GUIDE ■ RIVERFRONT RECAPTURE, INC ■

RIVERFRONT GUIDE

RIVERFRONT RECAPTURE, INC.

July 1982

An Invitation to Join the Riverfront Team

THE CONNECTICUT RIVER FLOWS MORE THAN SIX miles through Hartford and East Hartford. Today the riverfront land is little used and hard to reach. By 1995, however, it could be transformed into an attractive and valuable asset for both cities and for the surrounding region. It could become:

- The site of a major new park, usable for education as well as recreation;
- A catalyst for business and industrial development, providing thousands of new jobs;
- A stimulus for development of new river-related commercial activity;
- An incentive for up to 500 new units of low to medium density housing;
- A place to locate new performing arts facilities;
- A generator of significant new tax revenue.

The riverfront's potential, in short, is great. But realizing it awaits the right combination of resources and leadership. This RIVERFRONT GUIDE is for anyone who wants to be involved in putting that combination together...for anyone who wants to join the Riverfront Team!

It summarizes the results of a four-month study of the riverfront's possibilities. It describes what has been discovered about existing conditions and opportunities and offers advice about what can and cannot be done. The GUIDE does not prescribe what ought to happen, but it does try to help sort out "pie in the sky" dreams from ideas that are practical and realizable.

Most important of all, the GUIDE invites *you* to take part in the next step: *developing a Riverfront Plan that works.*

If you agree with the goal of recapturing the riverfront—and we hope after reading the GUIDE that you do—then it is important that you help us identify worthwhile projects, set priorities, and think about practical ways to proceed. The result will be a plan that will require a lot of effort to achieve. But it must be a plan that has broad public and community support, representing a consensus of ideas and approaches. That is why we need your help in identifying and responding to the opportunities and issues presented in the GUIDE.

Over the next few months, we will be talking and listening to a variety of citizen groups. Some of them are probably ones you belong to. But right now, we invite you as an individual to respond using the postal reply card you will find at the back of the GUIDE. At the same time, we encourage you to support city and state officials in their continuing effort to create the kind of public-private partnership that can make recapture of the riverfront a realizable goal.

Your thoughtful response and involvement are crucial to the success of the recapture effort.

Thank you for your help!

Riverfront Recapture, Inc.

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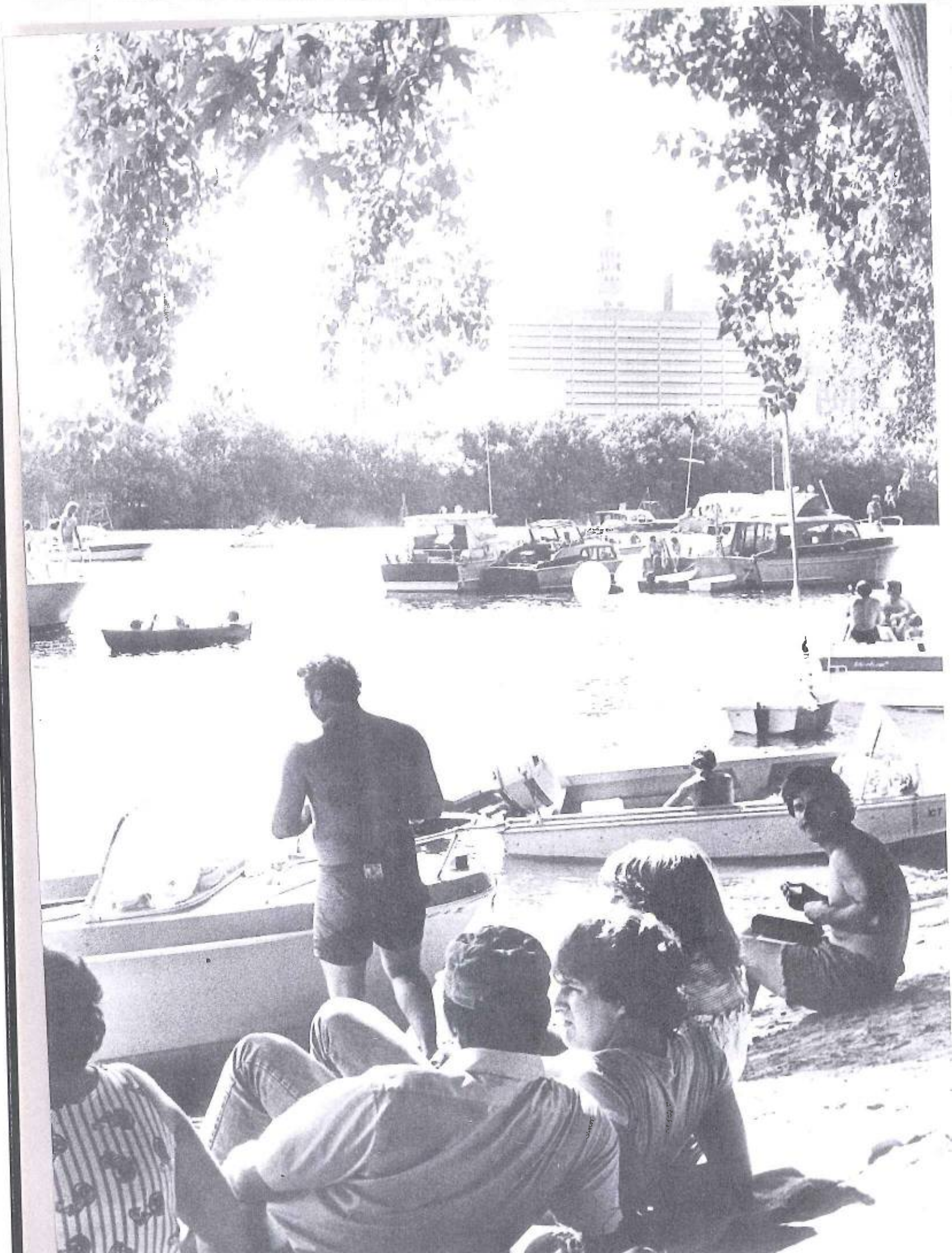


WHY RIVERFRONT RECAPTURE?

The Connecticut Riverfront shared by Hartford and East Hartford is an urban resource worth recapturing. It offers special and unique opportunities for recreation. It contains development sites for new residential and employment growth. It offers great natural beauty within a few minutes of city streets. It can be a unifying element shared by all the region's citizens.

FOR MOST OF ITS HISTORY, HARTFORD WAS A RIVER CITY. The waterfront was an intimate part of daily life. It is doubtful that Mark Twain would have settled here if he had not had the opportunity to wander around the docks and inspect the incoming paddle-wheelers.

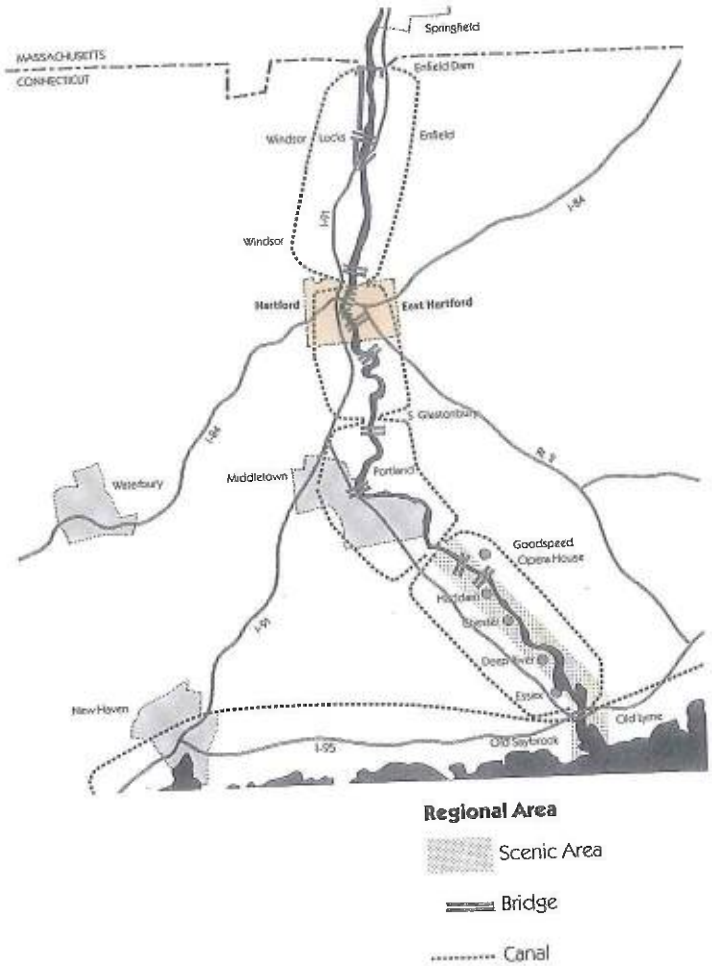
But the Connecticut River has been both friend and foe. Although the early economy of the City depended on the river, flooding was a constant fear. Dikes were built with private and public contributions to protect against the river's rampages. Unfortunately, this protection also made it hard for people to get to the river. Highways and rail lines along the dikes accentuated this separation. Eventually, the river became a lost resource.

The river, however, has not been totally forgotten. Those hardy folk who still make their way through the tangle of expressways and train tracks to cross the earthen dikes suddenly find themselves on the tree-lined edge of a cool and refreshing vista. They fish, they eat lunch, they relax in the sun, they watch small boats on the water or contemplate trees and buildings on the opposite bank. This serenity and beauty is now enjoyed by only a few people, but it could become available to everyone. The riverfront is worth recapturing; and you should go there yourself to see why.

Those fortunate enough to live or work in the Hartford area now have a unique opportunity: they can use land near the river to connect neighborhoods and open space, to connect new employment areas and downtown, and to connect urban development, east and west.

Public, private and volunteer organizations have begun to work together to overcome the physical and organizational barriers which for over 40 years have separated the area's people from their river heritage. As their resolve builds, events are occurring which indicate the potential for success:

- With the help of Riverfront Recapture, Inc., the State Department of Transportation has prepared plans to rebuild the interstate highway system adjacent to the river. These plans, covering not only downtown Hartford but also northern and southern areas of the city, emphasize improving access to the river.



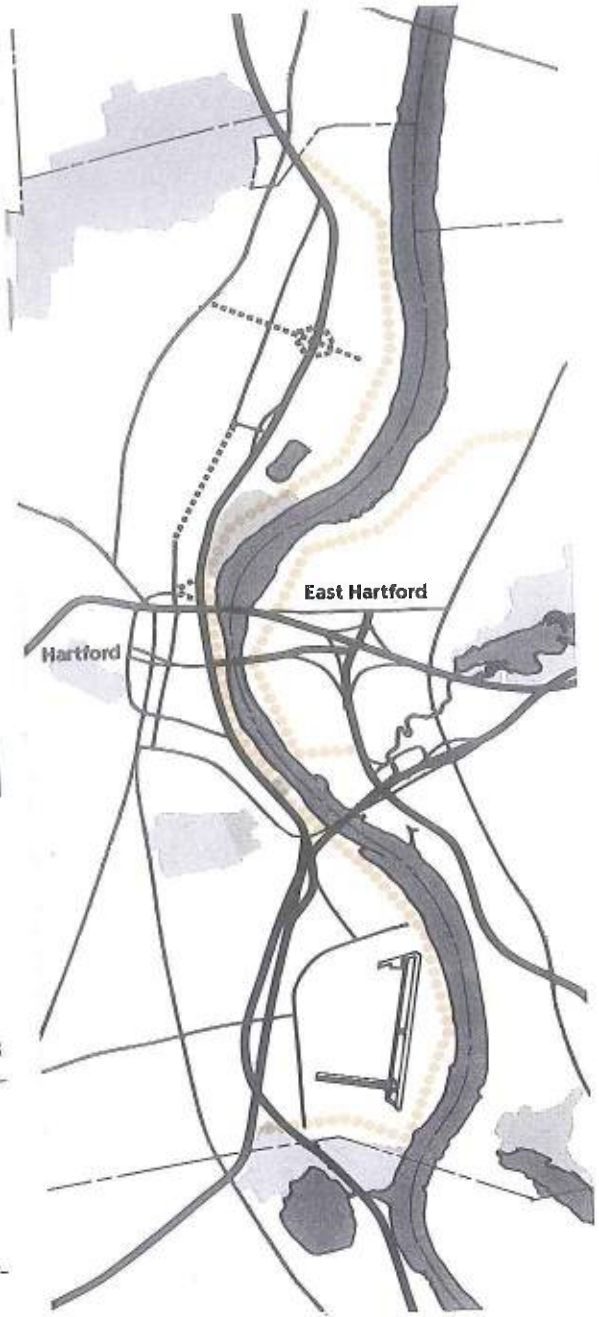
Riverfront Recapture, Inc. is at work with volunteers from community, business and civic organizations to regain use of the waterfront.

- Assuming improved access and the continuing attractiveness of the surrounding area as an employment center, new opportunities for jobs and housing are being identified near the river.
- Buildings now under construction, as well as proposed projects, are leading new development towards the river. Thousands of new workers will dramatically reinforce Hartford's economy and help create new markets for retail, entertainment, and cultural activities.
- In East Hartford, new development adjacent to Founder's Plaza will complement Hartford's growth and provide potential for linking the east and west riverbanks.

The immediate riverfront area includes both the riverbank and the adjacent land on the protected side of the dikes. This area is a long band of gradually sloping land that lies between nearby city neighborhoods and the river itself. The 700 acres of vacant or underused land in this "opportunity zone" is a valuabl asset—a source of new tax revenue and job opportunities.

If those who believe in the riverfront's possibilities make the right start toward recapturing it, they can trigger an exciting variety of new development, including offices, housing, hotels, industrial buildings, and cultural and recreation facilities.

- Physically, its development can help link neighborhoods and businesses to the water, both visually and for recreational us
- Financially, the private and public returns from such development can help transform current fiscal uncertainty into a future of economic strength.



Study Area

Study Area

Dike

A Regional River

Between Hartford and East Hartford the riverfront is more than six miles long. It is not only a city resource, but a regional one as well. An analysis of the region is therefore an important first step in defining the riverfront's development potential.

The regional pattern of the Hartford area suggests the important role which interstate highways have played. They have helped maintain Hartford's central place in the region's economy but have also helped disperse people, shopping, services, and jobs to the suburbs. Despite this loss of activity, Hartford remains vital. It is the state capital and a center of finance, services, shopping, sports, education, and culture. While manufacturing jobs have been declining, white-collar and government jobs are increasing. Recent data show a decrease in the residential population of Hartford proper but point to the city's continued stability as an employment center. Development of the riverfront will reinforce Hartford's central position in the region because it will create not only a major new recreation resource but jobs and housing as well.

Although Hartford's present relationship to its waterfront is weak, the river still serves as a limited recreation resource. While boating facilities are more extensive south of the city, two recent changes have increased river use: the improvements in the quality of river water (salmon have come back!) and a resurgence of river-related seasonal events (the Fourth of July, for instance, is becoming an annual river festival). The prospect for further recreational development is excellent.

A recent technical study has confirmed that riverfront recapture is feasible.* The study has also suggested a preliminary development concept. Central to this concept is a vision o the riverfront as a major park. The focus of the park is the "riverwalk," a linear walkway along each bank of the river, stretching from Windsor to Wethersfield on the Hartford side and from the Bulkeley Bridge to the Charter Oak Bridge on the East Hartford side.

From here on, the work of RRI's planning team will focus in detail on six areas: the North Meadows, Riverside Park, Downtown, East Hartford, Dutch Point/Colt Park, and the South Meadows. Planning for each will emphasize three area-wide needs: recreation, jobs, and housing.

Recreation

A continuous riverwalk on both sides of the river could provide access to the water and new activities along the water's edge. I the central portion of the Hartford and East Hartford riverfron the riverwalk could be a more intensively developed esplanade and landscaped park featuring boat piers, amphitheaters, and sitting areas.

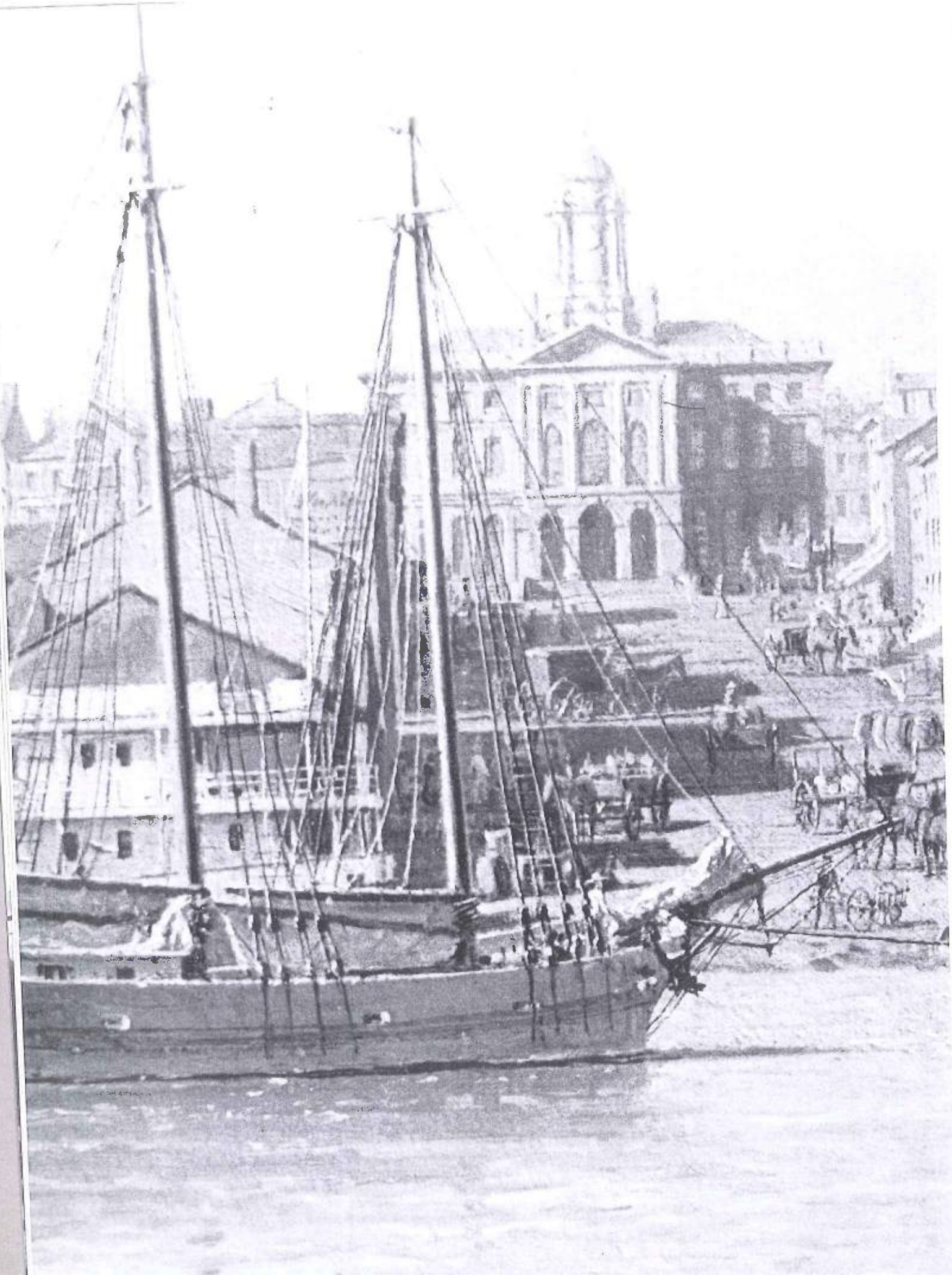
*This study has been presented to Riverfront Recapture, Inc. in a document entitled RIVERFRO RESOURSE BOOK: TECHNICAL REPORT (May 1982). Copies of the RESOURCE BOOK are availab at the Hartford and East Hartford public libraries a the RRI offices, 10 Prospect Street, Hartford. The GUIDE summarizes the major findings and concept described in the RESOURCE BOOK.

Jobs

In Hartford's North and South Meadows much underused land, protected by the dike from the river, provides the opportunity for creating thousands of new jobs through new industrial and commercial development. Planned highway improvements, providing better access, will increase the attractiveness of development parcels in these areas. If Brainard Field becomes available for development, it also would represent a substantial resource.

Housing

Transformation of the riverfront into a major park would especially benefit adjacent neighborhoods. Existing housing would be strengthened and new markets created. The strongest potential site for new housing lies in Hartford's Dutch Point/Colt Park area, south of downtown. As many as 400 to 500 units could be constructed there as low-rise dwellings within walking distance of the river. To the north, the Clay-Arsenal neighborhood can remain connected to the river if the existing footbridge to Riverside Park is rebuilt. The proposed new Jennings Road bridge will link other North Hartford areas to the riverfront.



YESTERDAY AND TODAY

To understand why recapture of the riverfront is a vision worth achieving, it is necessary to understand the river's central role in Hartford's early development, how the river became isolated by dikes, rail lines and highways, and the initial successes in Hartford and elsewhere in recapturing riverfronts for the benefit of all.

EFORE ITS ISOLATION BY FLOOD-walls and highways, the Connecticut River was the historic focus of Hartford's development. Called by Indians "the long tidal river," it is the only river that runs the full length of New England, stretching 400 miles from Canada to Long Island Sound. The Connecticut River valley was the birthplace of such pioneering achievements as the New World's first self-government, the first ferry and canal, and the first U.S. war vessel. Most occurred along the sixty miles within the colony of Connecticut.

Early settlement patterns clustered next to the riverfront. Because of the safe harbor created by the juncture of the Park River with the Connecticut River, Dutch adventurers selected Hartford as a trading site in the early 17th Century. Their "House of Good Hope" was located near where the Colt Factory complex stands today.

Led by the Rev. Thomas Hooker, English settlers arrived in 1636. They called their settlement Newtown in hopes of building an ideal utopian community. One year later the name Hartford was adopted in honor of Hertford, England. Almost immediately, the town began to grow as a shipping center. In the 18th century, tiny river-built sloops made regular trips to the Caribbean. They cruised from island to island, bartering farm produce and then returned to river wharves where they became floating stores.

Commerce flourished and shipbuilding became the colony's first major industry. By 1750, river shipbuilding had reached its peak and continued for another century almost without interruption. The river's shipbuilding yards became famous in the East for launching vessels much larger than commonly sailed out of river ports.

As the city grew, its town center evolved adjacent to the river, not far from today's Constitution Plaza. State Street was a grand thoroughfare leading from the docks up the hill to the Old State House, with arcaded shops, balconied offices and warehouses on either side. The north and south meadows remained marsh and farmland.

The practice of insurance started in Hartford back in the 18th century. Ship captains and merchants used to gather by the wharves, and make agreements to share risks and profits on cargoes of ships going forth to trade overseas.

Hartford's merchants and bankers certainly were not unique in their early involvement with marine and fire insurance. This was being done in many sections of the new nation. The difference was that Hartford built a solid reputation for keeping solvent, keeping promises to pay losses, keeping together in times of disaster, and keeping up with the new types of insurance.

State Street (opposite) was once the main street to Hartford's commercial riverfront.

The Hartford riverfront flourished from the 18th into the 20th century.

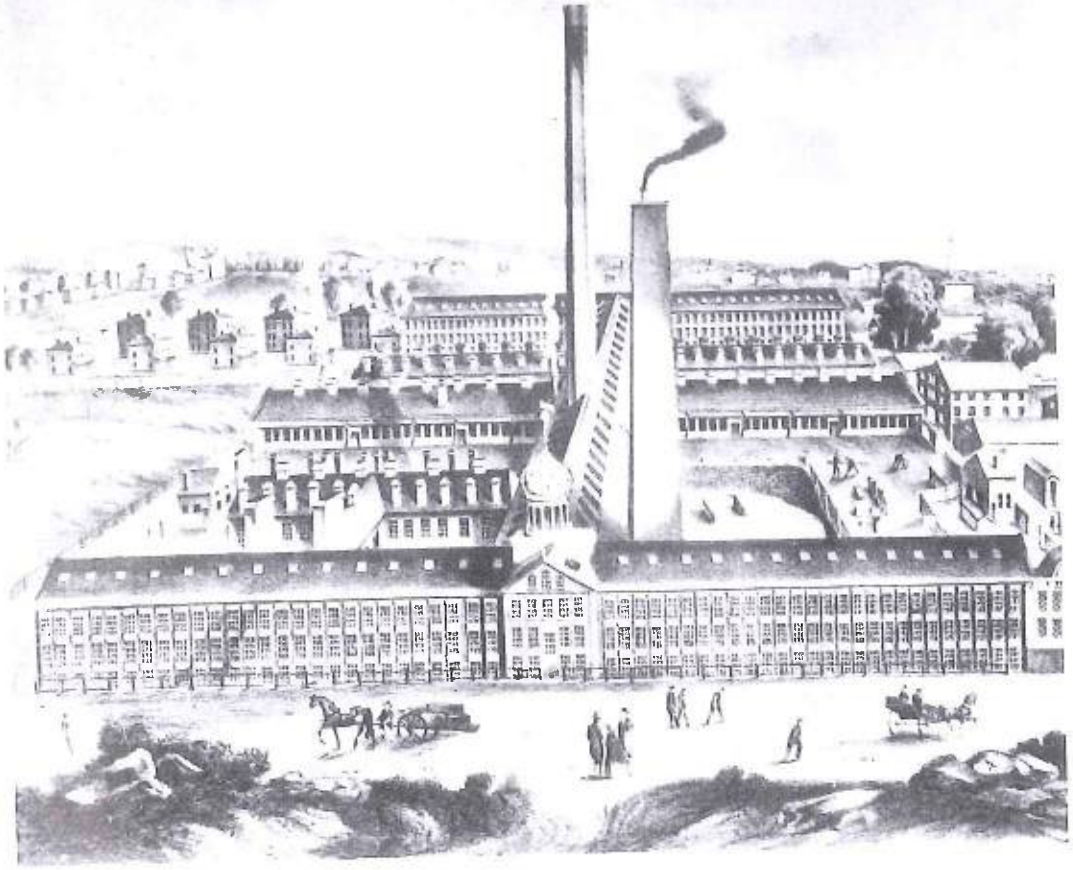
Samuel Colt (1814-1862), the visionary industrialist, created a planned communi around the Colt Armory that included privately built dike to protect the area.

In 1800, the Union Company, headed by John Caldwell (the President of the Hartford Bank and the grandfather of Samuel Colt) and John Morgan (the grandfather of J.P. Morgan), was chartered to deepen the river-bed below Hartford, to build wharves, and to collect tolls to pay for these improvements.

The age of steam, which had a profound impact on river commerce and later on industry, began in 1815, when the steamboat *Fulton* arrived upriver from New Haven. Villagers rushed to the banks to see the strange vessel "coming on wheels in the water." When the *Fulton* tied up in Hartford, the *Courant* enthused: "...indeed it is hardly possible to conceive that anything of its kind can exceed her, in elegance and convenience." She was the last to be designed by Robert Fulton. There quickly followed regular service three times a week; Captain James Pitkin's *Enterprise* advertised: "Passengers can be landed at any place on the river at their pleasure." The 112-foot long *Oliver Ellsworth,* built in 1824, was the first of a long line of floating palaces operating on the river. The same year, "amidst the salute of cannon and the shouts of thousands of gratified and grateful spectators," the Marquis de Lafayette, after revisiting Hartford, left aboard the *Oliver Ellsworth.*

By 1844 river traffic was at its peak with 2000 recorded arrivals and departures. The mid-1800s, however, saw the building of the railways, which replaced the river as the principal means of transporting goods and people. Hartford changed from a center of river commerce to a center of land-based industry.

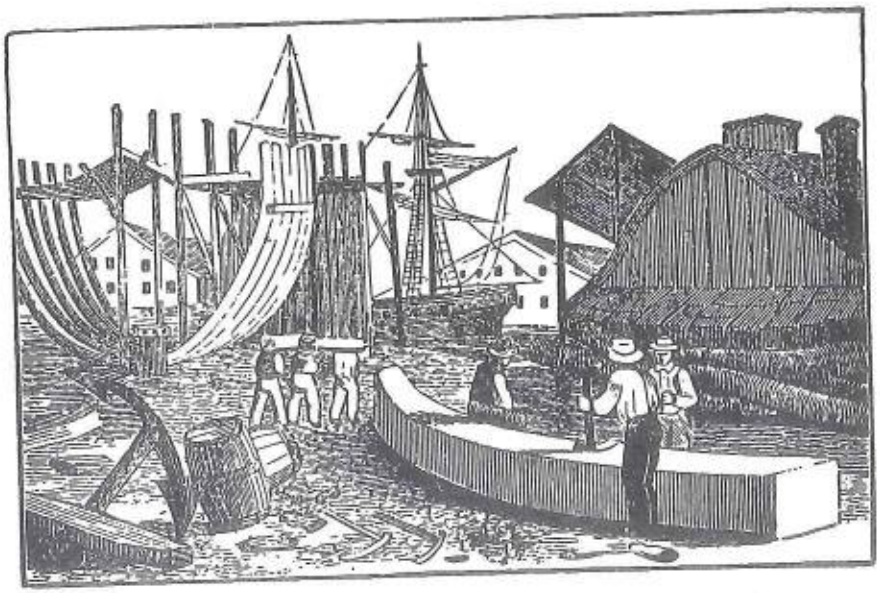
On May 1, 1854 a great flood isolated the city. One idea that withstood the flood was Samuel Colt's dream of a planned worker's community. On 200 acres of lowlands below Hartford where the Dutch had first set foot, he carried out a grand land reclamation scheme, building a dike nearly two miles long to contain spring floods. In two years, his dike, with willows planted on top to prevent erosion, was finished at a cost of $125,000. The Hartford Court of Common Council fought Colt every step of the way, and many local citizens scoffed at the venture. But, his dike survived the record 1854 flood, which reached almost twenty-nine feet. (In fact, it

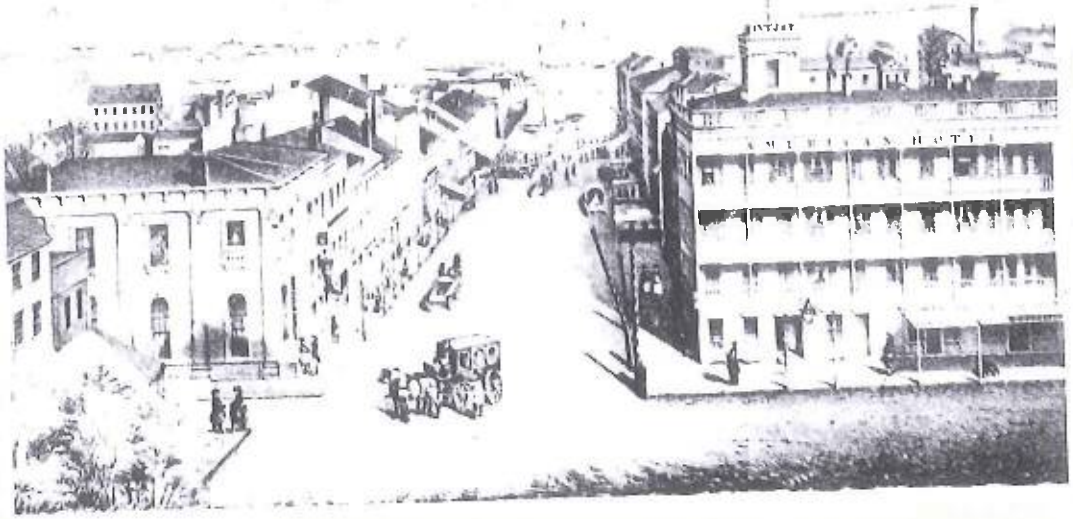


protected his South Meadows project for over 80 years, until New England's worst deluge in recorded history occurred in 1936.)

Behind the dike soon rose the great Armory, built with brownstone from nearby Portland, topped by a blue onion-shaped dome and gold ball, with a stallion holding a broken spear in his mouth. A giant 250-horsepower steam engine, its flywheel thirty feet in diameter, drove the factory's 400 machines by means of an elaborate web of shafts and belts. Around the armory, Colt constructed fifty multiple dwellings in rows for his workmen and their families and built a pattern of streets and a reservoir.

The willows grew so well atop the dike that Colt set up a small factory to manufacture willow furniture, which became popular in Cuba and South America because of its lightness and coolness. Unable to find trained willow workers, he imported a village of some forty Germans. Anxious to provide them with familiar surroundings, he erected a row of two-family brick houses with outside staircases modeled after their own homes in Potsdam, as well as a beer and coffee garden. Then, both for his own pleasure and theirs, Colt formed the Armory Band, giving its members blue uniforms with caps bearing the Colt insignia and instruments engraved with a revolver. Later he built Charter Oak Hall, named after the great





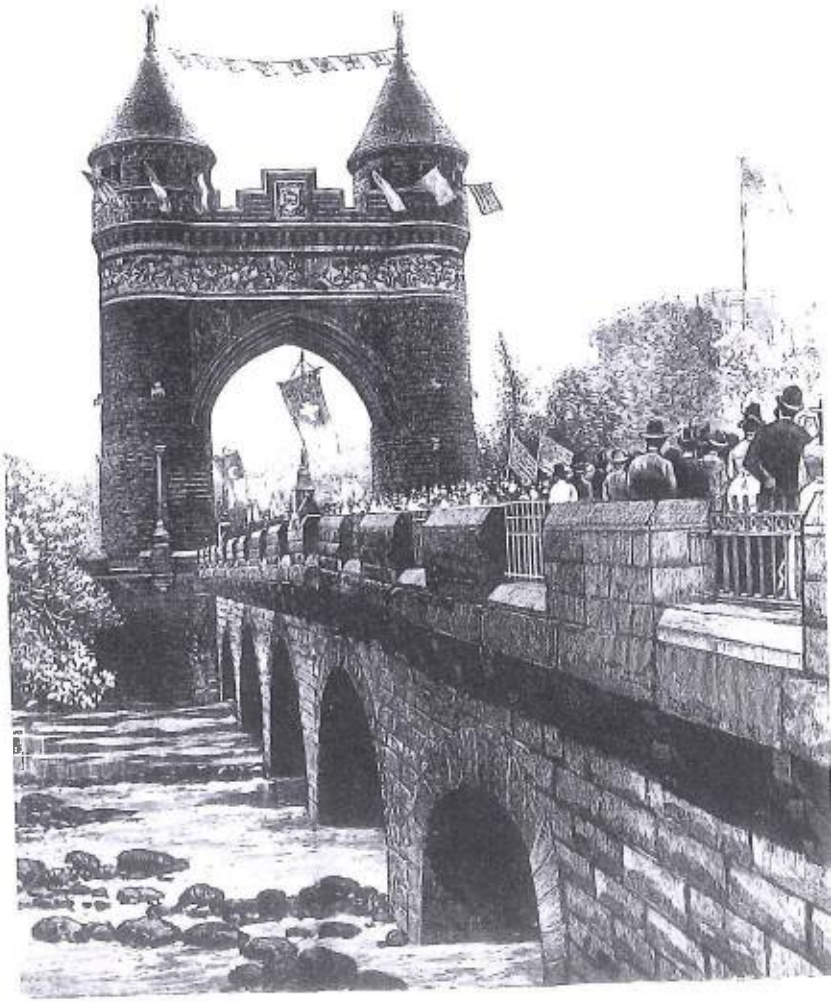
A view down State Street to a flooded river

The Park River once flowed through Downtown Hartford Bushnell Park and by the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Arch until it was buried for flood control in 1941.

Charter Oak that fell the same year the hall was dedicated. This hall, which seated 1000 people, served as a place where workers could read, hear lectures or concerts, and hold fairs or dances.

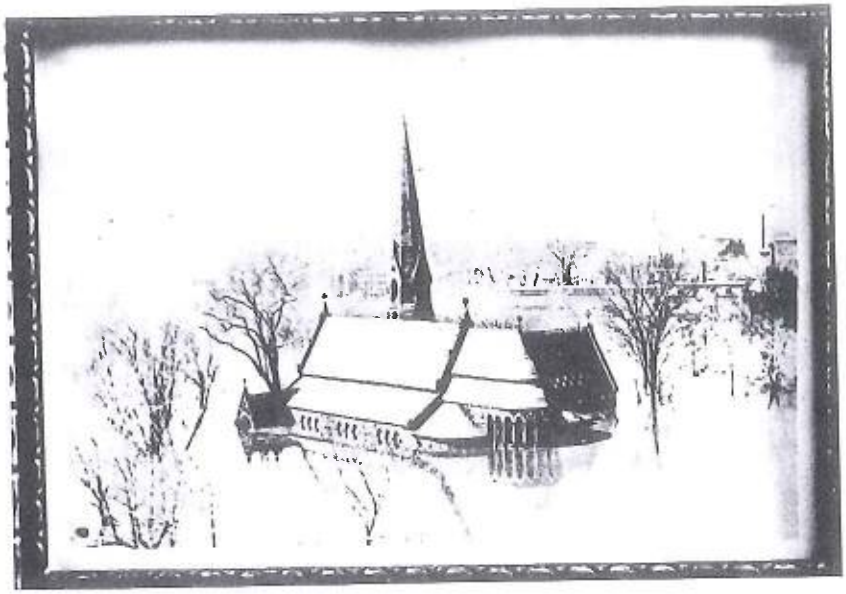
In the late 1800s, unpredictable floods, industrial pollution of the river, land speculation, and attractions such as the new Bushnell Park caused an economic shift that moved business and residential districts up the hill, away from the river's edge. In 1884, the chairman of the State Board of Agriculture said, "Hartford sits nervously in the lap of what was once one of the fairest and sweetest and is now one of the filthiest valleys in the world."

Despite the water's condition, however, the port remained active; as late as 1911 it handled almost 700,000 tons of cargo. In 1895 the Hartford Yacht Club was founded, the second oldest in the country, and instituted annual regattas.



The history of the Connecticut River and Hartford has been prepared with the help of Ellsworth Grant.

Hartford Turns Its Back on the River



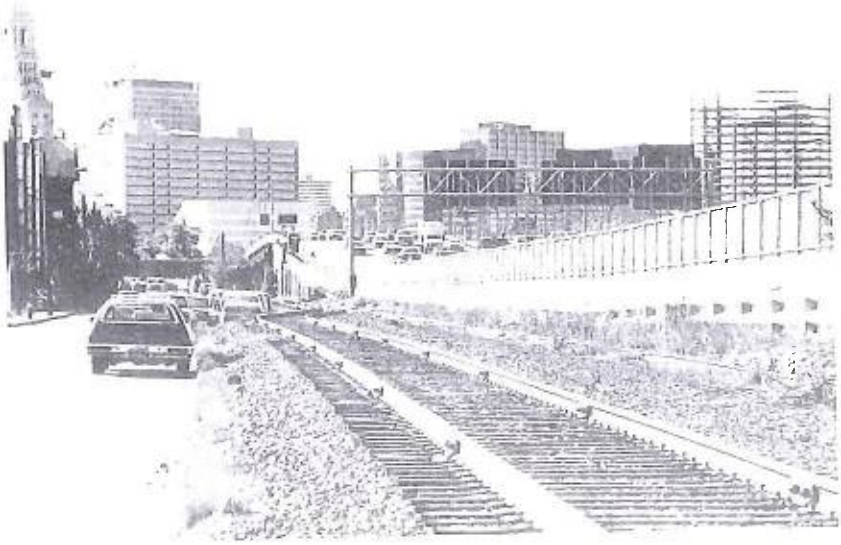
The great flood of 1936 caused extensive damage and spurred new dike construction.

IN THE 20TH CENTURY, GOVERNMENT, finance, and insurance have grown in importance on the high ground above the river. The water's edge, however, was increasingly ignored.

Nearly all river-borne commerce ended before World War II. In 1931, the steamboat *Hartford* made its last voyage. Massive floods in 1936 and 1938 destroyed many of the buildings and activities that remained by the river. In a decisive attempt to control the river, the present dikes were built in 1941. Both Hartford and East Hartford were finally protected from the ravages of flooding but at the same time were physically separated from the river. The Park River was buried underground and lost to the city's landscape.

As in so many other American cities, the now useless waterfront land represented a natural corridor for new road construction. Following World War II, the highways were built; a major part of this network was the north-south I-91 link along the Hartford dike. The interstate network helped redirect industrial growth to other locales and regions. Hartford became an inland-looking business and corporate center, ringed by its suburbs and severed from its riverfront past.

Today, highways and rail lines, as well as dikes, create barriers that keep people from the water's edge.



Riverfront Recapture: A Beginning

The 1982 July 4th River Fes val brought thousands to the riverfront to enjoy the river many assets.

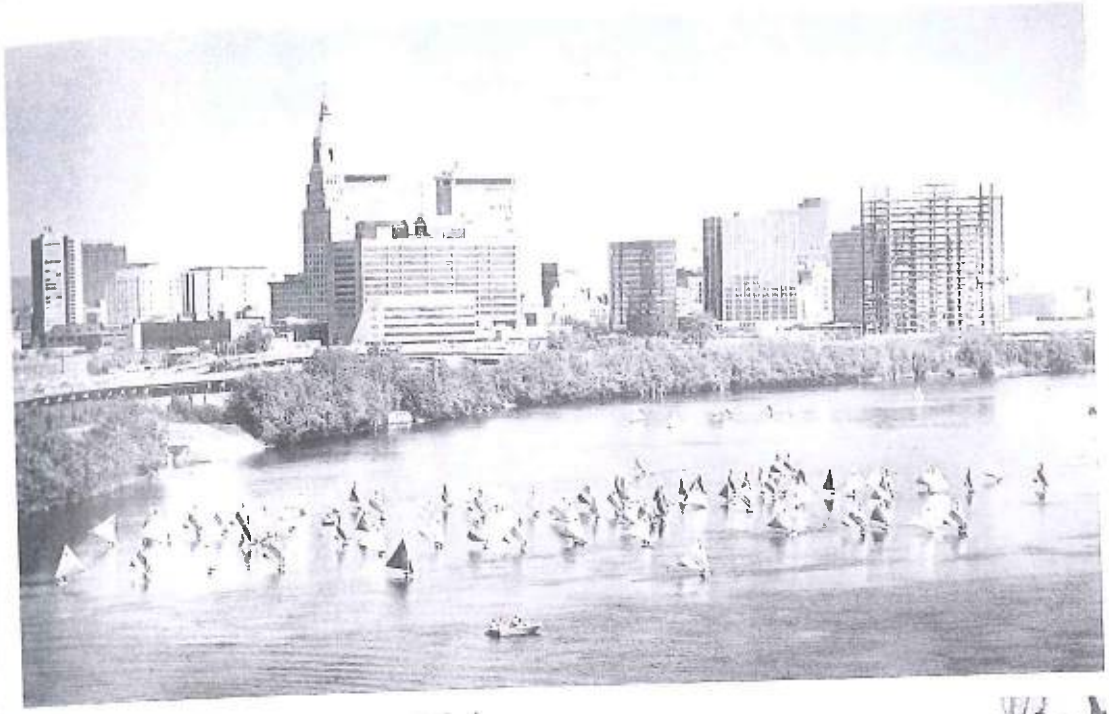
RECENTLY, THE AREAS THAT GREW UP behind the Hartford dike have begun to regain their vitality and attract significant private investment: offices in downtown, housing in the Colt Park area, and industry in the North and South Meadows. Connecticut's 1967 Clean Water Program has improved the river's quality so much that salmon are returning in record numbers.

At every opportunity people are returning to the riverfront to enjoy its benefits. The annual Sunfish River Classic has become a spring rite. This year, the renascent July 4th Festival focussed on the river. Now thousands of people turn out annually to enjoy the riverfront, despite its undeveloped condition.

Even without the planned events, people find their way to the water. On pleasant days, many can be seen fishing, boating, relaxing and studying. The river has become a learning laboratory for 120 Hartford students who are exploring ecology and natural sciences in a real-life classroom.

These two positive developments—restored interest in riverside land and river-related recreation—indicate that local citizens are rediscovering their vital link with the Connecticut River.

Riverfront Recapture, Inc. took part in the festivities on the 4th to make riverfront activity a year-round idea. Many people stopped by the RRI exhibit booth at the East Hartford boat landing.



The annual Sunfish River Classic brings a festive parade of boats to Hartford every spring.

CITIZEN ACTION: HISTORIC PRECEDENTS FOR RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

As they have in the past, the people of the Hartford area can transform creative ideas for the riverfront into realities: to improve its navigability, to minimize the dangers of flooding, and to enhance its environmental quality and public use.

- In 1773, Hartford's leading merchant, Jaremiah Wadsworth, persuaded the Assembly to hold a lottery to raise money to improve Hartford's education.
- In 1836, the Union Company was chartered to manage cattle in order to clear the land and build [illegible].
- In 1837, merchants formed the Connecticut River Co. [illegible] to improve navigation.
- In [illegible], the Samuel Colt [illegible] first [illegible].
- In 1869, Charles Goodwin [illegible] money for [illegible] parks, including [illegible].
- [illegible] the existing [illegible] built on each [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

The Riverfront Today

The Connecticut River corridor looking south through Hartford and East Hartford.

THE SIX AND ONE-HALF MILE RIVERfront and its adjacent land offer opportunities for redevelopment unavailable elsewhere in the region. Inland from the dikes, highways and rail lines lie hundreds of acres of land, much of which is vacant or occupied by often conflicting and unsightly uses. The situation in East Hartford is similar. Few developments near the river capitalize on its special qualities. There is very little access between adjacent neighborhoods and the riverbanks. One has to talk to the area's older residents to begin to reconstruct a vision of past activity and economic strength surrounding the riverfront.

Appreciating the role that the river and adjacent land might play in the future of the Hartford region requires understanding the constraints and opportunities offered by each. There are good reasons why the river and the riverfront have become neglected—why public and private developers have stayed away.

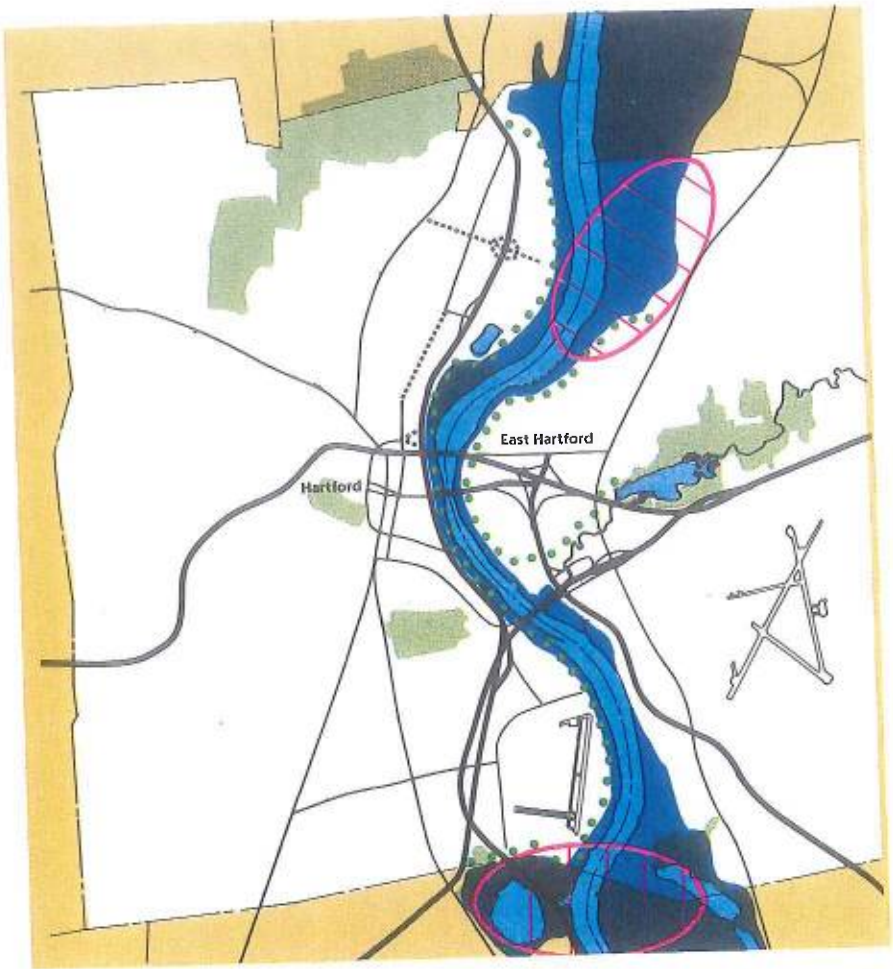
The difficulty of physically getting to the waterfront is one serious constraint. Much of the land on the river side of the dikes is frequently flooded, making it unsuitable for many kinds of development. Legislation aimed at protecting the fragile river-related environment further limits the range of possibilities in that area.

The scene, however, is changing. Developers and public officials have begun to look toward the river again. The new office buildings planned or under construction are the leading edge of a gathering tide. Highway planning, which until now has ignored the river, today promises to help make the water accessible once again.

New recreational opportunities will do much to reactivate the riverfront. But the creation of new housing, tourism, and industrial facilities or centers of employment which capitalize on the river's proximity is a crucial part of an overall "recapture" strategy.

Environmental Conditions

- Floodplain
- Sensitive Ecology
- Dike



The 100-year flood plain limits the development opportunities on the river side of the dikes.

The River Environment

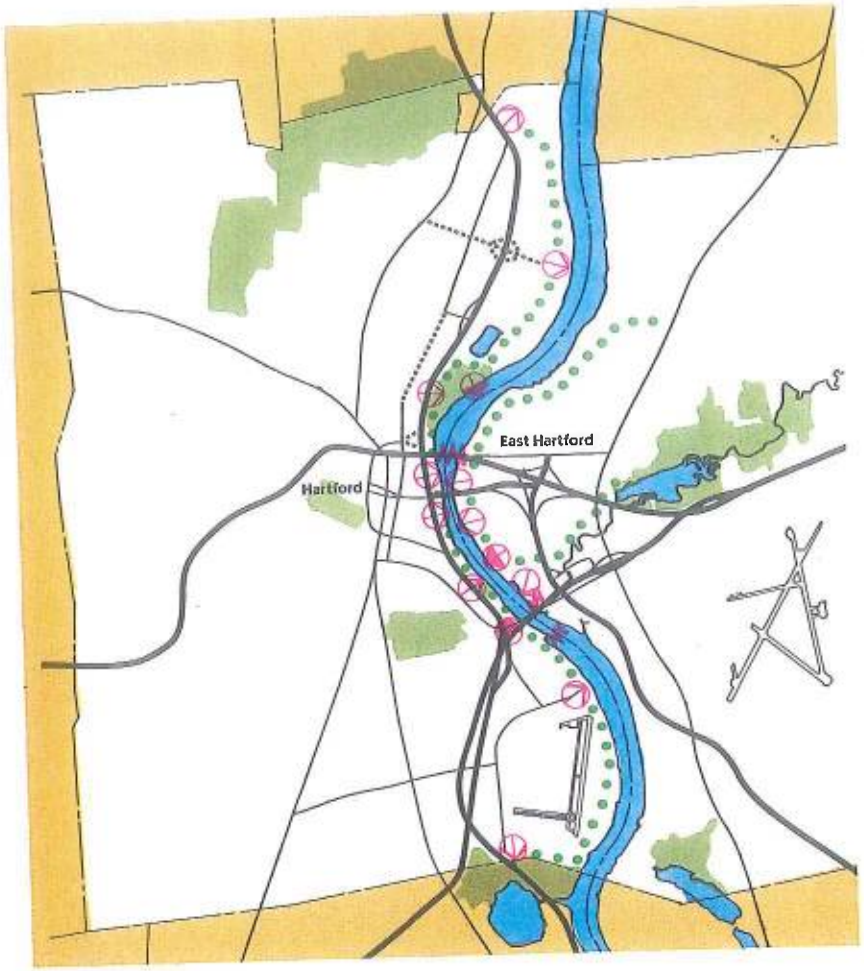
By far the most important environmental factor influencing future riverfront development is the Connecticut River's seasonal floods. Normally, the water rises and falls between 3 and 13 feet. However, in early spring (the period of greatest rainfall and snow melt), and in autumn (hurricane season) it can rise 38 feet or more.

After decades of disastrous floods, the dike systems in Hartford and East Hartford were constructed. Today, they eliminate the possibility of flood waters reaching existing development. They also define the "Channel Encroachment Lines." Beyond these lines only limited open space development is allowed by law. However, most of this land, lying between the river's edge and the dikes, floods only occasionally. It could therefore be used almost all year for recreation if developed with "flood-proof" facilities. Similar developments have been built in many other cities and towns. However, permanent buildings directly on the riverbank and outside the protection of the dikes are not feasible.

In addition to periodic flooding, the land alongside the river is an extremely sensitive environment. New development must be severely restricted where delicate natural areas can be damaged by people. The most important of these wildlife areas are near Hartford's north and south boundaries, adjacent to Wethersfield and Windsor. East Hartford's North and South Meadows are also important as wildlife habitats.

Seasonal flooding covers Riverside Park, but the dikes protect the rest of the city.

Existing and new ways to get to the river must be developed.



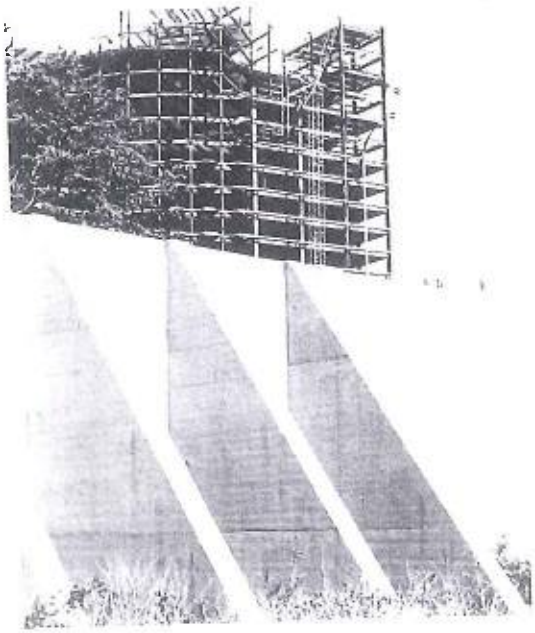
Access

- New Road Proposal
- Dike
- Barrier
- Existing Public Access
- Potential Public Acces

Access

You can't use the river if you can't get to it. To make the riverbank active again, frequent access points from neighborhood areas must be developed, along with uninterrupted walkways along the river's edge.

Hartford now has only three places where someone can get to the river with relative ease: the two public access points at Riverside Park and beneath the Charter Oak Bridge, and the service road under I-91 adjacent to the HELCO office building near the Colt Armory. In East Hartford, easy public access is limited to the boat landing site. To compound this problem, none of these access points has convenient connections from nearby neighborhoods.



Movement along the riverbank itself is also impeded. It is now impossible to walk along the water's edge from Riverside Park to Colt Park because of barriers such as the abutments of the Bulkeley Bridge.

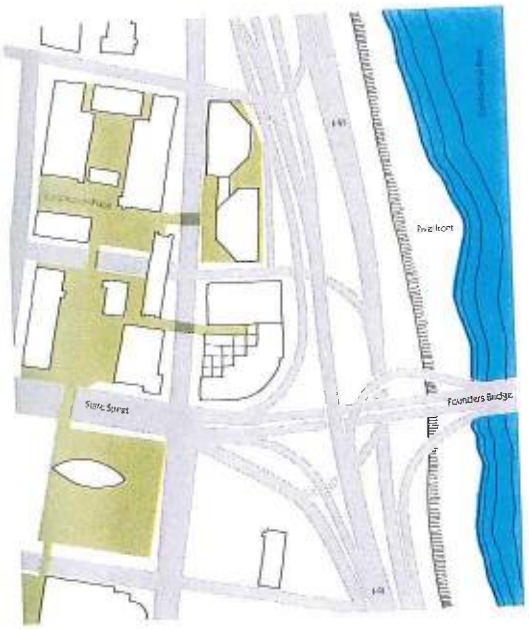
A number of opportunities for improved access have been identified:

- Highway planners propose lowering a downtown section of I-91 making possible pedestrian crossings to the riverfront.
- The new footbridge and highway interchange proposed for the North Meadows will make it easier to get to Riverside Park.
- Acquisition of rights-of-way near the Colt Factory and beneath the Charter Oak Bridge can create landscaped plazas or parking areas near existing access points.
- Points of access over the dike in the North and South Meadows will also be important.

These opportunities to be realized will require continuous citizen support: pressure on highway administrators, work with local public officials, and coordination of private participants.

New development is underi on the "safe side" of the dik

These diagrams show the existing I-91 highway conditions (left) and the proposed realignment of I-91 (right). The new plan creates two development sites, allows for walkways on Founders Bridge, opens vistas to and from the Old State House to the river, and makes plaza extensions to the river feasible.



Existing downtown highway

Proposed highway plan.

HOW TO REACH THE RIVER

EDITORIAL, *Hartford Courant*
April 21, 1982

The initial technical study by Riverfront Recapture, Inc. has led to a major discovery. The State Department of Transportation may be able to lower and realign the interstate highway that separates the city from the river. The RRI planning team worked with the city and state to produce a revised plan, which would allow a direct and visual connection to the river. The plan was endorsed by the Hartford City Council on April 12th, 1982. The following editorial ran in the ***Hartford Courant*** *following the Council's action.*

In the next weeks, the State Department of Transportation will decide whether the people of Hartford will finally be reunited with the Connecticut River.

What state highway planners once destroyed, can now be restored by the highway builders.

Consultants working for the corporate-funded Riverfront Recapture, Inc. have found a way to lower a section of highway, create new land for development and permit people to walk to the riverfront.

The proposal, endorsed by the Hartford City Council last week, would cost about $15 million. The new scheme would be used in place of highway improvements proposed by the state—if the transportation department agrees.

Today's highway builders, interested in restoring Hartford's historic link to the Connecticut River, improving the ill-conceived flow of traffic through the city's outskirts and in giving people access to the river, should adopt the plan.

Two highway ramps downtown would be eliminated. The elevated portion of I-91 South would be lowered to the same level as I-91 North and moved east.

Both highway segments would pass below the Founders Bridge.

This relocation of the highway would free land for commercial development on two new sites—an elevated walk from the riverfront. Buildings on those sites could be linked to Hartford Steam Boiler Inspection and Insurance Co.'s new corporate headquarters, to office buildings proposed by developers Richard Gordon and Harry B. Helmsley, to Constitution Plaza and the rest of downtown.

The historic view from the Old State House to the river would be obstructed only by the dike. People could contemplate the Connecticut from Constitution Plaza and from the broad, elevated walkways which would lead to the river.

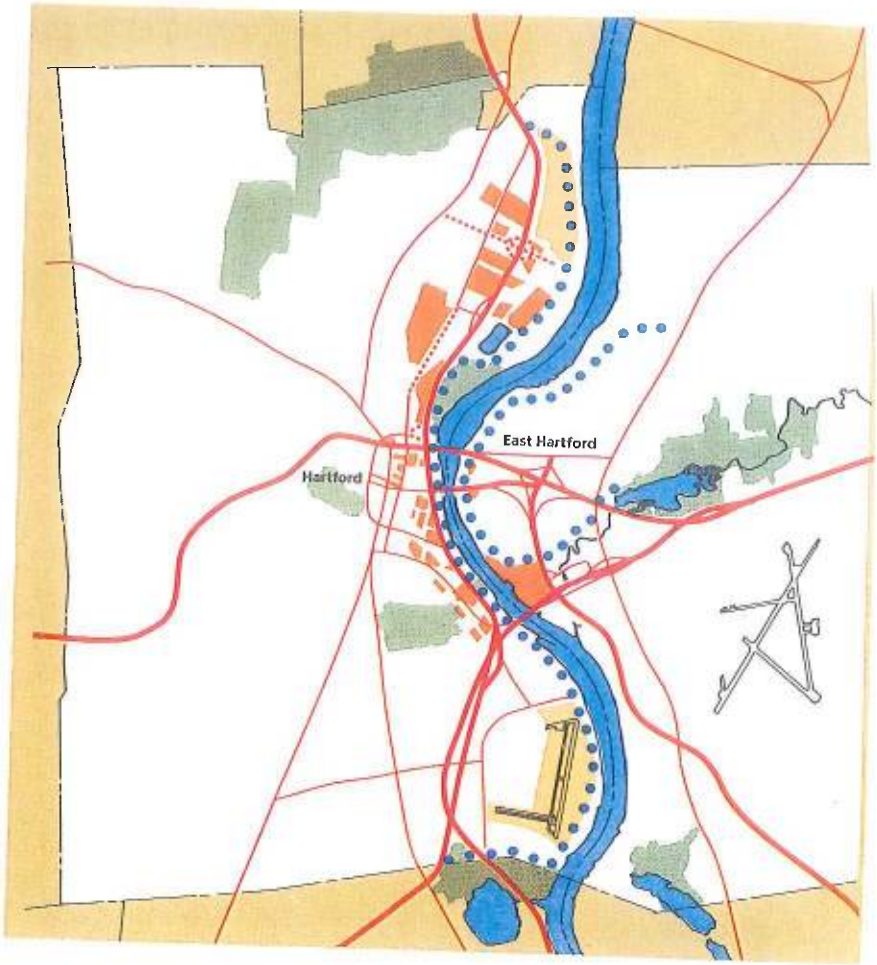
The plan would also divert interstate highway traffic from the downtown Founders Bridge to the Charter Oak Bridge farther downriver. If the Founders Bridge were no longer part of the interstate highway system, it could be used by pedestrians, as well as cars, and people could take steps from sidewalks to the river.

The scheme, at first, might sound as if it were concocted by a summertime dreamer snoozing on a riverbank. But consulting engineers have worked out the details on blueprints and the dream is attainable.

In Hartford and other cities built along rivers, first steamboats, then trains, then highways followed the waterway. Downtown Hartford's separation from its Connecticut riverbank has been especially severe because of the elevated highway and ramps and nightmarish I-84, I-91 interchange.

City Hall and the consultants have proposed a reconciliation—if the highway planners now make possible the link.

Many potential new development sites for jobs or housing have been identified adjacent to the riverfront.



Market Potential

- Development Sites (Short-Medium-Term)
- Development Sites (Long-Term)
- New Road Proposal
- Dike

Market Opportunities

The nature and pace of potential job and housing development depends on the market forces at work in the Hartford region. A review of current supply and demand factors for building space in the area leads to several conclusions about the potential for future growth.

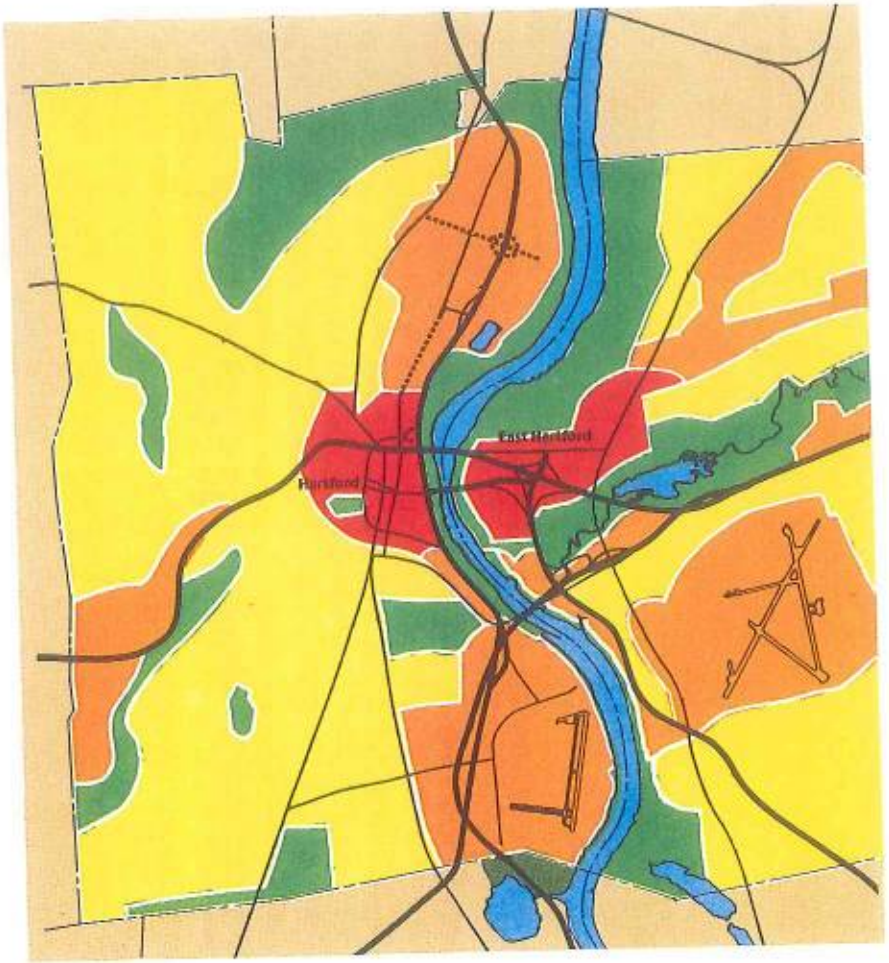
For office and hotel markets the supply of space for the next few years will be greater than the current demand. This could be healthy if the surplus space is used to attract firms and businesses not currently located in the Hartford region. In the late 1980s, demand for office and hotel space should increase, especially for prime sites with river views.

The City of Hartford has lost its prominence as a regional shopping center to suburban developments such as the West Farms Mall. In the future, downtown Hartford can be expected to address the shopping needs of the city as well as specialty shopping aimed at daytime office workers. A popular amenity such as downtown riverfront development will encourage the development of these retail markets.

The market for light industrial and office/research park growth in Hartford remains relatively strong. The preliminary riverfront inventory identified several potential sites. What is needed, especially in the North Meadows, is better access to the interstate highway system and an attractive package of management incentives and design amenities to attract quality users.

During the past several years there has been an increase in housing demand within the city. This has been spurred primarily by the growth in numbers of households but also by the desire of many new buyers or renters to live in the city rather than the suburbs. These factors apply both to market rate housing demand as well as the demand for assisted housing. Hartford has a valuable base of existing quality housing, so that renovation as well as new housing on empty sites will be an important future source of new units. Overall, the urban Hartford market has the potential for continued but gradual growth. Areas such as Dutch Point/Colt Park represent prime locations for bringing housing closer to the riverfront.

The riverfront can become a unifying link between downtown, neighborhoods and parks; it can also stimulate economic development, new housing and new jobs.



Land Use

- Central Business District
- Residential and Mixed-Use
- Open Space
- Industrial and Commercial

Public Commitment

People become committed to projects which they have helped plan and design.

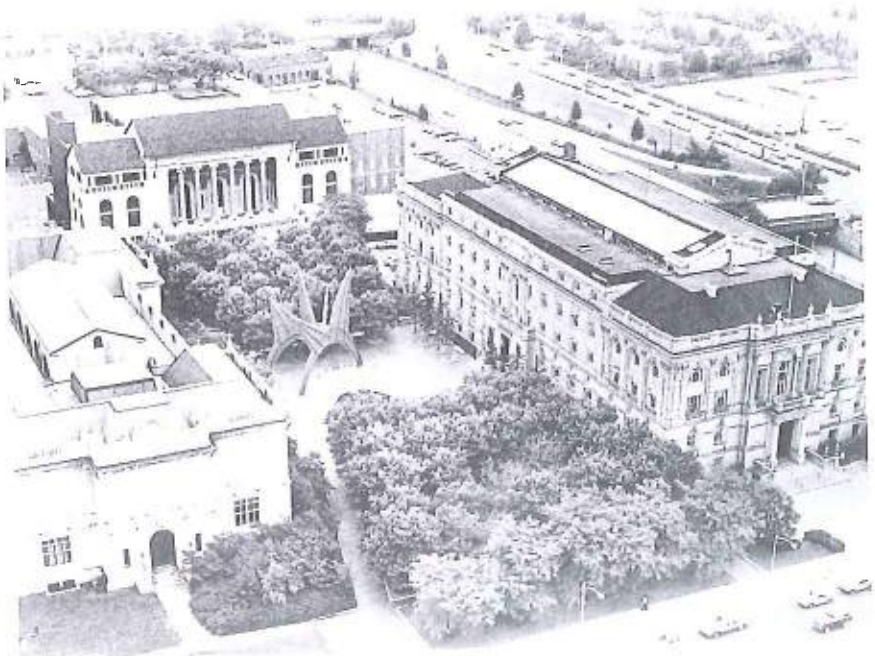
The physical, economic and organizational barriers to riverfront recapture will be overcome when Hartford and East Hartford citizens agree that the benefits are worth the effort. In cities throughout the country broad public support has enabled projects of similar potential to overcome all sorts of obstacles.

This GUIDE is the first step in the process of building public commitment. It describes existing conditions in the riverfront area: the major constraints and the development opportunities.

The next step will be to gather reactions and ideas from neighborhood residents, businessmen, downtown workers, and members of various civic clubs and organizations interested in the river. This public communication process must also involve elected representatives, such as the mayors and city council members, as well as city departments that support them.

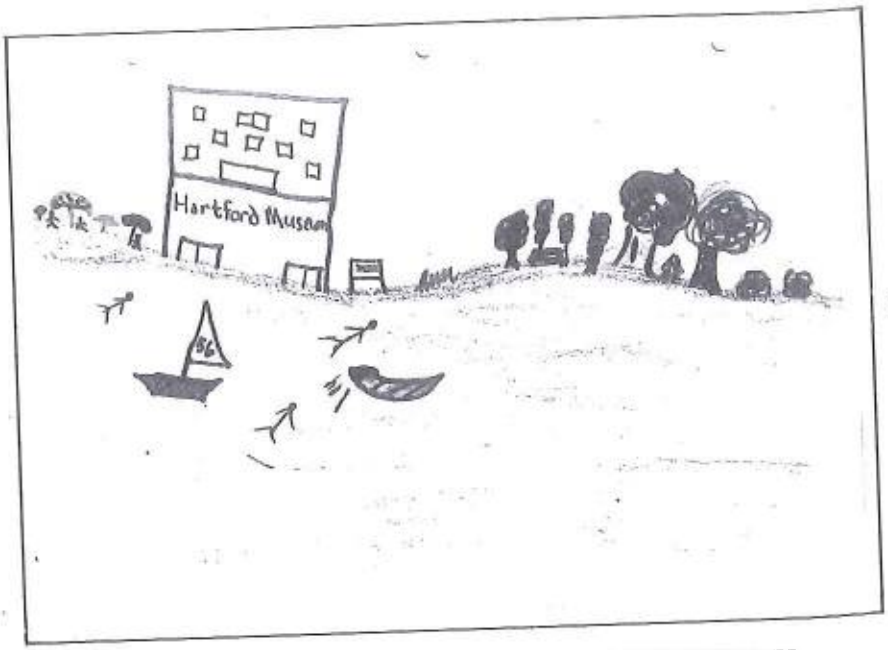
Finally, as design proposals evolve, incorporating a broad spectrum of ideas, the public must be involved in determining how they are to be carried out.

Hartford's City Hall is the focus of the city's long and impressive history of public and private cooperation to achieve community goals.



DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

The Connecticut River's edge and the developable land inside the protective dikes represent an "opportunity zone" which can help meet the three important regional needs: recreation, jobs and housing.



A NEW MUSEUM
Chiwanda Fulse, Student, Annie Fisher School

"The New Museum would be for people who do not have much time to go out to sea. It would have some types of sea creatures, shells and etc. There would be a gift shop with very low prices so everyone could buy something.

It is used for many different reasons such as sights and to see way out into the water. It would help by having people rent boats to go out onto the water to find special things that they saw in the museum. It will cost 50¢ to tour the building for everyone. It is fifty feet away from the river for people to have plenty of room to walk along the beach."

THE CONNECTICUT RIVER ITSELF provides a strong framework for linking river-related recreation, job, and housing opportunities. It is a unifying element to be widely shared.

A new waterfront park is therefore suggested. Its focus would be the "Riverwalk": a continuous pedestrian and bicycle route, linking neighborhoods and downtown commercial developments as well as Hartford and East Hartford.

From the Windsor Meadows to Wethersfield Cove, the riverwalk would provide continuous public access along the length of Hartford's riverfront. The views both of Hartford and the river, and facilities and activities at major access points, could make the riverfront an attractive and active area.

Recreation
Activities, Open Space, and Education

The greatest opportunity the river and its immediately adjacent land offer is for recreation. The lure of waterfronts has been demonstrated again and again. As if drawn by a magnet, people flock to waterfronts to swim, boat, fish, stroll, or just relax.

For the Connecticut riverfront to become a useful, clean, and safe recreation resource, certain prerequisites have to be met. Access must be improved, for the river will become an attractive and vital place only when you can easily make a visit: at lunchtime, after school, or during a pleasant autumn weekend. New places and facilities are needed, including paths, sitting areas, docks and piers for fishing and boating, concessions from which to buy lunch, cycling and jogging trails, and viewing points. Riverfront activities can range from touch football and Frisbees to programs of environmental education focussed on the river ecology. The development of the riverfront as a major regional park will make such facilities and activities available to everyone.

Jobs
Commercial and Industrial Employment

Land in the original floodplain, which is now protected by dikes, represents a prime opportunity to create new jobs.

On the Hartford side of the river the North and South Meadows are major land resources. Both have potential highway access and visibility, are within minutes of downtown Hartford, and are already serviced by utilities. Both areas already have an employment base. The connection between development projects and riverfront recreation adds to the attractiveness and the value of each. In short, this land is ideal for light industrial and office/research development.

The North Meadows has 150-175 acres of undeveloped or underutilized land. Much of this land lacks a consistent image and good access. Planned improvements to I-91 and the Market Street/Weston Street connector will help. If at least 150 acres can be developed for light industry and office research use, up to 3000 jobs would result.

In the Colt Park area, there are a number of likely sites for commercial/office development. The Colt factory itself is ripe for renovation. The marketability of these projects will be greatly enhanced by improving the river's accessibility across the highway.

The South Meadows area is largely developed. However, should Brainard Field become available for development, Hartford would gain a major new 200-acre tract. Intensive development for light industrial/office research could create up to 4000 new jobs.

Housing
Residential Development in River-Related Neighborhoods

The development of the riverfront as a major recreation amenity will accelerate the market in adjacent neighborhoods for urban housing. Improved access to adjacent riverfront parks and activities will also make these neighborhoods a nicer place to live for current residents.

There is a strong potential for 400 to 500 units of low-density housing within walking distance of downtown in the Dutch Point area near Colt Park. The publicly assisted, elderly, rental, and private housing already there provides the basis for neighborhood continuity as new housing is added. This neighborhood would have ready access to the riverfront via existing connections north and south of the Colt Building.

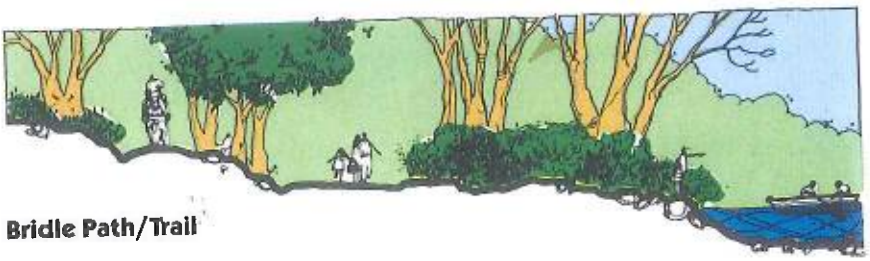
The Clay-Arsenal neighborhood is also within walking distance of the river. Clay-Arsenal can remain connected to the riverfront if a new, wider, and better-lighted pedestrian bridge over I-91 to Riverside Park is built to replace the existing bridge, which will be demolished when the highway is widened.

In East Hartford, there is the potential for a major riverfront residential development directly north of the Charter Oak Bridge. The site could include commercial development and a marina.

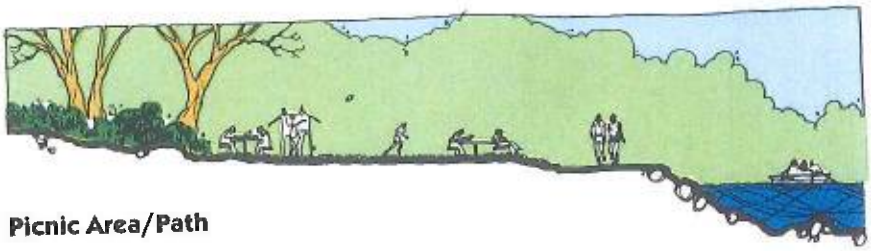
Other neighborhoods in North, Central, and South Hartford and in East Hartford are farther away from the river, but they would also benefit from a major park only a short bicycle or auto ride away.

The Riverwalk Concept

An Idea to Begin Recapture



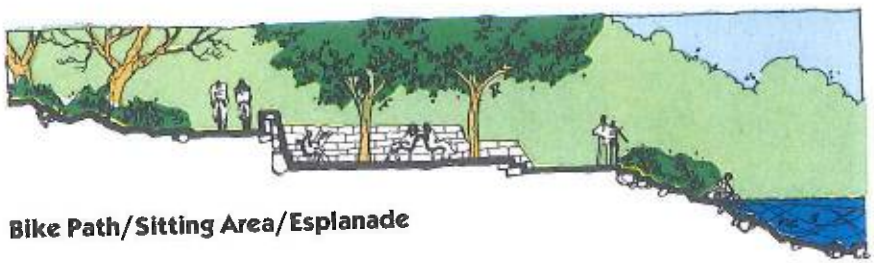
Bridle Path/Trail



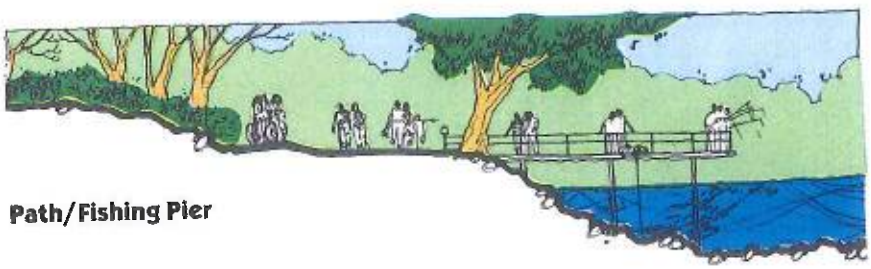
Picnic Area/Path

HARTFORD'S EXISTING PARK SYSTEM was largely created by Francis Goodwin over a relatively short time in the 19th Century. Parks including Keney, Colt, Pope, Goodwin and Rocky Ridge serve the neighborhoods, with Bushnell Park serving as Hartford's central park. Goodwin, however, did not achieve his goal of connecting the parks with wide, landscaped boulevards. A continuous riverwalk can become one such link, connecting Keney, Riverside, and Colt Parks and the Folly Brook natural area adjacent to Wethersfield Cove. The riverwalk, a relatively low-maintenance open-space system, would use the dike and existing river bank. The Charles River embankment and the Fenway Park system in Boston are examples of such a pedestrian-oriented development system.

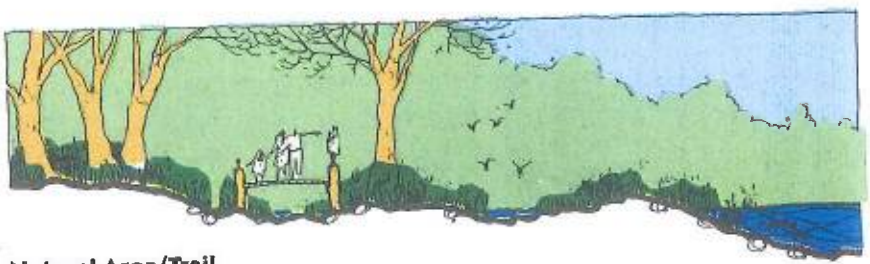
In the central area, the riverwalk could be a tree-lined, paved esplanade along the water's edge, linking Riverside Park to Colt Park. It would be wide enough to accommodate pedestrians, bicycles, ice cream vendors, and maintenance vehicles. The two points of existing public access (Riverside Park and the Colt Park area beneath the Charter Oak Bridge) can be improved and



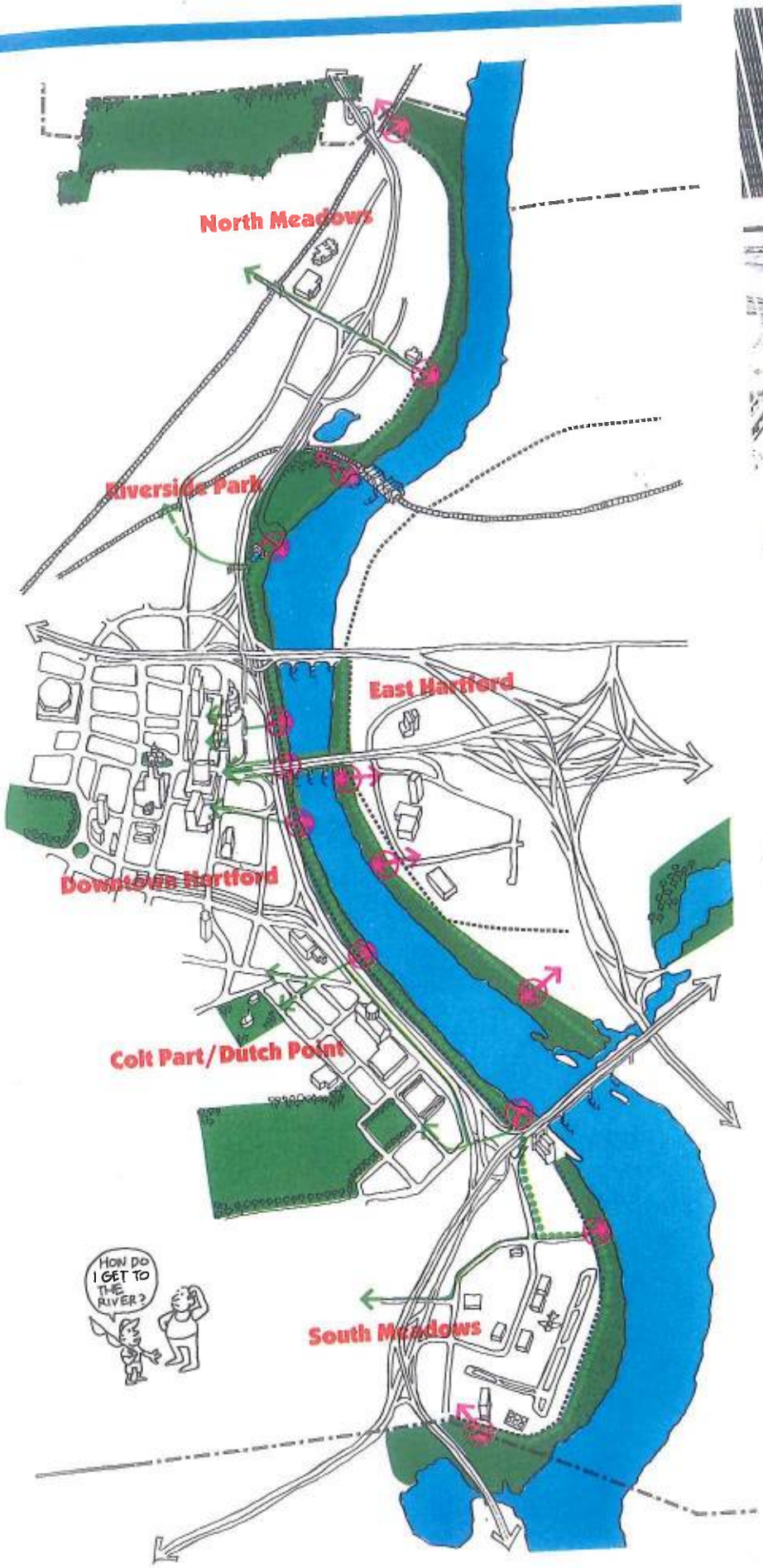
Bike Path/Sitting Area/Esplanade

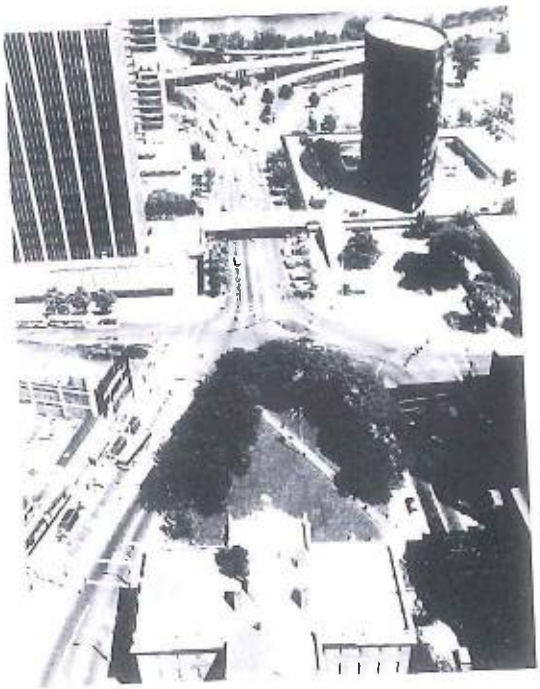


Path/Fishing Pier



Natural Area/Trail





Riverwalk Concept

- Riverwalk
- Neighborhood Connections
- Access Points
- Dike

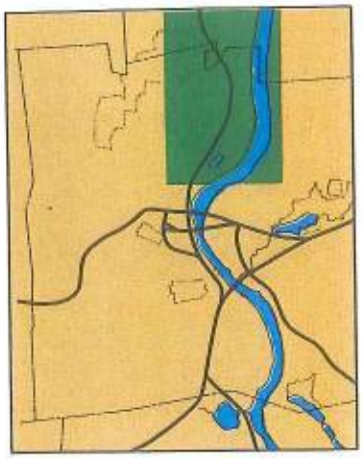
additional intermediate connections added. At these points, major riverfront projects could include an amphitheater, concessions, and boat landings. Elsewhere along the riverwalk, quieter activities could take place, such as picnicking and fishing.

On the East Hartford bank, a parallel riverwalk could reach from the Bulkeley Bridge south to the Hockanum River. The possibility of sidewalk development along Founders Bridge, in conjunction with the removal of interstate traffic, could link the Hartford and East Hartford riverwalks into one network.

Links from the river to existing neighborhoods are equally important parts of the riverwalk idea: landscaped boulevards flanked by new residential or employment-generating development could provide attractive connections between current urban areas and the new riverfront recreation resource.

Following are discussions of specific opportunities identified for each of the six action areas along the river: the North Meadows, Riverside Park, Downtown Hartford, East Hartford, Dutch Point/Colt Park, and the South Meadows.

North Meadows



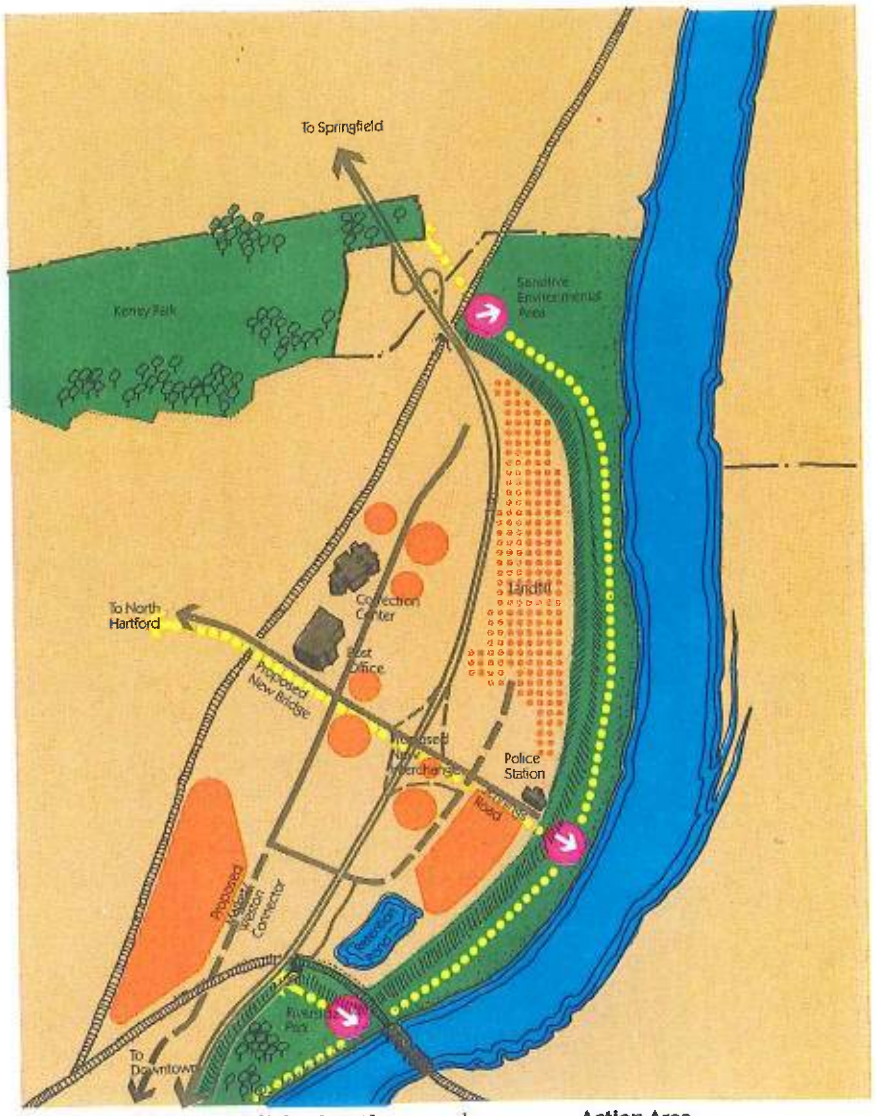
HARTFORD'S "NORTH MEADOWS" IS THE northernmost area of the riverfront. Between the river's edge and the North Hartford neighborhoods a half mile to the west is flat, low-lying land which was once part of the river floodplain. The protective earth-berm dike now divides the area into the flood-prone, tree-lined river's edge and an adjacent partially developed "opportunity zone" bisected by Interstate 91.

Planning in the North Meadows area can focus on designing low-intensity recreational activities along the water's edge, as well as encouraging the development of additional employment sites between the dike and adjacent neighborhoods. The links between these areas—the points at which access to the river will enhance the development potential of adjacent land—are crucially important.

River's Edge

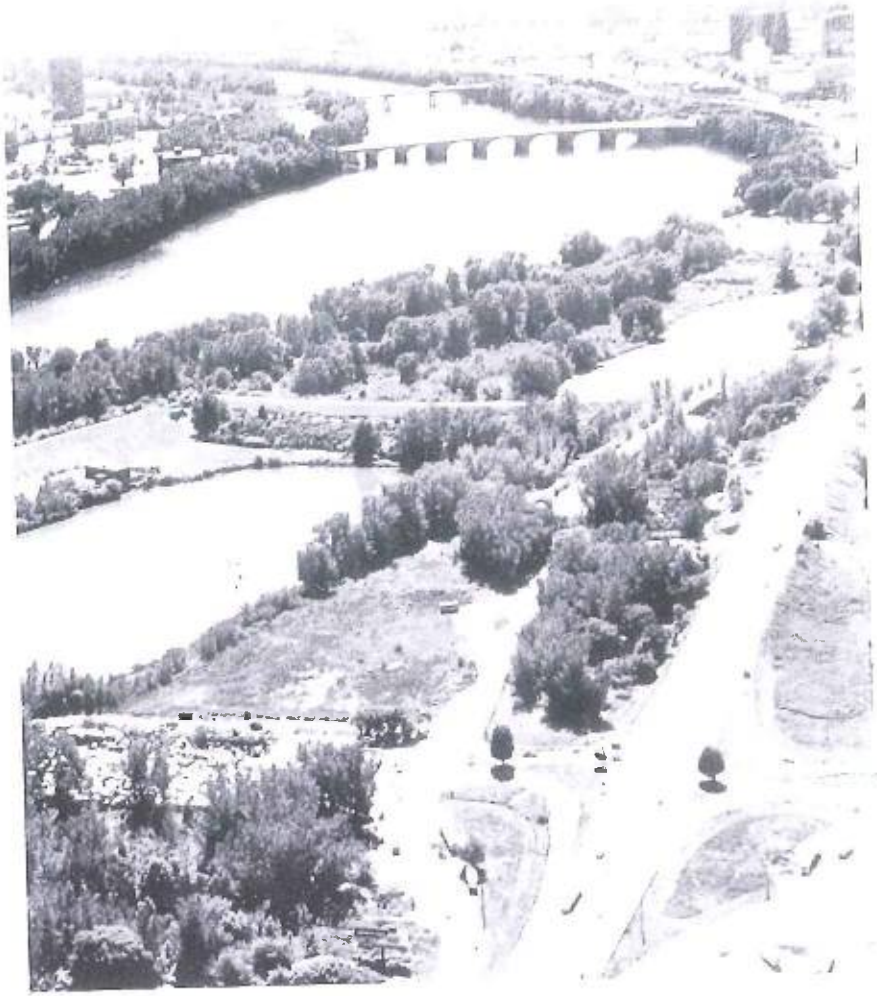
Along the river, extending the riverwalk from the central esplanade to the south would provide an informal pedestrian pathway following the dike and water's edge from Riverside Park to Windsor Meadows at the northern city limits. At present, there is no access across the dike to the river. However, future access could be established at three main places:

- In the south, from the upper edge of Riverside Park;
- In the center, over the dike near the Jennings Road police facility (Jennings Road is proposed for extension westward into North Hartford);
- In the north, adjacent to the I-91 interchange near Keney Park.



Action Area

- Riverwalk Neighborhood Connections
- Access Points
- Development Sites (Short-Medium-Term)
- Development Sites (Long-Term)



The North Meadows area looking south.

The North Meadows Opportunity Zone

In the "opportunity zone" protected by the dike there is much land available for development but few ways to get to it. The single interstate highway interchange is now the only way in or out of the area.

This has resulted in a series of unrelated and isolated uses, such as the Federal Post Office, the jai-alai complex, a highway-related hotel, the community correctional center, and facilities for Hartford's police, fire, and public works departments. Other users, including a city bus maintenance facility, are looking at potential sites in the area. City-sponsored redevelopment efforts to attract private industrial and office development have been hampered by delays in road and highway improvements.

When and how major access improvements take place will play a major part in the feasibility of future development. Specific plans that will affect the North Meadows area include:

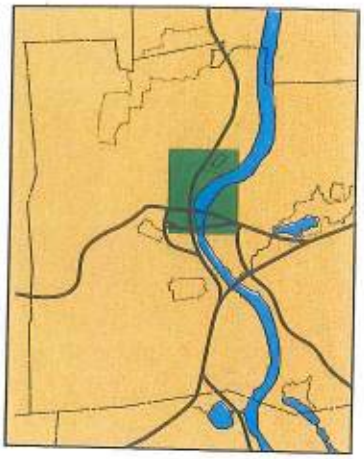
- A new I-91 interchange at Jennings Road replacing the current poorly-located on and off ramps, allowing better regional access to development sites;
- The extension of Jennings Road across the rail tracks to North Hartford, linking future employment development to existing neighborhoods;
- The extension of Weston Street to Market Street to the south, connecting new development with downtown.

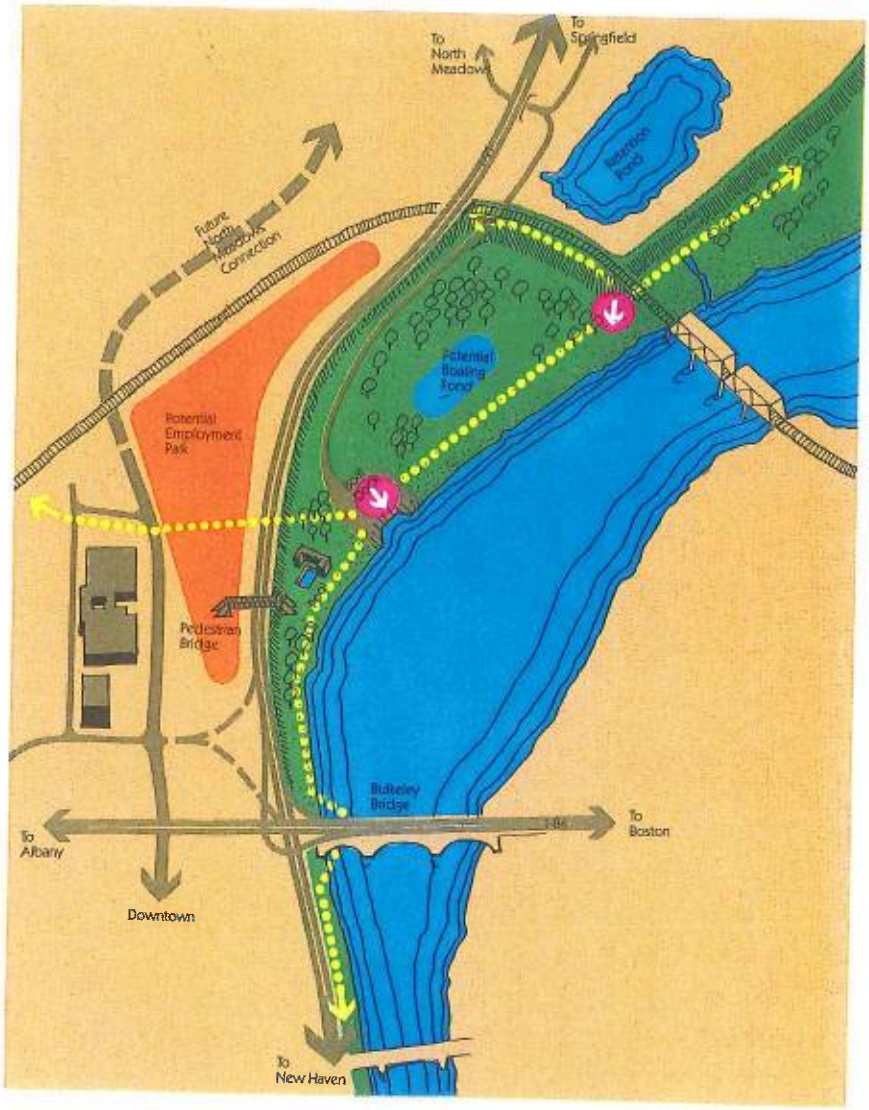
More than 150 acres will be opened up by these transportation improvements, not including possible reuse of the landfill site north of the police station. Major strips of developable land flanking I-91, Jennings Road, and the proposed Weston Street/Market Street connector could provide a major increase in office or industrial jobs.

The opportunities available in coordinated planning for these potential new jobs must be carefully studied.

An important approach is to carefully define the types of new products or services needed in Hartford and the region and to develop a public/private program to seek out or establish businesses to meet this demand. For example, the increasing need for data-processing services points to the need for both new "high tech" industries or computer facilities and for new training programs.

Riverside Park Area





Action Area

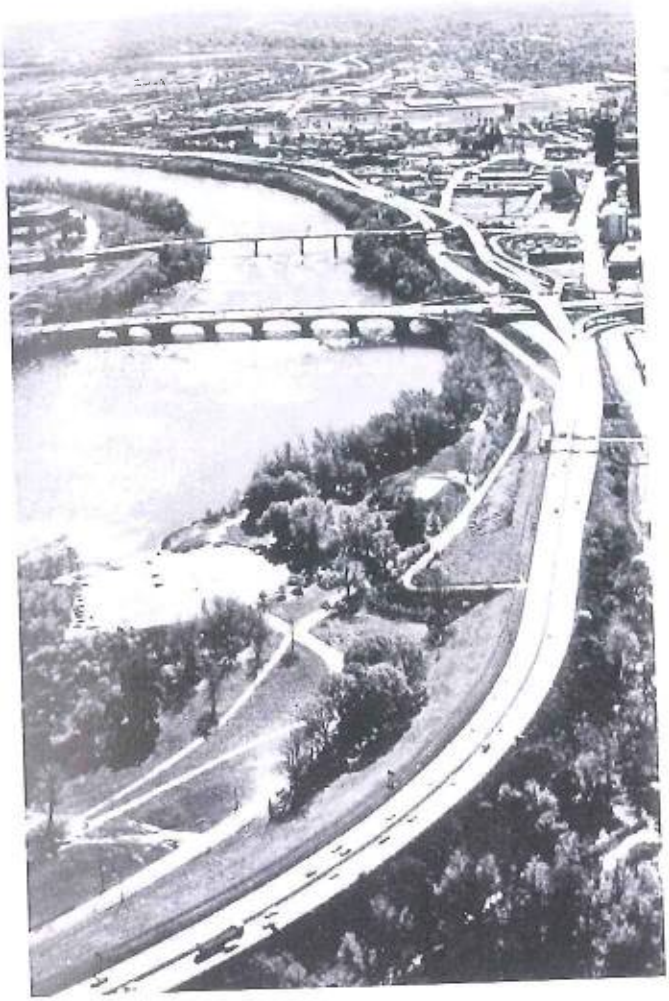
- Riverwalk Neighborhood Connections
- Access Points
- Development Sites (Short-Medium-Term)

DIRECTLY BELOW THE NORTH Meadows area is Riverside Park, Hartford's only existing river-related recreation area. Although hard to get to, lightly used, and poorly maintained, the park is a valuable resource. Farther inland, across the dike and interstate highway, is an approximately 75-acre area along the route of the proposed Weston Street/Market Street connector. This area, now occupied by freight rail lines and scattered office or light industrial buidings, is another "opportunity zone" for potential office, industrial or retail development. Once access is improved, it represents a series of prime building sites.

The successful renewal of Riverside Park depends on improvements not only to the park but also to this adjacent area: new recreation facilities will be provided where they are needed by potential users.

Potential Park Improvements

Riverside Park would be the northern "anchor" to the suggested central riverfront pedestrian esplanade. Developed in 1895, the 51-acre park has always been more of a passive open-space resource than an active recreation center. One reason is environmental: being on the river side of the dike, the



Riverside Park area looking south along I-91.

park is vulnerable to flooding. Another reason is poor access: there is only one entry for automobiles (from the interstate highway service road to the north), and pedestrians can now enter only by the long footbridge over I-91 in the south part of the park. Existing facilities include a boat-launching area, ballfields and a City swimming pool which is badly in need of repair. The park is primarily used for more passive activities such as fishing or picnicking.

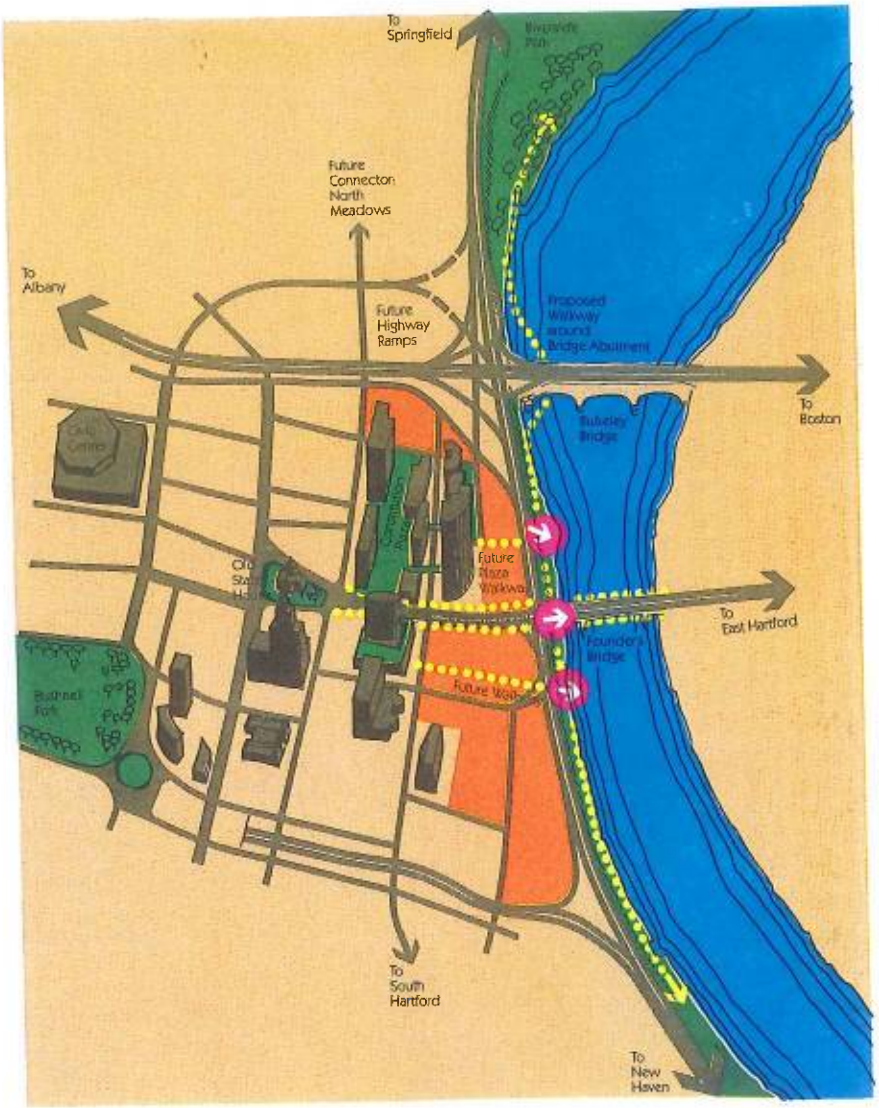
Access improvements to the park are necessary parts of any strategy for redevelopment:

- Automobile and bus access from North Hartford and downtown will improve when planned street connections and highway intersections are constructed.
- A relocated pedestrian bridge, planned with respect to new adjacent development, could be attractively designed, well-lighted, shorter in length, and better related to potential park facilities.

In the park itself, given the important constraints of flooding and access, a further series of possibilities have been identified;

- A complex of seasonal flood-resistant recreation facilities, including a small concession/restaurant, fishing pier and improved boat-landing ramp.
- A rebuilt and rehabilitated swimming pool.
- A ten-acre boating pond, similar to those of Boston Commons or New York's Central Park, with adjacent rowboat rental and food concessions.
- Picnic sites and sports fields adjacent to the pond.

Downtown Hartford



THE HISTORIC DOWNTOWN RIVERfront has been severely affected by highway development, flood control, and urban renewal. To be sure, many of these changes have helped to transform downtown Hartford into a thriving, modern urban center. Yet something has been lost as well—a sense of history, a framework of buildings and open space to allow the Hartford resident or visitor to imagine the city as it once was: a bustling port, founded on river commerce.

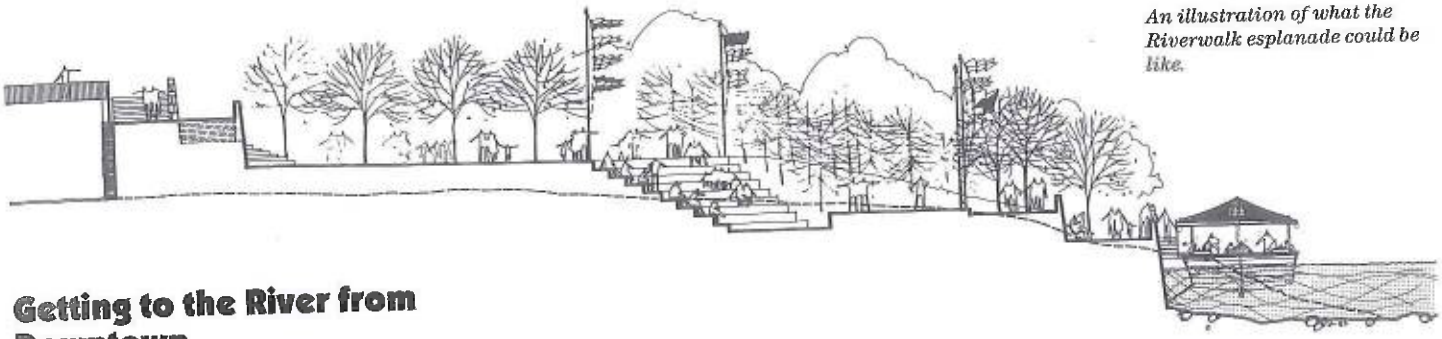
The downtown riverbank is now a thin strip of flood-prone land averaging 120 feet in width, separated from adjacent development by a 30-foot-high concrete dike, a rail line, and the mutli-level interstate highway. Beyond these barriers is an area one block wide which contains the remaining downtown sites for riverfront development.

In many respects, the riverfront in downtown Hartford is technically the most challenging part of riverfront recapture. The barriers seem almost insurmountable, yet access to the river from this central point is essential to link the north and south anchors of the riverwalk. Although formidable, the roadway, rail line, and dike can be bridged: their close proximity minimizes the distance to be overcome, and the adjacent Constitution Plaza elevation can be a take-off point for a series of overpasses or decks.

Action Area

- Riverwalk Neighborhood Connections
- Access Points
- Development Sites (Short-Medium-Term)

The riverfront through downtown Hartford.



An illustration of what the Riverwalk esplanade could be like.

Getting to the River from Downtown

A major opportunity now exists for overcoming the barriers to access downtown: the state's current plans to revise the interstate highway network in that area. Currently, the road system is a maze of at-grade and above-grade lanes, bridge connections, and entry and exit ramps.

However, state plans, prepared at the urging of the City Council and with the assistance of the Riverfront Team, propose to reconstruct both the north and the southbound lanes at ground level and relocate them as close to the dike as possible. Along with additional ramp removal, these improvements would make possible overpass pedestrian walkways or decks leading to the riverfront. The improvements would also create up to 3.8 acres of new taxable land on property previously used for highway ramps and bridges as well as opportunities for building on air-rights over the relocated highway. These represent prime new building sites facing the river.

If the highway plan proceeds, State Street will take on a new role: it would be not only a local automobile link between Hartford and East Hartford via Founders Bridge but also could become a major ceremonial pedestrian link between downtown Hartford and its riverfront. Starting at the Old State House, pedestrians could walk down a landscaped boulevard, past Constitution Plaza, to sidewalks along the bridge leading over the highway, rail line, and dike. Stairs from the bridge would then connect directly to the riverfront.

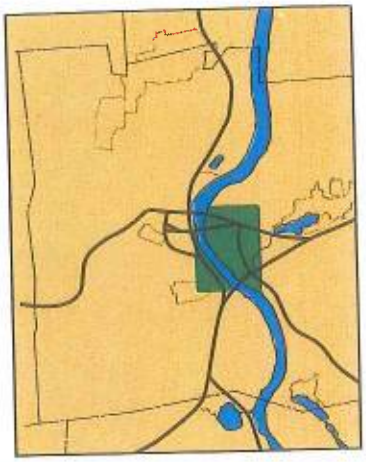
Parallel walkway extensions from Constitution Plaza could also provide pedestrian links to the riverfront. These extensions could cross the plaza level of new Columbus Boulevard developments, continuing over the highway and dike to the water's edge.

The Downtown River's Edge

Flooding will not allow buildings outside the dike. Facilities such as an amphitheater and riverboat dock, however, could provide the setting for a variety of events and activities. Restaurants and other entertainment facilities overlooking the river's edge behind or atop the dike could also be major attractions.

A series of walkway links between downtown and the riverfront would make possible lunchtime and weekend strolls. Connections north to Riverside Park, south to Colt Park, and across the river to East Hartford would provide additional attractions.

East Hartford

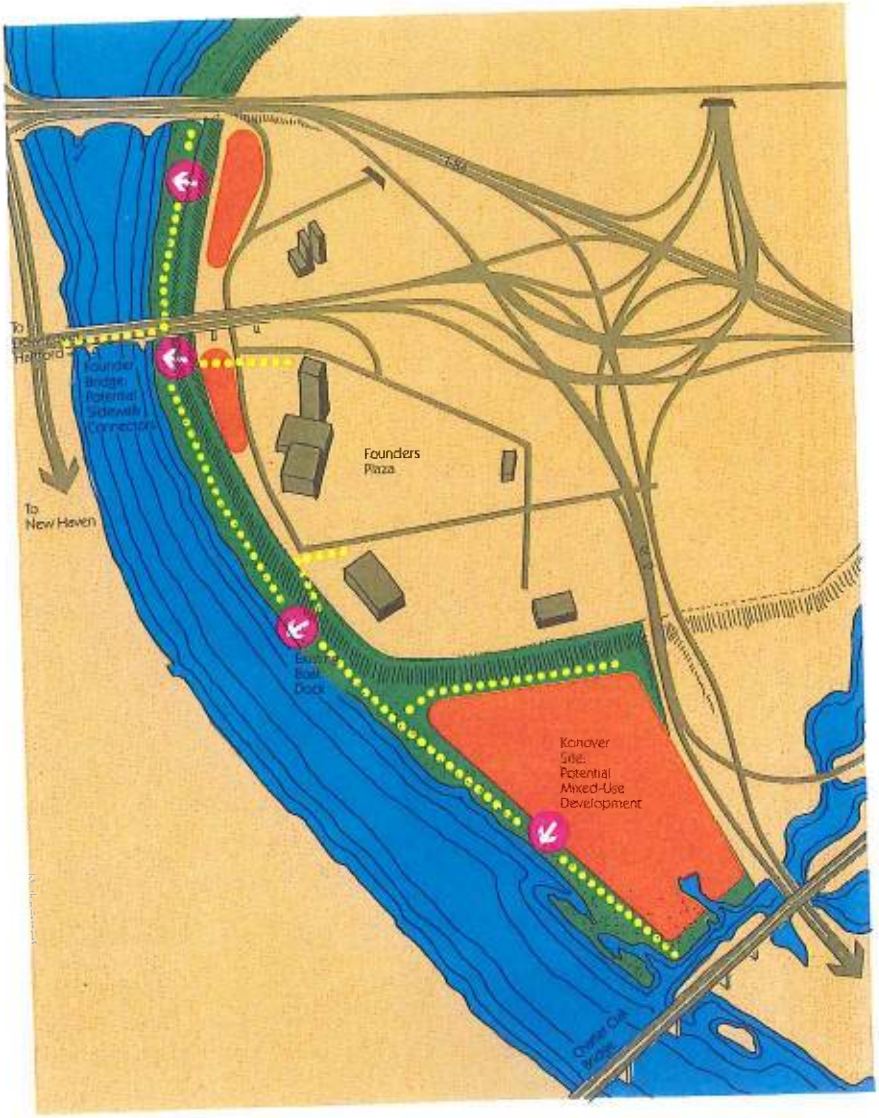


Action Area

Riverwalk Neighborhood Connections

Access Points

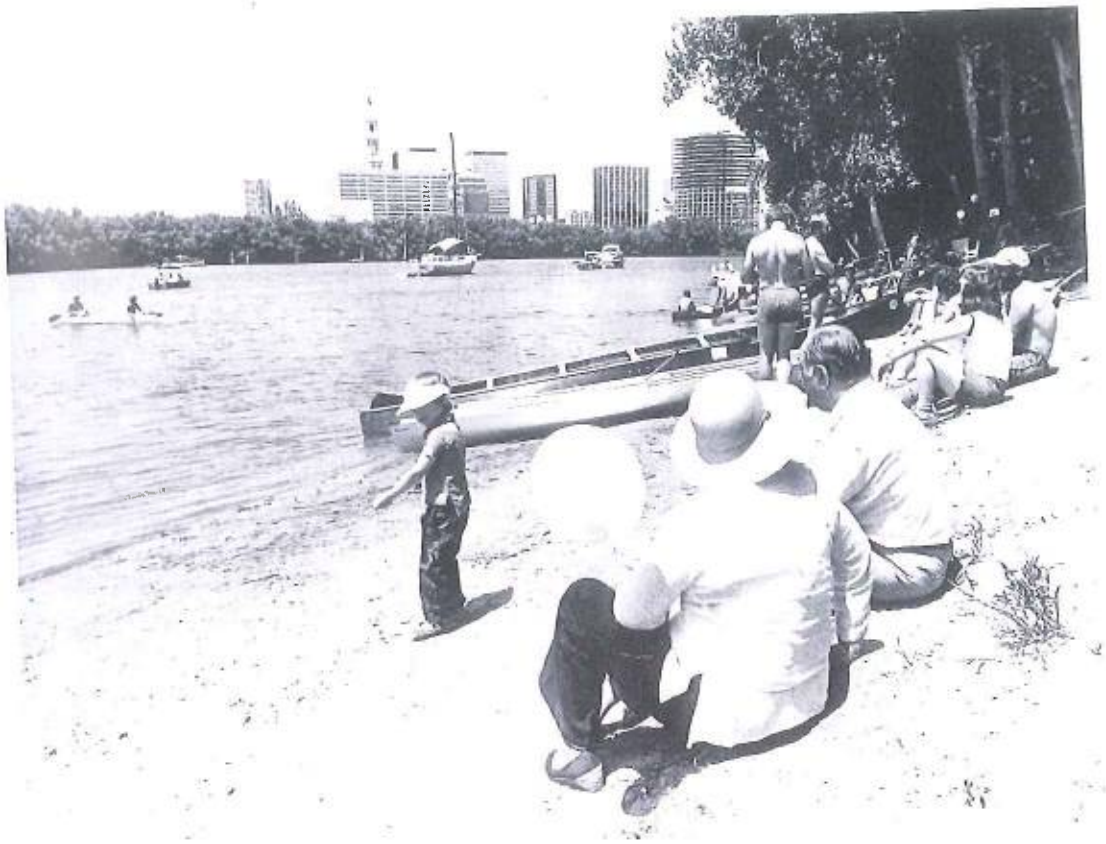
Development Sites (Short- Medium-Term)



AS IN HARTFORD, EAST HARTFORD'S riverfront can be divided into three zones: the North Meadows, the central area and the South Meadows. The North and South Meadows were historically unprotected from flooding and for the most part are vacant or sparsely developed. However, the central area behind the dike is extensively developed for industry, office, and other commercial uses. Significant new development is taking place at Founder's Plaza, an urban renewal area located between the highway "mixmaster" interchange and the river. New development in this area includes a Ramada Inn and high-rise and low-rise offices surrounded by extensive at-grade parking.

An East Hartford segment of the riverwalk could be adjacent to this developed area which is directly across the river from Hartford's downtown business district. Major potential development sites exist at either end of this section:

- At the north end, a six-acre site between the Bulkeley and Founder's Bridges is currently proposed for office and commercial development. Adjacent to this tract is a two-acre site south of the Founder's Bridge.



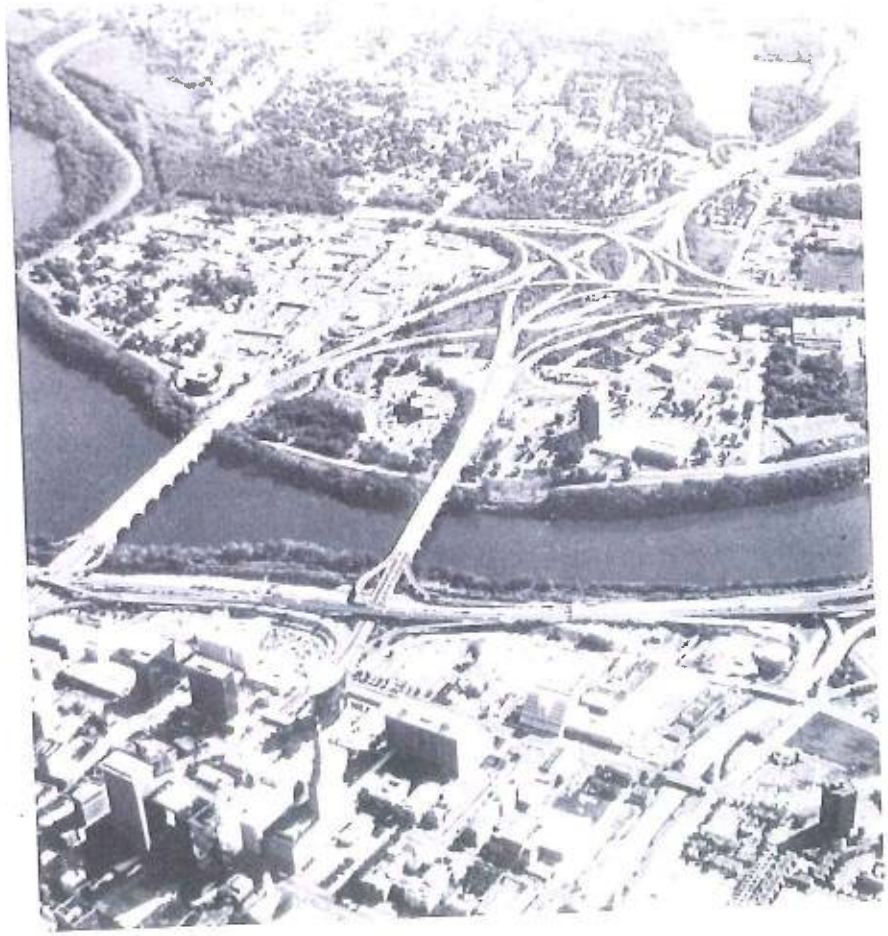
The East Hartford boat landing attracts large crowds only on special occasions like July 4th.

A view of East Hartford from the river to the "mix-master" highway interchange.

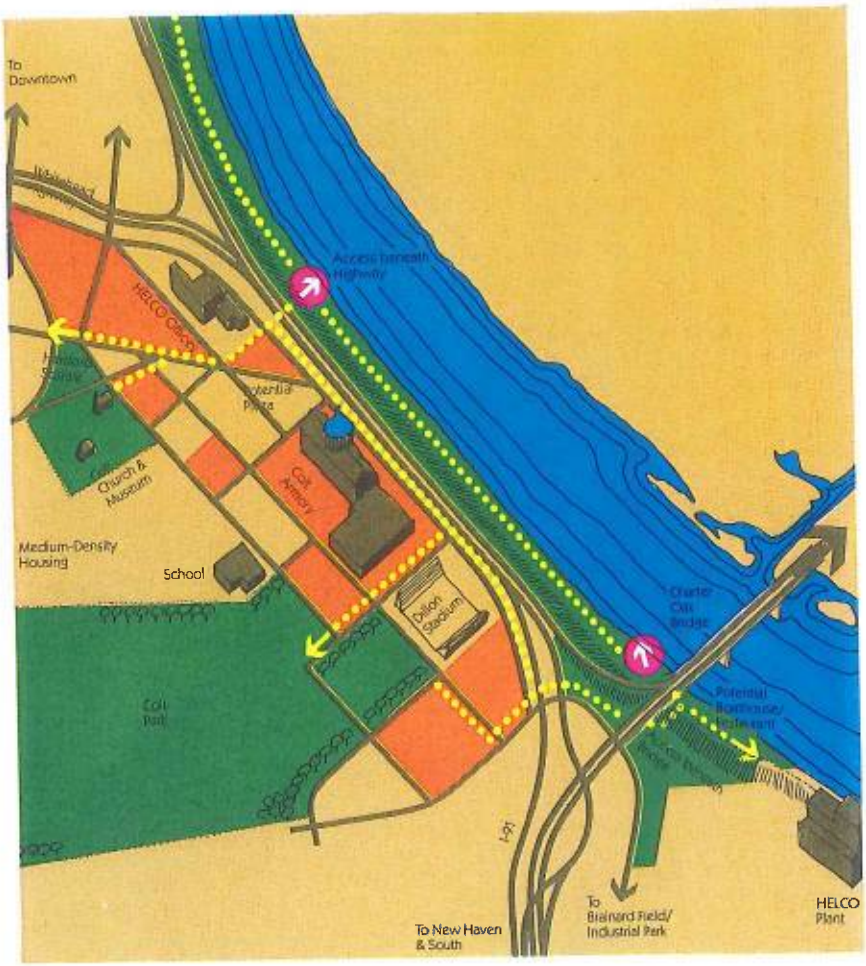
- At the southern end, a 50-acre privately owned tract flanked by additional HELCO-owned land represents the only large development site in the area with direct access to the river. This area has the potential for an attractive mixed-use project including housing, offices, and a marina.

The suggested pedestrian esplanade would link these two sites with a landscaped spine of continuous public access, reaching from the Bulkeley Bridge to the Hockanum River. The only current riverfront access is in the center of this stretch, at the existing boat-landing site.

The possibility of sidewalk development along the Founder's Bridge, in conjunction with removal of interstate traffic, would link the Hartford and East Hartford riverwalks into one network.



Dutch Point/Colt Park



THE DUTCH POINT/COLT PARK AREA, the mixed-use district directly south of downtown, is bounded on the north by the Whitehead Highway and on the south by Colt Park and extends about a half-mile west from the river.

The riverfront in this area is a thin strip of land cut off from the city by highway and dike development. However, two existing points of access and a variety of development opportunities in adjacent areas make the Dutch Point/Colt Park district a key element in any development strategy.

Dutch Point North

This area, centering on Charter Oak Avenue and Wyllys Street, contains many current renovation projects, including the "Hartford Square" office developments as well as adjacent housing for the elderly.

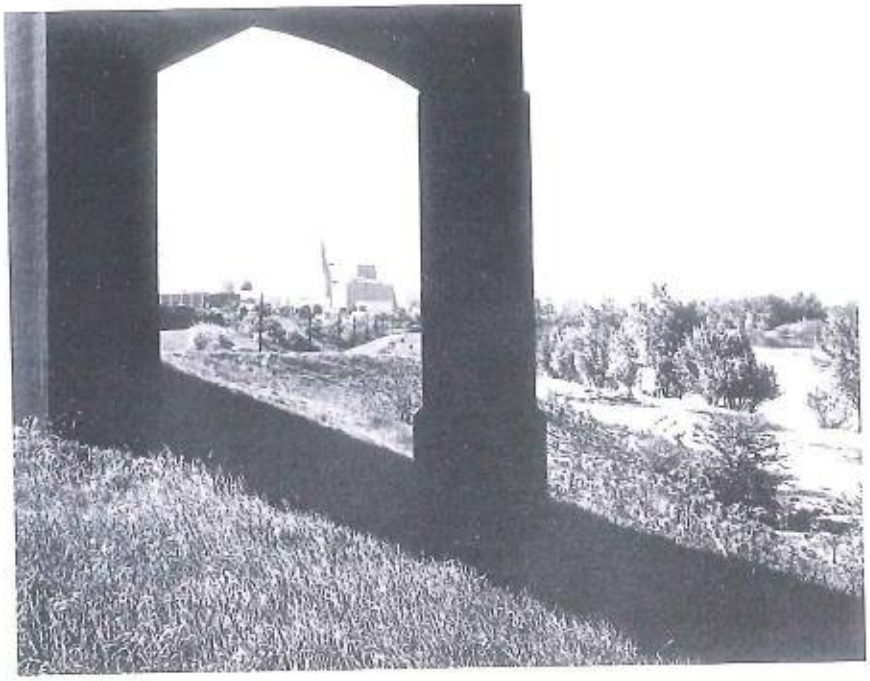
North of the Colt Plant, the existing maintenance passage beneath I-91 could link this development activity with the riverfront. Access could be emphasized by creating adjacent landscaped parks or walkways leading to this point. For example, an attractive riverfront "entry park" could be created on the adjacent lot, now used as a storage area, south of the HELCO building. At the same time, planting and pedestrian paving could be established on Charter Oak Avenue, Wyllys Street, or other local streets leading to the park.

Longer-term development in these areas will help reinforce these corridors. As an example, Hartford Square offices will be strengthened by the proposed residential/office project proposed directly to the north. The present HELCO parking lot to the east will then be the final remaining key parcel for future housing or mixed-use development, improving the corridor to the river.

Action Area

- Riverwalk Neighborhood Connections
- Access Points
- Development Sites (Short-Medium-Term)

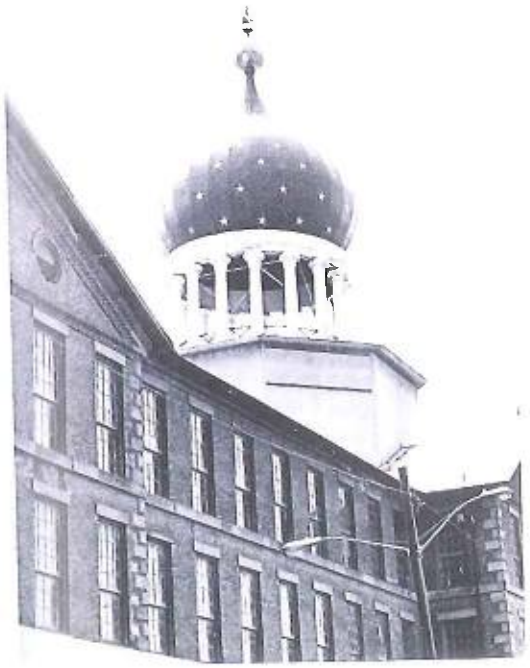
View of the Colt Park areas.



The area under Charter Oak Bridge has ample space for park development.

Colt Factory Area

South of Dutch Point is the Colt Factory. The onion-domed Armory building has strong potential for long-term reuse for either offices or housing. This would help reinforce the renovation of residential units and other proposed development now occurring behind the plant.

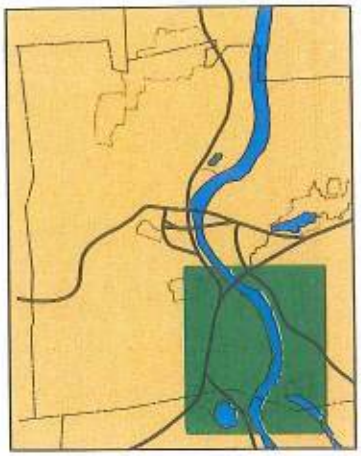


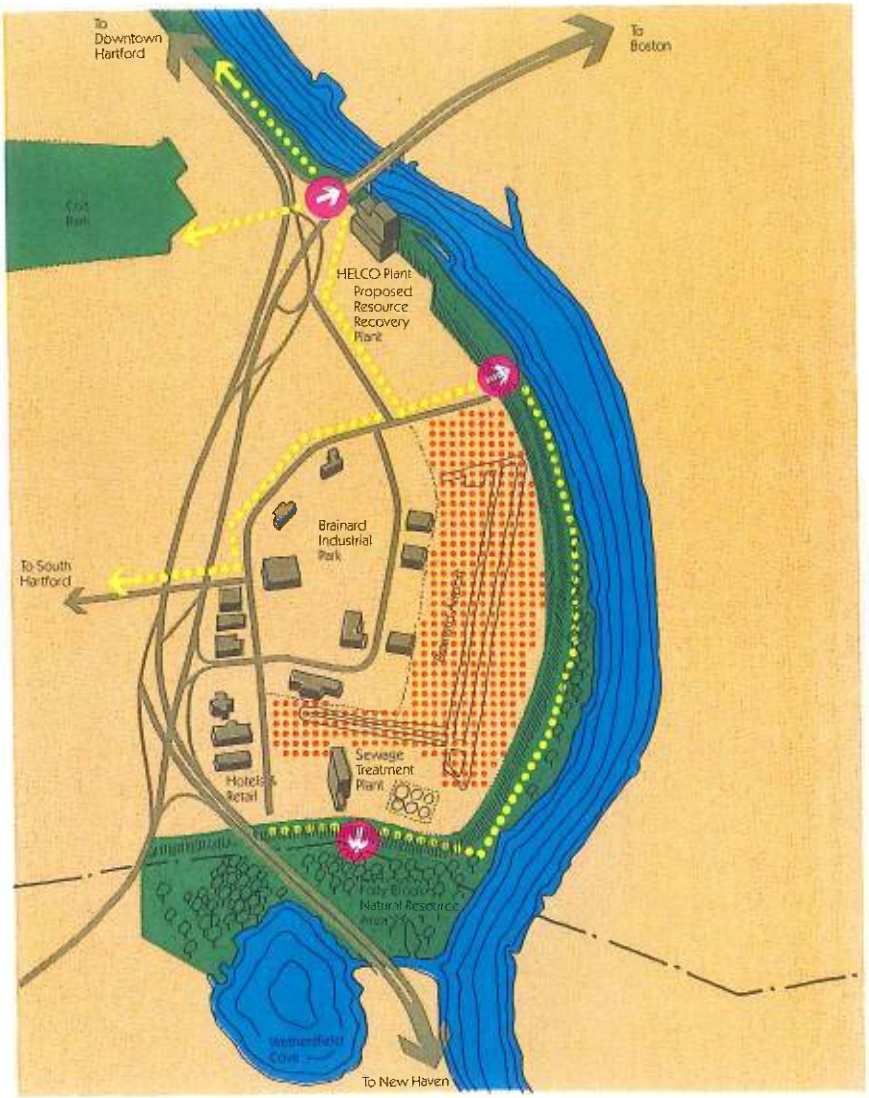
Charter Oak Bridge Area

The Charter Oak Bridge area is the southernmost sector of Dutch Point/Colt Park, the lower terminus for the proposed esplanade linking the area to downtown. Here is an existing way to actually get to the river. Because of the auto access beneath the bridge, unique opportunities for development above the flood line exist which are not available elsewhere along the riverfront. For example, facilities such as a boathouse or restaurant could be developed at dike level overlooking the water.

The problem in this area is to plan for adjacent development and landscaping so as to link adjacent neighborhoods to this river access. Key issues include the future of the Dillon Stadium (proposals have been made to move this facility closer to the school itself within Colt Park) and the potential for longer-term redevelopment of present industrial tracts adjacent to the stadium.

South Meadows





THE SOUTH MEADOWS RIVERFRONT IS the final "action area." It would contain the southern portion of the riverwalk, leading from Charter Oak Bridge to Wethersfield Cove to the south. It now contains the HELCO plant (proposed as the new resource recovery facility), Brainard Industrial Park, Brainard Field Airport and the modern Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) sewage treatment facility.

Proposed improvements to the interstate highway system would have minimal effect on this area. The Charter Oak Bridge would be widened to accept interstate traffic.

Possible new development land in the South Meadows area depends entirely on the potential reuse of Brainard Field. If, in the long term, the field can be removed (as has been suggested by many local and regional aviation analysts), more than 200 acres of prime land would be made available. This presents the potential for a major new employment center.

Action Area

- Riverwalk Neighborhood Connections
- Access Points
- Development Sites (Long-Term)

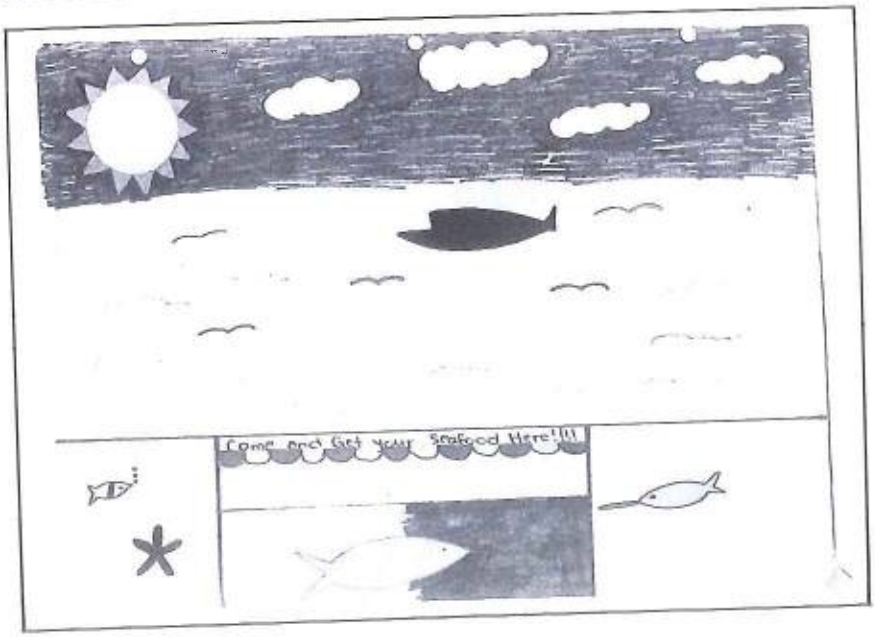
The South Meadows area looking north from Wethersfield toward Brainard Field.

THE SEAFOOD PLATTER
Michelle Hinds, Student, Annie Fisher School

"My futuristic drawing on the Connecticut River is a restaurant under water. The restaurant is built there to make more money for the old people at the convalescent home. The restaurant is operated by water that is pumped from the bottom of the restaurant. There is a tank that has different kinds of seafood. They have shad, trout, catfish and porgys. It will draw people here because of its beautiful color . . . The place has writing on it which says, 'Get your seafood here!' Located in the center of the Connecticut River, fish swim around to see what is going on."

Other proposed and potential projects can also have an impact on the riverfront:

- The HELCO plant is proposed for reuse as a resource recovery site, a major regional benefit. However, waterfront coal-loading facilities will present a major barrier to pedestrian access along the river. Other environmental impacts such as local air pollution or the visual impact of refuse material storage must also be considered. Plans for the facility include a visitor's center which could become an additional point of interest along the riverwalk.
- The Folly Brook Nature Preserve, south of the airport and adjacent to Wethersfield Cove, is an important conservation area. Its possible growth as an environmental education center must be examined, including future service or parking requirements and the need to control the number of visitors.



RIVERFRONT LESSONS LEARNED

Waterfronts are thriving across the land. They are special and vital settings for business, housing, shopping, and recreation. Formerly neglected waterfronts are being transformed all over the United States. While the costs may be high and the projects may take years to complete, the payoffs are dramatic.

WELL-DESIGNED WATERFRONTS have become focal points, drawing cards, the stages for celebrations, symbols of urban vitality. The examples highlighted here are relevant to Hartford's riverfront opportunities. They demonstrate that other places have overcome equally imposing barriers to transform wastelands into major assets.

Many factors have come together recently to make waterfront projects attractive. One of the most important is the nationwide water pollution clean-up program begun in earnest in the mid-70s. Water conditions in many communities are appreciably improved. There is swimming now in Lake Erie and rejuvenation along the banks of the Cayuhoga River (the waterway which embarrassed Cleveland a few years ago by catching fire). Today cities from Seattle to Savannah have rediscovered, redeveloped, and reactivated their waterfronts. River-

CHARLES RIVER, BOSTON, MA.

In Boston and Cambridge, the banks of the Charles River are now a park that can be a model for Hartford. It stretches just over six miles, the length of the Connecticut River in Hartford and East Hartford.

The Charles riverfront is maintained by the Boston Metropolitan District Commission, an agency similar to Hartford's MDC, although it has broader powers. Its jurisdiction includes supervision of the entire park.

Facilities in the park include picnic areas, a sailboat concession, several boathouses, a band shell, and athletic fields. A walkway connects these, creating a continuous system.

The Charles River esplanade is a Boston landmark. It is heavily used. It provides a pleasant amenity for adjacent neighborhoods and for hotel guests and museum visitors and office workers.

RIVERFRONT PARK, PORTLAND, OR.

Portland, Oregon has recaptured its riverfront. In ten years, the city has not only planned but is also developing 300 acres. The city convinced the state to remove a four-lane highway which resulted in an award-winning 35-acre linear park. Six new buildings are up and major historic preservation work has been completed. Boat docks, restaurants, and community facilities are now under way because of tax revenue produced by private development.

Portland's riverfront is the annual site for a spectacular neighborhood festival. The riverfront program shows how economic development and urban amenities go hand in hand. The value of the revitalized riverfront is found not only in dollars and cents but most importantly in the value it has brought to the people who live, work, and visit in the city.

For Hartford, the lessons are clear. Ideas can become real when there is broad public support and cooperation in solving difficult problems. It also takes time.

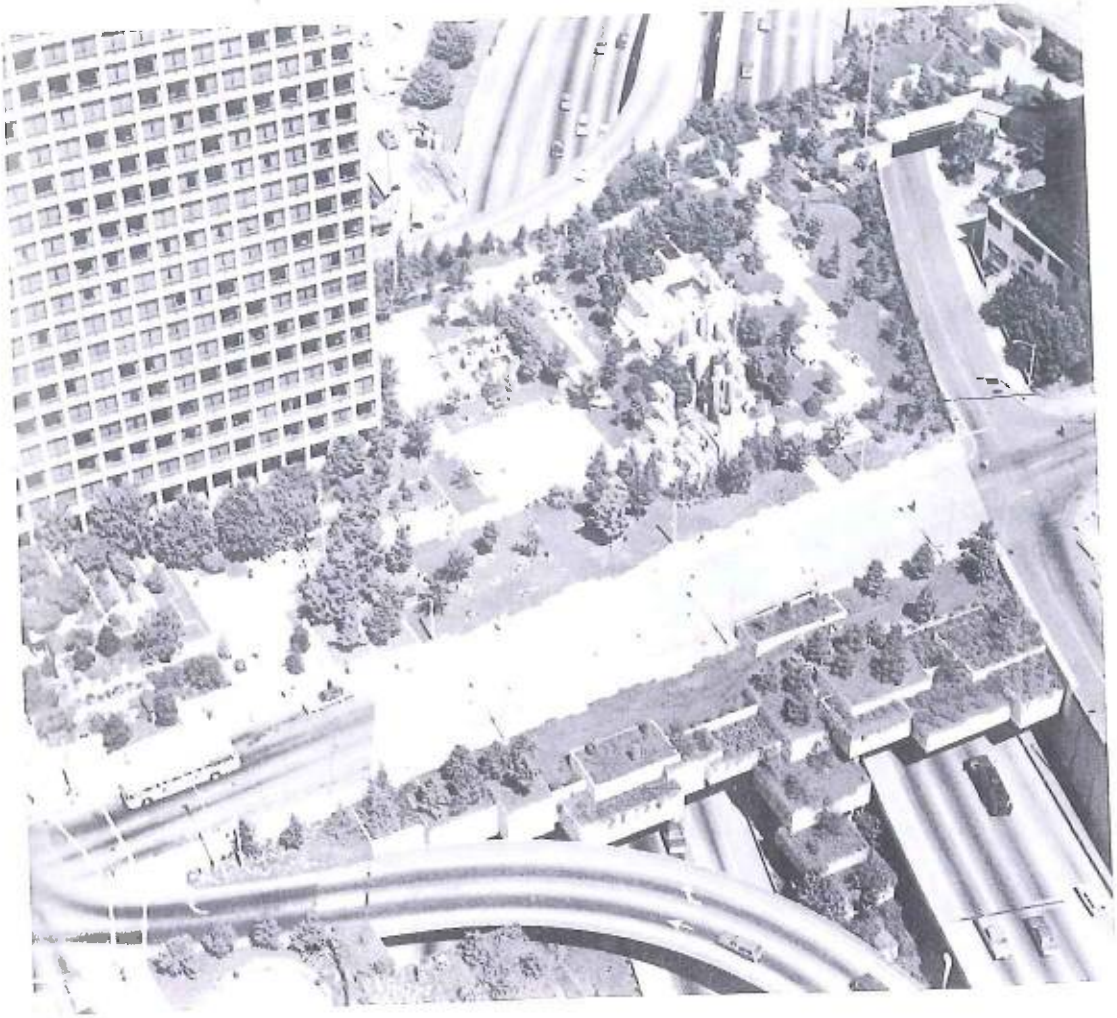
fronts which were abandoned and polluted are now real estate attractions and people magnets.

Other factors are also contributing to new waterfront revival:

- Demand for recreation has increased, spurred by greater leisure time, the popularity of jogging and bicycling, and the growth of water sports, notably boating.
- The back-to-the-city movement, while hard to quantify and easy to exaggerate, is an observable trend. The rise in commuting costs since 1973 has contributed to this, as has the shift toward smaller households.
- Completion of downtown renewal projects during the 1970s has often stimulated the revival of nearby waterfront areas such as in Portland, Oregon and Cincinnati, Ohio.
- Waterfronts in recent years have proven to be natural draws for successful retailing and marketing, beginning with Ghirardelli Square in San Francisco, and now evident in Seattle, Boston, Baltimore, and other cities.
- A new interest in river history and ecology has encouraged greater appreciation for the value of educational displays and environmental programs.
- Tax benefits for rehabilitation of older structures, made possible by tax law changes in 1976 and 1981, increase the attractiveness of investment in older areas.

But in many communities the attractiveness or timeliness of waterfront projects is balanced by the difficulties such undertakings pose. Hartford can learn from the problems overcome by other cities. Among those problems:

- Many waterfront areas developed for port and industrial use in the last century had fallen into disuse and disrepair.
- Governmental barriers to water-related projects are especially complex. Overlapping of jurisdictions at all levels of government is acute and can deter investment. Many cities, however, have turned such complexity to advantage by forming new working partnerships.
- Undesirable facilities such as dumps, power plants, or outmoded rail yards add to the difficulties of waterfront renewal: these require relocation or other negotiated solutions. Along the Potomac River across from the Nation's Capital, the Mount Vernon trail winds pleasantly past such obstacles. In Seattle, an abandoned gas works became an adventure playground.



FREEWAY PARK, SEATTLE, WA.

Mountains are there to climb and barriers are there to conquer. Seattle conquered a 16-lane downtown freeway by creating a pedestrian bridge in the form of a five-and-one-half acre park.

It took ten years of hard work and millions of Federal, state, and developer's money to build. But everyone feels it was worth it, so much so that a two-and-one-half-acre addition has just been announced.

Today, school children, workers, tourists, and residents flock to "Freeway Park." They not only walk easily (and unknowingly) over the freeway, but also enjoy the beautiful landscaping and cascading water. The park is one example for Hartford to remember as everyone gazes across freeways, dike walls, and railroad tracks toward the riverfront and wonders "HOW?"

- Work on or near the water can be expensive. Bulkheading, for instance, may be required before any construction can get under way.
- The elevated freeways, multi-lane highways, and railroad tracks located along many other city shorelines create physical and visual barriers that pose difficult design challenges.

There are similarities among waterfront cities, but each one has its own unique set of physical and geographic constraints, its particular heritage, economic uses and demographic profile, and its own community leaders. Hartford can learn from these places, but the sequence of steps in designing waterfront improvement will necessarily differ. There is no single approach that will lead to a rejuvenated waterfront. The successful recapture of the Hartford waterfront must rely on a combination of ideas and techniques used elsewhere, together with local initiative and much creative thinking.

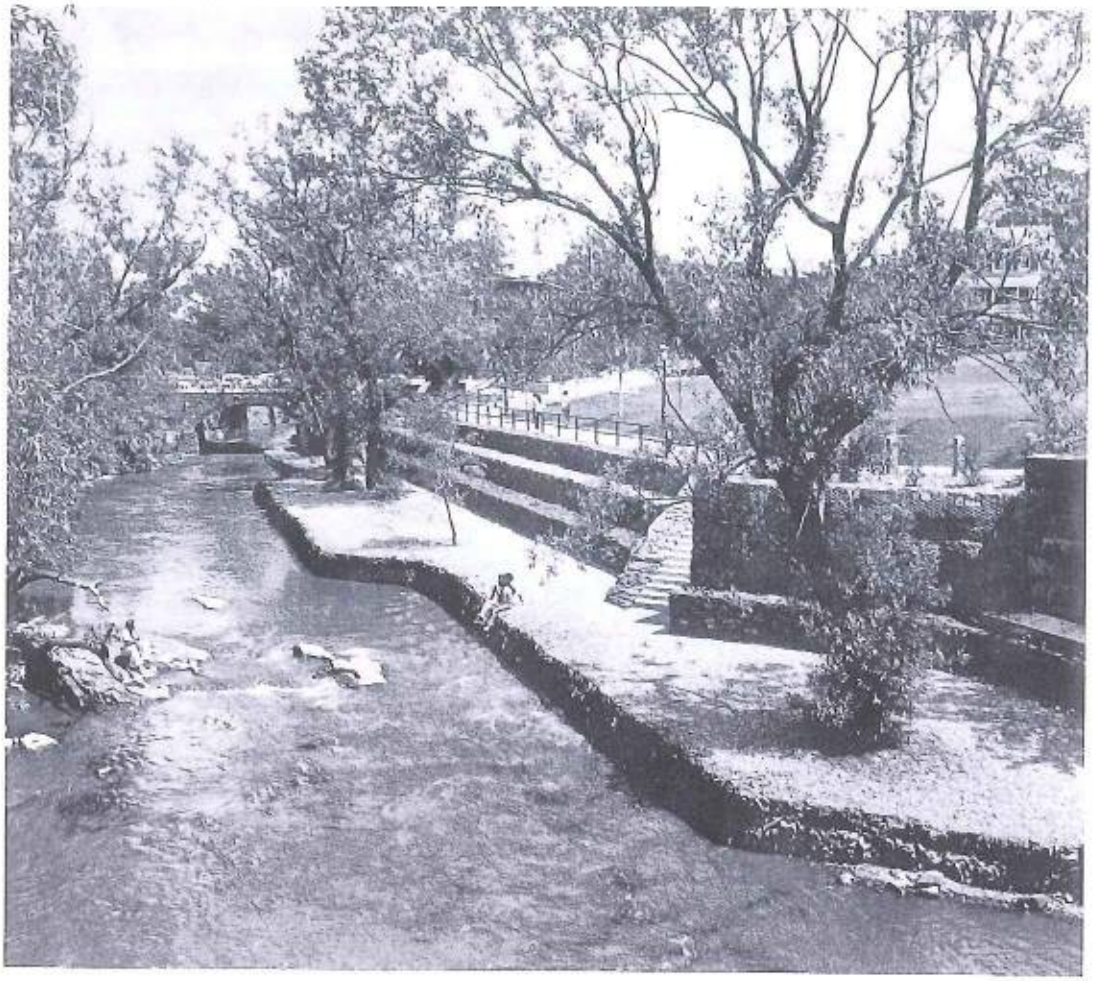
Included here are some useful lessons from other riverfronts. Each of these examples is pertinent to Hartford, not so much as models, but more as case studies in implementation: the need for cooperation, patience, and vision.

MOUNT VERNON TRAIL, ALEXANDRIA, VA.

A 17-mile trail for biking, jogging and walking winds along the Potomac River from the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., to Mt. Vernon, downriver in Fairfax County, Virginia. This riverfront development is noted for the sensitivity with which it has been placed in the landscape along the river's edge.

By employing careful design at minimum cost the National Park Service has made a trail that passes through some of the most scenic and historic landscapes in the country. Of note for Hartford is the trail's continuous route past power plants, an airport, industrial sites, and urban areas. Creative and attractive signage along the route interprets the area's history and environment for the passerby.

This heavily used trail is a simple, well maintained asset that demonstrates the value of careful development.

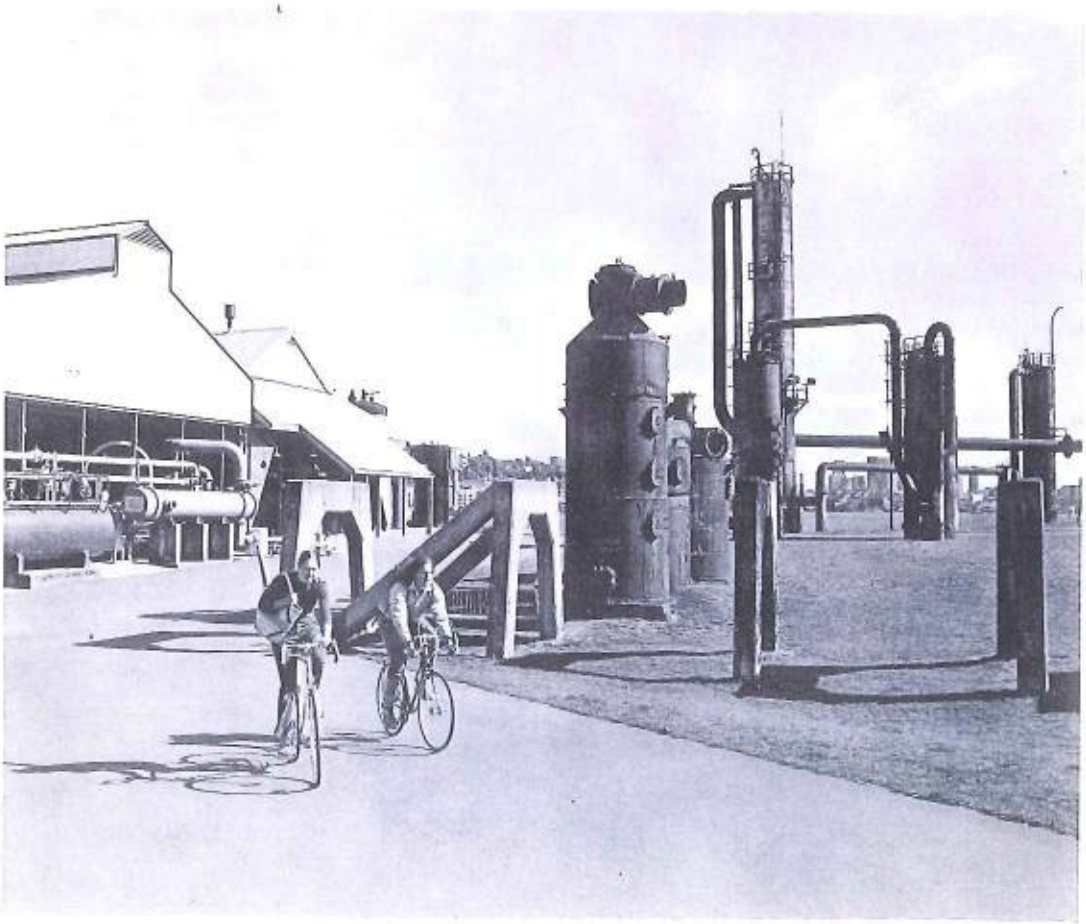


MILL HILL HISTORIC PARK, TRENTON, NJ.

Mill Hill Historic Park in Trenton, New Jersey shows what perseverance, community involvement and good, economical design can produce. It all began in 1905 when Olmsted Associates suggested that a linear park be created along Assunpink Creek. Nothing much happened for 70 years except that the little river became a polluted eyesore.

Then, in 1974, the city's Department of Planning began working with neighborhood residents to put the Olmsted ideas to work. The first steps were to clean up the pollution and contain flooding, but everybody agreed that wasn't enough. The residents had a lot of ideas and the designers knew how to make them work. Today the park is used for concerts, nature and historic studies, playgrounds, fishing, and other leisure activities.

Both sides of the Connecticut River provide unlimited opportunity for similar parks. By working closely with residents, planners and designers can create the kinds of places people want to use.



GAS WORKS PARK, SEATTLE, WA.

If it's there it can be used. That was the attitude taken by the Seattle Parks and Recreation Department as it worked on the waterfront's abandoned gas works. The project took 15 years to accomplish, but the results are striking. The park is an adventure land of recycled industrial structures mixed with new facilities for swimming, boating, recreation, and learning.

Gas Works Park is a happy mixture of park planning, environmental art, and landscape design. Its 20 acres provide an exciting place for leisure activities.

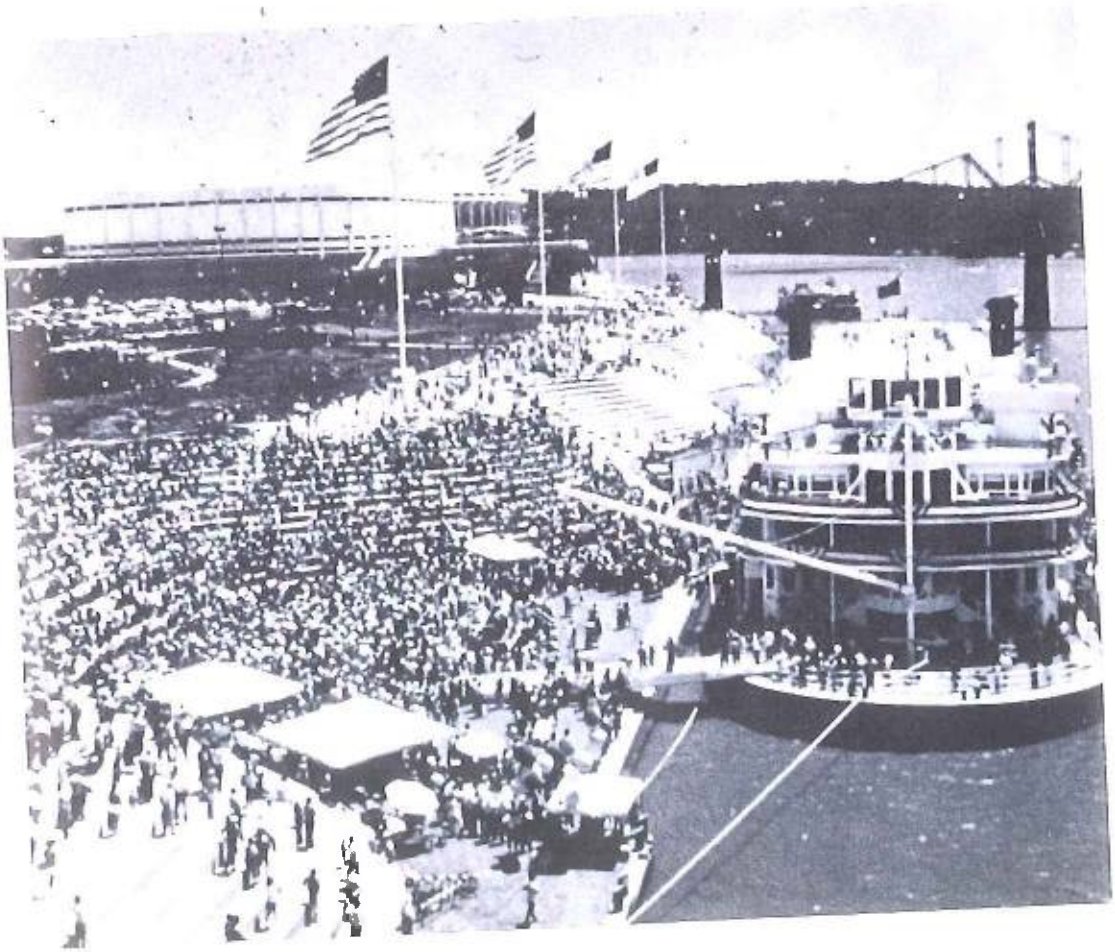
The park shows how creative ideas can meet community needs on a limited budget. Similarly in Hartford, many wasted areas along the riverfront can be put to new and better uses.

PENN'S LANDING PHILADELPHIA, PA

As with Hartford, Philadelphia's founder arrived by river. Two hundred years later, Penn's Landing on the Delaware River had become a riverfront wasteland cut off from the historic city by Interstate 95.

After a ten-year effort, Philadelphia has its riverfront back. It took public and private cooperation, federal highway funds and hard work. But today the effort is beginning to pay off. The I-95 concrete corridor has been conquered. The interstate highway was put just below grade and bridged-over with a 100-foot wide pedestrian promenade.

People now stroll from the historic center of Philadelphia for riverfront activities including boating, picnicking and other types of recreation. Much more is planned, and everyone is confident it will happen now that the riverfront has been recaptured.



YEATMAN'S COVE PARK, CINCINNATI, OH.

Floods, freeway walls, and vacant land could not keep Cincinnatians from their riverfront. The central feature of the eleven-acre Yeatman's Cove Park is the spectacular stepped and serpentine flood wall. It restrains the powerful Ohio River's spring floods and seats the hundreds of people who come for regular concerts and festivals. At the foot of the steps is a riverwalk and boat landing. Above flood level is a year-round landscaped park, pool, and recreation facilities.

Paddlewheelers and small boats dock here while joggers, bikers, anglers, and casual visitors discover new ways to use this pleasant flood-proof park. For Hartford, it shows that engineering and people-oriented design can go hand in hand.

NEXT STEPS FOR RECAPTURE

So far, this GUIDE has discussed why the Hartford/East Hartford riverfront is worth recapturing, where the opportunities lie, what the major obstacles seem to be, and who has attacked similar problems with success.

AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, RRI and its Riverfront Team have now scheduled their future work in three successive steps.

First, the findings of the initial technical study* and the revitalization concept they suggest will be presented to the public for full review and discussion.

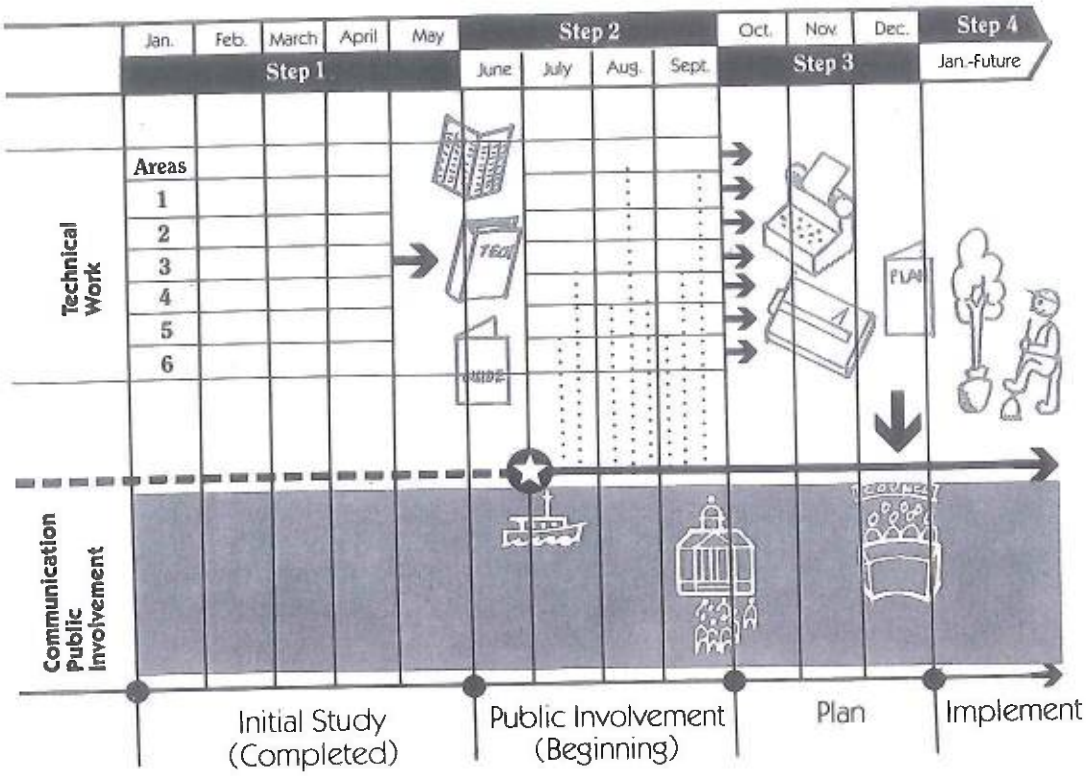
Second, a Riverfront Plan will be developed incorporating the reactions, ideas, and suggestions offered during the public dialogue.

Third, upon completing a plan that has broad public support, the task of implementation can begin.

This GUIDE is intended to facilitate taking the first step: public review and discussion. The information it contains will be the subject of numerous meetings with interested individuals, groups, and public officials over the next several months. Those meetings will assist in the development of the Riverfront Plan for which the GUIDE will then serve as a

Riverfront Recapture, Inc. works with the many people and organizations concerned with the riverfront.

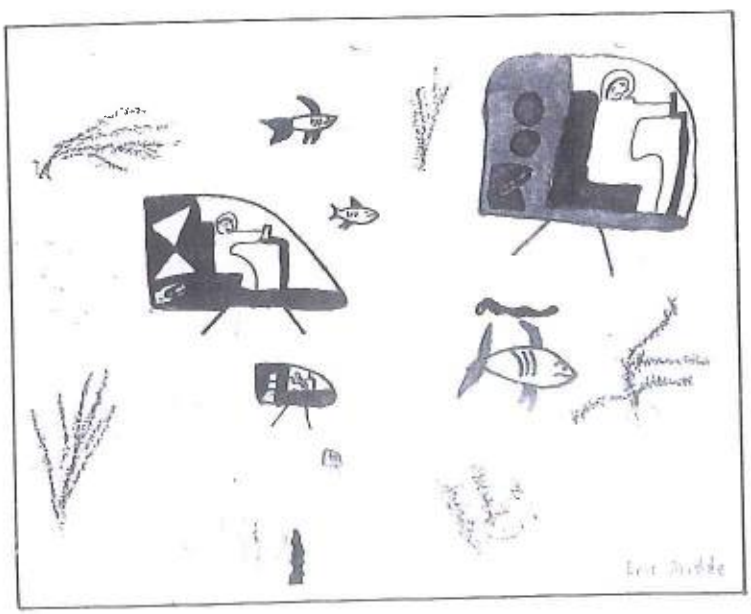
*These detailed findings have been presented to RRI by the Riverfront Team in a document entitled THE RIVERFRONT RESOURCE BOOK: TECHNICAL REPORT (May, 1982). Copies of the RESOURCE BOOK are available at the Hartford and East Hartford public libraries and the RRI offices at 10 Prospect Street. The RIVERFRONT GUIDE summarizes the major findings and concepts described in the RESOURCE BOOK.



companion publication. The Plan publication will combine a comprehensive strategy for riverfront development with a set of recommendations on which specific projects should be developed and in what order.

Carrying out the plan will require general agreement about what can be done on the riverfront, plus a great deal of public, private, and community cooperation. Clearly, however, the essential ingredient is public support for doing something about the riverfront's future. With that support, the Hartford and East Hartford planning commissions will be able to adopt the Riverfront Plan as part of their city-wide master plans.

Your participation, in short, is needed both now and later, as the plan begins to take shape. One way is to return the postal reply card, found on the last page of this GUIDE, which invites your comments, questions, and ideas. Fill it out and send it in and join the Riverfront Team!



THE FUTURE OF THE CONNECTICUT RIVER
Ava Nepaul, Student,
Annie Fisher School

"My idea for the Connecticut River is to have underwater boat tours. The boats take visitors of the Connecticut River under water to let the tourists see the marine life in the river. The boat tour only costs 10¢ for each person. The boat tour lasts for one hour and the people who control the boats work in different areas of the river.

In this system, the underwater boat tours help tourists realize the value of the river. It helps the tourists realize that they shouldn't pollute the river as well as other bodies of water. The tourists will or might form a group or committee in another state or country to help support their programs for their bodies of water."

Riverfront Reading List

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SPEAK OUT

Join in Riverfront Planning. Let us hear from You.

Here are the ideas I think are important for a better riverfront:

_____

_____

_____

Let us know of any problems you foresee in revitalizing the riverfront.

_____

_____

_____

Fill out and mail to Riverfront Recapture, Inc., 10 Prospect Street, Hartford, CT 06103. Please use extra sheets if you have more to tell us.

Name _____ **Address** _____

Telephone _____ **Any Civic Organization Affiliation** _____

I am most interested in these areas:

- ☐ North Meadows
- ☐ Riverside Park
- ☐ Downtown
- ☐ East Hartford
- ☐ Colt Park
- ☐ South Meadows

I think riverfront plans should emphasize: (Rate in order of importance to you by writing in numbers 1 through 6)

- ☐ Housing
- ☐ Jobs
- ☐ Recreation
- ☐ Entertainment
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Beautification

I would like to be involved in Riverfront Planning by:

- ☐ Being on RRI's mailing list
- ☐ Working with my civic or community organization
- ☐ Volunteering to help with work on special events
- ☐ Attending public meetings

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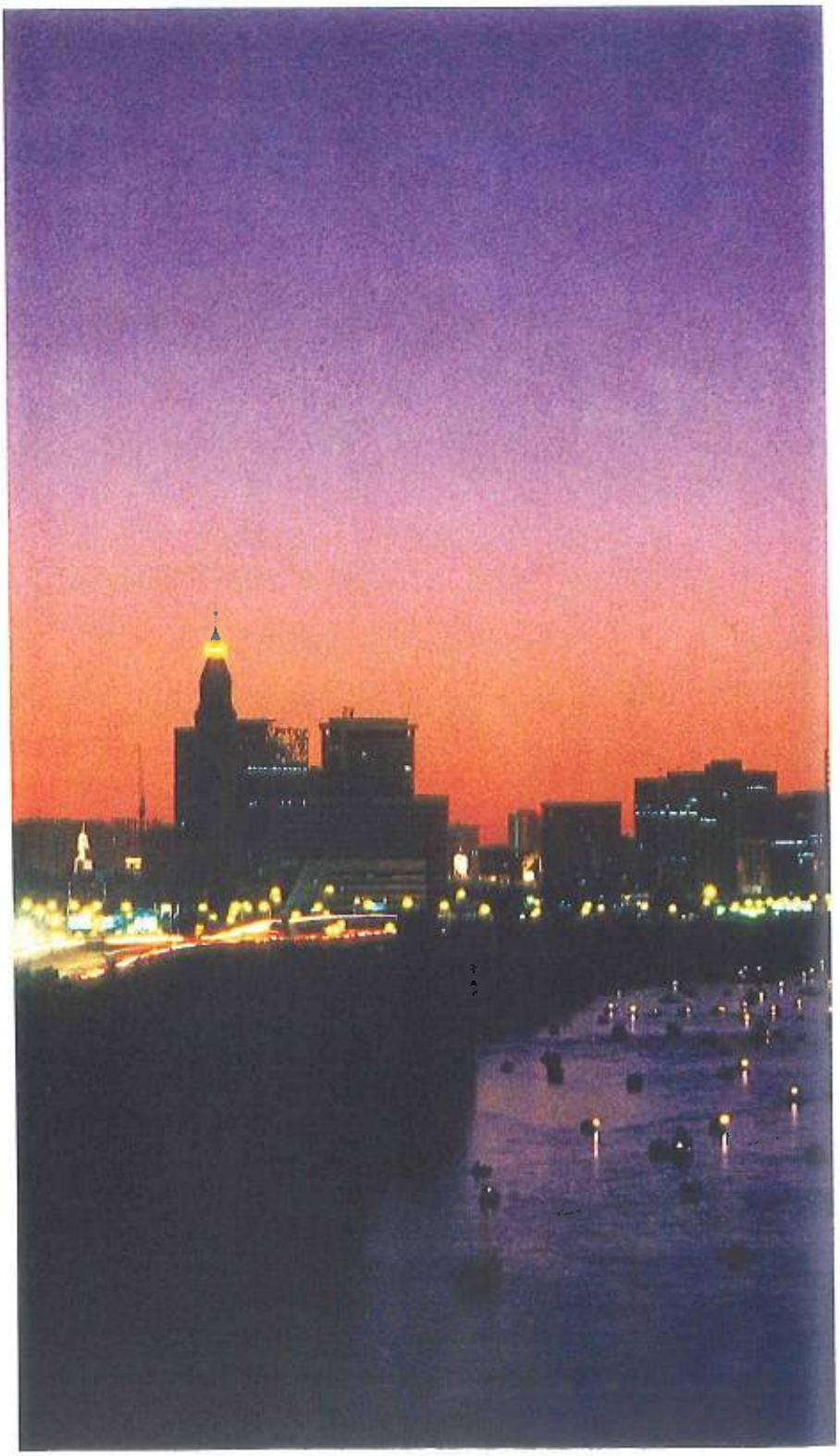

RIVERFRONT RECAPTURE GUIDE

The work summarized in this publication is part of a participatory planning process. It was commissioned by Riverfront Recapture, Inc. (RRI), a not-for-profit organization supported by private, voluntary, and public-sector groups from the Hartford area.

RRI evolved out of a recent history of citizen concern about access to one of the region's principal natural resources—the Connecticut River. It is committed to broad and continuing public involvement.

RRI's goal is to initiate and guide the development of a comprehensive plan for reconnecting Hartford and East Hartford with the river for the benefit of the residents of both communities and of the entire region.