

# Irish Town Bend

**Irish River Bend is an idealized “Emerald Isle” green-space that commemorates Irish immigrants who settled on the west bank of the Cuyahoga River. Using a theme of Irish landscape and Celtic interlace, this design offers solutions to the challenges posed by competition organizers.**

## Shifting Terrain

This design proposes a series of “interlaced” pathways, buttresses and water’s edge containment systems to stabilize the hillside and create an open, country landscape.

## Community Access

This design builds a physical and community connection to neighborhood through a) visual identity composed of - a silhouette of the Cuyahoga attached to a fragment of St. Malachi interlace; b) hill-top entrances that provide unparalleled views of the landscape; and, c) extensive pedestrian, wheelchair and bicycle access to the hillside and water’s edge. Visitors may move across the park in ten minutes, or travel slowly over vast hillside and river walk.

## History and Future

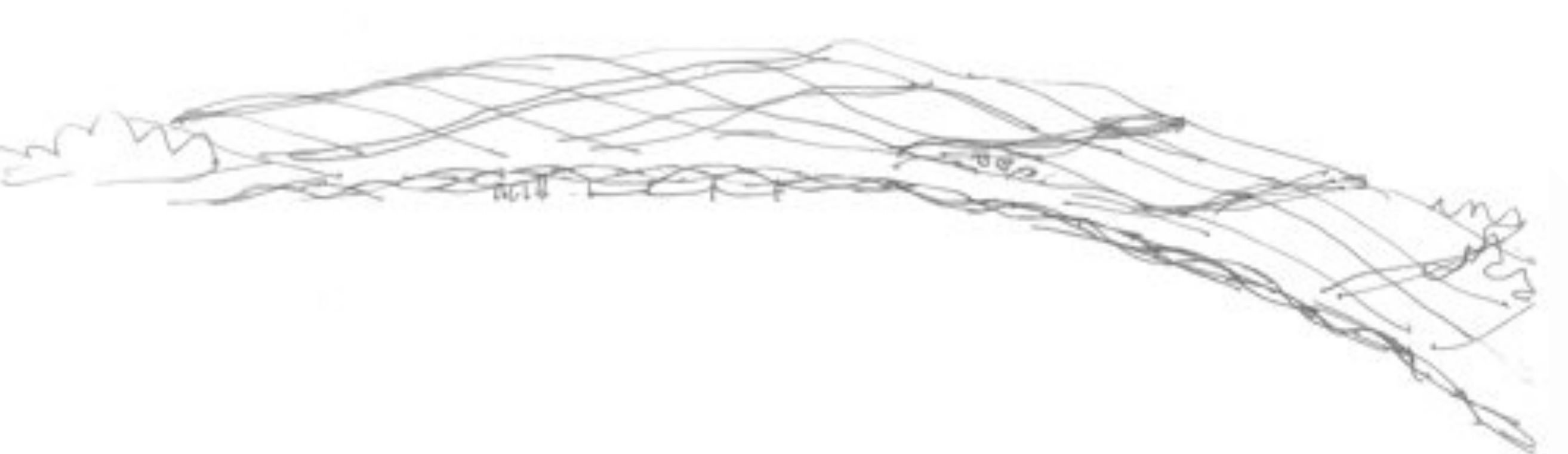
This design honors the history of the site as it relates to the Cuyahoga’s original Native American residents, 19th century Irish settlers, and present neighborhood residents. A powerful symbol of Cleveland’s optimism, Irish River Bend, will help to repopulate the city.

## Sustainable City

This design embraces the regeneration of the Cuyahoga Valley’s abandoned urban landscape by

- a) demonstrating “green” building practices;
- b) raising adjacent land values; and,
- c) providing a vast, innovative, hillside and riverside park for the leisure and recreation of city residents and visitors.

At Irish River Bend the hurried energy of bridges, viaduct, river and sky is transformed into a gentle leisure.

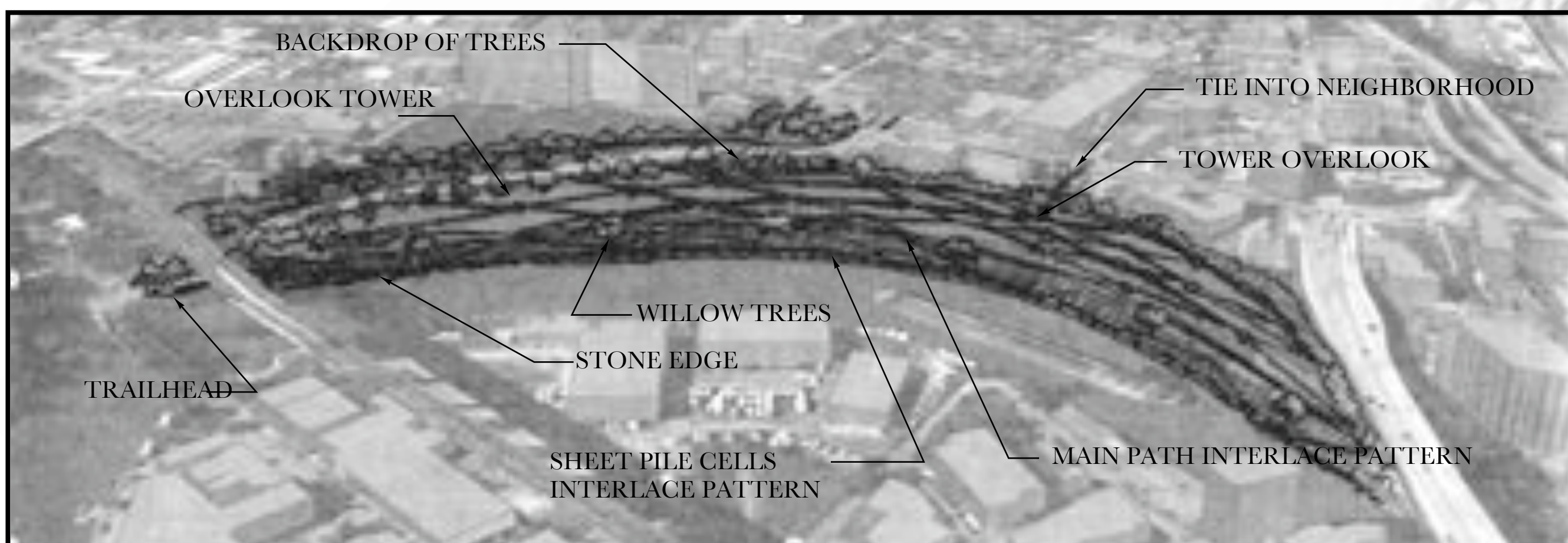


## Land Pattern

The loose grid of paths reference the neat Irish countryside. In celebrating that island landscape, this park recalls those who emigrated to American during the 19th century Potato Famine. Celtic interlace, similar to the decorative welcome at the nearby St. Malachi’s Church, adorns the park’s pathways and the standing “way-finder” stones. Most of the path’s intersections are distinguished by a single quotation. Generally these words are of Irish origin or they consider the exile experience.



Capture the essence of the Emerald Isle with its stone walls and hedgerows



## Hillside

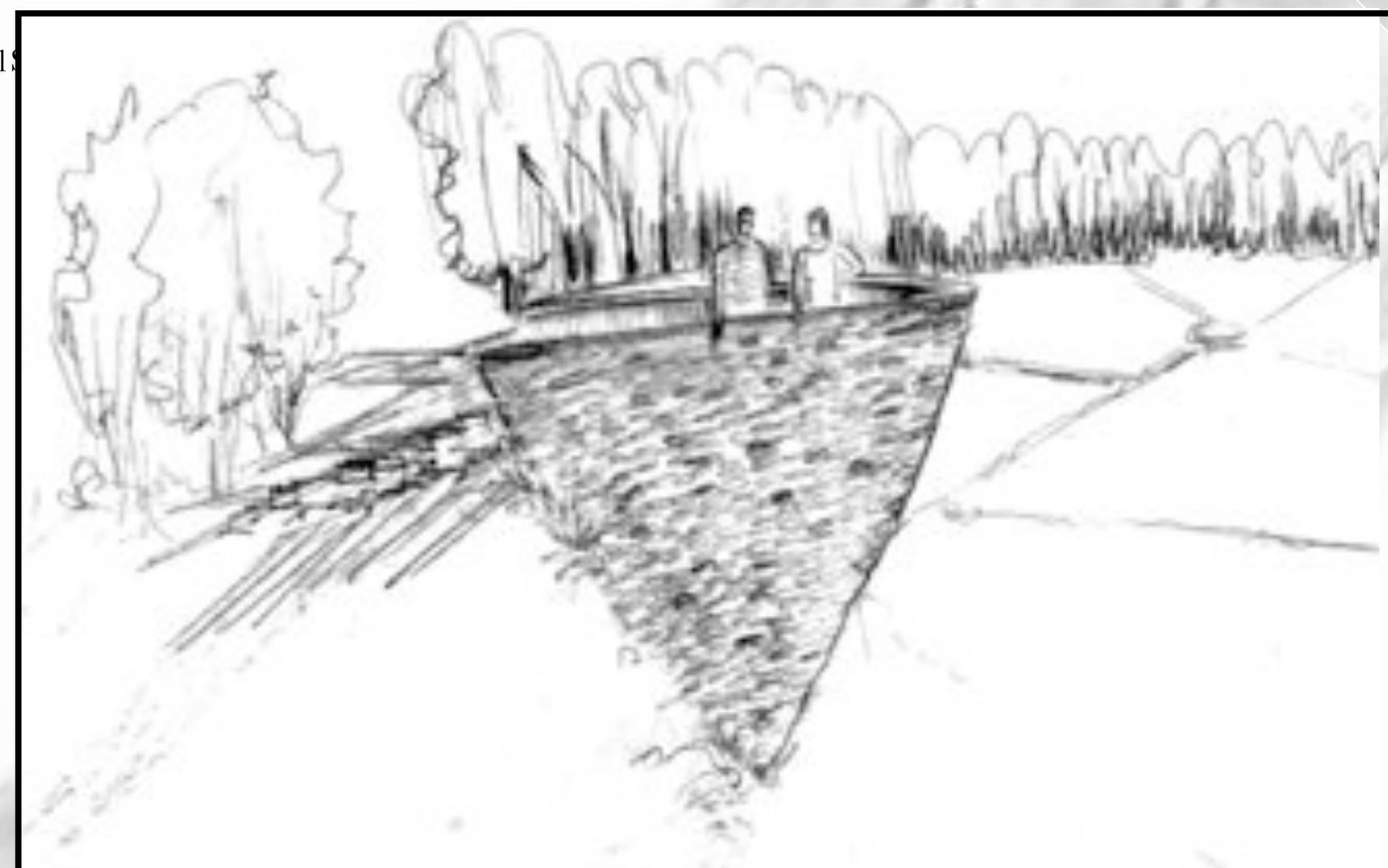
Sustainable design practices overcome the terrain’s instability. Cleared of wild growth, the long tightly-curving site rises quickly above the river. A web of pathways form an interlace that heightens the three-dimensionality of the irregular, sloping terrain. At night the in-ground fixtures illuminate the hillside with an intricate necklace of light visible from skyscrapers. The 1 : 1.5 slope of the hillside is stabilized through a network of latticed paths and hedge-rows forming a cellular containment system (built from recycled demolition materials from this site and from the city.) By leveling paths across the long site using switch-backs, an accessible 5% slope is attained to permit all users an opportunity to traverse the site using multiple routes to reach the river.

## Settler’s Story

During the Irish Potato Famine, thousands of destitute families boarded ships to America. After their lengthy journeys across the Atlantic, some survivors continued west to Cleveland’s Cuyahoga riverbank to live, work, play and pray in their newly built St. Malachi’s Catholic Church. In this idealized Emerald Isle green-space, the far-way Irish homeland is remembered.



Detail of stone trim from St. Malachi Church



## Programs

Each year a sunny field is planted with potatoes. Harvested by St. Malachi parishioners the potatoes are used to make soup to honor their ancestors and to celebrate their patron saint each November. On St. Patrick’s Day, area residents meet at the courtyard to walk to the Flat Iron - the local Irish Pub. Students from the Joyful Noise Neighborhood School play every Sunday afternoon in the summer. On weekends acoustic bands regularly gather for sessions in the large northern courtyard. Thursday nights, the courtyard is used for a poetry slam. Spaces art gallery receives annual funding to organize a series of temporary public art works in the park. Zygot Press gives a monthly out-door demonstration that recruits paying students to its workshops and classes on East 30th. Members of City Wheels assemble to tour Cleveland together.



## Partners

Local partners and the American Heritage River will link Irish River Bend to a variety of regional, state and national programs. In time, a narrow band of public access will be established along the river from the Cuyahoga Valley National Park through Irish River Bend, the Flats and northward to Lake Erie. All of Cleveland will embrace Irish River Bend with pride.