



Interviews, Focus Groups, and Town Hall Summary Report

To inform the Fort DuPont Redevelopment & Preservation Corporation 2023 Strategic Plan
May 25, 2023

Executive Summary

DANA conducted interviews, focus groups, and facilitated a town hall between March and May, 2023. Nearly fifty people comprised of residents of Delaware City and in the Fort Dupont Redevelopment area, elected and appointed state and local officials, and board members. The nature of the questions were derived from meetings with the Executive Director, organizational documents, and the strategic planning committee of the board of directors.

Fort Dupont Redevelopment and Preservation Corporation (FDRP) Reputation

Overall, there is a common understanding that FDRP is in the business of cleaning up the FDRP property to redevelop it for Delaware City. There is an appreciation for the interest in creating outdoor amenities, trails, parks, as well as more residential and commercial properties. There is a unified value around the preservation and repurposing of the historic properties and the parade field.

Though many identify FDRP as the organization that is redeveloping/repurposing the Fort Dupont area, there is an attitudinal difference between those who work closely with FDRP and leadership (such as the board) and those who are not part of the “inner circle”, which for this report will be called the community. Those who have inside knowledge understand the nuances of partnerships, challenges with previous leadership, and how decisions are made. They see the progress Tim has made with community relations, and in engaging others in the planning process. They are pleased with the property developments to date, and excited about future plans for restoration of the Chapel and Theatre.

The community also is excited about the proposition in renovated Chapel and Theatre, but they don't have the insights on how the plans are materializing. For them, it is not clear who makes the decisions (or responsible) for how FDRP is redeveloped/ repurposed. Promises were made, but not kept as it relates to the master plan. Individuals who bought property were given commitments for amenities that have not materialized or took much longer to complete. There is an acknowledgement that multiple entities and decision-makers are involved in the planning and execution of FDRP work. The previous Executive Director seemed to operate in a more unilateral fashion. The new Executive Director has created open lines of communication, of which there is appreciation.

In the general Town Hall session, community members do not know who is on the board. A perception is that the board is only comprised of appointed officials and non-residents. There is a concern that the

decisions that will impact their lives and quality of life are being made by people who do not live in Delaware City or will have to live with the consequences of those decisions. All of this has led to questions in regards to what areas can the community can trust FDRP to do.

Planning Implications: Revisit FDRP mission statement (its purpose), define a vision, articulate values and publicize them.

Desired Outcomes:

Questions regarding what the future looks like and how individuals will experience Fort Dupont identified these themes:

- Ability to engage with and enjoy nature & the natural environment
- Historic buildings are restored and are in productive use
- Access to and view of the water
- Residents can easily get to and from Fort Dupont and downtown Delaware City
- Fort Dupont's redevelopment is an attraction for new residents and businesses
- Fort Dupont Residents feel a part of Delaware City – overall community-feel is retained
- Decisions about the Fort Dupont property are made with the residents' needs in mind
- Transparent decision-making and open communication with FDRP Board and Community
- Fort Dupont has the financial resources necessary to remain sustainable

Planning Implications: Identify the three to four outcomes for the next five years that will be the focus for the plan strategies and resource allocation.

Priorities for Consideration:

There were common priorities that emerged.

- Finish what has already been started
- Create open/honest two-way communication
- Focus on uniting the community (not Delaware City vs Fort Dupont)
- Theatre & Chapel Restoration
- Commercial uses: Farmers market/ health clinic/restaurants
- Walking trails/other outdoor amenities
- Address the ability to easily connect between Delaware City proper and Fort Dupont
- Address access to the water (came up in the Town Hall)
- Stabilize deteriorating buildings until ready to work on them

Planning Implications: For each outcome what one to two strategies will be the priority that FDRP can complete within the plan time horizon of five years.

Next Steps: Deploy a community survey that helps to prioritize the potential outcomes and strategies.

Fort Dupont Redevelopment and Preservation Corporation Strategic Plan Interview Findings and Observations

PROCESS

From March 16, 2023, through May 20, 2023, fifteen interviews were conducted with sixteen individuals. The purpose was to seek their comments and insights into the progress of Fort Dupont Redevelopment and Preservation Corporation (FDRP), their hopes for the future of Fort Dupont (FDP), and the relationship between Fort Dupont residents and the residents of the rest of Delaware City (DC). Potential interviewees were provided by FDRP and supplemented by suggestions from other interviewees. Several did not respond to requests for interviews. Interviews were concluded with six board members, four legislators, the mayor of Delaware City, two residents of Fort Dupont and three residents of Delaware City (not FD). These individuals were selected as representative of various FDRP stakeholders. A complete list of interviewees follows this report.

Focus groups were held on May 4, 2023 and May 9, 2023. A total of six individuals participated, primarily from Fort Dupont. The responses of these individuals are aggregated to avoid the potential of identifying specific individuals.

GENERAL FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

Mission (Interviews)

- Most interviewees know the mission, but do not necessarily agree on what *Preservation and Development* means, or which should take precedence

Why Bought in Fort Dupont (Focus Groups)

- Close to family
- Friendly neighborhood
- Access to water, hiking, recreation
- Bought into the master plan
- Small town feel

Leadership Change (Interviews)

- Universal acknowledgement of better communication with new leadership
- More Fort Dupont residents are attending meetings
- Tim Slavin is more open and more visible
- Disagreements remain but less rancor
- Change in board membership is positive

Hopes for Future (Interviews)

- FDP and Delaware City residents become one
 - Residents don't allow frustrations of past to hinder going forward
 - Historical buildings renovated and in use (Theatre, Old church)
- Recreational areas in use
 - Walking trail w/dike to prevent water overflow

- More commercial activity
- Plan locked down for the marina
- Campground built
- Organizational development
 - Appropriate staffing
 - Succession plan for Executive Director
- Fort Dupont gets more amenities; promised amenities are delivered
 - Mail delivery
 - Grocery store/corner grocery store
 - Urgent care or other healthcare center
 - Potholes fixed

Hopes for Future (*Focus Groups*)

- Finish what has been started
- More opportunities for socializing and building community
- Recreational areas
 - Walking trails
 - Dog park
 - Benches
 - Gazebo
 - Playground
 - Public bathrooms on trails
- Chapel
 - Enable community
 - Rental income
- Theater (both positive and negative comments)
- Amenities for use of all of Delaware City
 - Medical/health
 - Grocery/small market
 - Coffee shop
 - Boutique-type stores
- Utilities and services to houses
- Plan for attracting businesses
- More preservation
 - Leverage historic nature of area
- Community
 - More open-mindedness from community
 - More inclusion of community in the planning
- Avoid (or "won't happen")
 - Marina
 - Stacked condo plans
 - Hotel
 - Pedestrian bridge
 - Moving the waste treatment plant

Drivers of Success (Interviews & Focus Groups)

- Funding
 - Investment from state, developers, commercial enterprises
 - Philanthropic gifts
- Mitigate effects of negative vocal minority
 - A wide-reaching marketing and public relations campaign
 - Overcome frustration of Fort Dupont residents (bait & switch from master plan)
- Work with federal, state, and local governments
 - Someone to coordinate agencies to get things done
 - Decisions regarding waste plant, Branch Canal
- A capable professional staff and annual audit
 - Someone to coordinate the different agencies so things can get done.
 - Project manager
- A plan for attracting businesses
- Leverage the historic nature of the area

Values to Prioritize (Focus Groups)

- Nature
- Community
- Recreation
- Preservation of historic buildings

Board Should Consider (Interviews & Focus Groups)

- Keep the mission in mind; think big picture, not just individual pieces
- Make room at the table for residents of both Fort Dupont and the rest of Delaware City
- Leverage the energy of the residents; put residents on committees
- Make sure all Delaware City residents can take advantage of what is done in Fort Dupont
- Take into consideration the businesses already in Delaware City
- Look to economic diversity
- Consider the potential impacts of the economy and climate change
- Consider capacity of waste treatment plant with population increase
- Balance working with the community with getting things done; decisions have to be made.
- Have short term plans that include city approval
- Have long-term objectives for 5-10 years from now, and how to get there
- Consider how engaged the board will be, not rubber-stamp
- Include measures of success that can be used for the Executive's performance review

BOARD MEMBERS AND ELECTED OFFICIALS:

- Almost universally optimistic about the successes of FDRP
 - Housing, Receive positive feedback from residents
 - Some concern about effect of promised amenities not being delivered
- Believe change in leadership is creating a good relationship between residents of Fort Dupont and the rest of Delaware City
- Several challenges:
 - Prior director's lack of transparency and communication
 - Obstruction by Delaware City marina owner
 - Business owners fear competition
 - Insufficient professional staff to accomplish objectives

RESIDENTS OF BOTH FORT DUPONT AND THE REST OF DELAWARE CITY:

- Not as optimistic as board members and elected officials
- Consider relations between the two parts of the city to be "fragile and tentative"
 - Cited, and in some cases exhibited, lingering resentment of FDRP
 - Need for continued increased communication
 - Need to have meetings at times when more people can attend, or recorded so they can be seen by more residents
- Pointed to the unfulfilled promises of the master plan
 - Promises of the pedestrian bridge over the canal
 - New marina
 - Stalled discussions of removing the waste plan
- Disappointed almost no one on the FDRP board lives in Delaware City or Fort Dupont
 - Board comprised of political appointees
- Some recognition of successes
 - Drawing more attention to Fort Dupont as an entity
 - Removing the drug rehab building
 - Restoration of historic buildings and homes
- Challenges include:
 - Lack of agreement on what is to be done
 - "Contention and sabotage" of the plans
 - Marina
 - Pedestrian bridge.
 - Money
 - Difficulty getting commercial enterprises onto Fort Dupont - a grocery store, healthcare center

RESIDENTS OF FORT DUPONT:

- *"If nothing progresses, we won't be here in 5 years."*
- Sold the master plan but have not seen it materialize
- Some board members haven't visited and walked around Fort Dupont
- Maintenance is terrible; buildings with holes in roof and rain damaging them further

RESIDENTS OF THE REST OF DELAWARE CITY:

- Some resentment of potential competition
- Want FDRP to recognize Delaware City as a vibrant commercial area

DETAILED FINDINGS INTERVIEWS

Board

Mission

Board members are generally in agreement on the mission of FDRP, although a newer board member indicated that they are still trying to figure out what the mission is. One member talked about the evolution of the mission, moving from a macro point of view - turn the property into an asset for the state - to the more nuanced integration of the development activity on FDP with the character of Delaware City. All board members mentioned both preservation and development, although some focused more on one than the other.

Successes

Board members were universally optimistic about the successes of FDRP. All mentioned the housing developments. Several board members mentioned the positive feedback of Fort Dupont and Delaware City residents. They pointed to the increase in foot traffic on Fort Dupont, events being held on the property, the construction of the roundabout despite community pushback.

Challenges

All board members mentioned the prior director's lack of communication as a primary contributor to the challenges FDRP has experienced. Delaware City residents have lacked trust in FDRP based on lack of transparency and communication around decisions that were made, particularly regarding the RV park. The owner of the marina is fighting the plans for a marina in Fort Dupont, which has had the cascade effect of stalling discussion of the pedestrian bridge over the canal. Other business owners fear competition that might impact their businesses.

One board member stated that there are always challenges when more than one government entity has to work with other government entities, and here we have federal, state, and local governments involved, as well as FDRP.

Fort Dupont <-> Delaware City Relationship

Most board members perceive an improved relationship between residents of Fort Dupont and residents of the rest of Delaware City. However, it is still fragile. There is still a need for continued communication and transparency to combat the skepticism of Delaware City residents.

In the future, they would like to see the residents of Fort Dupont and the rest of Delaware City become one, a dilution of the idea that there is a northern part of the city and the southern part.

Board members hope that residents of Delaware City don't focus on their frustrations of the past and see the effects of the new tax base for Delaware City and the impact of 25-30 more families and local businesses and restaurants. They would like to see Delaware City residents be part of the development and enjoy the new amenities.

Impact of Leadership Change

The change in leadership has been positive. Board changes appear to have a positive effect, with one board member indicating the positive impact of having the Secretary of DNREC on the board.

Since Tim Slavin became Executive Director, there have been unsolicited positive comments about him, more openness, and more two-way conversations. Tim has been more visible, attending the council and mayor's meetings.

One result of the leadership change is having more Fort Dupont residents attending mayoral meetings and communication from the city to the Executive Director has "done a 180 from the previous director." This is in contrast to the previous director, who "*ran the place as if everything was in his power.*"

The Future

Board members were both philosophical and concrete in their hopes for the future. In five years, they would like to see the community go "this has turned out better than we thought." Driving by, people will see a vibrant community and the narrative will be past. They would like to see continued full transparency with public and private partners.

More concretely, they hope to see historical buildings renovated and in use: the movie theatre is complete with people coming to see a play or performance; the old church finished, with a small kitchen, and being used for small events; the recreation area complete; the walking trail completed and a dike to keep the water from overflowing it.

Board members hope to see more commercial activity at the fort; a plan locked down for the marina; the campground built.

Organizationally, they look for appropriate staff and a succession plan for the executive director.

In the next three years, board members hope to see progress on all the five-year goals. In addition to having 32 apartments completed, they hope to see resolution around contentious issues. Specifically, resolve the issues around the RV park, road construction and the marina, as well as figuring out what needs to be done and can be done regarding transfer of the Sandy Branch Canal.

Needed for Success

Board members mentioned several drivers necessary for success, with several contributing to each other.

Funding is needed both from investments and from the state, with builders pursuing additional investment and Delaware Prosperity partnerships bringing more business to the buildings. They need to build bridges with legislature and others who will provide financing to deliver on the vision. Consider how to find philanthropic investors who will fund some of the capital improvements.

They need to lay to rest and move on from lingering controversies, such as the campground area, as well as mitigate the effect of the vocal minority that doesn't want any change.

Both within the city and externally, FDRP needs a wide-reaching marketing campaign about Fort Dupont, Delaware City, the housing developments, and commercial properties, including social media, messaging and leaders talking about it. The suggestion was made to harness the churches as ambassadors.

Internally, FDRP needs a capable professional staff, either employees or contractors, as well as to continue to institute internal controls with an audit every year.

Externally, FDRP needs to work with the government. This includes working with state and federal agencies to have a final conclusion to the question of the canal, as well as working with the city to gain approvals for plans.

Board Should Consider

Board members spoke both philosophically and specifically when asked what the board should consider when crafting a strategic plan.

They want to remind themselves that everyone's intentions are good. They want to consider the big picture, not just individual pieces, and take into account that this is a legacy area, impacted by history, and the potential impacts of climate change. Include the residents of both Fort Dupont residents and residents of the rest of Delaware City, making room at the table for them, asking what they want, and finding ways to leverage their energy.

The board should strike a balance between working with the community and getting things done. Communication is important but decisions have to be made.

The strategic plan should have short term plans that include city approval, and long-term objectives of where FDRP should be 5-10 years from now and how to get there.

When building the plan, the board should consider how they feel things have progressed and how they should consider operating together. The board should consider how engaged they will be, and not rubber-stamp decisions of the executive.

The plan should have measures of success that the board can use for the Executive's performance review, tied back to the strategic plan.

Mayor and Legislators

Mission

All of the elected officials interviewed talked about preservation and rehabilitation of Fort Dupont as part of the mission. Some used the phrase "quality of life," when talking about revitalizing the property, whether creating amenities or preservation of the natural areas. Two were focused on delivering exactly what was promised: economic development and to build out Fort Dupont as part of Delaware City. Two specifically mentioned the mandate to remove the liability of an unproductive property from the state.

Successes

Legislators and the mayor all talked about the homes that were built and are now occupied as successes, selling, and delivering a top quality product. More recently, they pointed to community engagement since Tim Slavin took over.

Challenges

The primary challenges mentioned by legislators and the mayor were lack of communication which led to mistrust. Displeased individuals were few but vocal, and the previous director exacerbated the mistrust. Both the legislators and the mayor pointed out that with any growth and development you see a contingent that wants to see growth and those who do not. The negative spin and publicity affected both others in Delaware City and those who moved into Fort Dupont.

A second challenge was funding, specifically the need for state investment to build homes, which would then be sold so Fort Dupont to become self-sustaining.

A third challenge was insufficient professional staff to allow FDRP to accomplish its objectives.

Fort Dupont <-> Delaware City Relationship

Legislators and the mayor had little to say about the current relationship between Fort Dupont and the rest of Delaware City. One said they didn't think there was ever a problem. Another said that Delaware City doesn't care about Fort Dupont; the town officials decided it needed to grow in order to provide services and that was more important than the need to maintain the small town feel.

They hope that in the future, there will be much more community involvement. Delaware City will be one big community, with kids using the facilities on both sides and families frequenting the restaurants on both sides.

Impact of Leadership Change

All the officials said that the change in executive leadership has been positive "like night and day." Some stated that the previous director served a purpose, was right on target, but didn't recognize the need to get buy-in and communicate. This contributed to the need to make the changes, in both executive leadership and the board.

FDRP is now trying to make up for lost ground, with more communication and making efforts to strengthen governance of the board and the corporation.

The Future

Looking five years into the future, elected officials would like to see a high quality of life, where everyone feels part of the city. They'd like to see that FDRP has made good on the promises to the people who have decided to invest. To have a marina there, full occupancy, mixed income and affordable housing, a revitalized theatre, people walking in the state park.

Short-term, they look for more housing developed, the theatre completed, the green used, more commercial development. Other amenities have been developed. They would also like people to understand that the plan is a living document.

Needed for Success

Elected officials were succinct when it came to drivers of success. They did not see much in the way of roadblocks other than "the plant." They want to make sure funding and communications continue, working together on updating Delaware City codes to account for Fort Dupont development. They want FDRP to build on success.

One legislator frequently mentioned insufficient professional staff, stating that Tim needed help to manage all the objectives.

Board Should Consider

In addition to what they would like to see for the future of Fort Dupont, elected officials would like the board to respect the design work of the community from 10 years ago. They want the board to be sensitive to the traffic implications and influx of people that would result from the RV park and new marina, as well as from the general growth of the area.

Recognizing the need for continued funding, they want the board to strategically work on getting what they need from the state, and continue working with DNREC and other state agencies.

There is a need to get residents involved, from the entirety of Delaware City.

Remember that the plan is a living document; circumstances change.

Interviews with Fort Dupont and Delaware City Residents

Residents of Fort Dupont and the rest of Delaware City had mixed opinions of FDRP.

All residents seemed to understand the FDRP mission, but have differing opinions of the balance between development and preservation. All seemed to believe the mission has been derailed in some way, with some believing housing taking priority and others pointing to the lack of development of amenities and building restoration.

A resident of Fort Dupont expressed great dissatisfaction with how the master plan is progressing, the lack of amenities, and lack of maintenance for the grounds and buildings. When they purchased their home, they were promised retail, shops, marina, hotel, but they haven't seen any of that. They said that if things did not improve in five years, they would leave. Particular examples were buildings slated for restoration that had rain coming through the roof, further damaging the building, and no tarp was laid to cover the hole; a path behind the homes that was supposed to be finished, along with the embankment into the canal, which has sinkholes; stripped vegetation from the canal, which will cause erosion.

Another resident of Fort Dupont was much more positive but acknowledged that there is a lot of grumbling. They pointed to a split between those who purchased them for the small town feel and history, and those that purchased homes for the promised amenities.

Delaware City residents also voiced disappointment with FDRP, although one understood that it takes time and the funds to be generated by the residences. They point to the lack of the pedestrian bridge, hotel and marina, and the unfulfilled promise of removing the sewer treatment plant.

Regarding the relationship between Fort Dupont residents and the rest of Delaware City, there was a split between those who thought they were good and those who believe there is little being done to bring the two groups together.

Both Fort Dupont and residents of the rest of Delaware City are concerned that so many FDRP board members are political appointees who are not from the area and don't know the history or what is happening there. They have concerns that discussion of the pedestrian bridge across the canal has stalled, with several pointing to hidden agendas.

There is some recognition of FDRP successes, including drawing more attention to Fort Dupont as an entity, removing the drug rehab building, bringing back historic buildings and home restoration.

Residents were fairly consistent in identifying challenges, including lack of agreement on what is to be done. One individual used the phrase "contention and sabotage" of the plans, particularly in reference to the issue of the marina and pedestrian bridge.

Mentioned by most residents was the challenge of money. One Fort Dupont resident believes that FDRP is not getting money from the state for the work to be done, they're looking for developers. This individual believes there is only one staff person besides the Director.

Delaware City residents point to the challenge of trying to get commercial enterprises down to Fort Dupont - a grocery store, healthcare center.

According to the residents, the relationship between Fort Dupont and the rest of Delaware City is fragile and tentative. Without the pedestrian bridge, it is hard for everyone to go back and forth between the two. The phrase "kind of an us and them relationship," with a Fort Dupont resident stating that they had the sense that Delaware City residents didn't want them there. Alternatively, a Delaware City resident said that "Fort Dupont residents feel like they have their own separate community." They hope that the future will bring greater integration.

The change in leadership is primarily viewed as positive, although there are some concerns. They would like to see more Delaware City residents, including Fort Dupont residents, on the board. One individual is concerned that Tim Slavin doesn't have the energy and vision of the previous director. All but one resident commented on better communications, although one said, "Tim doesn't send out the meeting notices the way Jeff did."

Communication is important to all respondents. They want to know about the meetings, have the Zoom meetings recorded so they can view them. Even when open to the public, meetings are first thing in the morning, making it difficult for people to attend. Use the Facebook page and the Delaware City website to promote meetings and communicate.

There is hope for the future amongst most of the residents. They are looking for all the buildings to be restored, some restaurants, mail delivery, urgent care center, small grocery, trail. They want to see a whole prototype of what the entire city will look like, so people can focus on the whole project and less on the specifics of an individual part of the project. Programming to honor the children who were housed in Gov. Bacon Building. Other residents are more pessimistic, that there will only be more housing, townhomes, more population. They are not convinced the marina will come to fruition.

Near term, residents hope the potholes will be fixed and events that will draw people from both sides of the canal. They want to see the Gov. Bacon and Painter buildings fixed and generating revenue. They want the connector across the canal done, or at least in progress.

Asked what it would take to accomplish these things, the advice was to keep building relationships between the two parts of Delaware City and to think outside the box in order to accomplish the connector.

Advice to the board: Keep the mission in mind, see history as a prelude to the future. Consider the ONE CITY concept, making sure that the rest of Delaware City can take advantage of whatever is done in Fort Dupont. Take into consideration the businesses already in Delaware City. Look to economic diversity, potentially a solar array.

DETAILED FINDINGS: FOCUS GROUPS

The responses of the participants are aggregated to avoid potentially identifying specific individuals.

What has FDRP done well/Successes of FDRP?

- Rehab of homes
- Preservation of old buildings
- Think it has done a good job on a good scale
- Hopes it will continue in the future, chapel, and theater
- Creation of the garden
- A fall festival
- Likes the strategic planning process
- Likes the improved communication

Why are people coming to Fort Dupont?

- Close to family
- Didn't want 55 or over community
- Neighborhood is close, people are friendly, the small town feel
- People come from all over the United States, diverse mix of ages
- Quiet, out of the way, everyone knows each other
- New community, not already established, easy to meet people
- Access to water, hiking, recreation
- Places to walk
- No overbearing Homeowners Association
 - Want to be able to do what they want with their property, few covenants
- Some people came because of the master plan – marina, bridge, hotel...

What would you like to see more of?

- More open mindedness from others in community
- Utilities and services to houses – slow to happen
- More inclusion of the community – Fort Dupont residents want to be part of Delaware City, not separate
- More work on walking trails
- More work to fix up older buildings in Fort Dupont and Delaware City
- Less scattered approach to improvements
 - Have started many good projects, but few are finished
- More ways to bring the community together
- Community gathering area(s); more social opportunities
 - Completion of the chapel for the community to use (bingo, card games)
 - Gazebo,
 - Picnic tables outside
 - Dog park
 - Natural amphitheater

What does the future look like?

- Like does now, but with more – more preservation, walking trails, theater with events
- Things finished before starting something else
- Not marina – not a big thing
- Farmers’ Market
- More basic amenities, not just for Delaware City or Fort Dupont but the whole town
- Repurposed buildings for use of surrounding communities – where there is currently a “desert”
 - Groceries
 - Urgent care
 - Boutique type stores.
- Businesses in larger buildings
- More like Chesapeake City (but not a goal)
- Chapel
- Anything to draw people out Dog park
 - Park benches
 - Gazebo
 - Playground
 - Natural amphitheater
- Trails, walking path
- Residents would like to see more things happening (e.g., whippet races), music

Does Delaware City feel like one city? How is the relationship between Fort Dupont residents and the rest of Delaware City?

- Hard to answer, there are hardliners who aren’t happy, varied opinions
- There is animosity, they don’t want development, “one side of the canal vs the other.”
- Improving; it is feeling more like they are
- Fort Dupont residents walking into town is important, meeting people, Post Office is important
- Several Fort Dupont residents are involved in town issues and like to buy local
 - Fort Dupont resident brought back Delaware City Day, some Fort Dupont residents have joined committees
- Some long-time residents have acknowledged that Fort Dupont residents are reinvigorating the town
- Many residents of Delaware City have been here for generations and are afraid of the unknown
- No one wants it to turn into Middletown (which Fort Dupont residents don’t want either)
- Some Delaware City residents are afraid that apartments, etc. will become “slums”
- Grassdale pushed Delaware City and Fort Dupont into competing teams, has improved due to communication
- Grassdale left a sour taste in everyone’s mouth; for the Delaware City residents.
 - Remember when prior owner of Grassdale was trying to upgrade it but not allowed so he sold
 - Now FDRP sold to someone who is upgrading it and the city residents are asking why prior owner couldn't
- Everyone needs to work together

What is the #1 Priority?

- It needs to be a destination
- Chapel can generate revenue
- Theater
- Dog Park
- Bike path
- Coffee shops, other businesses, pop up,
- Public bathrooms for people to use
- Walking path – right now it's falling into the canal, need to repair it
- Pocket park utilized
- Tie up existing loose ends – Canal - need to push government
 - Neither Delaware City nor Fort Dupont wants to take it over
- DNREC do more with Fort Dupont – historical walks, etc.
- Need data to identify what makes the most sense – what is realistic, what can be supported, what is the cost

What balance would you like to see among residential, commercial, cultural, etc.?

- Coffee shop
- Convenience store/market
 - It's a 20 minute drive to get anything,
- Need to have population to support these things, there needs to be a reason for people to come here – not sure what that will be.
- Bacon as YMCA
- No marina, no hotel, no restaurant
- Look to Newark and what they have done with the downtown area

What are the roadblocks?

- Have to get consensus
- Knows some are unhappy, not everyone will like everything
- Overcoming frustration
 - Some Fort Dupont residents feel it was a “bait and switch”
 - Promises broken on both sides
- Fears that the stacked condo plans will drive a wedge between the Delaware City and Fort Dupont and between Fort Dupont residents
 - Much lower cost, very dense
 - Will change nature of area and impact natural habitat
 - Block river views
 - Not included in original plans, violates covenants on land
 - Better places on property to build condos
 - Not clear if it's a done deal
- Funding
 - Once land is sold the income is gone
 - No recurring revenue source to do other projects
- Increased population may overwhelm the wastewater treatment plant
- Flood plain (renovating buildings)

- The mix of government agencies that have control over different aspects of the property
 - DNREC, Army Corp, State, County, City
- Fort Dupont residents don't know who is in charge of what. Maintenance, grounds, etc.

What are the values you are looking for?

- Community
- Recreation (biking, walking)
- Nature
- Preserve the historic buildings (what was here)

What can the corporation do to be successful?

- They need funds to do the work
 - State, county grants
 - Needs to be a revenue stream
- Someone to coordinate the different agencies so things can get done.
- Need a plan for attracting businesses
- Leverage the historic nature of the area

Other Comments

- Prior director lived on the property, knew the neighbors
- Tim has brought transparency, community together
- There is a lot of talking about things, but little gets done
- It gets busy on the weekends in the summer
- Pedestrian bridge – won't happen, too expensive, it needs to be retractable
- Wastewater treatment plant – too expensive to move it, not clear how much more it can handle based on the future building plans – may need to move or expand
- Stacked condos/townhouses
 - One resident on top one of the bottom and share middle (tall) and a double garage
 - They do have other stacked housing in D.C., so Planning Commission had to approve it
 - Historic Preservation Commission will put restrictions on it
 - Not historic in nature, inconsistent with historic nature
 - It will obstruct the view from everyone else
 - Not sufficient parking
- Bunkers could be used to house little markets
- Reference the downtown development plan for more information on what gaps exist in amenities for residents
- The Theater project seems expensive,

Suggestions for Town Hall Meeting and Survey Announcements

- Ask Dave Baylor for (or use) the emergency response list
- Does Tim or Janice have a comprehensive list of residents?
- Bert would put notice/link in the Fort Dupont Facebook page for FDRP
- Post a sign in Post Office for the meeting

INTERVIEWEES

<u>NAME</u>	<u>ASSOCIATION</u>
John McMahon	Board chair
Kurt Foreman	Board
Sec. Shawn Garvin	Board, DNREC
David Baylor	Board, Delaware City Manager
Ruth Ann Jones	Board
Courtney Stewart	Board
Bryan Short	Previous Chair, Former Legislator
Sen. Nicole Poore	Legislator Fort Dupont district
Rep. Melissa Minor Brown	Legislator Fort Dupont district
Rep. Valerie Longhurst	Former Legislator Fort Dupont district
Mayor Paul Johnson	Mayor of Delaware City
Billie Travalini	Delaware City resident (grew up on Fort Dupont property)
Dale Slotter	Delaware City resident
John Bucheit	Delaware City resident
Linda Naval	Fort Dupont resident
Mary Bricker Jenkins	Fort Dupont resident

FOCUS GROUP ATTENDEES

Roberta DeLeon	Fort Dupont resident
Dan Harlow	Fort Dupont resident
Arthur Turner	Fort Dupont resident
Rick Boisclair	Fort Dupont resident
Tim Konkus	Delaware City resident
Mark Wise	DNREC

Fort Dupont Redevelopment and Preservation Corporation Strategic Plan Town Hall Discussion Results

Approximately 25 individuals participated in the May 17, 2023 facilitated town hall meeting. Participants were seated at five tables and asked to discuss and respond to six questions, writing their summarized responses onto papers that were then collected. The results of these table discussions were relayed to the entire group for their reactions. A seventh question was asked of the entire group and their responses were recorded by the facilitators.

WHY DO YOU LIVE IN DELAWARE CITY?

Key points:

- Outdoors / Nature
- Close to / Access to water
- Historical / History [Family lives here for generations]
- Community:
- Small town feel / Friendly
- Safe - great for kids - family
- Welcoming

Table responses:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| -Historical homes | -Being close to water |
| -Advancement of river towns | -Safety in neighborhood |
| -Quiet | -Ability to build our own home in Ft Dupont |
| -Walkable | |
| -Small town | -Small town feel |
| -Access to airport / train | -Sense of community |
| -Great place to build democracy | -Being near water |
| -Access to water | -Outdoor activity |
| -Diverse / acceptance | -Great for kids - safe! |
| -Friendly people | -Diversity |
| -Beautiful / nature | -Historic / military feel / veteran friendly |
| | -Not congested / very little traffic / easy to get around |
| -We like it | |
| -Cheaper to live in | -Close to the water |
| -Friendly | -Close to work |
| -Very welcoming | -Liked the development |
| -History | -Wife born & raised here |
| | -Wanted children to be close to grandparents |

WHAT DOES THE FORT DUPONT PROPERTY LOOK LIKE IN 10 YEARS?

Key Points

- Restored buildings: Chapel, Theater
- Walking / Hiking / Biking trails
- Farmers Market / Grocery store
- Active waterfront: Marina, Restaurants, Brewery
- Connected to Delaware City - Ways to get to town more easily
- Spaces and activities to create a sense of community: activities, events, gatherings
- Delaware City as a destination
- Open spaces; Views of river and canal
- Energy efficient: solar array on undesirable property
- Diversity
- Places to swim

Table Responses

-No Home Owners Association
-Farmers market
-Theater (restored)
-General store
-Marina
-Brewery
-Biking / Hiking trails
-Historic restoration
-A destination
-More connected to downtown DE City

-More active waterfront
-Re-route boar traffic
-Farmers market
-Ample parking
-Restoration of buildings: Chapel, Movie theater, Px - Brew Pub
-Accessibility: all roads paved & safe sidewalks
-Revenue generating properties
-Outdoor concert pavillion
-Marina / hotel / shops
-Post Office on site

-Restore all buildings on site - History Walk
-Marina
-Maintain look & feel of military buildings
-Keep small town feel - not crowded with people & cars
-Bird watching, fishing, tennis, B-Ball, soccer, walking paths
-Better community use of chapel - kids games, after school programs
-Paved bike / walking trail
-Community events, e.g. Fall Fest, holiday celebrations, summer BBQ, regular calendar of events
-Preserve water views on canal & river
-How can bunkers be repurposed? Restaurant?
-Grocery store / farmers market
-Onsite Post Office or mail delivery

-Church (chapel?) on FDP completed
-One Delaware City
-Small local businesses
-Restore the older buildings
-Utilize theatre, Px, etc.

- Central gazebo / community space to build sense of community through spontaneous gathering
- Some form of cultural facility or art establishment
- Community, not a development
- Solar array on grounds
- Space for quiet contemplation of site's diverse past

- Integrated with larger trail network & expanded
- Destination - there's a reason for people to come
- Nice bathroom, parking, water fountain
- Restaurant scene like Chesapeake City
- Farmers market
- Finished chapel, theater, other amenities
- Meadowland

WHAT VALUES SHOULD GUIDE FDRP'S PLANNING AND DECISION-MAKING?

Key Points

- Community - One Town
- Transparency / Communication
- Diversity
- Open-minded
- Respect for history
- Stewardship of land, buildings, environment
- Honesty
- Inclusion of residents in decision-making

Table Responses

- Sense of community
- Honor the past - Buildings & people
- Transparency / Good communication
- Diversity
- A community focused on fair justice for all
- Good stewardship of the land
- Receptiveness to community voices/ideas & process for input
- Community included in decision-making

- Military core values: honor, integrity, service before self
- Keep residential community feel - small town - don't turn us into Middletown or Wilmington
- Respect the history of Fort Dupont - balance with modernization

- Transparency - community input on future decisions

- Communication
- Honesty
- Transparency
- Inclusion
- Preservation of nature and history
- Passion for the Fort Dupont community

- Inclusiveness
- Community (neighborhood & as a town)
- Small town feel
- Preservation (of buildings): new stores in historic buildings
- Uniqueness

-Preserve the history
-Strive for one community: not just the city & the Fort Dupont

-Community involvement in decisions & transparency
-More involvement with the community
-Respect for environment

HOW DO YOU ANTICIPATE EXPERIENCING THE FORT DUPONT PROPERTY?

Key Points

- Shopping
- Going to community events & concerts, festivals, art shows, parties
- Being outdoors: walking, hiking, fishing, biking, pickleball, tennis, boating, sitting, picnics, walking on the promenade, contemplating
- History programs / history walk
- Eating, Dining, Eating out
- Nature watching, bird watching
- Living here
- Attending plays at the theatre

Table responses

-Living here
-Car show
-Boating
-Hiking/Biking
-Using amenities (playground, courts, etc)
-Shopping
-Restaurants
-Live entertainment
-Bird watching
-Fishing
-Community events / historic events

-Parties @ community center
-Walking / hiking / biking
-Concerts
-Eat/Drink @ the brew pub
-Attending movies
-Dining
-Tennis / Basketball / Volleyball / other sports
-Walking @ a dog park

-Nature watching
-Swimming

-Breakfast place to hang out
-Bird watching
-Walking the dog
-Biking
-Community events
-Pickleball
-Shopping & commissary
-Farmers market
-Strolling the promenade
-Sitting in contemplative space
-Enjoying a fishing pier (fishing & boat watching)
-Monthly history / cultural programs

- Community gathering to bring together Ft. Dupont & city people
- Walking along the promenade
- Spending time on the Waterfront: Dinner, shopping etc. (mini-Riverwalk)
- Attending art show @ an Art Co-0-
- Community picnic @ the Fairgrounds
- Spending time @ the park

- Water sports - boating
- Outdoor sports - pickleball, basketball, tennis, walking, biking
- Open space for outdoor dining; brewery, restaurant, coffee shop/bakery
- History trail to celebrate the history of Fort Dupont
- Farmers market
- Water taxi between Delaware City & Fort Dupont
- Restaurant on the water - able to pull boat up to the dock
- Theater movie night & plays / community live theater

-Live entertainment - festivals

WHAT SHOULD BE THE FIRST FIVE THINGS THAT FDRP DOES?

Key Points

- Finish projects already started [4]
- Pave promenade [4]
- Renovate chapel [2]
- Funding/revenue to do projects [2]
- Food & drink [2]
- Groceries [2]
- Restorations [2]
 - all buildings; theater
- Community amenities / recreation [2]
- Stabilize buildings needing repair so they're not further damaged, e.g., cover roofs with tarps so rain does not further damage them
- Dog park
- Water Access
- Bacon Memorial
- Community input in decision-making
- Canal repair
- Marina district

Table Responses

- Building restoration - ALL buildings on Fort Dupont
- Pave Promenade & Old Elm

- Grocery store / Farmers market / Community co-op
- Revenue generating strategy to fund restoration, for example:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>History trail / tour (school field trips)
 Fort Dupont merchandise
 Food truck festival
 Winter Wonderland</p> <p>-Stabilize what's there & complete what's started
 -Complete renovation of church
 -Complete promenade
 -Renovate theatre
 -Restaurant
 -Finish what was started, such as:
 Bio basins / Canal revetment/
 Promenade w/benches
 -Dog Park
 -Create water access</p> | <p>-Allow residents to participate fully in decisions
 -Planning toward Gov. Bacon Memorial</p> <p>-Amenities for community residents
 -Finish projects already started
 -Complete chapel as a community center
 -Brew pub
 -Promenade</p> <p>-Finish what's been started
 -Canal repair
 -Marina district (Marina/shops)
 -Find investors for existing buildings
 -Community recreation facilities</p> |
|--|---|

IN WHAT WAY WOULD YOU LIKE TO HELP FDRP IN REACHING THE VISION?

Key Points

- Come to meetings
- Serve on committees
- Be involved on FDRP Board
- Invest in small businesses
- Promote events / Volunteer for events
- Coordinate farmers market
- Generate ideas for revenue
- Participate in decision-making
- Lead workshops @ theater
- Communicate better
- Participate in Friends of Fort Dupont
- Research history / support museum
- Help develop the Meadows

Table Responses

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>-Be on committees such as Comprehensive Planning & Architectural Review
 -Continual Community meetings to help with public awareness and resident involvements</p> | <p>-Continue to be engaged with residents of DE City & FDRP Board
 -Invest in small business in town
 -Find common ground within community
 -Come up with revenue generating ideas</p> |
|---|--|

- Serve on planning/executing committees
- Promote events on Facebook; marketing on social media
- Volunteer for events such as restoration projects
- Project management for community projects
- Coordinate farmers market
- Volunteer to work community events like Easter Egg Hunt, hay rides, etc.

- Participate in decision-making
- Help Larry develop Meadows
- Start garden club
- R-research history of site / support museum or display
- Lead workshops at theatre
- Participate in Friends of Fort Dupont

- Come to meetings, Mayor & Council
- Better communication from all parties concerned

WHAT GUIDANCE WOULD YOU LIKE TO GIVE THE FDRP BOARD OF DIRECTORS AS THEY DEVELOP THE PLAN?

- Ways of communicating beyond Facebook
- Board members come to Fort Dupont
- Ways of communicating what they decided and how resident ideas have been used
- They need to listen -- give the residents feedback about why or why not their ideas have been included, how they're progressing
- Need someone who can push things through
 - Coordinate all the government and other entities
 - Project management / project manager
- Advocacy so values are maintained
 - State to make sure they support projects and meet goals
- Give residents status updates on projects
- Residents participate on the strategic planning committee