



Developing the Waterfront and the Waterfront Casinos

The Central Delaware Waterfront has sat underdeveloped for decades. When development has occurred, we've been forced to suffer with big box stores, little or no public access to the riverfront and, now, two proposed casinos.

Last year, with the leadership of Councilman DiCicco and the participation of dozens of community groups and hundreds of individuals, the Central Delaware Advisory Group released a Vision for the Central Delaware.

The Vision provides a blueprint for the Delaware River, calling for the addition of open space, a riverfront trail to guarantee public access, limited parking facilities and a street grid to recreate the fabric of urban life along the River all while maintaining the importance of Philadelphia's industrial port.

While I recognize the difficulties of implementing the Plan in full I admire the Taskforce's ability to dream and to set high goals for which we should strive.

I am committed to supporting these efforts as well as providing state funds for infrastructure improvements and green space and providing targeted tax incentives to support appropriate development.

However, it is impossible to discuss waterfront development without discussing the two proposed casinos.

I am not anti-gaming. I recognize the revenue gaming may bring to the City and the opportunity for hundreds of new jobs.

However, I have serious concerns about the two proposed casino locations:

- In some jurisdictions, casinos have negatively impacted other commercial and entertainment corridors. To date, no independent economic impact study has been completed that examines what impact the casinos may have on South Street, Old City or Aramingo Avenue.

- With casinos come thousands of cars. SugarHouse Casino's traffic plan depends on the reconfiguration of the Girard Avenue Interchange off of I-95. However, according to PennDOT, this reconfiguration will not be complete until at least 2016. Until then, where does this traffic go? Unfortunately, no one has been able to address this problem. The area around Foxwoods Casino at Delaware Avenue and Reed Street already suffers from severe traffic problems. How can congestion be alleviated in this area while simultaneously adding thousands of cars? More importantly what impact will increased traffic have on the Port, surrounding retail businesses and the community?
- Some argue that casinos cause an increase in crimes like prostitution, petty theft and vandalism. While these public safety concerns could be addressed, neither the City nor the State has provided specific details to address these quality-of-life concerns.

Unless these issues are resolved, I believe that both casinos should find new locations.

I will sponsor legislation that requires these two projects move to new locations. The legislation will require that:

- The decision on location will be completed with community input and full transparency.
- An independent traffic study is completed to identify potential problems BEFORE a final decision is made.
- An economic impact study is fulfilled in order to insure neighborhood businesses and commercial corridors are not negatively impacted.
- A public safety plan is complete before construction could commence.

Too many mistakes were made in the gaming process – it is time to correct those mistakes for the long-term benefit of the City.