

CENTER CITY  
DEVELOPMENT PLAN  
— DOWNTOWN —

**MEMPHIS**  
TENNESSEE

VENTURI, RAUCH AND SCOTT BROWN  
KILLINGER KISE FRANKS STRAW  
ARTHUR D. LITTLE, INC.  
URBAN PARTNERS  
WILLIAMSON/AWSUMB  
TENNESSEE VALLEY CENTER  
ROBERT L. MORRIS

PLAN FOR THE  
RIVERFRONT  
SUB-AREA

**WILLIAMSON / AWSUMB**

**JANUARY 1987**

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## A CITY AND ITS RIVER

The Memphis riverfront is completely unique with its unspoiled natural amenities, its lack of industrialization, and its general accessibility and proximity to Downtown. Historically, the river and the bluffs determined the very establishment of the city at this point. Favored by the natural beauty of the river and a dramatic view to the fertile Arkansas flood plain, the Memphis riverfront offers young and old a serendipity for the senses and an easy escape to nature.

Although the original economic value of the riverfront and its hubbub of commercial activity have changed, the riverfront has, luckily, not been hardened by unsightly industrialization. Through its close physical relationship, Downtown Memphis has always been closely tied to its riverfront. The riverfront is Downtown's greatest unrealized physical asset--its main competitive edge. Still a rich, virtually unspoiled resource for the future of the city, the riverfront is a reminder of its heritage, a powerful symbol, and a link to new economic opportunity for Downtown Memphis and the entire city.

### A. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 1. Public Places, Civic Places

The Memphis riverfront is part of the Downtown "public realm"...the public sector seen in physical terms."

Within the public realm itself, a differentiation can be made between public and civic. Mark Lilla defines public places as those, like the mall, marketplace and beach, that "serve our shared but still private needs," whereas civic places are where we "share places and purposes," by virtue of sharing citizenship. In the one, he says, we share private enjoyment publicly, in the other, we act civilly.\*

This distinction between the public and the civic is an important one as it relates to the design of riverfront elements. Tom Lee Park, for instance, functions as both a public and a civic place, but at different times. It serves public needs as a field for kite-flying and river watching on a Sunday afternoon; it serves civic needs during the Sunset Symphony and the barbeque contest.

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\* "The Public Realm in Urban Design." Denise Scott Brown, 1985

Designs for riverfront elements should recognize this public/civic dichotomy; both should be accommodated. Moreover, a variety of public and civic needs should be met. Intimate public places should be provided where crisp autumn leaves crackle beneath your feet during an arm-in-arm stroll with your sweetheart; expansive public places should be provided where softballs soar and frisbees fly.

## 2. Historic Character

The river has shaped the city; it has made a place for it. Thus the river is at the crux of what Downtown Memphis is and what it wants to be. Yet the river's central role in determining the future has been eroded somewhat by decisions of the past that have moved the riverfront away from the spirit of its founders' dictum to keep it "forever public." Parking garages, the Post Office, and the Cossitt Library all vividly attest to this change.

The riverfront has been shaped by four epochs: the Promenade of the original town plat; the cobblestone wharf of the steamboat shipping era; the public works projects of the 1930's (Riverside Drive and the riverfront parks); and urban renewal, parking structures and Mud Island in the Post-war period. Each of these epochs should be recognized and accounted for in new development to ensure that its imprint remains recognizable.

Future development in the promenade should conform to the founders' vision of the original plat. Future uses should address the civic more than the public. The existing parking garages, for example, are public, not civic, in character. The Post Office was constructed as a Federal office building--civic in character, monumental in architecture. Today, its role as a branch postal station is simply public. The Cossitt Library's role has similarly changed from civic to public.

The Cobblestones is the city's historic "front door." It is where the cotton landed and took off. Memphis is a rarity among American river cities. Its waterfront has not followed the typical development of other similar cities which have seen a successive hardening at their river's edge. Because of flood control measures, industrialization and the population rise, cities have frequently lost their riverfronts. Other cities have been cut off from their river's edge by expressways.

Luckily for Memphis, the riverfront has not been compromised over the years. The bluffs took care of the flooding problem: cotton was handled at the water's edge; the space between the river and the bluffs was too narrow for heavy industry; water-related industries moved north or south of the city. During the period of urban expressway building, the riverfront was ignored because the city's growth pattern had already shifted south and east. Fortunately, during the 50's and 60's the perimeter expressway system was never completed by a section along the river.

Downtown has an absolutely unique location--one where the earliest origins of the city and its present are in close juxtaposition, without the intervening industrial and automobile patterns that reduce the level of amenity in other cities.

Today the Cobblestones' role in the public realm is that of a "commons."

This is land over which different members of the community have different rights: some to cross it, others to graze it, yet others to cultivate it or gather its brush wood. Although many pre-industrial societies have commons, modern U.S. examples are hard to find.\*

On the Cobblestones, some people park while others dock. Still others use it for industry, while tourists use it for "touring." The Cobblestones should continue to be a commons. This suggests that while it should not be used solely for parking, parking should not be altogether banished either, at least in the short-term future. Rather, an interesting agglomeration of uses should be encouraged to infuse the area with vitality.

Riverside Drive and the three riverfront parks were born out of a civic desire to stabilize the bluffs and to beautify the riverfront, which had been a garbage dump at the foot of a crumbling bluff. Accordingly, the bluff face was graded and landscaped, a winding boulevard was constructed to provide a scenic motoring experience along the mighty Mississippi, and parkland was created so that one might be able to stop and enjoy the river view. Riverside Drive was built as a civic boulevard for local use, not as a major arterial; reconstruction to stabilize the roadbed should not be required to meet state standards for a four-lane arterial, but should be guided by and designed to preserve its character as a civic boulevard.

The four riverfront parks (Confederate Park, Jefferson Davis Park, Tom Lee Park, and Mud Island) are not neighborhood public parks; they are great civic parks

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\*ibid.

with unused potential. Much of their civic potential lies in the way they can be connected to the city's urban fabric through processional routes and carefully delineated axes. These are described at greater length later in these guidelines; their implementation will entail some redesign of the parks. The redesign should cover the civic as well as the public aspects of their use.

### 3. Scale

The flowing currents of the Mississippi and the sweeping scale of the river and the Arkansas flood plain suggest that the major elements of the riverfront be developed boldly. It is important that the riverfront "read" from distant vantage points: Hernando De Soto Bridge; Ashburn Park; the top floor of skyscrapers. In this way, we build up a mind's eye image of the relation of various riverfront elements to each other which in turn helps us find our way about the riverfront by orienting ourselves to a particular landmark already found.

Conversely, this grand scale can be so overpowering that we can lose our sense of place as an individual--an uncomfortable feeling indeed. Imagine for a moment that you are alone in the center of an empty Houston Astrodome. The scale of the Memphis riverfront is far greater. Thus it is important that we provide in all our design human-scale details which can anchor a person in this vast space. Even though the cobblestone wharf is expansive, we can relate to it because it is composed of individual cobblestones about as large as a pair of footprints.

### 4. Views and Vistas

The riverfront is Memphis' treasured repository of views. Few urban areas can offer views of such unlimited distance as looking up or down the river or across the Arkansas flood plain.

There is an order to the views and vistas of the riverfront area. Approaching the river, one experiences a series of vistas. From the river and riverfront there are memorable views eastwards of the city. Views up and down the river give a true sense of the sweep of the mighty Mississippi and thus are more dramatic than views west across the river from within the city grid. Framed by buildings, these views give no feel for the river's linear character--the water we see could be a small lake.

Designers active along the riverfront should be cognizant of the views and vistas diagrammed in the Urban Design and Planning issue area report. The planting of trees along Riverside Drive and in the riverfront parks should be carefully planned with their mature size in mind to prevent eclipsing views and vistas in years to come.

Designers should walk their site and look freshly at the river, Arkansas, and the downtown skyline. Preserve the views; identify new vistas and frame them with the elements of the design.

##### 5. River's Edge--Inner Grid Linkages

For the riverfront to be a true asset to Downtown, it must be a place to be, as well as a place to look at. We must therefore make it easy to reach. The original plat placed a grid of streets oriented to the river atop the bluff, with a promenade connecting bluff top and river's edge. This historic grid's pattern of linkages to the river should be reasserted and strengthened, preserving the contrast between the regular pattern of streets and the freedom of the river and its edges.

The Riverfront Sub-Area Plan presents a connecting framework within which opportunities to reach the river are maximized and obstacles are minimized. Opportunities include: lower West Court Street (historic mule route); a new emphasis on the pathway from Court Square to Confederate Park (strengthened through redesign of Confederate Park); a new pedestrian connection to Mud Island on axis with Monroe Avenue (another historic mule route); a processional route along Beale Street connecting Church Park with Tom Lee Park; and a new pedestrian route from the National Civil Rights Center to a new Tom Lee Memorial along the Huling Avenue axis (common themes of interracial cooperation).

Pedestrians trying to move between downtown and the river encounter not only the topographical fact of the bluff but also the railroad tracks and Riverside Drive. Several measures can minimize the obstacles although some danger to pedestrians will remain. The plan proposes that the railroad's west track be removed and replaced with a paved path that at the outset would provide a dedicated north-south connector for bicycles and pedestrians. It should be designed to accommodate a future rubber-tired "people-mover" for the day when large numbers of people will want to move along the riverfront. A light rail system should not be utilized to move people through this corridor; it would negate the benefits to the pedestrians gained by

eliminating the railroad track. Pedestrian crossing points over the remaining track should be very clearly designated and paved, with the paving kept flush with the top of the railroad rails. The CCC should discuss with the railroad measures to reduce hazards to pedestrians as use of the riverfront increases.

In certain areas, such as Wagner Street between Union Avenue and Beale Street, new uses such as restaurants and housing exist side by side with older commercial uses such as warehouses and their associated loading docks and truck traffic. In the short-term future this juxtaposition of uses should be allowed to continue. It can even lend a sense of atmosphere and romance to the downtown scene. In the long term this area may lose its economic appeal as a warehouse district and other new uses will emerge. In the case of the Goldsmith's warehouse on Wagner Street, mixed use such as retail at street level with housing above would be appropriate.

Proposed improvements to Riverside Drive should be in keeping with its civic character. The section from Beale Street north to Jefferson Avenue should not be widened, in order to prevent incursion into the historic Cobblestones and to lessen the distance the pedestrian must cross. At-grade pedestrian crossings have been generally recommended at the location of existing streets. This helps reinforce the connection of the historic grid with the riverfront, as well as takes advantage of existing or proposed traffic control devices. Pedestrian crossings should be delineated by textural changes in paving. These crossings should be given further visual emphasis through the incorporation of special lighting standards which call attention to the pedestrian way, such as the flashing "Belisha Beacons" used extensively in England.

Above all, the temptation must be avoided to deal with the problem of pedestrian crossings by elevating Riverside Drive. While such a proposal might solve the vehicular-pedestrian conflicts through grade separation, the resulting visual and psychological amputation of the waterfront from the core of Downtown would be disastrous.

Pedestrian bridges over Riverside Drive are proposed only where traffic-control devices for at-grade crossings are inappropriate, such as where there is no intersecting street, or where an unusually high hazard to the pedestrian exists. Four locations have been identified: Ashburn Park (to connect the bluff top walk with the riverfront walk at the south end of the riverfront); Butler Avenue; Vance Avenue; and Confederate Park (to connect it to Jefferson Davis Park). The bridges are discussed in greater detail in the guidelines. Also a new pedestrian bridge across Beale Street is proposed as a vital link in the bluff walk.



## 6 Landscaping

Trees on the riverfront provide shade, frame views and vistas, and establish buffer zones, but careless use of planting can block views and vistas.

Wherever possible, indigenous or proven species that are hardy and maintenance-free should be selected. If exotics must be used, management provisions must be made for routine maintenance (water, fertilizer, pruning, etc.). Plantings should be appropriate to their site in terms of microclimate, intensity of use by people, mature size, etc. For example, flowers planted in the recently constructed Mid-America Mall planters will die no matter how much their automatic sprinkler runs because the microclimate on sunny summer days is inimical to their survival; crepe myrtles planted several years back in Tom Lee Park were trampled to death by the crowds during civic celebrations.

## 7 Lighting

Lighting, properly designed, can add a sparkle to Downtown. To create sparkle there must be a hierarchy of lighting. Uniform, very high intensity lighting everywhere along the riverfront is not a panacea for the issue of safety and security and can result in monotony rather than enhanced drama. Instead, a moderate ambient lighting level should be sought, sufficient for public safety, with carefully illuminated highlights of civic importance (e.g., Post Office building, Jefferson Davis statuary, etc.) to provide variety and character. A range of lighting types is indicated for different needs, from highway lighting to the floodlighting of landmarks to atmospheric glows.

The river itself provides a wonderful opportunity to animate our image of Downtown. Gently undulating river currents reflecting the carefully placed sparkling lights of floating restaurants, river's edge kiosks, bridges (including the current lighting of the Hernando DeSoto Bridge), boats, and docks can create an enchanting mid-summer night's aura. The illumination of the concrete bulwarks of Mud Island should also be considered; this would lend shape and form to what is now a rather dark hulk on the river.

Atmospheric lighting of tree canopies should be considered for appropriate civic locations, including Court Square, Confederate Park, and perhaps even selected trees along the bluff south of Beale Street above Riverside Drive.

## 8. Signage

The guidelines contained in the Urban Design issue area describe the three elements of the signing system--private, public, and civic. Signing along the riverfront will be primarily public and civic. The character of riverfront signs should be consistent with those throughout the Downtown area, yet possess its own identity.

Signs for parking in the riverfront area should be an integral part of the Downtown parking signing system and should be identical in design to the others, so as to minimize confusion. In addition, specially designed large-scale signage should be used to help animate the existing parking garages along Front Street. These signs should be large enough to help transform the entire facade to which they are applied, and should be illuminated, perhaps using neon lighting.

The civic signs should be part of the Downtown "family" of civic signs, perhaps using similar colors, sizes and/or shape. (See civic sign designs in Beale Street-Peabody Place Sub-area plan.) However, some distinguishing element should set them apart as "riverfront" signs, perhaps a distinctive curvilinear profile which imbues them with the character of the Mississippi.

Because of the historic nature of the riverfront many of its civic signs will be interpretive. A network of signs documenting the historic development of the riverfront should be created and an accompanying "walking tour" brochure might then be prepared to guide the interested visitor along the riverfront. Signs on the riverfront should give information for attractions on Mud Island.

Signs should articulate the historical reasons for the physical form of the city. The visitor should learn the reason for the extra width of West Court and Monroe Avenues (both were used by mule teams pulling cotton bales up from the wharf), or of how the Cobblestones came to be built (the stones were used as ballast by early riverboats).

## **B. GUIDELINES FOR KEY ELEMENTS**

### 1. The Cobblestones

Preservation of the historic Cobblestone wharf is of paramount importance to the character of the Memphis riverfront. Physical modifications to accommodate new uses for this "commons" area should be of a minimal and non-intrusive nature.

High on the list of priorities should be the simple restoration of the Cobblestones. The rate of deterioration is accelerating, noticeably even during the two-year duration of this planning study. During the restoration process, structural provisions should be made that will permit the paddlewheel riverboats to dock once again at Memphis' front door, rather than downstream at Edgar Point.

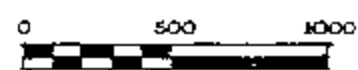
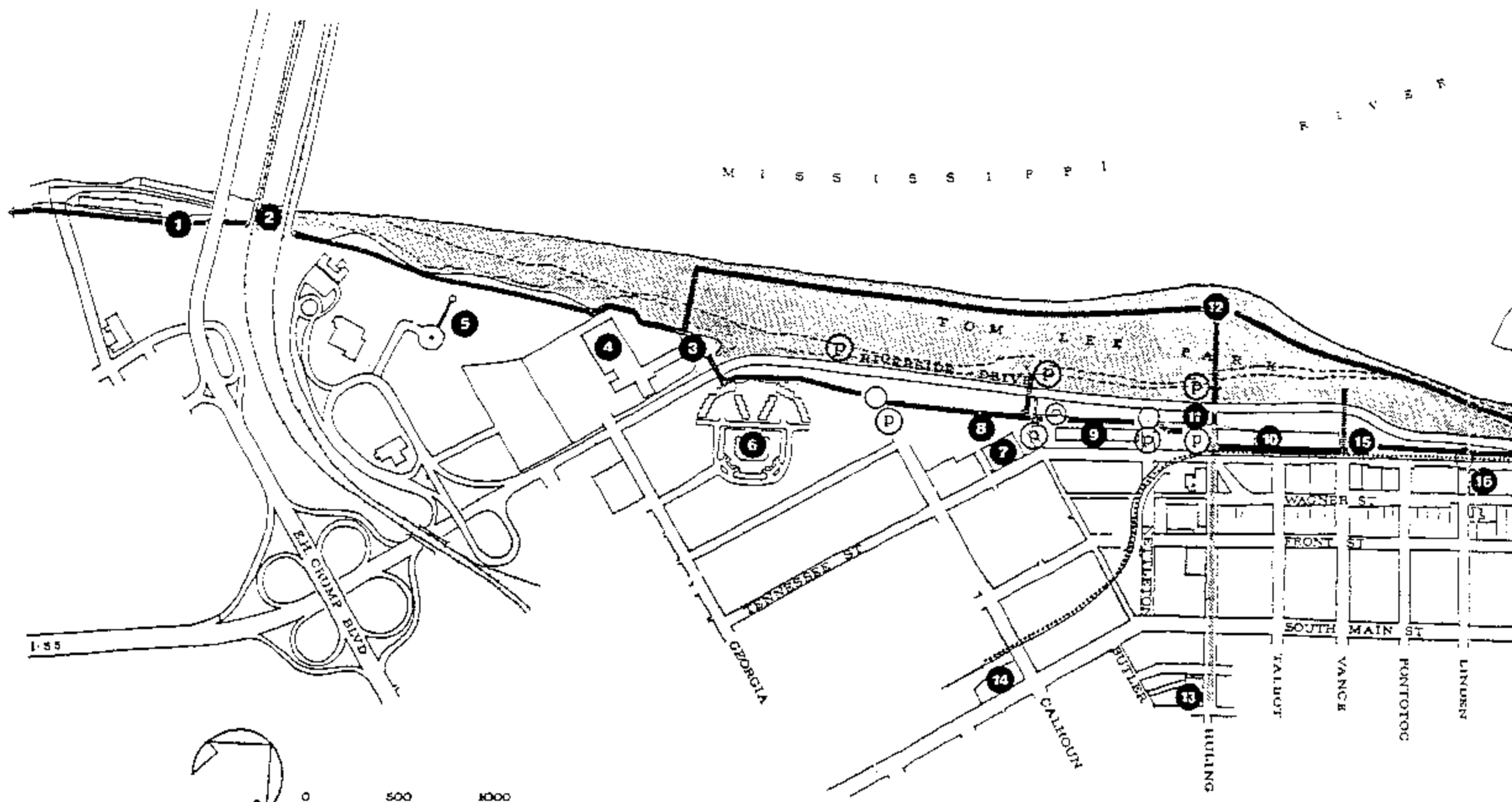
The pedestrian bridge to Mud Island should be designed to touch the Cobblestones lightly, and then soar gracefully over the Wolf River with a gossamer structure. The structure should begin at the level of Riverside Drive and clear-span the Cobblestones as they fall away. (If necessary to allow headroom below the bridge at the upper edge of the Cobblestones, the bridge may need to spring from a "pedestal" elevated slightly above the level of Riverside Drive.) A support should be located in the Wolf River just beyond the low water point, to avoid the image of a bridge left "high and dry." (See Figure A.)

Walkways should be used sparingly. Their material should be complementary to the Cobblestones, probably wood. They should be level where they parallel the river and form a section of the riverwalk. We propose that this walkway system be breached for a brief stretch, say ten feet, so pedestrians can experience the texture of this historic wharf. Sometimes in our bus-tour culture we forget to get out and touch the world.

A "history wall" should be constructed at the head of the slope to interpret the history of the riverfront wharf. It should not stretch the full length of the Cobblestones, but should be related to the pedestrian bridge to Mud Island. The surface of the wall should be smooth slate, marble, or limestone, and it should contain historic descriptions, quotations, and perhaps images engraved through a laser process into the wall's surface. (See Figure B.)

Nearby might stand a commissioned sculpture depicting a grizzled mule driver, his team of mules, and their load of cotton bales being dragged up the Cobblestones. The sculpture should be life-sized and realistic to impress upon the visitor what the Cobblestones might have been like during its heyday as a shipping wharf.

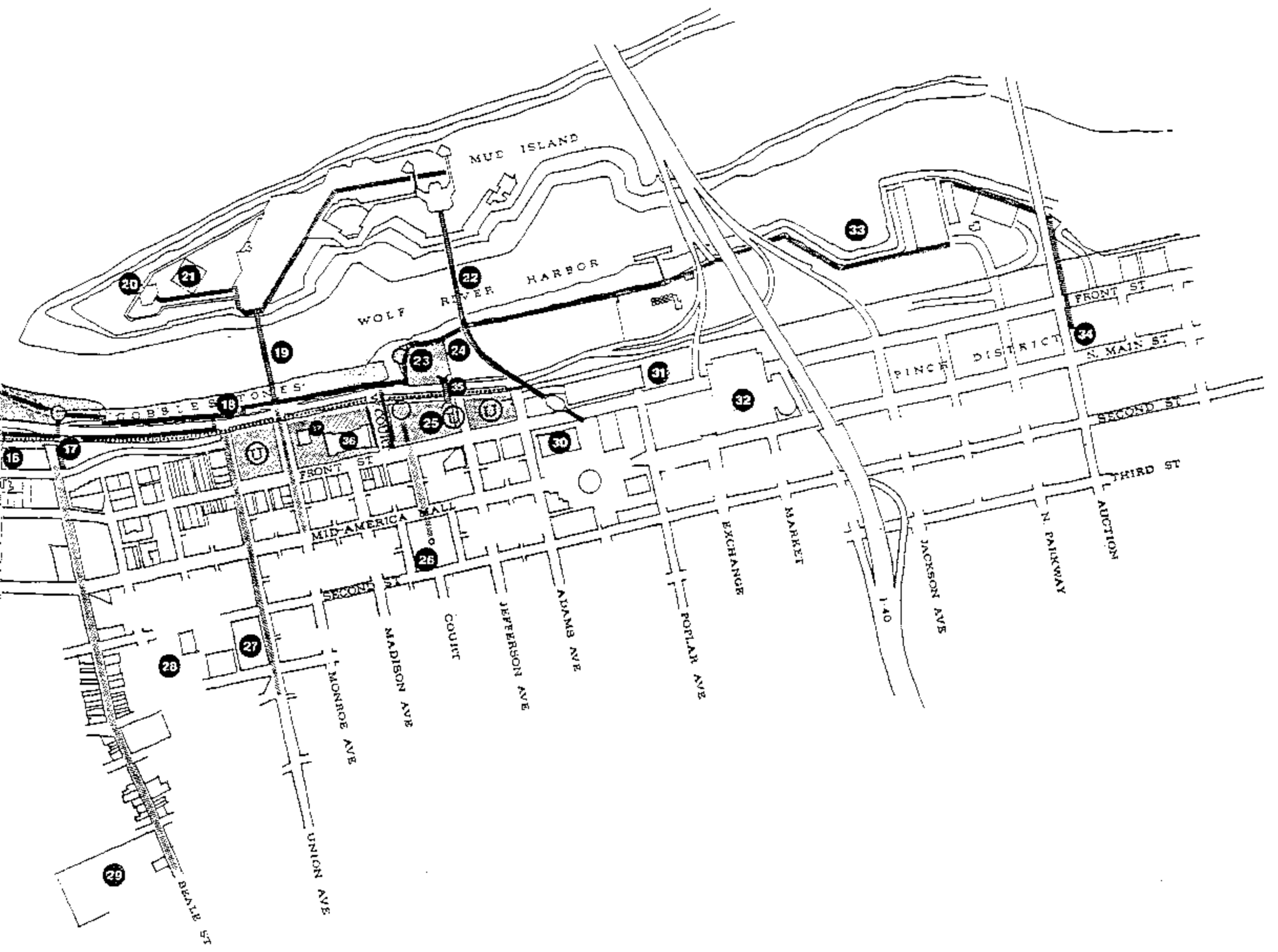
To animate the Cobblestones, its function as a wharf should be revived, with docks for large pleasure boats and floating structures which would ride the rising and falling river level. We see it as funky, diverse, and evolutionary. It could grow incrementally. It would be a little of Hong Kong in character, but all Memphis in culture. It should sparkle at night with light reflected in the river, shimmering; seafood and steak aromas should tickle your nose while waves lap and burble through the wooden slats at your feet. (Figure C)



- KEY TO PLAN**
- Dedicated pedestrian path
  - Professional Route
  - "People mover"
  - Overlook
  - Ⓟ New public parking area
  - Ⓢ Underground parking
  - ⋯ Promenade

- |                                 |                                       |                           |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 Crump Park                    | 14 Central Station                    | 27 The Peabody            |
| 2 Overlook                      | 15 New park                           | 28 Peabody Place          |
| 3 Ashburn Park                  | 16 Beale St. Landing                  | 29 Church Park            |
| 4 River Mark condominiums       | 17 Pedestrian bridge across Beale St. | 30 City Hall              |
| 5 Martyrs Park                  | 18 History Wall                       | 31 Railroad Museum        |
| 6 One Riverside Place           | 19 Pedestrian bridge                  | 32 Cook Convention Center |
| 7 Tennessee Brewery             | 20 Vietnam Veterans Memorial          | 33 New marina             |
| 8 New park                      | 21 Aquarium                           | 34 Auction Square         |
| 9 Proposed condominiums         | 22 Moorall and walkway                | 35 Pedestrian bridge      |
| 10 Condominiums                 | 23 Jefferson Davis Park               | 36 Post Office            |
| 11 Pedestrian bridge            | 24 Visitors Center                    | 37 Cassia Library         |
| 12 Tom Lee Memorial             | 25 Confederate Park                   |                           |
| 13 Lorraine Civil Rights Center | 26 Court Square                       |                           |

**SITE PLAN**  
**MEMPHIS RIVERFRONT SUBAREA**  
**MAP 1**



Foot-pedaled paddle boats and small sailboats do not belong in this area because of danger from commercial traffic. Their use is envisioned in the Wolf River Harbor marina area mentioned elsewhere in the guidelines.

Portable kiosks, on self-leveling platforms, would be placed on the Cobblestones themselves. These colorful architectural delights might be constructed of wood or canvas, and could sport flags, awnings, or anything to add a sense of the kinetic. They could be relocated during periods of high water. Their use could span a wide range--food vendors, crafts fair, etc. Again, a touch of the funky and informal would be quite appropriate.

In order to attract entrepreneurs to the waterfront and to enable them to finance new construction, the present City policy against long-term leases should be abolished.

For the short-term future, parking should be permitted to remain on this public commons, but it should be restricted to areas to the north and south ends of the Cobblestones. As the festival wharf becomes more vigorous, parking may need to be designated for its users; office workers should be provided additional spaces elsewhere as part of a comprehensive parking plan. The long-term goal should be the removal of all automobiles from the Cobblestones.

## 2. Riverside Drive and Tom Lee Park

Whether the Corps of Engineers will undertake a riverfront bank stabilization project is most uncertain at this juncture and should be carefully scrutinized by river hydrologists and morphologists. It places in question the south end of the riverfront. Our comments here are based upon the assumption that the project will proceed, and that an additional 200'-400' of fill will be placed in the river behind a massive masonry dike, as currently proposed.

Although it is regrettable that the soft quality of the river's natural edge may need to be hardened because of the need for erosion control measures, the new bank is a rich opportunity. The character of the new river edge should be elegant yet urban; hard yet curvilinear. A new quay should step down to the water with provisions for the docking of small pleasure craft, and stairs should then lead up to Tom Lee Park. The new land area provided by the Corps of Engineers' project should be designated as parkland, incorporated into a redefined and redesigned Tom Lee Park and maintained by the Memphis Park Commission.

Because Tom Lee Park serves a broad range of public and civic uses, its redesign must provide an equivalent diversity of spaces and places. Such variety will avoid the feeling of

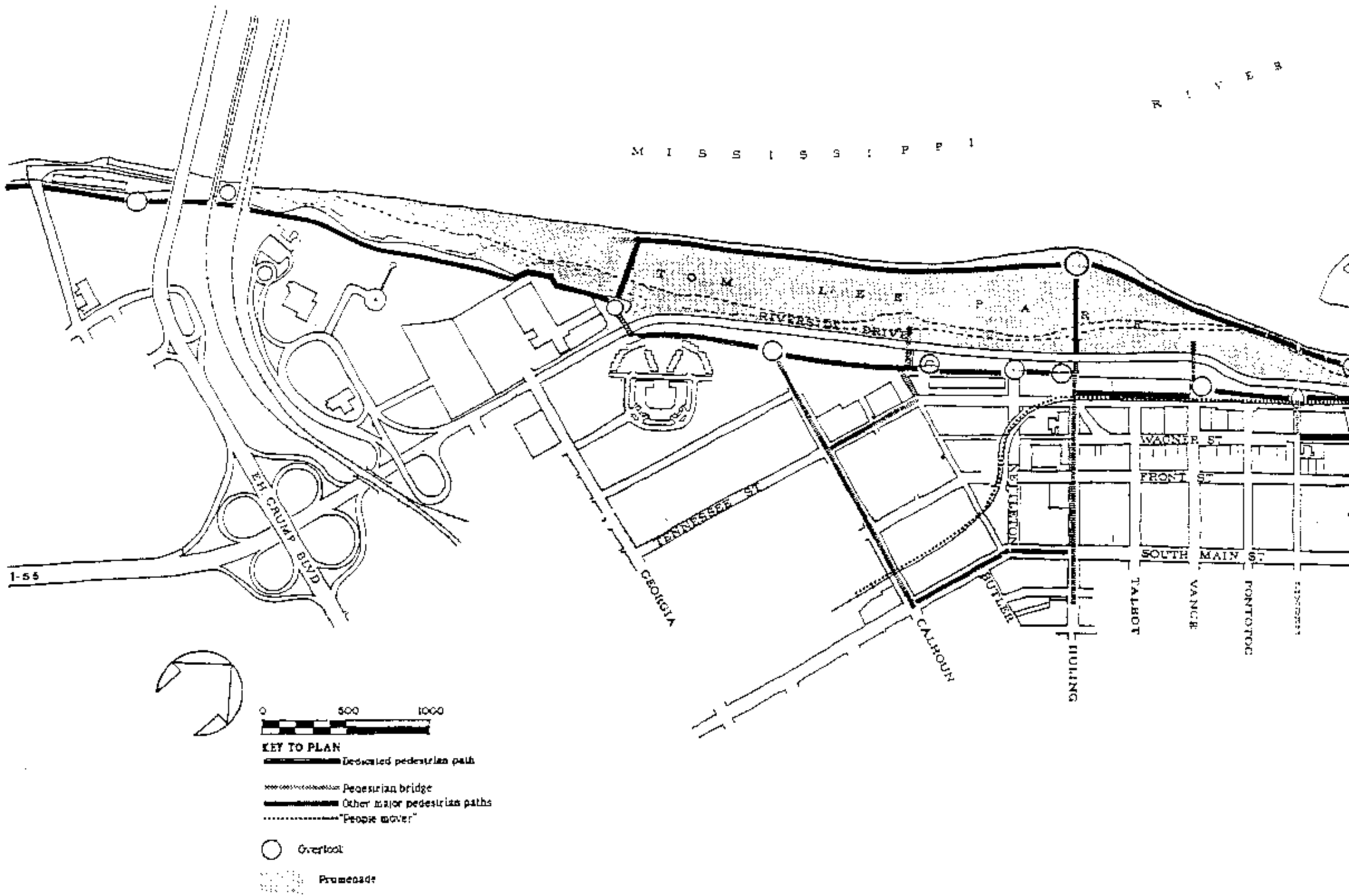
a monotonous mown lawn reminiscent of an enormous triple size football field. It should be sensitive to the issues of scale discussed earlier, and it should contain spaces amenable to intimacy as well as to grandeur.

The many civic events held in Tom Lee Park should not be removed from the park because they tax its facilities; the facilities of the park should rather be redesigned to accommodate its civic uses. The main concern seems to be the abuse of the grass surface of the park. The recommended solution is to harden up to 25% of the park with paving and designate this area for civic occasions.

The pattern and design of the paving is an especially important consideration because this area will be looked down upon from the bluff walk and overlooks, and it will be very large with the additional acreage. The paving should be patterned in such a way as to mediate the vast scale of the river and the human scale of the persons who use it. It should be pleasant to walk on as well as pretty to look at. A variety of surfaces should be used to break up the vastness and create places for a variety of activities. The paving type should match the intended uses: masonry pavers with sand joints might be appropriate in one area and concrete in another. Some paved areas may be for walking or bicycling, others for the congregation of large numbers of people. The use of "chlorophyll paving"--perforated paving blocks through which grass grows, creating a natural erosion-resistant green surface--should also be considered.

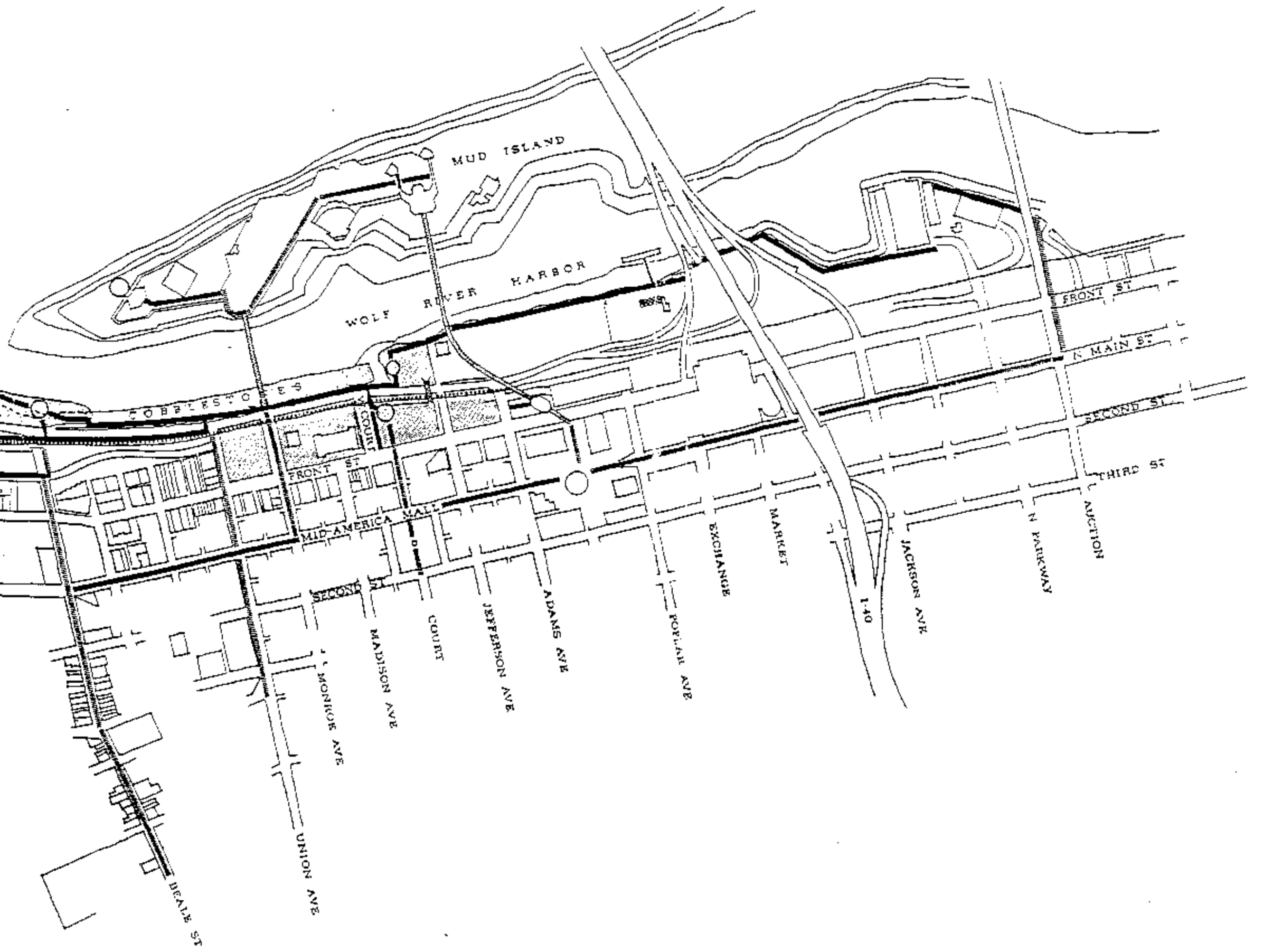
The redesign of the park should provide for a variety of public activities including picnicing, frisbee throwing, badminton, volleyball, touch football, soccer, and softball. Restrooms and one or more shaded pavilions for inclement weather should also be included. A jogging path should be provided along the river edge in concert with the continuous riverwalk (see Maps 1 and 2). Next to Riverside Drive a bicycle lane should be set aside, integrated with the new parking areas (see Maps 1 and 3). A new Tom Lee Memorial should be constructed on a subtle "bulge" in the river's edge, on axis with Huling Street with an implied link to the Lorraine Civil Rights Center (see Map 1). An at-grade pedestrian crossing of Riverside Drive with steps up the bluff would serve as a link to the overlook at the top and direct the visitor on down Huling Avenue to the Civil Rights Center.

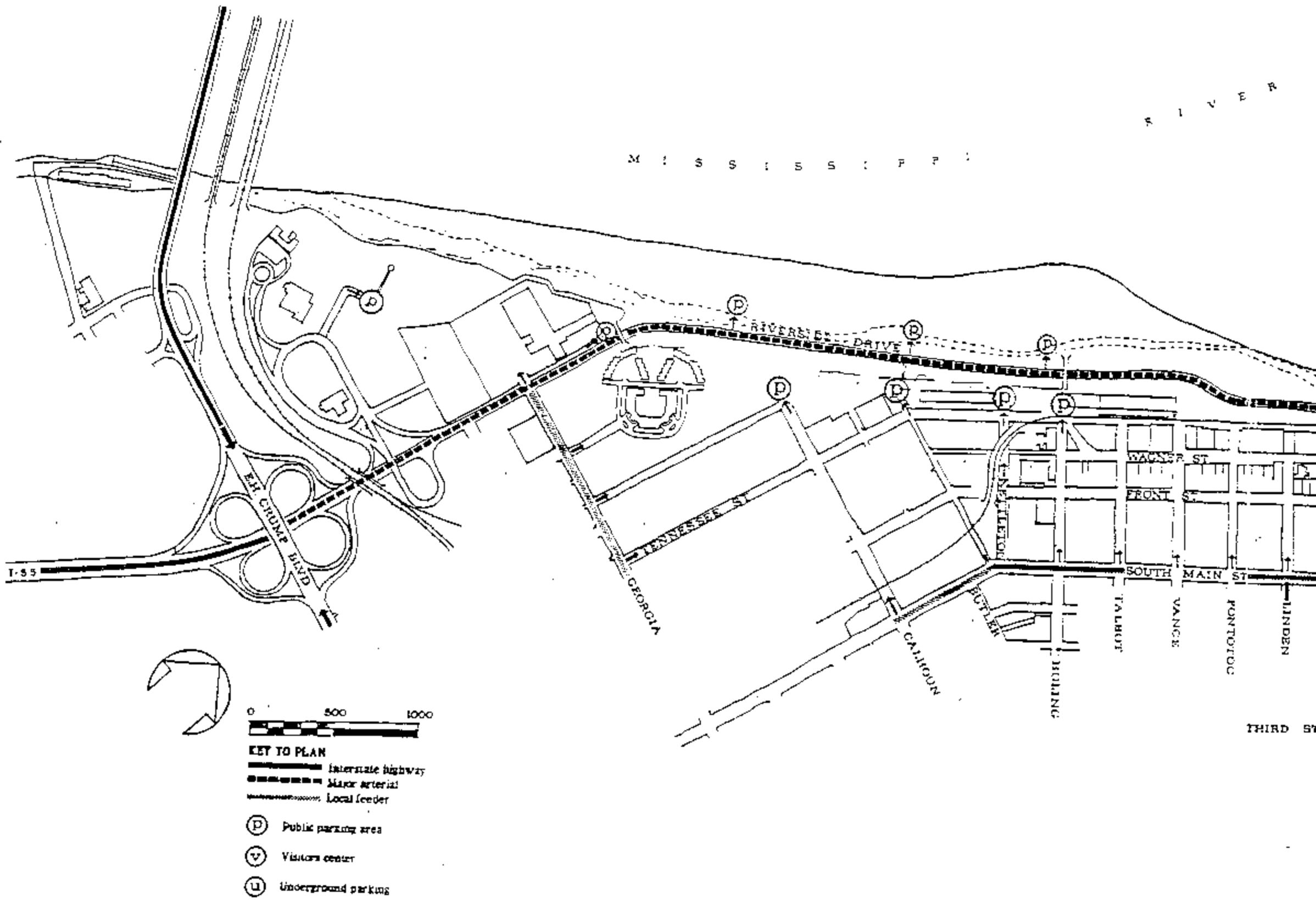
Rather than relocating the existing Tom Lee obelisk to this river's edge site, a new memorial should be commissioned, perhaps through a design competition. In addition to the commemoration of Lee's heroic act, the design should respond to its prominent site and to the theme of interracial cooperation which is shared with the Civil Rights Center.



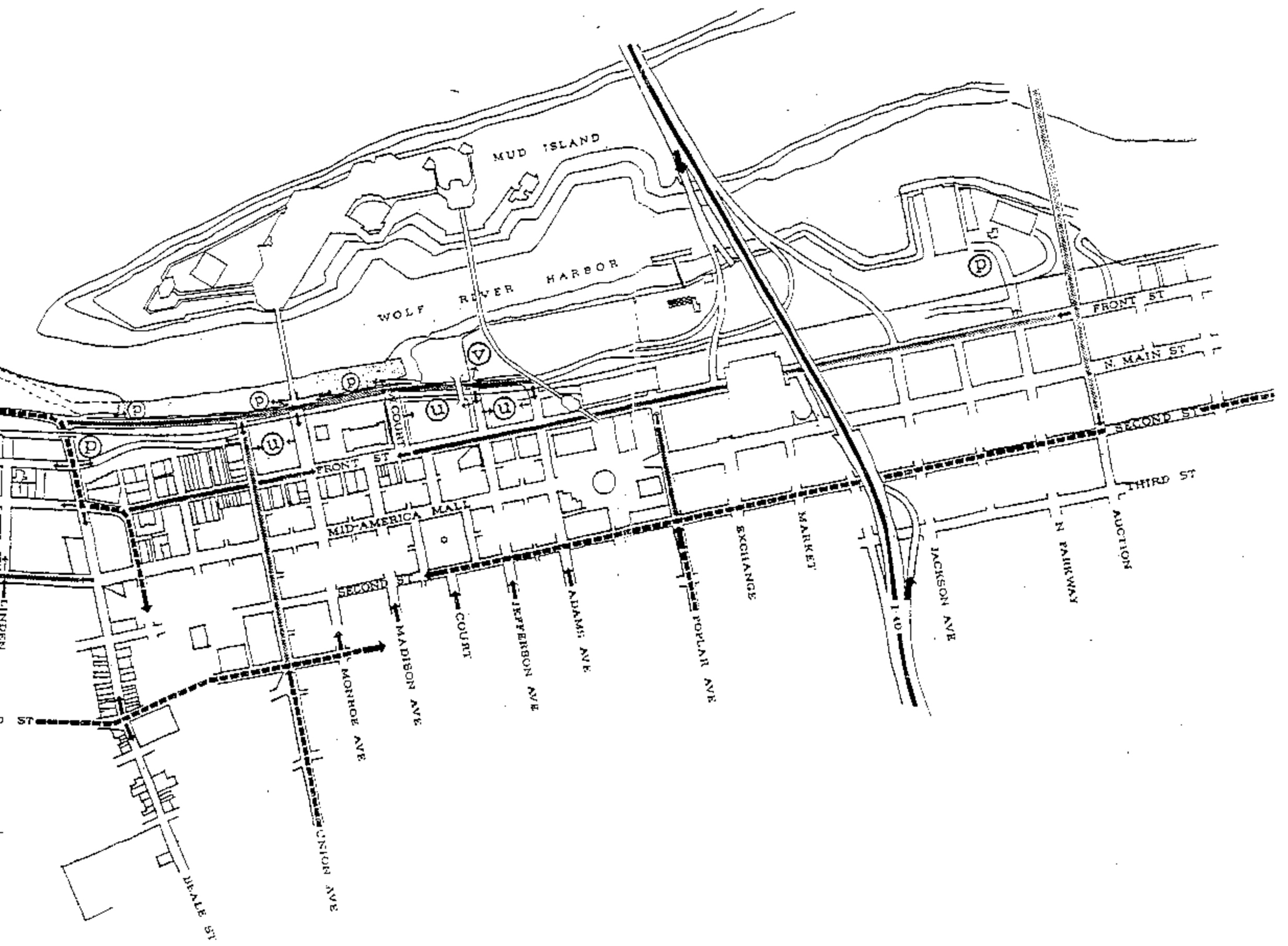
**PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION**  
 MEMPHIS RIVERFRONT SUBAREA PLAN  
 Map 2







VEHICULAR CIRCULATION - INBOUND  
 MEMPHIS RIVERFRONT SUBAREA PLAN  
 MAP 3



If the selection of Mud Island as the preferred site for the Vietnam Memorial proves not to be feasible, the first alternate choice would be to use Tom Lee Park for this purpose in lieu of a new Tom Lee Memorial.

The civic nature of a redesigned Riverside Drive has been previously discussed; how then does it fit into Tom Lee Park? Parking and pullovers should be designed at the park to accommodate not only the motorist who arrives with Tom Lee Park as a destination, but also the passing motorist who is suddenly seized by the spectacular beauty of a Mississippi River sunset. Care should be taken with the landscaping of Tom Lee Park not to block the view of Riverside Drive motorists.

South of Beale Street, Riverside Drive should be structurally stabilized and leveled to improve safety. Its width should not exceed 60 feet, consisting of four lanes of 12 feet each with a 6 to 12 foot wide landscaped central median. The existing curve immediately south of Beale Street should remain and the speed limit of 40 m.p.h. should not be increased. At the Beale Street intersection, the median should be discontinued and Riverside Drive should revert to its existing configuration.

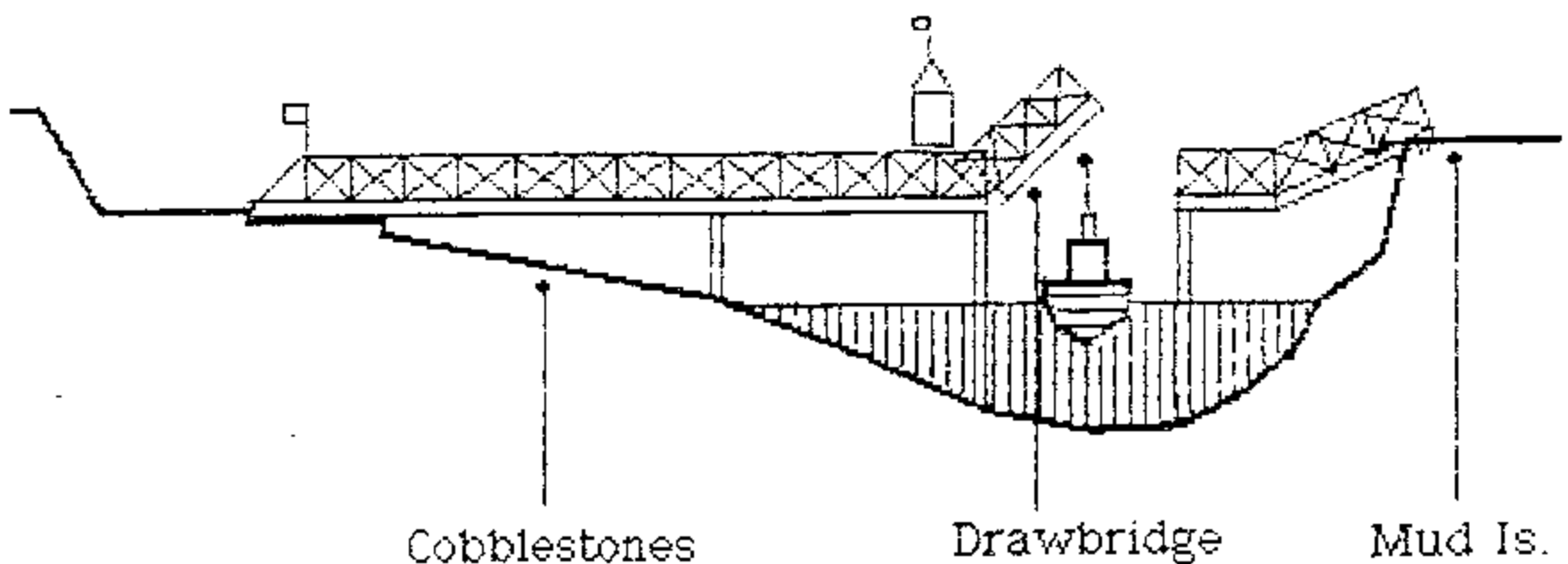
Signage and signalization should be employed to encourage northbound traffic to turn east onto Beale Street rather than continuing along Riverside Drive.

The proposed ramps connecting Interstate 40 to the north end of Riverside Drive should be abandoned in favor of the improvements to the existing arterial system recommended in the Transportation section of the Plan. Adams Avenue should remain open to both eastbound and westbound traffic.

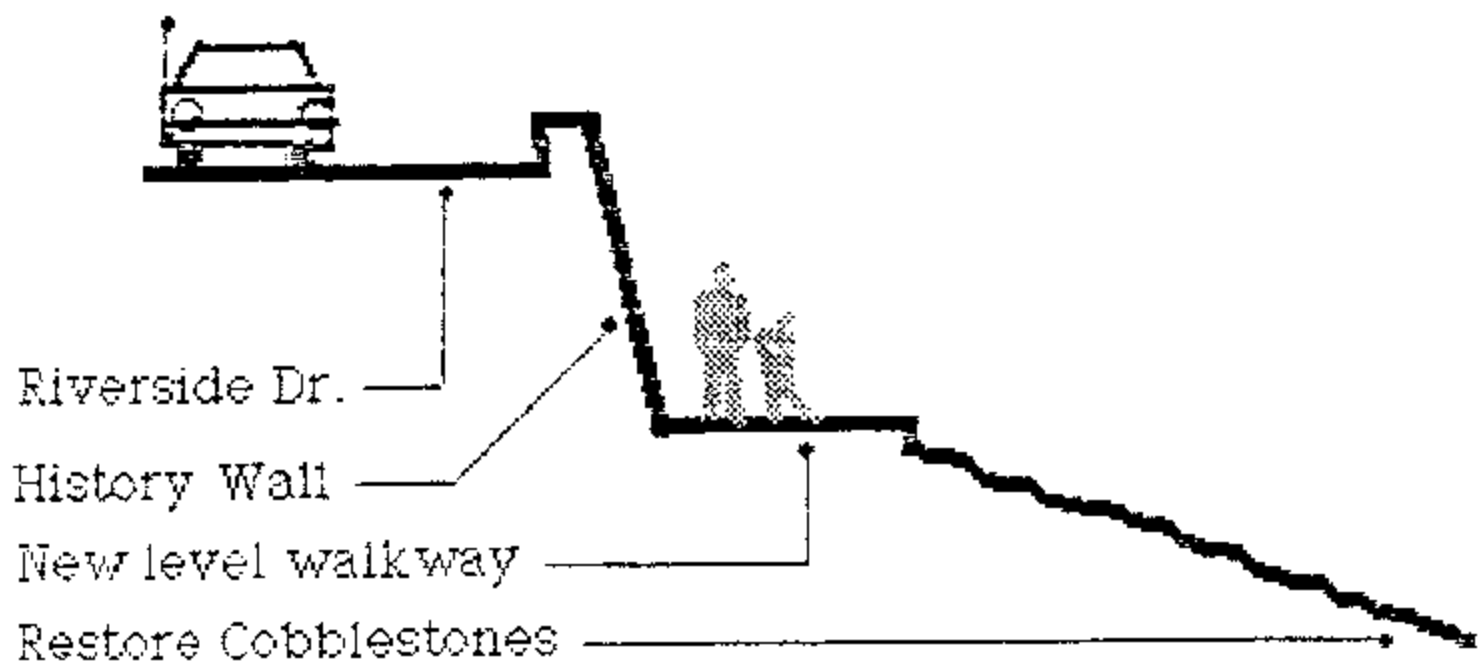
### 3. The Bluffs and the Bluff Walk

The Chickasaw Bluffs south of Beale Street are among Memphis' most valuable and striking natural resources. It is desirable to preserve free public access to the bluff-top wherever possible, consistent with appropriate and much-needed private development. To the maximum extent possible, a continuous pedestrian walkway should extend along the top of the bluff.

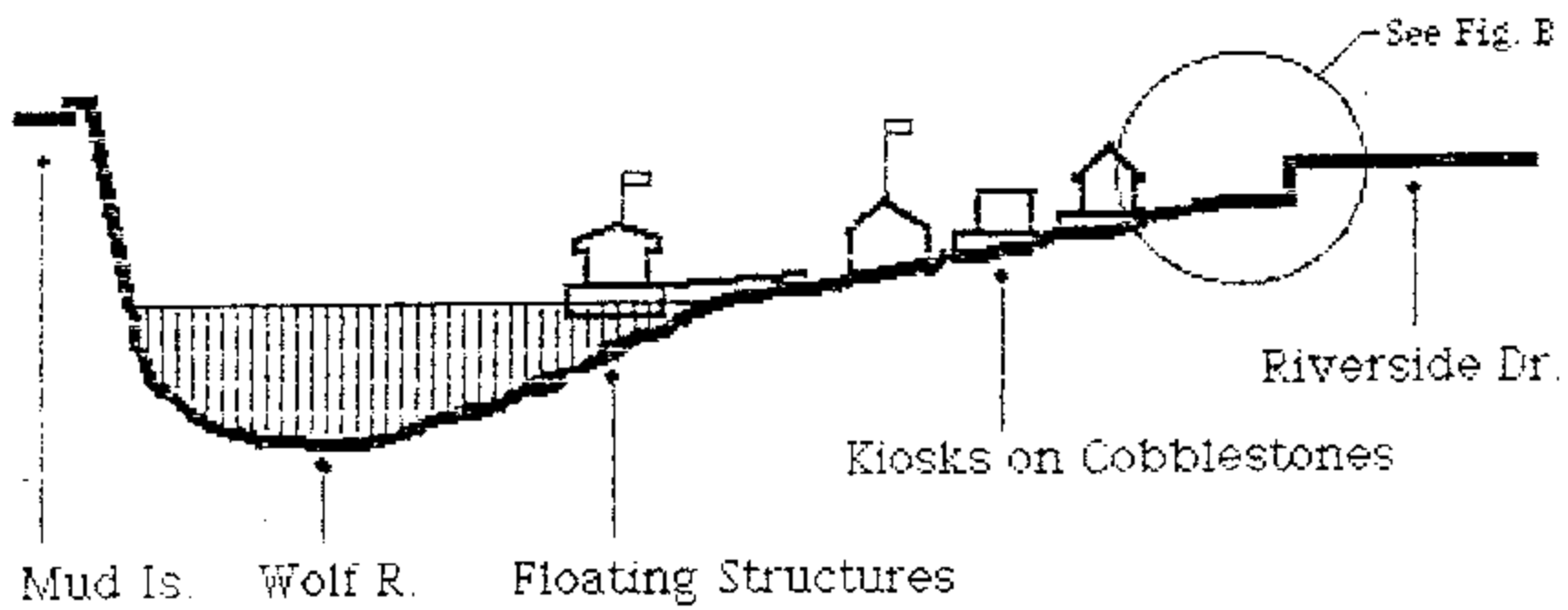
As shown in Figure D, a bluff-top walk need not be incompatible with bluff-top housing. By holding the housing back from the brow of the bluff and utilizing the second floor as the first living level, the two can coexist nicely. Second floor decks and balconies can in this way capitalize on the view while maintaining privacy and security from the public walk below. The ground level can



**FIGURE A: PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE ACROSS WOLF RIVER**  
Not to Scale

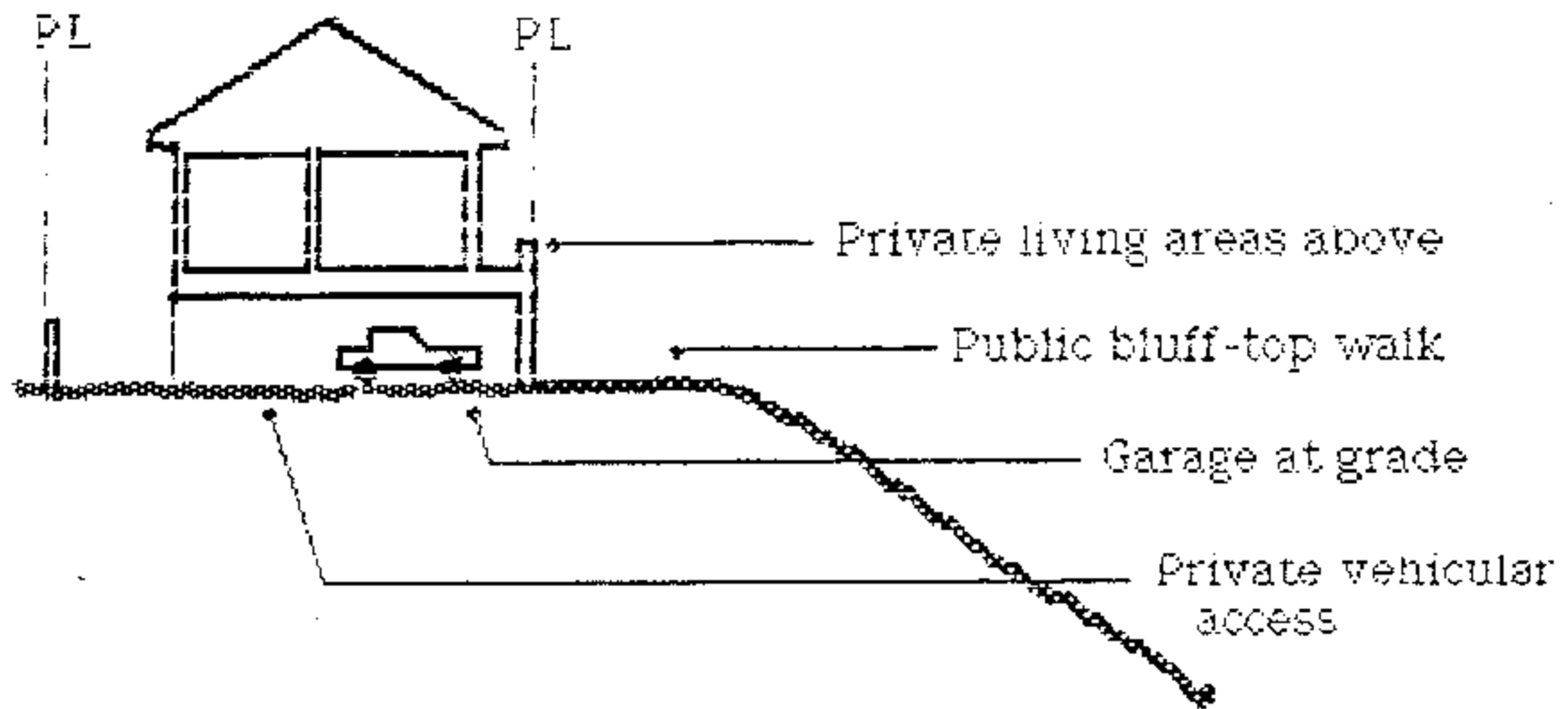


**FIGURE B: COBBLESTONES**



**FIGURE C: WOLF RIVER HARBOR**

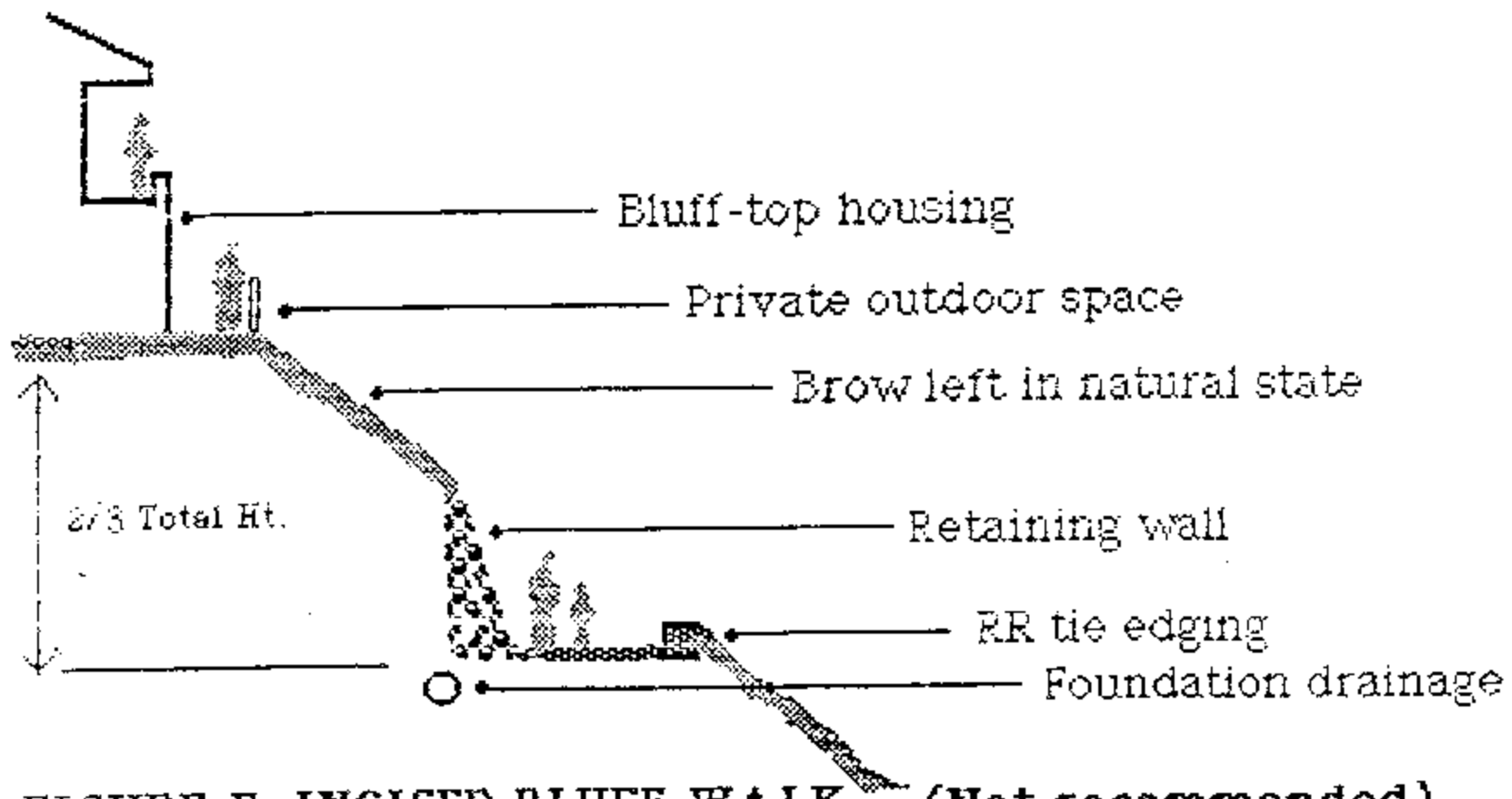
Not to Scale



**FIGURE D: BLUFF WALK WITH HOUSING**

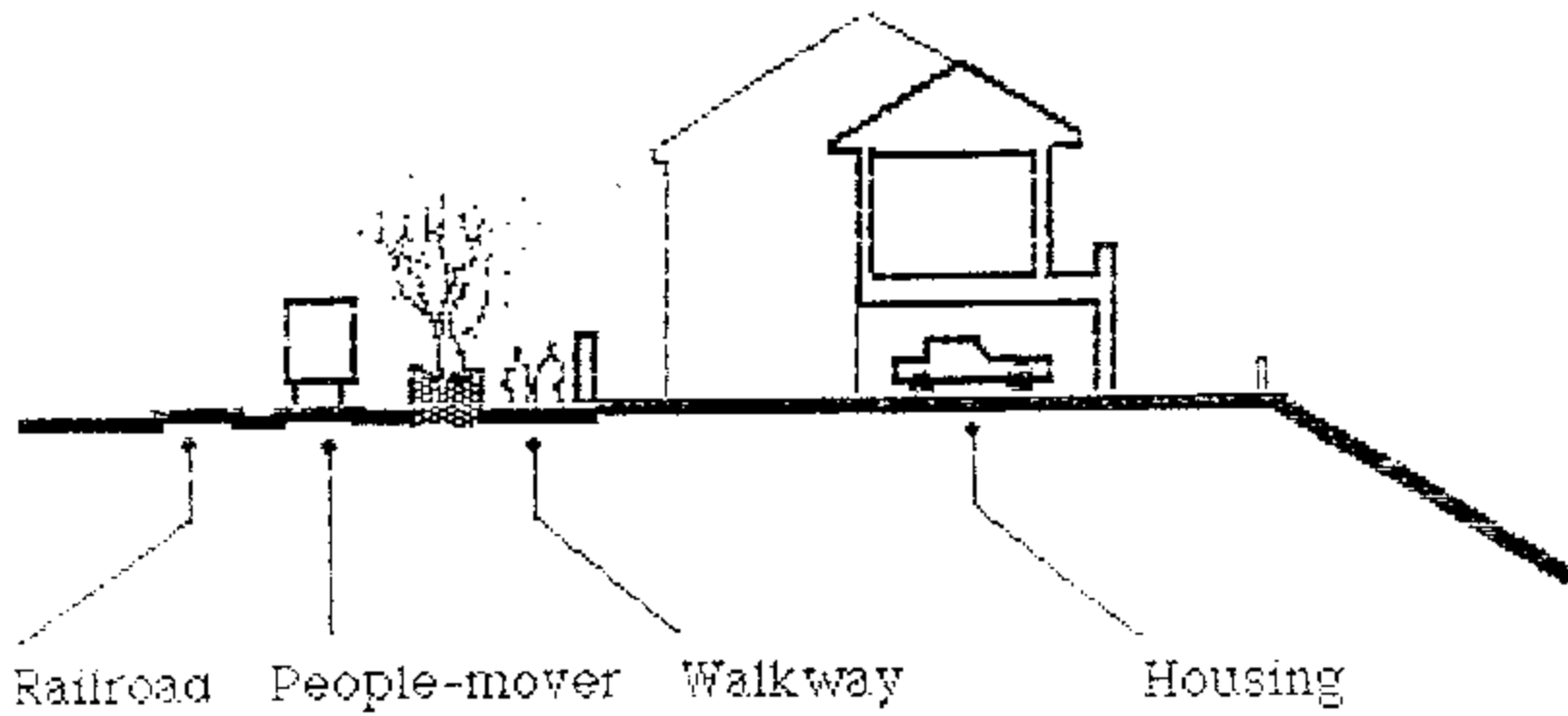
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**FIGURE E: INCISED BLUFF WALK (Not recommended)**

Not to Scale



**FIGURE F: BLUFF WALK BETWEEN HULING AND VANCE**  
Not to Scale

then be given over to service functions such as parking, laundry rooms, storage, etc.

Proposals to incise sections of this walkway into the face of the bluff should be rejected. Not only would such walkways permanently scar the bluff face as seen from the river edge below, but they could also result in the destabilization of the bluff itself. The bluffs are deceptively fragile due to their geological character. Formed of wind-borne alluvial soils known as loess, the bluffs are highly vulnerable to erosion. In the event of a severe earthquake they may prove unstable. An incised walkway will only aggravate this inherent instability and could pose a threat to bluff-top development.

The issues of erosion and seismic instability of the bluffs are crucial ones which are beyond the scope of these guidelines. Great caution should be exercised to avoid wrong action that could destroy the amenity that brings development in the first place. Before making any final plans which involve excavation or modification to the bluff face, a thorough study by a qualified soils engineer is essential. It is probable, for example, that any retaining walls will require a system of foundation drains.

If certain sections of the Bluff Walk are to be incised into the face of the bluff (see Figure E), then it is crucial that steps be taken not only to stabilize the slope against erosion, but also to avoid creating a visual scar across the bluffs as seen from the river edge below. This can be accomplished in part by the use of retaining walls which allow the growth of vegetation on their surface, and by the use of heavy timbers, cement-filled sandbags or other earthy materials to form banks, steps and curbs. The use of concrete and asphalt should be avoided.

In order to minimize erosion, preserve an appropriate separation between the public walkway and the semi-private outdoor spaces of housing on the bluff top, and to preserve the natural esthetics of the bluff top, no incised walkway should be built along the "military brow" of the bluff but should be kept at least two thirds of the way down the bluff.

The surface should be suitable for walking and jogging. Natural materials such as crushed walnut hulls or pea gravel held in place by metal edging strips will strike the right natural, park-like tone.

At frequent intervals the Bluff Walk should be seamed together with the vehicular circulation system at the new parking nodes. At these and other locations as determined by river views, overlook points should be established. These overlooks could be furnished with seating and perhaps coin-operated telescopes, and should be designed for handicapped accessibility.

As shown on Map 2, the Bluff Walk should move inland between Huling and Vance Avenues, and run between the existing Riverbluff Condominiums and the railroad. Figure F indicates the way in which a separation between the pedestrian circulation and the "people-mover" path can be achieved, using a low, wide planter-wall.

#### 4. Pedestrian Bridges

Pedestrian bridges over Riverside Drive and across the Wolf River Harbor are recommended at a number of locations. These bridges should all be thought of as members of the same family and a similar design approach should be common to all. (See Figure A and Maps 1 and 2.)

In general, these bridges should be of a skeletal design with an airy, tensile quality. Steel should be used for the spanning elements which should be designed as trusses. Some variety among the different bridges is desirable, as long as it emerges in direct response to circumstantial considerations such as span, clearance height, or spring point. Use of color and lighting should be made to give each bridge a festive character. Restrained design allusions to the existing bridges across the Mississippi could be appropriate.

While the spanning elements of the bridges should be skeletal in construction, their abutments should, by contrast, be of masonry to suggest firmly anchored foundations. Stone, brick and concrete materials should be used depending on the specific context. For example, a stone abutment rising out of the Cobblestones on the east side of the Wolf River Harbor might have a concrete counterpart on the west side at the Mud Island embankment.

In the case of the new pedestrian bridge over Beale Street, it should be possible to utilize the existing stone piers adjacent to the railroad trestle. From the north end of this bridge, stairs should descend to a pedestrian crosswalk across Riverside Drive.

The bridges across Riverside Drive should not spring from the very top of the bluff, but from the midpoint. In this way they can connect directly to any incised sections of the bluffwalk and will have less visual impact on the crest of the bluffs. The design of these bridges must not be unduly constrained by inappropriate governmental requirements such as those applying to bridges over interstate highways. If fencing is required for security, then careful attention should be paid to its design. Chain link fencing, for example, should be studiously avoided wherever possible.

## 5. Confederate Park and West Court Street

The formal visual axis already implied by the alignment of Court Square with Court Street (east of Front Street) should be extended west of Front Street through Confederate Park and on across Wolf River Harbor where it would be terminated by the mass of the Mud Island amphitheatre.

In order to accomplish this, Confederate Park should be redesigned. The statue of Jefferson Davis should be relocated along this axis as a counterpoint to the Court Square fountain, and a new bluff-top overlook point should be created at the west parapet using stone work to match the existing. As suggested in Map 4, the pedestrian pathway should jog at Front Street rather than continuing in a straight line along the visual axis. The Civil War theme of the park should be preserved and strengthened as an integral element of the city's past. The decrepit and inappropriate twentieth century artillery pieces should be removed and replaced with authentic cannons such as those employed in the Battle of Memphis. Interpretive signage and visual imagery should be provided to explain the tactics of this battle to the visitor.

The existing stairs at the southwest and northwest corners of the park should be restored and lighting should be provided. The existing stone parapet walls should also be restored. The abutment of the new pedestrian bridge across Riverside Drive should be constructed of stone to match the existing stone of these walls.

West Court Street between Front Street and Riverside Drive should be returned to its original cobblestone paving, which may well lie beneath the existing asphalt topping. The existing stone wall along the south side of the street should be enlivened with graphic images showing scenes from the days when this street was used to haul cotton from the riverfront up to Front Street. Although the street should remain open to traffic, its use as an important pedestrian gateway to the riverfront should be recognized and encouraged by the installation of a traffic signal and crosswalk at the intersection of Riverside Drive. Perhaps this cross walk could also be paved with cobblestones, thus visually demarcating the pedestrian path and exerting a "speed break" effect on traffic.

## 6. Front Street (Union Avenue north to Adams)

Front Street has great unrealized potential. Not only does it link the Orpheum, Cossitt Library, the Post Office, Civic Center, Auditorium, and Convention Center; it also affords panoramic views of the river.

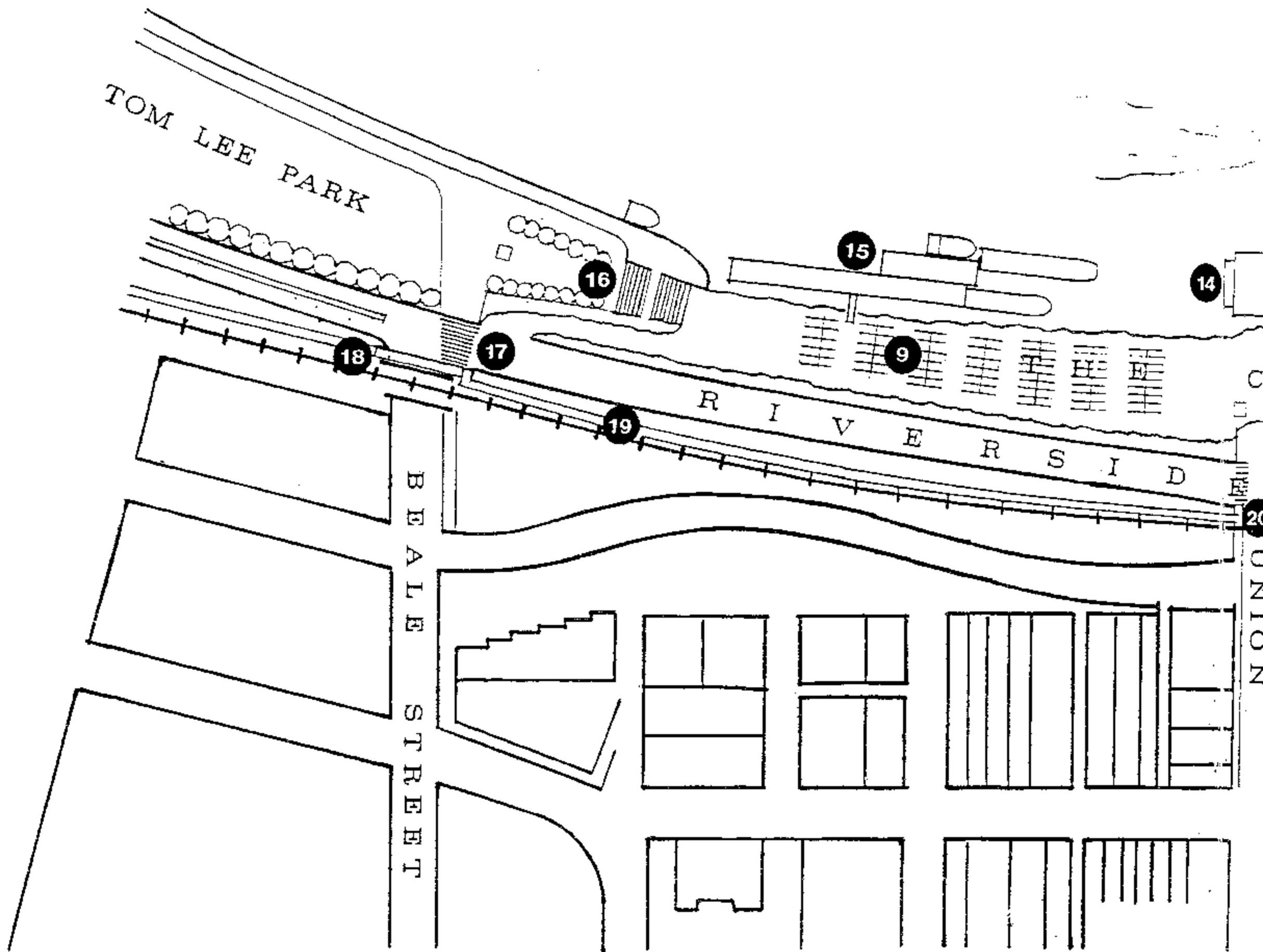
Design guidelines for Front Street need to be separated into short term and long term versions. Long term guidelines are predicated on the aspiration that it could once more become the civic treasure envisaged by the founders when they established the Promenade. Short term guidelines recognize that this long term transformation will entail major alterations and are intended to forestall future development which would conflict with the long term objectives.

In the long term the west side of Front Street should revert to a Promenade consisting of wide expanses of park-like open space with unencumbered river views. Of the present structures, only those possessing a civic character should be preserved. These include the Post Office and perhaps the surviving fragment of the original Cossitt Library. All others including the parking garages, fire station and modern addition to the Cossitt Library should be demolished as they become obsolete or begin to need major repairs.

After demolition these sites should be replanned as parks, following the precedent of Confederate Park. At the bluff edge handsome stone parapets should be constructed. Walkways should make frequent connections to front Street to encourage pedestrians to meander away from the street to experience the river views and breezes.

It is possible that the comprehensive downtown parking study recommended elsewhere may determine that there will be an intense need for parking in this area in the long term future. Should this be the case, below-grade parking should be developed beneath the new Promenade as sites become available. This new parking should not, however, be allowed to destroy the natural bluff face on the west. Vehicular entrances should be limited to east-west streets to help preserve a pedestrian orientation for Front Street. In the meantime, it may be possible to find new civic uses for portions of the parking garages. Perhaps their street levels could be used as farmers' and crafts markets or a cotton museum, thus enlivening the civic linkage system and drawing tourists up from Mud Island and the river.

In the short term no action should be taken that is inconsistent with these long term guidelines. The existing parking garages and fire station should not be expanded, nor should major capital improvements be made that would increase the value of the modern library addition. The original library building and the Post Office, on the other hand, should be preserved. As new civic uses are found for these two buildings (see the Cultural Resources section), appropriate renovations and adaptations should be made. In front of the Post Office the over-complicated maze of forgotten war memorial planters, ramps, steps, and vehicular pull-overs should be redesigned into a simple,



**KEY TO PLAN**

- 1 Morgan Keegan Block
- 2 Cross walk
- 3 Post Office
- 4 Cossitt Library
- 5 Promenade
- 6 Pedestrian Bridge
- 7 River Walk

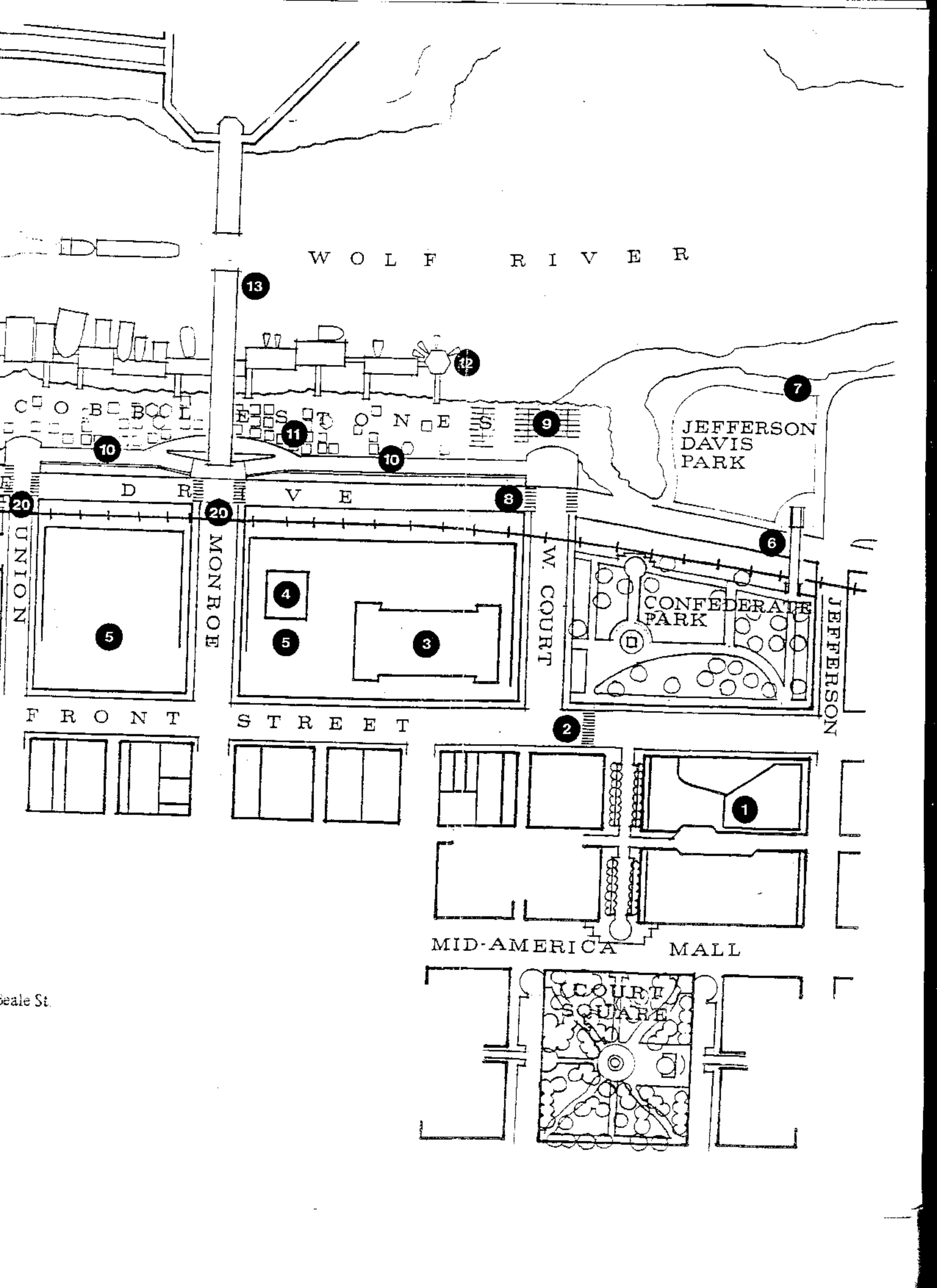
- 8 Cross walk
- 9 Parking
- 10 History Wall
- 11 Kiosks
- 12 Floating Structures
- 13 Pedestrian Drawbridge
- 14 Excursion Boat Docks

- 15 Commercial Docks
- 16 Stairs to Cobblestones
- 17 Cross walk
- 18 Pedestrian Bridge over Beale
- 19 Bluff Walk
- 20 Cross walk

**COURT SQUARE TO THE COBBLESTONES**

MEMPHIS RIVERFRONT SUBAREA

MAP 4



W O L F R I V E R

JEFFERSON  
DAVIS  
PARK

CONFEDERATE  
PARK

UNION  
MONROE  
FRONT  
STREET

W. COURT

JEFFERSON

MID-AMERICA MALL

COURT  
SQUARE

Seale St.



dignified forecourt in keeping with the neo-classical design of the building. The red granite should be replaced with marble to match the building facade.

The fountain and reflecting pool in front of the Cossitt Library should remain and should be kept clean and operating while the wire fence along the sidewalk should be replaced with a seat-height stone wall. A new stairway should be constructed from the south side of the old Cossitt Library down to the sidewalk on the north side of Monroe Avenue, thus providing a more direct route to the Cobblestones and the new pedestrian bridge to Mud Island.

The facades of the parking garages should be enlivened with large-scale signs as described in Section A.8.

The feasibility of a Front Street shuttle, similar to that proposed for the Mid-America Mall, should be explored. This shuttle would provide a link between Beale Street and the Civic Center, with stops at civic points between.

Streetscape improvements should be made with the civic character of Front Street in mind. Sidewalks and curbs should be repaired when necessary with high quality materials such as limestone aggregate concrete and granite curbs. Street trees should be planted along the west side only, thus emphasizing the street's unique "one-sidedness." Benches, seat-height walls, bus shelters, trash receptacles, lamp standards, bicycle racks, tree grates, and the like should be provided to enhance the street's pedestrian quality, but these should be designed or selected with a sense of civic dignity in mind. The cute and faddish (e.g. "riverboat" bus shelters) should be avoided and the temptation to lease advertising space on such items on Front Street should be strenuously resisted. Street furniture should be tough and sturdy to withstand the inevitable wear and tear of weather, time, and people. Whenever possible, it should evoke a sense of local color. The "alligator gar" benches in Jefferson Davis Park set an ideal precedent. (See Beale Street-Peabody Place plan, section IV, for further public improvement suggestions.)

The new Promenade will provide many sites for public art. Local sculptors should be commissioned to fill such spaces with their work. Themes relating to local history and the river should be especially encouraged.

## 7. Aquarium on Mud Island

In order to provide an additional Mud Island attraction which would generate a large number of repeat visits, a new aquarium should be constructed on the vacant site south of the "Gulf of Mexico" on axis with Union Avenue.

The aquarium should feature fresh water aquatic life forms indigenous to the Mississippi River and surrounding region, perhaps including examples of the giant catfish, gar, and turtles celebrated in the lore of the river.

Architecturally, the aquarium should employ the forms and materials of the other Mud Island structures. A high, glazed canopy above a rooftop observation deck, which would reflect sunlight should be considered. In scale the structure should possess sufficient monumentality to claim for itself an important place on the city skyline seen from the west. From the east it should serve to terminate the vista along Union Avenue and to help draw visitors from the hotel district to the riverfront, and then on across Wolf River Harbor on the new pedestrian bridge.

#### 8. Vietnam Memorial

The Vietnam Memorial, to be designed through a national competition, should be sited at the southern tip of Mud Island. The design must be sensitive to this powerful, unique site as well as to the meaning of the memorial as a civic symbol. While the memorial should engender a respectful, reflective atmosphere, it should not be funereal or too somber. There is nothing wrong with a complex juxtaposition of activities around the memorial ranging from sober meditation to picnicing.

Should the Mud Island site prove unacceptable, alternative sites may need to be considered. Possibilities, listed in order of preference, include Tom Lee Park or a bluff-top site at Huling Avenue or Vance Avenue.

#### 9. Wolf River Harbor (Monorail north to Auction)

This section of the harbor should be developed for increased use by recreational small craft. Beginning with the removal of rusting barge hulks, the harbor should be cleaned up to render it a more attractive place. Immediately north of Interstate 40 a new marina should be created on the eastern shore. Day sailboats, rowboats, and foot-powered paddle-boats should be offered for hire. (The paddle-boats should be restricted to a small, protected area safe from potential danger from larger powered craft.)