

ATTACHMENT R

**Sections from 2005 EA for Brooks Landing Phase I
regarding
City Plans, Purpose, Needs and Public Involvement**

1.2 Project Background

1.2.1 Brooks Landing Revitalization Project

Since the City of Rochester hosted the World Canals Conference in 2000, much attention has been given to linking local communities to the Erie Canal, an important recreational and economical resource that links the City of Rochester to other navigable waterways. The National Parks Service established the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor in December 2000, calling the Erie Canal “the most commercially enduring and historically significant canalway in the United States.”²

The historical significance of the Erie Canal has influenced development and redevelopment throughout New York State, and specifically in the City of Rochester. Projects such as Corn Hill Landing, the Troup Howell Bridge Reconstruction, the Erie Harbor-East River Wall, the Ford Street Bridge Historic Rehabilitation, and the Elmwood Avenue Bridge Rehabilitation are several examples of focused enhancements to the Erie Canal system. The Brooks Landing Revitalization Project is another such project, which aims to revitalize the Brooks/Genesee neighborhood and reconnect the greater Rochester community with the Canalway.

Brooks Landing is an area located in Sector 4 of the City of Rochester, New York. The proposed project is on the west side of the Genesee River, at the intersection of Brooks Avenue/Genesee Street and Plymouth Avenue, and across the river from the University of Rochester campus. A project location map (Figure 1) and an aerial photograph (Figure 2) have been included to illustrate the project area.

The surrounding area, once known as Castletown, has a rich and diverse history dating from early settlement farms to the boomtown era, when Rochester was one of the most prominent and productive cities involved with the country’s industrial revolution. Frederick Law Olmsted designed what became Genesee Valley Park in 1888. In the early 1920’s the Brooks/South Plymouth intersection became dedicated parkland, through an extension of Genesee Valley Park.

Despite the deep-rooted heritage and rich civic history, the area surrounding the proposed development site has experienced severe economic, social and aesthetic decline. The Genesee River South/Erie Canal Corridor Land Use and Development Plan, initiated in 1983, was prompted by a joint concern by the City of Rochester, University of Rochester, County of Monroe (the Cooperators) and adjoining neighborhoods to achieve the full economic and environmental potential of the Genesee River South/Erie Canal Corridor. Over the next three years, the Cooperators and stakeholders from area neighborhoods and businesses evaluated the corridors existing conditions and potentials as well as a variety of plan scenarios. The Genesee River South Corridor Land Use & Development Plan (Lane, Frenchman and Associates, 1986) was finalized in the Fall of 1986 and, with full endorsement of the Cooperators and community, was adopted by the City as an amendment to its Comprehensive Plan. The Plan called for development of retail space at the Genesee/Brooks intersection and reported blighted conditions there, with several vacant lots, shops in poor condition, and “nuisance” uses along the river, such

² <http://www.nps.gov/erie/>

as incinerators and junkyards. Section C of the Plan (included as Appendix A) discusses problems and opportunities, noting that the Genesee Street and Brooks Avenue area is a "very poorly defined area" (Lane, Frenchman and Associates, 1986). The Plan detailed a coordinated series of improvements to improve the open space system, to insure appropriate public services, and to encourage private and institutional development which will be compatible with the waterfront setting and supportive to the economic viability and livability of abutting neighborhoods.

The Plan's major theme is to give priority to waterfront uses which will be accessible to the public and will enhance appropriate development of adjacent areas. Major recommendations of the Plan include:

- ☐ Removal of roadways and rails which abut and isolate the River in favor of pedestrian, landscaped spaces. The Plan recommends elimination of a major segment of Wilson Boulevard, and the development of recently acquired railroad rights-of-way on the West Bank. New parks and open spaces along with other community supporting uses will be created in each of these areas;
- ☐ Completion of the network of River pedestrian and bicycle trails on both sides of the River. A continuous system will be developed between Genesee Valley Park and Ford Street, including new links across the River. These trails will be joined to the larger regional greenway network within Genesee Valley Park and along the Canal as well as extended north to the downtown;
- ☐ Long-range expansion of parks and open lands, to be accessible to the public, on University-owned land adjacent to the River. The Plan recommends that institutional arrangements be made for permanent park use of a major portion of the South River Campus between Elmwood Avenue and the I-390 main line. Similar arrangements should be made to insure public access to and along the riverbank in front of the River Campus;
- ☐ Improvement to transportation and utility systems to insure efficient services to existing and new uses and to enable maximum pedestrianization of the River's edge. Access improvements are recommended along Mount Hope Avenue, at north and south entries to and within the University, and along the West Bank to serve new development and protect existing neighborhoods;
- ☐ Creation of new housing development sites along both banks of the River is recommended. Over 800 new units are proposed which will expand the tax base and contribute to neighborhood revitalization;
- ☐ Enhancement of existing shopping and commercial areas is proposed in conjunction with the foregoing improvements. Such improvements in access, physical attractiveness, and range of goods/services will enable areas such as that at Genesee/Brooks to attract their fair share of the market and employment growth which can be expected with the success of the Plan.

The Plan's implementation phasing and responsibilities was detailed in a Memorandum of Agreement between the Cooperators and the community. The agreement outlined a phased approach to implementation with park/recreational improvements and removal of barriers to public access to and along the waterfront as the initial phase. This phasing was based on two principles: first, the open space/recreational elements form the spine for future development and, second; the public access elements would be in place even if market conditions slowed future economic development phases.

In recognition of the agreement, the following implementing actions have occurred:

- ☐ The City purchased forty-two (42) acres of waterfront land from the University of Rochester and subsequently dedicated it as parkland. (24 acres being added to Genesee Valley Park East and 18 acres establishing Bausch and Lomb Riverfront Park – see Figure 5)
- ☐ The County constructed a pedestrian bridge linking to U of R and the Brooks Landing area and completed park road, trail and pavilion improvements in the newly dedicated area of Genesee Valley Park East.
- ☐ The City established a West Bank Trail system linking the Erie Canal and Genesee Greenway trails to the Center City.
- ☐ The City abandoned Wilson Boulevard, a six lane road along the East Bank of the river/canal and the U of R financed reconstruction of the road as a two lane park road along with an East Bank Trail system linking Genesee Valley Park East to the Center City.
- ☐ The City reconstructed Ford Street and Elmwood Avenue bridges incorporating special pedestrian features and lighting and with direct connection to the river/canal front trails.
- ☐ The City relocated its park maintenance operation out of Genesee Valley Park West and redeveloped the building as a community Watersports Center offering canoeing, kayaking and rowing activities to area schools and the public.
- ☐ The City and University jointly installed an East and West side trailblazer and information signage system.
- ☐ The City, University and community jointly undertook a series of market/design studies and community meetings to determine the character of the Brooks Landing development.
- ☐ The City is currently developing trail connections from adjoining neighborhoods directly to the river/canal trail system.

To date over \$10 Million dollars have been spent to expand and enhance public access and recreational opportunities along the River and Canal with additional improvements scheduled as a part of the \$18 Million Brooks Landing development.

The City of Rochester's adopted comprehensive plan, entitled "Rochester 2010: The Renaissance Plan" (City of Rochester, 1999) outlines key strategies for the revitalization of City neighborhoods. In keeping with the City's strategy to draw upon the public for the content of the Plan, Sector 4 neighborhood and business organizations initiated a series of public meetings to establish a vision for the project area and highlight development opportunities based on land uses consistent with the neighborhood's vision. Since the early 1990s, various neighborhood leaders, development professionals and City staff have met regularly to create a development concept plan that takes full advantage of the broad range of land uses in the project area.

Based on public input, the Brooks Landing concept includes a new extended-stay hotel and restaurant along the Genesee River with an adjacent new public waterfront, promenade, boat landing, new building with office and retail space, and new infill development. Additionally, since this section of the Genesee River is part of the Erie Canal system, the Brooks Landing concept advances the state-wide goal, established through the creation of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor in December 2000 (P.L. 106-554, Title VIII, Sec. 801), to promote the use and awareness of the Erie Canal.

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor (ECNHC) incorporates all municipalities containing elements of the original or modern Erie Canal which means both the project and replacement parcels are in the Corridor. The replacement parcel however is located more than five (5) miles away from the modern Canal itself and some three (3) miles from the original canal alignment and has no relationship to or impact on the Canal itself.

In consultation with the ECNHC Commission, the Vice Chairman determined that although the official management plan for the Canalway would not be approved until Fall of 2005, the project, with its incorporated mitigating measures in relation to the legislated (PL 106-554) purposes for the Corridor designation and Canalway plan requirements, is consistent with the Corridor intent and goals.

Specific examples of consistency include:

- (1.) By attracting visitors and local residents to the project area and Canal front, the visibility and public use of the Canal corridor will be enhanced.
- (2.) The Canal front railway and docking facilities to be developed as part of the project will improve hiking/biking and boating opportunities on the Canal, a key objective for the Corridor plan.
- (3.) To protect the visual character of the Canalway, appropriate mitigating measures and design elements have been built into the project to respond to concerns over park conversion, traffic and visual character (See EA Sections 2.2, 4.5, 4.7, and 5.0).

(4.) Signage and interpretive factors are incorporated in the project to promote the story of the Canal and its role in the development of the community. (See EA Sections 4.6 and 5.0).

(5.) The project will have a positive economic and community development impact on the nearby community. (See EA Sections 1.3 and 4.12).

The current project, estimated at \$18 million, is the product of more than twenty years of sustained public planning, numerous design charrettes and significant input from the community as well as key stakeholders and agencies representing Rochester's Sector 4 Common Council, the 19th Ward, Monroe County, the University of Rochester, New York State Canal Corporation, Army Corps of Engineers, the State legislature and the Landmark Society of Western New York.

The major components of this waterfront project include:

- An 86-room extended-stay hotel
- A 4,900 square foot restaurant
- Enhanced public parkland including a new waterfront promenade and boat landing
- A new 25,000 square foot office/retail building
- Renovated and new infill commercial development

In addition to the main development components, this project will include provisions for enhanced public pedestrian access and recreational amenities within Genesee Valley Park, and will link the new public promenade to the existing Genesee Riverway Trail, which connects to the Genesee Valley Greenway trail system and the Erie Canal Heritage Trail via the existing Genesee Riverway Trail. The project will provide a useful and unique asset to the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. Nowhere else on the canal can a recreational boater land at a full-service extended stay hotel and restaurant within 30 feet of the water's edge. This project will enhance the recreational value of the entire network of regional public parkland and recreational resources.

The project has been reviewed through the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) process. A Negative Declaration was prepared in a Notice of Environmental Determination issued on April 8, 2003 (Appendix B).

1.2.2 Parkland Conversion Parcel

In 1976, the City of Rochester accepted financial assistance through the LWCF in the amount of \$710,500 through the NYS OPRHP for improvements to a 45-acre section of Genesee Valley Park West (see Figure ES-2). The project description was to upgrade and add to existing facilities by development of a new picnic area, hardball diamond, tennis courts, preschool and children's play areas; improvements to existing softball diamonds and walking path along the river; other miscellaneous improvement and demolition of existing obsolete structures and facilities. The request was submitted to the National Park Service in 1977. The geographic location provided was:

signage and other means to inform the public of entries into the new parkland within the required time frame as per NPS requirements.

The City of Rochester is working on a Locally Funded Federal Aid Project with funding from the Federal Highway Administration to extend the Genesee Riverway Trail from its current northern terminus in Turning Point Park to the north, through the proposed replacement parcel and terminating at the recently completed O'Rorke bridge. This project is occurring independently of the parkland conversion. The use of the replacement parcel as a substitute for the conversion parcel will designate the 19.5 acres as 6(f) parkland, protecting it from potential non-recreational uses in the future.

1.3 Purpose and Need Statement

The purpose and need statement is an important aspect of a NEPA document. The CEQ regulations simply require that the document "shall briefly specify the underlying purpose and need to which the agency is responding in proposing the alternatives including the proposed action." (Section 1502.17). However, a clear statement of purpose and need may limit the range of alternatives available. It will also be used as criteria in evaluating alternatives.

The following, from page 16 of the DO-12 Handbook, describes purpose as:

... a statement of goals and objectives that NPS intends to fulfill by taking action. These goals can come from a park's statement of purpose and significance (if the action proposed is a [General Management Plan] GMP, for instance), from management objectives or mission goals, from implementing or other legislation, from a GMP or other plan, from standards and guidelines for a particular management zone, from public or staff input, and from other sources. Because some of these objectives also may resolve needs, there may be overlap between purpose and need. The discussion should be limited to those goals and objectives that are critical to meet if NPS is to consider the proposal successful.

The following, from page 16 of the DO-12 Handbook, describes need as:

.. a discussion of existing conditions that need to be changed, problems that need to be remedied, decisions that need to be made, and policies or mandates that need to be implemented. In other words, it explains why your park is proposing this action at this time. It may have elements you would otherwise include in a discussion of project "background." There may be one or several needs that an action will resolve. Need is not a discussion of the need for NEPA or other regulatory compliance, but rather reasons why the park must take action at this time and in this place.

As stated previously, the existing land use in the project area has ranged from settlement farms to trading posts to hotels. What was historically once a thriving riverside landing that included homes, taverns and small businesses is now a depressed neighborhood center in need of

revitalization. Several planning documents include revitalization goals directed at this site in particular.

In September 1986, the Genesee River South Corridor Land Use & Development Plan identified the project area as a key commercial site to serve the surrounding neighborhood and link the neighborhood to the functions of the Genesee River, the Erie Canal system and other attractions in close proximity to the neighborhood, such as the University of Rochester (Appendix A).

In April 1999, the City's Comprehensive Plan, "Rochester 2010: The Renaissance Plan," was adopted (Appendix C). The Plan included the promotion of several goals/campaigns which are consistent with and support the Genesee/Brooks initiative, such as:

- (1) Environmental Stewardship (Campaign 4)
- (2) Economic Vitality (Campaign 6)
- (3) Tourism Destination (Campaign 8)
- (4) Healthy Urban Neighborhoods (Campaign 9)

As part of a city-wide objective to better utilize its dynamic local waterfront resources and in response to New York State's promotion of the use and awareness of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, the City of Rochester is currently undertaking major steps towards the collaboration of regional parks and recreation systems, extensive waterways, local city heritage and significant neighborhood revitalization. To these ends, an opportunity has been identified by the community to establish an Urban Renewal District at the waterfront landing along the Genesee River and Erie Canal Corridor (Appendix D). This District will contain three areas, Sub-Area I, Sub-Area II and Sub-Area III (Exhibits A, B and C of Appendix D). As a whole, the District will facilitate redevelopment by achieving the following objectives:

- (1) Revitalize and link back to the Genesee River/Erie Canal, an otherwise decaying neighborhood commercial center located in the City's southwest quadrant;
- (2) Celebrate the history of the site as it relates to the Genesee River/Erie Canal and the birth of Rochester;
- (3) Increase usage and recreational value of waterfront and parkland resources, and;
- (4) Increase awareness of local and regional historic and cultural resources.

In addition to reinforcing the City's Comprehensive Plan and Urban Renewal Plan, the Brooks Landing project reinforces the goals of the City of Rochester's Draft Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP). Though not yet formally adopted, the Program goals are:

- (1) To have the City of Rochester and its surrounding region be a family oriented, four season, tourist destination attraction for the northeastern United States and Canada.
- (2) To have waterfront resources that directly enhance the quality of life for city residents.
- (3) To have private, market driven investments in the tourism industry that result in additional revenue for businesses and jobs for local residents.
- (4) To have our community's waterfront related recreational, environmental, historic and cultural resources protected and/or enhanced.

Brooks Landing furthers the goals of the LWRP by improving underutilized land, enhancing public pedestrian access to the river, promoting tourism and supporting economic development. The Brooks-Genesee Landing is cited in the LWRP as an area which "could be a destination on the Canal." The Program recommends the development of a landing, retail, restaurant and small-scale lodging opportunities at this location. The LWRP Goals and Strategies, as well as Recommendations, Projects and Implementation Actions, are included as Appendix E.

The key objectives for the Brooks Landing Revitalization Project are:

- A. The elimination of substandard and deteriorated structures and other blighting influences in the project area, through demolition or rehabilitation and subsequent redevelopment.
- B. The promotion of economic development in and around the project area, through private commercial development, supporting parking facilities and public access.
- C. The conveyance by lease or fee simple agency-owned vacant property to developers to support private development.
- D. The generation of additional jobs and municipal tax base within the project area in order to maximize utilization of City land area.
- E. To make better use of underutilized land and buildings within the project area.
- F. The beautification of the project area through the construction of new sidewalks, streetscape improvement and waterfront amenities.
- G. To improve security and safety in the project area.

In addition to the overall objectives of the District, the proposed Brooks Landing Revitalization Project will attempt to create stronger connections between the Genesee Street/Brooks Avenue neighborhood, the Genesee Valley Park and the University of Rochester. Currently, these three areas are located in close proximity to one another but are socially and economically disconnected. The objectives of the Brooks Landing project as it relates individually and collectively to these three areas are summarized below:

Genesee River and Erie Canal Corridor:

- Attract canal recreational boaters and excursion boat passengers to existing and new businesses in the neighborhood;
- Increase neighborhood awareness and usage of the river/canal;
- Enhance pedestrian and visual access to the waterfront; and,
- Strengthen the physical relationship between the neighborhood and the University of Rochester.

Genesee Valley Park:

- Enhance the park's integration with the neighborhood center;

- Minimize dead-space and otherwise ineffectual and functionally disconnected land between the originally designed park and the neighborhood;
- Eradicate the visual and audible impacts of the existing South Plymouth Avenue thoroughfare through the park;
- Increase the value and usage of the existing park amenities including those improvements funded by a Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant in 1978, and;
- Create a visitor's hub along the Genesee Riverway Trail.

University of Rochester:

- Enhance the functional relationship between the campus and the neighborhood;
- Strengthen through design of public amenities, a sense of continuity with the neighborhood, and;
- Strengthen the economic vitality of the neighborhood.

CITY OF ROCHESTER, NEW YORK
Environmental Assessment for the Conversion of a Portion of Genesee Valley
Park under the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act as a Result of the
Brooks Landing Revitalization Project

6.0 CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

6.1 Public Involvement

The Brooks Landing Revitalization Project has an extensive history of public involvement involving long-range planning and project-specific community input. Three newspaper articles, dated August 12, 2002, February 7, 2003, and November 16, 2003, have been included in Appendix M to provide background on the Urban Renewal District and the history of the Brooks Landing project.

In September 1986, the Genesee River South Corridor Land Use & Development Plan identified the project area as a key commercial site to serve the surrounding neighborhood and link the neighborhood to the functions of the Genesee River, the Erie Canal system and other attractions in close proximity to the neighborhood, such as the University of Rochester (see Appendix A).

In the early 1990's, the first phase of the Genesee River South Corridor Plan was realized – the design and construction of the pedestrian bridge over the Genesee River and construction of the West Bank Riverway Trail. The pedestrian bridge achieved the first major goal of the plan – to link both sides of the river and more specially the University of Rochester with the commercial core of the South Plymouth/Brooks intersection.

Following this initial phase, the area received more attention from the City's Comprehensive Plan, entitled "Rochester 2010: The Renaissance Plan," and the recently-drafted City of Rochester's Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) (Appendices C and E). The Rochester 2010 Plan included the promotion of several goals for the City which support the Genesee/Brooks initiative, including:

- (1) Environmental Stewardship (Campaign 4)
- (2) Economic Vitality (Campaign 6)
- (3) Tourism Destination (Campaign 8)
- (4) Healthy Urban Neighborhoods (Campaign 9)

The City of Rochester's Draft Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP), though not formally adopted, include program goals that will be realized by the Brooks Landing project:

- (1) To have the City of Rochester and its surrounding region be a family oriented, four season, tourist destination attraction for the northeastern United States and Canada.
- (2) To have waterfront resources that directly enhance the quality of life for city residents.

- (3) To have private, market driven investments in the tourism industry that result in additional revenue for businesses and jobs for local residents.
- (4) To have our community's waterfront related recreational, environmental, historic and cultural resources protected and/or enhanced.

As community support and momentum for the revitalization of this area increased, the Sector 4 Brooks/Genesee Revitalization Committee formed, consisting of Sector 4 community leaders, local architects, developers and the City of Rochester's Economic Development staff. After considering large retail plazas, office buildings and grocery markets, the Committee determined that a waterfront hotel and restaurant would best compliment the existing character of the 19th Ward neighborhood, the University of Rochester campus and the site history as a landing on the Genesee River and Erie Canal system. Local developers recognized a market niche for a first-class extended-stay hotel. The hotel concept presented a feasible solution and appropriate land use for a commercial anchor to initiate neighborhood revitalization.

In March 2000, the Sector 4 Brooks/Genesee Revitalization Committee hosted a design charrette for the Brook Avenue/Genesee Street Initiative. The group of over 130 people included residents from five neighborhoods in Sector 4 including the 19th Ward, Change of the Scene (COTS), Neighborhood United, Plymouth-Exchange (PLEX) and South West Area Neighborhood (SWAN). Feedback from the charrette, the most significant of which was the desire to achieve a visual and physical connection with the river, was incorporated into the overall concept, and Sector 4 neighborhood representatives sought to attract seasoned developers with experience in revitalization and waterfront development.

Together with the University of Rochester and the City of Rochester, the Committee began meeting once a month to discuss issues and opportunities associated with the initiative. Appendix M contains summaries and the agendas for Sector 4 Common Council and 19th Ward meetings from March 2001 through July 2003.

In addition to the design charrette and neighborhood leader meetings, multiple community-wide and public agency meetings were held to present and solicit feedback on the Brooks/Genesee initiative (Appendix M). The community-wide meetings were well-attended, publicized in community organization newsletters, and public notices were mailed to residents and businesses in the neighborhood. In addition, flyers and door hangers were placed at properties in the immediate project area.

After many Committee meetings and public forums, the Sector 4 Brooks/Genesee Revitalization Committee drafted the following objectives, which compliment the City's updated City of Rochester Comprehensive Plan and the South River Corridor Plan:

1. Revitalize the Brooks Avenue/Genesee Street neighborhood center
2. Enhance pedestrian access and recreational usage of the neighborhood's waterfront for area residents, businesses, institutions and visitors
3. Increase and sustain economic development in the neighborhood by (a) incorporating an extended-stay hotel and restaurant and (b) linking the Brooks/Genesee intersection to the waterfront
4. Increase daytime population

5. Increase neighborhood retail and services
6. Improve neighborhood streets, streetscapes and vehicular traffic flow
7. Increase local job opportunities
8. Decrease neighborhood blight and street crime, and increased vitality and security
9. Enhance architectural building design and neighborhood character

The following set of criteria was developed to accomplish this goal:

1. The hotel/restaurant site should be within proximity to the University of Rochester, Strong Medical Center and along a direct route to the Rochester International Airport and downtown Rochester.
2. The site should be large enough to accommodate the hotel and restaurant.
3. In an attempt to strengthen Genesee Street businesses, the site should link the waterfront of the Genesee River and Erie Canal system to the Brooks Avenue/Genesee Street neighborhood center.
4. The site should utilize the existing pedestrian bridge spanning the Genesee River / Erie Canal and connecting the University of Rochester to the City's 19th Ward.

In addition to informational meetings and community workshops, regular meetings between neighborhood leaders and public agencies helped the Brooks Landing planning process retain continuous communication between residents and the City. Multiple public hearings and review meetings were advertised in local newspapers and held in compliance with various city regulatory processes. These hearings are summarized in Appendix M. The mailing list for these public meetings is included in Appendix M.

Finally, the Brooks Landing project is supported by several area stakeholders, including the Landmark Society of Western New York, the Genesee Corridor Business Association, the City of Rochester Planning Commission and the University of Rochester (Appendix M).

6.2 Agencies and Organizations that Received the Environmental Assessment

1. City of Rochester, Department of Economic Development
2. State of New York, Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
3. The National Park Service
4. Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor
5. US Army Corps of Engineers
6. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation