

# CENTER CITY DIGEST

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTER CITY DISTRICT AND CENTRAL PHILADELPHIA DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

FALL 2010

## Four Ways to Look at a Street

*I am a motorist* who loves the open road. Last month, driving to national parks in Montana and Wyoming, beneath the expanse of western skies, mile markers flew by as we cruised at the legal state limit of 75 mph. Exiting the parking lot at the Billings, Montana airport, no one had even asked for the rental contract. “No limits,” I thought. “This is the way America used to be in the days when I could fill up my first car, a 1964 VW Beetle, for under \$4.”

Back in Philadelphia, the frustration builds behind those achingly slow, horse-drawn carriages that straddle two lanes of our narrow streets, behind taxi cabs that halt without warning in moving lanes, behind buses that don’t bother pulling to the curb when discharging passengers, or trucks that put one wheel on the sidewalk, but allow their delivery doors to swing wide to the middle of the road. Then there are the pedestrians, oblivious on cell phones, popping out mid-block between parked cars, and the cyclists routinely testing their immortality. Did I mention the utility crews who block routes across town?

*I am a pedestrian.* There are multiple ways through colonial streets, alleys and greenways to enjoy my 10 minute walk to work. Within three blocks of our house there’s a grocery store, two convenience/drug stores, a health food store and a Sunday farmer’s market. Within the same radius we can savor cuisine from more than a dozen countries, buy books at a locally owned shop, sip lattes, sample endless varieties of yogurt and ice cream and hope our younger daughter doesn’t get enamored with tattoos. With an intimate, pre-automobile grid that forces cars to go slow, jaywalking is easy. Even on an angle, you can cross in under 12 steps.

I dislike bicyclists who ride on the sidewalk, blindside you while zipping the wrong way on one-way streets, or run red lights as my dog tugs ahead on her leash. I can’t stand cars that accelerate through changing lights, moving vans that commandeer walkways and vehicles that blow their horns in frustration when traffic crawls.

*I am a cyclist.* In the days before suits and ties became my habit, cycling was my primary way to work. In the era before fat tires made a comeback, trolley tracks were a terror. But otherwise, the flat contours of Philadelphia’s downtown made commuting a breeze, even as I balanced a bag of groceries on my handlebars. Today, biking is my primary form of exercise and a way to explore changes in surrounding neighborhoods.

Like many cyclists, I only slow for red lights, though I’ve lost the nerve to shoot the gap at 15 mph in that narrow corridor that forms between vehicles stacked up at a light and the row of parked cars. It was like playing Russian roulette: can I make it before the truck shifts over six inches more, the bus turns right, or without any car doors flying open?

I dislike vehicles that encroach into bike lanes, motorists who honk because I’m going too slowly, and pedestrians who cross at red lights even when I have the right-of-way.

*I am a SEPTA rider.* A monthly transpass arrives with my paycheck, deducted from pretax income. Swiping my card, I feel like I’m riding for free, much the way E-ZPass dulls the impact of tolls.

Underground transit is the fastest route between Center City and University City. Bus rides are a good time to check email, returning cross-town from meetings; and the air-conditioning is far superior to Philadelphia’s sad excuse for a taxi-fleet. What you see from the safe vantage of a bus window is that every other mode of transportation, including the one you’re in, has more than its share of crazies who push the outer edge.

That’s because each mode of movement has an internal logic and momentum all its own. Behavior and attitudes mutate as we move from mode to mode. Pedestrians exercise maximum flexibility, crossing on impulse; bicycles tip over if you come to full stop; cars are designed to power ahead while cocooning their drivers in surround-sound systems; buses, trucks and SUVs are simply much bigger than the rest. If we had avenues as wide as those in New York or Los Angeles, there would be more room for each to do what it wants. But our greatest asset, our intimate scale, is our greatest challenge.

To make it all work, we don’t need the arrogance of single-mode thinking that pretends that one way is superior to others. It’s more a matter of recalibration and balance, doing detailed outreach to businesses and residents, respecting multiplicity and the complexity of needs.

I’m sure it took months, if not years, following the introduction of traffic lights in Philadelphia in 1933, for motorists to internalize the rules. This is an analogous moment as economic, environmental, demographic and cultural changes are altering the dominance we afforded to cars. Walkable, transit-oriented places have held up better in this recession than drivable suburbs. Commuting by bike may be convenient and affordable, but it’s also part of an emerging culture that values sustainability.





Cyclists in Copenhagen actually wait at their own red lights, whose timing is different than those for cars and pedestrians.

What's needed is a thoughtful reallocation of scarce street space and an entire new system of management that includes bike lanes, rules of the road, traffic signals for cyclists, and real education and enforcement equally for all.

The Danes weren't born on bikes like their nearby cousins in Amsterdam. But as Copenhagen built a new pedestrian culture, complete with cafes, during the last three decades, they slowly implemented a system of dedicated, separately

signaled lanes for bikes. Starting from a point in the 1970s, when cars were the dominant way to commute, they have transformed their morning rush hour modal split so that 36% now arrive by bicycle, 33% on public transit, and just 23% come in by car.

Philadelphia surely isn't in Denmark. Given land-use, history and culture, we will remain far more committed to automobiles. But 15 years ago there wasn't a single outdoor café in Center City and

this summer we counted 248. Ten years ago, the highest price residential real estate was far from downtown; today Center City condos command some of the highest prices in the region. In 2000, there were very few school age children downtown. But since then, more than 18,000 have been born to Center City parents. Things change and vibrant cities adjust.

As we added amenities — new signs, lighting, crosswalks, improved parks and cafes — on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, more pedestrians appeared. Institutions are now renovating or relocating and new housing developments are moving forward. If we install proposed landscaping and bike-lanes on Market Street West and JFK Boulevard, new retail establishments and cafes will surely follow.

Almost two years ago, we released recommendations for recalibrating downtown in *Managing Success in Center City: Reducing Congestion, Enhancing Public Spaces* ([CenterCityPhila.org/docs/2008CCDcongestion.pdf](http://CenterCityPhila.org/docs/2008CCDcongestion.pdf)). Some things have been accomplished, but much remains to be done.

**Paul R. Levy**  
President

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## Two Indicators of a Vibrant Downtown

### Outdoor Cafés

The number of outdoor cafés in Center City continues to increase, up 209% since the CCD began counting in 2001. This year the CCD recorded 248 outdoor cafés between Vine and South streets, from the Delaware River to 24th Street, providing seating for 3,556 customers with a penchant for people-watching and face-to-face contact. To view the full 2010 report on outdoor cafés, visit [CenterCityPhila.org/docs/CCR2010\\_SidewalkCafes.pdf](http://CenterCityPhila.org/docs/CCR2010_SidewalkCafes.pdf).

### Bicycles

While cafés are thriving in spite of the recession, the number of bicycle commuters is growing in part as a response. For the first time this summer, the CCD sought to quantify the number of bike commuters entering Center City from neighborhoods to the south, where an increasing number of younger residents live. Eleven intersections were monitored for six mornings in July between 8:00 and 9:00 AM with an average of 800 cyclists counted each day. No surprise that 22nd Street, with a dedicated bike lane, had the most commuters, 209, and three-and-a-

half times the average volume on the other streets. But most streets carried between 40 and 60 cycles.

With a growing number of cyclists entering Center City each day, it's time to put in place a comprehensive system of bicycle infrastructure and enforcement. But it is essential that this be planned, street by street, in conjunction with the needs of business and residential communities. The full report on bicycles can be found at [CenterCityPhila.org/docs/CCDBicycles2010.pdf](http://CenterCityPhila.org/docs/CCDBicycles2010.pdf).

## Improving Center City's Retail Mix

In the year since Mayor Michael A. Nutter and CCD CEO Paul R. Levy launched the Philadelphia Retail Marketing Alliance (PRMA) at the Philadelphia regional meeting of the International Council for Shopping Centers, the quality and quantity of Center City retail has substantially raised Center City's profile in the retail industry.

The Alliance developed a new marketing campaign, "Be In On It," whose creative strategy is built around testimonials from successful local retailers, including Mary Dougherty of Nicole Miller, Simon Doonan of Barneys CO-OP and Jose Garces of the Garces Restaurant Group.

Publicity has included coverage in local publications, such as the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Philadelphia Magazine* and the *Philadelphia Business Journal*, and also in national trade publications, like *Shopping Centers Today* (SCT), *Retail Traffic* and *Shopping Center Business* (SCB).

The Alliance, a partnership of the CCD, the City, Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation, the Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau and the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation, has also placed advertising in trade publications, distributed collateral material at trade shows and sent direct mail to several thousand retailers, broker and tenant representatives.

Most important, Alliance members have met directly with national retailers, brokers and site selection professionals at trade meetings in Philadelphia, New York City and Las Vegas.

According to local developer Jim Pearlstein, President of Pearl Properties, many out of town retailers have heard the buzz about Philadelphia and are clearly interested in expansion opportunities.

In the year since the launch of the effort and the website [PhiladelphiaRetail.com](http://PhiladelphiaRetail.com), many significant retailers have chosen to open in Center City, including The North Face, Brooklyn Industries, and Second Time Around.

## Apple Store Opens In Center City Philadelphia



On Friday July 30, at five PM, the long-anticipated Apple Store at 1607 Walnut Street opened its doors to a line of 400 eager customers. Their presence has generated excitement not only among technology-loving customers, but also among nearby retailers who value the volume of pedestrians Apple generates. The opening also sends a signal to both regional and national tenants about the success of Center City retail.

But contrary to several local media stories, there is no relationship between Apple's opening and the recent closing of long-time Walnut Street restaurants, Susanna Foo and Le Bec Fin. Despite the recession, restaurant growth has remained strong in Center City, as a new generation of chefs and entrepreneurs continues to expand the diversity of food offerings downtown.

Corie Moskow, Executive Director of Rittenhouse row noted "The opening of the Apple store was highly anticipated by the entire community, both residents as Apple users and by the retailers who were excited to see another successful retailer opening up. The energy that Apple brings to a street is unmatched by anyone I've ever seen."

## KidsInCenterCity.com Adds Parent Reviews

For the growing number of families raising children in Center City, [KidsInCenterCity.com](http://KidsInCenterCity.com) is an indispensable resource. The site provides listings of performing arts events oriented to children, special exhibits at museums, summer camps, kids' classes, and parental resources, as well as information about Center City preschools and K-12, public, private, parochial and charter options.

To make the site even more useful to parents, we've added two new features. Each business and attraction page now has a section for readers to add a review, share reactions to the places they've visited with children, and read other parents' reviews. To share these pages with friends and family, there are new links for posting any business or attraction page directly to a Twitter or Facebook feed.

**Visit [KidsInCenterCity.com](http://KidsInCenterCity.com) today and start sharing experiences with fellow parents!**

## Thieves Do More Than Window Shop

First it was CD players and then PDAs. Now it's smart phones, laptops and GPS devices. Next it might be iPads and Kindles. Since almost everyone has some type of portable communications device, opportunities abound for thieves in garages and on transit, in cafés and restaurants.

Police around the country are reporting a significant rise in car break-ins because thieves are stealing GPS devices like hot-cakes. They peer into cars on the street or parking facilities. They even look for the telltale ring marks left by the suction cups of a portable GPS device as a clue that something is hidden in the car.

When you are sitting down for a latte or a drink after work, parking your car or riding the train, you can reduce the opportunities for criminals. Be mindful of

your personal belongings: don't leave them left unattended on the table, on the back of your chair, on the next seat or on the floor, even if you just want to run to the counter, the restroom or over to a friend sitting a few seats away. And wherever you are, don't block out the world by wearing headphones (or at least take the earplugs out of one ear), don't text on the go, or chat excessively on your phone. You may not be paying attention, but criminals are.

For more information about how you can reduce crime outside or in the workforce, contact Stacy Irving, Senior Director, Crime Prevention Services at 215-440-5500 or via email at [sirving@centercityphila.org](mailto:sirving@centercityphila.org).



## Plant a Tree This Fall



Every spring and fall, the Center City District replaces about 30 street trees in Center City, though the need is much greater. The 2,600 street trees within the CCD are susceptible to pollution, soil compaction, bruising and disease – not to mention bicycle chains and vehicle accidents. Our surveys indicate that there are

at least 200 additional sites that can accommodate new street trees. That's why we created the Plant!Philadelphia fund last spring, a new way for donors to expand Center City's inventory of healthy street trees and contribute to the citywide goal of planting 300,000 trees by 2015.

The fall planting season is a perfect time to help expand Center City's tree canopy and ensure that downtown remains a green, attractive and competitive place to live, work and visit. To make a tax-deductible contribution, visit [PlantPhiladelphia.org](http://PlantPhiladelphia.org) or call Nancy Goldenberg at 215-440-5548.

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The Center City District sincerely thanks those corporations, businesses and individuals who have already contributed to Plant!Philadelphia:

**Chris and Wendy Born**  
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**Center City District staff**  
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## Graffiti Removal

Removing graffiti quickly has always been the best form of prevention, since it eliminates the prime motivation – visibility. But no sooner did the CCD begin erasing spray paint and magic marker in the 1990s, than a more pernicious form emerged: scratching and acid etching of glass. The response: anti-graffiti film.

For more than a decade, the CCD has used this film on the 21 bus shelters and seven subway entrances along Market Street East that it maintains, while also providing a venue for non-profit, civic and arts and cultural groups to communicate with their audiences.

Not only does anti-graffiti film make cleaning simple, it helps deter future vandalism because the application of new film is a quick process. If a window panel is vandalized, the film simply needs to be changed rather than “buffing” or replacing the entire piece of glass.

Typically, the films cost less than one-quarter of the cost to replace or buff the glass. The CCD spends \$6.00–\$7.00 per square foot on anti-graffiti film, although the price can vary based on the location of the graffiti. Many property owners have also found that graffiti film is a very cost-effective way to protect retail storefronts and office lobby doors.

The transparent, Saran wrap-like films are available with varying thickness from 4 to 10 mil (one “mil” equals 1/1000th of



an inch). The CCD chose 6 mil film for bus shelters. It is applied by professionals who soak the window with water and layer the film over glass. Rubber squeegees are then used to smooth the application by extracting the air and water from between the glass and the film, creating a strong bond with a light, pressure-sensitive adhesive on the application side of the product. The installers trim the films to the area for a custom fit. Once applied properly, the films are not distinguishable from the glass. When the graffiti films are removed, the delicate

adhesive should remain on the film and not leave any residue on the glass. Even if the glass isn't damaged, the anti-graffiti film should be replaced after a few years, as sun and other elements tend to dull the plastic and reduce transparency.

There are several contractors in Center City capable of anti-graffiti film installations. For more information and advice, please contact Blake Lehmann at the CCD at 215-440-5573.

## New Dumpster Regulations in Effect

Center City's 43 small streets and alleys are essential for servicing commercial and residential buildings. But as many other cities have learned, they can also provide unique and pleasant pedestrian passageways. New legislation regulating and enforcing dumpsters in Philadelphia attempts to balance these two objectives.

First, the licenses for all dumpsters placed on private property or in the public right-of-way, as well as for all construction dumpsters, must be renewed annually by

the property owner. Second, every dumpster must have a small, identification medallion that functions as a radio transmitter that sends signals to a city database. A copy of the legislation can be found at [legislation.phila.gov/attachments/9251.pdf](http://legislation.phila.gov/attachments/9251.pdf). To obtain a license and medallion, visit [www.phila.gov/li](http://www.phila.gov/li) or call 215-686-8686.



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Center City District and  
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**DIG IN WITHOUT  
DIGGING DEEP**



## CENTER CITY DISTRICT RESTAURANT WEEK

**September 12-17 and September 19-24, 2010**

More than 120 restaurants will offer the city's best cuisine for just \$35 for three courses (not including tax, gratuity or alcohol). In addition, 59 of the participating restaurants will also offer a three-course lunch for \$20.

[CenterCityPhila.org/restaurantweek](http://CenterCityPhila.org/restaurantweek).

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 50 years of private-sector commitment to the revitalization of downtown Philadelphia.

 **CENTER CITY DISTRICT**

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