

Portland River District Park System Urban Design Framework Study

Portland Parks and Recreation
Peter Walker and Partners Landscape Architects
Opsis Architecture

January 16, 2001



View of River District from Centennial Mills Complex

Portland River District System Concept

The framework design for the River District Parks builds upon the Tanner Creek Park and Water Feature Steering Committee Report of October, 1998. This document sets forth in detail the location, goals, and preliminary program for the open space network in this new neighborhood. The purpose of this study is to set in place physical recommendations which not only address the planning objectives in meaningful and memorable ways, but which also generate a high level of community and civic support, not only to implement the design concepts, but more importantly to foster the recognition that the River District will emerge as a great urban neighborhood.

The Framework Plan:

Creates a strong and poetic metaphor of historic Tanner Creek. It addresses the deeper meanings of the natural cycle of water collection and storage, the visual relationship between water and land, and the natural and social life that they support.

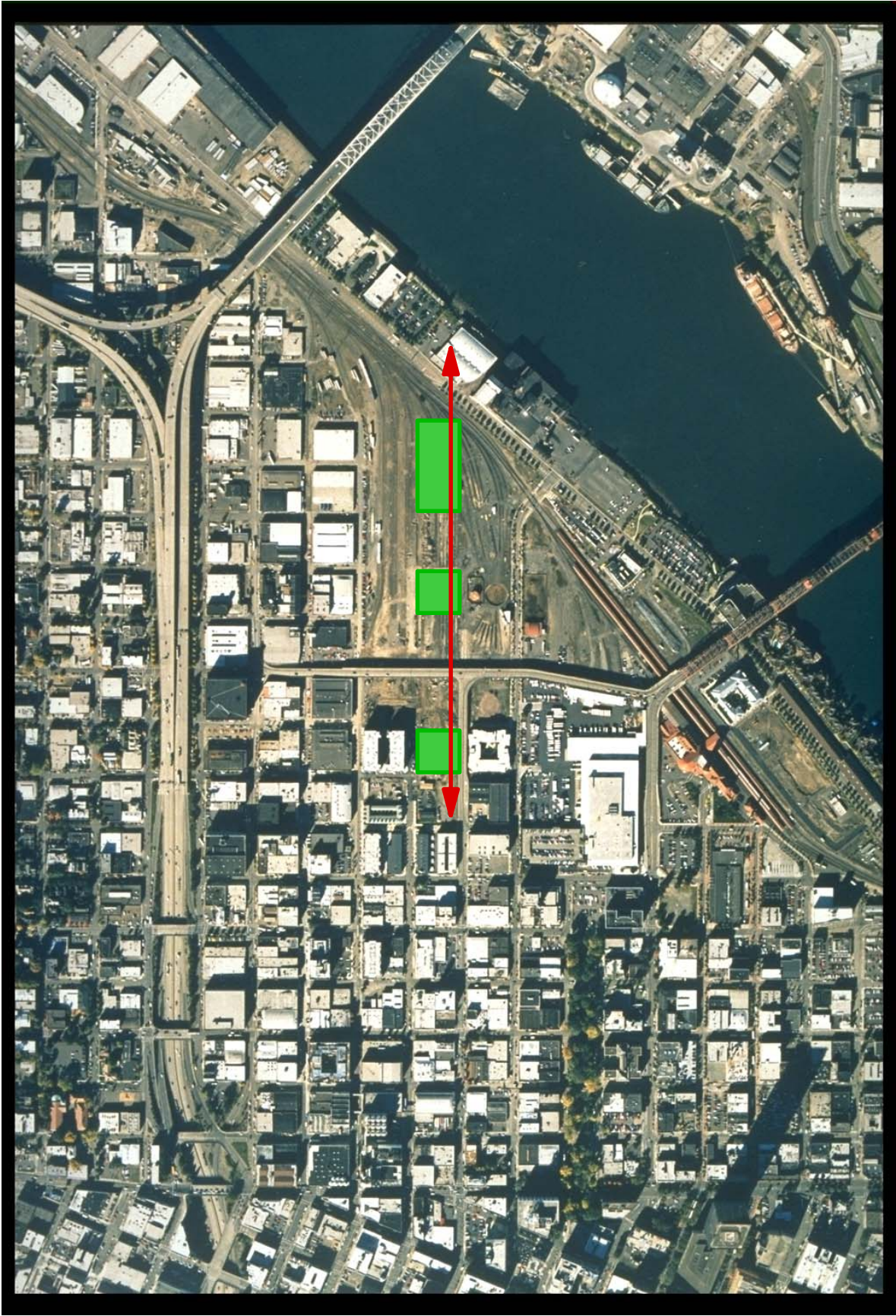
Provides a great variety of spaces, both in terms of use and scale.

Reaches out to promote a synergy between civic and private development initiatives.

Establishes strong, guiding principles to promote a sense of place. The plan relies on simple elements which are both common and unique to the city.



View of Existing City Edge from Lovejoy Ramp



The Public and City Process

The urban design process incorporated substantial community, developer, and city input. A project steering committee was formed to guide and ultimately endorse the design. Members of the Committee included:

Neilson Abeel, Pearl District Neighborhood Association
Bruce Allen, Portland Development Commission
Christine Clark, Regional Arts and Culture Council
Steve Pinger, Pearl District Neighborhood Association
Zari Santner, Portland Parks and Recreation
Tiffany Sweitzer, Hoyt Street Properties

Assisting the Steering Committee and design team were Kurt Lango, project manager for Portland Parks and Recreation, and John Southgate, project manager for the Portland Development Commission. Two public workshops were held to solicit input into the design process. The workshops were both well attended, with close to 100 people at each. The steering committee meetings were also open to the public, with many neighbors of the Parks attending these meetings and providing guidance to the design process. Issues important to the community as reflected in the framework plan include the following:

- neighborhood identity and image
- general use of the parks at the neighborhood level
- dominance of softscape
- street parking

The urban framework proposal also underwent extensive city inter-departmental review and coordination between Portland Parks and Recreation, Portland Development Commission, the Portland Department of Transportation and the Regional Arts and Culture Council on issues relative to the boardwalk, parking relocation, acquisition of the Centennial Mill property and the role of Public Art in the project. The framework plan has been strengthened from a high level of support from community, city agency and private development interest groups.

Program for the River District Parks

The program for the Parks is straightforward:

First and foremost, the Parks are neighborhood parks, and provide identity and form for a community which is being constructed from the ground up.

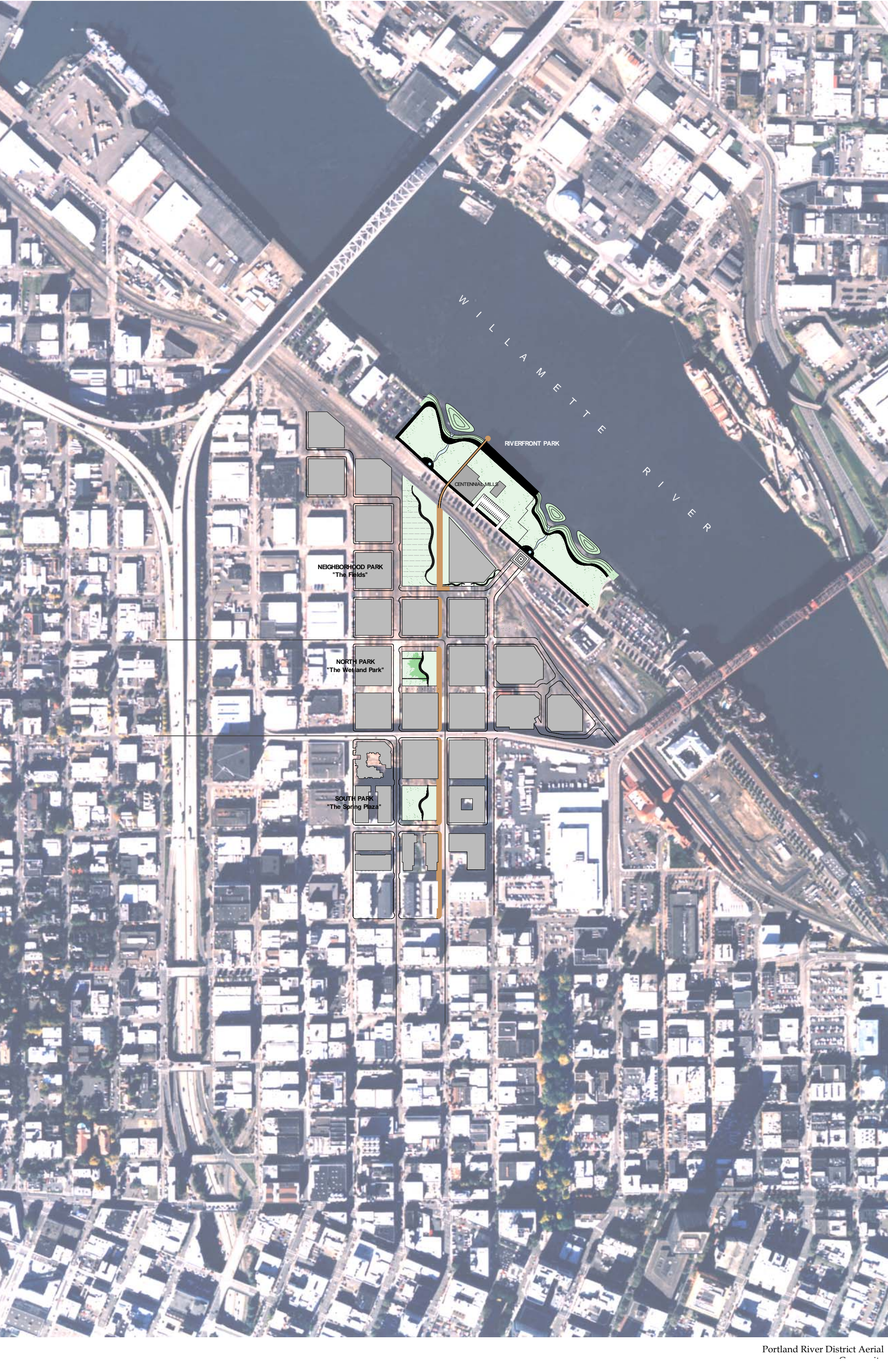
The Parks should enhance and foster retail opportunities on the ground level of the adjacent structures.

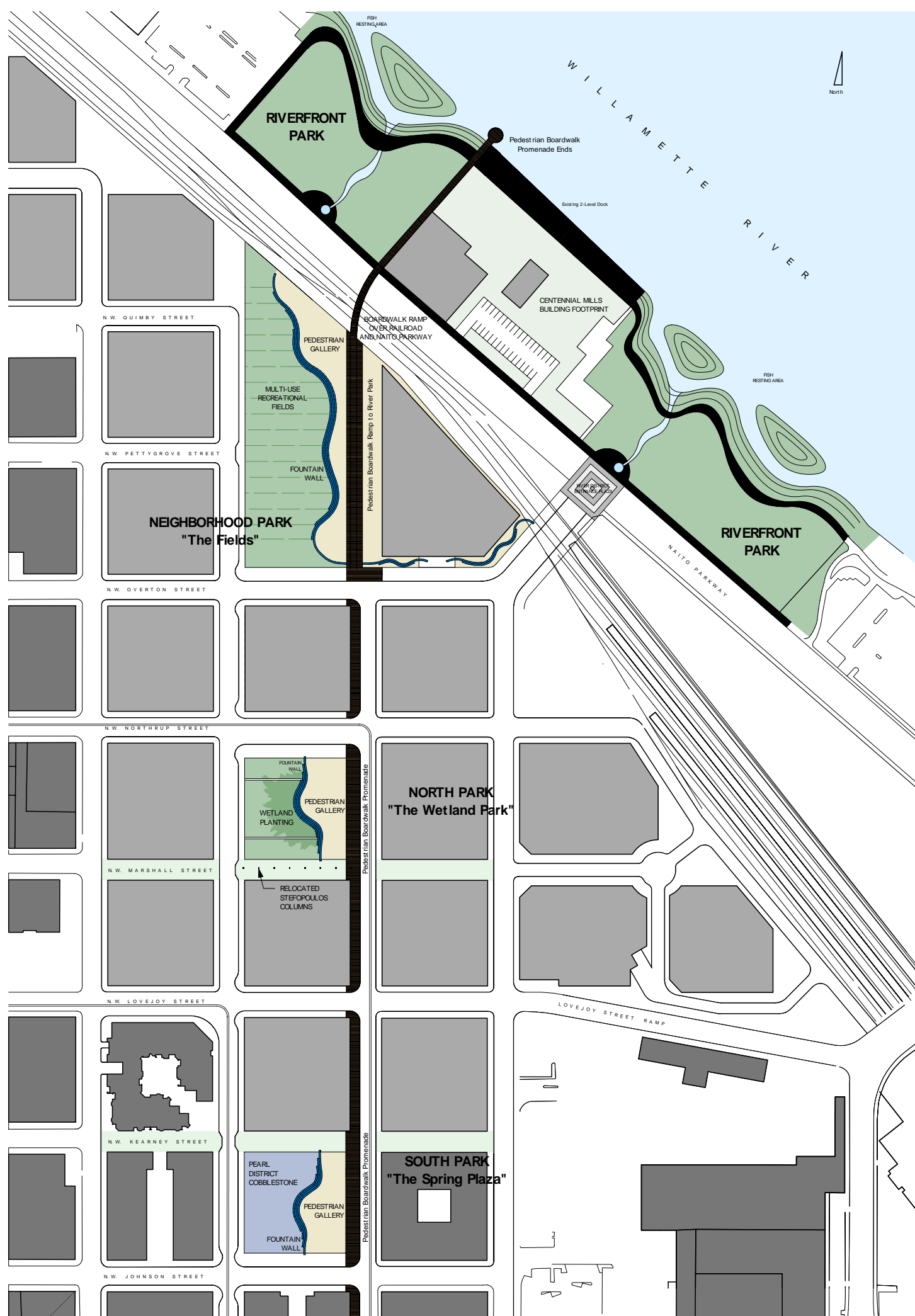
The Parks should provide a venue for Arts community. The artist-based legacy of the Pearl District and proximity of both the Pacific Northwest College of Art and the Portland Institute of Contemporary Art will enrich the life of the River District Neighborhood.

Flexibility and variety of use are important. Passive recreation, limited active recreation (no defined play fields) and performance should be accommodated - particularly in the first park.

Provide creative incorporation of water and linkage to a riverfront park network.

The park system framework must address the relocation of the Stefopoulos murals.





Description of the Scheme:

The intent of the framework plan is to have the individual parks impart a distinct character to its adjacent neighborhood, as well as cumulatively provide an overall image to the entire River District and the city as a whole. It is important that each piece of the composition be identifiable and memorable, both district and city-side, to ensure its long-term stewardship and maintenance.

The plan takes cues from both the natural systems and culture of the site and the region. Earth, forest, and water elements interface with agriculture, the past industrial use of the site and the pedestrian scale of Portland's urban core.

Three constant elements and four variable elements are the key to the urban design framework plan:

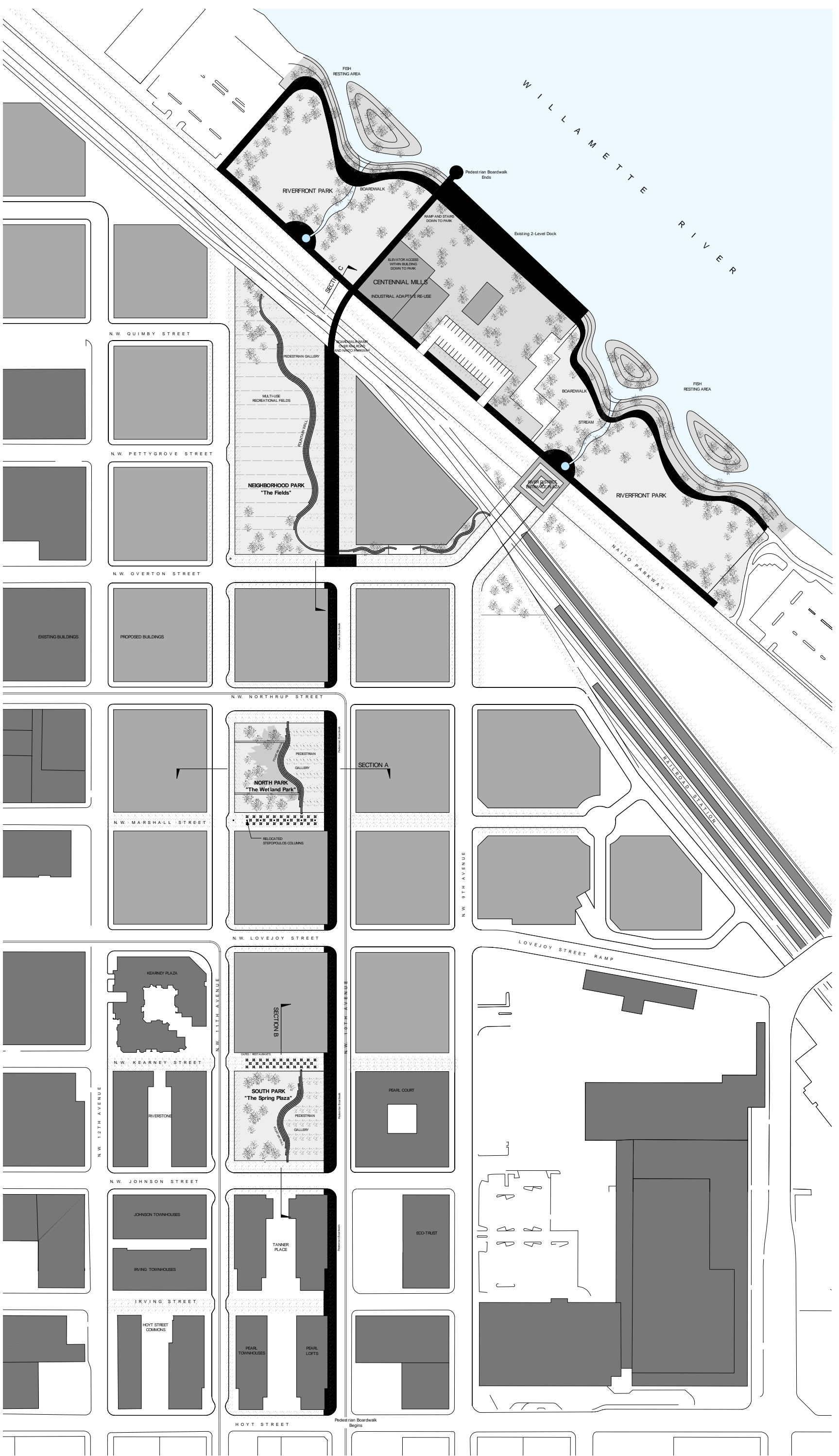
Constant elements occur at each of the Parks and extend to private development:

The Boardwalk
The Stone Aquifer
The Pedestrian Gallery

Variable elements define the individuality of the Parks:

The Spring
The Wetlands
The Fields
The Riverfront

The spring, the wetlands, the fields and the riverfront are linked together by the **Boardwalk**, the **Pedestrian Gallery** and the **Stone Aquifer** as beads on a string to be viewed, used and appreciated both singularly and as a linear composition.



Scheme One

**River District Open Space Concept Plan
Portland, Oregon**

Portland Parks and Recreation
Peter Walker and Partners Landscape Architects
Opsis Architecture

North

Scale 1" = 100'-0"

July 15, 1999



Battery Park City, New York



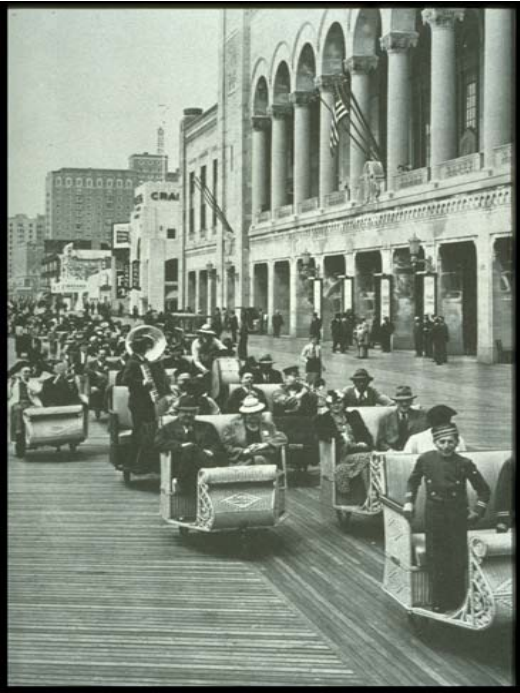
Pier 39, San Francisco



Charlston Navy Yard, Boston



Wood is Commonly Used at Waterfront Edges



Atlantic City Boardwalk

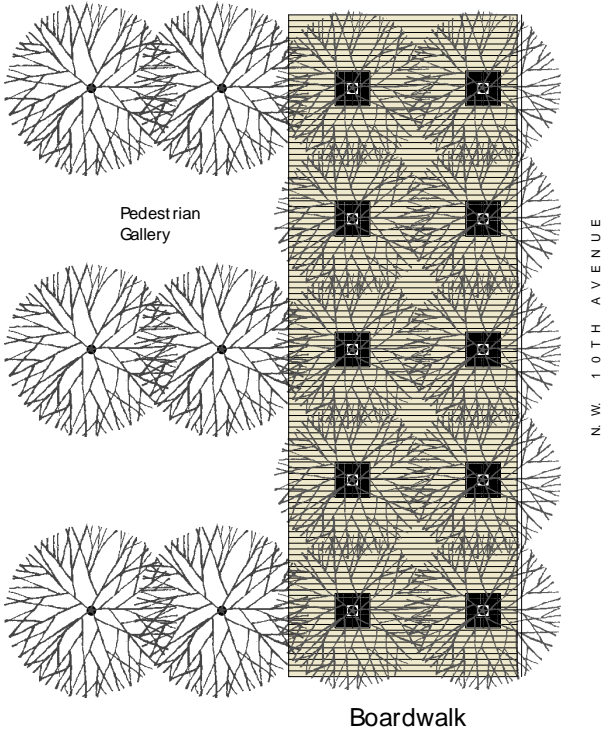


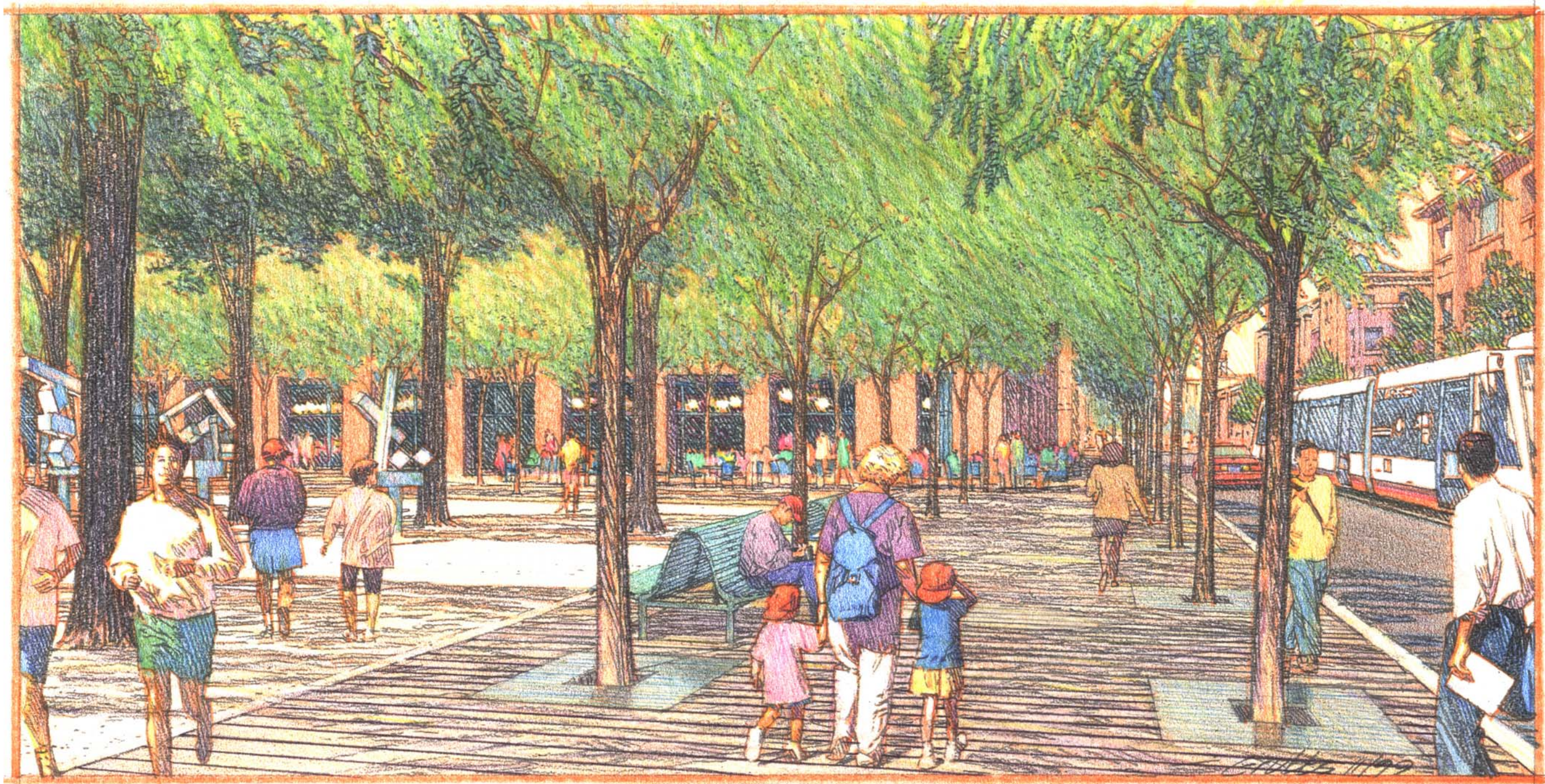
Boardwalk Ramp Experience

The Boardwalk

The Boardwalk signifies Portland’s industrial past along the Willamette River, vestiges of which still exist in the Pearl District. Beyond linking adjacent retail and park uses, the boardwalk will be a core element of the River District neighborhood. This is a continuous wood-plank walkway replacing the west sidewalk and parking lane of NW 10th Street. It begins at the southern most park at Johnson Street and extends northerly to the Fields (neighborhood park). At this point, a gentle, accessible incline of the boardwalk begins, ramping up to cross the railroad tracks and Naito Parkway and ultimately connecting to the renewed Centennial Mills Building Complex (at the second or third floor), recently obtained by the city. Accessibility to the Riverfront and back to grade will be provided within the Mill building. The boardwalk extends past the building at the upper level and terminates as a major promontory, high above the riverbank.

Along retail blocks the boardwalk is 20 feet wide, with a single line of trees at street edge - allowing sufficient unobstructed width for the spill-out of retail activities and café seating associated with the storefronts. Honeylocust has been selected as the street tree along the boardwalk as its open branching habit and fine leaf pattern will maximize the extent of light and air penetration through the tree canopy in response to Portland’s damp climate. The timber materials will be from sustainable sources. Adjacent to park blocks, the boardwalk expands to 28 feet incorporating a second row of street trees and functioning as a "porch" to the Pedestrian Gallery. Here, vendor carts will contribute to retail activities and provide amenity, security and interest to the Parks, helping to establish the boardwalk as "the" place in the neighborhood.







Aquifer Water Fall



Fog Wall



Articulated Stone



Darling Harbor, Sydney



Rusticated Stone



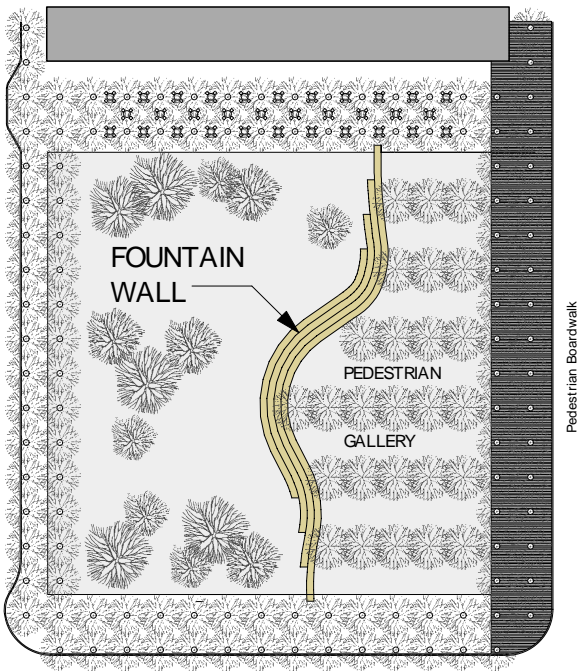
Linear Walls

The Stone Aquifer

The stone aquifer is a continuous organizing element for the varying expressions of nature and water which occur within the linked parks. The aquifer's naturalistic construction of cleft stone represents the primordial earth below the surface, thrusting up to be the source of water (a metaphor of the long-buried Tanner Creek). This water then takes on a different expression in each park: active in the Spring Fountain, passive in The Wetlands and agrarian in the Fields.

The construction of the wall is consistent in each park, with broad horizontal platforms of stacked stone stepping both horizontally and vertically. Representative of an outcrop, it acts as a 14 inch high seatwall along the Pedestrian Gallery (the wall's high side) and descends variably from 14 inches to 42 inches on the park side. The water effects unique to each park emanate from this side.

The wall provides informal seating for a significant population when the water is not active, yet also allows for one's direct interaction with water effects. The color of the stone will be light and warm in response to Portland's cloudy days.





Honey Locust Alee, Indiana

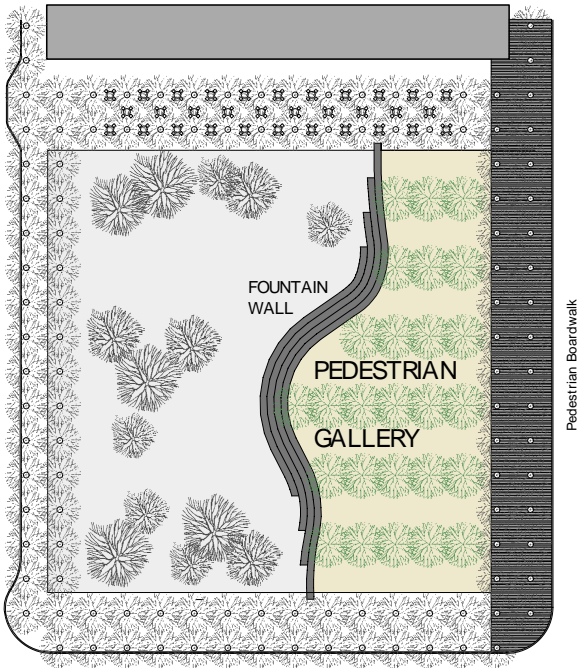


Tuileries, Paris

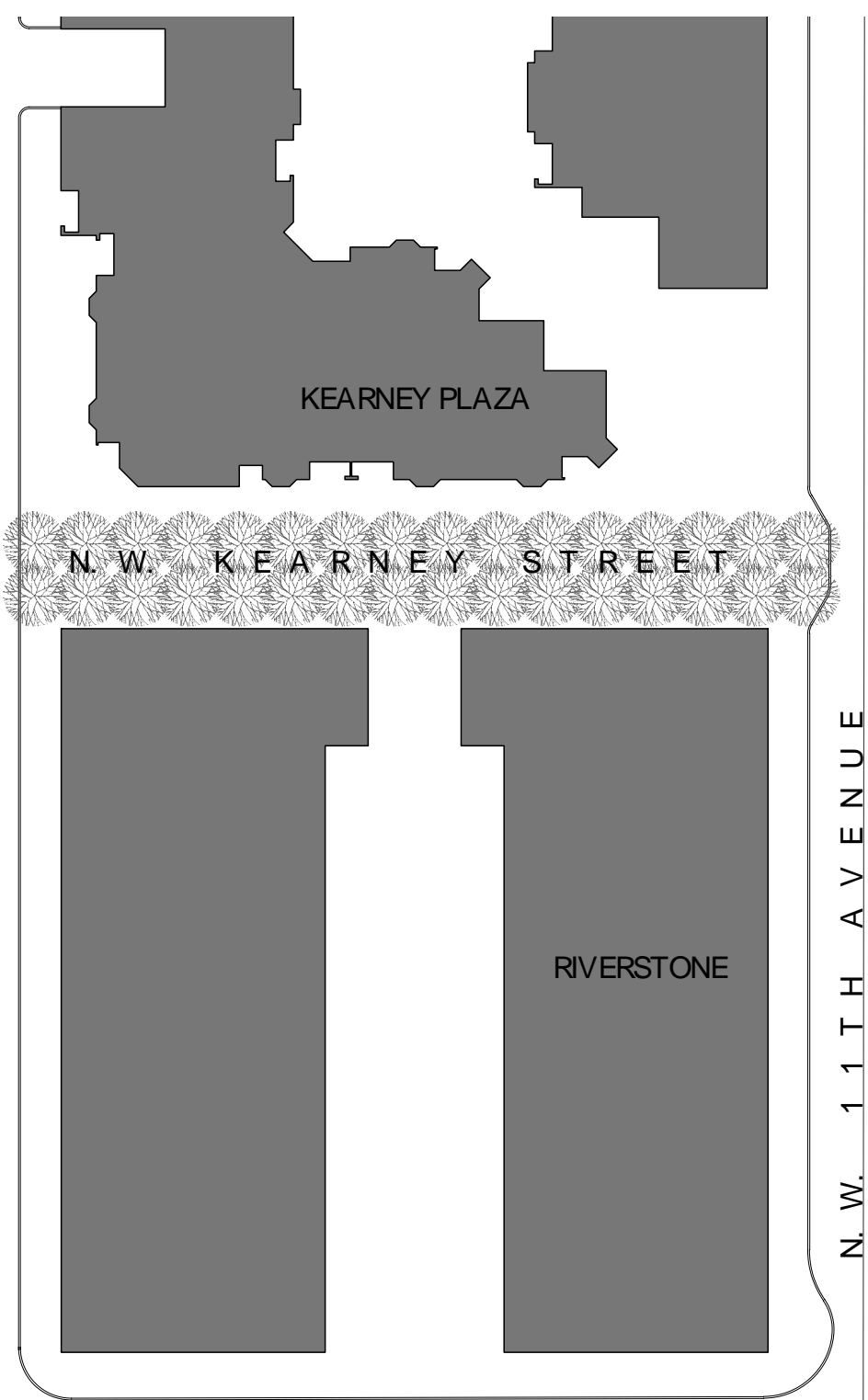


The Pedestrian Gallery

The appreciation and active promotion of the arts has been a cornerstone for the revitalization of the Pearl District. Numerous galleries, The Portland Institute of Contemporary Art and the Pacific Northwest College of Art, enliven and enrich the neighborhood. The park system in the River District will draw upon and expand these cultural associations by providing a linear place for the exhibition, promotion and creation of the Arts - the Pedestrian Gallery. Between the Boardwalk and the Stone Aquifer, the Gallery is a continuous urbane cultural space, paved in decomposed gravel of a warm color and planted with regular allées of finely textured, matched hornbeam trees to create exhibition spaces. As the name implies, it is a place of public art, both permanent and temporary, as directed by the newly formed River District Art Association. This space will have the quality of the great parks in Europe, such as the *Tuileries* in Paris. The gravel surface lends flexibility for the change out of exhibits and adjustable lighting and power will be provided.



N. W. 1 2 T H A V E N U E

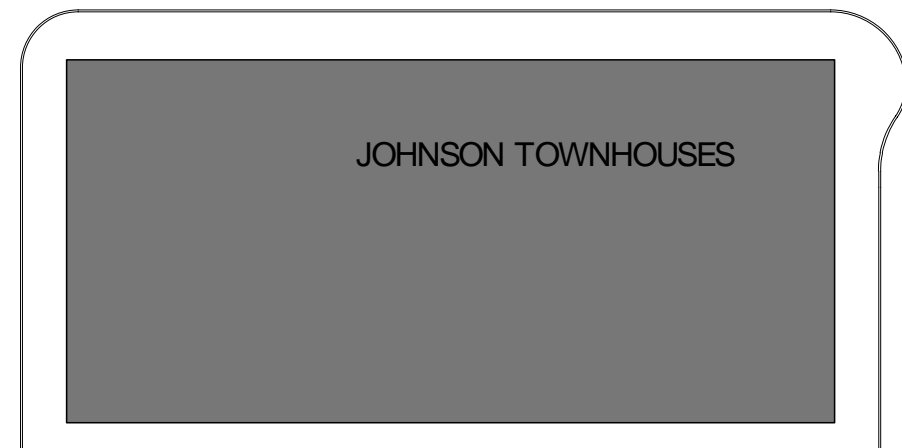


KEARNEY PLAZA

N. W. K E A R N E Y S T R E E T

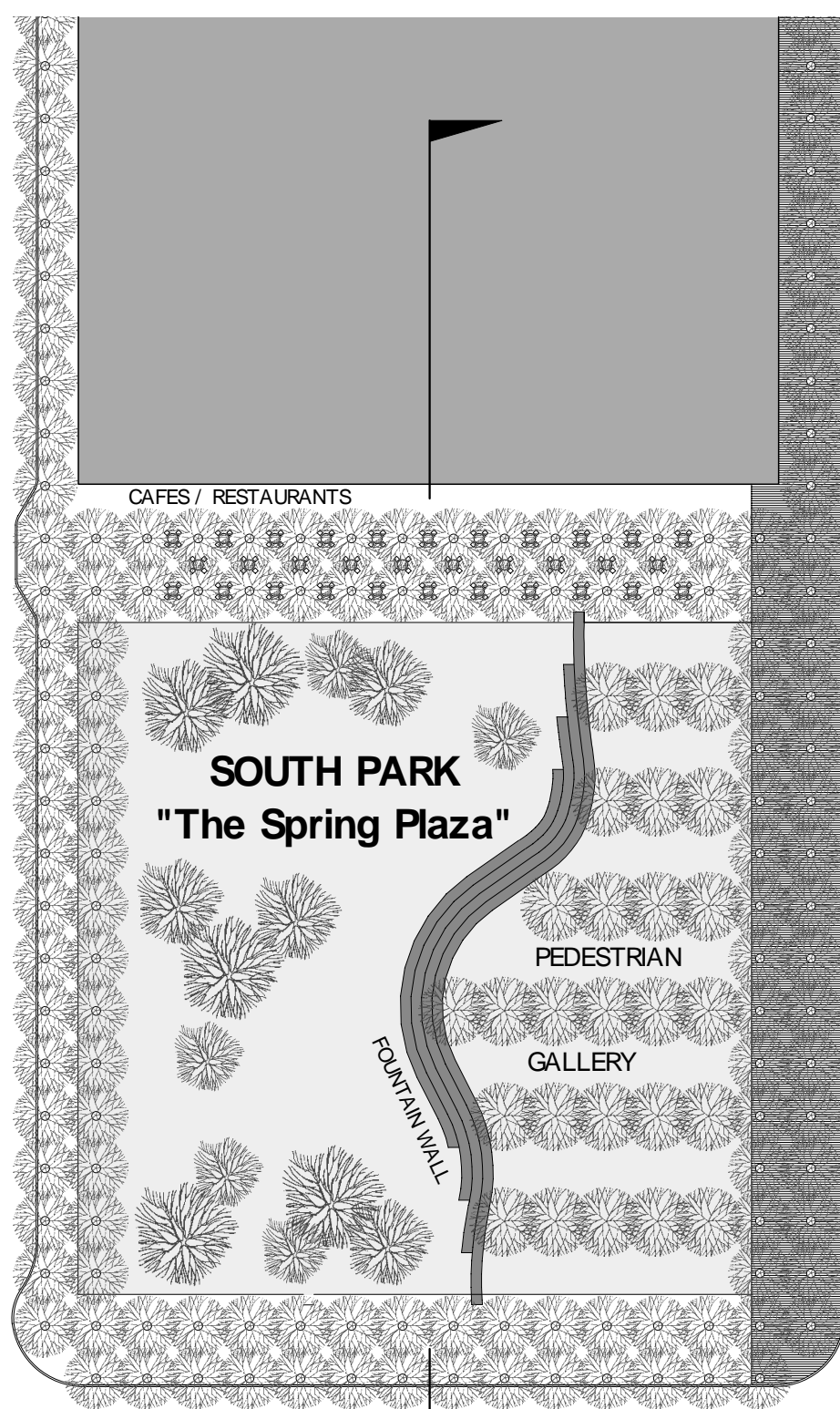
RIVERSTONE

N. W. J O H N S O N S T R E E T



JOHNSON TOWNHOUSES

N. W. 1 1 T H A V E N U E



CAFES / RESTAURANTS

SOUTH PARK
"The Spring Plaza"

PEDESTRIAN

GALLERY

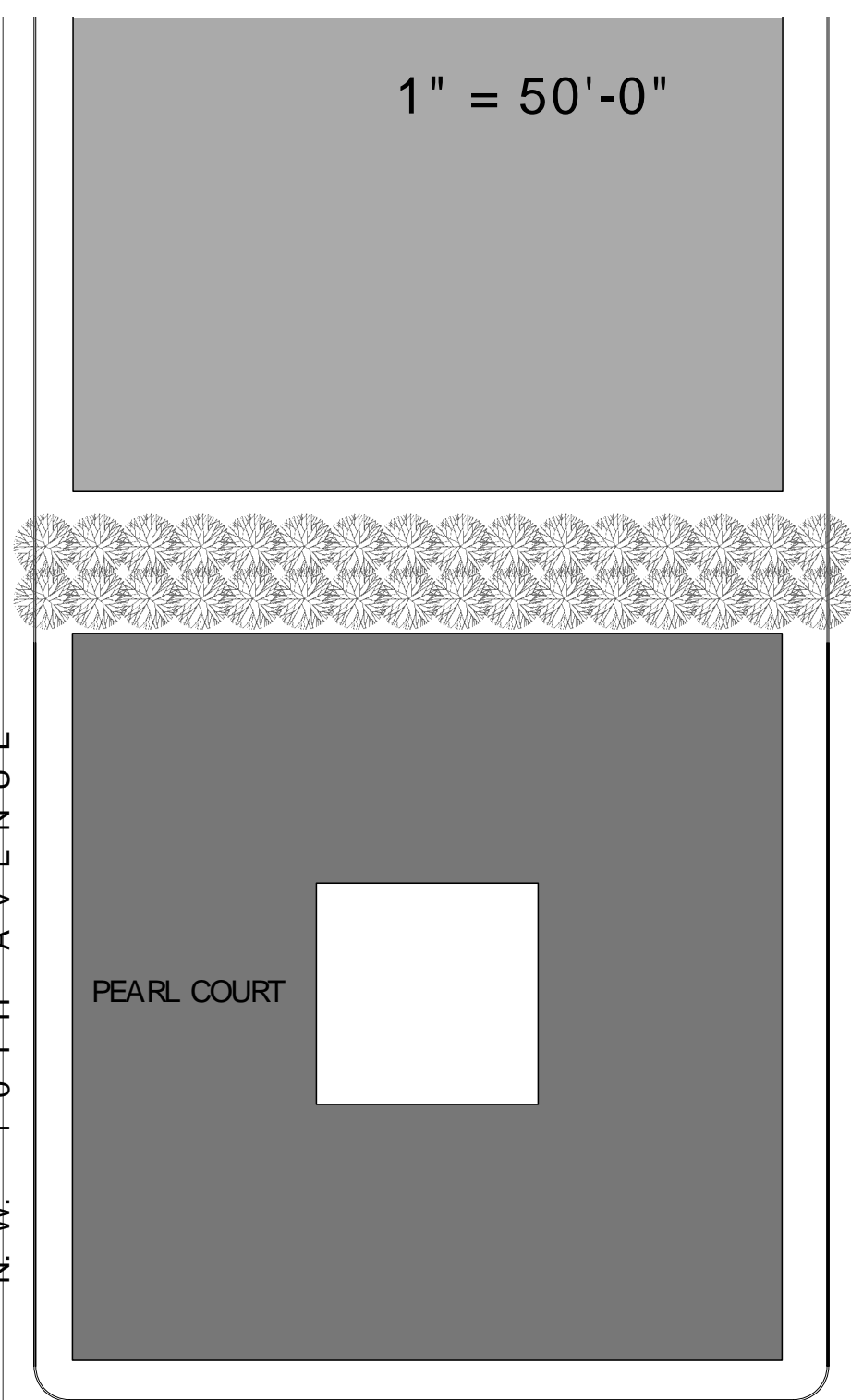
FOUNTAIN WALL

TANNER PLACE

Pedestrian Boardwalk

Pedestrian Boardwalk

N. W. 1 0 T H A V E N U E



1" = 50'-0"

PEARL COURT

ECO-TRUST

N. W. 9 T H A V E N U E



Existing River District Cobble Stone to be Re-Used

The South Park Square

The Spring Fountain: This park contains a plaza surfaced with unit pavers, sloping gently down toward the Stone Aquifer in a radial pattern creating a shallow bowl. It is planted with a grove of trees to form a canopy over the hardscape, providing shade outside the bottom of the bowl which acts as a water basin. At programmed intervals water surges from the Aquifer, cascading down its stone platforms and quickly and audibly filling the basin formed by the plaza paving, similar to wave action at the seashore. The effect is also tidal in character, with the plaza filling with water to become a reflecting pool and then quietly and slowly draining to expose the pavement. The waves repeatedly flow out from between the stones and then recede. This cycle could perhaps occur dramatically in the rainy season and gently in the dry season.

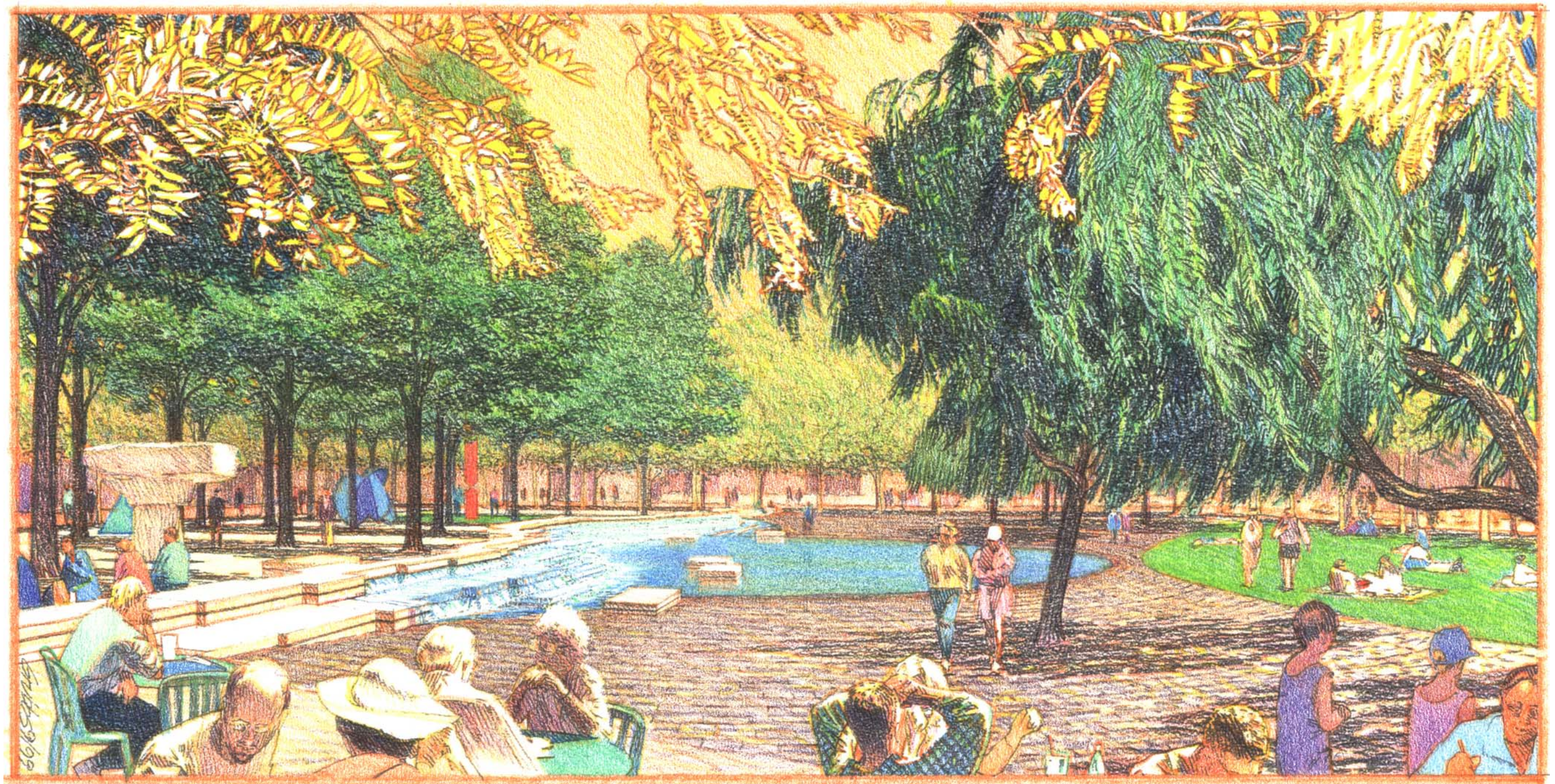
Directly across from retail (preferably restaurants), along the Kearney Street pedestrian corridor, the fountain will be a unique and soothing presence and an object of play and delight for children. Alternatively, the fountain may be turned off so the space can function as a shady hardscape plaza, a place for meetings, celebrations, or performances. The space can accommodate several hundred people but will also be comfortable for much smaller gatherings. Under this scenario, the plaza and aquifer wall play off each other, with the plaza as seating and the wall/gallery as stage or vice-versa. With the fountain shut off, the plaza will be the major, flexible use, community space in the neighborhood.

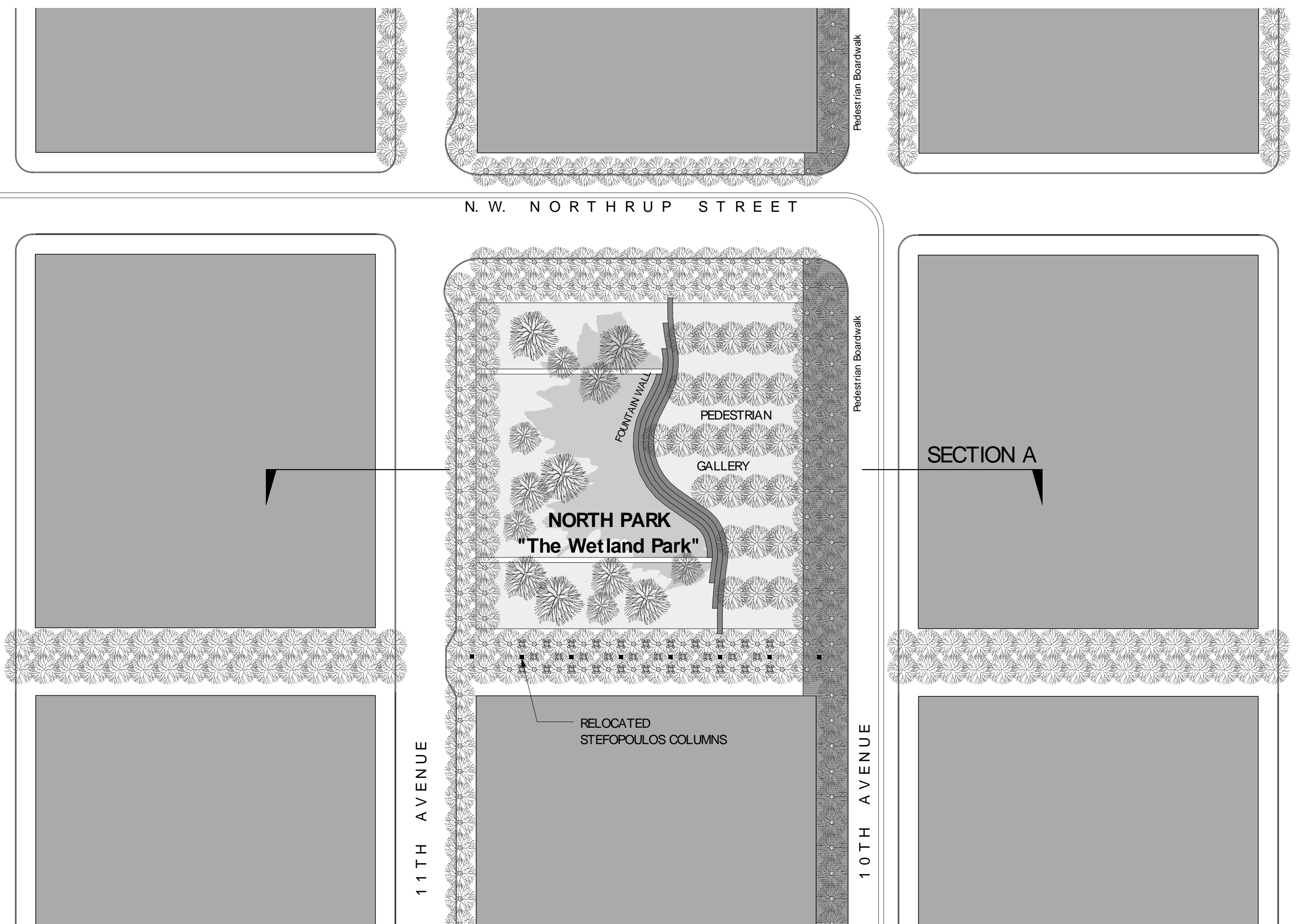


Restaurants and Cafes Overlooking Plaza



Restaurant N.W. Kearney Pedestrian Street The Spring Fountain Plaza The Aquifer Fountain Wall The Pedestrian Gallery Southern Sidewalk N.W. Johnson Street





N. W. N O R T H R U P S T R E E T

11TH AVENUE

10TH AVENUE

Pedestrian Boardwalk

Pedestrian Boardwalk

NORTH PARK
"The Wetland Park"

RELOCATED
STEFPOPOULOS COLUMNS

PEDESTRIAN
GALLERY

FOUNTAIN WALL

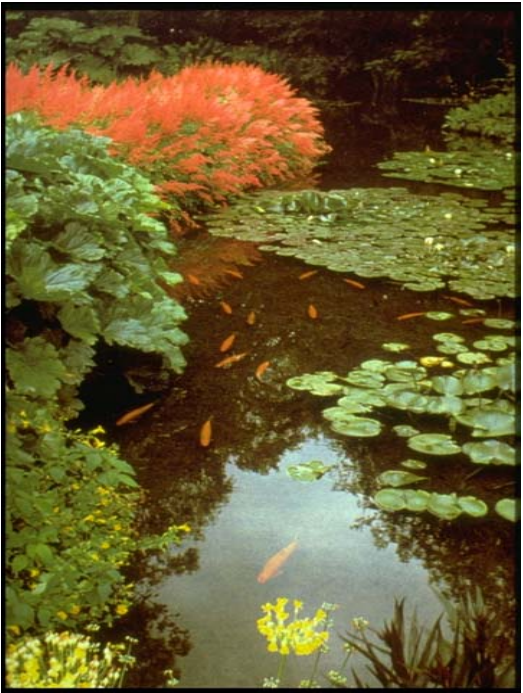
SECTION A



Boeing Corporation Wetlands



Bridge at Boeing



Fish Ponds



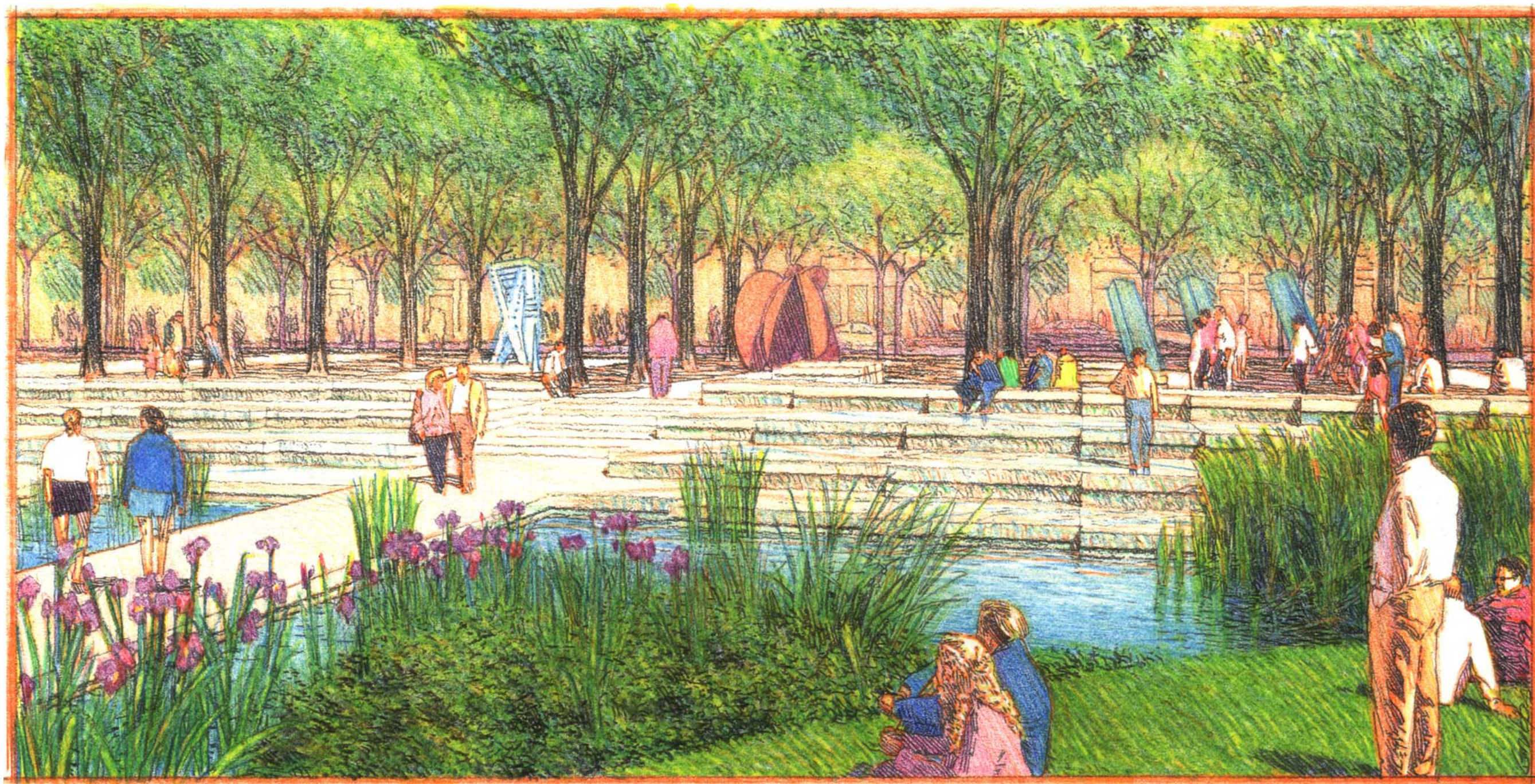
Cascade Wetland

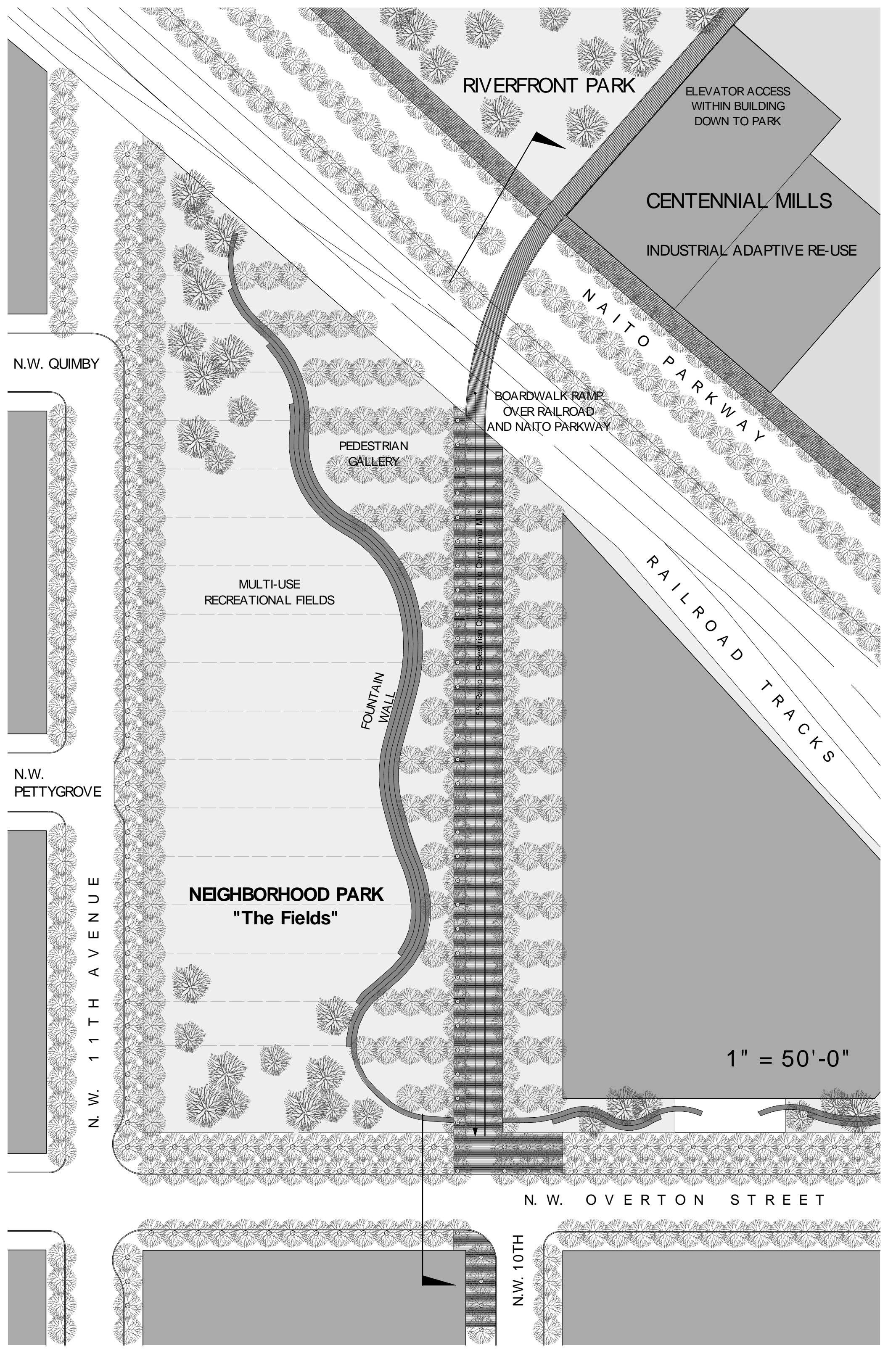


The North Park Square

The Wetlands: In contrast to the Spring fountain's energy and space for congregation, the wetland park is inwardly focused and more contemplative in character. Symbolic of one of America's most important natural resource issues, the Wetlands will bring to the neighborhood the continuous seasonal beauty of a native grass and tree community. The water for the Wetlands gently seeps or at times quietly flows from the Stone Aquifer. At intervals, fog will also emanate from the stone, increasing the sense of mystery and solitude. The land form of this park is similar to the spring fountain plaza yet it is soft rather than hard, with an intensely planted wetland occurring at the base of the aquifer wall. Raised walkways with simple seating areas penetrate the Wetlands connecting to the mid levels of the aquifer wall, allowing visitors to closely observe the changes and the habitat that it provides.







RIVERFRONT PARK

ELEVATOR ACCESS
WITHIN BUILDING
DOWN TO PARK

CENTENNIAL MILLS

INDUSTRIAL ADAPTIVE RE-USE

NAITO PARKWAY

BOARDWALK RAMP
OVER RAILROAD
AND NAITO PARKWAY

PEDESTRIAN
GALLERY

MULTI-USE
RECREATIONAL FIELDS

FOUNTAIN
WALL

RAILROAD
TRACKS

5% Ramp - Pedestrian Connection to Centennial Mills

NEIGHBORHOOD PARK
"The Fields"

1" = 50'-0"

N. W. O V E R T O N S T R E E T

N.W. 10TH

N. W. 1 1 T H A V E N U E

N.W. QUIMBY

N.W.
PETTYGROVE



Multi-Use Recreational Fields



River View from Centennial Mill Building



Existing Centennial Mill Building

The Neighborhood Park

The Fields: The "fields" provides a venue for the recreational needs of the neighborhood. The largest of the three River District parks, the majority of the site is devoted to a relatively flat, irregularly shaped grass meadow maintained for passive and informal recreation. Carefully sited masses of bulbs will be naturalized into the meadow for a display of spring color. Taller grasses with seasonal interest, informal tree groves and street tree rows define the perimeter.

The meadow play fields symbolize an agricultural condition, without the hydraulic sprinkler system. The modern system is replaced by a series of very shallow, imperceptible irrigation swales, originating from the Stone Aquifer, that "flood" the play fields (before dawn) during dry weather periods.

The Riverfront Park and District Gateway: Although not classified as River District Parks, the sequence of parks and boardwalk link suggests the integration of these elements to the neighborhood parks. At the regional Riverfront Park, the sea wall and railing treatment of the water's edge, used elsewhere in the city, is here replaced with a simple grass slope implying direct access to the waterfront. A stone "beach" protects and stabilizes the shoreline. The river's edge is planted with native riparian species. As a gesture towards the River District gateway along Naito Parkway, wedge-shaped stone retaining walls, mimicking the aquifer wall construction, not only provide a transition to the adjacent land uses, but extend the Park expression along NW Front Street to receive the at-grade rail crossing at NW 9th Street, reinforcing the entry to the district. Here, the Stephanopoulos columns will be placed, providing a vertical dimension to the gateway.



Boardwalk Ramp Experience



Pedestrian Gallery



Picnicing



5% Ramp from Centennial Mills - Riverfront Park down to the Neighborhood Park and the City

