

# SCHUYLKILL PARK

A NEW RIVERFRONT PARK FOR PHILADELPHIA



# SCHUYLKILL PARK

A 1980 PROGRESS REPORT

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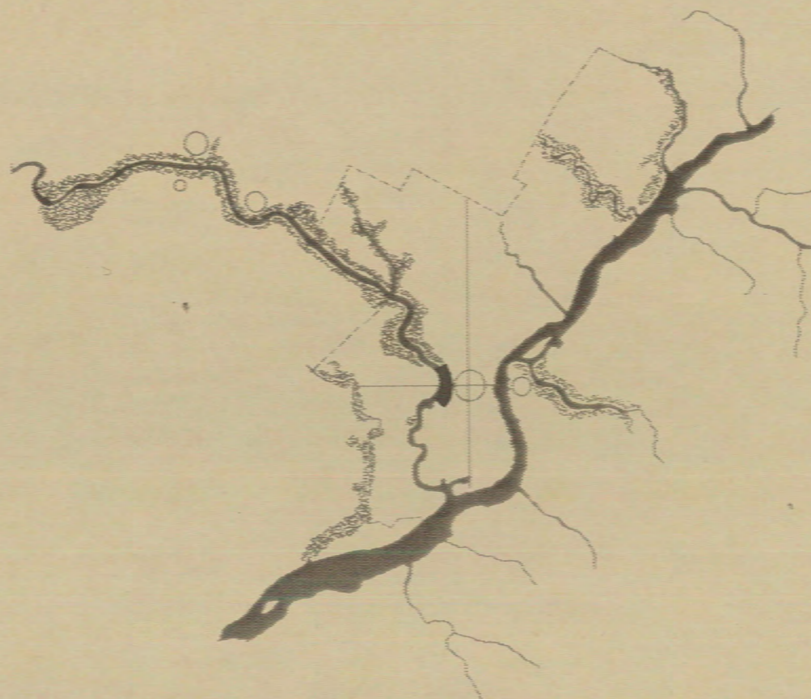
mUG-3479

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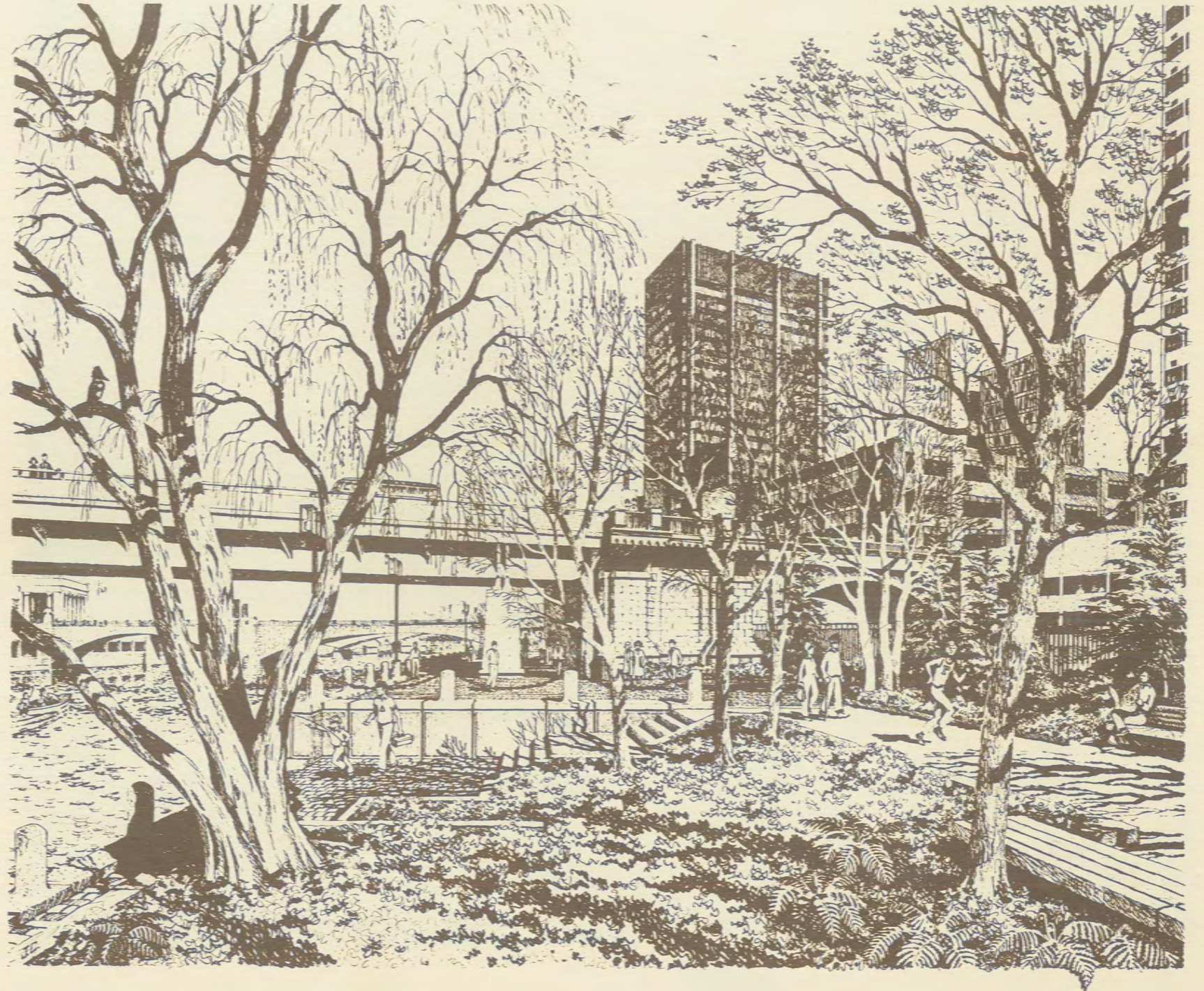
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## NEW CITY OPPORTUNITIES



### A GREEN CITY EDGE

For the past fifteen years, the City of Philadelphia has been planning the renaissance of Center City's western waterfront. In 1980, the stage is set for the implementation of these bold plans, extending the vision of Philadelphia's forefathers who first established Fairmount Park, the greatest city park in the world. During this period, office, housing, and commercial developments have been marching westward to form a new edge to the downtown. In the 1980's, the new riverfront park and this surge of development will meet to establish Center City West as a young and vital equal partner to the historical eastern half of central Philadelphia.

While the southern portion of Schuylkill Park was substantially completed in 1980, the riverfront-related park extending from the Art Museum to South Street (and possibly beyond) will begin in earnest this year.

The park will green the blighted western entry to the City and, in so doing, will provide the civic framework against which private reinvestment in the area can be enhanced. The proposed park development will reverse a fifty-year-old trend of declining investment within the waterfront corridor. Current tax revenues to the City from under-utilized riverfront land are well below their potential. Future tax revenue, assuming continued development of the area, would be increased significantly. Furthermore, by providing safe, attractive public access to the river, the potential for private investment will be maximized, and Philadelphia's unique riverfront identity will be restored.

The provision of adequate lighting, fencing of the Chessie Railroad, illuminated stair towers and ramps for access, and regular security patrols, will insure a safe, well-used riverfront park. It may be assumed that the park will be used and appreciated since today, even without these improvements, people walk through or fish in this area. Moreover, the image of Center City West will be revitalized by the private development, townhouses, high-rise apartments, and commercial structures which will establish the eastern park edge.

## A NEW CITY IMAGE

An obvious major benefit of the park development for Philadelphia will be a great improvement in the city's visual image. Daily, thousands of motorists and rail passengers see the city from the west bank of the river. They will soon be greeted by an active, green, welcoming "front door" rather than a deteriorating, dark, ominous scene.

Such revitalization has already begun in the first phase of Schuylkill Park. The dismal entrance to the Taney Street playground, shown below, has since been replaced by the inviting gateway plaza and splash fountain sculpture, shown on the right. The new park entrance expresses a sense of welcome, openness, and fun. This design attitude will be continued throughout the entire Schuylkill Park.



Before.



After. Entrance to Playground Plaza, Schuylkill Park, Phase I

## NEW CONNECTIONS

According to the 1970 census, 39.7% of Philadelphia's households were without cars. The percentage for Center City was even higher - 61.6%. The hiking/biking paths of Schuylkill River Park will provide non-motoring residents with direct access to other large-scale recreation opportunities.

As energy conservation becomes a necessity, we must seek varied recreation opportunities which are accessible to large population centers by alternative travel modes. The new park will extend existing trails and bikeways for a mile and a quarter, and provide direct connections to major neighborhood and arterial streets. Recreation-deficient residents of city neighborhoods will be able to walk, jog, bike, or stroll along the river to a rich variety of scenic features, historical and cultural sites, recreation facilities in Fairmount Park, the Wissahickon Valley (a nationally-designated Natural Historical Landmark), and the new Valley Forge Trail. Furthermore, with the completion of Schuylkill Park, the 75 miles of hiking and 25 miles of paved bike trails in Fairmount Park will offer alternative transportation systems to and from work for many Northwest Philadelphia residents.

Other riverfront communities are actively involved in the reclamation of the Schuylkill corridor for recreation-related transportation; a number of projects have been completed. The Schuylkill Greenway Association, a broadly-supported organization, is spearheading this effort from Pottsville to Philadelphia.

The potential for boat access in the new park area is great. This portion of the river is uninterrupted, and is tidal to the Fairmount Dam. In the future, water taxis could be utilized between the Art Museum and the central part of the park. Floating docks are planned at Walnut Street and north of the Vine Street bridge for short-term public mooring.



Existing Fairmount Park Bikeway

## NEW NEIGHBORHOOD RECREATION

Within Center City alone, there are approximately forty-three thousand residents in the eight neighborhoods to east and west of the river who are within a fifteen-minute walk of the proposed park. These neighborhoods include Schuylkill Neighbors, Center City Residents, Logan Square, Fairmount, Spring Garden, Mantua, Powelton, and University City. Both the University of Pennsylvania and Drexel University would also have easy access to the riverfront park.

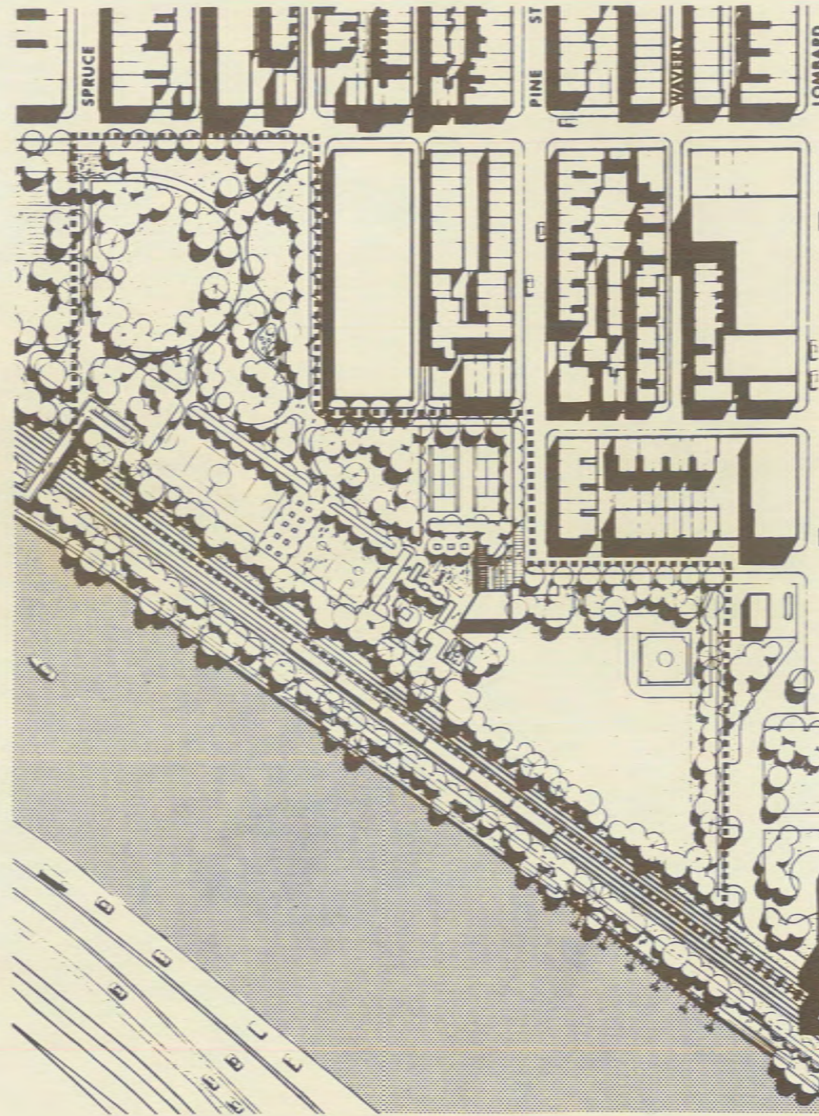
With the advent of Schuylkill Park, the city's existing resources in Fairmount Park will become much more accessible. In addition to opportunities for active sports - jogging, biking, and hiking - provision will be made for fishing, boating, picnicking, and "tot lots." And, as a continuous backdrop to the scene at river's edge, there will be the spectacular views of the Art Museum, 30th Street Station, and the Walnut, Chestnut, Market, J. F. Kennedy Boulevard, and railroad bridges.

The park forms a continuous amenity shared and enjoyed by a wide range of ethnically, racially, and economically diverse neighborhoods. The river's commonality is a unique treasure to the city.

## COMPLETED DEVELOPMENT

In 1979, the six-acre first stage of the park was completed between Spruce and Lombard Streets, east of the railroad. This \$850,000 project includes a neighborhood recreation building, court games, a playground, informal lawn areas, an athletic field, and two tot play areas. A central plaza features a spray fountain with a sculpture by Peter Rockwell. This first stage utilized a modest approach in terms of cost, while retaining high standards in terms of design.

The program and design of this area were developed in close cooperation with the Schuylkill Neighbors and the Center City Residents Association, representing the two neighborhoods that were most directly affected. The Logan Square Neighborhood Association has also been part of the planning process over the past twelve years.



Stage I Development - Markward Playground



## EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Schuylkill River forms a sweeping curve within the city's gridiron landscape. Its abandoned waterfront constitutes the western edge of Center City. The long, narrow park site on the east bank of the river extends for a mile and a quarter from South Street to the Art Museum. Bounded by deteriorating bulkheads on the river and active freight lines to the east, the site varies in width from 20 to 150 feet.

## ADJACENT LAND USES

Row and townhouse residential neighborhoods border the park on both ends; the central portion of the park is dominated by highrise commercial and residential structures. Residential density within the Schuylkill Park corridor is 33.6 Dwelling Units per acre - far greater than either the city-wide average (7.0 D.U./acre) or the Center City average (14.9 D.U./acre), and this has increased 17% since 1970.

## RECREATION FACILITIES

Existing recreation resources within this corridor are largely limited to passive areas at Logan, Fittler, and Rittenhouse Squares. Active recreation facilities for children and adults have been developed in the park's first stage (Markward Playground) and the Parkway ball-fields and Bicentennial playground. (The latter facility, built as a temporary Bicentennial project, is in great need of redesign if it is to be considered permanent.)



Aerial View of Center City from the West



## BULKHEADING AND SHORELINE CONDITIONS

Stabilizing or repairing the deteriorated riverfront for safe public use constitutes a major portion of the total park development cost. Edge conditions vary from steep rubble banks (1,670 linear feet) to existing concrete and steel bulkheads (900'±), and one portion of usable timber bulkhead (500'). Therefore, assuming retention of all suitable bulkheading (1,440'), a total of 3,530 feet of bulkhead, rip rap, or gabion bank protection must be constructed to complete the entire park project from South to Spring Garden Streets.



## THE RAILROAD

The Chessie Railroad poses a major barrier to public access to the riverfront. Eleven freight trains, of 50 to 200 cars each, pass through this area daily. Two and a half years of negotiations between the City and the Railroad companies were required to conclude the land acquisition and agreements concerning construction and right-of-way requirements. It is now clear that the park and the railroad may safely coexist.

In the northern third of the Park, the tracks and right-of-way will be relocated to the east to create sufficient space for park development and continuous access.

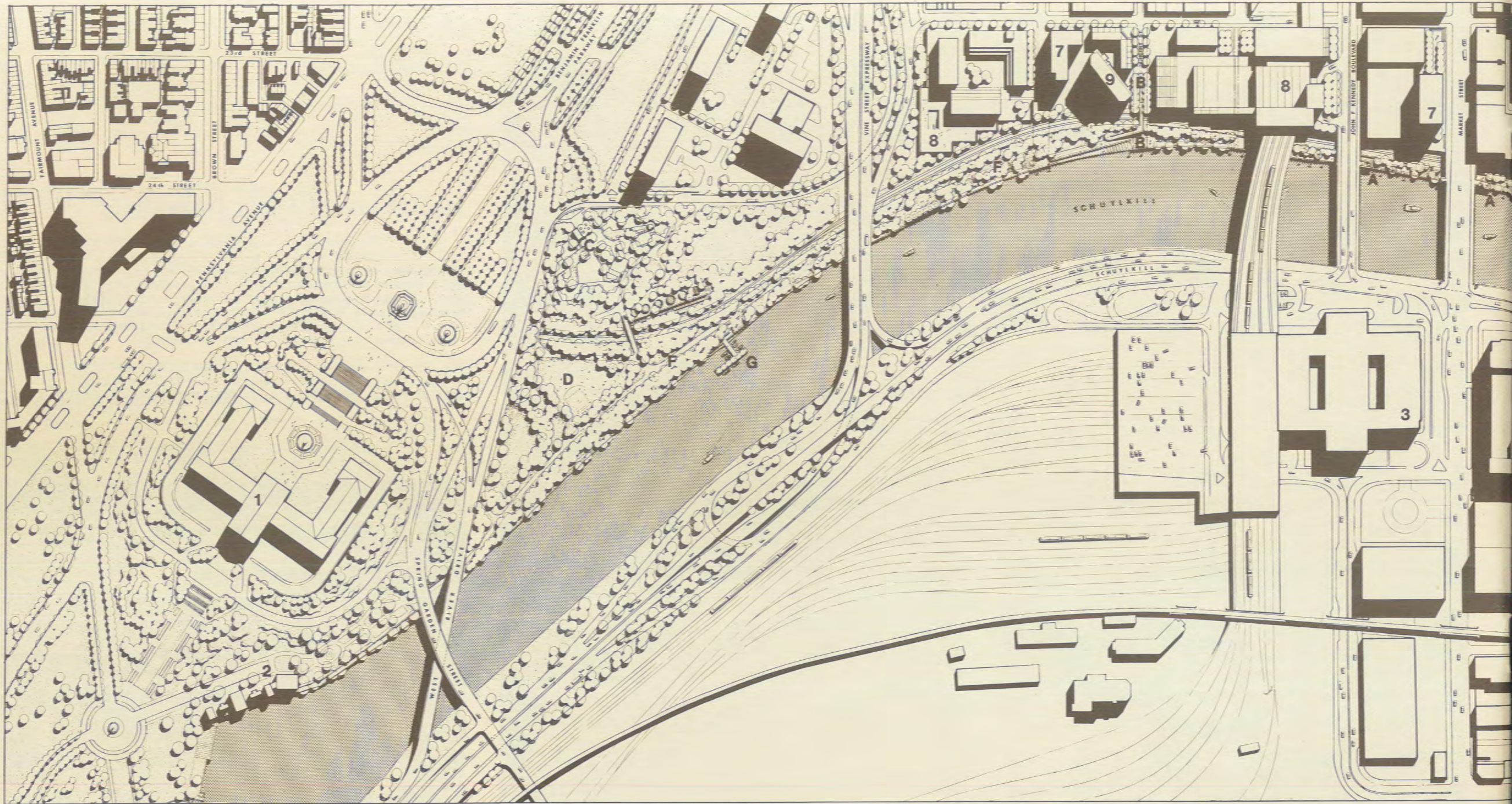


## MAJOR VIEWS AND LANDMARKS

Throughout the proposed park, expansive views of river and sky provide a refreshing contrast to dense urban development. The site also offers exciting vistas of such landmarks as the Art Museum, 30th Street Station, and the Center City skyline. The scene is further enlivened by nine bridges, each with its own unique character.

The park will enhance the view from the bridges and will be appreciated by travelers on the Schuylkill Expressway, Amtrak trains, and SEPTA lines across the river.





SCHUYLKILL RIVER PARK MASTER PLAN

FAIRMOUNT PARK  
THE DELTA GROUP - URBAN  
2323 CHESTNUT STREET

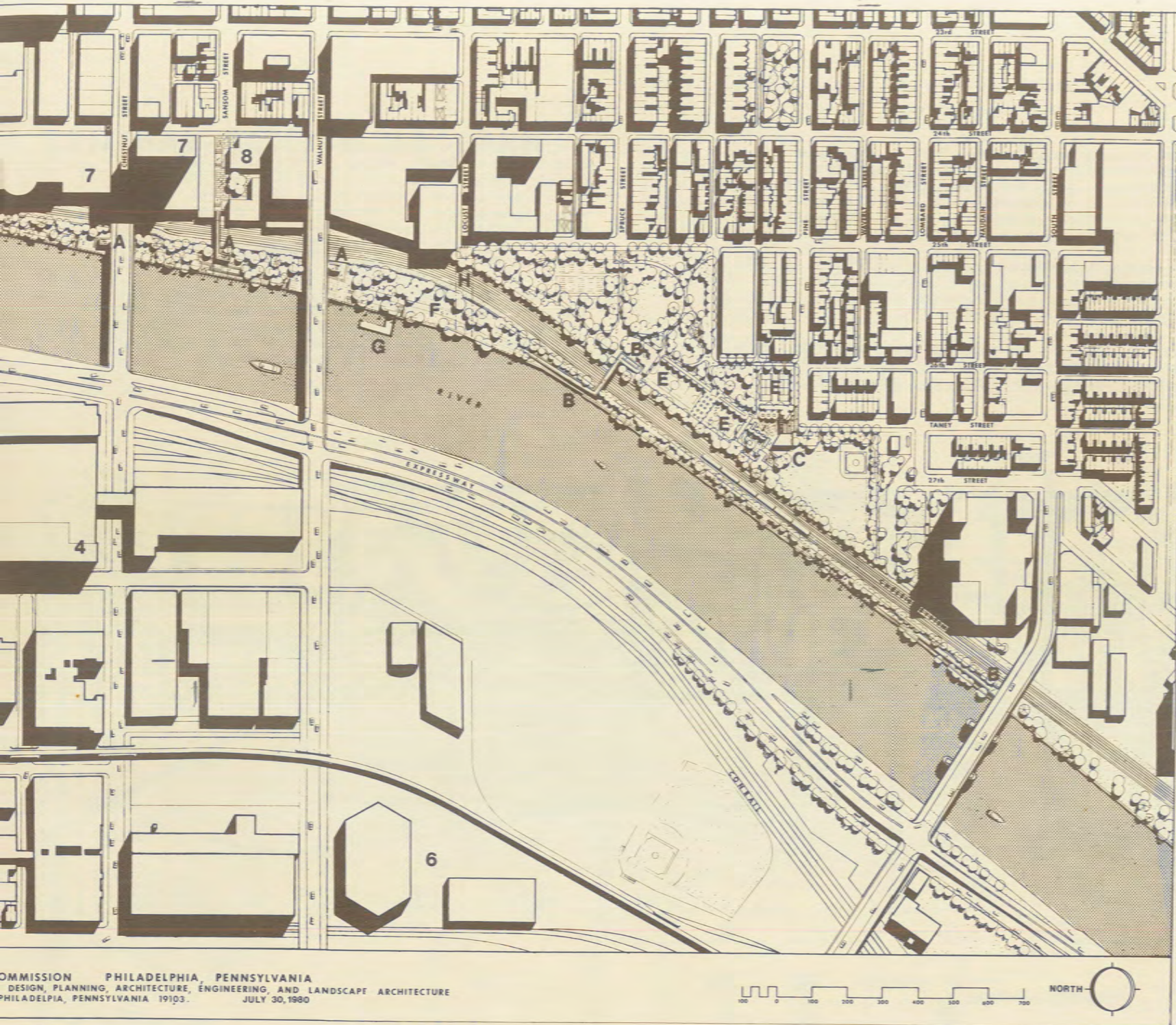
# SCHUYLKILL PARK MASTER PLAN

The planning and design development of Schuylkill River Park began in 1965. The original design character of the proposed park from South Street to the Art Museum was rather formal and elegant, with numerous large plazas, rich paving, and granite-faced bulkheading. A street-level upper promenade deck, encasing the railroad from Locust to Cherry Streets, was a major design element in the 1967 Master Plan.

In 1978, due to inflation and extremely high bulkhead costs, the Master Plan underwent significant revisions. The park setting became less formal, thus less costly; naturalistic plantings replaced the formal groves of trees. The promenade deck over the railroad was eliminated, and the granite facing on the bulkhead was replaced with textured concrete. In fact, the decision was made to reuse existing bulkhead wherever possible. It was decided to lower the park elevation to save significant sums on both bulkheading and the required earthwork. Additional monies were saved by cutbacks in the amount and richness of paving materials. Through these redesign efforts, the proposed cost was reduced considerably.

- A. Stair Tower
- B. Ramp
- C. Recreation Building
- D. Proposed Playfield
- E. Court Games
- F. Major Walkway/Bikeway
- G. Floating Dock
- H. Chessie System Railroad

- 1. Philadelphia Museum of Art
- 2. Water Works
- 3. 30th Street Station
- 4. Post Office
- 5. Drexel University
- 6. University of Pennsylvania
- 7. Recent Development
- 8. Proposed Development
- 9. River's Edge



COMMISSION PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA  
DESIGN, PLANNING, ARCHITECTURE, ENGINEERING, AND LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE  
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19103. JULY 30, 1980

*Delta Group John Collins*

The overall character of Schuylkill Park will be informal and "woody," in contrast to the formality developed at the Penn's Landing waterfront. This is fitting, as the Schuylkill has a much smaller-scale, passive nature, in contrast to the port activity and great width of the Delaware.

A major walkway will be constructed through the entire length of the park, uninterrupted by stairs or steep slopes. This walk will be approximately at the existing grade. Between bridges and in other appropriate locations, a lower-level walk of more rustic character will provide a quieter, more restful strolling and fishing promenade.

Given the railroad barrier, potential pedestrian access must be sought from either existing bridges or new ramp bridges over the tracks. Stair towers will be construc-

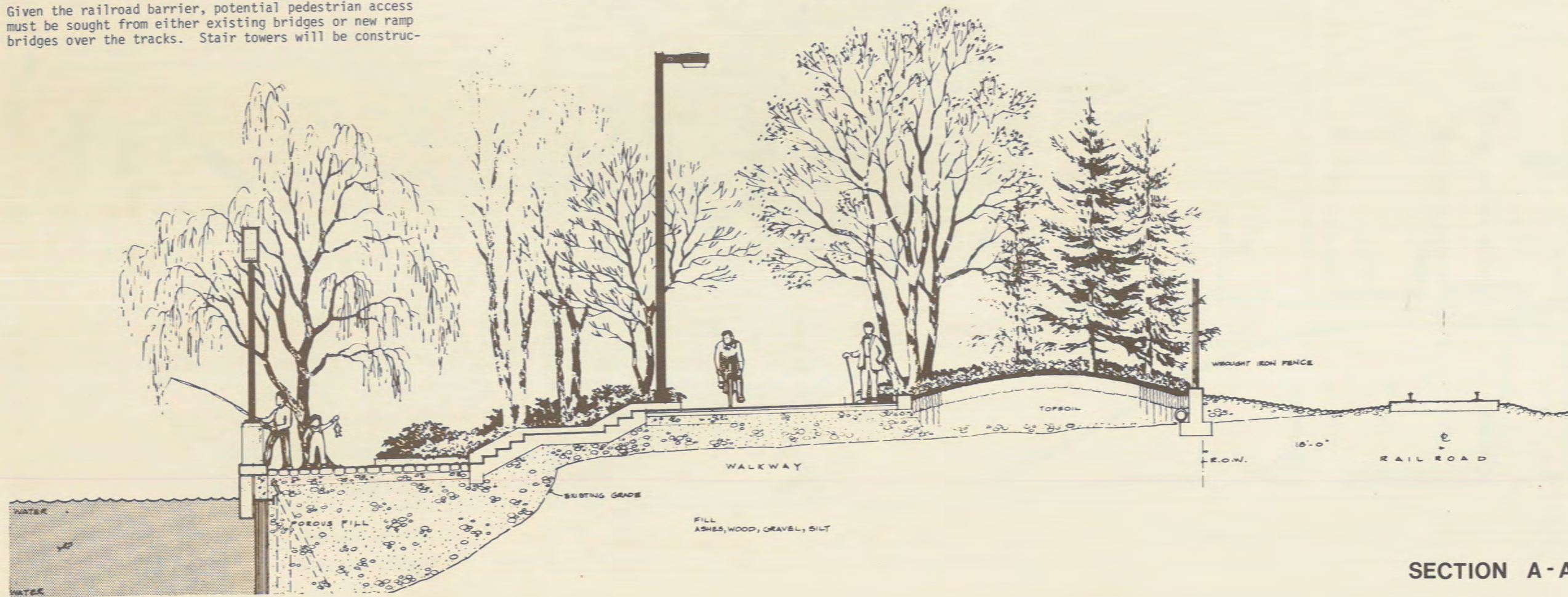
ted at the Walnut, Chestnut, Market, and JFK bridges, and ramp bridges for direct neighborhood access will be provided at Cherry and Spruce Streets. On-grade entry for service and emergency vehicles will be provided from the Eakins Oval. A ramp from the South Street Bridge will permit cyclist and pedestrian access from the south.

A continuous decorative iron fence, reinforced by dense evergreen planting and earth berms, will screen the railroad from view. Where the width precludes a planted buffer, a solid wall is proposed.

Paving will be a combination of concrete, brick, asphalt, and cobblestones, used to reflect the importance of each area as well as other functional and cost considerations.

Planting will be primarily native species, at home in the river-edge environment: Willow, Black Gum, Red Maple, Hemlock, Dogwood, Witch Hazel, Spice Bush, and Shadbush. On the higher, drier northern areas, oaks, maples, and other upland species will dominate. This will provide familiar habitat and cover for the great variety of hawks, ducks, geese, and other birds which use the river corridor.

Where possible, existing trees will be protected and utilized in the design, such as the large willow south of Chestnut Street, planted by interested neighbors to promote the idea of the park. This is an example of the care being taken to preserve all existing elements of value.



SECTION A-A

## CENTRAL SCHUYLKILL PARK

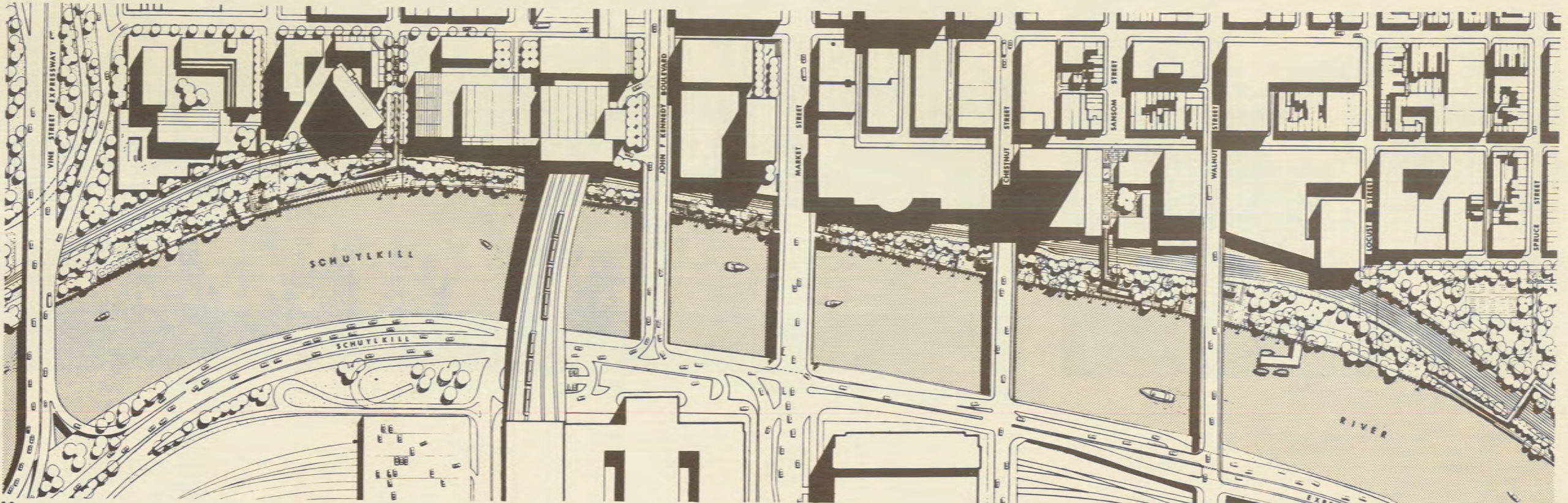


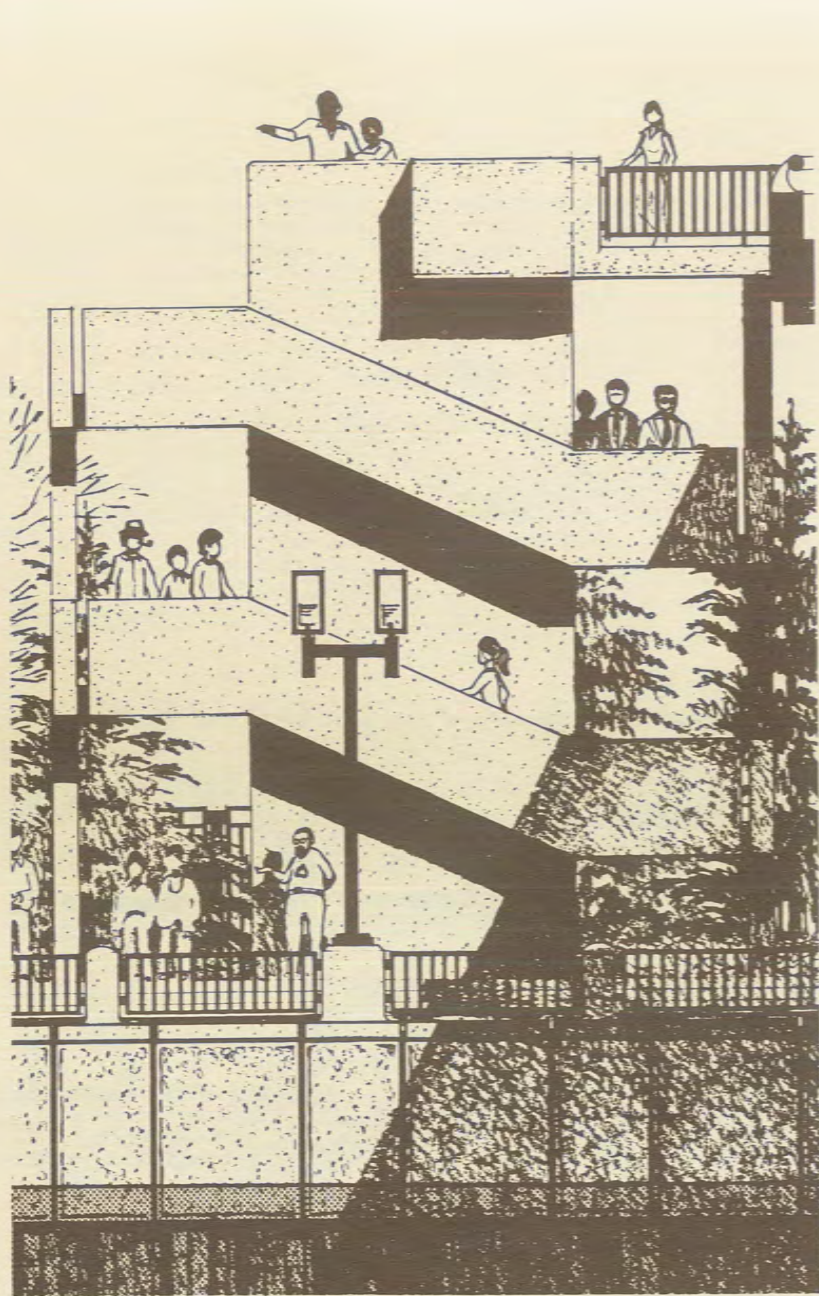
The park development in the central portion includes a quiet riverfront promenade, sitting areas, a major pedestrian and bicycle throughway, stair towers at all the bridges, and pedestrian ramps over the tracks at Spruce and Cherry Streets. This portion of the park will be used intensely; therefore, the design will reflect this usage in the amount of paved area. Both the water's edge and the major pathway will be well-illuminated. In addition, special lighting effects on the bridges will highlight their unique structures.

Park development must be preceded by the construction of the bulkhead and the placement of backfill material, allowing it to settle prior to park improvements. Stabilizing the deteriorated edge condition with the proposed bulkhead and rip rap constitutes over half the total project development cost.

However, creating a permanent river edge is critical to both the public's safety and the long-term maintenance of the park. Furthermore, the proposed bulkhead will allow extremely narrow areas to be widened, creating sufficient space for park uses, maintenance, and security vehicle access. Substantial savings in mobilization costs may be realized if the bulkhead installation proceeds sequentially from one end of the riverfront to the other.

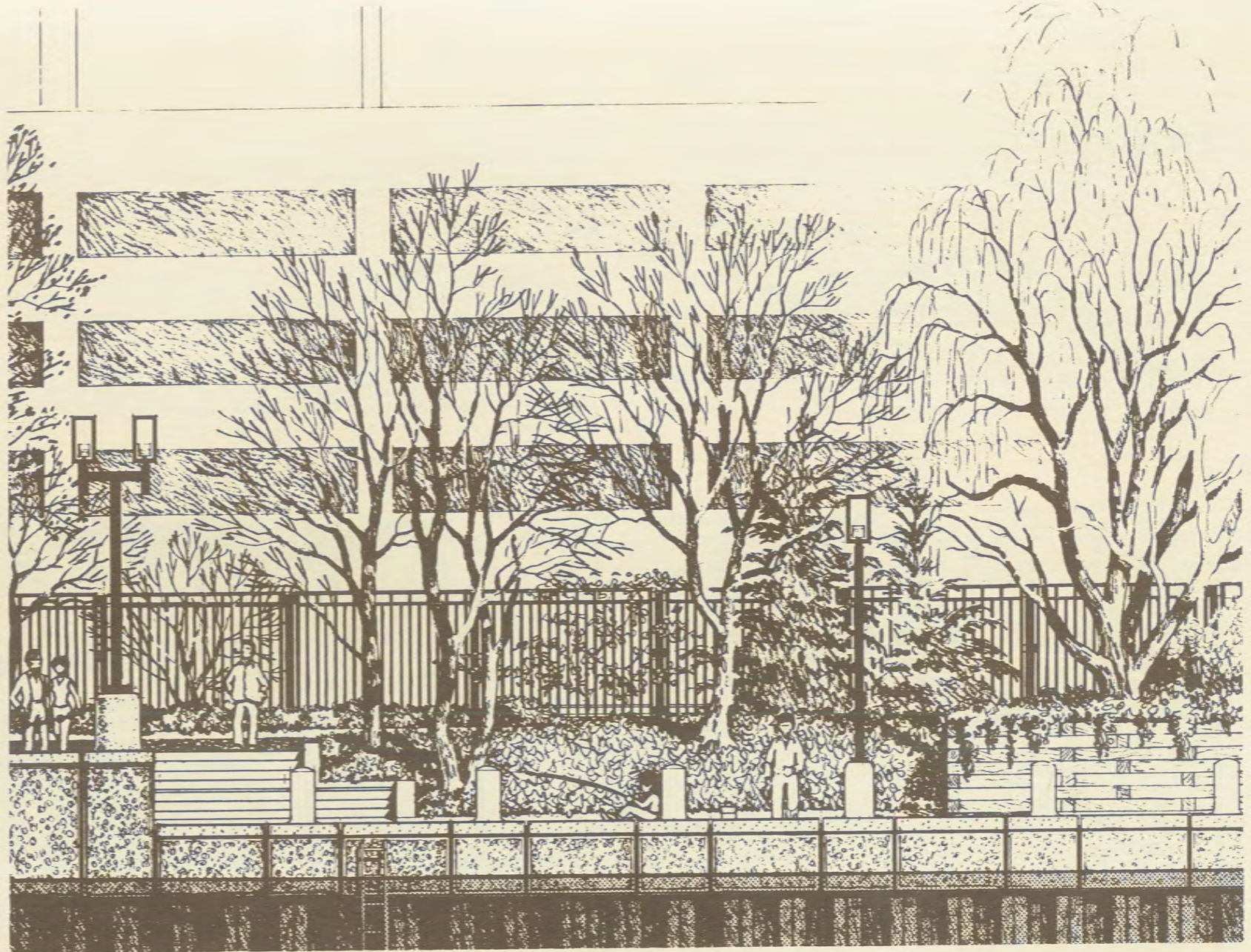
In order to link the new parkland south of Vine Street to the existing undeveloped city property to the north, it will be necessary to realign the railroad in the northern section to provide adequate width under the Vine Street Bridge. Without this added space, a continuous park would be impossible. The proposed realignment would occur at Arch Street, moving the tracks to the east and thus passing through the Vine Street Bridge portal east of the existing location. The track would join the existing tracks approximately 600 feet north of Vine Street.





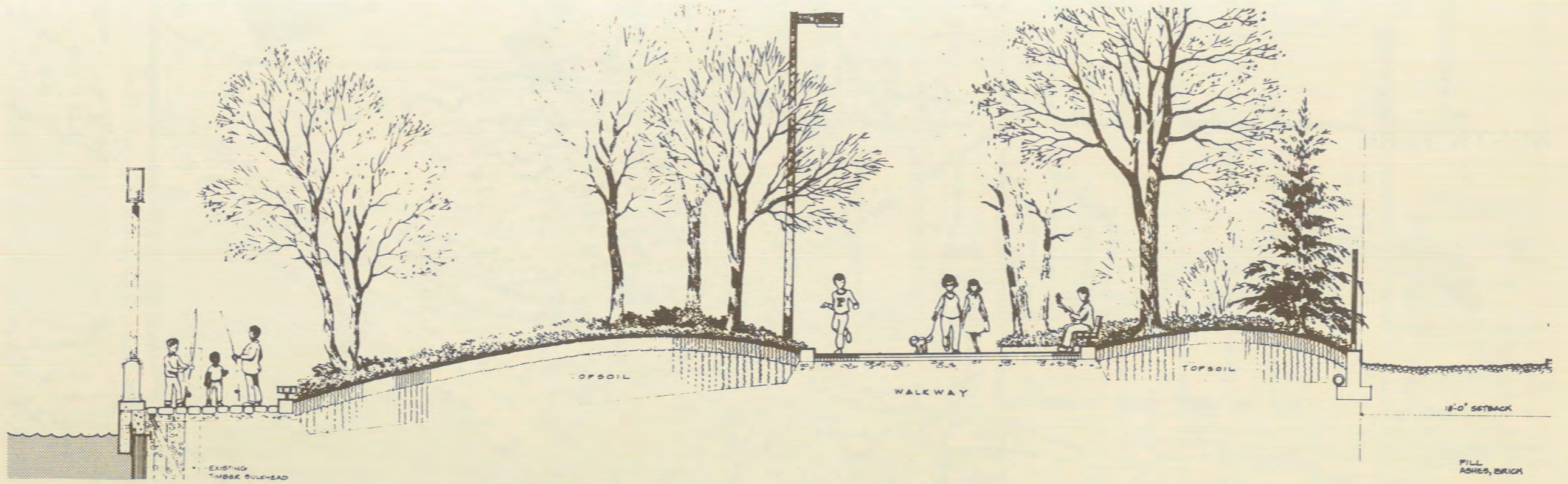
## STAIR TOWER

Stair towers and ramps have been designed to provide overlooks. Periodic landings will allow more interesting, less strenuous ascents and descents. A rough-textured concrete finish will be used to continue the design vocabulary established by the bulkhead facing.

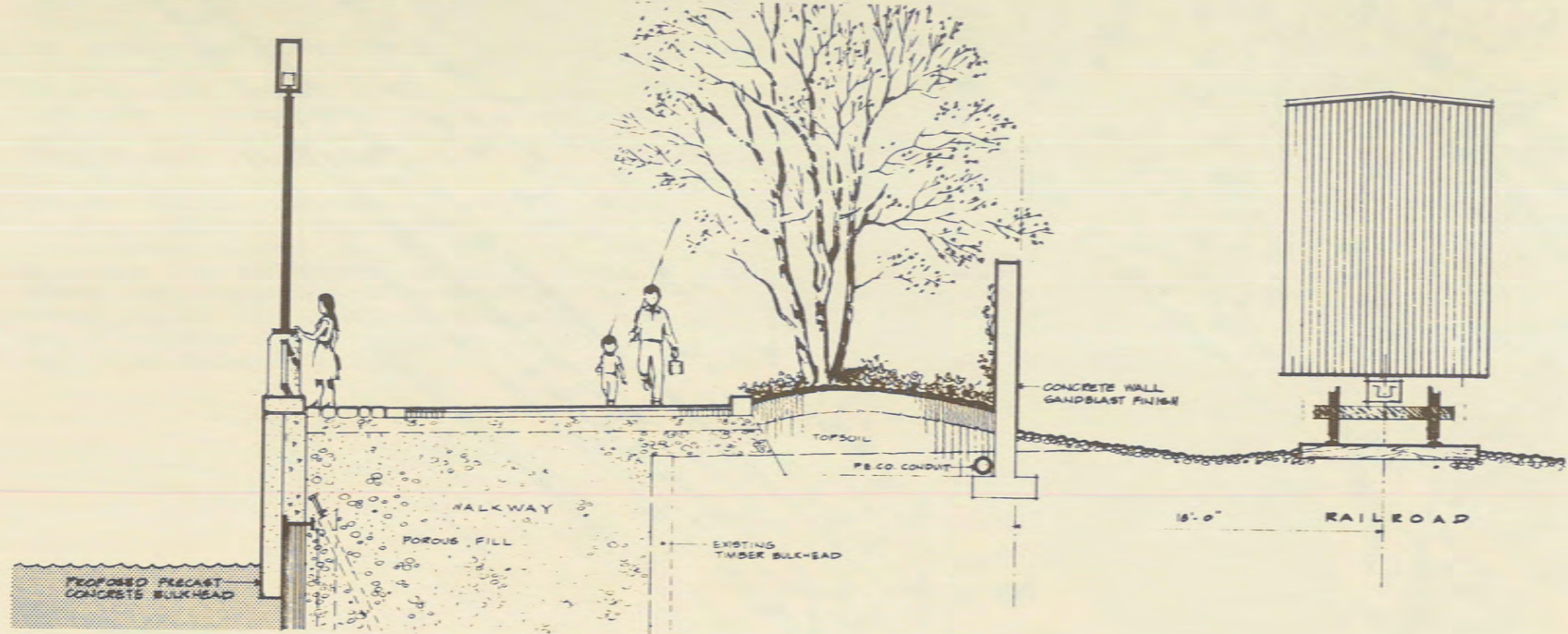


## RIVER WALL

Two heights of bulkheads or river walls will be constructed of steel sheet piling faced with a rough-textured precast concrete panel and coping. Special lighting, bollards, and railings will be integral with the coping, to provide design continuity.



**SECTION B-B**  
Typical Section.



**SECTION C-C**  
Narrow Section.

## NORTH PARK



This area is dominated by great views of the Art Museum and the Waterworks, two major Philadelphia landmarks. The Chessie Railroad bisects the parkland, but is relatively hidden because the tracks are in a deep cut with steep slopes.

The river edge in this area varies considerably; however, steep riverbanks are consistent from the old ruins to the waterworks. A great deal of erosion has taken place during recent floods, leaving unsightly and hazardous conditions near the twin bridges. Much of the existing embankment is covered with concrete and asphalt rubble, a condition which also requires remedial work.

The existing playground and ballfield occupy the area east of the railroad, and will require improvement.

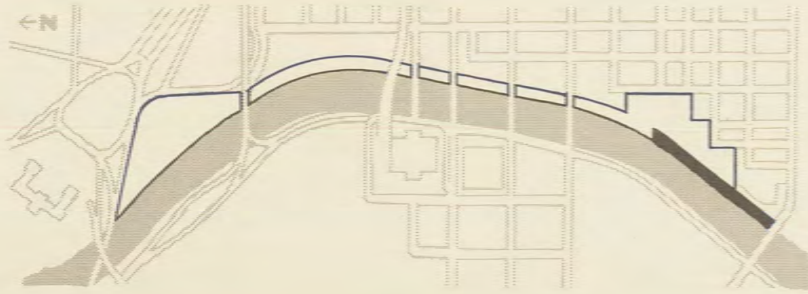
The character of the northern portion of the park has been simplified dramatically. Design proposals for the section from Vine Street to the Art Museum include a path connection and shoreline improvements only where absolutely necessary. The overpass and floating boat dock have been deferred, and the size of plazas and paved areas in the Arch to Vine Street section reduced.

The design calls for a minimum of construction, with only the basic regrading, planting, and paving required to develop the connecting major walkway. The riverbanks will be reinforced with stone, rip rap, or gabions, where necessary. Much of this work can be characterized as maintenance, and is therefore not included in the current budgeting for new park development.



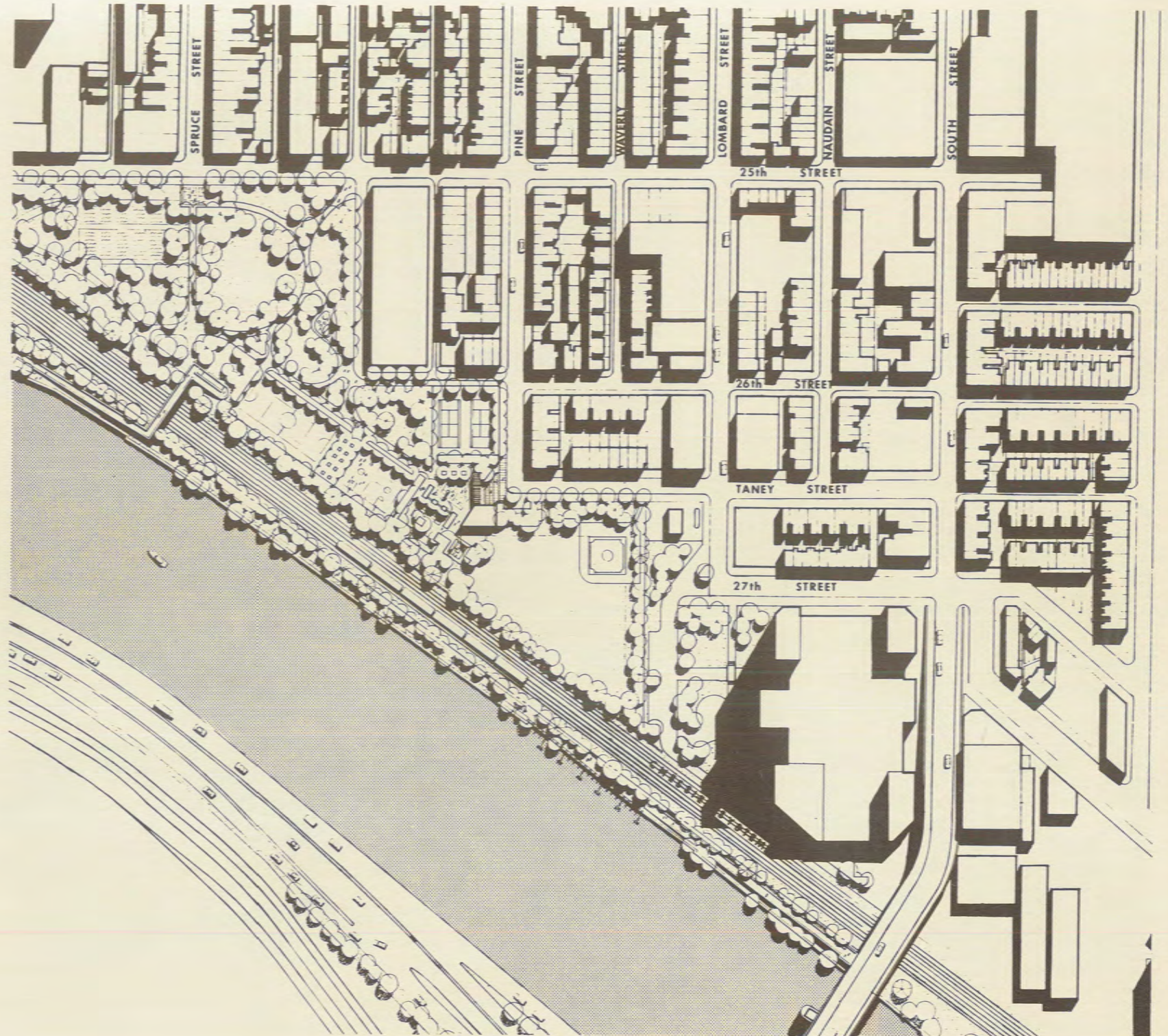


## SOUTH PARK



Due to more expensive bulkheading costs and extremely limited space, this area is now considered a longer-range master plan goal. The original plans were based on intensive highrise housing occupying the site north of South Street, since developed as a Bell Telephone installation. Until further residential development occurs beyond South Street, it is difficult to justify the disproportionately high cost/benefit ratio of this very narrow portion of park. The cost of bulkheading in this area is also higher than in any other because of greater depth to suitable bedrock. The southern bulkheading from Spruce to South Streets has therefore been eliminated from the present development program, though it remains a future objective.

When developed, this area will be used almost entirely for circulation, as the limited space precludes more intense recreational uses. A fence, reinforced by a dense hedge at the railroad property line, the through walkway, and a planted slope and low bulkhead will constitute a typical cross-section. A pedestrian/bicycle ramp is recommended at South Street, where the potential level of use can justify the expenditure.



## STAGING

The construction of new river walls is the first step in the six stages of proposed park development. Because the new fill to be placed behind the wall must settle prior to final park construction, a one-year minimum delay is recommended.

It is also anticipated that savings in construction cost of the river wall can be achieved if Phase III follows immediately after Phase II, as the high cost of mobilization could be avoided by the contractor building Phase II.

Should funds become available, the time period for park completion could be reduced considerably.

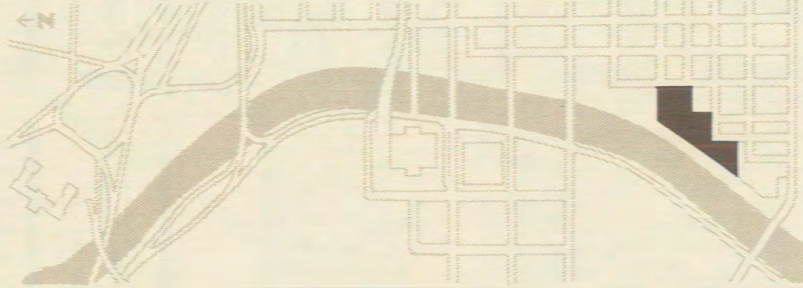
The total budget estimate of \$12,250,000 is based on current 1980 prices with a moderate escalation percentage. As final design and working drawings are prepared, more definitive cost estimates will be developed.

### PHASE I: 1979 (COMPLETE)

#### TANEY STREET PARK

\$850,000

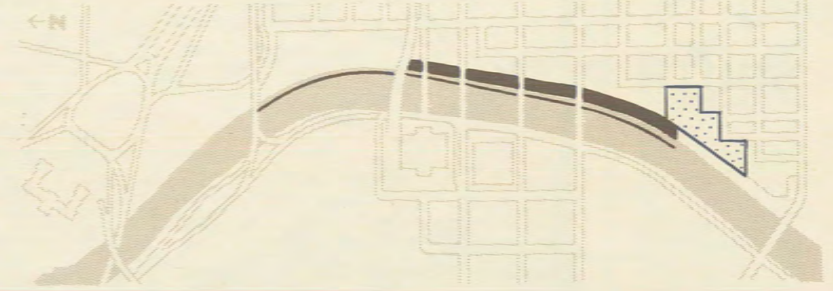
Six-acre neighborhood playground dedicated in the spring of 1979.



### PHASE IV: 1983

#### PARK DEVELOPMENT - SPRUCE TO ARCH STREETS

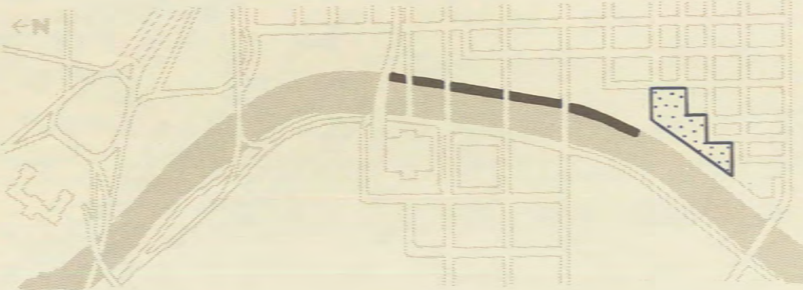
\$2,800,000



### PHASE II: 1980

#### BULKHEAD - SPRUCE TO ARCH

\$3,500,000



### PHASE V: 1984

#### PARK DEVELOPMENT - ARCH TO VINE STREETS (With minimal treatment between Vine Street and Waterworks)

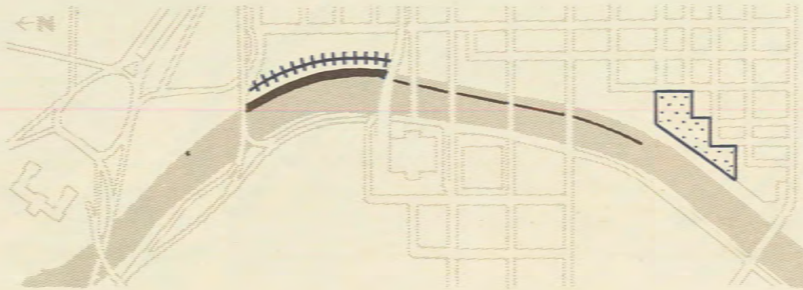
\$1,800,000



### PHASE III: 1982

#### BULKHEAD AND RAILROAD REALIGNMENT - ARCH TO VINE STREETS

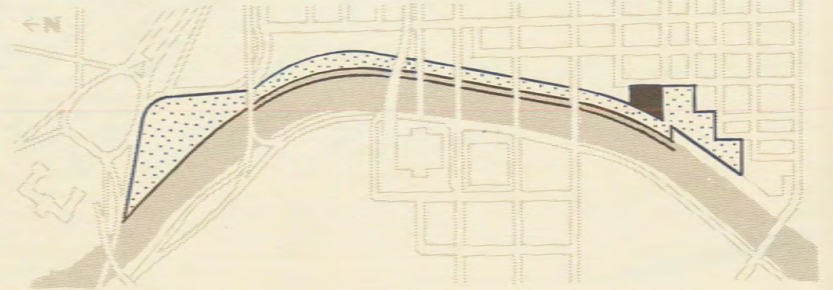
\$3,000,000



### PHASE VI

#### PARK DEVELOPMENT - "KELLY BRICKYARD" SITE

\$300,000



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Throughout the planning and design for Schuylkill Park, a number of individuals and groups have been a vital part of the decision-making process, or have provided much-needed support.

The following groups and agencies have been of great help in this effort:

- Center City Residents Association
- Logan Square Neighbors
- Schuylkill Neighbors
- Philadelphia City Planning Commission
- The Philadelphia Bicycle Coalition
- The Sierra Club, Eastern Pennsylvania Chapter
- The Old Philadelphia Corporation
- Philadelphia Water Department
- Philadelphia Department of Streets
- Philadelphia Fine Art Commission

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August 30, 1980



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