

Q&A: The Bellwether District Public Meeting – June 17, 2025

Below is a compilation of questions received and answers provided during The Bellwether District's virtual community meeting held on Tuesday, June 17 at 6:00 PM ET. During the meeting, The Bellwether District team provided updates on development, environmental remediation, and community and workforce related efforts.

Note: Questions are transcribed directly as asked.

Q1: Surrounding neighborhoods already experience above average air pollution and asthma rates. The Bellwether District's plans could cause many diesel trucks to introduce more air pollution into overburdened communities. How does the Bellwether district plan to address this? Will electric vehicles be mandated or what other protections can be in place for already vulnerable neighborhoods nearby?

We acknowledge the former refinery's impact on surrounding neighborhoods. First and importantly, the City of Philadelphia's Office of Sustainability reported that the refinery's closure and the removal of its infrastructure resulted in a 16% drop in Philadelphia's overall carbon emissions.

Second, our team is investing in infrastructure aimed at reducing carbon footprint. While Electric Vehicles (EV) will not be mandated, The Bellwether District is being built with EV-ready infrastructure. Our buildings will all be LEED-certifiable and solar-ready, and we anticipate a large percentage of our rooftops—potentially up to 6 million square feet—will be outfitted with solar panels. We are also implementing other sustainability-focused strategies. All new streets will meet the City's "complete streets" standard, with multimodal infrastructure including dedicated bike and pedestrian lanes on the north campus, and shared lanes on the south campus. We are also collaborating with SEPTA to enhance existing bus service to the site and explore opportunities for expanded transit connections, all of which is meant to encourage alternative transportation options for commuters and visitors.

Lastly, we anticipated 10,000 new trees will be planted onsite. South and Southwest Philadelphia have some of the lowest tree canopy coverage in the City, so these efforts will help reduce the urban heat island effect. We're also supporting offsite efforts like our tree planting partnership with Bartram's Garden.

Q2: What construction companies are you using for building?

Our first building is being constructed by Clayco and Perryman Construction. Our second building is being constructed by ARCO Design/Build. We have not yet selected a general contractor for the Innovation Campus.

Q3: I think a light rail loop along Snyder and Oregon Avenues would be a great idea to get people to the Bellwether District and Delaware River shipping terminals and allow transfers to the Broad Street subway. Are you petitioning SEPTA and the City for rail transit improvements to the Bellwether District?

We are actively working with the City, SEPTA, and various agencies to bring transit access to the site. So far, our efforts have focused on enhancing the bus network. In the near-term, we are upgrading existing bus stops and extending current routes, while also exploring the addition of new bus routes as the site continues to be developed.

We have also been working with the City and SEPTA to explore long-term transit options, including the potential for rail.

Q4: How has local hiring been going? Do you have a percentage of the total workforce?

We have substantial economic inclusion goals for the project to ensure equitable contracting and hiring throughout its duration. This includes clear workforce development targets: our goal is for 50% of construction job opportunities to go to local Philadelphians—specifically those with a 191 zip code—and for 50% of those opportunities to go to people of color. We plan to provide a progress update on these goals at one of our meetings this fall.

As you can imagine, this is a major area of focus for our team. We maintain ongoing engagement with our general contractor partners to ensure they are meeting these inclusion goals on our behalf. We also have a number of workforce development initiatives focused on both construction and future permanent jobs, to ensure the opportunities we are creating benefit local residents.

Q5: Have students already been chosen for the July internships? Just asking for advertising purposes in our community newsletter this Sunday.

Yes, students have already been selected for our summer 2025 internship positions. We engage with students year-round and would be happy to connect with any local non-profit or school partners to advertise future opportunities.

Q6: It was previously mentioned that six million square feet of roofs and structural load for solar has been included in the design and build of the roof. What is the process to be vetted as a solar vendor?

We encourage you to visit thebellwetherdistrict.com and complete our “contact us” form. Once submitted, all interested firms will be added to our vendor database and considered for future work.