

SECTION VIII
OBTAINING LOCAL COMMITMENT

GENERAL TEXT

In June of 1984, Albany Mayor Thomas M. Whalen, III established a Waterfront Advisory Committee in order to ensure a broad base of community support for revitalization of the City's waterfront and to include a variety of City agencies in the waterfront planning process. This committee consisted of the following:

Thomas Whalen:	Mayor, City of Albany
Richard Patrick:	Deputy Commissioner of Parks and Recreation
Charles Newland:	Director, Bureau of Economic Development
James Waugaman:	City Engineer
Karen Crotty:	Assistant Corporation Counsel
Willard Bruce:	Director, City Planning Office
Steven Fischer:	President of Urbach, Kahn and Werlin, Accountants
Thomas Magliocca:	Representative for a major local cement company
Dr. Neil Kaye:	Active participant in local waterfront recreational activities

During 1984, this committee met regularly to direct development of the waterfront revitalization program and all were involved in the selection of a waterfront consultant. The firm of Wallace, Roberts and Todd of Philadelphia was chosen.

While working with Wallace, Roberts and Todd the City hosted several all-day workshops. Some of those who participated with the advisory committee in these workshops were:

Peter Rumora:	Concerned citizen
Miriam Trementozzi:	Private Historic Preservation Consultant
L.A. Swyer:	Local developer
Keith Arnold:	Director, Albany County Conventions & Visitors Bureau
John Holt-Harris:	Attorney
Nancy Kupiec:	Director, South End Improvement Corporation
Kathy Dorgan:	Director, Capital Hill Improvement Corporation

The entire committee worked closely with the consultants to produce a plan that would realize the needs and potentials of Albany's waterfront. Meetings with the consultants were well covered by the Schenectady Gazette, Knickerbocker News and Times Union newspapers. As a result of the enormous public interest in anything concerning the Hudson shoreline, the members of the advisory committee heard a great deal of public comment.

Public Hearing #1

The committee held its first City-wide meeting in the Albany Public Library on the evening of April 4, 1985. After a normal presentation by consultants from Wallace, Roberts and Todd, the floor was opened to questions and comments.

Following is a summary of public comment presented at the hearings:

- In devising a use plan for the waterfront, the City should stress that which will appeal to the greatest number of Albany residents: inexpensive, open and easy recreation.
- The City should be careful not to overdevelop the waterfront.
- The revitalization plan appears to be elitist and designed primarily for use by the wealthy rather than for the enjoyment of everyone.
- In order to ensure the continued success of the Port, the City should accommodate the needs of the seamen in its plans for the waterfront.
- Protection was urged for a building located at 513 Broadway. It is said to have been constructed in 1795 and once served as the home of Albany Mayor Abraham Yates Jr.
- It is important that joggers and cyclists be considered in the waterfront plan. The existing bike path must be maintained and expanded.
- Support was expressed for construction of a marina and restaurant in the Corning Preserve.

Public Hearing #2

A second public hearing was held again at the Albany Public Library on the evening of November 13th, 1985. This hearing, like the earlier one, was very well attended. The consultants from Wallace, Roberts and Todd were present to display maps and talk to the public. At this hearing the proposed new waterfront zoning districts were explained by the City Planning Director.

Following is a summary of the public comment presented at this hearing:

- Some questions concerned moving the 14,000 ton cruiser USS Albany to a permanent mooring on the Albany waterfront.

- Clarification was requested on previous statements by the Director of the Bureau of Economic Development concerning the possibility of establishing a transportation museum on the waterfront.
- It was suggested that new buildings should be set back from the river (similar to a front yard set back as required by a zoning ordinance).
- New construction should be of quality materials.
- There were questions regarding how the flood zone would effect new construction.
- There was inquiry concerning whether the State Environmental Quality Review Act is applicable to a waterfront development plan.
- There were some questions regarding how closely the advisory committee had been working with those State agencies whose concerns are related to waterfront development.
- It was suggested that the City build an amusement park instead of an industrial park on the site of the demolition landfill in the Patroon Island Sub-area.
- Many questions concerned the legitimacy of Albany's need for a 400-seat restaurant in the Corning Preserve as proposed by the consultants.
- A representative of an organization promoting the construction of a path along the entire 300 miles of the Hudson presented his case.
- A number of people representing joggers and cyclists expressed concern that to be sure the existing waterfront bike path would be preserved.
- A representative from the South End neighborhood expressed the hope of having better access to the Hudson.
- In summary, most comments concerned the size of the proposed restaurant an the hope that runners and cyclists would not be forgotten in the waterfront development plan.

Conclusion

On several occasions, many local elected officials have pledged their involvement and support of the waterfront development plan.

The first Empire State Sculling Regatta was held on the Hudson along Albany's waterfront in June 1985. This annual event attracts 2,000 rowers and 80,000 spectators over a two-day period. It is the largest event on the City's calendar. In September of 1985, a major political rally in the Corning Preserve again drew thousands to this area. This testifies to the appeal and usefulness of the waterfront area and the willingness of Albany's citizens to visit it and participate in events there.

Many efforts have been made in gaining the support of the public and of a variety of community and government agencies. (See Section VII - Consultation with Other Affected Agencies.) Copies of the proposed zoning modifications were mailed in advance to the Capitol Hill and South End Improvement Corporations (the two such organizations closest to the Hudson) and these agencies were well represented at the City's waterfront hearings and workshops.