

Plan for the Central Delaware: Transforming Philadelphia's Waterfront
Focus Groups, June 2010
OVERALL THEMES
Synthesis

In June 2010, the Delaware River Waterfront Corporation sponsored a series of focus group meetings as part of the development of the Plan for the Central Delaware. This report, prepared by the Focus Group Facilitator, Hurley-Franks & Associates, summarizes the common themes heard during the four individual focus group meetings:

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|----------------------|---------|--|
| Waterfront Business | 6/15/10 | 9 participants, including hospitality and events businesses, offices, and light industry |
| Historic Resources | 6/16/10 | 7 participants, including people from the Preservation Alliance, the Philadelphia Archaeological Forum, and the Philadelphia Water Department Archives |
| Recreational Boating | 6/15/10 | 16 participants, including power boat and sailboat enthusiasts |
| Other Recreation | 6/24/10 | 6 participants, including people from the Philadelphia Bicycle Coalition, South Philly Striders, and the Natural Lands Trust |

COMMON THEMES

- There is a strong desire for improved access for pedestrians and bicyclists across Delaware/Columbus and I-95 as well as along the waterfront.
- There is strong support for a continuous path or trail along the waterfront (either at the water's edge or along Delaware/Columbus) for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-motorized users.
- Everyone wants to see more coherent connections between pockets of good development and public spaces. Although there are currently some attractive amenities on the waterfront, there are so many breaks in the good fabric that it deters people from walking between amenities. ***"The riverfront doesn't work if it's a series of places that aren't connected to each other. . . . You hit it, we have these great islands of things, but it's the in-between places that are dead and not interesting. . . . Connect the dots."***
- There was common support for improved signage to and along the waterfront. Several different purposes for signage were raised, including: (1) the importance of signage for wayfinding, especially in helping people find safe ways to cross Delaware/Columbus and I-95; (2) the role signage can play in public safety, by helping people identify where they are in case of emergency; and (3) the amenity signage can provide through interpretation of historic resources. ***"The idea of "stories" is so important – everyone can relate to the concept of a story. Weave the stories of all these archeological sites together."***

AREAS OF CONFLICT

- Waterfront businesses expressed strong support for free or reduced-cost parking, and emphasized the importance of parking in attracting people to the waterfront. However, this same group, as well as all of the other groups, discussed the problems created by the disconnected fabric on the waterfront today. The recreation group specifically suggested avoiding lots of parking. Not everyone recognizes the incompatibility between having substantial amounts of free or reduced parking and having a more coherent and continuous urban fabric.

Plan for the Central Delaware: Transforming Philadelphia's Waterfront
Focus Groups, June 2010
WATERFRONT BUSINESS 6/15/10
Synthesis

In June 2010, the Delaware River Waterfront Corporation sponsored a series of focus group meetings as part of the development of the Plan for the Central Delaware. This report, prepared by the Focus Group Facilitator, Hurley-Franks & Associates, summarizes the input heard at the Waterfront Business Focus Group Meeting.

PARTICIPANTS: 9 participants, including hospitality and events businesses, offices, and light industry

OBJECTIVES:

- Identify issues and concerns that existing waterfront businesses have about development in the project area.
- Identify current barriers to business expansion and start-up on the waterfront.
- Explore the relationship between tourism and business development on the waterfront.
- Explore the relationship between residential living on the waterfront and business development on the waterfront.
- Identify barriers to minority wealth-building through business development on the waterfront.
- Publicize opportunities for further public input to the project.

QUESTIONS EXPLORED DURING FOCUS GROUP:

1. As a business owner/operator, what do you think are the most important things for the Master Plan for the Central Delaware to accomplish?
2. What are the biggest barriers to business development on the waterfront?
3. What improvements would most help your business to thrive and grow?
4. How would an increase in people living on the waterfront affect your business?
5. How does tourism relate to your business?
6. Who are your primary customers? Where do they come from?
7. What do you think are the barriers to business development for minority-owned, women-owned, and disable-owned businesses?
8. What public policy measures would help promote business development and expansion on the waterfront?
9. What public policy measures would help promote business development for minority-owned, women-owned, and disable-owned businesses on the waterfront?
10. How does the existing zoning affect business development on the waterfront?

SUMMARY

Issues

- Access across I-95 and Delaware/Columbus and along the waterfront, especially for pedestrians and bicyclists, must be improved.
- Existing and future pockets of development need to be connected in a more straightforward way. **“Connect the dots.”**
- Signage – clearly identify how to get across Delaware/Columbus safely when walking or biking; information about how to get around to the various spots on the waterfront and across to Camden.
- Open space – desire for more public space and parks.
- High cost of parking is a barrier for people driving to the waterfront – desire for free or reduced parking to attract people to the waterfront.
- Underutilized areas need to be developed.
- The area needs appealing access for boating, especially transient public docking.
- The gross receipts tax is a big inhibitor of business development, especially for small and new businesses.
- The area needs activity both during the day and at night.
- A management process needs to address negative impacts from events, especially tailgating and trash that spills over from Festival Pier events.
- Connectivity is important, including physical connectivity as well as connecting people with each other.
- Zoning – Zoning requirements and the development approval process need to guide development to support public benefits (such as access to the waterfront and good walkable connections between developments), but it also needs to be designed so that is not too burdensome and time consuming.

Ideas

- Small business incubator – uniquely Philadelphia model of small businesses and sales, possibly in a market that has stalls and other small spaces.
- Tax-free trade zone.
- Marine theme for the trolley on Delaware/Columbus.
- Create a Special Services District for waterfront to help with cleaning, safety, and joint marketing.
- Host and market “Wednesdays on the Waterfront” – something to get people to waterfront when there’s no big event.
- Host a monthly networking event for businesses on the waterfront to talk about ideas and issues.
- Businesses can use cross marketing to bring customers to the waterfront. For instance, the Hyatt and the Duck Tours cooperate to promote the “Ducks Stay Overnight” package: <http://www.ridetheducks.com/philly/special-offers.aspx>.

Plan for the Central Delaware: Transforming Philadelphia's Waterfront
Focus Groups, June 2010
HISTORIC RESOURCES, 6/16/10
Synthesis

In June 2010, the Delaware River Waterfront Corporation sponsored a series of focus group meetings as part of the development of the Plan for the Central Delaware. This report, prepared by the Focus Group Facilitator, Hurley-Franks & Associates, summarizes the input heard at the Historic Resources Focus Group Meeting.

PARTICIPANTS: 7 participants, including people from the Preservation Alliance, the Philadelphia Archaeological Forum, and the Philadelphia Water Department Archives

OBJECTIVES:

- Identify issues and concerns that historic preservation enthusiasts have about development in the project area.
- Identify current barriers to preservation and re-use of historic resources.
- Identify amenities historic preservation enthusiasts want to see on the waterfront.
- Explore the relationship between tourism and historic preservation on the waterfront.
- Explore the relationship between residential living on the waterfront and historic preservation.
- Explore opportunities for business development related to historic resources on the waterfront.
- Publicize opportunities for further public input to the project.

QUESTIONS EXPLORED DURING FOCUS GROUP:

1. As a historic preservation enthusiast, what do you think are the most important things for the Master Plan for the Central Delaware to accomplish?
2. What are the biggest barriers to preservation and re-use of historic resources in the project area?
3. What can you tell us about the following topics that are not generally known and that you think would be important for the project team to know about?
 - o a) the history of your neighborhood
 - o b) important historic buildings
 - o c) potential archaeology sites
4. What are the qualities that define the historic character of your neighborhood?
5. What other waterfront and neighborhood historic resources can this group identify as important for further study?
6. How could historic resources help support residential development on the waterfront? How could residential development help preserve historic resources?
7. How could historic resources help support tourism? How could tourism help preserve historic resources?
8. What opportunities do you see for business development related to historic resources on the waterfront?
9. How does the existing zoning affect historic resources?

SUMMARY:

Issues

- Underground archaeology – most of the sites along the Delaware River potentially have historic resources underground, and most of the locations of underground historic resources are unknown.
- Buildings that represent the remaining industrial heritage of the area are endangered through neglect or potential demolition.
- Access across I-95 and Delaware/Columbus and along the waterfront, especially for pedestrians and bicyclists, must be improved.

Ideas

- Interpretive signage along the public trail could tie the waterfront together with a common thread.
- We need an inventory of historical buildings – we are losing the industrial heritage.
- Develop policies that encourage adaptive reuse of historic buildings.
- “The idea of “stories” is so important – everyone can relate to the concept of a story. Weave the stories of all these archeological sites together.”
- Use history as a destination draw for tourism. Tie into Independence National Historical Park or Peco Bldg/Penn Treaty Park.
- Even resources that can't be preserved should be documented.
- We need a flexible set of procedures that will ensure documentation of historic resources without making it too onerous and expensive.
- Work with existing archives to understand what information is already documented and available, specifically maps and resources recently uncovered as part of city cataloguing project.
- Create a patchwork of tours throughout the neighborhoods – build on and emphasize the historical connections between the neighborhoods and the waterfront.
- Create a video and/or map that shows the development of the waterfront across time.

Important Sites for Documentation/Preservation

- Cohocksink Creek
- Navy Yard
- Penn Treaty Park
- Pier 24 N
- Port Richmond Rail Yard
- PECO Power Plant
- Pumping Station, Delaware and Race
- Ship Remains (underwater)
- West Shipyard site, Vine and Front
- USS United States
- Willow St.
- Wood Street Steps
- WWI Pier

Plan for the Central Delaware: Transforming Philadelphia's Waterfront
Focus Groups, June 2010
RECREATIONAL BOATING, 6/15/10
Synthesis

In June 2010, the Delaware River Waterfront Corporation sponsored a series of focus group meetings as part of the development of the Plan for the Central Delaware. This report, prepared by the Focus Group Facilitator, Hurley-Franks & Associates, summarizes the input heard at the Recreational Boating Focus Group Meeting.

PARTICIPANTS: 16 participants, including power boat and sailboat enthusiasts

OBJECTIVES:

- Identify issues and concerns that existing boating enthusiasts have about development in the project area.
- Identify current barriers to boating recreation.
- Identify amenities boating enthusiasts want to see on the waterfront.
- Explore the relationship between tourism and boating on the waterfront.
- Explore the relationship between residential living on the waterfront and boating.
- Explore opportunities for boating-related business development on the waterfront.
- Publicize opportunities for further public input to the project.

QUESTIONS EXPLORED DURING FOCUS GROUP:

1. As a boating enthusiast, what do you think are the most important things for the Master Plan for the Central Delaware to accomplish?
2. What are the biggest barriers to recreational boating on the Delaware?
3. What improvements would most help recreational boating to thrive and grow? [specific projects]
4. How could boating-related amenities help support residential development on the waterfront? How would an increase in people living on the waterfront affect boating?
5. How could boating-related amenities help support tourism?
6. What opportunities do you see for boating-related business development on the waterfront?

SUMMARY:

Issues

- Underutilized areas need to be developed.
- There are very few places in or near the study area that have adequate facilities for transient boaters.
- There are no public boat launches in the study area.
- Need attractions for transient boaters: places to dine right on the waterfront; interesting shopping, access to Center City.
- "Even people who don't boat want to sit and look at boats." Examples: Baltimore and Chesapeake City, and Penn Treaty Park.
- Small boats, like kayaks, need a protected area. The currents and commercial traffic on the Delaware make small craft boating too dangerous for novices.
- There are only two private marinas between Neshaminy at the north and Wiggins in Camden.
- There is an inaccurate perception that boating is only for the privileged. Should develop casual, affordable activities and amenities (see below)

Ideas

- Develop better facilities for boating, especially for transient docking and especially at Penn's Landing Marina:
 - Bathrooms
 - 24/7 access
 - Individual key to locked dock with security gates
 - Ice machines
 - Pump-out
 - Electricity
 - Cable
 - Fuel
 - Wi-Fi
 - Dredged dock area (6 -12')
 - Public Ramp for getting in and out of the water
 - 1 parking space per boat near public ramps.
 - More Public Marinas. Only two accessibility points in area now.
 - Suggest marina near the stadium complex.
- Develop places to dine along the waterfront, especially places that are affordable, family-friendly, and casual.
- Use water taxis to get people to attractions along the waterfront.
- Put marinas on/near attractions like casinos to encourage people to access them by boat and reduce traffic
- Marinas should have good balance of seasonal or year-round slip rentals and transient slips
- Provide boating access near Wal-Mart shopping center
- Develop major boat show in Philadelphia
- Marina at Navy Yard

Boating Ideas provided via email after the meeting:

- Day care for children. This could be an existing center close to the waterfront with transportation provided.
- Fun pier for the kids and the whole family. Why not transform the river rink for seasonal fun?
- Pet facilities including vet care, boarding and grooming. Many boaters travel with their canine friends. This could be an existing business close to the waterfront with transportation being provided as part of the service.
- Pier & boat facilities for city boaters. This would also provide services for transient boaters and could be located on one of the vacant piers and would include storage facilities (daily & seasonal). To observe such a facility stop by Dredge Harbor Boat Center in nearby Delran, NJ to see their large indoor (rack boat) "parking lot" system for boats:
<http://www.dredgeharbor.com/Default.asp>
<http://www.dredgeharbor.com/shopcontent.asp?type=Storage>

• **Plan for the Central Delaware: Transforming Philadelphia's Waterfront
Focus Groups, June 2010
RECREATION, 6/24/10
Synthesis**

In June 2010, the Delaware River Waterfront Corporation sponsored a series of focus group meetings as part of the development of the Plan for the Central Delaware. This report, prepared by the Focus Group Facilitator, Hurley-Franks & Associates, summarizes the input heard at the Recreation Focus Group Meeting.

PARTICIPANTS: 6 participants, including people from the Philadelphia Bicycle Coalition, South Philly Striders, and the Natural Lands Trust

OBJECTIVES:

- Identify issues and concerns that existing recreation users have about development in the project area.
- Identify current barriers to recreation.
- Identify what recreation activities people engage in now on the waterfront, and what recreation activities they want to be able to engage in.
- Identify what amenities people want to see in future parks or open spaces.
- Identify what kind of events people attend now, and what kind of events people are interested in.
- Publicize opportunities for further public input to the project.

QUESTIONS EXPLORED DURING FOCUS GROUP:

1. In terms of recreation, what do you think are the most important things for the Master Plan for the Central Delaware to accomplish?
2. How do you use the waterfront now? What do you do along the waterfront? What brings you to the waterfront?
3. What would you like to be able to do along the waterfront?
4. If there were new parks or recreation spaces along the waterfront, what activities would you want those spaces to support?
5. What Active Recreation activities are most important to you?
6. What Passive Recreation activities are most important to you?
7. What water activities would you like to see along the river?
8. Do you attend events at Penn's Landing, Festival Pier, Penn Treaty Park? Which ones and why do you like them?
9. What other sorts of arts and entertainment would bring you to the river?
10. What kinds of attractions do you think would be fun - restaurants, cafes, bars, casinos, ferris wheel, carousel, museum telling the story of the waterfront, party boat, tours, etc.
11. What kinds of festivals, events, arts, concerts, sports are lacking in the area now and you would like to see on the waterfront?

SUMMARY:

Issues

- Access across I-95 and Delaware/Columbus and along the waterfront, especially for pedestrians and bicyclists, must be improved.
- For running and biking, the most important thing is to have a continuous, seamless connection from Allegheny to Oregon, with minimal street crossings. You also need to be able to get to the waterfront in one place and then connect back into the neighborhood in another place, so that you can make a loop.
- There needs to be better signage – clearly identify how to get across Delaware/Columbus safely when walking or biking, and where you are once you are on the river side.
- Belgian block and cobblestones are real barriers to biking.
- The physical design of Penn's Landing does not attract people to the waterfront. It's too hot and exposed, with too much concrete.
- ***"The riverfront doesn't work if it's a series of places that aren't connected to each other."***
- You need enough space for walking, running, and biking – separate lanes are ideal because they all move at different speeds.
- ***"You hit it, we have these great islands of thing, but it's the in-between places that are dead and not interesting."***
- We need to have a variety of spaces. We need to balance program and negative space. Open, unprogrammed space is good. Beauty will get people to the river. Add more trees.
- Strike a good balance between destination and throughway. Certain recreational users want to go through and use bike routes and paths to get through to somewhere. You should try to make the trail double as a transportation corridor for

bikers and walkers. At the same time, building in certain destinations like sculptures or ferris wheels is important. There is a balance that you need to strike. Don't let one dominate the other.

- We need enough ways to get here without driving.
- Avoid lots of parking.
- The current programming at Penn's Landing does not attract people to the waterfront, except for large, sporadic events.
 - We need a diversity of events. Several people said that they rarely or never go to events at Penn's Landing because they are not interested in any of the events offered.
 - Big events at Penn's Landing are just too hot and crowded.
 - People expressed interest in smaller events that hit a wider variety of audiences and interests.

Ideas

- Recreation amenities desired:
 - Basketball courts
 - Unprogrammed playing fields
 - Concessions
 - Water fountains
 - Good public bathrooms (ex. Bryant Park)
 - Lighting
 - Call boxes
 - Street signs or markings in sidewalk on water side so you know where you are, especially near call boxes
 - Fenced-in dog parks with separate areas for large and small dogs and also green spaces where dogs are not allowed
 - BMX bikes
 - Unearth tributaries and bring them into the neighborhood
 - Think about all seasons – ice skating
 - Place to sled
 - Roller hockey rinks (also used for bike polo, soccer, etc.)
 - Better information about the recreation amenities already here
 - Kayaking
 - Public launch for kayaks
 - Boat tour that goes all the way around from the Schuylkill to the Delaware
 - Amusement pier – but tasteful!
 - Major improvements to bike trail in South Philly (wider, trees, lighting, not going through parking lot)
 - Clean up area around WalMart – prostitution and other illegal uses happening
 - Slow down traffic on Delaware Ave so that bike lane is more attractive
 - Picnic
 - Benches
 - Rocks and sculpture kids can climb on
 - Trees closer together on Delaware/Columbus to buffer pedestrians on sidewalk and make them feel safer (like Kelly Drive)
 - Make world's longest mural on one of the walls of I-95
 - Incorporate water into some art
 - Build connections from the trail back into the neighborhoods
 - Beauty
- Events
 - More smaller events
 - More non-mainstream events
 - Local music and theater, opera
 - Show cultural events, like symphony and opera, on a big screen or the side of a building – like at the Piazza in Northern Liberties
 - Events where you can do art
 - Coordinate events with institutions in the city – tie existing organizations into waterfront development