

Brickbottom-McGrath Neighborhood Plan

11.360 : MIT Department of Urban Studies & Planning // Public Meeting, Argenziano School // Oct 22, 2014



Presentation Outline

- Our Team + Project Timeline
- Brickbottom History + Context
- Current Conditions + Site Analysis
- Related Plans
- Visions for the Site
- Next Steps
- Q&A + Feedback

Introduction



Who We Are



- 13 Students (12 MIT DUSP and 1 Harvard GSD) enrolled in a semester-long practicum class

- Variety of experience and skills, from urban design to transportation development

Project Timeline

September - October

- Meet with client
- Research + analyze site
- Begin to develop vision

October - November

- Gain insight from key stakeholders
- Get ideas + feedback, work into proposals

November - December

- Build final report
- Present report & get final feedback
- Deliver to the city to guide future planning

History & Context



Brickbottom in 1938



Regional centrality



Identified as a transformational area in SomerVision



Assembly Square	125 acres
Inner Belt	115 acres
Brickbottom	65 acres
Boynton Yards	35 acres
Union Square	25 acres
Total	365 acres

Source: City of Somerville SomerVision Comprehensive Plan, 2012; Bing maps

Transportation networks and proposed Somerville Community Path



Current Conditions



Current Conditions: What We've Heard



Assets

- Strong sense of community in Artist Building
- Great location

Challenges

- Redevelopment pressure inconsistent with current strengths
- Inadequate road infrastructure
- Aesthetics
- Poor stormwater management

Site Edges

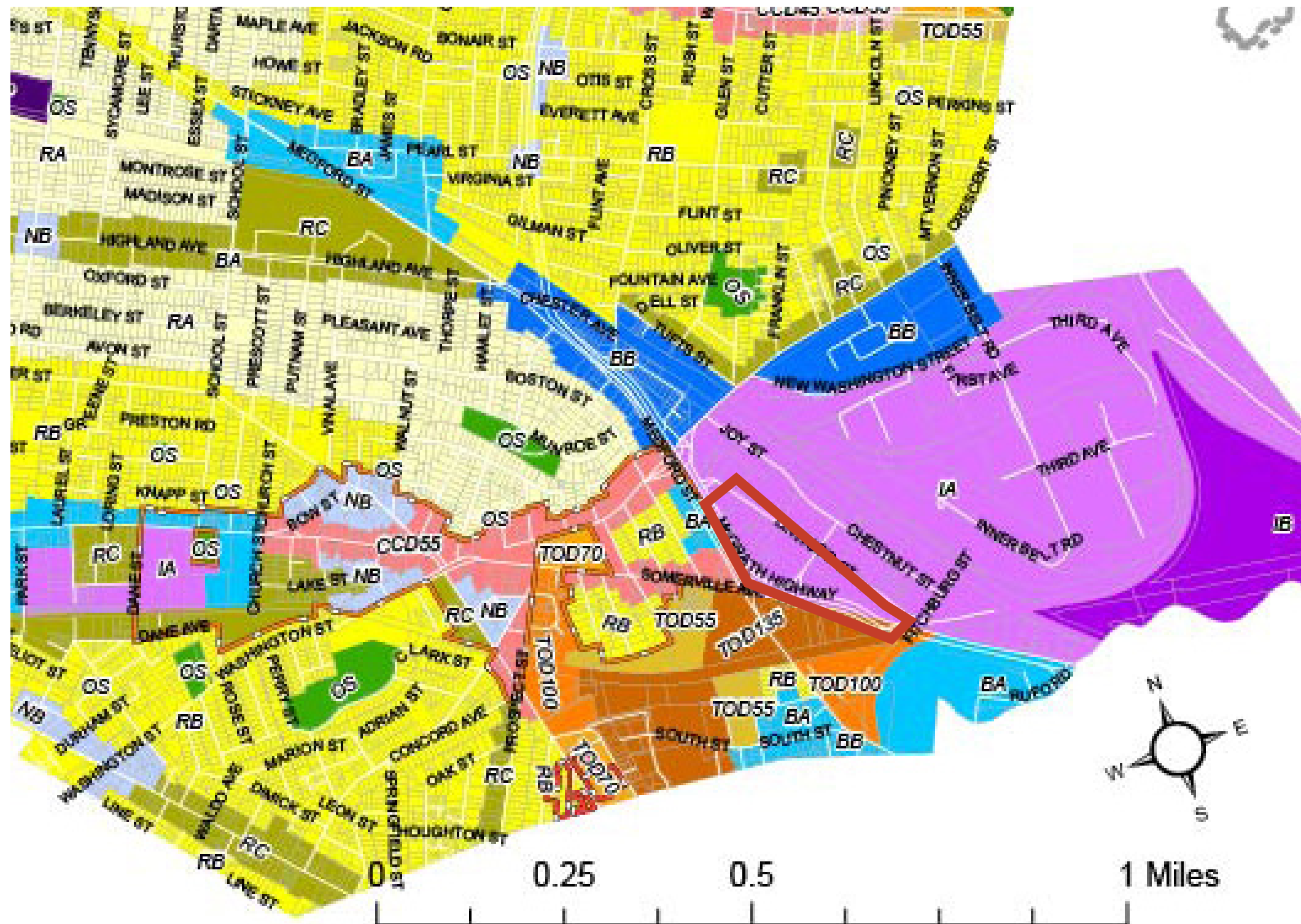


- **Railway lines** create barriers for cars and pedestrians alike
- **McGrath Highway** serves as a pedestrian and car barrier

“Somerville’s highway and railroad corridors divide our neighborhoods and prevent residents from enjoying open spaces and supporting local businesses.”

- *SomerVision Comprehensive Plan, 2012*

Industrial Zoning



- Study area currently zoned entirely IA industrial

- By far largest remaining industrial zone in Somerville

A Mix of Uses



- Brickbottom's local businesses include manufacturing, storage, auto sales and service
- Dispatching and response center for NSTAR, Cataldo Ambulance, and Eastern Bus



Artist Presence



- Brickbottom Artist Building and Joy Street Studios create artists presence
- Brickbottom is the sole residential element (150 condo units)



Urban Design Challenges and Assets



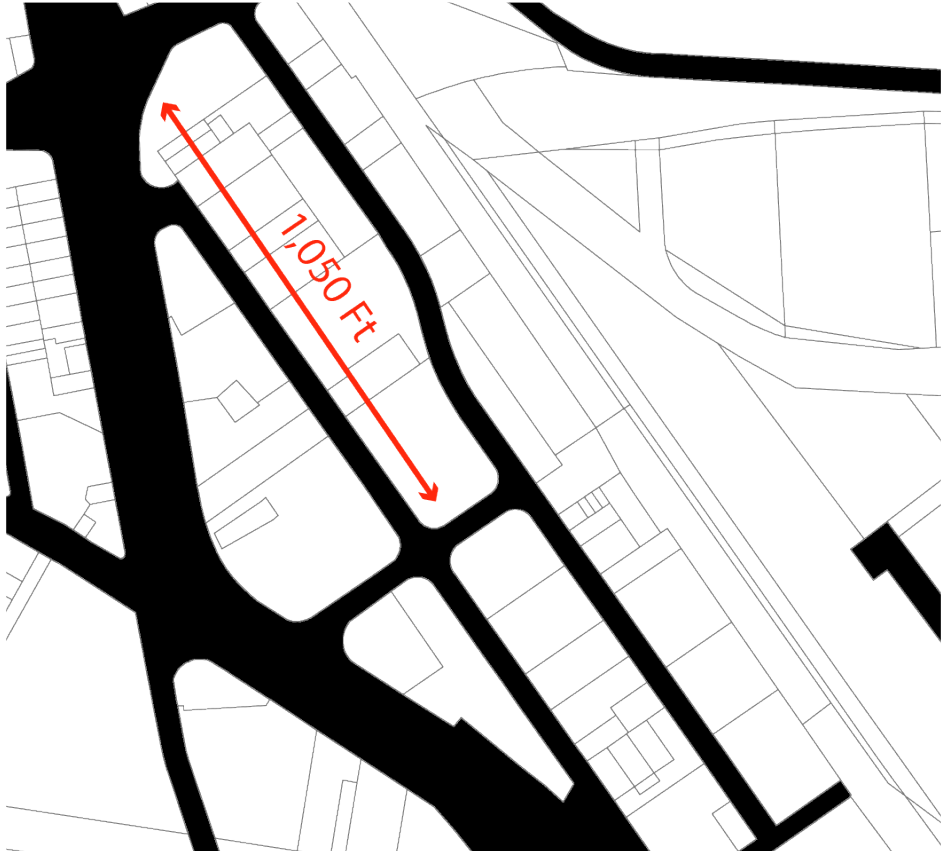
Block Size



Winter Hill



Union Square

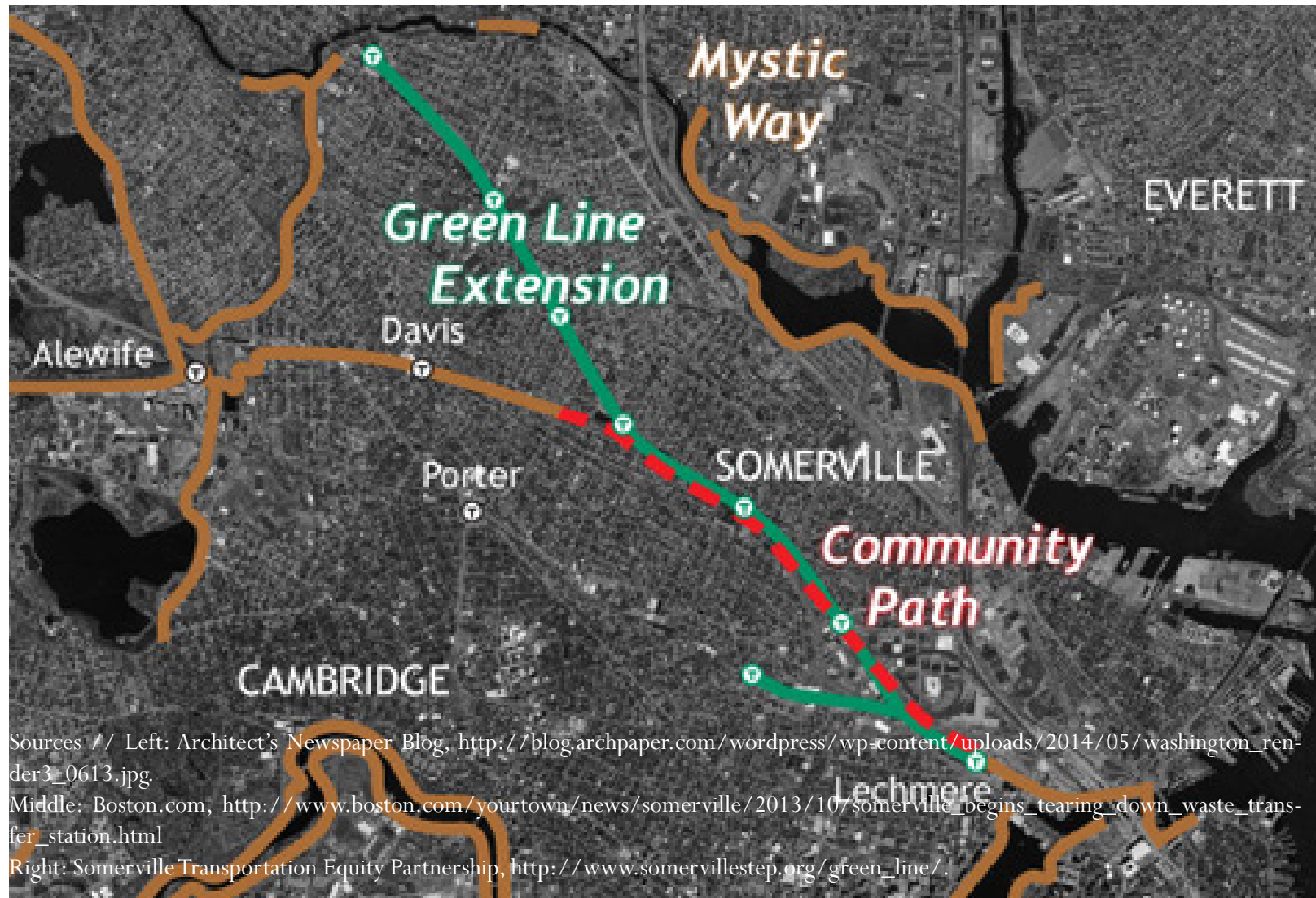


Brickbottom / McGrath

Neighborhood Changes

Area in transition:

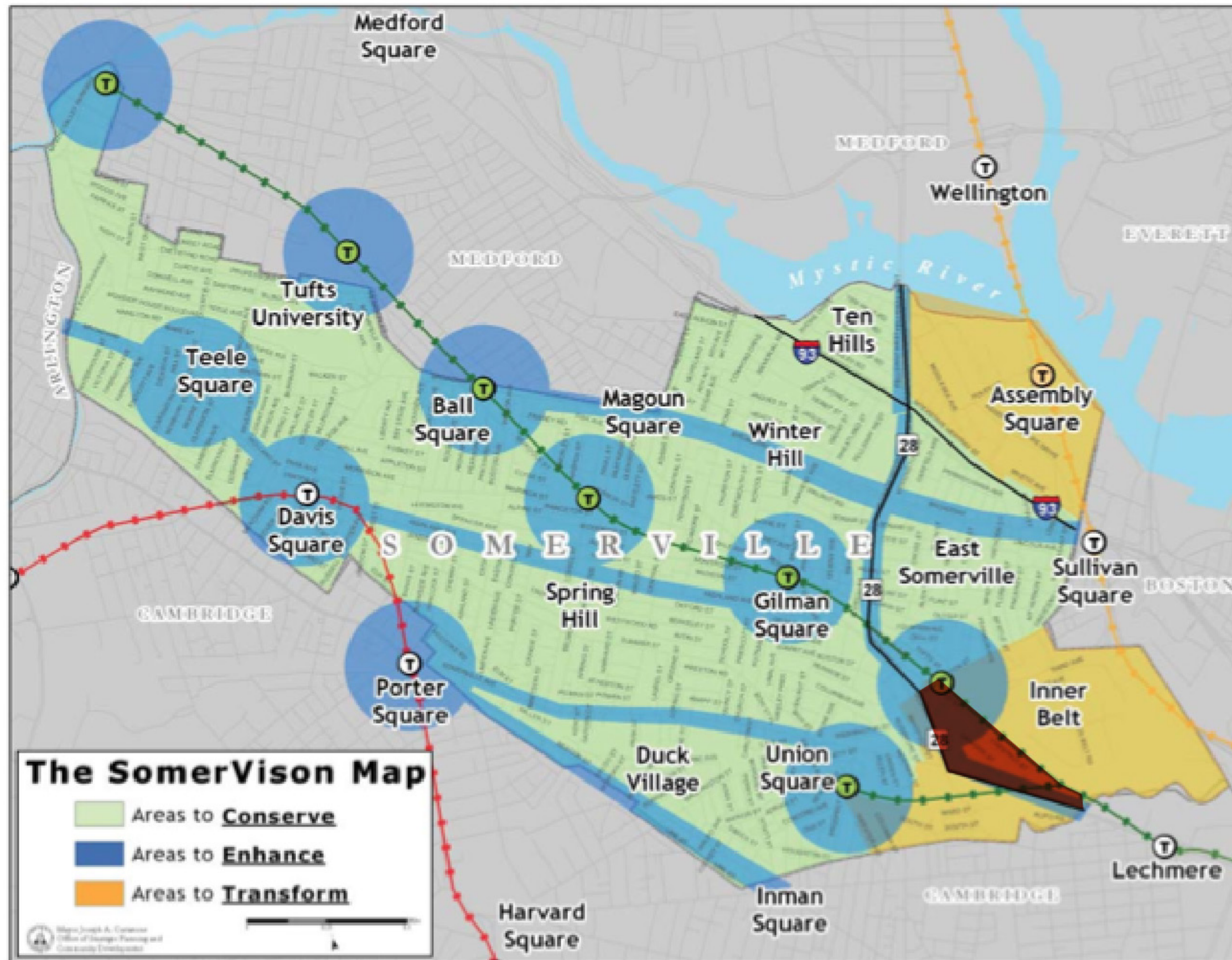
- the waste transfer station was recently removed
- plans to de-elevate the McGrath highway
- plans to construct a Green Line stop
- plans for a Somerville Community Path



Existing Plans



SomerVision



SomerVision designates Brickbottom as an “Area to Transform”

Source: City of Somerville, SomerVision Comprehensive Plan 2010 - 2030, 2012, <http://www.somervillema.gov/spotlights/comp-plan>.

SomerVision 2030 Goals



30,000 New Jobs as part of a responsible plan to create opportunity for all Somerville workers and entrepreneurs



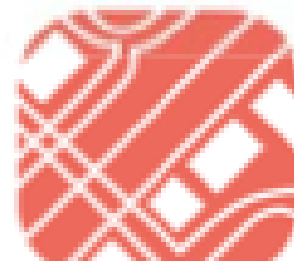
125 New Acres of Publicly-Accessible Open Space as part of our realistic plan to provide high-quality and well-programmed community spaces



6,000 New Housing Units - 1,200 Permanently Affordable as part of a sensitive plan to attract and retain Somerville's best asset: its people.



50% of New Trips via Transit, Bike, or Walking as part of an equitable plan for access and circulation to and through the City.



85% of New Development in Transformative Areas as part of a predictable land use plan that protects neighborhood character

Source: City of Somerville, SomerVision Comprehensive Plan 2010 - 2030, 2012.

SomerVision // Focus on Brickbottom

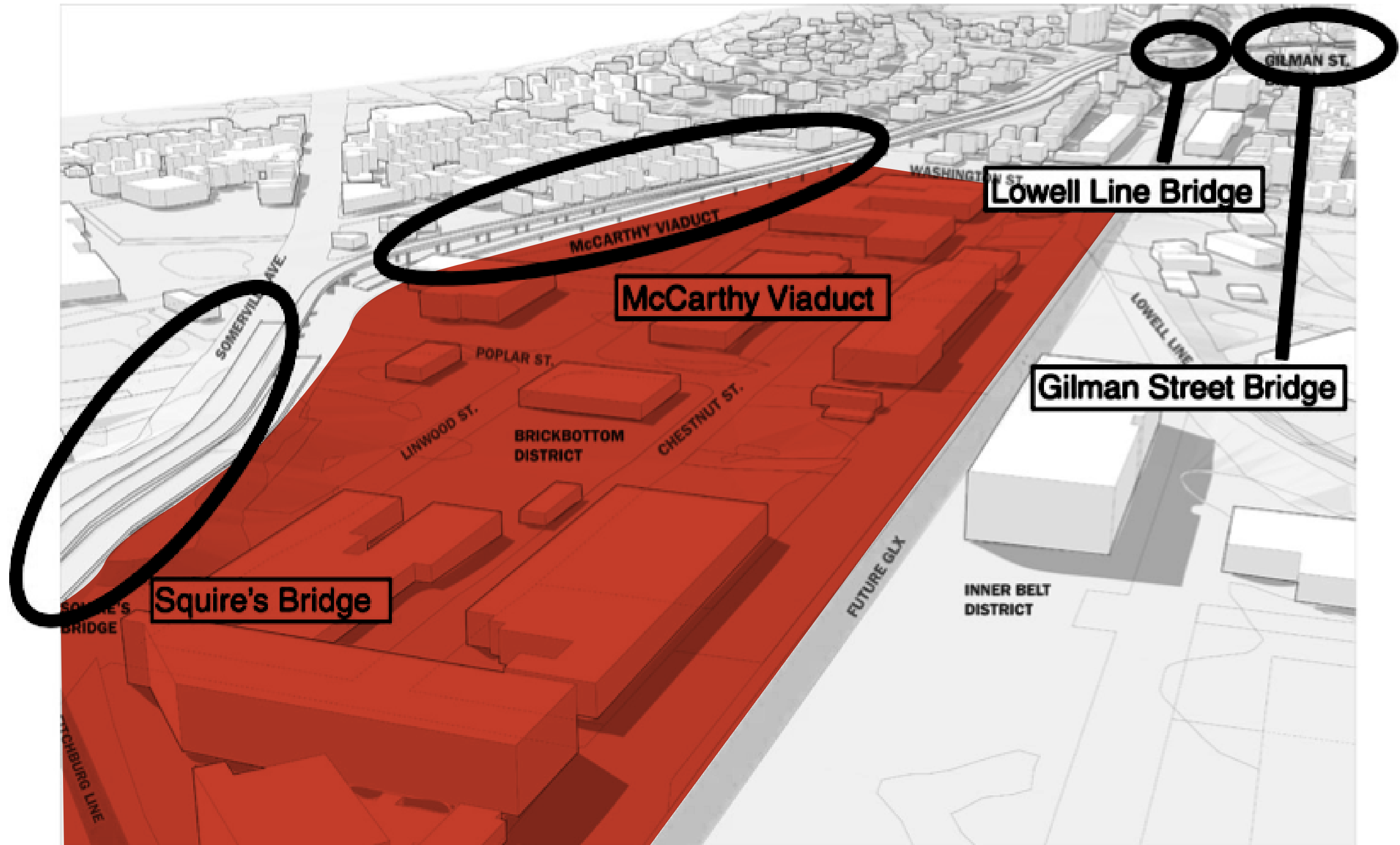
Transformational areas are slated to absorb 85% of Somerville's future growth
Brickbottom is planned to accommodate 15% of all growth

This means at least:

- 4,500 jobs
- 750 units of housing (or up to 1,200 according to the mayor's recent Sustainable Neighborhoods plan)
- 16 acres of new open space

Brickbottom should also contribute significantly towards the 50% of new trips via transit, bike, or walking goal, given the area's accessibility to the future Green Line Extension and Community Path.

Grounding McGrath



Source: MassDOT, Grounding McGrath, 2013, http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/Portals/23/Docs/Executive_Summary.pdf

Grounding McGrath // Recommendations

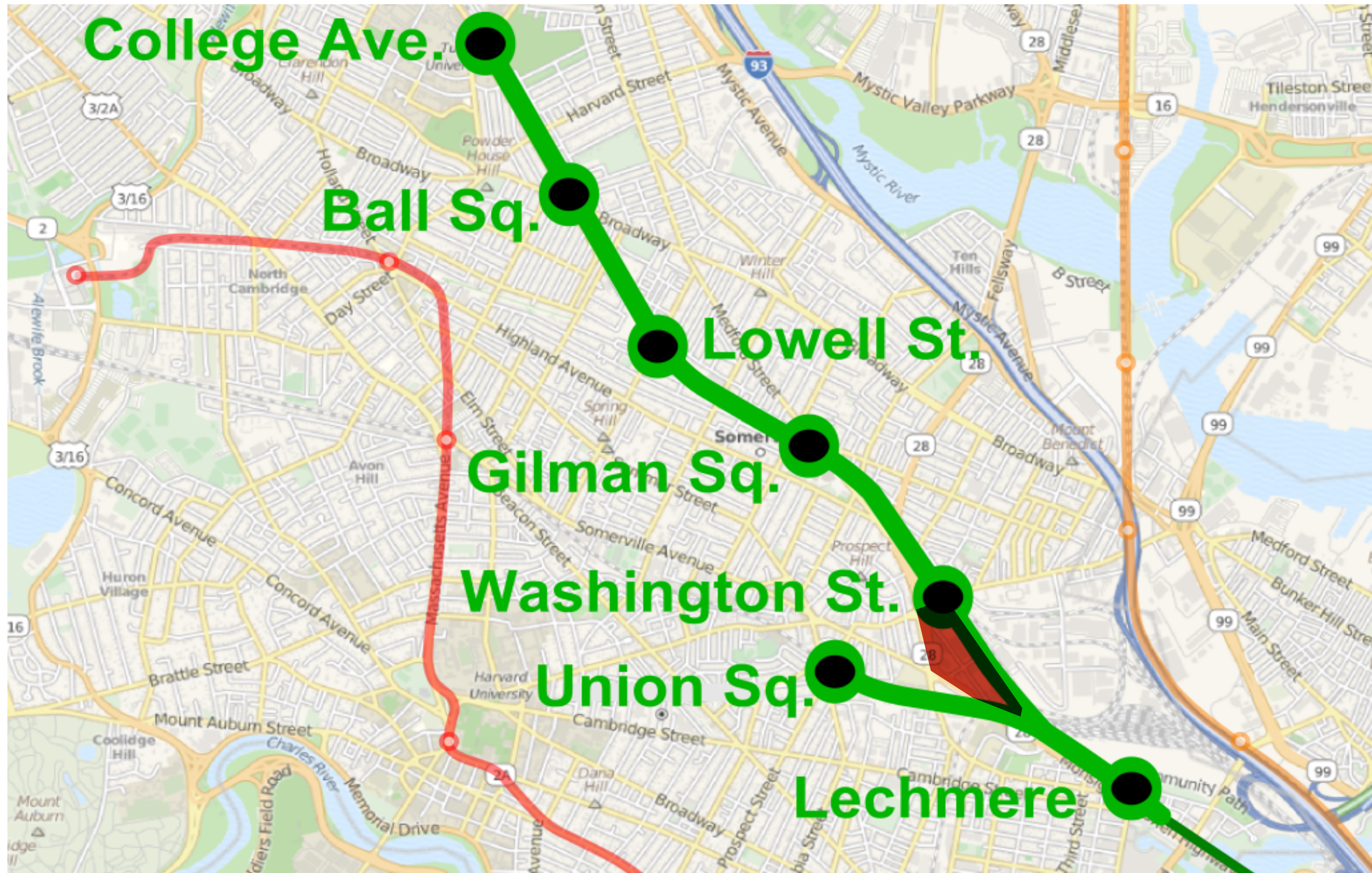


MassDOT recommended the
“Boulevard Alternative”

Current plans provide for two drive
lanes in each direction and one park
lane in each direction

Source: MassDOT, Grounding McGrath, 2013, http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/Portals/23/Docs/Executive_Summary.pdf

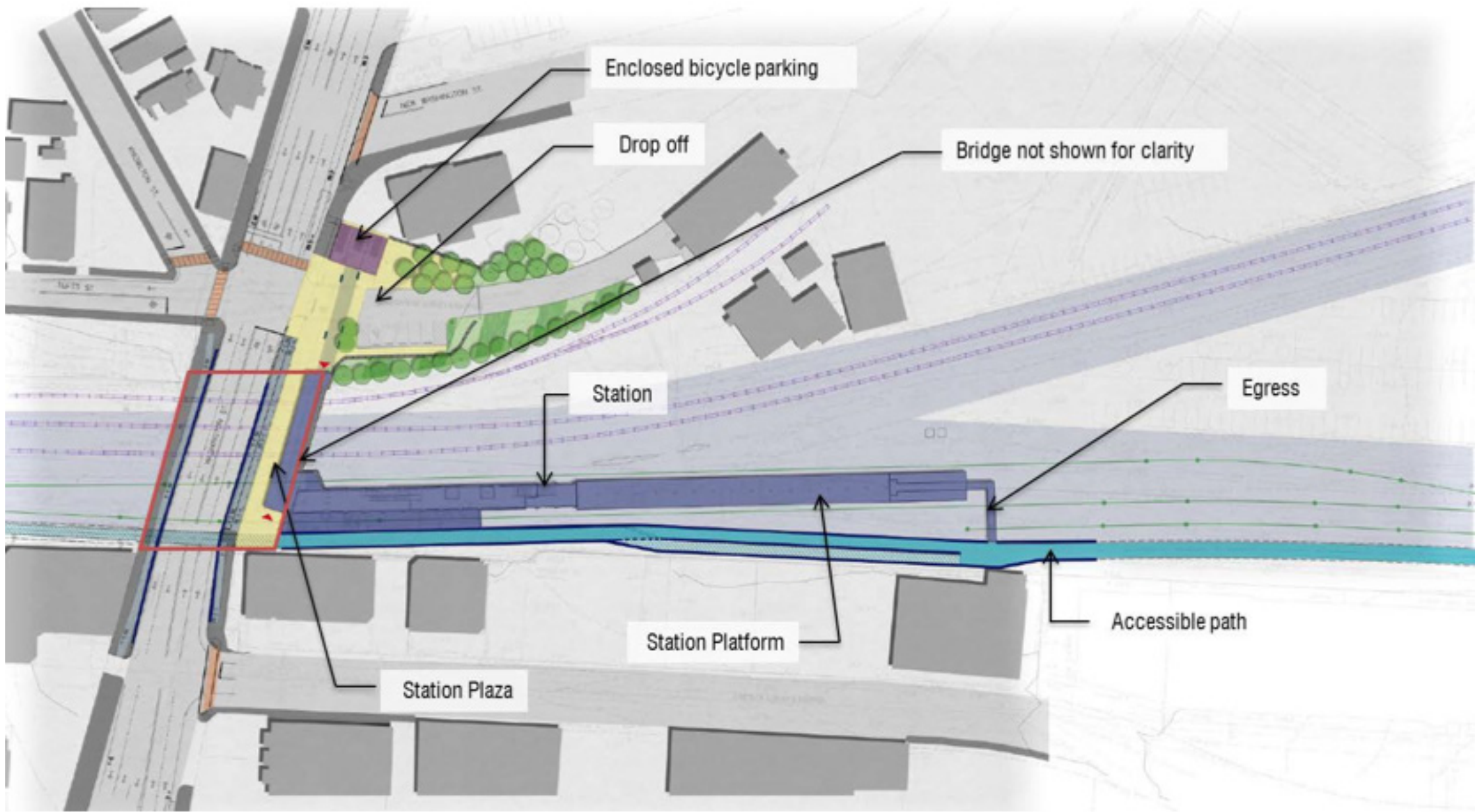
Green Line Extension



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_Line_Extension

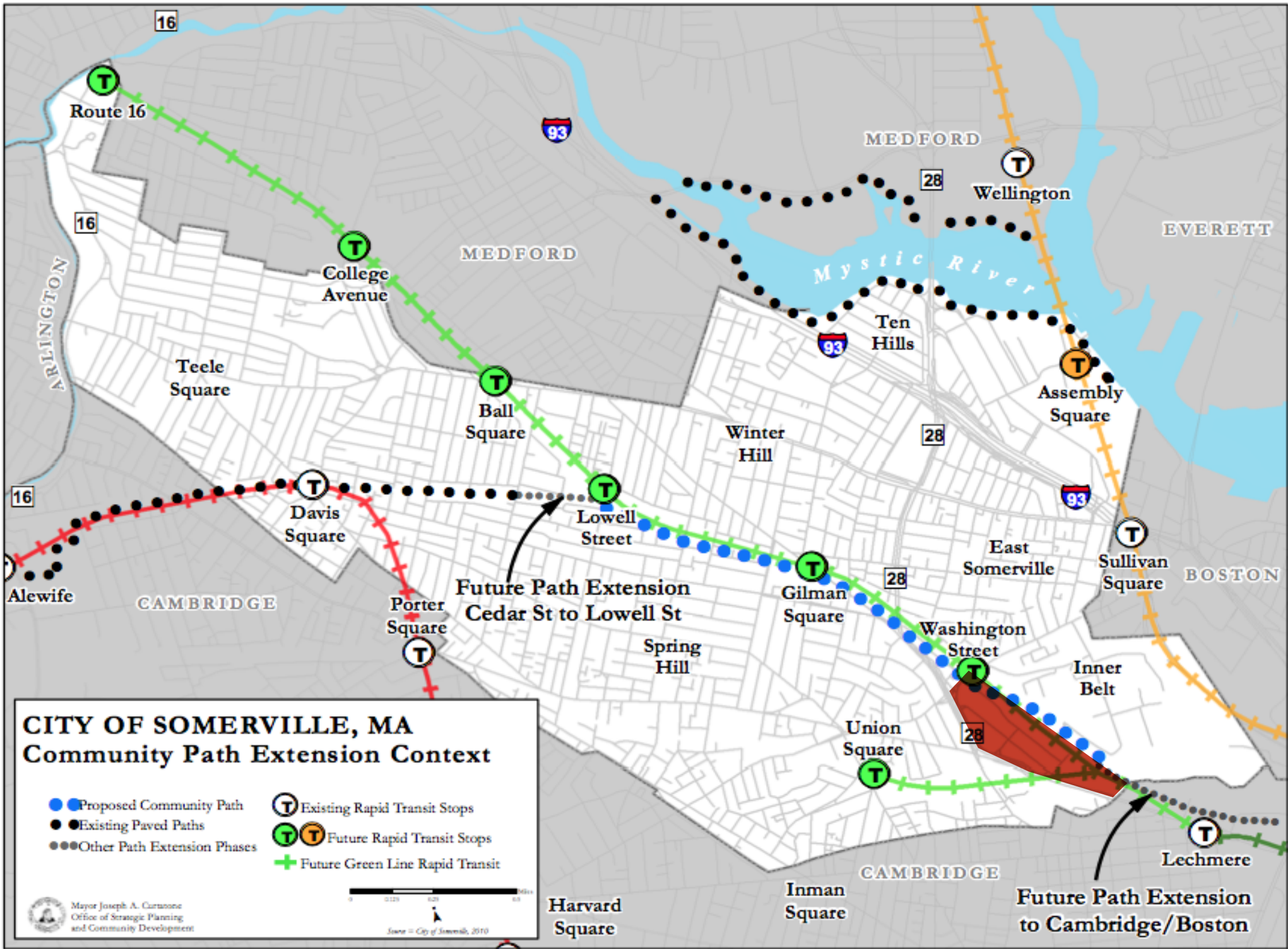
Green Line Extension // Washington Street Station Design

CURRENT PROPOSED SITE PLAN



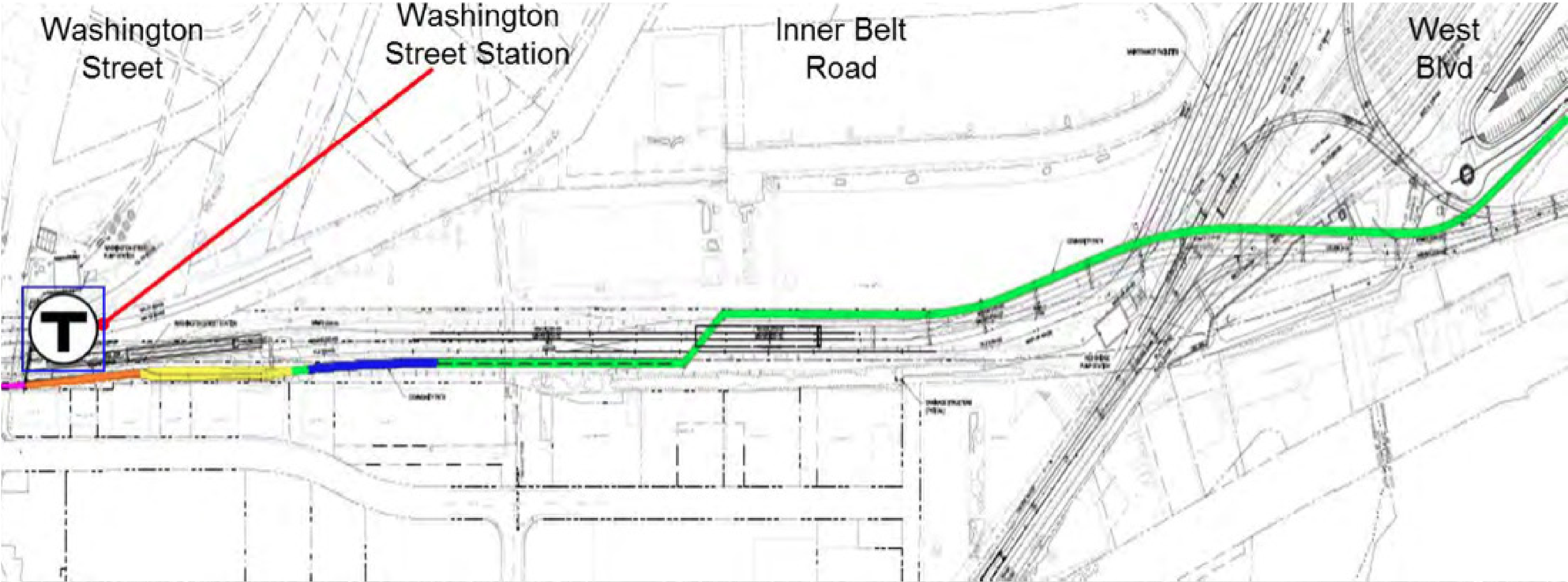
Source: MassDOT, Green Line Extension Station Design Meeting, Union Square and Washington Street, June 11, 2013, http://greenlineextension.eot.state.ma.us/documents/PubMtgs/staDesign/union_washington061113.pdf

Somerville Community Path



Source: City of Somerville, Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development, Community Path, <http://www.somervillema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Community%20Path%20-%20Somerville%20Context.pdf>

Community Path





massDOT
Massachusetts Department of Transportation

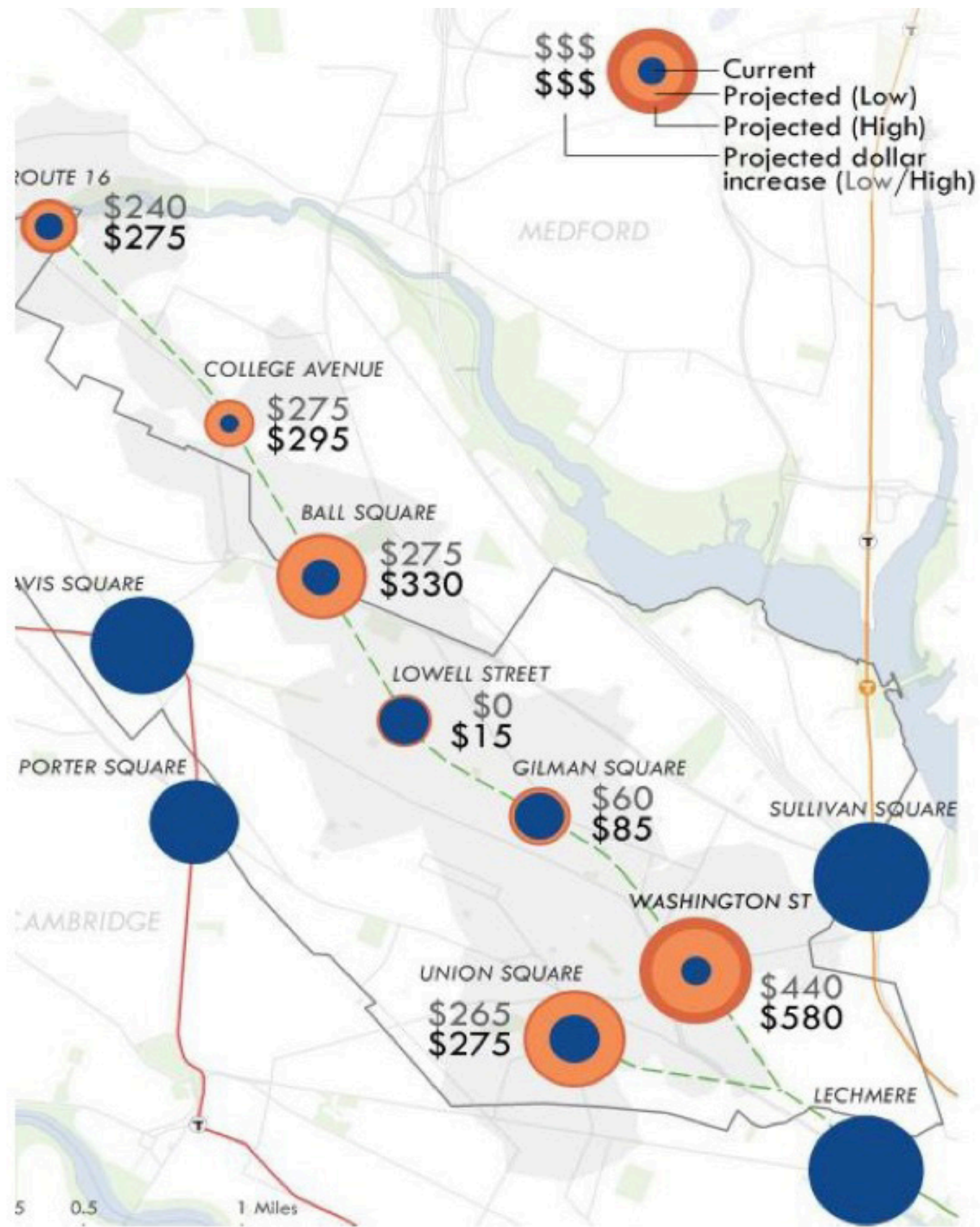
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COMMUNITY PATH
May 14, 2014

Source: MassDOT, Green Line Extension Station Design Meeting, Union Square and Washington Street, June 11, 2013, http://greenlineextension.eot.state.ma.us/documents/PubMtgs/staDesign/union_washington061113.pdf

Sustainable Neighborhoods Plan



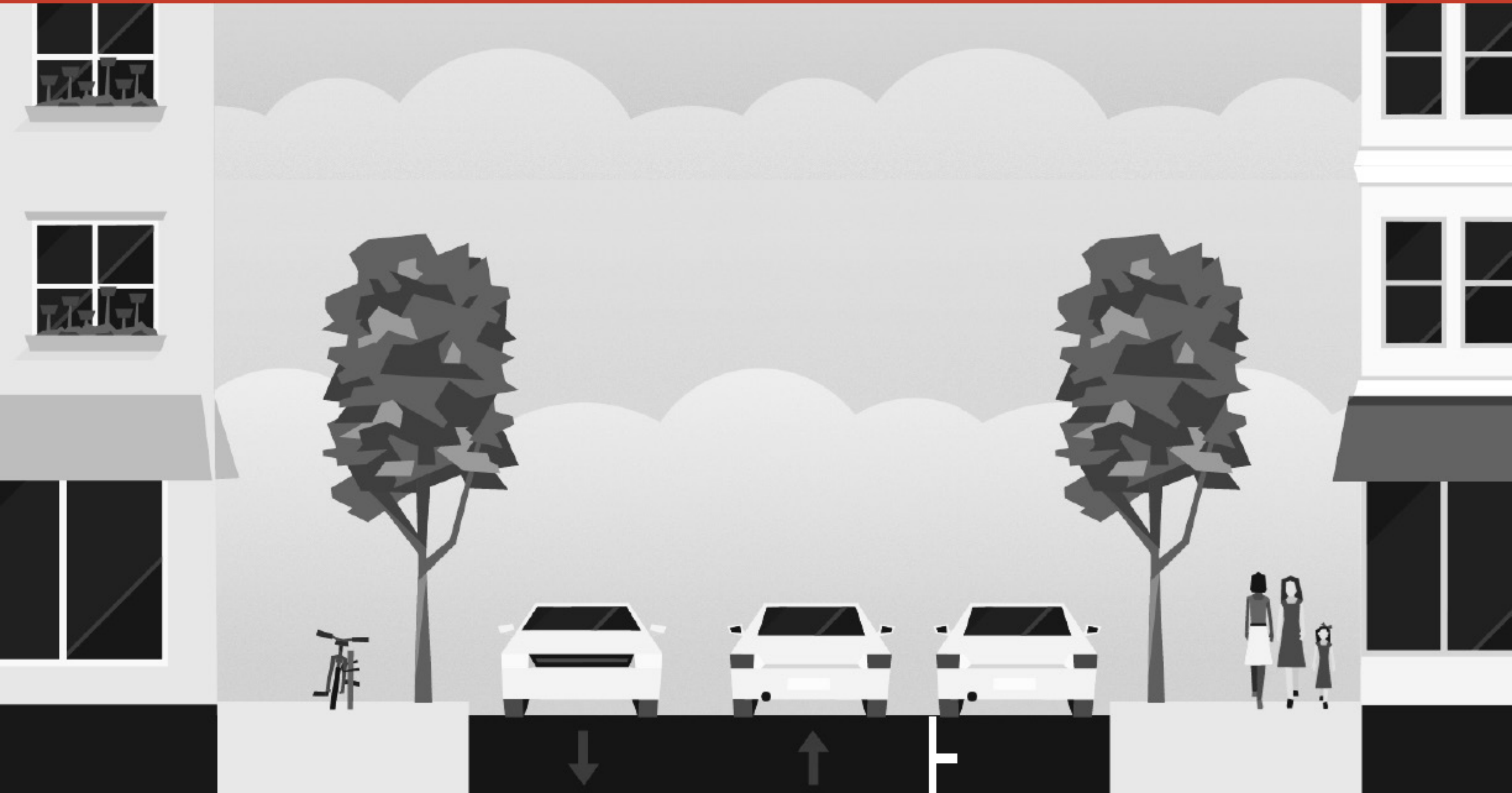
- Increased housing goals in SomerVision from 6,000 to 9,000
- Expanded inclusionary zoning ordinances
- Family housing and workforce housing
- Maker/artist live-work zoning

Source: <http://www.somervillema.gov/news/city-launch-affordable-housing-program>

Takeaways



Visions for the Site



Changes to McGrath



- No new developable area
- All extra space for open space



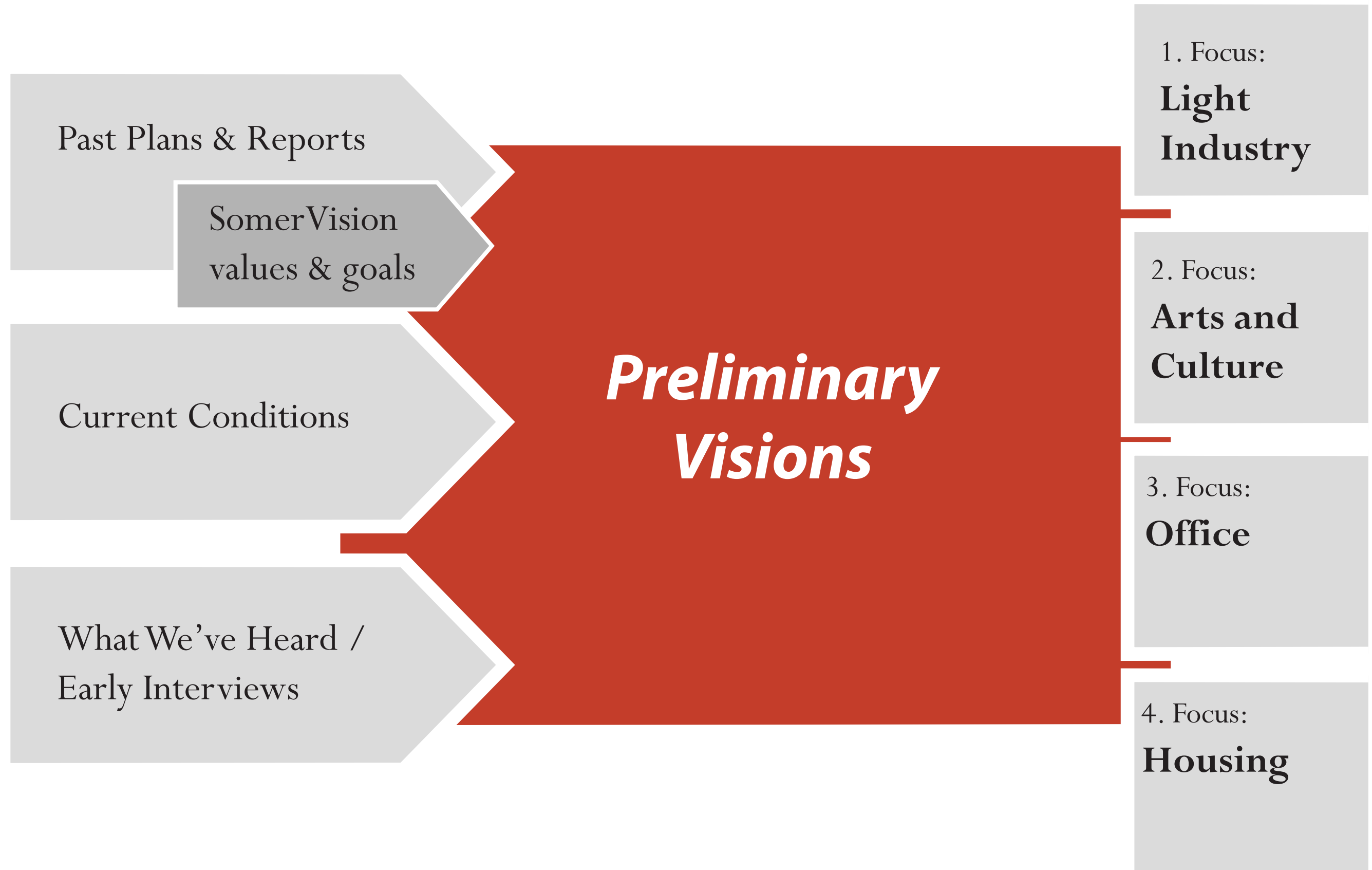
- Some new developable area
- Some open space



- All extra space for new development
- No new open space

What We've Heard

- Key issue is zoning
- Huge demand for future development in Brickbottom
- Commercial development is critical for tax base
- Need vertical development at urban scale
- Need mixed-use development
- Build upon current uses
- Use “creative energies” from Artists’ Building and Joy St. Studios



Framing a Discussion

- Each vision focuses on a particular use to create a site “character”
- Basis for discussion: not definite or finalized
- Each can accommodate affordable housing and open space

1. Focus:
**Light
Industry**

2. Focus:
**Arts and
Culture**

3. Focus:
Office

4. Focus:
Housing

Focus: Light Industry

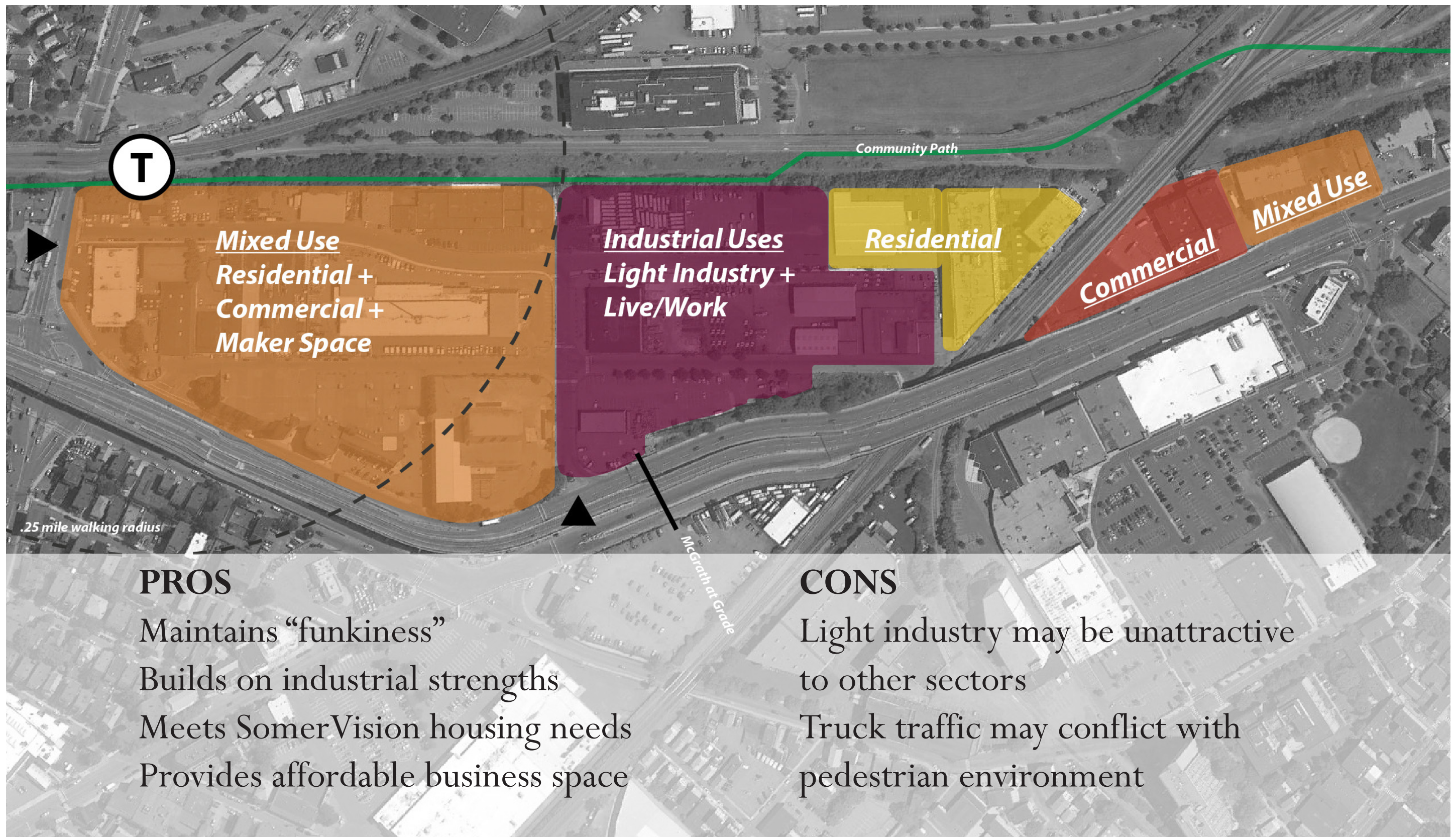


- Preserves light industry (warehouse, depot, and manufacturing) alongside infill, while improving public realm
- Can create opportunities for more flexible “maker space,” where smaller operations and hobbyists share resources



- Opportunity for public engagement (through classes) and workforce development

Focus: Light Industry

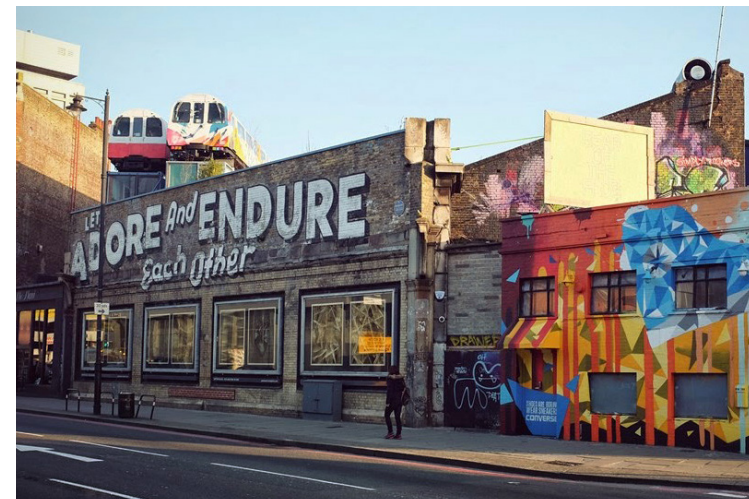


Focus: Arts and Culture



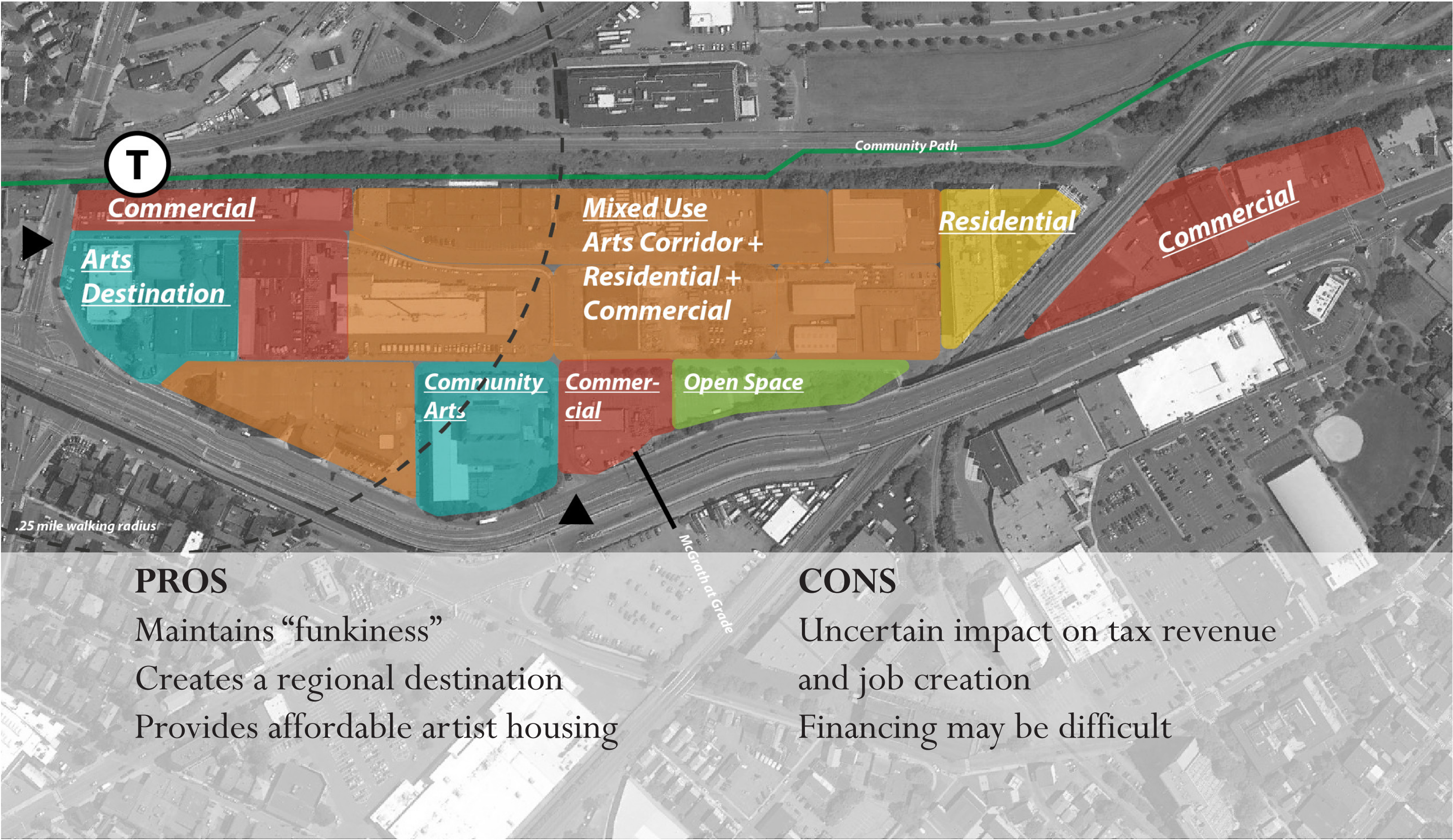
- Incorporate destination arts center and gallery space

- Create a corridor linking new amenities with T station, Brickbottom Artists' Building, Joy St. Studios



- Incorporate affordable “work/live” space

Focus: Arts and Culture



Focus: Office



- Could target “green” or specialized industries

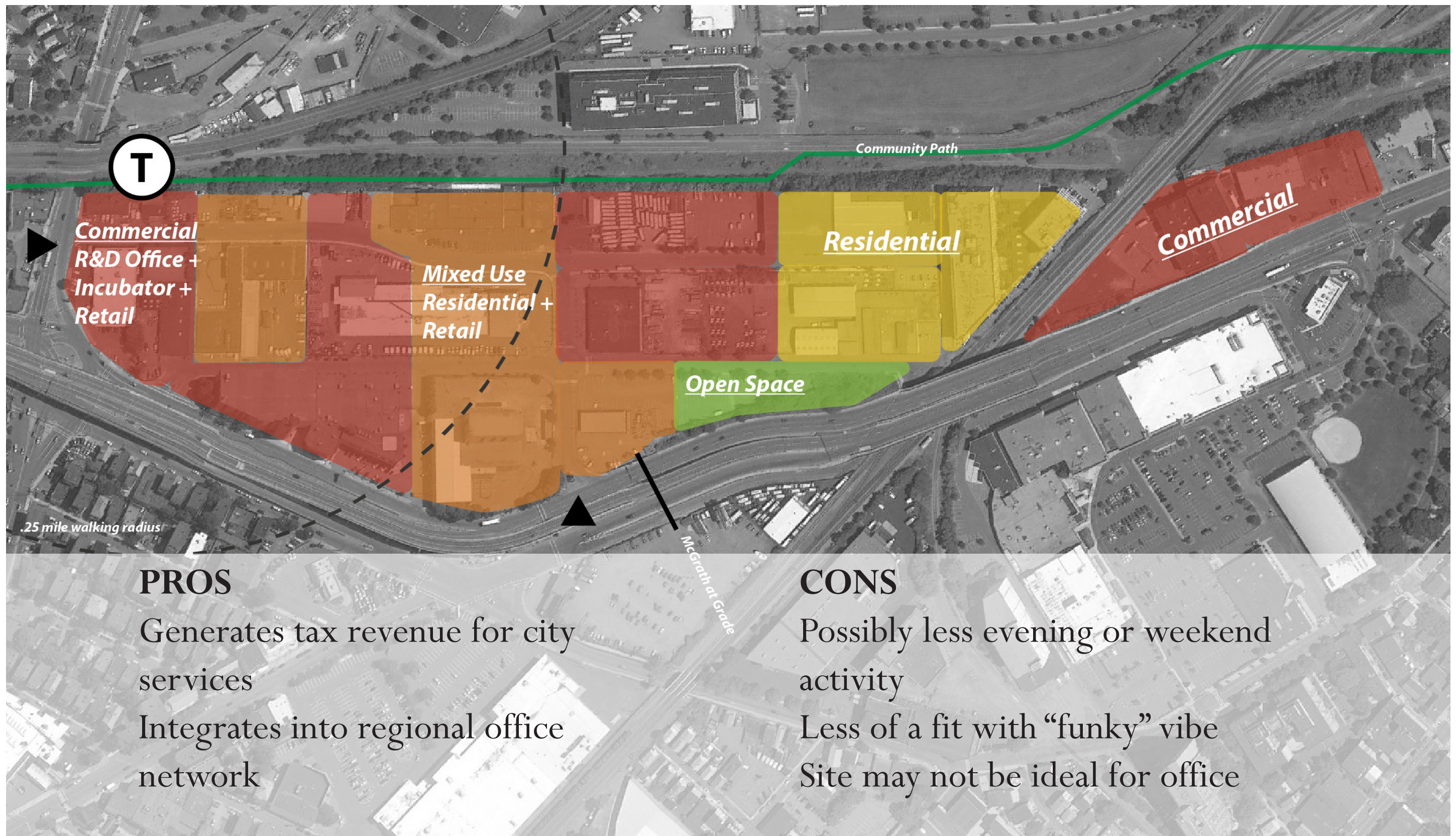
- Set aside space for startups and small businesses

- Capitalize on proximity to universities and downtown Boston



- Mix with residential and retail to stimulate activity outside of working hours

Focus: Office



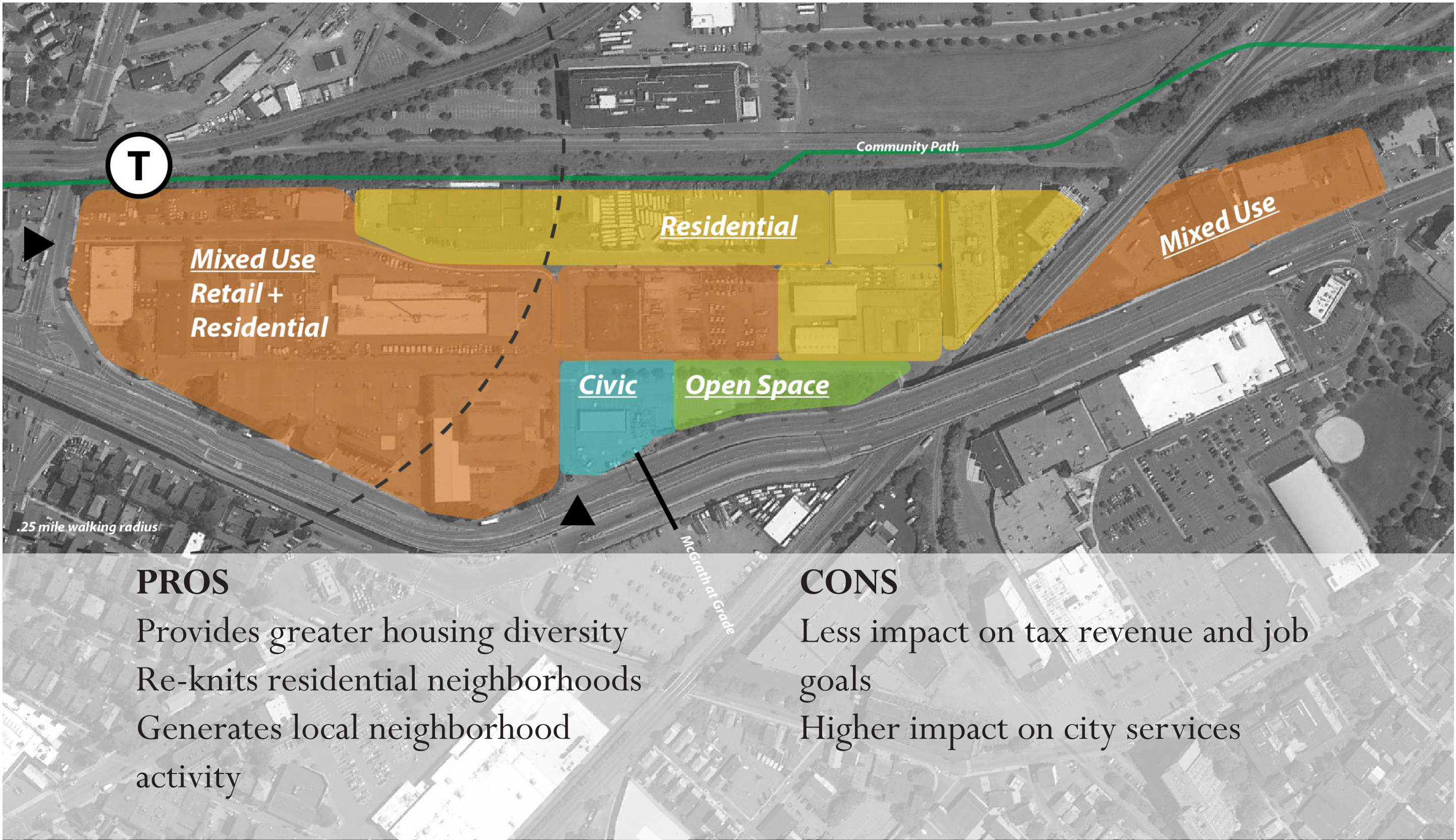
Focus: Housing



- Prioritizes housing, including family housing
- Resident-oriented mix of uses with neighborhood-scale retail



Focus: Housing



Next Steps

September - October

- Meet with client
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- Begin to develop vision

October - November

- Gain insight from key stakeholders
- Get ideas + feedback, work into proposals

November - December

- Build final report
- Present report & get final feedback
- Deliver to the city to guide future planning



Thank You

***Special thanks to George Proakis
& Lori Massa***

Contact us at 11.360@mit.edu

Questions

- Which of the 4 visions we presented do you find most compelling?
- What information surprised you?
- What do you think we should change?