

OPDC

50 YEARS

CPDC

REMAKING | CENTER | CITY



A History of the Central Philadelphia Development Corporation



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## Preface

Central Philadelphia Development Corporation (CPDC) is proud to present this commemorative history to its members, friends and supporters as we conclude a yearlong celebration of the 50th anniversary of the organization, originally founded in 1956 as the Old Philadelphia Development Corporation (OPDC).

This document is not meant to be a comprehensive history of Center City renewal, nor a critical history of the organization. Two books, Jeanne R. Lowe's 1967 *Cities in a Race with Time* and Kirk Petshek's 1973 *The Challenge of Urban Reform*, both do an excellent job of telling the story of the first several decades of Center City renewal and of OPDC's role in those years.

Rather, in this commemorative history, drawing from annual reports and project-specific documents published beginning in 1957, we have attempted to let OPDC and CPDC leaders tell their own story of accomplishments for the last 50 years by quoting them directly as often as possible. The narrative is supple-

mented by information drawn from published books and reports, from archival material and from contemporary interviews. All direct quotes from original OPDC and CPDC materials are italicized in the text. Most of the photos similarly come from OPDC and CPDC archives.

If this document tells the story of Center City's renewal through the eyes of CPDC, six companion videos that were produced by Wendy Daughenbaugh of Nobis Productions for CPDC by WHYY Television, which are contained on the DVD enclosed, focus primarily on the story of downtown renewal and treat OPDC and CPDC as one actor among many.

Thanks go first to five decades of CPDC staff members who carefully filed organization reports, photos and press clippings. Thanks to Nancy Goldenberg who convened the original project planning meetings and arranged the original discussions or interviews with Carolyn Adams, Valla Amsterdam, Stanhope Browne, Gerald Cope, Walter D'Alessio, Barbara Kaplan, James Kise,

Gerald Maier, John Mitkus, Theodore Newbold, Craig Schelter and Thomas Sugrue. Thanks to Susan Perloff for early drafts of the organizational history and to Marietta Barbour and Cyril Bahr Roseman who shared their detailed academic research on the history of downtown renewal. Thanks to current and former CPDC staff or board members William Blades, Michael M. Dean, Robert D. Lane, Jr., James Martin, Julian P. Rackow, Melinda Rigler and Richard S. Ravenscroft, as well as to John Andrew Gallery, for reading and improving on earlier drafts of the manuscript.

Special thanks to Wendy Daughenbaugh who videotaped interviews with many of those who participated in CPDC's history and who located archival material that has been included in the enclosed DVD. In addition to those cited above, thanks to these others interviewed for the videos: Peggy Amsterdam, Larry Beasley, Robert Brown, Denise Scott Brown, Libby Browne, John Connors, Anne D'Harnoncourt, Frank DiCicco, Valerie Ferguson,

Happy Fernandez, Oliver St. Clair Franklin, John Gattuso, Vito Genua, Marian Godfrey, Wilson Goode, Alan Greenberger, Gary Hack, Barbara Kaplan, Bob Keppel, Meryl Levitz, Karen Lewis, Jason Nathan, Peter Quinn, Judge Marjorie Rendell, Ronald Rubin, Randall Scott, Rick Snyderman, Keri White and Cecilia Yep and to Gregory Heller and the late Edmund Bacon.

The final version of the book was researched and written by Director of Communications Elise Vider and designed by Graphic Design Manager Amy Yenchik.

**Robert D. Lane, Jr.**  
President  
Central Philadelphia  
Development Corporation

**Paul R. Levy**  
Executive Director  
Central Philadelphia  
Development Corporation

December 2006

1956

1960

1970

**1957:** OPDC begins formal operations; William L. Day is founding president and Jack Robin is first staff member

**1963:** William L. Rafsky becomes executive director

**1971:** William White becomes OPDC president, James Martin becomes executive director, OPDC rejects merger with Greater Philadelphia Movement

**1977:** OPDC establishes Avenue of the Arts Council

Organizational History

**1956:** Old Philadelphia Development Corporation (OPDC) designated as official redeveloper of houses to be restored in Society Hill

**1958:** Mayor asks OPDC to expand its interests to the entire CBD  
**1958:** OPDC advises on developer selection for the parcels to be created by the demolition of the Dock Street market

**1961:** Hopkinson House, designed by Oscar Stonorov, and Society Hill townhouses, designed by I.M. Pei, under construction, OPDC establishes Historic Homes Committee to direct disposition of Society Hill houses

**1965:** New shops, streetlights and school expansions under construction

**1970:** OPDC forms and incorporates Penn's Landing Corporation

**1973:** Historic Houses Committee changes name to Washington Square Committee

**1978:** OPDC establishes Philadelphia Historic Preservation Corporation

Living in Center City

**1957:** Philadelphia adopts redevelopment plan emphasizing historic preservation and new construction in "Washington Square East" urban renewal area

**1959:** Demolition underway at Dock Street market; OPDC becomes official redeveloper of Society Hill houses

**1962:** Groundbreaking at Society Hill Towers

**1964:** OPDC promotes Delaware Expressway (I-95) in Center City

**1968:** OPDC completes sales of renovated Society Hill houses

**1971:** Federal approval of covered I-95 from Delancey to Chestnut streets, plans dropped for the Crosstown Expressway

**1975:** Washington Square Committee disbands

**1975:** OPDC identifies transit gaps on Market Street West

**1977:** I-95 ramps compromise reached, Commuter Rail Tunnel approved

Transportation

**1961:** OPDC endorses commuter rail tunnel

**1965:** OPDC endorses east-west Crosstown Expressway near South Street, quietly supports burying I-95 through Society Hill

**1973:** OPDC supports controversial I-95 ramps near Penn's Landing

**1976:** OPDC promotes parking garage over Vine Street Expressway at 16th and Vine

**1964:** OPDC and others consider feasibility of new venues for opera, theater and dance on Broad Street

**1974:** OPDC's Greenway program brings street trees and other improvements to S. Broad Street, construction begins at Academy House

**1977:** OPDC establishes the Avenue of the Arts Council

Arts & Culture

**1961:** First OPDC involvement in arts-oriented renewal at Broad and Spruce streets

**1971:** OPDC establishes South Broad Street Committee

**1973:** City commits to developing an underground mall on north side of Market Street

**1976:** Outbreak of Legionnaires Diseases closes Bellevue Stratford Hotel

**1977:** Gallery at Market East opens

**1979:** Bellevue Stratford reopens as the Fairmont Hotel, Avenue of the Arts Festival draws 300,000

Market East

**1962:** OPDC establishes Market Street East Committee to stop deterioration, construction begins on parking garage at 8th and Filbert streets

**1974:** The Rouse Company is selected as developer on Market Street East

**1978:** Gallery II under construction

1980

1990

2000

**1981:** OPDC establishes Academy Center, Inc. to assemble land for an arts center on the Avenue of the Arts

**1984:** Peter Wiley becomes acting executive director

**1987:** Michael Dean becomes president; CPDC studies feasibility of downtown management district

**1991:** Center City District begins operations as separate organization, Jeremy Alvarez becomes CPDC executive director

**1997:** Center City District assumes management of CPDC

**1999:** CPDC issues comprehensive plan for the Benjamin Franklin Parkway

**2006:** CPDC celebrates 50th anniversary

**1982:** Michael Scholnick becomes executive director

**1985:** OPDC becomes Central Philadelphia Development Corporation, with Richard S. Ravenscroft as president and Peter Wiley as executive director

**1990:** Paul Levy becomes executive director, J. Bartow McCall becomes president

**1996:** James J. Lynch becomes CPDC chairman, Julian P. Rackow becomes president, CPDC supports downtown baseball stadium

**2001:** Julian Rackow becomes chairman, Robert D. Lane, Jr. becomes president

**2004:** CPDC creates marketing campaign for Center City schools

**1997:** CPDC mounts campaign to attract residents to Center City

**1991:** Vine Street Expressway completed

**1984:** Commuter Rail tunnel opens

**2001:** Central Philadelphia Transportation Management Association formed as CPDC affiliate

**1980:** OPDC studies feasibility for a 3,000-seat performance hall on South Broad Street; OPDC establishes a Broad Street North Committee

**1986:** Philadelphia Orchestra announces plans for new hall

**1992:** CPDC commissions economic development strategies for arts

**2001:** Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts opens

**1981:** OPDC establishes Academy Center, Inc. to assemble land for an arts center on the Avenue of the Arts

**1984:** East Market Street Improvement Association incorporates

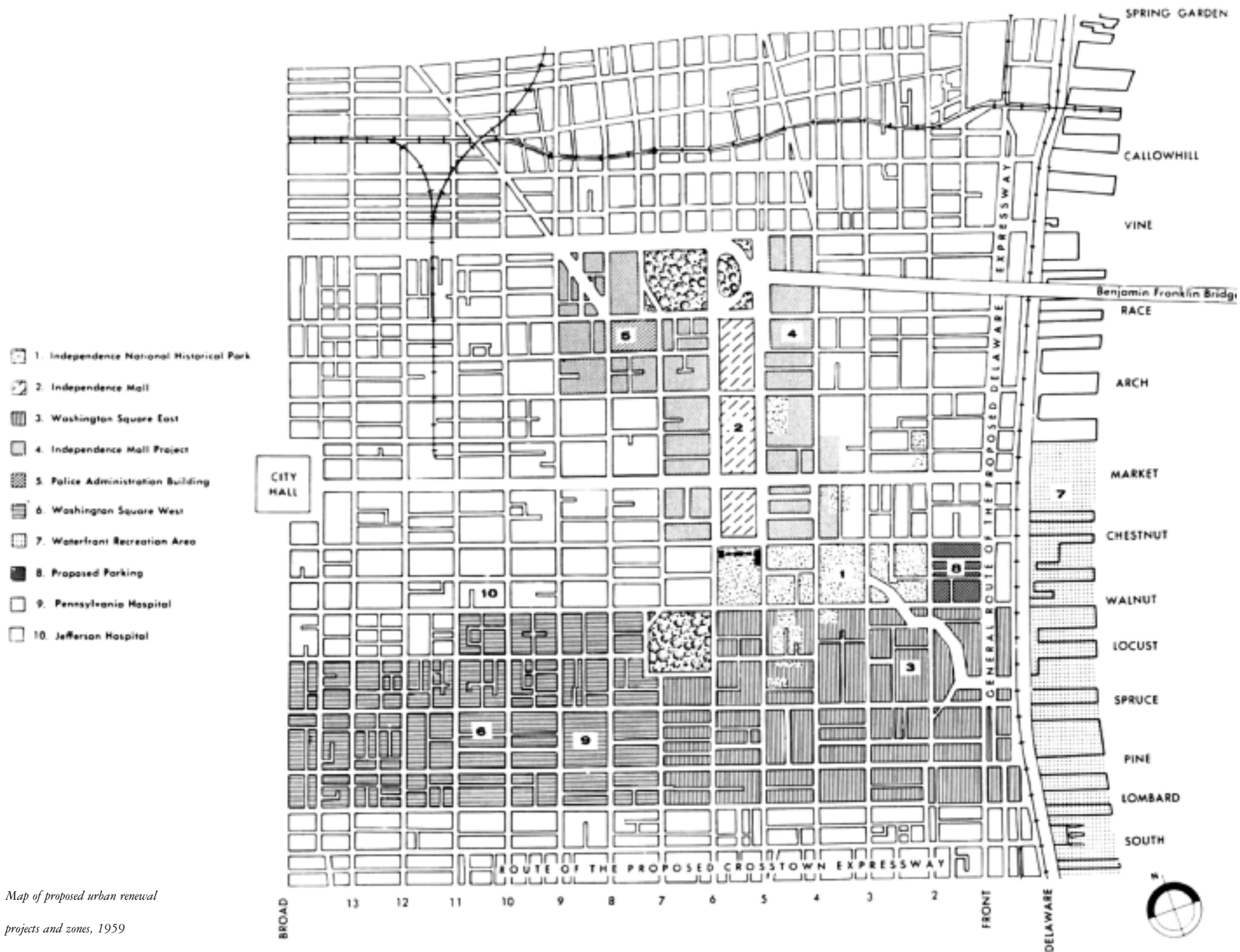
**1990:** CPDC issues comprehensive plan for South Broad Street geared to arts and entertainment

**1993:** Avenue of the Arts, Inc. established

**1993:** Pennsylvania Convention Center opens

**1988:** East Market Street Improvement Association begins operations

**1995:** Market Street East Improvement Association merges into Center City District



Map of proposed urban renewal projects and zones, 1959

## Introduction

### Establishing the Context

Old Philadelphia Development Corporation was formed at a time when American cities were first beginning to respond to decades of deterioration and decline.

By the end of the Second World War, Philadelphia showed distinct signs of decay. Like older manufacturing cities across the Northeast and Great Lakes regions, there had been very limited public and private reinvestment in infrastructure or in business during more than 15 years of Depression and war, unless it was directly related to military purposes.

At the same time, mass production of trucks and cars, beginning in the 1920s, had freed business and residents from dependency on the fixed rail lines that converged in central cities. Already in the 1920s, manufacturing firms were moving out of cities, retail establishments were migrating to the edge, and downtown business groups were expressing concern about the loss of market share to new auto-oriented developments in the suburbs.

Even in the midst of the Depression, urban policy makers understood the long-term implications of these decentralizing trends. A 1937 New Deal report on “Our Cities: Their Role in the National Economy” described the problem as not just old buildings and slums, but the fact that current production and transportation technologies were altering regional land-use patterns and rendering old cities obsolete. To respond, New Deal policy makers proposed a new range of public powers to carry out “urban redevelopment.”

In 1942, the newly formed Urban Land Institute suggested a post-war “replanning program” to redesign central cities by having local development entities use federal funds to acquire land in blighted areas and then sell or lease the parcels to the private sector for redevelopment. After four years of extensive debate following the end of the war, Congress authorized, and President Truman signed into law, the federal urban renewal program in 1949.

Reflecting in 1968 on the tools provided by the Urban Renewal Act, William L. Day, the chairman of the board of the First Pennsylvania Banking and Trust Company and founding president of Old Philadelphia Development Corporation, noted:

*“In a nutshell, the new statute proposed a great cooperative effort between private business and government to save and rebuild the decaying central cores in our cities, particularly the older ones. The whole concept was based on the theory that if the government could create, in blighted areas, an economic climate conducive to private investment, then private entrepreneurs would commit their funds to these projects.*

*“How could this economic environment be created? In short, the federal, state and local governments would acquire, through condemnation, blighted areas and then write them down to a value at which redevelopers could see the chances of the successful financial venture. Without the write-down to a new so-called ‘reuse value,’ no builders or developers could be attracted, but with a realistic reuse value, developers could be induced to undertake the work.”*

Like all older American cities, Philadelphia had been redlined – denied federally guaranteed mortgage insurance – since the creation of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) in 1934. As GIs returned en masse in 1945 and 1946 and 15 years of pent-up consumer demand was unleashed, a housing boom began in suburbs across the United States.

In 1945, there were 300,000 housing starts nationally. The following year, production more than tripled to one million housing starts, and then rose each year until it peaked at 1.9 million housing starts in 1950. Throughout the 1950s, the U.S. averaged 1.5 million new housing starts each year.

In 1951, construction began on Levittown in lower Bucks County. When it was finished in 1958, the 5,500-acre planned community contained 17,311 mass-produced houses, offered in six different models, priced as low as \$9,900. These were but a small fraction of the 250,000 new homes that the FHA and Veterans

Administration underwrote in the Philadelphia suburbs in the 1950s, while none were insured within the city. Between 1950 and 1960, the population in Philadelphia's suburbs grew by 44%; the city's population, which had peaked at 2.1 million, began to decline.

Retail followed residents. In 1956, a new regional shopping center with ample free parking opened in Bala Cynwyd, on the west side of City Avenue. In 1960, the even larger Cheltenham Shopping Center opened on a 62-acre tract, providing 4,500 free parking spaces, again, just over the city line. These were but two of the 16 regional shopping centers built in the Philadelphia suburbs over the next two decades and a small fraction of the 15,000 regional malls built nationally in the suburbs between 1955 and 1977. Simultaneously, Philadelphia's manufacturing and waterfront jobs, which had been buoyed by the full-production economy of World War II, resumed their path of decline in the late 1940s. As a result, working-class communities along the Delaware waterfront from Fishtown to South Philadelphia began to experience pronounced vacancies and deterioration.

At the same time, the movement of City Hall to Center Square in 1900 had been steadily pulling Philadelphia's central business district westward. When the Penn Central railroad demolished the elevated train tracks west of City Hall in 1953 and opened up a huge swath of Center City for the Penn Center office development, more companies decamped from East Chestnut Street and from Washington Square.

Speaking in 1968, William Day described the "old city" east of 7th Street as an area whose "past glories had faded." "The burgeoning city," he added, "had grown away from the heart of the old city. Emphasis had shifted westward, leaving a neglected and deteriorating community. Many of the old historic houses had collapsed, or been torn down. Others had been converted to stores or ship chandleries or flophouses and the once flourishing Dock Street Market, famous in the early 1900s, had outlived its usefulness and, indeed, had officially been condemned as unhealthy and unsafe." Concerned that cities might spend renewal resources in a scattershot fashion, the federal government required in 1954 amendments to the Urban Renewal Act that redevelopment agencies pre-

pare a "workable plan" before they could spend any dollars for acquisition.

Planning already was a central tenet of the reform movement that triumphed in Philadelphia in 1951. Philadelphia was without a paid planning commission until 1942 when the City Policy Committee under Walter M. Phillips' leadership was able to push through City Council the creation of a nine-person board of experts, supported by a substantial budget and a professional, civil-service-protected staff. Planning would soon be directly connected with implementation, when the 1951 Charter gave the Commission responsibility to create a six-year capital program for the city. Philadelphia reformers also pushed through state and local legislation to create a Redevelopment Authority in 1945, one of the first in the nation.

In 1947, the Planning Commission with Robert Mitchell as executive director worked closely with the Citizen's Council on City Planning, an offshoot of the City Policy Committee, the Chamber of Commerce, and with architect Oscar Stonorov and Philadelphia Housing Association Director Edmund Bacon, on the creation

of the Better Philadelphia Exhibition. Displayed on two floors of the Gimbel's department store at 8th and Market streets, the exhibition demonstrated through three-dimensional models and dioramas the powerfully positive benefits of city planning and thoughtful capital investment. Seen by over 385,000 residents and publicized widely in the press, the Better Philadelphia Exhibition presented a compelling vision of a renewed, thriving Philadelphia in 1982.

Bacon took the helm of the City Planning Commission in 1949, the same year reform-minded business leaders locally created the Greater Philadelphia Movement (GPM), and Congress passed the Urban Renewal Act with Philadelphia civic leaders playing a major leadership role.

With the 1954 amendments, the federal government was not only *requiring* planning, it was *funding* planning. Philadelphia, which had a 10-year head start on most cities in fashioning its renewal plans, quickly became a national leader, hiring the best and the brightest to refine its concepts for Washington Square East.

Elected in 1951, Mayor Joseph Clark, Jr. had focused Philadelphia's first renewal efforts on the removal of the old Food



Distribution Center that was located along Dock Street, between Walnut and Spruce streets, immediately adjacent to the central riverfront piers. Writing in 1963, Cyril Bahr Roseman provides a vivid image of the area in the 1950s: “The Dock Street Market was the scene of snorting, maneuvering trucks, of workers scurrying amid the debris of the previous day. Decaying refuse was piled along the curbs; incoming produce was heaped upon the bare sidewalk where rivulets of scum and urine wove their way around sprawling drunks.<sup>1</sup>”

It took to the very end of Clark’s administration to work through the local and federal politics, approval and financing. Clearance of the site that would become the Society Hill Towers was just getting underway when Richardson Dilworth took office as mayor.

With Clark having set the stage, Dilworth called a joint meeting of the Planning Commission and the Redevelopment Authority at the very beginning of his term in 1956 to underscore his commitment to downtown renewal. If nothing were done to revitalize the city’s center, he suggested, the entire city would fall apart, since downtown was the employment hub for both city neighborhoods

and suburban communities.

In the older area east of 7th Street, he pointed to the opportunity to create the base for a new tourism industry and to attract middle-income residents back to the city.

Day, speaking in 1968, summarized the concept for the renewal of this area: *“The potential was tremendous — the area was close to Center City and, with imagination and ingenuity, could become an attractive and convenient residential area for many professional people and others who wished to live in Center City. It was contiguous to the Independence National Park which itself was undergoing a magnificent rebirth and would provide unusually attractive and interesting open spaces for those residents. The area was on the river and even though the banks were cluttered with a deteriorating mass of piers, ample evidence was at hand from other cities that the riverbanks could be a great asset rather than a liability. Finally, several hundred historic residences still stood and were crying out for their very existence and for restoration.”*

Shortly after his inauguration, Dilworth had asked the Planning Commission to develop alternatives for redeveloping this area and the Commission authorized three architects – Roy Larson, Oscar Stonorov and Vincent

Kling – to conduct a detailed study of what could be preserved and what should be demolished.

Given the fact that the plan was to redevelop this area with market-rate housing, Dilworth knew that government couldn’t carry out redevelopment on its own. He believed that a new private non-profit was needed, not only for its business savvy, but because it was the best way to blend the diverse interests at work in redevelopment and “ensure that the specific concerns of all interested public and private parties were adequately considered.”<sup>2</sup> He also recognized that he would need the assistance of local private-sector leaders to act as an intermediary between public-sector planning and redevelopment agencies and newly attracted private redevelopers.

In a series of meetings in the spring of 1956, Dilworth convened business groups to convey his desire to see the formation of a new, private-sector non-profit corporation to help carry out the next phase of development. Old Philadelphia Development Corporation (OPDC) was thus inaugurated at a meeting on July 2, 1956 in the Mayor’s Reception Room that was chaired by Dilworth’s newly appointed chairman of the City Planning

Commission, real estate broker Albert M. Greenfield.

The organization was formally incorporated in November 1956. William L. Day, chairman of the board of the First Pennsylvania Banking and Trust Company, was elected as the first president. Gustave G. Amsterdam, president, Bankers Securities Corporation, and G. Joseph Keady, president, Philadelphia Steel & Iron Corporation, were named vice presidents; Paul M. Ingersoll, Penn Mutual Life Insurance Company, secretary; and James J. Mickley, Girard Trust Corn Exchange Bank, was named treasurer.

Its objective was to “aid and assist in the redevelopment, renewal, replanning and general improvement of the declining core of the historic city.” Former OPDC executive director James Martin summarized Dilworth’s charge to OPDC in the following way: *“Let’s create a private non-profit development organization that serves as a catalyst to encourage our business leaders, to encourage our civic leaders, and to encourage the general public that the public redevelopment program is worth investing in, that the city is worth investing in.”* OPDC served as a formal consultant to the Redevelopment Authority for major urban renewal parcels and

as the official redeveloper of preserved houses in Society Hill.

In her 1967 book, *Cities in a Race with Time*, Jeanne R. Lowe identified the creation of private-sector non-profits as a signature characteristic of Philadelphia's approach to redevelopment: "OPDC was important as the first new 'Philadelphia kind' of organization, one which had the joint participation of top citizens and officials. Its board of directors also included the mayor, the president of City Council and several key members of Dilworth's cabinet, as well as some civic and labor representatives and two university presidents." To serve on the board of OPDC, members had to be president or board chairman of their firm.

At the first board meeting, Albert M. Greenfield suggested John P. (Jack) Robin as the organization's executive and promised to recruit him personally. Robin had been secretary to Mayor David Lawrence of Pittsburgh, a board member of the Pittsburgh Redevelopment Authority, and chairman of that city's Parking Authority. He had helped oversee Pittsburgh's pioneering urban renewal project, Gateway Center. He helped establish Pittsburgh's Industrial Development Corporation. Much to the surprise of many Philadelphians, he

agreed to relocate and was hired as the first executive vice president at a salary of \$35,000, higher than any city official.

Speaking at his first Center City coordination meeting of city officials involved in the Washington Square East renewal area, Robin noted: "The OPDC is a non-profit citizens' organization. It has no public powers. Its strength comes from its acceptance by public officials as a disinterested associate in seeking what is best for Philadelphia." Thereafter, Robin chaired a monthly, two-hour, detailed working lunch meeting of all federal and city officials at which only five minutes was allocated at the beginning to order the meal and engage in private conversation.<sup>3</sup>

In 1963, Cyril Roseman wrote, "The instrument which, more than any other, carried the Washington Square East plans to fruition was OPDC.<sup>4</sup>" Far beyond its formal role, noted Roseman, OPDC lobbied city, state and federal officials, it publicly endorsed projects, it worked behind the scenes to mediate differences between preservationists and modernists, it funded design studies, and attracted developers to Philadelphia. It was the intermediary role that Roseman saw as the chief talent of its founding

executive vice president: "John P. Robin displayed that rare ability of communicating with politicians, ordinary citizens, businessmen, planners, and renewal administrators and officials."<sup>5</sup>

OPDC maintained its close relationship with city government through the Dilworth and Tate administrations. As the president of City Council, James H.J. Tate had assumed the role of mayor when Dilworth resigned in 1962 to run for governor. Tate was then reelected in 1964. Some distance did open between many reform-minded business leaders and Mayor Tate when the Greater Philadelphia Movement leaders endorsed Arlen Specter in the 1967 election. But Tate had served on the OPDC board when he had been Council president and he remained fully committed to the downtown renewal agenda and to OPDC, if not to some of the broader aspects of reform.

The election of Mayor Frank Rizzo required some repositioning of the organization and while it remained intimately connected with the formal renewal process, it was now a half step removed from its semi-official status. Across the country, neighborhood activism in both minority and white ethnic communities led to growing criticism of what was

perceived as a downtown-only agenda. A parallel shift in federal priorities eliminated funding for downtown renewal.

A similar process of adjustment occurred at the beginning of the Green administration at the same time as the ownership of companies was beginning to pass from local hands and business leaders were operating more on the regional and national scale. By the early 1980s new regional business organizations such as Greater Philadelphia First emerged and the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce expanded its role. OPDC became CPDC and while it remained the sole, major business organization focused exclusively on Center City, it had become by the mid-1980s one of several organizations speaking for Philadelphia's business community and competing for its financial support. The creation of the Center City District (CCD) in 1990 led to a further redefinition of CPDC's role, resulting in 1997 in a formal management agreement between CPDC and CCD. With 20/20 hindsight from the 21st century, it is clear that Old Philadelphia Development Corporation was a product of its founding time. It initially valued the history of the 18th and early-

19th century, but not the architecture of the industrial and Victorian age. Its original leaders largely emerged from white business and civic elites and decisions were made by a handful of men. Like all of American society, it wrestled with the racial and ethnic tensions of the 1960s and 1970s, the growing pluralism of civic and political life, and the loss of local corporate leadership. By the mid-1970s, annual reports reflect a recurring concern about the financial sustainability of the organization.

OPDC was formed by a generation that dared to dream big about cities when cities were in decline. We can quarrel today with some of the initiatives it supported and with its leadership style, but not with the breadth and success of its organizing vision.

Fifty years later, Center City Philadelphia is a thriving 24-hour downtown whose expanding boundaries, growing residential

population, tourist, cultural and retail offerings are far larger than the most ambitious dreams of the 1950s. Central Philadelphia Development Corporation has not only survived, it has secured a long-term and sustainable source of funding through the business improvement district it helped create and it continues to offer new ideas and programs to enhance the competitiveness of Center City.

**Paul R. Levy**  
Executive Director  
Central Philadelphia  
Development Corporation

- 1 Cyril Bahr Roseman, *Public-Private Cooperation and Negotiation in Downtown Redevelopment: A Study of the Decision Process in Philadelphia*; unpublished doctoral dissertation, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Princeton University, 1963, page 77.
- 2 Kirk Petshek, *The Challenge of Urban Reform*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1973, page 88.
- 3 *Ibid.*, pp. 222–223.
- 4 Roseman, page 136.
- 5 *Ibid.*, page 136.

## OPDC Founders



William L. Day



Gustave G. Amsterdam



William L. Rafsky



G. Joseph Keady



Albert M. Greenfield

*Founding OPDC officers, clockwise from top left: William L. Day, Gustave G. Amsterdam and G. Joseph Keady. The original officers also included Paul M. Ingersoll, James J. Mickley and John P. Robin. Also pictured, continuing clockwise, Albert M. Greenfield and William L. Rafsky.*

Old Philadelphia Development Corporation opened for business in February 1957 in Room 1008 of the Lumbermen's Mutual Insurance Building at 211 South Broad Street (now the Terra Building of the University of the Arts). Private support in the amount of \$300,000 had been raised at the end of 1956 and the organization began with an annual budget of \$90,000. OPDC identified as its priority *"the 127 acres between Seventh Street and Washington Square on the west, Walnut Street on the north, the proposed line of the Delaware Expressway on the east and Lombard Street on the south."*\*

OPDC's leadership endorsed the recommendations made by the architectural consultants to the Philadelphia City Planning Commission in May 1957 for what was called the Washington Square East urban renewal area. Unlike the wholesale demolition that had characterized early renewal efforts in other cities, Philadelphia's plan, based on a

careful house-by-house analysis, recommended that hundreds of federal-era structures be preserved, with new townhouse and high-rise buildings replacing demolished structures.

*"The redevelopment plan for Washington Square East has been generally accepted as a brilliant concept which will retain and embellish the fine structures in the area which have historic and architectural significance, while providing also a proper setting for about 2,000 modern apartment units of the highest construction and environmental quality ... The Corporation has urged a superior program of street trees and greenways for the area, and has emphasized the necessity of adequate parking facilities."*

The first phase of this 127-acre, \$25.4 million plan was approved by the Urban Renewal Administration in the fall of 1957. The federal government covered \$11.1 million in acquisition and demolition costs and the city \$5.6 million with \$8.7 mil-

lion to be recouped from the sale to redevelopers.

But almost immediately, OPDC broadened its focus to include the expansion of employment in Center City. Renewal planners understood that in a decentralizing region, there were still businesses that could benefit from a downtown location: corporate headquarters, firms requiring face-to-face contact with clients, and health care and educational institutions. Retention and attraction of such employers was key to sustaining downtown housing demand.

The federal Housing Act of 1954 had authorized the use of urban renewal funds for institutional projects to enable colleges, universities and hospitals to expand in the central city. To expedite this, OPDC lent financial support for a site planning study for the expansion of Jefferson Hospital and Medical Center.

Jack Robin, OPDC executive vice president, was asked by Mayor

### 1950s Highlights

OPDC is established

Society Hill revitalization

\* Quotes in italics are drawn from annual reports, meeting minutes and other original documents.



THE OLD PHILADELPHIA  
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

**1957**

**THE END OF THE BEGINNING**

*Cover, 1957 OPDC report*

1957

Continued

Dilworth to serve on the Philadelphia Parking Authority, establishing a characteristic reform era pattern of reciprocity between the boards of private non-profits and public agencies. Robin helped Dilworth engineer a reorganization of the Parking Authority from within, became a member of the city's Parking Policy Committee and began to participate directly in city-state discussions on all the expressways that were being planned.

1958

Mayor Dilworth facilitated this expanded role by asking OPDC to work with the city on redevelopment of the waterfront and *“to concern itself with the city's central business district,”* roughly defined as 20th to 6th, Arch to Walnut. *“This area is the city's retail trade center, and its area of concentration for corporate, financial and governmental administration. It is the symbolic ‘downtown’ for the Philadelphia metropolitan area; it is also a primary source of city revenues and employment opportunities. As such, its protection from obsolescence is a matter of vital community concern.”*

Howard C. Petersen, president of Fidelity-Philadelphia Trust Company, became the chairman of OPDC's newly formed Committee on the Central Business District, whose first major task was to evaluate the Planning Commission's broader master plan for Center City.

In its formal role as consultant to the Redevelopment Authority, OPDC actively sought developers for the former Food Distribution Center site on Dock Street, and Jack Robin made several trips to New York to interest out-of-town

developers. When the bids were open, three of the four were from New York firms. After reviewing the bids, OPDC recommended that the Redevelopment Authority accept the proposal by Webb and Knapp, a New York developer headed by William Zeckendorf, which included today's Society Hill Towers.

At the same time, the Redevelopment Authority was serving notice on owners of 567 properties designated for preservation in Society Hill that they either needed to restore their buildings to historic standards or face condemnation; 457 owners agreed to restore. To facilitate the redevelopment of these homes in Society Hill, OPDC distributed renovation guidelines, salvaged a number of mantels, doors and windows, plus a 50-foot wrought-iron balcony from houses razed to make way for a new nurses' residence for Pennsylvania Hospital and stored them *“for sale at no cost to persons wishing to use these fine elements in the restoration of other homes in the city.”*

1959

*“Demolition cut a huge swath through the Dock Street market area, following hard on the removal of the wholesale produce and seafood merchants to the new Food Distribution Center. This demolition was spectacular evidence of progress in Washington Square East.”*

In its formative phase, OPDC had considered actually taking title and redeveloping vacant homes in Society Hill. But on the advice of Jack Robin, it chose to play an intermediary role instead. *“In accord with our purposes, the Corporation will — if the City Council approves — become the redeveloper for about 40 historic houses in the area between Walnut and Spruce streets, east of Washington Square. The owners of historically certified houses were given the first opportunity to rehabilitate and restore them; those which come to us are the ones which the owners chose to sell. The Corporation's obligation as redeveloper will be limited to finding people who have the desire, taste, and means to buy a historically certified house and restore it in accord with sensible but sound historic standards. From the inquiries received, we believe that demand will be brisk.”*

*Mayor Richardson Dilworth  
watching Dock Street Market  
demolition, 1959*



1959

Continued

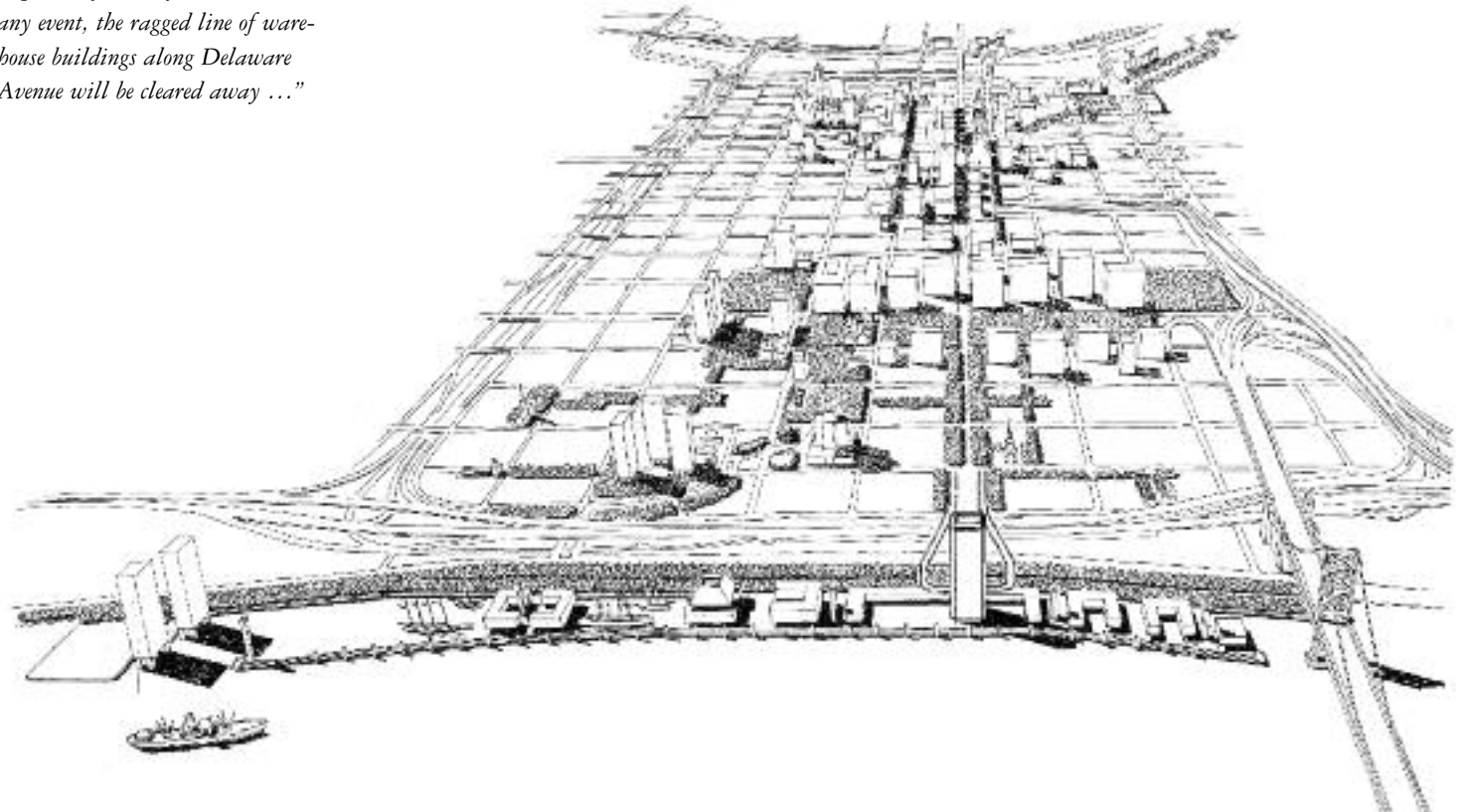
As OPDC identified successful buyers, a three-way settlement occurred in which properties passed from the Redevelopment Authority through OPDC directly to the individual buyer.

The City of Philadelphia, wanting to reinforce private investment, restored the Head House it owned at 2nd and Pine streets and began work on the “greenway concept — the threading through the area of charming planted walkways — [that] had its first physical demonstration in the city’s development of a handsome little park [now known as Three Bears Park] where a derelict police and fire station had added its element of blight to Delancey Street.”

At Independence National Historical Park, “rubble heaps and parking lots have vanished. Trees and shrubs are growing.” OPDC assisted with efforts to bring to the park the first American presentation of *son et lumiere* — a sound and light show popularized in France and a precursor of today’s Lights of Liberty.

With development of an Interstate highway system firmly

established in 1956 as federal policy, “It now appears definite that the Crosstown Expressway, originally planned along the line of Lombard Street, will actually be built on a line between the south side of South Street and the north side of Bainbridge Street ... The exact location of the Center City section of the Delaware Expressway is not yet resolved ... In any event, the ragged line of warehouse buildings along Delaware Avenue will be cleared away ...”







*Right: 246 and 248 Delancey Street pre-restoration and with restoration underway in 1959.*

*Left: Network of proposed highways and Delaware River waterfront, Geddes, Brecher, Qualls and Cunningham and the Ballinger Company, architects and engineers*

Richardson Dilworth began his second term as mayor.

*“The Old Philadelphia Development Corporation has growing interests and enlarged responsibilities. But it has been evident throughout that its success would be judged — and confidence in its abilities established — by the progress of its very first project, Washington Square East (Society Hill).”*

Philadelphia’s older neighborhoods remained redlined until federal policy outlawed the practice in 1968. The regional office of the federal Housing and Home Finance Agency (HHFA), which oversaw the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), had been skeptical of Philadelphia’s plans to concentrate renewal in Society Hill and had recommended instead that efforts be more conservative and build off the success of Rittenhouse Square. At the same time, the proposal for Hopkinson House was competing with Society Hill Towers and the nearby townhouses for federal mortgage guarantees. But OPDC was successful in lobbying for FHA-insured financing for

Society Hill Towers, while supporting the financing for Hopkinson House as well.

Rohm & Haas announced plans to build a new headquarters at 6th and Market streets, as part of the Independence Mall project, a year after OPDC officers initiated discussions between the company and the Redevelopment Authority. It was the first new corporate headquarters constructed east of 12th Street since the 1920s.

The City Planning Commission began work on updating the Center City plan, prompting Mayor Dilworth to write OPDC President William Day: *“We turn to the Old Philadelphia Development Corporation, as the agency especially created by business, labor and civic leaders to aid in the development of Center City, for assistance in carrying forward this plan.”* The OPDC task force chaired by Howard C. Petersen focused on land use and transportation improvements, notably an underground tunnel that could link the Pennsylvania and Reading commuter rail systems.

OPDC’s 1957 contribution of nearly \$9,800 for a site plan for Jefferson Hospital and Medical Center resulted in *“dramatic proposals”* by Jefferson to build two new buildings and redevelop the block bounded by Locust, Spruce, 10th and 11th streets.

#### 1960s Highlights

Society Hill revitalization

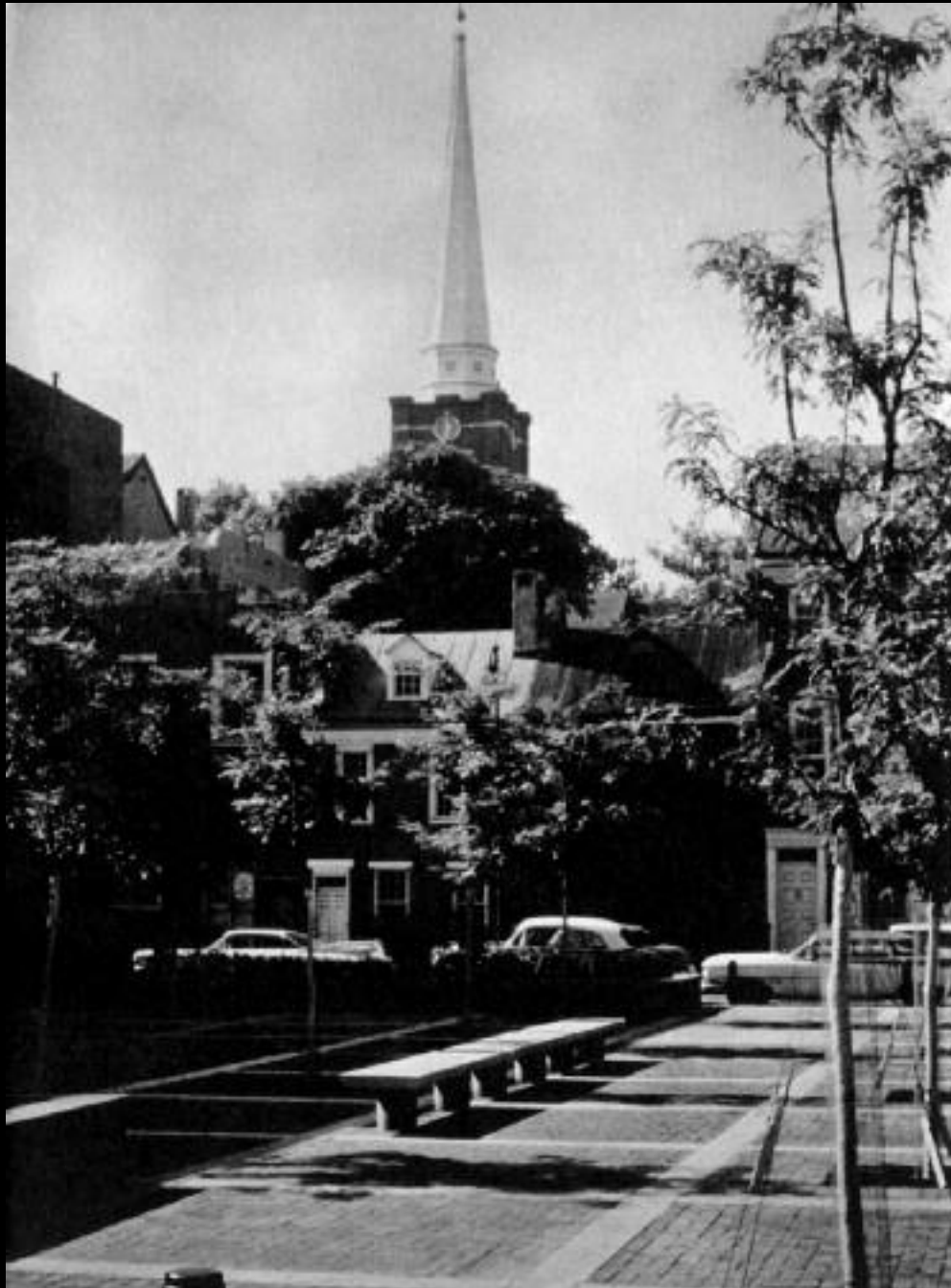
Market Street East planning

OPDC business attraction campaign

Crosstown Expressway, I-95

Washington Square West revitalization

Affordable housing



OLD PHILADELPHIA  
DEVELOPMENT  
CORPORATION

THE SPRING OF HOPE

1960

*St. Patrick's Church, cover,*

*1960 OPDC report*

OPDC established its Historic Houses Committee with Agnes (Mrs. C. Jared) Ingersoll as chair. She and her husband, a direct descendant of a signer of the Constitution, were among the first of the new Society Hill residents, restoring the 1763 house at 217 Spruce Street. The committee's task was to direct the disposition of Society Hill properties that owners (who were given 30 days to decide) declined to restore to the Redevelopment Authority's rehabilitation standards. The houses were required to be owner-occupied and single-family residences only.

Construction began on both Hopkinson House, the apartment building on the south side of Washington Square, designed by Stonorov and Haws and developed privately by Major Realty Company, and on I.M. Pei's townhouses for Webb & Knapp, facing Third Street.

In December 1955, just before he left office, Mayor Clark had received the recommendations of his Urban Traffic and Transportation Board that called for a balanced approach to region-

al transportation, including investments in both highways and transit to reinforce the competitive centrality of Center City. In addition to its interest in highway development, OPDC strongly endorsed the plan *"to connect the Pennsylvania and Reading commuter systems by an underground train passage north of City Hall, approximately in the bed of Filbert Street."*

OPDC also established a new task force, headed by R. George Rincliffe, president of Philadelphia Electric Co., to focus on *"the very core of the core."* Among its concerns: to consult with the Redevelopment Authority on the proposals for the block on the south side of Market Street between 15th and 16th streets, just across from the privately developed Penn Center office buildings.

OPDC began its involvement with what would eventually become the Avenue of the Arts: *"At Broad and Spruce, another renewal project — this one oriented to the arts — is beginning to stir."*

The interweaving of public and private organizations continued.

OPDC vice president Gustave Amsterdam became chair of the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority in 1961. Robin chaired the Pennsylvania State Planning Board and the Delaware River Basin Advisory Committee even as he served as vice chair of the Philadelphia Parking Authority. At the close of 1961, various urban renewal projects had OPDC working closely with four federal agencies, four state agencies, three independent public authorities, three quasi-public agencies and 15 units of city government. *"We are happy to acknowledge a high degree of intelligent cooperation to the men and women in government who have accepted the Corporation as a sister agency working in a common public cause."*

James Hugh Joseph Tate, president of City Council, succeeded Dilworth as mayor.

In his inaugural address, Tate promised, *"Philadelphia's renaissance shall continue."* He soon invited Jack Robin to meet with him regularly on a Mayor's Development Council, which also included City Development Coordinator William Rafsky, Edmund Bacon and Richard McConnell, an OPDC board member and Philadelphia director of finance.

After several delays over design decisions, ground was broken for Society Hill Towers. *"It is fair to say that if the Redevelopment Authority, this Corporation and [the developer] had been willing to accept a revision in design ... these apartments might well have been in construction a year or more ago. We do not regret our insistence on quality; we believe it will prove well worth the waiting."*

"The American Bell," a *son et lumiere* spectacle, premiered in July at Independence Hall, to mixed reviews. *"Our contribution to a spectacle of sound and light is some-*



*“Old Dock Street —*

*Filth, Congestion, Inefficiency;*

*New Dock Street — Light,*

*Beauty, Historical Restoration.”*

*1962 OPDC report*

1962

Continued

*thing of a champagne interlude, spent in the theatre arts and the dramatic interpretation of history. It illustrates our strong conviction, however, that successful urban renewal must bring more than new buildings and new highways to a city's core; it must bring its share of life and gaiety and interest."*

Demolition began on the derelict piers on the Delaware waterfront, *"the beginning of the magnificent Penn's Landing project."* One month later, construction began on the Parking Authority's 1,000-car garage at 8th and Filbert streets, *"a first step in the renewal of Market Street East."* With its direct connection to the Strawbridge and Clothier store, the garage was intended to provide vehicular access to Market East from the planned Vine Street Expressway.

OPDC established its Market Street East Committee, bringing together Market Street merchants, including G. Stockton Strawbridge, owner of Strawbridge and Clothier, *"to consider a joint approach on how to stop the continued deterioration of this vital shopping area."*

1963

*"Jack Robin could not repress a consuming curiosity as to urban problems and the ways of man in another country and another hemisphere"* and resigned to work as the Ford Foundation's chief consultant to the Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organization. William L. Rafsky, who had served since 1953 as Clark and Dilworth's development coordinator and was also executive director of the Redevelopment Authority since 1957, succeeded Robin as executive vice president of OPDC.

*"We are very close to total coverage of Center City as one great renewal area ... We are honored that the Redevelopment Authority, which invited us to serve as its consultant on the Washington Square East and Independence Mall projects, has broadened its invitation to include all of Center City."*

The Authority also asked OPDC to guide *"a national promotional campaign in which companies would be solicited to establish home offices or major branches in Philadelphia's Center City. The Corporation is accepting the assignment."*

1964

With the city having approved a plan to eliminate automotive traffic on Chestnut Street, *"despite some objections by Chestnut Street businessmen,"* OPDC sent a letter *"urging that a traffic study be undertaken before any commitment is made on the proposed Chestnut Street Mall."*

On assuming office in 1961, President John F. Kennedy substantially increased funding for both urban renewal and public housing construction. As a result, demolition and renewal projects were now underway in many Philadelphia neighborhoods. At the same time, the growing strength and prominence of the civil rights movement had led in the African-American community to rising expectations and impatience about long-delayed changes. Following Kennedy's assassination, President Lyndon B. Johnson accelerated efforts at urban renewal, announced more sweeping renewal programs, even as unrest and resistance to demolition began in low-income communities across the country.

In Philadelphia, James Tate began his first full term as mayor as similar criticism of renewal emerged in minority neighborhoods in the city.

*"The recent attacks on urban renewal both in Philadelphia and nationally ... may create problems in carrying out the program and receiving future congressional support. The [OPDC Executive] Committee generally felt*

*View of Market Street East  
from City Hall, 1965, and  
a 1964 model of Market  
Street East*



*that the most effective way to respond to such criticism was to take advantage of every opportunity for constructive publicity, particularly that which stresses the role of private industry in redevelopment and through such organizations as OPDC.”*

*“A great deal has been accomplished, but to those of us who have been intimately involved in the work, progress seems slow and tedious. We are impatient and anxious to see greater accomplishments so that the vision of a rebuilt Center City can become a reality. With this in mind, we feel that it is timely to rededicate ourselves to the work at hand ... Our Corporation hereby pledges its best efforts to bring this monumental undertaking to a successful conclusion. ...*

*“... Most significant is the unique role of the Corporation in encouraging private developers to invest in Center City Philadelphia. It is the participation of the members of our board and our various committees which has established a feeling of confidence in the integrity of Philadelphia.”*

OPDC entered into a \$50,000 one-year contract with the Redevelopment Authority, with

renewal options for an additional two years, *“to conduct a campaign to bring tenants from outside Philadelphia to offices in the central city,”* working with a committee of real estate brokers and concentrating on the Independence Mall area.

Responding to a request from the Dorchester on Rittenhouse Square, OPDC agreed to work with apartment building owners to promote occupancy and advise on a publicity effort.

*“A good deal of the Corporation’s energy was taken up during the year with the effort to properly relocate the Metropolitan Hospital. After much difficulty, Zoning Board hearings and court actions, the Corporation was instrumental in working out an understanding with the hospital to relocate in the Independence Mall area at 8th and Vine streets. ...*

*“Quality and diversity in the community’s cultural life requires a central location. Old Philadelphia Development Corporation is cooperating with a number of the key institutions to expand the city’s cultural horizons. Most of the focus of activity centers on South Broad Street between*

*Walnut and South streets ... A group of leading Philadelphians involved in the cultural life of the city has received the approval of the Redevelopment Authority to explore the feasibility of providing three new different size auditoria in the Academy of Music block. These will house performing arts groups – opera, theater and dance. ...*

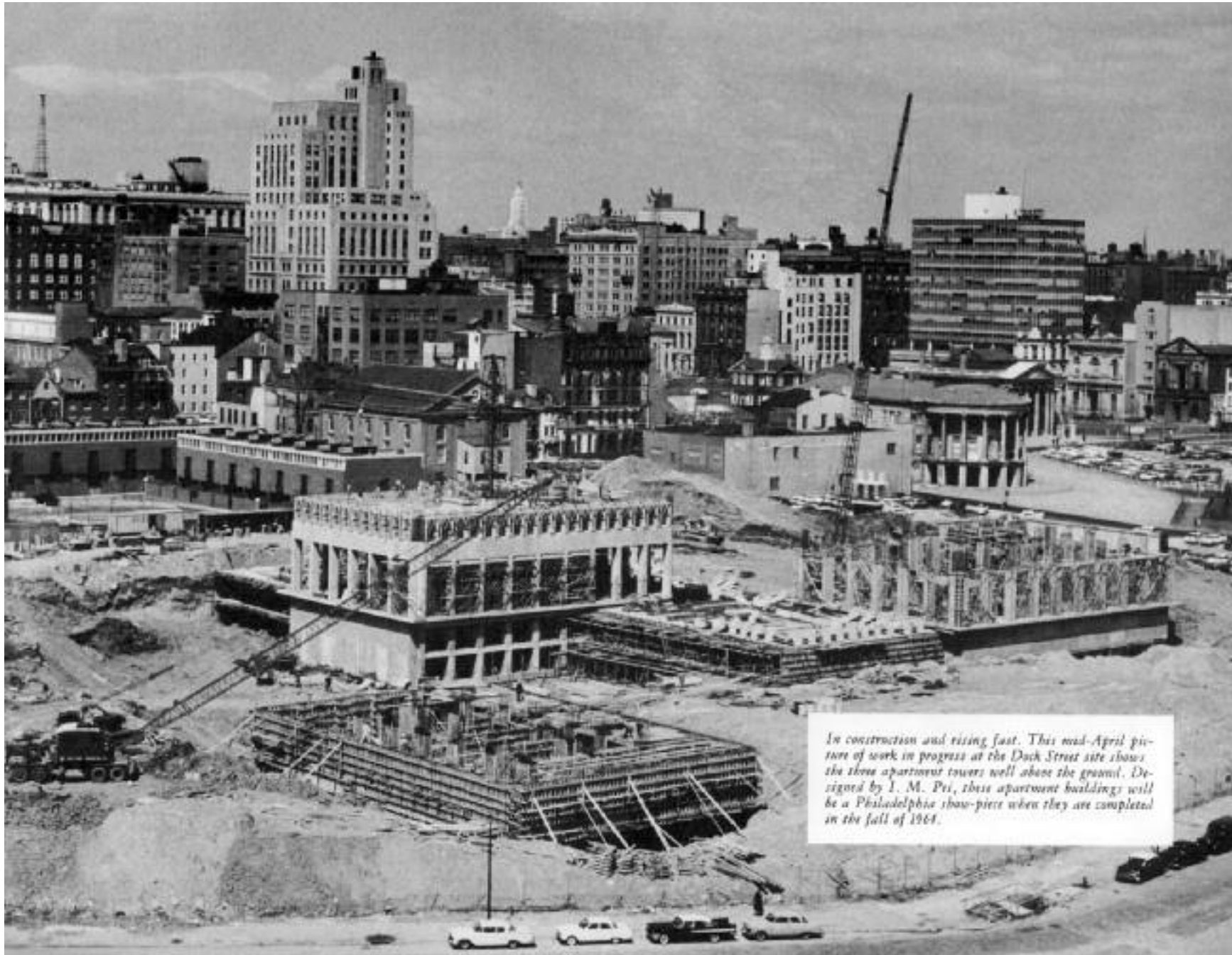
*“Adequate transportation is essential for the revitalized Center City of Philadelphia. Our major concern during the past year has been to expedite the Delaware Expressway in the Center City area. Old Philadelphia Development Corporation has worked closely with the State Highway Department and the City Streets Department and has helped overcome a number of bottlenecks and delays ... The Corporation Executive Committee is working with the City Planning Commission to attempt to insure high design standards for the Expressway.*

*“An essential ingredient in developing Market Street East is the proposed commuter rail connection of the Pennsylvania and Reading Railroads ... The Delaware River Port Authority line from New Jersey to 8th and Market Streets will also strengthen Center City. ...*

*“Throughout, the balance between highways and mass transit has been maintained.”*

OPDC established a committee on schools *“to cooperate with the School Board in the matter of better school facilities in the central city. The school committee will also concern itself with parochial and public schools.”*





*In construction and rising fast. This mid-April picture of work in progress at the Dock Street site shows the three apartment towers well above the ground. Designed by J. M. Pri, these apartment buildings will be a Philadelphia show-piece when they are completed in the fall of 1964.*

*Society Hill Towers under construction, April 1963*

As OPDC's work continued across Center City, the organization considered – and rejected – the idea of changing its name, but announced that it would greatly expand its responsibilities to coordinate all development from river to river, Spring Garden Street on the north to Bainbridge Street (route of the proposed Crosstown Expressway) on the south. *“Unless this is done, we will have private investors working in fragmented ‘islands’ of development in various sections of the core city completely unrelated ... It is essential to have an agency like OPDC which is made up of city officials, labor, industrialists, financiers, educators and civic leaders to rally the entire city in order to keep the center city strong and to encourage its continued growth.”*

The Executive Committee approved in principle a request for OPDC to assume responsibility for administering the development of Penn's Landing.

In Society Hill, OPDC focused on services and amenities for the emerging neighborhood. *“The Head House Square Corp. has started reconstruction of nine shops ... The Fifth Street shopping center ...*

*site has been cleared and construction should begin this summer.”* McCall School, a public elementary school, and the private St. Peter's School were both expanded due to *“the unanticipated influx of young couples to Society Hill,”* Colonial-style streetlights, street trees and brick sidewalk paving were installed with federal funding.

*“Developing a viable plan for [Market Street East] into an attractive, integrated shopping complex has proven to be extremely difficult, time consuming and thoroughly frustrating.”* After three years of work by Rincliffe's OPDC Market Street East Committee, *“a revised Planning Commission proposal, calling for an underground pedestrian mall on the north side of Market Street ... established a beginning point.”* A special subcommittee negotiated with the city's Streets Department concerning lighting improvements and reported *“lighting on East Market Street will be improved about five times over the present illumination.”*

*“Consultation with top railroad officials ... has aided in the negotiations for the proposed commuter rail connection.”* OPDC reaffirmed its earlier

endorsement of a Crosstown Expressway to run east-west between South and Bainbridge streets and *“again expressed concern that any closing of Chestnut Street to automobiles would increase the traffic on such residential streets as Spruce.”*

A public controversy emerged over plans to build I-95 as an elevated eight-lane highway, adjacent to Society Hill.

OPDC also discussed a development proposal for a 54-story building on the south side of Market Street between 15th and 16th streets: *“There was considerable discussion by committee members who objected to departing from the accepted policy of not having any building taller than City Hall.”*

Later, OPDC's West Plaza Committee contended that even a shortened 47-story building was too tall and requested that the developers explore keeping the building to 450 feet.

*“Program objectives east of Broad Street will require OPDC attention and energy for years to come. The Redevelopment Authority is looking to OPDC to work with it in the Washington Square West project, which is between 7th and 13th streets, from Walnut to South streets. Our Historic Houses Committee is making plans to serve in an advisory capacity.”*

An OPDC delegation traveled to Washington to lobby for “a landscaped” roof over the depressed portion of I-95.



*Delancey Park, 1964, known  
today as Three Bears Park.*

OPDC marked the passing of two of its founders: Harry A. Batten and Albert M. Greenfield. After 10 years of meetings, 16 of the original 21 executive committee members were still active.

In Society Hill, *"We are beginning to run out of old houses for restoring and new houses are being sold before they are completed. The vacancies in Hopkinson House have disappeared and Alcoa's [Society Hill] Towers are well on the way to full occupancy.*

*"One of the major problems which deters young people from making Center City their permanent home is the lack of good schools for all ages."* OPDC joined with the civic associations to form the Joint School Action Committee, which sought a high school to serve Center City. Construction began on the Albert M. Greenfield Elementary School.

OPDC established a Better Housing Committee, chaired by William P. Davis, III, vice chairman of the First Pennsylvania Banking & Trust Company, to work with the city on provision of *"better housing for the low and middle-income families of*

*Philadelphia."* OPDC also established a Market Street West Committee, headed by George H. Brown, Jr., chairman of Girard Trust Bank.

Bicentennial planning got underway: *"A major feature should be the completion of the revitalization of Center City Philadelphia as the hub and heart of the entire metropolitan region."*

The Chestnut Street Association, *"dubious of the planned mall treatment,"* sought and obtained OPDC support for *"beautification"* including *"sophisticated street furniture and lighting, as well as solving the parking and off-street loading problems in the near future."*

Following a very closely contested election, James Tate defeated Arlen Specter and began his second full term as mayor.

*"All historic houses for sale by the Redevelopment Authority under Old Philadelphia Development Corporation's jurisdiction have been sold."*

Reacting to urban unrest, OPDC issued a statement on the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King just a few days before its annual meeting: *"We believe that the greatest monument we can erect to the memory of Dr. King is our rededication as a board and as individuals to principles of equality and justice, and our firm resolve to expand even more on the programs that Dr King gave his life to carry forward."*

OPDC's Better Housing Committee reported, *"There is no need to point out to this group the danger to our cities stemming from neglect and decay. The recent riots are only the last signs of the difficulties all of us face in the coming months and years. Poor housing and slum conditions are recognized by all who have studied the urban problem as basic factors contributing to riots and violence."*

The Committee was *"formally involved by year's end in three projects comprising a total of 250 units of both rehabilitation and new construction ... Although this new endeavor is a radical departure from the original stated purpose of the Corporation, the officers and the Executive Committee recognized that the same leadership would have to be involved if the housing efforts of the city are to be fruitful. Further, there is a relationship in that the success of Center City revitalization would be empty without a viable residential series of neighborhoods which would be served by downtown."*

As President Johnson sought to increase the American commitment to the war in Vietnam and continue domestic social programs without a tax increase, federal urban renewal resources began to be curtailed.

At the annual meeting, OPDC President William L. Day reported, *"For a decade there has been an outpouring of federal funds for every program imaginable ... the United States now finds itself dangerously overcommitted and overextended ... This will mean that literally thousands of urban renewal projects now*



*Market Street West, 1969*

1968

Continued

*underway across the country will be held up, but this fact should not lead us to hasty decisions in changing carefully drawn plans ... The first victim of this somber state of affairs is Market Street East ... The commuter tunnel connecting the Penn Central and Reading Railroads is also stalled for lack of funds. Even though it is now generally agreed that this connection is essential to the whole Market Street East concept, the realization is still some years away."*

Bicentennial planning moved ahead: *"At this stage in our development it seems appropriate ... to look ahead to Philadelphia's participation in the 1976 Bicentennial Celebration ... What better gift could the Old Philadelphia Development Corporation bring to the feast than a completed Center City?"*

At year's end, OPDC's financial position was strained due to diminishing corporate contributions and the executive committee seriously considered *"what role, if any, OPDC should play in the city's future development effort."* Mayor Tate emphatically urged that OPDC *"not only continue to function as vigorously in the future as it had in the past, but also expand its*

*role to assist in the newly emerging projects of Washington Square West, Market Street East and Penn's Landing."* The Executive Committee voted unanimously to expand its program development as outlined by the mayor and to *"press vigorously into low- and moderate-income housing development."* *"After considering a number of alternative administrative mechanisms, the city administration late in 1968 turned to OPDC and requested direct Corporation involvement in preparation of plans, selection of developers and general administrative supervision of the Penn's Landing undertaking ... The past OPDC experience of attracting developers into a redevelopment area and coordinating public and private development functions can be applied directly to Penn's Landing. The more difficult job of direct administrative supervision is a new area of responsibility and poses an exciting challenge to OPDC in the years ahead."*

1969

*"Progress seems painfully slow, especially to a business oriented group that is accustomed to quick responses to executive decisions. Nevertheless, the members of the Old Philadelphia Development Corporation accepted from the very beginning the logical timing restraints inherent in public actions that involve peoples' lives as well as capital's investment."*

Responding to criticism of the displacement of low- and moderate-income residents from Society Hill, OPDC offered its support for a mixed-income approach to the Washington Square West neighborhood renewal.

*"Washington Square West offers a new dimension to OPDC's normal consulting role. In recognition of a difficult relocation program in the project, City Council and the city administration have requested that provision be made for low- and moderate-income housing to relocate displacedes within the area. ...*

*"In the past year, the Redevelopment Authority's marketing program [at Independence Mall], developed by OPDC under contract to the Authority ... succeeded in initiating the interest of the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia in a major site*

*on the Mall ... From this time on, the role of OPDC in Independence Mall is likely to change from a promotional effort to a review and follow-up of developers' timetables ... In the meantime, with the marketing experience gained in Independence Mall, OPDC is prepared to apply itself to the even more extensive development of Penn's Landing, Market Street East and Washington Square West."*



*Rehabilitated houses on  
Pine Street and the  
1000 block of Spruce Street  
in Washington Square  
West, 1966.*

*“The events and issues of the sixties have provided a complex stage for OPDC in the seventies. ...*

*“In the 1960s, the pace of development had a marked effect on the physical and economic characteristics of the city ... Programs of public and private development added more square footage of office space to the city’s inventory than had been added for the entire three decades between 1930 and 1960. This growth in downtown Philadelphia reflected the continuing shift in the city’s economy from blue collar manufacturing and production industries to white collar service industries. ...*

*“The specific functions of OPDC have been to recommend and support public policies that stimulate growth of employment-generating businesses. The functions will be particularly important in the 1970s because development sites that could be assembled solely through private means are rapidly disappearing. If Philadelphia is to maintain its competitive positions vis-à-vis other major office centers, development sites in publicly assisted projects like Market Street East and Penn’s Landing must be made available. OPDC’s role in the 1970s will be to encourage public policies which*

*will make development opportunities viable for major employers. ...*

*“Most of the 1960s were spent by the Market Street East Committee assisting the city in planning and seeking approvals for Market Street East. All of the 1970s will be required to bring the project to substantial completion.”*

In order to preserve its independence as a privately supported organization, OPDC separately incorporated the Penn’s Landing Corporation, which was the recipient of significant public dollars to manage and market the site. But the new corporation initially had the same board of directors and same executive committee members as OPDC.

*“The Penn’s Landing Committee of OPDC, in response to requests from the city and state administrations, undertook detailed planning studies of land uses and design which would direct private development on this publicly constructed landfill project.”*

*“Sun Oil Company has a serious problem in maintaining its central headquarters in Philadelphia because of the city’s policy of applying the mercantile tax to divisions of wholly-owned subsidiary corporations without*

*regard to whether or not the subsidiary corporations are located in Philadelphia.”* OPDC intervened, but Sun decided to move its headquarters to Wayne.

# 1970s

## 1970s Highlights

- OPDC Greenway project on South Broad Street
- OPDC Avenue of the Arts Council
- Market Street East reconstruction
- Commuter rail tunnel
- I-95 ramps controversy
- The Bicentennial
- Garment industry support
- Philadelphia Historic Preservation Corporation
- OPDC Penn’s Landing Corporation



## OPDC-21st Annual Report



*Eighty-foot-high holiday  
lights, designed for the  
Avenue of the Arts  
Council, on South Broad  
Street, 1977*

William L. Day, OPDC's founding president, became chairman; William White became president. William L. Rafsky, the executive vice president, became executive director of the Greater Philadelphia Movement (GPM), which shared some of Rafsky's time with OPDC; James Martin, who had been Rafsky's deputy, became OPDC executive director. OPDC considered a proposal to merge with GPM, but rejected it in part at Mayor Tate's urging, since much of the GPM leadership had supported Arlen Specter in the 1967 election. OPDC resolved to continue its current programs as "a separate and independent corporation."

White, Rafsky and Martin met with Mayor Tate "to discuss the future role of OPDC in its relations with the city administration... Mr. White told the mayor that there had been no change in OPDC's policy as a result of Mr. Rafsky's affiliation with the Greater Philadelphia Movement, and that the Corporation would continue to press ahead with all its existing programs through its current standing committees."

U.S. Secretary of Transportation

John Volpe approved full Interstate funding for the uncompleted portion of I-95 including the cover to extend from Delancey to Chestnut streets. "Approval of the covered expressway illustrates clearly, as perhaps no other major development project has, the pivotal nature of OPDC's role in coordinating public and private efforts to achieve a joint goal."

After extensive opposition to the Crosstown Expressway, coordinated by the Committee to Preserve the Crosstown Community, representing both white and African-American neighborhood groups along the South Street corridor, the city dropped plans for the Crosstown Expressway.

In many ways this was a watershed event, dividing supporters of downtown renewal on a fundamental question: were highways essential to linking the region to downtown or were they destructive to the urban fabric and poorer neighborhoods in their path? The scrapping of the Crosstown plans was part of a national trend, as the pendulum began to move away from large-scale renewal efforts and "top-down" planning,

One beneficial result was the revival of the South Street shopping and entertainment district and the revitalization, by private investment, of neighborhoods to the south, starting in Queen Village.

"In view of tremendous development potential along Broad Street from City Hall to South Street, OPDC this year formed the South Broad Street Committee [focusing on South Broad from City Hall to South Street] to give special priority to encouraging accelerated development in this area."

"Mr. Rafsky suggested that OPDC focus its concern on the effect of business taxes on Center City as the economic core of the metropolitan area. In dealing with state officials and legislators, officers and members of the Corporation should point out that a negative tax climate downtown has an effect on the entire economic health of the region. ...

"Mr. Martin told the [Executive] Committee that consistent problems were being encountered by developers in receiving reviews of development plans for Center City projects. He said he had received reports of prob-

lems with the Art Commission procedures, delays in review of plans by the Department of Licenses and Inspections, and mixed reports on availability of financing from local banks for Center City construction." In response, OPDC met with the managing director and other city officials to discuss how to expedite approvals.



*The Academy of Music, South*

*Broad Street, c. 1975*

Mayor Frank Rizzo took office.

In a 2005 interview, former OPDC executive director Jim Martin recalled that Rizzo's Managing Director Hillel Levinson initially told OPDC that the administration would have difficulty working with the corporation since several of its members had not supported Rizzo. OPDC prevailed by demonstrating both its support of key economic development projects, notably the commuter rail tunnel, which were on the new administration's agenda, and because of the close partnership it formed with several trade unions who were supportive of the new mayor.

*"Commenting on the relationship between OPDC and the new city administration, Mr. White and Mr. Martin said they were encouraged with the responsiveness of Mayor Rizzo and his cabinet to the operations of OPDC."* OPDC was asked to participate along with the Greater Philadelphia Movement and the Chamber of Commerce *"on general matters of economic development,"* OPDC's Rafsky and William S. Cashel, president,

Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania, were named to Rizzo's business advisory group, the Committee of Twelve, and the new commerce director, Harry Belinger, immediately turned to OPDC for resources and information upon taking office.

*"For the first time in over a hundred years, Center City Philadelphia is experiencing significant population growth. Throughout the old city's residential areas, families young and old are buying and restoring old colonial and Victorian townhouses to their former elegance. ... The proven success of the Society Hill area ... has paved the way for further residential growth in other areas of Center City such as Washington Square West, Franklin Town, Logan Circle, the Art Museum area and Queen Village ... As increased numbers of these new residents become involved in civic associations and community-based activities, a new spirit of involvement in the government, business and civic life in Philadelphia has been awakened."*

The clearance of the areas between 5th and 6th streets for the creation of Independence Mall in the 1950s had led to the displacement of many garment

industry firms. One of the first projects undertaken by the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation when it was formed in 1958 was the relocation of many of these businesses into the newly created Callowhill industrial corridor to the north.

As renewal efforts in the 1970s began to focus on Market Street East, a similar challenge was faced due to the concentration of garment and printing shops in older buildings slated for demolition. In a 1977 interview conducted by Walter M. Philips, James Martin, OPDC executive director, noted that there were many old loft buildings on Market East containing, *"a lot of declining industries: printing, needle trades, wholesaling ... and the effort was made to remove those declining industries and put in something that was a growth industry, such as offices, insurance and our service sector."* But representatives of those trades, both employers and unions, approached OPDC with the idea that they deserved the same redevelopment benefits as major corporations — demolition and

clearance for a new site.

Recognizing the ability of these groups to delay or block Market East renewal, OPDC initiated efforts to preserve employment in those sectors. *"To improve the competitive advantage of Philadelphia's important garment industry, we have been working closely with labor and industry leaders to determine the feasibility of combining commercial and industrial space in a new downtown building."*

*"In other areas of the city, the Better Housing Committee continued its work of providing seed money and technical assistance to non-profit sponsors of low-income housing. With funds provided from a \$5 million pool by eight of the Corporation's member banks, 315 units of new and rehabilitated housing have been completed to date under this program."*

OPDC identified South Broad Street as a *"top priority"* for city involvement and recommended development of the subway concourse. Reacting to several proposals for buildings taller than City Hall tower, OPDC raised the issue with the Planning Commission *"to develop an aware-*



*The Gallery at Market East  
under construction, 1976*

1972

Continued

*ness of the need for locational criteria for the placement of higher than City Hall buildings.”*

Reacting to both conservative and radical criticisms of federal intervention in cities, President Nixon declared a moratorium on all urban renewal and Model Cities spending. It would not be until 1974, when Gerald Ford was president, that newly configured federal programs for cities were funded under the Community Development Block Grant program, which placed a far greater emphasis on neighborhood, as opposed to downtown, renewal. Not only was the pendulum swinging further away from a focus on the central business district, the federal government also ceased funding the planning that had been essential to the reshaping of Center City.

1973

With virtually all the Society Hill houses that OPDC had marketed sold and “reflecting a lessened involvement with historical restoration and a posture of acting in a general consultative capacity ... to the Redevelopment Authority and community groups,” the Historic Houses Committee changed its name to the Washington Square Committee; Mrs. Ingersoll resigned after 10 years as chair of the committee: “*Society Hill itself stands in lasting tribute to her efforts.*”

*“The city administration with the backing of the Old Philadelphia Development Corporation confirmed its intent to build the total Market Street East mall with underground shopping facilities and began developing plans for accelerating land acquisition and construction on the north side of Market Street.”*

The Market Street West committee, chaired by George H. Brown, Jr., retired chairman, Girard Trust Bank, “*relinquishing its traditional low profile ... strived to infuse a sense of priority ... The Committee’s new direction is exemplified in its efforts to revive the Schuylkill River Park proposed for Philadelphia’s ‘East Bank’.*

*The Committee is especially dedicated to the revitalization of this long-delayed extension of Fairmount Park.”*

In a “*major commitment to the continuing viability of the garment industry in Philadelphia*” and recognizing the impact of Market Street East relocations, OPDC helped establish the Philadelphia Garment Industry Board, which undertook a “*series of programs designed to solve the present and anticipated problems in the industry including the need for new facilities, job training, security, health and child care services and long range planning.*”

As plans for the construction of the Center City commuter tunnel lagged, Frank C. Herringer, administrator, Urban Mass Transportation Administration, offered blunt remarks at OPDC’s annual meeting: “*You people in Philadelphia must set your priorities—and then you must ensure that the projects are executed in a reasonable time ... Philadelphia has several grants in which minimal activity has taken place and several new projects under consideration. My advice to you is to set your priorities, stick to them*

*and get the projects accomplished. We are entering a new era of competition for capital grants and you have to perform to compete.”*

The elimination of the Crosstown Expressway, which would have connected directly to I-95, created a need for an alternative way to enable on and off movements from I-95. The announcement of plans for ramps onto Front Street prompted major opposition from community groups along the waterfront from the Walt Whitman to the Benjamin Franklin Bridge.

This provoked some division within OPDC as Harry K. Schwartz, an officer of OPDC’s Penn’s Landing Corporation, cautioned the Corporation “*against losing touch with its original concepts*” and to urge opposition to proposed ramps at South and Bainbridge streets that he said would harm Society Hill. Arguing in favor of the ramps, “*Mr. Rafsky stated that the possibility of a seven-year delay in the construction of Penn’s Landing should be weighed seriously ... along with the possibility that interest in the site and the Corporation’s credibility in deliv-*

*Market Street West, c. 1976*



1973

Continued

*ering the site may be lost ... Ways can be sought to minimize any adverse effects the ramps may have [on Society Hill] ...* OPDC took a firm position in favor of the highway ramps.

1974

OPDC marked the passing of former Mayor Richardson Dilworth and founding OPDC president William L. Day. *"Together these leaders exemplified the partnership between the public and private community in Philadelphia."* Later in the year, Bernard Eskin, another longtime board member, died.

*"1974 could be called 'the Year of Market Street East'."* The Rouse Company was selected as developer for a *"four-level retail development with 90 to 100 stores ranging from an international gourmet food market and snack bar to clothing boutiques"* and demolition and excavation were started. *"The Market Street East Committee began to investigate alternate means to finance the project and sponsored a consultant's study of tax increment bonding."*

Twenty-three new street trees were planted on South Broad Street as part of OPDC's "greenway" program, which also included new lighting, signals and street signs and improvements to the South Broad Street Concourse. Construction began on the Academy House adjacent to the Academy of Music.

Working with the Philadelphia Garment Industry Board, OPDC participated in *"the recent groundbreaking for the new Garment Center at 8th and Arch streets ... a good example of the productive relationship generated by the labor, industry, government and business participants on the board."*

OPDC and the OPDC Penn's Landing Corporation joined with the Greater Philadelphia Movement and the Chamber of Commerce in opposition to the Neighborhood Preservation Coalition lawsuit to stop I-95 construction over the ramps controversy: *"In the last fifteen years, this portion of I-95 has undergone four major and countless minor changes to respond to community desires ... The time to build has now arrived."* A subsequent compromise was reached in 1977 with ramps moved to the east side of the highway connected to Delaware Avenue. Sound barriers and parks were built to buffer adjacent communities.

1975

OPDC reorganized, creating a separate body of members and a smaller board of directors. Having *"worked itself out of a job,"* OPDC's Washington Square Committee, headed by Nadine Mitchell, was terminated; OPDC remained involved through its participation with civic groups and the city. The Better Housing Committee also ceased operations, having overseen \$4.9 million in construction loans, covering 438 housing units since 1968. *"The eight banks which were contributing ... [decided] to deal with the urban mortgage program needed in the city of Philadelphia on an individual bank basis and not under a collective program ... Should the future need arise and circumstances warrant, the base has already been built for further collective action ... in the urgent field of housing for low and moderate income families. This, more than seed money loans and units completed, is a positive note on which we now announce the close-out of this phase of activity of the Old Philadelphia Development Corporation."*

The 1975 annual meeting took place at the new Penn Mutual Life Insurance Building on





*"A watercolor painting of  
ber block is presented to  
Washington Square Committee  
Chairman Mrs. Howard  
Mitchell," 1975. From left,  
John R. Clark, Nadine  
Mitchell, William White,  
James Martin and Mayor  
James Tate*

1975

Continued

Independence Mall, the fourth consecutive such meeting in a new building. (In previous years, OPDC met at the new Philadelphia Electric Company headquarters on the Schuylkill River, the Fidelity Mutual Life Insurance Building on Centre Square and at 1234 Market Street. *“The geographic spread of those meeting places ... symbolizes the diversity of the Old Philadelphia Development Corporation.”*)

Bicentennial preparations gathered momentum: *“We were busy sprucing up our city in anticipation of the many millions of visitors we will be receiving this year. Through the OPDC Greenway Program new trees and lights were placed on South Broad Street. The merchants on Market Street East are engaged in a multifaceted street improvement program, and the recently completed Chestnut Street Transitway lends a new distinction to the city’s primary shopping street ... The OPDC Penn’s Landing Corporation will have its World Sculpture Garden, Boat Basin, Esplanades and parking lot ready this spring.”*

An OPDC-commissioned transportation study for Market Street

West reported *“that a serious gap had developed between transportation demand and service in the area.”* Its suggestions included *“such short-term improvements as repair and improved maintenance of the 19th Street Subway-Surface Station to long-term system improvements such as a new subway station at 20th and Market streets and peripheral parking garages on the Vine Street Expressway.”*

With community opposition mounting to the Center City commuter tunnel out of concern that limited federal transportation resources would be better spent enhancing services in the city’s neighborhoods, OPDC participated in a meeting in the mayor’s office with UMTA head Frank C. Herringer *“to reaffirm unqualified support for the Rail Commuter Connection.”* A lawsuit brought by the Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia to stop or delay the project was quickly dismissed and the United States Department of Transportation approved a \$180 million grant for 80% of the cost, the largest federal grant in the city’s history.

Support for the commuter tunnel

was also seen by many in the public and private sectors as a way to continue downtown revitalization in the absence of federal urban renewal funds. To develop new funding alternatives OPDC’s Market Street East Committee commissioned a consultant to investigate the *“California method of tax increment land development financing. The study generated keen interest and demonstrated that alternative financing mechanisms can be applied feasibly in commercial urban renewal projects.”*

Pennsylvania, however, did not authorize tax increment financing until the 1990s.

1976

Mayor Frank L. Rizzo began his second term; millions visited Philadelphia for the Bicentennial.

With an older generation of corporate leaders passing from the scene and multiple business organizations now competing for business contributions, Old Philadelphia Development Corporation faced a growing financial challenge. *“Mr. White indicated that he regarded the situation with deep concern and one that requires a reappraisal of whether the Philadelphia corporate community desires OPDC to continue as a major operation within the Philadelphia civic community.”*

OPDC’s Market Street West Committee concentrated on the transportation plan. *“One of the major components of that program is the development of a system of large, collector parking garages in air rights above or adjacent to the expressways which border Center City. The purpose of this system is to intercept cars as they exit the highway, keep them off already congested downtown streets, and store them at the edge of the central business district until needed again. The concept also provides for constructing multi-use build-*

*The Market Street East Make  
Over Program preparing for  
the Bicentennial.*



1976

Continued

*ings above the parking structures and for some form of personal transportation system to move people quickly and safety from the garages to their ultimate destinations.”*

The Executive Committee commissioned an engineering analysis and ultimately recommended construction of a parking garage over Vine Street Expressway exit ramps at 16th and Vine streets. *“The history of the 16th and Vine streets parking garage to date illustrates the role of OPDC’s standing committees as ‘packagers’ of ideas. The Market Street West Committee did not create the concept of a peripheral parking system and in the end others will have to carry it out, but the Committee did take an idea requiring the cooperation of several agencies and branches of government, broke it down into manageable and testable components and, working with the agencies, has initiated the step-by-step process of implementation. ...*

*“In recent years, a number of cultural and performing groups have moved onto Broad Street ... These organizations, together with the institutions long established in the area, have made Broad Street*

*South Philadelphia’s center for performing arts.”*

An outbreak of Legionnaires Disease prompted the closing of the Bellevue Stratford Hotel. Walter D’Alessio, executive director of PIDC, told OPDC’s Executive Committee *“the loss of the Bellevue Stratford was a major blow to the already undersized convention trade that the city does have.”* The city government was prepared, he reported, to purchase the site, clear it and make it available for use as a hotel, if necessary.

OPDC continued efforts to balance its support for new post-industrial development with assistance to remaining manufacturing firms. The Garment Center at 8th and Arch streets, sponsored by the re-named Council for Revitalization of Employment and Industry, became the first new building for the garment industry to open in a Center City location since 1925. *“This single project did a lot to clear the climate of indifference toward the industrial sector that was associated by the unions with the Center City develop-*

*ment program and created a very positive and effective working relationship of labor and industry participants in the urban development process.”*

*“The rehabilitation potential of the Old City area is just now being discovered. New investments there should be guided carefully to insure that the unique character of the area is maintained.”*

1977

An independent evaluation of OPDC conducted as part of the Philadelphia Civic Organization Survey concluded, *“The strength of the OPDC board and the skills of the OPDC staff make it a logical vehicle for business community involvement in industrial and commercial development activities.”* It recommended that OPDC continue its present organization and operations, but expand its charter to include appropriate activities beyond Center City.

As the Penn Center development continued to expand and office tenants were migrating to West Market Street, vacancy rates grew significantly on South Broad Street. OPDC established the Avenue of the Arts Council, headed by Richard Ravenscroft, president of Philadelphia National Bank. The long-term goal of the council was to reposition South Broad Street and highlight the importance of performing arts organizations and new venues to the economy of the city. The council’s activities were also prompted by the debate within the Philadelphia Orchestra and



*The Garment Center at  
Eight and Arch streets under  
construction, c. 1975*

1977

Continued

among its supporters as to the artistic and economic need for a new concert hall and for use of the Academy of Music by other organizations. A group of architects developed a plan for OPDC to erect 80-foot-high Christmas lights on the Avenue of the Arts. The long-delayed commuter rail tunnel contract was approved, contingent on \$170 million of new, private development in Market East, *“a serious commitment for OPDC and the Market Street East Committee.”*

*“The retail sales rebirth of Market Street East began on August 11, 1977 when the Gallery at Market East and the new Gimbel’s Department Store simultaneously opened their doors.”* More than two million shoppers passed through the Gallery in its first week. Serving the complex were the new 800-car parking garage, the modernization and extension of the 8th Street subway station and a multi-million dollar renovation of the Strawbridge and Clothier department store.

President Jimmy Carter took office and reinstated a funding

commitment to downtown renewal through the Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG) program.

1978

OPDC responded to a request from the city *“to establish a new corporation ... to acquire visual easements on historic buildings in the Old City. The new Philadelphia Historic Preservation Corporation will continue, with contemporary tools, the rehabilitation and preservation efforts that were so significant in OPDC’s early efforts in the Society Hill area.”*

Responding to the civic organization evaluation, OPDC *“decided to embrace the citywide economic development goals of the Council for the Revitalization of Employment and Industry, an organization spawned by OPDC about five years ago. To this end, the new Industry Finance Committee was established to assist banks in reviewing and defining their policies with regard to loans made to labor-intensive industries such as the printing and apparel trades. ...*

*“The numerous office and residential buildings privately developed in the Market Street West area since the construction of Penn Center have brought with them the need to provide transportation facilities, green spaces and other public amenities ... The Market Street West Committee’s support of a new subway station in the vicinity of Twentieth and Market streets was*

*predicated on the Committee’s perception of the value of such a facility in stimulating new, high-rise development in the area. During 1978 the Committee authorized a Joint Development Analysis to spell out some of the ways in which new commercial developments can be tied into the processes of land assembly and financing for a new mass transit facility. The report concluded that on a smaller scale, the joint subway and commercial development prospects for a Market Street West project are at least as promising as those of the Market Street East project a decade ago. ...*

*“Market Street East continues to expand. The success of the Gallery at Market East will now be extended as Gallery II rises in the 1000 block of Market Street. A J.C. Penney department store will be part of the new complex, marking the first time Penney’s has entered the downtown Philadelphia retail market. Twin office towers, each containing 400,000 square feet, will substantially increase office space in Market Street East. The unabated popularity of the Gallery complex, one of the busiest shopping malls in the United States, indicates that the appetite for*



*"Center City has never seen  
a retailing extravaganza  
to match the opening of  
Gimbel's and The Gallery,"  
1977 OPDC report*

1978

Continued

*this type of retail facility in downtown Philadelphia is far from being satiated. The Reading Terminal Shed renovation will offer the public a different type of shopping environment, similar in concept to the very successful Quincy Market in Boston. ...*

*“The commuter rail connection between the Reading Terminal and Suburban Station, long supported by OPDC, is finally underway. ...*

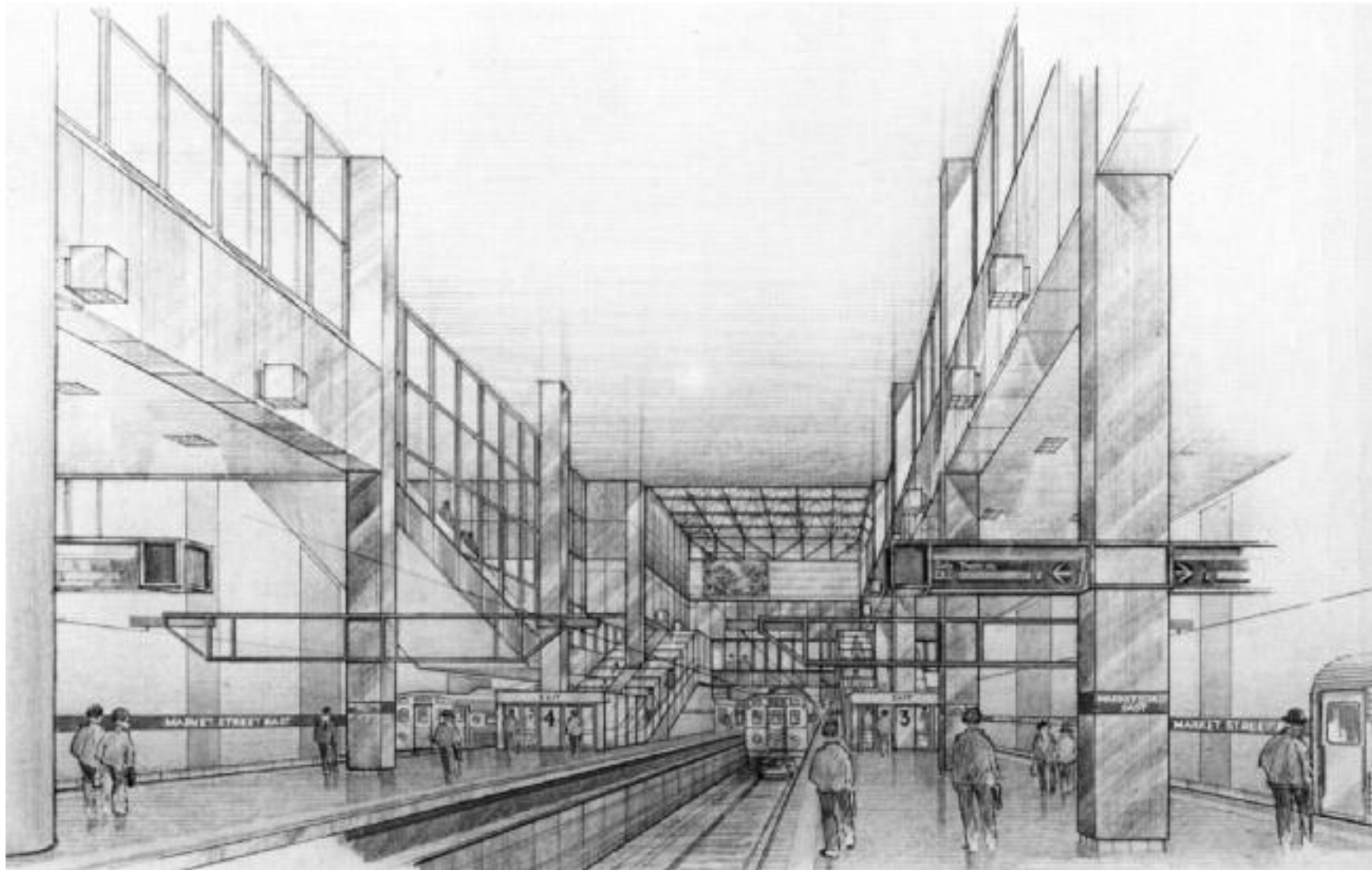
*“The OPDC Penn’s Landing Corporation is moving carefully ahead with the commercial development of the site and has recently agreed to the construction of a new, 250-seat Chart House Restaurant to the south of the Sculpture Garden.”*

The Avenue of the Arts Council sponsored the Avenue of the Arts Festival, closing South Broad Street and drawing more than 200,000 to an outdoor festival.

1979

On the Avenue of the Arts, the Bellevue Stratford was rehabilitated and reopened as the Fairmont Hotel; the Avenue of the Arts festival brought almost 300,000 to experience performing and visual arts live on South Broad Street. *“This celebration of the arts has become emblematic of the unification of the business and arts communities and their commitment to the area ... While this activity heralds a new era of vitality for this area, the true measure of success may be in the final disposition of the last major development site at Broad and Spruce streets. A quality commercial and arts-related usage would not only ensure that uniquely urban mix of activity to thrive, but would enhance the marketability of the site. Reflecting this concern, a market feasibility study — a highest and best-use analysis — has been sponsored by the Committee. It is being conducted jointly with a theater-needs study undertaken by the Avenue of the Arts Council.”*





*"The Commuter Rail  
Connection linking the Reading  
Terminal and Suburban Station  
has been championed by  
OPDC as the key to realizing  
the full retail market potential  
of Market Street East," 1979  
OPDC report*

William J. Green, III took office as mayor.

OPDC's feasibility study established "the need for a new 3,000-seat performance hall" on South Broad Street. In a 2006 interview, James Kise noted that out of that original study "evolved a mile-long district that is the heart of the performing and visual arts in Philadelphia."

The Annual of the Arts Festival brought 300,000 to hear Eugene Ormandy conduct the Philadelphia Orchestra outdoors on South Broad Street.

*"During the past year a group of civic leaders whose institutions and businesses are located along North Broad Street formed themselves into a committee to address their common problems ... The task this new Broad Street North Committee set for itself was to upgrade the section of Broad Street between City Hall and Spring Garden Street. To do this it must combat the common perception that private investment will not venture north of City Hall."*

The Philadelphia Historic Preservation Corporation (PHPC) expanded its area of operations from Old City citywide. By the

end of 1980, PHPC had received 13 easements appraised at a value of over \$2 million. *"Included in this figure is the Land Title Building, one of the earliest skyscrapers built in America...The Corporation is also restoring the facades of a row of commercial buildings at Front and Chestnut streets and is attempting to bring about the rehabilitation of two other building complexes in the Old City ... [PHPC's approach] is based on the utilization of federal tax incentives rather than direct subsidies, and it is designed to preserve historical buildings as functional elements in the community, not as museums in need of continuing financial support."*

At the end of the Rizzo Administration, developer Jack Blumenfeld was selected as the redeveloper for Penn's Landing. But when the Green administration took office it undertook a reappraisal of the project and then, after several months, cancelled the agreement with Blumenfeld. Since the Penn's Landing Corporation was still an arm of OPDC, this led to some straining of the relationship between OPDC and the city,

which was handled diplomatically in the annual report: *"Although regarded as a major development site, Penn's Landing's positioning in the market is being reconsidered. A strong residential market for piers to the north and south of Penn's Landing has suggested that much less significance might be placed on this role for Penn's Landing, which now is seen as one component of an increasingly extended and attractive waterfront. As partners in the reappraisal, the new city administration has brought fresh perspective to decisions regarding the site. It has placed greater emphasis on maintaining public open space in order to make Philadelphia's waterfront resources more accessible."*

Independent of the merits of the Blumenfeld proposal, it was the beginning of a recurring pattern in which four successive new administrations sought to select developers for Penn's Landing, only to have the project fail to proceed. (Blumenfeld ultimately sued the city successfully for damages, prompting at least one long-term city official to note that Blumenfeld was the only developer to make money at Penn's Landing.)

#### 1980s Highlights

Avenue of the Arts

Penn's Landing

Commuter Rail Tunnel

1988 Center City Plan

OPDC becomes CPDC

Special services district planning

## BROAD STREET SOUTH

*Paul H. Marfield*

Walter H. Greenfield  
 Chairman  
 Joseph W. Adams  
 Neil L. Smith  
 Lynn L. Decker  
 Robert F. Corlano  
 Bernard Cash  
 William Clark  
 John W. Harman  
 William L. Glick  
 J. Harrison Randolph  
 Donald Wolfe  
 Dr. Thomas Schwan  
 Robert B. Searles  
 Robert White  
 Alan Wolf  
 Peter Santilli

Last May, for the third consecutive year, the 1980-81 season South Center was joined with the Avenue of the Arts Council in making a one-day festival on South Broad Street. The Avenue of the Arts Festival, which showcased over 1,000 of Philadelphia's best visual and performing artists, showcased the vitality of the many outstanding cultural institutions located in the area. Some 300,000 people heard Mayor Dwanney conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra.



Following his performance the Maestro was honored for his many contributions to the cultural life of the City during his 47-year tenure as Music Director of the Orchestra.

The Committee and the Avenue of the Arts Council also commissioned an in-depth study exploring the feasibility of developing a new theater on Broad Street. In its initial phase, this work established the need for a new 1,000-seat performance hall. The most acceptable operating expenses and revenues, and the construction costs of the proposed facility are now being analyzed.

The remarkable revitalization of the area's office buildings has continued at a rapid pace, and renewed development on the North American Building, the Four Lancersman's Building, and the Grand Building, among other major structures stands on Broad Street. South Broad has now benefited from some

degree of private investment during the past few years. The construction of a new center for the arts on Broad and Spruce Streets would also be the catalyst of this area.

## OLD PHILADELPHIA DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

A Guide to the Arts Council Executive Committee  
 Carl H. Ryan, Chairman  
 Richard J. Wynn  
 Joseph W. Adams  
 Neil L. Smith  
 Robert F. Corlano  
 Bernard Cash  
 William Clark  
 John W. Harman  
 William L. Glick  
 J. Harrison Randolph  
 Donald Wolfe  
 Dr. Thomas Schwan  
 Robert B. Searles  
 Robert White  
 Alan Wolf  
 Peter Santilli

# Signature of a City



*The arts were the theme for the 1981 OPDC report.*

1981

With local corporate leadership waning and efforts underway to create a new regional business leadership organization, Greater Philadelphia First (GPF), OPDC assigned a Strategic Planning Committee to consider a merger with GPF, but concluded that OPDC should remain independent and focused on *“the overall health of the downtown.”*

The city convened a committee to develop an economic plan for the downtown and requested *“the involvement of various OPDC directors from time to time in this important long-range plan for Philadelphia.”*

On South Broad Street, OPDC incorporated a new spin-off, Academy Center, Inc., as a successor to the Avenue of the Arts Council, with Richard S. Ravenscroft, president of Philadelphia National Bank as its president. With funds from the Pew Charitable Trusts, the new corporation immediately purchased the Academy Apartments, a building at 1327 Spruce Street, *“with the sole purpose of demolishing it and using its site as part of the*

*planned arts center”* to be sited at the northeast corner of Broad and Spruce streets.

1982

After 14 years, James Martin resigned as OPDC executive director to head the Philadelphia Area Labor Management Committee. Michael Scholnick, an OPDC staffer for seven years who also served as PHPC executive vice president, took over as executive director; William Blades, a general contractor, assumed the associate director position.

After the extensive re-thinking and decision not to merge with Greater Philadelphia First, OPDC adopted a new mission statement, describing itself as *“a privately sponsored neighborhood organization ... The Corporation draws its agenda from concerns identified by its constituents and aims to respond to problems and opportunities which influence strongly the general health of Center City. For the Corporation’s purposes, Center City has been defined as extending to the point where major development ceases and, at this juncture, consists of Franklintown to Spring Garden, the Museum area, west of Broad through University City to 40th Street, and south of Bainbridge Street both east and west to the rivers.”*

The Broad Street South Task Force, chaired by F. Bartlett Moore, initiated *“a procedure for street maintenance and monitoring involving all of the major property owners and building managers on Broad Street South. It then turned over continuing operation responsibility for this project to the Clean Team Program of the Chamber of Commerce.”*

Late in the year, and serving as a consultant, former executive director William Rafsky outlined priorities for OPDC in 1983. Among them, creation of a South Broad Street concert hall was the highest priority. Establishment of a special services district for the area from City Hall to Pine Street and 13th to 15th streets was identified as a high priority *“to establish a reputation for South Broad Street similar to New York’s Fifth Avenue, Chicago’s State Street and Washington D.C.’s Connecticut Avenue,”* along with setting a Center City parking policy and determining a site for a new convention center complex.

PHPC created Friends of Conversation Hall, which restored the City Hall space as a reception room for the mayor.



*Eugene Ormandy conducts  
the Philadelphia Orchestra  
on South Broad Street  
during the 1980 Avenue  
of the Arts Festival.*

1983

While the board of the Philadelphia Orchestra had not yet decided whether it should move from the Academy of Music, OPDC supported creation of the “Academy Center,” a 3,200-seat concert hall as part of a performing arts center, to also include the Academy of Music and a renovated Shubert Theater. *“New land use controls, a special taxing district and historic certifications [were researched] as tools toward the improvement of the Broad Street South area ... [but] the special tax district was tabled in favor of a purely private-sector initiative to improve street maintenance.”*

1984

W. Wilson Goode became mayor. At OPDC, Michael Scholnick resigned as executive director; Peter A. Wiley was named acting executive director.

The commuter tunnel opened in early fall, connecting the entire regional network together in Center City. Within weeks it was shut down, when the 100-year-old Columbia Avenue (now Cecil B. Moore Ave.) railroad bridge, a critical link on the main line of the former Reading Railroad, was closed in fear of imminent collapse, halting train travel through the tunnel. Round-the-clock emergency repairs, ordered by Mayor Goode, restored the bridge and the Gallery businesses weathered the crisis. The Gallery at Market East was soon labeled “America’s Most Successful Urban Mall.”

Ground was broken for the Chart House, the first private development on Penn’s Landing.

On the Avenue of the Arts, OPDC used proceeds from the sale of the Academy Apartments by its subsidiary to contribute to the Philadelphia Orchestra’s get-

ting an option to acquire the building at the southeast corner of 15th and Spruce streets as part of a possible site assemblage for a new performing arts center. OPDC’s attempt to assemble the site ultimately failed when it was unable to acquire a small strip of ground adjacent to the property. The balance of the proceeds, including a substantial profit, was repaid to the Pew Charitable Trusts.

OPDC took on the administrative responsibility for the maintenance for all planters from City Hall to Locust Street.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation presented PHPC with its Preservation Honor Award for the easement program.

At OPDC’s annual meeting, speakers debated the *“issue of height limits [that] had aroused great interest throughout the city.”* Craig Schelter of PIDC called for a new Center City plan, the first since 1963, to address building height along with other issues in city planning; OPDC formed a committee to consider the issues raised by the controversy over

Willard Rouse’s proposal to build an office tower, subsequently known as One Liberty Place, taller than City Hall’s tower.



*The 1983 OPDC board  
of directors and staff*

The board approved a resolution giving OPDC a new name and confirming its expanded mission: *“Whereas, there is a need for a consolidated voice in the business and civic community of Central Philadelphia to advocate and promote orderly development and operations in the downtown area; and whereas, the Old Philadelphia Development Corporation has accomplished many of the objectives under its original mission ... the name of the corporation is ‘Central Philadelphia Development Corporation.’* *“The mission of the Central Philadelphia Development Corporation is to represent the business and civic community in helping to guide and facilitate and to be an advocate for the physical and economic development and management of Central Philadelphia.”*

Richard S. Ravenscroft, president of Philadelphia National Bank, was elected president, succeeding OPDC founder William White. Also named as the first officers of CPDC were: Vice President Steven Poses, president of Shooting Stars, Inc.; Vice President Gustave G. Amsterdam, another OPDC

founder; Secretary Michael M. Dean of Wolf, Block, Schorr & Solis-Cohen and Treasurer Bruce A. Gillespie, an assistant vice president at PSFS.

The city administration proposed an ordinance limiting the height of new buildings to that of City Hall’s tower, effectively precluding the development of One Liberty Place. CPDC declined to take a position and City Council later rejected the proposed ordinance, with then-Councilman John Street leading the Council’s opposition to Mayor Goode on this issue.

Spurred by the civic debate about building height limits, the Philadelphia Planning Commission began work on a new plan for Center City and City Planning Director Barbara Kaplan suggested that CPDC *“become the ‘keeper of the plan,’ to keep its provisions alive in the future.”* CPDC established a Center City Plan Advisory Committee, chaired by restaurateur Steven Poses.

CPDC initiated an early discussion of a downtown management

organization in Center City by hosting Richard Fleming, president of the Downtown Denver Partnership, who described the successful special assessment district that funded street cleaning, trash removal and free public transportation on Denver’s 16th Street Mall. *“That city’s use of this innovative technique for management of the downtown raised hope that Philadelphia’s Chestnut/Walnut and Market East retail areas could benefit similarly from such a program.”* The visit spurred *“creation of a new coalition of organizations dedicated to establishing a downtown management district in Philadelphia’s retail core.”* However, there were many diverse opinions as to whether the district should focus only on the retail core, on just a portion of Chestnut Street, or cover the entire central business district.

Also on CPDC’s agenda: *“Advocating additional I-95 access in the upcoming environmental impact statement process, direct involvement planning the Vine Street Expressway, landscaping Spring Garden and North Broad Streets and the improvement of Philadelphia gateways.”*

Working with the Greater

Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce and other groups, CPDC mounted a public information campaign and lobbied heavily for improved I-95 ramps in Center City: *“The Central Philadelphia Development Corporation has long considered the present state of limited Center City access to I-95 unacceptable ... Philadelphia’s rapidly developing downtown and central waterfront clearly need ready access to the Eastern Seaboard’s primary Interstate.”*

CPDC publicly opposed plans drawn up by the city’s Department of Public Property for a building that would have rivaled Liberty Place in height and appealed a zoning variance already granted for the city’s proposed, 520-foot Criminal Justice Center. A coalition of organizations, including CPDC, prevailed on the city to design an alternative, the building that exists today at the northeast corner of Center Square.



*The Land Title Building was  
one of the first façade  
easements obtained by the  
Philadelphia Historic  
Preservation Corporation.*



George Thomas for the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia

The Center City planning group reported a key interim finding: a business improvement management district encompassing much of the retail core, with a \$3-\$4 million annual budget, would increase district retail sales 10 to 20%. *“To equitably distribute the assessments that are necessary for the revitalization of our commercial core over a large number of businesses and properties, CPDC advocates a program spanning Walnut to Chestnut, from 6th to 20th streets.”* While CPDC was advocating the creation of such a district, no major business leader stepped forward to lead the initiative and several questioned the need for such an organization.

The Vine Street Expressway from 18th Street to I95 got underway. At the official groundbreaking, a proclamation was presented recognizing CPDC’s Vine Street Task Force, headed by Richard W. Rodney of SmithKline Beckman Corporation. *“Without the business support for the project through this CPDC committee, we might not be here today,”* said Pennsylvania Secretary of Transportation Thomas Larsen.

But CPDC’s long-supported parking facility at 16th and Vine did not move forward.

The Philadelphia Orchestra announced plans for a new, 3,200-seat Orchestra Hall at the southwest corner of Broad and Spruce streets; CPDC’s board was the first outside group to be briefed on the project *“in recognition of CPDC’s absolutely pivotal role in developing preliminary plans for the new orchestra hall,”* according to Stephen Sell, the orchestra association’s executive director. *“I can say, quite unequivocally, that, had it not been for the initiative and leadership taken by CPDC in the early 1980s, the project would not be taking place,”* he added.

Michael M. Dean, a senior partner at Wolf, Block, Schorr and Solis-Cohen, was elected CPDC president. J. Bartow McCall, executive vice president, First Pennsylvania Bank, restaurateur Steven Poses, Richard S. Ravenscroft, former president, Philadelphia National Bank and Richard W. Rodney, vice president, SmithKline Beckman Corp. were named CPDC vice presidents. Stanhope S. Browne, partner, Dechert Price & Rhoads, was elected secretary and Bruce A. Gillespie, director, merchant banking, Meritor Financial Markets, treasurer.

CPDC re-affirmed its intention to remain an independent organization with its own board of directors and staff, separate from Greater Philadelphia First.

CPDC established a new task force, headed by John D’Aprix, president of the University City Science Center, to study the feasibility *“of a downtown management district to maintain, promote and increase security for a defined commercial area ... To facilitate the process, CPDC is committing substantial staff time and has retained special retail/commercial development assis-*

*tance ... As CPDC begins its 30th year of downtown development projects, look for downtown management to become a key 1987 effort.”*

Mayor Goode singled out CPDC and other organizations in announcing agreement on site configuration and conceptual design for a scaled-down, 425-foot Criminal Justice Center; ground was broken.

CPDC and PHPC nominated the downtown commercial area west of Broad Street to the National Register of Historic Places *“to encourage new investment in the historic buildings there.”*

CPDC installed 1,200 flags and banners in celebration of “We the People” the 200th anniversary of the U.S. Constitution. The hardware purchased for this effort became the nucleus for the Center City District’s ongoing banner program.



*G. Stockton Strawbridge  
and the uniformed staff of  
the East Market Street  
Improvement Association, a  
forerunner to the Center City  
District, 1988*

Philadelphia Inquirer

1988

Mayor Goode began his second term.

Charter OPDC members Gustave Amsterdam, William Rafsky, Stockton Strawbridge and William White, all still active in CPDC, were honored for their more than 30 years of leadership.

The City Planning Commission released the long-anticipated Center City Plan. *“For over two years, CPDC ... has served as the business community liaison to the Planning Commission in the development of the plan.”* Its new objective was now *“to coordinate and implement recommendations from the plan.”*

Building on its interim finding, the plan strongly recommended creation of a downtown special services district and Mayor Goode’s first executive order for the plan was to direct his Commerce Department *“to work with Central Philadelphia Development Corporation in order to develop the required City Council ordinance creating a Downtown Management Corporation in the fall.”*

CPDC’s Downtown Management Task Force produced a *“detailed*

*feasibility study that recommends establishment of an 80-block, \$4 million special services district for Center City’s business core.”*

Research and analysis for this effort was supported in part by resources provided by Thomas Jefferson University, the Philadelphia Bar Association and Rouse and Associates. CPDC’s work won strong editorial support from the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and gained support from *“groups as diverse as the Building Owners and Managers Association, the Center City Proprietors Association, the Chestnut Street Association, Greater Philadelphia Economic Development Coalition and neighborhoods like Logan Square and the Center City Residents Association.”*

Meanwhile, long-time CPDC member G. Stockton Strawbridge’s voluntarily funded East Market Street Improvement Association began operations to maintain streetscape improvements and provide supplemental cleaning on just East Market Street.

With funding from the Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau, CPDC installed

a variety of over 450 flags and banners, enlivening Center City from May through October.

CPDC reconvened its Broad Street Task Force, inactive since 1985, co-chaired by Peter Solmssen, president of the University of the Arts, and William Broom, vice president of Philadelphia Newspapers, Inc. *“Historically Philadelphia’s premier business and civic address, this ‘Avenue of the Arts’ district has considerable development potential as a regional center for culture, and CPDC will continue to build on the organization’s fifteen-year commitment to realize this goal.”*

CPDC mounted and won an intensive lobbying effort, involving over 40 neighborhood, civic and business organizations, to muster the necessary votes to pass billboard controls on the Vine Street Expressway.

1989

CPDC continued to lobby for a downtown management entity, presenting its special services district feasibility report to a wide variety of civic and business groups, public officials and agencies. After several attempts by CPDC Chair Michael Dean and Executive Director Peter Wiley to find a major business leader to assume leadership of the effort, Ronald Rubin, president and CEO of the Richard I. Rubin Company, agreed to chair the endeavor to create a special services district. Rubin enlisted other major property owners and employers to support a downtown-wide district and to join a new board and tightened the focus to *“clean and safe.”*

CPDC created a new Downtown Access Committee, chaired by Judith Barnes, director of business planning at FMC Corporation, *“to direct business interests to improve traffic circulation, parking and transit in Center City.”*

Another new task force chaired by Robert Bowman, executive vice president, Jackson-Cross Company, examined the Planning Commission’s proposed zoning



*CPDC installed 1,200  
flags and banners for  
"We the People," the 200th  
anniversary of the U.S.  
Constitution in 1987.*

1989

Continued

code for Center City, concentrating on establishing a transferable development rights (TDR) program to allow owners of historic properties to sell unused air rights to developers of new construction.

CPDC also established a Center City Lighting Committee, headed by Harold S. Rosenbluth of Rosenbluth Travel “to provide input and advice regarding the increased use of lighting as a Center City enhancement ... An early part of the effort will involve production of an urban design scheme that explores the use of light in a variety of ways at both pedestrian and vehicular levels, in public spaces and on private buildings, and in connection with special events and seasonal activities.”

Executive Director Peter Wiley and his wife were killed in a plane crash on their honeymoon in October.





*CPDC Executive Director*

*Peter Wiley, left.*

*Vine Street Expressway,*

*c. 1988*

Longtime former OPDC president William White died; Paul R. Levy became executive director in March.

Michael M. Dean was elected CPDC chairman; J. Bartow McCall, executive vice president, First Pennsylvania Bank, was president; James J. Lynch, vice chairman, Continental Bank, Richard S. Ravenscroft and Myron S. Sigal, senior vice president of JMB/Urban Development Company, were vice presidents; Thomas M. Hyndman, Jr. of Duane, Morris & Heckscher was secretary and Brian D. Bash, Pannell Kerr Forster, was treasurer.

Throughout 1990, CPDC managed the process of creating and legally incorporating a municipal authority proposed to administer the special services district under state law. In partnership with committees convened by Ronald Rubin, CPDC advanced the funds required to finance planning activities to start up the new municipal authority, developed a plan and five-year budget, met with business and community groups, developed the commercial

ownership and tenancy database and calculated the charges that would be assessed against owners. After public hearings in July, only 12% of the property owners within the proposed special district boundaries objected to the creation of the taxing district. Following property owner assent and discussions with both City Council and the city administration, Council and Mayor Goode approved the special services district plan and budget in November.

The Downtown Access Committee, chaired by Myron Sigal, senior vice president of JMB/Urban Development Company, focused on circulation, mass transit and parking. *“As our downtown continues to grow, we are determined not to be paralyzed by Manhattan-style gridlock.”* The committee made recommendations to the city for inclusion of zoning incentives for off-street parking where needed.

With support from the William Penn Foundation, CPDC commissioned planners Kise, Franks & Straw (KFS) to prepare a plan for improvements to South Broad

Street from City Hall to Washington Avenue, including not only major cultural institutions, but also smaller community-oriented arts facilities. As part of the process, CPDC convened a new South Broad Street Committee, comprised of property owners, tenants, representatives of cultural and educational institutions and public officials, to advise on the report and to promote implementation.

*“The KFS work is the first step in a larger initiative planned by CPDC to link together the efforts of the diverse private businesses and institutions that make South Broad Street their home, and to develop a plan of streetscape improvements that creates a coherent visual identity for the Avenue of the Arts.”*

“South Broad Street: A Vision for the 1990s,” released in December 1990, recommended specific streetscape and transportation improvements from City Hall to Washington Avenue. It also called for an economic, community and cultural development plan for the corridor to focus on: reuse of vacant office space, attracting street-level retail and services,

#### 1990s Highlights

- Center City District begins operations
- Vine Street Expressway
- Avenue of the Arts
- Downtown ballpark studies
- Residential and office attraction campaigns
- CCD assumes management of CPDC
- Benjamin Franklin Parkway plan



*Make your move to Center City.*

**Convenient. Exciting. Affordable.**  
 Discover why living in Center City is just right for you.

Check this out. On any given day, we can take a quick skate through the neighborhood; enjoy a leisurely cup of java before strolling to work; run home from the office at lunch for a salad; grab a terrific take-out dinner; meet friends just blocks away from home at a martini bar; and still be home in time for LettuceMax.

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Living anywhere else just isn't living.

*Live in the center of it all.  
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Sponsored by the Central Philadelphia Development Corporation and the Center City District

Make it  
 CENTER  
 CITY

*CPDC promoted downtown  
 living in this 1997  
 advertising campaign.*

1990

Continued

activating the underground concourse, attracting restaurants, nightclubs and nighttime retail, attracting support facilities for the arts and stimulating residential development, especially south of Pine Street.

1991

CPDC's leaders decided that the organization should remain independent from the new special services district. Paul Levy resigned as CPDC executive director and was named executive director of the new special services district in January. He was appointed to the CPDC board, where he headed the South Broad Street Committee. Jeremy Alvarez was named CPDC executive director.

The special services district — named the Center City District — began on-street operations on March 21st. The core mission was — and remains — to make Center City “clean, safe and attractive.”

South Broad Street was CPDC's “highest priority item ... a complex effort having a number of major components.” CPDC obtained funding from the Pew Charitable Trusts to develop an economic development strategy that concluded that a major new concert hall to seat 2,700 to 3,000 with the Philadelphia Orchestra as its principal occupant was “optimum.”

CPDC members Robert D. Lane, Jr. and Michael Sklaroff worked with the City Planning Commission and secured approval for a new zoning code for Center City with new provisions for parking, public space, public art, public restrooms and transfer of development rights.

The Vine Street Expressway (I-676) was completed.

1992

Edward G. Rendell took office as mayor and at a CPDC meeting focused on the Avenue of the Arts, expressed his enthusiastic support for the concept.

Working with consultants Urban Partners and Kise Franks & Straw, CPDC released “South Broad Street Economic and Development Plan” and “*began briefing the new mayor and his administration, encouraging them to put the project high on the agenda for the city ... City officials led by the mayor and Midge Rendell are now working actively with CPDC Executive Director Jeremy Alvarez and South Broad Street Chair Paul Levy to identify specific strategies to create the diverse cultural facilities now planned.*”

CPDC revamped the Downtown Access Committee as “*a broad-based coalition of city and state transportation professionals, business and community leaders.*” Its agenda included managing Convention Center traffic, improving short-term parking to attract more shoppers, increasing use of transit vouchers and developing a consistent and attractive pedestrian map and sign system.



*Testifying before City Council  
in 1990 to establish the Center  
City District, from left,  
Ronald Rubin, Michael Dean  
and John Binswanger. The  
CCD began on-street operations  
in March 1991.*



J. Kyle Keener, The Philadelphia Inquirer

1992

Continued

Drawing on its experience launching the Center City District, CPDC acted as technical staff to help establish the city's second special services district, the South Street-Headhouse District, which began operations in 1993.

1993

Mayor Rendell assumed effective control of Avenue of the Arts, Inc., which had been formed by CPDC and Michael Dean of CPDC continued as an adviser to that organization. *"After several years of very active planning and advocacy on behalf of the development of Avenue of the Arts, CPDC will continue to serve as a resource to AAI to help move this complex and exciting project from drawing board to actuality."*

A downtown ballpark was considered: *"CPDC has followed, with great interest, the impressive response achieved in Baltimore to their new downtown stadium at Camden Yards ... CPDC is in an excellent position to refocus the discussion on the public interest."*

The Pennsylvania Convention Center opened.

1994

CPDC went *"beyond the organization's earlier economic and cultural development plan for the Avenue of the Arts [to focus] on the adjacent residential and low intensity commercial areas along South Broad Street from City Hall to Washington Avenue between 11th and 17th streets."* South Street close to Broad Street and 13th Street near Sansom Street *"are particularly challenging locations, but they are important to the health of the surrounding neighborhoods and to the success of the Avenue of the Arts and the Convention Center."* Other sections of the 72-block area were also characterized by deterioration, high crime and high vacancy rates. With James J. Lynch, executive vice president of Midlantic Bank, and Joseph S. Zuritsky, president, Parkway Corporation, chairing the effort, CPDC's published "Avenue of the Arts and its Neighborhoods: Next Strategic Steps" to lay out renewal strategies.

1995

CPDC collaborated with the city and the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce on the Mobility Alternatives Program, with the goal of reducing traffic congestion and improving air quality by encouraging coordinated work schedules and public transit use.



*Newly-elected Mayor Edward G. Rendell addresses CPDC on his plans for the Avenue of the Arts, 1992.*

1996

Edward G. Rendell began his second term as mayor.

A new slate of officers was elected: James J. Lynch, chairman; Julian P. Rackow, Blank, Rome, Comisky & McCauley, president; Marc D. Brookman, Walter E. Farnam and Samuel H. Steinberg, vice presidents; Daniel F. Hayes, treasurer and Robert D. Lane, Jr., Morgan, Lewis & Bockius, secretary.

CPDC launched its first Web site.

In recognition of their 40th and fifth anniversaries, respectively, CPDC and CCD co-sponsored a series of forums on the future of Center City. The topics: "Converting Office Buildings to Residential Use," "Making Cities Entertainment Centers," and "Bringing it All Together Downtown: Baseball, Movies and Entertainment."

CPDC prepared the "Hawthorne Neighborhood Redevelopment Study" for the city Office of Housing and Community Development and the state Department of Commerce and Economic Development to describe proposals for the neigh-

borhood just east of Broad Street below South Street. Its goals were to preserve the mixed-income character of the community, increase the quality and quantity of housing and alter negative perceptions to better integrate the neighborhood with its surroundings.

CPDC commissioned "The Economic Contribution of a Center City Resident," which demonstrated the substantial economic impact of new residents in terms of city and state taxes, jobs and other spending. Using the report as a case statement, CPDC established a Residential Conversion Committee to stimulate residential growth and support expanded tax abatements for the conversion to residential of vacant and deteriorated commercial properties.

Concurring with a working group headed by Robert Lane, CPDC decided to strongly support a Center City location for Philadelphia's new baseball stadium.

1997

CPDC had originally elected to remain separate from the Center City District in order to preserve the distinction between its role as an independent advocacy organization and the district's status as a municipal authority. But the greater visibility of the District, its similar geographic scope, and the continuing challenge of fundraising led CPDC President Julian Rackow in 1995 to explore with fellow officers how the organizations might be reconnected.

In 1997, these discussions culminated in a new relationship: *"The Center City District (CCD) and Central Philadelphia Development Corporation (CPDC) have entered into an agreement under which CCD staff now manages the day-to-day operations of CPDC. While CPDC and CCD will remain legally distinct with separate boards of directors, the agreement recognizes the significant common interests and objectives of the two organizations."*

CPDC amassed best practices and impressive results from other cities to work with the Rendell administration and City Council on the development

and passage of a 10-year tax abatement for the conversion of vacant office and industrial buildings to residential use.

CPDC commissioned "The Economic Impact of a Ballpark in Center City Philadelphia," which concluded that a new downtown baseball stadium would boost city revenues by at least \$11.8 million and state revenues by \$8.3 million annually.



*CPDC strongly supported  
a downtown baseball stadium.*

1998

CPDC commissioned “The Business State of Center City: An Analysis of Economic Trends Shaping Center City Philadelphia’s Office Market.” The report noted that *“while Center City remains the largest concentrated node of commerce and culture, it no longer is the single dominant business location in the region as it was throughout the first six decades of this century.”*

CPDC made attracting new residents to Center City a major priority and considered initiatives including promoting a new 10-year tax abatement for new construction. CPDC also published a full-color, 24-page brochure aimed at attracting new residents, distributed to real estate brokers, developers and corporate relocation staff.

CPDC documented and analyzed the process of securing public approvals for building, converting or renovating market-rate residential properties in Center City, and suggested ways to streamline the process and make it more friendly for residential development.

1999

Culminating a 16-month effort, CPDC published “Completing the Benjamin Franklin Parkway,” a comprehensive plan to *“enhance the Parkway as a center of urban activity, preserving vital landscaped open space and playing fields, but uniting the city’s cultural institutions along an easily accessible pedestrian-friendly boulevard.”*

CPDC established an Office Retention Committee to reduce barriers to retention and attraction, conduct a retention outreach effort and consider both economic and physical improvements needed to expand the office sector. CPDC also published an analysis of “The Fiscal Impact of Center City’s Hospitality and Office Sectors,” determining that the office sector pays over 2.75 times the average wage and generates 1.79 as much direct municipal tax revenue per square foot as the hospitality sector. *“Both are essential to a vibrant and diversified economy ... but from 1994 to 1998, hospitality employment in Center City grew by 31%, office jobs shrank by 13%.”*





Evelyn Taylor, Kimmel Center Inc.

*The Kimmel Center for the  
Performing Arts, under  
construction in 2001.*

## 2000

Mayor John F. Street took office. CPDC updated its previous analysis with a revised publication, “The Economic Impact of a Ballpark in Center City,” reporting an even greater boost to city and state revenues from a downtown stadium.

## 2001

OPDC founder and longtime active OPDC/CPDC leader Gustave Amsterdam died. Julian Rackow of Blank Rome became chairman of CPDC; Robert D. Lane, Jr. of Morgan Lewis was elected president; Marc Brookman of Duane Morris and David Marshall of Amerimar Realty Company, vice presidents; Edward D’Alba, Urban Engineers, secretary and Michael Morrissey, Citizens Bank, treasurer.

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation approved Central Philadelphia Transportation Management Association (CPTMA) an affiliate of CPDC, to help promote public transit and support capital and service improvements.

CPDC surveyed the commuting patterns of office workers at 39 member firms, determining that 71% of respondents use public transit to and from work.

CPDC partnered with the city’s Commerce Department and Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation on outreach to all major commercial office tenants with leases expiring in the next five years.

## 2002

CPDC and CCD published “The Success of Downtown Living: Expanding the Boundaries of Center City” which reported that Center City’s population is growing younger, the number of households is on the rise and the average household size is getting smaller. The report also demonstrated that over the previous three decades, Center City had expanded beyond the boundaries defined by city planners in the 1960s — Vine to South streets, river to river — to include adjacent neighborhoods, such as Queen Village, Bella Vista, the Art Museum area and Northern Liberties, that have been renovated due to the increasing demand for Center City housing.

With funding from the William Penn Foundation, CPDC initiated a demonstration–marketing program to promote urban living in six Philadelphia neighborhoods representing a diverse cross section of communities across the city with a wide variety of housing types that can appeal to different types of households.

# 2000s

### 2000s Highlights

CPTMA established

Neighborhood marketing campaign

Center City Schools Initiative

Parkway and waterfront planning

CPDC forums mark 50th anniversary

# STATE OF CENTER CITY 2004



*CPDC has become a major  
source for meaningful data  
and analysis regarding  
Center City Philadelphia.*

Prepared by  
Center City District &  
Center City Philadelphia Development Corporation

## 2003

CPDC published “Tax Policy, Job Growth & Neighborhood Transformation,” demonstrating that Philadelphia did not share in the economic boom of the 1990s experienced by other East Coast cities and by Philadelphia’s own suburbs, and suggesting that significant tax reform is required in order to begin to reverse the city’s decades-long drop in both jobs and population.

CPTMA launched the Read & Ride Transit Book Club, an innovative approach to advocating public transit use. Believed to be the first in the country, the book club encouraged commuters to “Read, Ride & Relax,” promoting time to read as a key — and often overlooked — benefit of transit ridership.

## 2004

John F. Street began his second term as mayor.

Working in partnership with the City of Philadelphia, the School District of Philadelphia and area private, charter and parochial schools, CPDC launched a new initiative aimed at engaging Center City business leaders and residents in an effort to market and expand the range of educational choices available to the growing population of young professionals and parents of school-age children in Center City.

With funding from the William Penn Foundation, CPDC worked with the institutions on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway and the Fairmount Park Commission on preparation of a revised plan for an “animated cultural district.”

## 2005

CPDC unveiled the first phase of a preliminary plan for the central Delaware River waterfront, between Penn Treaty Park and Home Depot, calling for a continuous riverfront trail, a series of parks, connections to adjacent neighborhoods and parks as anchors for appropriate residential development.

CPDC surveyed new Center City condominium buyers and found that, contrary to some concerns about speculative buyers fueling the market, 89% of the respondents were owner-occupants. The report also concluded that by 2010, the downtown population could be between 96,000 and 105,000 and that the traditional boundaries of Center City continue to expand.

Following the five-year CPDC, city and PIDC retention effort, 96 out of 98 major commercial office leases were renewed in the downtown.



J.B. Abbott

*In 2004, CPDC undertook a new initiative to help market and expand the range of educational choices for the growing downtown population of young families.*

In commemoration of its 50th anniversary, CPDC held a series of six forums to reflect upon significant accomplishments in Center City over the last half-century and to look toward the challenges and opportunities of the coming years. CPDC also commissioned a series of videos, unveiled at each forum, to look at its role in the revitalization of Center City. A compilation DVD is included in this book.

#### **Forum 1: Center City's Residential Revival**

February 7, 2006

Video: *Center City's Residential Revival: 50 Years in the Making*

Speakers:

- Eugenie Birch, chair, Department of City & Regional Planning, University of Pennsylvania
- Robert Weissbourd, president, RW Ventures, Chicago; former executive vice president of Shorebank Chicago Companies

#### **Forum 2: Creating a Competitive Office Sector**

April 11, 2006

Video: *Creating a Competitive Office Sector: The Legacy of Penn Center*

Speakers:

- Christopher Leinberger, visiting fellow, The Brookings Institution, professor and director, Graduate Real Estate Program, University of Michigan
- John Gattuso, senior vice president, national development, Liberty Property Trust

#### **Forum 3: The Car In the City**

May 31, 2006

Video: *The Car in the City: The Legacy of Interstate Highways*

Speakers:

- Walter Kulash, principal and senior traffic engineer, Glatting Jackson Kercher Anglin Lopez Rinehart, Inc.
- Jan Gehl, Gehl Architects
- Sue Weiler, principal, Olin Partnership
- Alan Greenberger, partner, MGA Partners
- Jim Kise, principal, Kise Straw & Kolodner, Inc.
- Gil Rosenthal, principal, Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC

#### **Forum 4: Upgrading the Retail Mix**

September 12, 2006

Video: *Market Street East: Updating the Vision for the 21st Century*

Speakers:

- Jan Heppe, vice president, director of stores, Burberry USA
- Joseph Coradino, executive vice president, Pennsylvania Real Estate Investment Trust
- Larry Steinberg, director, Michael Salove Realty
- Peter Iacovoni, manager, Special Projects, City of Philadelphia Commerce Department

#### **Forum 5: Arts & Culture in Center City: Avenue of the Arts and the Benjamin Franklin Parkway — The Next Phase of Development**

October 10, 2006

Video: *The Parkway and Broad Street: Arts and Culture in Center City*

Speakers:

- Derek Gillman, executive director and president, The Barnes Foundation
- Marian Godfrey, managing director of Culture and Civic Initiatives, The Pew Charitable Trusts

- David Seltzer, principal, Mercator Advisors LLC and board member, Avenue of the Arts, Inc.

- James R. Pearlstein, president and founder, Pearl Properties, LLC

#### **Forum 6: Reclaiming Center City's Waterfront**

November 14, 2006

Video: *Reclaiming the Delaware Waterfront: Lessons from Penn's Landing*

Speakers:

- Alex Krieger, principal, Chan Krieger Sieniewicz Architecture & Urban Design and Harvard University Professor of Urban Design
- Gerard H. Sweeney, chairman of Schuylkill River Development Corporation and president & CEO of Brandywine Realty Trust
- Harris Steinberg, executive director, Penn Praxis, consultant for the new Delaware River waterfront plan



*CPDC's proposal for a waterfront trail along the Delaware River.*

Wallace Roberts & Todd

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