



Where's Donald?

It appears that Donald Trump is having a Philadelphia moment. There's the casino in Nicetown, the condo in Northern Liberties, big renovations in A.C.—and Trump the Brand is plastered all over them. Look inside these projects, though, and you discover that Trump the Man really isn't here. So what is? **By Maureen Tkacik**



ALL TRUMPED UP From left, the proposed TrumpStreet casino site in Nicetown, with Randal Pinkett, the latest *Apprentice* winner, who is working on the project; Trump Organization COO Mark Juliano in A.C.'s soon-to-be-renovated Trump Taj Mahal; the renderings of Trump Tower Philadelphia, on the waterfront.

By the law that holds that you don't really exist in Philadelphia if a ward leader isn't fighting to hold up your project, earlier this year Donald Trump became a man, Philly-style. Because these days, when you drive around Nicetown, the North Philadelphia neighborhood that begs to be prefaced with "not-so," among the graffiti-streaked rowhouses and McDonald's franchises and pawnshops you will find, thanks to a very nice ward leader and former Black Panther affiliate named Ralph Wynder, a few hundred bright orange signs bearing the words NO TRUMP.

For it is here, in Nicetown, that Trump would like to build a \$350 million casino called, perhaps unsurprisingly, TrumpStreet.

(Nicetown, for its part, could sure use a grocery store, says Wynder.)

But TrumpStreet isn't all that Trump has in store for us. In fact, Trump is planning our very own Trump Tower Philadelphia, a 45-story condo development in Northern Liberties that promises to be the tallest building on the waterfront, replete with wine cellar, tennis courts, feng shui gardens, on-premises child care, cigar bar, five-star restaurant—maybe a Jean-Georges restaurant, who knows.

("Why *there?*" local luxury condo builder Allan Domb wants to know. "They don't have a grocery store!")

Throughout all this, Trump is also renovating his casinos in our backyard,

Atlantic City, which have for so many years stood shabby and garish and about as well-tended-to as your average DMV. Better yet, the winner of the fourth season of *The Apprentice*, Randal Pinkett, was awarded a post "overseeing the renovation" of Trump's three A.C. casinos (as well as a prominent role in the Philly casino), where Trump has promised to add a new tower to the cavernous, decrepit Taj Mahal.

To a city that not too long ago was the 900th market to get a Hard Rock Cafe, all of this seems like a terrifically big deal. Philadelphia is having a Trump moment! Trump is having a Philadelphia moment! Apparently, we have arrived! But somehow the Trump-related headlines that followed the condo announcement cheapened things: Trump expresses skepticism regarding the nuptials of Britney and K-

Fed; Trump talks about opening a casino in Las Vegas; Trump sues writer and publisher of Trump book for \$5 billion; Trump jokes, "If Ivanka weren't my daughter, perhaps I'd be dating her"; Trump defends the citizens of Dubai, where he is currently building a 92-story Trump-branded tower, regarding their involvement in the ports controversy, calling them "great people" on *Larry King Live*. Meanwhile, there is a Trump line of suits at Macy's, Trump Ice bottled water, Trump books, online education at trumpuniversity.com, travel advice on gotrump.com.

And so the significance of Donald Trump being *here* was quickly engulfed by the larger national debate over the significance of Donald Trump being *anywhere*. While in the past he has touted his location-picking savvy as one of his greatest instincts—indeed, one might wonder, what is real estate if not Location. Location. Location?—Trump the Man seems to be slapping Trump the Brand on any location that wants it.

In Atlantic City, where he once owned and controlled his casinos but now has very little involvement in them, his appointment of Apprentice Randal to oversee renovation on National Television was a way of reclaiming ownership of his casinos without having to actually *own* them, while his Philly deals create the perception that Trump is still building things without actually forcing him

to attend to all the headaches and financial hurdles of, you know, *building*. In a way, these deals offer a fascinating glimpse into how Trump remade himself as a postmodern mogul, or what Trump biographer Gwenda Blair terms a "virtual developer," who as of press time hadn't set foot in Nicetown.

And so a glimpse behind the complex corporate structures of the virtual developer's virtual developments in the area reveals a lot of confusion and no easily discernible strategy. For instance, the executive planning the \$350 million casino in Nicetown says he didn't know, until he read it on the front page of the *Inquirer* in January, that Trump was planning a skyscraper just a few miles away in Northern Liberties. Some of Trump's Atlantic City executives profess complete ignorance of what goes on at "Global Galactic Headquarters," their pet name for the Trump Organization's office in Trump Tower in New York, and indeed, when Global Galactic Headquarters decided to name Apprentice Randal to oversee the casino renovations, well, they already had

someone in that job. And then there is that most bizarre of his virtual developments, Trump Tower Philadelphia, which is actually being financed and developed by an obscure Lower Manhattan firm; the man who calls himself the "spokesman" and "a principal of the company" refuses to explain exactly how he became involved with Donald Trump and calls the day after our interview demanding that his name be removed from this story, even though, it turns out, his name is an alias.

Does The Donald even know what he's doing in Philadelphia? Or is the man who believes there is no such thing as overexposure finally exposing his own overexposure?

The Virtual Developer Era in the life of Donald J. Trump probably began in the summer of 2004, as the company that ran his three Atlantic City casinos was flirting precariously, for the umpteenth time in its short history, with bankruptcy.

Does The Donald even know what he's doing in Philadelphia? Does he know that one of his partners was a convicted drug trafficker? "I don't know him," Trump says.

RANDALL PINKETT AND MARK JULIANO; CHRIS CRISMAN

Donald Trump was worried. About his ratings.

"Think the B-word will hurt *The Apprentice?*" he asked visitors to his office at Global Galactic Headquarters. When licensees and television executives would call, he'd solicit their opinions: Would bankruptcy be bad for ratings?

Donald had long been unconcerned with the reality of his casinos in Atlantic City, where it didn't matter that those casinos were dingy and cash-strapped—because until Borgata, everyone else's were, too—and which he needed much more for the easy cash they generated (casinos paid his helicopter bills and funded his other projects) than for the sake of his ego, which spent most of its time in Trump Tower in New York. But when the Borgata opened in 2003 and *The Apprentice* debuted in 2004, he suddenly found himself with fierce competition in town, a new revenue stream (the TV show paid him "substantially more" than a million dollars an episode for the second season), and an image problem: a clearly second-tier batch of schlocky buildings emblazoned with the TRUMP brand he had so ingeniously bolstered on TV. He began to worry.

So Trump went to the holders of the high-interest junk bonds the Trump casinos were about to default on, and instead of paying them, agreed to cede control of his casinos to them if they would put up the money—about (continued on page 150)

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half a billion dollars in all—necessary to make them look good enough to sport the Trump name. He retained around a 25 percent interest and a salary—\$2 million “you might call a salary for staying *out* of the business,” bond analyst Barb Cappaert says—but the bondholders would have financial and management control and the exclusive right to use the TRUMP name on casinos throughout the world.

They immediately recruited a new management team led by two casino veterans: CEO Jim Perry, once with Illinois’s regional empire Argosy Gaming, an affable expert on the mass-market casino experience, and COO Mark Juliano, a suave Caesars Palace Las Vegas president who’d been a longtime fixture on the high-roller scene, visiting Asia as often as twice a month to wine, dine, and perform karaoke Sinatra songs with his top clients. Had The Donald had his druthers, his new management team would have gone straight to work planning a new Trump casino in Las Vegas, or perhaps Macau. But Trump casinos were no longer in the hands of The Donald. And both Perry and Juliano agreed that the Trump casino firm needed to focus its resources on turning Atlantic City around. But Bob Pickus, longtime general counsel to the Trump casinos and monitor of the tide of state gaming legalization schemes that threatened the predominance of locales like Atlantic City, convinced the two that there was *one* market they *needed* to be eyeing *immediately* for a new outpost of the TRUMP name.

Philadelphia.

Philadelphia will eventually have two casinos, initially wholly devoted to slots but at some point in the future, most observers expect, full-service facilities offering table games as well. Because the tax rate on these slot parlors will be a whopping 54 percent, Atlantic City—which taxes at less than 10 percent—will still have an edge with the shrewd gamer. But there is a customer—bored, lower- or middle-class, probably elderly—who will be attracted to the convenience of Philadelphia over A.C., and especially on weekdays, Trump casinos rely on those customers. Trump had to secure a gaming license in Philadelphia, Pickus reasoned, to hold onto them.

At the time, the threat of a joint venture between Trump’s former rival, casino industry revolutionary Steve Wynn, mastermind behind the Bellagio and the Mirage in Vegas, and Wynn’s old Philly friend, politically-connected-developer-to-end-all-politically-connected-developers Ron Rubin, loomed large; Wynn ended up balking at the tax rate. So to bolster his group’s application—and, cynically, to keep customers from walking next

door to a competing spot—Pickus ended up taking local developer Mike O’Neill’s offer to lease a section of the old Budd Manufacturing plant site he owned in North Philadelphia, feeling that once legislators got past the whole building-a-casino-in-a-neighborhood-where-some-third-of-all-residents-live-below-the-poverty-line thing, they’d agree it would make a better case for economic development than another waterfront casino.

To which the citizens of Nicetown replied: You mean like all that economic development that saved the impoverished residents of Atlantic City?

Pickus had his work cut out for him. By now the modest family man and 20-plus-year Trump casino veteran knows North Philadelphia better than he knows South Jersey. Well before he leased the site, he started attending neighborhood meetings and, to ease the minds of residents with their NO TRUMP signs, making concessions and compromises, agreeing to award a full three-quarters of the casino’s jobs to residents of the area surrounding the casino, to allot millions to rebuild a technical school that could become a casualty of TrumpStreet, to put up three movie screens to accompany the 3,000 slot machines. He agreed to build seven restaurants in the facility and 8,000 square feet of retail space, to accompany the gambling in what the TrumpStreet gaming application calls a Reading Terminal-inspired design.

“Bob just really cares about the community, he’s sort of an activist as much as he is a money guy,” says Pat Croce, who joined the project in August. Croce had initially vowed to “kick [Trump’s] ass” with a competing property at the old Adam’s Mark site on City Avenue and a group of investors that included the R&B group Boyz II Men, who had familiarized themselves with the casino industry by singing in a lot of casinos over the past decade. When the Adam’s Mark site seemed to be a no-go—the “community wanted a Target,” Croce explains—he brought the Boyz, and his money and energy, to Pickus’s team. He just had one request: that Trump, himself, appear in Philly to campaign for the license.

“I said, Bob, we have to get The Donald.”

Now, here is where it gets tricky. If you are a celebrity, or a reporter, or even a lowly employee, it is relatively easy to get The Donald on the phone, and certainly not an impossibility to get a meeting in his office. But getting Donald to leave Global Galactic Headquarters is not so easy. (“He’s afraid he’ll miss something,” explains Robert Slater, who penned the authorized business biography of Trump titled *No Such Thing as Over-Exposure.*)

“Um, Donald doesn’t make a lot of appearances,” Pickus told Croce.

“Bob, we need to get Donald,” Croce insisted. “We need him to pay respect to the

Mayor.”

Donald ended up obliging. Whether it was because of Pickus or because Croce had once blocked a flying hockey puck from hitting The Donald in the face while seated beside him at a Flyers game (The Donald thanked Croce by pulling from his pocket a fake million-dollar bill), The Donald met with the Mayor last December. The meeting lasted about an hour, including the obligatory exchange of the pleasantry “You’re fired.” Trump flew back to Global Galactic Headquarters without stopping in Nicetown. Later, when Larry King asked why he would possibly want to open a slots parlor with “no hotel, no casino, other than slots,” Donald chalked the whole thing up to just the sort of political hackery and cronyism of which he *wasn’t* a part. “Well the Mayor, and the Governor, they’re all good friends of mine, and they want me to do that,” he said. “They want me there badly.” In fact, Trump is widely considered to be the least politically connected of the slot candidates. Even his cronies were virtual!

If he had any reservations about the whole thing, well, he related them to the only guy who was enough of a Brand himself to really understand.

“You sure about that location?” he called one day to ask Pat Croce.

“Donald, I’m sure,” Croce said. And that was all.

Down in A.C., renovations were already well under way at Atlantic City’s three Trump casinos when Donald Trump decided to award the job of overseeing them to the winner of the fourth *Apprentice*, 34-year-old, refreshingly normal MIT Ph.D. Randal Pinkett.

The Trump Plaza, which had rolled back its vacuuming schedule to every other day because it couldn’t afford new vacuum cleaners, got new vacuums, and new rugs—and in some cases got rugs replaced with tiles. A new restaurant and a bar were fashioned around the casino. It would never be the Borgata, but it had done wonders with the \$20 million-plus it was given.

Perry and Juliano were saving their big money to renovate the Trump Taj Mahal, the billion-dollar monstrosity that had been so debt-ridden at its opening that Trump famously had to convince his father Fred to purchase \$3.4 million in casino chips without playing them or cashing them in, so the casino would have enough cash on hand to make an interest payment to his bondholders. (“I think it was a vote of confidence,” Trump later said of his father’s bailout.) Strapped as it was, the Taj had never reached phase two of its construction, which called for a second hotel tower; thanks to the reorganization, the tower will finally be built. All this was planned prior to Pinkett’s big win,

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but to welcome him to his assignment on his first day of the job (not to be confused with Apprentice Randal’s first day on the job as captured by Mark Burnett Productions, which occurred the following day), the construction team set up a conference room full of blueprints and renderings for Randal to inspect.

So “overseeing,” in Dr. Randal Pinkett’s context, was tantamount to “taking a field trip to go and see,” since not only was he awarded the job on a TV show, but The Donald had no actual authority to appoint anyone to oversee anything at his casinos. Still, on his first day at least, Randal certainly earned his paycheck. Cocktail waitresses swooned at his sight. Old ladies mobbed him. Awkward-looking 14-year-old boys traveling with their parents stood by to get their pictures snapped next to his hulking six-foot-seven frame. An elderly Chinese man, with tea-colored teeth and eyes like he’d just seen Jesus, asked him to sign his dollar bill, for luck.

And Randal obliged them all, warmly and happily, gripping their hands as the germophobe Donald never would. Donald notoriously hates crowds, hates gamblers, hates signing autographs. On his several contractually obligated trips to Atlantic City each year, when he bestows \$100,000 “Live Like Trump” checks as a casino promotion, he is whisked in and out without greeting employees or high-rollers.

“No, he’s not *overseeing* the renovation,” Juliano will remind the hapless Atlantic City press corps tomorrow, trying his best not to roll his eyes. “We have an executive vice president in charge of construction. Randal’s part of the *team.*”

Later, Randal actually finds a place for himself leading the team in charge of migrating the company’s software programs from a motley assemblage of Lotus Notes, WordPerfect and Hotmail to a streamlined Microsoft Office combination. It is not as glamorous a job as overseeing the casino renovations, but it is where he is needed.

He has learned a lot from Trump, he says. “Mr. Trump taught me the value, I think, of having your own personal brand,” Dr. Randal Pinkett explains, sounding for a moment like a Miss America contestant. “I think I would like my brand to stand for getting an education, for staying in school, for the importance of technology.” But right now he is the virtual ambassador for Brand Trump, in many ways a much better one than Trump himself could ever be.

Behind the proposed Trump Tower Philadelphia is another sort of ambassador. Born in Belgium, Raoul Goldberg lived a transient life, attending schools in Israel, New York

and Belgium, becoming fluent in Dutch and English, attending Cardozo Law School and eventually getting into real estate.

It was in early 2005, he says, that he set his sights on Northern Liberties. Philadelphia had in recent years become a target for investment from Israeli real estate developers wary of the astronomical valuations on land in more cosmopolitan cities. The most notable of these was a well-connected multi-billion-dollar firm called Isle of Capri Associates, which in 2003 had broken ground on a massive skyscraper project called Waterfront Square. Goldberg’s firm, Multi-Capital Group, knew some of the principals of Isle of Capri, and began to consider a spot, Pier 35 1/2, owned by the group. Goldberg drove down to the site, walked around Northern Liberties, visited Waterfront Square. It was the ideal place, he felt, for homebuyers looking “to be bohemian while at the same time basking in the lap of luxury.” It was ideal, in other words, for Trump Tower Philadelphia.

Within a week, the deal was done. “We picked up the phone,” explains Goldberg. “We said, ‘Hello, Donald. Let’s meet tomorrow,’ and he said, ‘Okay,’ because he always schedules our appointments for the next day.” For his part, Trump says Goldberg and he aren’t quite that close. “It’s possible I met him, because I’ve met a lot of the deal’s great partners,” he says. “But I don’t know him.” Trump says Raoul was recommended by his old friend Morton “Mortie” Davis, a Wall Street investment banker who emerged legally unscathed when the bank he chaired, D.H. Blair, was indicted on racketeering charges in 2000.

Trump agreed to go ahead with the project. According to the renderings, the 45-story Trump Tower Philadelphia will have the sort of amenities you don’t even see on *MTV Cribs*: an Olympic-size swimming pool with a retractable glass roof allowing residents to swim laps in the winter sunshine, a spa on par with the Mandarin Oriental’s, full-time concierge services, modules in every apartment allowing residents to order room service without speaking to anyone. The Trump Organization will be paid a management fee, and in the meantime, the Trump name—and appearances from, if not The Donald himself, Trump Organization employees Don Jr. and Ivanka—will help woo the right people to the job. Ivanka, for instance, negotiated with a potential spa partner for Trump Tower Philadelphia. Don Jr. has worked to secure a big-name restaurateur. Goldberg claims he talks to Don Jr. or Ivanka “every day.”

“We were asked by a very famous Philadelphia restaurateur who would like to place a restaurant in the building, and we are on very good terms, but everything we are doing is novel,” Goldberg says tantalizingly. “We wanted to be different.” (Stephen Starr says

he has never heard the name “Raoul Goldberg” but confirms that he has met with the “Trump people.”)

When we spoke, Goldberg said Multi-Capital was also in talks to do Trump projects in Boston and Seattle and that the company was one of the major groups helping The Donald to develop a new image. What he would not say was how he knows Donald Trump, who his investors are, or who his family—whom he credits for getting him into the real estate business—is. This is probably because his family was named “Goldberger,” not Goldberg. Until 2003, when he still went by the name Raoul Goldberger, he was primarily known as an up-and-coming drug trafficker who had been busted after a yearlong federal investigation for attempting to ship tens of thousands of ecstasy pills from Belgium.

Goldberger’s lawyer made the case that young Raoul had been hurt at an early age by his parents’ divorce and stung by a breakup with a young woman of mixed race who did not win his family’s approval because she was not Jewish. Although he was sentenced to 46 months in 2000, he was released early in part because of a rare liver and spleen condition called Gaucher disease that he had been diagnosed with. After his release in 2002, he was supposed to be supervised for five years, but got a special dispensation to move to Belgium to pursue a business opportunity with his cousin Charles Goldberg. Somewhere along the way, he took the name Goldberg. Before long, Raoul Goldberg had moved back to Manhattan and entered the real estate business. When asked about his colorful past, Raoul laughed and claimed the convicted Goldberger is a cousin. “I have 38 cousins,” he said, “and many are named Raoul.” Told by *Philadelphia* magazine of his history, Multi-Capital and Trump began distancing themselves from him. “We were unaware of his past,” the company said, through the powerhouse Rubenstein PR firm, “and he is no longer associated with the marketing of the project and he is not a principal in the development.”

Though Goldberg’s future role with Trump Tower Philadelphia seems murky, it’s hard not to admire such a quick change from jumpsuits to pinstripes—a comeback so massive and quick, it was practically Trumpian.

The thing about being a virtual developer is, at the end of the day, it’s hard to hold a virtual developer culpable; it’s like holding Kathie Lee Gifford—who, incidentally, retained Multi-Capital’s selfsame PR firm when she ran afoul of anti-sweatshop activists—responsible for the seamstresses who made her Kmart turtle-necks. To try and fashion Trump into a player in some Philadelphia Story, or the subject of some overarching Philadel-

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phia narrative, was counter to everything his Brand, massive and unstoppable and global and fully Trump-centric as it was, would do.

Back at Global Galactic Headquarters, I conducted an experiment:

“So, who were your favorite professors at Wharton? Who were your best friends?” I asked The Brand.

“Maureen, I had a lot of great professors at Wharton,” The Brand tells me. “One of the reasons I went to Wharton was because of the great professors. I loved the Wharton School. To this day, they are known to have great professors.”

“Why Philadelphia?”

“It’s a place I know. I know the streets. You have a great mayor in Philadelphia.” Brief pause. “And when Rendell was mayor, he was terrific, and now he’s governor.”

And it goes on this way for 32 minutes, as if I am talking to a Donald Trump body double, or Donald Trump as told by AskJeeves.com. Trump has been reduced, wholly and purely, to a Brand, a living Brand with speech powered by a world-class, state-of-the-art computer algorithm that generates real, grammatically correct and brand-appropriately effusive sentences from the simplest of keywords.

(You will want, I realize, to know about the hair, the skin, the jowls, the scowl, the pores, and all I can offer is: I don’t know. Perhaps it is all the earth tones and bronzed mirrors of Trump Tower, but he simply looked blurry and Trumplike: a ruddy complexion, tufts of strawberry-blond hairlike substance that seemed, if unnaturally, to cover everything.)

“So this lawsuit you’ve filed against Tim O’Brien ... ” I attempt again, referring to the author of the new book *TrumpNation*, which The Donald claims is libelous because it estimates his wealth at \$150 million to \$250 million, as opposed to the \$5 billion-plus he makes it out to be. Yesterday The Donald sued O’Brien and Warner Books for \$5 billion in Camden County. “How did you get to that number, \$5 billion?”

“We will show them in court how we came up with those numbers.”

In court, lawyers may prove that The Donald, The Brand, is worth \$5 billion. The Donald certainly seems to think that The Donald, The Brand, is worth that much, and in *No Such Thing As Over-Exposure*, a financial analyst estimates that the Trump name adds an “incremental \$50 a square foot” value to every building it graces. Maybe that explains all those towers in Dubai, and the Philadelphia plans—he is in a frenzied rush to accumulate 100 million Trump-branded square feet and prove his case against O’Brien in court, adding five billion actual dollars to the five billion virtual dollars this virtual developer will

have already virtually acquired.

It is altogether a pleasant experience, communicating one-on-one with a brand, and it strikes me as rather selfless that The Donald has given me and so many like me the chance to bear witness to his relentless positivity, his cloud-free no-fly zone for bad vibes and bad locations and bad deals and bad people. In truth, of course—and there is always a truth—Trump biographer Gwenda Blair wrote that Donald had fewer friends at Wharton than he’d had at military school, and that he’d sought out real estate professors as friends, and that it was altogether a socially awkward situation. Whatever, it is blacked out. Gone. *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*-erased.

In truth, in reality, Trump will furrow his brow and purse his lips as if he is seriously pondering a question, and then he will say something like:

“Did you see this?” He pushes an opened issue of *Variety* from a couple of weeks ago toward me.

“Ratings for the finale came in *second* for the *week!*” b