

## Durst Proposal Is Way Off the Mark

by Rob Kettell

The proposed high-rise development for the vacant lot at 300 North Columbus Boulevard, across the street from the Delaware River, isn't even close to what we decided should be there a decade ago.

### KETTELL FIGURE 1

Proposal for 300 North Columbus Boulevard by Durst Corporation (2021)

The city and community undertook an extensive study of the area between the Delaware River and Interstate-95 in the central portion of Philadelphia. After several years and dozens of meetings, involving hundreds of citizens, agencies, and departments, they adopted a detailed "Master Plan for the Central Delaware" (published in 2011), which generally advocates expanding the existing neighborhoods towards the river.

The plan details how the area south of Spring Garden Street, between I-95 and Delaware Avenue, is to be developed: *"The master plan proposes that the intimately scaled and irregular street system, including the uniquely shaped and historic Canal Street, be extended to the south, creating small blocks for conventional residential development, small parks, and recreational facilities, including some of the land under I-95. The environment in [this] area will mirror historic Philadelphia in scale and intent."*

### KETTELL FIGURE 2

The Concept plan for riverfront from the Benjamin Franklin Bridge to Spring Garden Street; the site is south of Callowhill Street. (Master Plan for the Central Delaware, 2011)

The development proposed by the Durst Corporation is just the opposite of "small blocks for

conventional residential development." It is a high-rise on a mega-block. The proposal is not "intimately scaled" nor does it "mirror historic Philadelphia in scale;" it looks like something from New York City, where the Durst Corporation is located. It makes you wonder if getting the public involved in planning its own future is worth the time and effort. It appears that politicians eventually control the process.

**Rob Kettell** is a retired architect and community planner who has lived in Philadelphia's Old City since 1975.