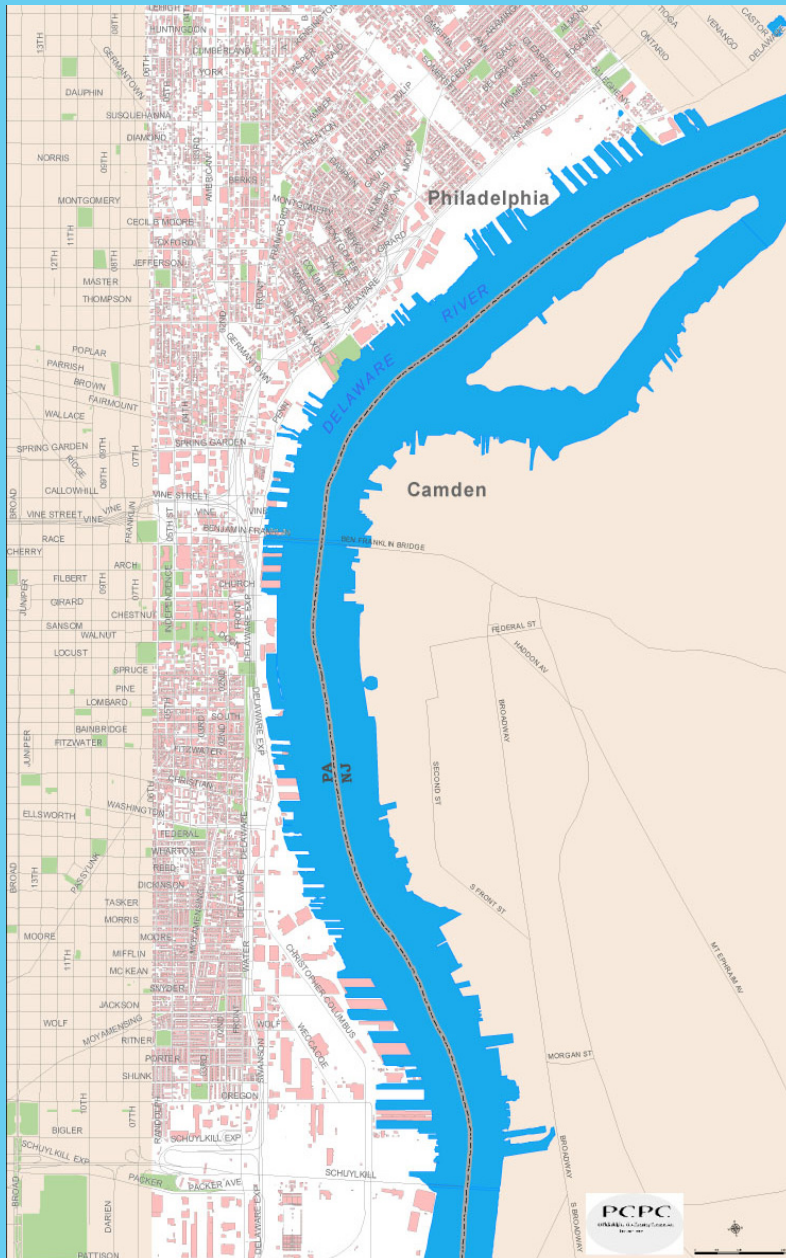


# Delaware Waterfront: Constraints & Opportunities

## I. Auto Roadways and Congestion



*The river's web of high-capacity roads*



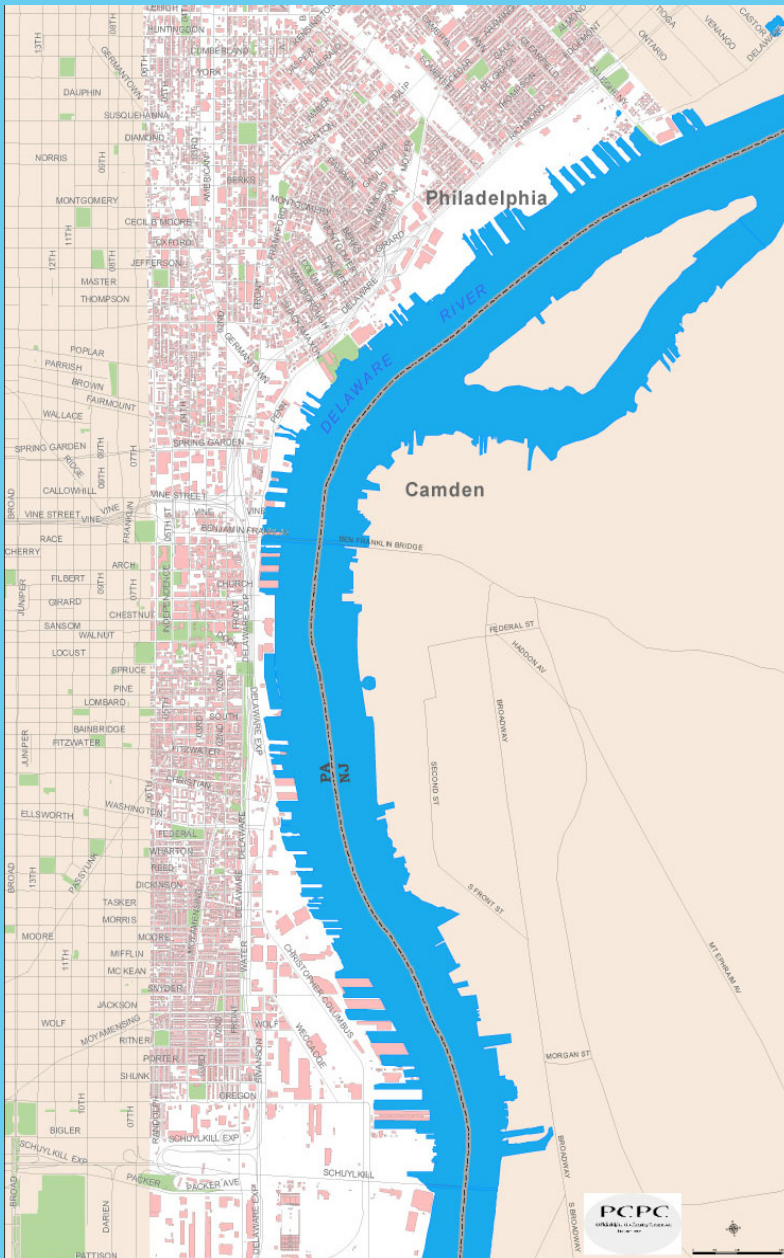
*Saturday morning Columbus Blvd traffic*

The most interaction that many residents get with the Central Delaware is when they admire the views from Interstate 95 and Delaware Avenue/Columbus Boulevard. When built in 1835, Delaware Ave was the first public street to link the various docks on the river. Old photos show the road with only four lanes and easy to cross, but it has become a widened high-speed thoroughfare for regional commuters. I-95 changed the face of the Central Delaware, knocking out industrial buildings that were obsolete due to shipping decline. It was viewed as a benefit to the river because it provided regional access to a riverfront newly opened for public use. However, its construction knocked out pieces of neighborhoods and, especially where it is elevated, has cut off local residents from accessing the river.

Lane construction has not stopped congestion along these roads. And with two casinos looming and a dozen high-rise residential units being proposed along the Central Delaware, auto traffic will inevitably worsen.

# Delaware Waterfront: Constraints & Opportunities

## II. Riverward Neighborhoods



*Market in Port Richmond*



*Queen Village homes off Columbus Blvd*

The variety of neighborhood populations and fabrics along the seven miles of the Central Delaware Waterfront is quite rich. These tight-knit high-density communities of rowhouses developed around different uses of the Delaware, from the factories to the ports to the old Navy Yard.

Access to the waterfront continues to be a problem for most riverward neighborhoods. Some are separated by grade-level regional roads like Columbus Boulevard, while others are blocked by a swath of the elevated portion of Interstate 95. The combination of these auto-dominated roads created as large as a 385-foot concrete gap between the neighborhood streets and the Delaware River. Issues of public access and disconnect were prevalent concerns in PennPraxis' first round of public forums.

# Delaware Waterfront: Constraints & Opportunities

## III. Varying Uses



*Big box stores at an old pier*



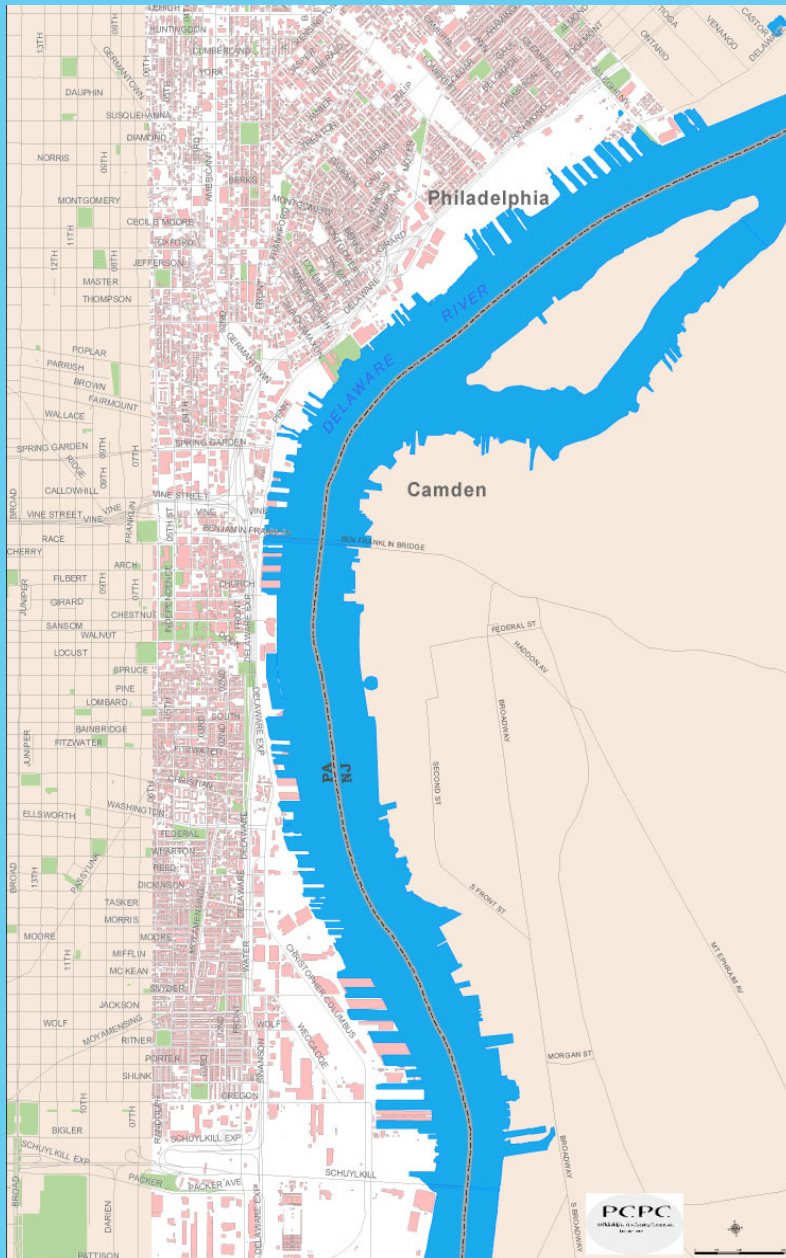
*Banner displayed near the "working port"*

No patterns or trends can be recognized in the uses of the land along the seven miles of the Central Delaware except for its apparent haphazard variety. At the southern end, big box retail stores abut working piers and dense rowhouse stock. At the northern end, the waterfront remains generally cut off from nearby residential neighborhoods because of highways and industrial sites. Some uses surrounding Penn Treaty Park alone include abandoned property, old factory buildings, a looming casino site, and numerous high-rise residential towers on the way.

The quality of the public realm varies as well, as the sidewalk is intermittent, parking lots front the road, and very few uses are designed to interact with the river. Much of this is due to the underutilization of the waterfront and the fact that only recently was there a development market for these sites. But now that one exists, there is a great opportunity to secure a cohesive and deliverative land use plan for this varied seven miles.

# Delaware Waterfront: Constraints & Opportunities

## IV. Public Access



*Behind U.S. Coast Guard property*



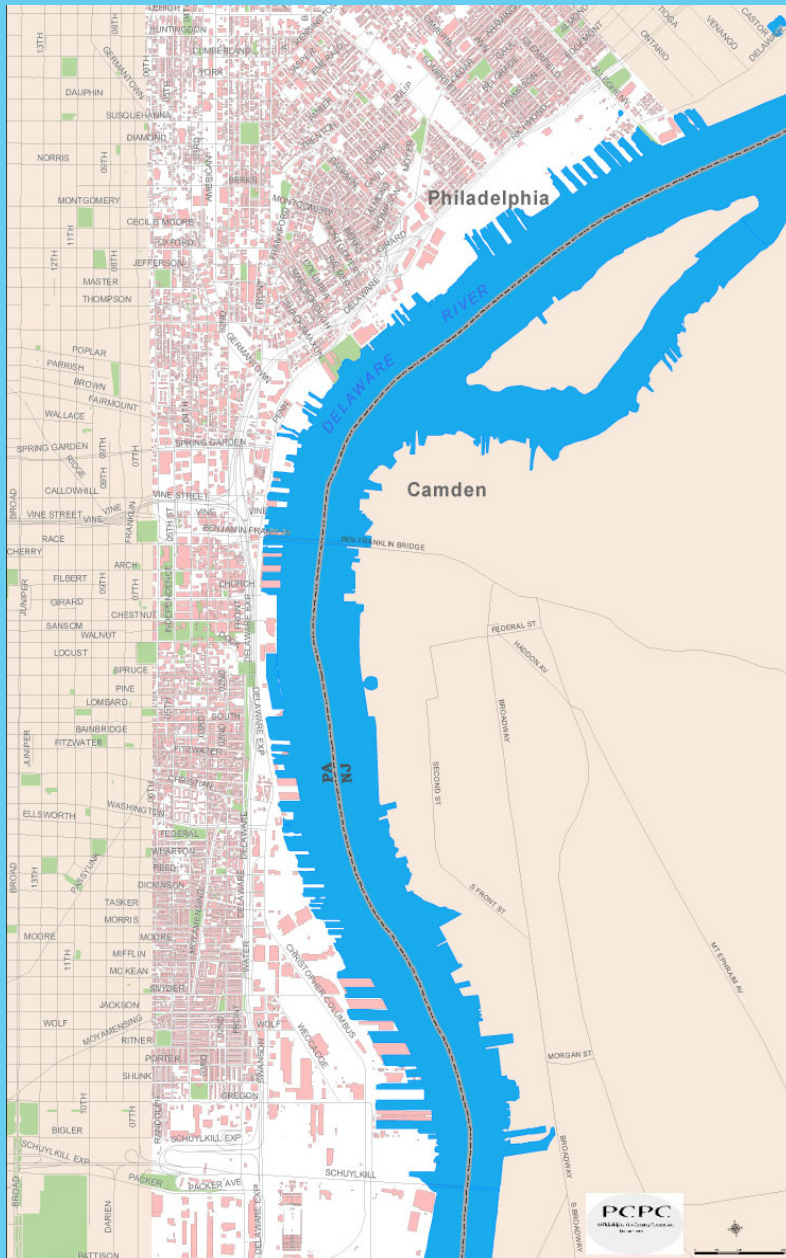
*New Waterfront Square gated community*

Because of the Central Delaware's original role as a center for port commerce and industry, there are very few points on the river that provide public entrances. Penn's Landing is the only significant stretch of publicly-owned land along the seven miles. But now that the factories and incinerators are off the Delaware, the River is much cleaner, and there is increasing demand to make it a more public amenity.

The opportunity for increased access is less around the southern edge of the project area because of the numerous big-box retail centers along that part of the river. Now large development is coming to the northern half of the Central Delaware, which threatens to erase the chance of public access permanently. New projects have started off on the wrong foot, as the newly-opened Waterfront Square condo buildings were established as a gated community and therefore cut off to public access. And with the threat of casinos looming, public rights to waterfront land has become an important issue for many citizens.

# Delaware Waterfront: Constraints & Opportunities

## V. Casino Licenses



*SugarHouse site north of Waterfront Square*



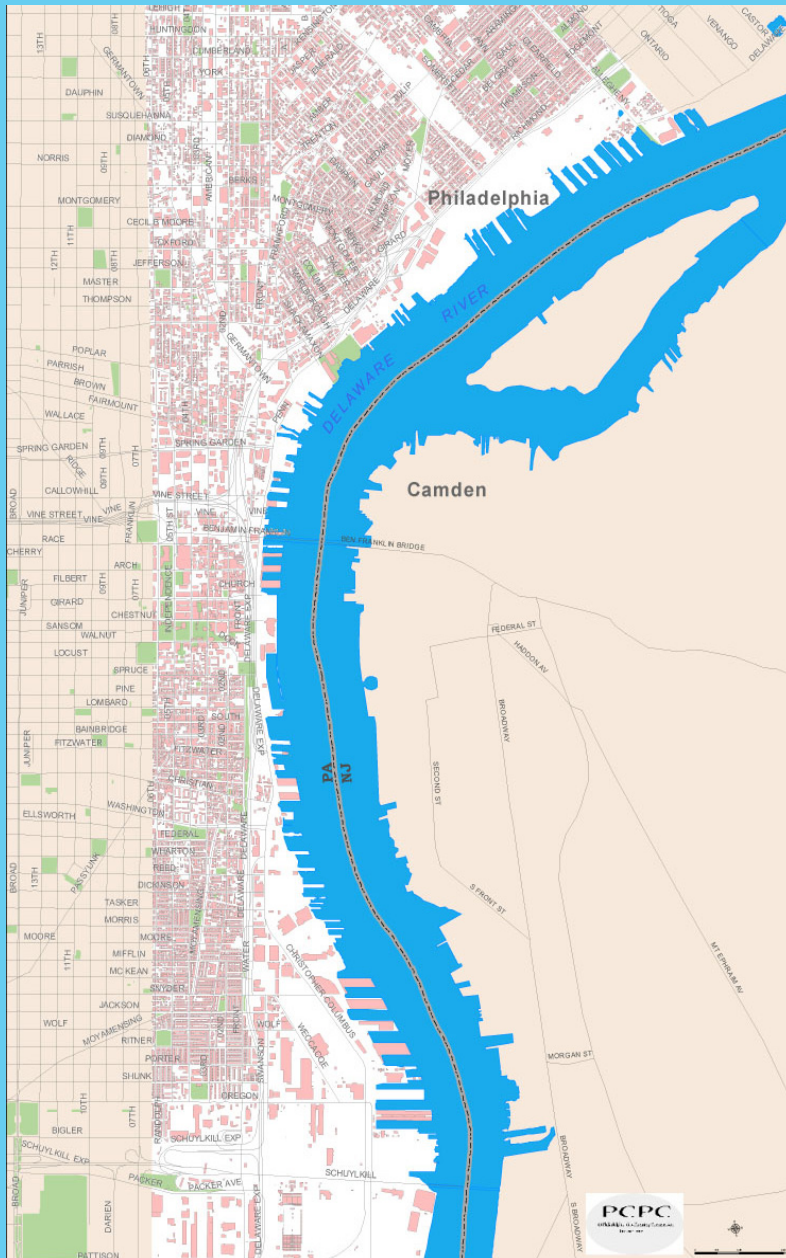
*Signs of protest along the Foxwoods site*

In order to compete with neighboring states for tax revenue, Pennsylvania made certain forms of gaming legal throughout the state. The state held siting rights, and awarded to slot parlor licenses to developers along the Central Delaware on Dec. 20: SugarHouse in the north and Foxwoods in the south. Each investor must submit a development plan to the Philadelphia City Planning Commission for approval, with special attention being paid to issues of urban design, transportation infrastructure, and public access.

Though the state continues to assert that casino revenue, taxed at 54%, will help Philadelphians by lowering wage taxes, riverward communities continue to protest their development. Neighbors cite casinos as a non-waterfront-dependent use, and contest investors' findings that claim that casino traffic will not increase overall congestion on nearby roads. They are also concerned that casinos will increase neighborhood crime and generally decrease quality of life in their community. This passionate opposition makes casino development the most pressing topic on many citizens' minds.

# Delaware Waterfront: Constraints & Opportunities

## VI. Historic Structures



*Gloria Dei Church*



*SS United States*

Many buildings along the seven miles of the Central Delaware remain that tell a story of Philadelphia's 400-year history as a European settlement. Some structures are protected from demolition through Philadelphia's Local Register of Historic Places, particularly those south of Center City.

The current design of the Delaware cuts citizens off from accessing many of these sites. They can be seen from Columbus Blvd., but difficult to reach. Others cannot even be seen -- for example, the SS United States is tucked behind the parking lot of a store parking lot. Sites include:

- Gloria Dei Church: first church built in the Delaware Valley
- Sparks Shot Tower: used in War of 1812, only five remaining in the country
- Elfreth's Alley: nation's oldest residential street
- Society Hill Towers: three protected high-rises designed by I.M. Pei
- SS United States: fastest and largest passenger liner built in U.S.

# Delaware Waterfront: Constraints & Opportunities

## VII. Industrial history (and vacancy)



Old PECO power plant in Fishtown



Former shipyard land left vacant

The Central Delaware was defined by industrial success for centuries. Philadelphia became the preeminent port city in the colonies before the Revolutionary War, and industry quickly developed around it. Railroad companies built tracks to the River, opening up previously inaccessible riverfront areas for growth. At its height, Port Richmond was the largest privately-owned railroad tidewater terminal. Marshlands became coal export facilities and sugar refineries, and tonnage was at 37 million tons by 1925.

The central piers declined shortly thereafter, and industry no longer needed to be directly on the river thanks to modernization. Little industry is left in the seven-mile project area: what remains are vacant plots hundreds of miles large and many old buildings worthy of historic consideration. These expansive vacancies cut off access to great land and vistas, but they present incredible opportunities both for new development and public space along the Central Delaware.

# Delaware Waterfront: Constraints & Opportunities

## VIII. Open Space



*Penn Treaty Park*



*Penn's Landing*

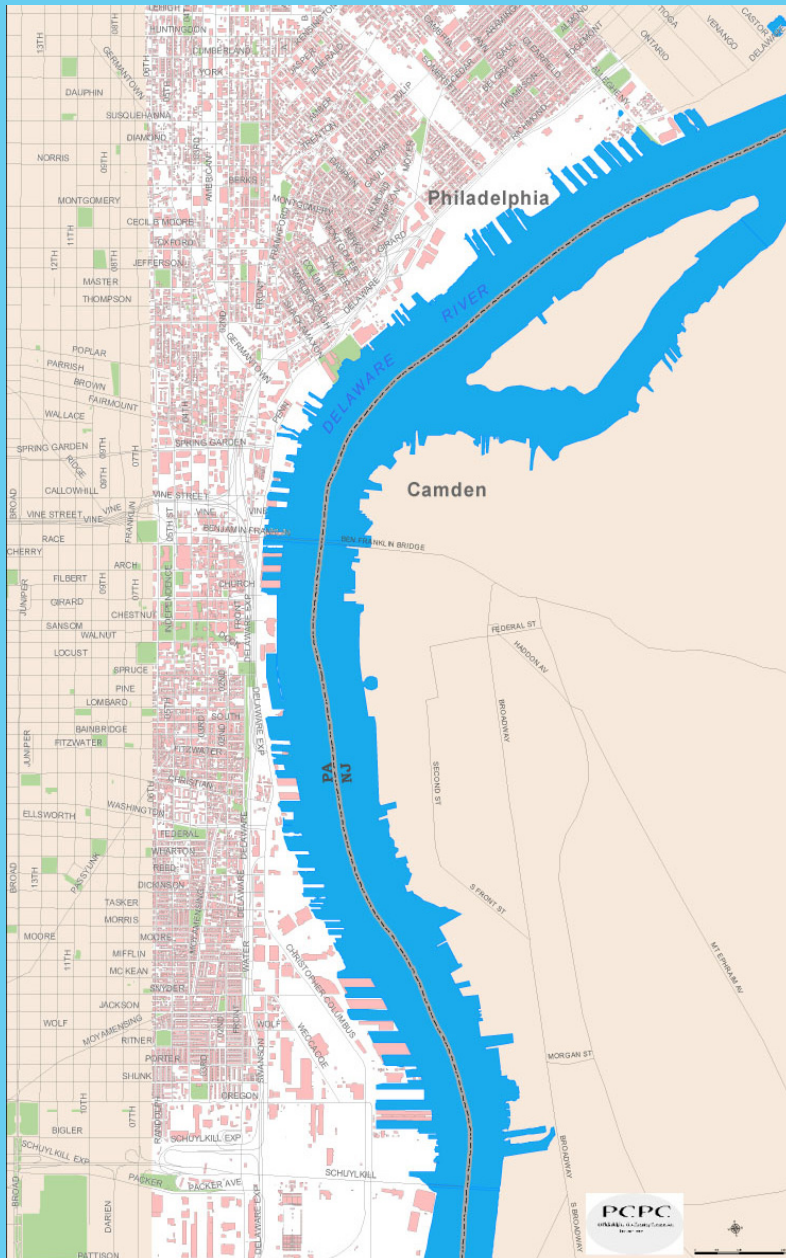
The Central Delaware has very little formal open space compared to most modern waterfronts. At the northern edge is Pulaski Park, a fishing spot on an old half-acre finger pier. Just east of Center City is Penn's Landing, the public space planned by Philadelphia's Ed Bacon using landfill and obsolete piers. Despite its proximity to downtown, Penn's Landing is significantly underutilized, most likely because of the lack of greening and active uses, as well as the large gap created by I-95. The jewel of the Central Delaware is Penn Treaty Park, a pure green space north of Center City with both passive and active uses.

Many opportunities exist for open space due to the former industrial sites that now lay vacant and the increasing development interest in bringing people to the river. Many plans call for a continuous trail along the Delaware as part of the East Coast Greenway movement from Maine to Florida.



# Delaware Waterfront: Constraints & Opportunities

## IX. Residential Development



*Proposed Trump Tower next to casino site*



*View of Center City from south end*

Thanks to the strengthening housing market, cheap old industrial land, and convenient regional auto access, the Central Delaware quickly became an attractive opportunity for residential development. The area that had not seen any growth in a decade suddenly had plots of land being purchased by investors and put through zoning changes; the City was glad to accept as necessary to encourage construction along the waterfront.

Fifteen high-rise projects are currently proposed on the Central Delaware, most of which are planned for the northern portion around the Ben Franklin Bridge. Waterfront Square Condominiums already has two of its five towers built, and Bridgeman's View received final permission to begin its 900-foot tower with 15-story parking garage. Though some have been delayed because the market is softening, it seems apparent that there soon will be thousands of new residents along the Central Delaware, which raises questions about infrastructure accommodations and public amenities.