

## Center City District: 20 Years of Downtown Transformation

When the Center City District began operations on March 21, 1991, downtown Philadelphia was perceived as dirty and dangerous. While major crimes were not exceedingly high, the sense of disorder undermined the confidence of owners, investors, workers, visitors and residents. Whirlwinds of litter blew everywhere; glass from broken car windows glittered in gutters; graffiti was lathered on buildings and street furniture. Thirty-foot-high “cobra-head” fixtures spaced far apart created pools of light at night, exacerbating darkness on adjacent walkways.

tained commitment of the private sector, working in tandem with four successive mayors and four different governors, has made Center City cleaner, safer and more attractive. Serious crimes have been reduced by half; theft-from-auto cut by 75%. New landscaping, pedestrian-scale lighting and directional signs foster a welcoming day and evening environment. There are 213 thriving outdoor cafés. We’ve experienced a 95% increase in the number of hotel rooms that serve a state-of-the-art downtown convention center that has just doubled in size. We have

When the CCD was first proposed, there was not only skepticism about paying extra, there was concern that municipal services might be reduced, pulling the rug out from under our supplementary programs. But a strong partnership with the police and other agencies (detailed on page 6) has meant that the responsiveness of city services has actually increased.

In 1991, there was concern that we might sweep litter and crime into adjacent communities. But through contracts with bordering neighborhoods and commercial areas, and with SEPTA and the City for the underground concourse and rail stations, as detailed on page 5, the zone of *clean* and *safe* has extended far beyond our boundaries. Organizations similar to the CCD bring improvements to Old City, South Street, University City and to 11 other areas in Philadelphia.

Since 1997, CCD assessments have funded \$23.7 million in capital improvements for landscaping, lighting, signs and parks. That has leveraged more than \$32 million in foundation, state and federal funding that probably would not have come downtown. With upgrades to transit entrances, outlined on page 6, and improvements to Chestnut Park and Dilworth Plaza, the CCD will be leveraging another \$40 million in federal, state and local funding in the next two years. Investments yield dividends: The assessed value of the District has increased by 28% in the last decade.

## Center City today is a different downtown – a place transformed by two decades of investment that has diversified downtown’s economic base, employment and residential opportunities, as well as its cultural and leisure offerings.

Downtown was busy 9 to 5; security gates rolled down by 5:30 p.m. There were no outdoor cafés. Academy House was the only condominium. Baby strollers were rarely seen on residential streets. The Civic Center in University City hosted occasional trade shows and smaller conventions; the zoo was the city’s number-one visitor destination. The orchestra was struggling to fund-raise for a new home. The City was in the midst of both a recession and a fiscal crisis. In the 1970s, there was actually an ad campaign with the tag line: “Philadelphia is not as bad as Philadelphians say it is.” We were not only economically depressed, we were clinically depressed.

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enjoyed (and have the waistlines to prove it) a 328% increase in fine-dining restaurants.

Even when challenged by global recession, Center City has capitalized on its dense, compact and walkable form to attract more residents, students and visitors. Educational and health-care institutions have not only added jobs through the entire recession, they have attracted millions in federal research grants. Transit ridership is up. Center City’s population has increased 26% in the last two decades making it the third-largest nationally with 93,000 residents, 63% of whom walk, bike or take transit to work. The number of college-educated residents has increased by 27% since 1990, while downtown housing has appreciated by 328%. More than 17,000 children have been born to Center City families in the last decade. Strollers and school-age children are everywhere.



The 1992 *Make It a Night* campaign had modest objectives: to get retailers to stay open until 8 p.m. on Wednesdays. Today, arts, entertainment, hotels, restaurants and thousands of new condos and apartments animate sidewalks well into the evening hours, seven days a week. *Restaurant Week* has steadily increased the number of regional residents who come downtown. Major retail associations that did not exist two decades ago — Rittenhouse Row, Midtown Village and the Reading Terminal Market Corporation — stage their own promotional events. Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation and the Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau now market extensively domestically and overseas. Select Greater Philadelphia draws new businesses to the region.

Much still remains to be done: learning from other cities' more successful efforts to address panhandling and homelessness (see page 4); fostering a more competitive tax environment; creating a 21st-century transit system with real-time information; and filling in significant gaps that linger on East Chestnut and East Market Streets, and between downtown and University City.

But after 20 years, it's a different place because we heeded the simple injunction architect Charles Moore offered a half-century ago, "You've got to pay for the public life!"

**Paul R. Levy**  
President

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Improvements to Dilworth Plaza are part of a broader effort to improve access to transit and the appeal of downtown public places.

## The 2011 CCD Budget

The Center City District directly bills and collects assessments from all taxable properties within its boundaries. While the number of residential condos has continued to grow, the office sector generates 62% of all CCD assessment revenues; and the 200 largest properties pay 79% of District charges.

Charges are calculated by a formula established by State law and approved by City ordinance. An individual property's charge is set by determining the ratio of the assessed value of that property to the total taxable assessed value of all properties in the district. (For 2011, the total assessed value of all properties within the district is \$2,041,583,012.) That ratio is multiplied by the CCD's annual budget, which was approved by District property owners and by City Council. In 2011, the amount billed is \$15,325,000.

For example, if a property is assessed by the Office of Property Assessment at \$100,000, the CCD calculation for 2011 is as follows:  $\$100,000 \div \$2,041,583,012 = 0.0048981599\%$   $\times \$15,325,000 = \$750.64$ . (Total CCD assessed charge for 2011 would be \$750.64.)

Unlike the City of Philadelphia, the CCD does not grant the 10-year tax abatement to any type of property. All owners of residential condominiums purchased after September 13, 2005, are required to pay the CCD charge, just as every other owner of taxable property that benefits from District services does.

Assessment revenues are used exclusively to fund services and physical improvements within the boundaries of the CCD, with 76% devoted to keeping downtown clean, safe and attractive. The CCD also receives revenue from other sources, such as fee-for-service contracts, foundation, state and federal grants and management agreements.

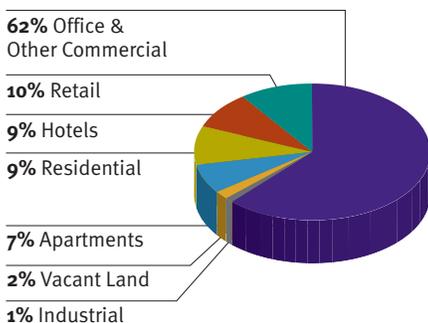
For more information about the many services the CCD provides to Center City property owners, visit [www.CenterCityPhila.org](http://www.CenterCityPhila.org).

## Property Statistics for 2011

- The top 15 properties pay 26% of total program cost, with an average charge of \$263,714.
- The top 200 properties pay 79% of total program cost, with an average charge of \$60,861.
- The lowest charge is \$1.20.
- The highest charge is \$435,973.
- The typical Market Street West office building pays \$172,011.
- The average hotel pays \$50,909.
- The average Chestnut Street property pays \$2,604.
- The average Walnut Street property pays \$2,604.
- The average retail property pays \$1,897.
- The average residential property charge is \$335, less than \$1.00 per day.
- The overall average charge for all properties is \$2,780.

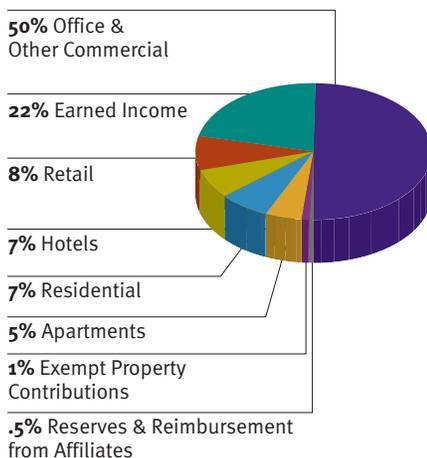
### 2011 Assessments by Property Category

**Total Assessment Billing:**  
**\$15,325,000**



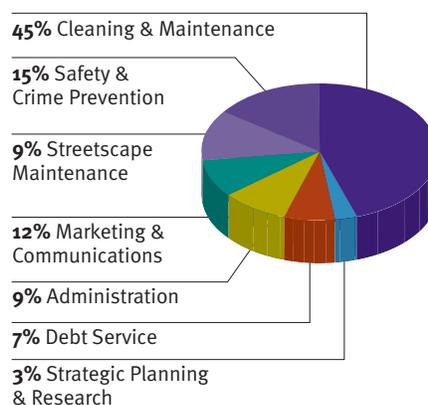
### 2011 Revenue From All Sources

**Total Revenue:**  
**\$18,739,470**



### Where the Money Goes, 2011

**2011 Operating Budget:**  
**\$18,739,470**



## Time to Change the Approach to the Homeless: Put Housing First



There are more cost-effective ways to help mentally-ill homeless people come off the streets, according to a recent study funded by the Scattergood Foundation and the CCD.

Official counts suggest that 6,700 people are homeless in Philadelphia on any given day; 3,250 in families and another 3,500 single adults. Nearly all take advantage of the City's shelter, transitional and permanent housing programs — funded at \$108 million per year. But 400 to 500 individuals refuse repeated offers of help and remain on the streets. Many suffer from drug and alcohol addiction; about a quarter have persistent mental illnesses that make them averse to being around and living with other people.

Traditional approaches to the “shelter-resistant” begin with an outreach team offering food, a shelter bed, as well as social and medical services. But the recent evaluation conducted by Fairmount Ventures, Inc. found that in 2009, outreach workers made 30,202 contacts with 4,506 unduplicated individuals, resulting in 1,509 people being placed into shelter and detoxification programs. Many were placed multiple times. Outreach workers thus visit individuals on the street seven times on average and succeed with only 33%.

Recognizing the limits of traditional outreach, and noting better rates of success in New York City, Denver, Seattle, San Diego, San Francisco, and Chicago, the Nutter Administration invited Pathways to Housing, a New York-based organization, to bring its *housing first* approach to Philadelphia in 2008.

The cornerstone of *housing first* is the direct placement of people who are homeless into permanent, rental housing without first requiring a period of sobriety or the acceptance of specific services after admittance. It seems counter-intuitive, but *being with others* is often the central problem for those with severe mental illness. Recognizing the debilitating physical and mental effects of remaining on the street, the approach seeks to initially reduce harm. Clients are then visited by case managers regularly and are offered appropriate medication or substance-abuse counseling.

Working from a list of 130 of the most resistant people living on the street, Pathways outreach workers succeeded between October 2008 and April 2010 in helping 92% move off the streets and into their own apartments without significant relapse. Not only was this dramatically more effective than traditional approaches, *housing first* reduced the substantial costs this troubled population incurs by recurring encounters with outreach teams, police, emergency rooms and temporary shelter. The Fairmount Ventures study concluded that the Pathways approach resulted in \$4,219 in costs avoided for each person it served.

To download the full report, visit [http://centercityphila.org/docs/Pathways\\_to\\_Housing.pdf](http://centercityphila.org/docs/Pathways_to_Housing.pdf)

## Panhandling

Many U.S. cities are adopting more proactive measures to deal with behavior that is intimidating for visitors, residents and workers in their downtowns.

Recognizing that the Constitution provides protection for different forms of speech, Dallas, Texas; Akron, Ohio; and the Florida cities of Orlando and Deland have either prohibited panhandling in their core business areas, or have limited the places and times that it is allowed. Atlantic City and Raleigh, North Carolina, have taken a different path, requiring panhandlers, just like newspaper stands, to apply for a permit that defines where and when a panhandler can operate.

## Center City District Staff Donates to Philabundance

On December 21, the Center City District staff delivered 278 pounds of food to Philabundance, following a holiday food drive organized by its employees.

Community Service Representatives (CSRs), sidewalk sweepers and office staff all contributed a variety of foods, from canned vegetables, fruits, soups and tuna, to peanut butter, couscous, oatmeal and ketchup.

“It’s really gratifying to see the generosity of our staff,” said the CCD’s Director of Human Resources, Tonimarie Nazzario, who helped organize the drive along with her colleague Bill Hughes, Senior Director of CSRs.

CSRs Lazette Sanchez and Terrance Keene helped pack the CCD van, and manager Tim Lilly delivered the holiday offerings.

“Though we’ve done projects for people outside Center City, this year we decided we wanted to stay close to home,” Nazzario said. “Philabundance serves the Philadelphia community and in these economically challenging times, we thought a food bank would be a good place to collectively target our energies and resources.”

Here are some links that give more detail about various initiatives in other cities.

### Raleigh, North Carolina

<http://www.raleighnc.gov/home/content/PubAffairs/Articles/Panhandling.html>

### Akron, Ohio

<http://www.downtownakron.com/clean-and-safe/safe/panhandling>

### DeLand, Florida

<http://www.news-journalonline.com/news/local/west-volusia/2011/01/07/officials-delands-strict-law-against-panhandling-effective.html>

### Dallas, Texas

<http://cityhallblog.dallasnews.com/archives/2009/01/downtown-dallas-to-experience.html>

### Atlantic City

<http://casinoconnectionac.com/issue/january-2011/article/a-helping-hand>

## Round-the-Clock Cleaning of the Concourse

Center City benefits from a public transit system that brings more than 300,000 workers, shoppers, students and visitors into downtown each weekday. SEPTA and PATCO riders benefit from the 3.5-mile underground concourse system that provides direct access from the regional rail stations, subway and trolley lines to major downtown office buildings, shopping centers and hotels. The network of walkways beneath South Broad Street, East and West Market Streets and JFK Boulevard also serves as a convenient, dry alternative for pedestrians during inclement weather.

For decades, however, the concourse was a place to be avoided. Over time, some portions had been closed, new sections were added, while many building connections had been altered. Most problematic, SEPTA and the City used different maintenance contractors to clean different areas of the concourse. The frequency of maintenance, hours and standards of cleanliness were far from uniform. The result was an unpleasant place filled with graffiti and the smell of urine, avoided by many.

In March 2006, SEPTA approached the CCD and the City's Public Property Commissioner to explore the consolidation of custodial responsibilities. The first order of business was to create an up-to-date map of the concourse identifying ownership, including sections in private hands. Once the CCD completed this exercise, two distinct contracts for custodial services were signed in 2007, one between the City of Philadelphia and the CCD for the concourse, and one between SEPTA and CCD for the two regional rail stations.

To maintain the same high-level standards underground as it did on Center City sidewalks, the CCD purchased new, state-of-the-art cleaning equipment, added new staff, standardized shifts and cleaning schedules, and provided professional, on-site supervision.

Now, a uniformed crew of 59 CCD cleaners and 14 supervisors keeps the underground and two regional rail stations litter- and graffiti-free.



## A Long Commitment to a Clean Center City

Two decades ago, Edward Vinluan had a conversation with his neighbor that, it is no exaggeration to say, changed his life. His neighbor mentioned that the Center City District was hiring and wondered if Vinluan might be interested.

On September 23, 1991, Vinluan showed up for his first day on the job. Now, almost 20 years later, Vinluan, 51, is still at work five days a week helping keep Center City clean.

Arriving in Center City each day on the R2 from Delaware County, Vinluan begins his day at 927 Filbert Street, where he picks up a lobby pan, broom and trash bag. Then he heads to his assigned area in the Jeweler's Row neighborhood. First stop is the SEPTA station at Eighth and Market, where he cleans the stairs and open areas.

He makes sure the sidewalks on his beat stay clean, and he's often interrupted with questions from people who need directions.

"As soon as they ask me where the Liberty Bell is, I know they're tourists," he said.

What he likes most about the job is the satisfaction of seeing the sidewalks looking neat and clean when he leaves a block.

"When I see an area that's really a mess, I'll look back and see it's clean, and I think it looks good. It's even better when it stays clean for a long time," he said.

Something else makes him feel good, too, when people say thank you. "A lot of people say that to me, thank you very much for what you're doing. You're keeping our city clean."

Once in a while, he'll spot a celebrity, Chase Utley or Morimoto, the Iron Chef, whose restaurant is in the area. That's nice, but even nicer are the local merchants who know him by name and greet him each day.

"How are you, Ed?" they call out, and Ed answers them by name.



Usually Ed is able to tell them that he is doing quite well, especially if the sidewalks are clean, the tourists can find their way, and the wind isn't blowing too hard.

## Monitoring the Quality of the Public Environment

When the Center City District began operating in 1991, it focused initially on just cleanliness and public safety. But given the high visibility of CCD personnel on the street, many property owners, businesses and residents soon started to call with requests to address conditions in the public environment that went far beyond our authority or resources.

Starting in 1993, CCD's Community Service Representatives (CSRs) began routinely to record on paper items like defective streetlights, overflowing trash dumpsters, and blatant, visible code violations. Initially, a staff person took these lists and began calling contacts in the appropriate public agency for resolution. Soon calls were replaced by faxes and then, gradually, we transitioned to email

But in 2002, the CCD took a quantum leap, collecting and communicating this data using hand-held computers equipped with a data system developed by the Fund for the City of New York and modified to meet the needs of Philadelphia. Eighty separate streetscape elements with 500 different possible conditions (street light out, graffiti on light pole, light pole damaged, etc.) are all entered into a computerized collection system and coded to the responsible organization. Two years later, working with

Environment Systems Research Institute, the CCD developed its own data system with custom field mapping and a data collection software application that tracks conditions of public spaces within CCD's boundaries.

Now, every other month, six specially trained CSRs survey Center City on designated routes looking for problematic conditions. Items are entered into the handheld devices; the data is downloaded after each survey, organized both geographically and by the agency or City department with responsibilities for upkeep of the public domain. Written reports are compiled bi-monthly and referred to the appropriate agency for response, with immediate alerts sent on urgent issues.

In 2006, the CCD augmented this initiative by formally establishing the Public Spaces Collaborative, a partnership of nearly 20 agencies that meets every other month to discuss common issues and learn about specific efforts underway that reinforce public safety and the appearance of the public environment. This sharing of information, face-to-face, has resulted in more effective and rapid resolutions of public space challenges and, importantly, in more positive communication across all organizations.



## Highlighting Entrances to Underground Transit

There are 108 entrances to Center City's underground transit system and the 3.5-mile pedestrian concourse. Some entrances are on the sides of buildings, some have dedicated head houses, others are open stairways with multiple designs.

To create greater visibility and uniformity, the Central Philadelphia Transportation Management Association, a subsidiary of CPDC, worked in partnership with SEPTA and PATCO to create a distinctive illuminated icon for transit, as well as transit route and directional signs, and underground concourse maps for each entrance. Installation began in 2008 and to date, graphics have been installed at 60 of 108 portals.

The design for the easily recognized green signs came from Joel Katz Design and was funded by a generous grant from the William Penn Foundation. The fabrication and installation has been financed in part by a grant from the U.S. Federal Highway Administration through PennDOT and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission. Additional generous contributions have come from SEPTA, PATCO, PREIT, Thomas Jefferson University and Kennedy Wilson.

The next installations will take place in late April and the project is expected to be finished by the end of this year.



J.B. Abbott

## Improvements to Chestnut Park

After a year of design and construction, the arrival of spring brings with it a newly renovated Chestnut Park on the 1700 block of Chestnut Street.

The park was proposed by Dorothy Haas and the William Penn Foundation after she visited Paley Park in Manhattan more than 30 years ago. Originally designed by landscape architect John Collins, Chestnut Park was opened in 1981 and received an American Society of Landscape Architects award in 1983. The park design was augmented by sculpted iron gates, created by artist Christopher T. Ray, featuring trees and wildlife indigenous to the Wissahickon and Delaware Valleys.

In early 2010, park ownership was transferred from the PenJerDel Foundation to the Center City District. Renovations to the park, once again generously supported by the William Penn Foundation, include the creation of a new woven metal gate, designed by the architecture firm KieranTimberlake, that moves the entrance out to the building line, elimi-

nating an unsafe alcove and making the park more visible from Chestnut Street. The new gate was designed to complement Ray's original gates, which have been fully restored as part of the renovation. New lighting, designed by The Lighting Practice, highlights the native vegetation, sculptural gates and the renovated fountain.

Wolfe Scott Associates, Inc. supervised the construction with the assistance of Kreilick Conservation, who took charge of the work on the Christopher T. Ray gates. The new woven metal fence was fabricated by Amuneal Manufacturing Corp. Fountain renovations are by Outerspaces.

The park will be formally rededicated on April 20.

## Spring Arrives at Café Cret



Colorful blooms are harbingers of spring at the Center City District's Cappricio at Café Cret at 16th Street and the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. The café is open seven days a week and offers espresso, paninis, and salads, as well as beautiful views of the Parkway.



## Banner Bags on Sale at Free Library's Philadelphia Book Festival

Center City District banners that hung in the Rittenhouse Square area heralding the 2009 Philadelphia Book Festival have been repurposed and are now convenient, eco-friendly tote bags that will be on sale at this year's Festival to benefit the Library.

The banners were laundered by Philacor, an inmate-training program administered by the Philadelphia Prison System where inmates learn skills that help them re-enter the workforce upon their release. From Philacor, they made their way to Baker Industries in Kensington, a work-rehabilitation program, where the banners were sewn into colorful totes.

The Free Library's Fifth Annual Philadelphia Book Festival has been expanded, and this year runs Monday through Saturday, April 11 to 16. Headliners include Tina Fey and Garrison Keillor. To find out more about the Philadelphia Book Festival, please visit [freelibrary.org/festival](http://freelibrary.org/festival), or call 215.567.4341.

# CENTER CITY DIGEST

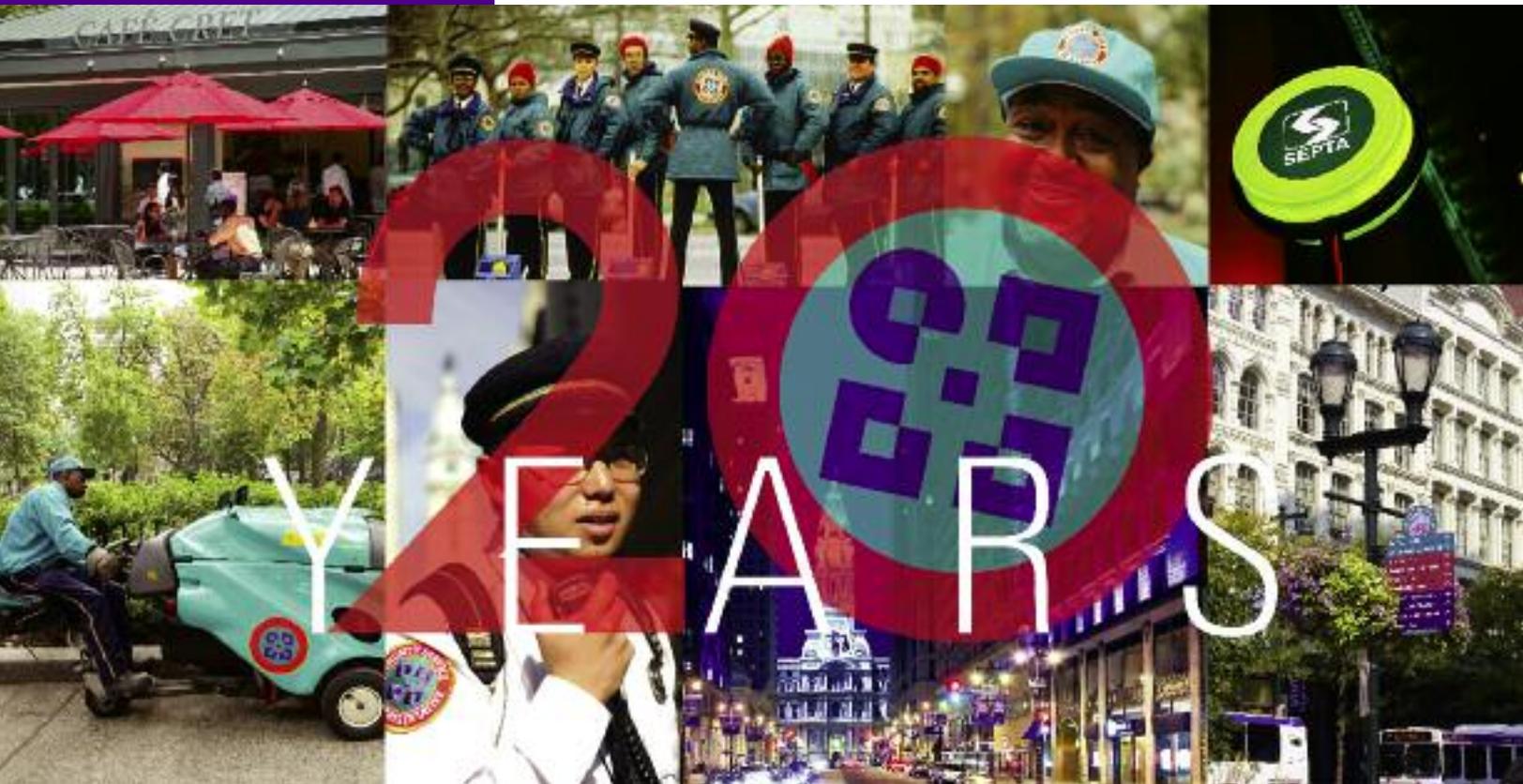
SPRING 2011

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