ADRR Board Discussion

Are the Challenges Our Larger Downtowns Now Face Properly Scoped Out? Downtown Order and Safety

May 6 to 11, 2022

INTRODUCTION

Since its inception, members of the American Downtown Revitalization Review's (ADRR) Board have engaged in a near continuous e-mail dialogue about a wide range of issues, trends and opportunities that do not, in our opinions, always receive the attention they need and deserve in other media outlets and industry publications. The vitality of these conversations is evident in the number who join and/or read these back-and-forths more than two years after the ADRR's launch; indeed, over time, non-Board members have added to the ferment with their own observations and insights.

As most others concerned about downtown revitalization, we at the ADRR have been trying to understand the challenges the Covid19 pandemic has generated and to identify effective strategic and programmatic responses to them. To help speed progress in this effort, our editor, David Milder, wrote "Are the Challenges Our Larger Downtowns Now Face Properly Scoped Out?" It can be accessed at:
https://theadrr.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Are-the-Situations-Our-Large-Downtowns-Now-Face-Properly-Scoped-Out-MW-edits-0426222.pdf

In it he looked at: the strength of downtown offices and how they are being impacted by remote work; downtown housing; downtown retail, and downtown public order and safety. After reviewing a draft of that article, the ADRR board engaged a in discussion of these challenges. The edited transcript of these discussions is being posted to The ADRR website in four parts, one for each challenge, as they are completed. They are also being distributed via our MailChimp emails. Below is the transcript on downtown order and safety.

PARTICIPANTS

Jerome Barth, Town Square Consulting
Charles Buki, CZB
Dave Feehan, Civitas
Paul Levy, Center City District, Philadelphia
Andrew Manshel, author, attorney, former BID manager
David Milder, DANTH, Inc and The ADRR

DATES for complete discussion:
May 4 to 12, 2022

THE DISCUSSION

Dave Feehan May 9, 2022 at 7:52 AM
Of course, the pandemic is but one reason (the restaurants in Minneapolis are having a weak recovery). What I hear is the George Floyd murder and ensuing riots, and the boarding up of many businesses because of fear have magnified the impact of COVID substantially. People are afraid to go to popular dining districts - Uptown, Warehouse District, Lake Street - because they believe these places are out of control. Police don't answer calls, don't patrol, don't intervene in lawless behavior (like taking over intersections and doing donuts with hot rods). It is decidedly NOT just office workers teleworking.

David Milder May 10, 2022 at 7:03 AM
Hi All,
We're coming into the home stretch of this great discussion. Thanks for your productive participation, especially the gusher of inputs over the past weekend. I certainly have my editorial work cut out for me.😎

I'd like to now turn our focus to the topic of public order/safety, though its importance is signaled by how often it already has perked up in this discussion. I ask you to now respond to the following questions:

1. How much are the operations in the downtowns you work in, and/or know very well, being altered, or damaged, by public disorder/safety? Is it keeping workers, shoppers and/or tourists away in substantial numbers? Is there really strong evidence of this?
2. How does this issue manifest itself: Increased homelessness? Higher drug use/sale? Higher rates of murder, assaults, rape? Higher rates of major public disruptions such as arson, riots, occupations of public and private spaces and buildings; flash take overs of roads, streets, flash mob robberies of shops?
3. For which of the above do the police and BIDs not have adequate responses?
4. Which BID programs are today the most effective?
5. Are there new types of programs BIDs should explore?
6. How important is BIDs simply influencing city and PD leaders?

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Dave Feehan May 10, 2022 at 8:51 AM

I've been working with Pat DiGiovanni on a BID renewal in Sioux Falls. I have also been developing a strategic plan for the BID in Des Moines IA. And I have been in touch with the BID in Minneapolis, as well as Blaire McBride, president of Block by Block. Based on what I've learned, I would say that Minneapolis has by far been most damaged by public disorder and crime. Des Moines has experienced some impact, and Sioux Falls not much at all. Minneapolis has had a frightening number of shootings, car jackings, and assaults occur in downtown and adjacent districts. Des Moines has had to shut Court Avenue to traffic, the heart of its entertainment district, because of a few violent incidents. Sioux Falls has had relatively few

violent crimes and incidents of public disorder, but there has been an uptick in homelessness and public concern about that issue.

One may conclude that the answer to your first question is situational and locational. Some cities have experienced real damage; others hardly any. I believe it has to do with the size of the city and the percentage of the population that is low-income.

In answer to #2, all of these problems are manifested in Minneapolis and St. Paul to a lesser degree. Significantly less in Des Moines, and hardly at all in Sioux Falls.

Regarding #3, the Minneapolis Police Department is in disarray. Morale is extremely low. Response times are high, and some calls just get ignored. The department is down more than 200 sworn officers, and recruiting has been very slow. It will take years before Minneapolis Police recover from the effects of the Floyd murder.

I am not sure BIDs have figured out any new approaches to reducing crime. Des Moines is having regular calls with BID staff in other cities, and I don't hear many ideas being proposed. BIDs could be the "canaries in the coal mine," an early warning system for the police. BIDs could make escort services more visible and available. BIDs could and some do establish communication networks between local businesses.

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David Milder May 10, 2022 at 8:59 AM
Dave, Thanks!

It doesn't seem that the BIDs you know are coming up with new ideas.

Also, I think escort services are a very bad sign, and while they may be needed, they also reinforce a negative security image. You can bet that those using such services are not disseminating positive images about their districts.

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Dave Feehan May 10, 2022 at 9:07 AM
I had a conversation with Blaire McBride a few weeks ago and asked that very question - what new ideas does he hear from the field, as Block by Block is in so many communities? He really didn't have any great new ideas. As for escorts, say what you want, but employers very much appreciate if an ambassador is available to accompany an employee (usually a woman) to her car, especially at night and if she is parked in garage. I would argue this is a positive image for the BID, but maybe not for downtown.

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Andrew Manshel May 10, 2022 at 9:38 AM
Good point.

When I worked in Newark, the law firm I worked for had a guard who walked people to the Military Park garage. Terrible message.

The firm then moved to Morristown, abandoning Newark.

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Andrew Manshel May 10, 2022 at 9:42 AM
Outsourcing of services is part of the problem with BID culture today.
It's an interesting discussion.

In house managed services are generally better in many ways, in my experience.

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Charles Buki May 10, 2022 at 10:08 AM
If there's a bigger enchilada than disorder and, subsequent to social and financial withdrawal, crime, I'm unaware of it.

Few - in my view - have done a better job thinking this through than Rolf Goetz (BRA) and Wesley Skogan (Northwestern) and of course Kelling and Wilson. Actually, er…all three Wilsons (WJ, EO, and James Q) in their own ways have contributed much, regardless of how politically unpopular some have become. And few above all have pulled it together better than Schelling (Micromotives) and Shuck/Zeckhauser (Good Apples/Bad Bets). I don't think Schelling can be ignored.

In any case, there just aren't many people who are not students on someone else's dime, or artists who, in my experience, are willing to have a meal outdoors and smell urine on the sidewalks, or walk to their cars (or wait for their taxis) with trash at their ankles, or in any event, cope with panhandling and all that comes with it; and the fact of the matter is that the policing of unacceptable behaviors such as these has long been thankless and perilous.

Long prior to literally sniffing out homelessness, any visitor to any urban center reads signals. It's the signals that are all important, in my experience. But as is well known, signals read by one group as communicating disorder and as being a harbinger of worse, often are misunderstood, as other groups know all too well. One person's pleasure at hearing rap music is another's annoyance, just as one person's "reading" of graffiti as a danger sign is seen by others as benign.

The BID or other group that has the thankless task of having to decode urban behaviors in 2022 is a target; the racial sub rosa in every direction is fraught with danger. I would not want to be a cop having to decide whether a person screaming in the public square is homicidal, suicidal, drunk, or just plain happy.

To some, the Navajo who gather in the plaza in Santa Fe may seem scary. To others, Native Americans in the historical plaza an indication that this is a good place. And to still others, it can be something else altogether. Who knows?!

To some, a group of black teenagers just having a fun conversation in downtown Portland ME means the end of the world. I know I am personally intolerant of places that allow people to walk around with guns, such as Phoenix, or now throughout Colorado. To others having John Wayne loaded for bear is, I suppose, comforting. Birds of a feather.

Anyway, three current clients come to mind, each with different versions of downtowns and downtown management acumen and norms.

- **Fargo ND** is a fascinating mix of Republican businessmen, MSW doo-gooders from Minneapolis, and white Ne'er-do-wells right out of a Sinclair Lewis novel who gather at dusk and crowd the corners and smell of piss and liquor. There, the BID cannot keep up, and FPD is hamstrung by its understandable aversion to the lose-lose proposition of intervening in the gravitational pull of the insane politics of the Twin Cities. So, what happens is on their way to dinner, everyone looks on as the strung out hang out, and I am seeing downtown Fargo go - in real time - in the wrong direction despite the proliferation of several hundred high-end multifamily units downtown, and at downtown's edges. Also, in this category of current/recent clients are Erie, PA and Utica, NY. The result will be another wave of greenfield development pulling demand ever outwards, I suspect.

- **Greenville SC,** which has a Lawrence Halprin makeover followed by 30 years of very good UDA attention, a series of hands-on mayors who try (and are generally successful) to curate - along with design review - the collection of buildings and spaces downtown, has in any event tilted too far into Celebration space. Where there is no mistaking downtown Fargo for a part of a real *city*, downtown Greenville is rather just another Reston with a nicely repaired river and park. As if to remind all the soft white golfers who come to downtown Greenville and tell themselves they live in a city, about 7-10 pm each warm evening you can count on a more than occasional group of hoodlums plowing through on their very loud motorcycles. It's like the Rolling Thunder noise graffiti of truckers every Memorial Day, in decades of previews of MAGA-life, who used to take the whole DC area hostage as if to say, "I AM HERE". In Greenville there is plenty of appetite by the city's leaders to pick up cigarette butts and power wash the sidewalks, but no stomach to police the kids on motorbikes as these kids are, invariably, minorities, and the complainants are, predictably, not. In Fargo the negotiated outcome is that downtown is slowly being ceded to the addict. In Greenville detente is a sparkly eight blocks of delight that are punctuated by the absence of mufflers. The result will be a second downtown in Verdae very shortly, more privatized than its true downtown. Just more sprawl.

- **Poughkeepsie NY,** which is transitioning - slowly - from awful to less bad - experiences and struggles with/against, like Fargo, the arrival each warm evening, of mannerless hordes on motorbikes, or other such thugs. The disorder here is more the norm than is the desired arrival of a greater calm, and it remains to be seen which will win out. But there is no appetite at City Hall or PD to police the disorder, which would almost certainly result in a racial controversy. I have personally watched police officers arrived at scenes of downtown chaos and shrug their shoulders, intuiting, correctly, they are damned if they intervene and damned if they don't. Meanwhile the businesses trying to make a go of it must see their patrons recoil as scenes like this right out of the late 1970s. Here, two important points I think. First, in every city there's the tension between the need for services that help the vulnerable, and the imperative to have these services located smartly so they can ably serve the poor, and the inevitable problems that arise when DHS and the courthouse and the bail bondsmen's offices are all in spitting distance of one another. Second, Poughkeepsie's downtown is really less a

downtown than eight blocks of Main Street that meander from the center of the city into abjectly poor neighborhoods. Patrons of the emerging downtown - (think Lily White Vassar kids) - have little in common with the non-white residents of the dense decayed housing stocks 200 feet to either side of Main Street. Also, in this category of current/recent clients is Canton, OH. The result will be a ground game the city will ultimately lose, I fear.

These three examples are, I think, illustrative of the tension between patrons of economically intense, mixed-use places that, if only by virtue of the costs of rents that become the costs of sandwiches and salads, and those living nearby who are, quite often, vulnerable if not vulnerable and destitute.

So…

- **Disorder is a significant problem.** The root of the battle is the argument about signals and norms, in my experience, and few have the stomach for refereeing this.
- The chief driver of this I think is a **growing bottom quintile** (absolute and %) who often live near downtown and who are helped by clusters of social services, and whose presence is manifest not in violent crimes so much as a proliferation of unacceptable (to the middle class) norms.
- For a few of our clients - Rochester NY comes to mind - **PD's have the financial resources but not the stomach to deal with these challenges**. I can't speak to BID capacities.

I recall in the mid 1970s when my mom had to have surgery at Columbia Presbyterian. To address homelessness, NYC under Dinkens had removed benches from the sidewalks. One result was my dad and brother and I didn't have a place to sit outside the hospital, or at the bus station, when we were waiting while my mom was in surgery. In the 1980s when I came to DC to work on Capitol Hill, Union Station was still a disheveled homeless shelter before Oliver Carr developed it into the magnificent mixed use center it became. I think at the end of the day there's only so much mixing people will tolerate so long as some in the mix have behaviors too unacceptable to others.

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Dave Feehan May 10, 2022 at 10:30 AM
Well said, Charles! I know Fargo, having helped create the downtown organization in 1999, and recruited Dave Anderson to run it; and more recently, because I was part of a team to create a new downtown organization in Moorhead, across the river. I don't know Greenville and Poughkeepsie except by reputation, but I know of other cities with similar characteristics - and similar issues. PD are reluctant to enforce even the most basic laws (shoplifting is becoming a terrible problem, hot rodders taking over intersections, other unsocial behaviors that are illegal as well. But many people in the black community want stricter law enforcement, better policing. I've written about this in the past. I am leading a team to Rochester, Charles, to form a BID there. Stay in touch.

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Andy Manshel May 10, 2022 at 11:29 AM
David --

As I think I have mentioned before, I think the BID world has not reacted effectively to current conditions.

When I came to the BIDosphere in 1991, we were intensely focused on figuring out how to solve the problems around perceptions of public safety – including homelessness. To Dan Biederman's great credit, he gave us assignments, asked us to figure out solutions, provided the resources to implement those solutions and backed us up in pushing them forward. We took a lot of heat for a lot of our unconventional, but highly successful, programs. But it was worth it.

It was a great puzzle to me when I went to work for the City of New York in telecommunications regulation to have BIDs calling ME for assistance in solving public order issues. They were calling me because they were blaming the LinkNYC wi-fi structures for being an attractive nuisance with respect to homelessness. NYC Bids have thrown up their hands on homelessness, underregulated commercial activity in public space and other anti-social behaviors. There are even illegal food vendors around Bryant Park! BIDs today are looking to city government for solutions. To me, that's just backwards.

Related to this is the issue of the contracting out of services. It has become the industry norm – and yet how can it be right that these organizations outsource the service they are primarily performing? My experience is that in-house managed services perform at a higher level and are more responsive. It also enables the DMO to hire from the community – which is hugely important. Another of Dan's virtues is that he has always insisted on managing these services in house. It's more work, yes. On the security side it requires licensure. But it is what these organizations were founded to do. In addition, I have found that to have ex-cops and ex-sanitation department managers on staff provides a very, very wide array of additional benefits because of their experience, contacts and just plain street smarts.

Public order is a perception issue. Downtowns and transit systems are safe. Having proactive, highly visible staff working with police and social service workers to actively intervene in issues that support the appearance of order ought to be central to the mission of downtown management organizations. Our is experience is that this promotes a virtuous cycle of more conventional behavior in public places resulting in improved perceptions.

In particular BIDs need to get actively back in the business of supporting EFFECTIVE outreach to the homeless, even if there is substantial political risk involved or local social service providers object. That's what we got the big bucks for.
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Andy Manshel May 10, 2022 at 11:50 AM
My observation is that the perception of public safety revolves around people's sense about the predictability of the behavior of the folks one encounters in public space. When people look like you and are dressed like you – your fight or flight instincts are turned off. Particularly with

respect to the mentally ill homeless, it is the physical threat implicit in the unpredictability of their behavior that causes people to fear being public spaces. You perceive the possibility that the unpredictable behavior of the apparently mentally ill individual will lead to their making physical contact with you.

Yes, some of this is derived from racial bias – but that bias comes from the same source. "I don't know people like that, and I don't know how they are going to behave with respect to me. I also don't know how to respond in turn to behaviors I don't understand." That's why placemaking is about providing subtle cues to public space visitors that assure than that the other people in the space are behaving in ways that they understand and are comfortable with. The moveable chair, example "A", sends the message i) that the chair hasn't been stolen ii) I can position the chair in a way I choose that enables me to see where I want to see, and feel like I am controlling my situation. Zero tolerance for trash on the ground, overflowing trash baskets and graffiti, all deliver the same set of subliminal messages. We were perfectionists. We sweated the details. We were constantly watching and fixing. That's what it takes to send the hundreds of required subtle messages that people pick up and enable them to feel safe.

As to having the political will to address difficult issues, elected officials play a unique and essential role in our democracy. They need to get reelected. But BIDs are another story. They are voluntary organizations set up to deal with these issues. If they are not going to deal with them because the issues are volatile, then BIDs have become the sclerotic bureaucracies our critics predicted we would become in the 1990's. They need to do their best to be diplomatic and politically sensitive, but they are in business to solve the problems that government doesn't have the resources or the political ability to address. That's their job.

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Jerome Barth May 10, 2022 at 11:53 AM

I fully support everything Andy is writing below. At Fifth we dedicated one of our security officers who happened to be a Deacon at this church to homeless outreach. In a matter of months we had a full list of all our "regulars", who was homeless and who was a professional beggar, who had mental issues and who had a drug issue. Did we solve the problem? No. But we had a couple of wins and overall improved the situation. And we would have continued to make it better.

Too many BIDs have inadequate resources and become agents to orient government attention rather than do the work themselves.

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Jerome Barth May 10, 2022 at 12:50 PM

Can we agree that disorder, regardless of different norms of behavior, impacts everyone to some degree? I would argue none more than the poor, because they have less access to the private spaces the affluent do and can retreat to. Nobody wants to see bikers fooling around in the main public square. I don't care what your background is. Disorder also pushes away the

elderly women, children, and families, until males totally dominate the public space, and make it even more threatening to those other groups. By standing up for a sense of order that is appropriate to a particular neighborhood, you are in fact fighting for equity, and a more just society. There is no equity without public safety.

I don't know which BIDs are most effective at the moment, but the crisis was so grave that 7 Midtown BIDs in Manhattan banded together in recent months to create a lobbying and advocacy vehicle, which was completely new: The Midtown BID Coalition The goal was to influence and provide cover to left-wing politicians to move on the public disorder issue and educate them as to the impact of the decisions they made in recent years. For our BID head colleagues to agree to this is a testimony to how bad things had become. Still, there remained much suppressed language or preference falsification as the desire not to offend, the fear of ostracism, or being called a racist, was very real.

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Andy Manshel May 10, 2022 at 1:37 PM
Jerome, these are interesting, valuable and thought-provoking comments.

1. They lead me to point out that each individual's perception of what constitutes predictable behavior is culturally bound. This makes analysis complicated, especially with today's heightened sensitivity to difference. Obviously, what you don't want to do is create public spaces that are designed to be perceived as safe only by college educated, middle class white people. This takes an openness, empathy and the involvement of the communities which are likely to make use of the public space.

   In, addition, what people articulate as their preferences, don't tend to actually be their preferences when placed in real time in physical public spaces. Folks tend to be bad predictors of their behaviors and preferences. Careful observation of how people react to various programs and features in public spaces, in the spirit of Holly Whyte, is the key to success in this.

2. With respect to the BIDs lobbying program, maybe they are/were trying to lobby public officials to do stuff that the BIDs were afraid to do for the reasons articulated by Jerome. That is never going to be successful. Those officials have even greater fears of making mistakes, bad publicity and losing elections.

   Grand Central Partnership got hammered for its involvement in homelessness. But the success of its drop-in center was an important element in improving the perception of safety in Grand Central Terminal and mid-town in the early 90's. And my firm belief is that the center did a lot of good, and very little harm. It became a target because a BID ran it, rather than a social service agency. But, and Dan Biederman might disagree, the risks that GCP took in establishing the drop-in center and appointing the unconventional Jeff Grunberg to run it were worth it – in terms of results. For our professional lives, certainly not so much.

3. For another illustrative example from my recent past. My group in NYC government was responsible for the licensing of placement of mobile telecommunications equipment on light poles all over the city. The mid-town BIDs were (and continue to be) adamantly opposed to the use of "their" poles for the deployment of the latest, most advanced telecommunications technology. The hot spots for mobile phone use are 34th Street, 42nd Street and Wall Street at around 5PM on Fridays. The BIDS are where transmitter density needs to be highest.

   BIDs ought to be FACILITATING innovative technologies in their districts. Instead, they were bureaucratically territorial about assets that in fact the City owned (and I knew this because I drafted the relevant documents in the 90's). The BIDs also opposed the City's Wi-Fi kiosks on what Dan used to pejoratively call an NIH (not invented here) basis, when other people took such positions with us. Again, being territorial.

5G, which is not really yet ready for prime time, will eventually need 32 foot tall, purpose built telecommunications infrastructure in a city's densest neighborhoods about 200 yards apart. Forward looking BIDs could be working with the telecommunications industry to design elegant such structures – which could be a profit center for them (charging occupancy fees to mobile telecom companies to put their equipment on them) – but that is nowhere near where any BID I am aware of is thinking. Those structures could also include Wi Fi, information screens, emergency call systems designed for use by the visually and hearing impaired, and data collection devices (traffic, weather, pedestrian counts).
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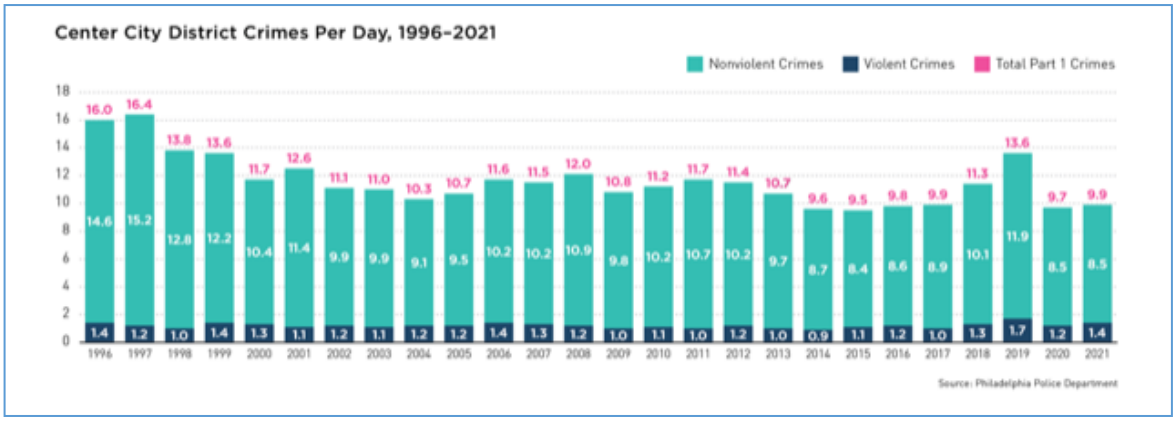
Paul Levy May 10, 2022 at 4:13 PM
I feel like a firefighter must feel in a dry pine forest with the wind blowing from all directions when I read all the responses that David's email has provoked. I will try to use the questions David asked to frame and limit my responses:

1. *How are the operations in the downtowns you work in and/or know very well being altered, or damaged, by public disorder/safety? Is it keeping workers, shoppers and or tourists away in substantial numbers? Is there really strong evidence of this?* Every major downtown I am in conversations with is wrestling with public safety realities and perceptions and quality of life challenges. Like everything else during the pandemic, pre-existing trends got accelerated and then supercharged again by highly visible situations of police violence and abuse. But before all that a whole new generation of young people had moved into our downtowns and, based on the success we all achieved, they took clean and safe and high quality of life for granted, which is both a testament to success and a source of many of our current problems. This created some unique challenges, when elected officials for many reasons, responding to this demographic and to the temper of the times, started pulling back on the focus on quality of life. This also corresponded to changes in policing, as too many departments wandered away from community policing and quality of life policing (enforcing regulations/laws that residential communities and business groups *asked* to have enforced) to *stop & frisk* that reached beyond focusing on people who were seen

committing infractions to those who police thought *might be suspicious.* David gave me a platform to talk this through in great detail in ADRR in July of 2021 *To read more click on this link:*
https://theadrr.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/LEVY-FINAL-WITH-COLOR-FIXESL-Edited-Rethinking-public-safety.pdf

But many city mayors, city councils or district attorneys – out of concern about over-incarceration – started pulling back on enforcement of many laws. This reminds me of the de-institutionalization of mental health patients in the 1970s, when were supposed to create many community based care facilities as an alternative to warehousing the mental ill in state hospitals. There was similar rhetoric about alternatives to incarceration, but how many cities did the hard work to create the community courts that blended treatment with community sentences under the banner of "restorative justice?" Then came March-June 2020: deplete a downtown of 50% to 80% of its pedestrian foot traffic; mandate that everyone close down and stay home. Nature abhors a vacuum. It could be as simple as the retailer who each morning at 6:30 am used to ask the person sleeping in the doorway to please move on before they opened. They closed their store and stopped coming in. Block after block, this added up.

2. So yes, increased *visible* homelessness, if not actually higher numbers. Increased retail thefts, ATV's. motorcycles running rampant. You can see all those trends within our District. Part One serious crimes steadily trending downward from the mid-1990s (with a few minor upticks) as we focused on clean and safe, quality of life and public space animation but then crime rates started to rise in 2016 as mayoral and DA priorities changed. Note too that as less people were downtown, Part ones dropped in 2020 and 2021, but perceptions of safety still declined because of emptiness and absence of some enforcement.



3. *For which of the above do the police and BIDs not have adequate responses?* I see the major task for policing these days is rebuilding credibility, so they can attract quality candidates and restore the community policing focus. What is interesting in many cities, including Philadelphia and NY, the African American and white working class neighborhoods, many of whom didn't have the luxury of downtown safety, have

become the proponents of restored, reformed policing – and their elected representatives are quickly separating themselves from *defund.* I see that happening across the country and I see it as a positive trend of bringing the pendulum back to the middle. Again, see the ADRR piece, *click on this link*:

https://theadrr.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/LEVY-FINAL-WITH-COLOR-FIXESL-Edited-Rethinking-public-safety.pdf

4. *Which BID programs are today the most effective?* I'm less critical of BIDs than many of you have been. We probably have the largest BID budget in the country so there are things that we are able to fund that are just beyond the reach of many other smaller organization. But in addition to our uniformed Community Service Representatives, who we have deployed for 31 year, we added a contracted bike patrol (we contracted out for the bike patrol, because I don't want to commit to making it permanent yet).

We also field two teams of homeless outreach workers that partner CCD staff, with social workers from our lead homeless services provider with CIT trained police and support them with a mental health worker and a van that can immediately transport to shelter anyone who asks for help.[1] This *co-service delivery* model is where I think police departments and BIDs need to go to rebuild credibility and effectiveness and it should be supported by robust infrastructure of community courts that also combine multiple disciplines under one roof.[2]

5. I think BIDs and businesses can lead on these issues, even if they can't always fund the solutions, but this needs to be part of a citywide alliance that includes all the neighborhoods negatively impacted by gun-violence and by rising crime.

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Andy Manshel May 10, 2022 at 5:10 PM

This is great stuff.

And, yes, what I wrote about BIDs doesn't at all apply to CCD, which is the great, shining example of what is possible.

The millennial assumption about a vital urban center being a default situation is very, very important. My kids don't get it — and they saw me trotting off to work for 25 years. They practically grew up in Bryant Park.

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David Milder May 11, 2022 at 7:53 AM

This discussion about public disorder/safety has been very productive. There is more consensus about important points than I anticipated, and more new stuff happening than many may have

[1] https://www.centercityphila.org/ccd-services/public-safety

[2] https://www.centercityphila.org/uploads/attachments/ck34l5o4803sq01qdxpdvjxr0-philadelphia-community-court.pdf

thought. Thank you. However, being a curmudgeon, I think that some realities are not being faced.

Many of us agree on the value of a quality of life based public order maintenance approach that includes not only police employing a true version of community policing, but also effective stewardship programs and projects for our downtowns. But that approach, I believe can go south because of the nature of several of its elements, and many media outlets like CityLab have jumped on it.

Jane Jacobs had it all wrong about eyes on the street. Fear levels are influenced not by who we think are watching us and will either help or call for help if we get in trouble, *but what our own eyes see as possible threats at various levels of severity*. Our eyes look at what Kelling and Skogan and others have called the physical and behavioral signs of disorder, and our fears of the strange and strangers also influences our responses to what we see. These fears are also sculpted by our socio-economic and geographic locations This means that we naturally, trying to make sense of our environment and its threat level, use stereotypes about classes of people and situations. The police for decades were accused of using racial stereotypes unjustly against POC, and often with good reason. The proper use of such stereotyping requires a kind of prudence that many congenitally lack, and that can easily erode in perceived high risk or high value situations. The strong implication of this for me is that poorly trained and bigoted police officers will be very poor at properly working in a quality of life oriented policing regimen. Community policing seemingly had a thousand variants, with most not coming close to what it truly was supposed to be. PDs often called things Community Policing (CP) because doing so could help win budget and staff increases. *CP should be a program that is fundamentally one of serious relationship building between patrollers and their departments and local residents and businesses.* When done properly, CP can both reduce fear levels and crime levels. But, as Kelling told me several times, PDs feel comfortable trying to reduce the number of crimes, but are like fish out of water when it comes to reducing fears*. So, where CP failed, in most places, it did so because the importance of relationship building was ignored and forgotten*. In NYC the implementation of stop and frisk was an obvious failure at building relationships with local community members, but at times still was called CP.

Over the past year I made a list of policing related problems – such as excessive and bigoted police use of violence, no knock entries, excessive and bigoted auto stops, citizen review boards, police accountability, overly powerful police unions , legal protections of police – and when I looked at the causal relationships among them determined that almost all of them were associated with the failure of the police to establish good relationships with the neighborhoods they are charged with serving. I would argue that improving police – community relationships is a critical problem to solve. Defunding the police is not the key problem, but one that is derivative of the failure of PDs to establish sturdy, meaningful relationships with the residents of many neighborhoods

Most of us are institutionalists and support the police because we also know that true freedom is only possible when there is public order. We certainly do not want police defunding. But what we also have learned is that our PDs have far too often not been very good at their jobs.

That is just a fact, as is that no profession is perfect! Seeing themselves as warriors against crime and often tainted by racism, they were not the public and community guardians the police should be. So, what are our BIDs and other downtown EDOs to do in such situations? In the past they have recognized that the big blue wall that surrounds PDs and its supporting culture can be nuclear bomb proof. Outsiders are supposedly too experientially ignorant and untrained to influence police policies and programs. At best BIDs tried, as Andy noted, to hire former high ranking PD officers to have some influence within the local precinct. But the unwarranted use of force and lack of appropriate accountability for police actions is not just a concern for distant neighborhoods. Many of the perps in our downtowns, and many of those creating troubling signs of disorder there, come from those non downtown neighborhoods. Moreover, much of the arson, looting and rioting seen in our downtowns in recent years was because the leaders of these disorders wanted to show downtown stakeholders that they would pay a price for ignoring such problems. They did not want the looting and arson in the poor neighborhoods, but in the wealthy areas where the powerful lived and shopped. And if downtowns want their disorder problems solved it cannot be at the expense of neighborhoods that also want their disorder problems addressed. Consequently, I was very heartened by Paul's suggestion that BIDs need to participate in a citywide effort to create programs and policies that will establish a kind of public order that is both more effective and more just. As he also notes, in this they have many shared concerns and objectives with local neighborhood leaders and elected officials. But such coalitions will be short-lived if they only focus on warding off police defunding. BIDs and the downtown politically powerful will also have to come out strongly for effective measures that will serve to generate much more police guardian type behaviors.

The barriers posed by the big blue wall can only be overcome via the use of political power and that means who has political influence will be more important than ever. Traditional BID security programs regardless of their effectiveness cannot address many aspects of this issue that need addressing. I think downtown leaders will have to become much more active within local political arenas, and much more knowledgeable and sophisticated about the public safety improvements they want. The Midtown BID Coalition Jerome mentioned is a step in that direction, though I hope it was also showing support for other needed improvements to turn NYC's police more into guardians than warriors. If not, I doubt it will be very persuasive. Andy is right, BIDs need to get into doing new things, though he may not agree with what I am suggesting.

While it may be true that our major downtowns are crucial to the economic health of our cities, any attempt these days to argue that neighborhood residents should therefore be oh so thankful for them, and support giving them privileged attention and resources will only seem like condescending arguments of the already overly privileged. The rich ghetto image of many of our major downtowns can bite them seriously in their butts when downtown concerns become part of citywide political discussions. We have no learned as much as we should have from NYC's Amazon debacle.

When it come to the signs of disorder that are influencing heightened fear levels and more avoidance behaviors, as indicated time and again in this discussion, as well as in surveys such as the one done recently in Seattle, homelessness easily tops the list. BID co-response programs,

such as the one Paul's organization has going, are certainly something effective that they can do. However, the homeless are really a citywide problem and, as Andy has argued, it involves more than a need for housing. BIDs, again here, probably need to become politically active at the citywide level advocating for the effective programs that have proven to work. Another often major issue is the failure of local government leaders to appreciate the need for public order, and allow the homeless to urinate and defecate wherever they want, as the disgraceful situation in San Francisco demonstrates.

To my mind, we also have not developed effective tools and tactics to respond appropriately to large demonstrations that a) can prevent them from turning into violent events seriously harming people and property, or b) end them quickly when they do occur. Yet these events can be very, very serious negative influences on the images of downtowns and urban areas, as well serious disruptions of their normal operations. I think BIDs would be very remiss if they did not pressure political leaders to address this issue. They should not have their pants down re large public disorder events during the 2023-2024 lead up to the next presidential election.

Why is IDA so silent on this issue? It's an embarrassing failure.

…

Paul Levy May 11, 2022 at 8:26 AM
I can only speak for Philadelphia, but I would be wary of this type of "class warfare" interpretation:
Moreover, much of the arson, looting and rioting seen in our downtowns in recent years was because the leaders of these disorders wanted to show downtown stakeholders that they would pay a price for ignoring such problems. They did not want the looting and arson in the poor neighborhoods, but in the wealthy areas where the powerful lived and shopped.

(1) We had vandalism and looting in working class African American neighborhoods as well as in the downtown

(2) We had legitimate peaceful protests high-jacked by a small number of people apparently set on violence and destruction

We have had downtown folks interpret our version of ATV/motorcycle cruises in the downtown through a similar class/race lens, until an enterprising young African American state legislator organized a meeting of working class, African American west Philadelphia neighborhoods and representatives of three major downtown residential civic association and they were all equally fed up with the same problem – ATV riders are equal opportunity offenders.

…

David Milder May 11, 2022 at 9:36 AM
No doubt, and thankfully, there will be points of consensus citywide about some crime problems like ATVs/motorcycles, drug use/sale and perhaps even the homeless.

But I am asking if the "policing problem" will also be addressed citywide in cities and downtowns where that is a problem?

I'm not making it a class problem, it is an income inequality problem. The above average wealth of our larger downtowns, as exemplified by their high prices for housing, entertainment, food and drink I think is irrefutable, and therefore likely to be perceived as such by others.

People in the neighborhoods can legitimately ask why they aren't getting their fair share. And many will, especially if they are homeowners. A few years ago, a neighbor told me that Manhattan would be nothing without him and all the others who work and spend money there. So, he did not think it was such an important place. It was the people who worked and spent there who were important, not the place.

Yes indeed, it only takes a small group to turn a legitimate protest event into a violent riot. That is precisely the potential danger that needs attention. The fact that they are few in number only spotlights how dangerous they are.
…

Andy Manshel May 11, 2022 at 10:13 AM
Having spent eleven years working in Eastern Queens, I have a bit of a perspective on the neighborhoods vs. downtown dichotomy. While there was some validity to it (parks in Eastern Queens were definitely under-resourced compared to comparably-used spaces in Manhattan) I found it mostly to be a well-milked demagogic cow.

Public officials were so sensitive to the issue that they way overcompensated – on snow removal in particular, but also street repair, small grants to community organizations, policing resources, sanitation pick-ups. Another example, EVERY neighborhood claims to have an unfair burden of services to the homeless.

ın addition, because of the density of activity at the center, DT NEEDS more resources per block or per square foot (or however you want to measure it). Public space is a good example. DT parks and places are much more heavily used than those in the neighborhoods and need more resources for trash removal, maintenance and programming.
…

David Milder May 11, 2022 at 10:30 AM
Andy,

I think the perceived situation is more important than the actual situation.

Also, here in KG we certainly do not feel we get the kind of goodies you mentioned that the Jamaica area is getting. Just ask the homeowners assn.

Also, from what I've read about neighborhoods in Minneapolis and St Louis , they certainly were not getting those kinds of goodies or attention, though the situation in St Louis may have changed with the new mayor.
…

Andy Manshel May 11, 2022 at 10:34 AM
Yes, politically it's the perception that matters.