
Rebound or transformation: What is next for business improvement districts after 50 years?

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Abstract As business improvement districts (BIDs) in the US reach the half-century mark, how prepared are they to handle challenges lingering from the events of 2020: the impact of remote and hybrid work on downtown vitality, resurgence of quality-of-life challenges and, for many, declining assessments as older office buildings empty out? This paper reviews the history and evolution of downtown organisations, primarily in North America, as they have responded to trends that have reshaped urban regions and city centres in the last half-century. It asks if the disruptions triggered by the 2020 global pandemic were just another in a series of challenges for which city centre organisations already have the skills and panoply of programmes through which to respond? Or were the disruptions so profound as to require a complete rethinking of downtown land use and functions? Should BIDs and related city centre organisations simply do more of what they were doing in 2019, securing additional sources of revenue, or must they rethink and restructure their mission, adding new services and different professional staff to fashion new funding sources and programmes to respond to profoundly changed realities and to support the realignment of downtown economies? Based on national research overseen by the author, more than three decades managing and expanding a BID, a review of multiple published policy studies and interviews with several downtown professionals across the US, the paper outlines the types of choices to be considered and implemented by city centre leaders, tailored to the site-specific conditions in their downtown. This article is also included in **The Business & Management Collection** which can be accessed at <https://hstalks.com/business/>.

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IN THE BEGINNING

The first business improvement district (BID) in North America was

authorised 55 years ago, in 1970, by local government in Toronto at the request of the Bloor West Village commercial

area. Fifty years ago, in 1975, the New Orleans' Downtown Development District (DDD), the first US BID, commenced operations. In the intervening years, BIDs have proliferated across Canada, the US, UK, Ireland, Germany, and New Zealand, while Australia, Japan and a host of other countries have volunteer schemes with some considering formal legislation.

Both the Bloor Street business improvement area (BIA) and the DDD were responses to loss of market share. But differences between the character and problems faced by these places and the uses to which each put their self-imposed mandatory assessments anticipated the broad spectrum of options for subsequent downtown management entities. They also provide guidance on how these organisations, numbering now around 1,700 in North America, may respond most effectively to the changed economic landscape, workforce and customer expectations confronting city and town centres.

The Bloor West BIA website tells its origin story: when the Bloor–Danforth subway line opened on this two-storey retail corridor in the late 1960s, it diverted shoppers from frequently stopping surface streetcars to high-speed underground lines connecting to new shopping malls on the outskirts of the city.¹ To lure customers back, the BIA responded with a marketing campaign, plantings and retail façade improvements — enhancements to the quality and perceptions of place.

Four years later the Louisiana legislature authorised the DDD of New Orleans. The setting: a traditional US central business district with high-density office buildings, a working port and an emerging hospitality and entertainment zone. The expanding economy was highly dependent on a single commodity; but when lower-price Middle East oil flooded the market in the early 1980s, Louisiana's oil

production plummeted. Unemployment surged and oil companies departed, consolidating office operations back to headquarter cities like Houston. Supportive businesses and banks closed.

From the start, DDD defined its enhanced services as 'economic development, cleaning and safety' with bonding capacity added shortly after to implement comprehensive streetscape improvements and facilitate the transition to tourism and entertainment.² Corporate buildings were converted to hotels. More recently, it has focused on an academic medical and district, the bio-medical industry, the retention and attraction entrepreneurial talent, startup companies and 'industries of the mind'. In short, the BID is part of a broader public–private collaborative, a partnership of several linked entities that share common staff, dedicated to clean and safe, as well as to economic restructuring and land-use transformation.

Both origin stories were responsive to macro trends that prompted the proliferation of BIDs in larger downtowns, beginning in the mid-1980s, as well as in smaller towns and neighbourhood commercial corridors. Following the Second World War, the movement of people and jobs out of cities was driven by manufacturing decline and by a huge national commitment (in the US) to vehicles and highways. New retail malls and edge city office parks steadily eroded downtown's share of shoppers and workers, as broader demographic shifts to new suburban housing, underwritten by federally insured mortgages, undermined the national political power of cities.

Federally funded urban renewal during the 1950s and 1960s, the first US response to suburbanisation, was shaped by 'everything in its place' zoning as single-use, multi-block office districts, shopping centres, pedestrian malls and university campuses replaced older

factories, railway lines, warehouses and working-class neighbourhoods.

A FOCUS ON CLEAN AND SAFE

In the 1980s, the new federalism of the Reagan–Bush era in the US significantly reduced funding for community development and ended general revenue sharing, curtailing public resources for sanitation and safety. The downtown real estate boom that produced a new generation of post-industrial skyscrapers and visitor destinations collided with the deteriorating quality of the public environment. Cities like New York struggled early to sustain services without national support and began sliding towards bankruptcy. President Ford declared flatly that he would veto any congressional bill that offered ‘a federal bail-out of New York City’. The 30th October, 1975 headline in New York’s feisty *Daily News* famously captured local reaction: ‘Ford to City; Drop Dead’.

When cities were manufacturing and distribution centres, neither the quality of the public environment nor a focus on customer service were essential. Industries depended on rivers, railways or proximity to raw materials, labour and markets. But in the highly competitive and mobile post-industrial economy, quality of life issues became paramount. Businesses, employees and tourists with multiple choices can go where the experience, tax structure, workforce, accessibility and amenities are best.

While BIDs in smaller towns and neighbourhood commercial corridors with limited resources followed Bloor Street’s path with marketing and modest streetscape enhancements, most early downtown BIDs in larger cities concentrated on clean and safe. Downtowns may have been economic engines for their cities, but not where most voters lived. With local governments

straining to address city-wide needs, downtown business leaders, regardless of political party, got the message: to remain competitive with suburban malls and office parks, they needed to self-fund services. It was enlightened self-interest to borrow back from the malls the common area maintenance (CAM) charge. But it was also true that with fewer local corporate giants committed only to that place, there was a compelling logic for mandatory assessments paid by all.

In 1990, the founding chairman of Philadelphia’s Center City District (CCD), Ron Rubin, downtown’s largest property owner, also owner of several suburban shopping centres, was blunt when introducing peers to the concept of mandatory BID assessments:

I already provide cleaning, security, and promotional services for my 15 office buildings and shopping centers downtown, so I don’t need this for my properties. But if my buildings are islands of cleanliness and safety in a downtown widely perceived as dangerous and dirty, I cannot succeed and neither can you.

Likewise, the head of the Downtown Pittsburgh Partnership in 1996 told out-of-town institutional property owners who opposed their district:

The value of your property is not determined solely by the investments you have made in your property. Rather, a major portion of your property value is derived from how investors, businesses and visitors view the entire downtown as a business, retail, and cultural center.³

BEYOND CLEAN AND SAFE

Most larger BIDs quickly evolved beyond basics, adding consumer marketing, events management and modest streetscape improvements: signage, banners, planters and trees. Those structured as authorities,

not non-profits, such as New Orleans' DDD and Philadelphia's CCD, took advantage of their bonding capacity. Others, structured in a partnership or under an umbrella with other business-led organisations, made use of tax increment financing (TIF) to expand their scope.⁴ They financed more complex streetscape improvements, façade lighting and, in CCD's case, created and now manage four downtown parks, leveraging funds from local foundations and from city, state and federal sources, becoming horizontal developers, reinforcing vertical development.⁵

There were early signs, however, that BIDs might do even more. The Alliance for Downtown New York started in 1995 as an effort to fill buildings, not just to manage public spaces. Wall Street faced a 30 per cent office vacancy rate. With a former city economic development professional at the helm, the BID was created to diversify this single-use financial centre, repopulate buildings and vacant streets, and reposition Lower Manhattan in the region.⁶

The Alliance encouraged targeted municipal tax and utility abatements to stimulate conversion of vacant office buildings to housing and to leverage infrastructure investments in other buildings to attract information technology companies. The BID also invested in clean and safe services and operated transport shuttles to link workers and visitors to significant destinations. But economic development — business attraction and downtown diversification — was part of its initial driving mission.

The Alliance's efforts inspired CCD's 1996 analysis, 'Turning On the Lights Upstairs', a guide to converting older office buildings to residential use.⁷ The following year, CCD's board chair assembled a working group of developers, the city's lead economic development professional and a deputy mayor. This classic example of the convening power of a BID resulted

in the drafting of Philadelphia's citywide ten-year abatement for the conversions of vacant office, industrial and warehouse buildings to residential or hotel use.

From 1998 to 2023, 40 major buildings downtown, including 10mft² of vacant office space, were converted to new uses, jump-starting significant, sustained population growth in the core downtown and adjacent neighbourhoods. Between 2000 and 2020, the Greater Center City area grew by 39 per cent, adding 57,112 new residents and surpassing 200,000.⁸

RESPONDING TO 2020

By 2019, most downtowns in all major US cities were thriving mixed-use places, hosting professional and financial services companies, information technology, education, research and healthcare, entertainment and culture, tourism, shopping and dining, and were preferred places to live. Several added sports facilities in or adjacent to city centres. Whatever conditions prevailed citywide, downtowns were widely perceived as clean, safe and vibrant destinations. There were multiple causes, but BIDs played a significant role in shaping success.

Suddenly, in March 2020, public mandates required everyone to work from home. For decades, mobile phones, e-mail and texting had been untethering workers from fixed locations. The national shutdown in early 2020, however, was unprecedented both in breadth and duration. Yes, there had been terrorist attacks and awful incidents of gun violence in some cities. But the COVID-19 pandemic prompted fear that went to the heart of all cities: dread of simply being near other people.

Yet the widespread availability of new, web-based video-conferencing platforms for group meetings made the transition to remote work almost seamless. There was a dramatic and sustained drop in office

occupancy, transit ridership, pavement vitality and retail sales. International tourism was suspended and domestic travel dropped precipitously. The arts and culture sector shifted to virtual performances and exhibits. Evening vitality and restaurant table service evaporated, along with the sense of safety in numbers in public areas. Students left college campuses. Middle-class residents with second homes decamped to beaches, mountains and rural areas. In Cleveland, the volume of people downtown plummeted by 70 per cent between February and April 2020. In Chicago the volume dropped by 73 per cent. Central Houston recorded the presence of office workers at 100 per cent in January 2020 and at 24 per cent in April.⁹ It was similar across the country.

In the spring, rioting and looting in several cities was prompted by the killings of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and George Floyd. Those old enough experienced 1970s flashbacks, as a barrage of news stories predicted ‘the death of downtowns’. A burgeoning academic industry foretold a new, immiserating cycle of ‘urban doom loops’. Most significantly, employees grew accustomed to working from home, controlling their own time, while those with young children enjoyed the blessings and challenges of mixing parenting with work.¹⁰ Decades of progress redefining police as guardians, not warriors, also seemed to evaporate overnight, as some questioned whether there was any role for police at all.¹¹ There was a spike in homelessness in many downtowns as well as visible drug addiction.

When the CCD’s management team first gathered again in person in the mid-spring of 2020, I confidently told staff: ‘It’s 1990 all over again and we know what to do’ — as if this was simply a matter of doubling down on services first deployed 30 years before.

But four years later, none of the US’s 26 largest downtowns had fully restored

2019 levels of vitality. The non-resident worker recovery rate at the end of 2024 averaged 67.5 per cent in the 26 largest downtowns in the US, ranging from a high of 84 per cent to a low of 51 per cent. A comprehensive analysis by CCD staff, ‘Downtowns Rebound: The Data Driven Path to Recovery’, used mobile phone data to measure rates of return of non-resident workers, visitors and downtown residents.¹² The report documents that some downtowns are recovering more quickly than others, while some employment sectors are rebounding faster than others. There are many variables, including perceptions of safety, but in general, downtowns with strong overall recovery rates tend to have robust leisure, entertainment and hospitality industries (where work must be performed in person) and a lower dependence on information technology and financial services (which lend themselves more to remote work). We know too that secondary industries that depend on the presence of office workers, such as building engineers and janitors, transit and restaurant workers, were adversely affected, setting up a disturbing tension between remote work for some and the espoused goal of inclusive growth for workers at all educational and skill levels. Enrico Moretti’s *New Geography of Jobs* elucidates best the interconnected nature of the post-industrial economy.¹³

Two key findings from CCD’s report have significant strategic implications for downtown managers: (1) the mix of who was downtown each day in 2019; and (2) the substantial difference in return-to-work ratios, depending on how close employees live to their offices.

TIME TO RESTRUCTURE?

Despite the significance of downtowns as employment centres for their cities and regions, mobile phone data suggests

on average in 2019 only 32.2 per cent of those downtown each day in the US's 26 largest cities were workers; 7.3 per cent were residents and 60.6 per cent were visitors, a broad category including shoppers, diners, tourists and convention attendees, those coming to sports venues, concerts and shows, or accessing services such as doctors, lawyers, accountants, nail salons or hairdressers. This led some to downplay the role of downtown as central business districts (CBDs), emphasising instead their central social functions when seeking to restore vitality.¹⁴

Rebecca Rockey and Chris Leinberger acknowledge the high concentration of visitors, although draw a different conclusion from their examination of 15 major urban places. *Reimagining Cities: Disrupting the Urban Doom Loop* applies the portfolio theory of investing to land use in city centres.¹⁵ Offering three broad land-use categories: (1) work; (2) living; and (3) play (arts, culture, sports, popular entertainment), they calculate pre-pandemic that real estate in their 15 downtowns was comprised 67.2 per cent of work functions, 15.9 per cent of residential functions and 14.5 per cent of play activities. They contend the so-called 'doom-loop' is far from the death of cities, but rather a by-product of unbalanced investment, an overcommitment to office functions, resulting in spiking vacancies in most large cities, as they were battered by the combined impact of the pandemic and new technologies enabling virtual work.¹⁶ The optimal downtown portfolio to maximise local gross domestic product (GDP), tax revenues and vibrancy, they suggest, would be 42 per cent work, 31 per cent live and 26 per cent play. While downtown organisations need to stay focused on basic quality of life challenges and support employer efforts to draw workers back, this suggests that economic restructuring must move higher on the agenda.

There are obvious and subtle benefits to this reframing of priorities. The conversion of vacant office buildings removes surplus inventory, reinforces the remaining product, while adding more people to downtown public areas.¹⁷ Even more, as mobile phone data reveals, the closer employees live to work, the more likely they are to return. Even in San Francisco, which ranked near bottom in return-to-office rates in 2024, those dwelling within two miles were back in their offices at 86 per cent of 2019 levels, while those living at distances of ten miles or more were only back at 38 per cent. In most cities, those living within two miles have attained return rates exceeding 90 per cent.¹⁸ Downtown housing can reinforce office occupancy and rents.¹⁹

This is one of the primary benefits of the rebalancing recommended by Rockey and Leinberger. In 1998, 75 per cent of CCD's assessment revenues came from commercial office buildings, 7 per cent from hotels and 6 per cent from apartments. In 2024, in a budget that had quadrupled due to growth rather than rate increases, offices accounted for 60 per cent, while apartments had grown to 17 per cent and hotels to 10 per cent.²⁰ Fundamentally, this posits the objective of replacing single-use zoning and diversifying land and ground floor uses, as Jane Jacobs advocated when urban renewal first began to reshape downtowns.²¹

REMAIN COGNISANT OF CONSTRAINTS

BIDs rarely have budgets large enough to support traditional economic development functions, nor retain staff with this expertise. But they can afford researchers to document trends, to convene local subject experts from downtown companies and advocate with local and state governments for new public tools to induce change. Where BIDs are affiliated

with or positioned under an umbrella with other business-led advocacy, planning and development entities supported by contributions or fundraising, the BID is probably most in touch with the on-street realities that affect the competitiveness and vitality of place.

As Brad Segal, a long-term Denver-based consultant who has worked for and assisted downtowns since the 1990s, suggests:

Nationally, we're seeing a resurgence for the BID's role in economic development, particularly in markets that have struggled with office recovery. This means an infusion of new skillsets, including an understanding of real estate and an orientation that is increasingly transactional — i.e., impacting local incentive and public financing policies to reinvest in a variety of downtown improvements that include public realm enhancements, activations, and individual deals to repurpose obsolete buildings.²²

For a variety of reasons that may relate to the different legal structures of BIDs, as authorised by diverse state laws, or the importance of keeping publicly approved assessments separate from policy advocacy, the 'voice' for those recommendations may come from volunteer board members of affiliated non-profit corporations. But in most larger cities with partnership structures, the BID is usually the largest financial partner.

Still, immediate challenges remain front and centre. As several downtown managers and consultants have noted, BIDs have been compelled to expand supplementary security efforts as policing levels decline, and to enhance homeless outreach as more addicted people appear on their streets.²³ This is occurring, however, at the same time as their prime revenue source, assessments on commercial office inventory, may be contracting. BIDs can work simultaneously with local and state governments on incentives for housing

conversions, but given the duration for design, financing and construction, new residents and new value will not materialise overnight.²⁴

Even more, as local advocates and politicians press for affordable housing downtown, it is by no means certain that private developers can carry the extraordinary costs of converting depopulated office buildings with deep floor plates, while simultaneously committing a substantial share of units to affordable housing, without generous layers of public subsidy. Pittsburgh's initial attempt to fashion a conversion abatement, based on the same state law used by Philadelphia 25 years earlier, had so many affordable requirements added locally that nothing was produced.

Finally, while Rockey and Leinberger urge a balanced portfolio of downtown land uses, the tax mix adopted by many cities varies dramatically.²⁵ Typically, office buildings generate more diverse jobs and tax revenues for cities, school districts and BIDs than the same buildings converted to residential or hotel use.²⁶ Downtown needs to diversify. Housing conversions may be necessary to fill gaps, but they alone are not a sufficient panacea to sustain downtowns as major centres for diversified employment opportunities in their regions.

In the end, we return to where things began a half-century ago. BIDs are unique place-based mechanisms that generate and sustain dedicated revenue streams, focusing the energies of property owners and businesses on specific local needs. They perform best when tailoring responses to local challenges, rather than copying from elsewhere or repeating what worked yesterday.

On one hand, there is a strong case for BIDs to remain focused on basics: removing litter and graffiti, creating a safe and welcoming setting, affecting both the appearance and psychology of public

spaces, delivering services that people see, feel and touch every day. On the other hand, challenges now confronting many city centres have expanded exponentially, leaving downtown leaders no choice but to broaden their horizons, to find ways to fund, fashion or orchestrate new programmes and services that expedite structural changes that will keep their unique places competitive. The future of city centres will be determined by how well their leaders successfully navigate these conflicting pressures and choices.

References and Notes

1. Bloor West Village, available at <https://www.bloorwestvillagebia.com/> (accessed 11th February, 2025).
2. New Orleans Downtown Development District (DDD), available at <https://downtownnola.com/> (accessed 11th February, 2025).
3. Downtown Pittsburgh Partnership (1996), 'Say Yes to Higher Property Values' (brochure).
4. Because there is no one national law authorising BIDs in the US, state enabling legislation varies significantly in determining their corporate form: private non-profit, private sector sponsored authority or quasi-public entity. Different state laws also authorise different powers, varying ways to appoint boards and alternative methods and means of assessment. Some BIDs were born free-standing; others, sponsored by existing non-profits, remain affiliated. It would be an interesting research task to conduct a national or North American survey of the different forms of BIDs to try to determine for how many the legal *form* has influenced their *functions* and their ability to respond to current challenges or how much is shaped by the leadership style and entrepreneurial skills of BID executives and boards.
5. See websites of the DDD, ref. 2 above; Center City District (CCD), available at <https://www.centercityphila.org/> (both accessed 11th February, 2025).
6. Carl Weisbrod was the founding CEO, see Marron Institute of Urban Management (NYU), 'Carl Weisbrod', available at <https://marroninstitute.nyu.edu/people/carl-weisbrod> (accessed 11th February, 2025).
7. City Center District (CCD) (February 1996), 'Turning on the Lights Upstairs', available at <https://www.centercityphila.org/research-reports/turning-on-the-lights-upstairs>; It is also important to acknowledge the role of the International Downtown Association that for decades has facilitated conversations, conferences and the sharing of information between downtown professionals, not simply in North America, but across multiple continents. International Downtown Association, available at <https://downtown.org/> (both accessed 11th February, 2025).
8. City Center District (CCD), 'Housing', available at <https://www.centercityphila.org/research-reports/housing> (accessed 11th February, 2025).
9. Downtown Houston+, available at <https://downtownhouston.org/central-houston> (accessed 11th February, 2025).
10. Just as BIDs were initially ground in the US system of decentralised governance with states and cities free to initiate different laws and policies, the response to returning to work mandates and requests has been very much influenced in the US by a culture of individualism, significantly different from many other nations.
11. Sharkey, P. (2018), *Uneasy Peace: The Great Crime Decline, the Renewal of City Life*, W.W. Norton, New York.
12. City Center District (CCD) (October 2023), 'Downtown Rebound: The Data Driven Path to Recovery', available at <https://www.centercityphila.org/research-reports/downtowns-rebound-report-2023> (accessed 11th February, 2025). (First published in October 2023, updated with quarterly data ever since.)
13. In Enrico Moretti's *New Geography of Jobs*, he notes that in the 19th and early 20th century, when North American and European cities were centres of production for steel, oil refineries, locomotives, boats, cars, radios, military equipment, the garment industry and food processing, they were *maker* cities and *exporting* cities, dependent on ports and rail lines. Manufacturing was driving edge of innovation. Selling manufactured goods both regionally and nationally was the source of wealth for cities. Office buildings in those original downtowns housed the management functions for the industrial city. Corporate headquarters were tied to place, overseeing their manufacturing infrastructure. By contrast, knowledge-intensive jobs form the driving edge of innovation in post-industrial cities. They are not necessarily tied to place. But they draw toward them a solid base of knowledge-workers who are attractive to other companies. This triggers a process of mutual reinforcement and attraction as knowledge-intensive industries cluster in 'geographic agglomerations'. Moretti suggests that a small number of innovation jobs within start-up, medium and large firms draw at least 6–7 other jobs into their orbit — from other high skilled to moderate skilled to building maintenance and transit jobs. Moretti, E. (2013), *The New Geography of Jobs*, Mariner Books, Boston.
14. Milder, N. D. (Fall 2023), 'How Our Downtowns Three Most Important User Groups Can Help Their Sustained Recoveries', available at

- https://www.ndavidmilder.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/EDJ_Fall2023_final-Milder-3-downtown-user-groups.pdf (accessed 11th February, 2025).
15. Cushman & Wakefield (September 2024), 'Reimagining Cities: Disrupting the Urban Loop', available at <https://cushwake.cld.bz/Reimagining-Cities-Disrupting-the-Urban-Doom-Loop> (accessed 11th February, 2025).
 16. They calculate that their 15 cities, across their entire geography, allocated 66.6 per cent of land to living, 21.3 per cent to work and 12 per cent to play functions, underscoring the concentration of work functions downtown.
 17. Mayor Wu in Boston, a city highly dependent on property tax, has been a strong proponent. Leblanc, S. (July 2023), 'Boston launches program to encourage converting underused office buildings into residential use', Associated Press, available at <https://apnews.com/article/empty-office-buildings-residential-affordable-boston-92e155d8eb12d8c1446e88a5015b8afa> (accessed 11th February, 2025).
 18. City Center District (CCD), ref. 12 above, p. 28. Midtown Manhattan, where commuting is perhaps most challenging, had a return rate of workers living at distances of more than 10 miles of 62 per cent. But the return rate within two miles was 104 per cent — meaning there was a net increase in people living and working within Midtown between 2019 and 2023.
 19. The downtown housing trend also includes substantial new construction. At year-end 2024, the Downtown Seattle Association reported 16 new, primarily rental projects that delivered nearly 2,000 units and added 2,400 young, people to their downtown. Downtown Seattle Association (2024), 'Development Guide: 2024 year-end update', available at <https://downtownseattle.org/files/research/development-guide.pdf> (accessed 11th February, 2025).
 20. This raises another key strategic question for BIDs. Do current state and local laws allow their districts to assess residential apartments and condominiums? There is substantial variation in US state legislation on this point. From the beginning, CCD assessed apartments the same as offices, as commercial real estate used for residential purposes. But CCD secured amendments to its state law to allow the assessment of condominiums at a discounted rate. City Center District (CCD), 'Plan and Budget for the Center', p. 7, available at <https://www.centercityphila.org/research-reports/2023-2027-plan-and-budget-for-the-center-city-district> (accessed 11th February, 2025).
 21. Jacobs, J. (1961), *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Vintage Books, New York.
 22. Correspondence with the author, see International Downtown Association (IDA), 'Brad Segal', available at <https://downtown.org/master-talks/brad-segal/> (accessed 11th February, 2025).
 23. At opposite ends of the country, challenges are similar. Kate Joncas, former CEO of the Downtown Seattle Association, and long-term consultant reports that cities in the Northwest are stepping up 'cleaning and outreach due to the increased impacts of homelessness and fentanyl that started during covid'. Jessica Lappin, current CEO of the Downtown Alliance in Manhattan reports 'the perception and reality around quality of life issues is currently a hot button issue. Our Operations team spends a good deal of time and energy doing what we can to address things like homelessness, garbage, and criminal activity and coordinates extensively with the relevant city agencies. Now more than prior to the pandemic'. (Both e-mail correspondences with the author.)
 24. Kris Larson, CEO of Central Houston's BID, where the office vacancy rate currently exceeds 20 per cent, points to the compounding challenge of emptying a handful of remaining tenants out of largely vacant buildings that are in receivership before renovation can begin. (E-mail correspondence with author.)
 25. See Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 'Fiscally Standardized Cities', available at <https://www.lincolnst.edu/data/fiscally-standardized-cities/> (accessed 11th February, 2025).
 26. While there is substantial variation between rents within and between office buildings, apartments and hotel room rates, on a per square foot basis CCD assessments paid by apartment buildings can be 20 per cent lower than those paid by office buildings and hotels can be another 20 per cent below that.