

The Riverfront Vision

Riverfront Commons Corporation

Columbus

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Introduction

The continuous parklands and water activities on the Olentangy and Scioto River corridor will create a memorable place that is a defining element of the City of Columbus. Along the nine-mile riverfront, residents and visitors will be able to understand the city and its landscape through an exploration of special environmental areas, recreational activities, and cultural experiences. The Columbus Riverfront Vision Plan provides a framework for redeveloping the river corridor in the coming decades. It envisions almost 600 acres of additional parks, which will create a total of 1,300 acres of connected open space along the river corridor.

The plan's recommendations are designed to guide development along the riverfront for at least 20 years. The open space corridor will complement urban development and neighborhoods along the corridor. As a continuous corridor, the river will link together residential neighborhoods, institutional campuses, and the civic heart of downtown. Approximately 145 acres of new development area have been identified in four major locations along the corridor to replace underutilized, industrial, and vacant lands which detract from the riverfront environment.



Fig. 1: The Scioto River is the setting for the civic heart of Columbus.

The Riverfront Commons Corporation (RCC) has led an extensive public process that has enriched and shaped the Columbus Riverfront Vision Plan, tailoring it to the unique qualities of Columbus. In order to implement the vision plan, however, leadership, collaboration, and cooperation will be required among the many involved and interested parties that have a stake in the future of the City of Columbus.

The Columbus Riverfront Vision Plan is a working document that sets forth the planning process to date and provides the City of Columbus with the necessary tools to move the plan into implementation. The report contains the following chapters:

- **Chapter 1: *Executive Summary***, which highlights the underlying goals and objectives, planning process, vision, and implementation.
- **Chapter 2: *Planning and Design Principles***, which are the broad policies guiding all future work in the corridor.
- **Chapters 3 through 7: *The Vision Plans for each geographical area***, which describes the unique characteristics, program and concept design, and immediate action steps for these areas
- **Chapter 8: *Open Space Guidelines***, which provides direction for future designers of the riverfront parks.
- **Chapter 9: *Development Strategy and Guidelines***, which focuses on the target development projects providing urban design guidelines, program, and implementation strategies.

The report is a guide for the immediate and long term actions of the City of Columbus; but it also provides the basis for design and developer Requests for Proposals. Implementation strategies are woven into every aspect of the report, including immediate action steps for each geographical area and implementation strategies for each target development. As each park project moves into design and as each development project is initiated, a Request for Proposal can be crafted to direct the future work by including the planning and design principles for the corridor; design and development guidelines for the corridor; and site-specific context information, design requirements, program and concept design information. The report suggests that funding and mechanisms for maintaining riverfront improvements should be identified early and included in plans for public improvements.

1.2 Goals and Objectives

From the outset, the clearly expressed goals of the Columbus Riverfront Vision Plan have been *public access to the riverfront and a balance of uses*. The project mandated a compelling urban design vision for the riverfront linked closely to a development and implementation strategy. Throughout the process, the RCC has been committed to public process as an integral component to the development of the plan, with outreach to government, business, and diverse community groups. As a result of the public process, the plan includes a third basic goal: *change within the river realm must progress carefully, incorporating development of the built environment with concern for preserving the river's natural wooded riparian edge*.

The planning process also responded to the following objectives, which were derived from interviews and public input during the process.

- The river should contribute to the image of Columbus.
- The river should be a destination in and of itself.
- The river should be a connector between activities and places.
- New development should be mixed use and mixed income.
- The river should be accessible by diverse communities.
- The riparian environment is a special asset to the city.

These goals and objectives underpin every aspect of the vision plan.

1.3 Process

Many people in Columbus have informed and inspired the Columbus Riverfront Vision Plan under the leadership of the Riverfront Commons Corporation (RCC). The process of developing the plan began with the Riverfront Forums in 1996 and continued in 1997 with interviews and a series of public open houses.

The Riverfront Commons Corporation, directed by a 13-member board, is a non-profit corporation with a mandate to develop a vision and an implementation plan for a nine-mile corridor along the Scioto and Olentangy Rivers. The organization is funded by the City with additional contributions from the Greater Columbus Arts Council and The Ohio State University (OSU). In 1996, the RCC sponsored three Riverfront Forums: one in the northern area, one in the central area, and one in the southern area of the river corridor. The forums, which were well attended, generated enthusiasm

for the vision plan, provided initial comments, and began to form a riverfront constituency. Subsequently, the RCC issued a Request for Proposal from design and planning firms to develop a vision plan. In April 1997, the RCC selected Sasaki Associates in association with Economics Research Associates, Myers-Schmalenberger, Moody Nolan, and Burgess & Niple to accomplish this work.

Initial discussions with stakeholders were conducted in May 1997 and continued on a monthly basis throughout the summer. The interviews included Mayor Greg Lashutka and Columbus City Council members; municipal, regional, and county agencies; non-profit organizations; advocacy groups; real estate developers; and business leaders. From these informal discussions, stakeholders in Columbus were able to convey to the consultant team specific concerns about the river today and to express their aspirations for the future of the riverfront and its role in the city.

As a part of their ongoing district master planning, The Ohio State University (OSU) engaged the consultant team to study in more detail the University Reach between King Avenue and the wetland research area north of Dodridge Street. This planning work is summarized in this report insofar as it relates to the continuous riverfront corridor. The recommendations for the University Reach were developed with the generous support and cooperation by OSU.

During the Vision Plan process, two additional public open houses were held and these were supplemented by numerous informal and neighborhood meetings. In the open houses, the RCC, the public, and the consultants were able to engage in extensive dialogue around issues and ideas. In addition, index cards and pencils were made available for written comments at the forums, and the RCC collected comments generated in letters, e-mails and faxes. The first open house, which was in June, focused on the analysis of the riverfront corridor including the river system, the circulation system, the open space framework, the urban context, and land ownership. In the second open house, which was held in September, the RCC, the public, and the consultant team considered a series of alternatives for each section—or “reach”—of the river corridor. A public comment period followed this forum, during which the RCC presented the alternatives in many meetings with neighborhood and special interest groups.

1.4 Vision

The Columbus riverfront will respect the special environmental characteristics of the Scioto and Olentangy River ecosystem and celebrate the unique opportunities that can bring citizens and visitors alike to enjoy and experience the river.

Interpretive centers and trails, observation towers, wetlands research areas, and access along the natural riparian edge will reveal the natural history of the river, including its geomorphology, its plant life, and its wildlife. The existing riparian edge will be maintained and enhanced to encourage wildlife and to stabilize the river bank.

In balance with the natural environment, the river corridor will come alive with a host of recreational activities and more informal leisure use that will make it a safe and attractive resource within the core of the city. Running, bicycling, skating, and walking will be possible on continuous trails integrated into the environment with winding pathways, occasional river overlooks, pedestrian bridges, and observation towers. Boat ramps, boat houses, and portages around the dams will encourage more small boating on the river. Active recreational facilities, which are typically popular destinations, will be woven into the open space corridor to encourage family use of the riverfront.

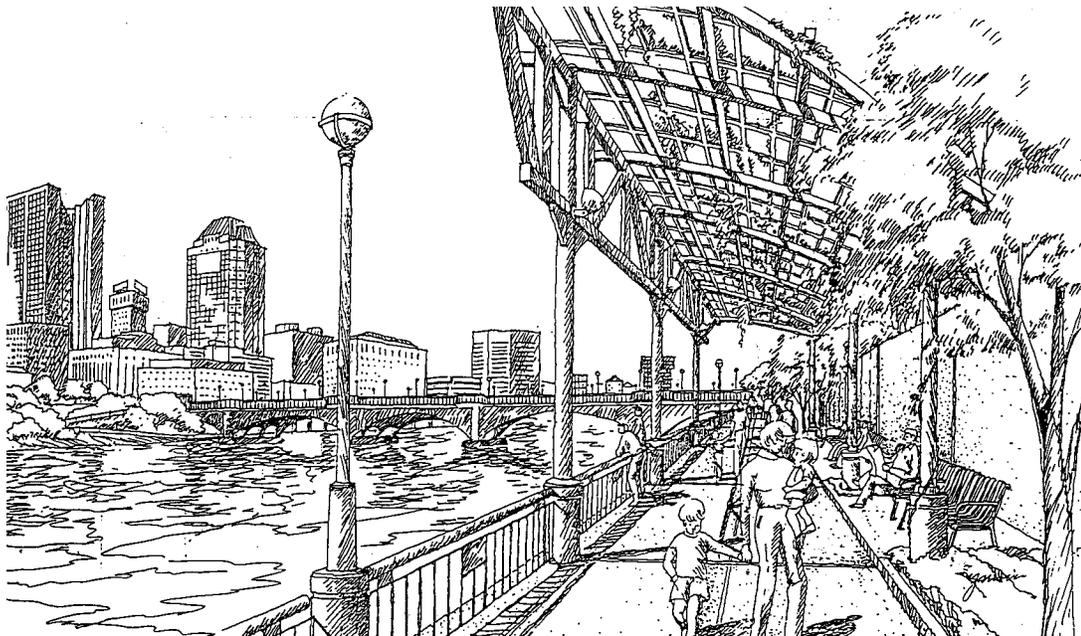


Fig. 2: Continuous public access is a primary goal of the Columbus Riverfront Vision Plan.

The river will become a cultural spine for the city. Cultural features and destinations along the riverfront will be linked with interpretive information to create a special Columbus experience including historical features, musical events, public art, and educational and cultural institutions. The riverfront parks will accommodate large gathering spaces suitable for special arts, music, and civic festivals. Along the length of the entire corridor, the bridges will establish an architectural statement that is unique to the history of Columbus.

New urban development will respect and complement existing neighborhoods and urban districts and relate directly to a continuous corridor of public open space along the river. Appropriate development will face the riverfront, rather than turn its back, and will generate life and activity, contributing to a secure and safe recreational experience. Because of the value of the land and the preciousness of the open space resources, new development will have urban densities comparable to Columbus' traditional urban neighborhoods and commercial mixed use districts (see *Figure 3, Columbus Riverfront Vision Plan*).

Access to the river, across the river, and parallel to the river is central to the success of the corridor. Gateways from the river corridor into the downtown or into neighborhoods will enjoy special treatment as part of the sequence of arrival. Pedestrian lighting, sidewalks, and landscape plantings will identify the major corridors as key access routes and will clarify secondary routes that twist and turn along the immediate edge of the riverfront. Roadways immediately adjacent to the river--whether existing or new corridors--should be thought of as parkways passing through an open space. On these roads, traffic should be calmed to minimize speeds, employing such techniques as reduced capacity, cross walks and signals, parking lanes to separate moving cars from pedestrians, and two-way traffic. Roadways that cross the river should also be redesigned to narrow widths, provide landscaped medians, accommodate bicycles, and add cross walks and signals to facilitate pedestrian crossing. The riverfront will be tied into the life of the city with pathways down to the edge, new activities and destinations within the riverfront corridor, and beautiful parks and trails along the banks of the river.

1.5 Next Steps

The Columbus Riverfront Vision Plan is a complex undertaking that will require substantial cooperation between the public and private sectors and between various branches and levels of government to succeed. Despite the myriad of detailed decisions and issues the sponsors of the project will face,

the fundamental implementation issues can be reduced to three principal challenges.

- Funding the capital costs of public amenities
- Facilitating private investment
- Funding the ongoing operations and maintenance of the public environment.

A phasing strategy and site-specific implementation actions provide a guide to focus future efforts, although unforeseen opportunities may arise and should be seized. The design of the new Veterans Memorial Auditorium Park, Riverfront Amphitheater, floodwall and COSI grounds on the Scioto Peninsula are already underway and will establish a distinctive palette of materials for the Columbus Riverfront parks. By phasing the plan, the vision will unfold over time; however, the pace of park development must be steady in order to maintain public enthusiasm and establish a cohesive character and continuity that are central to the plan.

2. PLANNING AND DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The Olentangy and Scioto riverfront is a hidden jewel in the heart of Columbus, an untapped resource flowing nine miles from Ohio State University to State Route 104 south of downtown. To maximize its recreational, cultural and educational value, from the outset, the Vision Plan incorporated two overall goals: ***maximum public access to the riverfront and a balance of land uses.***

A vigorous public input process—three well attended riverfront forums and numerous open houses and neighborhood meetings—corroborated the soundness of this approach and led to the establishment of a third basic goal: ***change within the river realm must progress carefully, incorporating development of the built environment with concern for preserving the river’s natural wooded riparian edge.***

Planning and Design Principles established in this chapter are broad policies that spring from the community’s goals and will guide future work in the corridor. Adherence to these principles will insure continuity of purpose over time and across a large geographic area. Though they draw on planning experience from other waterfronts, these principles are built on local knowledge and local aspirations for the future of Columbus.

2.1 The River Environment

- **The natural riparian edge will be preserved and enhanced.**

The existing vegetation on the river banks provides a natural setting and wildlife habitat that is special to Columbus’ river corridors. Viewing platforms and small openings in the vegetation will provide river views and create an element of mystery and surprise without intruding on the natural environment.

- **The dynamics of the existing river hydrology will be respected.**

The plan does not generally envision the need for dredging, filling, or changes to the height of the dams or water pools for recreational use of the river. In the urban sections of the river, some targeted dredging may be needed to facilitate active boat use including public or recreational water taxis. Water intake at the OSU heating/cooling plant may require some dredging.



Fig. 4: The natural environment is a key resource along the river corridor.



Fig. 5: Columbus has many high quality urban neighborhoods that establish the character of the city.

- **Improvements in water quality will require watershed management.**

Comprehensive governmental policies and actions will be required to redress non-point pollution from agriculture and construction and point pollution from combined sewer outfalls and sewer systems within the larger Scioto and Olentangy watersheds.

2.2 The Urban Environment

- **New riverfront neighborhoods and districts will be urban in character.**

Future urban development in the riverfront corridor (approximately 145 acres) will be similar in character to traditional Columbus neighborhoods such as German Village and Harrison West, and the more recent Victorian Gate development in the Short North. Appropriate building density, housing types, streetscapes, and a grid of streets and blocks will define this character.

- **New development will be varied in character.**

A mix of tenure (rental and home ownership), housing type (detached, row house, low rise and mid-rise apartments), and architectural style will create a varied and interesting neighborhood. To promote this, the development process will involve multiple developers.

- **New riverfront districts will connect to adjacent neighborhoods and districts.**

New urban development will respond to the land uses and character of adjacent districts and will be connected by a network of streets to the extent possible. A combination of vehicular, pedestrian, and visual connections will bridge railroad tracks.

2.3 Parks and Recreation

- **Small boating will promote appreciation and exploration of the river environment.**

Small non-motorized boats--canoes, row boats, paddle boats, small sail boats, "johnboats," and rowing shells--and low-horsepower motorized launches will allow people to experience the river, and at the same time, add life and activity to the nine-mile corridor. Certain reaches of the river corridor will be more conducive to small boating than others.

Portages, sluiceways, and/or small locks for small boats will facilitate movement along the river.

- **More than thirty miles of continuous non-motorized trails will parallel the flow of the river and connect the different reaches.**

The river forms a natural linear right-of-way. Continuous upper and lower trails on both sides of the river will allow people to enjoy the river environment as well as to move between the different activities, neighborhoods, and districts along the river corridor (see *Figure 6, Public Access Diagram*).

- **The river corridor will connect 1,300 acres of environmental exploration, active recreation, and cultural celebration.**

The river corridor in Columbus will weave together three main themes: environmental exploration of the natural riparian edge, wildlife habitat, and unique wetland areas; active recreation areas at Berliner, Dodge, Gowdy, and Tuttle Parks as well as running and rowing along the corridor; and celebration of Columbus culture including public art, the Columbus Symphony series, educational and research institutions, COSI, and other cultural destinations in the downtown (see *Figure 7, Open Space and Development Diagram*).



Fig. 8: The river provides a setting for many different types of recreation.



Fig. 9: The bridges over the Scioto River and the Olentangy River define the character of the city.

2.4 Circulation

- **Bridges should be replaced or renovated, preserving architectural character and details and improving pedestrian access.**

The bridges along the Scioto and the Olentangy are part of the unique architectural heritage of Columbus and unite the river banks.

- **Roadways that cross the river should be redesigned to narrow vehicular travel ways, provide landscape medians, and add crosswalks and signals to facilitate pedestrian crossings.**

The ability to reach and cross the river--whether by car, by foot, by bicycle, or by transit--will be key to the successful appreciation of this unique environment. Since the river cuts through the heart of the city from north to south, the ability to cross the river will be a means of joining recreation activities and destinations on both banks. The expanse of the river corridor creates unique viewpoints of the downtown that will serve as gateways.

- **Circulation corridors that parallel the river should be enhanced to improve riverfront access and use.**

Major north-south corridors parallel to the river (High Street, Olentangy River Road) will continue to define the zone of the river corridor and provide vehicular access between different reaches of the river. The short discontinuous roadway segments that comprise secondary routes along the river corridor should be re-conceived as continuous access ways with facilitated traffic movements and consistent signage and streetscape elements. Additional physical linkages should be created that tie together existing and new downtown corridors.

These Planning and Design Principles will be incorporated into Requests for Proposals for both the planning and design of open space, parkland, and recreational areas as well as for any development activity within the riverfront corridor.

2.5 Vision Plan

Envisioning the future of the Columbus riverfront corridor is a central focus of this planning process. The following chapters present the vision for each section—or “reach”—of the Columbus riverfront corridor.

The vision plan is a creative synthesis of many different sources of information.

- The ***Planning and Design Principles*** (Chapter 2) outline the broad policies that will set the tone for all future work within the river corridor as a whole.
- The ***Context*** is site-specific and encompasses both the physical and the socioeconomic world. The context inspires and at times constrains what is possible to achieve in the future.
- ***Programming and Concept Design*** become a third major component for establishing the vision of the future. At the planning level, the program describes the general function, use, and elements of a place, while the design presents a concept for creating unique places that draw the program elements into a dynamic relationship with the specific site. The program and concept design provide a direction and broad parameters to guide implementation, which involves detailed design.
- ***Immediate Action Steps*** are considered as an integral part of the creative design process to produce a vision that is realistic and achievable.

The vision plan is presented by geographical area in order to convey the complex issues and special characteristics of each place that in turn shape the proposals (see *Figure 10, Reach Designation Diagram*). For this section, the riverfront corridor is considered as separate reaches, each one defined by geographical limits:

- ***Merion Village Reach:*** S.R. 104 to Greenlawn Avenue Corridor
- ***Whittier Reach:*** Greenlawn Avenue Corridor to Interstate 70
- ***Downtown Reach:*** Interstate 70 to Interstate 670
- ***Harrison West Reach:*** Interstate 670 to King Avenue
- ***University Reach:*** King Avenue to Dodridge Street area

3. MERION VILLAGE REACH

The Merion Village Reach extends from S.R. 104 on the south to the Greenlawn Avenue corridor on the north. On the west bank, the planning study extends to Interstate 71 and encompasses all of Berliner Park, the land to the south of Berliner Park, and the existing development and riverbank along the north side of Greenlawn Avenue. On the east bank, the planning study extends to the railroad tracks parallel to High Street.

3.1 Context

The context for the Merion Village Reach summarizes the physical features and the public comments that relate to this part of the river.

Physical Features

The Scioto River passes quietly between wooded banks in the Merion Village Reach. This narrow linear corridor is defined by steep man-made embankments that isolate the river from the adjacent land uses and give the impression of a remote wilderness.



Fig. 11: Many parts of the riverfront corridor appear quite remote.

Just east of the narrow riparian corridor, however, are an array of industrial uses. Two quarry lakes--each over 30 acres of deep blue water--are spectacular features in the landscape. In the adjacent low-lying land are two concrete plants and various trucking and industrial uses that back up to the railroad tracks. During the 100-year flood, the river overflows the embankments and spreads across the entire area from the railroad tracks on the east to Interstate 71 on the west, and including both sides of Greenlawn Avenue and S.R. 104. On the high ground above the railroad tracks, High Street becomes an attractive gateway corridor of mixed residential and commercial uses as it passes through Merion Village heading north to downtown.

With more than 200 acres and approximately 30 softball fields, Berliner Park on the west side of the river is one of the largest recreational resources in the city. The active recreational fields, however, have no visual connection to the river because of the thick vegetation and the steep embankment. On top of the wooded embankment is a continuous pedestrian/bicycle path that follows the river and crosses the Greenlawn Avenue Bridge and continues along the Whittier Peninsula. Although Interstate 71 is a major gateway to the city, high tension wires along the highway interfere with the views of downtown.

An impoundment lot, a landfill, and other industrial uses are located south of Berliner Park. Between Berliner Park and the river, grit chambers screen out solid materials that collect in a combined sewer before it is pumped to the Jackson Pike sewage treatment facility. South of S.R. 104, meat rendering plants create unpleasant odors that affect the Berliner Park area on certain days.

The north side of Greenlawn Avenue has a mix of public facilities and small scale commercial uses, which sit within the 100-year floodplain. All of the current buildings turn their back on the riverfront, even though some of the most spectacular views of downtown are possible from this location. The site has excellent highway access from Interstate 71.

Public Comments

Suggestions from the public included the desire to connect Berliner Park to the riverfront. While the landfill and the tow pound lot seemed inappropriate uses, the reuse of these southern properties for active recreation raised questions about their relative isolation. People mentioned that the high tension electric lines along Interstate 71 visually degraded a key entrance to downtown. The Merion Village residents took an active interest

in the prospect of new parklands in this southernmost reach of the river corridor.

3.2 Program and Concept Design

The Merion Village Reach is one of the most exciting opportunities for transformation along the entire nine-mile river corridor. The recommended program for this reach is an environmental reserve centered around the river and connected to the existing recreational facilities in Berliner Park.

Within the Merion Village Reach are three distinct areas: the proposed Environmental Park on the east bank; the Berliner Park on the west bank, and the Greenlawn Avenue Corridor. The vision plan for each of these areas is presented below.

Environmental Park

The 200-acre Environmental Park at Merion Village will be one of the most unique settings along the riverfront corridor, with riparian, wetlands, lake, and upland environments in close proximity. The Environmental Park will complement the Ohio State University Wetlands Research Area at the northern end of the study area (see Figure 12: Merion Village Reach Vision Plan).

The riverfront corridor improvements for the Environmental Park must be designed to

1. Reclaim the industrial and commercial lands for public park use and continuous public access.
2. Create a unique environmental destination with interpretive features related to the river valley environment.
3. Strengthen lateral connections from the neighborhood to the river's edge and from the existing recreational areas to the river's edge.

The concept plan envisions the following elements for the Environmental Park:

- Large open water bodies, formerly quarries with over 60 acres of open water, will be one of the key features in the environmental program, perhaps serving as bird rookeries.
- Approximately 40 acres of newly created wetlands will expand across the low lying areas on the east bank.
- A visitor center will overlook the quarries at the southern entrance off of S.R. 104.
- In the center of the site, an environmental education center will feature hands-on learning opportunities for the public as well as research laboratories.
- Interpretive trails and boardwalks will explore the riparian ecosystem along the river, the wetlands research areas, and bird and other wildlife habitat areas.
- An observation tower will allow people to view sensitive environmental areas without physically disturbing them.
- Connections across the railroad track will link the Merion Village neighborhood to the riverfront and provide access for other visitors to the site. Limited small parking areas will be located on the edges of the park.
- A boat landing will provide access for small boats to enjoy the riparian experience from the water.
- The natural bank along the riverfront will be maintained and enhanced for bird habitat.



Fig. 13: New wetland areas will provide educational opportunities and beautiful settings.

Berliner Parklands

The Berliner Parklands will be expanded to encompass not only active recreational uses but also more natural passive park areas. The river environment will become better integrated with the recreational activities (refer to Figure 12, Merion Village Reach Vision Plan).

The riverfront corridor improvements for the Berliner Parklands must be designed to

1. Reclaim industrial and commercial lands for public park use and continuous public access.
2. Improve public infrastructure activities along the riverbanks.
3. Strengthen lateral connections and visual access from the existing recreational areas to the river's edge.

The concept plan envisions the following elements for this area:

- In the center of the site, a pedestrian bridge will extend across the river to connect to the west bank. In later phases, additional bridges may be added.
- An interpretive center will present the industrial heritage of the river. Housed in a now little-noticed but historic pump house, exhibits will reveal the role of the river for water power, transportation, and engineering projects.
- The existing trail system will connect to the bridge and also will extend down into Berliner Park.
- New rows of trees and other landscape amenities between the recreational ball fields will provide a more human scale to the area and will link it better to the riverfront experience.
- The land south of Berliner will become passive recreation use such as open meadows and upland forests to complement the active recreational fields.
- The natural bank along the riverfront will be maintained and enhanced.

Greenlawn Avenue Corridor

A new mixed use development on the north side of Greenlawn Avenue will occupy approximately 21 acres and take advantage of spectacular views of downtown and the river from upper floors. In conjunction with the redevelopment of this area, a broad swath of riverfront can be created for public use and continuous public access. Along the riverbank, existing vegetation will be preserved to enhance bird habitat in the Greenlawn basin. The riverfront park will culminate in an overlook above Greenlawn Dam, where the views of downtown are most spectacular. The guidelines and strategy for redeveloping this area is presented in Chapter 9.

3.3 Immediate Action Steps

Design Review

- Encourage the utility companies to relocate or reconfigure their high tension lines along Interstate 71.

Acquisitions and Relocation

- Acquire properties along the riverfront, particularly along Greenlawn Avenue, south of Berliner Park, and in the Environmental Park area.
- Over the long term, assist existing industrial uses to relocate away from the river.

Capital Improvement Projects

- Coordinate with Franklin County Metro Parks to identify funding opportunities for the Metro Park System to participate with the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department in the acquisition and capital improvements of the environmental reserve, tailoring the program to meet its mission.
- Improve Berliner Park and connections from the active recreational facilities to the riverfront trails.
- Prioritize improvements to the Columbus sewer system to further reduce the frequency of combined sewer overflows in accordance with the City's long-term control strategy.

Development Projects

- Once land is assembled, prepare a developer Request for Proposal for the Greenlawn corridor including riverfront park improvement (see Chapter 8 and Chapter 9).

4. WHITTIER PENINSULA REACH

The Whittier Peninsula Reach extends north from the Greenlawn Avenue Corridor to Interstate 70. On the west bank, the planning study encompasses the narrow corridor between the river and Interstate 71. On the east bank, the planning study broadens out to encompass all of the Whittier Peninsula between the river and the railroad tracks. This planning area recently has been expanded to Short Street.

4.1 Context

The context for the Whittier Peninsula Reach summarizes the physical features and the public comments that relate to this part of the river.

Physical Features

The Whittier Peninsula is approximately 150 acres of land bounded by Interstate 70, the Scioto River, and the railroad track. Approximately one half of the peninsula is publicly owned and the remainder is in private ownership. Active uses on the site include the City of Columbus impoundment facility and a facility for the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department. The remaining land is abandoned and underutilized industrial, warehouse, railroad uses. Approximately 110 of the 150 acres is developed and paved surface areas. The changes in topography on the peninsula are dramatic.

A relatively new road, Whittier Street, runs along the perimeter of the peninsula on the top of a levee (elevation 724). There is currently one access point over a set of active railroad tracks that links the south end of the peninsula to Front Street. While the southern quarter of the site is on level ground (elevation 720), the land drops sharply along steep escarpments to low lying land (elevation 704 to 710) and then rises slightly to the railroad tracks (elevation 716).

A steep levee defines the edge of the peninsula and keeps the site outside of the 100-year floodplain. The narrow riparian edge, which is typically about 100 feet wide, is a steep wooded slope rising approximately 24 feet above the level of the river. At the tip of the peninsula, the land between the perimeter roadway and the riverfront widens out to 400 feet to encompass a quiet meadow. At this point the river is contained between lowhead dams at Town Street and Greenlawn Avenue and through natural sedimentation parts of the river have been emerging as wetland. Its proximity to woodlands and waterway makes the Whittier Peninsula an excellent bird habitat.



Fig. 14: The Whittier Peninsula lies just south of downtown Columbus.

Winding through the riparian edge is a lovely wooded trail maintained by the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department. To the north, this trail connects underneath Interstate 70 and continues north along the edge of the Miranova site to link to the Bicentennial Park and the downtown riverfront esplanade. On the south side of the peninsula is the only developed boat ramp within the corridor with a small number of parking spaces. Directly behind this recreational area, however, are settling lagoons and an overflow which are part of the sanitary sewer system draining south to the Jackson Pike sewage treatment plant.

Public Comments

The potential for the Whittier Peninsula is viewed as many things by many different people. A significant number of people envision a traditional urban neighborhood in keeping with Columbus' other historic neighborhoods. People did not want it to become a suburban or gated community. The desire to overcome the physical barrier of the railroad and connect to the Brewery District was expressed by many.

People voiced concern that development on the Whittier Peninsula may disturb the narrow band of natural habitat along the riparian edge. They recommended leaving the river's natural edge as wild as possible. Others see the entire peninsula as a place to be protected, although much of the land is now developed and has been paved with concrete and asphalt.

4.2 Program and Concept Design

Within the Whittier Peninsula Reach the primary focus of the Vision Plan is to maintain woodlands and wetlands where more than 200 species of birds are observed, while guiding the development nearby of a new residential community with densities that range from that of German Village to that of the Short North development, Victorian Gate. On the west bank, the river corridor narrows between the river and Interstate 71. Within this narrow corridor, a continuous pathway should be incorporated into the top of the riverbank to connect the Greenlawn Avenue area with the Scioto Peninsula (see Figure 15, *Whittier Peninsula Reach Vision Plan*).

The Whittier Peninsula Reach will become a beautiful riverfront park close to the downtown with an expanse of open water, natural wetlands reaching out into the river, wooded banks at the river's edge, and open meadows and woodlands on the higher ground. The life and activity of the Brewery District will extend across the railroad tracks in the form of a new residential and mixed use neighborhood on the Whittier Peninsula. This neighborhood will complement the open space by creating a community with a vested interest in the safety and maintenance of the park and in preserving the Greenlawn Basin as natural wildlife habitat.

The park improvements on the Whittier Peninsula must be designed to

1. Enhance the riparian environment and wildlife habitat along the river as a unique environmental setting along the corridor.
2. Improve connections to the Brewery District.
3. Complement the park with a traditional urban neighborhood.

The concept plan envisions the following elements for the parklands on the Whittier Peninsula and the west bank (see Chapter 9 for the development guidelines and strategies):

- Approximately 75 acres of open space will provide public access to the river's edge and along its shore. The riverfront corridor averages 500 feet wide with continuous trails along the 1.5 mile shoreline. The natural banks will be maintained and enhanced for wildlife habitat.
- Approximately 75 acres will be developed into a new residential neighborhood similar in scale to German Village, Harrison West, and Victorian Gate. Low-rise office buildings and commercial uses may be suitable for properties near the railroad and Interstate 70.
- Initially, the existing Whittier Street Bridge and a new Liberty Street Bridge will provide the primary vehicular access across the railroad tracks and into the peninsula. Street right-of-ways will extend to the railroad tracks to allow additional vehicular and pedestrian connections wherever possible. A Liberty Street extension will not require relocating Columbus Brewing Company.
- Whittier Street will be relocated and pulled away from the Scioto River to create a wide buffer of green space, to ensure public access to new parklands, and to define the edge of the built environment. Old Whittier Street will be narrowed for use by pedestrians and bicycles.
- Between the existing riparian corridor and the relocated roadway, undulating meadows and woodlands will provide habitat for upland species of wildlife.



Fig. 16: Residential neighborhoods will complement the new riverfront park on the Whittier Peninsula

- An unobtrusive viewing station will allow visitors to observe wide views of the river and wildlife activity.
- A wedge of open space with water features and riparian vegetation will expand the river experience into the upland area in order to invite and welcome people down to the water's edge.
- Small parks and landscaped medians will create additional public open space within the neighborhood, connecting each house to the larger open space framework.
- Access to downtown will be improved with a pedestrian connection under I-70 to the riverfront at Miranova and improved signage, streetscape elements, and two-way streets on the Short Street/Mound Street/Civic Center Drive vehicular route.
- On the west bank the interchange of I-70 and I-71 is a gateway to the City and will be landscaped with natural plantings to create a beautiful "urban wilds."
- On the west bank, a continuous trail will connect the Greenlawn Park with the Dodge Park.

4.3 Immediate Action Steps

Acquisitions and Relocation

- Acquire remaining private land on the Whittier Peninsula.

Capital Improvement Projects

- Identify funds for the initial Liberty Street bridge connection over the railroad tracks to the Whittier Peninsula.
- Coordinate with the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department and Franklin County Metro Parks to identify funding opportunities for the acquisition and capital improvements of parkland in the Greenlawn Dam basin, tailoring the program to meet its mission.
- Phase in public parks with new development
- Prioritize improvements to the Columbus sewer system to further reduce the frequency of combined sewer overflows in accordance with the City's long-term control strategy.

Additional Studies

- Conduct environmental studies to determine the level of contamination, if any, at the Whittier Peninsula.

Development Projects

- Once land has been assembled, initiate a developer Request for Proposal (see Chapter 8 and Chapter 9).

5. DOWNTOWN REACH

The Downtown Reach extends from Interstate 70 north to the Spring/Sandusky Interchange of Interstate 670. On the west bank, the planning area encompasses the riverbanks along the Scioto Peninsula up to the first railroad track. On the east bank the planning area extends to Civic Center Drive, with additional focus on enhancing several pedestrian corridors between High Street and the river.

5.1 Context

The context for the Downtown Reach summarizes the physical opportunities and constraints as well as the public comments that relate to this part of the river.

Opportunities

In the Downtown Reach, the expanse of the riverfront serves as a front yard that distinguishes Columbus from other cities. The broad bends in the Scioto River allow sweeping views of the skyline: from the distinctive classical bridges, from the Confluence site, and from the Long Street corridor. The civic realm along the riverfront consists of pedestrian walkways, public roadways, and a series of civic structures, built during the public works era of the 1930's with a consistent beaux arts architectural style.

Several new projects will serve as catalysts for new activity along the riverfront corridor, including COSI and the Nationwide Arena. The renovation and reuse of the Ohio Departments Building will present a more public face and entrance toward the riverfront.

The continuous public access along the riverfront in the downtown reach connects existing parks such as Battelle, Bicentennial, and the existing amphitheater site, which is being redesigned. Nearby Dodge Park is a large active recreation area with ball fields, court games, and a recreation center serving the Franklinton neighborhood. A private rowing club operates from the Confluence and the PenWest boat ramp and uses the downtown river reach to practice for competitive racing.

Constraints

Despite its location in the heart of Columbus the downtown riverfront is lifeless. People are barricaded from the river by roadways, tall concrete

floodwalls, government office buildings (federal, state, county and municipal), and streets, alleys and plazas that are relegated to parking or closed to pedestrians. There is little life or activity within the river corridor, little reason to go there, and almost no way to get there.

The downtown roadways function as arterial highways with four to five lanes in one direction and high speeds that discourage pedestrian access to and along the riverfront. In particular Civic Center Drive and the Spring Street/Long Street one-way pair are difficult for pedestrians to cross to reach the river, and Broad Street is difficult to cross as pedestrians walk along the river. Roads leading to the river, ranging from Neil Avenue to Gay Street, are not pedestrian friendly. Travel between the Whittier Peninsula, Brewery District, and downtown is difficult due to barriers, such as the railroad and the Interstate highway. Meandering routes, such as Civic Center Drive to Mound Street to Short Street, and the one-way traffic system on Front Street and Civic Center Drive, exacerbate the sense of separation.

The floodwalls and levees channel the river's flow but were not designed to contain adequately the 100-year flood in all areas. On the Scioto Peninsula, the flood protection system is being replaced by higher walls and levees, which will remove Franklinton from the floodplain. The PenWest area is protected by levees, but parts of this district are within the 100-year floodplain. The levees rise up high enough, however, to cut off views of the



Fig. 17: In the downtown, the river is difficult to reach.

river.

Public Comments

Many initial conversations in Columbus focused on the importance of the river in defining a distinctive identity and character for downtown Columbus. People wanted opportunities for family entertainment, public art, and flexibility for large gatherings and events. A world class river would serve the city's diverse population and downtown employees, while attracting metropolitan residents, conventioners, and other out-of-town visitors to a memorable experience. The development opportunities in the PenWest area were discussed.

Many people talked about transit opportunities and the need for traffic calming and pedestrian friendly streets. The desire for navigability in the river was mentioned, and the rowing club explained their need for a more permanent boat house and boat ramp. The idea of building lower level landings along the Downtown riverfront captured the imagination of many, as did the idea of consolidating Spring Street and Long Street. The need for pedestrian-friendly corridors to the river was expressed, including improvements to Neil Avenue, reopening Gay Street near City Hall to pedestrian and vehicular traffic, and improvements to the alley north of the Huntington Building and to the plazas on both sides of the 11-story State Office Building at State and Front Streets, soon to be refurbished. Reopening Gay Street will require reconfiguration of the existing on-street parking between Front Street and Civic Center Drive.

5.2 Program and Concept Design

In the future, the downtown riverfront should be graced with continuous public access not only at the street level, but also at the lower level adjacent to the river's edge connecting to the existing landings at the Broad Street bridge. Roadways paralleling the river should be narrowed or consolidated to increase open space and improve pedestrian access, while a number of streets should be improved with landscape and sidewalks to serve as pedestrian corridors to the river. Additional physical linkages should be created that tie together existing and new downtown communities.

Within the Downtown Reach are several distinct areas: the Scioto Peninsula, Civic Center Parklands, Confluence Park, and the PenWest District. The vision plan for each one is described below (*see Figure 18, Downtown Reach Vision Plan*).

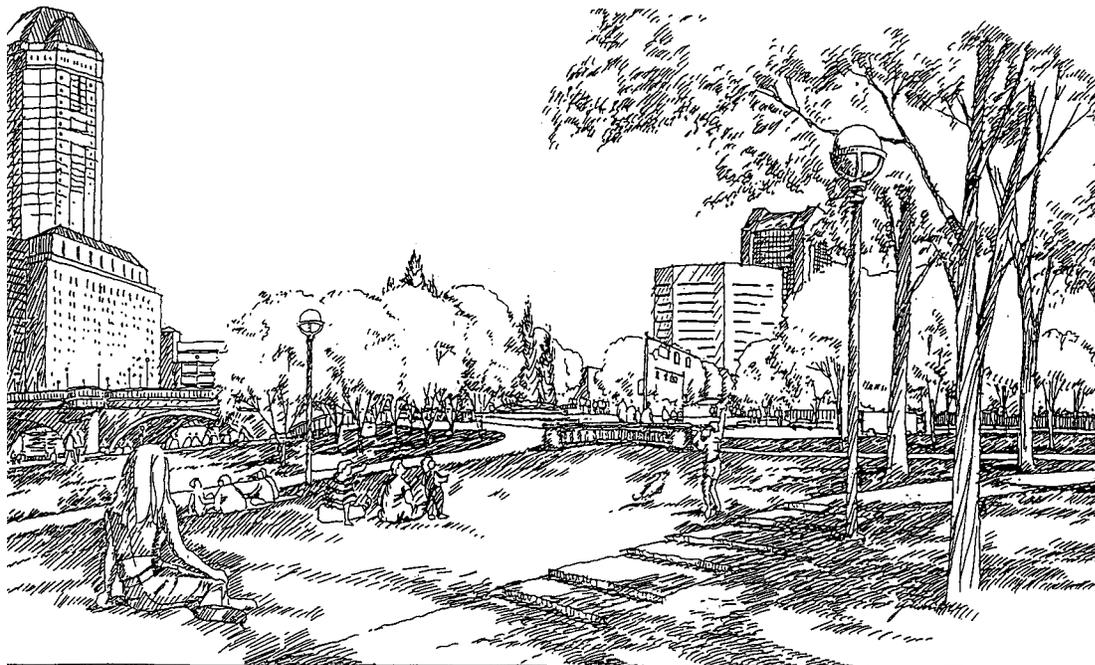


Fig. 19: The Veterans Memorial Auditorium Riverfront is one of the first phases of park development.

Scioto Peninsula (West Bank)

From the streets and towers of downtown, a ring of parklands, trails and walkways will be visible along the west bank of the Scioto River from Dodge Park in the southwest corner (near the I-70 S.R. 315 interchange), through the Sunshine Terrace housing area, past the new COSI and Veterans Memorial Auditorium parks, to a new Columbus Confluence Park that will welcome travelers to downtown where the Olentangy flows into the Scioto.

A number of significant projects on the Scioto Peninsula are in construction or final design, including a new floodwall, amphitheater, riverfront park, COSI building, renovations and additions to Veterans Memorial, and improvements to Belle Street. The City of Columbus is assembling land to insure its availability for appropriate development. These projects share many infrastructure and service needs and provide a strong opportunity for the RCC and the City to work together to refine the land use plan for this portion of the riverfront.

The riverfront corridor improvements on the Scioto Peninsula (west bank) must be designed to

1. Integrate seamlessly site design for riverfront park use and engineering design for floodwall protection.
2. Create a consistent character that unites the upland uses, with a single palette of materials for ornamental handrails, pedestrian lighting, surface pavements, and park furnishings.
3. Create continuous walkways at the river's edge at the upper and lower levels.

The concept plan envisions the following elements for the Scioto Peninsula:

- Redevelopment of the City Health Department site.
- In front of COSI, grand stairs will lead to a new amphitheater and redesigned park by the river amid green, sloping lawns and rows of trees.
- In front of the Veterans Memorial Auditorium, water's edge walkways, an open trellis, a broad sloping lawn, and rows of trees will define the river's edge.
- Broad Street will have an additional pedestrian crosswalk to improve access for those walking along the river between COSI and the Veterans Memorial Auditorium.
- Special places, such as an open trellis, the grand stairs, or integrated public art, will punctuate the edge.

Civic Center Parklands (East Bank)

As the city's new symbolic front door on the river, a gracious linear park will be anchored on either end by the existing Battelle Park and Bicentennial Park and will connect to the riverfront park at the Miranova site.

The riverfront corridor improvements for the Civic Center Parklands must be designed to

1. Expand the parklands along Civic Center Drive by narrowing the roadway width.
2. Integrate seamlessly site design for riverfront park use and engineering design for floodwall protection.
3. Create a consistent character that unites the continuous promenade, with a single palette of materials for ornamental handrails, pedestrian lighting, surface pavements, and park furnishings coordinated with the materials on the Scioto Peninsula.
4. Create continuous walkways at the river's edge at the upper and lower levels.

The concept plan envisions the following elements for the Civic Center Parklands:

- Civic Center Drive will become a two-way parkway, with two travel lanes and a parking lane, passing through expanded parks along the river and a wider sidewalk in front of the Supreme Court building.
- At the street level, the pedestrian sidewalk along Civic Center Drive will pass through rows of trees. Glass pavilions set within this space will draw people in for coffee or light fare, adding activity and a destination in this reach.
- Terraces and seat walls will be notched into the upper level of the river's edge, stepping down to a continuous promenade graced with a new balustrade along the river's edge.
- Water taxis will dock at the lower level landing before moving on to take people across the river to COSI or up the river to the new Columbus Confluence Park. Paddle boats and rowing shells will be part of the activity on the river.
- Landscaped medians will signify Broad Street's role as a major gateway to the river connecting downtown and the Scioto Peninsula.

- Gay Street will be reopened between Front Street and Civic Center Drive with widened sidewalks, rows of trees, and parallel parking that will enhance the pedestrian connection to the water.
- The restored courtyards on either side of the Ohio Departments building will be actively used by pedestrians crossing between the commercial activities on Front Street and the park environment along the riverfront. Visitors and employees at the Ohio Departments building will use the new Civic Center Drive entrance to enjoy the riverfront parks. The restored murals and the grand public lobby of this historic building will draw park visitors inside.
- The alley north of the Huntington Building and State Street will be enhanced for pedestrian use. State Street will be tree-lined from High Street to Front Street. These will become major pedestrian thoroughfares, connecting with the restored courtyards on either end of the restored Ohio Supreme Court Building.
- These courtyards will be actively used by downtown pedestrians as major entrances to upper and lower level walkways along the east bank of the river.



Fig. 20: Lower level walkways along Civic Center Drive will make the riverfront more accessible.

- The rebuilt Town Street Bridge and the Main Street Bridge will have distinct architectural character and details similar to the Broad Street Bridge and will become a set of handsome bridges.
- At the new Miranova mixed use complex, residents and employees will have access to the river, and people strolling along the riverfront will be able to take advantage of new restaurants and shops in this development.
- The Main Street Dam will have a boat landing and portage route, as well as a small hand operated lock to allow canoes and other small boats to reach the Whittier Reach downstream, without altering the level of the Scioto River.
- The route parallel to the river (Long Street/Marconi Civic Center Drive/Mound Street/Short Street) should be consistently signed and landscaped to read as a continuous network of streets along the river.

Confluence Park

Seen from a distance a highly visible icon will draw highway visitors to Confluence Park. Interpretive trails will begin where the rivers meet and meander downtown, passing on the way a water play area and a boat house for canoes and rowing shells. Residents of the Harrison West area and Victorian Village will reach the river via a river railway system or tree-lined Neil Avenue. An existing railway bridge may support a pedestrian crossing to the Scioto Peninsula (west bank) parklands (see *Figure 21, Confluence Park Vision Plan*).

The riverfront corridor improvements for the Confluence Park must be designed to

1. Expand the riverfront parklands by consolidating Spring and Long Streets.
2. Provide a pedestrian crossing across the river to connect to the attractions on the Scioto Peninsula.
3. Create a unique destination along the riverfront with a family-oriented park uses.
4. Enhance the Confluence site for public park use.
5. Incorporate a major work of public art as a symbol of the city.
6. Develop an interpretive theme for the Confluence Park area, using historical, cultural, and/or environmental themes.

The concept plan envisions the following elements for the Confluence Park:

- The combined Spring/Long Street will be an urban park drive with signals and pedestrian crosswalks, characterized by street trees and pedestrian sidewalks.
- Street trees, pedestrian sidewalks, and a landscaped median along Neil Avenue will connect the Victorian Village and Harrison West neighborhoods with the river.
- An improved West Street will lead down to the river from the new Nationwide arena.
- A pedestrian river crossing might attach to the existing railroad trestle bridge near AEP and the Veterans Memorial Auditorium, which in the long term could become a transit link reaching from the Convention Center and Arena District across the river to the Scioto Peninsula.
- An interpretive route using both boat and pathway routes will connect different areas of the Confluence Park.
- While some limited parking may be available on the Confluence site, access will be possible via a pedestrian bridge from PenWest or by boat.



Fig. 22: New trails will connect interpretive elements in the Confluence Park.

- Boats will be a primary means of access to the opposite bank of the Scioto River, which will feature natural wooded areas and small ponds. For special events, this bank of the river could serve as the fireworks platform.
- Reclaiming more of the Confluence site for park use may be accomplished through a major redesign of the waterfront portion of the existing restaurant, moving the existing restaurant away from the water's edge and reducing parking, or by finding a suitable site at a location other than the Confluence site.
- Possible historical and cultural themes to be explored will include
 - Native American settlements near Spring Street (and near Mound Street)
 - The role of the river in the selection of the capital city site
 - The National Road (Route 40) and railroads as vital economic links in the development of the city
 - The role of the rivers in making Columbus a stop along the Underground Railroad

- The growth of industry along the river
- Famous floods and the engineering of the dams, walls, levees and bridges
- The 1908 Plan including its proposal for a water park in this same area.
- Environmental themes could link to the wetland and habitat areas further upstream and downstream, while addressing features in the immediate area such as:
 - Water quality in urban environments
 - The natural dynamics of the river and the costs of channeling and controlling the river
 - Bird migration routes through the area
 - The fauna and flora of the riparian edge even in urban environments.
- Improved access between the Downtown Reach and the Harrison West Reach will be accomplished with consistent signage, pedestrian sidewalks, and streetscape elements along Neil Avenue, Goodale, and Perry Street as well as continuous pedestrian/bicycle trails along the river.

PenWest Sub-District

At the end of Dublin Avenue, a new 30-acre mixed use district will anchor one end of the PenWest and front onto Spring Street as a gateway to the city. A continuous park corridor will follow the shoreline of the Olentangy River, with informal boat access and a wooded riparian edge. The guidelines and strategy for developing this site and integrating public open space are discussed in Chapter 9.

5.3 Immediate Action Steps

Design Review

- Continue to review plans for the redesign and construction of the floodwall and park in front of the Veterans Memorial Auditorium, which will set the design standards for the public open space along the riverfront.

- Continue to review plans for the site design of the COSI building and adjacent riverfront.
- Continue to monitor each phase of the Miranova development project to ensure that adequate public access is maintained between the development and the riverfront, even if only during the day.
- Undertake the review of the floodwall design for the entire Scioto Peninsula in order to ensure the compatibility of flood structures with the vision of the riverfront as a visual and recreational centerpiece of the city. Opportunities to design continuous trails as part of the landscape on the flood control structures should be explored.
- Coordinate the planning and design of any future flood control projects to incorporate public access, open space, view corridors, and aesthetics from the outset.
- The selection of public art for the Confluence site should ensure the quality, stature, and uniqueness tailored to the City of Columbus.

Acquisitions and Relocation

- Acquire two small parcels of land in the Confluence Park area that are currently privately owned: one parcel between Spring and Long Streets and one parcel on the high ground next to the easternmost railroad tracks.
- Acquire an access easement along the riverfront adjacent to the Sunshine Terrace-Riverside Bradley Homes to connect the Scioto parklands at COSI to Dodge Park.
- Identify new facilities for the existing City Health Department operations that are now located on the Scioto Peninsula.
- The implementation of the park may require the re-negotiation of the long term lease for the existing restaurant on the Confluence. This re-negotiation might include the remodeling of the existing restaurant on the Confluence, moving the existing restaurant away from the water's edge, or identifying a new site that will benefit from restaurant activity, such as the PenWest Sub-district overlooking the Olentangy River.

Capital Improvement Projects

- Identify funding sources for the initial phases of the Confluence Park.
- Identify funding sources for the riverfront at Miranova.

- Plan for the development of the Civic Center parklands and the later phases of the Confluence Park.
- Prioritize improvements to the Columbus sewer system to further reduce the frequency of combined sewer overflows in accordance with the City's long-term control strategy.

Additional Studies

- Work with the City traffic engineers to accept lower levels of service during peak hours for all riverfront roads, particularly Civic Center Drive and Spring Street, in order to improve the pedestrian environment and increase riverfront parklands.
- Based on the Nationwide Arena traffic studies and others as necessary, confirm the ability to remove Long Street west of Neil Avenue and change Spring Street into a two way urban street rather than an arterial highway. Ideally the roadway will be reduced from four lanes in each direction to two lanes in each direction, in keeping with a parkway character. Travel lanes of 11 feet, rather than 12 feet, will help calm traffic and encourage slower speeds, while narrowing the width of the overall road right-of-way.
- If Spring Street requires more than two lanes in each direction, modify the railroad underpass at the gateway into the city at the western end of Spring Street. In the short term, the Long Street underpass might be used but this is not recommended as a long term solution because of the negative impact on the parklands.
- Model the traffic implications of narrowing Civic Center Drive and creating two-way streets on Front Street and Civic Center Drive to assess the effect on the larger downtown street system. The goal should be to calm traffic along the riverfront edge, giving pedestrians a priority in this area.
- Conduct a schematic design study of Civic Center Drive to explore options at a more detailed scale and to generate an accurate construction cost estimate based on the preferred option.
- Conduct environmental studies to determine the level of contamination if any at the PenWest Sub-district.

Development Projects

- Prepare a developers' Request for Proposal for the PenWest Sub-district within the RCC's planning area (*refer to Figure 21: Confluence Park Vision Plan*). Acquire land within the subdistrict or negotiate a public/private partnership for development (see Chapter 9, Development Strategy and Guidelines).

6. HARRISON WEST REACH

The Harrison West Reach extends north from the Spring/Sandusky Interchange at Interstate 670 to the edge of The Ohio State University (OSU) campus at King Avenue. On the west bank, the planning study considers the highway corridor along the river. On the east bank, the study area reaches from the river to the first public way: from Goodale to Buttles, the boundary is Thurber Drive West; from Buttles to First Avenue, the boundary is Oregon Avenue; and from First to Third, the boundary is Perry Street.

6.1 Context

The context for the Harrison West Reach summarizes the physical features as well as the public comments that relate to this part of the river.

Physical Features

In the Harrison West Reach, the Olentangy River is difficult to see or to touch. Blocking the river on both banks is the new Spring Sandusky interchange, which cuts a swath that separates Harrison West from PenWest and downtown. On the west bank, highways continue to act as a barrier between people and the river for almost the entire length of the reach. Ironically, one of the few places where the river can be clearly viewed is from Olentangy River Road, where the S.R. 315 highway actually veers out over the river.

Gowdy Field, once a popular site for ball games, has lain fallow since its reuse as a landfill site. On the other bank, the Harrison West Reach is one of the few places where residential uses actually meet the river, although the interface is extremely small and the houses are oriented away from the river. Other uses on the east bank include Battelle Institute and industrial and warehouse uses, all of which turn their back on the river. Recently, Battelle Memorial Institute entered into an agreement with the City that consolidated their ownership south of Fifth Avenue, in exchange for an open space easement along the riverbank for a bicycle/pedestrian path. A new parking lot is visually screened from the street and the southernmost portion of their property has been landscaped as open space.

Public Comments

In conversations and written comments, the desire for better connections between the river and the Victorian Village and Harrison West



Fig. 23: The Harrison West neighborhood has almost no public access along the waterfront.

neighborhoods was clearly expressed. The need for more open space in these neighborhoods was also a frequent comment. Although industry historically has been located in this neighborhood, people thought that the existing industrial uses were entirely inappropriate along the riverfront and in the neighborhood. They did, however, identify original industrial buildings as an historic resource. The design and reconstruction of the bridges at Third and King Avenues is an extremely important issue to the community, offering the opportunity to recreate the historical bridge details and to incorporate pedestrian and bicycle access.

6.2 Program and Concept Design

The Harrison West Reach is critical to making the Columbus Riverfront a single continuous park corridor. In this area, where the river is the most difficult to perceive, dramatic transformations will have to occur to re-establish the riparian link. Within the Harrison West Reach, each side of the river is considered individually to address the unique issues of context. The vision plan for each one is described below (*see Figure 24, Harrison West Reach Vision Plan*).

East Bank

The east bank of the Harrison West Reach will become the key link that brings downtown into a closer relationship with the University. The new parklands on the east bank will add significantly to the open space resources enjoyed by the residents in the nearby neighborhoods.

The park improvements on the east bank must be designed to

1. Serve the recreational needs of the immediate community while fitting within the context of the larger regional park along the corridor.
2. Maintain and enhance the vegetated steep banks of the river's edge.
3. Incorporate continuous public access along the river corridor with points of connection from the neighborhood to the river's edge.

The concept plan envisions the following elements for this area:

- Perry Street will extend south from Second Avenue to Michigan Avenue near Goodale Street as a parkway providing public access to new riverfront parklands and redefining the edge of the built environment. Community needs may have a long-term impact on existing businesses, although the plan recognizes that significant recent investments by area businesses may require a flexible implementation approach.
- The riverfront parks might include playgrounds, open meadows, woodlands, and perhaps some limited court games or sports fields for informal neighborhood use.
- Trails will meander along the upper bank with occasional stairs, ramps, and landings at the water's edge.
- A new mixed use development area along Perry Street will encompass approximately 15 acres and will face the riverfront parks.
- New development on the east side of the Olentangy at Goodale Street will address the river and will include easements or larger acquisitions for public open space along the riverfront in order to achieve the connection between PenWest and Harrison West.
- The natural bank along the riverfront will be maintained and enhanced for wildlife habitat.

West Bank

The west bank of the Harrison West Reach will join the Confluence Park with the river corridor along Olentangy River Road creating a more memorable identity and more usable open space along this major

On the west bank, improvements must be designed to

1. Create continuous public access with landscaping to mitigate the highway environment.
2. Improve the streetscape along Olentangy River Road incorporating views of the river.
3. Reclaim Gowdy Field for recreational use.

transportation corridor. The concept plan envisions the following elements on the west bank:

- A landscaped trail will parallel the highway as far as the Third Avenue Bridge, where a crossing is possible
- From Third Avenue north, the trail will become part of streetscape improvements along Olentangy River Road. Overlooks and small parklands will take advantage of the direct access to the river in this area. At Third Avenue, Fifth Avenue, and King Avenue, pocket parks will serve as gateways into Harrison West.
- Gowdy Field will become an active recreation facility with athletic fields, court games, and other supporting facilities.
- The natural bank along the riverfront will be maintained and enhanced for wildlife habitat.

6.3 Immediate Action Steps

Design Review

- Review the plans for the King Avenue Bridge to ensure the quality of design, the compatibility with Columbus' other historic bridges, and the incorporation of pedestrian and bicycle use along and across the riverfront.

Acquisitions and Relocation

- Acquire key parcels between Second and Third Avenue that have river frontage. Recent and ongoing construction of condominiums that turn their back on the river and preclude public access represent a lost opportunity for the neighborhood and for the regional linear park.
- South of Second Avenue, every effort should be made to assist current businesses to relocate to sites away from the river, taking advantage of acquisition opportunities as they arise.
- In the Goodale Street section, negotiate with current and future developers to acquire riverfront easements or larger acquisitions.

Capital Improvement Projects

- Initiate design and construction of steps down to the river at the foot of Second Avenue as an interim improvement.
- Convert Gowdy Field back into parkland, incorporating necessary improvements for vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian access to enhance neighborhood use.
- Undertake streetscape improvements along Olentangy River Road; assist in the identification of alternative funding sources.
- Enhance the landscaping, as necessary, of the bicycle trail and riverbank that are part of the Spring/Sandusky interchange project.
- Prioritize improvements to the Columbus sewer system to further reduce the frequency of combined sewer overflows in accordance with the City's long-term control strategy.
- Initiate design and construction of a sluiceway for canoes and kayaks at the Fifth Avenue Dam.

Development Projects

- Once land is assembled between I-670 and Third Avenue, prepare a developer Request for Proposal in conjunction with improvements to the street infrastructure and open space.

7. UNIVERSITY REACH

The University Reach extends northward from King Avenue to the Wetlands Research Area just north of Dodridge Street, addressing the entire riverfront corridor under the jurisdiction of The Ohio State University (OSU), as well as the City-owned Tuttle Park, the campus of Chemical Abstracts and other private properties on both sides of the river. On the west bank, the planning area encompasses the University's Green Reserve along the river and the Olentangy River Road corridor. On the east bank, the planning area encompasses the Green Reserve along the river and the Cannon Drive corridor.

7.1 Context

The context for the University Reach summarizes the OSU master plan process and the physical features along this part of the river.

OSU Master Plan Process

Over the last several years, OSU has been actively engaged in preparing a Long Range Concept Plan for the entire campus, supplemented by a series of more detailed district studies. A fundamental concept established in the campus master plan is the Green Reserve, which is a connected open space system that flows through the campus. The spine of the Green Reserve is the river corridor, with lateral fingers that reach into the Oval and Mirror Lake Hollow on one side and into the athletic fields, arboretum and agricultural fields on the other side. Each district plan established a likely development program and defined the location of major new buildings while preserving the concept of the Green Reserve. The OSU Long Range Concept Plan and district plans underwent careful public scrutiny during their development over the last four years.

As a part of their ongoing district master planning, The Ohio State University (OSU) engaged the consultant team to study in more detail the University Reach between King Avenue and the wetland research area north of Dodridge Street. This planning work is summarized in this report insofar as it relates to the continuous riverfront corridor. The recommendations for the University Reach, however, were developed in collaboration with OSU with only minor involvement of the RCC.



Fig. 25: Drake Union hugs the shore of the Olentangy River and provides boating facilities.

Physical Features

The University Reach of the Olentangy River extends from King Avenue north to the wetlands research area on Dodridge Street and encompasses all of the riverfront land on The Ohio State University campus as well as Tuttle Park and some residential uses on the east bank. In this section, the Olentangy flows between levees for most of the distance. The character of the river banks ranges from open lawns and scattered canopy trees to dense impenetrable thickets on the steep banks.

The levees do not contain the 100-year flood, however, and the flood plain extends back into the campus on the east bank encompassing athletic and recreational fields and surrounding Drake Union and the adjacent residential towers. On the northern part of this reach, the flood plain spills out to inundate an expanded wetlands research area and parts of Tuttle Park.

The river corridor threads together a number of environmental, cultural, and recreational destinations and activities, although most of them are not oriented currently to the water. Environmental activities include the OSU wetlands research project, the OSU Department of Natural Science, and the Chadwick Aboretum. Cultural activities in the corridor include the Columbus Symphony Summer Concert Series and events associated with the

Fawcett Center, Alumni House, St. John Arena, French Field House and Schottenstein Center. Recreational and sports facilities in the corridor include Tuttle Park active recreation facilities, Schottenstein Arena, Ohio Stadium and athletic fields, and the University's varsity and recreational rowing facilities in Drake Union.

A continuous trail runs along the top of the eastern levee, with heavy use by runners, skaters, and bicyclists. At King Avenue, this trail turns inland to join city streets where its route to the downtown is marked with signs. To the north, the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department is constructing an extension of the trail, which will cross north of Dodridge Street and pass by the wetlands research area.

Several bridges cross the river in the University Reach. The replacement of the Lane Avenue Bridge is just entering into the design phase. On the west bank, Olentangy River Road, north of S.R. 315 carries relatively little traffic yet is a significant barrier to river access.

7.2 Program and Concept Design

Within the University Reach, the river will be a part of the regional open space corridor but also will respond to the mission and needs of the Ohio State University. As a part of the campus, the river corridor will become

- A part of the *Green Reserve*, a connected open space system on campus
- A circulation corridor, especially for bicycle commuting
- A resource for teaching and learning
- A resource for student life and recreational activity
- A series of unique destinations reflecting the context of the different campus districts and highlighting cultural events along the river.

In addition, the continuous trails along the river will connect Tuttle Park and nearby residential neighborhoods with the life of the OSU campus and downtown Columbus. Continuous trails also will wind their way along the riverbanks through the Chemical Abstracts and Battelle Institute campuses.

The activities of the campus will reach toward the Green Reserve to engage the river open space in a few key locations along the University Reach, including Drake Union, St. John Arena, and the Health Sciences District (see Figure 26, *University Reach South Vision Plan*).

Drake Union will become a more hospitable, welcoming and exciting location along the river corridor. Students will congregate in the open spaces

overlooking the river; people and bicycles will have a pleasant experience along Cannon Drive; Drake Union will have a distinctive architectural identity; and the coming and going of boats will add life to the river.

At St. John Arena, students and faculty will pause for refreshments, conversation, and outdoor studying in a series of terraces, stairs, and overlooks above the river.

The expansion of the Health Sciences District will engage the river's edge with a major public open space and overlook at the top of the berm, offering views up and down the river and inviting people to reflect outward to the river and back to the culture of the campus. The proposed highway access bridges crossing the river to and from S.R. 315 will become symbolic gateways that join the campus to the larger region.

The Midwest Campus Landing will be a memorable event on the west bank, widely visible from the main campus and from the river bridges. A pathway marked by continuous rows of trees will make a procession from the Midwest Campus across a narrower Olentangy River Road and down to the water's edge.

The rest of the riverbanks will be improved to relate to their surrounding context, whether the open lawns of the Academic Core, the meadows near the Fawcett Center, or the natural wooded banks of the river. The Wetlands Research Area will be connected by continuous trails and should become a key educational and interpretive destination along the Columbus Riverfront Corridor (see *Figure 27, University Reach North Vision Plan*).

The natural river parklands will extend from the Lane Avenue Bridge north to the Wetlands Research Area above Dodridge Street. In this area the riparian edge will be enhanced with a combination of selective thinning in some locations and additional native plantings to promote wildlife habitat. Continuous paths will extend along the upper and lower banks. At key locations along the route, overlooks, landings and breaks in the vegetation will allow users to experience the river more directly. Landings are envisioned for the Alumni House, Tuttle Park, Dodridge Street Weir.

7.3 Immediate Action Steps

Improvements to the river corridor in the OSU campus will be undertaken by the university. At Tuttle Park to the north, the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department is constructing an extension of the continuous trail, which will cross north of Dodridge Street and pass by the wetlands research area before crossing back to the east bank. Hopefully, with general improvements

to the riverfront, the privately owned Olentangy Village Housing complex will be willing to provide public access and connect their open space to the linear corridor.

Design Review

- Work with OSU to ensure linear connections and public access to and along the riverfront.
- Review the Lane Avenue Bridge reconstruction to ensure that the bridge becomes a significant architectural statement within the realm of the Columbus vernacular, and that the pedestrian environment is made integral to the bridge design.

Acquisitions and Easements

- Seek an access easement with the Riverwatch Tower and the Olentangy Village Apartments if possible to provide continuous public access along the river north of Lane Avenue.
- Negotiate an access easement with Chemical Abstract, respecting their needs as a private institution, but ensuring continuous access along the banks of the river.

Capital Improvements

- Prioritize improvements to the Columbus sewer system to further reduce the frequency of combined sewer overflows in accordance with the City's long-term control strategy.
- Provide interchange access from State Route 315 to the OSU Medical District.

Additional Studies

- A River Corridor District Plan is being prepared by OSU in collaboration with the Columbus Riverfront Vision Plan to define the character of the riverfront and to identify specific open space projects.
- OSU is initiating a campus-wide landscape master plan that will include the river corridor.

- A hydrologic study should be conducted to define flood control structures and identify berms that do not serve a flood control purpose and that could be removed.

8. DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR OPEN SPACE

The Columbus Riverfront Vision Plan is an overall framework for the riverfront and recognizes that public investment will occur over time to establish the infrastructure for private development. The design guidelines for open space ensure that public sector decisions create a cohesive system of parks and street corridors as an amenity for residents and businesses. These guidelines also should be included within Requests for Proposals for riverfront park projects. The guidelines would then serve as the basis for the review of design work over time.

Water's Edge

- The natural wooded banks of the river should be maintained and enhanced to promote wildlife habitat.
- In heavily used areas in the Downtown Reach and in portions of the University Reach, higher canopy trees and an open understory are more appropriate for safety and to establish civic character.
- Continuous trails should follow the river's edge at either the top of the bank or, where necessary, the toe of the slope, or both. Upper and lower trails should be connected at regular intervals.

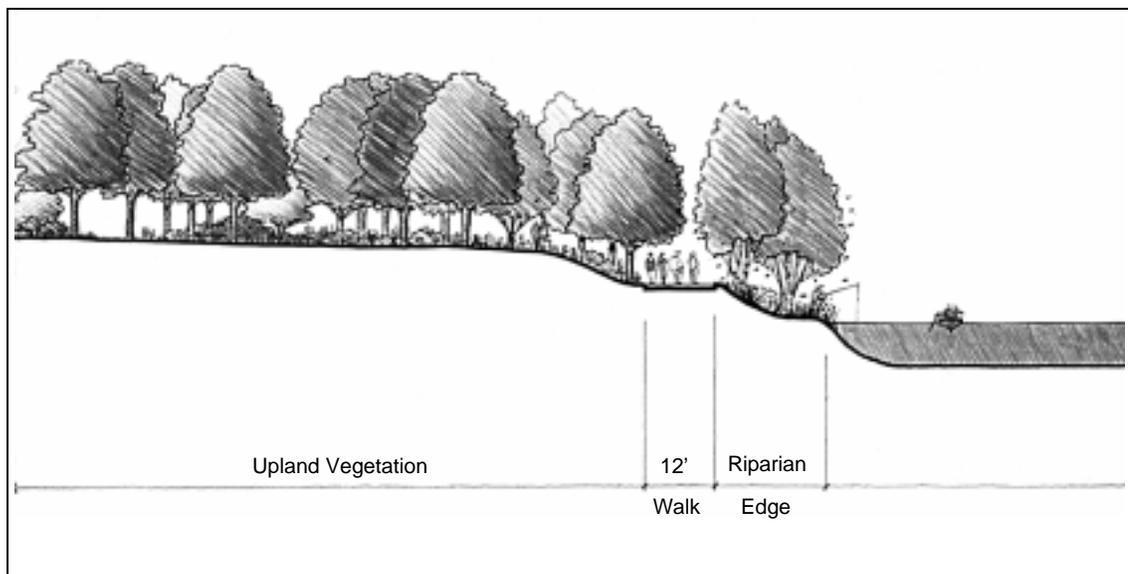


Fig. 28: Typical section of a natural riverfront edge.

- In urban areas, lower level landings close to the elevation of the normal pool is desirable.
- Floating docks, overlooks, steps down to the water, and/or boat access for small boats should be placed at regular intervals along the riverfront to mark the points of access from the city into the corridor.

Planting Materials

- In urban and open meadow environments, landscape planting along the riverfront should not obstruct views of the water. Trees with high canopies are recommended.
- Vegetation along the natural river banks should be selectively enhanced with additional plants that will prevent erosion and promote wildlife and birds, while still allowing some views of the water.
- A high priority should be placed upon providing some columnar or fastigate plant materials especially within the Downtown Reach to establish a theme for the Scioto and Olentangy riverfronts. The majority of plant materials, however, should be native vegetation.

Pathways and Circulation

- Wherever possible, an upper and lower set of pathways should be created on both sides of the riverfront, creating a multi-use trail system for recreation and commuting along the entire corridor.
- River's edge paths should meet the cross streets at grade level. Pedestrian crossings should be enhanced wherever possible with crosswalks and other pavement distinctions.
- The pathways should pass under bridges only if safety features are completely addressed including under-bridge lighting and patrolling.
- The primary river edge pathway should be constructed of an all weather surface with a minimum width of 12 feet.
- Additional pedestrian bridges are recommended to connect uses on both banks of the river, including one from Nationwide to COSI; one between the Berliner Park and the Environmental Park; and one at OSU.
- Pedestrian access should be improved on existing bridges whether through reconstruction or renovation.

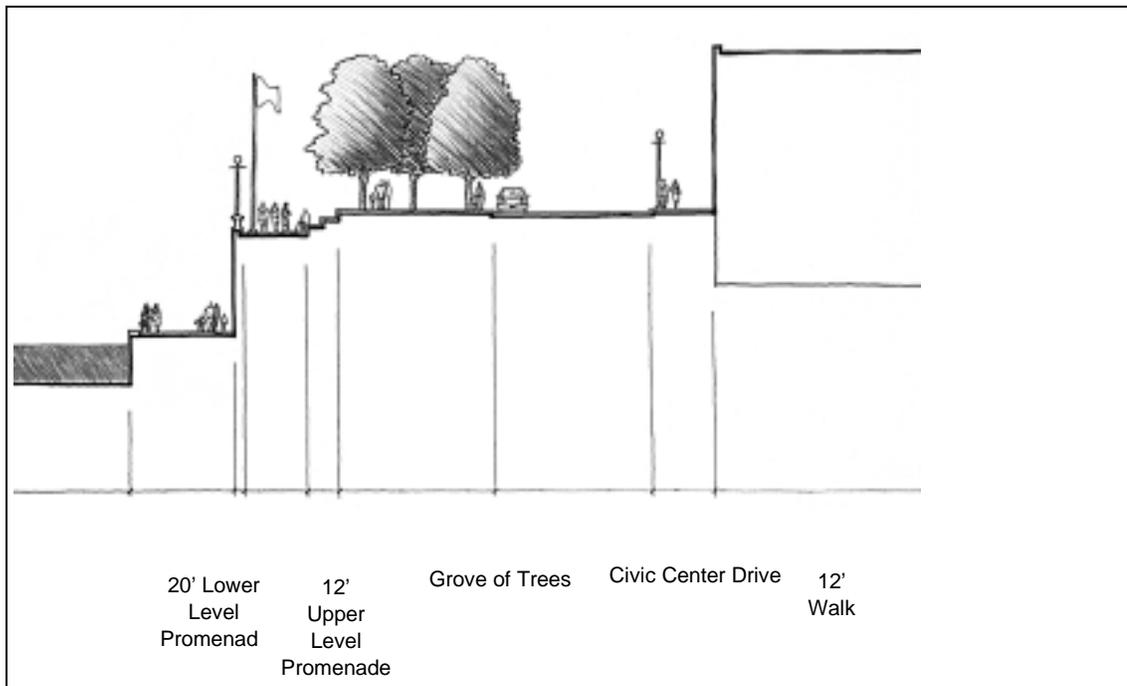


Fig. 29: Typical section of urban riverfront edge (river esplanade).

Streetscapes

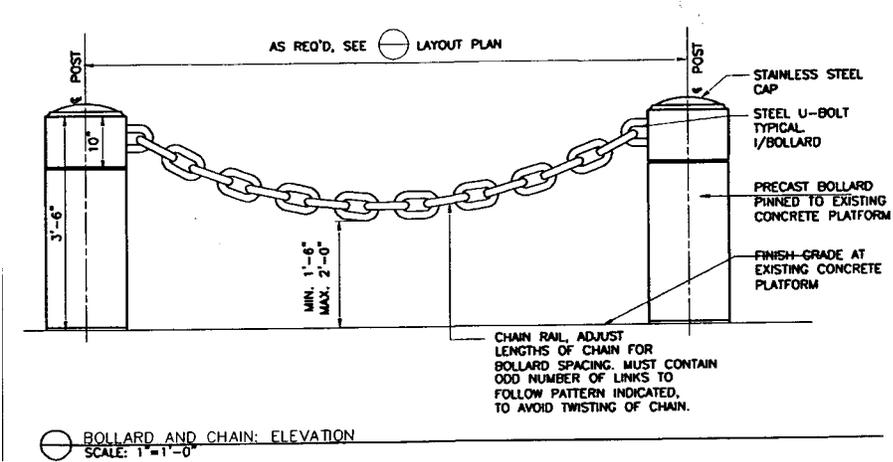
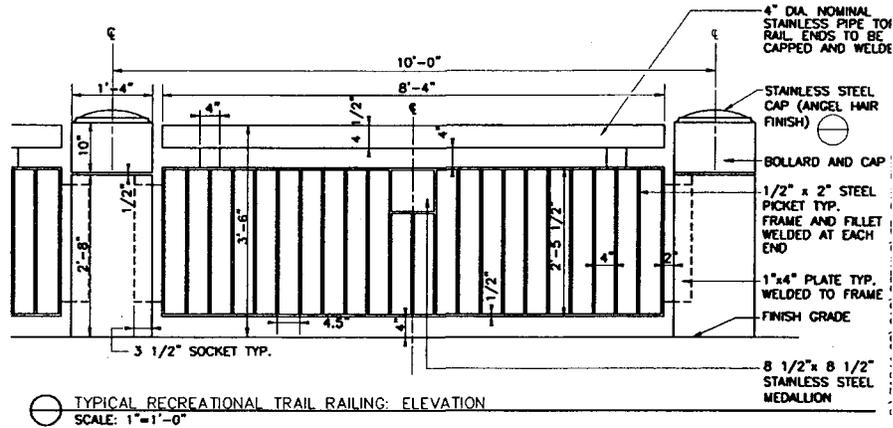
- On-street parallel parking should be considered for roadways that border parkland and that cross through the corridor in order to encourage park use, reduce traffic speeds, and protect pedestrians on sidewalks.
- All streets along the riverfront and leading to the riverfront should have continuous pedestrian sidewalks.
- Continuous rows of trees are recommended along both sides of the street, especially on major gateways.
- Streetscape details for major and minor streets parallel to the riverfront should be consistent, including lighting, signage, materials, and furnishings.

Furnishings

- Furnishings should be carefully selected to set a high quality for the parks. A consistent palette of materials should be used throughout the park corridor based on the construction documents for the first phase park at Veterans Memorial Auditorium Riverfront (VMAR). In some cases, some variations for distinct reaches such as OSU should be

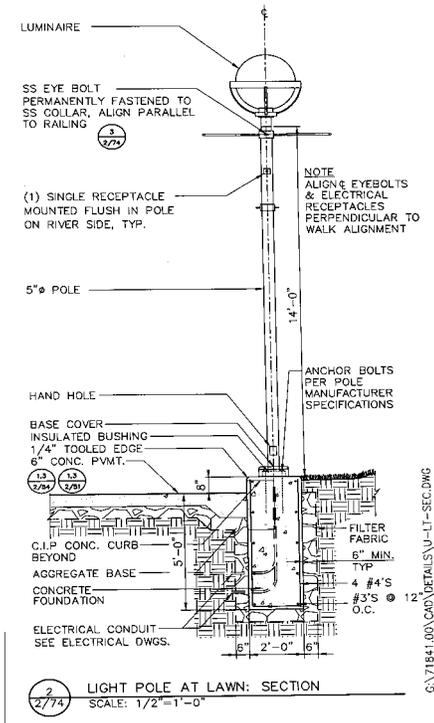
considered to create memorable places linked to the identity of the adjacent neighborhood or district.

- At the water's edge either recreational trail railing or bollard and chains should be used, to be consistent with VMAR.
- Pedestrian lighting should illuminate pathways, sidewalks, and special features of the urban riverfront parks. The VMAR light should be the standard fixture. Lighting is not required for extensive natural parks.
- Riverfront park benches should follow the VMAR standards.
- Interpretive and directional signage throughout the Riverfront Corridor should be consistent and designed to complement the character of the park.
- Public art is desirable and should be integrated into the design of the



park, relating to its context.

Fig. 31. Typical Riverfront Park Light (VMAR).



ADD'N ARM RESTS. EQ. SP. @ 1/3 BENCH LENGTH, TYP.

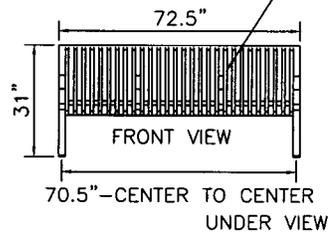
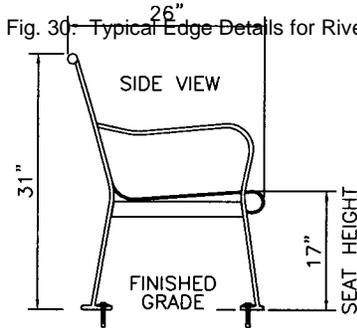


Fig. 30: Typical Edge Details for Riverfront Parks (VMAR)



(4) 5/8" I.D. EXPANSION BOLT HOLES (EXPANSION BOLTS TO BE PROVIDED BY OTHERS)

Fig. 32: Typical Riverfront Park Benches (VMAR)

9. DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES

In order to move forward with specific development projects, a clear development strategy and a set of development guidelines are the necessary tools to facilitate private investment and ensure the creation of quality environments. The development guidelines are basic principals of urban design for the riverfront corridor, based on the context of nearby successful districts and on the aspirations expressed by stakeholders and other participants. The development strategy focuses on the specific issues—market, financial, site, and organizational—that will affect each of the target projects.

A number of target development projects have been identified by the Riverfront Vision Plan. Of these the PenWest site and the Whittier Peninsula district are more likely to occur in the near future. In both of these areas, the public sector has assembled significant portions of the property and much of the land is either vacant or underutilized.

The Greenlawn Avenue site can be conceived as a mid- to long-term project that may be accelerated by some of the site advantages such as good access and views. It does involve land assembly and relocation of city facilities and small private businesses.

Portions of the Harrison West project may be an extremely long range vision for the future of this part of the riverfront. Full implementation of this project and its program involve substantial land assembly and the relocation of a major industrial users and multiple active businesses. However, components of the Harrison West project can and should be implemented incrementally in the short term.

The following section presents the corridor-wide urban design guidelines and then describes a development strategy for the three key target projects, which will occur in the near to mid term future, including program, financial and market considerations, and the urban design framework specific to each site.

9.1 Development Guidelines for the Corridor

Purpose

The Columbus Riverfront Vision Plan is an overall framework for nine miles of riverfront corridor and recognizes that private developments will occur within the corridor, particularly on four targeted sites: Greenlawn Avenue, Whittier Peninsula, PenWest, and Harrison West. In addition, there are

several new projects slated for the Downtown Reach including COSI and renovations to the Veterans Memorial Auditorium.

These development guidelines ensure that the specific developments within the corridor are consistent with each other and contribute positively to public open space and to nearby neighborhoods and districts. These development guidelines also ensure that private developments within the corridor contribute to the Columbus Riverfront Vision Plan's three core objectives: an appropriate balance of land uses, optimum public access to the river, and the preservation and enhancement of the river's natural riparian edge.

Streets and Blocks

- New development should be organized with an urban grid of streets and blocks
- Within a development district, the plan recommends that typical street right-of-ways be 60 feet wide, with 36-foot-wide streets to allow for two travel lanes and on-street parking on both sides.
- Typical boulevards within development districts should be 100 feet wide, with 20 feet of pavement on either side to allow for a one-way travel lane and on-street parking. These boulevards should serve primarily to create additional open space as an amenity to adjacent residences.
- Streets should have continuous sidewalks on both sides, between four and six feet wide.
- Development parcels should be divided by alleyways and/or interior courtyards with pedestrian access to reduce the scale of the building blocks.
- On-site parking should be located on the interior of the blocks.

Open Space Framework

- The land along the riverfront should be preserved and enhanced as public open space and should allow for continuous trails.
- A pattern of open space should be created to provide an amenity for each development parcel: either the riverfront parks or internal neighborhood parks or wide boulevard medians (over 50 feet).

- The streets are a vital component of the open space framework and should include continuous rows of street trees, sidewalks, and pedestrian-scaled lighting.

Building Placement

- The plan recommends that buildings be placed to establish and reinforce open space and street corridors.
- Buildings should be sited to create usable, positive open spaces, not leftover or remnant spaces.
- Buildings along the riverfront should address the river in a positive way reflecting the aesthetic role of the riverfront as an open space corridor.
- Buildings should recognize landmark positions by special treatments of massing and/or entries. A landmark position may be a gateway entrance, prominent along the river, or a point visible at the end of a view corridor, including a street.

Building Size and Massing

- In general the height of the buildings should be proportional to the width of the street, so that higher buildings typically would face onto the wider boulevards and the major public open spaces. Typically, the higher density housing will be three to four stories and should be complemented by two-family and single family housing that might range from two to three stories.
- Buildings should be designed to provide view corridors and public access to the riverfront and to avoid the creation of impenetrable walls that block movement and sight.
- Residential housing stock should be varied and offer a variety of living arrangements including townhouses, two- and three-family houses on small lots, and low-, mid-, and in some cases high-rise apartment buildings.

Facades, Edges, and Entries

- Building faces adjacent to public open space and to streets should be treated as fronts and should activate the public environment.

- Entrances and active ground floor uses are encouraged along the riverfront facade.
- Entries that face primary open spaces and streets should be easily identifiable and align with key visual axes.
- The building facades and edges should reinforce the integrity and vitality of the open space and should align or complement adjacent facades.
- Buildings should have good proportions, visible points of entry, and well crafted expressions of human scaled elements, including windows, doors, door frames, steps, rails, and ramps.
- Public facades should be lively and articulated to identify public circulation areas.
- Glass should not be reflective or smoked, but should allow observation of activity both inside and outside.
- There should be no blank walls at street or riverfront level(s). The minimum amount of transparent surfaces should be 35 percent on the ground levels.

Parking and Parking Structures

- Parking structures should be sensitive to scale and form.
- Large blank walls and continuous sloped strip openings should be avoided. Ramps should be inside the structure and not expressed on the outside.
- Vertical proportions are encouraged rather than horizontal proportions. Fifteen- to twenty-foot bays are recommended.
- Louvers or screens should be used to animate the facade surfaces and to articulate the structure.
- Passive surveillance should be encouraged through maximum openings and minimum walls.
- Where possible, the first floor should be for human occupancy such as office or service functions to maintain activity at the ground level.
- Vertical pedestrian circulation elements should be clearly articulated and visible from adjacent public spaces and nearby circulation routes.
- The maximum number of levels should be six including the ground level and the roof level.

- Lighting within the structure should be designed to have a uniform illumination and to minimize glare to the exterior.
- Bicycle parking should be included.
- The plan recommends that landscape plantings be placed to screen parking structures from open space and to break down the scale of the structure.
- Parking garages should provide public toilets, which can be overseen by the garage attendants.

Building Service

- The building service should be located internal to the building or its parking if possible. Service should be away from public open spaces and thoroughfares, or if unavoidable, should have design treatment to emphasize pedestrian comfort and compatibility.

Floodplain Zone

- Buildings within the 100-year floodplain must be consistent with local, state and federal regulations.
- The first habitable floor of a residential building must be one and one-half feet above the height of the 100-year flood. The first floor should not be any higher than necessary, however, in order that the buildings maintain a relationship to the street, both active and physical.
- On the street edge, stoops, stairs, and landscape planting are recommended to strengthen the connection between the raised first floor and the street.
- The first floor of a commercial structures may be either one and one-half feet above the floodwater elevation or be flood-proofed, with compensatory storage provided.
- Parking structures within the floodplain should be designed to allow the free flow of floodwaters, without obstructing them or reducing flood storage. Louvers and roll-up panels are recommended.
- Access to buildings must be one and one-half feet above the 100-year flood.

The site specific urban design framework and the development strategy for the target projects are presented below.

9.2 PenWest Redevelopment Site

Urban Design Framework

The following urban design elements are specific to this site (see also Section 9.1):

- New development should be sited on a grid of streets with several connections to Spring/Long Street as well as the extension of Dublin Avenue into the site.
- Public access to the existing boat landing should be maintained and improved.
- A public park roadway is recommended between the development and the riverfront parks in order to define the public realm and to promote public access to the area.
- The historic portion of the power plant should be considered for reuse if possible.
- Interior parks should be created to provide a public amenity and to improve the value of the interior properties.
- The land should be reconfigured if possible to raise the interior portions of the site and create compensatory flood storage along the banks of the riverfront.

Expected Range of Market Support

This 24-acre site, partly owned by the city and partly by private interests, appears well-suited to development of a variety of residential opportunities. The riverfront amenity is relatively modest in this location, though it would be enhanced by the proposed open space improvements in this reach. The various surface transportation improvements underway, as well as the existing railroad, have a strong influence on this site. The existing redevelopment in the PenWest area, which is limited in scope but highly visible, should help to pioneer this area. The development of the arena and the Pen site will also help to solidify the market prospects for this site.

Mix of Uses and Sizing of Development

This site is envisioned as apartments at a density of approximately 15 to 20 units per net acre, with surface parking and a limited recreational amenity

package (community pool and clubhouse). At this density, the site capacity is perhaps 300 to 400 units, net of parking and streets.

Timing, Phasing, and Absorption

This site represents a relatively short-term opportunity, with development potentially occurring over the next three to five years. Unlike the Whittier Peninsula, the infrastructure to serve the area is largely in place. Assistance with demolition costs, site preparation costs, and land assembly may be prerequisites to private-sector investment. It is likely that the project would be built in a single phase, with absorption occurring over 12 to 18 months.

Implementation Strategy

The City of Columbus Department of Trade and Development has indicated that the redevelopment of the Power Plant area at the end of Dublin Road is a high priority. Rather than issue a Request for Proposal solely for the City-owned land along the riverfront, we recommend that the City either assemble the other properties between the river, the railroad and Spring Street, or that the City work cooperatively with the adjacent private landowners to create a more comprehensive plan for the district. An expanded project area will achieve three goals:

- A public open space corridor can be established along the riverfront and development rights away from the river can be maximized;
- The reconfiguration of the land may be possible to transfer the flood storage closer to the river banks, while creating high ground away from the river for development; and
- A more compelling real estate development opportunity will be created.

The joint development project will mean a unified parcel along the riverfront with sufficient size to support a residential project with the appropriate critical mass. The site can take advantage of river views and direct access to the riverfront trail system. The city owned land is the key to unlocking the value of the inboard parcels. As such, the public has strong leverage over the ultimate form of the development project. In the current configuration, the public land borders the banks of the river and is on high ground above the 100-year floodplain. The interior private land does not have riverfront frontage and is entirely within the floodplain. Whether the City assembles the land or enters into a private/public partnership, the development should follow a clear set of design guidelines (see above and Section 9.1).

9.3 Whittier Peninsula District

Urban Design Framework

The following urban design elements are specific to this site (see also Section 9.1 for the corridor-wide guidelines):

- New development should be sited on a grid of streets with connections wherever possible to the Brewery District.
- A relocated Whittier Street should run between the development and the riverfront parks in order to define the public realm and to promote public access to the area.
- Interior parks should be created to provide a public amenity and to improve the value of the interior properties.
- A major public open space should connect the Brewery District to the riverfront parks, encouraging public access into the Whittier Peninsula.
- The land should be reconfigured and filled as necessary to create gradually sloping ground plains.
- Commercial uses are recommended along the highway and along the railroad tracks as a buffer to the residential neighborhood. Commercial retail uses should be concentrated at the point of connection to the Brewery District.

Expected Range of Market Support

The Whittier Peninsula is envisioned as the next of Columbus' urban villages, following the successful models of in-town living at German Village, Victorian Village, and the Brewery District. As such, it is expected to draw support primarily for moderately dense housing, but in a wide variety of configurations, both detached single-family units and attached townhouses as well as multi-family apartments.

Housing will be the engine that drives this multi-phased development, but the program should include opportunities for office, service businesses, and retail shops and restaurants. The site's relative isolation suggests that the non-residential program will be more limited than in, say, the Brewery District or Short North, and will ultimately be linked to the success of the housing.

The Whittier Peninsula appears to be a superb opportunity for a new neighborhood that offers new housing in a traditional, mixed-use "village"

setting, where land uses relate closely to high-quality public spaces, even where a certain number of people may choose to walk to work. The combination of location, parks, the riverfront, and a high-quality plan makes the Whittier Peninsula a prospect that we have little doubt will find developer interest.

Mix of Uses and Sizing of Development

Based on similar models elsewhere, such a project should encompass a range of housing types and styles. Both rental and for-sale units should be included. Higher-density rental housing will likely support higher land values and help to offset infrastructure costs, but higher-end single-family housing will send a stronger message to the market that Whittier Village is a viable neighborhood. We expect that a logical range of densities is from approximately ten to 50 dwelling units per acre. This implies a maximum of perhaps four or five stories, and a predominantly two- or three-story pattern.

Sasaki's calculations show potential residential development of about 1,000 to 1,300 units at an average density of 25 to 35 units per acre. This would certainly provide the kind of critical mass necessary for the peninsula to emerge as a viable neighborhood. It would also help to offset the major investment in infrastructure and parks that will be required to develop the peninsula.

In addition, the site has the capacity to offer up to 450,000 square feet (gross) of office, retail, or service space. This is probably high given the likely demand for such space, and based on precedents elsewhere. In other planned communities, commercial development as a percentage of total land area is typically on the order of 10 to 15 percent. The access and visibility difficulties and the size of the "on-site" market suggest that commercial opportunities will be more limited, perhaps more in the range of 150,000 to 200,000 square feet of space. Importantly, this space should be integrated into the residential fabric of the neighborhood.

Timing, Phasing, and Absorption

Under current conditions the close-in markets are fairly healthy. Newer projects like Victorian Gate show that well-located, high-end rentals proximate to a high-quality park meet a ready market. We believe that Miranova's prospects are also good, although this represents a different market from that foreseen for the Whittier Peninsula.

However, we also believe that the market for in-town housing in Columbus is not deep. Metropolitan Columbus builds about 9,000 housing units each year, split about evenly between single-family and multi-family units. Yet Victorian Village, German Village, and Downtown contain only approximately 5,100 households, and according to Census data, this population has been falling by about 150 households per year. Marketing 1,000 new housing units is not something that will happen overnight. The Whittier Peninsula initiative, in fact, could be seen as an attempt to stabilize and reinforce the in-town population by offering a significant new community to the market.

We believe that if the project can establish a successful toehold, probably with an initial phase of either a 100- to 200-unit rental apartment project or with an initial single-family detached phase of perhaps 75 units, it should be able to continue to build momentum. Ultimately, the Whittier Peninsula may be capable of absorbing 100 units per year, but this pace will only happen with considerable early efforts. We would expect that under any scenario, build-out of the peninsula is probably a 20-year prospect.

An important prerequisite to successfully marketing the community will be the establishment of high-quality infrastructure, better access, and amenities, including at least some of the major public parks. As such, the project will necessarily represent a public risk in the sense that public resources will be needed to “establish the address” some time before houses can be sold. We believe that developer-recruitment and detailed planning efforts should proceed in the short-term, the next 18 to 24 months or so. One objective of the next task for the planning team should be to clearly define the magnitude of the public investment required to support an initial phase of housing.

Implementation Strategy

The basic development roles for the public and private sector are described below.

Public role: Recruitment of private development partner, project coordination, land assembly, parks development, construction of basic land-development infrastructure, including bridges, rebuild Whittier Boulevard and main utility lines.

Private role: Detailed planning and development programming, project debt and equity financing, development and marketing (sales or leasing) of finished land bays, vertical product (houses, apartments, offices, stores), or both.

The public sector therefore acts as catalyst, laying the foundation for the private development to be feasible. Without this critical public role, the Whittier Peninsula site will be very difficult to develop because of the high costs of land assembly, parks, and infrastructure. We expect that the private role will be played by a developer, or by multiple developers working in accordance with the plan. The choice for the public sector sponsors of the plan is to select a single master developer who will serve as land developer and will either develop the “vertical” product or will sell parcels to sub-developers for development of the houses, offices, and stores.

A single master developer is potentially a more efficient choice for the public sector, with only one developer-recruitment process and negotiation process. The risk is that the project will reflect the vision of a singular development entity to the detriment of the diverse neighborhood envisioned by the plan. We believe this can be mitigated, as it has been in other successful large developments, through a sound, flexible master plan and carefully defined development guidelines and the distribution of parcels to sub-developers.

9.4 Greenlawn Avenue Redevelopment Site

Urban Design Framework

The following urban design framework is specific to the Greenlawn Avenue site (see Section 9.1 for corridor-wide guidelines)

- New buildings should be oriented in such a way that they provide a well defined urban edge along Greenlawn Avenue, while embracing the riverfront to the north and taking advantage of the views of downtown.
- The buildings should be set back a minimum of 100 feet from the river edge to create a generous public open space corridor.
- A public access and view corridor easement should be maintained through the middle of the site, in alignment with the Berliner Park roadway.
- Buildings must be designed to meet the Federal, State and local regulations regarding the 100-year floodplain. Typically, the first floor of

a residential building must be above the level of the 100-year flood; commercial buildings may be flood-proofed or have the first floor raised above the floodplain; the flood storage capacity must be maintained or compensated within the same section of the river.

- Consideration should be given to parking on the lower levels of the building to address the floodplain issues and to take advantages of the views above and beyond the levee.
- The easternmost portion of the site, which overlooks the Greenlawn Dam and has spectacular views of the city, should be set aside for public open space as part of the riverfront corridor.

Expected Range of Market Support

The 21 to 22-acre Greenlawn site appears to offer a good opportunity for an institutional, government, or corporate office user interested in strong visibility and central access to the region. The location is somewhat similar to the campus environment occupied by Battelle on the east bank of the river. The west bank is a somewhat less desirable location, but the visibility and access help to mitigate this fact. An alternative use would be a rental apartment community. Again, this use would derive some value from the riverfront and the views, but the site is somewhat isolated and not in the mainstream for market-rate residential development.

Mix of Uses and Sizing of Development

Under an office scenario, a lower, suburban-style density of perhaps 0.3 FAR would be appropriate at the site. This would suggest a development capacity of about 275,000 square feet. This is not envisioned as multi-tenant office development, however, so it is likely that a single user or two would plan the site so as to meet their own particular needs, and the density may not be related to the most efficient use of the land. In any scenario, provisions could be made to retain the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department in a new facility in this district.

Timing, Phasing, and Absorption

Greenlawn will become fairly attractive as a development opportunity when significant efforts to improve the river corridor are underway in the south reaches of the study area. This suggests that this is a moderate-term

development opportunity. As a user-driven program, absorption will occur in large chunks, but finding users may take some time.

Implementation Strategy

This project would be expected to follow a similar pattern as those described above: the City of Columbus Department of Trade and Development, along with the RCC, has chief responsibility for “packaging” the development opportunity. This would not necessarily require site clearance or demolition in advance of recruiting a developer.

The project will become marketable, in our view, only after the early stages of riverfront revitalization are underway and parks and shoreline improvements are visible. As such, Greenlawn is likely a second-phase development project. At the appropriate time, the city should issue a request for proposals to developers and interested institutional and corporate office users. The public and private roles will be as they are described above for the Whittier site—the public acting as catalyst and responsible for resolving site access and major infrastructure. The private developer will be responsible for site and building development, project financing, and leasing and marketing.

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City of Columbus

Gregory S. Lashutka, Mayor

Richard Browning, Chief of Staff

Ralph Smithers, Executive Assistant

Columbus City Council

Michael Coleman, President

Jeannette Bradley, Member of Council

Matthew Habash, Member of Council

John Kennedy, Member of Council

Maryellen O'Shaughnessy, Member of Council

Richard Sensenbrenner, Member of Council

Les Wright, Member of Council

David Bush, Manager, Legislative Research Office

Pete Cass, Economic Development Coordinator

Franklin County Commission

Arlene Shoemaker, Commissioner, President

Dorothy Teater, Commissioner

Dewey Stokes, Commissioner

Guy Whorley, County Administrator

Franklin County Metro Parks

Robert H. Jeffrey, Commissioner

Ellen Tripp, Commissioner

William C. Wolfe, Jr., Commissioner

John O'Meara, Director-Secretary

Riverfront Commons Corporation

Doug Borrer, Trustee, Chairman
Julia F. Johnson, Trustee, Vice Chair
James Kunk, Trustee, Treasurer
Saul Seigel, Trustee, Secretary
Jim Steckel, Trustee, Vice Chair
Sally Bloomfield, Trustee
John Christie, Trustee
Don Day, Trustee
Michael Flowers, Trustee
Ted Kanatas, former Trustee
Gerald E. Mayo, former Trustee
Barbara Nicholson, Trustee
Neal Schultz, Trustee
Robert C. Skaggs, Trustee
Robert Teater, Trustee

John Dobie, staff
Cleve Ricksecker, staff
Tawny Lynn, staff
John Rosenberger, Esq., Bricker & Eckler, Legal Counsel
Lorz Communications, Public Relations

Columbus City Attorney

Janet Jackson, Esq., City Attorney
John Klein, Esq., Chief Real Estate Attorney

Columbus City Auditor

Hugh Dorrian, City Auditor

Columbus Department of Finance

Wyatt Kingseed, Director

Columbus Department of Trade and Development

George Arnold, Director
Pat Grady, Deputy Director
Ken Ferrell, Downtown Planning Manager
Paul Freedman, Senior Planner
Ken Klare, Urban Designer
Carl Klein, Information Systems Manager

Steve McClary, Planning Administrator
Jim Schimmer, Downtown Development Coordinator

Columbus Public Service Department

Tom Merritt, Director
James Musick, Chief Traffic Engineer
Dave Younger, Transportation Planning Engineer
Glen Yoder, Bridge Engineer

Columbus Public Utilities Department

James Joyce, Director
Tom Russell, Project Engineer

Columbus Recreation and Parks Department

Gary Fenton, Director
Robert Ames, Assistant Director
Alan McKnight, Parks, Planning Administrator
Mollie O'Donnell, Recreation Administrative Coordinator

Frank Casto, Commissioner
Jerome C. Gafford, Commissioner
Lynn A. Greer, Commissioner
Eugene Harper, Jr. , Commissioner
Linda Lawrence, Commissioner
Alphonso C. Montgomery, Commissioner
Robert M. Roach, Commissioner
Jerry Saunders, Commissioner
William C. Wolfe, Jr. , Commissioner

Franklin County Auditor's Office

Joseph Testa, Auditor

Franklin County Engineer

John Circle, County Engineer
Mark Sherman, Bridge Design Engineer

Greater Columbus Arts Council

Raymond J. Hanley, President

The Ohio State University

William E Kirwin, President

Jill Morelli, Assistant Vice President & University Architect

Jean Hansford, Senior Campus Planner

Paul Young, Professor of Architecture

Veterans Memorial

Fred Simon, Chairman

Richard Nolan, General Manager

Civic and Corporate Organizations

Arshot Investment Corp.

Battelle Memorial Institute

Brewery District Society

COSI

Columbus Audubon Society

Columbus Landmarks Foundation

Columbus Museum of Art

Community Shelter Board

Council of Historic Neighborhoods

Don M. Casto Companies

Chemical Abstracts

Dennison Place Association

Downtown Commission

The Edwards Companies

Feinknopf Macioce Schappa Architects

Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority

Franklinton Board of Trade

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Jerry Hammond

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Katz Interests

Kinzelman Klein

Kohr Royer Griffith

Krema Group, Ltd.

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Nationwide Insurance
NBBJ Architects
Ohio Arts Facilities Commission
Ohio Athletic Club
Ohio Department of Administrative Services
Ohio Equities
Ohio Historic Preservation Office
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Columbus Riverfront Vision Plan Consultants

Stuart Dawson, Sasaki Associates
Ken Bassett, Sasaki Associates
Alistair McIntosh, Sasaki Associates
Alan Ward, Sasaki Associates
Varoujan Hagopian, Sasaki Associates
Kathryn Madden, Sasaki Associates
Cate Oranchak, Sasaki Associates
Dan Boudreau, Sasaki Associates
Gina Ford, Sasaki Associates

Patrick Phillips, Economics Research Associates
Tom Lavash, Economics Research Associates

Keith Myers, Myers-Schmalenberger
Karen McCoy, Myers-Schmalenberger
Anne Weekes, Myers-Schmalenberger

Curtis Moody, Moody/Nolan

Bob Larimer, Moody/Nolan
Tatyana Prokofyeva, Moody/Nolan

Mark Rowland, Burgess & Niple
Pat Conroy, Burgess & Niple

Douglas Moore, Burgess & Niple