THE NEXT EXPLORATION: SAVANNAH'S RIVER REGION

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Special thanks to my family, friends, and colleagues

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Abstract

Urban landscapes continue to be shaped by dynamic social, cultural, and economic influences. Water remains one component of the landscape that continues to reside in a flux space, influential for life and economic means, but also transportation and recreation, contained and conflicted, but also blurry and free.

Savannah, Georgia is a prime example of a city influenced heavily by its waterways. Its strategic location at the intersections of the Savannah River, Intracoastal Waterway, and Atlantic Ocean have made it a key trading town with expanding demands for port infrastructure. These port spaces are new investments to the region, yet often isolated from the city, politically hostile, and continue to become privatized, excluding any possible social or cultural interactions with the public. The Port of Savannah and its future port, Jasper Ocean Terminal, will continue to shape landscapes and population growth in this river basin.

The situation in Savannah is similar to other port regions around the world. Economies influence the building and change to the landscape surrounding the port for efficiency. Landscape architects in this subfield are often coming in afterwards to help meet environmental mitigation goals or complete master plans that are never fully implemented. Rather than designing the entire region as a new urban landscape, there is an underutilized ability to perceive relationships across water and land, and be influenced to make design moves based on an understanding and discovery of potential interdependencies between spaces outside the confines of a singular site.

Many landscape architects have written about the flows of distribution and invisible global markets that determine how waterways function, but very few have employed historic and contemporary analysis to how a landscape design approach finding latent properties across existing watery landscapes can be socially, culturally, and politically influential from the local, rather than the global. While port authorities in Savannah and Charleston have tried to cooperate and compete for economic means, this research involves a landscape approach that involves design with value to systems thinking, cultural ecologies, and public realm that can foster new experiences and spatial relationships within the waterways that have not been explored before in Savannah, adding value to this region in ways other than strictly economic.

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01.
INTRODUCTION

SITUATING THE STUDY

The study of Savannah's waterways has allowed for new opportunities and exposure that can be designed and documented by landscape architects. Landscape architects have an inherent interest in designing and planning for social, political, environmental, and cultural interactions within public landscapes.

Within this regional landscape, historic and contemporary case studies were influential in framing an arguement about the privatizing nature of Savannah's waterways, and the need to visualize a landscape with diverse interests and acessibility.

Design tests have been influenced by the analysis and knowledge gained about the region and its spatial relationships, as well as influence from people and projects across built environment professions who strive for systems thinking, cultural ecologies, and public realm as integral pieces of desiging and expanding conditions in the landscape that allow for integral benefits and experiences across regions.

This exploration began by diagramming the political and economic histories of Savannah's waterways to stimulate curiosity about the different types of existing man-made and natural water systems in this region. The project focuses on the potential of design to re-organize and influence new kinds of diverse recreation and economic possiblities of engaging these waterways in a region where water is overwelmingly dictated by logistics and private ownership. Each of the waterways in Savannah are tested by design in ways that relate to systems thinking, cultural ecologies, and public realm. Each of these typologies influenced the location, form, and strategies for the waterways.

Figure 1

Evolution of Agricultural Economies within the Savannah River Landscape

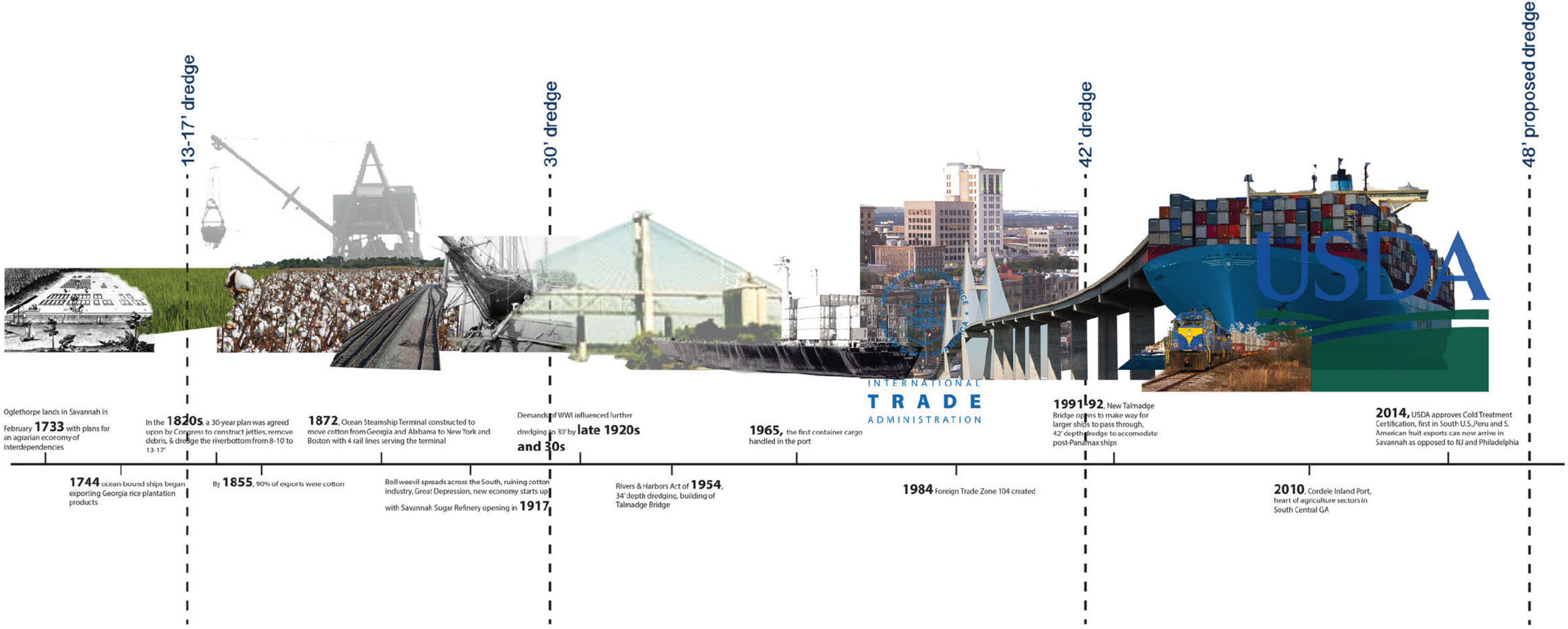


Figure 2

INFLUENTIAL WATERWAYS

Savannah's unique river history and urban design have made it an excellent case study for exploring new ideas about the future of cities that rely heavily on large-scale logistics and waterways. As Savannah's demands for port infrastructure continue to expand, less emphasis has been made to incorporate the logistical landscapes into the existing city fabric so uniquely represented through James Oglethorpe's plan for the public good. Many landscape architects have written about the flows of distribution and invisible global markets that determine how landscapes look, but very few have employed historic and contemporary analysis to how a landscape design approach can enhance and create new values across water and land that are social, cultural, and politically influential. While port authorities in Savannah and Charleston have tried to cooperate and compete for economic means, a landscape approach that involves systems thinking, cultural ecologies, and public realm can foster new relationships within the waterways that have not been explored before in Savannah, adding value to this region in ways other than strictly economic.

The logistical waterways are strategically planned for moving cargo, with very little room for error and diversity in the landscape. Port industries have attempted to parcel the water, creating new jurisdictional claims that complicate the notions of private and public on a natural resource. Successful cities have always thrived on public space, allowing the potential for multiple encounters and possibilities outside of buildings and in the waters. A landscape approach to systems thinking, cultural ecology, and public realm is employed as a design criterion that challenges Savannah's waterways to not only be more accessible, but open for exploration, mobility, and consequence.

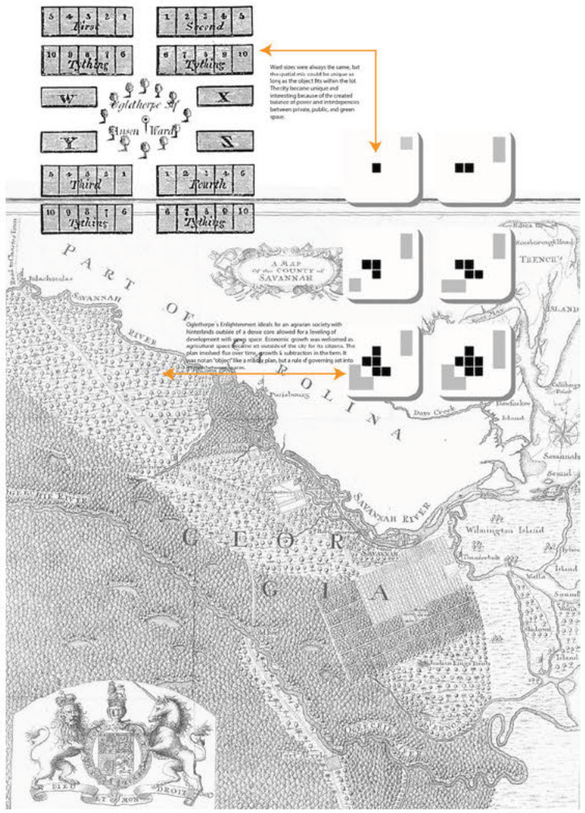


Figure 3

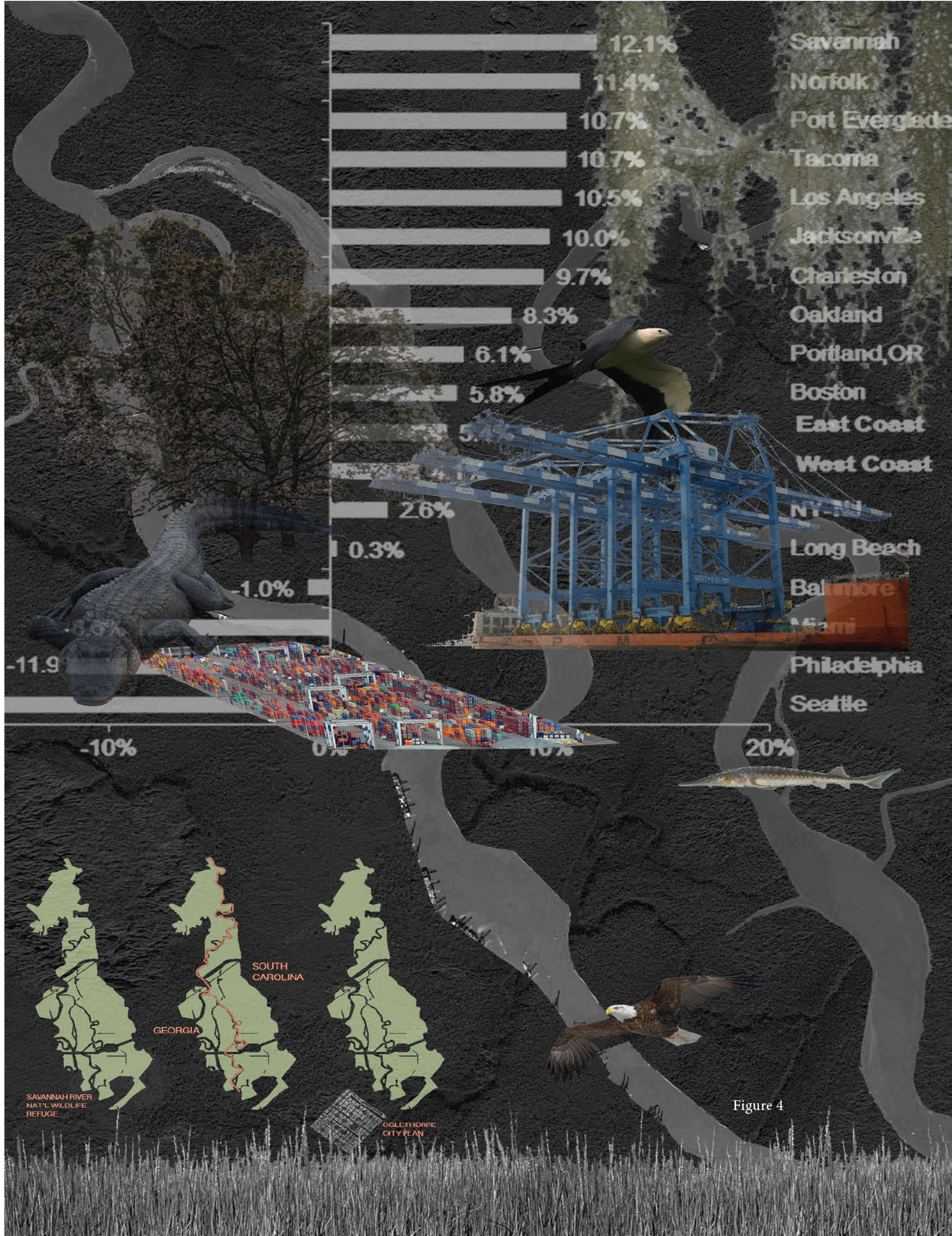
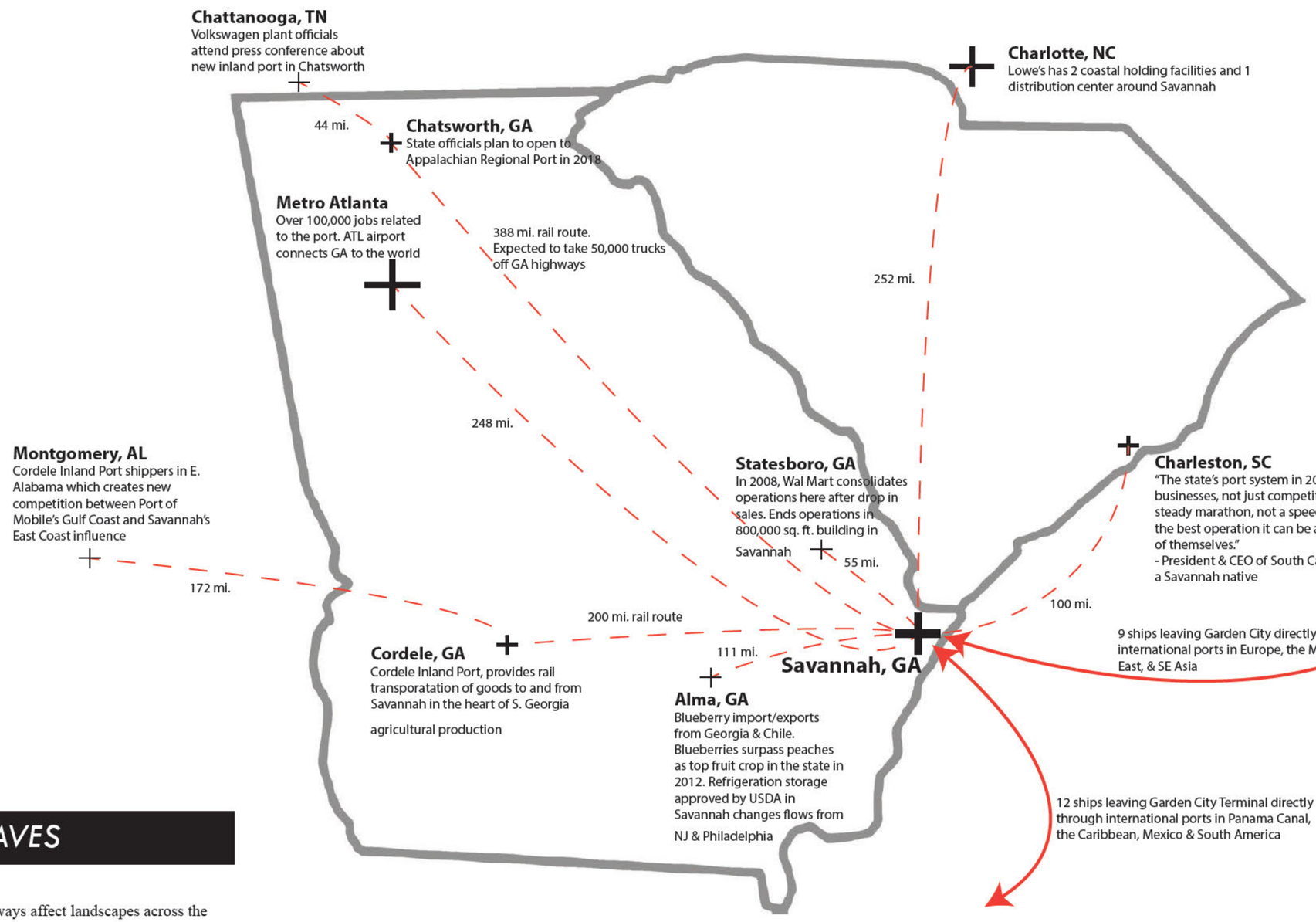


Figure 4

Key Regional Hubs of Distribution



REGIONAL WAVES

PORT OF SAVANNAH

Goods transported from the waterways affect landscapes across the Southeast. These distribution patterns related to rails and highways are quickly assembled and planned for stricly economic gains related to port activity.

Figure 5

PANAMA CANAL EXPANSION

PANAMA CITY, PANAMA

The Panama Canal is a global influence in the rise of large corporations and massive infrastructure projects in the U.S. and around the world. Port cities are competing for expectations of growth. These expansions are often master plannned and designed for efficiency, leaving little opportunties for environmental sensitvity and investment in existing city fabric.

Figure 6

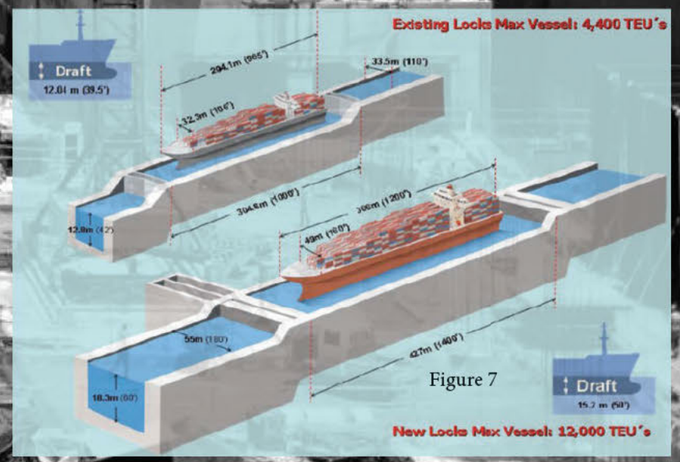


Figure 7

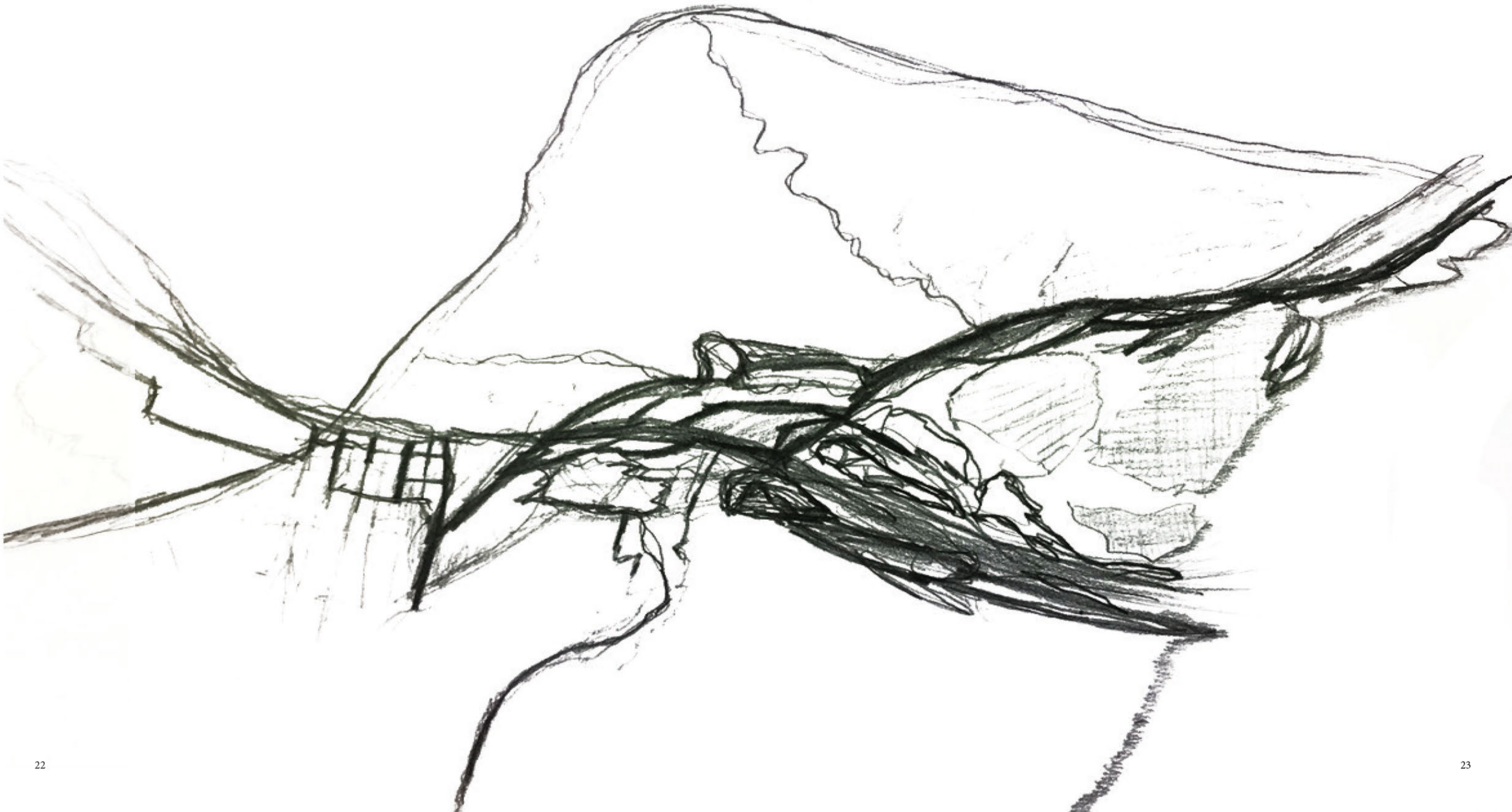
GLOBAL RIPPLES

PANAMA CITY, PANAMA

These large-scale infrastructural projects are necessary for supporting industry. Landscape architects might not be designing the port, but rather reaching in and uncovering the potentials of the latent waterways that can be designed to influence this region from the local, rather than the global.

Figure 8

How can landscape architects reframe the logistical and privatized character of Savannah's waterways through a design approach valuing systems thinking, cultural ecologies, and public realm?



02.

GAPS IN DESIGN THINKING

Figure 9

The situation in Savannah is similar in other port regions around the world. Economies influence the building and change to the landscape surrounding the port for efficiency. Landscape architects in this subfield are often coming in afterwards to help meet environmental mitigation goals or complete master plans that are never fully implemented. Rather than designing the entire region as a new urban landscape, their is an underutilized ability to perceive relationships across the land, and be influenced to make design moves based on an understanding and discover of potential interdependencies between spaces outside the confines of a singular site.

Keller Easterling writes about the skill of detecting opportunities in a regional landscape as "an art and an object of design. Rather than being restricted to the more familiar singular object form or masterplan, leveraging relationships and interdependencies allows architects and urbanists to organize a stream of objects. The artistry involves not the representations of planning arrangements, but the population effects in a larger reconstituted landscape" (Easterling "Interplay" 1). Her use of the word "stream" is particularily important in this project as a metaphor to understanding the regional waterways because these design tests have attempted to prove and showcase how landscape architects are much more likely to influence and support multiple stakeholders and organizations when thinking about planning of "streams" and movement.

Benton MacKaye, a forester and often forgotten but relevant theorist to the profession, thought about planning the landscape of "streams" and movement in what he coined liquid planning ("Plan the Planet" 1).. The inventor of the Appalachian Trail, he believed that latent properties in the landscape could be visualized and re-imagined by the work of landscape architects and urbanists.

MacKaye's work remains influential today in thinking about regional landscapes and the uneven development between industrial expansion and natural resources. MacKaye was writing his most well-known book, *The New Exploration*, during the Industrial Revolution. At that time, he believed that the country was in an unsustainable balance between nature and metropolis, wilderness and civilization (MacKaye:1962 27). MacKaye believed planning was about visualing the potentials of existing landscapes to function in new ways, and that "the final thing planned is not mere area or land, but movement or activity" (18). This approach to landscape should be utilized more often in thinking about regional landscapes as interrelated across sites and constantly adjusting.

Figure 10

MacKaye's unique approach to working and seeing the landscape as something undertaken as "the planning of movement or activity", has been incredibly influential in the opportunisitic possiblities of public recreation and new economic markets that are possible within Savannah's existing waterways to function at a more balanced and sustainable functionality.

Shanti Levy is one contemporary scholar in the profession promoting the sustainable and beneficial interpretations of MacKaye's work in current landscape practice. Levy writes about how MacKaye's approach to geotechnics gave him an understanding of scientfic charting and how to make both practical and artful design interventions with the landscape. She champions MacKaye's interpretations of urban and regional design as finding latent systems in the ground or land, and visualizing the potential designs to be "tactical in that it focuses on the most minimal intervention to spur the most fundamental re-ordering" (Levy 1). These catalytic desires from landscape architectural practice are not as promenent as they could be, and they will continue to be influential in the complexities of dealing with regional stakeholders and budget constraints that often hold up inspiration for massive landscape projects that coexist within major infrastructural projects.

She recognizes MacKaye as a landscape theorist who predates landscape urbanism with a more cost-effective and practical

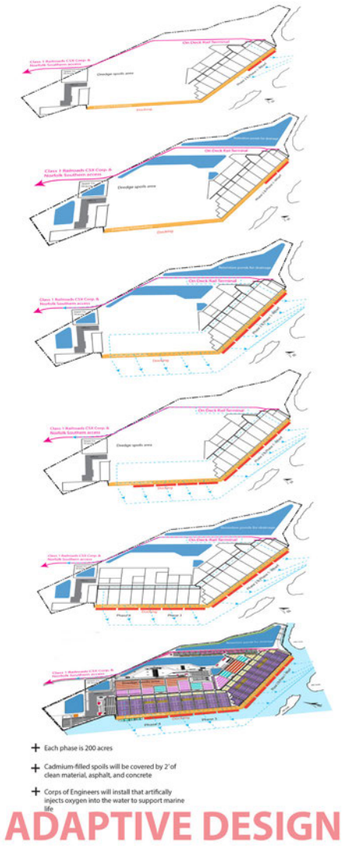


Figure 11

approach to landscape design. She acknowledges his attempts to design and plan for diversity between urban and rural landscapes that function together to create viable regions (Levy 1).

In specifically referencing to Panama Canal expansion and logistical landscapes, Brian Davis, Rob Holmes, and Brett Milligan offer an approach to regional landscape design that acknowledges the strength of this profession to harness a diverse set of values that are rarely found in logistical and economic formulas for city building.

In writing about the values inherent in landscape architectural practice in tackling regional projects, they write "While the logistician frames every situation as a technical problem to be solved, the landscape designer sees a cultural project, an opportunity to bring together competing value systems and forms of expertise. Landscape foregrounds the values that are contested in a given project, and it does not assume that economic gain and efficient distribution are the only goals that matter" (Davis 1). These contemporary educators support the goals of this project and the efforts to channel MacKaye's approach to the landscape that provides for diversity in experience and values, with the potential to surprise logistical frameworks, potentially benefitting the environment and the way that they build and expand.

MacKaye's proposal for the Appalachian Trail was a direct response to the overpowering influence of logistical and industrial expansion on the eastern seaboard of the United States. His proposal was a minimal intervention, finding the ridgetops of the Appalachian Mountains and using it as a footpath that would flip the transportation hierarchy ("Plan the Planet" 1). He proposed that the footpath would organize the pedestrian at the top of the transporation hierarchy, with rails and highways leading out from the footpath (MacKaye:1921 7). This project would not only spur new development from an existing latent landscape, it would offer new perspectives and visualization of people's relationship to the land and their surroundings. The industries are necessary, and might benefit from understanding this approach, a more integral and balanced attempt to offer recreation and economic possibilities with what the earth has to offer, rather than designing and inventing new developments that are not in relationship to the lands geological and cultural histories.

The Appalachian Trail idea provides historic influence of an often underutilized approach to seeing the regional landscape. This project remains relevant today in a similar time of port expansion, and the ways this project has tested design of the waterways as potentials for new recreational opportunities that influence new personal experiences with the waterways and potential for new economic growth in the region.

"the final thing planned is not mere area or land, but movement or activity" [1]

- Benton MacKaye

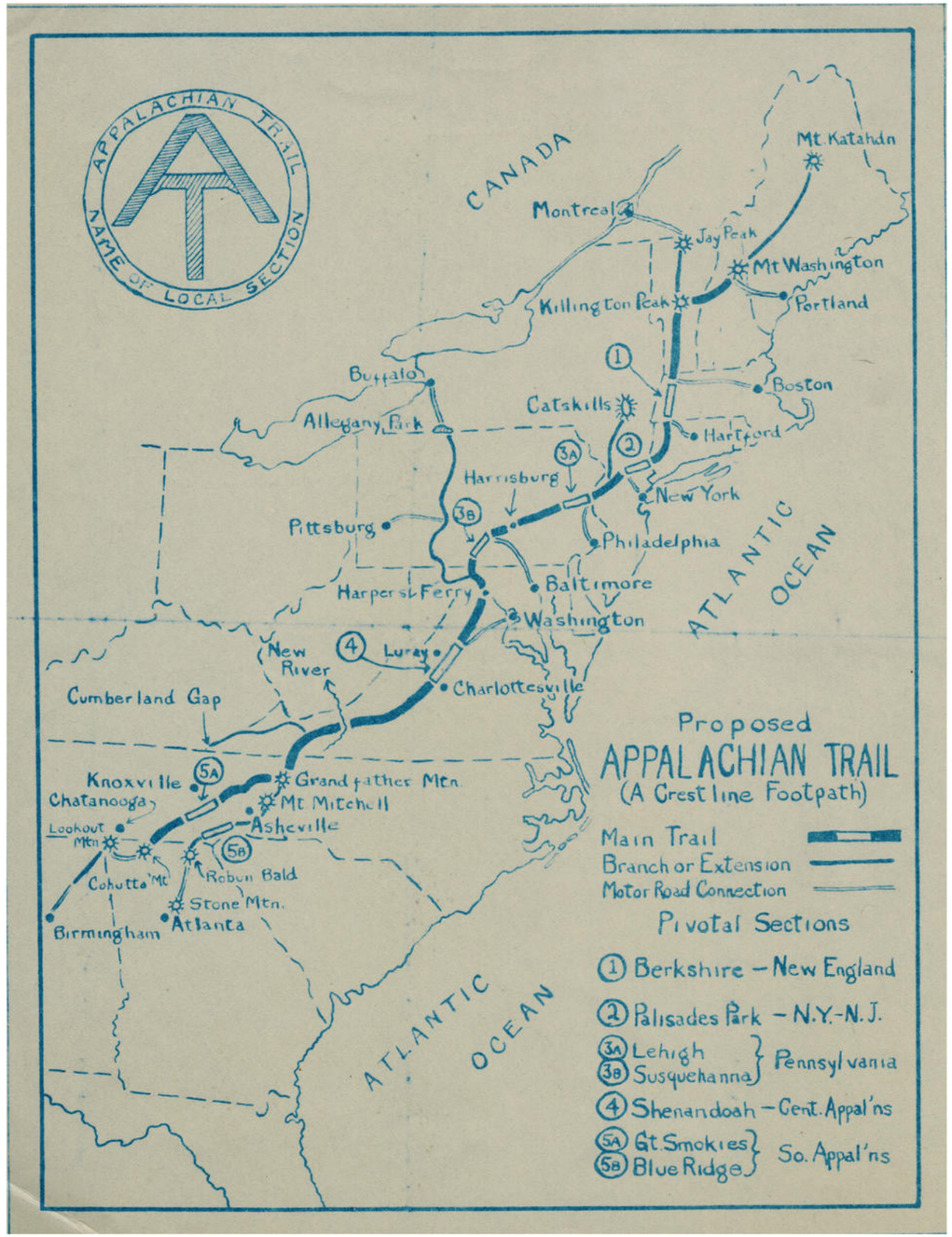


Figure 12

There are a few landscape architectural practioners who are employing design strategies and built projects that relate to waterways in the landscape approach thath MacKaye valued as site relationships and latent potentials.

Often contemporary examples use a similar strategy, but with latent infrastructure such as railroad beds, road right-of-ways and highway underpasses. Ryan Gravel's Atlanta Beltline project is an example of an exploration of abandoned rail lines in Atlanta that was able to be implemented as a regional park and development network, including enhanced perspectives throughout the city within existing and new neighorhoods and cultures.

While these projects relate to the approach's values of systems thinking, cultural ecologies, and public realm, there are fewer contemporary landscape architectural projects that use an existing land form or hydrology to organize a regional landscape or waterway.

Related specifically to waterways, many of the European port cities have integrated civic life with logistical processes. The Port of Hamburg is one of Europe's largest ports, and designers are actively involved in new recreational and development projects that are oriented towards the waterways and the cultures that define this region's influences.

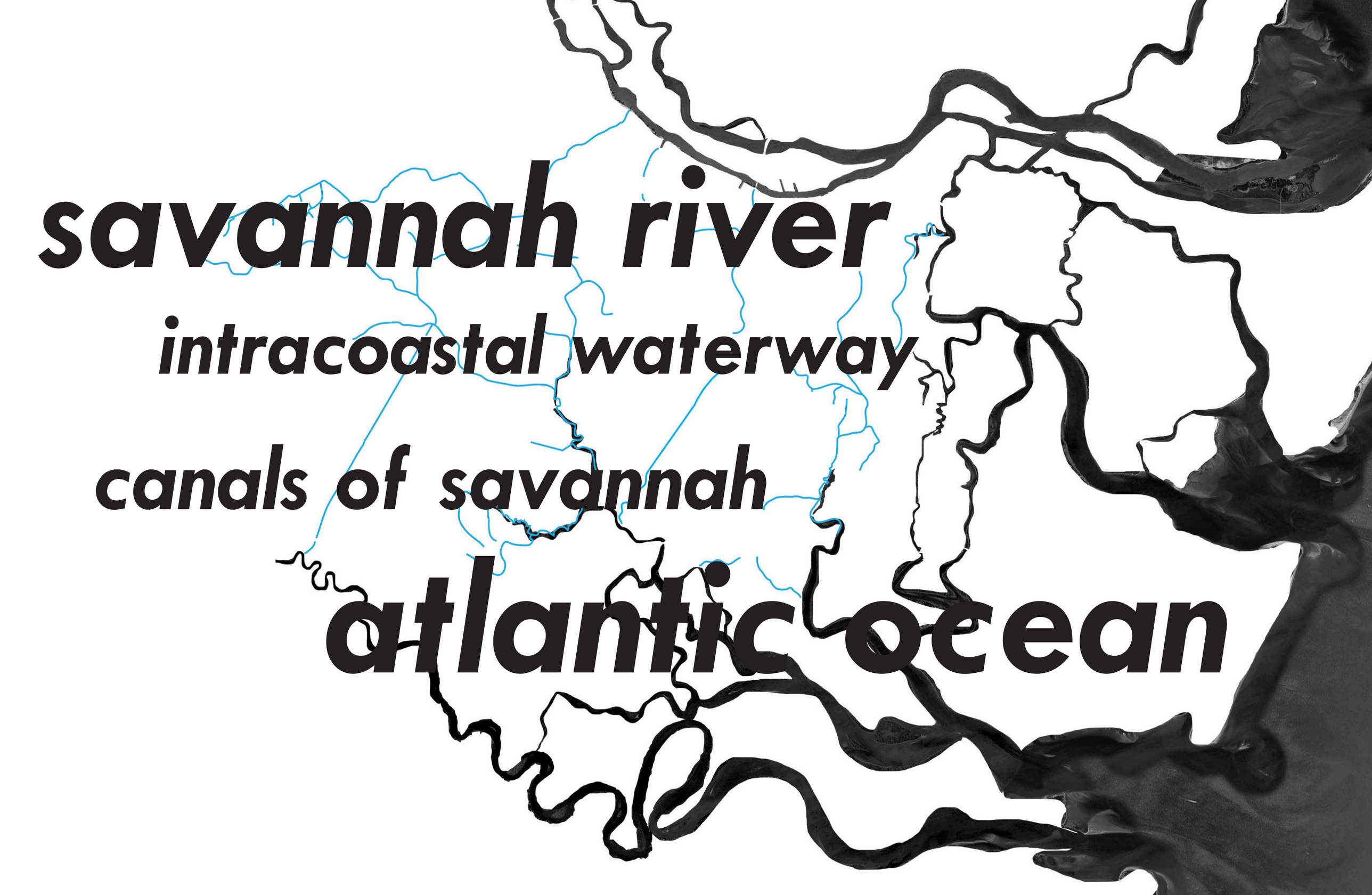
Mexican landscape architect Mario Schjetnan's work portrays an acute understanding of native cultures and histories that inform new designs along the waterways. Mexico City, once the ancient Mayan city of Tenochtitlan, was once referred to as "Venice of the New World" (Kagan 91). The city was built up on the lake bed with canals and gardens situating the organization of the urban form. Today, evidence of the waterways in Mexico City are largely buried, with only one remaining canal and garden system in the borough of Xochimilco.

Schjetnan's understanding of the canal system's history, and his passion for his city allowed for him to analyze and contribute material and planting palletes of the area into an ecological park that compliments the small market vendors and floating gardens along the endangered canals of Xochimilco. This project is an example of how a landscape architect's sensitivity to local geography, history, and culture reflects design moves that affect regionality, and can promote a lost landscape and enhance its visability, experience, and market cultures.

These traits of design and approaching regional landscapes as one in which exploration and understanding of context informs design moves and strategies. These case studies have been influential in looking and analyzing Savannah's waterways for new opportunities.

Figure 13

Figure 14


savannah river
intracoastal waterway
canals of savannah
atlantic ocean

03.

INTRACOASTAL WATERWAY

LINEAR LANDSCAPES

The first design explorations were tested on the Intracoastal Waterway. By looking into maps, and researching about the port expansions on the Savannah River, the Intracoastal Waterway was located at the intersection of the Savannah River and the site of the newest port, the Jasper Ocean Terminal. This portion of the Intracoastal Waterway forms a transient region along the eastern seaboard, providing access for small barges and recreational travel. Within this area between Hilton Head Island, South Carolina and Savannah, Georgia, many river cultures related to shrimping, kayaking, and marine research are mapped in relation to the numerous private boat and yacht clubs that also exist in this segment.

Design goals focused on understanding a systems thinking approach to the water and its transient nature, not only of people, but its multiple high and low tides each day. The designs relate to new kinds of transportation and public realm interaction that can also benefit a region of existing clubs and docks.

The existing private spaces are revised into a network with public access in many of these areas, some residential in character, others more commercial. Many of these sites are directly related to commercial hubs and access to cultural ecologies that include fishing docks and shrimping piers. These historic activites might more seemlessly interact with new kinds of access, and have more visibility within a water network that supports their uniqueness within activites along the landscape.

A mapping exercise showcases the spatial relationships between Savannah, Hilton Head, Jasper Ocean Terminal, and the Atlantic Ocean. New network sites have the potential to be designed for new transporation and public access potentials that diversify the users and uses of this transient and local waterway. Like the Appalachian Trail, the existing waterway and its histories are tested in ways to re-organize the uses and interpretations of how this water is experienced.

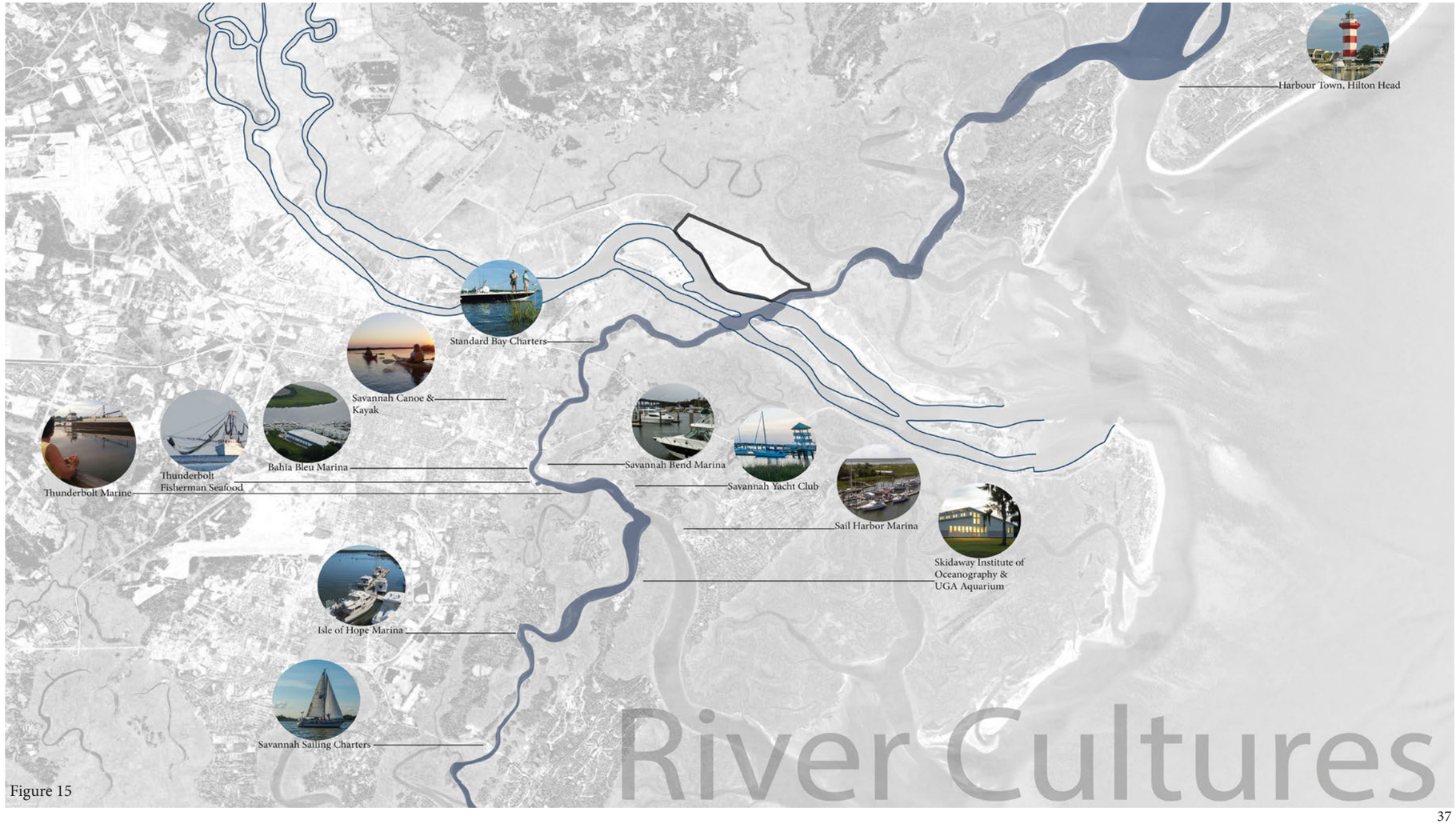
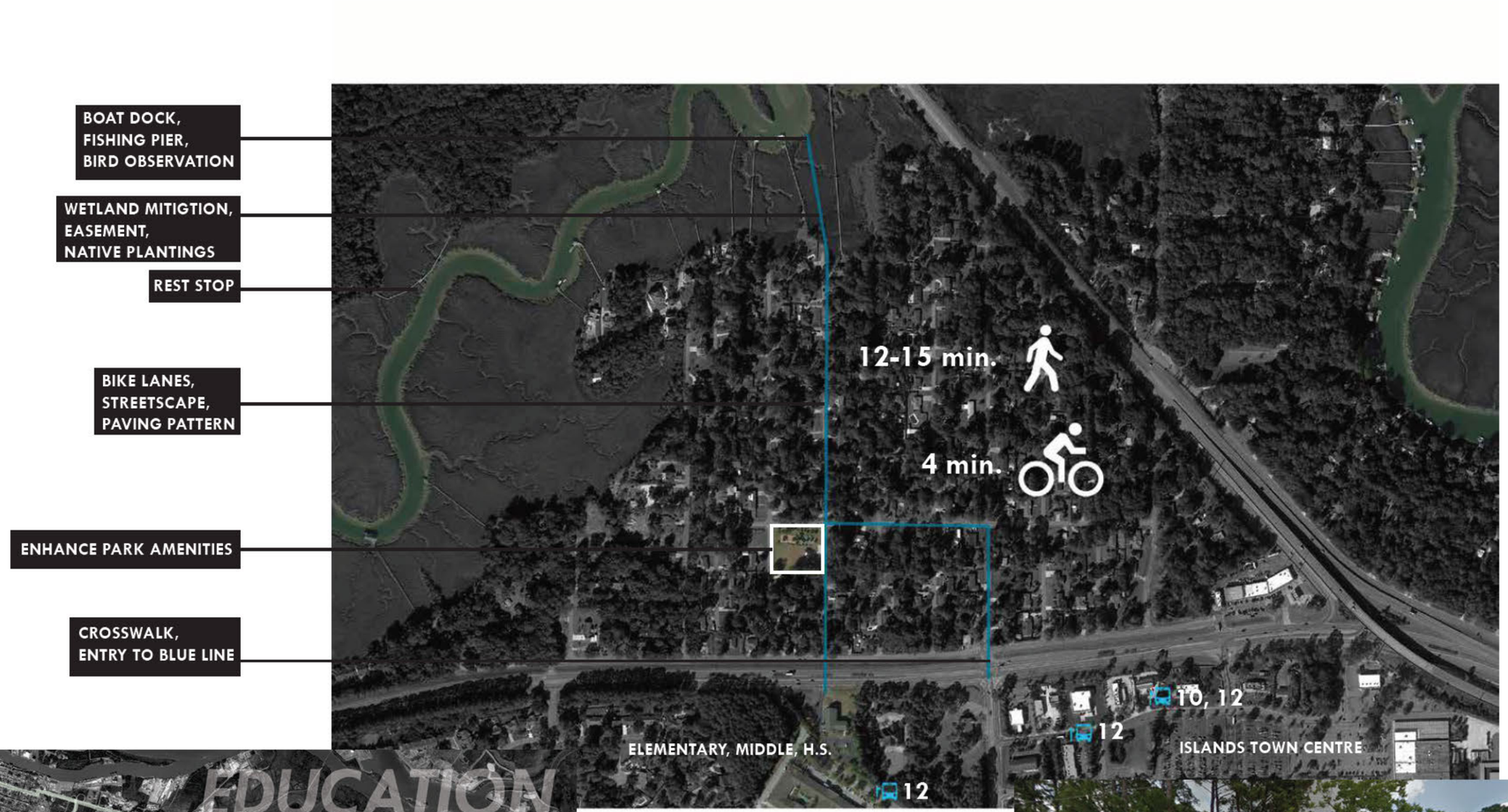


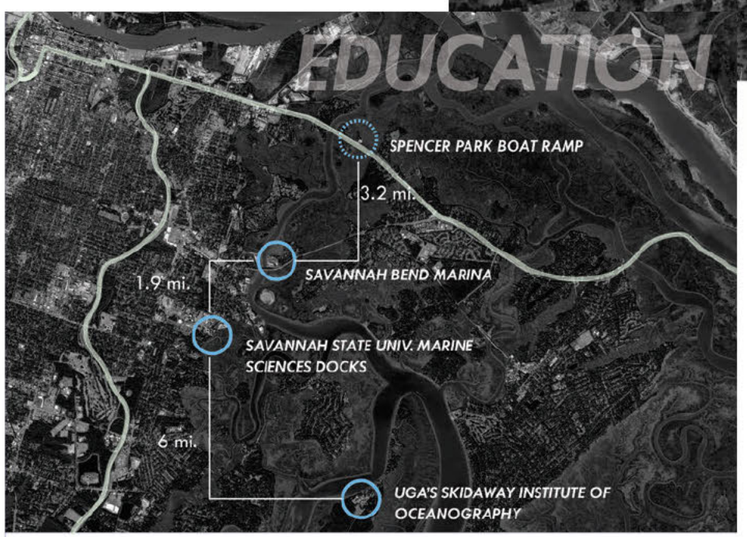
Figure 15

EDUCATION ROUTES DESIGN TEST

Educational opportunities and the ability for students to use a new kind of transportation along the Intracoastal Waterway was a source of inspiration in these design tests. By mapping out several public university and research centers along this section of the Intracoastal, new considerations between schools and commercial hubs were targeted.

These design tests related to access from land to water, and an understanding that many university students would be curious and many do not have a car. Students and other citizens might be interested in trying a new mode of transportation, similar to a bike sharing program, but along the waterways, with rental boats, canoes, and other kinds of aquatic crafts that transport and allow for new interactions and landscape design between land and water in this concentration of educational and commercial hubs along the Intracoastal Waterway.

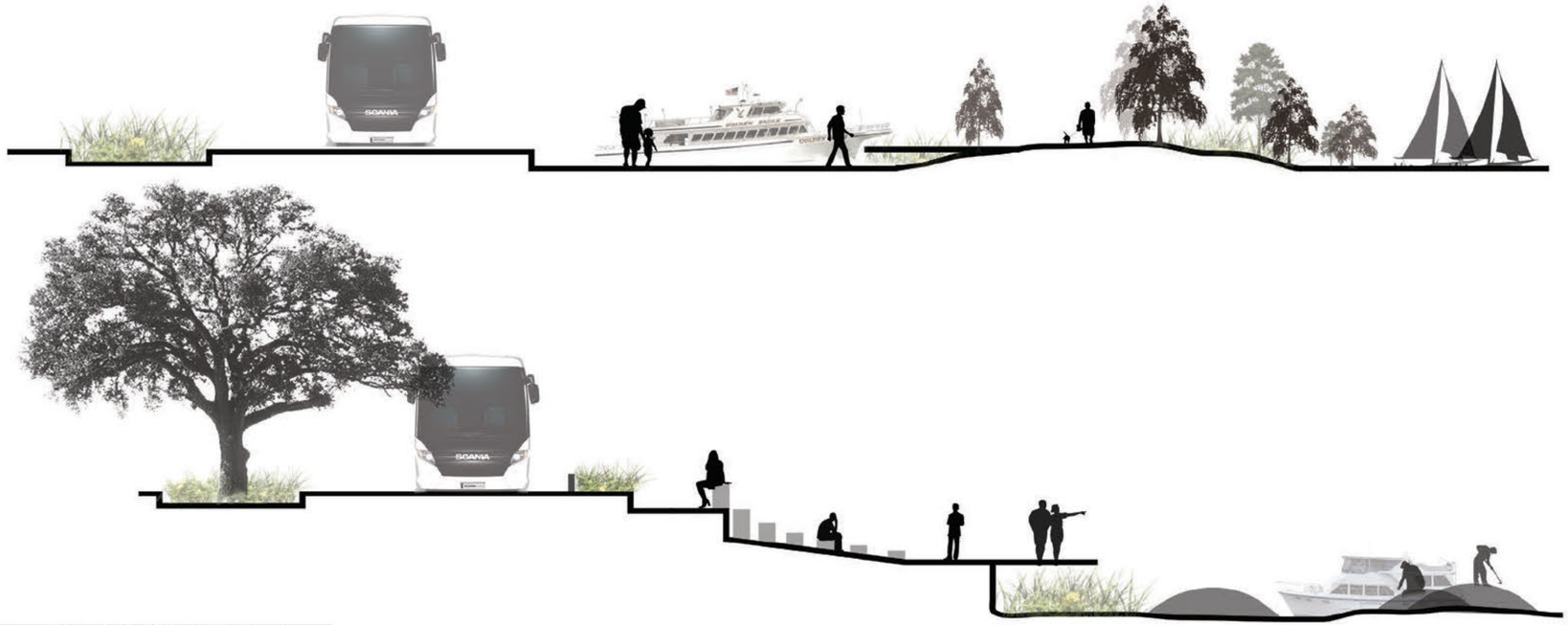


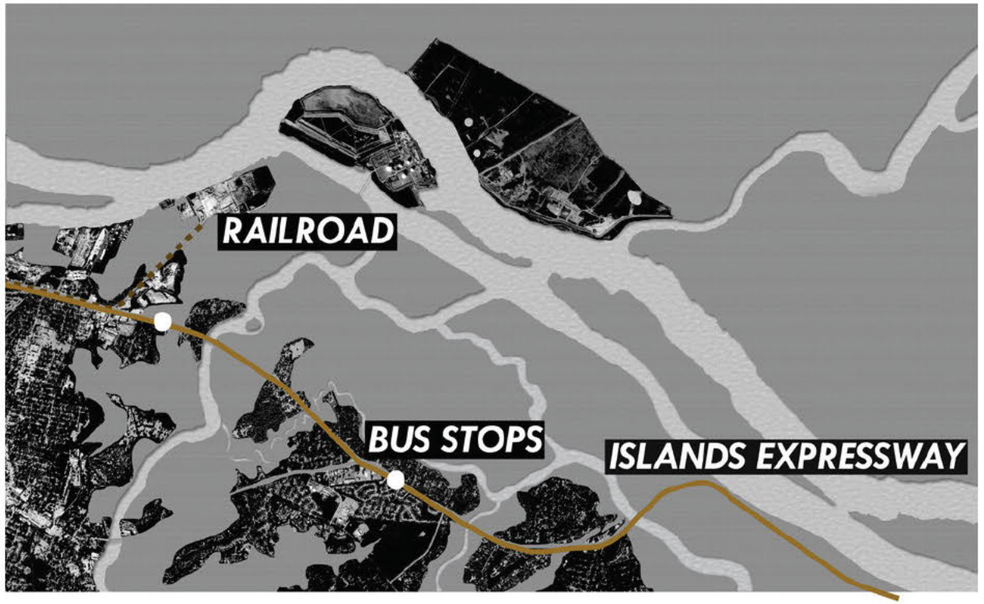


BLUE LINE DESIGN TEST

A proposed shift in vision, allowing public bus networks existing along Island Expressway to integrate with a new blue line, allowing recreational and transportation opportunities along the Intracoastal Waterway.

Sections show the integration between a new bus stop and the ability to transfer onto the proposed Blue Line. This Blue Line stop allows for public and private boats to be parked here, and the design allows for multiple walking paths and and permanent seating that allows for new visibility and interaction between the two systems.

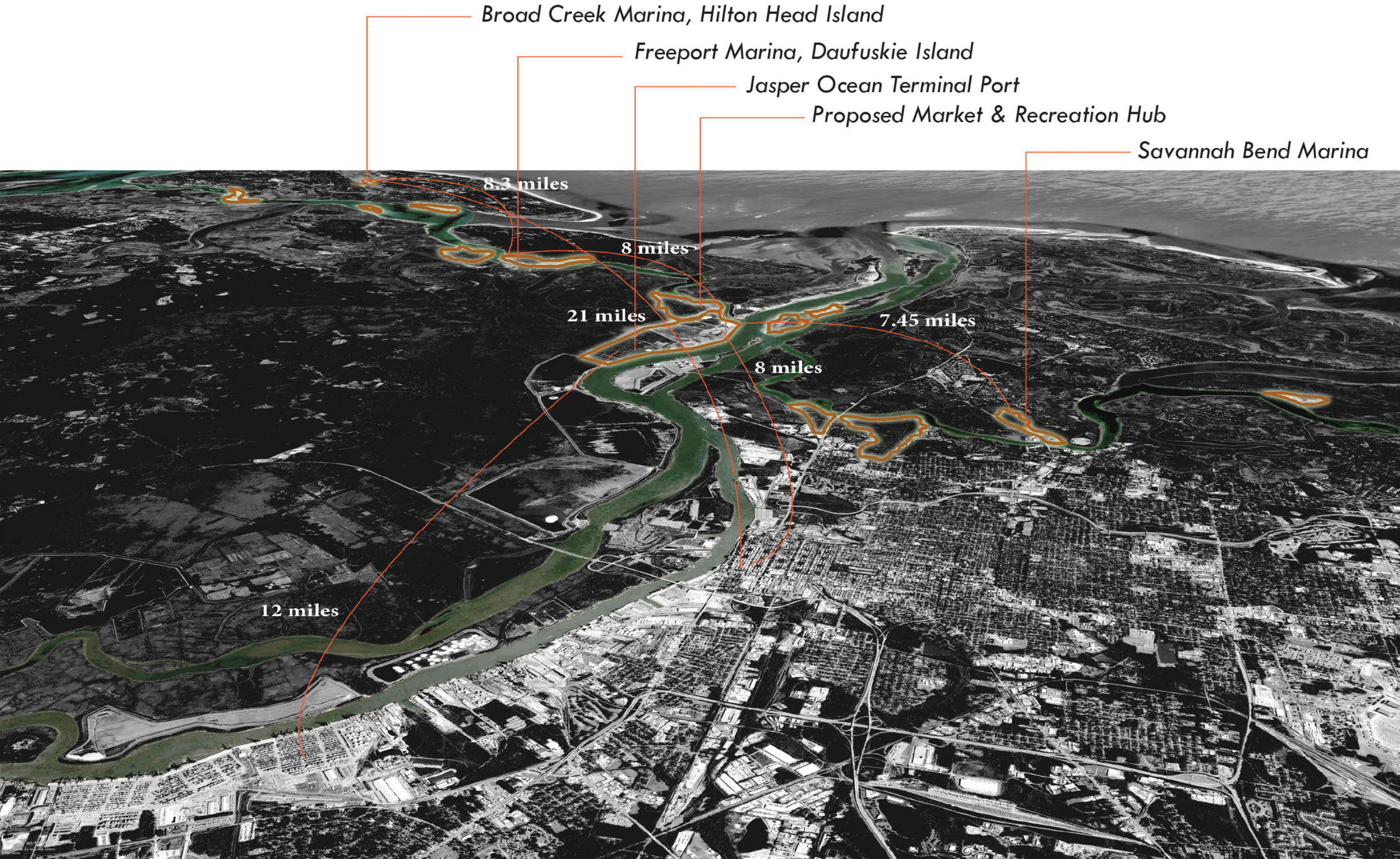


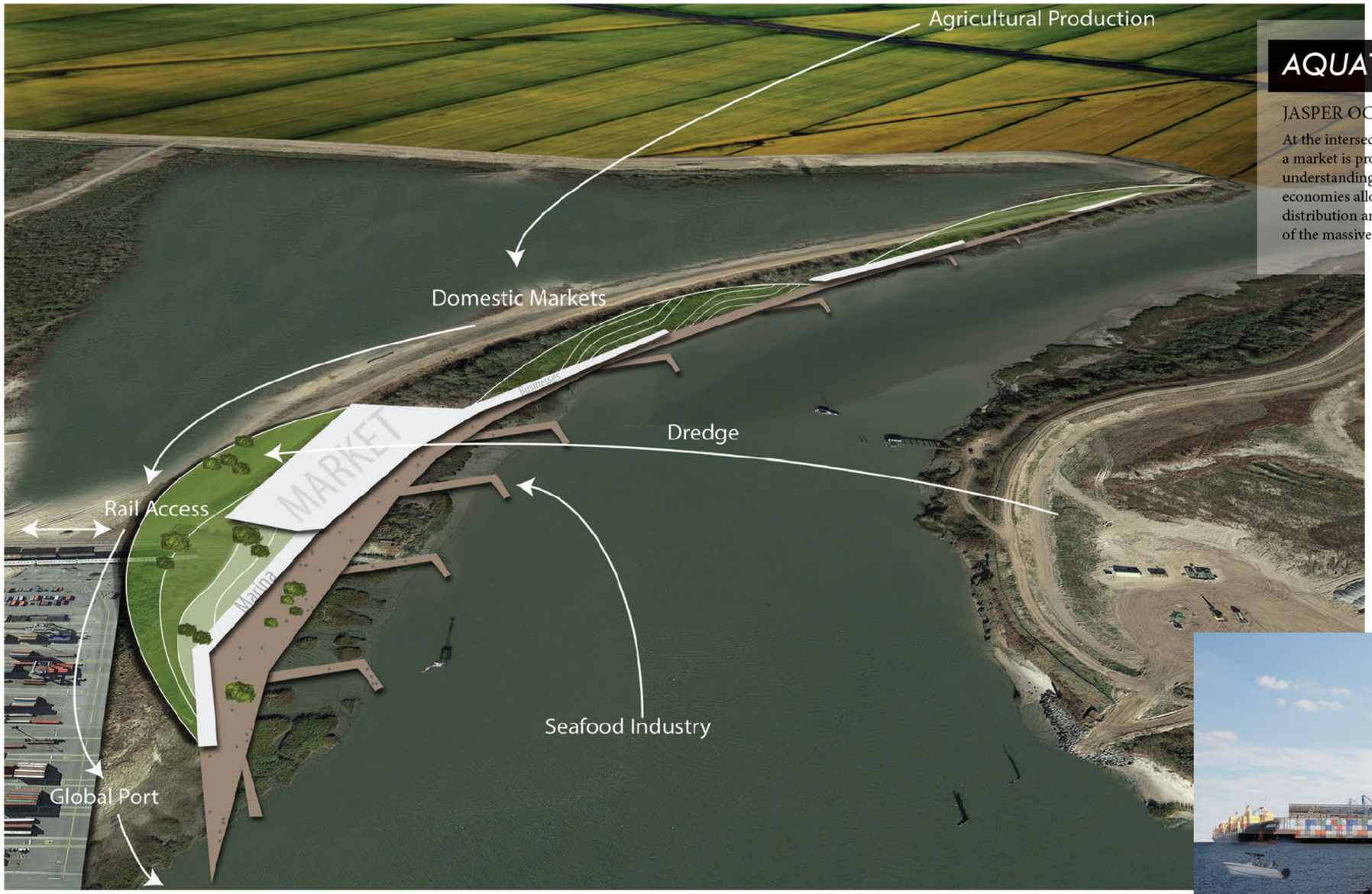


BLUE LINE SWITCH

ISLANDS EXPRESSWAY

This perspective shows the intergration of public bus systems along the route from downtown Savannah to Tybee Island. This proposed Blue Line allows for new forms of recreation and cultural activites like fishing to integrate with the public transportation system already engaged in this area.

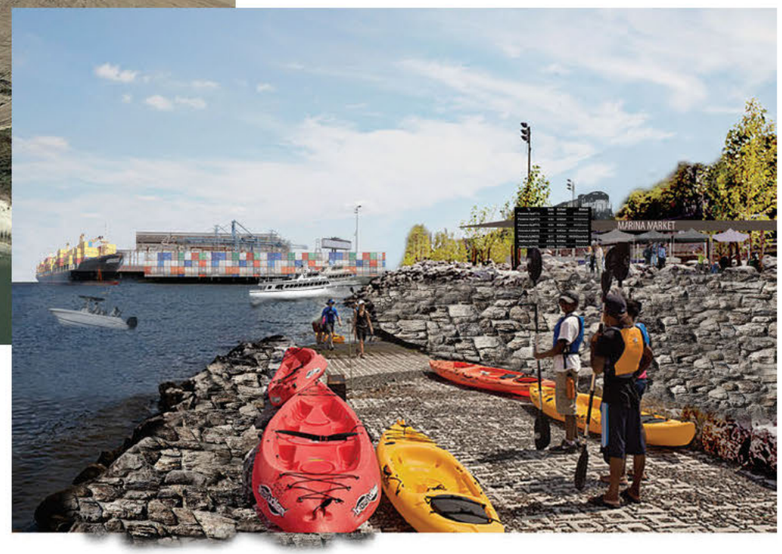

Broad Creek Marina, Hilton Head Island
Freeport Marina, Daufuskie Island
Jasper Ocean Terminal Port
Proposed Market & Recreation Hub
Savannah Bend Marina
8.3 miles
8 miles
21 miles
7.45 miles
8 miles
12 miles



AQUATIC MARKET HUBS

JASPER OCEAN TERMINAL PORT SITE

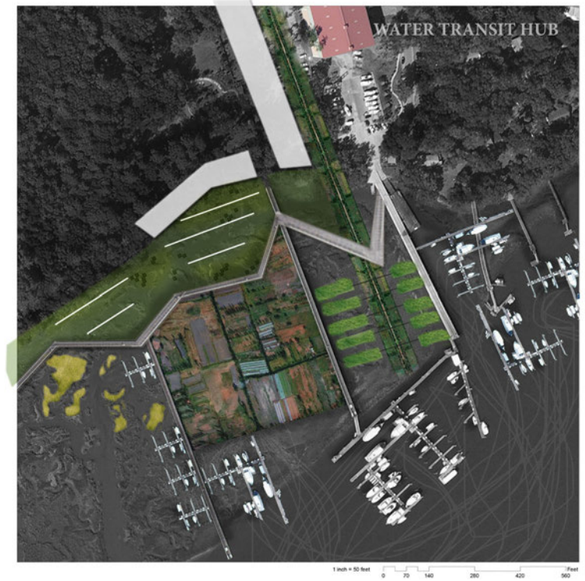
At the intersection of the Savannah River and Intracoastal Waterway, a market is proposed directly next to the new port site. An understanding of local environmental conditions and agricultural economies allows for a parallel market that can compliment port distribution and allow for new user experiences and understanding of the massive infrastructure of port developments.

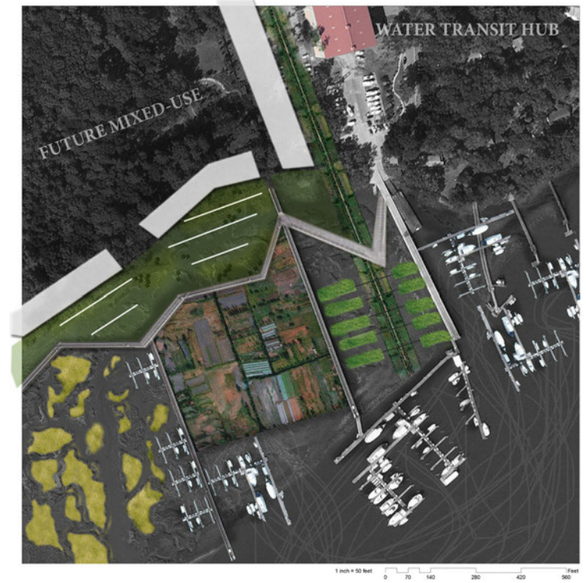


BROAD CREEK MARINA DESIGN TEST

Looking at a network of marinas in relation to logistical operations on the Intracoastal and Savannah River, hubs were chosen based on location to other sites and their potential to adjust function in a more public and time-based development.

Broad Creek Marina in Hilton Head is surrounded by residential development, with many people who already use the waterways as their main mode of transportation. This proposal envisions time-released development, matching an interdependency between ecological islands and the expansion of mixed use expansion that would occur if the new transit and recreation options were seen through. The ecological constructed islands would include native plantings that support wildlife, fishing, and absorb toxins from the increased traffic of boats and other vessels in this area. Aquatic gardens have the potential to become sources of recreation and food for the hub, and a new economic market could also emerge. The ability to re-orient this neighborhood and marina to the water allows for increased economic activity, more transportation and recreation options, and new abiltites for people within the region to travel and see Hilton Head for work and play.





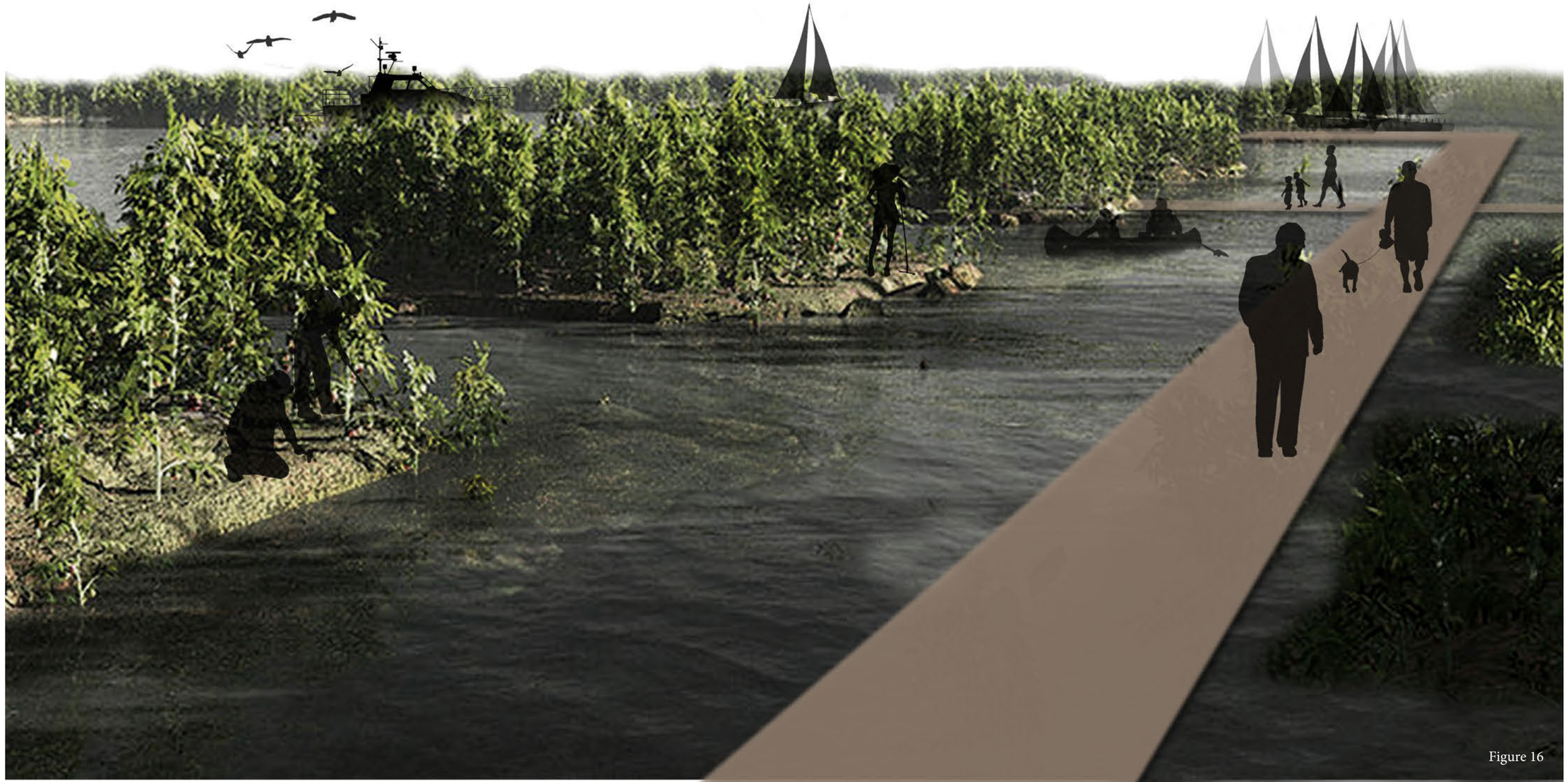
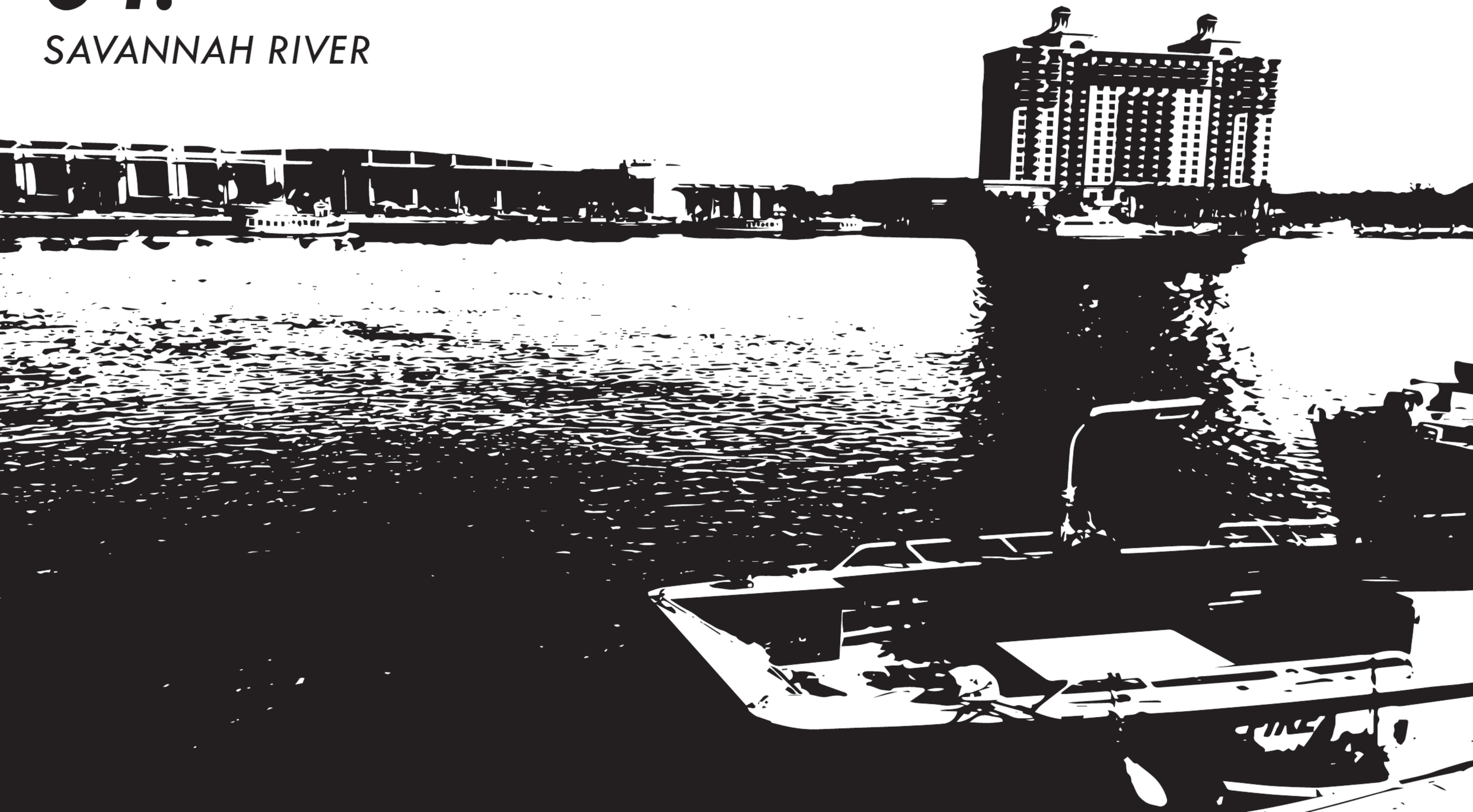


Figure 16

04.

SAVANNAH RIVER



THE MIGHTY RIVER

The Savannah River sites are much more logistical in nature, supporting industrial and port-related activites that affect the largest employers in the region.

These design tests also deal with an understanding of unique site contexts that inform where water access and the integration of public transportation could enhance the livability of the riverfront.

In addition to transportation and access, the Savannah River is located along some of the most prime real estate in downtown. Much of this riverfront is not integrated with city, found below the river bluffs. River sites are touristy, industrial, visible, but not truly accessible or integrated into the city form. The downtown locations of the Savannah River allow for the potential of landscape architecture to design in a way that introduces a large public into a marine culture that defines why this city was built. The expansion of a new port along the river also provided an opportuntity to test how an interplay between the old and new port, and how these relationships might be enhanced in relation to Savannah and the environmental alterations to the waterways so that bigger boats can function these waters.

These sites are tested in ways that practicality can be considered in the future of designs along the river. These design tests are also the most logistically considered sites within the study. The river is wide enough to increase its capacities for public life, cultural recreation, and network thinking as sustainable to the existing landscape.

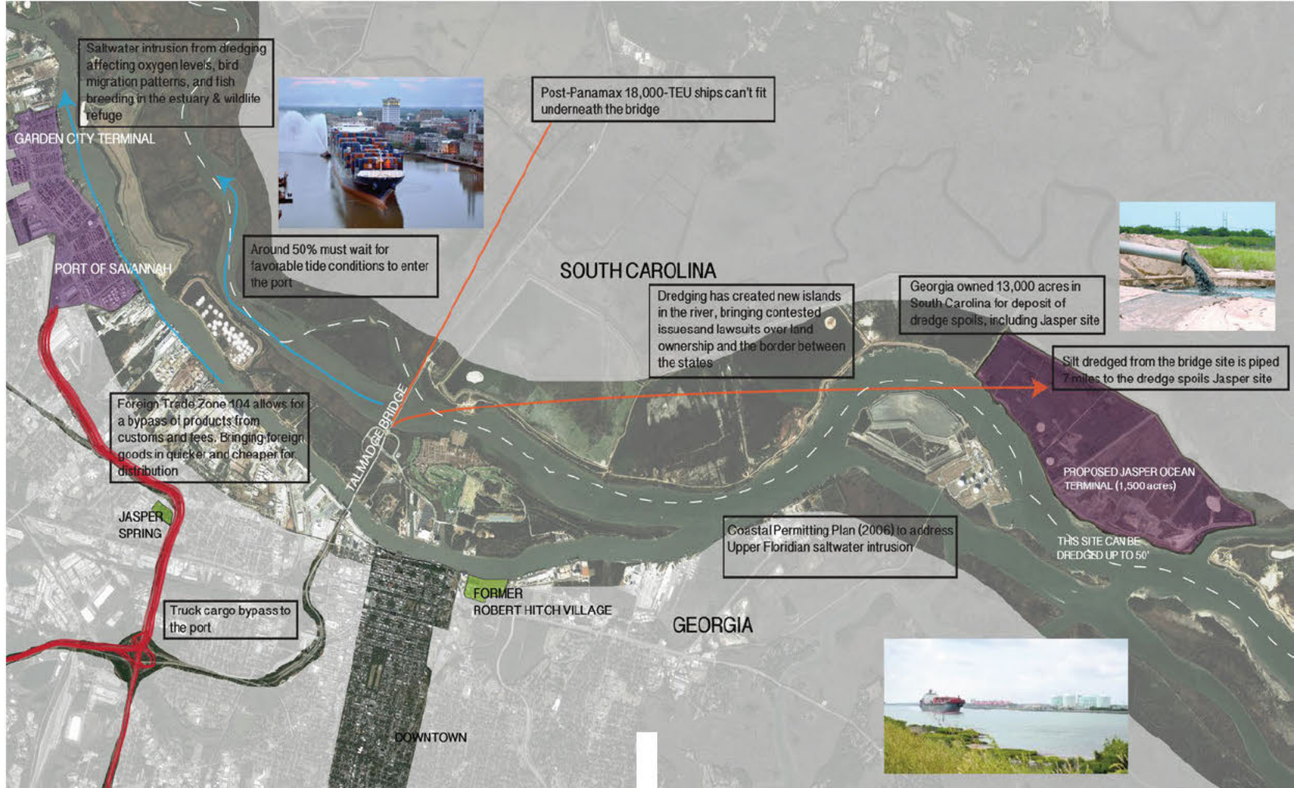


Figure 17

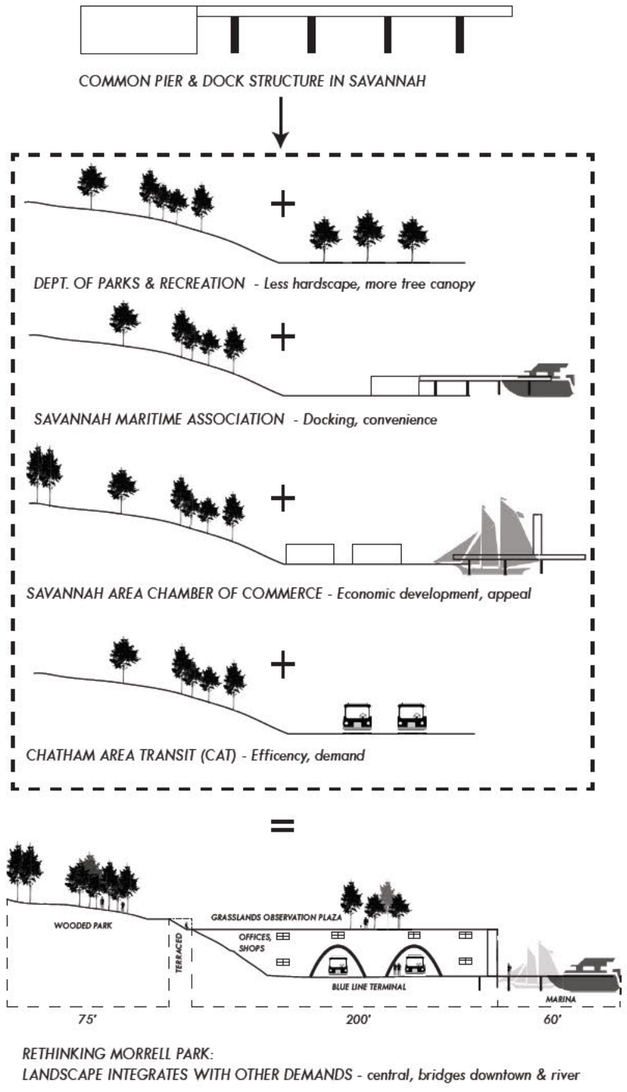
MORRELL PARK DESIGN TEST

Morrell Park is a small open space in downtown that is located directly next to the tourist shopping area of River Street. Through the analysis done of public transportation and Intracoastal Waterway's proposal for a Blue Line, it became apparent that its location at the end of River Street was strategic to the transportation, tourism, and logitical networks of the city.

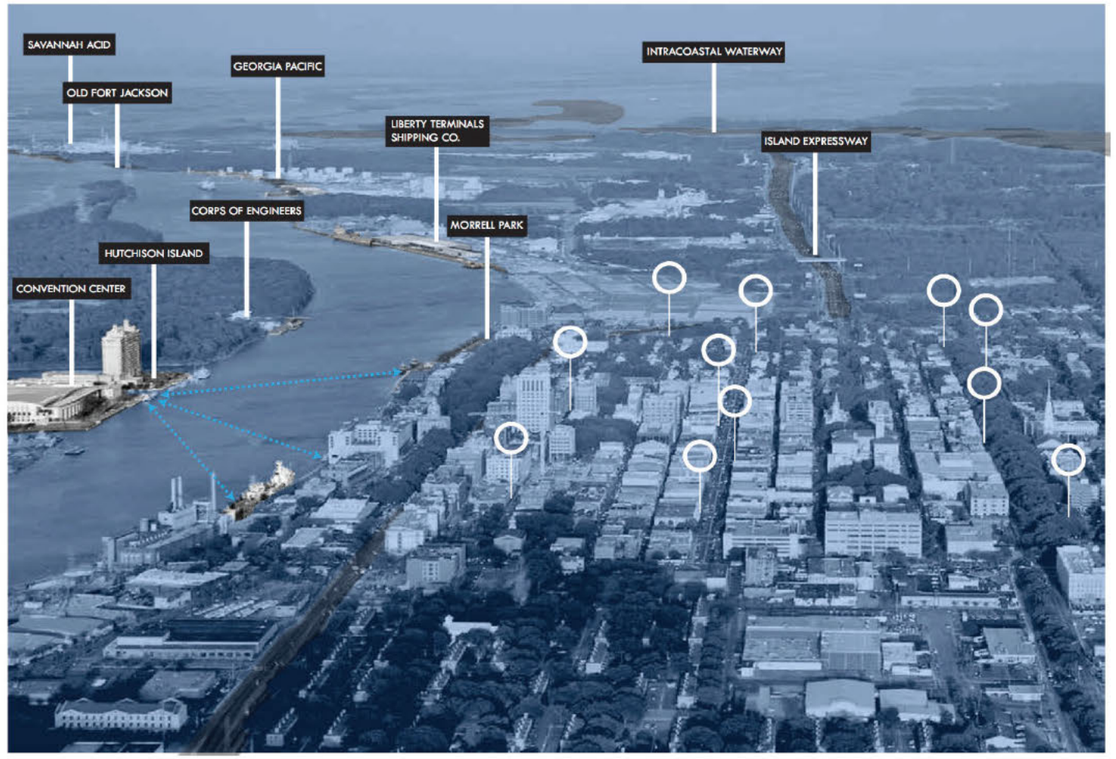
This design test proposes a reinterpretation of Morrell Park from a forgettable open space by the water to maximizing its potential as a public infrastrutuctural project that values systems thinking, cultural ecologies, and public realm.

Major stakeholders were used and considered about how they would interpret the uses of this space, and how the landscape could integrate development with new public views and interaction with watery landscapes.

As a major infrastructural project, it was important to recognize the connections across land in relation to this site, and the organizations that would be willing to support it based on these strategic relationships that helped support the value of a landscape approach for design reasoning.



RETHINKING MORRELL PARK:
LANDSCAPE INTEGRATES WITH OTHER DEMANDS - central, bridges downtown & river

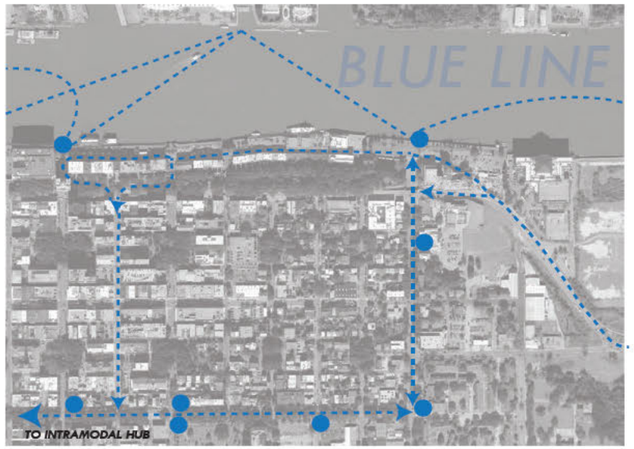


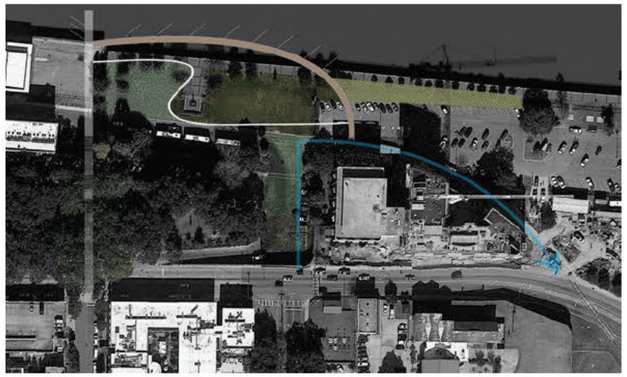
BLUE LINE DESIGN TEST

After attempting a major infrastructural re-ordering of the downtown waterfront, a more minimal intervention with similar understanding of systems and culture is applied to a design that forms a seemless transition between the historic downtown squares and the waterfront.

An armature was identified and is in a heavily walked through area and accessible by the bus network. The armature is designed in such a way that the experience of Savannah's history and ability to function are traversed within this path. The armature links the historic squares that Savannah is so famously known for through trees lined with spanish moss, down the river bluff, and out to the logistical and recreational water access.

The current route to River Street from downtown is not very well marked, and steep grade changes leave a visitor either walking down the restaurant truck road or descending down very steep steps. In section, the armature design is able to allow for multiple areas to sit and take in the perspectives. Accessed by the buses or walkers, this area could be transformed with the design allowing for spots along the way to take in the juxtaposition of views and perspectives between the historic squares and the expansive river.





05.

FIELD STUDIES

INSPIRATION AND INFLUENCE

After testing and discovering new potentials and restraints across the Savannah River and Intracoastal Waterway, a trip to Savannah, Georgia was in store. This exploration would ground some of the claims made about these sites, and the potential to understand other underutilized waterways, such as a recently discovered map of a canal system. Computer literacy is important to exploring the design of latent landscapes, but often overlooked in the profession is taking the time to draw, chart, and walk these regional landscapes to understand histories, cultures, and geographies that can help determine and show new visions.

Benton MacKaye became important for this trip in testing his theoretical appraoch to charting landscapes. The field studies used his techniques of perceiving regional landscapes as an "expedition-nining" to produce maps, pictures, and notes about the waterways and their underutilized characteristics.

The son of a famous actor and playwriight, MacKaye was influenced from a young age when his family moved to the countryside of Shirley, Massachusetts from New York City (Anderson 17). His "expedition-ning" in this small town was accompanied with hand-drawn maps where he wrote out stories and histories of the sites and their relationships.

This technique influenced his approach to planning regions throughout his life as the planning of activity, the idea that sites have agency and influence across the land (Anderson 1).

From film to literature, there are people in other fields using a MacKaye-style technique to reveal hidden potentials and stories that are exposed to visualize the cultural and ecological values of landscapes.

> *"I believe my father was a pioneer in seeing theatre (and all dramatic activity) as a sort of focusing lens- a telescope, whereby the public mind can look into perspective, and be enabled to vision, not alone the actuality of the past, but the potentiality of the future. Such, to my mind, is the aim of the visualiser- whether statesman, regional planner, or dramatist: to focus the people's vision"* [2]
>
> *– Benton MacKaye*

Figure 18

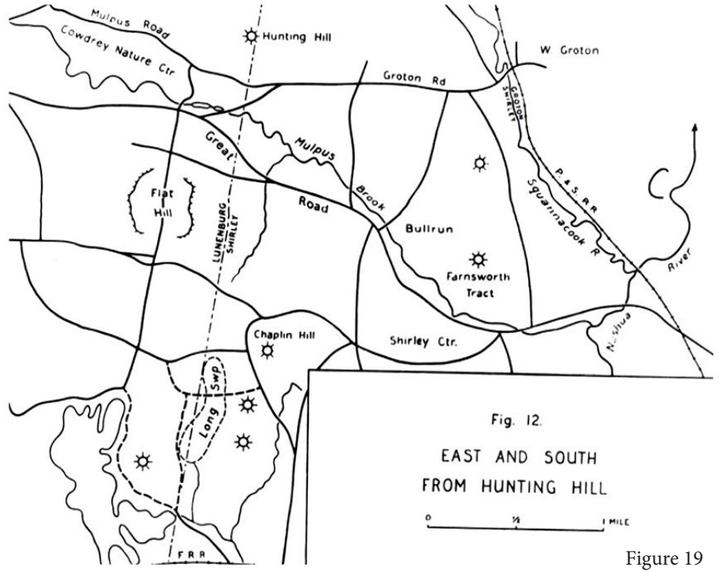


Figure 19

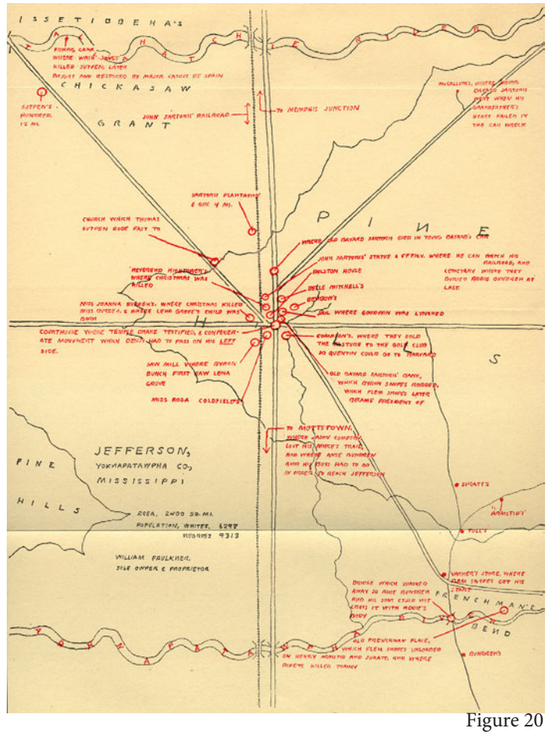


Figure 20

USED TO MOVE PEACHES, LUMBER

DIVERSE LOCAL PLANT COMMUNITIES

SCAD. DENSE

MANY LOCKS

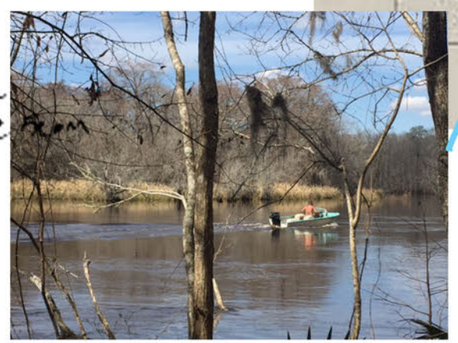
LEFT BANK MUCH STEEPER FOR DRAINAGE & RELATED TO RIVER & PORT

BUILT BY AFRICAN AMERICAN + IRISH IMMIGRANTS BY HAND

RURAL, PARALLEL TRAILS

VERY QUIET, HEAR MUSIC & BOAT MOTOR FROM DISTANCE

MARSHY



CANAL INTO TRIBUTARY

HIDDEN MEANDERS OF A CANAL

BUILT FOR RES. AREA

WORLD CLASS HOG HUNTING ON ONE OF THE ISLANDS

Figure 21

The field studies trip was successful in revealing a new potential about the waterways, in particular the cultural and historical properties of an extensive canal system with unique characteristics and relationships to other landscapes around the city and region. It also revealed residential canals not depicted on maps, and the different grades and blocks in the canal system that would need extensive consideration in how to be designed for an extended use.

The trip and the mapping exploration was successful in reitterating the importance of the thesis question in thinking about opportunistic potentials of valuing a system thinking, cultural ecologies, and public realm in the design of Savannah's region.

The new opportunities for public life along and in the canals is possible. The

Figure 22

Figure 23

extensive English canal system and the chinampas floating gardens within the canals of Xochimilco, Mexico involve a landscape approach to their designs that values public recreation and smaller markets that influence the region, working simultaneously within the local context, but also as integral to the regional landscapes around it based on their flows and meanders between sites and communities.

The field studies trip provided a framework for provoking interest in certain sites that had already been analyzed through computer mapping explorations within the canal system. This allow strategic testing of interesting sites to experience and take notes on.

This new network might offer not only access, but new ways of perceiving the way these waterways can be used, and showing through drawings and imagery how this kind of parallel landscape can be inspiring for many kinds of new experiences in the context of a heavily private and logistical water region.

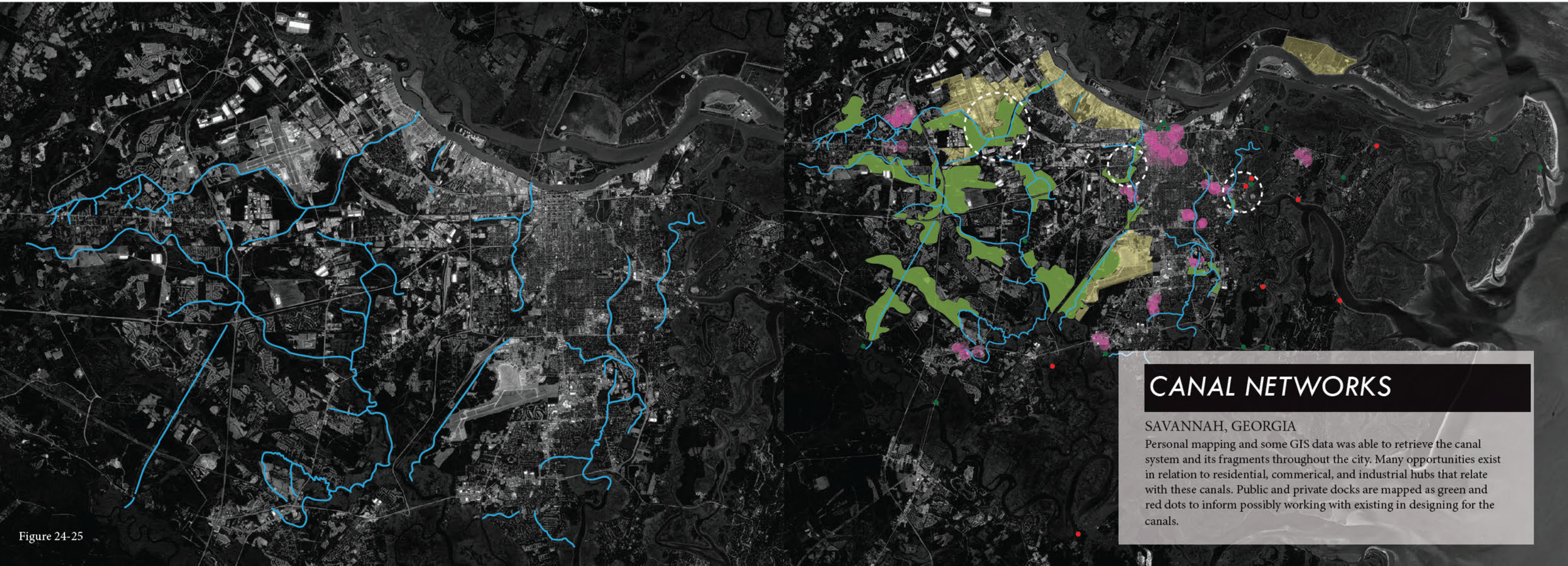


Figure 24-25

CANAL NETWORKS

SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

Personal mapping and some GIS data was able to retrieve the canal system and its fragments throughout the city. Many opportunities exist in relation to residential, commerical, and industrial hubs that relate with these canals. Public and private docks are mapped as green and red dots to inform possibly working with existing in designing for the canals.

VISUALZING POTENTIAL

SAVANNAH RIVER REGION

Perspectives of new possiblities working within the existing landscape to provide new opportunities for unique systems, cultures, and public engagement to occur. These perspectives offer not only access to the canals, but unique ways of experiencing them in ways that have not been pereceived before in Savannah.

Figure 26

06.

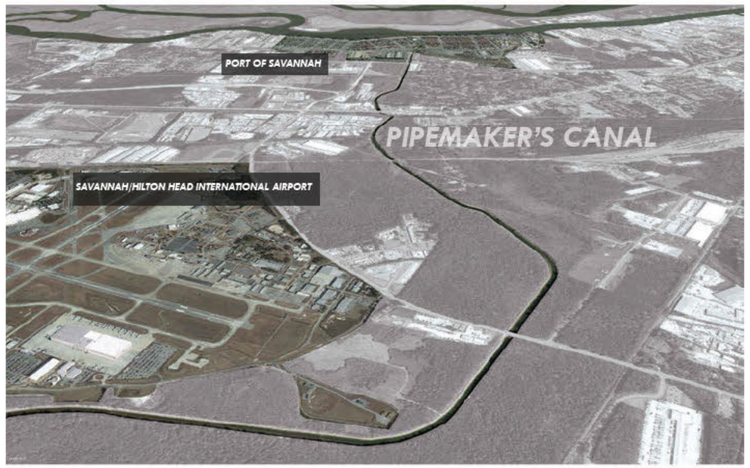
CANALS OF SAVANNAH

CANAL ATMOSPHERES

The discovery and exploration of the canal system in Savannah provided new analysis and mapping of the canals in relation to other land uses and the potential to see across the landscape for opportunties along this unique waterway.

Each canal is unique in its relationship to the land and its connections, but also their uses. Some have been strictly dug to control flooding, while others were hand dug by first generation immigrants to Savannah, and were used for recreation and moving items like peaches, lumber, and cotton across the colony.

Many of these canals feed back into the river, while others filter out into tributaries in the south of the city that eventually lead out to the Intracoastal Waterway. The remnants of canal brick and structure are interesting to see in these in-between places, marking potential to enhance their visiblity with public access, and the possibilities to traverse and experience uniquely constructed man-made canals along the same strecth of water with natural hydrological formations.



"a planner is someone who finds rather than plans a region's best development: one who builds on the actualities disclosed by exploration" [3]
– Benton MacKaye

The Springfield Canal became a choice for a design test due to its location just outside of the city grid, and its relationship to SCAD, established neighborhoods, and the Port of Savannah.

This canal has the potential to form a new spine and organizational piece between many kinds of land uses that could be more mutually beneficial and more easily travelled via a landscape design that contributes to canal visiblity and function.

Seperated from downtown by the highway, these designs attempt to harness the canals in relation to public transportation, logistics at the port, and civic life for SCAD students and community members. These designs also perceive each canal functioning in multiple and new ways that relate to ideas about public participation and regional connectivity.

Minimal interventions are explored as well as design tests that consider connections and expansions to other canals.

Figure 27

SCAD DESIGN TEST

The design test attempted to integrate Savannah College of Art and Design's campus with an understanding of the proximity to the river and the new public transportation hub. This site was envisioned as a largely recreational piece within a larger network. A footpath around this section allowed for people to exercise within the site as a parallel piece to traversing the canal.

Agricultural plots were designed within the site, allowing for a new interplay between sites on this part of the canal, making it easier to move goods between these residential plots, and possibly onto the river or to the port. These plots were also creating new water networks between residents that are not connected closely without the water, and because the site is fenced off between residences now that are strictly for students. The design allows the water as a new venture for students and citizens for water access in their neighborhood if they so choose.

The design resembles a park-like landscape within a compact area, allowing multiple acceses into the canals. The designs for the canal were chosen based on gentle existing slopes, and the tree canopy along the canals makes the experience feel distant and quiet, despite being right in downtown, next to the interstate, and the Port of Savannah.

INTEGRATING URBAN CANALS

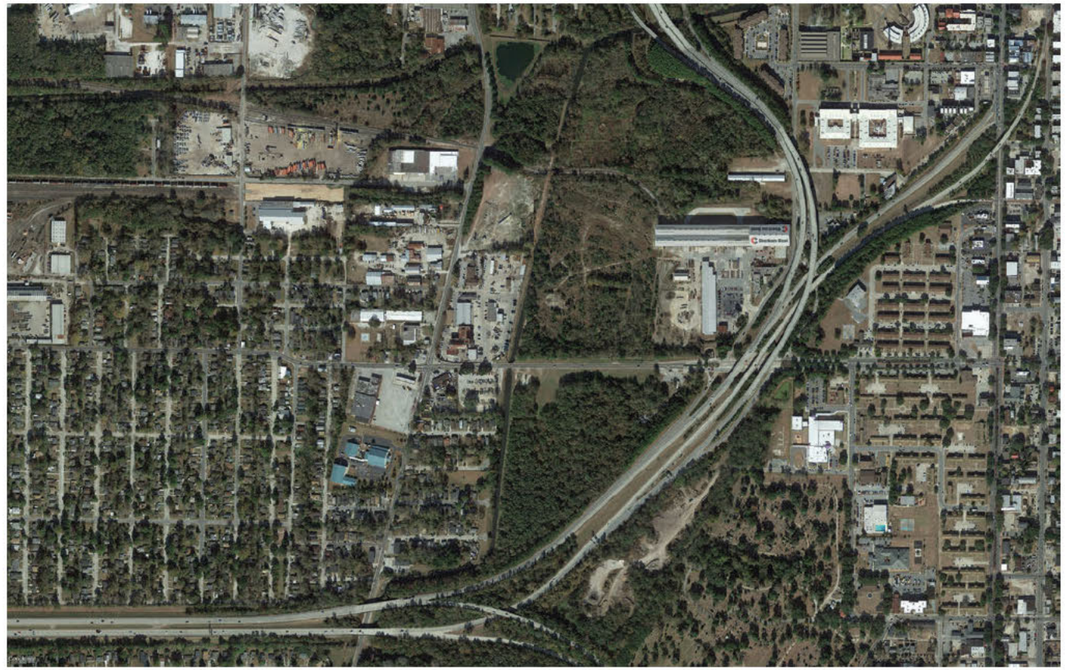
WESTSIDE, DOWNTOWN SAVANNAH

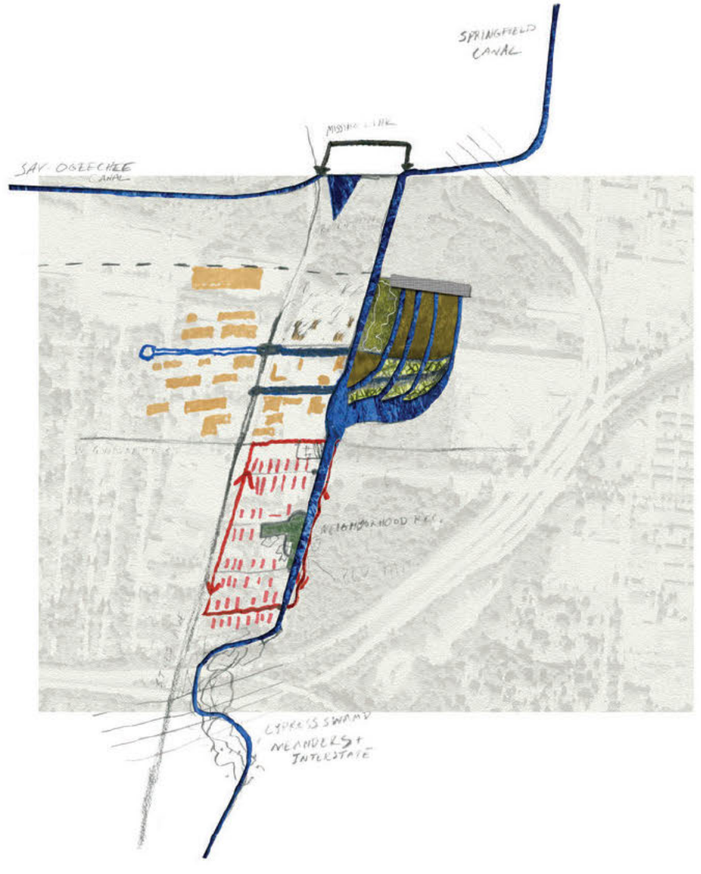
The design's highly dense context uses the canal as a landscape design that allows for new recreational and potentially small barges to operate in a slower, and quieter context, but with moments to notice the context of the port, city infrastructure, and diverse communities that the water pierces through.

CARVER VILLAGE DESIGN TEST

Carver Village is an historically African American neighborhood along Springfield Canal, further downstream and south of the SCAD campus site. This site near the interstate allows for both minimal and larger infrastructural projects within the canals to influence organization of this canal as a regional influence within Savannah's waterways.

The site is diverse in that it has been targeted as part of a canal recreation system in relation to a new arena for the city. This section is located within the context of a local community, a university campus, industrial development, highways and rail. This diversity of infrastructure supports the designs that expand the opportunities of this latent waterway as exhibiting systems thinking, cultural ecologies, and public realm experiences and influence.





COOPER VILLAGE DESIGN TEST

The site allowed for two design tests at different scales and efforts. One is based on a neighborhood design, re-orienting the cul-de-sacs into neighborhood public space along the canals. Neighborhoods will be oriented by hubs known by the British canal terminology of winding hooks. Winding hooks are areas where someone can turn a boat around on the waterways. The plan indicates these nodes as strategic spots of a new winding hook where landscape architectural designs integrate public opportunties into that flux space between land and water.

The other is a future vision of an extension of the canal system near the proposed arena, with multi-use islands that are environmentally sustainable, allowing for public interaction with trails, waterfront arena views and entertainment, and educational opportunities. Rail access from the water might allowfor small barges, local economies, and possibly travelers to emerge along this stretch of a traditionally industrial corridor.

PLAY + LOGISTICS

PROPOSED ARENA DISTRICT

As the canals become a more integral public, cultural, and network landscape, the arena district envisions the potential of working with engineers to design more public, sustainable, and logistical opportunities along the water.

This design breaks off the canal form that allows for new travelers and small barges or boats. The lanes allow for some efficency, while the islands created between allow for new public and agricultural exchanges to take place. The center island due to changes in soil composition from digging, might be allowed to form more like a marshy in-between space that preserves cultural ecologies for fishing and coastal plain ecosystems found in this region.

The curve form functions as a winding hook and access area from the arena, but also will slow down water after heavy rains, allowing for native plantings along this route to absorb toxins from increased motor traffic and debris along the canals. The line across follows the grid of the adjacent streets allowing for expansion to follow a similar formula of integral designs between logistics and public life in this section over time.

WINDING HOLE

COOPER VILLAGE NEIGHBORHOOD

An emptyy cul-de-sac becomes a neighborhood center based on interacting with the canals. Different kinds of boats and vessels are accessible. The center circle is allowed to fluctuate with water levels, and maintains a marshy character. Outer walkway allows access to boats, seating, and views of the marshy space which can be used as an education center. The extended piers allow for new views, entertaining, and hybrid aquatic vendors that would be similar to food trucks or boats to emerge.

WINDING HOLE SECTION

COOPER VILLAGE NEIGHBORHOOD

Section shows the integration of the water to the neighborhood, allowing multiple activities and vantage points to be undertaken, even if someone is not getting into the canal waters.

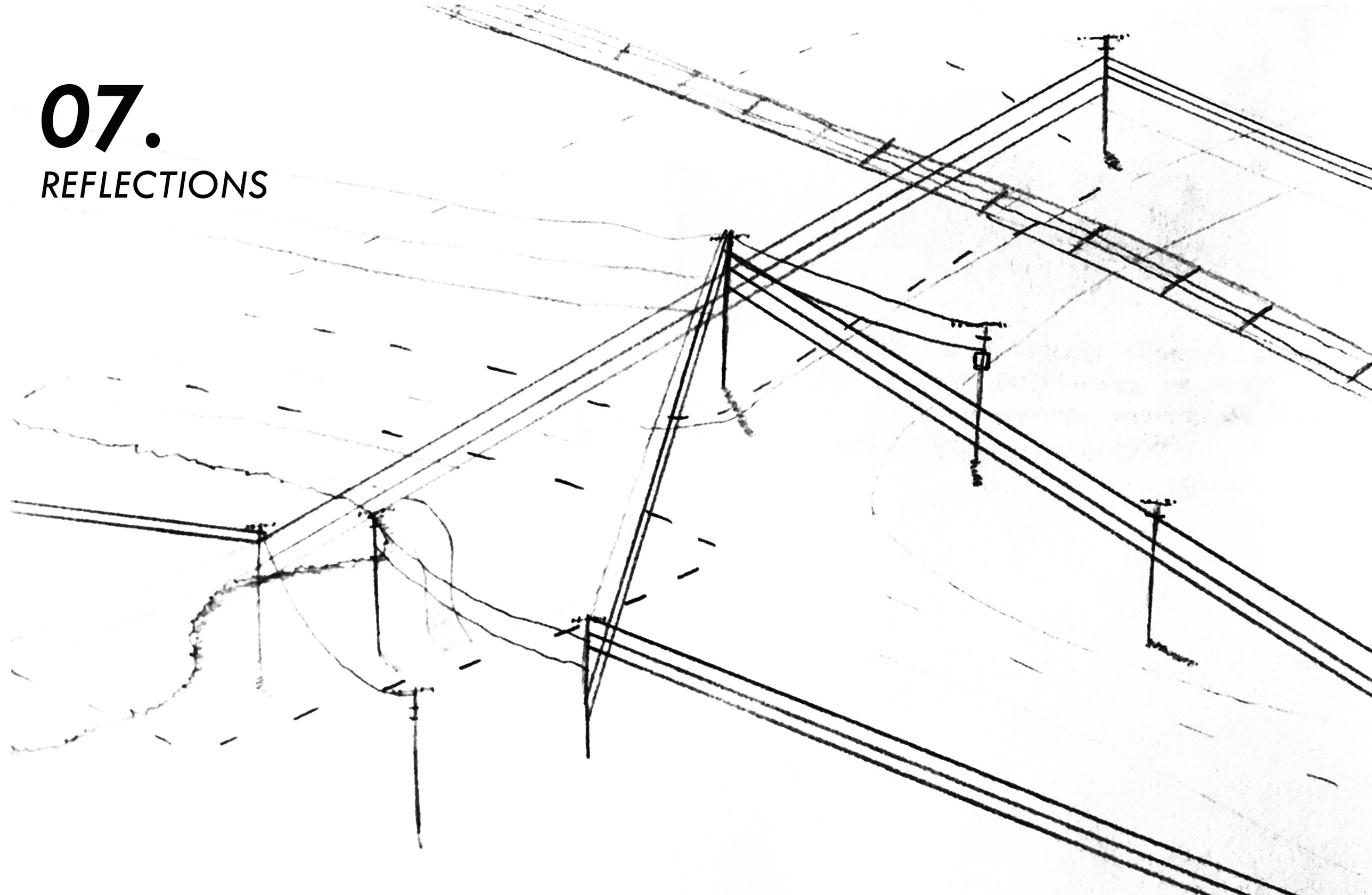
NEW HISTORIES

SAVANNAH RIVER REGION

Perspective shows how the canals begin to operate differently within this regional landscape. It shows how old and new, man-made and natural environments of this region can compliment each other and are directly related. Within the canals, design can integrate with these systems, allowing for moments of solitude and new visualization of the surrounding world of movement and activity.

07.

REFLECTIONS



Reflection and Future Opportunities

This exploration has been very inspiring and informative about the waterways in Savannah, their histories, and latent potentials. The study worked well as a framework for visualizing the opportunities of landscape architecture to understand ways of designing across sites and regions by valuing systems thinking, cultural ecologies, and public realm as design tests for enhancing the character of these waterways.

This study would have benefited from an in-depth analysis and inventory of topologies about grade changes, barriers, property ownership, and flood levels in leveraging potentials for the project to be implemented in segments around Savannah that would have the power to alter the perception of these waterways.

The study was limited in site design detailing and this would have been another element that could have tested the question, and pushed the framework of visualizing this landscape into implementation. It would have also been beneficial to more thoroughly understand the communities along these waterway sites and people's daily interaction and opinions about them being designed as part of a regional landscape.

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