

Millennium Philadelphia

Updated & Expanded

The Staff of the Philadelphia Inquirer

The New Millennium

The new century arrived with an outbreak of civic optimism. There was a growing sense that the city's story of the last 40 years—a tale of loss, decay, and decline—had taken a turn for the better.

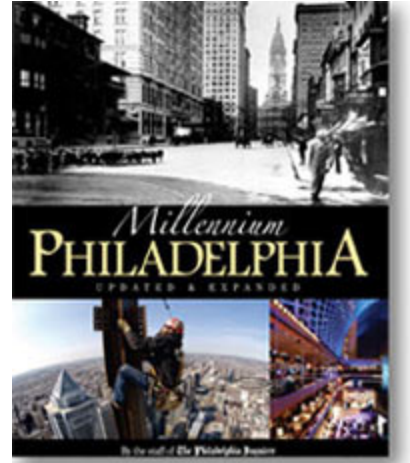
Signs of revival could be found in many neighborhoods, especially Center City. To see the change, all you had to do was try to thread through the thick crowds at midday. Even at night, the restaurants and sidewalk cafes were filled, often with the young, soaking up the urban vibes.

Construction cranes dotted the skyline as new buildings went up and old office buildings were reincarnated as condos. Vacant land went for premium prices and became new townhouses. (A townhouse is a rowhouse that costs more than \$200,000.)

There was a civic building spree, too. The Eagles and the Phillies got spanking new stadiums, and the Philadelphia Orchestra got a new home in the Kimmel Center, an instant landmark at Broad and Spruce streets with its distinctive glass dome.

Independence Mall, a child of the 1950s, was redone and repopulated with new buildings: a new home for the Liberty Bell, a red-brick Visitor Center, and a grand exhibition center devoted to the U.S. Constitution.

The old city sported a new vibrancy, evident when the clock struck midnight on New Year's Eve of 1999 and thousands of revelers greeted the new year.



The city fathers, as they always did, proudly proclaimed it the best New Year celebration ever. Philadelphians were celebrating the beginning of a new century and a new millennium—a double excuse to party.

The Philadelphia that entered the 21st century was different in so many ways from the city of 1900.