

# The cbd (the central business district)

Business



The typical CBD is in the commercial and cultural activity in a city. In many large cities, it is immediately recognizable by tall skyscrapers, the neon lights at night and the very high density of buildings, traffic and people. The CBD is usually highly accessible. It is the focus of roads, with bus and railway stations near by. The CBD usually has the highest density of bus services and taxis in the whole of the urban area. Although the residential population is only very small, during the day and evening the CBD is crowded with people working, shopping or seeking entertainment.

#### Main functions of the CBD

**Shops:** The CBD is usually at the top of the shopping hierarchy in a city. It has the widest range of shops and the largest department stores. Shops mainly sell comparison or high-order goods and they draw their customers from a wide sphere of influence. The highest land costs are in the centre of the CBD. In the core of the CBD, there are large department stores and branches of many national chains of shops. Smaller shops, often privately owned, are located on the edges of the CBD in the fringe area called the frame. Some shops, such as clothing, shoe and jewellery shops tend to cluster together to take advantage of competition, while others are more dispersed, such as newsagents and chemists.

**Offices:** Banks, building societies, solicitors, company headquarters, insurance companies and government offices occupy high-rise office blocks or the upper floors above shops in the CBD.

**Culture& entertainment:** Parts of the CBD 'come alive' at night as the theatres, cinemas, clubs, bars and restaurants attract customers. Certain

parts of cities have become famous for their nightlife, such as London's West End.

The CBD of a city is not static; it is a dynamic area going through phases of growth and decline. You will see some areas in decay in a CBD of a large city, with closed shops and a rundown appearance, and others that appear lively, smart and successful. The CBD also has problems with traffic congestion, parking and pollution, as well as those caused by lack of space and shortage of land. Local planners have implemented a variety of different schemes to attempt to solve the problems of the CBD.

Problems and attempted solutions in the CBD:

Traffic congestion: Lots of cars and shops, services and employment in the CBD create massive problems of congestion and parking in the city centres. Roads are often narrow, with little pavement space. Some solutions include:

- \* Ring roads and by-passes to divert traffic not going into the city centre
- \* Urban motorways and flyovers
- \* Public transport schemes such as 'park and ride', the Newcastle metro, trams in Manchester
- \* Multi-storey car parks
- \* Pedestrianization of high streets

Lack of space and the high cost of land: Competition for land has led to high prices, and growing firms find it difficult to find space. In some CBDs the

smaller retailers have been forced away from the city centre because of the high costs. Some solutions include:

- \* High-rise buildings to increase the floor area available
- \* New retailing areas in out-of-town shopping centres in the suburbs or rural-urban fringe, in a process called decentralization

Pollution: Water, land, air and noise pollution are all common in city centres. Pollution is thought to contribute to the stresses of living in urban areas and to some diseases, such as asthma and bronchitis. Some solutions include:

- \* Laws against litter and dumping sewage in rivers
- \* Improved provision of litter bins and road sweeping
- \* Clean Air Acts that allow only the use of smokeless fuels
- \* Clean-fuel technology and vehicles that run on methane gas or electricity
- \* Banning heavy lorries from passing through city centres
- \* Increased planting of trees and shrubs

Urban decline: Parts of some CBDs have declined. Shops and offices have closed down and the empty buildings are vandalized. City centres compete with out-of-town shopping centres to cater for the growing demands of shoppers. Some solutions include:

- \* Redevelopment of zones of decline in the CBD such as King's Cross and Covent Garden in London

\* Expansion of the CBD into areas of the inner city - old factories and substandard terraced housing have been cleared, rehousing the occupants in the suburbs or New Towns and filling the space with new shopping and office developments