

BATON ROUGE RIVERFRONT
DEVELOPMENT PLAN



29 May 90

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE BATON ROUGE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

On behalf of Eskew Filson Architects, Chenevert Soderberg Architects and our consultants, we are pleased to present this conceptual design and masterplan report which documents the recommendation developed during the course of this four-month study.

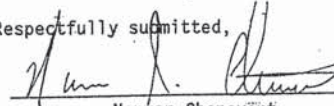
The challenge of developing public amenities for a 6,000 foot stretch of Baton Rouge riverfront is a daring adventure. The power and majesty of the Mississippi River is an untapped resource for public entertainment and recreation. Baton Rouge has a unique opportunity to capture, for its citizens, a linear park and promenade system upon which its citizens can enjoy the drama which plays out on the river. The design team has been asked to review the existing facilities and make recommendations for linking an established collection of public components into a continuous weave of riverfront public space. Based on the design explorations and recommendations documented herein we are pleased to present this vision of what the Baton Rouge riverfront could become with the active participation of both private and public sector in the development of this most important resource.

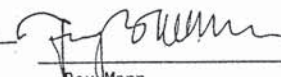
It is our goal as designers for the Downtown Development District to develop a set of design recommendations that will maximize public participation and enjoyment of the riverfront. We have found this design commission to be challenging and invigorating and hope that this masterplan report satisfies the expectations and potentials of a truly extraordinary site.


The material presented herein is the graphic documentation of the physical masterplan and conceptual architectural design. It is complemented by companion volumes of information prepared by Harrison Price Company which outline the economic parameters of the project components. We trust that these three volumes of report material provide adequate information from which Baton Rouge Downtown Development District might make a studied response to the next phase of the project.


R. Allen Eskew
Eskew Filson Architects

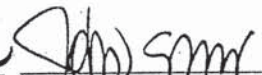
Respectfully submitted,


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PROJECT TEAM

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Stretched along a mile of downtown Mississippi River waterfront, Baton Rouge maintains a diverse and potentially significant collection of attractions and civic amenities. The Design Team has studied the existing conditions and has identified a collection of improvements and additions which will increase the public attraction and economic viability of the downtown riverfront. The specific components recommended for development within the Riverfront District include Civic Attractions, Public Amenities and Commercial Projects. Details of these recommendations are included in the attached report. A brief description of these components is discussed in the following;

1.0 CIVIC ATTRACTIONS

The Riverfront site currently has a number of resident and visitor attractions including the Louisiana Arts and Science Center, the U.S.S. Kidd, the Riverboat Landing pier, Catfish Town, the Old State Capitol, Centroplex Arena and Convention Center, among others. The intent of this masterplan study was to build on the existing attraction base to increase interest in visiting the Riverfront by residents and visitors alike. Components recommended for development include:

- 1.1 Centroplex Arena and Convention Center - In order to improve internal circulation and special event flexibility, the public corridor system should be upgraded with the addition of escalators and orientation/directional graphics. Options for providing a more direct physical link between the Arena floor and the Convention Center floor should be developed.
- 1.2 U.S.S. Kidd - The museum presentation of the collection is excellent. The team recommends increasing the type and quality of the signature graphics from the Government Street elevation. Increased pageantry, rigging and lighting on the ship will improve its presentation along the water's edge.
- 1.3 Levee Theater - An open air amphitheater built into the Levee Apron with a capacity of 4,000 to 5,000 people would host major civic events and celebrations. A site near the U.S.S. Kidd which would tie into the Levee Walk and the Riverside Gardens is desirable.
- 1.4 Old State Capitol - It is understood that much of the Old State Capitol building is to be used for the proposed Political Museum. The project Design Team proposes that other areas such as the Rotunda, Senate Chamber and the gardens be set aside as public event space for residents and Centroplex meeting users.

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1.5 Riverside Discovery Center - It was suggested that the LASC Riverside building be reconfigured and reformatted to better utilize its spaces and accommodate some new functions. Interpretive areas would include the Fine Arts Gallery and the Children's Discovery Center. As noted below, the "black-box" repertory theater could be built within the existing structure without impacting existing functions. The auditorium would continue to be used for travel films, etc. The area above the auditorium would be expanded and developed into a commercial project, The Landing Cafe and Bar (see below).

1.6 Black-box/Flexible Theater - This small "spoken word", theater (250 to 350 seats) would feature flexible staging and seating suitable for new works, experimental works, local productions and children's theater. A potential site is the atrium area of the LASC Riverside building. An alternate location could be developed with the proposed hotel project. This type and size of venue does not currently exist in the region. This presence would accommodate a wide variety of both community and university productions as well as commercially viable traveling programs. Capital cost, excluding shell is estimated at \$2-3 million.

2.0 PUBLIC SPACES AND AMENITIES

Major public spaces and amenities are required which will establish the character of the Riverfront District and provide the urban linkages essential stimulating interaction between the district and the rest of downtown Baton Rouge. Specific components recommended include:

2.1 Levee Walk - One of the most significant attributes of the Riverfront District is the changing character of the river and the levee. The 6,000 linear feet of riverfront which make up this project consist of natural river battures at each end with sloped levee embankments in between. The center section is scheduled to receive concrete aprons by the Corps of Engineers shortly in order to control levee erosion.

The overall objectives of the levee walk improvements are as follows:

2.1.1 Maintain and enhance the existing riverfront qualities, including the natural battures and vegetation; as well as the husky, real-life river activities such as shipping, barge staging, transportation and loading/unloading operations. These activities helped justify the city's existence, and are an integral part of its present economy; as such, they should be celebrated and not diminished.

2.1.2 Embellish the plans by the Corps of Engineers to pave the levee apron and crown, in order to create a pedestrian promenade at the river's edge.

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2.1.3 Draw attention to the riverfront - make it the "front door" of the downtown instead of the "back door". Celebrate the intersection of the major east/west corridors with the river, and create a visual and psychological access to the riverfront at these points.

2.1.4 Identify the different personalities of each segment of riverfront and enhance those qualities through design.

2.1.5 Utilize the levee as the prime public linkage between the various riverfront amenities extending from the capitol complex to the bridge.

2.2 Riverside Gardens - The Centroplex and Old Capitol gardens should be integrated to become the Riverside Gardens, a dense urban garden oasis with strong water features. The spaces surrounding City Hall and the Centroplex buildings could become platforms for a number of "user friendly" functions such as food kiosks, seasonal carts, shade structures, ad-hoc performance venues, etc.

2.3 Capitol Gardens - Collection of historical sites important to the history of Louisiana. Complemented by Capitol lakes, this area is anchored by the State Capitol Building. Graphics and upgraded historical directories are needed in this area.

2.4 Zachary Taylor Residence/Old Spanish Fort Historic Sites - These historic sites immediately south of the Pentagon Barracks are adjacent to the proposed site of a new state office building. The design team recommends that the building program include a commemorative plaza honoring Taylor, and a historic marker along the axis of Spanish Town Road, believed to be the location of the Old Spanish Fort.

3.0 COMMERCIAL PROJECTS

A number of commercial projects appear to be economically feasible and would inject some commercial vitality into the Riverfront District. These projects are summarized as follows;

3.1 Convention Hotel - The Centroplex needs a quality headquarters hotel to compete for regional meeting, convention and trade show business. Absence of a good downtown hotel is viewed as a significant void. The Design Team recommends a 350- to 450-room hotel with a quality at least comparable to a Ramada Renaissance or Holiday Inn Crown. The hotel would be built next to Centroplex and utilize its meeting facilities. Joint management and booking should be investigated. Cost is estimated to be approximately \$110,000 per room, or \$38.5 million to \$49.5 million.

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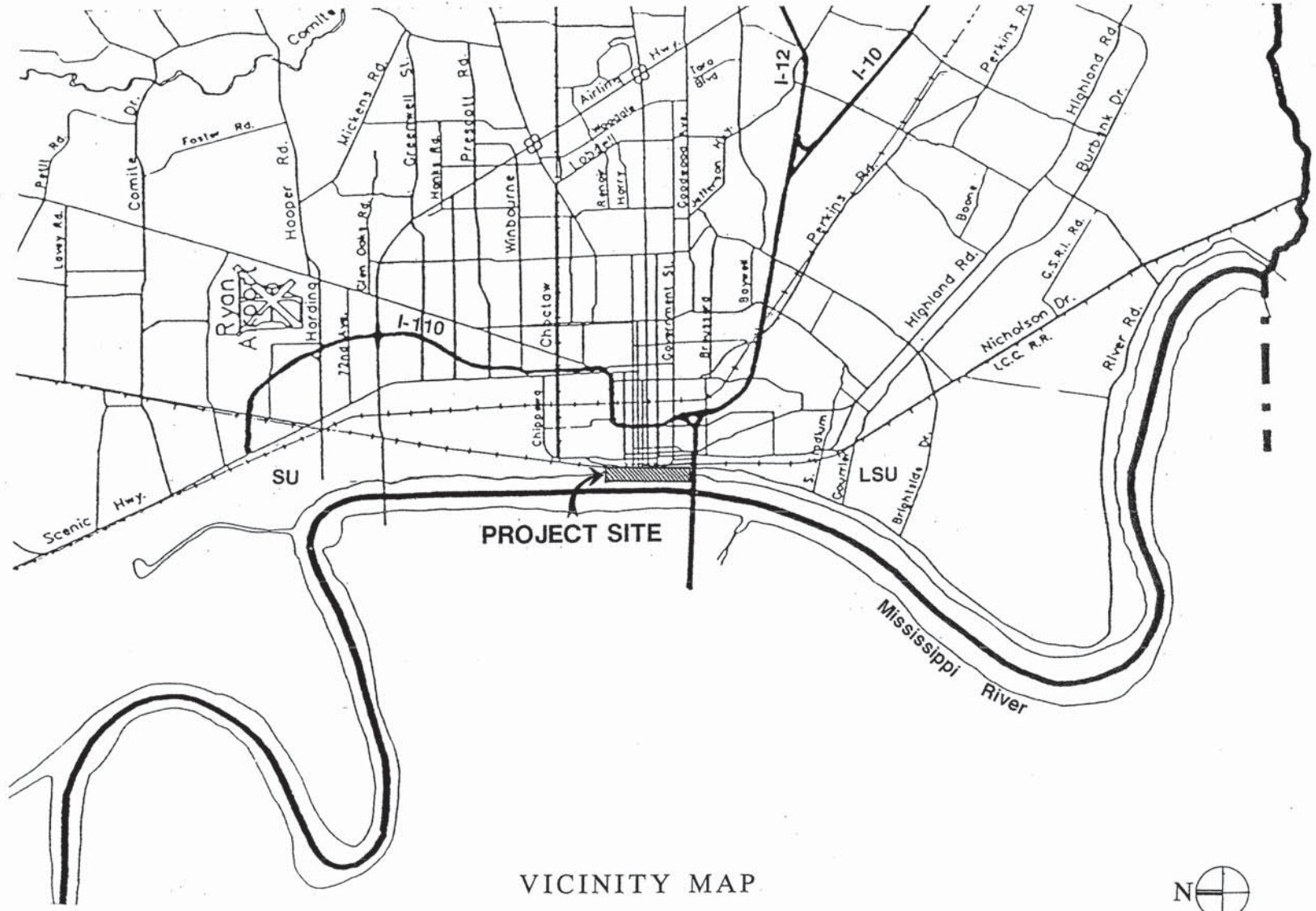
- 3.2 Pilot House Sports Bar - Modeled after similar projects in Pittsburgh and Baltimore, this facility would occupy vacant space in the Pilot House in Catfish Town. The bar would celebrate all of Louisiana's sports heroes and legends. Estimated size is 12,000 square feet requiring a capital improvement investment of \$720,000 to \$900,000.
- 3.3 Landing Cafe and Bar - This eating and drinking establishment, developed on the upper floor of the LASC Riverside building with an excellent view of both the River and the Centroplex. A cafe with 150 restaurant seats and 100 bar seats will require approximately 5,250 square feet of space and an improvement budget of approximately \$140 per square foot, or \$735,000.
- 3.4 Catfish Town - The unoccupied space in the existing Catfish Town commercial area should be infilled with supporting food and beverage outlets as the complex becomes increasingly occupied with commercial office tenants. The strip between Catfish Town and the levee should be studied for potential development of townhouse retail and professional office use.
- 3.5 Original Capitol House - This historic structure should be adaptively reused for downtown housing if technically feasible. The rooftop ballroom could be used as a residential amenity. In addition to the development of residential units in the main building, the townhouse units could be constructed over the parking area. Additional townhouse residential development could occur on the unused portion of the Water Works block.
- 3.6 "New" Capitol House site - Design Team is unanimous in the opinion that the Capitol House annex is not historically significant and should be demolished. The site should be held until such time as there is demand for additional office and retail space.
- 3.7 Class A Commercial Office - The River Road/Florida Street site should be used for development of a Class A commercial office tower. Its design should make a specific point of gesturing to the river in recognition of its unique, riverfront site.

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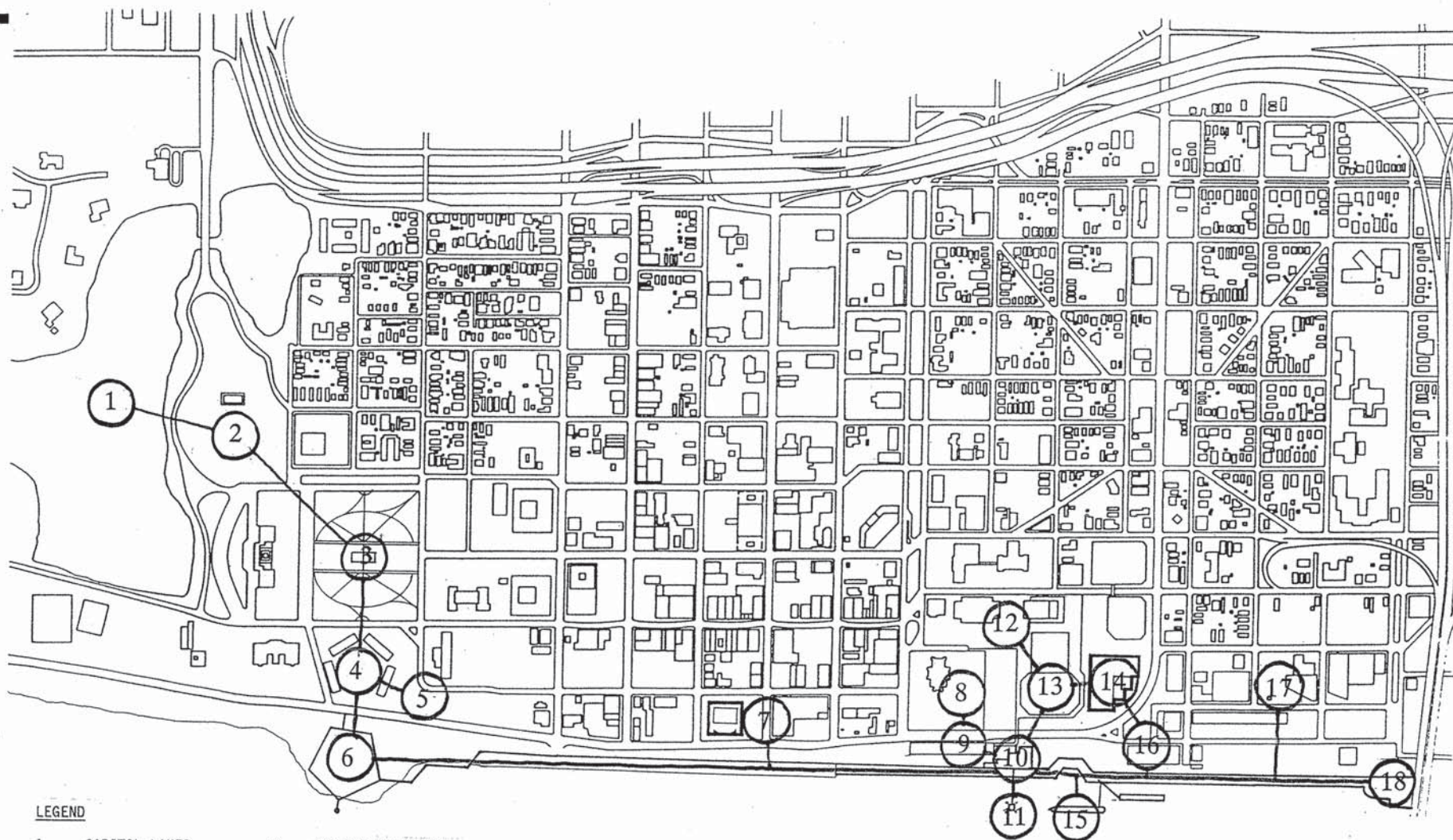
VICINITY MAP

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VICINITY MAP

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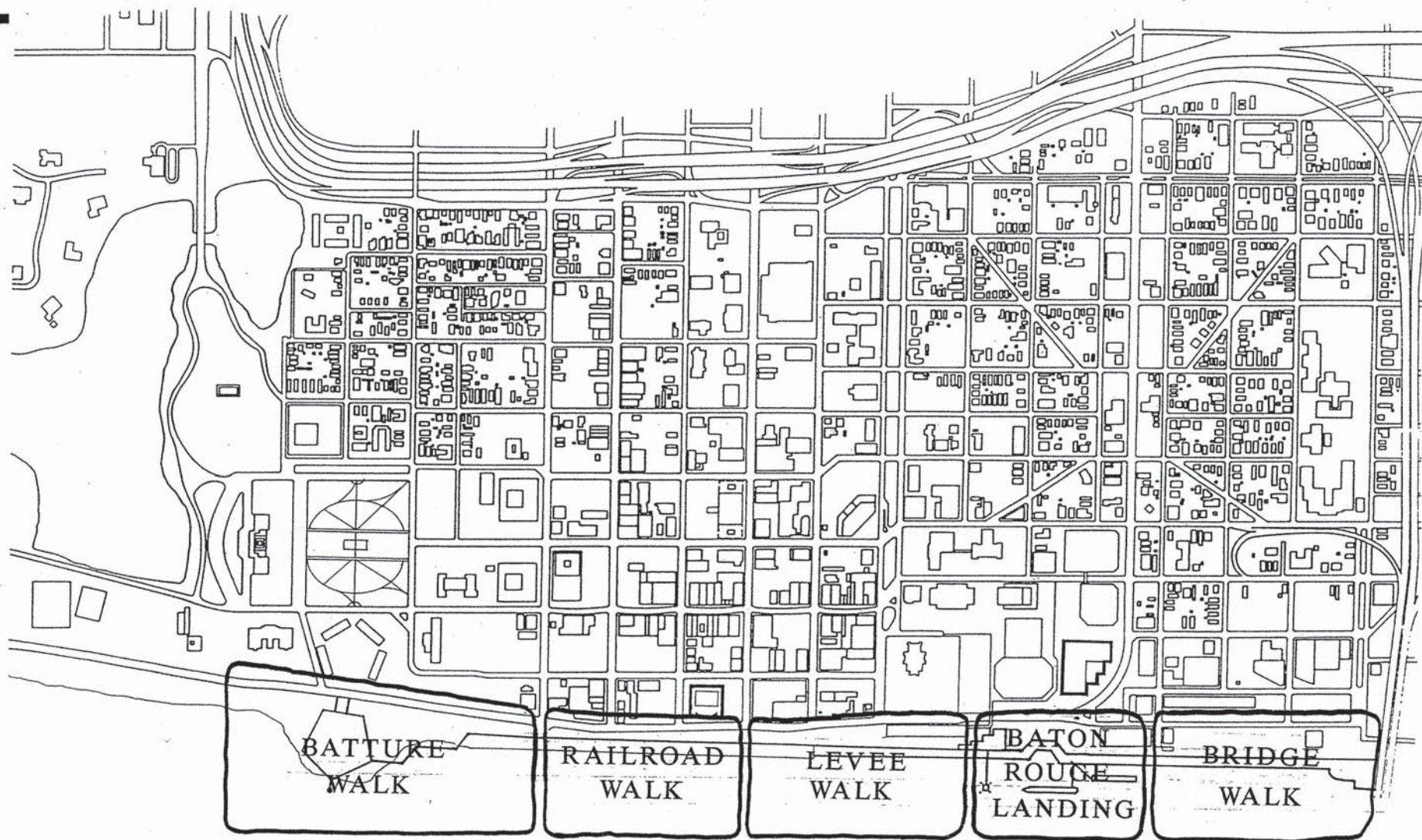
LEGEND

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|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. CAPITOL LAKES | 10. RIVERFRONT PLAZA |
| 2. ARMORY GARDENS | 11. RIVERBOAT LANDING |
| 3. CAPITOL GARDENS | 12. CULTURAL DISTRICT |
| 4. PENTAGON BARRACKS | 13. CENTROPLEX |
| 5. OLD SPANISH FORT | 14. NEW HOTEL |
| 6. RIVER BATTURE | 15. USS KIDD |
| 7. FLORIDA STREET | 16. KIDD MUSEUM |
| 8. OLD STATE CAPITOL | 17. CATFISH TOWN |
| 9. LASC MUSEUM | 18. BOAT LAUNCH/MUNICIPAL PIER |

ACTIVITY LINKAGES

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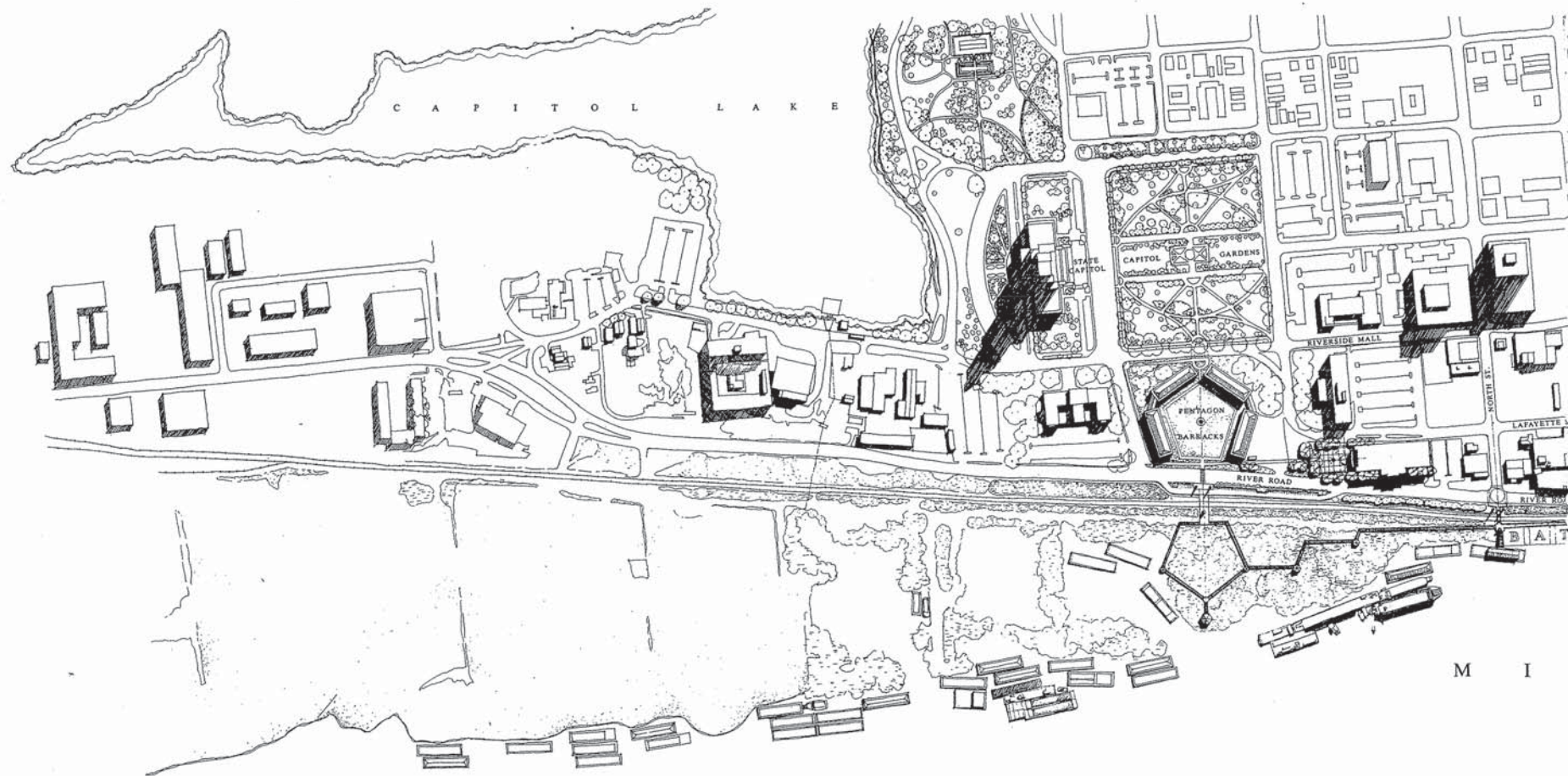


RIVERFRONT PERSONALITIES

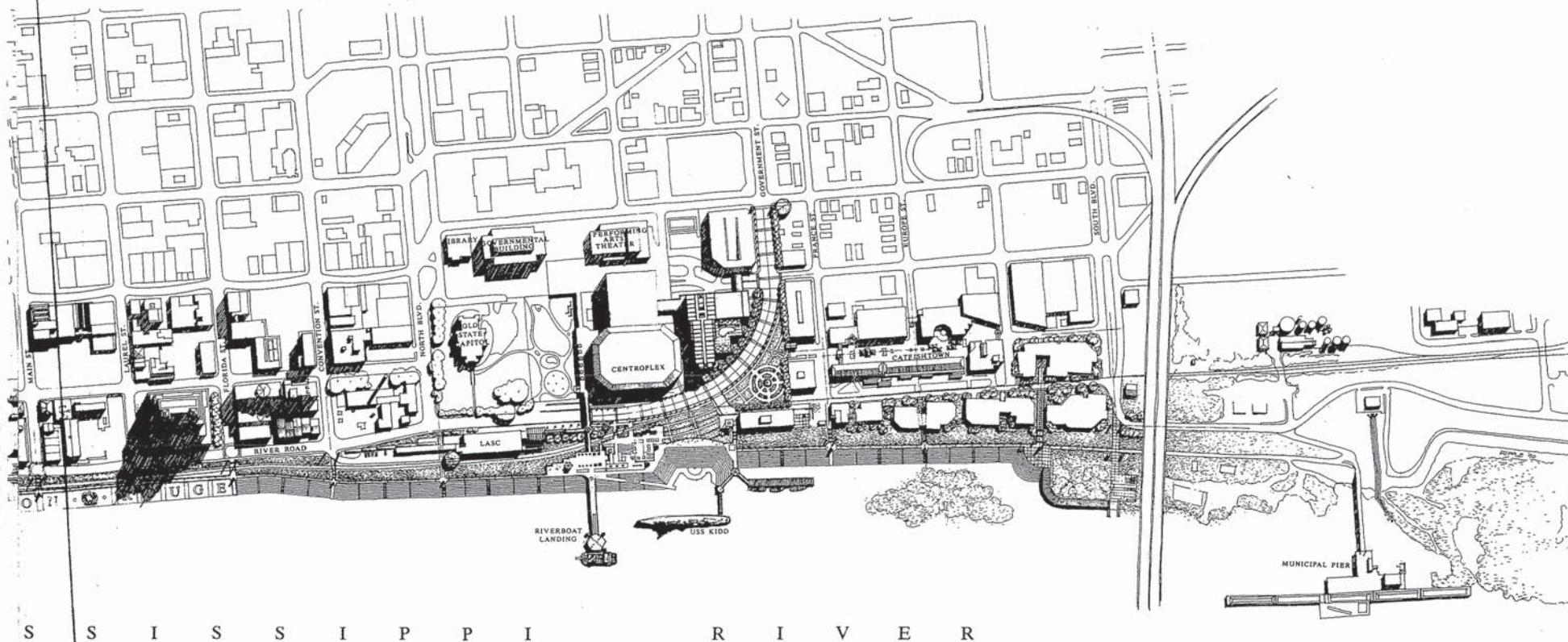
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SITE OVERVIEW

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M I S S I S S I P P I R I V E R

BATON ROUGE RIVERFRONT
DEVELOPMENT PLAN
ESKEW + FILSON ARCHITECTS
NEW ORLEANS
URBAN DESIGN
CHENEVERT SODERBERG
BATON ROUGE
PLANNING
100' 200' 300'
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RIVERFRONT
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A.0 Batture Walk (Capitol to North Street)

- A.1 Pentagon parking strip
- A.2 Legislator's Pier
- A.3 Batture Boardwalk
- A.4 Pentagon portal pylons and lantern
- A.5 River Road pedestrian signal crossing
- A.6 Batture Landscaping
- A.7 River Road landscaping strip
- A.8 Decorative Lighting
- A.9 Benches
- A.10 Graphics/pageantry
- A.11 R.R. pedestrian crossing

B.0 Railroad Walk (North Street to Florida Street)

- B.1 North St. Ferry loading apron improvements/barge landing
- B.2 R. R. pedestrian crossing
- B.3 Entrance portal pylons and lanterns
- B.4 New brick promenade on levee crown
- B.5 River Road landscape strip
- B.6 Promenade decorative lighting
- B.7 Benches
- B.8 Graphics/pageantry
- B.9 Supergraphics on face of levee slab

C.0 Levee Walk (Florida St. to Riverside Plaza)

- C.1 Entrance portal pylons and lanterns
- C.2 R.R. pedestrian crossing
- C.3 New brick promenade on levee crown
- C.4 River Road landscape strip
- C.5 Promenade decorative lighting
- C.6 Benches
- C.7 Graphics/pageantry
- C.8 Cityside Levee landscape strip

D.0 Baton Rouge Landing

- D.1 Embellishments to existing Riverside Plaza
- D.2 Embellishments to existing Riverboat Landing Platform
- D.3 New amphitheater stage & seating area
- D.4 Embellishments to U.S.S. Kidd support structure & entrance ramp
- D.5 U.S.S. Kidd Naval Museum signature signage
- D.6 Entrance portal pylons
- D.7 Integrated urban "Village"
- D.8 Catfish Town entrance plaza landscape zone
- D.9 Government St. entrance portal
- D.10 New brick promenade on existing levee crown
- D.11 Promenade decorative lighting
- D.12 Boat pier
- D.13 Terraced lawn behind amphitheater
- D.14 Bandstand at Riverside Plaza
- D.15 Benches
- D.16 Graphics/pageantry
- D.14 New stair to pedestrian crossover

E.0 Bridge Walk (Maritime Museum to Bridge)

- E.1 New promenade on existing levee crown
- E.2 R.R. Pedestrian crossings
- E.3 Entrance portal pylons and lanterns
- E.4 Promenade decorative lighting
- E.5 Boardwalk/wharf area
- E.6 Public boat launch
- E.7 Pedestrian batture plaza
- E.8 Launch access drive and trailer parking
- E.9 Landscaping
- E.10 Benches
- E.11 Graphics/pageantry

DEVELOPMENT MENU

INDIVIDUAL SITE ELEMENTS

The overall goal of the capitol complex improvements is twofold: to embellish the wonderful natural and architectural amenities already in place; and to create a strong pedestrian linkage between the capitol complex and the riverfront. Embellishments to the Capitol Grounds are concentrated at the area near Capitol Lakes, and include additional lighting and security, picnic areas, jogging paths and amenities for lunch hour relaxation. Capitol lakes improvements include general clean up of trash and contaminants, restocking with fish, creation of a wildlife refuge, and addition of fountains to aerate the water. Linking this area with the riverfront through the historic Pentagon Barracks creates a dramatic east/west axis for pedestrians. Alternate routing of pedestrians around the perimeter of the Barracks during periods when the legislature is in session will minimize jurisdictional disputes over use of the Pentagon Courtyard.

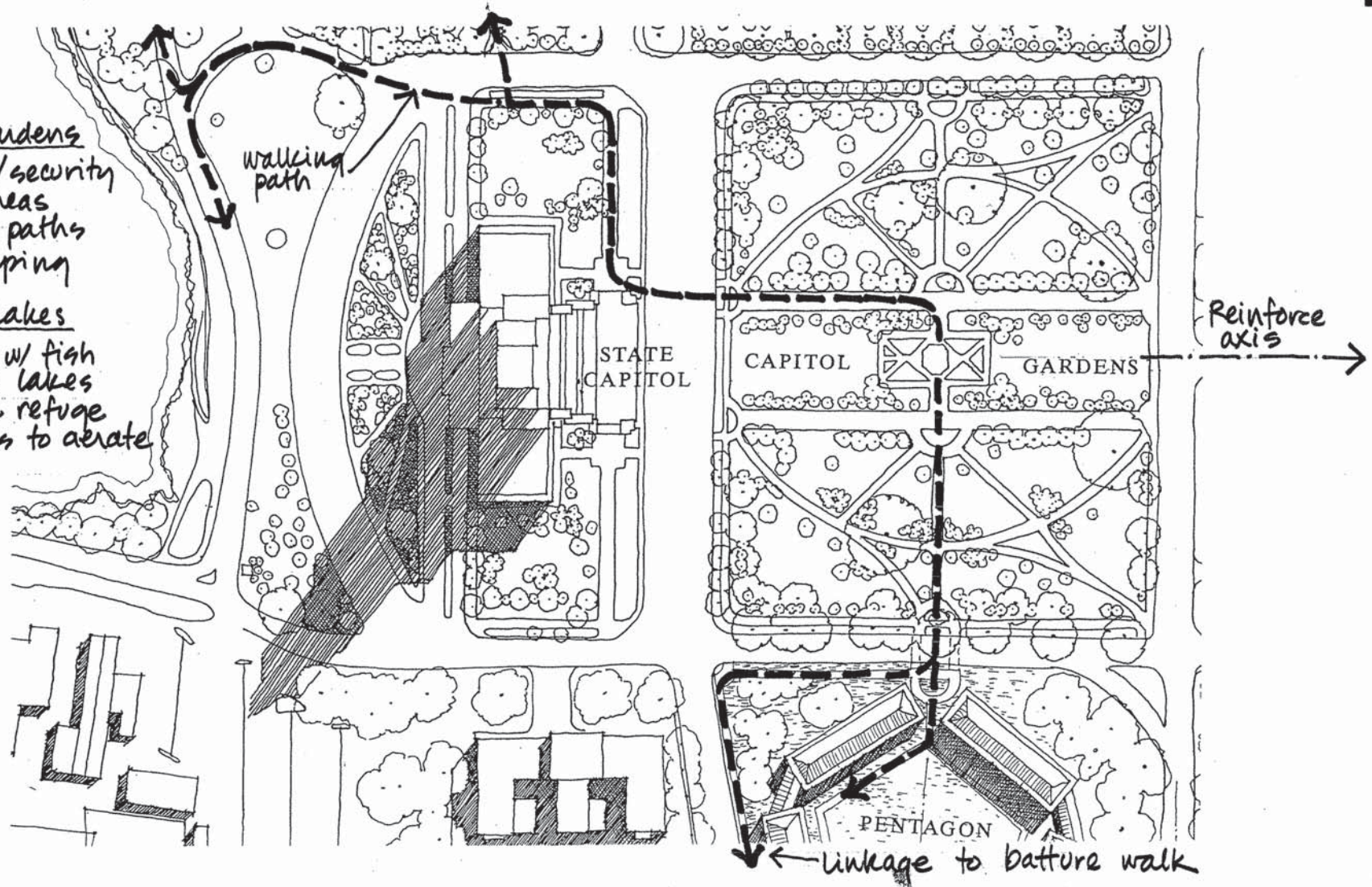
CAPITOL COMPLEX

capitol gardens

- lighting / security
- picnic areas
- jogging paths
- landscaping

capitol lakes

- Restock w/ fish
- clean up lakes
- wildlife refuge
- fountains to aerate water



CAPITOL COMPLEX

• RIVERFRONT •
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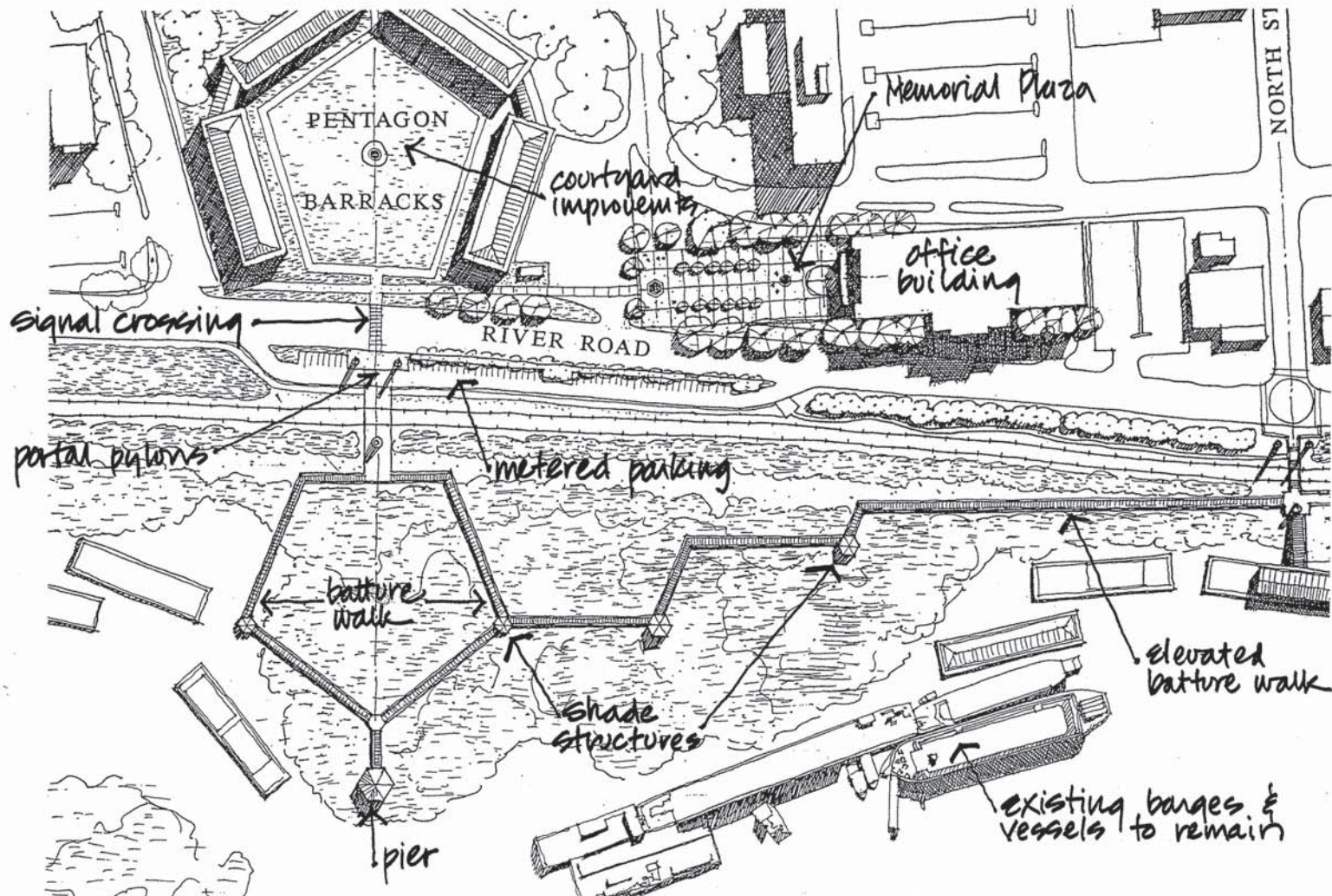
ESKEW FILSON ARCHITECTS
CHENEVERT SODERBERG ARCHITECTS

The personality of this area of riverfront is created by the natural batture of trees and ground cover, enhanced by the views of barges, tugboats and other vessels being loaded or unloaded to the north. These conditions create a husky, real-life image of the river, which should remain intact as much as possible. Through this area will run an elevated walkway periodically interrupted by shade pavilions, and ending in a large "legislator's pier" pavilion. At points along the walk the structure ramps down to hinged floating walkways to allow pedestrians a close-up view of the batture for further exploration.

Access to the batture walk from the Pentagon will include pedestrian signal crossing and metered parking at River Road, framed by "Red Stick" portal pylons announcing the entrance. Across the road will be a commemorative plaza marking the approximate location of the old Spanish Fort and Zachary Taylor residence, adjacent to a new capitol office building.

BATTURE WALK

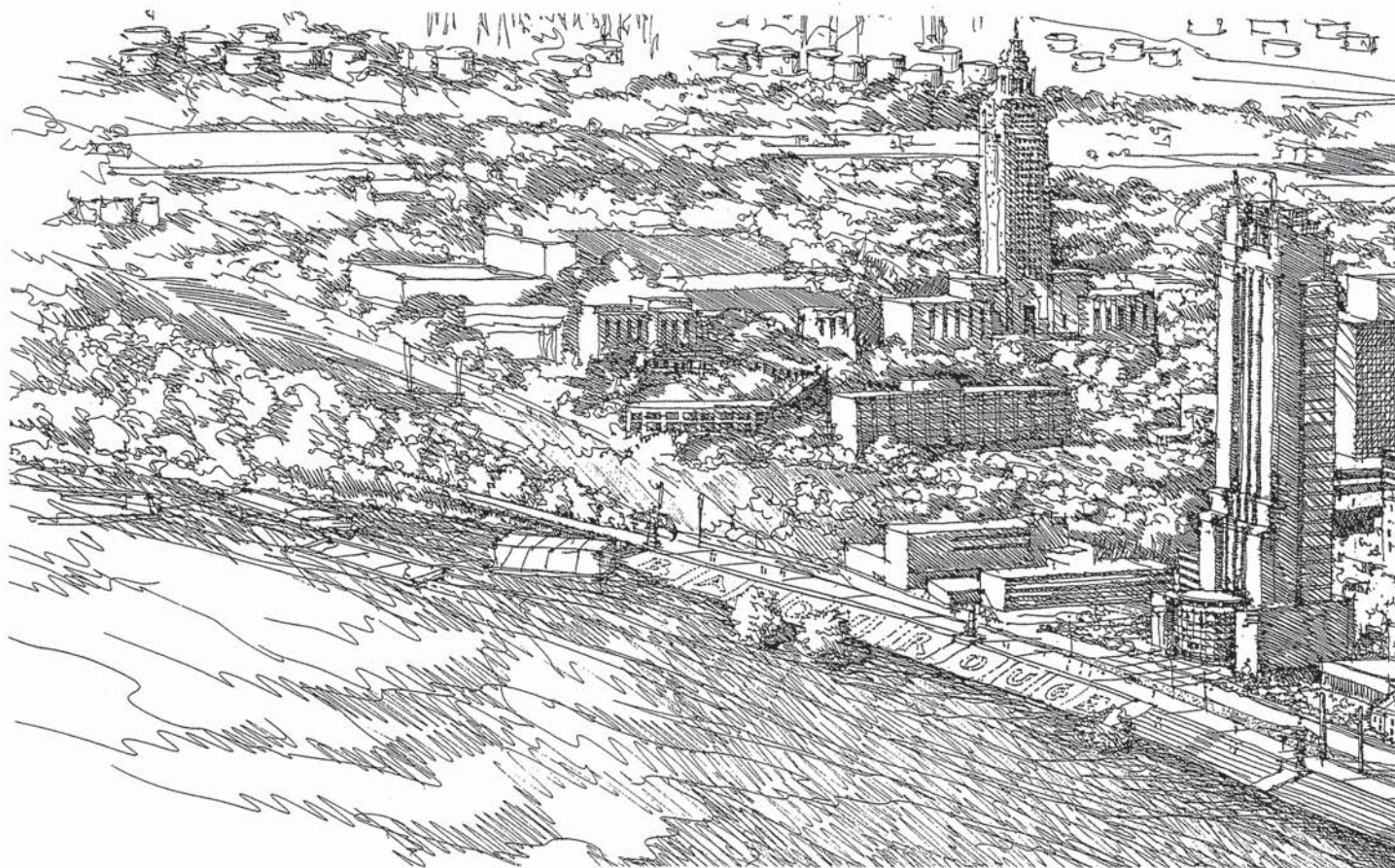
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BATTURE WALK

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BATTURE WALK

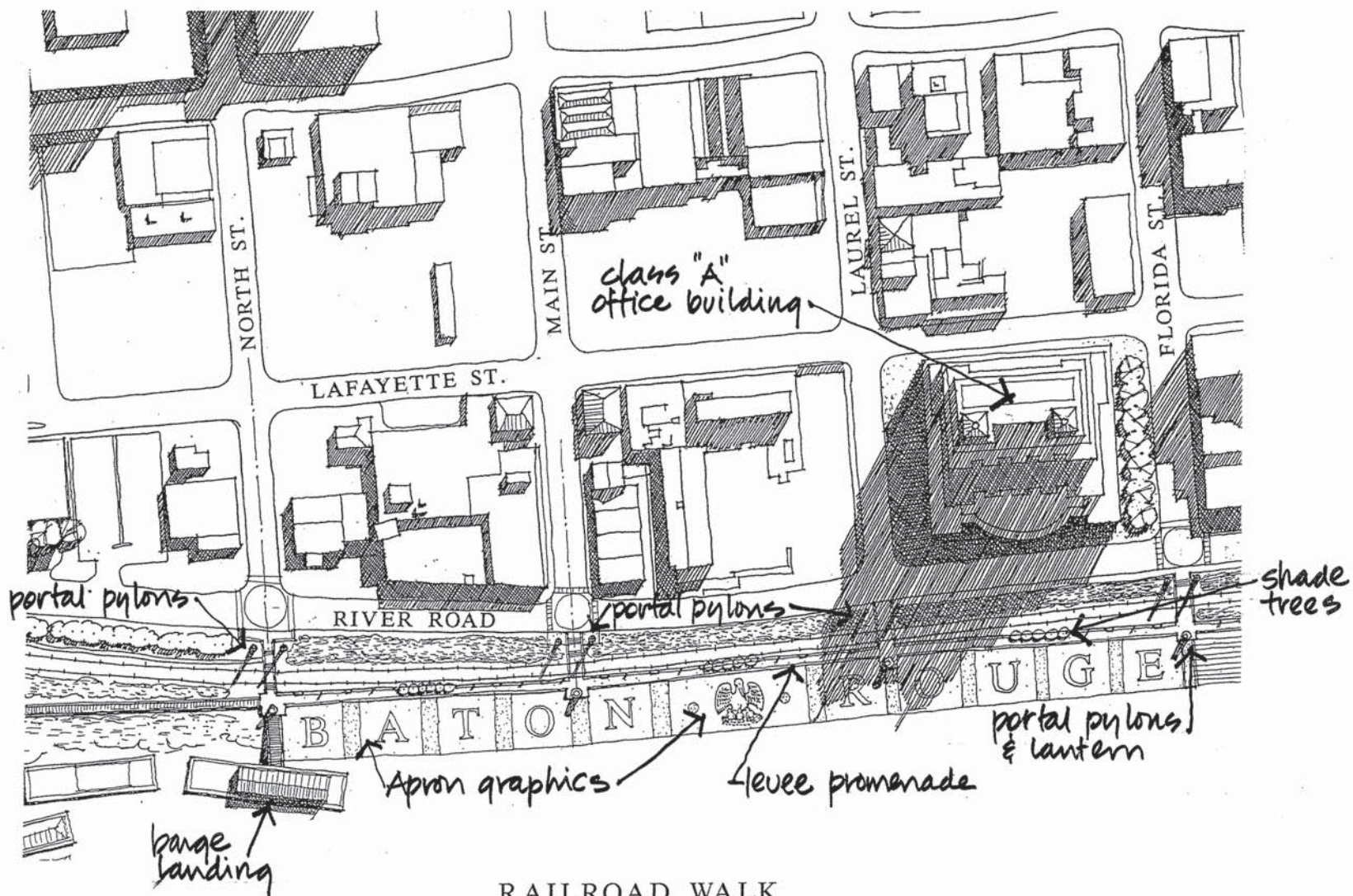
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This portion of the levee is characterized by the railroad tracks adjacent to the crown, which help emphasize the industrial nature of the area. Along this section will run a brick and stone promenade on the levee crown with benches, lighting, and entry portals/lanterns. The Corps of Engineers' design to pave the levee apron can be modified to include supergraphics which celebrate the arrival of riverboats, ferries and the like. Red stick portal pylons will announce the terminus of the major east/west streets, with lush lawns and planting along the levee face. Along this and all other portions of the levee promenade will be banks of trees in planters providing much needed shade for pedestrians. A new class "A" office building will provide a distinctive river "face" at the foot of Florida Street. At North Street a new barge landing will provide a "floating store" with concessions, souvenirs and maritime memorabilia.

RAILROAD WALK

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RAILROAD WALK

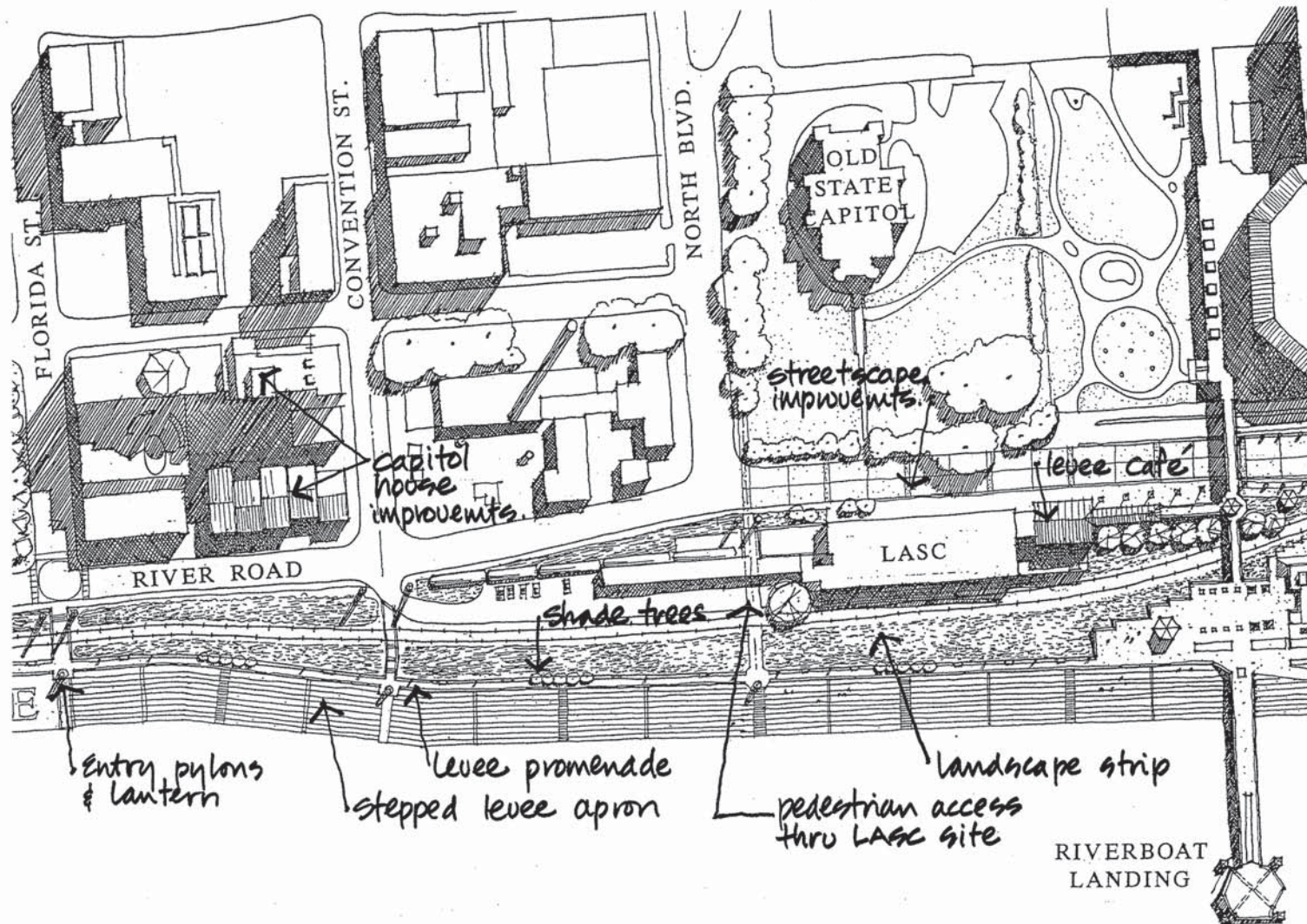
RIVERFRONT

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Along this section of levee will begin the stepped concrete levee apron which will allow seating, fishing and river viewing down to the water's edge. Visitors will approach the levee through entry portals at the foot of Convention Street and at North Boulevard through the LASC site. Large lanterns will be located at the center line of each portal, and designed in a nautical/industrial imagery suggesting buoy markers or lighthouse structures. Outriggers on the lanterns will allow hanging of pageantry, graphics, banners for events or festivals. Along River Road the utility poles and high voltage lines will be relocated underground, creating a new streetscape of lush lawns periodically interrupted by pairs of red stick pylons and pedestrian crossings at the major street intersections. The LASC facility can be enhanced with restaurant, cafe and concessions facilities along the elevated plaza connected to the Riverside plaza and Centroplex. A new bandstand adjacent to the levee promenade will provide shade for pedestrians, informal concerts, class field trips, etc. Festive pageantry along the elevated pedestrian crossover will announce the motorists' arrival at Baton Rouge landing.

LEVEE WALK

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LEVEE WALK

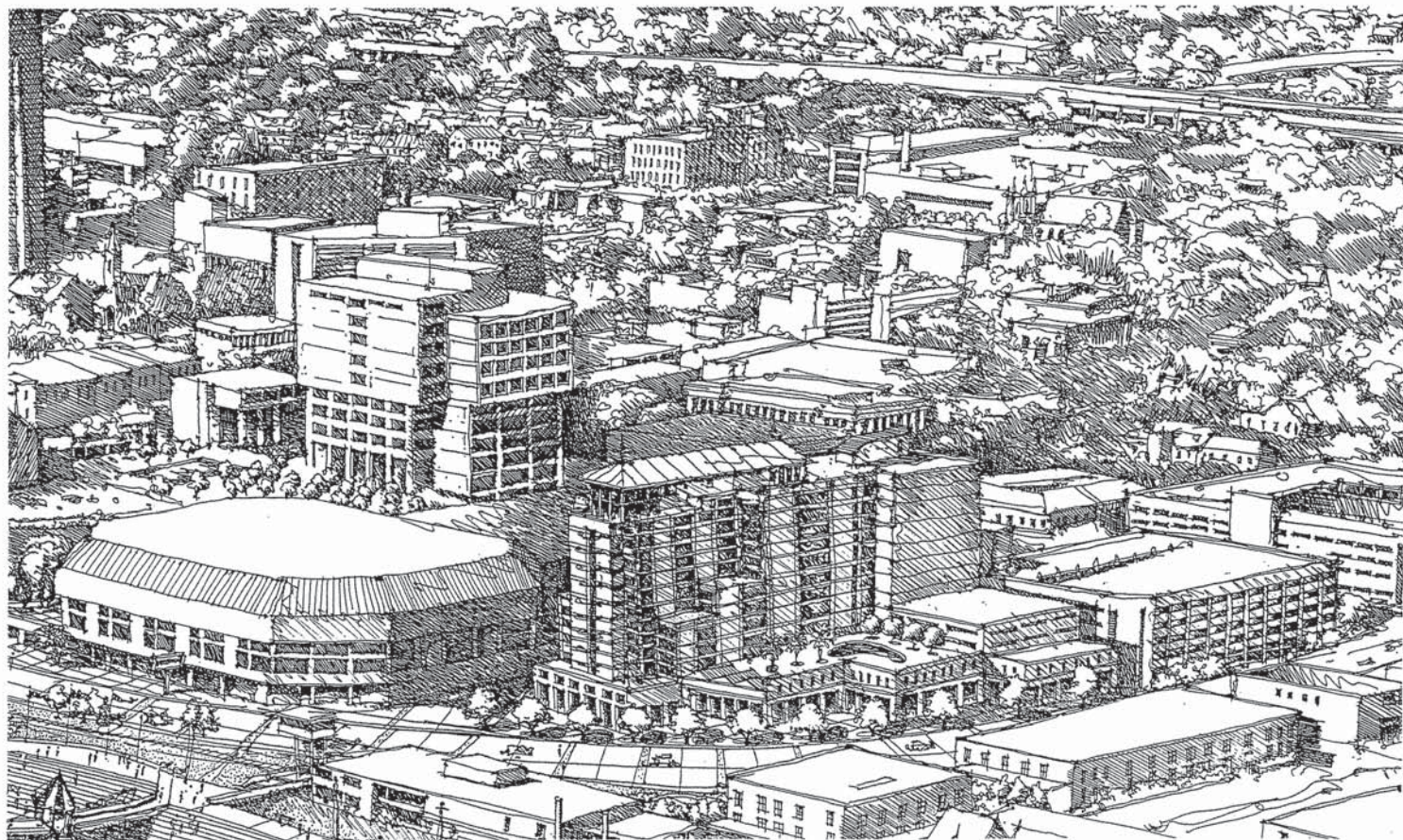
RIVERFRONT

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The area near the Centroplex extending from the Government Street ridge down to North Boulevard will be developed into a "town center" similar to those of small European towns. As the focal point of the riverfront development, this area should be designed to create a sense of arrival into a single integrated space. Design ideas for accomplishing this include resurfacing portions of the street, walks and surrounding public spaces with brick pavers; bollards, lighting, graphics and pageantry; positioning new entry portals at the Government Street ridge and at the existing pedestrian crossover; and integrating the isolated pockets of landscape design for the entire town center. The new Centroplex hotel will include a two-story wing of shops, cafes and other activities at the base of the building, in order to maintain the sensitive pedestrian scale of the adjacent Catfish Town buildings. A new parking garage integral with the hotel complex will replace the grade-level parking presently on the site, and provide a platform on which the hotel rooms will be seated. Green space along the levee adjacent to the new amphitheater will be maintained and embellished with terraced lawns and shade trees. The existing fountain and gardens will be modified to fit within the overall streetscape pattern of the town center.

CULTURAL COMPLEX

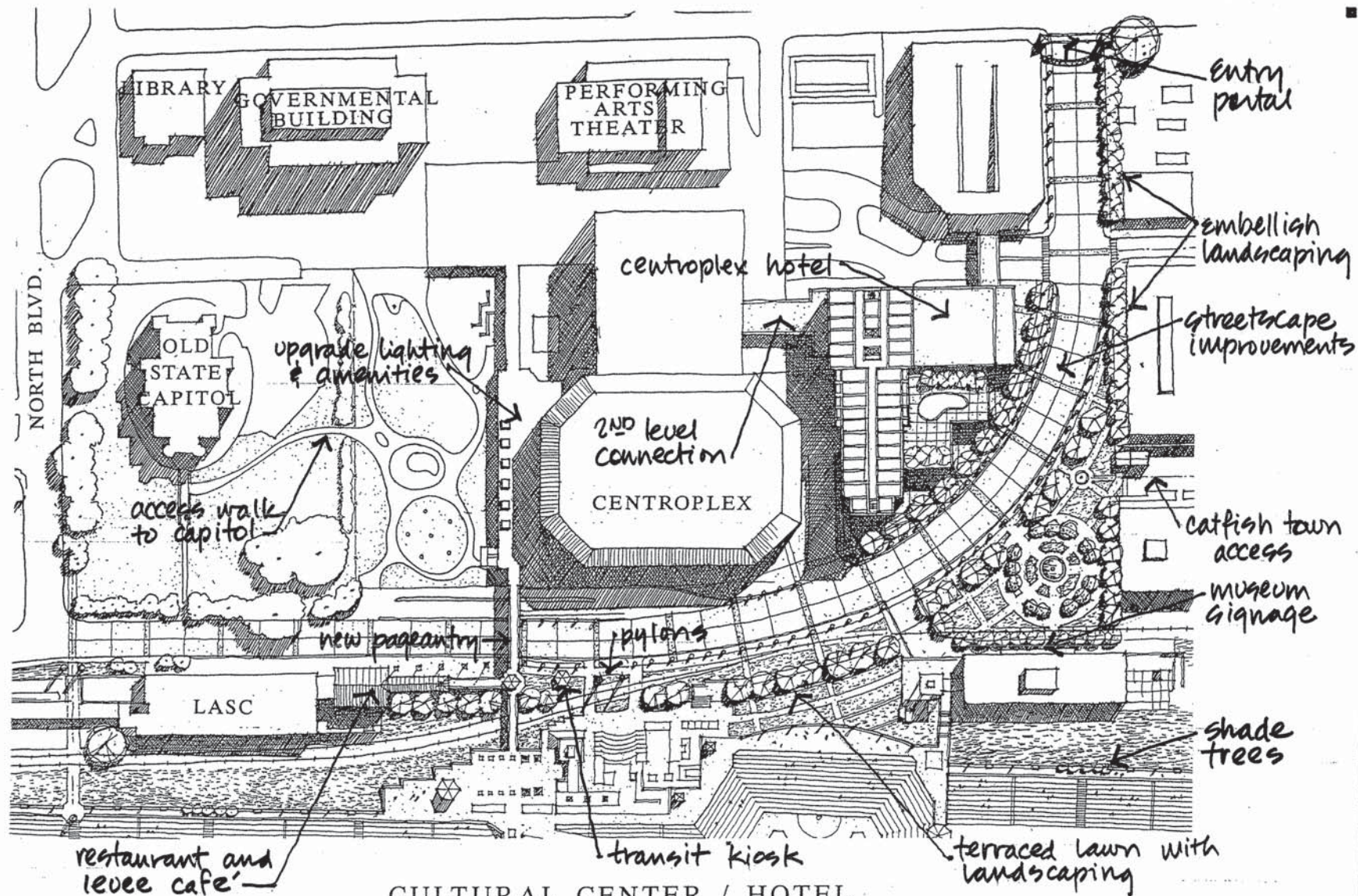
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CULTURAL COMPLEX

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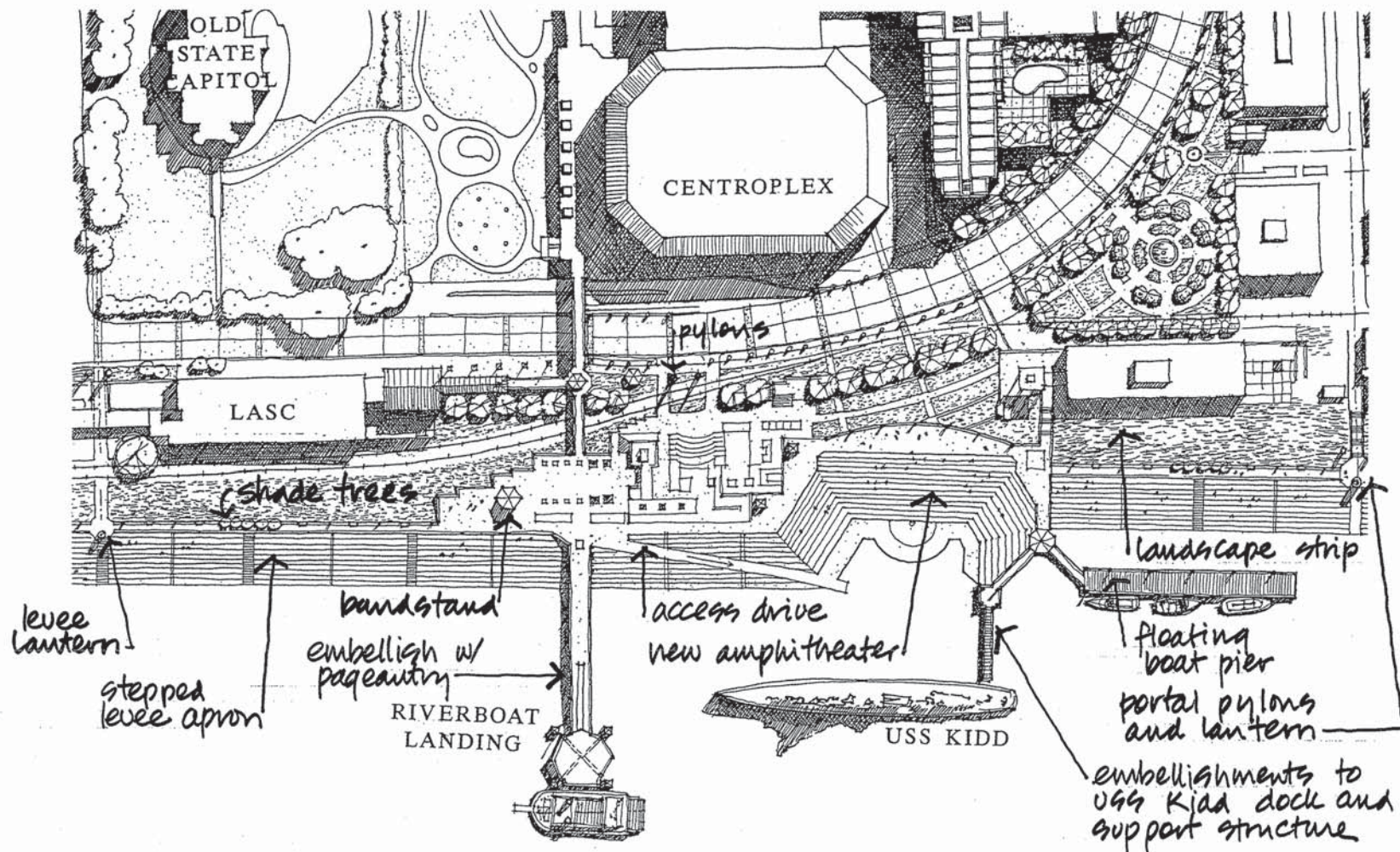
ESKEW FILSON ARCHITECTS
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RIVERFRONT
BATON ROUGE

The most dramatic improvement to the levee walk will be the creation of an amphitheater down to the river's edge at the point where the levee bends. An access drive down to the stage area will allow service vehicles for instruments and equipment, and also allow pedestrians access to the river bank during low water levels. The U.S.S. Kidd will double as a backdrop for performances, sound and light shows, etc. Spillover from the amphitheater on both sides will allow needed seating for large public events such as fireworks displays. Adjacent to the U.S.S. Kidd platform will be a floating boat pier, possibly a converted barge, for docking of small recreational vessels; the pier could be repositioned or moved upstream to the barge landing during low water periods. The three city-side entrances - from the riverside plaza, the pedestrian bridge, and the U.S.S. Kidd entrance - should be embellished with pageantry to read as an integrated whole. The riverside plaza will be expanded to the north to include a bandstand for small, outdoor events, school field trips, or simply shaded seating. The LASC property will be enhanced with a levee restaurant/cafe linked to the pedestrian crossover, providing refreshments to the public. The backside of the levee will be maintained with a lush lawn; and the area directly adjacent to the amphitheater converted to a terraced lawn with rows of trees at the levee base. The levee promenade and public areas may also serve as a platform for site specific sculpture, commissioned art work, and provide a showcase for local artists.

BATON ROUGE LANDING

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BATON ROUGE LANDING

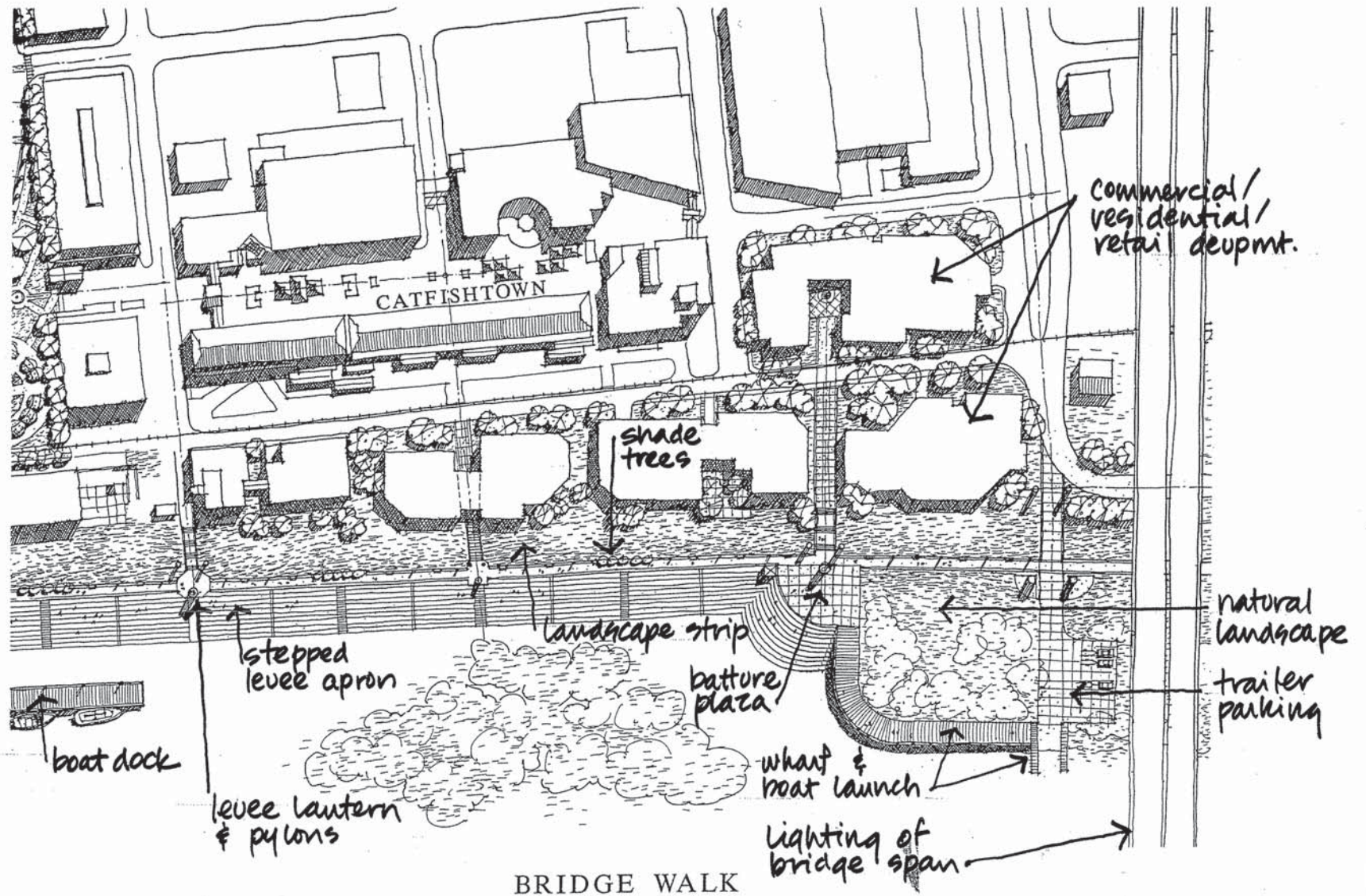
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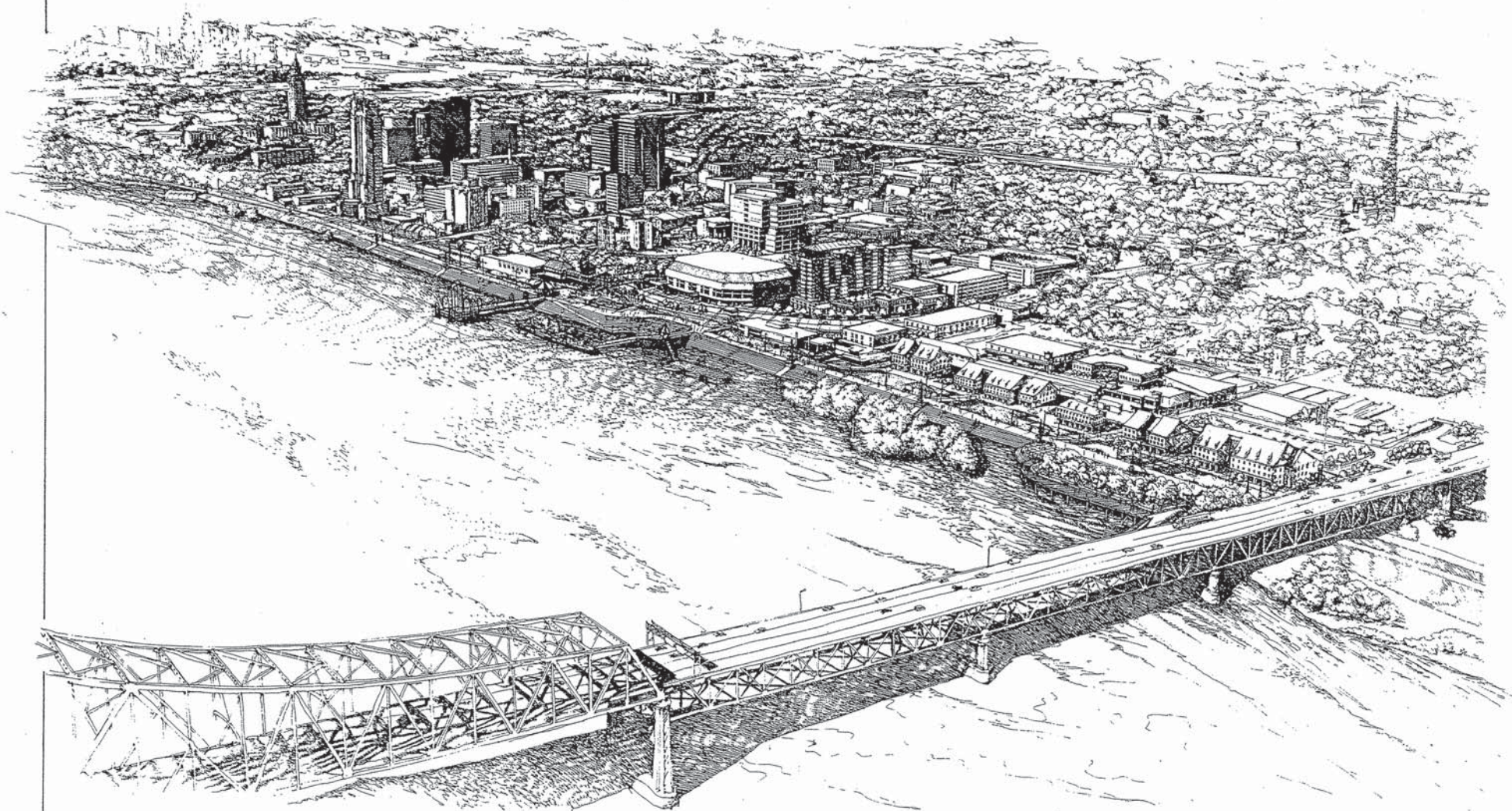
RIVERFRONT
BATON ROUGE

The stepped levee apron will terminate at a new batture plaza with a lantern and pylons at its center. From the plaza to the bridge will be a batture park, providing an informal, natural green space which serves as a transition between the hard edge of levee apron and the natural landscape beyond the bridge. At the center of South Boulevard will be the final portal pylons designating the entrance to the boat launch near the foot of the bridge, with trailer parking below the bridge span. Between the plaza and the boat launch will be a raised wharf echoing the personality of the wharf and dock facilities across the river, and allowing grade level access to the river for fishing, river watching, picnics, etc. Since the bridge dominates this portion of the riverfront, it provides a natural termination point for the development. Lighting of the bridge in a manner similar to the Greater New Orleans bridge will create a dominant visual impact on the city skyline at a relatively modest cost.

BRIDGE WALK

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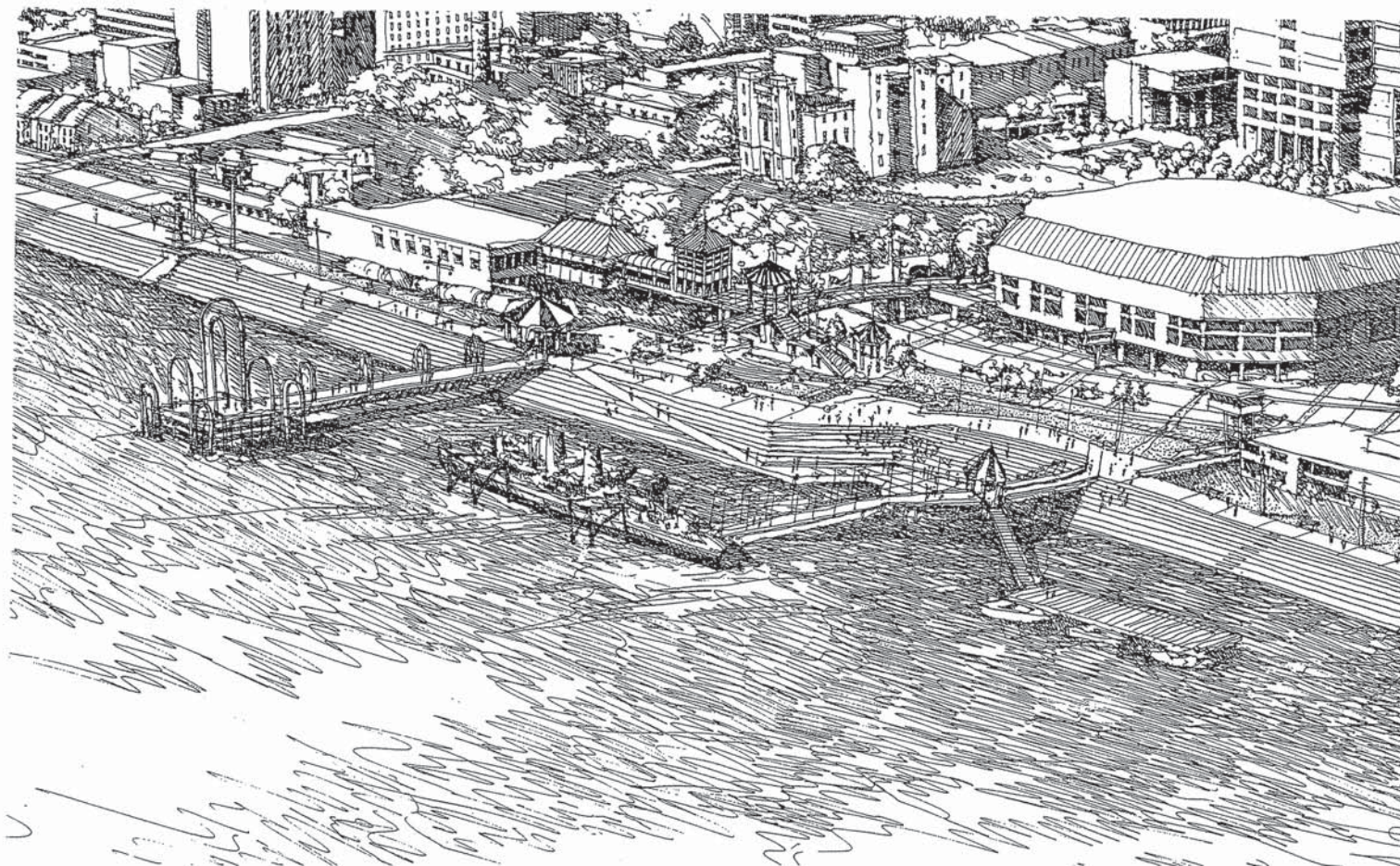




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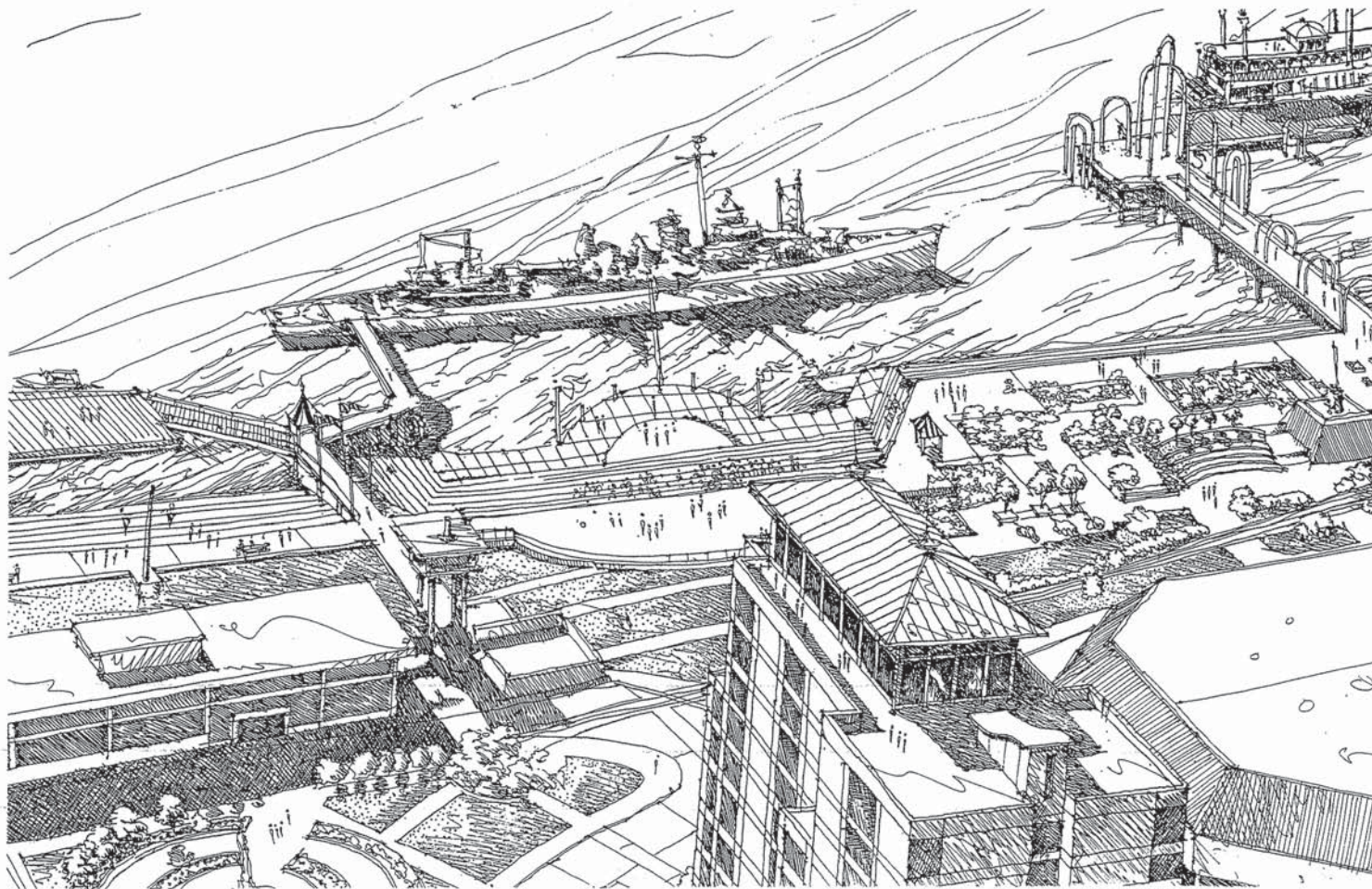
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BATON ROUGE LANDING

ESKEW FILSON ARCHITECTS
■ CHENEVERT SODERBERG ARCHITECTS

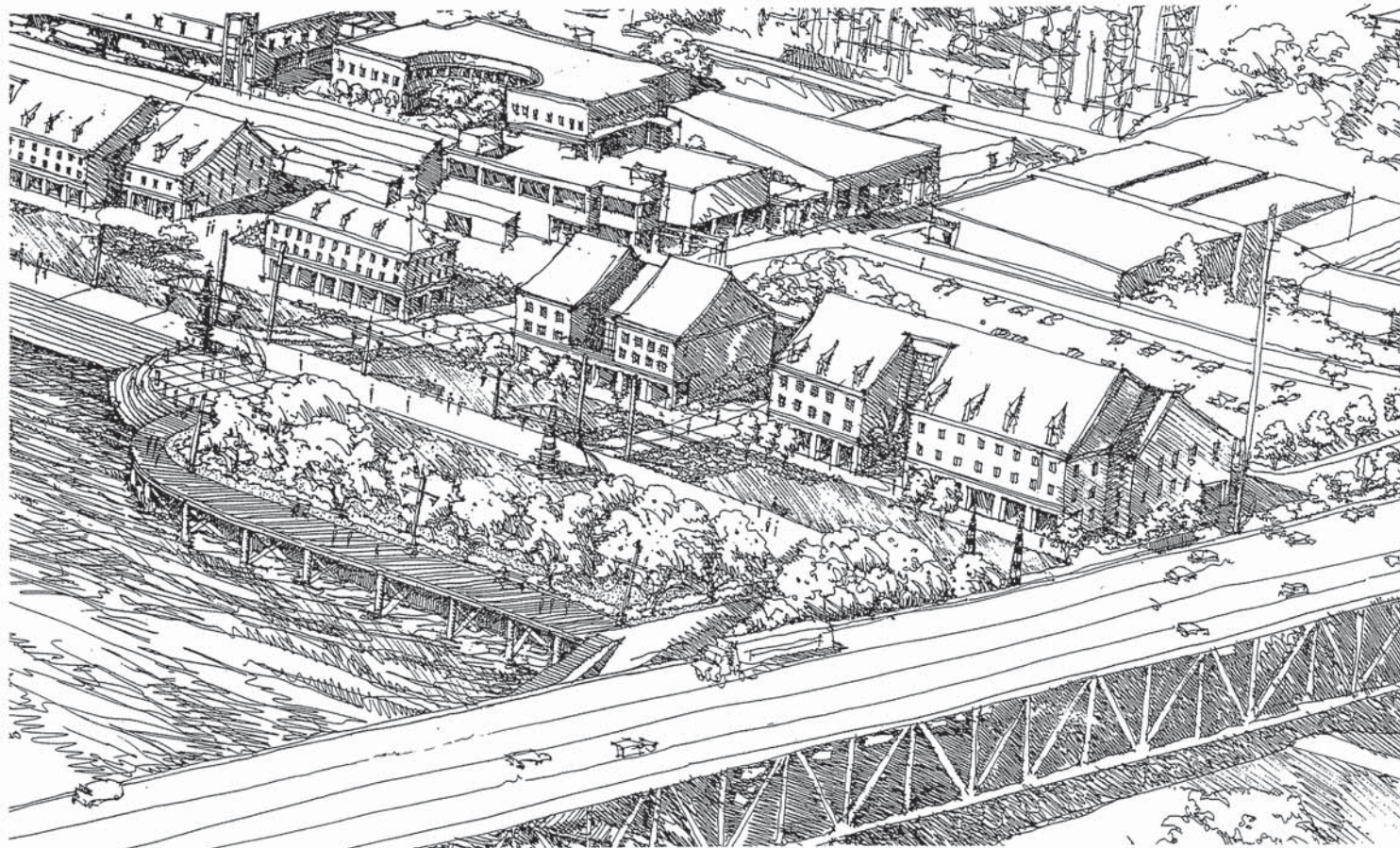
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AMPHITHEATER AND USS KIDD

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CHENEVERT SODERBERG ARCHITECTS

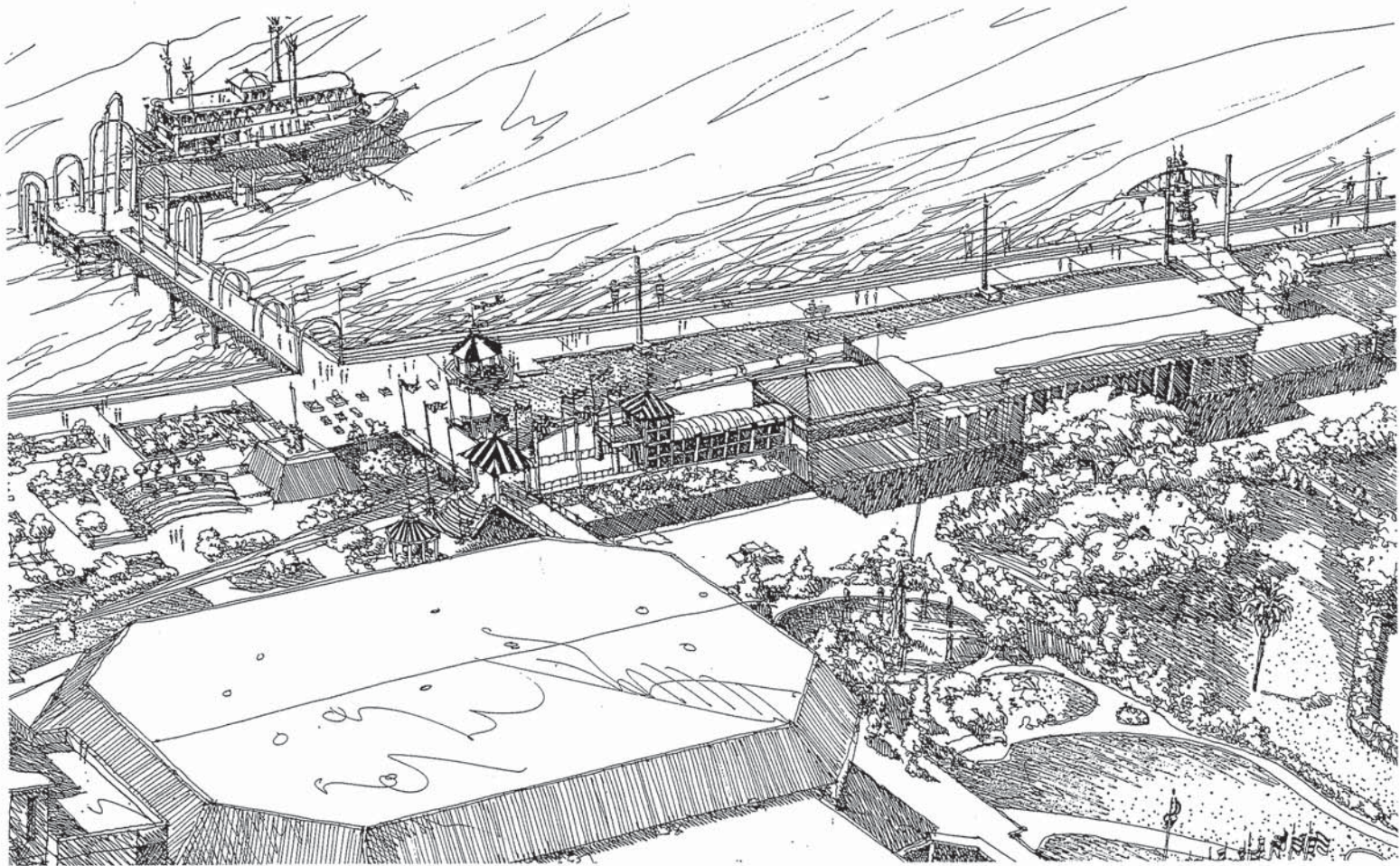
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WHARF / BOAT LAUNCH

ESKEW FILSON ARCHITECTS
CHENEVERT SODERBERG ARCHITECTS

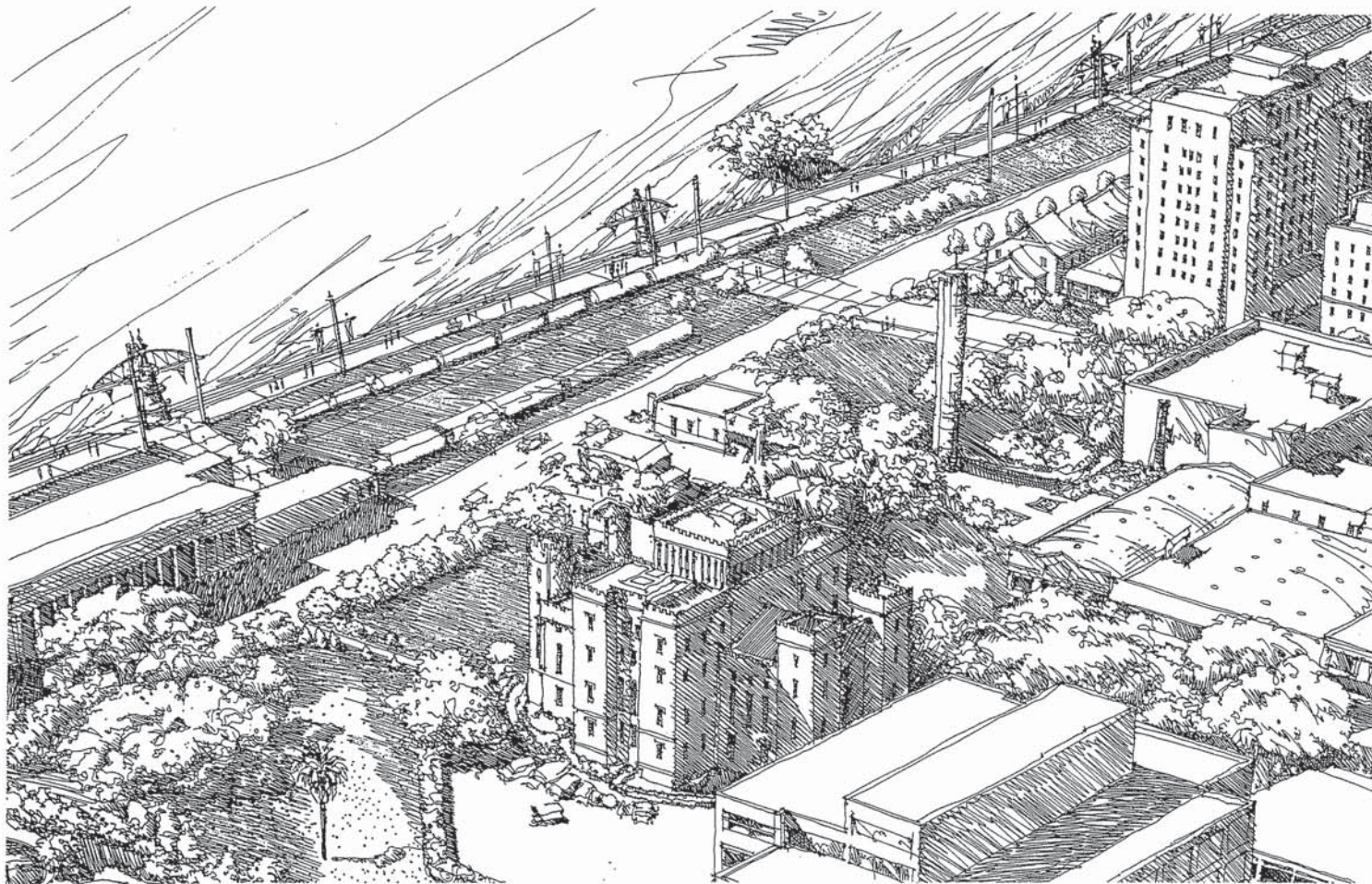
• RIVERFRONT •
BATON ROUGE



LASC AND RIVERSIDE PLAZA

ESKEW FILSON ARCHITECTS
CHENEVERT SODERBERG ARCHITECTS

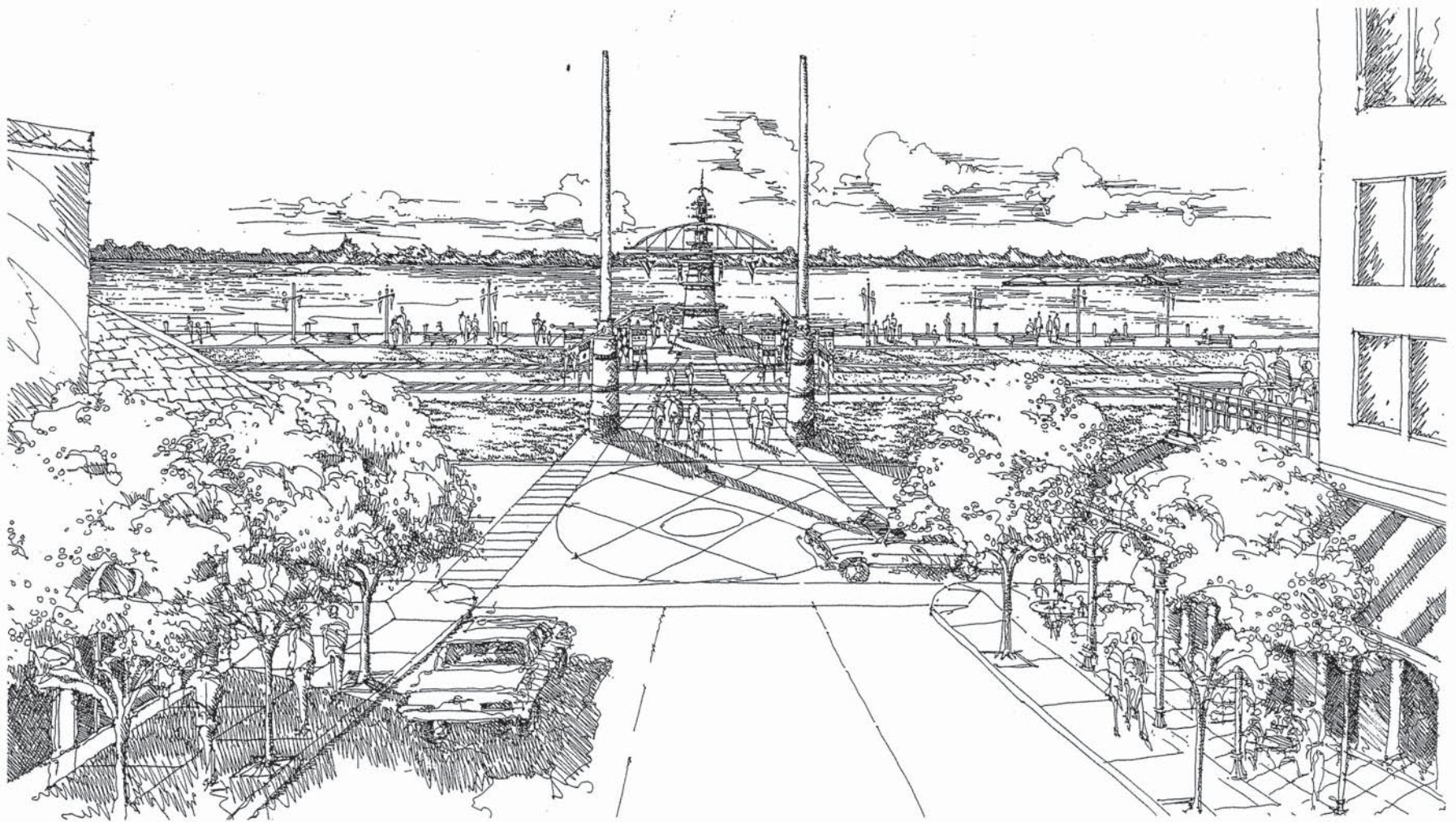
• RIVERFRONT •
BATON ROUGE



CAPITOL HOUSE AND LEVEE WALK

ESKEW FILSON ARCHITECTS
CHENEVERT SODERBERG ARCHITECTS

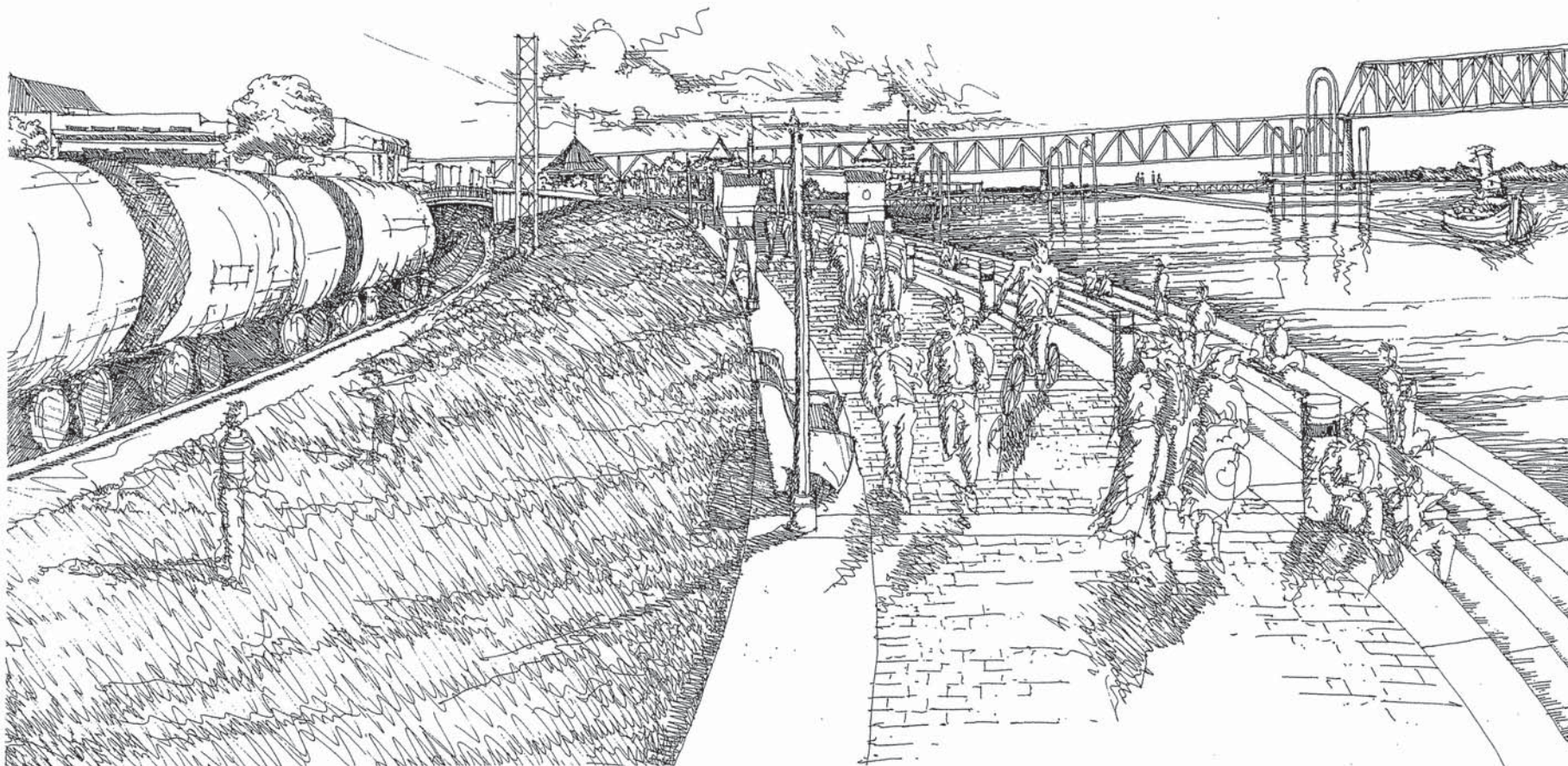
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BATON ROUGE



PORTAL AT RIVER ROAD

ESKEW FILSON ARCHITECTS
CHENEVERT SODERBERG ARCHITECTS

• RIVERFRONT •
BATON ROUGE



LEVEE WALK

• RIVERFRONT •

BATON ROUGE

ESKEW FILSON ARCHITECTS
CHENEVERT SODERBERG ARCHITECTS

DEVELOPMENT MENU

The following is a complete summary of development
recommendations for the Baton Rouge riverfront,
indexed according to the five riverfront areas.

Also included are off-site development options
as well as U.S. Army Corps of Engineers improvements.

F.0 Off-Site Improvements

- F.1 Lighting of Bridge Spans
- F.2 Centroplex Pedestrian plaza upgrade
- F.3 New stair to Centroplex skyway @ Arts & Science
- F.4 New LASC restaurant, cafe and pavilion
- F.5 Centroplex hotel and parking
- F.6 Commercial/residential/retail development near Catfish Town
- F.7 New access between Old Capitol House grounds and Centroplex gardens
- F.8 Streetscape development along riverside "village"
- F.9 Capitol House improvements/condominium development
- F.10 Class "A" office building at Florida Street and River Road
- F.11 Capitol office building near Pentagon Barracks
- F.12 Memorial plaza at site of Zachary Taylor house and old Spanish Fort
- F.13 Improvements to Pentagon Courtyard and circulation
- F.14 Improvements to Capitol Gardens
- F.15 Improvements/amenities at Capitol lakes
- F.16 Connections to universities
- F.17 Relocation of River Road utilities underground

G.0 Corps of Engineers Work

- G.1 Regrade levee profile in Zone B
- G.2 New smooth levee apron slab - Zone B
- G.3 New stepped apron slab - Zone C thru Zone E

DEVELOPMENT MENU