Section Two: The Strategy

Based on the ‘Vision Plan’ the Hudson Opera House prepared a ‘Request for Proposals’. Proposals were solicited from consulting firms throughout the northeast. The Opera House received over a dozen proposals from consulting firms with expertise in planning, market analysis, engineering and citizen participation strategies. After a lengthy review process and interviews with several firms the review committee selected The Cavendish Partnership, Inc., a planning, urban design, landscape architecture and citizen participation firm to lead a team. Subconsultants included Douglas J. Kennedy & Associates, a firm specializing in market analysis, and Bourne Consulting Engineering, a firm specializing in waterfront engineering. The following proposal outlines the master planning strategy prepared by the consulting team.

Part A: Project Analysis

Task One: Base Map and Site Inventory

Using citywide maps with lot lines, urban renewal plans, official maps and the historic structures inventory, the team will prepare a base map of the entire project area. This map will be drafted on Mylar film and to the extent of available information will delineate the following information:

a. Streets and sidewalks  
b. Utility poles and signs  
c. Rights-of-way  
d. Footprints of structures  
e. Vegetation  
f. Floodplain and wetlands  
g. Soil types  
h. Historic structures  
i. Water and sewer facilities  
j. On and off street parking

Site inventory findings will be summarized in writing. The plans will be illustrated in color for presentation and planning purposes.

Task Two: Economic Base Line Analysis

Initial work will be focused on gathering existing data, and identifying key local players in the process. Major work elements will include:
a. Gather and Review Existing Data/Studies - this will include previous studies and plans completed for the city, and information from alternative sources. These will provide inventory and analysis data. Additional business, economic and transportation related data will also be sought from public and private sector sources.

b. Interviews - interviews with key informants will be conducted both while gaining familiarity with the downtown and waterfront situation and as part of completing specific technical studies. Interviews are expected to be conducted with a range of contacts, including City officials, store and business managers (both from inside and outside the downtown), bankers and other finance contacts, real estate brokers, and others.

c. Field Work - the team will inspect the downtown and waterfront area through walking tours. In addition, we will inspect outlying, competitive shopping areas (a business concentrations) with windshield surveys.

**Task Three: Local Input**

Local ideas, recommendations and criticism are essential to the success of the long term viability of the project. For a plan to work, the people who have a direct stake in the downtown and waterfront must “sign-on” and fully support the plan. Local input will be incorporated into the study via three primary approaches.

a. Interviews - each of the technical components of the study will involve interviews with a range of local informants. In each instance, interviews will elicit local data, opinions on the current state of the downtown and waterfront (assets and deficiencies) and proposed recommendations for improvements.

b. Survey(s) - the study will also incorporate input from persons who are not interviewed or directly involved in the project area. Specifically, gathering opinions from downtown shoppers will be important, workers and area residents. A survey instrument will be designed that will incorporate short answers regarding the downtown market, assets, deficiencies and improvement needs. A distribution-collection approach will be selected following discussions regarding the most effective approach. Opinions include: Windshield Postcards, Placement Surveys. A total of 1000 surveys will be distributed. Returned surveys will be analyzed on a quantitative basis to provide input for project work and recommendations. (Printing and Distributions are not included in the cost of this proposal) - in addition the team will facilitate a public workshop within the project area to solicit comments on the current state of the downtown and waterfront area. Local residents, shoppers, merchants, and landowners will be invited to evening workshops. The workshop will be a highly structured, positive, creative problem solving session. Trained facilitators will help the participants identify current assets and liabilities and focus on potential solutions.

c. Field Office - a field office would be established in the project area. Ideally the office would be a storefront so that it would have high visibility and plans could easily be displayed. The field office might be open weekly for several months during the project depending on the availability of space and the costs. On prescribed schedule consultants would be available to
answer questions and describe the progress of the work to visitors and drawings would be on display daily.

Part B: Technical Studies

Task Four: Market/Economic Analysis

Economic analysis is an essential component of any downtown planning effort. Several points are important to note in the approach to the work:

a. The analysis will consider a range of uses in the downtown, recognizing that a mix of uses provides the best results. In particular, office uses will be considered, along with retail/commercial and institutional potentials. A successful downtown combines a range of uses and activities.

b. The market analysis work will define realistic potentials and marketing approaches for the downtown. By integrating a realistic assessment of market opportunities with promotional ideas, the plan is better suited for implementation.

c. Analysis work will consider both quantitative and subjective evidence. Including local opinions and ideas in the analysis is essential. Project work will focus on the development of solid concepts and ideas rather than just “number crunching.”

Gather Existing Data - many public and private economic studies have been done in the Hudson area. These studies will provide an historic review of the market trends in the area.

Local Conditions/Inventory - become familiar with market conditions via a walk through and discussions with local contacts. Inventory of land/building usage will be drawn from existing materials.

Interviews - a variety of persons will be interviewed to assess current market conditions, assess current performance (store sales, occupancy levels, rent levels etc.), identify key market restraints, identify competitors, and develop concepts for market improvement. It is expected that interviews will include store owners/manager, real estate professionals, landlords, developers, town officials, major employers and others.

Define Market; Analyze Current/Future Potentials - the geographic extent of Hudson’s primary and secondary market areas will be defined. The area will be profiled as for current and projected (Five Year Projections) demographic makeup, and terms of retail sales, employment and other business potentials. Quantitative data will take advantage of the most recent available Census data, and additional source materials. This aspect of the analysis will identify current and potential future competitors to the downtown area, and assess their market reach and competitive advantages or disadvantages with respect to the downtown.

Economic Trends - trends in the regional economy are critical to assessing office, residential and retail market prospects. Interviews, and readily available labor market and economic indicator data will be reviewed for this purpose.
Task Five: Recommendations for Economic Restructuring

Overall, the focus of project work will be to provide specific input to downtown and waterfront planning efforts, about what potentials exist for short and long term development and improvements. In addition to specific findings and action plan elements regarding downtown and waterfront market/economics and the potential shuttle system, recommendations will consider downtown organization, and the best context in which specific recommendations can move toward implementation.

Recommendations will, of course, depend on analysis findings. However, it is anticipated that they will include some, or all, of the following:

a. Recommendations for consolidating Hudson’s hold on its geographic market. Within the market area, potentials for growth will be assessed in terms of: absolute growth (population); income growth (greater disposable income), and; increased market capture rates. Appropriate usage elements to increase capture rates will be recommended.

b. Potentials for drawing on a larger market will be assessed. Potentials for development marketing concentration in specific retail or other niche business markets can draw income from outside the existing market area. This will include consideration of the mix of uses that can best foster an active downtown economy, and compete effectively in the marketplace.

c. Assessment of business conditions that may help to foster positive, commercial, development activity. Infrastructure, regulations, financing and a host of other factors can have a significant influence on an entrepreneur’s willingness to invest. This development “environment” deserves attention and consideration if a plan is to become a reality.

d. A structure/organization for continuing with downtown work. (This will be based on the National Main Street Program model).

It is proposed that the format and organization of the 10-year economic plan recently completed for the Vermont Partnership for Economic Progress (see reports under separate cover) represents an excellent model for organization and planning direction, as applied to the specifics of Hudson’s downtown. As such, it is proposed that the plan contain the following critical elements.

a. An “Economic Health Assessment” as determined through market analysis.

b. A Statement of the Major Objectives of the Plan.

c. Categorization of the Hudson Economy in terms of Major Sectors or Organizational Areas.

d. A Listing of specific plan actions oriented toward achieving plan objectives, along with responsible organizations/individuals and specific time frames for steps to be completed.

Plan actions will cover both broad economic concerns and items specific to each major sector.
e. Development of qualifiable “benchmarks” which can be used to measure the city’s progress toward achieving its goals for the downtown economy, both in broad and sector specific terms.

The plan will be developed in a format that can be readily used as a workbook by persons or organizations charged with following-up on its action plan elements. Further, the plan will be set up to accommodate regular updating of data, indicators, actions completed and benchmark measurements.

**Task Six: Project Area Site Analysis**

Using the inventory information developed in Task One the team will analyze project area conditions. Analysis findings will be based on existing data sources and will include the entire project area. The analysis findings will address both the waterfront and the downtown project area and will include by not be limited to the following:

a. **Waterfront Analysis** - review existing plans and information regarding waterfront issues including: FEMA maps, NOAA charts, USGS maps and available plans and reports. In addition, the waterfront features and structures will be analyzed in terms of exposure from river impacts. The team will evaluate the condition of existing waterfront and shoreline conditions and identify site opportunities and constraints.

b. **Waterfront Maintenance** - provide a list of possible alternatives waterfront maintenance, stabilization and improvements including: water’s edge walkways, access points - fishing; boathouse docks - rowing, kayaking; marinas and yacht clubs; commercial river cruise boat landing (deeper water required); and public landing.

c. **Waterfront Utility Demands** - investigate existing utility services for the waterfront.

d. **Land Use Analyses** - using existing mapping, records and a visual survey, prepare a land use map of the project area by floor, building or lot.

e. **Circulation, Parking and Loading** - development of a plan that documents existing patterns of automobile and pedestrian circulation, on and off street parking and loading. Meet with police departments to identify safety concerns within the project area.

f. **Photographic Inventory of Streetscape** - preparation of a photographic inventory of Warren Street, 4th Street and the waterfront parcels.

g. **Historic Analyses** - meet with local historians, visit historical society and library to document historic development and character of the project area.

h. **Zoning Analysis and Modifications** - that would facilitate business revitalization and waterfront development.
Task Seven: Conceptual Plans

Based on the Economic and Market Analysis, Public Input and the Site Analysis the team will prepare conceptual plans for the Waterfront, Warren and 4th Streets. The plans will address the following:

a. Design concepts for public and private waterfront development, including public access and parkland.

b. Appropriate uses for existing vacant and in-fill parcels and buildings.

c. Gateway entrance improvements and a public signage directory system.

d. Adaptive reuse of historic buildings.

e. Streetscape improvements - landscaping, lighting, signs, street furnishings, paving, parking, accessibility.

f. A greenway trail along the entire waterfront.

g. Redefinition of the historic waterfront street pattern with small scale commercial, cultural and recreation uses linked to an improved transportation system.

h. Adaptive reuse of the defunct fuel storage facility - possibly for restaurant, marina and public green space.

I. Recreational and commercial uses for under utilized parcels.

j. Revitalization of Promenade Hill at the base of Warren Street linked to other parts of the waterfront.

k. A multi-use recreation area on the recently capped landfill along the Hudson Waterfront.

l. Recommendations for infrastructure improvements to accommodate waterfront development.

The concepts will be illustrated in easily understandable perspective sketches, elevations and plan drawings. All drawings will be prepared in color for presentation purposes and will be suitable for preparation of slides and report graphics. Accompanying the conceptual plans will be a possible phasing plan and the costs associated with each phase.

Task Eight: Public Input

Public Workshop. The market analysis findings and the conceptual plans will be presented at a second planning workshop where citizens, public officials, merchants, landowners, business owners, shoppers will have an opportunity to comment on the plans and make suggestions for possible
improvements. Ideally this workshop would be held in the project area. Following the workshop the plan and report will be completed and the action plan will be prepared.

**Youth Participation.** Over the past 12 years we have had an opportunity to work with many youth groups and schools (ages six to 18) in preparing revitalization plans. We have facilitated workshops for entire schools and individual classes. If it would be appropriate, we would be happy to organize a planning and design workshop for young people. The program could be incorporated directly into classes in: civics, economics, geography, art, sociology, dance, theater, etc. In the past these workshops have led to the implementation of improvements by the young people who participate in the workshop. By involving the City’s youth in the planning process they become empowered and become part of the solution. Not to mention the great media attention.

**Media Relations.** Throughout the planning process we will prepare press releases, give the media camera copies of graphics and use the print and broadcast media effectively to publicize the positive aspects of this project.

**Task Nine: Action Plan**

The action plan will use the National Trust for Historic Preservation - Main Street Model as a guide. The action plan will be divided into four primary areas: Economic Restructuring (see Section Five), Organization, Marketing and Promotion and Planning and Design. The team will identify and prioritize projects within the project area and then describe how each will be implemented. Key components will include: the hard and soft costs, the individual or organization that will be responsible for its implementation, marketing and promotional needs, a time line and possible funding and revenue sources.

**Task Ten: Workbook**

The final product will be a workbook that can be used for marketing and promotion, grant applications and for general information. The three ring binders will document the economic analysis and planning process. The workbook will clearly describe the opportunities for redevelopment and investment in Hudson. It will be divided in major components and indexed so that users can easily access information. The text will be free of jargon and easy to understand, whenever possible, charts, graphs, diagrams, and sketches will be used to illustrate points. The text will also be on a computer disk so that it can be used for future grant applications. Illustrations will be in color and black and white.

**Final Products**

- Base Map of the project area
- Economic and market analysis reports
- Map, charts, photographs documenting current conditions
- Concept plans and sketches depicting the "Vision"
- Cost estimates and phasing plan for implementation
- An action plan for transforming the project area, including zoning recommendations to facilitate business revitalization on Warren Street and the waterfront development, and recommendations for infrastructure improvements to accommodate waterfront development
- A user friendly workbook to help in marketing, organization, funding
- Lots of good will, community support and excitement