

City of Whittier

Waterfront and Economic Development Plan

Community Outreach Plan

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Prepared for:

City of Whittier

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Community Outreach Plan (COP) serves as a strategic guideline for engaging the community throughout the development of the City of Whittier's Waterfront and Economic Development Plan (WEDP). This plan guides efforts to foster relationships and document the Whittier community's needs and those outside Whittier that use the waterfront. The COP clearly defines the goals and objectives of outreach activities and identifies specific target groups targeted in the planning effort.

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

The City of Whittier, herein referred to as the City, has contracted Corvus Design, Inc. to deliver a WEDP that is reflective of community needs and desires, identifies economic potential for the waterfront, maximizes the use of City-owned or leased lands, protects the tidelands within City boundaries, and promotes public access and recreational opportunities to Whittier's waterfront and uplands. PND Engineers, Northern Economics, Solstice Environmental, and ECI Alaska support Corvus Design.

The City of Whittier lies near the head of Passage Canal, a fjord of Prince William Sound (PWS), 62 road miles southeast of Anchorage, 24 road miles southeast of Girdwood, 98 road miles northeast of Seward, and 109 road miles northeast of Soldotna. As the closest year-round, ice-free port to Anchorage, Whittier is a critical hub for marine activities and freight transfer, bringing goods to Anchorage and Alaska. The waterfront is a popular destination for cruises, sport fishing, sightseeing, sea kayaking, and scuba diving, and provides service for the Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS).

The WEDP will encompass two distinct geographic locations: the Waterfront Development Area (WDA) and the Harbor Management Area (HMA). Key waterfront challenges include enhancing and expanding economic development opportunities, providing public and recreational access to the waterfront, and preserving the scenic, historic, and natural features within the waterfront area. The WEDP must reflect the vision of the community and waterfront users while harmonizing with the community's character and environmental conditions consistent with the region.

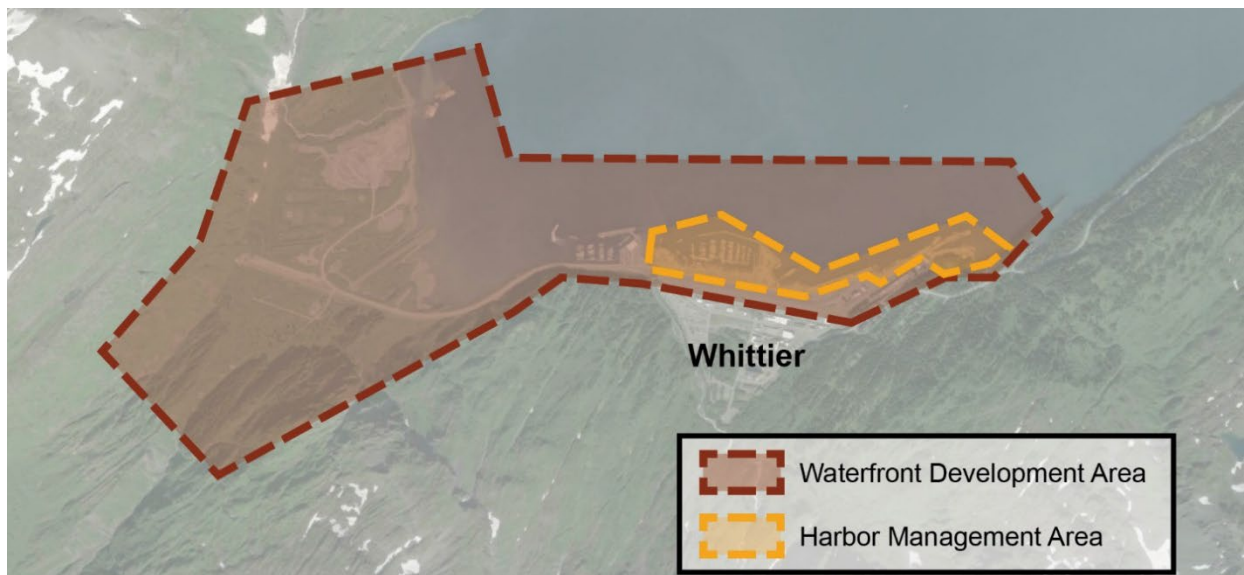


Figure 1 Proposed Project Boundary

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE COMMUNITY OUTREACH PLAN

The objectives of our community outreach process are to optimize the community's ability to shape beneficial outcomes, build trust, and strengthen relationships. This process provides an effective and responsive plan that clearly defines the project's scope of engagement, desired outcomes, and sets measurable targets of success. It also identifies adaptive strategies to maintain a flexible process. Community outreach is a shared responsibility that enhances decision-making with valuable insights from the community and key stakeholders. The City plays a crucial role in this, actively working to build trust and strengthen social connections.

The intention is to provide opportunities for the community and key stakeholders to participate in a manner that will generate constructive feedback for the development of the WEDP and keep people informed about the progress of the plan development.

1.2.1 Define the Scope of Engagement

The COP outlines the scope of engagement with the community and key stakeholders and the engagement strategies undertaken throughout the project duration. Key stakeholders are identified, a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) is outlined, and public outreach efforts are defined. A key engagement component is the clear definition of expectations, ensuring that participants understand how and when they can positively influence the process.

1.2.2 Outline Desired Outcomes

Outlining desired outcomes ensures that the public meetings are productive and meaningful and contribute to the development of the WEDP. Clearly outlining desired outcomes in the COP provides a framework for discussions and effectively outlines the meeting agenda and activities. Defining specific outcomes assists in determining measurable targets and identifying areas for improvement as we move through the planning process. Stating these outcomes at the onset of a meeting holds participants accountable for their contributions and promotes participation as they can see that their input is valued and contributes to tangible results in the planning process.

1.2.3 Set Measurable Targets

Measurable targets provide a benchmark for tracking progress over time and celebrating achievements. These subjective and objective metrics assist in evaluating each meeting and confirming that the outreach process is achieving the desired outcomes. These assessments can indicate where refinements or supplemental engagement are needed to ensure we achieve the identified targets.

1.3 TARGET COMMUNITY

Engagement will specifically target those directly affected by waterfront development in Whittier and invite those indirectly affected to participate. A clear focus on key stakeholders will ensure the effective use of project resources and result in meaningful and relevant outcomes. A target community will help identify specific needs and priorities to develop supported and practical solutions, increase the chances of achieving measurable and sustainable outcomes, and ensure that planning efforts are inclusive and address the needs of marginalized or underrepresented groups.

In general, stakeholder groups will include:

- Commercial entities that rely upon the waterfront (freight, cruise ships, AMHS, tourism)
- Landowners directly or indirectly affected (ARRC, ADOT&PF, City of Whittier, USFS)
- Locals that use the waterfront directly (small boat harbor, recreation, commercial uses)
- Locals that are impacted by the waterfront indirectly (businesses, residents)
- People who come to Whittier to moor or launch their boats, come for day or weekends trips, or just to recreate

2 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

2.1 KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholders provide unique perspectives and experiences that enhance the planning process. They provide valuable insight into the project development, including opportunities for the waterfront and identifying potential risks or challenges. Consulting stakeholders fosters a sense of collaboration and ownership with the WEDP and will strengthen relationships to create a more supportive environment for implementing the plan. Overall, including stakeholders in the planning process ensures that the WEDP is informed, supported, and aligns with the needs and interests of those affected by the plan's implementation.

2.1.1 Stakeholder List

2.1.1.1 Freight and Transportation

- State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF)
- Alaska Railroad (ARRC)
- Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS)
- Alaska Marine Lines
- Dojer Services, LLC

2.1.1.2 Passenger Transportation

- Alaska Cruise Transportation – ACT Big Bus
- Bear Valley Road Runner
- The Park Connection Motorcoach
- Wild Journey's – Private Transfers
- Salmon Berry Tours
- BAC Transportation
- Premier Alaska

2.1.1.3 Land Owners

- United States Forest Service (USFS)
- Alaska Railroad (ARRC)
- Huna Totem Corporation

2.1.1.4 Waterfront Services

- Custom Marine Services, LLC
- Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation (PWSAC)
- Copper River Seafoods

2.1.1.5 Dive Tourism and Recreation

- Huna Totem
- Norwegian Cruise Lines
- Phillips Cruises and Tours
- Holland America-Princess Cruises
- UnCruise Adventures
- USFS
- Whittier Chamber of Commerce

2.1.1.6 City Departments and Commissions

- City Council
- Port & Harbor Advisory Commission
- Planning & Zoning Commission
- Parks & Recreation Committee

2.1.1.7 Non-Governmental and Community-Based Organizations

- Whittier Fish and Game Advisory Committee
- PWS Economic Development District (PWSEDD)
- Prince William Sound Stewardship Foundation (PWSSF)
- Greater Whittier Chamber of Commerce

2.1.1.8 Indigenous

- Chenega Corporation
- Chenega IRA Council

2.1.2 Level of Influence

A crucial component of engagement is to ensure that the type of engagement is tailored to the level that a participant can influence the outcome of a project. At the beginning of an effort, there is a high chance that information or ideas can be received and used to shape outcomes. As a project moves forward, decisions begin to solidify outcomes that become less and less able to be modified. This trajectory normally involves inclusive workshops first, then open houses to share information and receive comment, and then presentations where questions can be answered.

2.1.3 Scope of Engagement

The project team will meet with the stakeholder groups as identified in the schedule.

2.2 PAC MEETINGS

The Project Advisory Committee (PAC) is a group of 6-8 representatives of stakeholder groups that are advisory to the project in cooperation with City staff and the project consultants. The PAC shapes project development and reviews findings and documents throughout the duration of the WEDP process. At least one (1) week prior to each meeting, the project consultant will distribute applicable documents to the PAC for review and to receive comments/direction.

2.2.1 Level of Influence

Members of the PAC are tasked with representing a particular voice of the various groups that will be affected by implementation of the WEDP. These participants should expect to have their own interactions with their stakeholder group peers in order to be a conduit of information into

the process. This representation is a critical connection to the community, and will significantly influence project outcomes.

2.2.2 Scope of Engagement

The following provides a summary of each PAC meeting proposed in the Work Plan and the purpose of each meeting:

2.2.2.1 PAC Meeting #1: Introductions

Purpose: Convene the PAC and review project requirements and roles and responsibilities, identify new information needs and next steps, review the timeline for the project deliverables and review periods, and identify City tasks throughout the course of the project. The PAC will provide context and background information that assists in project completion.

Outcome: Initiation of the group, establishing project development roles, and setting schedules for participation.

2.2.2.2 PAC Meeting #2: Review Initial Recommendations

Purpose: Review and provide input on the Draft Inventory and Analysis, Draft HMA Boundary and WDA Boundary, Preliminary Economic Assessment, and Initial Land and Water Uses and Proposed Projects.

Outcome: Confirm HMA and WDA Boundaries; provide feedback on the Preliminary Economic Assessment and Draft Inventory and Analysis to identify gaps in the content; and refine the Initial Land and Water Uses and Proposed Projects.

2.2.2.3 PAC Meeting #3: Review Outcome of Public Meeting #1

Purpose: Review and provide input on community feedback received from Public Meeting #1, the Draft Vision, Goals, and Objectives and Preliminary Draft, and the Preliminary Land and Water Uses and Proposed Projects.

Outcome: PAC will review insight provided by the public and provide direction for the Draft Vision, Goals, and Objectives and the Preliminary Draft and Water Uses and Proposed Projects that will be presented to the public during the Public Meeting #2.

2.2.2.4 PAC Meeting #4: Review Outcome of Public Meeting #2

Purpose: Present the Refined Preliminary Land and Water Uses and Proposed Projects to receive feedback on the proposed alternatives for the WDA and HMA.

Outcome: PAC will review and provide input on the feedback received from the public on the Refined Preliminary Land and Water Uses and Proposed Projects.

2.2.2.5 PAC Meeting #5: Present the Preliminary Draft WEDP

Purpose: Present the Preliminary Draft WEDP following with a question-and-answer period so the consultant team can answer questions and provide clarification on the plans.

Outcome: The PAC is briefed on the Draft WEDP to assist them with their review and provision of feedback to the consulting team.

2.2.2.6 PAC Meeting #6: Receive Comments on the Preliminary Draft WEDP

Purpose: PAC presents to the consulting team their feedback and recommendations for the Draft WEDP.

Outcome: The City and consulting team receives feedback from the PAC to evaluate for implementation into the Draft WEDP prior to the 60-day review period.

2.2.2.7 PAC Meeting #7: Review Public Input for Final WEDP

Purpose: The consulting team will review community feedback and recommended actions with the PAC to complete the Final WEDP.

Outcome: The City and consulting team receives comment on recommended or alternative actions from the PAC to evaluate for implementation into the Final WEDP.

2.3 PUBLIC MEETINGS

Public meetings provide project briefings, project updates, and an opportunity for the consultant team to work directly with the community, collecting information and feedback and answering any questions or comments posed by the public, officials, or interested agencies. In total, the project will hold three public meetings.

2.3.1 Level of Influence

The level of influence that the public has within the project will transition from the beginning of the project where participation will provide a high level of information and guidance, to the end of the project where decisions have been made and participation is more informational in nature to keep people informed. Beyond the direct engagement effort, the public will also have the ability to participate through City of Whittier approval processes.

2.3.2 Scope of Engagement

The following provides a summary of the Public Meetings proposed in the Work Plan and the purpose of each meeting:

2.3.2.1 Public Meeting #1: Evening Work Session

Location: Online

Platform: Zoom

Purpose: The first public meeting will be held to review the Economic Assessment and Inventory and Analysis, including local waterfront issues and opportunities with the public. The consultant team will solicit public input regarding the completeness and accuracy of the inventory and analysis and issues and opportunities presented during the meeting. The consultant team will host breakout room sessions with meeting attendees to start developing a vision for Whittier's waterfront and inform the goals and objectives of the WEDP.

Outcome: The consultant team will collect information from meeting attendees to develop the Draft Vision, Goals, and Objectives and confirm proposed projects so we can develop the Preliminary Draft Land and Water Uses and Proposed Projects

2.3.2.2 Public Meeting #2: Public Presentation and Open House

Location: Anchorage/Whittier

Platform: In-person

Purpose: The second public meeting will be held shortly after the first to present proposed alternative development ideas for the WDA and HMA to the public. The meeting will be conducted in an open house format to allow the public the opportunity to review alternative scenarios with the project team and provide direct feedback in the form of verbal or written

comments. One open house meeting will be held in Anchorage and a smaller meeting will be held in Whittier.

Outcome: The consultant team will collect feedback from meeting attendees on the Draft Land and Water Uses and Proposed Projects to refine the concept plans for final feedback from the PAC and the City. Public comments will help the consultant team revise the concepts and develop the Draft WEDP.

2.3.2.3 Public Review Period (60-days tbd)

Platform: Comment collection via website and/or email to the City.

Purpose: The 60-day review period will be held to collect feedback regarding the Draft WEDP solicit feedback of the Draft WEDP and collect comments.

Outcome: Consolidation of received comments, document refinement based on comments, and comment review with the client team and PAC where additional review or discussion is needed.

2.3.2.4 Public Meeting #3: Public Information Meeting

Location: Online

Platform: Zoom

Purpose: In conjunction with the 60-day review period, the consultant team will host a third public meeting to review the Draft WEDP with the public. The meeting will be used to present the plan and answer questions or provide input to the public. Feedback will be collected through the 60-day review period process online via submitted comments.

Outcome: Brief participants and answer questions to assist them with their subsequent review and potential comment on the document.

2.4 PROPOSED OUTREACH SCHEDULE

PROJECT TASK	DATES
Stakeholder Meetings	October
PAC Meeting #1: Introductions	November 6, 2024
PAC Meeting #2: Review Initial Recommendations	Submittal: December 5, 2024 Meeting: December 12, 2024
Public Meeting #1: Evening Work Session	January 8, 2025
PAC Meeting #3: Review Outcome of Public Meeting #1	January 9, 2025
Public Meeting #2a: Public Presentation and Open House (ANC)	January 15, 2025
Public Meeting #2b: Public Presentation and Open House (WHI)	January 16, 2025

PROJECT TASK	DATES
PAC Meeting #4: Review Outcome of Public Meeting #2	January 16, 2025
PAC Meeting #5: Present Draft WEDP	Submittal: March 19, 2025 Meeting: March 26, 2025
PAC Meeting #6: Review Comments from Draft WEDP	April 8, 2025
45-Day Review Period	May 5 – June 19, 2025
Public Meeting #3: Public Information Meeting	May 13, 2025
PAC Meeting #7: Review Public Input for Final WEDP	Submittal: July 2, 2025 Meeting: July 9, 2025

3 COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Recommended community relations activities throughout the duration of public involvement.

3.1 IDENTIFY CITY INFORMATION CONTACT

Purpose: To provide accurate and timely response to questions from citizens, civic leaders, officials, agencies, and the news media throughout plan development, and to ensure that City information is coordinated and consistent.

Technique: The designated City community relations contact will respond directly to public inquiries regarding project information. The Corvus Design team will record information provided to the public and comments received from the public.

Timing: Identify the City Information Contact early in the project process so that information dissemination is coordinated at the beginning of the project and is maintained throughout the project and subsequent project design and construction.

3.2 ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN MAILING AND CONTACT LIST

Purpose: To identify and obtain names and email addresses/telephone numbers of interested citizens, groups, and agencies to provide them with pertinent project information.

Technique: Opportunities for residents to have their names included in the mailing list will occur throughout the project duration. Citizens may contact the designated City Information Contact during business hours or they may complete a contact list form provided at public meetings. Project updates will be sent by the City contact.

Timing: As needed for project updates.

3.3 PROVIDE PROJECT UPDATES ON THE WEBSITE

Purpose: To inform residents about the project progress, public meetings, and the information discussed and collected during public meetings.

Technique: Project information and periodic updates will be provided on the project website managed by the City. Information will include project purpose and need, project schedule, project updates, and planned activities when available. The website address is: <https://www.whittieralaska.gov/wedp/>.

Timing: Notices will be advertised on the project website a minimum of two weeks prior to public meetings. Updates to the project will happen for specific deliverables and input provided at public meetings will be posted a minimum of 3 weeks after the meeting date.

3.4 CONTACT LOCAL NEWSPAPERS FOR NEWS RELEASES

Purpose: To ensure that the general public receives notification of upcoming meetings and accurate information on the project.

Technique: News releases will be prepared and released by the City to announce upcoming public meetings and significant activities and findings during the project. News releases will be issued upon initiation and completion of significant project milestones. The news releases will be distributed via notice boards throughout Whittier and shared on the City’s Facebook and Instagram pages, What’s What in Whittier, and Whittier Alaska Facebook groups, and distributed to all individuals and members of the news media included on the project mailing list. If appropriate, news releases will be shared with the PWS Hunting and Fishing Forum Facebook group and the Anchorage News Source.

Timing: Two weeks prior to public meetings, the 60-day review period, and any other project milestone.

3.5 PREPARE SCOPING SUMMARY

Purpose: Ensure that the PAC and the public input and comments are responded to and, if deemed appropriate, incorporated into the project design.

Techniques: The scoping summary will organize and record public and agency comments so that all comments and input can be tracked, documented, and responded to, and incorporated into the project as appropriate.

Timing: Two weeks following the completion and receipt of public comments from the first public meeting and the 60-day review period.

3.6 TIMING OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS ACTIVITIES

Purpose: Ensure the public and agencies are informed of the project at key milestones.

ACTIVITY	PROJECT INITIATION	PUBLIC MTG #1	PUBLIC MTG #2	60-DAY REVIEW	PUBLIC MTG #3
Contact Mailing List	X	X	X	X	X
Project Updates		X	X	X	X
News Releases		X	X	X	X
Scoping Summary		X		X	

3.7 MONITOR PUBLIC RELATIONS

Purpose: To monitor the effectiveness of the COP and make changes as needed to ensure that the public and agencies understand the project, have the opportunity to comment, and are aware of the overall project progress.

Technique: Corvus Design will review measures to assess the community outreach process and need for adjustment to better achieve outcomes as identified in the objectives.

Timing: Existing ongoing project meetings will include review and discussion of potential refinements.