

Broad Street Brief: Philadelphia Zoo's New Giraffe Exhibit Fosters Friendship Between People and Animals

CITY HALL

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Giraffe Encounter, the Philadelphia Zoo's newest exhibit that opened last Thursday, allows the public to get up close and personal with its three resident giraffes. For an additional \$6, or \$5 for members, guests are able to feed the giraffes acacia browse, the same plant the long-necked animals eat in the wild.

Homestead Exemption Decreases Property Tax Burden for Philadelphia Homeowners

Last week, Mayor Jim Kenney signed a bill that is set to significantly lower many Philadelphians' tax bills. The city's Homestead Exemption will allow enrollees to have \$80,000 deducted from the value of their residential property — nearly doubling the previous exemption value. The law is designed to ameliorate financial tax burden among Philadelphia homeowners, and is expected to be followed by further related measures.

Affordable Housing Organizers Set Up Protest Encampment in West Philadelphia

A new encampment protesting University City Townhomes was set up on Market Street between 39th and 40th Streets in West Philadelphia over the weekend. The action comes a year after the news that the property owner would not be renewing its contract with the Department of Housing and Urban Development, which subsidizes 70 units in the complex. According to Save the UC Townhomes Coalition organizers, 68 families are expected to be displaced when the contract expires in early September. The encampment is currently ongoing.

Center City Shopping and Dining Activity Returns to Near Pre-Pandemic Levels

While the COVID-19 pandemic has taken a considerable toll on the entire city, its effect on the once bustling "commercial core" in Center City has been quite noticeable. But according to a promising new report put out by the Center City District last week, shoppers and diners have been returning to Center City in droves — nearly to pre-pandemic numbers. The increased foot traffic is attributable in large part to suburban visitors, tourists, college students, and roughly half of the Center City office workforce.

City Council Members, Mayor Kenney Debate the Merits of Stop-and-Frisk Policies

Last week, in the wake of the July 4 Parkway shooting and in light of a rise in gun violence, City Council President Darrell Clarke advocated for (at the very least) discussion of controversial stop-and-frisk policies. While stop-and-frisk has never officially ended in Philadelphia, stops have decreased dramatically in recent years, and policies to lessen what some deem to be "unnecessary" police interactions have gained traction. Mayor Jim Kenney has stated that he is not interested in bringing the policy back.

New Water Heater Repair Fund Available for Eligible Philadelphia Homeowners

A new Energy Coordinating Agency (ECA) fund will now pay to replace the broken hot water heaters of approximately 65 low-income Philadelphia families. Currently, the ECA operates a



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program to repair or replace broken heaters that are reported through their hotline, but cannot use its funding to do the same for broken water heaters. The new fund has been kick-started by a \$150,000 grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, as well as funding from the W.W. Smith Charitable Trust and the Green Family Foundation.

Suburban Spotlight: Many Suburban Business Owners Advocate Keeping Weekend Street Closures

The COVID-19 pandemic motivated many suburban towns — such as Phoenixville, West Chester, and Media — to block off their streets on weekends to accommodate socially distanced outdoor dining and events. Some business owners are now [advocating for these weekend street closures to remain](#), citing the policy's ability to increase foot traffic and business to downtown areas.
