

# Everything Old Is New Again

## Take a Stroll Down the Memory Lane of Charlotte's Elizabeth Avenue

After two years of the dust and detours that revitalization brings and another two years of settling in, the two block strip of Elizabeth Avenue that leads up to the entrance of Charlotte's Novant Presbyterian Hospital is finally up and running and in full swing.

While most of us remember the inconvenience of the construction, many don't have any idea what they were doing. Now we can rest easy as all of the electrical cables, phone and power lines are underground; and the 100-year-old sewer and water system has been totally replaced, so we won't have to endure another upheaval of things for many years to come.

Not only did the project renovate, but it revitalized as well, taking the now tree-lined Avenue back to its roots. The CityLinx Gold Line streetcar started running again in July of 2015 – Charlotte's first running streetcar in 77 years – and the Elizabeth Avenue corridor is proud to call it their own.

In addition to the convenience of the streetcar, which, at this writing, runs a 1.5 mile loop from the hospital to Center City, the Avenue is now walker and bike friendly, and parking in surrounding lots is free. The old idea of a neighborhood gathering spot is new again.

While Elizabeth Avenue wasn't always considered the restaurant row it has become today, it has always been the hub for activity in the neighborhood.

### BACK IN THE DAY

As Charlotte was developing, this vibrant neighborhood found its beginnings in the late 1800s along what is now Elizabeth Avenue. By the 1920s retail began to develop, and the growing Elizabeth neighborhood became the city's second oldest streetcar suburb. By the late 1930s Charlotte history books tell us the strip was home to "the Hawthorne Pharmacy, Grier's Grocery, a branch Post Office, the Charlotte Flower Shop, a dentist, a beautician, a barber, Mrs. Mamie Bruns' Jack and Jill Kindergarten, and the city's first neighborhood movie theatre, the Visulite."

In the late 1940s Anderson's restaurant opened on the corner of Hawthorne Lane and Elizabeth Avenue and was to become a landmark for the next 60 years. Anderson's is still there today – now run by Gary Anderson, but as a catering company (and those famous pecan pies are available via mail order!). The original building is now home to the Elizabeth location of Viva Chicken, a Peruvian inspired restaurant specializing in Peruvian seasoned rotisserie chicken; but, Andersons' original sign can still be seen on the side of the building along Hawthorne Lane.

By the late 1980s, the Visulite had become a venue for live music and the Avenue home to a couple of art galleries, a graphics arts store, and the original Leo's Deli.

Through the 1990s it was pretty much status quo on Elizabeth – businesses came and then were gone, nicer restaurants and shopping venues were either

uptown or in the burbs, but plans were in the works for something big.

Things started happening, and people started paying attention to the neighborhood in the early 2000s when restaurateurs Bonnie Warford and Tricia Maddrey took the leap of faith and moved their much loved restaurant Carpe Diem into its third Charlotte location, making Elizabeth Avenue its new home in 2003. As predicted this third time has been a charm, and Chef Paul Ketterhagen works his culinary magic cooking new American cuisine in a decidedly Southern style.

Several years later, Anderson's full service restaurant closed its doors in November of 2006; but then Chef Trey Wilson's customshop opened on the corner across from Carpe Diem in March of 2007. Wilson describes customshop as a modern trattoria offering an eclectic mix of traditional and innovative American dishes inspired by Italian, French and Spanish cuisine.

Construction started on the city's Elizabeth Avenue Corridor project in December of 2007 and despite the must and dust, these restaurants and the historic Visulite Theatre have held fast, open for business through it all. The biggest part of the construction ended in 2009, and in the years since, 1900 Mexican Restaurant, Passion8, Earl's Grocery, The Spoke Easy, Nothing But Noodles and The Elizabeth Creamery right around the corner have all come to call Elizabeth Avenue home.

## Elizabeth Avenue's Restaurant Row – Taking it from the top:

### Anderson's

Mail Order Pie Service Breakfast and Lunch Catering  
1617 Elizabeth Ave., Charlotte, NC 28204  
704.734.9012  
Details at [AndersonDelivery.com](http://AndersonDelivery.com)

### Viva Chicken

Peruvian inspired restaurant specializing on Peruvian seasoned rotisserie chicken  
1617 Elizabeth Ave., Charlotte, NC 28204  
980.335.0176  
11 am - 9 pm daily  
[VivaChicken.com](http://VivaChicken.com)

### Earl's Grocery

A local eatery and niche grocery store owned by Carpe Diem's own Bonnie Warford and Tricia Maddrey. This, the second sibling to Carpe Diem, is a grocery store and deli stocked with everything you ever wanted and lots of cool stuff you never realized you just had to have. In the kitchen Chef Marc Jacksina is at the helm working recipes for everything from deli sandwiches to salad plates as well as all the great take and bake fare in the refrigerator and freezer cases. Eat in or take home.  
1609 Elizabeth Ave., Charlotte, NC 28204  
704.333.2757  
Monday - Friday: 8:30 am - 8:30 pm  
Saturday: 8:30 am - 6 pm  
Sunday: 10:30 am - 3:30 pm  
[EarlsGrocery.com](http://EarlsGrocery.com)

### Nothing But Noodles

A fast-casual restaurant with locations across the country serving made to order noodle and global pasta dishes all prepared to order.  
1605 Elizabeth Ave., Charlotte, NC 28204  
704.295.1466  
Sunday: 11 am - 2 pm  
Monday - Thursday: 11 am - 8 pm  
Friday - Saturday 11 am - 9 pm  
[NothingButNoodles.com](http://NothingButNoodles.com)

### customshop

Owner and Executive Chef Trey Wilson is committed to supporting local and organic farm ventures bringing in the freshest sustainable foods in the area. Weekly menu changes are tailored around the seasonal availability of produce and proteins.  
1601 Elizabeth Ave., Charlotte, NC 28204  
704.333.3396  
Sunday: 5 - 9 pm  
Monday - Thursday: 5 - 10 pm  
Friday and Saturday: 5 - 11 pm  
[customshopfood.com](http://customshopfood.com)

### Elizabeth Creamery

Family owned and operated with ice cream master Sun Jae Kim at the helm. Kim has been making ice cream since 1996. His belief is in simple honest flavors made fresh on location with the very best ingredients. Look for the classic flavors such as Mint Chocolate Chip and Butter Pecan as well as more eclectic options such as Smurf, Green Tea and a Charlotte crowd favorite, Ginger.  
1535 Elizabeth Ave., Charlotte, NC 28204,  
704.376.3426  
Tuesday - Sunday: Noon - 9 pm

### Carpe Diem

Owned by Bonnie Warford and Tricia Maddrey, Carpe Diem is Earl's Grocery's bigger sister and has the distinction of being the first "new" restaurant to relocate to the historic Elizabeth Avenue reinvented restaurant row. Rated as one of the top 10 Charlotte restaurants in Zagat's guide every year since 2005, chef Paul Ketterhagen heads up the talented team in the kitchen.  
1535 Elizabeth Ave., Charlotte NC 28204  
704.377.7976  
Monday - Thursday: 5 pm - 10 pm  
Friday - Saturday: 5 pm - 11 pm  
[Carpediemrestaurant.com](http://Carpediemrestaurant.com)

### Passion8

Owned by husband and wife team chef Luca Annunziata and Jessica Annunziata, this romantic dining destination features fresh local farm to fork fare prepared and served in the European tradition and spirit of hospitality – both on the plate and in the glass. Passionate about their food, their business and

their customers, the aim at Passion8 is to exceed your every expectation. Rated as one of the top 10 Charlotte restaurants in Zagat's guide since 2006.  
1523 Elizabeth Ave., Charlotte, NC, 28204  
704-910-3161  
Monday - Saturday: 5 pm - 10 pm  
Sunday: 11 am - 2:30 pm  
[thepassion8.com](http://thepassion8.com)

### The Spoke Easy

What's not to love – it's a bicycle shop with a bar! Bringing the joy back into cycling, one custom bicycle at a time.  
1523 Elizabeth Ave., Charlotte, NC 28204  
980.224.7681  
Shop Hours: Monday - Friday 11 am - 9 pm  
Saturday 10 am - 7 pm  
Bar Hours: 1 - 9 pm daily  
[TheSpokeEasyCLT.com](http://TheSpokeEasyCLT.com)

### 1900 Mexican Grille and Tequila Bar

Family owned bringing Charlotte a taste and feel of Mexico. Family-owned, bringing Charlotte a taste and feel of Mexican food and drink. Ole!  
1523 Elizabeth Ave., Charlotte, NC 28204  
704-334-4677  
Monday - Thursday: 11 am - 10 pm  
Friday - Saturday: 11 am - 11 pm  
Sunday: Noon - 9 pm  
[1900mexicangrill.com](http://1900mexicangrill.com)

The friendly faces behind the chef-driven ride up Elizabeth Avenue, from left: Chefs Paul Ketterhagen, Jose Garcia, Trey Wilson, Marc Jacksina, Sun Jae Kim and Luca Annunziata

