

# CENTER CITY DIGEST



## A Foundation for the Future

In 2016, we celebrate two important milestones in the transformation of Center City: the 60th anniversary of the Central Philadelphia Development Corporation (CPDC) and the 25th anniversary of the Center City District (CCD). It's a moment to reflect on decades of accomplishments, an opportunity to focus on the future and the year in which we launch the **Center City District Foundation** as a vehicle to fund the next phase of public improvements.

### REMAKING CENTER CITY:

Old Philadelphia Development Corporation (OPDC) was founded in 1956 as a partnership between business and civic leaders and Mayor Richardson Dilworth. Center City then was the headquarters for fading manufacturing firms, the setting for department stores losing market share, a place whose banks were soon to be purchased, and where a declining central waterfront bordered the squalid Dock Street markets. Residential deterioration and abandonment plagued redlined neighborhoods; thousands of

residents were beginning to depart for the suburbs in a process that would reduce the city's population by 600,000.

While many concluded old cities were dying, OPDC's mission was to reverse those trends. Etched into the granite at two entrances to the park that bears his name at City Hall, we placed two quotes from the 1950s from Richardson Dilworth. At 15th and JFK: *"Some cynics say our big cities should be eliminated. But you cannot have a lot of suburbs sprawled out in search of a city."*

Simple to say today; but it appeared wishful thinking to many in 1959. It takes transformational vision and a commitment to the hard work of implementation to remake cities.

On the south side of City Hall, on the walkway that links the Avenue of the Arts to Dilworth Park is a second quote: *"Once you get renewal started, it spreads out like a fan and benefits much greater sections of the city. It helps bring people back from the suburbs."*

Today, 43% of all jobs in Philadelphia are located in Center City; 25% of the working residents of every Philadelphia neighborhood work downtown; 60% of these jobs are available to those without a college degree.

When OPDC changed its name in the 1980s to CPDC and began to advocate for the Avenue of the Arts and a private-sector-sponsored management district, Center City was a 9-to-5 downtown, reeling from the loss of federal funds.

When the Center City District was launched in 1991, new office buildings, healthcare and educational institutions, first envisioned in the 1960s, had replaced much of the old economy. Historic housing was being restored and reoccupied. But the public environment was in disarray, plagued by graffiti. Sidewalks were dirty by day; dark, empty and foreboding at night.

Today, Center City is the fastest growing residential portion of Philadelphia. More than 40% of the residents living between Girard Avenue and Tasker Street work downtown. New retail is transforming long dormant streets where department stores closed decades ago. An expanding number of suburban firms are following empty-nesters and young professionals back into downtown. Arts, culture, tourism, conventions and new public spaces are flourishing.

Change takes time. When the CCD was created with the simple mission of clean and safe, no one imagined that 25 years



later we would have invested over \$135 million in lighting, landscaping, and directional signs, and transformed four public spaces into beautiful, well-used parks. Renewal spreads out like a fan. CCD pedestrian-scale light fixtures have become the standard for commercial districts across the city. CCD's pedestrian wayfinding system has extended into University City and South Philadelphia.

There is a lag between cause and effect. Gas prices at 30 cents a gallon throughout the 1950s and 1960s fueled decades of sprawl. Prices spiked in 1974. Still, as late as 1970, 70% of the regional office space across the country was located in central business districts. By 2010, 75% of commercial office space had decamped for the suburbs. But the tide has clearly turned. Investments made decades ago took time to yield dividends. In the digital age, everything

accelerates. Commitments made today can reshape Philadelphia for decades to come.

To commemorate these landmark anniversaries in 2016, we are launching a repurposed **Center City District Foundation (CCDF)**. The CCDF was created in 1992 as a 501(c)3 tax-exempt nonprofit organization to provide technical assistance to neighborhood commercial corridors throughout Philadelphia. With initial funding from The Pew Charitable Trusts, the goal was to transfer experience from the CCD to more than a dozen other special districts that have formed across the city.

Since then, CCDF has served as the conduit for the *Campaign for Real Change*, urging the public to give, not to panhandlers, but to employment and housing programs that provide real change for recovering homeless

individuals. CCDF has been the medium for businesses and individuals to contribute more trees to Center City sidewalks through *Plant!Philadelphia*.

When the William Penn Foundation transferred ownership and management responsibility for John F. Collins Park on the 1700 block of Chestnut Street, the vehicle was the CCDF. From 2012 to 2014, the Foundation served as the channel for charitable contributions that helped build Dilworth Park.

### SUSTAINING MOMENTUM:

Major investments by businesses, individuals and institutions have transformed Center City. Assessments, member contributions, local foundations and government grants have fashioned the walkable public environment that attracts businesses and residents today. But there is so much more to do! The



CCDF is now repositioned to be Center City's charity of choice to implement ideas generated by CPDC and augment programs managed by the CCD. Its goal: to enhance competitiveness and the quality of life and to fashion a more expansive and inclusive downtown Philadelphia.

For long-time residents or those who have moved back to a thriving Center City, rich with cultural and dining alternatives, think how much better a place you can leave to your children and grand-children, by supporting improvements to CCD parks and by adding new amenities like the Viaduct Rail Park ([centercityphila.org/about/viaduct.php](http://centercityphila.org/about/viaduct.php)). For businesses eager to retain and attract talent, think of the public amenities, landscaped boulevards, gateways and quality spaces that define great cities. Both donor and

sponsorship opportunities are available. Those seeking to commemorate a family member or a friend can read on page 4 how employees from a downtown firm honored the memory of one of their colleagues. For those committed to reducing Philadelphia's appalling high unemployment and poverty rates, learn about the employment opportunities CCD creates in the story on page 6.

The CCDF will be led by an expanded board of directors, chaired by Gerard Sweeney, CEO of Brandywine Realty Trust. Its executive director will be Nancy Goldenberg. Additional board members will be announced shortly. To become part of Philadelphia's success and to learn about the diverse projects that you can support through tax-deductible contributions to the CCDF, visit [supportccdf.org](http://supportccdf.org).

Great cities do not happen by accident. They are not only the result of market forces. They are the creation of dedicated leaders and community members; they are the product of the decisions, contributions and investments we make. They provide pathways to opportunity for all; they are the legacy we leave for the future.

**Paul R. Levy**  
President  
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# Park Benches Adopted to Honor Beloved Radian Colleague

Miyoko Kato came to Philadelphia from Japan as a young woman to pursue an education, fell in love with the city, and decided to make it her home. She had no family here until she met and married Beba Varadachar, who had ventured from India to America also on his own. Together they built a life in the city, with Miyoko working in finance and Beba in psychology.

In November 2014, Miyoko celebrated the 10 years she had been employed by Radian, an insurance company at 1601 Market Street. Over the course of a decade, Miyoko had won the hearts of her new colleagues with her devotion to their lives and families. Her cubicle was filled with photos of everyone's children, and if they had no children, she posted pictures of their pets. Her nearby office mates, finance colleagues Kelley Cahill and Caryn Durling recall cards, birthday presents and Christmas presents quietly appearing on their desks, not just for themselves, but for their children as well.

"The people on this floor were her family," Caryn said. "She used to bring me vegetables and fruits to eat because she worried I didn't take care of myself."

In January 2015, Miyoko was diagnosed with cancer that was rapidly spreading through her body. In February, she had surgery. In March she was moved to hospice, by May, she had passed away. Beba and Miyoko had always made their plans assuming Beba would leave Miyoko a widow, because he was much older. Beba was devastated and Miyoko's friends rallied to his aid.

Her colleagues on the 11th floor of Radian honored her memory and spirit by holding a butterfly ceremony in Logan Circle, releasing monarch butterflies. But they wanted to do more, something more permanent.

"She was so special," said Loretta Tague, an administrative assistant at Radian. "We wanted to memorialize her."

One day after the butterfly ceremony, an ad popped up on Loretta's Facebook page from the Center City District's Adopt-A-Bench program for two of our parks. She knew she had found the appropriate memorial. The next day she emailed a few people and all agreed that adopting a bench in Sister Cities Park, near Miyoko's and Beba's home and where they loved to

take walks, would be a perfect tribute to their beloved friend.

Forty-six donations poured in, buoyed by Radian's generous 100% match for gifts to 501c3 organizations, up to \$2,500. Not only did they raise enough to adopt a bench in Sister Cities Park, 18th Street and the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, but there were sufficient contributions to adopt a second bench in nearby John F. Collins Park, 1707 Chestnut Street.

"The stack of checks was awesome," Loretta recalled.

The CCD is preparing the memorial plaques and the benches are expected to be dedicated early next year.

"We didn't want her to be forgotten," Kelley said.

Added Caryn: "I will never come across someone as sweet as Miyoko."

Thousands of visitors spend time in CCD's beautiful parks. Donations help endow the maintenance of benches and landscape. If you would like to honor or memorialize someone, please contact Nancy Goldenberg at [215.440.5523](tel:215.440.5523) or email [ngoldenberg@centercityphila.org](mailto:ngoldenberg@centercityphila.org).



# CCD Parks Host Special Events Large and Small

In the past year, Center City District parks have hosted a variety of events, from large public gatherings, to charitable fund-raisers, to small intimate weddings.

In April, Dilworth Park at City Hall hosted the kick-off for the fifth annual Philly Tech Week. Festivities included an “open air app arcade,” video game demos, and live performances. More than 30 community partners came together to create an accessible and inclusive public gathering for Philadelphia’s tech community.

In July 2015, the 25th Anniversary Celebration of the Americans with Disabilities Act in Dilworth Park was one of the many celebrations that took place across the country to recognize the landmark legislation protecting the civil rights of individuals with disabilities.

Education was the theme for two well-attended events in September. More than 5,000 newly-arrived college students gathered at Dilworth Park on September 12 for CollegeFest, the all-day welcome event for students, produced by Campus Philly in collaboration with the City of Philadelphia and Army ROTC.

On September 19, Steppingstone Scholars, the nonprofit that supports academic enrichment programs for students in middle school through college, held their Step Into Fall Gala fund-raiser at Dilworth Park.

Weddings have been especially popular in our smaller parks. John F. Collins Park, 1707 Chestnut Street, offers a lush green oasis for intimate-scale weddings. Sister Cities Park, 18th Street and Benjamin Franklin Parkway, hosted an event with both human and four-legged members of the wedding party.



If you would like to have your special event in one of CCD’s parks, please contact Sarah K. Anello, Venue Sales Specialist, at [215.440.5507](tel:215.440.5507) or [sanello@centercityphila.org](mailto:sanello@centercityphila.org). To see photos of CCD’s four parks, please go to [ccdparcs.org](http://ccdparcs.org) or visit our individual park Facebook pages (e.g. [facebook.com/dilworthpark](https://www.facebook.com/dilworthpark)).



Arlee Polite: "It feels good to have a positive lifestyle."

## Arlee Polite: Making the Best of a Second Chance

In March, Arlee Polite walked out of Community Corrections Center (CCC) #2, a halfway house on North Eighth Street where he had spent the previous six months, and into a job with the Center City District's (CCD) cleaning team.

Polite had served 2½ years in prison and as his time was coming to an end, a counselor suggested he talk with the CCD about a job as a sidewalk sweeper.

"I made a couple of wrong decisions in my life, but I paid my debt to society," Polite said recently. "I'm back on my feet. Getting a job is the most important thing. You can't do it without a job."

Polite is part of a seven-person team that sweeps and cleans sidewalks outside the District as part of the CCD's neighborhood, fee-for-service program. Work begins at 7:30 a.m. and ends at 4:00 p.m., giving Polite time to see his three children in the evenings.

"I see them every day," he said. "That's the most important thing, the family," Polite said. "It feels good to have a

positive lifestyle."

Since the late 1990s, the CCD has competitively selected a company (now ABM) to manage its cleaning operations and has offered jobs to hundreds of people looking for a fresh start in life. Currently ABM works with counselors at two nearby halfway houses in the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections to identify qualified candidates for sidewalk sweepers.

Henry E. Hippert, Jr., CCD's Operations Manager from ABM Janitorial Services, said approximately 70% of the people hired through this program succeed in their new jobs, which, along with wages, come with a benefit package.

Polite grew up at 17th and Carpenter Streets in South Philadelphia. His mom died when he was eight years old, his father passed away when he was 17. He dropped out of South Philadelphia High School and began working at a fast-food restaurant. He had other jobs: prep cook, housekeeping, cashier in a grocery store. Then came the time when he couldn't

find work. "The economy was bad and I couldn't find a job," he said. That's when trouble began.

Having had time to think about things and consider what's important, he realized, "I had to get myself together."

He earned his GED, and when his time was up, he was ready for a second chance. He found it at the CCD: "I really needed it," he said. "I really appreciate it."

*There are many others like Arlee Polite who deserve a second chance. Please help the CCD expand these employment opportunities by making a contribution today to the Center City District Foundation at [supportccdf.org](http://supportccdf.org) or sending your donation to: Nancy Goldenberg, Center City District Foundation, 660 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106.*

# Rothman Ice Rink's Exciting Second Season

The Rothman Institute Ice Rink reopened for a second season on Friday, November 13, with the addition of the new Rothman Cabin, a heated hospitality tent offering Cuban burgers, French fries, hot chocolate, and coffee from Garces Events. Skaters are enjoying the convenience of visiting the Rothman Cabin without having to remove their skates.

The Rothman Institute, PNC, Temple University Center City, Magee Rehabilitation, and 6abc (WPVI) have provided generous support for this winter attraction.

Also new this season, the Rothman Institute Ice Rink is accessible for everyone, including members of the disabled community. With the generous support from Magee Rehabilitation, sled skating allows disabled children and/or adults to reserve a sled to use during scheduled sessions throughout the season.

Admission to the Rothman Institute Ice Rink is \$3 for children ages 10 and under and \$5 for adults. Skate rental is \$9. Group rates are available for parties of 10 or more.

Hours for the Rothman Institute Ice Rink are Noon to 9:00 p.m., Monday



Peter Tobia

through Thursday; 12:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m., Friday; 11:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m., Saturday; and 11:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Sunday.

A four-week Learn-to-Skate program is available on Sunday mornings at 9:30 a.m. and 10:15 a.m.

The Rothman Institute Ice Rink at Dilworth Park is operated and managed professionally by Rink Management Services Corporation (RMSC) of Mechanicsville, Virginia. RMSC was competitively selected by the CCD.

The Rothman Institute Ice Rink will be open on all holidays, including Friday, December 25, Noon to 8:00 p.m.; and Friday, January 1, 11:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. For the complete up-to-date schedule, visit [dilworthpark.org/rothmanicerink](http://dilworthpark.org/rothmanicerink).

If you would like to hold your special event at the Rothman Cabin, rentals are available Sunday from 6:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.; Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.; Thursday and Friday between 9:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.; and Saturday mornings between 9:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.

The rental rate depends on the number of people, time of day and length of the event. Exclusive catering is provided by Garces Catering. Group rink rentals also are available in conjunction with the cabin rental.

To arrange your rental, please contact Sarah K. Anello, Venue Sales Specialist, at 215.440.5507 or [sanello@centercityphila.org](mailto:sanello@centercityphila.org).

## All-New! Made in Philadelphia Holiday Market

Holiday activity at Dilworth Park is even more animated this year as the new *Made in Philadelphia Holiday Market* adds new craft and gift shopping opportunities on the southern end of the park, complementing the Rothman Institute Ice Rink on the north.

Showcasing local artists, confectionaries and designers, *Made in Philadelphia Holiday Market* offers unique gifts and special holiday foods in tents topped with Original Herrnhut Stars with dramatic 17 square and eight triangular points. The Holiday Market was conceived and

designed to complement the Christmas Village in Philadelphia at LOVE Park (JFK Plaza), and was created by the same producer, Thomas Bauer's German American Marketing, Inc.

*Made in Philadelphia Holiday Market* offers more than two dozen specialty vendors and will be open through Sunday, December 27.

*Made in Philadelphia Holiday Market* hours are Sunday through Thursday, 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.; and Friday and Saturday, 11:00 to 8:00 p.m.

On Christmas Eve, December 24, market hours will be 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and the market will be closed on Christmas Day, December 25.

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Center City District and  
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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 60 years of private-sector commitment to the revitalization of downtown Philadelphia.