



thetriangles ON GRAYS FERRY AVENUE GATEWAY PROJECT

A joint committee supported by SOSNA, CCRA, SSWBA, and SOSCDC

Summary

A joint committee of residents from Center City and South of South hosted a stakeholder meeting on March 29, 2011 to discuss the traffic triangles between South and Bainbridge Streets, 23rd and 24th Streets, and Grays Ferry Avenue. Gus Scheerbaum, chair of SOSNA's board welcomed the approximately 150 people in attendance, including State Representative Babette Josephs and Terri Paone from Council President Verna's office. Gus noted that an online survey conducted by the committee showed that 90% of respondents are either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the existing conditions around the triangles, and 92% of respondents want the City to invest in improvement to the area. Representative Josephs spoke briefly as the meeting commenced to say that she lives nearby and has been watching this effort closely, that the future of this area will be decided by the neighbors, and that whatever we decide, she will be there to help us out. The meeting progressed with some background on the project, including a brief introduction to the traffic engineers, who were hired to review the current conditions of the area and to present some possibilities for improvement. Everyone then formed discussion groups in which they chose three of six topics and discussed each one for ten minutes. This session was followed by a recap from each of the twelve groups. The traffic engineers then presented five ideas for changes that would improve traffic conditions based on their professional findings. They will now work to incorporate input from this meeting to present two final schemes. The meeting concluded with an invitation to join the committee and more fully participate in this project, and a thank-you to all attendees for their active involvement. A summary of the topics discussed is below.

Safety

For pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles, there is much confusion in this area due to poor traffic signals, which lead to irregular movement by everyone and encourage speeding through lights. Heavy traffic on the 2200 block of Bainbridge is considered a safety hazard for those residents. Slowing vehicular traffic with physical changes and improved traffic signals, new bike and pedestrian paths, and better sidewalk lighting would improve the safety for all users.

Public Place/Identity

At present there is no regular maintenance, including litter pickup, nor is there any place to put litter, and without seating and because of the flow of traffic, there is no reason to linger in this space. Marking this area as a gateway to the neighborhood by introducing plantings, seating, bike racks, pedestrian-oriented lighting, burying the utilities, and connecting the northern island to the sidewalk would create a place to gather that this part of the neighborhood currently lacks. Additionally, this space needs a name, cultural references, and public art, banners, and/or other place markers.

Greening

There is a strong desire for landscaping with street trees and rain gardens, permeable surfaces, unique paving at street corners, and drinking water from the fountain. It was also recommended that there be a maintenance plan and funds in place, and potentially a friends group that would oversee and possibly carry out some of the work.

Economic Development

An increase in basic retail that is locally owned (not a chain) to provide a competitive mix of businesses in this area is desirable. Supportive infrastructure includes the greening ideas mentioned above to create physical continuity throughout this area, metered and residential permit parking, no litter or blighted lots, and more business-friendly regulations such as the tax code and the process for obtaining use permits.



CONSOLIDATED GROUP NOTES

1. Safety

Problems:

Vehicular Traffic

- Speed of traffic on GF (2)
 - Southbound on SF from South (1)
- Confusion/Lights (8)
 - Stupid signage: “Opposing traffic does not stop” (1)
- People racing to make the light
- People ignoring signals
- Signal timing
 - 23rd & Bainbridge
 - South Street
- 23rd/Grays/Bainbridge intersection
- 24th Street traffic (speeding) (2)
- Two one-way southbound streets
- Traffic on Bainbridge is a big problem (3)
 - This includes SEPTA buses (1)
- Two-way on [upper] Grays Ferry could make it more dangerous
- Drivers going north on GF don't know it's one-way
- Bridge (increase in traffic?)
- 23rd & South: constant traffic is not directed properly
 - Limited crosswalks
 - Nobody maintains the sidewalks on public spaces, esp. when it snows

Parking

- Church parking (2)
- Cars park — hard to view traffic
- Parking (1)
- Pay attention to loading zones

Pedestrians

- Irregular pedestrian movements
- No place for pedestrians to walk (cross?) (2)
- Bainbridge west of 24th Street is dark and unsafe (3)
- Crossing 22nd & Bainbridge is dangerous
- Pedestrian crossing at South/ 23rd

Bicyclists

- Blind spots for cyclists
- Need connection to bike paths

No purpose traveling down GF (?)

Signage confusing for cars and peds, e.g.

Grays Ferry name at South Street

Solutions:

- Improved signals for cars and pedestrians (5)
 - Green arrow?
 - Add light to 24th & Bainbridge (2)
 - Eliminate light at 22nd & Bainbridge
- Speedbumps
- Marked crosswalks (3)
- Light the public spaces (1)
 - Pedestrian lights down GF (2)
 - Toll parking lot and TPS (?) (1)
- 24th Street northbound to Lombard (2)
- 23rd Street two-way to South?
- Close off 24th between Grays Ferry and Bainbridge
- Roundabout at 23rd
- 23rd& GF bike lanes
- Tiny green space along Bainbridge between 24th & Grays Ferry
- Traffic should be rerouted from the 2200 block of Bainbridge
- Truck traffic off South Street: are there restrictions?



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2. Public Place/Community Identity

Maintenance including cleanup

- Lots of cigarette butts [maybe a trash can would help?]

General area

Concepts

- Tie streetscaping plan with triangle design
- Consistent visual on storefronts

Problems

- Health of trees
- People currently avoid
- Litter/dog walk and curbing

Ideas

- Replace asphalt with cobbles under roadway
- Can buses be rerouted South on 24th
- Speed table/traffic calming of GF South of South
- Utilities should go underground (3)
- Limit turning lane to loading and share with public
- More plaza light
- Trash cans
- More bike racks
- More trees around triangles
- Plantings
- Brickwork around 23rd in honor of brickworks
- Multicultural festival

Northern triangle

Concepts

- The “welcome mat”/gateway for the neighborhood (2)
- Need for gathering space (there’s nothing else nearer than Fittler Square)
- Fountain is important / open space important(?)
- Keep historical/cultural
- How spaces are used (2)
- How to balance public and private seating
- Public space — green space: more aesthetically pleasing
- Invite across South Street
- Park space like Julian Abele

Problems

- No one wants to sit there — maybe because it’s surrounded by traffic
- No place to stay (sit, linger)
- Not enough eyes on the street to keep it nice (accountability)
- Potential noise issues in plaza
- Parking is (big)/(huge)concern (3)
- Homeless issue?
- Ugly at triangles / Grays Ferry is beautiful
- Parking on Grays Ferry is unsafe
- No name!

Ideas

- Catharine Thorn Circle
- Need PA historical market (Naval Square)
- More activity
 - Bridge opening celebration/Odunde
 - Park[ing] Day (and additional days): block off the parking and make it a seating area in the summer. Put out some cheap patio furniture, and see if it gets used
 - Farmers market (2)
 - Music, events (2)
- Landscaping
 - Flowers (2)
 - Trees (2)
 - Remove fence
 - Tables and chairs/outdoor seating (5)
 - Install grass pavers
 - Keep fountain (3)
 - Public art/sculpture
 - Improve street lighting
 - Landscaping/focal features
 - Make more pedestrian friendly
 - Railing and seating area outside businesses for eating area
 - Nice central fountain area: flowers, fence
 - Low vegetation
- Businesses (2)
- Expand to east sidewalk to become “prime real estate” for those businesses and great place to gather
- Things for kids
- Water dept — they maintain if they use it for water management
- Maintenance (2)
- Ownership
- Paint(?) big triangle
- Clock tower / monument to identify the neighborhood
- Maximize
- Loading (3)
- Bike racks
- Welcome sign
- Banners/flags
- Southwest Triangle
 - Pergola at Bainbridge and GF on west triangle
- South Triangle
 - Pathways
- South Street Bridge opening
- Identity: celebrate Naval Square history
- “South Square”
- Crossing to shop feels like it wants to be (triangle at South)
- Is fountain cost effective?
- Big triangle outside seating like Times Square (don’t plow) even
- How to change?
 - Zoning
 - Parking
- Future uses



3. Cultural/Historical Recognition

- Encourage pride in the community
- Upset by the recent Osun sign that was set up at northern triangle.
- Complaints that Odunde never contributes money for upkeep/maintenance/cleanup after their festival, but now their name is on the fountain. If they have a sign, they should contribute. (Whoa, does that mean that contributors now get signs?)
- Animosity between groups
- Diversity/Different groups with interest in the area
- As neighborhood changes/gentrification:
 - Where are we now?
 - Can we build good relationships?
 - We lost our school: how does that affect us? New and traditional residents?
- Odunde festival: small neighborhood festival that became big/regional attraction
 - Source of tension?
- Preserve existing features of 23rd & GF triangle
 - Important to maintain historical features: cobblestones, horse watering station
 - Maintain architectural/historical features around the triangles
 - Keep height and bulk of current zoning of neighboring properties
- Historical signs in different areas

4. Historical

- Odunde (35 years)
- Thorne Fountain: is it important?
- Shriners: history is all over
- Temple on Broad Street
- Marian Anderson
- Madison Square/St. Albans
- Father Divine
- 1st black YMCA/Female Y
- Recreation Center
- Naval Home
- William DuBoise
- Historical Plaques: Add plaque to fountain

5. Green Space/Sustainable/Stormwater Management

- Green streets/rain gardens
- Bury power lines (1)
- PWD storm retention — funding available
- Street trees (3)
- Potential to allow businesses to discharge into retention under triangle
- Solar lighting options
- Permeable surfaces: sidewalks and streets
- Street garden along Grays Ferry from Bainbridge to South
- Trees can create a more intimate space
- Promote flower boxes
- Maintenance of public green spaces
- Outsource maintenance
- Friends committee
- Traffic bollards as barriers (TS: use bike racks!)
- Trash cans and recycling bins
- Fresh water source
- Planters
- Use historical elements and materials from demolished buildings for sculptures or landscaping triangles
- Different pavers on corners

6. Linkages

- Pedestrian flow
- Don't stop southbound flow on 24th
- Redirect 24th Street one-way north
- To South Street and Lombard Street: Important (?)
- To parking around South Street and down Grays Ferry
 - Close Grays Ferry South Street to Bainbridge (with restricted access for businesses)
 - Reverse traffic on 24th Street to connect Grays Ferry to South Street / Reduce Bainbridge Traffic
 - Contra-flow bike lane on Grays Ferry from Bainbridge to South
 - Improve pedestrian crossings
 - Raised crossing
 - Curb bump-outs
 - 23rd & Bainbridge must be improved



7. Economic Development

- Businesses should get what they need to stay in business
- More shops/stores
- Parking needed to encourage customers and businesses
- Metered parking
- No parking at night
- Better transit
- Destination marketing
- More #12 and #7 buses, Lucy Loop, Penn Bus and private buses to market this corridor
- Welcome signage to GF shopping center
- Open 25th from Bainbridge to South
- Bank with ATM needed in neighborhood
- Types of businesses
 - Banks/ATMs (3)
 - Shops: small, independent business owners like Spool/Loop
 - Don't compete with what is currently close by
 - No chain drug store
 - Ice cream
 - More bars, restaurants, coffee shops
 - Expand Ants Pants
 - MORE
 - Post office
 - Pharmacy
 - Restaurants
 - Markets (produce, Mom & Pop)
- Better infrastructure
 - Lighting
 - Pedestrian friendly
 - Safety
 - Parking facilities (high turnaround) (TS: metered parking)
 - Tax incentives
 - Simplify local tax code
 - Trees and green space
 - Clean up litter
 - Clean up blight, empty lots
 - Vegetative wall along Naval Square
 - Trees along GF/planters
 - Physical continuity: Have parks bracket Grays Ferry
 - Metered parking / residential parking permits
 - Loading zone
- Problems getting through zoning
- Model after Baltimore Avenue
- More recreational
- SAFETY for businesses and people on the street
- Better sense of community fosters economic development
- Any and all!
 - How to attract?
 - More retail space
 - Need competition and mix
- Close Grays Ferry for buses on St. (?)
- Dollar Days for Bridge opening

8. General Ideas

- Close long leg of big triangle
- Close 24th Street leg of “southern” (medium) triangle
- Leave drivable area on large triangle for deliveries; include benches
- Create identity name: Something catchy that relates to history
- Create more loop-arounds for vehicles
- Reverse 24th from Bainbridge to South
- Bigger “safe spot” at little triangle

9. Map

- Two-way traffic on Grays Ferry
- Make Grays Ferry between South and Bainbridge all-pedestrian zone (and/or bus only)
- Public art in middle of triangle
- Improve pedestrian traffic at southern triangle
- Park area — public space at both triangles
- Two-way on Grays Ferry?
- 2300 block of Bainbridge running westbound?

10. Parking

- Permit parking for residents
- Cars may decline with rise in price of gas
- People park here for days/months to go to airport (???)
- Parking will only get worse
- No more garages on street!
- Improve bikes/bicycling — fewer cars!
- Too many live in neighborhood
- Streets with no parking
- Cars parked on triangle
- Sidewalk bumps seem dangerous
- Add pavement that slows down traffic (cobblestones)
- Respect handicapped spaces/need more handicapped spaces
- GF/South Street: make triangle public space

11. Miscellaneous

- Parking is #1 priority
- Friends of the Triangles group comprised of residents who wish to maintain the triangles