

A Central Business District

The typical CBD (Central Business District) dominates the commercial and the cultural activity of a city. In many large cities it is immediately recognizable by the tall skyscrapers, the neon lights at night and the high density of traffic, buildings and people. The CBD is usually highly accessible. It is the focus of roads with many bus and railway stations nearby. The largest urban areas often have a mass rapid transport system such as the London Underground. The CBD has the highest density of bus and taxi services in the whole of the urban area. The CBD is crowded with people day and night, working, shopping or for entertainment, although the residential population is very small due to high property prices.

The Central Business District is usually at the top of the shopping hierarchy in a city. It contains 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 here. Smaller, more privately owned stores are at the edge of the CBD whilst the large chains of shops are in the centre. Newsagents and chemists are often dispersed while clothes, shoes and jewellery shops are often clustered together to take advantage of competition. Banks, building societies, solicitors, company headquarters, insurance companies and government offices occupy the high-rise buildings or the levels above shops.

Parts of the CBD are more active at night than others due to clubs, theatres, cinemas, bars and restaurants. Certain parts of cities have become famous for their entertainment, such as the West End in London.

The CBD of a city is not static. It is a dynamic area going through phases of growth and decline. Many CBDs have areas of decay; derelict buildings and run-down shops dominate these areas. Other shops appear lively, smart and successful. All CBDs experience problems of traffic congestion, parking, and pollution as well as those caused by lack of space and shortage of land.