



Community Open House Summary

City of Rochester, New York

June 26, 2013



Prepared for: City of Rochester Bureau of Planning and Zoning, City of Rochester Department of Neighborhood and Business Development.

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Sharing Ideas

On June 26, 2013 stakeholders gathered in Rochester City Hall Council Chambers for the first community meeting for the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) Update. Approximately 50 residents, business-owners, and leaders shared ideas and comments for the waterfront. The meeting focused on informing and engaging participants using a casual 'open-house' format. Participants browsed exhibits, adding comments, and engaging project leaders throughout. Moreover, the meeting provided attendees a forum to express their community values in a stimulating, respectful environment. A slideshow of waterfront images from around the world and a gallery of local waterfront plans and projects encouraged participants to think big and then share their vision.

Exhibits and Key Findings

The open house included five exhibits. These displays were intended to both inform attendees and collect public comments. Most

exhibits were interactive and encouraged attendees to share their vision, identify issues, opportunities, and assets or comment on the proposed waterfront boundary. A description and key findings from each exhibit are included below.

Welcome

Meeting participants began the meeting by greeting project leaders, signing-in, and collecting information on the project and understanding meeting format. Participants could also volunteer to join a focus group.

LWRP History and Background

Attendees viewed a slideshow covering the history of the LWRP in Rochester. Previous waterfront planning documents and other background information was on display and available for review.





LWRP Vision

The “vision” exhibit was an important component of the meeting. Participants were asked to answer two open-ended questions:

- *What makes a great waterfront?*
- *What words, phrases or ideas should be part of our waterfront vision?*

In addition, participants were asked to imagine that a fictitious relative (E.g. Aunt Sally) moved away from the area and ten years had passed. They then penned postcards telling her how much the waterfront in Rochester has changed over the years. The objective was to think about and write down what they would like the waterfront to be in the future; to share their vision! This information will be very valuable when preparing the vision statement.

Key Findings

Participants stressed that great waterfronts feature public access to the water and active transportation through multi-use trails.

The word cloud (on the following page) represents answers to the question, “What words, phrases or ideas should be part of our waterfront vision? The larger text represent frequent responses, while smaller text represent unique ideas.

In addition to walking, biking, and boating, postcard writers see waterfront restaurants and dining as important components of their vision.

LWRP Issues

A large aerial map depicting the LWRP boundary along with identified subareas helped attendees focus their thoughts. Here, participants identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for specific waterfront areas.

Key Findings

- *Strengths—public access to beautiful natural resources*
- *Weaknesses—Inconsistent Genesee Riverway Trail and waterfront access*
- *Opportunities—Enhanced transit, economic development*
- *Threats—Lack of funding, insensitive development*



LWRP Priorities

The priorities exhibit included a list of current and proposed City of Rochester waterfront projects. Participants were asked to place sticker dots in specific project columns while considering the following questions:

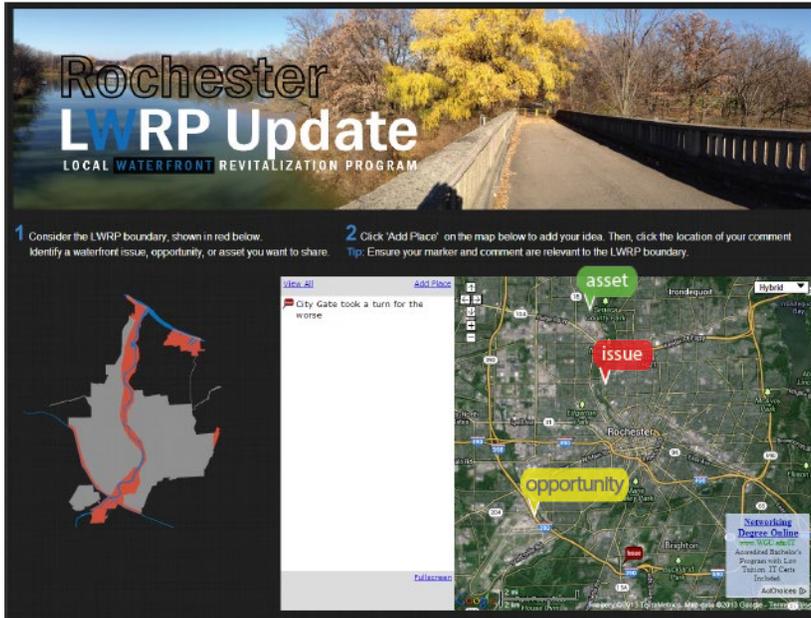
- *What is your one 'big idea' or 'catalyst project' for our waterfront?*
- *Which waterfront projects or priorities are important to you?*

Key Findings

Participants offered diverse, creative ideas for waterfront projects. A few identified the realization of the Historic Erie Canal Aqueduct and Broad Street Corridor Master Plan as their priority. Others expressed interest in extending and connecting multi-use trails.

Participants 'voted' on specific waterfront priorities. Below are a few of the responses:

- *Highest Votes –Develop Downtown Riverfront , Improve Access to Waterfront Neighborhoods*
- *Lowest Votes—Develop more boat docks/slips/marinas, Improve Fishing Access*



To access the site, go to www.cityofrochester.gov/LWRP/

Digital Participation

Understanding the power of the web, project leaders broadened public participation in the LWRP Update with collaborative mapping and an online survey form. The collaborative map allows anyone with web access to add a geographically-specific comment. It emulates a public meeting by collecting issues, opportunities, and assets twenty-four hours a day. Furthermore, the site allows users to submit text comments through a web form.



Moving Forward

The open house provided valuable information that will be used throughout the development of the LWRP update. Project leaders will continue the outreach process by meeting with local stakeholder focus groups to discuss specific waterfront topics and/or geographic areas. A draft waterfront vision statement will also be developed based on information from the community open house and discussions with the focus groups. The vision statement will be the guiding force for the LWRP.

Table 1: What makes a great waterfront?

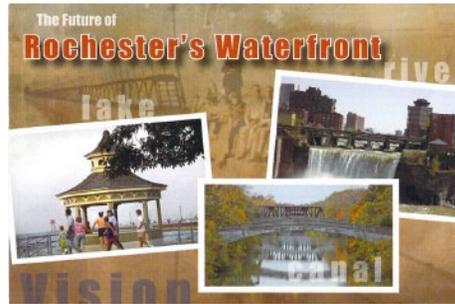
| # | Comment | # | Comment |
|---|---|----|---|
| 1 | accessibility waterfronts should be open to the public | 9 | sparkling clean water moving at different speeds at different areas (E.g. FDR Memorial in DC) |
| 2 | views & natural habitat Maintain scenic resources & ecological health of land, water, air | 10 | keep out high-rises from waterfront - they put up a barrier between the water & public views |
| 3 | active transportation multi-use trails for biking, walking, access to water from canoe\kayak rentals, launches | 11 | a comfortable waterfront that feels safe by design |
| 4 | story of water quality, habitat & history of canal & harbor | 12 | people |
| 5 | whitewater kayaking at Upper Falls (good water, bad land; we are used to this) | 13 | festivals & events |
| 6 | bring back floating dock to the new park you just built on Mt. Hope; it is paid for | 14 | well used & maintained |
| 7 | interactive urban edge | 15 | picnic & sitting areas |
| 8 | vibrant, commercial (restaurant) stablishments | 16 | birding wildlife viewing & education |

Table 2: What words/phrases/ideas should be part of our waterfront vision?

| # | Comment | # | Comment | # | Comment |
|----|---|----|-----------------------------------|----|---------------------------------------|
| 1 | access | 15 | families | 29 | pulsating water fountain for kids |
| 2 | active | 16 | for all | 30 | residents |
| 3 | activity | 17 | fresh air | 31 | respect |
| 4 | bars, restaurants, coffee shops, hotels | 18 | fun | 32 | safe |
| 5 | beauty | 19 | generations to come | 33 | share |
| 6 | bike-friendly | 20 | health | 34 | sustainable |
| 7 | clean | 21 | high grounds | 35 | thrive |
| 8 | community asset | 22 | kids | 36 | utility |
| 9 | concert stage on water | 23 | linkage | 37 | visibility |
| 10 | connectivity | 24 | lively | 38 | waterfront: meeting of sky\land\water |
| 11 | destinations | 25 | magnificent | 39 | welcoming |
| 12 | diversity | 26 | nature's edible vegetation | 40 | well used & peaceful |
| 13 | elegant | 27 | open | 41 | wetland restoration |
| 14 | engagement | 28 | perchings to see the surroundings | 42 | wildlife |

Table 3: What are the most important waterfront projects or goals to you?

| Votes | Waterfront Projects\Goals |
|-------|---|
| 16 | develop Downtown riverfront |
| 15 | improve access to waterfront neighborhoods |
| 14 | improve water quality |
| 13 | develop more trails |
| 12 | develop canoe\kayak access |
| 12 | protect sensitive environmental areas |
| 9 | develop waterfront tourist attractions\ festivals |
| 5 | improve\enhance existing parks |
| 4 | develop more boat slips, docks, & marinas |
| 4 | improve fishing access |



share your vision

Dear Anne Sally-

Rochester's waterfront has really changed. You should see it today! Now it's...

** began with activity, a spectacular outdoor location, highlight historical sites and geological attributes; trails and kayakers allow easy access*

City of Rochester **LRBP Update**

Table 4: 'Rochester's waterfront has really changed. You should see it today! Now it's'

| # | Postcard Statements |
|---|--|
| 1 | ...become a dominant feature of the City. It is so nice to be able to walk down to the riverfront & get your feet wet. We caught a couple of fish & watched kayakers, rowers, & sailors all over the river. We walked across the pedestrian bridge from the South Wedge to Corn Hill for dinner & took in the city lights over the river. |
| 2 | ...filled with the people, shops, places to eat, & you can watch the boats travel right down the original canal bed! It's so neat to imagine our little city part of history & this same canal responsible for what we are today. Love, Joe P.S. The restaurant we just ate at is making a lot of money, & gives free drinks for boaters! |
| 3 | I was able to ride my bike from the canal all the way to Lake Ontario - we were exhausted but it is down hill! The river side had so many picnic tables - filled with families fishing & having a great time. |
| 4 | Rochester is a puzzle with the wrong picture on the box. |
| 5 | I went to the beach today & the air smelled like water & sky. Such an improvement from the days of algae. |
| 6 | There are dozens of kayaks & canoes on the river now that there are more put-ins & docks. |
| 7 | ...a great craft beer town! |
| 8 | There's a Zip line over the gorge! |

Table 5: What is your one “big idea” or “catalyst project” for our waterfront?

| # | Comment | # | Comment |
|---|--|----|---|
| 1 | Historic Erie Canal Aqueduct & Broad Street Corridor Master Plan create a vibrant, walkable mixed-use neighborhood as an international destination grounded in Rochester’s history connecting to greater city assets & neighborhoods & promoting flexible mass transit alternatives | 10 | pedestrian bridge between Court St & Ford St connecting Corn Hill & South Wedge neighborhoods |
| 2 | GardenAerial a vision to connect High Falls to Center City through the creation of a three-quarter mile loop trail, & a connection underneath the Inner Loop, creating unprecedented access to High Falls & the Middle Gorge | 11 | continuous Genessee Riverway Trail add connections in Downtown & northern areas, including trestle bridge connection to El Camino Trail |
| 3 | edible, public food forest trail for walk\bike with car access at limited places | 12 | enhance riverfront park at PLEX |
| 4 | build an outdoor concert venue near Corn Hill Landing (500-1500 seats) & relocate “Party in the Park” there | 13 | snowplow selected trails in winter for bikes, just as we do sidewalks for pedestrians |
| 5 | an active transportation center on waterfront near FD-SBA bridge bike repair, pay showers, café, parking, restrooms | 14 | develop a trail along Densmore Creek to Bay |
| 6 | a) more direct river access in Lower Gorge, Seth Green Drive is not enough b) need access at Maplewood Park for fishing, kayaking, hiking | 15 | a) warm & dry - no more wet & cold places b) light the re-watering project |
| 7 | remove river wall (partial) from Exchange Blvd near Ford Street (Cornhill) & add small craft access point | 16 | water quality improvements at Charlotte Beach |
| 8 | keep waterfront areas more park-like, less commercial development | 17 | complete the 1993-1996 Erie Canal Corridor Plan |
| 9 | create Genessee River app (i.e. mobile application) to digitally tell stories of all the points along the river | 18 | trail lighting |

Table 6: Identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the waterfront.

| | A | B | C | D | E |
|-----|--|--|--|--|---|
| Row | Strengths | Weaknesses | | Opportunities | Threats |
| 1 | beautiful scenic quality | gaps in the trail network can discourage some users, especially Downtown | lack of access to the River for Westside residents north of Downtown | public food forests | lack of creativity to adopt a bold, just vision & find ways to implement it |
| 2 | great growth potential | promotion & signage to the beautiful waterfront is low | water quality due to agriculture up river | zip line over the gorge | crowding public space or blank walls & parking on the waterside |
| 3 | Rochester's proximity & relationship to Toronto, High Falls, beautiful river, and a Wine District | neighborhood groups not well connected (yet) with a single vision | High Falls connection between Center City via the Inner Loop | bus rapid transit (along Lake Ave) connecting Port, Eastman Business Park, Downtown, UR, (or Airport) Maybe RIT or Marketplace Mall area as another terminus | scale & proportion of new development |
| 4 | historic designed parkland | poor design (good design doesn't mean expensive, just appropriate) | gang-related crime & perceptions of unsafe neighborhoods | light rail connecting High Falls, Charlotte, & the rest of the city | same old process results in same old outcome |
| 5 | proximity to affordable residences, key employment hubs, (Eastman Business Park, Downtown, UR) cultural & natural assets | too much parking on waterfront | too little public access to waterfront | active, urban lifestyle as a tool to entice millennials | lack of necessary funds to implement vision |
| 6 | almost continuous public ownership & access | blighted open spaces in Charles Carroll Park | need more picnicking leisure opportunities (also sports games, etc) along river trail on west side North of Downtown | Eastman Business Park as solar energy hub, build-up employment, incentivize folks to live close by, redevelop Kodak parking lots & bring Bus rapid transit to Lake Ave & complete bike trails to Downtown & beyond | insensitive development |
| 7 | land is mostly public | need to put bike-friendly ramps on Sister Cities Bridge | need more physical access to the river | underutilized | parochialism, reluctance to change & grow |
| 8 | nearby destinations, inspiring & historical | poor schools | income inequity/concentrated poverty | welcoming spaces for all folks, not just tourists or wealthy | fear of crime (not actual crime) |
| 9 | | lack of jobs for 'unskilled workers' | mismanagement of riparian buffers | GardenAerial project | |

Table 7: Share your comments on waterfront zones 1–4.

| | A | B | C | D | E | F |
|-----|--|---|--|---|--|--|
| Row | Zone 1: Beachfront\Durand | Zone 2: Port Site | Zone 3: River St | Zone 4: River Gorge (natural) | | |
| 1 | a) Durand playground b) connect Beach Ave lake sidewalk to beach c) Signage d) bathrooms | a) keep new structures in scale & style with existing neighborhood b) no 10-story apartment\condo c) no build-up of parking lots along beach\lake d) make it Beautiful | human-scale, historic ambience & authenticity | bring back the old beer garden at the bottom of the gorge in Maplewood | install Cable Car, Zip line, Tram, or Funicular for gorge access | connect the gaps in the Genesee River Trail for one clear, continuous trail |
| 2 | a) allow cyclists to use the beach-side sidewalk West of Ontario Beach b) upgrade to shared use path | a smaller, faster ferry to make over \$100 million port facility relevant | a) more bike parking b) stop closing off river trail in front of port | complete all gaps along the river from Lake Ontario to the Erie Canal for a complete bike trail, walking\ running space all along the gorge | West side direct access to river at Maplewood Park | a) make river trail by the cemeteries actually on the river, not Lake Ave b) install bike lanes on Lake Ave |
| 3 | a) keep boats in smaller area so people can have a safer place to play b) public beach is critical to local residents | a) many boats to & from Toronto hotel b) reuse beach cafes c) cruises | | a) family hiking\ biking trail on East side of river (Zoo to Lake) | a) create some scenic vistas from west side b) cut back dense wooded tree cover & insert picnicking areas (tables, grills) & leisure activity areas (like near the Maplewood Tennis Courts) | provide safe fishing, kayaking canoeing, and hiking access down into the gorge |
| 4 | connect the lakeshore trail with the Genesee Riverway Trail to provide an off-road bike trail all the way to the beach from the city | a) cafes b) more year-round activities for residents & visitors c) sea kayaking, canoe rental d) other destinations that welcome people to the waterfront | | public access to land at bottom of gorge under Pontes De Rennes | a) waterfront\river access from Maplewood\west side b) install steps & trail down to the river from the new rose garden | provide 'lightly' developed trail to Lower Falls gorge from Maplewood Rose Garden area |
| 5 | a) safe swimming for all, all summer long b) offer swimming lessons in the lake c) keep water clean | a) winter festivals b) ice sculpture | | GardenAerial plan for pedestrian bridge at brink of falls | a) lower access to High Falls Gorge B) preservation of BeeBee Station | cross country skiing & snowshoe rental to encourage winter trail use |
| 6 | a) allow fires on the beach b) create an area for camping on the beach c) lean-tuos for picnicking in the rain or camping | a) more bike parking b) stop closing off river trail in front of port | | Lower Falls Park is isolated & under-utilized | continuous access lake to canal East & West | |

Table 8: Share your comments on waterfront zones 5–8*.

| | A | B | C | D | E |
|-----|---|--|--|---|--|
| Row | Zone 5: Upland Areas | Zone 6: High Falls\Downtown | | Zone 7: South River Corridor | Zone 8: Erie Canal (East\West) |
| 1 | recognition of the civic value of the historic path system, the green space of the community | the Broad St Aqueduct should become the heart & center for all aspects of Rochester history & future vision, a place where Hollywood, wine, arts, music, & culture are celebrated, including our sister cities | connect the gaps in the Genesee River Trail for one clear, continuous trail | a) remove major bumps in pavement from the roots (dangerous for bikes) b) Lighting for safe bike riding/ walking home at night c) picnic area with tables, grills by Camp John Porter | a) celebrate major street crossings (Lyell, Chili, Mt Hope, E Henrietta etc) of Canal Gateways b) bridges should look more like Ford St bridge & less like standard highway department bridges, bridges would also serve as landmarks for boaters |
| 2 | safe, inviting river access (via steps, trail, or cable car\ski lift) down to bottom of the river gorge from Maplewood (perhaps near the rose garden) | ensure that pedestrians & bicyclists can, without conflict, navigate the river trail on the east side if a skatepark is built, many people of color & low income people use this relatively safe | leave Broad St Bridge as aqueduct for street of shops from Convention Center to Blue Cross Arena walkway, enclosed use, all-year round | Sharrows, bike lanes, or shared-use paths connecting neighborhoods to canal & river trails | a) exercise park with equipment along the canal b) signage with directions of key destinations by bike along the trail in the city |
| 3 | redevelop old Kodak Park parking lots between lake and Maplewood Dr into mixed-use with affordable units & incentivize Eastman Business Park employees to live near where they work | consider preserving the canal bed and aqueduct for the future, even if not feasible right now | pedestrian bridge from South Wedge to Cornhill | need at least one small boat launch (ramp) in this section (Black Creek is closed) maybe across from UR near pedestrian\ railroad bridge) | a) bike repair stand b) make picnic areas & benches\grills c) maps of how to bike whole Erie Canal corridor with history & interpretive information |
| 4 | better signage to guide folks in neighborhoods to the trail & river gorge | keep River Trail on West side of river near festival site open to bikers\walkers during events, don't drive them away from the river during events | keep the land between Hamilton Tower & YNN\TW open to the public | take down the old walls on the West Side of the river South of the Ford St Bridge | a) storm drain & septic issues with Red Creek b) restore creek bed |
| 5 | a) calm traffic\road diet for Maplewood Drive b) install bike lanes & safer, more inviting pedestrian crossings to the Maplewood Park Playground | keep Dinosaur Barbeque funky, don't upscale the surroundings in a manner that destroys its success | GardenAerial: bridge connection system linking High Falls under the Inner Loop into Downtown | retain old walls on West side of River, flood waters will return if removed | plow canal trails once per week during winter, but leave strip for cross-country skiers |
| 6 | lower Inner Loop by High Falls to create a boulevard, create connections to High Falls from Front St | same rules that apply to closing streets should apply to trails | clean, safe, inviting walk\bike connections all through Downtown (from Corn Hill to Maplewood) | make river trail on west side safer for walkers\bikers so residents can make better & safer use of trail for walking\biking | green & organic management of Genesee Valley golf course |

*Continued on page 13

Table 8: Share your comments on waterfront zones 5–8.

| | A | B | C | D | E |
|-----|--|--|--|--|--|
| Row | Zone 5: Upland Areas | Zone 6: High Falls\ Downtown | | Zone 7: South River Corridor | Zone 8: Erie Canal (East\West) |
| 7 | Bus rapid transit along Lake Ave from the Port/Marina (or Eastman Business Park) to Downtown and beyond- through city core than to UR along Mt. Hope or along Exchange, Plymouth, Brooks, to the Airport | a bridge crossing under High Falls, similar to Cave of the Falls in Niagara Falls | a) modify the Inner Loop so as not to be so much of a barrier b) widen Lake Ave | signage to river on Mt. Hope Ave or even South Ave | a) Red Creek water quality b) watershed addressed |
| 8 | maximize the potential & leverage UR capital here | get rid of the Inner Loop | make Inner Loop\Central Ave Bridge a pleasant pedestrian crossing route | a) bring back the paid for dock to Mt. Hope, install by Averill Ave park | west side trail with neighborhood connectedness |
| 9 | install or improve wayfinding signage to the river | trail for daily exercise | better bike trails | small water taxi connecting Corn Hill Landing, UR, RIT | restoration of the three-arch bridges in Genesee Valley Park, a scenic highlight of the Heritage Trail |
| 10 | | park in High Falls gorge through BeeBee Station along waterfront towards the old incinerator | running track | improve directing & informative signage on the Genesee River Trail | signage to & from Erie Canal |
| 11 | | | | public water center for rowing, canoes | |
| 12 | | | | develop PLEX | |