

September CDAG Board Meeting Minutes – 2011

Central Delaware Advocacy Group (CDAG) – September 8, 2011

Old Swedes Church Community Room, 6:00 PM – Recorded Attendance Attached

I. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Minutes of CDAG Board meeting of August 11th, 2011, approved

II. Discussion of CDAG Comments on the Riverfront Master Plan – Sarah Thorp

Sarah first described the in-house process of addressing each of the over one hundred of the public comments, large and small, submitted on the Master Plan draft.

Sarah first addressed the proposed schedule for the conclusion of the Master Plan process. The final draft of the Plan will be closed on September 23rd, and shortly thereafter be sent out for printing in October, to then be presented to the DRWC Board for its consideration on October 28th.

If the DRWC Board approves the Master Plan, the Plan would then be submitted to the Philadelphia City Planning Commission in the hope that the Plan will, subsequently, be adopted by the Commission.

The process of developing the attendant zoning recommendations will likely follow the anticipated end-of-year passage of the new zoning code. The zoning recommendations will first analyze the appropriateness of the base zoning of each parcel in the area of the Master Plan and possible re-classification recommendations to be carried out during the re-mapping process, followed by the interpretation of the current zoning overlay (14-1638) into the format of the new zoning code as well as consideration of additional overlay provisions, and lastly the development of design guidelines consistent with the principles of the Master Plan with appropriate Civic Design Review triggers. Regarding the issue of the zoning recommendations, there was much discussion and expression of the need for CDAG to be included, early on, in this critical process.

Sarah then addressed the individual points of the CDAG's comments on the master Plan submitted on August 24th. Following is the core text of the letter we submitted on August 24th, with Sarah's comments identified and inserted:

(1) COMMENTS ON THE MASTER PLAN FINAL DRAFT

Overall Comments:

Transit Recommendations

Comment: Transit solutions are balanced, phased, and achievable

CDAG commends the multifaceted, balanced, phased, collaborative approach to the short-term and long-term transportation solutions that have been added to the Master Plan since our comments of June 2011.

Sarah: Thanked CDAG for the positive comment and noted that many of the comments received during the comment period were positive.

Walking Trail Along Columbus Blvd./ Delaware Ave.

Comment: Trees alone are not a sufficient buffer

Trees alone are not a sufficient buffer; there needs to be a more substantial, human-scale vegetation buffer, combined with shade trees, to separate heavy vehicular traffic from pedestrian traffic, where the walking trail must be positioned adjacent to the roadway.

***Sarah:** With the exception of the “choke-point” sections of the trail, when adjacent to the roadway, there will be a continuous 6’ wide planted buffer separating the trail from the roadway. The planted buffer is intended to include full-size trees as well as shrubs and a full variety of site-specific appropriate plant materials to achieve the desired buffering effect.*

Urban Edge Management and Program

Comment: Commercial frontage should be focused on the street side, not the river side

Curiously, the maps in the *Implementation* section showing ground-floor activation and street-wall build-to locations seem to promote a hard urban edge on the riverfront, while not holding the hard urban/activated street line on Delaware Ave./Columbus Blvd. This seems the inverse of the principles of the Civic Vision.

CDAG recommends focusing ground floor commercial activation and a hard urban street edge on the street side rather than the river side. This allows for a staged softening of the urban fabric moving from the city towards the river, more effectively attracting people to the commercial corridor of Delaware Ave./Columbus Blvd., and then eastward to the waterfront, where we recommend allowing the river edge to be greener and softer.

***Sarah:** After much discussion and clarification of this point, it appeared that the Master Planners intend for the commercialized edge of this central section, and in particular the Penns Landing promenade, to include commercial components along the promenade to promote pedestrian traffic. However, the promenade is intended to be landscaped to the greatest degree possible, to help make the promenade a pleasant experience.*

The planners do not agree that a commercial edge is appropriate at this section, due to the planned cover over Delaware Avenue between Walnut and Chestnut Streets and the likelihood that pedestrians would prefer the river-edge promenade, rather than the sidewalk along Delaware Avenue. However, otherwise, the Master Plan does call for commercial uses along edge of Delaware Avenue.

Comments on Central Section:

Penns Landing Boat Basin

Comment: It is generally felt to be over-built and intensely commercialized

The Boat Basin plan suffers from an overconcentration of built program to the detriment of accessibility and the natural beauty and draw of the waterfront. CDAG recommends a reduction in the density of structures programmed, and adjustments should be made to assure a greener area.

CDAG appreciates the need to balance waterfront access and recreation on the one hand; on the other hand, development that will activate the area and generate much-needed revenue to invest in other projects along the Central Delaware. The current proposal for this area simply gets the balance wrong. The Boat Basin is the narrowest, most compressed part of the Central Delaware Waterfront and should not be overbuilt. CDAG recommends a reduction in the density of structures and increased greening.

***Sarah:** The Boat Basin is conceived as a more commercial urban edge than some other areas of the Central Delaware and the two-story commercial spaces are required due to the limited first-floor space afforded by the narrowness of the parcels and the economic drivers. The development is intended to be articulated to preserve view corridors and manage the perceived mass of the*

proposed structures. This area is conceived as an extension of Center City, with appropriately consistent density and building heights.

Penn's Landing Promenade

Comment: This critical waterfront amenity should be greener and more user-friendly

The current design featuring a hardscaped, largely unshaded waterfront edge of this landmark promenade does not take advantage its inherent benefits and features. CDAG recommends it be designed to be softer and greener along the water's edge, with the hardscaped edge on the street side.

Sarah: After much discussion and clarification of this point, it appeared that the Master Planners intend for the commercialized edge of this central section, and in particular the Penns Landing promenade, to include commercial components along the promenade to promote pedestrian traffic. However, the promenade is intended to be landscaped to the greatest degree possible, to help make the promenade a pleasant experience.

Market Street Ramp

Comment: Repurposing the Market Street ramp would reduce cost and enhance use

CDAG strongly agrees with the removal of the scissor ramps in the Market Street area. However, we feel it is unnecessary and unwise, both fiscally and programmatically, to rebuild the Market Street ramp itself as a narrow pedestrian walkway. The existing ramp serves as a street grid extension to the river. It offers tremendous potential as a ready-made linear park, pairing pedestrian river access with pedestrian-friendly destination uses such as street vending, farmers' markets, and small-scale performances.

Sarah: The planners continue to believe that it is important to demolish the Market Street ramp in order to be able to complete the built street scape along the north side of the 100 block of Market Street and establish an appropriate terminus to east Market Street.

Comments on Northern Section:

Projected Land-Use Program

Comment: Industrial-exclusive program fails to connect with the adjacent community

In order to fulfill the key goal of reconnecting neighborhoods to the river, usage dedicated to industrial, commercial, and large-scale entertainment should be generously interspersed with mixed residential uses. The residential component of this mixed-use approach increases the diversity of land uses and enhances the stability of the social fabric through future fluctuations in the economy.

Sarah: Although DRWC agrees with CDAG's comment, the Conrail property and certain adjacent properties will remain unchanged in both its use and zoning classification for the foreseeable future, so it will be difficult to program any changes for the area, including incorporation of residential uses for the area. Although the new zoning code does include an industrial/residential use category that may be applicable, due to the current use of the area, the underlying zoning classification may remain unchanged. However, the planned infrastructure, such as the new (connector) streets and trail, do appear in the Plan.

Spring Garden Site and Connector

Comment: Spring Garden site must be developed through a rigorous public process

CDAG recognizes the need for the Spring Garden site to balance waterfront access and recreation with development to activate this site and raise revenue. The Master Plan has the potential to achieve this balance, but questions remain about the height and massing of mid-rise structures, and the relationship to the adjacent developed parcel to

the north. Because this is the largest contiguously-owned parcel controlled by the DRWC, CDAG recommends the RFP process fully engage both CDAG and the public, to ensure the delicate balance necessary for this site is preserved in the final product.

Sarah: Of course, there would be a public process consistent with the public process consistent with the Civic Vision and Master Plan processes, and it does make sense that CDAG would have an opportunity to review and comment on any RFP prior to release.

(2) COMMENTS ON THE FUTURE ZONING COMPONENT

The Master Plan For The Central Delaware will live or die with the details of the zoning component codifying its principles. Because the zoning component has not yet been written or presented to CDAG or the public, many of our previous comments and concerns require continued emphasis:

Sarah: Yes, the success of the Master Plan hinges on the zoning codifying the Plan. (See notes above on the discussion and comments of earlier in our meeting.)

Re-Mapping

Recommendation: Re-map the Central Delaware now

Few parcels of the District are properly zoned for the uses proposed by the Master Plan. Re-mapping is essential to minimize the need for zoning variances as development occurs. Variance-driven development on the waterfront would open a Pandora’s Box that could spell a slow, agonizing “death by a thousand cuts” for the Master Plan, eviscerating its principles and proposals, parcel by parcel and project by project.

CDAG urges the DRWC to include a proposed re-mapping of the entire District when it presents the Master Plan to the Planning Commission, and the zoning component to City Council.

Immediate re-mapping could also make palatable the majority of the proposed height controls recommended in the Master Plan, or render the height controls unnecessary, if an appropriate underlying zoning classification such as the new CMX-2.5 were assigned to most parcels where mixed-use (commercial and residential) is desired. CMX-2.5 prescribes a 55’ height limit and would ensure a maximum building height more consistent with most adjacent neighborhoods. At some parcels where taller development is appropriate, the new CMX-3 may be the most appropriate classification, due to the absence of a height limit, but with density controlled by a base F.A.R. of 500%.

To emphasize the principles of the Master Plan to make it “real Philadelphia”, the underlying zoning classifications of adjacent residential neighborhoods should be extended eastward to the adjacent riverside development parcels, to continue the scale of the urban fabric to the waterfront.

Sarah: The DRWC anticipates that the Central Delaware area will be included in the District Planning process, managed by the PCPC, which will start in January. The Master Plan includes adequate detail to communicate the intent of the Plan and inform the District Planning process. The District Planning will subsequently inform the re-mapping process that will follow. The DRWC will be active in the District Planning process and urges CDAG and all its constituent organizations to remain involved throughout the process.

Massing Controls

Recommendation: Require “step backs” adjacent to trails, access points, and view corridors

It is not clear how the Master Plan will work to prevent a claustrophobic, “cavern” effect when large buildings abut the waterfront trail, setback, and connector streets. CDAG recommends the zoning component supporting the Master Plan include massing controls in the form of a “step-back” or “wedding cake” formula to prevent structures from overwhelming the trail, setback, and river-access areas. CDAG also recommends that the *Sky Plane Controls* of the

proposed new Zoning Code be employed to manage massing of taller structures and preserve view corridors along the waterfront.

Sarah: DRWC concurs with CDAG's comments on this point. The Master Plan does include adequate detail to convey the intent of the Plan to preserve appropriate view corridors and avoid a cavern effect in those areas where the density of development might result in that ill-effect. The Sky Plane formula of the proposed new zoning code may be applicable, and will be considered during the creation of zoning recommendations codifying the principles and specifics of the Master Plan.

Height Limits

Recommendation: Allow CDAG to review height-exception criteria

The Master Plan allows structures higher than the standard three, five, and eight-story district controls. Excess height limits are proposed to be based on certain criteria, rather than on mapping specific parcels. This is a sensible approach, but it puts tremendous pressure on the criteria, which, if not written properly, could lead every property owner to seek height exceptions or challenge the legality of the standard height limits, rendering the Master Plan moot. These criteria must be specific, legally defensible, and allow for no deviation. CDAG respectfully, but strongly, requests to see these criteria as soon as possible.

Sarah: The height-exception criteria has not yet been decided and will not be included in the Master Plan, in spite of a great deal of time and discussion dedicated to this topic, due to the lack of consensus among the Planners. This issue has been deferred forward to the zoning process.

Historic Preservation

Recommendation: Make use of the new zoning code's preservation language

The Master Plan lacks substantive language that would enable the preservation and showcasing of the Philadelphia waterfront's rich colonial and industrial history. CDAG suggests that the zoning component of the Master Plan mimic the frequent reference to the *Historic Preservation Chapter 14-1000* of the latest version of the New Zoning Code Draft Proposals.

Sarah: DRWC concurs with CDAG's comments on this point. There will be additional language added to the master Plan draft to address this point.

Nuisance Uses

Recommendation: Ensure Night Club uses do not proliferate

Because the Master Plan process pre-dates the creation of the City's new Zoning Code, it is CDAG's understanding that the Master Plan and Master Plan Report will not contain remapping recommendations that use the new Code's zoning classifications. For this reason it is unclear whether, and to what extent, the Master Plan's recommendations will allow or prevent Assembly and Live Performance uses, i.e. nightclubs, as a matter of right. Because the proliferation of such uses could undermine the entire Master Plan (and quality of life in waterfront areas), CDAG recommends that specific language be included in the zoning component supporting the Master Plan to specifically limit or disallow these uses within the district.

Sarah: DRWC concurs with CDAG's comments on this point. These controls will be included in the zoning recommendations, but cannot be included in the Master Plan.

In response to a question from one of our visitors, Sarah responded that the DRWC-managed traffic study will start very soon. The consultants decided that a summer season count would not be as effective than an early fall count. At this time, the consultants are gathering and studying all existing available traffic data. The first of two public meetings will be held in the third week of October and the second meeting in January.

III. Committee Reports

1. Communication & Outreach – Rene Goodwin

Rene introduced Susan MacAninley who has been working with the CDAG brochure sub-committee and is also active in the Washington Avenue Green Friends-Of Group.

BROCHURE

The CDAG brochure draft is underway. Rene, Susan and Marsha have met and composed the first draft the brochure that will soon be circulated to the Board for comment

COMMUNITY MEETINGS - OUTREACH

Chairman Steve Weixler will be leading CDAG presentations made to our constituents organizations and Rene is scheduling those presentation events. Current schedule: Penns Port – Oct. 12th, Northern Liberties - Oct. 27th, and Olde Richmond is intended to be scheduled as soon as possible.

COMMUNICATION WITH FRIENDS' GROUPS

Dianne Mayer has agreed to present a regular, brief reports of the activities of the Washington Avenue Green friends group. Rene is looking for someone to report on the activities of the Race Street Pier friends group. It would not entail much time or work but it is worthwhile to keep abreast of the goings on at each venue. If interested, please let Rene and Steve know.

Dianne Mayer circulated a flyer on "IT'S MY RIVER' EcoFest scheduled for Saturday, September 17th, at 10:00 AM – noon, at Washington Avenue Green (Washington Avenue & Columbus Boulevard behind the Sheetmetal Worker Building and the Coast Guard Station). The event is sponsored by the Friends of Washington Avenue Green.

3. Fall Social Event – Honey Pertnoy

Honey Pertnoy is coordinating this social event. The majority of those CDAG Board members registering an opinion on the matter have preferred a Sunday brunch event. Although the Spirit of Philadelphia does not offer a brunch menu, its lunch menu will suffice. The event dates proposed to the Board are October 9th and October 16th.

The purpose and utility of this first CDAG social event, and the appropriate composition of attendees beyond CDAG Board members and their spouses/life-partners/companions/etc., and non-CDAG-affiliated invitees might be included was discussed and a broad range of opinions expressed did not yet yield a consensus. Honey offered to continue this discussion outside of our meeting time and asked all interested to send Honey comments by Tuesday of the coming week.

4. Membership Committee – Laura Lanza

Laura Lanza requested that CDAG support the efforts of the Delaware River Historic Places Network, and Professor Glenn Muscio of Drexel University, and we commit to sending an organizational representative to the planning session workshop to be held at Hagley Library and Museum, Wilmington Delaware, May 2012, pending NEH funding. A motion was made to support, as requested, and the motion carried. The Secretary will draft a support letter for signature by Steve Weixler.

Laura also reminded the Board that she had sent out notice of the I-95 Sustainable Action Committee meeting to be held on Tuesday, September 13th at Holy Name at 701 Gaul Street. The meeting topic will be the I-95 underpasses and the interface between the highway and neighborhoods.

5. Finance & Development - Treasurer's Report - Dave Hammond (no report submitted)

V. Discussion of the 2011 Progress Report – Steve Weixler

Steve requested that all input from all Board members should be directed to Steve by Tuesday, September 13th. The 2010 Progress Report pdf was circulated to all CDAG Board members after our meeting of August 11th.

Volunteers working on the first draft of the 2011 Progress Report are: Joe S., Jeff R., and Steve W.

Closing and Next Meeting

Motion to adjourn. Adjourned: 8:00 PM

Next regularly-scheduled CDAG Board meeting is scheduled for October 13, 2011, 8:00 AM, Society Hill Towers Community Room

CDAG Board Member Organizations Roll Call:

	CDAG Board Member Organizations (N/V = non-voting Board Members)	Representatives Primary & Alternate	Present (X)	Quorum Count
N/V	Delaware River City Corp.	Tom Branigan (P)	N/V	N/V
N/V	Dickenson Narrows Civic Assoc.	Kirk Brown (P)	N/V	N/V
1	Fishtown Neighbors Assoc.	Micah Hanson (P)		
	Fishtown Neighbors Assoc.	Matt Karp (A)		
N/V	Franklin Bridge Neighbors North	Dick Tucker (P)	N/V	N/V
2	Neighbors Allied Best Waterfront	Mary Stumpf (P)	X	1
	Neighbors Allied Best Waterfront	Dianne Mayer (A)	X	-
3	New Kensington Development Corp.	Sandy Saltzman (P)	X	2
	New Kensington Development Corp.	Tom Potts (A)		
4	Northern Liberties Neighbors Assoc	Matt Ruben (P)	X	3

	Northern Liberties Neighbors Assoc	Ira Upin		
5	Old City Civic Association	Joe Schiavo (P)	X	4
	Old City Civic Association	Marcus Saitchenko (A)		
6	Court At Old Swedes Homeowners Assoc.	Honey Pertnoy (P)	X	5
	Court At Old Swedes Homeowners Assoc.	Deep Parmat (A)		
7	Olde Richmond Homeowners Association	Phil Stolfus (P)		
	Olde Richmond Homeowners Association	Travis Hanmer (A)	X	6
8	Pennsport Civic Association	Tom Otto (P)	X	7
	Pennsport Civic Association	Jim Moylan		
9	Penn Future	Bryan Collins (P)	X	8
	Penn Future	Christine Knapp (A)		
10	Pennsylvania Environmental Council	Patrick Starr (P)		
	Pennsylvania Environmental Council	Chuck Knolls (A)	X	9
11	Pennsylvania Horticultural Society	Amanda Benner (P)		
	Pennsylvania Horticultural Society	Jennifer Mahar (A)	X	10
12	Port Richmond On Patrol & Civic Assoc.	Laura Lanza (P)	X	11
	Port Richmond On Patrol & Civic Assoc.	Jeremy LeCompte (A)		
13	Queen Village Neighbors Association	Jeff Rush (P)	X	12
	Queen Village Neighbors Association	Richard Wolk (A)	X	-
14	River's Edge Community Association	John Scorsone (P)		
	River's Edge Community Association	Rich Stange (A)		
15	Society Hill Civic Association	Steven Weixler (P)	X	13
	Society Hill Civic Association	Rosanne Loesch (A)		
16	Society Hill Towers Homeowners Assoc.	Marsha Bacal (P)	X	14
	Society Hill Towers Homeowners Assoc.	Jim Moss (A)	X	-
17	South St. Head House Business District	Dave Hammond (P)		
18	Whitman Council	Rich Lazar (P)		
	Whitman Council	Mark Kapzcynski (A)	X	15

(* 9 voting Board members required for a meeting quorum)

Friends and Guests of CDAG Present:

Rene Goodwin, Chair, Communications Committee
Sarah Thorp, DRWC
Steve McGovern
Bridget Keegan, PennPraxis
Shawn Rairgh, NABR

Kellie Patrick-Gates, PlanPhilly
Karen Tompson, DRWC
Ed Kirlin
Juliet Whelan
Susan MacAninley