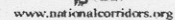


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LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS, ARCHITECTS, ENGINEERS, AND PLANNERS, P.C.

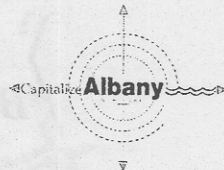


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NORTH WATERFRONT DISTRICT REDEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



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CITY OF ALBANY NORTH WATERFRONT DISTRICT REDEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

"There's no telling what the power of the people and the river can do."

Pete Seeger, 1982

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. INTRODUCTION

The contemporary urban waterfront is a proven amenity that enhances quality of life and drives economic resurgence. Recognizing this important asset, the City of Albany has taken concrete steps to improve the accessibility and attractiveness of its waterfront, beginning with its core. In tandem with construction of a new pedestrian bridge linking the downtown to the Corning Preserve and improvements to this waterfront park, the City initiated redevelopment efforts for the north and south waterfront districts. The goal of these plans is to revitalize each district by creating new, themed waterfront destinations. In the case of the North Waterfront, the focus is on creating a pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use district centered on a major water feature.

The North Waterfront District occupies 176 acres and is bounded by Interstate-90 to the north, Livingston Avenue to the south, the Hudson River to the east, and the CP Rail tracks to the west. The great redevelopment potential of this district lies in its location at the convergence of two major highways, its history as the easternmost lock on the Erie Canal, its proximity to the Hudson River, and its location on the Amtrak rail line.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study began with an assessment of existing conditions in and adjacent to the district. Having gained a preliminary understanding of the district, a "First Impressions Plan" was created which took a broad, first look at potential redevelopment opportunities. The resulting plan identified issues and key drivers for redevelopment, and defined potential program elements.

One key driver examined early on was the development of an intermodal center. This idea was founded on the expectation of new commuter rail service between Albany and Saratoga Springs. Once the decision was made not to pursue a commuter rail demonstration project, attention quickly turned to defining a new focus for the district. Development of an intermodal center in or near the district is discussed in the full report. While no longer a catalyst for redevelopment, an intermodal center is seen as a complement to the long-term development of the district.

Based on the district's proximity to the Hudson River and its Erie Canal history, water became the new focus for the district. Building on the First Impressions Plan, four (4) Alternative Redevelopment Plans were developed around this theme. A full size graphic of each alternative can be found in Attachment 1 of the full report.

Heating and Cooling District

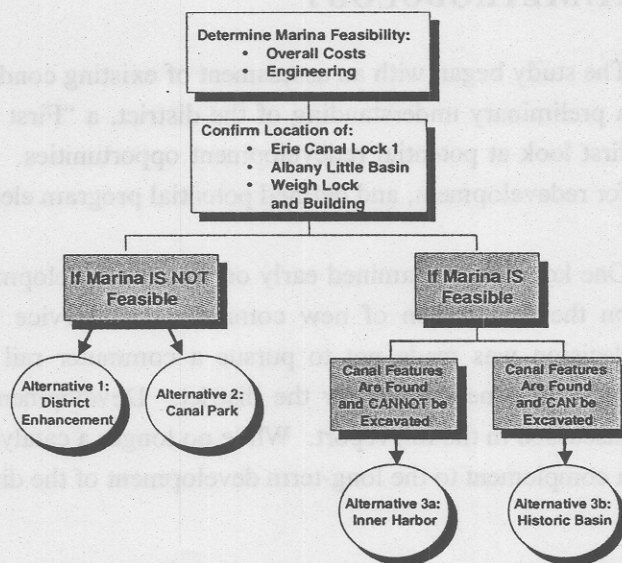
The feasibility of establishing a Heating and Cooling district was investigated for Alternatives 2, 3a and 3b, the build and reuse options. To identify a feasible option, four different pilot programs were evaluated. Only one resulted in annual revenues that exceeded annual costs of delivery. However, a number of variables (e.g. H/C plant design, fuel costs, number of users connected) could influence these results. Any pilot program would require further study to draw definitive conclusions about its viability.

III. NORTH WATERFRONT DISTRICT REDEVELOPMENT STRATEGY ALTERNATIVES

The intent of the Redevelopment Strategy is to create a lively, pedestrian-friendly district centered on water. Alternative 1 is geared toward short-term improvements, which can serve as steppingstones toward full site development. It sets aside investigation areas so that the City can begin to study the feasibility of creating a 300+ boat harbor/marina between Erie Boulevard and I-787.

The feasibility of constructing this water feature is the key driver of the level of redevelopment that can occur in the district. If the harbor/marina is not feasible for reasons such as high cost, engineering feasibility, or archeological concerns, then Alternative 2 should be pursued. If, however, the harbor/marina can be constructed, then the grander Alternatives 3a or 3b may be pursued.

Selecting between Alternatives 3a and 3b will depend upon the outcome of investigations of the Erie Canal. If the historic Erie Canal is found but cannot be excavated, Alternative 3a should be pursued. If however, the canal can be excavated and incorporated into the overall design, Alternative 3b should be pursued. The addition of this historical element in the design of the water feature will give the district added character and appeal.

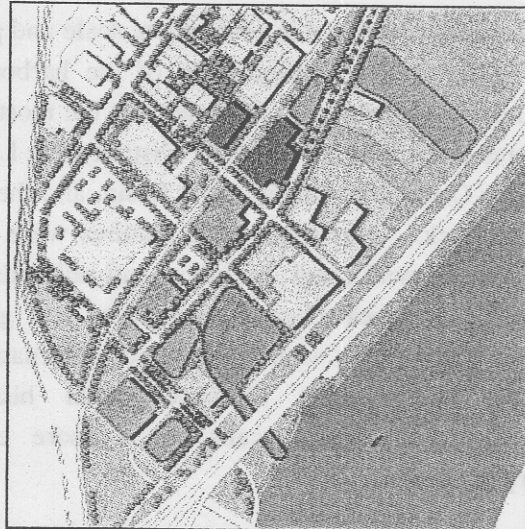


Alternative 1 – District Enhancement

The first alternative – District Enhancement – is intended to be a phasing plan, which allows the City to move forward with selected elements of Alternatives 2, 3a or 3b while enhancing the business climate in the district.

Major components of this alternative include:

- Conducting a Feasibility Study for the Harbor/Marina
- Establishing a Little Basin Laboratory/Investigation Site
- Conducting a Central Warehouse Feasibility Study
- Implementing Rowing Club Enhancements
- Maintaining East/West Access on Lawrence and Ferry Streets
- Establishing East/West Access at Manor and Colonie Streets



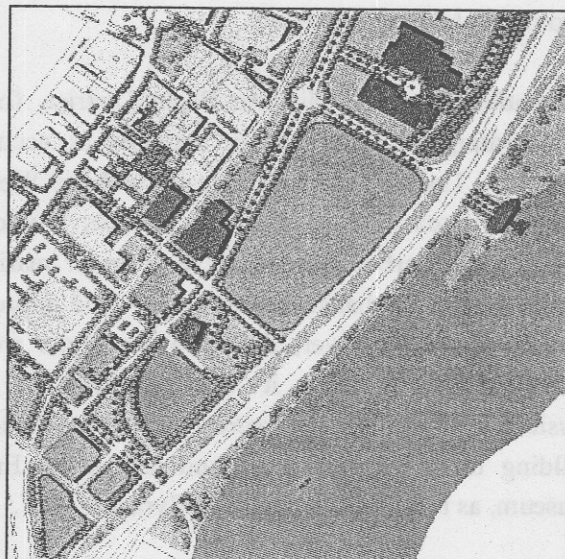
Alternative 1: District Enhancement

Alternative 2 – Canal Park District

The second alternative – Canal Park District – is intended to serve as an intermediary plan. If the harbor/marina cannot be constructed, then a small water feature could be created that would add visual character and help catalyze the redevelopment of the district. The result would be a new park with a water feature in its center.

Major components of this alternative include:

- A central, small water feature around which redevelopment occurs.
- A revised I-787 southbound Colonie Street exit and new connection to Manor Street
- New office construction north of Manor Street Extension
- Partial redevelopment of the Central Warehouse and other key buildings



Alternative 2: Canal Park

Alternatives 3a and 3b – Inner Harbor District and Historic Basin District

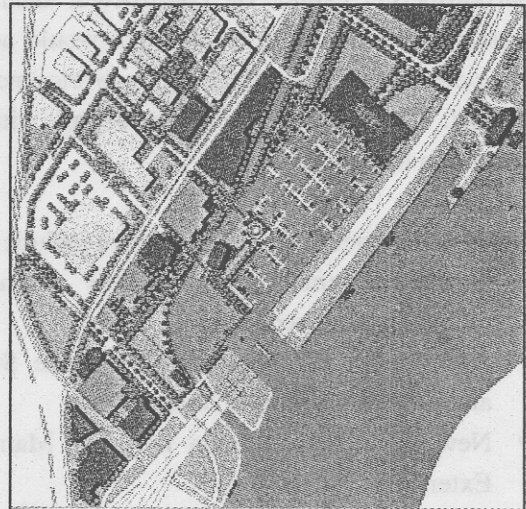
While almost identical in orientation, scale and purpose, they differ in the configuration of the harbor/marina area. Historical research indicates that the most notable features in the North Waterfront District were Lock 1 of the Erie Canal, the Albany Little Basin, and the Albany Weigh Lock. Over time, these features were filled in and covered with roads, buildings and railroads. Their condition as revealed upon excavation, will guide the City in determining whether to pursue Alternative 3a, a modest interpretation of Erie Canal history or Alternative 3b, which calls for a more extensive interpretation.

Alternative 3a, the Inner Harbor District, focuses on a simplified interpretation of the three historic canal features. Lock 1 and the Weigh Lock are incorporated into this design with no interpretation of the Little Basin. Lock 1 is not excavated to allow for the movement of water, but to enable the visitor to walk near it, or even in it, to gain a real understanding of its materials and construction. The Weigh Lock could be excavated and/or re-created allowing boats to pass through it. The entire inner harbor would extend from Colonie Street north to Manor Street and accommodate up to 300 boats.



Alternative 3a: Inner Harbor

Alternative 3b – the Historic Basin District, focuses on incorporating all three historic features as accurately as possible. Lock 1, the Little Basin, and the Weigh Lock would be excavated so that the features would form a smaller inner harbor surrounded by a larger marina. This smaller harbor, or basin, would be elevated approximately 12 feet above the river, the span the boats were lifted through Lock 1 when it was operational. Another possibility would be the recreation of the Weigh Lock building in its historic form and use as an Erie Canal Museum, as recently completed in Syracuse, NY.



Alternative 3b: Historic Basin

Major components of these alternatives include:

- Construction of a harbor/marina for 300+ boats
- Construction of a pedestrian promenade around the harbor/marina
- Full redevelopment of the Central Warehouse and other key buildings

- Construction of the Thatcher Street Underpass for autos, bicyclists and pedestrians to keep traffic flowing in the event of a train crossing
- Closing of Water Street
- Construction of a north/south service road
- Relocation of the Rowing Club facility

IV. IMPLEMENTATION

Moving from conceptual design to implementation can frequently be a complicated charge especially when communities have limited resources. Creating as open an implementation program as possible would ensure the continued input and involvement of key stakeholders as the district redevelops. Yet orchestrating such an interactive process can be complex and time-consuming. Toward this end, it is suggested that a North Waterfront Redevelopment Task Force be established. Its primary purpose would be to keep stakeholders informed and engaged during development of the detailed master plan for the district.

To assist the City and the Task Force implement the North Waterfront District Redevelopment Strategy, a table was prepared breaking down the development of the project into phases. It can be found in the full report. The detailed steps are listed in chronological order noting key decision points along the way.

In general, Phase I is dedicated to the investigation of the Erie Canal and the feasibility of constructing the harbor/marina. Phase II continues with key long-term items such as studying the feasibility of constructing a new exit ramp, and conducting feasibility studies for the selected alternative. Phase III then focuses on finishing the major items, completing the final enhancements to the district, and physically connecting the North Waterfront District to the Central Business District.