

Neighborhood Plan 2017

Ball Square and Magoun Square



Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Department of Urban Studies and Planning
Community Growth and Land Use Planning Practicum
September - December 2017

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Somerville engaged MIT's Department of Urban Studies and Planning (DUSP) to develop a neighborhood plan for the Ball Square and Magoun Square neighborhoods in Somerville, Massachusetts. The purpose of this plan is to leverage opportunities of, and mitigate potential negative impacts from, the Green Line Extension project on this neighborhood and its residents.

Vision & Goals

This plan presents a vision to foster cohesion among the communities that live, work, play, and raise families in Ball Square and Magoun Square. This vision can be realized by achieving four primary goals:



Securing stable housing: Ensure that rising prices do not displace existing residents, and remain affordable to ensure a welcoming and diverse community.



Improving mobility: Redesign streets and promote diverse modes of transportation to allow easy and safe access to amenities, workplaces, and residences.



Creating a vibrant business district: Enable a diverse range of businesses that cater to the local communities needs, provide jobs, and attract visitors.



Making public spaces more inviting and safe: Reshape streetscapes and intersections so that pedestrians feel safer, and engage in community activities within an expanded public realm.

Methods & Process

The vision, goals, and recommendations presented in this plan resulted from a four-month engagement and planning process which employed the following methods:

- Conducting site visits to make observations and meet residents, including a walking tour, formal interviews, and trips to Ball Square and Magoun Square to observe land use, patron businesses, informally talk to community members including business owners, conduct resident surveys, and generally gain familiarity with the neighborhood.
- Hosting public meetings and workshops with community members to brainstorm ideas and receive feedback on recommendations.
- Meeting with elected and public officials to understand Somerville's priorities and the feasibility of certain recommendations.
- Collecting information from existing studies and analysis to gain technical familiarity with the neighborhood's characteristics.

Existing Conditions & Recommendations

This plan synthesizes the analysis into two thematic chapters: Mobility & Public Realm and Housing & Development. While these themes are intertwined, the former focuses on improving how people get around the study area and enhancing the public realm and the latter proposes equitable development that prioritizes affordable housing and transit-oriented growth.

Each chapter examines current conditions of economic activity and physical spaces in the study area and outlines a series of recommended projects, programs, or policies that would benefit the community.



Figure 1 . Posters showcasing preliminary findings during the first public meeting, October 24, 2017.



Figure 2 . Community members choosing preferred design scenarios during the second public meeting, November 30, 2017.



Public Realm & Mobility

Whether people drive, walk, bike, roll, or dance around the study area, everyone experiences the public realm and relies on infrastructure to support their daily errands and new adventures. This chapter includes:

1. Discussion of existing conditions of the commercial activity, public spaces, transportation, and safety; and,
2. Recommendations to help nurture the neighborhood as a community through programming, improved connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists, and design scenarios for street intersections.

Specifically, the recommendations aim to improve how people move to, from, and within the study area and enhance the public realm through the following actions:

- Design varied programming which caters to people from all walks of life, including families, artists, students, and local businesses;
- Install wayfinding features to orient visitors, highlight assets, and provide contextualized environmental and historic education;
- Improve comfort and flow of pedestrians and cyclists; and,
- Calm vehicular traffic while installing new bike infrastructure and green infrastructure.

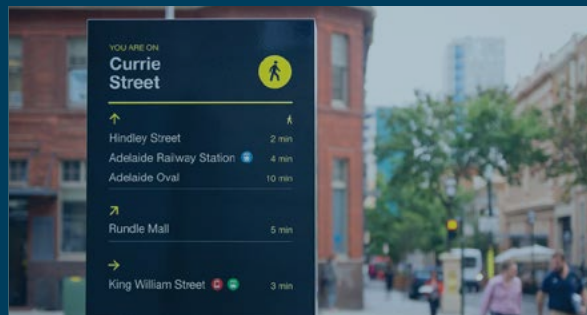


Figure 3. (Top) *SomerStreets*: The annual series shuts down streets for pedestrians and cyclists in hopes of reconnecting residents with local businesses, fresh food, and neighborhood culture. (Source: City of Somerville. *Seize the Streets @ SomerStreets*. 2015. <https://www.somervillema.gov/events/seize-summer-somerstreets/>.)

Figure 4. (Bottom) *Wayfinding*: Signage that denotes direction and distance to places of interest can help increase peoples' ability to move throughout the area. (Source: Studio Binocular. *City of Adelaide: Wayfinding Strategy*. 2015. <http://www.studiobinocular.com/2015/08/city-of-adelaide/>.)

Housing & Development

This chapter offers policy and building recommendations to increase the supply of housing in the Ball Square and Magoun Square neighborhoods, with a special focus on affordable housing. The proposed new housing stock is diverse and includes larger mixed-use developments, balanced with an opportunity for current property owners to build on their lots in a manner that maintains neighborhood character while adding a new housing unit. The Green Line Extension has already increased property values in these neighborhoods, and demand is only expected to grow. These recommendations are designed to insulate current residents from being priced out of their homes and ensure an economically diverse Somerville community for future generations. Housing proposals include:

1. **Build an affordable housing complex on the current Department of Public Works (DPW) site:** *SomerVision* proposes adding 222 units of housing to Somerville, all of which should be affordable. Already an incredibly dense city, this goal is limited by available land. The sprawling Department of Public Works building has been flagged for redevelopment before, and could fulfill this pressing need.
2. **Build three mixed-use buildings along Broadway (See figures 5 through 7).**
3. **Zoning code changes** to allow for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in residential neighborhoods and taller buildings along Broadway:
 - In addition to increasing the general housing supply, ADUs benefit homeowners by increasing the value of their property.
 - Taller buildings capitalize on the Green Line Extension to create a more transit-oriented community.
4. **Policy recommendations** to protect current and future renters and homeowners from rapidly increasing housing costs.



Figure 5 . Near the incoming Ball Square Station: small grocery store, topped with three residential floors and a green roof. (See figure 4-18 for detail)

Figure 6 . In Magoun Square: a community center with a cafe plus one other commercial establishment and perhaps a co-working site, also topped with three residential floors. (See figure 4-9 for detail)

Figure 7 . In place of the Shield Gas Station between Ball Sq. and Magoun Sq.: an office building that will include retail on the first floor and a gym on the second floor. This proposed building does not include residential units, but will benefit local businesses by livening city streets during business hours. Tax revenue could then fund more affordable housing. (See figure 4-13 for detail)

01.



INTRODUCTION



The City of Somerville engaged MIT's Department of Urban Studies and Planning (DUSP) to develop a neighborhood plan for the Ball Square and Magoun Square neighborhoods in Somerville, Massachusetts. This plan is the culmination of a semester-long course, *Community Growth and Land Use Planning*, taught by Professor Terry Szold and Viktorija Abolina in Fall 2017. It was produced by twelve students representing nationalities and experiences from around the globe.

The purpose of this plan is to leverage the opportunities of, and mitigate potential negative impacts from, the Green Line Extension project on this neighborhood and its residents. Major themes of this plan include improving how people get around the study area and enhancing the public realm (see *Public Realm and Mobility*, Page 20), and proposing equitable development opportunities that prioritize affordable housing and transit-oriented growth (see *Housing and Development*, Page 42). Throughout, we have structured our analysis and recommendations to build on and react to *SomerVision*, the city's comprehensive plan for the years 2010 through 2030.

THE STUDY AREA

The scope of this Somerville plan includes the area spanning from Nathan Tufts Park through Ball Square along Broadway, to Magoun Square (“the study area”) (Figure 1-2). This is primarily a residential neighborhood featuring two- and three-family homes on small lots as well as pockets of commercial activity and parks. Public land includes Trum Field and Nathan Tufts Park, as well as the City of Somerville’s Department of Public Works (DPW).

Decades after the last streetcars ran through Somerville (see Figure 1-1), the Green Line Extension (GLX) will once again connect this neighbor-



Figure 1-1. Old Streetcars: Mid-1900’s Somerville saw streetcars; 2020’s Somerville will see the Green Line Extension. (Source: Bouseblog <https://bouseblog.wordpress.com/page/2/>)

hood to downtown Boston via rail transit. The Ball Square Station and the Magoun Square Station are poised to begin operation in 2021.

INFRASTRUCTURE, INDUSTRY, AND LAND USE

A Brief History

The site of one of the first hostile acts of the Revolutionary War, the study area underwent many

transitions before becoming what we recognize today. Before national independence was established—let alone municipal boundaries—the Old Powder House, atop what we know today as Nathan Tufts Park, served as a battleground after the gunpowder magazine was seized by British troops in 1774. (1)

Once the dust from the war settled, the then-rural part of Charlestown, known for its dairy farms and grazing land, was established as Somerville in 1843. Broadway, one of the first major roads in Massachusetts, transported farm materials and products to Boston by horse. At the time, Magoun

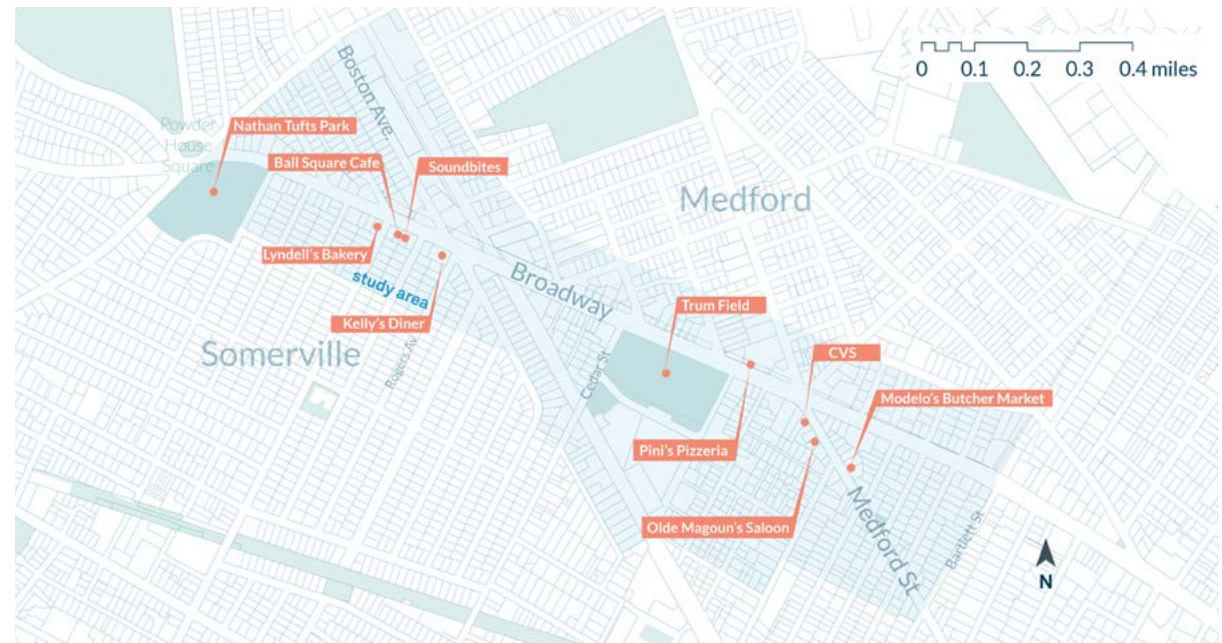


Figure 1-2. Community Assets: Established small businesses like Lyndell’s Bakery, Kelly’s Diner, and Old Magoun Saloon help to build the character of Ball Square and Magoun Square. (Source: student observations. October 2017.)

Square was a popular rest stop for thirsty workers and horses alike. Over the next few decades, a rising tide of industries, including bleaching and dyeing, rope-making, and brickyards, replaced farmland in Somerville.

As Somerville crossed into the 20th century, the meatpacking industry grew more prominent, rail and road infrastructure expanded, and agricultural land was divided into small residential lots. At the same time, the study area's most iconic establishments began opening their doors. In 1901, Lyndell's Bakery moved to its current location in Ball Square, where they have continued to

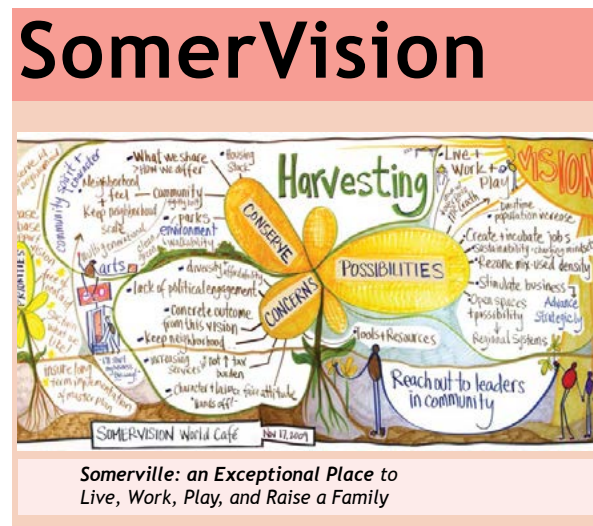


Figure 1-3. SomerVision: The 2012 comprehensive plan for Somerville looks to strengthen and support neighborhood commercial centers that integrate residential uses, offer lively destinations, and contribute to Somerville's unique identity; its goals are interwoven into this plan. (Source: City of Somerville. SomerVision. 2012.)

follow the same recipes for over a hundred years. (2) During the late industrial period, Ball Square and Magoun Square were developed into one- or two-story commercial buildings, and the expanding rail network continued to grow Somerville's regional importance.(3)

Today

Those early rail lines remain relevant today, and explain many of the changes we propose in the following chapters. With the upcoming GLX, Ball Square and Magoun Square are at the brink of a new chapter that builds on their rich history.

During the preparation of this plan, the City of Somerville has also been in the process of a zoning overhaul. Figure 1-6 reveals proposed zoning for the study area. The majority of changes are concentrated along Broadway, where parcels have been rezoned from "neighborhood business" to "mid-rise 3" and "mid-rise 4," which allow building heights up to three and four stories respectively. The intent of this change is to encourage multi-use and mixed-use buildings which provide quality commercial spaces on the ground floor, and housing or business uses on the upper stories.

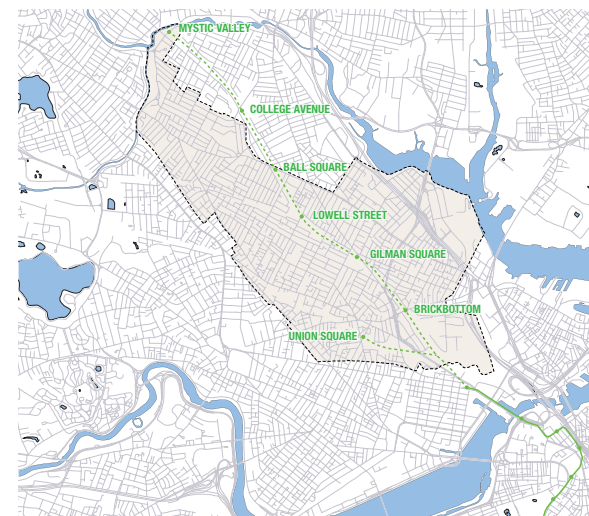


Figure 1-4. Green Line Extension: Scheduled for completion in 2021, the Green Line Extension project adds 7 new rail stops to increase mobility in the Cambridge-Somerville-Medford areas. (Source: Green Line Extension. Project Map. <http://greenlineextension.eot.state.ma.us/documents/about/ProposedMap/projectMap.pdf>)

Figure 1-5. Ball Square Station: One of the proposed MBTA stations will be located in the study area, along Broadway at Ball Square; above is the proposed site design for a neighboring station at College Ave. (Source: MassDOT and MBTA. Transit-Oriented Development. <https://www.mbtarealty.com/transit-oriented-development/>)

DEMOGRAPHICS

A WELCOMING COMMUNITY, HISTORICALLY AND TODAY

Transitioning from the land to the people who live on it, we find a community defined by immigration.

English settlers scouted Somerville as a Puritan haven in the early 17th century. “By the middle of 19th century, Somerville was an industrial center, attracting immigrants in search of work in the Boston area.” In the late 1900s, Somerville “resembled the diverse community it is today, with immigrants from Italy, Portugal, Greece, Russia and other countries from Southern and Eastern Europe.” (4)

Despite periods of gentrification, including during the dot-com bubble of the 1990s and following the demise of rent control, Somerville remains committed to being a haven for newcomers. The city has been in the news lately for its status as a “Sanctuary City.” According to one resident, quoted in a recent Boston Globe article (February 2017), “If it’s not a sanctuary city, it’s not Somerville.” (5) The city is proud of this diversity, and celebrates the 50 languages spoken in its schools. New immigrants today are from Haiti, El Salvador, Brazil, and other places around the world. (6)

Somerville is also known for, and proud of, its artist community and connection to local universities. (7) All of these communities thrive when they can access affordable housing.



Figure 1-6. Land Use in the Study Area: While the study area is primarily designated neighborhood residential, the Broadway corridor is zoned for mid-rise level 3 and 4 to support ground level retail and mixed use. (Source: City of Somerville Planning Department. Article 04- Mid-Rise Districts. 2017. <https://www.somervillezoning.com/>)

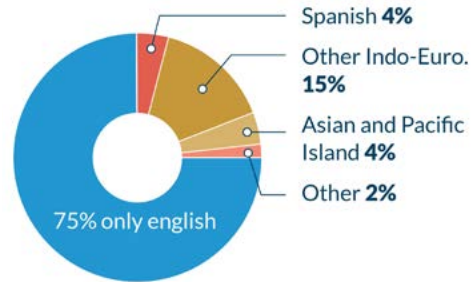
DEFINING STATISTICS

Today, Somerville is New England’s most densely populated municipality. (8) There are over 18,000 adults residing in the study area.

Comparably more affordable than other areas in the region, these neighborhoods have seen a recent influx of young professionals and graduate students, who are creating a more transient community. Recent immigrants have also added new diversity to Somerville. Our plan strives to balance the interests of these diverse groups along with long-standing Somerville residents.

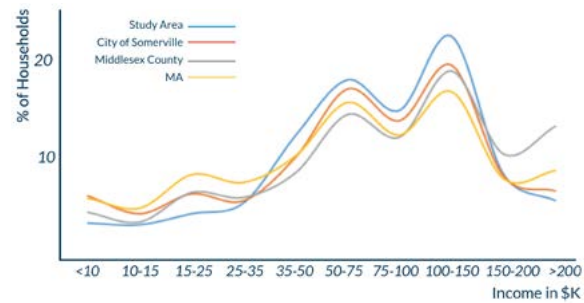
Recent census and American Community Survey (ACS) data revealed the study area to be defined by the key characteristics on the following page.

Language



The study area is predominantly home to people who speak English, with 75% reportedly speaking only this language. The second most common language group is other Indo-European languages.

Household Income



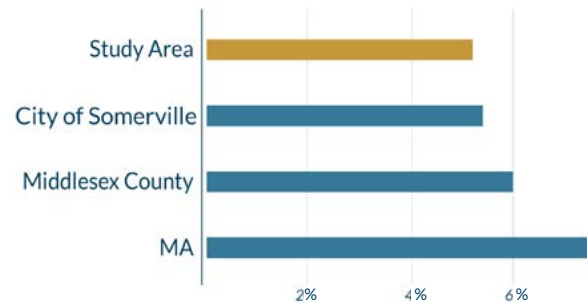
The distribution of household income in the study area mirrors that for the City of Somerville as a whole, Middlesex county, and Massachusetts, with a minor exception. As shown by blue curve, the study area is home to a higher proportion of households clustered in the middle to middle/high income categories, with fewer households in the extremes.

Businesses by industry



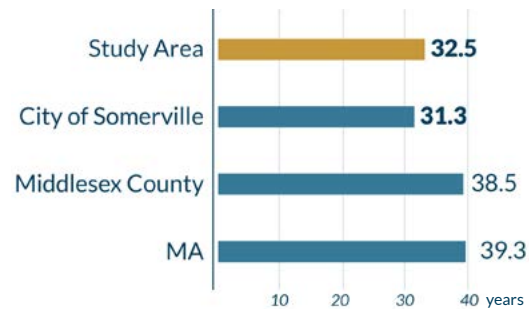
The study area is dominated by retail trade and service provision. Residents and non-residents alike travel to Ball Square and Magoun Square for brunch, baked goods, and bars. Together, 142 businesses provide the community with 855 jobs. Of these companies, 91% have fewer than 10 employees; as such, small businesses are an integral part of the community.

Unemployment



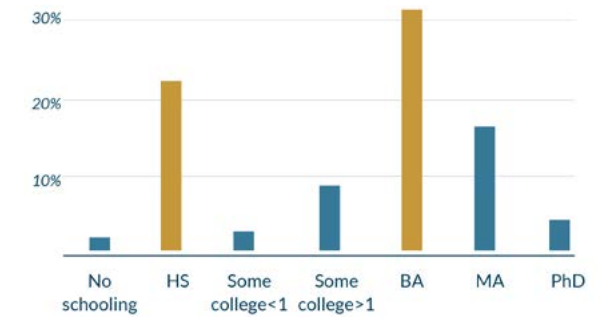
The study area has an enviably low unemployment rate, at just over 5%. This is lower than any of the comparison areas. Somerville as a whole has a lower unemployment rate than the county and state.

Age



The study area is quite young, with a median age of 32.5, only slightly above that of Somerville as a whole. This is likely due to proximity to a wealth of universities as well as jobs in the Boston area.

Educational Attainment



Given the area's proximity to a number of universities, the high educational attainment is not surprising. Many of the 30% of respondents with a bachelor's degree may be current graduate students, striving towards the next strata in the chart.

02.

BUILDING A VISION





This plan presents a vision to foster cohesion among the communities that live and work in Ball Square and Magoun Square. This vision is based on four months of community engagement as well as inspiration from *SomerVision* as a guiding document. This vision can be realized by achieving four primary goals:



Securing stable housing: Ensure that rising prices do not displace existing residents, and remain affordable to ensure a welcoming and diverse community.



Improving mobility: Redesign streets and promote diverse modes of transportation to allow easy and safe access to amenities, workplaces, and residences.



Creating a vibrant business district: Enable a diverse range of businesses that cater to the local communities needs, provide jobs, and attract visitors.



Making public spaces more inviting and safe: Reshape streetscapes and intersections so that pedestrians feel safer, and engage in community activities within an expanded public realm.



Figure 2-1. Engagement at Public Meeting: Each of the public meetings to support this plan included hands-on activities that solicited the opinions of residents on the changes that should or should not be happening in their community. Above, two men prioritize what they would like to see in Ball Square and Magoun Square.

INSPIRATION FROM SOMERVISION

This vision for Ball Square and Magoun Square fits within the greater vision for Somerville outlined in *SomerVision* (2012). This guiding document calls for strengthening and supporting neighborhood commercial centers that integrate residential uses, offer lively destinations, and contribute to Somerville’s unique identity. It also calls for the protection and promotion of a diverse and interesting mix of small-scale businesses in Somerville neighborhoods. Moreover, *SomerVision* stresses the need to ensure that all community members can afford a place to live within the city.

This plan’s vision is to foster cohesion among the communities that live, work, play, and raise a family in Ball Square and Magoun Square. In alignment with *SomerVision*’s framework for community growth, this vision can be achieved through development of a vibrant business district reachable via improved transit networks, served by inviting public spaces, and adjacent to diverse and accessible residential blocks.

METHODS

Our vision for community cohesion results from extensive community engagement and research over the course of four months from September to December 2017:

Walks and talks: The planning team visited the neighborhood frequently to speak with dozens of business owners, residents, and passersby about how they came to live, work, or visit the area as well as to learn their vision for the neighborhood’s future. The team also administered surveys to residents and commercial patrons to understand more about people’s daily experience of the neighborhood and what types of changes they would like to see in the future.

Public meetings and workshops: The planning team hosted two public meetings to present findings and proposals and, more importantly, to collect insights from the community. The first meeting was a visioning workshop with activities for community members to share their priorities and discuss opportunities for redevelopment. At the second meeting, community members voiced their support or opposition to the team’s ideas. Participants also completed feedback surveys.

In addition to hosting meetings, members of the planning team attended public meetings within the study area, including a public meeting for the new 55-unit development close to Magoun Square, and a public meeting hosted by the MBTA for updates on the Green Line Extension.

Meetings with elected and public officials: The planning team reached out to Municipal officials, and representatives of Ward 5 and 6, within which the study area lies. Their institutional knowledge provided important perspective on the historic evolution of Somerville’s overarching goals and priorities, and lessons that could be learned from



successful plans in other parts of the city.

Existing studies and analysis: The planning team relied on existing studies and analysis to gain technical familiarity with the neighborhood's characteristics and history. Demographic and economic data from the U.S. census, land use and zoning information, data and maps on infrastructure and transportation networks, environmental data, and housing market figures, were all key in understanding existing conditions and opportunities. Finally, narratives and historic photographs supplemented this data with personal experience that gave the team a greater depth of understanding of the community context.

Synthesis:

Community members' lived experiences, desires, and dreams do not automatically transform into a vision for a neighborhood's future. The public meetings provided a forum for neighbors to find pragmatic compromises between competing desires and needs.

Through workshop sessions, question and answer periods, and informal conversations, the planning team combined priorities voiced by community members with urban planning best practices to arrive at the overall vision of increasing community cohesion through securing stable housing, improving mobility, creating a vibrant business district, and making public spaces more inviting and safe. The rest of this plan outlines how to achieve these goals in more detail.

CONCEPT

Our general concept, as presented in the map to the right, depicts Ball Square and Magoun Square as centers that, in accordance with *SomerVision*, “integrate residential uses, offer lively destinations, and contribute to Somerville’s unique identity.” Proposed services in each square are grouped by type, taking into account existing institutions, the community’s desire for particular amenities, and the location of future MBTA subway stations.

Ball Square is planned as a center for “Living and Dining,” accommodating mixed-use buildings that provide housing and amenities like a grocery store and gym. These businesses and residential units are oriented towards public transit to reduce overall dependence on cars.

Magoun Square is planned as a center for “Arts and Culture,” building on the success of diverse dining options that already exist in the area, and Somerville’s desire to ensure a mix of spaces “for creative production, performance and exhibition” (*SomerVision* 2012). Here, we envision a new community center, as prioritized by the community, that provides space and programs towards these and other purposes.

We concentrate commercial and mixed-use development along Broadway, and address issues of affordable housing through the redevelopment of the Department of Public Works site, and a proposed Accessory Dwelling Unit ordinance.

Finally, we envision Broadway as the main corridor to connect these neighborhood centers, and the individuals, families, and businesses that they serve. We prioritize active modes of transportation and enhanced public spaces through the redesign of key streetscapes and intersections.

Where possible, program and policy recommendations have been made in conjunction to development and design interventions, in order to provide an equitable and robust roadmap towards achieving the goals of secured housing, improved mobility, vibrant business districts, and inviting public spaces.

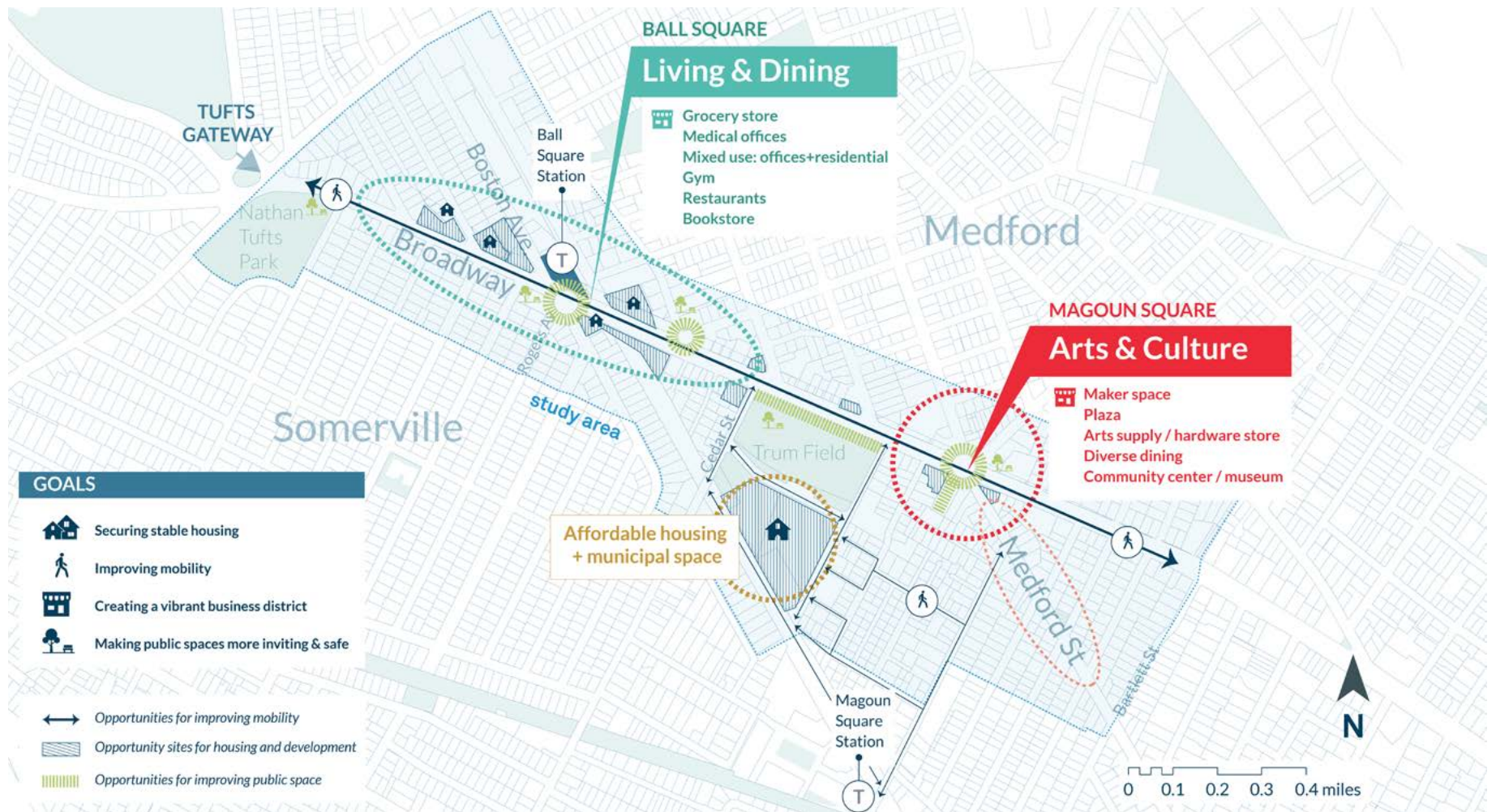


Figure 2-2. Concept Map for the Study Area: Distinguishing between the character of Ball Square and Magoun Square helps to create respective identities as destinations. Our proposed programming stems from the underlying existing character of the neighborhood, emphasizing the preservation of community assets.

03.

**MOBILITY AND
PUBLIC REALM**





This chapter of the plan addresses two of the four goals listed within the vision: 1) improving mobility, and 2) making public spaces more safe and inviting. The public realm and mobility networks are common, shared goods that support those who live and work in the community by providing opportunities for interaction and recreation, and the freedom to access and move between places. Features like parks boost environmental sustainability and build communities, while transit systems and street networks provide access to these shared spaces. Strengthening these features by making them more inviting, convenient, and safe, provides an environment that fosters community cohesion.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section presents existing conditions and challenges related to mobility and the public realm within Ball Square and Magoun Square. The second section contains recommendations which address the issues highlighted in the first section.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

To understand the existing conditions of how people move and experience the public realm within Ball Square and Magoun Square, we observed activity in public spaces in the study area and measured the quality and performance of such spaces in terms of environment, comfort and safety, and programming. We also analyzed major transportation modes and corridors, and synthesized information from existing design guidelines, data, and community members' perceptions.

Broadway Activity

The sidewalks and storefronts along Broadway comprise an important public space corridor within the study area. Figure 3-1 shows the level of “activity” as measured in the character of storefront facades along Broadway. This measure is a way to understand how some storefronts, by virtue of being more inviting, encourage greater pedestrian traffic, generating more economic activity and promoting personal interaction. As the map shows, activity is currently concentrated in Ball Square and Magoun Square, whereas the areas between the two squares invite minimal foot traffic. This also suggests that residents and visitors do not travel between the squares, but tend to drive through by bus or car, or visit only one square, before leaving.



Figure 3-1. Facade Activity along Broadway: The most active facades are in Ball Square and Magoun Square, while the Broadway connection between the squares has low activity. (Source: Student observations. October 2017)



Figure 3-2. Passive Building-Street Relationship: This storefront does not engage with pedestrians due to its lack of seating, inviting signage, or exposed windows.



Figure 3-3. Vibrant Building-Street Relationship: These storefront attract pedestrian activity because of their bright coloring, seating, and ware display.

PUBLIC SPACE & ENVIRONMENT

Equitable access to safe and inviting public spaces is a crucial element of fostering cohesion along the Broadway corridor by providing areas for people to play, gather, interact. The maps in Figures 3-5 and 3-6 analyze three features of public spaces within the study area: parks, trees, and impervious surfaces.

Residents of Ball Square and Magoun Square have access to multiple parks, including two within our study area: Nathan Tufts Park and Trum Field. An

additional two parks, Tufts Park in Medford and Triangle Park in Powder House Square, are adjacent to the study area. Residential accessibility to parks within and outside the study area is represented in the map in Figure 3-5. The “walksheds” on this map represent areas within a five-minute walk of residents. We found that most residents live within walking distance of a park.

However, conversations with community members revealed that these parks do not maximize their potential use because they attract only specific groups of people at specific times rather than catering to the community as a whole. For instance, Trum Field accommodates active uses,

such as baseball and basketball, but is not inviting to picnickers or dog walkers. Notable exceptions are the annual Somerville Dog Festival and the Fourth of July fireworks. While infrequent at Trum Field today, this alternative type of programming is recommended by recent studies of major U.S. urban parks, which demonstrate that, when used in these ways, parks promote social and cultural diversity and contribute to the overall vibrancy of communities. (1)



Figure 3-4. Trum Field: This 4.8-acre park is home to various sporting facilities, including two baseball fields and basketball courts.



Figure 3-5. Residential Accessibility to Parks within the Study Area: All residents are within a 5-minute walk to parks. Residents attending public meetings, however, voiced their dissatisfaction with park quality, suggesting the need to improve the quality of public spaces.

In addition to accessibility, the quality of public spaces is measured by comparing green and grey features, with the understanding that green spaces are visually inviting and provide environmental benefits such as stormwater runoff mitigation and reduction in flooding.

Figure 3-6 reveals that tree distribution, a key feature of green space, is concentrated in and around the two parks, and along residential streets, but inconsistent and largely absent along Broadway and some residential streets.

The map also reveals that the majority of the study area is covered in grey, impervious surfaces, which contributes to downstream flooding downstream during large storm events. The *Somerville Hazard Mitigation Plan* (2013) lists flooding as a major concern for the City.(2) Therefore, in all parts of the city, green infrastructure and other stormwater mitigation measures continue to be a high priority for city officials, including Alderman Niedergang in Ball Square.(3)



Figure 3-6. Public Space within the Study Area: Tree coverage is significant in the study area's parks, but not along Broadway or some residential streets. (Source: Tree layer - Department of Public Works. City of Somerville. 2017.)



Figure 3-7. Urban Flooding in Union Square: flooding following a 2010 storm as a result of high impervious cover. Source: Jen Stevenson. Nowhere to Runoff: Somerville's Flooding Problem. (Source: Scout Somerville. 2010.)



Figure 3-8. Example of a sidewalk planter to manage street runoff. (Source: Philadelphia Stormwater Guidance Manual. 2014.)

TRANSPORTATION

Improving mobility by providing a range of options to travel to, from, and between Ball Square and Magoun Square, is critical to supporting our vision of a more cohesive community.

Mobility improvement is especially important since Broadway serves as a major regional corridor, linking vehicular traffic between Route 16 and Route 28/McGrath Highway.

As seen in Figure 3-10, the American Community Survey reveals that two-thirds of residents within the Ball Square and Magoun Square area com-

mute to work by car. This proportion is markedly higher than Somerville as a city, where 50% of residents commute to work on foot, by bike, or by public transit. Unlike other regions of the city, which are serviced by the MBTA Red and Orange line, Ball Square and Magoun Square are only accessible by bus.

The anticipated arrival of the Green Line Extension in 2021, which includes two stops within the study area, is likely to change this scenario significantly, in line with *Somervision* (2012) which aims for 50% of new trips to be made via transit, bike, or on foot (4).

Even before the long-awaited arrival of the Green Line, traffic counts from the City

of Somerville (see Figure 3-9) indicate an increasing trend in the use of alternative modes of transportation.

Between 2008 and 2016, the number of Somerville residents who chose to walk and bike increased, while car usage has remained the same.

Although residents in the study area do not have access to a rail connection, they are serviced by three MBTA bus lines. Route 101 runs adjacent to the study area along Main Street, and Routes 80 and 89 run directly through the study area along Broadway. Route 80 provides a north-south connection between destinations like Tufts and Union Square, while Route 89 serves the Broadway corridor and connects important destinations like

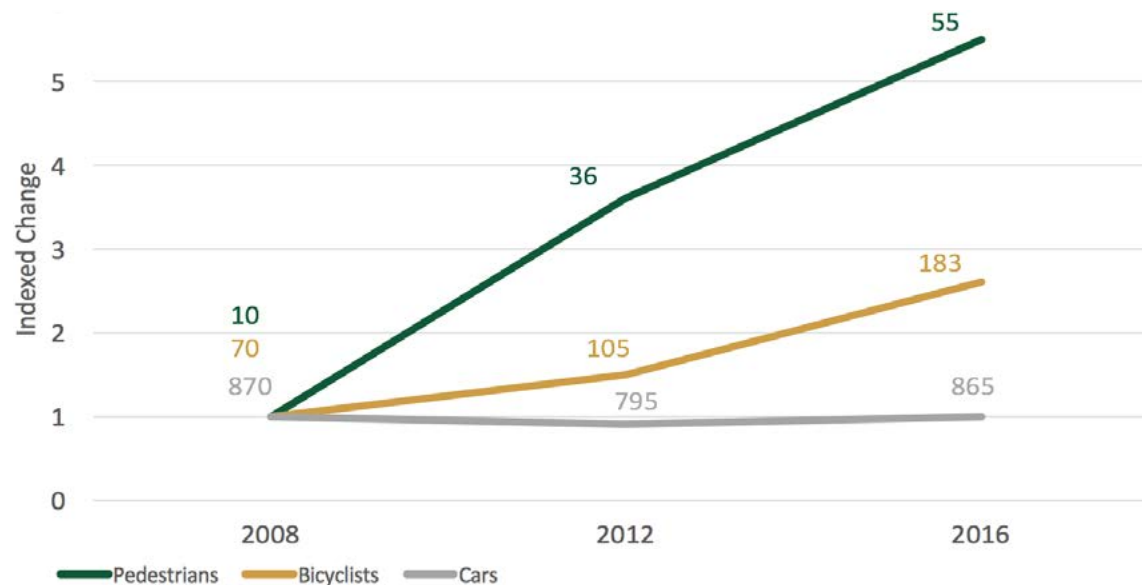


Figure 3-9. Preferred Transportation in the Study Area as Compared to Somerville: Fewer residents in the study area use public transit to commute; whereas other areas of the city are serviced by the MBTA Red Line, Ball Square and Magoun Square do not have a rail connection. (Source: American Community Survey. Somerville, Massachusetts. 2015.)

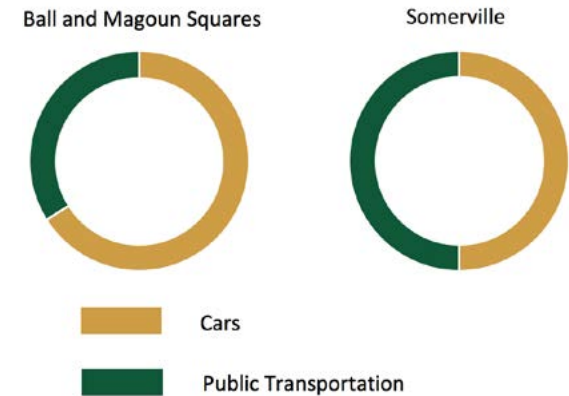


Figure 3-10. Somerville Transportation Trends: Traffic counts indicate that Somerville residents are shifting towards walking and cycling as a means of transportation. (Source: City of Somerville. Vision Zero Somerville 2017.)

Sullivan Square Station on the Orange Line and Davis Square Station on the Red Line.

In addition to transit, community members have access to bike-sharing and car-sharing services. There are two Hubway stations, one located in front of Trum Field, and another in Nathan Tufts Park. There are also two Zipcar locations, one each in Ball Square and Magoun Square.

Pedestrians and cyclists who weave through the study area rely on bike lanes and sidewalks. Ball Square has more robust biking and walking infrastructure than Magoun Square. In the former, there are dedicated bike lanes that separate cyclists from cars and sidewalks along residential streets. The latter largely features shared bike/car lanes and includes inconsistent residential sidewalks along private ways.

The current walking route from Lowell Street to Trum Field requires pedestrians to walk through private ways that are often blocked by concrete pillars. The arrival of the GLX at Lowell Street serves as an important opportunity to better direct new foot traffic towards diverse activities at Trum Field and businesses at Magoun Square.



Figure 3-11. Streetscape at Broadway and Cedar St: The bike lane along Broadway terminates at Cedar St. Here, sidewalks are wide, as well as driving lanes.



Figure 3-12. Streetscape at Lowell St: The narrow street accommodates one lane of parking and two shared lanes for cars and bikes.

COMFORT AND SAFETY

Improved mobility is highly dependent on the level of comfort and safety that is associated with each mode of transportation; *Vision Zero Somerville* (2017) offers a snapshot of safety conditions in the study area by providing data on the number and types of accidents that have occurred (5). As seen in Figure 3-13, most accidents involving pedestrians and bicyclists between 2013 and 2015 have taken place along intersections on Broadway, including the major intersections at Ball Square and Magoun Square.

In both instances, intersection design contributes to safety hazards along the corridor. For instance, the angle of intersecting street grids produces exceptionally long (greater than 90 feet) crosswalks along Broadway. Long crosswalks pose a safety threat to children, disabled, and elderly residents.

In addition to lengthy crosswalks, the Broadway corridor is unevenly serviced by dedicated but unprotected bike lanes, which extend only to Cedar St. Wide lanes for cars and confusing turns at intersections aggravate already hazardous conditions. For example, walking from the east side of Magoun Square to the west side requires a pedestrian to cross three crosswalks to continue walking along Broadway. The following section addresses these concerns and others through a combination of interventions.



Figure 3-13. Pedestrian and Cycling Accidents within the Study Area: The roundabout near Nathan Tufts Field, Ball Square, and Magoun Squares are the least safe intersections for pedestrians and cyclists, as shown by these reported accidents between 2013 and 2015. Source: City of Somerville. *Vision Zero*, 2017.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the challenges presented in the existing conditions, the rest of this chapter provides recommendations within the following categories: placemaking and programming, connectivity, design scenarios, and intersections.

PLACEMAKING AND PROGRAMMING

Just as art and warm meals make a house a home, public art and thoughtful, varied programming and public spaces are important tools to create a sense of place in a neighborhood.

A community is more than the buildings and roads within neighborhood boundaries. This section reveals the near-term actions that can be taken to express community identity and culture in Ball Square and Magoun Square. These recommendations draw upon previous studies, including the *Public Space, Public Life in Somerville, MA* report (2016) (6), which presents a vision for public space that meets the demands of the City's vibrant public life. Which activities will appeal to people of all ages and backgrounds? How can commercial and residential streets and parking spaces be activated temporarily, for exhibits and performances?



Precedents

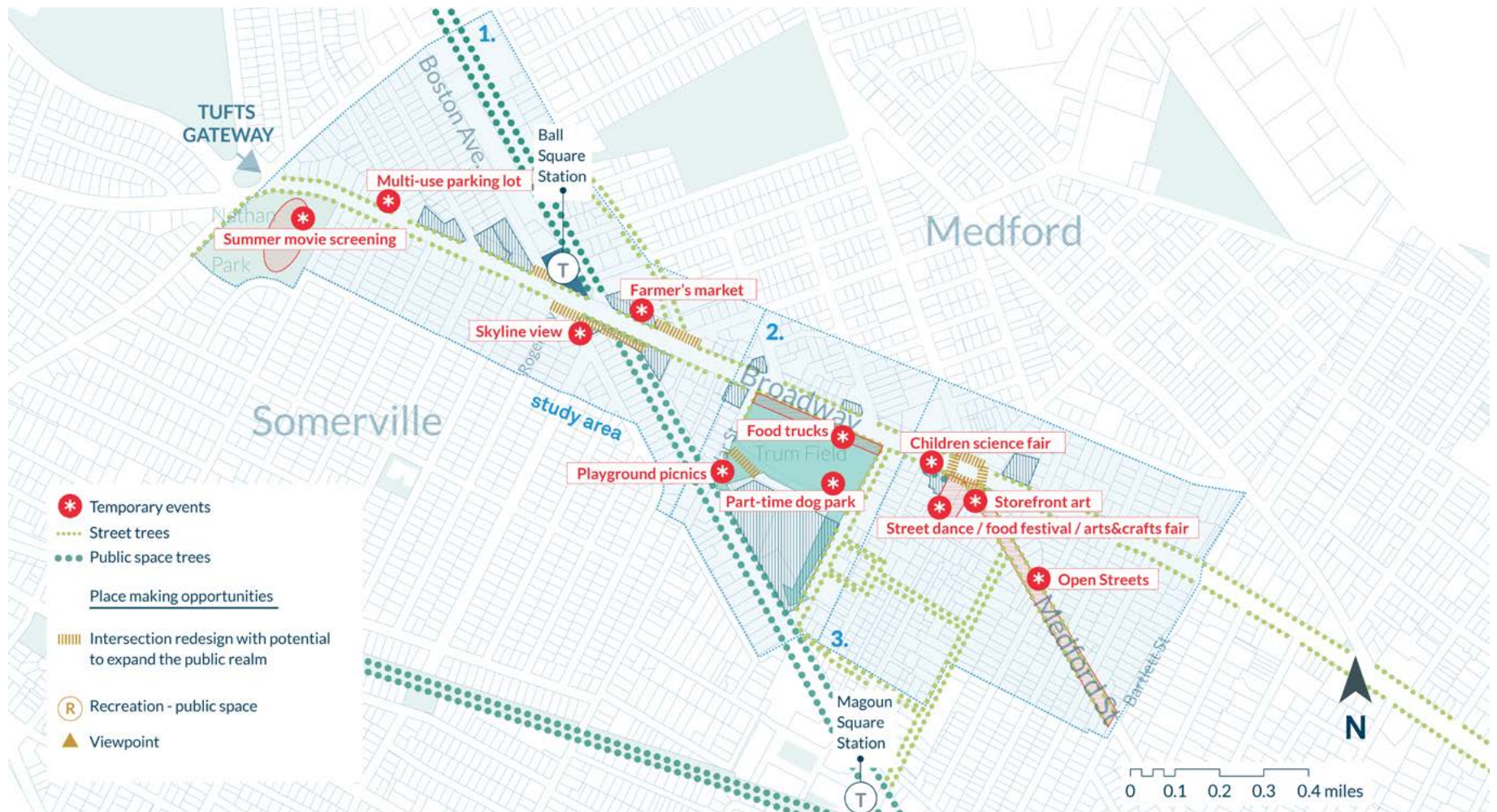
As land in urban areas becomes more scarce, cities have developed creative ways to change how people experience the public realm. Below are examples of events and space usage that could be replicated in Ball Square and Magoun Square.

Open streets: Each summer, the City of Somerville organizes a community event series called SomerStreets (7), inspired by the “ciclovia” (open streets) program in Bogotá, Colombia (8). Each SomerStreets event closes a busy road to vehicles and promotes active neighborhood exploration by cyclists and pedestrians. See Figure 3-14 for a 2014 SomerStreets event on Somerville Ave near Union Square. Similar events have also taken place in Davis/Teele Square and East Broadway. These events connect people to neighborhoods and the local businesses that comprise them, and also feature music stages, flea market booths, and other entertainment.



Figure 3-14. Open Streets Events: The City of Somerville organizes a community event series called SomerStreets where a busy road is closed to vehicles for one day, and pedestrians, musicians, and local vendors rule the road. This photo of Somerville Ave. is taken from the 2014 SomerStreets event. (Source: Active Living By Design.)

Figure 3-15. Example of a colorful mural that highlights local restaurants while reinforcing the neighborhoods identity of the Dallas Arts District. (Source: Adam Simmons, Flickr.)



Multi-purpose parking lots: Parking lots used between Monday and Friday present opportunities for weekend farmers markets and temporary shops that encourage local business and foster social gathering and community activity. By removing middlemen, pop-up markets offer local food and art vendors a direct and more profitable way to conduct sales and provide residents access to high quality produce and goods, while encouraging

interaction with their neighbors. For example, the Cambridgeport farmers market takes advantage of weekend vacancy at Morse School parking lot.

Outdoor movie screenings: Sometimes called “Movies in the Park” or “Movies by Moonlight” in other communities, these open-air cinema events draw friends and families to spread out on blankets and get captivated by a film under the stars.

Figure 3-16. Our proposed programming stems from the underlying existing character of the neighborhood, emphasizing the preservation of community assets.

Outdoor movie screenings (Figure 3-18) foster a sense of connection to public parks and a sense of community among neighbors and families. SomerMovie Fest in Somerville and movies at the Esplanade’s Hatch Shell are local examples of family-friendly film screenings that cater to everyone.

Suggested Programs

Programming recommendations provide low-cost options to encourage social gathering and engagement with local businesses in the near-term.

They do not require new construction, but successful implementation does call for collaboration with community partners and support from community members. To build long-standing capacity and creativity, we recommend that a Main Streets organization be considered for Ball Square and Magoun Square, similar to Union Square Main Streets and East Somerville Main Streets.

Throughout the year, events and new uses should be designed to cater to all tastes, age groups, and seasons. We suggest the following programs and actions.

- Schedule events, such as outdoor movie screenings, at Nathan Tufts Park, the study area's gateway to Tufts University.
- Convert Monday through Friday parking lots into multi-purpose "flex space," where temporary, pop-up events (e.g., farmer's markets, dance performances, and art and vintage shops) can be scheduled on weekends.
- Reserve space at the Broadway-facing border of Trum Field for food trucks to encourage foot traffic from offices and recreational visitors during peak hours of the work week and weekends.
- Plan a SomerStreets event on Medford St. to showcase the diverse range of dining options and promote foot traffic in Magoun Square.
- Engage local businesses to consider hosting rotating exhibitions of local artists' work in their storefronts.
- Offer grants for local artists to paint murals on passive facades. Hold a contest for mural design, whose winners are determined by a participatory online voting process.
- Plan a SomerStreets event on Medford St. to showcase the diverse range of dining options and promote foot traffic.
- Engage local businesses to encourage artwork exhibition of local artists in storefronts.



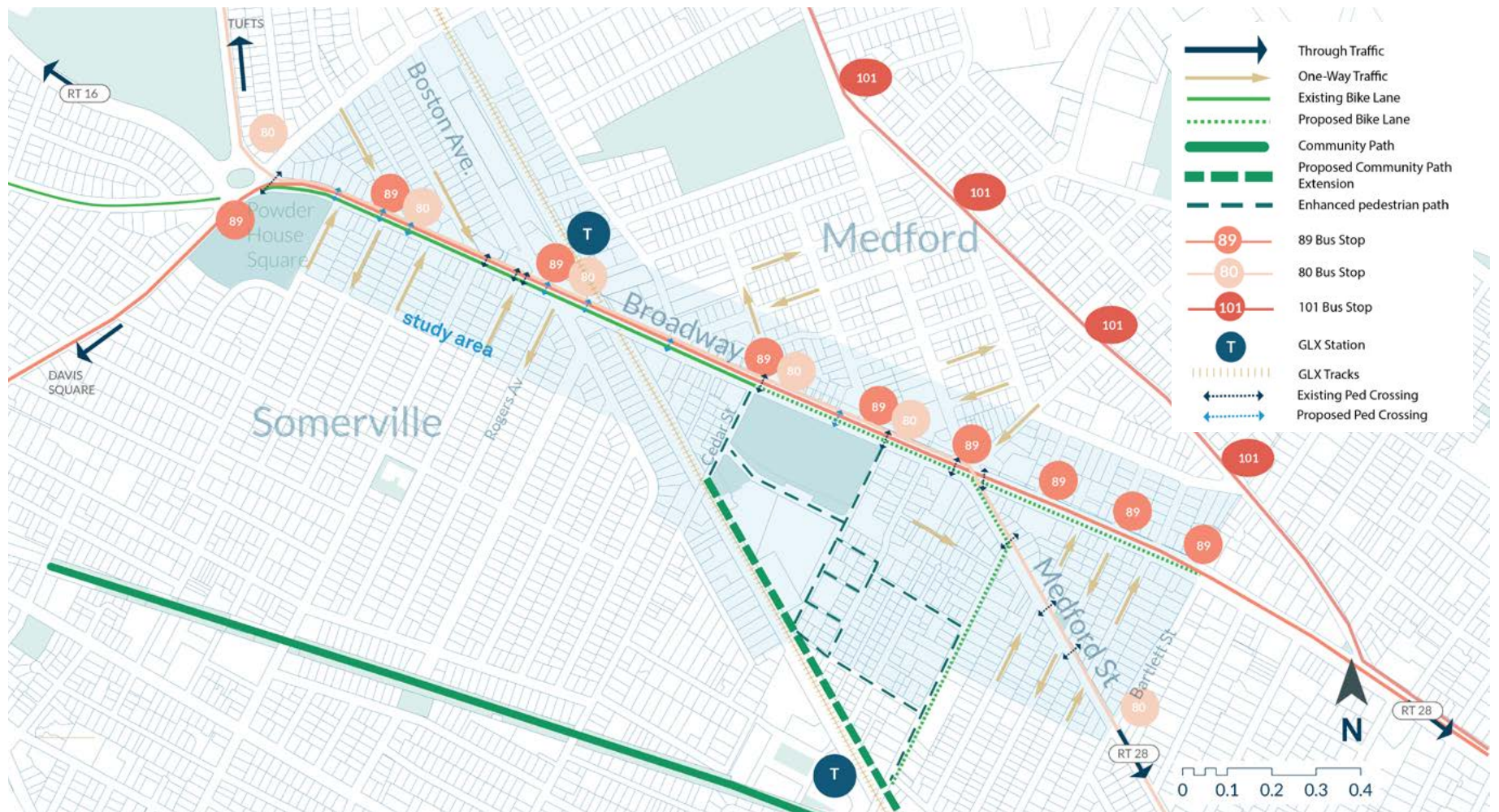
Figure 3-17. Temporary Repurposing of a Parking Lot: Parking lots that are used by commuters during the work-week can transform into temporary community events on weekends. This Central Square parking lot in Cambridge hosts a farmers market on Saturdays. (Source: BostonZest)



Figure 3-18. Family-friendly Outdoor Movie Screening: Free outdoor movie screenings foster a sense of connection to public parks and a sense of community among neighbors and families. (Source: Boston Magazine)



Figure 3-19. Vintage & Art Pop-up stores: Pop-up stores offer local artists and vintage vendors a direct and more profitable way to conduct sales. Visitors get the chance to connect with the artists and learn the story behind the goods they purchase. (Source: The Somerville Flea)



CONNECTIVITY

Making it easier to get around and between Ball Square and Magoun Square is critical to achieving the vision of community cohesion. Increasing connectivity will make it easier for residents to commute to and from work and local amenities, as well as provide local businesses with a larger,

more mobile customer base. This section outlines recommended interventions to improve safety, increase foot traffic, and reduce traffic congestion, as summarized in Figure 3-20.

We heard from residents regarding perceived dangers of walking and biking in the area. With arrival of the Green Line stations, we recognize the need for infrastructure that encourages

Figure 3-20. Connectivity within the Study Area: Extending sidewalks and creating more crosswalks will ultimately help to facilitate safe pedestrian activity, emphasizing connection between planned MBTA stations and highly trafficked neighborhood features. Also, by eliminating barriers between Charles Ryan Road and Fennell, Roberts, and Cutler Streets, pedestrians traveling from the proposed housing development and Trum Field will be more easily able to access the Magoun Square MBTA station.

active modes of transportation such as walking and cycling. Pedestrian pathway improvements and clear signage create a welcoming environment that serves first-time visitors and lifelong residents alike.

Wayfinding

Clear signage containing contextualized information can welcome and orient people in moving through, and learning about the neighborhood.

The following are some potential wayfinding interventions for the study area:

- Install directional plaques with walking times/distances from various locations to parks, landmarks, and other neighborhoods, including Davis Square, Medford Square, Porter Square, and Tufts University.
- Install information kiosks for transit, including maps for Hubway stations, car-share locations and MBTA stops, as well as bus schedules.
- Hang street banners to promote local events like the Annual Somerville Dog Festival at Trum Field.
- Develop visual cues to connect Ball Square with Magoun Square. For example, use the air rights over the bridge on Broadway to develop a small park with a tall landmark that provides community members access to a view of the Somerville skyline.

- Install outdoor educational kiosks and placards a) to describe the timeline and process for development of the GLX, b) to highlight green infrastructure which may otherwise go unnoticed beside street sidewalks, or c) to provide historical information that contextualizes the neighborhood.

Pedestrian Access

Figure 3-20 depicts changes to the ways that people can walk to Trum Field from the future Magoun Square Station site. By converting four private ways adjacent to the DPW site to public streets, the City of Somerville can remove existing concrete obstacles and update sidewalks.

These paths provide a diagonal connection to Broadway that bypasses Medford Street and Magoun Square.

Well-maintained, painted sidewalks can also extend up Lowell Street towards Medford Street to reinforce the path from the station toward the commercial center. For sections of the sidewalk on Lowell St. that are out of compliance with the American Disabilities Act (ADA), steel grates should be added over tree beds where possible to improve accessibility without removing trees.



Figure 3-21. Example of Wayfinding: Signage and mapping like that in Adelaide, Australia, can help to orient those traveling through the study area. (Source: Studio Binocular, 2015.)

Figure 3-22. Pedestrian Access and Crosswalks: Partnering with local artists to repaint crosswalks can help emphasize the character of the neighborhood while also helping to distinguish pedestrian right of way. (Source: ARTnews)



Figure 3-23. Shared bike lanes, or bike “sharrows,” represent the design with the lowest level of comfort for cyclists. Source: Brent Adams and Associates, 2012.



Figure 3-24. Dedicated bike lanes provide a higher level of comfort to bicyclists. Source: Better Block Foundation, 2015.

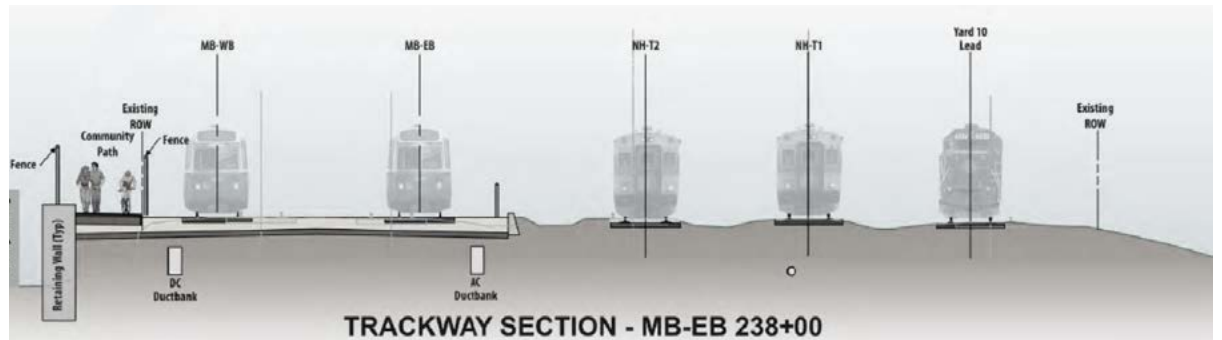


Figure 3-25. Protected bike lanes provide the greatest level of comfort to bicyclists. Source: Wikipedia, 2006.

Bike paths

Dedicated and protected bike lanes provide higher levels of safety and comfort than shared bike lanes, as seen in Figures 3-23, 3-24, and 3-25. Therefore, the City should extend dedicated bike lanes from Cedar Street on Broadway past Magoun Square, and toward Magoun Square Station. As discussed in detail in the following section, Broadway and Lowell Street are wide enough to support dedicated bike lanes.

In addition to dedicated bike lanes on existing thoroughfares, the team recommends building a protected bicycle and pedestrian pathway parallel to the GLX tracks. This could be as simple as extending MassDOT’s planned community path extension



Existing Community Path GLX Community Path Extension Proposed Extension

from Magoun Square Station to the proposed housing development at the existing DPW site, and, ultimately, to Trum Field, Cedar Street, and Broadway (see Figure 3-26).

Crosswalks

Figure 3-20 identifies several areas where we recommend new, raised crosswalks. Additional crosswalks at key points along Broadway and Medford Street ensure safe street crossing and intuitive movement. For example, painting a new crosswalk and raising the grade in front of the new Ball Square Station can both give MBTA riders safe access to the station and calm traffic in pedestrian areas.

Figure 3-26. Community Path Extension: As part of the GLX, MassDOT plans to build a community path to Lowell St. (as denoted by the orange line), where it currently terminates. We recommend that the community path extend to the housing development south of Trum Field, as indicated by the red line on the diagram. (Source: MassDOT. Community Path Meeting Advanced Conceptual Design Lowell Street to Inner Belt Road, 2012.)

DESIGN SCENARIOS

The following section presents a range of suggested design guidelines for streetscapes and intersections within the study area. These design guidelines aim to increase safety, prioritize active transportation, and create more public space.

STREETS

We have identified strategic changes to improve the infrastructure in two of the most heavily trafficked streets within the study area: Broadway and Lowell St.

Broadway Adjacent to Trum Field

Within the study area, Broadway's street width can vary from 68 to 90 feet. At its widest, the cross-section adjacent to Trum Field is dominated by 60 feet of driving lanes and parking (see Figure 3-28). From the pedestrian and cyclist perspective, residents have vocalized concern about the width of these lanes — which are far wider than the requisite 9-foot minimum (9). Without removing parking or affecting existing bus stops, driving lanes should be restricted to a width of 11 feet and the space repurposed to support the public realm (see Figure 3-27).

Sidewalks are wider along the corridor than those in residential areas of the study area. However, due to insufficient tree cover, inactive facades, and scant benches, these sidewalks do a poor job of inviting foot traffic along Broadway. To enhance

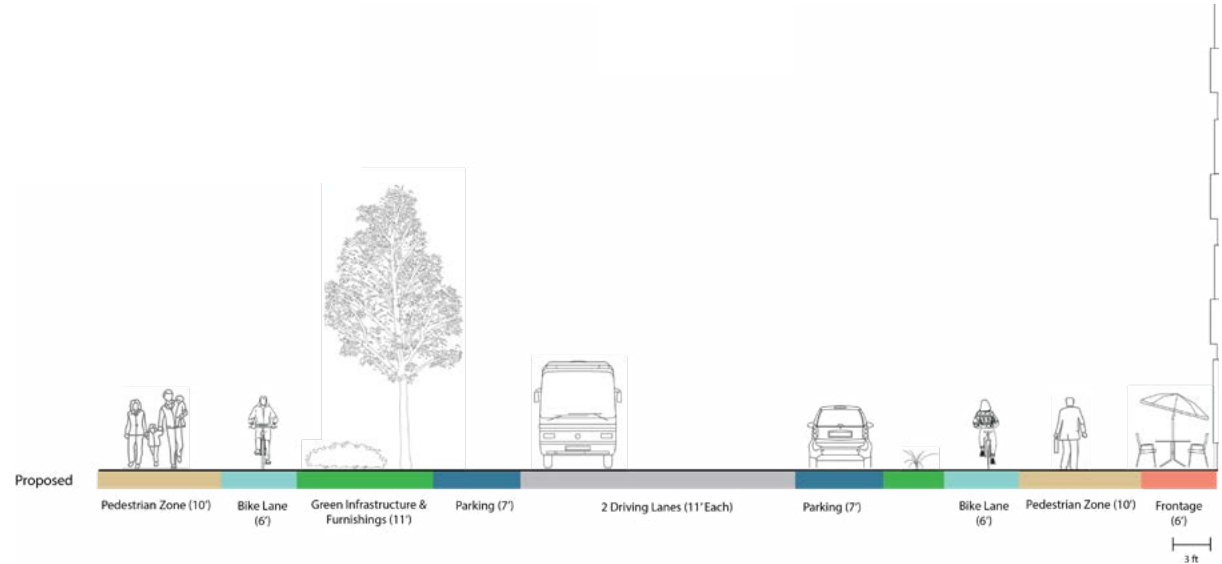


Figure 3-27. Proposed Streetscape at Broadway Bordering Trum Field: Reducing lane width allows for more public space along the Broadway corridor, as well as the provision of shielded bike lanes.

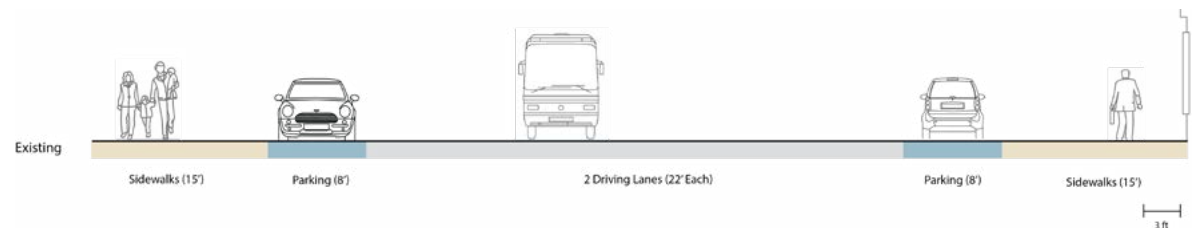


Figure 3-28. Existing Conditions at Broadway Bordering Trum Field: Currently, the streetscape adjacent to Trum Field is dominated by wide driving lanes and on-street parking.

the pedestrian streetscape, we propose differentiating the walkway from sidewalks adjacent to Broadway by designating a 10-foot pedestrian zone and 6-foot frontage zones for business seating options, following potential redevelopment in this area. In addition to standard 5-foot green-scape zones, the segment of Broadway bordering Trum Field could dedicate an additional 6 feet to bioswales and other types of green infrastructure to manage stormwater runoff.

As well as making Broadway more attractive to pedestrians, we aim to enhance the corridor for cyclists. While the current bike lane ends at Cedar Street, we recommend extending a protected bike lane and elevating it to the same grade as the sidewalk, wherever street width allows. Making the area safer and more accessible for cyclists can contribute to decreasing vehicle dependency and congestion and increase activity along the thoroughfare.

Lowell Street

Magoun Square Station is expected to increase foot and bike traffic on Lowell Street and surrounding streets by reducing vehicular dependency. Transit riders will exit the station from the southwest, facing Highland Avenue, and northeast towards Magoun Square. The existing roadway — a tight streetscape measuring 40 feet across with one shared bike/car lane in either direction and alternating sides of parking — is not equipped to safely manage the increased capacity.

Drawing on transit-oriented development principles, the City should emphasize Lowell Street’s connection to the subway line by prioritizing active transportation (10).

The current driving lanes measure 10 feet each, with 8 feet dedicated to parking (Figure 3-30). By reducing each driving lane by one foot and removing the lane of on-street parking, the City can create 5-foot bike lanes in each direction (see Figure 3-29). Not only will a dedicated lane for cyclists facilitate the flow of bike traffic from Magoun Square to the Magoun Square station, but the reduced driving lane width will serve to calm traffic speeds, creating a safer environment for drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians alike.

An alternative for Lowell Street is to reduce driving widths and remove on-street parking in order to prioritize greenscaping and walkable space. Existing sidewalks span five feet and contain tree beds, despite measuring less than the

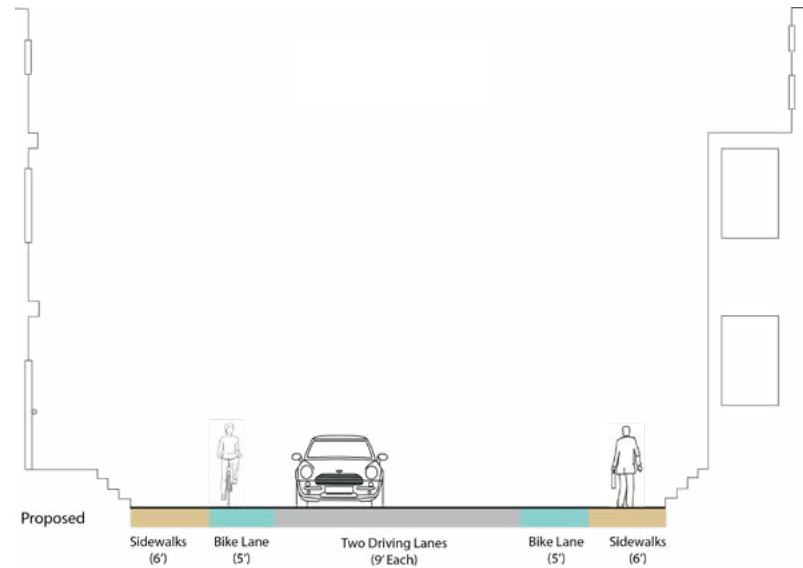


Figure 3-29. Proposed Streetscape at Lowell St.: Prioritizing active transportation on Lowell St. yields dedicated bike lanes in either direction at the expense of on-street parking.

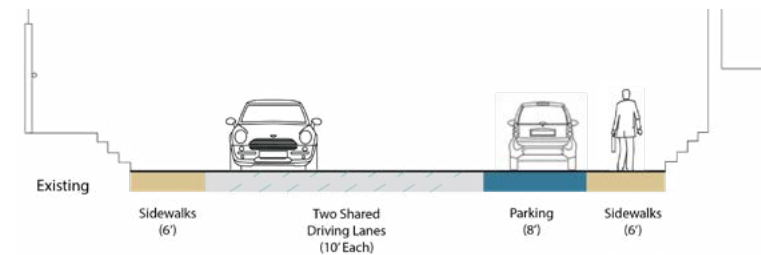


Figure 3-30. Existing Conditions at Lowell St.: Currently, the Lowell St. composition is dominated by driving and parking lanes.

four feet minimum of required walkable space, as set forth by the ADA (11). Therefore, to supplement Lowell Street with additional trees or vegetation that manages stormwater runoff, the City could expand sidewalk widths to create more space for pedestrians.

INTERSECTIONS

Intersections are dynamic spaces where cars, bikes, and pedestrians cross paths. These junctions are ideally comfortable spaces for all travelers, regardless of their transit mode. However, in practice, intersections can create unsafe conditions propagated by design that does not account for varying traffic modes, speeds, and behaviors.

As such, planners have begun to incorporate strategic changes to existing crossroads. For instance, the Broadway Corridor in Manhattan, New York was redesigned to bolster public space while simultaneously creating safer driving conditions (see Figure 3-31). Sharpening the turning angle for drivers encourages slower speeds. Similarly, shortening the distance that pedestrians must travel to cross a street, and widening crosswalks, decreases the likelihood of car strikes.

Using these design principles, we suggest a redesign of three historically unsafe intersections along Broadway: a) Ball Square, b) Magoun Square, and c) Winchester-Albion.

Ball Square Intersection

The Boston Avenue /Broadway intersection at Ball Square is of particular importance due to its proximity to the new station, where the City should prioritize safety for cyclists and pedestrians.

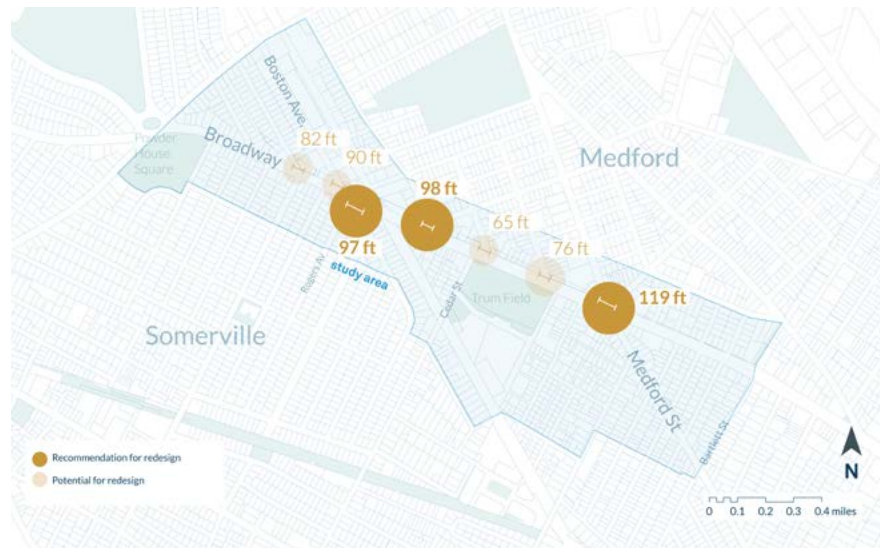
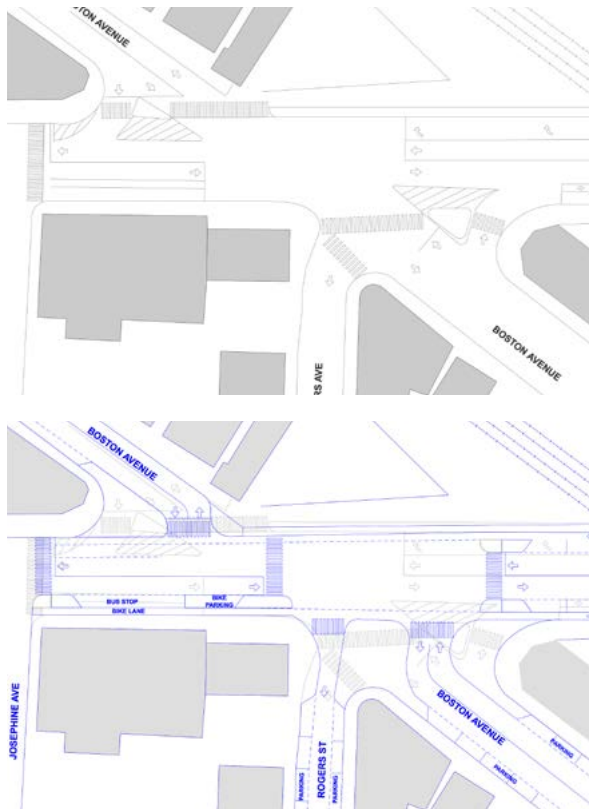


Figure 3-31. (Top) Intersection Interventions in Manhattan, NYC: Along Broadway in Manhattan, sidewalks have been expanded to increase public space; similar interventions can happen in Somerville. (Source: Nacto Urban Street Design Guide, National Association of City Transportation Officials, 2013)

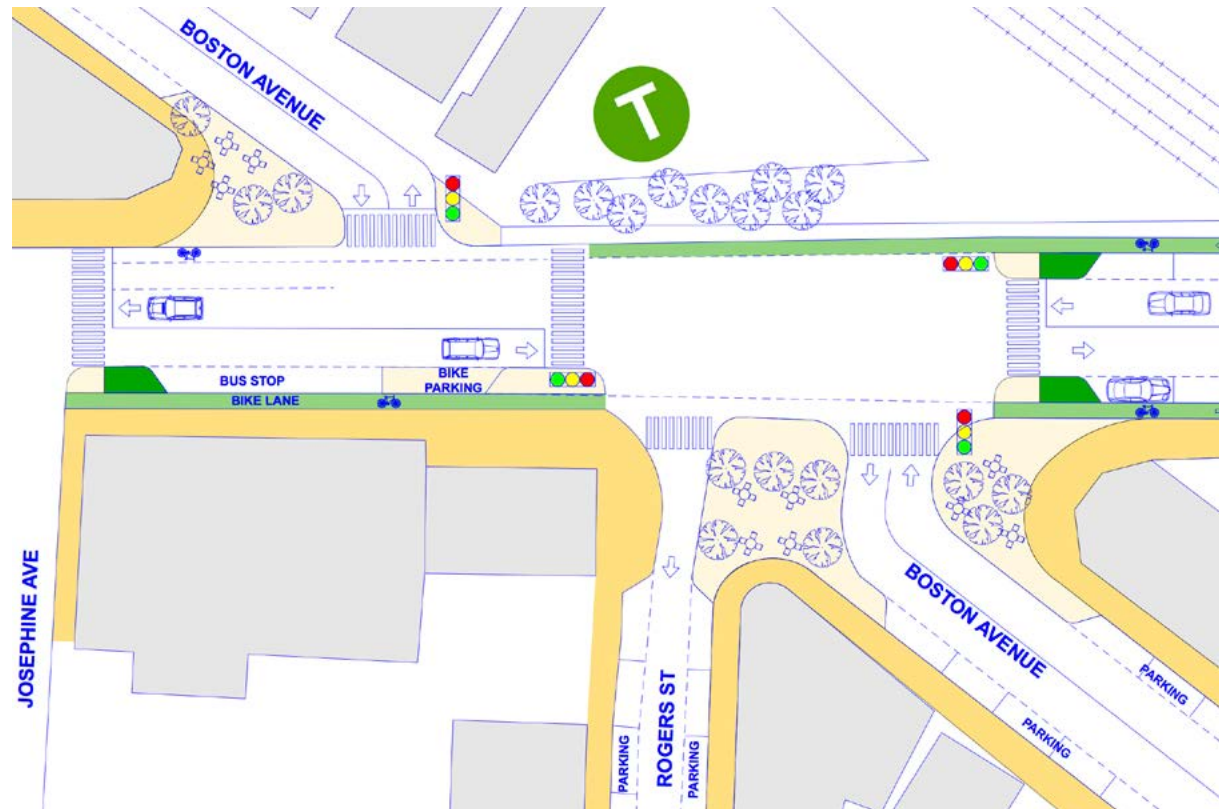
Figure 3-32. (Bottom) Existing width of current intersections that are too wide to comfortably walk.



Creating sharper turns by removing the right-turn lane and extending sidewalks along Boston Avenue will calm traffic speeds while providing spaces for pedestrians to interact.

In addition to reclaiming the space previously designated for cars, two new crosswalks have been inserted near the entrances to the station to ensure accessibility for increased foot traffic.

Similarly, we recommend that the City extend sidewalks into the street to create vegetated curb bump-outs. These curb extensions reduce



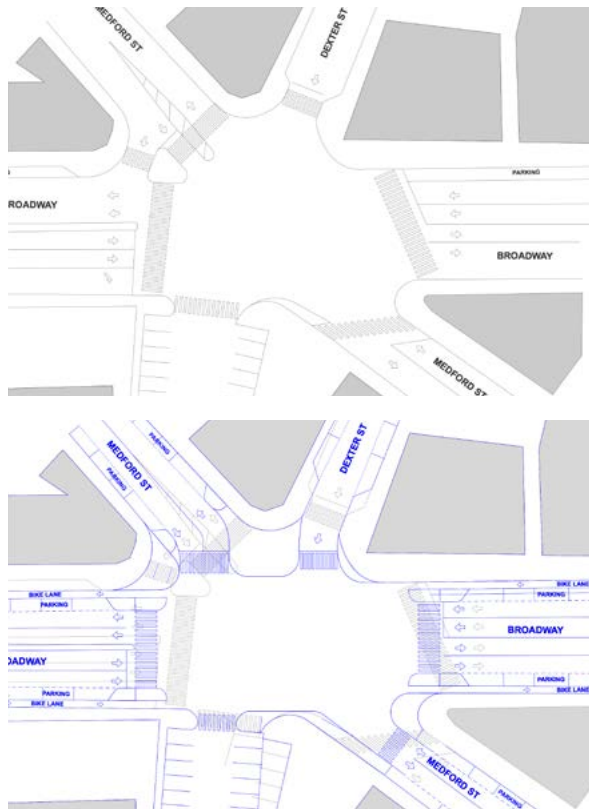
crossing distance, while providing a wider range of vision for pedestrians crossing the street, which may have otherwise been obstructed by parked cars. The bump-outs also serve as features that manage stormwater runoff.

As mentioned by residents during the community engagement process, drivers exiting parked cars can be a significant hazard for cyclists, even when there are dedicated bike lanes. The City should switch the location of bike lanes with parking spaces such that parked cars shield cyclists from moving traffic.

Figure 3-33. (Top Left) Current Intersection Conditions at Ball Square: Wide turning lanes promote faster speeds and reduce safety for pedestrians.

Figure 3-34. (Bottom Left) Current Conditions and Proposed Changes at Ball Square: Suggested alterations to the existing streetscape are overlaid in blue.

Figure 3-35. (Right) Proposed Changes at Ball Square: Extending sidewalks, inserting curb bump outs, and increasing the number of crosswalks creates a more walkable space for pedestrians, which is critical given the intersection's proximity to the proposed Ball Square Station.



Magoun Square Intersection

Magoun Square currently prioritizes travel by car over the needs of pedestrians and cyclists. The island between Medford St. and the north side of Broadway (see Figure 3-36) does little to add to public space despite decreasing crossing distance.

The proposed design omits the right-turn lane and the island in order to create additional gathering space in the square and to encourage foot traffic to first floor retailers.

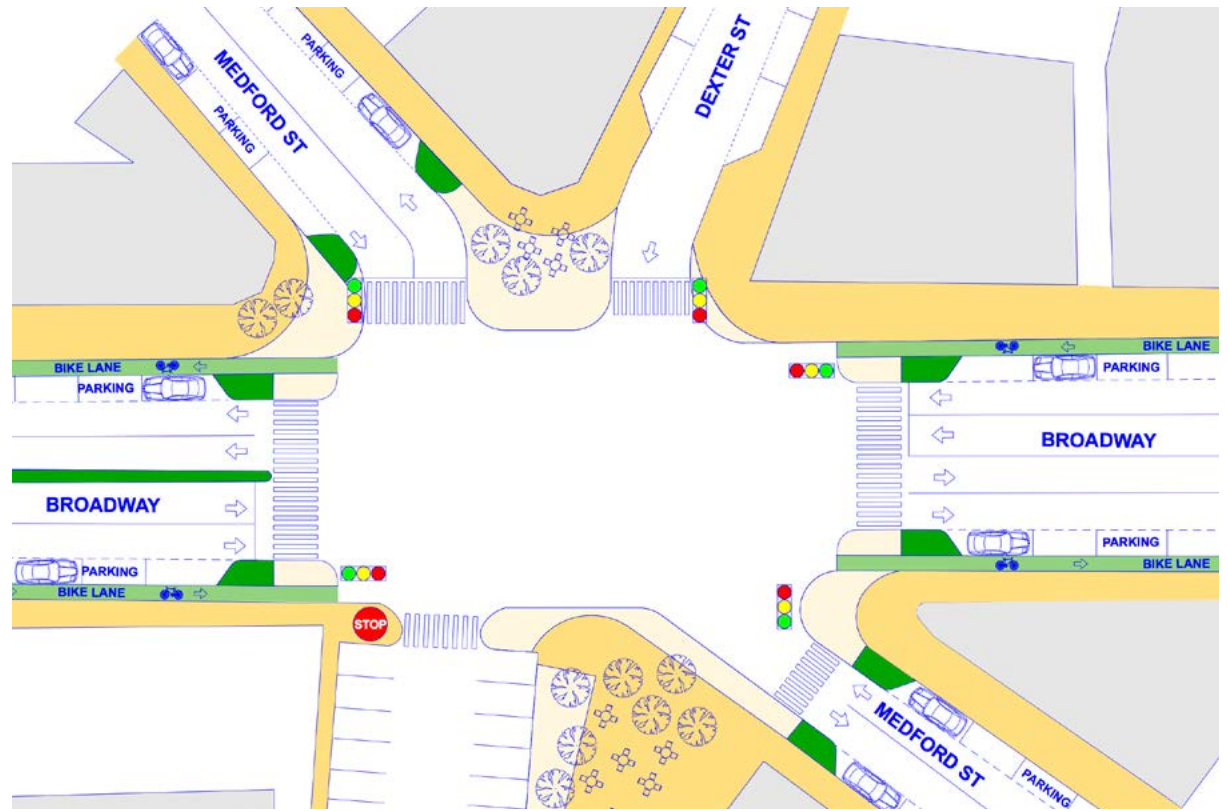
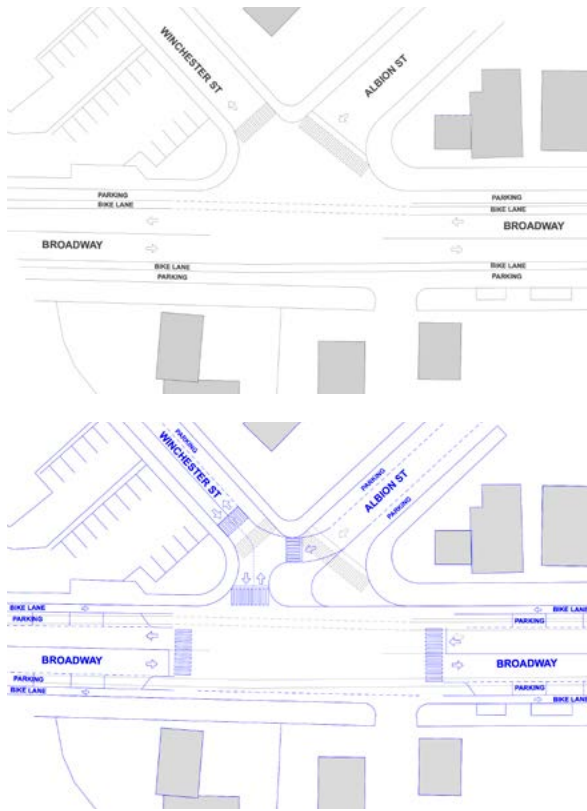


Figure 3-36. (Top Left) Current Intersection Conditions at Magoun Square: The junction prioritizes travel by car, at the expense of cyclists and pedestrians.

Figure 3-37. (Bottom Left) Current Conditions and Proposed Changes at Magoun Square: Suggested alterations to the existing streetscape are overlaid in blue.

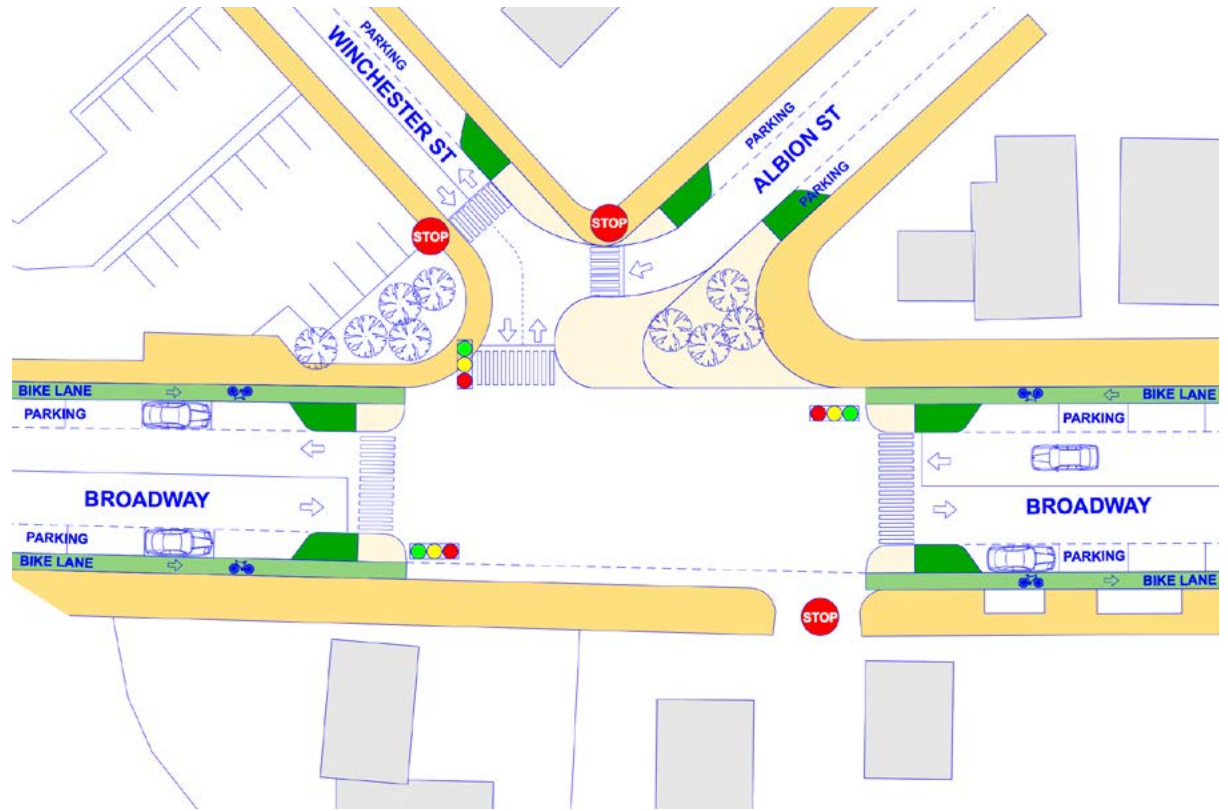
Figure 3-38. (Right) Proposed Changes at Magoun Square: By creating protected bike lanes and reducing the width that pedestrians must cross to travel through Magoun Square, the proposed interventions increase safety for all travelers.



Winchester-Albion Intersection

At the current intersection of Winchester Street and Albion Street with Broadway, pedestrians have no mechanism for crossing the thoroughfare to get to Trum Field. Similarly, they must cross two roads to continue along Broadway, navigating between Ball Square and Magoun Square.

To make this intersection more accessible to pedestrians, this design extends the sidewalks bordering Broadway to the north and creates three new/repainted crosswalks (Figure 3-41). The curb



extensions along Broadway again serve to give pedestrians a better view of oncoming traffic. This is especially important since Broadway slopes downwards, so cars traveling toward Magoun Square speed downhill. The design protects bike lanes by a buffer row of on-street parking.

Figure 3-39. (Top Left) Current Intersection Conditions at Winchester and Broadway: The grade and width of lanes are conducive to fast driving speeds, which creates unsafe conditions for pedestrians looking to cross Broadway.

Figure 3-40. (Bottom Left) Current Conditions and Proposed Changes at Winchester and Broadway: Suggested alterations to the existing streetscape are overlaid in blue.

Figure 3-41. (Right) Proposed Changes at Winchester and Broadway: Narrowing lanes and inserting crosswalks are mechanisms to calm traffic and create safer walking conditions.

SUMMARY

The recommendations in this plan aim to improve how people move around the study area and to enhance the public spaces that everyone shares. They are designed to help nurture the neighborhood as a community by:

1. Planning a variety of events that cater to people from all walks of life, including families, artists, and local businesses;
2. Installing wayfinding features to orient visitors, highlight assets, and provide contextualized environmental and historic education;
3. Improving comfort and flow of pedestrians and cyclists; and,
4. Calming vehicular traffic while installing new bike infrastructure and green infrastructure.

However, comprehensive programming and design of the public realm cannot be crafted by the City alone. Fortunately, Somerville is home to dozens of community groups whose goals align with those outlined in this plan. The City should continue to expand its community engagement beyond public meetings and strengthen partnerships with more of the active groups that represent the community in a different forum. Since our recommendations are built on best practices and examples of successful precedents, some of these groups already have substantial experience in advancing our shared goals and can act as resources for the City.

Examples of potential allies include: East Somerville and Union Streets Main Streets organizations, Somerville Arts Council, Mystic River Watershed Association, Groundwork Somerville. Refer to Chapter 5: Conclusions for a full list of potential partners.

This chapter helped pave—and green—the discussion of specific development proposals and general policies. The next chapter addresses economic development, other amenities, and affordable housing.

Synthesis: Some features that create the identity of a place



Buildings with iconic shapes

Mid-rise buildings

Murals

Incentives for art-related stores

Wayfinding

Street trees

Brick sidewalks

Figure 3-42. Congress Square Arts District in Portland, Maine. (Source: Wikipedia)

04.

HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT





FINDINGS

EXISTING MARKET CONDITIONS

The Ball Square and Magoun Square neighborhoods, like most of Somerville, are characterized by low-rise residential development. While the area is considered more affordable than neighborhoods along the Cambridge border, prices are rising. Like the rest of the Boston metropolitan area, the housing market in Somerville has recovered strongly from the financial crisis of 2008. Home prices and rents continue to rise, and vacancy is low, with approximately half of Somerville residents renting, and the other half owning units. In order to maintain a housing cost burden of 35% or below, a household must earn almost \$100,000 per year to rent, or at least \$75,000 per year to purchase a unit with a mortgage. Given Somerville's median household income of \$5,671 per month, these calculations suggest that more than half of Somerville's households experience housing cost burdens, whether they rent or own a home. (1)

Despite this strong market, there is a low replacement rate, which measures the rate that houses are rebuilt. Indeed, less than 5% of the residential units were built after 2000, while the majority of units were built before 1939. Older units may require more energy to stay warm in winter and cool in summer. While the low replacement rate might mean that the housing stock skews older and therefore more affordable (in contrast to newer, more expensive units), it also means that there is probably significant upward price pressure due to demand outpacing supply.

A peculiar feature of housing consumption in Somerville is the apparent spatial mismatch between the number of individuals in a household and types of units available. For instance, in part of the study area (approximately from Ball to Magoun Squares and from Broadway down to the Community Path), there are 436 one-person households, but only 35 studio apartments. Additionally, there are 166 three-person households and 648 two- or three-bedroom housing units. This signifies that there are many individuals who live with roommates in multi-room units (such as students).

There is a lack of diversity in unit typologies which are overwhelmingly two- and three-bedroom homes. (2)

What We Heard

The recommendations outlined in this chapter draw inspiration from community input. The team conducted walks and talks in the neighborhood, distributed surveys, facilitated workshops at the public meetings, and chatted with community members in other informal settings to understand residents' and visitors' perceptions, hopes, and visions for the area.

The team gathered over 50 surveys targeted to renters, owners, and visitors while walking the neighborhood as well as from public meetings. These surveys asked questions such as "what are the most pressing issues for this neighborhood?" While there were a variety of responses, the survey results indicate that residents feel pressure from rising purchase and rental prices, take pride in the neighborhood's low-rise and family-oriented residential character, and hope to see new amenities pop up along Broadway.

The two public meetings gave a chance for the community to hear the team's proposals and to grapple with trade-offs such as increased building heights and more affordable housing. Community members participated in a variety of workshop activities where they voted on potential uses for specific sites, and discussed the merits and demerits of development proposals. Our recommendations came directly from these workshops, such as the amenities that the community needs (e.g., community center, grocery store, and gym) and where to site these new proposed amenities within the neighborhood. While community members voiced a wide variety of viewpoints, we found general support for increased density along

Broadway to provide more housing and amenities, though there was also concern over parking availability. Whether communicated through public meetings or on street corners, community members fell solidly on one side or the other in debates over parking (too much vs. not enough), affordable housing (build it here vs. build it elsewhere), and new amenities (transit-oriented development vs. keep what's there already). The aim of the following recommendations is to capture the community's desires as we heard them, while balancing interests on all sides of key debates and working towards community cohesion.



Figure 4-1. Public Meeting with Somerville residents

VACANCY RATE	MEDIAN HOME SALE PRICE	MEDIAN RATE	HOUSING COST BURDEN
3.4%	\$629,000	\$2,900	Potentially over 50% of population

Figure 4-2. # of Households by Size vs. # of Units by Size: Census Tracts 3502-04 and 3396. Source: Census 2011.

OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. DPW SITE

The Department of Public Works (DPW) in Somerville is located on 3.8-acre lot that is adjacent to the future Magoun Square Station, an active public space (Trum Field), and a residential neighborhood marked by two- and three-family homes.

Current uses at this site include the offices, storage and parking garages for the DPW. According to the Somerville Facilities Master Plan (2011), the site was assessed at \$7.6M, which indicates high potential for redevelopment.

SomerVision set a housing production goal of 6,000 new housing units by 2030, with 1,200 of those units permanently affordable. Despite the best efforts of affordable housing developers and government agencies, market pressures and the rising cost of land makes it extremely challenging to build affordable housing today in Somerville. Where will Somerville put all of this new affordable housing?

Publicly owned land, such as the DPW site, provides a unique opportunity for the City to meet its housing production goals. In recent years, cities across the United States have launched initiatives to identify publicly owned land that has potential for development of income-restricted affordable housing. As an underutilized site near future rapid transit and other amenities, the DPW site is particularly attractive for residential redevelopment.



Residents from Ball Square and Magoun Square have expressed concerns about affordability and the risks of displacement and gentrification that increase with new transit-oriented developments.

Neighborhood residents identified expansion of the current stock of affordable units as a top priority for the use of the DPW site (Figure 4-5). In addition to affordable housing, residents identified community space and municipal offices as development priorities. In addition, when presented with the trade-offs associated with building affordable housing and increasing density, residents reacted positively, with many of them acknowledging the need for denser developments in order to preserve the neighborhood's affordability levels (Figure 4-6).

Figure 4-3. Current Uses at the DPW Site.

- DPW Offices - 5,500 sq ft
- DPW Storage - 35,000 sq ft
- DPW Parking and Materials Storage - 30,000 sq ft

Precedents

There are strong precedents of repurposing the sites of public works facilities for mixed-use, mixed-income housing developments.

A report commissioned in 2003 by the City of Portland, ME assessed the feasibility of relocating its public works operation to a larger facility outside of the historic Bayside neighborhood, to accommodate significant growth and rising housing costs. While initially stalled due to the recession, this relocation started in October 2017, and will lead to 60 new units of affordable housing.

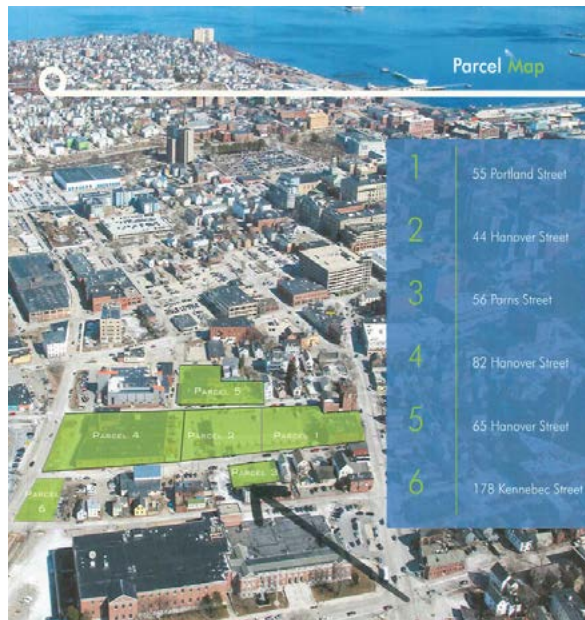


Figure 4-4. Parcel Map for the Public Works Site in Portland, ME. Parcels 3 through 6 were sold in October, 2017. (Source: City of Portland, ME.)

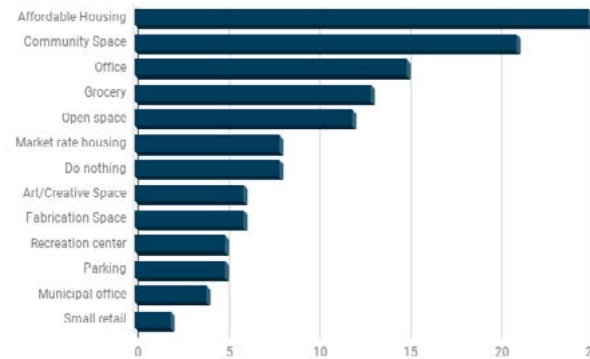


Figure 4-5. Residents' priorities for the DPW Site (Source: First Public Meeting, October 24, 2017)

The high cost of relocating Portland's public works facility was offset by selling the land to a real estate developer for \$3.8M. Within the sale agreement, the City included obligations for buyers to develop affordable housing and create mixed-use, mixed-income projects within a short time frame.

Proposal and Implementation

For the Somerville DPW site, we propose a combination of municipal office space that consolidates services for the City of Somerville, including a first-floor space for a local library branch, and permanently-affordable rental apartments at the DPW site.

The development would include the following characteristics:



16,434 sq. ft of office space



222 units of affordable rental housing



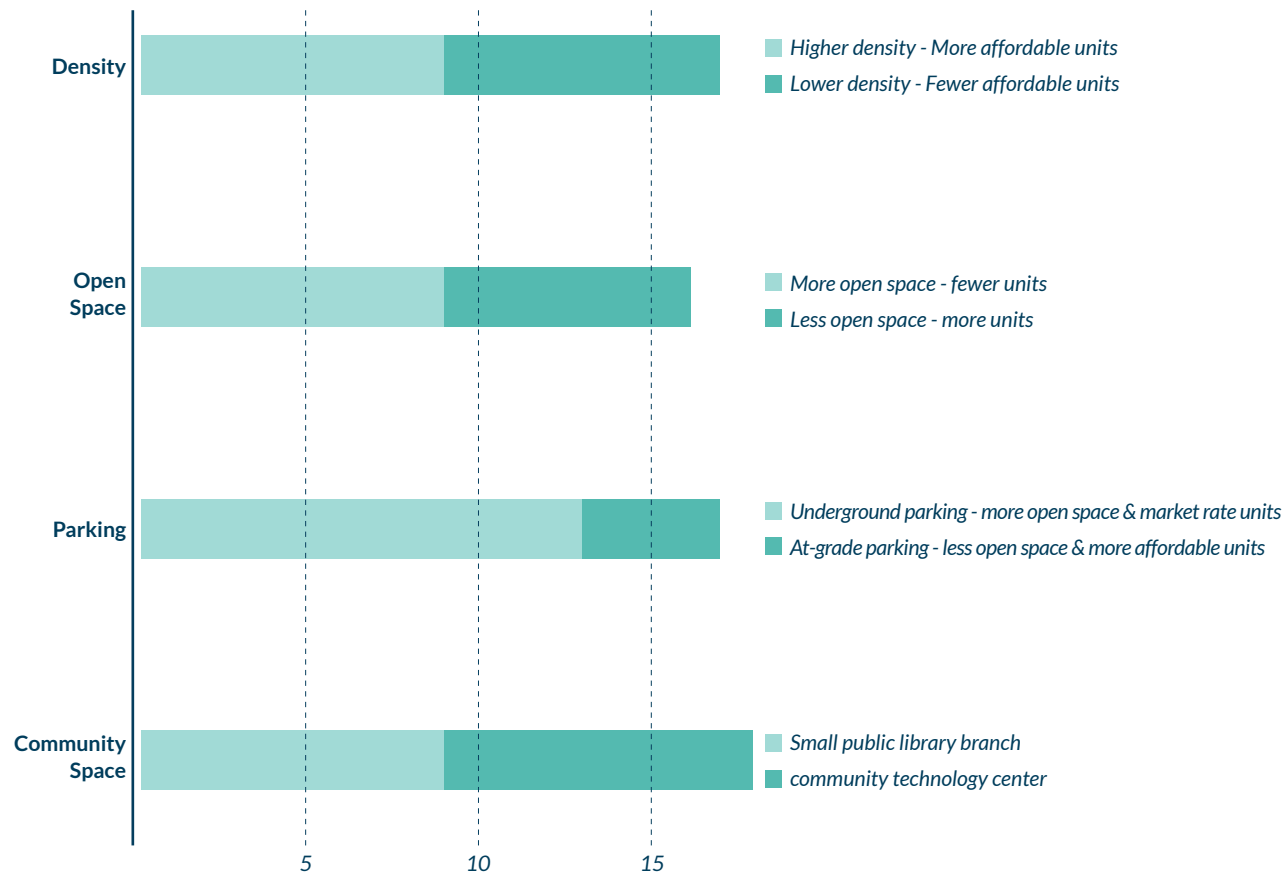
24,700 sq. ft. of open/park space



171 parking spaces
0.77 spaces/unit

The unique opportunity to build on public land allows for 100% affordable housing.

An alternative scenario offers a share of market-rate units, which would subsidize construction of a below-ground parking structure that would allow for the creation of a larger park space in the center courtyard. The above-ground parking ratio was determined based on other transit-oriented, affordable rental developments in Somerville due to its proximity to the future Magoun Square Station.



Given the size of the parcel and the complexity of developing a large-scale, affordable housing project, we propose phased implementation as follows:

Phase 1: Relocate operations of the DPW site, except for administrative offices. Concentrate development efforts on the northern border of the site, on Franey Road, prioritizing the consolidation of city services and the construction of the community space.

Phase 2: Prioritize development on the northwest section of the site, close to Cedar St.

Phase 3: Prioritize the development of affordable units facing the Green Line Extension tracks. Lease this land to an affordable housing developer and include a permanent affordability covenant.

Phase 4: Develop the southeast section of the lot, adjacent to Charles E. Ryan Rd., minimizing impact on residential streets and abutters.

Design Concept

To promote integration among residents of the new development and with the neighborhood as a whole, the proposed set of buildings together create a ring shape, intended to catalyze daily interactions. If additional funding is secured through higher density and a share of market-rate units, then the inner circle could work as a central park where residents can relax at an outdoor barbecue, read on a bench, take in the sun, or enjoy the playground space with their children.

To foster cohesion with the larger neighborhood, the ring is designed with multiple openings for pedestrian flow, connecting with the existing street grid. This creates a development that is visually and functionally open to the surrounding neighborhood.

Of the three buildings in the proposal, two are consistent with current heights in the neighborhood (35 feet). Only the building adjacent to the train tracks would be taller, at six stories.

Viewed from the surrounding neighborhood and Trum Field, the buildings on Franey Road and Charles Ryan Rd. create a visual step up to the taller building in the back. In addition, the Charles Ryan Rd. building will match the architectural style of the adjacent homes by using the same building height and roof shape. Following the approach of visual and functional connectivity, the building located on Franey Rd. has several pedestrian entrances to integrate the development with Trum Field and the community as a whole.



Figure 4-7. Scenario A. Lower density and less open space at the DPW site.



Figure 4-8. Scenario B. Higher density and a share of market-rate units to support more open space at the DPW site.

B. COMMUNITY CENTER

Overview

SomerVision’s call for vibrant business districts and neighborhoods aligns with the interest we heard in developing a community center. We propose a new community center at the current site of Dunkin Donuts at 504 Broadway in Magoun Square. The community center would serve as a locus for creative community activity, including both informal gatherings among neighbors as well as structured activities like classes and scheduled events.

The project is envisioned as a six-story development, given community support for increased density. Over half of respondents to a survey at the second public meeting voiced support for a six-story structure and increased density on the site.

This would require a variance, considering that the lot will be designated as Mid Rise 4 under Somerville’s newly proposed zoning code, which allows for a maximum of four stories.

The building’s gross footprint would be approximately 3,900 square feet. The first floor could continue to house a commercial establishment, like the Dunkin Donuts. The second floor would be home to the community center. Given the large footprint, some space could also be designated as co-working space on the second floor. Upper floors would be residential, with a total of 19 units (roughly 5 units per floor). Lease agreements for the commercial/retail establishments, a possible co-working space, and the residential units would

cross-subsidize the construction and maintenance of the community center space.

We recommend engaging Tufts University regarding the design, maintenance, and programming of the community center. Large institutions such as Tufts can help anchor a community center in a neighborhood. For instance, the University of Chicago’s Smart Museum of Art is operated by the University, but provides open space and programs targeted toward neighborhood residents.

Implementation

The proposed zoning for the site in Somerville’s zoning overhaul would allow a mixed-use, four-story development by-right (including two retail establishments, a community center, co-working space, and residential units). That said, the community’s support for a six-level structure would require a variance, as outlined in the preceding paragraph, or new zoning alto-

gether. Given consistent community support for taller structures along Broadway — almost 70% of respondents to a survey at the second public meeting voiced support for denser, taller development — the City might consider updating the proposed zoning code from Mid-Rise 4 to Mid-Rise 6. A public committee or body would need to coordinate the interests, energies, and resources of the different actors involved to successfully realize this complex project. Key actors include: the current owner, the Dunkin Donuts tenant, a developer, and potential involvement from Tufts and/or a community group to manage and program the community center.

Given consistent community support for taller structures along Broadway (See Appendix D), the City should consider updating the proposed zoning of Mid-Rise 4 districts to Mid-Rise 6.

Proposal Breakdown

-  3,961 sq. ft of cafe/restaurant(s)
-  3,961 sq. ft of community center
-  19 new apartment units



Figure 4-9. View of the proposed development from the Medford side of Magoun Square.

C. GAS STATION

Shield Gas Station is a prime development site for the neighborhood and for Somerville as a whole. Several representatives of this establishment attended our public meetings. Their helpful feedback, paired with insight from the rest of the community, informed these recommendations.

We propose a six-story, 35,500 square foot building with a café/ dining space on the first floor, a gym on the second floor, and four floors of office space. Offices would liven the commercial corridor during weekdays.

According to our observations and constituent outreach, despite lunch specials, many restaurants are relatively vacant during the day because the neighborhood is so predominantly residential. Capitalizing on the new Green Line stations and bike lanes, most office workers will be able to commute without a car. Since the deed restricts residential uses on this site, redevelopment of the Shield Gas Station can focus on bringing more jobs and restaurant patrons to the area.

Workshop activities from our first public meeting revealed an interest in a neighborhood gym, an idea that was raised repeatedly. The closest indoor gyms are at Tufts University and in Davis Square. The proposed gym could cater towards office workers and neighborhood residents alike. The proposed café/ dining space could be a new establishment or an opportunity for one of the current occupants of the proposed grocery store site (see Page 52) to relocate within the community.



- Selected sites
- Other sites considered
- T Station

Figure 4-11. Location: 660 Broadway and Shield Gas Station

Figure 4-10. Rendering of the proposed development (café + gym + offices) in place of the current Shield Gas Station on Broadway, from Boston Avenue, looking towards Magoun Square.

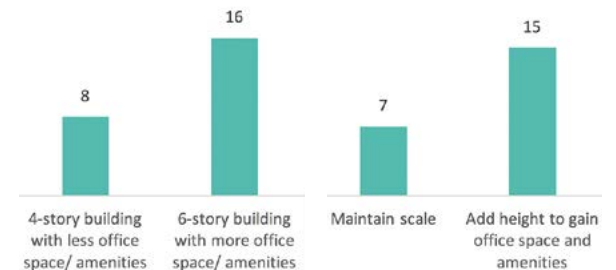


Figure 4-12. Via a survey distributed at the second public meeting on November 30, 2017 Public Meeting, the community demonstrated strong support for a taller building with more amenities and office space.



Figure 4-13. The development of Shield Gas Station and 660 Broadway creates an opportunity for the expansion of the current bridge as an active public space, complementary to the new proposed functions.

At the second public meeting, the community voiced support for a taller structure here and generally more dense development along Broadway (approximately 70% of respondents to a survey).

The Mid-Rise 4 zoning designation restricts this building to four floors, but we believe that a taller building will best support the community’s desires and SomerVision’s goals of supporting diverse and transit-oriented development.

Like the proposed community center development at 504 Broadway, we recommend updating proposed zoning of this Mid-Rise 4 district to Mid-Rise 6.

We agree with the community that this site can support a six-story structure, in part due to the proposed open park space spanning the railroad tracks.

Proposal Breakdown



23,680 sq. ft of office space



5,920 sq. ft of cafe/restaurant(s)



19 new apartment units

D. GROCERY STORE

Ball Square and Magoun Square lack a grocery store. As a result, most residents drive to access fresh fruits, vegetables, and other grocery staples.

To need a car to reach this essential aspect of a healthy lifestyle runs counter to the transit-oriented, diverse, and healthful community proposed in *Somerville Vision*. At our second public meeting on November 30, 2017, 20 (91%) of 22 attendees who completed a survey said that they would prefer “transit-oriented growth” to “reliance on cars for groceries.”

As noted throughout this plan, there is a need for more housing in the area, especially as the proposed Green Line Extension to Ball Square has increased housing demand and costs. We therefore propose a new mixed-use development at the corner of Broadway and Boston Avenue.

A small, transit-oriented flagship grocery store, similar to the *bfresh* stores in Harvard and Davis Squares, will be on the first floor (14,400 square feet). Above the grocery, there will be three floors of apartments (35,500 square feet). Assuming the 20% inclusionary zoning requirements, this new development will bring a total of 40 new apartments, of which 8 will be affordable units, and 32 will be market rate.

The building will have a green roof to support the need for more pervious surfaces in this part of Somerville to prevent flooding in Davis Square and other downhill neighborhoods.



Figure 4-14. Existing conditions at the site of the proposed development at 691-703 Broadway

Due to its proximity to the proposed Ball Square Green Line station, this new development will not be accompanied by additional parking. The grocery store will cater to the neighborhood and MBTA commuters, with the latter group expected to stop for dinner items on their way home from work, as well as shopping at other times.

Even the smallest grocery stores require a bare minimum of approximately 9,000 square feet. The proposed site was chosen because it was the only parcel near Ball Square Station large enough to support a grocery store given the industry standards. This proposal assumes that efforts will be made to preserve all or at least part of the historic

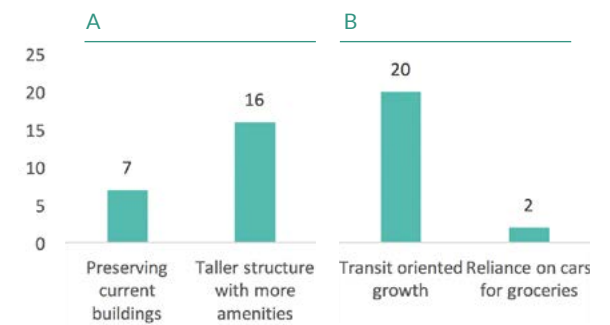


Figure 4-15. Results from a survey distributed at the Second Public Meeting on November 30, 2017, asking respondents to select between competing trade-offs.



Figure 4-16. Proposed grocery store type. (Source: The Shelby Report. <http://www.theshelbyreport.com/2015/09/08/aholds-bfresh-store-in-boston-to-host-grand-opening-sept-18/>)



- Selected site
- Other site considered
- T Station

Figure 4-17. Site of the proposed development





Figure 4-18. A rendering of the proposed mixed-use development, including a grocery store and new housing, looking up Broadway, towards Boston Avenue and Powder House Square.

building façade. We recommend that the City encourage the development of establishments which serve the immediate community.

Somerville’s proposed zoning for this site will allow for three floors, but we are recommending four due to Somerville’s stated desire to host more transit-oriented development. Of those surveyed at the November Public Meeting, 70% said that they would prefer a “taller structure with more amenities” over “preserving the current building.” (See Appendix D)

Proposal Breakdown

-  14,391 sq. ft of grocery store
-  40 new apartment units

E. ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS (ADU)

As one of the densest cities in the country (3), with a population that is only growing, Somerville is facing an affordable housing challenge. The study area in particular is dominated by residential neighborhoods with little land to spare. Roughly half of Somerville residents rent, making them particularly vulnerable to volatility in the housing market. (4)

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), known informally as “in-law units,” are a promising solution to the dual challenge of lack of housing options and limited land. ADUs are self-contained, smaller living units on the lot of a single-family home; they can be attached to the primary house or stand alone as a small separate unit. Some are converted from garages or backyard parking spaces.

There are several benefits to ADUs. In addition to providing more housing options, ADUs enhance the homeowner’s asset, adding value to the property. Homeowners can rent out their ADUs, and thus acquire rental income, or even have their parents move into the ADU to truly embrace the “in-law unit” nickname distinction. ADUs provide a strategy to increase density and add more housing units within the current neighborhood fabric.

Consistent with *SomerVision*, ADUs seeks to expand rental units and promote mixed-income transit-oriented development, while mitigating displacement.

To meet these goals, the City of Somerville should consider amending its zoning code to allow ADUs and to incentivize owners to rent out the units to lower-income tenants.



Figure 4-19. A former garage converted to an ADU (Source: AccessoryDwellings.org)

Precedents

There are precedents that showcase innovative ways to leverage ADUs for housing affordability:

- Los Angeles County eyed its single-family zoned areas as a significant opportunity to build new affordable housing and identified ADUs as a homelessness prevention strategy. They provided \$75,000 per unit to build new, and preserve existing, affordable ADUs. The subsidy was tied to a commitment to rent the ADU to a homeless family or individual or participant in the housing voucher program.
- Lexington, Massachusetts sought to ease strains on the housing market by streamlining the permitting process. They reduced minimum lot size requirements, allowed ADUs by-right in most homes if located within the primary dwelling, and allowed up to two ADUs per lot.
- Cambridge, Massachusetts recently amended its zoning codes to allow for ADUs.
- Boston, Massachusetts is currently implementing a pilot program in three neighborhoods to test whether allowing ADUs by-right achieves the Mayor’s goals to increase affordable housing stock and prevent displacement. In Boston, ADUs are restricted to owner-occupied homes.

Implementation

As the study area is zoned mostly as neighborhood residential (NR), there are significant opportunities for ADUs to be built, either within the primary residence as an attached unit, or as an independent unit. However, there are several barriers in the current and proposed zoning codes in Somerville. Neither the existing code nor the proposed code allow for ADUs, although they do allow for detached units to be used for things other than residential use, such as “home occupation uses” (home offices). Unfortunately, the proposed code heaps additional barriers precluding the construction of ADUs by prohibiting the construction of new buildings in back yards and limiting the number of buildings permitted on each lot.

We propose the following amendments to the proposed zoning code:

- Homeowners should be permitted to convert or construct detached structures for use as dwelling units.
- If the property (either primary or ADU) is owner-occupied, ADUs should be permitted by-right with a design review by neighbors. If the property is entirely renter-occupied, the property should pass an inspection to meet minimal standards in addition to design review.
- Each unit of ADU should be provided with one off-street parking spot, with the exception of properties within a quarter-mile of an MBTA station.
- The permitting process for ADUs, including

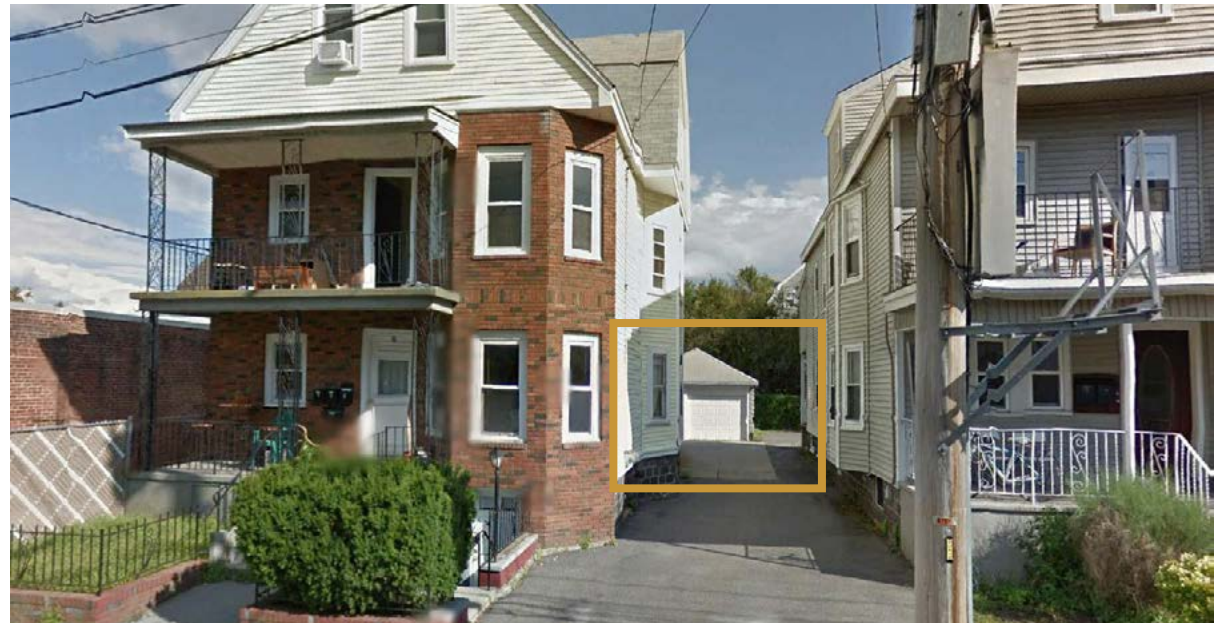


Figure 4-20. A garage in the study area with potential to be converted into an ADU (Source: Google Earth)

the design review and the inspection, should be streamlined to the greatest extent possible to reduce barriers for property owners seeking to construct ADUs.

- To incentivize the building of affordable ADUs, the City of Somerville should explore the potential of providing subsidies to property owners who commit to rent the ADU to low-income tenants.

Community members voiced overwhelming support for this proposal at the Second Public meeting. Several community members even suggested that the team’s proposal for an ADU parking requirement be eliminated in order to incentivize their construction. That said, there was a minority

of community members who were concerned over the impact ADUs might have on neighborhood character and parking congestion.

This proposal can be implemented as a zoning text amendment or as a pilot program. Assuming that the final version of the zoning code will not include provisions to allow ADUs, the City may seek a text amendment to the code. As specified in the latest draft of the proposed Somerville Zoning Ordinance (15.6.2 Zoning Text Amendment), a text amendment petition can be submitted by an alderman, the Mayor, the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Planning Board, a property owner, or ten registered voters in Somerville. The program itself could be administered by the Housing Division of the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development (OSPCD).

MUNICIPAL POLICIES FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING PRESERVATION

In addition to constructing new affordable housing in the study area, the City of Somerville should implement policies to preserve the affordability of current housing and prevent displacement of low to moderate income residents.

At community meetings, current residents expressed mixed feelings that the Green Line Extension would likely increase property values and also increase rents, putting working class renters at a higher risk of displacement from the neighborhood and creating property tax burdens for some owners. The following recommendations build on Somerville's Sustainable Neighborhoods Working Group Report (2015) and outline strategies to achieve equitable growth without displacement.

By pursuing this package of affordable housing preservation policies, the City can mitigate the potential negative effects of the Green Line Extension on neighborhood stability.

Affordable Housing Preservation Fund

The City should consider creating a unified fund for the preservation of affordable housing. This fund can have multiple sources of revenue, including dedicated funding sources, developer in-lieu

fees, and local budget appropriations. Dedicated sources can include the Mayor's proposed fee on real estate transfers and other potential fees associated with real estate development and speculation. In cases where developers pay in-lieu fees rather than construct on-site inclusionary units, those fees should be paid directly into the affordable housing preservation fund. Finally, the City should consider appropriating funds directly into this fund through the budget process. If affordable housing is truly a top city priority, these values should be reflected in the budget.

Tenant Right of First Refusal

The City can create a tenant right of first refusal program similar to Washington, DC's Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA). In this program, when a building is sold, tenants can form a tenant association to purchase the building at market value, or assign their right to a nonprofit housing developer to purchase it on their behalf as affordable rental housing. This policy can help prevent a building being sold to a new owner, who evicts current tenants and flips the units to charge luxury rents-- a sadly frequent occurrence, particularly in rapidly gentrifying areas.

The City can supplement state and federal sources of subsidy with local affordable housing preservation funds, to assist tenant associations and affordable housing nonprofits in purchasing these buildings at market rate. With city funding, the tenant association or nonprofit would have to agree to a permanent affordability covenant and city monitoring to ensure that the buildings stay affordable in perpetuity.

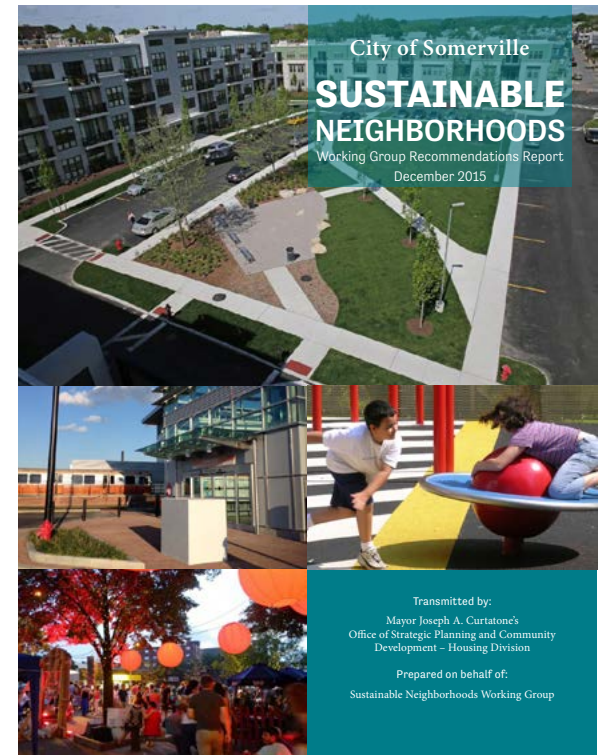


Figure 4-21. City of Somerville's Sustainable Neighborhoods Working Group Report, December 2015

100 Homes Campaign and Community Land Trust

The affordable housing preservation fund and tenant right of first refusal program can supplement the Somerville Community Corporation's (SCC) 100 Homes Campaign. First, by giving tenants an assignable right of first refusal, the policy would allow tenants and SCC to compete in the market with all-cash buyers, who can currently outbid any other party simply by not needing to take the time required to assemble financing to close. Second, tenants can assign their right of first refusal to SCC, which can use funding from the affordable housing preservation fund to add the units to the 100 Homes Campaign. Alternatively, the tenants could work with SCC organizers to form a limited equity housing cooperative, and accept a permanent affordability covenant as part of City financing.

Affordable homes purchased by tenants with this financing should be converted into shared equity homeownership, either through a deed restriction or a Community Land Trust. This will ensure that the properties remain affordable to generations of low to moderate income home purchasers, and helps to stretch the City's scarce subsidy dollars to help more people over time.

Tax Relief for "Cash Poor" Homeowners

Although renters are the most vulnerable to displacement from rising real estate pressure, low to moderate income homeowners can also struggle to keep up with rising property tax assessments.

Especially seniors and the disabled often find themselves "asset rich and cash poor," where they may be forced to sell their house in order to unlock the equity they have built. The City can assist this population by better advertising existing tax breaks for seniors, and by creating a program that allows residents to defer property tax payments until the sale or transfer of property. In this scenario, the homeowner could pay zero property tax for years, and the deferred payments would add up, with interest, and would be payable in full at the time of sale of the property. This would help to alleviate the property tax burden on asset rich homeowners without decreasing the City's long-term property tax revenue.

Implementation

Some of these proposals are directly within the City's authority, and some need permission from the state via home rule petitions or enabling legislation. The City should submit home rule petitions for the tenant right of first refusal and the transfer fee.

Creating an affordable housing preservation fund and new property tax collection options should be within the city's current authority. The City should also consider adding staff to the Housing Division to implement and oversee the programs proposed here.



Figure 4-22. Assembly Row in Somerville, where 56 units of affordable housing will be available by lottery in early 2018.



Figure 4-23. Residents rally for diverse and affordable housing in Somerville (Source: Somerville Community Corporation)

SUMMARY

Without public intervention, the economic diversity of communities like Magoun Square and Ball Square could be a faint memory. The Green Line Extension will likely exacerbate the affordability crisis already threatening many Somerville residents. In this chapter, we propose opportunities to expand the housing supply through new mixed-use buildings along Broadway, including a transit-oriented grocery store near the incoming Ball Square Station, a community center in Magoun Square, affordable housing at the current Department of Public Works site, and a new office building to replace the Shield Gas Station.

Our proposed zoning change to allow for accessory dwelling units (ADUs) would increase housing supply while maintaining neighborhood character and increasing property values for current owners. In addition to adding needed housing, these proposals would yield exciting transit-oriented development that will enhance Somerville's desirability as a great place to live, work, play, and raise a family.

Recent News

Recent media coverage highlights the timeliness of these proposals, underscoring the urgency for affordable housing: On December 5, 2017, the Metropolitan Mayors Coalition of Greater Boston comprised of 14 local leaders, including Somerville Mayor Joseph Curtatone, announced a regional partnership to focus on housing production, affordability, diversity, and other pressing needs. Mayor Curtatone will co-Chair the partnership with Mayor Walsh of Boston; the two developed the idea together and invited the rest of the region to join them. (5)

On December 11, 2017, Mayor Curtatone stood by Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker as he announced new legislation: An Act to Promote Housing Choices. If passed, this would enhance localities' power to reform zoning and otherwise innovate to increase housing supply, especially affordable housing. The governor is backing his support with \$10 million in incentives to build and \$2 million in technical assistance. His goal is to construct 135,000 new housing units statewide by 2025—only eight years away. (6)

This summer, the median housing price in Massachusetts surpassed \$400,000 and regional Boston rents are similarly among the highest in the country, making this one of the most unaffordable regions to rent or own a home and highlighting the urgency undergirding the above two recent announcements. (7)

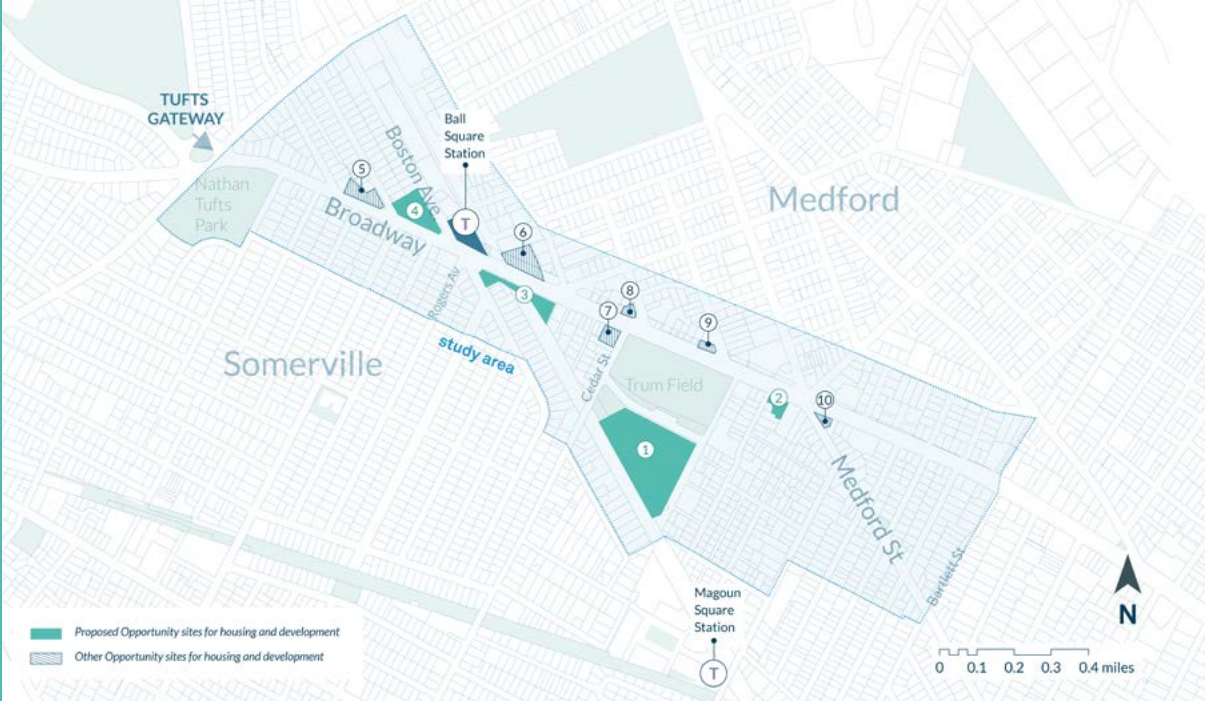


Figure 4-24. Opportunity sites for development. (1) Department of Public Works, (2) Dunkin Donuts, (3) Shield Gas Station, 660 Broadway, and the Bridge, (4) 691-703 Broadway (5) 729 Broadway/Supreme Paint Company, (6) Dialysis Clinic, (7) 7-Eleven, (8) Hillside Auto Repair and Gas Station, (9) Trum Field Sunoco, (10) 531-535 Medford Street

05.



CONCLUSIONS



This plan envisions a phased approach to guide implementation of the recommendations described in previous chapters. The following table organizes recommended actions by the overarching goal with which they align, and the type of intervention. Each recommendation identifies the responsible party and potential partners that the City should consider in the planning and implementation process. The recommendations are divided into two phases:

Near-term (2018 – 2023)


The near-term phase reflects actions that the City of Somerville and its partners can take with property owner buy-in or relatively low additional investment. The “low-hanging fruit” that the City should consider includes low-cost, small-scale, and/or short-term actions that improve pedestrian and cyclist safety, ease mobility, and bring new energy into existing public spaces. The City can also begin designing or modifying policies to a) protect existing tenants and homeowners from anticipated changes in the neighborhood, and b) encourage new residential and commercial development.


Long-term (2024 – 2040)

The long-term phase refers to changes that a) require larger investment – human or capital, b) hinge on completion of the Green Line Extension, or c) involve partially-completed business leases.

SUMMARY TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

NEAR-TERM (2018 - 2021)





<i>General Goal</i>	<i>Intervention Type</i>	<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Responsible organization</i>	<i>Potential Partner(s)</i>
Creating a vibrant business district 	Site development	Build a small, transit-oriented flagship grocery store in Ball Square as part of a mixed-use development		Transit-oriented grocers such as bfresh; MBTA
	Site development	Design mixed-use development at 660 Broadway (Gas Station), with construction to begin around 2020	Real estate developers	
	Organizational	Organize workshop of local businesses interested in creating a main streets organization. Invite existing Somerville & surrounding area main streets organizations to share their experience	City of Somerville	Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development (OSPCD); East Somerville Main Streets; Union Square Main Streets
	Programming	Organize SomerStreets open streets event on Medford St.	City of Somerville; OSPCD; local business	Somerville Arts Council; OSPCD
	Policy	Streamline process to allow businesses to improve store and restaurant façades	City of Somerville	N/A

General Goal	Intervention Type	Recommendation	Responsible organization	Potential Partner(s)
Improving mobility 	Connectivity	Convert private ways leading to the current DPW site to public streets to promote direct movement between Magoun Square Station and proposed affordable housing site	City of Somerville	N/A
	Street layout	Determine feasibility of reducing driving lane width to 11 feet (e.g., on Broadway) & developing separated bike lanes	City of Somerville	Boston Cyclist Union; Mass Bike
	Street layout	Determine feasibility of swapping orientation of car parking lanes and bike lanes in Ball Square	City of Somerville	Boston Cyclist Union; Mass Bike
	Street layout	Remove “easy right” turning lanes and extend public space to promote pedestrian safety and comfort at crosswalks	City of Somerville	N/A
	Streetscape	Paint new crosswalks as indicated in Figure 3-22	City of Somerville	N/A
	Streetscape	Raise grade and add textured paving (e.g., brick or permeable) to crosswalks at Ball Square and Magoun Square Station. Alternatively, hire local artists to design colorful crosswalk.	City of Somerville	OSPCD; Somerville Arts Council
	Streetscape	Install clear signage and other wayfinding features	City of Somerville	N/A

General Goal	Intervention Type	Recommendation	Responsible organization	Potential Partner(s)
Making public spaces more inviting & safe 	Site development	At Trum Field, allot pull-off spaces for food trucks on Broadway at peak hours	City of Somerville	N/A
	Programming	Program Monday through Friday parking lots with weekend art shops and farmers markets	City of Somerville	Somerville Arts Council; Tufts Office of Community Relations; OSPCD; Federation of Massachusetts Farmers' Markets
	Programming	Program events for children at Trum Field	City of Somerville	Somerville Public Schools; Center for Applied Child Development at Tufts; Groundwork Somerville; Boys and Girls Club of Middlesex County
	Streetscape	Along Broadway, implement green infrastructure best management practices (BMPs), including bioswales, vegetated curb cuts, rain gardens, and tree plantings	City of Somerville	OSPCD; Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA); MassDEP
	Streetscape	Identify sub-areas that contribute large volumes of stormwater runoff and/or flood. In those areas, offer FAR bonuses as incentives for developers to build more stormwater retention BMPs	City of Somerville	OSPCD; MyRWA; Tufts University
	Streetscape	Offer grants to local artists for murals to activate passive building facades. Alternatively, hold contests for mural design, whose winners are determined by a participatory online voting process	City of Somerville	OSPCD; Somerville Arts Council

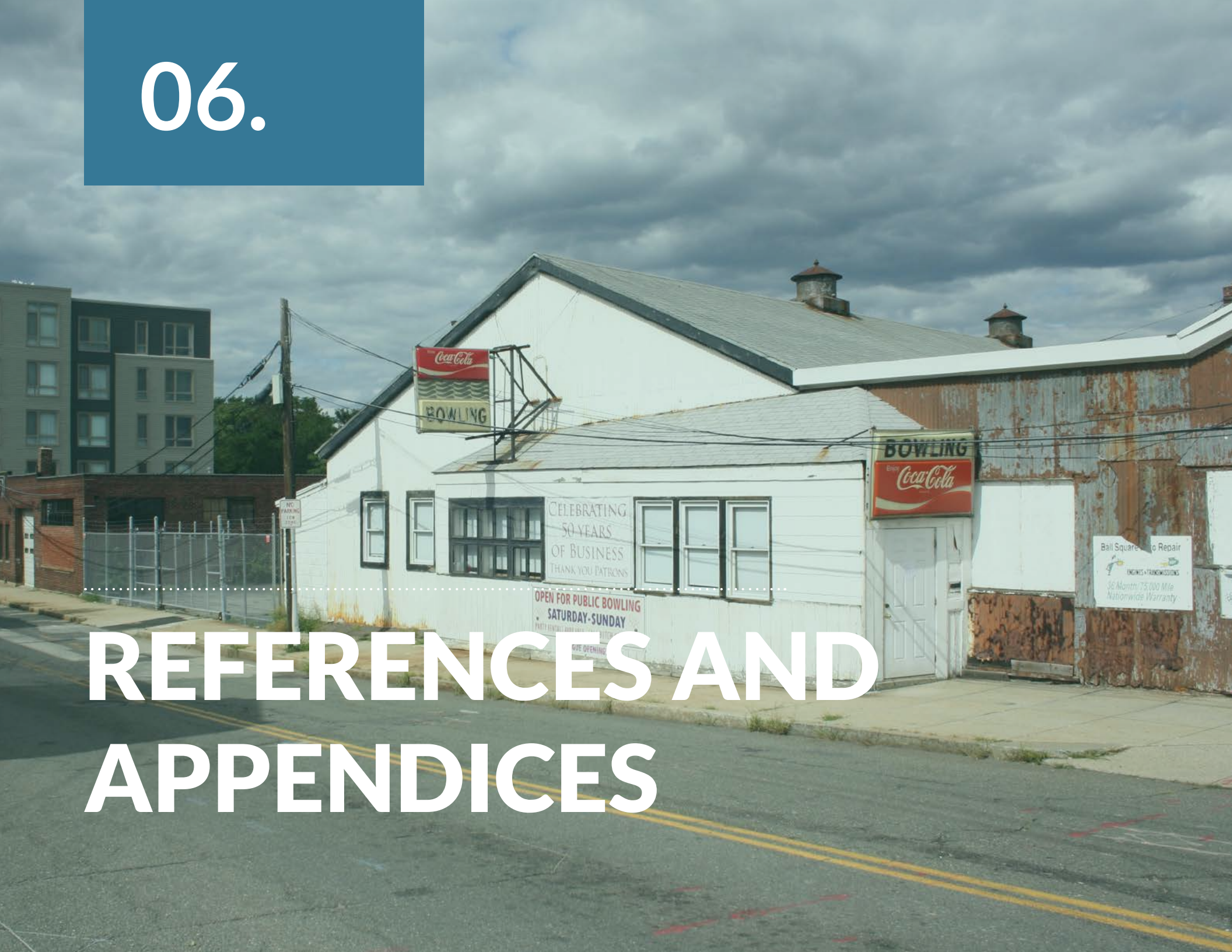
General Goal	Intervention Type	Recommendation	Responsible organization	Potential Partner(s)
Secure stable housing 	Site development	Relocate DPW operation, except for administrative offices. Concentrate development efforts over Franey Road. Consolidate city services and build community center	City of Somerville - DPW; afford. housing developer	Somerville Community Corporation
	Policy	Allow ADUs and incentivize owners to rent out the units to lower-income tenants	City of Somerville	OSPCD
	Policy	Creating Affordable Housing Preservation Fund	City of Somerville	OSPCD
	Policy	Create Tenant Right of First Refusal program	City of Somerville	OSPCD
	Policy	Support 100 Homes Campaign and Community Land Trust	City of Somerville	Somerville Community Corporation
	Policy	Create program to defer property tax payments until the sale of properties	City of Somerville	Somerville Assessor's Office
	Policy	Amend 2017 proposed zoning code by upgrading zoning code to MR6 along Broadway between Ball Square and Magoun Square	City of Somerville	Office of Planning and Zoning
	Policy	Upzone strategic parcels near Ball Square Station to increase transit-oriented housing supply	City of Somerville	Office of Planning and Zoning

LONG-TERM (2022 - 2030)

<i>General Goal</i>	<i>Intervention Type</i>	<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Responsible organization</i>	<i>Potential Partner(s)</i>
Creating a vibrant business district 	Organizational	Develop main streets organization of Ball Square and Magoun Square business owners	City of Somerville; local business	Chamber of Commerce; OSPCD; local business
	Site development	Build a community center in Magoun Square as part of a mixed-use commercial and residential development	Local real estate developer	Tufts University; Dunkin Donuts; Somerville Arts Council; other local art groups
Improving mobility 	Connectivity	Extend community path from Magoun Square Station to proposed affordable housing development at the DPW site	MassDOT	MassDOT
Public space 	Streetscape	Implement plan to upgrade Trum Field, focusing on activation of borders by converting excess concrete structures to community gathering spaces	City of Somerville	Groundwork Somerville
Secure stable housing 	Site development	Prioritize development of affordable housing on the north-west section of the DPW site, closer to Cedar St	City of Somerville; affordable housing developer	
	Site development	Develop the south-east section of the lot, adjacent to Charles E. Ryan Rd, minimizing impact on the residential streets and abutters	City of Somerville; affordable housing developer	

06.

REFERENCES AND APPENDICES



REFERENCES

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Table of Appendices

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- Homeowners
- Renters
- Nonresidents

B. Workshop Prioritization Activity

C. Workshop Redevelopment Activity

- Department of Public Works
- Shield Gas Station, Bridge, and 660 Broadway
- Dunkin Donuts

D. Final Public Meeting Feedback

APPENDIX A: SURVEY FORMS

To understand existing conditions of the study area, the team distributed surveys to understand more about people’s daily experience of the neighborhood and what types of changes they would like to see in the future.

Given that the study area is predominantly home to people who speak English, our presentations, surveys, and all of the materials that we produced for this project were only offered English. At our first Public Meeting, we offered to provide translations if anyone felt inhibited in their ability to participate or knew of neighbors or friends who might offer insights if materials were translated. No one approached us to fulfill this offer.

The survey forms can be found on the following pages.

HOMEOWNERS SURVEY - BALL AND MAGOUN SQUARES

Thank you for completing this short, **anonymous** survey! The City of Somerville is working with a class of MIT graduate students to create a plan for the development of Ball and Magoun Squares. **This survey is completely voluntary.** If you have any questions or would like to learn more about our work, please contact: 11.360students@mit.edu.

Please share your cross streets or address (We will use a mapping software to show where survey respondents live. Addresses will not be shared.)

1. What three issues are most pressing for your neighborhood? 1. 2. 3.	2. How could these issues be addressed? 1. 2. 3.
3. What do you cherish most about this neighborhood?	4. What places in the community do you frequent?
5. What year did you buy your unit/ move to the neighborhood?	6. Have you considered leaving? Why would you leave?
7. What kind of building do you own? <input type="checkbox"/> Detached house <input type="checkbox"/> Duplex <input type="checkbox"/> Triple decker <input type="checkbox"/> Apartment building with more than 3 units <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	8. Why did you settle in this neighborhood? (Check all that apply) <input type="checkbox"/> Proximity to work <input type="checkbox"/> Proximity to school <input type="checkbox"/> Price <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood amenities - (Specify: _____) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

9. Please assess the following characteristics of your house and neighborhood.

Category	1. Worst	2	3	4	5. Best
Safety					
Walkability					
Bikeability					
Parking availability					
Access to public transit					

RENTERS SURVEY - BALL AND MAGOUN SQUARES

Thank you for completing this short, anonymous survey! The City of Somerville is working with a class of MIT graduate students to create a plan for the development of Ball and Magoun Squares. This survey is completely voluntary. If you have any questions or would like to learn more about our work, please contact: 11.360students@mit.edu.

Please share your cross streets or address (We will use a mapping software to show where survey respondents live. Addresses will not be shared.)

<p>1. What three issues are most pressing for your neighborhood?</p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p>	<p>2. How could these issues be addressed?</p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p>
<p>3. What do you cherish most about this neighborhood?</p>	<p>4. What places in the community do you frequent?</p>
<p>5. How much has your rent changed in the last 3 years?</p>	<p>6. What year did you move to the neighborhood?</p>
<p>7. What kind of building do you live in?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Detached house</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Duplex</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Triple decker</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Apartment building with more than 3 units</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</p>	<p>8. Why did you settle in this neighborhood? (Check all that apply)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Proximity to work</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Proximity to school</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Price</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood amenities - (Specify: _____)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</p>

9. Please assess the following characteristics of your house and neighborhood.

Category	1. Worst	2	3	4	5. Best
Safety					
Walkability					
Bikeability					
Parking availability					
Access to public transit					

APPENDIX A: SURVEY FORMS

NON RESIDENTS SURVEY - BALL AND MAGOUN SQUARES

Thank you for completing this short, **anonymous** survey! The City of Somerville is working with a class of MIT graduate students to create a plan for the development of Ball and Magoun Squares. **This survey is completely voluntary.** If you have any questions or would like to learn more about our work, please contact: 11.360students@mit.edu.

Please share your cross streets or address (We will use a mapping software to show where survey respondents live. Addresses will not be shared.)

1. What is your relation to this neighborhood (check all that apply)?

- Business owner
- Work in neighborhood
- Landlord
- Here to shop/ eat/ play
- Other: _____

2. What do you cherish most about this neighborhood?

3. What places in the community do you frequent?

4. What three issues are most pressing for your neighborhood?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

5. How could these issues be addressed?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

6. Please assess the following characteristics of your house and neighborhood.

Category	1. Worst	2	3	4	5. Best
Safety					
Walkability					
Bikeability					
Parking availability					
Access to public transit					
Neighborhood upkeep/ physical appeal					
Access to grocery stores					
Availability of open/ outdoor spaces					
Category	1. Worst	2	3	4	5. Best

APPENDIX B: **PRIORITIZATION** **ACTIVITY WORKSHOP**

During this activity, attendees were asked to pick the top five priorities for their neighborhood, given the options presented in the poster on the right.

The results for this activity can be seen in the chart on the next page.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO SEE IN BALL AND MAGOUN SQUARES?

Please share what you would like to see more of in Ball Square and Magoun Square by choosing your top 5 priorities from the options listed at the bottom of the page.

My Top 5 Priorities:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Options:

- more bike and car sharing
- density
- grocery store
- less traffic
- maintain building heights
- medical facilities
- more parking
- neighborhood events (farmers market, festivals, etc.)
- open space
- presence of arts
- road safety
- retail and restaurants
- stormwater retention and green infrastructure
- trees

APPENDIX B: PRIORITIZATION ACTIVITY WORKSHOP



bike and car sharing



density



grocery store



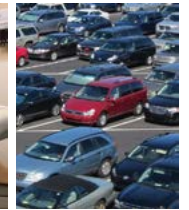
less traffic



maintain building heights



medical facilities



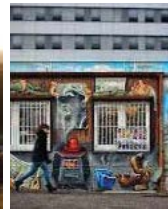
more parking



neighborhood events
(farmers market,
festivals, etc.)



open space



presence of arts



retail and
restaurants



road safety

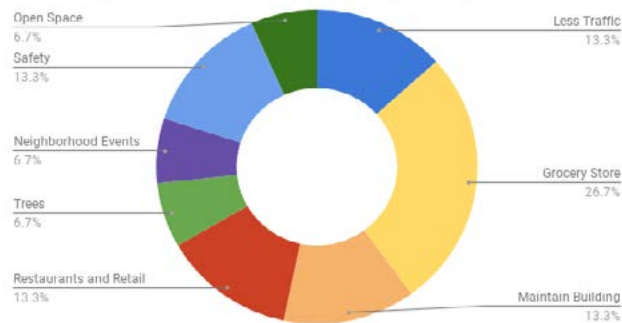


stormwater
retention and green
infrastructure



trees

What do you want to see in Ball and Magoun Squares?

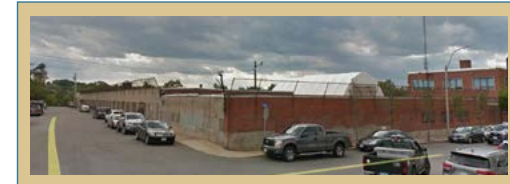


APPENDIX C: REDEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY WORKSHOP

During this activity, attendees were asked what they would like to see at specific opportunity sites within the study area.

Exercise results for each site are shown in the following pages.

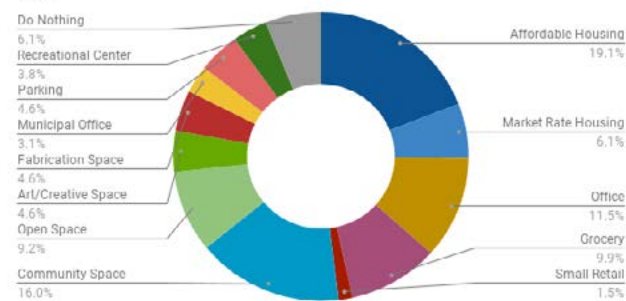
Site 1: Department of Public Works



Potential Use:	Votes:
Affordable Housing	
Market-Rate Housing	
Office	
Grocery Store	
Small Retail	

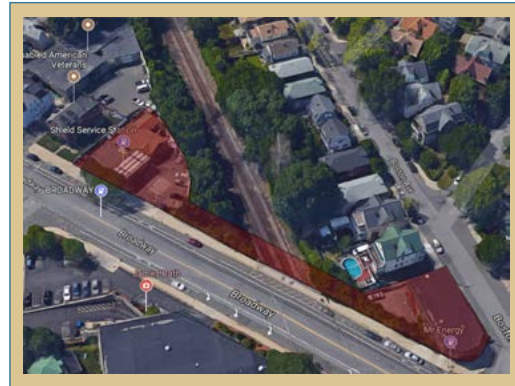
Community Space	
Open Space	
Art/Creative Space	
Fabrication Spaces	
Other	
Do Nothing	

What would you like to see at the Department of Public Works site?



APPENDIX C: REDEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY WORKSHOP

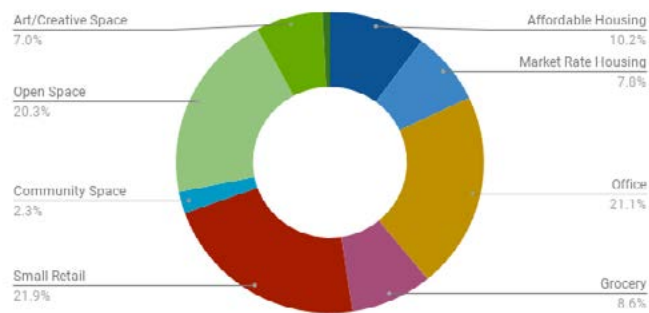
Site 2: Shield Station + Bridge + Exit Realty



Potential Use:	Votes:
Affordable Housing	
Market-Rate Housing	
Office	
Grocery Store	
Small Retail	

Community Space	
Open Space	
Art/Creative Space	
Fabrication Spaces	
Other	
Do Nothing	

What would you like to see at the 660 Broadway/Shield Gas sites?



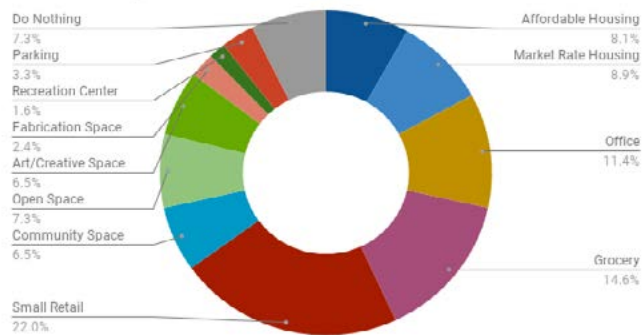
Site 3: Dunkin' Donuts



Potential Use:	Votes:
Affordable Housing	
Market-Rate Housing	
Office	
Grocery Store	
Small Retail	

Community Space	
Open Space	
Art/Creative Space	
Fabrication Spaces	
Other	
Do Nothing	

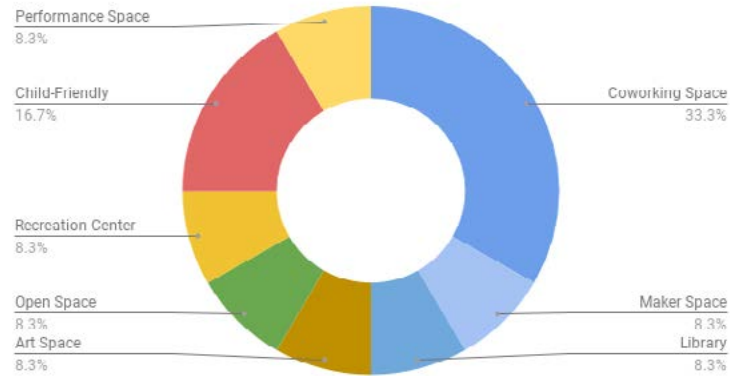
What would you like to see at the Dunkin' Donuts site?



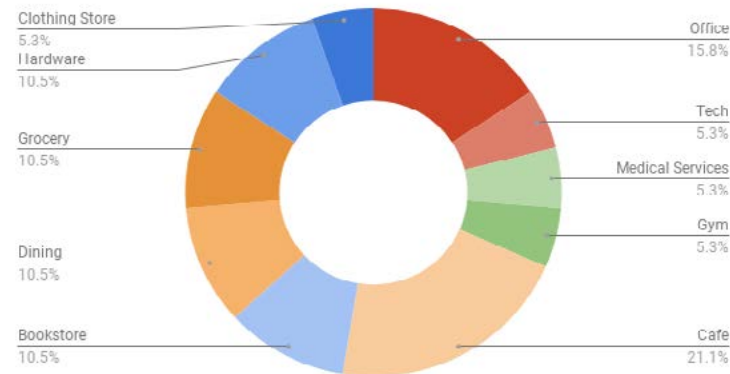
APPENDIX D: FINAL PUBLIC MEETING FEEDBACK

At the public meeting on November 30, 2017, attendees were presented with preliminary recommendations and prompted with questions to determine their preference for different design and programming scenarios. The results of these prompts are on the following pages.

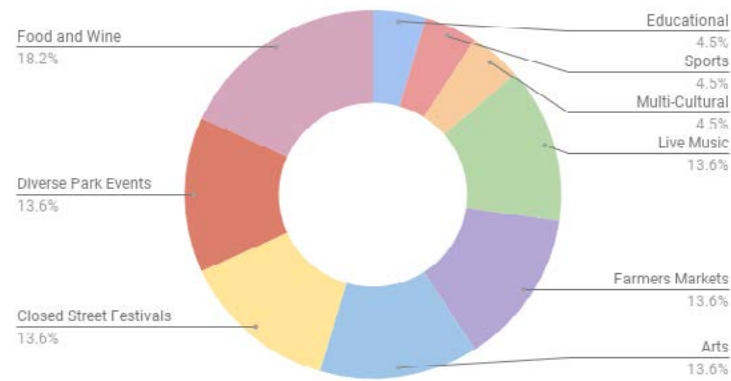
What kind of community space would you like to see?



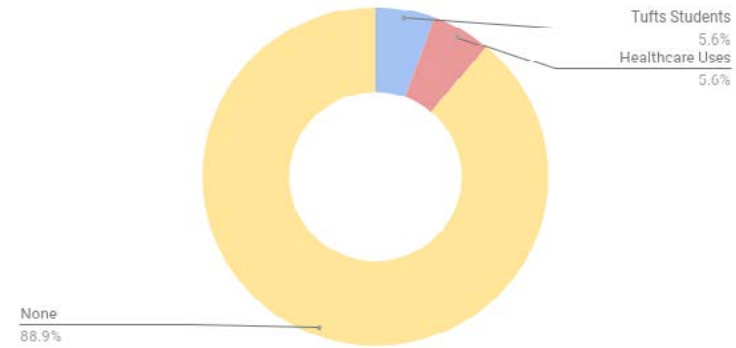
What kind of commercial activity would you like to see?



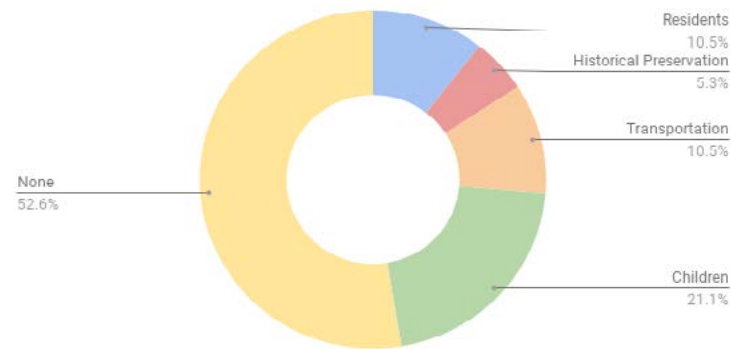
What kind of events would you like to see?



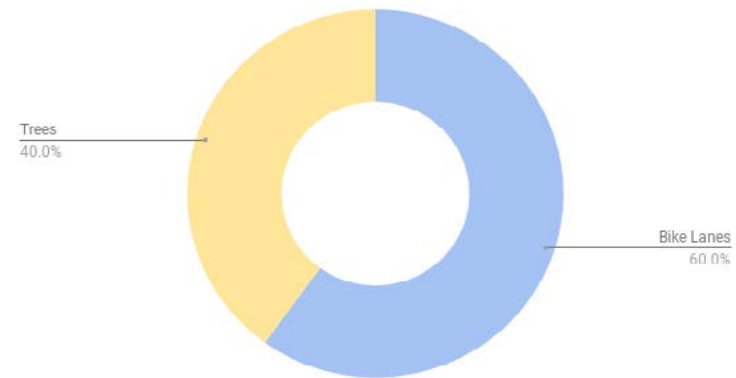
Do you feel as if any group's interest are being over-represented? If so, which?



Do you feel as if any group's interest are being under-represented? If so, which?

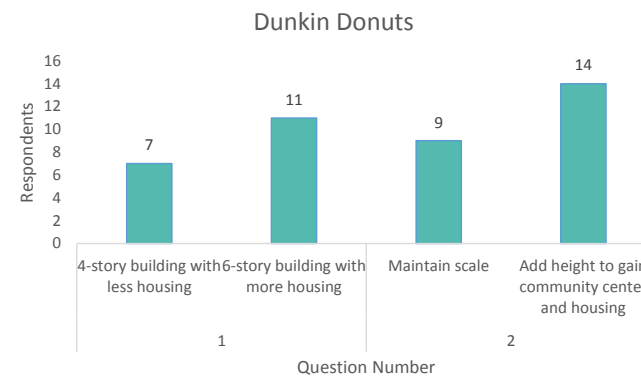
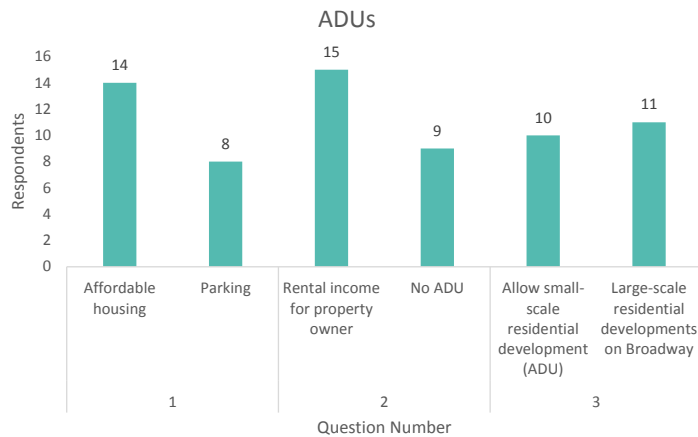
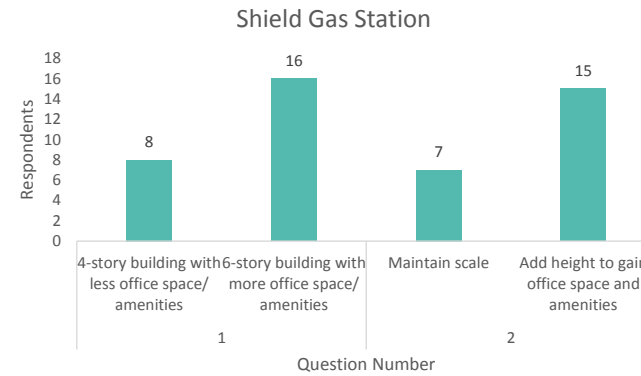
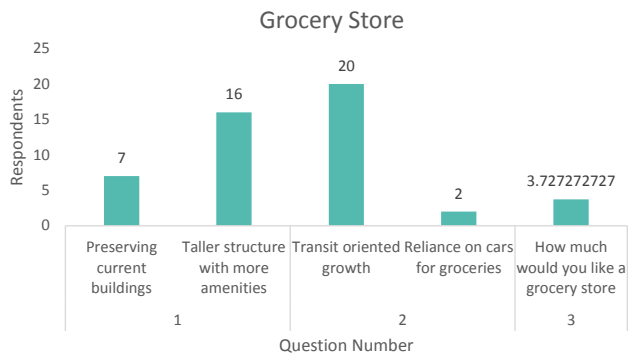


Which intervention would you rather see on Lowell Street?



APPENDIX D: FINAL PUBLIC MEETING FEEDBACK

Responses from the Development Tradeoff Survey



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Responses from the Development Tradeoff Survey
for the DPW site

