

Shelby

<https://southgrand.org/business-directory/restaurants/>

Gotham and Eggs: Gotham and Eggs is a comic book restaurant that opened at South Grand in early August. Its menu features many breakfast and lunch items with a superheroes and villain theme. Co-owned by Jason and Shanisah (Shani) Knight, owning a family-friendly restaurant was the main goal. The idea of opening a diner came to the couple on New Year's Day when they were sitting in a diner, wanting to fill the void of the previous restaurant, City Diner. As soon as you walk into Gotham and Eggs, it feels like a DC nerd's paradise. From the Batman statue in the front to comic posters all over the walls, it has something that everyone, young and old, can enjoy. While the Tower Grove neighborhood was very welcoming, Shani and Jason still faced challenges running a black-owned business. When asked, Shani stated, "There is a lack of support and resources for opening a new restaurant. If we had done something in the STEM field, there are grants available, but not as many for restaurants." Another challenge she stated is that they currently don't have a liquor license. "The city makes it extremely complicated to obtain a license. Without it, I feel like we aren't making as much revenue as other businesses," Shani disclosed. The owners, Shani and Jason love the community around them and couldn't imagine starting a business in any other area. Their main focus is making sure they have an inclusive work environment for employees, good food, and a sense of community.

Brasilia Bar and Restaurant: Brasilia Bar and Restaurant has a nice sultry Latin vibe with a welcoming feeling. As soon as you walk in you hear bossa nova music playing and you see the giant mural of Christ the Redeemer that spans the entire wall. The founders Jorge and Rachel Carvalho are a great husband and wife team that are going for a fun beach ambiance that just makes you feel good. It took many trials and tribulations to open and perfect this restaurant for the couple since this is their third effort at running a business in St. Louis. Their first restaurant was Cafe Brasil in Rock Hill, which felt uninspired; Coco Louco Brasil was too big for the inanimate feel they were going for. Jorge wanted to infuse his memories from home to channel a cozy, authentic Brazilian feel to the design to make the restaurant look like a beachside shack. "It's like taking a little mini vacation. You walk in the door and just feel at home," co-owner Rachel Carvalho says. "You get that warm, happy, relaxed feeling like Brazilians have." (Suen, 2015, p2) Brasilia offers a distinctive palette of dishes that cater to the South American population in St. Louis. This provides the community of Tower Grove with a variety of

dining alternatives in the neighborhood. Even though this is Rachel and Jorge's third restaurant, Tower Grove embraces their eatery with open arms as their business continues to flourish.

How are they thriving due to their cultural diversity?:

In the heart of St. Louis, Tower Grove emerges as a dynamic hub where minority-owned businesses flourish, propelled by the kaleidoscope of cultural diversity that defines the neighborhood. The entrepreneurial landscape reflects a mosaic of voices, backgrounds, and traditions, resulting in a thriving ecosystem that goes beyond commerce. Tower Grove's cultural diversity acts as a catalyst for innovation, infusing a distinct vibrancy into the products and services offered by minority entrepreneurs. From corner markets featuring global flavors to boutique shops showcasing handcrafted goods inspired by various traditions, the community becomes a microcosm of inclusive commerce.

The strength of minority-owned businesses in Tower Grove lies not only in their ability to cater to diverse consumer needs but also in the profound connections forged with the community. The residents actively champion these enterprises, recognizing the significance of supporting businesses that reflect the richness of their own backgrounds. This symbiotic relationship fosters economic resilience and a shared sense of pride. Tower Grove's welcoming atmosphere attracts a broad clientele eager to engage with the authenticity and unique perspectives offered by minority entrepreneurs.

As the word spreads about the distinctive experiences provided by these businesses, Tower Grove becomes a destination for those seeking cultural immersion through commerce. The economic prosperity of minority-owned enterprises in the neighborhood becomes a beacon, illustrating how embracing cultural diversity can lead not only to financial success but also to the cultivation of a resilient and interconnected community.

Aaliyah

Jay International Food Co.- Jay's Grocery is St Louis's first international grocery store located on Grand Blvd. Their shelves are stocked with foods and snacks from all around the world, making it a unique staple in the Tower Grove neighborhood. As you walk up

and down the aisle you'll see a wide range of culturally significant items. This assortment allows Jay to enjoy what he says is his favorite part of his job, interacting and building relationships with people from different parts of the globe! After interviewing the owner, we learned about the struggles they encountered as immigrant people attempting to create a successful business. When asked how their business contributes to the community in ways that other businesses do not, we learned that the owner is a second-generation immigrant. Due to this experience, there is this rare aspect embedded in the foundation of their business—— working against the ramifications of displacement. Jay highlighted how 30 or 40 years ago they “had no choice, they put us here so this is where we are.” So initially for him, it wasn't necessarily about trying to make a name or gain popularity, it was more so about making do with what he had. Because if he didn't, what were the other options? He persevered against so many odds which is truly admirable.

Cultivate Natural Hair Salon- The Cultivate Natural Hair Salon is located at 1110 Tower Grove Ave. According to their website, their prime objective is to be the best natural hair salon in St. Louis through outstanding customer service, superior hair care, and world-class professionalism. They provide hair care and style for a predominantly black demographic. It is historically infrequent to have a black-owned hair salon intentionally curated by and for black people in the Tower Grove Area. To quote their website “ We believe in empowering our clients to sustain exceptional, long-term hair beauty AND health. Bring us your toughest hair challenges. We will deliver.” They pride themselves on their patience and appreciation when dealing with natural hair. "Natural hair is simply the kind that is not only beautiful but also stays on your head over time. There's nothing "dreadful" about the locs our clients rock. Our clients with curly hair are happy with being slinky or kinky.” They work hard to ensure that everyone who has the pleasure of sitting in their salon chairs feels safe and welcome however they come. “We love our clients. All of you. We are angry that there aren't enough outlets to care for our broad spectrum of hair textures in a high quality way. We are on the upward swing of a movement in natural hair care and would love to have you on this journey with us!” In the black community, there is a specific sacredness and aura of grandness that surrounds the hair of black women. This salon is the embodiment of this very special and powerful relationship between black women and their hair.

Difficulty Flourishing in White Spaces as POC

Let's look at history. Not only for the purposes of providing historical context but also to show how this issue has remained persistent to present day. Although proper recognition

and support has just recently started to be provided for black owned businesses, they have existed. Even prior to emancipation, enslaved people still found ways to acquire small bits of autonomy. Many enslaved people had fine skill sets which allowed them to become carpenters, cooks, and seamstresses, and eventually business owners. Black Wall Street was located in Tulsa, Oklahoma and was home to one of the most successful and prosperous black owned businesses. But, after a black man was accused of raping a white woman, a reign of terror fell onto these businesses and they were destroyed by enraged white people. 35 city blocks were sent up in flames killing 300 people and injuring 800. This all occurred before the police were able to properly investigate the accusations. Hundreds of businesses are gone forever over one accusation.

After being refused service nearly everywhere during the Jim Crow era, black people took this as an opportunity to create something of their own. Black entrepreneurs followed the wise words of Booker T. Washington, who created the National Business League in 1900 to promote economic self-help. From this you started to see black barbers, black beauty parlors, black funeral directors, black cafe's, and black taverns. They took a ugly situation and still created beauty from it which is a theme that persists in the present day.

Karmen

Introducing our argument- Our main argument as a team is showing how minority-owned businesses uniquely contribute to the Tower Grove community in ways that other businesses may not. We believe that minority-owned businesses play an important part in contributing to the liveliness and economic development of a city like Tower Grove. St. Louis is a very diverse place and it's home to a myriad of minority-owned businesses. During 2020, Tower Grove gave many future business owners an opportunity to start a business. Before COVID, the community wasn't as diversely populated as we see it now. Due to events such as the brutal murder of George Floyd and the coronavirus, a lot of opportunities arose for minority business owners to begin taking the preliminary steps necessary to jump start their establishments.. While walking around in the Tower Grove neighborhood, it's almost impossible to ignore the

overt feeling of “fresh gentrification”, which to some of the business owners doesn’t feel like a good thing. Sure, they might be making more money than they have before, but at what cost? The process of gentrification leaves local business owners feeling as if their dignity has been stripped. They were in these neighborhoods creating legacies, telling stories, and connecting the interstices of a tightly knit community. None of this was acknowledged or taken into account in the slightest once the process of gentrification began. Despite this, Tower Grove still has many successful minority-owned businesses, displaying an admirable trait of perseverance within the owners. Even though Tower Grove is known for their cultural diversity, it is still a predominantly white space. It’s populated with nearly 13,000 people but only 20% of people are black and, 5% are Hispanic, and 2% of people are some other race.

SLIDE 6 Tower Grove being the ideal place for minority entrepreneurs to start their businesses- Tower Grove has an extensive reputation for being a diverse and welcoming city. The Tower Grove neighborhood is home to many people who come from all different walks of life. An important area to highlight is Tower Grove South. This spot consists of a plethora of Authentic restaurants that make people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds feel welcome and at home. The community’s open-mindedness and cultural acceptance create an environment that makes it easier for businesses that reflect those different cultures to thrive and expand. We interviewed multiple business owners in the Tower Grove area, and all of them felt like the community welcomed and accepted them with open arms. Of course there were trials and tribulations that all business owners will have to undergo before they reach their peak. But, as of now, the owners all agreed that Tower Grove was a great geographic decision for their business to grow. Tower Grove’s diverse Population creates a market for a wide range of businesses. Minority entrepreneurs may find opportunities to start and grow businesses that cater to the specific needs and preferences of the community here. A place so affluent as Tower Grove is so important because it provides a place for the minorities of St. Louis to feel welcome. They are also important because they provide jobs for minorities who might not feel welcome in other spaces. Tower Grove also allows the majority to gain cultural enrichment. Cultural enrichment and exposure are crucial to others and help with empathy and appreciation for people of different backgrounds.

The Vine Mediterranean Cafe - The Vine Cafe is a Middle Eastern-owned restaurant on South Grand specializing in authentic Mediterranean cuisine. The owners of the Vine

Cafe opened up their business in 2010 with the goal of making people feel at home, comfortable, and nourished with their authentic Lebanese dishes. When you come in, you are immediately greeted with heartwarming hospitality, which is one of their valuable tenets. They value guest experience and treat every customer as if they are a guest in their own home. They want everyone to feel welcomed and acknowledged. Another value of theirs is nourishment. One of the owners, Roudyana, says that a Mediterranean diet is regarded as one of the healthiest diets to eat and can heal the body. Every dish is created with the intention to nourish and bring comfort to the person eating it. One of the biggest inspirations for creating this business was being able to work for themselves. “You know, working for people, it’s hard.” Roudyana’s husband used to work as a manager for a tire company. They were not too fond of having to follow the rules and schedule of someone else. So they created their own business. Roudyana has a big passion for Lebanese food from her experiences back home cooking with her mom. With that, she thought, “This would be a good thing for us,” She loves connecting with others in the community and feeding people with love. A place like this is a great asset to the community because it provides a space for the Arab and Middle Eastern people of St.Louis, a place of familiarity and comfort while giving a space for others to expand and experience new food.

Taste Of Persia - The Taste of Persia is an authentic homestyle Afghan and Indian eatery on South Grand that opened on April 6, 2019. This restaurant features many different dishes with a casual, welcoming feel. The idea of the restaurant comes from Mohammad Abdolrezagh who previously owned an array of restaurants in St. Louis. He moved to St. Louis from Russia 19 years ago and opened his first restaurant, Grand Mediterranean Cafe, in 2005. Since then, he also owned Hot and Sour (a Persian, Chinese, and Indian food concept) and Chicago Style Dogs in West County, both of which have been sold. For a while, Mohammad took a break and worked as a cab driver for St. Louis County Cab, where he sometimes drove 18 hours a day. He later decided to return to his passion for cooking in the kitchen and opened Taste of Persia. “The beginning was great. After the pandemic hit, business dropped. But we just continue.”(Renner, 2021,p7) He now shares cooking responsibilities with his wife, Sofia, who brings her personality to the menu. They share this love and passion with the family as their children are a part of the business as well as taking care of managing, marketing, and financials aspects of the business. In the future, Mohammad wants to be able to open a larger location where he and his wife can have a bigger cooking space but they are

grateful for what they have now. Its a potential space for middle-easterners to have a place for them to feel at home again through the services and food of Taste of Persia.

Aydien

Professional Cuts and Styles- Morgan Ford Road is where you can find this barbershop. A few companies look after Tower Grove, but the barbershop serves as an essential connection for the neighborhood. This is due to the fact that it gives young black men a sense of belonging to a community and increased confidence. This small store has a history, having first opened in South Side, St. Louis. They were doing rather well and earning a lot of money in the south side. The government began raising their rent, forcing them to vacate, which caused problems. The cause of this is gentrification. As rent increased, gentrification began to force away numerous companies. In addition, rent in the neighborhood began to rise quickly as the wealthier white man moved in. Black-owned businesses in South Side St Louis were being forced out by the high rate of rent increases. The South Side was experiencing a wave of gentrification. On the South Side, unoccupied houses are hard to come by these days. As well as when our group was talking to the owners. They mentioned that they moved to Tower Grove 6 years ago. One of the owners mentioned “Within this community you need somebody thats a mentor and the barbershop is the perfect for that”.

Steve’s Hot Dog- The hot dog place is located on 3145 South Grand. It's known for their various specialties on hot dogs. Unfortunately we were unable to get an interview from the owner. An important factor in the Tower Grove community's economic health is Steve's Hot Dogs' success. As a local business, it fosters economic development, creates jobs, and supports surrounding suppliers and vendors. There are beneficial effects to the local business environment from this economic impact that goes beyond the hot dog joint's walls. Steve's is a model of community involvement even outside of its kitchen. The hot dog business is sustaining the community's well-being and cultivating a sense of collective responsibility through charity events, and partnerships with neighborhood organizations. It's doing more than just satisfying customers' cravings. Steve Ewing's

dedication to helping the community is evident in every facet of his business. Ewing's commitment to giving back is demonstrated by his participation in local celebrations, such as Dine Around, an annual restaurant crawl on South Grand. Ewing jumps at the chance to give back and actively engages in events that honor Tower Grove's vibrant attitude, much as the neighborhood has supported Steve's Hot Dogs. Furthermore, Ewing has a strong sense of gratitude towards his staff and the community that has supported him in establishing his name.

How does failed business affect the tower grove community? - Minority-owned companies frequently act as social hubs in the neighborhood, offering venues for cross-cultural dialogue and promoting a feeling of self. There is a weakening of the social infrastructure when these enterprises fail. The loss affects not only the economy but also the social structure of the community and the citizens' sense of community. The Tower Grove saw a major adjustment during Covid. During Covid there were numerous shops that closed due not having enough income due to the virus. Businesses in Tower Grove had immediate interruptions when the pandemic struck. Restaurants, retail outlets, and service-oriented businesses experienced a sharp decline in foot traffic as a result of government-mandated lockdowns and bans on public gatherings, which created operational and financial strain. Tower Grove restaurants encountered particular difficulties because dine-in limitations had a big effect on their conventional business plans. So many businesses ended up shutting down during the pandemic. Essentially during covid Tower Grove was viewed as a ghost town. Coming out of covid The Tower Grove community was able to resurface as a new diversity area that has food business from different ethnic backgrounds.

Juan

Padrinos Mexican Restaurant- Padrinos opened their doors this past year in August 2022, at 3143 South Grand Boulevard. Padrinos shares their building with another popular business called Steve's Hot Dog. It is co-owned by 4 different people, a husband and wife duo Christina and Enrique Robles, Ciro Trapla, and Rafa Rosas. Three out of the four owners grow up on the streets of Mexico, with the exception being Christina, who is a southern Illinois native. Padrinos focuses on Mexican favorites such as quesadillas, burritos, street tacos, and more. Not only that, but it also acts as a bar with its various kinds of alcoholic drinks. And when Padrinos first opened their door, they seemed to be accepted by the community because they had a line around the corner. However, it wasn't easy like all businesses which need a substantial amount of money to get off the ground. Not only that but they faced great difficulty to get their space because Steve's Hot Dogs also tried to get their space. While visiting Padrinos we got the chance to interview Christina and discuss her experience running Padrinos and her favorite part of her everyday work experience. "If I was to choose one thing it would have to be the conversations with all the diverse customers because it's like traveling around the world." Padrinos' has also vowed to make several contributions to the Tower Grove community through sponsoring events, contributing in community service efforts, and providing food for fundraising events, just to name a few.

<https://www.riverfronttimes.com/food-drink/review-basil-india-serves-some-of-the-best-dishes-in-st-louis-37467201>

Basil India- Basil India began operation in July 2022 at 3183 South Grand Boulevard. This restaurant features Thai, Indian, and Indo-Chinese cuisine all under one roof. Deciding to join forces, Basil India's owners, Somying Fox, and Naveen Kumar, wanted to combine their restaurant to create a melting pot of flavor. "Our plan was to serve three different cuisines in one restaurant," Kumar says. "We wanted to offer unique Indo-Chinese fusion. It's very popular in India. I couldn't find it in St. Louis and wanted to bring that here." This adds two different cultures, combining them together, and also creates a safe space for both the Chinese and the Indian community. Basil India's menu is very diverse with Thai staples, such as pad Thai and yellow curry, chicken tikka masala, vindaloo as Indian signature, Tangra-style chili paneer as a classic Indo-Chinese and so much more. You may find comparable dishes at any other kind of Indian restaurant. However, Chhetri's rendition makes you feel as though you are tasting it for the first time,

much as every meal that leaves the chef's kitchen. Given how well Basil India blends with the other foreign eateries along South Grand, you wouldn't think it was home to such outstanding cuisine. The eatery is merely a simple inside. The dining room is simply furnished with a few wooden tables, coral-colored columns to highlight the walls of pale blue and brilliant green, and a few small but colorful tapestries hanging next to green vines on the wall dividing the kitchen from the front of the home. All in all, this establishment adds a lot to the community of Tower Grove.