



# Northern Liberties Waterfront Plan

An Addendum to the Northern Liberties Neighborhood Plan

Northern Liberties Neighbors Association

**\_INTERFACE STUDIO LLC**  
Orth-Rodgers & Associates, Inc.

April. 07



# Acknowledgments

## NLNA Board of Directors

Jennifer Lewis, President  
Deborah Scoblionkov-King, Vice President  
John Braxton, Treasurer  
Bonnie Graham, Secretary  
Harvey Bell  
Nina DeCosta  
Janet Finegar  
Larry Freedman  
Irene Lambrou  
Shelley Marcus  
Sue Patterson  
Matt Ruben  
Hank Sammon  
Barbara Saverino  
Ira Upin

*Special thanks to the interest, input and commitment made to this effort by the following political representatives, City agencies and neighboring community organizations:*

Councilman Frank DiCicco  
Councilman Darrell Clarke  
Representative Mike O'Brien  
Representative Curtis Thomas  
Philadelphia City Planning Commission  
New Kensington CDC  
Neighbors Allied for the Best Riverfront  
Fishtown Neighbors Association  
River's Edge Civic Association  
Old City Civic Association



## Project Funding

*This Waterfront Plan is made possible by the generous donations of:*

1080 NCCB Associates  
Hoboken/Brownstone  
Delaware River Development Group  
Bridgeman's View  
Waterfront Square  
Trump Tower  
BIU Properties

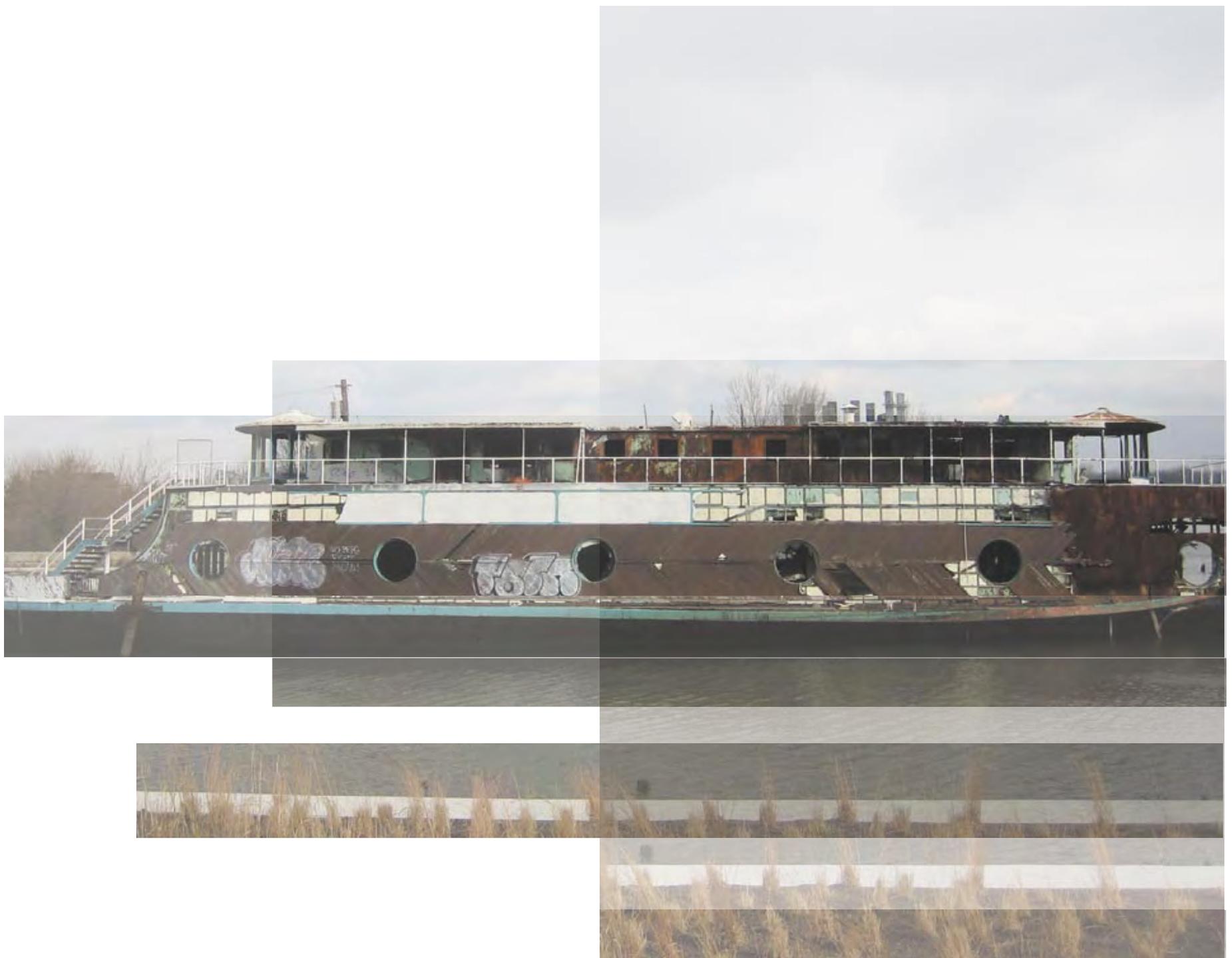
## Project Team

### **INTERFACE STUDIO LLC**

Scott Page, Principal  
Mindy Watts, Urban Designer

### *Orth-Rodgers & Associates, Inc.*

Adrienne Eiss, Senior Project Manager  
Jason Zhang, Transportation Analyst



# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>	8. Apertures	80
Need for the Waterfront Plan	1	9. An Adaptive Environment	81
Study Area	3		
Project Partners	4	Private Framework	81
<b>Planning Process</b>	<b>5</b>	1. Basic Expectations	81
Methodology	5	2. Height / Bulk	82
Coordination with Concurrent Planning Efforts	6	3. Site Design and Use	85
		4. Transportation	89
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>9</b>	5. Low-Impact Development	89
		6. Signage	90
<b>Analysis</b>	<b>13</b>	7. Lighting	91
An Overview	13	<b>A Note on Implementation</b>	<b>91</b>
Existing Land Use	15		
Vacancy	16		
Building Condition	17		
Public Ownership	18		
Transportation	19		
Waterfront Access	29		
View Corridors	31		
Topography	35		
Susceptibility to Change	36		
Proposed Development	37		
Comparison to other Waterfronts	45		
Open Space Targets	48		
<b>Guiding Principles</b>	<b>49</b>		
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>54</b>		
Public Framework	55		
1. Waterfront Trail	57		
2. A Natural River's Edge	61		
3. Play Space	63		
4. Green Links	65		
5. Civic Incisions	67		
6. I-95 Insulation	71		
7. A Multi-Modal Waterfront	75		

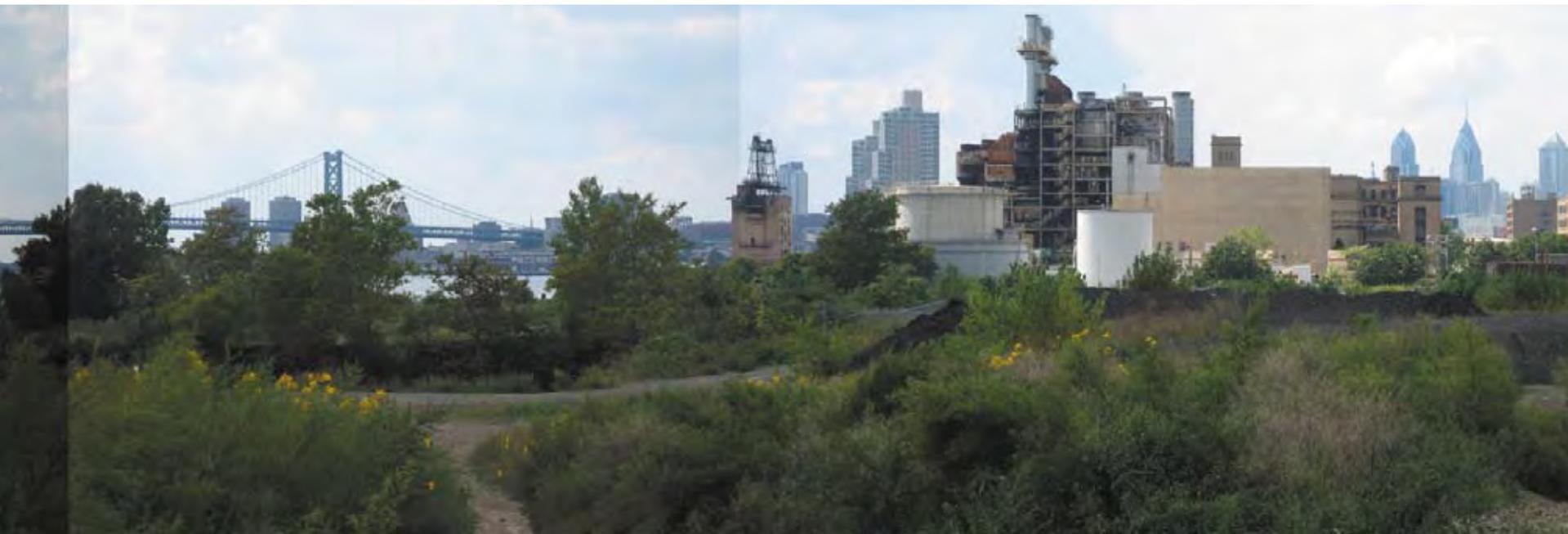


## Introduction

### Need for the Northern Liberties Waterfront Plan

In fall 2005, Interface Studio completed the *Northern Liberties Neighborhood Plan*, a comprehensive plan that addressed a wide range of local issues including community participation, land use, the future of 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, “green” development, the development review process, and organizational capacity building for the NLNA. The *Neighborhood Plan* spoke generally to impending waterfront development, but the NLNA made the decision to focus - at that point in time - on other community priorities and to raise additional funds to conduct a study focused specifically on the waterfront soon thereafter.

Since completion of the *Neighborhood Plan*, development pressure in the waterfront area (east of Interstate-95) has reached a fever pitch. Besides Waterfront Square and 700 N. Delaware, which were already on the table at the time the *Neighborhood Plan* was completed, Trump Tower, Bridgeman’s View, Penn Treaty Tower, Pier 40, proposed casinos and a number of other residential proposals were brought to the NLNA for zoning review. Given the scale, density and amount of new development proposed, coupled with the lack of an overall plan for the waterfront, the NLNA became one of the first communities in Philadelphia to impose a moratorium on all projects east of I-95. The NLNA refused to review any additional projects until they had a plan to help assess whether each project would add value to the waterfront. The NLNA raised funds during the summer of 2006, and the planning process formally launched on September 1<sup>st</sup>.



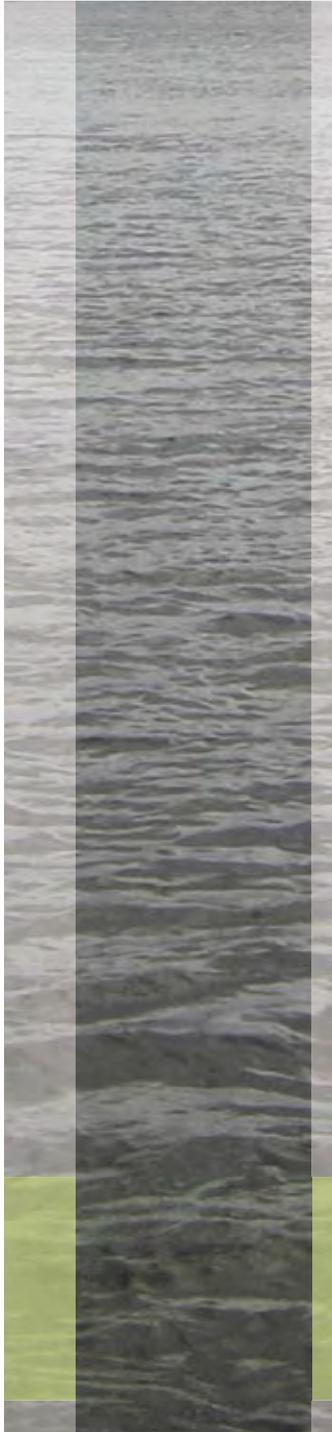
View of the Delaware River, the Benjamin Franklin Bridge, and downtown Philadelphia from the 33-acre vacant parcel north of the historic Richmond Power Station.

Within the same time frame, the Community Design Collaborative funded the New Kensington CDC and Neighbors Allied for the Best Riverfront in August to undertake a series of waterfront charrettes with residents to discuss the Delaware River stretching south to the Ben Franklin Bridge. In October, an executive order was signed by Mayor Street to undertake a civic vision for a 7-mile stretch of the Central Delaware Riverfront, which encompasses the study area for this plan. The waterfront district adjacent to Northern Liberties went from no planning to multiple and overlapping studies within two months.

The City-wide Central Delaware Riverfront planning process is organized to guide the future growth of the waterfront and to act as the conduit through which implementation will be focused. To ensure open discussion and transparency, PennPraxis, the clinical arm of the University of Pennsylvania School of Design and the entity charged with directing the process, has committed to active citizen involvement and neighborhood

input throughout the project. For this reason, the NLNA strongly believes that the *Northern Liberties Waterfront Plan* is necessary to clearly express the shared vision of Northern Liberties' residents for their waterfront. This is a community guided and endorsed plan that has two overlapping objectives:

- Provide guidance to the NLNA Zoning Committee in reviewing and negotiating with developers seeking to build within the waterfront district; and
- Develop a clear framework of public improvements that will substantially enhance the use of the waterfront and establish seamless connections from the River's edge to the fabric of the neighborhood. Some of these recommendations are elements with which the NLNA can move forward independently, while others should be strongly considered in the context of the larger Central Delaware Riverfront planning process.



Recognizing the importance of a unified voice advocating for the future of the waterfront, a third objective became immediately apparent – to ensure that an open dialogue and line of communication be maintained between this planning effort and those of adjacent communities and PennPraxis.

Full consideration of the *Northern Liberties Waterfront Plan* follows in this document, intended to serve as an addendum to the *Northern Liberties Neighborhood Plan*. The *Northern Liberties Waterfront Plan* is not a master plan for the neighborhood’s waterfront district, nor is it a redevelopment plan detailing the specifics of the area’s build out. Rather, the *Waterfront Plan* is a statement of the community’s vision for one portion of the Delaware River Waterfront, the portion adjacent to the creative, progressive, and proactive Northern Liberties neighborhood. The *Plan* calls for a future for the waterfront district that is both flexible and reflective of such neighborhood qualities.

*The Plan is intended to capture the imagination of the community as well as the support of those positioned to partner with Northern Liberties in its realization.*



Official Northern Liberties neighborhood boundaries.

**Study Area**

The *Northern Liberties Waterfront Plan* adopts the area bound by Interstate-95 to the west, the Delaware River to the east, the Benjamin Franklin Bridge to the south, and Penn Treaty Park to the north as its designated study area. The 189-acre (gross area) study area encompasses land that falls within the Northern Liberties neighborhood as well as within two adjacent neighborhoods: the River’s Edge neighborhood, south of Callowhill Street, and the Fishtown neighborhood, located north of Laurel Street and east of Front Street.

Established with respect to the pre-existing edges that define this upper portion of the Central Delaware River waterfront, the plan’s study area encourages continued



Study Area adopted for the Northern Liberties Waterfront Plan.

coordination between neighboring civic organizations and allows for the creation of a plan responsive to the larger area's vision for the Delaware River waterfront between the Benjamin Franklin Bridge and East Columbia Avenue. The study area also recognizes that proposed developments have an impact beyond the neighborhoods in which they reside. If the plan was constrained to Northern Liberties' official boundaries, the neighborhood would miss the opportunity to evaluate the range of issues and opportunities associated with developments such as the proposed SugarHouse Casino site and the multiple residential towers proposed near Penn Treaty Park.

## Project Partners

The **Northern Liberties Neighbors Association (NLNA)** is a volunteer driven nonprofit organization established in 1975 by a small group of local citizens. Evolving over time to address the changing issues facing the neighborhood and best represent the interests of the community, the NLNA and members of its Board of Directors, Zoning Committee, and Urban Design Committee today find themselves in the midst of developer interest, media attention, and City-wide planning efforts concerning the future of the Delaware River waterfront. Gaming and transportation decisions at the State level promise to further alter the landscape of both Northern Liberties, its waterfront district, and its river edge. Outspoken and proactive in its approach to neighborhood development, the NLNA commissioned the *Northern Liberties Waterfront Plan* to document local priorities and aspirations for the riverfront and serve as a tool for negotiating the waterfront's redevelopment in keeping with the neighborhood's vision.

**INTERFACE STUDIO LLC** and **Orth-Rodgers & Associates, Inc.** comprise the planning team for the *Northern Liberties Waterfront Plan*.

Interface Studio, lead consultant for the *Northern Liberties Waterfront Plan*, is an urban design, planning, and architecture practice based in Philadelphia. Founded in 2004 by Brian Phillips and Scott Page, Interface Studio was established to pursue high planning and design quality and a close working relationship with our clients. Today, we are a successful company of seven professionals who work collaboratively on a diverse mix of projects ranging from the design of 13 green affordable homes in North Philadelphia to a city-wide housing strategy for the City of Rochester, New York. We have worked extensively in the City of Philadelphia, actively addressing the unique challenges and opportunities presented in the City with a renewed sense of optimism and innovation.

Orth-Rodgers & Associates (ORA) has been providing professional traffic engineering, transportation planning, and highway engineering services to both public and private sector clients since 1977. Headquartered in Center City Philadelphia, the firm also has branch offices in West Trenton, NJ, in Malvern and Mechanicsburg, PA, Tampa, FL, and Las Vegas, NV. The staff includes a total of about 130 people with diverse background and experience in all areas of traffic, highway, and site engineering, and transportation planning. Orth-Rodgers conducted the traffic study for the *Northern Liberties Waterfront Plan* and collaborated with Interface Studio in the development of mobility-, circulation-, and parking-related recommendations.

# Planning Process

Given the highly-charged planning environment and media attention surrounding the Central Delaware Riverfront planning initiative and recent casino decisions, the planning process for the *Northern Liberties Waterfront Plan* has been one of interaction. The project has called for field work, research, and learning, collection, quantification, and creation, but also for community participation, cooperation and collaboration between local civic groups, and coordination with concurrent planning efforts.

## Methodology

- Physical Survey – What’s there now?  
The planning team undertook a detailed physical analysis of the study area, surveying existing land use, view corridors, waterfront access, open space resources, topography, the street network, and the operational status of major intersections. Maps and photography document our findings as well as the character of Northern Liberties’ waterfront.
- Historic Research – What was there?  
Research in the City Archives enriched our understanding of the place today and informed our idea of what a reclaimed and re-imagined, yet authentic Northern Liberties waterfront might be. Old photographs offer a glimpse of what was, indeed, a working waterfront, and Sanborn Maps provide clues as to the logic of today’s street pattern and pier system.
- Developer Interviews – What’s on the table for tomorrow?  
Discussions with private developers pursuing projects within the study area afforded a sense of what the waterfront’s future may hold, what the landscape may look like, who and how many people will share the space as a place to live, work, and play in the near future. The data collected through these interviews yielded, for the first time, a comprehensive, quantifiable table of what all of the proposed development means in real terms – how many dwelling units, how many square feet of commercial, how many parking spaces, how many more cars on the road, and how many new structures reaching for the sky.
- Virtual Tour of World-Class Waterfronts – What’s been done (well) before?  
For comparison (and vacation planning) purposes, Interface Studio took a virtual tour of some of the world’s most fabulous waterfronts. Choosing a select few for their particular relevance to Northern Liberties’ waterfront,



Interface Studio collected a database of best practices and implementation policies and strategies. The waterfront comparison analysis resulted in a broadened picture of what a diverse, urban waterfront’s land use program should include as well as a means of measuring the amount of existing open space in the study area with respect to the existing and projected population.

- Resident Focus Group – How do you envision the waterfront? Send us a postcard from 2020...

*Wish you were here!*

Interface Studio conducted one well-attended focus group for residents of Northern Liberties, River’s Edge, and Fishtown. The focus group served as an information sharing and visioning session. Interface Studio presented the analysis of the Northern Liberties waterfront (a synthesis of all we learned from the physical survey, historic research, and developer interviews), concluding with a brief discussion of lessons learned from waterfronts elsewhere in the world. The

*Vision postcards: Greetings from Northern Liberties’ waterfront, 2020. Top to bottom: Frankford, Fairmount, Delaware, and Spring Garden.*

residents at the meeting then contributed their thoughts, each listing, rapid-fire, three words that describe the waterfront today, three words that capture his or her vision for the waterfront, and finally writing us a postcard from 2020 describing a walk down Delaware Avenue, Spring Garden, Frankford, or Fairmount. Their input was thoughtful, critical, poetic, imaginative, and most importantly, reflective of the community. Their input was heard.

*This plan incorporates their ideas and employs their words.*

- Recommendations – So what?  
Upon completion of the full analysis and after receiving input from the community and comments from the NLNA, Interface Studio and Orth-Rodgers engaged in the recommendations phase of the Northern Liberties waterfront planning process. All recommendations fall into one of two categories: the Public Framework, a series of design and infrastructure improvements to the public arena for which the NLNA must advocate, and the Private Framework, a policy agenda to be adopted by the NLNA and meant to clearly communicate expectations and points of negotiation regarding private development along the waterfront.
- Public Meetings – What do you think?  
Interface Studio and Orth-Rodgers attended three NLNA community-wide meetings, presenting first, the findings of the overall analysis, second, the findings of the traffic study specifically, and third, the plan's recommendations. The public meetings



*Leadership for the Central Delaware Riverfront planning process.*

provided a forum for additional stakeholder input, as well as questions and suggestions, critique and support.

### Coordination with Concurrent Planning Efforts

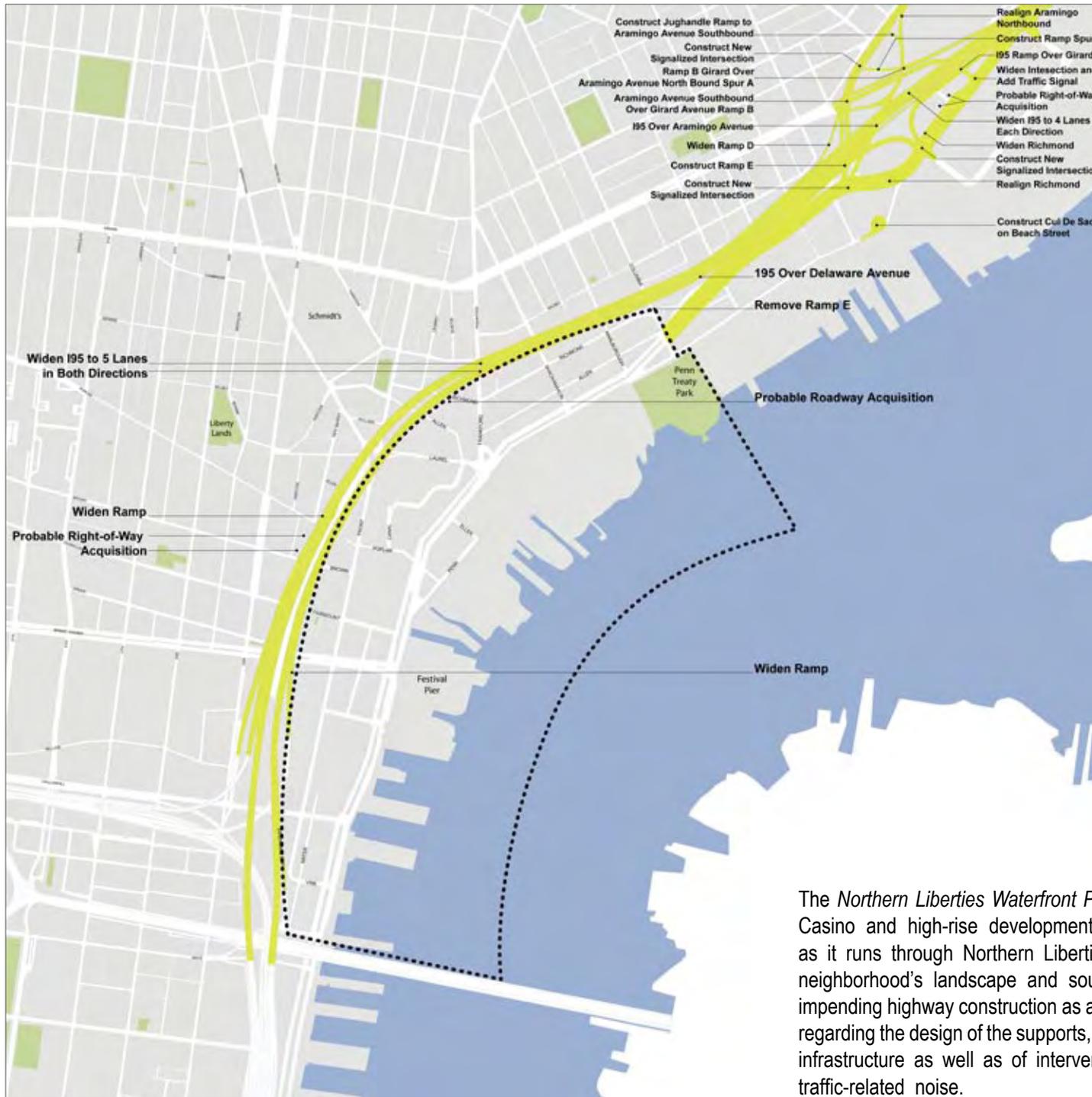
- PennPraxis *Central Delaware Riverfront Planning Process*  
In October 2006 Mayor Street announced the commencement of a City-wide planning process focused on re-visioning the Central Delaware Riverfront, a 7-mile stretch of the Delaware from Oregon Avenue to Allegheny. PennPraxis, the clinical arm of the School of Design of the University of Pennsylvania accepted the charge to lead the year-long public engagement process. PennPraxis is working in partnership with the Philadelphia City Planning Commission and with support from the Central Delaware Advisory Group, the project's steering committee composed of political representatives, civic organizations active in the historic river wards, and representatives from the Fairmount Park Commission, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), SEPTA, and Penn's Landing Corporation, among other entities. All meetings of the Advisory Group are open to the public.

Jennifer Lewis, President of the NLNA, is a steering committee member for the Central Delaware River planning process plan. Interface Studio has also shared all aspects of this plan's work, as it became available, with PennPraxis to ensure that a strong collaboration exists between this effort and the larger civic vision.



Pre-existing and concurrent planning efforts informing Northern Liberties' waterfront planning initiative.

- **NLNA Northern Liberties Neighborhood Plan**  
 Completed in November 2005 by Interface Studio, the *Northern Liberties Neighborhood Plan* is a live planning document, adopted and in use by the NLNA as the organization continues its work to balance growth and development while preserving the characteristics of the neighborhood cherished most by long term residents and newcomers, alike – its diversity of people, built form, use, and landscape. Adept at using the *Neighborhood Plan* to empower the neighborhood as a proactive participant in Northern Liberties' unfolding future, the NLNA commissioned the *Northern Liberties Waterfront Plan* as an addendum to the *Plan*. The *Waterfront Plan* reinforces all objectives and refines some of the strategies that form the *Neighborhood Plan*.
  
- **New Kensington / Fishtown Waterfront Plan**  
 During the analysis and recommendations phases of our work for the *Northern Liberties Waterfront Plan*, Interface Studio met with leaders of both of the New Kensington CDC and NABR (Neighbors Allied for the Best Riverfront) seeking their review and input. The NLNA invited representatives of the New Kensington CDC, NABR and Fishtown Neighbors Association to attend the NLNA resident focus group and public meetings for which the *Waterfront Plan* was an item on the agenda. Likewise, representatives of the NLNA and the Northern Liberties waterfront planning team were invited to attend meetings held by New Kensington CDC, Fishtown Neighbors Association, and their planning consultant, WRT.
  
- **Casino Decisions**  
 On December 20, 2006, the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board selected two of the five slots parlors competing for casino licenses in Philadelphia, SugarHouse Casino in Fishtown, and Foxwoods Casino in South Philadelphia. If realized according to plan, one of the chosen gaming parlors, SugarHouse Casino, will be located within the Northern Liberties Waterfront Plan study area, at the intersection of Delaware Avenue and Shackamaxon Street on the 22-acre parcel once home to the Jack Frost Sugar Refinery. The NLNA has been a leading voice, both in opposing the location of casinos near residential communities in Philadelphia as well as in working through the North Delaware Avenue Unity Coalition and Delaware River Neighborhood Association with political representatives to mitigate the impact of the potential implementation of SugarHouse. As such, all analysis projections account for the potential impact of a large scale development like SugarHouse, and all proposed recommendations consider ways to mitigate increased traffic and light pollution, among other casino-related issues. The NLNA does not feel that the siting of the SugarHouse Casino at the Sugar Refinery site is consistent with the community's vision for the waterfront. Thus, all recommendations and guidelines are adaptable to multiple uses for the SugarHouse site in the event that the casinos on the waterfront are relocated.



Map of PennDOT's planned improvements to the I-95 / Girard Avenue Interchange.

o PennDOT I-95 / Girard Avenue Interchange

PennDOT's I-95 / Girard Avenue Interchange project, which commenced preliminary design engineering in March 1999 transitioned to final design engineering in fall 2006. Construction of the interchange and its related improvements is slated to start in 2009. The project will involve reconfiguring the Girard Avenue Interchange, widening I-95 from three to four lanes in both directions within the *Waterfront Plan* study area, improving access between I-95 ramps and the local street system, renovating highway lighting and signage, and mitigating drainage issues.

The *Northern Liberties Waterfront Plan* recognizes that, like the proposed Casino and high-rise development along the waterfront, widening I-95 as it runs through Northern Liberties promises to dramatically alter the neighborhood's landscape and soundscape. The *Plan* thus views the impending highway construction as an opportunity to engage with PennDOT regarding the design of the supports, structures, and land below the elevated infrastructure as well as of interventions deployed to mitigate increased traffic-related noise.

## Executive Summary

The slow decline of the City’s industrial base has had an enormous impact on the Northern Liberties waterfront. Left in the wake of this economic shift stands a mixture of active warehouses, housing, entertainment venues, parking and extensive vacancy – over 50% of the total net area lies vacant or underutilized. As a defining characteristic of the waterfront, this vacancy has not instilled a strong stewardship of the River, nor has it fostered strong connections between the River and the community despite their close proximity. As a result, access and views to the River are limited. Multiple barriers have emerged that further separate the River from the Northern Liberties neighborhood, including I-95, Delaware Avenue and the proliferation of private fencing.

Despite these challenges, residents of Northern Liberties have always seen the potential of the River to provide a meaningful front door to (and front yard for) the community. Recently, developers and investors have recognized this potential as well. With all of the proposals currently on the table, there is potential for a 313% increase in housing units alone in Northern Liberties. The impacts on traffic, open space and views are serious concerns for the community.

In this plan, we have worked closely with the NLNA to catalogue the existing conditions of the waterfront area. We have shared this analysis with the community and garnered their feedback on what the future could potentially hold. This document illustrates the analysis as well as the results of public feedback that have shaped the *Northern Liberties Waterfront Plan’s* recommendations.

### A Lens for Northern Liberties

*Merge [murj], verb – 1. to combine, blend, or unite gradually so as to blur the individuality or individual identity of. 2. to become one.*

The perceived (and real) gap between the heart of the neighborhood and the River must be erased. The distinctive character of Northern Liberties must be imprinted along the water. At the same time, the character of the riverfront must seep into the fabric of the community. Northern Liberties’ identity will evolve as the community reconsiders its waterfront and, in that process, the revived riverfront will alter how the community sees itself.

The recommendations were guided by the following community-driven vision:

- *An ecological retro-fit:* The next evolution of the waterfront will exemplify the next green City.
- *Touch the water:* The community needs to re-discover the water itself.
- *A multi-purpose waterfront:* Extending the community to the water means putting aside broad land use designations and defining a finer-grained vocabulary with which to advocate for the broadest range of use and activity.
- *Diversity:* The Northern Liberties’ riverfront cannot be homogenous. Tension, surprise, and eclecticism must find a voice.
- *Active and secluded:* The waterfront must provide space for recreation and isolation - recreation to serve the growing needs of an expanding community, isolation to capture the need to escape within nature.
- *Expressive:* Transform the vestiges of previous eras into modern expressions of the community through public art and interpretation.
- *Decelerate:* Speed currently defines the waterfront. Cars trump pedestrians. “Slow city” should become a defining characteristic of the area.

The vision was translated into both a public framework, to identify key infrastructure and civic space improvements, and a private framework to guide investment and development. In both cases, the waterfront is treated as much more than a strip of coastline, but rather as a district that must be seen as an extension of the local community and an integral part of the City as a whole.

### Public Framework

Nine interlocking elements comprise the neighborhood’s priorities for the public waterfront.

#### 1. Activity Channel / Waterfront Trail

Continuous public access along the riverfront via a linked waterfront trail is a basic right. Our approach is to treat the trail as one public amenity comprising three very different characteristics:

- *Trail as expanded sidewalk:* There are moments when the trail must operate as an active part of Delaware Avenue. Embrace these moments, and



Interlocking elements proposed for the waterfront's public arena.

ensure that the sidewalk is designed to handle active bicycle lanes and other necessary amenities.

- *Trail along the River's edge:* Where possible, require new developments to provide at least a 50' public right-of-way in perpetuity. Where properties are deeper, advocate for a 150' right-of-way.
- *Trail floating along the water:* Where opportunities to build a 50' trail are lost, bypass them. Create a floating trail that allows people to experience the feel of the water. One benefit is that the trail will create inlets, each of which can adopt a distinct personality.

## 2. A Natural River's Edge

A natural riparian edge along the River can bring enormous benefits - rebuilt natural / marine habitats, improved stormwater management and enhanced water quality through wetlands and marshes. Portions of the River's edge, however, are man-made



Proposed new park space, restored riparian edge and floating waterfront path.

constructions, elevated above the water line. We have identified a number of areas where the riparian edge can and should be improved. At times, this natural edge is separate from the proposed waterfront trail, and at other times they overlap. Final designs for the waterfront trail should seek to capitalize on these different conditions as a means of celebrating the coexistence of an urban, civic trail with a passive, natural one.

## 3. Play Space

The study area has but one green space overlooking the river – Penn Treaty Park. It was strongly expressed that the waterfront should consist of multiple parks, linked to one another and the adjacent neighborhoods. The waterfront must be infused with play space – a collective front yard for the community. This includes improving and expanding Penn Treaty Park to the south along the coastline in an expanded right-of-way; creating small, passive plazas; developing a new park under I-95 to foster stronger connections between Northern Liberties, Fishtown and the waterfront; and transforming the parking lot on Festival Pier into an active park – capping Spring Garden with a public gateway to the River.

## 4. Green Links

When residents emerge from I-95, extensions of the waterfront park system should greet and lead them to the River's edge. The perpendicular streets to the riverfront require investment, creativity and protection. The perpendicular streets – Callowhill, Fairmount, Brown, Poplar, Laurel, Frankford, Shackamaxon, Marlborough and Columbia must remain active, neighborhood-serving and green.

In the case of Shackamaxon, Marlborough and Columbia Streets, the former right-of-ways that extended from Delaware Avenue to the River should be recovered providing connections to the waterfront trail system between development sites.

## 5. Civic Incisions

The study area is organized around two critical corridors – Spring Garden Street and Delaware Avenue. These streets are currently treated, by and large, as highways. Both Spring Garden Street and Delaware Avenue should be reclaimed as a civic gesture of the community, facilitating east-west connections and promoting more pedestrian activity.

Early and relatively simple actions can make a big difference. To act as a true riverfront boulevard, Delaware Avenue needs improved intersections, crosswalks (including electronic countdowns) and additional landscaping. Long term improvements include new light rail and expanded bicycle lanes to provide alternative modes of transportation.

To more strongly connect the Spring Garden El station to the River, Spring Garden Street between the station and Delaware Avenue should be transformed into a linear park. Planting the median with wild grasses, removing street parking, adding landscaping and enhancing the bicycle lanes will serve to bring the riverfront into the community, forge a new identity for the street and leverage the role transit plays in the waterfront area.

Both corridors should be populated with new street furniture that is unique to the community. Bus stops, message boards / kiosks and benches should be designed with the community's industrial past and artistic present in focus. These deployable elements can be manufactured in the community, tapping the talents of local artists.

## 6. I-95 Insulation

I-95 is a barrier that must be addressed. PennDOT's plans to improve the Girard Interchange and add a lane to the highway in both directions all the way to Vine Street should be viewed as an opportunity. While a widened highway is an unfortunate side-effect that only furthers the gulf between the community and the waterfront, early advocacy can bring about significant improvement to what will be the highway's interface with the community will be at street level and noise level. Creative attention to I-95's edges are essential, and the community should have the chance to influence the look, feel and function of these edges from the ground up. There are 4 proposals for I-95:

1. Create new open space where the highway is lofted above the City grid;
2. Selectively excavate under the highway to reconnect streets once severed by I-95, most notably Poplar Street;
3. Re-plant the berms along the highway edge to accommodate a strong row of trees that frame views to the waterfront as well as swales to improve stormwater management; and
4. Build new infiltration planters at the base of the highway walls, and treat the wall surfaces with vines and murals.



*Proposed Spring Garden and Festival Pier improvements.*

## 7. A Multi-Modal Waterfront

The transportation overview completed by Orth-Rodgers & Associates indicates that up to 42,000 additional cars per day could be added to Delaware Avenue. Trade-offs will need to be made. In place of free flowing automobile traffic, a growing grass-roots consensus is building that the waterfront should offer the best of multiple forms of transportation including public transit, automobile access, cycling and walking. Connectivity and choice are the underlying themes that guided our transportation recommendations. Key recommendations include:

- *Improve the Frankford / Laurel / Delaware intersection* – Re-routing Frankford Avenue to intersect with Delaware Avenue at a right angle thereby creating a new plaza as a gateway to Fishtown.
- *Change Callowhill Street to two-way traffic* – Callowhill is currently one-way east owing to a complicated intersection at 2<sup>nd</sup> and Callowhill where I-95 traffic descends into the City. This intersection should be redesigned to allow for two-way traffic.
- *Improve the Spring Garden El Station* – The El station is trapped within the northbound and southbound lanes of I-95. Our approach is to wrap the interior of the underpass with a metal mesh and rear lighting to improve the physical appearance of the underpass.
- *Pursue water taxi and river ferry service* – With two proposed casinos, Dave and Busters, the Aquarium and ballpark in Camden plus a growing number of proposed riverfront uses, a demand is apparent for new and enhanced water transportation services.
- *Insert light rail onto Delaware Avenue* – Delaware Avenue's future as a boulevard rests in the ability to adequately manage traffic without compromising the safety and appeal for pedestrians. For this to occur, new public transportation is necessary. It is time to re-think the character of Delaware Avenue.

## 8. Apertures

We believe that the presence of the water should be felt far from its coastline. Small, highly visible locations such as intersections and small plazas should be programmed to introduce and entice people to discover their riverfront. There is a richly historic and evolving narrative to be embraced and expressed. From the Revolutionary War to the industrial revolution to the present day, the waterfront has played a multi-faceted role, though at times it seemed forgotten. We have identified 11 locations as opportunities to create varied installations that express these hidden narratives. These installations can be simple – comprising only historical markers / signs – to more aggressive and interpretive integrating both public art and landscaping.

## 9. An Adaptive Environment

A waterfront must flow and respond to each season. The yearly rhythms need to be imprinted on the River. All of the existing activities, both that occur within Festival Pier and within the neighborhood, must find stronger expression on the riverfront. A calendar of events needs to be created that populates the River with unique experiences from farmers' markets to art shows and concerts.

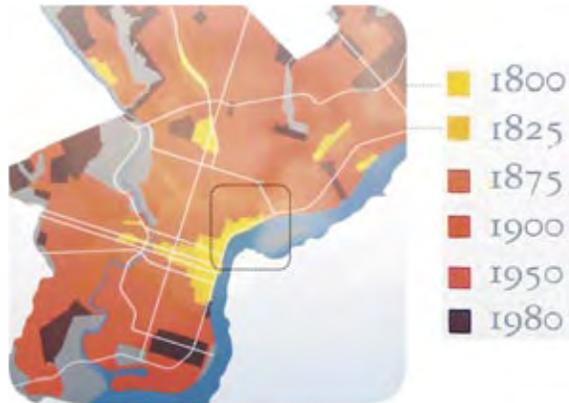
## Private Framework

The NLNA has built a solid reputation for its capacity and ability to provide local zoning review. Given the current system in Philadelphia that affords community organizations power in determining their future, the following guidelines are created to help the NLNA review waterfront proposals. As with the *Neighborhood Plan*, these guidelines are intended as a statement of the community's expectations for new development.

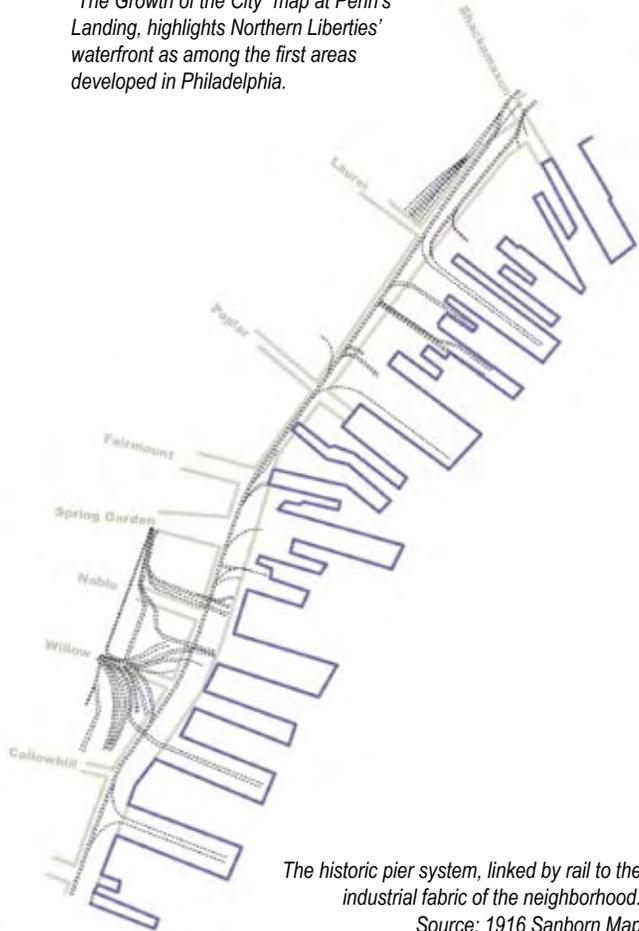
We recognize that there is a move afoot to finally address the City's zoning code. We applaud these efforts. To promote private investment, clear expectations are necessary City-wide, not just in one community. However, until such time as the zoning process and code are changed throughout the City, these guidelines attempt to make the best of the existing system.

The private framework, beginning on page 81, is organized around 7 elements:

1. **Basic Expectations** – Guidelines that all developments should exemplify, from retaining view corridors and maintaining public access to the River to striving for excellence in architectural design.
2. **Height / Bulk** – Recognizing the controversy surrounding the height of new development, the plan provides an approach for determining provisional height guidelines. By mapping existing residential uses and overlaying view corridors, a height limits map was created, accompanied by design guidelines that limit bulk and promote diversity in form.
3. **Site Design and Use** – Guidelines to address the placement of buildings, the location of allowable uses, the physical treatment of edges and entrances, and the waterfront trail.
4. **Transportation and Parking** – Guidelines intended to limit the impact of new development on the character of local streets and promote alternative forms of transportation.
5. **Low-Impact Development** – A template for promoting green building and design in all waterfront developments. These are extensions of the guidelines developed for the neighborhood plan.
6. **Signage** – Suggestions on allowable placement and types for signage.
7. **Lighting** – Guidelines to enhance the safety and attractiveness of local streets and limit light pollution.



"The Growth of the City" map at Penn's Landing, highlights Northern Liberties' waterfront as among the first areas developed in Philadelphia.



The historic pier system, linked by rail to the industrial fabric of the neighborhood.  
Source: 1916 Sanborn Map



## Analysis

### An Overview

The Delaware River began as a working port and fueled Philadelphia's growth. Despite William Penn's plan for Philadelphia that stretched from River to River, early settlers concentrated close to the Delaware River, rapidly expanding the City to the north and south as opposed to westward to the Schuylkill River. Northern Liberties, located outside of the City proper, became a haven for multiple activities that had been effectively zoned out of the City itself.

The further growth of the community stemmed from its role in the Revolutionary War as an army outpost and later as a hub for waterfront industry. Finger piers were constructed, served by multiple rail lines, the majority of which were removed as local industry declined. During Northern Liberties' industrial heyday, the riverfront had a direct and meaningful connection back to the community. The River was a source of jobs and the economic engine for the neighborhood. People lived and worked within just a few blocks. The riverfront was a main street of the community.

As industry left, the direct relationship between the economy, jobs, housing and the water was de-coupled. I-95 was introduced. Vacant land and buildings were left in the wake of industrial out-migration. The water quality continued to worsen. The Delaware River became a 'backstreet' that would sit for decades without significant investment. While the City toiled with ideas of a central, civic space at Penn's Landing, there was little active discussion about the area north of the Ben Franklin Bridge. During William J. Green, III's term as Mayor of Philadelphia (1980-1984), the Philadelphia City Planning Commission completed the *North Delaware Waterfront District Plan*, including Northern Liberties' waterfront within its scope; this effort was largely overlooked.



L-R: Delaware Avenue north of Poplar 1931, Delaware Avenue north of Callowhill 1914, Delaware and Spring Garden 1929, Working Waterfront, 800 North Front Street 1915.  
Source: Philadelphia City Archives

*The 1916 Sanborn Map documents that Northern Liberties' waterfront once pulsed with the activities of:*

*Reading Railroad Co.  
Philadelphia Transportation Co.  
Philadelphia Warehousing & Cold Storage Co.  
Terminal Warehouse Co.  
Pennsylvania Warehouse & Safe Deposit Co.  
Acorn Iron & Supply Co.  
Pennsylvania Sugar Co.*

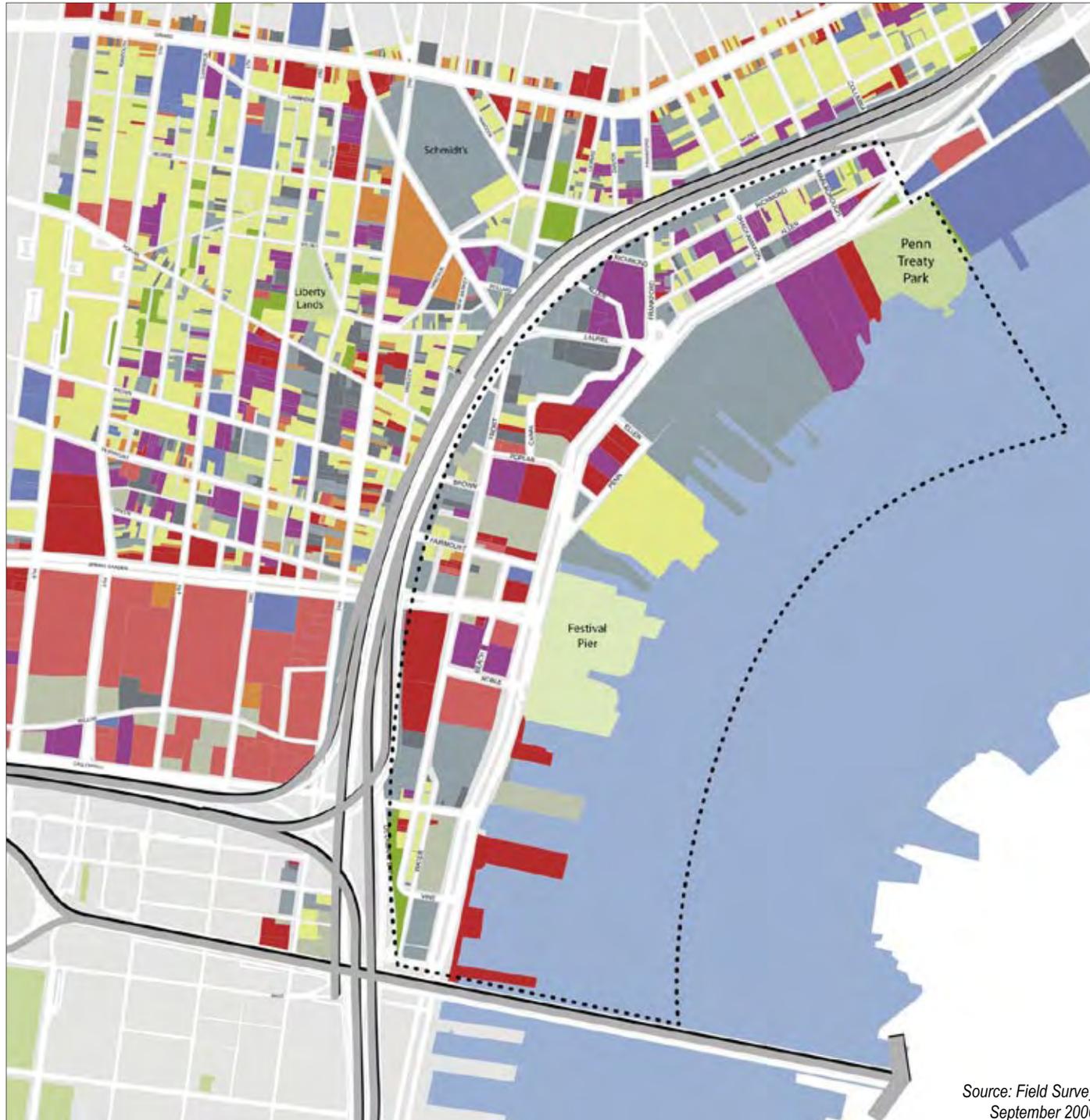
*Trains, ships, goods, and laborers all came and went within the tightly scheduled shifts of a thriving port.*

firmly in the context of larger eco-systems. With an emphasis on naturally managing stormwater, reducing discharge and eliminating primary water pollutants, the water is being reclaimed as a clean and healthy resource for the region. One noticeable impact has been the marked increase in the Atlantic Shad runs that originally provided the economic basis for waterfront activity.

In addition to a growing environmental ethos, active discussions are now taking place about what happens along the Delaware River. This is due in part to what appears to many as the sudden 'discovery' of the waterfront by private developers as well as a surging housing market, a revitalized Northern Liberties and an awakening in Philadelphia that planning and design matter. As these discussions proceed, we cannot take for granted the riverfront's rich history; the industrial past is what makes the area unique. Giant cargo ships and tankers still traverse the landscape, and this history of shipping and industry should find a voice in the riverfront's future.

Owing credit to the efforts of multiple organizations and advocacy groups and a stronger environmental awareness, the water quality has improved significantly. Along the northern portions of Philadelphia's waterfront as well as across the Delaware River in Camden, multiple initiatives are underway that place waterfront revitalization

What follows is a catalogue of existing characteristics along the River's edge and throughout the Northern Liberties and Fishtown waterfront district, which lies between the River and I-95. As a snapshot in time, the catalogue is an attempt to see the place through a critical lens and with an open-minded perspective.



Source: Field Survey  
September 2006

### Existing Land Use

Land use within the waterfront planning area encompasses a wide array of distinct uses, from entertainment and active industry to offices, new residential towers and quiet, small-scale residential streets. The truly unique existing character of the waterfront stems from the fact that there is no concentration of existing uses. Residential uses are nestled between large tracts of vacant land or dotted with active commercial and industrial buildings. Retail and entertainment are scattered across Frankford, Spring Garden and Delaware Avenue, often in close proximity to other office or residential properties.

There is only one publicly accessible open space - the 7.3-acre Penn Treaty Park - located at Delaware Avenue and Columbia Street. Festival Pier, situated at the critical intersection of Spring Garden and Delaware, is publicly owned but off-limits to the public except when an event is occurring.

#### Existing Land Use



## Vacancy

Vacant land and buildings form a large part of the existing fabric and character of the waterfront. Former industrial uses have been long vacated, replaced in some cases with surface parking. There are currently 61 acres of vacant land in the study area. At times, this vacancy has been overtaken by nature in the form of tall grasses, brush, flowers and trees, bringing a sense of serenity when proximate to the River's edge. Upon other vacant parcels, abandoned industrial structures remain.

Vacant land combined with the 14+ acres of surface parking within Northern Liberties' waterfront district renders approximately 53% of the 142-acre net study area underutilized.

### Underutilized Land

KEY	
	Vacant Land
	Vacant Building
	Parking



*Vacant land reclaimed by nature, abandoned industrial structure atop vacant land, underutilized event parking on roughly 7 acres of Festival Pier, and vacant land adjacent to I-95.*



## Building Condition

As determined through a building by building condition survey, the majority of existing structures in the waterfront district range from fair to distressed condition. Most of these structures are former or active industrial buildings that today exhibit weathering and signs of deterioration over time. The small scale residential fabric of townhouses along Front Street south of Callowhill and along Richmond and Allen Streets (between Frankford Avenue and Columbia Street) represent the largest concentrations of structures in either good or excellent condition.

The building condition survey is based solely on the exterior condition of each structure. The survey does not account for any improvements to the quality of the building interiors nor portions of the exterior that are not visible from a public right-of-way. The condition survey is divided into 6 categories:

- *Excellent* – pristine exterior appearance. No improvements necessary.
- *Good* – minor issues such as peeling paint, which could be addressed by the owner without hiring a contractor to fix.
- *Fair* – damaged window frames, cornices or cracking in the brick that likely (depending upon the skill level of the owner) would require hiring a contractor to address.
- *Deteriorated* – major exterior damage necessitating professional assistance.
- *Distressed* – apparent structural damage that likely requires the structure to be demolished for safety purposes.
- *New Construction* – any obvious new construction including projects underway or recently completed.

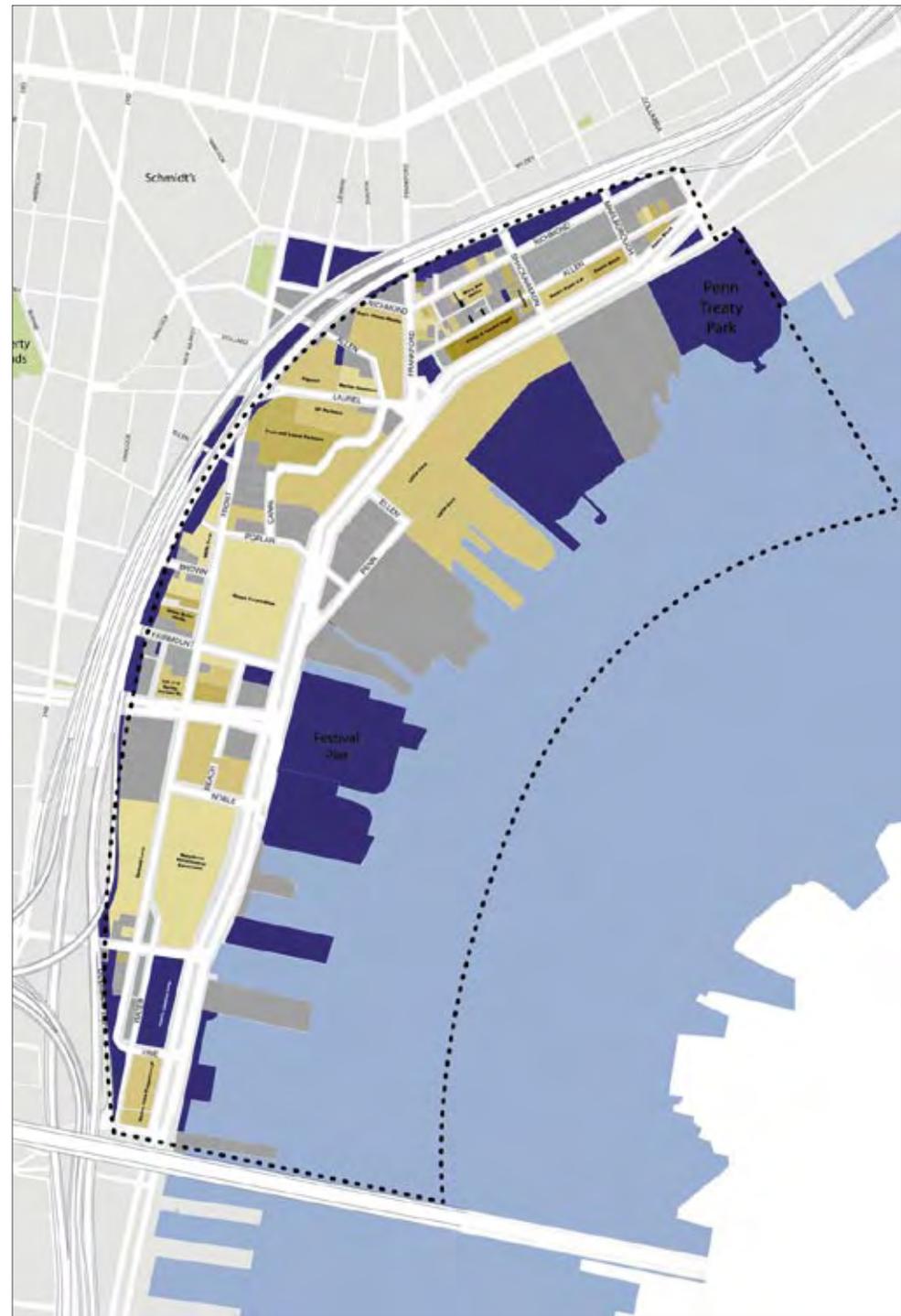
### Existing Building Condition

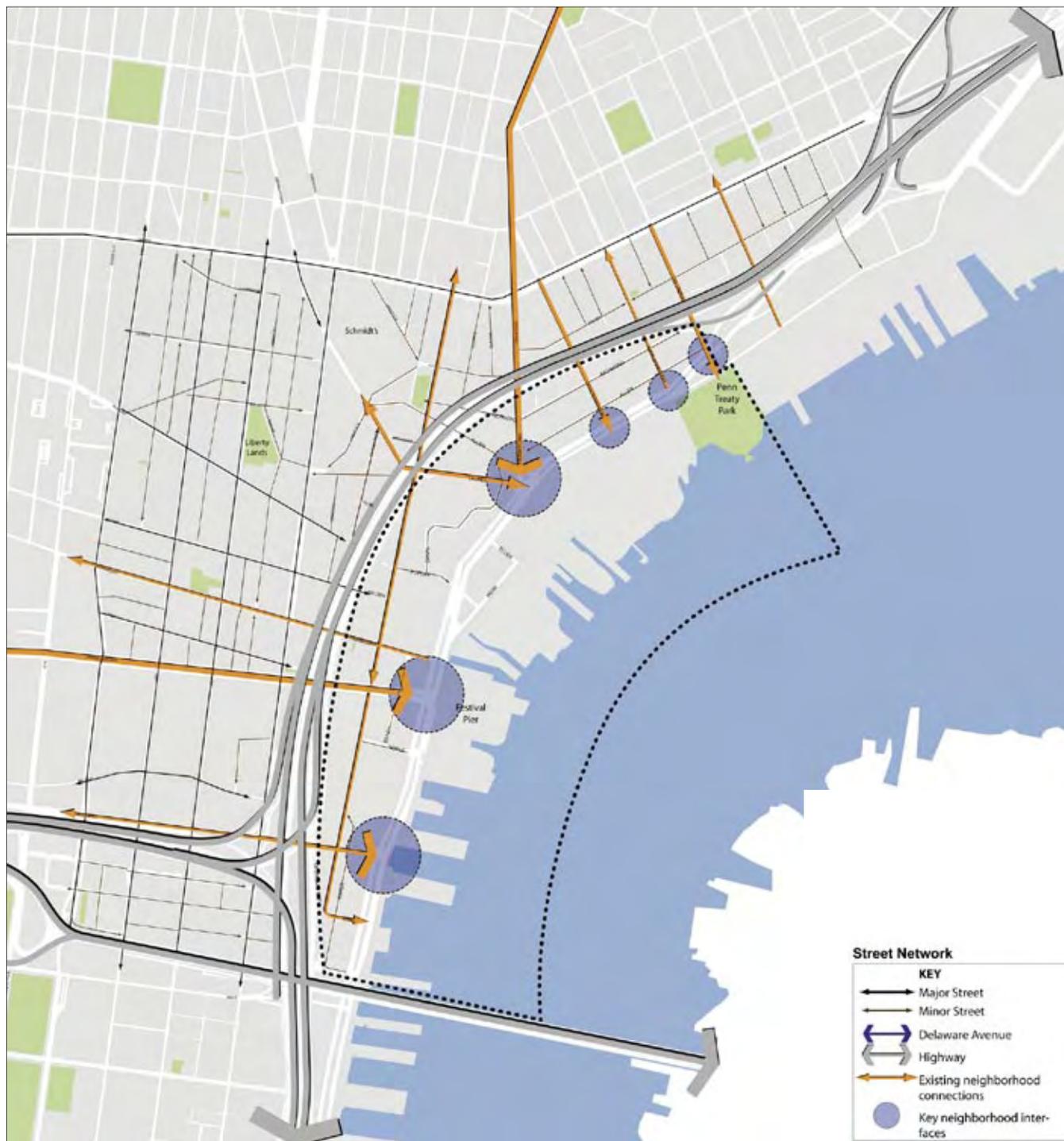
KEY	
	Excellent
	Good
	Fair
	Deteriorated
	Distressed
	New Construction

## Public Ownership

There is very little public ownership within the study area. The only location of concentrated public ownership lies adjacent to I-95. Much of this land is owned by PennDOT and, in some cases, planned for I-95 expansion. Besides a handful of smaller properties owned by the City or the Penn's Landing Corporation, there are 7 key publicly owned sites:

- Penn Treaty Park;
- Piers 44-50 – dedicated to the proposed SugarHouse Casino, account for approximately half of the total designated site;
- Festival Pier – used only during events, the northern half of the site is used exclusively for event parking;
- Pier 24 – immediately north of Dave and Busters, the pier is currently used for remote parking largely for Pennsylvania Hospital. There is a long term lease on the property, but recent signs indicate that the pier is available;
- The majority of the block between Vine Street, Callowhill Street, Water Street and Delaware Avenue – the site is a surface parking lot and is not open except during events;
- The southeast corner of Fairmount and Delaware Avenues – a publicly owned small warehouse located along a key neighborhood connector street is now for sale; and
- The northeast corner of Frankford and Delaware Avenues – a former gas station, now vacant, is a highly visible and strategic publicly held parcel.





## Transportation

### Street Network

The existing street network is varied but with limited connections to the waterfront. I-95 is a major barrier, blocking Poplar from extending through to Delaware Avenue. Brown Street also ends at Front Street, as the remaining block was ceded to private use years ago. The only location where a clear grid extends to the water is north of Frankford Avenue where Shackamaxon, Marlborough and Columbia all afford the possibility of strong connections, either automobile or pedestrian, to the waterfront. Remaining connective streets include Laurel, Fairmount, Spring Garden and Callowhill. Where all of these streets intersect with Delaware Avenue, there are opportunities to significantly enhance pedestrian access.

Spring Garden and Delaware are the primary movement corridors and integral components of the larger City street system. Spring Garden carries the majority of east-west crosstown traffic, approximately 20,000-25,000 cars per day, likely because no other streets between Market and Spring Garden are accessible from Delaware Avenue. Delaware Avenue bears a substantial amount of north-south traffic, which tapers off significantly north of Frankford Avenue. As reported by Orth-Rodgers, Delaware Avenue currently carries 22,000 cars per day. While the width of Delaware Avenue can handle this level of use, the traffic study, detailed later in the report, identified the Spring Garden and Delaware intersection as "failing" during peak traffic hours.



*Brown Street truncates at Front rather than connecting to Delaware Avenue.*



*Fairmount connects with Delaware Avenue, but does not provide pedestrian access across the major thoroughway.*



*Delaware Avenue's sloped median accommodates the grade change between north and southbound traffic lanes.*



*Spring Garden lacks active ground floor uses, pedestrian amenities, and landscaping.*

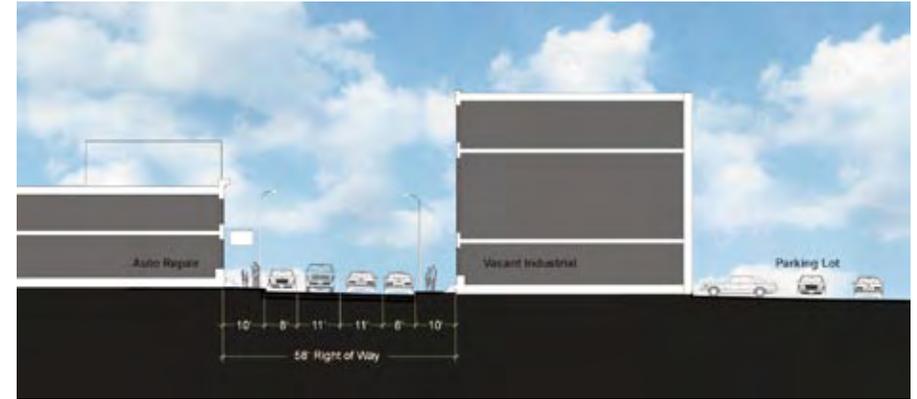


*Like its distinctly varied land use pattern, the street system along Northern Liberties' waterfront is very unusual. No two streets are alike with polar and extreme conditions in close proximity.*

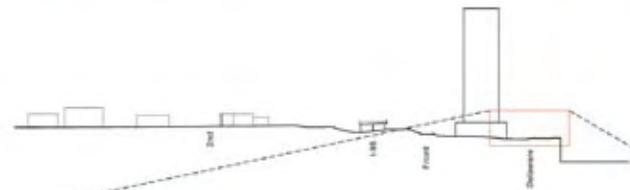
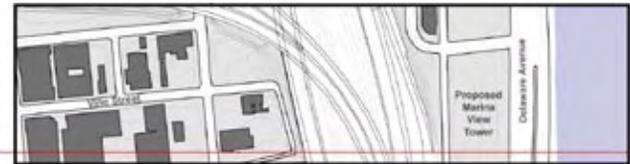
Street Widths

With the exception of Spring Garden and Delaware, all streets are standard widths of between 35' and 50.' Spring Garden is approximately 80' across including two lanes of cars in either direction, a parking lane on each side, bicycle lanes and a center median, which is unplanted. The width combined with the lack of street-facing active uses east of I-95 encourages fast moving traffic.

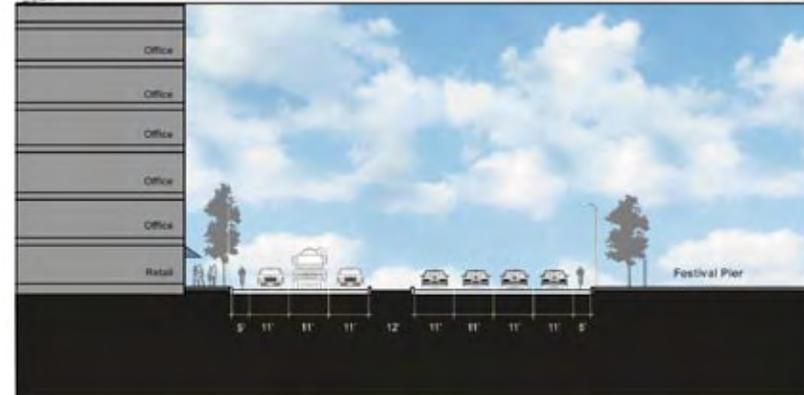
Similarly, Delaware Avenue acts as a significant boundary to the water's edge. At 108' across (for the cartway only), Delaware Avenue is wider than Broad Street. It carries three lanes of traffic in either direction, bicycle lanes, alternating parking lanes and a planted median that accommodates a left turning lane where necessary. An analysis of sections of Delaware Avenue in three different locations using topography data and information on proposed development illustrates the varied conditions along the corridor. Of particular note along Delaware Avenue is the significant (at times) grade difference between the northbound and southbound traffic lanes. The sloped and planted median accommodates this difference in grade.



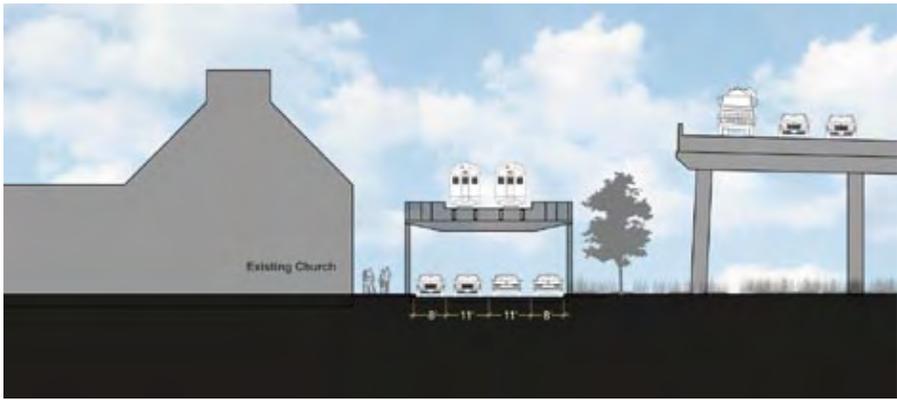
Front Street at Spring Garden.



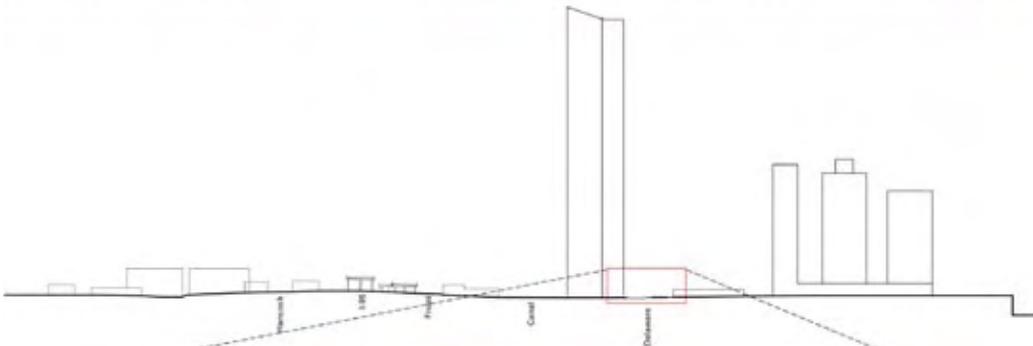
Delaware Avenue adjacent to the proposed Marina View Tower.



Delaware Avenue at Spring Garden.



Front Street north of Laurel.



Delaware Avenue adjacent to the proposed Bridgeman's View tower.

### Parking

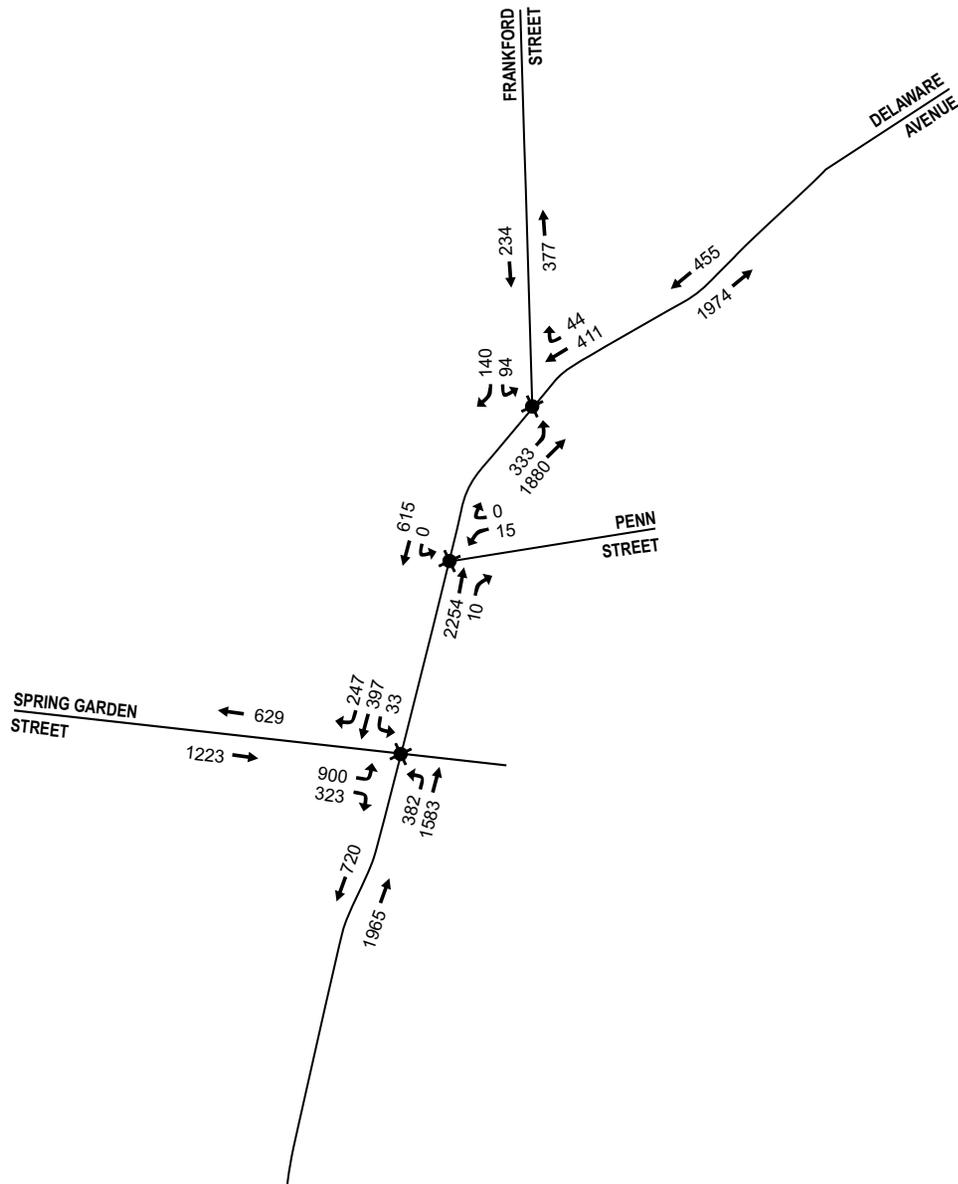
There are 5 public parking surface lots within one to two blocks of the Spring Garden and Delaware intersection. Two of these – Festival Pier and the block facing Delaware Avenue between Callowhill and Vine Streets – are not operational on a day to day basis. Pier 24 is 120 spaces and approximately half full on a week day, mostly from Pennsylvania Hospital employees served by a shuttle bus. On any given weekend evening, all public parking lots as well as any on-street parking near Spring Garden Street is completely utilized. Front Street, Fairmount and the parking lot along Spring Garden at Front Street are also heavily used during weekdays. At times on weekend evenings, the privately owned parking lot at Delilah's swells with overflow parking stemming from high demand related to the bars and clubs in the area.





FIGURE 2

**Existing PM Peak Hour Traffic Volumes**  
 Northern Liberties Waterfront Plan  
 Northern Liberties Neighbors Association



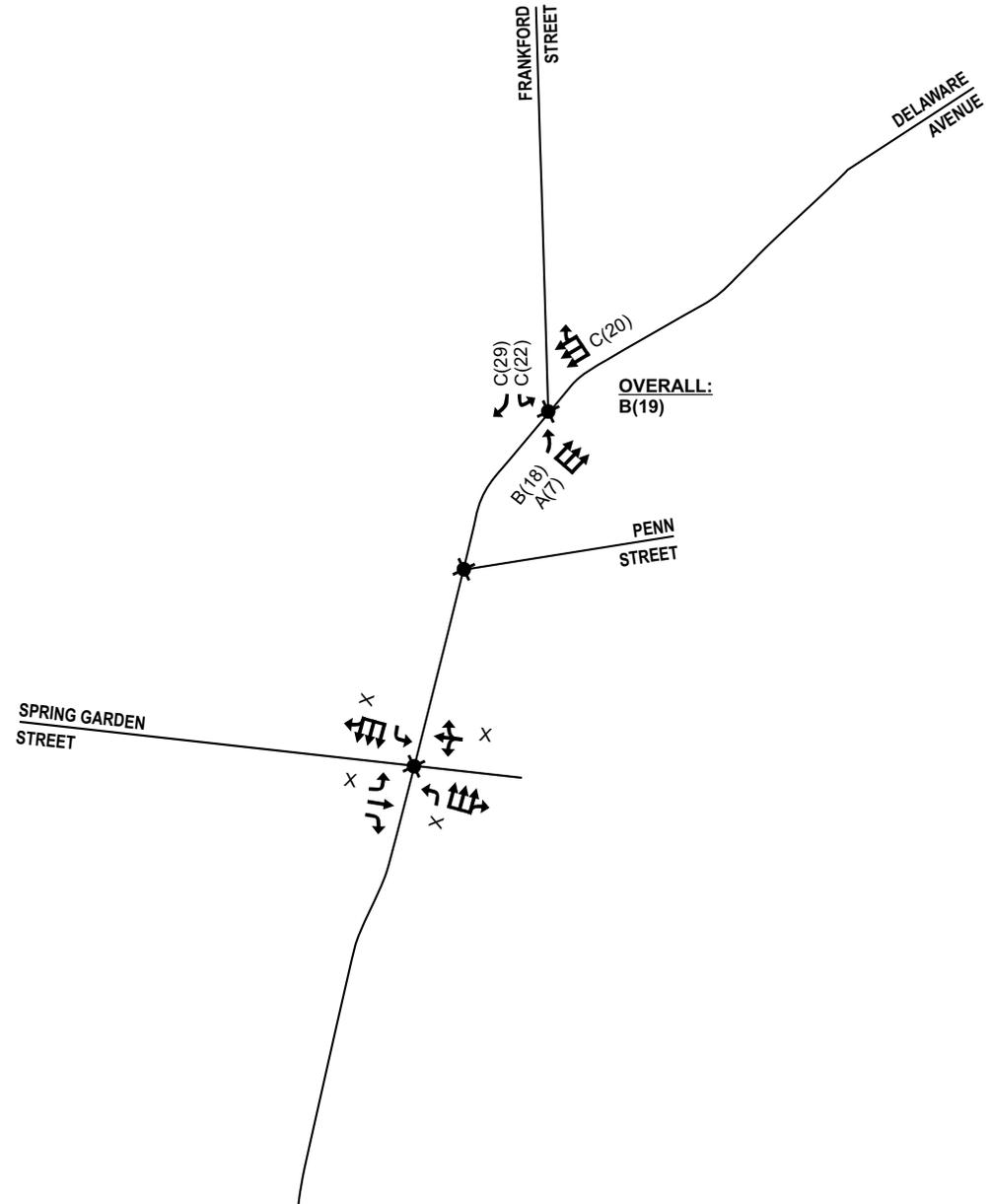
SOURCES: TRAFFIC IMPACT STUDIES FOR 700 N. DELAWARE AVENUE, SUGARHOUSE CASINO AND RIVERWALK CASINO.



### Existing AM Peak Hour Levels of Service

#### Northern Liberties Waterfront Plan

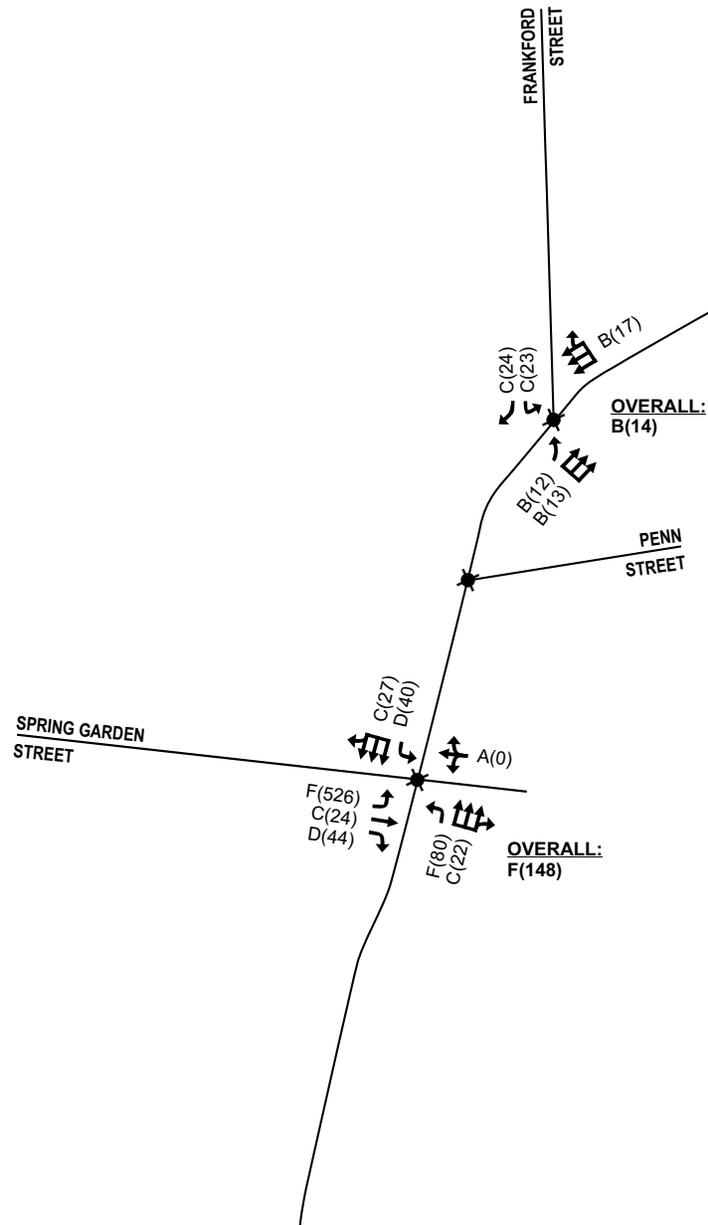
Northern Liberties Neighbors Association

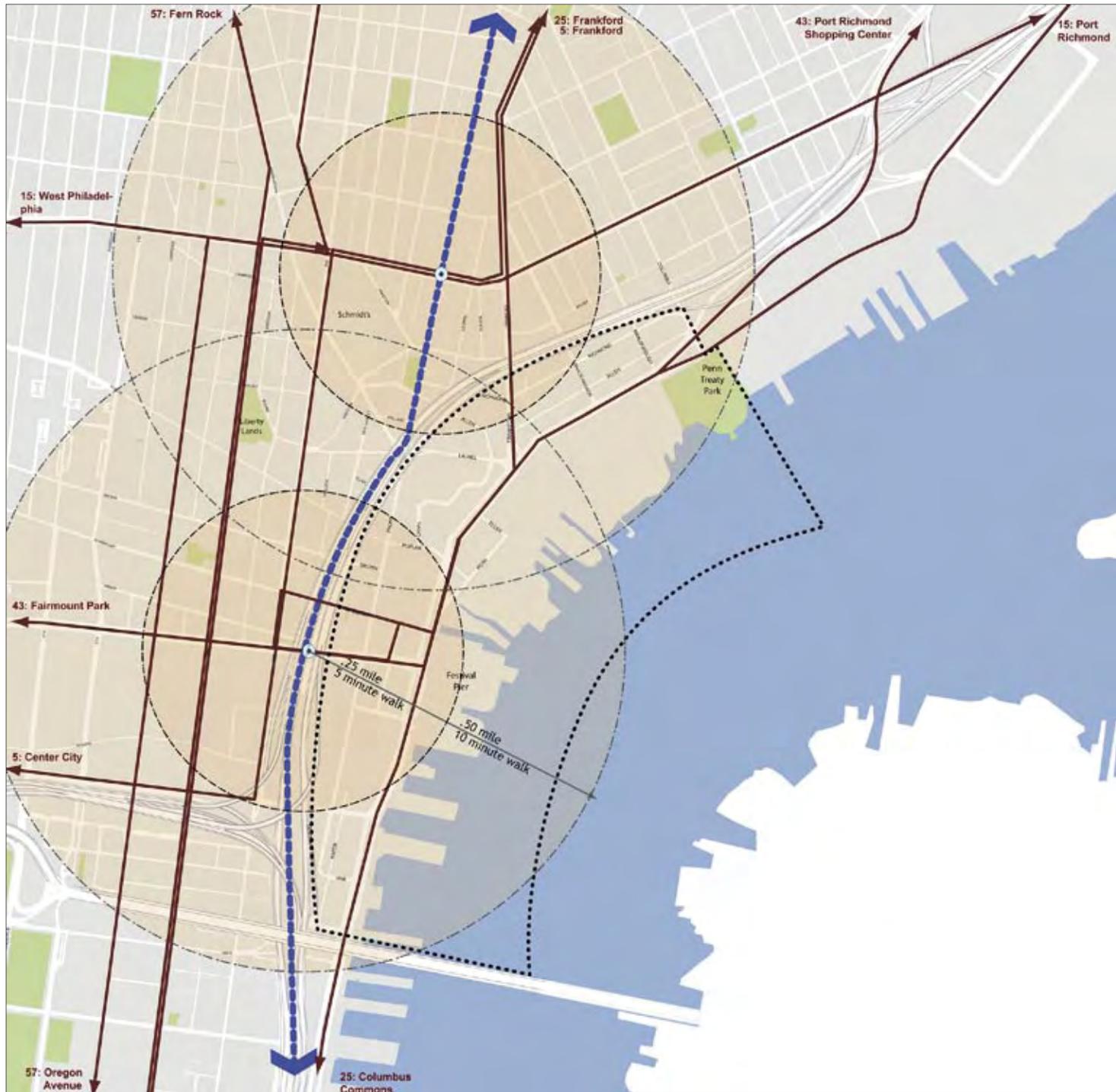


ORA examined the operation of the signalized intersections using volume/capacity analysis. The intersections of Columbus and Frankford and Columbus and Penn Street have acceptable operation. However at Spring Garden Street, during the PM peak, level of service 'F' conditions exist for the northbound Delaware Avenue left turn to Spring Garden Street and also for the eastbound Spring Garden Street left turn to northbound Delaware Avenue. The results are illustrated in Figures 3 and 4.

**Existing PM Peak Hour Levels of Service**  
 Northern Liberties Waterfront Plan  
 Northern Liberties Neighbors Association

FIGURE 4





**Public Transportation**

Given the already overburdened roadways and intersections, transit options are especially important in Northern Liberties. The area is well-served by a range of public transportation opportunities, including two SEPTA EI stations within a 5 or 10 minute walk, 5 different bus lines and the Girard Avenue Trolley nearby.

The primary challenge is the perceived disconnect between the SEPTA EI stations and the waterfront. I-95 functions as a major boundary, in effect encasing the Spring Garden Station in concrete. The Girard Station is separated by I-95 as well as underutilized and vacant land along Front Street. The 25 bus is the only one that links the southern and northern portions of Delaware Avenue, but the route only runs every 10-20 minutes during peak hours and every half hour off-peak.



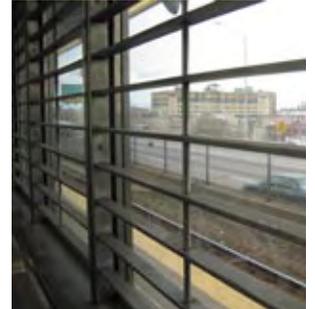


*In its BEST...*



*...and WORST light, the Spring Garden El Station leaves much to be desired.*

- *It is inconvenient and challenging to cross Spring Garden Street upon leaving the station, as pedestrians must walk quite a distance to the nearest crosswalk.*
- *The station is not handicap accessible.*
- *There is no entrance to the station on the north side of Spring Garden Street.*
- *The environment beneath the highway and El tracks is dark, desolate, and unattractive.*



*The Spring Garden El Station.*



Source: Field Survey September 2006

## Waterfront Access

There are only a few locations in the area where people can get within 20' of the River's edge. The best opportunity to experience the water is in Penn Treaty Park. Penn Treaty Park has great, long views of the River and of the Benjamin Franklin Bridge but is unfortunately severed from the rest of Fishtown by Delaware Avenue. The other location where people can enjoy and feel the presence of the water is along the sidewalk, between the piers from Waterfront Square south to the Ben Franklin Bridge. Views from these locations are limited by the piers themselves.

There are other locations for waterfront access, but these are not public. Commercial activities at Dave and Busters or Cavanaugh's (when it was open) afforded access to the water but only for paying customers. Perhaps the most unique waterfront experience is located far north of the study area on an overgrown, large and vacant parcel of land, formerly the site of the proposed Pinnacle Casino. Although exploring this forgotten landscape is technically trespassing due to the fence, the openness and vegetation offer a reprieve from the City. If you are daring enough to climb through the holes in the fence, you can find a regular group of fisherman over the hill and along the water's edge.

### Waterfront Access

KEY	
	Within 10-20'
	Access as paying customer
	Access but trespassing
	Views



*Varied conditions of waterfront access.*

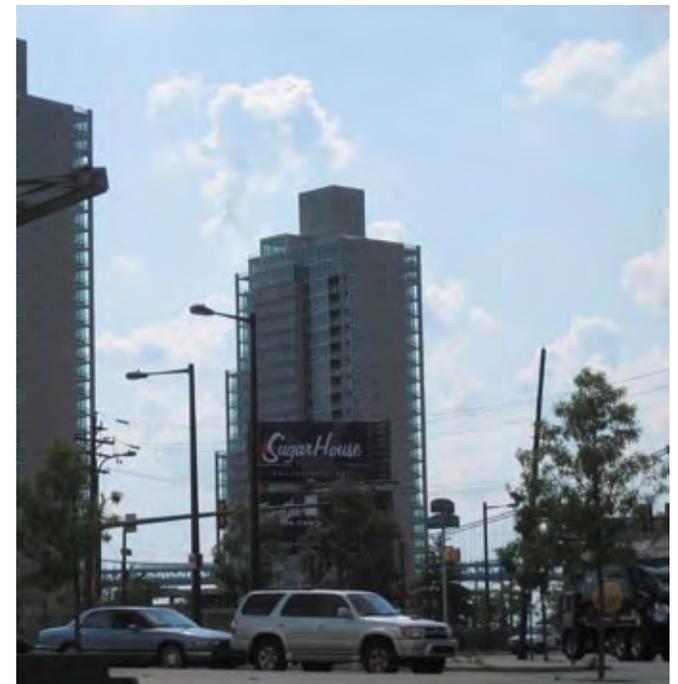


*Existing pedestrian path along Delaware Avenue between Waterfront Square and the Ben Franklin Bridge.*

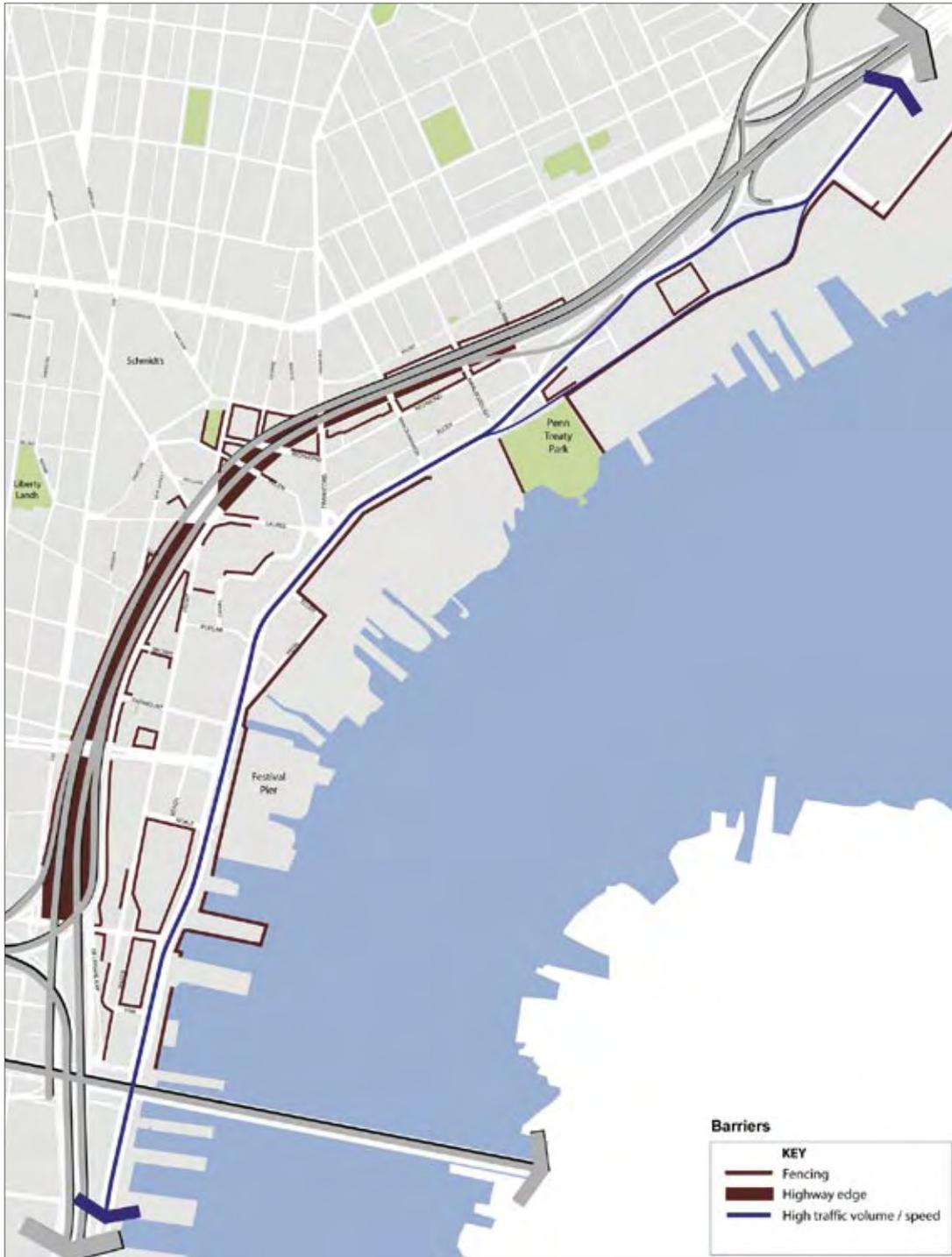


## View Corridors

Views to the water are limited. Due to the presence of I-95, riverfront views from the neighborhood are only afforded at street level along specific east-west streets. The strongest view corridors exist on Callowhill, Spring Garden and Columbia. All of these view corridors have unimpeded views to the water. The current design proposals for Trump Tower and Penn Treaty Tower preserve and restore the views to the water along Fairmount and Marlborough, respectively. Shackamaxon, however, currently has views toward the water, but recent development proposals threaten to hamper them; depending upon the final design for the proposed SugarHouse Casino site and Piers 44 and 49 / 50, the views down Shackamaxon toward the River are in question. The views from Frankford Avenue and Brown Street have already been obstructed by the development of Waterfront Square. Views of the Ben Franklin Bridge, an icon that frames the Central Delaware River landscape during the day and glows above the water at night, must also be protected.



*Waterfront Square obstructs views of the River from Frankford Avenue.*



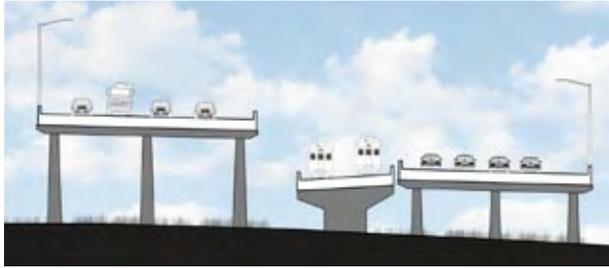
### Barriers

“Fragmented” is one of the most frequently cited terms in reference to the waterfront by neighborhood residents. This is due largely to the multitude of barriers that impede any level of connectivity with the River. I-95 is the first major obstacle to contend with. I-95’s width, dark underpasses and un-designed edge conditions only further the perceived disconnect between the heart of the Northern Liberties and its waterfront. Any design for the waterfront must address the character and impact of I-95’s infrastructure on its immediate surroundings.

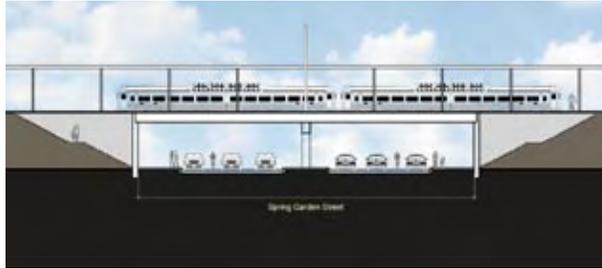
Beyond I-95, Spring Garden Street and Delaware Avenue also act as major boundaries due to traffic speed, width and the lack of any pedestrian amenities. In this respect, the River’s edge and the entire waterfront district suffers, as automobiles, not pedestrians, dominate the environment.

The ubiquitous fencing that encases many sites within the study area forms a final set of boundaries. Fences, in fact, are one the most visible and common elements of the existing waterfront landscape. North of Dave and Busters, where the wide sidewalk of Delaware Avenue is actually close to the water, two different fences ensure that pedestrians cannot get closer than 15’ from the River’s edge. In fact, the majority of properties along the east side of Delaware Avenue are fenced, preventing any potential access to the water.

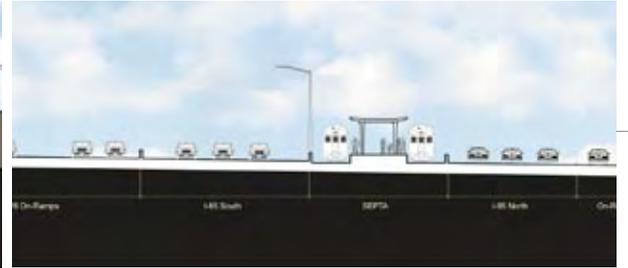




*Interstate infrastructure at Laurel and Richmond Streets.*



*Interstate infrastructure at Spring Garden Street.*



*Interstate infrastructure at Callowhill Street.*

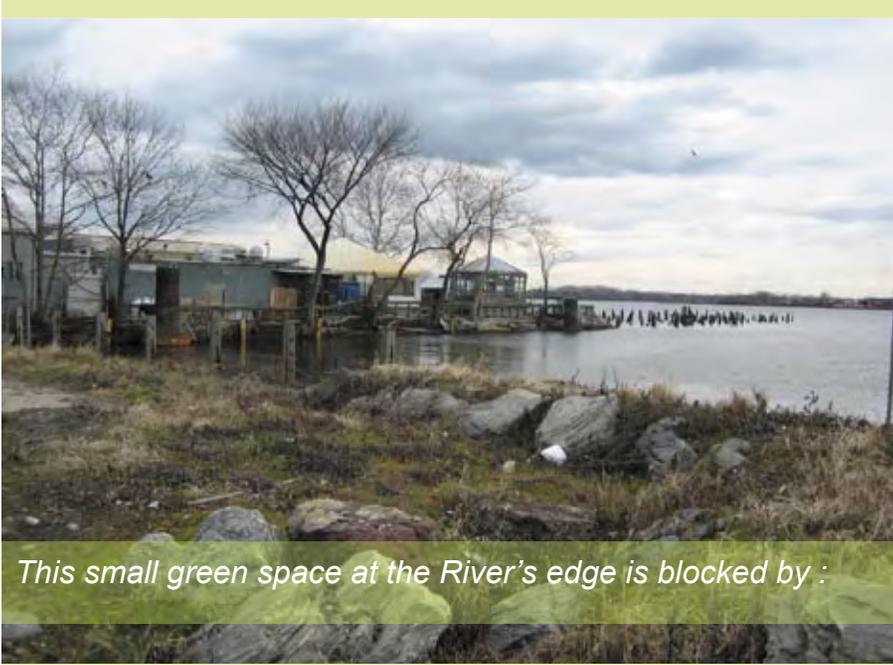


*The dramatic elevated infrastructure poses a physical and psychological barrier between the heart of Northern Liberties and its waterfront.*

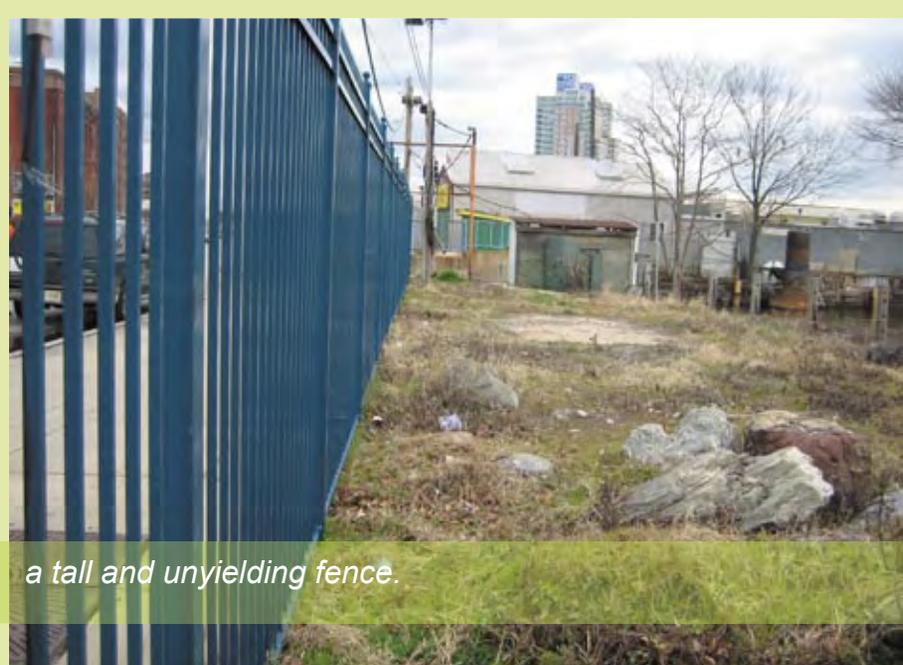
Any way you slice it, if you are in Northern Liberties, there are multiple imposing barriers between you and the waterfront.



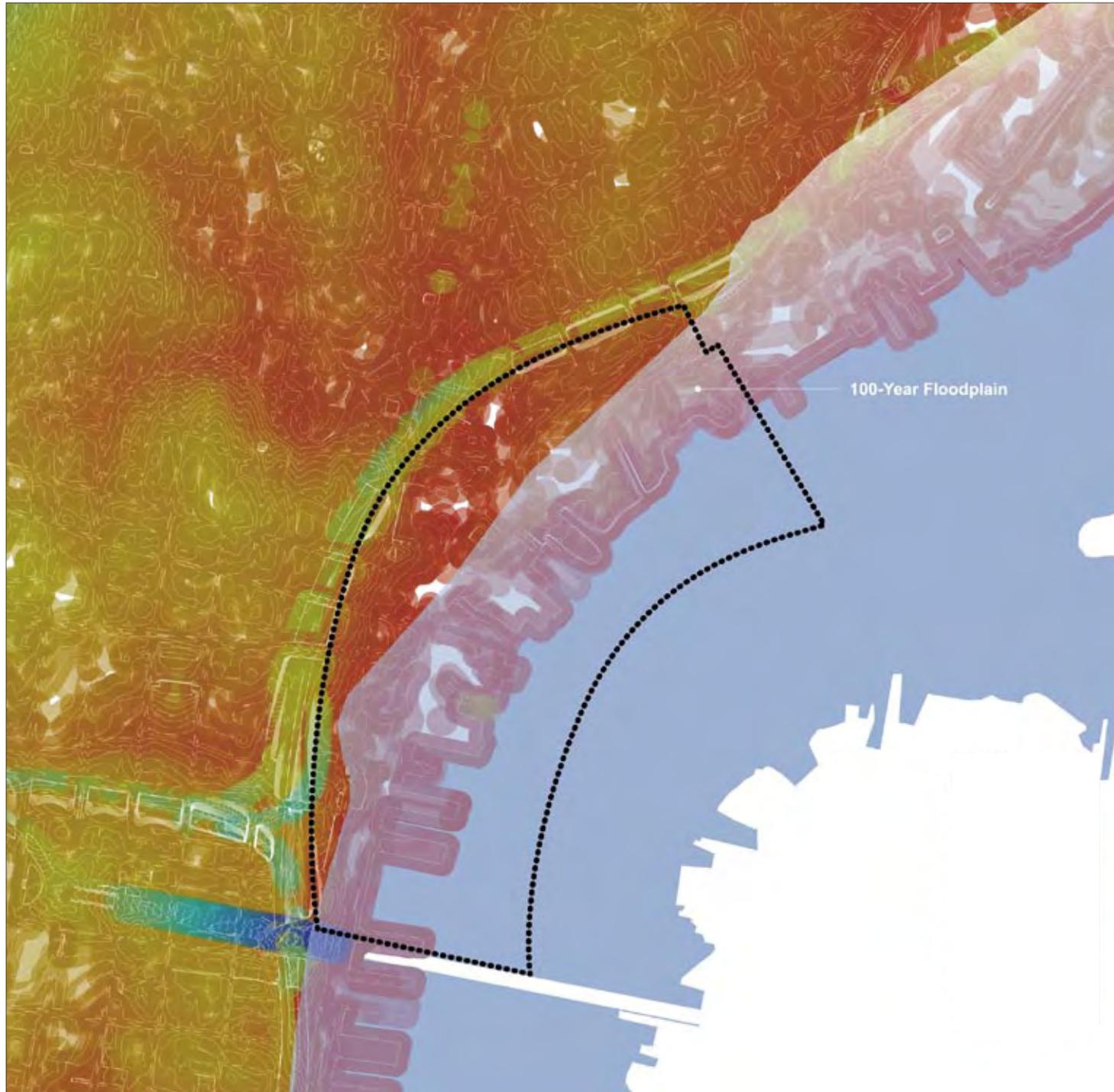
Service facilities and fencing hinder the ability to experience and enjoy the waterfront.



This small green space at the River's edge is blocked by :



a tall and unyielding fence.

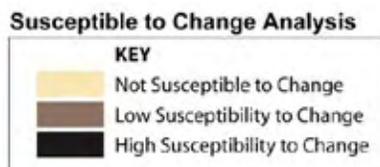


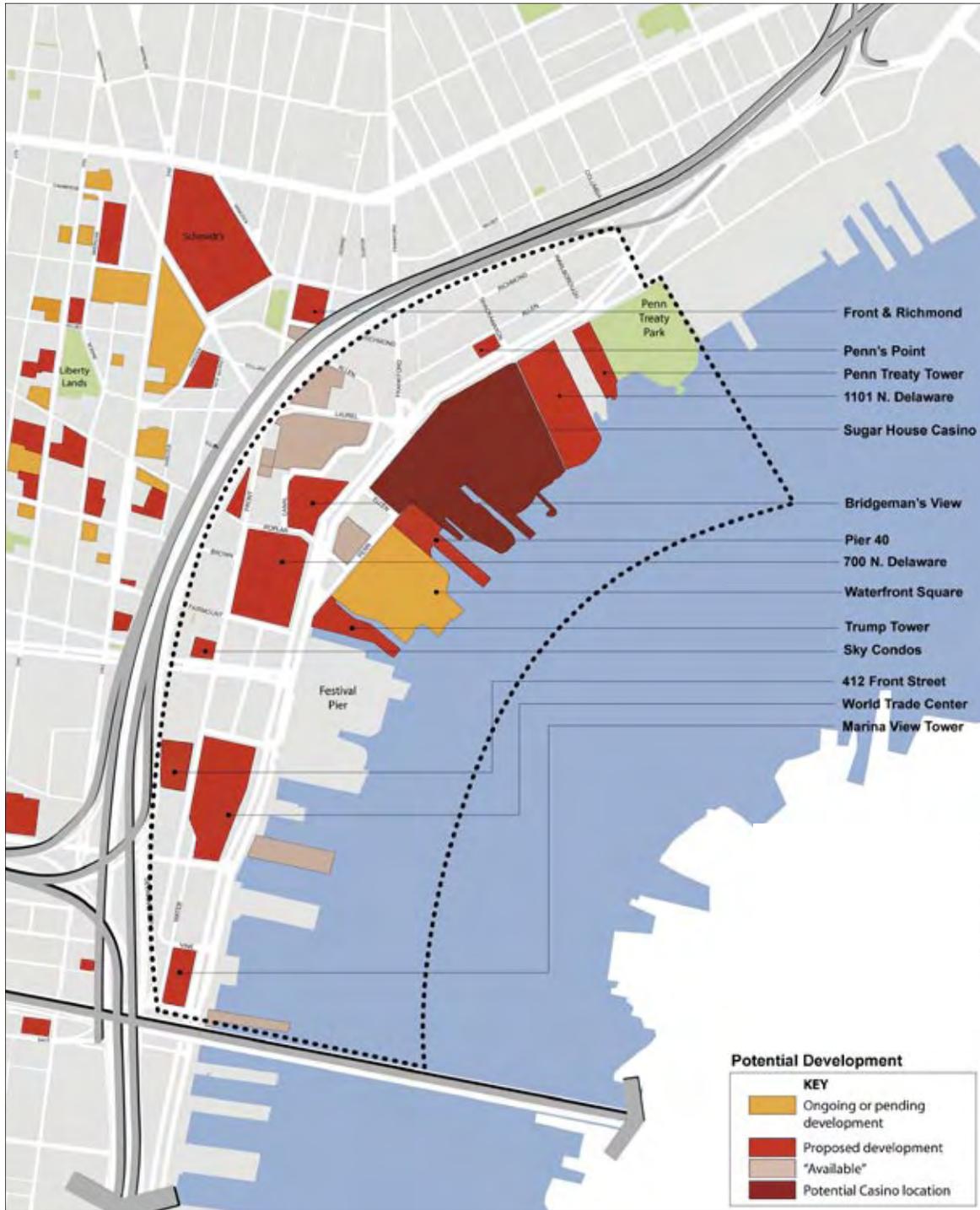
## Topography

Most of the study area is located within the 100 year floodplain. The study area also has the lowest elevation of anywhere else in Northern Liberties. As water in the area tends to flow southeast, during rainfall the waterfront study area faces both the rising water level of the Delaware River and the urban storm-water run-off that emanates from much farther afield in North Philadelphia's neighborhoods. Add to this system heavy run-off from I-95 and the fact that Northern Liberties has suffered from numerous water main breaks and sewer back-ups, and the need for thoughtful stormwater management becomes abundantly clear.

## Susceptibility to Change

A standard means of assessing future change is to undertake a susceptibility to change analysis. The analysis is generated by combining information on building condition, use, density and design to determine which parcels have a high likelihood to change in the coming years, which have a low likelihood to change and which will likely remain as they are. Our analysis determined that out of the 142 net acres of parcels in the study area, 93.7 acres have either a low or high susceptibility to change. This amounts to 66% of the study area's net area, no surprise given the high vacancy combined with the strong housing market.





## Proposed Development

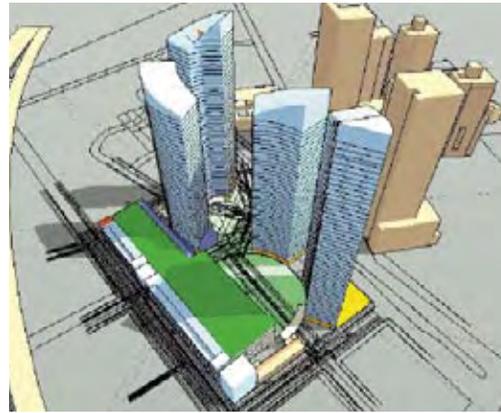
### What's proposed now?

Most of the discussion surrounding the waterfront lately has targeted either the proposed casinos or a certain 70-story tower. However, there are multiple proposals on the boards, some with preliminary zoning approvals. We documented all of the major proposals in the waterfront area by speaking with the developers themselves, their architects or other representatives. In some cases, if the development was far enough along (Marina View Tower), we were able to tally the number of units, parking and other space through publicly available information. In addition, we updated the analysis completed for the *Neighborhood Plan* of new developments proposed west of I-95. The result is a total assessment of what is *planned* for the community. This analysis is just a snapshot in time, as existing projects frequently fall apart and new projects emerge. The analysis results helped us to build a 3-D model of what the waterfront will look like if every project moves forward. The results were also used by Orth-Rodgers to run an assessment of the potential trips generated by each development.

*In 2000, the Northern Liberties neighborhood had 2,276 housing units which marked an increase of 12% from 1990. An additional 1,509 housing units are currently proposed, completed or under construction since 2000, west of I-95. This represents a 166% increase from 2000. Proposed development in the waterfront study area would add yet another 3,346 units to the community. In sum, the potential is for Northern Liberties to grow to 7,131 households, a 313% increase from 2000.*

The majority of the proposed waterfront units stem from several major projects:

- *Waterfront Square* – 936 units – all permits secured;
- *Bridgeman’s View* – 352 units plus retail, office space and a 177 room hotel – zoning permits secured;
- *Trump Tower* – 263 units – preliminary zoning approval, riparian rights pending;
- *Penn Treaty Tower*– 166 units plus public amenities at park edge – preliminary zoning approval, riparian rights pending;
- *412 Front Street* – 240 units – zoning permits secured;
- *Pier 40* – 266 units plus limited retail – preliminary zoning approval, riparian rights pending;
- *World Trade Center* – 265 units (phase 1) plus over 100,000 SF of retail and over 2,000,000 SF of office – phase one zoning permit secured;
- *700 N. Delaware* – 1,050 units plus retail – zoning permit secured; and
- *1101 N. Delaware* – 535 units plus limited retail – in planning only.



L-R: 700 N. Delaware, Marina View Tower.

All proposed developments meet or exceed the parking requirements.



L-R: Trump Tower, 1101 N. Delaware, the proposed SugarHouse Casino.



L-R: Waterfront Square, Penn Treaty Tower.



L-R: 412 Front Street, Bridgeman’s View rendering and model, World Trade Center, Sky 101 Condos.



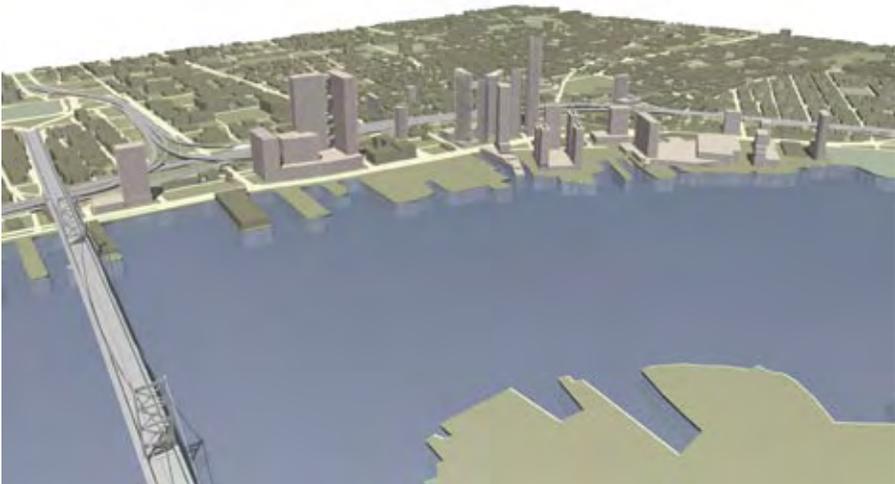
*Waterfront redevelopment projects with all permits in place.*



*All waterfront redevelopment projects with preliminary zoning approval.*

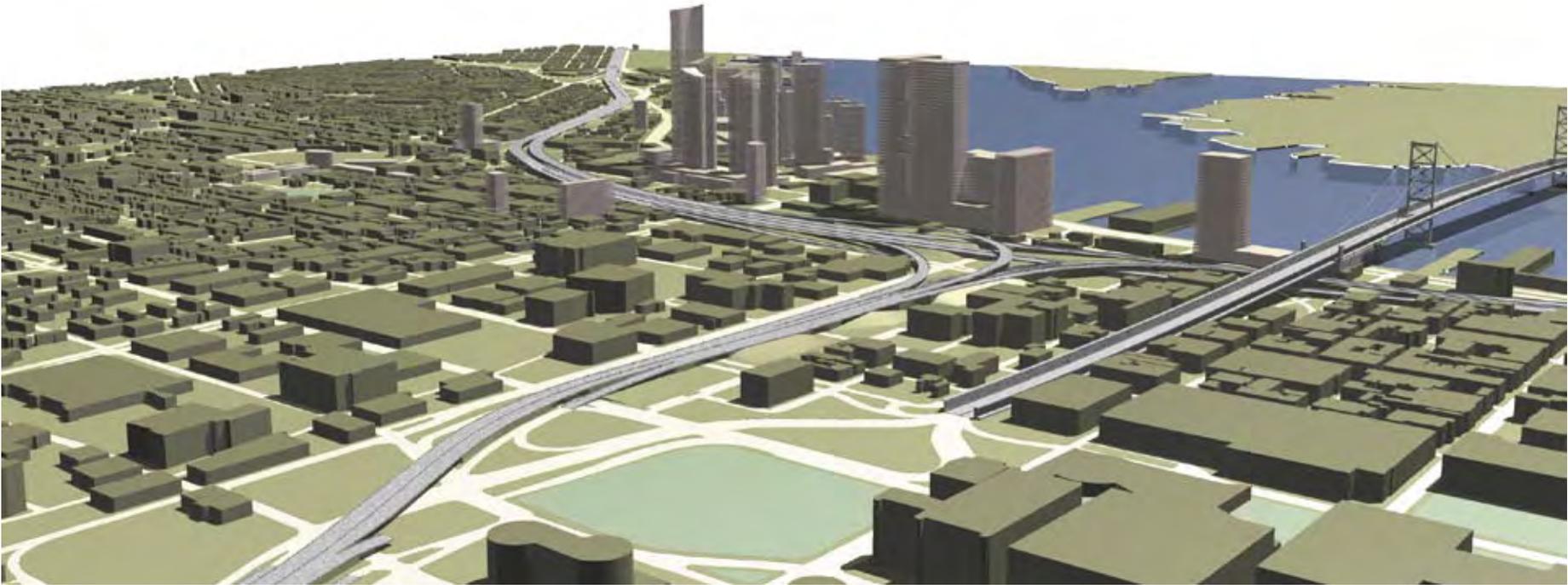


*View of the waterfront from Center City prior to any redevelopment.*

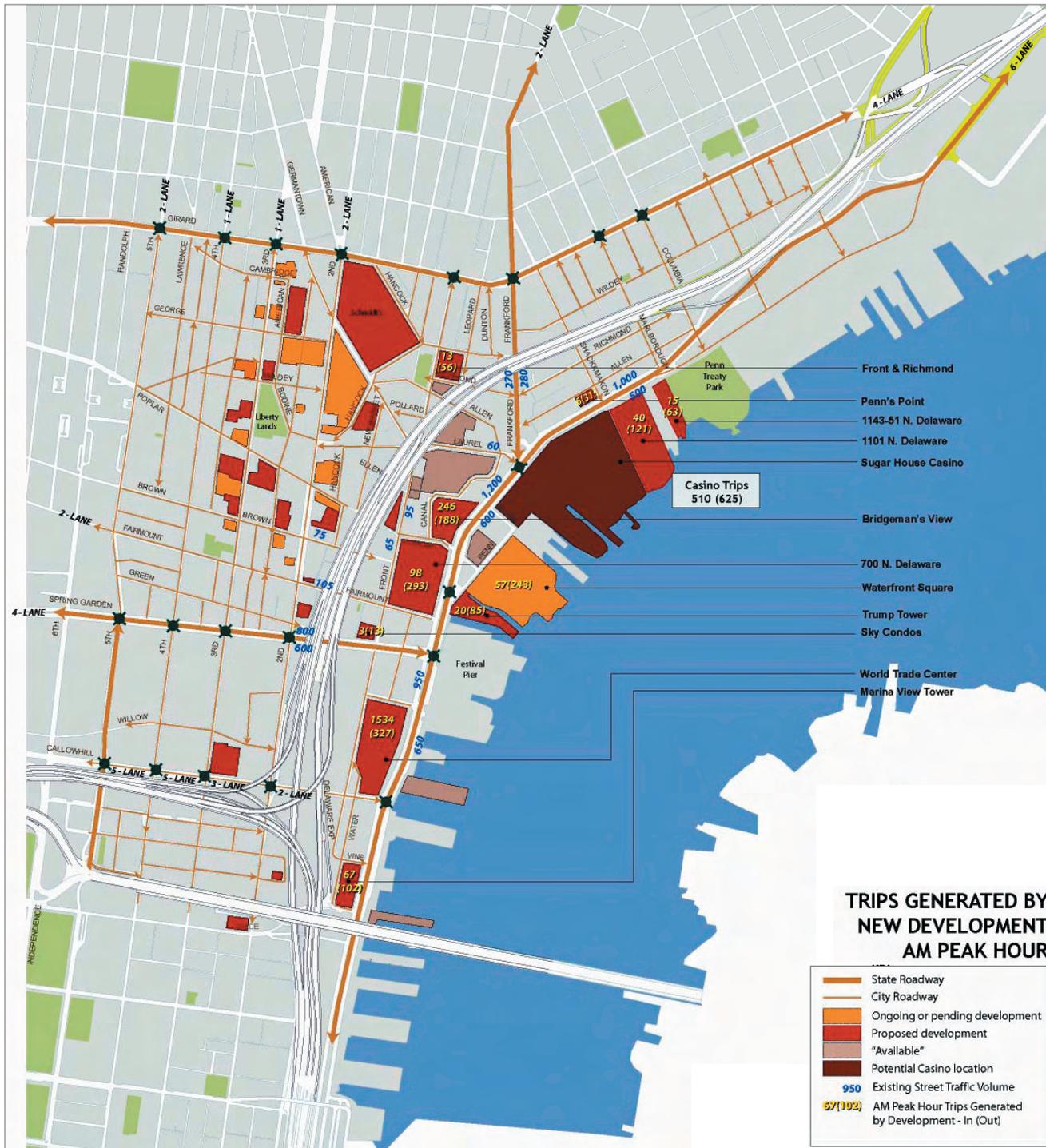


All currently proposed waterfront redevelopment projects.

note: These models represent a snapshot in time, and may not account for all projects currently proposed or in development along the waterfront.



View of the waterfront from Center City if all proposed projects proceed as planned.



Traffic Impacts: Trip Generation and Distribution for the Proposed Developments

According to information collected and compiled for the proposed projects in the area, these developments are going to build about 3,350 housing units, 214,000 sq.ft. retail/entertainment, 2,460,000 sq.ft. office, and 177 hotel rooms within the study area. Orth-Rodgers & Associates estimated the amount of traffic that could be generated by all of the proposed new developments using Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) data, based on type (residential high rise condominium, retail, office, hotel) and size of the development.

It was assumed that for office, 30% of trips would be made by transit. This rate seems reasonable given that survey and census data indicates a drive-to-work percentage of 65% in University City. For the retail and entertainment development, a 40% reduction from ITE trip generation rates was taken in order to account for traffic already on the roadway and interaction with other developments. For residential high-rise condominiums, the ITE trip rates were used directly for estimates of residential trips. High rise condominiums are typically only found in urban areas, so that the ITE rates already reflect urban conditions.

The maps illustrate the estimated traffic generation of each development plus the existing traffic volumes on major streets.

All of the proposed developments taken together, not including the proposed SugarHouse Casino, could generate approximately 3,600 vehicle trips in the morning peak hour and 4,800 vehicle trips

in the PM peak hour (total, in and out). The World Trade Center development alone generates about half of the overall estimated trips from all proposed non-casino development.

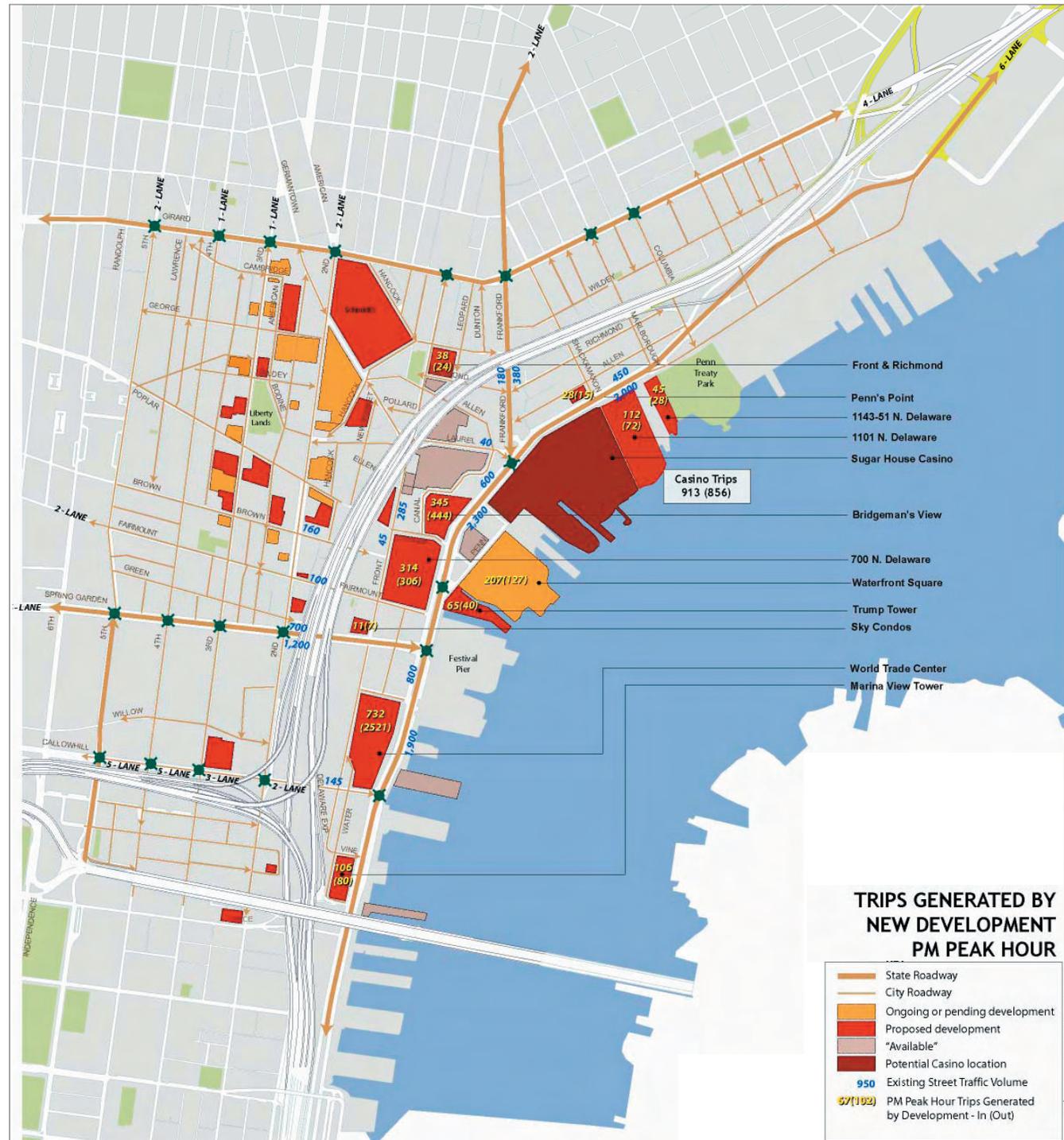
The proposed SugarHouse Casino would add another 1,500 trips to this area in the peak hours.

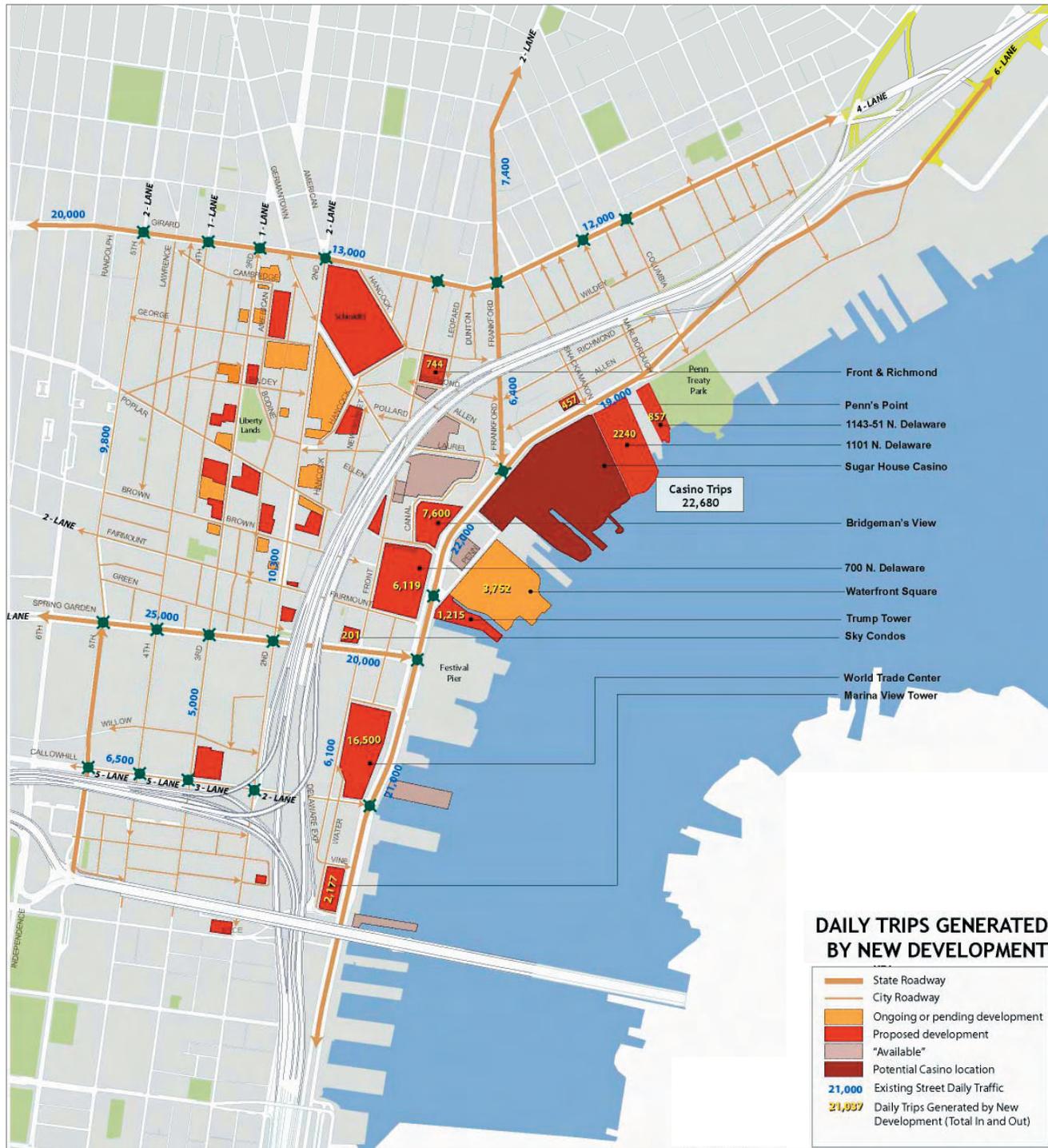
The new trips from all the proposed developments were distributed into the adjacent roadway network. The trip distribution of all development except the proposed casino was assumed to follow the current traffic pattern in the area as listed below:

- From/to the south on Delaware Avenue: 45%
- From/to the north on Delaware Avenue: 25%
- From/to Frankford Avenue: 10%
- From/to Spring Garden Street: 20%

Trips were all assigned to the major roadways, although 100% of trips will not use the major streets listed above but will filter through on other streets such as 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, Brown Street and Fairmount Avenue.

Since site plans and specific access locations were not available, these estimates are very approximate. However, the estimates show that weekday peak hour volumes on Delaware Avenue could increase by about 120% in the morning and 80% in the afternoon.





The proposed SugarHouse Casino will have a different trip distribution. In the longer term, after completion of the Girard Avenue Interchange, approximately 80% of casino trips are expected to approach from the north, with 5% on Frankford Avenue, 10% on Spring Garden Street, and 5% from the south on Delaware Avenue. This information was obtained from the casino's traffic study.

Given that some level of service 'F' conditions already exist at Delaware and Spring Garden Street, some intersection improvements will be imperative. Also, at Delaware and Frankford Avenue, improvements almost certainly will be needed, as the number of additional trips will transform the currently operational intersection into a failing intersection.

The access locations are not known for the two largest developments, Bridgeman's View and the World Trade Center. Access location and design will be critical at these developments.

The traffic study indicates that if everything is built according to existing plans, the non-casino developments will add almost 42,000 cars daily to Delaware Avenue. More concerning is the projected number of peak hour trips generated, which amounts to between 3,600 and 4,800 additional cars passing through the area during morning and evening rush hours, respectively. There is no simple solution to this issue, nor can we, or should we, widen Delaware Avenue to accommodate more cars thereby widening the gap between the River's edge and the community.

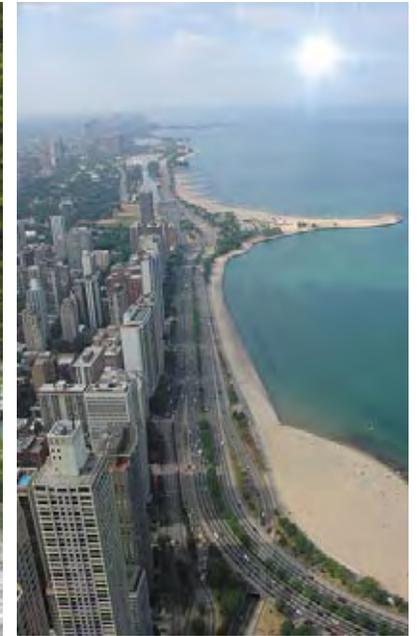
*For the waterfront to be successful, overlapping strategies will be needed that emphasize alternative modes of transportation.*

## A Comparison to Other Waterfronts

Many cities have accepted the challenge of planning and implementing real change along their waterfronts with pride, commitment and creativity. We spent some time in research to review good examples that might help to enlighten the approach for Northern Liberties' waterfront. We collected information on national models such as Louisville, Chattanooga and Chicago as well as international models including Amsterdam, Singapore, Toronto and Glasgow. Although each plan is different and none echoes all of the challenges facing Philadelphia's riverfronts, they do offer examples of cities overcoming a range of extreme challenges. Chattanooga's waterfront is particularly interesting as a model given that a highway and multiple barriers inhibited clear and easy access just as I-95 does in Northern Liberties. Much can be learned from simpler examples too, such as the treatment of the West Side Highway in New York City, which separates the City's block system from the Hudson River. Although the West Side Highway is the same width (approximately) as Delaware Avenue, crossing it is far less intimidating than doing so at the open and unprotected intersections along Delaware Avenue.



*Hargreaves Associates' Waterfront Park in Louisville, Kentucky blends natural settings with hardscape elements.*



*L-R: New piers reflect industrial history of riverfront in Portland, West 8's proposed new pier system for Toronto, Proposed landscaped boulevard accommodating multiple modes of transportation in Toronto, Chicago's Lake Shore Drive separates high rise development from public open space.*



*Chattanooga's waterfront faces similar challenges posed by elevated infrastructure.*

*New York City's Battery Park City Park and continuous trail along the Hudson River give people good reason to cross the West Side Highway.*

*Low-rise waterfront development in Amsterdam treats the water as a quiet residential street.*

*High-rise waterfront development in Singapore's Boat Quay and in Chicago takes a seat behind low-rise waterfront frontages.*





**% Waterfront Park**      90%   85%   64%   47%   42%   33%   9%      4%      4%

**Total Planning Area**  
**Open Space Area**



**Brooklyn Bridge Park**  
Brooklyn, NY

**Louisville Waterfront Park**  
Louisville, KY

**Chattanooga 21st Century Waterfront**  
Chattanooga, TN

**Poplar Point: Anacostia Riverfront**  
Washington D.C.

**Glasgow Harbor Master Plan**  
Glasgow Scotland

**Battery Park City**  
New York, NY  
meets 2.5 x / 1,000 residents city-wide service level

**Portland South Waterfront**  
Portland, OR  
meets City-wide service level: 2.28 x / 1,000 residents

**Greenpoint-Williamsburg Waterfront & Land Use Plan**  
Brooklyn, NY

**Existing Northern Liberties Waterfront**  
Philadelphia, PA

Percent Open Space for the project increases to 7% if measuring all greenspace, not just waterfront green space.

**7%**

Comparison of waterfront plans: percent open space versus percent developed.

One of our primary interests was to assess how each waterfront plan balanced open space with development. We collected information on a number of plans and determined how many acres were planned for development and how many acres were planned for park space. The results vary significantly. Brooklyn Bridge Park reserved the highest percentage for open space – 90% – and planned for high density development on the remaining 10% to help off-set costs. At the other end of the spectrum, the Greenpoint-Williamsburg plan reserved 7% of the area for open space focusing instead on a collection of smaller parks that weave new and existing development together. The existing open space percentage in the Northern Liberties study area is 4%, contained almost entirely in Penn Treaty Park – an isolated, yet valuable asset for Fishtown, and one in need of stronger linkages to its surrounding context.

### Open Space Targets

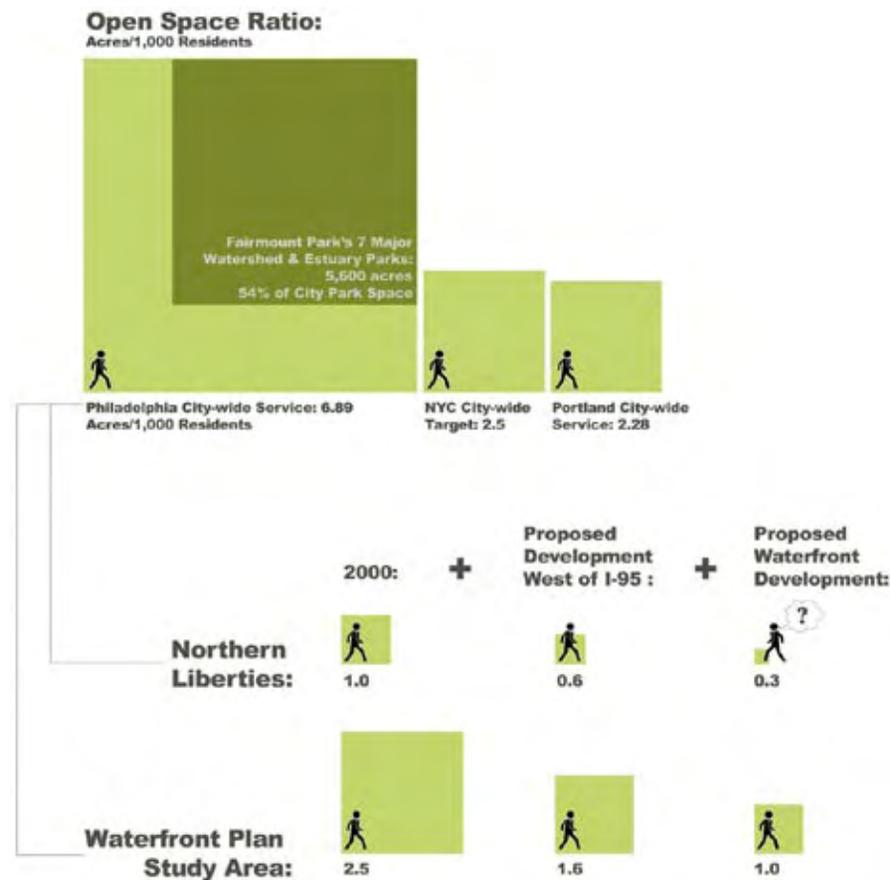
If all of the waterfront’s open space rests within one isolated park, the question quickly becomes, how much open space is needed? While it may be tempting to advocate for the entire water’s edge to be lined with open space, the Central Delaware Riverfront is 7 miles long, not taking into account the North Delaware Riverfront or the Schuylkill River. Even Louisville’s 85-acre waterfront park, the largest that we surveyed, amounts to only a small proportion of the City’s overall riverfront. In short, strategic choices must be made about where the best locations for open space may be and how best to connect one to another.

Our process evaluated how much open space should be made available for every 1,000 residents. The rate in Philadelphia is nearly 7 acres of open space per 1,000 residents. Given that Fairmount Park, the nation’s largest urban park, skews this number significantly, we looked at New York and Portland target ratios for comparison, which range between 2.25 and 2.5 acres per 1,000 residents. We then collected open space acreage for two separate geographies recognizing that our waterfront study area extends beyond Northern Liberties.

- For the Northern Liberties neighborhood boundaries, identified in the NLNA bylaws as extending to Frankford Avenue on the northeast, Girard to the north, 6th Street to the west, and Callowhill on the south, the community currently has 1 acre of open space per 1,000 residents, most of which is contained in Liberty Lands. When new development is factored in, this number drops to 0.3 acres per 1,000 residents if no new open space is created.

- For the waterfront study area adopted for this plan, the existing ratio is 2.5 acres per 1,000 residents. This is due solely to Penn Treaty Park and the small number of people currently living in the study area. Even so, when proposed development is factored in, this ratio drops to 1 acre per 1,000 residents.

Both numbers indicate the necessity of more open space to meet the needs of new and existing residents while providing the community with a front door to the River.



Comparison of open space ratios: existing and after completion of proposed development.

## Guiding Principles

Due diligence in review of other waterfront plans reveals a clear set of commonly held and overlapping principles. These principles are often present in each City's vision for its waterfront. They are echoed time and again and have helped to capture the hopes of residents regardless of the City in which they reside. We refer to these as *commonly accepted principles* – the basis of any good waterfront planning effort.

### Commonly Accepted Principles

- Provide a clean and healthy river – water quality is critical;
- Ensure public access – continuous trails and open spaces are a must;
- Connect back to the City – a waterfront should be an extension of the surrounding context;
- Celebrate local culture – a successful waterfront is an authentic one;
- Plan for the long-term – building value often takes time and commitment;
- Build public / private partnerships – no government can do it all.

Taking these commonly accepted principles as 'givens,' we asked residents to help us apply them to Northern Liberties in a concrete way. What emerged was a wide range of ideas that firmly grounded the waterfront within the character and feel of Northern Liberties.

### *In your words, in rapid fire: the Waterfront, now:*

- Fractured
- Potential
- Unplanned
- Jeopardy
- Wasted
- Resource
- Under-appreciated
- Massive
- Uncoordinated
- Hot
- Ugly
- Inaccessible
- Desolate
- Over there
- Dangerous
- Dirty

### *In your words, in rapid fire: the Waterfront, of tomorrow:*

- Open
- Accessible
- Public
- Green
- Lush
- Natural
- Habitat
- Escape
- Active
- Recreation
- Multi-functional
- Continuous
- Beautiful
- Leisure
- Multi-modal
- FINALLY!

a little more concrete now:

#### **Delaware Avenue:**

*"Light rail down the center to the Navy Yard."*

*"Safe and well lit, public art by local artists, no casinos."*

*"Easier to cross."*

*"A more enclosed median with crosswalks and decorative barriers at non-crossing areas. At least one direct-access corridor to a public river use. Building at Laurel and Frankford becomes a retail/wholesale market – ½ Reading Terminal, ½ Warehousing. Billboards disappear or share space with giant 'artboards.'"*

*"Fewer cars, more green space along water's edge, cafes and cultural establishments, health of the River is key."*

*"Archaeological park about the history of the old piers."*

#### **Fairmount Avenue:**

*"Full of trees, high powered street lights, and bicycle paths."*

*"Small open spaces on each block used for informal gatherings, performances, or art installations (temporary and changing)."*

*"Next to the sidewalk are rain gardens with indigenous plants."*

*Small shaded cafes, bookstores, and shops. Neighbors know each other! We can walk straight to the River."*

#### **Frankford Avenue:**

*"Wish you were here! We walked down to the River from Johnny Brenda's and passed some really neat artist studios. Everything from furniture to punk art - we got to see the artists at work. The pedestrian traffic was a little dense, but the eclectic make-up of the crowds made it fun."*

*"Dense, but not high-rise. Terminates at waterfront with some public space, which is the focal point. Maintains historical scale of existing industrial structures (4-5 stories). Provides transition between waterfront and interior neighborhoods, respects the local context. Main gateway links visually and functionally to Girard Avenue corridor."*

#### **Spring Garden Street:**

*"The Lukoil station is gone, replaced by a mid-rise commercial building with an open green space plaza and café-style commercial businesses at ground level. More quality development on the south side of the street with a restoration plan for the Belgian Block surface of Front Street on both sides of Spring Garden and the elimination of all billboards."*

*"A gateway connecting the new waterfront to the established community serving as a mixed use buffer between the two-areas. A smorgasbord thoroughfare."*

*Quotes from the visioning process postcards: Northern Liberties' waterfront, 2020.*

Northern Liberties Waterfront Plan

A walk down Frankford Avenue in 2020:

A dirty, wide street has been transformed, by introduction of street trees on both sides of the street and a 4-6ft wide planted area on the southern side of the street where the wider sidewalk abuts existing warehouses now converted into successful retail spaces some of which open on to the sidewalk, utilizing its width for outdoor cafe seating. The large fenced off junkyard beneath Route 95 is replaced with an open park area that ties into the waterfront park system. Select areas between the 95 lanes contain trees and jogging paths criss-crossing sending runways north and south towards the river. At the intersection of Delaware, crosswalks lead towards a grand esplanade that cuts

through the waterfront park ending at a small fountain termination jutting out into the water slightly to offer north/south views.



Northern Liberties Waterfront Plan

A walk down Spring Garden in 2020:

AS I WALK FROM MY STREET (5th ST) DOWN SPRING GARDEN TOWARDS DELAWARE AVE I AM AMPEDED AT HOW LARGE THE SYCAMORE TREES IN THE CENTER MEDIAN HAVE GROWN. SURROUNDED BY LUSH (LOW MAINTANENCE) GREENERY I FEEL LIKE I AM IN THE PARK. A QUICK CROSS OF DELAWARE AVE AND I AM CONNECTED TO THE TRAIL ON THE RIVER. ALTHOUGH FLANKED BY LARGE BUILDINGS THE MEANDERING PATH IS LUSH AND PROVIDES A NICE ESCAPE FROM THE

ASPHALT + CONCRETE OF THE CITY. OH, AND THE HEAT DAY I WALK TO DELAWARE AVE TO CATCH THE GIRARD TROUGH TO THE ZOO.

INTERFACE STUDIO  
1400 N. American Street, #301  
Philadelphia, PA 19122

Northern Liberties Waterfront Plan

A walk down Frankford Avenue in 2020:

The modernized post-industrial buildings are an art form that draw visitors to historic ~~Frankford~~ <sup>Frankford</sup> ~~area~~ <sup>area</sup>. Street trees and plantings filter the view of waterfront square, and direct the visitor toward the waterfront. The car-nearly obsolete due to the high price of oil, is replaced by pedestrians, bikes, + smaller electric vehicles, which

means that pavement is reduced and streeted with vegetation and other permeable surfaces.

INTERFACE STUDIO  
1400 N. American Street, #301  
Philadelphia, PA 19122

Northern Liberties Waterfront Plan

A walk down Delaware Avenue in 2020:

A wide boulevard with safe pedestrian crossings and lots of landscaping. There is on-street parking and a mix of land uses including residential, office, retail, + open space. It is a 24 hour street meaning there is activity at all times. It is well lit and safe. There is a BRT line or some type of public transit that is clean and quiet.

Vehicle speeds are low and ped activity is high. It is a place where people want to be to live, work, + play. It is green and promotes sustainability in building and transportation design.

INTERFACE STUDIO  
1400 N. American Street, #301  
Philadelphia, PA 19122

Northern Liberties Waterfront Plan

A walk down Fairmount Avenue in 2020:

From 1-95 garden @ front + fairmount. W/ trolley down front connecting the zoo to waterfront 3 story homes on either side between front + delaware. light @ delaware for pedestrian crossing to park along river. With trees + grass. piers to fish or boat.

INTERFACE STUDIO  
1400 N. American Street, #301  
Philadelphia, PA 19122

Northern Liberties Waterfront Plan

A walk down Delaware Avenue in 2020:

Very green + well lit at night. Pedestrian friendly sidewalks, room to bike - unobstructed view of the river. Mixture of residential + commercial uses. wall murals and sculptures/out on each block - Am say happy all the casinos moved away.

INTERFACE STUDIO  
1400 N. American Street, #301  
Philadelphia, PA 19122



**Merge** [murj],  
verb – 1. to  
combine, blend,  
or unite gradually  
so as to blur  
the individuality  
or individual  
identity of. 2. to  
become one.

## A Lens for Northern Liberties

The perceived (and real) gap between the heart of the neighborhood and the River must be erased, and the distinctive character of Northern Liberties must be imprinted along the water. At the same time, the character of the riverfront must seep into the fabric of the community. Northern Liberties' identity will evolve as the community re-considers its waterfront and, in that process, the revived riverfront will alter how the community sees itself.

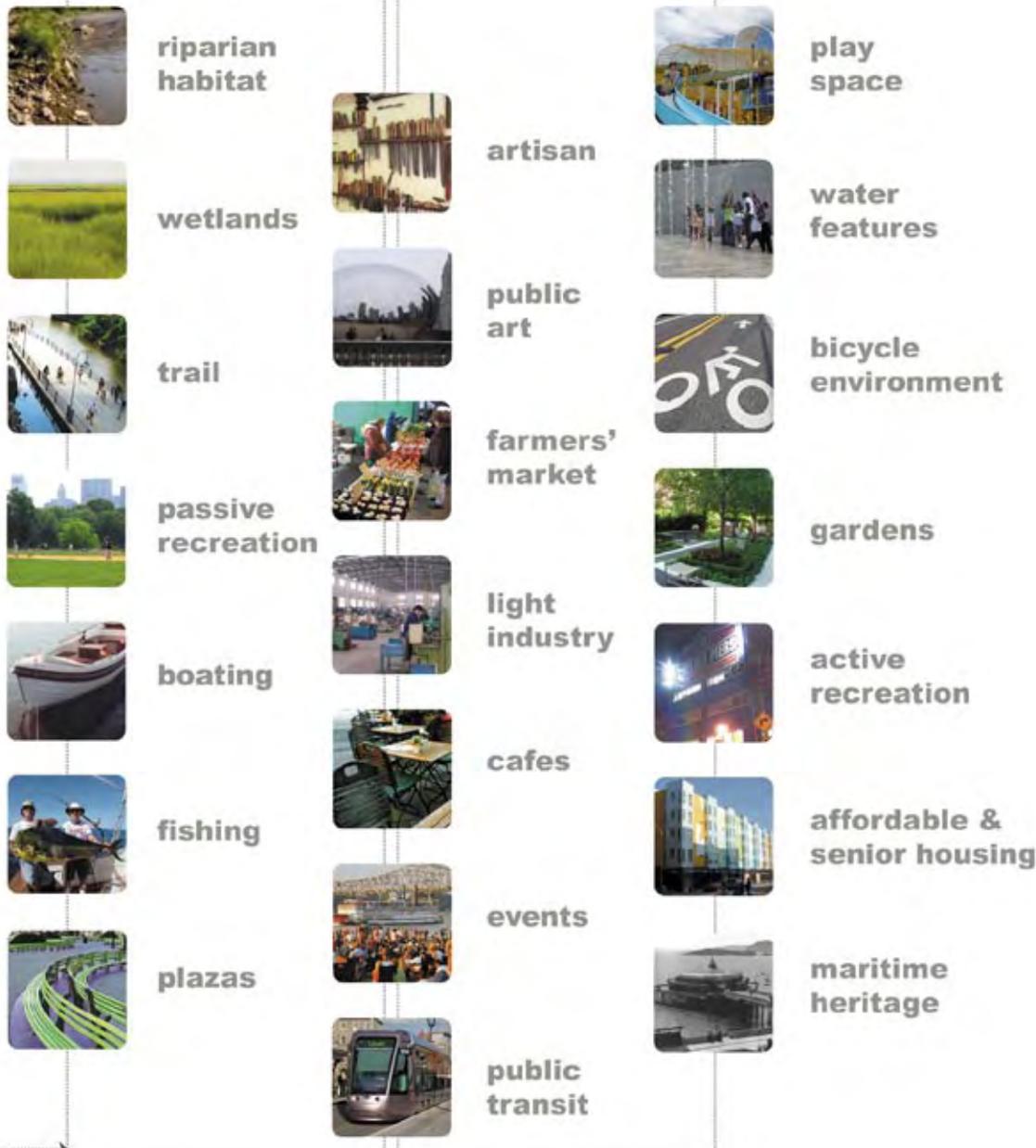
The recommendations stem from the following community-driven vision:

- **An ecological retro-fit:** *The next evolution of the waterfront will exemplify the next green City.*
- **Touch the water:** *The closest many Northern Liberties residents get to 'touching the water' is when a water main breaks. The community needs to re-discover the water itself.*
- **A multi-purpose waterfront:** *The proximity of industry, entertainment, retail, offices, vacancy and housing defines an urban grittiness unique to Northern Liberties. Extending the community to the water means putting aside broad land use designations and defining a finer-grained vocabulary with which to advocate for the broadest range of use and activity.*
- **Diversity:** *Residents value, above all, the wide range of architecture, people and uses that characterize the community. The Northern Liberties' riverfront cannot be homogenous. Tension, surprise, and eclecticism must be present.*
- **Active and secluded:** *The waterfront must provide space for recreation and isolation - recreation to serve the growing needs of an expanding community, isolation to accommodate the need to escape within nature.*
- **Expressive:** *Transform the vestiges of previous eras into modern expressions of the community through public art and interpretation.*
- **Decelerate:** *Speed currently defines the waterfront. Cars trump pedestrians. "Slow City" should become a defining characteristic of the area. (see: <http://www.slowmovement.com>)*





## Expand the Discussion



Discussions with residents of Northern Liberties conveyed a collective appreciation for their mixed use urban neighborhood and a common desire to promote a range of uses along their waterfront. Their comments suggest the need to plan a diverse program of uses for the waterfront so that it develops as the mixed use extension of the community that they envision.

## Recommendations

The vision was translated into a public framework, to identify key infrastructure and civic space improvements, and a private framework, to guide investment and development. In both cases, the waterfront is treated as much more than a strip of coastline, but rather as a district that must be seen as an extension of the local community and an integral part of the City as a whole.



### Public Framework

Nine interlocking elements comprise the neighborhood's priorities for the waterfront's public arena:



*An Activity Channel:  
continuous waterfront trail*



*A Natural River's Edge:  
restoration of the riparian edge and habitat*



*Added Play Space:  
new passive and active green space*



*Green Linkages:  
connections between the neighborhood  
and the waterfront*

*Civic Incisions:  
investment in the area's major corridors*



*A Multi-Modal Waterfront:  
convenient and flexible access for all*



*I-95 Insulation:  
thoughtful treatment to soften the edge*

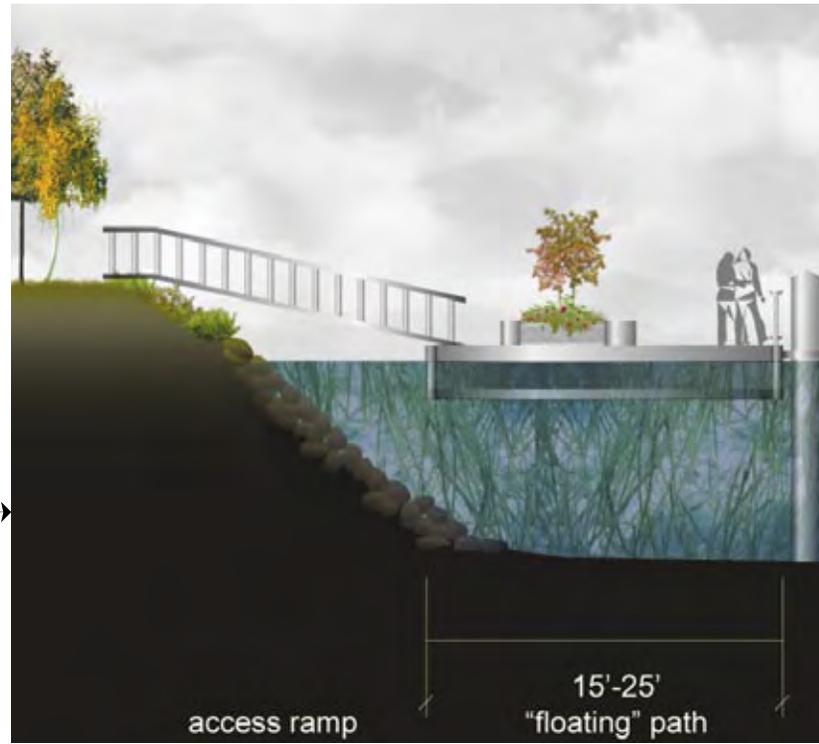


*Apertures:  
installations that encourage perception of  
the community and waterfront in new ways*



*An Adaptive Environment:  
flexible spaces for community interaction  
and City-wide celebration of the riverfront*





Trail floating along the water.

## 1. Activity Channel / Waterfront Trail

Continuous public access along the riverfront via a linked waterfront trail is a basic right. Unfortunately, development practices to date have effectively removed some piers and other parcels from what could have been a continuous 50' right-of-way at the River's edge. Our approach is to treat the trail as one public amenity comprising three very different physical conditions and experiential characteristics:

- *Trail as expanded sidewalk:* There are moments when the trail must operate as an active part of Delaware Avenue. Embrace these moments and ensure that the sidewalk is designed to handle active bicycle lanes and other necessary amenities. Re-capture the empty and fenced off spaces that sit along the River's edge for small plazas and nodes along the trail.
- *Trail along the River's edge:* Where possible, require new developments to provide at least a 50' public right-of-way in perpetuity. Where properties are deeper, advocate for a 150' right-of-way.



Trail as expanded sidewalk.

Source: Reclaiming the Delaware Waterfront, WRT for CCD



Existing: fenced off green space with hard urban edge along the water.

- *Trail floating along the water:* Where opportunities to build a 50' trail are lost, bypass them. Create a floating trail that allows people to experience the feel of the water. The benefit is that the trail encloses safe water inlets, each of which can take on a distinct personality. Larger inlets should be used for active uses (recreational boating, etc.) and smaller ones for passive escapes, natural ecosystems and habitats. Designs for these trail types can be engineered to open in specific locations to allow boats to pass through if necessary.



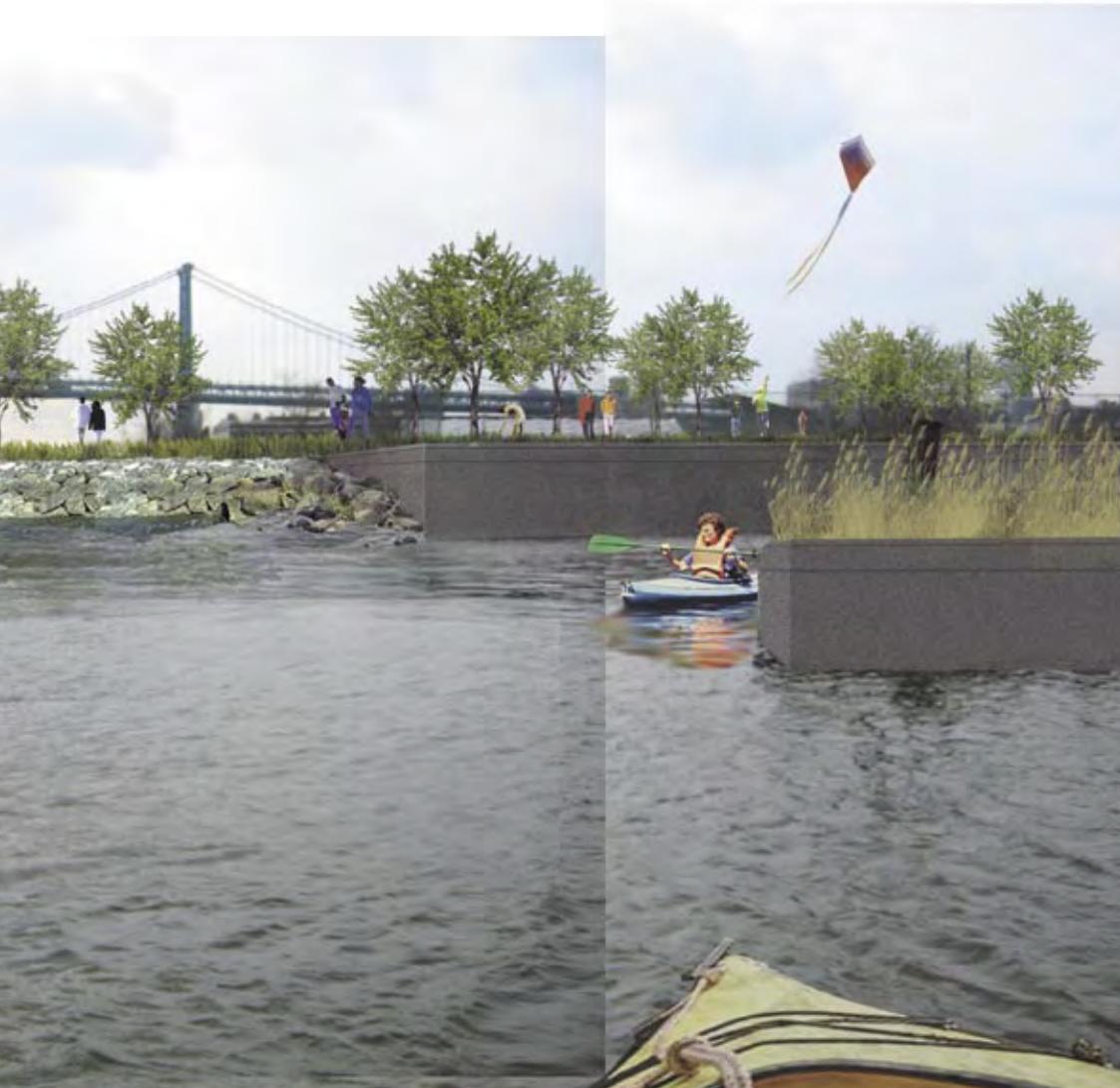
Proposed: restored riparian edge, publicly accessible and landscaped plaza at water's edge, and floating trail allowing people to experience the water.

The current proposal stretches the trail along the coastline south from Penn Treaty Park to the proposed SugarHouse Casino site after which it arcs across the water connecting Waterfront Square, Trump Tower, Events Pier and Pier 24. From there, the trail follows Delaware Avenue south past the Ben Franklin Bridge. The design of the trail should adhere to PCPC guidelines. More detailed guidelines for the incorporation of the waterfront trail into private development projects are provided in the Private Framework section on Site Design and Use, pages 86 - 88.

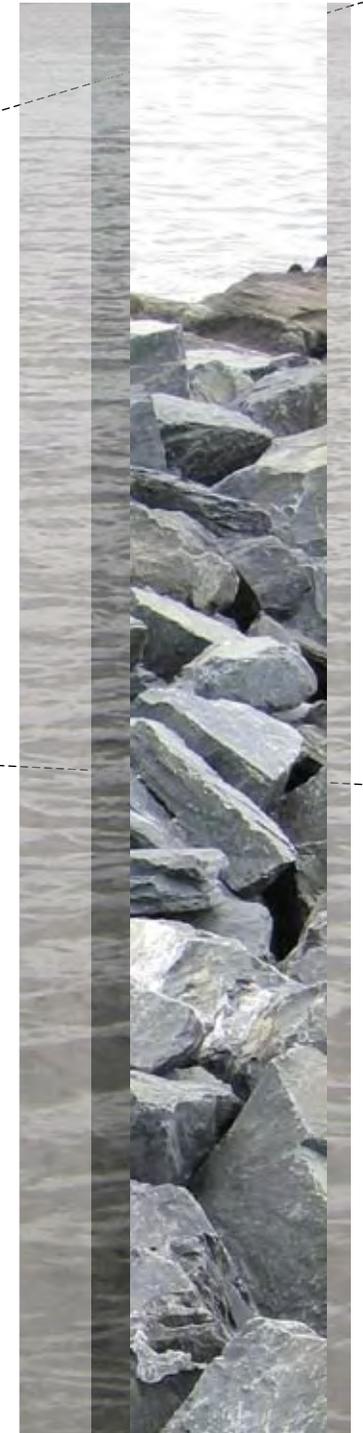




Existing: view of waterfront and Festival Pier surface parking area.



Proposed: new park space and restored riparian edge along Festival Pier plus floating waterfront path bring people to the River in new ways.

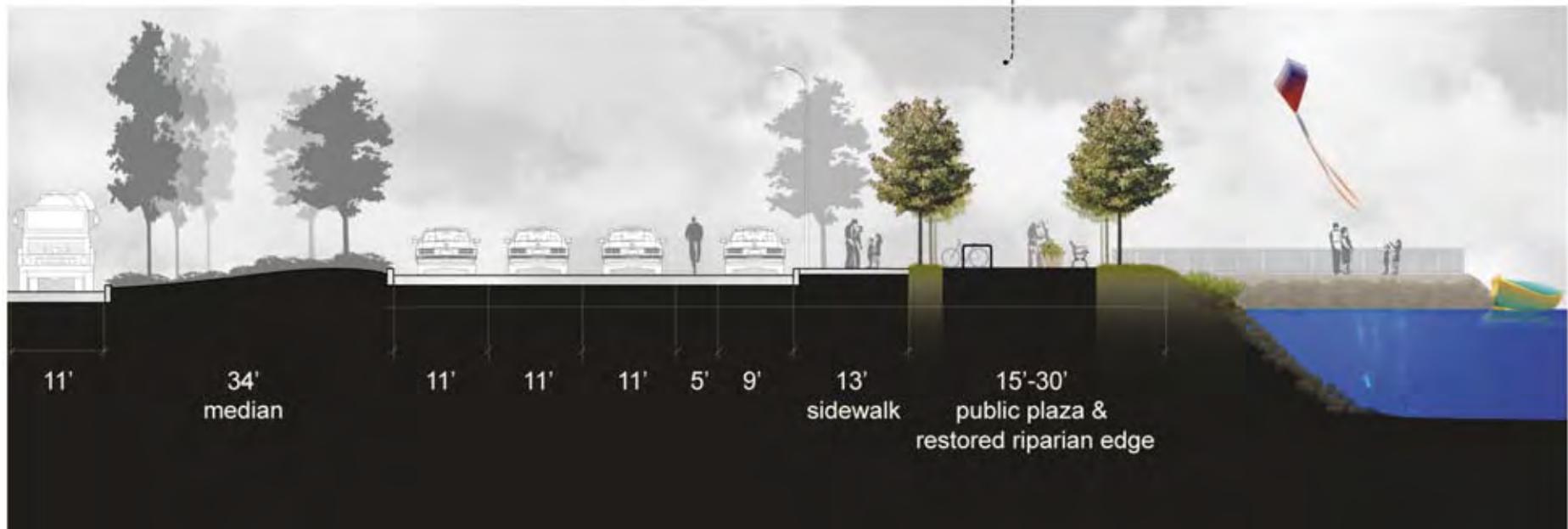


## 2. A Natural River's Edge

A natural riparian edge along the river can bring enormous benefits - rebuilt natural marine habitats, improved storm-water management and enhanced water quality through wetlands and marshes. Portions of the river's edge, however, are man-made constructions, elevated above the water line. We have identified a number of areas where the riparian edges can and should be improved. At times, this natural edge is separate from the proposed waterfront trail and at other times they overlap. Final designs for the waterfront trail should seek to capitalize on these different conditions as a means of celebrating the coexistence of an urban, civic trail with a passive, natural one.



Proposed: riparian edge restored to create a small, passive green space along a softer water's edge.



Proposed: riparian edge restored adjacent to a narrow public plaza along the water, which creates a node on the proposed activity channel and an exchange between the urban and natural character of the River's edge.



The waterfront's play space program should include, but not be limited to:  
 - picnic space and amenities (pavilion and grills)



- a weekly farmers' market



- a new location for the horse stables, bioswales for stormwater management, community gardening plots



- interpretive spaces for education and art installations



- sports spaces for basketball, tennis, baseball, and unprogrammed field space for frisbee, soccer, and reading the newspaper in the sunshine



- flexible hardscaped plazas for gatherings and performances as well as skateboarding, rollerblading, and roller dance

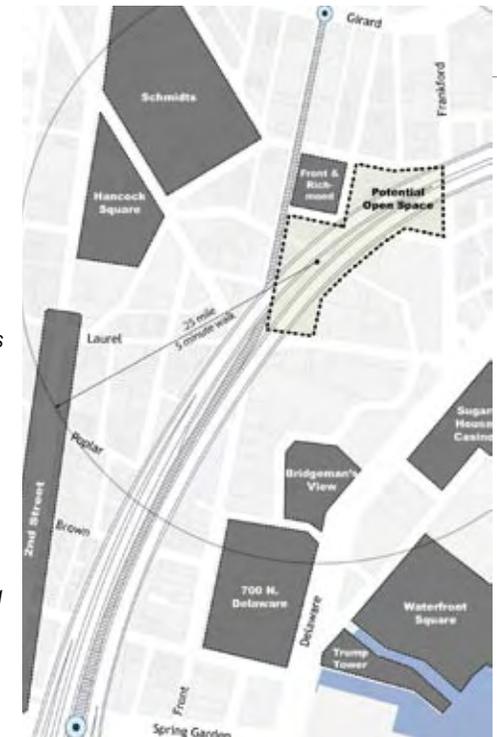


- play equipment and water features for a fast growing population in Northern Liberties: kids



- plenty of opportunities to sit and take it all in.

Play space program.



Major development projects surrounding the intersection of I-95 and the El.

### 3. Play Space

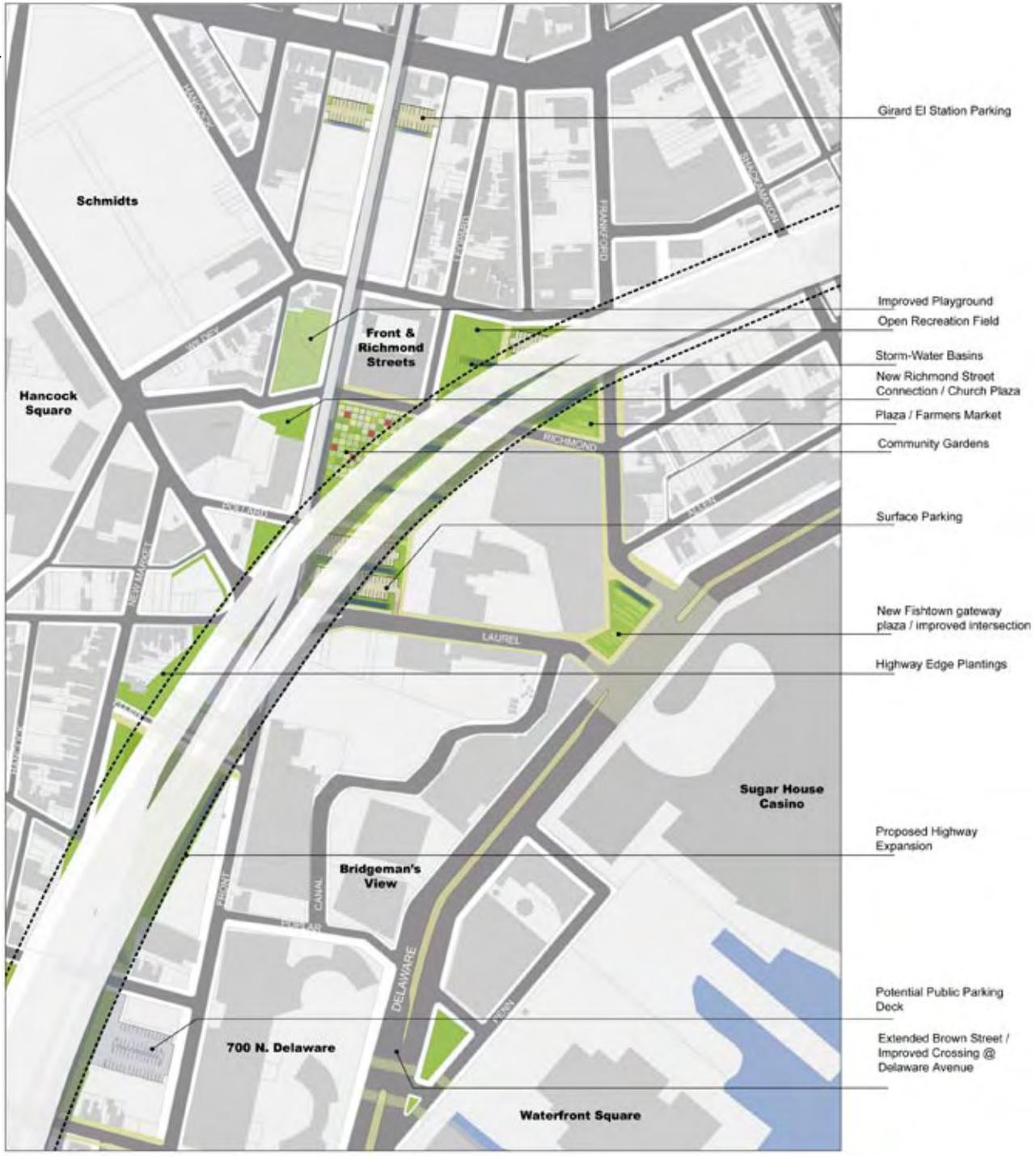
The study area has but one green space overlooking the River – Penn Treaty Park. Northern Liberties community members clearly expressed that the waterfront should consist of multiple parks, linked to one another and the adjacent neighborhoods. The waterfront must be infused with play space – a collective front yard for the community.

- Transform the existing parking lot that occupies the northern half of Festival Pier into park. This caps the major east-west Spring Garden corridor with an important and centrally located open space. Initial conceptual ideas include extending Spring Garden into the water as a grand, pedestrian esplanade. This more formal portion of the park could be flanked with a wide range of active uses including fields for baseball, frisbee, and soccer, courts for tennis and basketball, unprogrammed field area for flexible play and reading the Sunday paper in the sun, hardscaped plazas intended as a skate park, but designed to function as gathering spaces as well, and safe, interesting

play equipment for one of Northern Liberties' fastest growing demographics: kids. The edge of the park, including Festival Pier's event space, must be reclaimed as a natural riparian edge that gradually brings the community to the water and the proposed waterfront trail.

New parking to serve Festival Pier is proposed one block away west of Front Street between Spring Garden and Callowhill and adjacent to I-95.

- Create a new park under I-95 between Richmond Street and Frankford Avenue. What was once a gulf that perceptually expanded the dividing line of I-95 is now the center of a growing residential community that is filling the gap between Northern Liberties and Fishtown. Bridgeman's View, 700 N. Delaware, Trump Tower, Hancock Square, a new proposal on the northeast corner of Front and Richmond Streets and upcoming projects by Tower Investments promise to add significant numbers of new residents, all within a 5-minute walk of I-95. The park should serve many functions from active recreation to community gardening - building upon the rich



Details of proposed park space under the elevated infrastructure of I-95 and the El.



Vacant gas station at Frankford and Delaware.

history of gardening in both Fishtown and Northern Liberties. At grade parking and new space for the horse stable that will soon be relocated from its home in Northern Liberties are also possibilities. All of these uses should be nestled within an ecological framework engineered to manage storm-water naturally and to generate its own power through solar cells and LED lighting.

This proposal was documented in the *Neighborhood Plan* and updated during this design process. With increasing development, upcoming PennDOT investment in I-95 and a renewed, City-wide interest in the waterfront, this is an excellent time to significantly transform how the highway meets the ground.

- Create a Fishtown gateway plaza at Frankford and Delaware Avenues. The current intersection of Frankford Avenue, Delaware Avenue and Laurel Street can be hazardous to your safety depending upon what turn you may be trying to make. The vacant gas station on Frankford Avenue provides a large opportunity to re-imagine this intersection. Frankford Avenue as it descends toward Delaware Avenue should be re-routed through this vacant site. The advantages of this approach are fourfold:

- Frankford Avenue will meet Delaware Avenue at a 90 degree intersection, improving safety;
  - Frankford Avenue and Laurel Street will become separated, improving use of the intersection;
  - The abandoned gas station structure, unique for its streamlined moderne design, should find new life as an incorporated element of the redesign, perhaps as a snack bar for people coming and going to the River; and
  - A new plaza will be created that will greatly enhance the view toward the water and provide an active, civic space for the community at the focal point of historic Frankford Avenue, formerly the King's Highway, which connected Philadelphia and New York City.
- Enhance and re-program Penn Treaty Park. While Penn Treaty Park is an important community asset, it should be re-evaluated in terms of its use and design to maximize its potential. Fishtown should work with the developers of the three parcels between Penn Treaty Park and the site designated for the proposed SugarHouse Casino to create additional green space as an extension to the Park where possible. The program for Penn Treaty Tower, located immediately to the south of the Park includes public restroom facilities for park-goers as well as an outdoor museum space along the building's northern wall featuring a permanent display about William Penn.
  - Create small, passive open spaces along the River between Dave and Busters and Festival Pier. Three small spaces, currently shrouded with fences, should be opened for public use and riverfront enjoyment.



- Green and program all traffic “triangles.” These spaces, envisioned as simple green plazas, should be programmed to communicate the rich history and current activities along the waterfront.

#### 4. Green Links

When residents emerge from I-95, extensions of the waterfront park system should greet and lead them to the River's edge. The streets perpendicular to the riverfront require investment, creativity and protection.

Investment is needed to extend streetfront activity to the water and fill the gaps. Creativity in design is required to render these green streets an indelible connective element for each community.



In most cases, parking can be selectively removed and replaced with landscaping, infiltration planters and improved sidewalks. Frequent crosswalks and material changes should form a horizontal rhythm along the street surface, slowing traffic and promoting pedestrian use. Lastly, protection is needed to ensure views to the water remain open and deleterious uses such as remote parking for the proposed casinos are prohibited. The perpendicular streets – Callowhill, Fairmount, Brown, Poplar, Laurel, Frankford, Shackamaxon, Marlborough and Columbia – must remain active, neighborhood-serving and green.

The cobblestone and macadam surfaced streets near the waterfront should also be recognized as green links to the River. Cobblestones slow traffic, look beautiful, and offer a tangible link to the past. As such, these cobblestone and macadam streets, among them, Canal, Front, Penn, Poplar, and Ellen, require cleaning, repair, and preservation.

In the case of Shackamaxon, Marlborough and Columbia Streets, the former right-of-ways that extended from Delaware Avenue to the River should be recovered providing connections to the waterfront trail system between development sites. The site plan for Penn Treaty Tower does so, effectively re-establishing a clear view and path to the water at the tip of Marlborough Street. Negotiations will be required with other property owners regarding the potential extension of the Brown Street right-of-way to the River. Developers of the proposed SugarHouse Casino site should maintain their promise to not only provide for a waterfront promenade (and its construction during the first phase of the project), but also to ensure access back to Delaware Avenue on either edge of the property. Negotiations with the casino developers must also investigate strategies for preserving the Frankford and Laurel view corridors.



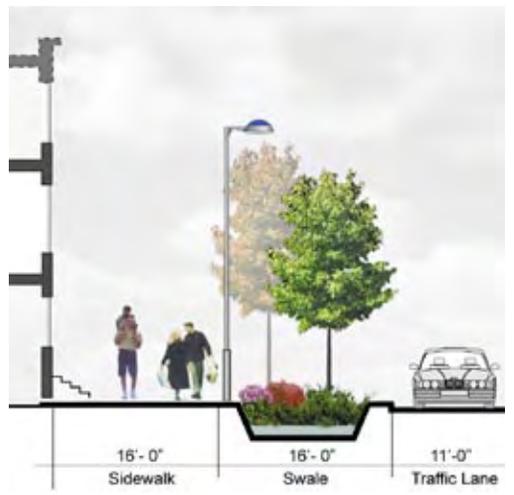
Proposed site plan for Fairmount Avenue's green linkage to Delaware Avenue, showing alternating street parking and densely planted infiltration beds as well as paving material changes at crosswalks and intersections.



Proposed: Fairmount Avenue as green link to the waterfront.



Existing: Fairmount Avenue looking toward the River.



Proposed: infiltration beds to aid stormwater management.



Existing: Spring Garden looking toward the River.



Proposed: improvements to Spring Garden to create stronger connection to the waterfront.

## 5. Civic Incisions

The study area is organized around two critical corridors – Spring Garden Street and Delaware Avenue. Both streets carry a heavy traffic load (over 20,000 cars daily) and play an important role in the regional circulation system. These streets are currently treated, by and large, as highways. The insertion of bicycle lanes and the median plantings along Delaware Avenue south of Spring Garden notwithstanding, both corridors are characterized by speed and pass-through movement patterns. Building pedestrian bridges over Delaware Avenue will not only cost large sums of money but also send the signal that we have given up on reclaiming Delaware Avenue for use by multiple modes and speeds. The community will have accepted that Delaware Avenue is for cars and the River's edge will remain disconnected from the fabric of the community. An alternative approach is necessary. Both Spring Garden Street and Delaware Avenue should be redesigned as a civic gesture of the community, facilitating east-west connections, promoting more pedestrian activity and providing new means of public transit.

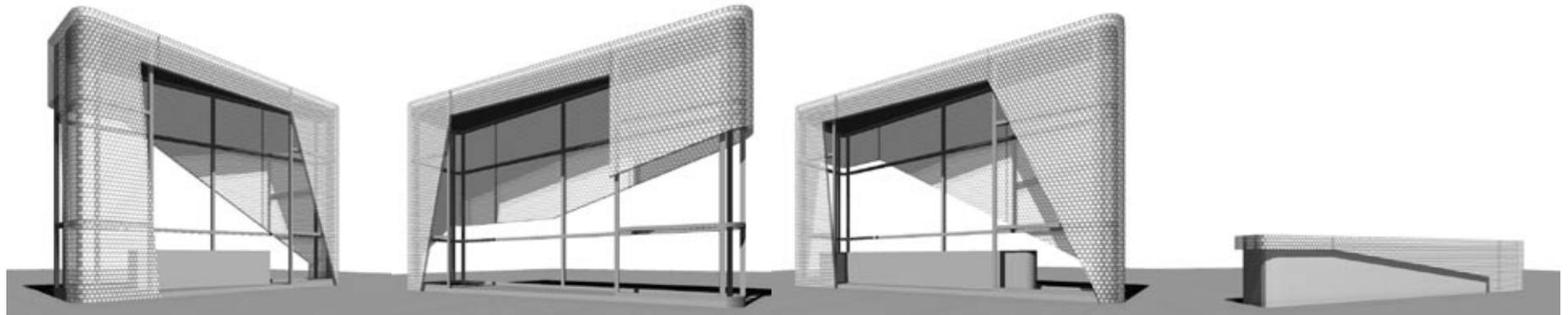
Early and relatively simple actions can make a big difference. To serve as a true riverfront boulevard, Delaware Avenue needs improved intersections and traffic signal operation, crosswalks (including electronic countdowns), additional landscaping and turning lanes. Removal of all street parking would provide additional space for landscaping as well as visually narrow the width of the cartway.

To more strongly connect the Spring Garden El station to the River, Spring Garden Street between the station and Delaware Avenue should be transformed into a linear park. Planting the median with wild grasses, removing street parking, adding landscaping and enhancing the bicycle lanes will serve to bring the riverfront into the community, forge a new identity for the street and leverage the role transit plays in the waterfront area.

Both corridors should be populated with new street furniture that is unique to the community. Bus stops, message boards / kiosks and benches should be designed with the community's industrial past and artistic present in focus. A combination of poured in place concrete, metal mesh and LED lighting comprise an initial approach



Proposed site plan of Spring Garden improvements and extension as pedestrian promenade through new park space at Festival Pier and into the water.



Conceptual designs for neighborhood-specific street furniture: bus shelters, information kiosks, and benches.

to creating a consistent collection of new streetscape elements that will help enliven each corridor. These deployable elements can be manufactured in the community, tapping the talents of local artists and signaling to visitors that they have arrived in Northern Liberties.

Delaware Avenue's future as a boulevard rests in the ability to adequately manage traffic without compromising safety and appeal for pedestrians. For this to occur, new public transportation is necessary. The traffic overview indicates the potential extent of the issue. Any small improvements to how the road works will only be a band aid for the larger issues. It is time to re-think the character of Delaware Avenue. This long-term recommendation calls for the insertion of light rail along Delaware Avenue.

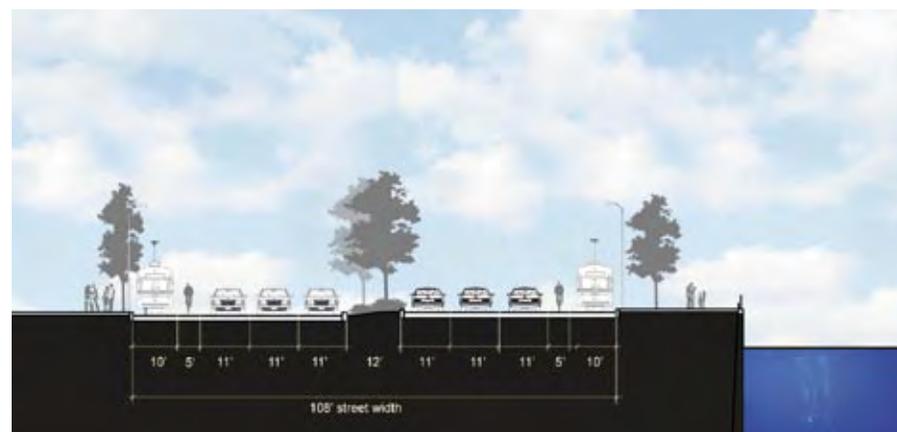
Although a monorail system may take less physical space at ground level than light rail, the cost per mile is extremely high and the engineering quite complicated. Our recommendation is to pursue a light rail system or extension of the Girard Avenue trolley as an ideal solution, recognizing that a dedicated lane for bus rapid transit / electric buses would also be desirable if light rail was cost prohibitive in the short term.

We have illustrated two possible ways of folding light rail into the existing right-of-way. The least invasive in terms of traffic changes to the Avenue is to replace the parking lanes with trolley tracks. The existing sidewalk would be used as the platforms. The disadvantage to this approach is that there are fewer opportunities to create the widened sidewalk / trail along the east side of the Avenue as well as the fact the median shrinks substantially – disappearing when there is a turn lane required. The best solution is to recognize that Delaware Avenue is shared space and therefore, to remove a lane of traffic in either direction. This enables protected bicycle lanes, dedicated trolley lanes, planting strips and an ample median. The most asphalt a pedestrian would need to cross at one time in this scenario is two lanes of traffic, or 22.'

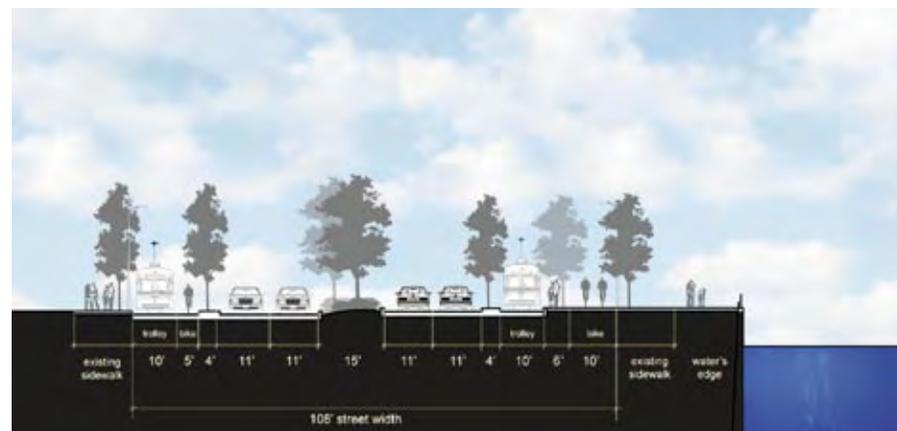
It goes without saying that removing lanes of traffic can only be considered if a wide array of transit options become available to take its place. The future of the waterfront cannot rely on one system alone. Improvements to El stations, new water taxi and ferry service, extended bus routes, and improved pedestrian links are necessary complements to the proposed light rail scheme, and they are discussed in greater detail later in the report. Carving some space for public transportation along what is destined to be an even more significant thoroughfare and civic boulevard is a long term goal, which calls for immediate and collaborative planning efforts. Discussions about the future of the waterfront within the context of the PennPraxis process must similarly consider mobility.



*Existing: Delaware Avenue section.*



*Proposed: less invasive but less ideal means of inserting light rail into Delaware Avenue.*



*Proposed: preferred scenario for light rail on Delaware Avenue removes one lane of traffic in both directions.*



Proposed: wrapping the Spring Garden El station in mesh and light, referencing proposed street furniture.



Existing: Spring Garden El station.



Existing: Spring Garden approach to the waterfront.

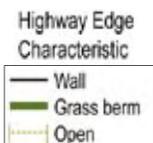


Proposed: improved approach to the waterfront along Spring Garden.



## 6. I-95 Insulation

I-95 is a barrier that must be addressed. PennDOT's plans to improve the Girard Avenue interchange and add a lane to the highway all the way to Vine Street should be viewed as an opportunity. While a widened highway is an unfortunate side-effect that only furthers the gulf between the community and the waterfront, early advocacy and a forged partnership with PennDOT can bring about significant improvement to what will be the highway's interface with the community at street level and noise level. Creative attention to I-95's edges is essential, and the community should have the chance to influence the look, feel, and function of these edges from the ground up. No community is better equipped with the artistic vision and energy for such a task than Northern Liberties.



*I-95's existing edge conditions in Northern Liberties.*

We have catalogued the varying conditions in terms of how the highway meets the community. There are three primary conditions - a wall, a sloped berm and an elevated structure. As described in our park recommendations, where I-95 is lofted over the ground plane, a new park should emerge to serve multiple functions and a growing community. The materials and lighting used for the new piers of I-95 must be carefully considered with an emphasis on high quality materials and effective noise absorption. Where concrete is used, options to enhance its appearance should be explored including potentially infusing it with elements that add depth and color - iron fillings for instance. The result will be a surface that captures and plays with light. The Urban Design Committee of the NLNA should take this charge seriously, helping to define a construction treatment and material that enlivens the space below, while also serving as a sound barrier to protect nearby residents from increased highway noise.

In addition, the 15-foot wide access corridor alongside the western wall of I-95 should be reconsidered for an integrated walkway and bike path. In the early 1990s, Northern Liberties residents worked on a plan for such a path, intended to link the neighborhood from Spring Garden Street south to Penn's Landing. Improvements to this strip of land, owned by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, should be advocated for in conjunction with all PennDOT work related to the Girard Avenue interchange.





In locations with a sloped berm, we have identified two types of improvements:

- Slopes should be densely planted to include a row of trees – either Lombardy Poplars or Ginkos – that form a strong edge to the highway. The experience of driving into the City will be informed by this datum of tall, thin trees. At the base of the slopes, open swales should be constructed to capture rainwater.
- Between Poplar and Ellen Streets and between Marlborough and Columbia Streets, the slopes should be excavated to open up the space below. This will enable a reconnected Poplar Street, enhanced views, greater connectivity in key locations (Marlborough and Columbia Streets frame Penn Treaty Park at the River), and provide additional space for necessary uses such as parking.



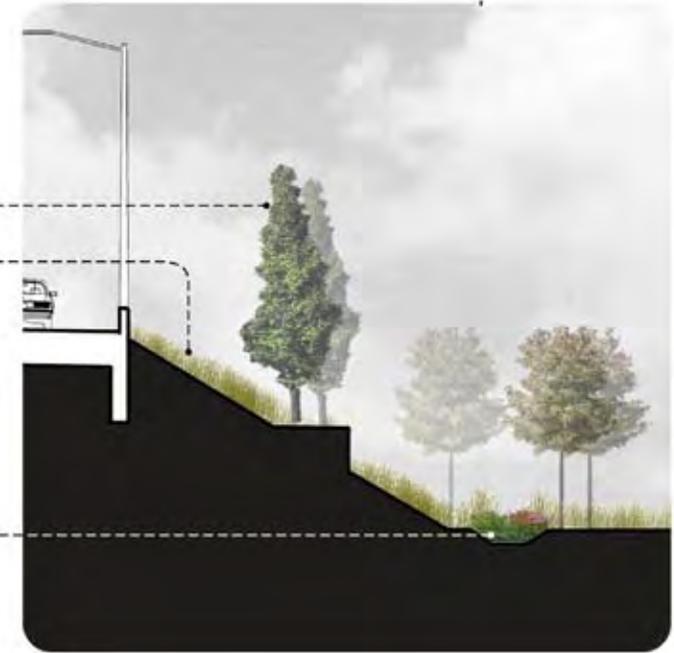
Lombardy Poplars



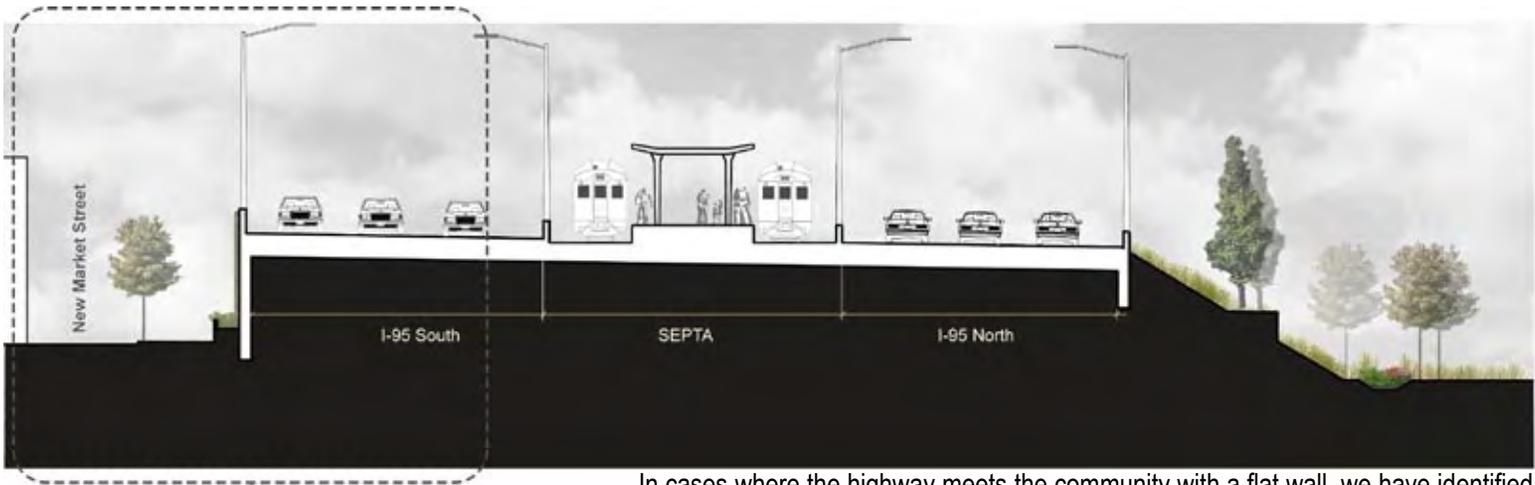
Durable plantings



Swales

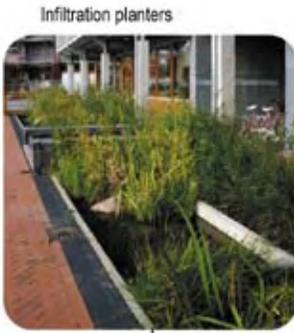
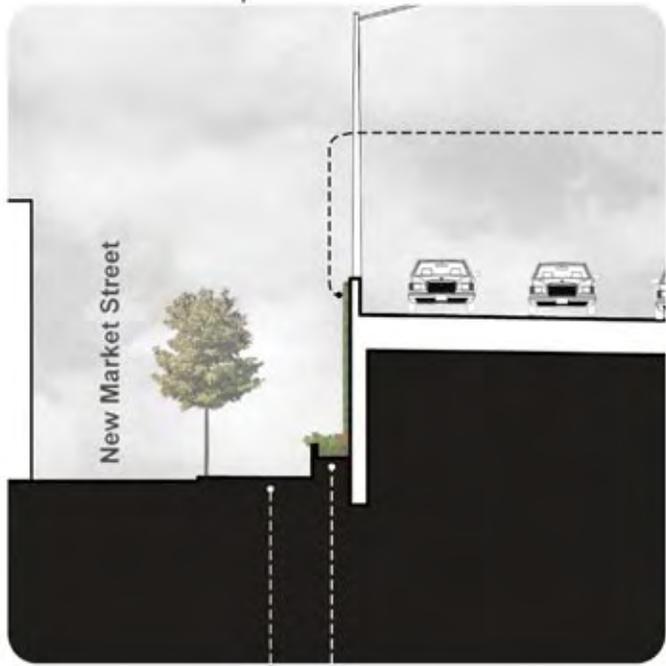


*Proposed: improvements to sloped berm edges.*



In cases where the highway meets the community with a flat wall, we have identified three strategies:

- Build infiltration planters at the base of the walls. These will capture rainwater and provide space for landscaping.
- Utilize permeable paving and / or porous asphalt for parking areas.
- Alternate wall treatments including planted vines and murals.



Vines / murals

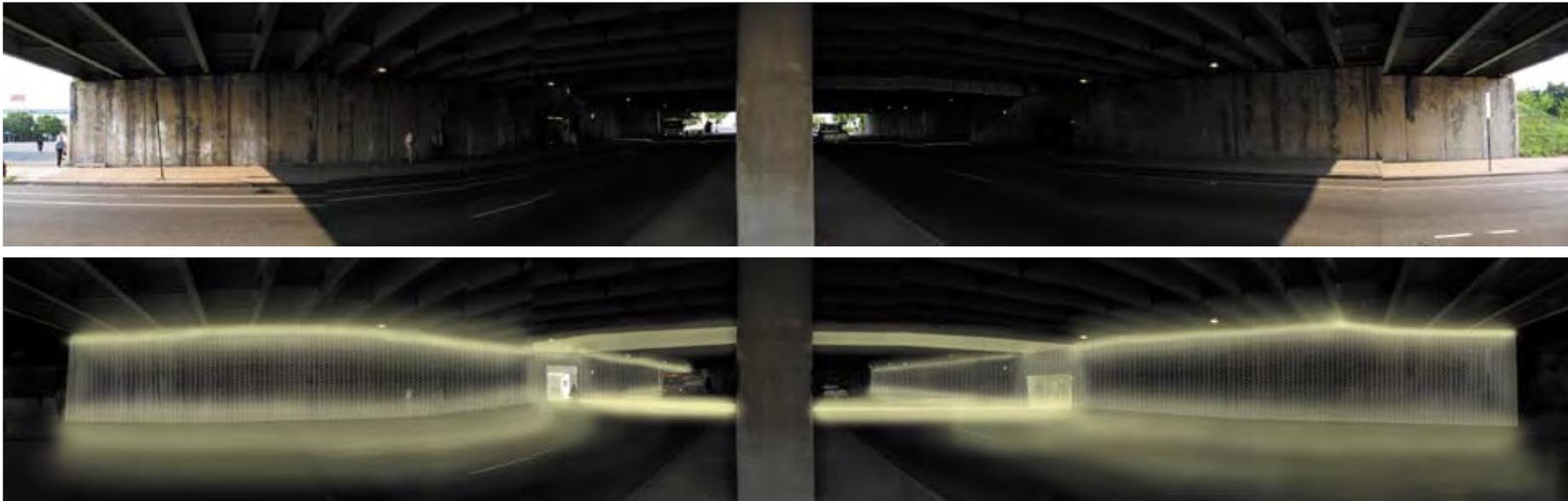
Proposed: improvements to flat wall edges.



## 7. A Multi-Modal Waterfront

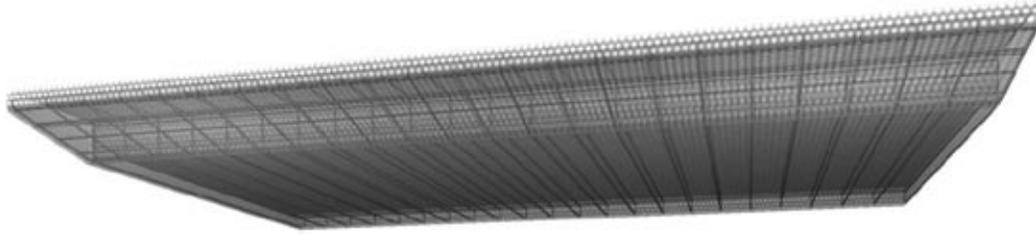
The transportation overview completed by Orth-Rodgers & Associates indicates that up to 42,000 additional cars per day could be added to Delaware Avenue if all proposed projects currently in the pipeline progress as planned. Trade-offs will be necessary. The days of being able to travel to Home Depot in South Philadelphia in less than 10 minutes are over. Although roadway and traffic signal improvements will have a role, a growing grass-roots consensus is building that the waterfront should offer the best of multiple forms of transportation including public transit, automobile access, cycling and walking. Connectivity and choice are the underlying themes that have guided our transportation recommendations.





Existing conditions at the Spring Garden El station and proposed facade and lighting improvements.

- *Improve the Frankford / Laurel / Delaware intersection* – As described above, re-routing Frankford Avenue to intersect with Delaware Avenue at a right angle creates a new plaza and addresses what is currently a confusing intersection which only promises to worsen with the introduction of the proposed SugarHouse Casino. The traffic light needs to be located at Frankford and Delaware only. Laurel Street, redirected out of the intersection, should be designated as right turn only. This strategy will reduce conflicting movements and improve safety.
- *Improve / Re-connect Poplar Street* – Poplar Street between Front Street and Delaware Avenue is two-way but extremely narrow. To fully serve new development, this block should be widened. In addition, as improvements to I-95 proceed, excavation should be considered to allow Poplar to re-connect east and west of the highway.
- *Ensure access to Delaware Avenue via Brown Street* – If plans for 700 N. Delaware fall through, the NLNA should lobby for public access through the site even if only for pedestrians. This will connect the community with one of the few traffic lights along Delaware Avenue at Penn Street.
- *Provide new public parking resources along the highway* – The *Neighborhood Plan* recommended one parking deck near Brown and Front Streets to simultaneously serve 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and entertainment uses in the waterfront area. This is still desirable if screened from Brown Street with new housing or other active uses. Another deck should be considered south of Delilah's adjacent to I-95 for the relocation of Festival Pier parking.
- *Enhance Delaware Avenue and Spring Garden Street* – As described previously, these corridors require traffic calming and aggressive streetscape enhancements to reach their potential as civic boulevards. The addition of a second eastbound left turn lane on Spring Garden Street and a second northbound left turn lane on Delaware Avenue are possible capacity improvements.
- *Change Callowhill Street to two-way traffic* – One possible roadway capacity improvement involves conversion of Callowhill Street from one-way eastbound to two-way. For northbound traffic on Delaware Avenue, Spring Garden Street is the first opportunity to turn west toward Center City after the ramp to Market Street. Conversion of Callowhill Street from one-way eastbound to two-way could reduce the need for a second turn lane at Spring Garden Street. Two-way travel on Callowhill Street would also provide access to the World Trade Center development site. The tradeoff of a two-way operation would be added delays at the intersection of Callowhill, 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and I-95 southbound off ramp due to the need to add a signal phase for Callowhill Street.



*Proposed: edge of metal mesh wrap designed to accommodate signage and solar panels to power lighting under the station.*



*Proposed: metal mesh wrap under Spring Garden Street El station to highlight industrial history of Northern Liberties.*



*Rendering of Spring Garden station at night.*



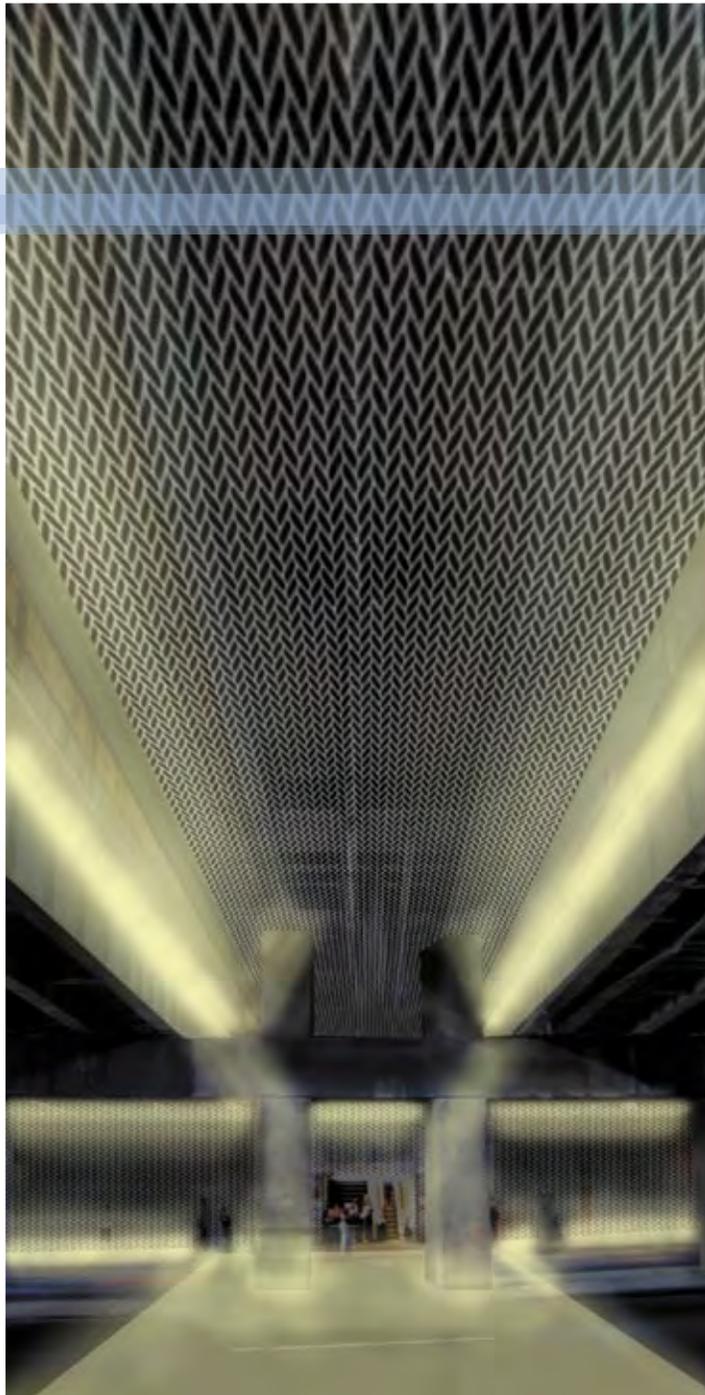
Circulation along the waterfront should be provided by multiple modes of transportation.



- *Improve the Spring Garden El Station* – The El station is trapped within the northbound and southbound lanes of I-95. The result is an unattractive entry for the station under the dark cavern of the I-95 overpass. Our approach is to wrap the interior of the underpass with a metal mesh and rear lighting to echo the street furniture designed for Spring Garden and Delaware. At the ceiling of the underpass, the metal mesh would be applied to a light metal structure that cantilevers over Spring Garden Street to capture sunlight and charge solar cells intended to generate power for the lighting. The face of this structure could be used for signage or public art as defined by the community. At night, the station and highway would appear to float above the street and greatly improve the experience and safety of the station.

All entry to the station is on the south side via a stairway and escalator. The north side offers an exit only, with only a stairway. SEPTA has plans for a cosmetic improvement to the station, which might dovetail with the facade treatment described above. More in-depth improvements to the station would require that the station be made ADA accessible, which would be extremely difficult given the concrete encasement.

- *Pursue water taxi and river ferry service* – With two proposed casinos, Dave and Busters, the Aquarium and ballpark in Camden, plus a growing number of proposed riverfront uses, a demand is apparent for new and enhanced water transportation services. An effective water-based transportation network would allow gamblers, for instance, to easily travel between the proposed casinos without burdening the street system, and links with parking lots in New Jersey would provide a transportation alternative for visitors coming from east of the Delaware River. The proposed river taxi should also plan to service the future “Petty’s Island Nature Preserve.” The Cooper’s Ferry Development Corporation is promoting the expanded use of the Delaware River Port Authority’s River Link Ferry for this very



Proposed: solar-powered LED lighting to brighten the underside of the station.

purpose. Discussions should take place with the State, Casino owners, DRPA, Penn's Landing Corporation and other stakeholders about a comprehensive water taxi and ferry system.

- *Insert light rail onto Delaware Avenue* – The waterfront planning process must transform hopes of reclaiming Delaware Avenue from the realm of the car for the use of multiple modes of transportation into policies that mandate flexible, efficient and universal access and circulation within and to the district. The success of a restored and reimagined riverfront relies on the ability of people, coming by foot, by bicycle, by water, by car, or by transit, to reach the River - safely.

A light rail system or extension of the Girard Avenue trolley is an ideal solution, functioning to both increase Delaware Avenue's capacity to move people between destinations and to narrow the width (and therefore reduce the speed) of the automobile thoroughway. Because of the long-term and costly nature of this recommendation, the NLNA should support the creation

of a dedicated lane for bus rapid transit or electric buses in the short term as well as advocacy efforts for improvements to El stations, water taxi and ferry service, extended bus routes, and improved pedestrian links. All of these components are important, and they are all needed to reinforce one another.

- *Advocate for added SEPTA service* – SEPTA's Service Planning Department is evaluating the need to add service or routes on Delaware Avenue as a result of the proposed casino developments. Routes that currently terminate at Front and Market Street are candidates for extension to Delaware Avenue.

Furthermore, the NLNA should encourage SEPTA to consider addition of a new station on the Market-Frankford line where the line diverges from I-95 near Laurel Street. Such a station would be four blocks from the Spring Garden station and three blocks from the Girard station. The walk to the waterfront would be reduced to one block compared with two blocks from Spring Garden Street and four blocks from Girard station. A good pedestrian connection should be designed to the waterfront, and the station should be made ADA accessible. This would support more intense development and encourage a higher percentage of transit use. For comparison, the Market-Frankford line station spacing in Center City from 15<sup>th</sup> Street east, where density comparable to that proposed for the waterfront district exists, is every two or three blocks.



L-R: conceptual design for information booth, 'art board' at 11th and Vine Streets in Philadelphia, riverfront artifacts for found object art installation.

Proposed: real-time waterfront soundscape project.



### 8. Apertures

Where are the gateways to the water? Where are the spaces for interpretation, learning and expression? We believe that the presence of the water should be felt far from its coastline. Small, highly visible locations such as intersections and small plazas should be programmed to introduce and entice people to discover their riverfront. There is a richly historic and evolving narrative to be embraced and expressed. From the Revolutionary War to the industrial revolution to the present day, the waterfront has played a multi-faceted role. We have identified

11 locations as opportunities to create varied installations that express these hidden narratives. These installations can be simple – comprising only historical markers / signs – to more aggressive and interpretive integrating both public art and landscaping.

The following are a few initial ideas:

- Hear the water: real-time soundscape that brings the movement and activity of the water to a specific intersection along 2<sup>nd</sup> Street.
  - Reuse artifacts: Sculpture garden composed of found materials on riverfront vacant land.
  - Seeing history: Historical photos of riverfront uses tagged to a timeline of development.
- 
- Seeing change: Large-scale Sanborn maps from different eras of the waterfront displayed in a large format display kiosk.
  - Community expression: Community “whiteboard” enabling posts and other

facts about the riverfront, rotating art installations to showcase local talent, or dispersed “collectibles,” designed or decorated street furniture - like Chicago’s Cow Parade, but with two functions: encouraging exploration and a supporting a cleaner or more comfortable environment.

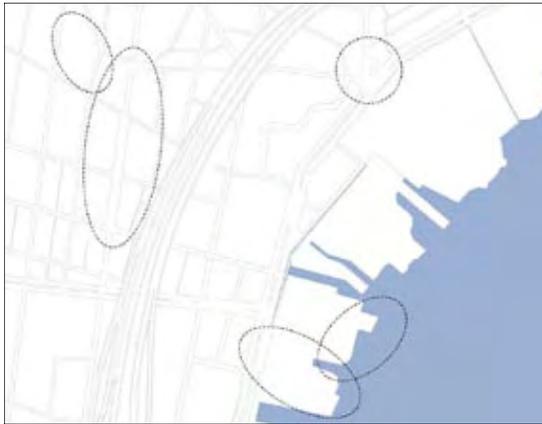
- Art boards to replace or adorn the reverse side of billboards.

As a public art and community building initiative, foundations are a likely source of funds for this effort.



*L-R: post-it boards for residents and visitors alike, adaptations of metal mesh to add increased coherence to neighborhood streetscape elements, “collectibles” garbage cans designed by local artists, community-based public art in Rochester, NY including a series of unique benches and other sculptures, like a poetry booth... pick up the phone!*





*The riverfront needs regular programming of temporary events that emerge from the community.*

should be used for larger gatherings, and Frankford Avenue should become an active location for art walks and farmers' markets.

### Private Framework

The public improvements described above are necessary, but as with all great waterfronts, the role of private investment is equally important. The NLNA has built a solid reputation for their capacity and ability to provide local zoning review. Given the current system in Philadelphia that affords community organizations power in determining their future, the following guidelines are created to help the NLNA review waterfront proposals. As with the *Neighborhood Plan*, these guidelines are intended as a statement of the community's expectations for new development.

We recognize that there is a move afoot to finally address the City's zoning code. We applaud these efforts. To promote private investment, clear expectations are necessary City-wide, not just in one community. However, until such time as the

## 9. An Adaptive Environment

A waterfront must flow and respond to each season. The yearly rhythms need to be imprinted on the River. Festival Pier holds multiple events yearly, almost exclusively in the warmer months. Similarly, Northern Liberties holds frequent community-based events, either individually or with adjacent communities. All of these activities need to find stronger expression on the riverfront. A calendar of events should be created that populates the riverfront with unique experiences from farmers' markets to art shows and concerts. The new park proposed on Festival Pier

zoning process and code are changed throughout the City, these guidelines attempt to make the best of the existing system.

Further, we recognize that there are extensive concerns regarding the potential addition of casinos. In the event that the proposed casinos become a reality, a number of individuals have been working to create restrictions on the types and locations of uses around them. The NLNA should support these efforts and integrate the final restrictions into the expectations below.

### 1. Basic Expectations

Flowing from the community's vision, there are a number of basic expectations to which every development must adhere. These are the community's ground rules for new development:

- *Respect the water* – Ensure public waterfront access and, where applicable, design for that use.
- *Respect the neighbors* – Continued coordination with the NLNA, immediate neighbors and other neighborhood groups (if applicable) is a must through all phases of the project.
- *Retain view corridors* – View corridors are at a premium, existing ones are to be protected and enhanced with clear and attractive views to the water.
- *Design for excellence* – The City and citizens of Philadelphia and its Delaware Riverfront communities envision a world-class waterfront with world-class architecture. Every project must reflect the community's desire for design



*The NLNA expects excellence in design - in the heart of the neighborhood and along the River.*

## 2. Height / Bulk

How tall is too tall? Many opinions exist on the subject. From the more controlled low- and mid-rise approaches to high-rise developments, the common ingredient is density. Chicago and Vancouver follow this model closely with high-rise structures adjacent to or along the water. The same is true of the proposed Brooklyn Bridge Park, which maximizes height and density in the limited zones not designated as open space.

Northern Liberties has not been host to a consistent 3- or 4-story fabric for over a century. Industries often pushed the boundaries of scale, sitting cheek by jowl with small-scale townhomes. Recognizing the varied pattern of building heights as something intrinsic to Northern Liberties, the NLNA remains open-minded with regard to mid-rise development.

With the proposed waterfront development, the vertical boundaries of the community are being tested once again. Waterfront Square, a collection of 40-story towers, was approved by the City without any community input. Subsequent proposals have matched or exceeded these heights. The most recent, Bridgeman's View, was approved by the NLNA after the developer met extensively with the community and adjusted the approach and final design to meet local concerns and objectives.

By mapping all of the existing residential uses and drawing 200' buffers around each, we have determined where new height is more appropriate than not. Taking into account the scale of existing development, topographic changes and viewsheds, we have created 4 separate height zones:

1. 50' or less (equivalent to a 4- or 5-story townhome)
2. 51'-100' (low- to mid-rise structures up to 10 floors)
3. 101'-200' (mid-rise structures between 10 and 20 floors)
4. 201'-450' (high-rise structures up to approximately 40 stories)

These heights are provisional and can be extended if additional commitments are made to funding public space, providing additional affordable housing or exceeding other expectations described in this document. The following additional height / bulk expectations must be considered when designing in the district, so as to protect and restore views of the River and of the Ben Franklin Bridge;

- Buildings should be designed perpendicular to the water's edge;
- A minimum of 70' shall be retained between towers over 40' in height;



*The area's industrial fabric is something to embrace and reinforce where possible.*

excellence and significantly enhance the look and feel of the waterfront. This includes high quality materials, no historic mimicry, and sensitive placement of mechanical rooms and services. Each building will be subject to a special review process assessing architectural excellence to be conducted by the NLNA Urban Design Committee.

- *Protect structures of historic significance* – New construction should not involve the demolition of any heritage building that adds value to the waterfront's character and can be salvaged. Where possible, these structures should be integrated into final designs.
- *Build for diversity* – All projects over 50 units shall include at least 10% set aside for affordable units, defined as up to 80% of the City's median household income (\$30,700). This is a policy adopted by the community in the *Neighborhood Plan* and under discussion by City Council (albeit in different forms). As described in the *Neighborhood Plan*, incentives to provide affordable units include density / height bonuses of up to 150% in height.

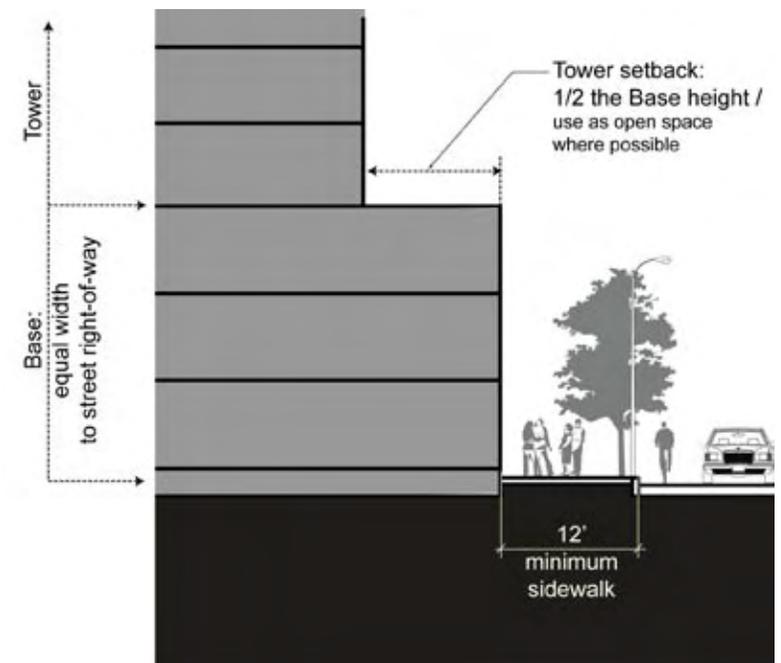


Residential buffers - 50' to 200' distances around existing homes.



Building design should express variation in form and scale.

- Smaller footprints are preferred – additional height will be considered if towers are designed to taper, minimizing bulk above 40';
- Larger building masses should be avoided, broken instead into multiple forms; and
- Building heights should step down to the waterfront trail and along the perpendicular green linkages.



Minimum bulk requirements along perpendicular east-west streets and along the River.



### 3. Site Design and Use

The site design of all structures should recognize the objective of creating an active, vibrant, viewable, and accessible waterfront. Proposed developments should:

- Locate pedestrian-oriented uses on the ground floor of buildings and provide pedestrian amenities to activate open-space connections;
- Construct building(s) with no setback from major streets. “Hold the corner” of buildings at intersections by building to the property line;
- Utilize landscaping, rather than walls and fences, to create semi-public / private buffers as well as buffers for service entrances;
- Refrain from building surface or structured parking lots adjacent to the riverfront;
- Refrain from locating transformers and other above-grade utility structures along the parks, the waterfront trail or perpendicular connections to the River (green links);
- Where appropriate, promote mixed-use districts by providing a minimum first floor height of 18’ to accommodate a wide range of ground floor uses;
- Focus major retail development (10,000 sq. ft. or more) along Spring Garden, Frankford and Delaware Avenue to protect the integrity of 2nd Street;
- Ensure that all retail is neighborhood-serving and high quality;



Potential retail concentrations.

- Allow for the continued activity of light industrial uses where possible;
- Avoid the use of stucco, EIFS systems, wood and simulated wood products, one-way or mirror glass and spandrel glazing as primary building materials;



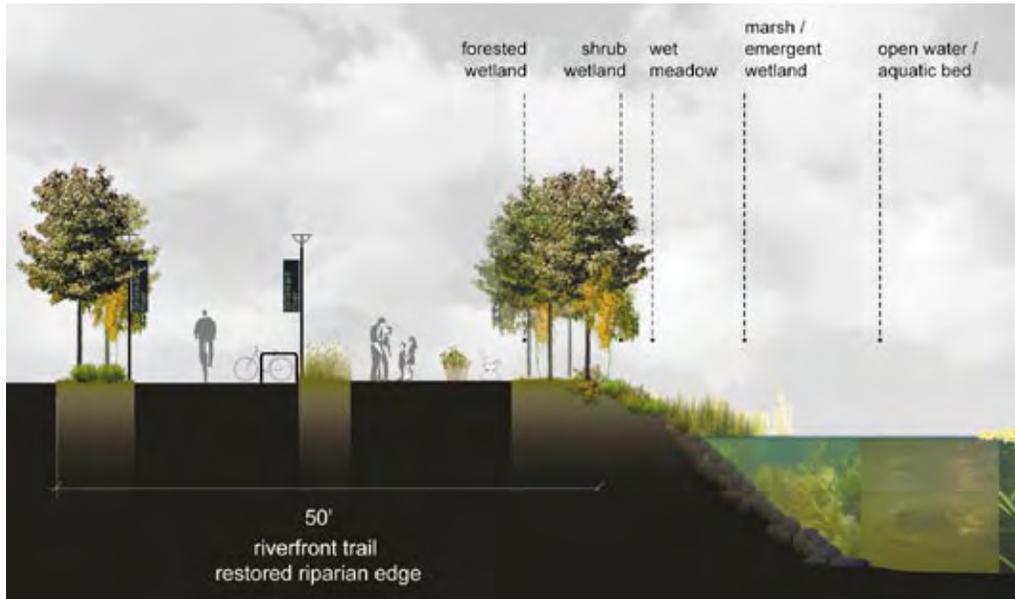
Above: Utilize landscaping to create outdoor spaces and buffer service entrances. Right: prohibit surface parking or structured parking overlooking the River.



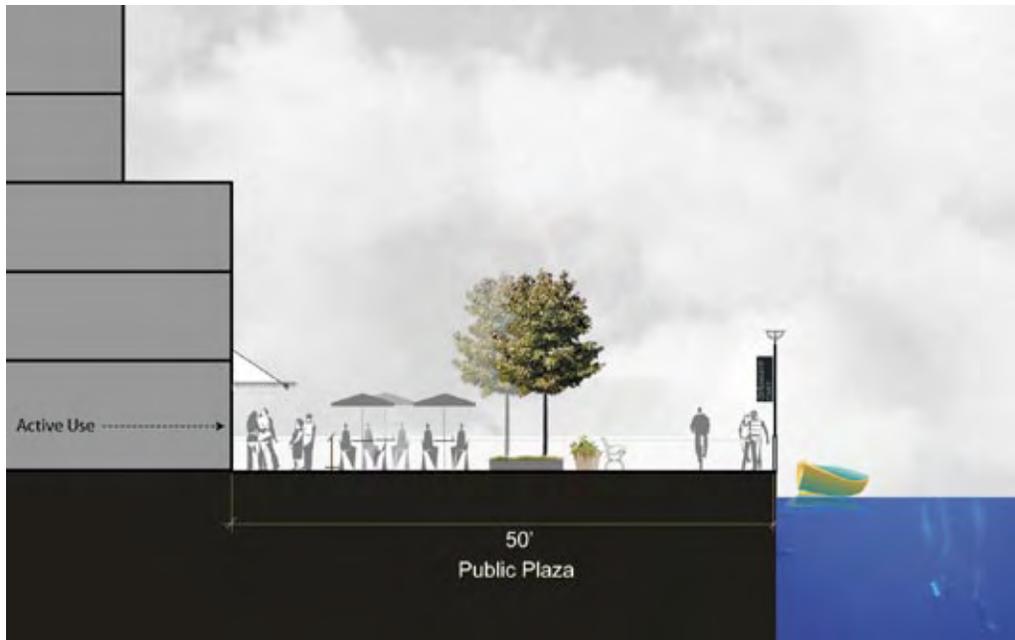
Transparent facades, landscaping and the thoughtful design of public space are required for all projects in the waterfront area.

- Ensure that 75% of ground floor facades are transparent for all developments except new townhouses;
- Ensure that ground floor glazing is 100% transparent, allowing clear views into and out of buildings;
- Avoid large, blank walls covering any portion of new development. A minimum of 15% should be transparent on all surfaces. Alternative approaches including landscaping or murals must be approved by the NLNA;
- Design locations for light fixtures, trash cans, signage and other necessities as a part of the initial building concepts; and
- Ensure public connections to the waterfront based upon the following guidelines:
  - All public connections to the River must be lined with active, visually interesting uses, including retail, fitness centers, residential entryways, and other public uses. Parking should not be visible from the public trail.
  - For large parcels, ensure a 50-foot trail along the water's edge with a restored riparian edge;
  - Retain a minimum of 50 feet at the end of all piers for public space;
  - Provide a minimum of a 20-foot wide public trail connection between Delaware Avenue and the end of each pier;
  - For the development of piers, provide a continuous 20-foot wide public trail around all edges or provide one 20-foot wide connection on the southern side of the pier and build a "floating path" to connect with adjacent piers;
  - Where east-west connections are proposed between Delaware Avenue and the riverfront and are not located along the water's edge, ensure that the width of a typical street is retained for access (minimum 35 feet); and
  - Recognize that the sidewalk along the eastern edge of Delaware Avenue offers a secondary trail along the River. Ensure that building facades and points of entry promote safety and activity along Delaware Avenue by minimizing breaks along that trail. Incorporate public amenities such as lighting, benches, planters, and trees to enhance the existing trail.

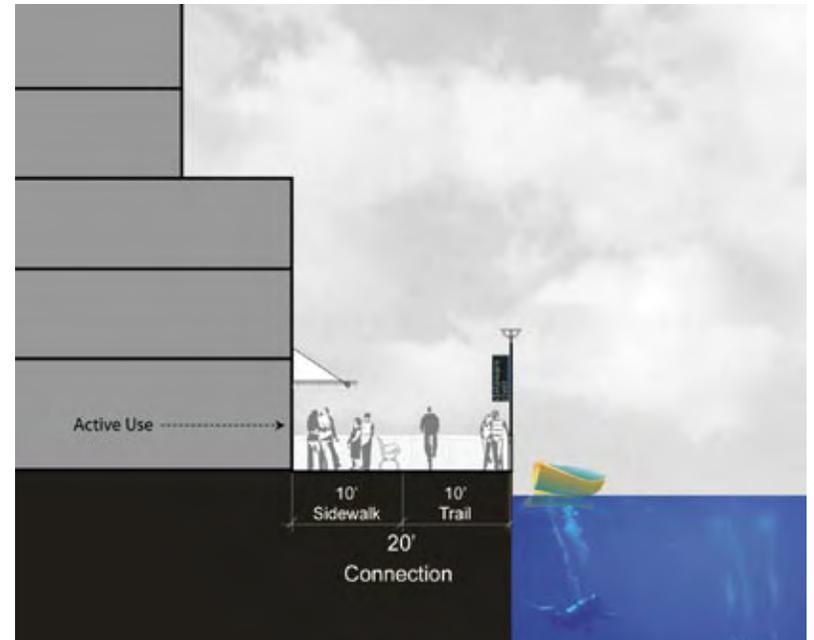




50-foot trail along the water's edge with a restored riparian edge.



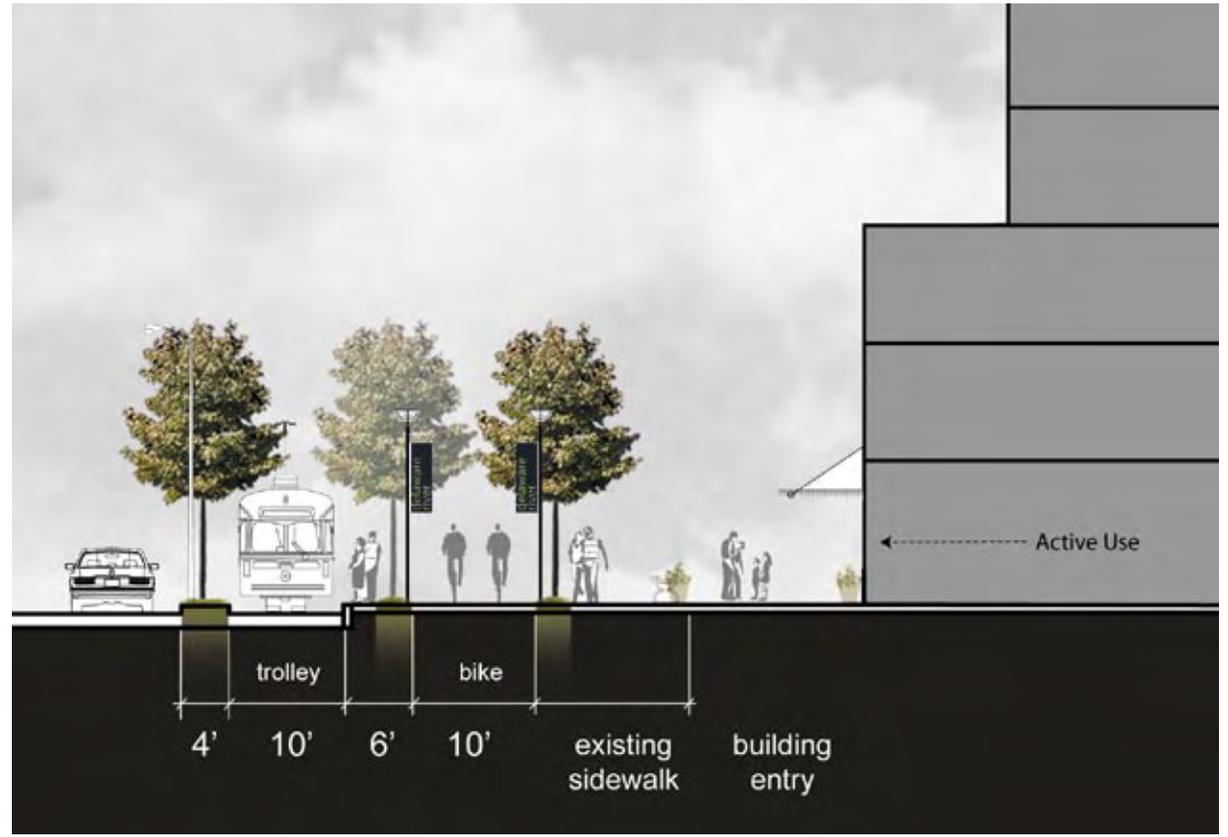
50-foot public space adjacent to active use at the end of pier.



20-foot public trail connection between Delaware Avenue and end of pier, lined by active use.



Proposed / existing trail integrated with sidewalk along the eastern edge of Delaware Avenue.  
 Source: Reclaiming the Delaware Waterfront, WRT for CCD



Waterfront structures designed to respect and enhance the public space and existing path along Delaware Avenue's eastern sidewalk.



Floating path alternative to continuous path along all pier edges.

## 4. Transportation / Parking

The design for all structures should promote access by multiple modes of transportation with the overarching objective of providing viable and attractive alternatives to automobile travel. Proposed developments should:

- Promote shared parking by reducing parking minimums for mixed-use developments;
- Locate parking in the rear of the property and out of view of major public zones;
- To the maximum extent possible, refrain from locating vehicular entrances to parking garages and building service areas along primary perpendicular streets (green links);
- Minimize curb-cuts for vehicular access to development sites along primary roads;
- Avoid locating curb-cuts, parking entries or service entries within 100' of a street corner;
- Promote stacked parking where feasible;
- Promote PhillyCarShare;
- Provide dedicated parking spaces for PhillyCarShare in residential lots or garages;
- Ensure that all above ground parking structures are enclosed within at least 25' of active uses. Parking should not be visible from main pedestrian corridors; and
- Provide secure bicycle storage to accommodate a minimum of 5% of the building's occupants. In office buildings, also provide personal lockers,



*New developments should promote the use of bicycles.*



changing rooms and showers for a minimum of 5% of the building's daytime population.

Additionally, the NLNA should:

- Require developers to identify the nearest transit stops and improve the sidewalk or pedestrian pathways to those stops; and
- Negotiate with developers to "adopt" the nearest transit stop and provide improvements such as benches, shelters and lighting.

## 5. Low-Impact Development

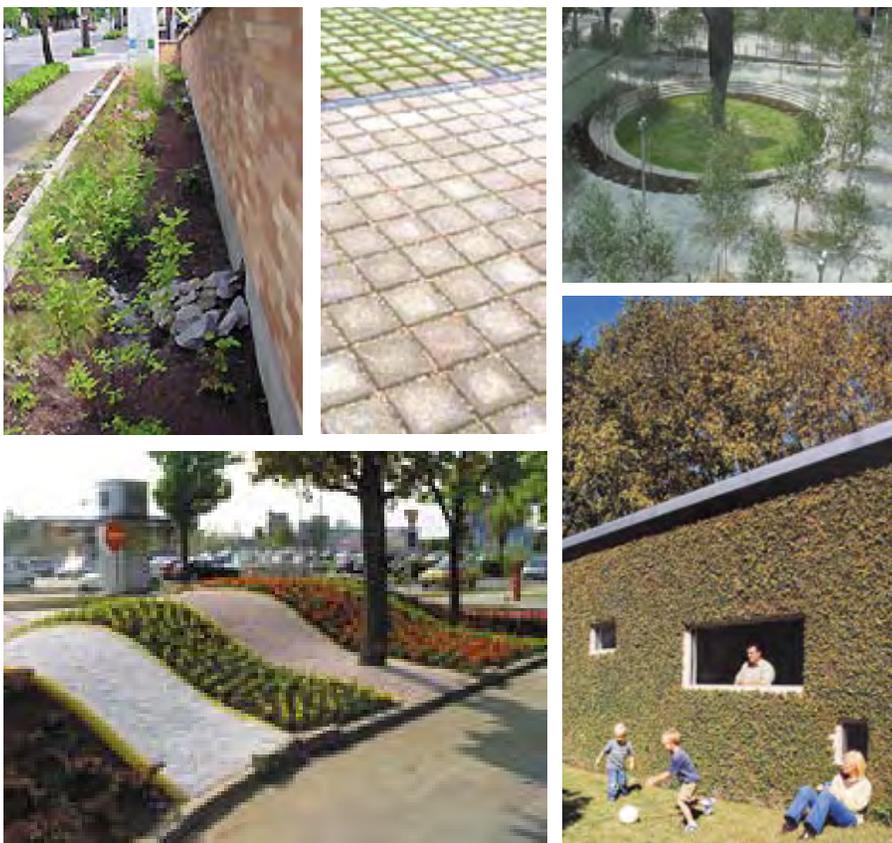
The design for all structures should respect and contribute to the neighborhood's desire for a greener, more sustainable future. Proposed developments along the waterfront should:

- Build to the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Gold standards. This applies, particularly, to projects located immediately adjacent to the River;
- Ensure that at least 20% of the land area is publicly accessible open space;
- Provide Green / Eco roofs for large projects;
- Utilize green construction technologies including recycled materials, natural lighting, grey water systems, energy efficient design, energy star appliances, etc.;
- Where demolition is necessary, consider "deconstruction" practices to salvage materials;



*Potzdamer Platz in Berlin: an example of integrated, low-impact design.*

- Provide on-site open space that represents a significant addition to the green and plaza spaces of the waterfront area including a 50' foot right-of-way for a trail at the River's edge;
- Minimize adverse microclimate effects through tree plantings, awnings and other design elements;
- Develop planting designs that balance ecological functions with the security of trail users;
- Maximize the use of pervious materials on the site to reduce stormwater run-off. This includes porous asphalt, unit pavers and grass-paving systems for parking areas;



Reinforcing one goal of the Neighborhood Plan, new construction in the waterfront area should exemplify the highest standards in green design. Clockwise from top left: infiltration planter; permeable paving; usable open space; innovative use of recycled materials; and swales.

- Incorporate design features such as landscape swales in parking islands to promote the absorption of stormwater into the ground; and
- Reduce on-site heat gains by minimizing dark-colored surface areas, such as black asphalt. Acceptable alternatives include the use of concrete paving, unit paving systems, light-colored asphalt product using limestone aggregates or colored sealants, and increasing areas of landscape and ground cover.

## 6. Signage

Like the buildings and uses they mark or advertise, signs contribute to the look and feel of the built environment. The design for all signage should be thoughtful, creative, and held to a standard of excellence, just as that of the structures themselves.

- All signs must be reviewed and approved by the NLNA Urban Design Committee;
- No billboards or off premise signs are permitted in the waterfront study area;
- Signs that flash, blink, rotate, or move by mechanical means are not permitted;
- Floodlighting or illuminated signs must be shielded so that the light source is not visible from any point off the lot on which the sign stands;
- The temporary display of signs, banners, or flags advertising special events or activities is permitted. However, should the display be planned for more than one month, signage review and approval by the NLNA Urban Design Committee should be sought;
- Signs placed in positions that might cause danger or otherwise interfere with the free flow of pedestrian traffic on the sidewalk or waterfront path are not permitted;
- A sign should not project above the roof of the structure to which it is affixed or project more than 2' from the façade of the building;
- Signage on buildings should not be located at a height which exceeds the established height limits; and

- All signs within the study area shall be part of the overall total design scheme and in keeping with the architectural character of each project.

## 7. Lighting

Likewise, lighting for each project requires careful design to ensure that the light produced functions to brighten intended areas, and intended areas only. Proposed projects should:

- Ensure that the ground level of buildings and associated outdoor spaces are well lit at night;
- Integrate exterior lighting such that it does not negatively impact adjacent uses; and
- Minimize site light pollution by using fixtures that conceal the light source and contain the light to within the property and sidewalk boundaries.

## A Note on Implementation

This effort was squarely focused on helping the Northern Liberties neighborhood define a vision for its riverfront. With the information provided within this document, the NLNA will now resume the review of private development proposals with respect to the recommendations and guidelines included herein. Implementation of the design guidelines is an ongoing process that will be re-affirmed with each new project reviewed by the NLNA Zoning Committee. As a part of zoning review, the NLNA should work closely with Fishtown and other community organizations, recognizing that every project has an impact beyond its immediate boundaries.

The NLNA has a proven capacity for advocacy, which will remain critical to the *Waterfront Plan's* ultimate success. The range of recommendations for the public realm will require coordination and financing well beyond what the NLNA can organize locally. PennDOT, SEPTA, Penn's Landing Corporation, the City, local businesses, developers and adjacent community organizations must form an active dialogue about these recommendations.

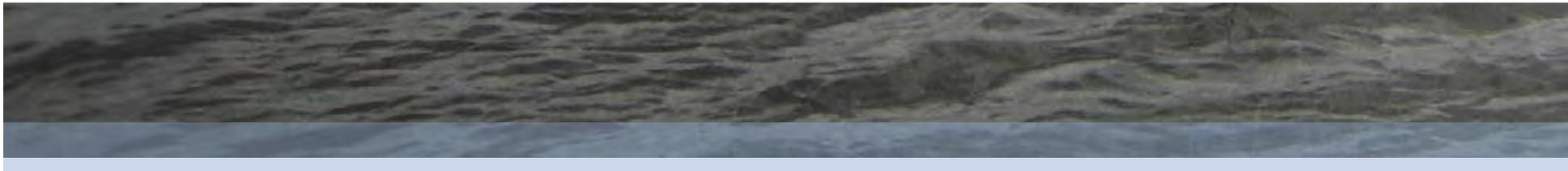
Broadly speaking, there are two key avenues toward financing many of the recommendations documented in this plan:

- *Public investment* – with the City-wide interest in the waterfront and planned investment by organizations like PennDOT, this may be the perfect time to lobby for community-based funding in line with this *Plan*. The necessary first step is to continue participation in the PennPraxis Central Delaware Riverfront planning process. PennPraxis is empowered to create recommendations and access potential funding sources. PennPraxis will also be outlining potential methods to guide implementation over time. The work and effort of Northern Liberties to assert the community's voice must be acknowledged by PennPraxis with major concepts adopted as a part of the overall plan.

Further, some recommendations, such as new light rail can, and should, only be truly evaluated at a larger scale. The NLNA must work with PennPraxis as they assess some of the ideas in this document in the context of the 7-mile riverfront area.

The second step is to work closely with political representatives, Fishtown and PennDOT to create a comprehensive improvement strategy for the I-95 corridor. Negotiation must begin early, as construction is set to commence in the next two years.

- *Private investment* – In the absence of a designated waterfront Tax Increment Finance (TIF) district that captures the increase in tax value to be used locally for infrastructure and other amenities, the NLNA should continue to negotiate



community benefits agreements (a *laissez faire* TIF), which have already provided dollars for services and amenities such as community cleaning, Liberty Lands and the NLNA community center. This is common practice nationally (see Chicago and New York City), and the NLNA has used the practice strategically to guide dollars toward community improvements that will benefit both existing and new residents.

As with any implementation strategy, the NLNA should always seek to blend dollars from both public and private sources to maximize impact. Foundation dollars and grants should also be sought for specific efforts such as public art installations or the planning and acquisition of new park space (DCNR provides grants and assistance for planning, acquisition and implementation with strong political support). In addition, the NLNA needs to capitalize upon its network of local talent that can help to implement some of the recommendations. Residents can play a strong role in raising funds as well as creating public art and other supporting public elements that imbue the community with its unique character.

The Northern Liberties community has proven itself adept in both planning and implementation. The advocacy and creativity with which the NLNA has already steered recommendations of the *Neighborhood Plan* to reality must continue as the City reconsiders its riverfront and makes a multi-year commitment to its revitalization. Northern Liberties is a key stakeholder along the River's edge. The community's voice expressed in this document must be echoed during implementation through close collaboration between community, private and public partners.

