

CENTER CITY DIGEST

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTER CITY DISTRICT AND CENTRAL PHILADELPHIA DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

WINTER 2009

Ten Steps that Set the Stage for Recovery in 2010



A decade ago, author Malcolm Gladwell suggested that places are revitalized not just by major investments, but also by sustained attention to little details. Small, incremental enhancements in the public domain can build towards a *tipping point* and wholesale transformation.

The CCD focused first on *clean and safe* to restore confidence in Philadelphia's intimate, walkable grid. The subsequent installation of 2,100 pedestrian-scale light fixtures was a subtle, but cumulative change, reinforcing investments in arts, culture, housing and hospitality that transformed Center City from a 9-to-5 workplace to a 24-hour downtown.

With economists predicting slow recovery through 2010, municipal government wrestling with more wrenching contractions, and with financing unlikely for major new projects, we focus again on little details, particularly those that reinforce downtown's competitive strengths while supporting projects in the pipeline.



1) By January 2010, the CCD, SEPTA and PATCO will complete the installation of 39 of 107 new backlit pylons and directional signs at entrances to underground transit. The balance will follow throughout the year. Economic recovery surely will bring escalating fuel prices. Now is the time, as SEPTA draws down federal stimulus dollars for major upgrades, to accentuate this key competitive asset with small-scale customer enhancements, like the installation of real-time information at all transit stops downtown.



3) Also in spring, with support from The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the CCD will break ground in Sisters Cities park in front of the Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul at Logan Square, bringing new landscaping, a new fountain, cafe, children's discovery garden, boat pond and environmental education center, aimed at visitors and the growing number of downtown families with children.



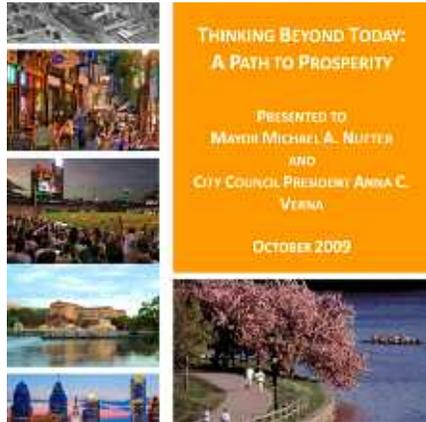
2) Next spring, the CCD will replace approximately 30 of the 800 street trees that we routinely maintain. Look too for the launch of a *Center City Street Tree Fund* to expand downtown's inventory of 9,600 curb-side trees that provide a cooling canopy of over 3 million square feet, equivalent to 53 football fields, between Spring Garden and South Streets.



4) About the same time, renovations should start on Chestnut Park, in the small pocket park on the north side of the 1700 block of Chestnut Street, where fountains, benches, landscaping and lighting will be restored through the generosity of the William Penn Foundation.



5) In May, CCD staff will attend the International Council of Shopping Centers national convention as part of a multi-year partnership with the Philadelphia Commerce Department, Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation, Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation and the Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau. The purpose: to tell the “New Philadelphia story” to national retailers who haven’t yet discovered downtown’s impressive demographics, and to position Center City for new investment as the economy rebounds (see story on page 4).



8) Sometime in 2010, proponents of economic growth may prevail within the Nutter Administration, unlocking the fiscal straight-jacket clamped on wage and business tax reductions last year. Just as tax abatements turned around decades of population decline, lowering barriers to business attraction and retention is the only way to put the city on a path of job and economic growth.

Download the Mayor’s Task Force Report at www.phila.gov/taxpolicy



10) CCD’s capstone project for 2010, centerpiece of an agenda to improve infrastructure and animate civic spaces in Center City, is the redesign of Dilworth Plaza on the west side of City Hall. In February, we learn if Philadelphia has secured a substantial federal transportation investment grant, enabling us to start construction by year end. The goal: a new plaza with green, shaded lawns, an outdoor café, and a programmable fountain that can be turned off for special events, concerts, outdoor markets, or winter ice-skating. With new sloping glass entrances to the underground concourse, animated at night by artist-designed lighting, Dilworth Plaza will also serve as a prominent gateway to Philadelphia’s extensive network of transit lines.

Paul R. Levy
President

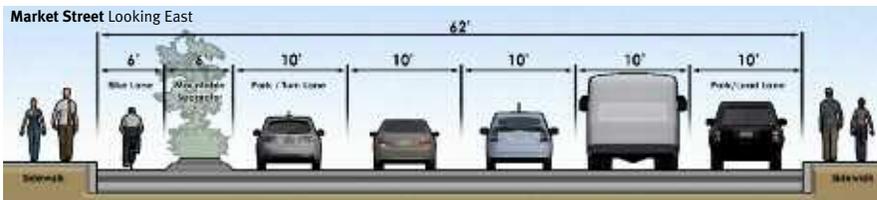
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6) Next spring, the CCD will install its 40,000th banner for one of the city’s cultural or civic institutions. Since 1993, the CCD has assisted more than 300 non-profit groups with design, approvals and installation at more than 1,000 highly-visible locations throughout Center City. This year, the CCD started recycling used banners into tote bags that are for sale by cultural institutions at their gift shops.



9) At the end of 2010, construction crews will put the finishing touches on the expansion of the Pennsylvania Convention Center, doubling the building’s capacity. Its new front door should have as transformative an effect on North Broad Street, as theaters and performance halls have had on the Avenue of the Arts.



7) Reflecting growing interest in green and sustainable forms of commuting and development, the CCD is working with major property owners on West Market Street and JFK Boulevard in partnership with the City Planning Commission and the Office of Transportation to transform these two auto-dominated streets, created through 1950s urban renewal, into pedestrian friendly, landscaped boulevards with new, buffered bicycle lanes.

Riding Out the Storm



Despite gloomy global news, 81% of Center City residents remain upbeat about the future of the downtown, based on more than 3,000 responses to a recent CCD survey. Confidence is grounded in part in a stable Philadelphia economy that experienced only a 3.17% loss in jobs since January 2007, compared to 3.23% for the region and 4.23% for the nation. Housing values in Philadelphia have held up as well, with prices down citywide only 8% since the market peak in 2005, as compared to a drop of 47% in Miami, 54% in Phoenix and 55% in Las Vegas.

But it is the convenience and walkability of Center City that remains its primary attraction. Residents overwhelmingly responded that they choose to live downtown because of the proximity to shopping, dining, entertainment, arts and cultural institutions and because they could find the type of housing they wanted in a safe community. Fifty-two percent of respondents work in Center City and more than half of those surveyed walk to work; 19% use public transit; only 12% commute by car. Seven percent of residents work from home and 6% bike to work, a figure that is expected to rise in the coming years as the City provides more infrastructure to support cyclists.

Driven by the 10-year tax abatement, Center City has added 12,121 new units of housing since 1997, helping push Philadelphia toward positive population growth for the first time in fifty years.

Within the traditional business district, new construction and the conversion of commercial buildings to residential use have animated streets that used to be dark and empty after 5pm. Outside of the core, new residential towers have been added, industrial lofts have been converted, deteriorated units renovated, and new townhouses have filled in vacant lots and transformed entire city blocks

Who is living in Center City? Nearly a third of survey respondents were 25 to 34 years old, while 39% were over 55. Although the majority of Center City households have no school-age children living with them, larger numbers of young professionals, especially those living in neighborhoods ringing the core downtown, are choosing to remain in Center City once their children reach school age.

When asked to identify those changes to their neighborhood that would most improve it as a place to live, Center City residents wanted improvements to the public environment. For those living in the core of the downtown, reducing the adverse impact of homeless and panhandlers was the top priority. For residents in the outer ring neighborhoods of Center City, who don't benefit from the CCD's cleaning services and where street homelessness is minimal, improving trash pick-up and eliminating vacant and deteriorated buildings ranked highest. Across all neighborhoods and household types, respondents cited reductions in the wage and business privilege taxes as the top improvements needed to enhance Center City as a place to work, start or expand a business.

The full report, *Residential Development 2009: Riding Out the Storm*, can be downloaded from www.CenterCityPhila.org.



The Best Holiday Shopping is Right Here in Center City

To help Center City rebound from the recession, Philadelphia has started to tell the “New Philadelphia story” to national retail developers, investors, site selection professionals, and to regional customers. A collaborative effort of the Center City District, the Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau, the Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation, the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation, and the City of Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Retail Marketing Alliance (PRMA) has created a strong, public-private retail attraction program to enhance the quality and mix of retail and entertainment offerings in Center City, which already hosts over 2,200 shops and restaurants.

At the center of the initiative is a new website, www.PhiladelphiaRetail.com, where successful Center City retailers and restaurateurs tell the Philadelphia story of new residents, more visitors and a downtown workforce with substantial disposable income. The site offers a searchable database of available retail space, listing brokers to contact. It



describes Center City’s diverse retail neighborhoods, and provides demographics, co-tenancy information, retail-related news, and a step-by-step guide on how to open a business in Philadelphia.

In addition to the website, PRMA has developed promotional materials, placed advertisements in trade publications, and will have a direct presence at national meetings of the International Council of Shopping Centers.

TreeVitalize



CCD received a grant from the TreeVitalize program to improve the irrigation and drainage for street trees along Chestnut Street. With the assistance of the Philadelphia Horticultural Society and Lager Raabe Landscape Architects, trenches were retrofitted to test which various soil types and depths fare best under urban conditions. More information may be found at CenterCityPhila.org/treevitalize.

Philadelphia Community Court Wins Caron Award

The Philadelphia Community Court was established seven years ago as a problem-solving court to address both the symptoms and causes of low-level, quality-of-life crimes. It was recently chosen as a recipient of the 2009 Community Leadership Award from Caron Treatment Centers, a non-profit provider of drug and alcohol addiction treatment (www.caron.org). The award recognizes the restorative justice approach practiced by both the Court's staff and the Philadelphia Police officers assigned to it, who work with defendants to address their underlying problems through behavioral treatment programs, community service sentencing and job placement, rather than jail time.

Community Court is a partnership of the City of Philadelphia, First Judicial District, District Attorney, Defender Association, Police Department, the Department of Behavioral Health, and the Center City District. Working with offenders from the 6th and 9th Police Districts in Center City, as well as eight other contiguous districts, the Court's



Caron awardees (left to right): Ofc. David Petroski, Ofc. Margaret Ingram, William Babcock, Cpl. Alisa Frederick, Jerry Philipp, Ofc. Vanessa Carter-Moragne, Jaritza Vasquez, Ofc. Frederick Todd, Leah Hatton, Kate Lunger, Michelle Cozzi

social service staff performed 1,711 drug and alcohol assessments; 11,328 clients attended classes; and 486 clients completed long-term treatment. In the last

seven years, Philadelphia Community Court defendants have performed over 407,000 hours of community service at an estimated value of \$2.3 million.

Crime Prevention Awards

For the fourteenth year, the Center City District presented its annual Crime Prevention Awards, honoring local and federal law enforcement officials, private security personnel, and its own community service representatives for their role in helping reduce major crime in Center City.

“From the officer who rushed into a burning building to rescue a 76-year old woman to those who nabbed a suspect wanted in the armed robberies of over 10 parking lots, our law enforcement officials perform heroic acts on a daily basis to help keep Center City safe for those who live, work or visit,” said CCD President & CEO Paul Levy, noting that **crime in downtown Philadelphia has decreased by 34% since 1998**. “We are pleased to have this opportunity to show our gratitude and let them know that their efforts are noticed.”

“A thriving and safe Center City is good business for all Philadelphians,” said



CSR Jacqueline Ashburn receives the award from CCD Crime Prevention Services Senior Director Stacy Irving and CCD President Paul Levy.

Police Commissioner Charles H. Ramsey. “On behalf of the entire Philadelphia Police Department, I extend my sincerest thanks and congratulations to all of our brave and dedicated law enforcement public servants.”

CSR Jacqueline Ashburn

The CCD's own Community Service Representative, Jacqueline Ashburn, also received an award for assisting in the apprehension of a serial shoplifter who was chased through busy noontime traffic by a store manager. Ashburn recounted her surprise when on her lunch break one day, she spotted two women running towards her at 18th and Chestnut Streets. “As it happens, one of the women was a shoplifting suspect with bags full of merchandise. When she saw me and a police officer, she reversed direction and I radioed dispatch.” With coordination between numerous CCD employees and the Philadelphia Police, the suspect was apprehended.

Born and raised in Philadelphia, CSR Ashburn joined the Center City District in 2000. Despite her success in stopping crime in Center City, what Jacqueline loves most about her job is the positive interaction she has with visitors to the city. “We make a difference, whether it's helping people find their way around or welcoming visitors from all over the world. I love being part of something that is my city.”

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Keep Center City Philadelphia thriving. Shop locally for gifts, fashions, food, and the unique charm that makes our city shine.

CenterCityPhila.org for events, maps and more.



Philadelphia Retail Marketing Alliance



The *Center City Digest* is a publication of the Center City District (CCD), a private-sector sponsored municipal authority that provides supplemental services that make Philadelphia's downtown clean, safe and attractive; and of Central Philadelphia Development Corporation (CPDC) with more than 50 years of private-sector commitment to the revitalization of Center City.