



## City of Albany

# Waterfront Access, Vitality, and Economic Strategy (WAVES)



Photo: Fred Coffey

## Community Participation Plan

**October 2020**

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## I. Introduction

### Albany WAVES

The City of Albany is undertaking a comprehensive “Waterfront Access, Vitality, and Economic Strategy” (WAVES) to reimagine its approximately 4.6 miles of waterfront along the Hudson River with funding from the New York State Department of State. The project builds on the Albany 2030 Comprehensive Plan, which aims to leverage Albany’s history and diverse natural, cultural, institutional, and human resources to become a global model for sustainable revitalization and urban livability.

The WAVES project consists of three components:

#### 1. **Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP)**

The City of Albany completed an LWRP in 1991 for its Waterfront Revitalization Area (WRA) which runs along the City’s entire riverfront covering a total area of 1,647 acres for approximately 4.6 miles. The WRA expands westward from the Hudson River to include parts of Albany’s South End, Downtown, North Albany, and Warehouse District; terminating at the City’s southern border with the Town of Bethlehem and northern border with the Village of Menands.

In 2014, an updated LWRP was drafted with funding from the New York State Department of State (NYSDOS.) Under the advisement of NYSDOS, the City delayed finalization and adoption of the updated LWRP due to impending changes to the City’s zoning code that would affect the project area. The WAVES project will revise and update Albany’s 2014 Draft LWRP so that it

- a. is consistent with Albany’s recent planning initiatives and zoning code updates;
- b. incorporates a harbor management plan (HMP) as set forth in the provisions of New York State Executive Law, Article 42, and 19NYCRR Parts 600-603; and
- c. reflects emerging issues and needs in the riverfront area in a manner that will contribute to a vibrant, resilient waterfront while promoting local investment.

#### 2. **North Warehouse District Brownfield Opportunity Area program (N-BOA)**

The City will complete a BOA Nomination Study for an approximately 102-acre area in the North Warehouse District on the Hudson River with 49 potential brownfield sites. The study area is located within the WRA described in item one above, and is bordered by Interstate 787 and the Hudson River to the east, Downtown to the south, and the Arbor Hill and North Albany neighborhoods to the west and north respectively. The Nomination will provide an in-depth and thorough description and analysis of existing conditions, opportunities, and reuse potential for properties located in the proposed BOA study areas with an emphasis on the identification and reuse potential of strategic sites that may be catalysts for revitalization, and culminating in designation by the New York Secretary of State.

**3. South Waterfront District Brownfield Opportunity Area program (S-BOA)**

The City will complete a BOA Nomination Study for an approximately 23-acre area in the South Waterfront District with seven potential brownfield sites. The study area is located within the WRA described in item one above, and is bounded by the Hudson River, Interstate 787 and the Port of Albany. The Nomination will provide an in-depth and thorough description and analysis of existing conditions, opportunities, and reuse potential for properties located in the proposed BOA study areas with an emphasis on the identification and reuse potential of strategic sites that may be catalysts for revitalization, and culminating in designation by the New York Secretary of State.

**Project Team and Roles**

A Steering Committee comprised of local stakeholders and government officials will oversee all aspects of the WAVES project. Nagle, Tatich, Cranston d/b/a Elan.3 Consulting (Elan) has been selected to support the Committee with their work to complete the LWRP and BOA Nomination studies. The Committee will also be supported by the City of Albany Planning & Development office and will receive guidance from NYSDOS.

**Community Participation Plan**

The WAVES project involves a significant public involvement component to gather input from stakeholders and the general public including residents, property owners, business owners, and community organizations. This CPP details the approach that the Project Team will use to fully involve the community in the study process.

The goals of the Community Participation Plan (CPP) are to:

1. Foster dialogue and interaction between the public, stakeholders, the City of Albany, applicable regulatory agencies, and the project team during the course of the study process;
2. Gather information from the community to inform decisions; and
3. Build ownership and support for the process and outcomes.

The CPP outlines an approach to achieve the goals by:

1. Sharing information with the public and stakeholders regarding the WAVES study process;
2. Providing opportunities for the public and stakeholders to voice issues, concerns, and opportunities related to the project; and

3. Providing an opportunity for the public and stakeholders to contribute their vision and ideas for the development of the Albany riverfront including the BOA study areas and the Waterfront Revitalization Area.

The success of the WAVES project will depend on broad community input and support. The sections below summarize the outreach and engagement measures that will be employed throughout the project. These measures will follow public health and safety protocols related to the COVID-19 pandemic. As the process unfolds, it may be appropriate to modify the CPP to best capture public input or to respond to changing public health guidelines.

## II. Previous Public Involvement

Past planning efforts in the City of Albany have engaged the public to better understand the community's vision and priorities for the waterfront area. The WAVES project will consider and build on public input from recent planning efforts related to the study area. These may include the Albany 2030 Comprehensive Plan, 2014 Corning Preserve Master Plan, 2014 draft LWRP, 2019 Albany Downtown Revitalization Initiative Strategic Investment Plan, Unified Sustainable Development Ordinance (2017), and the ongoing South End Strategic Plan update.

## III. Steering Committee

A local Steering Committee will guide the WAVES project including the development of the updated LWRP and the BOA Step Two Nomination studies. The steering committee will fulfill the role of the “**Waterfront Advisory Committee**” for the LWRP and the “**Project Steering Committee**” for the N-BOA and S-BOA. Convening a single Steering Committee with three subcommittees will facilitate a comprehensive vision and revitalization plan for Albany's waterfront while providing the opportunity to analyze each study area individually.

The committee is comprised of a range of interests (see table 1), including private or business interests, property owners, regional planning entities or other regional groups, environmental groups, and members engaged with community groups. The committee also includes representatives of federal, state, county, and local municipal agencies, including agencies with jurisdiction over project activities or the project area.

The responsibilities of the Steering Committee include:

- Provide input and advice on the study process, documentation, waterfront issues, existing conditions, technical studies, conceptual designs, and potential opportunities;

- Collect ideas and input from the public as well as key stakeholders and experts; and
- Keep the public informed and engaged throughout the study process.

Committee members will be divided into three sub-committees, one for each element of the WAVES project:

1. **Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) sub-committee** – The LWRP subcommittee will provide detailed input on the update of Albany’s 2014 Draft LWRP including development of the Harbor Management Plan and revisions to the LWRP vision, inventory and analysis of the WRA, LWRP policies, proposed land and water uses and projects in the WRA, and implementation techniques.
2. **North Warehouse District Brownfield Opportunity Area program (N-BOA) sub-committee** – This subcommittee will provide detailed input on the N-BOA Step 2 Nomination Study including the vision and goals for the study area, the inventory and analysis of existing conditions, an assessment of economic and redevelopment opportunities, and key findings and recommendations.
3. **South Waterfront District Brownfield Opportunity Area program (S-BOA) sub-committee** - This subcommittee will provide detailed input on the S-BOA Step 2 Nomination Study including the vision and goals for the study area, the inventory and analysis of existing conditions, an assessment of economic and redevelopment opportunities, and key findings and recommendations.

The Steering Committee will hold regular meetings and public engagement opportunities throughout the study process beginning with a **kick-off meeting October 15<sup>th</sup>**. The kick-off will review the WAVES project’s intent and scope. It will solicit initial input on the study process including public participation and development of project goals, opportunities, and constraints.

Committee meetings will be held approximately once a month with time for members to break into sub-committee groups. Elan will prepare agendas and meeting materials and will work with the City to distribute these to the full Steering Committee in advance via email. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, meetings will be conducted virtually for the foreseeable future.

Table 1. Steering Committee Members

Name	Organization	Sub-Committee
Carolyn McLaughlin	District 1, Albany County Legislature	S-BOA
Anthony (Tony) Gaddy	Co-Founder & President/CEO, Upstate New York Black Chamber of Commerce	S-BOA
Christopher (Chris) Bauer	Senior Transportation Planner, Freight, Capital District Transportation Committee	S-BOA
Sarah Reginelli	Capitalize Albany	S-BOA
Jeffrey (Jeff) Buell	Principal, Redburn Properties	N-BOA
Hon. Kelly Kimbrough	4 <sup>th</sup> Ward, Common Council	N-BOA
Hon. Joyce Love	3 <sup>rd</sup> Ward Common Council	N-BOA
James (Jim) Eaton	Owner, Fort Orange Brewery	N-BOA
Tyler Smith	Surpass Chemical Company Inc.	N-BOA
William (Willie) White	Senior Employment and Training Specialist, City of Albany Workforce Services	LWRP
William (Bill) Simcoe	Deputy Commissioner, City of Albany, Albany Water Department	LWRP
Tara Donadio	Sustainability Planning, Capital District Regional Planning Commission	LWRP
Martin Daley	Director of Water Quality Programs, Capital District Regional Planning Commission / Livingston Avenue Bridge Coalition	LWRP
Tina Lieberman	Chair, Sustainability Advisory Committee	LWRP
Todd Rutecki	President, Friends of Albany Rowing	LWRP
Matthew Peter	Executive Director, Albany Parking Authority/ County Legislature	LWRP
Georgette Steffens	Executive Director, Downtown Business Improvement District	LWRP

## IV. Public Participation

A variety of public engagement techniques will be used throughout the study process. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most public events will be held remotely using virtual tools and platforms. Where necessary and if possible, small in-person activities may be held in accordance with health and safety guidelines. Engagement techniques may include:

- Walking tours
- Public Open Houses and Meetings (Virtual and in-person if possible)
- Interviews, Focus Groups, and/or Community Meetings
- Interactive online and messaging tools
- Project website

A focused effort will be made to engage people who typically do not participate in planning programs such as youth, immigrants/new Americans, residents of public housing, persons with limited English proficiency, and persons with disabilities. These efforts may include taking the study process to these groups by collaborating with local community organizations on events and outreach. Care will also be taken to make events and outreach strategies accessible. Considerations will include choosing ADA-compliant venues, providing audio and visual materials, using electronic materials compatible with screen readers, and providing guidance on how to request accommodation for non-English speakers and people with disabilities or special needs to enable them to participate in each event.

### Walking tours

Following the Steering Committee Kick-off meeting, the Project Team will organize a **three-day immersion** that will include (socially distanced) walking tours of the WRA inclusive of the N-BOA and S-BOA areas. The tour may include brief on-site interviews with local residents, property owners, and other stakeholders. Steering Committee members will be invited to participate.

Further virtual or in-person site visits with stakeholders or members of the public may be held during the study process to examine specific elements such as walkability, transportation needs, green and gray infrastructure opportunities, effects of potential sea level rise, redevelopment opportunities, access, etc.

### Public Open Houses and Meetings

Several Public Open Houses and Meetings will be held to share information about the project and invite feedback from the community at key decision points in the process. They will include interactive elements

which may be available over a period of one or several days such as live streamed presentations; public surveys; polls; mapping tools; and/or comments submitted by text, email, website, or mail.

### **Virtual Public Open House #1**

A Virtual Public Open House will be organized in early December 2020 to introduce the WAVES project including the intent, scope, and process for the LWRP update and BOA nomination studies. The event will solicit initial feedback on various project elements including:

For the LWRP:

- Purpose of the LWRP
- WRA vision
- WRA boundary description
- WRA Inventory and Analysis of existing conditions, issues, and opportunities

For the N-BOA and S-BOA:

- Purpose of the BOA
- Vision and goals for each study area
- Explanation of community and regional setting
- Initial current conditions, opportunities, and constraints for each study area
- Initial economic and market trends for each study area

### **Virtual Public Open House #2**

A second Public Open House will be organized in Spring 2021 to introduce potential projects and redevelopment opportunities for the WRA and BOA study areas. Community feedback will be solicited on the ideas and project or redevelopment designs. The following elements will be presented:

For the LWRP:

- Identified issues and opportunities for the WRA
- Proposed land and water uses for the WRA
- Proposed projects for the WRA

For the N-BOA and S-BOA:

- potential reuse and redevelopment opportunities for strategic sites within the study areas

### **Public Presentation and Informational Meeting(s)**

A final public meeting will be hosted in the Fall of 2021 to present the draft outcomes of the WAVES project including the:

- full draft LWRP
- full draft BOA step 2 Nomination Study for the North Warehouse District
- full draft BOA step 2 Nomination Study for the South Waterfront District

The draft documents may be presented together at one meeting, or over a series of two or three. The meeting(s) will describe and invite feedback on the contents of the draft documents including the visions, existing conditions, study area analysis, key findings, and proposed actions. It may also be possible to target specific groups within the study areas to solicit feedback.

### **Interviews, Focus Groups, and Community Meetings**

Elan will work with the Steering Committee and the City to identify and engage key stakeholders through interviews, focus groups, and/or community meetings. These may include government officials, technical experts, community and not-for-profit organizations, private sector interests, and environmental groups, among others. Stakeholders will be invited to share their unique perspectives and expertise on key issues such as complete streets, inclusivity, public infrastructure and utilities, natural resources, business and real estate development.

#### **Stakeholder Interviews**

For the N-BOA and S-BOA, the Project Team will identify key individuals in the community that have been, or will likely be involved with or impacted by the redevelopment of brownfield sites in the study areas. For the LWRP, the Project Team will identify key individuals in the community that have been or will likely be involved with the redevelopment of waterfront. One-on-one interviews will be held to understand issues, concerns, and ideas for redevelopment. This format is preferred for stakeholder meetings as people are more comfortable expressing their ideas and desires.

#### **Focus Groups**

The Project Team may organize Focus Groups to gather information on a particular issue or topic area. Elan and City staff will work to organize focus group with relevant experts and community members/organizations using a roundtable or workshop format.

#### **Community Meetings**

The Project Team will meet with local groups and community organizations throughout the project to discuss the goals and progress of the LWRP and BOAs and to gather feedback. These discussions may be organized as part of a regularly scheduled meeting or as a special standalone event. Community meetings may be useful for reaching groups that are often underrepresented in public planning processes.

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## Interactive online and messaging tools

The above activities may be supplemented by additional engagement opportunities (online or in-person) such as design charettes, pop-up presentations, mapping stations, and text or social media campaigns.

## V. Outreach Methods

Project updates and engagement opportunities will be publicized through a variety of channels to ensure broad public participation. Notices of public events will be posted at least two weeks in advance. The coordination of outreach materials and meeting/event logistics will be led by Elan with support from City staff.

**Contact Database** – a community contact list will be updated by Elan and used on a regular basis to keep key stakeholders up to date on the WAVES project.

**Coordination with local media** - all public meetings will be publicized in the community through press releases to local media outlets. Local media will also be invited to attend public events. Media releases will be developed by the City.

**Project website** – Elan will maintain a website with information about the project and how to get involved. Announcements, events, documentation, and engagement opportunities will be posted to the website, with links to and from the City of Albany website. Links will also be provided to established NYSDOS websites for further information on the LWRP and BOA program.

**Outreach materials and Social Media** - Elan will develop outreach materials such as flyers, road signs, business cards, mailers, and/or tweet cards to display and distribute in the community, at public events, and on the City of Albany's social media accounts (facebook, twitter).

## VI. Interagency Project Group

In addition to the public participation methods outlined above, an Interagency Project Group will be established. The group will include representatives from Albany County, the City of Albany, the BOA Steering Committee, and key stakeholders including the Department of State and other state and local agencies as needed/necessary such as NYSDOT, NYSDEC, CDTA, CDTC, and private landowners. The group will meet annually to discuss the progress of the N-BOA and S-BOA along with tourism and economic development initiatives.

## VII. Local, State, and Federal Contacts

The following information provides contact information for local, regional, and state agencies participating in the LWRP as well as the N-BOA and S-BOA studies.

### **City of Albany:**

ATTN: Lauren Alpert and Yasmine Robinson  
City of Albany  
Planning and Development Department  
200 Henry Johnson Blvd  
First Floor, Suite #3  
Albany, NY 12210  
[dpd@albanyny.gov](mailto:dpd@albanyny.gov)

### **New York State Department of State (DOS)**

The DOS is the primary sponsor of the Albany LWRP, the North Warehouse District BOA, and the South Waterfront District BOA and has provided funding for the projects. In addition, the DOS will provide oversight, direction, and technical assistance throughout the duration of the project. Contact information for the DOS representative for this project is provided below:

### BOAs

Tanushri Kumar  
Office of Planning and Development and Community Infrastructure  
New York Department of State  
Suite 1010  
One Commerce Place, 99 Washington Avenue  
Albany, New York 12231-0001  
[Tanushri.Kumar@dos.ny.gov](mailto:Tanushri.Kumar@dos.ny.gov)

### LWRP

Lisa Vasilakos  
Office of Planning and Development and Community Infrastructure  
New York Department of State  
Suite 1010  
One Commerce Place, 99 Washington Avenue  
Albany, New York 12231-0001

[Lisa.Vasilakos@dos.ny.gov](mailto:Lisa.Vasilakos@dos.ny.gov)

**Elan.3 Consulting**

The Project Team will provide technical expertise for the duration of the project. The consultant on the Albany LWRP, N-BOA, and S-BOA will be Elan.3 Consulting (Elan) of Saratoga Springs, New York. The primary contacts for the Project Team are listed with contact information below:

Lisa Nagle

Elan

18 Division Street, Suite 304

Saratoga, New York, 12866

[lnagle@elanpd.com](mailto:lnagle@elanpd.com)

Laura Lourenco

Elan

18 Division Street, Suite 304

Saratoga, New York, 12866

[lnagle@elanpd.com](mailto:lnagle@elanpd.com)

## VIII. Project Schedule

### Albany North Warehouse District and South Waterfront BOAs and LWRP Update – Proposed Project Schedule and Milestones September 2020

Task*	2020				2021										
	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV
<b>Project Initiation</b>															
Project Scoping & Outline															
Project Descriptions incl Boundaries, Visions, Goals (LWRP Section I)		SC 1				BOA									
<b>Public Participation and Stakeholder Engagement</b>															
Community Participation Plan & Enlisting Partners		SC 1													
Stakeholder Interviews															
Community Participation (Focus Groups, Open Houses, etc)		Multi-day Immersion			Open House				LWRP Open House	BOA Interagency engagement		Public meeting			
<b>Inventory and Analysis</b>															
Inventory and Analysis, incl. Maps (LWRP Section II)		SC 1		SC 2	SC 3	SC 4									
BOA Technical Studies Public utilities, CSO, Geotechnical, Green Infrastructure., CSX Railroad impact, Truck rerouting				SC 2		SC 4									
BOA Strategic Brownfield Sites Review				SC 2	SC 3	SC 4	SC 5								

Task*	2020				2021										
	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV
<b>Draft Policies, Plans, and Implementation Strategies</b>															
LWRP Section II: Waterfront Revitalization Policies															
LWRP Section IV: Proposed Projects					SC 3	SC 4									
LWRP Section V: Local Implementation Techniques								SC 6							
BOA Implementation Strategy									SC 7						
LWRP Section VI: State Actions															
LWRP Section VII: Local Commitment and Consultation															
LWRP Draft															
BOA Draft Nomination & Executive Summary															
<b>Final Plans</b>															
Preparation of Final BOA Nomination															
Final LWRP															

SC = Steering Committee \*Tasks are for all projects (N-BOA, S-BOA, and LWRP) except where they begin with 'BOA' or 'LWRP'