

Out & About

Naked Bike Riders at Rittenhouse Square—What a Sight!

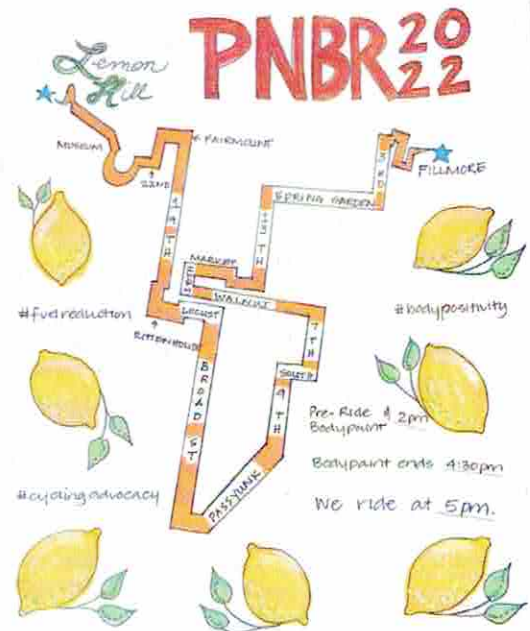
By Bonnie Eisenfeld

On Saturday, August 27, a crowd slowly gathered along Walnut Street near the 19th Street entrance to Rittenhouse Square to await the arrival of the Naked Bike Ride, an annual event in Philadelphia and worldwide. In the meantime, spectators were entertained by bagpipers playing for a wedding party exiting the Church of the Holy Trinity across the street.

Naked Bikers started riding at Lemon Hill near the Art Museum at 5 pm and arrived at Rittenhouse Square around 5:45. Traffic was not halted. Participants spanned a variety of ages, shapes, sizes, colors, hair styles, and genders.

Most riders were completely naked; some wore scant clothing or had decorated themselves with body paint, hats, or partial costumes. A few people rode tandems, recumbent bikes, or skateboards, and some walked. The crowd clapped, laughed, and shouted encouragement. Bikers smiled, waved, and seemed to be enjoying the ride. Photos appeared in the [Philadelphia Inquirer](#) later that day.

The first [Philly Naked Bike Ride](#) happened in 2009, with 400 participants. This year, several thousand participants rode on the 12-mile course. The date and route are announced 24 hours before the ride. The organizers' purpose is to promote cycling, body positivity, and fuel reduction.



The ride route for the 2022 Philly Naked Bike Ride.
Courtesy of the Philly Naked Bike Ride

Town Square

Rittenhouse Row Protections Restored

By Michael Schade

The Remapping Committee, co-chaired by Charles Robin and Michael Schade, has been meeting since December 2014. (Wow – that is not a typo – it has been almost eight years!) Our mission is to recommend revisions to the zoning map in our neighborhood for several purposes:

- to correct zoning classifications where the allowed use and density do not match the actual use and density
- to implement changes that will help direct density to appropriate areas within our neighborhood
- to reduce the need for zoning variances by applying consistent standards

One of the most difficult challenges we faced was the remapping of the Rittenhouse Row area. This area is zoned CMX-5, which allows for the highest density of buildings. This designation is appropriate for blocks along our widest streets (Broad and Market) and areas close to mass-transit stations.

Up until 2012, there were some sensible overlay restrictions that limited building frontages and required height setbacks on Walnut and Chestnut Streets. The addition of the "Skyplane Option" in the 2012 Zoning Code rewrite allowed these

restrictions to be avoided. Our committee realized that the wonderful pedestrian scale of Walnut, Sansom, and blocks of Chestnut Street would be lost if the densest zoning envelopes were applied to new construction on the streets. Rather than trying to reduce the allowable zoning on these blocks, we adopted another strategy that would limit the maximum building frontages along Walnut and Chestnut Streets when using the Skyplane Option, and would also limit building frontage and require setbacks along Sansom Street.

The Remapping Committee worked with the City Planning Commission, City Council members, the Building Industry Association of Philadelphia, and fellow RCOs in Center City to negotiate the specific details of this proposal. Earlier this fall City Council Bill 200118 was passed, adding these provisions to the Zoning Code. The new regulations affect development along Walnut, Sansom and Chestnut Streets, from river to river. The pedestrian scale of these streets has a much better chance of being maintained under the new regulations.

This ordinance, combined with the ongoing efforts of the CCRA Historic Preservation Committee (which is hard at work adding historic buildings to the Register) will help to maintain the best aspects of Center City and Rittenhouse Row.