



WALKWAY

Hudson River Waterfront Walkway

IMPLEMENTATION STUDY

SEPTEMBER, 2004

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Hudson River Waterfront Walkway

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Executive Summary

In 2000, Hudson County received a Smart Growth Planning Grant from the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs to fund the Hudson River Waterfront Walkway Implementation Study. The goal of this Study is to expedite construction completion of a continuous Walkway through the seven Hudson County municipalities which front the Hudson River, in part by identifying “gap” sites or unpassable portions of Walkway.

This process promotes a multi-jurisdictional partnership among the various local governments of the seven waterfront municipalities, which are: the City of Bayonne; the Town of Guttenberg; the City of Hoboken; the City of Jersey City; the Township of North Bergen; the Township of Weehawken; the Town of West New York, as well as

other stakeholders in the waterfront area including entities such as: Hudson County, the Hudson River Property Owners and Conservators Association, and the Hudson River Waterfront Conservancy of New Jersey. The result of this collaborative effort will be almost 18 miles of uninterrupted public Walkway for both Hudson County residents and visitors to enjoy.

Initially presented in the 1966 Regional Plan Association Study, “The Lower Hudson”, the Hudson River Waterfront Walkway (HRWW) was conceived as a continuous walkway open to the public along the Hudson River in New Jersey from Fort Lee to Bayonne, extending over 20 miles from the George Washington Bridge to the Bayonne Bridge.

Purpose of the Plan

In order to guide the final implementation and determine the appropriate way forward, the Implementation Study was intended to:

- Identify and classify uncompleted areas of the Walkway and make recommendations for Hudson County's role in completion of these segments
- Examine and evaluate the physical condition and public access along completed segments of the Walkway
- Propose recommendations for best practices in the operation and maintenance of the Walkway

Additional issues which affect the public use of the Walkway have been addressed in this Study, including:

- Future alignment of currently unbuilt portions of the Walkway
- Walkway design and construction standards
- Security along the Walkway
- Local and regional linkages



In fulfillment of the right of public waterfront access ideal expressed within what is known as the “Public Trust Doctrine”, Hudson County has set as a goal the completion of the entire Hudson River Waterfront Walkway that lies within County boundaries. While much of the Walkway has been completed, and more is currently under construction, there are “gaps” in portions of the Walkway alignment.

As a part of this Study, an investigation of the Walkway's existing and proposed alignment was made, including the creation of an extensive GIS database, which was linked to aerial photography of the waterfront in Hudson County. The primary objective of this GIS database was to identify and classify “gap” sites in the Walkway by status of completion, on a parcel by parcel or project by project basis. (The database is included in the Appendix.)

Recommendations for each identified gap site within each municipality are included within the Study. Recommendations are also included for issues that have come up along the completed portions of the Walkway.

Finally, a “Lessons Learned Elsewhere” section provides comparative information from three other communities with extensive waterfront walkways:

- San Antonio's **Riverwalk**
- New York City's **Hudson River Park**
- Chicago's **Grant Park**

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

FINDINGS:

The Hudson River Waterfront Walkway:

- The calculated distance of overall potential Walkway alignment within Hudson County is 210,247 linear feet, or 39.82 miles.
- The calculated distance of completed Walkway is 76,902 linear feet, or 14.56 miles.
- The calculated waterside “gap” distance is 133,345 linear feet, or 25.25 miles.
- Thirteen gap sites covering a distance of 12,812.7 linear feet, or 2.4 miles, have been identified as needing action.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that a Hudson River Waterfront Walkway stewardship operating entity be formed to operate and maintain the Walkway in a consistent fashion along the entire Walkway alignment. The Walkway is in need of a coordinated approach to provide:

- an upgraded program of signage and public information, with way-finding and user information
- a unified approach to public access, including standard hours of operation
- linkages to the Hudson County transportation network
- linkages to regional trails and bikeways networks
- reliable security conditions along all segments of the Walkway
- regular maintenance, clean-up and repair/renovation

In the interim period prior to establishment of the recommended operating entity, Hudson County should enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the private owners/developers and each municipality on standards and responsibilities for, at a minimum: operation, maintenance, and security along the Walkway.

Hudson County should target the Walkway gap sites that currently have no plans for implementation by providing incentives to develop, Walkway planning assistance, financing assistance, or by county or municipal acquisition and construction. The Walkway should be considered as a component of any Open Space planning for Hudson County and the affected municipalities.

Segments of the Walkway which are currently built and in public use, but have been found to be in poor condition (design, maintenance or operation) should be targeted for improvement through Hudson County grants, incentives or loans or through the establishment of municipality-based parks and recreation partnerships or property-exchange arrangements.

Financing for additional Walkway construction should continue to be accomplished through the auspices of the Hudson County Improvement Authority on a tax exempt basis, in locations covered by redevelopment plans or special improvement districts, by municipalities willing to support a special assessment financing, such as the funding provided for Walkway segments in Weehawken, West New York, and Bayonne.

Future capital improvements funding and funding to provide for the ongoing functioning of a stewardship entity should be handled under a special improvement district designation, such as a Transportation Enhancement District, which includes the entire Walkway.