Digest

CENTER CITY DISTRICT

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Mel Epps

Two-Handed Solutions

Philadelphia is on pace for an unprecedented, tenth consecutive year of job growth. Despite worries about the durability of the national economic expansion, momentum remains robust in Greater Center City, where 42% of all city jobs are concentrated. Several new office buildings are in design; outside investors are upgrading existing stock. Occupancy and room rates are rising even as more hotels open. New residential construction and renovation are leasing and selling well. An expanding, diversified customer base is attracting new retailers to traditional shopping streets and fueling transformational developments on Market East.

Two emblematic indicators: (1) While 76% of downtown's retailers remain locally owned, 90 nationals have opened here in the last five years. (2) Two decades ago, you could count all major grocery stores in Greater Center City on just one hand. Now, 18 full-service grocers are thriving between Girard and Tasker, river to river. They join 10 neighborhood-scale specialty shops and our landmark Reading Terminal Market. Even with national uncertainties, optimism about Center City remains strong: 72% of respondents to CCD's 2019 Customer Satisfaction Survey view downtown as "headed in the right direction" – 18 points higher than optimism about the city as a whole.¹

RESURGENT QUALITY OF LIFE CHALLENGES:

There are caution flags however, focused mostly on quality of life concerns, curtailed in the 1990s but resurgent again. Since 2015, the number of people that police count sleeping outside *overnight* in the area between Spring Garden and Lombard, river to river, increased by 57%, averaging 494 per night, even higher in warmer months. Within the narrower boundaries of the Center City District, our daytime sidewalk counts of unsheltered individuals have increased 136% since 2015 to a monthly average of 86, with summer highs over 130. In the last four years, panhandlers have increased by 116%, averaging 59 per day.

People living and begging on the street need compassion and help. Some suffer from untreated medical ailments and from drug, alcohol or mental health problems. Several exhibit disturbing, behavioral problems, posing a danger sometimes to themselves or others.

While 76% of respondents to CCD's survey said they feel **safe** "most of the time" or "always" downtown, those numbers have declined in the last five years. Among experiences that prompt feeling **unsafe**, ranking first is *panhandlers who confront pedestrians* (58%) followed by *people sleeping on the sidewalks and in building entrances* (45%). Many also wrote in describing disturbing subway concourse conditions and teen behavior after school.

^{1:} CCD has conducted an annual Customer Satisfaction Survey for almost two decades, reaching over 100,000 individuals in 2019. Postcards linked to online surveys were mailed to more than 4,000 business and residential property owners and building managers within the CCD; 2000 postcards were distributed on street; the survey was promoted for eight weeks to the 9,632 recipients of CCD's print Center City Digest, which includes workers, shoppers and residents throughout the region. The survey was the subject of five special edition emails sent to the CCD's regional distribution lists of 99,000 individuals and posted on the CCD's social media accounts. The Urban Land Institute, Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau, Design Advoccy Group, BillyPenn and Econsult helped distribute it electronically. On nine days between October 5 and October 29, CCD staff and uniformed Community Service Representatives were deployed at 11 outdoor locations through the downtown to administer the survey (Midtown Village Festival, Dilworth Park, 18th & Walnut, 13th & Sansom, 19th & Market, Concast Center, 10th & Chestnut, Loews Hotel, Collins Park, Sister Cities Park and the Fashion District). By the close of the survey on December 2, 2019, we received 397 paper returns and 4,620 online responses, totaling 5,017 completed surveys.





AVERAGE DAYTIME HOMELESS COUNT WITHIN CENTER CITY DISTRICT

Month	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2015-Most Recent % Change
January	16.50	26.00	39.00	58.00	34.00	106%
February	15.50	39.00	49.50	62.00	52.00	235%
March	24.50	43.33	62.00	62.00	38.33	56%
April	32.33	58.50	50.00	101.50	81.00	151%
May	33.00	55.00	43.50	110.67	104.66	217%
June	35.00	54.50	46.50	127.00	93.50	167%
July	46.00	71.00	73.00	108.00	113.50	147%
August	66.50	90.50	180.67	137.00	109.50	65%
September	56.00	80.67	135.50	115.00	130.50	133%
October	45.33	75.00	151.50	89.50	100.25	121%
November	28.00	52.68	78.00	81.00		189%
December	53.50	63.50	84.00	78.50		47%
Yearly AVG	37.68	59.14	82.76	94.18	85.72	136%

CCD on-street counts

While responses are similar across race, ethnicity and gender, there are marked variations by age. For the safety question, in addition to panhandling, homelessness, illegal drug dealing or the absence of uniformed police officers or other public safety professionals, respondents could elect: these are normal aspects of urban life and do not bother me. Among all respondents, this option ranked fourth at 24%. Aggressive panhandling was first (58%) followed by people sleeping on sidewalks [45%] and absence of uniformed public safety officers (38%).

For those 34 and under, *panhandling* similarly scored first (55%); *homelessness*, second (40%); but seeing these as a *normal aspect of urban life* rose to 35%. However, acceptance of such conditions drops dramatically to 24% among those age 35 to 53 and to 19% for those 55 and older.

TWO-HANDED SOLUTIONS:

Responding to resurgent panhandling and homelessness, CCD expanded last year's pilot outreach program, named the Ambassadors of Hope. Instead of the traditional practice of police and city-funded outreach teams operating separately, CCD funded two, specially trained, *interdisciplinary* teams: social workers from Project HOME, police officers from their service detail and CCD's own outreach teams. All three have patrolled together since April 2019, engaging unsheltered individuals and panhandlers, building relationships and offering offstreet alternatives. CCD dedicates a van to immediately transport those who request assistance.

As of November 23, 2019, *Ambassadors of Hope* helped 184 individuals leave the street and access food, services and shelter, with CCD vans transporting 76%. Those choosing to remain complied with requests from police to abide by the City's *sidewalk behavior ordinance*. They departed from locations where they impeded free passage of other pedestrians. They complied with requests to cease obstructing doorways and transit shelter benches; to cease panhandling within eight feet of building entrances or ATMs; and to neither occupy nor leave belongings on the public sidewalk for extended periods.

No arrests have been made; no citations issued. The goal is to connect those in need to help, while supporting everyone else's right to use public walkways. More off-street resources remain essential to achieve greater

HOW SAFE DO YOU FEEL WHEN IN CENTER CITY?



Source: 2019 Customer Satisfaction Survey, Center City District

success, especially as federal resources for housing with supportive services have declined.

This *two-handed* approach – increasing services, housing and opportunity, while maintaining basic standards of public behavior – was key to the dramatic reduction of street homelessness and panhandling in the 1990s. This was the successful formula behind the Center City Community Court, which blended criminal justice and social services from 2002 until it was unfortunately disbanded in 2012.² The court took seriously low-level offenses like street-corner prostitution, retail theft, aggressive panhandling, disorderly conduct,

WHAT SITUATIONS/CONDITIONS MAKE YOU FEEL MOST UNSAFE IN CENTER CITY?



Source: 2019 Customer Satisfaction Survey, Center City District

destructive graffiti, vandalism or public defecation. It offered community service sentences, rather than jail time; job training, mental health and addiction services as constructive, rather than punitive responses to underlying disorders that may have compelled the offense. Those who completed courtordered sentences saw the arrest expunged from their record.

The same two-handed approach is used to address the opioid crisis in Kensington.

Complex social problems are rarely resolved at ideological extremes. They respond best to balanced, two-handed, pragmatic approaches.

WHAT IS QUALITY OF LIFE POLICING:

Current public discourse about *quality of life* policing confuses and conflates it with the tactics termed *stop and frisk*. Stop and frisk authorized police briefly to detain someone on the suspicion a crime has been, or is about to be committed by the suspect.

Quality of life policing grew out of the learned experience, starting in Newark, N.J., in the 1970s, that the police **should not be the sole party** to decide what constitutes or produces *public safety*. Closely aligned with *community policing*, it was founded on the assumption that police should engage residents and businesses in a community, ask what makes them most insecure and in a time of scarce resources, what problems they would most like addressed. What quickly emerged in neighborhoods of all incomes: no one thought serious crimes like murder, rape or armed theft should be ignored. However, most wanted more priority given to day-to-day annoyances: drug dealing on corners; disruptive behavior and broken beer bottles in playgrounds; smashed car windows; graffiti on storefronts and in schoolyards.

When police took these lower-level offenses seriously, neighbors felt more secure as a standard was set and enforced for acceptable public behavior. Serious crimes also declined because occasionally, perpetrators of low-level offenses turn out to be perpetrators of more serious crimes. Taking *quality of life* issues seriously does not have to result in incarceration. It usually means collaborating with community associations, truant officers, addiction and mental health professionals and family counselors, recognizing that social problems often drive behavioral challenges. As in the Community Court, *qualify of life* policing seeks solutions for both the offense and the causes underlying the offense.



KEEPING CENTER CITY CLEAN:

Regarding cleanliness, 62% of survey respondents see Center City walkways as "much cleaner" than the rest of the city (down from 66% in 2015). The problems that most "detract from the appearance of sidewalks in Center City" were cardboard, rubbish and waste left by people sleeping on sidewalks (59%); overflowing municipal trashcans (51%); commercial and residential trash left on sidewalks (49%); and graffiti on street furniture (23%).

To address simpler challenges like graffiti, CCD has increased frequency of cleaning ground-floor building facades and pressure washing sidewalks to remove stains and gum. Separate teams scour not only CCD-owned street furniture, directional signs, maps and planters, but also city-owned Big Belly trashcans, PPA parking kiosks, light poles, regulation signs and newspaper honor boxes.

Responding to a 30% rise in pedestrians on prime retail streets in the last decade, we are collaborating with the Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau, Greater Philadelphia Hotel Association and the Streets Department's Sanitation Division to deploy more trashcans on downtown sidewalks, while reporting those broken or overflowing.

2: To read an overview, https://centercityphila.org/ccd-services/public-safety/crime-prevention

BROADENING THE RANGE OF JOB CREATION:

Since the end of the Great Recession, Philadelphia has added more than 43,000 entry-level jobs, requiring only a high-school diploma. This has reduced unemployment and poverty rates in neighborhoods. However, as noted in CCD's recent report, Growing More Family Sustaining Jobs, while 60.5% of jobs added in Philadelphia since 2009 pay \$35,000 or less, just 26% pay between \$35,000 and \$100,000 annually.³ Nationally, 29% of new jobs are in lower wage sectors; 58.4% pay between \$35,000 and \$100,000. Among the 25 largest cities, 28.1% of new jobs are in lower wage sectors; 51.8% pay between \$35,000 and \$100,000. Philadelphia seems an outlier with insufficient, family-sustaining jobs created, nor sufficient opportunities to maximize retention of recent college graduates.

Newly added jobs are distinctly different from the distribution of Philadelphia's existing, 580,665 private sector jobs: 27% pay \$35,000 or less; 56% pay \$35,000 to \$100,000 and 17% pay \$100,000 or more. All cities constantly shed existing jobs; to stay competitive, we must continually produce a broader range of replacement jobs. The October report suggested several paths to this goal.

The Customer Satisfaction Survey sought answers too: Which three improvements would enhance the competitiveness of Center City as a place to work or start/expand a business? The top responses are improve public schools [57%]; reduce the wage tax (52%); reduce homelessness was added as a possible response this year, and tied for third with reduce traffic congestion (both 49%).

Again, responses vary most by age: priorities for those 34 and under are *improve public schools* (64%); *reduce the wage tax* (55%); *reduce traffic congestion* moved into third position (54%); and *reduce homelessness*, fourth (44%). Among the demographic that best gauges successful retention, 35 to 54 year olds, rankings reversed: *reduce the wage tax* (58%); *improve public schools* (57%); and *reduce homelessness* tied with *reduce traffic congestion* (45%).

Among respondents who own businesses in Center City, answers are more tightly clustered: *improve public schools* (55%); *reduce the wage tax* (54%); while *reduce the business income and receipts tax* (53%) jumped high in



the ranks, followed by *reduce homelessness* [47%] and *reduce traffic congestion* [30%]. Economic development also warrants a two-handed approach: improving workforce preparedness **and** lowering locally imposed costs of doing business.

IMPROVING THE PUBLIC ENVIRONMENT:

We asked what changes to the "public environment could most improve Center City as a place to work or live?" *Better manage traffic and congestion* topped the list (57%); *require property owners to fix broken sidewalks* was second (45%); *improve the condition of dumpsters in service streets and alleys* was third (35%).

CCD's March 2018 report, *Keep Philadelphia Moving*, recommended how the diverse city agencies that manage mobility could coordinate more effectively.⁴ Similarly, we are exploring methods to consolidate dumpsters. Regarding components of the streetscape CCD tends directly, we plan in 2020 to: (1) add 200 trees to sidewalks throughout the District, bringing totals to 2,500 by the year's end; (2) landscape the new bike lanes on West Market and JFK Boulevard, following restriping next spring; (3) upgrade street and sidewalk lighting in multiple locations; (4) add new planters in partnership with adjacent property owners. Finally, 89% of survey respondents rank CCD's four parks as *positive additions* to downtown; 10% see them as an *improvement, but not convenient* to them; just 1% say they *are not a good use of District resources*. In 2020, we will continue to diversify the amenities and programs in these special places, while seeking new spaces to upgrade.

POSITIONED FOR GROWTH:

National factors – declining federal funds and devastating costs of the opioid crisis – exacerbate local challenges. Nearly all cities face similar headwinds. Most have rebounded despite declining federal support since the 1980s. For the first time in decades, we have local growth to harness, if we do not stifle it with heavy-handed efforts to redress real disparities. We succeed best when we cease blaming or demonizing others, avoid rhetorical and policy extremes and focus on practical, innovative and two-handed solutions that prompt more dynamic and diverse job growth for all.

Paul R. Levy

President plevy@centercityphila.org

^{3:} The report can be downloaded at https://www.centercityphila.org/research-reports/growing-more-family-sustaining-jobs-in-phila

^{4:} The report can be downloaded at https://www.centercityphila.org/research-reports/2018congestion



Meet Emrah Ulcay,

CCD's New Vice President of On-Street Operations

Emrah was born and educated in Turkey and has gained a broad range of experience in retail and customer service in the U.S. over the last two decades. Most recently, he served for six years as Director of Guest Services for the Philadelphia Zoo, where he oversaw all aspects of the visitor experience. Prior to that, for seven years, he was the Director of Operations, Retail/Food for Drexel University.

In his role at Center City District, Emrah oversees the day-to-day internal coordination, management and quality control for the CCD's highly visible sidewalk cleaning and safety programs that have transformed the pedestrian experience in Center City Philadelphia. We asked Emrah a few questions about his current work at CCD and his future goals: **Q:** You get to interact with nearly every facet of CCD's work – from our sidewalk cleaners and Community Service Representatives to our parks and events. How has your previous experience prepared you for this role?

A: I feel very fortunate to have had opportunities to gain diverse work experiences. At Drexel University, I opened and managed many businesses on campus, ensured that a high level of service was maintained, and really enjoyed the engagement with staff and students. Moving to the zoo was an exciting change – going from a workplace of 10 city blocks to 42 acres definitely increased my daily steps count! Managing all aspects of guest services for 1.2 million visitors a year kept me busy. It was my first experience in a mission-based nonprofit and changed my way of thinking, becoming part of something bigger than myself. My current role at CCD incorporates some of the most important things I learned from prior roles: diverse operational experience, people-oriented service and being a part of a big mission. It is a privilege to work in a public service environment.

Q: What are you enjoying most so far?

A: I am so impressed with our current CCD staff, who have been a great help for my onboarding here since day one. I enjoy walking the Center City sidewalks, visiting our parks and engaging with our staff and seeing how dedicated and focused they are, doing what they do every day with great passion. Makes me very proud to be a part of a great group of people.

 ${f Q}_{:}$ What do you see as your biggest challenge?

A: Maintaining the consistent level of service that CCD is known for, with an ever-changing and growing Center City. Homelessness and panhandling have become larger challenges recently, and CCD is working with Project HOME and the police department to help connect people living on the streets to shelter and services.

Q: What are your objectives for the coming year?

A: Creating a coalition with all partners, businesses and residents to provide the best, most welcoming environment possible in Center City.



The Center City District Foundation supports CCD programs and is the charity of choice for those who seek to sustain and enhance downtown Philadelphia's vitality, economy and attractiveness. A broad range of donors have enabled the Center City District Foundation to raise funds for three very diverse initiatives that are improving the downtown.

At the beginning of 2019, we launched Plant Center City: an effort to add 200 new trees to downtown Philadelphia by the end of 2020. As of November 2019 we are pleased to announce that we are more than halfway to our goal, and plan to plant dozens more trees in spring 2020 thanks to many generous donors.

While surveying the families who regularly visit Sister Cities Park, many parents and caretakers expressed their wish to expand the age range of children we can serve and lengthen the season for outdoor play. As a result, through design work by Studio Bryan Hanes and generous contributions from local businesses and residents, we will be adding new play attractions in the Children's Discovery Garden for spring 2020.

Through the Center City District's continued partnership with Project HOME, we expanded the *Ambassadors of Hope* program in 2019, deploying two teams for homeless outreach, and extended the duration of the program to 35 weeks.

These accomplishments would not have been possible without our partners and contributors, whose generosity fosters the continued transformation of Philadelphia. Additional thanks to our corporate partners, whose investments continue to animate our parks and streets, increasing the vibrancy of Center City. Sponsors and donors listed on the next page represent commitments of \$250 or more made between November 1, 2018 and October 31, 2019.

To learn how you can contribute, visit **SUPPORTCCDF.ORG** Or contact Katie Andrews, Director of Development, at kandrews@centercityphila.org

Center City District Foundation

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Sister Cities Park

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Wintergarden

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Homeless Outreach Continues in Center City

Ambassadors of Hope, an innovative collaboration developed in response to the resurgence of panhandling and homelessness in Center City, is successfully connecting people on the street with shelter and services they need.

Two specially trained three-person teams of Project HOME outreach workers, police officers from the Philadelphia Police Department's service detail and Center City District Community Service Representatives patrol together five days a week, engaging homeless individuals and panhandlers and offering off-street alternatives.

Funded and launched by the CCD, this intensive program helped more than 130 people come off the street during its inaugural year in 2018. This year, as of November 23, Ambassadors of Hope have helped 184 individuals leave the street and access food, services and shelter. Overall, CCD vans were responsible for transporting 76% of those who agreed to seek help. City Streets Department crews cleaned up 19 sites, after those who had encamped there came inside to secure assistance.

Those who choose to remain on the street complied with directives to abide by the City's sidewalk behavior ordinance with no arrests or police citations issued by the outreach teams since the program's inception in April 2018.

"We've been really pleased with the results achieved through this unique collaborative effort in which people from very different disciplines, skills and organizations work together each day to connect so many people with the services and help they need," CCD President Paul R. Levy said.

The 2019 Ambassadors of Hope program is being extended into the winter months.

CCD employees donated 190 gently used books this fall to Project HOME's new online book store. For details, visit www.projecthome.org/posts/2019/02/project-home-nowaccepting-book-donations

"This collaboration enhances communication and efficiency between these three organizations since all of us get calls for help for people who are living on the street."

- Project HOME Executive Director Sister Mary Scullion



Shop Center City

Center City District's newest style ambassadors – Malcolm Jenkins, Owner/ Creative Director of Damari Savile and Safety for the Philadelphia Eagles, Meredith Gremiel, owner of Beaucycled and Teddy Sourias, owner of Craft Concepts Group – share their favorite places to shop, eat, drink and experience the holidays in Center City.

From the Made in Philadelphia Holiday Market at Dilworth Park and the Christmas Light Show at Macy's, shop Center City for the ultimate holiday experience in the region.





@shopcentercity



New Reports from CCD/CPDC



Growing More Family Sustaining Jobs

After decades of economic contraction, Philadelphia has added jobs for nine straight years. However, the city has grown a disproportionately larger share of jobs in lower wage sectors than the national average and the 25 largest American cities.



Center City Philadelphia Retail

An expanding job base and a dramatic increase in Center City residents has attracted 90 national retailers in the last five years. As a result, 2 million square feet of new retail was either recently completed or is under development at the end of 2019.

TO READ AND DOWNLOAD THESE REPORTS, VISIT centercityphila.org/research-reports

Streetscape Improvements

Center City District works year-round to make downtown Philadelphia welcoming, brighter, safer and more accessible. Our work includes planting and maintenance of over 700 street trees and 360 planters, as well as landscaping and care of more than 160 trees in the five parks we manage.

ENHANCING CENTER CITY'S VITALITY THROUGH CLEANING AND GREENING





CCD teams scour not only CCD-owned street furniture, directional signs, maps and planters, but also city-owned Big Belly trashcans, PPA parking kiosks, light poles, regulation signs and newspaper honor boxes. We have also increased frequency of cleaning ground-floor building facades and for pressure washing sidewalks.

Winter at Dilworth Park

Center City District has a festive calendar of events for all ages. Enjoy free fitness classes, free music, cocktails, karaoke, ice skating, the holiday light show and winter garden, a local makers' market and much more. Visit ccdparks.org for details.

Ongoing

DECK THE HALL LIGHT SHOW

Presented by Independence Blue Cross with support from 6abc Through January 1 Daily, 5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

MADE IN PHILADELPHIA HOLIDAY MARKET

Through January 1 Sunday-Thursday, 11 a.m. – 7 p.m. Friday-Saturday, 11 a.m. – 8 p.m.

COCKTAILS & COLD ONES Presented by Shipley Energy Through February 19 Wednesdays, 5 p.m. – 7 p.m.

COLLEGE NIGHTS Through February 20 Thursdays, 5 p.m. – 9 p.m.

ROTHMAN ORTHOPAEDICS ICE RINK & ROTHMAN ORTHOPAEDICS CABIN Through February 23

WINTERGARDEN ON THE GREENFIELD LAWN Presented by TD Bank

Through February 23

Coming in 2020

CENTER CITY FIT

Presented by Rothman Orthopaedics January 7–February 18 Tuesdays, noon – 1 p.m.

QUIZZO

January 7–February 18 Tuesdays, 6 p.m. – 8 p.m.

KARAOKE NIGHTS

Presented by The Met Philadelphia January 10–February 21 Fridays, 7 p.m. – 10 p.m.

SUPERHERO SKATE

Presented by Capital One January 18 Saturday, 2 p.m. – 4 p.m.

CHINESE NEW YEAR CELEBRATION

January 25 Saturday, 5 p.m. – 9 p.m.

FREE IN FEBRUARY

Presented by Capital One February 1–23

SWEETHEART SKATE February 14 Friday, 7 p.m. – 10 p.m.



Interested in hosting an event at one of CCD's parks?

To find out about CCD park rentals, call 215.440.5507 or email rentals@centercityphila.org

CHECK US OUT AT CCDPARKS.ORG



Digest

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 more than 60 years of private-sector commitment to the revitalization of downtown Philadelphia.



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