

A L V I N H O L M A . I . A .

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Dear Sirs,

The series of neighborhood meetings you convened last week were impressive, partly through the excellent attendance but also for the highly organized and friendly good nature of the program. I'm certain you were all well pleased with the results and the enthusiasm that was generated. It was all of very keen interest to me having raised a family on Logan Circle and having spent many years on the Parkway and beyond along the Schuylkill. My wife and I were actively engaged with all the institutions as well as serving on LSNA in a variety of ways including Zoning Chairman and several terms as President. So you see the ardor of my interest in your program.

Two projects rivet my attention. The first responds to the particularities of your focus at those meetings and while I had sympathy for practically all the neighbors' suggestions, as an architect I winced at the thought of putting it all together in a simple coherent harmonious scheme. But as I examined closely the original Parkway plan as conceived by Greber and Cret, it occurred to me that to follow studiously the ideas they had already drawn, almost all the expressed current needs would be met. Although much has been changed since the twenties

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that could not be redone, the idea of a series of "vest-pocket" parks, symmetrical along both sides of the Parkway, could be implemented without offense to anything existing at present. The tiny "parklets" that Greber indicated had great variety of size and shape and planting, but they also exhibited a harmonious sense of ensemble, which is seldom seen these days in landscape design. Most frequently the more formal schemes of the past receive less than sympathetic treatment in our current zeal to design "for our time." But here we have a perfect excuse to further implement the grand design of Greber and Cret. The neighbors would love it. See how everyone loves Paul Cret at Rittenhouse Square.

The second project that came up in response to your meetings was a scheme I developed myself way back in 1986 for an amphitheater at Eakins Oval. At the time, I proposed it to Councilman John B. Kelly as a memorial to Princess Grace. For obscure reasons I can't recall the project never took wings. But now it seems as though its time has come. Everyone I showed it to at a couple of those meetings seemed genuinely delighted with the idea, and several of them are actually coaching me on how to get it going. One woman has actually composed a press release to be used at the opening. She has encouraged me with a list of "next steps" and people to call, so what am I to do, but persevere?

I have enclosed some pictures of the Eakins Oval Scheme. I know that it not the sort of large scale long term ideas you were looking for, but the occasion cried out for me to bring it up. I would be interested to hear your thoughts on these ideas. I hope they may be useful. Again, my congratulations on your excellent series of neighborhood meetings.

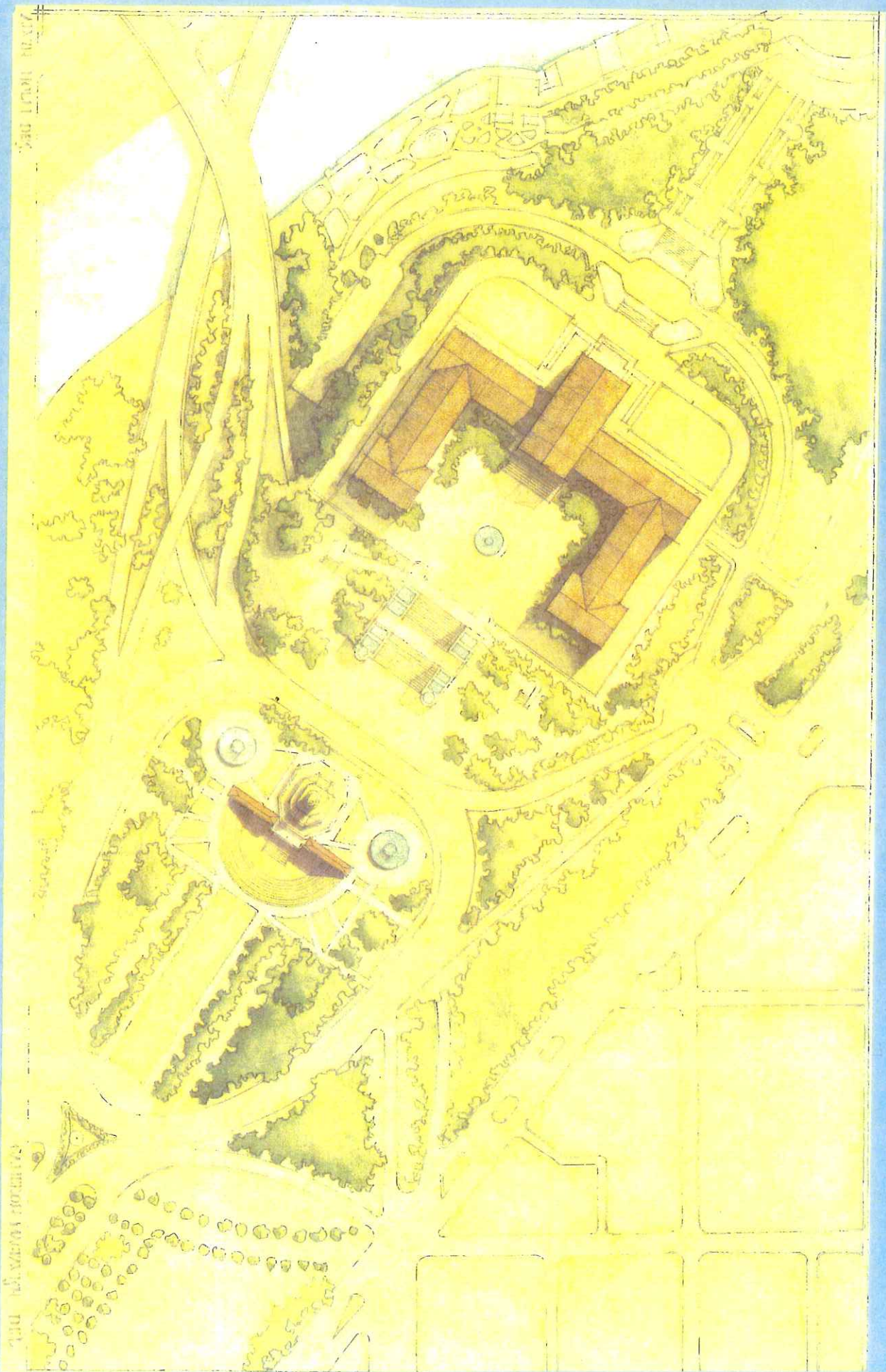
Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Alvin Holm".

Alvin Holm

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ALVIN HOJIM ARCH.

GRACE KELLY MEMORIAL

A PROPOSAL FOR THE
GRACE KELLY MEMORIAL
MUNICIPAL AMPHITHEATRE
AT EAKING OVAL, PHILADELPHIA
ALVIN HOJIM AIA

PARKWAY FANTASIA

Eakins Oval

A series on the city
and its future

by Erin Einhorn
Daily News Staff Writer

The Ben Franklin Parkway has inspired visionaries for over a century, but few in recent decades have rallied behind a single idea with the same fervor that Alvin Holm did nearly 20 years ago.

Charmed by the concept of an ornate outdoor amphitheater at the foot of the Art Museum steps, Holm, a Center City architect, sketched a drawing in 1979 that showed what it might look like.

He hired an engineer, who said at the time that the building would cost about \$3 million. He researched the site, which he said would require only excavation, and could use an existing underground retaining wall.

He then spent the better part of a decade in a passionate pursuit to put his proposal into motion.

"I was quite impressed with the project that you described," wrote city Councilman Thacher Longstreth, then president of the Chamber of Commerce, in response to one

Tourism and public recreation now have commercial value in a city where other industries are dwindling.

The Central Philadelphia Development Corporation is looking for new ideas for the Parkway, and the museum is being relandscaped.

Now's the time to give the old sketch another look, Holm said.

He dusted off a color rendering last month, and placed it in the window of his office, hoping perhaps to stir some excitement.

The Daily News took it to some of today's parkway movers and shakers.

Here's what some of them said:

CPDC's Paul Levy: "For a 19-year-old idea, it's aged well. It's a very elegant drawing...but it's a place that's on an island."

Joseph Kluger, Philadelphia Orchestra President: "It sounds like an interesting idea, but it's not very practical...When you've got limited resources, people are going to say, 'Why is this idea worth us either closing

down or competing with the Mann Center?'"

Meryl Levitz, president of the Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation: "How do you get people there, and where do they park and how do they walk to it and how do you avoid traffic noise and wind and fumes and everything else?"

City Arts and Culture Representative Diane Datto:

"In a vacuum, it seems like a wonder-

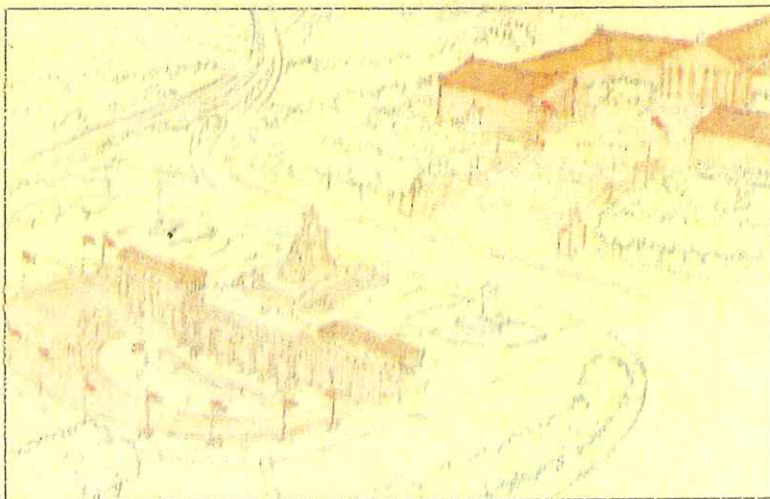
ful idea. My immediate question is parking — there's already no place to park for the art museum."

Art Museum President Anne d'Harnoncourt: "I can think of a lot of wonderful things in that space, and an amphitheater would certainly be one of them."

Fairmount Park executive director Bill Mifflin: "Everyone does want to use the museum as a backdrop for special events, but it would require an element of parking."

Please Touch Museum president Nancy Kolb: "Oh, isn't that neat! As long as we can solve some of the basic problems, that would be one of the options we would look at."

Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau president Tom Multoon: "Without any idea of the cost or parking on the surface it certainly seems like a terrific idea. It would be a venue that conventions could use for private parties."



Architect Alvin Holm made this sketch in 1979

of dozens of letters that Holm sent to city power brokers in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

"I agree, Mr. Holm, and can share your enthusiasm for the project for enriching Philadelphia's urban landscape," wrote Eugene C. Hosmer Jr., who was president of the city's Convention and Visitors Bureau in 1979. "I wish you well in the project."

Mayor Bill Green said he would consider it. City Councilman John Kelly got behind the idea when Holm pitched it as a memorial to his sister, Princess Grace.

But there would be problems with parking, some said. Others wondered whether an amphitheater was needed, with other outdoor venues already in place.

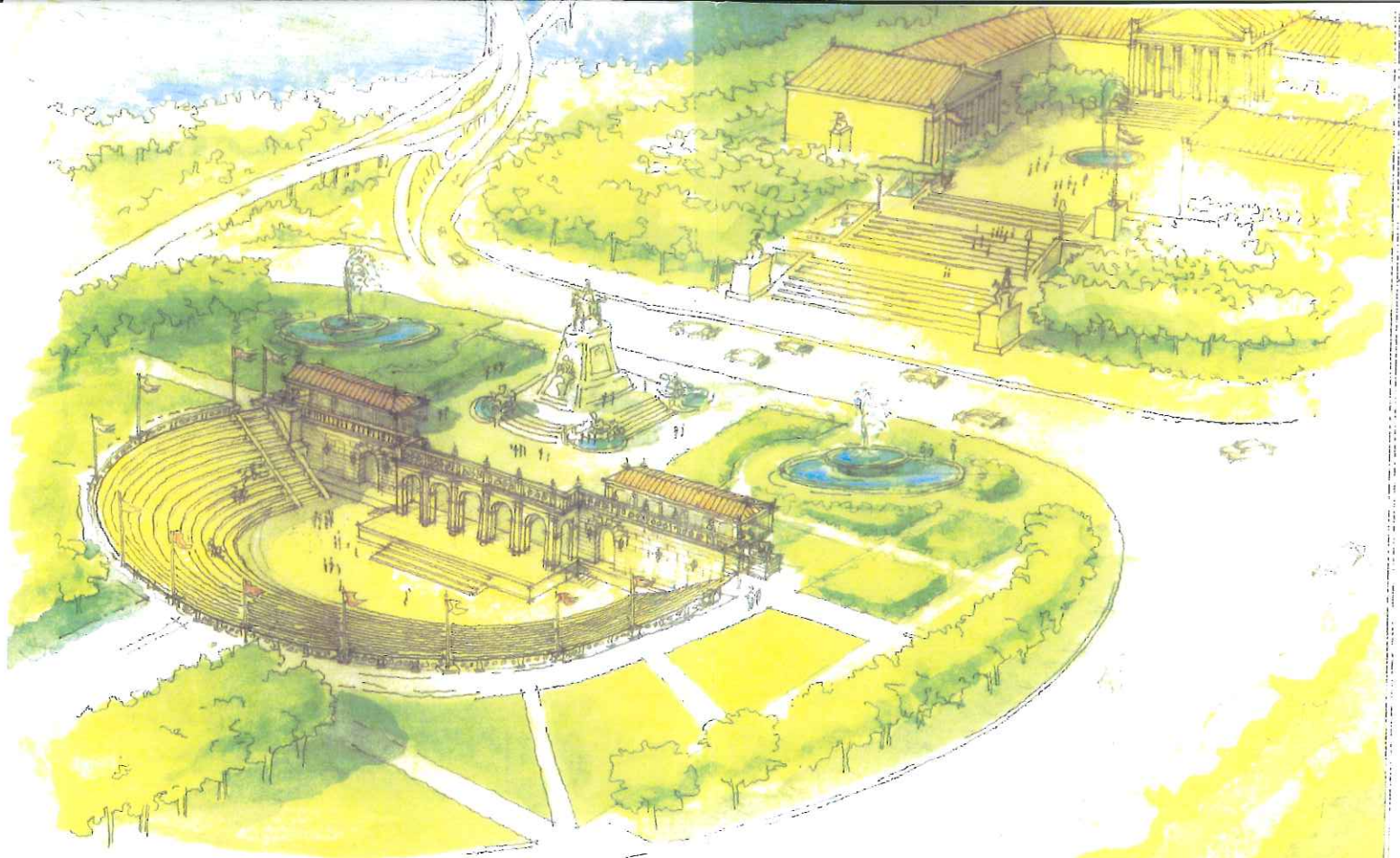
Money was also a barrier. The plan was inexpensive, Holm said, but it was a civic project with no commercial value, and there was little tolerance for such proposals.

Fast-forward 15 years.

Comments? Let us hear some of your ideas for the Parkway. Write to Erin Einhorn, Daily News, Box 7733, Philadelphia, Pa. 19101. Or e-mail einhorn@phillynews.com



A series on the city
and its future



THE AMPHITHEATRE ON THE PARKWAY
A PROPOSAL FOR A MEMORIAL TO PRINCESS GRACE

BY GREER + COET



What's your bright idea for the Parkway?

CARRY ON THE BRILLIANT SCHEME

AS ORIGINALLY DESIGNED

GLORIOUS, MONUMENTAL, FORMAL,
TRADITIONAL !!!

DO NOT CONTINUE TO "DUMB DOWN"

MY WIFE AND I RAISED OUR DAUGHTERS
ON THE PARKWAY (ON LAMBERT ST) AND WE
ALL LOVED THE WALKING UP & DOWN TO THE
ART MUSEUM; ALL THE WONDERFUL
INSTITUTIONS, INCLUDING SPLASHING IN
THE FOUNTAIN OF THE 3 RIVERS

ALVON HOLM