



CENTER CITY  
DISTRICT



# CENTER CITY Digest

## Accelerating Recovery in 2024

Do Philadelphia's civic, business and political leaders have what it takes to fashion the city we say we want: a growing, prosperous, diverse and inclusive place? Or will the response to the extraordinary challenges of these last three years relegate us to the left-behind land of *A Nation of Wusses*, as Ed Rendell bluntly titled his autobiography a decade ago?

### Good News First

Center City District's (CCD) June recovery report (see page 8) documented restoration of all 126,500 jobs Philadelphia lost in the spring of 2020 and highlighted that we've now surpassed February 2020 levels by 16,400 jobs. Center City's population continues to grow, more office buildings are being converted, and conventions, tourism and retail are all rebounding, pedestrian vitality is almost fully restored in most portions of downtown.

But perceptions of public safety still lag, even as crime numbers decline. Staffing levels for police remain low, as uncertainty about their role and mission persists. Center City's challenges, to be sure, pale in comparison to those in Kensington, though the problems are connected. Office vacancy is rising, challenged by a partial return to office and reinforced by a wage tax that encourages suburban residents to remain remote. Still, 62% of workers of all kinds were back in Center City in June compared to June 2019, while workers in the office district have steadily risen to 57%.

Center City and University City remain the primary engines of prosperity and opportunity, together providing 53% of all of Philadelphia's jobs. Because they are well-positioned at the center of a multi-modal transportation system, more than half of these jobs are held by neighborhood residents of all skill levels. But if more workers, including those in local government, are not motivated to return and if more underutilized buildings are not refilled or converted to other uses, more moderate wage and entry level jobs are put at risk. Cuts to transit when federal recovery resources run out next year could further undermine access to opportunity for those who may not be able to afford a car or the price to park downtown.

### Lessons from San Francisco

The disturbing prospect of such a downward spiral was apparent last May in San Francisco, where I participated in an Urban Land Institute panel advising local government on ways to restore vitality to their downtown. BART had just floated the idea of reducing regional transit to hourly service.

Arriving a day early on Sunday, I clicked on a mobile app to jump on a bike (speaking of wusses, it was electrified). From media stories, I anticipated a post-apocalyptic landscape with homeless addicts everywhere. To be sure, there were desperate scenes in the Tenderloin, but no more than our local failures in Kensington. The city still had extraordinary natural amenities and scenic views. Adjacent

residential neighborhoods were thriving, as were nodes of tourist vitality. Yes, there was a dearth of workers during the week. Among America's 25 largest downtowns, San Francisco lags most because of a heavy dependence on IT firms and long commutes. But this was hardly the city on the edge of extinction, described by prophets of doom.

A colleague recommended *Season of the Witch* — neither the song nor movie—but David Talbot's cultural history of San Francisco from the 1960s to the 1980s, as it remade itself from a declining, working class port to an international metropolis—long before the advent of information technology.

Talbot evokes the grit of industrial decline, the horror of Hells Angels stomping concert attendees to death at Altamont, the "Zebra murders," Jim Jones' Peoples Temple cult that ultimately ended in Jonestown, the Symbionese Liberation Army, the AIDS crisis, the political assassination of the mayor and gay-rights activist and councilman, Harvey Milk, not to mention earthquakes. Such was my summer reading.

Yet, despite crushing challenges, San Francisco rebounded in 1990s, prospered and will do so again. Think of the utter devastation of Lower Manhattan on 9/11. New York City built back a more diverse downtown, as it is doing again. Philadelphia has its share of triumphs offset by self-inflicted wounds.

But Talbot's book is a reminder that cities are resilient. They are places that continually reinvent themselves; places that require determined leaders to fashion new futures. So consider just two of our current challenges: remote work and public safety.

### Is Hybrid and Remote the Future We Want?

Virtual meeting apps have expanded the extraordinary flexibility first proffered by email and digital phone technology, freeing us from limitations of place, connecting us globally and creating work-from-anywhere scenarios beneficial to both employers and employees. But few major technological changes come without downsides.

Late 19th and early 20th century industrialization and urbanization created enormous new sources of wealth for business owners, new products and services for consumers and unprecedented opportunities for immigrants and for African Americans to escape rural poverty. But it also resulted in overcrowded slums, unsafe working conditions, inadequate wages, discrimination and systemic racism that's taking decades to overcome. So, too, the freedom and flexibility automobiles and suburbanization offered to middle class families in the 1950s and '60s resulted in dramatic increases in homeownership and improved living standards. But it also left us a legacy of unsustainable, regional development patterns and the underside of urban redlining, the abandonment of cities and the concentration of poverty.

When office workers are remote, they gain flexibility with childcare and reduce the costs and time of commuting. But they also undercut demand for jobs in building management, maintenance, security, transportation, retail and restaurants. These jobs cannot be performed remotely and rely on the presence of other workers. Unionized janitorial jobs in offices downtown are currently off by a third. Weekday lunchtime business is a memory for many restaurants.

But there also may be losses in innovation and creativity for firms when workers cease interacting face-to-face. There are missed, unplanned conversations in elevators, hallways and on street corners, random meeting of colleagues from different departments that spark new ideas. There is a loss of on-the-job learning as staff no longer gather in the same room, especially

for younger workers for whom these settings serve as informal moments of apprenticeship. Last month, even Zoom recognized the benefits of collaboration and mentoring when it called its employees back for at least two days per week.

This is a hard assertion to prove, but in 2020 we had years of stored-up social capital from conversations and experiences with colleagues that facilitated communication in a shorthand that made the shift to virtual almost seamless. Three years on, many new employees have yet to meet all of their peers in person and have far fewer reference points of shared experience. Again, this doesn't negate the value of virtual meetings. It is just a reminder that they are not a panacea, nor as substitute for old fashioned human interaction.

What is most encouraging is that Comcast and many other large- and medium-sized employers are moving this fall toward a greater presence in the office. They recognize that hybrid makes sense for some activities and some employees, but they value the collaboration, communication and creation of a cohesive corporate culture when everyone comes together. Most are making this transition not by edict, but through engaging events and by offering new office amenities and programs. Those businesses with their own event and marketing teams can easily direct some resources internally. Others may benefit from outside assistance.

This fall, CCD is presenting a series of morning and evening pop-up events on Center City office plazas and at key transit hubs. Modeled on our successful series last spring and summer, these free events are part of a multi-pronged effort to support the return to office by creating a welcoming presence for workers arriving in the mornings and providing lively destinations to mingle after work. (see page 9). Looking ahead to November, let's imagine a scene in which our new mayor stands with those major firms that have long been back to announce the return of city workers.

### Restoring A Sense of Public Safety

When the CCD was formed in 1991, we embarked on a unique, long-term partnership with the Philadelphia Police Department, just as it was embracing "community policing." During the 1960s and 1970s, police had been incident driven, patrolling behind windows

of air-conditioned cars, responding to 911 calls, jumping out to make arrests and then departing. Priority went to serious (Part One) crimes: murder, rape, arson and armed theft.

By the 1980s, despite decreases in serious crime, communities continued to tell pollsters across the country they did not feel safe. Partially, this reflected the omnipresence of guns in America and the way television and movies highlight violence. But many felt police were simply not focused on the problems that made them feel unsafe. An evocative metaphor, broken windows, helped to redefine "public safety." Just as one untended broken window emboldens those with rocks to break the rest, ignoring petty crimes and misdemeanors conveys implicit permission to perpetrate more serious crimes. Put simply, things felt out of control.

The focus on *quality of life* converged with community policing. With scarce resources, police were urged to rely less on Part One crimes as the organizing principal for patrol and instead to ask residents and businesses: "what makes you feel unsafe?" Rarely would anyone suggest that serious crimes be ignored. Rather, most communities wanted priority given to day-to-day disturbances and misdemeanors: drug dealing on corners; retail theft; disruptive behavior and broken beer bottles in playgrounds; smashed car windows; graffiti on storefronts and in schoolyards. Most requested visible, approachable officers on foot and on bikes.

Rather than respond only to 911 calls, police were encouraged to be proactive and diagnostic, using computer mapping to analyze locations that generated repeat calls for lesser infractions. Often it was discovered that situations like domestic disputes, usually beyond the purview of law enforcement, could degenerate into violence if left untended.<sup>1</sup>

From the beginning of CCD's partnership, uniformed and unarmed Community Service Representatives, serving as goodwill ambassadors and as eyes and ears, were co-located in a police substation in CCD's office to ensure close collaboration with sworn officers, patrolling on foot and on bicycles.<sup>2</sup>

In 2002, the partnership substantially expanded with the creation of Philadelphia's Community Court, under the jurisdiction of the First Judicial District (FJD). The court heard cases from across 10 police districts,

<sup>1</sup> For a more sustained discussion of these themes, see Paul R. Levy, *Rethinking Public Safety for Cities*, *The American Downtown Revitalization Review*, Volume 2, 2021: [centercityphila.org/uploads/attachments/cclphpkbb1cmomqd24jp7zpm-rethinking-public-safety-strategies-for-cities-prl-theadrr-v2-2021.pdf](https://centercityphila.org/uploads/attachments/cclphpkbb1cmomqd24jp7zpm-rethinking-public-safety-strategies-for-cities-prl-theadrr-v2-2021.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Over the years, this partnership has grown, as CCD, Project Home and the police collaborate in a jointly-delivered homeless outreach program six days per week. CCD and the police also host bi-weekly coordination meetings that bring all public and private security groups downtown together to analyze and respond to trends.

spanning four Councilmanic Districts, home to 420,000 Philadelphia residents, or almost one-third of the city’s adult population. Traditional adversaries in the criminal justice system came together to focus collaboratively on crimes that traditionally had fallen below the radar: criminal mischief, vandalism, graffiti, theft from auto, obstructing the highway, prostitution, disorderly conduct, retail theft, defiant trespass, drug and weapon possession, and a range of theft of services offenses: fare jumping, non-payment for taxis or meals.

Under one roof at 1401 Arch Street, Assistant District Attorneys and Assistant Public Defenders worked cooperatively with Philadelphia police, drug and alcohol counselors, social service and medical professionals, staff from the CCD and professionals from the First Judicial District, addressing both the impact and the behavioral problems that led to crime.

The court reduced these crimes significantly by blending together disciplines that are traditionally siloed—criminal justice and social services. Using the authority of the court to provide needed services to individuals who committed these offenses, it focused less on punishment and more on preventing a downward spiral into more serious crime. It offered less expensive and more constructive alternatives to incarceration through community sentences. Supervised

neighborhood and park cleanups and administrative work in social services offices were proscribed as a program of *restorative justice*, repaying the neighborhoods and commercial corridors in which the harm was done.

Formal, independent evaluations showed that in the decade during which it operated, Community Court dramatically reduced the rate of recidivism among offenders and prevented many from committing more serious offenses. From 1993 to 2015, there was a 46% decrease in serious crimes within the boundaries of the CCD. But in 2012, the Court lost its City funding due to budget cutbacks precipitated by the Great Recession, and a process of unraveling began. From 2016 to 2019 there was a 39% upsurge in serious crimes within the CCD.

In 2020, the impact of the pandemic and the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and the host of individuals commemorated in Black Lives Matter protests prompted an even more profound debate about the appropriate role of police and optimal ways to produce public safety. But it also generated demands to *defund* the police that were acted upon in several cities, while in others it produced lower staffing levels as many officers chose to leave the profession or move to more homogenous suburban communities.

As recovery proceeds, Philadelphia’s leaders face the extraordinary challenge in polarized times of finding a vital middle ground: recognizing public safety is paramount to economic recovery, both in low income communities and in the downtown, but understanding it must be produced in new and different ways. Restoring the Community Court should be near the top of the list.

Patrick Sharkey’s 2018 book *Uneasy Peace* urged a renewed commitment to community policing, shifting the role and image of the police officer from *warrior* to *guardian* so that departments become more engaged in, and trusted by, the communities they serve. One can reject racist and illegal police actions and the over-investment in jails yet still affirm an appropriate role for well-trained police in concert with other service providers. The revival of our city depends on it.

**Shaping the City We Want**

Every eight years, we get an opportunity to start anew. Philadelphia has many extraordinary qualities and strengths to preserve and enhance, just as we have much to fix and repair. But the central challenge remains that we are a slow growth city with too few jobs, too few businesses and too few minority firms. This directly accounts for our appallingly high poverty rate.<sup>3</sup> Public safety, competitive tax policies and enhanced educational opportunities are key components of a cure. The time for platitudes is over. It’s time to get to work and shape the city we want.



**Paul R. Levy**  
 President  
 plevy@centercityphila.org



*The ribbon cutting for the Philadelphia Community Court in 2002*

<sup>3</sup> For a full explication of Philadelphia structural deficiencies see CCD’s report *Firing on All Cylinders*, July 2022. [centercityphila.org/research-reports/firing-on-all-cylinders](http://centercityphila.org/research-reports/firing-on-all-cylinders)

# What's New at Dilworth Park

Dilworth Park attracted almost 9 million visitors last year with its diverse year-round offerings of arts, cultural, retail and leisure activities. Free exercise classes and performing arts events, festive holiday lighting and décor, a play fountain and lawn, gift markets, ice-skating and roller-skating keep the park active throughout the year. Visitors will find two new attractions:

## Dilworth Park Café featuring Salt & Vinegar

Dilworth Park, which hosts popular makers markets several times a year featuring area artisans and entrepreneurs, is bringing an outpost of South Philadelphia retail store Salt & Vinegar to the Dilworth Park Café. In addition to picking up coffee and grab-and-go fare from Brulee Catering, café visitors will also find a curated selection of gifts, pantry items and handmade products from women-, minority-, immigrant-, and locally-owned businesses.



## Pickleball by CityPickle

Through October 21, Dilworth Park will feature New York City-based CityPickle, with two regulation-sized pickleball courts available 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily. Players can register and reserve space at City-Pickle.com. During CCD's Harvest Weekend at Dilworth Park (October 6-8), CityPickle will hold matches and tournament play to engage park visitors and encourage kids to take part.

Visit [dilworthpark.org](http://dilworthpark.org) for more information.



# Capital Projects

Center City District has invested more than \$152 million in capital projects downtown since 1997 — from wayfinding signage and landscaping, to illuminating sculptures and building facades, to creating new public spaces like Dilworth Park and the Rail Park. Here are details on two CCD-funded improvement projects that are underway.

## Jewelers’ Row enhancements

CCD is completing the first phase of a project that will create a more welcoming and pedestrian friendly shopping experience, to help brand the area as a destination for tourists and attract customers from Center City and the region. The project consists of new Jewelers’ Row District gateway signs, new lighting on the 600 and 700 blocks of Sansom Street, moveable street planters in the current parking lane on the north side of Sansom Street.

## City Hall lighting

CCD has invested in a variety of City Hall exterior lighting improvements for 20 years. A new capital project, in partnership with the City’s Department of Public Property, will upgrade the lighting system of this historic landmark with energy efficient LEDs with programmable, color-changing properties similar to the façade lighting on South Broad Street. City Hall is a public gathering spot for celebrations and festivities year-round; the goal of updated lighting is to enhance its profile and establish it as a beacon connecting neighborhoods and people.



# Meet Kristine Kennedy, CCD's New Director of Development

Kris has a diverse and varied background, most recently serving as the Executive Director of the Northern Liberties Business Improvement District. In that role, she secured funding for a variety of capital projects and programs, while working with neighborhood businesses, property owners and residents, on the creation of a number of greening and streetscape plans. She previously led Philly Beer Week and developed a variety of popular community events in Philadelphia including the annual Shadfest at Penn Treaty Park and the 2nd Street Festival in Northern Liberties.



In her new role, Kristine is using her strategizing, planning and research skills, coupled with her deep understanding of business improvement districts like CCD to engage support for the Center City District Foundation (CCDF). As a 501(c)3 nonprofit charitable organization, CCDF supports CCD programs to enhance the quality of life and economic prosperity of downtown Philadelphia.

**We asked Kris a few questions about her current work at CCD and her future goals:**

**Q:** How has your previous experience prepared you for this role?

**A:** Before I got into running festivals or the world of business improvement districts, I was a woodworker for about 13 years. I apprenticed with a renowned furniture maker who, more than anything, taught me to think 10 steps ahead. "What could go wrong if I make this choice now? How can I set myself up for success later by planning carefully at the beginning?" I learned to approach everything like that. To fund a multi-million dollar capital project, which can take years to do, you have to very strategically build a layered plan that creates dollar matches for other dollars and navigates the many different deadlines for grant applications and awards. You need to make sure you have all your plans and documents in order and that you have the support you will need to not just win grants but carry out the project with as few hiccups as possible. You need to think ten steps ahead.

**Q:** What are you enjoying most so far?

**A:** Good planning requires good research. I love diving deep into problems and putting my whole creative brain towards solving a puzzle. It's been nice to be given the time to do that. I also enjoy writing project narratives which I've gotten to do a fair amount of so far.

**Q:** What do you see as your biggest challenge?

**A:** The fundraising landscape has changed a lot in response to events of the past three years. There's an awful lot of need out there and in many ways, fewer resources. Telling the story of how CCD fits into these ever changing funding priorities will be an evolving process.

**Q:** What are your objectives for the coming year?

**A:** To harness once-in-a-generation infrastructure funding and to expand the Foundation's fundraising base. I want to engage all the new people who have moved here in the past few years and make them loyal park supporters who feel empowered to keep downtown Philadelphia vibrant and attractive.

**Interested in learning how you can support the Center City District Foundation? Contact Kris at [kkennedy@centercityphila.org](mailto:kkennedy@centercityphila.org) or 215.440.5929**



**WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!**

COMPLETE A FIVE-MINUTE SURVEY AT [CCDSURVEY.COM](https://ccdsurvey.com)

AND BE AUTOMATICALLY ENTERED TO WIN \$250 IN RESTAURANT GIFT CERTIFICATES. FIVE LUCKY WINNERS WILL BE CHOSEN AT RANDOM.



# A Foundation of Center City's Success

Dilworth Park's ice rink and Wintergarden. Sister Cities Park's Discovery Garden for children. Color-changing lights on South Broad Street. New sidewalk trees, planters, directional signs, lampposts. City Hall's monumental portal gates. The Rail Park. The Ambassadors of Hope outreach teams and a new bike patrol.

So many of the places and things, both large and small, that make Center City special have been made possible by generous supporters of the Center City District Foundation. CCDF is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that to-date has raised more than \$20 million for projects to enhance the quality of life and economic prosperity of downtown Philadelphia.

**Your donation to CCDF will enable us to expand outreach to the homeless in partnership with Project Home, enhance more public spaces like an expanded Rail Park, bring educational programming and cultural events to our parks, and much more. Please use the enclosed envelope to make an impact today or give online at [supportccdf.org](https://supportccdf.org).**

# Fall Happenings in CCD Parks

## DILWORTH PARK

**Center City Fit**  
*presented by Rothman Orthopaedics*  
Mondays & Tuesdays  
**Through October 3**  
6 pm – 7 pm

**Live @ Lunch**  
*presented by TD Bank*  
Wednesdays  
**Through October 4**  
12 pm – 1 pm

**Philadelphia Marketplace**  
Saturdays & Sundays  
**Through October 1**  
12 pm – 6 pm

**Hay Maze on the Greenfield Lawn**  
Daily  
**September 29 – October 8**  
9 am – 9 pm

**Harvest Weekend  
& Made in Philadelphia Fall Market**  
**October 6 – 8**  
Friday & Saturday, 12 pm – 8 pm  
Sunday, 12 pm – 6 pm

## SISTER CITIES PARK

**Parkway Pals: Storytime**  
*with the Free Library of Philadelphia*  
Tuesdays  
**Through October 10**  
10:30 am – 11:30 am

**Parkway Pals: Family Saturdays**  
Wednesdays  
**Through October 14**  
11 am – 12 pm

**Pictures in the Park**  
Fridays  
**Through September 29**  
7 pm



**Host your next event at a  
Center City District park!**

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



# Supporting a Vibrant Office District




Through mid-October, Center City District has created a series of morning and evening pop-up events in Center City office plazas and key transit hubs. Modeled on our successful event series in spring and summer, these free events are part of CCD's multi-pronged effort to support the return of downtown office workers by creating a welcoming presence for workers arriving in the mornings and lively destinations to mingle after work.

**Center City Sunrise** events take place in office plazas and near transit stations on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 7:30-8:30 a.m. with music, coffee and a variety of giveaways.

**Center City Social** events are happening on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 4-6 p.m. at a rotating series of office plazas. Events will range from live music and DJs to art projects, dance performances, lawn games and more.

For more information, visit [centercityphila.org/explore-center-city/events/office-events](http://centercityphila.org/explore-center-city/events/office-events).

## Follow us on social media for the latest happenings:

-  @centercitydistrict
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# CCD Restaurant Week: Cheers to 20 Years!

Center City District Restaurant Week takes place September 10-23, with more than 110 restaurants offering three-course, prix-fixe dinners starting at \$45 per person. Two-course lunch menus (\$20 pp) and premium dinner menus (\$60 pp) are available at select locations.

We're marking the 20th anniversary of CCD Restaurant Week by celebrating some of the chefs and restaurateurs — from James Beard Award winners and Iron Chefs to self-taught cooks and family-run kitchens — who make Center City's restaurant scene like no other.

Check out our Q&A series, "Twenty Weeks, Twenty Stories," with CCD Restaurant Week participants discussing what inspires them, plus a digital recipe book featuring dozens of their favorite dishes.

**Find the recipes and Q&A series at [ccdrestaurantweek.com](http://ccdrestaurantweek.com).**



## Quotes from #CCDRW Participants

*"Philly has skyrocketed as one of the best cities for dining. ... It has been exciting to see other restaurants, now Philly staples, enter the scene."*

—Ellen Yin, High Street Hospitality Group

*"The neighborhood still has the old-school staples, but then waves of new restaurants have opened and continue to do so. It's great to see."*

— Liam Geoghegan, The Dandelion

*"Midtown Village is our home. ... Center City feels alive with people dining on the sidewalks and shopping in the neighborhood."*

—Marcie Turney, Barbuzzo

# Research from CCD/CPDC

Throughout the year, CCD researches, produces and distributes reports to assist a variety of stakeholders in their efforts to attract businesses from outside the region, encourage new startups, retain businesses within Center City and expand the residential population.

## Building Back a More Diverse Downtown:

*Pedestrian Vitality,*  
July 2023

Center City continued its steady process of recovery in June and during the first three weeks of July with pedestrian volumes reaching 92% of 2019 levels. The robust recovery of residents and visitors has led the way, while the number of workers in June approached 100,000, attaining 76% of June 2019 levels.

## Center City Retail Update:

July 2023

Momentum continues in Center City's retail sector, as occupancy rates, pedestrian volumes, retail sales and jobs are rising and approaching levels last seen in 2019.

## Shaping the Future We Want:

*Economic Recovery,*  
June 2023

Jobs are back, salaries are rising, Center City's population continues growing, conventions, tourism and retail are all rebounding, and pedestrian vitality is almost fully restored in many portions of the downtown. Office vacancy is rising but challenged by a partial return to office and reinforced by a wage tax that encourages suburban residents to remain remote.

Read and download CCD reports at [centercityphila.org/research-reports](http://centercityphila.org/research-reports).



## Become a CPDC Member Today

Business leaders who are members of the Central Philadelphia Development Corporation (CPDC) have access to year-round programs and events from panel discussions to behind-the-scenes tours of some of Center City's most exciting projects.

CPDC membership pays for research and member engagement, and enables CPDC to continue to provide reliable marketplace information and enhance the competitiveness of Center City.

To learn more about CPDC and how to join, visit [joincpdc.org](http://joincpdc.org) or contact CPDC Executive Director Prema Gupta at [pgupta@centercityphila.org](mailto:pgupta@centercityphila.org)

# CENTER CITY Digest



CENTRAL PHILADELPHIA  
DEVELOPMENT  
CORPORATION

FALL 2023

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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# HARVEST WEEKEND

AT DILWORTH PARK

OCTOBER 6 - 8

Hay bales, cornstalks and pumpkins aplenty, this 3-day festival embraces autumn for visitors of all ages.

[CENTERCITYPHILA.COM](http://CENTERCITYPHILA.COM)

