



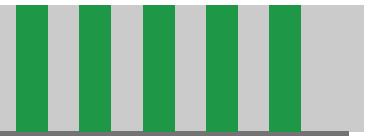
Lower Highlands Neighborhood Plan Meeting



December 1, 2009
Sponsored by:
The City of Lowell's Division of Planning and Development



What We Will Cover



Introduction and Context



Pailin Plaza and Clemente Park



Cupples Square



Nottingham St. Mills

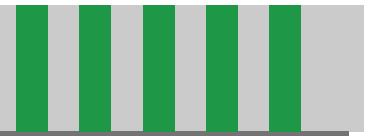


Gallagher Terminal



Lower Highlands: Cross Cutting

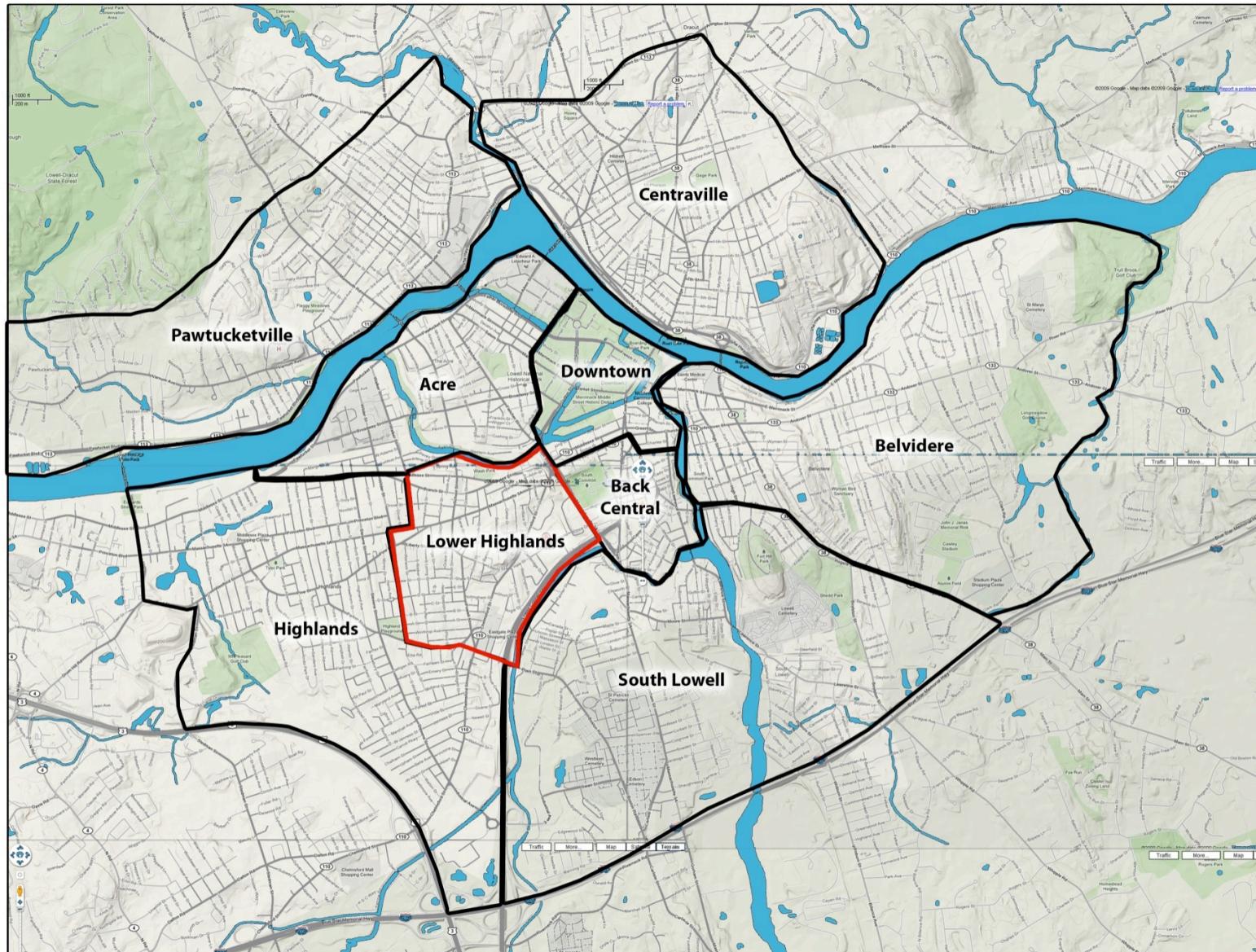
Our planning process



Key Stakeholders consulted:

- Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association
- Iglesia Cristiana Ebenezer Asamblea de Dios
- Pailin City Market and Restaurant
- Revolving Museum
- 119 Gallery
- Lower Highlands Neighborhood Association
- Cultural Organization of Lowell (COOL)
- UMass Lowell Community Relations Office
- Coalition for a Better Acre
- Community Gardens Greenhouse
- Keep Lowell Beautiful
- Lowell Development Finance Corporation
- Lowell Department of Parks and Recreation
- Lowell Wastewater Utility
- Lowell Planning Department
- Lowell Police Department
- Business owners and employees throughout neighborhood
- Diverse Lower Highlands residents and business patrons
- Owners of businesses located elsewhere in Lowell

Context of Lower Highlands



Lowell Neighborhoods

MIT/Lower Highlands Public Meeting 12/01/2009

Statistics



Demographics

Total housing units: 39,468

Homeownership rate: 43%

Median household income: \$39,192

Persons below poverty: 16.8%

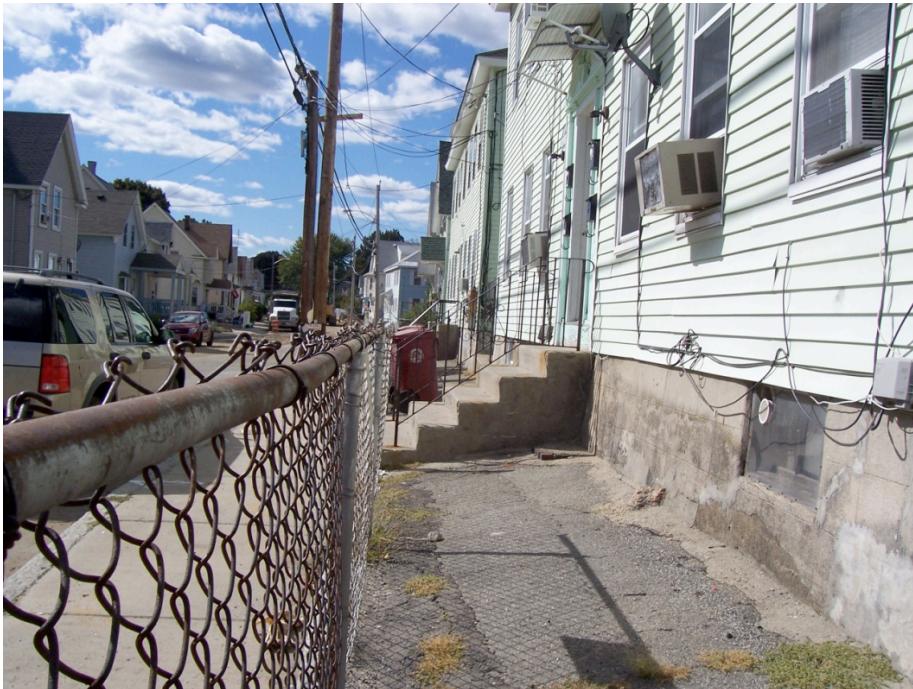
Business/Commercial

Total retail sales: 517,804

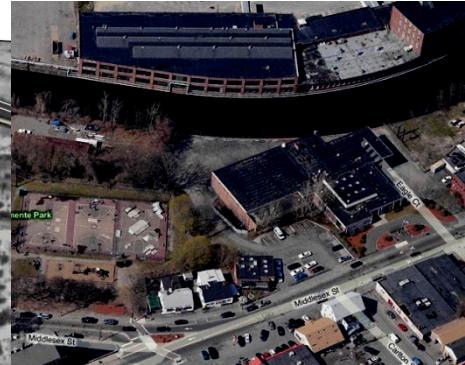
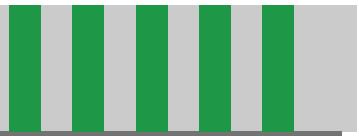
Total number of firms: 5,310

Minority owned firms: 21.3%

Women owned firms: 27.3%



Assets of Lower Highlands



Canal, Gallagher Terminal

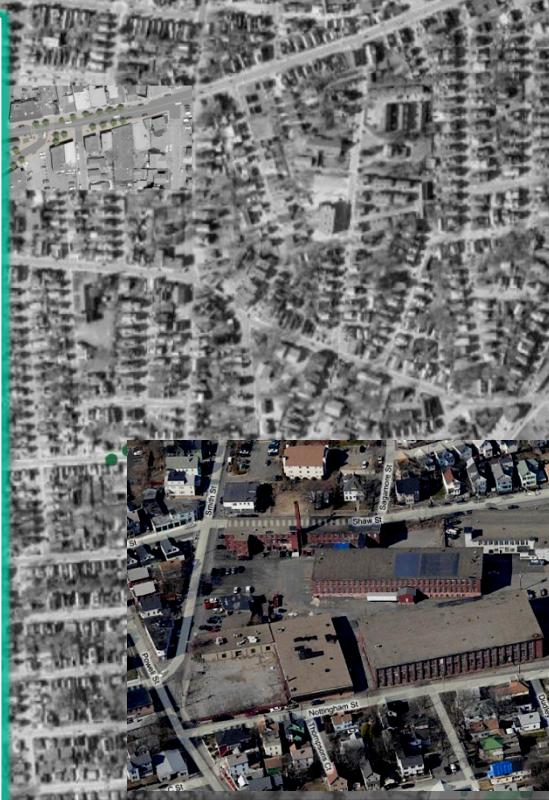
**Proximity to Downtown/
Hamilton Canal District**

**Gateway to Lowell via
Chelmsford**

**Immigrant gateway
community**

Affordable

Historical legacy

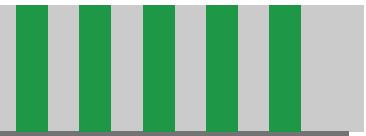


Challenges

- Old infrastructure
- Worn-out public spaces
- Neglected houses
- Lack of pedestrian support in streetscape
- Isolated from the rest of the city
- Lack of community gathering spaces
- Mostly vacant mill
- Conflicting land uses
- Localized flooding and drainage problems
- Weak economic development



MIT's Favorite Things about the Lower Highlands



- Talking with people in the community
- Potential to be a TOD neighborhood
- The architecture of the old homes
- Exploring inside the mill buildings
- Taking the train in from Boston— an easy day trip!
- Great vegetable markets
- All the kids on skateboards
- Eating at the Red Rose
- Eating fried dough
- Flower gardens



Neighborhood Vision



The Lower Highlands can build its identity as a gateway to Lowell and destination neighborhood by capitalizing on its:

- rich cultural diversity,
- outward connectivity via the Gallagher terminal,
- central location, and proximity to Hamilton Canal District and downtown, and
- traditional neighborhood fabric.

To achieve these objectives, this plan aims to:

- enhance public spaces and neighborhood identity,
- improve walkability,
- strengthen local business presence,
- ensure continued affordability, and
- incorporate cutting-edge green design principles.



Aerial Neighborhood Plan



Aerial Neighborhood Plan

Areas of Interest:

Pailin Plaza

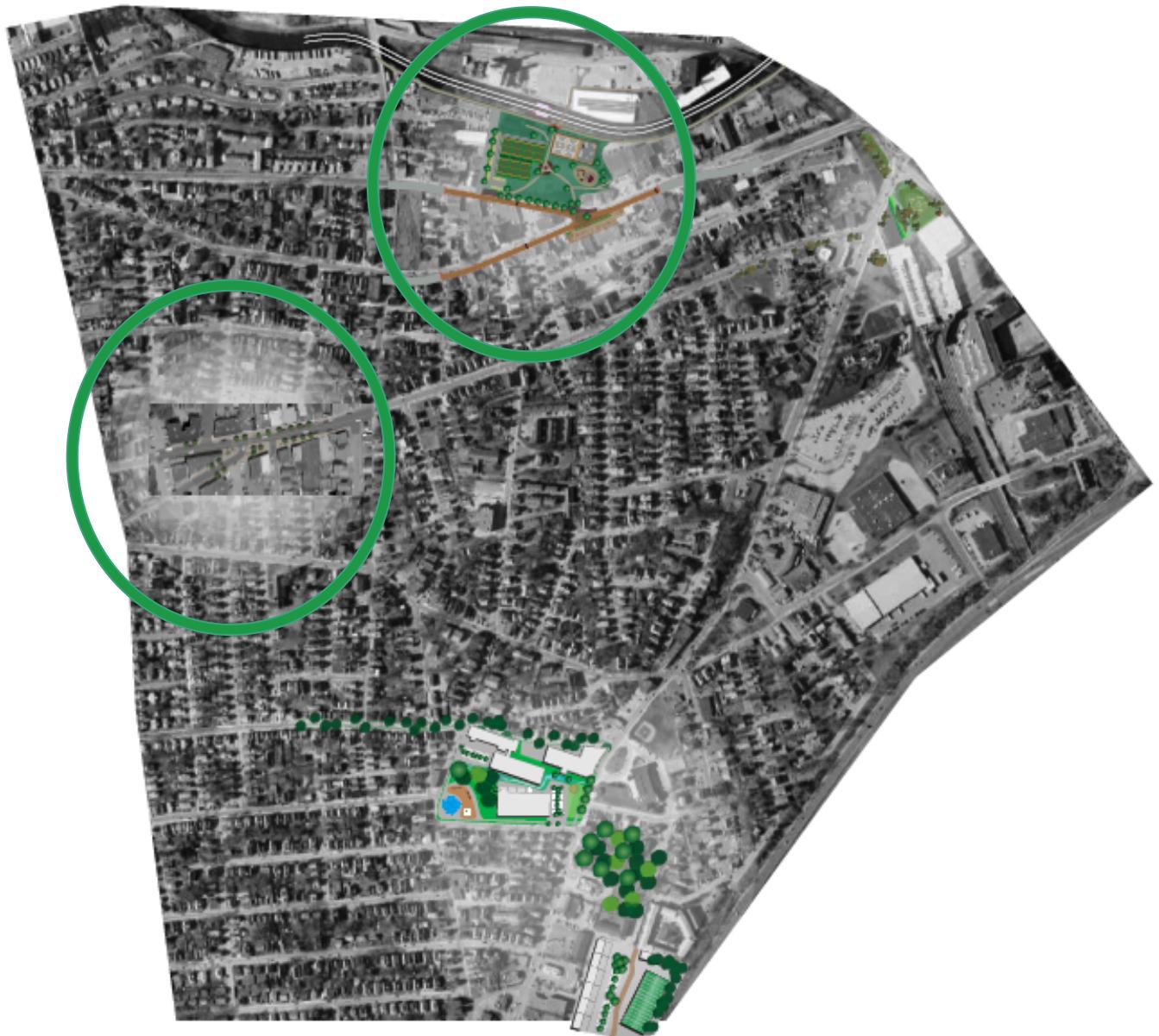


Aerial Neighborhood Plan

Areas of Interest:

Pailin Plaza

Cupples Square



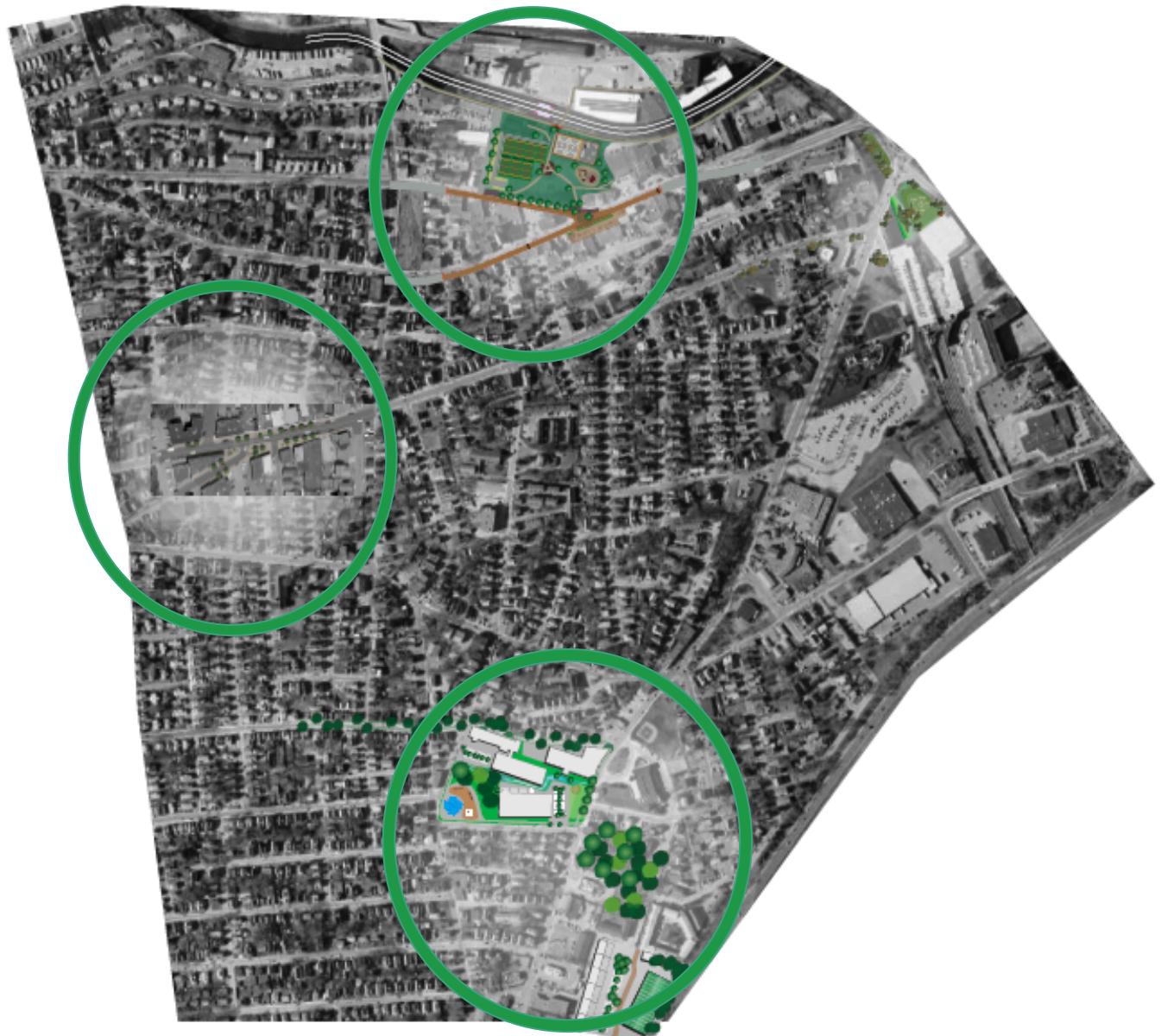
Aerial Neighborhood Plan

Areas of Interest:

Pailin Plaza

Cupples Square

The Mill Site



Aerial Neighborhood Plan

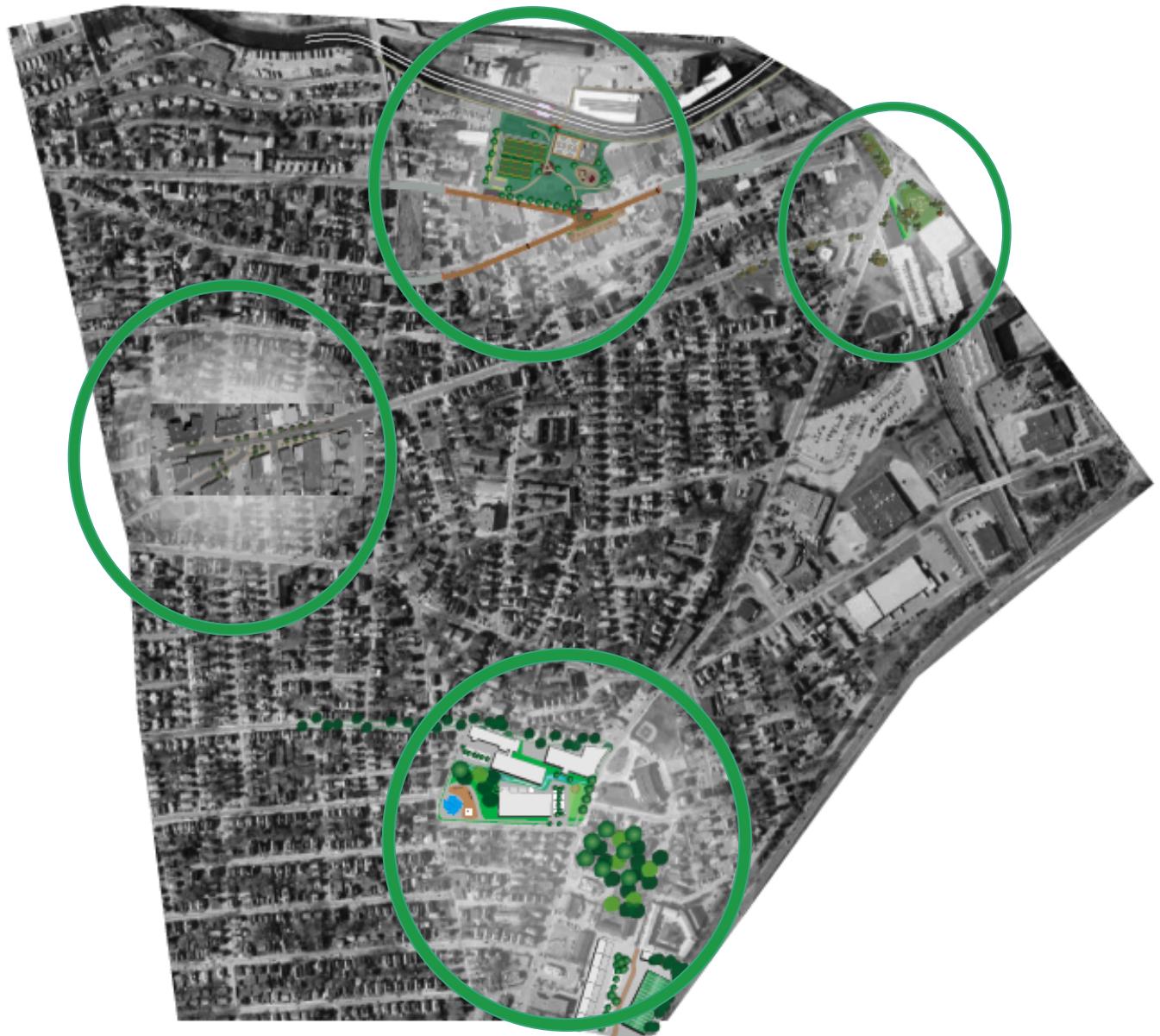
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Gallagher Terminal



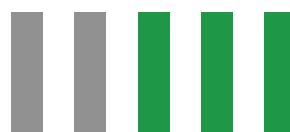
What We Will Cover



Introduction and Context



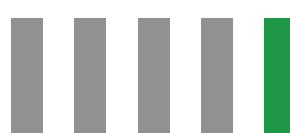
Pailin Plaza and Clemente Park



Cupples Square



Nottingham St. Mills



Gallagher Terminal



Lower Highlands: Cross Cutting

Pailin Plaza and Clemente Park



Pailin Plaza and Clemente Park



Pailin Plaza and Clemente Park



Pailin Plaza and Clemente Park



Pailin Plaza and Clemente Park



Pailin Plaza and Clemente Park



Design Guidelines

- Do you want this area branded?
- Identity and Sign Control
- Streetscape Improvements



Pailin Plaza: Site Plan



Pailin Plaza: Illustrative Plan



Pailin Plaza: Streetscape Improvements



Pailin Plaza: Streetscape Improvements



Pailin Plaza: Streetscape Improvements



Pailin Plaza: Streetscape Improvements



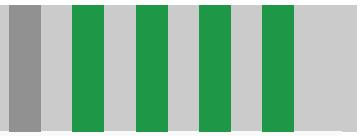
Clemente Park: Improvements



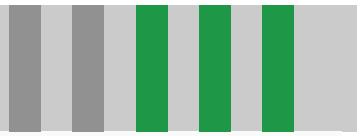
Clemente Park: Improvements



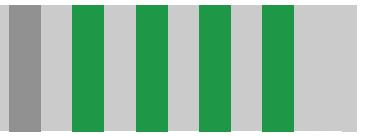
Canal Frontage



Canal Walk



Canal Walk



Autobody Shops and Park Expansion

- Economically beneficial
- More consistent use
- Is there a better site?



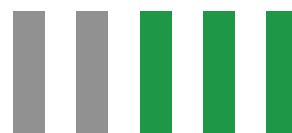
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Gallagher Terminal



Lower Highlands: Cross Cutting

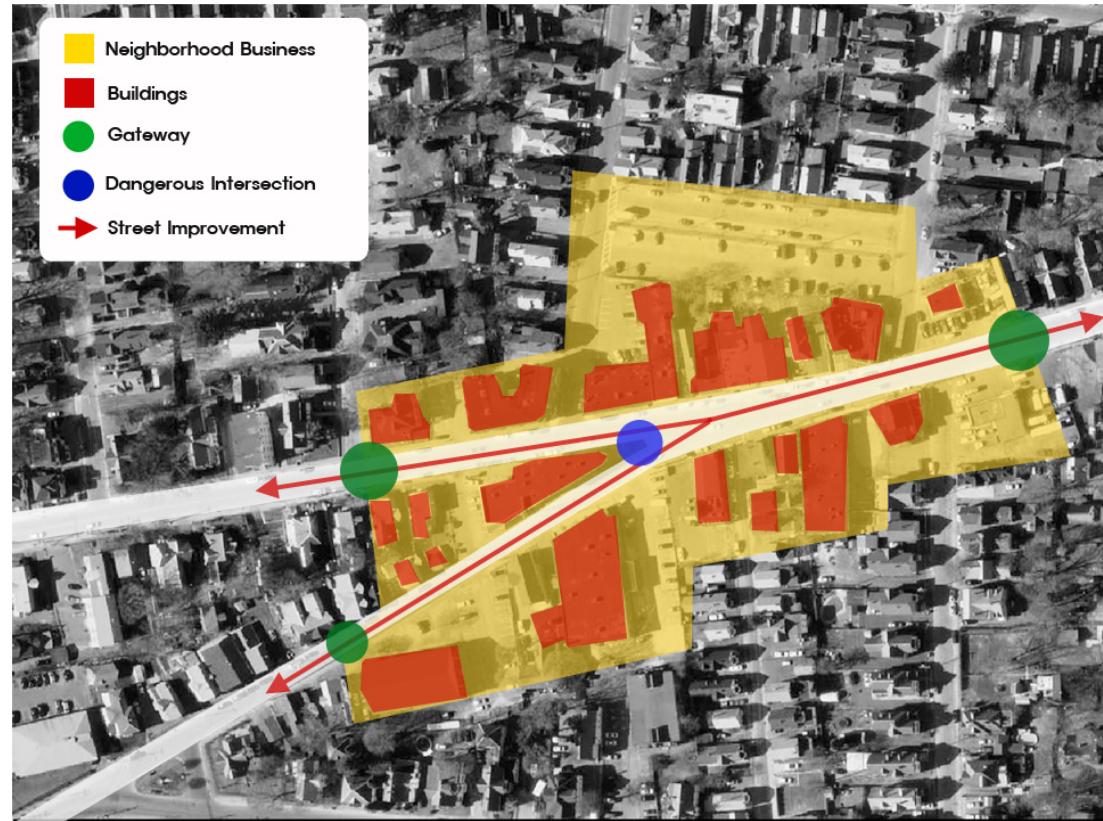
Cupples Square



Cupples Square



Cupples Square

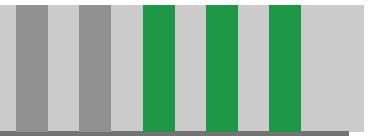




Key Interventions

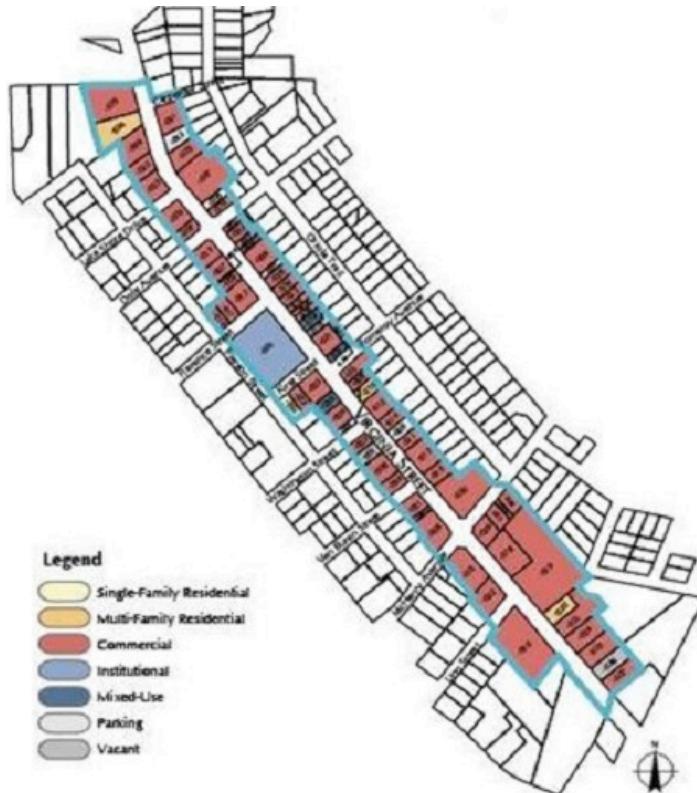
- 1. Creation of zoning overlay district**
- 2. Streetscape improvements**
- 3. Traffic mitigation**
- 4. Small business development**

Cupples Square



Cupples Square Overlay District

- Allows for unique place-making
- More specifically tailored uses than what is allowed in
- Neighborhood Business zoning



Cupples Square Overlay District

- **Design guidelines for business facades**
- **Incorporates zoning incentives for green development**
- **Merge lots → “Lot next door” program**
- **Preserve historic landmark building**

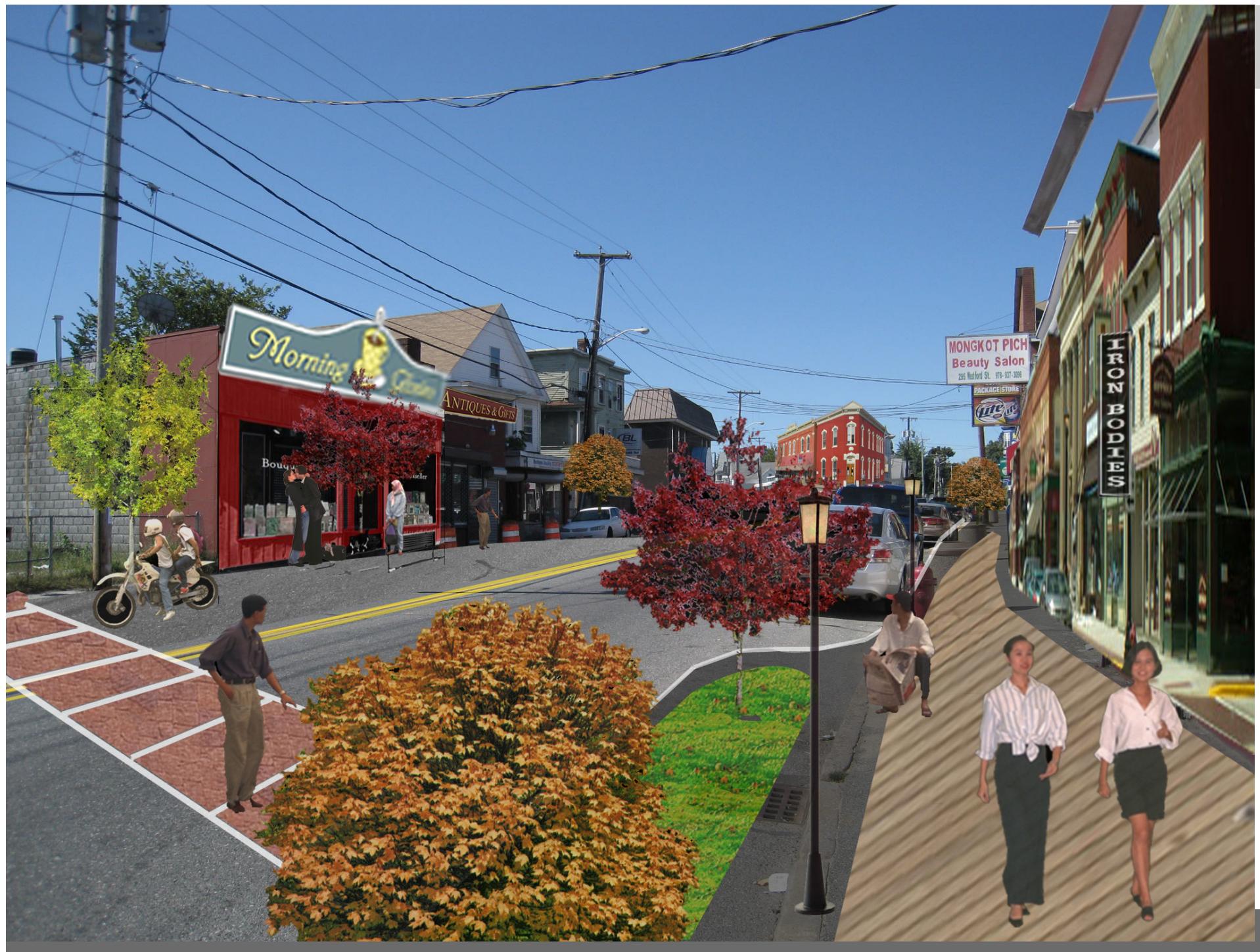


Streetscape Improvements



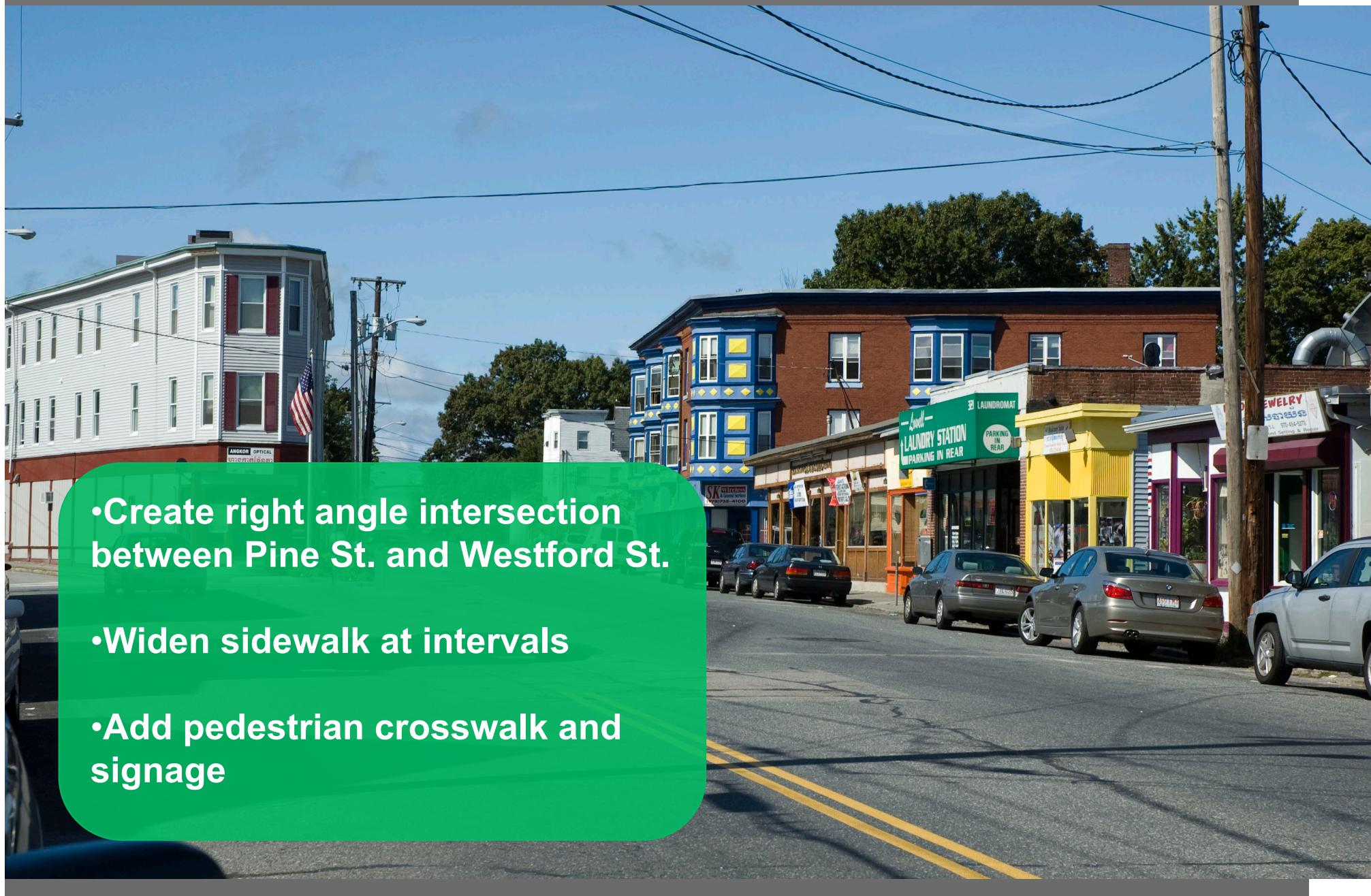
Streetscape Improvements





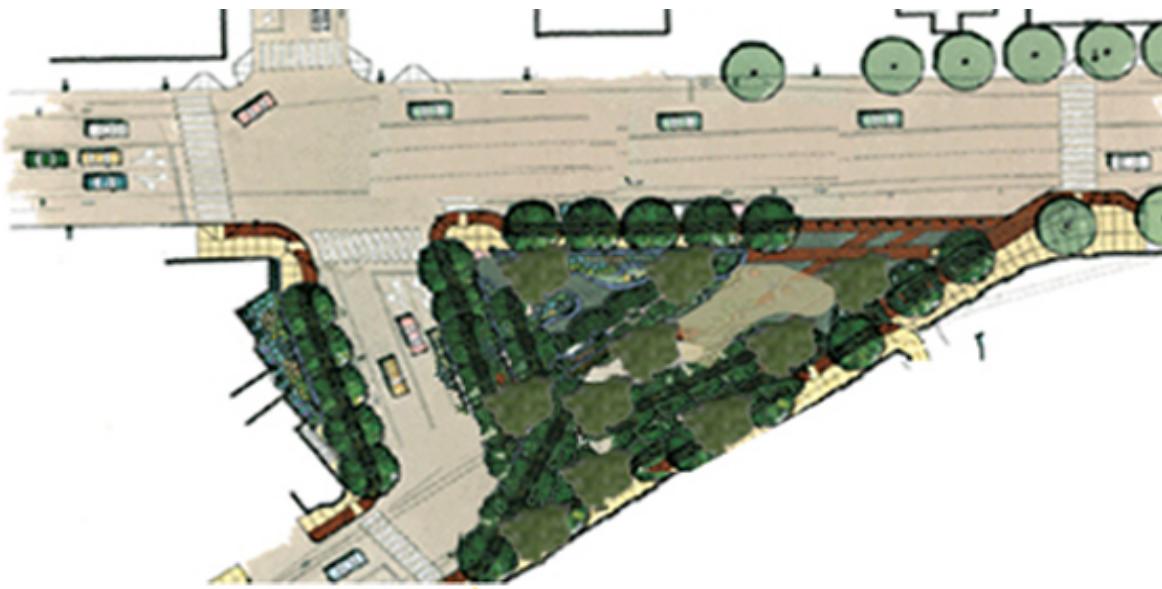


Traffic mitigation



Cupples Square





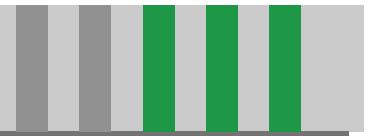
Site Detail



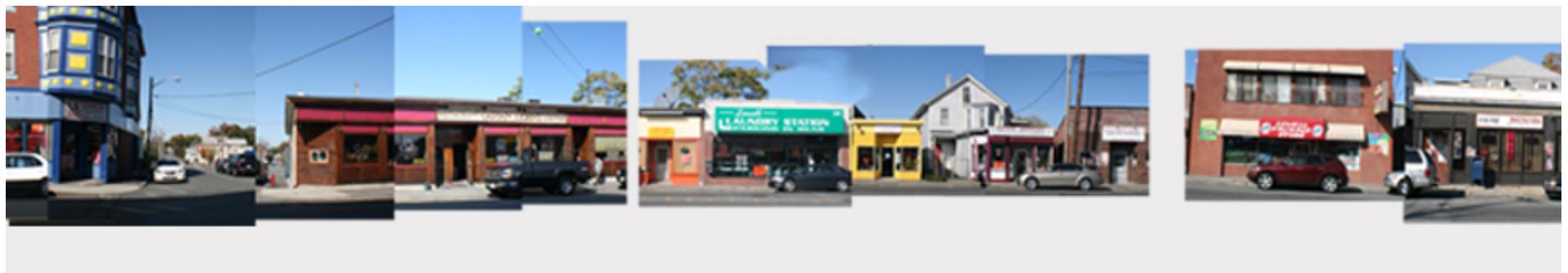




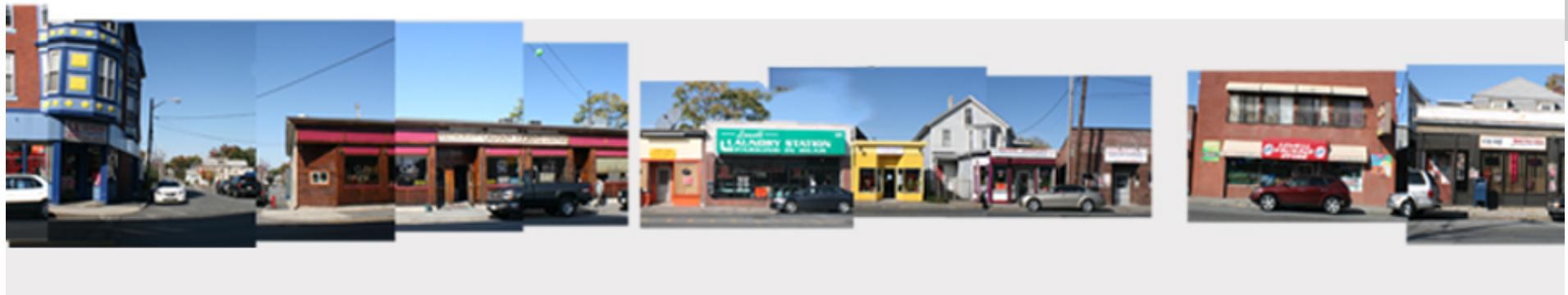
Small business program



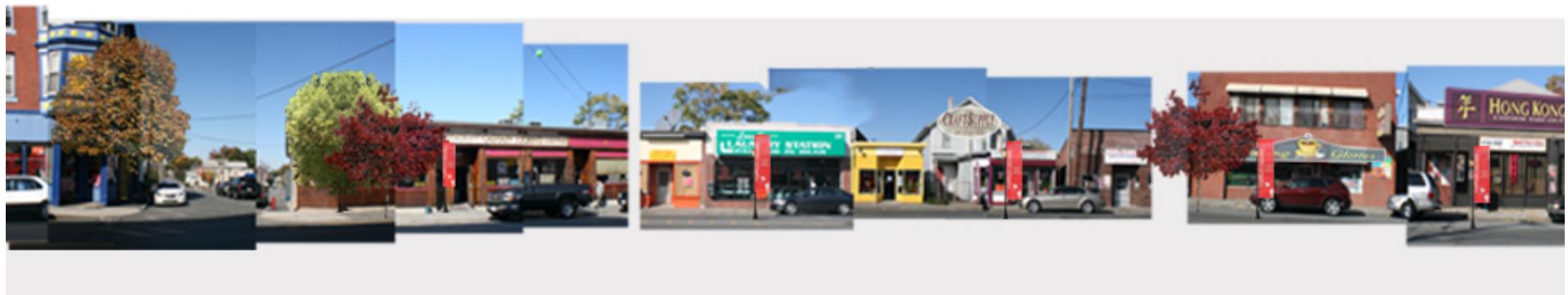
- Develop Main Streets program
- Bring Lowell's Retail Best Practices program to the area
- Green retrofit loan program



1st Phase



2nd Phase



3rd Phase

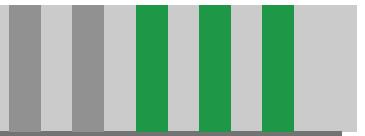


Revitalizing Small Businesses

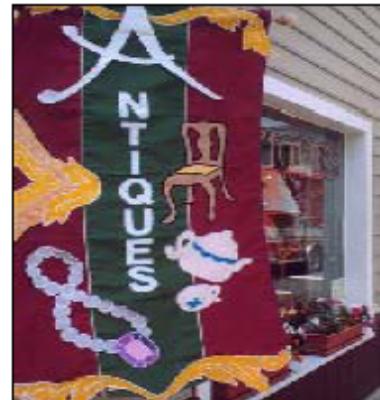
Gateway Business District Restoration Grant Program; Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn NY
New York City Department of Small Business Services



Revitalizing Small Businesses



Downtown Redevelopment Strategy; Bel Air, Maryland (2003)



Example organizations:

The Jamaica Plain's Small Business Development Program

Dorchester Bay Economic Development Corporation

What We Will Cover



Introduction and Context



Pailin Plaza and Clemente Park



Cupples Square



Nottingham St. Mills



Gallagher Terminal



Lower Highlands: Cross Cutting

Nottingham St. Mills Area: Sites We Looked At



Nottingham St. Mills: Existing Conditions



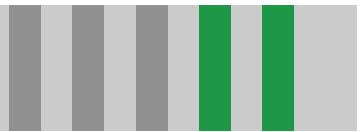
Nottingham St. Mills: Existing Conditions

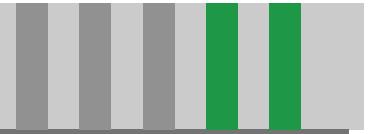


Nottingham St. Mills Existing Conditions



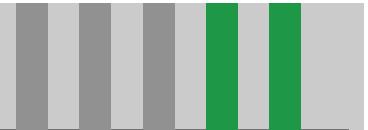
Nottingham St. Mills Existing Conditions





Designate site as Priority Development District (PDD) to:

- Access state resources to clean up site
- Create new site guidelines to attract investment and new uses
- Get expedited permitting for developers if they follow guidelines



Create new design principles that:

- Promote preservation of the site's historic buildings and reflect the historic scale of buildings
- Support the site's unique low-elevation topography by integrating natural systems into the site's design
- Encourage the development of a contemporary millyard that serves the surrounding neighborhood and attracts visitors from within and outside of the city through service provision, cultural activities, and job creation

Redeveloping the Mills: A Vision



Nottingham St. Mills: Option 1



Nottingham St. Mills: before



Nottingham St. Mills: after



Nottingham St. Mills: Before



Nottingham St. Mills: After





Possible implementation partners and funding sources:



revolving museum



Coalition for a Better Acre
*Building and Strengthening
Our Communities*

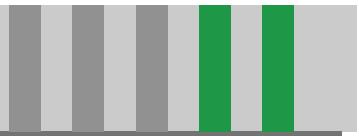
State sources through PPD designation:

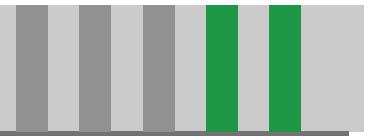
- Community development action grants
- Public works economic development grants
- Brownfields remediation assistance
- \$150,000 in technical assistance

Additional sources:

- Lowell HOME funds
- Historic Preservation Tax Credits
- Housing Tax Credits

Nottingham St. Mills: Option 2





Possible implementation partners and additional \$\$ sources:



State sources through PPD designation:

- Community development action grants
- Public works economic development grants
- Brownfields remediation assistance
- \$150,000 in technical assistance

Additional sources:

- Historic Preservation Tax Credits
- New Market Tax Credits

Registry of Motor Vehicles Site



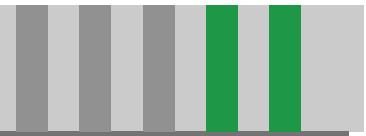
**CURRENT ZONING:
REGIONAL RETAIL**



Site Advantages:

- Accessible and partially visible from Lowell Connector
- Proximity to Target and Nottingham Mills Sites
- Proximity to Gallagher Terminal
- Large lot
- Situated on only Regional Retail zone within Lowell's urban core
- Neighboring lots underutilized - potential for larger redevelopment?

Registry of Motor Vehicles Site

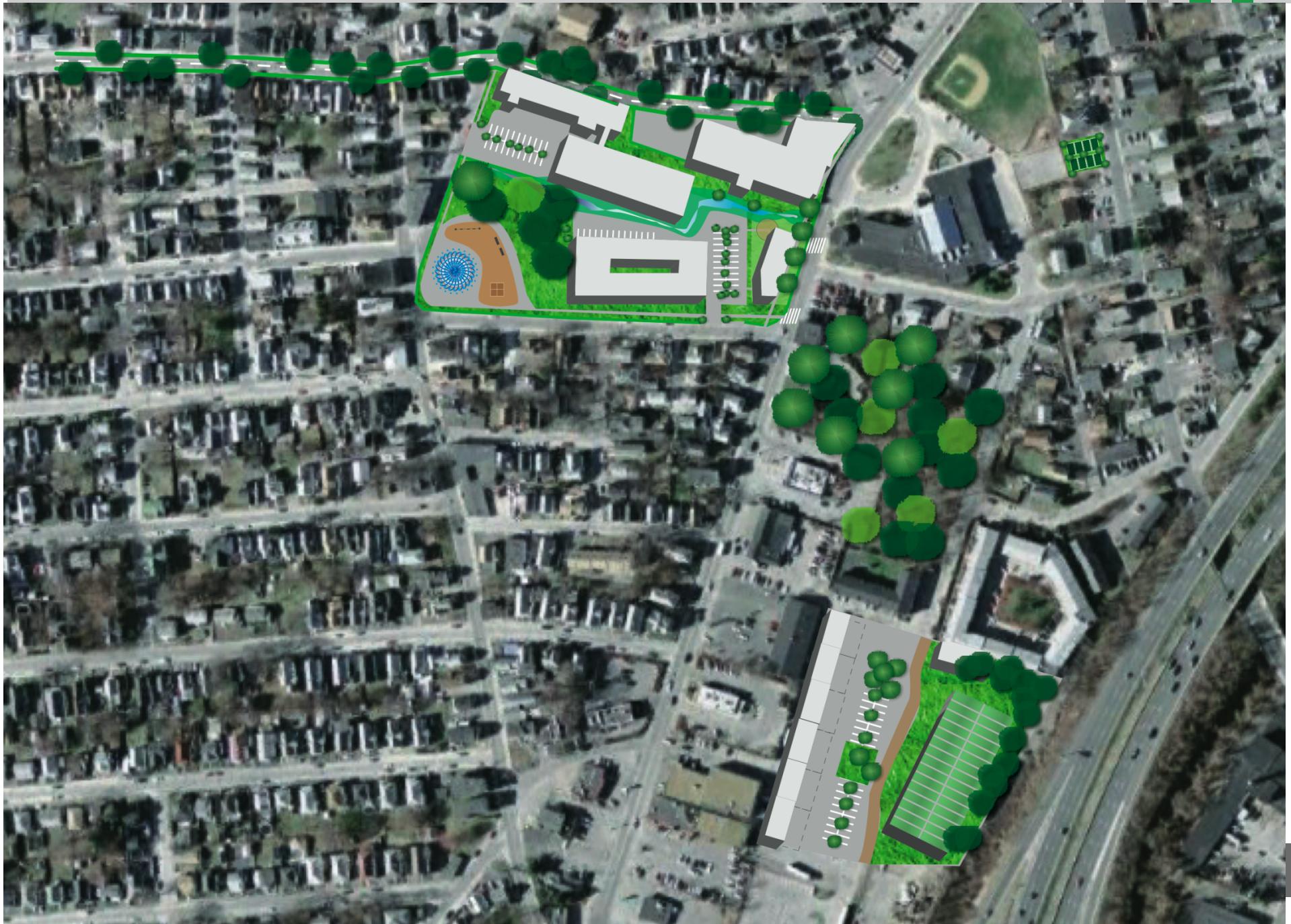


Challenges:

Strategies:

| | |
|--|---|
| No Chelmsford St. frontage | Amend zoning to allow businesses that don't require prominent street frontage (autobody shops) |
| Concern that autobody shops incompatible with nearby residential, and ugly as seen from Lowell Connector | Develop design and quality criteria ensure autobody "eco friendliness"; screen uses from Connector with trees |
| Multiple parcels, all privately held | Incentivize merging of parcels through density bonuses |
| Desire for community amenities | Advocate city purchase of RMV land to set aside part for sports fields / community garden / etc. |
| Lack of city funds for public amenities | Solicit big box or other large retail to "anchor" redevelopment |
| Chelmsford St. businesses not physically integrated with neighborhood | Develop Chelmsford St. Corridor design guidelines to guide future redevelopment |

A New South Gate into the Lower Highlands



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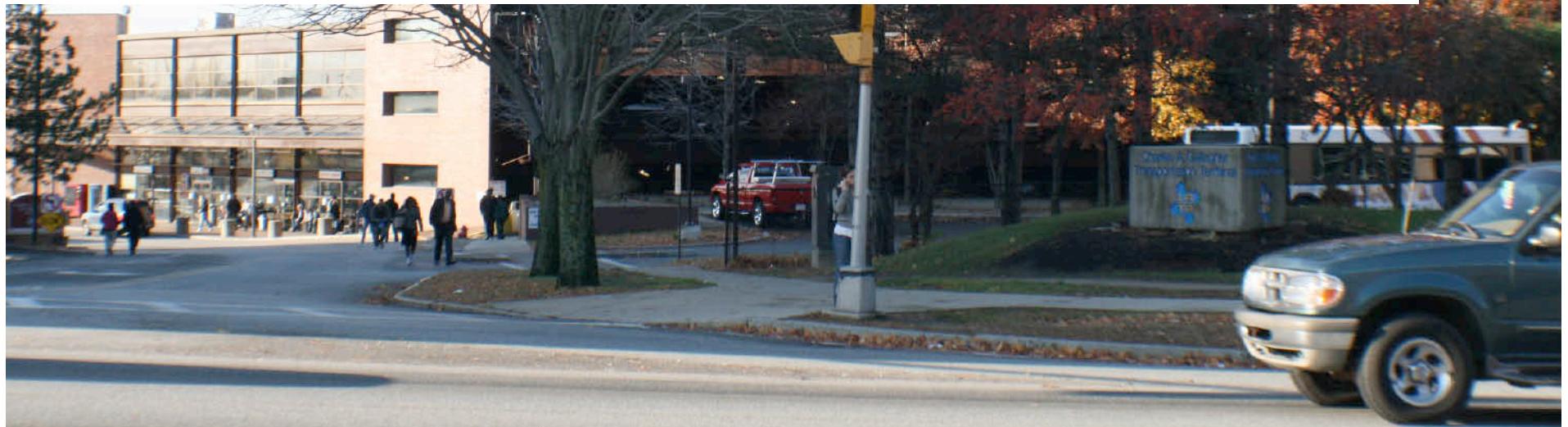
Lower Highlands: Cross Cutting

Gallagher Terminal



Gallagher Terminal

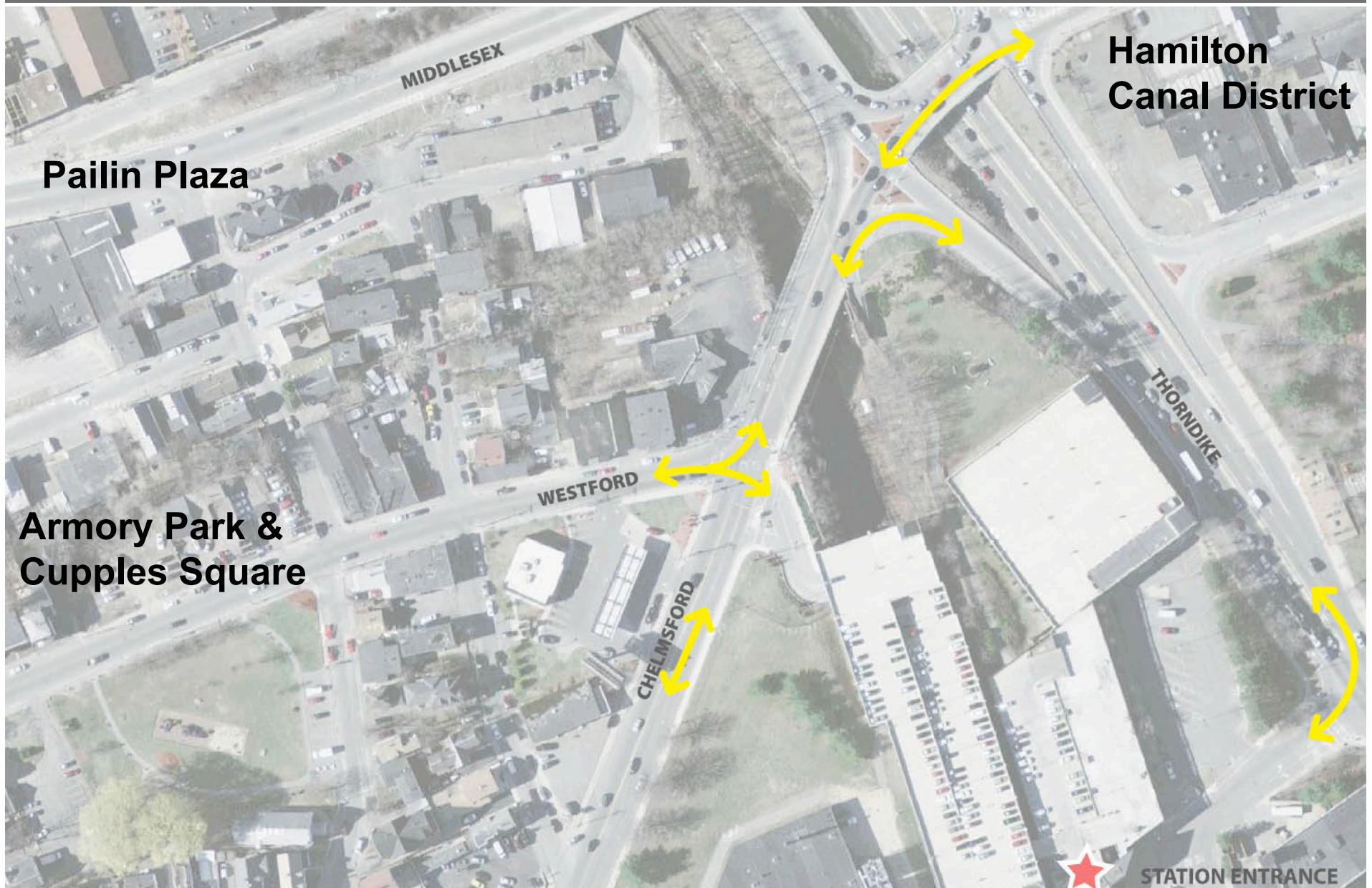
- 5th busiest MBTA commuter rail station (weekday inbound)
- 1,600 daily train boardings
- Stimulates local economy
- Connects Lowell, Lower Highlands and neighbors
- Ties together neighboring land uses



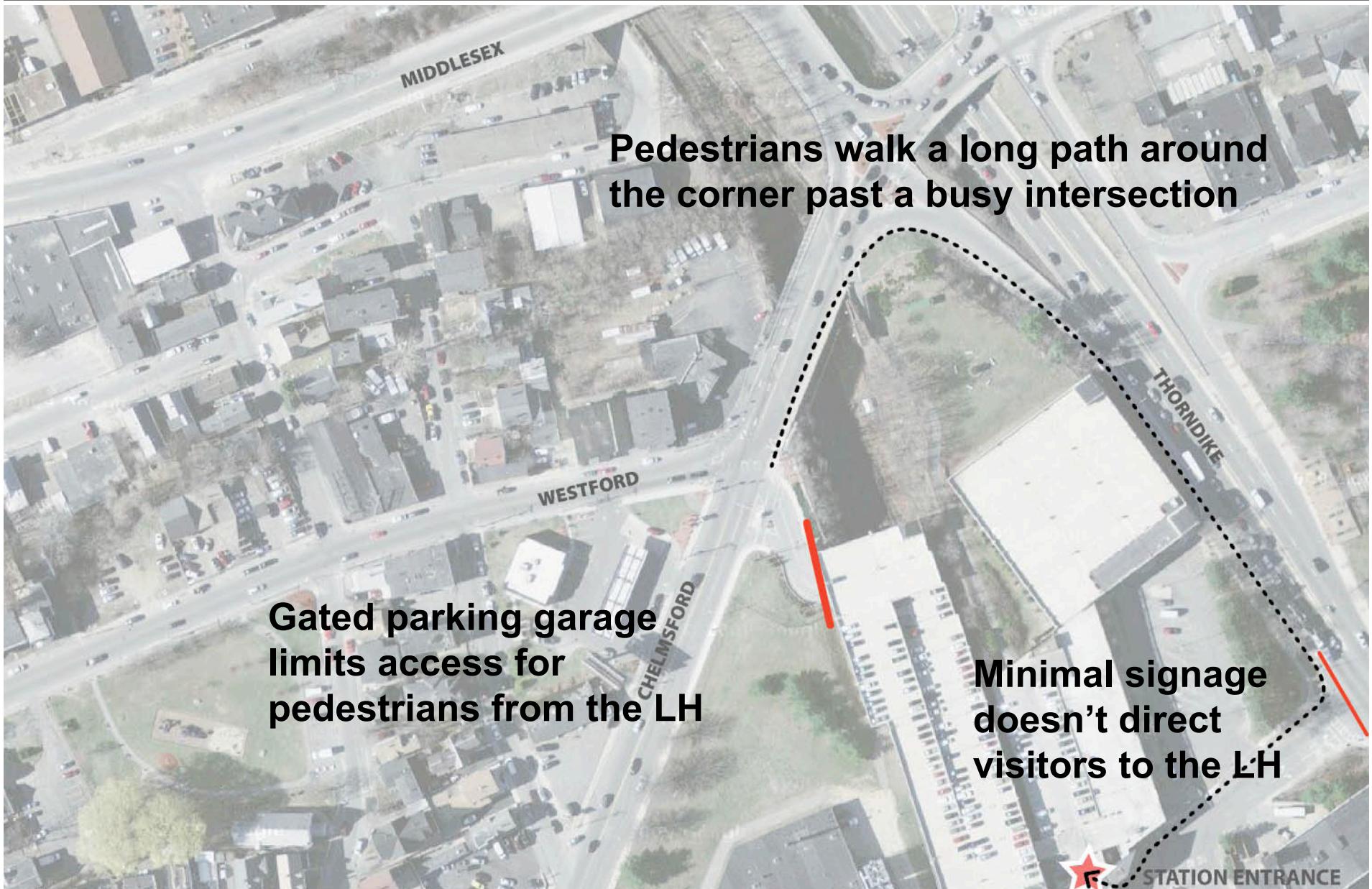
Gallagher Terminal



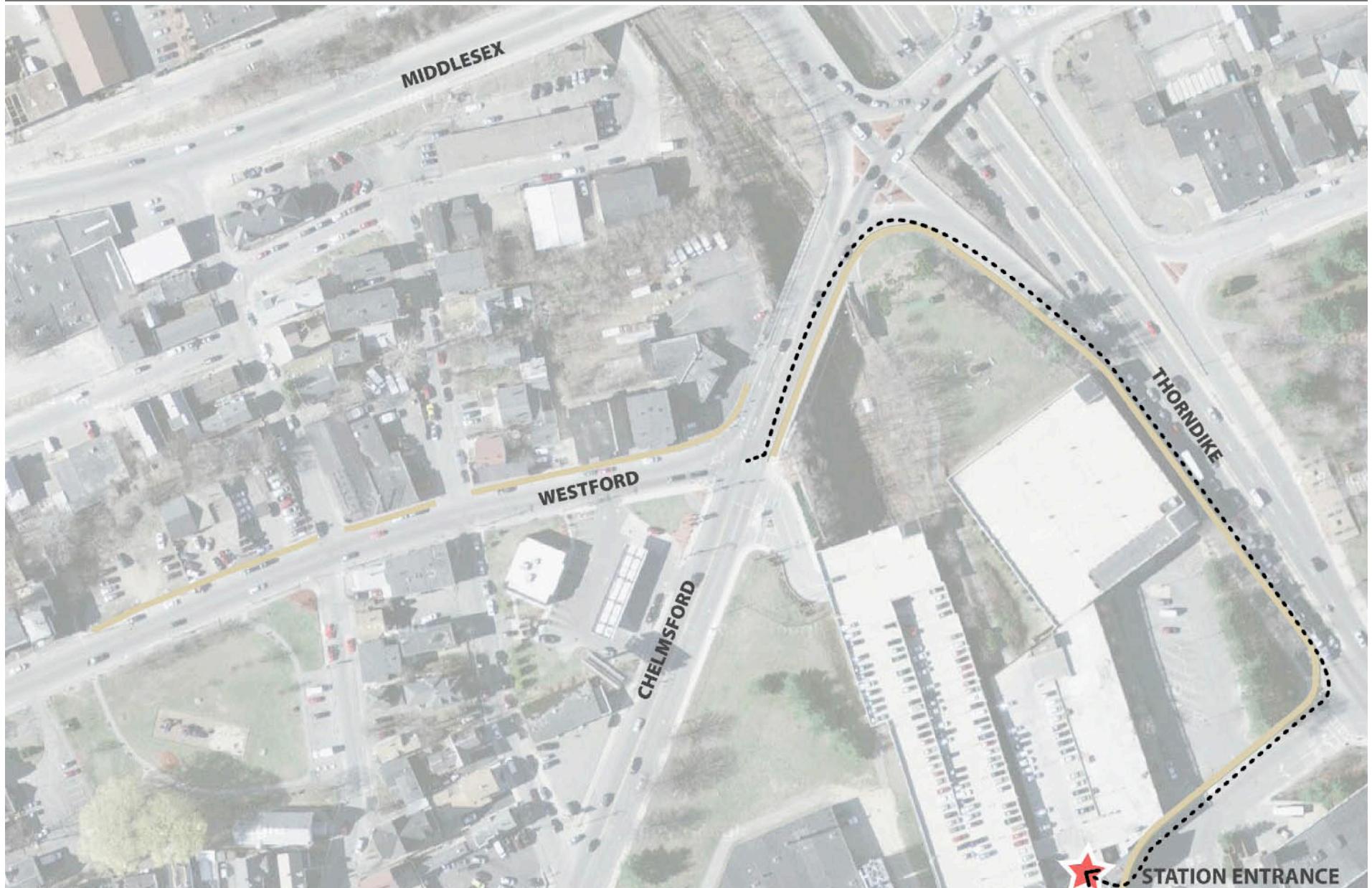
Gallagher Terminal: Neighborhood Connections



Gallagher Terminal: Barriers



Option #1: Streetscape improvements



Option #1: Streetscape improvements



Option #1: Streetscape improvements

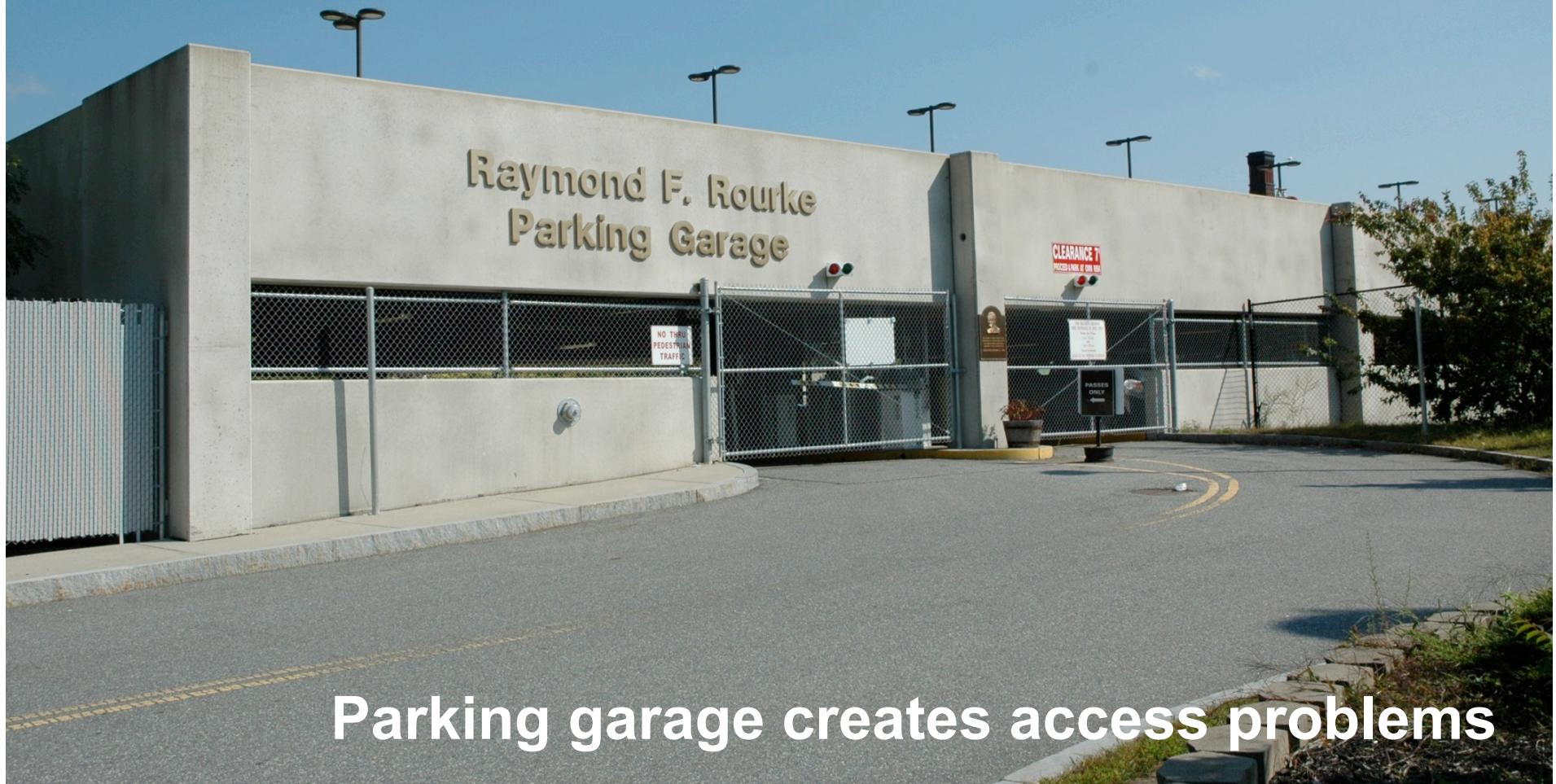


Bright street markings, improved lighting, and landscaping improve safety at the Westford intersection and to the front of Gallagher

Option #2: Safer route through the garage

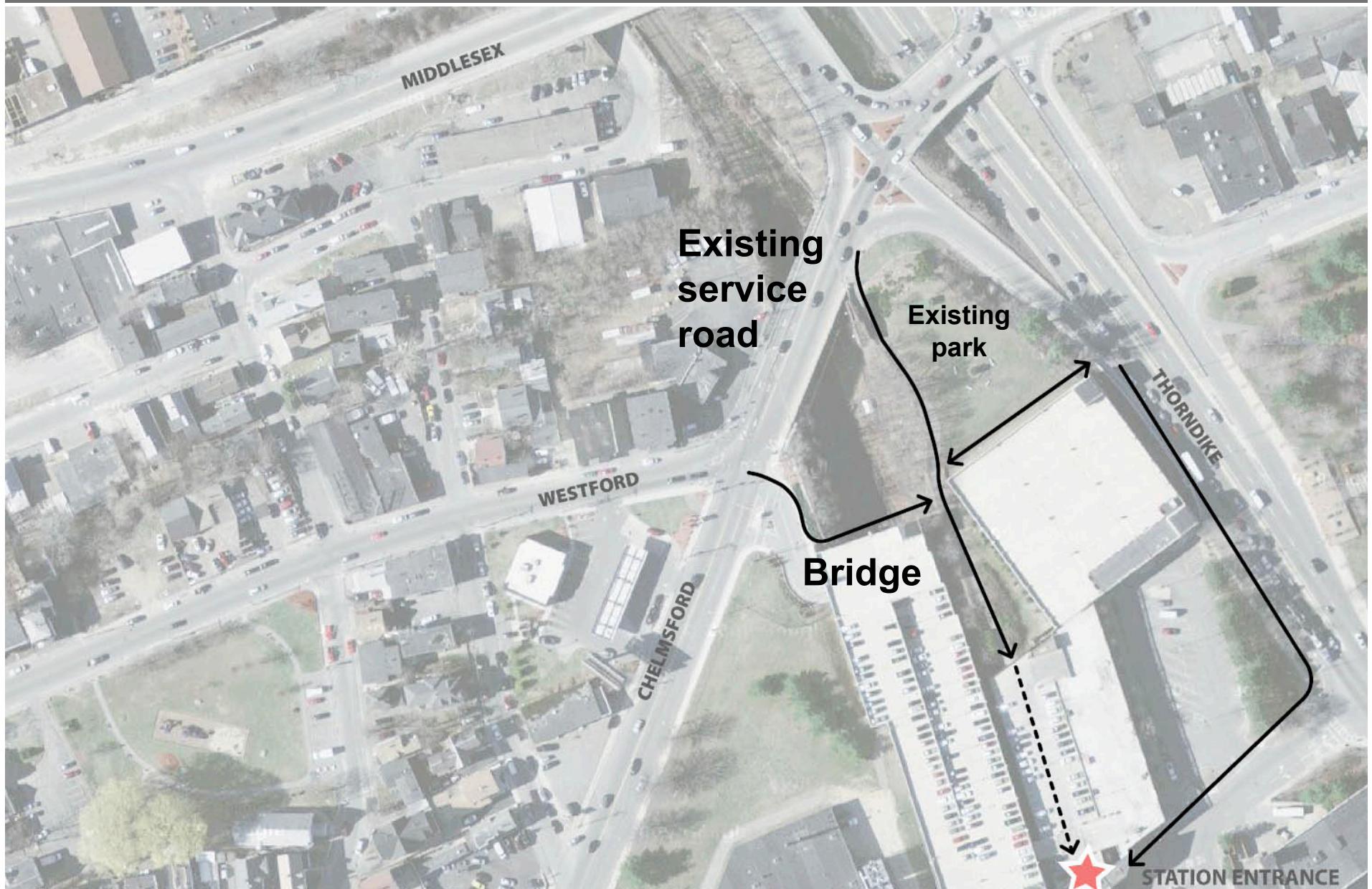


Option #2: Safer route through the garage



Parking garage creates access problems

Option #3: New path and bridge



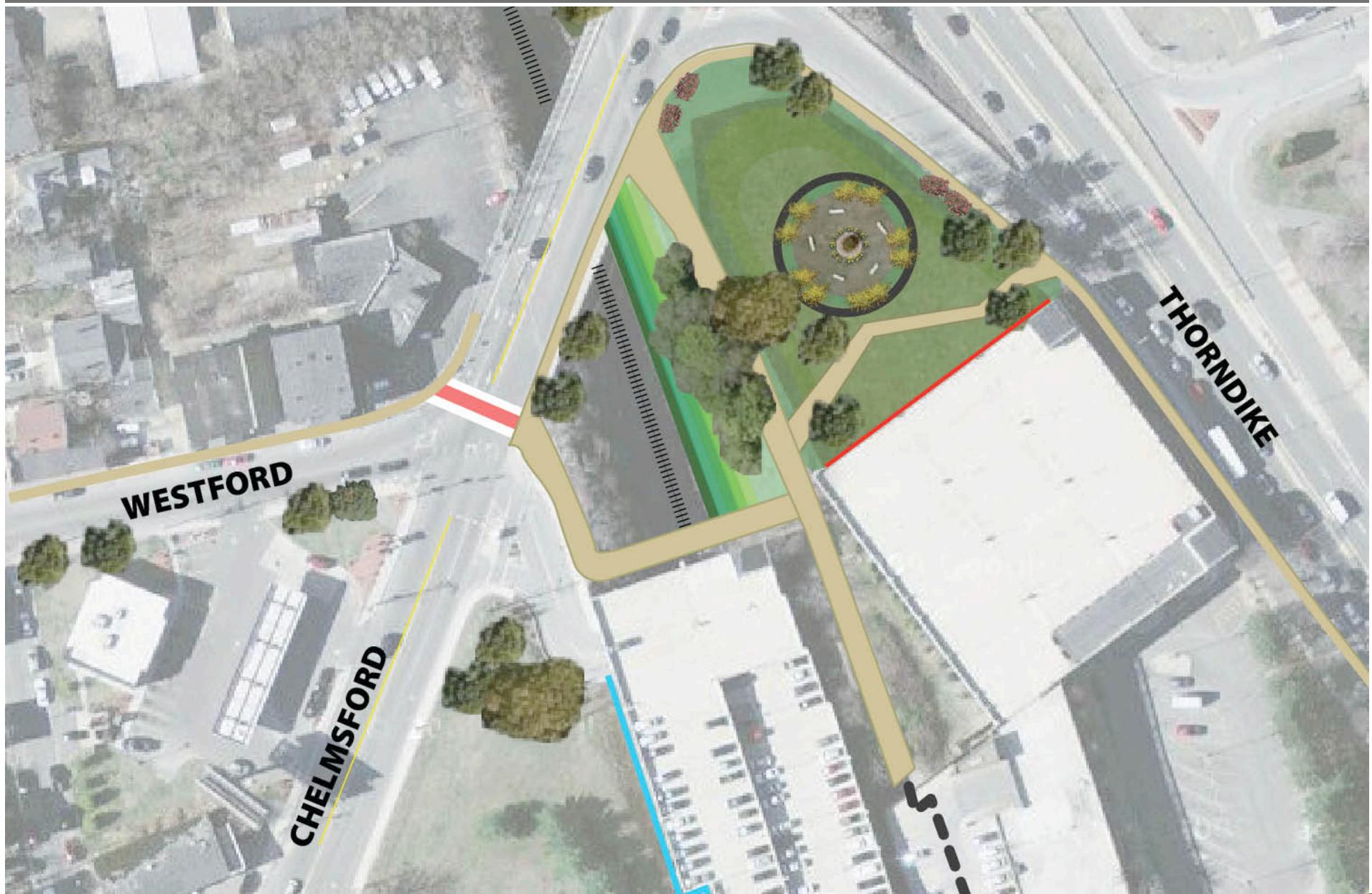
Option #3: New path and bridge



Option #3: New path and bridge



Option #3: New path and bridge



Option #3: New path and bridge



View of the north side of Gallagher Station from Thorndike

Option #3: New path and bridge



View of the north side of Gallagher Station from Thorndike

Option #3: New path and bridge



Option #3: New path and bridge

PATHWAY & PARK



View from the parking garage roof, facing north

Option #3: New path and bridge



Option #3: New path and bridge



Option #4: Elevated path along parking garage



Option #4: Elevated path along parking garage



View of the parking garage and Terminal, facing North

Option #4: Elevated path along parking garage



New exterior elevated pathway

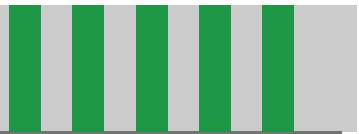


**Solar photovoltaics on the exterior
can convert sunshine into electricity**

Wayfinding at the front of the station

- Install more wayfinding signage near Gallagher Terminal
 - Overpass and adjacent streets
 - Directions to Cupples Sq. via Westford
 - Directions to Pailin Plaza area
- Extend downtown directional signage
 - Example: signs near School St. and Western Ave. Studios
- Post standalone map signage to orient pedestrians at and around Gallagher
 - Include directions to proposed garage bypass (pedestrian path)

Wayfinding in the Lower Highlands



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Cupples Square



Nottingham St. Mills

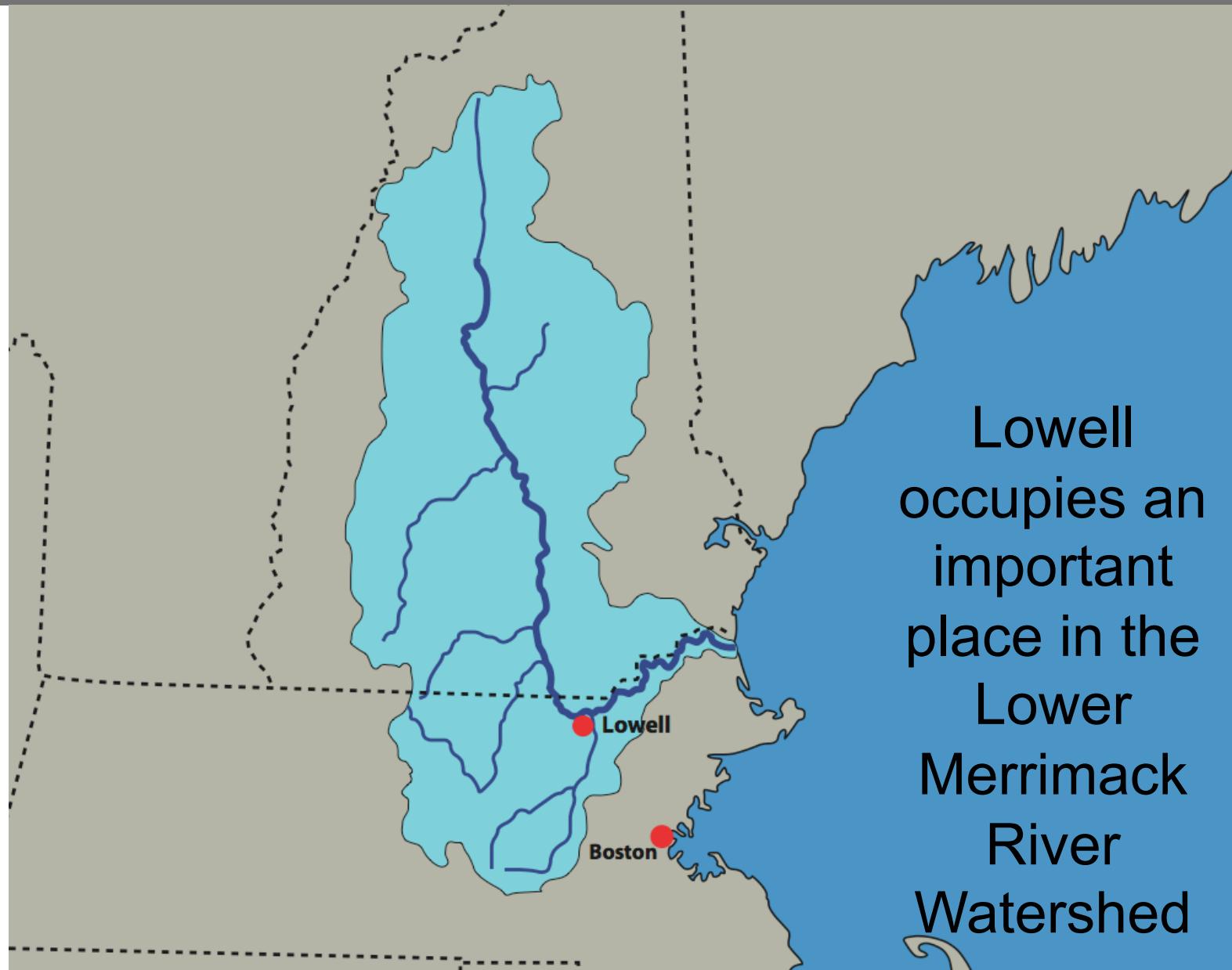


Gallagher Terminal

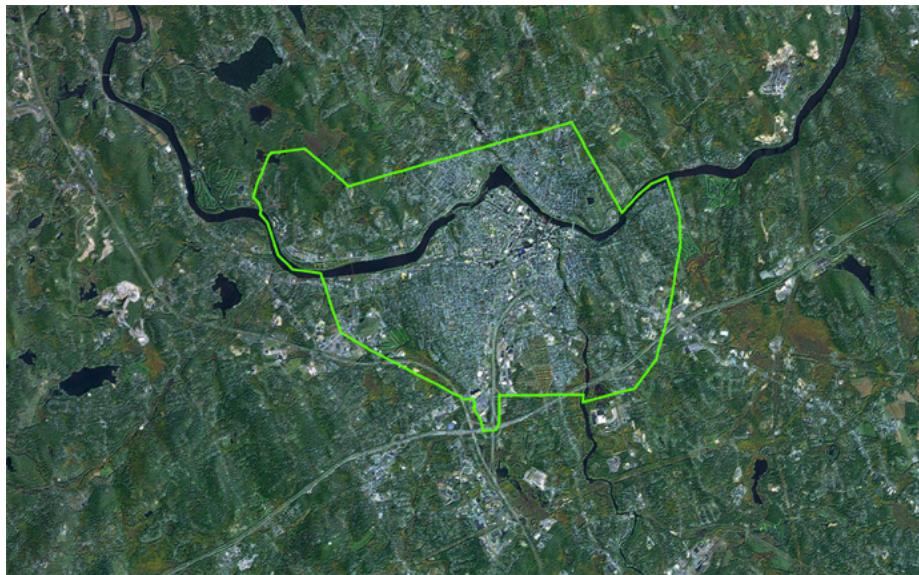


Lower Highlands: Cross Cutting

Natural Systems and Lowell



Natural Systems and the Lower Highlands

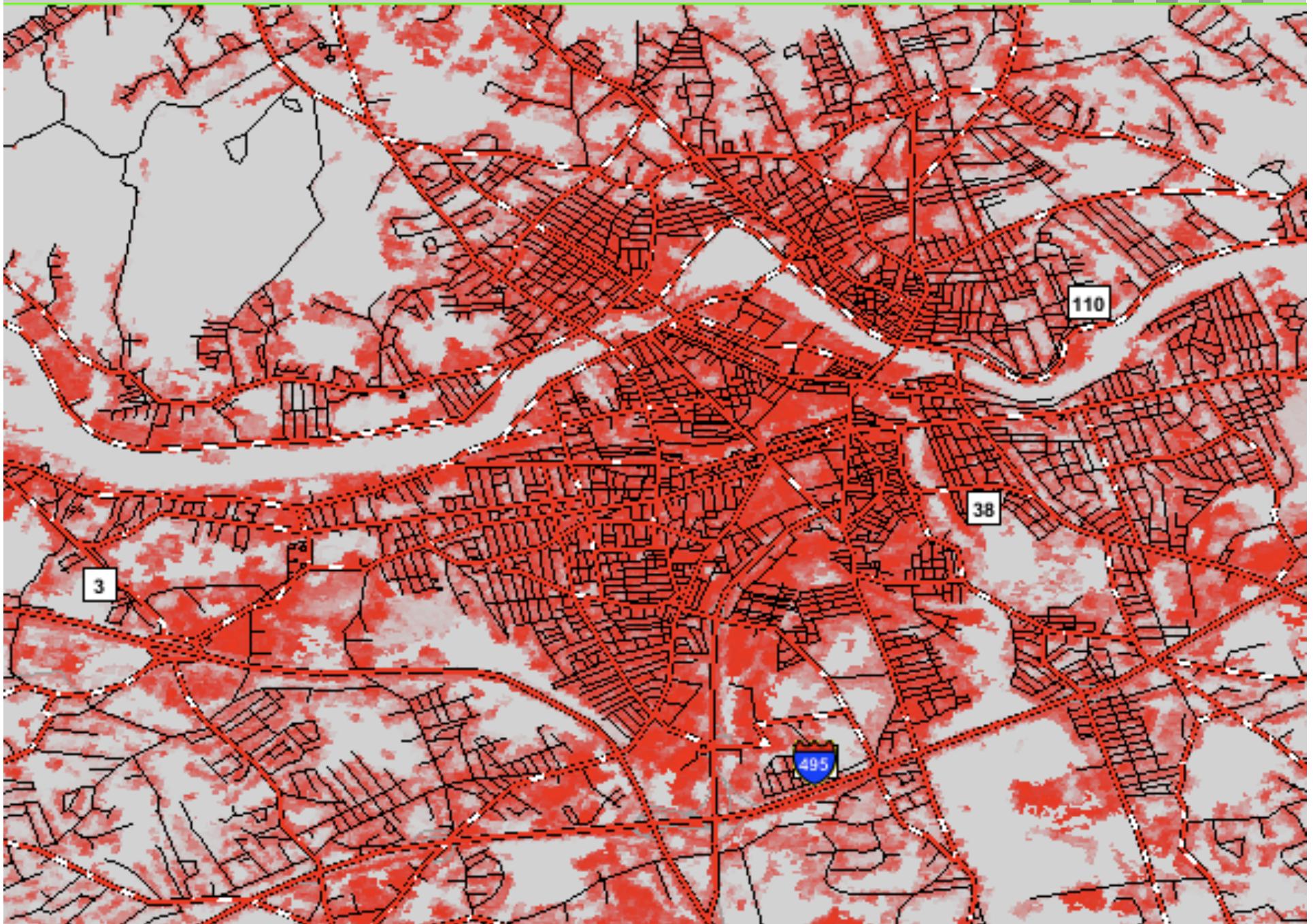


Natural landscaping and green space:

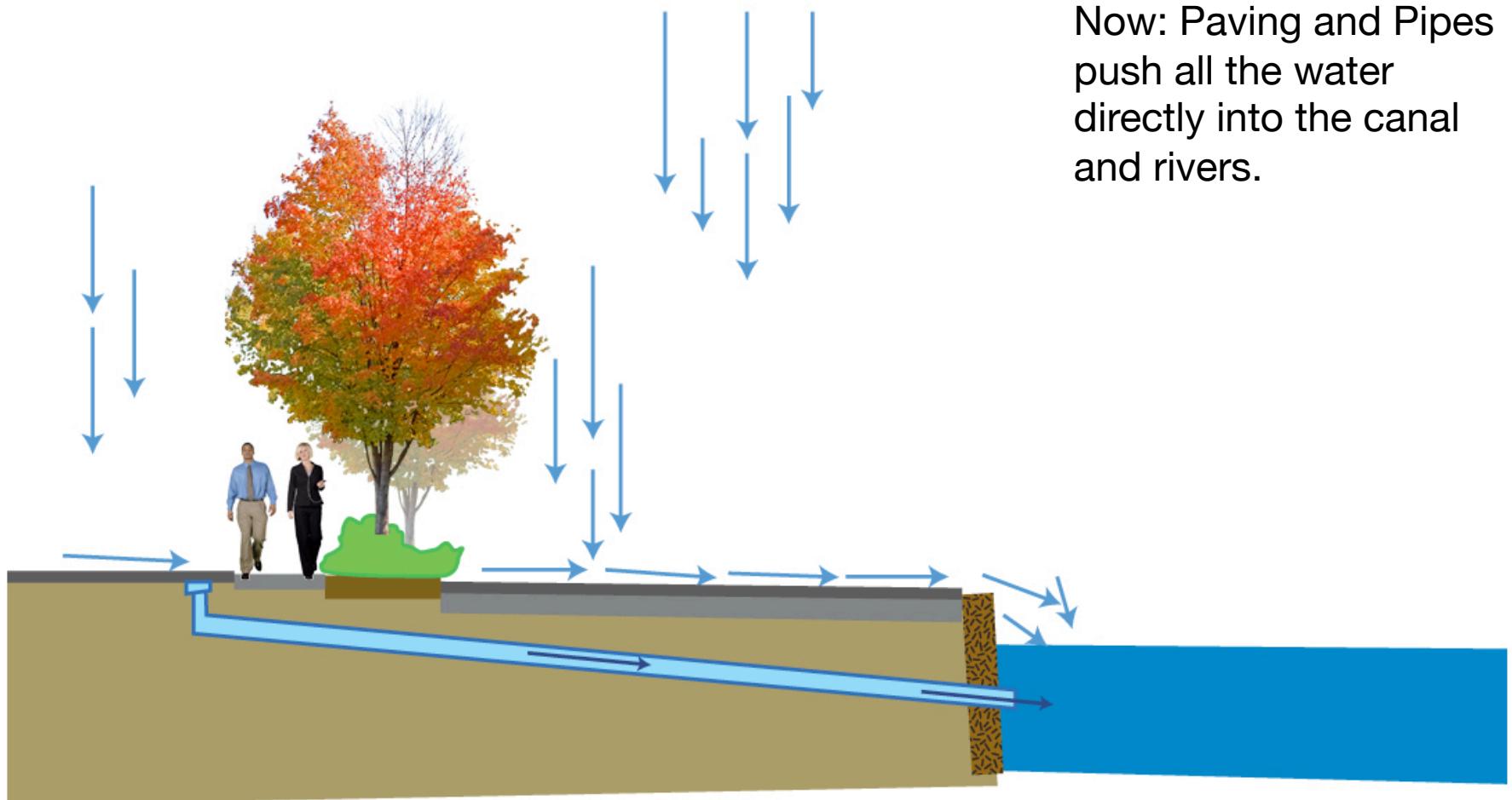
- **Clean air and water**
- **Control flooding by improved runoff absorption**
- **Aid in soil retention**
- **Beautify neighborhoods**
- **Create new community spaces**
- **Activate the streets**



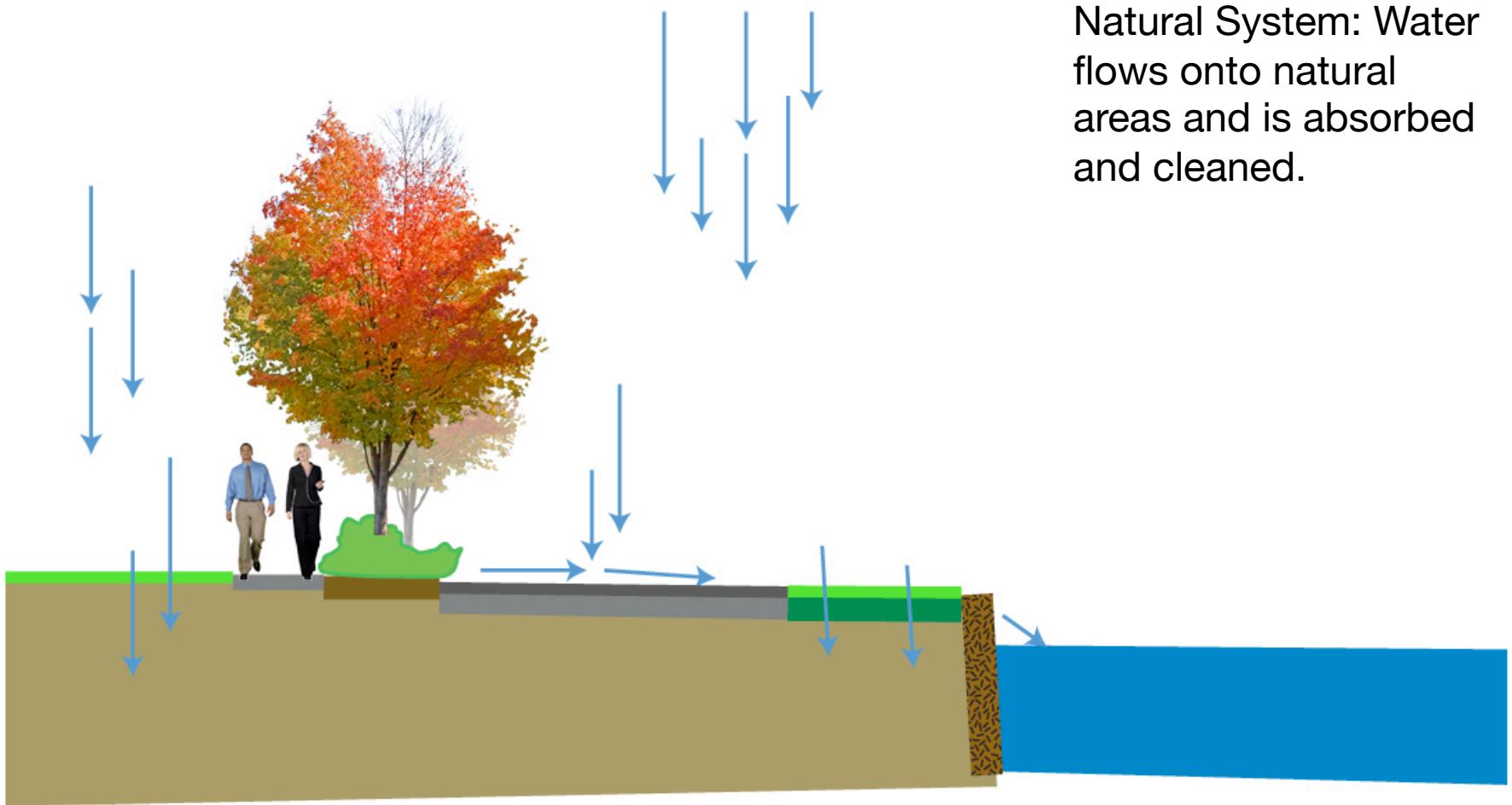
Existing paved surfaces in Lowell



Rainwater in the Lower Highlands

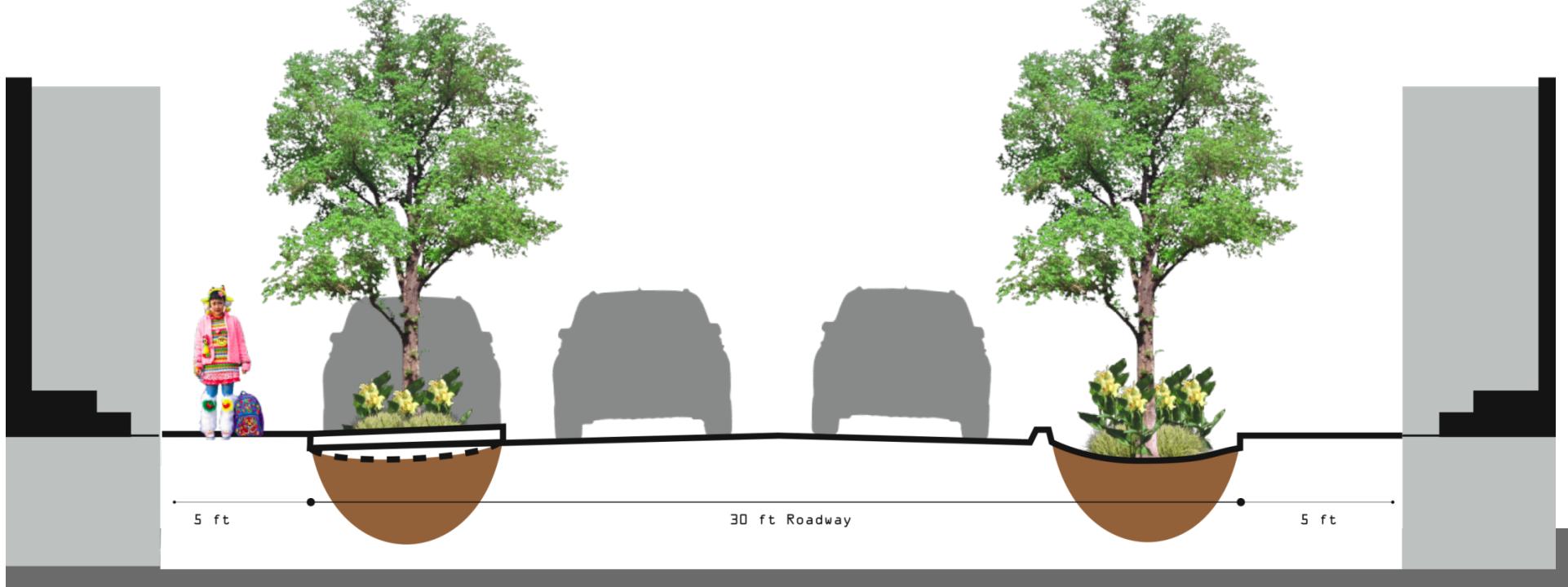
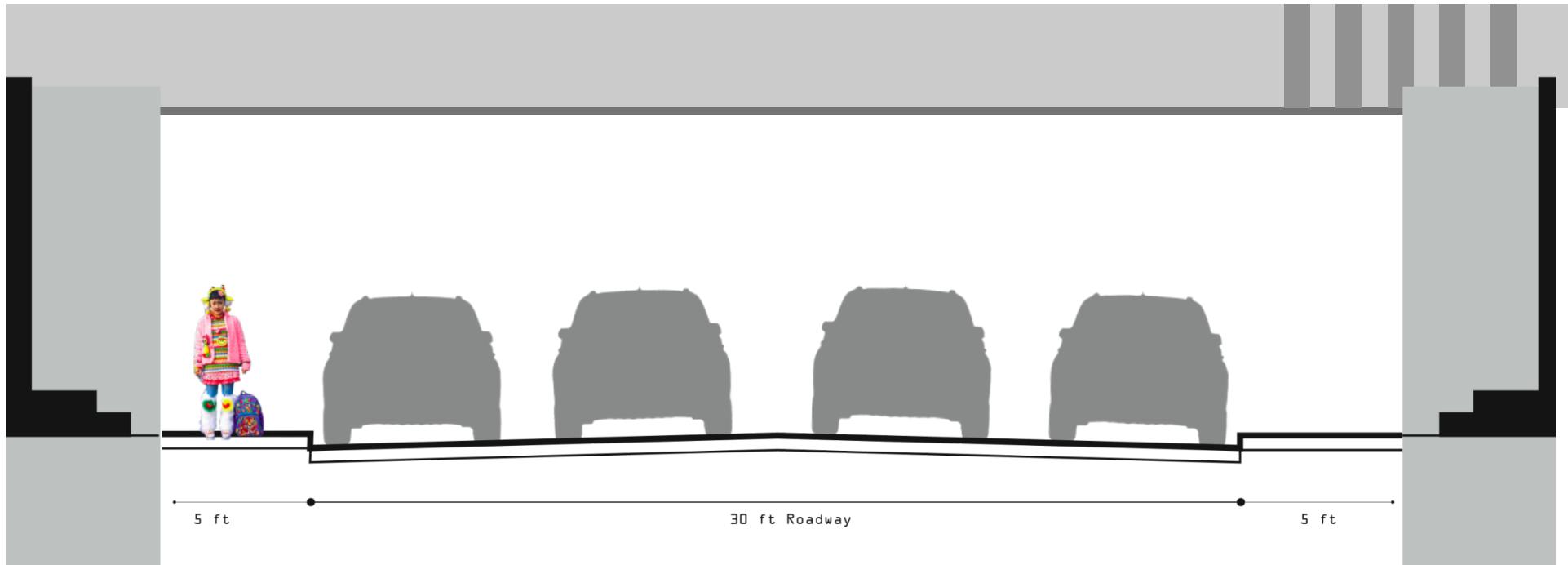


Improved Natural Water Flows

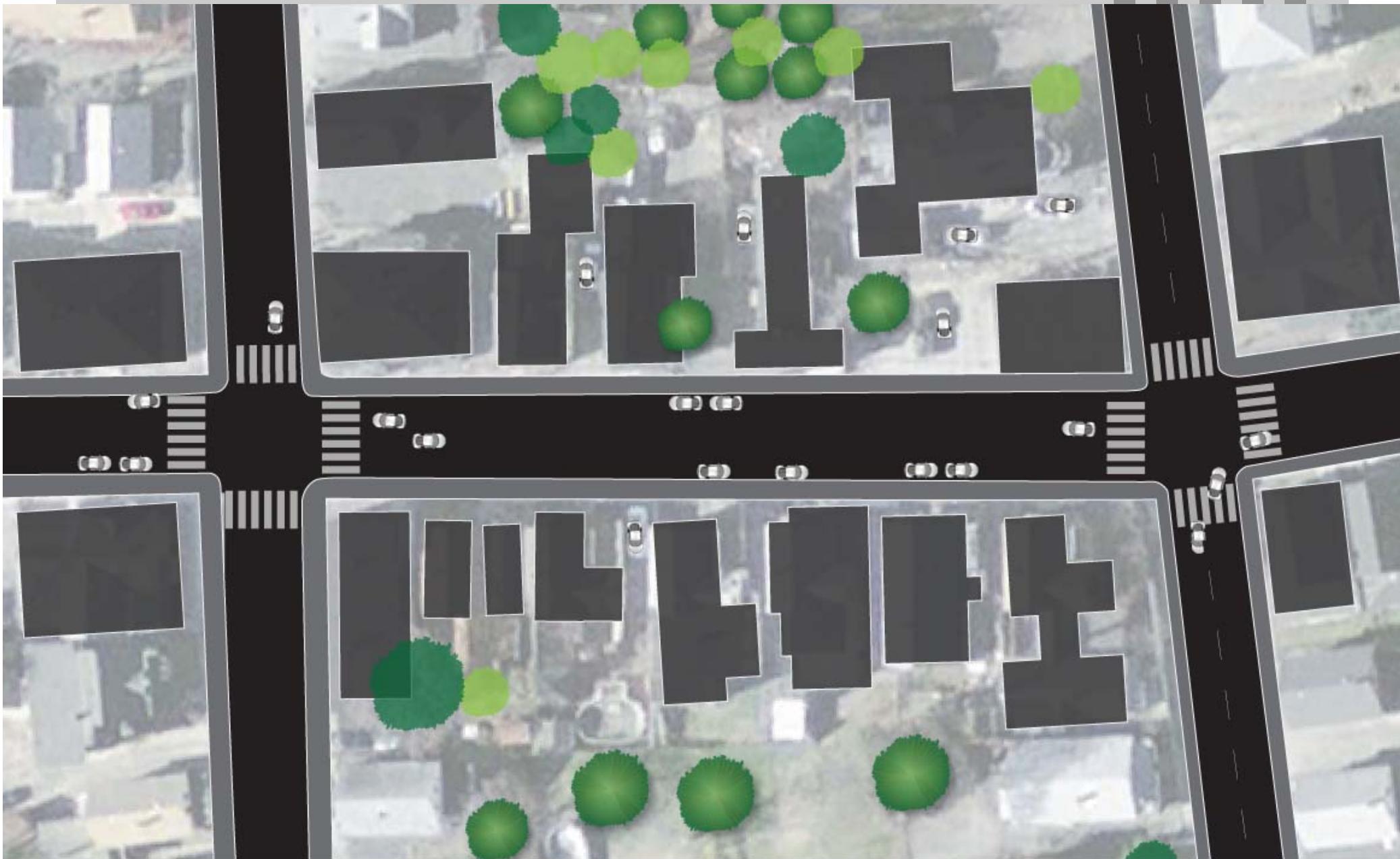


Improving drainage and natural systems: “green streets”

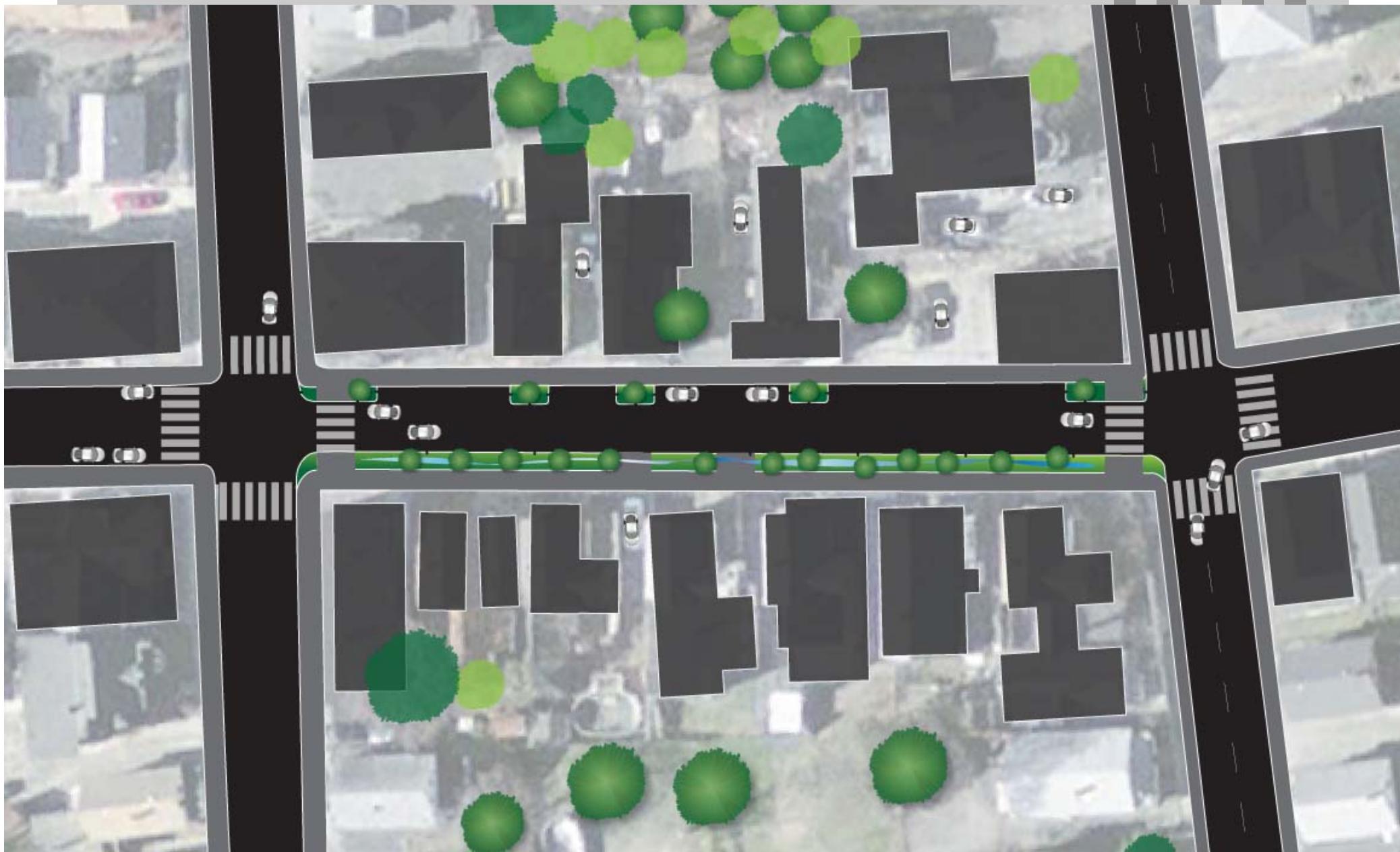




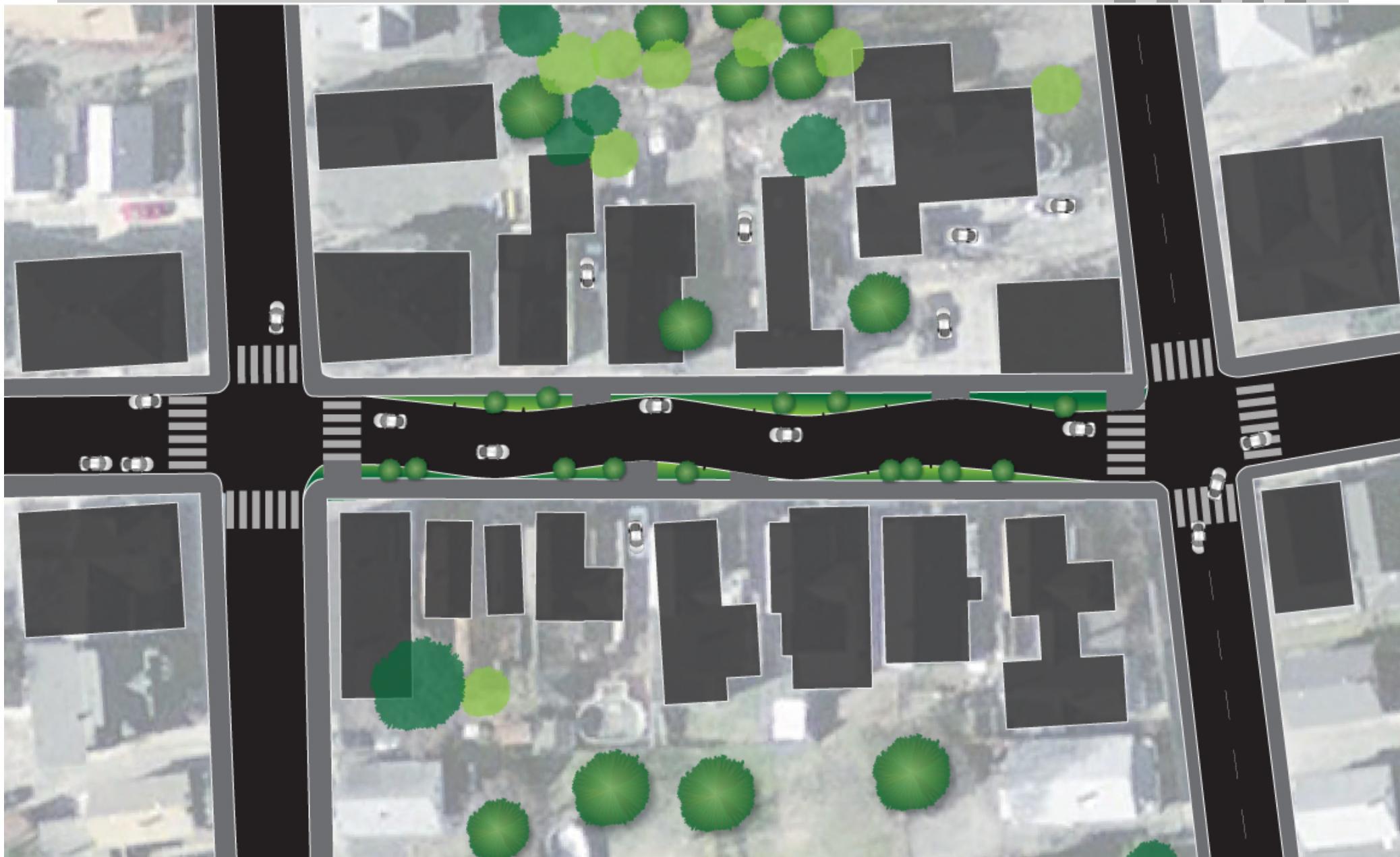
A regular street



A green street (model 1)



Another green street (model 2)



Green Street: how?

- Integrate into ongoing city-wide Combined Sewer Separation Project
- Link up with city-wide Climate Change Action Plan as “green infrastructure” showcase
- Revise Traditional Neighborhood design guidelines
 - Create specifications for pervious pavement, swales, and other drainage innovations
 - Provide for street narrowing to allow for additional trees and greenery
- We want your ideas on the best candidate pilot streets in Lower Highlands

Improving drainage on private lots

- Amend zoning code section on off-street parking:
 - Revise purpose not only to provide adequate parking, but also to promote multi-modal transport and ensure ecological integrity
 - Reduce off-street parking requirements for properties close to Gallagher Terminal; trolley line and other public transit; affordable housing (example: NYC and other cities)
 - Require new off-street parking to utilize pervious pavement (develop new guidelines; apply through paving permit process)
- Incentive schemes to encourage residents to replace existing pavement with natural or pervious surfaces
 - Stormwater utility payment scheme
 - Educational materials, technical assistance from the City







Increase Community Green Space

Proposal: Turn vacant lots into community gardens & pocket parks



Partner with Keep Lowell Beautiful & Neighborhood groups

Implementation

| Planning Recommendation | Specific Action/s | Cost | Time (yrs) |
|--|---|--|-------------------------------|
| Cupples Square streetscape improvements | Widen sidewalks and add amenities such as streetlamps, informational placards and trees | Moderate | Can Start within a few months |
| Creation of Cupples Square Zoning Overlay District | | Low | 1 |
| Traffic Mitigation in Cupples Square | Construction of right angle in road, pedestrian crosswalks, sidewalk widening and signage | High | |
| Small business development | Create Main Streets Program, bring in Best Retail Practices program; revolving loan fund for green retrofits | Moderate | 1-2 years |
| Pailin-Clemente area: enhance unique identity and regional draw | Institute new design guidelines including a removal of sign ordinance; create branding and gateways; Extend Acre Urban Renewal Boundary to include current autobody shop area | Low | 1-2 |
| Upgrade Clemente Park | Improvements to park, surrounding streetscape, and crosswalk | Medium | 1-2 |
| Create Community Center in Clemente Park | Acquire taxicab barn and convert to community center | High | 5 |
| Create Canal Walk | Interface with National Park Service plan for upgrading canal walk | High | Reliant on NPS |
| Redevelop Nottingham Mills | Designate site as Priority Development District | Low | immediate |
| Redevelop Nottingham Mills | Develop according to pre-specified uses: (Option 1) Mixed use with residential; or (Option 2) Mixed use with business incubator | High, but offset by grants and tax credits | 3+ |

Implementation

| Planning Recommendation | Specific Action/s | Cost | Time (yrs) |
|---|---|-------------|---------------------|
| Utilize RMV site | Amend site zoning to allow eco-friendly autobody shops | Low | < 1 year |
| Plan for RMV site future redevelopment | Amend zoning to encourage lot consolidation for larger-scale future redevelopment; develop Chelmsford St. design guidelines | Low | <1 year |
| Improved (dedicated?) pedestrian access to train platform from Chelmsford St. | Identify and construct new pedestrian pathway around and through terminal | Moderate | 2+ |
| Improved outdoor park space at corner adjacent to Lord Overpass | Conduct site analysis and develop design concept | Low-High | <1-10 |
| Enhanced wayfinding signage at and around Terminal property | (i) Develop a signage master plan and/or coordinate with existing City sign program (ii) Design and produce signs directing pedestrians around Terminal vicinity | Low/ Medium | Immediate / <1 year |
| Public arts program at Terminal using facades as canvases | Solicit RFPs from various arts groups and community artists | Low/Medium | 1-2 |
| Community marketing campaign to promote use of train / Terminal | Advertise and promote use of commuter rail in LH neighborhood to better highlight the Terminal asset in the community | Low/Medium | Immediate/ <1 year |
| Create demonstration "green street" | revise traditional neighborhood design guidelines select and design pilot street in collaboration with residents | Moderate | 1-2 |
| Reduce pavement on private lots | Amend zoning code section on off-street parking to require and encourage pervious pavement reduce parking requirements near transit | Low | <1 |



Thank You!

Send us comments and questions at
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