

CHAPTER TWO: DEVELOPING A WATERFRONT VISION

In this chapter, you will work through the following steps:

- Planning for community involvement
- Understanding what you have to work with
- Developing a vision
- Reaching consensus on the vision
- Charting the course

Traveling around the State, you notice that other communities' waterfronts are thriving with marinas, parks, fishing piers, and other attractions that bring economic activity into these communities and enhance the waterfront for residents and visitors alike. You take a closer look at your own community. Could you redevelop that vacant waterfront parcel as a new business, perhaps as a marina? Are there ways of linking your main street with the waterfront to enhance access and enjoyment? You begin to see that making the most of your waterfront can revitalize your community.

At this stage, your ideas need to be developed and refined. Whether you are a local government, a neighborhood group, a community-based nonprofit, or an interested individual, you will need to turn your ideas into a shared vision for the future of your community's waterfront - to know where you want to go. More and more communities are doing this through the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program.

Planning for community involvement

Successful waterfront revitalization happens when the community realizes that the waterfront belongs to them. It happens when they recognize the significance and potential of their waterfront. It happens when they are determined to improve and protect their waterfront for the enjoyment and benefit of the entire community and future generations.

Right from the beginning, as you seek to make the most of your waterfront, you must involve the public. You will need the support of the community at every stage - from developing a vision to planning for and implementing improvements. Success will depend upon building and sustaining local support for the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program.

Community participation can take many forms, but it is generally designed to:

- Foster an appreciation of local and regional coastal assets and issues
- Introduce local leaders and community residents to the waterfront planning process
- Generate a community consensus about the vision for the future of the waterfront
- Develop a strategy to address the community's most critical waterfront issues

Meaningful public participation doesn't just happen. It has to be carefully thought out and planned to embrace the public in the planning process and to keep them informed about progress. Now is the time to begin to develop ideas about how the community can participate in the planning process. To start, it is important to understand who should be involved.

Identifying the key stakeholders

Stakeholders are critical. A stakeholder is a person or group who has something to gain or lose based upon the outcomes of your revitalization program. You will need to involve those individuals and groups, such as elected officials, business and civic leaders, neighborhood and environmental groups, and educational institutions who have a direct stake in the future of the waterfront. Make special note of the key leaders, and be sure to include those who may oppose your revitalization efforts as well as those who are likely to support them.

From the beginning of your efforts to revitalize your waterfront, you will be seeking out stakeholders and trying to define their role in making your vision a reality. In particular, you will want to seek out two groups with an interest in the waterfront - the experts and the enthusiasts. Experts are people with useful knowledge. Enthusiasts are people who will bring energy to the effort from either a civic concern, or from a business interest. Both types of people can help you get the job done and, as advocates, can help you reach consensus in the community.

You will need to create a strategy to effectively involve these stakeholders. Identify how you will approach each contact and be clear about why they are involved. Is it to keep them informed and seek their support? Do you need their funding help? Do you want them to participate on a committee? Be prepared, in advance, to address important issues and provide information about your waterfront, including how they can benefit. Once you have their involvement, keep in touch and make sure your project is on their front burner. By bringing people together you can create a vision that captures the ideas and interests of a broad constituency of those concerned with the future of your waterfront.

As you work to fulfill your vision, you may involve stakeholders and other community members in a wide variety of ways. These might include creating an oversight committee; creating a series of specific, issue-oriented subcommittees; encouraging participation in visioning and planning workshops; or “hands-on” participation in volunteer work parties. You will also need to keep the entire community informed about what is going on, including people who are not directly involved but may have a real interest in the waterfront revitalization efforts. It is important to provide them with regular progress reports, and keep them informed about how they can participate.

Selecting consultants

Communities often hire consultants to supplement their own staff and volunteer resources or to gain use of special skills. At this stage, consultants can help with community involvement and provide an understanding of what you have to work with on your waterfront, so it is good to think about hiring a consultant before you get too far into the visioning process. Selecting a consultant involves answering some key questions, including:

- What do you want the consultant to do?
- What skills, expertise, and experience must the consultant have to carry out the project?
- How will you relate to the consultant? That is, will you simply give the problem to the consultant and expect a completed report? Or, will you provide staff support, citizen participation, review, or other input into the project?
- How experienced is the consultant in doing programs of this type? Has the consultant worked on waterfront and community revitalization programs and projects in communities similar to yours?

If you are seeking a consultant, you will need to prepare a Request for Proposals (RFP). Your RFP must meet all applicable procurement rules and be designed so that responses from consultants will provide all the information that

you will need to select and hire a consultant. Make sure you fully describe your needs and your planning proposal and a schedule for implementation. Make sure to request details of the consultant's experience on similar efforts. To ensure a comprehensive response, the RFP itself should be advertised as extensively as possible and mailed to a wide range of consultants. The Division of Coastal Resources can provide sample RFPs as well as guidance on what to look for when you seek a consultant to help prepare and implement a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program.

After you receive the responses, set up interviews with potential consultants and talk with references. Find out more about them and their proposal, and try to determine how well they can achieve your vision. Find out why they are interested in your project and explore what they see as the main issues and challenges as they develop the plan. Fully explore the financial requirements of each consultant's proposal. Interviews are a great opportunity to develop an understanding of everyone's expectations and to set the stage for a strong partnership. Once you have selected your consultant and have executed a contract, it is time to begin developing your vision for enhancing your waterfront.

Case Study: New York City

Using its Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/wrp/wrp.shtml), New York City has the planning framework in place to help its neighborhoods achieve their vision of a vibrant public waterfront. The waterfront has become a magnet for thousands of people in places like South Street Seaport and Chelsea Piers.

Major new parks are being created at Queens West, Hudson River Park, Riverside Park and Brooklyn Bridge Park. New York City is working to connect these attractions in a City-wide greenway, and is adding new community parks in places like 125th Street in Harlem and Sunset Park in Brooklyn.

In Harlem, the community has taken the lead and a fresh approach to intense development speculation on the Hudson River at 125th Street, and is now promoting its own redevelopment vision. The community's vision of a waterfront park where families can enjoy a mix of activities, set in a vibrant neighborhood, was established with extensive public input. It builds on the existing assets within this area, such as the Fairway Market, the Cotton Club and the revitalized 125th Street corridor.

In Brooklyn's Sunset Park, residents have come together to promote the development of a waterfront park in a heavily industrialized area. The City and State have embraced their vision and are working to transform the vacant Bush Terminal and its decaying piers into an exciting waterfront destination.

Communities throughout the City have gone from thinking of the waterfront as off-limits, to realizing that the City's waterways are New York's last great open space.



Establishing an oversight committee

Early in the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program development process, most communities establish a coordinating and oversight committee. In some communities, this may be handled by an existing board, such as the planning board or a conservation advisory commission, but more often a separate waterfront advisory committee (WAC) is established. The responsibilities of this committee generally include:

- Managing the waterfront revitalization process or advising staff on managing the process
- Providing valuable input on waterfront issues and existing conditions
- Holding regular meetings related to waterfront revitalization planning or project implementation
- Informing others in the community about the waterfront revitalization process and ways they can be involved
- Organizing and participating in focus groups, design charettes, visioning and action planning workshops, and public hearings
- Reviewing reports, designs, and other documents

- Keeping elected officials and municipal officials informed about the planning process
- Working with municipal staff, consultants, State agency staff, and others to complete various tasks

It is important to find committee members who are likely to stay with the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program from initial planning and visioning through to implementation of improvements. Take a look at the stakeholders you have identified: who are the key players, and who among them would be best suited to sit on an advisory and oversight committee? It is important to recruit the “movers and shakers” to be on the committee - those who others listen to and recognize as having the ability to get things done. Local leaders can provide valuable experience, advice, guidance, and resources, and will be able to persuade others to join and contribute to the waterfront revitalization efforts.

Look for an effective chairperson to lead the committee. The size of an advisory committee is also important to ensure productive group discussion. Ten to fifteen members is best, although a smaller group can also be effective. The committee may include representation from the following groups:

- Local government - elected officials; municipal staff; planning, zoning and other boards

- Neighborhood and community organizations, local and regional nonprofit organizations
- Property owners from waterfront neighborhoods
- Representatives from the business community, particularly those whose livelihood depends on the community’s waterfront, such as tour boat operators, marina owners, commercial and recreational fishermen, boat suppliers and outfitters; chambers of commerce; merchants’ organizations; and business improvement districts
- Tourism and promotion groups
- The academic community

If your Program involves several municipalities or an entire region, such as a watershed or highway corridor, the waterfront advisory committee must include representatives of each municipality. You must also look at a broader geographic base to involve all appropriate organizations.

Case Study: Erie Canal

As the western gateway to the Erie Canal, the Cities of Tonawanda and North Tonawanda (www.the-tonawandas.com) were once a bustling shipping and industrial center. Reversing decades of decline, the Cities are using their Local Waterfront Revitalization Programs to realize their shared vision of becoming a destination on the Canal. Both planning efforts were directed by waterfront commissions comprised of representatives from the local business community, individuals with knowledge of recreational boating, and residents.

Each community prepared an inventory and analysis of existing land and water resources including opportunities and constraints for waterfront development. This analysis included review of a wide range of information about the built environment, natural resources, historic resources, municipal services, circulation patterns, environmental conditions, land ownership, and waterfront access. Based on this analysis, the Cities developed policies and projects that would revitalize and redevelop their waterfronts.

With assistance provided by the Division of Coastal Resources and the Canal Corporation, North Tonawanda and Tonawanda have improved their existing waterfront parks. As part of the first step in revitalizing their Canal waterfronts and enhancing their community, the Cities have received nearly \$4,000,000 to

develop conceptual plans for the Gateway Harbor Center; to construct docking facilities and repair the retaining wall and bulkhead on the Niagara River; and to construct an amphitheater and waterfront promenade and trail.

A key component in the success of their revitalization has been the participation of business leaders and continued community involvement. Taking it one step at a time, the Tonawandas are implementing their projects as funding permits, but always keeping in mind their shared vision of making the waterfront a special place for the community and visitors alike.





Manhattan, Hudson River



Braddock Bay, Lake Ontario



Montauk Lighthouse, Long Island

Understanding what you have to work with

Creating a clear vision for revitalizing your waterfront requires an understanding of what you have to work with. This involves several key steps:

- Assessing your waterfront
- Knowing and respecting your community's heritage
- Taking full advantage of all your resources and assets

You can begin by taking a close look at your waterfront and talking to the waterfront businesses, residents, the local government, and community groups. They can provide you with valuable insights on your waterfront.

One approach for pulling together information about your waterfront is to use the SWOT Analysis: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. By analyzing the information you have gathered and breaking it down into these four elements, you are better able to size up what you have to work with and what might be working against you. This analysis can help you determine the best mix of uses for your waterfront, what could be developed, and what resources should be protected.

To evaluate the existing condition of the waterfront and how it relates to the rest of the community, ask yourself:

- *S - What are the strengths of the waterfront?* Does your waterfront feature thriving maritime uses? Does it have good public access? Are there important natural resources? Does it include attractive historic features?
- *W - What are weaknesses of the waterfront?* Is your waterfront hard to get to from your downtown? Are there environmental constraints such as brownfields? Is the waterfront surrounded by deteriorating buildings? Is there adequate parking nearby?
- *O - What opportunities exist?* Could that vacant parcel become a park or a marina? Can your waterfront link with a regional trail system? Is there a future for any abandoned buildings?
- *T - What threats exist?* Are traditional waterfront uses, such as commercial fishing and marinas, threatened by redevelopment proposals, such as condominiums? Is an important wetland threatened by a road-widening plan? Is declining water quality impacting swimming or shellfishing?

Now that you have some understanding of what you have to work with, you can use this information to develop an initial vision for your waterfront. But remember, your vision will be refined as your understanding of your waterfront and its role in the community increases. In Chapter Four, you will gather more detailed

information about your waterfront, but first you must focus on your vision.

Making that vision a reality starts by asking yourself “*exactly what do I want to accomplish?*”

Developing a vision

A vision is your idea of what your waterfront will become. A vision statement declares what you hope to accomplish. It can be any length - a single sentence, bullet points, or a paragraph - as long as it is clear, focused, and based in reality. Your vision statement might be:

Vision Statement for Kingston’s Waterfront:

“The Kingston waterfront will be an attractive, active, walkable, culturally vibrant district with strong linkages to the rest of the City of Kingston. Shops, restaurants, recreational opportunities, museums, and events will attract visitors and residents seven days per week all through the year. New development will be consistent with established character and will highlight the area’s historic and natural resources. Trails, parks, marinas, and boat launches will maximize access to the waterways, creating high-quality recreational opportunities, and optimizing meaningful, permanent public access to the waterfront.”

The vision statement is the starting point for action and it will be used throughout the waterfront revitalization process, from planning to implementation. Creating the vision statement

should be the time to think big, but avoid wishful thinking. A compelling vision for your waterfront can provide:

- A future to work toward
- Focus and direction for enhancing your waterfront
- Motivation to mobilize assets and resources in partnerships, based on a shared vision
- Excitement about the waterfront's future and its potential role in the community

Developing a vision process is an exciting and dynamic way to mobilize community involvement and support. Visioning should occur as early in the planning process as possible.

Community participation is key and a formal visioning process that is open to all community members and involves key stakeholders is the best approach. Visioning is most successful when participation is broad-based and ongoing. By bringing people together you create a vision that captures the ideas and interests of a broad constituency of those concerned with the future of your waterfront.

Visioning generally occurs in some type of workshop format that brings key stakeholders together in a constructive forum to share opinions and new ideas. Your waterfront advisory committee can provide this forum. A visioning workshop would be useful if:

- You see great potential in your area and know that others do as well
- You desire to get a group inspired and make them more cohesive
- You want a clear, agreed-upon way to keep a project focused

A successful visioning workshop depends on thoughtful planning and skillful meeting facilitation. Bring together the key stakeholders in a comfortable meeting environment. Explain the agenda and ground rules, stressing the importance of participation and respect for one another's perspectives. Define the scope of your vision - namely, what can our waterfront become? Given what you know about the waterfront's features and location, have people identify and define what they think the opportunities are for the waterfront. Given what you know about the waterfront's features and location - what is possible? Brainstorm ideas, but keep the waterfront as the focus. Don't set out to solve larger community issues. Have fun thinking up possibilities, but if it seems unrealistic, then scale back.

Use pictures, graphics, or designs as well as words to begin to pull together a statement of your vision. Careful wording is important, so don't worry if there's a lot of effort spent on choosing the right words, or making subtle changes. It may take several sessions and drafts to reach consensus. Once you have reached consensus, support your statement with a

visually appealing depiction of your vision for the waterfront. A professionally prepared and well presented graphic representation of your vision is a powerful tool. The final vision should state how the waterfront can be enhanced, and how it fits into the revitalization of your community. Everyone should be comfortable with what is said and how it is said.

You may want to refine your vision by establishing goals and objectives. Goals provide the direction, and objectives break these down into a series of achievable tasks.

Goals can be both short- and long-term, indicating the various milestones along the way. They should be descriptive and provide enough explanation for anyone to understand the nature of each goal. Your goals will be based on your initial understanding of your waterfront and its assets; but you will always be re-evaluating your goals as you move forward and discover more about your waterfront.

While goals are fairly broad in their scope, your objectives will be specific regarding how these goals will be achieved. There can be a number of objectives for each goal and, as you move through a project, objectives are achieved and new ones are added.

Consider our earlier example of the vision statement for the Kingston waterfront. Goals such as *“protecting historic resources, providing mixed uses, and developing recreational opportunities”* may be established for the waterfront.

The goal of *“providing mixed uses”* at Kingston’s waterfront would be followed by a series of objectives such as:

“To develop a marina, five new retail storefronts, a restaurant and bar, all linked with public walkways along the creek.”

By developing goals and objectives, you will help increase the community’s understanding of your vision for the waterfront.

Reaching consensus on the vision

An integral part of the visioning process is building consensus - bringing people together in support of the common vision. You will always need to address the community’s ideas and concerns. Your success in revitalizing your waterfront will depend upon whether the people who live and work in the community embrace the vision.

There are many ways to develop consensus, but the key will be to sustain it. This is a long-term process requiring an outreach strategy to keep your community informed and involved in revitalization efforts. To build consensus and strong community support and begin to establish the partnerships that will be so important to your success, you may consider:

- Bringing the community to the waterfront to explain the vision and progress of revitalization efforts
- Publicizing early successes to highlight evidence of progress and build momentum and support

- Building press and media relations to inform the community of the vision and update them on the progress of revitalization efforts
- Starting a newsletter and establishing a regular mailing to the community to keep them informed on progress and to create a sense of involvement
- Producing a booklet, poster or brochure
- Launching a website to allow the community to stay up-to-date on the progress of revitalization efforts and obtain feedback from the community
- Holding community workshops, using an approach similar to the visioning process, to inform the community on the vision and update them on the progress of revitalization efforts

Remember, the vision statement is the starting point for action, but it is not set in stone. You will be able to refine the vision as you learn more about what you have to work with, find out more about your community, and discover if your vision is feasible. You can always modify the vision statement when new facts come into play. As you get further into the process, you will need to test the original vision against the realities, and, if an adjustment is needed, you should not hesitate to redefine the vision for the future of your waterfront.

Case Study: Troy

The City of Troy has developed a community-based planning process to guide redevelopment of its Hudson River waterfront. Public involvement included over a dozen community workshops, two design charrettes and the active participation of an advisory committee. These meetings, involving hundreds of concerned citizens, have resulted in substantial support for waterfront enhancements from the community and the private sector.

The resulting plan outlines projects, incentives, and regulatory changes that will result in environmental cleanup; new green space and public access; transportation improvement; and new waterfront land uses (www.troyny.gov/projects/brownfields/STWWRP.pdf). Troy's approach relies on partnerships among its private, public and nonprofit partners to make incremental improvements to the waterfront over the next 15 to 20 years.

The plan seeks to relocate existing heavy industrial users in the northern waterfront, where they now operate in close proximity to residential neighborhoods, to vacant and underused sites in the southern waterfront which offer convenient interstate access. The northern area will be freed to accommodate retail, new light manufacturing, commercial, and research and development uses. Public

improvements include a new waterfront park, trail, crew pavilion, and boat launch. Intensive buffering and creative design guidelines will be used to reduce land use conflicts and ensure that new development is consistent with historic neighborhood character. The entire waterfront will be served by a new waterfront bike and pedestrian trail. A new waterfront access road is currently being designed (www.troyny.gov/projects/industrialparkroad/industrialparkroad.html).

The City has modified its zoning and land use regulations to implement the plan and has tapped into numerous grant programs. The City has been successful in securing over \$12 million in funding to implement programs and improvements identified in the South Troy Revitalization Plan. These include Environmental Protection Funds to fund park planning and design; TEA-21 funds to build the waterfront trail; federal transportation funds to construct a waterfront access road; EPA funds for environmental site assessments and a job training pilot program; and funds from HUD Brownfields Economic Development Initiative for land assembly, cleanup, and relocation of industry (www.troyny.gov/projects/brownfields.html).





Lake Champlain



Esopus Meadows Lighthouse, Hudson River

Charting the course

Once you have reached consensus on your waterfront vision, it is essential to chart the course for the revitalization of your waterfront. You will need to turn your vision into a step-by-step strategy to guide you through plan preparation and project implementation. Ask yourself *“what tasks need to be performed to fulfill my vision and how will I handle them?”* Take the time to discuss and plan your approach to waterfront revitalization with your partners. This will help to strengthen both consensus and support for your project.

Develop a concise, action-oriented agenda that describes the steps that you will follow to implement your vision. View it as a scope of work for moving forward with the vision. To chart your course, you will specify the following:

- the tasks to be performed
- the techniques to be used
- the people to be involved and their areas of responsibility
- the time frame for action

By pulling these elements together, you can outline how your vision will be turned into a plan for the revitalization of your waterfront and how this plan will be implemented, one step at a time. This should be documented in writing, but don't go overboard with detail at this point. Keep it short and simple.