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**Section VII**  
**Obtaining Local**  
**Commitment for the City**  
**of Watervliet LWRP**

# Obtaining Local Commitment for the City of Watervliet LWRP

## *Introduction*

The procedures and methods outlined here were used to obtain local support, consensus, and commitment to the City of Watervliet's Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) among local organizations, public agencies, and the general public, and to ensure adequate and timely public participation in the preparation of the LWRP. Given the nature and impact of the program and the importance of a local consensus and commitment, every effort was made to ensure active participation in the LWRP preparation process. The process of preparing the LWRP presented a tremendous opportunity for the City to involve its residents in the task of preparing for the future; something many communities do without much input from their residents. The Watervliet Waterfront Advisory Committee provided the opportunity for City residents to become involved in a process of discussing and deciding upon the City's future opportunities, priorities, projects, and resources that are worth protecting.

## *City of Watervliet Waterfront Advisory Committee*

Although the City had attempted to develop an LWRP during the 1980s that never came to fruition, the City, reinvigorated by a successful corridor study completed in 2003, in early 2004, decided to reinitiate the LWRP process and focus once more on identifying both a vision for its waterfront and the implementation strategies necessary to achieve that vision.

The 2004 - 2005 planning effort built upon the process that began in the 1980s. An LWRP Waterfront Advisory Committee was created in spring 2004 to guide development of the LWRP and oversee the City's planning process. The LWRP Waterfront Advisory Committee included members of the Watervliet residential and business communities that were appointed by the City's Mayor.

The LWRP Waterfront Advisory Committee held regular meetings at the City's Community Center during the course of the planning process. Every effort was made by the Committee to gain input from the residents of the City. All meetings were open to the public and were announced prior to the meeting date.

## *NYS DOS Consultation*

The City of Watervliet worked closely with the NYS Department of State's Division of Coastal Resources during the development of the Watervliet LWRP. Following the first two public workshops, a meeting was held with NYS DOS on July 17, 2004. As the City now

had an idea of what community residents wanted to see happen with the development of the LWRP, the City met with NYSDOS providing a sample set of policies and goals and a description of the proposed activities that had been identified as desirable for the Watervliet waterfront. At this July 17 meeting, the City also provided NYSDOS with the revised boundary delineation and a list of the maps that would be developed in support of the LWRP.

A draft LWRP was submitted to NYSDOS in July 2004. Following an internal review period, the City met with NYSDOS on November 16, 2004 to discuss modifications that needed to be made to the LWRP. The City consulted with NYSDOS several times to ensure that the modifications, once made, fully addressed the concerns identified by NYSDOS. The revised LWRP was forwarded to NYSDOS during the week of January 24, 2005. Representatives from the City met with NYSDOS on February 8 and February 11, 2005 to go over technical revisions to the LWRP.

A final draft LWRP was submitted to NYSDOS in April 2005.

### *Public Participation*

The foundation of a good Plan is the incorporation of public input early and often throughout the Plan's development. In order to develop an action plan built on a foundation of common goals and objectives, obtaining feedback from the City's elected and appointed leaders, business owners, and residents is imperative. There were two approaches to community outreach during the City of Watervliet's planning process: public workshops and stakeholder interviews.

To support the process, several public visioning meetings were held during the spring and summer of 2004. Advertised via flyers at fraternal organizations, nonprofits, and public buildings including City Hall and the Community Center, and via the local Watervliet television channel WVLT, Channel 17, each of the meetings was designed to solicit input from the public on specific issues. The intent behind the first public meeting, held on June 17, was to identify the Watervliet waterfront area's strengths and weaknesses. The focus of the second public meeting, held on July 7, 2004, was to identify possible opportunities to improve the waterfront area. The final draft plan was presented to the public at a third public meeting, held on July 29.

### *Asset and Liability Workshop*

The first public workshop was held on June 17, 2004. This workshop was designed to solicit feedback from participants on the **assets and liabilities** associated with the City's waterfront area. Participants were also asked to discuss what they felt the coastal zone boundary should be. Following a presentation that illustrated several aspects of the City's existing demographic and economic profile, as well as the City's riverfront history, meeting attendees were asked to break into groups to identify the City's assets and liabilities. Participants were also asked to consider identified liabilities or problems as well as identified assets as opportunities for improvement. Everyone was then asked to rank these issues in importance.

Workshop participants identified the City's Hudson Shores Park as its number one resource in the waterfront. The City's commercial mix on its major access routes, including Second Avenue and Third Avenue, ranked second. The City's location, with its proximity to the interstate highway, the Hudson River, and the State capital, was regarded as another asset. The Watervliet Arsenal and the potential development opportunities it represented were identified as another asset. Finally, Watervliet's many historic resources (such as the Watervliet Arsenal, the Erie Canal sidecuts, its history as part of the underground railroad, etc.) were identified as another resource, albeit a potentially untapped one.

Interstate 787, which crosses through the City, dividing the shoreline from the remainder of the City, was identified as the City's major liability. Other aspects of the community they identified as negative included the fact that the City-owned park, Hudson Shores Park, was greatly underutilized as a community resource. Many indicated that the prevalence of absentee landlords who failed to maintain their properties was another problem. The Watervliet Arsenal, as it segments the City into two halves, no longer contributes as many jobs to the City as it once did, and is, as a federally owned property, off the tax rolls, was also identified as a potential liability. Finally, the lack of economic development in the waterfront area ranked as the fifth most significant liability.

### *Visioning Workshop*

The intent of the second public meeting, held on July 7, 2004, was to identify a **vision for the future** of the City's waterfront. A presentation identifying elements that contribute to a vibrant waterfront was given. The presentation also provided background information on the Coastal Zone program, sample goals, and

### *Presentation Meeting*

information on successful waterfront planning efforts in NYS. Following this, participants were asked to break into groups and discuss potential opportunities for improvement of the waterfront area. Participants were asked to identify on maps potential locations for infrastructure or design improvements or specific land use changes they felt would improve the character and attractiveness of the City's waterfront. These ideas for improved public access, a wider variety of recreational activities, and new opportunities for economic development are the basis for the policies and proposed land and water uses and projects identified in Sections 3 and 4 in this LWRP.

A final public meeting was held on Thursday, July 29, 2004. Community members were invited to this meeting, held at City Hall, to see a presentation on the draft LWRP. A powerpoint slideshow presentation was shown to identify the policies and goals, as they were applicable to the City of Watervliet. The presentation also included information about the many proposed activities, projects, and infrastructure improvements that were included in the LWRP to revitalize the City's waterfront and reconnect its neighborhoods and residents to the shoreline.

### *Stakeholder Interviews*

Some outreach was targeted, focusing on obtaining input from specific groups or individuals identified as stakeholders. A stakeholder is defined as any group or individual that has a stake in or may be impacted by recommendations developed through the planning process. In general, stakeholders represent government agencies, residential communities, business associations, and other local organizations, such as nonprofits or volunteer committees that perform a specific function, such as providing meals to the elderly or protecting wetlands. Utility providers or individuals with large property holdings may also be considered stakeholders. This outreach focused on asking specific questions of specific representatives. The stakeholders consulted as part of this planning effort included the following:

- NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation
- Capital District Transportation Committee
- RiverSpark/Gateway Urban Cultural Park
- Watervliet Arsenal Partnership
- Watervliet Arsenal Museum
- Hudson Valley Greenway
- Parker Brothers Funeral Home

### *Previous Planning Efforts*

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- NYS Office of General Services

It should also be noted that this planning process comes on the heels of a number of other widely promoted planning efforts in the City and region.

### *Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Canal Corridor Initiative*

In early 1997, the City of Watervliet pursued funding from the Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Canal Corridor Initiative to enhance Hudson Shores Park, its riverfront park. Hudson Shores Park, surplus land acquired as a result of the construction of I-787, was, at that time, under the jurisdiction of NYS Department of Transportation, and under-utilized and lacked amenities. The proposal included development of a boat launch, a full-service marina with showers, pump-out and fueling facilities, docks, a restaurant, a pavilion and public picnic area, and a bike-hike trail. To accommodate these uses, the waterfront was to be bulkheaded, thus increasing the land area. Several hearings were held to solicit public input regarding the proposal. While the proposal enjoyed wide-spread support from local and state officials and agencies as well as from City residents, the perceived threat of environmental impacts on the river and fish resources hindered all but the pavilion, picnic area, and trail from being constructed.

### *Albany County Waterfront Strategy*

*The Albany County Waterfront Strategy*, completed in 1999, created a cooperative community vision for Albany County's waterfront. The plan was designed to further public and private investments. In addition to reviewing several previously completed plans, additional plan and project development data was obtained through meetings and dialogues with local municipal representatives, developers, and landowners. This plan resulted in the following five (5) goals.

1. To reconnect people to the waterfront.
2. To revitalize and maximize waterfront and water dependent uses.
3. To maintain, restore, and enhance the water quality and shoreline ecosystems of the Hudson River.
4. To establish the regional context of the waterfront while recognizing and supporting local municipal interests.

5. To support waterfront communities interested in reconnecting to their waterfront.

Specific projects proposed for the City of Watervliet included creating additional trail linkages to the self-contained bike trail in Hudson Shores Park. It was proposed that the Hudson Shores trail could be linked to the off-road segment of the Mohawk Hudson Bike Hike Trail, which currently terminates south of Hudson Shores at Fourth Street in Watervliet.

### *The Mohawk Hudson Bike Hike Trail Crossroads Connections Study*

In July 2003, *The Mohawk Hudson Bike Hike Trail Crossroads Connections Study* was completed. Funded by grants from the Hudson River Valley Greenway, the purpose of the study was to identify off-road alternatives for continuing the Mohawk Hudson Bike Hike Trail between the City of Albany and the Village of Waterford and to examine the need for improved signage along the on-road portion of the Mohawk Hudson Bike Hike Trail in Albany County. Over a 7-month period, the Hudson River Valley Greenway, Albany County Department of Economic Development, Conservation and Planning, and the Capital District Transportation Committee conducted a public outreach process to solicit input from the municipalities, stakeholders, and residents along this section of the Hudson River. This process included three public meetings to discuss trail opportunities.

The Mohawk Hudson Study proposed development of an additional trail segment to be located in the City of Watervliet. These included a 7,500-foot shoreline connection between the trail end at Fourth Street and the self-contained trail in Hudson Shores Park that terminates at 15<sup>th</sup> Street. The trail would require cutting into the I-787 embankment, and sensitive trail design would be needed to protect against disturbance of the shoreline and any aquatic habitats located in the area.

### *The 19<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor Strategic Plan*

Finally, most recently, in late 2003 the City of Watervliet completed *The 19<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor Strategic Plan*. The planning process for this project began in January 2003 with the creation of a Strategic Plan Citizens Advisory Committee. The Committee included a representative cross section of business owners, City officials, senior citizens, students, and homeowners. Throughout the process, the Committee held open meetings to promote public participation in the development of the plan. Opportunities for public participation included surveys, public workshops, and stakeholder interviews. During the planning process, it was determined that improvements were needed to foster a dynamic economic climate and improve the housing stock and infrastructure for existing and future residents and business owners. The Citizens Advisory Committee developed goals that build on the community's assets and capitalize on the many opportunities identified during the planning process.

1. Foster Economic Development on 19th Street and Second Avenue.

2. Provide safe, quality housing to all residents in the Corridor.
3. Develop 19th Street and Second Avenue as an attractive, vital mixed-use district.
4. Improve and maintain the capacity and efficiency of the transportation infrastructure through access management and enhance mobility in the corridor.
5. Enhance the existing parks and recreational facilities in the target area and create new venues for social/recreational activities.
6. Consider revisions to the Zoning Regulations to create new commercial districts along 19th Street and Second Avenue.
7. Create a 19th Street Corridor Management Program.
8. Create a Marketing Program for the target area.

While 19<sup>th</sup> Street runs perpendicular to the shoreline, the corridor connects the City to the Congress Street Bridge and is the City's gateway from the City of Troy. In addition, the City's historical Central Business District is centered at the intersection of 19<sup>th</sup> Street and Second Avenue. Second Avenue (Route 32), runs along the former Erie Canal corridor, and falls within the LWRP waterfront area.