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Philadelphia: Trying to Create a Riverfront

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Monday, November 8, 2010

Philadelphia: Trying to Create a Riverfront

Bethany Renner

Hi All,

While in the city of brotherly love this weekend, I found an editorial in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. The editorial is a great example of how lucky we are in Dayton to have a riverfront with paths and a place like RiverScape to experience the river downtown. Also, this is another great example of a city trying use the riverfront as a place for community to come.

Inquirer Editorial: By the river

Along Philadelphia's waterfront, the street grid lives.

There may be problems with the draft master plan for the Delaware River waterfront, but it does appear to embrace the great idea of running streets down to the water in a modified grid pattern - just like any other real city neighborhood.

Adding streets to the former dockland and industrial properties along the river would be vital to creating the pedestrian-friendly community envisioned by Mayor Nutter's planned rebirth of the central seven-mile stretch along the Delaware.

But it also happens to be an aspect of the plan that seems to get under the collar of some developers, who see the waterfront as a site for big-parcel projects more along the lines of the suburbs.

Having their properties bisected by a street grid would turn such plans on their heads, forcing developers to think more creatively and to build designs for residential, entertainment, and commercial services that are more in keeping with an urban setting.

Nutter plans new parks, low-rise development, and better pedestrian access, including a new pedestrian bridge to South Street.

Gated communities surrounded by setbacks and "open space" where the public is barred won't bring life back to riverfront neighborhoods, no matter how many people buy condos. So it makes perfect sense to rely, in part, upon a grid design to shape what happens along the waterfront.

While the master plan no doubt will undergo modifications prior to its being made final, it's vital that the grid concept makes it into the final design.