

**DELAWARE VALLEY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
LAND USE AND HOUSING COMMITTEE MEETING HIGHLIGHTS
December 8, 2006**

A meeting of the DVRPC Land Use and Housing Committee (LUHC) was held on December 8, 2006, beginning at 10 a.m. Barry Seymour, Executive Director of DVRPC, welcomed the members and provided for introductions. Mr. Seymour then announced that Lynn Bush, the Executive Director of the Bucks County Planning Commission, will serve as the chair of the LUHC for the coming year. Ms. Bush chaired the remainder of the meeting, which focused on waterfront development. The meeting's guest speakers presented information on waterfront planning at three different stages, from the visioning that is now beginning along the Central Delaware Riverfront, to the implementation now being pursued following the recent adoption of the North Delaware Greenway Master Plan and the Bucks County Waterfront Revitalization Plan, to the development activity now being realized twenty years after the development of a vision for the Camden City waterfront, under the guidance of the Cooper's Ferry Development Association.

North Delaware Greenway Master Plan: Patrick Starr (Vice President, Southeast Region Pennsylvania Environmental Council) and Sarah Thorpe (Executive Director of the Delaware River City Corp.)

Mr. Starr began the presentation by discussing the project's history and providing background information. Like many urban waterfronts, the Northern Delaware Riverfront in Philadelphia, once a prime location for factories and mills, has fallen into disuse as the economy shifted from manufacturing to services. The North Delaware Riverfront Greenway Plan, initiated by PEC in 2003 and formally endorsed by the City Planning Commission in 2006, evaluates the land use, environmental, transportation, and market opportunities within a 10-mile long area between the Delaware River, I-95, Penn Treaty Park in Fishtown, and the Poquessing Creek in Torresdale. Using funding provided by DCNR and the William Penn Foundation, the plan was developed by Greenways, Inc. and Econsult, working in close partnership with the City Planning Commission and an extensive greenway task force chaired by Congressman Borski.

Three alternative greenway scenarios were studied, ranging from an "as is" scenario that could be completed at minimal cost by 2009 (with limited public land, minimal bike trail segments, no neighborhood connections or civic spaces, and no ecological restoration) to a public greenway scenario, to be completed at a much higher cost and with an anticipated completion date of 2019 (but also to include 274 acres of public land, over 8 miles of bike trails, neighborhood connections, civic spaces, and ecological restoration). A cost-benefit analysis demonstrated that the annual benefits from the public greenway scenario, including increased capital investment, land value, commercial and residential investment, business activity, and income and employment, are ten times that of the other two alternatives.

Priority features of the public greenway include the reconstruction of River Road; the improvement of neighborhood "green" streets linking residents to the waterfront greenway; the development of the Kensington/Tacony Trail; and the development of three parks (Lardner's Point, Pleasant Hill, and Pennypack Park). In Bridesburg, the plan includes paved bicycle and pedestrian trails, a ferry landing, a public fishing pier, public picnic areas, and a linkage to SEPTA service via Bridge Street. In Wissinoming, features will include an ecologically restored park (Lardner's Point), habitat and wetland restoration areas, picnic areas, and a link to the SEPTA station. Features in the Tacony neighborhood include habitat restoration, a riverwalk, a public esplanade, and numerous neighborhood connector streets. In Holmesburg, the

greenway plan calls for locations for canoeing and fishing, a trail connection between Pennypack Park and Pleasant Hill Park, and connectors to Linden Avenue and Rhawn Street.

Ms. Thorpe discussed the role of the Delaware River City Corporation (DRCC), a non-profit corporation founded to implement and champion the Northern Delaware Greenway Plan. The DRCC's tasks include developing an organizational Strategic Plan; developing a greenway operation and maintenance plan; securing resources to implement the Greenway Plan; and working closely with new developers as advocates of the Plan. Their current priority projects include the construction of the Kensington/Tacony Trail; various transportation improvements (including the Delaware Avenue extension and the improvement of several neighborhood connector streets along the greenway); and the design and construction of Lardner's Point Park, a new 5-acre "trailhead" park at the base of the Tacony-Palmyra Bridge. Design of this park, which incorporates sustainable features such as photovoltaic lighting and composting toilets, has been completed, and construction is scheduled to begin in summer 2007. Issues that will impact the completion of the 10-mile multi-purpose K & T Trail (including 5 miles of abandoned Conrail track acquired by the City in 2004), relate to land acquisition and ownership as well as securing agreements with the existing industrial and institutional users.

In addition to these projects, DRCC is working with several developers that have expressed an interest in constructing residential communities on four of the study area's formerly industrial sites, including the former Philly Coke site (to be developed by Westrum); the former Dodge Steel site; the former Tacony Army Warehouse site, and the former Northern Shipping site (to be developed by Barton Partners). When asked by committee members whether these developers are endorsing the Greenway Plan and working with her group, Ms. Thorpe noted that they are cooperating, since working with DRCC should make it easier for these developers to obtain necessary assistance and approvals from the City. When asked how long it will take to fully implement the plan, Ms. Thorpe noted that the overall Plan realistically has a 25-year horizon, although certain features (such as the trail construction and the development of Lardner's Point Park) will begin as early as this summer.

Central Delaware Riverfront Visioning Initiative: Harris Steinberg, Penn Praxis

Mr. Steinberg briefly discussed upcoming activities of the Central Delaware Riverfront Visioning Initiative. Announced in October 2006, this initiative seeks to develop a civic vision that balances access to the waterfront, open space, quality urban development, and the public good for an area adjacent to the Delaware River, from Allegheny Avenue southward to Oregon Avenue. Penn Praxis, a University of Pennsylvania affiliate, has been asked by the City of Philadelphia to lead this visioning process. Penn Praxis has organized a 45-member advisory group to direct this planning effort, working in concert with the Northern Delaware Waterfront Plan. A series of public meetings will be held in January 2007, followed by presentations by experts on Best Practices in the area of waterfront development. The intent is to develop a roadmap for development and public investment in the area with a 25-30 year timeline, with the goal of developing this vision by October 2007.

Barry Seymour noted that the anticipated casino development will be an important part of this vision, given that all four casino proposals are located within the project area (note: the decision as to the location of the two casinos was announced on December 20, 2006, after this meeting). He noted that while the casino proposals may have created neighborhood tension in the area, they also have been the impetus for numerous planning studies and have allowed planners to gain a better understanding of the nature and extent of area issues such as traffic.

Camden Waterfront Development: Joe Myers, Project Manager, Cooper's Ferry Development Association

Mr. Myers began his presentation with an observation that the City of Camden is actually an island, with tremendous potential for waterfront development. He next described the ongoing activities of the Cooper's Ferry Development Association (CFDA). CFDA was founded in 1984 as a private, non-profit corporation dedicated to creating and carrying out economic development projects within the City of Camden. CFDA's mission is to coherently plan and implement high-quality urban redevelopment projects in order to help replenish Camden's depleted tax base and to create jobs for city residents.

During its 23 years of existence CFDA has successfully attracted and coordinated more than \$500 million of private and public investment in the Camden waterfront. With its focused approach and persistence, CFDA has created a critical mass of both public and private development projects and has created a climate in which private investment can now flourish. Significant projects completed to date include Wiggins Park and Marina (completed in Spring 1987); the New Jersey State Aquarium, which opened in 1992 before being expanded and re-opened in 2005 as the Adventure Aquarium; a waterfront garage (1992); the Riverlink Ferry (initiated in 1992); L-3 Communications (1992); the E-Center, formerly known as the Tweeter Center (1995); One Port Center (1997); the Camden Children's Garden (1999); Campbell's Field (2001); the Battleship New Jersey (2001); the opening of NJ Transit's RiverLine in 2004; and the restoration of Johnson Park in Fall 2006.

Working with Steiner and Associates, Dranoff Properties, and the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA), CFDA has successfully put into place the building blocks for a vibrant, mixed-use waterfront community, anchored by family entertainment venues but also to include large scale residential and commercial office elements as well as retail, dining, and entertainment venues. In addition to the aquarium expansion, the first phase of Steiner and Associates' Master Plan for the Waterfront includes Cooper Commons Park (with an anticipated completion date of Spring 2007) and Ferry Terminal (the first privately-funded office building developed in the City of Camden in over 40 years), which will be completed this summer. Also planned is Cooper's Crossing, which will include 1,500 residential units in addition to commercial office space; dining, retail and entertainment venues; and a hotel/conference center. Building on the success of its Victor Lofts project (which opened in May 2003), Dranoff Properties is currently developing Radio Lofts, set to open in December 2007. NJEDA's successes include the Camden Technology Center, completed in winter 2005.

Barry Seymour noted that CFDA's ongoing activities demonstrate that it has truly taken a 25-year commitment to successfully implement their original vision for the Camden waterfront. When asked by Patrick Starr as to what relationship CFDA has with the City of Camden, Mr. Myers noted that they work in partnership with the City, Camden County, and the State as the master developer of the City's waterfront. When asked whether parking (or the lack thereof) is an issue in the area, he noted that the kinds of uses concentrated on the waterfront area generate a lot of demand for parking, often at the same time. Parking to date has been concentrated in an area south of Mickle Boulevard, and the CFDA is currently undertaking traffic and planning studies with the goal of developing a more comprehensive solution, including off-site parking in structured facilities.

Bucks County Waterfront Plan: Lynn Bush, Executive Director, Bucks County Planning Commission

Robert White (Executive Director of the Bucks County Redevelopment Authority) was originally listed on the agenda to discuss the Bucks County Waterfront Revitalization Study, completed in 2005, but was unable to attend. Lynn Bush (Executive Director of the Bucks County Planning Commission) briefly described ongoing waterfront planning efforts in his absence, having served on the Waterfront Study Steering Committee. The Bucks County Waterfront Revitalization Plan, completed under the direction of the Bucks County Redevelopment Authority, charts a vision and course of action to enhance a portion of Lower Bucks County, adjacent to Philadelphia. The waterfront study's main goals were to provide for improved public access to the riverfront and to promote targeted economic development within the six municipalities that comprise the study area, including Bensalem Township, Bristol Borough, Bristol Township, Falls Township, Morrisville Borough, and Tullytown Borough. A special focus was placed on building consensus among the municipalities and on implementation.

The study process included regular meetings of the Study Steering Committee, workshops in each jurisdiction, and three public forums. The waterfront plan (available for review on the Internet at www.bcrda.com/frames6.html) includes recommendations for improving waterfront access; incorporating design elements that enhance the attractiveness of the area; improving the economy through redevelopment; expanding mobility and accessibility; fostering environmental sustainability; and reinforcing the area's key historic and community assets. Ms. Bush noted that since the adoption of the Plan, several communities have begun implementing its recommendations (by modifying their codes, for example), and some developers are now turning their attention to waterfront redevelopment. Bensalem, for example, has adopted a design ordinance, and other communities are beginning to follow suit. Ms. Bush also noted that a lesson to be learned from the previous presenters is the need to continually coordinate and monitor activities in the study area, and act as an advocate for the policies and recommendations advanced in the Plan.

Additional business: The next meeting of the Land Use and Housing Committee is planned for mid to late March. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:00 p.m.