

July 18, 2022

To the Honorable Members of the City's Planning Commission:

The South Wilmington Planning Network (SWPN) stands in strong support of the Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) between the Southbridge Civic Association and the developers of the former Diamond State Oil Site. Establishing CBAs with South Wilmington developers is an explicit recommendation of the Southbridge Neighborhood Action Plan (or SNAP) (Community Empowerment 03, page 59). CBAs will help ensure Southbridge residents benefit from redevelopment and not just outside forces. The proposed publically-accessible riverfront trail also advances another recommendation from the SNAP (Improved Mobility 13, page 89).

Following numerous fact-finding meetings with the owner/developer of the site, the Southbridge Civic Association helped to establish the CBA Coalition to engage in formulating a CBA with the owner/developer. The Southbridge CBA Coalition and the owner/developer have an agreed-upon CBA that provides the types of benefits that all members of the Southbridge community will gain from for decades to come. Employment opportunities with livable wages during and post-construction, support of quality affordable housing, youth education and local business development are key components of the agreed-upon and signed CBA. This CBA benefits both Southbridge, an underserved neighborhood, and our City of Wilmington as a whole.

Southbridge community members have endured the negative appearance of this site for decades – along with the knowledge (from DNREC) that it remains a contaminated Brownfield – while keeping it from being developed into check-cashing and liquor stores that would only exacerbate the decline of this community.

The benefits that this development will bring to Southbridge and the broader City of Wilmington include: fair and equitable pay, honorable employment with benefits, equal opportunity for local contractors to compete for projects, improved housing stock, and long-term increases in City wages.

We urge that the Planning Commission consider the local support this project has received, its implementation of the SNAP, and the collaborative effort from both the community and developer in establishing a CBA in your decision.

Respectfully submitted,



Co-Chair, South Wilmington Planning Network