

**GUIDELINES to PRESERVE  
the  
INTRINSIC VALUE AND BEAUTY  
of  
RIVERTON'S DELAWARE RIVER WATERFRONT**

Prepared in collaboration with the  
Riverton Planning Board

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# DELAWARE RIVER WATERFRONT GUIDELINES

## Introduction

In 2007 and 2008 the Borough of Riverton conducted a multi-phased project with funds from the Office of Smart Growth and assistance from the Burlington County Board of Freeholders. The first phase of the project included the development of Riverton's first Environmental Resource Inventory. A series of community outreach meetings were conducted after that to discuss local open space and recreation policies, and collect ideas, hopes, concerns and expectations from the public on matters of local recreation. The input obtained from the workshops was assessed with direction from the Planning Board and used to generate an Open Space and Recreation Plan Amendment for the Borough's Master Plan.

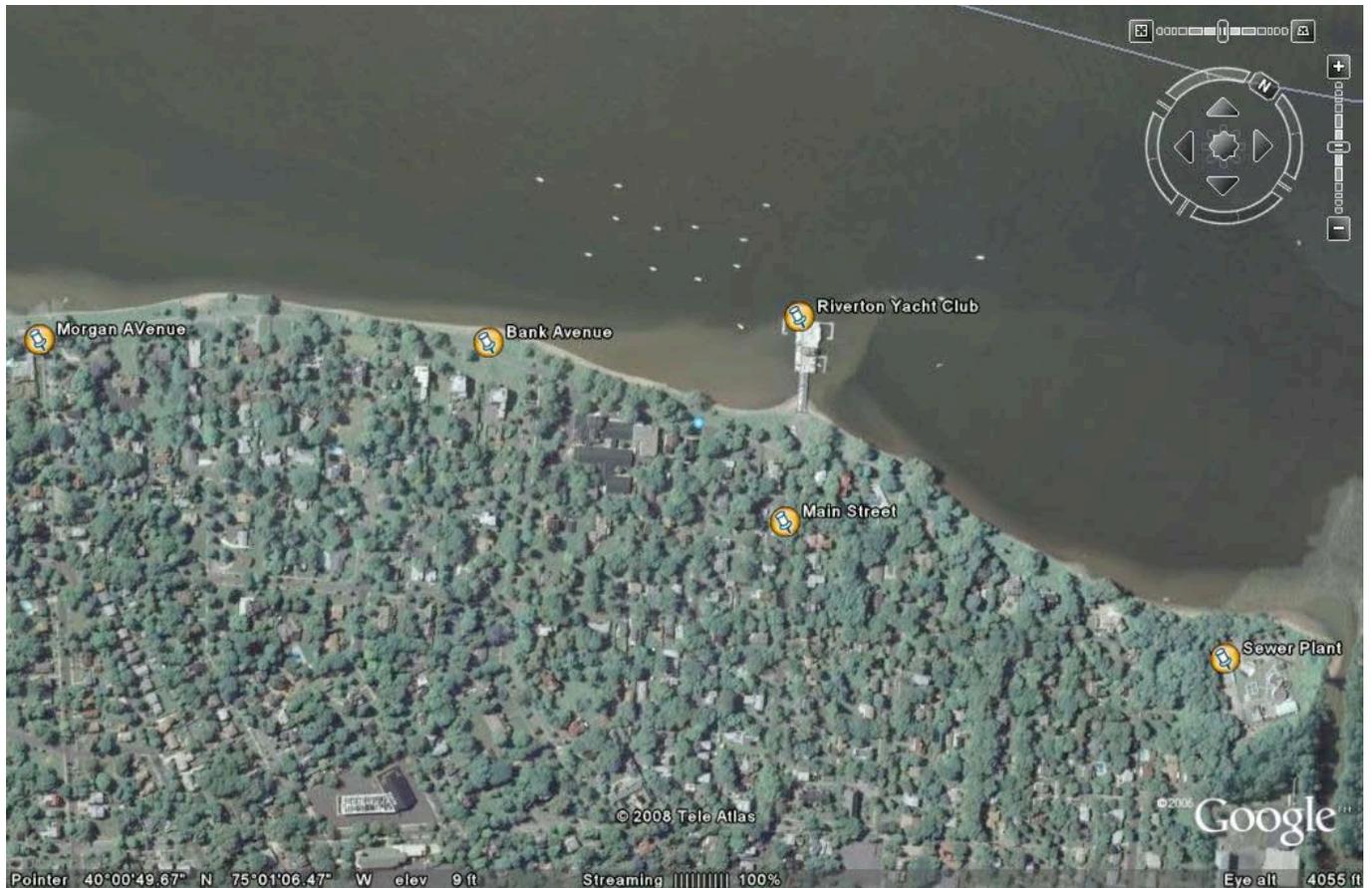
Following the Master Plan Amendment, the Planning Board generated a stream buffer protection ordinance, which is forwarded to the Borough Council for review and adoption. That ordinance strives to protect portions of the Pompeston Creek that are not protected by the State's stream corridor protection regulations for Category One streams and their primary tributaries.

The final phase of the original project is this set of guidelines for the preservation of Riverton's Delaware River waterfront. Ideas and perspectives collected during the initial community outreach meetings from both waterfront residents as well as residents at-large, were discussed and evaluated by a subcommittee of the Planning Board, and ultimately the full Planning Board in preparation of these guidelines. The guidelines noted herein represent a consensus of the Borough's local planning officials and articulate the Planning Board's best recommendations for appropriate policies regarding the management and direction of planning decisions as they relate to the local river waterfront area.



## Study Area

The study area included the entire length of the Delaware River waterfront within Riverton Borough. That stretches from the mouth of the Pompeston Creek near the Borough's sewer plant to the southern end of Bank Avenue at Morgan Avenue.



## Riverton's Delaware Waterfront

## Goals and Objectives

Riverton's Master Plan, adopted in 1998 and re-examined in 2007, includes Goal #3; to "preserve and enhance the key distinguishing man made and natural features that define Riverton's character as a historic, Victorian and riverfront community." It goes on to advance the Objectives # 1 and #2; to "retain the existing open vistas, public open space and residential land use patterns adjacent to the Delaware River," and "encourage the stability and maintenance of pedestrian use of lands adjacent to the Riverfront."



The newly adopted Open Space and Recreation Element includes a section on the Delaware River and Bank Avenue and articulates the following objectives:

- *Foster local use of Bank Avenue, minimize vehicular through traffic and enhance pedestrian use of the roadway. Investigate possible changes in traffic patterns that would reduce vehicular through traffic. Consider implementing scheduled changes or partial closures on a trial basis to evaluate the effectiveness of possible modifications.*
- *Develop plans for mini-parks at the ends of Penn, Lippincott, Thomas, Linden, Morgan and Fulton Streets. Add benches. Delineate public and private space. Install and maintain trash and recycling containers. New site improvements should be simple, uncluttered and minimally obtrusive to the overall view of the river.*
- *Install decorative paving at the intersections of Bank Avenue with Penn, Lippincott, Thomas, and Linden. \**
- *Install granite or Belgian block curbing along Bank Avenue, only as permitted by the public easement, to better delineate the public access easement area. Do not widen the cartway. \**

*\* These objectives are no longer recommended.*

- *Enhance and maintain historic looking lights along Bank Avenue.*
- *Investigate the potential purchasing the waterfront lot next to the sewer plant. Secure an appraisal of the land.*

These goals and objectives charted a course for the Planning Board and its subcommittee to investigate more detailed public policies relating to the riverfront. Various options were discussed relating to many riverfront issues and the pros and cons of all the options were analyzed. The guidelines that follow represent the Planning Board's best recommendations for how future planning along the riverfront should be considered.

## **Relationship to Other Documents**

The Borough's Master Plan presently includes the original 1998 document, the 2007 Re-Examination Report and a number of amendments, including amendments related to affordable housing, stormwater management and the latest, Open Space and Recreation Plan. The Municipal Land Use Law stipulates that the Master Plan is the foundation on which all planning decisions should be made and on which all land use development applications and variance applications should be based.

Riverton's Environmental Resource Inventory is a valuable resource for understanding the natural and built environment of the town; both its assets and its liabilities. It includes information on ground and surface water resources, soils and topography, vegetation and wildlife, as well as historic and architectural local treasures. But it is an inventory, and not a policy document. The Master Plan is the primary document pertaining to local planning policy.

There are also local ordinances. These represent the law. Local ordinances are land use regulations enacted by Riverton's Borough Council and intended to regulate the use of the land. In the case of the riverfront, local ordinances govern the land, but Federal regulations govern the waterway. Since the Delaware River is a 'navigable waterway' it is governed by US Army Corps of Engineer regulations and Federal Environmental Protection Agency laws. The administration of many of these federal regulations has been turned over to the State, which, in some cases, enforce the federal regulations, and in other cases, enforce State regulations under a Memorandum of Agreement between the State and the Federal governments; an agreement which permits the State to substitute its rules for the Federal government's regulations.

This document, Guidelines to Preserve the Intrinsic Value and Beauty of Riverton's Delaware River Waterfront, is intended to outline ways to advance the goals and objectives of the local Master Plan. It will not recommend changes to the Borough's land use ordinances or propose drastic changes to the riverfront. It does not represent local law; only guidelines. It includes ideas for protecting the riverfront in its current state and only improving its condition in appropriate ways that support the overall goals of preserving the waterfront's best qualities and resources.

## Private Property

There is very little obvious or noticeable distinction between public land and private land along the Delaware River waterfront. At the north end of town, or the upstream edge of town at the mouth of the Pompeston Creek, the Borough owns a 3.7 acre parcel on which operates the Municipality's sewer treatment plant. The lot has frontage on both the River and the creek. It is accessed via a narrow right-of-way at the end of Third Street, where it intersects with the paper street called Martha's Lane.

Directly adjacent to and downstream of the sewer site is a 3 acre, undeveloped lot owned by National Casein. This lot appears to be substantially encumbered by wetlands, wetland buffer areas and hundred year floodplain, which suggests that its developability is limited. On the other hand, the Borough's Master Plan notes that the site might have some open space or recreational value to the Borough, but the property's value should be evaluated through a proper appraisal process, which is not within the scope of this report. But if the Town were able to use this site someday, the most likely use would be some combination of wildlife preservation and local passive recreation.

Continuing downstream, there are five private properties with frontage on the River. These properties have no parallel public access. Beginning at Howard Street, Bank Avenue parallels the water's edge between the private residences that face the Delaware and the river. Bank Avenue is not a public street. In most instances, the homes along Bank Avenue own the land under the cartway, as well as the land that includes the house on one side and all the land to the river's edge on the other. The deeds of each lot vary slightly. Some properties own land to the high water



line, some to the low water line, some to the bulkhead only. But most of the lots indicate that there is an easement along Bank Avenue for the public to use. A Court has interpreted the easement language to mean that *“(t)he Borough of Riverton has [a] documented easement to use, operate and maintain its public improvement known as Bank Avenue....the Borough may not expand the existing height, width or location of Bank Avenue from its present location.”* In short, the Borough, and the public, may continue to use and maintain the paved cartway known as Bank Avenue, as long as it does not change it. For the most part, the rest of the land by the river is private. There are a few exceptions.

The Borough owns a small water's edge parcel about 250 feet upstream of Morgan Avenue. It also owns the end of Linden Avenue, Thomas Avenue, Penn Street and Fulton Street where they intersect with the River. Similarly, the Borough owns a portion of the end of Lippincott Avenue and Howard Street. But the deeds of the adjoining properties indicate that a portion of Lippincott and Howard are part of private deeds.

The Riverton Yacht Club is located at the end of Main Street. It's been reported that a portion of the parking lot, between Bank Avenue and the water's edge, has always been owned by the Club since the Club obtained a riparian grant from the State. But another portion of the parking lot was owned by the County, since Main Street is a county road. In 1961, the County transferred its ownership to the Borough, and the Borough subsequently gave it to the Yacht Club. For some unknown reason, the title for the second transfer was never perfected. There was clearly an intention on the part of the Borough to transfer ownership to the Yacht Club, but failure to execute the paperwork has left the issue unsettled. Nonetheless, the Yacht Club uses the area for both auto and boat parking while the public uses it for parking too.

There are a couple of other isolated lots along Bank Avenue for which the deeds expressly except out the Bank Avenue cartway or right-of-way, but such deed descriptions are more the exception than the rule.



## Design Guidelines

What follows is a set of guidelines to help maintain the riverfront in a manner most appropriate for Riverton residents. Like the Master Plan, it might be advisable to revisit these guidelines periodically to insure that they still accomplish the goals and objectives of the Borough and its Master Plan.

### 1. General Concept and Overall Expectations

Bank Avenue is the area from which most people enjoy the river in Riverton. In general, the area is as the Town wishes it would be. The cartway is minimalistic; more like a 'country lane.' It's narrow, unadorned, edged only with grass; no curbing. The landscaping is equally simple; a few canopy trees, but little else to interrupt the expansive views of the water. Existing shrubs are low and sparse. Again, little interferes with the panoramic view of the River.

The preferred use of Bank Avenue is heavily in favor of local residents. The cartway is a one way street, downstream, from Howard Street to Morgan Avenue. It would be ideal if the number of out-of-town, cut-through commuters could be reduced, since many of them tend to speed through the area and most commuters value the route's ability to bypass the lights on Broad Street more than they value the view of the River. Local drivers seem more respectful of this scenic road. Nonetheless, vehicular traffic use of the cartway should continue, especially if vehicular speed can be controlled effectively. Pedestrian and bicycle use of the roadway is highly desirable. During nice weather,



many people enjoy walking along the river with and without children or strollers or pets. The challenge is to maintain an inviting atmosphere for the public, without including too many public improvements that would attract large crowds and potentially infringe on the rights of the private property owners. One of the things that makes Bank Avenue so enjoyable is the people-friendly atmosphere and the regular practice of neighbors running into neighbors, enjoying the setting and each other's company. Crowds of people, or too many people that might come to the area with cars (because they live too far to walk or bike) will negatively change the best aspects of Bank Avenue, the people-friendly atmosphere. Therefore, these guidelines, and any policies that are implemented, should be cognizant of the intimate, hometown country feel of Bank Avenue and any improvements that would change that should be discouraged.

Portions of the river's edge, not associated with Bank Avenue should be treated with particular care. These areas are less visible to the public and their secluded nature, in places like the sewer plant site and the end of Fulton Street, are difficult to patrol. There is general concern that too much development in these areas might attract undesirable activity from members of the public who feel they can engage in unobserved and possibly unseemly behavior. The Borough has a substantial investment in the sewer plant site, along with the investments from a number of private communication companies who use the cell tower on the lot. Public improvements to the sewer plant site that encourage public access and use of the waterfront could also lead to vandalism and/or increase the Borough's exposure to liability. Hence, areas along the river without high public visibility should receive only minimal maintenance-related improvements.



**Steps at the end of Fulton Street to receive maintenance related improvements.**

## 2. Views and the Landscape

The views along the River are a prized resource to all Riverton residents. It's understandable that townspeople enjoy being at the water's edge. There is an overwhelming consensus that the uninterrupted views should be preserved. Construction between the cartway of Bank Avenue and the water's edge should be discouraged. Even things as low as railings and shrubbery are not desirable. Some trees exist and provide welcomed shade, but an abundance of street trees would interfere with the view.

Since the overall intent is to design the riverbank for small groups of people and not large crowds, it is not necessary to plant many trees that would offer shade to large groups. Instead, a limited number of trees will encourage a sustainable level of public use of the Bank Avenue area.

It is also better that the landscaping between Bank Avenue and the River remain as continuous as possible and does not become segmented by property owners that might try to define their lots with man-made fences or 'living fences' even if they are beautiful hedges. Historically, few riverfront owners have felt the need to create divisions in this area, but it's understandable that property owners might feel protective of their space, if members of the public demonstrate disrespect for the land. Therefore, it would be best if a balance were struck that offers adequate space along the water's edge for the visiting public in areas that are owned by the Borough.



Public space can be accommodated on existing public portions of the waterfront. The Borough does not own a lot of space along the River, but that's not necessary either. Again, the overall intention is to serve small groups of the public at any one time, and the areas already owned by the Municipality should be adequate to serve their needs. If the needs of the public are satisfied, then there should be less pressure from members of the public to 'spill over' onto private lands. Ultimately, the Borough expects the vast

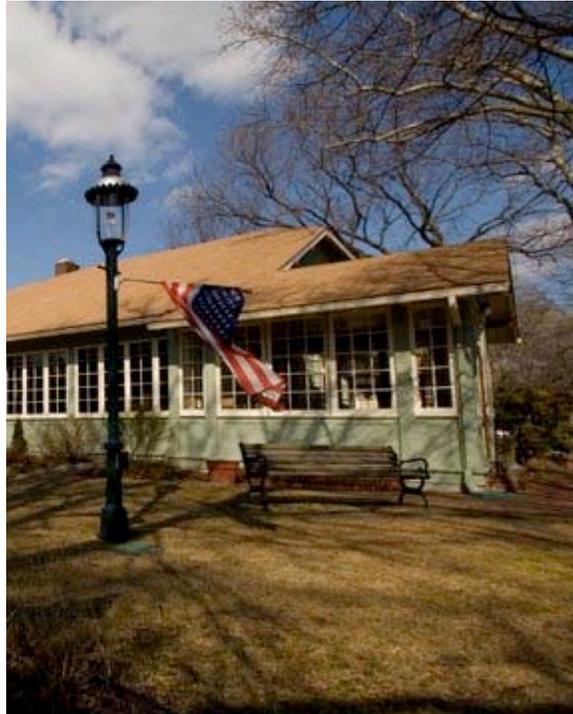
majority of visitors to the riverfront will respect private property, but providing adequate resources for public use in the Bank Avenue area is an important part of a positive relationship between public and private users.

### 3. Seating, site furniture, lighting

Historic looking site furniture, and more specifically Victorian styled site furniture, is important to the ambiance of the river's edge. The historic feel of the town is central to the quality of life in Riverton and it should follow through along the River.

Existing gas lamps along Bank Avenue are perfect for the area. They should be maintained. They look appropriate and they provide just the right amount of light. Too much light would be obtrusive and interfere with the nighttime riverscape. Gas lights create a special atmosphere.

Other site furniture should be limited. The Borough has installed a few benches at the ends of the streets that dead end at the River. One or two benches in a grouping are usually sufficient. More seating might attract groups of people that are too large and not in keeping with the quaint, intimate character desired for the area. This includes terraced seating. Admittedly the slope from the Bank Avenue cartway to the bulkhead could be terraced, but terracing would create too much seating and it would destroy the simple, clean, expansive lines of the continuous strip of lawn that currently edges the River.



**Local style of gas lamp and bench in Riverton**

The style of benches along the river should be consistent with the successful designs of public spaces in town, near Broad Street and Main Street. Consistency through the Borough should be attainable, since the Borough is so small and consistency will be noticeable.

Additional site furniture, like gaming tables or picnic tables are not appropriate along the River. The primary use of the Bank Avenue area should be in appreciation of the River and not other recreation. Gaming tables and picnic tables are more appropriate at Memorial Park. Also tall site furniture, like flagpoles or clocks will interrupt the panoramic view and therefore, these types of site elements should not be encouraged. It is not appropriate to clutter the riverfront with a collection of assorted site furniture pieces. As they say, in this case, less is definitely more.

#### 4. Cartway and Vehicular Traffic

As noted already, the concept of Bank Avenue as a country lane is the preferred image of the roadway. It should not be widened or curbed or otherwise ‘dressed up.’ Though decorative pavement was recommended in the newest Open Space and Recreation Element, after further consideration it’s been decided that even its limited use would detract from the country lane character of Bank Avenue. An unobtrusive flush curb (flat with the ground) in some areas, particularly those owned by the Municipality might be fitting, but such suggestions should be studied carefully to insure that the informal, country feel of the road is not lost. Bank Avenue already has a few spots with some bluestone curbing that is very old and historic. This same large bluestone material might be attractive in limited quantities and selective places. It might be used as a flush curb. It would be a better choice than a flush concrete curb or even a flush Belgian block curb. These materials tend to represent a typical suburban neighborhoods and not unique historic towns like Riverton. Since Bank Avenue is perfect just the way it is, with no particular edging and only grass flanking the asphalt, it would be better to install nothing rather than install the wrong curbing or settle on a compromise material because historic bluestone is too expensive.



The narrowness of the Bank Avenue has some effect on controlling the speed of the traffic, but it doesn’t control all speeding activity. The width of the road can’t be changed, per the terms of most of the deed restrictions. Unfortunately, the straightness of the road allows people who want to speed to travel faster than many Rivertonians would like. Traffic calming techniques like rumble pavement, travel lane offsets and speed humps might slow the traffic, but they could also detract from the country lane character.

The Borough could experiment with changes in traffic patterns, but this exercise has a couple of drawbacks. Undoubtedly, any changes to the traffic pattern on Bank Avenue will adversely affect traffic on parallel streets. Therefore, changes to Bank Avenue’s

established traffic patterns should not be attempted without simultaneously, and equally effective changes to Second and Fourth Streets.



**Bluestone curb stone**



**Existing, historic cartway edging detail**

More importantly, Bank Avenue is relatively short and whether you're enjoying a stroll down Bank Avenue or enjoying a scenic drive down the street, the current length of Bank Avenue provides a perfect venue for that leisurely experience. To change the traffic pattern in an effort to manage a few offending speeders causes more harm to the experience of Bank Avenue than it creates positive change. Therefore, it's been determined that changing the traffic patterns is not a reasonable option.

On the other hand, it might be worthwhile investigating the limited use of a single, well designed speed hump south of Lippincott Avenue. Lippincott gets a lot of the 'cut-through' commuter traffic and a hump on Bank Avenue might provide enough of a deterrent to discourage and reduce speeding traffic. The hump should be carefully designed. That means it should be wide enough to equal the wheel span length of an average car. This way a car would have both the front and rear axles over the hump at the same time. Such a design minimizes the noise generated by cars going over it, but it also creates an effective mechanism for encouraging cars to slow down.



**Bank Avenue, south of Lippincott**

If the Borough decides to test the effectiveness of a speed hump, it should do so on a temporary basis to begin with. Rubber speed humps are available and can be installed temporarily to test their effectiveness. The Borough might also consider using a temporary speed hump seasonally, slowing traffic in the summer, but removing the hump in the winter, when traffic interferes less frequently with pedestrians. Seasonal use of a hump would also not hinder snow plowing in the winter.

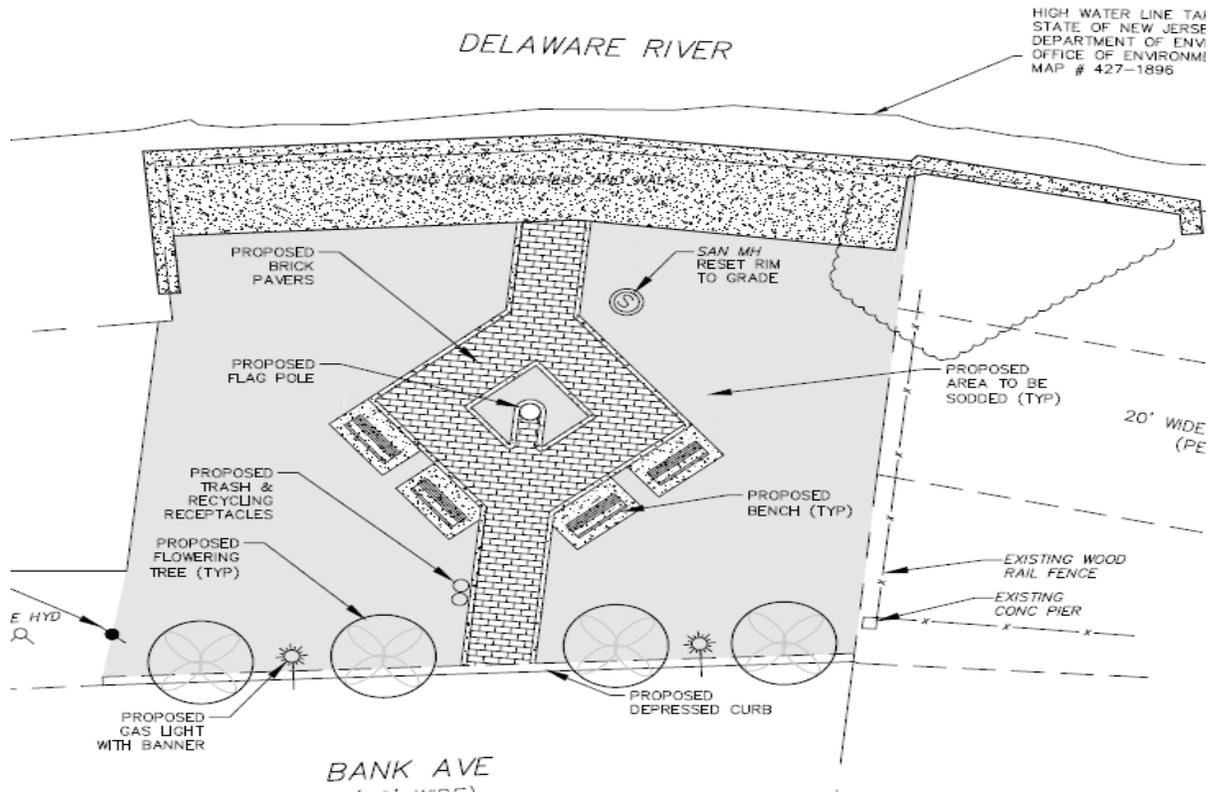


## 5. Pedestrian and Bicycle Traffic

Most pedestrians and bicyclists on Bank Avenue, use the asphalt cartway. A few wander off onto the lawn strip between Bank Avenue and the bulkhead. Limited improvements to the public portions of the riverfront would serve the needs of the visiting public. Presently, and for generations in the past, pedestrians and bicyclists have pleasantly shared Bank Avenue and there's no apparent need to segregate the traffic with sidewalks or bicycle lanes. Similarly, since most people who enjoy Bank Avenue are local residents and repeat visitors, the community has developed an inherent understanding and tolerance of the different users of the space. Maintaining the riverfront's quaint character and intimate neighborliness will be an effective means of insuring that the various types of users on Bank Avenue continue to enjoy the waterfront harmoniously.

6. Municipal Land along the River's Edge

As noted earlier, the Borough owns some land along the water's edge. There's a small parcel between Morgan and Linden Avenues, and some spots of land at the end of the streets that 'T' into the river. With the help of a grant from the Delaware Bridge Commission, Riverton is improving a small public space at the end of Linden Street (see concept plan below). It will be the most well developed public space along the river to date. Once improved, it will serve as a focal spot for public attention and use.



**Concept Plan for the Linden Avenue Riverfront Park**

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The benches at the newly improved park should be substantial enough to be secure, but not so large as to detract from the view of the river. They should complement the benches used throughout town. The sidewalks should be brick, like the gathering spots downtown. It's warm and welcoming and works well with the scale of the site. This public spot is a logical place for a public trash receptacle, but otherwise, there's no need to pepper Bank Avenue with trash cans. The park might also be an appropriate place for utilizing a bluestone depressed curb to divide the park from the cartway, but the curb should not extend beyond the reaches of the site. The park at Linden Avenue will be an 'interesting experiment.'

For the present, more such public spots are not recommended. Bank Avenue has served the community well and it is not necessary to make numerous significant changes to it. It would be better to make small changes slowly, if at all, and monitor their impact to insure that the desired character of the riverfront is not lost.

Again, the primary objective for the riverfront is to preserve it for small neighborly experiences and not to allow or encourage large public attractions. Any change to Bank Avenue should occur at a measured pace. It will be easier to preserve the country character of Bank Avenue than restore it if that character is lost to over zealous improvement projects.

## 7. Parking and the Yacht Club

Bank Avenue is intended mainly for use by small numbers of local residents. There is no need or desire to cater to large crowds or to people from out of the area who can't walk or bike to the river. Therefore it follows that providing large amounts of parking would be contrary to the primary objective. Big parking lots would encourage people to drive to the area and it's logical that the number of people using Bank Avenue at any one time might increase too.

By minimizing the amount of parking available to the public, people will be encouraged to walk or ride their bikes. This will automatically control the number of people attracted to the area. That's more in keeping with the desired character of the space. Some parking is available on a first come, first served basis at the end of Main



Street, next to the Yacht Club. The lot is used by the Yacht Club during the season but it remains open to the public. Theoretically, during good weather in the summer time, there is little need for residents to drive to the river; in Riverton, walking and biking is always a good option. Off season, most if not all of the Main Street parking lot is available for public parking.

On-street parking on Bank Avenue is illegal, but moreover, additional parking for the visiting public is unnecessary and undesirable. The riverfront is primarily a pedestrian space and vehicular use should not be encouraged.



**Parking at the Yacht Club**

## **Conclusion**

Riverton's waterfront is one of the most special resources the town has to offer its residents. It's an integral part of life in Riverton and a key reason why many people choose to local and stay in the Borough. Preserving the waterfront for Riverton residents is paramount among the policies established to protect the quality of life for the community. The intimacy of the experiences along the river's edge, with neighbors meeting neighbors and the area remaining rural and not congested is the way the waterfront should remain. It's a refuge from the crowded, over-developed busy commercial areas of Route 130. And it's a marvelous and peaceful contrast to the bustling energy of Riverton's vibrant downtown. It enriches the palette of opportunities in Riverton and should never be lost or demonstrably changed.