

City's Waterfront Plan in Danger

By Robert Kettell

In March the City Planning Commission adopted a much-heralded master plan for the central Delaware waterfront. This well-thought-out plan establishes guidelines for preserving the best existing features and details how new development can create an exciting future for the city's waterfront.

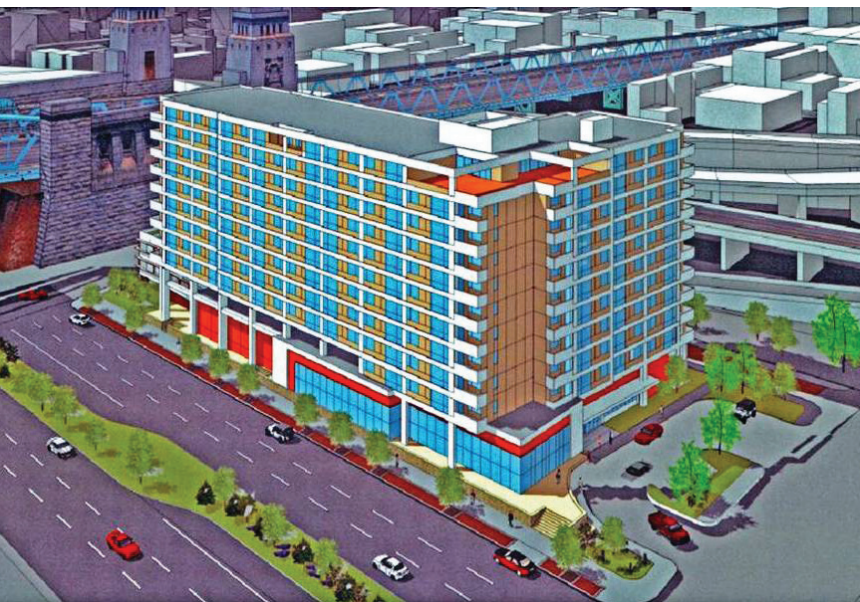


That vision is in danger of being compromised by the very first proposal for development along this section of the river. The “Marina View Apartments” proposal for 230 North Delaware Avenue was recently approved by the City Planning Commission, despite the fact that it violates the plan’s height limits, blocks views of the historic Ben Franklin Bridge anchorage, defeats the plan for a pedestrian-friendly Delaware Avenue, fails to restore the adjacent historic street, lacks the proper landscaping and public space, and ignores possible archeological resources at this historic site – all key elements of the master plan. DAG would be embarrassed by the project’s design: multi-colored DRYVIT panels with large through-the-wall air conditioners below each window, just like the cheapest shore motels.

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The waterfront plan's major premise is to "extend the abutting neighborhoods to the waterfront," which the apartment proposal completely ignores. At this location the surrounding neighborhood is called River's Edge, which consists of two-, three- and four-story row homes, very unlike the proposed eleven-story apartment structure with 180 units.

The city's waterfront plan was supported by, and is supposed to be protected by, a city-chartered development corporation (the Delaware River Waterfront Corporation), a coalition of riverfront associations (the Central Delaware Advocacy Group), and a local community organization (the Old City Civic Association). However all three organizations failed in their first test to convince the City Planning Commission to make the plan work. It looks like four years of planning and dozens of community meetings is quickly being dumped into the river.

It makes you wonder why the City Planning Commission takes the time to approve thoughtful plans if they have no desire to implement them.

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