

CENTER CITY DIGEST

ON THE AGENDA FOR THE NEXT MAYOR: THE PUBLIC ENVIRONMENT

Even as we diversified services in the last 25 years, the Center City District (CCD) has maintained the same goal: creating a competitive, vibrant and attractive downtown. Founded in 1990, when *dirty and dangerous* were overwhelming barriers, CCD 1.0 was an operating system of seven-day-per-week sidewalk cleaning, graffiti removal and safety ambassadors, known as Community Service Representatives (CSRs), working in partnership with police. In 1994, we expanded those services with the now quaint-seeming *Make It a Night* campaign to activate sidewalks one night per week, deploying entertainment and encouraging stores to stay open later on Wednesday.

As the downtown diversified in the mid-1990s with arts, entertainment, hospitality and housing, the visitor and evening economies began to flourish. Property owners authorized a new level of services. CCD 2.0 was launched in 1997 with a \$20 million bond issue, backed only by district revenues, to finance a system of streetscape improvements that has grown into 957 directional pedestrian signs and maps, 841 transit signs and maps, 832 trees and planters, 1,500 banner poles and 2,179 pedestrian lights (see pages 4 and 5). From a provider of clean and safe services the CCD evolved into a *stage manager*, enhancing the backdrop for commerce and for the daytime and evening pedestrian experience.

Building on this project-management experience, the CCD was able to leverage significant additional funding from local, state, foundation and federal sources to make even more streetscape and facade lighting improvements in what has evolved into a 24-hour downtown, welcoming to more than 180,000 residents, millions of visitors, and nearly 300,000 workers.

CCD 3.0 was born in 2003, when a long-term lease of parkland from the City at 16th Street and the Benjamin



Sister Cities Park at Logan Square is one of four parks managed and programmed by the CCD.

Franklin Parkway enabled us to make \$2.33 million in improvements that were completed in 2008, including new landscaping, walkways, lighting and the 1,200-square-foot Café Cret with outdoor seating. Rental income from a competitively-selected operator is pledged to park maintenance, creating the template for future projects.

Since 2007, CCD has renovated, manages and now programs four parks and three cafes in Center City cutting the ribbon last September on CCD's most ambitious project to date – the \$55 million transformation of Dilworth Park, bringing CCD's capital investment in the public environment to \$132 million since 1997. With an ice-rink, three fountains and a pond in our parks, programming for children and adults, the ability to host events, weddings and special events, CCD has emerged as a 24-hour *place manager*.

A central principal throughout this evolution has been that the CCD should *supplement but not replace* the responsibilities of local government and those of property owners and business. The graphics on pages 6 and 7 make amply clear that while the CCD maintains a broad range of public amenities, there are scores of other streetscape furnishings and installations that are the responsibility of 23 different entities. They include parking kiosks, traffic signals, fire hydrants, trash containers, commercial dumpsters, bus shelters – the list reaches 83 in number!

Early on, CCD took an oath that we would try never to utter the words, *"It's not our job."* At the same time, we could not afford to spend District dollars doing the work of others. That's one of the tight-rope acts of downtown management: how to help out in a pinch without getting sucked into a void.



CCD staff clean sidewalks, remove graffiti, provide public safety patrols and note on hand-held pads deficiencies and problems that are reported to multiple agencies.

The response? Every other month, teams of our CSRs survey the entire District with hand-held tablets and report on those 83 different public space conditions (see stories on pages 3 and 10). Everything is geo-coded and tied back to a database that lists the agency responsible for maintenance. Quick emails and periodic meetings help with follow-up. Beginning as eyes and ears for the police, CSRs have evolved into public space managers who assist and coordinate with almost two dozen other public agencies. The goal is not to find fault, but rather to fix problems.

Some things are easy: a light is either on or off; a sign is bent or oriented correctly. But many challenges are grounded in outmoded systems, obsolete ways of doing things, or totally inadequate resources. So many quality of life issues remain as opportunities for innovation and creativity for our next mayor.

Pages 8 and 9 highlight just a few of the public space challenges that, if addressed, could help take the public

environment of Center City to the next level. Better management of newspaper boxes, trash cans and commercial dumpsters are just the low hanging fruit. Major challenges like homelessness, aggressive panhandling and various forms of disorderly conduct touch major social and constitutional issues. They require a thoughtful balance of well-managed services, rethinking how the city spends scarce public dollars, and respect for the rights of everyone who wants to enjoy the great success that has been achieved in Center City.

If there is a message from the last quarter century in all American cities, it's that success is achieved not by solo acts or prima donnas, but by partnerships forged between public, private and civic groups that share a common mission: creating thriving city centers that are places of employment,



innovation, opportunity, culture and excitement; great places in which to learn and live.

Paul R. Levy
President
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High-Tech Tablets and GIS-Based Maps Used for CCD Surveys

Three teams of Community Service Representatives (CSRs) survey the entire District every other month and report on 83 different public space conditions ranging from graffiti to non-functioning traffic lights to damaged hydrants to light poles that need repainting. The information is recorded on portable iPads, which allow for sophisticated data tracking. Once the CSRs have gathered the information, they turn it over to the CCD's data-mapping specialist, Richard Citkowitz, who creates a GIS-based map pinpointing the sites that need attention. Those conditions that CCD is directly responsible for are referred to District operations, and Philly 311 is notified of others. A week after the data have been gathered, 23 responsible agencies are invited to the Public Space Collaborative meeting to review and develop a plan to correct the problems. (See profile on page 10.)

STREETSCAPE FEATURES WITH THE MOST PROBLEMS

Graffiti is the most prevalent problem across Center City. Elements most impacted in descending order of frequency with other problems, besides graffiti, noted in parentheses.

Newspaper Honor Boxes (not secured in corral, damaged, blocking curb cut, unlicensed)

Building Facades (challenges with construction perimeter, damage, maintenance required)

Parking Signs (damaged, faded, missing)

Parking Meters/Kiosks (broken, damaged)

Mail Boxes (damaged)

Pedestrian Street Lights (missing components, damaged, knocked over, not working)

Traffic Signs (damaged, missing, leaning over)

Dumpsters (improperly maintained, overflowing, damaged)

CCD Street Banners Enliven the Downtown

The Center City District's banner program began in the early 1990s as a way to enliven the streets of Center City and highlight CCD's marketing activities and programs. But very quickly arts and culture organizations began calling to ask about how they could participate and use these colorful street graphics to promote their own message and mission.

Today, the CCD manages 1,500 banner poles and serves an average of 77 different organizations each year. Most banners are usually deployed for no more than six weeks. Occasionally, some remain in place for months; but to create variety and to ensure that faded banners don't mar the streetscape, six months is usually the maximum life. In 2014, the CCD installed 3,843 banners, with Walnut and South Broad Streets as the most popular locations.

Clients pay for the design and production of the banners, as well as the installation, which is managed by the CCD. Based on criteria set by the Philadelphia Art Commission, discrete corporate sponsorship recognition on the banners helps cultural institutions underwrite the costs.

If you are interested in banners for your organization, please contact Kelly Farrelly, Manager of Marketing & Sales, at 215.440.5527 or kfarrelly@centercityphila.org.



The CCD's street banner program helps animate Center City's streets.

Philly311: The City's Contact Center

Philly311 is the City of Philadelphia's centralized non-emergency Contact Center. Residents can contact 311 and report broken traffic signals, potholes, graffiti, unsafe or improper residential conditions, or other complaints. Philly 311 also provides information on trash and recycling schedules and how to get a smoke alarm.

When you submit a request for service, you will receive a reference number to track the status of the request.

Contact Philly311 by dialing 3-1-1 Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., excluding City holidays; downloading the mobile app available in 16 languages; or emailing Philly311@phila.gov.

For complete information, please go to www.phila.gov/311/Pages/default.aspx.

CCD INVESTMENTS IN STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS

Since 1997, the Center City District has invested \$132 million in capital projects downtown to enhance the pedestrian environment, make public transit more accessible, enliven and beautify the streetscape, illuminate cultural and architectural assets, and transform parks.

The CCD completed renovations to Aviator Park (across the street from the Franklin Institute) in 2007; Cret Park (16th & Benjamin Franklin Parkway) in 2008; John F. Collins Park (1707 Chestnut Street) and Sister Cities Park (18th & Benjamin Franklin Parkway) in 2012; and Dilworth Park (at City Hall) in 2014. The CCD manages, maintains and programs all the parks except Aviator Park.

In addition, the CCD has added many other improvements and routinely maintains them on blocks throughout the entire District.

STREET FURNITURE

- 113 Honor Box Corrals
- 29 Bike Racks
- 25 Park Benches
- 3,834 Changeable Banners



LANDSCAPING

- 745 Trees
- 97 Planters





SIGNS

- 434 Pedestrian Directional Signs
- 258 Diskmap Signs
- 240 Vehicular Directional Signs
- 63 Parkway Interpretive Signs

TRANSIT ENHANCEMENTS

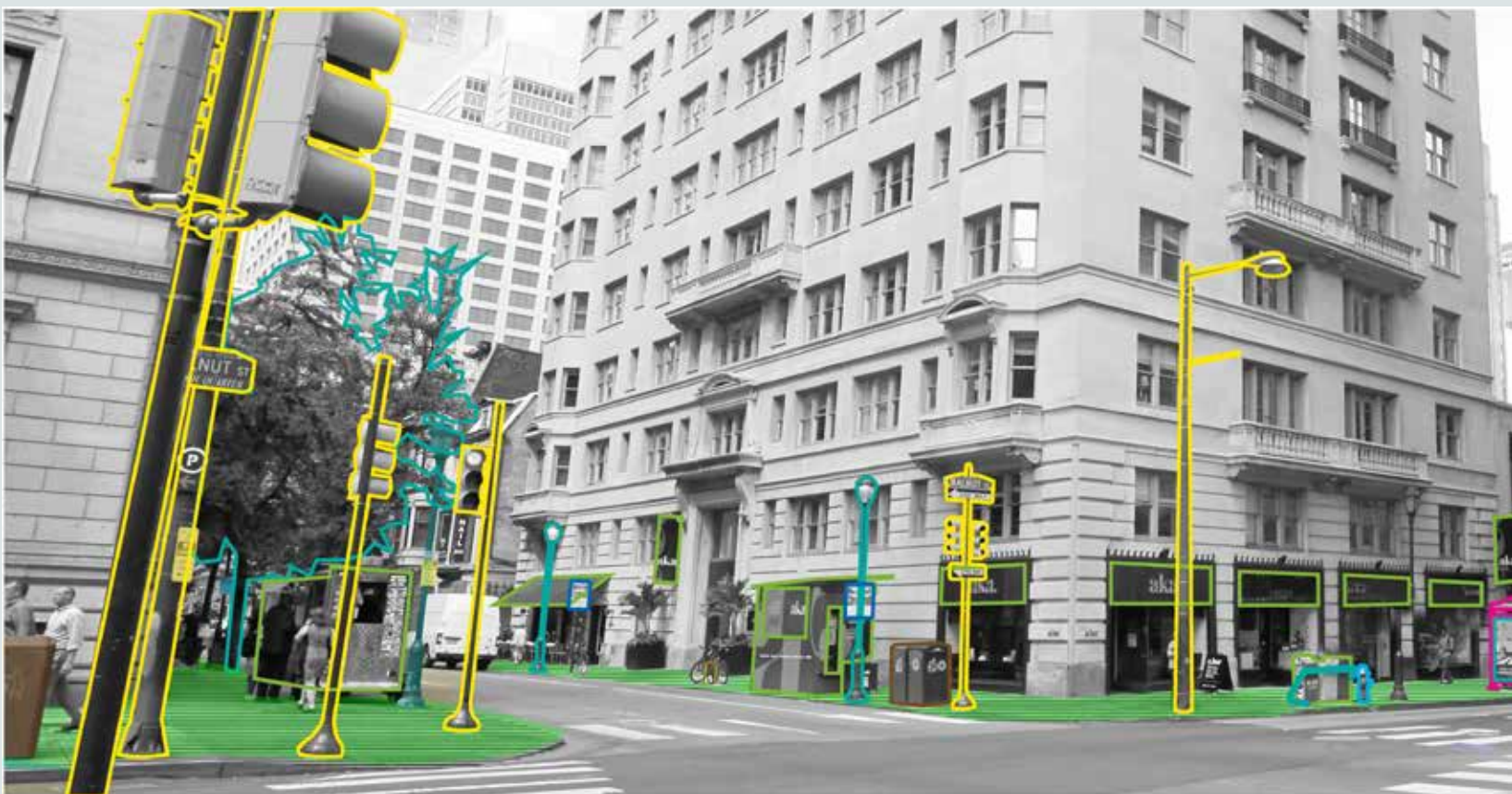
- 498 Art in Transit Posters
- 92 Bus Route Maps
- 261 Signs at Underground Transit Entrances

LIGHTING

- 2,179 Pedestrian Streetlights
- 74 City Hall Lighting – 10 locations
- 20 Illuminated Sculptures
- 12 Illuminated Parkway Building Facades
- 12 Color-Changing Avenue of the Arts Building Facades
- 3 Lighted JFK Boulevard Underpasses



SHARING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE STREETScape





Chicago has consolidated newspaper boxes into "condo" units that are easy to clean and far better organized.

Next Steps for Newspaper Boxes?

In 1999, Philadelphia City Council passed legislation that created a framework to manage newspaper "honor" boxes on the streets of Center City. Regulations limit the number that can be deployed per intersection, set distances between boxes, transit shelters and other street furniture, and require boxes to be within "corrals" that group them together.

Between 2003 and 2006, the Center City District (CCD) worked closely with newspaper companies to design a "corral" that worked for the publishers

and to implement a system of allocating boxes in the corral. As part of the three-way arrangement that was finalized in 2006, the CCD agreed to fabricate, install and maintain them; the publishers agreed to share the cost of the corrals and to keep their boxes chained within the corrals, in good working order, and free from graffiti, stickers, trash and debris; the City of Philadelphia agreed to assume formal ownership of the corral structures, to license boxes and enforce regulations.

While the system worked reasonably well for a decade, as major publishers have ceased to rely on boxes for street distribution, smaller publishers haven't always had the resources to keep up with graffiti removal.

The CCD has proposed to the City and to Titan Outdoor, its selected provider of transit shelters and other street furniture, that the corrals be superseded by honor box "condo" units that have been used successfully in other cities.

BigBelly® Cans: Room for Improvement

In July 2008, the Center City District and the City of Philadelphia undertook a month-long demonstration project to test solar-powered trash receptacles in Center City. Three BigBelly® solar-powered trash compactor cans were jointly purchased and placed at three locations – Seventh and Chestnut Streets and on the 1400 and 1800 blocks of Walnut Street.

Using the sun's energy to automatically compact trash, these compacting cans hold up to 200 gallons of trash,

compared to a typical City can that holds 55 gallons. Because they are closed at the top, they don't overflow and a warning light and computerized system automatically signals the Streets Department when they are at capacity.

During the demonstration phase, CCD provided graffiti removal and routine cleaning services.

In April 2009, following the test period, the City purchased and deployed 500 cans to replace all the open-top

wire mesh baskets that continually overflowed.

CCD proposed that the City continue cleaning and graffiti removal services, or arrange to have them performed some other way. CCD estimated a one-time cost of \$42.50 per can to apply protective graffiti film, \$10 per can per year to clean and remove graffiti, and \$10 per can to power wash routinely. The Streets Department chose not to provide for those services after the full deployment was made.

A Better Use for the 43 Alleys in the Commercial District?

Throughout residential Center City, many small alleys that subdivided Penn's grid in the 18th and 19th centuries now provide unique and pleasant pedestrian experiences. They accommodate small houses, serve as shortcuts for pedestrians and in some neighborhoods accommodate gardens, retail, dining and entertainment.

In 2008, the Center City District identified 43 alleys in the core commercial district within the boundaries of the CCD. Of these, 27 alleys (63%) are located east of Broad Street and 16 alleys (37%) are located west of Broad Street.

While a handful of these alleys have a mix of residential and vibrant commercial activity, most accommodate dumpsters and loading for businesses that front on larger streets. Unlike in shopping centers where multiple retailers share key-operated dumpsters that consolidate refuse from multiple businesses, individual retailers in Philadelphia arrange their own contracts with multiple providers. As a result, many dumpsters crowd alleys and often are not appropriately locked, leading to overloading and vulnerability and to vandalism. Some haulers are neat, others are not.

While enforcement is part of the solution, the cities that have handled this best have decided that it is in the public interest to consolidate the management of private dumpsters, limiting the number of haulers and borrowing the shared, metered approach used in shopping centers.

The next Administration could consider consolidating private, commercial waste hauling services for the downtown, an option that has been successfully implemented in other cities such as San Francisco, Seattle, and Los Angeles. In essence, the city bids out the service of collecting private commercial waste in a specified geographic area. Different commercial waste haulers are awarded licenses to provide services for defined districts, affording the city greater control, management and oversight of the hauler's operations and effectiveness. It allows the city to deal with far fewer entities, generally provides for uniform dumpsters, ensures consistent waste-hauling practices and dramatically reduces the number of dumpsters per alley.

This is not an easy path, but as some of our existing alleys demonstrate, it can create new pedestrian spaces, room for

outdoor cafes and increase the utility and value of smaller buildings that front on these alleys.

For a good summary of options, see *The New Yorker* magazine, January 9, 2014 issue, "A Better Way to Take Out the Garbage" www.newyorker.com/business/currency/a-better-way-to-take-out-the-garbage.

In the Public Spaces Survey conducted every other month by the CCD, about one-quarter of the cans are found to be marred with graffiti and stickers and most appear to be dirty and stained. In the absence of a funded, comprehensive maintenance program, the CCD has elected to spray down the cans during routine sidewalk cleaning, but does not give them a thorough cleaning.

As a result of complaints about their appearance and the reluctance of some to grab the bar handle that opens the disposal chute, the City recently announced that, as existing units reach the end of their useful life, they will

be replaced with foot-pedal-operated units. Given the much greater efficiency and performance of these cans, the next Administration should invest in the routine cleaning of their exteriors so they contribute to the appearance of a well maintained city.

Efficient "BigBelly Cans" would contribute even more to downtown cleanliness if the City would budget to clean them.





CSRs Brandon Anderson (left) and Terrence Keene note graffiti on a pedestrian light pole as part of the Public Spaces Survey.

Terrence Keene: Tracking Problems in Public Spaces

For 13 years, Community Service Representative (CSR) Terrence Keene has handled a variety of responsibilities at the Center City District. He was an original member of the six-person Public Spaces Team and continues to serve in that capacity, works on the Homeless Outreach Team, and also takes up CSR duty at Dilworth Park.

While the CCD provides a specific set of services, the mission of the Public Spaces Team is to track major issues, where the responsibility to rectify rests with others, such as potholes, leaking fire hydrants, broken street lamps, damaged building facades, and overflowing dumpsters.

“The goal is to serve as eyes and ears for various municipal agencies and to report problems, so they get fixed,” Keene said.

Every other month, the team of six spends an entire week walking each block of the District and noting issues. The team uses a computer tablet capable of taking photos. The tablet is programmed with a map and when the team finds a problem, they note the location and add a description of the problem and a photo.

“A lot of problems we saw when we first started have been fixed,” Keene said. Illegal dumping is not nearly as prevalent, he said, and pedestrian lights that are missing or broken are fewer.

CCD GIS and data specialist Richard Citkowicz downloads all the data from the entire team and maps it on a single comprehensive database at the CCD.

Since 311 was introduced, that City service has become part of the reporting process as well. “Our dispatcher will call 311 and let them know,” Keene said.

Keene enjoys all aspects of his job. “I get to enjoy the weather, meeting people from all over the world, engaging with the businesses in the area, it’s an all around good job. You have to be a people person. I like interacting with anyone.”

SUMMER IS A GREAT TIME TO VISIT DILWORTH PARK



In addition to its many amenities, Dilworth Park is busy with a variety of activities – something for everyone – throughout the summer and the entire year.

Summer is the perfect season to stop by Dilworth Park, where you can enjoy a cooling stroll through the fountain, live music, evening drinks and tasty foods from Rosa Blanca Café, with al fresco dining on the PNC Terrace. Rosa Blanca Café is open Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.; and Saturday and Sunday, 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Also, Capogiro Gelato Artisans, a family-owned gelateria, has its colorful custom-made cart open seven days a week from 11:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. on the north side of the park. Capogiro offers sorbetto and gelato in a wide array of flavors.

Summer slips past so quickly. Make sure you visit Dilworth Park this season! Here are some activities for you to enjoy.

SIPS AT DILWORTH

Every Wednesday through September 16, from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., Rosa Blanca Café hosts Center City District Sips. DJs provide music from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

FARMERS' MARKET AT DILWORTH PARK

Every Wednesday through November 18, 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., McCann's Farm of Elk Township, New Jersey, has an array of fresh fruits and vegetables, from asparagus to blueberries to zucchini. PetAl Plants & Flowers of New Jersey stocks a wide variety of houseplants, flowers and Philly Bread offers freshly baked breads.

MAJOR LEAGUE BOCCE SUMMER

Every Wednesday, July 15 through September 16, 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., on the Albert M. Greenfield Lawn. Pre-registration required.

RHYTHMS AT ROSA BLANCA

Every Thursday, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. through September 17, with no program on August 6, live music features duos and trios playing summer-style and Latin music.

Here's the lineup:

July 16, 23, 30, and August 13 – Trinidadella;
August 20 – Rafael Pondé;
August 27, September 10 & 17 - De Tierra Caliente;
September 3 – El Caribefunk.

For complete information on Dilworth Park, please visit www.ccdparks.org/dilworth-park. If you would like to host your special event at Dilworth Park, please contact Sarah Anello at sanello@centercityphila.org or 215.440.5507.

CCD THANKS ALL THE DONORS & SPONSORS WHO MAKE DILWORTH PARK A SUCCESS. FOR A COMPLETE LIST, PLEASE GO TO WWW.CCDPARKS.ORG/DILWORTH-PARK/DONORS.

CENTER CITY DIGEST

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Inside

- 1 Agenda for the Next Mayor
- 3 Street Banners Enliven Downtown
- 4 CCD Streetscape Improvements
- 6 Sharing Responsibility for Streetscape
- 8 Next Steps for Newspaper Boxes?
- 9 A Better Use for 43 Alleys?
- 10 Terrence Keene: Tracking Problems
- 11 Summer at Dilworth Park



RESTAURANT WEEK



New Dates
SAME SPECIALS

AUGUST
2-7 & 9-14

3 Courses



\$35 DINNER **\$20 LUNCH**



#CCDRW   

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* Tax, alcohol & gratuity not included. Lunch or dinner only. For reservations call restaurants directly or book online at CenterCityPhila.org.

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.