

# ***Brickbottom-McGrath Neighborhood Plan***

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



# ***Presentation Outline***

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



# ***Introduction***





# Who We Are



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

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



# ***Project Timeline***

*September - October*

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

***October - November***

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

*November - December*

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



# History & Context





# ***Brickbottom in 1938***





# ***Regional centrality***





# Identified as a transformational area in SomerVision



Assembly Square	125 acres
Inner Belt	115 acres
<b>Brickbottom</b>	<b>65 acres</b>
Boynton Yards	35 acres
Union Square	25 acres
<hr/>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>365 acres</b>

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



# Transportation networks and proposed Somerville Community Path





# ***Current Conditions***





# ***Current Conditions: What We've Heard***



## ***Assets***

- Strong sense of community in Artist Building
- Great location

## ***Challenges***

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



# Site Edges



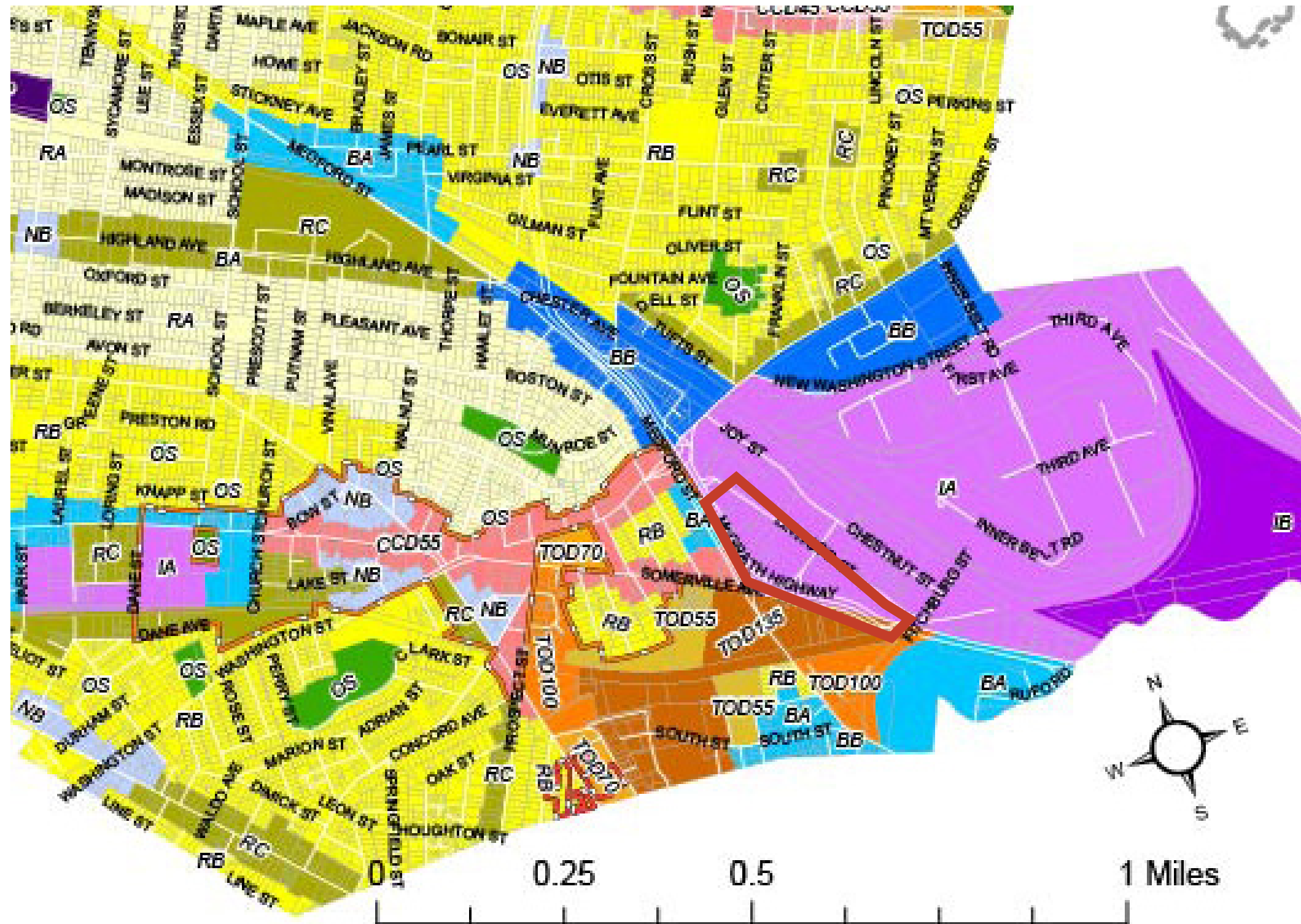
- **Railway lines** create barriers for cars and pedestrians alike
- **McGrath Highway** serves as a pedestrian and car barrier

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

- *SomerVision Comprehensive Plan, 2012*



# Industrial Zoning



- Study area currently zoned entirely IA industrial
- By far largest remaining industrial zone in Somerville



# A Mix of Uses



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





# Artist Presence



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





# Urban Design Challenges and Assets





# ***Block Size***



*Winter Hill*



*Union Square*



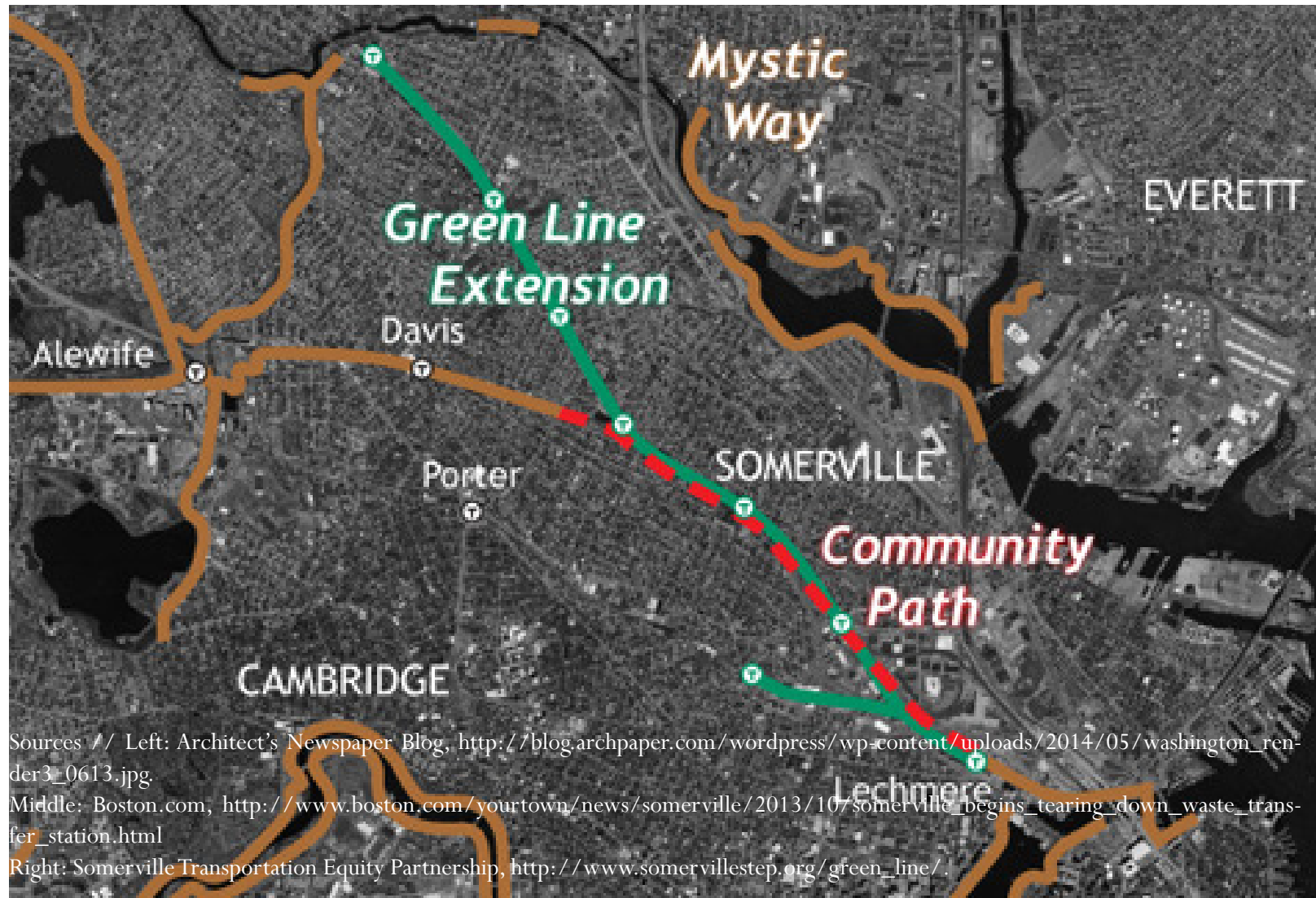
*Brickbottom / McGrath*



# Neighborhood Changes

Area in transition:

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



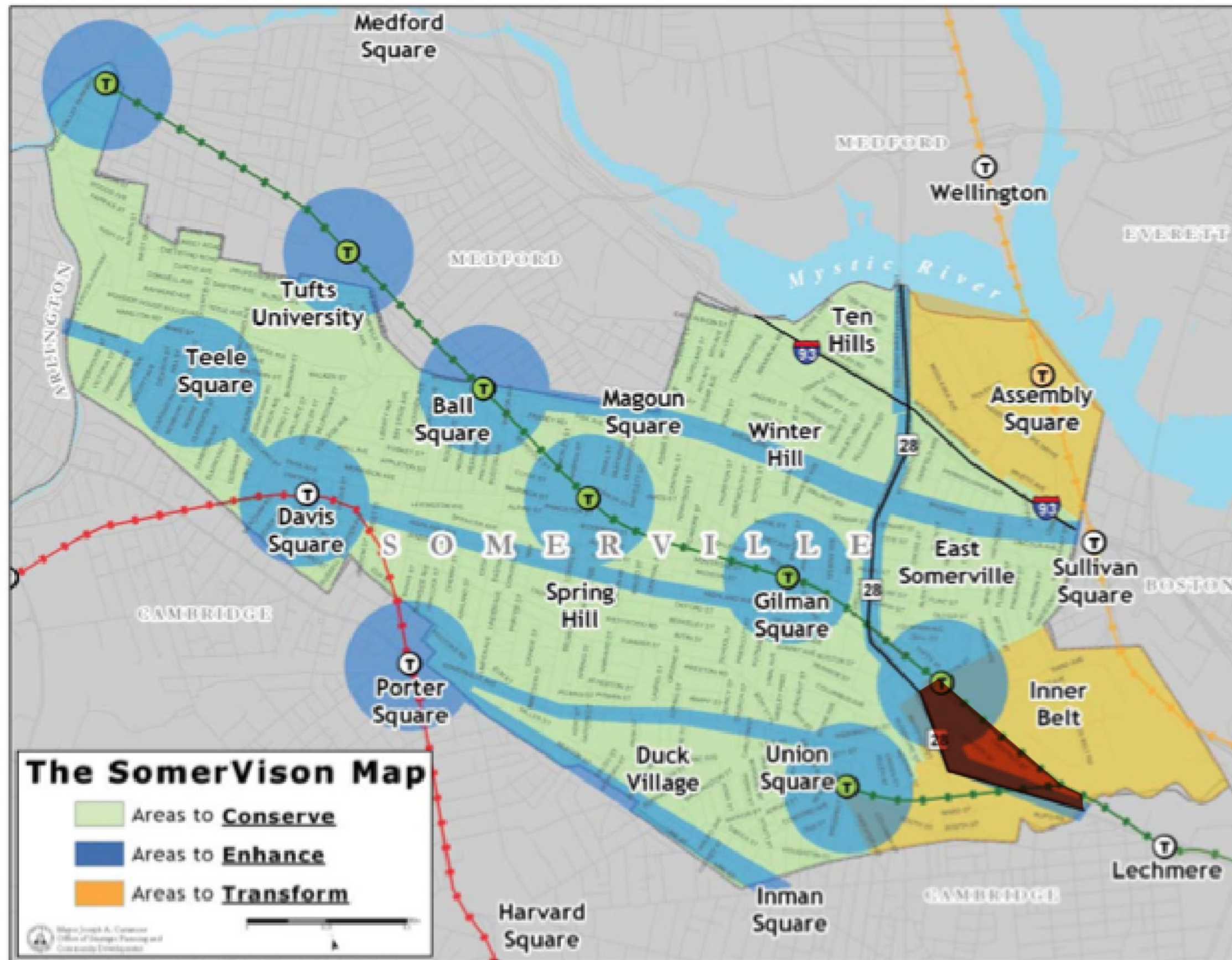


# *Existing Plans*





# SomerVision



SomerVision designates Brickbottom as an “Area to Transform”

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



# SomerVision 2030 Goals



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



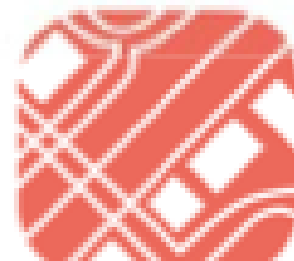
***125 New Acres of Publicly-Accessible Open Space*** as part of our realistic plan to provide high-quality and well-programmed community spaces



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



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



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

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



## ***SomerVision // Focus on Brickbottom***

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

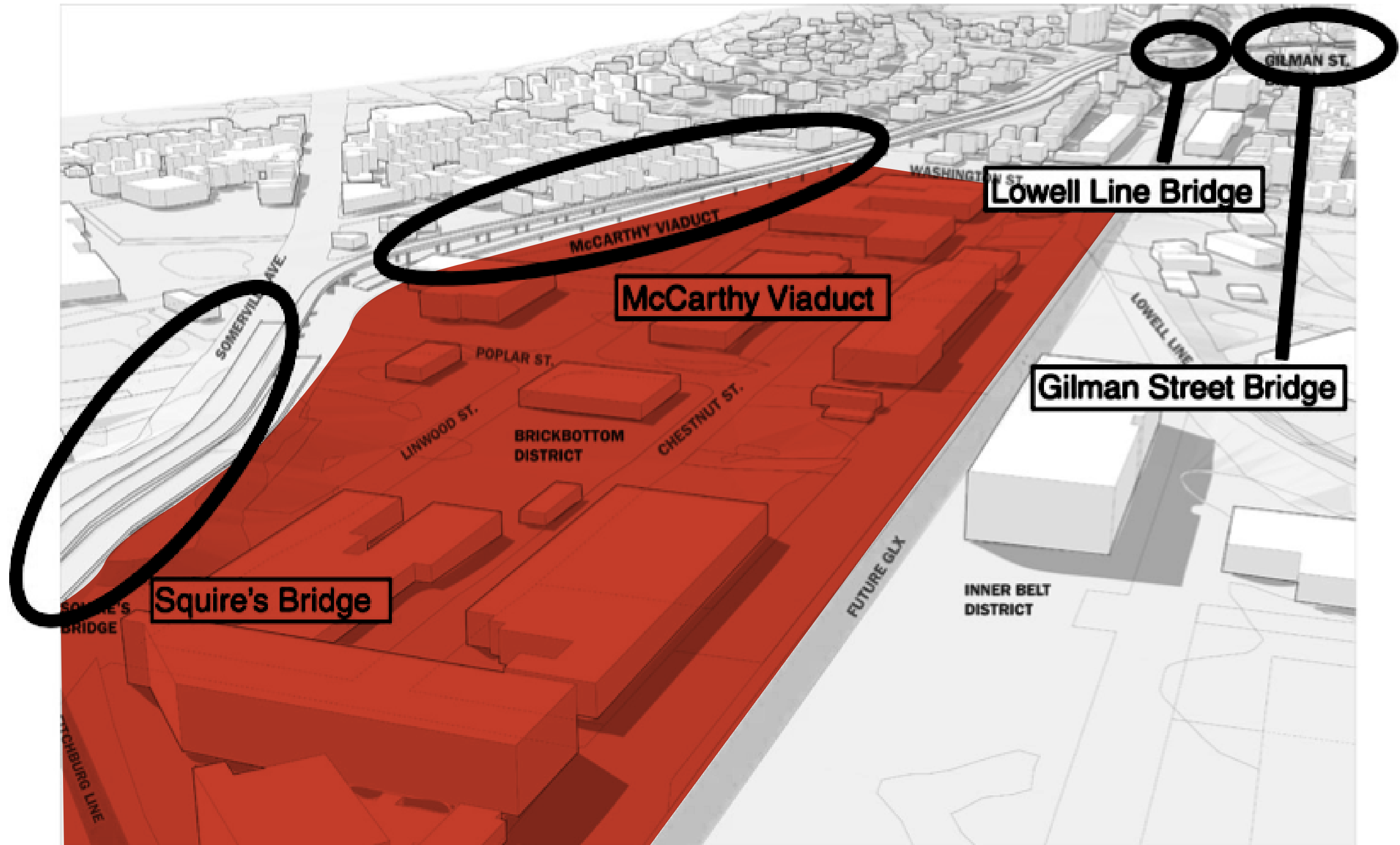
This means at least:

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

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



# Grounding McGrath



Source: MassDOT, Grounding McGrath, 2013, [http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/Portals/23/Docs/Executive\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/Portals/23/Docs/Executive_Summary.pdf)



# Grounding McGrath // Recommendations



MassDOT recommended the  
“Boulevard Alternative”

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

Source: MassDOT, Grounding McGrath, 2013, [http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/Portals/23/Docs/Executive\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/Portals/23/Docs/Executive_Summary.pdf)



# Green Line Extension

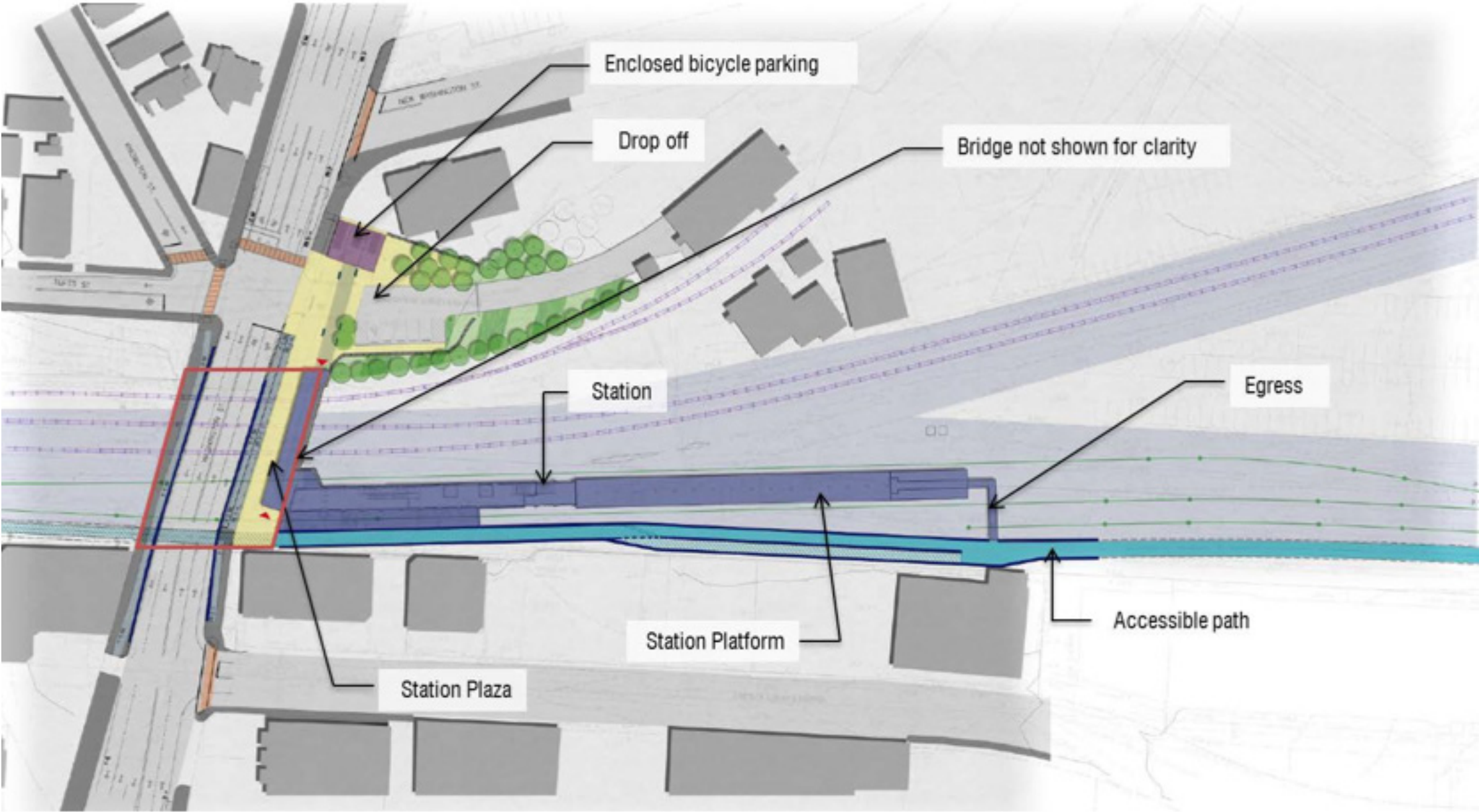


[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green\\_Line\\_Extension](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_Line_Extension)



# Green Line Extension // Washington Street Station Design

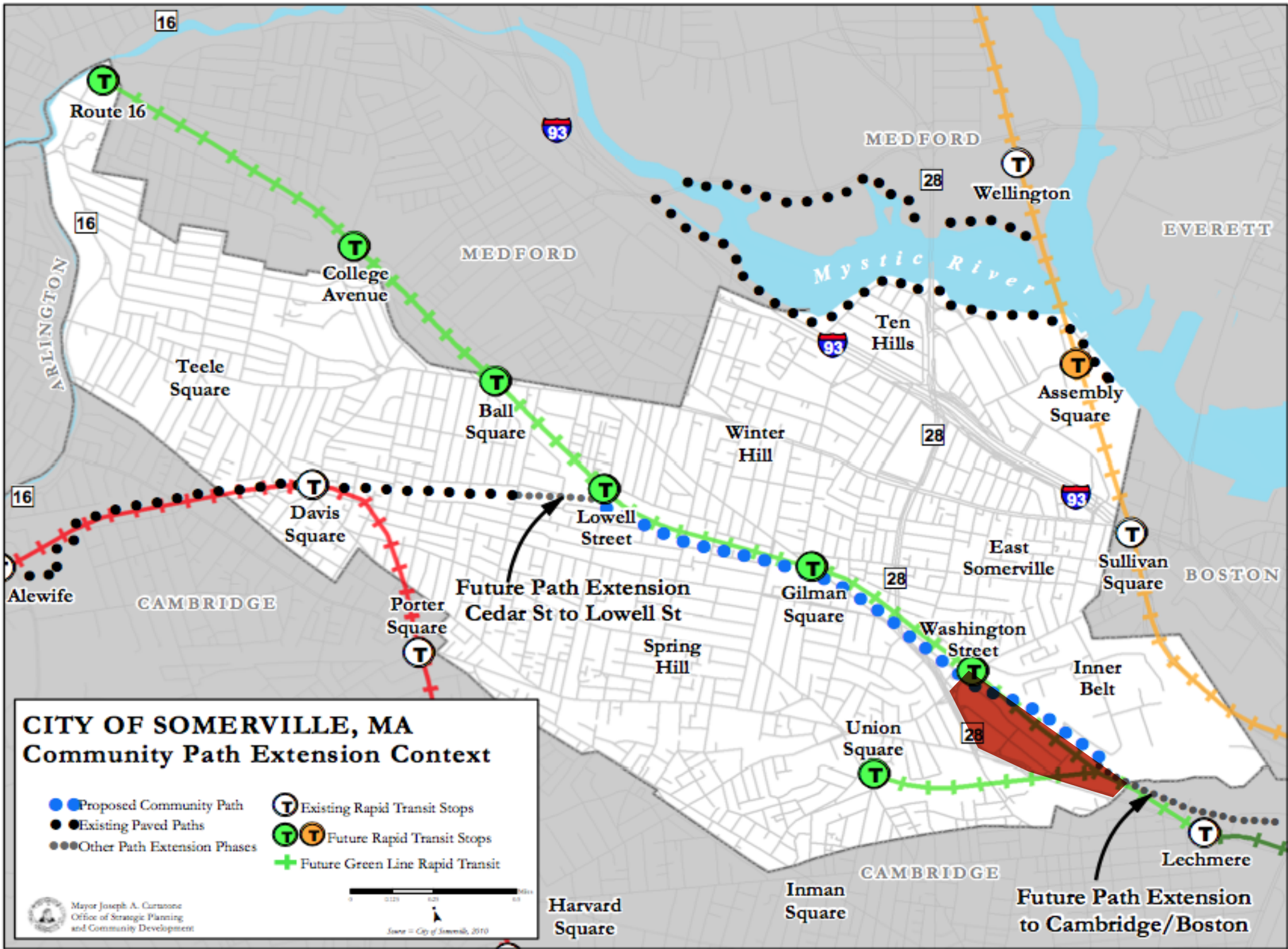
## CURRENT PROPOSED SITE PLAN



Source: MassDOT, Green Line Extension Station Design Meeting, Union Square and Washington Street, June 11, 2013, [http://greenlineextension.eot.state.ma.us/documents/PubMtgs/staDesign/union\\_washington061113.pdf](http://greenlineextension.eot.state.ma.us/documents/PubMtgs/staDesign/union_washington061113.pdf)



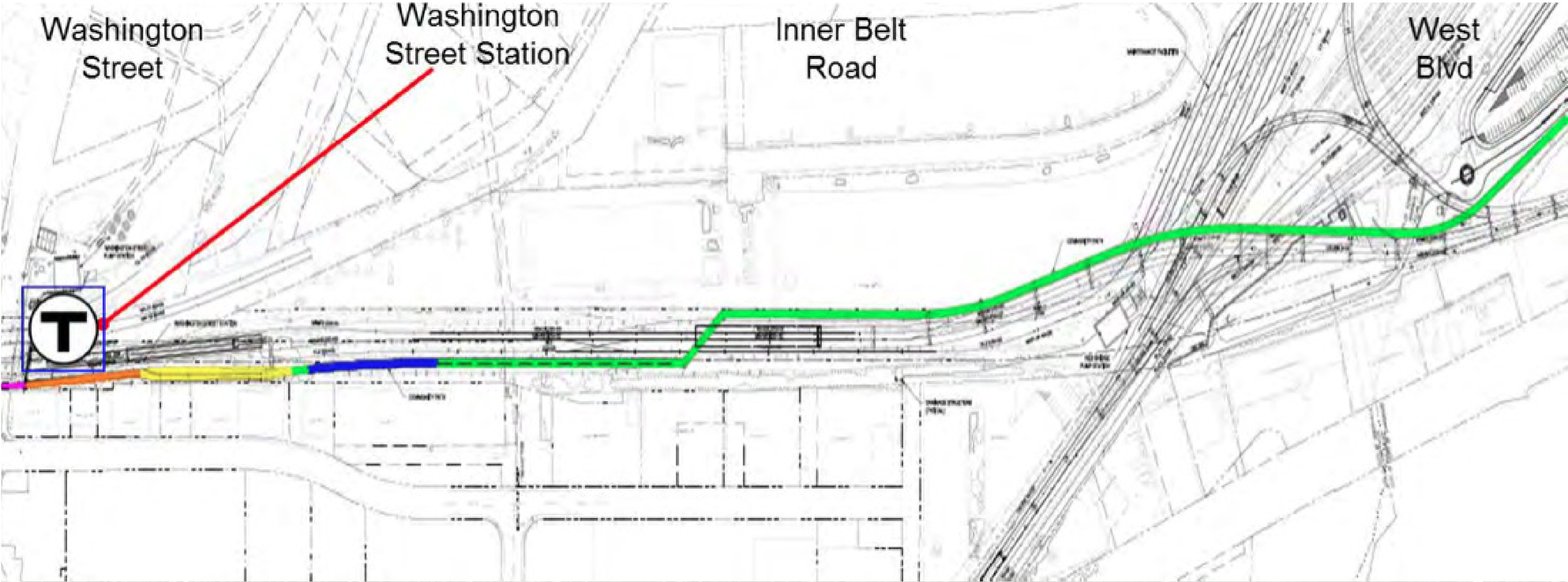
# Somerville Community Path



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



# Community Path





**massDOT**  
Massachusetts Department of Transportation

#7

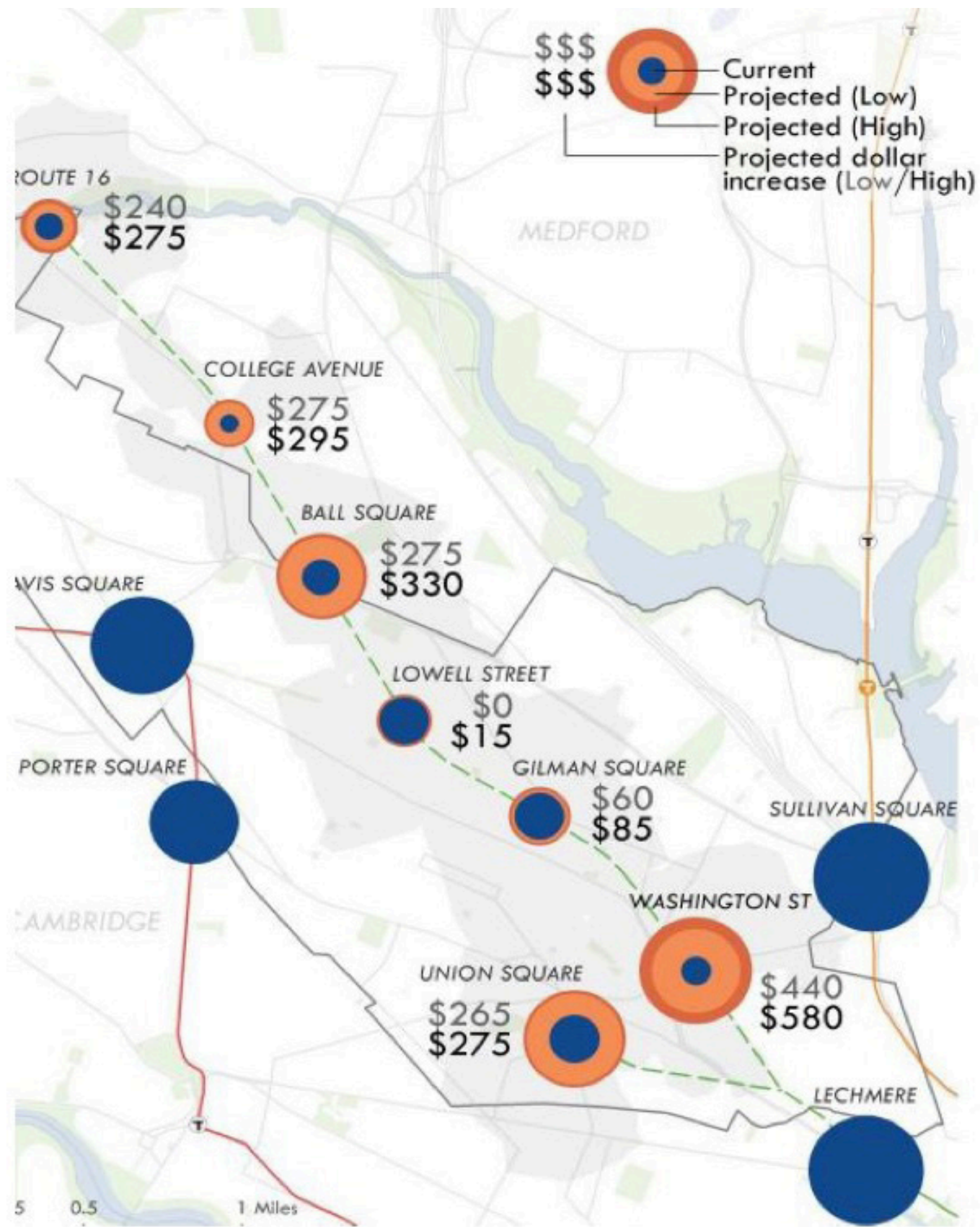


**COMMUNITY PATH**  
May 14, 2014

Source: MassDOT, Green Line Extension Station Design Meeting, Union Square and Washington Street, June 11, 2013, [http://greenlineextension.eot.state.ma.us/documents/PubMtgs/staDesign/union\\_washington061113.pdf](http://greenlineextension.eot.state.ma.us/documents/PubMtgs/staDesign/union_washington061113.pdf)



# Sustainable Neighborhoods Plan



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

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



# Takeaways





# ***Visions for the Site***





# Changes to McGrath



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



- Some new developable area
- Some open space



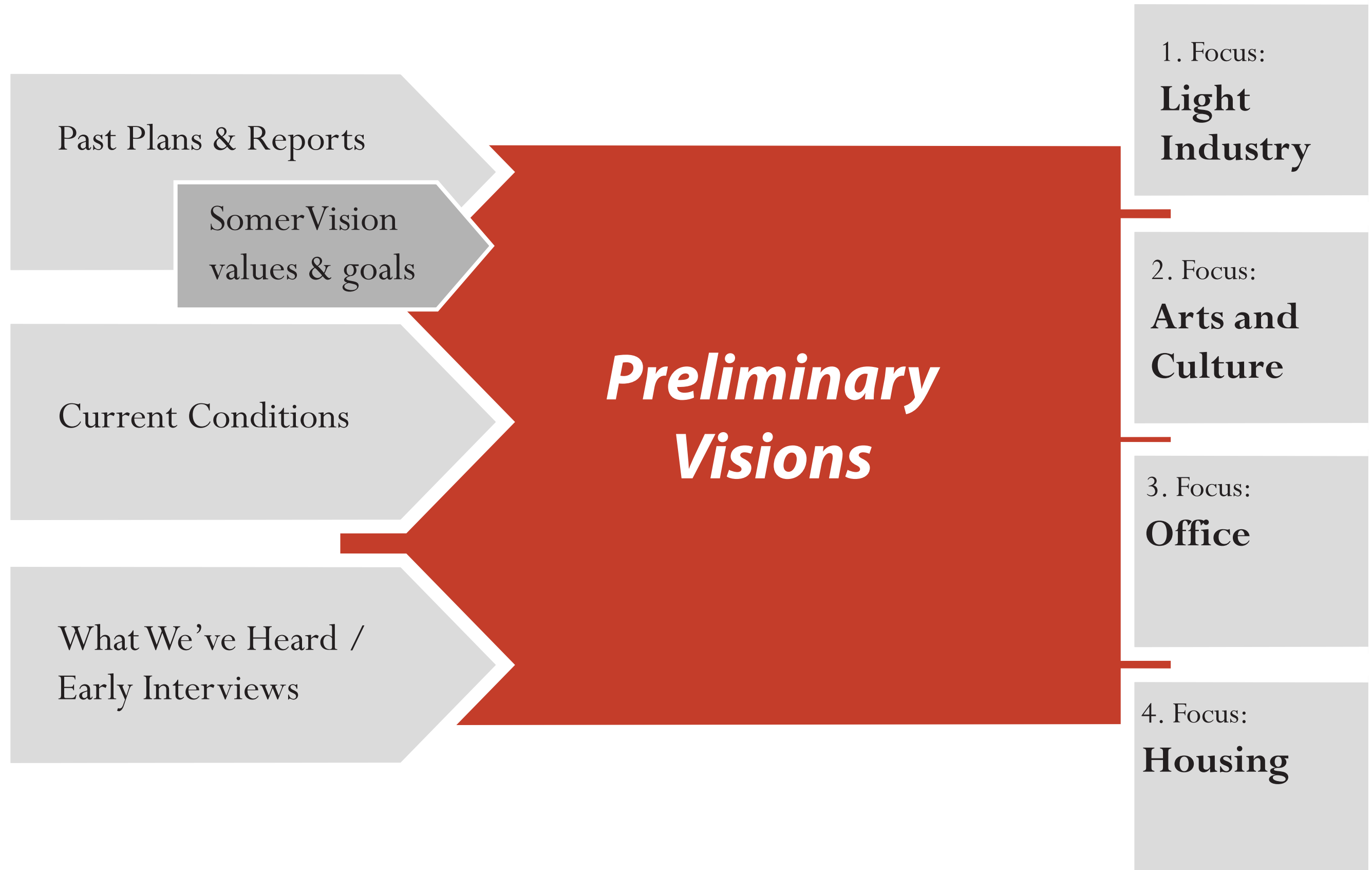
- All extra space for new development
- No new open space



## ***What We've Heard***

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







# ***Framing a Discussion***

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

1. Focus:  
**Light  
Industry**

2. Focus:  
**Arts and  
Culture**

3. Focus:  
**Office**

4. Focus:  
**Housing**



# ***Focus: Light Industry***



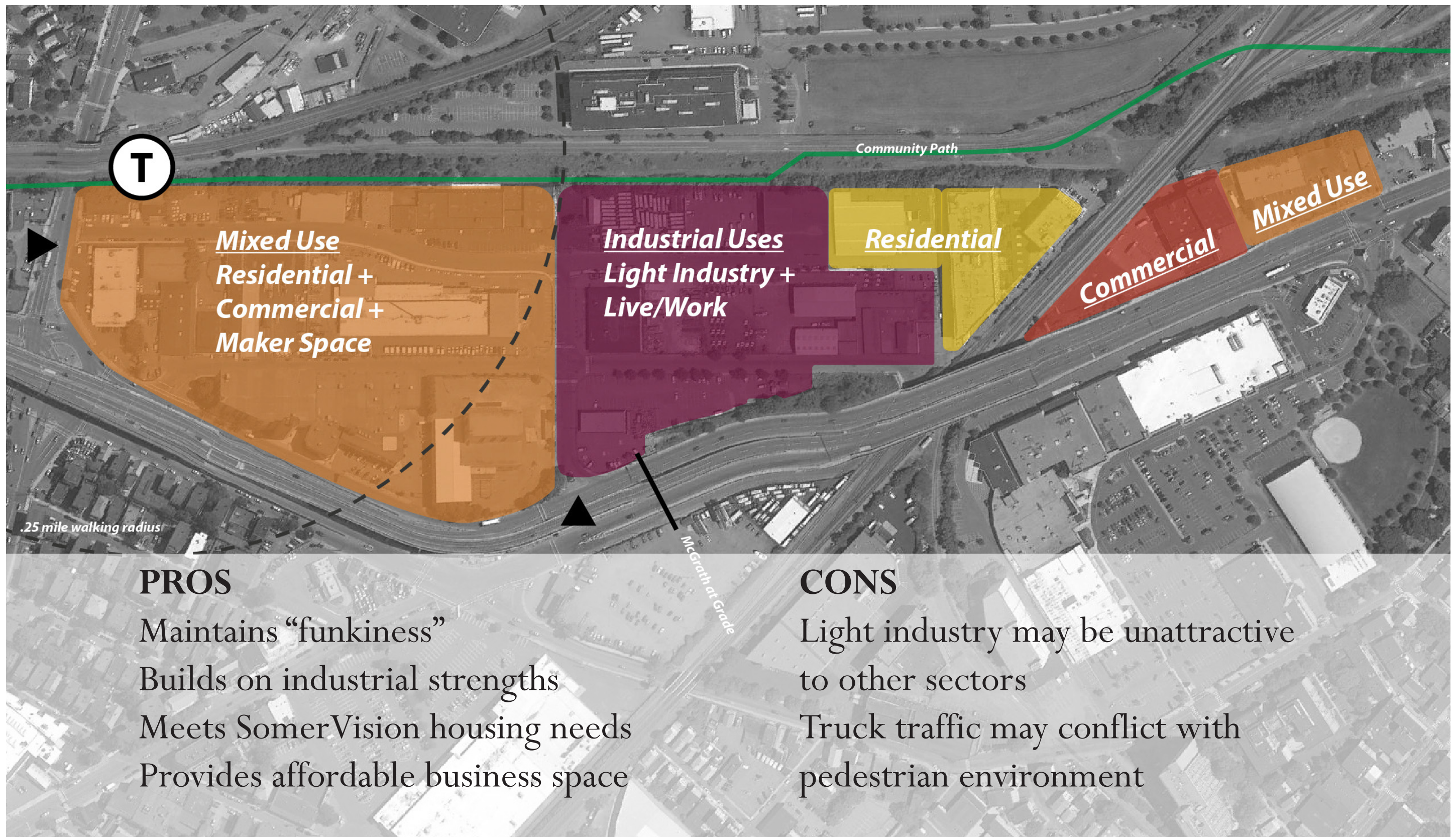
- Preserves light industry (warehouse, depot, and manufacturing) alongside infill, while improving public realm
- Can create opportunities for more flexible “maker space,” where smaller operations and hobbyists share resources



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



# Focus: Light Industry



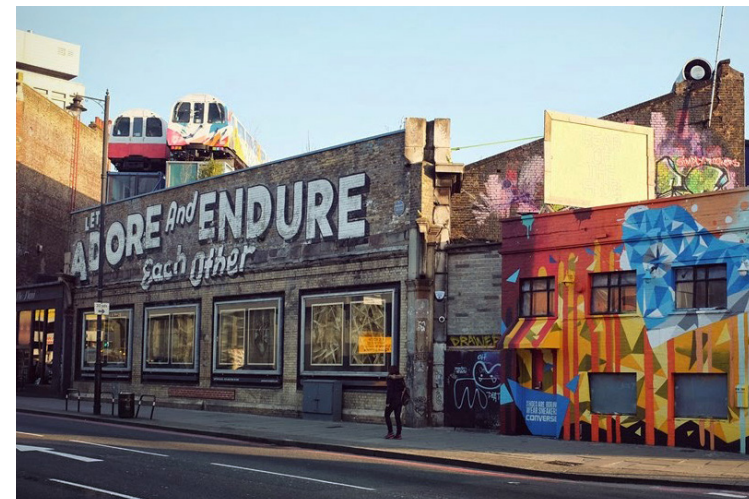


# ***Focus: Arts and Culture***



- Incorporate destination arts center and gallery space

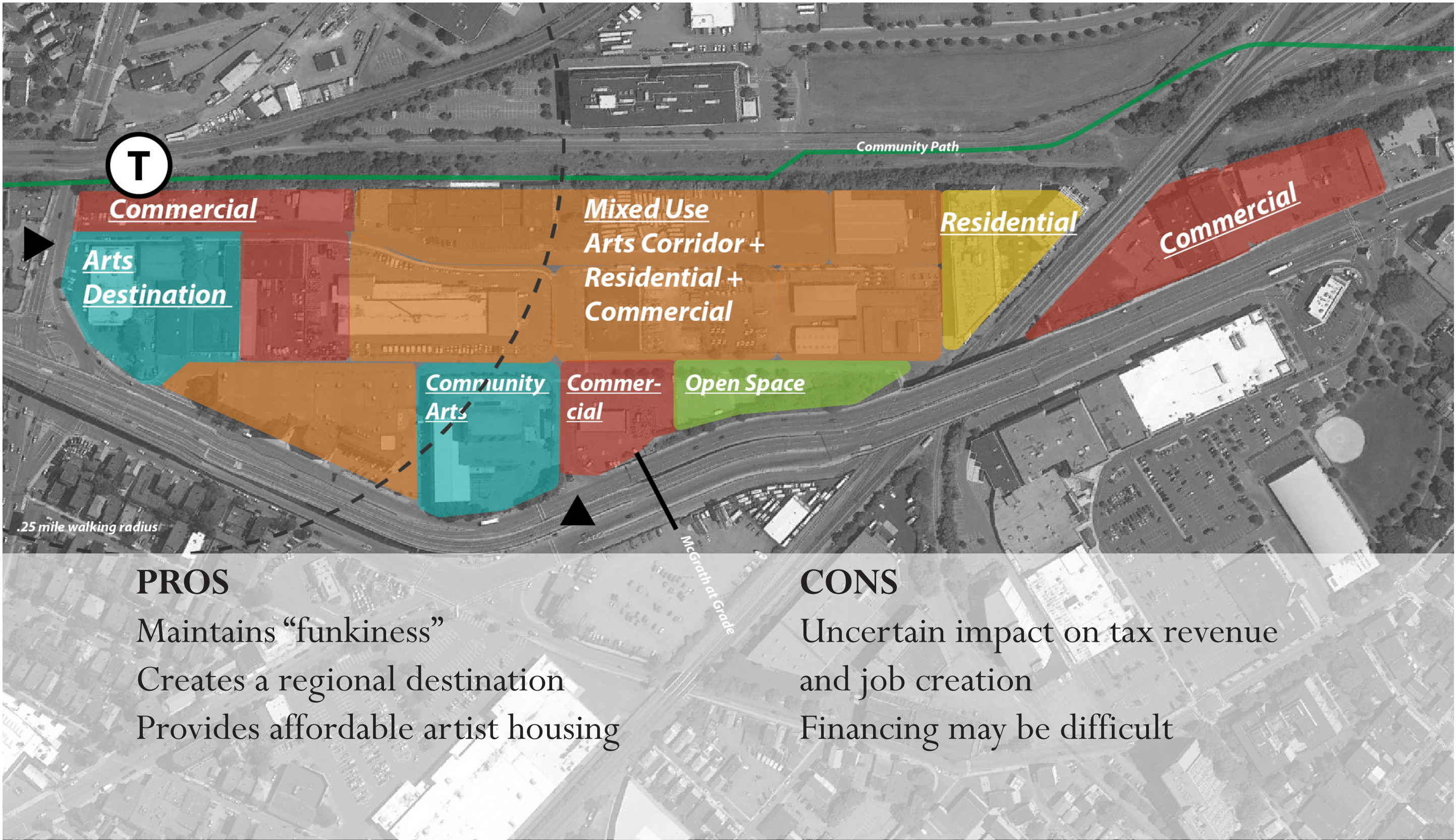
- Create a corridor linking new amenities with T station, Brickbottom Artists' Building, Joy St. Studios



- Incorporate affordable “work/live” space



# Focus: Arts and Culture





# ***Focus: Office***



- Could target “green” or specialized industries

- Set aside space for startups and small businesses

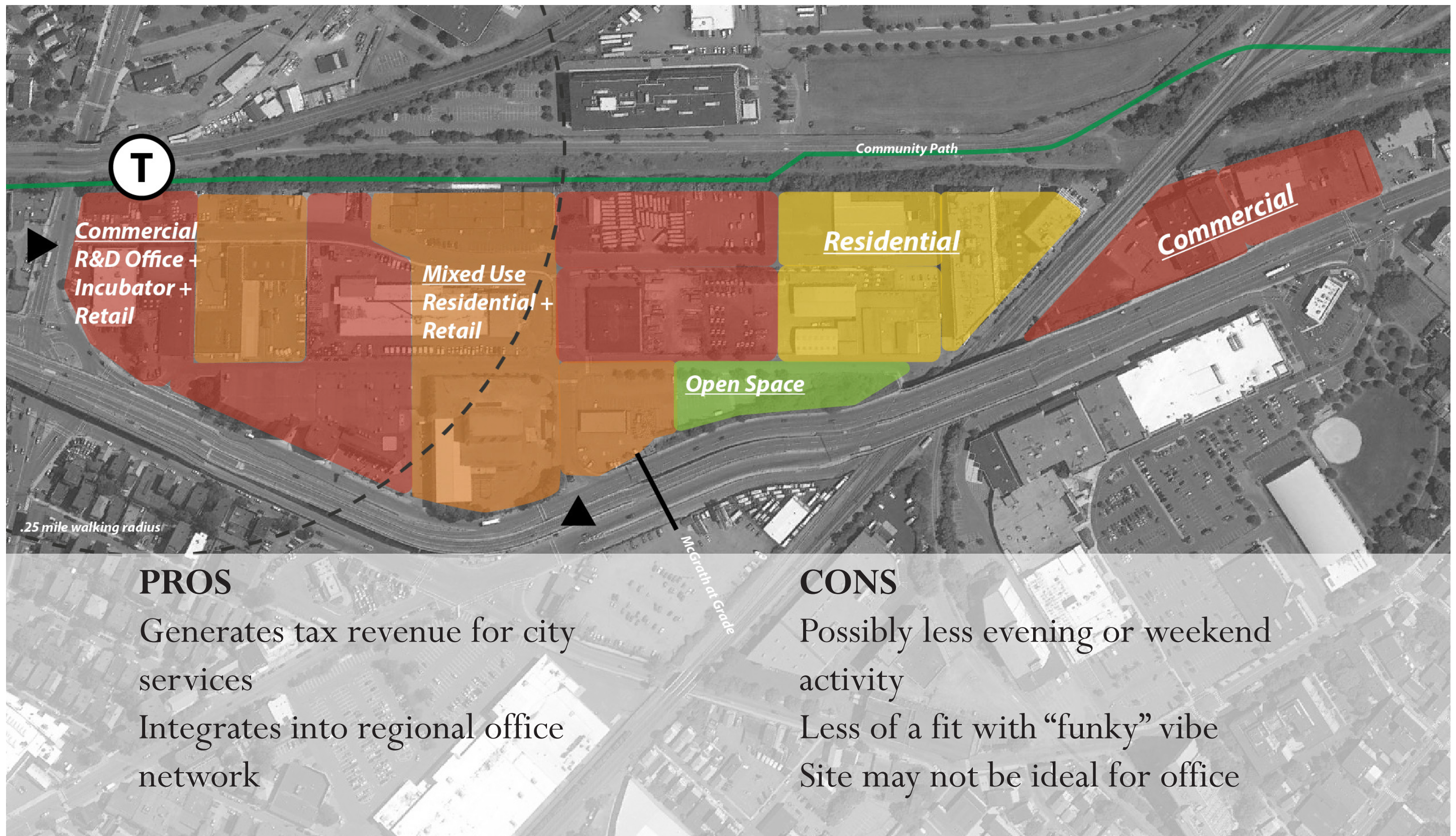
- Capitalize on proximity to universities and downtown Boston



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



# Focus: Office





# ***Focus: Housing***

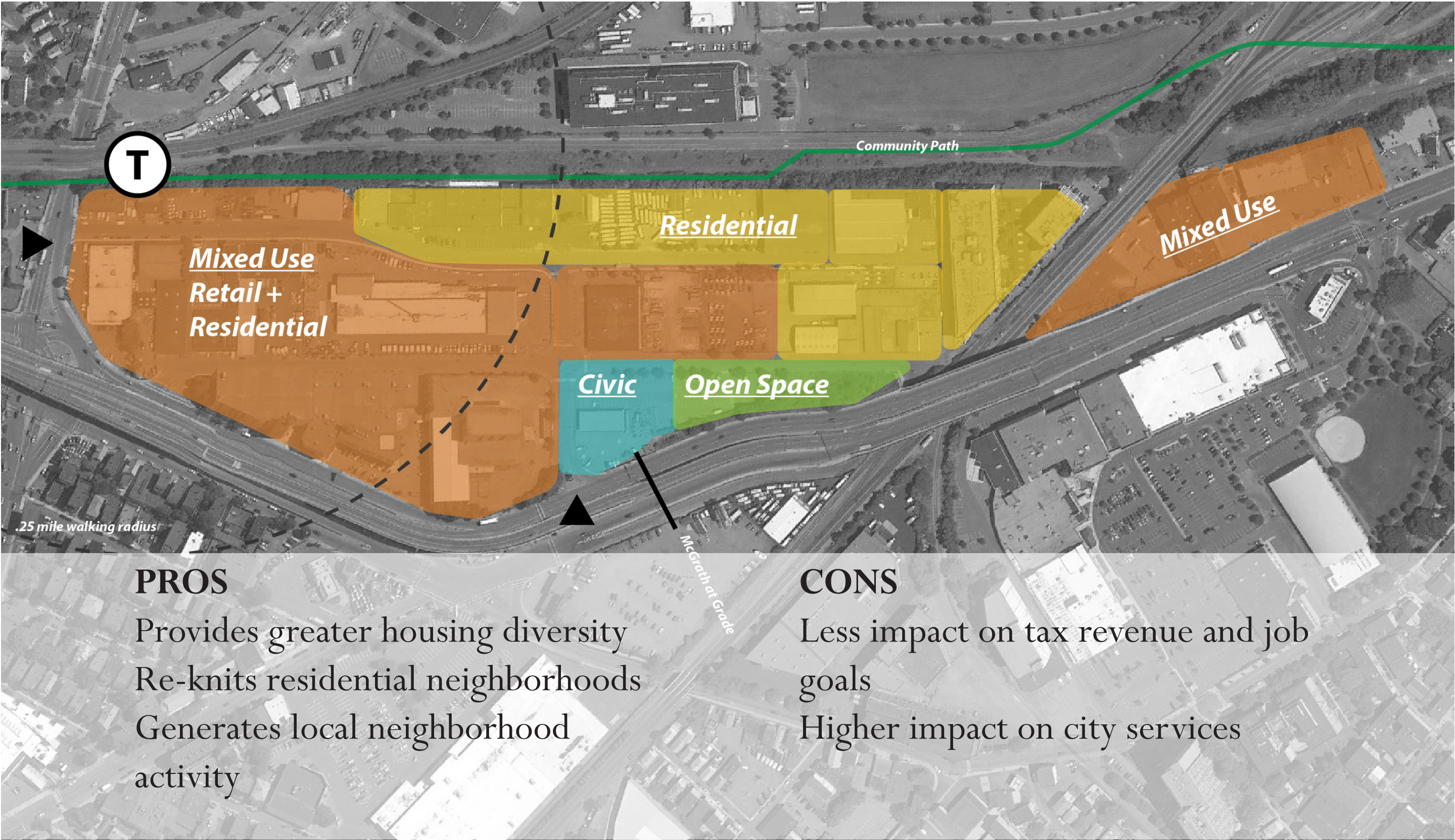


- Prioritizes housing, including family housing
- Resident-oriented mix of uses with neighborhood-scale retail





# Focus: Housing





# ***Next Steps***

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- Gain insight from key stakeholders
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*November - December*

- Build final report
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***Thank You***

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

***Contact us at [11.360@mit.edu](mailto:11.360@mit.edu)***



# Questions

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