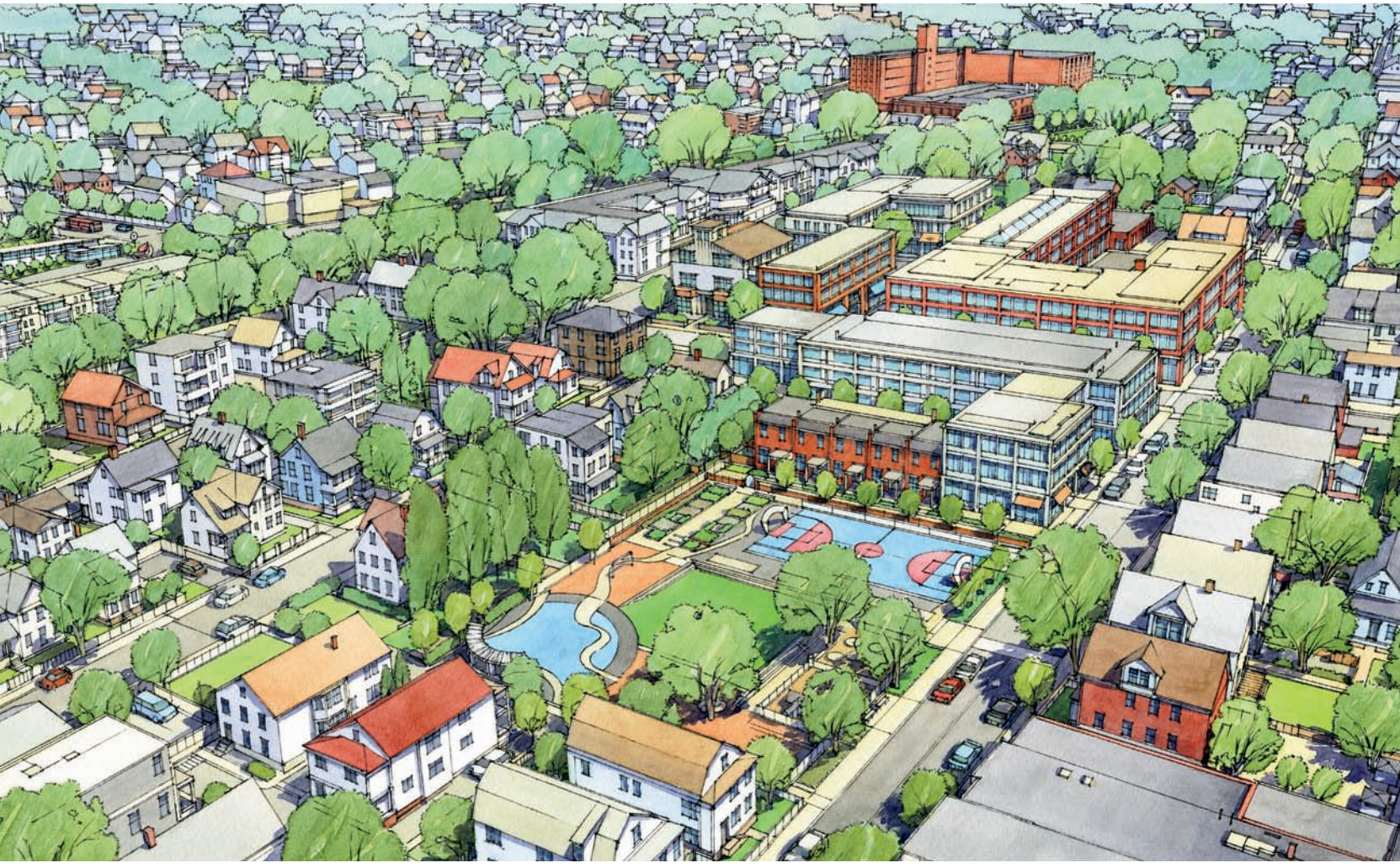
LOWELL STREET

STATION AREA PLAN



Mayor Joseph A. Curtatone

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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 Twenty-Year Comprehensive 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

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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 the future, and communicate the plan in a clear way to promote harmonious 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 Lowell Street 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

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 Washington Street 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

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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

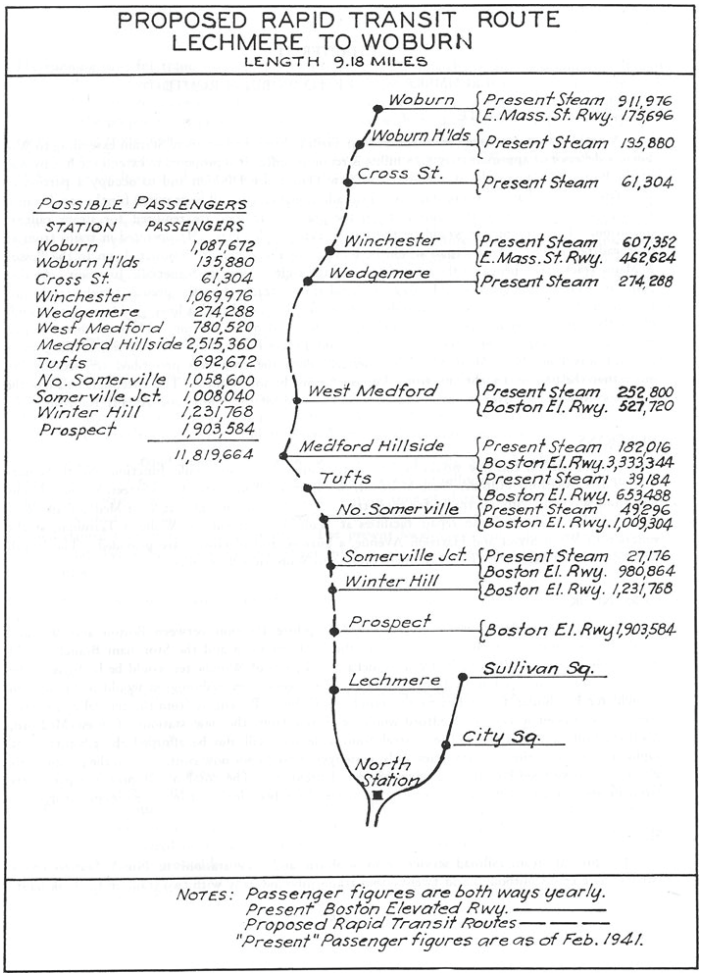
put forward - although still with a focus on moving suburban commuters. A 1945 state-level commission on mass transit recommended that Green Line trolley service be extended along existing commuter rail right-of-way from Lechmere through Somerville all the way to Woburn. Core elements of this proposal were carried forward in subsequent studies during the 1960s, '70s, and '80s. 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 rational 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 ground-breaking 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

Lowell Street 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

MYSTIC VALLEY

COLLEGE AVENUE

BALL SQUARE

LOWELL STREET

GILMAN SQUARE

BRICKBOTTOM

UNION SQUARE

STATION DESIGN

MBTA focuses on Neighborhood-Scale Form and Function

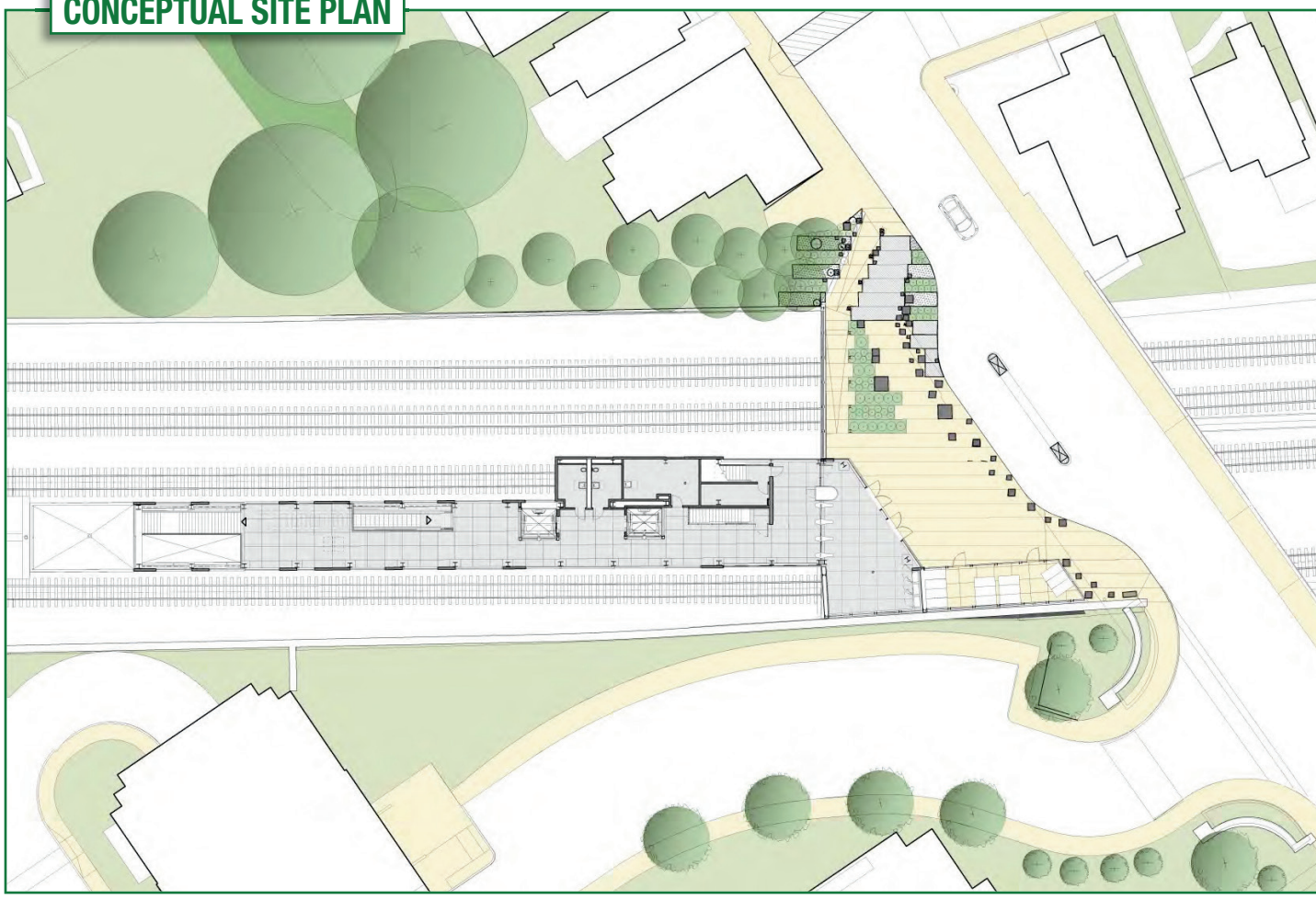
Lowell Street station will be the third of six new stations along the extension of the Green Line's existing "E" Branch service. The extension runs from a relocated Lechmere Station in East Cambridge to Route 16/Mystic Valley Parkway in Somerville. Several miles of the Lowell Commuter Line tracks will be shifted within the existing right-of-way to make room for the new Green Line tracks and platforms. Complete reconstruction of the Lowell Street bridge is needed to facilitate the project and Lowell Street station itself will be constructed as an integrated component of the rebuilt bridge.

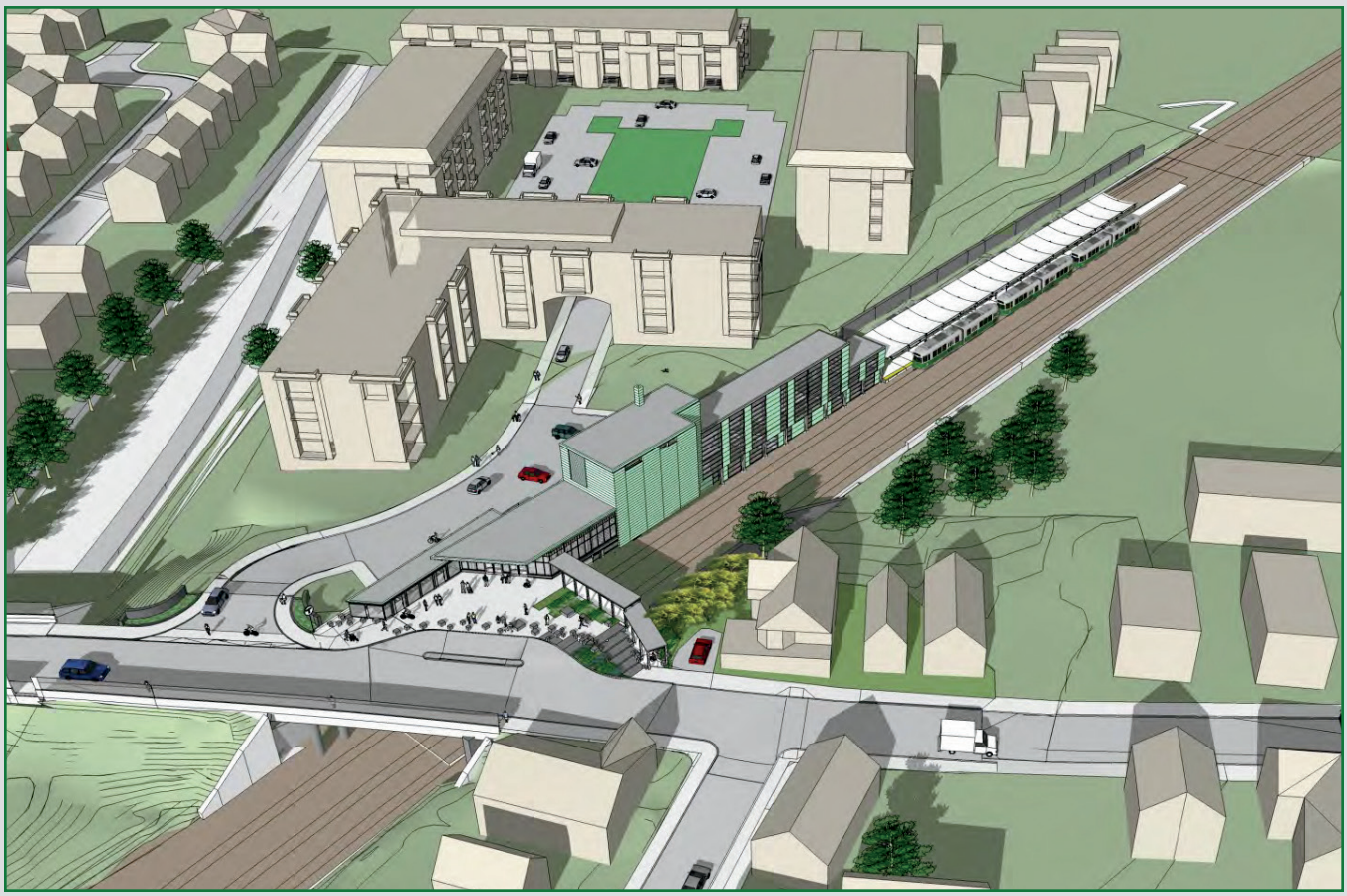
Lowell Street station will consist of a head house and one 'island platform' servicing both the inbound and outbound tracks of the Green Line. The stop will provide riders with outbound access to Ball Square, Tufts University, and eventually the Mystic Valley terminus; and inbound access to Gilman Square, Brickbottom, Lechmere, North Station, and beyond.

The entrance to Lowell Street station will be located off the western side of the Lowell Street bridge facing east. Although increasing the span of Lowell Street bridge was the primary focus of bridge reconstruction, the MBTA also plans to increase the width, creating space for a 4,000 square foot pedestrian plaza and an accessible vehicular drop-off to accommodate the MBTA's "The Ride" para-transit program. The plaza has been designed with extensive bicycle parking including an open area for roughly 20 short-term spaces and an enclosed storage room for an additional 60 long-term spaces that will be protected from the weather. Consistent with public input throughout the Green Line design process, no parking facilities will be built with the station.

Approaching the station from the north, the existing sidewalk will turn into the plaza, with a wide set of stairs and an accessible ramp absorbing the slope coming off the bridge. From the south, the sidewalk crosses the Maxwell's Green entrance and blends into the accessible pedestrian plaza. After entering the station, passengers will pass through fare gates and proceed west through the concourse. Escalators and elevators will bring riders down to the platform level, where inbound streetcars stopping on the southern side and outbound streetcars stopping on the north.

CONCEPTUAL SITE PLAN





LOWELL STREET STATION

Lowell Street at Maxwell's Green

STATION TIMELINE

Construction Starts	Spring 2015
Grand Opening	Spring 2019

ANTICIPATED RIDERSHIP

Daily Trains	162
Daily Boardings	1,140

ESTIMATED FREQUENCY OF SERVICE

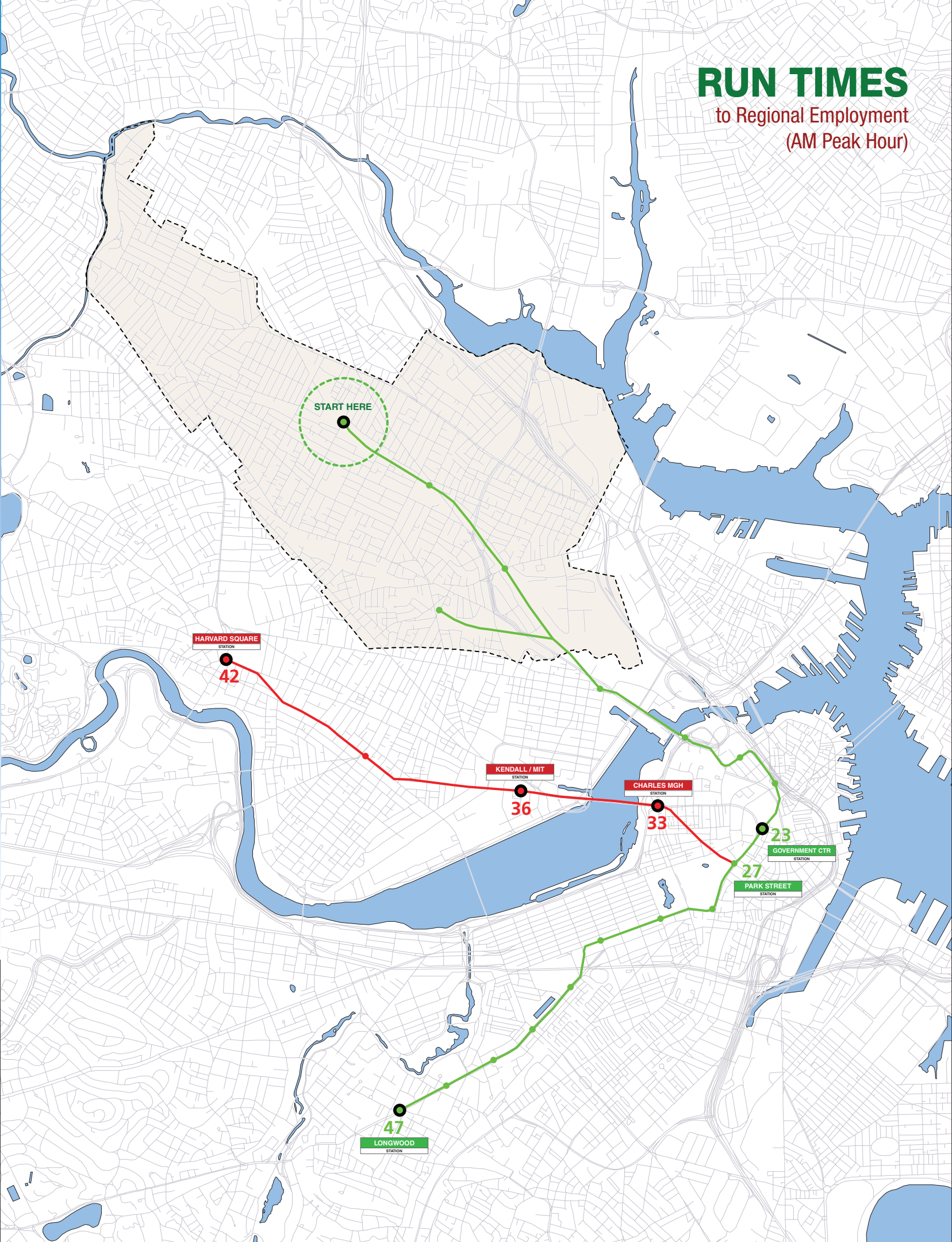
HEADWAYS (TIME BETWEEN TRAINS)	
AM Peak-Time	5 minutes
AM Standard	10 minutes
PM Peak-Time	5 minutes
PM Standard	10 minutes
Late Night	13 minutes

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)



Magoun Square's business district at the corner of Lowell Street and Medford Street includes local retailers, food entrepreneurs and professional service offices.

"The Lowell Street station area straddles an area of Somerville between Highland Avenue and Magoun Square

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LOWELL STREET STATION AREA PROFILE

The Lowell Street station area straddles an area of Somerville between Highland Avenue and Magoun Square where the Magoun/Albion and Winter Hill neighborhoods meet. This central part of the city is generally defined by a shallow valley running east/west between the higher elevations of Winter Hill (to the north) and Central Hill (to the south). At the core of the Lowell Street station area is the former junction of the Lowell/New Hampshire rail line and the Arlington rail line (now the Somerville Community Path). This plan focuses on the area within a five- to ten-minute walk around this junction and the future MBTA Green Line station to be located there.

A fine-grained residential fabric extends outward in all directions from Lowell Street station, interrupted only by large current and former industrial properties that tend to be situated along the rail lines. The station area's northern boundary is the historic Broadway commercial corridor, and the Magoun Square business district located at the intersection of Broadway, Lowell Street, and Medford Street. Key north-south streets paralleling Lowell Street form the station area's eastern and western boundaries (Cedar Street and Central Street, respectively). To the south, Highland Avenue is notable for its small retail and service cluster, at the intersection with Lowell Street, and for civic and institutional uses like Somerville Hospital and the Center for Arts at the Armory.

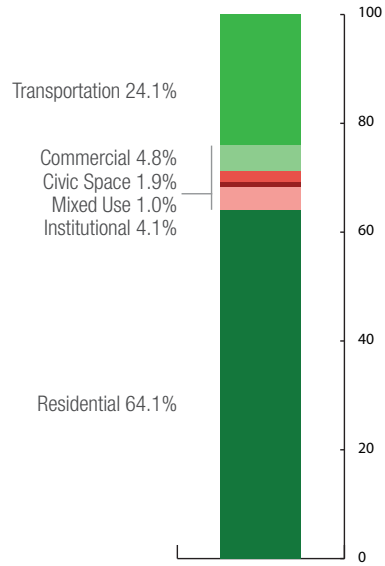
Lowell Street's population is indicative of Somerville as a whole: 12% of residents are aged 18 or younger, while 10% are aged 65 or older. Roughly 22% of residents are persons of color, compared with 26% citywide, and approximately 30% speak a language other than English at home (compared with 33% for Somerville as a whole). The housing stock is also diverse with a wide variety of building types, but also includes a higher frequency of single dwelling-unit cottages than anywhere else in Somerville. Similar to the Gilman Square station area, both rental and sales rates around the future Lowell Street station are more affordable on average than in other neighborhoods (although prices have increased substantially over the past decade).

Like many neighborhoods in the city, the Lowell Street station area has a limited amount of civic and recreation space. Albion Park and Somerville Junction Park are key resources proximate to the future Green Line station. Although Trum Field is within a 15-minute walk and provides local residents with a significant recreational resource, it is more oriented toward city-wide functions. The recently completed development at Maxwell's Green has produced approximately 20,000 square feet of publicly-accessible green space, and the current phase of the Community Path extension (Cedar Street to Lowell Street) will create an additional 2.5 acres of civic open space available to the local residents.

LAND USE

AREA (1/4 MILE)

125 acres



PEOPLE

TOTAL POPULATION

4,386

=10%

NON-WHITE

967 (22%)

UNDER 18

489 (11%)

OVER 65

458 (10%)

POPULATION DENSITY

35.1 /acre

HOUSING

TOTAL HOUSING UNITS

2,045

=10%

OWNER OCCUPIED UNITS

814 (40%)

RENTER OCCUPIED UNITS

1,231 (60%)

HOUSING DENSITY (PER ACRE)

LOWELL

16.4 /acre

SOMERVILLE

12.73

OCCUPANCY (PEOPLE / UNIT)

LOWELL

2.06

SOMERVILLE

2.25

BEDROOMS / HOUSING UNIT

LOWELL

1.90 /unit

SOMERVILLE

1.79

VACANCY RATE

LOWELL

1.6 %

SOMERVILLE

4.8 %

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

PERMANENT

143 units

TRANSPORTATION

ON-STREET PARKING PERMITS

1,930

MA AUTOMOBILE REGISTRATIONS (ESTIMATED)

2,050

VEHICLES PER HOUSEHOLD

0.96

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

18.40 million/year

FUEL USE (22.3 M.P.G. ESTIMATE)

825 thousand gal./year

CO_2 EMISSIONS (19.60 POUNDS PER GALLON)

8,090 tons/year

FUEL COST ($3.689/GALLON ESTIMATE)

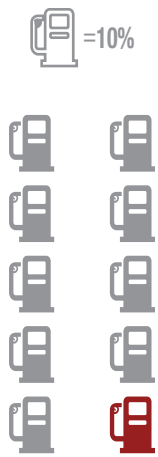
$3.05 million/year

TRANSPORTATION COSTS*

$6,252 /year

TRANSPORTATION COSTS*

10% of household income



‡ Calculated with the US DOT HUD Location Affordability Index for address: 231 Lowell Street.

* Calculated with the US DOT HUD Transportation Cost Calculator with a median income of $61,000/year, 2.5 persons/household, 1.21 commuters, and 1 automobile.

PUBLIC REALM

CIVIC SPACE (LOWELL)

14.3 acres

PER 1000 RESIDENTS

3.26 acres

STREET TREES

412

CIVIC SPACE TREES

43

SIDEWALK

8.5 miles

CROSSWALKS

72

CURB RAMPS

136

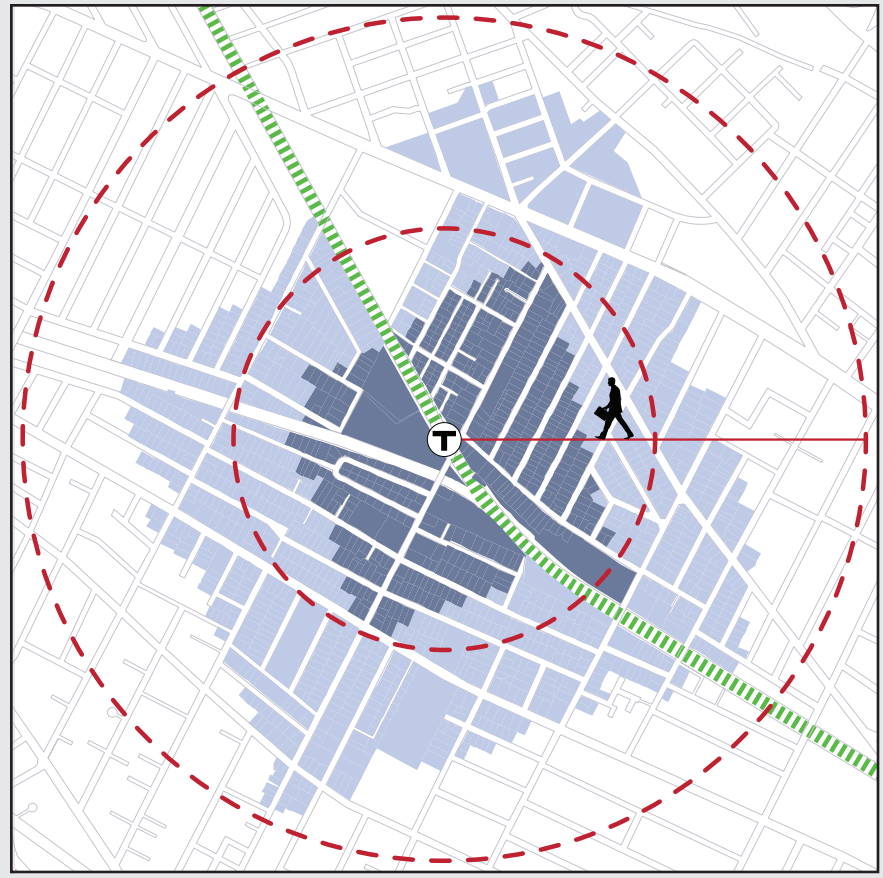
STREET LIGHTS

204

LOWELL STREET STATION AREA

WALKSHEDS

Walking distances are typically measured as a straight-line distance between two points, but the street network is one of the major features that defines walkability. On three sides of Lowell Street station, the local pattern of long blocks forces extended walks on pedestrians than possible if shorter blocks existed. Few bridges cross the tracks of the Green Line route, making Cedar Street, Lowell Street and Central Street become critical feeders to connect residents to the station. Similarly, the extension of the Somerville Community Path to Lowell Street will be an important connection for local residents.



ACTUAL 5-MIN. AVG. WALK

ACTUAL 10 MIN. AVG. WALK

BIKING COMFORT

Somerville prides itself on being a bicycle-friendly city, but every rider has a different comfort level riding on city streets. Even though they have similar widths and traffic volumes, and both use "sharrow" pavement markings, Medford Street is rated as more comfortable than Highland Avenue (possibly because its unmarked center-line). Cedar Street south of Highland Avenue has a dedicated bike lane, and is rated more comfortable than the section north of Highland, which uses sharrows.

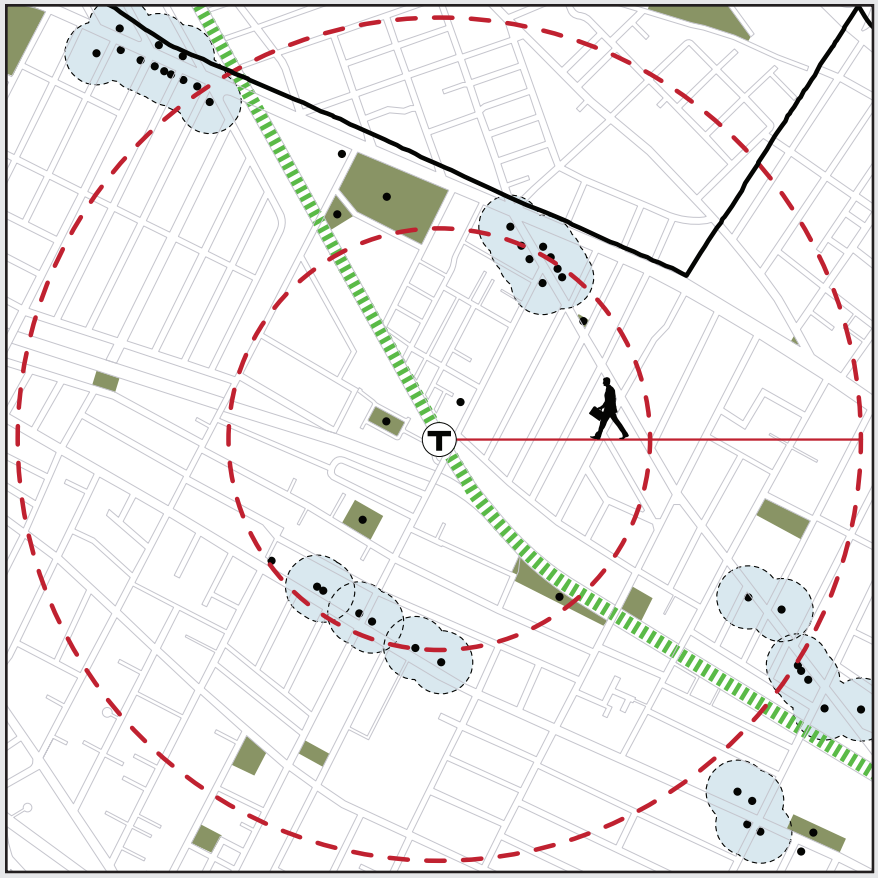
NO STRESS

VERY LOW STRESS/VERY COMFORTABLE

LOW STRESS/COMFORTABLE

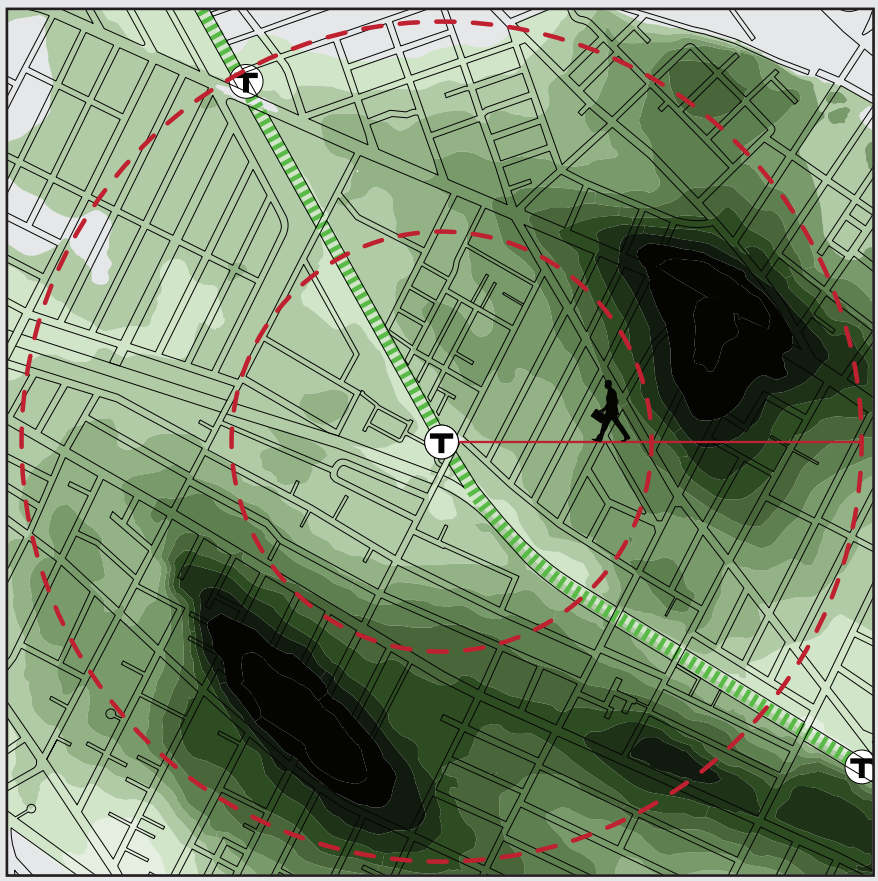
MEDIUM STRESS/MEDIUM COMFORT

HIGH STRESS/LOW COMFORT



BUSINESSES

Quality of life is increased when residents live within a short walk of daily and weekly service and shopping needs. A methodology known as "Complete Neighborhood Analysis" has been developed to help understand the mix of businesses and services that exist in a neighborhood. Clusters of businesses in Magoun Square and on Highland Avenue serve Lowell Street residents, but the business mix is more diverse in Magoun Square. Additional information on the local economy and a Complete Neighborhood Analysis of the station area can be found on the following page 25.



TOPOGRAPHY

Central Somerville is characterized by hills and valleys. To the northeast of the future Green Line station, Winter Hill rises to 180 feet above sea level, and Lowell Street north of the station climbs gently to meet Medford Street. North of Medford Street, the slopes become steeper. To the south, Lowell Street climbs a steep hill to reach Highland Avenue, but the steepest sections of Spring Hill are located south of Highland Avenue. The railroad follows the valley in between these two hills. Bridges over the tracks at Lowell Street, Cedar Street and Central Street connect neighborhoods, but can represent physical and psychological barriers, particularly for persons with mobility limitations.

LOCAL ECONOMY

How Complete is the Neighborhood?

Walkable cities are fundamentally built from mixed-use neighborhoods that offer their residents access to daily and weekly needs within a short walk of home. Of the seven station areas along the Green Line extension, Lowell Street station will be unique in that it is not located in an existing business district. Instead, the station area connects two business districts together.

Lowell Street itself is a north-south corridor connecting Medford Street to Highland Avenue. To the north is Magoun Square, a commercial district at the intersections of Medford Street, Broadway, and Dexter Street. This popular square has been a local business district since the mid-nineteenth century and several handsome commercial buildings have survived into the modern era. Today, Magoun Square has roughly 76,000 square feet of commercial space and about 50 businesses.

To the south, Highland Avenue offers a smaller group of retail and service businesses (20,000 square feet of space and 19 businesses) that are within walking distance of the future Lowell Street station site. The section of Highland Avenue near the intersection with Lowell Street was originally built around 1870 and remains primarily residential in character. Over the years, several large civic and institutional buildings have come to exist, including the 185,000 square-foot Somerville Hospital complex (c. 1895) and the Armory Building (c. 1909), which is now a community arts center.

Lowell Street plays host to its own collection of commercial and light-industrial buildings clustered around Woodbine Street Extension and Albion Street. These buildings contribute to a diverse job base in the area and include an automotive repair business, screen printing service, and a closet design and installation company.

As the real estate market changes, private property owners will consider alternative uses for these sites due to the high demand for new residential unit throughout Metro Boston. A key question discussed during the station area planning series was whether new retail and pedestrian-oriented services along Lowell Street would be consistent with the community's vision for the future. The relationship between Lowell Street and business districts at Highland Avenue and Magoun Square is important to understand. Would new retail businesses directly compete with businesses in Magoun Square and Highland Avenue, or would it support them?

COMPLETE NEIGHBORHOOD ANALYSIS

Key Uses...	...along Highland Avenue		...in Magoun Square		...in the Station Area	
	Yes / No	Establishments	Yes / No	Establishments	Yes / No	Establishments
BANK	✗	0	✓	1	✓	1
CAFE/DELI	✓	3	✓	2	✓	5
CIVIC SPACE	✗	0	✓	1	✓	3
COMMUNITY CENTER	✓	1	✓	2	✓	4
CONVENIENCE FOOD	✓	1	✓	4	✓	5
DAY CARE	✗	0	✗	0	✗	0
HARDWARE STORE	✗	0	✗	0	✗	0
HEALTH SERVICES	✓	4	✗	0	✓	4
GROCERY STORE	✗	0	✗	0	✗	0
LAUNDRY	✓	1	✗	0	✓	1
PHARMACY	✗	0	✓	1	✓	1
RESTAURANT	✓	3	✓	8	✓	11
TOTAL	**6 of 12 (50%)**		**7 of 12 (58%)**		**9 of 12 (75%)**	

THE ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE

Somerville's dense, mixed-use, and highly walkable neighborhoods offer an incredible customer base for local businesses. To understand the dynamics of the local economy, the City of Somerville's economic development planners analyze the local business mix to determine which key categories are being provided by the market and which are not. Additionally, by analyzing how much revenue local merchants are bringing in annually and comparing those numbers against average annual consumer spending, planners can determine if those same businesses are providing the goods and services the local market desires.

If merchant revenues exceed consumer spending for a given business category, the local market is said to have a "surplus" - meaning that consumers from outside the neighborhood are drawn in to spend money at local businesses. If consumer spending for a given category exceeds the revenues of local merchants in that category, the local market is said to be "leaking". That is to say, residents are choosing (or are forced) to leave the neighborhood to meet their daily and weekly needs.

According to research conducted on Magoun Square in 2009, consumer spending by residents totaled nearly $70 million, or roughly $16,000 per capita and $34,220 per household. Magoun Square merchants capture approximately 30% of that consumer spending for the trade area within ¼ mile of the square. In other words, for every dollar spent in total by residents of the immediate area, only 30 cents is spent in Magoun Square. As the trade area expands, merchants face greater challenges in capturing consumer spending. For the ½ mile trade area, Magoun Square's capture rate drops to just 9%. This drop-off is partially due to the walkable nature of Somerville, where squares are typically just a 5-10 minute walk away from each other, but does highlight one ongoing challenge: capturing local dollars spent.

Magoun Square is a relatively small district in terms of land area and building square footage available for commercial use. According to tax assessing data, there are only 41 parcels used for commercial purposes within ¼ mile of the square. These properties comprise roughly 3.8 acres of land area and their buildings represent approximately 70,000 square feet of leasable space.

The square's largest economic opportunity stems from a general lack of daytime employment. The addition of new uses providing daytime employment would immediately bolster the local economy because dollars spent by daytime employees wold be captured and recycled through local business owners that also live in Somerville, making the local economy more efficient and resilient.

Mayor Joe Curtatone and the next generation of Somerville bicyclists break ground on the Community Path Extension between Cedar Street and Lowell Street, 2013.

"Community members have not waited idly for the arrival of the Green Line

4

LOWELL STREET
WORK IN PROGRESS

The Lowell Street station area has a vibrant history rich with social capital and full of public and private investment. During the nineteenth century, street car routes following Broadway and Medford Streets spurred the growth of Magoun Square as a small commercial center originally called "The Corner". Nearby orchards, brickyards, and factories provided employment opportunities and rows of residential blocks were developed to house local workers as well as Boston businessmen.

In recent years, the neighborhood has retained its strong sense of identity and celebrates its roots while also welcoming in newcomers. Community members have not waited idly for the arrival of the Green Line, instead they have rolled up their sleeves and worked together to guide change to be consistent with shared values and vision. This Station Area Plan is built upon that tradition of self-determination and proactive placemaking.

Public and private investment during recent decades has included small business growth, streetscape and civic space upgrades, infill residential development, and arts entrepreneurship. Magoun Square is bursting with energy and offers up an eclectic and useful mix of shopping, dining, and other daily needs. Highland Avenue has emerged as a commercial corridor that incubates start-up businesses like M.F. Dulock Pasture Raised Meats, Scout Magazines, and Cuisine en Locale in the former Anthony's function hall.

Reinvestment in public spaces has created a network of parks, plazas, and other community places where residents can enjoy the outdoors. The City recently redesigned and reconstructed Albion Park, built Junction Park from scratch, and installed a new pavilion at Trum Field to host amateur baseball and Somerville's Fourth of July festivities. With an eye toward mobility, investments in the Magoun Square streetscape and extension of the Somerville Community Path have created safer, more attractive, and more accessible ways to get around.

Redevelopment of larger commercial properties also plays an important part of this station area's success story. Vacant and polluted industrial sites have been cleaned up and redeveloped into the Visiting Nurse Association senior living community and the Maxwell's Green apartment complex. At the same time, iconic historic buildings such as the Rogers Foam complex and the Somerville Armory have reinvented themselves as anchors of the creative economy. Modernization of the Somerville Hospital has supported job retention and ensured that medical services are available for local residents. During the past fifteen years alone, the Lowell Street station area has experienced a remarkable period of change that is very consistent with its own special history and culture. This chapter of the plan is about celebrating our success to date.

STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

Improving Safety, Accessibility and Aesthetics

Until 2009, Magoun Square was ranked as one of the most dangerous places in Somerville for both drivers and pedestrians. Chaotic traffic movements resulting from the six-point intersection of Broadway, Medford Street, and Dexter Street are made even more complicated by nearby Hinckley Street, two driveway entrances serving Dunkin Donuts, and an entrance into a municipal parking lot beside CVS. Broadway is particularly wide between Cedar Street and the top of Winter Hill, which encourages drivers to travel at speeds that can prove fatal to pedestrians if an accident were to occur (see page 48). These design elements convey a message that Magoun Square is a place to pass through, but not a place to walk, shop, or stay - especially outdoors.

Efforts to re-imagine the dangerous intersection have existed since 2001. A process carried out between the City, local residents, and business owners explored various traffic calming techniques, pedestrian enhancements, and landscaping elements to help restore Magoun Square's sense of place. By 2007, the City of Somerville had prepared 100% engineering plans for a limited streetscape improvement project that would put in place some of the improvements devised for the intersection. The project was entered onto the region's transportation funding list, with a likely delay of at least five years before construction funding would be allocated.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 provided a crucial opportunity to move the Magoun Square reconstruction forward. Because the City had completed a design process, the project qualified for $3 million in federal funding as a "shovel-ready" project. Construction began in 2010, and was completed in 2012. The project included the following components intended to increase accessibility and make pedestrians more visible to drivers:

- New sidewalks and curb extensions
- New crosswalks
- Granite bollards installed around the main intersection
- New traffic signals
- Decorative pedestrians lighting
- New tree plantings and greened roadway medians

Since the project was completed, Magoun Square has become a safer and more attractive place to be a pedestrian, particularly along Medford Street.

ACCESSIBLE CURB RAMPS

The public realm must be safe and comfortable for all users. The 2012 Magoun Square streetscape project made critical upgrades to 28 curb ramps along Medford Street and Broadway, re-grading slopes to accessible standards of 8% (less than 2% for cross-slopes). Joints between materials were rebuilt to ensure that gaps do not impede access. Textured surfaces on the ramp alert pedestrians with visual impairments, and reduce slip hazards for all.

BRICK CROSSWALKS

Crosswalks serve two functions: they encourage pedestrians to cross where they are most visible; and they tell drivers to slow down. Common design strategies include pavement markings and changes in materials. A three-piece crosswalk design was used for the 14 crosswalks in the Magoun Square project area. Brick pavers were installed as the main element of the crosswalk. Buried granite curbs form a strip along the crosswalk, and wider strips of reflective paint provide visibility in low-light conditions.

PEDESTRIAN LIGHTING

After decades of relying on inefficient and unsightly "cobra-head" fluorescent lighting, the 2012 streetscape upgrades included two new standard street lamps: a 13-foot ornamental lamp; and a 27-foot roadway lamp. With their human scale and decorative details, these light fixtures communicate that Magoun Square is a pedestrian-oriented business district. All fixtures use high-efficiency LED lamps, and hanging planter baskets are maintained on the lampposts from spring through fall.

CIVIC SPACE UPGRADES

Supporting Healthy Living and Community Spirit

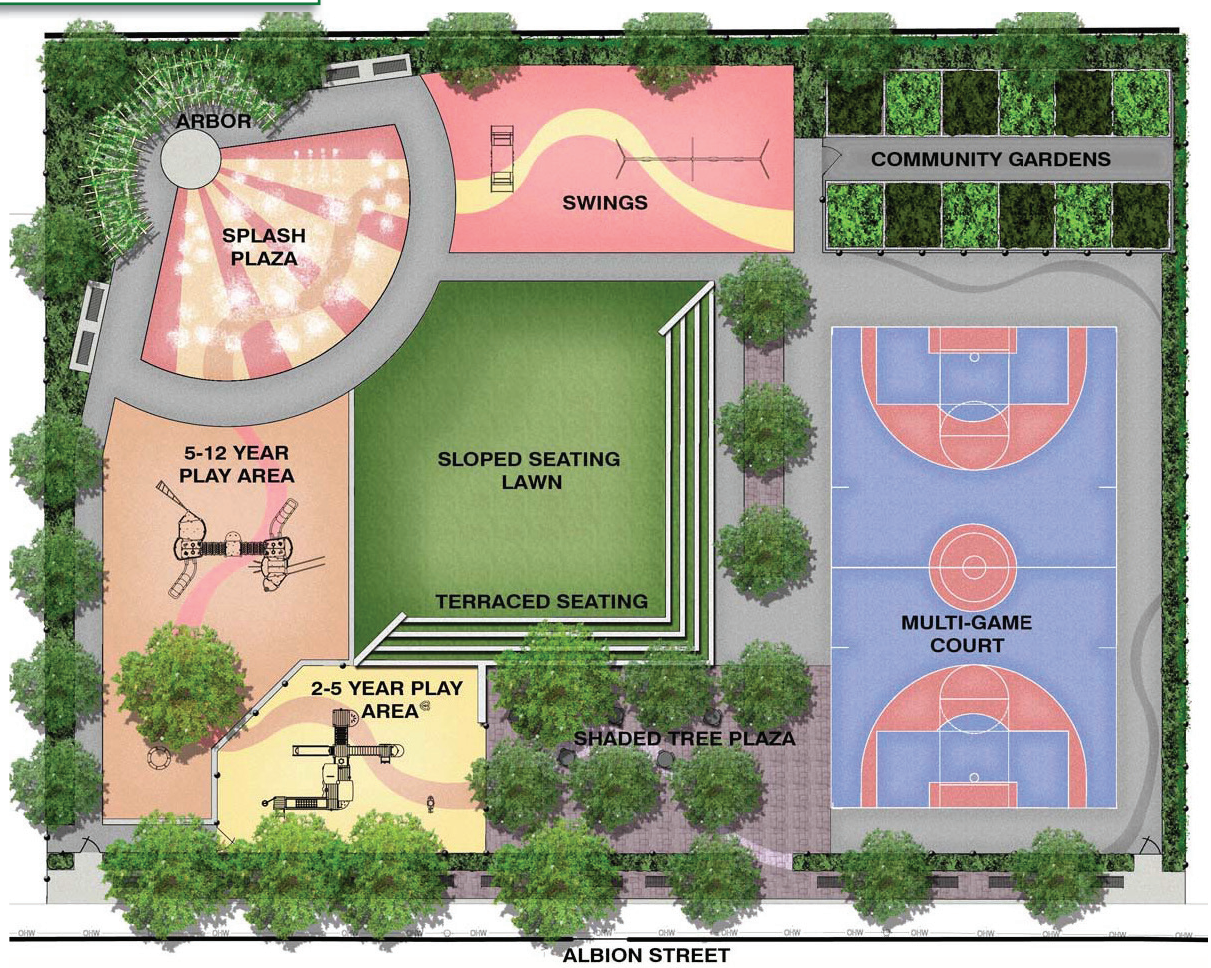
Somerville has very little open space, even by urban standards. For every 1,000 residents, we have roughly 2.4 acres of open space. In the Lowell street station area, this ratio is 2.5 acres per 1,000 residents. Four important civic and recreational facilities serve the residents living near the future Lowell Street station: Albion Park, Maxwell's Green, Somerville Junction Park, and the Somerville Community Path.

Albion Park, located just off the intersection of Lowell Street and Albion Street, has been a recreational anchor for the neighborhood for decades. After a period of disinvestment, the City began a planning and design process in 2004 and completed a major reconstruction of the 0.9 acre facility by 2008. The park serves diverse users offering children's play equipment, athletic courts, a community garden, and plenty of unprogrammed seating spaces. A small but important maintenance effort will begin in spring 2014 to manage erosion on the hill feature, ensuring that Albion Park continues to serve as a focal point for the neighborhood.

Somerville Junction Park is a long, linear space running from the end of Woodbine Street to the city-owned parking lot at the Central Street bridge. This half-acre, formerly vacant industrial lot was donated to the City by the Cambridge Health Alliance in 2005, following grassroots advocacy by local residents. The City managed environmental assessment and remediation to ensure proper cleanup of contaminated soils and materials found on-site. Construction of the park was completed in 2008 and today it offers walking paths and expansive viewpoints. A potential second phase may someday expand the park east toward Central Street by transforming the underutilized parking lot into green space.

Maxwell's Green is a privately-owned public space. A multiyear collaborative design process with neighborhood residents resulted in the simple, open design and a legal framework guaranteeing public access to the space in perpetuity. Maintenance is handled by the private property owner, and the land is taxed as private property.

ALBION PARK SITE PLAN



The Grand Reopening of Albion Street Park (2009)

COMMUNITY PATH EXTENSION

Expanding Choices for Off-Street Walking and Bicycling

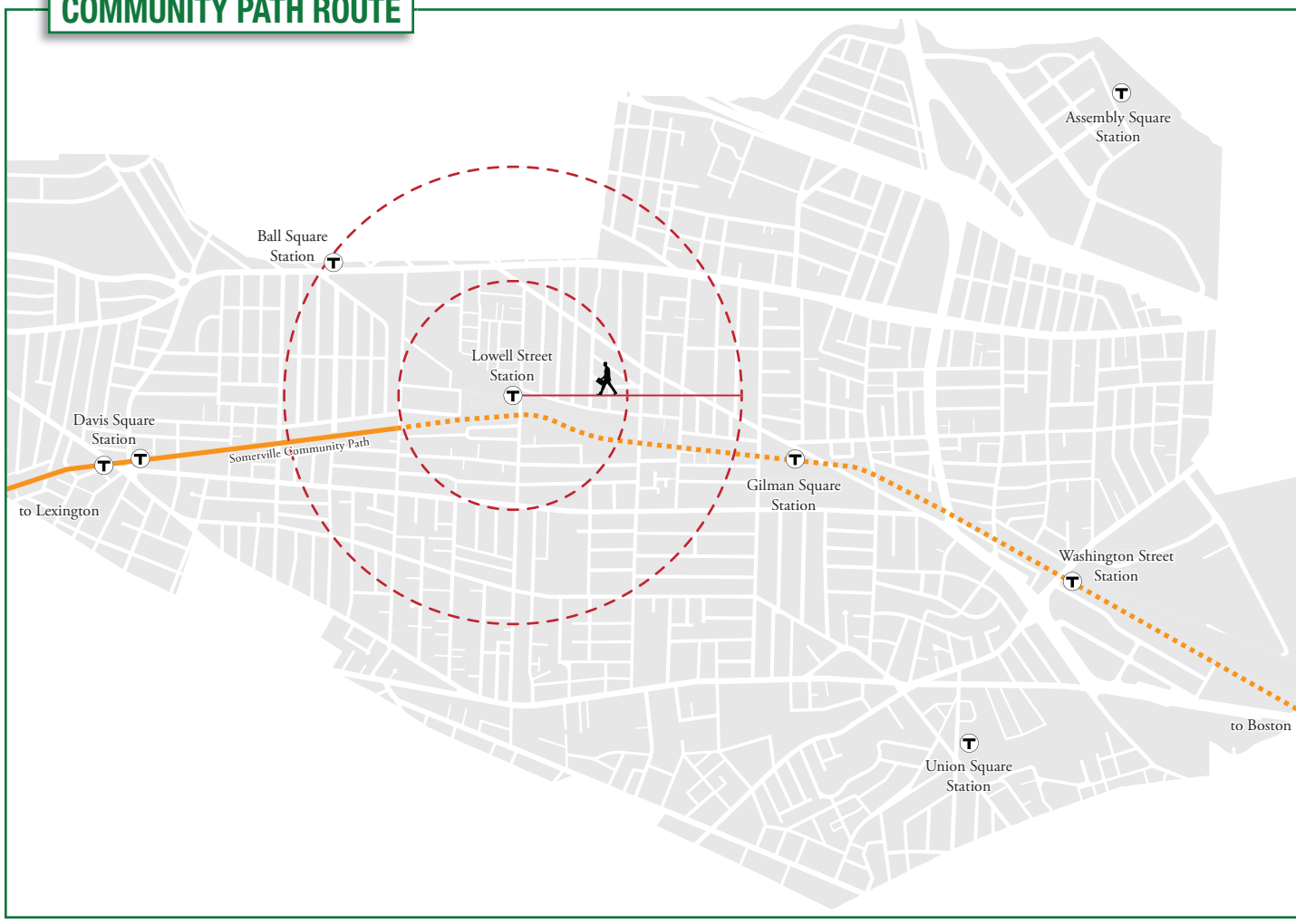
The Somerville Community Path is one of our City's most cherished public assets. This one-mile linear park serves as a commuting route and recreational facility for thousands of Somerville residents and visitors. The path currently runs from Cedar Street westward through Davis Square to the Cambridge 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 more recreational cyclists.

Residents of the Lowell Street station area have been working for years to extend the Community Path. In May 2013, construction began on the first phase of the extension, a quarter-mile segment connecting Cedar Street eastward to Lowell Street. Public access points will be located at Maxwell's Green and at a ramp and stair system on the east side of the Lowell Street bridge. This segment is scheduled for opening to the public in 2014. Funding for construction included a federal earmark secured by Congressman Michael Capuano and funds from the City of Somerville.

The remaining three miles of the Community Path Extension connecting Lowell Street to downtown Boston are in the final stages of design and engineering. The MBTA Green Line Extension project has prepared full designs, working closely with the City of Somerville, advocacy organizations, and neighborhood residents. The path will run alongside the Green Line streetcar tracks from Lowell Street to Gilman Square, Washington Street, 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 between Lowell Street and Central Street will be particularly attractive and interesting. The old Arlington Branch rail right-of-way is wide enough that a comfortable rest area will be built just east of the Lowell Street bridge. From there, the path will begin a slow climb in elevation to meet Central Street at street level. A public access point will be located at Somerville Junction Park on the south side of the path, showcasing grand views of the iconic Rogers Foam complex on the opposite side of the railroad.

COMMUNITY PATH ROUTE




1976


2010


2014

BEYOND LOWELL STREET

The GLX project includes an extension of the Somerville Community Path from Lowell Street to North Point. These images illustrate the segment between Lowell Street and Central Street, an important and final link in what will become a 20-mile bike/ped connection between Boston and Bedford

SMALL BUSINESS GROWTH

Celebrating the "Local First" Philosophy

Historically, the intersection of Medford Street and Broadway was the nexus of two popular regional trade routes that made it a popular rest stop that attracted entrepreneurs to set up shop to meed the needs of travelers. Today, Magoun Square is one of Somerville's most unique local business districts, but primarily serves the needs of local residents and is home to a diverse selection of specialty retailers, international restaurateurs, bakeries, caterers, and professional and personal services.

In the late 1990s, the square found itself struggling economically and suffered from a relatively high rate of vacant storefronts. In 2001, the CVS pharmacy was brought in as an anchor tenant for a city-owned property and the City expanded a public parking lot to make room for the expected increase in automobile visitors. Unfortunately, small businesses continued to experience a high rate of turnover and commercial vacancies remained stubbornly high.

Soon, residents and business owners came together to begin a dialogue about the future of Magoun Square, encouraging the City of Somerville to launch a series of public investments to encourage private investment. The City's economic development office collected data on retail sales, lease rates, parking usage, and property maintenance to help elected officials understand what forms of investment might help Magoun Square get over the hump. Trum Field was upgraded, the streetscape of Medford Street and Broadway was rebuilt, small storefront improvement grants were made to landlords and tenants, and the iconic "Magoun Square" sign was reinstalled to remind visitors that this was a place with a local history and culture all its own.

Over the course of 2012 and 2013, a wonderful cycle of private reinvestment has taken place and neighborhood pride continues to grow. Vacant storefronts have been filled with new tenants and several highly visible properties have new signs, lighting, and storefront windows. The "local first" movement is strong in Somerville, with residents patronizing Magoun Square businesses and creating word-of-mouth buzz among family, friends, and neighbors.

As the regional real estate market continues to gather steam in anticipation of the Green Line's opening, this relationship between residents and local businesses will be even more important. Magoun Square's small businesses are a crucial part of neighborhood identity, and a thriving business district creates value for all stakeholders.

Olde Magoun's Saloon is a long time anchor of Magoun Square

DADDY JONES

Somerville's restaurants are among the pride of the metropolitan region. In Magoun Square, Daddy Jones (525 Medford Street) has gained a loyal customer base and many positive reviews since it opened in 2012. Owner Dimitra Tsourianis, who grew up in Somerville, has created modern variations on traditional Greek cuisine including small plates and larger meals. The restaurant has a fun and friendly feel that attracts new customers and encourages return visits.

MODELO MEAT MARKET

In 2013, Magoun Square residents celebrated the opening of a locally-owned neighborhood grocery market. Joe de Souza, who also owns the Modelo bakery and coffee house at the corner of Medford Street and Lowell Street opened this 2,500 square foot market at 501 Medford Street. Fresh vegetables, dry goods, and a great butcher and deli counter are giving residents the choice to do some of their weekly shopping within walking distance of home.

K-2 MART

Raul Katoch is another local entrepreneur that recently opened a second business in Magoun Square. His K-2 convenience market has been a staple in the square for years. In 2013 Raul opened a new wine and beer shop at 500 Medford Street. The rehabilitated storefront gives the eastern end of Magoun Square an exciting signal of reinvestment and revitalization. Weekly wine tastings bring customers to the store every Friday night where local products are showcased.

M.F. DULOCK PASTURE RAISED MEATS

Michael Dulock has opened a unique shop on Highland Avenue that fills a niche in Somerville's local food economy. The business connects consumers with small-scale family farms across New England. Customers can buy into a subscription model for meats similar to many Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) services. Whole-animal purchases are also offered, helping advance the company's mission of promoting healthy, environmentally sustainable eating.

INFILL DEVELOPMENT

Balancing Private and Public Interests

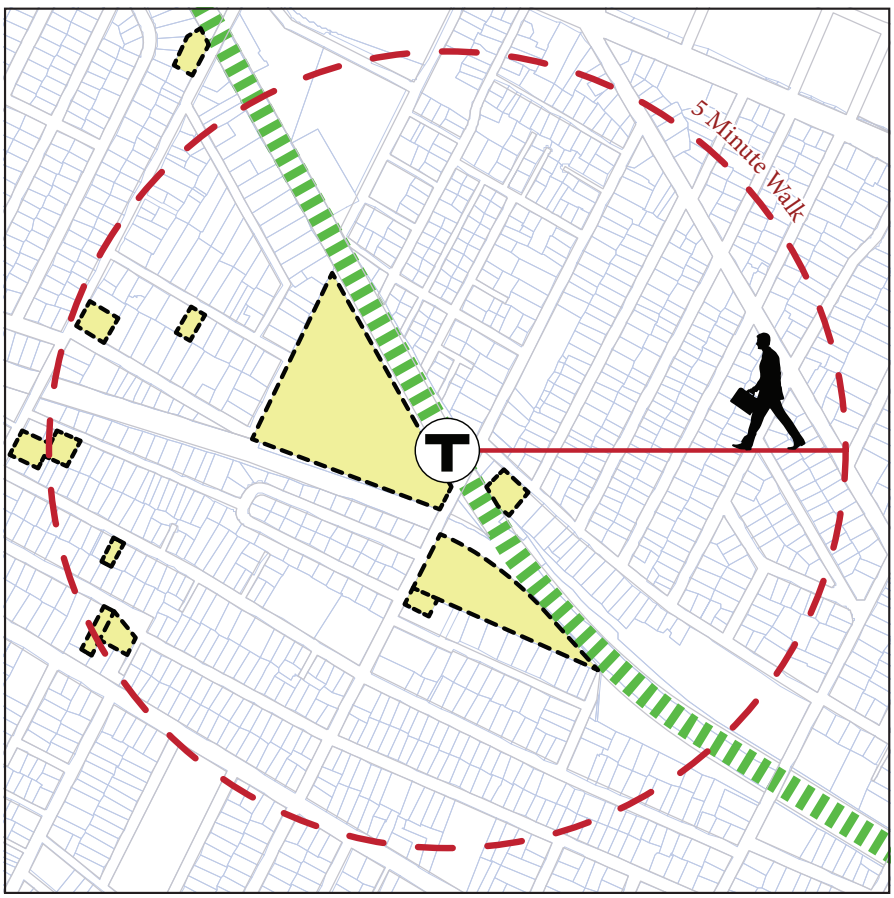
The Lowell Street station area is an eclectic urban environment: around any corner, a mixture of single- and multi-unit residential building types might be interspersed with small, single story industrial and commercial buildings built of brick or cinder block. Larger manufacturing buildings and light industrial facilities were historically sited along the Lowell commuter rail line, adding to the diverse landscape.

The decline of American manufacturing during the late twentieth century contributed to several prominent vacancies. Repurposing and redevelopment of these properties has become common. This process began back in 1975, when the Rogers Foam Corporation converted portions of its production building at 20 Vernon Street into the Vernon Street Artist Studios - helping to incubate a new style of creative industry in the station area.

Increasing demand for residential development changed the dynamic. In 1979, the 38-unit condo complex at 301-303 Lowell Street was built and in 1987, a 14-unit apartment building was constructed at 154 Cedar Street. In 2002, the Visiting Nurses Association completed its 100-unit Senior Living Community on a former industrial property at 259 Lowell Street. Between 2005 and 2012, the 5.5 acre 'MaxPak' factory site was redeveloped into Maxwell's Green, a four-building, 199-unit apartment complex.

At a smaller scale, many of the low-rise commercial buildings scattered throughout the neighborhood have also been redeveloped during recent market cycles. Although small commercial operations like Fidalgo Floors at 152 Albion St., Somerville Auto Parts at 270 Cedar St., and Royal White Laundry at 181 Cedar St. experienced years of success, extreme demand for new housing across greater Boston has provided a strong incentive for private owners to pursue residential redevelopment. Collectively, this style of small-scale residential infill has added roughly thirty new units into the station area over the last four years alone.

The benefits of infill redevelopment in the Lowell Street station area include re-use of vacant properties, expansion of housing choices in the neighborhood, and creation of permanently affordable housing. Additionally, amenities that had not previously existed have been created, such as the public green space at Maxwell's Green and the community room at the VNA. As community stakeholders contemplate the next fifteen years of neighborhood infill, this station area plan will help ensure it fits with a shared vision for the future.



PAST 15 YEARS OF INFILL

- 1999 — VNA begins
- 2001 — VNA completed
- 2003 — 140 Hudson St.
- 2005 — Maxwell's Green begins
- 2007
- 2009
- 2011 — 152 Albion St.; 270 Cedar St. & 181 Cedar St.
- 2013 — Maxwell's Green completed; 25 Clyde St. & 143-145 Cedar
- 2015 — 235 Lowell St.


FOR SALE


DRY CLEANING

MAXWELL'S GREEN

Long before the Somerville*by*Design station area planning series, residents of the Lowell Street station area were rolling up their sleeves and working proactively to guide changes in their neighborhood. A historic factory complex between Clyde Street and Lowell Street known as "MaxPak" had become vacant in 2002 creating a quality-of-life nuisance for hundreds of neighbors. When private development interests acquired the property, a unique collaboration between residents, city officials, state agencies, and the private sector was launched.

Rather than simply stand back and let the private developer spend time and money preparing plans that might or might not be consistent with a community vision, the City of Somerville organized a formal community planning process in which the developer would work hand-in-hand with neighboring residents and community advocates. In 2004, a series of six public workshops helped establish a broad framework for what kinds of change were desirable.

To transition from big-picture visioning to more detailed planning and design, a formal "Design and Development Review Committee" of neighborhood residents was assembled and empowered. This group held nine public meetings in 2005, digging into the details of site plans, urban design, use program and intensity. Ultimately, a series of guidelines were agreed upon offering mutual benefit for neighbors, the development team, and the City of Somerville. A series of legal agreements were signed to move the project into its next phase. Zoning changes to implement the vision were voted into law by the Somerville Board of Aldermen in 2007.

Key conditions of the final project permitting included brownfield remediation, construction management plans; a modestly-scaled development program; public access to the central green; protected pedestrian access through the site; off-site public realm improvements; and, significant on-site provision of permanently affordable housing. Construction was completed in 2013, and today the vibrant Maxwell's Green illustrates how a collaborative process focused on physical design can yield great results.

Vernon Street Studios, located in the Rodgers Foam industrial building, began the celebrated tradition of Somerville artists opening their studios to the public in 1975.

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

5

LOWELL STREET BUILDING ON SUCCESS

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 the Lowell Street station area. 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.

Participants shared a vision of bringing new amenities, connections, and opportunities to the station area, while respecting today's quality-of-life and urban design character. For the Lowell Street station area, that means preserving and celebrating detached single-family homes, which are so important to maintaining a family-friendly community, yet are quickly disappearing from the city. It means improved lighting, vegetation, and wayfinding signage to ensure safe and attractive pedestrian connections to Magoun Square, to Highland Avenue, and along Somerville Community Path. For new development projects, it means creating attractive, usable frontage and civic space. 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 eight objectives:

- Improve Walkability
- Support Transit Oriented Infill
- Encourage Adaptive Re-Use
- Support the Arts
- Maintain Housing Diversity
- Adopt Smart Parking Policy
- Reform Zoning Regulation
- Expand Somerville*by*Design

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.

IMPROVE WALKABILITY

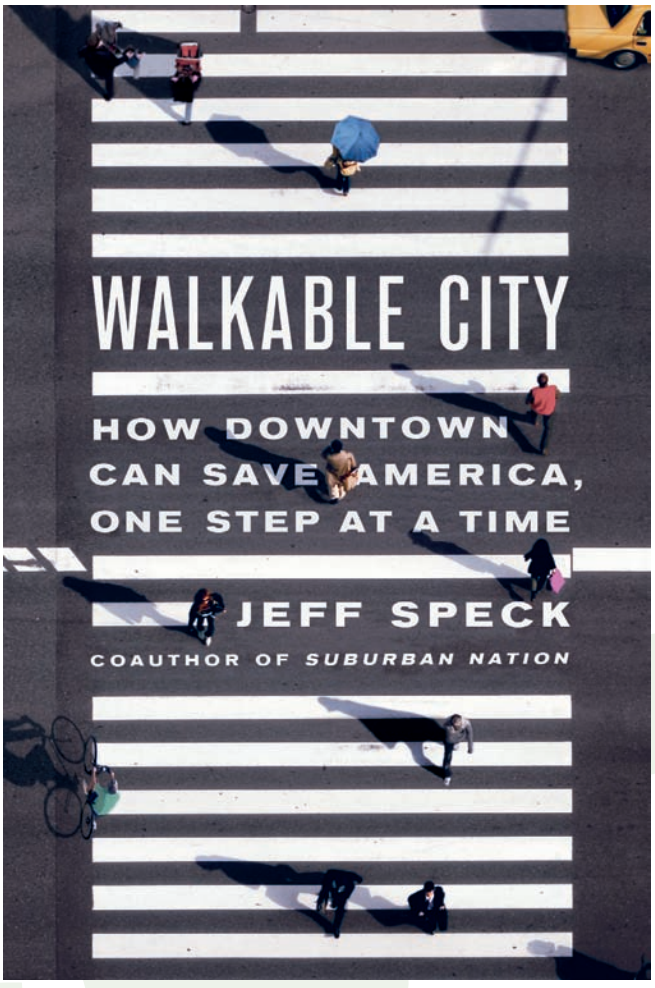
Safety, Accessibility, and Aesthetics

Somerville is ranked as one of the most walkable municipalities in the Unites States by Walkscore.com. This honor reflects our city's historic development pattern of small, close-knit residential blocks and mixed-use neighborhood squares distributed frequently throughout the city. Somerville owes this pattern to a time period when cities were built at the human scale, before the automobile entered the picture. Today only 5% of Somerville's residents live more than a five-minute walk from most of their daily needs.

Somerville's high rate of walkability is also a result of targeted public policy decisions. Over the past ten years, the City of Somerville has prioritized its pedestrian environment by instituting progressive policies and backing them up with meaningful capital investments. When asked 'what kind of community does Somerville want to be?", Mayor Curtatone spreads a message reflecting our residents desire to make Somerville the most walkable and bikeable city in the United States.

Urban Designer Jeff Speck, a national expert on walkability who also worked on Somerville*by*Design station area design team, explains that to build a city that is appealing to pedestrians streets must provide a walk that is simultaneously useful, safe, comfortable, and interesting. Furthermore, Speck advocates that walkability is the most important factor in building a city that supports public health, economic competitiveness, and environmental sustainability.

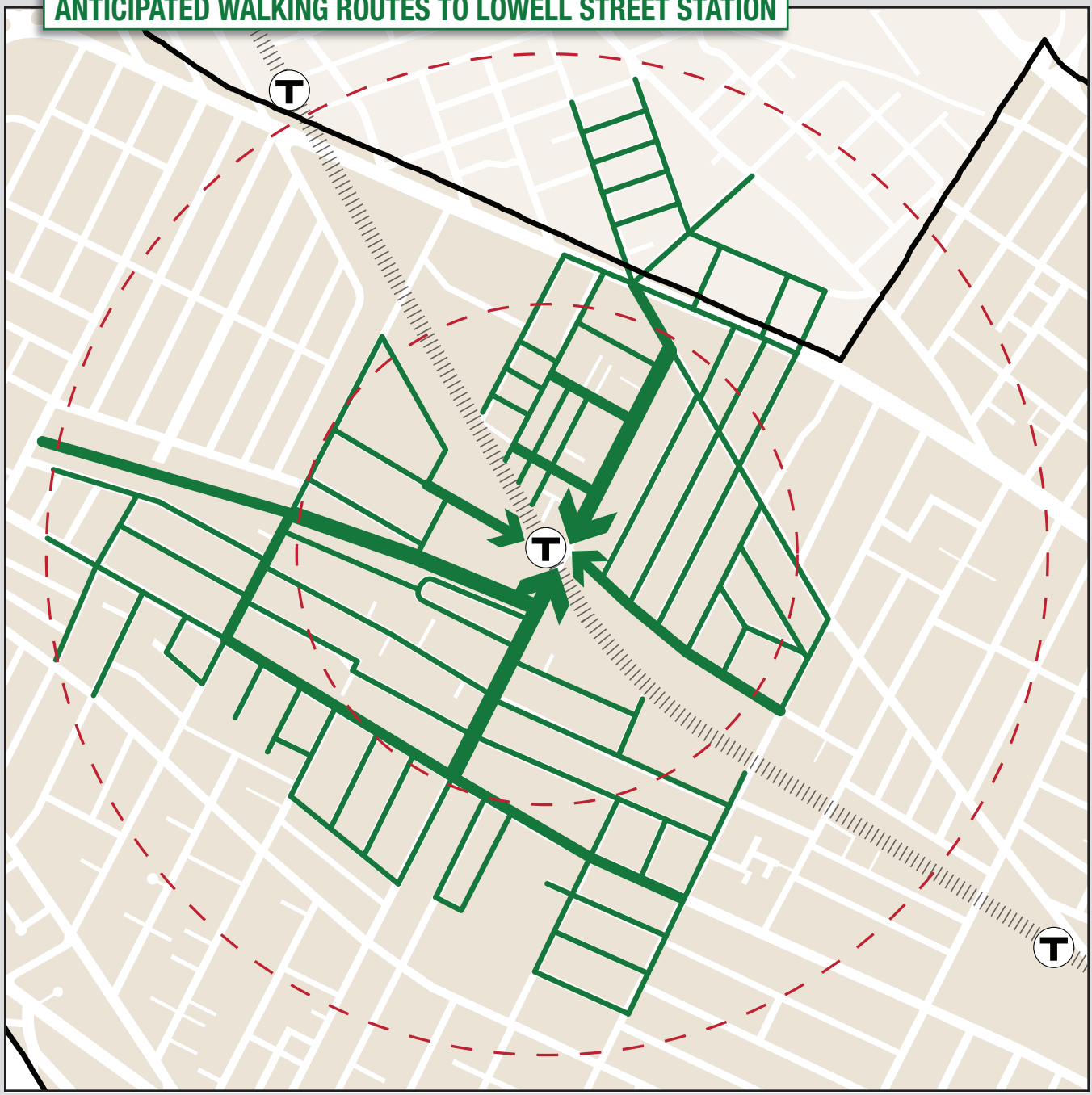
Many of Jeff's *10 Steps to a Walkable City* are already in place in the Lowell Street station area. The urban fabric surrounding the future Lowell Street station has strong density, short blocks, diverse civic spaces, and daily and weekly needs within a reasonable distance of most homes. To build on these important characteristics of walkability, work is still needed to ensure that the right conditions exist to promote street life and deliver on the promise to make Somerville a city that puts pedestrians and cyclists first.



SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Replace existing street lamps with LED bulbs that provide better, clearer, and more consistent light quality on primary walking routes
- Require infill development to include pedestrian oriented lighting along frontages.
- Improve sidewalks, crosswalks, and curb ramps identified as high priorities in the City's 2013 Curb and Ramp Inventory and 2013 Pavement Management Plan.
- Develop a Safe Routes to Transit program to coordinate City Departments in making improvements to walking and cycling routes to Lowell Street station.
- Complete the Community Path Extension to Lowell Street and maintain and manage the space effectively.
- Partner with the MBTA and MassDOT to build the full Community Path Extension simultaneously with the Green Line construction.
- Design and install way-finding signage to guide residents and visitors from the new Lowell Street station to Magoun Square, Highland Avenue, the Somerville Community Path, and Somerville Junction Park.
- Create a safe and attractive walking environment on Woodbine Street Extension to connect Lowell Street to Somerville Junction Park.
- Support the MBTA's efforts to design, build, and maintain high-quality short- and long-term bicycle parking at Lowell Street station.

ANTICIPATED WALKING ROUTES TO LOWELL STREET STATION

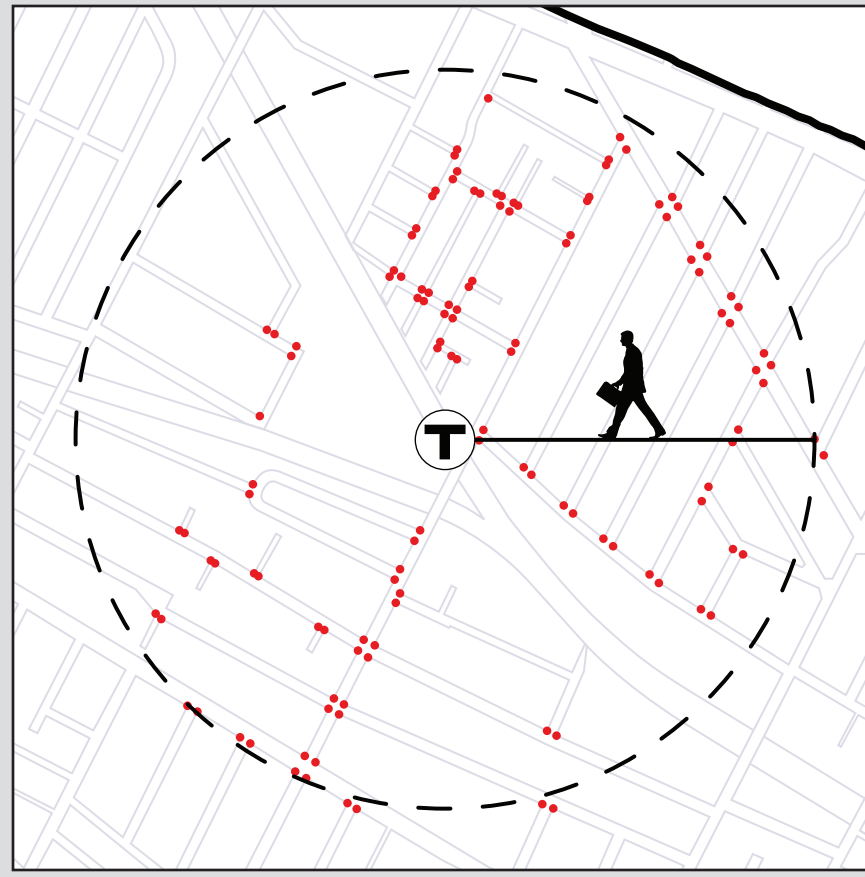


Lowell Street station is positioned between Gilman Square and Ball Square, along what will become an extension of the E-Branch of the MBTA's Green Line. The route will follow the below grade right-of-way of the historic Lowell commuter rail line, a naturally occurring barrier to walkability in the station area.

North-south oriented streets are limited to Central Street, Lowell Street, and Cedar Street, which reinforces Lowell Street itself as the primary access route for pedestrians headed to the station. For riders living to the north, all paths lead to Lowell Street. The small cottage blocks to the north-west will route pedestrians to Lowell via cross streets such as Wilton and Richardson Street, while the long blocks to the north-east will increase pedestrian traffic on Vernon Street. Similarly, residents to the south will arrive to Lowell from cross streets like Albion, Alpine, Hudson, Princeton, and Woodbine. Highland Avenue will collect those walking from homes on Central Hill past the cluster of businesses at the intersection with Lowell Street. Finally, directly west, Maxwell's Green will provide routes to the station for residents of Clyde, Murdock, and Warwick streets and east-west connections will also be enhanced when construction Somerville Community Path Extension is completed.

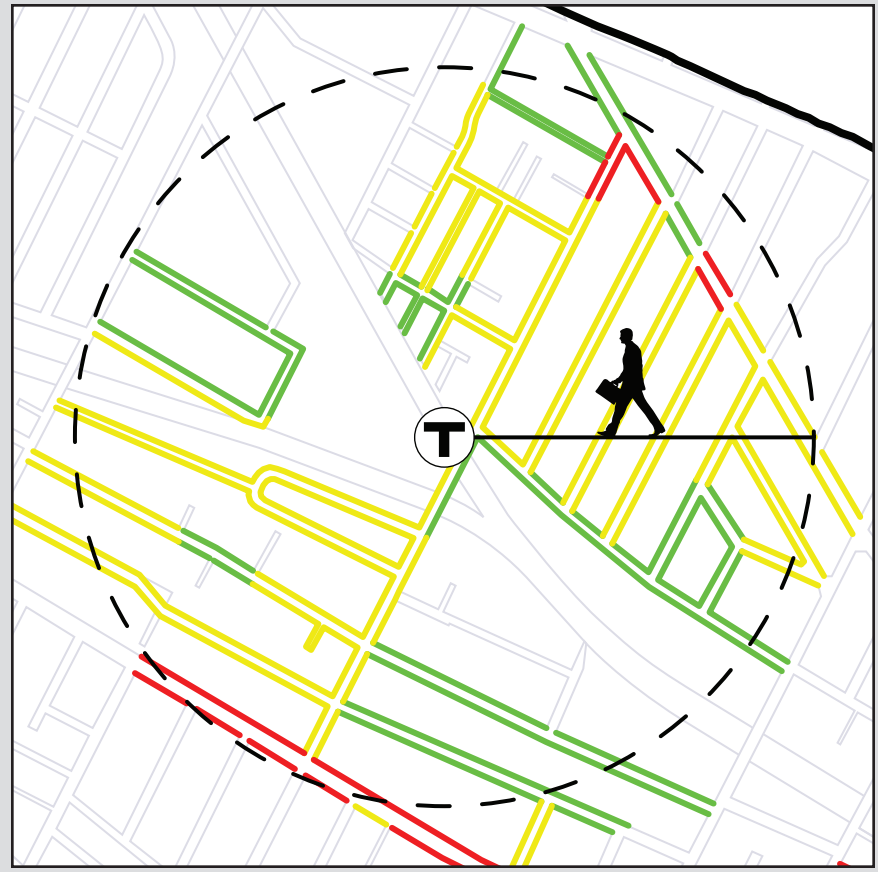
CURB RAMP REPAIRS

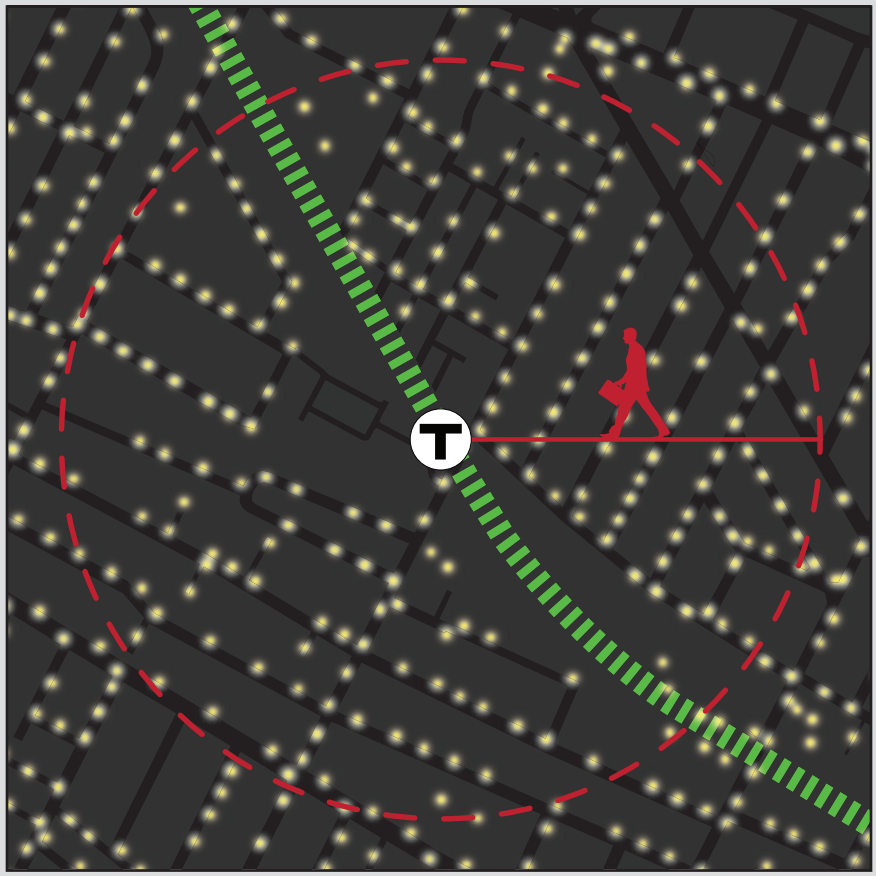
When a sidewalk meets a street intersection, the slope is called a curb ramp. More than 3,200 curb ramps exist in Somerville today. Since many of these ramps were installed before the Americans with Disabilities Act, there are hundreds of places where pedestrian safety and comfort is compromised by steep slopes, cracked surfaces, or poor drainage. In 2013, the City completed a major inventory of curb ramps that will help speed up the process to improve inaccessible sites. In the Lowell Street station area, more than 100 individual ramps must be addressed.



SIDEWALK REPAIRS

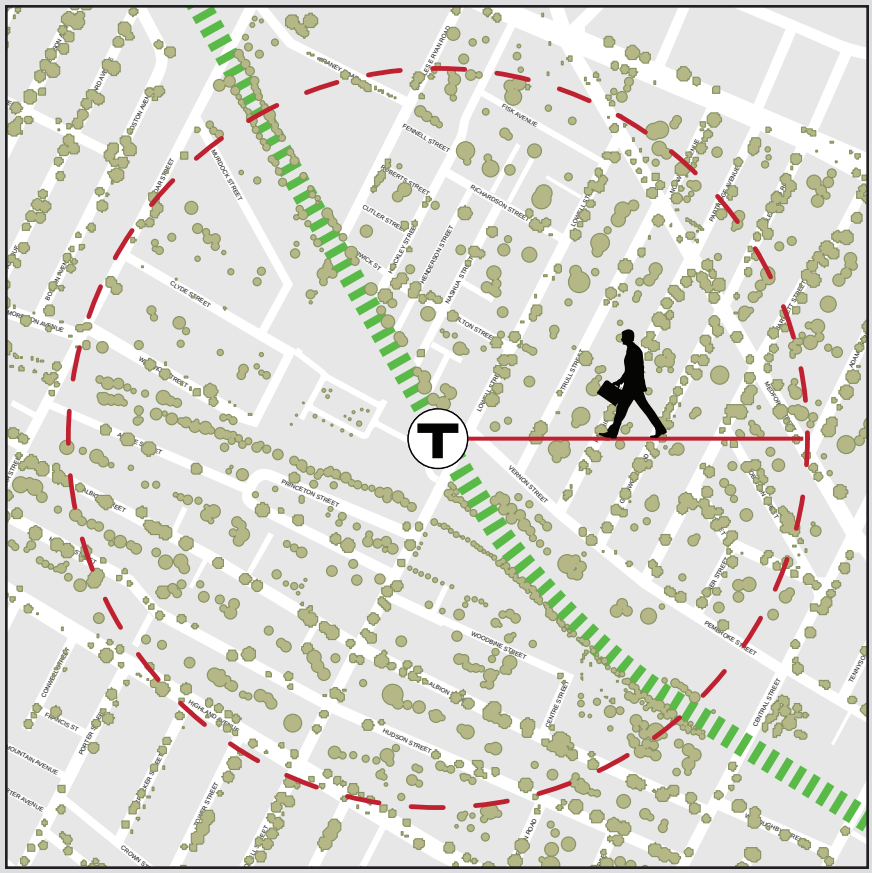
Many of Somerville's sidewalks were built more than 50 years ago. Common problems include narrow sidewalk widths, tree roots buckling the concrete, and slopes that exceed accessibility standards. The City of Somerville recently announced a repair prioritization policy that will guide capital investments to sidewalks citywide. In the Lowell Street station area, high-priority sidewalk repairs include Highland Avenue, and the sidewalks near the intersection of Lowell and Medford Street. Some repairs, like the sidewalks along the Lowell Street bridge, will be replaced during construction of the Green Line Extension.





STREET LIGHTING

Participants in the Somerville*by*Design station area planning series identified street lighting as a major issue that can help improve the neighborhood's pedestrian environment. On Lowell Street itself, there are 25 streetlights between Medford Street and Highland Avenue. A gap exists between Albion Street and the bridge that discourages residents from walking after dark. Most streetlights are owned and operated by the City of Somerville, but lighting on private properties can also play a role in improving the pedestrian experience.



TREE CANOPY

Street trees are a inexpensive way to improve the pedestrian environment. Science has identified a wide range of benefits provided by street trees including improved air quality, traffic calming, increased retail sales, storm water retention, and an improved perception of a neighborhood. In the Lowell Street station area, public streets represent roughly 2.5 acres of land. Tree canopy from the 430 local street trees covers roughly 22% of this area. Establishing an optimal canopy cover target for city streets is problematic because understanding each street's tree canopy cover to determine its appropriateness is needed on a case-by-case basis. The analysis here is intended as a starting point for making informed decisions regarding targeted street tree plantings in the Lowell Street station area.

Point the Way

Walking & Cycling to Local Business

Comfortable walking environments provide information that helps orient pedestrians to their surroundings. Subway riders exiting the MBTA Red Line station in Davis Square are greeted with a map of the neighborhood. The Somerville Community Path has several signs explaining distances to various locations. These types of informational signs are often called "wayfinding" signs.

Lowell Street station is unique among all of Somerville's new Green Line stops as the only transit station that is not located in an existing business district. Green Line riders at Ball Square, Gilman Square, and Union Square will see business activity immediately when exiting those stations. Since Lowell Street station is located in a area that is primarily residential, wayfinding signs should be used to help residents and visitors understand their options for getting around the neighborhood.

Wayfinding signs come in different shapes and sizes, and can communicate different information. The best systems are easily identifiable from a distance, yet are sited and designed to be unobtrusive. A consistent visual brand is important, since color schemes, fonts and materials can help the reader to feel comfortable.

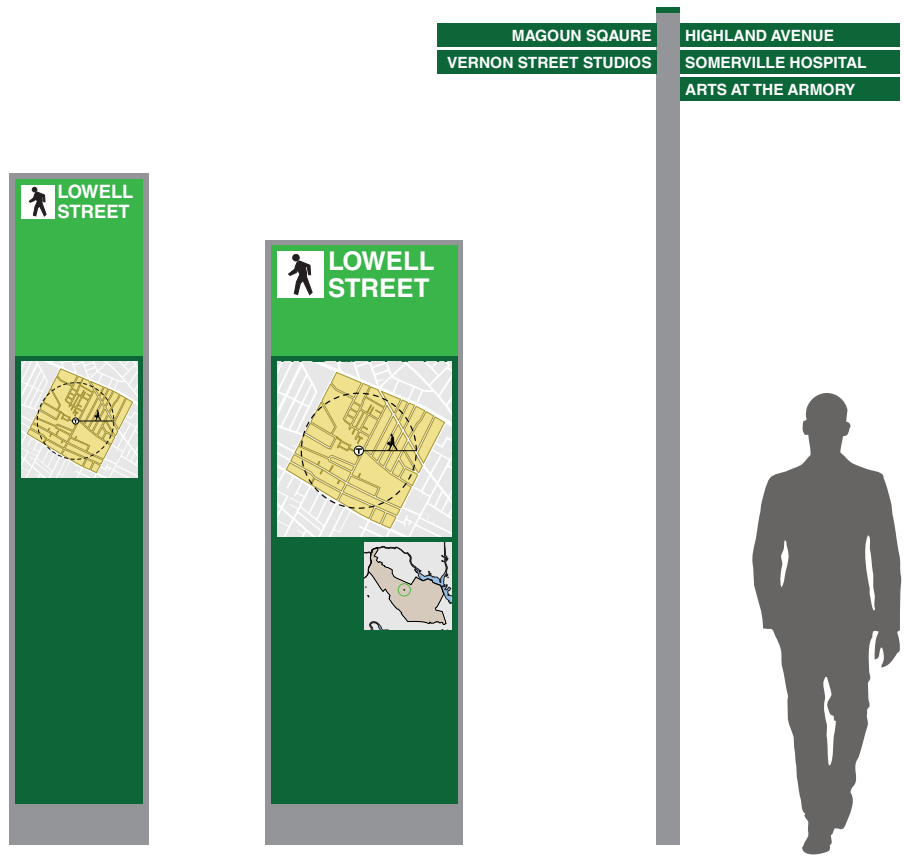
Participants in the Somerville*by*Design station area planning series discussed the importance of connecting Green Line riders to Magoun Square, roughly one-quarter mile north of the station at the corner of Lowell Street and Medford Street. The MBTA will install a standard neighborhood map at the station, but that map would serve a different purpose, and it would not necessarily offer the level of detail that residents, business owners and the City of Somerville might want to communicate.

In order to help residents and visitors navigate the Lowell Street station area, the City should consider a more comprehensive wayfinding program. Signs could be designed and installed at key locations like the Somerville Community Path, Somerville Junction Park, and Somerville Hospital. A wayfinding sign at the Lowell Street bridge could focus on steering Green Line and Community Path users toward Magoun Square, to the Vernon Street Studio complex, or to the recently renovated Albion Park. Wayfinding signs should communicate that the new green in the Maxwell's Green apartment complex is free and open to the public. With so many interesting destinations, an integrated citywide signage program may be needed.

WAYFINDING

Wayfinding Totems provide current location, connecting transit information, and the direction and distance to local attractions at major transit exists and civic plazas

Directional Signs provide direction and distance (walking time estimates) for nearby destinations at decision points along key pedestrian and cycling routes



WAYFINDING TOTEMS

DIRECTIONAL SIGN

VIEW TOWARDS MAGOUN

This view looking north along Lowell Street represents what a Green Line rider will see when exiting the station. Magoun Square's vibrant business district is only a quarter-mile away, but today there are no visual clues to draw visitors there. Wayfinding signs could be installed at the station plaza to guide residents and visitors to Magoun Square, as well as the Vernon Street studio building four blocks to the east.

MAGOUN SQUARE

Similarly, wayfinding signs could be placed in the Magoun Square business district. Helping patrons understand that the Green Line station and the Somerville Community Path are so close by will help encourage walking and bicycling, instead of universal automobile travel. In the other direction, signs can point the way to the recreation complex at Trum Field, the Ball Square business district and Tufts University.

VIEW TOWARDS HIGHLAND AVE.

This view looking south, down the center of Lowell Street, represents what a visitor to the station area sees once exiting the future Green Line station. Elevation changes allow certain buildings on Highland Avenue to be visible, but the average pedestrian wouldn't necessarily know that Albion Park, Somerville Junction Park, the Arts at the Armory facility, or the Somerville Hospital are just a few short blocks away.

HIGHLAND AVENUE

The corner of Lowell Street and Highland Avenue is an important crossroads. Two popular bus lines provide connections to Davis Square. Mixed use buildings feature ground floor space for small local businesses. The Somerville Hospital complex employs roughly 100 workers. This Station Area Plan recommends new wayfinding signage at the corner to illustrate connections to the Green Line station, Magoun Square and beyond.

Calm the Streets

Lean, Cost-Effective Tools to Improve Pedestrian Safety

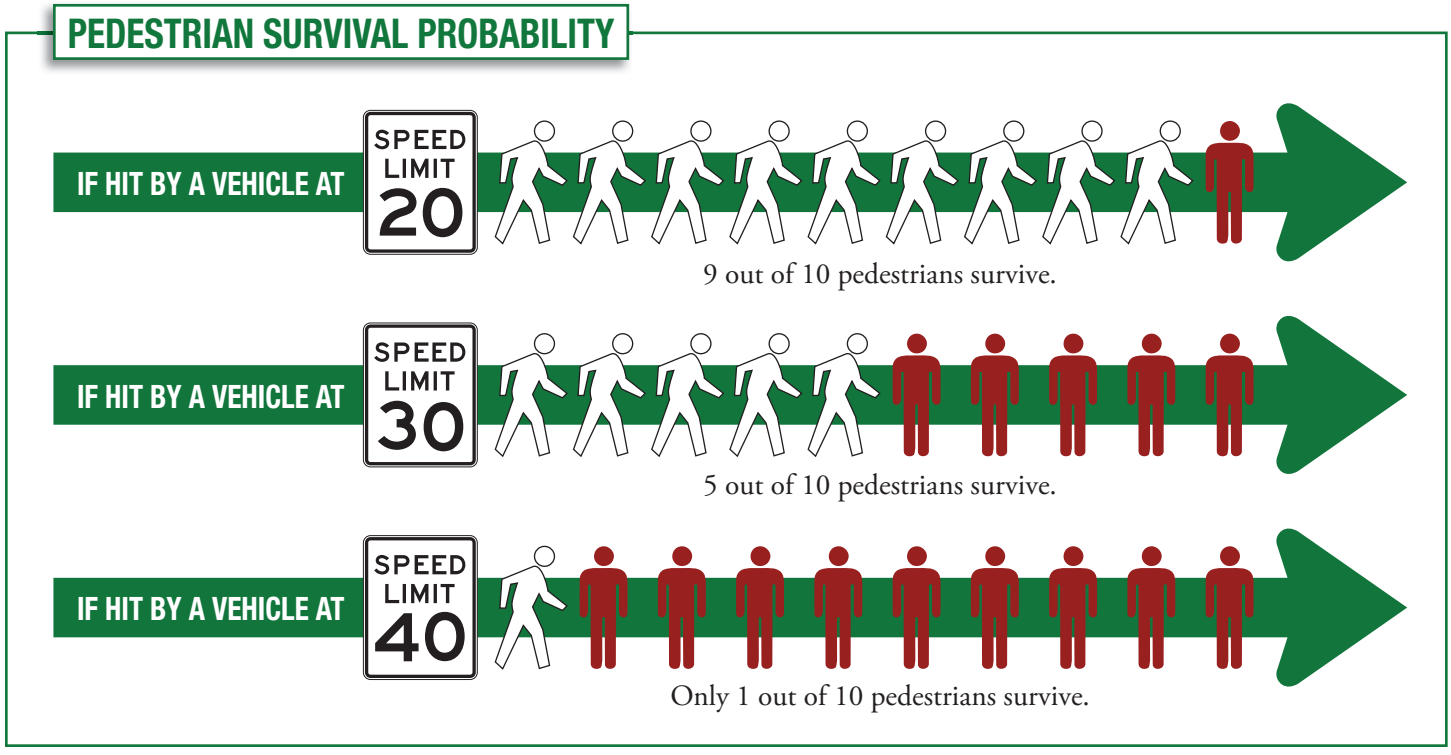
The most prominent geographic feature of the Lowell Street station area is a shallow valley featuring the MBTA's Lowell Commuter Rail line. This railway runs through the city from southeast to northwest, essentially slicing the Lowell Street station area into northern and southern halves. Since drivers traveling from Broadway to Highland Avenue have few choices to cross over the railway, north-south streets with bridges like Lowell Street, Cedar Street, and Central Street receive a disproportionate amount of cut-through, cross-town vehicular traffic.

Traffic moves quickly on these streets. Residents, business owners, and other participants in the station area planning series all recognized the absolute necessity for safe neighborhood streets. Many highlighted safety concerns due to the expected increase in pedestrian and bicycle traffic that will come once Lowell Street station opens. Working closely with the design team, participants acknowledged the need for street designs that would force cars to slow down to increase pedestrian safety and quality of life for residents and visitors alike.

In Massachusetts, speed limits on unposted streets like Lowell, Cedar, and Central are set at 30 mph by State Law. To decrease the speed limit, municipalities are required to get approval from MassHighway and the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV). Before establishing a new speed limit, an engineering study is required to monitor the prevailing speed of motorists so that a speed limit that is 'safe, reasonable, and self enforcing' can be established. Traffic engineers use the actual speed that 85 percent of drivers travel at or below to set the appropriate speed limit for a particular street. This '85th percentile' metric is used as a starting point for setting rational speed limits because the actual physical design of a street and a drivers perception of safety greatly impacts the actual speed we feel comfortable driving and is considered to be the maximum safe operating speed for that location.

During the summer of 2011, the City of Somerville's Traffic and Parking Department monitored automobile traffic on Lowell Street to determine the typical operating speed of drivers. Over the course of three separate weeks, the "85th percentile" of observed speeds was found to be 29 to 30 miles per hour. However, a growing body of scientific research shows that when vehicles are moving at 25 miles per hour or faster, nearly all crashes result in severe bodily injury and roughly 50% are fatal for pedestrians. When vehicular speed drops to 20 mph or less, injuries for all roadway users, including motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians significantly decreases.

The most effective way to slow vehicular traffic on urban streets is to create 'visual friction' that impacts a drivers perception of safety. When travel lanes have appropriate widths, streets with two-way traffic flows are generally observed to have slower speeds than one-way streets because drivers are careful not to sideswipe each other. Vehicular speed decreases even further when features like on-street parking and street trees are provided on both sides of the street (causing more



THE HUMAN EYE AND STREET DESIGN

The physiology of the human eye has many implications for urban design. The retina of our eye functions similar to film in a camera, interpreting what we are looking at, and plays an important role in how we perceive the world around us.

The central part of our retina is called the fovea. This area is densely packed with over 25,000 cells that detect light and color. Each cell is individually connected to a nerve fiber. These cells provide us with very high-resolution vision for tasks such as threading a needle.

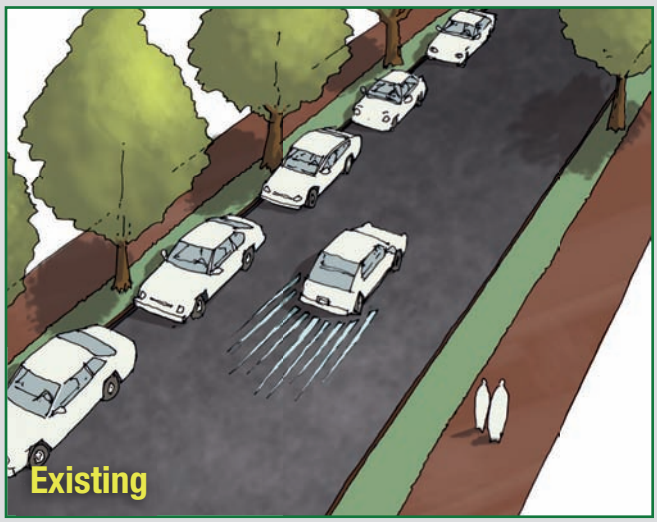
Surrounding the fovea is another area of color detecting cells called the macula. Macular vision is very clear, but not as sharp as with the fovea because the cells are further apart from one another. As you move away from the center of the retina the nature of our vision fundamentally changes. Cells that detect color become scattered and cells designed for seeing at night become more prominent.

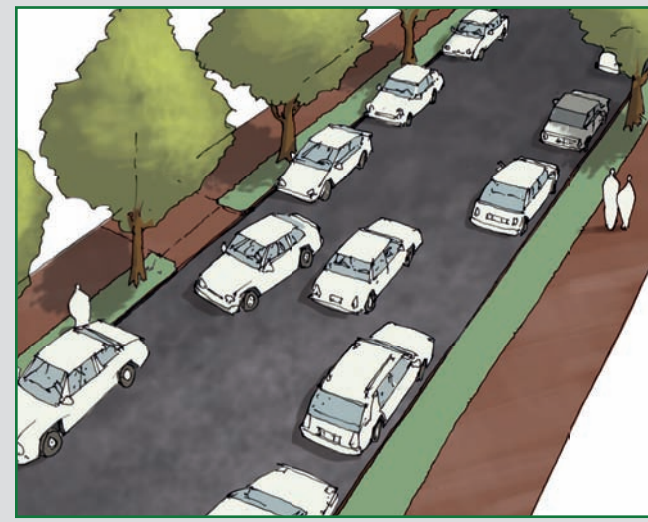
Outside of the macula is the peripheral retina, with cells designed more for night vision and where up to 200 or more cells are connected to a single nerve fiber. When more than one cell is connected to a nerve fiber, resolution decreases and the perception of motion is increased. This is why moving objects are easily caught 'out of the corner' of our eye, but everything is out of focus.

When we ourselves are moving, objects seen in our peripheral vision exaggerate the speed our brain thinks we are traveling. This means that streets lined with on-street parking and street trees provide a natural 'visual friction' that slows down drivers because they think they are moving faster than actually are. As a result, streets with on-street parking and street trees are naturally safer streets for pedestrians than streets without.

LOWELL STREET TODAY

ON-STREET PARKING





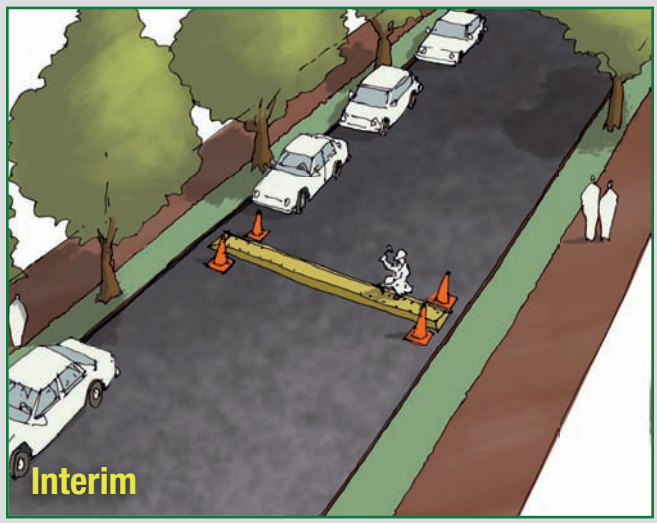
Characteristics:
- Physically narrows the roadway
- Creates "visual friction" in the peripheral vision of drivers

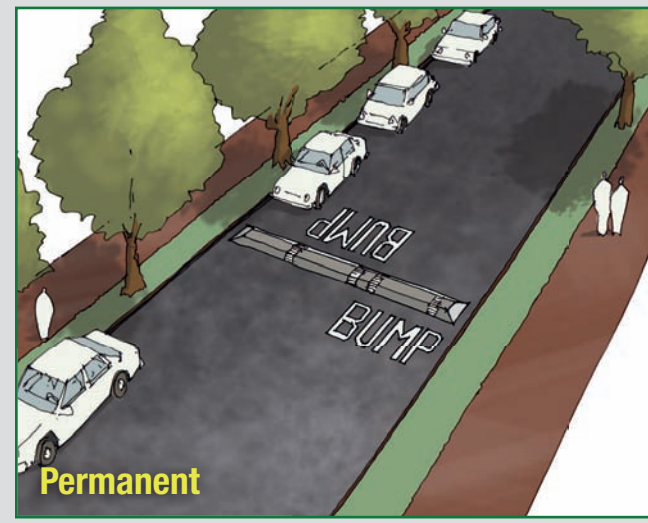
Advantages:
- Places a barrier of steel between pedestrians and moving vehicles
- Increases parking supply
- Permits unobstructed flow of storm water
- Low cost

Disadvantages:
- ?
- ?

Effectiveness:
- Average 2.3 mph decrease in vehicular speed when compared to streets without on-street parking

SPEED HUMP





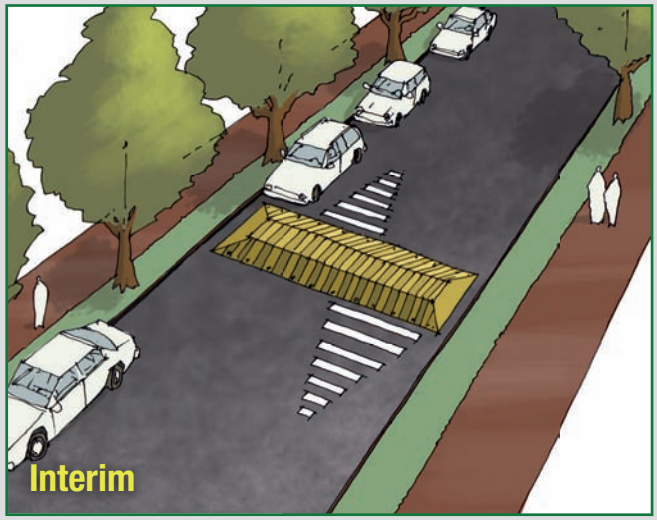
Characteristics:
- Rounded, raised section of the roadway
- Typically 10-14 feet long, 3-4 inches high
- Often tapered at the curb to allow unimpeded drainage
- Distinct from shorter "speed bumps" found in many parking lots

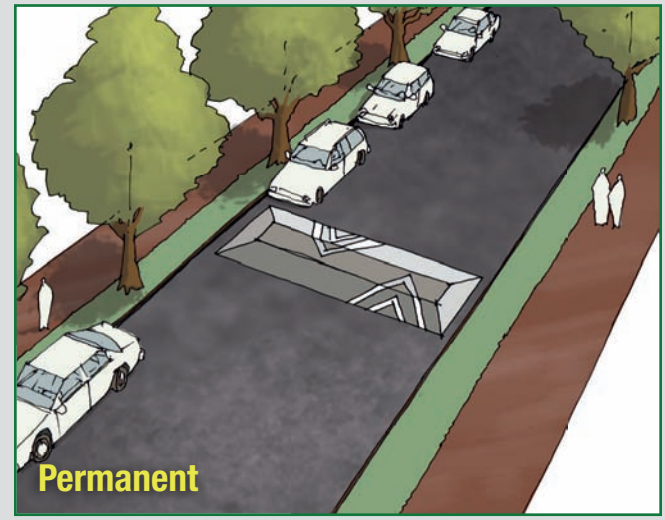
Advantages:
- Relatively inexpensive

Disadvantages:
- Can cause severe pain for drivers with certain health problems
- Can be jarring for cyclists
- Can impact storm water drainage

Effectiveness:
- Average 23% decrease in vehicular speed
- Average 41% decrease in accidents

SPEED TABLE





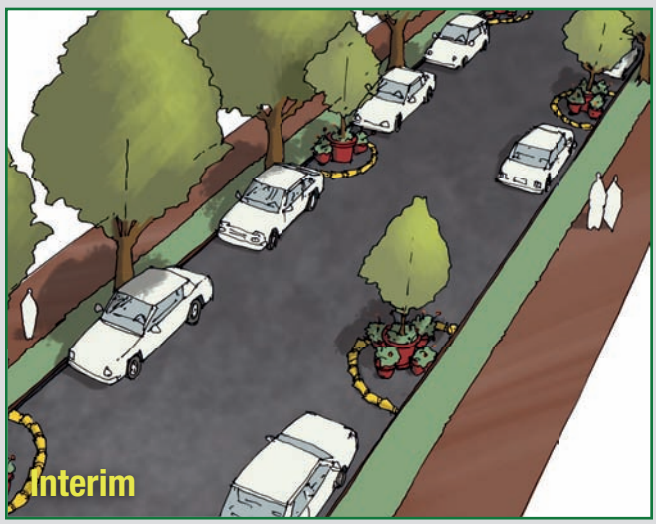
Characteristics:
- Flat-topped, raised section of the roadway
- Typically 10-14 feet long, 3-4 inches high
- Textured material can be used on the flat portion

Advantages:
- Effective at reducing speeds
- Smoother on larger vehicles than speed humps

Disadvantages:
- Can be expensive, depending on materials used
- Can impact storm water drainage
- Less effective at reducing speed than a speed hump

Effectiveness:
- Average 18% decrease in vehicular speed
- Average 45% decrease in accidents

PARKING LANE PLANTER



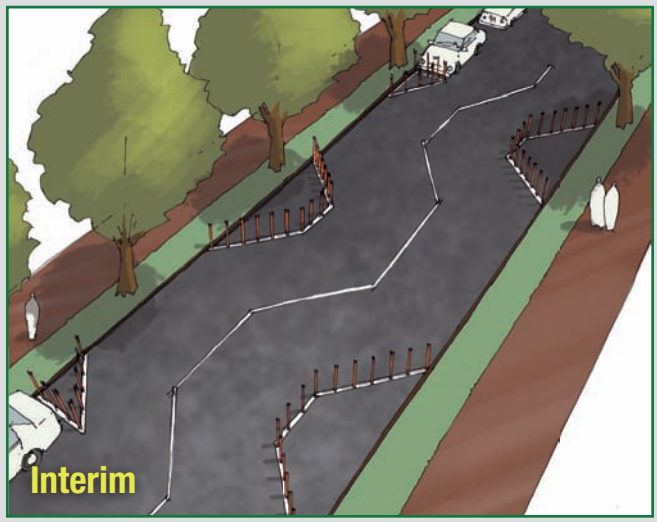
Characteristics:
- Physically narrows the roadway
- Creates "visual friction" in the peripheral vision of drivers

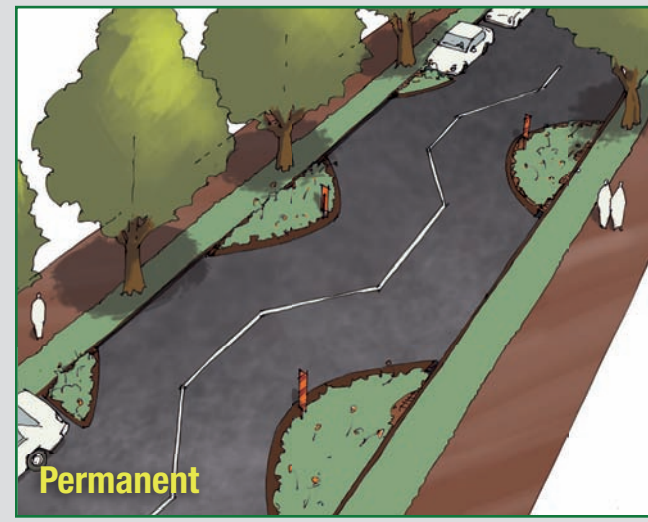
Advantages:
- Can create tree planting sites along sidewalks that are otherwise too narrow to handle street tree plantings.
- Can add permeable surface to the roadway

Disadvantages:
- Can impact storm water drainage
- Limited soil volume available to grow large canopy trees

Effectiveness:
- Average 7% decrease in vehicular speed (standard street trees)
- Average 20% decrease in accidents (standard street trees)

CHICANES





Characteristics:
- Curb extensions installed on alternating sides of the street
- Drivers must reduce speed to maneuver through the extensions
- Alternate-side on-street parking can replicate the effect

Advantages:
- Discourages high speeds by forcing lateral deflection
- Easily negotiable by large vehicles

Disadvantages:
- Drivers tend to accelerate after clearing the chicanes
- Impacts storm water drainage
- May require eliminating some on street parking

Effectiveness:
- Calming effect is thought to depend on how far the chicane extends into the roadway
- No hard data available on the effects of chicaned curb extension

PINCH POINT

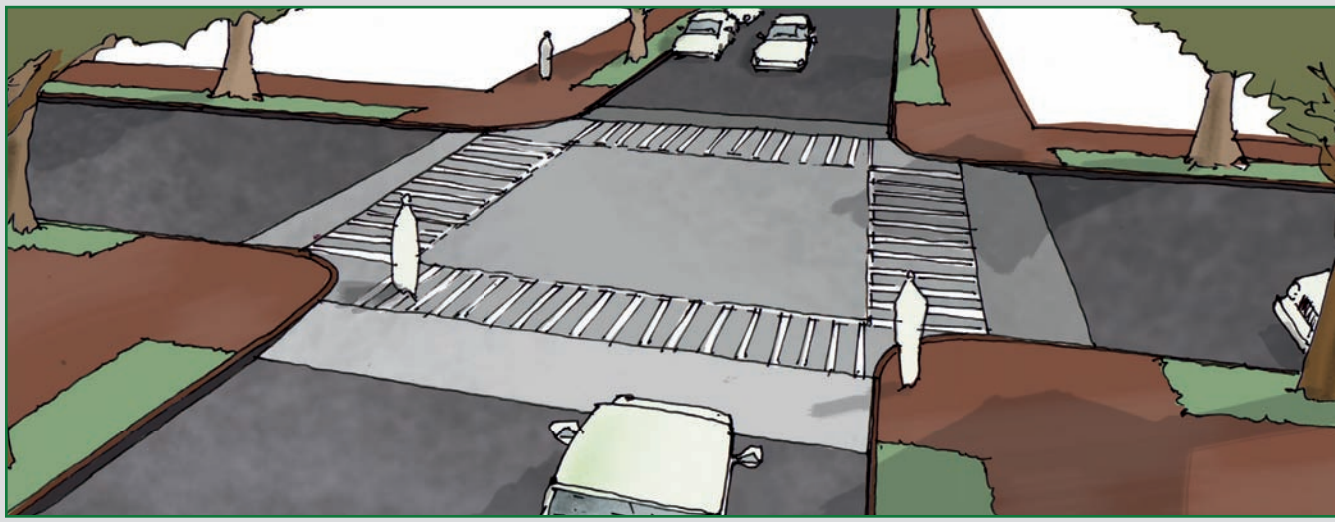
Characteristics:
- Curb extensions aligned at mid-block locations
- Narrow a street down to one travel lane
- May include a crosswalk and/or landscaping in the curb extension

Advantages:
- Easily negotiable by large vehicles, such as fire trucks
- Can have a positive aesthetic value
- Reduces both speed and volume

Disadvantages:
- Without raised crosswalk, impact on vehicular speed is limited
- Requires cyclists to merge with automobile traffic
- May require eliminating some on street parking

Effectiveness:
- Average 7% decrease in vehicular speed

RAISED INTERSECTION



Characteristics:
- Makes roadbed level with adjacent sidewalks
- Ramps at all vehicular approaches to absorb grade change
- Textured materials often used on the flat raised portion

Advantages:
- Improves safety for pedestrians
- Can have a positive aesthetic value
- Can calm two streets at once

Disadvantages:
- Expensive
- Impacts storm water drainage
- Less effective at reducing speed than any other intervention

Effectiveness:
- Average 1% decrease in vehicular speed

'visual friction'). This happens because objects seen out of our peripheral vision make drivers feel like they are moving faster than they really are, due to the way our eyes see and interpret our surroundings (see page 49).

The safest type of neighborhood street for pedestrians is one featuring a shared travel lane 14-16 feet wide with no center stripe and parking lanes on both sides. This type of street is called a "yield street" because cars passing each other are forced to slow down and in many cases one car is even required to pull over slightly to make enough room for the other to pass. Yield streets significantly reduce travel speeds and promote safety for all modes because of the 'visual friction' they provide.

In comparison, drivers on Lowell Street have anywhere between 19 and 26 feet of clear roadway to drive through because the street has infrequent on-street parking on only one side of the street. The lack of visual friction is made worse because Lowell Street only has 47 street trees between Medford Street and Highland Avenue, an average of just one tree for every 53 feet of roadway. Urban design literature suggests a desired frequency of 25-35 feet for pedestrian friendly, neighborhood streets.

Lowell Street, Cedar Street, and Center Street require a detailed physical survey to determine the appropriate locations for permanent street calming interventions. In general, the design objective should be to introduce 'visual friction' while maximizing the opportunity to plant new street trees and add on-street parking - two low cost solutions that effectively slow down cars and improve pedestrian safety. Until such studies can be completed, interim 'tactical' solutions are needed.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Install, monitor, and evaluate the effectiveness of interim traffic calming techniques on Lowell Street.
- Conduct a physical survey of Lowell Street, Cedar Street, and Central Street to accurately map curb cuts, existing street trees, and existing on street parking.
- Add on-street parking to both sides of the roadway where possible on Lowell, Cedar and Central Street
- Opportunistically install new street trees in sidewalk extensions that can provide larger soil areas for street trees than found in normal sidewalk widths.
- Study the feasibility of "chicaning" the roadway of Street, Cedar Street, and Center Street by alternating on street parking from one side of the street to the other.
- Deploy a comprehensive data collection survey of actual vehicular operating speeds on streets throughout the city.
- Require data collection on collector and arterial streets in station areas on an annual basis.
- Submit a Home Rule petition to the State Legislature requesting local jurisdiction over posted speed limits on local streets.

SUPPORT TRANSIT ORIENTED INFILL

'Transit-Adjacent' Development Simply Falls Short

One of the major objectives of this station area plan is to guide redevelopment around the future Lowell Street station to be consistent with a shared community vision for the future. Participants in the station area planning series described their vision for the Lowell Street corridor as a safe and attractive street that would serve as the backbone of the station area, connecting residents and visitors to nearby businesses in Magoun Square and Highland Avenue.

Redevelopment of the traditional housing throughout the Lowell Street station area was not desired. However, stakeholders recognized that commercial properties along Woodbine Street Extension and Albion Street are likely to change over time. During the public process, a consensus formed that any redevelopment of these single story commercial buildings should not overwhelm the adjacent homes with excessive height or bulk, but could rise to heights similar to the surroundings. Improved pedestrian-oriented lighting was desired to illuminate station area streets better at night. Expansion of local employment opportunities, as well as the retention or creation of new production spaces for artists, was desired. Finally, the development of housing options that would be attainable to a variety of potential residents and family sizes was important to local residents.

With these desired outcomes in mind, the design team set out to create visuals that would help residents see infill that met their vision for future. These sites included:

1. Capitol Glass and Mirror Co. (231 Lowell Street)
2. Boston Closet Company (229 Lowell Street)
3. The office condos and warehouse at 99 Albion Street

Working closely with several of the existing property owners, the design team sketched conceptual illustrations of potential infill for each of the three opportunity sites. Detailed exploration of the redevelopment potential for each of these sites is explored on the pages the follow.


CAPITAL GLASS & MIRROR
GENERAL
1


ONE WAY
99
ALBION STREET
99
ALBION STREET
2


Auto Plus
Boston Closet Co.
3

Urban Designer Russell Preston brainstorms initial design concepts for infill in the Lowell Street station area.

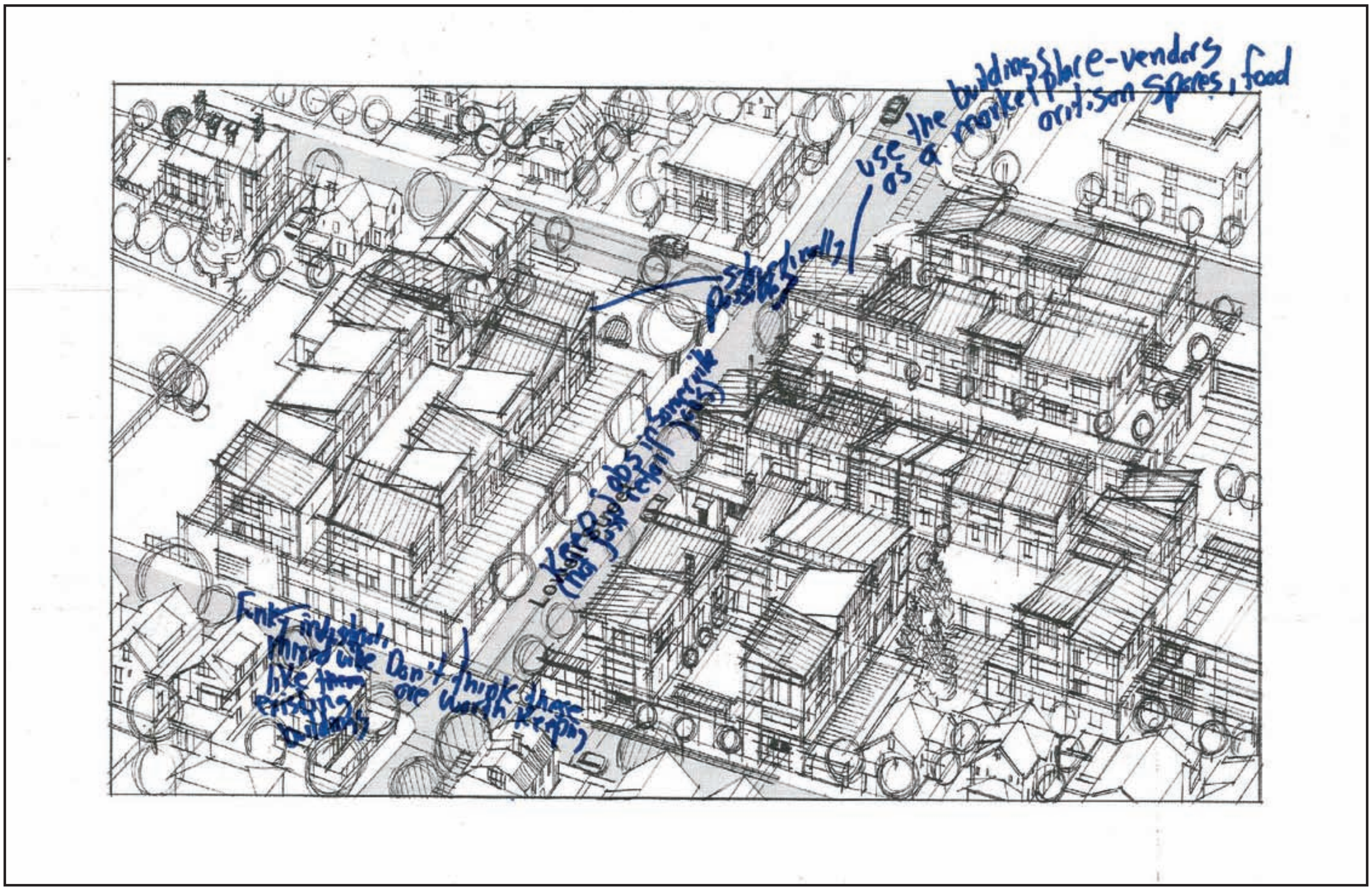
First and foremost, redevelopment of these opportunity sites must be designed to leverage the significant public investment in the expansion of the Green Line corridor. Although Lowell Street station itself will open in early 2019, the strong housing market of metro-Boston has already recognized the value that can be captured in this location. Because the arrival of the Green Line is still years away, there is an impetus to overbuild automobile parking on each site. Proposals for redevelopment that apply suburban parking standards, deep setbacks, or limit the program to luxury residential units should not be viewed as consistent with this plan because they undermine the principles of sound station area planning, transit-oriented development, and the desires of local residents. Mixed-use development that acknowledges the coming transit-oriented future of the station area must be promoted and supported.

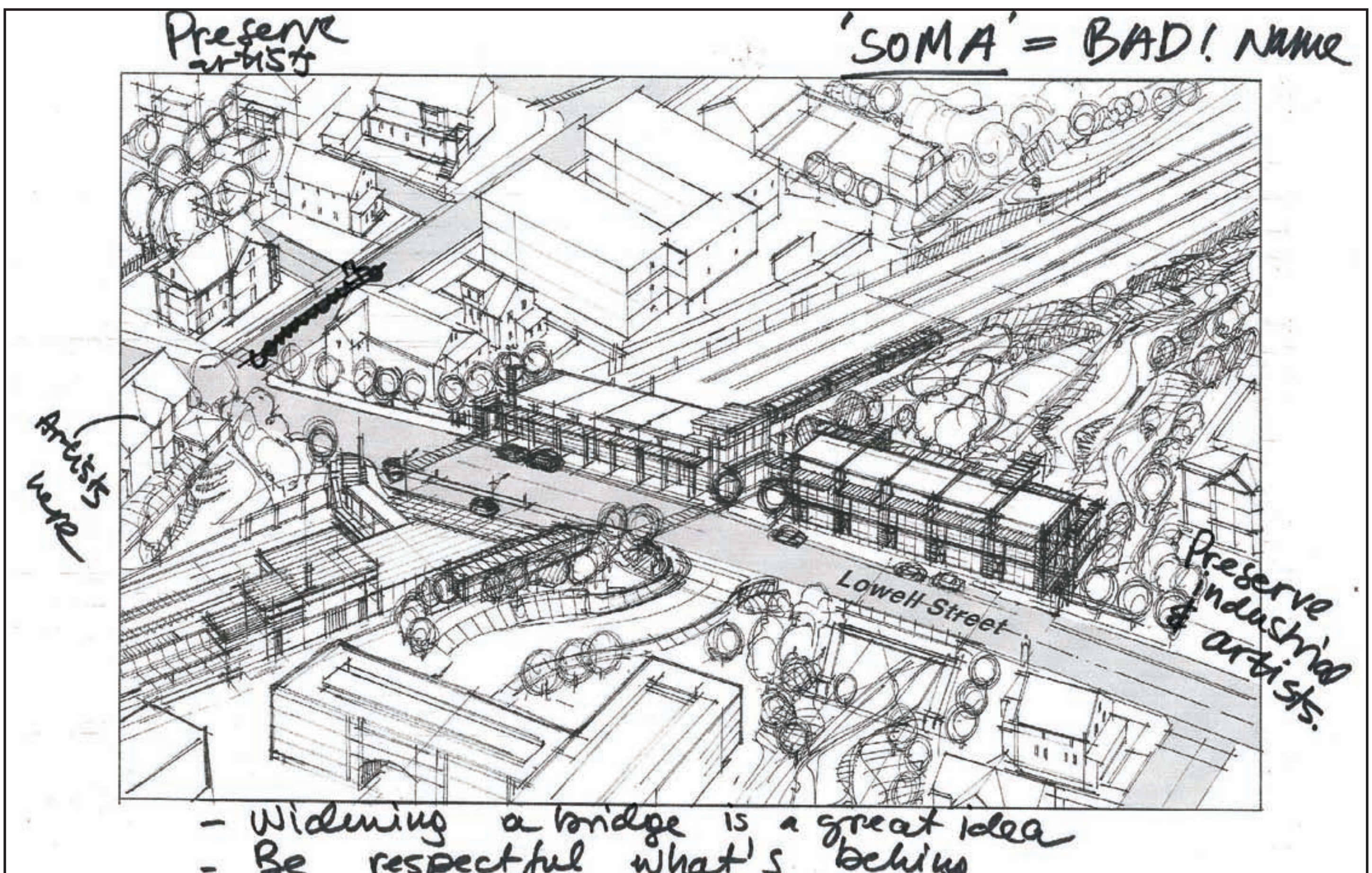
Honoring public feedback from the visioning session, designers explored concepts for modestly-scaled redevelopment of the opportunity sites that would contextually blend in with surrounding fabric. Maintaining a three story height limit was crucial. Residents were then asked to critique all of the conceptual sketches at a subsequent design charrette so that another round of public feedback could be incorporated into the final design concepts.

Based on public feedback and interest from the private property owner, 231 Lowell Street was selected for a conceptual design and development study, which is presented on page 58. Similarly, a conceptual design and development study was prepared for the existing office condos and warehouse building at 99 Albion Street, which is presented on page 62.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Expand local employment opportunities and create spaces available for the arts by developing infill projects with commercial first floors.
- Reinforce the street edge along Lowell Street with buildings constructed close to the front lot line of abutting properties.
- Implement facade design requirements that include pedestrian scale lighting, high transparency, and appropriate signage.
- Maintain existing character of the station area by limiting both mixed-use and residential infill development to three stories.
- Promote a diversity of building types to be included in infill projects as appropriate.


use the buildings & place-vendors as a marketplace artisan spaces, food
Keep jobs in Somerville
Don't think these are worth keeping
Funky industrial
existing buildings


Preserve artists
'SOMA' = BAD! name
Artists here
Lowell Street
Preserve industrial & artists.
- Widening a bridge is a great idea
- Be respectful what's behind

231 Lowell Street

Infill Opportunity Site One

A conceptual design and development study was prepared for 231 Lowell Street, currently home to Capitol Glass and Mirror. The privately-owned lot is roughly 23,000 square feet in land area. The property is split between two existing zoning districts, with roughly 16,600 square feet within the "Residence C" zoning district and the remaining 6,400 square feet within the "Residence A" district.

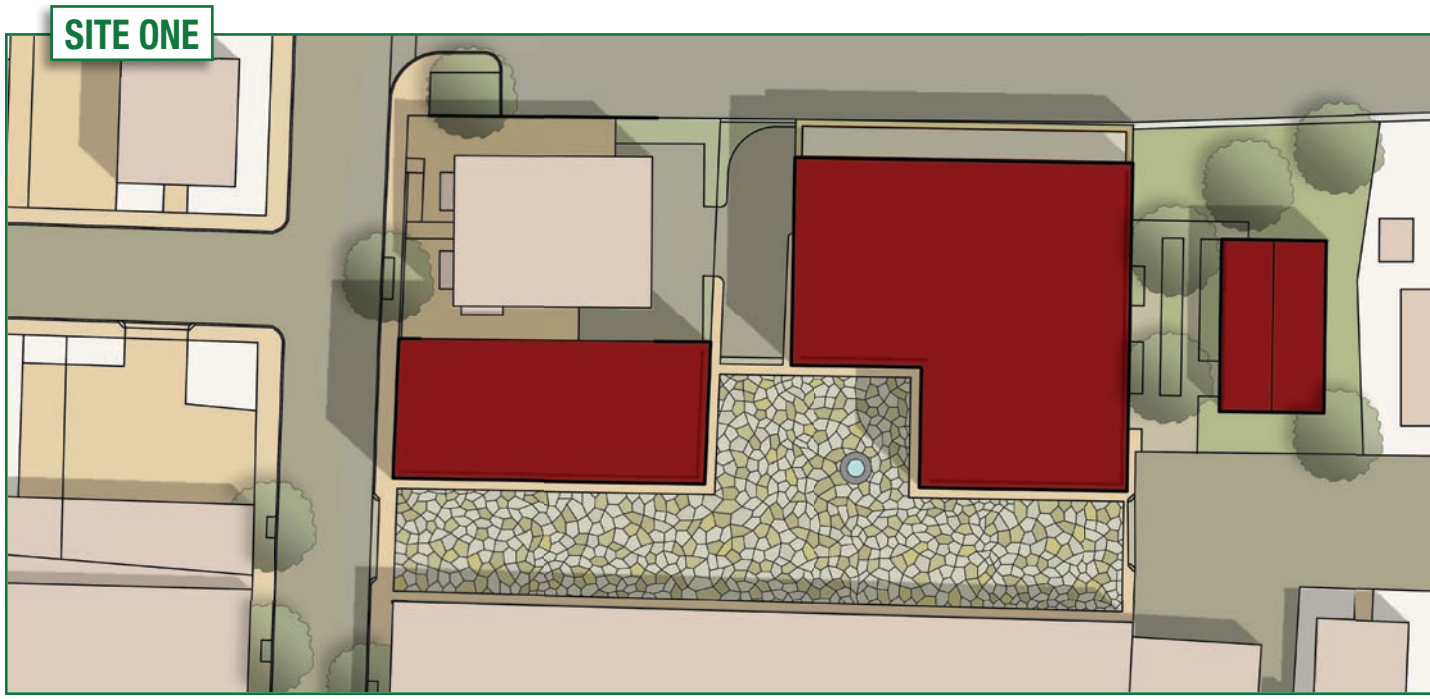
Participants in the Somerville*by*Design station area planning series agreed that new buildings should not overwhelm the existing character of the neighborhood with their height or bulk. The concept for Site One respects that vision in three ways. First, the buildings illustrated here are limited to three stories in height. Secondly, three small footprint buildings, rather than one large structure, are shown. Third, the easternmost building is a designed as a typical detached two-family house to provide a respectful transition between the existing cottages along Woodbine Street and the new development.

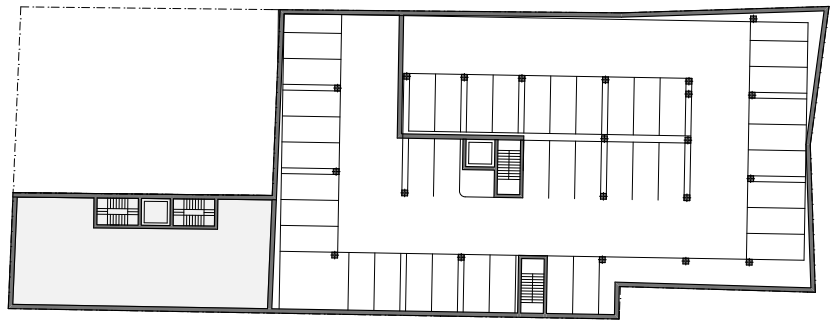
The portion of the site fronting onto Lowell Street is designed as a new multi-story mixed-use building with a 30 foot wide storefront. Behind this building, fronting onto Woodbine Street Extension, is a new apartment building with a flexible ground floor space. A small forecourt creates an outdoor space in front of the building as an amenity for the new tenants or visitors to the ground floor space. A key element of the concept is a rethinking of Woodbine Street Extension as a shared space that blends continuously into the forecourt. Both areas are paved with granite block or similar material. The individual blocks will create a 'rumble' effect that will slow down drivers while at the same time aesthetically linking the forecourt and street space. The total development imagined in this study is roughly 32,000 square feet of built space, including:

- 2,200 square feet of ground floor commercial space
- 1,500 square feet of studio or cafe flex space
- 24 dwelling units of various sizes
- 42 underground parking spaces

Construction costs for the 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 or restaurant uses. Total hard costs were estimated at $7.7 million to $8.5 million. It is important to note that this scenario includes more parking than a transit oriented development site requires. Significant construction savings can be realized if the project is built to be truly transit-oriented by reducing or even eliminating off-street parking.

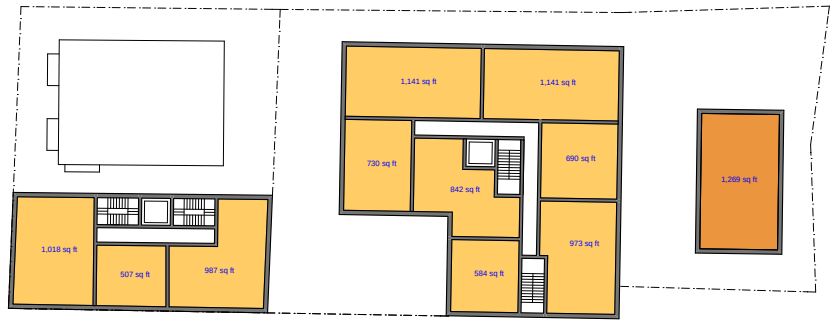
The Metro Boston apartment market has effective rents of $1,772 as of 2013. Existing market-rate apartments in the Lowell street station area have an average monthly lease rate of $2,100/month. Commercial rents are assumed to be $25 per square foot (per year) for retail space. Annual gross potential income is estimated at $800,000 with no vacancy. The development scenario is estimated to generate approximately $112,000 per year in property tax revenue. Today the site currently generates roughly $12,000 per year in taxes.



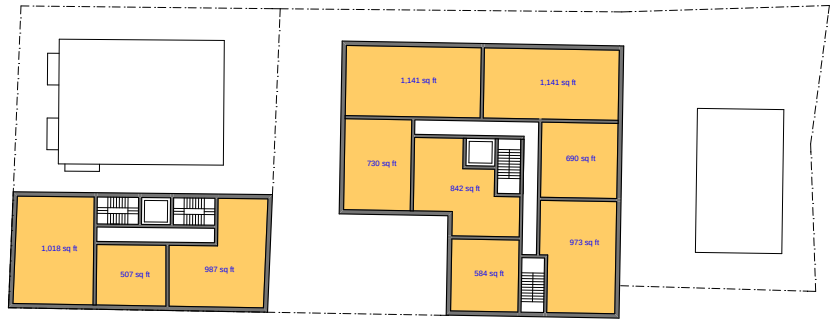


BASEMENT

GROUND FLOOR

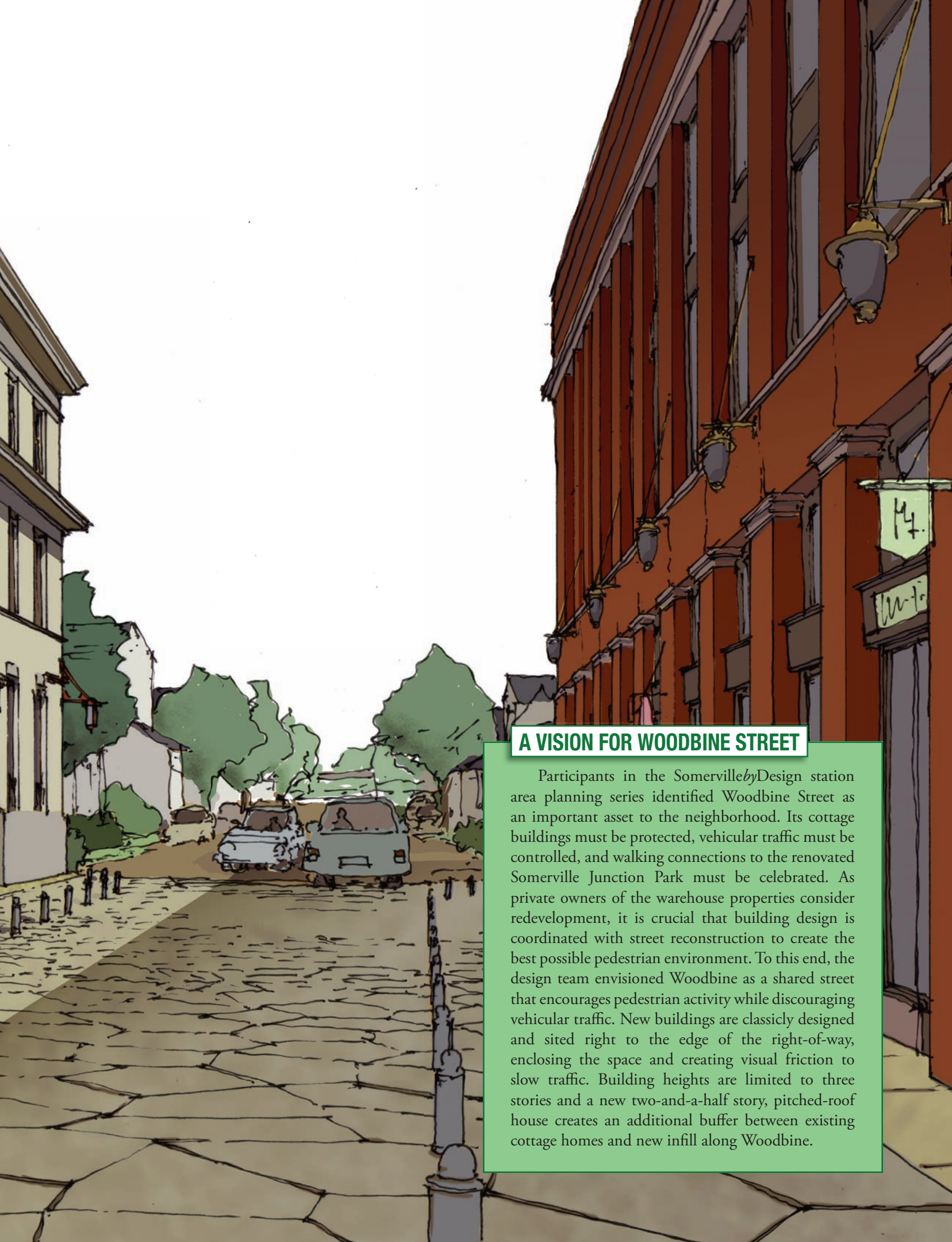


SECOND FLOOR



THIRD FLOOR


CAFE



A VISION FOR WOODBINE STREET

Participants in the Somerville*by*Design station area planning series identified Woodbine Street as an important asset to the neighborhood. Its cottage buildings must be protected, vehicular traffic must be controlled, and walking connections to the renovated Somerville Junction Park must be celebrated. As private owners of the warehouse properties consider redevelopment, it is crucial that building design is coordinated with street reconstruction to create the best possible pedestrian environment. To this end, the design team envisioned Woodbine as a shared street that encourages pedestrian activity while discouraging vehicular traffic. New buildings are classicly designed and sited right to the edge of the right-of-way, enclosing the space and creating visual friction to slow traffic. Building heights are limited to three stories and a new two-and-a-half story, pitched-roof house creates an additional buffer between existing cottage homes and new infill along Woodbine.

99 Albion Street

Infill Opportunity Site Two

A conceptual design and development study was prepared for 99 Albion Street, a large warehouse and office complex with several business tenants. The privately-owned site is roughly 33,000 square feet in land area, stretching from Albion Street to Alpine Street. The site is currently in the "Residence C" zoning district, but up until roughly 1960 it had been zoned for business activities with regulations similar to those still present in Magoun Square.

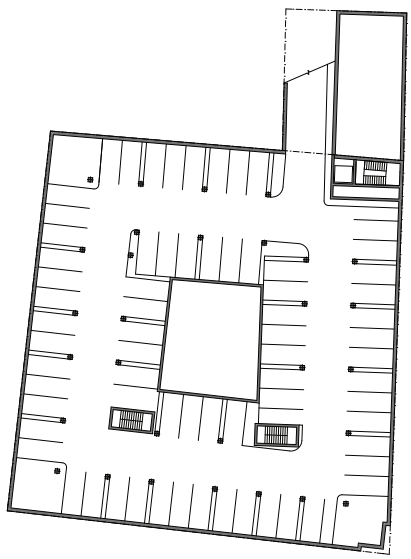
Participants in the Somerville*by*Design station area planning series expressed two important concerns related to this site and the neighboring commercial properties. First, infill development should be mixed use with commercial uses on the ground floor. Additionally, first floor facades should engage the public realm with human-scaled design and lighting that will make the area safer for pedestrians walking home from Lowell Street station at night.

The scenario for 99 Albion envisions one or two mixed-use buildings built to the sidewalk with underground parking. The floor plans illustrate significant commercial space on the ground floor with two floors of residential above. Additionally, there is the potential to create a row of attached 'townhouse' style units fronting onto Albion Park. The total development imagined in this study is roughly 50,000 square feet of built space, including:

- 11,658 square feet of ground floor commercial space
- 35 dwelling units of various sizes
- 5 townhouse-style residential units facing Albion Park
- 70 underground 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 $12.4 million to $12.8 million. It is important to note that the scenario described here includes more parking than a transit oriented development site requires. Significant construction savings can be realized if the project is built to be truly transit-oriented by reducing or even eliminating off-street parking.

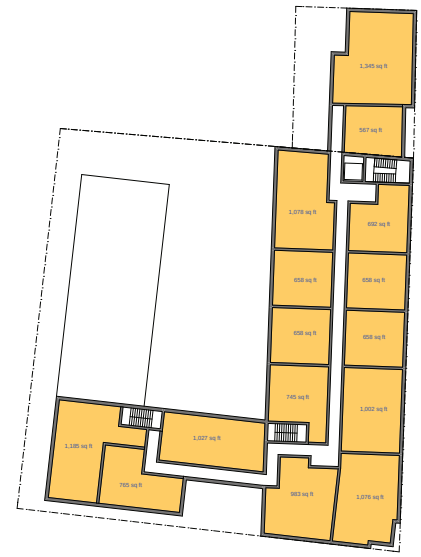
The Metro Boston apartment market has effective rents of $1,772 as of 2013. Existing market-rate apartments in the Lowell Street station area have an average monthly lease rate of $2,100/month. Commercial rents are assumed to be $25 per square foot (per year) for retail space after Lowell Street station opens. Annual gross potential income is estimated at $1.17 million with no vacancy. The development scenario is estimated to generate approximately $164,000 per year in property tax revenue. Today the site currently generates roughly $24,000 per year in taxes.



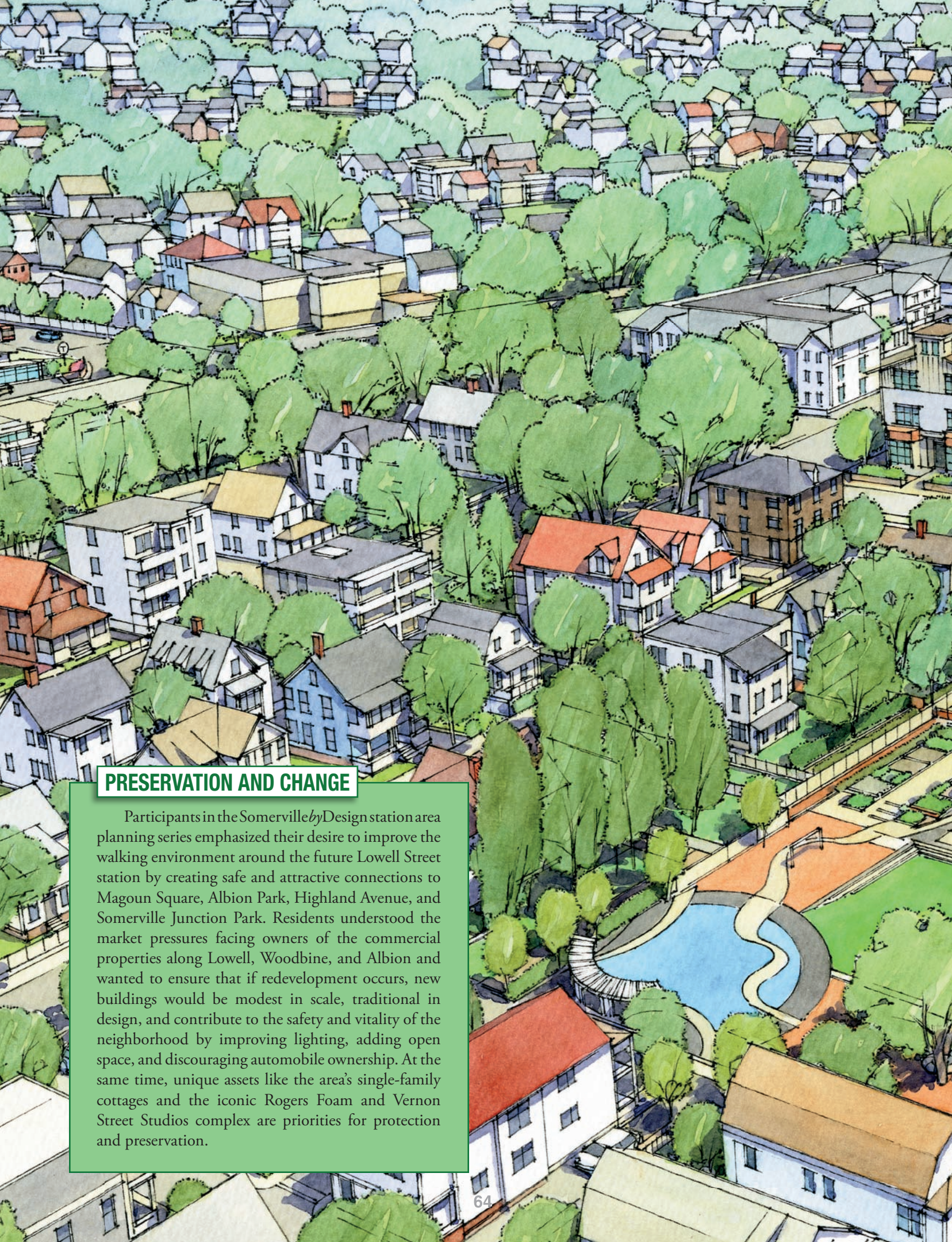
BASEMENT

GROUND FLOOR

SECOND FLOOR

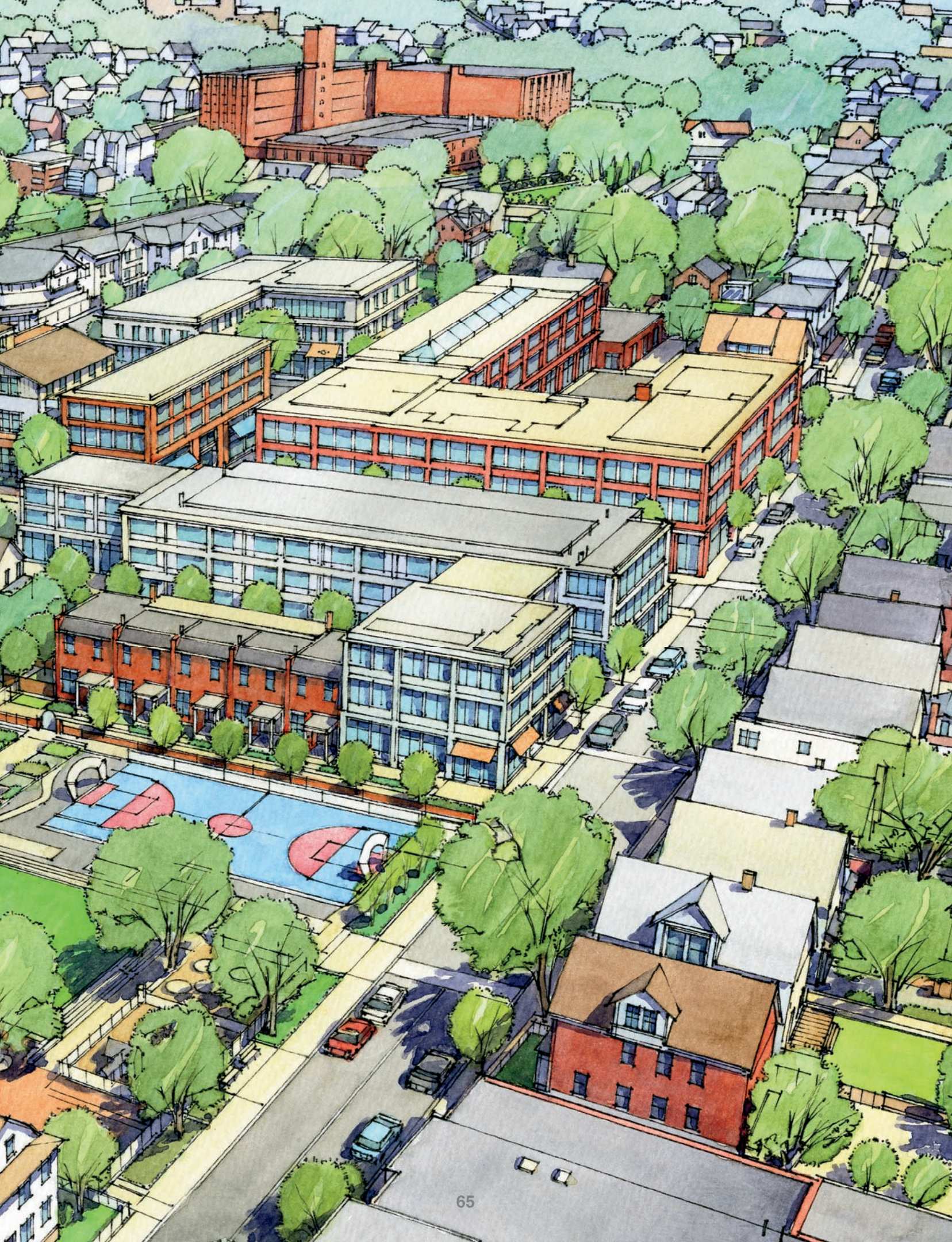


THIRD FLOOR



PRESERVATION AND CHANGE

Participants in the Somerville*by*Design station area planning series emphasized their desire to improve the walking environment around the future Lowell Street station by creating safe and attractive connections to Magoun Square, Albion Park, Highland Avenue, and Somerville Junction Park. Residents understood the market pressures facing owners of the commercial properties along Lowell, Woodbine, and Albion and wanted to ensure that if redevelopment occurs, new buildings would be modest in scale, traditional in design, and contribute to the safety and vitality of the neighborhood by improving lighting, adding open space, and discouraging automobile ownership. At the same time, unique assets like the area's single-family cottages and the iconic Rogers Foam and Vernon Street Studios complex are priorities for protection and preservation.



ENCOURAGE ADAPTIVE RE-USE

Building Mix Contributes to an Interesting Neighborhood

Somerville's mix of old buildings and new buildings is an important part of our character. Magoun Square, Lowell Street and Highland Avenue boast numerous examples of older buildings that have been successfully adapted to meet modern needs. As new investment continues to flow into the neighborhood, there will be additional opportunities to re-imagine older structures.

Two prominent example of adaptive re-use in the neighborhood are the Vernon Street Studios complex, and the Arts at the Armory facility on Highland Avenue. Both represent unique "Somerville" resources that likely would not exist in newer buildings. Vernon Street Studios occupies roughly half of the Rogers Foam facility at the corner of Vernon Street and Central Street. It is the single largest studio space in all of Somerville, with nearly 100 individual studios leased to working artists and artisans (and a three-year wait-list for prospective tenants).

On Highland Avenue, a more recent success story has played out. The Arts at the Armory building features memorable architecture, but the large space and floor plan were so unique that they presented challenges for new investors. In 2008, a new owner created a business plan for a nonprofit arts center that included performance, gallery, cafe and office space. Today, the building is beautifully restored and actively used by residents, artists, and the small business community.

Participants in the station area planning series emphasized the value that they place on these anchor buildings and the activities that take place inside them. Public policy can play an important role in making adaptive re-use projects economically competitive with run-of-the-mill redevelopment projects. For example, off-street parking requirements in the Somerville Zoning Ordinance currently discourage re-use of older commercial buildings that were originally built without surface parking lots. Similarly, achieving modern life safety and accessibility standards in old buildings is often a barrier to new private investment, suggesting that targeted public investment programs can help achieve these important policy goals. Even existing funding programs for storefront improvements can be improved and expanded, since the federal funds typically used by the City to assist property owners and business tenants can only be applied in certain geographic areas.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Establish an assistance program that offers low-cost and forgivable loans for adaptive re-use projects.
- Explore creation of a city-funded storefront improvement program that can offer assistance in neighborhoods not eligible under federal programs.
- Require properties that receive financial incentives for adaptive re-use conversions to protect spaces available for fabrication and other creative uses through deed restrictions.

Muskat Studios, at 193 Cedar Street, is a well-loved example of adaptive re-use

TEST SITE

Participants in the station area planning series appreciated the fact that commercial buildings south of the Lowell Street bridge provide a job base in the neighborhood. There was also a shared understanding that the historic building facades add character to the district and slow traffic. However, blank walls and insufficient lighting represent challenges. As private owners position these buildings for the future, adaptive re-use is one way to address these issues simultaneously.

OFFICE FRONTAGE

Based on public input at the charrette, the design team studied the property at 99 Albion Street. The building currently contains several thousand square feet of office space, but none of that space is visible from Lowell Street. Replacement of two bays on the building's east wall could potentially create a valuable and attractive office space. In this scenarios, large industrial-style windows maintain the historic character, while creating a safer, more attractive pedestrian experience.

RETAIL FRONTAGE

A second adaptive re-use scenario imagines creation of retail space facing Lowell Street. Frontage requirements are slightly different in this scenario, with larger, lower windows to allow product display. Signage and exterior lighting are more substantial than in the office scenario. Pedestrian activity would also be different: depending on the business tenant, people could be entering and exiting the storefront during weeknight and weekend business hours, improving feelings of safety for pedestrians in the area.

SUPPORT THE CREATIVE ECONOMY

Space, Programming, and Funding

Somerville's creative economy is a core part of our community identity. Our arts community ranges from hobbyists to professionals whose works are celebrated around the country. Workshops, galleries and studios are scattered throughout Somerville's neighborhoods, and long-running events like ArtBeat and Somerville Open Studios are a source of community pride and business activity. Our designers and fabricators have started and spun off dozens of companies that have helped grow Somerville's economy, and arts-related training in our public schools is helping prepare Somerville's youth for jobs of the future.

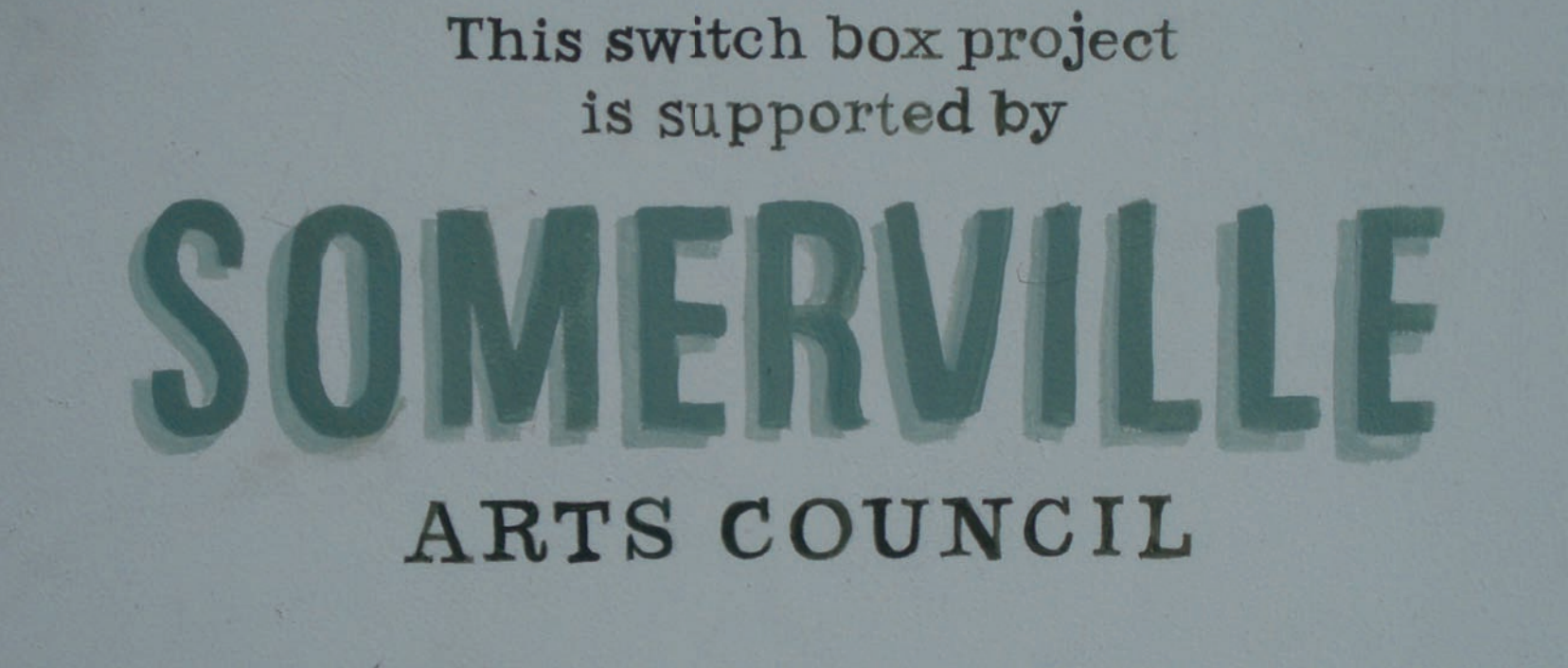
Participants in the station area planning series expressed a consistent and strong desire to protect and grow Somerville's arts economy. Public policy can support the arts in several ways, including physical neighborhood plans as well as program activities. As policy interventions are considered, it is critical to explicitly recognize that Somerville's arts community is not a monolith - it includes people from every walk of life, who may have shared or unique goals and needs.

The first important piece of the puzzle is appropriate and affordable space for production and display. Some types of art lend themselves to quiet, clean spaces. Other types are noisy and messy, requiring high ceilings, heavy walls and floors, specialized ventilation, freight elevators and loading docks. This plan calls for policy changes that establish clearer guidelines and measurable performance standards for low-impact home-based arts uses. It also calls for zoning reform to limit conversion of production spaces to residential use. Lastly, the City should investigate whether municipal real estate tax classifications incentivize or punish private landlords of studio and fabrication buildings.

The second major area of public policy is related to programs that promote the arts. Today, Somerville's arts community is thriving despite severe limitations in funding for staffing, events, research, marketing, technical assistance and commissions. As the City continues to grow its tax base, its financial commitment to the arts should grow. As major infrastructure investments are planned, the City should consider whether a formal 1% budget line can be carried to underwrite arts-related improvements.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Prepare zoning regulations for a "Fabrication District" that supports light manufacturing and arts-related uses, and prohibits residential uses.
- Map the new Fabrication district over the Rogers Foam / Vernon Street Studios property.
- Evaluate zoning regulations for home-based arts uses, and establish clear performance standards for appropriately-scaled uses that should be permitted in basements, garages and carriage houses.
- Work with the City's Assessing Department to understand current tax policy related to privately-owned studio and fabrication buildings.
- Partner with the MBTA and MassDOT to plan, design and install Somerville-sourced art installations at the Green Line Station
- Explore whether a "1% for the Arts" campaign in Somerville is viable.
- Partner with the New England Science Fiction Association to explore upgrades to their headquarters at 502-504 Medford Street.



In 2011, Somerville Open Studios became the largest one weekend open studios in the nation with over 390 participants.

MAINTAIN HOUSING DIVERSITY

Diversity in Building Types, Bedroom Counts, and Price Points

Somerville's residential neighborhoods are well-loved for their traditional two- and three-family homes, but the Lowell Street station area has a development pattern that is relatively rare and unique in Somerville: single-family cottage buildings alongside larger warehouse and industrial buildings. This diversity of residential building types represents an important opportunity to implement the SomerVision Comprehensive Plan's goal of planning for diverse choices in the housing market.

Four distinct clusters of single-family cottages are located within a short walk of the future site of Lowell Street station. This building type is often associated with single-family structures and small yards, which is particularly important for families with children. Cottage clusters exist along Woodbine Street, on Clyde, Murdock and Warwick Streets, in the Hinckley Magoun neighborhood, and along Partridge Avenue. This plan recommends strong protections to discourage demolition and redevelopment of these structures.

Somerville Junction is also unique for its larger commercial properties sited along the railroad. As economic conditions have changed, private property owners have redeveloped older commercial sites for multifamily housing. The VNA property, Maxwell's Green are well-known examples, and the Walnut Hill Auto Repair garage is currently seeking permits for residential redevelopment.

As Somerville has become a more attractive place to live, community members have become focused on ensuring that our housing market continues to offer choices to current and future residents.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Protect the single family cottages found frequently throughout the neighborhood.
- 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 at least 15% of units as affordable housing.

COTTAGE BUILDINGS

Detached single-family cottages are slowly disappearing from Somerville, as market pressures are encouraging speculators to redevelop multifamily apartment buildings in their place. On Partridge Avenue (pictured) and in several other areas throughout the Lowell Street station area, preservation of cottages are a critical element of Mayor Joe Curtatone's efforts to attract and retain families with children in Somerville.

ROW HOUSES

Attached row houses are not as common in Somerville as in some neighboring communities, but they serve an important niche in the housing market. Row houses tend to offer up-and-down layouts and back yard / patio space, which are important characteristics of family-friendly housing. A shared building foundation creates efficiencies for developers, suggesting that savings on construction costs might be able to be passed on to the consumer.

APARTMENT BUILDINGS

Some properties are capable of handling construction of new apartment buildings without placing a burden on nearby residents. Demand for apartment living is increasing around the country as young professionals and empty-nesters return to America's cities. New apartment construction also triggers Somerville's Inclusionary Housing Ordinance, which requires a percentage of units to be reserved for low- and moderate-income residents.

ADOPT SMART PARKING POLICY

If You Build It, They Will Come

The SomerVision Comprehensive Plan outlines a series of community goals that include expanding choices for affordable and family-sized housing, enhancing economic opportunity, promoting public transit use, relieving traffic congestion, decreasing automobile use, reducing air pollution, promoting transit-oriented development, and encouraging walking and cycling. These goals are related elements of a larger system, and several are dependent on each other. They also share a common impediment: existing parking policies.

In 2004, when the MBTA's planning efforts for the Green Line Extension started to gain momentum, Somerville residents stated a clear goal that the new stations of the Green Line should function as walk-up and bike-up stations serving local neighborhoods. No public parking lots or garages were desired, particularly for Lowell Street station. Our residents intuitively understood that space dedicated to parking is part of a system that impacts housing, transportation, sustainability, and quality-of-life objectives.

Scientific research has produced a growing body of knowledge on the nexus of these relationships. In 2010, researchers at Northeastern University identified the connection between parking and housing affordability in a report titled *Maintaining Diversity in America's Transit-Rich Neighborhoods*, finding that higher-income households are attracted to transit-rich neighborhoods and that higher income predicts higher rates of automobile ownership in those same neighborhoods. In 2013 the *Journal of the American Planning Association* published research that controlled for income and found that the availability of off-street parking was actually the single most important variable in determining automobile ownership, regardless of accessibility to a rail transit station.

A study from March of 2013 published in the journal *Transport Policy* went a step further, illustrating a clear relationship between the availability of a guaranteed, private, off-street parking space at home and the use of a private automobile for trips to work, even for people living and working in locations well served by transit. In addition to these studies on the relationship between the availability of parking and automobile use, a report from June 2013 titled *Parking Requirement Impacts on Housing Affordability* found that supplying one parking space per unit increases costs associated with affordable housing by 12.5% and that two parking spaces increase costs by about 25% - making blanket parking standards 'regressive and unfair for lower-income households' and the production of affordable housing in a community.

Today, Somerville's zoning regulations require developers to provide 1.5 off-street parking spaces per dwelling unit with 1-2 bedrooms and 2 off-street parking spaces per dwelling unit with 3 or more bedrooms. Today, households in Somerville and the Lowell Street station area own an average of 0.96 vehicles per dwelling unit (prior to the arrival of the Green Line). By requiring off-street parking at a rate that is even higher than the current rate of automobile ownership, our rules produce infill development that literally builds an even higher demand for automobile ownership (and its use) into the very fabric of our city than exists today. The creation of 'transit adjacent' infill development that is actually 'auto-oriented' in design accelerates gentrification and increases housing costs, as well as unnecessary traffic, pollution, and carbon emissions that will off-set the transportation, air quality, and sustainability benefits provided by the extension of the Green Line.

Clearly, parking reform is needed. The recently-completed Maxwell's Green development is a step in the right direction. Off street parking was restricted to 180 parking spaces for the 184-unit project (0.98 spaces per unit). Since construction was completed, the City of Somerville has worked with the property owner to track residents' actual vehicle ownership and as of mid-November 2013, only 154 residents have vehicles registered with the City (0.84 vehicles per unit).

For the last fifty years, Somerville has required new development to build off-street parking to the detriment of other community goals. Policy will have an undeniable role in ensuring that the housing, transportation, sustainability, and quality-of-life goals in SomerVision become reality by reducing or removing minimum off-street parking requirements and properly pricing, managing, and permitting on-street parking. To achieve the vision proposed by participants of the station area planning series and ensure that the Green Line Extension provides the maximum public benefit, Somerville must get smart about parking.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Reform zoning regulation to require off-street parking at a ratio of 1.0 space per new residential unit, regardless of bedroom count.
- Adopt a transit-oriented parking reduction of 0.5 spaces for any property within 1/4 mile of an operational rapid-transit station.
- Eliminate off-street parking requirements for first-floor retail uses within 1/4 mile of any operational rapid-transit station.
- Require tuck-under or structured parking for all new construction.
- Permit the street frontage of properties to count toward parking requirements.

OFF-STREET PARKING

The Lowell Street station area contains approximately 1,260 off-street parking spaces. Historically, many residential blocks were laid out with space for driveways, but not all. Off-street residential parking can represent a valuable amenity. Families with children, and residents with disabilities can benefit greatly from predictable access to an off-street space. However, creating new off-street parking can inflate housing costs, increase utility bills, and eliminate important yard space.

ON STREET PARKING

Within a five-minute walk of the future Lowell Street station, there are more than 1,200 on-street parking spaces. Nearly all of these are subject to the City's Residential Permit Parking restrictions. On-street parking provides convenient access for residents and visitors and plays an important role in traffic calming. For roadways that are 26 feet wide or wider that only allow parking on one side of the street, this plan recommends adding on-street parking to increase supply and calm traffic.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

Architects and designers often say that form follows function, but in most communities form follows parking requirements. Suburban-style minimum requirements have been law in Somerville since the 1960s encourage mutations away from our city's traditional building styles. Instead of front stoops and porches that promote walking and interaction with neighbors, buildings built under these requirements frequently turn their back on the street, creating a feeling of "Anytown U.S.A."

REFORM ZONING REGULATION

Preserve Working Buildings and Make Good Design Easy

SomerVision calls on elected officials to conserve Somerville's great traditional housing, enhance our funky squares and main streets, and transform under utilized areas of the city into new complete neighborhoods. Of the more than five hundred recommended actions within SomerVision, over one fifth involve adjustments or whole-sale changes to the Somerville Zoning Ordinance. Lawmakers in Somerville have always worked hard to provide a zoning ordinance that protects the iconic character of our neighborhoods. However, two very difficult challenges have always plagued zoning in this city: one practical and one technical.

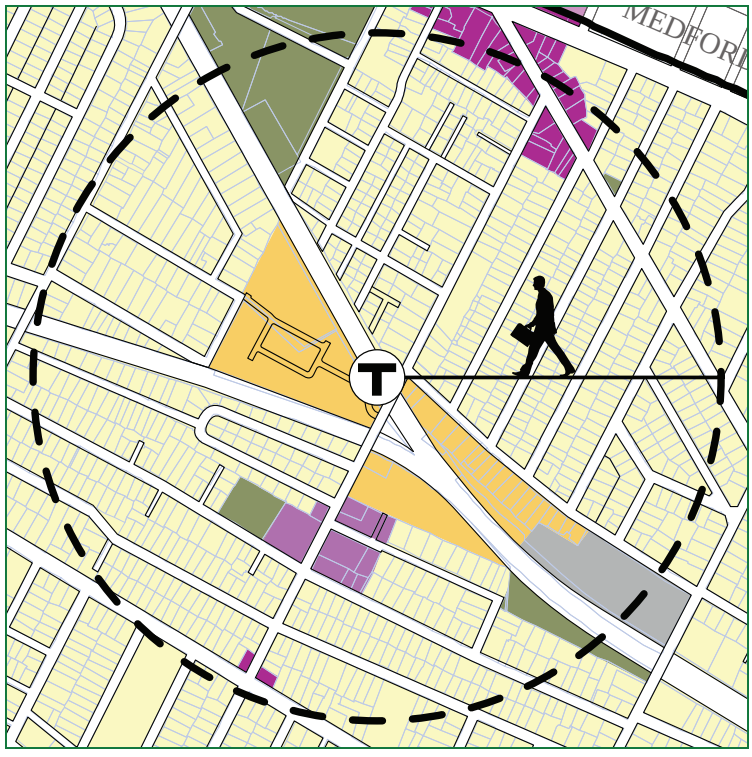
First, until SomerVision was adopted, Somerville had not done much planning for the future. Without planning for the future, a zoning ordinance must include a wide variety of discretionary permits in order properly handle changes over time - both good and bad. To remain competitive in the soft market of the 1970s, '80s, and '90s, the ordinance needed to be *reactive* to many unknowns that presented themselves on a case by case basis. Today, in a strong market and with a plan in place to guide the future development of the city, a code is needed that is less discretionary and more *proactive* about what is wanted where.

Second, the primary objective of any zoning ordinance written for Somerville is to control the infill of existing lots and the adaptation of existing buildings across the city. Conventional use based zoning does not provide the tools to differentiate one type of building from another in a city where the existing buildings are diverse in design despite having the same 'use' (ie. residential). It is now common to find apartment buildings built in districts intended for houses specifically because this problem is built-in to the existing code.

Since early in 2012, the Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development has been constructing a completely new regulatory system from the ground up. The end result will be an ordinance that is an effective, responsive, fair, efficient, user-friendly, and predictable but flexible system to regulate land development. The project to reform and modernize the zoning ordinance will provide the city with a new system to regulate physical form and quality of place while also improving readability, organization, and graphic design. The first 'discussion draft' of the new ordinance is scheduled to be released in May 2014.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Create a "Low-Rise Mixed Use" district of three-story, mixed use buildings for lots currently zoned RC in the Lowell Street station area (near Albion Street).
- Create a "Fabrication" district that will protect the light manufacturing and artist uses at the Rogers Foam building.
- Create a "Neighborhood Residence" district to protect existing cottages and two-unit houses.
- Create an "Urban Residence" district to promote predictable, multi-unit infill close to Lowell St. station.

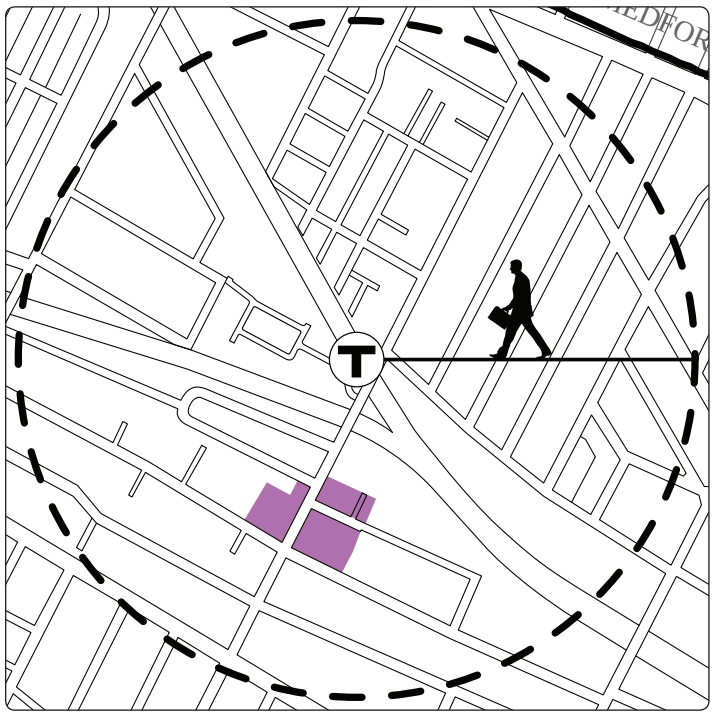


PROPOSED NEW ZONING MAP (September 2014)

Zoning reform around the Lowell Street station will create stronger and more predictable protections for traditional residential blocks. Residential conversion of iconic artist buildings like Rogers Foam / Vernon Street Studios will be prohibited. Warehouse buildings at Albion Street will be encouraged to redevelop at modest scales consistent with this plan.

- NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENCE
- URBAN RESIDENCE
- CIVIC
- LOW-RISE MIXED USE A
- LOW-RISE MIXED USE B
- FABRICATION

Low-Rise Mixed-Use A



BUILDING TYPES

- Cottage
- House
- Paired House
- Duplex
- Triple Decker
- Paired Triple Decker
- Row House
- Four Plex
- Six Plex
- Apartment House
- Apartment Building
- Town Houses
- Shop House
- Commercial Building
- Mixed Use Building
- Civic Building
- Production Building
- Fabrication Loft
- Storage Warehouse
- Live Work Loft

- Not Permitted
- by Special Permit
- by Right

EXPAND SOMERVILLE*by*DESIGN

Local Plans Need Local Input

When the station area planning series began, there were questions about where the Lowell Street station area began and ended. Would the planning effort simply focus on Lowell Street itself? Would the small business district at Highland Avenue receive the same emphasis as the larger district in Magoun Square? Does the recreation complex at Trum Field factor prominently in the neighborhood plan?

As the public process unfolded, participants encouraged the design team to focus on the area immediately around the Green Line station. Lowell Street itself has major needs related to lighting, tree canopy, storm water management and traffic calming. Many residents emphasized the importance of the cluster of warehouse and commercial properties around Albion Street and Woodbine Street. The Community Path Extension, connections to Somerville Junction Park, and the preservation of the Rogers Foam / Vernon Street studio complex were hot topics.

Magoun Square itself generated a great deal of enthusiasm among participants. But neighborhood residents also cautioned the design team that Magoun Square is larger than the Medford Street corridor. Commercial properties on Broadway are crucial parts of the neighborhood, even if they are outside the traditional walking distances from the Green Line station. Stakeholders want better connections

from Magoun Square west to Ball Square, and east toward the top of Winter Hill. In the other direction from the station, Highland Avenue presented the same challenges of geography.

Toward the end of the station area planning series, an interesting thing happened. Residents and advocates from other Somerville neighborhoods began requesting their own planning initiatives using the Somerville*by*Design method of participatory neighborhood planning. Federal funding for the City's Green Line station area planning series was limited to the station areas of the Green Line Extension, but there was enough demand that the City of Somerville authorized local funds to launch new neighborhood plans in mid-2013. In mid-2014, a planning process for Winter Hill is expected to begin.

The popularity of the Somerville*by*Design neighborhood planning model suggested that places like Magoun Square and Highland Avenue could potentially launch their own, specific planning efforts. If a study area boundary becomes too large, there is always a risk that local issues will not be dealt with in enough detail. As a result, this Station Area Plan recommends that a specific, district planning effort for Magoun Square be initiated. Similarly, a corridor planning effort for Highland Avenue should be conducted. The Lowell Street Station Area plan is an important tool to guide change, but it cannot capture all of the detail needed for those neighboring districts in a meaningful way. Somerville is building a culture of grassroots neighborhood planning. Let's make sure that each neighborhood has the same opportunity to plan for its future.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Use the Somerville*by*Design methodology to generate a neighborhood plan for Magoun Square and Broadway.
- Use the Somerville*by*Design methodology to generate a corridor plan for Highland Avenue.

Community-based partnerships are the key to Somerville's success. In 2013, City officials celebrated the Community Path Extension ground-breaking with the Somerville Chamber of Commerce, the Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership, and the Friends of the Community Path.

"When asked to identify a favorite part of the Lowell Street plan, one survey respondent wrote: 'The out-of-the-box thinking around the station

6

LOWELL STREET GETTING THINGS DONE

Plans succeed or fail in their implementation. Somerville*by*Design has sparked a new approach to neighborhood planning in Somerville and this plan for the Lowell Street station area offers a fresh way to think about getting things done. Neighborhood residents and business owners contributed valuable expertise to the process by steering the design team toward solutions that can be put into action this year, not just ten years from now.

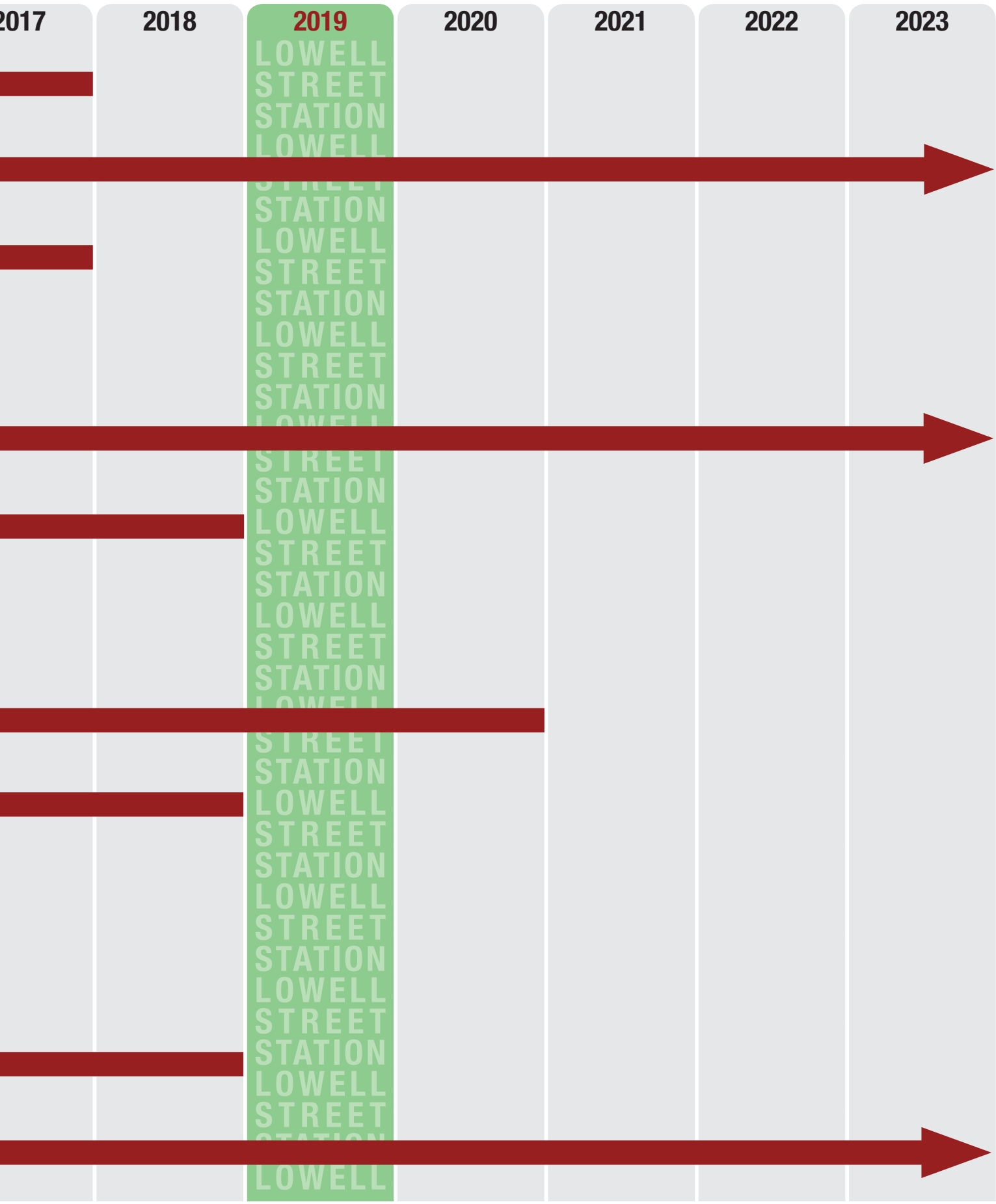
Our January 8th, 2013 "Plan Presentation" meeting brought 140 community members together to hold the project team accountable. Updated designs were presented and participants used a survey form to identify what they liked and what they didn't. An important consensus emerged that focused on improving the pedestrian environment of Lowell Street using all the tools available: street trees, pedestrian oriented lighting, repairs and maintenance, informational signage, and slowing cars down. When asked to identify a favorite part of the Lowell Street plan, one survey respondent wrote: "The out-of-the-box thinking around the station".

On the following pages, the plan objectives discussed and visualized in Chapter 5 are fleshed out with meaningful, real-world action steps that the City and its partners can take to turn our shared vision into reality. The actions are illustrated as a calendar stretching out ten years into the future. Each of the plan objectives is listed on the left side of the page to create an easy-to-use reference back to Chapter 5.

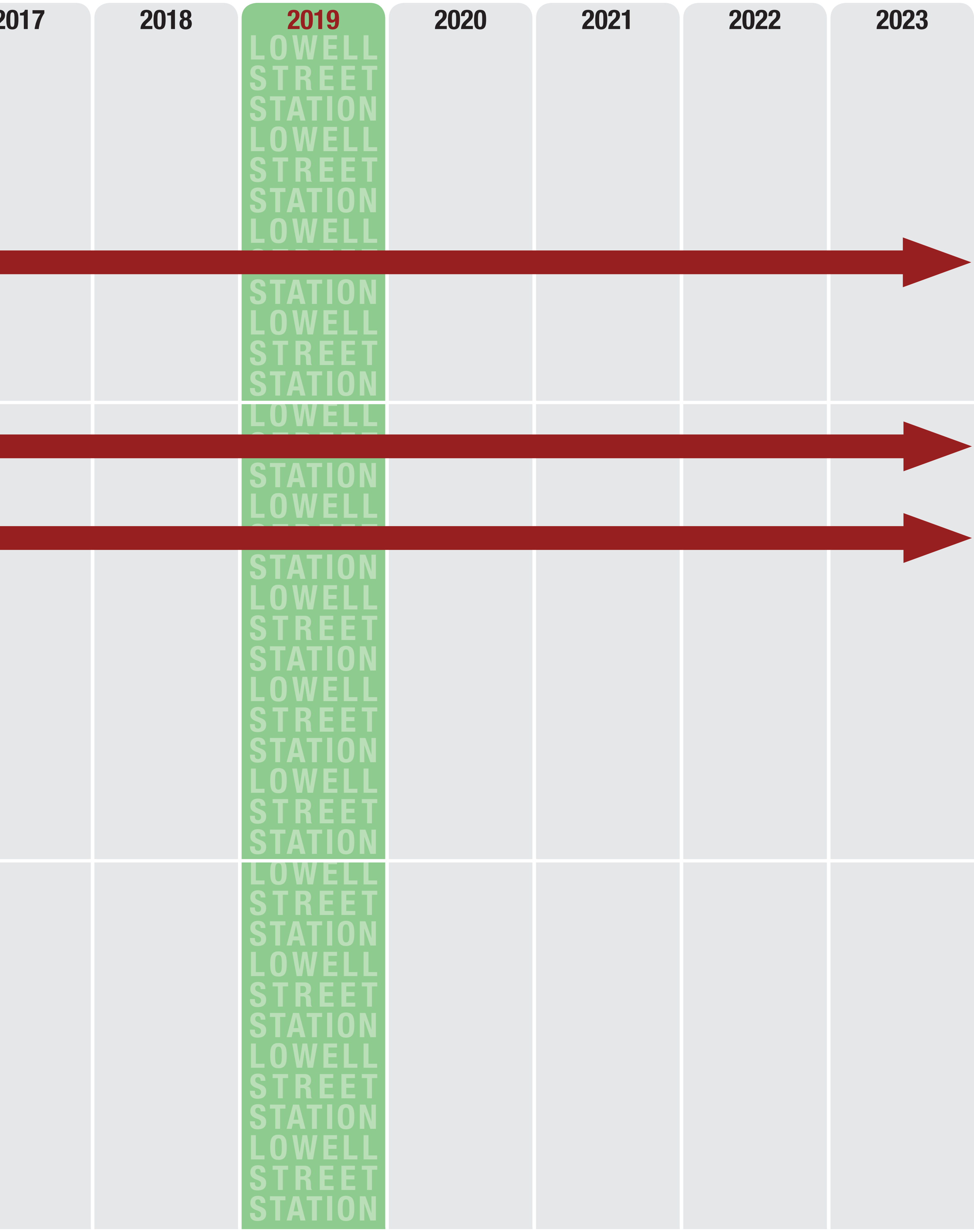
Each plan objective has between two and eleven specific actions, resulting in a checklist consisting of 42 specific steps. Some actions depend on one another, while others can be independently pursued. Some are completely within the City's authority, while others require coordination with partners in state government, the private sector, and among community-based organizations. By using the calendar model to present this information, the plan can help external partners make informed decisions about the future by important milestones, but it will also help Somerville residents hold the City and its partners accountable.

The year 2019 is highlighted on the calendar to identify the date that MassDOT and the MBTA have publicly committed to opening Lowell Street station for service. This lends a sense of urgency to all the actions listed in this plan. Somerville residents must continue to advocate for the Green Line Extension (and Community Path Extension), but to truly achieve our vision of a neighborhood that maintains its Somerville identity while inviting new public and private investment, we must ensure that many other actions are begun, or even completed by 2019. We can see changes all around us and, with more on the way, we have an opportunity to steer those changes in a way that is consistent with our core values as a community. Let's keep thinking out of the box!


IMPROVE WALKABILITY
2014
2015
2016
Replace existing street lamps with LED bulbs that provide better, clearer, and more consistent light quality on primary walking routes
Require infill development along Lowell Street to include pedestrian oriented lighting along frontages
Improve sidewalks, crosswalks, and curb ramps identified as high priorities in the City's 2013 Curb and Ramp Inventory and 2013 Pavement Management Plan
Develop a Safe Routes to Transit program to coordinate City Departments in making improvements to walking and cycling routes to Lowell Street station
Complete the Community Path Extension to Lowell Street and maintain and manage the space effectively
Partner with the MBTA and MassDOT to design and build the full Community Path Extension simultaneously with the Green Line construction
Design and install wayfinding to guide pedestrian and cyclists from Lowell Street station and the Somerville Community Path to Magoun Square, Highland Avenue, and Somerville Junction Park
Create a safe and attractive walking environment on Woodbine Street Extension to connect Lowell Street to Somerville Junction Park
Support the MBTA's efforts to design, build, and maintain high-quality short- and long-term bicycle parking at Lowell Street station
Install, monitor, and evaluate the effectiveness of interim traffic calming techniques on Lowell Street
Conduct a physical survey of Lowell Street, Cedar Street, and Central Street to accurately map curb cuts, existing street trees, and existing on-street parking.
Add on-street parking to both sides of the roadway where possible on Lowell, Cedar, and Central Street.
Opportunistically install new street trees in sidewalk extensions that can provide larger soil areas for street trees than found in normal sidewalk widths.


2017
2018
2019
2020
2021
2022
2023
LOWELL STREET STATION


2014
2015
2016
IMPROVE WALKABILITY
Study the feasibility of "chicaning" the roadway of Street, Cedar Street, and Center Street by alternating on street parking from one side of the street to the other.
Deploy a comprehensive data collection survey of actual vehicular operating speeds on streets throughout the city.
Require data collection on collector and arterial streets in station areas on an annual basis.
Submit a Home Rule petition to the State Legislature requesting local jurisdiction over posted speed limits on local streets
SUPPORT TRANSIT ORIENTED INFILL
Expand local employment opportunities and create spaces available for the arts by developing infill projects with commercial first floor spaces.
Reinforce the street edge along Lowell Street with buildings constructed close to the front lot line of abutting properties.
Implement facade design requirements that include pedestrian-scale lighting, high transparency, and appropriate signage.
Maintain existing character of the station area by limiting both mixed-use and residential infill development to three stories.
Promote a diversity of building types to be included in infill projects as appropriate.
ENCOURAGE ADAPTIVE REUSE
Establish an assistance program that offers low-cost and forgivable loans for adaptive re-use projects.
Explore creation of a city-funded storefront improvement program in neighborhoods not eligible under federal programs.
Require properties that receive financial incentives for adaptive re-use conversions to protect spaces for fabrication and other creative uses through deed restrictions.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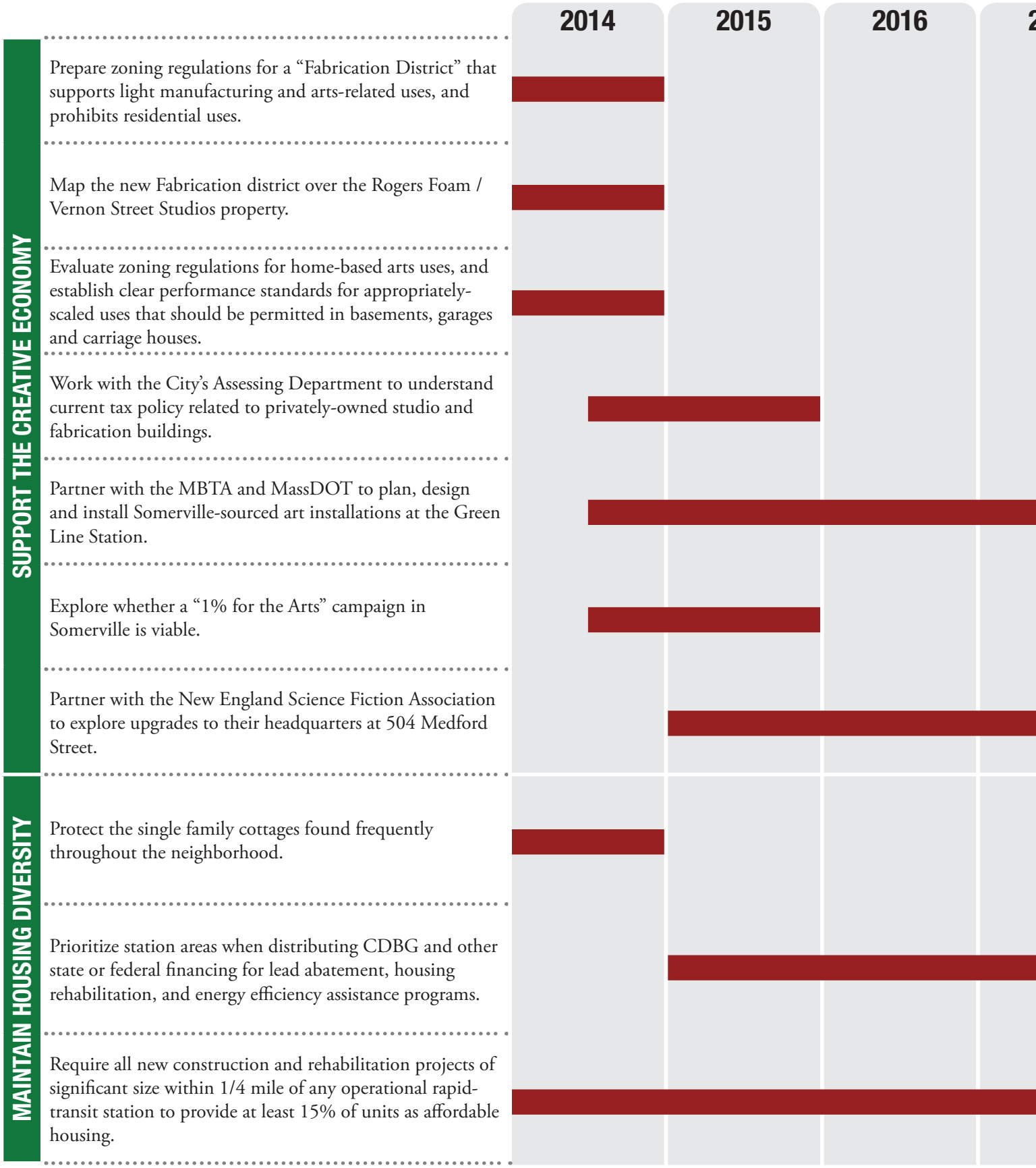
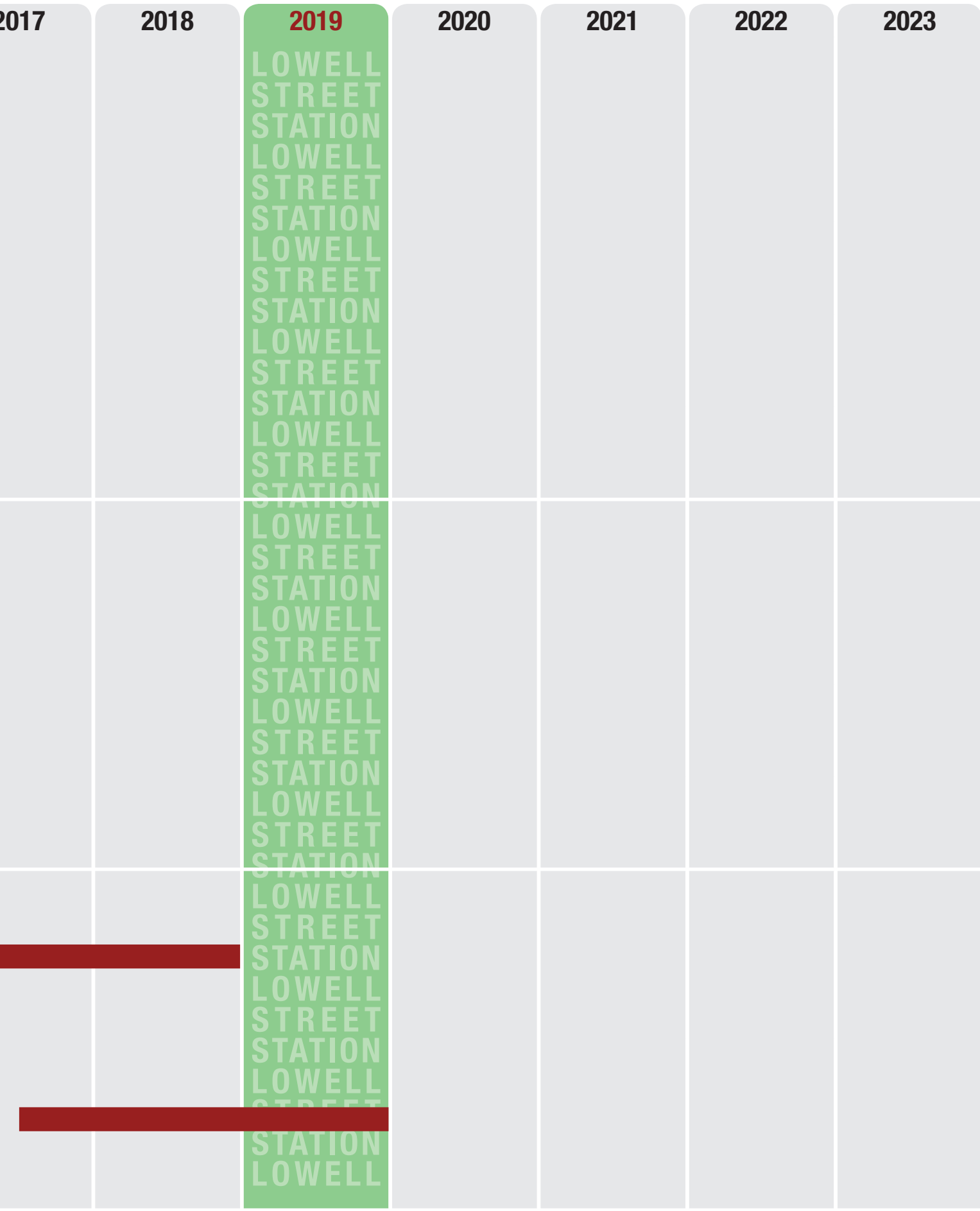
LOWELL STREET STATION


2014
2015
2016
SUPPORT THE CREATIVE ECONOMY
Prepare zoning regulations for a "Fabrication District" that supports light manufacturing and arts-related uses, and prohibits residential uses.
Map the new Fabrication district over the Rogers Foam / Vernon Street Studios property.
Evaluate zoning regulations for home-based arts uses, and establish clear performance standards for appropriately-scaled uses that should be permitted in basements, garages and carriage houses.
Work with the City's Assessing Department to understand current tax policy related to privately-owned studio and fabrication buildings.
Partner with the MBTA and MassDOT to plan, design and install Somerville-sourced art installations at the Green Line Station.
Explore whether a "1% for the Arts" campaign in Somerville is viable.
Partner with the New England Science Fiction Association to explore upgrades to their headquarters at 504 Medford Street.
MAINTAIN HOUSING DIVERSITY
Protect the single family cottages found frequently throughout the neighborhood.
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 at least 15% of units as affordable housing.


2017
2018
2019
2020
2021
2022
2023
LOWELL STREET STATION


2014
2015
2016
ADOPT SMART PARKING POLICY
Reform zoning regulation to require an off-street parking ratio of 1.0 space per unit, regardless of bedroom count.
Adopt a transit-oriented parking reduction of 0.5 spaces for any property within 1/4 mile of an operating rapid-transit station.
Eliminate off-street parking requirements for first-floor retail uses within 1/4 mile of an operational rapid-transit station.
Require tuck-under or structured parking for all new construction.
Permit the street frontage of properties to count toward parking requirements.
REFORM ZONING REGULATION
Create a "Low-Rise Mixed Use" district of three-story, mixed use buildings for lots currently zoned RC in the Lowell Street station area (near Albion Street).
Create a "Fabrication" district that will protect the light manufacturing and artist uses at the Rogers Foam building.
Create a "Neighborhood Residence" district to protect existing cottages and two-unit houses.
Create an "Urban Residence" district to promote predictable, multi-unit infill close to Lowell St. station.
EXPAND SOMERVILLE*by*DESIGN
Use the Somerville*by*Design methodology to generate a neighborhood plan for Magoun Square and Broadway.
Use the Somerville*by*Design methodology to generate a corridor plan for Highland Avenue.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LOWELL STREET STATION

We are at a special moment in Somerville's proud history. For decades our residents, community groups, and businessowners have worked to reconnect our city using the timeless technique of integrating public transit into great walkable neighborhoods. We are correcting the failed policies of the 1950s and '60s because the evidence is in: our economy, our public health, and our social fabric are best served by a human-scaled city, not an automobile-scaled city.

Still, when we launched Somerville by Design in 2012, no one knew what would happen. The only guarantee we had was that the public process would succeed or fail based on how much ownership our stakeholders were willing to take. Members of our community can provide valuable insite into the needs in any neighborhood and we structured our public process to channel that expertise into actionable public policy. You rose to the occasion by contributing time, energy, and ideas that make this Lowell Street station area plan different than any other station area plan to date.

Our award-winning, community-driven SomerVision Comprehensive Plan gives us a big-picture for the future: take all of the things that make Somerville a great place to live, work, play, and raise a family and make them even better. We want more jobs, more local businesses, more services, and vibrant public life together. 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 commits the City to innovation in government operations by identifying and replicating best practices from all around the country. The SomervillebyDesign station area planning series is evidence that we take SomerVision seriously. For the first time in a Somerville planning document, we are examining cutting-edge tactical approaches to traffic calming, rather than "business as usual" heavy construction. You told us to use a strategic approach to pedestrian improvements and I'm pleased to say that this station area plan offers a holistic toolkit that addresses making Lowell Street a safer environment from multiple angles. In Somerville, we honor the public taxpayer by doing more with less, so let's make sure that our choices on Lowell Street are lean, progressive, and backed up by data.

But remember, a plan document is not the end of the line, so please stay engaged. Lowell Street station will be open by 2019 and change is occurring each day. I am confident that together we can use this plan to steer 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.

Sincerely,

Joseph A Curtatone, Mayor