

## With Street Homelessness on the Rise, New Strategies are Needed

The number of people sleeping on the streets, in the parks and alleyways of Center City is on the rise. Significant improvements in the late 1990s reduced the average annual number of people living on the street downtown to just 171 in 2000. Since then, it has more than doubled, peaking at 550 last August.

Most visible are the panhandlers and scores of individuals who are being fed weekly on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway by religious and other groups coming from outside the city. At the same time, the number of people within city-funded shelters is up as well.<sup>1</sup>

Among many reactions is Mayor Street's very positive directive for a comprehensive review of existing programs and the creation of a special task force, of which the CCD is a member. This group has been challenged to propose new, creative responses for hard-to-reach individuals suffering from mental health and drug and alcohol problems.

*Recent history suggests that no approach to the shelter-resistant will succeed unless it addresses both the availability of specialized facilities for this troubled population and the enforcement of rules on the street that discourage health-threatening, anti-social behavior.*

### Cyclical Problems

Since the CCD first engaged this issue in 1992, there have been several cycles in

which on-street homelessness increased or waned due to macro factors: the health of the regional economy, availability of federal and state funding for services, and the destructive presence of addictive drugs such as crack-cocaine or heroin on city streets. At the same time other factors are completely within local control: the quantity and quality of facilities for the homeless, the availability of free food on the streets of Center City, and the policies of the City of Philadelphia regarding begging and sleeping on the sidewalks or in parks downtown.

In the 1990s, dramatic progress was made locally by centralizing the management of services, transforming shelters from warehouses to places of recovery providing social and medical assistance, and increasing the supply of transitional and permanent housing. An expanding regional economy and federal programs made the task far easier as city spending on homelessness increased from \$47 million to over \$90 million each year. At the same time, a specially trained police team assisted with outreach and enforced standards of public conduct, discouraging aggressive panhandling, disorderly conduct, and obstruction of the walkways.

### Center City's Homeless

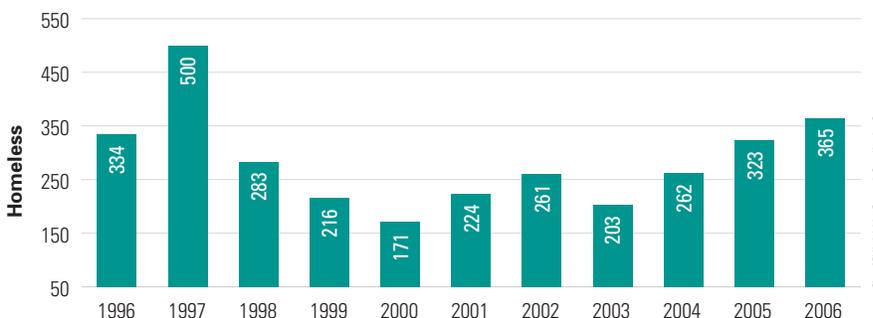
The overwhelming majority of Philadelphia's homeless are never seen downtown. They are families suffering economic hardship, individuals lacking

the skills or readiness for work, or abused women — all of whom quickly avail themselves and their children of help. Even a large number of those in Center City willingly come off the streets.

Over the last decade CCD outreach teams have partnered with city outreach teams and have successfully engaged scores of individuals, connecting them with services. Our sidewalk cleaning division partnered with a half-dozen training providers and, since 1996, has provided work experience for over 300 individuals who have made the transition from welfare to work and from homeless recovery programs to full-time employment. Twenty percent of the CCD's full-time, unionized sidewalk cleaning employees are graduates of these training programs.

But despite this progress, downtown business owners, workers, visitors and residents have had to contend with a handful of shelter-resistant individuals

STREET HOMELESSNESS IN CENTER CITY, 1996–2006\*



\* Annual average across all seasons



The Center City District has provided training and job opportunities for hundreds of disadvantaged workers and formerly homeless individuals.

who engage in anti-social behavior, including public urination and defecation, loud and abusive language and active drug use. These behaviors, which no residential community in Philadelphia tolerates, are possible in the central business district because it is everyone's — and therefore no-one's — neighborhood. Many of the individuals on the streets of Center City are individuals who have been forced out of their own families and neighborhoods or have been discharged from shelters for precisely the disruptive behavior that causes concern on the sidewalks of Center City.<sup>2</sup>

Rather than increase compassion and concern for other needy people in Philadelphia, their behavior downtown creates a misleading and distorted image of homelessness that undermines public support for needed programs and services. Studies conducted by the University of Pennsylvania also document that the mortality rate among chronic homeless is four times greater than their non-homeless peers. So it is clearly in the self-interest of the individuals on the street, as well as in the broader civic interest, to help connect them quickly to supportive services in indoor facilities.<sup>3</sup>

### **New Approaches**

By definition, the shelter-resistant are hard to reach. The Outreach Coordination Center, directed by Sister Mary Scullion, reports only a 35% to 40% success rate in persuading these individuals to come inside. Because they need far more than a bed or a meal, repeated engagement is necessary. To increase success, many good ideas are being considered by Mayor Street's task force:

- Increase the number of outreach teams;
- Add professionally trained behavioral health, psychiatric, drug and alcohol professionals to outreach teams;
- Increase permanent housing with supportive services for individuals suffering from mental health and drug and alcohol issues;
- Pair out-of-town church groups with same denomination Philadelphia churches and encourage them to feed the homeless inside where they might connect to services;
- Relocate and reconfigure the Ridge Avenue men's shelter so off-street

options are more intimate in scale and specialized in focus to increase the willingness of individuals to come off the street.

### **Downtown "Drop-In" or Engagement Centers**

Other ideas under consideration are questionable. For almost a decade, service providers have experimented with "low demand" facilities, rechristened now as "engagement centers." The theory behind them has merit. The success rate of existing shelters improved when the city imposed standards of conduct and prohibited active drug use. But a by-product was the eviction of the most troublesome back to the street. Advocates now propose new, 24-hour drop-in centers "to provide a sense of community and safety for people who are experiencing street homelessness that may have nowhere else to go." They suggest locations in the heart of Center City and Old City.

Apart from business reasons for rejecting this concept, research conducted for the city by Dr. Dennis Culhane in the mid-1990s documented the overwhelming number of homeless people came from just a handful of impoverished communities in the city. This analysis led to a recommendation to concentrate more resources on homeless prevention in the originating neighborhoods where people could reconnect with local family, social and religious networks rather than expanding impersonal public bureaucracies downtown.

### **Enforcing Standards of Public Behavior**

In 1998, after much debate, City Council, under President John Street's leadership, approved and Mayor Rendell signed a bill entitled: "Public Spaces: Prohibited Conduct." Section 10-611 Sidewalk Behavior can be read online at <http://municipalcodes.lexisnexis.com/codes/philadelphia>. The bill sought to "prohibit various forms of inappropriate conduct in public places, including various obstructions of the public sidewalk; various forms of aggressive conduct, including aggressive solicitation; and various forms of clutter on the public right of way." The preamble explicitly counterposed the public's "right to safe, unobstructed passage and use of the public sidewalk" with two limiting provisos: (1) "no person should be subject to discrimination of any kind, based on

race, religion, gender, economic status or otherwise, in his or her use of the public sidewalk;" and (2) "any enforcement efforts...must be conducted in a humane manner with all due process..." with particular sensitivity shown to those with mental illness or social ailments.

But implementation guidelines and all subsequent directives have sharply curtailed the use of public authority, mandating oral and written notices and requiring police to call civilian, social service outreach teams, who must concur before officers can use their authority.

One practical effect of this process of oral and written notices is that homeless encampments simply relocate around the corner, requiring the process to start over again.

Contrast this with *Code Blue/Red* procedures that advocates have concurred with for over a decade: in very cold or hot weather, when lives are threatened, people are moved involuntarily from the street. Once inside, no one is detained against their will. But by putting the mentally ill and addicted in direct contact with experienced professionals, it increases the likelihood they will accept help and break the cycle of decline. As a community we have concurred that no one should die overnight on the streets. The same logic should apply to the process of slow, chronic decline.

### **Making Use of Community Court**

One option under review is to make expanded use of Philadelphia's highly successful Community Court ([www.CenterCityPhila.org/programs/community\\_court.aspx](http://www.CenterCityPhila.org/programs/community_court.aspx)). The Court focuses on quality-of-life offenses: theft from auto, retail theft, minor drug possession, vandalism and prostitution. It emphasizes community service sentences and behavioral treatment programs, rather than jail time, for low-level offenses. Through on-site social services, it helps to cut repeat offenses by addressing the defendants' underlying social or medical needs. Seventy percent of the individuals who are currently arrested for Community Court eligible offenses have drug and alcohol problems; an overlapping 30% show evidence of mental disorders. Recovery rates have been high.

By making the Court the venue to process violations of the sidewalk behavior bill, an effective new tool could be added to the outreach process. Individuals would be

brought quickly to a problem-solving court and, by accepting and completing treatment, they would get the help they need and nothing would appear on a criminal record.

### Seeking a Balanced Approach

There are many details to work through and many perspectives to balance, if we are to make progress again on this challenging issue. But in 1997 at the height of the last upsurge in homelessness we noted something that is equally true today: “Homeless people need help. But being homeless is not an excuse for urinating and defecating on the street. Being homeless is tragic, but it is not an excuse for intimidating people or breaking the law. Fundamentally, it is demeaning to those who are homeless and struggling to

recover to say that just because they have suffered economic hardship, they are unable to conduct themselves according to the same standards of public behavior as the rest of us.”

Homeless people have just as much right as corporate executives to be on the sidewalks and parks of Center City. But with rights come responsibilities for everyone to adhere to basic standards of public conduct. That is the basis for a civilized society, a compassionate community and a competitive city.

**Paul R. Levy**  
President

[plevy@centercityphila.org](mailto:plevy@centercityphila.org)



The CCD's 'Real Change' campaign reminds well-meaning pedestrians how they can really help panhandlers and the homeless.

- 1 In 2005, 15,000 unduplicated individuals used and passed through the city's shelter system: 63% were single individuals, 13% were heads of households, 23% were children. A snapshot of one night, January 25, 2006, counted 3,079 individuals living in city-funded shelters and 313 people on the street. Some people experience brief episodes of homelessness; others, recurring episodes and still others are long-term chronically homeless. (Source: City of Philadelphia)
- 2 The foremost reason people cite when they enter city shelters is “evicted from a friend or relative's dwelling.” “Insufficient resources” and “drug and alcohol issues” are most cited as secondary causes. (Source: City of Philadelphia)
- 3 Among the chronically homeless, 52% have received publicly funded mental health services and 41% have received substance abuse treatment (Source: City of Philadelphia)

## This Year, Give “Real Change”

This time of year, well-meaning pedestrians are tempted to give handouts to panhandlers on Center City streets.

But instead of giving loose change, which usually feeds drug or alcohol addictions, the Center City District encourages contributions to an appropriate charity, social service agency or to the Center City District Foundation, which provides job opportunities for disadvantaged individuals and supports Philadelphia Community Court.

Since the early 1990s, CCD has reminded Philadelphians: “The more you give change, the more things will stay the same. So please stop giving to panhandlers and stop feeling guilty about it.”

Through its Real Change campaign, CCD has worked to educate pedestrians to do the truly compassionate thing when approached by a panhandler, which is to provide information about needed services, while saving their loose change for

a charitable organization that can make a real difference.

The CCD's community service representatives periodically distribute cards that pedestrians are encouraged to give to panhandlers, listing where food, shelter and healthcare services are available within a short distance of Center City.

The CCD also maintains a specially trained Homeless Outreach Team, which, along with the City of Philadelphia's Outreach Coordination Center and the Philadelphia Police Department's Special Service Detail, works with the homeless population every day to encourage them to take advantage of available shelter and services.

And the CCD is a key supporter of the Philadelphia Community Court, which assists those who commit petty offenses (an estimated 70% of Community Court defendants have an addiction problem and 33% of the clients seen by the Court

nurse are homeless) with a litany of behavioral treatment programs and social services, including housing referrals, drug treatment, anger management, health care, job training and more.

This holiday season, to make a *meaningful* contribution that truly helps the homeless, please consider making a contribution to the charity of your choice. Or support Community Court with a tax-deductible contribution to:

**Center City District Foundation**  
660 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19106

## Transit: Another Year, Another Crisis

2006 comes to a close without success in efforts to secure dedicated and sufficient funding for Pennsylvania's transit systems, highways and bridges.

The Governor's Transportation Funding and Reform Commission (TFRC) did a thorough job of both delineating the transportation crisis that is occurring across the Commonwealth and suggesting reasonable solutions for funding and governance of transit, highways and bridges. (To view the TFRC's final report, visit [www.dot.state.pa.us/tfrc](http://www.dot.state.pa.us/tfrc).)

But despite lobbying by Philadelphia business and civic groups, state lawmakers deferred the matter to the new legislature that will convene in 2007. The issue will be considered in the spring as only one component of the state's complex budget deliberations.

Since SEPTA approved an unbalanced budget for the fiscal year July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2007, stopgap-funding measures by the governor or the legislature are necessary. Otherwise, SEPTA again will need to sound its annual warnings and hold public hearings on fare increases and service cuts that would take effect in early 2007.

Other cities are grappling with similar issues, but many have moved beyond the issue of funding basic service and infras-

tructure to focus instead on broader regional efforts to reduce congestion and encourage smart growth.

The Chicago metro area has embarked on the "Moving Beyond Congestion Project." Like Philadelphia, Chicago's huge regional transit system is aging and struggles with capital and operating budget shortfalls. But Chicago has a clear vision for a world-class public transportation system and is working towards bipartisan, regionwide consensus for transit modernization. (To learn more, visit [www.MovingBeyondCongestion.org](http://www.MovingBeyondCongestion.org))

In Pennsylvania, TFRC concluded, "a comprehensive change ... is required ... The people of Pennsylvania can invest more to correct years of insufficient funding, inadequate business practices and instability in transportation, or do nothing and watch transportation and all of its attendant benefits to our way of life erode further."

In 2007 we will get another chance to make this choice.

## Free Downtown Zone, Comfortable Vehicles, Technology Add Up to Success in Portland

**By Alan Greenberger  
Principal, MGA Partners, Architects**

Portland, Oregon has done some remarkable things to enhance its downtown and region. One of the most interesting is the "Fareless Square" transit policy, providing a free downtown transit zone to increase ridership and decrease pollution.

Nearly 50% of commuters to downtown Portland now arrive by transit. Free and frequent transit within downtown, along with Portland's walkable grid, make it easy to get around without a car. The transit agency employs an honor system for those traveling beyond the free zone. Enforced by the sheriff's department, the honor system carries with it severe fines for non-compliance. While there is inevitably some cheating, it is more than offset by increased ridership by those coming from throughout the region.

Portland has also invested in the most modern, well-designed streetcars and light rail anywhere in the country. The streetcars — Czech built — are quiet and spacious. Their platforms are at curb height, making access for the handicapped and those with strollers and bicycles easy. Light rail — the equivalent of our subway — is also on the street. These larger vehicles are equally well designed. They interact with pedestrians surprisingly well, though naturally they proceed at much slower speeds. The buses are buses: too noisy, high platforms, no rear windows.

Information on transit in Portland is extensive. In the downtown, large transit shelters provide complete, readable information on the route, the interconnections and the frequency. Best of all, each vehicle in the system is tracked by a GPS system. Through your cell phone, you can call an information number, press in your station number (all prominently posted) and find out exactly when the next vehicle will show up.

This experience reminded me that a well-funded and progressive transit system can make urban life dramatically better.



Portland, Oregon's comprehensible signs, state-of-the-art technology and well-designed vehicles add up to a customer-focused transit system that is an asset to urban life.

# Honoring Civilians and Law Enforcers at the 11th annual CCD Crime Prevention Awards

The Center City District presented its 11th annual Crime Prevention Awards in October, honoring law enforcers, private-sector security personnel, civilians and its own uniformed community service representatives for their exemplary work in fighting crime.

“Once again, we are proud to honor individuals whose courage and commitment to public safety contribute to the quality of life in Center City Philadelphia. These brave law enforcers and citizen heroes make our streets safer, and make it possible for Center City to thrive as a lively 24/7 downtown for residents, visitors and workers,” said CCD President Paul R. Levy.

The Hon. Louis J. Prezenza, president judge, Philadelphia Municipal Court, and Deputy Police Commissioner Patricia Georgio-Fox were among the speakers at the awards luncheon.

## The 2006 Center City Crime Prevention Awardees are:

**Sixth Police District Officers Gary Kustra and David Blackburn**, who together apprehended a suspect sought in a string of gunpoint robberies.

**Ninth Police District Officer James Godfrey and Sixth Police District Officer James Minnis**, whose careful work and good instincts led to the capture and arrest of a serial car thief who turned out to be a rape suspect.

**Center City District Police Substation Sgt. Thomas Macartney; CCD Community Service Representative (CSR) Manager Thomas Rose, CSRs Kimberly Maw and Robert Gettis; AEI Digital/Ewing Cole**, whose collaboration

resulted in the speedy apprehension of a suspect who minutes earlier had mugged an elderly man.

**Center City District Police Substation Officers Michael Walker and Thomas Fiorino** who chased and apprehended a bank robbery suspect in the underground concourse.

**Joseph Liciardello, Counter-Terrorism Intelligence Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of Pennsylvania**, who has played a key role in helping protect against the threat of terrorism by bringing together hundreds of law enforcement agencies for information sharing, planning, training and educational programs.

**SEPTA Transit Police Department Officers Richard Cavallaro, Christopher Lafferty, Nicholas Natale and James Zuggi** who apprehended a trio of thugs in the midst of rush-hour crime spree.

**US Secret Service Special Agent Joshua McDowell and Assistant U.S. Attorney Sarah Grieb** who successfully investigated and prosecuted a multi-million-dollar identity-theft ring.

**Philadelphia Police Department Detective Joseph Rovnan, Detective Sean Brennan, and Walter Blichaz; FBI Special Agents Einar Gustafson and John Loudon; Sgt. James Wolfson and Alexander Kadysh, Wackenhut Corporation; John W. Hopf, Jeffrey Pascale and Donald Reed, National Park Service; Bernadette McKeon, U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of Pennsylvania**, who collaborated on the long investigation leading to the arrest and prosecution of a man who made a series of bomb threats.

**Santo Montecalvo of the Citizens Crime Commission of the Delaware Valley**, whose tipline has generated thousands of leads and helped solve many crimes.

**Center City resident Ellis Reeder and his dog, Remington**, who trailed a burglary suspect and gave important information leading to an arrest and conviction.



Deputy Commissioner Patricia Georgio-Fox



Philadelphia Police Officers Godfrey and Minnis

## Center City Restaurant Week, January 28–February 2

Save the dates for the next **Center City Restaurant Week**, January 28 – February 2, 2007. More than 100 restaurants will once again offer three courses for only \$30. (Price does not include alcohol, tax or gratuity.) And you can park for \$8.50 or less at over 40 participating parking facilities in Center City with a voucher from a participating restaurant.

Eleven new restaurants have joined Center City Restaurant Week since the last event: 1225 Raw Sushi & Sake Lounge, CoCo's Restaurant, La Fontana

Della Citta, Mantra, Monk's Café, Ms. Tootsie's Restaurant Bar & Lounge, Sfizzio Restaurant, The Oceanaire Seafood Room, Tiramisu, XIX – Restaurant and Xochitl.

The fall's Center City Restaurant Week presented by Mercedes-Benz generated over \$4.3 million in sales for participating restaurants, who served more than 86,500 diners.

The Center City District and Rittenhouse Row produce Center City Restaurant Week. Sponsors include: American

Express, PCVB, Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board, Plymouth English Gin, Level Vodka, Rittenhouse Row, Philadelphia Parking Authority, Philadelphia Parking Association, *PW*, *Metro*, *Where Magazine*, *Philadelphia Magazine*, *Philadelphia Sunday Sun* and Philly 106.1.

For full information about the next Restaurant Week, including menus and online reservations, visit [www.CenterCityPhila.org](http://www.CenterCityPhila.org).

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Central Philadelphia  
Development Corporation  
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## Give the Gift of Center City: The Center City Gift Card



This holiday season, give the one gift that opens doors throughout Center City. The new Center City Gift Card can be used at thousands of Center City stores, restaurants, cafes, theaters, galleries — anywhere Visa® debit is accepted.

The Center City Gift Card is a new project of the Center City District, in partnership with TD Banknorth, providing an easy way for shoppers, visitors and residents to demonstrate their support and enjoy the

extensive retail, dining, cultural and entertainment opportunities available downtown. The stylish card comes in its own gift envelope and is available for year-round gift giving and self-indulgences.

In the spirit of the season, CCD media partners including *City Paper*, *Metro*, *Philadelphia Style Magazine* and *Philly 106.1* will each give away cards through their own promotions. And **CCD is sponsoring an online contest, with the grand prize a \$250 Center City gift card. To enter, fill out the form on [www.centercityphila.org/giftcard](http://www.centercityphila.org/giftcard) by midnight, December 31.**

In addition, select downtown retailers, restaurants and others are making special offers for customers using the gift card. Visit [www.centercityphila.org/giftcard](http://www.centercityphila.org/giftcard) to see what Naked Chocolate Café, Les

Castagne, The Melting Pot and Blue Cross River Rink at Penn's Landing are currently offering and to stay abreast of new offers.

**The Center City Gift Card is available at these TD Banknorth branches, conveniently located throughout the downtown:**

- 1601 Market St.
- 1607 Walnut St.
- 1845 Walnut St.
- 5th and Chestnut
- 1100 Walnut St.

The cards sell for face value, plus a \$3.50 service charge. Non-TD Banknorth customers need to pay in cash. For larger amounts, customers can purchase cards by certified check or wire transfer; please see a banking representative for details.

**For more information about the new Center City Gift Card, go to [www.CenterCityPhila.org/giftcard](http://www.CenterCityPhila.org/giftcard)**

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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. **Editor:** Elise Vider **Designer:** Amy Yenchik