

**CITY OF ALBANY
WATERFRONT COMMITTEE
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda date: Feb. 9, 2009

SUBJECT: Recommendation to the City Council Regarding Expansion of the Waterfront Visioning Public Engagement Process to Include City-wide Values and Visions to support the upcoming General Plan.

FROM: Ann Chaney, Community Development Director
Jeff Bond, Planning and Building Manager

RECOMMENDATION

That the Waterfront Committee recommend to the City Council that the Waterfront Visioning Process be modified to include City-wide values and visions to support the upcoming General Plan.

BACKGROUND

In April 2008, the City Council authorized Fern Tiger Associates (FTA) to begin work on the Waterfront Visioning process. As part of that visioning process, FTA will be undertaking an extensive public outreach to engage the community on land use and related issues at the waterfront. This comprehensive outreach and participatory effort is an innovative and unique approach intended to inform and engage a broad spectrum of Albany residents on the possibilities of the waterfront. Every resident in the city will be mailed a publication containing extensive background information and an invitation to participate in a session where they will have the opportunity to better understand options and tradeoffs related to waterfront development and to express ideas about the future of the waterfront.

DISCUSSION

FTA anticipates that inevitably some of the neighborhood discussions will blend over into a broad-spectrum of city planning issues. The cost of replicating this effort for other land use planning initiatives, most particularly the 2010 General Plan effort, may be prohibitive. Thus, staff has discussed with FTA the feasibility of anticipating this broader discussion, incorporating information about the general plan into the publication; and expanding the facilitated sessions to purposefully include discussion about land use "values and visions" into these neighborhood meetings. Thus, the "Voices to Vision" process – while focusing heavily on the waterfront – will contain some components that look beyond the waterfront. The results could help form the foundation of the upcoming update to the 2010 General Plan.

The primary emphasis of the FTA work in general, as well as the neighborhood sessions themselves, will remain focused on the waterfront visioning (approximately 90 minutes). The

meetings would be extended by approximately 30 minutes to allow for the broader discussion. The proposal would not have a major impact on the schedule of completion of the waterfront planning process.

If values and visions beyond the waterfront are incorporated into the FTA community outreach effort, there will be an additional cost to the City of approximately \$45,000. The additional funds would cover the cost of researching and preparing information to be distributed to all households in the City, before the start of the sessions and in conjunction with the publication related to the waterfront. The costs also include designing the appropriate process for the broader discussion and having it move seamlessly into the waterfront portion. The length of each neighborhood meeting would be extended, and the information from the sessions would be analyzed, requiring additional professional time for facilitators, for analysis, and for the creation of the final report and presentations. Some of this additional cost could be absorbed within the current waterfront visioning budget. For example, the budget included a \$40,000 community survey and allocated \$75,000 for consultants, some of which is currently not anticipated to be spent.

In addition to presenting this at the Waterfront Committee meeting for discussion, staff will also be presenting this concept for Planning and Zoning Commission discussion on February 10, and the City Council on February 17.