

City Dock Advisory Committee: Talking Points for July 21, 2011 City Council Work Session

The overarching theme of all planning for the future of City Dock should be to reinforce the city's image as a Beautiful Historic Seaport. To be successful, all planning must recognize the diverse mix of needs represented by those who live in the city, work in the city, operate commercial businesses here, and come to visit, whether from five miles or 5,000 miles away.

Six key issues have come to the fore-front in our discussions:

1. The City and the Bay--Viewsheds from the City to the harbor and from the harbor into the city are a precious resource that must be protected and enhanced.

- The views from Main Street and City Dock to the harbor and the Bay are among the most important assets of the city. New construction, infrastructure, and tree plantings should take these views into account.
- Views from the harbor, Eastport, and the Severn River are equally important components of the city's history and are signature elements of the city's public image. New construction, harbor policies, and the interface between land and water should all be planned with careful attention to potential impact on these views.

2. Parking and Transit--Parking should be reduced at City Dock, especially parking spaces immediately adjacent to the water. This area is dominated by the automobile and it is time to implement a comprehensive parking program while opening up new public spaces that will increase access to the water. Key steps to take:

- Adopt a comprehensive parking and transit program that encourages use of existing off-street facilities;
- Install way-finding signage and smart technologies to enable motorists to assess parking options as they enter the city;
- Adopt flexible pricing for parking to reward the use of the new Circulator Transit System;
- Offer special rates for employees of city businesses to shift parking to the Knighton and Park Place garages;
- Encourage a greater mix of transportation modes (bikes, shuttles, water taxis, and public transit);
- Retain flexibility in City Dock open spaces to accommodate shifting needs—year-round needs for tour bus and emergency vehicle access, annual episodic needs for major festivals, and seasonal flexibility to encourage downtown shopping in off-season months.
- Any significant reduction in on-street parking will be implemented only after off-street options have already been brought on-line.

3. Market Space, Hopkins Plaza and Market House--We need to get this space right in order to support the success of Market House. This is a key opportunity now, given the upcoming

reconstruction plans. City Dock planning needs to work carefully in collaboration with Market House renovations.

- Installation of the geo-thermal HVAC system will require repaving on the west side of the Market House. This offers an opportunity to replace existing asphalt with ‘friendlier’ pavement, most likely brick paving to match the adjacent paving of lower Main Street.
- The planned design review of Hopkins Plaza will be an opportunity to improve pedestrian movement around the Market House and explore alternative ways to provide shade and seating in a popular and busy public space.

4. Motorized and Pedestrian Traffic Flow—At peak times, city streets are strained to accommodate vehicular traffic even as sidewalks are crowded with pedestrians. These traffic loads create bottlenecks in the heart of City Dock, and are especially acute at existing pedestrian crossings.

- Pedestrian flow from the foot of Main Street to the head of City Dock is widely considered to be dangerous and ineffective. Pedestrian access across Randall Street should be the first priority for improving the balance between these two traffic needs.
- Pedestrian sidewalks and walkways are often at or above capacity during warm weather, especially on the weekends. The city should begin a series of experiments to test ways to improve pedestrian movement from the foot of Main Street across City Dock to Compromise Street on the south and the two Naval Academy entrances on the north.
- Memorial Circle--This intersection has recently been analyzed by traffic engineers to assess the conflict points between automobiles, pedestrians, and bicycles. While the safest option for pedestrians could be to reconfigure this intersection into a T-intersection with a traffic light, another option would be to alter the circle with improved crosswalks and with less overall pavement. This option would be more in keeping with the historic layout of the City and better preserve viewsheds down Main Street.

5. A Gateway to City Dock—Compromise Street is the busiest street in downtown Annapolis, and at present is viewed primarily as a traffic corridor. The Committee envisions Compromise Street as a monumental opportunity to create a gateway to the city’s historic downtown.

- The old City Recreation Center is poised to begin a new function, and the Committee strongly supports a public use for this building.
- The city-owned park and children’s park across from the Recreation Center provide an important and much-needed element in the overall scope of public spaces around City Dock, and provide a ready-made part for the enhancement of Compromise Street.
- The City-owned Donner Parking Lot and a second city lot next to the Fleet Reserve Club are currently used only for parking, but could be re-purposed to create more green space with shade, seating, and enhanced access to the water.
- Compromise Street is already an important pedestrian thoroughfare, but one that would benefit greatly from buffer elements to soften the gauntlet between busy traffic and adjacent parking lots that characterizes the primary, north-side sidewalk from the Eastport Bridge to Market Space.

6. Management Entity—A stand-alone management entity would be established to ensure that the City Dock and surrounding area is a clean, safe, and inviting space. The sole responsibility of this management group is to brand the image of a Beautiful Historic Seaport. The group would aim to strengthen coalitions and partnerships between public and private stakeholders, promote commercial and residential interests, and work towards the implementation of the recommendations set forth by the CDAC.

While the specifics of its structure still should be determined, the Committee feels the organization should be a non-profit group with diverse governance and diverse funding. The organization must always be kept cognizant that it exists for the benefit of its constituents, not the other way around.

The management entity could be responsible for the following: Data collection for parking; Data collection for market segments; implementing a comprehensive parking program; Retail recruitment; Marketing and public relations (including aesthetic functions such as flowers and street beautification; Public space activation (a.k.a. “Programming”); and special event coordination.