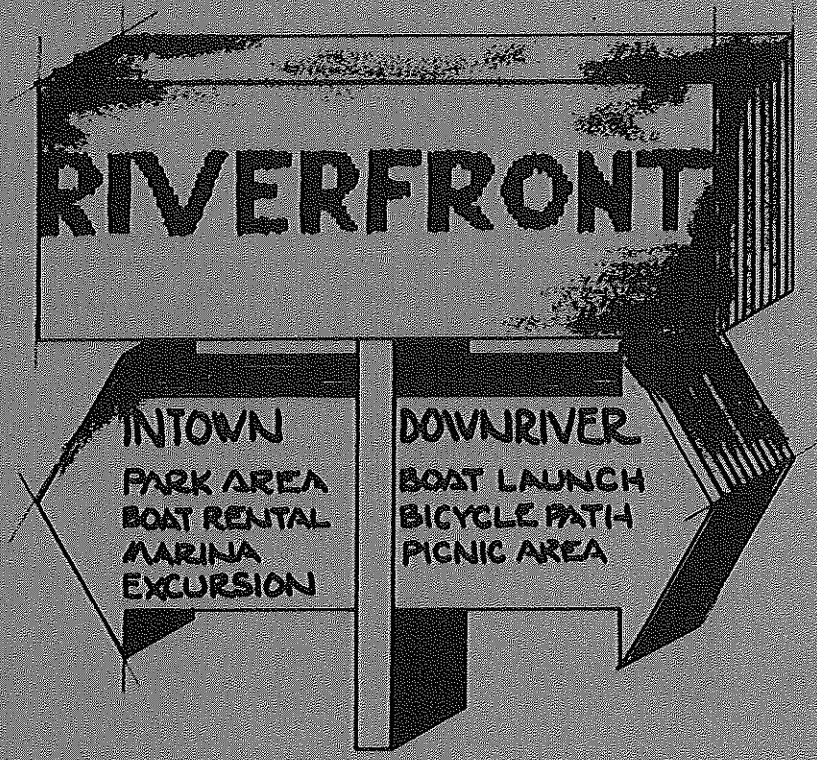
MIDDLETOWN and the CONNECTICUT RIVER:
a new image



a PLAN for WATERFRONT RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

MIDDLETOWN AND THE CONNECTICUT RIVER:

A NEW IMAGE

A PLAN FOR WATERFRONT RECREATION DEVELOPMENT

April, 1974

Prepared for the

HARBOR IMPROVEMENT AGENCY

Middletown, Connecticut

by

CE MAGUIRE, INC.

Wethersfield, Connecticut

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PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

The revitalization of the Connecticut River waterfront in Middletown would provide an opportunity for the City to re-establish its close relationship with the River which has been badly neglected in recent years. The time is right since Federal and State environmental legislation has resulted in the vast improvement of water quality and, thus, the appeal of the River as a recreational resource.

While waterfront improvement has been mentioned in plans and reports at least as far back as 1943, the Harbor Improvement Agency has been most active during the past year in investigating the present recreational potential of the River.

In August of 1973, the Agency commissioned CE Maguire, Inc. to prepare a plan of development for a section of land along the River. This plan for recreational development incorporates previous ideas and studies with an overall analysis of the Study Area to create a unique recreational advantage for the City of Middletown.

An extensive evaluation of the site including consultations with City and State officials preceded the development of the plan. Numerous meetings with the Harbor Improvement Agency

and presentations and discussions with City agencies and with the general public aided greatly in the plan's refinement.

The overall design objective of the plan is to provide a combination of active and passive recreational uses which would allow as wide a range of users as possible the opportunities afforded by the River. Its approach is low-key, using the natural beauty of the River as its most important feature.

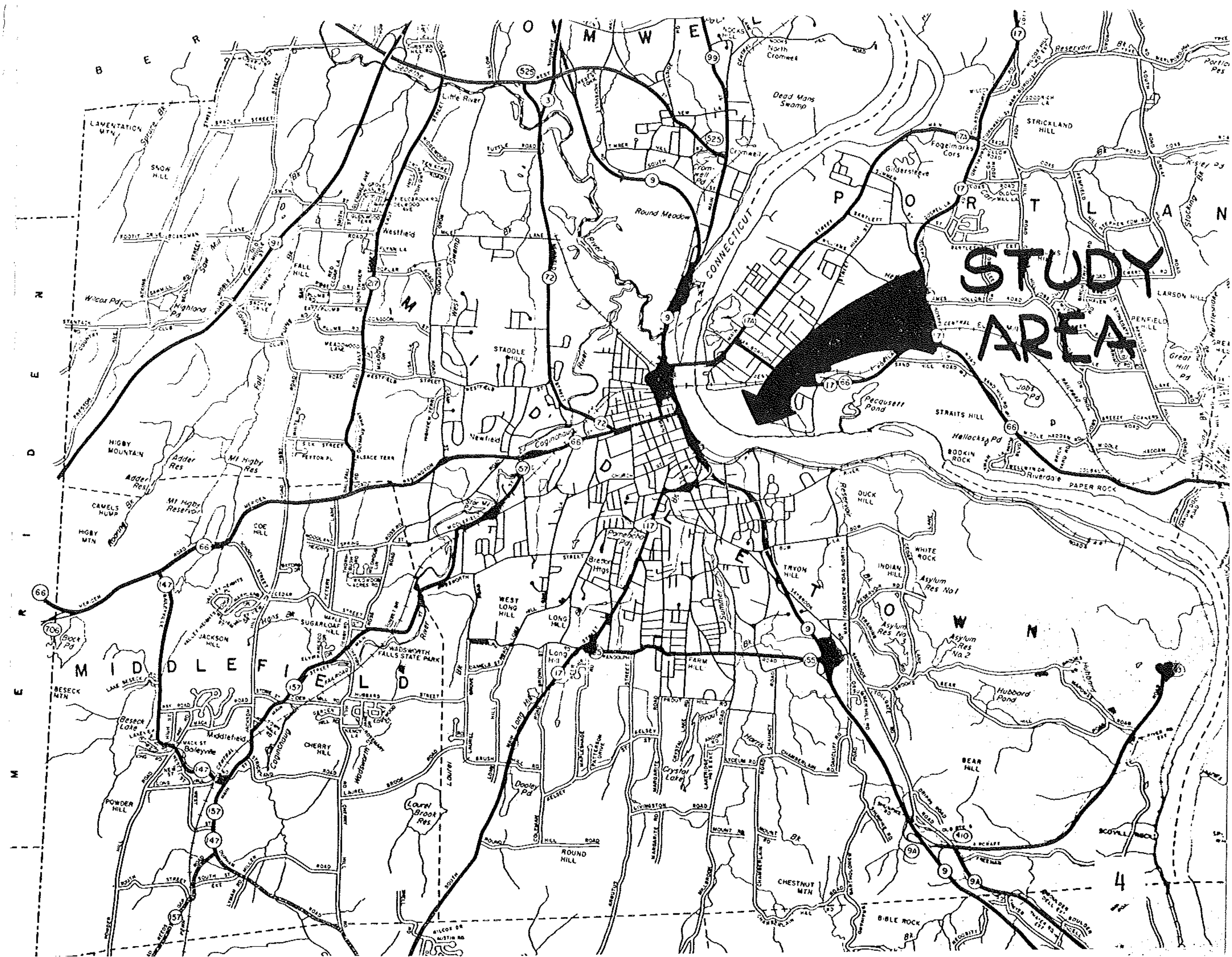
The plan is based on the theory that a vital and active park system will enhance the Downtown area of the City for visitors, residents, workers and shoppers alike. It will bring the community back to the River from which it grew by providing an attractive setting for both individual enjoyment and special events. It gives ample space and opportunity to both power boat and rowing enthusiasts, fishing fans, walkers, sitters and lookers.

The features of the plan are chosen for their ability to both contribute to and receive support from the Downtown and other surrounding neighborhoods.

The Study Area stretches approximately a mile and a half from just below the Penn Central Railroad bridge to beyond the intersection of River Road and Silvermine Road. It covers in total approximately 23.5 acres of riverfront land of which about 17 acres are City-owned.

For study purposes, we have divided the area into two sections--INTOWN, adjacent to the Downtown area, and DOWNRIVER, between Walnut Street and Silvermine Road.

This report outlines the process of examining and evaluating the Study Area and developing a plan. It includes: A Short History of the Waterfront, Site Considerations, General Site Conclusions, Design Objectives, Plan of Development and Staging Plan.


STUDY AREA
MIDDLETOWN
MIDDLEFIELD
PORTLAND
CROMWELL
BERLIN
MERIDEN
CONNECTICUT RIVER
Round Meadow
Dead Mans Swamp
North Cromwell
Cromwell
Westfield
Newfield
Staddle Hill
Higby Mountain
Camels Hump
Higby Mtn
Mt Higby Reservoir
Lamentation Mtn
Snow Hill
Fall Hill
Coe Hill
Jackson Hill
Beseck Mtn
Beseck Lake
Middlefield
Baileyville
Powder Hill
Cherry Hill
Laurel Brook Res
Wadsworth Falls State Park
Sugarloaf Hill
West Long Hill
Long Hill
Dooley Pd
Round Hill
Farm Hill
Crystal Lake
Chestnut Mtn
Bible Rock
Tryon Hill
Indian Hill
White Rock
Duck Hill
Asylum Res No 1
Asylum Res No 2
Asylum Res No 3
Hubbard Pond
Bear Hill
Pecausett Pond
Straits Hill
Hellocks Pd
Jobs Pd
Bodkin Rock
Riverdale
Paper Rock
Strickland Hill
Fogelmarks Cors
Gildersleeve
Penfield Hill
Great Hill Pd
Larson Hill
Pameacha Pd
Bretton Hgts
4

SHORT HISTORY OF THE WATERFRONT

As most good citizens of Middletown know, Middletown was an important shipping and shipbuilding center during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Vessels from Europe and the Far East brought manufactured goods and spices up the River to trade for New England lumber, livestock, corn and fish.

In the nineteenth century, the introduction of steam revolutionized water transportation. By the 1830's, steamboats carried passengers and freight to and from Middletown and other Connecticut River ports to the now larger more important harbors at Boston and New York. Middletown retained its nautical flavor until the late 1800's when it turned away from the river to pursue industry in other areas.

Residents living during the early part of the twentieth century can still remember when the steamboats docking at Middletown were a major means of passenger and freight transportation to New York.

The INTOWN area was kept fairly lively after that by the Middletown Yacht Club. Since the Yacht Club has relocated, the most frequent users are the high school and Wesleyan crew clubs, occasional excursion boat riders, Park Department employees working in the old power plant building and an occasional area resident, often elderly, enjoying the view or fishing.

SITE CONSIDERATIONS

LAND USE

The INTOWN section of the waterfront is separated from the Downtown area of Middletown by Route 9. Directly across Route 9 from the River lies the Municipal Building and the County Courthouse, the Riverview Center parking structure and the site of the Metro South Urban Renewal Area. Because the grade rises gradually from the river, other commercial and residential structures can be seen from the waterfront.

Within a fifteen minute walk of the INTOWN section of the waterfront are: the entire Central Business District, Wesleyan University, Middlesex Memorial Hospital, the YMCA, Housing for the Elderly, and a number of medium to high density residential neighborhoods. The development of Metro South will add light industrial and more commercial and residential land uses.

The area bordering the DOWNRIVER section of the river is principally residential with some light industrial and commercial uses interspersed. The Connecticut Valley Hospital is the largest land owner and employment generator in the area.

Waterfront land uses are shown on the Land Use Map.

Most of the INTOWN section is currently used for recreational purposes. Lions Park, at the far north end is a passive park area created by the Lions Club of Middletown and maintained by the City. It is an attractively arranged area with great user potential. Beside it, the State of Connecticut presently controls an easement for access to its boat launching area. The easement is gravel surfaced and used primarily for parking.

The Wesleyan and City high schools' crew clubs use the area around the old power plant and Yacht Club for their rowing activities. Fishermen are also seen there occasionally.

The excursion boat, the Dolly Madison, currently docks behind the old power plant.

Sherman-Tomasso Concrete Inc. uses approximately one acre of land north of Sumner Brook for a concrete mix plant.

The William Peterson Oil Company stores oil on a two-acre plot of land south of Sumner Brook.

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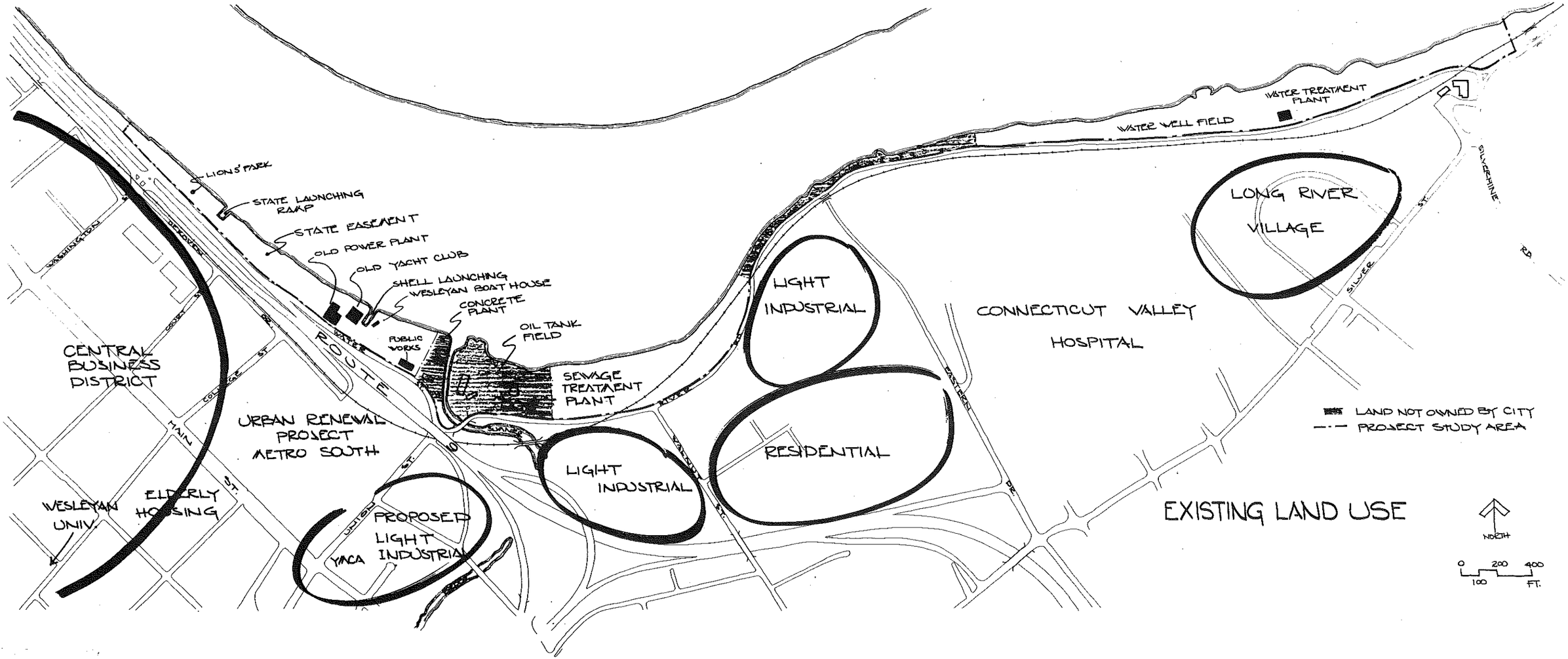
Sherman-Tomasso Concrete Inc. uses approximately one acre of land north of Sumner Brook for a concrete mix plant.

The William Peterson Oil Company stores oil on a two-acre plot of land south of Sumner Brook.

The City is currently constructing a sewage treatment plant on land fill beside the oil tank fields.

Most of the DOWNRIVER section is vacant and is used by area residents and passersby for fishing or relaxation.

Approximately three acresare used by the Middletown Water Department for well fields and a water treatment plant.



EXISTING LAND USE

EXISTING STRUCTURES

The old power plant building is currently used by the Parks and Recreation Department to store and maintain playground equipment. It is in excellent structural condition and easily adaptable to a number of uses.

The second floor of the old Yacht Club building is used as a recreation center by the Parks and Recreation Department. The first floor is used by the high school crew clubs for shell storage and crew activities. The structure is in good condition, but needs some rehabilitation.

The building used by the Public Works Department for sign painting and storage is a wood-frame structure in fair condition, feasible to rehabilitate.

The Wesleyan boat house is a temporary structure and can be easily removed.

The concrete plant and oil tanks are not suitable for other uses. The concrete plant, although a massive structure, is movable.

ACCESS

River Road, extending along most of the site area, is the major access facility. It is a narrow right-of-way in disrepair without curbs, side walks or street lighting. It is fed by a number of local residential streets and two collector streets - Union Street in the Downtown area and Silvermine Road down river. Despite its poor condition, the road is heavily traveled by Pratt and Whitney commutors during rush hours. It serves as a virtural one-way street, east in the morning and west in the afternoon. Walking and bicycle riding along this road is dangerous.

Water Street, which provides access to the INTOWN section of the waterfront also serves as an on-ramp to Route 9. It meets with River Road and Union Street under the Route 9 overpass, creating a hazardous intersection for both pedestrians and vehicles.

For pedestrians, a tunnel extends under Route 9 from the lawn of the County Courthouse to Lions Park. It is dark and dingy and seldom frequented. The entrance on the courthouse side is hidden by shrubbery and no direct connections exist from parking areas or pedestrian walkways.

RIVER CHARACTERISTICS

The water quality of the Connecticut River within the study area has been classified by the State Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) "SD", identifying it as being suitable for navigation, power, industrial cooling, migration of fish and having good aesthetic value.

Existing water quality standards are in support of elevating the River to a SC standard which would make the waters suitable for fish, shellfish and wildlife habitat as well as suitable for recreational boating. More recent proposals by DEP envision the river at this location eventually conforming to class SB standards which would make the waters suitable for bathing and other recreational purposes.

Depending upon seasons and flows of the River, current velocities vary. The shoreline configuration is such that the Middletown side of the River receives the brunt of the current and its velocity past the shore is most obvious in the vicinity of Sumner Brook outfall.

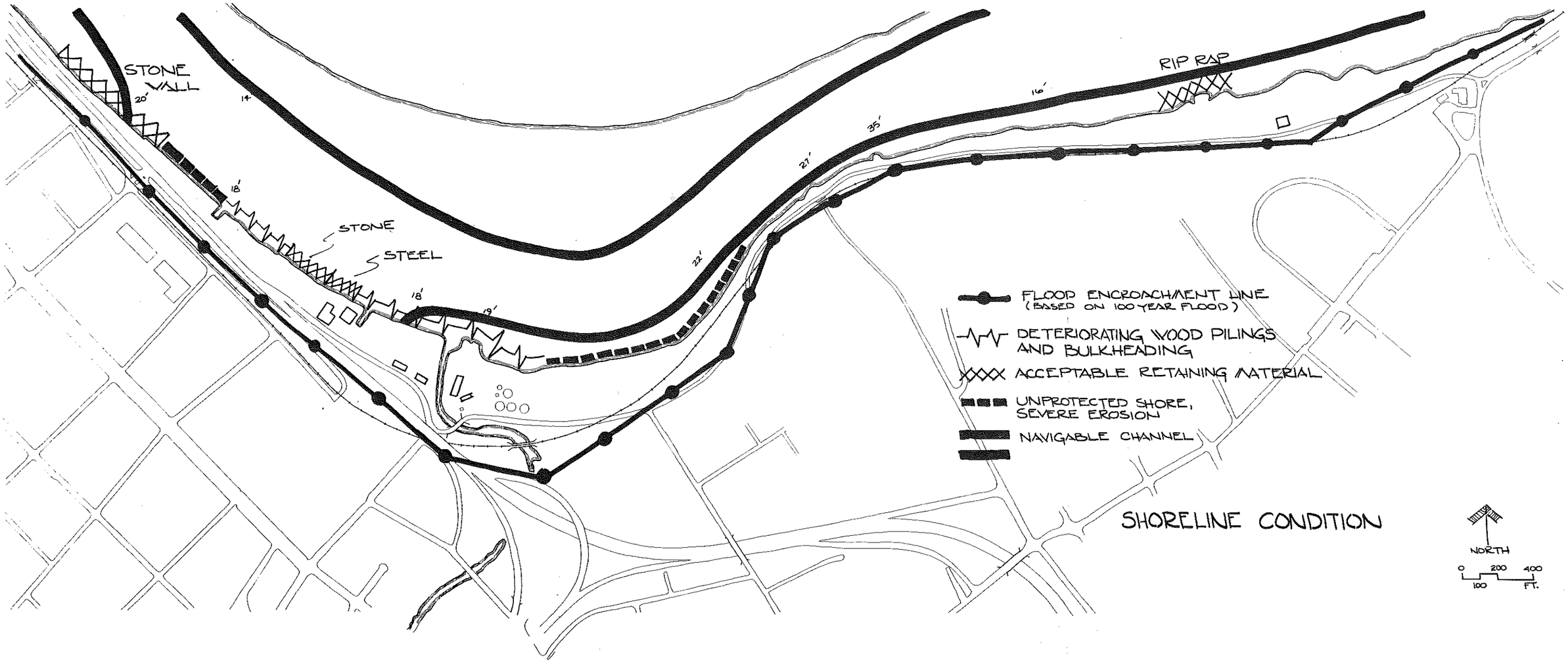
The River has been designated as a navigable waterway and, as such, is under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The maintenance of the navigable channel is their responsibility concurrent with State of Connecticut's approval, and depths within the

channel are maintained from 14 feet to 35 feet. Along the Middletown shore, depths are found to usually range from 18 to 20 feet.

Stream encroachment lines have been established by the State Water Resources Commission to provide passage of high water flows comparable to those experienced in the March 1936 flood. The encroachment lines embrace most of the lower land area in the study area and thus, construction in this vicinity would require specific authorization from responsible State agencies.

SHORELINE CONDITIONS

The shoreline along the study area is in varied stages of decay. The section from Wilcox Island to approximately 1500 feet downstream from Sumner Brook experiences severe scouring action from the River. Wooden piling/shoring in this vicinity has deteriorated to the point where the land area is no longer effectively contained. Heavy undercutting is visible and in instances has caused a condition whereby large caliper trees are in danger of falling into the water. Stone bulkheading, where it has been in place for many years, still retains some integrity and in most places requires only reconstruction. The existing docking berth for the Dolly Madison which is constructed of steel bulkheading is in excellent condition and has many serviceable years left. The shoreline further south has experienced little or no deterioration and, thus, requires minimal slope maintenance. Along the shore in the vicinity of the well fields, stone rip rap has maintained the shoreline in excellent condition requiring little or no upkeep.



SHORELINE CONDITION

NOISE

The proximity of Connecticut Route 9 to the study area has a decided effect on noise levels currently experienced. From Lions Park to the old power plant building, outside noise levels are 75 dB(A) ten per cent of the time. Average noise levels (50%) are slightly less than 70 dB(A). These figures are based upon measurements taken in March of 1974 by the State Department of Transportation and reflect values that are usually experienced in the vicinity of a road such as Route 9. It has been predicted that because of the increase in traffic on the highway that these levels will increase approximately 6 dB(A) by 1990. Although considered high by standards (70 dB(A) being acceptable) the existing levels are experienced primarily during morning and evening peak traffic movement. During other parts of the day and on weekends, noise levels are significantly lower. Along the remainder of the study area, overall noise levels are very low and noise generation is caused only by the passage of vehicles along River Road.

TOPOGRAPHY

The topography varies along the waterfront but may generally be described as gently sloping toward the river. A strip of land, however, located in the center of the study area, is very narrow and steep.

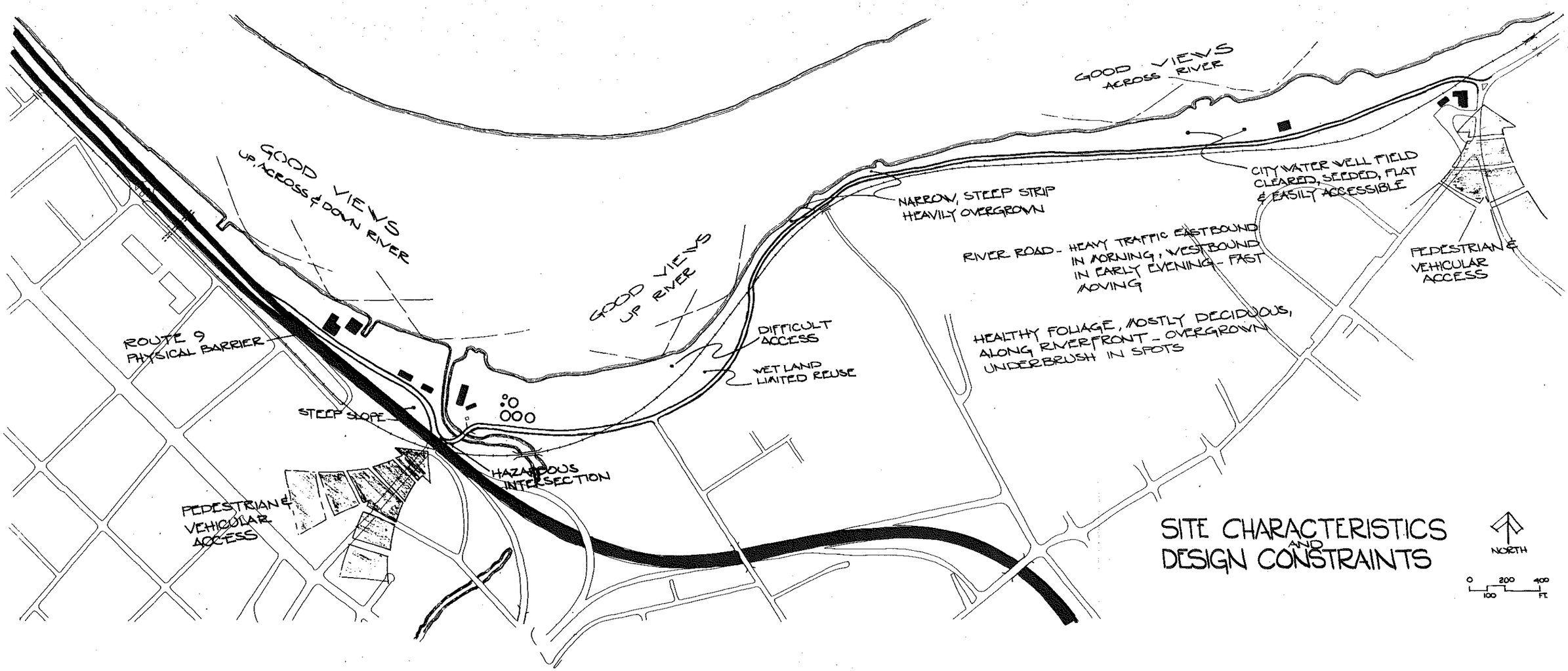
AESTHETIC AND HISTORICAL FEATURES

There is little evidence of Middletown's once thriving shipping industry. Some old homes still stand and the foundations of warehouses may be seen in the vicinity of the Wesleyan Boathouse and the Public Works Building. There are also some of the tie-ups used by ships servicing the warehouses.

The most unique aesthetic feature of the riverfront is the spectacular views which may be enjoyed from almost any point along the stretch. Most of the waterfront also contains healthy foliage which should be retained.

The excursion boats, Dolly Madison and the Yankee Clipper, which occasionally dock at Middletown are reminiscent of early steamship days.

Penn Central Railroad tracks along the area also remind one of the days when trains often passed through Middletown on their way between Boston and New York. The Valley Road is now using these tracks for excursion trains in the Essex area and have considered extending the service as far up as Middletown.



SITE CHARACTERISTICS AND DESIGN CONSTRAINTS

GENERAL SITE CONCLUSIONS

A development of the nature of the Middletown Waterfront must of necessity consider the limitations placed on it by the site conditions. Therefore, the analysis of the site has led to some basic GENERAL SITE CONCLUSIONS which will guide the physical arrangement of uses.

SHORELINE STABILIZATION

A vital prelude to any plan for the waterfront is the preservation of the existing land from continuing erosion. Therefore, it is essential that slope stabilization in the form of new or rehabilitated bulkheading be undertaken as soon as possible where the current is eating away at the shore. The most severely affected area is approximately 800 feet between two stone walls in the INTOWN section of the study area.

STATE LAUNCHING RAMP

At its current location, the state launching ramp is badly designed and inappropriate. The ramp is very steep and placed so that

launching and hauling boats are difficult maneuvers. The presence of automobiles in the area of the waterfront is also not appropriate. Relocation of the ramp is therefore desirable.

EXISTING BUILDINGS

All existing buildings are well constructed and may be feasibly rehabilitated.

GRADING AND LANDSCAPING

Most parts of the waterfront are gently sloping and contain rich vegetation. Grading and landscaping should therefore be minimal. Any area that cannot accommodate a recreational use without major alteration should be cleaned and conserved in its natural state.

ROAD ACCESS

River Road's poor condition makes approach to the DOWNRIVER portion of the riverfront hazardous for both pedestrian and motorist. Its improvement would enhance the waterfront development. Poor or no signing on other nearby arterials discourages visitors unfamiliar with the area to approach the river. Signing should be attractive and legible.

PEDESTRIAN ACCESS

It is presently a difficult and unpleasant experience to approach the INTOWN section of the river on foot. Union Street is hazardous and the Route 9 tunnel uninviting. Improved pedestrian access is essential to the success of a park system.

MARINA LOCATION

Shallow depths, the direction and intensity of the current and lack of sufficient land area necessitate the feasible location of a marina in the area presently used by the concrete plant and oil tank fields. Any other location in the study area would require annual dredging to retain a sufficient depth. The site also provides good access to the central business district and regional transportation.

NOISE LEVELS

Noise Levels in the INTOWN area are, in places (e.g. Lions Park), excessive. Low shrubbery and other plantings along the road's edge would help alleviate some of the noise. The DOWNRIVER section, on the other hand, is very quiet and peaceful.

FLOODING

It is recommended that the flooding which occurs in the area each year--to varying degrees-- not be limited or controlled through artificial means. The flooding is usually of short duration-- a few days--and does little or no damage. The plan should be designed so as to accommodate the flooding.

WILCOX ISLAND

Wilcox Island, on the other hand, floods regularly and for long durations and any use other than conservation would necessitate that the island be built up to a large extent with fill. This procedure, however, would affect the flow of the River and may cause increased flooding downstream. It was therefore concluded that Wilcox Island should be cleared of overgrowth and left in its natural state.

DESIGN OBJECTIVES

The overall goal of devoting the waterfront area to a community park system in which people of all ages could use and enjoy the Connecticut River in a pleasing recreational setting stemmed from an awareness of the following factors:

- The unique natural features and advantages of the Connecticut River in Middletown.
- Large tracts of City-owned land.
- Surrounding people-oriented land uses (residential neighborhoods, community facilities and Downtown).
- Widespread and growing use of the area for recreation.
- Community desire for nearby recreational and open space opportunities.

To provide a framework for the physical design of the waterfront sites consistent with this goal, DESIGN OBJECTIVES were established based on analyses of historical trends, site characteristics, recent policies and plans and expressed community desires.

The DESIGN OBJECTIVES are:

(1) Preserve and enhance the unique character of the Middletown riverfront by recognizing its special natural and historic qualities. Locate facilities in such a manner as to minimize the destruction of natural resources.

(2) Limit future use of City-owned property along the riverfront to such facilities that derive immediate benefit from or make direct contribution to their riverfront location.

(3) Provide a variety of uses along the riverfront that are interrelated and contribute to an ordered, easy-to-understand park system.

(4) Minimize conflicts among different users of the system by separating potentially conflicting land uses and providing natural landscape barriers or "buffers" between areas.

(5) Provide a wide range of recreational uses and take into account future land uses surrounding the area as well as potential water quality changes of the river. Such uses should include facilities for picnickers, fishermen, recreational boating, commercial boating, and others seeking a variety of forms of passive and active recreation.

(6) Provide easy and safe access for users of the park system who come either by foot, boat, automobile or public transit.

(7) Provide sufficient utilities in keeping with appropriate design standards, so as to minimize the potential negative environmental impacts.

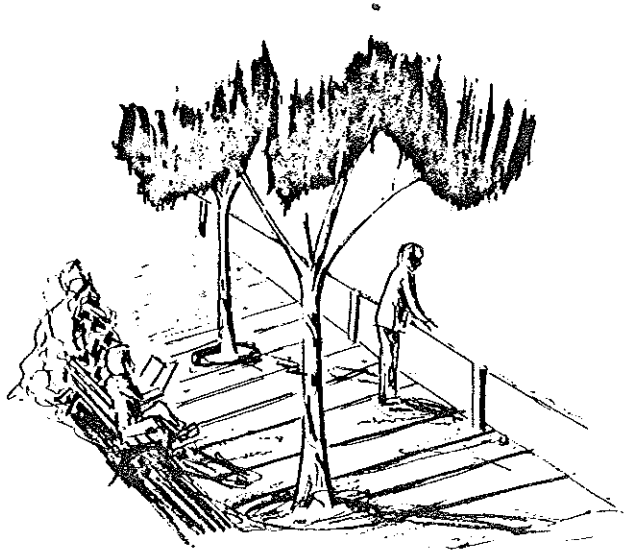
(8) Minimize the changing of land forms (grading) by locating facilities in areas that are topographically suited.

(9) Control erosion by construction or reconstruction of bulkheads in certain areas where land resource is sufficiently important.

PLAN OF DEVELOPMENT

INTOWN

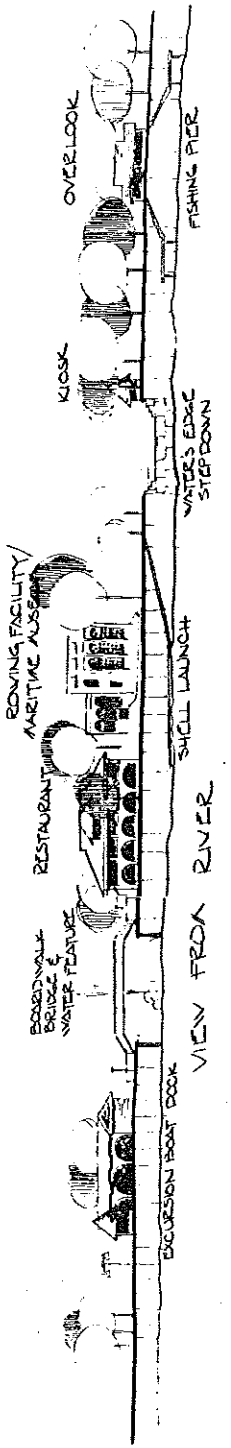
The INTOWN section of the waterfront has been arranged to accommodate both active and passive recreation--cars, boats, and people--without conflict. It is designed to allow for the seasonal, short term flooding of the area while encouraging a wide range of year-round activities. Recommended plant materials and park furniture are those designed to withstand flooding and climate. Light, inexpensive structures which will not require massive excavation are also suggested. Design features include:



- Boardwalk situated on bulkheading along water's edge. An occasional overlook and fishing pier is placed at strategic points to take advantage of the magnificent vistas and to allow closer association with the river.

- Pavilions with restrooms to provide shelter for picnicking and special events.

- Game and play areas for all age groups. Such activities as horseshoes, shuffleboard, bocci and such children's play equipment as swings and sandbox may be included.



- Well-lighted walkways along which park furniture (benches, trash cans, kiosks) will be placed.

- Row boat rentals and shuttle service to Wilcox Island from the site of the current State launching area.

- A launching area and floating dock for row boats and shells.

- A marina in the area now occupied by an oil tank field and concrete plant. It is made possible by relocating a portion of Sumner Brook.

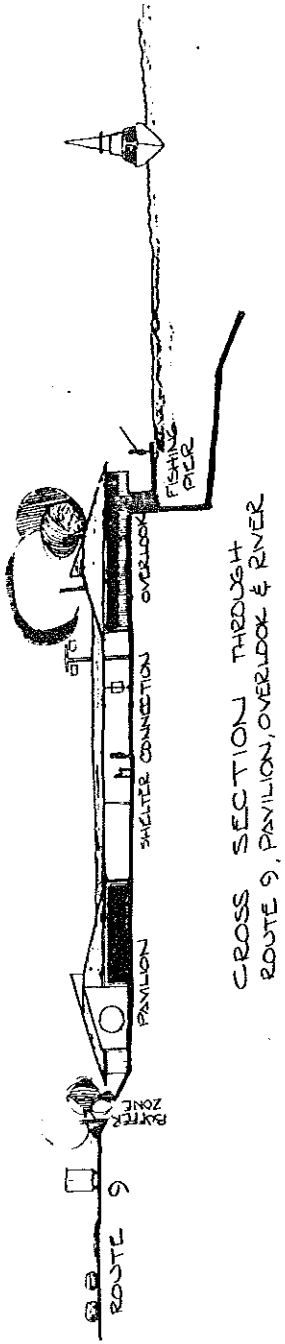
- Rehabilitation of existing structures for river-oriented use.

  Old power plant building may be used in part as a rowing center with principal occupants being the high school and Wesleyan crew clubs.

  A maritime museum chronicaling Middletown's role in American shipping may also occupy part of that structure.

  Old Yacht Club building may be used as a restaurant/lounge with dining or dancing overlooking the river.

  Public Works building may be used as a park maintenance building for equipment storage and repair or as a bicycle rental shop.



CROSS SECTION THROUGH ROUTE 9, PAVILION, OVERLOOK & RIVER

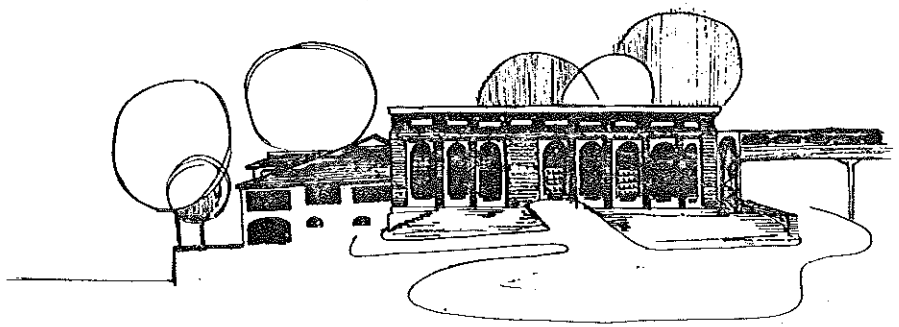
. Improved Pedestrian Access from the Downtown Area

Existing pedestrian tunnel under Route 9 is painted, better lighted and openings are accentuated on both sides of the highway.

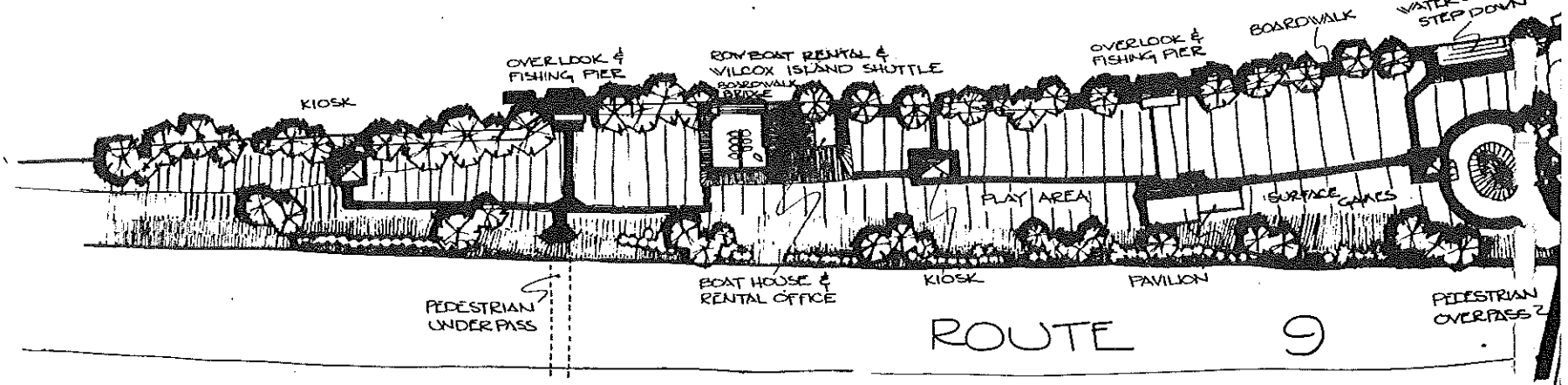
New pedestrian bridge over Route 9 is placed so as to connect waterfront area with the existing Riverview parking structure and Metro South Urban Renewal Area.

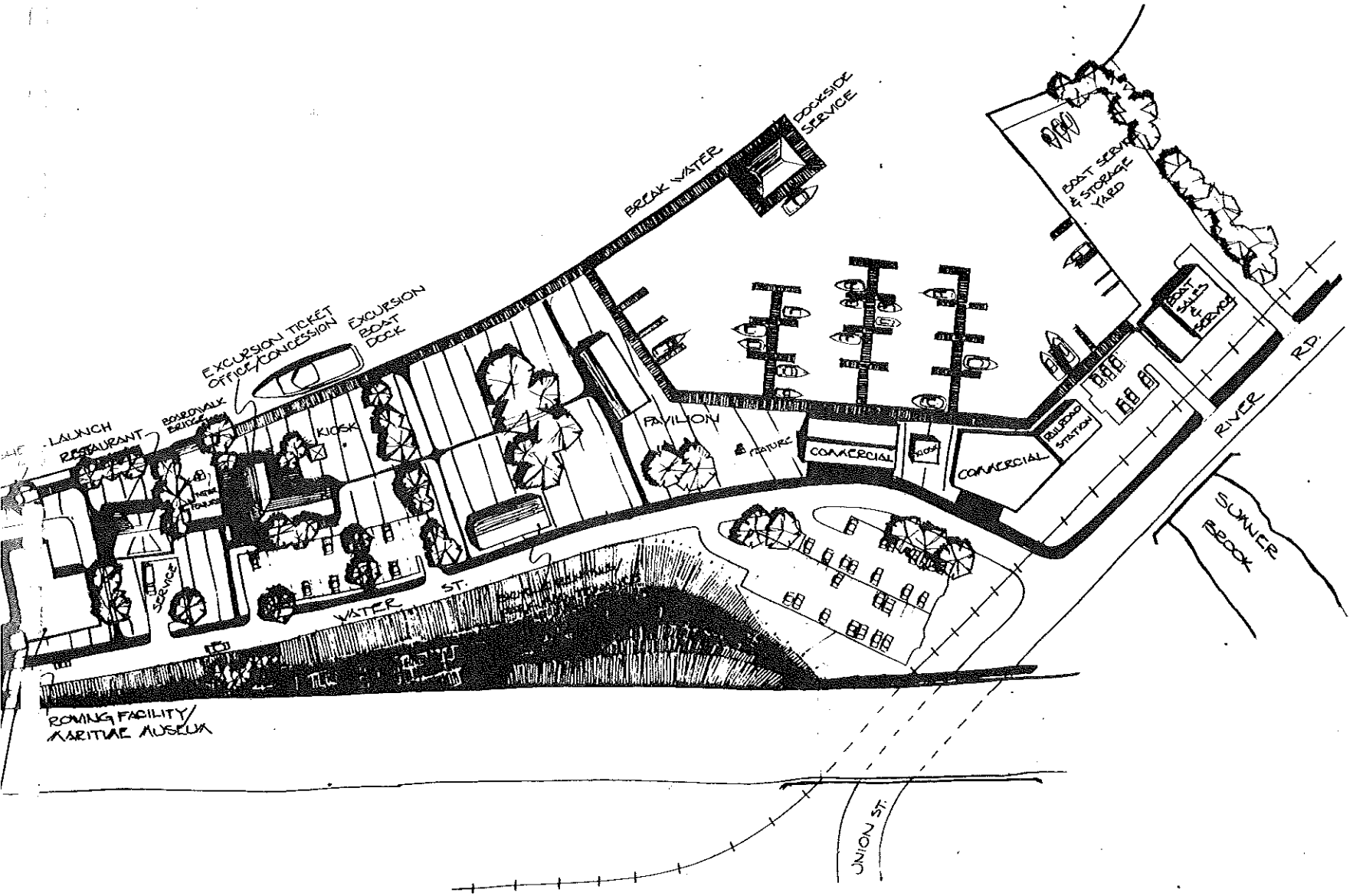
. Improved Automobile Access

Sections of River Road and Water Street and the Penn Central railroad tracks are realigned consistent with the State Department of Transportation's plans for a new Route 9 interchange. The realignment corrects a dangerous intersection and improves access from Route 9. It also eliminates the two crossings of River Road by the railroad tracks. Water Street services only the waterfront--the on-ramp to Route 9 having been eliminated.

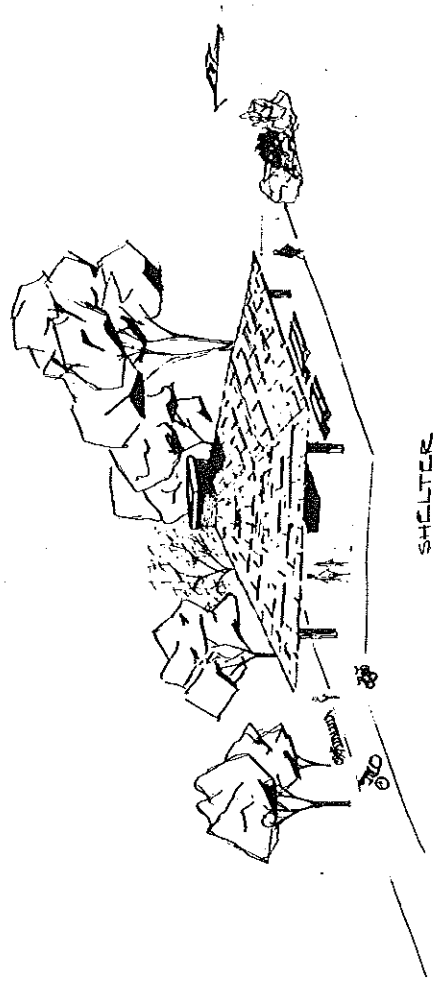


SKETCH LOOKING EAST AT PROPOSED ROVING FACILITY/ MARITIME MUSEUM & THE RESTAURANT/LOUNGE


KIOSK
OVERLOOK & FISHING PIER
ROWBOAT RENTAL & WILCOX ISLAND SHUTTLE
BOARDWALK BRIDGE
OVERLOOK & FISHING PIER
BOARDWALK
WATER'S EDGE STEP DOWN
PLAY AREA
SURFACE GAMES
PEDESTRIAN UNDER PASS
BOAT HOUSE & RENTAL OFFICE
KIOSK
PAVILION
PEDESTRIAN OVERPASS
ROUTE 9


DOCKSIDE SERVICE
BREAK WATER
BOAT SERVICE & STORAGE YARD
BOAT SALES & SERVICE
EXCURSION TICKET OFFICE/CONCESSION
EXCURSION BOAT DOCK
LAUNCH
RESTAURANT
BOARDWALK
KIOSK
PAVILION
COMMERCIAL
COMMERCIAL
RAILROAD STATION
RIVER RD.
SUMNER BROOK
SERVICE
WATER ST.
ROWING FACILITY/ MARITIME MUSEUM
UNION ST.
NORTH
0 40 80
20 FT.

INTOWN



DOWNRIVER

Beyond the new sewage treatment plant, the natural characteristics of the strips of land owned by the City of Middletown and Connecticut Valley Hospital are not suitable for recreational use (see the site evaluation). It is recommended that this land be cleared of trash and overgrowth and maintained in its natural state.

As the land between River Road and the River levels off again, it is proposed that an open space passive park area be created for the pleasure of area residents and the entire community.

Features of the Plan include:

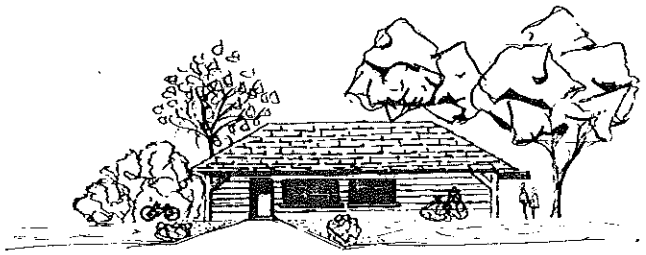
- Retention of healthy trees and shrubs, clearing of overgrowth, seeding and planting.

- Picnic areas in cleared areas. Light shelters , parking areas and bicycle racks are placed occasionally along the area to accommodate users.

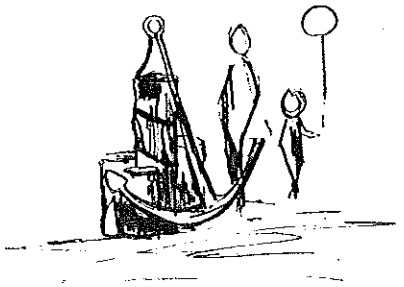
- Pedestrian/bicycle path extending along entire lenth of park.

- State boat launching area near River Road intersection with Silvermine Road and Commodore MacDonough Inn. This launching area replaces the one displaced from the INTOWN section of the waterfront.

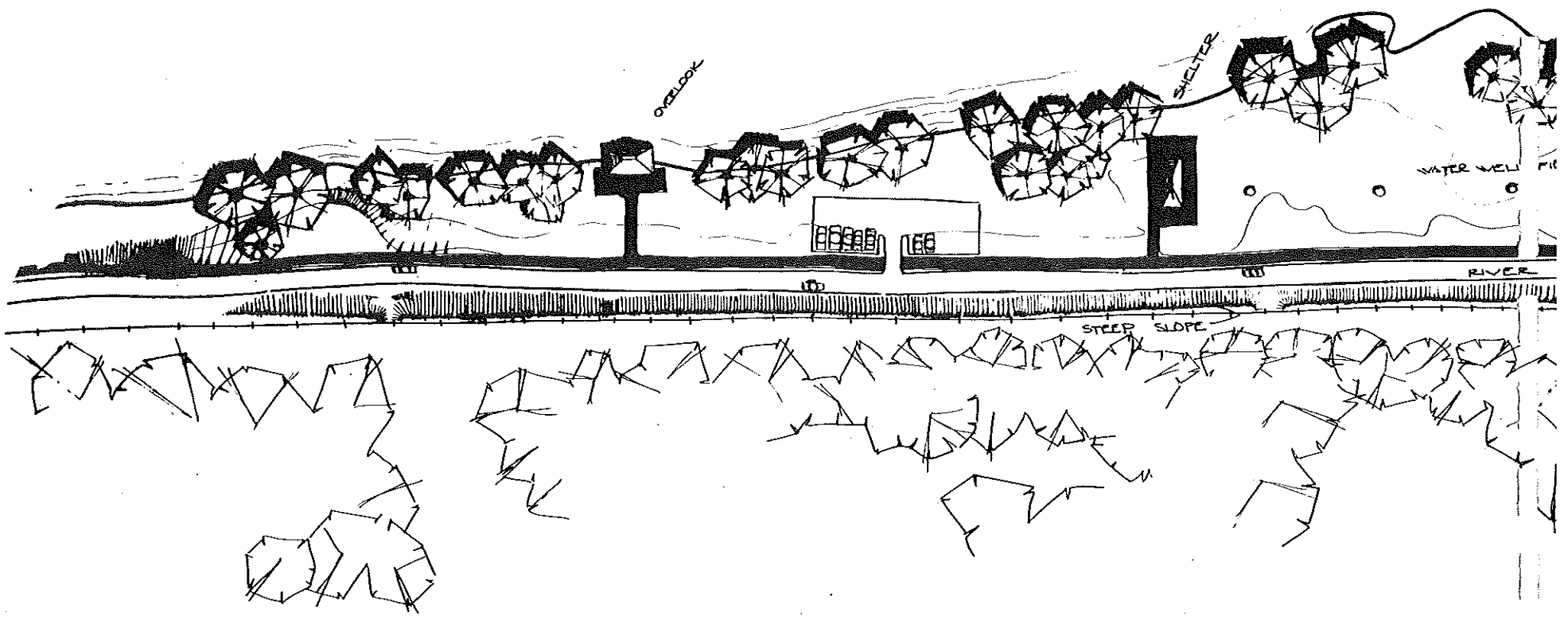
- Mini railroad station to accommodate passengers of proposed extension of the Essex Railroad.

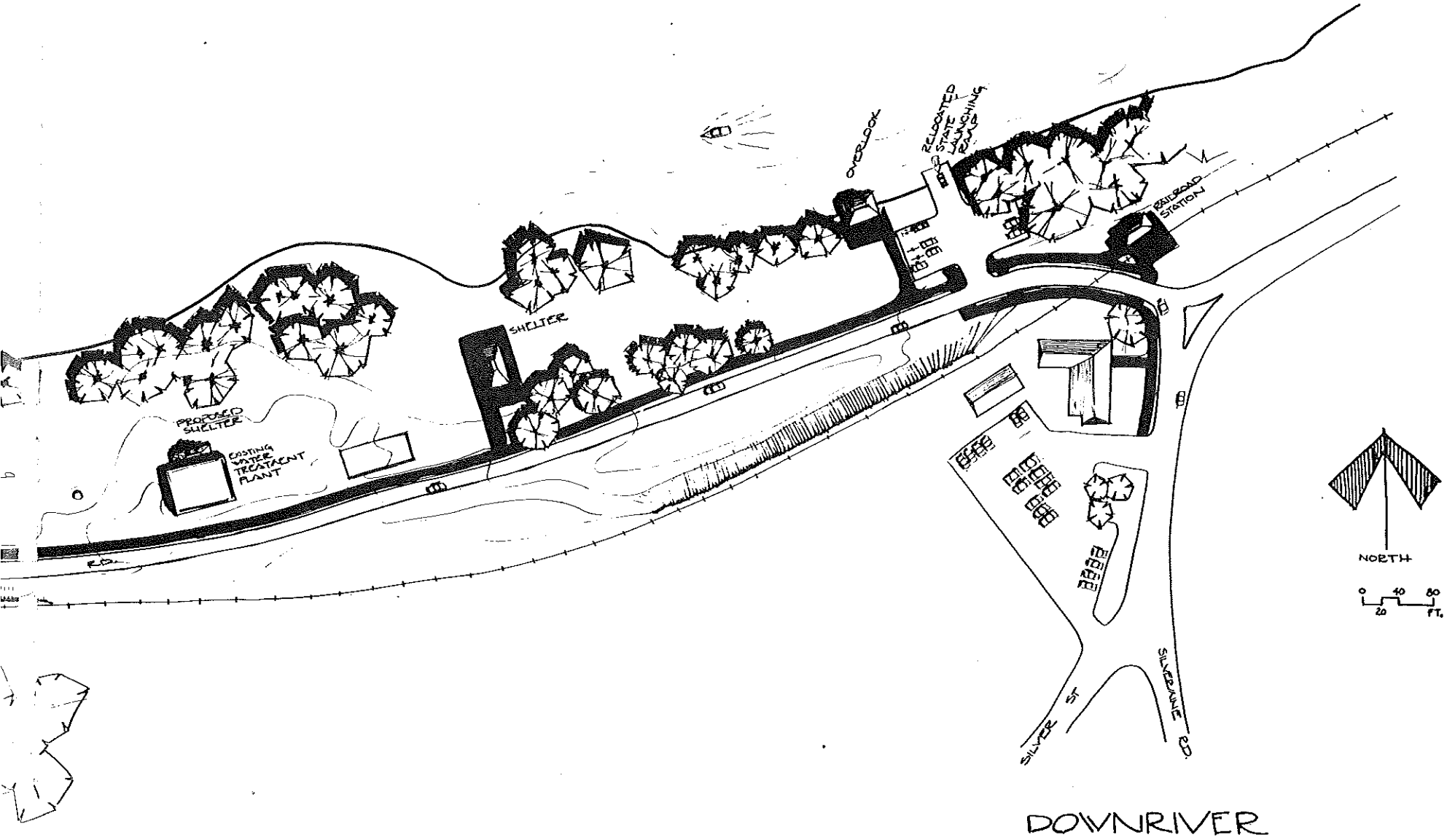


RAILROAD STATION



FEATURE


OVERLOOK
SHELTER
WATER WELL
RIVER
STEEP SLOPE


OVERLOOK
ELEVATED STATE LAUNCHING RAMP
RAILROAD STATION
SHELTER
PROPOSED SHELTER
EXISTING WATER TREATMENT PLANT
SILVER ST
SILVER AVE
NORTH
0 40 80
20 FT.
DOWNRIVER

S T A G I N G

One of the most important features of the plan is that it need not be executed in its final form to be useful and attractive.

If, due to financial or other reasons, the City does not wish to acquire additional land, it may carry out the plan without the marina facility. In that case, a dock similar to that planned for rowing use may be constructed.

Staging of the overall plan may be arranged in the following manner:

(1) Clean-up (entire study area) — Estimated cost not determined.
A good way to involve community in waterfront improvement. Many towns have conducted volunteer projects to clear brush and remove junk. Public Works Department may provide equipment and direction.

(2) Slope Stabilization and Rough Grading (INTOWN section) — $ 800,000.00
Slope stabilization is essential to preserving the waterfront for any plan. Deteriorating bulkheading should be rehabilitated and needed bulkheading constructed. The State launching ramp would be relocated during this stage.

(3)	Landscaping, Lighting, and Furniture (INTOWN) This procedure would include seeding and planting, walkways, parking areas, picnic tables, benches, design features (e.g., fountain), kiosks, game areas, signing, lighting of major walkways, improving tunnel.	$ 350,000.00
(4)	Landscaping, Lighting, and Furniture (DOWNRIVER) Including seeding and planting, walkways, parking tables, picnic facilities.	$ 200,000.00
(5)	Construction of Light Buildings (INTOWN) Pavilions and restrooms, boardwalk, look-outs, and floating docks.	$ 75,000.00
(6)	Rehabilitation of Existing Structures Old power plant, yacht club, public works building.	$ 90,000.00
(7)	New Construction Pedestrian bridge, new buildings (excursion train station).	$1,000,000.00

(8)	Marina Land acquisition, dredging, construction of finger piers and accessory buildings.	$1,200,000.00 (Cost of land acquisition not included)

The marina is listed last because it is the most costly improvement and because all the other improvements can stand without it. However, revenue making possibilities may be considered in its placement in a staging plan.

The relocation of River Road, Water Street and Sumner Brook is an optional, although important, aspect of the plan. This improvement may be done in conjunction with the State's plans for a new interchange for Route 9.

PRINCIPAL CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS STUDY

Harbor Improvement Agency

Arnold Ackerman, Chairman
Jane Hall, Secretary
Joseph Meehl
Philip Salafia
Joseph Rosano
Joseph Guida
Lamont Benedict
Randy Miller
Eugene DesRoches
John McWilliams
William Wrang

William Kuehn, Municipal Development Coordinator

CE Maguire, Inc.

Sandra Zlokower	Project Coordination
Albert Gary, AIP	Urban Design/Site Planning
Kenneth MacGregor, P.E.	Civil Engineering