

residential has progressed and is encouraged by the CCD. Overall the CCD is seen as 'hugely successful' in doing what the city administration seemed incapable of doing – improving the quality of Center City.

Major references

Houston Jr, Lawrence O. (1997). Center City District. In *BIDs: Business Improvement Districts*. Washington, DC: The Urban Land Institute, 133–49.

Lehman, Nicholas (2000). No man's town: the good times are killing off America's local elites. *The New Yorker* (June 5): 42–9.

Levy, Paul R. (2001). Downtown: competitive for a new century. In Jonathan Barnett, ed. *Planning for a New Century: The Regional Agenda*. Washington, DC: Island Press, 135–76.

Commentary

A number of major lessons for urban design have been learnt about special districts and zoning from the experience of New York, Philadelphia, and other cities (Lai, 1988; Vossman, 2002). The first lesson is that the image and character of a place should be identified based on an empirical analysis based on community values (Stamps, 1994). The second is that top-down decisions without political and civic commitment are likely to lead nowhere – indeed 'most people do not want what architects want' (Michleson, 1968). The third is that design controls must be enforceable; legislation must precede or accompany the development of regulations. The potential problem with incentive zoning is that it can soon become urban design by negotiable zoning control. It is open to mismanagement and corruption as property developers seek ways to achieve additional benefits for themselves if they are to provide public benefits. Clear channels of legal and administrative action must thus be established.

There was a much broader lesson too. The urban design task is to create salubrious environments for life, to upgrade the behavioural opportunities for people, and to enhance their self-images (to lift their spirits) through environmental improvements. Zoning districts and zoning modifications may create opportunities for achieving these ends but in many instances the zoning tools that are legally available to urban designers are, by themselves, not strong enough. BIDs, a gentle and more inclusive approach to urban upgrading, may achieve more. A high-quality public realm can be good for business.