

Design Review for the Philadelphia Coke Site Development Plan

Commissioned by: Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC)

Conducted by: Design Advocacy Group (DAG)

Developer Response: Westrum Development Company/K. Hovnanian Cos.

We appreciated the occasion to participate with PEC and the DAG Design Review Team on the site tour and presentation in February, as well as the opportunity to respond to the comments and recommendations contained in the report for this exciting project which will help revitalize Bridesburg and bring a critical part of the Delaware River waterfront back to the community. As we have indicated throughout our discussions, the current site plan is the result of an extensive community review process which has attempted to address the needs and desires of the parties. We also recognize that this will be a long-term project, encompassing the next seven-to-ten years, over which time the site plan will undoubtedly evolve to address the changing issues of the site conditions, housing market and Bridesburg community. We plan to take many of the ideas generated from the design review report and incorporate them into the plan; however, we must be ever-careful to balance those comments with the needs and desires of several other critical stakeholders in the project, including city agencies and the community, to determine what is practical and marketable for the project given the constraints of the market and the site itself. This is not an easy task, but it is one we are committed to seeing through, resulting in an improved plan and leading to a successful project.

With regard to the design issues highlighted in the report, we offer the following response:

- **Emphasize connecting Bridesburg to the Delaware River** – Achieving this goal is a fundamental intent of the development plan. We recognize that internal “through” streets, from Richmond St. to the river, would assist with this goal and provide more efficient pedestrian and vehicle access to the waterfront and greenway trail. The current plan does not depict any “through” streets because we did not want to encourage motorists to cut through the neighborhood to access Delaware Avenue. However, we do feel that making one internal street connect directly with the waterfront would enhance the plan and provide some symmetry with the current direct access streets (Orthodox and Buckius) at the site’s northern and southern borders. We are investigating this possibility with the Philadelphia City Planning Commission (PCPC), Streets Department and the community groups.
- **Re-design the mid rise district** – As a later phase of the development plan, and a less defined segment of the current housing market, the mid- to high-rise waterfront development zone between Delaware Ave. and the greenway hinges on the success and momentum achieved by the project’s initial phases, between Richmond St. and Delaware Ave.. A mid- to high-rise district along the waterfront, maximizing waterfront views and access, is a sound urban planning concept with demonstrated success in many markets; however, that market does not currently exist in Bridesburg and needs to be created over the next several years. Given the longer term prospects for this section of the development, we are

currently exploring with PCPC and the community the concept of designing it as the project progresses, with the current focus on the initial phases of construction. This concept will lead to a better, more practical and marketable design of the waterfront district which can integrate the view, parking and other comments expressed by the review team and give the PCPC and other reviewing agencies the opportunity to review and comment on the plan as it progresses.

- **Provide a thoroughly developed system and hierarchy of open spaces** - We agree with the review team's comments on this issue and fully intend to develop specific open space plans with detailed information regarding uses, materials, hardscaping and landscaping amenities. We will provide sections and/or perspectives with emphasis on the community center block, the "village green" and, most importantly, the major open space amenity, the waterfront greenway. This effort will also include street and sidewalk details to tie these and other open spaces together, both on- and off-site.

- **Develop more site-specific visual expressions** - Similar to the open space issue addressed above and given the large scale of the project in terms of both density and duration, the developer intends to create and provide detailed, site-specific plans for all of the architectural elements as the project progresses. These plans will include streets, sidewalks, open spaces and other critical details. The site plan/master plan is only the beginning of the process which will lead to numerous plans and designs for all the critical development areas (including site remediation and infrastructure) essential to constructing and marketing the project. Just as the zoning process for the Waterfront Redevelopment District designation is merely the beginning of the lengthy process of obtaining all of the approvals and permits necessary to develop the project, the site planning process is the prelude to all of the detailed site designs that will be developed.

- **Other –**
 - We have initiated an assessment of the site, a brownfield, to determine if a LEED certified rating can be attained under the pilot program for Neighborhood Development.
 - The Richmond Street retail shown on the site plan is not projected in the first phase of development. Consideration for the location, type and implementation of retail space will continue as the plan and project progress.
 - We will continue discussions with the city, community and Delaware River City Corporation concerning the uses of the property on the south side of Orthodox St. and their effect on the orientation and buffering of the project. If removal of the current industrial uses is achieved, we would work closely with the stakeholders toward the redevelopment of Orthodox St. as a pedestrian friendly corridor leading to the waterfront.

In closing, we, again, appreciate the efforts and concern for this project displayed by PEC and DAG in the design review process and look forward to continuing to work with them as it progresses. It would be foolish not to take this opportunity to make a request of all of the stakeholders who have participated in and/or observed this process (including PEC, DAG, PCPC, OHCD, Delaware River City Corporation, Bridesburg CDC and other community groups) to combine their collective forces with the development team and focus on two other issues with direct impact on the project and the betterment of the community:

- Making the Delaware Avenue extension project a reality; and
- Finding an alternative for the active railroad line which crosses the project site and impacts the community's accessibility to the waterfront.

Both of these issues are not only crucial to the success of the project, they also have substantial impact on the continued viability of the Bridesburg community. With a concerted effort by the stakeholders mentioned above (plus others), it is a virtual certainty that these issues can be conquered. We would ask for your continued support and participation in truly bringing the waterfront back to the community in a pedestrian and vehicle friendly way, "for the betterment of Bridesburg".