Report of the Inlet Island Land Use Committee
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Inlet Island Land Use Committee
Introduction.

REPORT BACK in four months, said Common Council — but our work took somewhat longer to complete. The same complex layering of history that gives Inlet Island its fascination presented us with a long series of questions, riddles and mysteries requiring answers before planning could begin.

The list of questions rolled on:

How does the past explain Inlet Island’s anomalies? How does the Flood Control Channel easement restrict land use? Is this easement line a property line? Or do property parcels extend through the easement line and into the channel? When was part of Taughannock Boulevard licensed for private use? What were the provisions of this license? What regulations apply to the Barge Canal property at Inlet Island’s tip? What will the Route 96 project look like? What stymied past attempts to alienate Island park land?

The long process of finding answers (and answering new questions raised by the initial answers) was sometimes frustrating — but always intriguing.

We found, by referring to land surveys, that many previous Inlet Island maps contain serious contradictions and errors. So we produced completely new color maps (found between Pages 40 and 41) presenting the most accurate information we could find about Inlet Island’s present, and its past — before any “Island” yet existed.

The new maps are based on many sources: aerial photographs from various years (including Cervin Robinson’s marvelous aerials of 1933), tax parcel maps, Sanborn maps of August 1940 and March 1965, meticulously surveyed composite taking maps for the Flood Control Channel project prepared by Konski Engineers of Syracuse in 1967, Route 96 project drawings from the 1988 Draft Environmental Impact Statement, as well as other miscellaneous verbal and visual sources. Each source was carefully compared to the others to eliminate inconsistencies and inaccuracies.

Our land use proposal (limited to the area north of Buffalo Street) emerged as the best of various alternatives. Rejected plans provided more park land, or less, or omitted access to the tip of the Island, or suggested relocating the Coast Guard Auxiliary dock.

We hope the Inlet Island Land Use Plan — and the answers we found to all those questions, riddles and mysteries — will finally allow Inlet Island to attain the exciting, beautiful potential so many Ithacans have envisioned for so many years.

— J.S., February 12, 1992
Acknowledgements.

The committee would like to thank members of the public who attended one or more of our meetings, including Joseph Ciaschi, Betsy Darlington, Peter and Steve DeGraff, Doria Higgins and Scott Witham. Their comments and advice were helpful and appreciated.

In the fall of 1989, Tom West and other members of the Department of Public Works staked and chalked out the location of the prospective Route 96 and Route 89 corridors on Inlet Island. This greatly helped committee members visualize the impending impact of the Route 96 project.

Doug Foster of the Department of Planning and Development staffed our meetings and provided able research assistance.

Thanks are also due to the DeWitt Historical Society of Tompkins County, which kindly granted us permission to use all three Page 13 photographs, and to the Lehigh Valley House, which graciously hosted several of our early sessions.

Most especially, the committee would like to express its appreciation to U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 2-2, for a brightly lit and spacious meeting area, for warmth on cold winter afternoons and for the help offered to us by individual auxiliary members. Special thanks to John Pitts and Russell C. Mott, who served as the auxiliary's liaisons to the committee, and to auxiliary members Bruce Murray and Arnold Albrecht, who attended many of our meetings.
Members of the Committee.

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Chapter I:
Inlet Island’s Historical Context.

The map of the Inlet Island vicinity has probably changed more dramatically over time than any similarly-sized area in the City of Ithaca. This area has been shaped and reshaped by some of the most powerful forces that have transformed American cities over the past 150 years. The establishment of canal systems, the coming and the dying of railroads, the realignment of automobile highways, the water rechannelization work of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the inauguration of large new parks — all these layers of change have left indelible traces on the external form and internal configuration of Inlet Island.

Yet another cycle of change is now imminent. In 1992, Inlet Island awaits its latest transformation: the long-anticipated construction of the Route 96 project, with its new road alignments and two new bridges.

Many of Inlet Island’s current land use problems and opportunities are the legacy of these successive urban transformations, and they can only be understood properly and solved effectively in the light of this complex history. So we begin with a brief summary of Inlet Island’s past.

Nineteenth Century Beginnings.

Understanding the mid-nineteenth century appearance of the area corresponding to today’s West End requires an active imagination, for one must erase much of one’s image of today’s Ithaca. One must picture the area without the Route 13 highway, and without the Flood Control Channel. And one must picture the land now known as Inlet Island, not as an island, but as a contiguous portion of all the land lying to the west of the Cayuga Inlet.

Figure 1 shows the western portion of Ithaca in 1866. To orient oneself to this map, one must first realize that today’s Esty Street, Court Street and Cliff Street (Route 96) were then called New Street, Mill Street and Geneva Road, respectively. Today’s State Street was called Owego Street (east of the Inlet) and Junction Street (west of the Inlet). Finally, Taughannock Boulevard was then known as West Port Street.

West Port Street was laid out parallel to the original course of the Inlet, precisely sixty feet west of the water’s course. Where the Inlet’s course angled or curved, so did West Port Street’s right-of-way. This contrasted with the perfectly straight rectilinear grid of
1. The portion of the Cayuga Inlet seen flowing diagonally northeast to the point called “Steam Boat Landing” on the 1866 map has since been filled in, with the Inlet’s waters following a new straightened course not far to the west. The Ithaca Area Wastewater Treatment Facility now sits atop part of the old stream bed. The new Farmers’ Market building stands well northwest of the former watercourse.


FIGURE 1. This is a portion of a map of the then “Village” of Ithaca featured in Spencer Spencer’s 1866 Headwaters of Cayuga Lake. The depicted area corresponds to today’s West End — before Route 13, before the Flood Control Channel, and before many other changes. See the text for a list of some street names that have changed over the past 125 years.

most early streets on Ithaca’s flats. Because of this legacy, Taughannock Boulevard curves irregularly to this day. A similarly curved “East Port Street” once paralleled the Inlet between the water’s east edge and Fulton Street.

Oddly enough, the Cayuga Inlet segment originally sponsoring these irregularities was soon straightened (as the 1866 map already shows). The short-lived East Port Street had, by 1866, become a straightened north-south right-of-way for the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad.

The stretches of the Inlet today bounding Inlet Island on the south and east flow in much the same stream bed in 1992 as the course shown on the 1866 map. Elsewhere, the Inlet’s course has been greatly altered, most notably through 1960s construction of the Flood Control Channel.

As the place names indicate, the long segment of the Inlet extending from the vicinity of East and West Port Streets up to “Steam Boat Landing” was Ithaca’s nineteenth century port. Here, goods were exchanged from railroad to boat or barge, and from water to rail.

Figure 2 is an 1882 bird’s eye view delineated by L. R. Burleigh. Steamboats ply the Inlet between West Port and Fulton Streets. Paralleling the Inlet to the east are the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad tracks, balanced on the Inlet’s west by those of the Geneva, Ithaca & Sayre (later the Lehigh Valley). One steam locomotive heads south on the D, L & W, while another train — apparently loaded with coal — heads north on the C, I & S. Clustered in the vicinity are grain elevators, factory buildings, railroad stations and residential areas. Up on West Hill, between Elm and Chestnut Streets, stands the First Ward School with its four corner towers.

In the stratified society of nineteenth century Ithaca, writes Carol U. Sisler, the Inlet area was home to “those who were poor and uneducated and often the victims of industrial expansion, hired or fired seasonally, perhaps injured by factory work, unable to work, or too sick to work.” Squatters’ shanties sprang up in the marshy areas to the northwest of the Cayuga Inlet, while a substantial working class neighborhood of two-story gabled wood frame houses developed in the vicinity of what is now Inlet Island. This neigh-
borhood, which would be almost completely demolished in the 1960s during the construction of the Flood Control Channel, was located at the west end of Seneca Street, on Court Street Extension, and along Taber Street and Floral Avenue.

**Early Twentieth Century Changes.**

By 1933, philanthropic individuals and organizations had responded to the social and recreational needs of Inlet neighborhood residents by establishing a multifaceted community center on the block then bounded by Court Street Extension and Brindley, Buffalo and Cliff Streets. The center included an inter-denominational chapel, a settlement house, a small formal park and an open grassy playground (see Map #1 and Figure 3). Note: Map #1 through Map #9 are reproduced in color between Pages 40 and 41.

This entire community center flourished on land donated by members of the Williams family, sire by Ithaca banker Josiah Butler Williams. The Williams family lived in "Cliff Park," a stone Gothic Revival house up on West Hill, near a rivulet. This house, since torn

**FIGURE 2.** Shown here is one part of L. R. Burleigh’s 1882 aerial perspective of the Village of Ithaca. The view looks northeast from an imaginary point above West Hill. The forested lower portion of West Hill is seen in the foreground. Between the bottom of the hill and the Cayuga Inlet is the area corresponding to today’s Inlet Island. Mill Street, West Port Street, Genera Street and Spe[ ]r Street, as seen in the perspective, correspond to today’s Court Street, Thompson-Bright Boulevard, Cliff Street and Floral Avenue. Junction Street on the drawing corresponds to the “diagonal” westernmost stretch of State Street that leads today to and from the Octopus.

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FIGURE 3. In 1933 local photographer Corin Robinson took aerial photographs of most of Ithaca, using a grid system. The photos were annotated and assembled into a one-of-a-kind book. Reproduced here is part of photograph 36. The open area with several irregular dirt paths (upper right) is Williams Playground. Directly above it is Inlet Beach Mission (T-shaped). Left of the playground are the West Side Homes and Brindley Park. Just below the "L. V.R.R." caption is the Lehigh Valley Railroad passenger station (today’s Station Restaurant), with landscaped areas south and east. The latter lawn features a trolley shelter on Buffalo Street. On Taughannock Boulevard, between Seneca and Buffalo Streets, a trolley car rolls down its tracks. Many frame houses of the old Inlet neighborhood stand on the photo’s upper left. More homes are located north and northwest of Williams Playground. Compare this photo with Map #1 and Map #2. The latter illustrates how the Flood Control Channel ploughed through the area in the 1940s.
down, stood on a site near today's Chestnut Hill apartments.

The Inlet Beebe Mission ("A" on Map #1) provided religious training and charitable services for Inlet residents. A new, ample brick chapel (Figure 4) had been built in 1932. It replaced a small 1882 wooden chapel that had stood across Buffalo Street on the triangular lot where State and Buffalo Streets then met.

The West Side House ("B" on Map #1) was a community center modeled on the settlement houses then serving working class and immigrant neighborhoods in large American cities. Built in 1918, this popular Tudor-style haven (Figure 5) was operated by the Social Service League. According to former Inlet resident David Drumheller, the West Side House featured "a complete woodshop, ... a kitchen for home economics, a weight room, a shower room and a room with four pool tables and a pingpong table."*8 Offerings included gymnastics and crafts, sewing and cooking classes, public dances and programs, and community celebrations. Vaccinations were given and free food was distributed to the poor.

East of the West Side House was Brindley Park, small but formal, with paved walks meeting at a precise angle and a central pyra-

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FIGURE 4 (lower left). The Inlet Beebe Mission was named for Elizabeth W. Beebe, who dedicated the last decades of her life to serving the poor in the Inlet neighborhood. Pictured is the new 1932 chapel, built on the fiftieth anniversary of the original 1882 chapel.

FIGURE 5 (upper right). The West Side House, built in half-timbered style in 1918, was another anchor of the Inlet neighborhood. Within its walls, the Social Service League and local clubs offered classes, programs, crafts, gymnastics, dances and other activities for children and adults. The West Side House was demolished in 1967, because — like many of the houses of the neighborhood it served — it stood directly in the path of the new Flood Control Channel.

FIGURE 6 (lower right). The photographs who recorded this view of the Lehigh Valley passenger station around 1900 perched atop a building at the corner of Buffalo Street and West Pier Street (Couchanski Boulevard), with the camera pointed northwest. A trolley car of the Ithaca Street Railway waits for passengers at the trolley system's west terminus. In the left foreground is the Lehigh Valley House, in the center middle ground is the station with its well-tended gardens, and in the left background is a long-vanished hotel that stood at the corner of Buffalo and Brindley Streets. (This section of Brindley Street was later moved west, as shown on Map #1). The West Side House and the old Inlet Beebe Mission did not yet exist.
midally roofed drinking fountain. Water was available on each of the fountain’s four sides, so that gangs of thirsty children could quench their thirst four at a time. Baseball, football and similar group games were won and lost on Williams Playground, just north of the park.

By 1933, the area corresponding to today’s Inlet Island was also a surprisingly sophisticated transportation center.

To the north, thick masonry retaining walls defined a large harbor basin. This was the Barge Canal Terminal, Ithaca’s port connection with the New York State Barge Canal. (This was the quite unsentimental new name for the old Eric Canal.) The portion of the Cayuga Inlet extending south from the Barge Canal Terminal was an official segment of the “Cayuga and Seneca Canal,” appropriated by New York State in 1915. The official canal designation apparently extended all the way up the Inlet to the State Street bridge. East of Taughannock Boulevard, numerous boat houses lined the Inlet.

The Lehigh Valley Railroad Company owned the land west of Taughannock Boulevard and east of Brindley Street, plus land extending well north. Building “G” on Map #1 was the Lehigh
Valley passenger station (today's Station Restaurant), and building "H" was the freight depot. Arriving or departing passengers were greeted on Buffalo Street with beautiful landscaping, including a formal lawn with flagpole in front of the station ("D"), and a more informally landscaped lawn at the Taughannock Boulevard corner ("E"). To the north were extensive railyards and utility buildings. Figure 6 shows the passenger station around the turn of the century.

The Ithaca Street Railway provided yet another transportation link. This was Ithaca's trolley system, and it maintained a stop ("E") at the corner of Buffalo Street and Taughannock Boulevard. A passenger arriving on a Lehigh Valley Railroad train could walk a few steps to this sheltered stop, and ride the trolley downtown, or up to East Hill or Cornell Heights, on the way to Stewart Park.

Map #2 shows that, by 1940, a few significant changes had occurred in the area. To the north, the route of Taughannock Boulevard had been altered, to allow construction of a large Lehigh Valley railroad loop even further north, off the map. (The former loop area is today home of the Cass Park baseball fields.)

By 1940, three oil companies operated facilities ("I", "J", and "K") along the realigned portion of the boulevard. Five large and four smaller tanks filled with petroleum products towered above surrounding concrete "dikes," designed to capture any spills. All the tanks are visible in Figure 7, an illustration from the March 7, 1949 Ithaca Journal. On this day, The Journal announced New York State's first Route 96 improvement plan. The bridge in the photo's middle ground is a painted simulation of a proposed Route 96 span. The bridge, of course, was never built.

By 1940, the trolley stop at the corner of Buffalo Street and Taughannock Boulevard had permanently disappeared. The last Ithaca trolley had made its farewell run in 1935.

The 1960s: Inlet Island Is Created.

Another event of 1935 ultimately resulted in the creation of Inlet Island.

That was the year Ithaca experienced its great flood, which inundated most flat areas of the City. The flood resulted after a massive downdraft, when water from the City's south could not flow rapidly enough north into Cayuga Lake. Instead, the water flowed through the City's neighborhoods, flooding houses, yards, and streets with water up to four feet deep. The Inlet neighborhood—which stood directly along the path the water wanted to flow—was particularly hard hit.

After decades of discussion and lobbying, the federal government finally placed an Inlet flood control project in the Federal Flood Control Act of 1960. Funding was not approved, though, until 1964, when work by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began.

The Ithaca Flood Protection Project had three phases. First, the mouth of the Inlet, north of its juncture with Cascadilla Creek, was deepened and widened. The second phase included a number of projects at the south end of the City, including a new bridge for the Lehigh Valley railroad. Third, a realigned Flood Control Channel was dug all the way from the southwest corner of today's Southwest Park, north to Cascadilla Creek. This third phase created Inlet Island.4

But this last portion of the channel was originally planned for a very different route than the one built. The original route followed a curving path well to the west of today's channel (Figure 8). It would have resulted in a much larger, and very differently shaped Inlet Island. The first "nibble" of excavation for the original route, before it was abandoned, is still visible on any Ithaca map. (It is due east of the Cass Park ice rink.) A prime motivation for changing the route to its current path was Cornell University's desire to use the Flood Control Channel as a nearly straight three-lane 2000 meter rowing course for its crew races.

As shown in dark blue dashes on Map #3, the final course of the Flood Control Channel extended southwest from the New York State Barge Canal Terminal, through a portion of the petroleum tank area, through Lehigh Valley Railroad Company land, through a cluster of houses on Court Street Extension, through Williams Playground and the West Side House, and through the heart of the Inlet neighborhood south of State Street. The swath of land to fall under Permanent Flood Control Channel Easement restrictions was even wider.

The State obtained control over land between the east and west

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4. "State Offers Ithaca $3,896,000 Highway Plan" heralded the banner headline in this 1949 Ithaca Journal. The "Plan" referred to was the NYS Department of Public Works' 1949 Report on Arterial Routes in the Ithaca Urban Area. The State intended phased implementation of this master plan for Route 96 and Route 13 improvements—but also intended work to begin "at an early date." One article in the March 7 Journal emphasized Ithaca's helpful attitude toward the highway planning, noting that state officials' praise for "top cooperation" from Ithaca's press and radio. "Funds for the improvement are said to be available," the Journal added confidently, "so the projects if approved, could be started immediately."


6. To better illustrate relationships between old and new at a time of great change, Map #3 includes information from various years in the 1960s. For example, the map shows railroad tracks throughout the 1967 Cass Park purchase from the Lehigh Valley Railroad Company, although by that year many tracks were already only a memory.
Permanent Flood Control Channel Easement lines in several ways.

In most cases, private properties were purchased outright (see simple). But in at least two instances, private landowners were permitted to own portions of parcels that extended inside the permanent easement lines. In these two cases, the State purchased only permanent easement rights over the portion of the land inside the lines. When the City owned affected land, it retained ownership but the State acquired permanent easement rights over the land. This procedure applied, for example, to part of Williams Playground, to various street rights-of-way, and to part of the City’s new Cass Park purchase.

The City, too, bought land in conjunction with the flood control project. Most notable was the City’s purchase of 48.6 acres of Lehigh Valley Railroad Company land for the purpose of dramatically expanding Cass Park. According to a December 18, 1967 agreement, this $500,000 purchase included a City contribution of $250,000 and an equal amount contributed by the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund. The New York State Conservation Department acted as the agent between the City and the federal government.

The portion of this purchase immediately relevant to today’s Inlet Island is colored dark green on Map #3. The acquired land was extremely irregular in shape, reflecting the curves and curving extensions of former railroad tracks. The State acquired Permanent Flood Control Channel Easement rights over that portion of the purchase that lay between the east and west permanent easement lines, but — as indicated above — the City retained ownership.

As the channel was dug, the Octopus was born. New York State built a new bridge to carry State Street traffic over the new channel. The bridge’s location was slightly northeast of the former State Street right-of-way. The State expected the City to build a second new bridge over the channel to reconnect Taughannock Boulevard on Inlet Island with Route 89 across the channel. But the City balked at the cost, and asked the State to include construction of the new Route 89 bridge in its long-proposed Route 96 project. (Yes, this was the same unbuilt Route 96 project whose first design had been announced in the 1949 Ithaca Journal!). The State demurred. So the City, with State acquiescence, built Park Road, a
"temporary" park road that connected Route 89 with the new State Street bridge.

City penny-pinching had created The Octopus.

By 1970, the Flood Control Channel was complete. It benefited the City by providing flood protection and a beautiful new waterway. But it also destroyed an entire neighborhood, along with the community center that sustained it. The West Side House and Beebe Community Chapel (the new name of Inlet Beebe Mission) were demolished. Most of Williams Playground was excavated and flooded. Of some 65 private homes in the old neighborhood, about 55 were destroyed to make way for the channel. Over thirty of these were torched in fire department training exercises.
CHAPTER II:
Inlet Island Today: Land Use & Ownership.

The story of land use and property ownership on Inlet Island is not simple. Special government regulations and unusual situations abound. The complexity derives from the area's historical role as the nexus of interrelated highway, railroad, water transport, water management and park systems. Over time, dramatically different city forms were superimposed over old ones. The curvilinear tracks and property lines of railroads were superimposed over the rectilinear street grid of early nineteenth century Ithaca. A Barge Canal Terminal was carved out and defined by masonry retaining walls. A diagonal Flood Control Channel was superimposed over previous superimpositions.

Today, Ithaca anticipates yet another layer of change: the final arrival of the Route 96 project, with its own separate internal logic of curving highway connections.

Maps #4 and #5 are meant to be used together. The former illustrates 1992 Inlet Island land use, while the latter depicts 1992 property ownership.

As the maps show, the nature of land use and the nature of ownership are not necessarily the same. There are instances where publicly-owned land is used for private purposes, and other instances where privately-owned land is used for public purposes.

Maps #4 and #5 are mostly self-explanatory. But certain elements require further explanation:

Permanent Flood Control Channel Easement.

There has been much confusion in the past about who owns, and ultimately controls, Inlet Island land subject to the Permanent Flood Control Channel Easement.

The confusion is not surprising. Comparison with official land surveys proves that Inlet Island planning and tax maps prepared after 1970 present inaccurate or misleading information about property lines on the Island's west side. The erroneous maps show the Permanent Flood Control Channel easement line as a property line, serving as a boundary for various parcels. On most of Inlet Island, this simply is not true. For the part of the Island treated in this report, the only place where the permanent easement line follows a parcel boundary line is along Brindley Park's west side. Elsewhere,
the easement line passes through individual parcels (see Map #5). As indicated in the previous chapter, New York State acquired rights for the channel through three different methods:

**Method One:** Outright Fee Simple Purchase From Private Landowners. On Map #5, the areas so purchased are labeled “State of New York, D.E.C. Administration.” (“D.E.C.” stands for the “Department of Environmental Conservation.”)

**Method Two:** Purchase of Permanent Easement Rights From Private Landowners, With the Landowners Retaining Property Ownership and Any Property Rights Not Covered by the Easement. This procedure has led to an odd circumstance: In places, the water of the Flood Control Channel passes over private property. This occurs on part of one Ciaschi parcel and part of one DeGraff parcel, as shown on Map #5.

**Method Three:** Acquisition of Permanent Easement Rights From the City, With the City Retaining Property Ownership and Any Property Rights Not Covered by the Easement. Because of this procedure, many City-owned parcels existing prior to the Flood Control Channel legally continue to exist “under” the superimposed permanent easement lines and “under” the waters of the channel itself.

Suppose one wished to walk along the west edge of Inlet Island, fully within the permanent easement line, with the walk beginning just north of the State Street bridge (at the first colored parcel on Map #5). As one walked the water’s edge towards Inlet Island’s northern tip, one would pass in succession over parcels owned by the following entities:

- City of Ithaca (Williams Playground).
- City of Ithaca (former Court Street Extension right-of-way).
- City of Ithaca (Cass Park).
- Joseph Ciaschi (since this is private property, walking here without permission is trespass).

- City of Ithaca (Cass Park).
- State of New York (D.E.C. administration, with license to Coast Guard Auxiliary).
- City of Ithaca (former Taughannock Blvd. right-of-way).
- Peter DeGraff (since this is private property, walking here without permission is trespass).
- State of New York (D.O.T. administration, with license to Coast Guard Auxiliary; “D.O.T.” stands for the “Department of Transportation”).

The irrationality of this situation is typical of 1992 Inlet Island property boundaries. The old boundaries reflect long-abandoned uses, and do not correspond to the “island” shape of the land — even though the island has existed for over two decades.

Appendix A presents the precise language of the Permanent Flood Control Channel Easement, which is administered by the N.Y.S. Department of Environmental Conservation. The easement’s practical effect is to prohibit anything that would rise vertically from the ground plane. The D.E.C.’s reasoning: Such objects or plantings could become obstacles or snags if high water streamed down the channel. Water obstruction would, of course, interfere with the Flood Control Channel’s primary purpose.

A ground-level paved path, though, would not be an obstacle. It would almost certainly be permitted, upon application to the D.E.C.

The Coast Guard Auxiliary maintains a removable floating dock near the north end of the Island. D.E.C. Flood Control Engineer Henry Carroll has ruled that that no permits for docks will be granted south of this auxiliary dock. The auxiliary’s dock floats where the channel widens. Upstream, though, the channel is narrower, and any docks there could obstruct free-flowing water under high water conditions.

Mr. Carroll adds, however, that it might be possible to establish one or more basins or lagoons on Inlet Island’s interior, with water access through what is now dry land subject to the permanent easement. 9

Note: The Inlet Island map used repeatedly in the N.Y.S.
Department of Transportation’s 1988 Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Route 96 project erroneously locates the permanent easement line on the northern half of the Island. The easement line is shown correctly on the Inlet Island Land Use Committee’s maps.

City of Ithaca Park Land.

The park land shown on Map #4 attained that status in three different ways. The three hues of green on Map #5 distinguish these origins.

Category A:
Officially Designated City of Ithaca Park Land,
With No Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Involvement.
(Medium green on Map #5).

Brindley Park and Williams Playground fit this category. Both were donated to the City for park use more than sixty years ago. The Brindley Park hip-roofed drinking fountain (Figure 9) still exists. This fountain, along with some surrounding sidewalk, is the only extant physical remnant of the former Inlet neighborhood community center described in Chapter 1.

Augusta H. Williams, Charlotte E. Williams and Ella S. Williams donated Williams Playground to the City on November 27, 1916. Their intent was to provide an outdoor play area for children. Only parts of Williams Playground now remain above water.

Augusta H. Williams deeded Brindley Park to the City on July 1, 1929, in fulfillment of an offer she had made two years earlier. The minutes of the Board of Public Works record that on August 24, 1927 “a communication was received from Miss Augusta H. Williams advising that she is having the corner lot at the junction of Buffalo and Brindley Streets converted into a little Park Area to be planted with shrubbery and the installation of an attractive drinking fountain, asking the City to co-operate in the installation of water.

10. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement maps are erroneous in two ways in their depiction of the Permanent Flood Control Channel Easement line. First, towards the north end of the Island, the easement line is consistently shown too close to the Flood Control Channel waters. Second, the two places where the easement line “juts out” in rectilinear angles should exactly correspond to the northwest corner of the existing concrete dike (once enclosing four petroleum tanks) on the “Agway Parcel,” and to the northwest corner of the building now used by the Coast Guard Auxiliary. The concrete dike with the four tanks can be seen on Map #3, in the dark-green area labeled “Leased by L.V., R. & L. Agway.” Correct information on the easement line’s location is provided by the comprehensive 1967 Jones Engineers land survey maps referred to in Footnote 8.

FIGURE 9. The Brindley Park drinking fountain, now out of service, still stands to the west of the Stadium Restaurant. Some of the original park sidewalk remains, as do trees which define some of the park’s original edges. Augusta H. Williams had the fountain built and shrubbery planted at her own expense before she donated the park to the City in 1929.

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11. At the time of the official conveyance of Brindley Park to the City, in July 1929, Augusta H. Williams' lawyer, Charles H. Newman, reminded the City of its 1927 promises. "As you know," Newman reminded City Clerk W. O. Kerr, "Miss Williams has beautified this property and placed thereon a drinking fountain for the benefit of the public, and this conveyance is in accordance with action already taken by the city agreeing to accept the property and maintain it as a park. Miss Williams wishes us to state that one of the fountains in the fountain has been out of order and is being repaired at her expense." Newman's letter is preserved in the city clerk's office along with the Brindley Park deed.


13. Ibid., p. 5, with additional information from Title 49, §303, paragraph (c) of the 1988 edition of the United States Code.

14. Ibid., p. 3.

sewer and lighting, and eventually to accept title to this plot and maintain the same. The improvement adding to the attractiveness and convenience of the adjoining Williams Playground." On the same day, the Board adopted a resolution declaring that the communication of Miss Williams be acknowledged and the offer of this plot accepted with assurances of co-operation for the necessary service, installation and maintenance, and that the Clerk be directed to express the thanks and appreciation of the City authorities.

In 1992, the fountain is dry, its four fountains capped, and the park is neglected, despite the City's 1927 assurances.11

If the City wanted to "unpark" any Category A park land, the alienation from park status would require authorization by the New York State legislature. The legislation could (but would not have to) include provision of substitute park land. If substitute land were not provided, the legislation would require the City to use the proceeds of the land sale for capital improvements to other City parks.12

Use of park land in Category A by the N.Y.S. Department of Transportation for highway purposes is not considered an alienation, and so does not require State legislative approval. However, when a federally-funded highway "requires the use of any land in a public park, recreation area, wildlife or waterfowl refuge or historic property" of national, state or local significance (as determined by supervising federal, state or local officials), the U.S. Secretary of Transportation must "ensure that the project is undertaken only if there is no prudent or feasible alternative and if it is designed to minimize any harm done to such land." This process is called "4(f) conversion" approval, because the process derives from Section 4(f) of the federal Department of Transportation Act of 1966.13

Category B: De Facto City of Ithaca Park Land, With No Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Involvement.

(Yellow-green on Map #5).

Although never officially designated as park land, the abandoned Court Street Extension and Brindley Street (north of Buffalo) have acquired de facto park status. For over twenty years, the dry-land portion of these rights-of-way has been an open grassy park area, functionally indistinguishable from adjacent official park land. According to the State's Guide to the Alienation or Conversion of Municipal Parklands, dedication of land to park status does not necessarily require a formal legislative act. Rather, "dedication can also occur when the common, accepted use of the land is as a park."14

Alienation procedure for this category of park land would be the same as for Category A. The regulations governing N.Y.S. Department of Transportation use of this category of park land for highway purposes would also be the same.

Category C: City of Ithaca Park Land, Purchased With Assistance of Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Monies.

(Dark-green on Map #5).

The 1967 Cass Park purchase fits into this category, since it was funded by a $250,000 grant (matched by the City) from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Following is a description of how approval would be gained for alienating and converting park land purchased with money from this fund:

First Situation: When a New York State municipality wishes to remove park status from land in this category, it must follow a complicated two-stage process. First comes alienation approval, and then comes conversion approval.

The first stage, alienation approval, occurs at the state level. The New York State legislature must authorize alienating the land from park use. The alienation legislation must identify specific substitute park land, because subsequent federal conversion approval will require such substitute land.

The second stage, conversion approval, occurs at the federal level. When land has been purchased with Land and Water Conservation Fund money, and a municipality wishes to convert the land from public outdoor recreation use, this conversion must be approved by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior. The Secretary may
only approve the conversion under certain circumstances. First, he or she must determine that the conversion accords with New York State’s comprehensive statewide outdoor recreation plan. Second, the Secretary must assure that substitute park land “of at least equal fair market value and of reasonably equivalent usefulness and location” will replace the old park land. This is required by Section 6(f) of the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965. The process, therefore, is called “6(f) conversion” approval.15

Second Situation: When the N.Y.S. Department of Transportation wishes to use park land in this category, it must follow a different procedure. If the land is to be “unparked” for highway purposes, it is not considered an alienation, and no State legislative approval is required. But now two, instead of one, federal conversion approvals are needed.

One is “4(f) conversion” approval by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation. This approval process was described earlier.

The other is “6(f) conversion” approval by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior. This approval process, too, was described above.

If one stands at the edge of the Flood Control Channel not far from the State Street bridge and looks due east toward the Station Restaurant’s engine, passenger cars and caboose, one surveys an uninterrupted expanse of grassy park land (Figure 10). Though there are no differentiating visual cues, the park land one sees belongs in succession to Category A, Category B and Category C.

Note: Maps from the N.Y.S. D.o.T.’s Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Route 96 project have, in the past, been regarded as authoritative on Inlet Island park land boundaries. In fact, however, these maps incorrectly depict the north property line of the portion of the 1967 Cass Park purchase directly south of the Coast Guard Auxiliary building. The boundary is shown correctly on the Inlet Island Land Use Committee maps.

License to Portion of Taughannock Boulevard.

On April 27, 1977, the Board of Public Works discontinued “that portion of Taughannock Boulevard, being approximately the most northerly 150 feet before its intersection with the Flood Control Channel.” On the same day, the Board unanimously agreed to license a portion of this discontinued right-of-way to Inlet Park Marina (a predecessor of Peter DeGraff’s Ithaca Boating Center). The agreement had several conditions, including the provision that the license was “revocable upon 30 days’ notice by either party to the other.”

The license was granted “in exchange for the conveyance to the city by Inlet Park Marina of a portion of the bed of Cascadilla Street.” The latter parcel is seen on Map #3. It is the small rectangular lot just below the “I” of the map’s “Cayuga Inlet” label. The lot is part of the original Cascadilla Street.

15. Section 6(f) of the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 states in part that “No property acquired or developed with assistance under this section shall, without the approval of the [U.S.] Secretary [of the Interior], be converted to other than public outdoor recreation uses. The Secretary shall approve such conversion only if he finds it to be in accord with the then existing comprehensive statewide outdoor recreation plan and then only upon such conditions as he deems necessary to assure the substitution of other recreation properties of at least equal fair market value and of reasonably equivalent usefulness and location.”

16. The fact that a boundary error exists here in these N.Y.S. Department of Transportation maps is confirmed by referring to the comprehensive 1967 Konski Engineers land survey maps mentioned in Footnotes 8 and 10.
right-of-way (compare Map #3 with Map #1).

The Taughannock Boulevard license has been in effect continuously since 1977. The licensed land is labeled “City of Ithaca License to DeGraff” on Map #5. The land is colored orange on Map #4, since — though owned by the City — its use is private.

The minutes of the Board of Public Works describing the granting of this license appear as Appendix B.

New York State ‘Blue Line.’

The State of New York “Blue Line” indicated on Map #5 is the western limit of the Cayuga Inlet segment appropriated by the State in 1915 as part of the “Cayuga and Seneca Canal.” As the map shows, the Ithaca Boating Center building and nearby piers partially encroach on this state-owned land.

However, it appears that many earlier buildings formerly on this site extended over the “Blue Line” to a similar extent (see Maps #1 and #2). So the State has apparently tolerated encroachment here for over fifty years.

Land Used by the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 2-2, located at the end of Taughannock Boulevard, is an important community institution, providing many services to the public. The services offered range from boating safety classes to public education, and from safety patrols to helping boaters in distress. The auxiliary is a private volunteer organization, and its assets are owned by its own corporation. Physical structures used by the auxiliary include its headquarters building (“J”) on Map #4 and a floating dock (“L”) that is removed and stored elsewhere during the winter months.

A comparison of Map #4 with Map #5 shows that the Coast Guard Auxiliary uses portions of four parcels, owned by four different parties.

The parcel furthest south is owned by the State of New York, under D.E.C. administration. This is one of the parcels purchased outright by the State during construction of the Flood Control Channel. The D.E.C. has licensed the land portion of this parcel to the auxiliary, which enjoys its exclusive use. The auxiliary headquarters building stands here.

Just to the north, the auxiliary uses a portion of the abandoned Taughannock Boulevard right-of-way, owned by the City. There is apparently no formal agreement between the City and the Coast Guard governing the use of this land.

To the north one more step, the auxiliary uses part of a parcel owned by Peter DeGraff. Mr. DeGraff says he enthusiastically approves of this use.

The three areas mentioned so far are used exclusively by the auxiliary. The auxiliary also has a license to use Inlet Island’s tip, but here its use is shared with the N.Y.S. Department of Transportation, the land owner. See below.

The Tip of Inlet Island.

As shown on Map #5, the tip of Inlet Island is part of a large area (mostly covered by the waters of the Cayuga Inlet and the Flood Control Channel) owned by the State of New York and administered by the Department of Transportation. The State acquired this land long ago for its Barge Canal system. The perfectly square northeast corner of Inlet Island, with its stone retaining walls, is a remnant of the full-scale Barge Canal Terminal that existed before the Flood Control Channel’s construction (see Maps #1 and #3).

The Waterways Maintenance Division of the D.O.T. has immediate jurisdiction over this whole area.

Inland Island’s tip still functions as an official N.Y.S. D.O.T. Barge Canal Terminal. Instead of serving commercial trade, as is did earlier in the century, it now serves mainly as a temporary mooring place for visiting boaters. The D.O.T. also uses the tip to monitor Cayuga Lake’s water level. This occurs in a very small “sentry-size” station.

According to John Baldwin and Jamie Marino of the Waterways Maintenance Division, the D.O.T. offers permits for use
of Barge Canal lands, with the goal of maximizing access to, and use of, these lands. Municipalities, private landowners and even commercial enterprises are all eligible to receive permits. First preference is given to municipalities or institutions whose use of the land will provide a “public benefit.” Municipal park use or Coast Guard Auxiliary use are examples of publically beneficial uses; permits for such uses are free. Otherwise, preference is be given to the nearest upland property owner, who pays a fee based on a percentage of the fair market value of the land.

Dual permits may also be issued, if this benefits the public and if the two parties applying for the simultaneous permits agree to use the land in harmony.17 Currently the Coast Guard Auxiliary holds “Revocable Permit” 71-2-23, granting it permission to use Inlet Island’s tip “to beautify the area for use by the general public.” The permit appears as Appendix C. According to Paul A. Yonge of the N.Y.S. D.o.T., the language describing “use by the general public” does not imply that the general public now has access to the Island’s tip.18

17. This information comes from a phone conversation between Mr. Baldwin and Doug Foster of the City planning department, and from discussion at the January 23, 1991 Inlet Island Land Use Committee meeting, which was attended by Mr. Marino and other N.Y.S. D.o.T. representatives.

18. In a March 18, 1991 letter from Paul A. Yonge, Property Management, Region 3, N.Y.S. Department of Transportation to Doria Higgins, Mr. Yonge writes, “As we have discussed, the reference in the permit to “Use by the General Public” does not confer any right to anyone other than the Auxiliary to determine how the area will be used.”
CHAPTER III:

The Route 96 Project’s Impact on Inlet Island.

By the late 1980s, the N.Y.S. Department of Transportation was actively considering three basic alternatives (some with optional variants) for its decades-old Route 96 improvement project. In a May, 1989 advisory vote, Ithaca’s Common Council told the State it preferred “Plan A With Route 89 Alignment.” That July, the D.O.T. — citing environmental factors — chose the related “Plan A.” At the City’s urging, the State soon modified its selection to Plan A With Route 89 Alignment.

The Route 96 project has recently received necessary federal approvals. A Final Environmental Impact Statement is now being prepared, and the D.O.T. will seek final City okay of the project. Then final project design and land acquisition will begin. The bulldozers might arrive in 1994 or 1995.

Like Map #4, Map #6 shows 1992 Inlet Island land uses — but it depicts the impending Route 96 project as well. At project completion, the following changes will be in place. Buffalo Street, rather than merging with State Street, will connect to Cliff Street (Route 96) via a new bridge paralleling the existing State Street bridge. Part of what is now Park Road will become a cul-de-sac service road. A new highway right-of-way and a new bridge will connect Inlet Island’s Taughannock Boulevard with Route 89 on the west side of the Flood Control Channel. A portion of Old Taughannock Boulevard will remain on the Island as a dead-end street.

Map #7 depicts property, on and near Inlet Island, that the State plans to acquire for the Route 96 project.

The State plans to use about one-third of Brindley Park as highway right-of-way. (The drinking fountain will remain.) Since the D.O.T. will use this land for highway purposes, it is not considered an alienation, and no State legislative approval is required. Moreover, since Brindley Park was not funded with federal parks money, the D.O.T. need not seek federal “6(f) conversion” approval from the U.S. Secretary of the Interior, and no substitute park land is required. Federal “4(f) conversion” approval from the U.S. Secretary of Transportation could have been required, had the City insisted. The State will pay the City for the Brindley Park taking.

The D.O.T. also plans to acquire about 1.1 acres of the 1967 Cass Park purchase. This land will be taken in three different places: (1) a small sliver near Buffalo Street; (2) an irregularly shaped area in the middle of Inlet Island; and (3) another sliver near the Route 89 corridor on the west side of the channel. The State must receive
FIGURE 11. The City and the State have selected this Route 96 project alternative, called Plan A With Route 39 Alignment. The map, from the 1988 Draft Environmental Impact Statement, correctly portrays the new highway connections, but is erroneous in other particulars. It incorrectly labels the Permanent Flood Control Channel Baseline line as a property line, mislocates this line on the north half of the Island, and also mislocates a property line south of the Coast Guard Auxiliary building. See Footnotes 8 and 10 and Map #5.
federal "4(f) conversion" approval for these takings. Furthermore, because of Land and Water Conservation Fund involvement, the State must receive federal "6(f) conversion" approval, and substitute park land must be provided. Land bordering the Flood Control Channel in the vicinity of Southwest Park has been identified as potential substitute land. The identified land would be a link in the Cayuga Inlet Trail slated to connect major regional parks.

The federal government recently approved the proposed park takings, along with the suggested substitute park land.

The State will also purchase some privately owned parcels on and near Inlet Island. Of these, only one is located on Inlet Island itself: a parcel owned by Joseph Ciaschi. Ciaschi's parcel will be split awkwardly into two irregular fragments, one quite small.

In its Route 96 Draft Environmental Impact Statement, the State provided some preliminary, schematic design information about the two proposed bridges (see Figures 11 and 12). Both new bridges will be approached by mounded inclines. These ramps will rise on both sides of the Flood Control Channel.

Considered only as a physical structure, the new segment of Buffalo Street and its new bridge will have little effect on Inlet Island. This is because the new span will so closely parallel the existing State Street bridge.

But the new Route 89 alignment through the heart of Inlet Island will have a profound impact on Island land use. In plan alone, this new alignment will split the Island into halves, one south and one north of the highway. The noise and smells of traffic will intensify this barrier, physically and psychologically. Vistas up and down the Island will also be obstructively blocked. The inclined earthen ramp leading to the new bridge will begin not far west of today's Taughannock Boulevard. By the time it reaches the bridge, the ramp will have risen some ten feet above ground level.

After highway construction, Inlet Island will no longer seem like a whole, but rather like two disconnected and distant pieces — unless significant mitigating measures are undertaken.

The new Route 89 alignment may have one additional negative impact on the Island. Taughannock Boulevard north of its intersection with Buffalo Street will be widened to three traffic lanes (including one turning lane). No on-street parking will be per-
FIGURE 14. The new road connections and bridges of the pending Route 96 project are roughly sketched on an aerial photograph of Inlet Island. Highway construction is expected to begin in 1994 or 1995. This illustration comes from An Analysis and Evaluation of the Octopus/Route 96 Alternative Plans, a 1987 report by Planning/Environmental Research Consultants.
mitted. These changes could have serious adverse impacts on adjacent Inlet Island businesses, and on the attractiveness of the Taughannock Boulevard "entry" onto the Island.

The above information is based upon preliminary designs, so some details may change during final design. But the preliminary designs' fundamental premises — such as the location of the new highway corridors or the basic premise of having earthen ramps — will not change. They cannot change, because this would require preparation of a new Draft Environmental Impact Statement, putting the project back at "square one."

An artist's rendering of the two new bridges appeared in a Visual Resources Assessment attached to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. This illustration — the details of which are quite hypothetical — appears as Figure 13. A report prepared in 1987 by Planning/Environmental Research Consultants of Ithaca includes an aerial photo with an overlay sketch of the new highways and bridges. This is reproduced as Figure 14.

Although the Route 96 project will have a serious impact on Inlet Island, we can at least be thankful that State engineers are no longer designing highways like they did twenty-five years ago. Figure 15 depicts a Route 96/Route 13 project alternative under serious consideration in the late 1960s. The plan would have completely obliterated Inlet Island beneath an incredibly huge tangle of concrete highway ramps and multiple overpasses. The main highway corridor in this astonishing plan would have plowed right through the Station Restaurant.
CHAPTER IV: Inlet Island Today: Problems & Opportunities.

ANY INLET ISLAND LAND USE problems have been identified, both in discussions leading to the creation of the Inlet Island Land Use Committee, and during the committee's own deliberations.

Problems.

These are some of the leading issues needing resolution:

(1) The N.Y.S. Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation ("State Parks") is the agency responsible for monitoring compliance with the requirements of the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund. Officials of the Finger Lakes Region of State Parks believe certain existing conditions on Inlet Island constitute unauthorized conversions from park use.

On November 15, 1990, Andrew Mazzella and Robert Gonet of State Parks wrote a letter to the City listing these alleged conversions. They include encroachment on park land by a portion of the Station Restaurant, possible encroachments by businesses along Taughannock Boulevard, and the "general poor condition of the site."

State Parks has directed the City to "remEDIATE EXISTING CONVERSIONS and bring the project into compliance with Land and Water Conservation Fund guidelines." Required actions include establishing park limits by survey, ceasing existing conversions, restoring park uses, and removing facilities prohibited by federal guidelines.

The letter from Mr. Mazzella and Mr. Gonet appears as Appendix D.

(2) The current boundaries of the portion of Cass Park on Inlet Island were rational for a railroad company operating prior to construction of the Flood Control Channel. But these boundaries are not the optimal demarcation between public and private land today.

As noted previously, the current Cass Park limits are highly irregular, reflecting the past location of railroad sidings, railroad service buildings, and curving tracks. One conspicuous oddity is the thin "tongue" of park land, southeast of the Station Restaurant, that
presently separates two privately-owned plots.

The Flood Control Channel has functionally separated a small piece of Cass Park toward the north of the Island from a larger piece to the south, though legally they remain part of the same parcel. The smaller northerly park land piece — corresponding to the area labeled “Leased by L.V.R.R. to Agway” on Map #3 — is often called the “Agway Parcel,” though Agway never owned it. It consists of a service building; a concrete dike enclosing a weedy wasteland where four petroleum tanks once stood; and a paved area surrounded by a forbidding chain-link fence topped with barbed wire.

The “Agway Parcel” must rank as one of the unlikeliest pieces of park land in America.

(3) The park land on Inlet Island appears under utilized. This may result from several factors. First, much of the park land has never really been developed as such. Second, with the large Cass Park on the west side of the Flood Control Channel, there may not be a need for a large park (as opposed to a linear park) on the east side of the channel. Third, there may not be sufficient private development on Inlet Island to support its large stretches of park land. Smaller, well-planned park areas, in conjunction with attractive private development, could actually increase Island park use.

(4) Following the State’s Route 96 project land acquisition, the federally-funded park land on Inlet Island — already functionally divided into two separate pieces (Map #4) — will be functionally divided into four oddly-shaped separate pieces (Map #6). This will make some remaining park land even less usable and less coherent.

(5) The irregular shape of Inlet Island park parcels, the functional separation between them, and the lack of park definition by plantings, fences or other means confuses the general public. Few people really know for certain what areas are park and what areas are not. The so-called “Agway Parcel” looks like private land, but isn’t. Some private parcels look like park land, but aren’t.

The City Forester, who is well acquainted with most City land holdings, recently asked the planning department for a map to help him figure out what Inlet Island land was City-owned. No wonder the average citizen is perplexed.

This ambiguity leads well-intentioned people to trespass unknowingly onto private land. The lack of clear, logical definition between what is public and what is private, combined with the neglected appearance of much existing park land, probably also encourages intentional trespass and vagrancy on the Island. Various landholders on the Island complain vigorously about the latter problem.

(6) When the Route 96 project is complete, the presence of a widened and more intensely used highway could harm businesses lining the east side of Taughannock Boulevard. The widened road will come very close to Pete’s Grocery, for instance. After project completion, no parking will be permitted on Taughannock Boulevard near its intersection with Buffalo Street, and this, too, could hurt Island businesses.

Taughannock Boulevard north of Buffalo Street serves as the traditional “entry” from the City onto the Island. The presence of a wider and busier highway here could diminish the attractiveness of this “gateway,” for both drivers and pedestrians. The Island’s health depends on an appealing and inviting entry point.

(7) The earthen ramp that will connect the Route 89 alignment to its new bridge will be an intrusive horizontal and vertical barrier in the heart of Inlet Island (see Chapter III). The ramp will split the Island visually and functionally unless effective mitigating measures are adopted.

(8) Many City planning reports have made suggestions for Inlet Island. Most have recommended retaining some park land along the Flood Control Channel and encouraging waterfront-related private development on the Island’s interior.

In the City’s 1971 Ithaca, N.Y.: A General Plan, for example, a “Projected Land Use, 1990” map foresaw a combination of “commercial” and “recreational and green space” uses for Inlet Island. The plan’s text makes two relevant proposals — one for the Island specifically, the other with broader application. First, the
"island created by the flood control channel and the Cayuga Inlet north of Buffalo Street should be developed to exploit its unique water-oriented character and view. The area should be developed in marine-oriented commercial land uses." Second, the "city, state, and private all-season cultural-recreational facilities on the lake front should be further encouraged. These facilities should be developed in such a way as to attract both vacationers and local residents to the multiple-purpose area."19

The 1974 Cayuga Inlet Study foresees three possible outcomes for Inlet Island, resulting respectively from minimal, moderate and significant City involvement. The study prefers the latter scenario, which would make Inlet Island a "center of the waterfront" and of marine-oriented activities. The ideal result, according to the study, would be the development illustrated in Figures 16, 17 and 18.

The designers propose a Route 96 project arrangement that has both similarities to and differences from the design actually selected in 1989. North of the highway, a "gateway" opens onto a "public square" surrounded by a horseshoe arrangement of shops with apartments above. Many shops cater to marine needs, and some nearby docks "can be reserved" for visiting boats.

Family housing is clustered in "U-shapes around lagoons." The lagoons are "not dominated by automobiles, but rather people, their houses, boats and water." A pedestrian way "thread[s] its way through the housing village" and leads to the Island’s north tip. Here, "a public terrace, cafe and restaurant take advantage of the panoramic view from the point." The report emphasizes the tip’s

FIGURE 16. This "Site Plan" is from the 1974 Cayuga Inlet Study, which examines Inlet Island and its environs. The planners assume a Route 96 corridor whose bridge somewhat resembles (but when other aspects differ from) the plan adopted in 1989.

INLET ISLAND LAND USE COMMITTEE
value to the community: "This area should be elevated to serve as a landmark, and provide a place to watch activity on the water and in the [Casa] park across the Inlet."

The green area west of the Station Restaurant would be preserved as park land. This park — to be enhanced with "more color in the form of flowering and ornamental trees" — would welcome Route 96 and Route 89 traffic into the City.

Overall, the plan would seek to "promote continued improvement of Ithaca's leisure time facilities." Activities would include "play areas, boat parades, races, regattas, outdoor music and theatre, sitting, people and boat watching, boat rides and renting."20

The 1976 Ithaca Waterways Study makes three recommendations for Inlet Island. First, it asks that no highway bridges be built north of Buffalo Street "so as to preserve the island's integrity and allow for new residential, commercial, recreational and marine development." Second, the public land on the Island's west side "should continue to be landscaped with an interesting variety of plantings and should be used as a waterfront park and promenade." Third, the old Inlet on the Island's east side should be canal-like with residential, recreational and marine-related uses encouraged. Finally, landscaping to the Inlet's east should screen the Island from the "industrial-commercial uses north of Court Street and west of Meadow."21

The 1982 Final Report: Cayuga Inlet and Island Project presents a detailed Island development program (Figure 19). New condominiums, shops and parking areas are envisioned, along with a new hotel. A linear park along the Flood Control Channel connects a natural park south of State Street to a small park at the Island's tip. This linear park includes floating docks, meandering waterfront walkways, lighting, seating and landscaping — all meant to bring "water closer to people." At the Island's tip are picnic tables and benches.22

Despite so many recommendations over so many years, no substantial Inlet Island redevelopment has yet occurred. One major roadblock — now removed — has been uncertainty over the Route 96 project's final form. Disagreement about the scope of desirable development, and crucial mistakes in the park alienation and conversion process, have also stymied progress.23

(9) Past attempts to alienate and convert all the federally-funded park land east of the Permanent Flood Control Channel Easement line are in permanent limbo.

In 1985, at the request of the City, the State legislature passed and the governor signed Chapter 757 authorizing alienation of this park land — and authorizing alienation of Southwest Park, as well. The legislation listed an undifferentiated pool of three substitute park land parcels. One was the "Festival Lands" (northwest of the