

# AWARD

In 2012 the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) awarded the Regional Economic Development Program of the Year to the Master Plan for the Central Delaware Waterfront

According to DVRPC, "The Master Plan for the Central Delaware Waterfront was chosen for this award because of its sensitivity to the unique character and needs of Philadelphia's Delaware River Waterfront. Intended to encourage high quality private development through strategic public investment, the plan offers a roadmap to leverage public and private resources and enable the Delaware River Waterfront to grow in a sustainable and economically viable way that ensures a high quality transformation of this area. Released in 2011 following an extensive planning and public outreach process, the plan aims to connect the city to the waterfront with a system of trails, parks and extended city streets providing a framework for economic growth. It is now part of the City of Philadelphia's comprehensive plan, and must be considered by any city governing body when making decisions related to the waterfront."



RBA Group, Rendering of Penn Street Trail North View



BCJ Architects, Rendering of Pier 9

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# YEAR 4 REPORT 2013



Photo credit: Ed Savaria New Communications, Philadelphia Orchestra



Photo credit: Ed Savaria New Communications, Blue Cross RiverRink



RBA Group, Rendering of Penn Street Trail South View

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Adoption of the Master Plan by the City Planning Commission in March 2012 marked a giant step forward in the development of the Central Delaware River Waterfront, enabling the Delaware River Waterfront Corporation (DRWC) to continue to lay the foundation for a vibrant waterfront. In the past year DRWC has succeeded in acquiring waterfront acreage for park and trail implementation, established partnerships to increase connectivity to riverfront neighborhoods, and continued to attract funding from diverse sources. DRWC has been particularly successful in leveraging resources, raising over \$27.8 million dollars for capital projects from foundation, state, city and federal contributions since inception. Most importantly, strategic public investment in high quality design and public amenities is beginning to attract high-quality private development, fulfilling the promise of the Master Plan. The extension of Philadelphia to the riverfront through implementation of the Master Plan is firmly underway.

**Parks and Greenspace:** DRWC made significant strides in 2012 in realizing the goal of the Master Plan for establishing a park every half mile along the waterfront. Early in the year, DRWC succeeded in its first major land acquisition for new waterfront park land by working with the Natural Lands Trust to secure Department of Conservation and Natural Resources funding to purchase Piers 64 – 70 in South Philadelphia. These piers add 16 new acres of green space and riparian rights to the Central Delaware and will form the southern terminus for the permanent waterfront trail. The new park will present opportunities to work with a diverse group of stakeholders including the PA Department of Environmental Protection and the Army Corps of Engineers to create wetlands and to restore natural habitats. DRWC has also advanced to the implementation phase of the permanent park on Pier 53 south, creating a new open space to extend Washington Avenue Green and allow for users to walk out on to the pier, fish, and even touch the river.

**Waterfront Trail:** One of the key elements of the Master Plan was the creation of a permanent multi-use trail, which would provide for recreation, connectivity and public access along the waterfront. To realize this goal, DRWC is moving forward on multiple fronts. The design of the first section of permanent trail was completed by the RBA group and will be built along Penn Street in Northern Liberties in 2013. This section of the trail will connect Spring Garden Street with the waterfront trail at SugarHouse Casino and demonstrate the high quality materials and aesthetic that will one day span the entire length of the Central Delaware. RBA has also been working on a conceptual design for the complete permanent trail, including the on-road segment between Washington Avenue and Penn Street and the off-road segment between Washington Avenue and Pier 70. In the meantime, DRWC succeeded in realigning a segment of the temporary trail just south of Washington Avenue Green so that it now fully grips the water's edge, the preferred alignment for the permanent trail. Additionally, under contract from DRWC, the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society has begun clearing some of the overgrown vegetation along the trail as part of an effort to improve the existing trail. Part of this effort is the installation of three "nodes" which will feature seating and rest areas with views of the river. PHS is currently finalizing the design of these nodes, with construction intended to finish in Spring 2013. Ultimately, these trail sections will help the city to complete its regional trail network, the Circuit.



**Connector Street Projects:** DRWC has worked to connect the city to the river with significant collaborations with PennDOT and the Philadelphia Streets Department. As part of the Girard Avenue Interchange rebuild, DRWC hired Studio Bryan Hanes to design underpass and streetscape improvements to three streets in Fishtown with community input. Columbia Avenue, as a primary connector street, will have a full streetscape and underpass design and public art designed by well known national artist Donald Lipski. Marlborough Street and Shackamaxon Street will also see improved underpass lighting and custom designed formliner walls. PennDOT will fund and install most of the improvements between the underpass and Delaware Avenue as part of the highway reconstruction while DRWC has secured funding for the public art component. DRWC also selected a team led by the RBA Group for the Spring Garden Connector Street project that includes streetscape and underpass improvements to better connect upland neighborhoods to waterfront destinations and make the area a more inviting place to pedestrians. As the dark, 300-foot wide Spring Garden/I-95 underpass is a significant component of any design, lighting artist Leni Schwendinger Light Projects and Philadelphia-based Lighting Practice also part of the consultant team to design lighting that is both artistic and creates a safer, brighter area. DRWC continues to seek funding to make similar improvements to other primary and secondary connector streets identified in the master plan. Connector improvements will complement DRWC's work on Columbus Boulevard, where changes such as improved signage, safety measures, and retimed traffic signals, recommended through a traffic study, are being implemented.



**Economic Development:** The overarching framework provided by the Master Plan and the strategic investments described above in this report have begun to reap dividends, fulfilling the promise of attracting private investment discussed in the plan's economic development recommendations. Several major projects were announced within the last year, including multiple developments near the Race Street Pier; DRWC's first new fully-designed public space, which opened in 2011. Philadelphia Live Arts Festival is in the process of developing the historic pumping station across from the pier for a theater, offices, and a restaurant and will also provide public restroom access for waterfront users. This historic reuse will complement DRWC's proposed redevelopment of Pier 9, adjacent to the Race Street Pier. Further north on the Central Delaware, developer Michael Samshick has already opened phase I of a residential project, the first large scale residential reuse on the Central Delaware and with the help of planning firm Interface Studio, has developed a plan for Penn Treaty Village, a mixed-use entertainment district anchored by a live music venue operated by LiveNation and other related uses. The project will adaptively reuse several industrial buildings and will also take advantage of Canal Street, a unique curvilinear street identified as a key part of any redevelopment of the area, transforming it into a vibrant amenity for the project and the waterfront.

**Zoning and Planning:** DRWC succeeded in codifying the framework established in the Master Plan in 2012 in local regulations. The Master Plan was adopted by the Philadelphia City Planning Commission, meaning that city agencies and boards will need to consider the plan when making decisions related to waterfront development. In November 2012, with the strong support and leadership of First District Councilman Mark Squilla, Philadelphia City Council approved a 50-foot setback on all major and minor rivers and waterways in Philadelphia, including the Central Delaware waterfront, codifying this setback in the new zoning code and providing numerous environmental benefits such as flood protection and sensitive species habitat, while creating space for the future waterfront trail. DRWC has also served as a resource in ongoing discussions between the Central Delaware Advocacy Group, development representatives and Councilman Squilla to ensure the Central Delaware overlay captures and codifies the intent of the master plan. The new overlay is expected to be introduced in early 2013.



Aerial map of the Central Delaware River Waterfront

- 1 Piers 64 - 70 Acquisition:** DRWC worked with Natural Lands Trust to secure DCNR funding to purchase 16 acres of new parkland which will form the southern terminus of the Central Delaware Trail and provide opportunities for wetland creation.
  - 2 Southern Trail Improvements:** DRWC completed the realignment of the trail just south of Washington Avenue Green, allowing it to run fully along the river's edge. PHS has begun clearing vegetation towards the installation of three "nodes" along the trail, which will feature seating and rest areas with views of the river; with construction planned to be complete Spring 2013.
  - 3 Pier 53:** DRWC has held public input and technical meetings to assist the design team, led by Applied Ecological Services, in developing the design and ecological improvements for Pier 53. Based on ecological improvement methods employed at Pier 53, DRWC will coordinate with the PA DEP, the Army Corps of Engineers, and other relevant stakeholders in the eventual creation of a 30-acre wetland park from Pier 53 to Pier 70. The Pier 53 design is expected to take users onto the pier on boardwalks and provide opportunities to fish and touch the river.
  - 4 West Shipyard:** DRWC undertook a small archaeological study at the Vine Street Lot, known as the site of the former James West Shipyard dating to the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. Public outreach and interpretation was a key aspect of the dig, with over 200 people visiting the site and many news outlets covering the project. The dig uncovered artifacts believed to be associated with a shipyard, and DRWC will pursue funding for a second phase of study.
  - 5 Penn Street Trail:** DRWC is beginning construction of the Penn Street Trail, which will demonstrate all of the elements intended for the complete multi-use waterfront trail: a separated 10' pedestrian walkway, a two-way 12' bike path, solar lighting, rain gardens, and beautiful street furniture. Completion of the trail's construction is planned for Summer 2013.
  - 6 Columbia Avenue Connector:** As part of an exciting partnership with PennDOT as they design and rebuild I-95 between Ann Street and Race Street, DRWC commissioned designs to make underpass and streetscape improvements to three streets in the Fishtown neighborhood.
  - 7 Spring Garden Street Connector:** DRWC has begun design for the Spring Garden Street Connector, which will include streetscape and underpass improvements to better connect Northern Liberties to waterfront destinations and make the area a more inviting place to walk, particularly around a major SEPTA transit station. The dark highway underpass is expected to be transformed by lighting that is both artistic and creates a safer, brighter area.
  - 8 Pier 9:** DRWC completed a study with the firm Bohlin Cywinski Jackson for the reuse of Pier 9, a key opportunity for development adjacent to the Race Street Pier.
- Columbus Boulevard Improvements:** DRWC engaged Whitman Requardt & Associates to perform a traffic study for Columbus Blvd/Delaware Ave from Snyder Avenue to Columbia Avenue and identified a number of small changes, implemented in 2012 with the help the Streets Department and PennDOT, such as improved signage, safety measures, and retimed traffic signals.
- Development Underway:** Live Arts has begun construction of its new headquarters and theater. Developer Michael Samshick has opened a residential reuse project along Canal Street, with further phases for more residential, entertainment and industry following that historic spine. Townhouse development proceeds at Front and Noble.
- Development Approved:** The Planning Commission has approved plans of development for residential development at Columbus Blvd. and Vine St. and at Piers 34-35.