

# GILMAN SQUARE

## STATION AREA PLAN







## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS Joseph A. Curtatone, Mayor



### STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Michael F. Glavin, *OSPCD Executive Director*

#### PLANNING

George Proakis, *Director*  
Brad Rawson, *Senior Planner*  
Dan Bartman, *Senior Planner*  
Lori Massa, *Senior Planner*  
Amie Hayes, *Planner*  
Melissa Woods, *Planner*  
Adam Duchesneau, *Planner*  
Alex Mello, *Intern*  
Viktorija Abolina, *Intern*

#### HOUSING

Dana LeWinter, *Director*  
Kelly Donato, *Director of Special Projects*  
Evelyn Persoff, *Grants Manager*  
Daniel Hauck, *Lead Program Manager*  
Walter Whitney, *Rehab Program Manager*  
Mario Beauzille, *Housing Specialist*  
Gerry Carrington, *Lead Specialist*  
Russell Koty, *Energy Specialist*  
Vicki Wairi, *Specialist*

#### TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

Hayes Morrison, *Director*  
Arn Franzen, *Director of Parks & Open Space*  
Sarah Spicer, *Senior Planner*  
Luisa Olivera, *Landscape Projects Manager*  
Rachel Kelly, *Planner*

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ed O'Donnell, *Director*  
Stephen Houdlette, *Senior Planner*  
David Guzman, *Specialist*  
Amanda Maher, *Specialist*

#### CONSULTING TEAM

Speck & Associates  
Principle Group  
Carrico Illustration

#### INSPECTIONAL SERVICES

Goran Smijic, *Director*  
Ellen Schneider-Collins, *Operations Manager*

The City would like to thank the following Public Agencies for their contributions in planning the Green Line Extension Project:

Massachusetts Department of Transportation  
Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority

The City would like to acknowledge the dedicated efforts of the various organizations and individuals that have participated in and supported the ongoing planning of the future station areas of the Green Line Extension project:

Friends of the Community Path ([pathfriends.org](http://pathfriends.org))  
Groundwork Somerville ([groundworksomerville.org](http://groundworksomerville.org))  
Somerville Chamber of Commerce ([somervillechamber.org](http://somervillechamber.org))  
Somerville Community Corporation ([somervillecdc.org](http://somervillecdc.org))  
Somerville Local First ([somervillelocalfirst.org](http://somervillelocalfirst.org))  
Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership ([somervillestep.org](http://somervillestep.org))



This station area plan was funded in part by a Community Challenge Planning Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Sustainable Communities Program.

The City would like to thank Flickr user Terry Swallow ([terriseesthings](https://www.flickr.com/photos/terriseesthings/)) for sharing their photos under the Attribution-ShareAlike Creative Commons license.



Mayor Joe Curtatone poses with members of the Somerville Board of Aldermen and SomerVision Steering Committee following the Board's formal endorsement of SomerVision as the City's official 20 year comprehensive Master Plan.

*“Planning for communities is like career or retirement planning for individuals: If you don't set goals for where you want to be, it is almost certain that you won't get there*



# 1

## IT BEGINS WITH A “SOMERVISION”

Great communities don't happen by accident. Hundreds and thousands of people make individual decisions that shape how a city looks, feels, and functions. Those decisions can work in harmony or they can work in conflict. Successful places are usually ones that proactively plan for a future that promotes harmony in decision making.

Planning for communities is like retirement planning for individuals: if you don't set goals for where you want to be, it is almost certain you won't get there. Like individual families, communities have their own unique characteristics and individual needs. In both cases, desired outcomes should be identified after careful thought is given to alternatives so that a coordinated series of actions can be taken to achieve the goal.

This plan provides a road map for revitalization of the Gilman Square station area. The purpose of the plan is to shape both public and private investment that will coincide with the arrival of the Green Line rapid transit system to Somerville. Recommendations presented in this plan are the result of an innovative form of community outreach that has two objectives: to distill the goals, policies, and actions of Somerville's comprehensive master plan, SomerVision, at the neighborhood scale and to directly involve residents in urban design and economic development decisions facing their neighborhoods. As a fundamental strategy, this plan

focuses on best practice in station area planning to maximize the environmental, economic, and social benefits of Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) while also addressing the challenges involved when any neighborhood experiences change.

### **SomerVision**

In 2009, Mayor Joe Curtatone issued a challenge to Somerville's residents, the business community, and advocacy organizations: to begin a three-year process of preparing Somerville's first-ever comprehensive Master Plan. Even though Somerville has a wonderful tradition of public participation in government, and even though we pride ourselves on using cutting-edge techniques in public policy, Somerville had never taken the steps necessary to develop a plan for its future.

The development of SomerVision was structured to build consensus around various strategies to preserve Somerville's identity as an accessible, mixed-income, multi-cultural city; while at the same time identifying an actionable policy agenda to invite and leverage public and private investment in transit-oriented development. The Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning & Community Development coordinated the four year project in house, generating trust and buy-in among residents and community partners in the process.

As a first step, a series of 10 public workshops were held

to discuss Somerville’s history and contemporary statistical data. City planners researched the demographic, housing, economic, and transportation characteristics of the city and discussed the results with residents at neighborhood meetings all over Somerville. The idea was to promote shared learning, provide community members with access to the best statistical information available, and learn which issues were most important for different stakeholders. The results were published in a series of five “Trends Reports” highlighting the current state of the city.

For the next phase of work, a 60 member Steering Committee comprised of residents, business owners, nonprofit agencies, and elected officials was assembled. Members were nominated by each advocacy group to make sure that diverse opinions and priorities would be present on the Steering Committee. Over the next three years, more than 60 public meetings were held using creative public engagement techniques including multilingual interpreters, graphic recording, online and mailed surveys, and unedited meeting broadcasts on community access television. Hundreds of Somerville residents saw their own ideas integrated into the process, yielding tremendous public buy-in for SomerVision’s values and vision statements.

SomerVision is based on our shared values, which reinforces our commitment to:

- Celebrate the *diversity* of our people, cultures, housing, and economy.
- Foster the character of residents, neighborhoods, hills, and squares, and the strength of our *community* spirit as expressed in our history, our cultural and social life, and our deep sense of civic pride.
- Invest in the growth of a resilient *economy* that is centered around transit, generates a wide variety of job opportunities, creates an active daytime population, supports independent local businesses, and secures fiscal self-sufficiency.
- Promote a dynamic urban streetscape that embraces public transportation, reduces dependence on the automobile, and that is *accessible*, inviting, and safe for all pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users.
- Build a *sustainable* future through strong environmental leadership, balanced transportation modes, engaging recreational and community spaces, exceptional schools and educational opportunities, improved community health, varied and affordable housing options, and effective stewardship of our natural resources.
- Commit to *innovation* and affirm our responsibility to current and future generations in all of endeavors: business, technology, education, arts, and government.

Somerville’s Comprehensive Plan creates clear expectations regarding neighborhood character and neighborhood change through The SomerVision Map, which establishes a plan for growth in certain areas and neighborhood conservation in others. The map illustrates a shared understanding that the City and its partners in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors will work to “Conserve Somerville’s great residential neighborhoods, enhance our funky squares and commercial corridors, and transform opportunity areas on the eastern and southern edges of Somerville”.

The SomerVision Map is tied to the SomerVision Numbers, a series of aspirational targets for job creation, housing development, and open space improvement. The SomerVision Steering Committee advocated to include these aspirational yet achievable performance measures, so that progress could be tracked over time. Somerville will seek to create:

- 30,000 new jobs
- 125 acres of publicly-accessible open space
- 6,000 new housing units - 1,200 permanently affordable
- 50% of new trips by transit, walking, or biking
- 85% of new development in transformative areas

The final element of the SomerVision Plan is an Implementation Plan. Six key areas of activity were identified to organize projects and programs that the City and its partners oversee in support of the Comprehensive Plan’s 500 goals, policies, and action statements. The six areas are:

- Quality of Life Strategies
- Housing Activities
- Sustainability Programs
- Infrastructure and Transportation Improvements
- Zoning Code Overhaul
- Station Area Planning

### Somerville*by*Design

For generations, the typical system of municipal planning has sidelined the public, forcing what should be a dialogue about the future into an unproductive, top-down monologue. Critics of the status quo describe it as the “Decide-Present-Defend” model. Somerville*by*Design is different: it directly involves residents in urban design and economic development decisions facing their neighborhood - early on and in a meaningful way. Our model can be described as “Outreach-Dialogue-Decide-Implement”. This new method for urban planning acknowledges that the best results can be generated when informed residents collaborate with public officials to establish a vision for the future. Somerville*by*Design helps participants create this vision from the ground up using a series of transparent and collaborative steps:



- Identification of existing strengths and weaknesses, assets and opportunities of the station area
- Identification of examples of future conditions that match community values
- Collaboration with the project team to develop a wide variety of potential interventions
- Critique of design and policy proposals by participants
- Refinement of certain ideas and “deletion” of unsatisfactory concepts by the project team
- Development of a plan document to guide decision makers and city leadership for implementation

The Somerville*by*Design process brings SomerVision to the neighborhood scale. It continues our tradition of civic engagement and connects it with best practices in planning that have emerged over the last fifteen years. Communities all over the world have learned that urban design is an effective basis for public dialogue because people know and care how places look, feel, and function. New technologies are helping government to “crowd-source” the collection of valuable information and the generation of creative ideas. By documenting these ideas in a visual format, the City and its partners can build and maintain public enthusiasm for projects and programs that are consistent with SomerVision’s framework of conserving Somerville’s great residential

neighborhoods, enhancing our funky squares and commercial corridors, and transforming opportunity areas on the southern and eastern edges of the City.

### Station Area Planning

SomerVision calls for design-based area plans for each neighborhood, station area, and commercial corridor across the city. Special priority is given to neighborhoods with existing or future rail transit because they serve as important economic engines for the city, focal points of community identity, and areas that must adapt to change over time.

Despite the novelty of design based collaborative neighborhood plans, the idea is not at all unique in Somerville’s past. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, residents, the business community, and public officials advocated for the MBTA Red Line subway to be routed through Davis Square. This same group realized that this energy could be leveraged to produce a strategic plan for new investment throughout the Davis Square neighborhood. Mayor Gene Brune shared that vision, and after several years of collaborative planning, the “1982 Davis Square Action Plan” was published. Many of Davis Square’s signature public spaces, as well as key transit-oriented development projects are the direct result of this neighborhood plan - which illustrates the benefits that a grass-roots, physical design planning process can offer.

## EVENT FLYER

**Somerville *by* DESIGN**  
**STATION AREA PLANNING SERIES**  
 GILMAN SQUARE • LOWELL ST. STATION • MAGOUN SQUARE • BALL SQUARE

[www.somervillebydesign.com](http://www.somervillebydesign.com)

<b>OCTOBER</b>	<b>NOVEMBER</b>	<b>JANUARY</b>
<b>17</b>	<b>28 &amp; 29</b>	<b>8</b>
Visioning Session	Design Charrette	Plan Presentation

OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
 Joseph A. Curtatone, Mayor



Today, the MBTA is extending the Green Line trolley service through Somerville, and several of our neighborhoods are getting the opportunity similar to the one that took place in Davis Square 30 years ago. Green Line stations at Union Square and Brickbottom are scheduled to open for service in late 2016 or early 2017. Stations at Gilman Square, the middle of Lowell Street, and at the heart of Ball Square are scheduled to open in early 2019. The Green Line Extension will terminate at Mystic Valley Parkway between 2020 and 2022. A landmark Community Challenge Planning Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has given the City the resources needed to engage in a planning process for each station area.

Station area planning has become an industry best-practice around the country. Public transit service creates new demand for safe, attractive, and accessible streets, since every transit trip begins and/or ends as a walking trip. Typically, new transit service also increases demand for nearby residential and commercial space. Cities and towns have learned that creating a strategic plan for the station area neighborhood can help steer new investment in ways that maximize the quality-of-life benefits for existing residents, future residents, and the business community.

Since new mass transit service often makes nearby real estate more attractive for reinvestment, station area planning is typically used to set expectations for transit oriented development. This term refers to new development that uses very specific planning and design techniques to promote walkability and maximize the value of public transportation. Transit oriented development can provide a number of environmental, economic, and social benefits for neighborhoods served by transit including:

- Reduced automobile traffic and fuel consumption
- Improved air quality
- Efficient use of land
- Increased property values
- Reduced transportation costs for households
- Increased sales and property tax, real-estate lease and sales and fare-box revenues and business licensing fees
- Improved fitness and health for the community
- Reduced traffic accidents
- Enlarged labor markets for employers
- Increases access to employment, goods and services, transportation, and housing options

Transit oriented development can also present challenges that must be addressed to ensure that existing and future residents and business persons can share in the benefits of new transit service. One key challenge is ensuring that residential and commercial real estate continue to offer a range of space types and price points. As housing in a station area becomes more attractive, rental and sale prices often increase. At the same time, unit sizes often decrease since property owners

and developers have market incentives to offer studio, one-bedroom and two-bedroom units. These dynamics can result in fewer choices for families with children, seniors on fixed-income, and persons of low and moderate income.

The commercial real estate market in neighborhoods served by transit can experience similar pressures. Rental price points often rise, and the typical size of commercial spaces becomes larger. As a result, fewer types of businesses can efficiently operate in the station area, and the variety of services and job opportunities for nearby residents can be reduced. For example, restaurants may be able to crowd out retailers or national franchises may be able to crowd out independent businesses.

Station area planning represents a critical opportunity for a city or town to explore policies that encourage development while minimizing potential negative impacts. For example, new buildings around a transit station can be planned to include affordable housing or small business incubator spaces. Off-street parking standards for new development can be relaxed because TOD projects require less parking. Zoning regulations can promote housing types suitable for families and new civic spaces can be planned to serve neighborhood children who do not have yards sufficient for outdoor play.

Other policy responses will be more programmatic. Business development programs can support local entrepreneurs via training, marketing, or funding. Affordable housing programs such as first-time home-buyer assistance and lead abatement grants can be targeted to a station area. Successful communities often use station area planning to set clear expectations about how private market energy can fund community benefits. Mass transit projects involve hundreds of millions of dollars in public investment. Ensuring that local government can fairly and predictably capture some value from new private investment to enhance the community is critical to successful station area planning.

## TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

All patterns of urban development are inherently linked to some form of transportation. TOD is a model of land development that supports investments in public transportation infrastructure to produce neighborhoods that are compact, mixed-use, highly walkable, and equitable for people of all ages and incomes. Although every neighborhood should have these traits, TOD planning specifically leverages public transit as an asset for community development.



# PRINCIPLES OF STATION AREA PLANNING

## Local Plans, Local Input

The Somerville *by*Design planning philosophy focuses on utilizing the knowledge of local residents to create station area plans that reflect the needs and values of the community while supporting the regional transit system. The planning of each station area of the Green Line Extension includes meaningful public outreach, education, and creative design in support of Somerville's strong tradition of grass-roots community participation in civic affairs.

## Get Walkability Right

Station area planning is rooted in the goal of making pedestrian trips to and from the stations of the Green Line Extension safe, convenient, and interesting. Accessible pedestrian infrastructure, mixed-uses, and well designed facades will all build upon the small blocks and right-sized streets already existing in each station area to further promote walkability.

## Plan for Complete Neighborhoods

A "Complete Neighborhood" provides choices for housing and employment, as well as convenience retail, neighborhood schools, places of worship, health care providers, civic spaces, and public transportation all within walking distance. Although many of Somerville's neighborhoods provide for residents daily needs, station area planning of the Green Line Extension corridor explores ways to fill in any gaps that may exist.

## Promote Appropriately Scaled Development

Public transit brings with it private investment in new jobs, services, and housing opportunities. Station area plans identify potential sites and the appropriate scale for infill development to shape the changes that transit brings according to residents vision for the future. This form of infill development must reflect the changes in travel behavior that transit brings while maintaining typical neighborhood patterns and respectful transitions between mixed-use and residential properties.

## Design Complete Streets

With such a limited land area, Somerville requires a "Complete Streets" approach to planning thoroughfares that are designed to safely balance the needs of pedestrians, transit riders, bicyclists, and drivers; a reality even more important in neighborhoods with transit. The incorporation of well-designed intersections, crossings, and sidewalks that provide safe mobility for all users, including the young, old, and mobility impaired is paramount to ensure accessibility to the station.

## Address Diverse Housing Needs

While transit offers a substantial reduction in household transportation costs, market pressures in neighborhoods with transit may have the unintended consequence of reducing diversity in a station area's housing stock. Station area planning provides direction for City policies that help ensure that families with children, fixed-income retirees, persons with disabilities, and young professionals have access to safe, accessible, and affordable housing choices.

## Capture the Value of Transit Investments

The introduction of transit into a formerly under-served station area creates a windfall of value due to proximity to the station and changing travel behaviors of local residents. Utilizing policy tools and public resources to capture some of that value for public benefit will help Somerville continue to provide excellent public services while spending the least amount of money per resident of any municipality in Massachusetts.

## Prioritize Civic Space

Well-designed, publicly accessible civic spaces including parks and plazas, sidewalks and café seating, even multi-purpose lobby spaces will be critical to making the station areas of the Green Line Extension successful. Public spaces must be designed to be inviting and accessible for all users, reflect neighborhood identity, encourage social interaction, and add economic value for private property owners and the business community.

## Get Smart About Parking Requirements

Parking requirements for properties near rapid transit stations should be based on actual demand, and be lower for neighborhoods with access to transit than in neighborhoods without. Similarly, stations within core neighborhoods should not be designed to serve regional "park and ride" commuters, a fact already recognized by the MBTA for new stations of the Green Line Extension within Somerville. In combination, these smart, transit-oriented parking strategies create value and improve quality-of-life for residents by encouraging transit use, walking, and cycling.

## Keep the Plan Off the Shelf

Long-range plans are only as good as their implemented outcomes. Station area plans focus on diverse set of short-, medium-, and long-term actions that promote transit ridership, pedestrian activity, and economic self-sufficiency. Ambitious, but achievable, recommendations of the Green Line Extension station area plans will be evaluated periodically consistent with Somerville's identity as a data-driven, results oriented municipality.



Mayor Joe Curtatone speaks at the Green Line Extension ground breaking with Governor Deval Patrick and other elected officials

*“Somerville is one of the most densely populated cities in the United States, but we have only one rapid transit station*



# 2

## THE GREEN LINE EXTENSION JUSTICE AT LAST

Somerville is the embodiment of the close-knit relationship between transportation, economic competitiveness, and community quality-of-life. From the seventeenth century to the early twentieth century, public and private investments in roads, railways, and canals gave families and businesses a reason to invest in Somerville. Tens of thousands of homes were built, commercial and industrial activity flourished, and community pride blossomed. The city grew to serve a vital role in the regional economy as a gateway for immigrants, a hub of diverse employment opportunities, and a center of production for goods that were shipped throughout the Boston metro area and nationwide.

For years, Somerville residents and workers had transportation choices; the City was built of highly walkable neighborhoods that were serviced by efficient and economical public transportation. Heavy rail linked the population to nearby communities and shared streets integrated well with the various forms of private transportation that existed at the time. By 1940, Somerville's population had stabilized at roughly 100,000 residents, but behind the scenes, large-scale social and economic changes were occurring that would ultimately steer investment away from cities for multiple generations. Federal policy began to actively discourage investment in urban places, including the Federal Highway Aid Act and the FHA mortgage program that discouraged

urban home buying. Private investment followed government incentives, and families and businesses migrated to suburban locations.

In Somerville, the effects were dramatic. Streetcar lines that had crisscrossed the city since 1890 were systematically ripped out and one by one, commuter rail service was discontinued at the City's eight railway stations. In 1950, an urban boulevard known as the Fellsway was expanded into the massive elevated McGrath Highway and plans for two highways, Interstate 93 and the proposed but later cancelled Interstate 695 (Inner Belt Expressway), were developed. Neighborhoods suddenly became isolated from the larger urban fabric and Somerville's culture of walking gave way to an emerging automobile culture.

In response to these powerful trends, Somerville's leaders tried to change with the times. Viewing the emerging suburbs as our primary competitors, the City's elected leaders during the 1950s and 1960s enacted policies to create wider roads, surface parking lots, industrial warehouse districts, and strip malls. They viewed Somerville's traditional urban fabric as a weakness rather than as a strength, but their attempts to make the City into a suburb backfired – Somerville continued to lose residents, businesses, and visitors.

Interestingly, it was during this period that early proposals for extending the Green Line through Somerville were first

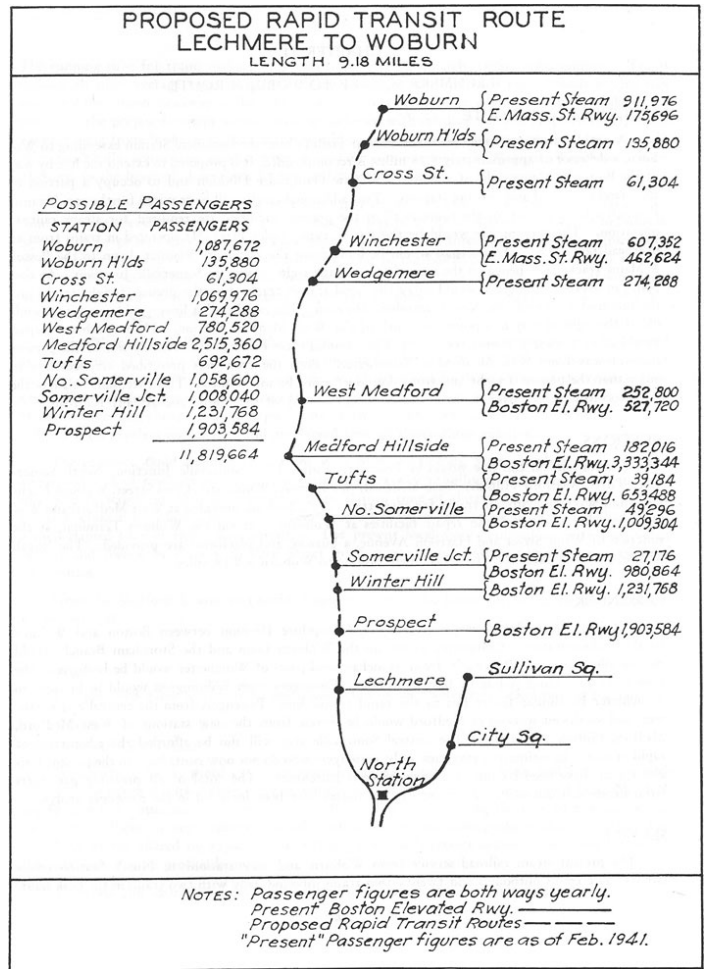
put forward - although still with a focus on moving suburban commuters. A 1945 state-level commission on mass transit recommended that Green Line trolley service be extended along existing commuter rail right-of-way from Lechmere through Somerville all the way to Woburn. Core elements of this proposal were carried forward in subsequent studies during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. The concept was simple and consistent: public investment in rapid transit service would connect residents to jobs and services more efficiently than building new highways.

Ironically, it would take one of the largest highway projects in American history to make the Green Line Extension project a reality. The "Big Dig" was conceptualized in the 1970s to improve traffic flow and unlock development opportunities in downtown Boston and by 1990 the project had advanced enough to begin discussions of environmental impacts. Recognizing that the highway project would cause

*"By early 2017, the first three stations of the Green Line extension will be operating"*

major air pollution impacts, the Commonwealth committed to several mass transit projects that would give area residents more non-automobile transportation choices. Completing the Green Line Extension through Somerville by December 2011 was a key portion of these commitments. The legal rationale for the Green Line Extension is related to the environmental and health burdens that Interstate Highway 93 (which carries a quarter-million cars on the average weekday) places on residents of Somerville, Medford, and Cambridge. When the full extension is completed to Route 16/Mystic Valley Parkway, the MBTA projects that roughly 50,000 riders will use the Green Line Extension every day. Automobile traffic is projected to drop by roughly 26,000 vehicle miles traveled daily, and neighborhoods along Broadway, Mystic Avenue, Medford Street, and Highland Avenue will be the major beneficiaries of cleaner air and reduced traffic congestion.

Despite the legal commitments and economic benefits, engineering challenges and fiscal uncertainty caused numerous delays during planning and design of the extension. Not surprisingly, hundreds of Somerville residents and businesspersons routinely came together to demonstrate support for the Green Line Extension to State representatives. In 2012, Governor Deval Patrick committed roughly \$500 million in state funding for construction and a groundbreaking finally signaled the Extension would become a reality. By early 2017, the first three stations of the Green Line extension will be operating and the final four, including



A 1945 map illustrating a potential route for an extension of the Green Line all the way to Woburn

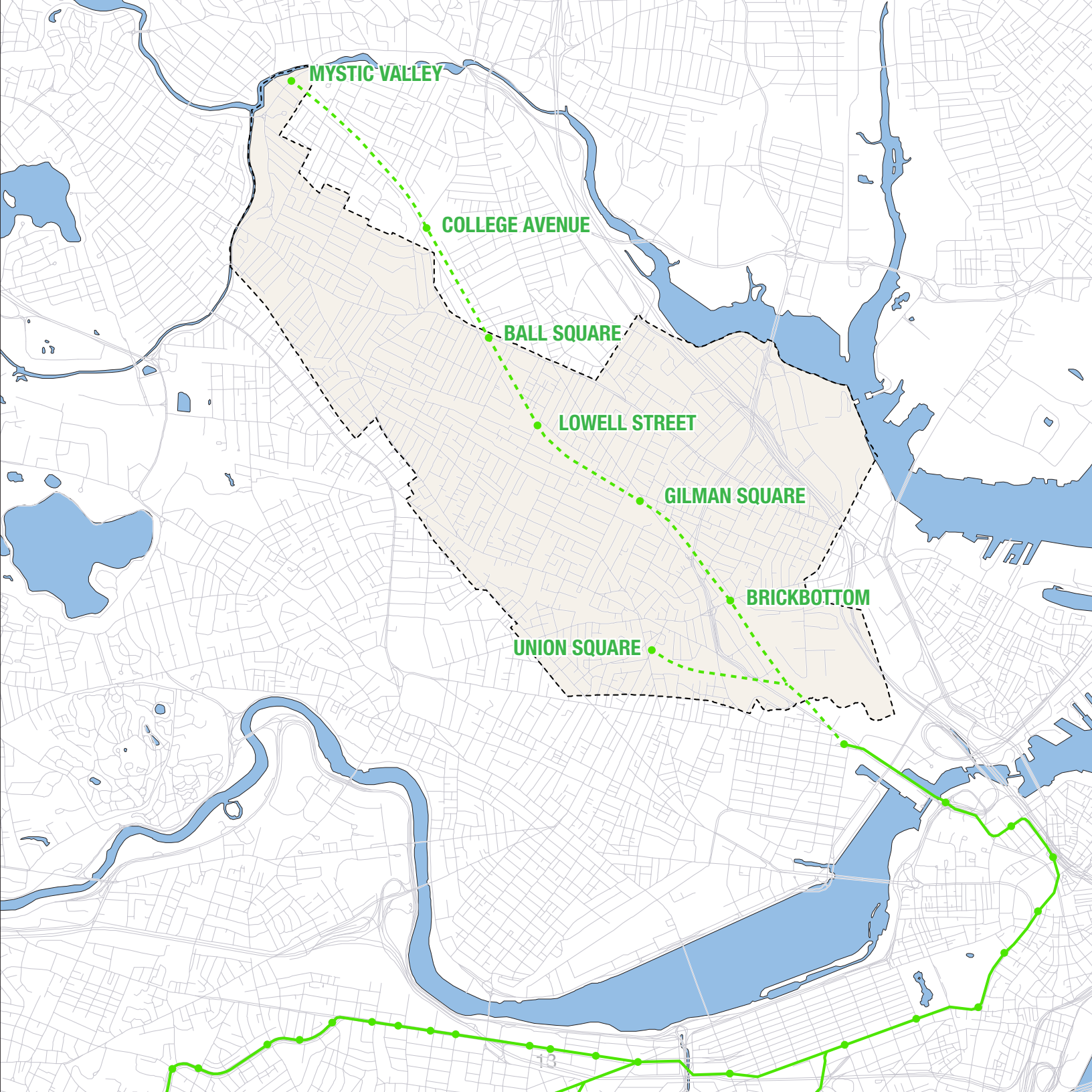
Gilman Square station, will be in operation by 2019.

Today, Somerville remains one of the most densely populated cities in the United States, but we only have one rapid transit station to serve our residents and businesses. Environmental justice remains at the heart of the Green Line Extension project, however the recession has brought new attention to the economic benefits of investment in public transit. As demographic trends and consumer preferences swing back towards urban areas, mass transit service gives the Boston Metro region a leg up as we compete against more suburban regions like Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina, or Silicon Valley, California to create good jobs and attract entrepreneurs from around the world. To build and sustain a twenty-first century economy, Massachusetts needs a twenty-first century transportation system.

For many Somerville residents, the most relevant benefits of the Green Line Extension will include simple quality-of-life improvements: a quicker trip downtown for work or pleasure, new parks, plazas, and paths outside the stations, and new shops and services sprouting up in Somerville's historic business districts. As the Commonwealth delivers on its long-standing promise, Somerville can celebrate a return to its roots.

# GLX

Green Line  
Extension





# STATION DESIGN

## MBTA focuses on Neighborhood-Scale Form and Function

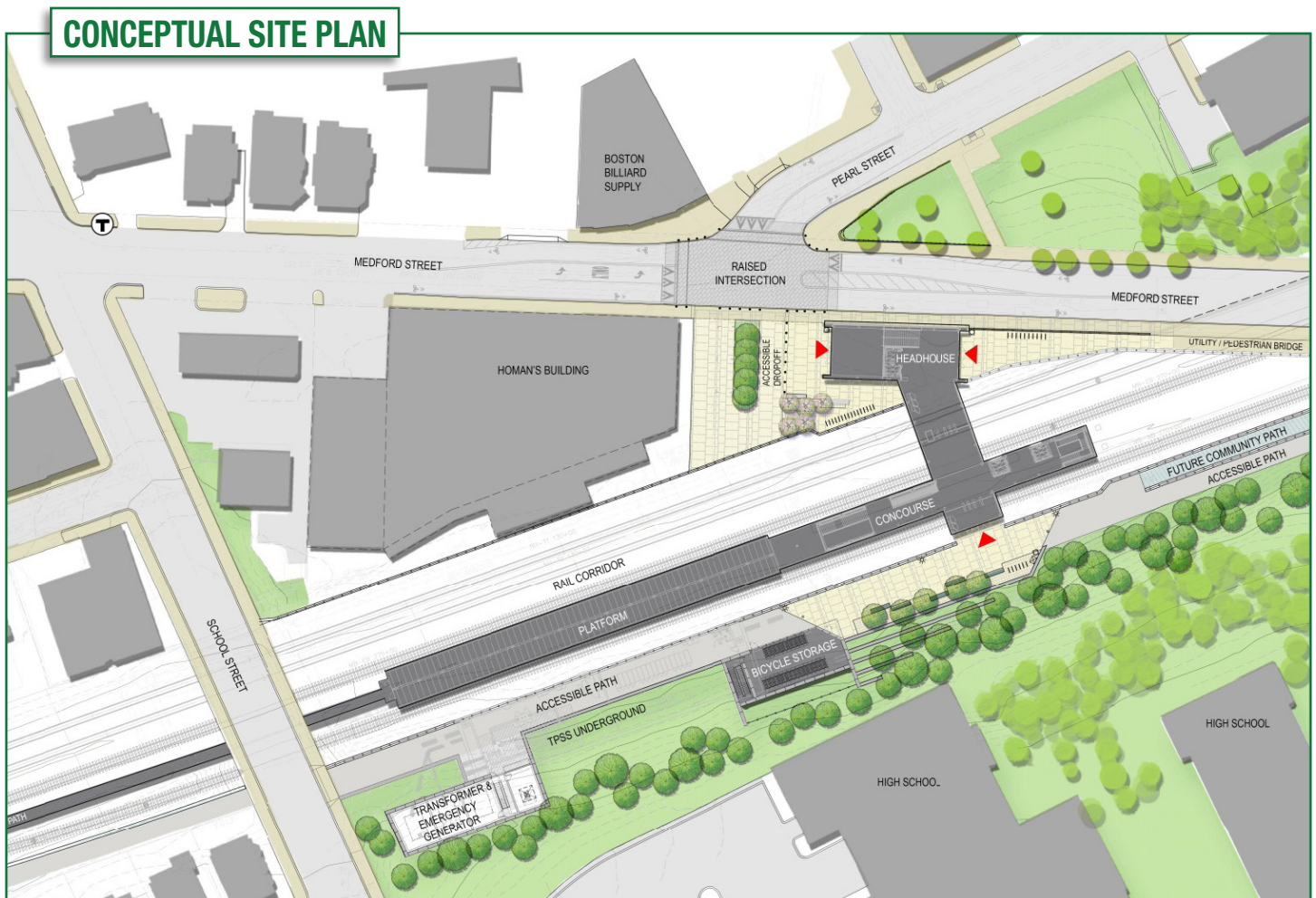
Gilman Square station will be the second of six new stations along the extension of the Green Line's existing "E" Branch service. The extension runs from a relocated Lechmere Station in East Cambridge to Route 16/Mystic Valley Parkway in Somerville. Several miles of the Lowell Commuter Line tracks will be shifted within the existing right-of-way to make room for the new Green Line tracks and platforms. A variety of other improvements including signal and utility work along with a complete reconstruction of the Medford Street bridge are needed in the area of Gilman Square to facilitate the project. The station itself will be constructed close to the historic site of the former Winter Hill Station (once a stop on the Lowell Commuter Line) on the south side of Medford Street opposite the Pearl and Medford intersection.

The station will consist of a headhouse and one 'island platform' servicing both the inbound and outbound tracks of

the Green Line. The stop will provide riders with outbound access to Magoun and Ball squares, Tufts University, and eventually the Mystic Valley terminus; and inbound access to Brickbottom, Lechmere, North Station and beyond. Riders will be able to enter the station from multiple directions:

- An upper entrance leading in from the east at the Medford Street bridge
- A lower entrance leading in from the west at a newly-created plaza at the intersection of Medford Street and Pearl Street
- A rear entrance leading in from the south from the extension of the Somerville Community Path

After entering the station, pedestrians will proceed through fare gates and across an elevated passage that extends



over the Lowell Commuter Rail tracks. Escalators and elevators will bring riders down to the island platform, with inbound streetcars stopping on one side and outbound streetcars stopping on the other.

A third entrance has been designed for riders approaching the station from the residential streets around the intersection of Highland Avenue and School Street. An accessible path will be built across the hillside, parallel to the train tracks, that connects the School Street bridge to the station. Eventually, this accessible path will become part of the Somerville Community Path, which will run alongside the Green Line from the Lowell Street/Magoun Square station all the way to Lechmere. The Community Path will provide a continuous link for walkers, joggers, and bicyclists from downtown Boston’s Charles River Path network to the 14-mile Minuteman Commuter Bikeway running from Davis Square to the western suburbs of Arlington, Lexington, and Bedford.

The station will include two new pieces of utility infrastructure. A storm water pump station will be built adjacent to the lower plaza, to help drain water from the train tracks. An electric power substation will also be built near the School Street bridge to provide power to the Green

Line’s light rail streetcar system. Based on resident feedback, the MBTA’s current design for this substation is far smaller and more integrated into the nearby landscape than previous design iterations.

*“All of the new stations of the Green Line Extension are intended to function as walk-up stations”*

All of the new stations of the Green Line Extension are intended to function as “walk-up” stations that serve the immediate station area around them. No parking lots or garages will be constructed by the MBTA. However, the lower plaza opposite the corner of Medford and Pearl has been designed to handle vans that serve the MBTA’s “The Ride” para-transit program. Bicycle parking will be provided at both entrances.

**CONCEPTUAL RENDERING**





# GILMAN SQUARE STATION

Medford Street at Marshall

## STATION TIMELINE

Construction Starts	Spring 2015
Grand Opening	Spring 2019

## ANTICIPATED RIDERSHIP

Daily Trains	162
Daily Boardings	3,930

## ESTIMATED FREQUENCY OF SERVICE

### HEADWAYS (TIME BETWEEN TRAINS)

AM Peak-Time	5 minutes
AM Standard	10 minutes
PM Peak-Time	5 minutes
PM Standard	10 minutes
Late Night	13 minutes

## TRANSFERS TO EMPLOYMENT AREAS

### DESTINATIONS

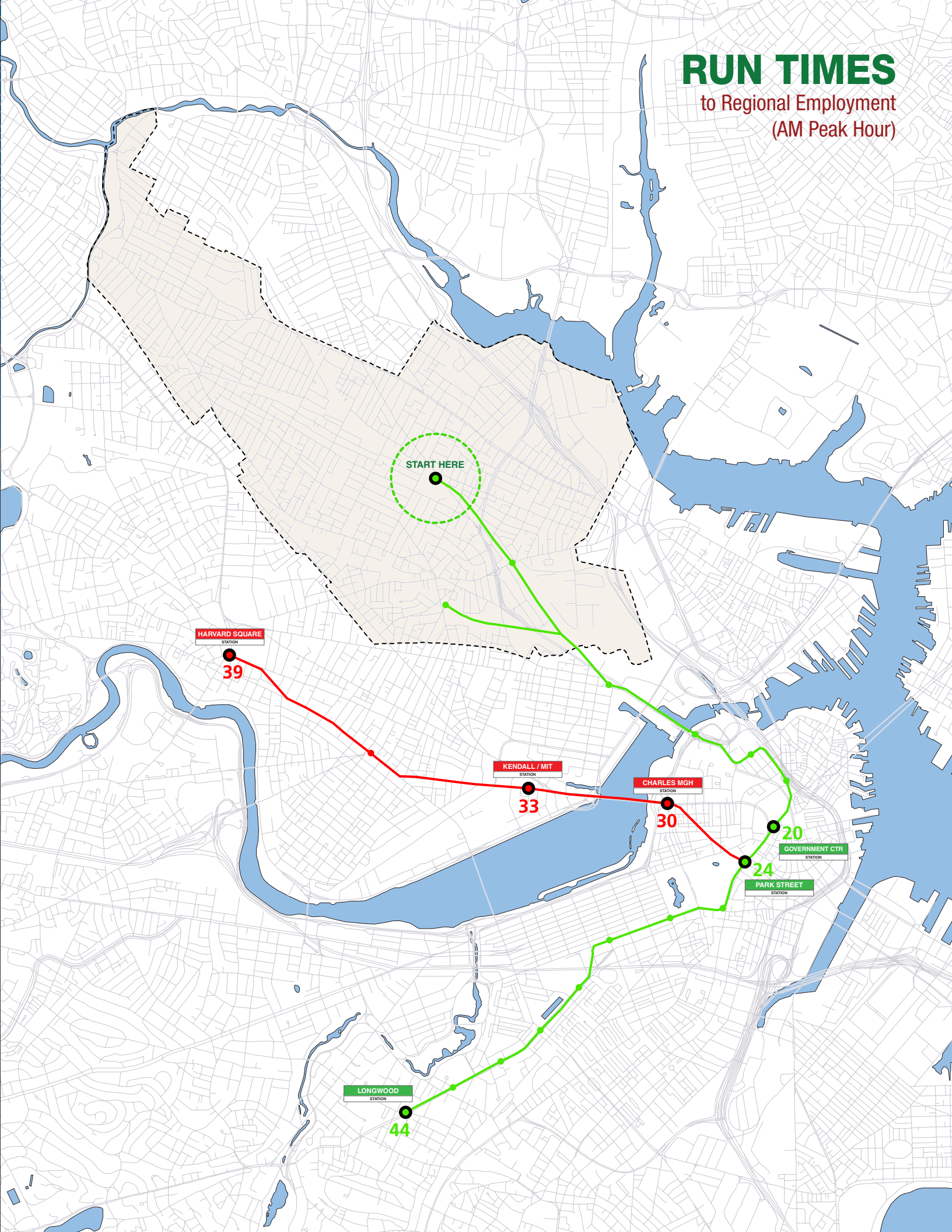
Government Center	0
Park Street/Downtown Crossing	0
Charles MGH	1
Kendall Square	1
Harvard Square	1
Longwood Medical	0





# RUN TIMES

to Regional Employment  
(AM Peak Hour)







Students of Somerville High School frequent the highly walkable streets of the Gilman Square station area

*“Gilman is a small square in the eastern part of the much larger neighborhood of Winter Hill*

# 3

## GILMAN SQUARE STATION AREA PROFILE

Gilman is a small square in the eastern part of the much larger neighborhood of Winter Hill. At its core is the intersection of Medford Street, Pearl Street, and Marshall Street where a small node of business activity historically existed since the middle of the nineteenth century. This station area plan focuses on the area within a five- to ten-minute walk around the commercial core of Gilman Square and the future MBTA Green Line station.

A fine-grained fabric of residential streets extends outward in all directions from Gilman Square. The station area's northern boundary is the historic Broadway commercial corridor. Key north-south streets connecting Broadway and Gilman Square include Thurston, Dartmouth, School, Marshall, and Walnut. To the east, the McGrath Highway represents a hard neighborhood boundary between Gilman Square and East Somerville, although important crossing points exist at the Pearl Street intersection, the Gilman Street underpass, and the Otis Street pedestrian footbridge. Directly south of Gilman Square is a large complex of civic buildings including Somerville High School, Somerville City Hall, and the Central Library. Highland Avenue is notable for its bus service and large apartment buildings, which transition to smaller-scale two- and three-family homes on the residential blocks between Highland and Summer Street.

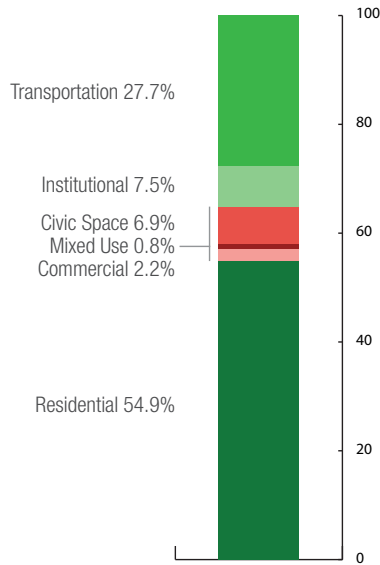
Gilman Square's population is quite diverse. Compared with the rest of Somerville, the Gilman Square station areas is home to more residents who are under the age of 18 (15%), seniors (12%), persons of color (34%), and more residents that speak English as a second language. The housing stock is also diverse with a wide variety of building types and both rental and sales rates are often more affordable than in other Somerville neighborhoods (although prices have increased substantially over the past decade). Shopping and services are limited to basic convenience retail with a noticeable lack of healthy and affordable groceries in close proximity.

Like most areas of Somerville, the Gilman Square station area has limited usable civic open space. The Winter Hill Community School has a blacktop schoolyard while the Marshall Street and Otis Street playgrounds offer play structures suitable for small children. Central Hill Park is a larger and more diversified public space, but is separated from Gilman Square by a steep hill. The City of Somerville made a major open space investment in 2009, creating Ed Leathers park on the site of an old factory at the corner of Walnut Street and Skilton Avenue. Ed Leathers Park has been very successful, and work is already underway on an expansion.



 LAND USE

AREA (1/4 MILE)  
**125 acres**



 HOUSING

TOTAL HOUSING UNITS

**2,176**



OWNER OCCUPIED UNITS

**653 (30%)**



RENTER OCCUPIED UNITS

**1,523 (70%)**

HOUSING DENSITY (PER ACRE)

GILMAN

**17.3 /acre**

SOMERVILLE

**12.73**

OCCUPANCY (PEOPLE / UNIT)

GILMAN

**2.58**

SOMERVILLE

**2.25**

BEDROOMS / HOUSING UNIT

GILMAN

**1.73 /unit**

SOMERVILLE

**1.79**

VACANCY RATE

GILMAN

**3.0 %**

SOMERVILLE

**4.8 %**

 PEOPLE

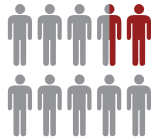
TOTAL POPULATION

**5,612**



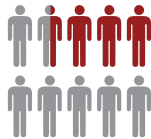
UNDER 18

**824 (15%)**



NON-WHITE

**1,917 (34%)**



POPULATION DENSITY

**44.7 /acre**

 **TRANSPORTATION**

ON STREET PARKING PERMITS

**X,XXX**

MA AUTOMOBILE REGISTRATIONS (ESTIMATED)

**X,XXX**

VEHICLES PER HOUSEHOLD

**X.X**

VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED<sup>‡</sup> (9,000 ANNUAL MILES/HOUSEHOLD ESTIMATE)

**19.58** million/year

FUEL USE (22.3 MPG ESTIMATE)

**880** thousand gal./year

CO<sub>2</sub> EMISSIONS (19.60 POUNDS PER GALLON)

**8,600** tons/year

FUEL COST (\$3.689/GALLON ESTIMATE)

**\$3.24** million/year

TRANSPORTATION COSTS\*

**\$6,204** /year

TRANSPORTATION COSTS\*

**9.4%** of household income



‡ Calculated with the US DOT HUD Location Affordability Index for address: 91 Marshall Street.  
 \* Calculated with the US DOT HUD Transportation Cost Calculator with a median income of \$65,800/year, 2.5 persons/household, 1.21 commuters, and 1 automobile.

 **PUBLIC REALM**

CIVIC SPACE (GILMAN)

**12.2** acres

PER 1000 RESIDENTS

**2.17** acres

STREET TREES

**607**

CIVIC SPACE TREES

**342**

SIDEWALK

**5.5** miles

CROSSWALKS

**75**

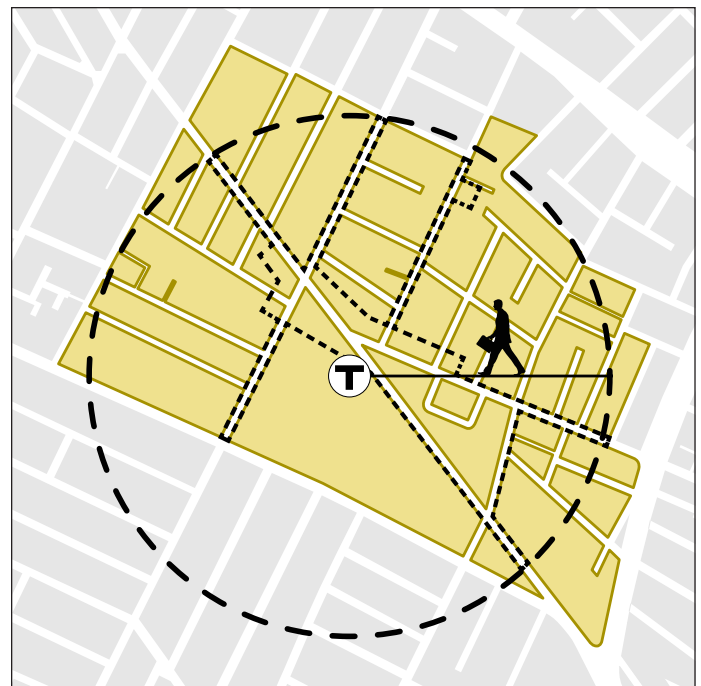
CURB RAMPS

**166**

STREET LIGHTS

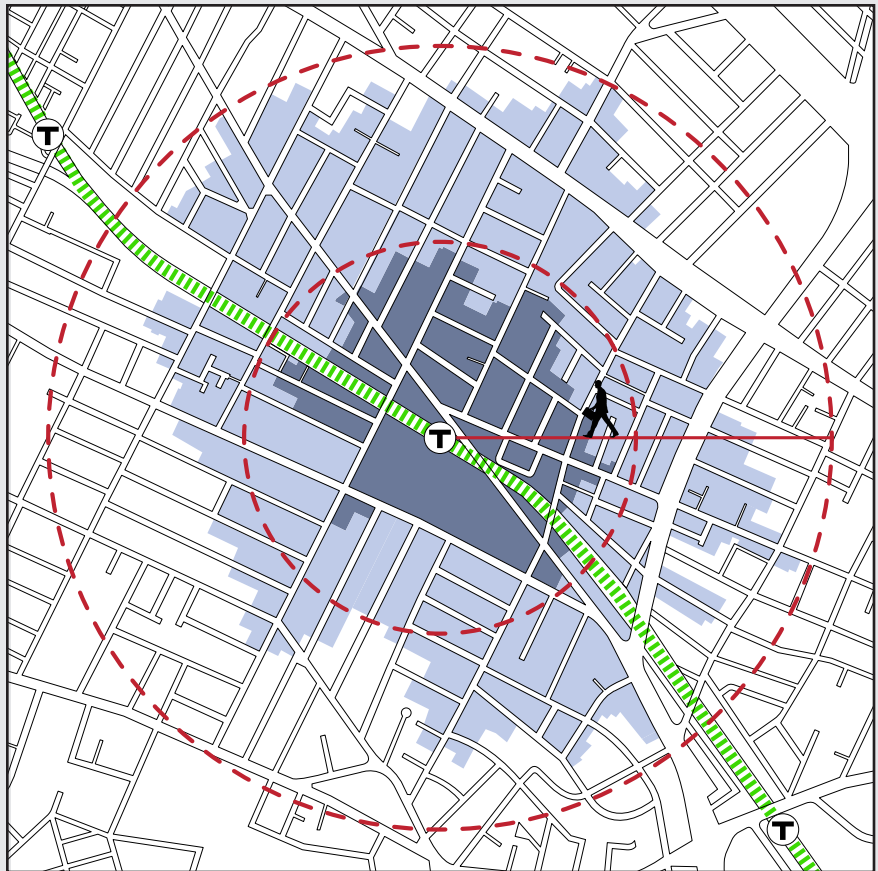
**236**

GILMAN SQUARE STATION AREA



## WALKSHEDS

Walking distances are typically measured as a straight-line distance between two points. The uninterrupted street grid north of Gilman Square puts the corner of Broadway and Temple Street within a ten-minute walk of the Green Line station. But to the south, walking access is complicated by steep hillsides and a large complex of municipal government buildings including Somerville City Hall. As a result, many residents of Prescott Street or Putnam Street live within a quarter-mile from the station, but have to walk a half-mile or more to reach the station site.



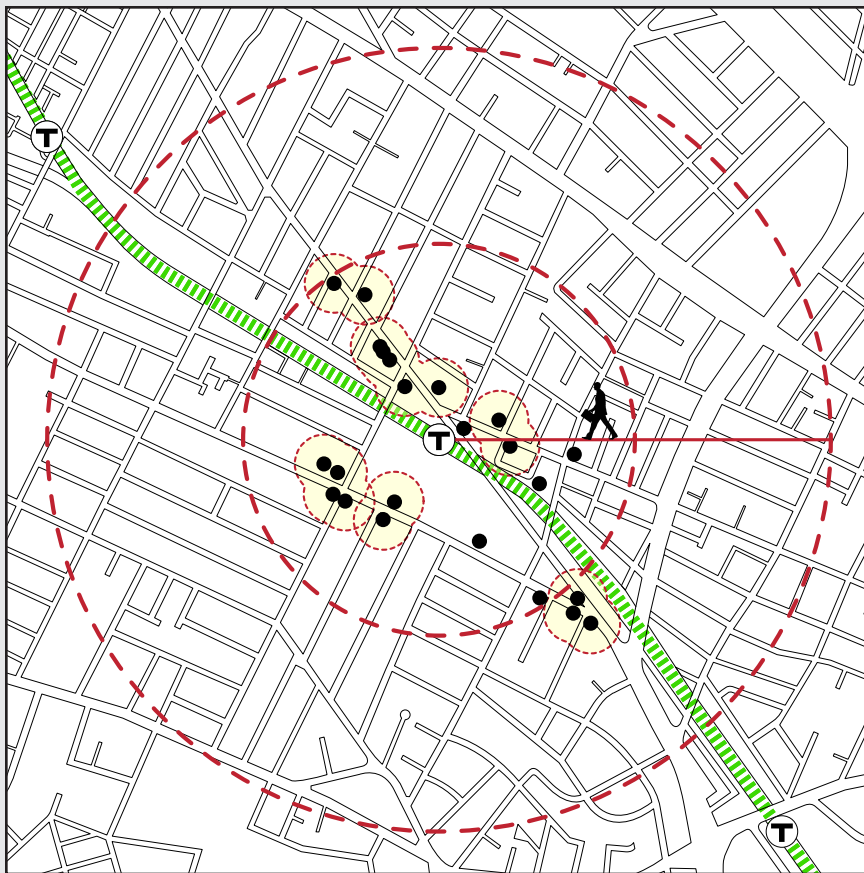
## BIKING COMFORT

Somerville prides itself on being a bicycle-friendly city, but every rider has a different comfort level on city streets. On many residential blocks, narrow streets and infrequent traffic contribute to higher comfort levels.

Medford Street is rated as more comfortable than Highland Avenue, even though both streets have similar widths and similar traffic levels. Not surprisingly, Somerville residents rank wide, high-speed roads like Broadway and McGrath Highway very low in terms of comfort.

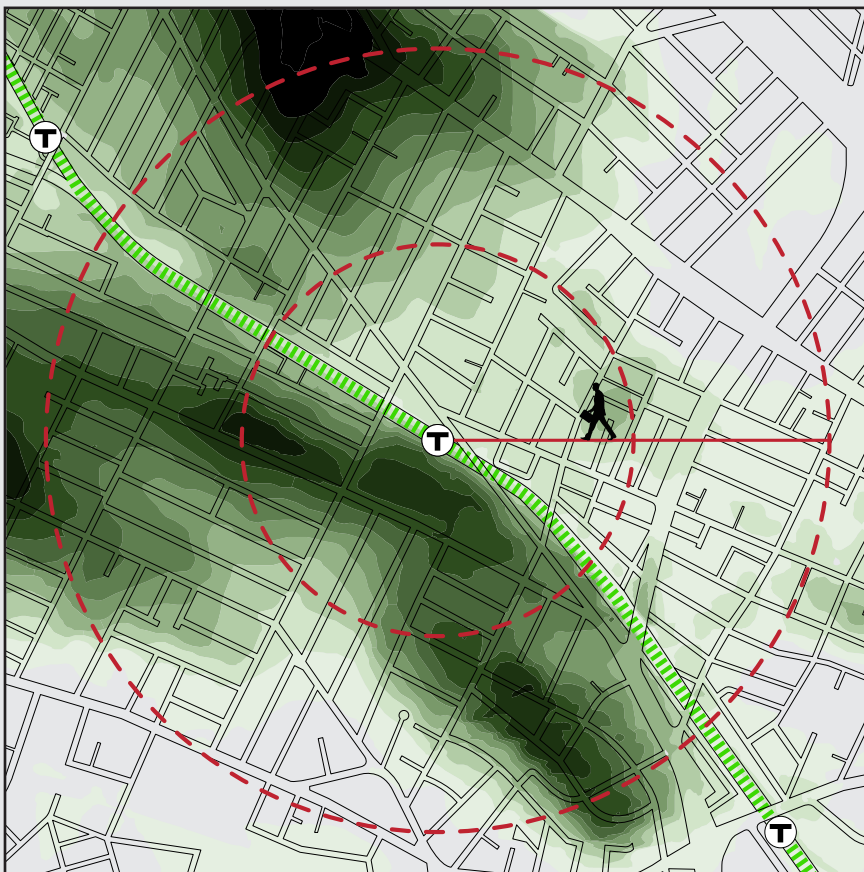






## BUSINESSES

“Complete Neighborhood” Analysis looks closely at the local economy of a neighborhood by taking inventory of the existing businesses that cater to the daily and weekly needs of residents. Business activity in the core of Gilman Square clusters along Medford Street, with some peripheral activity at key intersections along Highland Avenue. In general, the market is dominated by convenience food, convenience retail, and salons of various types. There is a noticeable lack of sit down restaurants, coffee shops, and fresh groceries within a five-minute walk. “Completing the neighborhood” would involve finding existing space or creating new space for these types of businesses to potentially open in Gilman Square.



## TOPOGRAPHY

The steep hillside between Highland Avenue and Medford Street creates impressive views, but breaks up the walkability of the station area. Steep slopes coming off the Medford Street bridge also present a challenge related to accessibility for persons with disabilities. Some of these challenges can be mitigated with roadway and sidewalk improvements, while others can be best dealt with using buildings. A physical design plan for the station area can help set priorities and seek efficiencies between the two techniques to ensure that all transit riders can easily access the new Gilman Square station.

# HISTORY

## An Original Transit-Oriented Business District

Gilman Square's roots as a walkable, mixed-use center of activity run deep. The Lowell railroad line was built through the area by 1850 and a wave of property subdivision and development quickly followed. By 1900, Gilman was well established as a handsome public green framed by multiple four-story commercial buildings around the intersection of Medford Street and Pearl Street. Several of these buildings remain to this day: the Knights of Malta Hall, the Litchfield Block, and a Telephone Switching building that is now Mad Oyster Studios.

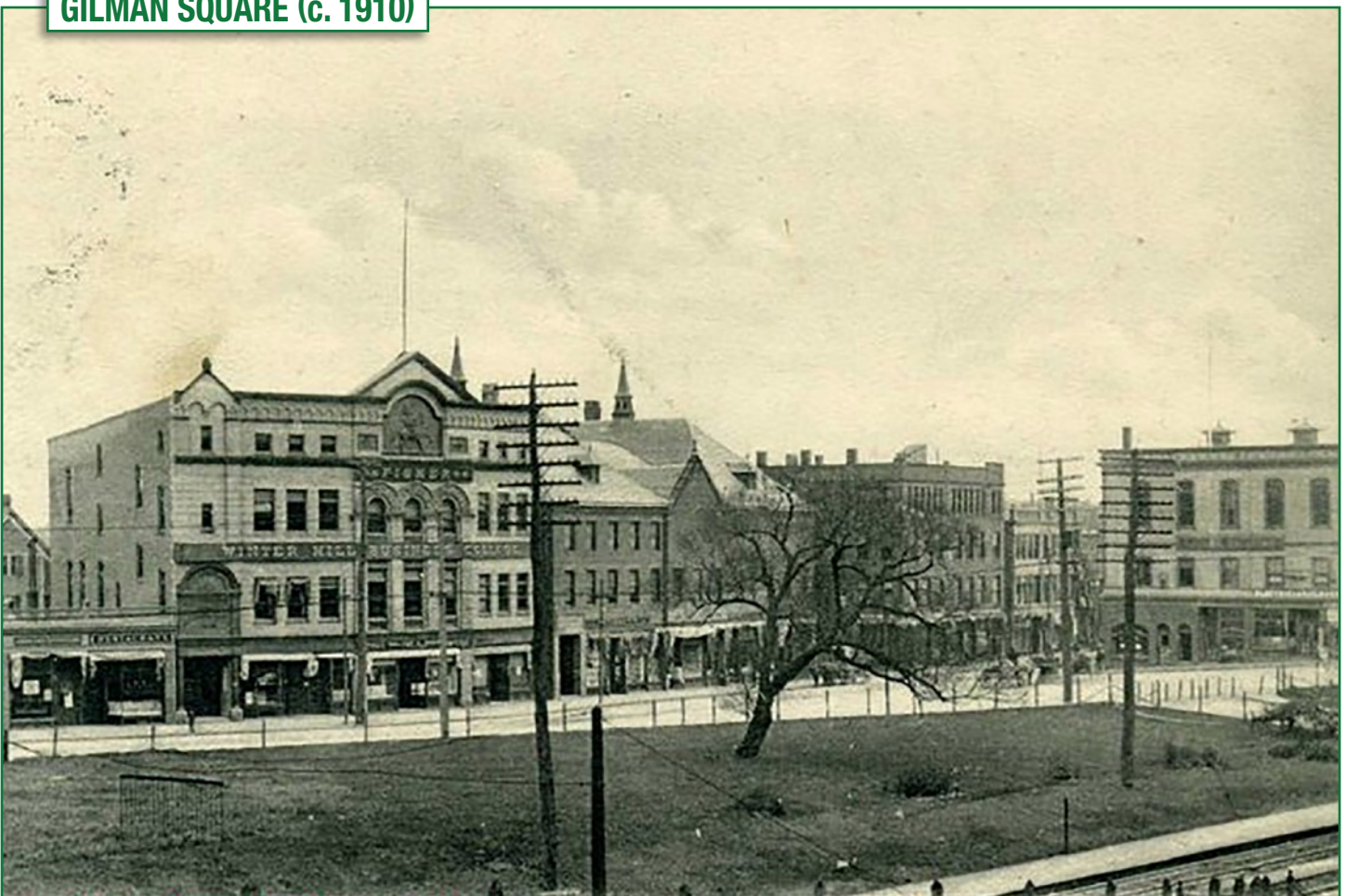
Residential neighborhood fabric of the area was created block-by-block, as large landowners subdivided their holdings and hired builders to construct single-, two- and three-family homes. Much like today, the demand for housing was extreme, with a booming economy attracting new residents from across New England as well as from around the world. Residents of this old 'Winter Hill' station area had easy access to the most essential goods and services in walking distance due to the vibrant mix of businesses in both Gilman Square and nearby Broadway. It could be argued that Gil-

man was once as vibrant as Union or Davis.

By mid-century, powerful social and economic forces had started to undermine Gilman Square's neighborhood character. Public policy began to steer investment away from urban neighborhoods. Families and business owners followed suit beginning a forty-year exodus to the suburbs. The Winter Hill station of the Lowell commuter rail service was eventually discontinued and Somerville's streetcar network slowly phased out.

During this period, some historic buildings in Gilman Square were demolished including the Citizen building at the corner of Medford and Pearl, the Northeastern Junior High on Marshall Street, the Winter Hill rail station itself. Others, such as the Masonic Apartments at the corner of Pearl and Marshall, were destroyed by fire and never rebuilt. Divestment of Gilman soon included regional automobile traffic cutting through the square rather than stopping to stay. Over time, fewer and fewer Somerville residents even knew that Gilman Square was a place with a name and its proud history as a neighborhood center was almost lost.

**GILMAN SQUARE (c. 1910)**





## LITCHFIELD BLOCK

This four-story, mixed-use building was constructed in 1900, and currently contains 12 residential apartments and 3,500 square feet of ground-floor commercial space.

From roughly 1990 to 2009, the ground floor was occupied by The Paddock restaurant. Recently, the space has been renovated into a new restaurant, Sarma, that opened in the Fall of 2013.



## KNIGHTS OF MALTA HALL

Constructed in 1895, this four-story commercial building was home to the Winter Hill Business College and later Fisher College during the early twentieth century. Today, the building is a hub of economic activity for Gilman Square, with six different businesses operating inside. Many of these businesses are part of Somerville's creative economy: Boston Billiards, East Cambridge Piano, and Wooden Kiwi theater design and construction.



## MAD OYSTER STUDIOS

Originally constructed in 1900, this three-story building was used as a telephone switching station for decades until it was purchased in 1999 and converted to artist studio space. Today, roughly 25 artists lease studio spaces ranging from 250 square feet to 1,500 square feet. The building serves as a community anchor, and is a popular destination during the annual Open Studios event hosted by the Somerville Arts Council.







Lead urban designer Jeff Speck presents the illustration of the proposed new Gilman Square to the public at the plan presentation event on January 8, 2013.

*“The process was a learning opportunity for the City as much as it was an educational and problem solving exercise for participants*

# 4

## GILMAN SQUARE A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

When the series of planning events for the station areas of the Green Line Extension were scheduled, no one knew exactly what the outcome would be. The Somerville *by* Design methodology of “Outreach-Dialogue-Decide-Implement” was developed to bring new techniques in community engagement to the public so that the first-hand knowledge of local residents could inform and shape a vision for the future of each station area. The process was a learning opportunity for the City as much as it was an educational and problem solving exercise for participants.

Between October 2012 and January 2013, the City hosted a variety of public events including a visioning session, stakeholder meetings, open design studio, pin-up presentation, and final plan presentation to collaboratively involve residents in setting a course for the future of Gilman Square. Various stakeholders included residents, property owners, business operators, the MBTA, and a variety of community-based organizations each of whom voiced their opinions and put pen to paper with the design team. Common themes began to develop with a primary focus on returning Gilman Square to its functionality as a node of activity, similar to other secondary squares throughout the city - such as Teale or Ball Square.

A consensus solidified around a vision that Gilman Square’s future should resemble its past: a neighborhood

square that offered a mix of service, employment, cultural, and transportation options to residents of the station area. Participants called for new four-story, mixed-use development in the core of the former business district to complement the surviving historic commercial buildings. Based on all of the public feedback generated during the planning process, consultants and city staff distilled the desires of residents into a series of nine broad objectives:

- Bring Back the Square
- Fill in the Gaps
- Invite Public Life
- Complete the Streets
- Invest in Civic Spaces
- Promote Attainable Housing
- Adopt Smart Parking Policy
- Reform Zoning Regulation
- Support the Local Economy

Each objective has multiple recommendations that include short-, medium-, and long-term actions to promote transit ridership, pedestrian activity, and economic self-sufficiency in the station areas. Overall, each objective contributes toward achieving the principles of station area planning outlined previously.

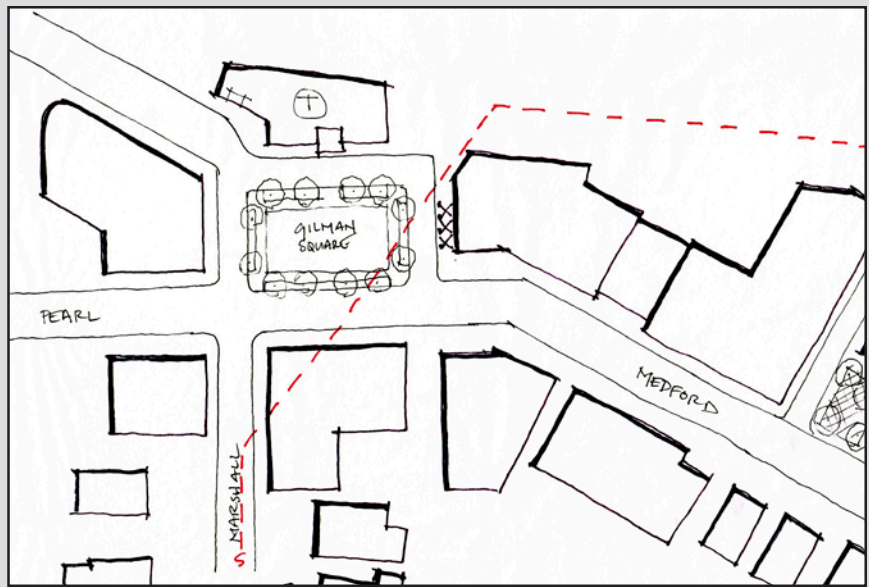




## SQUARE CONCEPT #1

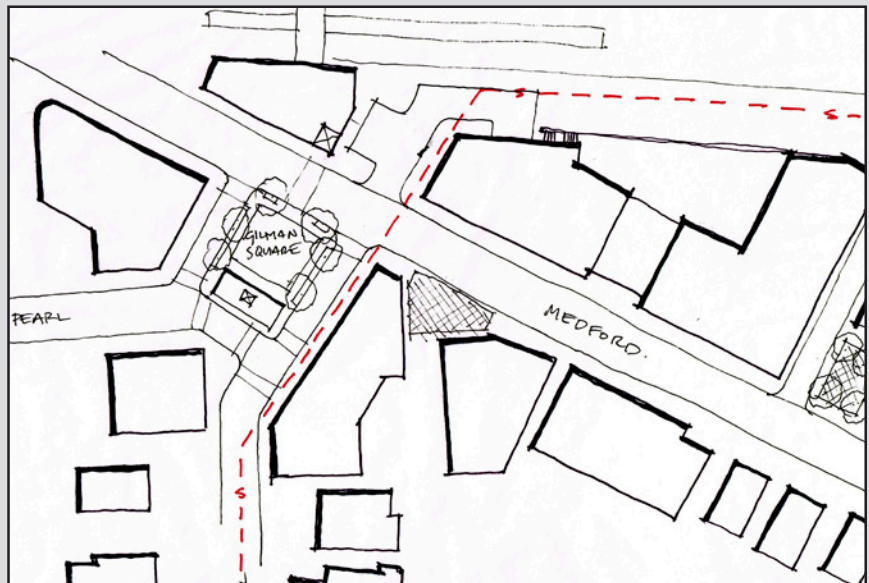
Through ideas generated at the charrette, the design team sketched new buildings for the ABJ Auto site and on an existing green space at the corner of Pearl and Medford Streets.

In the first version shown at right, a new square in front of the Green Line station slows traffic, facilitates accessible street crossings, provides a para-transit drop-off, and creates a more usable civic space. Pearl Street retains its current alignment and traffic on Medford would be routed around the new civic space.



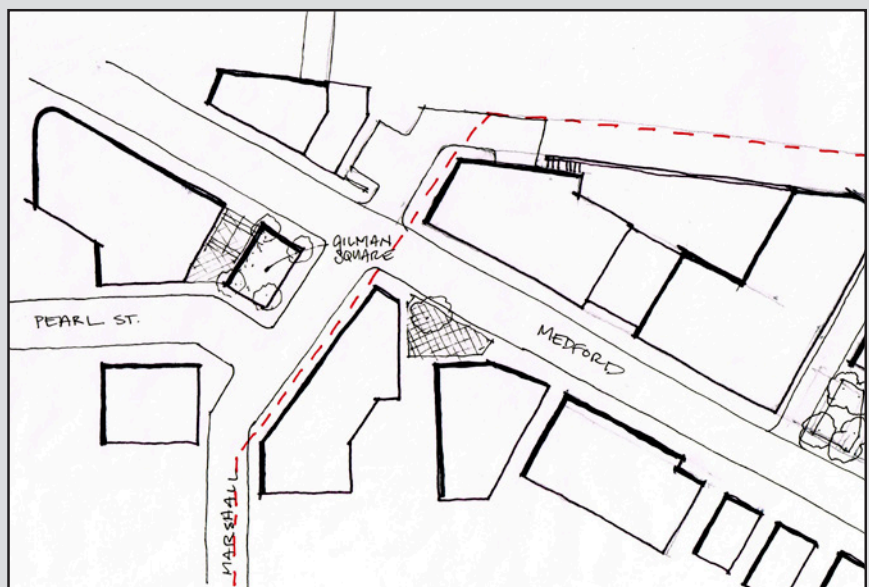
## SQUARE CONCEPT #2

After learning that it would be impossible to build over the storm drainage infrastructure running under ABJ Auto, and since it would be prohibitively expensive to move the pipe, the design team shifted the alignment of the intersection so that it paralleled the storm drain underground. The infill building at ABJ Auto was reconfigured, but the potential floor space is similar in comparison to the first design.



## SQUARE CONCEPT #3

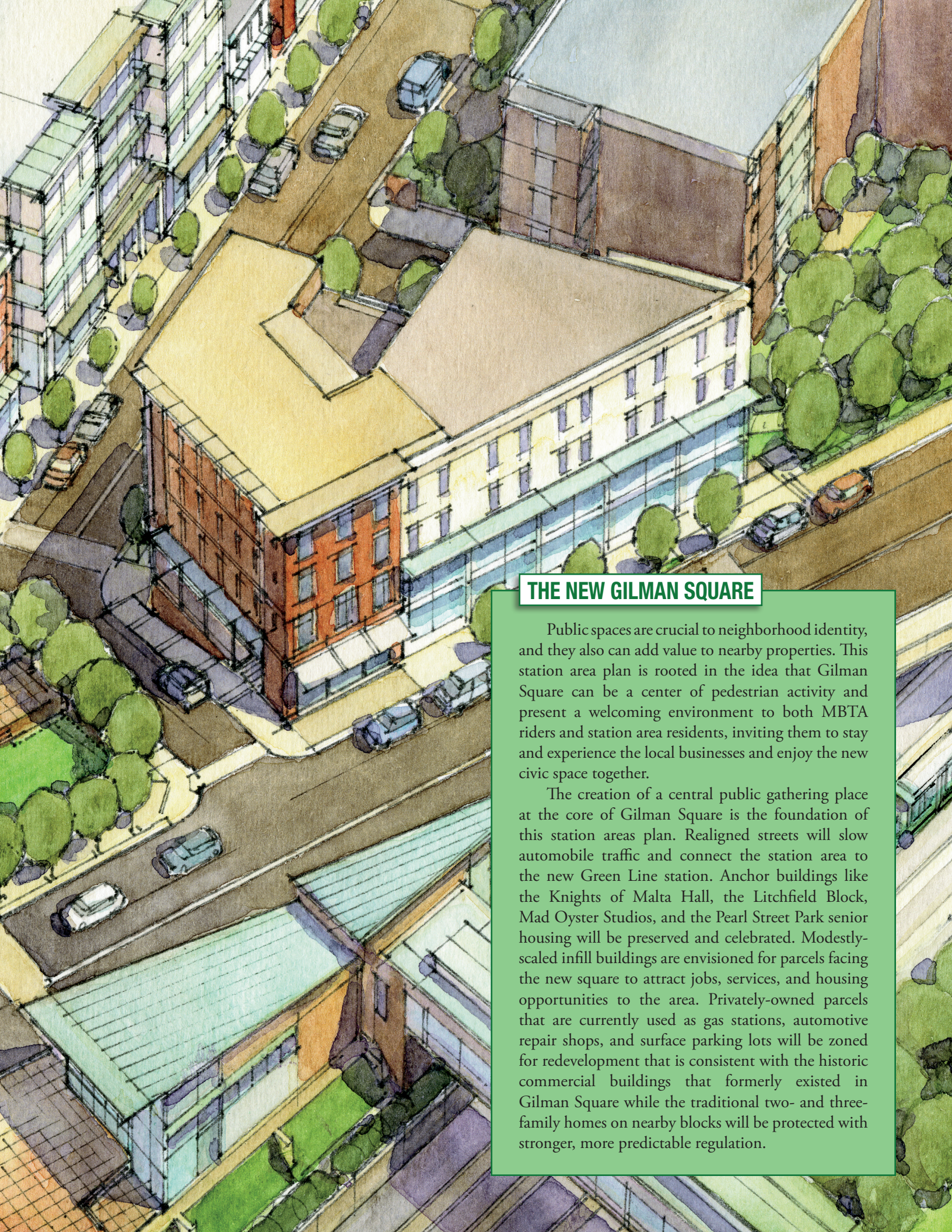
A third variation of the concept anticipates that the slopes leading from Medford Street to Pearl Street (where the concrete stairs are located today) may be too steep for a thoroughfare to be properly constructed. In the version shown at right, the new civic space at the heart of the intersection becomes attached to the infill building imagined at the site. The civic space would be reduced in size because Pearl and Marshall Streets would need to facilitate two way vehicular traffic.











## THE NEW GILMAN SQUARE

Public spaces are crucial to neighborhood identity, and they also can add value to nearby properties. This station area plan is rooted in the idea that Gilman Square can be a center of pedestrian activity and present a welcoming environment to both MBTA riders and station area residents, inviting them to stay and experience the local businesses and enjoy the new civic space together.

The creation of a central public gathering place at the core of Gilman Square is the foundation of this station areas plan. Realigned streets will slow automobile traffic and connect the station area to the new Green Line station. Anchor buildings like the Knights of Malta Hall, the Litchfield Block, Mad Oyster Studios, and the Pearl Street Park senior housing will be preserved and celebrated. Modestly-scaled infill buildings are envisioned for parcels facing the new square to attract jobs, services, and housing opportunities to the area. Privately-owned parcels that are currently used as gas stations, automotive repair shops, and surface parking lots will be zoned for redevelopment that is consistent with the historic commercial buildings that formerly existed in Gilman Square while the traditional two- and three-family homes on nearby blocks will be protected with stronger, more predictable regulation.



# FILL IN THE GAPS

## Redefining the Street Edge

Realignment of the main intersection and development of a central civic space for the station area is the first step in place-making efforts called for by this plan. The second objective is to facilitate and encourage the redevelopment of underutilized sites in the core of Gilman Square.

One of the most important themes articulated during the station area planning process was the need to reestablish the center of activity that once existed at the intersection of Medford, Pearl, and Marshall Streets. The design team identified five potential sites and worked closely with several property owners that attended the charrette envision new buildings that could fill in the gaps between anchors like the Knights of Malta Hall and Mad Oyster Studios including:

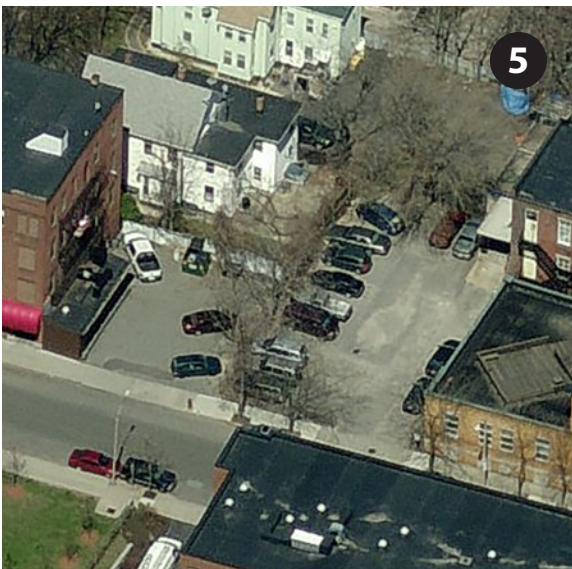
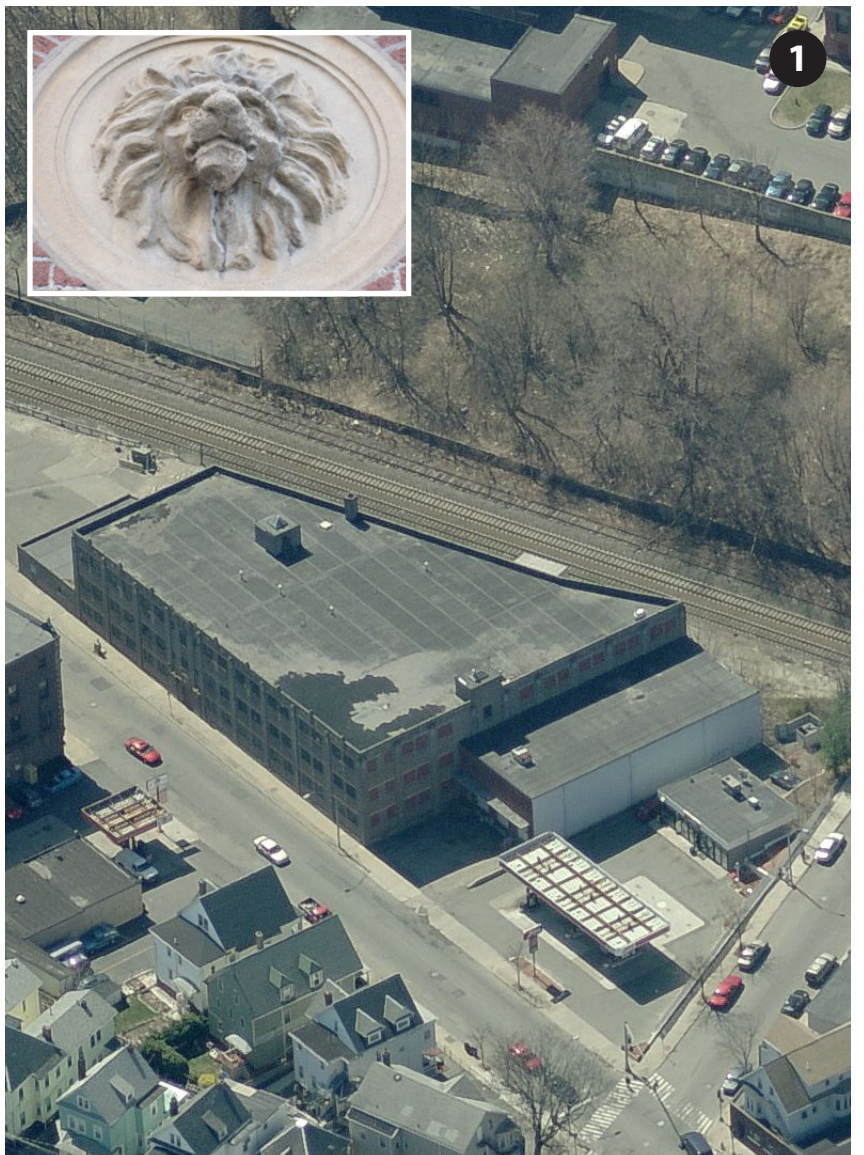
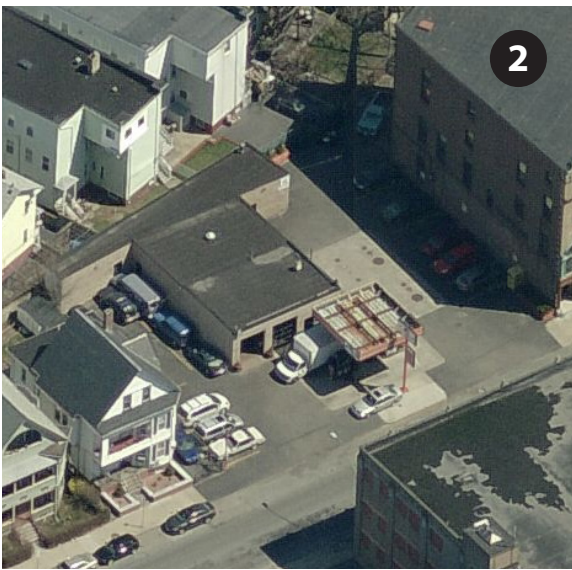
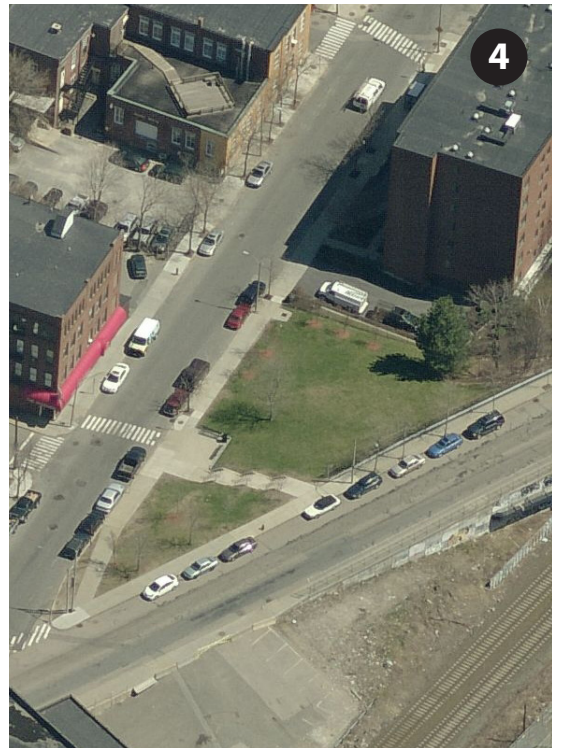
1. The Reid and Murdock Building (Homans) & Xtra Fuels gas station (350-360 Medford)
2. Good Gas service station (345 Medford)
3. ABJ Auto Repair (91 Marshall Street)
4. The green space informally called “ Gilman Triangle”
5. The parking lot shared between the Litchfield Block and Mad Oyster Studios

These five sites frame the new civic space if it is developed according to this plan and work with the ‘Bring Back the Square’ objective to make Gilman Square the hub of public life that it once was. Filling in the gaps in street frontage can be directly facilitated by using existing City land holdings, which include the Gilman Triangle and Reid and Murdock building sites, through the outright sale of the property to a developer, a public-private partnership, or even urban renewal via the Somerville Redevelopment Authority.

Based on public feedback at the October visioning session, the design team sketched conceptual illustrations of potential infill for each of the five opportunity sites that were identified. Detailed exploration of the redevelopment potential for each of these sites is explored on the pages the follow. During the process, a wide variety of ideas were brainstormed including multiple versions of a new civic space at the intersection of Marshall and Pearl St. with inspiration from historic photos from the early 1900s (see page 22). As identified on page 26, the major challenge presented by the storm drain running under the intersection and a portion of the ABJ Auto Repair site triggered the need for revised intersection concepts that











Jeff Speck and David Carrico brainstorm initial design concepts for Gilman Square

improved the quality of the public space at its center. At the same time, the re-configuration of the intersection increased the probability of ABJ Auto Repair as a potential infill site.

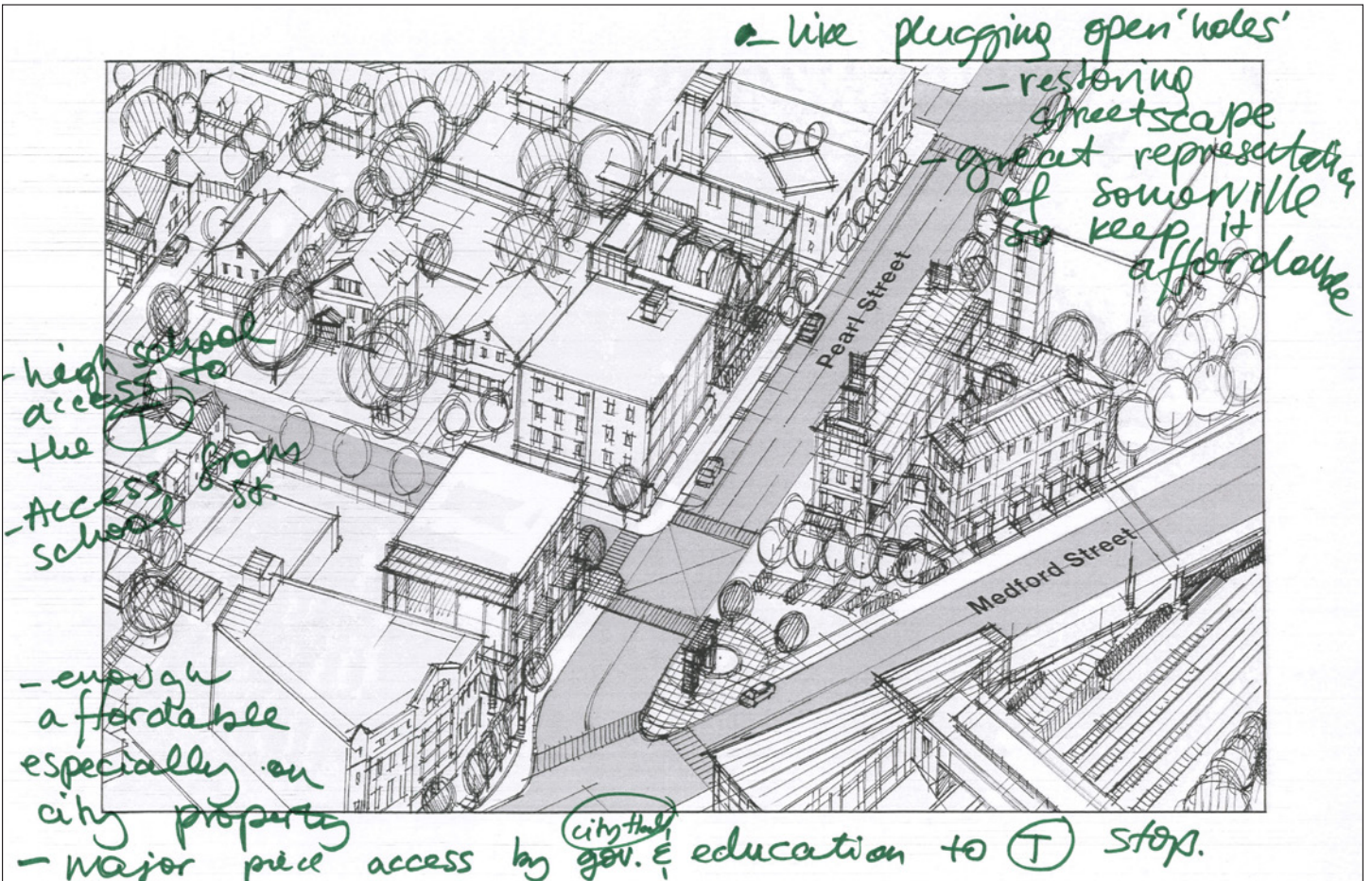
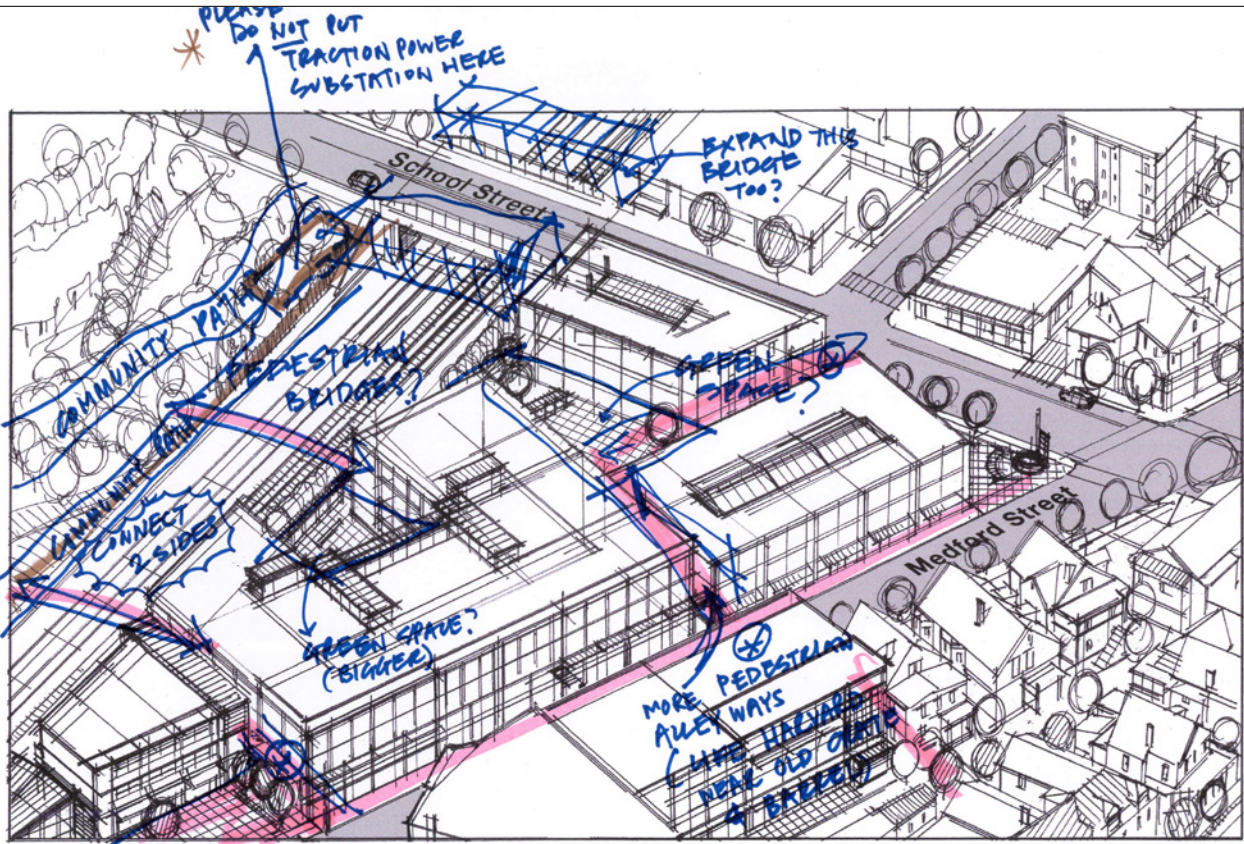
Honoring public feedback from the Visioning Session, designers explored concepts for modestly-scaled, traditionally-designed redevelopment of surface parking lots and other underutilized properties while preserving key historic commercial buildings that were still in good condition. Residents were then asked to critique all of the conceptual sketches at a subsequent Design Charrette so that another round of public feedback could be incorporated into the final design concepts.

Following discussions between the City and the private property owner of Xtra Fuels, site one (see: Opportunity Sites map on page 30) was selected for a conceptual design and development study, which is presented on page 34. Although site two, 345 Medford Street, could facilitate a basic four-story infill building of roughly 20,000 square feet, more detailed studies were not conducted because near-term change is not expected. A conceptual design and development study was also developed for ABJ Auto Repair (site three) because it is an important piece of the puzzle in developing a new civic space at the heart of Gilman Square (see page 36). Site four is another important location that will be crucial to properly frame the new square as a public, outdoor room. The slope of the site running downward from Medford to Pearl Street presents a challenge, but it can be solved internal to an infill building

constructed on site. A detailed study was not conducted, however, because accurate measurements of the topography need to be collected by engineers before any concepts could be explored. Lastly, recalling historic photos of the area, residents envisioned filling the final gap along Pearl Street between Mad Oyster Studios and the Knights of Malta Hall (site five), but since the parking lot is actively used by two distinct property owners with numerous tenants, any redevelopment of the site would be highly unlikely.

Of additional note, City Staff made special consideration of the Reid and Murdock building as a redevelopment site. Additions need to be removed from the rear of the building to provide space in the rail right-of-way for both the Green Line Extension and commuter rail tracks and on the eastern side to accommodate a small shared-space plaza that will permit drop off of handicapped transit riders at the new station. Structural damage has already impacted much of the building and the demolition of these additions will leave the front facade as the only portion fully intact. With respect to the Reid and Murdock building's contribution as part of Gilman Square's history, a preservation mason should be hired to determine the potential extraction, preservation, and reuse of the distinct front door surround. Additionally, if any features of the door surround are able to be preserved, they should be relocated to an appropriate site in Gilman Square - such as the new civic space.







# Xtra Fuels and Reid & Murdock Building

## Infill Opportunity Site One: Gilman Square's Western Gateway

A conceptual design and development study was prepared for a 1.4 acre land area identified as opportunity site one (see page 30). The site consists of two properties: the 48,000 square foot city-owned Reid and Murdock Building lot and the 13,000 square foot privately owned Xtra Fuels gas station lot located at the corner of Medford and School streets. The site is well-suited for new transit oriented development: the Green Line station is immediately adjacent, intersections at School Street and Pearl Street provide great visibility, and the depth from Medford Street to the railroad is large enough to support cost-effective construction.

The concept for site one was envisioned as either one or two mixed-use buildings that hug the front property line and reinforce the urban feel of the square. Building heights were made consistent with the current zoning so that infill would blend in with the existing four-story buildings on Medford and Pearl streets. A courtyard or plaza space with frontage along Medford Street incentivizes active ground floor uses while heavy rear walls along the train tracks create a noise buffer for residents and commercial tenants.

During the SomervillebyDesign station area planning series, residents envisioned a future for Gilman that prioritized pedestrians, transit-riders, and bicyclists rather than automobile users. The scenario explored for site one includes more parking than a transit oriented development site requires, but the 90 parking spaces could serve sites around Gilman that are too small to provide their own structured parking.

Ground-floor spaces at the building's corners are envisioned as retail, restaurant, or gallery space serving the pedestrians

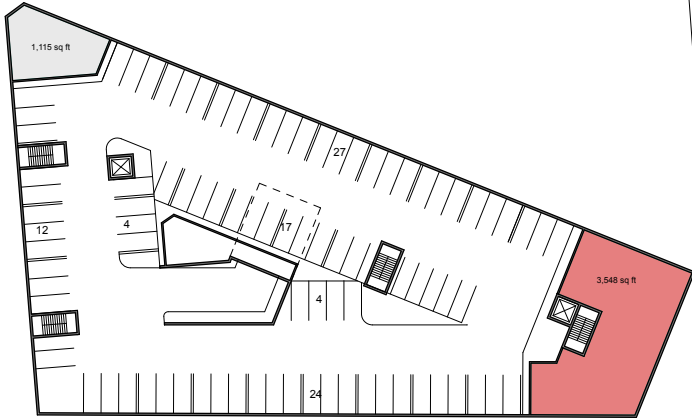
traveling to and from Gilman Square station. The remaining ground floor space is suitable for craft manufacturing, fabrication, or other uses supporting Somerville's creative economy. The scenario includes roughly 124,000 gross square feet of total floor space, including:

- 6,000 square feet of ground floor commercial space
- 78 dwelling units of various sizes
- 4 live-work artist units
- 18,000 square feet of craft manufacturing space
- 90 structured parking spaces

Construction costs for the two mixed-use buildings are estimated at \$220 to \$250 per square foot and \$18,000 per parking space. Tenant improvements were set at \$25 per square foot for retail and \$30 per square foot for craft manufacturing. Total hard costs were estimated between \$28 million and \$32 million.

The Metro Boston apartment market has a current vacancy rate of 3.6% and effective rents of \$1,772 as of 2013. Existing market-rate apartments in Gilman Square have an average monthly rent of \$1,495. Commercial rents are assumed to be \$25 per square foot (per year) for retail and \$12 square foot (per year) for industrial space after Gilman Square station opens. Annual gross potential income is estimated at \$1.94 million with no vacancy. In this scenario, the new development is estimated to generate approximately \$270,000 per year in local property tax revenue. Today the site generates roughly \$18,000 per year in taxes.





**BASEMENT**



**GROUND FLOOR**



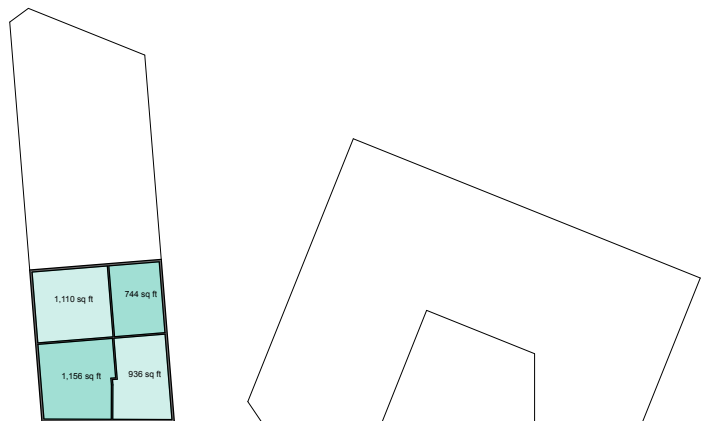
**SECOND FLOOR**



**THIRD FLOOR**



**FOURTH FLOOR**



**FIFTH FLOOR**



# ABJ Auto Repair

## Infill Opportunity Site Three: Framing the New Gilman Square

A conceptual design and development study was prepared for the parcel identified as opportunity site three (see page 30). Site three consists of a 13,000 square foot privately-owned lot, as well as roughly 800 square feet of land that is currently part of the Pearl Street right-of-way. The private lot is used as an automotive repair business and the private owner was an active participant in the public process for this plan.

The scenario imagined for site three requires extensive coordination and cooperation between the private owner of 91 Marshall Street, the City of Somerville, and the MBTA. As described on page 26, a major storm drain runs diagonally underneath the lot and severely restricts the redevelopment capacity of the site. To offer a win-win scenario that is consistent with the vision for Gilman Square generated by participants of the SomervillebyDesign station area planning series, designers imagined a land swap strategy to transfer roughly 1,200 square feet of unbuildable lot area in exchange for about 800 square feet of buildable land that is currently part of the Medford and Pearl intersection. This land swap would allow the intersection of Pearl Street, Medford Street, and Marshall Street to be reconfigured, resulting in a dramatic public plaza and a safer, more attractive intersection at the heart of Gilman Square.

The building concept works with the new intersection to generate value for the property owner that does not exist today, since it creates roughly 100 linear feet of high-value

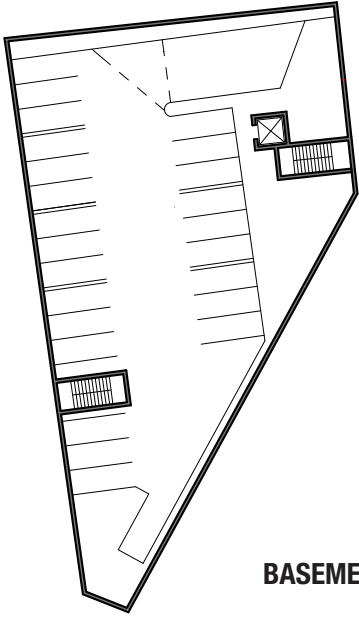
frontage for retail or restaurant space facing toward the new square. The scenario includes roughly 36,000 square feet of total floor space in a mixed-use building, including:

- 7,800 square feet of ground floor commercial space
- 24 dwelling units of various sizes
- 25 garage parking spaces

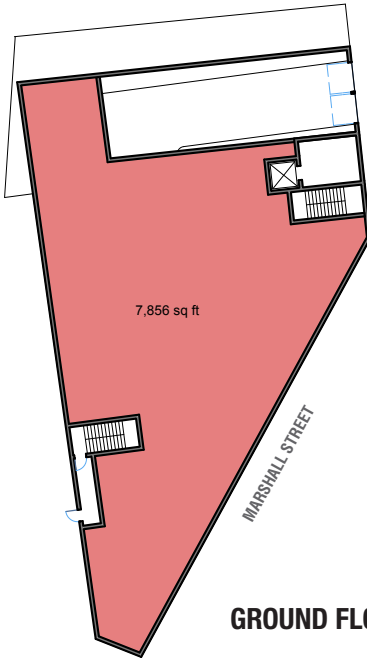
Construction costs for the mixed-use building are estimated at \$220 to \$250 per square foot and \$18,000 per parking space. Tenant improvements were set at \$25 per square foot for retail or restaurant uses. Total hard costs were estimated at \$8.6 million to \$9.6 million. Significant construction savings can be realized if the project is built to be truly transit-oriented by reducing or even eliminating off-street parking.

The Metro Boston apartment market has a current vacancy rate of 3.6% and effective rents of \$1,772 as of 2013. Existing market-rate apartments in Gilman Square have an average monthly lease rate of \$1,495/month. Commercial rents are assumed to be \$25 per square foot (per year) for retail space after Gilman Square station opens. Annual gross potential income is estimated at \$657,000 with no vacancy. The development scenario is estimated to generate approximately \$92,000 per year in property tax revenue. Today the site currently generates roughly \$10,000 per year in taxes.

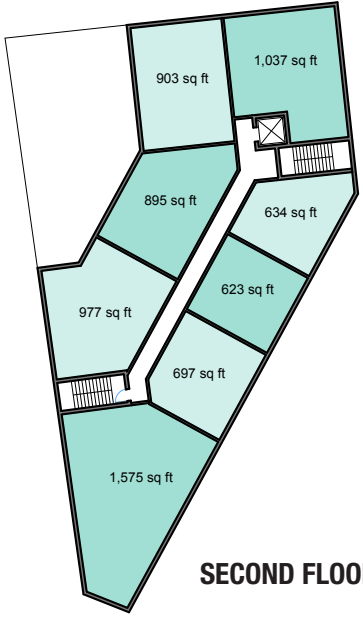




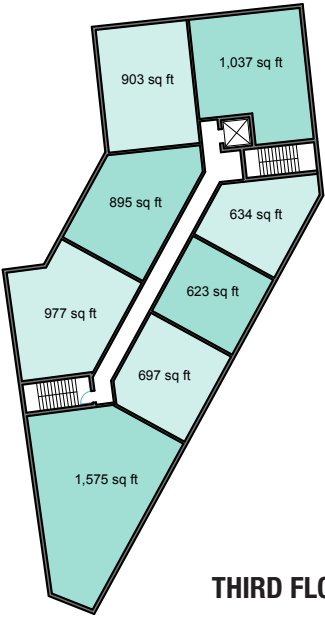
**BASEMENT**



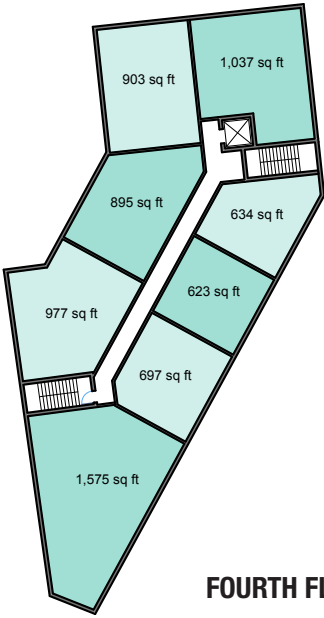
**GROUND FLOOR**



**SECOND FLOOR**



**THIRD FLOOR**



**FOURTH FLOOR**

# INVITE PUBLIC LIFE

## Creating Spaces for Socializing, Recreating, and Doing Business

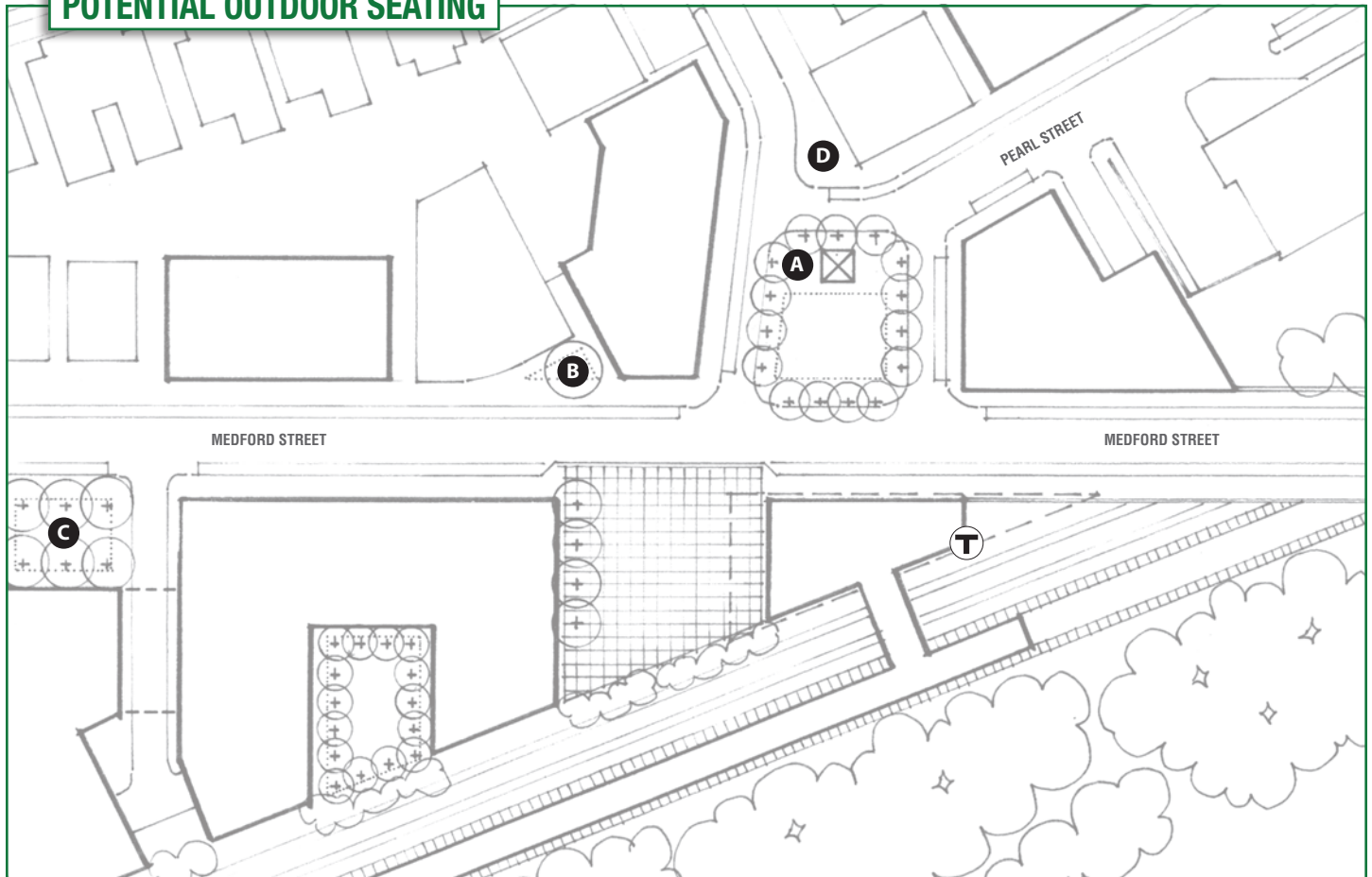
The redesign of Gilman Square’s main intersection calls for the City to invest in the development of a public square to serve as the social and economic heart of the station area (see #1 on “Potential Outdoor Seating” below). This new ‘Gilman Square’ will provide a central social space for the public, an accessible path for pedestrians to the transit station, and a landmark that will help reinforce neighborhood identity. Construction of a new public square will also contribute toward achieving SomerVision’s overall goal of developing 125 acres of new civic and recreation space citywide. However, because Somerville’s urban fabric is densely woven, with relatively few parks and open spaces compared to the size of the population, achieving this open space goal will also require a creative, entrepreneurial approach from private property owners to design and build privately-owned, publicly-accessible spaces like retail plazas, street seating, and outdoor cafes.

The next page illustrates some of the many possibilities for incorporating additional outdoor spaces into sidewalk extensions and infill and redevelopment sites surrounding the new public square. If the Marshall-Pearl-Medford intersection and Gilman Square are redeveloped according to this plan,

the ABJ Auto Repair site would be slightly reshaped, creating the opportunity for a small protected plaza on the north side of Medford St., framed by the Knights of Malta Hall and a new four-story, mixed-use building on site (see #2 below). Redevelopment of the Xtra Fuels/Reid and Murdock building site could include a roughly 2,000 square foot commercial plaza or pocket park (see #3 below) internal to the lot. Finally, reorganization of the intersection creates an opportunity to bump-out the sidewalk in front of the Litchfield Block building, site of the new Sarma restaurant, that is appropriate for outdoor seating open to the public or as a dining patio for patrons (#4 below).

The first two objectives of this plan give residents of Gilman Square a destination to go to and a place to stay once they get there. Yet to fully invigorate the street life residents are looking for, other initiatives such as the City’s Storefront Improvement Program and Street Tree Planting Program will be important in fostering a public realm that achieves our community goals of healthy living, economic vitality, traffic calming, and rich cultural activity.

### POTENTIAL OUTDOOR SEATING





The new Gilman Square is a return to Somerville's roots. It will provide a gathering space for the public, an accessible path for pedestrians to the transit station, and a landmark that will help contribute toward neighborhood identity. The central space should be flexibly designed to host various activities and could include a small coffee or newspaper stand while also providing an opportunity for a prominent public art piece, such as the tower drawn in the conceptual renderings of this plan.



The southern end of the building envisioned for the ABJ Auto site will be one of the most valuable commercial spaces in Gilman Square. Generous sidewalks, particularly on the western side adjacent to the historic Knights of Malta Hall, create excellent opportunities for window-shopping or for outdoor dining, all in clear view of the Green Line station and the Somerville Community Path.



The recessed plaza between Xtra Fuels and the Reid and Murdock building site is large enough to feel like an urban park. It is conceptualized with enough land area to support large canopy trees that can offer shade for café tables and other seating which will add value to adjacent commercial and residential spaces.



The restaurant space formerly known as the Paddock was renovated by a well-known chef and opened for business in the Fall of 2013. With a focus on reinvestment in and support for existing assets, the plan to create a real 'Gilman Square' creates and opportunity to bump-out the sidewalk on Marshall Street, potentially a place outdoor seating for this new restaurant, while simultaneously slowing traffic and increasing pedestrian safety.



# COMPLETE THE STREETS

Safety, Comfort, and Convenience for All Users

City streets and sidewalks are public assets that must be safe and accessible for all users. Our core values as a community and long-standing Federal requirements compel the City to maintain our infrastructure at the highest level possible. The scale of this management effort is huge: the City is responsible for 93 miles of roadway, 6.5 million square feet of sidewalk area, and 3,200 curb ramps. In the Gilman Square station area, there are six miles of roadway, 400,000 square feet of sidewalk, and 166 curb ramps to be maintained.

For decades, Somerville's approach to managing these public assets could be described as a "band-aid" approach. The City typically put off maintenance and repairs until a street or sidewalk became extremely deteriorated and repairs were often performed in isolation from other projects. Community goals such as ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities or promoting the health of our street trees were not emphasized in typical road reconstruction projects of the past. At the same time, opportunities for cost savings and efficient spending were missed: studies have shown that every \$1 invested in preventative maintenance can save between \$6 and \$14 in major pavement reconstruction costs later.

Fortunately, Somerville has committed to a more strategic, data-driven approach to roadway management following the adoption of SomerVision. Through 2012, the City conducted a rigorous existing conditions survey of crosswalks, curb ramps, and sidewalks throughout Somerville to help prioritize future repairs. In 2013, the Department of Public Works launched the "Neighborhood Street Reconstruction Program" with an

emphasis on cost savings through preventative maintenance and targeted repairs for areas with the greatest need. An important component of the maintenance program prioritizes curb ramps and crosswalks within a quarter mile of existing and future transit stations.

To build on the success of this new program, support walkability and bikeability in station areas, and promote ridership of the Green Line Extension this plan recommends the development of a Safe Routes to Transit program similar to the City's focus on providing Safe Routes to School. Through coordination between the Transportation and Infrastructure Division, Traffic & Parking, and the Department of Public Works, research and analysis of the primary walking and biking routes to Gilman Square and locations for passenger drop-offs can inform improvements to signal timing, traffic flow, and bicycle facilities in addition to crosswalk and curb ramp repairs. This initiative represents an integrated, proactive approach to evaluating projects based on need, cost effectiveness, and a broader and more nuanced understanding of the ways that public infrastructure can serve the public interest.

A final piece of the puzzle is to make sure that people using Somerville's streets and sidewalks know where they are, and how to get where they are going. Participants in the SomervillebyDesign station area planning series identified a need for wayfinding signage to guide residents and visitors arriving on the Green Line to Gilman Square and all of Somerville's great destinations.



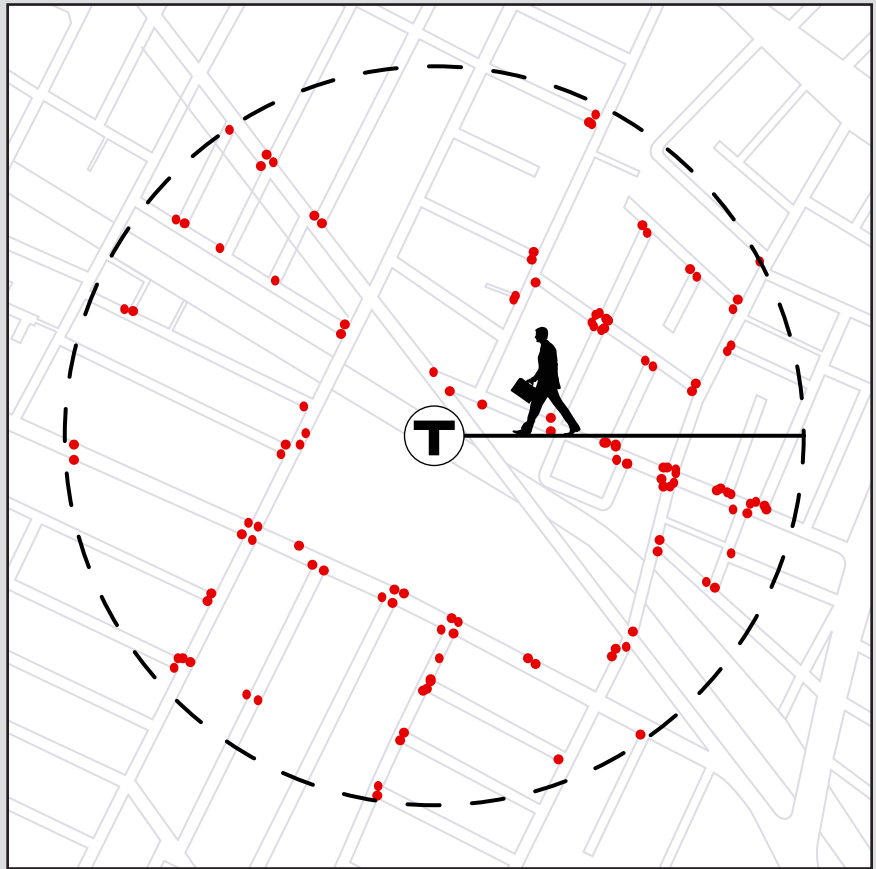
Future Site of Gilman Station



## CURB RAMP REPAIRS

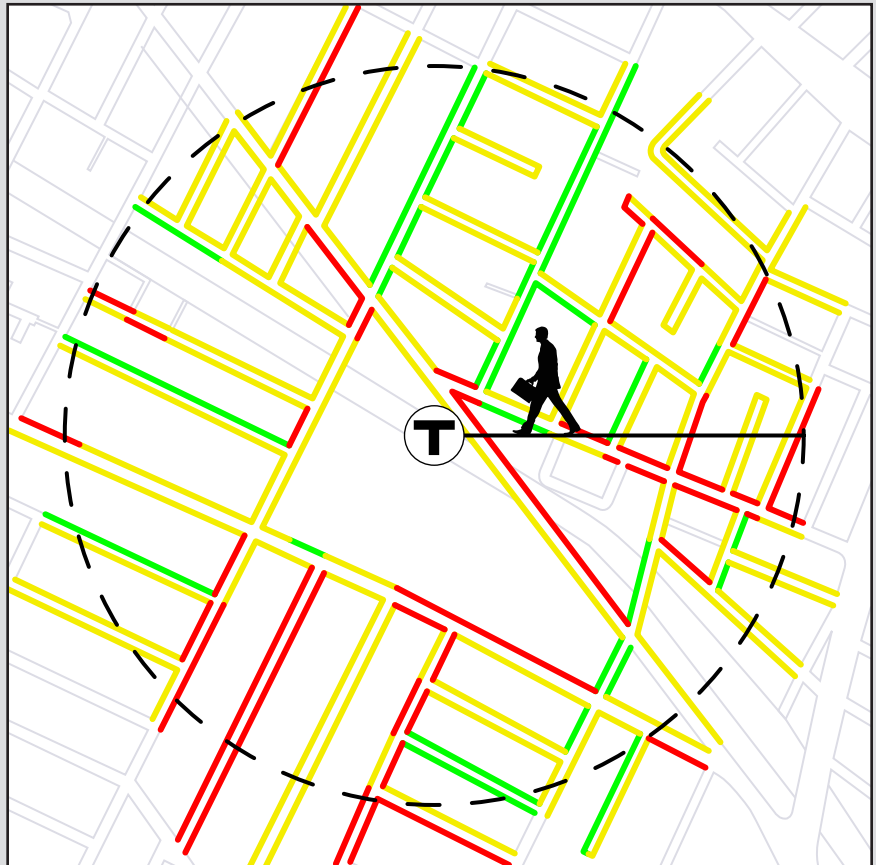
When a sidewalk meets a street intersection, the slope is called a curb ramp. Somerville has more than 3200 curb ramps Citywide.

Since many of these ramps were installed before the Americans with Disabilities Act, there are hundreds of places where pedestrian safety and comfort is compromised by steep slopes, cracked surfaces, or poor drainage. The City just completed a major inventory of curb ramps that will help speed up the process to improve inaccessible ramps. In Gilman Square, major problem intersections include Pearl Street at Walnut Street; Highland Avenue at School Street, and Medford Street at Thurston Street.



## SIDEWALK REPAIRS

Many of Gilman Square's sidewalks were built more than 50 years ago. Common problems include narrow sidewalk widths, tree roots buckling the concrete, and slopes that exceed ADA design standards. The City of Somerville recently launched a repair prioritization study that will guide capital investments to sidewalks citywide. In Gilman Square, high-priority sidewalk repairs include Thurston Street between Medford and Evergreen St., the intersection of School Street and Medford Street, and most of Pearl Street. Some repairs, like the sidewalks along the Medford Street bridge, will be completed during construction of the Green Line Extension Project.



# INVEST IN CIVIC SPACES

## Parks, Playgrounds, and Plazas

Somerville has very little open space, even by urban standards. For every 1,000 Somerville residents, we have roughly 2.4 acres of public open space (similar to the size of 1.5 football fields). In Gilman Square, the ratio is 2.2 acres per 1,000 residents. This station area plan calls for a new civic space to be constructed in the heart of Gilman Square, but it just as important to plan for existing open spaces as a parts of a larger system. Each civic space asset can serve multiple purposes: recreation, storm water absorption, air quality improvement, community building. Each may have different needs, ranging from normal maintenance, to low-cost upgrades, to major redesign and reconstruction. By treating these facilities as parts of an integrated system, the City can better meet the needs of residents living in the station area and the City as a whole.

The core area of the Gilman Square station area has a variety of civic spaces including Marshall Street Playground, Otis Street Playground, the Winter Hill Community School Yard and the recently built, award-winning, Ed Leathers Neighborhood Park. Slightly removed, but equally valuable is Central Hill Park and Playground. This historic park, which was last updated in 2008, stretches along Highland Avenue from School Street to Walnut Street and includes a children's play area, public art, a veterans' memorial, and an open green lawn with 50-year old shade trees.

This plan recommends Marshall Street Playground and Otis Street Playground as candidates for low-cost, easy-to-implement upgrades. These civic spaces have good bones, and minor updates and improvements can go a long way to make sure they add value and serve station area residents. Improved

signage, fresh paint, better plantings, and collaborative programming with neighborhood organizations and the City's Recreation Department are improvement strategies that can be implemented without years of planning and large sums of money. The Winter Hill Community School Yard has also been identified as a priority for improvement. The City should include these civic spaces in the next update of its state-mandated Open Space and Recreation Plan, which is required to qualify for certain funding sources. These facilities should also be identified in the City's Capital Improvement Program.

Ed Leathers Neighborhood Park serves as a success story for recent public investment in the station area. The City of Somerville purchased the land in 2003 and spent the next six years cleaning the contaminated soil. During that time, the City collaborated with station area residents to design the park as a place for relaxation and unstructured recreation. The park opening in 2009 drew hundreds of residents, and the City is currently working to purchase additional land to expand the space.

Finally, the Green Line Extension presents an opportunity to improve the network of civic spaces in the Gilman Square station area. The MBTA has planned to build a shared space plaza at the lower entrance of the new Gilman Station headhouse and a segment of the Somerville Community Path that will include a connection to the upper entrance of the station from School Street. As the rest of the Green Line Extension is planned and built, the City should continue advocating for the entire Somerville Community Path to be built as part of the project.



Grand Opening of Ed Leathers Community Park (2008)



## MARSHALL STREET PLAYGROUND

Marshall Street Playground is located roughly halfway between Pearl Street and Broadway, serving Gilman Square residents as well as families from Winter Hill. It covers roughly 0.24 acres of land area, and is designed primarily as a children's play space.

There are benches, picnic tables, and numerous shade trees creating a pleasant sitting environment for adults as well.



## OTIS STREET PLAYGROUND

This playground at the corner of Otis Street and Dana Street is one of Somerville's smallest at just 0.1 acres. The space is dominated by McGrath

Highway and a pedestrian bridge connecting Gilman Square to East Somerville. Although every public space is valuable, Otis is often under-

utilized as a playground for children and should be identified in the 2015 update of the City's Open Space Plan for improvements and possibly redesigned as a different type of space.



## WINTER HILL COMMUNITY SCHOOL YARD

Winter Hill Community School Yard is at the corner of Evergreen Avenue, Sycamore Street, and Thurston Street.

It is a 1 acre schoolyard completely covered in asphalt. There are no plantings and very little seating space. Despite the unforgiving blacktop, the schoolyard is well-used, with more than 400 students taking morning and afternoon recess. Upgrading this facility is a large undertaking, but phasing strategies can be explored to save time and money.





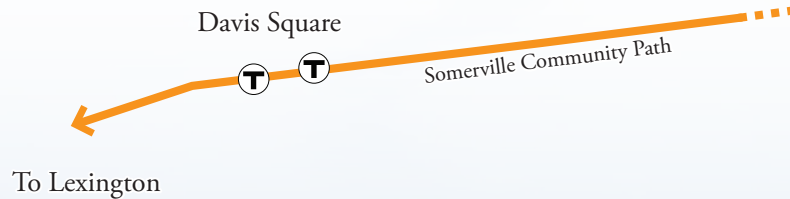
## COMMUNITY PATH EXTENSION

The Somerville Community Path is one of our City's most cherished public assets. This one-mile linear park serves as a commuting route and recreational facility for thousands of Somerville residents and visitors. The path currently runs from Cedar Street westward through Davis Square to the Cambridge city line, where it connects with the 14-mile Minuteman Commuter Bikeway, which serves thousands of daily bicycle commuters from Boston's western suburbs and thousands of recreational cyclists.

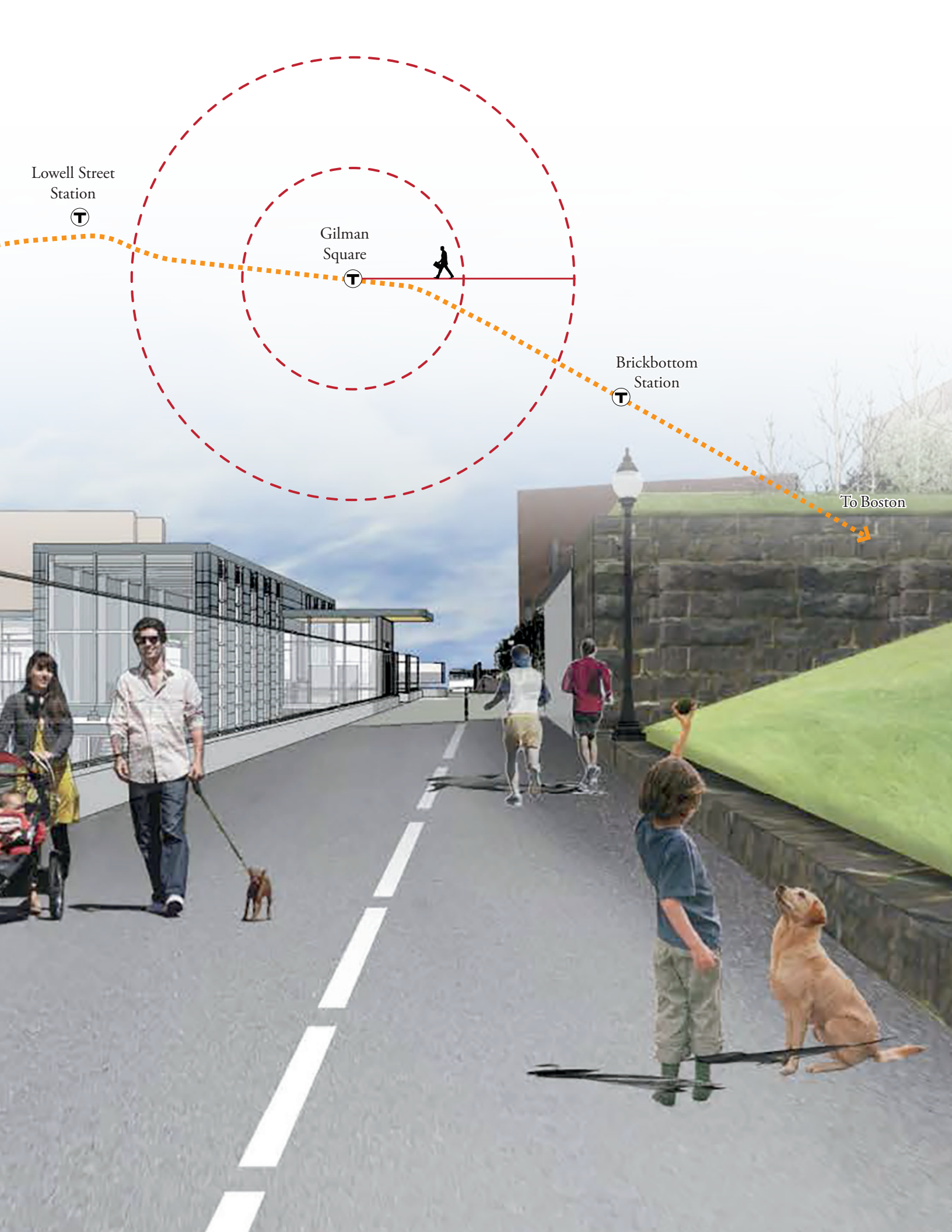
The Community Path is currently being extended through Somerville to downtown Boston, and it will soon serve the Gilman Square station area. In May 2013, construction began on the 0.25 mile path segment connecting Cedar Street eastward to Lowell Street. This segment is scheduled to be open to the public the fall of 2014.

The MBTA Green Line Extension project is preparing full design and engineering documents for the remaining three miles of the Community Path Extension. The path will run alongside the Green Line trolley tracks from Lowell Street to Gilman Square, Brickbottom, and Lechmere stations. When it is completed, it will fill the missing link in one of the most heavily-used regional bicycle networks in the United States.

The path segment in Gilman Square will be one of the most attractive and interesting segments of the entire extension. An at-grade crossing will be created at the southern (uphill) end of the School Street bridge. From there, the path will run across the hillside to connect with the Medford Street bridge. The path will be elevated from the train tracks, with memorable views into Gilman Square and uphill towards Somerville City Hall and Somerville High School. A large seating area, bicycle storage, and access to the Green Line station will be created. Best of all, this path segment will be built at the same time as Gilman Station and the rest of the extension, meaning that this remarkable open space resource will be available to the community by 2019.







Lowell Street  
Station



Gilman  
Square



Brickbottom  
Station



To Boston



# PROMOTE ATTAINABLE HOUSING

## Provide Choices in the Marketplace

Like many urban communities across the country, Somerville has experienced significant increases in housing prices over the last decade. Citywide, Somerville has roughly 3,200 housing units that are permanently reserved as affordable housing for low- and moderate-income residents. This number represents 10% of the City's overall housing stock. In the Gilman Square station area, there are 325 affordable units (15% of the overall stock).

Participants in the station area planning series called for a continued focus on housing affordability in Gilman Square. Public policy is used to create affordable housing in three ways. The first policy approach is to provide financial incentives to residential property owners in return for temporary affordable housing. Landlords can qualify for grants and loans to perform rehabilitation, lead hazard abatement, or energy efficiency improvements if they agree to rent their units to low- and moderate-income tenants. These incentive programs are particularly important in keeping residential units near transit at affordable rental rates and should be expanded. The City should consider prioritizing funding for projects within  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile of rapid transit stations.

A second approach is to construct new buildings with permanently affordable units. Developments of this sort often use public subsidies, publicly-owned land, tax credits or loans

from nonprofit entities. Units can also be designed to serve specific types of residents, including senior citizens, persons with disabilities, families with children, and even artists. This station area plan recommends that at least one City-owned property in the core of Gilman Square be designed, funded and constructed as purpose-built affordable housing.

The third policy tool is Somerville's Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance. Developers of market-rate housing are required to set-aside a percentage of the units they build for low- and moderate-income residents or pay into a affordable housing trust fund. This policy has produced roughly 100 affordable units since its adoption in 1990. Today, the inclusionary requirements are applied to development projects of eight or more units, requiring that 12.5% of the units be designated as affordable. This plan recommends that new development in Gilman Square provide a greater number and variety of unit sizes and price points than in other areas of the city.

In Gilman Square, affordability restrictions on two large buildings will expire during the next ten years. With the arrival of the Green Line, it will be even more important to preserve the existing affordable housing in Gilman Square. The City of Somerville and its partners should lead negotiations with private property owners to extend the long-standing contracts for senior housing at Pearl Street Park and Faulkner Tower.





## HOUSING PROGRAMS

The City of Somerville offers small grants and loans to property owners and first-time home buyers in return for temporary affordable housing. Lead abatement, housing rehabilitation, and energy efficiency assistance programs are an important part of the City's policy approach to housing affordability. Since 2000, roughly \$2.5 million in City assistance has been loaned and granted in Gilman Square.



## INCLUSIONARY HOUSING

As the Green Line Extension brings rapid-transit to areas of the city outside of the existing TOD districts, it is recommended that the Somerville Zoning Ordinance be amended to require that all new construction and rehabilitation projects of significant size located within 1/4 mile of any operational rapid-transit station provide a greater number and variety of unit sizes and price points than in other areas of the city.



## PURPOSE BUILT HOUSING

In 2002, a non-profit purchased 301 Medford St. from the City to build an affordable housing project. The resulting six-plex of three, two-bedroom and three, three-bedroom units is considered an excellent example of contextually appropriate design. With this example in mind, this plan recommends that the City partner with a developer to design, finance, and construct purpose-built affordable housing on at least one City-owned site within the core of Gilman Square.



# ADOPT SMART PARKING POLICY

## A Systems Approach to Parking Demand Management

Although most of Gilman Square was built long before automobiles were common, we live in a different world today. Both residential quality-of-life and business vitality require a certain amount of vehicular parking. However, too much parking can be bad for urban neighborhoods. Participants in the Somerville *byDesign* station area planning series (as well as the MBTA's Green Line design meetings) have called for prioritization of walking and biking over automobile use for the Gilman Square station area. To accomplish this goal, parking policy will require a 'systems approach' to develop a variety of tools to address parking issues from multiple angles.

For the 2,100 housing units located within ¼ mile of the Gilman Square station there are roughly 2,500 parking spaces, including driveways, off-street parking areas, and street frontage for on-street parking. This represents an estimated supply of approximately 1.2 parking spaces per unit while vehicle registration data indicates an ownership rate of 1.3 vehicles/unit. On the ground, Gilman Square seems to be operating at the sweet spot yet the Somerville Zoning Ordinance currently requires new development to provide at least 1.5 off-street parking spaces for every new unit. This is an obvious disconnect because the zoning requires all parking to be off-street and be provided at a higher rate than what is demonstrated by actual ownership. To correct this, it is recommended that parking requirements be adjusted to 1.0 spaces/unit and that one on-street space per twenty feet of unobstructed street frontage be permitted to count toward

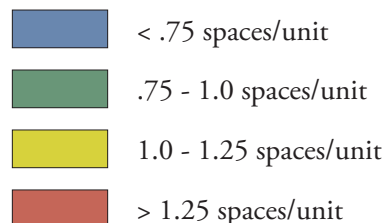
meeting parking requirements. This, of course, has not taken the arrival of the Green Line into consideration. Once the Green Line is operational, properties within ¼ mile of the station should be subject to a reduction in required parking of 0.5 space/unit.

Gilman Square also needs a series of tools to address parking for commercial businesses. Participants at the various planning events were enthusiastic to "Fill in the Gaps" (see page 30) on properties that once featured great mixed-use, multi-story buildings but many of which are now parking lots or automobile oriented uses. Unfortunately, parking requirements for commercial space, in general, make it difficult to meet requirements because the sites at hand are small and have limited ability to absorb parking as currently required. To facilitate the vision of a revitalized and transit-oriented Gilman Square, parking requirements should be eliminated for neighborhood oriented businesses within ¼ mile of the station. To directly support parking for business activity, but protect against Green Line park-and-ride commuting behavior, metered parking spaces should be established in the core of Gilman Square along Medford, Pearl, and Marshall Streets.

Lastly, and as a key component of successfully meeting the 'Fill in the Gaps' and 'Adopt Smart Parking Policy' objectives of this plan, off-street parking for properties in the core of Gilman Square should be tuck-under or structured in form.

### LAND DEDICATED TO PARKING

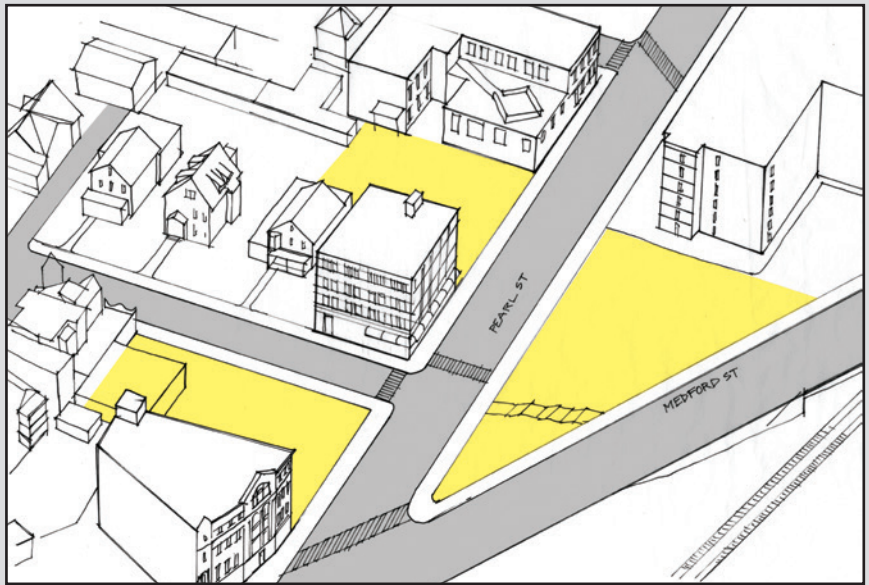
This map illustrates parking supply and demand around Gilman Square. For the 38 blocks within a five-minute walk of the Green Line station, parking availability is calculated at 1.2 parking spaces per housing unit. Blocks colored in red have ratios above that average, and in some cases have ratios greater than 2.0 spaces per unit. The lowest ratios (less than 0.75 spaces per unit) are calculated for three blocks south of Pearl Street, along Skilton Avenue and at the corner of Walnut Street.





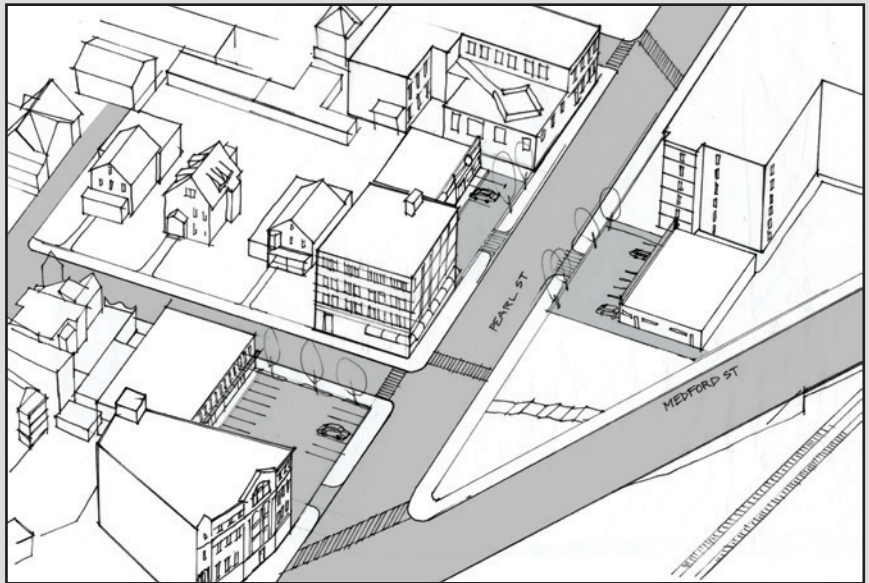
## TEST SITES

Participants in the Somerville*by*Design station area planning series suggested that three sites at the corner of Pearl and Marshall should be viewed as redevelopment opportunities. All three sites had multi-story buildings in the early 20th century placed right against the street.



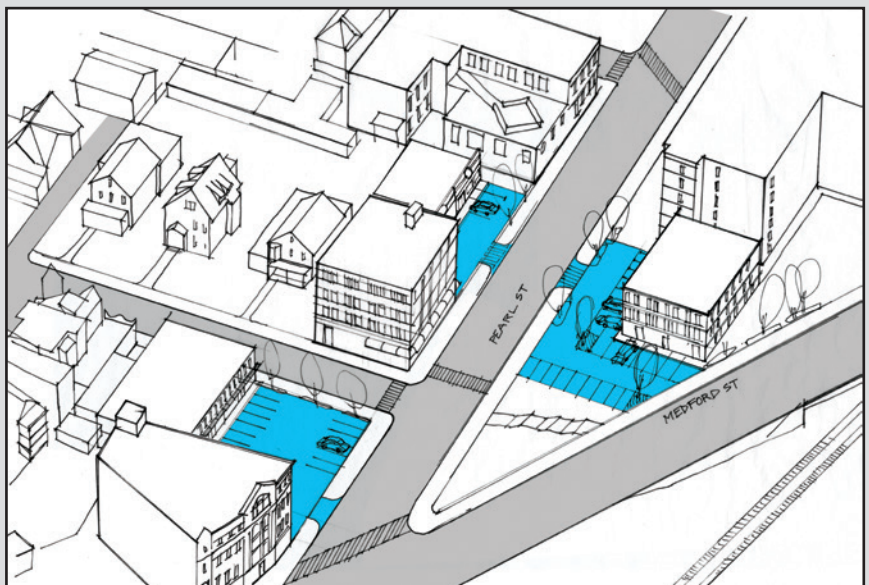
## SCENARIO #1

If these sites were redeveloped under current zoning, we would see suburban strip-style infill buildings. Required setbacks and high parking ratios create incentives for low buildings set back from the street. These buildings would not be consistent with the historical pattern or the vision developed by residents for the future of Gilman Square.



## SCENARIO #2

Assume that a more urban two-story building is constructed on the former Citizens Building site. The Zoning Ordinance requires so much parking that there is no space left for landscaping or anything else. This scenario would also be incompatible with the vision developed by residents during the Somerville*by*Design station area planning series.



# REFORM ZONING REGULATION

## Zoning for Community Character

The SomerVision Comprehensive Plan calls on the City of Somerville to conserve its historic residential housing and enhance its funky squares and commercial corridors. In Gilman Square, residents and property owners took that big-picture vision down to the neighborhood scale, identifying a core area where rehabilitation and redevelopment would foster the return of Gilman Square as a node of neighborhood serving activity. Participants also identified the many residential blocks of multi-unit, detached houses that are deserving of protections from uncharacteristic infill brought on by the strong market for new housing.

Although these areas closely reflect how existing zoning districts are *mapped* over the station area, the actual regulations of those existing districts unfortunately stand in the way of achieving many of the goals of this plan. Loopholes, contradicting cross-references, and “one size fits all” requirements can allow large projects on quiet residential streets while also making it almost impossible to build the mixed-use buildings that are consistent with the vision developed by residents for the future of Gilman Square.

The Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development is currently undertaking a comprehensive update of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO). The goal is to develop a reformatted and updated version of the SZO that focuses on the physical form of lots and structures while also improving readability, organization, and graphic design. The Somerville *by* Design station area planning process is the primary tool to inform needed changes in zoning regulation to implement SomerVision. Integrating the zoning revisions needed to properly redevelop Gilman Square into the new zoning ordinance is one of the most important recommendations of this plan.

To foster the rebirth of Gilman Square as a transit-oriented node of activity, an entirely new ‘Neighborhood Mixed-Use’ zoning district should be created that permits neighborhood-serving commercial uses, four-story mixed-use buildings, and parking regulations reflecting the recommendations from the ‘Adopt Smart Parking Policy’ section covered previously. To foster the existing community of ‘makers’ already operating in the square, the zoning should permit “fabrication” uses; including visual arts, performing arts, and small-scale manufacturing; and establish standards for live-work units for certified artists and fabricators. At the same time, a new “Neighborhood Residence” zoning district should be created to implement the recommendations of the City’s 2012 “Residence A / Residence B Technical Report” so that the existing character of nearby residential blocks is conserved and protected.

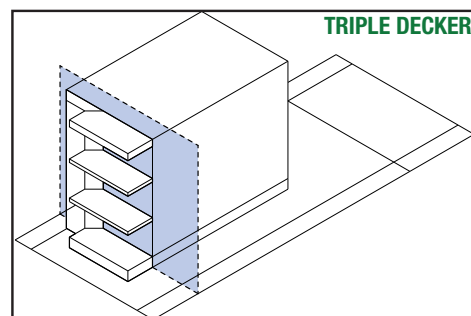
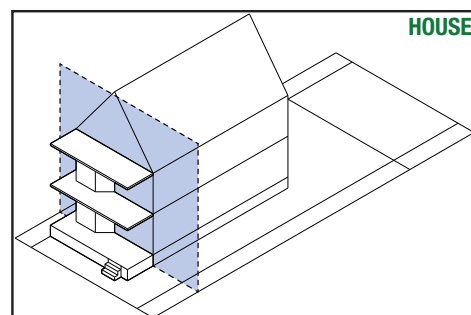


### BUILDING TYPES

The new SZO will use ‘building types’ as the fundamental regulatory framework for the code.

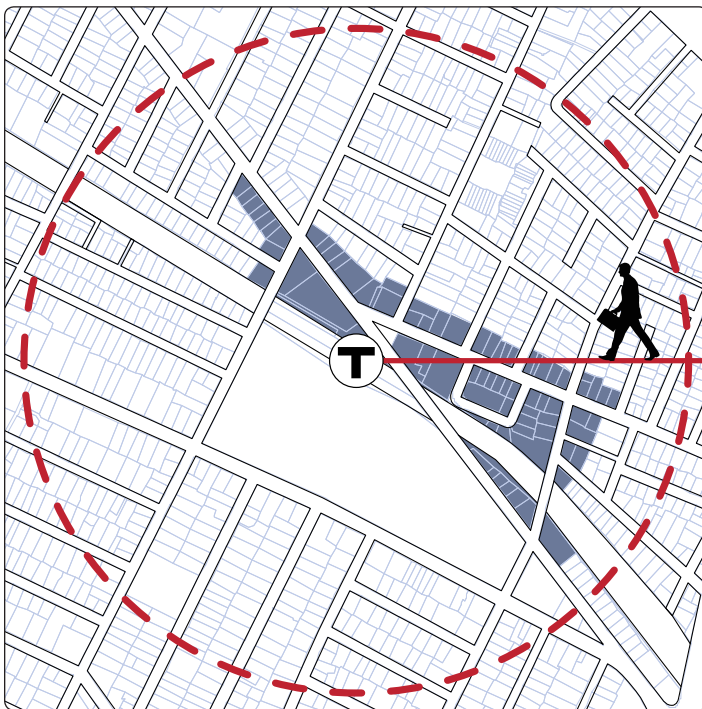
When dimensional standards become a factor of individual building typology, predictability

is increased for alterations to existing structures and the form of new infill buildings. At the same time, flexibility is provided by permitting multiple buildings types as appropriate.





# Neighborhood Mixed-Use District



## BUILDING TYPES

- |                         |                       |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| ■ Cottage               | ■ Shop House          |
| ■ House                 | ■ Commercial Building |
| ■ Duplex                | ■ Mixed Use Building  |
| ■ Triple Decker         | ■ Civic Building      |
| ■ Paired Houses         | ■ Production Building |
| ■ Four-Plex             | ■ Fabrication Studios |
| ■ Paired Triple Deckers | ■ Storage Warehouse   |
| ■ Six Plex              |                       |
| ■ Apartment House       |                       |
| ■ Apartment Building    |                       |
| ■ Row House             |                       |
| ■ Town Houses           |                       |
| ■ Not Permitted         |                       |
| □ by Special Permit     |                       |
| ■ by Right              |                       |



# SUPPORT THE LOCAL ECONOMY

## Planning for a Vibrant Mix of Services, Spaces, and Jobs

In Somerville, we take pride in our business community. Our entrepreneurs provide needed goods and services to our residents, create job opportunities, and contribute to our City's fiscal health and funky multicultural environment. During the Somerville*by*Design station area planning series, residents talked about the need to support existing business owners and attract new entrepreneurs to the Gilman Square. Zoning reform is a key strategy to grow the local economy, but several other policy and programmatic initiatives can help support a vital and vibrant Gilman Square.

The City of Somerville should encourage businesses to locate in the core of the square that cater to residents' daily and weekly needs. To accomplish this goal, the City should continue and expand its technical assistance programs for entrepreneurs, which include business plan writing, financial literacy training, licensing and permitting guidance, marketing support, and tenant-landlord matching. In addition, the City should encourage business and property owners to participate in its federally-funded Storefront Improvement Program, which provides matching grants for qualified projects. To ensure maximum flexibility in funding potential projects in

Gilman Square, the City should pursue designation of the district as a federally-recognized "Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area".

A diverse business mix requires a diverse mix of commercial spaces and rental price points. Commercial space in older buildings often leases at lower prices than new buildings. This plan recommends preservation of commercial space in Gilman Square's historic buildings such as the Knights of Malta Hall, the Litchfield Block, and the Mad Oyster Studios building to maintain a diverse mix of price points in the core of the square. New commercial space should be created as part of mixed-use redevelopment on the five opportunity sites identified on pages 30-37 of this plan.

This plan calls for the preservation and expansion of Gilman Square's creative economy. Businesses such as Boston Billiard Supply, East Cambridge Piano, Wooden Kiwi, SRP Signs (as well as the arts entrepreneurs in the Mad Oyster Studios building) should be celebrated and supported. The City should continue to support the arts and cultural community by disseminating information related to City-sponsored technical assistance, existing and proposed artists

New storefront for Sarma restaurant under construction at the Litchfield Block building





spaces, open studios and other special events, local support organizations, and municipal programs.

The City and its nonprofit partners should work with business and property owners to make sure that appropriate space types and price points are maintained in the coming years. Buildings like the Knights of Malta Hall are uniquely well-suited to production, fabrication and craft manufacturing businesses, which generally require high ceilings, freight elevators, loading docks, and high-capacity electrical systems.

The City recently completed a study of space availability and leasing rates for arts and fabrication uses, finding that studio and production space is in extremely high demand across Somerville. In fact, the per-square-foot lease rates for studios in certain neighborhoods are actually higher than retail or restaurant lease rates. Since the survey was conducted, the owner of a major studio building on Boston Avenue just across the municipal border with Medford terminated leases for dozens of creative economy tenants, suggesting that studio and production space is at an even greater premium.

Clearly, landlords and property owners set lease rates and make business decisions that suit their needs. Targeted marketing and technical assistance will be needed to encourage property owners to continue to rent space to creative economy businesses. The City can and should play a role in data collection, analysis, and marketing to help property owners understand the viability of the creative economy.

As the creative economy has expanded over the last decade, it has also become clear that Somerville's zoning regulations are not well-suited to supporting the preservation and expansion of spaces suitable for production, fabrication, and craft manufacturing. Reform that encourages the adaptation of existing buildings for creative economy uses will be critical if Somerville is to continue to successfully foster the local creativity that has become such a valued asset by residents. The creative economy can be more than just a part of Somerville's arts and culture, it can be a viable economic investment for business owners and their landlords with the proper tools in place to help it compete with outside interests.





Mayor Joe Curtatone and residents of the Gilman Square station area celebrate the Grand Opening of Ed Leathers Community Park on a former industrial site

*“When asked to identify a favorite part of the Gilman Square plan, one survey respondent wrote: ‘Everything – let’s do it!’”*



# 5

## GILMAN SQUARE GETTING THINGS DONE

Plans succeed or fail through their implementation. SomervillebyDesign has introduced a new approach to planning in Somerville and the station area plan for Gilman Square offers a fresh way to think about getting things done. Our January 8th, 2013 “Plan Presentation” meeting brought 140 community members together to hold the design team accountable. Final schematic designs were presented and a survey form was given to attendees to ask what they liked or didn’t like about the team’s work. A remarkable consensus emerged in favor of the design ideas for Gilman Square. When asked to identify a favorite part of the Gilman Square plan, one survey respondent wrote: ‘Everything – let’s do it!’.

That type of confidence and clarity generates consensus between the public and local government for turning recommendations into reality. On the following pages, each objective and its corresponding recommendations have been graphically illustrated on a ten-year time line. The calendar is built around the nine ideas our participants cared about most: bringing back the square, filling in the gaps, inviting public life, complete the streets, invest in civic spaces, support attainable housing, adopt smart parking policy, improve zoning, and supporting the local economy.

Each of the nine principles is listed on the left side of the table to create an easy-to-use reference back to the recommendations of Chapter 4. Within the nine principles

are 40 recommendations in total. Of these, 34 can be accomplished by the City. Three actions require coordination and partnership with MassDOT and the MBTA and three require coordination and partnership with private property owners and business operators from the station area. The calendar provides guidance to the variety of stakeholders involved so that they can make informed decisions that are in line with the community’s vision for the future. To promote accountability for the City and its partners, arrows indicate if specific actions should be ongoing or completed by a certain period of in time.

The year 2019 is highlighted on the summary calendar to identify the date that MassDOT and the MBTA have publicly committed to opening the Gilman Square Green Line station. This lends a sense of urgency to all the actions included in this station area plan. Somerville residents must continue to advocate for completion of the Green Line Extension, but to truly achieve our community vision for Gilman Square we must also ensure that certain actions are begun, or even completed by 2019. Change is coming to Gilman Square and we have an opportunity to steer that change in a way that is consistent with our core values as a community. Let’s do it!

**BRING BACK THE SQUARE**

Partner with the MBTA and MassDOT to re-engineer the intersection of Medford, Pearl, and Marshall Streets into an urban square.

Investigate and pursue state and federal programs available to help finance the construction of the new intersection.

Add the intersection reconstruction project to the City's Capital Improvement Plan.

Procure design services for the new Gilman Square civic space created by the realignment of the intersection.

Add the civic space construction project to the 2015 update of the Open Space Plan and the City's Annual Capital Improvement Plan.

Partner with the property owner of 91 Marshall Street to conduct a land swap as part of the Gilman Square intersection realignment project.

Identify community partners and establish a stewardship program for the new Gilman Square civic space.

**FILL IN THE GAPS**

Explore the use of the Somerville Redevelopment Authority's urban renewal powers to incentivize redevelopment for sites identified in this plan.

Utilize City-owned land, including the Homan's building site, to incentivize redevelopment.

Procure consulting services from a preservation mason to determine the potential extraction, preservation, and reuse of the door surround of the Homans Building.

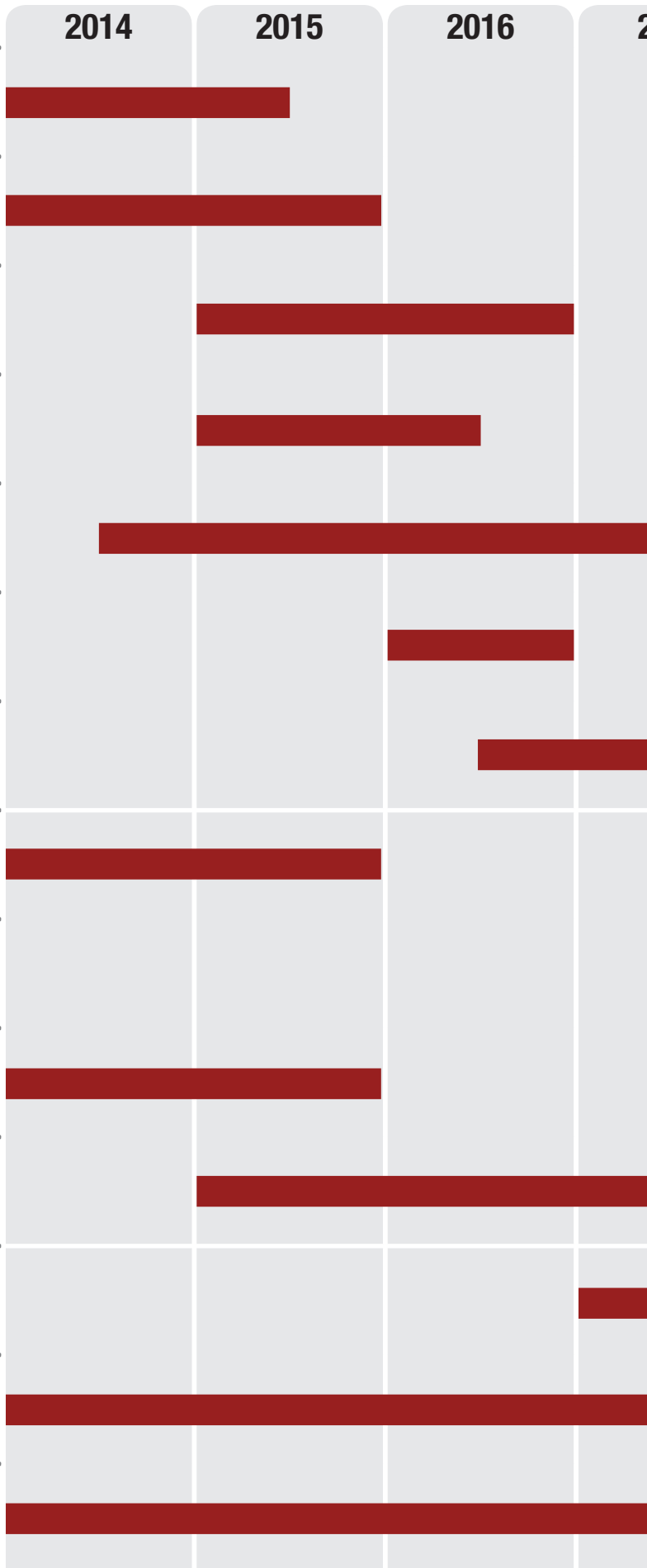
If any features of the Homans Building door surround are able to be preserved, relocate them to an appropriate site in Gilman Square.

**INVITE PUBLIC LIFE**

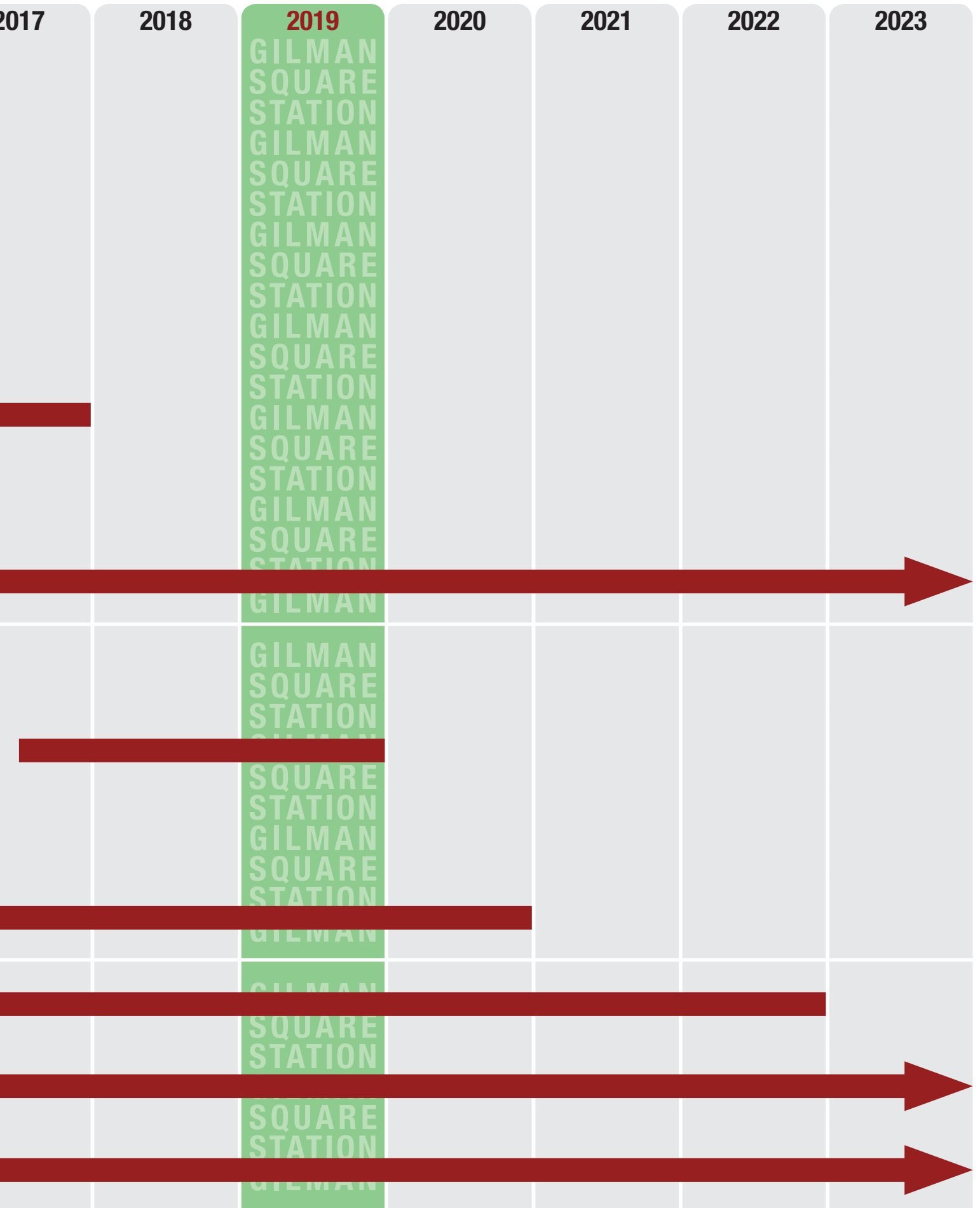
Encourage the creation of privately-owned, publicly-accessible space (such as sidewalk cafes and other street seating) as a component of redevelopment projects.

Encourage business owners and property owners in Gilman Square to participate in the City of Somerville's Storefront Improvement Program.

Increase tree canopy to effectively provide an abundance of shade, support storm water drainage, and to create a protective barrier between motor vehicles and pedestrians.







**COMPLETE THE STREETS**

Improve sidewalks, crosswalks, and curb ramps identified as high priorities in the City's 2013 Curb and Ramp Inventory. (Neighborhood Street Reconstruction Program)

Develop a Safe Routes to Transit program to coordinate City Departments in making improvements to walking and bicycling routes to Gilman Square station.

Design and install way-finding signage to guide residents and visitors to and from the new Gilman Square station and civic space.

Support the MBTA's efforts to design and build high-quality short- and long-term bicycle parking to encourage commuters to get to Gilman Station by bicycle.

**INVEST IN CIVIC SPACES**

Partner with the MBTA and MassDOT to design a high-quality shared space at the lower entrance to Gilman Square station.

Partner with the MBTA to design and construct the full Somerville Community Path from Lowell Street through Gilman Square to downtown Boston.

Identify Marshall St. Playground, Otis St. Playground and the Winter Hill Community School yard as candidates for improvements in the 2015 update of the Open Space Plan.

Investigate state and federal programs available to finance the Marshall St. Playground, Otis St. Playground, and Winter Hill Community School yard improvements.

Add improvements to Marshall Street Playground, Otis Street Playground and the Winter Hill Community School yard to the City's Capital Improvement Plan.

Expand the size of Ed Leather's Community Park.

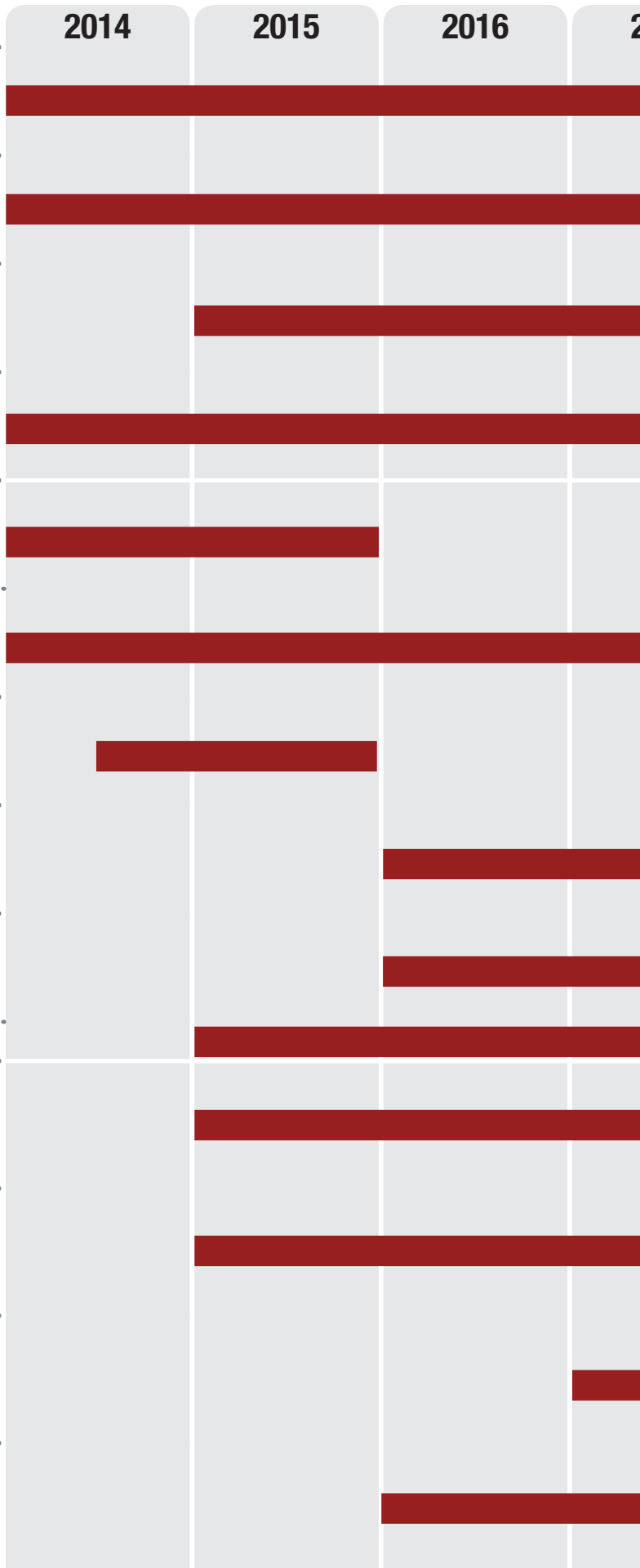
**PROMOTE ATTAINABLE HOUSING**

Prioritize station areas when distributing CDBG and other state or federal financing for lead abatement, housing rehabilitation, and energy efficiency assistance programs.

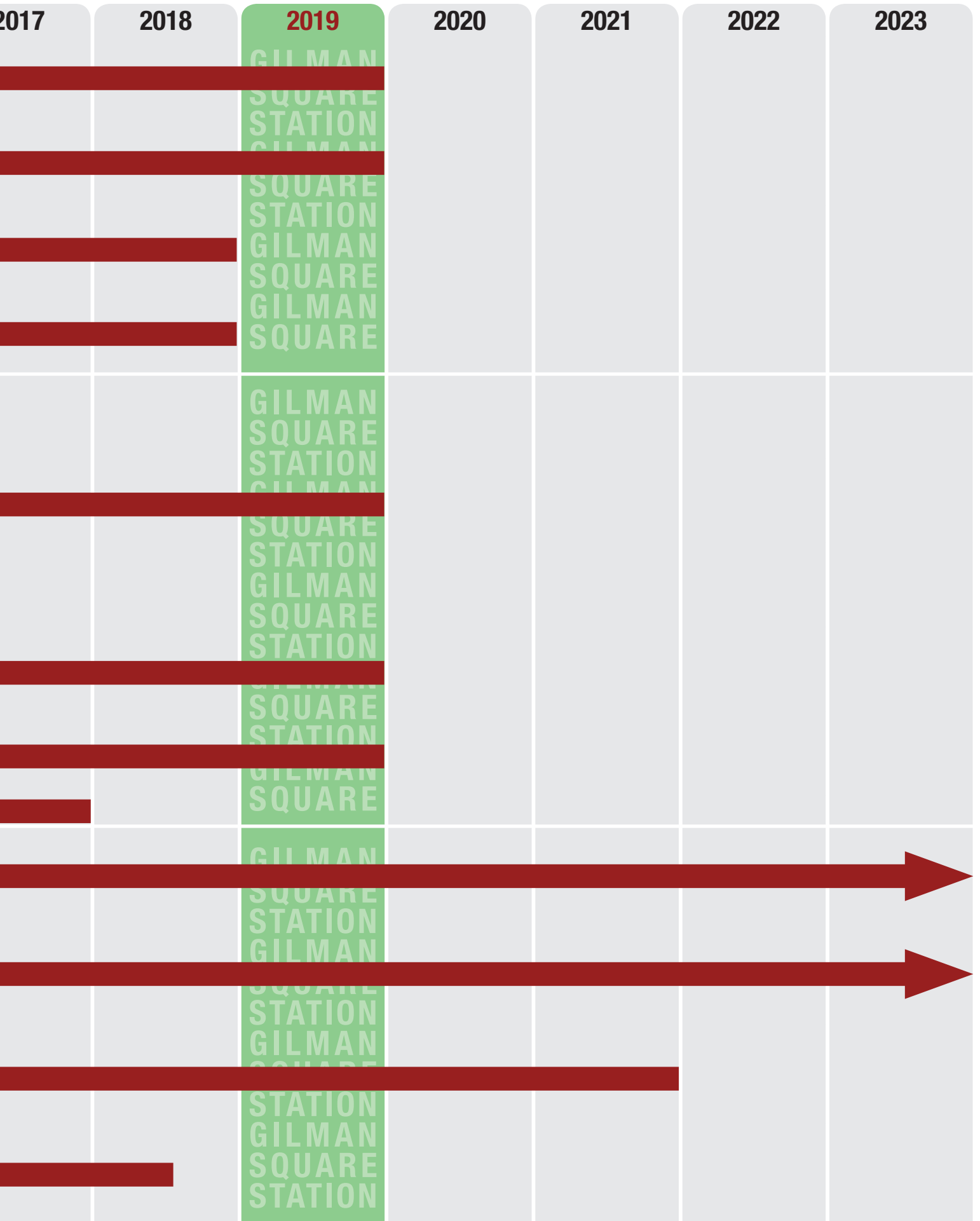
Require all new construction and rehabilitation projects of significant size within 1/4 mile of any operational rapid-transit station to provide a greater number and variety of unit sizes and price points than in other areas of the city.

Partner with a developer to design, finance, and construct purpose-built affordable housing on at least one City-owned site within the core of Gilman Square.

Lead negotiations with private property owners to extend the long-standing contracts for "expiring-use" affordable senior housing at Pearl Street Park and Faulkner Tower.







**ADOPT SMART PARKING POLICY**

Reform zoning regulations to require off-street parking at a ratio of 1.0 space per new residential unit, regardless of bedroom count.

Adopt a transit-oriented off-street parking reduction of 0.5 spaces for any property within 1/4 mile of any operational rapid-transit station.

Eliminate off-street parking requirements for first-floor retail uses within 1/4 mile of any operational rapid-transit station.

Establish retail-oriented, metered parking spaces in the core of Gilman Square along Medford, Pearl, and Marshall Streets where appropriate.

Require tuck-under or structured parking for all new construction in the core of Gilman Square.

Permit the street frontage of properties to count toward parking requirements.

**IMPROVE ZONING REGULATION**

Create a new “Neighborhood Square” zoning district that generates four-story, mixed-use buildings with first floor commercial activities and privately-owned, public spaces.

Reform zoning regulations to encourage the adaptation of existing buildings for commercial, fabrication and artist-oriented live-work space in the core of Gilman Square.

Promote flexibility in the Neighborhood Square zoning district by permitting a range of allowed building types.

Promote predictability in the Neighborhood Square zoning district by requiring by-right building types to meet specific design standards.

Create a new “Neighborhood Residence” zoning district that implements the recommendations of the City’s 2012 “Residence A / Residence B Technical Report”.

Incorporate any new districts generated by this station area plan into the structure and format of the new zoning ordinance called for by SomerVision.

Permit “fabrication” uses, including visual arts, performing arts and small-scale manufacturing, and establish standards for live-work units for certified artists and fabricators.

**2014**

**2015**

**2016**

**2017**





2017

2018

2019

2020

2021

2022

2023

GILMAN  
SQUARE  
STATION  
GILMAN  
SQUARE  
STATION  
GILMAN  
SQUARE

GILMAN  
SQUARE  
STATION  
GILMAN  
SQUARE

GILMAN  
SQUARE  
STATION  
GILMAN  
SQUARE  
STATION  
GILMAN  
SQUARE  
STATION  
GILMAN  
SQUARE  
STATION  
GILMAN  
SQUARE  
STATION  
GILMAN  
SQUARE

**SUPPORT THE LOCAL ECONOMY**

Recruit businesses that cater to local residents' daily and weekly shopping and service needs to locate in the core of Gilman Square.

Preserve certain older commercial buildings in the core of Gilman Square to maintain a diverse mix of price points for commercial space.

Offer storefront improvement grants to businesses and landlords in Gilman Square.

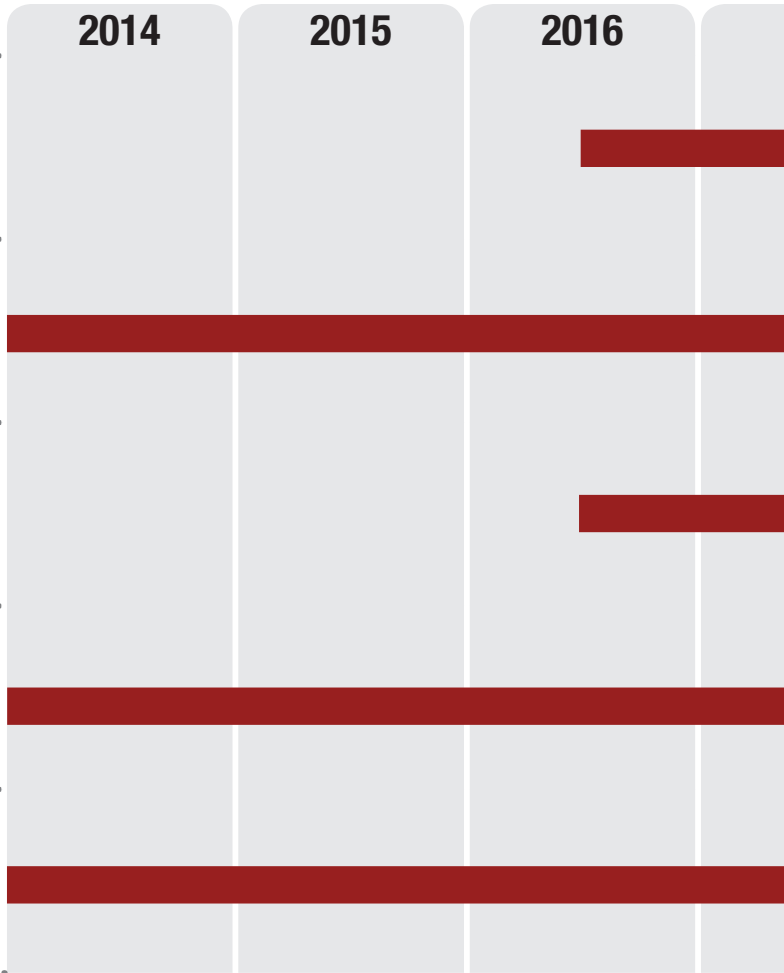
Promote and expand the City of Somerville's technical assistance programs for small businesses, including business plan assistance, financial literacy training, licensing and permitting guidance, marketing support, and tenant-landlord matching.

Support the arts and cultural community by disseminating information related to City- sponsored technical assistance, existing and proposed artist spaces, open studios and other special events, and local support organizations and municipal programs.

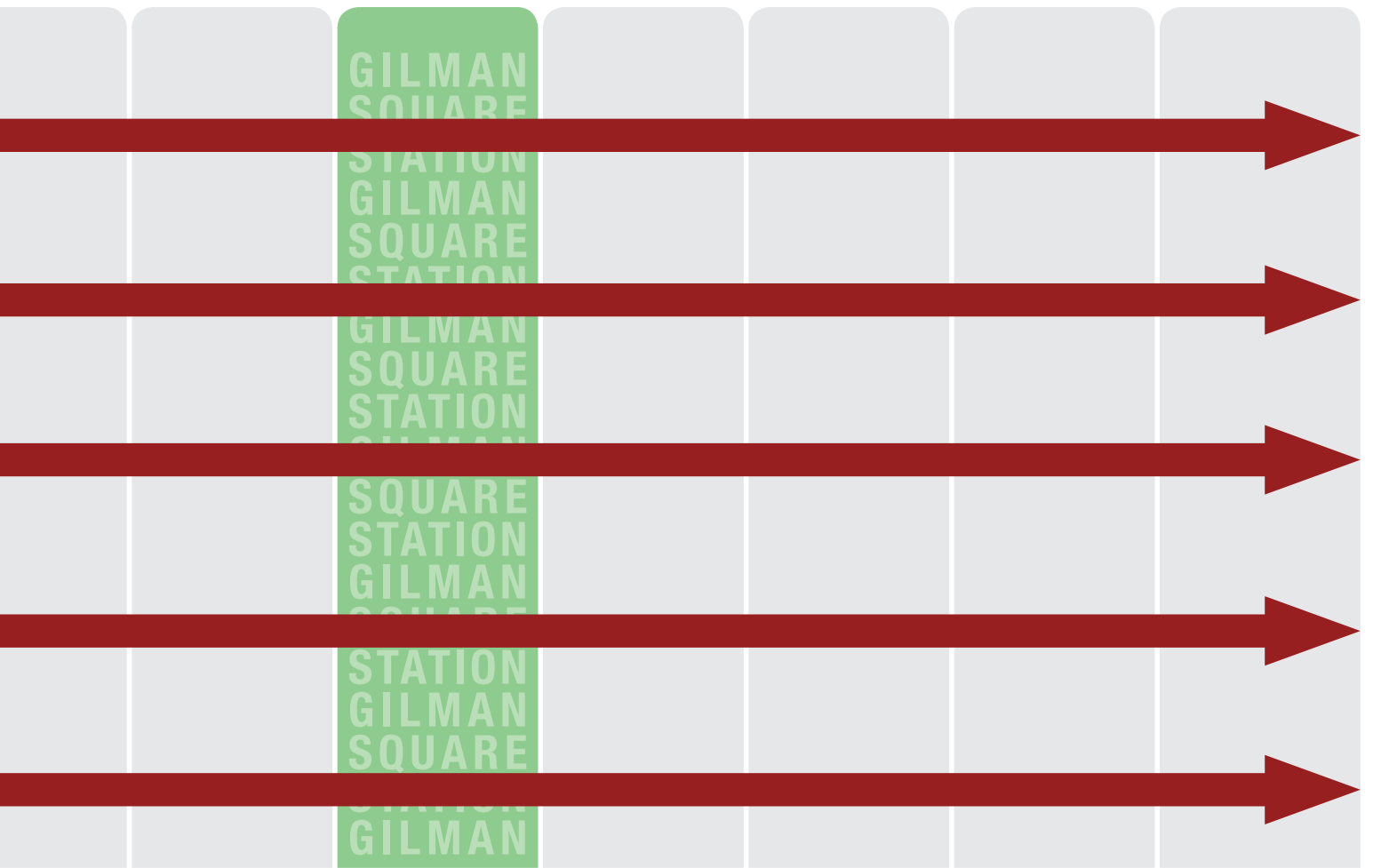
**2014**

**2015**

**2016**

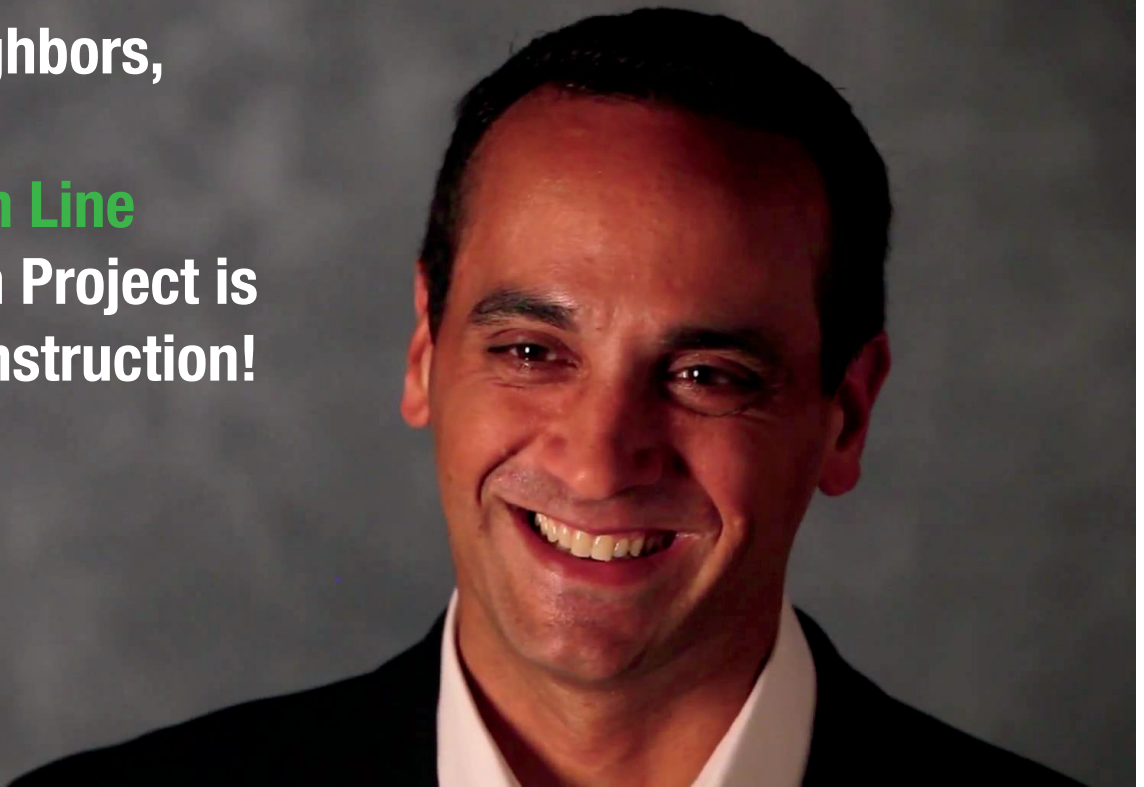






Dear Neighbors,

The **Green Line**  
Extension Project is  
under construction!



When we launched SomervillebyDesign in 2012, no one knew what would happen. The only guarantee was that the public process would succeed or fail based on how much ownership our stakeholders were willing to take. Gilman Square residents and businesspersons rose to the occasion, contributing time, energy, and ideas that make the Gilman Square station area plan different than any other neighborhood plan to date. Who could have predicted that we would be talking about an actual public square in Gilman?

After decades of community activism, Somerville is poised to reap the economic, environmental, and social benefits of bringing mass transit to New England's most densely populated city. Thanks to progressive partnerships between local, state, and federal government we have figured out how to engineer and finance what has been called "the most complicated light rail project under construction in the United States". Now, the question is "What kind of neighborhoods and services do Somerville residents want to see around each of the Green Line stations"?

Our award-winning, community-driven SomerVision Comprehensive Plan gives us the big-picture. Our residents want to take all of the things that make Somerville a great place to live, work, play, and raise a family, and we want to make them even better. We want more jobs, more local

businesses, more choices in shopping and services. We want housing that is accessible, affordable, and attractive. We want much more open space than we have today, and we want it to be well-designed and integrated into the fabric of our great walkable neighborhoods and funky commercial squares.

SomerVision also commits the City to innovation in government operations, to identifying and replicating best practices from all around the country. The SomervillebyDesign station area planning series is evidence that we take SomerVision seriously.

But remember, a plan document is not the end of the line. We still need your energy, enthusiasm, and advocacy to turn this plan into an on-the-ground reality. The public square envisioned in this plan will not build itself, and current zoning does not permit or enable smart growth like we have imagined.

So please, stay engaged. Gilman Square station will be open by 2019 and change will happen to us even if we do nothing. I am confident that as Gilman Square changes, this plan will steer that change in a way that is consistent with our core values: making Somerville an even better place to live, work, play and raise a family - but only if you help us to keep it *off the shelf*.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joseph A. Curtatone". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style. It is positioned above the printed name of the Mayor.

Joseph A Curtatone, Mayor



# Somerville *by* DESIGN



**STRATEGIC  
PLANNING &  
COMMUNITY  
DEVELOPMENT**