



SCHUYLKILL WATERFRONT TOOLS FOR ADVOCACY

prepared by the Design Advocacy Group, May 2021

DAG Design
Advocacy
Group

PURPOSE

develop tools for

ADVOCACY

POLICY

WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

*that will enable Grays Ferry residents, business owners,
and stakeholders to advocate for alternative futures for
their neighborhood and community.*

BACKGROUND

*The planning exercise was initiated by the **DESIGN ADVOCACY GROUP OF PHILADELPHIA (DAG)** who wished to promote better design quality and waterfront accessibility on the Schuylkill Waterfront alongside the future Schuylkill River Trail extension, and respond to pressures of neighborhood change caused by the expansion of Center City and Pennovation towards the Grays Ferry neighborhood.*

*With support from the William Penn Foundation, DAG partnered with a City & Regional Planning studio at the University of Pennsylvania Stuart Weitzman School of Design in Fall 2020 to develop a **PLAN FOR ADVOCACY** to conduct initial research and develop policy and engagement tools for the neighborhood.*

*Alongside the studio, DAG hosted a series of focus groups and design charrettes in Fall 2020 that would inform **WATERFRONT DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS**. These concepts were refined by the DAG Waterfront Task Force in Spring 2021.*

BACKGROUND



PENNOVATION

University of Pennsylvania's center for innovation opened in 2016, limiting public access by gates.

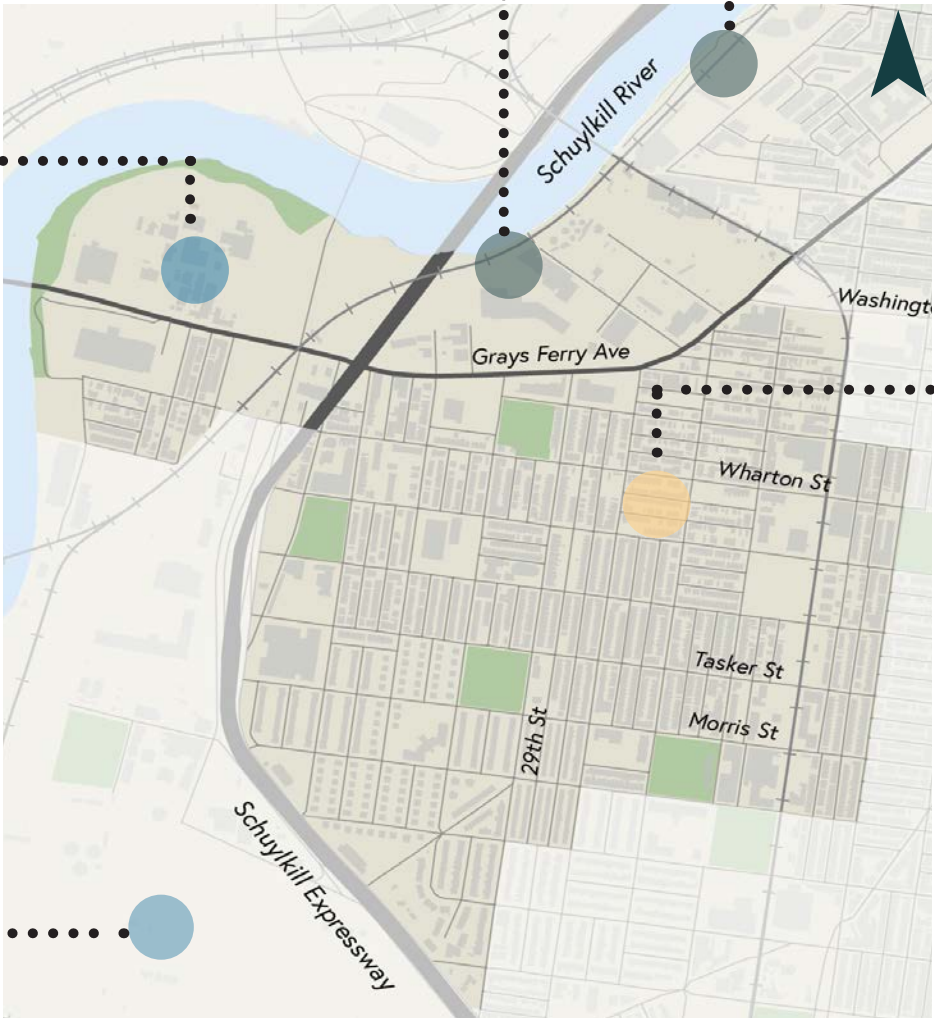


SCHUYLKILL RIVER TRAIL

The planned Christian to Crescent extension of the SRT will run adjacent to Grays Ferry.

CENTER CITY GROWTH

Development influenced by Center City continues to expand west and south on developable parcels.



NEW RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION

Developer-driven residential construction is driving up housing costs and contributing to neighborhood change.



PES SITE



The 2019 closure of the Philadelphia Energy Solutions refinery has ramifications for the future of Grays Ferry.

Sources of Development Pressure

TOOLS

ADVOCACY

POLICY

WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT



APPROACH TO ADVOCACY

APPROACH TO ADVOCACY

CENTER LOCAL KNOWLEDGE AND PRIORITIES

Residents shape priorities and analyzing findings, not just in generating information for others to assess.

WIDE OUTREACH FOR DEEP ENGAGEMENT

All Grays Ferry residents should be asked to share their perspectives through existing local networks and connections, neighborhood organizations and partners through varied and continuous outreach pathways.

CLEAR, CONSISTENT TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION

Residents should be kept informed of ongoing projects even if they are not currently actively participating in them through clear and consistent communication.

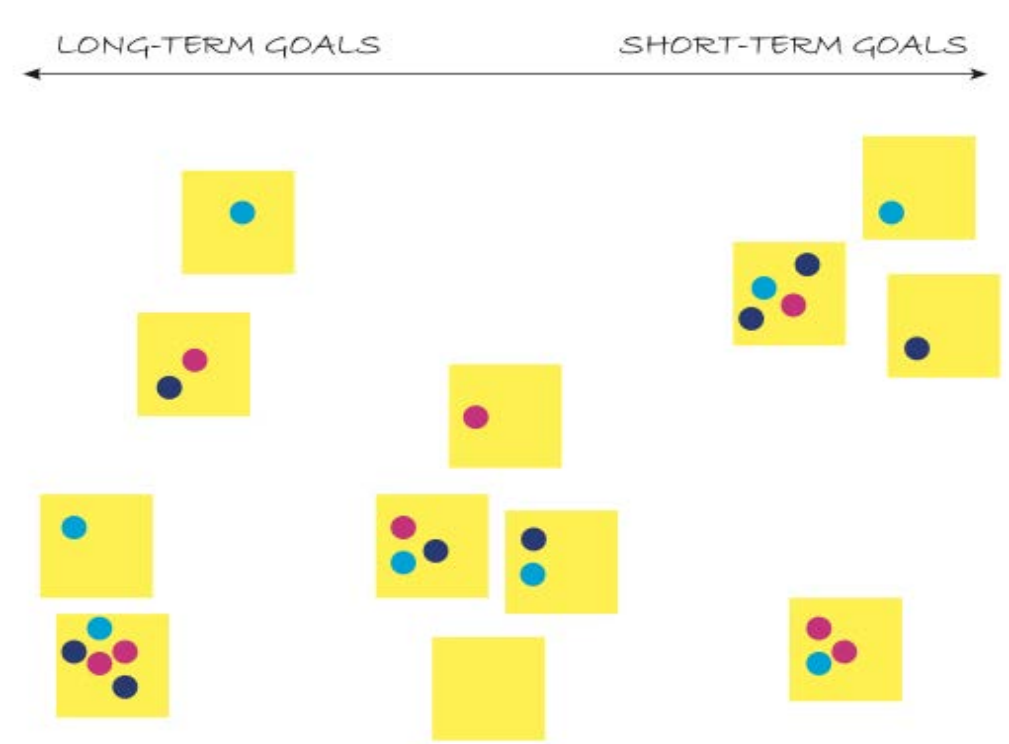
ONGOING PARTNERSHIPS

Resident's voices should be at the center of planning and design projects throughout all stages from setting goals to ensuring effective implementation.

BUILD HEALING, AND LEARNING INTO ENGAGEMENT

Engagement should respond to Grays Ferry's history not only by developing ways to address ongoing injustices, but by providing opportunities to strengthen social ties, and build the knowledge and skills needed for further advocacy.

APPROACH TO ADVOCACY



Group and Prioritize Goals



Neighborhood artists as partners



Neighborhood celebrations



Living Room Gathering

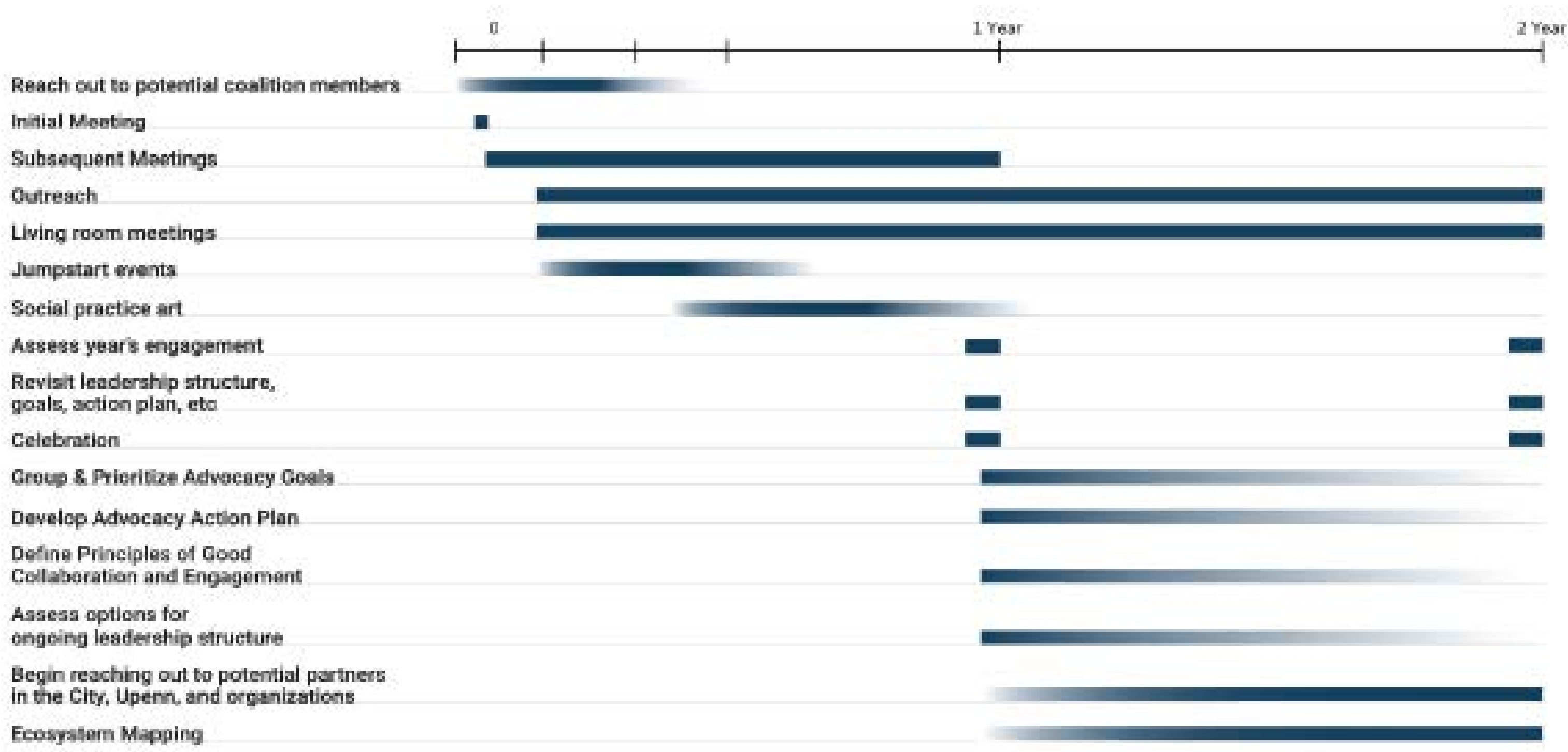


Jump-start Events



Resident discussion circles

APPROACH TO ADVOCACY



Sample implementation timeline



POLICY TOOLS FOR ADVOCACY

SHARED PROSPERITY: Exactions & Impact Fees

WHAT IS IT?

Exactions and Impact Fees are:

- required contributions by private developer to cover the cost of additional public infrastructure and services.
- In December 2020, the City of Philadelphia City Council approved a 1% citywide construction tax to go into effect at the beginning of 2022.
- The exact allocation of this new revenue has not been finalized, except for a broad commitment to funding affordable housing programs
- This presents a good opportunity for Grays Ferry community organizations to insert its advocacy stance for the neighborhood to benefit from the new funding.

HOW TO GET THERE?

- ✓ Form a coalition among local community organizations, relevant institutions (schools, churches, etc.), and even community leaders from other neighborhoods across the city experiencing similar pressure for a stronger stance in the negotiation process,
- ✓ Connect with City Council representatives to advocate for a set of fund allocation criteria, so that neighborhoods under threat from gentrification and displacement such as Grays Ferry can benefit and alleviate housing burdens.
- ✓ Sample criteria for reference include:

Neighborhood median income

Neighborhood percentage housing cost burden

Neighborhoods change in property taxes

Neighborhoods change in rent

SHARED PROSPERITY: Community Benefit Agreements

WHAT IS IT?

A Community Benefit Agreement is:

- an agreement between community organizations and developers that wish to undertake developments within or adjacent to existing communities,
- the agreement outlines material and reciprocal benefits that are required from the developers in exchange for their developments,
- agreements may include direct investments, local hiring priorities, provision of affordable financing programs, and public space improvements.

This is a great tool for community groups and other agencies:

- to ensure that development has tangible positive impacts on local residents, where negotiation of exact details are critical.
- the most successful Community Benefit Agreements – the ones that result in the creation and sustained presence of high impact goods and services – are grounded in the highly specific negotiation process between designated community representatives and developers.

HOW TO GET THERE?

- ✓ Form a coalition among local community organizations and relevant institutions (schools, churches, etc.) for a stronger stance in the negotiation process, which will then monitor the large parcels (e.g. those with an area greater than 10,000 square feet) in the neighborhood, as they are most likely to see large-scale developments.
- ✓ Gain support of local City Council member.
- ✓ Negotiate community benefit agreements through a **zoning overlay** or negotiation with City government.
- ✓ Seek benefits such as affordable housing commitments, local hiring minimums, public space improvements, or even the implementation of a workforce training program such as the West Philadelphia Skills Initiative.

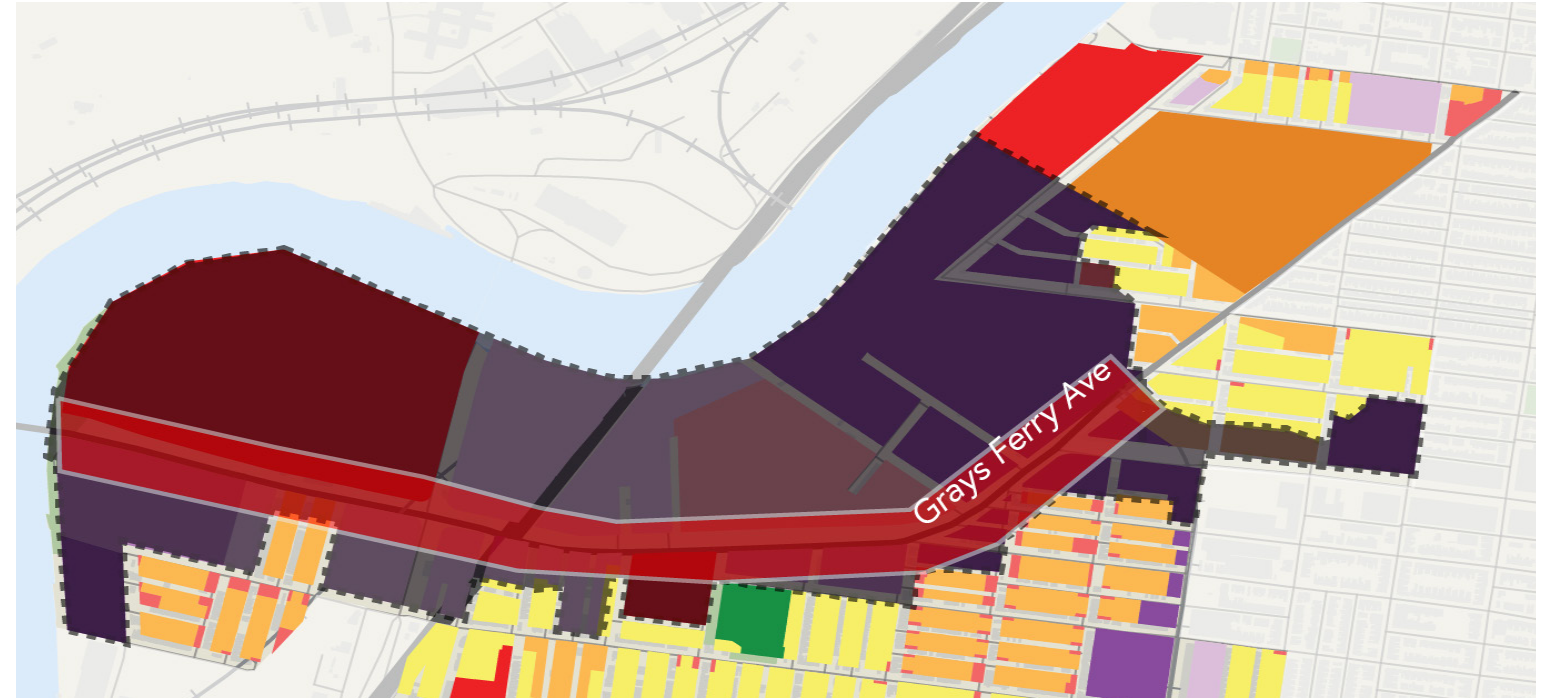
SHARED PROSPERITY: Zoning Overlay

WHAT IS IT?

A Zoning Overlay establishes additional or stricter standards and criteria for covered areas, in addition to the regular zoning district requirements.

A potential zoning overlay would:

- cover river-adjacent parcels and Grays Ferry commercial district,
- provide transition from industrial to mixed uses
- provide design guidelines for future development
- ensures that all future development would meet the retail and housing needs to the neighborhood
- establish zoning that is appropriate to desired future uses and reduce variance applications
- will open up potential smaller-scale development initiated by community organizations through easier by-right zoning approval.



Proposed Mixed Use Zoning Overlay

HOW TO GET THERE?

- ✓ Form a coalition among local community organizations and relevant institutions (schools, churches, etc.) to lobby for zoning remapping
- ✓ Connect with the City's Planning Commission to negotiate for a zoning overlay similar to the proposed zoning changes in the South District Plan published by the city
- ✓ Gain support of local City Council member.
- ✓ Continue to be active in neighborhood coalitions and participate in the planning process.

SHARED PROSPERITY: Targeted Commercial Corridors

WHAT IS IT?

Commercial corridors within neighborhood are generally of a smaller scale and can complement the current retail economy and presence of national chains observed mainly along Grays Ferry Avenue.

This will allow a new and diverse retail economy to emerge, add and activate economic and social activity to the core of Grays Ferry, and allow residents and community groups to access the products and services they otherwise must leave the neighborhood to get.

Existing loans and grants provided by PIDC will be good resources to utilize when initiating such efforts, including:

- Working Capital & Equipment Loan for small and midsize businesses
- Contract Line of Credit for small, minority, women, and disabled-owned businesses
- Commercial Mortgage Loan for small businesses and nonprofits

HOW TO GET THERE?

- ✓ Community organizations can reach out to and/or keep track of interested neighborhood business owners and educate and connect them to existing resources at the City level.
- ✓ Some locations to consider include the critical intersections along 29th and 30th streets (at Wharton, Reed, and Tasker Streets)



Proposed Commercial Corridors Within Neighborhood

SHARED PROSPERITY: Residential Parking Permit

WHAT IS IT?

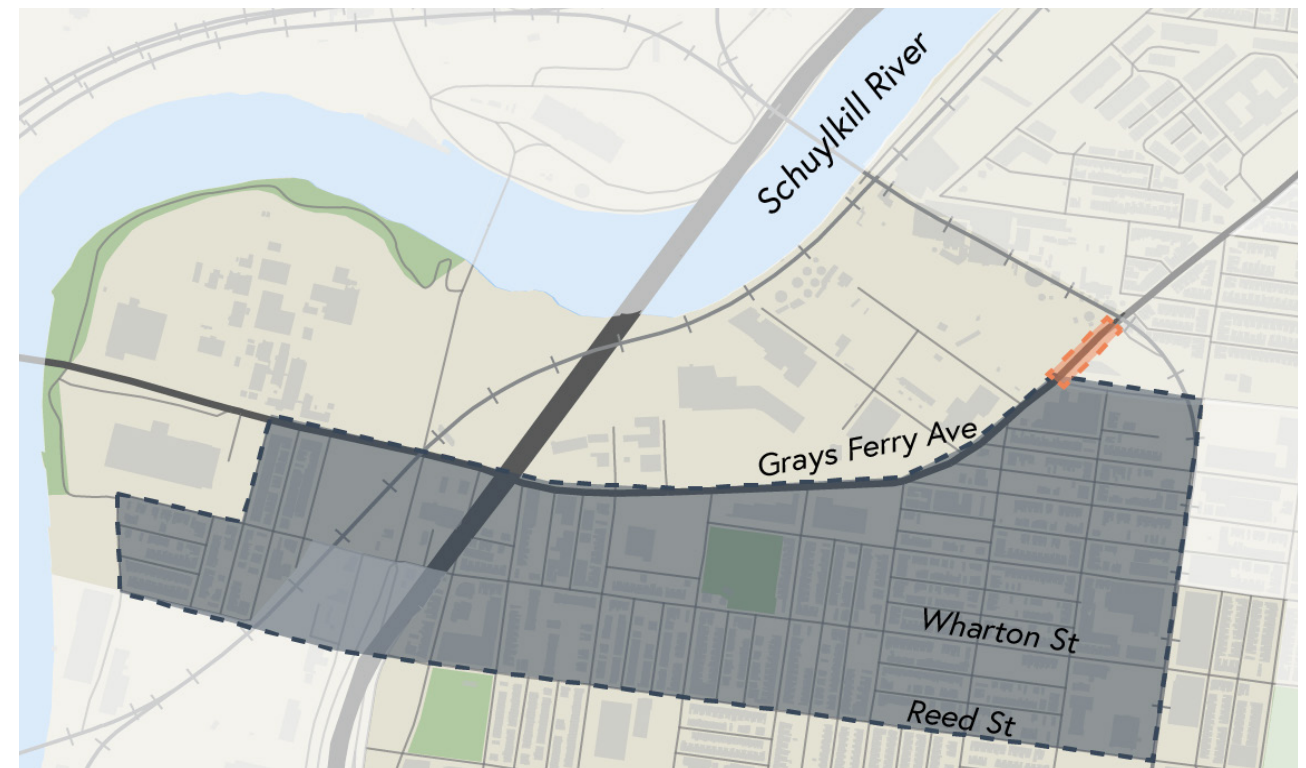
The lack of access to convenient parking near their place of residence is one of the biggest concerns of Grays Ferry residents. The area closest to the river and Schuylkill River Trail are most heavily affected by this problem.

A residential parking permit would:

- ensure that neighborhood residents have priorities to park conveniently
- cost \$35 per year per resident,
- allows visitors without permits to park for maximum 2 hours.
- Maintain parking for residents amid potential future development caused by new recreational amenities at the waterfront.

HOW TO GET THERE?

- ✓ Residents attend Parking Authority Board Meetings to voice their concerns and recommend this change.
- ✓ A map of proposed residential parking enforcement area is provided below for reference.



Proposed Parking Permit Area

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY: Tenant & Homeowner Protection

WHAT IS IT?

To protect Grays Ferry renters,

- The City's No Evictions Without Good Cause policy ensures landlords can only evict tenants for "good causes," such as habitual non-payment of rent or material breach of lease.
- Other cities have programs such as:
 - Rent stabilization, New York City
 - "Right to Return" (Portland), where affordable housing is provided to families displaced by large infrastructure and other projects, especially through large scale government programs such as eminent domain.

HOW TO GET THERE?

- ✓ Community organizations can inform residents of existing No Evictions Without Good Cause policy to protect their rights to affordable housing,
- ✓ Community organizations can advocate for more robust policies by working with City Council and local advocacy organizations like Community Legal Services.

Many homeowners in Grays Ferry face "tangled titles,"

- Where families residing in a home passed down from deceased family members, do not have proper documentation for the deed of the home.
- Without proper documentation, they often become vulnerable to foreclosure or buyout from developers as they cannot legally defend their ownership.

- ✓ Community organizations can provide residents with information on the City's existing designated funds for issuing proper documents and legal protections to residents with "tangled titles."

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY: Home Repair/Financial Programs

WHAT IS IT?

Investing in the ongoing maintenance of one’s home, which is critical for retaining homeownership and affordable housing in the community, could be financially difficult for many households.

Fortunately, there are several public and private initiatives that aim to provide assistance and relief along the way, including:

- Restore Repair Renew program (city-level)
- Basic Systems Repair Program (city-level)
- Habitat for Humanity Philadelphia
- and various funding programs at the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA).

HOW TO GET THERE?

- ✓ Community organizations can help homeowners identify programs for which they qualify and assist them through the application process.
- ✓ For programs where the income criteria are prohibitively low or don’t apply to Grays Ferry residents, community organizations should voice their concerns with their City Council representatives and agencies and request a comprehensive review of the requirements.
- ✓ A coalition among local community organizations and relevant institutions (schools, churches, etc.) can be helpful for a stronger stance in the negotiation process.

Existing City Policy	Eligibility
Restore Repair Renew program (Philadelphia Neighborhood Home Preservation Loan Program)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Primary residence needs repairs- Credit scores above 580- Up to date on public utilities and taxes or in a payment plan with the City- No L & I violations or will eliminate violations as part of the program- Loan-to-value ratio at or below 105% of after-rehab value and a back-end debt-to-income ratio at or below 43%
Basic Systems Repair Program - PIDC	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Own and live in the single-family house with the problem (electrical, plumbing, heating, etc.)- Be current or under current payment agreement for both property taxes and water bill- Meet income guidelines (see figure)- Not own any other residential property

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY: Community Land Trust

WHAT IS IT?

A Community Land Trust is a nonprofit corporation that holds land on behalf of a geographically-defined community, which:

- is typically governed by residents (1/3), other community residents (1/3) and experts and stakeholders (1/3),
- tweaks the normal process of homebuying to make housing permanently affordable
- obtains funding from private donors, government subsidies, or anchor institutions to acquire land and develop housing and selling at below-market rates to serve low-to-moderate- income households.
- Community Land Trusts retain ownership of the land while the residents own the parcel occupying the land, retain the ability to repurchase any improvement on the land, and place restrictions on the resale value.

Compared to standard subsidized rentals, which often requires ongoing funding to cover operating expenses, this model offers greater permanence, using a one-time subsidy to preserve long-term affordability.

HOW TO GET THERE?

- ✓ Form a coalition among local community organizations and relevant institutions (schools, churches, etc.) with a shared vision of change to fully utilize the existing capacities and personnel,
- ✓ Determine the organizational and governance structure, resources needed, and an execution plan for the community land trust.
- ✓ The new coalition can reach out to specialized legal service providers such as the Regional Housing Legal Services for assistance to set up the actual community land trust.

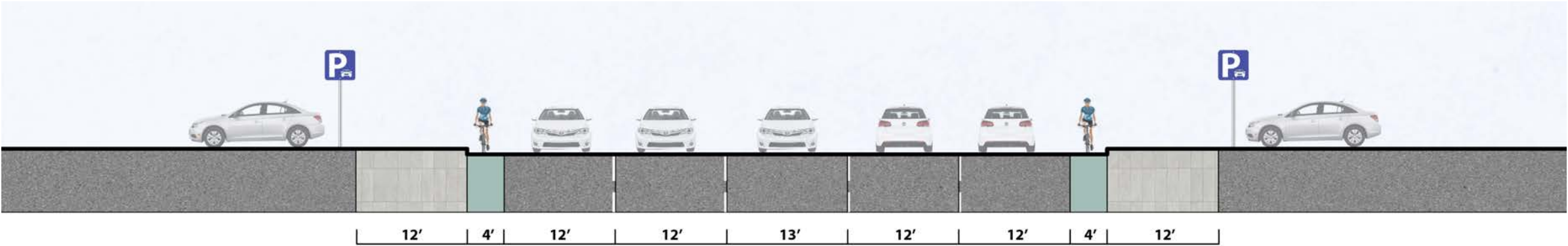
CONNECTIVITY: Traffic Calming Measures



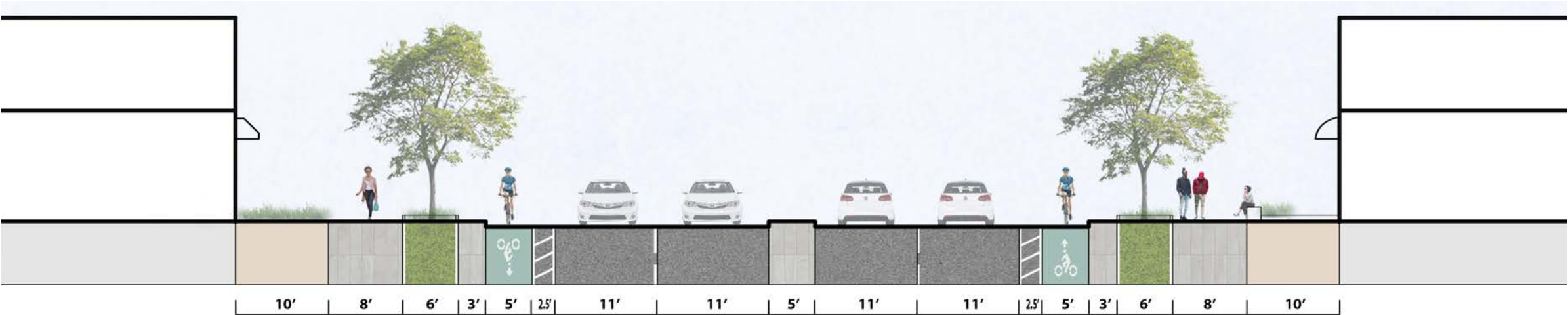
Mixed-use Development with Street Face - Cleveland,OH



Route 1 Boulevard - Crystal City, VA



Grays Ferry Avenue
Road Diet Concept



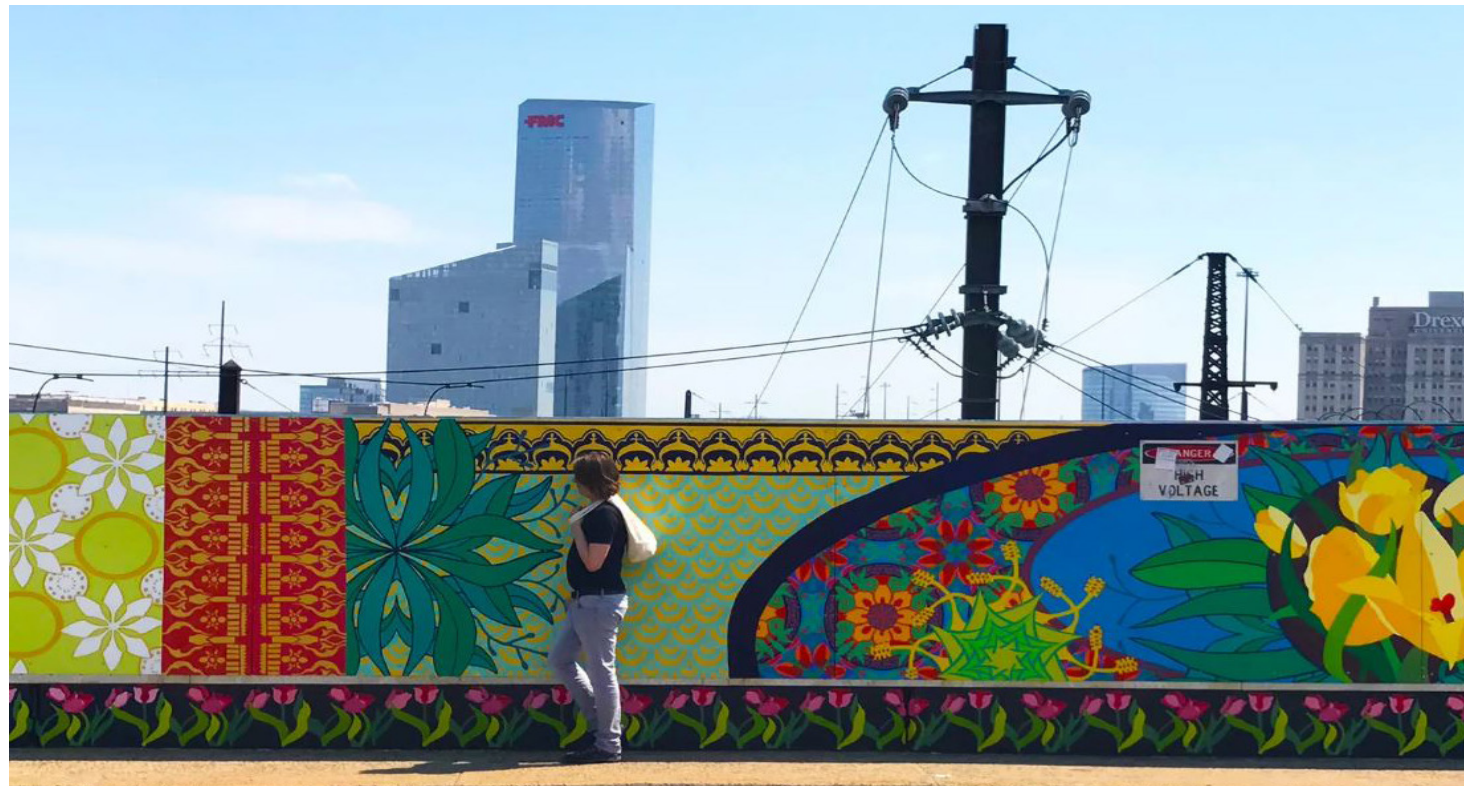
CONNECTIVITY: Street Improvements & Intersection/ Underpass Beautification



Separated Bike Trail - Delaware River Waterfront



Midblock Crosswalk - Atlanta



Gateway Mural - Spring Garden Bridge



Painted Underpass Gateway - 5th Street Tunnel

CONNECTIVITY: Public Easements & Pedestrian Connections



Separated Bike Trail - Delaware River Waterfront



Existing Schuylkill River Trail entrances at South Street



Proposed Riverfront Public Easements



Pedestrian connections from Schuylkill River Trail

HOW TO GET THERE?

- *Zoning Overlay to incorporate guidelines for building envelope and public realm*
- *Negotiate public easement along waterfront and Grays Ferry Avenue*
- *Collaborate with OTIS to prioritize Grays Ferry Avenue for a road diet*
- *Work with landowners and Mural Arts to create Grays Ferry mural at intersection of Grays Ferry & Washington Avenues*
- *Create neighborhood “green loop”*



DESIGN TOOLS FOR WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

AREA OF FOCUS

Schuylkill River Trail Christian to Crescent Extension - Anticipated Alignment



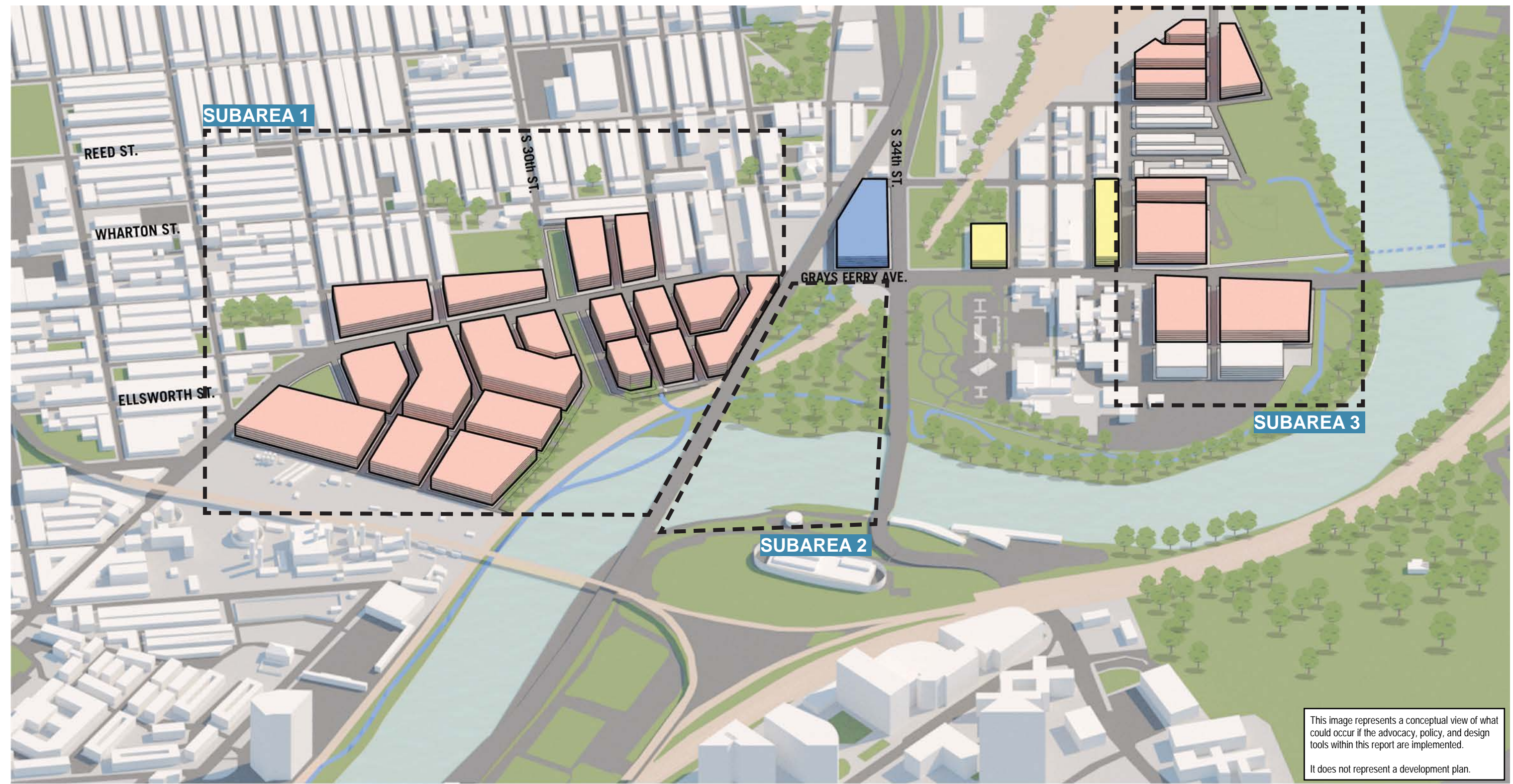
- Trail on Land
- Trail on Structure/ Approach on Structure
- Cable Bridge



Images courtesy of Schuylkill River Development Corporation (SRDC), 2018

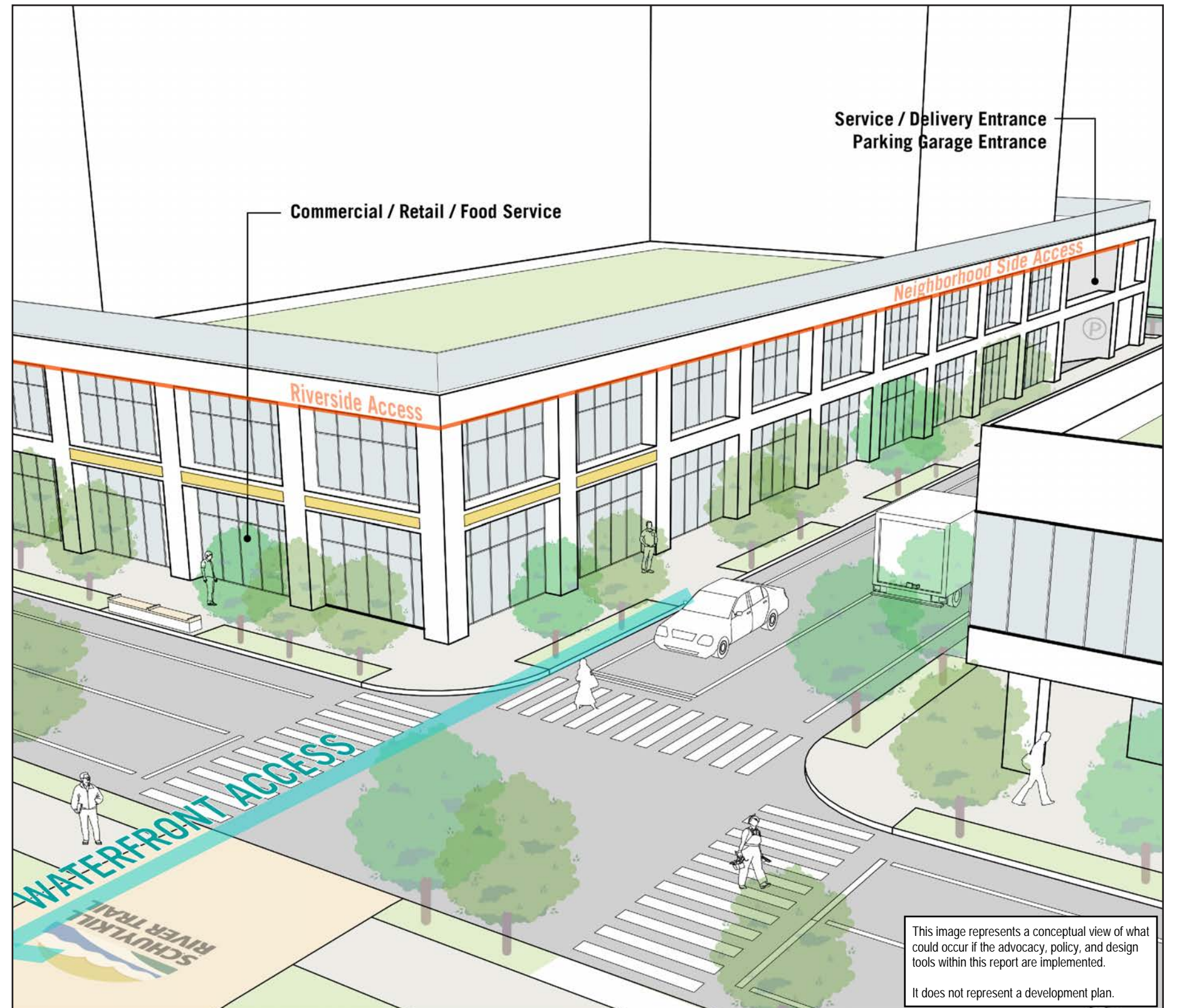
AREAS OF FOCUS

Schuykill Waterfront along Grays Ferry Avenue



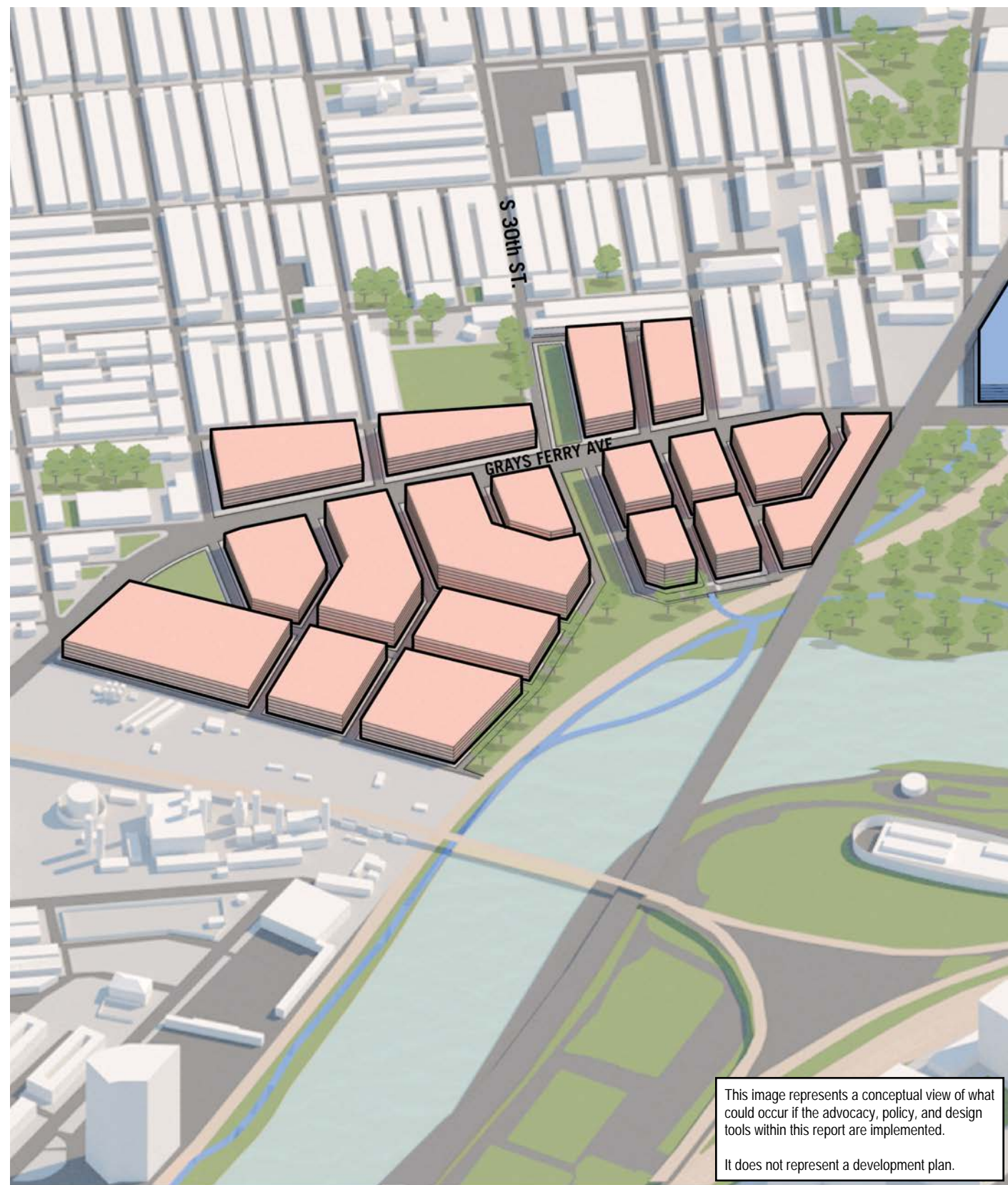
DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- All development should have entries/access from both the waterfront and the city/neighborhood side.
- All development should be setback a minimum 100' from the water's edge to create a consistent park/recreation/trail edge.
- All development should not create an architectural "backside" facing the waterfront. It should be treated like an equal main façade as the city/neighborhood side.
- Provide commercial, retail, food service on the first floor with sidewalk/river path access and even outdoor cafes on the riverside to activate riverside as if it's an urban street.
- Avoid residential uses in the lower portions of the building, especially if within the flood plain.
- If a large development includes a structured garage, include architectural elements that disguise the garage.
- Garage/ parking entrances should face internal streets, not Grays Ferry Avenue or the waterfront.
- Avoid large service/delivery entrances on the waterfront-facing side.
- High density development should include lower stories that match neighborhood scale, with taller portions set back from the waterfront and Grays Ferry Avenue interfaces.
- Internal streets should correspond to existing city grid where possible.



Typical Block within areas of new mixed use development

DESIGN



Note: This design shows alignment with existing parcel lines.

Subarea 1: Grays Ferry Commercial Site Development

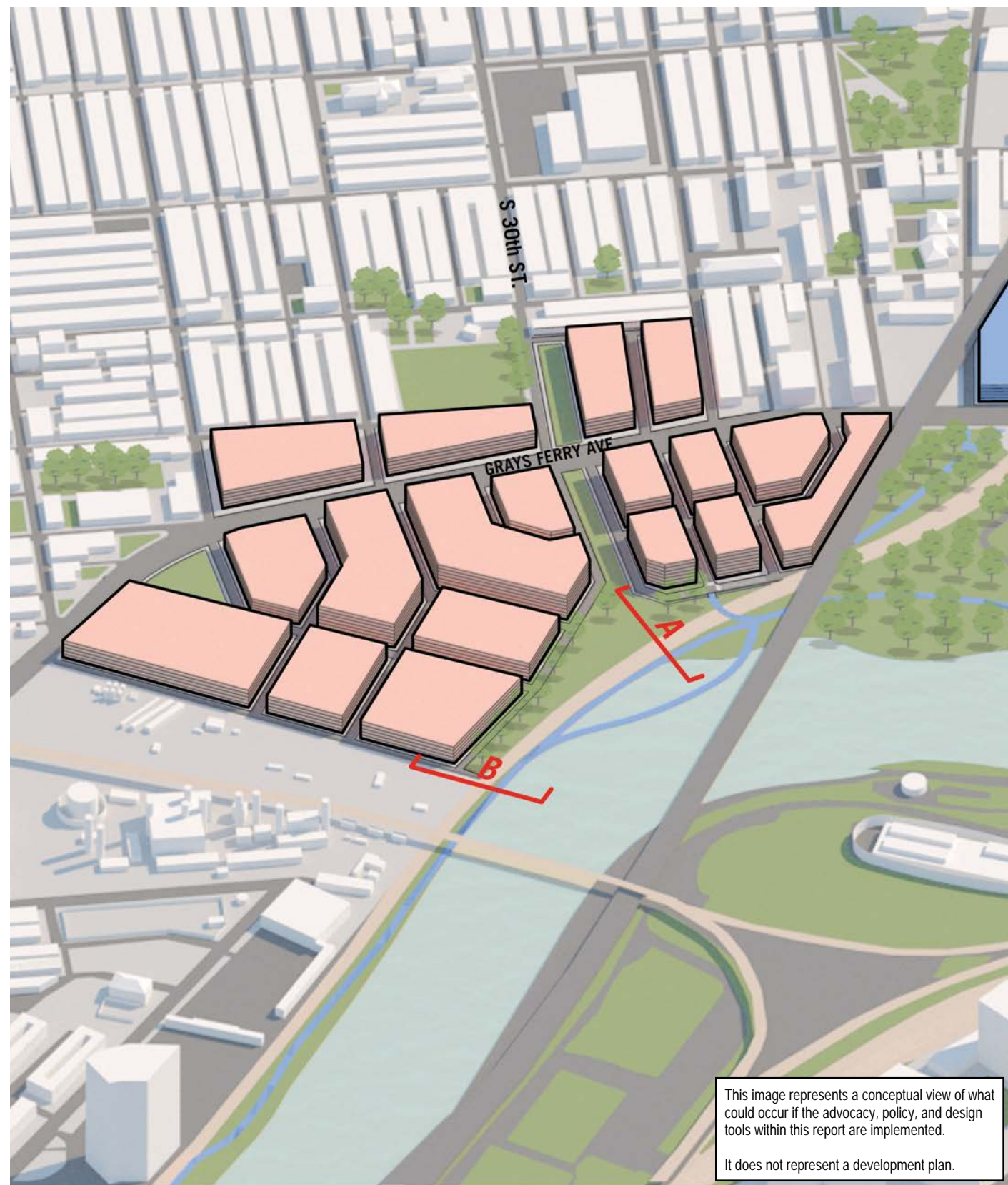


Mixed-use Development with Street Front

Above: Xing Hua Mixed-use Project - Mercer Island, WA

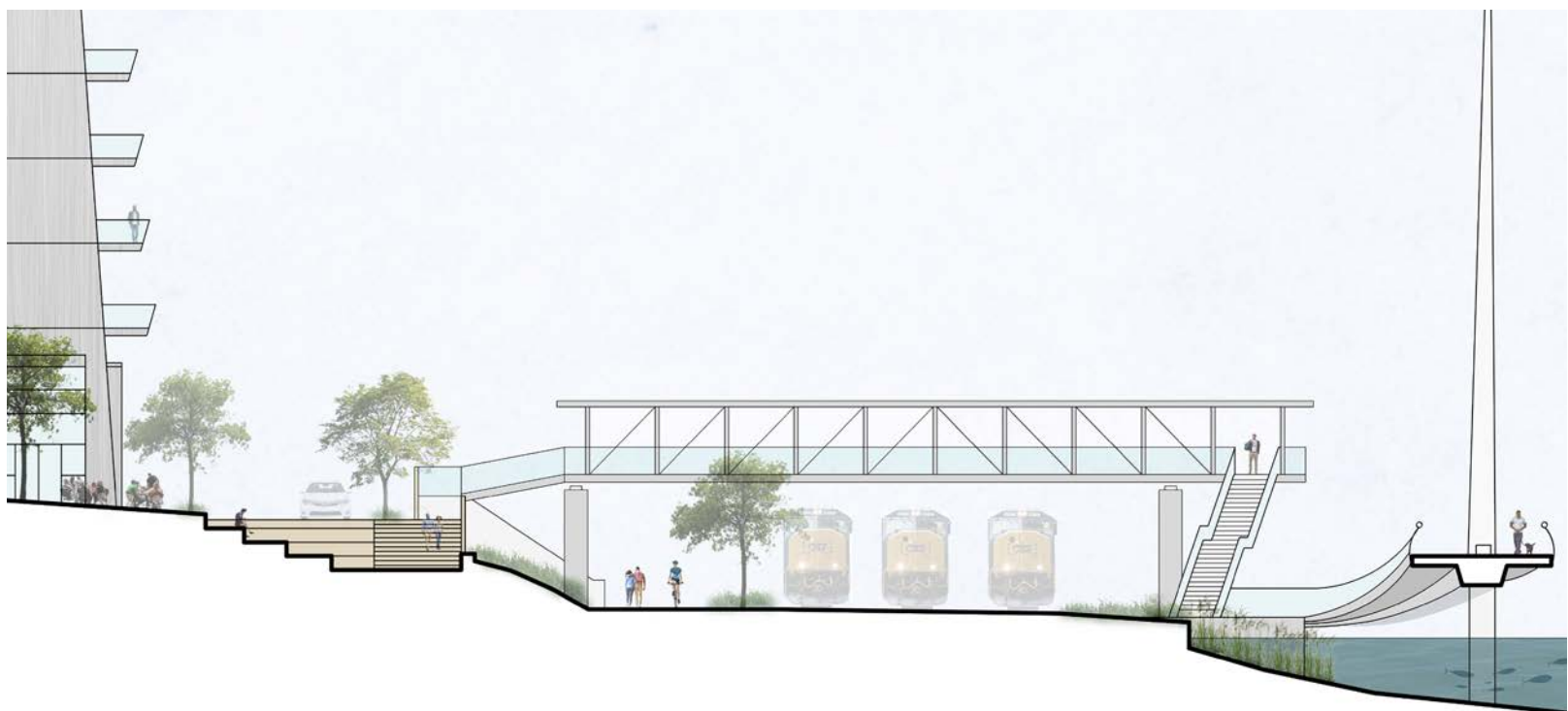
Below: Germantown Avenue Mixed-use Development

DESIGN



Note: This design shows alignment with existing parcel lines.

Subarea 1: Grays Ferry Commercial Site Development



A. 30th Street Section



B. Paltz Street Section

DESIGN

Development Characteristics:

- views to river from elevated grade
- pedestrian bridge over rail
- connection to SRT bridge
- balconies and other design elements facing both river and Grays Ferry Avenue



Waterfront-facing program - Providence, RI

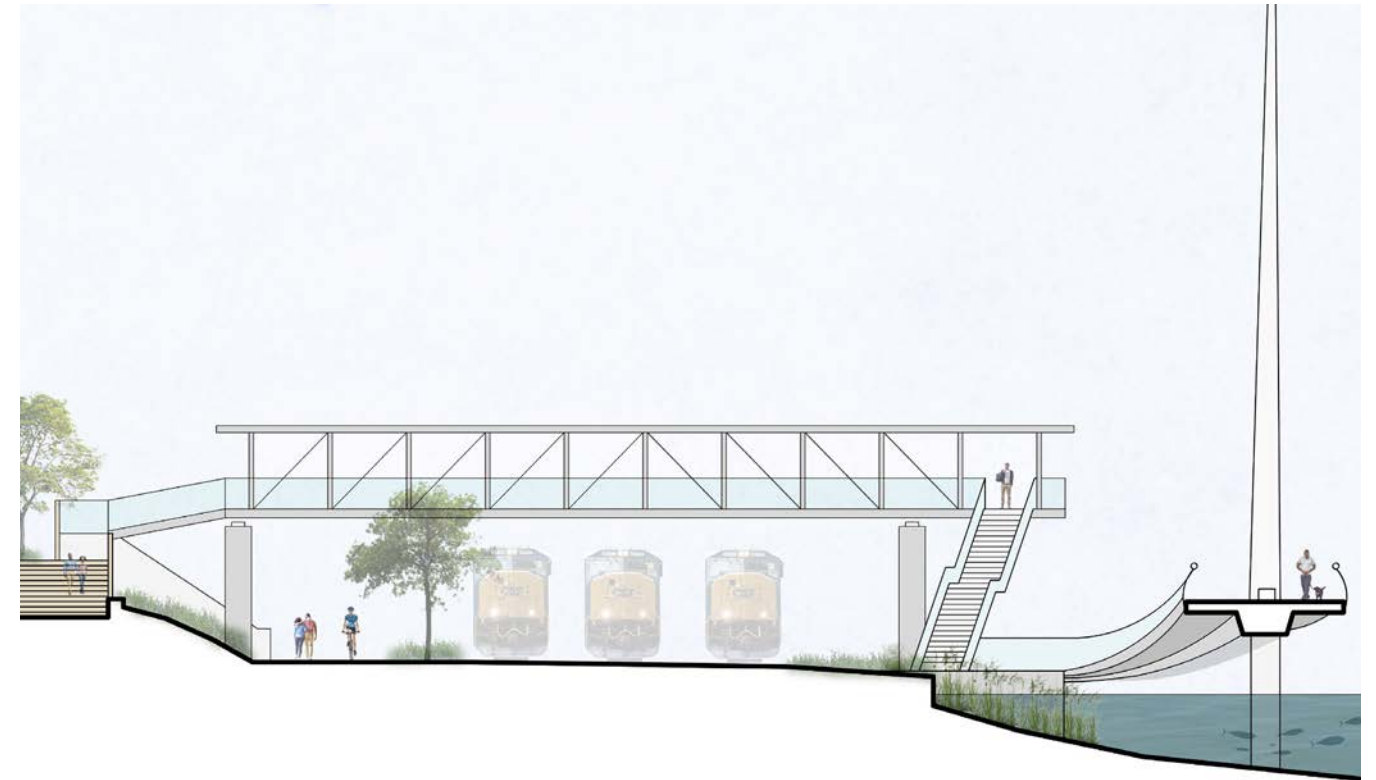
Development Characteristics:

- at grade crossing at rail
- connection to SRT bridge
- balconies and other design elements facing both river and Grays Ferry Avenue
- building entrances via trail



At Grade - Portland Flanders Crossing Bridge

Subarea 1: Grays Ferry Commercial Site Development



A. 30th Street Section



B. Paltz Street Section

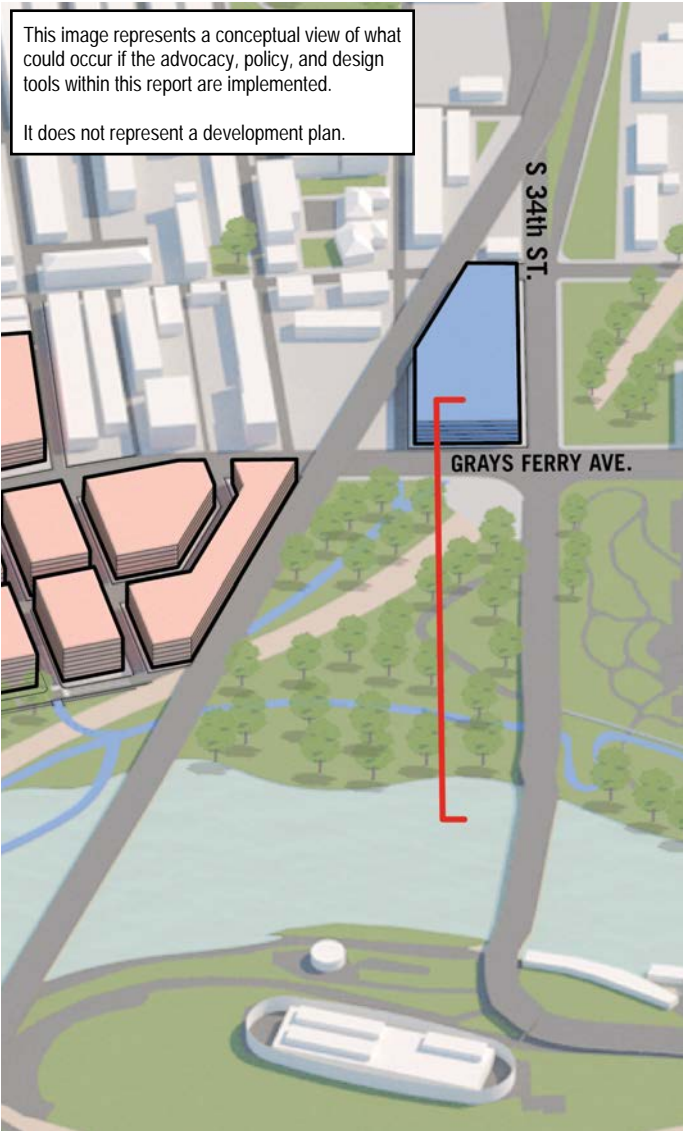
HOW DO WE GET THERE?

- *Zoning Overlay to incorporate guidelines for building envelope and public realm*
- *Riverfront Public Easements for development-side path*
- *Developer agreements*
- *Maintain existing ownership/parcel lines for granular development*
- *Re-imagine current Grays Ferry Shopping Center as part of the new development*
- *Consider: possible transit center to be incorporated into new development*
- *Community development corporation to manage waterfront public realm and community-serving uses*

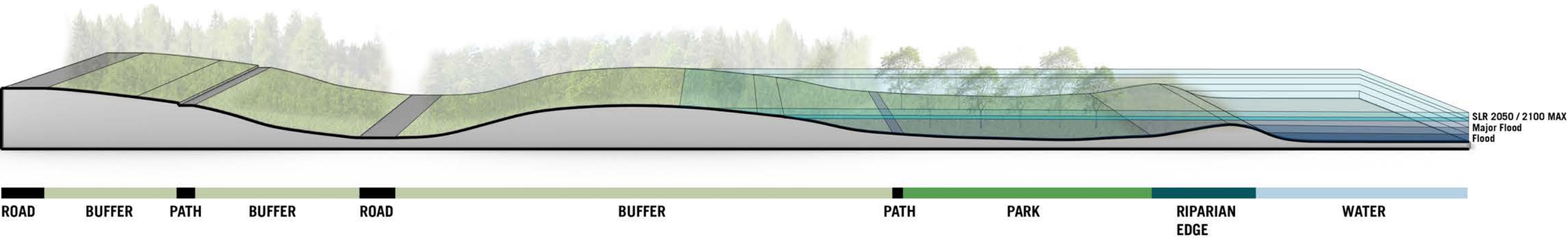
DESIGN

Development Characteristics:

- passive open space at water's edge
- riparian edge to allow for sea level rise (100 year storm = 16.6' SLR in 2080)
- potential fill to slope down to water's edge
- path integrated with SRT extension on land



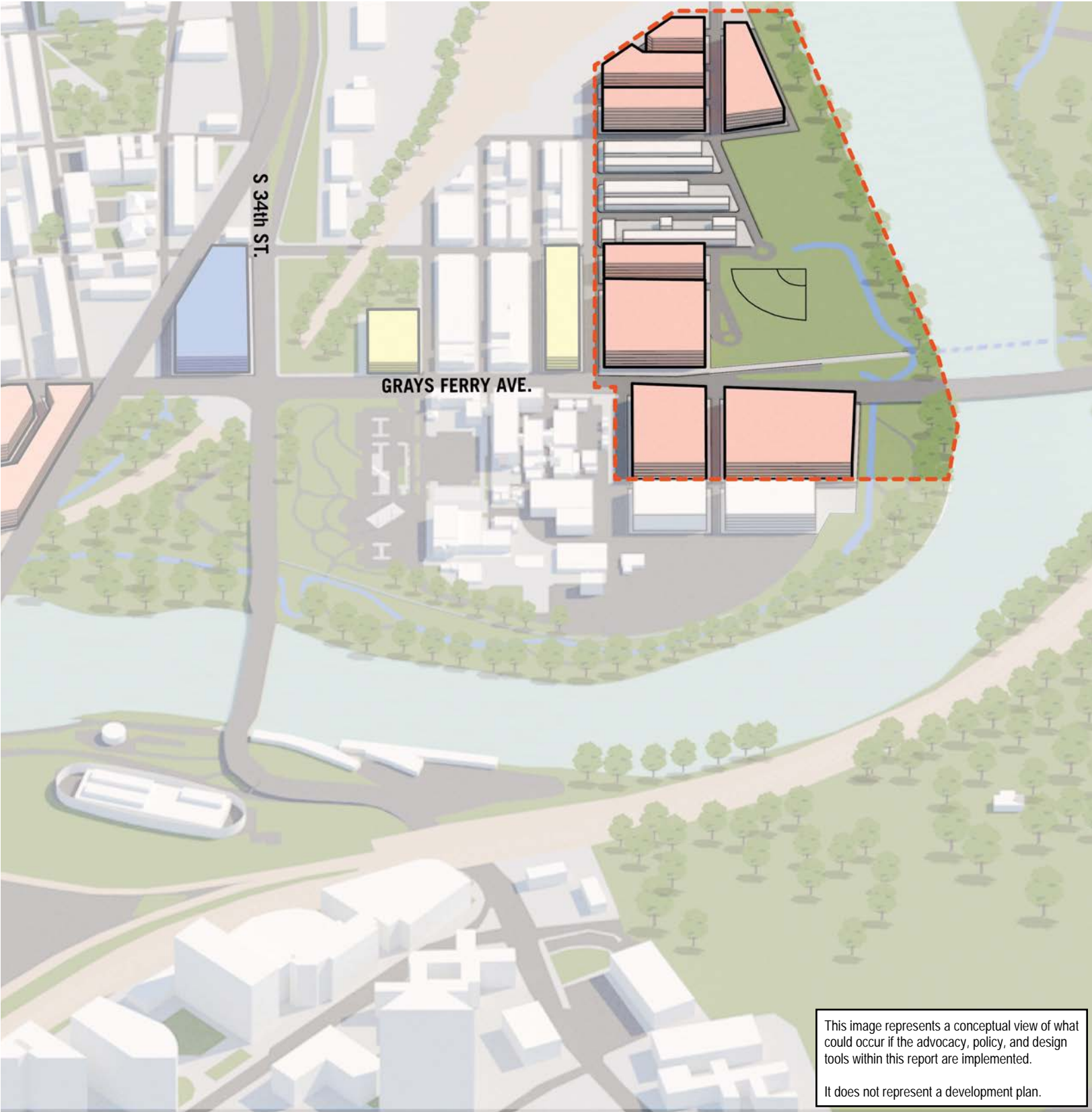
Subarea 2: Waterfront Park between I-76 and 34th Street



HOW DO WE GET THERE?

- *Current landowner dedicates this parcel to public use*
- *Fundraise to design and build park integrated with nearby public and private development*
- *Enforce proposed impact fees to support park development*
- *Build bulkhead further upstream to control flooding*
- *Consider: tunnel for rail*
- *Consider: berm on either side of rail + pedestrian bridge for protection from existing rail*
- *Community development corporation to manage waterfront public realm*

DESIGN



This image represents a conceptual view of what could occur if the advocacy, policy, and design tools within this report are implemented.
It does not represent a development plan.

Subarea 3: FedEx, Waste Management & Trolley Works Sites



Waterfront Mixed-use Neighborhood Serving Development
Above: Allegheny Riverfront Green Boulevard, Pittsburgh
Below: Former Alstom Plant on the Tennessee River

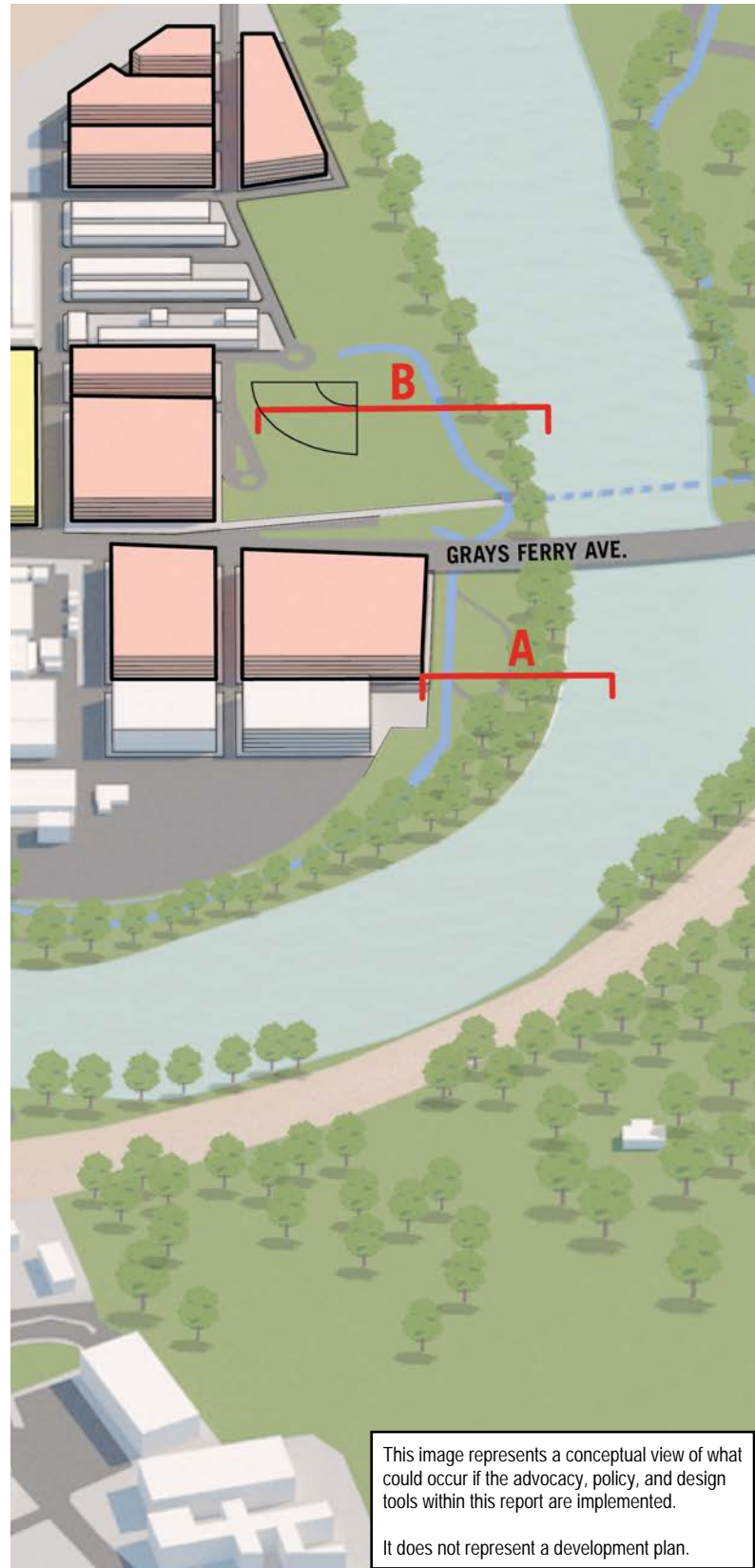
DESIGN

Development Characteristics:

- 3-5 story mixed use development
- Active uses facing park/waterfront and street
- Public connection to Pennovation
- Continuous trail and linear park
- Natural river edge

Development Characteristics:

- 3-5 story mixed use development
- Active uses facing trail and street
- Re-oriented baseball field closer to Grays Ferry Avenue
- Connection to SRT trail and bridge
- Bulkhead path and fishing pier at river



Subarea 3: FedEx, Waste Management & Trolley Works Sites



A. Waste Management Site



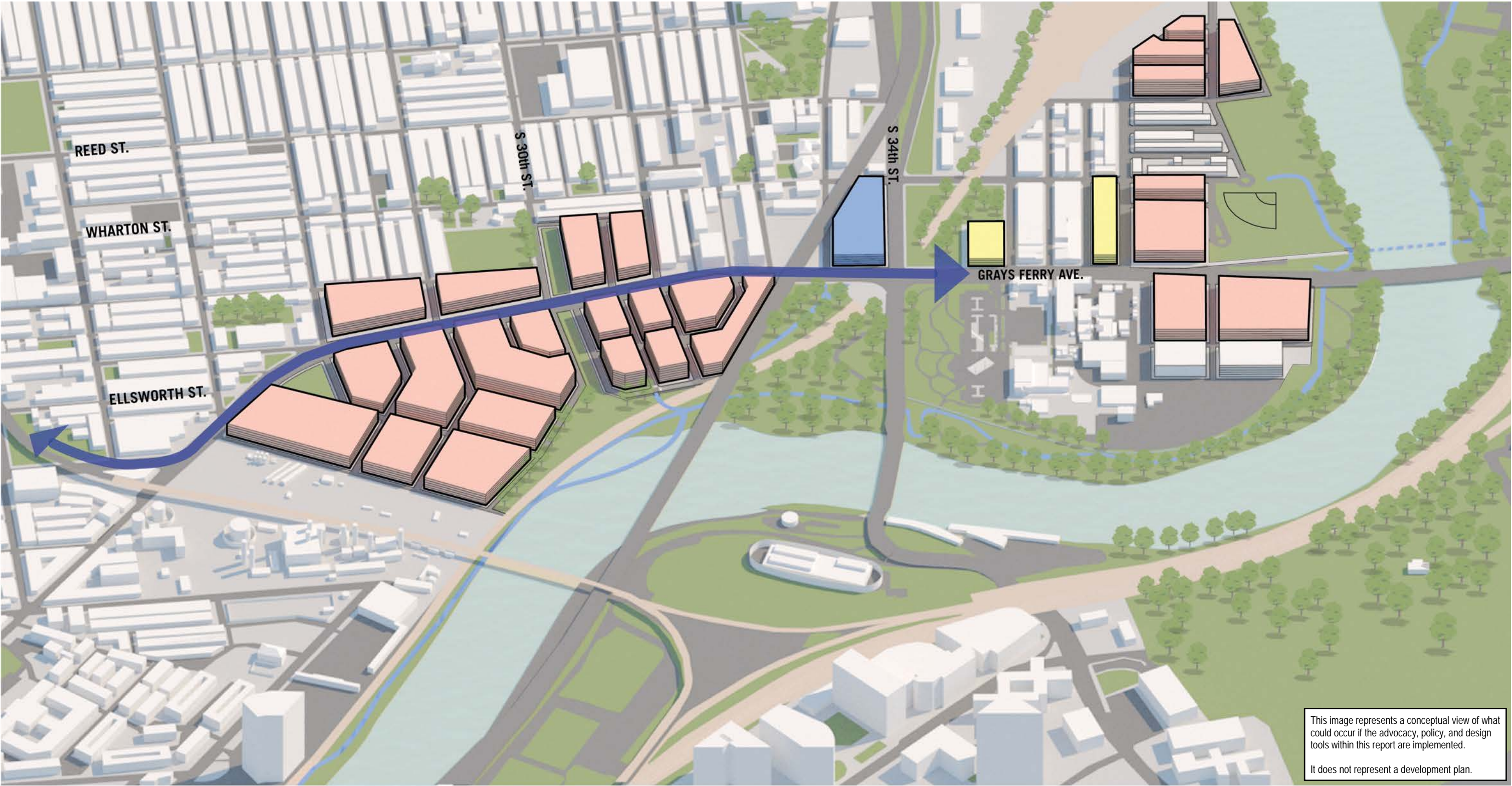
B. Fed Ex Site

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

- *Design Guidelines for new development that complements existing affordability and scale*
- *Advocate for neighborhood-serving park and recreation amenities (e.g. baseball diamond) reoriented for better community use and activation of Grays Ferry Avenue*
- *Work with Penn/Pennovation to encourage community-serving uses at Waste Management and FedEx potential development sites that complement trail*
- *Potential relocation of FedEx and Waste Management sites to Hilco site or elsewhere nearby*
- *Community development corporation to manage waterfront public realm and community-serving uses*

DESIGN

Grays Ferry Avenue Street Character



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These tools for

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY DESIGN

*will enable Grays Ferry residents, business owners, and stakeholders
to advocate for alternative futures for their neighborhood and
community.*