Fast Train to Revitalized Downtowns: Case study of Center City Philadelphia
Philadelphia: 4th largest metro area
At the center of the Northeast corridor: Between New York City & Washington, D.C.
City = 1.5 million

Metro area = 6 million people
City of Philadelphia: 135 sq miles

Center City
3 sq. miles
Center City core = 3 square miles
Based on 1682: Plan - Center Square + 4 public squares
Legacy: human-scale, walkable city
While this made us obsolete: 1950s-1970s
Re-infused with value in the post-petroleum age:
Dense, diverse & walkable = sustainable
Since the 1950s restoring historic architecture
1956: 567 properties designated for preservation
Philadelphia has a long tradition of downtown living
1953: the demolition of elevated Pennsylvania RR
Creation of modern new Office District
Rail-lines placed underground
1960s & 1970s: all buildings connected to transit
1980s: Linked Pennsylvania & Reading Railroad into integrated regional rail system
New underground tunnel in Center City
Employers: easy access to 360 degree labor market
309,256 riders/day take transit into downtown

Regional transit lines provide downtown employers with 360° access to a highly skilled workforce.
40 million sf of office space,
Largely concentrated on west side of town
Largest center of employment in region
$12.1 billion salaries to metro residents

Percent of Center City Generated Wages
- Under 3%
- 3–4%
- 4–5%
- Over 5%

Source: LED, On the Map Application, BLS/US Census Bureau
1992: Public investment: arts & entertainment
Diversifying downtown land-use
Arts District on South Broad
Renovated historic theaters
Built new theaters
2002: Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts
4,000 seats added
Hospitality investment on East Market
In 1993 took the 1890 historic Reading Headhouse & station:
Prompted private investment in new hotels: reused vacant buildings
A 95% increase in hotel rooms
Nearly all within 15 minute walk
Center has just doubled in size
2001: New Independence Visitors Center
New home for Liberty Bell
328% growth in fine dining restaurants

65 in 1992

278
Flourishing of sidewalk cafes

There is no better measure of the revival of downtown than the flourishing of sidewalk cafes in the last decade. Center City has long been the largest concentration of employment in the region and a preferred place to live. But as downtown has become cleaner and safer, as sensibly increasing numbers of people have come to enjoy a more urbane environment, sidewalk cafes have become more than doubled in number. As recently as 1994, the city had only about 50 sidewalk cafes.

In 1995, when Mayor Rendell legalized sidewalk cafes, there were no sidewalks cafes downtown. In 2001, when the CCD first began surveying, there were 60 sidewalk cafes. This year, the Center City District’s eighth annual survey counted 215, up 5% from last year and an increase of 212% over the summer of 2001. Sidewalk cafes expand the existing area of restaurants and coffee shops and augment the volume of business downtown. They provide a place for leisure, people-watching and for the stimulation of business. They increase the natural surveillance and safety of streets and multiply the number of chance encounters, enhancing both the sociability of Center City and its competitiveness for the many forms of business that thrive on face-to-face contacts.

Establishments with Outdoor Seating by Category

![Pie chart showing distribution of outdoor seating by category]

Growth of Outdoor Cafes & Cafe Seating

![Graph showing growth of outdoor cafes and cafe seating over time]
2011: 224 outdoor cafes

Center City’s 213 sidewalk cafes offer seating for 3,556.
Vibrant evening economy
Residential revival

1996: 4.5 million sf. Vacant Class “C” office space

- Retained architect & developer to evaluate buildings
- Survey to determine best buildings; floor layout, window size & exposure
- Detailed economic analysis of 10 buildings: evaluation for code compliance, cost-estimate, pro-formas.
10 year residential tax abatement
Approved 1997

- Extraordinary costs of converting from vacant office or industrial to residential use
- 10 year abatement on improvements
- Available city wide
1998–2010: 171 buildings of all sizes
Converted to residential use
Since 1997 added 12,632 new units of housing
Diversification of downtown land-use
22,000 residents now living inside CBD

22,000

157,000 surrounding
10.2% increase in population since 2000

26% in core of downtown
Since 1990

8 Zip codes = 7.8 sq miles
5.7% of city’s land area

hold 11.8% = 179,003

Fastest growing
Most densely settled
With fuel costs high: makes sense to cluster close to work
Citywide 20% of residents work downtown
In core 40-50% downtown; 11.2% in University City
38% walk to work; 21% public transit; 4% bike
157,000 in adjacent neighborhoods
Extended neighborhoods rapidly approaching 40%

Map: Workers Employed in Center City and University City
- < 40%
- 41-45%
- 46-50%
- 51-55%
- > 55%

Pie: Percent of Workers Employed in:
- Center City
- University City
- Rest of Phila
- Suburbs
- Out of Area

Source: LED, On the Map Application, BLS/US Census Bureau

- Fairmount: 7,954
- Loft District: 2,108
- Northern Liberties: 1,869
- Old City: 2,761
- Grays Ferry: 3,941
- Point Breeze: 4,958
- Passyunk Square: 6,729
- Pennsport: 3,574
These outer areas greatest increase in bike & bus commuting to work.
Across all age categories college degrees rising

**Center City Core**

- **2000**: 68% 42% 60% 84%
- **2010**: 72% 52% 67% 86%

**Extended Center City**

- **2000**: 42% 28% 22% 58%
- **2010**: 32% 16% 8% 41%

**Citywide (25-34) 18% to 22%**

Educational Attainment (% with at least BA)
Big opportunity: 20,553 children were born to Greater Center City parents from 2000 to 2010
Infrastructure investment strategy

- Amtrak: 60 minutes to New York City
- Amtrak: 1 hour 35 minutes to Washington DC
- To Airport: 15 minutes by car, 20 minutes by train
Projects that enhance competitiveness of region
#1: Expanding runway capacity
Philadelphia International Airport
#2: Big opportunity
Capitalize on national support for high-speed rail
39% of all jobs in the city are located downtown.
University City: rapidly expanding
A major center for education, research, health care
These 2 employment nodes: 51% private sector jobs
Well-connected to region by public transit
Including Amtrak’s 30th street station
Current Acela service

83 weekly trains to Washington D.C.
99 weekly trains to New York City

70 minutes to NYC
95 minutes to Washington, D.C.
Invest first to connect city’s two largest employment & research nodes: 52% of jobs
Long-shot, game-changer: High speed rail
38 minutes to NYC; 67 minutes to Washington DC

A Vision for High-Speed Rail in the Northeast Corridor

September 2010
Stopping both in Center City & PHL Airport
Made possible by deep boring technology
Rather than cut & cover
Direct connection to SEPTA & PATCO; Atlantic City
Existing base of 309,256 riders/day
Surrounded by 179,000 professional residents
Committed to walking & transit
Make Market Street: primary hospitality & destination retail/entertainment corridor
Market East has been problem street
Significant # vacant & underdeveloped parcels
Gimbel’s site: 8th & Market, 33 years vacant
Gaps in quality retail & pedestrian experience
MSE Goal: Stimulate movement between major destinations at either end of the street.
Independence National Historical Park: 3 million
Pennsylvania Convention Center
1.2 million visitors conventions, trade and gate shows
Current plans to renovate 1977 mall
New retail development on both sides of the street
HSR puts Market East 38 minutes from Manhattan.
Market East stop in Center City

Proposed Market East Station in Philadelphia
Reinforces Convention Center & hospitality industry.
Suddenly creates demand for high-rise office & residential on Market East
All office demand has been concentrated on the west side of town.
An alternative to Jersey City
Part of an integrated northeast economy
Long-shot, game-changer: High speed rail
38 minutes to NYC; 67 minutes to Washington DC

A Vision for High-Speed Rail in the Northeast Corridor

September 2010