



CENTER CITY: PLANNING FOR GROWTH 2007-2012



Prepared by
Center City District &
Central Philadelphia Development Corporation
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In preparation for celebrating the 50th anniversary of Central Philadelphia Development Corporation (CPDC) in 2006, we undertook a major initiative to document the history of this private-sector leadership organization that was formed in 1956 as Old Philadelphia Development Corporation (OPDC). Formed at a time when all older American cities were in serious decline, OPDC/CPDC partnered with local government to carry out an ambitious program of renewal in Center City. The remarkable success that was sparked by those efforts is documented in six videos that we created together with WHYY television. Those videos can be downloaded from our Web site at www.CenterCityPhila.org.

At the same time, the Center City District retained seven design firms to look forward to what Center City could become in the next five years. Starting from the data and trend analysis we have developed in the last 10 years in preparation for our annual *State of Center City* report, we challenged our designers to think both about small-scale, incremental improvements and about more ambitious investments that could help surmount the current challenges confronting Center City.

These recommendations were initially summarized in PowerPoint presentations that were discussed at six public forums in 2006. They now appear in text form as part of this document, focusing on four districts: East Market Street, West Market Street and JFK Boulevard, Broad Street and City Hall and the Benjamin Franklin Parkway.

The efforts to look back and to look forward come together in two companion documents: **State of Center City: 2007** is a candid look at strengths and weaknesses and a benchmarking effort to remind us how far we have come and how far we still need to go to be competitive with peer cities. This document, **Center City: Planning for Growth, 2007-2012**, offers proposals for investment and developments that can occur during the first term of Philadelphia's next mayor. It also contains a summary of prior plans for Center City from the last 60 years, beginning with the *Better Philadelphia Exhibition* of 1947.

The recommendations contained in this document are not meant as end-state plans, but rather suggestions that should be formally considered, revised and adopted by the next mayor as a flexible framework for growth. As suggested in the first chapter, *Why a New Plan*, Philadelphia is at a historic crossroads. Either we capitalize on the success of the last 16 years and grow as a significant regional and global economic force, or we succumb to divisiveness and drift downward on a path of declining jobs and lost opportunities.

In the last decade, as Philadelphia emerged from fiscal distress and as development sprouted everywhere, many have sought a stronger role for planning. Lamenting the diminished influence of the Philadelphia City Planning Commission, they hark back to a "golden age" in the 1950s and 1960s, although not to the style and urban design values of that era.



One of the great strengths of Center City is a compact, high-density business district surrounded by easily accessible and walkable residential neighborhoods. The boundaries of the Center City District (solid line) correspond to the city's central business district. Central Philadelphia Development Corporation (dashed line) focuses on the broader area roughly bounded by Girard and Washington avenues, between the two rivers.

But the decades following World War II were unique in the history of the city. It was a time when the federal government not only required, but funded planning as part of urban renewal. As Jonathan Barnett of Wallace, Roberts & Todd has noted:

In the 1950s, developers and elected local officials could be expected to pay attention to urban renewal administrators, housing authority directors and the heads of city planning departments — and by extension the designers who worked for them — when they could unlock subsidies from Washington and help determine how they were spent. Once cities have to depend more on their own resources, the city design problem becomes one of managing the cumulative effect of everyday decisions about zoning, housing subsidies and public works.¹

But, it is precisely the concerns that major real estate decisions are being made today only on a project-by-project basis and significant opportunities are being missed that have prompted many to seek a broader vision for development. Of equal con-

cern is that many of the recent planning efforts that have been undertaken by neighborhood, institutional and business groups have occurred without the formal authority of government.

But, our history suggests that *planning from the outside* is a long Philadelphia tradition. As Jonathan Farnham, acting historic preservation director of the Philadelphia Historical Commission, has noted, there is a huge gap between William Penn's official 1682 plan and Mayor John Reyburn's *Comprehensive Plan for Future City Improvements* of 1908.² In fact, many of the plans that Reyburn endorsed, including those for the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, were initially undertaken not by city government, but by civic, park and business groups who lobbied government.

Planning from the outside was central to the reform movement that triumphed in Philadelphia in 1951. Charter reform efforts had failed in the 1930s, as did reform candidates in the 1940s. But in 1941, when Philadelphia hosted a national conference on city planning, it inspired reformer Walter Phillips to create a local "Joint Committee on City Planning" and ultimately led to the creation of Philadelphia's first professionally staffed planning commission. It was that commission, led by Robert Mitchell and staffed by Edmund Bacon, working with Oskar Stonoroff and Louis Kahn to create the privately funded *Better Philadelphia Exhibition* of 1947, that inspired public reform and renewal efforts of the 1950s and 1960s.

This is not to suggest that Philadelphia can do without formal, public-sector planning. Most dynamic, growing cities make well-considered strategic investments that stimulate private investment and create new jobs. It is only to suggest that the calls for change we hear today have occurred before. When we have acted on these reform impulses in the past, and when mayors have embraced planning and formed strong public-private partnerships to implement plans, Philadelphia has made quantum leaps forward.

The document is organized as follows:

Chapter 1, *Why a New Plan* establishes the context and the opportunity for growth. Chapter 2, *Walkable Center City: The Virtues and Limitations of the Grid* articulates the urban design values that inform our recommendations. Chapter 3, *Gaps in the Fabric* highlights the physical areas in Center City that have not fully participated in the process of recovery, while Chapter 4, *What Planning Can Do* establishes the preconditions for success and the broad goals and objectives that inform individual district plans. What follows are four district plans which will be updated from time to time over the next several years as new developments and opportunities emerge.

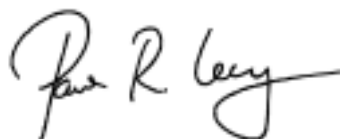
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As a companion to this document, we are also releasing our more traditional *State of Center City* that is divided into three sections. *Business Center City: The Place Where Philadelphia Works* provides information on the office sector, health care and education, hospitality and tourism, retail, arts and culture, transportation and employment trends. *Residential Center City: Living in the Center of Everything* contains sections on the housing market, demographic trends, parks, playgrounds, and schools. The final section focuses on the performance of the Center City District.

Together, these documents highlight successes, challenges and significant opportunities for the future.



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1 Jonathan Barnett, *The Way We Were, The Way We Are: The Theory and Practice of Designing Cities Since 1956*, Harvard Design Magazine, Spring/Summer 2006.

2 Jonathan E. Farnham, *Comprehensive Planning: Paul Cret, Modern Architecture and Philadelphia's Civic Reform Movement*, 2006 lecture at the Athenaeum.



B. Krist, GPTMC

1. WHY A NEW PLAN?



J.B. Abbott

A Time of Change

Philadelphia began 325 years ago as a planned city. While the city has grown far beyond its original three square miles, the grid that surveyor Thomas Holme fashioned for William Penn in 1682 still gives shape to 21st-century Center City.

Still, planning in the history of Philadelphia has been more the exception than the rule, though this is typical for most American cities. City planning seems to capture public attention and have its greatest impact at times of profound transition.

The City Beautiful movement at the start of the 20th century gave us the Benjamin Franklin Parkway and helped transform a grimy, industrial metropolis into a great civic and cultural center. Urban renewal in the 1950s and 1960s accelerated the transition from a manufacturing, railroad-based economy to the post-industrial automobile age.

Planning at its best can prompt the removal of obstructive remnants of the past, help envision new opportunities and provide the public infrastructure or amenities that make new private development possible. It also provides the rules that define how private development shapes or detracts from the public realm.

In 2007, city planning has the opportunity to respond to powerful new global economic realities and to digital and demographic trends that are reshaping regions and strengthening the competitive advantages of cities. At the same time, it can repair the damage of the prior era's auto-centric urban design.

Successful American cities in the 21st century are the focal points for thriving regional economies. They are centers for corporate headquarters, professional and business-services firms and a prime locale for education, research and health-care institutions. They are preferred convention and tourist destinations, the setting for arts and culture, sports and entertainment, shopping and fine dining and, increasingly, they are attractive places to live.

In the global economy, airline travel and digital communications enable work to be performed almost anywhere, while tourist, convention and entertainment are just as plentiful. Prosperous cities, large or small, thus must be successful competitors, reaching globally to capture market share, creating opportunity locally for residents and new immigrants. Successful regions may have multiple business centers, but downtown shapes the image, provides the spark and serves as the portal to global trade.

From the agora in ancient Athens, to Renaissance Florence, to 19th-century industrial Philadelphia, flourishing cities have been open to innovation and creativity. Once they imported raw materials and exported new products. Today, they import talent, export services and offer unique experience. Planning and public investment can enhance the defining and competitive aspects of a place in a time of rapid change.



B. Krist, GPTMC

For Philadelphia, planning can help preserve our remarkable heritage, while embracing new market realities. This requires openness to new ideas and transparency for new investors. It depends on an educated workforce and competitive tax policies that foster innovation, small business development and the expansion of the largest concentrated center of employment in the Commonwealth.

Competitive, Connected & Attractive

Center City starts with distinct advantages. Located midway between New York City and Washington D.C., Center City houses 38 million square feet of commercial office space, an expanding Convention Center, 10,000 hotel rooms and 21 education and health-care institutions with 30,000 students, and another 67,500 students adjacent to downtown. Compressed into just three square miles are also 2,400 retailers, over 270 restaurants and several dozen arts, cultural, historic and entertainment destinations. This dense cluster of employment generates \$13.9 billion in annual salaries for residents across the region.

A plan for 21st-century Center City cannot gaze nostalgically in the rear-view mirror, lamenting what's lost. Manufacturing once accounted for 52% of Philadelphia jobs; today it is only 5%. Service-industry employment now makes up 83% of the downtown economy and 78% of the city's economy. In the 1960s when the goal of city planning was securing federal subsidies to compensate for market failure, the storyline often was a depressing tale of deterioration, poverty and loss. But, the federal doctor no longer makes house calls. As former Mayor John Norquist of Milwaukee notes, "you can't build a city on pity." The new urban storyline must be about recapturing market share and capitalizing on economic, demographic and cultural trends which once again favor central cities.



J.B. Abbott

Planning can strengthen the competitive aspect of a place and focus on connections to other places: the airports, highways and digital networks, as well as on the renewal of an early-20th-century transit system that reaches across the region to carry 291,000 riders downtown each day. Regional transit makes possible density without congestion, facilitating large concentrations of employment and robust labor markets. A well-run system can encourage impulse decisions to jump on and off trolleys and buses, reducing the dependence on autos and minimizing storage space needed for cars. Planning can also help strike a balance between pedestrians and cars with better management and enforcement on downtown streets.

In an era of global choice, cities must be *competitive*, *connected* and *attractive* places to work, live and visit. Danish architect

Jan Gehl notes that in the mercantile and manufacturing city, people were in the street out of necessity, because that's where work was often performed. In the post-industrial city, they are outside by choice at wireless cafes and in restored parks. Successful cities have learned that they will never compete with suburbs by imitating suburbs. The competitive advantages of cities are their walkable streets and successful public places.

This is part of a broader cultural and marketplace appreciation of *walkable urbanity*, notes Christopher Leinberger of the Brookings Institution. In car-dependent suburbs "more is less" as traffic from expanding development slows and snarls travel time and degrades the quality of life. But in mixed-use, walkable towns and city centers, "more is more" as higher density development supports more amenities and services, animating streets both day and night.

So planning for 21st-century Philadelphia should also focus on the creation of vibrant public spaces. For Center City it means tending to fundamentals: *clean, safe and attractive*. But it also means maximizing the virtues of the historic grid: filling in gaps in the fabric, improving civic plazas and parks, undoing barriers and blank walls that are a legacy of urban renewal and animating empty open spaces on the Parkway, JFK Boulevard and Market Street.

Taking Things to the Next Level

For the last 16 years, the Center City District has burnished the basics: focusing on *clean* and *safe*, promoting shopping and dining and operating a continually changing banner program that highlights arts, entertainment and civic events in the city. Through a unique partnership with the Philadelphia police, serious crime has been cut in half downtown since the early 1990s and quality-of-life crimes have been reduced by three-quarters.

In the 1990s, strategic public investments helped diversify downtown from a nine-to-five office economy to a mixed-use arts, entertainment, convention and tourism district. To reinforce the evening economy, the CCD installed more than 2,000 pedestrian-scale fixtures and illuminated the facades of cultural and civic buildings, statues and monuments. To accommodate visitors, the CCD designed and installed a comprehensive pedestrian wayfinding system, assumed maintenance responsibility for a vehicular sign system and management responsibility for the Phlash tourist loop. In addition to an annual operating budget of \$14.5 million, the CCD has completed in the last decade over \$45 million in streetscape and public area improvements.

In 1997 Philadelphia enacted a tax abatement to transform vacant buildings to residential use. In 2000 the benefit was extended to all new construction. Together, these incentives re-ignited the housing market, prompting the conversion of 110 factories, warehouses and obsolete office buildings and the addition of 10,672 new units by the end of 2006.

Center City's population has reached 88,000 and is continuing to climb. Philadelphia now has the third largest downtown residential population and the most downtown households in the United States. An analysis of 45 downtowns, conducted by Dr. Eugenie Birch of the University of Pennsylvania, ranked Philadelphia as one of just five "fully-developed downtowns," characterized by a large population, high percentage of college-educated adults and affluent residents and by steady household growth since 1970.

A self-reinforcing dynamic has been set in motion: new residential units, stimulated by tax abatements, prompted a dramatic increase in young professionals and empty nesters living downtown close to work. They in turn supported the expansion of home furnishings and grocery stores, personal services and health clubs. Image ads for downtown living in regional magazines and newspapers complemented the positive promotional messages of the Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation. People attract people, fostering a 232% increase since 1992 in fine dining restaurants, rising hotel occupancy and new tourist attractions, while 187 outdoor cafes animate the streets.

The Need for Planning: Managing Success

There is much to celebrate, but much more still to do. Narrow streets and walkways are being challenged with congestion and with proposals for even more development at a scale unimaginable in the 1950s when downtown planning started in earnest.

Fear of change and a handful of proposals for inappropriately sized development have triggered the imposition in some areas of overly restrictive height controls. But mostly, the velocity and scale of residential development have prompted a new burst of positive civic activism. Institutions, community associations, foundations and design professionals have initiated an impressive amount of planning, or have urged local government to do its share.

The University of Pennsylvania has released plans for a significant eastward expansion of its campus onto former industrial land, seeking to strengthen connections to downtown. Several Center City neighborhood associations, including the Center City Residents Association, Northern Liberties Neighborhood Association, Fairmount Civic Association and the Logan Square Civic Association, retained professional firms. Other communities have engaged in fundraising for improved street lighting and residential amenities like parks, playgrounds and schools for the expanding population of young children. While there has been an undercurrent of *nimbyism*, the dominant theme has been: "Let's have development, but set some standards and do it well!"

The Design Advocacy Group, a voluntary association of architects, planners and civic leaders, has been serving for several



K. Ciappa, GPTMC

years as an informal development review committee, urging a greater emphasis on design quality and vibrant civic spaces. Recently, they have suggested that Philadelphia discard its ad hoc approach to development and devote more resources to planning.

One of the best byproducts of attracting outside developers to Philadelphia has been their impatience with Philadelphia's antiquated zoning and building codes. Through the Building Industry Association, developers, architects, lawyers and design professionals have collaborated on recommendations for a comprehensive update of our 40-year-old code in ways that will minimize the need for variances and simplify the process for every homeowner, developer and non-profit development corporation in the city. City Council has unanimously approved a ballot initiative that could authorize such a commission.

Finally, in late 2006, the pressure from casino development along the Delaware River prompted the William Penn Foundation to retain Penn Praxis to work in partnership with the City of Philadelphia and community groups to build on earlier work on the central Delaware waterfront and to prepare a comprehensive framework for waterfront development.

The need to manage success, accommodate new development and address challenges that did not exist when the last downtown plan was released in 1988 are obvious reasons why Center City needs a new plan. Equally important is the need to prompt new private-sector job growth.

The Need for Planning: Tuning up the Engine for Growth

The downtown economy is like a powerful, handcrafted, four-cylinder automobile, stocked with extraordinary amenities, but firing fully on only three cylinders.



Top: Kat Photography

Concentrated in just 3% of the city's land area, downtown jobs account for 47% of all private-sector wages paid citywide. Center City's private and non-profit employers generate \$6 billion in annual salaries to Philadelphia residents and another \$7.9 billion in salaries to households in surrounding counties. The institutions of University City account for an additional 10% of all private-sector wages paid citywide and generate \$774 million in annual salaries to Philadelphia residents and another \$1.1 billion in salaries to those in surrounding counties. In sum, 57% of the city's economy is centered between Front and 40th streets, Spring Garden to South Street.

While health care and education constitute the largest sector of employment citywide, 44% of all private-sector jobs in Center City are in office buildings; 21% are in health care and education institutions, while leisure and hospitality employers constitute 11% of Center City's jobs. Construction jobs loom large in public debates about economic development. Though they are a highly visible sign of activity, they are the result, not the cause of growth. They constitute only 2% of city jobs.

The residential market has been booming. Hospitality and leisure employment has grown in Philadelphia by 26% since 1990; health-care and education employment has expanded by 32%, but the office sector has been misfiring, contracting by 17.6%.

The differential levels of growth can be explained by several factors. Residential growth has been driven by regional demographic trends and prompted locally by tax abatements. The expansion in leisure and hospitality is a direct result of sustained public investments in new facilities and in marketing that has enabled Philadelphia to capture a larger share of an industry expanding globally.

Health care and education, one of the region's strongest suits, has been aided significantly since the 1950s by successive may-

ors who have made land available for continuous institutional expansion. This highlights a key difference with the office sector. Hospitals and educational institutions are large landowners, very invested in place, and continually needing room to grow. As non-profits, they are also exempt from real estate and business privilege taxes. By contrast, the commercial office sector is composed primarily of tenants who are highly mobile employers with highly mobile workers. Amenities matter to this sector. But first and foremost, given the pressures for downsizing and mergers and the many regional and global alternatives, office tenants need a cost-competitive setting. Without one, they will continue to leave when their leases are up, just as manufacturing firms did when the numbers no longer made sense.

Between 1986 and 2006, the region's office inventory expanded from 58.9 million to 109.9 million square feet, an average gain of 2.55 million square feet per year. But throughout the 1990s, even during a period of national economic expansion, no commercial office buildings were started downtown. As a result, Center City dropped from 41% of the region's supply to only 27% in 2006, six points below the national average for central business districts.

The decentralization of office jobs may be a national trend, but Philadelphia lost market share to its suburbs at a faster rate than many peer cities. This is not just a downtown problem. Thirty-eight percent of office wages are earned by city residents. When these jobs move beyond the reach of regional rail lines, it weakens every Philadelphia neighborhood.

While a higher percent of hospitality, education and health-service wages stay in the city (65.3%, 57.3% and 44.9% respectively), the sheer number of downtown office jobs means this sector has the largest impact on Philadelphia neighborhoods. Office jobs generate \$3.27 billion in annual salaries to city residents, as compared to \$833 million from downtown education and health-care institutions and \$259 million from hospitality employers. For residents of North Philadelphia the office sector generates 2.5 times the combined total of salaries paid in health care, education and hospitality: \$175 million from the office sector, \$45 million from education and health-care employers, \$24 million from the hospitality industry. For Bridesburg, Kensington and Port Richmond, the office numbers are 3.5 times the combined total of salaries paid in health care, education and hospitality: \$207.6 million from the office sector, \$41.9 million from education and health-care employers, \$17 million from the hospitality industry.

Rethinking the City's Tax Structure

At the core of the problem lies the city's tax structure, undermining Center City's substantial advantages as an office location. The wage tax was first enacted in the 1930s when Philadelphia held 90% of metro area office space and two-thirds of regional residents. The tax rose steadily from 1% to

almost 5% by 1990. Today, two-thirds of the region's population and 73% of its office space have moved beyond the limits of the city and its wage tax.

The second challenge is the city's business privilege tax (BPT). City and suburban office rents are almost exactly equal: \$26 per square foot for prime space in the city, \$27 per square foot in the suburbs. But the BPT adds \$3.67 per square foot, or a 14% premium for typical office tenants. For large financial-services firms and those structured as partnerships, the BPT premium adds between \$12 and \$15 per square foot, a 46%–57% surcharge on downtown occupancy costs.

Philadelphia needs revenues to support municipal services. Fifty years ago, local government could look to Washington D.C. to bail us out. Harrisburg still provides limited assistance. If this were Phoenix, the city could annex suburban growth zones. But in the post-federal era, as a landlocked Northeast city, we are largely on our own. Only 27% of the revenues to support Philadelphia's operating budget come from the federal or state government.

So the next mayor can continue to preside over a shrinking job base or he can make *urban competitiveness* the centerpiece of his agenda. The core political challenge is that while 47% of Philadelphia residents' salaries may be earned downtown, 95% of the electorate lives outside of Center City where they have a right to expect safe streets, quality public schools and well-delivered municipal services. So it is essential for mayors to avoid the trap of defining the choice as cutting taxes or providing quality services.

As Philadelphia's 2003 Tax Reform Commission noted, the path to competitiveness is not found by slashing taxes and gutting services. Rather the challenge is to alter the balance and mix of taxes in a way that stimulates growth and raises municipal revenue.

Philadelphia's unusually high reliance on business and personal income taxes is far more damaging to the economy than a more traditional revenue structure would be. In 1997, personal income taxes accounted for 33.3% of total tax revenue in Philadelphia, as compared to an average of 8.5% for the 10 largest U.S. cities. Business income tax revenue contributed 12.4% to Philadelphia's tax revenues, versus an average of only 5.3% elsewhere. In contrast, in 1997 property taxes made up just 19% of Philadelphia's tax revenue, while overall U.S. cities with more than 300,000 residents obtained 40% of their financing from this source.

Only eight of the 20 largest U.S. cities levy local income taxes, with Philadelphia's 4.4625 percent rate standing at more than twice the average; the city's nonresident rate is higher than that of any other locality. The gross receipts portion of the BPT is six-to-nine times higher than in the average southeastern Pennsylvania suburb. Only three of the nation's 20 largest cities tax the net income of corporations, and one of those cities is phasing out the tax.

With its heavy reliance on those tax sources that are most likely to



Matthew Johnson

drive residents, jobs and businesses from the city, Philadelphia compounds the problems created by its high overall tax burden. Today's workers, customers and suppliers are highly mobile; as a result, high local business and income taxes directly reduce business profits and encourage flight from the city.

The goal for the next mayor is not tax cutting, but true tax reform that brings Philadelphia's method of financing municipal services more in line with national norms.

2008: A Year of Opportunity

The Cira Centre and Comcast Tower, the first new office towers in more than a decade, required substantial public inducements to surmount local tax barriers. But both amply demonstrate the advantages of development positioned at the very center of the region's transportation network.

Ease of Access: Downtown employers benefit from the dense concentration of thousands of professional and business-services firms and enjoy easy access to a 360-degree labor market. Seventy percent of downtown office workers avoid the frustrations of rush-hour traffic by taking public transit to work. Even those who drive only have to park once and can easily walk from work to more than 200 restaurants and 2,000 retail shops.

Well-Educated Workforce: Sixty-two percent of downtown residents have at least a college degree and nearly a third of Center City's growing population is between the ages of 25 and 34; among this demographic, 79% hold college degrees. Close proximity to major colleges and universities also puts employers in touch with the latest research and a steady stream of recent graduates and affords employees numerous opportunities for continuing education and professional development.

Extraordinary Amenities: A wide array of arts and cultural institutions, historic public markets, shops, restaurants and

WHY A NEW PLAN?

outdoor cafes adds to the extraordinary amenities downtown.

In January 2008, when the next mayor takes office, legislated cuts will have incrementally reduced the wage tax for residents to 4.22% and for non-residents to 3.72%, significantly below the 1995 resident rate of 4.96%. Rates will drop another half point as significant gaming revenues begin to flow. Rates will continue to drop towards 3% by 2015. Meanwhile, 70% of suburban Pennsylvania municipalities now levy an earnings tax of 1%. So the tax gap is steadily narrowing.

If the next mayor were to embrace a highly publicized effort to accelerate the reduction of the BPT, it would create a significant opportunity for Philadelphia to capture more of the expansion of existing firms, snare a larger share of businesses attracted by regional marketing efforts and induce suburban firms to open branch offices downtown.

The investment in business tax reduction would prompt new office buildings, more construction jobs, more residential demand and expanding retail opportunities that would steadily expand the *commercial* real estate tax base of the city. Most important, for the rest of the city:

- Every 500,000 square feet of vacant office space reoccupied by firms moving in from outside the city, or by the growth of existing firms that stay in the city, results in approximately 2,000 more office jobs. This translates into \$11.4 million in new salaries to Center City residents and \$39.7 million in new salaries to residents of other city neighborhoods, including \$7.8 million in salaries to North Philadelphia and \$7.37 million in new salaries to residents of West and Southwest Philadelphia.
- From a municipal tax perspective, every 500,000 square feet of reoccupied office space in existing Center City buildings generates at current tax rates \$11.1 million in total city wage, real estate, business and use and occupancy taxes — enough to pay for 257 new caseworkers in the Department of Human Services, 228 additional employees for the Department of Public Health, 198 new firefighters or 186 more police officers.

At a time when we must be far more self-reliant as a city, public-sector services can only be expanded by growing private-sector jobs and by attracting new residents. There is simply no way for the city to provide quality services if the base of the triangle, shown below, keeps contracting.

Citywide Local Public and Private-Sector Employment, 2006



Philadelphia's next mayor has the opportunity to preside over a period of sustained economic growth and expanding opportunities for city and regional residents. The recommendations in this report highlight investments in public infrastructure and amenities, as well as broad design guidelines — suggestions to owners and developers — that could both trigger and accelerate this growth.



J.B. Abbott

2. WALKABLE CENTER CITY: THE VIRTUES AND LIMITATIONS OF THE GRID



J.B. Abbott

The Virtues and Limitations of the Grid

Center City Philadelphia has inherited all the virtues and limitations of William Penn's 1682 grid. Located at the narrowest point between two rivers and conceived in a pre-auto age, the historic plan provides a walkable scale, framed with reassuring regularity by rowhouse facades of similar height, reminiscent of older European city centers. Punctuated by stairways, railings and cascading flowerboxes in warmer months, the intimacy of residential streets encourages casual conversation among neighbors and has fostered a culture of civic engagement and a tradition of block parties.

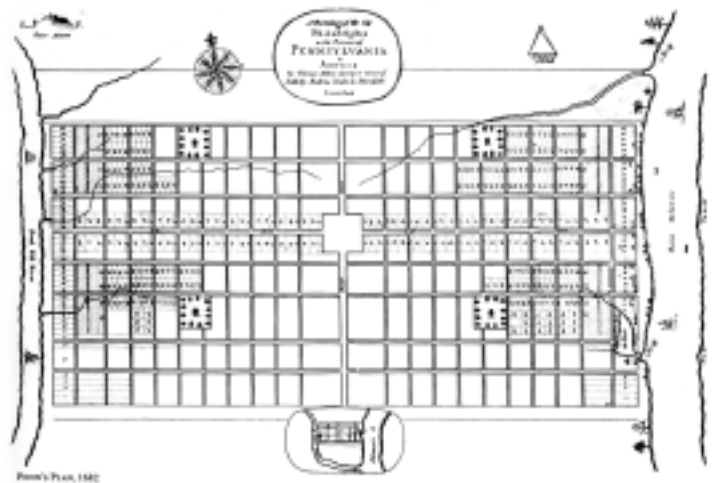
When the rowhouse cadence is accented by frequent doorways and window displays on Chestnut, Walnut, Locust and along north-south streets, a vibrant two-sided shopping and dining experience is created, with nearly 200 cafes spilling out onto sidewalks.

In the business district, townhouses gave way over a century ago to large commercial buildings, residential high-rises, hotels, health-care and educational institutions that constitute the largest concentrated center of employment in the city and Commonwealth, providing the density that gives vibrancy to the street.

The street grid, numbered east to west, is easily navigated on foot. Small alleys, early affordable subdivisions and violations of Penn's plan provide interesting places to explore. They create an intricate network of pathways for the 37% of residents who walk to work. In 10 minutes one can move from quiet 18th-century, cobblestone streets, past 19th-century warehouses and 1920s office buildings now converted to condos, to a dense, 21st-century business district, the setting for employment for 60% of Center City residents. The grid also provides a comprehensible framework for public transit and relieves congestion by giving motorists multiple routes to the same destination.

Penn's plan also contained two wide avenues, Broad and High (today's Market Street) which intersect at Center Square, envisioned as a main civic plaza and locale for major public buildings. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Benjamin Franklin Parkway was carved diagonally through the northwest quadrant, demolishing 1,300 structures to provide access to Fairmount Park and to set the stage for more cultural, civic and educational buildings. Following the demolition of elevated Penn Central railroad tracks and their placement underground in the early 1950s, another large avenue, JFK Boulevard, was added north of West Market Street, providing room for the largest office buildings in the region.

For William Penn, the grid signified a break from the weight of custom, tradition and religious bigotry in the Old World. Philadelphia provided rational, orderly space and promised tolerance and openness to all. But the grid's limitation is its monotonous linearity. With the exception of the unrealized potential of historic Dock Street, Center City lacks curved streets, like Boston, Greenwich Village or the medieval precincts of



The original 1682 plan for Philadelphia.

European cities that promise continual discoveries around the next corner. Few avenues culminate in memorable, monumental facades. Built on a two-mile-wide plain between two rivers, Center City is easy to walk or bike, but it lacks hills or high points, like San Francisco or Seattle, that provide orientation and dramatic vistas.

Penn's plan did make room for five civic squares, two of which, Rittenhouse and Washington, are thriving parks and gathering places. Franklin and Logan squares are just now being improved, while Center Square has yet to achieve its promise as the central civic space.

Philadelphia realizes the full potential of Penn's plan on residential blocks and thriving commercial streets. Where blank walls, residential garage doors, gaps for driveways, loading docks or surface parking lots are allowed to break pedestrian continuity, Philadelphia subverts its own strengths. With large-scale, high-density buildings like Liberty Place and the Convention Center that get the ground floor right and respect the rhythm of the walkway, the city blends old and new. When it wraps parking garages and podiums with articulated, well-lit facades offering quality ground-floor retail, it preserves the balance between people and cars.

But on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway and on urban renewal avenues, like West Market Street and JFK Boulevard, design decisions favored automobile drivers and building facades rarely engage the public environment. When massive intrusions like Interstate 95 or JFK Boulevard west of 20th Street disrupt the fabric, Philadelphia feels more like sprawling Los Angeles.

Few American cities have preserved so much of the intimacy of their original plan while remaining competitive places to live and work. The challenge for contemporary Philadelphia is to know when to preserve and pour new life into old forms, and how best to complement the 18th-century scale when adding 21st-century buildings.



Tom Crane

3. GAPS IN THE FABRIC



Edward Savaria Jr., PCVB

The Economic Value of Walkable Streets

Center City's compact density and diversity provides a network of animated and walkable streets. The more interesting and lively the sidewalks, the more pedestrians will choose to walk to work, to shop or dine and the longer visitors will linger to explore. Shopping center and theme park developers fully understand the importance of continuity for both the pedestrian experience and economic success. While cities are far more heterogeneous and historically textured than malls and theme parks, they must devote equal attention to an engaging pedestrian experience if they are to succeed.

Despite enormous progress in the last 16 years, Center City's transformation into a vibrant 24-hour downtown is still a work in progress. There are significant gaps in continuity that inconvenience pedestrians, reduce the value of adjacent real estate and limit the time that visitors will spend exploring the attractions and amenities of Center City.

It is impossible for any city with diverse ownership and land uses to provide 100% uniformly high-quality, pedestrian-oriented streets. But Philadelphia's success is constrained by these problematic or unfinished zones:

1: East Market and Chestnut Streets

With several great historic department stores, the distinctive architecture of the Reading Terminal Headhouse and two convention hotels, Market East should serve as the vital walkway between Independence National Historical Park and the Pennsylvania Convention Center. But undeveloped parcels at both 8th and 13th streets, unappealing storefronts, the blank walls of federal and corporate buildings and an internally oriented shopping mall dominate too many blocks. On Chestnut Street, despite significant progress, clusters of vacant, deteriorated or underperforming shops slow the revitalization of this recovering transit mall.

2: East Arch Street

The link between the National Constitution Center, the African American Museum of Philadelphia and the Pennsylvania Convention Center is slowly being improved by residential and retail expansion of Chinatown. But the 8th Street corridor from the Vine Street Expressway provides an unappealing gateway to Center City and disconnects Chinatown from a restored Franklin Square.

3: Center Square

City Hall, arguably the largest and most exuberant municipal building in the world, sits at the center of a traffic island, while its public spaces are too often barren and forbidding, disconnecting North and South Broad Street and separating the office district from Market Street East. City Hall's visitors center and Center City's only public observation tower are hard to



J.B. Abbott



Animated storefronts and cafes that spill out onto the sidewalk create attractive and walkable streets. Blank walls or vacant lots create gaps in the pedestrian experience.

find. Only a handful of the buildings that form the perimeter of Center Square animate Philadelphia's central civic space.

4: North Broad Street

Expansion of the Pennsylvania Convention Center, the growth of educational and medical institutions and new residential developments are well situated to lead the recovery of a long-dormant stretch of Philadelphia's primary thoroughfare. But there are still significant gaps in the pedestrian fabric from Vine Street to Spring Garden Street.

5: West Market and JFK Boulevard

Highways, surface parking lots and inappropriate retail uses dominate the zone between the downtown office core, Amtrak's 30th Street Station and the eastward expansion of the University of Pennsylvania.

6: Benjamin Franklin Parkway

The Parkway institutions attract almost three million visitors each year. But because the 12 lanes of the Parkway are dominated by high-speed traffic, unsafe pedestrian crossings and large empty blocks, pedestrians are discouraged from exploration and major destinations often appear inaccessible, particularly northwest of Logan Square.

7: Perimeter Highways

The Vine Street Expressway, an important east-west link, contributes to an enormous gap between Old City and Northern

Liberties, constrains the expansion of Chinatown, interrupts the fabric of North Broad Street and creates noisy canyons in front of the Free Library and Family Court.

Incomplete covering of I-95 and the combined effect of 16 lanes of expressway and Delaware Avenue severs the historic relationship between the city and its waterfront. The Schuylkill Expressway and the highway-style bridges on Chestnut and Walnut streets divide Center City from the thriving universities of West Philadelphia.

The district plans in the concluding section provide suggestions on how to respond to each of these challenges.

Center City Block Analysis



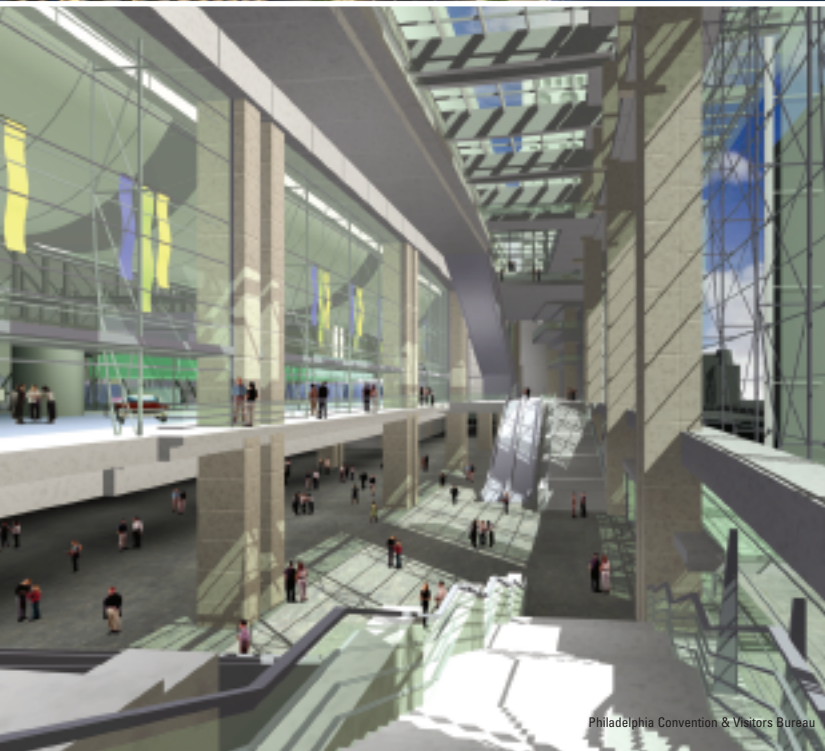
A detailed analysis conducted by MGA Partners rated each Center City block as either pedestrian-friendly with interesting facades, storefronts and active uses or as incomplete or unattractive due to blank walls, vacant shops, deteriorated facades, surface parking lots or highway uses. Where a cluster of less-successful blocks seriously disrupts pedestrian continuity, the area was considered to be a “gap” in the fabric.



P & A Associates

4. WHAT PLANNING CAN DO:

AN OVERVIEW OF
DISTRICT PLANS



Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau

The purpose of planning, notes Ray Gindroz of Urban Design Associates of Pittsburgh, is not to figure out how to spend money. The purpose of planning is to create a compelling vision that inspires leaders and attracts money. Good planning enables politicians, citizens and developers to see possibilities and connections that are overlooked because of present-day encumbrances. Encumbrances can be physical obstacles like highways and railroads, or a civic mindset diminished by pessimism, or it can be a tax structure and political culture that discourage investment and limit growth.

The revival of Center City in the last 16 years demonstrates what is possible when business and civic leaders share a vision of a competitive and animated downtown while government provides the support and incentives that make success possible. We have moved from *dirty and dangerous* to *clean and safe*; from 40% office vacancy on South Broad Street to a thriving mixed-use Avenue of the Arts; from an outmoded Civic Center to a state-of-the-art, expanding Convention Center; from 4.5 million square feet of vacant, obsolete office and industrial space to 11,000 new housing units and a burgeoning population; from a two-hour stop between Washington and New York to a thriving tourist mecca; from no outdoor cafes to 187; from no new office towers to signature buildings rising on the skyline.

Building upon almost two decades of success, Philadelphia's next mayor has the opportunity to articulate a bold vision for growth. The aim for political leaders should not be to pit factions against one another while divvying up a diminishing pie; rather the goal is to create an optimistic climate of entrepreneurial energy that expands opportunity for all.

Seventy-three percent of the dollars that support municipal services are generated locally. Downtown — from the Delaware River to 40th Street — is the primary source of tax revenues that city government has to invest in services, infrastructure and redistribution. Philadelphia must avoid falling into that perennial trap of downtown *versus* neighborhoods or business competitiveness *versus* social services. Those are misleading and divisive choices that we must banish from the coming mayoral election.

This document is based on several assumptions: (1) that the next mayor will make urban competitiveness and tax reform a centerpiece of a strategy for growth; (2) that he will govern with a spirit of transparency and optimism that bridges gaps and draws diverse communities together; (3) that he will empower the City Planning Commission and a new Department of Transportation to develop major plans for infrastructure and amenities investment and will aggressively seek federal, state and foundation resources that can leverage new private investment and better link downtown to the neighborhoods and to the region. The next mayor should not merely embrace plans, he should have a well-organized and professional system to implement them by attracting the best and the brightest to city government, professionalizing all the quasi-public agencies, and engaging the talents of the private sector.



The west side of City Hall can become an animated civic space with a signature entrance to public transit, generous landscaping and a large fountain that can serve as a skating rink in winter months.

Towards a New Plan for Center City

Center City is the engine for growth and plans must have two focal points: managing and enhancing the successes we've had and prompting investment in geographic areas and in infrastructure that have lagged behind.

In 2005 and 2006, in preparation for this document, the CCD retained seven design firms and asked them to describe what they liked most and least about Center City. Those urban design values are embodied in the two prior chapters: *Walkable Center City* and *Gaps in the Fabric*.

From those initial discussions and from conversations with property owners, developers, business leaders, residents and public officials, seven broad objectives emerged: (1) increase the attractiveness of Center City as a place to work in the office, hospitality, education and health-care sectors, while creating opportunities for new 21st-century industries; (2) build upon Center City's successful residential boom by investing in key amenities — schools, playgrounds, parks and public access to Philadelphia's waterfronts; (3) enhance the walkable quality of Center City; (4) eliminate gaps in the pedestrian fabric and overcome barriers to growth, such as highways and railroads; (5) continue to diversify the mixture of land uses throughout the downtown while preserving an extraordinary architectural heritage; (6) allow for the easy movement of cars, bicycles, trucks and buses, but design so they coexist with pedestrians on most major streets; and (7) dramatically enhance the quality, customer-friendliness and frequency of public transit through both small-scale and major infrastructure investments to link the city's neighborhoods and residents of the region to opportunities downtown.



Cope Linder Architects

EAST MARKET STREET



Brown & Keener Bressi

WEST MARKET STREET



Olin Partnership

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN PARKWAY

Proposed improvements for East and West Market Street and for the Benjamin Franklin Parkway all seek to strengthen the walkable quality of public spaces.

Participating Firms

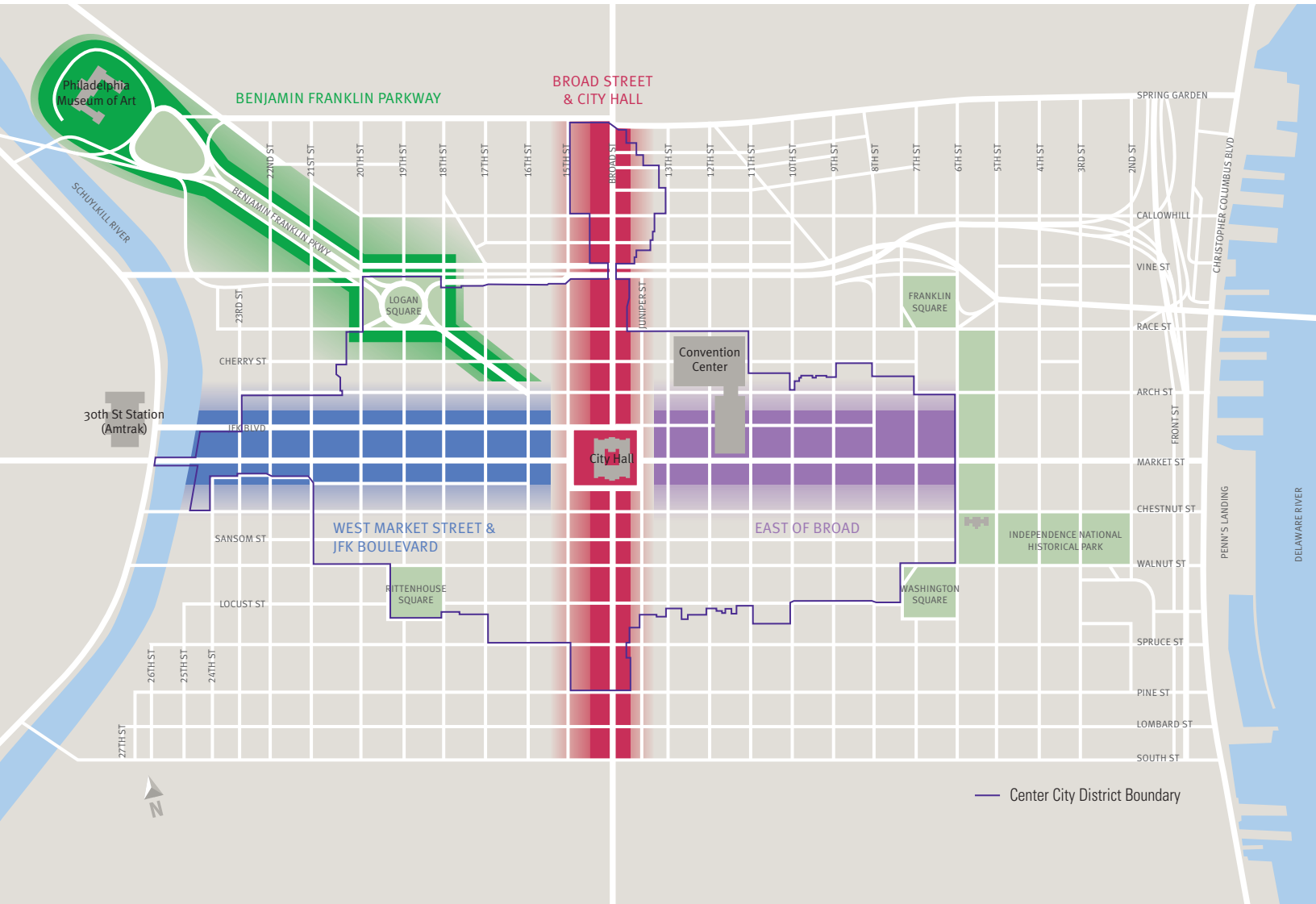
With generous support from the William Penn Foundation, specific plans were prepared for public amenities along the central Delaware waterfront (Wallace, Roberts and Todd); to fill in the gaps and transform Market Street East (Cope Linder Associates); to activate the public environment on South Broad Street and around City Hall, while capitalizing on Convention Center expansion on North Broad Street (MGA Partners and Olin Partnership); to chart a course for new office development and mixed-use growth on West Market and JFK Boulevard (Brown & Keener Bressi); to conceive major new transit investments that would increase the competitiveness of Center City (Urban Engineers); to develop site-specific plans to animate public spaces along the Benjamin Franklin Parkway (Olin Partnership, Brown & Keener Bressi, Lager Raabe Skafte Landscape Architects, Cope Linder Architects). At the same time, Kise, Straw & Kolodner was retained by both the Schuylkill River Development Corporation to recommend improvements to the bridges connecting Center City and University City and by the Center City Residents Association to develop recommendations for a new neighborhood plan.

The concepts developed by these design teams were presented at a series of widely publicized forums held throughout 2006. Many comments and suggestions were incorporated from that process.

The individual district plans, that can be found at the back of this book, focus mostly on the main corridors of the central business district as noted in the map on page 23 and on the connections from the business district to University City, to residential areas and to the waterfronts. Specific recommendations for the Delaware waterfront are not included in this document because an extensive planning process is currently underway that will supersede the work completed in 2005.

Because the Center City District is primarily focused on the quality of the pedestrian experience and on civic spaces, most recommendations focus on the public domain and on transportation enhancements. None of these are offered as final plans, but rather as suggestions to the next administration and a re-energized Philadelphia City Planning Commission to look comprehensively at development in Center City in partnership with business, civic, foundation, institutional and community leaders. Many are suggestions that can be implemented by existing owners and developers to strengthen the fabric and economic vibrancy of downtown. But other recommendations point toward significant capital investments in transportation infrastructure and in public amenities needed to sustain Center City's remarkable revival and to prompt a new, expanded cycle of growth.

District Plans



Included in the back folder of this book are preliminary recommendations for each of the areas highlighted on the map above, as well as recommendations for transportation enhancements.



Temple University Libraries, Urban Archives

5. PRIOR CENTER CITY PLANS



Temple University Libraries, Urban Archives

In the second half of the 20th century, five plans have shaped the city we take forward into the 21st century.

Better Philadelphia Exhibition (1947)

By the end of the Second World War, Philadelphia showed distinct signs of decay. Like older manufacturing cities across the Northeast and Great Lakes regions, there had been very limited public reinvestment in infrastructure during more than 15 years of Depression and war. At the same time, mass production of trucks and cars, beginning in the 1920s, had freed business and residents from dependency on the fixed railroad lines that converged in central cities. By the 1920s, manufacturing firms were moving out of cities, retail establishments were migrating to the edge, and downtown business groups were expressing concern about the loss of market share to new auto-oriented developments in the suburbs.

Even in the midst of the Depression, urban policymakers understood the long-term implications of these decentralizing trends. A 1937 New Deal report on *Our Cities: Their Role in the National Economy* described the problem as not just old buildings and slums, but the fact that current production and transportation technologies were altering regional land-use patterns and rendering old cities obsolete. To respond, New Deal policymakers proposed a new range of public powers to carry out “urban redevelopment.”

Philadelphia was without a paid planning commission when it hosted a national conference on city planning in 1941. This inspired the formation of a local “Joint Committee on City Planning” and led to civic reformer Walter M. Phillips successfully lobbying City Council and Mayor Samuel to create in 1942 a nine-person board of experts, supported by a substantial budget and a professional civil-service-protected staff.

In 1942, in the midst of World War II, a group of business and labor leaders came together in Philadelphia, concerned that when hostilities ended, the production boom within Philadelphia’s shipbuilding and manufacturing sectors would end and the economy would lapse back into depression.

At the national level in 1942, the Urban Land Institute was suggesting a postwar “replanning program” to redesign central cities by having local development entities use federal funds to acquire land in blighted areas and then sell or lease the parcels to the private sector for redevelopment. Simultaneously, a 1942 *Business Week* article “Philadelphia’s Ills: Diagnosis by a Real Estate Specialist” recommended a comprehensive redevelopment process to deal with the spreading blight and deterioration. As a result, business and civic leaders pushed through state and local legislation to create a Redevelopment Authority in 1945, one of the first in the country and four years before federal urban renewal legislation was signed by President Truman in 1949.

In 1947 the City Planning Commission, led by Robert Mitchell and staffed by Edmund Bacon, worked closely with



Ezra Stoller ©Esto



Ezra Stoller ©Esto

The 1947 Better Philadelphia Exhibition attracted over 350,000 people to Gimbel’s Department Store at 8th and Markets streets to view plans of Philadelphia transformed by major public investments. The highlight was a scale model of Center City with moving parts that turned to show what downtown could become.



Temple University Libraries, Urban Archives

Elevated Pennsylvania Railroad tracks dominated the blocks that are now West Market Street and JFK Boulevard.

the Citizen’s Council on City Planning, the Chamber of Commerce, and with architects Oskar Stonorov and Louis Kahn to create the Better Philadelphia Exhibition, the first comprehensive plan of the modern era.

Displayed on two floors of the Gimbel’s department store at 8th and Market streets, this 50,000-square-foot “super-colossal city planning exhibition” demonstrated through three-dimensional mechanical models, aerial photos, dioramas, movies, murals, cartoons and the reproduction of an actual street corner the powerfully positive benefits of city planning and thoughtful capital investment. Seen by over 350,000 residents, the Better Philadelphia Exhibition presented a compelling vision of a renewed, thriving Philadelphia in 1982 and had a huge impact on the psyche of city.

The Better Philadelphia Exhibition proposed transforming Philadelphia and the surrounding tri-state region with improvements to sewers, water quality, highways, housing, transit, parks and commerce. It was fundamentally a plan to realign an old industrial, railroad and port city with new decentralizing automotive, trucking and market realities. The capital program proposed public infrastructure that would unleash private investment to create what today would be termed a “post-industrial city.”

An elaborate 30-by-14-foot scale model of Center City showcased a host of long-range improvements including a widened Vine Street, a large bus terminal, the removal of the “Chinese Wall” of elevated Penn Central railroad tracks to create the

new Penn Center commercial district, an expressway along the Delaware River (I-95), new bridges, housing and Independence Mall.

Bacon took the helm of the City Planning Commission in 1949, the same year Congress approved the Urban Renewal Act with Philadelphia civic leaders playing a major leadership role in its passage. With federal funding available for acquisition and demolition, planning was closely linked with implementation and Philadelphia began refashioning Center City when the reform movement triumphed in 1951.

Study and Proposed Plan for the Philadelphia Central District (1954)

Joseph Clark, Jr., the first mayor elected under the new reform charter, immediately embarked the city on a series of smaller scale plans to carry out the vision of 1947, including the first Center City plan. With 1954 amendments to the urban renewal act, the federal government not only required planning, it funded planning. Philadelphia, which had a 10-year head start on most cities in fashioning renewal plans, quickly became a national leader, hiring the best and the brightest to refine its plans to remove vestiges of the industrial age and reposition Center City as the downtown for a larger, more decentralized region.

The 1954 plan highlighted the potential of a new transit-oriented, West Market office district on land that was cleared in 1953 of the elevated Penn Central railroad tracks. It proposed a new civic plaza west of City Hall (today’s Dilworth Plaza) and a new municipal services building. It proposed the relocation of the Food Distribution Center from Dock Street to South Philadelphia to make way for what would become Society Hill Towers. It proposed a program of preservation, demolition and new construction to reclaim the area east of Washington Square for middle-income housing. Expanded schools, new playgrounds and landscaped walkways were all proposed as supportive amenities, including the extension of the trail from the Art Museum into Center City along the east bank of the Schuylkill.

The plan advocated that most trips into the central business district be on public transportation and proposed extending high-speed transit using existing subway and railroad lines. But to reduce congestion, it proposed eliminating streetcar lines, building new highways that would link the downtown into the region, while providing large parking lots at the periphery of the central district with direct access to expressways.

Philadelphia Comprehensive Plan (1960)

In 1960, Mayor Richardson Dilworth released the first city-wide comprehensive plan for Philadelphia that expanded on themes from the 1954 document. To compete successfully against suburban areas and other cities, the plan suggested, Philadelphia required downtown:

- An efficiently concentrated core to house the dynamic center of private commerce and public services for the region.
- A modern, balanced transportation system penetrating close to the heart and the exclusion of traffic not destined for the core.
- Major parking facilities and bus terminals directly connected to the expressway system to reduce congestion on local streets.
- Pedestrian movements in the core separated from automobile traffic (the origin of the inward-facing Gallery at Market East and underground retail of Penn Center) and the removal of automobiles from the city's primary retail street (the origin of the unsuccessful Chestnut Street transit mall).
- Parks and open space to provide an appropriate and dignified setting for public buildings and historic shrines, squares for public gatherings and celebrations, quiet spaces for relaxation and places for enjoying the bustle and excitement of the crowd.

The Plan for Center City Philadelphia (1963)

Building upon the 1960 Comprehensive Plan, the 1963 Plan for Center City, issued during the Tate administration, focused specifically on the downtown.

The 1960 Census had documented how housing, retail and employment were booming in the suburbs. While the city's population had leveled off during the 1950s around two million, the suburban population had grown by 44%. For the first time, more residents in the region were living in the seven sur-

rounding counties than in the city. At the beginning of the 1950s, 70% of regional jobs were in the city; by the end of the decade, only 60% remained in the city. Sprawl was thus identified for the first time as a significant regional land-use challenge. Transportation investments were posited as “the most important single element” to keep Center City dominant in the region by conveniently connecting the outskirts to the center. Once in Center City, the plan called for the connection of all transportation modes in an attractive, pleasant and efficient manner in close proximity to adjacent business and commercial activities.

There is no quarreling with this fundamentally sensible planning principle and one of its most positive results was the Center City commuter rail tunnel, which provided the region with a fully-integrated transit system, connected as well to the Amtrak system and to the international airport.

But the execution of so many of the elements of the 1963 plan were governed by urban design values that removed life from walkways and concentrated retail on interior promenades both on East Market Street and below ground at Penn Center, undermining the fundamental strengths of William Penn's walkable grid.

At City Hall, JFK Plaza and the Municipal Services Building, efforts to separate pedestrians from cars led to a series of walled, barren plazas cut off from life on the street.

Even in Society Hill, where so much attention was paid to residential amenities, retail was removed from all but two blocks and interior walkways provided alternatives to the street. One of the most profound limitations of the 1963 plan was the proposed ring of expressways that defined the outer edges of Center City and linked it to the broader region.



Philadelphia City Planning Commission, 1963

The 1963 plan envisioned a multi-modal transportation system to reinforce Market Street East.

PRIOR CENTER CITY PLANS



Philadelphia City Planning Commission, 1963

A renewed downtown was to be served by a ring of highways that clearly defined the limits of Center City.



Philadelphia City Planning Commission, 1963

Cars would be left at perimeter garages and quaint trolleys would move people on a transit-only Chestnut Street.



Philadelphia City Planning Commission, 1963

In the effort to create multi-level walkways and transit connections on Market Street East, the relationship between the sidewalk and retail establishments would have been completely severed.



Philadelphia City Planning Commission, 1963

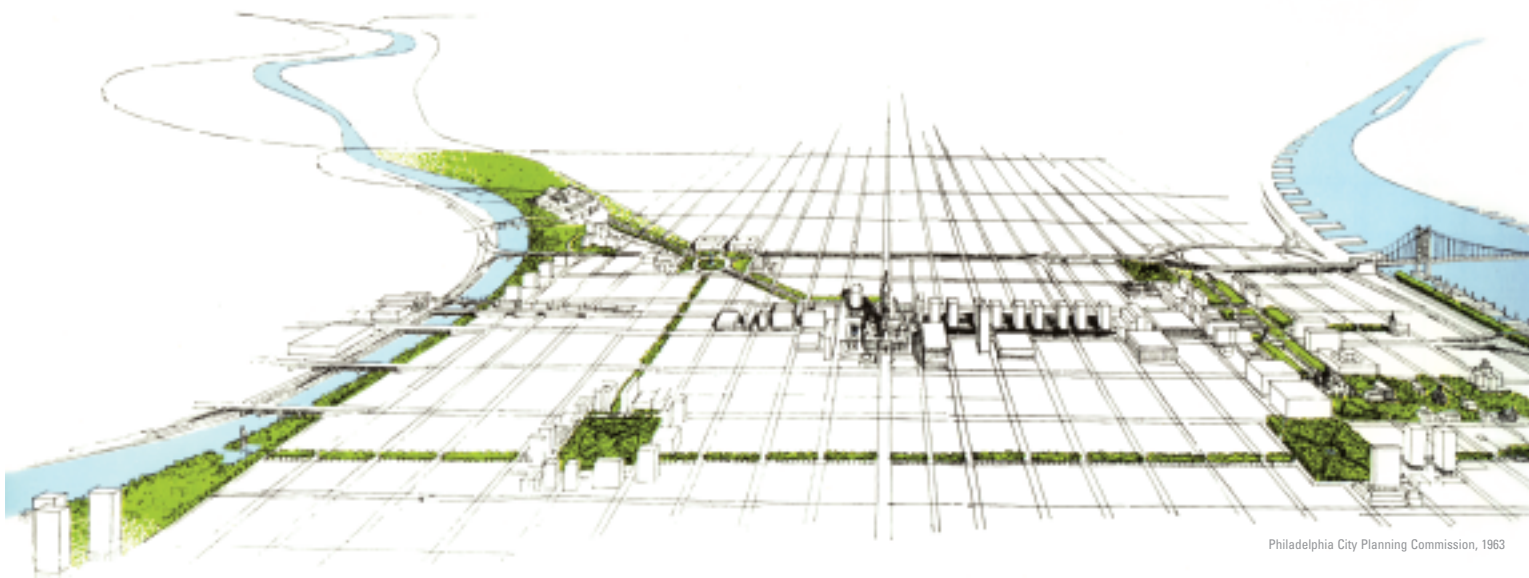
A long time coming: the 1963 plan envisioned today's Schuylkill River Park, but without adjacent railroad tracks.

The Interstate Highway and Defense Act of 1956 made 90% federal financing available for the clearance of land and the construction of new limited-access highways. While new roadways were essential to the competitiveness of cities, it was planners like Robert Moses in New York and Bacon in Philadelphia, and not the national government, that initially sought to use federal highways as tools for downtown renewal.

President Eisenhower, who had seen the benefits of limited-access highways in Europe, clearly preferred the European approach of bringing expressways to grade as landscaped boulevards before they entered the core of the city. But the scale of deterioration faced by mid-20th-century planners, the prominence given to automobiles and the lure of federal dollars ultimately led to a system of roads in Philadelphia that slice through Fairmount Park and the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, cut the city off from its waterfronts and retard the northward growth of Center City.

The 1963 plan envisioned motorists exiting these expressways, leaving their cars in peripheral garages, jumping onto quaint Chestnut Street trolleys that would run frequently on a transit-only shopping street. Perhaps had the transit component of this vision been realized, the concept might have had merit. But with noisy diesel buses, vacant shops and not a single restaurant in the mid-1990s, Chestnut Street was deemed a planning failure and the street was reconstructed and reopened to cars in 1998.

Most successful in the 1963 plan was the vision of strong residential neighborhoods ringing the business district, though the network of open space and parks was never fully realized.



Philadelphia City Planning Commission, 1963

William Penn's four squares were to be linked by greenways that connected to riverfront parks.

The Plan for Center City (1988)

By the mid-1980s, most of the developments envisioned in 1963 were finished or nearing completion. The Gallery at Market East opened in 1977; Gallery II followed in 1983. The Center City commuter tunnel tied together 12 separate rail routes and 500 miles of track of the former Reading and Suburban lines into an integrated regional network now operated by SEPTA. During the 1970s and 1980s, 90% of all new office development occurred in the land that had been cleared for Penn Center. After a slow start in Society Hill, private reinvestment led to the restoration of neighborhoods throughout Center City. In 1971, in the face of strong community opposition, the South Street Expressway was removed from city plans. After years of delays and lawsuits, I-95 opened and a redesigned Vine Street Expressway was nearing completion.

In a city that pioneered design controls and fine arts requirements for redevelopment, one rule remained unwritten. At 548 feet, standing atop City Hall, William Penn’s statue was “set for all time as the central image of Philadelphia as a city.” “We have a gentlemen’s agreement,” Edmund Bacon would tell developers proposing taller towers. “No building should be higher than William Penn’s hat. The only question your building raises is whether or not you are a gentleman.”

This agreement prevailed until 1984, when developer Willard Rouse proposed during the administration of Mayor Wilson Goode to build Liberty Place, a mixed-use project on West Market Street, with two towers that would rise hundreds of feet above William Penn. This prompted a major civic debate that resulted in the City Planning Commission, now under Barbara Kaplan’s leadership, undertaking a thorough revision to the 1963 plan, with support from the William Penn Foundation.

The new plan set two broad goals: stimulate growth and preserve the character, scale and livability of Center City. Conceived during an office construction boom, *The Plan for Center City* that was released in 1988 was quite optimistic about this sector’s growth. Noting that Center City had lost a third of its jobs from 1956 to 1980 as the manufacturing sector contracted, it estimated a net gain of 10,000 office-based and service-sector jobs between 1980 and 1984 and projected this trend to continue.

It was also apparent that the Civic Center in West Philadelphia, which had hosted the first televised conventions of the Democratic, Republican and Progressive parties in 1948, was lacking in the technology and space to host modern conventions. By the early 1980s, the city had slipped to 23rd as a preferred convention site and 30th as a trade show location.

Through a competitive selection process, a site on Market Street East that included the now vacant Reading train shed, was selected for a new 440,000-square foot Pennsylvania Convention Center, in the expectation it would stimulate new hotel construction and bring thousands of visitors into the

downtown in close proximity to Independence Mall.

With so much construction underway and proposed, the plan set significant growth targets for the year 2000 in four strategic areas:

- 65,000 more office jobs and 22 million more square feet (1.5 million square feet per year over 15 years), based on capturing 40% of the region’s office growth;
- A 100% increase in annual conventioners to 700,000 and a 50% increase in the number of tourists to 7.5 million;
- A 30% increase in retail sales, driven by new office workers and new visitors;
- A 25% increase in housing production to 1,250 new units a year.

At the same time, the plan sought to preserve intimately scaled streets in residential neighborhoods, unique architectural styles and the rich design heritage of the city. While the plan established a high-density zone west of City Hall, allowing buildings significantly taller than William Penn, it designated specific view corridors to be preserved. To eliminate barren plazas and unfriendly facades, the plan proposed changes to the zoning code to insure that new office buildings would create a lively pedestrian environment and connect with public transit. It proposed limiting both the placement and the entrances of parking garages to service streets to preserve the pedestrian fabric. To enhance the quality of life, the plan called for a better sign system, more public art and more attention to design details like vendor carts, billboards, street furniture and sidewalk cafes.

The 1988 plan then provided its overarching vision for six different downtown districts:

- Philadelphia’s main office core would remain **Market West**. But it would have more shops, better civic spaces and improved connections to Logan Square. A new subway station at 21st Street would support the westward expansion of the office district. New streetscape improvements on Market Street and JFK Boulevard would enhance the ceremonial gateways to the Center City office core.
- **Market East** would prosper as a center for shopping, entertainment and hospitality. A new Convention Center would create a demand for new shops and hotels. Special zoning controls would protect Chinatown as a mix of commercial, residential and industrial uses and would promote its expansion.
- **City Hall and Penn Square** would become the city’s center for public activity containing cafes and tourist information and connect to an expanding arts district on South Broad.
- The **Chestnut Street** transitway would be revived as an active retail space popular with pedestrians. Spring Garden

and South streets would be the northern and southern gateways to Center City.

- The **Parkway** would be less of an automobile corridor and more of a public promenade due to a wider and more accessible Logan Square. A trust fund was to be established to fund the long-term maintenance of Logan Square and the Parkway.
- New commercial development would complement existing public spaces along the **Delaware Riverfront**. New residential communities would develop along the riverfront from Washington Avenue to Penn Treaty Park. A riverwalk would allow people to walk along the river's edge.

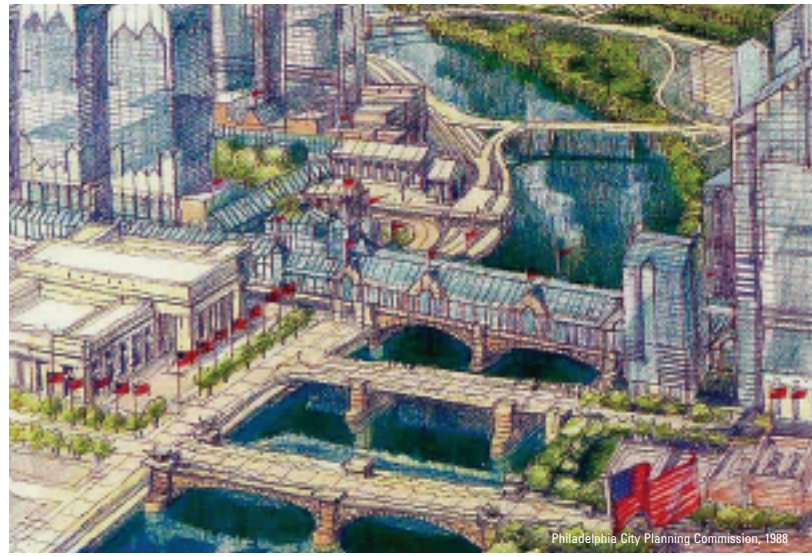
The 1988 Plan for Center City noted that development alone was not sufficient to make a competitive and attractive city. To attract businesses, residents and visitors, the plan supported the creation of a private-sector-sponsored downtown management district to upgrade the maintenance and security of all public spaces. It also called for greater public investment to improve the transportation system, public facilities, parks and walkways.

The 1988 plan contained a host of good ideas, many of which have come to fruition, including a new high-rise zoning code, the flourishing of the hospitality industry, an expanded arts district and the formation of the Center City District. But within two years of its release, a national recession pushed Philadelphia into fiscal crisis. Optimistic scenarios for office growth and infrastructure proposals, like the new subway station at 21st and Market, the animation of the exterior plazas surrounding City Hall and a Delaware riverfront trail, were left unrealized.

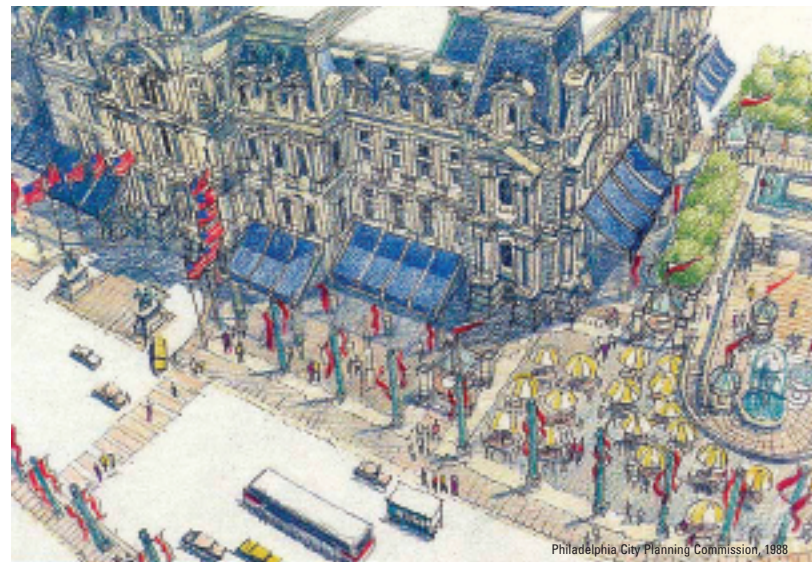
Lessons from the Past: Urban design values change over time. Today successful cities place a much greater premium on the creation of quality pedestrian spaces, accommodating the car without giving it dominance downtown. Part of the agenda for the next five years should be to continue to undo the damage from earlier, misguided decisions.

But many past ideas are worth revisiting and realizing: the riverfront walkways from the 1963 plan; the recommendations from 1988 to animate City Hall plaza and the Benjamin Franklin Parkway; the focus on transit that was central to the 1963 vision; and the ideas for better transportation connections to the West Market office district. Fundamentally, one message endures: when Philadelphia develops compelling plans, when civic and political leaders come together to ensure they are implemented, new opportunities are created for all.

The 1988 plan optimistically projected that by 2003, office towers would extend west from 21st street crossing the Schuylkill River and bridging Amtrak's railyards. The plan also envisioned City Hall's exterior as a great civic space animated by cafes and East Market Street transformed by a burgeoning hospitality industry.



Philadelphia City Planning Commission, 1988



Philadelphia City Planning Commission, 1988



Philadelphia City Planning Commission, 1988

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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PATCO
Peirce College
Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts
Pennsylvania Ballet
Pennsylvania Convention Center Authority
Pennsylvania Cultural Data Project
Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council
Pennsylvania Horticultural Society
Pennsylvania Hospital
Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology
Philadelphia Art Alliance
Philadelphia Board of Revision of Taxes
Philadelphia Business Journal
Philadelphia Chamber Music Society
Philadelphia City Planning Commission
Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau

Philadelphia Department of Recreation
Philadelphia Department of Revenue
Philadelphia International Airport
Philadelphia Museum of Art
Philadelphia Parking Authority
Philadelphia Police Department
Philadelphia Zoo
PKF Consulting
Please Touch Museum
The Prince Music Theater
RAND Corporation
Real Capital Analytics
Rosenbach Museum & Library
School District of Philadelphia
Schuylkill River Development Corporation
SEPTA
Smith Travel Research
Strayer University
Studley, Inc.
Temple University
Thomas Jefferson University
Tyson Hospitality Consulting, LLC
University of Pennsylvania
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
U.S. Census Bureau
Walnut Street Theatre
Wills Eye Hospital

2006 CPDC/CCD SURVEYS

Center City Apartment and Condominium Survey
Center City Developments Database
Community Organizations Survey
Cultural and Performing Arts Organizations Survey
Customer Satisfaction Survey, Eshelman & Townsend
Philadelphia Police Department/CCD Survey
Outdoor Seating Survey
Pedestrian Count Survey
Residential Development Survey
Restaurant Week Diner Survey
Restaurant Week Participant Survey
Retail Occupancy Survey
Schools and Universities Survey

CPDC/CCD PUBLICATIONS

Center City Reports: Residential Development, CCD/CPDC, 2006
Sidewalk Cafes, CCD/CPDC, 2006
Office Sector: Restarting the Engine for Growth, CPDC, 2005
Residential Development, CCD/CPDC, 2005
Success of Downtown Living: Expanding the Boundaries of Center City, CCD/CPDC, 2002
Retail Location Guide for Center City Philadelphia, CCD, 2006

A complete list of CCD and CPDC publications is available at www.CenterCityPhila.org. For more information, call 215.440.5500 or email info@CenterCityPhila.org.

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