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# CENTER CITY Digest

## Come back to the office, there's work to do

*Slow but steady* best describes Philadelphia's recovery, as we've averaged 1,600 more jobs each month since July 2020. Recent growth has been led by educational services, leisure, hospitality and government, though we still are 69,000 jobs short of the citywide employment levels in February 2020.

Rising transit ridership, parking occupancy and pedestrian volumes in Center City reflect the staying power of downtown residents, the full return of colleges and universities (most mandated vaccination for students and employees), the reopening of performing arts venues, the steady return of tourists, convention attendees, regional shoppers and the partial return of office workers.

In October 2021, we averaged 309,600 pedestrians per day in Center City, 75% of January 2020 levels, the highest volumes in 20 months. But on West Market Street and JFK Boulevard, activity was just 26% of pre-pandemic levels with 84,000 office workers still absent from Center City each day. Nationally, 78% of lost jobs have been recovered; the 11-county region has recovered 69% of its jobs. Philadelphia's rate of recovery is just 46%.

With 70% of Philadelphians ages 12 and over, and 85% of residents 65 and older, vaccinated twice by December 1, with boosters widely available for adults, with children ages 5 to 11 already in line, the city has made extraordinary progress toward a goal we once thought of as *herd immunity*. Breakthrough cases and new variants have given reason for caution and prudence. But crowds are comfortably returning to sports arenas, theaters and concert halls, bars and restaurants. So what's the problem with offices, where social distancing and masking in common areas is much easier to achieve?

We read about the *great resignation*, the *end of office buildings* and how the pendulum has swung in the employee's favor in workplace negotiations. A recent article in *The New York Times*, "What Bosses Really Think About the Future of the Office," summarizes well:

"CEOs are struggling to balance rapidly shifting expectations with their own impulse to have the final word on how their companies run. They are eager to appear responsive to employees who are relishing their newfound

autonomy, but reluctant to give up too much control. And they are constantly changing policies in response to worker demands, re-examining aspects of their business that they might not have tinkered with otherwise."

Read surveys, participate in roundtables or focus groups with employees or employers, and you'll hear a litany of reasons why workers allegedly will never come back five days a week. But peel away COVID concerns, fear of transit, worries about safety and child care challenges (all real, and many still in the process of being resolved, as we note in this issue of *Center City Digest*) and push beyond the misleading paradigm of "remote vs. in-office," and what you'll probably find is a general reluctance to have one's time and schedule dictated by others, a visceral resistance to the 9-to-5 routine, a *Zoom*, *Webex* and *Teams* enabled 21st-century Luddite rebellion: "For almost two years, I've set my own schedule. I'm reluctant to relinquish control."

For employees, this is enticing; and loosening things in stultifying organizations is always beneficial. At the same time, business leaders ponder: "We function *adequately* through

remote meetings. But is our company achieving peak performance, being truly innovative, providing high-quality service to our customers and mentoring younger professionals who will sustain the company's culture, competitiveness and growth in the future?"

Let's acknowledge we've lived through a global trauma and it is human nature to draw back at such moments in self-protection. Let's also recognize there are functions in many organizations ably performed and managed remotely. If you run a call center, you may not need an office. Many tasks can be done from multiple locations, as we did on cellphones and linked laptops for almost two decades before the pandemic.

Still, there are multiple projects and processes that benefit significantly from either structured or informal face-to-face conversations, from reading unstated messages in body language rarely detectable on computer screens. There are serendipitous conversations on the train or sidewalk, in the gym or in restaurants with colleagues or competitors that prompt new ideas, unlikely to emerge from planned "innovation sessions." Creativity comes from connecting the unconnected, from encountering the unexpected, from walking down the corridor and bumping into a colleague who becomes an accidental sounding board. Greater flexibility, yes. The end of offices? Unlikely.

For years, I have taught graduate students at the University of Pennsylvania and as the classrooms have gotten more internationally and racially diverse, so have the perspectives. For the last year, we've compared the recovery of city centers from the pandemic among students from North American cities, from Beijing, Chengdu, Shanghai, Wuhan, Xiamen, Bangalore, Singapore, Tokyo and a host of European and South American cities. The U.S. has done better than some and far worse than others.

Every fiber of my American DNA rebels against the government control exercised in China. But even while concealing some things, they have almost entirely shut down the pandemic in major cities. Mask wearing is universal. When new cases appear, they immediately quarantine and shut down entire neighborhoods, as they take contact tracing to an authoritarian extreme with digital technology. Most workers are back in their offices and most shops are reopened.

There are advantages to American individualism. So, too, there are many reasonable points along a continuum between

the singular focus on individual liberties and the total dominance of community and corporate concerns. Denmark is notable as a democratic society with high levels of social and institutional trust that produces a community spirit and cooperative adherence to shared public norms.

So if we see the limits of individualism in the refusal to value the community benefits of universal vaccination; if we recognize that deracinated individuals living only on social media, holed up in their homes, are prone to paranoid fantasies and charismatic madmen, might we entertain the thought that the rebellion against 9-to-5 work culture could be another, perhaps more benign, manifestation of this trend? Bowling and trolling alone?

## *Does it Matter?*

What are the broader implications if office workers remain remote and buildings go vacant? Let's acknowledge Philadelphia has excelled over the last two decades in diversifying our downtown by converting vacant older buildings to new residential and hotel use. It may make sense to do this again.

But professional, financial and business services companies, as well as technology firms, offer not only high-wage innovation and managerial jobs; they also provide many mid-wage support roles. We know every half-million square feet of occupied offices creates opportunities in building services: five mechanical engineers, 18 cleaning personnel and 12 security guards. We know every time tenants expand or lease new space, work is created for the building trades. We know the spending of office workers creates demand for retail and restaurant jobs and employment in transit, taxis and ride-sharing. That same half-million square feet of occupied office space creates demand from business travelers for 11,000 hotel room nights.

While one-third of downtown jobs require a four-year college degree, one-third require a two-year associate degree and one-third require just a high school diploma. That is a huge advantage when these jobs are at the center of our transit system.

We know residents never left and visitors are returning, but absent all office workers, only 80% of retail and restaurant locations within the CCD are open for business, while taxable receipts from Center City's bars and restaurants in the second quarter of 2021 were only 67% of 2019 quarterly revenues. Both nationally and locally, high-wage jobs have increased, while low wage jobs have declined.

The combined effect of remote, high-wage work and low-wage job loss is that wage tax collections are consistently below 2019 and 2020 levels, with Q3 2021 revenues still 11% lower than Q3 2019. This reduces resources for needed citywide municipal services. This is compounded by the fact that 47% of Center City workers and 35% of citywide workers commute from the suburbs and are exempt from the wage tax, if they have been directed to work from home.

This critical challenge to Philadelphia finances and to social equity ought to be a spur for those serving on the City's tax reform committee, as the pandemic has starkly revealed the City's vulnerability due to its unusual dependence on wage and business taxes.

## *Fashioning a Response*

In partnership with many others, CCD is working overtime and adding new services to keep Center City clean and safe. As we recover from a global trauma, we should do everything possible to reassure and encourage people to come out of isolation and return. This issue of the Digest highlights our new and expanded initiatives, recent research and reports, events in our parks and support for restaurants and retail. We acknowledge the many generous donors who have enabled us to do even more than assessment revenues can support.

Recovery is about more than restoring business as usual. The pandemic has highlighted the compelling need to correct long-standing deficiencies in our tax structure; to rethink current policing strategies; to invest more in economic development and the growth of Black and brown businesses; and to capitalize on remarkable opportunities afforded by the life sciences. It creates a unique opportunity to attract remote workers and firms from other cities, given our affordability, amenities and ease of access. To this end, CCD has launched a multimedia campaign, linked to the website [www.Philllyworks.com](http://www.Philllyworks.com).

Crises are moments when businesses and cities that hold to the status quo and fail to respond, can slip into decline. This is also a moment when leaders with courage and vision can set Philadelphia on a new trajectory as a faster growing, more inclusive and innovative place. It's hard to do that by remote control.

**Paul R. Levy**  
President  
[plevy@centercityphila.org](mailto:plevy@centercityphila.org)

# CCD Messaging to Promote Recovery

Center City District has created a pair of marketing campaigns with two different audiences but the same goal: Center City's recovery.



## #GetRecentered

is our yearlong effort to encourage the return of workers to Center City offices and visitors to shops and restaurants by highlighting the people, places and things they've missed, from group lunches and happy hour to performing arts and shopping. The ads feature vibrant collages that change seasonally and also promote specific events like Center City District Restaurant Week and Shop Center City Saturdays. You'll see #GetRecentered ads in print brochures and postcards, on bus shelters, on outdoor and office lobby digital screens, on online banner ads and all over social media. Learn more about the campaign at [centercityphila.org/getrecentered](http://centercityphila.org/getrecentered).

## Philly Works

launched in October to encourage firms from other cities to open a satellite office in Center City. The campaign cites the advantages of shorter commutes, a walkable and amenity-rich downtown, a diverse talent pool, and a better live/work balance, all with housing and office rents at a fraction of the costs in other cities. The campaign includes print ads in *The Wall Street Journal* and *Wharton* magazine, digital ads on Amtrak, online banner ads, and social media. Check it out at [Phillyworks.com](http://Phillyworks.com).



# Expanded Safety Patrols



Center City District has expanded our clean and safe programs by deploying a 20-person, uniformed, unarmed bicycle safety patrol from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. in office, retail, entertainment and dining areas. This patrol is in addition to 100 sidewalk cleaners and 40 uniformed foot patrol safety ambassadors, called Community Service Representatives (CSRs), who have been central to CCD's mission since our founding 30 years ago.

CCD's clean-and-safe team is part of a broader partnership of public and private agencies working to enhance public safety and support the return of workers to public transit and to their offices. The "Safety Matters" initiative includes more than 200 uniformed and plainclothes SEPTA police officers deployed system-wide, coordinated patrols with the Philadelphia Police Department (PPD) and police from three area hospital systems; and redistribution of PPD resources already allocated to Center City into busy commuter and transit areas at peak travel times.

# Enhanced Homeless Outreach

To address panhandling and homelessness on Center City sidewalks, the CCD funds and has expanded the successful Ambassadors of Hope (AoH) program, a unique partnership established in 2018 with Project HOME and the Philadelphia police with support from the City of Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health in which two teams, consisting of Project HOME, CCD CSRs and crisis intervention-trained police officers engage with homeless individuals on Center City streets and provide transport to shelter.

In October, a mental health outreach worker from Pennsylvania Hospital's Hall-Mercer Community Behavioral Health Center joined the AoH teams, bringing specialized expertise and connections to additional networks providing addiction treatment, shelter and housing for individuals with mental health and cognitive issues and the ability to assess and prepare mental health committal petitions for individuals in crisis.



# New Reports from CCD/CPDC

## *Monitoring Philadelphia's Economic Recovery*

is a snapshot of current conditions, updated monthly and based on key economic indicators, commercial office and housing market trends, construction activity, local tax revenues, transit ridership, parking volumes and pedestrian activity in Center City. Read or download the latest 10-page report at:

[centercityphila.org/office](http://centercityphila.org/office)

## *Center City Developments 2021*

is an in-depth report on current and upcoming major projects in Center City. The report includes a map and full-color photos or renderings and project descriptions of all 63 major developments in Center City Philadelphia, categorized by type. An interactive map features all of the developments found within the publication. To see the map and report, visit:

[centercityphila.org/developmentsreport](http://centercityphila.org/developmentsreport)

## *Center City Retail 2021*

is an annual look at the state of downtown retail, which has experienced a slow, but sustained process of recovery throughout 2021 as vaccination rates have steadily climbed, lost jobs have been restored and those businesses that rely on face-to-face customer interaction are rebounding from the total, global disruptions in 2020. To read or download the report, visit:

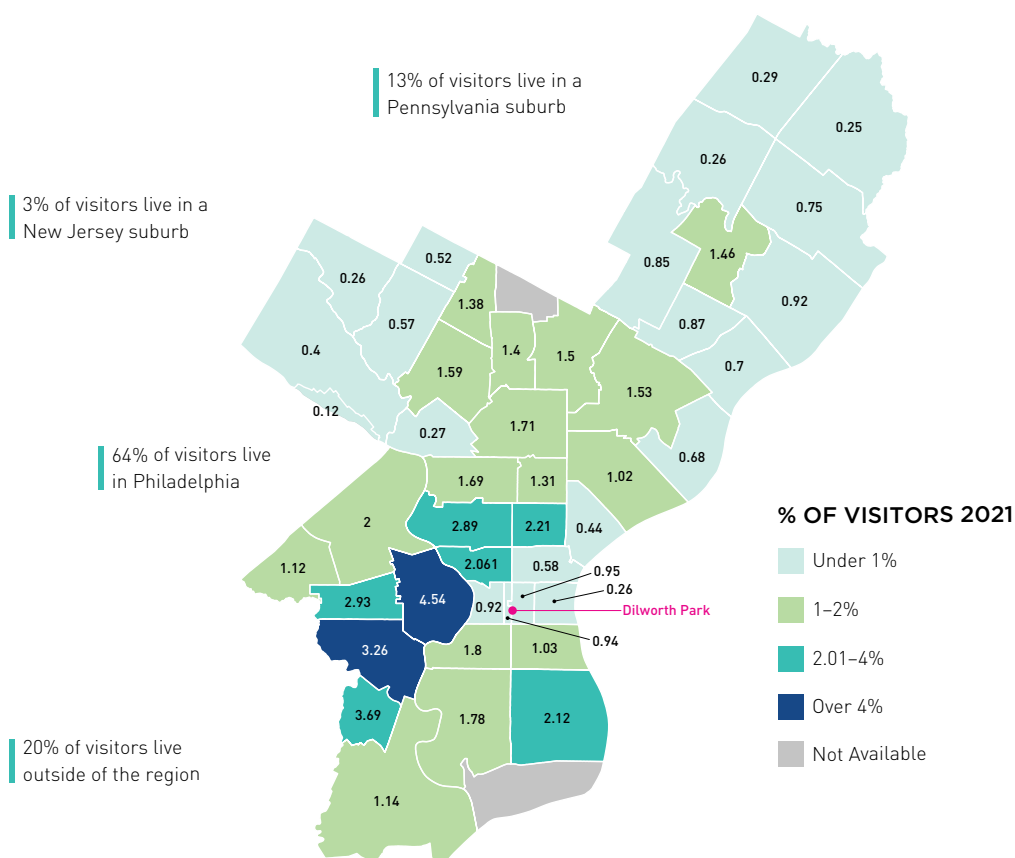
[centercityphila.org/retail](http://centercityphila.org/retail)



**FOR MORE CCD/CPDC  
REPORTS, VISIT**  
[centercityphila.org/research-reports](http://centercityphila.org/research-reports)

## PERCENTAGE OF VISITORS TO DILWORTH PARK BY HOME ZIP CODE

Dilworth Park attracted residents from neighborhoods throughout the city and across the region in the first 11 months of 2021.



Source: Placer.ai



# Thank You For Your Support

Generous contributions to the Center City District Foundation over the past year have supported the recovery of downtown Philadelphia. CCDF supported the creation of the Wintergarden in Dilworth Park and has underwritten *Arts on Center Stage* and *Parkway Pals*, free performances and programs in our parks in partnership with Philadelphia's arts and cultural organizations, providing them with safe, no-cost venues to reach their audiences. Contributions to CCDF also support the *Deck the Hall Light Show*, highlighting Philadelphia's historic City Hall throughout the holiday season, making skating in Dilworth Park a unique experience.

The Foundation has enabled us to add mental health professionals to our homeless outreach teams, expanding the Ambassadors of Hope program, a partnership with Project HOME

and the City of Philadelphia. We are continuing to plant more trees throughout the downtown and have installed new planters with holiday decorations along West Walnut Street to support our retailers and restaurants.

These accomplishments would not have been possible without our partners and contributors, whose generosity fosters the resurgence of Center City, after two challenging years. 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 gifts of \$125 or more made between November 1, 2020 and October 31, 2021.

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To learn how you can contribute, visit  
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Or contact Katie Andrews, Director of Development,  
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# Merry on Market Every Thursday in December

Center City District has partnered with retailers along Market Street East for a new holiday promotion on Philadelphia's most historic shopping street. Each Thursday in December, residents, workers and visitors can enjoy live outdoor entertainment from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. while shopping or dining on Market East.

Participating businesses include Macy's Center City, home to holiday traditions Dickens Village and the Grand Court Holiday Light Show; an animated 35-foot tree on East Market's pedestrian walkway between 11th and 12th streets; Reading Terminal Market, with music, Santa sightings and foodie demonstrations; Fashion District

Philadelphia's holiday light show and live music; holiday lights and a brass quintet at the Lits Building. In addition, dozens of streetlights are decorated with colorful holiday banners.

For more details, visit:  
[centercityphila.org/merryonmarket](http://centercityphila.org/merryonmarket)

*Still looking for some gift inspiration?*

Check out our Instagram (@centercitydistrict) for creative gift guides and insider tips from local influencers.

# City Sidewalks (and Parks), Dressed in Holiday Style

Center City District's streetscape team works year-round to ensure that our sidewalks and CCD-managed public spaces are welcoming and attractive, and the holiday season is no exception. You'll find festive parks filled with photo ops and play opportunities for kids, well-maintained planters adding seasonal spirit to holiday shopping, and much more.



Wintergarden on the Greenfield Lawn presented by TD Bank is an open-air oasis with festive décor and twinkling lights, plus a group of reindeer topiaries. These playful centerpieces are created on a wire structure with moss, grasses, seed heads and pods, and accompanied by seasonal foliage and a massive arbor, plus plenty of seating and a Chaddsford Winery kiosk.

The Wintergarden will be open every day, weather permitting, through April 3, 2022. This year's display was designed and built by Moonflower Garden Design, a local, woman-owned landscaping company. The Albert M. Greenfield Foundation has provided additional support for this season's Wintergarden, and TD is also proud to support the space to create a greener and more beautiful Center City.



Back by popular demand! This is the second year for the massive tunnel log at Sister Cities Park's Discovery Garden, an instant hit for children to explore. The log came from a fallen silver maple tree in Philadelphia that was estimated to be more than 150 years old.

Rescued from the Fairmount Park Organic Recycling Center operated by Philadelphia Parks & Recreation, it was then hollowed and smoothed out for reuse at Sister Cities Park, along with stepping stone rounds and a smaller climbing log. The tunnel log will be in the park through April, when the pond returns.



Center City's bustling West Walnut Street retail corridor has a new look for the holidays with new planters, funded by contributions to the Center City District Foundation. Thanks to the generosity of eight Center City property owners and commercial brokers, the 81 large planters that line both sides of Walnut Street from Broad to 18th Street will be maintained with three seasonal plant rotations throughout 2022. For the holidays, these large containers have been planted with seasonal evergreens and ivy varieties, along with colorful and winter-hardy flowering plants, created by landscape designer Hoffman Design Group to generate a festive and eye-catching impact.

*CCD is grateful for the support of sponsors Allan Domb, Midwood Investments, MPN Realty, Lubert-Adler, JLL, EQT/Exeter, Pearl Properties, and Asana Partners.*

# Winter in Dilworth Park

## Ongoing

### **DECK THE HALL LIGHT SHOW**

*supported by 6abc*

**Through January 1**

Sunday-Thursday, 5 p.m. – 9 p.m.

Friday-Saturday, 5 p.m. – 11 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**

**Through February 23**

Wednesdays, 5 p.m. – 7 p.m.

### **COLLEGE NIGHTS**

**Through February 24**

Thursdays, 5:30 p.m. – 9 p.m.

### **ROTHMAN ORTHOPAEDICS ICE RINK & ROTHMAN ORTHOPAEDICS CABIN**

*presented by Rothman Orthopaedic Institute*

**Through February 27**

### **WINTERGARDEN ON THE GREENFIELD LAWN**

*presented by TD Bank*

**Through April 3**

## Coming in 2022

### **CENTER CITY FIT**

*presented by Rothman Orthopaedic Institute*

**January 4-February 22**

Tuesdays, 6 p.m. – 7 p.m.

### **SUPERHERO SKATE**

**January 15**

Saturday, 2 p.m. – 4 p.m.

### **LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATION**

*supported by Temple University Klein College*

*of Media and Communications*

**January 29**

Saturday, 5 p.m. – 7 p.m.

### **FREE IN FEBRUARY**

*presented by Temple University*

**February 1-27**



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

For info about CCD park rentals,  
email [rentals@centercityphila.org](mailto:rentals@centercityphila.org)



CHECK US OUT AT  
**CCDPARKS.ORG**



# CSR Moses Pierce Retires After 30 Years As A CSR

Congratulations to Moses Pierce, the self-described human GPS, as he retires from Center City District after 30 years of service.

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*“You never work a day in your life when you are doing what you love to do.”*

---

Moses is one of CCD's first Community Service Representatives, and the last remaining in a CSR role from the original 1991 class. Several others have moved on to new roles within the CCD.

Moses has helped untold thousands of people in Center City over three decades, including a German sandwich shop owner who in 2016

was so taken by his hospitality, the tourist returned home and named a sandwich after him: The Philly Moses.

He says simply of his CCD career, “You never work a day in your life when you are doing what you love to do.”

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Learn more about CCD's Community Service Representatives, and find a link to apply, at [centercityphila.org/csrposition](http://centercityphila.org/csrposition)

# CENTER CITY Digest



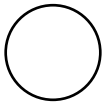
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DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

WINTER 2021

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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CENTER CITY DISTRICT

## Diverse Flavors to Savor Only in Center City.

JANUARY 9—21, 2022

THREE COURSES:  
\$25 LUNCH, \$40 DINNER\*

Restaurant Week returns this winter with two great prices and too many bites to count. To see all restaurants and menus, or to make a reservation, visit [CCDRESTAURANTWEEK.COM](http://CCDRESTAURANTWEEK.COM).

HAKU  
VODKA  
THE JAPANESE CRAFT VODKA



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