



Cultural Benefits from Metropolitan River Recreation—San Antonio Prototype

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CULTURAL BENEFITS FROM METROPOLITAN
RIVER RECREATION--SAN ANTONIO PROTOTYPE

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PREFACE

The investigation for which this is the final report was carried on by the Department of Recreation and Parks, Texas A&M University and was supported by funding from the Texas Water Resources Institute and the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station. The project term was from July, 1970 to June, 1972.

The principal investigator was Clare A. Gunn, Ph.D., professor of tourism-recreation development, Texas A&M University. The visitor survey and the environmental analysis were performed by David J. Reed, then research assistant and now assistant professor, Parks and Recreation Department, Oregon State University. The study of voters of San Antonio, owners, organizations and agencies was performed by Robert E. Couch, research assistant and now assistant professor, Department of Recreation, Kent State University, Ohio. Other research assistants, such as Sidney Nolan, Lawrence Simonson, Nick Gettys, Allan Worms, John Hanna and Curtis Shirer assisted in gathering data and in preparation of the report.

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SUMMARY

This study analyzes the response to an outstanding design and development of a park-business complex along a natural river in the heart of a major city, The San Antonio River Walk. The research includes both those who visit and those who control or influence its development.

The River Walk refers to a horse-shoe bend in the San Antonio River covering an area about four by six blocks in size in the central business district. This portion of the river lies in a deep cut, about 25 feet below street level, and is flanked by huge trees, lush plant growth and many shops, restaurants, and hotels. A continuous promenade parallels the river on both sides and the fifty-foot river is bridged many times providing both automobile and pedestrian crossing.

The research flowed along several lines in order to obtain full understanding of this unusual site. Because designed environments are seldom evaluated after construction, this project sought to obtain results on the following objectives:

1. to sketch the present trends in river development for recreation in U.S. cities,
2. to analyze the landscape character of the River Walk, and
3. to obtain the opinions and attitudes toward the use and characteristics of the River

Walk from: a) the visitors at all seasons, b) the voters of San Antonio, c) the organizations and agencies controlling and influencing development, and d) the property owners contiguous to the River Walk.

To determine the status of urban river development in the U.S., a survey of the fifty largest cities was conducted in addition to a review of literature and visits to ten cities with urban water development. Data from these sources revealed the following:

There is at present very little use made of urban rivers and most have been badly abused. Many plans are being made in most cities for the realignment of policies governing their waterfronts. A few cities are beginning the implementation or redevelopment that incorporates the open space, esthetic and recreational values of their waters.

Generally, the following attitudes were obtained from urban planners and leaders:

1. An increasing concern over the deterioration of urban centers,
2. Pressure from conservationists, preservationists, and historic restorers to redevelop urban river corridors,
3. Continued concern over flooding problems of urban areas,
4. New development in urban

areas along waterfronts that ignores the esthetic and visual amenities of the water.

5. Some new, low-quality downtown river development that perpetuates an already serious problem because the land is low-priced,
6. Little acceptance by business that waterfront has value in an urban setting.

A landscape analysis was conducted to identify the primary characteristics of the River Walk. These include:

The River Walk has emerged as an esthetically unified area due to the integration of engineering, architectural and landscape design. At the same time, enough variety exists to provide diversity of user activity and to stimulate environmental interest.

The River Walk is in the vicinity of several other features that add to the strength of its attracting and fulfilling powers.

Because of its unique microclimate, plants abound that will not survive at the street level in the hotter air in summer and colder air in winter. It represents an extensive collection of flora and offers the visitor pleasant relief from the low-grade amenities in the normal urban setting.

The informal landscape design gives the impression of being in a wild setting of great size; yet there is provision for many activities.

Excellent control and maintenance is provided, always offering a neat

and clean setting although used by many people.

It represents a unique mix of business enterprise and park, each one complementing the other to produce an identifiable urban feature of high quality.

The visitors use and image of the River Walk was surveyed through visitor response to interview using social survey techniques at nine stations along the River Walk. The survey was conducted on weekends for a full year.

Results of the survey reveal a single encompassing conclusion--the River Walk design and development are evoking an unusually strong positive response. This response is consistent over a wide range of ages, incomes, and occupations of visitors. Visitors describe the River Walk as very beautiful, moderately large, passive, uncrowded, safe, very interesting, cool, and uncommercial. At the same time, they make diverse leisure uses of the area. Some find solitude and others find excitement and gregariousness. Some shop and others do not. Some prefer to walk and others like the specially designed sightseeing barges. A wide range of personal satisfactions appear to be coming from a relatively small development.

In order to gain some insight into the strength of the voter support of the San Antonio River Walk, the registered voters of the city were surveyed. A statistical random sample of 2,001 of the 216,100 registered voters was drawn and was mailed questionnaires. A total of

414 usable responses were returned and constitute the basis for the following analysis:

76.6% have visited the River Walk in the last year.

96.6% consider it to be a tourist attraction; 80.7% consider it to be of economic benefit to the city; 74.9% consider it to be of benefit to them as residents of the city.

42.5% consider downtown traffic to be a problem; 64.5% consider downtown parking to be a problem; only 15.7% believe that the entrances to the River Walk are difficult to find; 11.6% say that they could not get a ride to the River Walk if they wished to go there.

76.6% consider the buildings on the River Walk to be attractive; 50.2% consider the River Walk to be lighted well enough at night; 47.1% consider the River Walk to be safe; 48.3% do not consider the river water to be clean.

62.3% would favor increased recreational use of the River Walk; 55.1% favor a man-made channel connecting with the Alamo; 79.7% favor improving the remainder of the San Antonio River northward to the Brackenridge Park while 62.8% favor improving southward to the city limits.

45.4% would be interested in living in an apartment along the river if available in their price range.

56.0% would vote for a bond issue to expand river development even if it raised taxes slightly; 25.6% favor if it would not raise

taxes; 4.8% against if it raised taxes; 2.7% against even if it did not raise taxes. (10.9% were undecided.)

The survey of controlling agencies revealed a unanimity of policy toward the River Walk even though they are not bound officially. A high degree of collaboration and cooperation is taking place. When questioned, not one was interested in greater power, believing that the present management was working well.

The contiguous owners of property did not reveal future plans but generally were in favor of the present River Walk development. Some were in favor of land use and building controls and others believed them to be overly restrictive. About 70% of the owners do not have land uses that face upon or utilize the amenities of the river at the present time.

Conclusions:

For the city of San Antonio the following conclusions were reached:

1. The River Walk is unique.
2. The River Walk is a unified whole.
3. The River Walk contains diversity.
4. A delicate balance between park and commercial exists.
5. The River Walk is of great social and economic value.
6. The River walk is a cohesive whole with dynamic internal forces.

For other urban river areas:

7. The River Walk has an atypical

- setting.
8. A refocus upon downtown can be accomplished.
 9. A small amount of water can become a powerful social force.
 10. Composite management can succeed.
 11. A business-park mix can be functional.
 12. Diversity is successful.
 13. Internal and adjacent land uses must be compatible.
 14. Both tourists and local citizens can participate.
 15. Can provide state tourism stimulus.



1. INTRODUCTION

This study is designed to describe and analyze an outstanding example of the revitalization of a decadent city core, accomplished primarily through design and development around a natural river. The scope of the study includes citizen, visitor, and owner response to a business-park complex about four by six blocks in size located in the heart of San Antonio. It is equally well known by either its Spanish label, Paseo del Rio, or the Anglicized version --simply, the River Walk. The study is an investigation of the qualitative aspects of a designed environment to determine how well (or poorly) it is performing urban core functions as viewed by those who control and use it.

The study proves conclusively that the River Walk now acts as a single entity even though originating from fragmentation of development. It is an object of great pride, intensive use, and strong social value for both citizens and visitors. While civic leaders have frequently expressed opinions similar to these conclusions, this is the first effort to document the information. From the results of the study, leaders and citizens of San Antonio can develop better plans for the future and other river cities may be inspired to study their own environmental potential and develop constructive plans for urban core redevelopment around water as a critical asset.

BACKGROUND

Of much concern to planners as well as sociologists, political scientists and land developers has been the de-urbanization of American cities in the last few decades. As suburbia grew, the downtown core decayed. Although causes are not well identified, ". . .the fear of the city's infections and the attractions of the open countryside provided both negative and positive stimulus" (Mumford, 1961: 487). The open greensward offered appeal to the new middle class just as it had to the aristocracy for centuries. At the same time, the noise, smoke, congestion and filth became the hallmark of the city.

Along with general urban decay came wanton abuse of a resource vital to the initiation and growth of most cities--the waters. Essential to defense for the ancient city and critical to commerce for the medieval as well as the industrial city, the rivers and other water bodies were converted by exploiters into giant sewers, lined with the city's trash. Cultural development turned its back upon the resource.

Abrams (1965:296) describes the problem,

Water has been the age-old magnet for people--the Roman



FIGURE 1.
Ancient city of Nuremberg, built
astride a river and enclosed by a
defense canal.

*bath, the fountain, falls, vil-
lage well, beach, spa, and more
recently the resort swimming pool.
Yet while preservation of natural
access to water has been the
pride and stabilizing force of
great cities, American cities
have been relinquishing their
waterways so recklessly that the
last vestige of the aqueous
will soon be the laundromat.*

The loss of rivers and waterfronts to cities might not be such a tragedy if so many segments of society had not placed such a high value upon the mental stimulus and social functions of water.

Throughout history, no natural feature has held the magnetism exhibited by water. "In fresco paintings of the Egyptian dynasties (1225 B.C.) ponds and canals and cultivation of exotic water plants were part of the theme" (Kramer, 1971:1). For centuries, flowing waters raised questions in man's mind that were not completely answered by the more practical uses he made of such waters. "Magic and ritual, superstition, reverence, and worship--all are so intermin-

gled that the various elements cannot be isolated" (Brittain, 1958: 121). For the ancient city, the river was the social as well as economic catalyst. It not only served commerce and defense but also

. . . drew men together in communal pleasures, strengthening, no doubt, a sense of individual participation in a larger life that embraced neighbors and strangers, and even foreigners from distant lands wearing their exotic clothes and clacking away in incomprehensible languages (Brittain, 1958:124).

In spite of the fact that the Ganges River, for example, has been the most heavily exploited river resource in the world for irrigation and water supply, ". . . it is the mystical powers of purification that have been, and are still, most deeply revered" (Kramer, 1971:1). In Handel's time, it was the Thames in the center of London which gave enriching reflection to his music for the court and for George II. Through-

out history, during both days and nights, flowing urban water has provided the medium for a great diversity of mystical and pleasurable activities. Even today, as engineers attempt to harness its flow, it remains an element of awe.

Reflecting pools, rivers, ponds, fountains, and waterfalls continue to be important features of urban life. Water provides appeals of sound and sight that cannot be reproduced in any other material. Ancient and modern designers have long known of many fundamental human responses that can be evoked by creating water settings.

Water brings tranquility, repose, motion, and sound to the setting. What is more soothing to the ear than the quiet trickle of a fountain on a hot day? What is more satisfying to the eye than reflections of sky and trees in a small pond where moving shadows present an everchanging picture? (Kramer, 1971:1)

Water, therefore, is not only a commodity to be consumed, to generate electricity, to support ships, to facilitate manufacturing or to flush waste; as an element of the landscape environment, it enriches man's mind.

Grady Clay (1965:53) crystallizes this qualitative function of urban rivers,

The greatest civic amenity is a continuously accessible riverbank or stream valley which can wind its way through a city, unfold its views, and give its benefits to all who choose to walk, to sail, or to bicycle along its length.

Waterfront reclamation, therefore, becomes one of the most important objectives of present-day urban renewal. Weaver (1966:38) points out,

Through planning and urban renewal programs we want to revitalize the central city. We want to open it up, by surgery if need be, so that it is accessible to all. We want to facilitate, not extinguish, the flow of people and ideas through the downtown area. We want to make it a place where people come not only to work and to shop, but to seek out the highest intellectual and cultural experiences available to their communities.

Nowhere else in the country have these words been so effectively implemented as in the San Antonio River Walk.

HISTORICAL SKETCH

Modern-day visitors to the River Walk obtain an impression of a single entity--a complex conceived and planned as a focal point of urban life. This is only partly true. Several individuals throughout the history of San Antonio have visualized the development of portions of the river into places of historic interest, resource preservation or entertainment. But the present mix of business, park, entertainment, shopping and meeting place is relatively recent. Only in the last three years has the present balance between these elements and such a high quality of design and management been established.

In the early years of the foundation of San Antonio as a city, the

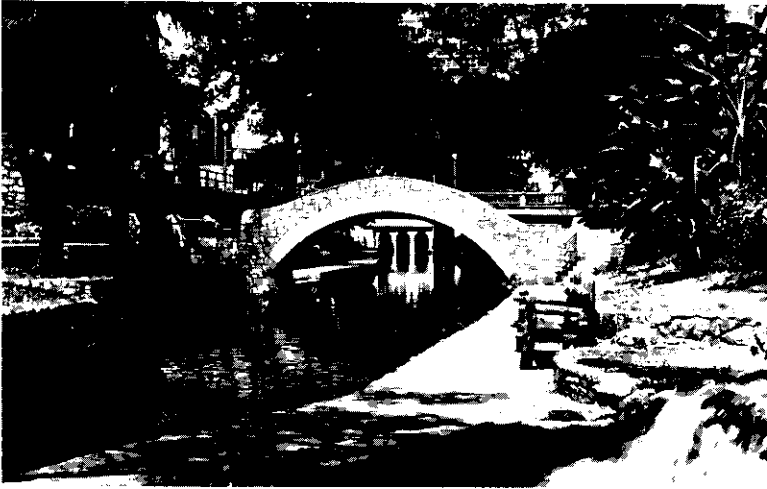


FIGURE 2.
Typical view of the San Antonio
River Walk.

traditional rectangular street grid was laid upon the land with no regard to the terrain or water courses. The San Antonio River was neither a thing of beauty nor a force in the orientation of buildings. It was either ignored or used as the waste receptacle for structures built near or along it.

In 1919, the results of an engineering study for the San Antonio River forecast that heavy flooding was probable and would result in serious damage to the city. On September 9, 1921, the prediction came true. A flood swept the city taking 51 lives. The loss of buildings, merchandise, private effects, homes and public improvements amounted to approximately \$3 million (Gwin 1921:45).

Following this flood many civic leaders seriously considered covering the stream cut with concrete, using the top as a street and the interior as a large sewer. Local citizen pressure resisted and defeated this solution. Instead, a flood prevention program was initi-

ated. This plan included elimination of sharp bends in the river in the downtown area and construction of a cutoff channel to allow more rapid release of flood waters. These engineering structures virtually eliminated the threat of flooding in the horseshoe bend of the river.

The stabilization of the flooding problem stimulated many efforts to beautify the horseshoe bend area. As a result of the fight to save the downtown section of the river, the San Antonio Conservation Society was formed on March 22, 1924 (Donovan, 1968:52). Later, Mr Robert H. Hugman, a local architect, envisioned the horseshoe bend as a tourist attraction and was employed by a committee of property owners to produce a plan which would develop the natural beauty of the river.

Mr. Jack White, a local hotel manager and Mr. Hugman were able to interest people in the plan, but they could not raise enough money for the project nor could they convince the City Council that a

special tax levy was needed for the river project. As a result of this difficulty in appropriating funds the San Antonio Improvement District was created. It included all property in a strip one-half block back from the water on either side of the river in the downtown section (Lomax, 1948: 69).

On October 26, 1938, a \$75,000 bond election was held with only 107 persons--those who owned and occupied downtown riverfront property--being eligible to vote. The bond issue passed by a vote of 74 to 2, imposing a tax upon the property owners of one and one-half cents per \$100 assessed valuation (Lomax, 1948:69). This was probably the first such bond issue in the country.

Ground was broken in March, 1939, and the work was completed within 18 months with the Works Progress Administration spending \$350,000 to the city's share. The project covered 21 blocks in the downtown area and consisted of rock retaining walls, picturesque foot bridges and rock

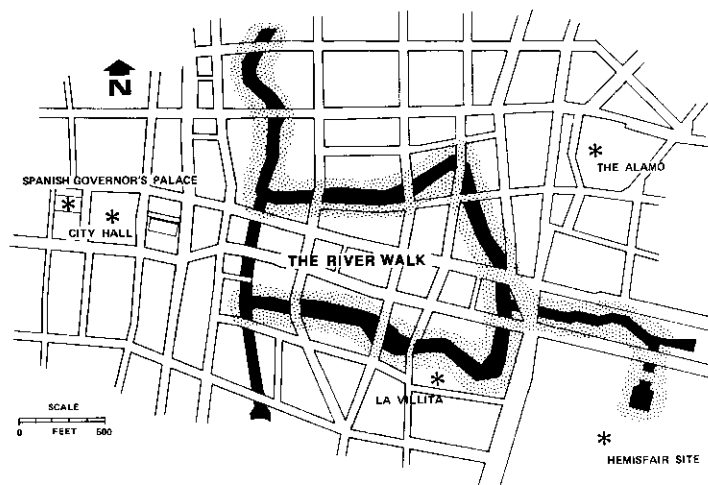
surfaced walks and landscaped banks (San Antonio Chamber of Commerce, a:3).

For over twenty years, this remained the major development of the river, establishing a park-like setting, protecting huge trees and other landscape materials. However, visitation was low due to the river bend's reputation of thievery and assault and to the lack of stimulating points of interest. During this period only two restaurants had faith in the area and they maintained merely a sustaining business.

In 1961 a feasibility study concerning the expansion of the river development was sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce. It was not accepted in detail because it emphasized festive development and little protection of historic buildings, but it did stimulate further study.

Subsequently, in March, 1962, the City Council passed an ordinance which established a

FIGURE 3.
Grid street pattern and the River Walk portion of the San Antonio River.



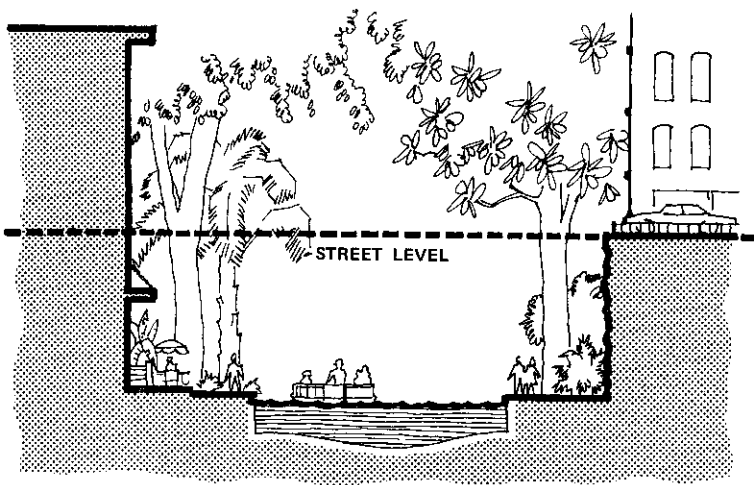


FIGURE 4.
Section through River Walk.

River Walk Commission consisting of seven members appointed by the City Council. The Commission was empowered to advise the Director of the Department of Housing and Building Inspections concerning all applications for building permits within the river bend area and to act in an advisory capacity to the City Council and the city manager in all matters pertaining to municipal improvements in the river bend area (San Antonio Chamber of Commerce, b:2).

By creating a River Walk Commission, the city government provided a mechanism for guiding and controlling development along the river in a way deemed desirable for the entire city. Shortly after its creation the River Walk Commission joined with the Chamber of Commerce in commissioning the preparation of a master plan for the river development. It recommended the linkage of the River Walk with the Alamo, La Villita, and the Military Plaza, containing City Hall and the Governor's Palace.

In addition to the River Walk Commission, two other groups were organized: the Paseo del Rio Project Committee of the Chamber of Commerce (10 volunteers to assist in finding tenants) and the Paseo del Rio Association (property owners and businessmen along the River Walk).

In 1964, the voters of the City approved a \$30 million municipal improvement bond issue. \$300,000 was earmarked for improvements to the horseshoe bend of the San Antonio River. Government officials considered this a clear indication that city property owners recognized the economic and esthetic potential of the river and that the citizens were willing to pay tax monies to develop the potential. The money was spent to create a river park by landscaping the river banks, extending the river walk, installing esthetic lighting along the walk and creating new entranceways.

"River property began to change hands and some new owners, as well

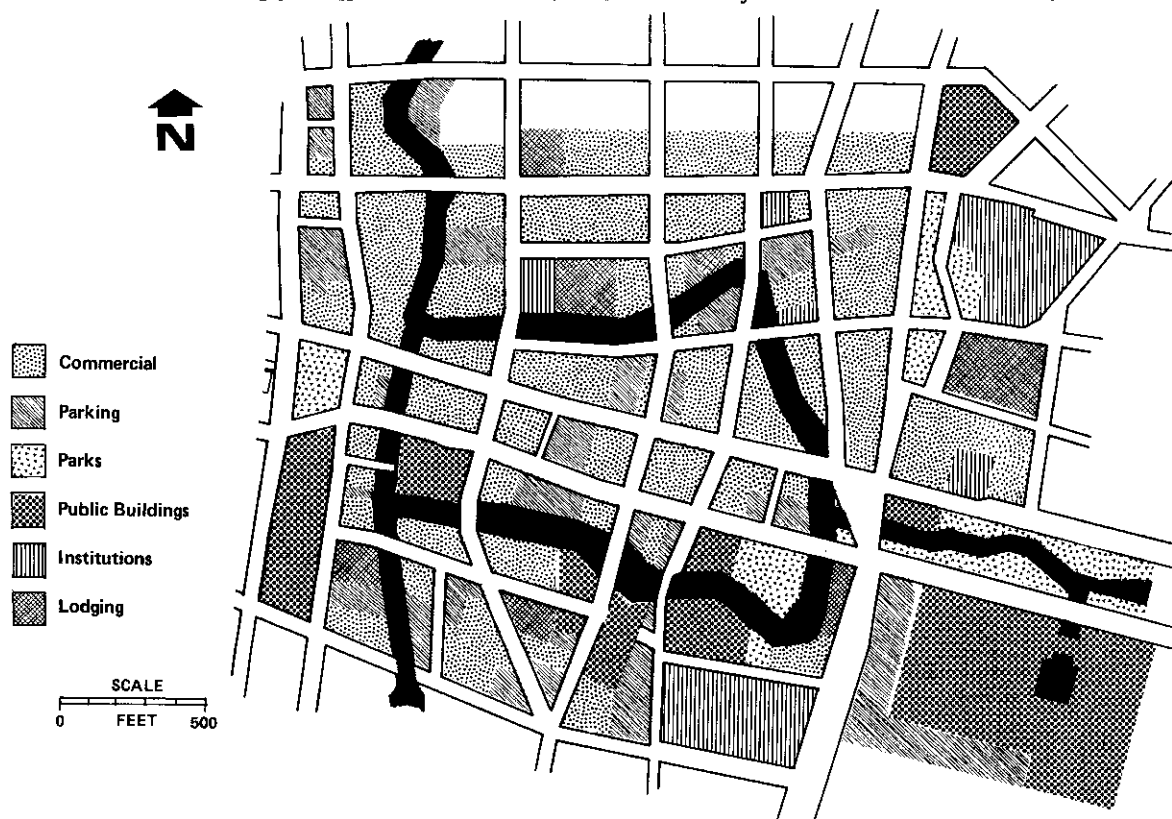
as some whose property had been handed down for generations, commissioned architects to prepare preliminary designs for remodeling and rehabilitation" (San Antonio Chamber of Commerce, b:3). Thus, more and more of the commercial establishments on riverfront property were built or renovated so as to face the river. By 1965, the Paseo del Rio Association consisted of eight businesses. This increased to nearly thirty by the end of 1968.

Much of the Paseo del Rio growth between 1965 and 1968 was stimulated by the city's hosting a World's Fair--HemisFair, from April to September of 1968. A major civic cultural complex,

including an arena, a theater and an exhibition building was built between the HemisFair site and the horseshoe bend. A part of this civic improvement was excavation of an area, approximately 30 feet deep, to create an extension channel connecting the complex with the horseshoe bend. Increased commercial potential of river property was cited as an objective (Whitman, 1968).

The term, River Walk, generally now refers to the horseshoe bend (with extension) of the San Antonio River, as shown in Figure 3, located in the heart of the downtown central business district. The topography is basically flat with the river cut 25-30 feet

FIGURE 5. General land use in vicinity of the River Walk.



below street level. This produces an enclosed environmental corridor, 100 to 300 feet wide at the street level and 60 to 100 feet wide at river level. The river itself is confined between retaining walls 30 to 50 feet apart. Along beautifully landscaped walkways, a variety of land uses attractive to both residents and visitors now include shops, restaurants, night clubs, residences, hotels, public library, arena, exhibition building, theater, restored historic buildings and a high proportion of garden-like open landscape. The water level is reasonably stable and for all except flood periods is supplied from pumped wells at a former spring site in Brackenridge Park and from inflows along the watercourse. Mean annual flow is rapid enough to keep the river from becoming stagnant and choked with unsightly water plants.

Now that the River Walk is a viable and active force in the social and economic structure of the city of San Antonio and fulfills the functions generally lost in urban river areas, it seemed appropriate to investigate both this special environment and the response to it. Designed landscapes are seldom so studied to evaluate the effectiveness of design decisions.

STUDY OBJECTIVES AND APPROACH

In order to gain the fullest insight into the use and response to the River Walk environment, it did not appear that a single research approach would suffice.

Therefore, the following objectives were set for the study:

1. to sketch the present trends in river development for recreation in U.S. cities;
2. to analyze the landscape character of the River Walk;
3. to obtain the opinions and attitudes toward the use and characteristics of the River Walk from: a) the visitors at all seasons, b) the voters of San Antonio, c) the organizations and agencies controlling and influencing development, d) property owners contiguous to the River Walk.

The approach to an understanding of urban river development across the country consisted of a brief survey and a review of current research literature, a survey of the 50 largest cities of the country and an inspection of 10 cities. The results of the survey of 50 cities are based upon a 76 percent return. Recreation and park directors were questioned regarding the existence of water resources for recreation, characteristics of such waters and the recreational development that has taken place along these waters.

For the environmental analysis of the San Antonio River Walk, the researchers used descriptive techniques based upon observation, photographic recording and analysis common to the profession of landscape architecture. Characteristics that unified or divided the area were studied.

descriptive information on the use of the River Walk.

Because the voters of the city, through their taxes, help support the River Walk development and upkeep, it was believed that a survey of their attitudes toward the River Walk was important. A representative cross section of names was selected by using the voter registration records for 1970. Through the use of random numbers a sample of 2001 names was obtained. Questionnaires were mailed, yielding a return of 475 responses. It is assumed that this return is reasonably representative of the voters of the city. However, no records were available to assist in supporting or denying this assumption. A telephone followup was made of 39 non-respondents to the first wave of inquiry. Of the 39, 7 either had moved out of the state, were deceased or had unlisted numbers; 13 had no telephone. The results from this check were very similar to the initial returns except that the frequency of visitation to the River Walk was slightly lower for the non-respondents. The attitudes expressed toward the River Walk by the two groups were very similar.

Another important segment involved in the research was the group responsible for the decision-making and control of the River Walk. On May 19 and 20, 1971, the leaders of the following 6 agencies and organizations were interviewed: Parks and Recreation Department, San Antonio River Authority, San Antonio Conservation Society, Paseo del Rio Association, the San Antonio

Chamber of Commerce and the River Walk Commission.

It seemed appropriate to include the individuals who have much to do with the final development that takes place along the river--the property owners. Therefore, all the 51 property owners contiguous to the river were surveyed by a two-page mail questionnaire. Twenty-nine usable responses were obtained and formed the basis for the results.



2. STATUS OF URBAN RIVER DEVELOPMENT

This brief investigation revealed that only now are plans being made in most cities for the realignment of policies on urban land use to take advantage of an ancient but badly abused amenity. A few cities are beginning the implementation of urban river renewal development.

A RENAISSANCE

Indeed, a renaissance of urban river use is now taking place. The President's Council on Recreation and Natural Beauty in 1968 reported that 50 cities were involved in programs to renew and enhance waterfronts. In 1971 it was reported that more than 100 cities were involved in such programs. (Arthur, Cotton, Moore Associates, 1971). The *Journal of Housing* in 1964 focused on the topic, "Renewal is Recovering the Waterfront". From this discussion, it is apparent that there is a compulsive desire for people to reach open water, whether it be in the form of ocean shore, a bay, a lake, or the banks of rivers in cities or small communities. Just in the last few years, studies of urban rivers have been springing up from many sources.

A poll of the Direct Member Cities of the National League of Cities revealed a great amount of planning in process. Of the 185 respondents, including cities

from 30,000 to over 500,000 in size, the percentage of those which have waterfront development plans varied from 19.4 percent (cities between 30,000 and 50,000) to 100 percent (cities 400,000 to 500,000). However,

. . . while most cities have ideas for their waterfronts, quite a bit of activity is still confined to drawing boards and stacks of plans are still stuck in the hope chests of city halls--for problems of restoring the waterfronts are more than surface deep. (Balchen, 1971)

The survey of the largest 50 cities of the United States (38 responded) carried on as part of this project, also supports the fact that cities are now recognizing the importance of their rivers and other water resources. While none indicated that it had a business-park complex comparable to San Antonio, all of the responding cities indicated that they were planning improvements. All stated that they possessed surface water of some type. Some cities possess several types. In all, 95 rivers, streams, canals and lakes were mentioned by name. Of these, 62 were deemed "navigable," leaving the definition to the respondent. Some stated that their definition included streams usable by fishing boats or small runabouts only.

The incidence of a variety of developments on water bodies in the 38 responding cities is shown in Table 1. This inventory suggests that a great amount of recreational development has already taken place. Inspection of some of the information submitted however shows that many of the parks, sports complexes, town houses or civic centers make no use of the relationship with water although located near it. In fact, many of these developments completely ignore the water resource, using the frontage as parking lots. The comparatively low frequency of swimming beaches probably infers either preemption by other uses, poor water quality or lack of interest in swimming areas.

A Milwaukee River study includes a statement from the mayor that is indicative of the present state of the art of urban river development:

Who can rely on more than his own opinion as to the proper land use for different sections of the riverfront? Almost everyone agrees that something should be done about the river and riverfront but there has been little dialogue on specifics. Apart from some few obvious items, whose vision is broad enough to say confidently that he has the perfect plan for the development of the entire river within the city limits? (Milwaukee River Technical Study Committee, 1968:11)

The "river corridor" plan for Wichita, Kansas, (Oblinger-Smith, 1968:7) as have many plans, includes emphasis on river recreation and offers recommendations for urban river development. However, the

Public Parks	84
Fishing Areas	71
Public Parking	69
Undeveloped Vacant Land	53
Parkway or Waterfront Drive	52
Single Family Housing	48
Light Industry	46
Docking Facilities	43
Apartments	41
Warehouses	41
Scenic Overlooks	40
Restaurants	38
Public Marinas	38
Promenades or Walkways	37
Railroads	35
Heavy Industry	35
Bicycle Trails	34
Hiking Trails	34
Commercial Shops	31
Private Marinas	29
Tour Boats	29
Office Buildings	28
Public Swimming Area	26
Historic Buildings	24
Town Houses	24
Historical Sites	23
Hotels/Motels	23
Tenement Housing	17
Sports Complex	17
Mobile Homes	16
Nature Interpretive Center	14
Tourist Information Center	9
Commercial Amusement Park	9
Convention Center	8
Resort Development	8
Arena	6
Private Swimming Area	6
Observation Towers	6

basis for this plan is the Kansas State Outdoor Recreation Plan which skews the data away from many urban leisure activities that may be associated with rivers, such as attending cultural events, festivals and pageants, visiting night clubs and restaurants and the recreational aspects of conventioning.

In a recent report by Davis, the concept of water in urban areas as a focus for organization is presented. Because water is such a critical and yet common item, it is his belief that many urban decisions by a great many fragmented forces could converge upon water issues because,

First, water is a ubiquitous feature of urban areas. Second, water possesses vital linkages with most other urban subsystems

and in many cases can act as a focal point for planning. Third, the water resource varies physically from site to site and thereby provides unique opportunities for urban areas. Finally, certain techniques and methodologies of water resources management can be applied in a total urban system context. (Davis, 1970:8)

Part of the present problem of low-level river use in American cities stems from different cultural roles and development functions assigned to them, either by intent or by neglect. For example, a comparison by Said (1967) between historic development of American and European river use in cities reveals some striking differences:

European

1. Railroads do not thread through city; end at terminals
2. City develops with equivalent potentials on both sides of river
3. Greater number of bridges allows for dynamic use of both river banks
4. Significant avenues not intercepted by river, but run concurrently with complementing vistas
5. Impact of waterfront reaches farthest inland

American

1. Railroads dominate waterfront
2. City develops more on one side than other
3. River is considered as a barrier
4. Grid patterned streets usually conflicting with riverbends
5. Little or no expression of central business district on waterfront

CASES

From this survey and review of the literature on urban river development, it appeared desirable for the researchers to visit some of those cities reputed to have developed plans for high quality leisure use of their waterfronts. The following discussion reports the highlights of these visits.

Minneapolis

Few cities in the interior are as well blessed with water resources as is Minneapolis. A total of 32 miles of lakefront, 12 miles of the Mississippi River and more than 62 miles of river-oriented parkway can

be found within the city (Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, 1969:13). Industry and shipping took an early hold on the Mississippi riverfront, whereas the lake frontage has long been considered important for pleasure. Regarding linkage between park-water areas and the business community, Floyd Brandt, Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce stated, ". . .they have been linked neither by accident or intent in the past but evidence of awakening interest is now beginning to develop."

Recreational use of non-river waters is high the year-around. The parks entertain about 10 million visits a year by local residents, providing a wide range of outdoor activities at

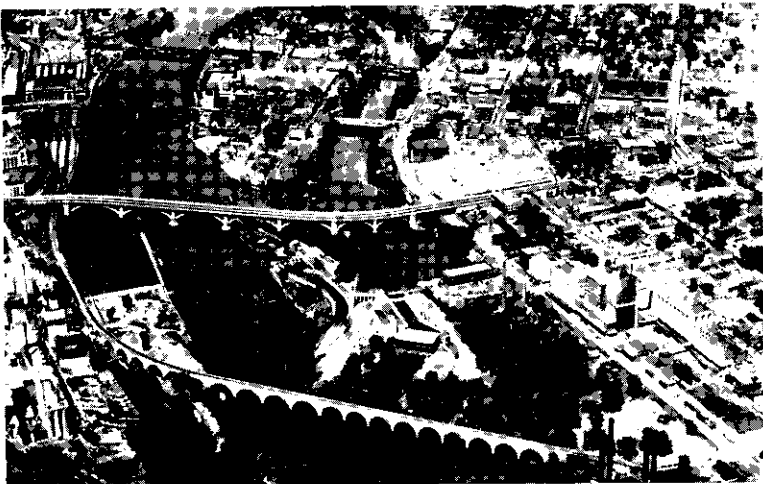


FIGURE 7.
Mississippi River through downtown Minneapolis.



FIGURE 8.
Typical recreational use of Minneapolis waterfront parks.

all seasons.

Business and public interest in development of the river resources is beginning. A 15,000-acre park with a network of trails and linear parks is planned south of the city; Nine Mile Creek is now protected by legislation fostered by local citizen groups; and a Mississippi Gorge Park is in its infancy. Professional planners and designers, active citizen groups and a few civic leaders are actively engaged in recovering some of the downtown river assets.

Denver

The South Platte River, a large

drainage channel fed by numerous tributaries, flows through central Denver. Nearly all vegetation has been removed from the channel and banks and unsightly rip-rap, debris from floods, broken concrete and refuse line the banks. Bank erosion is prevalent.

Primary industrial and transportation functions are located along the river bank, including railroad tracks (spur and main line) which extend the length of the river valley on both sides. Railroad facilities (yards, shops, freight houses, repair facilities), industrial facilities (warehouses and wholesale distributive functions) and a proliferation of highways

FIGURE 9.
Industrial use along Platte
River through Denver.

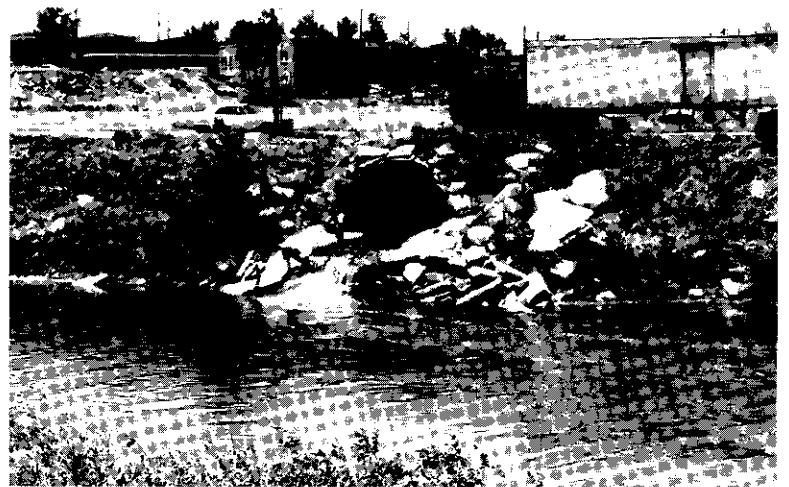


FIGURE 10.
Relationship of Platte River
to suburban Denver.



are the dominant land uses.

Devastating flood damage in 1965 stimulated a comprehensive study of the Platte valley. The resulting plan, *In Response to a Flood*, calls for developing the river as an architectural and natural feature, linking cultural, historical, recreational, industrial, business and residential functions. The complete effort is to span 20 years and carries a budget of \$630 million.

A second major study of the Platte, released in March, 1971, reaffirms this plan and includes feasibility of holding the 1976 Winter Olympics in Denver. The study cites the Olympics as providing a catalyst

for restoring the river area.

There is little evidence of business-public collaboration on urban core river plans. Recreation and city officials are presently pessimistic about removing all the obstacles, relocating rail lines, resistance from private owners, unattractive solutions to flooding, lack of leadership and insufficient funding (Everson et al., 1971).

Wichita

The city of Wichita has expressed interest for many years in the Arkansas River from both flood-control



FIGURE 11.
Bikeway and riverfront through
Wichita



FIGURE 12.
Urban renewal along Arkansas
River in Wichita.

and leisure-use points of view. Flood waters are now rerouted through a drainage channel around the city. While navigation is possible, the lack of provision for locks in new reservoir development suggests that navigation is not to be a major use. On the Arkansas where it is joined by the Little Arkansas and not far from the central business district, power boating and water skiing are popular.

Far-sighted planning, as early as 1923, succeeded in preventing industrial development from monopolizing the majority of the waterfront. The major rail system does not follow the waterways nor penetrate the central

business district.

Currently, there does appear to be a "river ethic" concerned with reorientation to this asset. Efforts, however, continue to be fragmented resulting in spotty development. A \$40 million urban redevelopment of the central business district virtually ignored the river asset. Recently, two river parks have been built near the convention center, providing some linkage between downtown and the river. (Oblinger et al.)

Kansas City, Missouri

For many years, the dominant functions of the Missouri River

FIGURE 13.
Entrance to river front park,
Kansas City, Missouri.



FIGURE 14.
General view of Missouri River,
Kansas City, Missouri.



through Kansas City, Missouri have been water supply, barge traffic and waste removal. In spite of flood control measures, the river carries a strong stigma today as a dangerous and uncontrolled river.

Planning for scenic, recreational, and preservational functions has taken place since 1947. The sporadic efforts now appearing indicate renewed interest in this important asset. A recent plan calls for a riverfront development commission to direct the present scattered efforts. Large areas are suited to recreation and the park department is considering easements for pedestrians and bicyclists. One riverfront improvement plan, issued in 1964, calls for the preservation of the City Market

and buildings of architectural and historical value. It recommends new specialty shops, cafes, restaurants, a golf course and a marina. Local public agencies recognize the need for greater publicity regarding the need for redevelopment of the river as a critical local asset.

Industrial encroachment is evident. One report deplores the degradation of a residential district and stimulation of out-migration due to the establishment of new industry. Railroad lines tie up large quantities of riverfront land. The city owns large tracts of land but has not put these to creative use. One tract is a huge automobile storage lot, others are up for sale. (Johnson et al.)



FIGURE 15.
Harbor, San Francisco Bay,
Alcatraz--from Ghirardelli
Square.

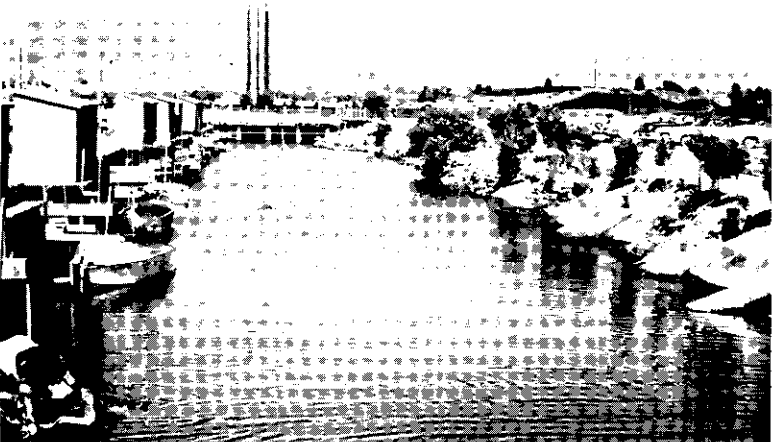


FIGURE 16.
Berkeley Marina and Waterfront
Park.

San Francisco-Berkeley-Sausalito

The San Francisco Bay area has been used for many years for commerce and waste disposal but recently became the focal point for concern as an urban water asset for its esthetic value. An act of the California legislature in 1965 directed a detailed study, resulting in the *San Francisco Bay Plan* of 1969, issued by the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission. This comprehensive plan has set guidelines for all waterfront uses.

Even prior to this plan, a 40-foot-height limit on Bay-side building (restoration of older buildings,

exempted) had been set. Land-water esthetic linkage has been fostered in the north of San Francisco because maritime activity generally moved to the east. (Bolles, 1968:72)

The Waterfront Planning Commission of Berkeley is planning five miles of Bay front which will include parks and marinas. Opinion appears to favor parks over business-park complexes at the present time. (Toney)

Very little waterfront development for leisure or esthetic use has yet developed along the Bay at Sausalito except for a few scattered restaurants, a small seawall fishing spot, and a great

FIGURE 17.
Waterfront development, Sausalito.

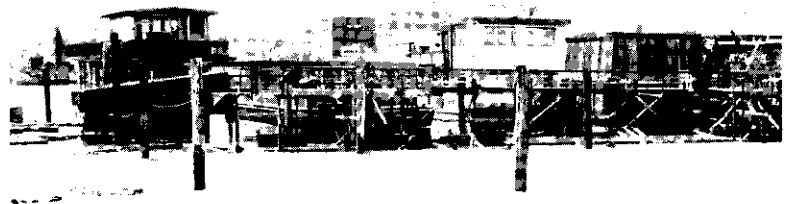
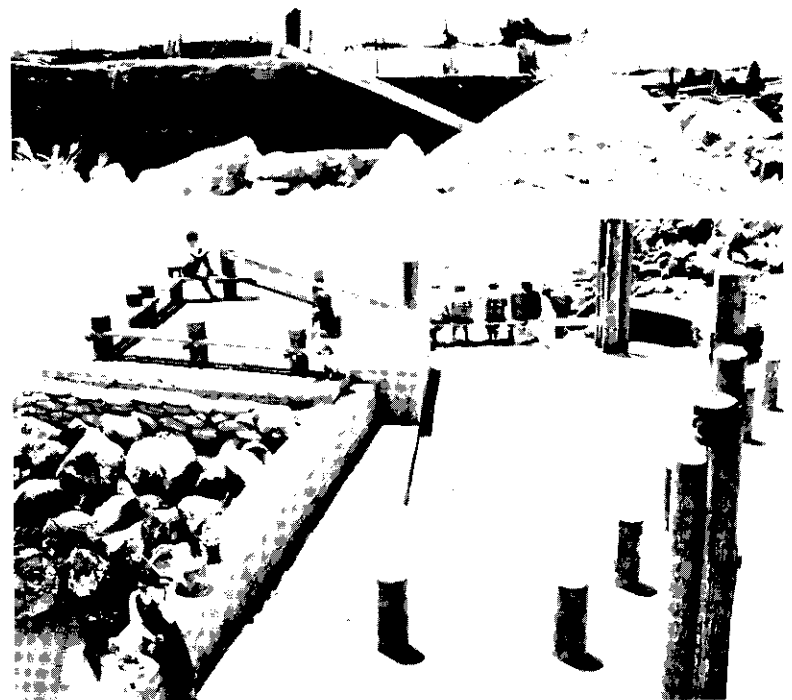


FIGURE 18.
Lookout point, waterfront,
Sausalito.



many "river squatters." A Master Plan for the City of Sausalito (1972) calls for "marine uses including boat harbors, piers, wharves and launching ramps, boat storage, service and repairs, boat building and sales, water taxis, boat rental, sport fishing centers." However, this plan is not being implemented until the nearby areas stop dumping raw sewage into the Bay. (Borgwardt)

Portland

Portland is a city that has long respected its natural amenities, especially the rivers with which it is so intimately associated--

the Columbia River skirting the north and the Willamette upon which the city was founded.

Although homes, shops and civic buildings flanked the Willamette in the 1850's, shipping and industrial development took over the waterfront and remain the dominant use today. (Portland City Planning Commission, 1967) Few structures of "Old Portland" remain.

Recent changes foster dramatic renewal possibilities in the downtown section. Industry up river has virtually eliminated its pollution of the river. A new industrial park at the confluence of the Columbia (Mann, 1967)



FIGURE 19.
Willamette River, through downtown Portland.



FIGURE 20.
Industrial corridor, Willamette River, Portland.

and the Willamette allows a relocation of waterfront industry, now underway. A vigorous Parks Department is adding ribbons of river frontage to its already well-distributed and managed park system.

Even so, business-park linkage is not supported by policy and much of downtown offers no relationship to the river in spite of efforts by planning officials. A new office high-rise now under construction, for example, will block visual linkage with the river for much of the city. (Buckley *et al.*).

Active planning for riverfront development is taking place, fostered by both public officials and

local citizens. The local American Institute of Architects chapter sponsored a visual study rallying input from landscape architects, architects, planners and others. Although the sociological research was not performed in depth, the analysis of the downtown is very illuminating and is stimulating much local interest in the redevelopment of the Willamette (Norman, 1971:5).

Victoria, B.C.

Although outside the United States boundary, the city of Victoria, British Columbia was visited because of the harbor and waterfront reputation for quality. This city demonstrates a strong

FIGURE 21.
Victoria Harbour, from Empress Hotel, Victoria, B.C.



FIGURE 22.
Parliament Buildings, reflected in harbor, Victoria, B.C.



feeling for the water amenities and yet makes multiple use of the water resources.

Although Victoria Harbour is lined with active shipping industry, it presents a tidy, functional, and interesting approach to the city. The harbor terminates at the very heart of the city and is flanked with its most important urban functions: Parliament Buildings, Empress Hotel, Museum, Visitor's Center, Thunderbird Park, Fisherman's Wharf, and Bus Depot.

Planning, preservation, and redevelopment have been taking place for many years as is evidenced by the

active use being made of downtown and waterfront properties. According to the *Overall Plan for Victoria*, (1965:32) the primary functions of the urban core are: "to work, to use its services, to see it as tourists, or because they reside there."

In order to maintain a dynamic waterfront urban center, a plan in 1970 calls for major redevelopment, particularly along extensions of the harbor area. Planned are new housing, shopping, and offices with a new system of downtown circulation--walkways, malls, and public squares linking parking structures with the core (City of Victoria, 1970:3).



FIGURE 23.
Outdoor dining concession,
Stanley Park, Vancouver, B.C.

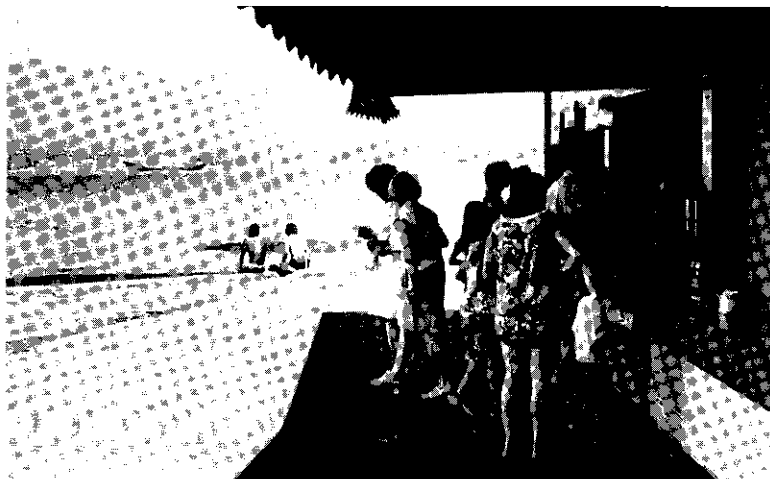


FIGURE 24.
Beach, snack bar, Stanley Park,
Vancouver, B.C.

Vancouver, B.C.

Like Portland, the port city of Vancouver, B.C. demonstrates a sensitivity to the esthetics of its waterfront at the same time that it makes heavy use of the waters for industry and transport. Much of the waterfront is already in park and recreation uses and many urban facilities relate well to the waterfront.

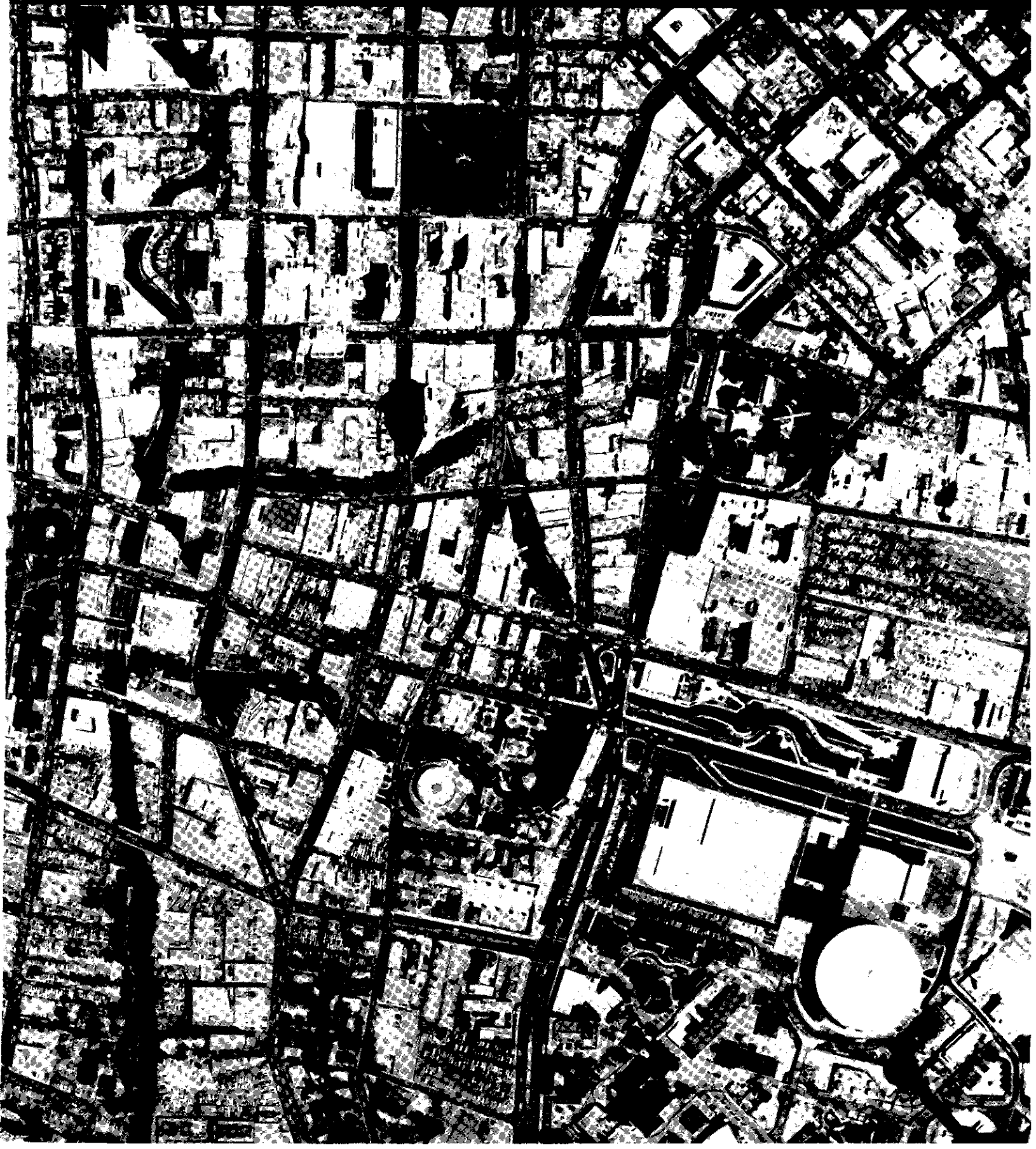
Especially important is the 1000-acre Stanley Park, dedicated in 1899, and located directly adjacent to the heart of the city (Vancouver Board of Parks and Public Recreation, 1968). Few parks offer such diversity--solitude and group sports, wilderness and intensive use areas, trails and a miniature train, ice rinks and swimming beaches. The mix of services (two restaurants, three coffee bars, two curio shops and 26 refreshment stands) and a park setting, containing an abundance of plant materials and wildlife, provide for a wide range of visitor use at all seasons (Livingstone, 1971).

In spite of intense use of their urban parks (1,520,000 participated in community centers and 4 million used beaches in 1970), the Board of Parks and Public Recreation (1971) is purchasing new urban lands whenever possible even though the average cost (of land now developed with houses) is \$293,311 per acre (Vancouver Board of Parks and Public Recreation, 1971:10). As in many other coastal cities new highrise apartment buildings are taking advantage of beach sites and tend to block views toward the waters except for the occupants.

CONCLUSIONS

The status of urban river development across the nation appears to be one of sporadic but expanding dimensions. First, urban leaders are becoming more and more alarmed at the deterioration of urban areas from evacuation of both businesses and residences. Second, conservationists, preservationists and history buffs are beginning to be heard. The recovery of urban river areas for recreation, education, esthetics and other amenity reasons is becoming a stronger argument for redevelopment. Some is taking place. Third, flood water damage continues to be a threat, stimulating agencies to consider the installation of flood control measures. Fourth, some new development (parking, outdoor storage) is taking place adjacent to the river but frequently does not incorporate vistas or other amenity uses of the river assets. Fifth, some new development along the downtown waterfront fosters a declining trend because the site is selected only because of low price, already a reflection of blight and abuse. Finally, the economic value of urban river improvement has not yet generally been accepted or utilized by business except in the traditional functions of transportation, water supply or waste disposal.

**WASHINGTON WATER
RESEARCH CENTER LIBRARY**



3. LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS OF THE RIVER WALK

Although the main objective of this study is behavioral response to a designed and developed urban focus based upon water, this response can best be understood if placed in context of the major characteristics of this special environment. First of all, it is physically far more than a paved promenade although this is a major functional segment. It is a special zone along a horse-shoe bend of the San Antonio River that relates to many other attractions and functional elements of San Antonio. Second, it has emerged as an esthetically unified area due to the integration of engineering, architectural and landscape design. However, the evolution is not complete because a few misfits of design still remain. Third, access has developed in a rather special way allowing easy and frequent physical linkage with the downtown area and yet retaining a quality of hidden mystique. Identification and information are provided by a specially integrated sign system. Fourth, a rare blend of historic and contemporary life has been created. Fifth, a great diversity of interest and user activity by many kinds of users is evident. Sixth, because the water is the focus of development, its quality becomes important. Seventh, it was found that much of the success of the River Walk was due to the special system of maintenance and control. Finally, the River Walk contains both environmental cohesiveness and diversity. An

analysis reveals a series of related subunits. Following is a more complete discussion of these eight primary characteristics.

VICINITY RELATIONSHIPS

While the River Walk is a major attraction in downtown San Antonio, other nearby attractions and a keen sensitivity for preservation of historical and cultural values have influenced the use patterns and development of the river. Civic interest and pride have resulted from the judicious restoration and tasteful redecoration of innumerable dwellings; the preservation of historic documents, pictures, objects, places, names and customs; and protection of indigenous natural beauty of the region. Since 1949 the Conservation Society of San Antonio has presented 253 awards to homeowners, clergy, public officials, businessmen, organizations and others for their efforts. A large number of the restored buildings and museums are accessible to the public.

Several attractions within walking distance of the river illustrate the significance of a complex of tourism-recreation opportunities in the downtown area. The Alamo, formerly the first Spanish mission in the valley and now the shrine of Texas liberty, is a project of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas and receives over a million

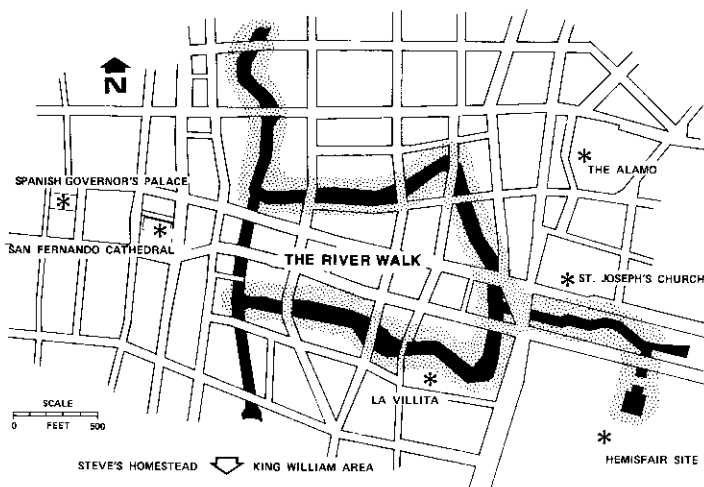


FIGURE 25.
The River Walk and attractions
in the vicinity.

and a half visitors annually. The Spanish Governor's Palace, the only example in Texas of an aristocratic Spanish home and courtyard, is maintained as a museum by the city. The San Fernando Cathedral is the original parish church of San Antonio, and reportedly heroes of the Alamo were buried there. The King William area, a recently zoned historic district, has some of the finest examples of fashionable old German residences. Steves Homestead is one of the handsome homes with restored formal gardens owned and operated for the public by the Conservation Society.

La Villita or "Little Town," dating from colonial times, was purchased by the City in 1939 and a number of adobe houses were restored to their original character. Designed as a cultural center, La Villita prop-



FIGURE 26.
The Alamo, shrine of Texas
liberty.



FIGURE 27.
Governor's Palace, ancient
Spanish residence.

erties are leased to craftsmen and program leaders to perpetuate the flavor of Old San Antonio. Access to La Villita is provided from the river, but one must walk through the outdoor amphitheater to gain entrance. Recognizing the problem of access, park officials have hired young people dressed in Spanish attire to encourage those on the River Walk to visit La Villita.

A large department store only a block away from the River Walk is an integral element of visitor attraction to downtown San Antonio and the river park. On the same block, another historic church, St. Joseph's, has managed to survive expansion of the business through the efforts of strong-minded clergy.

The 92-acre site of HemisFair '68



FIGURE 28. San Fernando Cathedral, original parish church of San Antonio.

FIGURE 29.
Historic St. Joseph's Church,
viewed from River Walk.



FIGURE 30.
HemisFair site: Tower of the
Americas, convention center.



is now an entertainment plaza featuring four museums, food services, rides and amusements, craft shops, a children's playground, convention and exposition center, theater of performing arts, arena and the Tower of the Americas. Minstrels often entertain in the open-air food centers.

At street level, visual access to the river is available only at a few locations where the sidewalk parallels the waterway and at bridge crossings. However, many of the River Walk businesses have both street-level and riverfront access. Parking is provided largely by commercial lots, a few garages and limited on-street space.

Despite the fact that the river is considerably below street-

level, the cityscape is not always obscured from view. In a few locations, large downtown buildings are visible and a distinct contrast is offered between the serenity of the River Walk and the activity of the central city. While on the River Walk in the evening, one feels linkage with the heart of the city even though he is shielded from it. Brightly lighted buildings in the background produce an atmosphere that enriches the experience of the user, providing an awareness of a pleasant outdoor setting in the inner city more often thought of as unfit for human survival, much less human enjoyment.

A variety of shops and cultural amenities in the vicinity are important to the River Walk.



FIGURE 31.
One of the 19 vehicle bridges that allows views of the River Walk.



FIGURE 32.
Downtown buildings and street-level activity, visible from River Walk.

DESIGN THEME AND DETAIL

The design theme of the River Walk is based on a heritage culture dating from the century of Spanish colonial rule and from the time when Texas was an integral part of Mexico. Adobe and stone buildings provide a unifying textural theme well suited to the climate and culture. Maintenance of this charm and atmosphere of Old San Antonio has been a basic goal of riverfront enhancement. The policy of the River Walk Commission sets forth standards for maintaining the distinctive character and natural beauty of the area. The river is the core of the development, with the system of walkways and terraces maximizing the water's edge and tying together shoreline facilities. The design elements of the

river park are simple, unobtrusive and restful. New structures have been carefully coordinated with the old, maintaining the basic theme and enhancing the visual identity of the riverfront.

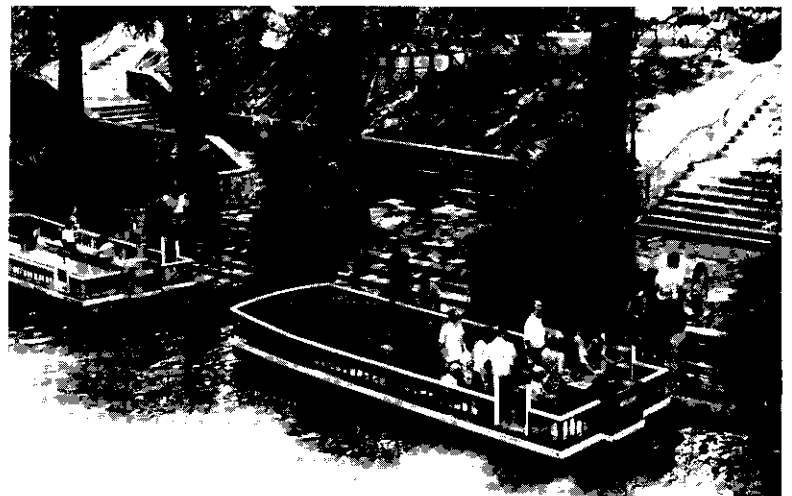
The channelized river serves as the dominant feature of the River Walk, bordered by wide walkways and landscape material. Maximum riverfront access is a major design element. Boat landings and the river terrace link the river, walkway and waterfront development.

Detail in the architectural design and treatment of buildings and the use of regional and indigenous materials is evident in commercial and private development, the Arneson River Theater and structural features. Complete integration of

FIGURE 33.
Old San Antonio design theme of
River Walk.



FIGURE 34.
Boat landing and sightseeing
barge at Paseo del Rio Plaza.



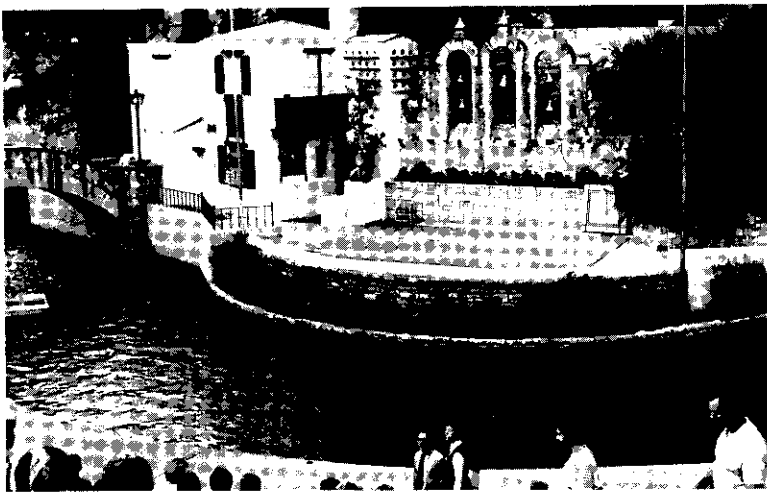


FIGURE 35.
Stage of Arneson River Theater,
as viewed from amphitheater.



FIGURE 36.
Old and new structures, harmon-
ized by design detail.



FIGURE 37.
Chamber of Commerce Building,
HemisFair river extension.

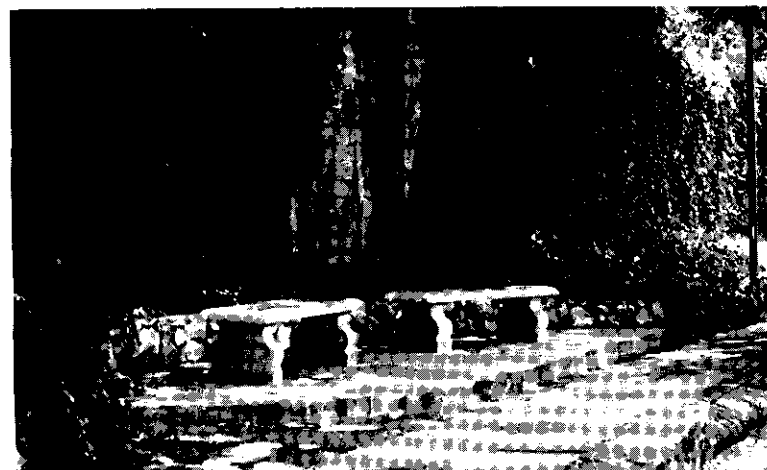


FIGURE 38.
Seating, typical of designs
used in earlier stage of
development.

FIGURE 39.
Results of early efforts of
riverbank conservation.



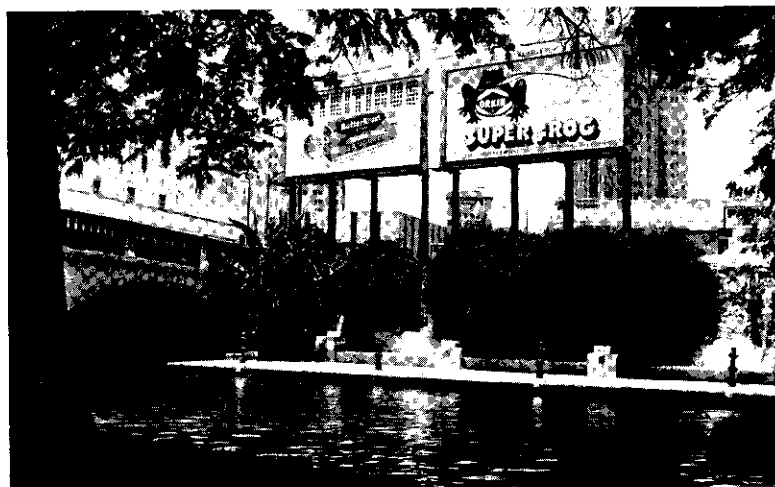
FIGURE 40.
Semitropical plants create
paradisaical atmosphere.



FIGURE 41.
Water flow feature at La
Mansion Hotel.



FIGURE 42.
Contrast of landscape character.



structures and the site is thereby achieved--in design expression, choice of materials, interlocking of the terrace and walkway with the buildings and river and connecting footbridges.

No attempt has been made to regiment architectural and landscape design of new buildings. The City Library, Chamber of Commerce building, and recent commercial development, although designed in a contemporary idiom, reflect a sensitivity to the character established in the early days of riverfront development.

Special design features and furnishings identify and unify the riverfront and express the character of Old San Antonio. Street furniture, waste receptacles, container plantings, special interest features, an elaborate lighting system and river terrace dining facilities create a harmonious environment through use of form, color and carefully selected materials.

Plant materials on the River Walk have been described as one of the finest botanical collections in the Southwest. A temperate climate and the advantage of a micro-climatic zone below street level provide an ideal environment for semitropical plants. Efforts of early conservationists and park officials to preserve the native river trees, such as the huge cypress, have assisted in maintaining the original riverfront characterized by dense vegetation. The Park and Recreation Department has fostered an intensive landscape development program for several years. Illustrative of this effort is the large variety of plant materials introduced along the river

which reflect, express, and strengthen the architecture, the circulation and open space patterns. Plant material has been carefully selected so that it maintains the theme of the River Walk, does not outgrow its location, and provides for shade, ornament and screening. Plants and trees which flower more or less continuously during warm weather provide masses of color. Ground cover and bank stabilization materials draw the park together at the same time that they allow for interesting and meaningful variety.

Plans are underway to develop an interpretive program designed to inform the visitors of the diverse plant material represented on the riverfront.

A small water feature near La Mansion Hotel trickles across the walkway, intriguing the pedestrian. A pump recycles river water to maintain a constant flow. Enhanced with landscape material, this feature is popular with photographers. The river extension includes a large waterfall with outdoor lighting.

At the upper end of the River Walk and outside the horseshoe, certain urban elements are out of character and, for the purposes of this analysis, are termed "misfits." These visual encroachments are outside the present jurisdiction of River Walk controls.

Other undesirable features include outfalls and several sub-standard dwellings that were occupied prior to creation of the ordinance. Most of the outfalls in the River Walk area have been screened from view with natural wood facing.

ACCESS AND SIGNING

Linkage between waterfront and city is an integral aspect of the River Walk development. Because of the difference in elevation (about 35 feet) between the River Walk and the central business district surrounding it, all access is by foot, via approximately 50 stairways. The Paseo del Rio Plaza, built by the City Water Board on surplus public land is the most extensive entrance development and has been designated the main entrance to the River Walk. Most of the entrance stairways occur at bridge crossings, although a few elaborate entry areas have been developed at other locations. A sense of location and human scale are afforded the user through this physical access system. Few access

structures are designed the same but all adhere to the general theme.

Very few signs direct visitors to the River Walk. Two theories have been advocated by designers and park officials to support this policy. One theory states that entry to the development should be an adventure in itself and the visitor on foot should derive some pleasure in exploring the downtown area and its linkage with the waterfront. The other maintains that there is already a gross proliferation of signs in the downtown area and River Walk signboards would merely add to the chaos. Therefore, very few signs are available, such as the one illustrated in Figure 47, located near the Chamber of Commerce Headquarters and Visitors Information Center.

FIGURE 43.
Appealing entrance at Paseo del Rio Plaza.



FIGURE 44.
Spiral stairway provides access from street level.

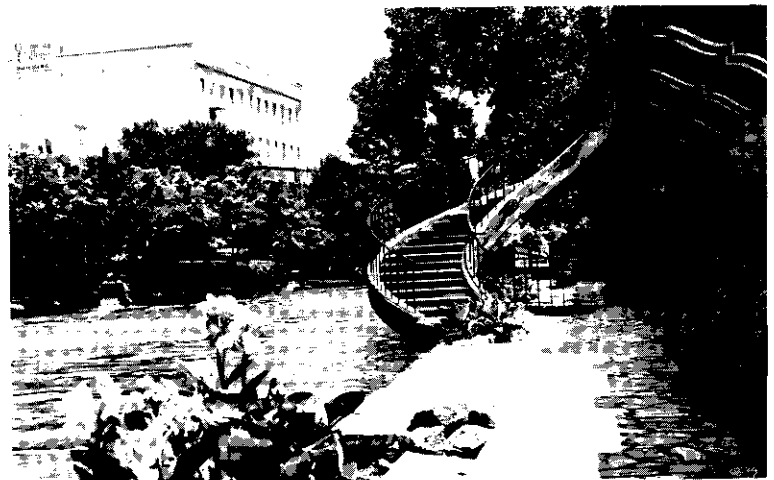




FIGURE 45.
Direct access, linking River
Walk with street.



FIGURE 46.
Linkage between street bridge
and River Walk.



FIGURE 47.
One of few entrance signs.



FIGURE 48.
Typical restaurant sign along
River Walk.

FIGURE 49.
Sign visible from river, walk-
way and automobile.



FIGURE 50.
A more contemporary sign on
new building.



FIGURE 51.
Group studying River Walk map.

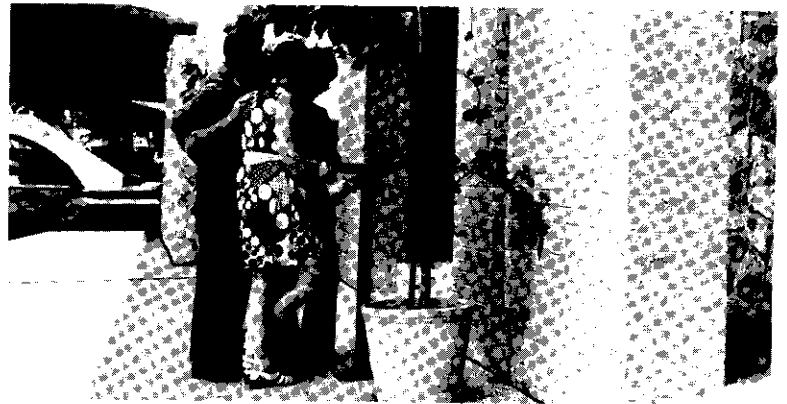
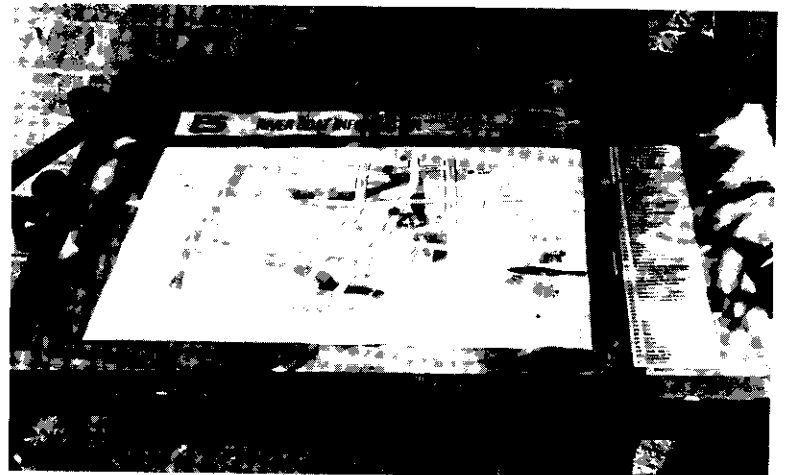


FIGURE 52.
River Walk map showing boat
landings and points of
interest.



Two years after the ordinance was passed creating the River Walk Commission and establishing development standards, it was amended to provide for restrictions relating to signs along the riverfront. Governed by the existing regulations of the Building Code of the City, the restrictions include only one sign per business and limitations on surface area and illumination. A more recent sign (Figure 50) appears to deviate somewhat from the character of the majority of others, but it should be noted that there are no specific standards governing the precise style.

Information stations are provided frequently along the River Walk to assist the visitor. Detailed maps of the River Walk are mounted under plexiglass. These stations also sometimes serve as boat landings.

HISTORY, LEGEND AND LORE

The San Antonio River area is steeped in legend and history, not unlike most American communities that were founded upon waterways and depended upon them for water supply and transport. Some of this legend and history has been documented and placed upon plaques along the River Walk. Generally, these have not been placed in conspicuous spots. Therefore, the visitor is primarily forced to seek out his own information from newspaper reports, historical sketches or from a knowledgeable local citizen. It would appear that this is an area of opportunity for further expansion. A good start has been made with the introduction of taped narrations on the sightseeing barges.

VISITOR ACTIVITIES

Many different activities are engaged in by visitors to the River Walk.

Active

Sightseeing on foot and strolling through the river park appear to be popular with the River Walk user. A large number of elderly people, many of whom live in a nearby nursing home, said they obtained daily exercise by walking along the river. Other users include downtown workers, students, shoppers and others who use the River Walk as a pleasant pedestrian route rather than taking street-level itineraries.

Shoppers are in evidence, including both those who have patronized street-level businesses and those who are shopping in the specialty stores on the River Walk.

The large number of photographers (amateur and professional) provide ample testimony that the River Walk is both an intriguing and esthetic entity.

Pedal boating is popular with visitors; boats are rented from concessionaires (Figure 49). Although no users expressed dissatisfaction with the boats, designers and a few riverfront entrepreneurs feel they are out of character and should be discontinued. However, this is the only "muscle" recreational activity on the River Walk other than walking and strolling.

Small wildlife is present and

visitors often feed the songbirds and pigeons. Several elderly people can be seen almost daily on the River Walk visiting with friends, reading or feeding the birds. The park is a haven for the lonely and elderly.

Passive

Protected from encroachment and intense activity, the River Walk presents the user with many areas for relaxation and solitude. Places to be lazy in, to repose in and for contemplation are numerous. Close proximity to the water's edge also provides the opportunity for emotionally experiencing the juxtaposition of land and water.

The large number of settees also affords the opportunity for reading. Employees of the hospital, secretaries, businessmen and other users bring reading material to the River Walk, during their break periods.

Sightseeing barges run at capacity on most days during the summer months. Tape recordings describe points of interest along the journey. The boats may also be rented for private dinner parties on the river and floating business seminars have been conducted on the River Walk.

The River Walk is popular with young couples who describe it as a romantic setting. The park rangers appear to discourage the more obvious displays of affection, perhaps due to the past reputation of the park as a haven for overt sexual behavior. The Park Department does not permit pic-

nicking or lounging on the river-front lawn.

Visiting friends and relatives is a popular pastime. Residents of San Antonio proudly use the River Walk to entertain guests and the families of military personnel are frequently seen on the river.

Entertainment

Night clubs, the Arneson River Theater and special events provide entertainment on portions of the River Walk (Figures 35 and 61). The Arneson River Theater plays host to over 30,000 people each season. From September 1970 to December 1971 seventeen special events were held on the River Walk. Many of these gala affairs are linked with the various ethnic groups and religions represented in the city. Some of the festivities have been celebrated annually for up to thirty years. Art shows are numerous. It is estimated that over a quarter of a million people attend these events annually.

Basic Services

Dining and lodging are supportive services which accommodate the tourist, conventioner and resident alike. All of the restaurants utilize the river terrace for outdoor dining and many have balconies. Specialties include, in addition to Mexican dishes, seafood, Italian, German and French food. As illustrated in Figure 63, the River Walk atmosphere is reinforced by the costuming of waitresses and other



FIGURE 53.
Wall plaque of tile describing historic site.

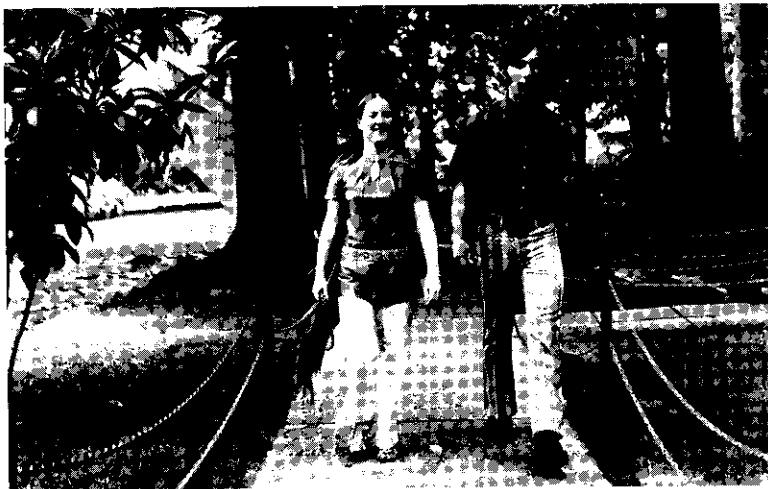


FIGURE 54.
Forty-eight percent of visitors are under 25.



FIGURE 55.
Sightseeing on foot is enjoyed by all age groups.

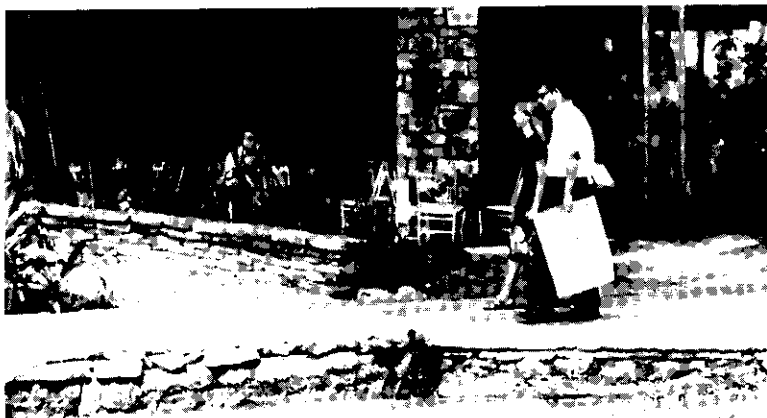


FIGURE 56.
Many visitors come to walk and shop.

FIGURE 57.
For many, the River Walk
provides their only recreation.



FIGURE 58.
The River Walk offers year-
around pleasure at break time.



FIGURE 59.
Specially designed sightseeing
barges are popular.

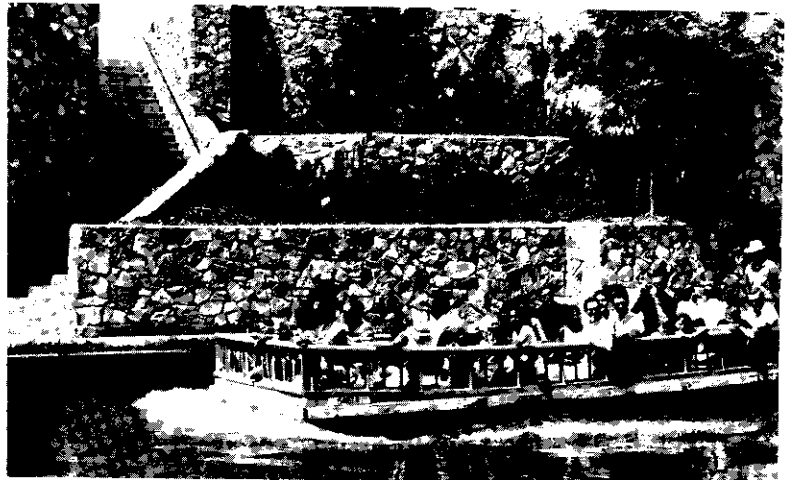


FIGURE 60.
Quiet corners in River Walk
restaurants provide moments
of relaxation.





FIGURE 61.
Special events, such as this
art show on the grass seats of
the Arneson Theater, are very
popular.



FIGURE 62.
Outdoor dining is popular
along the open waterfront.



FIGURE 63.
A popular dining patio along
River Walk.

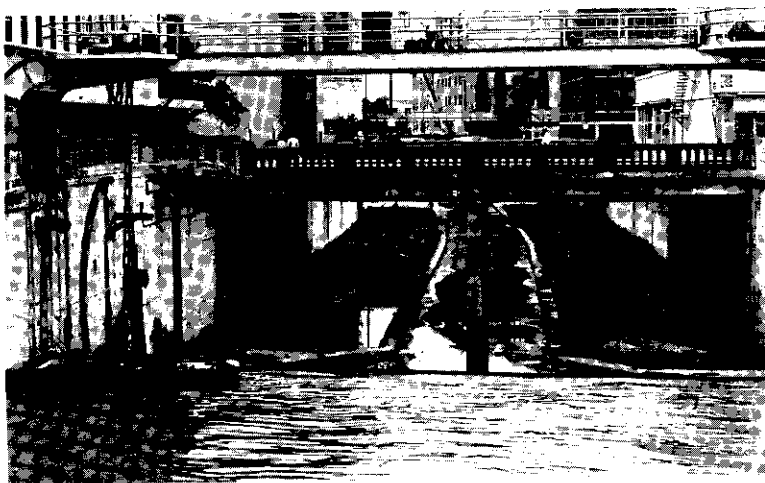


FIGURE 64.
Dam holds the horseshoe bend of
the river at constant level--
opens to allow flow at flood
time.

employees and design detail in dining furniture. Frequently, minstrels entertain river patio guests.

The river hotels are major attraction centers accommodating conventions, special meetings and parties, in addition to providing entertainment and food service.

WATER QUALITY AND CONTROL

The flood control shut-off channel and gate serve two functions. They provide not only a by-pass for flood water, thus protecting riverfront development along the horseshoe bend, but also maintain a constant level of water during periods of low flow. An additional gate can be closed at

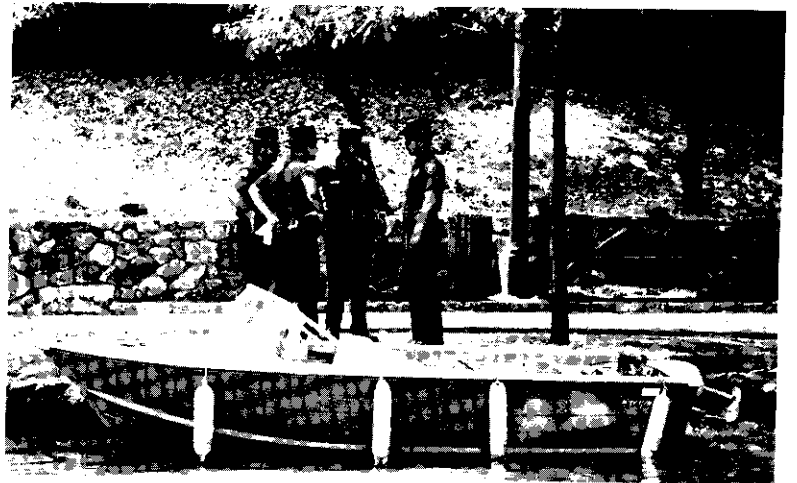
the entrance to the riverbend to prevent flood waters from reaching the old river channel.

In 1968, a plan was prepared by a consultant outlining the desirability and feasibility of extending river improvement from Brackenridge Park to Alamo Street with the continuation of pedestrian traffic on to Roosevelt Park. A series of dams and lakes was recommended to overcome a 54 foot elevation differential (Haggard et al., 1968). This proposal has been incorporated into the recently prepared comprehensive plan by the San Antonio City Planning Department (1971) which calls for extending riverfront development.

FIGURE 65.
River Walk maintenance is handled from river barges.



FIGURE 66.
Safety and guidance are provided in the River Walk area by a special law enforcement group--the Park Rangers.



Water quality of the San Antonio River in the downtown area is somewhat unpredictable, due to highly variable flows. Typical of any surface water present in a highly congested area, discarded paper materials, leaves and other solid wastes are a continual problem in river maintenance. According to authorities, the major pollutant of the river at midtown San Antonio is urban run-off; municipal waste treatment effluent enters downstream. After periods of high rainfall, the river is highly turbid due to eroding soils within the watershed. This, of course, generates a slightly negative visitor reaction. The closest water quality sampling station to the River Walk is approximately one mile downstream. Data from this station (Table 2) indicates the river water meets state requirements as far as dissolved oxygen and biochemical oxygen demand. Although the bacteria count is high, the coliforms are of non-fecal origin. Thus, it may be inferred that acceptable water quality levels exist for the requirements of aquatic life, and apparently the non-fecal nature of polluting materials does not

present a danger to health, making the quality suitable for "secondary contact" recreation. Although the channelizing may have removed some of the fish feeding and spawning areas, some fish remain. The river bottom remains in its original state.

MAINTENANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

The Parks and Recreation Department of the City of San Antonio is charged with the responsibility of maintaining the river, public walkway and landscaping. Maintenance is performed seven days a week. Riverfront owners are required to maintain the public easement leased to them for business purposes. The Parks and Recreation Department budget for maintaining the River Walk was \$119,000 in 1971. Maintenance headquarters are located in the marina parking garage, constructed at the termination point of the river extension. Full time employees number ten and three seasonal employees are assigned to the park. Overuse of the grounds and landscape deterioration are major problems. The

Table 2
WATER QUALITY OF THE SAN ANTONIO RIVER (MIDTOWN)
(Garner et al., 1972)

	Coliforms MPN/100ml.	Suspended Solids mg./l.	PH	D. Ox mg./l.	BOD Mg./l.
San Antonio River (midtown)	20,000	625 avg.	7.9 avg.	8.0 avg.	7.7 avg.
State Requirements	20,000	700	6.5-8.5	4.0	10.0

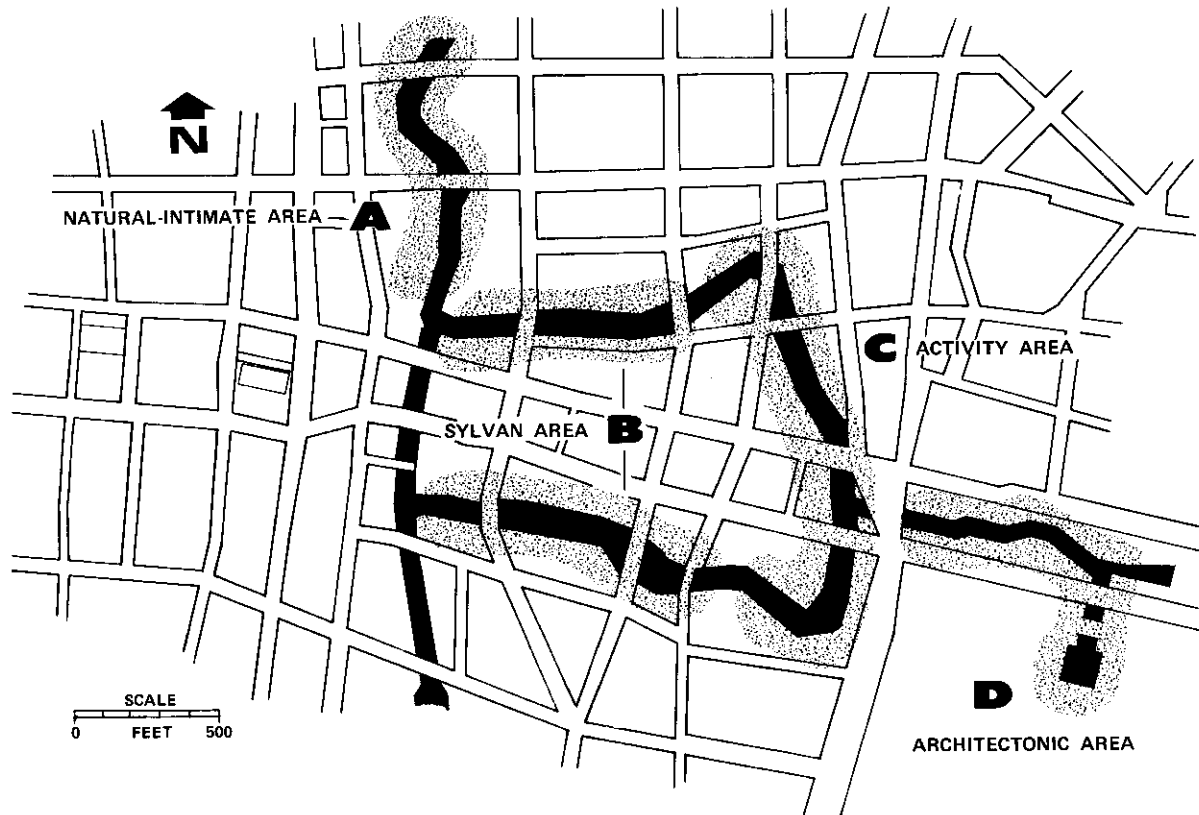


FIGURE 67. Four environmental sub-zones of River Walk.

River Walk cannot efficiently accommodate large crowds. Special events which draw thousands of visitors at peak periods create heavy maintenance work loads.

A few well-publicized criminal acts, even though they took place over twenty years ago, stimulated the recent creation of a special police force--the park ranger program. The 35-man ranger force patrols both the river and walkway from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 a.m. each day. Since the inception of this program there have been no major crimes committed on the River Walk. The park ranger also assists the visitor in providing information concerning River Walk activities and enforces park regulations.

IDENTIFICATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL SUBUNITS

Landscape analysis, as a process, provides a useful tool for understanding environmental settings. One of the first steps is to identify the mixes of landforms, plant materials, and open spaces that provide both unity and division within the total design.

Applying this type of critical analysis to the River Walk, one finds strong elements that provide unity and cohesion. The singular type of cross-section throughout the River Walk--an enclosed corridor composed of a river base framed by high banks--offers strong unity. The similarity of plant materials, the design

of structures and the design of landscape features tend to add to this unity. Landscape contrasts with the business district above offers another unifying element. Finding just one style of sight-seeing barge at any place on the River Walk gives the visitor an impression of unity of circulation. Finally, the dominant impression of the landscape and the uniforms of the rangers provide a unity of management and control.

At the same time, monotony is relieved by offering a great amount of variety. This distinguishes the River Walk from most other park or business complexes. Within the overall unity can be observed differences of environmental character. Closer examination of the many factors that make up the entire environment of the River Walk reveal four sub-environmental units, each one having its own unity even though part of an harmonious whole. These sub-units are illustrated in the diagram, Figure 67, and by photographs taken in each one.

ZONE A. NATURAL-INTIMATE AREA

This zone is typified by a park-like setting along both sides of the river displaying a colorful and verdant enclosure but with no shops or activity areas. The earlier efforts of conservation did not include this zone; the major development took place during the 1960's. Therefore, the trees and other plant materials are younger but already provide much shade and solitude. The

flood retaining wall, often ivy-covered and flanked with plant masses, dominates the vistas. Intensive use of plant materials at times creates a canopy over the walkway, providing static enclosures. This contrasts with the more typical linear enclosure illustrated in Figures 68 and 69. Many settees provide relief for those unaccustomed to walking and offer repose for those who wish to contemplate the water-based scene. Flowering plants provide ever-changing masses of color throughout the year. Visitor use appears to be very low in this zone, limited largely to young couples, servicemen and pedestrians passing through to destinations at street-level.

ZONE B. SYLVAN AREA

The two legs of the horseshoe riverbend resemble each other a great deal in landscape character and user activity. This area was one of the first to be given conservation protection in the 1930's and therefore contains some of the largest specimens of cypress and cottonwood trees. The visitor is much more conscious of the verdant enclosure than the flood retaining walls. The design work of the Works Progress Administration is evident in the quality and harmony of walks, bridges, and retaining walls. Only a few buildings are oriented to the water. Many settees and pleasant garden spots provide variety within the overall quiet and restful setting. Most of the use appears to be sight-seeing, reading, relaxing, romancing, conversing and taking pictures.

FIGURE 68.
Static enclosure provided by
astute use of landscape mater-
ials in confined space in
"Natural-Intimate Area."



FIGURE 69.
Linear enclosure offering
intimate contact with river.

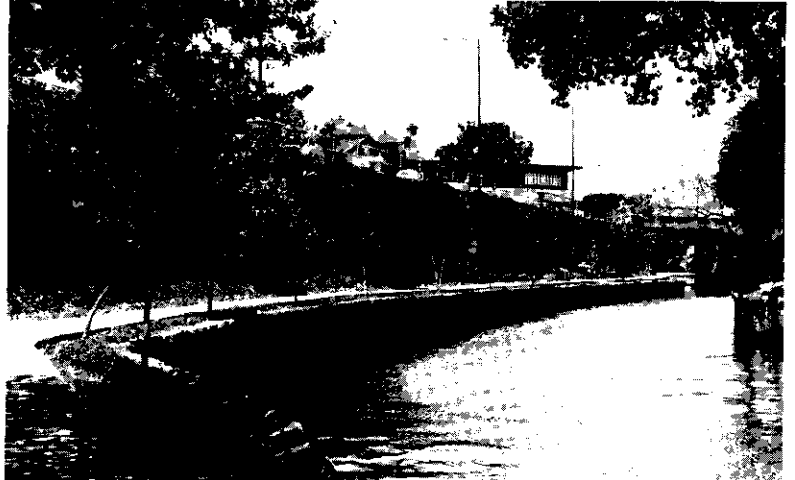


FIGURE 70.
Rich design harmony of setting
and structures in "Sylvan
Area."



FIGURE 71.
One of the many festivities in
the "Activity Area."



ZONE C. ACTIVITY AREA

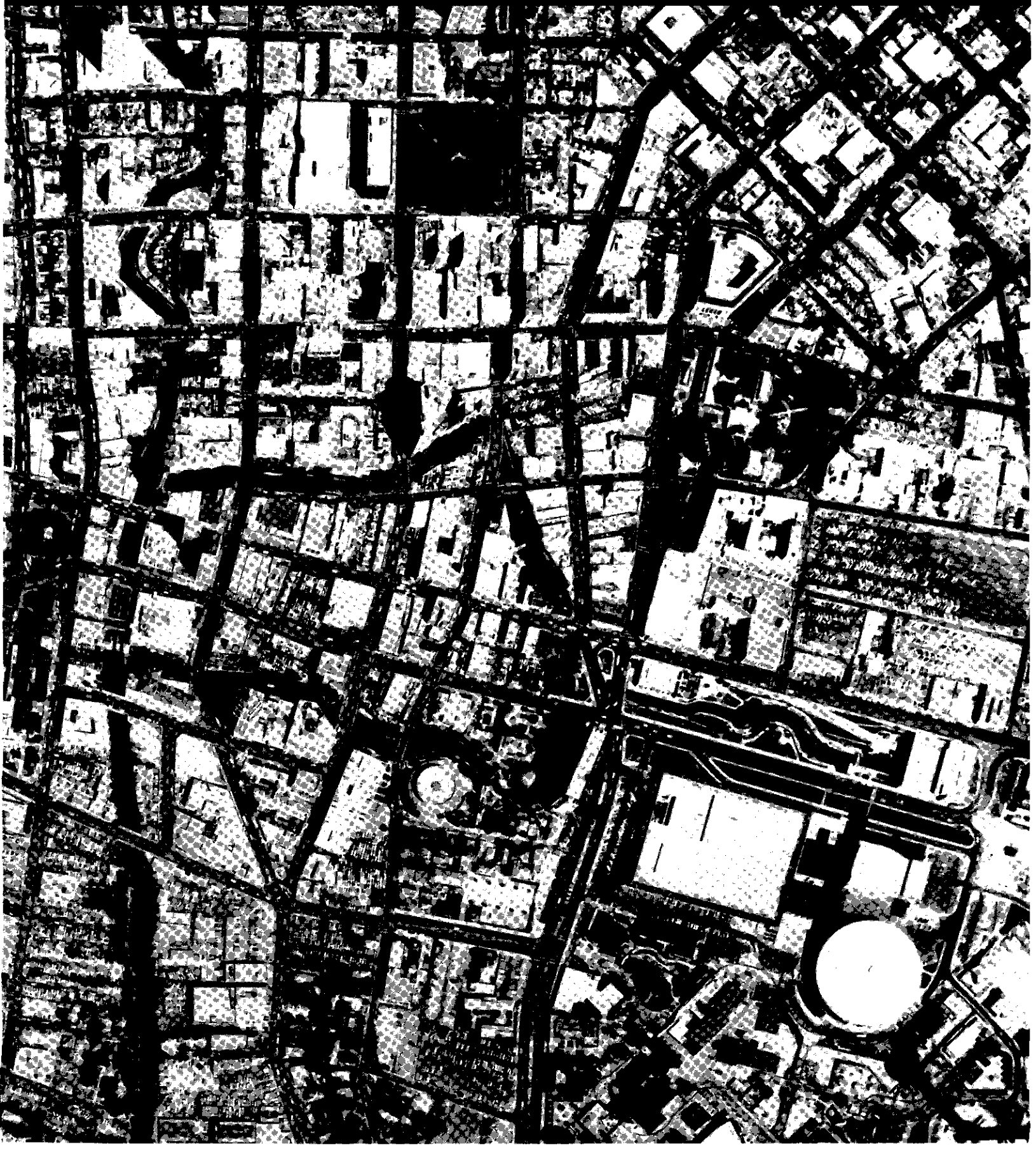
This zone retains much of the same impression of the verdant setting expressed by zones A and B and yet offers the greatest amount of things to see and do. Restaurants, night clubs, gift shops, an amphitheater and downtown business enterprises form the zone with sparkling interest and excitement. Artful blending of design combines the old with the new. There is both contrast and harmony. This zone also includes many huge cypress trees. Night lighting of the trees has been carefully designed to maximize the display of trunks, limbs and leaves and minimize the intrusion of lighting fixtures. The river terrace is extended in front of businesses, forming static enclosures connected by a series of linear enclosures. This portion of the River Walk receives the most intensive use, especially in the evening hours.



ZONE D. ARCHITECTONIC AREA

The extension of the River Walk, built in 1968, offers yet another total environmental impression. Because the entire channel was created anew, all the construction reveals this fact in its uniformity of design. The channel has the same general cross-section as in other zones, but has been more uniformly engineered and formalized. All vegetation is recent and is rapidly providing shade and a softening effect upon the severity of the masonry. Here the enclosure is predominantly linear but has greater volume because no large trees now constrict the space. Special interest features are a terraced waterfall, the statue of St. Anthony and a lagoon near the Civic Center, which affords a view of a large mural on the Theater for the Performing Arts. The entire design character is contemporary and does not yet show the patina of time. Observation of this zone shows that it receives much less use than one might expect. Perhaps the lack of shops, entertainment and activity areas or the low frequency of events in the arena, exhibition hall and theater depresses the volume of use.

FIGURE 72.
Simplicity of recent extension,
"Architectonic Area."



4. VISITOR USE AND IMAGES

Table 3
USER CHARACTERISTICS
(In percent)

SEX	
Male	63.4
Female	36.6
	<u>100.0</u>
MARITAL STATUS	
Married	55.3
Not Married	44.7
	<u>100.0</u>
ORIGIN	
Resident	25.7
Suburbanite	4.0
Nonresident	70.3
	<u>100.0</u>
AGE	
Under 25	48.0
25-34	16.3
35-44	14.6
45-54	10.2
55-64	6.4
65 and over	4.5
	<u>100.0</u>
INCOME	
Under 3,000	16.0
3,000-4,999	15.1
5,000-7,999	17.0
8,000-9,999	14.4
10,000-14,999	17.1
15,000 and over	20.4
	<u>100.0</u>

USER CHARACTERISTICS

Contrary to many tourist attractions that draw from only one market segment, the River Walk attracts year-around visitors encompassing great diversity--high to low income, variety of occupations and professions (including the unemployed) and from many geographic regions, both outside and within the city of San Antonio.

The relatively high proportion of males (see Table 3) may be due to the high number of people visiting the area for military and business reasons (see Table 4). This, together with the number of student visitors may account for the large numbers of unmarried persons (44.7 percent, Table 3). Compared to overall out-of-state tourists coming to Texas, the River Walk visitors are much younger (Texas Highway Department, 1971:6). The number of visitors coming to Texas under the age of 35 represents 25 percent of the total, whereas visitors to the River Walk in the same age bracket represent 64.3 percent of the total. These are not truly comparable figures because the River Walk visitors include 29.7 percent living in San Antonio and vicinity together with another significant number from outside the vicinity but from within Texas. The state study does not include Texas residents traveling in Texas.

Table 4
OCCUPATIONS OF USERS
(In percent)

Military (temporary)	22.0
Housewife	16.7
Student	14.6
Professional	11.9
White Collar	11.7
Businessman	5.8
Retired	5.0
Blue Collar	4.9
Service Worker	3.5
Proprietor	1.4
Unemployed	1.2
Military (resident)	1.0
Farm and/or Ranch Operator	0.3
Other	0.0
	<u>100.0</u>

The River Walk receives a much higher proportion of lower income visitors (31.1 percent under \$5,000) than does the state as a whole (10 percent under \$5,000). Although skewed somewhat by students and the military, the visitors do include a wide diversity of income.

The River Walk apparently serves a dual market of visitors: San Antonio (25.7 percent) and outsiders (74.3 percent). Although 84 percent of the users sampled live over two miles from the River Walk, 16 percent could be considered as living within walking distance. Many of the same visitors can be seen on the River Walk daily and it is readily apparent that it is an integral part of urban life for many.

Occupational diversity is also evident. (see Table 4). While 31.1 percent have white collar

and managerial occupations (professional, white collar, businessmen, proprietors, and farm operators), students and housewives combine to represent another third (31.3 percent) of the total. Blue collar and service workers total 8.4 percent of the total and even retired (5.0 percent) and the unemployed (1.2 percent) are included in the total.

Honeymooners, vacationers enroute to Mexico City and friends and relatives visiting servicemen occurred frequently in the sample. It was also apparent that local citizens take a great deal of pride in bringing visitors to the River Walk. Approximately 150 conventions were held in the city during the study months.

CHARACTERISTICS OF USE

One of the important ways of evaluating the development of park and tourist areas is to measure the actual behavior of users. A major part of this research was devoted to both observation and questioning through the user survey. The results show the River Walk to be an intensively used focal point providing a wide range of activities.

The purposes for those visitors on the River Walk to be in San Antonio are shown in Table 5. Because interviews were made on weekends and because military installations are located nearby, the number indicating "the military" as a purpose is relatively high (35.5 percent). The fact that another third (35.0 percent) indicate "pleasure"

suggests that San Antonio is a tourist destination area in its own right.

The visitors were asked why they were in the downtown San Antonio area. The results are shown in Table 5. The relatively large number (71.2 percent) who indicated that they were sightseeing in the city and visiting the River Walk again supports the conclusion that the River Walk and other San Antonio amenities constitute major attractions. The other purposes for being downtown, such as business-employment (12.4 percent) and shopping (6.4 percent), are also very important.

That the River Walk is a strong lure and provides satisfaction is borne out by the high ratio of repeat visitors (see Table 6). Nearly two-thirds (61.9 percent) of the visitors had been there before. Of these, a great majority (82.6 percent) had been there the year before. It is rather striking to observe that almost one third (30.0 percent) of those visiting within the last year had visited ten times or more. The River Walk represents a sustaining appeal seldom found in other attractions.

The respondents who had visited the River Walk during the last year were asked to name the activity most frequently participated in. The results are shown in Table 7. "Sightseeing by Foot" dominates but other activities are important to some. In addition, they were asked to give second and third choices. (not shown in table). The highest ranking second choice

was "relaxing and resting" and the highest ranking third choice was "attending special events."

The environmental settings and the activity opportunities are quite different at night from those during the day. (see Table 8). Visitors were questioned regarding their period of visit and the results were equally split between day and night. Those who had not visited the River Walk in the evening were asked why. Many

Table 5
PURPOSE OF VISITS
(In percent)

TO SAN ANTONIO (Nonresidents Only)	
Armed Forces Personnel	35.5
General Pleasure (destination)	23.5
General Pleasure (in transit)	11.5
Visiting Friends and Relatives	11.4
Business	9.7
Convention	3.8
Student	2.2
Other	2.4
	<u>100.0</u>

TO DOWNTOWN SAN ANTONIO
(Total Sample)

Sightseeing in the City	46.0
Visiting the River Walk	25.2
Business-Employment	12.4
Shopping	6.4
Attending Convention	2.5
Live Downtown	1.3
Other	6.2
	<u>100.0</u>

Table 6
FREQUENCY OF VISITS
(In percent)

Visited River Walk Before
(total sample)

Yes	61.9
No	38.1
	<u>100.0</u>

Visited Last Year
(of those who visited before)

Yes	82.6
No	17.4
	<u>100.0</u>

FREQUENCY (of those who
visited last year)

One to 5 times	56.4
6 to 10 times	13.6
Over 10 times	30.0
	<u>100.0</u>

Table 7
ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION
FOR RESPONDENTS WHO
VISITED DURING PAST YEAR
(In percent)

First Most Frequently
Participated In

Sightseeing by Foot	55.2
Shopping	14.8
Relaxing, Resting	12.8
Dining	5.6
Attending Special Events	2.7
Sightseeing by Boat	2.7
Walking, Strolling	2.0
Attending La Villita	1.8
Photography	0.0
Other	2.4
	<u>100.0</u>

Table 8
EVENING VISITS
(In percent)

Did you visit in the evening?

Yes	50.0
No	50.0
	<u>100.0</u>

If "no," why not?

First visit	62.6
Not safe	10.6
Not enough to do	4.0
Costs too much to participate	0.9
Other	21.9
	<u>100.0</u>

Table 9
MOST FREQUENTLY-USED
ACCESS POINTS
(In percent)

Through street-level stairway	70.1
Through a hotel	14.8
Through a street-level shop or restaurant	5.7
Through La Villita	5.3
Through HemisFair Plaza	4.0
Through Office Building	0.1
Other	0.0
	<u>100.0</u>

(62.6 percent) had just arrived during the day and had not yet been given the opportunity of visiting by night. A recurring reaction to the River Walk use, particularly at night, was the problem of safety. Over 10 percent of those not coming in the evening cited "safety" as the prime reason.

PHYSICAL AND VISUAL ACCESS

As shown in Table 9, over 70 percent of the respondents entered the River Walk through a street-level stairway, 15 percent entered through a hotel and six percent through a street-level shop or restaurant. The other nine percent entered through La Villita or HemisFair Plaza. It is apparent that there is considerable linkage between street-level businesses and attractions and the river, as evidenced by the significant number of respondents who gained access through these enterprises and areas. Apparently, there are many (39.8 percent, Table 10) who share the opinion that there should be more entranceways having more complete landscape development.

About two-thirds of the respondents indicated they had not taken a cruise on one of the sightseeing boats. (see Table 11). Of these respondents, 32 percent said they preferred to walk and 31 percent either had not had an opportunity or it was their first visit. Eight percent said there was not enough information on where to board the boats and it was

Table 10
OPINION TOWARD
INCREASING NUMBER OF
LANDSCAPED AND DEVELOPED
ENTRANCEWAYS
(In percent)

Not in favor	55.8
In favor	39.8
Don't know	3.3
Makes no difference	1.1
	<u>100.0</u>

Table 11
USE OF SIGHTSEEING BARGE
(In percent)

Those who took a cruise	34.4
Those who did not	65.6
	<u>100.0</u>
Reasons for not taking cruise:	
Prefer to walk	32.3
Lack of opportunity (first time, no time)	30.5
Cost	8.1
Plan to do so later	6.6
Lack of information	5.7
No desire	5.7
Dislike of the idea (boats)	5.2
No reason	4.6
Other	1.3
	<u>100.0</u>

Table 12
 IMPORTANCE OF
 SEPARATION BETWEEN
 CITY AND RIVER WALK
 (In percent)

Very important	86.5
Somewhat important	10.7
Not very important	1.2
Of no importance	0.3
Don't know	1.3
	<u>100.0</u>

apparent that the barges did not stop for passengers at the boat stands. About seven percent said they planned to take a cruise at a later time. Thus, it may be theorized that if more information were provided on the exact location for barge loading and if first-time visitors had been interviewed later in their stay, a substantially larger percentage of those interviewed might have actually participated in a boat ride.

The respondents were asked for their opinion regarding the importance of the present visual and physical separation between the

River Walk and the remainder of the city. The results are shown in Table 12. The strong emphasis on importance--97.2 percent total of "very important" and "somewhat important"--suggests that the visitor well recognizes that he is in a special environmental situation and that this contrast with the environs should be kept that way.

ANCILLARY ATTRACTIONS

The Alamo, HemisFair grounds and La Villita are nearby attractions which a significant number of respondents were attending as a part of their visit to downtown San Antonio. (see Table 13). On the other hand, visits to these ancillary attractions are not made by over half of those visiting the River Walk, suggesting that programs promoting increased linkage may be needed if a higher ratio is desired.

Even though La Villita is physically adjacent to the River Walk, slightly over one-third of the users interviewed either had visited or planned to visit the area.

Table 13
 VISITS TO ANCILLARY ATTRACTIONS
 (In percent)

	Yes	No	Undecided	Total
Will a visit to the Alamo be part of your total visit?	41.6	55.4	3.0	100.0
Will a visit to La Villita be a part of your total visit?	35.5	58.0	6.5	100.0
Will a visit to HemisFair be a part of your total visit?	39.6	54.5	5.9	100.0

Several respondents indicated they did not know how to reach the Spanish Village, and appeared to know little about the nature of this attraction.

A large number of respondents (almost 40 percent) included the HemisFair Plaza in their visit to downtown San Antonio. Even though linkage of the River Walk and this area is accomplished through the HemisFair extension, most of the River Walk visitors appear to gain entrance to the Plaza from street level.

PERCEPTION OF THE RIVER WALK

One of the most difficult aspects of human behavior to research is that pertaining to people's perception, especially a qualitative evaluation of their environment. The interviewer is plagued with many problems in order to obtain meaningful responses. After the careful wording of questions and after pretesting the instrument, it appeared that reasonably satisfactory results were being obtained from a basically structured interview approach that included some open-ended questions. Several directions of inquiry were made, including identification of theme, descriptive identification and a special phase using color photographs of four typical environmental segments of the River Walk.

Environmental Design

The majority of the respondents (87 percent, Table 14) felt that the River Walk did have a theme or definite character. However,

there were different opinions among the users as they attempted to identify a particular factor most responsible for the theme. It does appear that developers of the River Walk have created an environmental system with a design theme which many of the users considered as having a definite cultural flavor (40 percent). One-fourth attributed the river park theme to the semi-tropical landscaping and about 19 percent felt a "relaxed atmosphere" was most responsible. It could therefore be stated that a great majority of the respondents (84.4 percent) considered the landscape character, the architectural style and the cultural flavor as very significant factors that support an overall River Walk theme.

Table 14
OPINION OF FACTORS OF
RIVER WALK THEME
(In percent)

Did the respondent recognize a cultural theme?

Yes	87.1
No	6.2
Don't know	4.7
No opinion	2.0
	<u>100.0</u>

Factor most responsible for the theme?

Cultural Flavor	40.3
Semi-tropical landscape	24.8
Relaxed atmosphere	19.3
Architectural style	10.4
Other	4.7
Don't know	0.5
No opinion	0.0
	<u>100.0</u>



FIGURE 73.
 Photograph used in survey of
 "Zone A, Natural-Intimate
 Area."

The researchers' analysis of the River Walk (chapter 3) described the blend of park-like development and commercialization. Because this blend is not popularly offered to the public for leisure activity, the researchers were curious about how well the visitors perceived this mixture. The response is shown in Table 15. Apparently, the mixture was very clear to many respondents (54.6 percent) and yet the "park" quality (42.3 percent) was much stronger than that of "commercial, business-like" (1.6 percent). This is an important finding for both park and commercial supporters. In spite of the fact that most of the contiguous properties are private owners and there are between 35 and 40 business places along the River Walk, it gives the impression of "park." How much more "park" or "commercial" could be established without upsetting the present popularity and favorable response is a provocative question.

Zone Analysis

Respondents were presented with five color photographs representing the four distinctly different environmental zones described in Chapter 3. During the course of

the interview, the respondent was asked to associate any one word with each of the five photographs. This research method was patterned after the more commonly used word association technique, a statistical measure in psychology in which the respondent associates a synonym or related word with a given term (Jung, 1969). Since the question was open-ended and there was a proliferation of responses, the words were subsequently grouped and manually coded.

Zone A. Natural-Intimate Area

Figure 73, represents Zone A,

Description best suited to River Walk:	
A mix of park and business.	54.6
Natural, park-like	42.3
Commercial, business-like	1.6
None of the above	1.7
No opinion	0.3
Don't know	0.1
	<u>100.0</u>

FIGURE 74.
 Photograph used in survey of
 "Zone B, Sylvan Area."



Natural-Intimate Area. Visitor use is not as apparent along this segment, and it is frequented more by individuals and couples than families and groups.

Almost one-third of the respondents described this setting with words such as "beautiful," "pretty" or offered more descriptive expressions including "lavish," "gorgeous," "exceptional," "charm-

ing" or "fantastic." (Table 16). Over 25 percent considered the development as "tropical" or a "jungle," and 12 percent reacted to the landscaping with expressions ranging from "garden" to "woods." Over seven percent said the setting was "peaceful". This photograph received the least frequent number of both non-responses and "other" responses which could not be grouped (less than one percent).

Table 16
 RESPONSE TO PHOTOGRAPH
 OF ZONE A, FIGURE 73
 (In percent)

Beauty	31.8
Tropical, jungle	25.1
Garden, plants	9.1
Peaceful	7.3
Landscaping, trees	3.6
Natural, woods	3.4
Green	3.0
Cement, stones, construction materials	3.0
Cool	2.4
Relaxing, resting	2.1
Deserted, abandoned	1.9
Atmosphere	1.7
European, Spanish	1.7
Georgian	1.1
Other	4.5
	100.0

Zone B. Sylvan Area

Figure 74 represents Zone B Sylvan Area, those segments of the horseshoe bend that are characterized by large trees, arched bridges and landscaped walkways. Here, the dominant activity is strolling along the walks and viewing the park-like setting with its abundance of plant materials.

Respondents reacted to this photograph as predominantly "beautiful" or "pretty" (29 percent) and "peaceful" or "serene" (21 percent) (Table 17). Significant numbers responded with the words "water," "river" or "creek" (11 percent), "cool" (six percent) and "green" (five percent).



FIGURE 75.
 Photograph used in survey of
 "Zone C, Activity Area."

Table 18
 RESPONSE TO PHOTOGRAPH
 OF ZONE C, FIGURE 75
 (In percent)

Food	33.3
Enjoyment	17.3
People	11.1
Relaxing, resting	7.7
Beauty	7.5
European, Spanish, Georgian	3.9
Crowded, overcrowded	3.8
Busy, action	3.2
Tourist, sightseeing	2.3
Commercial	2.0
Shady	1.0
Other	6.9
	<u>100.0</u>

Table 17
 RESPONSE TO PHOTOGRAPH
 OF ZONE B, FIGURE 74
 (In percent)

Beauty	29.0
Peaceful	21.3
Water, river, creek	10.7
Cool	6.1
Green	4.9
Shady	3.6
Relaxing, resting	3.2
Landscaping, trees	2.6
Natural, woods	2.0
European, Spanish, Georgian	1.9
Deserted, abandoned	1.4
Tropical, jungle	1.3
San Antonio	1.0
Negative responses	1.2
Other	9.8
	<u>100.0</u>

Table 19
 RESPONSE TO PHOTOGRAPH
 OF ZONE C, FIGURE 76
 (In percent)

Enjoyment	22.6
Tourist, sightseeing	20.1
Boat, ride, boat-ride	18.2
Beauty	7.9
Relaxing, resting	4.3
Commercial	4.1
People	3.5
Crowded, overcrowded	3.1
European, Spanish, Georgian	2.5
Water, river, creek	2.1
Busy, action	1.5
Peaceful	1.0
Cement, stones, construction materials	1.0
Negative responses	1.8
Other	6.3
	<u>100.0</u>

Zone C. Activity Area

Figures 75 and 76 represent Zone C, Activity Area. Business enterprises and landscaping combine to create a setting which receives the most intensive visitor use.

To the sidewalk cafe, (Figure 75 Table 18) over a third of the respondents reacted to "food," the "restaurant" or expressed a desire to "eat." Over 17 percent responded to the photograph as an experience described as "festive," "gay," "fun," "exciting," "enjoyable" or generating feelings of "fellowship." Other responses included "people" (11 percent), "relaxing" (eight percent), and words of praise (eight percent) (see Table 15). Figure 76 was associated largely with "enjoyment" and "fun" (23 percent, Table 19), with significant numbers relating the activity with "sight-seeing" and "tourists" (over 20 percent). Almost 18 percent reacted to the photograph depicting the "boat," or identified with the setting with responses which ranged from "good" to "superb." Nine percent indicated the activity or boat as "commer-

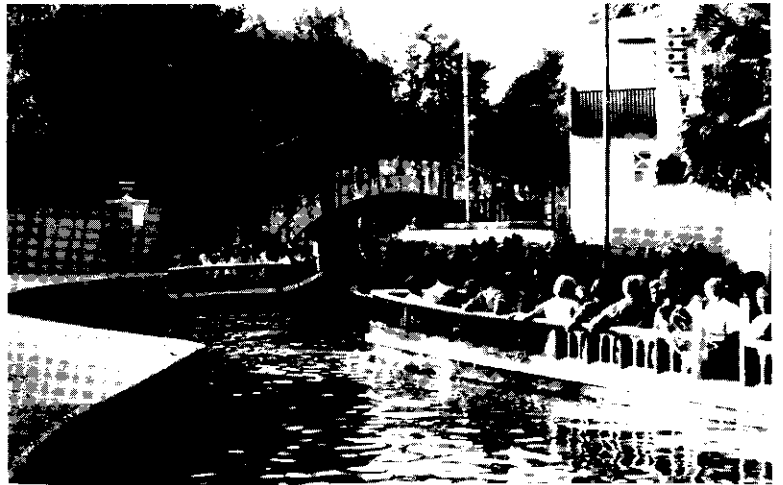


FIGURE 76.
Photograph used in survey of "Zone C, Activity Area."

cial," "honky," "noisy," "lazy," "plastic," "crowded" or "overcrowded." Chi-square analysis showed a definite relationship between nonresident response and negative reaction to this photograph (see Table 20).

Table 20
RELATION OF NEGATIVE RESPONSES TO PHOTOGRAPH OF ZONE C
WITH PLACE OF RESIDENCY
(In percent)

Negative Responses	Residents	Suburbanites	Residents	Total
Frequency	25.0	8.3	66.7	100.0

Chi-square--6.50, significant at the .05 level, df = 2

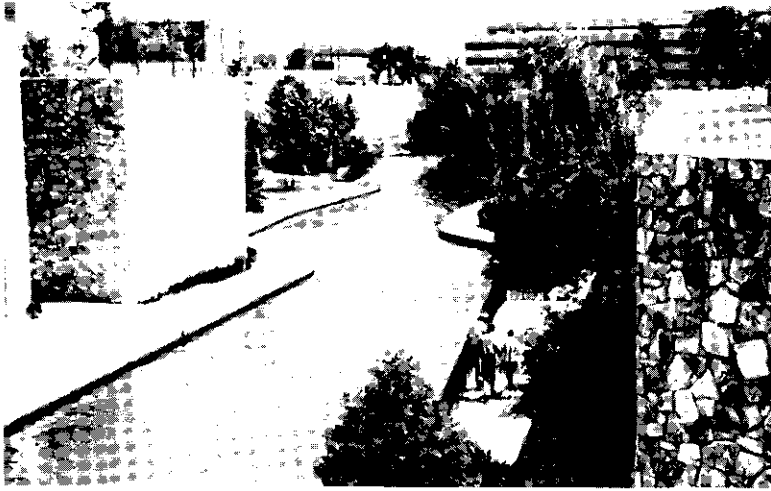


FIGURE 77.
Photograph used in survey of
"Zone D, Architectonic Area."

Zone D. Architectonic Area

Figure 77 represents Zone D, Architectonic Area, the most recent segment of the River Walk--the HemisFair extension. There were no original trees or vegetation in this section, hence development is entirely man-made and could be described as architectonic.

Responses focused primarily on the setting rather than the experience of being present on this portion of the River Walk (Table 21). Almost one-third of the respondents reacted positively to the development with statements ranging from "good" to "breathtaking." Twelve percent indicated the setting as "modern" and "new," while almost ten percent reacted to the "architecture," "design," "planning" or "form." About seven percent responded in a less than positive vein to the river extension, with reactions of "bare," "artificial," "hot," "unnatural," "commercial," "sterile," "cold," "industrialization" or other similar negative responses. A significant number (almost seven percent) considered the setting as "peaceful," six percent expressed feelings of "isolation" or "loneliness."

Summarizing, the users in the sample responded in a positive vein to four of the five photographs representing major segments of the River Walk, describing the scenes as predominantly "beautiful" and "serene." Only the HemisFair extension generated significant negative responses; however, it is likely that visitor opinions will become more favorable as the landscaping of this area matures.

Table 21
RESPONSE TO PHOTOGRAPH
OF ZONE D, FIGURE 77
(In percent)

Beauty	29.9
Modern, new	11.8
Architecture	9.7
Peaceful	6.8
Cement, stones, construction materials	5.8
Water, river, creek	5.7
Landscaping, trees	4.4
Deserted, abandoned	3.9
Clean	1.6
Commercial	1.1
Negative responses	6.9
Other	12.4
	<u>100.0</u>

When presented with activity-oriented settings, respondents associated themselves with the personal experiences of dining and touring the River Walk by sight-seeing barge, which significant numbers described as "fun," "festive," or "enjoyable." Landscape scenes drew reactions which were descriptive of the environmental settings, with large numbers responding to them as "beautiful" and "peaceful," and a significant number describing the intimate portion of the park as a tropical garden.

It therefore appears that the designers, managers, owners and officials have been successful in creating an environmental setting with esthetic appeal conducive to human enjoyment.

Quality of Environmental Elements

In order to obtain another measure of the visitors' reaction to the River Walk environment, they were asked to rank from "good" to "poor" their evaluation of the quality of six major elements.

These elements were:

- Landscape Development (trees, grass, flowers, walkways)
- Restoration of Historical Buildings (design, architecture, store-fronts)
- Entertainment (special events, theater, night clubs)
- Dining Establishments (restaurants, ice cream parlors)
- Shops (art galleries, souvenir, specialty)
- Night Lighting

The design and development decision-makers seem to have adequate support for their decisions because such an overwhelming number rate all elements highly. (Figure 78). The relatively lower percent of visitors who ranked "good" the elements of entertainment, shops, and night lighting is due primarily to the relatively lower number who had been exposed to these elements. This interpretation is supported by the relatively higher number who reported "don't know" to these elements. Certainly there is consistency in the very low number who rated these elements "poor"-- at no time exceeding 3 percent.

Water Quality

The search for opinion of water quality was kept on a visual impression level because this was the only means visitors had available to them. The visitor response to this line of questioning for the entire year is shown in Table 22.

Approximately one-half of the respondents described the San Antonio River as "fairly clean," and over ten percent indicated it was

Fairly clean	47.3
Dirty	33.1
Very clean	10.3
Very dirty	8.9
Don't know	0.4
No opinion	0.0
	100.0

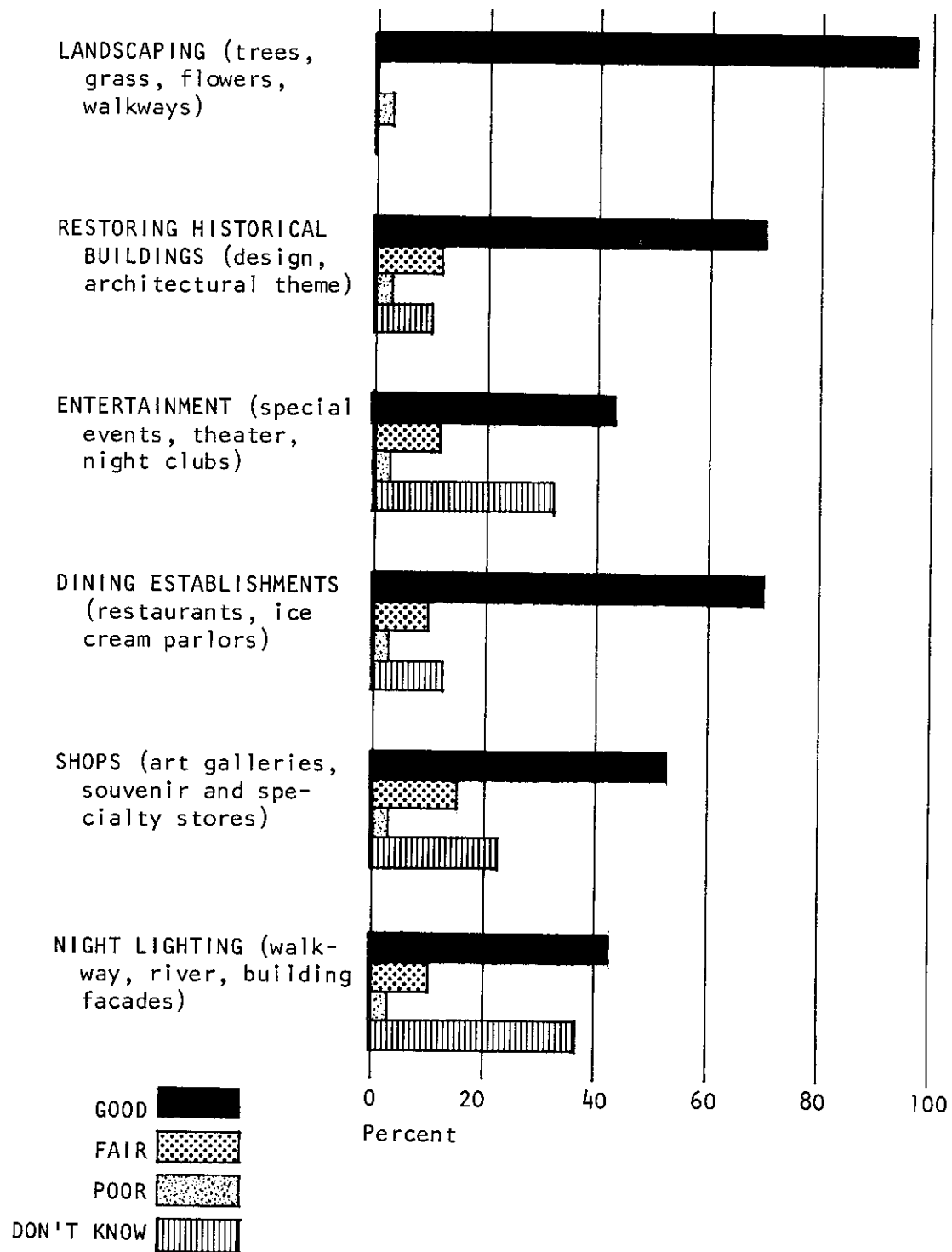


FIGURE 78. Response of visitors to six factors.

"very clean." Forty-two percent said it was "dirty" or "very dirty." Little rainfall was recorded from January through April; consequently the river was approximately the same quality as that coming from the wells at Brackenridge Park and a few inflows along the way. However, heavy rainfalls during August, September and October of 1971 caused substantial run-off and the turbid water may have accounted for the negative response. Table 23 supports the expected relationship between rainfall and visitor reaction. Several of the users also pointed out drainage problems, particularly at bridge areas, which interfered with their enjoyment during these high rainfall periods.

Users' Perception

A five point scale was used as a method for determining the perception of users with respect to several aspects of the River Walk. This portion of the survey produced results concerning the basic attributes of the River Walk as viewed by the visitor. The respondent was asked to indicate a point on a scale representing eight attributes and their antonyms. Prior to the exercise the respondent was told that his response should best represent his true feelings, with no right or wrong answers.

Figure 79 illustrates the sampled visitors' reaction to the beauty, interest, commercial nature and safety of the River Walk. Respondents clearly indicated the River

Walk as "beautiful" and "interesting." Response to other attributes of the development were not so precise. Over 51 percent felt the River Walk was neither "commercial" nor "noncommercial," with 35 percent describing it as more "non-commercial." This response appears to support the premise that the River Walk represents a melding of public and private interests to a degree that the visitor does not consciously view "park" or "business" as separate functions. With the considerable commercial investment, it is also significant that more than a third of the users considered the development as on the "noncommercial" side.

Most of the respondents believed the area to be "safe," but a significant number did not consider it to be perfectly safe. For a public park in the heart of a large city, it appears significant that a large proportion of respondents felt the River Walk as completely safe, or "near safe." This

Table 23
WATER QUALITY RELATED
TO SEASON
(in percent)

Period of Interview	Responses to Water Quality	
	Clean	Dirty
November - March	67.9	32.1
April - October	53.0	47.0

Chi-square = 15.84, significant at the .001 level, df = 1

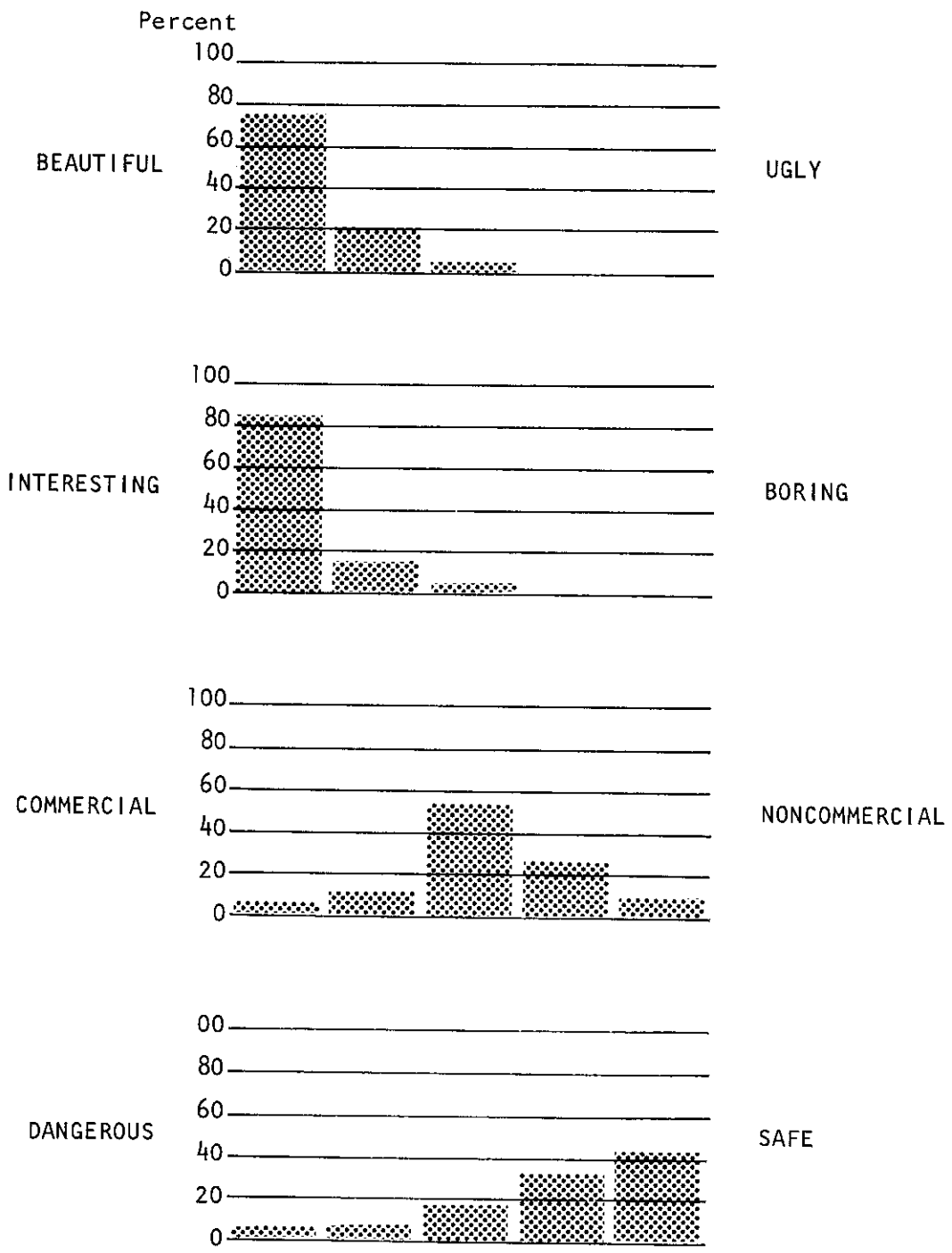


FIGURE 79. Visitor reaction to River Walk characteristics.

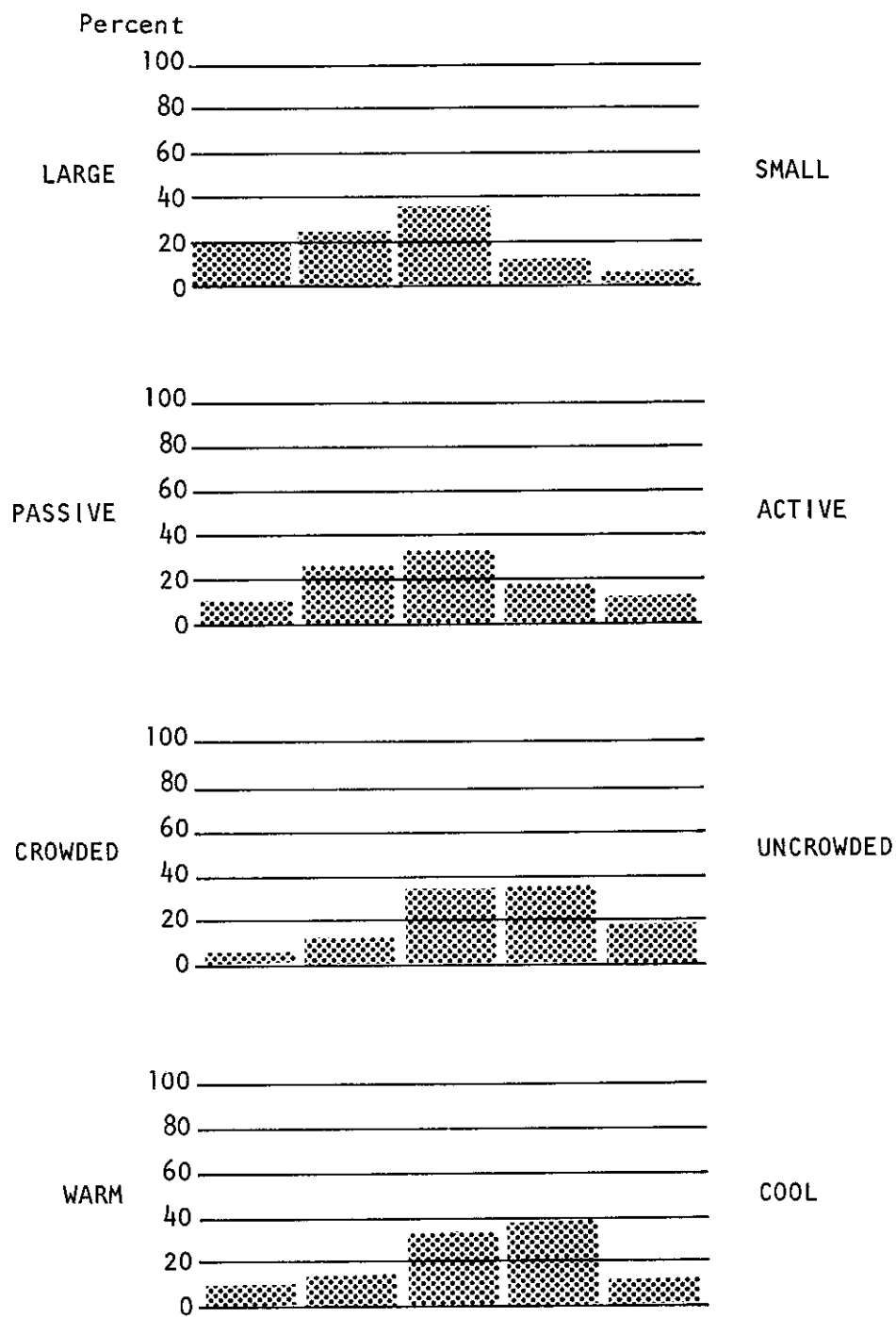


FIGURE 80. Visitor reaction to River Walk characteristics.

can be explained in large part by the police protection provided by park rangers.

Shown in Figure 80 are the users' reactions to the size, level of activity, extent of crowding and temperature of the River Walk. Results on the "size" of the river park varied with 38 percent indicating it as neither large nor small, and 45 percent considering it as on the large side. This response appears to grow out of the overall length of the development (two miles), and perhaps the extensive riverbank development providing a wide range of recreational pursuits. The River Walk is quite narrow at many points and could be considered intimate and small from a design standpoint; the San Antonio River is also considered a small river. According to park standards, the acreage is very small considering the regional scope of the facility.

Over one third of the respondents felt the River Walk was neither active nor passive, with 34 percent considering it as on the passive side, and 31 percent as moderately to very active. Apparently the River Walk succeeds in achieving a balance of active and passive experiences, which may vary greatly from individual to individual.

Fifty percent considered the development as more uncrowded than crowded, with 34 percent listing it as neither crowded nor uncrowded, 13 percent somewhat crowded and three percent describing it as definitely crowded. Personal observation revealed crowded conditions on holidays, during special events and on weekends

during the summer. A few respondents indicated undesirable congestion on the River Walk during these periods. Despite these peak periods of use, most of the respondents did not view the River Walk as congested.

Even though San Antonio's climate is hot and humid for much of the year, 32 percent of the respondents felt the River Walk was neither warm nor cool, and 46 percent considered it on the cool side. Almost 23 percent listed the area below street level as on the warm side. This response supports the observation that the River Walk is considerably cooler than street level during the many hot months of the year and slightly warmer during winter.

Summarizing, most of the respondents viewed the River Walk as very beautiful, moderately large, passive, uncrowded, safe, very interesting, cool and noncommercial.

USER SATISFACTION

In order to gain some insight into the overall satisfaction the visitors derive from their experience in the River Walk environment, some structured and open-ended approaches were made.

Benefits and Preferences

First, the visitors were asked if they felt that they had in the past or were now receiving some specific value from their visit to the River Walk. Their replies are documented in Table 24. The great majority (81.3 percent) indicated

that they in fact did receive some specific value from their visit. The next level of questioning asked those who said "yes" for specific reasons. These results suggest that the mix of commercial, public service and park settings is able to produce quality satisfactions from River Walk visits.

Second, an open-ended question was asked, "What do you like about the River Walk?" The answers represent a wide scatter of topics and no attempt was made to categorize them. A sampling of these responses follows:

- Housekeeping--maintenance.
- Calmness, quietness, scenery.
- Outdoor restaurants and landscape.
- Lots of good views, pleasant to walk along, peaceful, no cares, fact that there is a river.
- Attractive, relatively compact so can see, quiet, unique.
- 1. beauty, 2. the manner in which landscaped; natural, not artificial.
- Place to exercise--refuge from cars.
- Trees, quiet, nature, feel more at home than anywhere else.
- Clean, green atmosphere; helps relax--like a vacation spot in middle of town.
- Peaceful, away from air pollution, trees beautiful.
- Atmosphere of Old Mexico, altogether different.
- Designed in sense that keeps human proportions, not regimented; not a national park, but commercial and natural - takes into account all human activities - dining, night life, relaxing, fact is downtown but completely divorced from city;

- like in country.
- Like to be able to walk for long distance.
- Its esthetic quality, lush landscaping, friendly relaxed people and interesting shops.
- Night clubs, night life, good food.
- Festivals, shops.
- Beautiful, Spanish culture, not too commercial.
- Ability to travel to and from work and avoid crowded streets.
- Cheerfulness.
- Opportunity to socialize.
- Winding of the river.
- Architecture, especially along the HemisFair extension.
- The gay, natural, parklike setting.

Table 24
VALUES RECEIVED FROM VISIT
(In percent)

Whether or not a value had been received: (total sample)

Yes	81.3
No	0.1
Don't know	12.5
No opinion	6.1
	<u>100.0</u>

What value had been received:
(of those who replied "yes", above)

Relaxation	34.4
Pleasure	21.5
Peace	18.8
Beauty	14.7
Escape	4.5
Historical/cultural	1.6
Other	4.5
	<u>100.0</u>

It's very scenic, uncrowded, has a peaceful atmosphere and a place to contemplate and forget. The non-commercialization; variety of landscape material; picturesque character; arrangement and design of shops. It is cooler than street-level; more refreshing and the interesting aspect of meeting people is very interesting. Relaxed atmosphere; the fact that you're near the water brings one peace and relaxation; the chance to socialize. The clean water and the lay-out; it is spacious and gives you the impression that you aren't in the city. The pleasant atmosphere and variety of things to do, the restaurants are great; the structure of the waterfalls are beautiful. Night club activity is very enjoyable; the pretty scenes and the people who visit the river are positive aspects of the development. The fact that you are so free; the architectural design; accessibility. It is so relaxing and peaceful; the design of the outdoor dining area; the safety feature created by the park rangers (like them not being patrol policemen like at street-level). The birds and plants are beautiful. Being alone (the uncrowdedness). The preservation of plants and buildings; the architecture of the new buildings is done well. Romantic atmosphere. The variety of ways to relax and the different things to do on the River Walk; it gives relief to the flat topography of the

area.

The exotic, somewhat European flavor and the exciting atmosphere.

The cruise is one of the most exciting features, and the shade and relaxed atmosphere is just great.

Dislikes, Improvements Needed

In order to give respondents an equal opportunity to tell of their negative attitudes about the River Walk they were asked, "What is it that you do not like about the River Walk or would like to see improved?" The answers were far less numerous than for the question about their likes. However, they do suggest areas for improvement in the development and management of the River Walk. Some sample replies follow:

More patrolling at night.

Lack of bridges over water.

Squeaky paddle boats.

Danger after hours--drainage problem--lack of flow.

Odor smelled like sewer.

More improvement of storefronts on River Walk side (Thinks backs of buildings are ugly).

Quality of water and too commercialized.

A clean up of walls and urine on stairways and profanity written on the walls along the walk.

Fish in the river.

Loud speaker on boat not too clear.

Removal of functioning units that are not aesthetically pleasing.

More litter baskets.

Boats should have electric motors so as not to pollute water.

Lack of advertisement on street level.
 Need for more lights in certain areas at night for security reasons.
 More side-walk cafes.
 Inadequate parking facilities.
 Improvement of area underneath the bridges.
 Would like to see more restrooms
 Public facilities - more water fountains.
 More arts and crafts shows.
 Would like to be able to board the boats at any place and get round trip ticket at any time or place.
 Removal of sightseeing boats and be allowed to sit on grass.
 Improvement needed on some buildings, and perhaps some plant identification.
 Permanent apartment and living facilities along the river.
 More rest areas, benches and shade trees.
 Written information on historical sites around River Walk.

Barge Preference

The sightseeing barges are an important element of the development because they are the only watercraft (other than paddleboats, control and maintenance boats) allowed. Therefore, an open-ended question about what the visitors thought about these was asked. Following is a sample of the responses.

Very exciting - just as long as it doesn't get too commercial.
Very nice, especially dining on the boat.
Could be one of the main reasons for River Walk visit.
Great, but should use electric motors - reduce gasoline which

contributes to water pollution.
Like it but wish it was longer; it offered a new perspective to the Walk area and helps to give a good orientation to the area.
Beautiful, relaxing and gives good orientation to the city and walk area.
Like it because you could see more, but river interpretation was dull (recording).
Great - reminds me of Europe.
Greatest thing I've ever been on; recording was of great help.
It's okay, nothing really all that great.
Lovely, beautiful.
Enjoyed it very much because of the information presented.
Beautiful, very friendly and non-commercial.
Romantic.
Fantastic.
Like it - but didn't know where to board. The loud speaker was not informative.
Liked it - but would like to see tapes done in both English and Spanish.
It was a lot of fun - very educational.
Most exciting thing on River Walk.

Importance to City

Finally, the researchers wished to find out how important the visitors believed the River Walk was to the City of San Antonio. Without refining the questioning to either social or economic directions, a simple open-ended question produced the following results:

Prime reason the city is unique.
Main reason for San Antonio's popularity.

Adds color and atmosphere to city.
 Vital asset as contrasted to commercialization.
 Strongest asset due to character and quality of setting.
 Offers peace and solitude in busy city.
 It is San Antonio.
 Important because it gives special identity to the city and makes it very attractive.

Important due to its unique beauty and fact that it is in the city and yet separated from the busy area.
 Historically important and beautiful due to its landscaping, people and cleanliness.
 It is the most beautiful aspect of San Antonio due to its landscaping.
 Best feature of the city because of its atmosphere; adds to the City's cultural flavor.
 Brings tourists, economic assets and social tranquility to the city.
 Important because of its opportunity for everybody - shops, restaurants and things to do.
 Important landmark.
 A most charming asset - extremely important.
 Very attractive to tourists and adds a romantic character to the city.
 Economic asset and aesthetic value to the city; it gives the city a cleaner, more non-pollution type setting.
 Very valuable asset to get away from the busy city life; it gives the people an escape from the city.
 Extremely important because of its ecological significance; the fact that it is within the city itself is important; also its uniqueness and relaxed atmosphere.
 Quite important because it gives visitors a chance to be close to nature.
 Important because it's the heart of the city - it's unique.
 Tremendously important. The most wonderful tourist attraction.
 Very important mainly because

Table 25
 RESPONSE TO BUILDING AND LAND USE CONTROLS
 (In percent)

Present enforcement of Building and Land Use Controls:	
Very good	26.1
Good	61.5
Poor	4.4
Very poor	0.3
Don't know	6.9
No opinion	0.8
	<u>100.0</u>
Favoring Stronger Controls:	
Yes	24.6
No	60.2
Don't know	11.3
No opinion	3.9
	<u>100.0</u>
Of those favoring stronger controls, what kinds:	
Less commercialization	46.2
Maintain present state	14.5
Expanded beautification	11.0
Control commercial signs	9.7
Theme continuation	8.3
Other	10.3
	<u>100.0</u>

it's so original.
Important because of the balance of natural setting and the commercial places.
Very important; sets San Antonio apart from any other city in America.
It could be more important. It could be made available to other classes of people.
It projects excitement.
Very important because it gives tranquility to the city.
Very important it identifies the city and makes it serene and quiet.

Expansion and Control

It is believed by many that the setting of standards and the exercise of some control in order to maintain them are important to the success of the River Walk. The details of these are not generally known to the visitors, particularly those from outside San Antonio. Even so, the visitor reaction to the impression of control was sought by the researchers.

First, the visitor was asked about how well he thought that building and land use controls were being enforced. Table 25 shows that about 88 percent are of the opinion that the present enforcement is "good" or "very good."

Second, for every visitor who favors stronger control about two do not. As a probe into the types of stronger controls desired, the 24.6 percent of the total respondents who wanted stronger controls were asked to be more specific. For them almost half sought "less commercialism." At the same time, however, almost an

equal number (33.8 percent) favored "expanded beautification," "theme continuation" or "maintain present state."

Visitors were asked to respond to the type of leisure and park development they would favor as improvement. Table 26 shows that increased landscape development and beautification were most favored. Some favored more day and evening entertainment (21.2 percent). An increase in commercial offerings was not as strong as continued beautification programs.

Table 26
 DESIRE FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT
 (In percent)

Landscaping and beautification	45.7
Evening entertainment	12.1
Day entertainment	9.1
Shops	5.1
Activities on the water	5.0
Restaurants	2.8
Other	20.2
	100.0

Table 27
 DESIRE FOR MORE
 BACKGROUND INFORMATION
 (In percent)

Yes	73.8
No	16.7
Don't know	1.3
Makes no difference	8.2
	100.0

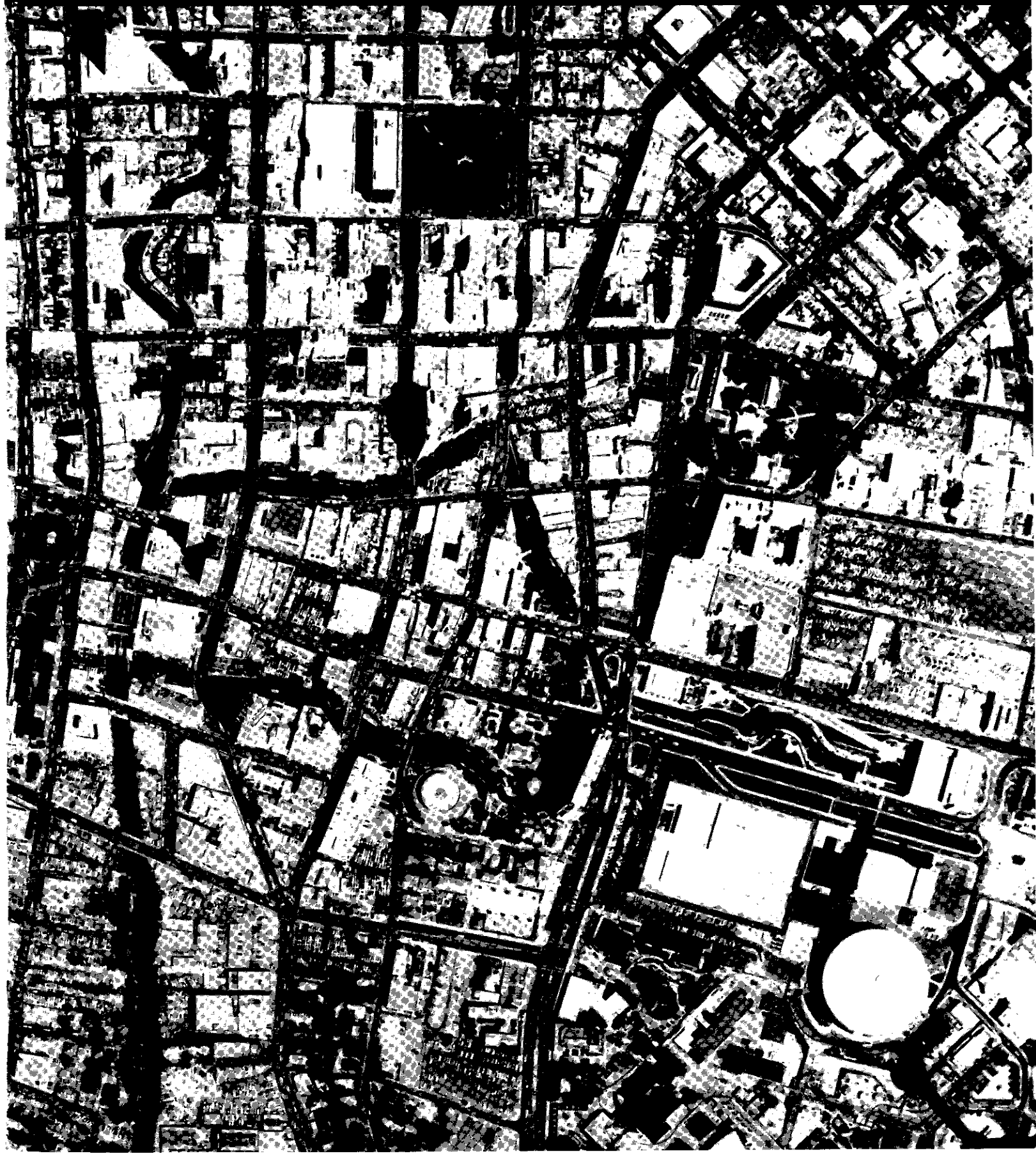
A measure of opinion was made on the need for more information and historic data available to the visitors because the River Walk appears to be an unusual development and civic officials report great interest from outside. Table 27 leaves no doubt that the visitors would appreciate greater information and interpretation of the background and development of the River Walk.

A major question sought from the voters of San Antonio (described in Chapter 5) concerned their support for a hypothetical bond issue to support River Walk development. In order to prevent the stimulation of local concern over a possible imminent issue, the question was couched in general terms: "If another city in the United States wanted to develop a river, similar to the way San Antonio has done, how would you vote concerning a river development bond issue if you were a resident of that city?"

Both the voter population and the visitor population were asked the same question. The results for the visitor population is shown in Table 28. No aspect of the study was a greater surprise than to learn that even though taxes might have to be raised, a massive 73.5 percent would favor such a bond issue. This must be testimony to the validity of such a civic improvement. The suburbanites and nonresidents reflect, as one might expect, a somewhat stronger support. This great support probably shows that respondents realize that private enterprise alone could not produce the results needed and that public support (through taxes) would be required and would meet with their approval.

Table 28
VISITORS' OPINION OF SUPPORT OF HYPOTHETICAL BOND ISSUE TO IMPROVE
(In percent)

	Total	Residents	Suburbanites	Nonresidents
For issue, even if would raise taxes	73.5	63.9	80.9	76.6
For issue, if would not raise taxes	16.5	25.0	11.5	13.7
Against issue, if would raise taxes	2.2	4.4	0.0	1.4
Against issue, even if would not raise taxes	4.4	1.7	3.8	5.4
Undecided	3.4	5.0	3.8	2.9
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0



5. VOTER IMAGES AND ATTITUDES

The results of the cross-section survey of the registered voters of San Antonio were so overwhelmingly positive that the researchers felt compelled to run a complete re-check of data, which was done. It is doubtful if any other civic improvement in the country has the public support held by the voters of San Antonio toward their River Walk. As the following results show, the design, construction and management of the River Walk are evoking an extremely favorable response from them. The following discussion includes the several aspects of the inquiry made of the voters.

USER CHARACTERISTICS

According to the results shown in Table 29, the voters of San Antonio apparently are quite evenly split between men and women, with a slight edge in favor of the men. The age distribution is spread over all categories with the highest numbers in the 25-34 and the 45-54 age brackets. Almost as many are found in the 65-and-over bracket as in the under-25 bracket. Income distribution is skewed toward the higher brackets with about two-thirds having incomes over \$10,000.

Comparisons between characteristics of visitors (Chapter 4) and voters of San Antonio are rather revealing. Almost half of the

voters are over 45 whereas less than one-fourth (21.1 percent) of the visitors are in that bracket. Almost half of the visitors are under 25 whereas only 10.4 percent of the voters are in that age bracket. Perhaps this is due to the greater number of military and out-of-town families in the visitor group. The income distribution between the two groups also is quite different. Whereas about two-thirds of the voters have incomes of over \$10,000, only a little over one-third of the visitors have incomes in this bracket. Conversely, only about nine percent of the voters have incomes under \$5,000 whereas almost one-third of the visitors have incomes in this bracket.

Occupational distribution of voters can be found in Table 30. Almost two-thirds are in professional, clerical or housewife categories.

Comparisons with the visitors shows several major differences. The military does not constitute a very important segment (1.5 percent) of the total voters whereas it makes up 23.0 percent of the visitors. About twice as many blue collar workers are found among the voters as the visitors. Not quite half (41.6 percent) of the visitors are professional, white collar, businessmen, and housewives as compared to a similar grouping of voters represent-

Table 29
 DESCRIPTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF VOTERS AND VISITORS
 (In percent)

SEX:	Male	53.4	63.4			
	Female	46.6	36.6			
AGE:	Under 25	10.4	48.0	35-44	45-54	55-64
	25-34	23.9	16.8	16.7	22.2	17.9
	65 and over	8.9	4.5	14.6	10.2	6.4
INCOME:	Under \$3,000	4.4	16.0	5,000 to 7,999	8,000 to 9,999	10,000 to 14,999
	3,000 to 4,999	4.4	15.1	14.9	13.0	32.7
	15,000 and over	30.6	20.4	17.0	14.1	17.4

Note: Italicized numbers represent Visitors' Characteristics.

Table 30
 OCCUPATIONS OF VOTERS AND VISITORS
 (In percent)

	VISITORS	VOTERS*
Military (temporary)	22.0	1.5
Housewife	16.7	19.1
Student	14.6	3.5
Professional	11.9	26.8
White Collar	11.7	17.8
Businessman	5.8	
Retired	5.0	7.9
Blue Collar	4.9	13.6
Service Worker	3.5	2.5
Proprietor	1.4	4.7
Unemployed	1.2	0.2
Military (resident)	1.0	
Farm and/or Ranch Operator	0.3	0.0
Other	0.0	2.4
	100.0	100.0

* Nearest category -- different categories used for voters and visitors

ing almost two-thirds of their total numbers. There are about four times as many students, proportionately, in the visitor group as in the voter group.

CHARACTERISTICS OF USE

The voters were asked about how and why they visited the River Walk. A very large proportion (97.6 percent, Table 31) indicated that they had visited the River Walk at some time in the past. About three-fourths said they had visited last year. Of these, 18.3 percent had visited the River Walk ten times or more.

Comparing with the visitors, it appears that proximity allows local voters much easier access; hence many more have visited the River Walk. However, not quite as many, proportionately, visited

last year. The frequency of visiting among voters and visitors is much the same for visits under five but visitors are relatively more prolific in visiting. Perhaps this again is due to the increased proportion of military and young people among the visitors.

The general comments of those voters who had never visited or not visited recently included the following reasons: age, health, lack of time or that he had not had out of town guests since his last visit.

IMPORTANCE AND VALUE

Another line of inquiry sought the voters' opinions on how they valued the River Walk. It might be one thing to visit the area but quite another to believe in its social and economic value.

Table 31
FREQUENCY OF VISITS BY VOTERS AND VISITORS
(In percent)

		Voters	Visitors
Have Visited the River Walk Before (total sample)	Yes	97.6	61.9
	No	2.4	38.1
		<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Visited Last Year	Yes	76.6	89.6
	No	23.4	10.4
		<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>
	Frequency		Of Total Sample
Of Those Who Visited Last Year:			
One to 5 times	58.3	56.4	44.6
6 to 10 times	23.4	13.6	18.0
Over 10 times	18.3	30.0	14.0
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>76.6</u>
			89.6

Table 32
 VOTERS' OPINION OF VALUE
 (In percent)

	YES	NO	N.O.*	N.R./C.*	Total
An Attraction for Tourists	96.6	1.7	1.2	0.5	100.0
Economic Benefit to City	80.7	6.3	12.3	0.7	100.0
Benefit to You	74.9	14.7	9.4	1.0	100.0

*N.O. means "no opinion" and N.R./C. means a combination of "no response" and "conditional yes and no."

Response to the question, "Is it an attraction for Tourists," is given in Table 32. There is little doubt that the River Walk is a tourist attraction in the minds of the voters. Apparently, some (12.3 percent) were unable (or preferred not) to consider the River Walk of economic value to the city. Even so, a very strong majority (80.7 percent) believe that it is of economic benefit to the City of San Antonio. Comments helped explain this strong opinion:

Visitors remember 'The City With the River'.
Delightful and novel city attraction.
Visitors think it is beautiful. It has made our city one of the unique in the country.
Provides entertainment for residents as well as tourists.
I think it is very important to the "image" of San Antonio.
Just good sense to beautify our city!
A great thing!
A definite tourism plus as more activity centers around the river.
It is a very pleasant sight

among the asphalt trails downtown.
Anything benefit to city helps all residents.
More tourists, more money, more jobs.

Pride in their River Walk was revealed in many comments, such as:

A beautiful city reflects the people living in it.
I think the River Walk is beautiful, pleasant and gay.
We take all our visitors to the River.

Even more impressive is the number--about three-fourths of the total--who could relate the value of the River Walk to themselves, personally.

My out-of-county and state guests love dinner and boat ride on the river.
The river parade is the best benefit to me.
I love it! I go as often as possible!
It has been a real source of relief, to walk along the River.

Table 33
VOTERS' OPINION OF ACCESS
(In percent)

	YES	NO	N.O.	N.R./C.	Total
Downtown Traffic, A Problem	42.5	54.8	2.4	0.3	100.0
Downtown Parking, A Problem	64.5	32.6	2.9	0.0	100.0
Entrances Difficult to Find	15.7	79.7	2.4	2.2	100.0
Could Get a Ride to River Walk	83.1	11.6	4.8	0.5	100.0

I work downtown--spend many noon hours there.

The image of the River and the beauty of San Antonio was an important factor in our decision to move to this city.

Our little boy 3 yrs. loves to walk and see the water and the boats.

We enjoy going down there and when we do we usually eat out or buy something.

Appreciate just knowing it's there.

On account of my age and health, I am not able to make much use of it but appreciate having such an attraction in the city.

put to use in ridding the city of crime, San Antonio would be more attractive for its residents.

Although a much smaller number had negative comments, they are worthy of consideration. A sampling would include such comments as:

Would be an attraction if you weren't afraid to go down there.

We need more sanitation, security and lights.

Too many thieves.

Benefits only a few.

If the money that the taxpayer has to pay for this place were

ACCESS

The researchers were interested in the voters' opinions regarding access and transportation to the River Walk. It is very well to have a civic amenity but of equal importance is whether the populace has access.

In response to the question, "Is downtown traffic a problem," slightly over half of the voters do not believe that it is (see Table 33). However, the 43.5 percent who consider it to be a problem suggest that this is a topic for further improvement. However, compared to most cities even this may be a low ratio considering how universal the city parking problem appears to be.

Some commented favorably about the downtown traffic:

Traffic is no worse than other big cities.

I have a car and at night it is somewhat easy to get to the River Walk.

A few did express difficulty such as:

Transportation does keep some friends from going to the River.

I have my own car but don't like downtown traffic.

Parking, however, is another matter. Anyone who has flown over the area is impressed by the apparent abundance of parking lots surrounding the River Walk area. However, the voters (64.5 percent) do consider downtown parking to be a problem. Pricing came in for more criticism than space:

Parking lot fee is expensive.

Parking is the worst problem of all.

Elimination of on-street parking in the downtown area would improve the traffic situation.

Others said:

Parking is plentiful.

Traffic and parking are only problems depending what else is going on in the city.

Apparently those people residing in San Antonio have little difficulty finding the River Walk in spite of the relatively few identifying signs at the entrances. Only 15.7 percent indicated that entrances were hard to find. The main entrance from Paseo del Rio Plaza has been developed into a beautiful park at street level and may be the one most used by local

citizens. One summarized the entrance situation this way, "entrances are not hard to find now, because we are familiar with the city. They are not well enough identified for strangers."

The question was asked, "If you decided to go to the River Walk sometime this week, could you get a ride (other than taxicab)?" A total of 83.1 percent stated that they would have no difficulty. The 11.6 percent who would have difficulty may include the elderly and the poor. Some representative comments included:

I could walk as I live in walking distance.

The city bus service is excellent.

The bus service in this section of town is very poor.

I wouldn't go downtown at night for anything.

I could ride bus also would have to walk 3 blocks to bus line.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND SAFETY

Table 34 shows the respondents' answers to questions pertaining to the attractiveness of the buildings and landscape, safety along the River Walk and cleanliness of the water.

There is little question that the voters believe that what the architects and landscape architects have provided for them is attractive. This was supported by the comments, such as: "I enjoy the landscaping and the cleanliness of the River Walk," "landscape and buildings along the River are get-

ting better all the time." The negative comments included "the buildings are crummy in places," "no public restrooms," and one summarized in this manner, "some buildings are attractive, some picturesque, some interesting but some are not attractive."

The voters were asked if they believed that the River Walk was adequately lighted at night. These responses need to be evaluated in terms of the physical lighting situation. Much improvement in lighting has been made recently. Furthermore, many people have not actually visited the area at night. These facts may account for much of the response reflected in both "no" and "no opinion" answers, totaling almost one-half of the total. Even so, lighting may be an issue deserving further investigation and development.

City noise is often cited as an inherent urban characteristic. Whether the noise from the city above the River Walk was a major threat to pleasurable partici-

pation formed another point of voter inquiry. The question was asked, "Is the noise from the above streets noticeable along the River Walk?" The response, shown in Table 34, would indicate that it must not be a serious problem if only 17.4 percent are aware of any such noise. No measure was made of these responses to determine how disturbing it was for them, if at all.

A question of odors was posed but the wording did not differentiate between obnoxious odors (sewage, oil) and pleasant odors (fragrance from flowers). Therefore, the results may not be very meaningful.

Because the question of safety was raised so often by citizens, the direct question was asked, "Is the River Walk safe?" The term "safety" in this context is that most clearly understood by local people--safety from bodily harm by thieves and rapists. It should be pointed out that before major redevelopment and initiation of special police protection--the

Table 34
VOTERS' OPINION OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND SAFETY
(In percent)

	YES	NO	N.O.	N.R./G.	Total
Buildings are attractive	76.6	8.9	7.7	6.8	100.0
Landscape is attractive	92.8	2.7	4.1	0.4	100.0
River Walk is well lighted	50.2	30.2	16.7	2.9	100.0
Noticeable noises from streets above	17.4	70.5	11.1	1.0	100.0
Noticeable odors	21.7	59.7	13.5	5.1	100.0
The River Walk is safe	47.1	35.0	13.0	4.9	100.0
I feel safe about the trip from home	82.6	13.5	2.4	1.5	100.0
The river water is clean	42.8	48.3	6.0	2.9	100.0

ranger program--portions of this area did have a reputation for such violations. Therefore, it would not be surprising if a substantial number of the voters, particularly those who have not visited the River Walk since these programs were started, would believe it to be unsafe. This proved to be the case. Slightly over one-third of the voters believe it to be unsafe. Interviews with the rangers revealed that there had been no offenses in 1971. Perhaps this record of dramatic upgrading is not well understood by the citizenry.

Some comments:

*No police patrol
Frequently dangerous due to thugs, etc.
Need city police patrol instead of park rangers and more lights.
Bridges are not (safe). People loiter under them.
Not safe for a female alone. I never feel safe in San Antonio after dark unless I have a man along.
Too many Mexican boys hang around down there.
I, personally, have had no trouble.
Too many years of reading about "gangs" on River Walk formed opinion.
Where is it safe to walk these days?
As safe as any other section of the city.*

The matter of safety between home and the River Walk was probed. A large majority, 82.6 percent, believe that they feel safe in making that trip. Safety officials, however, may view with some

concern, the 13.5 percent who do not feel safe about such a trip. Some of the voters' comments follow:

*Least secure feeling when on street from car to Walk.
Traveling alone is risky.
On bus, but at night going to bus line and back not safe (I walk 5 blocks and lights not good enough).
Many residents say it is not safe. I'd like to really know.
No knowledge of unsafe incident. I recently moved from San Antonio--primary reason was because of holdups, robberies, unsafe to walk or drive the streets. San Antonio is a most beautiful city but it is not a place for retired or elderly people to live due to the mentioned reasons. I would return to San Antonio when it has been proven to me that the city has cleaned up its problems of drug addicts which in my opinion is the primary causes of the mentioned items.
It all depends on the time of day.
For safety sake I would always want to go in the early evening.
I never had any problems.
I would not go at night without a male escort--preferably large.*

The respondents were asked if the water in the River Walk area appears to be clean. The response is shown in Table 34.

This near-even split is not easily explained. Perhaps those who say it is clean are reporting their

impression of their last visit, which may have been at time when the river was free from coloring caused by excessive runoff due to rains. Or, they may be indicating that it is as clean as need be for other than water contact sports. Conversely, those who say it is not clean may be reflecting conditions when runoff is high. Comments on the water quality included, "the water is dirty," "it is becoming a polluted ditch" or "it always seems to be well taken care of."

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Much of the purpose behind this study was to provide information that would be of assistance for future planning and development. Therefore, a series of questions focused upon specific issues, some of which have already been voiced locally. These questions deal with topics such as extended channels, landscape improvement of more urban portions of the San Antonio River, housing and the ex-

tent to which voters would favor bond issues needed to support development like the River Walk.

In some cities, waterfront parks include ball diamonds, tennis courts, beaches and other recreational opportunities. Without specifying whether additional recreation possibilities along the River Walk were feasible, we asked if they would favor more use of the water for recreational activities. The majority (62.3 percent Table 35) indicated that they would and about one-fourth said they would not.

Casual conversation in the area had revealed divergent opinion on the question of digging channel extensions from the original horseshoe bend of the San Antonio River. Therefore, the survey included two pertinent questions. The first dealt with whether, in the voters' opinion, the man-made extension to HemisFair was a good idea. Table 35 shows that there is not much doubt in the minds of most voters. The second asked about a popular

Table 35
VOTERS' OPINION OF FUTURE DEVELOPMENT
(In percent)

	YES	NO	N.O.	N.R./C.	Total
More recreation is needed	62.3	26.1	11.6	0.0	100.0
HemisFair extension was a good idea	84.3	7.2	8.2	0.3	100.0
Favor extension to Alamo Plaza	55.0	32.6	12.3	0.0	100.0
Favor a downtown mall	47.6	38.6	13.0	0.8	100.0
Improve River Walk to Brackenridge	79.7	8.2	12.1	0.0	100.0
Improve south to city limits	62.8	18.8	18.1	0.3	100.0
Favor sightseeing boats	79.5	11.6	8.9	0.0	100.0
Would be interested in an apartment	45.4	47.8	6.8	0.0	100.0

proposal, "Would you be in favor of a man-made channel which would connect the River Walk area to the Alamo Plaza?" The results in favor are much stronger than anticipated. However, the one-third of the voters who oppose such an issue need to be considered in future planning.

Because some cities are having some urban renewal success with a downtown mall, the possibility of creating one directly above the River Walk was asked of the voters. The replies were not decisive but far more in favor (47.6 percent) than accidental opinion had demonstrated. It is another issue deserving further study.

Several local groups have proposed extending park-like landscape improvement along the San Antonio River both above and below the present River Walk. The segment northward to the El Tropicano Hotel is typical of one approach. When asked whether they favored improvement all the way to Brackenridge Park, almost 80 percent were in favor. However, not quite as many favored such improvement southward to the city limits. Perhaps this is a reflection of the local general knowledge of the differences in the landscape problem on this stretch of the river, especially in handling greater volumes of flood waters.

In addition, the voters were asked if they favored the use of sightseeing boats if these extended improvements to the river were made. Again, a strong majority would favor their use. Some of the comments are revealing:

River going south should be connected to the Lone Star Brewery and mission as the missions are close to the river.

If economically feasible, this would be great.

Sightseeing boats to Brackenridge Park would be ideal since it is a city attraction.

Some did not believe in the expansions, "I think it is better to improve and patrol the present area than to increase the area," or "Leave it as it is."

Many urban specialists have speculated on the reasons why most cities have lost population in downtown areas in the last few years. Out of the many possibilities, some believe that if certain amenities were present such as have been designed and built into the River Walk, there could be a return to the downtown section. In order to gain some insight into this question, the voters were asked, "Would you be interested in living in an apartment along the river if it became available in your price range?" The 45.4 percent who would "be interested" is much higher than was expected. In fact, it is far in excess of the present level of apartment use in San Antonio. In 1970, only 17.9 percent of the occupied housing units within the city were apartments (2 or more units in a structure occupied by renters) (US Bureau of Census, 1971:1-88).

Finally, the researchers sought answers to the voters' strength of support for possible expansion programs. In order to avoid stim-

ulation of a local issue which could damage future efforts in San Antonio, the question was posed in general terms: "If another city in the United States wanted to develop a river, similar to the way San Antonio has done, how would you vote concerning a river development bond issue if you were a resident of that city?" The respondent was given five choices. Table 36 shows the results and also comparisons with the same inquiry of the visitors.

Antonio among the visitor population tend to parallel the survey results of the voters. The greatest deviation comes at both ends of the scale--a higher percentage of visitors were for the first alternative and a lower percentage of visitors were undecided.

It should be kept in mind that the context between the two surveys may be slightly different--the voters more conscious of their own River Walk for which they now know they are paying taxes and the visitors responding to a more hypothetical situation. These results show that the residents of San

Table 36
VOTERS' AND VISITORS' OPINION OF
SUPPORT OF HYPOTHETICAL BOND ISSUES TO IMPROVE
(In percent)

	VOTERS		VISITORS		
	TOTAL	RESIDENTS	TOTAL	SUBURBANITES	NONRESIDENTS
For issue, even if would raise taxes	56.0	23.5	63.9	80.9	76.6
For issue, if would not raise taxes	25.6	16.5	25.0	17.5	13.7
Against issue, if would raise taxes	4.8	2.7	4.4	0.0	1.4
Against issue, even if would not raise taxes	2.7	4.5	1.7	3.8	5.4
Undecided	10.9	3.4	5.0	3.8	2.9
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0



6. RESPONSE FROM OWNERS AND MANAGING AGENCIES

PROPERTY OWNERS SURVEY

The survey of property owners provides some insight into the collective thinking of those who own property fronting the San Antonio River along the River Walk development. In addition to some of the same line of questioning as posed for the visitors and voters, the owners were quizzed on their attitudes toward use and development of their own lands.

The results indicate that 70.0 percent of the property owners along the River Walk are not directly oriented to it as a park-business leisure complex. In other words, only 30 percent of the properties are used for restaurants, shops, entertainment and related uses. The others are used for business offices, parking lots and garages, medical services, wholesale business, a college, banks and vacant lots. This suggests that the majority of the private land abutting the River Walk has an equal chance in the future of remaining in present uses or becoming oriented in some way to the River Walk. When asked the question directly, "Are there any plans at this time to change the use of this (your) land?" Out of 28 replies, 93 percent replied, "no." This type of inquiry must be placed in the context of business speculations and risk. Most businesses prefer not to make public disclosure of in-

tentions until after all plans have been crystallized.

The property owners were asked their opinion regarding land use and building controls--whether those now outlined in the City Council Ordinance of 1962 help or hinder the development they might like to make. About one-third believe these controls are helpful. One respondent felt that controls would hinder and the balance was noncommittal.

Comments on the question included the following:

Of critical importance: River Walk has been kept free of bad design, developed well in accordance with master plan, no unsightly "honky tonks," good sign control, no neon, etc.

Who would want to spend a lot on good design if the neighbors are free to ruin it with shabby construction?

It depends on the controls. Over a period of years will permit development with continuing theme.

These ordinances should be stronger.

Assures development in good taste--protects property values from decline due to poor redevelopment of neighboring property.

A more flexible approach to conformity is better.

Not familiar with ordinance but the control exercised to maintain a planned development is wise.

Property owners were asked if they believed that more residents of San Antonio should be encouraged to visit the River Walk. Virtually all agreed that this should be done (one respondent had no opinion). Among the comments regarding how this might be accomplished came the following recommendations: 1) increased publicity and promotion, 2) improved access (more parking, reduced rates), 3) increased things to see and do and 4) increased level of safety, particularly in the region around the River Walk.

The property owners were asked their opinion regarding future change of the present balance between *park area and commercial area*. One might expect the replies to be biased in favor of business but this was not the case as is shown in Table 37. The

Favor more public buildings	3.4
Present balance between commercial and park is about right	58.6
Should be changed in favor of more business	13.7
Should be changed in favor of new park area	20.7
No response	3.6
	<u>100.0</u>

majority favor maintaining the present balance and more favor additional park than additional business.

Allied to this was an open-ended question regarding their personal opinions of the River Walk, present and future. A sampling of the comments follows:

Present:

It is developing but slowly and ways must be found to encourage investors to participate in some or all of the activities.

Excellent development so far-- both private and city.

It is one of the few unique attractions existing in cities in the U.S. A relaxing and restful atmosphere.

One bright spot in downtown San Antonio.

Beautiful, peaceful.

I believe that the entertainment and social development of San Antonio lies along the river or I would not be involved.

It is the one attraction no one else has.

Outstanding.

A priceless jewel in the crown of San Antonio!

Very lovely.

Future:

Many of our visitors are aged. There should be ramps for these people to descend and ascend.

Unlimited.

If properly attended it will always be good for San Antonio.

With improved security at river level and entire downtown,

Table 38

PROPERTY OWNERS' OPINION OF VALUE

	YES	NO	N.O.	N.R./C.	Total
An attraction for tourists	29	0	0	0	29
Economic benefit to city	27	1	0	1	29
Benefit to you	27	0	0	2	29

area will be fantastically successful.

Present park department security men are highly qualified, effective, and well organized but we believe proper security will require more personnel--also, more police department protection for downtown area.

Will become more valuable as selective development increases and widens the exposure to this unique attraction of our city.

Needs more variety of commercial development, more entertainment places with live entertainment.

Great, if it is not overexploited.

Great opportunity for quiet area. Please, no musak.

The present development will be enhanced by changes in liquor laws, increased convention traffic, and more development.

One thing is paramount--river development must be first class, whether it is for the person who merely wants to stroll and spend a small amount of time and money, or for the person who can afford to spend more time and money.

Please keep the river quiet and peaceful.

Needs 500% increase in development similar to three of the last 10 years.

Money, imagination, and planning should be devoted as quickly as possible to the over-all development of the River.

Regarding access, the survey revealed that 95.5 percent of the property owners had public entrance at street level but only 41.3 percent had public entrance at river level.

The property owners were asked many of the same questions asked the voters and visitors. The results are shown in Tables 38, 39, and 40. Generally, the distribution of these frequencies is very similar to those shown by the voters. Their attitudes toward access, future development, and value of the River Walk were much the same as that of the voters.

ORGANIZATION, AGENCY SURVEY

As the historical sketch of the River Walk showed (Chapter 1), development and control of the River Walk has emerged from a fragmented approach that for most cities has kept development

Table 39
PROPERTY OWNERS' OPINION OF ACCESS

	YES	NO	N.O.	N.R./C.	Total
Downtown traffic, a problem	12	16	1	0	29
Downtown parking, a problem	18	11	0	0	29
Entrances difficult to find	8	20	1	0	29

of waterfront areas to the minimum. Instead, there is now a very high degree of collaboration and cooperation operating on both an informal and a formally structured basis. The following discussion includes results from interviews with the leaders of those organizations and agencies that play key roles in the management and control of the area at the present time. The first set of responses identifies the responsibilities concerning the River Walk and the basis for the authority of the agency or organization.

Parks and Recreation Department
ROBERT L. FRAZER, DIRECTOR

The main responsibilities of the Parks and Recreation Department of the City of San Antonio on the River Walk are: planning, design, planting, construction and maintenance of the publicly-owned properties (including the river and its banks back to private property lines), and law enforcement through the use of the Park Ranger program. It is also responsible for making recommendations to appropriate agencies and organizations for needed

Table 40
PROPERTY OWNERS' OPINION OF FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

	YES	NO	N.O.	N.R./C.	Total
More recreation is needed	19	6	3	1	29
Hemisfair extension was a good idea	28	1	0	0	29
Favor extension to Alamo Plaza	13	12	4	0	29
Favor a downtown mall	15	9	4	1	29
Improve River Walk to Brackenridge Park	23	2	4	0	29
Improve south to city limits	17	10	2	0	29
Favor sightseeing boats	24	3	1	1	29

changes. The department is now working on plans for better use of areas under bridges. They also maintain the water quality and are seeking new ways of keeping the river clean without upsetting the ecology of the existing plant materials. Their authority stems from the city charter which gives them responsibility for all public grounds.

San Antonio River Authority

FRED PFEIFFER, GENERAL MANAGER

The San Antonio River Authority has the responsibility of the quality of the water in the River, particularly as it relates to pollution and flood control within the river basin. An elected board of directors is the policy body and the authority operates within the limits set by the state enabling act.

San Antonio Chamber of Commerce

FRED BURTNER, EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT

The Chamber of Commerce, among many other objectives, assumes the responsibility of developing new functions and encouraging new business in the River Walk. It originally conceived the idea of the River Walk Commission. The Paseo del Rio Association was originally under the Chamber of Commerce jurisdiction. An environmental quality committee is a new branch of the Chamber.

San Antonio Conservation Society

MRS. BROOKS MARTIN, PRESIDENT

The main function of the San Antonio Conservation Society is to promote the preservation and protection of San Antonio's heritage and to influence future growth that will respect the natural environment and traditional character. The preservation of the River Walk area was its reason for being created in 1924. It has since promoted the establishment of a historic review board and a historic zoning ordinance, both important to the River Walk. It is a self-supporting non-profit organization.

Paseo del Rio Association

WILLIAM HUNTER, PRESIDENT

The function of the Paseo del Rio Association is to promote the business interests of the River Walk. This includes holding events, sponsoring publicity, advertising and issuing permits to hold events on the River. It operates by permission of city ordinance, renewable each year.

River Walk Commission

ED HARLLEE, CHAIRMAN

The River Walk Commission is a regulatory and controlling body that reviews plans and concepts for development of areas and buildings on the San Antonio River from Brackenridge Park to Villita street crossing. It was established by city ordinance.

General Information

Questions were asked agency and organization heads concerning their opinions on some of the same points raised with the voters and visitors. In addition, they were asked about their involvement with other agencies and whether they feel their authority is sufficient for their goals. The replies are presented in Table 41. From this, it is clear that all of the agencies believe the River Walk is an attraction for tourists, of economic benefit to the city, of benefit to them individually, destined to expand and that their present authority is sufficient. Most do not believe that downtown parking is a problem and most meet either regularly, frequently or upon call with other River Walk agencies.

Some comments from these local leaders may prove interesting:

TOURIST ATTRACTION:

Regularly impressed by number of people outside the state who

visit and want to copy the River Walk.

It is unique. People have the feeling of enjoyment and serenity.

It's a totally different atmosphere than at street level. The idea that you can walk out of any number of hotels, take a barge ride to the convention center is extremely appealing to most convention goers.

Visual impression is a lasting one even though the river is smaller than what is found in most U.S. cities. Lack of width of river is an asset in that you are not really separated from people on the other side. Being on the River Walk is being in a totally different world compared to street level. Central focus of architecture (Mexican colonial) is a great asset.

ECONOMIC BENEFIT TO CITY:

Benefit from the total tourist dollar, not just what is spent on the river.

Table 41
ROLES, VALUES AND ISSUES AS VIEWED
BY ORGANIZATIONS AND AGENCIES

	YES	NO	TOTAL
Is the River Walk an attraction for tourists?	6	0	6
Is it of economic benefit to the city?	6	0	6
Is it of benefit to you?	6	0	6
Is downtown traffic a problem?	1	5	6
Do you attend meetings of other River Walk agencies?	5	1	6
Do you expect expansion?	6	0	6
Do you have enough authority?	6	0	6

All of city benefits economically. Any wholesome industry in San Antonio benefits the man on the street.

Because each tourist spends approximately \$35.00 a day while here and this helps the economy of the entire community.

I'm not sure. I think so.

People who own shops on the river profit. People in the community do not profit economically.

Biggest single selling attraction of the city.

Definitely. It is the "plus" which sells the convention. This is because it is natural and unique. The contrast of the river in an urban environment is a great drawing card for visitors from out of state. Tourist and Convention Bureau of Chamber of Commerce is doing a great job because most of their advertisement centers on the river.

TRAFFIC, A PROBLEM:

No problem with finding parking and it does cost less than other large cities. People have a bad attitude about parking because for so long there was plenty and it was free. Why tax the public when the user can pay as he goes? Government entity should step in only when private enterprise does not offer it.

Parking is not a problem for me but for a person visiting it may be. By comparison to other problems the visitor probably is not much concerned about parking.

No merchant has enough parking.

It is not economically feasible to have enough parking for peak need time. There is plenty of parking but not all of it is located where people want it. Traffic is not a problem for most people especially in the evening. This city has the lowest downtown crime rate of any of 15 major cities of the U.S.

Neither traffic or parking is a problem. Parking is too expensive in some areas. Traffic is less a problem in the downtown area than at some of the mall shopping centers. Fairly good parking in downtown area. Not convenient enough for some people.

Yes, parking problems, but nothing that can't be solved. Could have more conveniently located for river usage. Seldom have full parking lots. Have more parking per capita than any major U.S. city.

No, there is no traffic problem. Some merchants like traffic jams because it causes people to come back.

FUTURE EXPANSION

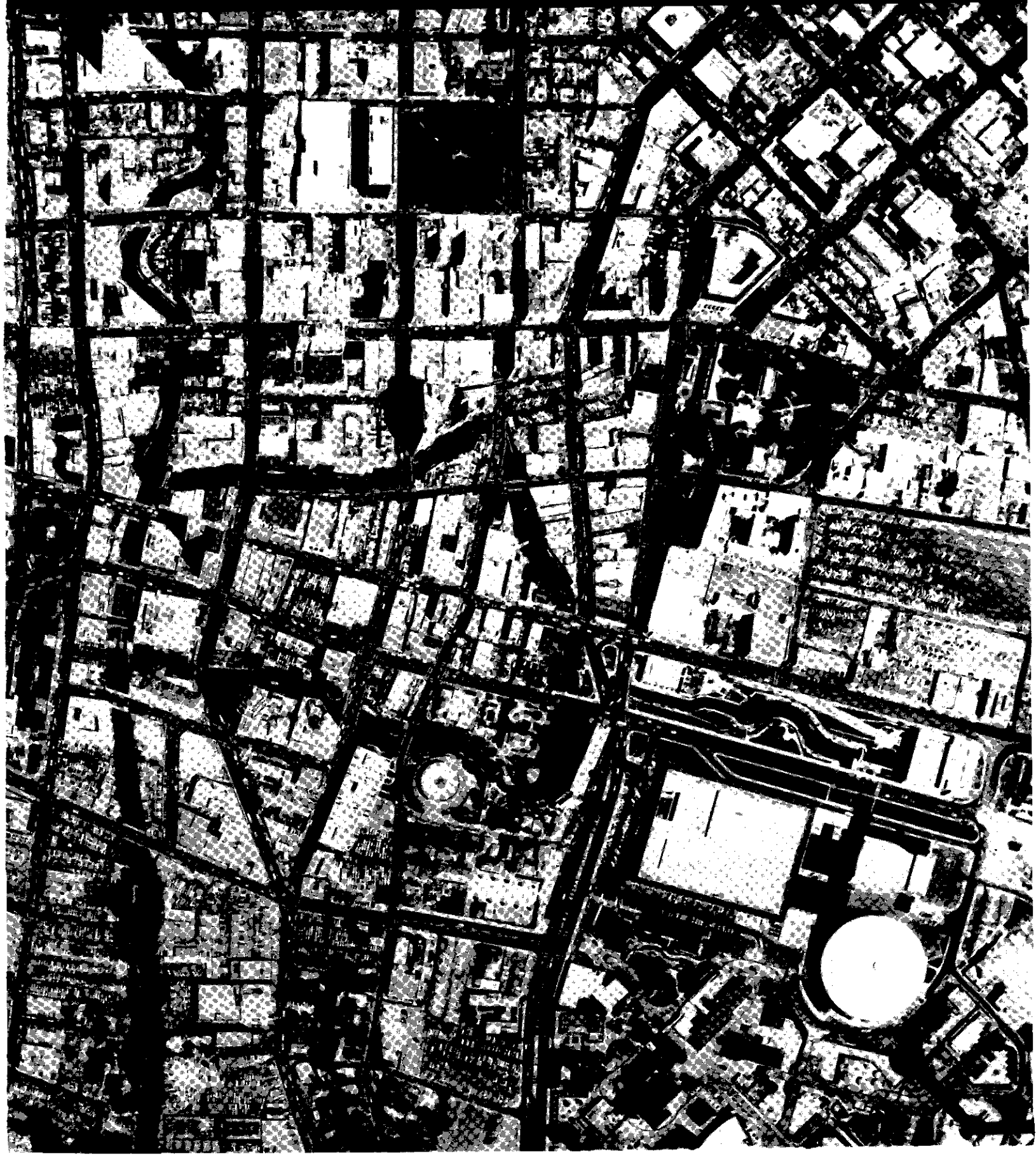
The agencies and organizations were asked their opinion regarding the type of expansion of San Antonio River development they expected in the future. The responses revealed a great many plans, some of which were joint between several organizations and some which were not. Recommended is a linear park along the river northward to Brackenridge Park and south to Proband Street. Another recommendation is the development of a master plan for a highly-developed commercial complex in the area between St. Mary's Street

and Navarro Street. Special emphasis is expected in the King William area and the river segment from Lone Star Brewery to Bexar county line. One agency believes that the horseshoe bend area should be given priority over other stretches of the river. Another agency recommends the expansion of extensions to other attraction complexes.

There is consensus among the controlling organizations and agencies that the River Walk concept will continue to grow in San Antonio. As yet, plans are in flux regarding specifics of such changes in the other portions of the river area. Some plans include the following and others do not: housing, entertainment, shops, parks, locks or lifts for pleasure boat navigation and conservation of plant materials and historic sites.

AUTHORITY

The question was asked, "In your opinion, do you have enough authority to do what you want to do concerning the river and the River Walk area?" Every agency and organization reported that it now had all the authority it needed. Several indicated that they were unable to meet their objectives regarding development, not because of lack of plans or public support but because of inadequate budgets. Compared to the total urban impact of the River Walk, the present agency budgets have not kept pace with the needs.



7. CONCLUSIONS AND INFERENCES

This study documents the fact that the San Antonio River Walk is an unusual attraction and is succeeding very well in spite of the trend in most cities toward decay of the urban core. This is the major conclusion to be drawn from the analysis of the site, survey of visitors, survey of voters, and surveys of organizations, agencies, and property owners. In addition, several conclusions and inferences of interest to planners, businessmen and government officials of both San Antonio and other cities were reached following the completion of this study. The following discussion is based primarily upon logical deduction from the data obtained and also upon inferences believed by the researchers to be important.

SAN ANTONIO

1. The River Walk is Unique

Special historical circumstances and physical characteristics set the River Walk apart as a singular environment. Several times during its history, it could have become something quite different or even might have been eliminated for all time had it not been for strong local interest in protecting and enhancing it as a valuable place. It is special because, unlike most city parks, it contains a mix of

public parkland, attractions, and a variety of commercial establishments. It offers a strong downtown focus for a wide diversity of leisure activity and cultural enrichment, both day and night, for a wide range of users, both local and outside,

2. The River Walk is a Unified Whole

The horseshoe bend virtually forms a circle of interest far stronger than a linear setting. The recessed corridor below street level forces attention inward and isolates the River Walk from the city activity above. The protection of older trees and the intensive use of plant materials enhances a naturally beautiful setting. This is in direct contrast to the central business district, of which it is a part. The design of both landscape and structures has continued the informal yet orderly theme set by the old river and early Spanish influence. Although four environmental subunits were identified, the River Walk functions as a cohesive whole.

3. The River Walk Contains Diversity

The fragmentation of ownership, development and control has resulted in a high degree of diversity. The integrity of private ownership of riverfront property has been

retained at the same time that common goals have been supported voluntarily. This has resulted in a wide range of usage--solitary to masses, many levels of life-style, several ethnic groups, and diverse socio-economic status. Visitors participate in a variety of activities from lounging and relaxing to religion, education, entertainment and shopping--all in a beautiful setting.

4. A Delicate Balance Exists

In the opinion of the researchers, the two principal forces--park and commercial development--appear to be in a state of delicate equilibrium at the present time. The users (both outside visitors and local residents) now understand and show a preference for this balance. Actually, the mix is so tastefully handled that each force seems to complement the other rather than compete. Those seeking the restful beauty of natural landscape and water appreciate easy access to food, lodging, entertainment and shopping. The businesses are more rewarding because they are located in an attractive setting.

5. The River Walk is of Great Value

All visitors are fully conscious of the beauty and leisure quality of the River Walk. Testimony is very strong, both by voters as well as outside visitors, for the great social as well as economic value of the River Walk. It not only brings regular visitors from great distances but draws many local residents. Few civic invest-

ments anywhere could equal the popular support of the River Walk.

6. A Dynamic Future Lies Ahead

The overwhelming success of the River Walk, according to testimony from users, owners, and controlling agencies suggests that the present physical situation and management policies should be retained. However, any city is in constant dynamic flux and as much change is possible in San Antonio as elsewhere.

Internally, the vast majority of River Walk properties have not been reoriented to it in a functional land use sense. Changes in the uses of these lands, therefore, could markedly affect the character of the River Walk. If the park-like character is reduced in proportion, there is a strong chance that the entire area would lose its present quality of appeal.

Changes in surrounding land uses could greatly influence the future success of the River Walk. Increased development of attractions in the vicinity and linkages with the present development would undoubtedly strengthen the power of the total attraction. On the other hand, great increases in the volume of use of the River Walk could pose a threat to its quality. Even now, masses of users at special events force maintenance authorities to fence off planted areas to keep them from being destroyed. Increased residential development around the River Walk might be highly compatible. There is ample evidence in this country to support the hypothesis that city parks isolated

from residents readily become lifeless and abused.

River "improvements," both upstream and downstream from the River Walk, as well as possible channel extensions, are looked upon with favor but it is doubtful if they can replicate the impact of the River Walk as a single attraction. New and different focal points can be found and throughout the city landscaped river linkage would be desirable but these would be additions, not necessarily replicating or competing with the River Walk.

Even though the River Walk is highly successful in revitalizing the downtown core and is the object of great pride and use, the study revealed the opportunity for making some improvements. Improved linkage with ancillary attractions, clearer identification of landings and schedules of sight-seeing barges, better water quality, more restroom facilities, more consistent lighting at some sites, and a better understanding of the security and safety level already attained are issues worthy of further effort.

OTHER CITIES

7. The River Walk Has an Atypical Physical Setting

Few cities have similar waterfront circumstances. Most cities face onto much wider rivers, reservoirs or lakes. Furthermore, many urban waterfronts are low-sloping rather than enclosed by high banks. Therefore, the intimacy and overall unity of the River Walk is difficult to replicate

except where similar circumstances are found or can be developed. Key to the success of the River Walk is the stabilization of the water level, directly within a natural flood plain. Contrary to many urban rivers, the San Antonio is not used for shipping or harbor activities.

8. A Refocus Upon Downtown Can Be Accomplished

Contrary to decentralizing trends nationally, the River Walk has proven that urban water development can provide a base for major urban revitalization. Inspection of business and cultural development surrounding the River Walk clearly shows a general halt to urban core blight and renewal of interest in downtown. Several proposals have been made recently for major investment in housing and business complexes.

9. A Small Amount of Water Can Be Powerful

The River Walk demonstrates that quality of development is more critical than quantity. Comparatively little water surface forms the core for all development and activity. In fact, its small size actually increases its utility because both sides of the river function, visually and physically.

10. Composite Management Can Succeed

The River Walk controlling agencies and organizations as well as the property owners demonstrate

that a diverse aggregation of decision-makers can collaborate and cooperate for mutual good. Instead of fostering a single managerial agency, they have retained their individual identities at the same time they have formed a cohesive operational unit.

11. A Business-Park Mix Can Be Functional

Contrary to most park or business development taken separately, the River Walk shows that the amalgam is a very worthwhile and workable approach. Most park philosophies are anti-commercial and most business enterprise sees little commercial value in parks. The complementarity of the two is perhaps the most dramatic accomplishment of the River Walk development.

12. Diversity is Successful

Few civic developments include more than one purpose--people drive to, park, and use the facility for one function only. The River Walk shows that a great diversity of leisure and cultural activities can take place in a single environment without conflict. In fact, this diversity accounts for much of its popularity. A beautiful landscape, historic sites, night clubs, library, college, theater, church, and many shops form a very viable mosaic.

13. Internal and Adjacent Land Uses Must be Compatible

If the River Walk had to contend

with massive industrial plants that created environmental problems--odor, noise, toxic waste, congestion--it would be in great difficulty. Although diverse functions do take place in downtown San Antonio, they are primarily of four human-use types: cultural, commercial, recreational and housing.

14. Both Tourists and Local Citizens Participate

Contrary to many urban developments that are built only for local citizens because they are supported by local tax moneys, the River Walk successfully serves both tourists and residents. It is a civic improvement of great pride, intimately belonging to the citizens. At the same time, it draws thousands of outsiders who appear to mix well with local visitors. The voting residents show a remarkable willingness to provide tax support for such a civic asset.

15. Provides State Tourism Stimulus

There is little question that the River Walk now is one of the major attractions for tourism for the state of Texas. Other cities may not be utilizing similar assets as destination possibilities for traveler interest. While much national travel is oriented to extensive rural and remote areas, city attractions such as the River Walk have equal appeal for many.

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