Throughout 2021, CCD surveyed ground floor businesses within the District on a monthly basis and the balance of Center City, from Vine to South Street, river to river, on a quarterly basis. The most recent survey was conducted within the District between December 9-18, 2021 and focused in the inventory of 1,894 storefronts within that geography (see adjacent map). Within the broader area, inclusive of the CCD, there are approximately 3,000 groundfloor businesses.

Pre-Covid, 11.1% of the ground floor premises within the CCD were vacant. Immediately following the civil disorder in June 2020, 34.3% of stores temporarily closed. During the last year and a half, the overwhelming number of those businesses have steadily reopened, while others have permanently closed. By December 2021, the percent that were temporarily closed fell to 2.5%, 195 businesses permanently closed, but due to many new openings, the District experienced a net increase of 115 vacant stores out of a total inventory of 1,894 ground floor premises, a vacancy rate of 17.7%.

Among the businesses that closed, 33.8% were national brands that filed for bankruptcy, downsized or went out of business, while 66.2% were local and regional operators. These national closures affected not only Philadelphia’s retail streetscape, but also Chicago, Miami and New York’s retail corridors. In 2021, 22% of storefronts in Chicago’s Magnificent Mile were vacant, while vacancy on Miami’s Lincoln Road was 20%, and vacancy in New York’s SoHo shopping area jumped to 27%. Philadelphia’s Walnut St recorded a 22% vacancy.

**Bankruptcies:** Gap, Ann Taylor, Century 21, Lucky Brand, Modell’s, The Walking Company, Aldo

**Major national closures:** Banana Republic, GAP, The Children’s Place, Rite Aid, AC Moore, Tie Bar

Overall in Center City, retailers accounted for 35% of closings, restaurants constituted 46% and service providers represented 19% of closures between 2020-21.
Between March 2020 and December 2021, Center City welcomed 125 new businesses, which include 75 (52%) food and drinking establishments, 38 (30%) retailers, and 22 (18%) service providers. Of these 125 openings, 41% are national brands and 59% are independent business or local chains.

Upcoming openings: 28 new business have announced plans to open in 2022. Of these upcoming openings, 22 are food establishments, 5 are service providers, and 1 is retail – the recently announced Canadian brand, Aritzia, coming to 1725 Walnut St. Additionally, at least 20 Center City leases were signed in the latter half of 2021 with businesses yet to be announced for 2022 openings, including 1630 Walnut St, 211 S 17th St, and 1719 Chestnut Streets.

With the broader area, inclusive of the CCD, there are 977 Eating and Drinking Establishments, 954 Retailers, and 1,030 Service Providers. Local and regional brands constitute 81% of downtown tenants, up from 74% in 2019. Among the key national and international brands that have opened are Ireland’s Primark, Denmark’s Bang & Olufsen, New York City’s Shoppers World, Brooklyn’s Van Leeuwen Ice Cream, and San Francisco’s Allbirds.

While pedestrian volumes steadily increased in 2021, they are still at about two-thirds of pre-pandemic levels. Based on PlacerAi data prepared for CCD, the average daily number of pedestrians in Center City in 2019 between Vine and Lombard Streets, river to river, was 428,634. In 2021 it was 267,829, 62.5% of pre-pandemic volumes. As conventions and trade shows rebound and, if Covid recedes to endemic levels, as a significantly larger percentage of office workers return, the volumes of pedestrians – all retail customers – will continue to rise.