

CHAPTER 3

PUBLIC OUTREACH

Introduction

The Delaware Direct Watershed River Conservation Plan (RCP) utilized a unique approach to community engagement and public outreach. In addition to following the traditional RCP process of establishing a steering committee and hosting public events, the RCP process also evaluated previous planning efforts that incorporated a large amount of public outreach in a variety of formats. Full Outreach and Meeting Documentation is available in Appendix B.

Outreach Principles

From the outset, the planning team approached the community engagement process with respect for recent efforts to involve thousands of watershed residents and stakeholders in the City and neighborhood planning processes. The RCP began by reviewing the outputs from several existing planning documents that have significant potential impact on the Delaware Direct watershed. Brief summaries of these documents are presented in Section 1.4 of this report and links are provided to the sponsoring agencies' websites.

The robust processes and extensive community input into these complementary plans enabled the RCP team to identify recurring themes that were developed into key principles for guiding the public outreach components.

1. Claim the Delaware waterfront as a signature cultural landscape that defines Philadelphia and informs the surrounding neighborhoods.
2. Provide residents and visitors open access to the Delaware and allow for a variety of experiences and amenities along the waterfront, including the ability to "touch the river."
3. Balance public space as a cultural and social resource, with the opportunity to mitigate environmental impacts from human use and development.
4. The imperative for government to lead by example on riverfront redevelopment, particularly where ownership and control issues are minimal and re-investment can result in multiple benefits, or benefits to the community as a whole.
5. The desire of Philadelphians to retain distinct and individual neighborhood identities while recognizing the common desire for safe, attractive and walkable access to neighborhood amenities such as parks, schools, restaurants, shopping, etc...
6. Community input and influence on how neighborhoods are planned and developed, particularly when it comes to redevelopment projects that are likely to have significant impact on the life and/or character of a neighborhood.
7. Strong agreement among City residents that multi-modal transportation options such as bus, trolley and light rail are one of, if not the most, highly valued neighborhood

amenity, providing relief from parking woes and the noise, congestion and pollution associated with cars.

8. An understanding by citizens, professionals and municipal officials that outcomes are determined by both action and policies: effective policies encourage desirable activities and, symbiotically, citizen action can drive and direct municipal policy.

In addition to these unifying principles, the RCP planning team considered several specific projects and policies highlighted in the existing plans. Building on this information, groups of experts and stakeholders were identified and invited to participate in outreach activities. This approach allowed the RCP outreach components to minimize redundancy, yet still capitalize on the energy of previous processes and to move planning towards action steps. Workshops, meetings and other outreach activities were organized around land-use typologies and place-based concerns so that proposed recommendations would be applicable and possibly duplicated elsewhere in the watershed.

3.1 - Steering Committee

The Delaware Direct Watershed RCP Steering Committee first convened in November 2007. Twenty-eight individuals, representing 19 organizations (including government, non-profit and community groups), were invited to represent their constituents and the many related planning and community engagement processes that have taken place throughout the City and in the watershed. See table 1.1 in Chapter 1 of this document for a list of Steering Committee participants.

The Steering Committee was charged with two primary tasks:

- To provide input and guidance to the River Conservation Plan team throughout the planning process
- To form a partnership of key stakeholders to share information, ideas, activities, program goals and accomplishments

The Delaware Direct Watershed RCP Steering Committee met three times over the course of the project. A first meeting in November 2007 sought input and guidance on information-gathering and start-up phases of work. A second meeting in February 2008 focused on community engagement and workshops. A third meeting in September 2008 reviewed workshop outcomes and gathered recommendations for content and organization of the final report.

Steering Committee #1: November 15, 2007

The first meeting included a dozen representatives of partner agencies along with members of the planning team. The group reviewed the planning goals, methodology and approaches to the RCP. Much of the meeting was devoted to discussion on what key elements, features, issues and concerns the representatives felt should be covered in the RCP.

Steering Committee #2: February 20, 2008

An expanded group convened for a project update and information exchange. The focus of the evening meeting was to develop the work plans for future focus groups and workshops.

Steering Committee #3: September 24, 2008

The fall meeting centered on a summary of outcomes and lessons learned from the focus groups and workshops. The team presented findings and received feedback and input from the Committee on the first large public meeting. PWD gave a presentation on continuing the Steering Committee as the Delaware Direct Watershed Partnership and presented a set of goals and objectives for discussion.

Watershed Partnership

The Philadelphia Water Department (PWD) addresses water quality and water quantity issues through a watershed management approach. PWD establishes watershed partnerships comprised of key stakeholders in each watershed. The ultimate goal of the PWD's watershed planning approach is to cultivate partnerships committed to implementing watershed management plans, once completed. The Delaware Direct Watershed Partnership consists of the members of the RCP Steering Committee in addition to active participants who emerge from RCP public events and public meetings. Watershed partners share resources and expertise and coordinate information with each other. The Delaware Direct Watershed River Conservation Plan provides the foundation for further watershed plans.

3.2 - Workshops

A series of three research and problem-solving sessions were held in the spring and summer of 2008. The meeting plans for these workshops were highly structured. Using presentations, discussions and a review of proposals from planning work conducted by the City and neighborhoods in the Delaware Direct Watershed, working groups considered how to advance key concepts. Rather than begin with basic input on issues, concerns and ideas, workshops were designed to test ideas and apply concepts from previous planning efforts against real-world conditions. Source material for workshops came from planning processes with extensive community engagement.

For each workshop, key experts and stakeholders were invited to consider proposals, best management practices, recommendations, actions to advance projects and learning models for the Delaware Direct Watershed. Each intensive workshop centered on a single thematic element that had emerged from complementary planning and community engagement work. In all, more than 100 individuals representing more than 50 organizations participated in the three half-day workshops. The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS), with support from the William Penn Foundation, provided venues and hospitality for these meetings. Groups gathered at the Independence Seaport Museum to discuss one of the most challenging and contentious urban watershed issues: parking. A remarkable gathering of experts met at PHS offices to create a study design for tidal wetland restoration, and concurrent groups discussed

riparian restoration and park expansion planning. The final workshop event, held in a tent overlooking the Delaware River at Penn Treaty Park, challenged attendees to create priority recommendations for moving forward on a city-wide green and complete streets initiative.

Appendix B contains detailed outcomes from the three workshop and focus groups.

Workshop #1: Pulaski Pier Park, April 2008

Overview

Multiple previous and ongoing plans (Vision for the Central Delaware, New Kensington Riverfront Plan, North Delaware Riverfront Greenway) call for improvements to the City-owned and operated Pulaski Park (Figure 3.1). Of particular note is the park's importance as one of only four public waterfront parks within the City's 21 miles of Delaware waterfront. Approximately 40 attendees, including natural resource professionals, planning and design professionals, and community leaders, convened to discuss practical next steps to explore proposals to expand, enhance and restore ecological functions at Pulaski Park. The focus group included scientists, practitioners, policy experts and other watershed stakeholders with specific interests and expertise in wetland restoration, riparian rights and public parks. Attendees broke up into three sub-groups to review one of several proposals for Pulaski Park. Groups focused on wetland restoration, riparian restoration and adaptive re-use of pier structures, and expansion of the park into adjacent municipally owned riverfront property.

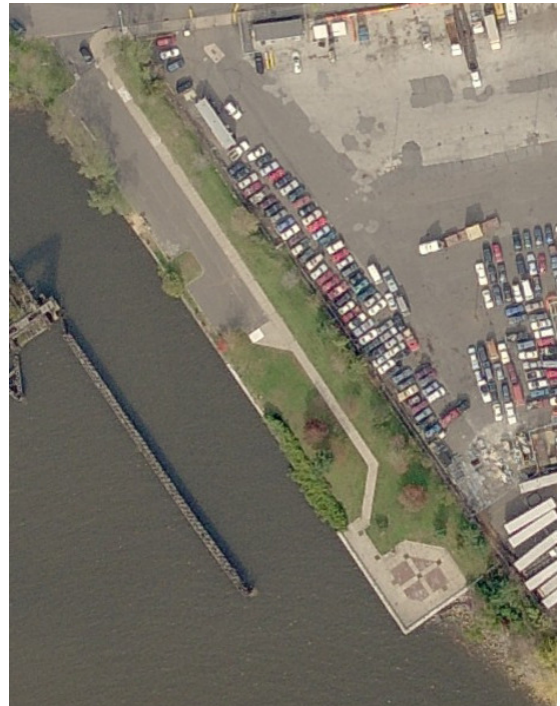


Figure 3.1 - Pulaski Pier Park

Each working group was asked to outline tasks and issues related to specific restoration and design elements proposed for Pulaski Park. These outlines can be used to help structure future requests for proposals from consultants who may be asked to provide ecological, engineering and planning services in support of a variety of detailed feasibility studies for Pulaski Park. A brief summary of the discussion from each working group follows.

Subgroup one: Outline of tasks and consideration for wetland restoration at Pulaski Park.

Consideration was given by the group to identify potential wetland restoration locations along the waterfront in Philadelphia. The group also identified key project goals, including the importance of defining explicit endpoints.

Subgroup two: Outline of tasks and consideration for restoration of riparian areas, including piers and bulkheads at Pulaski Park.

The group found it difficult to limit consideration only to the river's edge of the park as opposed to the entire park. A proposal for park expansion also resulted. As such, the group considered, but did not limit itself, to a discussion of the riparian areas. The group noted that a clear understanding of land ownership, use and regulations was most critical to the project.

Subgroup three: Outline of tasks and consideration for park expansion from existing Pulaski Pier Park into adjacent municipal property.

The group suggested that the outline would have relevance to any future public use on post-industrial lands. This group readily identified a clear and concise goal for the project: evaluate the feasibility and cost/benefit of expanding Pulaski Park. The group noted that there would need to be a designated project sponsor, whether that was one agency or a consortium of partnering groups. Ownership issues were of primary importance. Mapping and investigations related to boundaries are a priority.

Workshop #2: Advanced Parking Lot Design, June 2008

Overview

As one of the largest impervious surface cover types within the City, auto-related infrastructure, such as parking lots, is noted in every planning and referenced study and is a primary source of concern as Philadelphia struggles to meet its water quality goals. In addition to affecting stormwater, parking design impacts traffic, congestion, air quality and the pedestrian experience.

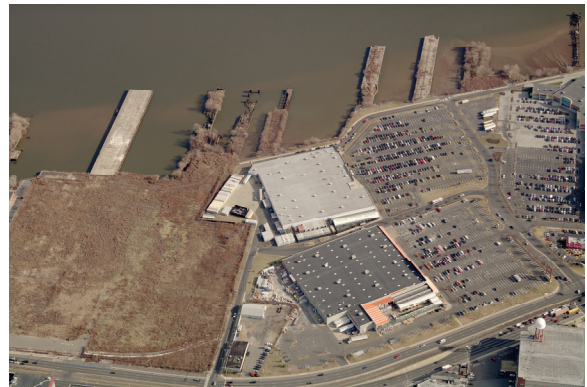


Figure 3.2 - Pier 70 shopping area

Approximately 30 attendees, including urban design, planning and policy professionals, met at the Independence Seaport Museum to consider alternative designs and strategic approaches for three different neighborhood typologies in and around the waterfront in South Philadelphia. The typologies reflect typical urban parking approaches and classic parking models: big box retail mall; residential tower; and private/public mix of parking options available in a vibrant commercial district. Attendees were broken into groups and assigned specific locations to focus their discussions. These locations were the mall adjacent to Pier 70 in South Philadelphia (Figure 3.2), Stamper Square in Society Hill, and Bainbridge and 3rd Street in Queen Village. Topics of discussion included:

- Efficiency of existing resources
- Need and dependence on private vehicles
- Improved/enhanced public transportation options
- Providing community parking amenities versus private parking amenities
- Environmental performance of parking facilities and structures

Workshop #3 – Green Streets & Riverfront Connections, July 2008

Of all the urban retrofits recommended in recent planning efforts, green streets occupy pride of place. Whether denoted as green connectors, green corridors, green ways, great streets, or complete streets, there is no lack of institutional and academic interest in the transformation of this key feature of the urban landscape. The July 2008 focus group gathered to explore in detail what the experience of a journey to the riverfront is like today, and ways in which the physical and psychological barriers to connection can be negated or dissolved.

Approximately 40 attendees with expertise and interest in issues related to transportation, mobility and riverfront access participated in a challenge to reach the meeting location, Penn Treaty Park on the Delaware waterfront, using atypical modes of transportation. Having reached the meeting (Figure 3.3), each of four subgroups was



Figure 3.3 – Green Streets & Riverfront Connections workshop

tasked with looking at green and complete street initiatives from a different perspective: policy, design, funding and short-term fixes.

Several key conclusions and recommendations that came from the groups were directed squarely at creating the bureaucratic infrastructure to allow for improvements of streetscapes for pedestrian, multi-modal use, stormwater management, aesthetics, and greening—not only for streets

linking to Penn Treaty Park, but across the City. Retooling, it was suggested, could begin with the City creating a joint task force of key and relevant agencies, including Philadelphia Department of Streets and The Philadelphia Water Department.

The barriers presented by the current configuration of Delaware Avenue are the most important issue noted. The distance across multiple lanes, the sense of exposure and vulnerability when walking parallel with high-speed traffic, and the lack of any way-finding or pedestrian signals makes the experience daunting for pedestrians. Difficulty of pedestrian use on Delaware Avenue is compounded by the presence of Interstate 95, which limits connectivity to adjacent neighborhoods.

3.3 - Public Meetings

One large public meeting was held during the RCP process.

Public Meeting #1: Healthy Neighborhoods

Date: December 4, 2008
Location: Center for Architecture
Attendees: Approximately 60

Overview

On December 4, 2008, groups and individuals across the watershed were invited to convene and participate in a series of activities and information-sharing sessions focused on creating and sustaining Healthy Neighborhoods. Rather than a traditional lecture format, the meeting plan provided for a series of activities and one-to-one discussions. The open house format allowed for drop-in visitation over a period of several hours. The four-hour event was attended by more than 60 participants, including representatives from various neighborhood groups and non-profit organizations.

Graffiti Wall

The graffiti wall (Figure 3.4) was designed to introduce precedent examples of urban greening and sustainability approaches, stimulate conversation and provide organizers with a sense of what appealed to respondents. About 40 feet of 3-foot-wide paper was posted around the meeting room, and dozens of color photographs of various urban forms and scenes were taped to the paper. Images included streetscapes, buildings, stormwater management systems, green roofs and a variety of transit and mobility designs, as well as some historical images. Visitors were invited to use colored markers and self-adhesive notes to offer comments in response to the images.

One interesting outcome of this exercise was the dialogue that developed between respondents. Commentary developed around several images addressing the assignment of space in the public right-of-way in the most effective ways to offer multi-modal. In general, the most frequent response was to images that depicted a design that met the needs of more than one user group. Several street scenes were noted for the clever ways in which pedestrian, bicycles, parking, and trolleys shared space to the benefit of all. There was also significant negative commentary where streetscapes seemed designed only for cars.



Figure 3.4 –The graffiti wall, public meeting December, 2008

There was also a good deal of “wow” factor in many responses. Clearly there was a great deal of excitement around design ideas that were either new or tapped into an existing care or concern. Some of the design ideas that respondents showed particular desire or enthusiasm for were complex green spaces, where green components (such as trees or planters) were incorporated into buildings or streetscapes.



Figure 3.5 - Green carpet interviews, public meeting December, 2008

Green Carpet Interviews

Attendees were invited to step onto the “Green Carpet” (Figure 3.5) for a video interview on issues and concerns on their block. The range of responses was very broad. Issues related to traffic congestion and parking were mentioned frequently in addition to the need for more trees, less litter and more crime prevention and safety. When asked how their concerns connected to air, land or water, many respondents mentioned land use planning and zoning.

Map a Neighborhood Tour

Attendees at the meeting took advantage of a personalized internet-based mapping exercise by creating a tour of notable places in their particular neighborhood. Using the “My Maps” feature in Google Maps (Figure 3.6), participants were able to show locations and pathways between resources and landmarks in their neighborhood. Most participants chose to highlight favored or special places and few pointed out problems or challenges. Interestingly, almost every participant started their tour at their house and stopped first at their local park or favorite coffee shop/restaurant. At least one communal gathering space was highlighted in every tour map.

The exercise was enjoyable for the organizers and participants and proved to be an interesting and useful means for sharing information. Several participants mentioned they

would use this feature to organize tours to show friends and family members the places they cherish in their neighborhood.

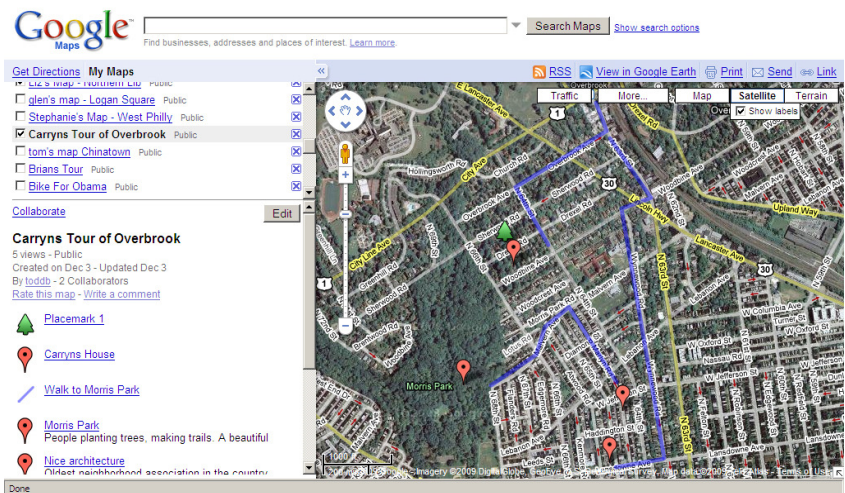


Figure 3.6 - “My Maps” feature in Google Maps

Issue Polling

A Healthy Neighborhood Polling Station was set up and presented a series of slides as an accompaniment to 16 questions. Respondents were asked to rank importance of various neighborhood concerns on a scale of 1-10. Of the estimated 60 visitors, only 15 completed surveys, and on this basis, organizers consider the data anecdotal. With that qualifier in mind, there was a great diversity of opinion. The 15 respondents represented 13 different zip codes. Walkable access to parks and access to public transit rated as the most important amenity for a healthy neighborhood. In second place were

clean air, and pedestrian- and bike-friendly safe streets. The lowest score was inexpensive and easy parking.

3.4 - Watershed Walks

Watershed walks provide an opportunity to engage stakeholders in an exploration of real-world conditions as they relate to specific issues. In the many planning processes that have involved the Delaware Direct communities and neighbors, issues related to connectivity—particularly the links from neighborhoods to the riverfront—have been a priority concern. Reflecting the importance of this issue, watershed walks were focused on this issue. Two opportunities to experience first-hand the realities of the highly urbanized Delaware Direct watershed were offered as part of the RCP process.

Watershed Walk #1: July 31, 2008

Location: From multiple destinations to Penn Treaty Park

Attendees: Estimated 40 participants

As a prelude to the July 31, 2008 workshop on transportation, the first watershed walk invited participants to use a provided transit and trail map to travel to Penn Treaty Park using an alternate mode of transit. For most participants, this meant finding their way to Penn Treaty Park using something other than an automobile. Participants were eager to share their experiences, and 35 participants submitted travel data, as shown in Figure 3.7. Many found their way for the first time to historic Penn Treaty Park, and all agreed that it was worth the effort. All attendees to the July 2008 workshop were provided with a specially created transit map to make options easier to find. Participants completed a user survey upon arrival at the park.

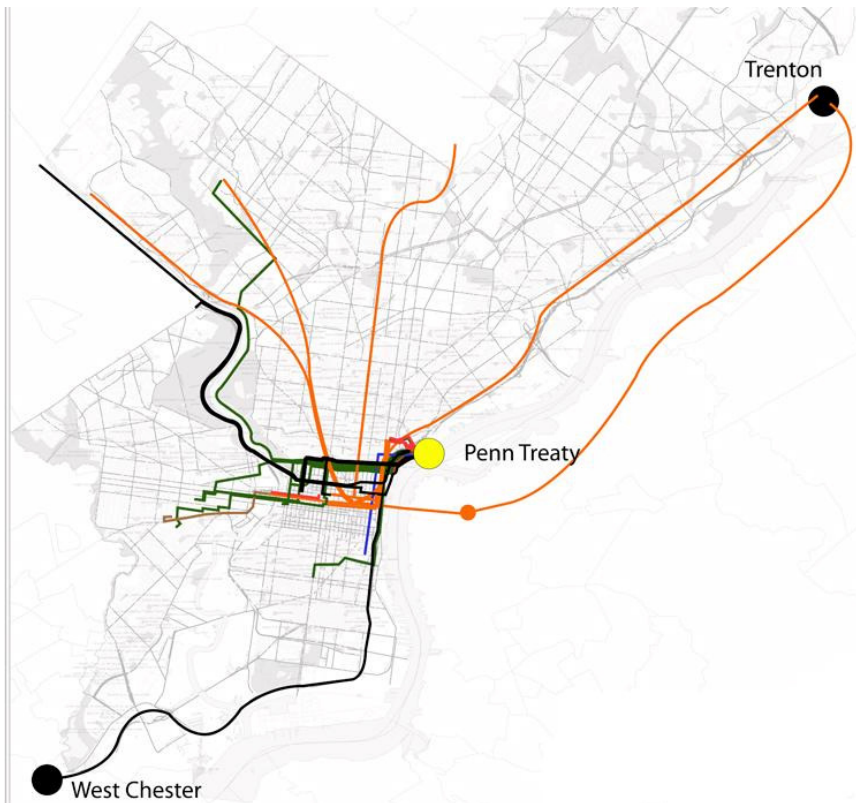


Figure 3.7 - Participant's travel routes to Penn Treaty Park

Participants gave high praise to the map and suggested that many riverfront destinations could benefit from a similar guide. Ideally, a riverfront map could be updated and available on the web. As for the travel experience, there was universal agreement that Delaware Avenue was anything but a user-friendly environment. Pedestrians and bicyclists found the speed and volume of traffic daunting. For those seeking to travel from the south or north on Delaware Avenue by bus, finding the right bus stop was another big challenge. The most pleasant trip was had by those walking to the park (aided no doubt by the sunny and breezy summer weather). Most of these travelers had local trips, but several walked for at least a portion of a longer journey. For many, the park itself was a revelation. About half the attendees had never been to this six-acre public park, but all found it to be well worth the trip. Many participants noted that access to Penn Treaty Park must come from Delaware Avenue, and that access can be both improved and expanded.

Watershed Walk #2: April 25, 2009

Location: From Penn Treaty Park through near neighborhoods of Fishtown

Attendees: Estimated 200 participants

The second watershed experience was hosted as part of the first annual Shad Festival, a celebration designed to emphasize the importance of the river as a fishery, both historically and as a goal for the future. Festival attendees were recruited as participants and invited to join three different guided tours of the neighborhood around Penn Treaty Park. Each walk was hosted by a representative from the Central Delaware Advocacy

Group (consisting of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, Penn Praxis and the North Delaware River Corporation). One group walked south along Delaware Avenue to gain a first-hand pedestrian experience while visualizing future development opportunities. The group in the second tour walked north to consider the future development of greenways, buffers and future riverfront trails. The third group walked west on Columbia Street to learn about the potential for green and complete streets that would connect neighborhoods to the riverfront.

3.5 - Public Outreach Identified in Planning Summary Inventory

As described throughout this report, dozens of neighborhood plans, city plans, riverfront plans, community plans, sustainability plans and more have been developed in the watershed. Each planning effort contains parallel or complementary functions to the RCP, including community outreach, goals and objectives; an inventory of technical resources; and recommendations for implementation. The Delaware Direct Watershed RCP, therefore, arose out of the extensive planning history of the study area as an effort to minimize duplication, synthesize information, and advance application of the planning recommendations.

Table 3.1 shows the previous and current planning efforts in the watershed inventoried for their public outreach components. Each plan listed in the table satisfied the RCP requirements of:

- Using community input or public participation
- Setting vision, goals and objectives
- Documenting the technical resources in an inventory
- Making project recommendations

In many cases, multiple outreach methods were utilized and this RCP capitalized on this these historic efforts.

Table 3.1 – Planning efforts inventoried for public participation

PLANNING EFFORT	YEAR	AUTHOR
An Action Plan for the Central Delaware	2009	PennPraxis; WRT; William Penn Foundation
Central Delaware Riverfront Master Plan	forthcoming	PennPraxis; DRWC
A Civic Vision for Central Delaware	2007	PennPraxis; WRT; William Penn Foundation
East Coast Greenway; Blueprint for Action	2007	DRCC
Green 2015	2011	PennPraxis; PP&R
Green City, Clean Waters	2009	PWD
GreenPlan Philadelphia	2009	PCPC; WRT
GreenWorks Philadelphia	2009	Philadelphia
Natural Heritage Inventory for Philadelphia County	2007	Western PA Conservancy
New Kensington Waterfront Plan	2008	NK CDC
North Delaware Riverfront Greenway Master Plan	2005	DRCC; PEC; Econsult Corp. Schelter & Associates
Northern Liberties Neighborhood Plan	2005	NLNA; Interface Studio
Northern Liberties Waterfront Plan	2007	NLNA; Interface Studio
Philadelphia Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan	2010	PCPC; WRT
State of the Delaware River Basin Report	2008	DRBC
Water Resources Plan for the Delaware River Basin	2004	DRBC

