

## SECTION 4.0

# ALTERNATIVES

SEQR requires the evaluation of a range of potential alternatives including an evaluation of the no action alternative. The alternatives were guided by the Vision Statement and the Inventory and Analysis, Market Study, input from the Steering Committee, City Officials and the public. Both the Inventory and Analysis (Appendix 2) and the Market Study (Appendix 3) are Included in this document. Alternatives were developed sequentially at a series of Steering Committee and Public Meetings, each based on the above referenced input on each previous alternative. Finally, the chosen or preferred alternative was a result of combining “preferred” elements from Alternatives 1-4 as directed by input from the Steering Committee, City Officials and the public.

Recognizing the potential of their impact to the stated site vision and successful implementation of this project the adaptive reuse of the Hilton Center, improvements to the City’s boat launch and extension of the multi-use path to both the south and north are elements of each alternative.

### 4.1 Alternative 1

Alternative 1 (Figure 4-1) consists of multi-story residential, commercial mixed use, redevelopment of the Hilton Center and both active and passive recreation as follows:

#### **Residential (adjacent to the Livingston Avenue Bridge)**

- Waterfront orientation
- 184 units in 5 structures, 3 and 4 stories
- Emergency access, multi-use path extension under Livingston Avenue Bridge to southwest
- Surface parking associated with each structure
- Greenspace

#### **Commercial Mixed Use and Waterfront Park:**

- One, 3 story building to include 14,040 SF commercial first floor and 16 units on remaining 2 stories



- One, 2 story structure to include a Maritime Center and marina and Café- 14,900 SF total
- Expansion and improvements to existing waterfront park and boat ramp
- Surface parking
- Multi-use path extension

### **Hilton Center Mixed Use Development**

- Hilton Center Redevelopment – mixed use retail, residential and cultural arts

### **Recreation- active and passive**

- Multi-use pathway connection between existing waterfront park to property boundary with East Greenbush with future connections to trails to the northeast
- Two-story, 31,200 SF recreation Center in vicinity of Patroon Island Bridge
- Recreational fields to include basketball, tennis, youth softball, little league, baseball, and multi-purpose
- Surface parking

The Steering Committee's review of Alternative 1 noted, that while the location and waterfront focused orientation of the residential units was attractive; the building layout raised concerns related to the 100-year floodplain. Specifically they identified that additional construction costs necessary to mitigate floodplain impacts may make project too expensive for the expected return on investment.

Discussion also focused on the use of this area for active recreation as a way to mitigate the potential impacts of flooding. There was also conversations regarding building height as the Market Study (Appendix 3) supported buildings of 7 to 8 stories. Increased density could result in higher profit margins for a developer, however the Steering Committee recognized the importance of protecting existing views to the River from the surrounding residential neighborhood and maintaining the appropriate scale so as not to significantly impact community character.

As a result the Steering Committee requested consideration of a two additional alternatives: one showing the residential layout in the same vicinity but located closer to the southeast property boundary and one delineating the active recreational area adjacent to the Livingston Avenue Bridge.

The maritime center and café was intriguing, but combined with improvement and expansion of the City boat ramp area and the desire to provide additional residential opportunities, it was eliminated from consideration.

As noted the adaptive reuse of the Hilton Center (historically known as the Barnett Mills complex) is an element of each alternative. The historic significance of the structure and unique architectural features combined with its waterfront orientation, view of the River and Albany skyline and the access to the City boat launch, result in a structure conducive for redevelopment that could include a unique combination of retail, living units, and community space such as a cultural arts center. For the purposes of this study, it is estimated that this space would include almost 65,000 SF (60) of apartment space, 8,200 SF of cultural arts or similar space, and 8,200 SF of neighborhood retail under all the alternatives.

The approximately 40 acres owned by RPI to the northeast of the City boat launch represents one of the largest undeveloped parcels remaining in the City. This parcel was identified as a potential location for active recreational area uses including a variety of multi-use fields including baseball, softball, soccer, tennis courts and basketball courts and a recreational 2-story center. The City has expanded its recreational programs over the years but is limited by available facilities.

A multi-use path traverses the entire site connecting south to DeLaet's landing and north to the Rensselaer Technology Park linking the City's Riverfront Trail System to the Rensselaer County Trail System noted in the October 2004 *Rensselaer County Trail from the Livingston Avenue Bridge to the Troy-Menands Bridge*.

There was varying interest favoring the development of this space for active recreation versus the development of this space as a business park that would tie into the Rensselaer Technology Park located to the north and east and connecting to Route 4 from both Steering Committee members and the public. As discussed above, this resulted in the development of Alternatives 4.2 and 4.3.

## 4.2 Alternative 2

Alternative 2 (Figure 4-2) consists of the same major elements as Alternative 1. The key changes are the layout of the residential area to reduce floodplain impacts and the increase in the residential building heights. The inclusion of two, six story buildings and one, seven story building represented a compromise between the desire for increased density and protection of the viewshed.

### **Residential and Commercial Mixed use (adjacent to the Livingston Avenue Bridge)**

- Approximately 383 units
- Two, 6 story buildings with 96 units
- One, 7 story building with 140 units
- 3-story building – with 14,040 SF commercial and 16 residential units
- One, 5-story building with 35 units
- Parking closer to river to reduce floodplain impacts

- Emergency access, multi-use path extension under Livingston Avenue Bridge to southwest
- Surface parking associated with each structure

#### **Hilton Center Mixed Use Development and Waterfront Park (See Alternative 1)**

- Hilton Center Redevelopment – mixed use retail, residential and cultural arts
- Expansion and improvements to existing waterfront park and boat ramp
- Surface parking
- Multi-use path extension

#### **Recreation – active and passive (See Alternative 1)**

- Multi use pedestrian connection between existing waterfront park to property boundary with East Greenbush– future connections to trails to the northeast
- Two-story, 31,200 SF recreation center in vicinity of Patroon Island Bridge
- Recreational fields- basketball, tennis, youth softball, little league, baseball, multi-purpose
- Surface parking

The reaction to the residential area near the Livingston Avenue Bridge was that, while it may reduce flooding risk it was not visually appealing. The Steering Committee requested a layout that would not include all of the parking in one large lot facing the Hudson River.

### **4.3 Alternative 3**

As described in the discussion under Alternative 1, the Steering Committee wished to evaluate a layout which provided the recreational amenities proximate to the Livingston Avenue Bridge and included a layout for an office park in the vicinity of the Patroon Island Bridge. The area in the vicinity of the Livingston Avenue Bridge is approximately 18 acres necessitating a reduced number of recreational fields and facilities. Traffic generated by the office park would require the development of additional site access from either Lincoln Terrace/Manor Road or Jordan Road. Alternative 3 including two potential road connections is illustrated in Figure 4-3 and 4-4.

#### **Recreation area- active (adjacent to the Livingston Avenue Bridge)**

- Baseball and soccer field, tennis and basketball court
- Two-story, 28,000 SF recreation center
- Surface parking
- Emergency access, multi-use path extension under Livingston Avenue Bridge to southwest
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### Hilton Center Mixed Use Development and Waterfront Park

- Hilton Center Redevelopment – mixed use retail, residential and cultural arts
- Expansion and improvements to existing waterfront park and boat ramp
- One, 5-story building with 35 residential units – adjacent to boat launch area
- Surface parking
- Multi-use path extension

### Office Development

- Approximately 245,600 SF of commercial
- 1 story office-15,600 SF southwest of Patroon Island Bridge
- 3, two story office buildings between Patroon Island Bridge and Property Boundary
  - Structure 1- 100,000 SF
  - Structure 2- 70,000 SF
  - Structure 2- 60,000 SF
- Surface parking
- Multi use pedestrian connection between existing waterfront park to property boundary with East Greenbush– future connections to trails to the northeast
- Potential Future Access
  - Future road connection to Jordan Road
  - Future Road connection to Lincoln Terrace/Manor Drive to Washington Avenue

Discussion regarding the large office development versus the reduced recreational area and limited residential component focused on following issues:

- Value of commercial development versus the cost to construct the required access
- Lack of available property in the City to develop a recreational complex
- Reduced recreational area in this alternative
- Demand for office space in this location
- Reduced emphasis on residential units
- Reduced emphasis on community space and access

#### 4.4 Alternative 4

A fourth alternative (Figure 4-5) was requested that reintroduced residential units near the Livingston Avenue Bridge. A small recreational component would be included just south of the Patroon Island Bridge and commercial office would remain north of the patroon Island Bridge. As identified in Alternative 3, the office development would require consideration of additional site access in the northern area of the site (Figure 4-4).



### **Residential and Commercial Mixed Use (adjacent to the Livingston Avenue Bridge)**

- Approximately 408 units total
- Two, 6-story buildings with 96 units and 120 units
- One, 7-story building with 112 units
- Parking closer to river to reduce floodplain impacts
- Two, 5-story buildings with 40 units each
- Emergency access, multi-use path extension under Livingston Avenue Bridge to southwest
- Surface parking associated with each structure

### **Hilton Center Mixed Use Development**

- Hilton Center Redevelopment – mixed use retail, residential and cultural arts

### **Recreation – active and passive**

- Expansion and improvements to existing waterfront park and boat ramp
- Multi use pedestrian connection between existing waterfront park to property boundary with East Greenbush– future connections to trails to the northeast
- Two-story, 31,200 SF recreation center in vicinity of Patroon Island Bridge
- Outdoor basketball and tennis courts
- Surface parking

### **Office Development**

- Approximately 230,000 SF
- Three, 2-story office buildings between Patroon Island Bridge and Property Boundary
  - Structure 1- 100,000 SF
  - Structure 2- 70,000 SF
  - Structure 3- 60,000 SF
- Surface parking
- Multi-use pedestrian connection between existing waterfront park to property boundary with East Greenbush with future connections to trails to the northeast
- Potential Future Access
  - Future road connection to Jordan Road
  - Future Road connection to Lincoln Terrace/Manor Drive to Washington Avenue

Again the discussion regarding this alternative centered on the availability of recreational amenities within the City, the viability of a commercial office park on the RPI lands and the cost of developing the additional roadway connections.

After a review of Alternative 4, the Steering Committee, City officials and the public determined that the combination of residential uses, waterfront improvements, redevelopment of the Hilton Center, and recreational facilities were the most desirable. This combination would maintain and improve public access to the River, provide much needed active and passive recreational facilities to City residents, and offer opportunities for waterfront living. The redevelopment of the Hilton Center as a mixed use residential, retail, and cultural arts center would draw people to the site helping to create a community gathering spot.

To ensure that views to the River were maintained and to address density concerns, structure height shown in Alternatives 2 and 4, would be reduced.

#### **4.5 No-Action Alternative**

As noted in Section 1.1, this largely undeveloped Study Area offers a unique opportunity for the City to preserve and enhance public recreation and access to its waterfront, preserve and celebrate its history through rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of the Hilton Center and provide for current and future residents opportunities to live and/or conduct business activities within the site. Under the No-Action alternative, the site would remain as is and no development alternatives would be evaluated and progressed. As a result, the historic Hilton Center structure would continue to deteriorate and improvements to the boat launch would not be completed.

The loss of opportunity to enhance this unique asset for the benefit of the City and its residents rendered the No-Action alternative undesirable.