

REVISIONING THE CENTRAL DELAWARE RIVERFRONT: THE EFFECTS OF REGIME
CHANGE ON WATERFRONT PLANNING IN PHILADELPHIA, PA

by

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A REPORT

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Abstract

This report will examine the effect that shifting political ideologies have had on the redevelopment process for Penn's Landing and how citizen activism influenced planning reform along the Central Delaware Riverfront. It addresses the historical development that led to the demise of Philadelphia's port industry and waterfront commerce. The study discusses the influences that mayoral administrations from the 1950s to present day have had on planning for Penn's Landing. The report reviews the public forums held by Penn Praxis to change the course of planning from a top-down approach to a grassroots effort and evaluates the progress that has been made in the years following the forums. An analysis of the political ideologies of Philadelphia's mayoral administrations is made to determine that the most effective approach to advancing waterfront redevelopment along the Central Delaware Riverfront involves discovering the right balance of private investment and public involvement.

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Dedication

To my family and friends. Thanks for the love and support.

CHAPTER 1 - Introduction

“Redeveloping a decaying and abandoned waterfront can be a powerful symbol of rejuvenation of the inner city.” – Remaking the Urban Waterfront pg. 95

Rivers have long been the life-blood of cities across the globe. Waterfronts allow humans to have access to essential resources and act as a catalyst for growth because of ease of transportation and trade. Travel, exploration, trade, and transportation are all possible because of waterways. As the United States was settled, the only connection back to Europe was through water routes, thus the first colonies were formed near protective harbors. Rivers and waterfronts became essential during the Industrial Revolution because many industries relied on waterways to run factories and transport goods. Technology advancements and the development of new transportation systems such as trains, automobiles, and air planes have moved the focus away from waterfronts. People are now able to move further away from the city center and goods can be transported without a major waterway leaving urban waterfronts across the nation with opportunities for a new life.

Visioning, planning, and redeveloping riverfronts in the post industrial era has been taking place in many cities throughout the nation. This is an essential process as riverfronts are vital assets which allow cities to thrive. These ports have historically been the center of industrial development because of the ease of access to transportation, before the age of semis and automobiles. Many American riverfront cities have been revitalizing these old industrial sites back into a natural asset that allow citizens and visitors to access the river. Systems of trails and parkways have been incorporated and developers have acquired prime riverfront real estate and transformed it into an economic asset to the community.

The Delaware Riverfront in Philadelphia has a long history of being a large industrial powerhouse. As the United States moved into the post-industrial era, the riverfront embodied this spirit of change. Industry and commerce fled the Central Delaware riverfront, leaving abandoned factories and rundown shipping piers. Riverside development occurred in an ad hoc manner and without comprehensive future planning or coordination with the rest of Philadelphia, resulting in an auto-oriented super-block development that is home to many big-box retailers and has a disappointing lack of public connection or access to one of Philadelphia's greatest natural resources, the Delaware River.

Political agendas have been the driving force leading to the ad hoc development at the river's edge. Philadelphia's mayors from 1950 to the present day entered office with opinions about how planning should be done to maximize the potential of the waterfront. Each change in administration brought new plans and discarded old ones making it difficult to accomplish one cohesive set of goals from term to term. The purpose of this report is to examine these political ideologies as they relate to the planning and decision-making processes that lead to fragmented development along the Central Delaware Riverfront and to discuss the efforts that have been made in the past decade to reform waterfront planning in Philadelphia.

Location

The site that will be the focus of this report is a thirty-five acre tract of land along the Central Delaware Riverfront known as Penn's Landing, named after the place that William Penn, founder of Philadelphia, docked his ship. Penn's Landing is located at the edge of Center City, the central business district of Philadelphia, and adjacent to historic Old City where the Liberty Bell, Independence Hall, and other historic monuments are found. Festivals and celebrations are often held at the Great Plaza at Penn's Landing which is a large public amphitheater space with

seating for 5,000. This site is municipally owned and managed by the Delaware River Waterfront Corporation, a non-profit agency responsible for the development of the Penn's Landing Property and for the organization of events held at the Great Plaza. A map of Penn's Landing can be found in Appendix A.

Literature Review

Waterfront redevelopment is a trend among many cities around the world. Waterfronts are the source upon which great cities were established. They have served as the center of commerce and economics with large ships transporting goods and services into and out of cities. The industrial revolution and technological age has brought about the degradation of waterfronts. In recent years, the attention has been refocused back to waterfronts. The Urban Land Institute has produced a guide to redeveloping these forgotten spaces. *Remaking the Urban Waterfront* by the Urban Land Institute discusses the events leading to interest in redeveloping urban waterfronts and provides a set of ten guiding principles for approaching the process of redevelopment.

- 1. Transformation along the urban waterfront is a recurring event in the life of a city, and tends to occur when major economic or cultural shifts lead to conflicting visions of contemporary urban life.*
- 2. The aura of a city largely resides and endures along its waterfront allowing substantial changes to occur without inevitably harming its enduring qualities of place.*
- 3. Despite periodic and sometimes rapid change, a waterfront preserves for its bordering city inherent and unalterable stability.*
- 4. As valuable and often contested realms, urban waterfronts bring forth the opposing, though reconcilable human desire to preserve and to reinvent.*

5. *Even though a waterfront serves as a natural boundary between land and water, it must not be conceptualized or planned as a thin line.*
6. *Waterfront redevelopments are long-term endeavors with the potential to produce long-term value. Endangering this for short-term riches rarely produces the most desirable results.*
7. *Underused or obsolete urban waterfronts come alive when they become desirable places to live, not just visit.*
8. *The public increasingly desires and expects access to the water's edge. This usually requires overcoming historic barriers- physical, proprietary, and psychological – while persuading new investors that there is merit in maintaining that valuable edge within the public domain.*
9. *The success and appeal of waterfront development is intrinsically tied to the interrelationship between landside and adjacent waterside users and to the environmental quality of both the water and the shore.*
10. *Distinctive environments, typically found at waterfronts, provide significant advantages for a city's competitiveness in its region or in relation to its rival cities (Fisher, 2004).*

Much of the attention to waterfront redevelopment came following the industrial era. Peter Hende Brown wrote a book titled *America's Waterfront Revival: Port Authorities and Urban Redevelopment* that discusses the influence of local port authorities on urban waterfront redevelopment efforts following the industrial age. Public authorities are a critical piece of the governing puzzle, they have proven to be one of the most enduring, resilient, versatile and adaptable forms of government ever created. Established by legislation at the city, state, or national level, these quasi-governmental authorities are not subject to the same rules of operation as the city government. They open new lines of credit, avoid city bureaucracies, and are flexible in terms of their functions. Operating more like private corporations, public authorities offer cities an outlet for expediting public works projects. Port Authorities are the oldest and most studied type of modern authority still in operation (Brown, 2009). Traditionally, port authorities

have been responsible for maritime operations but as the industrial era past, port authorities shifted their functions towards waterfront redevelopment. Cities have been able to utilize their public-private nature and large revenue base to fund revitalization projects. Brown's book looks at the history, impact, and responsibilities of four port authorities in the United States; the Delaware River Port Authority was discussed. Pennsylvania and New Jersey partnered to establish joint legislation that created the Delaware River Port Authority (DRPA), a bi-state authority responsible for bridge building and toll management. This organization was formed in 1919 for the purpose of building a bridge to increase traffic across the Delaware River.

Originally called the Delaware River Bridge

Joint Commission, the first charge of the organization was to design and build a suspension bridge to cross the Delaware River.

The Delaware River Bridge (now called the Benjamin Franklin Bridge) opened seven years

later in 1926 and has been in operation since (see figure 1.2). As a result of the

success of the bridge, it was recommended that a regional bi-state port authority be formed to enhance and centralize port commerce, thus the Delaware River Bridge Joint Commission

became the Delaware River Port Authority. Throughout its time in operation, the agency has been responsible for the planning and construction of several other bridge crossings as well as

the establishment of its subsidiary, Port Authority Transit Corporation (PATCO), which is

responsible for the operation and maintenance of speedline trains running between Philadelphia and Camden. Despite its success as a toll bridge building and management agency, the Delaware



Figure 1:1: Benjamin Franklin Bridge (photo by author)

River Port Authority has never become a true bi-state port authority. In 1980, the focus moved from bridges and toll operations to redevelopment. DRPA used excess toll revenue to fund projects on both sides of the river, acting more like a grant-making foundation than a transportation operation, with no expectation of repayment on bonds or return on its investments. The ultimate goal of DRPA acting as an economic development authority was to unify the ports of Camden and Philadelphia into one “two-sided waterfront destination.” Instead, the Port Authority provided funding for two sports stadiums, the Kimmel Center, improvements to the Franklin Institute, the Philadelphia Zoo, and a planned expansion of the Philadelphia Convention Center between the years for 1995 and 2000 because Mayor Ed Rendell was interested in advancing Philadelphia’s convention business, historic tourism, arts, culture, and entertainment (Brown, 2009). None of these projects were located on or near the waterfront. Tom Corcoran, the former president of the Coopers Ferry Development Association of Camden, New Jersey, said the following about how DRPA funds were spent in Philadelphia, “... Funds in Pennsylvania were spent in a more diffuse pattern, because there were already major preexisting tourism areas... Individual politicians who were members of the more fractious Pennsylvania delegation to the port were also able to push projects through that did not fit the waterfront redevelopment mission as closely and that were further from the waterfront” (as cited in Brown, 2009).

The Journal of Planning History published an article in 2008 by Stephen J. McGovern titled *Evolving Visions of Waterfront Development in Postindustrial Philadelphia: the Formative Role of Elite Ideologies*. This article discusses the long-term efforts to redevelop Penn’s Landing and what affect political leaders have had on the planning and policy making for the riverfront. McGovern’s article presents four political ideologies: privatist, progressivism, managerialism,

and populist. These ideologies were formed based upon how individuals think about the role of government and who they believe should be responsible for making political decisions (McGovern, 2008). Each of these approaches to governing places different values on the role of comprehensive planning, the planning department, and economic development. Privatist politics assumes that if individuals are free to pursue their own interests than society will prosper, limiting the government's role to securing conditions that maximize individual autonomy. Progressive politics is vastly different from the privatist view. Progressives value an expansive role of government that aims to reduce the inequalities in the market while strengthening the sense of community. They also believe that citizens should be involved in political decision-making as they are the ultimate authority on civic matters. Managerialism varies slightly from progressivism by holding the same beliefs about activism and governmental control but believe in addition, that skilled and experienced professionals should have the power to influence honesty, efficiency, and effectiveness among leaders. The fourth type of ideology is populism, which differs greatly different from managerialism by celebrating popular rule and establishing distrust of the larger government. Philadelphia's political leaders have varied in ideologies over the past fifty years which is reflected their approach to planning and development along the waterfront. McGovern's article discusses these ideologies that each administration has held and its influence on the Central Delaware Riverfront from the 1950s to present day.

Understanding the history of a place is an important part of planning for its future. The Philadelphia City Planning Commission has set of working papers for the Central Delaware Riverfront plan with a chapter that discusses the long history of the river. The Central Delaware Riverfront was the landing place of William Penn; founder the state of Pennsylvania and key player in the layout and design of Philadelphia. Since William Penn's landing, the city has been a

power player in river commerce and industry. Post industrial revolution and urban flight has taken its toll on the riverfront leading to low density development and numerous vacant properties. Abandonment and lack of attention to the river's edge has brought about the identification of an untapped development potential. *A Civic Vision for the Central Delaware* produced by Penn by Penn Praxis, the clinical arm of the School of Design at the University of Pennsylvania, has recognized the potential for redevelopment along the river's edge. This report was created through a process of civic engagement to develop a plan that incorporated the values of Philadelphia natives on waterfront development. The study developed into a set of principles that reflect the aspirations of Philadelphia for combating the loose land use controls and ad hoc development patterns occurring along the Central Delaware riverfront. Following the publication of *A Civic Vision for the Central Delaware*, a supplemental study was done entitled *An Action Plan for the Central Delaware: 2008-2018*. This document establishes ten objectives to be accomplished over a ten year period to facilitate action on redeveloping the riverfront. The following are the ten objectives set up in the *Action Plan*:

1. *Appoint an open, accountable, effective waterfront manager*
2. *Adopt clear zoning, a detailed master plan and a coordinated regulatory policy*
3. *Build a continuous 7-mile trail along the Central Delaware Riverfront*
4. *Create new parks and improve the two existing parks.*
5. *Guarantee public access to the riverfront and make it easier for residents to walk and bike to the river.*
6. *Extend transit to the river*
7. *Extend key streets to the river*
8. *Manage traffic and parking in the central Delaware area*

9. *Create a 100-foot greenway along the water's edge*

10. *Create a natural river's edge and restore habitat* (Penn Praxis, 2008)

A professional interview was conducted with the director of Penn Praxis, Harris Steinberg, to further understand the impact of the study and its implications on the City of Philadelphia. Professor Steinberg has been a major player in the civic engagement processes and the development of both *A Civic Vision for the Central Delaware* and *An Action Plan for the Central Delaware*. Steinberg has been involved with city officials and media outlets to promote and encourage the adoption of both documents as guidelines and goals for redeveloping the Delaware Riverfront.

The *Philadelphia Inquirer* is the city's leading newspaper service, reporting on all news pertaining to the Philadelphia area. Penn Praxis has close ties to the *Inquirer*, thus reporters produce stories on the projects and community involvement that the organization is involved with. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* has been closely following the planning and development processes taking place along the riverfront. A collection of articles from *Inquirer* on riverfront issues will be utilized to address the most current events and happenings', illustrating the progress and process Philadelphia has undertaken to redevelop its waterfront.

Methodology

This study began as a review of the work Penn Praxis has done to facilitate waterfront redevelopment along the Central Delaware River and an examination of how two state-licensed casinos were to fit into the Penn Praxis plan. Following research on the topic and further discussion Jason Brody, advisor for this report, the topic shifted from a focus on evaluating the casinos and their place along the riverfront to a study of how planning and decision-making effected development of the area. The assessment of decision-makers and waterfront planning at

the Central Delaware Riverfront came about from reviewing *America's Waterfront Revival: Port Authorities and Urban Redevelopment* by Peter Hendee Brown and *Evolving Visions of Waterfront Development in Postindustrial Philadelphia: the Formative Role of Elite Ideologies* an article by Stephen McGovern which provided information about the history of Philadelphia's mayoral administrations and their contributions to waterfront redevelopment.

This report will begin with an overview of historic development along the Central Delaware Riverfront which will outline major shifts in waterfront uses and development patterns that have led to the decline of the riverfront property in the post-industrial era. The review of historical development will be gathered from a variety of sources including the *Central Delaware Riverfront Working Papers* published by the Philadelphia City Planning Commission and *America's Waterfront Revival* by Peter Hendee Brown. Next, a discussion of past and present mayoral administration's approach to planning and redevelopment along the Central Delaware River will be made using the information provided in Stephen McGovern's article entitled *Evolving Visions of Waterfront Development in Postindustrial Philadelphia: the Formative Role of Elite Ideologies*. This discussion will highlight how the leaders in Philadelphia influenced planning for the Penn's Landing site and led to the uprising of a grassroots effort to create a cohesive vision for the Central Delaware River. A review of Penn Praxis's *A Civic Vision for the Central Delaware Riverfront* and *An Action Plan for the Central Delaware Riverfront: 2008-2018* will be made to establish an understanding what the citizens of Philadelphia were interested in seeing happen along the riverfront and how civic engagement processes can affect change in governmental decision-making. The report will conclude with an analysis of the influence of changing political ideologies on the waterfront redevelopment efforts

at Penn's Landing. This analysis will utilize the information gathered from Stephen McGovern's article. *An Action Plan for the Central Delaware: 2008-2018*, information provided from the Delaware River Waterfront Corporation (DRWC) website, and articles published in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* will also be utilized to examine the influence of political leaders on planning, how grassroots efforts can shift political agendas, and the importance of open and transparent planning in Philadelphia. This study will illustrate which political ideologies were most effective at advancing development along the Central Delaware Riverfront.

CHAPTER 2 - Riverfront Development

“Each urban waterfront will have its own idiosyncratic history. Those who are interested in exploring development opportunities in a particular waterfront area must make a point of understanding its history, as it will influence the incentives for , and constraints on, futures development” (Fisher 2004).

Waterfronts are unique from city to city, as are the issues that come when embarking upon a redevelopment effort along the water’s edge. The success of a waterfront redevelopment project relies upon an understanding of historical uses, development patterns, and community needs. This chapter will discuss the story of Philadelphia’s riverfront, explaining how development occurred, what events and decision-making processes affected the waterfront, and what contemporary issues the Delaware is facing.

The story of the Delaware Riverfront in Philadelphia begins with the Native Americans. The Lenni Lenape nation of Native Americans occupied the area from Northern Delaware to New York. They had been utilizing the coastline of the Delaware as a commercial port before the time of Europeans and William Penn (Penn Treaty Museum, n.d). The location was ideal due to the river’s calm nature and abundance of creeks and tributaries. Tribal warfare and territory battles occurred in the area that is now Philadelphia because the Delaware

River offered resources and trade opportunities that were vital to survival in the region. The



Figure 2:1: Lenni Lenape Territory (History of American Women Blog, n.d)

Lenape nation declined in population rapidly due to battles against the Susquehannocks for control over the region and access to European trade (Penn Treaty Museum, n.d).

Europeans came to the area in the early 1600s and found shelter along the Delaware River, as it provided safety and protection from the ocean. The Swedes were the first to arrive along the central Delaware and were quick to setup trade and commerce with local Native American tribes. At the time of their arrival, the area that is now Philadelphia had abundant creeks and streams flowing between the

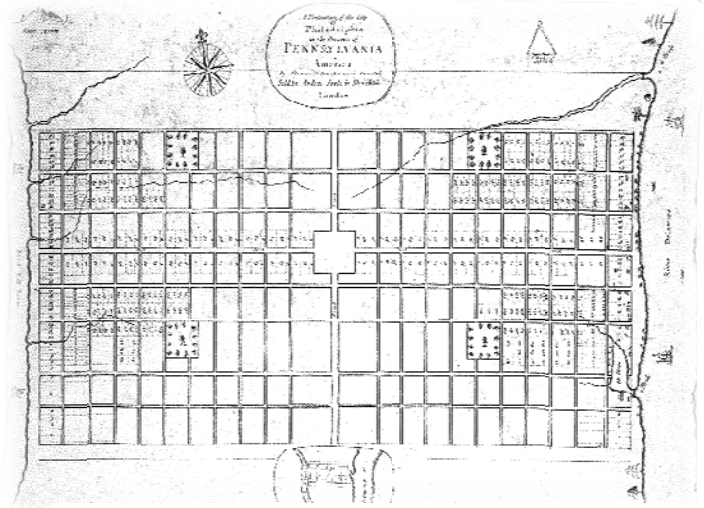


Figure 2:2: William Penn's Plan for Philadelphia

(<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~cap/penn/philmap.gif>)

Schuylkill and the Delaware giving the Europeans plenty of access to fresh water and ship docks (Philadelphia City Planning Commission [PCPC], 2007). William Penn arrived in Pennsylvania in the 1680s, where he developed a plan for Philadelphia using the Delaware River as a port for the city and a place for government. He laid out the city in a grid pattern with the intention to spread out houses and businesses to allow them to be surrounded by gardens and orchards (See figure 2.2). Penn envisioned the city developing commerce along both the Delaware and the Schuylkill rivers. According to the Central Delaware Riverfront Plan Working Papers published by the Philadelphia City Planning Commission, William Penn called Philadelphia his “holy experiment” (PCPC, 2007). Although most early settlement of the city took place in caves along the riverfront, eventually Philadelphia began to grow and people ventured further west towards the banks of the Schuylkill River.

As the city began to grow, the riverfront became an important center for trading because it served as America's third largest port next to Boston and New York. Even though development did not occur along the Schuylkill River as Penn envisioned, commerce along the Delaware flourished and extended beyond the official borders of Philadelphia. Thriving river development brought about the construction for the city's first wharf, constructed in 1685 by Samuel Carpenter (PCPC, 2007). The approval of the wharf came with William Penn's Council requirements for steps to be built leading from the water's edge to the top of the river bank at every block. This was an effort to connect the docks to the main level of the city. This was the first and possibly the last attempt to connect the city to the riverfront. Unfortunately, only one of these sets of steps still exists today. Ferry services developed in the late 1600s as well. Daniel Cooper established the Cooper's Ferry in 1695 as the first ferry system to connect Philadelphia to New Jersey. Proceeding Cooper's Ferry, many other companies began to establish ferry landing docks along the Delaware to move people across the river (PCPC, 2007). The Delaware Riverfront continued to thrive as a port to Philadelphia throughout the 1700s.

The mid-1700s brought about change for Philadelphia, with a population reaching 10,000; the city was only second in the trade industry to Boston. Philadelphia was serving as a port for European's immigrating to the colonies while thriving in waterfront development (PCPC, 2007). Shipbuilding became a significant business along the riverfront which allowed for private supportive industries such as blacksmithing, rope making, sail making, and foundries to establish between piers along the water's edge. The dirt and grime from craftsmen industries and crowding from a growing population caused the old harbor along Dock Creek to become unusable as a port, thus was infilled to allow for further development of wharfs (PCPC, 2007). As the eighteenth century progressed, the Revolutionary War set in. During this time, businesses

and industry prospered but the city became overcrowded due to British occupation. At the time the war ended, Philadelphia had passed its centennial and was left dirty, crowded, and in need of reinvestment in infrastructure. The city entered the nineteenth century as the nation's largest city with a population of over 53,000 (PCPC, 2007).

Shipbuilding businesses continued to flourish along the riverfront. The United States Navy built a yard for its shipbuilding and other activities at what is now Tasker Street. Congestion became a problem as industries grew, which prompted discussion of improvements among merchants (PCPC, 2007). 1820 brought about one of the most significant development events of the early nineteenth century, Paul Beck's proposal for an avenue along the riverbank. Beck suggested that the City acquire all property along the river in order to establish an avenue. Delaware Avenue was created from this proposal and still exists today. The construction of Delaware Avenue pushed wharves and piers further out into the river, facilitating further growth and development. Although the new avenue promoted development, Philadelphia began to fall behind other cities in population growth and economic prosperity (PCPC 2007). The city had to search for other sources to re-establish prominence and viability as a port.

Philadelphia turned to manufacturing as its economic focus. Coal plants and factories of all types began to sprout up around the city as the industrial revolution approached. It is because of Philadelphia's determination and ingenuity that the city was able to establish its self as the epicenter of the industrial revolution. 1840 marked the beginning of the Industrial Revolution during which Philadelphia was known as "Workshop of the World" (PCPC, 2007). Philadelphia had been a port city since its birth, although it thrived and flourished during this era. The revolution also brought railroads and steam engines to the city. The invention and implementation of freight rail meant that industries were not constrained to building along the

river's edge. Industries and people began to move out to the city's edges. Philadelphia stretched its boundaries to include the outlying neighborhoods in 1854, but the neighborhoods were able to retain their character and identity (PCPC, 2007). Soon, the turn of the twentieth century came about, bringing about another shift in the Delaware Riverfront. Changes in technology for the shipping industry also prompted the need for change along the waterfront. Containerization methods for cargo transportation eliminated the need for finger piers to dock ships and unload cargo, thus the piers were left abandoned (Brown, 2009). New municipal piers were built along rail lines to allow for ease of transition from ship to rail leaving little need for industries to be placed near the river. The riverfront was declining as Philadelphia prospered to one of the largest ports in the nation. Small manufacturers and wholesale retailers remained along the Delaware as everything and everyone else moved westward.

The automobile began to take its toll on the riverfront beginning in 1926 with the opening of the Benjamin Franklin Bridge which allowed free flowing traffic between Philadelphia Camden, NJ. Automobiles surged in popularity throughout the early and mid-1900's, pushing people and industry further away from the riverfront and the center city. The last major change to the riverfront occurred with the construction of I-95. The interstate was built as part of the Federal Interstate Highway Act of 1956 but was not opened until the 1970s (PCPC, 2007). I-95 had the side effect of cutting off the riverfront from the rest of Philadelphia (See figure 2.3). Although the city opened Penn's Landing to service as a public venue in the 1970s,



Figure 2:3: I-95 Corridor at Penn's Landing (Photo by author)

most of the area along the Delaware Riverfront remains vacant or underdeveloped. Major industries have relocated to other cities or to other locations in Philadelphia. The current status of the riverfront offers much to be desired as it suffers from a major disconnect from the city and lacks public access to the river's edge.

The twenty first century has brought about the realization and acknowledgement of the problems and opportunities associated with the central Delaware Riverfront. According to the Philadelphia City Planning Commission, 60% of the seven mile focus area examined by Penn Praxis has been deemed eligible for redevelopment, providing the city with ample opportunity to create a new image for the riverfront. The study area has been shifting its focus from industry and production to tourism and recreation, especially within the three miles from Shackamaxon street south to East Tasker Street. Although the Delaware River is still a large working port essential to the vitality of the city, active piers and factories have shifted south towards the nexus of the Delaware and the Schuylkill rivers.

CHAPTER 3 - Politics and Planning

“Development and revitalization in Philadelphia has suffered for years under the weight of a political culture that discourages public input. Backroom deals and personal relationships have often seemed to define the ‘public interest.’”- Sokoloff & Steinberg

Decision-making and planning processes are important to the advancement of goals and objectives in redevelopment efforts. Often, political agenda is the driving force of development decisions and planning because government officials seek reelection and economic advancement. Revitalization efforts become prime targets for controversy and political chaos due to the agenda and objectives of numerous entities with interests and investments in property. Philadelphia’s riverfront has been suffering from a long history of disjointed politics, multiple jurisdictional controls, and a general lack of cohesive planning strategies. Several public agencies, private development groups, and neighborhood associations have stakes in riverfront property and each entity searching for the redevelopment solution that will advance their individual agenda. This chapter will discuss the influences Philadelphia’s leaders and changing political ideologies have had on the nearly fifty-years of redevelopment efforts on the Central Delaware riverfront. Political views of mayoral administrations from the 1950s to present time will be presented and their approach planning and policy making for the Central Delaware Riverfront will be discussed.

Waterfront Reform: The Beginning

Philadelphia’s declining waterfront was first recognized by Mayor Joseph Clark and Richardson Dilworth following World War II. These leaders were driven by their belief that the power of government could affect positive change with the assistance of honest and efficient trained professionals (McGovern 2008). The Clark and Dilworth administrations worked with

the Old Philadelphia Development Corporation, the city's principle advisor on renewal projects in Center City, to move the city into the post-industrial era (McGovern, 2008). Revitalization began in the central business district and Society Hill, and then attentions turned towards the waterfront. The desire to retain Philadelphia's shipping industry fueled the development of new, state-of-the-art facilities to the north and south of the harbor. These facilities were equipped to handle larger freightliners and accommodate cargo and storage needs. Truck access was provided via the interstate system as to allow for mobility and viability of the shipping and trade industry. The vision for the waterfront at Center City was to create a center for commerce, tourism, and recreation. Philadelphia began to purchase dilapidated piers along river's edge to demolish and fill 300 to 400 feet into the river, creating a new space that would stretch south one mile from the Benjamin Franklin Bridge. Progress continued with the creation of the first master plan for what is now Penn's Landing. Keeping with the managerial ideology of the Clark and Dilworth administrations, the Department of Commerce commissioned Robert Geddes or the architectural and planning firm Geddes, Brecher, Qualls & Cunningham, to develop a master plan that was followed the city's vision (McGovern, 2008). "The Nautical Mile" as the Geddes plan was called, consisted to two phases that were scheduled to be complete within fifteen years in time for the bicentennial celebration of the nation's birth. The first phase focused on creating an administrative center for the port community that would establish Philadelphia's role in global commerce and establishing a recreational and cultural center that would pay homage to waterfront history. Commercial and residential development was to be the focus of the second phase. Construction began in 1962 with the demolition of sixteen piers and by 1970 the site was ready to be developed. This plan evoked confidence in the city planners with their ability to

undertake ambitious projects that would make Philadelphia competitive in the post-industrial era (McGovern, 2008).

The Rise of Privatism

In 1970, Mayor James Tate, with the assistance of the Old Philadelphia Development Corporation, established a non-profit organization that would be responsible for managing and developing the Penn's Landing site. This organization was called the Penn's Landing Corporation. Its board was comprised of representatives from the city government and downtown business community. The rise of Penn's Landing Corporation as a decision-making and planning entity reflected the changing values at city hall. Planners began to shift focus from publically driven projects to a reliance on the private-sector as the engine for economic growth (McGovern, 2008).

Penn's Landing Corporation's first action was to update the Geddes plan that was, at the time, only seven years old (McGovern, 2008). There were concerns that the current plan would leave Penn's Landing as a static historic monument rather than a vibrant waterfront activity center. The firm of Murphy, Levy & Wurman was hired to develop a new plan for the site that would leave some space for cultural and historic monuments but would focus mainly on private commercial development. Public access would be significantly decreased in favor of high-density private development that would bring more revenue to the city (McGovern, 2008). Following the adoption of the Murphy, Levy, & Wurman plan, Penn's Landing Corporation hired McCloskey & co, a local developer, in 1973 to create a plan for the site. The McCloskey plan consisted of a three-level shopping mall, high-rise apartment buildings, a high-rise hotel/office building, a museum, a boat basin, and a parking garage all to be completed by 1976

for the bicentennial celebration (McGovern, 2008). Rising concerns about access to the site via Interstate 95 and the challenges with finding funding for the project lead McCloskey & Co. to rethink the deal. Penn's Landing opened to the public in the summer of 1976 for the Bicentennial celebration, bringing in more than 2 million visitors to the site. This success did not sway McCloskey to begin construction so the city decided to search for a new developer. Two more developers with interest in large-scale commercial projects were enlisted to develop at Penn's Landing but concerns with access and failure to find an anchor caused Houston developer, Gerald D. Hines Interests to pull out and local developer Jack Blumenfeld & Co. was dropped when William Green took office in 1980 (McGovern, 2008).

The Sixth Great Square

Richard Doran, the Commerce Director during the Green administration, was a pioneer against the Blumenfeld plan because it lacked a unifying theme for development. He believed that the plan did not capture the full potential of Penn's Landing posing the question, "Are we going to build in unrelated pieces, or do we say this is one of the most valuable pieces of waterfront in urban America and go from there?" (as cited in McGovern, 2008). Doran went on to declare that the focus on private use was unacceptable as Penn's Landing was becoming a popular destination he said it, "ought to be as public a space as we can make it...almost park-like, public entertainment like..."(as cited in McGovern, 2008). This soon became the new focus for the site, reflecting a shift back to a managerial vision of politics. The Green administration endorsed the role of comprehensive planning and thought that citizens should have a voice in the preparation of a master plan for the waterfront.

In 1981, a planning session was held for the mayor and top planners at which they confirmed the idea that Penn's Landing should be a public assets and established a set of goals for the waterfront site. A museum and public auditorium were part of the plans, along with the encouragement of a hotel, residential complexes and a world trade center (McGovern, 2008).

Gerald Cope of Cope-Linder Associates

was hired to prepare a new master plan for

Penn's Landing. The Cope plan had

several of the same elements as previous

plans while following the ideals of the

Green administration by including greater

public access and spaces. A pedestrian

bridge to link Center City and Penn's

Landing was planned at Walnut Street along

with a large, open-air amphitheater called the Great Plaza. The Great Plaza was to be the focal

point of the waterfront and serving as a place for concerts, festivals, and celebrations. The

planning commission's executive director Craig Schelter compared the plans for the plaza to

Philadelphia's other historic spaces and said, "Does the waterfront deserve a sixth great square?"

We already have five of them in the William Penn plan...Does the waterfront deserve another

one? Yes. You can create a spot there." (as cited in McGovern, 2008). Construction on the Great

Plaza and the Walnut Street pedestrian bridge went forward, opening in the mid-1980s.

Fluctuation in the market caused little interest from developers for the remainder of the site,

which caused the Green administration to modify the Cope plan to include a greater amount of

private land uses. This move marked the transition back towards privatist politics.



Figure 3:1: The Great Plaza at Penn's Landing (photo by author)

The Height of Privatism

Privatist culture moved to the forefront of Philadelphia planning beginning in 1984 when Wilson Goode took office. At this time Rouse & Associates, a high-profile developer with close ties to the city, expressed interest in Penn's Landing. Goode's administration was enticed by the possibility of Rouse creating a megaproject on the waterfront. Rouse eventually pulled out of the deal citing that the city had an oversupply of office and retail space. Daniel Rose, a developer from New York, proposed a similar project following the failure of the Rouse plan, but met a similar fate due to an economic recession in 1991 (McGovern, 2008).

The early 1990s brought about a change in regime with the election of Ed Rendell as Mayor in 1991. Rendell was in favor of market-driven planning, he had no interest or patience in long-term comprehensive planning. Inga Saffron, the architecture critic for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, said the following about Rendell's approach to planning,

“Now one thing about Rendell is Rendell did not like planning. He did not allow his city planner to participate in anything...I think he saw [planning] as cramping his style and he wanted to be able to maneuver, be flexible, make a deal. He didn't want to be hemmed in by a plan” (as cited in McGovern, 2008).

Planning moved from master plans and long-term ideals to a “let's get it done” attitude as Mayor Rendell acted as a one-man development team, leaving his success to hinge upon market forces and elite decision-making. Rendell's focus was on promoting arts, entertainment, sports, and tourism and avoiding commercial as well as residential development. Rendell went on to negotiate deals with big-box retailers such as Wal-



Figure 3:2: Wal-Mart at Pier 70 (photo by author)

Mart and Home Depot to locate along the Delaware Riverfront just one mile south of Penn's Landing (McGovern, 2008). For Penn's Landing, Rendell was seeking a destination attraction that would promote family entertainment. Michael Rubin of MRA international was hired to conduct a feasibility study on the site's suitability for such a facility. Rubin found that Philadelphia was underserved by large family entertainment attractions which caused Rendell to pursue a number of entertainment firms such as Disney, SONY, and MCA to create a family entertainment center or mini-theme park at Penn's Landing (McGovern, 2008).

The Simon DeBartolo Group, a successful family entertainment developer, picked up the Penn's Landing project as the lead developer with the stipulation that they would be given full access to the site, including the Great Plaza. Simon's plan was to include a 400,000- to 600,000-square-foot urban entertainment complex with shops, restaurants, a large movie theater, and a multimedia exhibit that would highlight the nation's historical development (McGovern, 2008). The Great Plaza would be demolished to accommodate the complex and a new public amphitheater would be created on the roof of the building. Initially, response to the project was favorable as reports in the *Philadelphia Daily News* said, "It [will] transform Philadelphia's waterfront... from a land of miniskirts, reggae music and tequila shooters, to a wonderland of baby strollers, balloon animals, buttered popcorn and high-tech fun" (as cited in McGovern, 2008). Economic gains from the project were estimated to be high, as tax revenue would be boosted and an abundance of jobs would be created. Rendell believed that Penn's Landing could be added to the list of Philadelphia's tourist attractions transforming the city into a leading tourist destination in the United States (McGovern, 2008).

The idea of a megaproject soon became one of questionable merit. Professionals and critics began to see the flaws in the project. Whether it was criticized for being endangering local

businesses in adjacent districts or for its location along the waterfront, the Simon plan was quickly losing steam in Philadelphia. The Philadelphia Inquirer editorial page editor Chris Satullo thought Mel Simon underestimated the possibility at Penn's Landing when he carried on about how the Cheesecake Factory was going to be a major piece to his project, Satullo said, *"You're a half mile from Independence Hall. You're on the Delaware River. If you think the spot you're in is so devoid of magnetism and appeal and attraction in and of its own right the best thing you can say about your project is that you've got the Cheesecake Factory, you don't understand what you've got. That's not good"* (as cited in McGovern, 2008). Many other criticisms began to surface about the project such as the plan for a five-story parking garage, the destruction of the Great Plaza, and the decision to put a public amphitheater and skating rink on the roof of the complex. Dissatisfaction with Simon's plan was not the only issue at hand. Tenant recruitment had been suffering following September 11th 2001 terrorist attacks and the estimated cost of the project rose to \$120 million over what was originally budgeted. Simon finally backed out of the project in August of 2002 (McGovern, 2008).

A Shift to Progressivism

Following the election of John F. Street as Mayor of Philadelphia in 2000 and the demise of the Simon plan in 2002, political culture began to change in the city. Forty years of attempts at redeveloping the riverfront had been made leaving the central Delaware with a pedestrian bridge at Walnut Street, a Great Plaza at Penn's Landing, and scattered development up and down the shoreline. At the beginning of his reign as Mayor, John F. Street followed the way of his predecessor by continuing to search for a developer that would be able to capitalize on the potential for economic growth at Penn's Landing (McGovern, 2008). In the mean time, citizens were becoming more interested in the waterfront development process. The Simon project had

fueled distrust among citizen groups in the City's approach to development at Penn's Landing. People began to express their thoughts about what the site should become. It seemed as though citizens were not interested in megamalls or large entertainment facilities but rather a place for recreation and relaxation at the water's edge. Judy Applebaum of the Washington Square West Civic Association said, "*We really wanted... a place where you could take a book on a beautiful afternoon and go and sit, and enjoy the trees, enjoy the flowers, sit and have a cup of coffee, or a class of wine*" (as cited in McGovern, 2008). Citizens not only began to voice what they wanted but criticized developers for a lack of interest in what was best for the community. The development plans that had failed were all focused on extruding the most profit and economic growth out of Penn's Landing as possible rather than considering what it was the community really needed. Penn's Landing Corporation was targeted by citizens for their closed-door planning approach and their development strategy for Penn's Landing and distrust was building against the ability of elected officials to effectively oversee the development process (McGovern, 2008). Citizen organizations and neighborhood groups began to protest Mayor Street's bid process for a new developer for Penn's Landing. They believed that the City should hire a respectable professional and host a planning charrette to produce a master plan for the riverfront which would allow civic input on the process and outcome of the plan (McGovern, 2008). *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and the University of Pennsylvania's School of Design began to take interest in the issues at the waterfront. The *Inquirer* compiled a series of articles entitled "The Lost Waterfront" that illuminated the development process at Penn's Landing while Harris Steinberg, direct of PennPraxis at the University of Pennsylvania, expressed interest in organizing a public forum to discuss redevelopment of Penn's Landing. Steinberg worked with

Gary Hack, the dean of the School of Design and former chair of the Philadelphia City Planning Commission, to obtain consent from Mayor Street to host the forum (McGovern, 2008).

Penn's Landing Forum

The first public forum took place over fifty days in 2003 and was called the Penn's Landing Forum. PennPraxis, in conjunction with *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, the Center for School Study Councils at the University of Pennsylvania, and the Design Advocacy Group of Philadelphia developed a public process to engage citizens in conversation about the future of the Delaware waterfront. The site that was up for discussion was Penn's Landing, a place where many development proposals have failed to pass through the scrutiny of Philadelphia's city decision-makers. After years of silence, the citizens of Philadelphia were finally given the opportunity to voice their opinions on civic planning and design. Penn's Landing Forum occurred in four sessions, beginning with presentations from experts in real estate, waterfront design and development, history of Penn's Landing development, and successful waterfront designs around the world (Sokoloff & Steinberg, 2005). The second session was where citizens were able to share their visions and ideas with experts. This meeting was specifically set up to develop a set of principles to guide design, the principles developed at the meeting became known as the Penn's Landing Principles. The following are the Penn's Landing Principles (from Sokoloff & Steinberg, 2005):

1. *Distinctively Philadelphia, with pride:* create a place that can be a signature for Philadelphia and will instill a sense of pride among citizens.
2. *It's the river, stupid:* Develop Penn's Landing into the focal point of Philadelphia's identity as a "river city."

3. *Get the connections right:* Connect Center City, Camden, and other amenities along the riverfront.
4. *Bolster “Destination Philadelphia”:* Penn’s Landing should be a regional attraction and a local park
5. *Keep it a public space:* Preserve the public nature of the space.
6. *Use a public process:* Allow the citizens of the area to have a say in the future of Penn’s Landing.

During the third session of the forum, local well-know design professionals met for a design charrette. They utilized the Penn’s Landing Principles to create three development concepts for the site, which were published in the *Inquirer* and on the web prior to the final session to allow citizens to review and vote on which scenario best fit their view of the future for Penn’s Landing (Sokoloff & Steinberg, 2005). The final session of the forum was a public meeting that was held at the Independence Seaport Museum at Penn’s Landing. During the meeting, the three development concepts were presented and discussed (Sokoloff & Steinberg, 2005). Several hundred Philadelphians were in attendance to share their opinions about the future of the site. The outcome of the Penn’s Landing Forum paved the way for the development of another civic engagement forum for planning the waterfront, *A Civic Vision for the Central Delaware Riverfront*, also lead by Penn Praxis. It was apparent from the response of citizens to the Penn’s Landing Forum that future planning should be open and transparent, allowing residents to voice their thoughts and opinions on the shaping of their city.

Activism and Progressivism

Despite Mayor Street’s endorsement of the Penn’s Landing Forum, he remained loyal to the privatist approach by continuing his search for a new developer for Penn’s Landing but

allowed a higher level of citizen participation than prior administrations had tolerated (McGovern, 2008). Even city officials remained interested in the developer-driven approach noting that master plans were restrictive. Commerce Secretary Jim Cuorato had the following to say about developer-driven planning;

“We wanted to do this more in a fashion that developers can put together great teams that include urban planners that are imaginative, they’re innovative. Let’s open it up to the development community. Let’s give them some guidelines or parameters to frame things and then turn them loose and let them come back with different visions and that will give u the best, the broad spectrum of what our possibilities are...”(as cited in McGovern 2008).

In 2004, the Street administration had narrowed their search down to two developers but citizen activist argued aggressively that they did not reflect the principles that had been established in the Penn’s Landing Forum (McGovern, 2008). Doubts about the developer-driven approach began to flow through city hall as Mayor Street suspended the search for developers in late 2004 then two years later he signed an executive order authorizing the preparation of a master plan by Penn Praxis (McGovern, 2008). This move marked the first step towards progressive political reform in Philadelphia. The shift towards a progressive political culture became apparent as citizens expressed extensive interest in planning processes at the riverfront. Hundreds of local residents participated in the visioning forums for the Central Delaware Riverfront held by Penn Praxis in 2007. Voters also demonstrated their commitment to change at city hall when they elected Michael Nutter as Mayor in 2007. Nutter was a former city council member with a record of backing progressive polices and citizen empowerment (McGovern, 2008).

Mayor Nutter took office in January of 2008 and proceeded to make changes immediately. The Nutter administration has moved development along at the river’s edge at an accelerated pace. Facilitated by Penn Praxis’s *A Civic Vision Plan for the Central Delaware Riverfront* and *An Action Plan for the Central Delaware: 2008-2018*, Nutter has been able to

pass a zoning overlay for the waterfront that sets guidelines for development that are consistent with the citizen vision, he has also reformed planning and planning entities such as the Penn's Landing Corporation to work more efficiently and in conjunction with the City's goals, and he has also overseen the hiring of a master planning firm to develop a new cohesive plan for the Central Delaware Riverfront. The visions and goals established by Penn Praxis and progress on the riverfront will be discussed further in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 4 - Re-visioning the Riverfront

“Experience has shown that the best plans for the urban waterfront...come from balancing interest and fashioning win-win scenarios. The goal is to strive for a coherent overall vision, rather than to settle for piecemeal, ad hoc solutions” (Fisher, 2004).

Philadelphia spent the past fifty years struggling to piece together a productive and economically viable waterfront with the belief that any development is good for the economy. Changing political ideologies at City Hall moved towards a more progressive, grassroots approach to planning at the water’s edge; meanwhile the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania approved licenses for two casinos to be built along Philadelphia’s riverfront which aided in the need for a cohesive riverfront development plan. In October of 2006, Penn Praxis came to the rescue with a year-long civic engagement process that involved stakeholders, design-professionals, and city officials in a visioning process to establish a strategy for future development along the river’s edge. Success with the Penn’s Landing Forum in 2003 and political ties to the Philadelphia City Planning Commission made Penn Praxis the best choice to host the events. The organization had close ties with *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, which helped to spread the word about planning for riverfront future. Following the process, Penn Praxis published *A Civic Vision for the Central Delaware Riverfront* which outlined the principles and strategies that were developed during the meetings. *An Action Plan for the Central Delaware Riverfront: 2008-2018* was produced in 2008 outlining a ten-year step-by-step process for revitalizing the waterfront. Both documents have set the stage for investment and redevelopment efforts that optimize the historic character, environmental sensitivity, and economic potential of the riverfront. This chapter will review the initial efforts that Philadelphia has invested throughout the past four years to capitalize on the potential of the central Delaware riverfront.

A Civic Vision

¹Penn Praxis, in conjunction with Wallace, Roberts, and Todd (WRT) and the William Penn Foundation embarked on a year-long civic engagement process to gather public and professional input on the needs and potential of the post-industrial Delaware riverfront. Intentions of the civic visioning process were to gather public input on waterfront matters and to combat the traditional closed-door planning that Philadelphians were used to through open and transparent communication and planning.

The process began in October with river front tours. Neighbors, civic officials, and design professionals gathered to learn about the waterfront and to see what needed to be done and the potential at the river's edge. These river walks represented the important principle that redevelopment begins with public engagement at the water's edge. The next step was a series of community forums, taking place from December of 2006 through February of 2007. Each of these forums was aimed at establishing a set of values and principles derived from the communities that were to be affected by the redevelopment of the waterfront. The first session was held in December of 2006 and focused on creating a set of values which are listed below. The values derived from the forums served as the core from which the Civic Vision was built.

1. *A safe place to live* – A place where children can play outside and neighborhoods have the feeling of safety and security due to an understanding of trust between neighbors.
2. *A varied culture* – Economic, racial, cultural, generational and physical diversity
3. *A healthful environment* – A clean, open, and accessible environment

¹ Information presented in the following section has been derived from *A Civic Vision for the Central Delaware Riverfront* produced by Penn Praxis at the University of Pennsylvania in 2007.

4. *Economic sustainability* – A variety and strength of jobs along the riverfront, including industrial and shipping trades.

5. *A rich history* – embracing the richness and diversity of Philadelphia’s history

After establishing a set of values, another forum was held to engage citizens in the development of a set of principles for the riverfront’s revitalization. The principles provided a roadmap for the civic vision, as they were what citizens believed needed to be accomplished with future design and planning along the water’s edge. Principles set forth by Philadelphians included the following:

1. *Reconnect the city to the river’s edge* – Providing physical and visual links to the river, preserving historic structures, integrating innovative transit options, and creating dense, intimate neighborhoods that foster safety and civic pride.

2. *Honor the river* – Acknowledging the importance of the river as a port and celebrating its history and value to the city.

3. *Design with nature* – Integrating the natural ecosystems with human needs to promote and preserve the health of the river.

4. *Strike the right balance* – Encourage a balance of public and private development. Develop a mixture of shops, civic spaces, and residential areas to provide a destination for visitors and Philadelphians.

5. *Take the long view* – Aim for bold and innovative plans that provide the waterfront with high-quality urban development. Avoid the seduction of short-term economic gains as far-sighted plans can bring stability and excellence to the central Delaware.

6. *Protect the public good* – Connect and integrate neighborhoods through a series of public spaces that tell the history of the riverfront and of Philadelphia. Promote civic

gathering and cultural diversity by providing a mixture of environmental and residential spaces that serve the need of a variety of people.

7. *Make it real, Philadelphia* – Create a legacy of excellence through the integration of profession design and public desires that will last for generations. Continue to prioritize public input to foster dialogue that will continue to direct development.

A design charrette was held in March of 2007 to utilize the values and principles developed during the community forums in formulating a master plan for the riverfront. Penn Praxis, the Philadelphia City Planning Commission, and WRT facilitated the workshop that included world-renowned designers, community members, and students from the University of Pennsylvania's School of Design. The process occurred over a three-day period and ended with presentations of the design work and publication of plans in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. The design charrette brought over 500 citizens to the Independence Seaport Museum to hear and see the proposals and ideas for the future of the riverfront. Three planning networks were identified during the workshop; movement systems, open spaces and land development. Planning networks established during the design workshop became the basis for the Civic Vision Plan. Throughout the spring and summer of 2007, design and community feedback sessions were held to refine the ideas that had been produced. This part of the process was integral determining if the public voice was being conveyed through the development designs. Once the design guidelines and ideas had been refined, Penn Praxis held focus to obtain information on and work of the various public agencies involved with riverfront development and commerce. The *Civic Vision for the Central Delaware Riverfront* was completed in November of 2007 with a public presentation. Since then, the document has served as the framework for redevelopment along Philadelphia's riverfront.

Action Planning

²Following the *Civic Vision for the Central Delaware Riverfront*, a subsidiary document was published utilizing the principles and values set forth by the civic visioning process to outline a ten-year action plan for the City of Philadelphia as it proceeded with riverfront revitalization. The *Action Plan for the Central Delaware: 2008-2018* was produced as a guide to the implementation of the civic vision. The document outlines what actions need to be taken, who has the authority to take the action, how much it will cost, and what funding resources are available to pay for it (*An Action Plan for the Central Delaware: 2008-2018* p. 6). The steps presented in the *Action Plan* are described as concrete and doable, as the study shows that other cities have successfully achieved riverfront redevelopment by utilizing similar goals and objectives. The map below illustrates the ten steps that were set forth in the *Action Plan*.

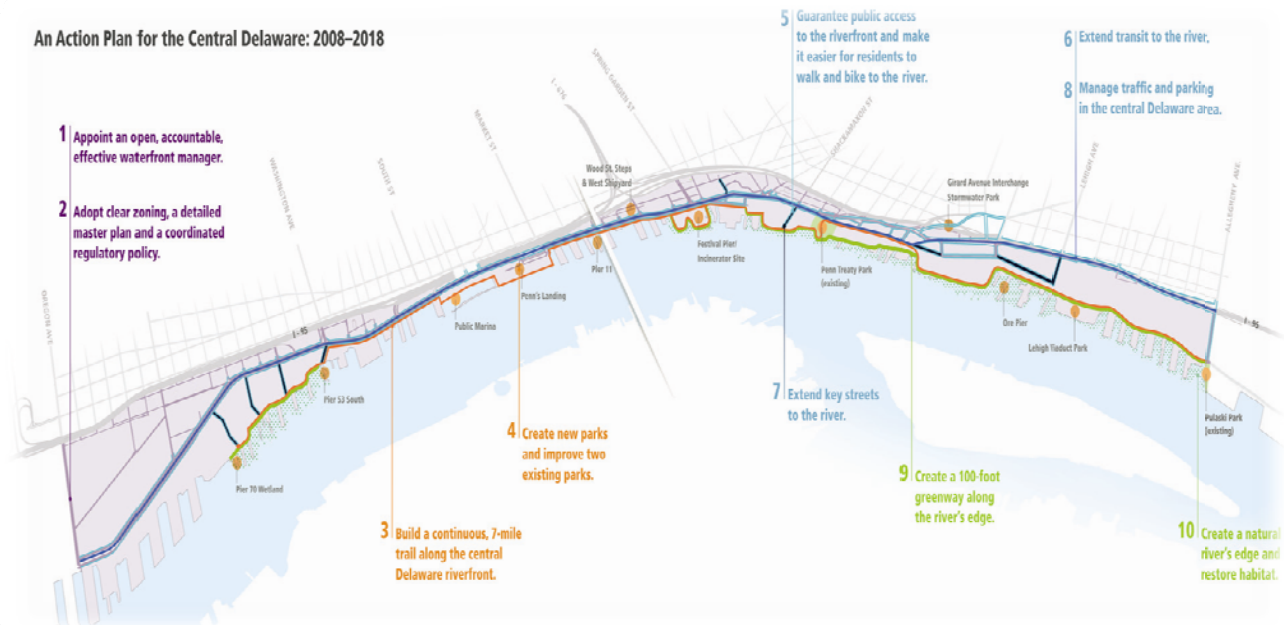


Figure 4:1: Ten objectives in ten years (Penn Praxis, 2008)

² Information presented in the following section has been derived from *An Action Plan for the Central Delaware 2008-2018* produced by Penn Praxis at the University of Pennsylvania in 2008.

The ten steps or objectives that the *Action Plan* outlined include the following:

1. *Appoint an open, accountable, effective waterfront manager-* Philadelphia's historic waterfront management has been disjointed and unproductive. The *Action Plan* calls for a reform of Penn's Landing Corporation, the current waterfront management organization, to create an organization that operates openly and with the trust of citizens. The responsibility of the waterfront management organization will be to implement a master plan for the riverfront, to present annual progress reports to the city and public, to maintain relationships with stakeholders and residents of the waterfront, and to work towards achieving the goals set forth by Philadelphians in the *Civic Vision*.
2. *Adopt clear zoning, a detailed master plan and a coordinated regulatory policy-* Zoning codes in Philadelphia are outdated and counter-productive towards achieving the citizen's vision for the waterfront. The first action that is needed is an interim zoning overlay that protects public spaces and ensures active ground-floor uses, urban setbacks, and concealed parking. Next, it is recommended that the Philadelphia Zoning Code Commission begin their revision of city zoning codes with the riverfront. A master plan to guide the transformation of the riverfront should be completed by the Philadelphia City Planning Commission and the waterfront manager to ensure that the vision of the city is incorporated into the planning process. Finally, the Action Plan recommends that city, state, federal and quasi-governmental agencies come together to establish an understanding of how they will work together throughout the redevelopment process.

3. *Build a continuous 7-mile trail along the Central Delaware Riverfront-* Building a trail system will provide the city with recreational, environmental, and economic benefits. This step advises that a continuous trail system be built within a greenway which would be a 100-foot band of green along the edge of the Delaware River. A greenway will offer scenic views of the waterway. The challenge of obtaining the right-of-way for a 100-foot green way comes with older property owners with waterfront access but new development should be required by zoning laws to provide right-of-way access for the trail system.
4. *Create new parks and improve the two existing parks -* Add a series of parks along the riverfront, linked by a greenway that will spur economic development. The idea that creating park spaces will initiate investment in the area comes from the success of Chicago's Millennium Park which saw a return of nearly \$5 billion in job growth and tax revenue since its development. In order for Philadelphia to accomplish the goal of creating a park system, it must create destination parks on land at Festival Pier and at Penn's Landing. It must also open publically owned piers such as Pier 11 and improve the existing parks located along the riverfront.
5. *Guarantee public access to the riverfront and make it easier for residents to walk and bike to the river –* The Action Plan recommends that the city improve sidewalks that lead to the riverfront to encourage pedestrian traffic and ensure public access. Safe crosswalks are a key part of creating a place that is safe and friendly for pedestrians so it is recommended that safe, visible, well-lit crosswalks be built at every intersection along Delaware Avenue. Another essential part to guaranteeing public access is to extend bike routes to the riverfront. Adding bike lanes to streets that

- connect to the water's edge will allow people to bike safely to the river and connect up with trail ways.
6. *Extend transit to the river-* Another essential factor in bringing people back to the riverfront is building extensions of public transit systems to key places along the Delaware. Possibilities for transit are already present along Delaware Avenue where the right-of-way for an old streetcar line is still exists. It is recommended that this right-of-way be updated and modernized to accommodate a trolley line. The Port Authority Transit Corporation (PATCO) is in the process of evaluating alternative plans and financing possibilities to build a line along Delaware Avenue.
 7. *Extend key streets to the river-* The extension of key streets to the river's edge will provide safe and efficient access points for automobiles, cyclists, and pedestrians at a variety of locations. The *Action Plan* calls for the identification of key streets that can be extended to the riverfront to allow for improved access and circulation. Enforcing street right-of-ways, purchasing necessary vacant property for street extension and platting streets in the City Plan will allow the Philadelphia to have control of providing opportunities to extend streets to the waterfront.
 8. *Manage traffic and parking in the central Delaware area-* Delaware Avenue is the main access road for the riverfront area. It currently carries a large volume of traffic and would only be further congested with planned development. Strategic traffic mitigation plans are needed to alleviate the burden on Delaware Avenue. The *Action Plan* suggests that traffic congestion can be reduced by synchronizing traffic signals. Coordinating traffic signals will allow traffic to flow without constant stopping as well as save drivers time and fuel. It is also recommended that east-west cross streets

be extended to the river, creating new intersections that can handle high traffic volumes. This will provide drivers with several route options and ease traffic flow by the river. Other traffic mitigation techniques suggested by Penn Praxis include adding a streetcar line down Delaware Avenue, improving bicycle and pedestrian routes, build parking garages next to 1-95 exit ramps, and regulating private casino buses. Each one of these techniques would provide people with a variety of options for accessing the riverfront development while reducing the number of automobiles traveling to the area.

9. *Create a 100-foot greenway along the water's edge*- Cities across the nation have been transforming their urban waterfronts back into floodplain and habitat areas for the purpose of reducing pollutants and restoring natural systems. It is recommended that Philadelphia implement a zoning overlay which will reserve land adjacent to the Delaware for a 100-foot greenway. Once the greenway area is reserved, the city can begin to transform the land into a parkway for recreation and public enjoyment. Utilizing a native plant palette will help restore the waterfront ecosystem and provide a place for Philadelphians to learn about the environment.
10. *Create a natural river's edge and restore habitat*- The final step in the *Action Plan* is to clean and restore the river's edge. An annual clean-up day is recommended to get Philadelphians involved with the riverfront and instill a sense of pride in their city's appearance. At places where the 100-foot greenway is not available, shrubs and grasses should be planted to reduce erosion and promote habitat restoration. The end goal of this step is to bring the Delaware River's banks back to their natural state.

CHAPTER 5 - Progress on the Riverfront

“Starting an urban waterfront development project takes money, land, power, and a compelling vision of the future.” – David L.A. Gordon

Penn Praxis’s studies were the initial steps to redevelopment along the Delaware River. Since the documents were published, progress has been pushed forward by civic involvement and by the election of a new mayor in 2007. Mayor Michael Nutter supported the plans for riverfront redevelopment that were initiated by his predecessor Mayor John Street and he has been a key player in the progress that Philadelphia has made towards revitalizing the central Delaware. Mayor Nutter’s platform included a key piece to pushing forward development at the water’s edge, that was a planning and zoning reform for the city. One of Nutter goals included putting the Philadelphia City Planning Commission back into its place as the city’s authority on planning and shaping the city to combat the historic “let’s make a deal” attitude of government in Philadelphia (Walsh, June 17,2008). Nutter made clear his intentions with a lecture to the planning commission in June of 2008, just months after his inauguration, when he said, “Over the years, for reasons of expediency, both politics and economics, we’ve strayed from relying on the Planning Commission as the arbiter of planning expertise... I want to return the commission to its rightful position” (Nutter, 2008). This speech was a big step for riverfront redevelopment, as it puts the Planning Commission in the driver’s seat for choosing development projects that follow the objectives set forth in the *Civic Vision*. Empowering the planning commission demonstrated Nutter’s commitment to moving Philadelphia forward in its goals to have a world class waterfront. Since his endorsement of Penn Praxis’s Delaware waterfront plan in June of 2008, Nutter has led Philadelphia in three other major moves towards redevelopment: reforming

Penn's Landing Corporation, Establishing a zoning overlay, and hiring a master planner for the riverfront.

Reform of Penn's Landing Corporation

Penn's Landing Corporation, established in 1970 to manage publicly owned land along the riverfront, had a long history of closed-door planning. Secret meetings and deal-making attitudes cast a shadow of distrust in the eyes of Philadelphians over the Corporation. Peter Hendee Brown, in the book *America's Waterfront Revival*, stated, "Penn's Landing Corporation put all its eggs in one basket more than a half dozen times repeatedly relying on a single master developer to provide both the vision and funding for a mega project at Penn's Landing." Penn's Landing Corporation in conjunction with the city of Philadelphia was seeking the development project that would provide the greatest economic benefit rather than following guidelines set forth by the Penn's Landing master plan. Mayor Nutter took action in June of 2008 with a promise to citizens of openness when it comes to the management public lands. This was one of his first acts after endorsing Penn Praxis's *An Action Plan for the Central Delaware: 2008-2018*. Penn's Landing Corporation was formally disbanded in January of 2009 when Mayor Nutter dismissed the board. The corporation was renamed and re-staffed to create the Delaware River Waterfront Corporation (DRWC). Reform of the waterfront corporation included a new, expanded mission statement and status as a 501(c)3 non-profit making it eligible for foundation, state, and federal grants (Marketwire, 2009). The new mission of DRWC is:

The fundamental purpose of DRWC is to design, develop and manage the central Delaware River waterfront in Philadelphia between Oregon and Allegheny Avenues. DRWC intends to transform the central Delaware River waterfront into a vibrant

destination location for recreational, cultural, and commercial activities for the residents and visitors of Philadelphia. DRWC will serve as a catalyst for high quality investment in public parks, trails, maritime, residential, retail, hotel and other improvements that create a vibrant amenity, extending Philadelphia to the river's edge (Delaware River Waterfront Corporation [DRWC], 2009).

Reforming the organization's mission allowed Mayor Nutter to make clear the goals and objectives of DRWC. Another change Nutter made clear was needed in the development of DRWC was stating that the planning processes and decision-making done by DRWC was to be in an open and transparent fashion. This meant that board meetings had to be advertised and open to the public. The corporation developed a website to help facilitate the objective of open and transparent planning, upon which it posts meeting dates, minutes, and agendas.

Effective and accountable leadership is essential to promoting the mission of DRWC. Nutter appointed Tom Corcoran, former president of Cooper's Ferry Development Corporation in Camden, NJ, as the president of DRWC. Corcoran's work in New Jersey attracted over \$550 million in public and private investment for Camden's waterfront (DRWC, 2009). Nutter's aspirations are that Corcoran will have the same success with Philadelphia. Board members were also reappointed; this time Nutter selected a board of experts from a variety of design and development backgrounds none of whom are politicians (Goodman, 2009). The new DRWC board and their President have been active for just over one year now and have been actively working towards the objectives in Penn Praxis's *Action Plan*. DRWC recently published its first annual progress report which included the following list of accomplishments.

1. Funding, bid, and awarded a contract for a master plan for the central Delaware Riverfront.

2. Funded, bid, and awarded a design contract for Pier 11, located underneath the Benjamin Franklin Bridge. The contract was awarded to James Corner Field Operations of New York City with a schematic design for a public park scheduled to be completed in spring of 2011.
3. Funded and bid for a new one acre park at the end of Pier 53
4. Continued to fund and expand summer events at Penn's Landing and the annual New Year's Eve fireworks celebration.
5. Reopened Blue Cross RiverRink at Penn's Landing for the winter season.

The DRWC will continue to be essential to the redevelopment efforts along the central Delaware riverfront, as they advance the goals of the city and residents of Philadelphia. Continued cooperation between Mayor Nutter and the city, Penn Praxis, and other stakeholders will allow DWRC to move Philadelphia's waterfront redevelopment forward in a positive and productive manner.

Establishing a Zoning Overlay

Councilman DiCicco of Philadelphia's First District drafted a bill to create a zoning overlay district for the central Delaware Riverfront in March of 2009. DiCicco developed the bill with the input of the Central Delaware Advocacy Group and waterfront property owners as to accommodate the needs and objectives of both groups (Gates, 2009). The ordinance enabling the Central Delaware Riverfront Overlay District states the following as its fundamental purpose:

The District is established to protect the existing characteristics of the built and natural environment that are essential to achieving the working guidelines of the Civic Vision, adopted by the Philadelphia City Planning Commission on April 21, 2009, while a Master Plan for the area is developed. This section of the City presents a diverse

collection of uses, ranging from the working port and large retail establishments in the southern portion to high-rise residential communities in the north. Special land use controls and design guidelines will help promote long-term economic viability and to provide a framework for future growth (City of Philadelphia, 2009).

In June of 2009, the bill enabling the Central Delaware Riverfront Overlay District was passed through the City Council and adopted in the Code of Ordinances for the City of Philadelphia.

The ordinance acts in accordance with the values and principles of the Civic Vision by regulating the types of uses that are permitted within the overlay district, setting guidelines for design of structures, and requiring a 100-foot setback for a riverfront greenway. In the overlay district, square footage regulations are set to ensure that big box retail development does not occur.

Types of businesses are also regulated as to combat an adult oriented district from occurring near the riverfront. Ground floor commercial or retail is required for buildings fronting Delaware Avenue, and the ground floor is required to be constructed of at least 75% glass or transparent material. DiCicco's ordinance also discusses how the 100-foot setback should be established where possible and excludes piers from providing the required setback. It requires that a recreational trail be provided within the 100-foot setback, and allows current property owners to dedicate the land for the waterfront setback to the City as to alleviate their responsibility for construction and management of the trail. The Central Delaware Riverfront Overlay District will be enforced in conjunction with existing zoning and overlay districts that currently exist for the area.

Master Planning

The Delaware River Waterfront Corporation funded a search for a Master Planner for the central Delaware River redevelopment. Cooper, Robertson and Partners of New York was

chosen in November of 2009 as the master planning firm for the Delaware riverfront. They will work with OLIN, Kieran Timberlake, and HR&A Advisors to prepare a plan that incorporates the values and principles set forth by the *Civic Vision*. Cooper, Robertson and Partners will serve as the master planners, with OLIN and Kieran Timberlake as the landscape architects and architects on the team. HR&A Advisors will prepare an economic analysis of public and private projects. The master plan will address the issues of land use, infrastructure, public access, neighborhood connectivity, parks and trails, riparian rights and easements. Sub consultants with expertise outside of the main design team will be utilized to provide input on the areas of transportation, planning and zoning, traffic engineering, ecology, and historic preservation in order to create a plan that represents the best possible solution for the riverfront. The process is expected to take from 12-18 months to complete and will turn the vision of Philadelphia's riverfront into concrete land use and zoning laws (DRWC, 2009).

CHAPTER 6 - Analysis and Conclusion

“Humanity, it seems, delights in and finds inspiration at waterfront settings, but increasingly asks more from them than a mere spectacle.” – Alex Krieger, Remaking the Urban Waterfront

Philadelphia’s nearly fifty years of outdated plans, selfish politics and closed-door decision making contributed to the ad hoc nature of the central Delaware Riverfront. What was once the “Workshop of the World,” one of the most productive and competitive riverfronts in the world during the industrial revolution, became a wasteland of big-box retail and abandoned shipping piers. As for the planning at Penn’s Landing, the city sought an ideal project that would provide the most economic viability, but no such project existed (Brown, 2009), striving for the unattainable goal led eight failed development proposals and nearly fifty years of unproductive waterfront planning. Political leaders played a critical role in the planning process as the ultimate decision-makers. Philadelphia’s waterfront planning process demonstrates that success or failure of projects depends greatly upon the agenda of those in charge. Further, waterfront redevelopments can be long-term efforts but require a cohesive vision that will withstand changing administrations. Finally, public projects should involve public opinion as to establish an understanding of what needs and desires exist among community members. The following chapter discusses these concepts through an analysis of the past fifty years of regime change in Philadelphia and its effect on the Central Delaware Riverfront.

Lesson 1: The Success or Failure of a Public Project Greatly Depends on Political Ideologies and Approach to Planning

Political agendas provide a driving force for redevelopment efforts. This is clearly illustrated by Philadelphia’s attempts to create a new destination at Penn’s Landing following the

decline of waterfront industry. Figure 6.1 below shows the term, administration, political ideology, and contribution to planning on the Central Delaware Riverfront.

Philadelphia Administrations and Waterfront Plans 1950-Present				
Term	Mayor	Political Ideology	Waterfront Plan	Year
1952-1956	Joseph Clark	Managerial	Gedde's Nautical Mile	1956
1956-1962	Richardson Dilworth	Managerial	Gedde's Nautical Mile	1956-1970
1962-1972	James Tate	Privatist	Established Penn's Landing Corporation	1970
1972-1980	Frank Rizzo	Privatist	Murphy Plan	1970s
			McCloskey Co. Developers	1973-1976
			Gerald D. Hines Developers	
			Jack Blumenfeld Developers	End 1980
1980-1984	William Green	Managerial	Cope-Linder Associates Plan	1981-1984
1984-1992	Wilson Goode	Privatist	Rouse & Associates Developers	
			Daniel Rose Developers	1989-1991
1992-2000	Ed Rendell	Privatist	Simon Development Group	Begin 1997
2000-2008	John Street	Privatist/Progressive	Simon Development Group	End 2002
			Penn Praxis Plan	2007
2008-Present	Michael Nutter	Progressive	Penn Praxis Plan	2007-Present

Figure 6:1: Mayoral administrations and their contribution to waterfront development

As mentioned in chapter 3, Joseph Clark and Richardson Dilworth championed the idea that the site should be a place for the public to gather and enjoy. Focused on redeveloping stagnate and down-turning areas of the city, the Clark and Dilworth administrations worked diligently towards creating a place at the river's edge that would attract tourism near and within the historic district by purchasing dilapidated piers and building new land with fill out into the river by 300-400 feet (McGovern, 2008). Early commitment to redevelopment showed progress and potential for an active destination as infrastructure investments had been made, however plans that were made did not survive changing administrations during the 1970s. Successors to Dilworth were less interested in revitalization efforts that focused on the public nature of the site. Mayors James Tate and Frank Rizzo looked towards the private sector to bring investment to Penn's Landing.

In order to expedite the process of development, Penn's Landing Corporation was created to manage the site. The privatized focus slowed construction and progress along the river, as Penn's Landing Corp. saw the need to update the seven-year old Geddes plan. A new vision for the waterfront led to the first of eight developer-driven plans to fail. Two more developers came to Philadelphia seeking to make Penn's Landing a office/retail/and residential center for the city but neither was successful. Changes in regime occurred in 1980 bringing a new agenda to city hall. Mayor William Green took office with the vision that Penn's Landing should be a public space, just as Clark and Dilworth had believed. His administration moved forward on that vision by hiring Cope-Linder Associates to create yet another new master plan for the site. This time, significant amounts of public space would be set aside to create a gathering space for the city. During Green's time as Mayor, much progress was made at Penn's Landing. Construction of the Great Plaza and the Walnut Street Pedestrian Bridge were some of the biggest accomplishments during the 1980s and the end of significant development progress for the next few decades. Wilson Goode and his processor Ed Rendell shifted the focus from a public asset to a highly privatized mega entertainment facility. Rendell brought in the country's biggest and best developers to create a destination for family entertainment at the river's edge. His agenda was clearly about deal making and short-term economic gains. This is demonstrated by his approval of the construction of a Wal-Mart and Home Depot at Pier 70 just one mile south of the Penn's Landing site. Rendell's attitude towards planning and development allowed him to push these small scattered projects through at the water's edge but his plans for Penn's Landing did not follow suit ultimately ending in failure. Privatist attitudes prevailed well into the Street administration's reign at city hall. Street's success at Penn's Landing was greatly due to changing political culture among citizens and grassroots pressure to shift ideologies at the city

level. It has been demonstrated by Philadelphia's fifty years of waterfront planning that managerial and progressive approaches to public redevelopment projects are often more successful than the privatist view. Although small short-term economic gains can be made when taking the privatist approach, long-term development and cohesive visions do not survive without comprehensive planning that can withstand changing regimes at city hall.

Lesson 2: Waterfront Redevelopments can be Long-term Efforts but Require a Cohesive Vision that will Withstand Changing Administrations

As comprehensive plans establish city-wide long-term goals and visions for growth and development, master plans facilitate redevelopment efforts at a site-specific level. *Remaking the Urban Waterfront* published by the Urban Land Institute has a set of waterfront redevelopment principles, principle six out states, “*Waterfront redevelopments are long-term endeavors with the potential to produce long-term value. Endangering this for short-term riches rarely produces the most desirable results*” (Fisher, 2004). This principle best describes why the managerial and progressive ideologies move development forward at a faster and more productive pace than privatist politicians. In Philadelphia, waterfront redevelopment began with a master plan that was to strike a balance between private and public spaces with the goal of creating a destination and center for commerce on the historic piece of property known as Penn's Landing. Changing regimes at city hall derailed the original vision for the waterfront in favor of short-term economic gains.

Shifting political culture and the rise of the creative class, a more highly educated class of professionals living within the city, has encouraged residents to take an active role in local politics and planning matters (McGovern, 2008). This change is illustrated by activism from neighborhood associations and community groups against Mayor Street's search for a developer

for Penn's Landing following the demise of the Simon Plan. Participation in waterfront planning forums hosted by Penn Praxis also demonstrates the increasing interest citizens had in community planning and politics. Mayor Street's endorsement of *A Civic Vision for the Central Delaware Riverfront* as the official vision for the waterfront has proven that long-term planning is the best solution for redevelopment of public lands within the urban realm. The involvement of citizens and community organizations in the planning process for redevelopment along the riverfront should provide vitality to the plan. As long as the citizens are actively placing pressure on government officials to move forward with the Civic Vision, the Central Delaware Riverfront will transform into the world class waterfront that the city has been attempting to create since the 1950s. A plan's ability to withstand changing administrations at City Hall involves the activism and pressure from the citizens along with a solid vision for the future with concrete goals to achieve that vision. Philadelphia is now equipped with the proper tools to ensure that redevelopment along the Central Delaware River will occur in a fashion that utilizes waterfront property to its full potential and best benefits residents and visitors while providing opportunities for economic growth for Philadelphia.

Today, Philadelphia is making positive strides towards their goal of creating a world class waterfront. Penn Praxis's forums built the framework for the success that the city has been having in recent years. The city committed to open and transparent planning when Mayor John F. Street signed the executive order making *A Civic Vision for the Central Delaware Riverfront* the official plan for the waterfront in 2007. Since then, Philadelphia has reformed the corrupt Penn's Landing Corporation by firing the entire board of directors and rehiring new leadership and changing the name of the organization to combat the poor reputation that was left behind by

Penn's Landing Corporation. The city has also begun the process of developing design guidelines and updated zoning laws for the riverfront through the adoption of the *Central Delaware Riverfront Overlay* district. Finally, Cooper, Robertson & Partners was commissioned to develop the Master Plan for the Central Delaware Riverfront. These efforts show the how Philadelphia learned from its past mistakes to make significant progress towards revitalization on the riverfront. However, to continue to move forward with waterfront redevelopment the city must stay committed to the long-term view offered by *A Civic Vision for the Central Delaware Riverfront*. When administrations change, it will be important for citizens to stay involved with the redevelopment process and keep the city accountable for following the *Action Plan for the Central Delaware: 2008-2018*.

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Appendix A - Location Map



Figure A:1: Penn's Landing (base image from Google maps, created by author)