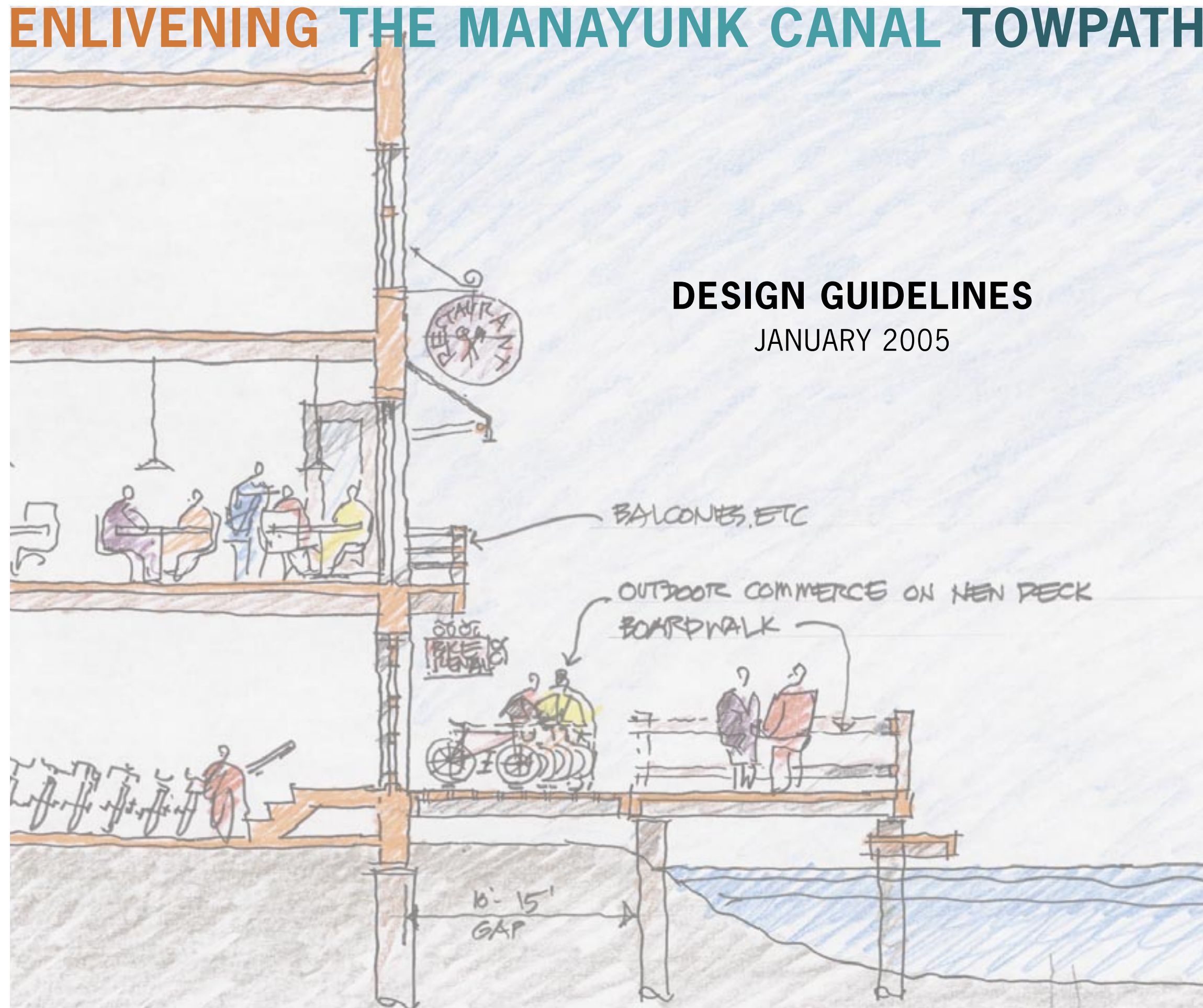


# ENLIVENING THE MANAYUNK CANAL TOWPATH

## DESIGN GUIDELINES

JANUARY 2005



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# INTRODUCTION



The Manayunk Canal Towpath represents an exciting opportunity to reconnect people with a remnant of Manayunk’s industrial heritage. While the existing towpath is easy to access and fairly well-maintained, it is an underutilized asset. However, interest in remaking this asset into a welcoming destination has grown in recent years. As a result, the Manayunk Development Corporation has spearheaded an effort to study the towpath, compile input from stakeholders, examine various possibilities for bringing life to the towpath, and develop a series of guidelines and recommendations for animating the towpath. This document represents the results of these efforts.

The Manayunk Development Corporation would like to thank the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development for providing a grant to undertake this project. MDC would also like to thank the Philadelphia City Planning Commission, the Manayunk Neighborhood Council, and the residents of Manayunk for their valuable suggestions for breathing new life into towpath.

# PHOTO GALLERY



As these pictures indicate, the Manayunk Canal Towpath comes in many different forms. In some places there is a boardwalk, in others there might be a gravel trail. The distance of the buildings from the edge of the towpath also varies. In some cases the buildings line up to the edge of the towpath, while in other places there might be 4 to 10 feet of space between the buildings and the towpath.



The guidelines for adding balconies, bays, and decks to the backs of the buildings, which are described in detail in this report, take into consideration these variations.

*Note:* At the time this report was published, the City began installing lighting along the towpath. This is the first step in the transformation of the towpath into a vibrant destination.

# WHO'S ON THE TOWPATH?



## BUSINESSES LINING THE MANAYUNK TOWPATH

**Icons:** Fork and knife (restaurant), Music note (music), Wheelchair (accessibility), Hanger (clothing), Fork and knife (cafe), Dollar sign (bank), Coffee cup (cafe), ATM, Gift box (antique), Fork and knife (barber), Golf club (golf), Hanger (jeans), Fork and knife (pub), Hanger (clothing), House (apartments), Wine glass (bar), Warehouse (storage), Coffee cup (cafe).

**Businesses and Locations:**

- STYLE OF MAN
- MAIN ST. MUSIC
- CANAL VIEW PARK
- MAINLY SHOES
- CAFE ZESTY
- LA COLOMBE
- BEN & JERRY'S
- ANTIQUE STORE
- GOLF STORE
- BARBER SHOP
- LUCKY JEANS
- SIPS & STEAKS
- PITCHER'S PUB
- THAI SHOP
- SPORTSWORKS
- BOURBON BLUE
- G WHITFIELD
- MOM'S PIZZA
- ART & SCIENCE
- Future Store
- PUBLIC IMAGE
- CITIZENS BANK
- Mellon Bank ATM
- HIKARU
- BELLE MAISON
- RECTOR COTTON APTS
- LABOV
- FRUIT FREEZE

**Streets:** Main St., Gay St., Cotton St., Roxborough St.

A diverse group of businesses lines the towpath, from clothing stores to pizzerias. A few business owners have already expressed interest in “opening up” on the towpath. Once these pioneers are able to demonstrate success on the towpath, other businesses will likely follow suit.

# EXAMPLES FROM OTHER PLACES



## WILMINGTON, NC RIVERWALK

A pleasant, manicured place for a stroll that caps off the revitalization of the town's historic main street



## SAN ANTONIO RIVERWALK

A unique destination for shopping, dining, and boating, day or night, that put San Antonio on the map for something other than the Alamo



Canals and riverfronts can make for exciting destinations for shopping, dining, and recreation. The examples on the left, from Wilmington, NC and San Antonio, TX illustrate some of the ways cities throughout the country have brought life back to their waterfronts.

The photos from Wilmington, NC show the careful attention given to the design of the light fixtures, the boardwalk, and the railings, which all contribute toward a pleasant experience for strollers and joggers. The San Antonio photo shows how adding dining and recreational options has transformed a canal into a popular destination and landmark.



# WHAT ARE THE ISSUES & CHALLENGES?

## **Ambiguous Property Ownership and Property Lines**

Who owns the space between the towpath and the buildings? Where are the exact property lines? Since Fairmount Park Commission has jurisdiction over the towpath, it will be interested in participating in discussions.

## **Regulatory Issues**

Should the space between the buildings and the towpath be treated as a public right-of-way similar to a sidewalk? Would businesses need to get a variance to make additions to their buildings?

## **Environmental Limitations**

Would property-owners within the floodplain be burdened by FEMA insurance restrictions and construction requirements if they wanted to make changes to their buildings?

## **Design Guidelines**

How can the ensemble of potential changes to the buildings facing the towpath be coordinated to maximize the benefits to everyone and minimize problems?



Before business owners can begin to make improvements to the backs of their buildings facing the towpath, a number of issues need to be resolved. This report details the last item on the list to the left: “Design Guidelines.” The Manayunk Development Corporation will take a lead role in meeting with various agencies to resolve the other issues.

# WHAT GUIDELINES SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED?

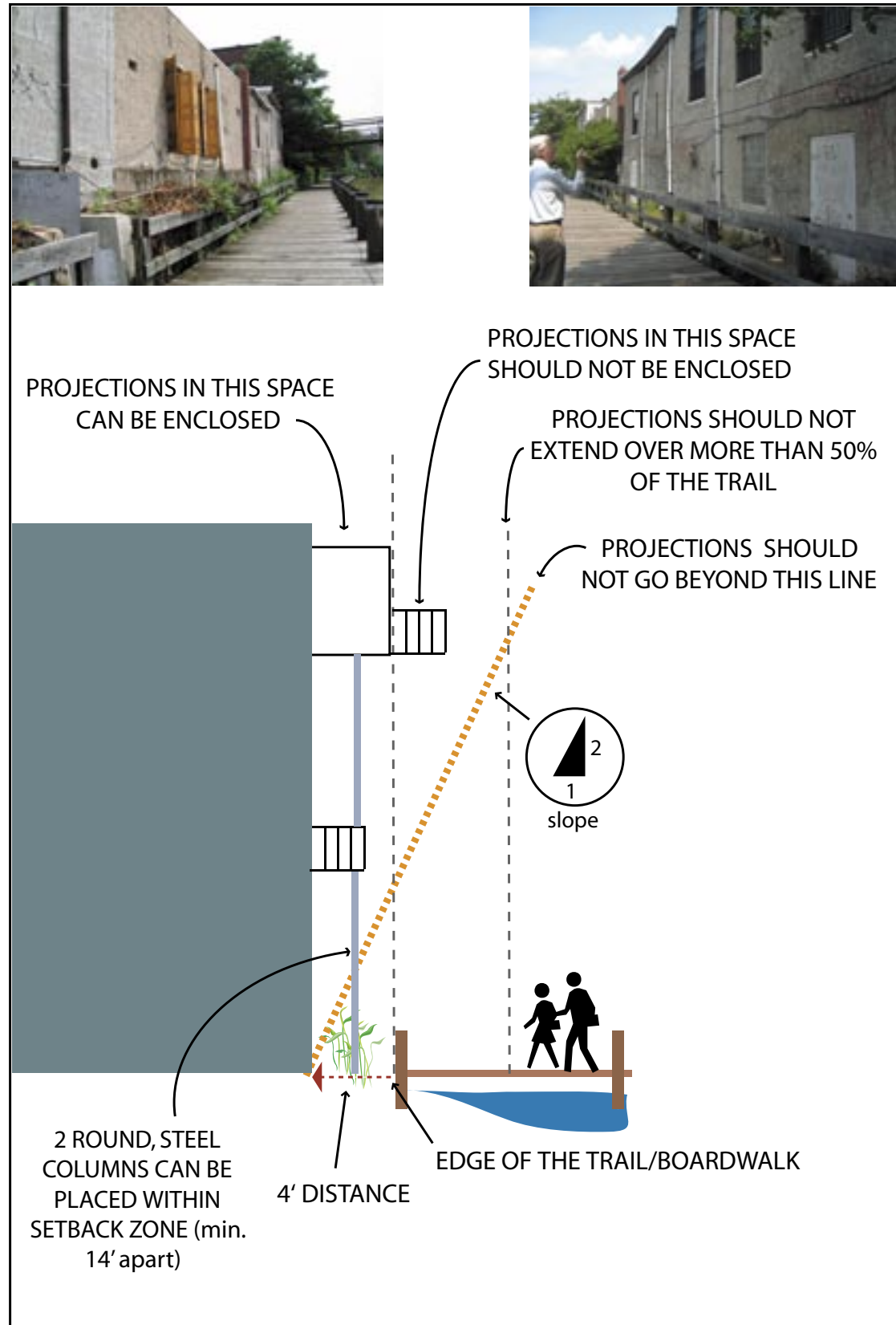
## Reasons for Establishing Guidelines for the Towpath

- Increase the vitality of the towpath.
- Promote safe and pleasant passage for pedestrians.
- Ensure that the design of new structures is consistent with existing character in Manayunk.
- Provide design ideas to businesses wishing to make additions to the backs of their buildings.



# WHAT GUIDELINES SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED?

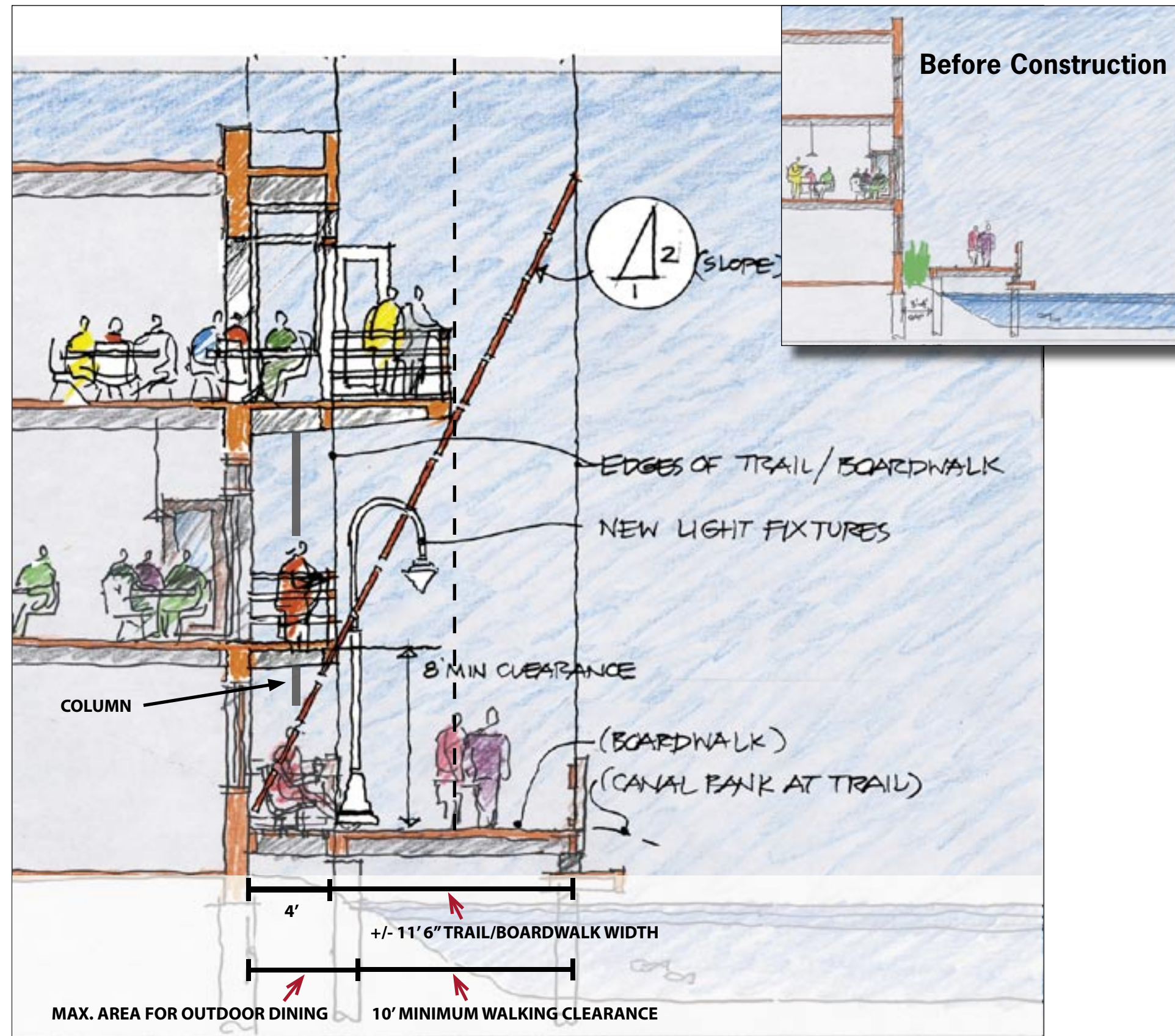
## Condition 1: Short Distance (4') Between Building and Towpath Edge



**Under Condition 1, in order to determine how far a balcony, bay window, or deck can extend over the towpath, the first step is to measure 4' from the edge of the trail/boardwalk back toward the building. From that point, draw an imaginary line extending upward with a slope of 2:1. This line represents the primary limit.**

# WHAT GUIDELINES SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED?

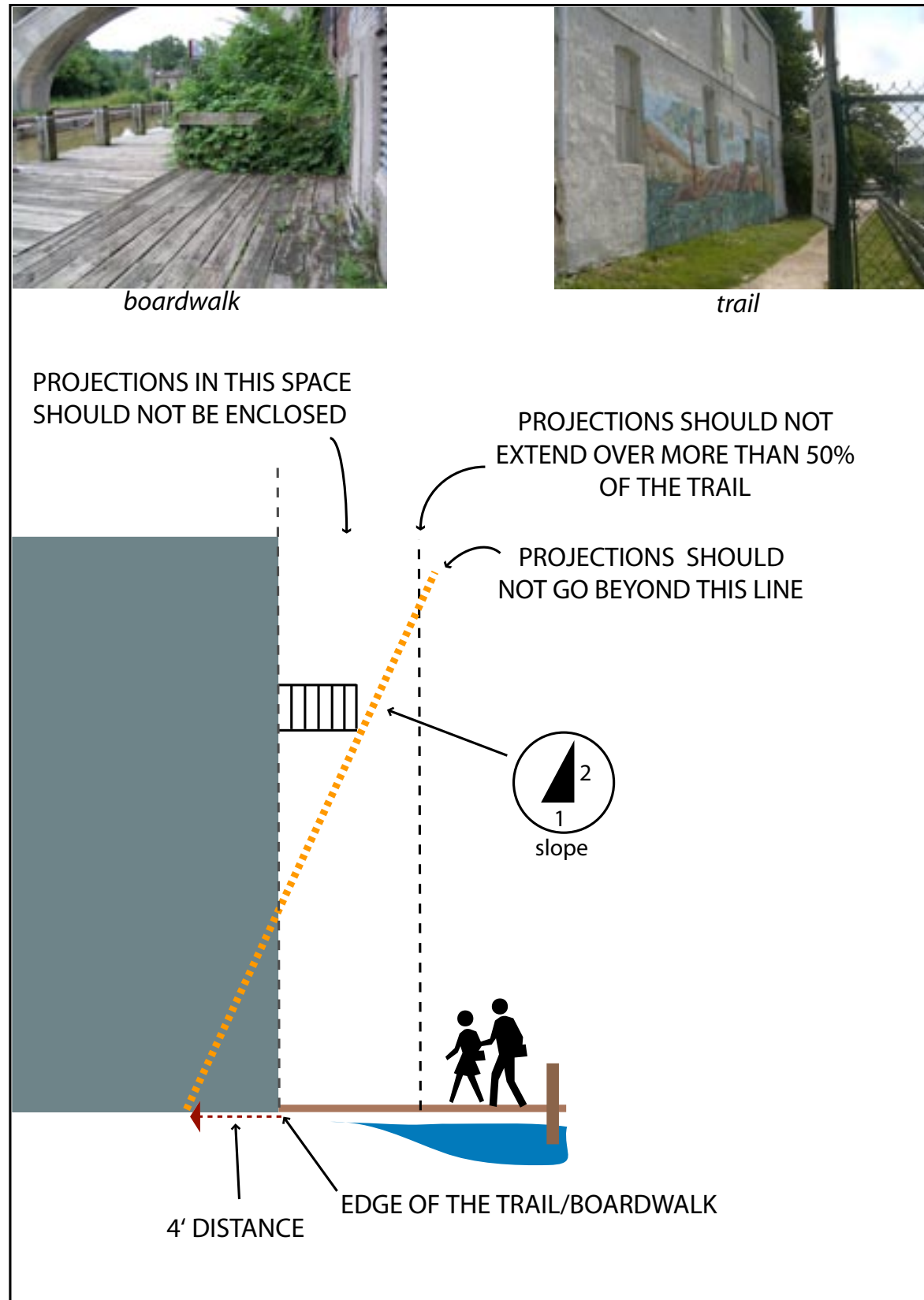
## Example of Improvements Allowed Under Condition 1



The sketch on the left shows how a business owner facing Condition 1 might make use of the space on and above the towpath. In this case, the business owner added a first floor balcony, along with a second floor bay/balcony. The boardwalk was extended out to the building. The business owner placed a bench on this space. If the business owner were interested in adding a small table and chairs to this space, this is allowed. As the sketch on the left indicates, the table/chairs can actually extend onto the towpath so long as there is a 10' clearance on the towpath for pedestrians.

# WHAT GUIDELINES SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED?

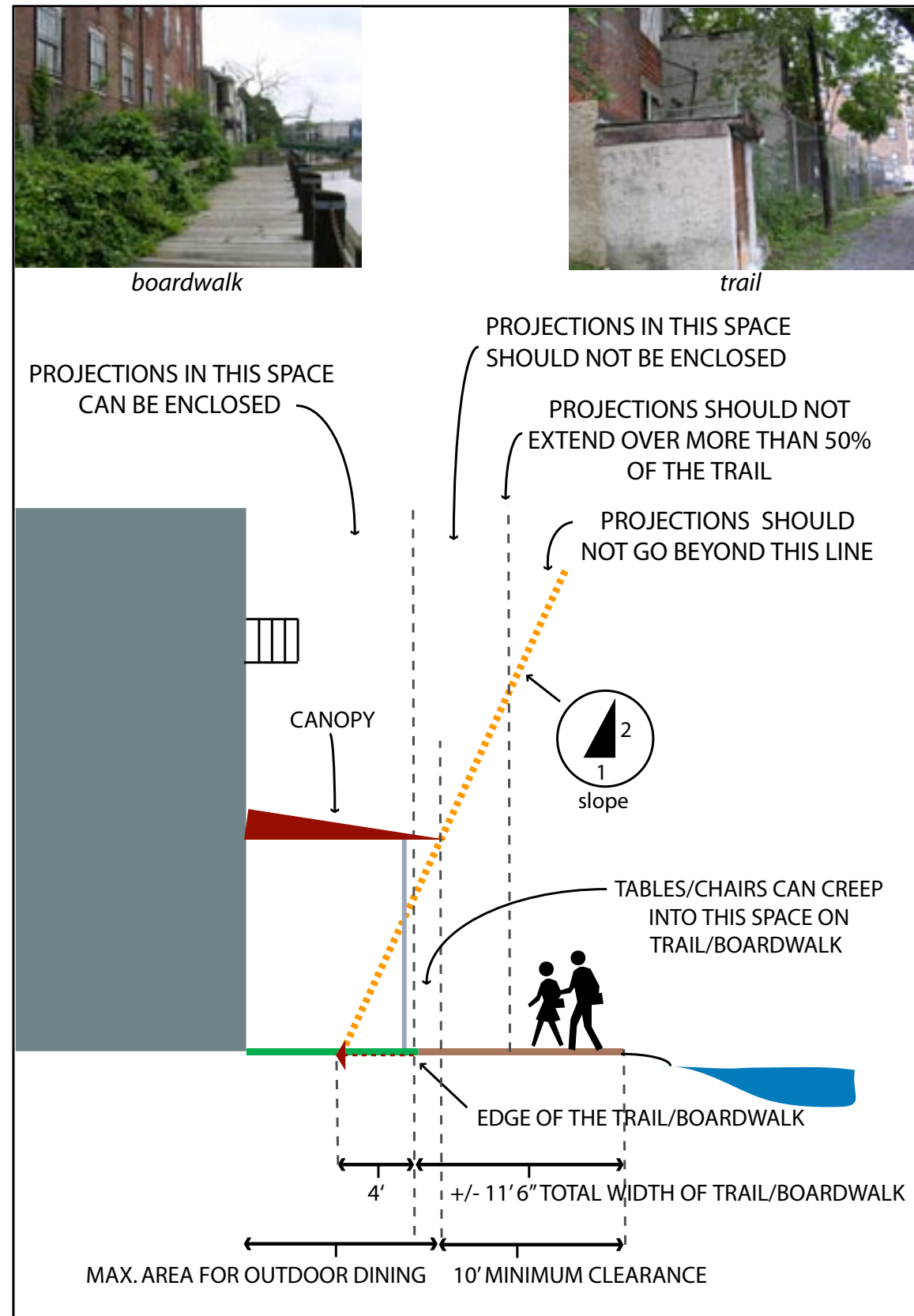
## Condition 2: No Distance Between Building and Towpath Edge



**Under Condition 2, in order to determine how far a balcony, bay window, or deck can extend over the towpath,** the first step is to measure 4' from the edge of the trail/boardwalk back toward the building. Under Condition 2, this 4' setback actually extends into the building. From that point, draw an imaginary line extending upward with a slope of 2:1. This line represents the primary limit.

# WHAT GUIDELINES SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED?

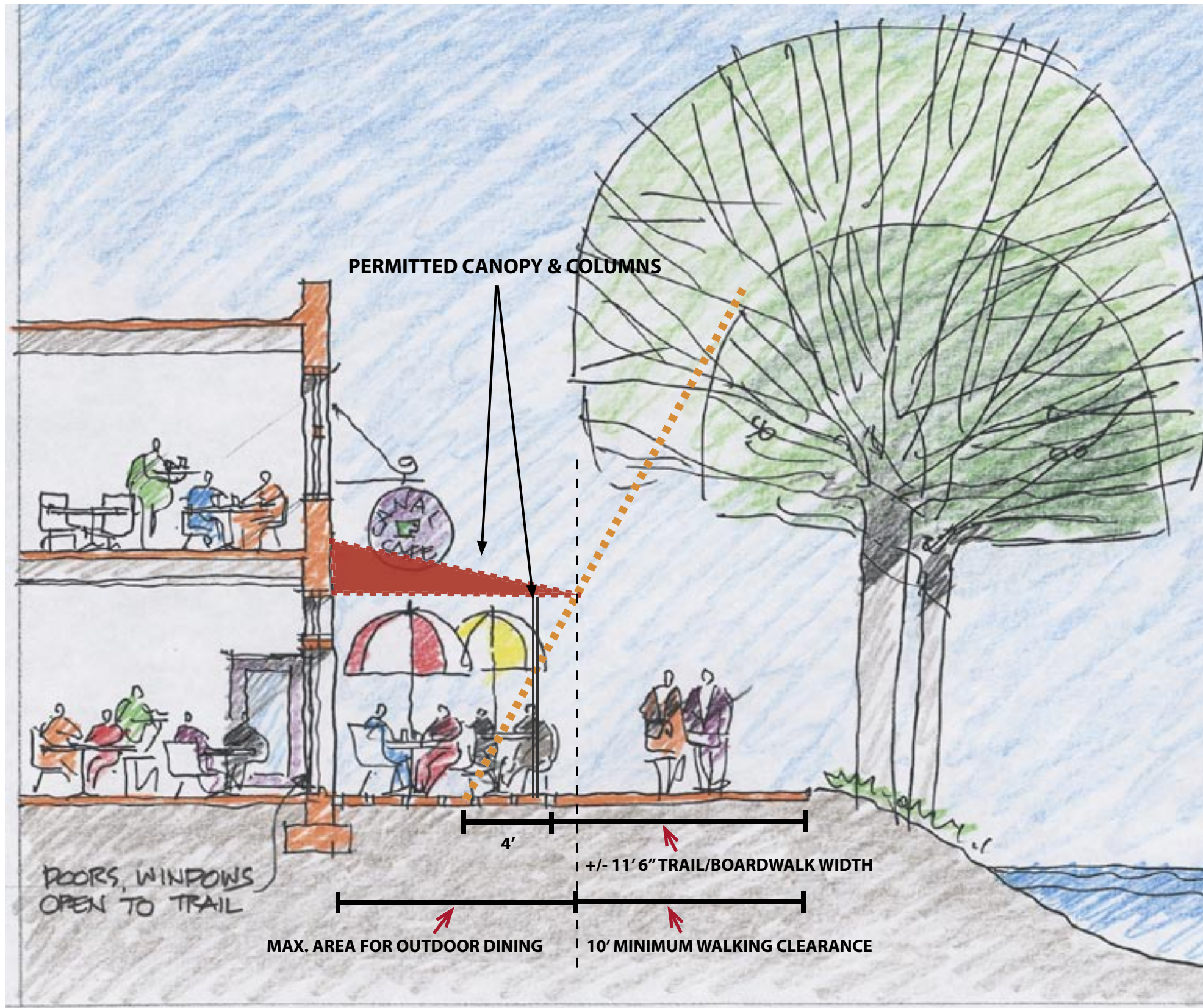
## Condition 3: Large Distance Between Building and Towpath Edge



**Under Condition 3, in order to determine how far a balcony, bay window, or deck can extend over the towpath,** the first step is to measure 4' from the edge of the trail/boardwalk back toward the building. From that point, draw an imaginary line extending upward with a slope of 2:1. This line represents the primary limit. Since there is a relatively wide gap between the trail/boardwalk edge and the building, a business owner could place a canopy (along with supports) over this space and place tables and chairs underneath the canopy.

# WHAT GUIDELINES SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED?

## Example of Improvements Allowed Under Condition 3



The sketch on the left shows tables and umbrellas in the outdoor dining space. It also shows, as an option, how a business owner facing Condition 3 might attach a canopy behind the building and place the tables and chairs underneath for outdoor dining. As in Condition 1, the tables and chairs, along with the canopy, can extend onto the trail/boardwalk, as long as there is at least 10' of space for pedestrians to walk. Projections may be enclosed, but only up to 4' back from the edge of the trail.



This photograph of San Antonio's Riverwalk shows conditions similar to those shown in the sketch on the left.

# WHAT GUIDELINES SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED?

## Guidelines for Design Details of Projections & Other Building Elements



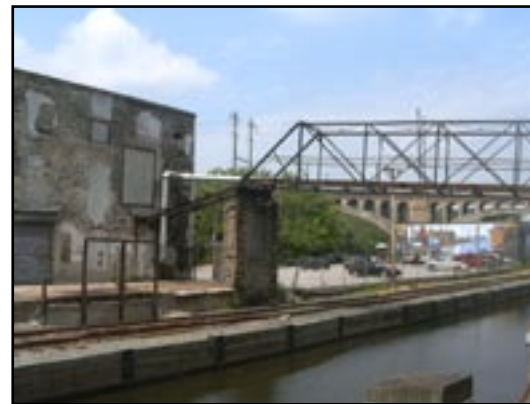
- 1** Railing design should reflect the industrial character of the towpath/canal; metal is the preferred material



- 2** Bay-like projections should have clear glass windows that cover at least 50% of the bay wall space



- 3** Materials on exterior walls of bays and on soffits should reflect the area's industrial aesthetic; preferred materials include painted metal, painted wood, and metal supports



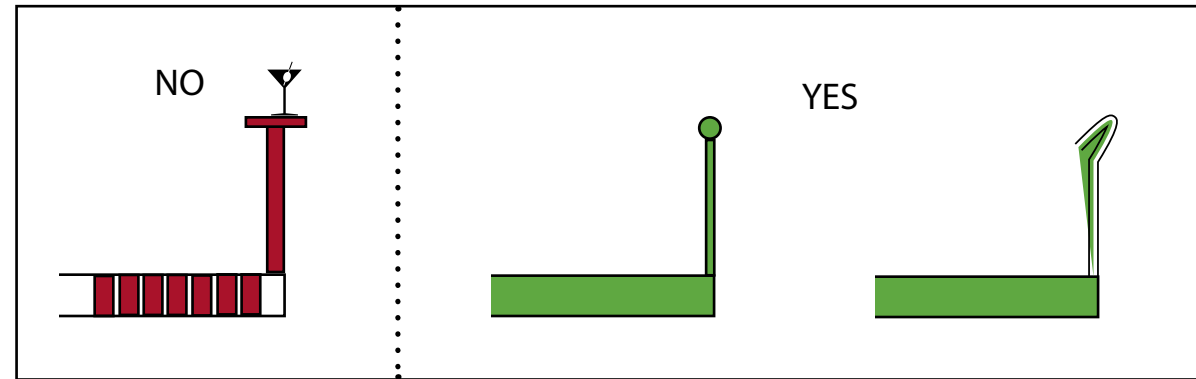
# WHAT GUIDELINES SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED?

## Guidelines for Design Details of Projections & Other Building Elements



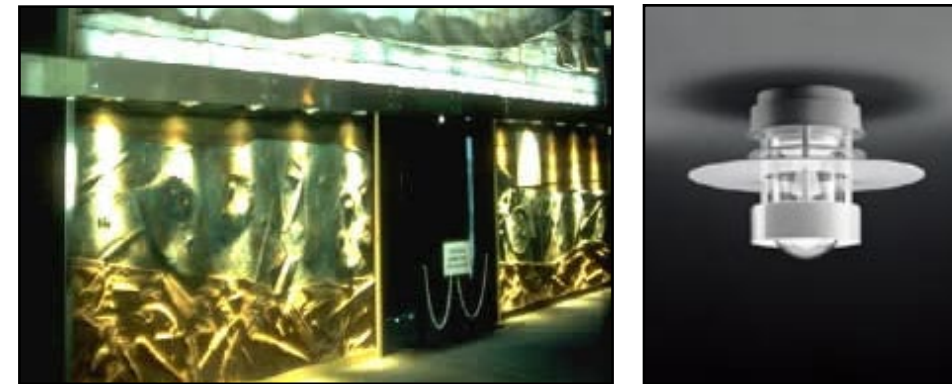
The design of the floors and railings of projections should prevent hazards to pedestrians walking on the towpath; floors should be solid and railings should be shaped so that objects cannot be placed on them

4



Businesses should install lights underneath bays, balconies, and decks and are encouraged to illuminate the backs of their buildings to help contribute toward a more lively nighttime ambience along the towpath

5



The design of signs should be guided by the existing standards set for Main Street Manayunk. Two examples from Manayunk are shown here

6



Temporary vendor carts should be permitted, but their hours of operation, placement, services provided, and designs should be controlled.

7



# WHAT COULD THE CHANGES LOOK LIKE?



*This photo simulation illustrates what could be done to bring life to a section of the towpath in two situations: when the boardwalk adjoins the boardwalk, and when the building is set back about 10 feet.*



*This sketch shows how the restaurant Bourbon Blue might add outdoor dining options on and above the towpath. Bourbon Blue faces a unique set of conditions that only approximately fit the three described in preceding pages.*

# PROJECT MILESTONES



June 2004 **Project Initiation**

July 2004 **Site Survey & Sketches**

September 22, 2004 **Met with Planning Commission**

October 20, 2004 **Met with Neighborhood Council**

November 10, 2004 **Met with Businesses**

December 1, 2004 **Met with Community Group**

December 2004 **Issued Final Guidelines & Recommendations**

