

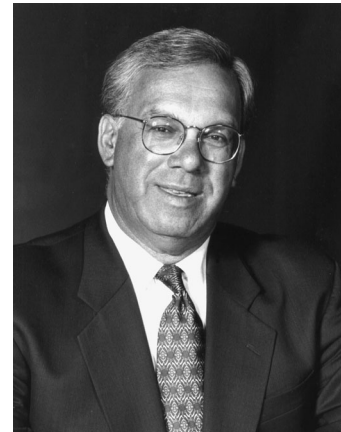


# NORTH ALLSTON

## *Strategic Framework for Planning*

Thomas M. Menino, *Mayor of Boston*  
Mark Maloney, *Director, Boston Redevelopment Authority*

May, 2005



May 2005

Dear Friends:

I'm pleased to share with you the North Allston Strategic Framework for Planning, the product of four years of collaborative effort of the North Allston Planning Group.

In January 2001, I convened a Planning Group of North Allston residents, businesses, and community organizations to develop a vision for the future of their neighborhood. Their mission was especially important and challenging given the expansion of Harvard University into this area of Boston. Supported by City of Boston staff, the Planning Group examined the wide range of issues and concerns—ranging from housing and transportation to open space and cultural activities—shared by members of this diverse community. Throughout the process, the Planning Group hosted a series of community meetings that addressed these issues and more. Just as importantly, the meetings also provided opportunities for neighborhood residents to raise their ideas and concerns directly with Harvard University staff.

The result is a set of ideas and goals that will shape North Allston's future as a strong residential neighborhood, a vibrant area of economic activity, and an exciting hub of intellectual teaching and research. I want to thank the Planning Group members and the many other residents and businesses of Boston who participated in the process and thus contributed to this Strategic Framework. One reason Boston is a great city is because of the continued commitment of its residents to their neighborhoods.

The principles set out in this Plan will provide a framework for the development of an Institutional Master Plan by Harvard University for the first stage of its North Allston campus. Harvard University has committed to work closely with the North Allston community and the City of Boston throughout the Master Planning process so that the goals of this plan are reflected throughout.

This Strategic Framework provides a guide to enhance the future of North Allston, bringing new energy and opportunities to one of Boston's most dynamic neighborhoods.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Thomas M. Menino". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Thomas M. Menino  
Mayor

# NORTH ALLSTON STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR PLANNING



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*Key steps in the creation of the North Allston Strategic Framework for Planning were characterized by extensive community participation in public meetings, workshops, area tours, and brainstorming sessions.*



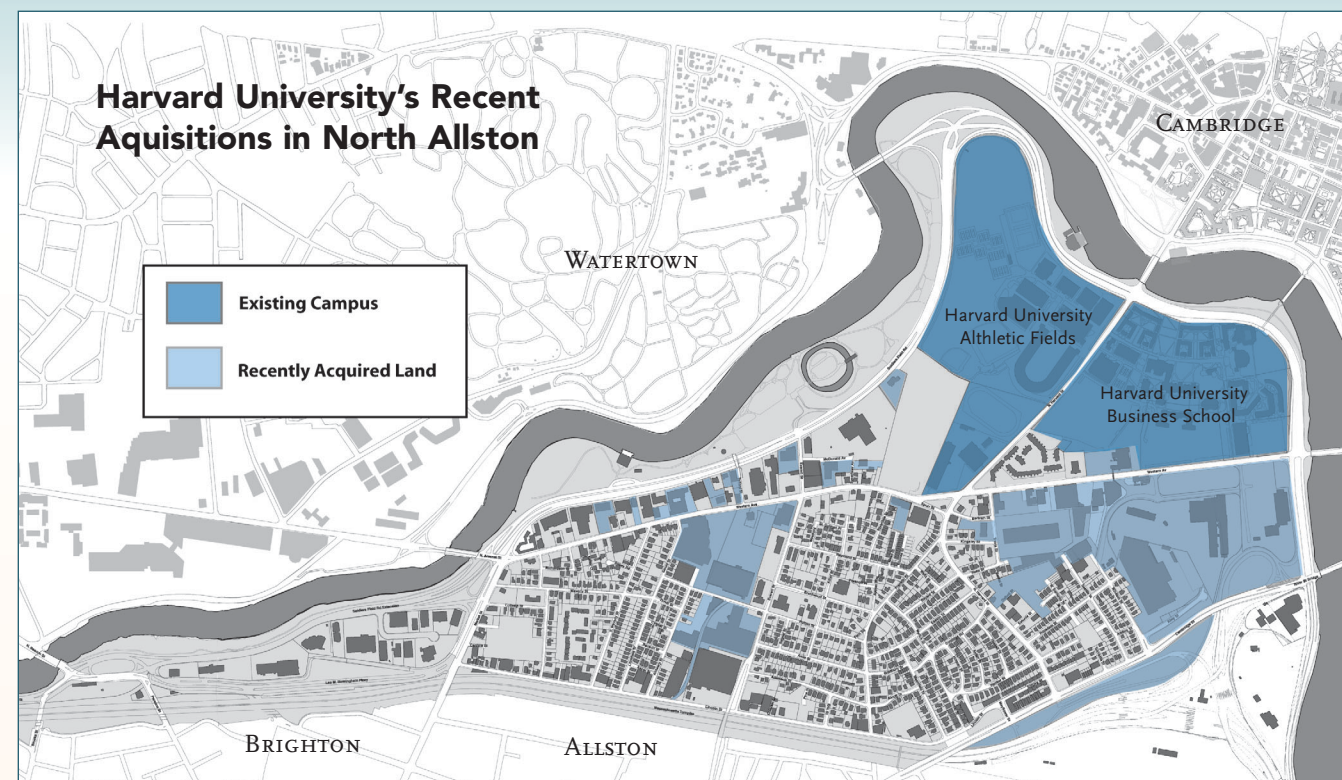
## CHAPTER 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction

The North Allston Strategic Framework for Planning integrates the aspirations of one of Boston's great traditional neighborhoods, North Allston; one of the world's foremost education and research institutions, Harvard University; and the City of Boston. The result is a collective vision – embraced and endorsed by the City – that describes a new model of institutional-community cooperation and collaboration. It grows from the goals, concerns, and values of all three stakeholders:

- Preserving and enhancing North Allston's invaluable neighborhood qualities;
- Accommodating Harvard's long-term growth while responding to significant neighborhood problems such as lack of sufficient housing and the absence of a pedestrian-friendly neighborhood "Main Street";
- Ensuring greater economic opportunity for residents and businesses in North Allston and all of Boston.

The Framework grew out of Harvard's recognition of both the City's and the North Allston community's interest and concerns regarding the University's future uses of the approximately 100 acres of commercial and industrial land it had acquired in North Allston. Given the scale and potential benefits of Harvard's acquisitions, and with the University committed to a community-based planning effort, Boston's Mayor Thomas M. Menino appointed a North Allston Planning Group to serve as the community's representatives during the four-year planning process. The planning area boundaries, which encompass approximately 760 acres in all, include Lincoln and Cambridge Streets to the south; Soldiers Field Road to the east and north; and Birmingham Parkway to the west.



The Planning Group consisted of members of the Harvard University Allston Campus Task Force, representing residents, community organizations, and businesses, and formed in 1996 to review development proposals and planning on Harvard-owned property; other community interests; and representatives from the University. (A complete membership listing can be found on page 59 of the report.) The Mayor charged the Planning Group with creating a framework for planning aimed at ensuring that Harvard's increased presence in Boston would provide clear, tangible benefits – physical, economic, and social – to the North Allston community and to the City of Boston as a whole. Over the project's span, there were more than 80 one-on-one interviews, four walking tours, five educational workshops, two community-wide charrettes, more than a dozen community-wide public meetings, and monthly working sessions with the Planning Group.

It was understood that the planning framework's timeframe would cover the next 20 years of a development strategy that would occupy

Harvard over the next 50 years.

The Framework reflects two fundamental areas of agreement among the community, Harvard, and the City.

- Growth and change, while inevitable, can be managed for mutual benefit.
- Joint planning can find common ground and resolve differences in ways that bring neighborhood, institutional, and City perspectives together and ultimately produce a unique neighborhood-University-City partnership.

For the North Allston neighborhood, that perspective centers on the *ability* to sustain its traditional residential character into the future; for Harvard University, on the *need* to accommodate growth and change in order to fulfill its teaching and research mission; for the City of Boston, on the *desire* to manage growth and change in ways that enhance the economic and social well-being of its citizens.

### Accommodating Preservation and Change

At first, the community viewed Harvard's expansion as a threat that would exacerbate longstanding concerns: increased demand for scarce housing, loss of traditional jobs, competition for open space, increased traffic congestion, and disruption of the area's highly valued traditional neighborhoods.

Harvard's expanded presence soon came to be seen as a positive catalyst to address these issues. The community, Harvard, and the City worked together to establish a series of mutually interdependent goals to ensure that planning to accommodate Harvard's strategy would unlock the ability to address a number of critical issues:

"THERE'S AN OPPORTUNITY HERE AND WE NEED TO BE PART OF IT."

—Paul Berkeley, co-chair of the North Allston Working Group, in an interview with local historian William Marchione

### Factors affecting affordability in North Allston

- Between 1996 and 2000, rents in North Allston increased by over 55%, with the median single-family home price rising to \$330,000.
- As of 2002, median household income (MHI) was \$64,313 (vs. the Boston MHI of \$74,200).
- Nearly half of households in North Allston earn less than 120% of the Boston Area Median Income (AMI).
- Less than 40% of households earning 80-120% of the AMI can afford the median price of a single-family home in the neighborhood; less than 20% can afford the typical rent for a new two-bedroom apartment.

#### FOR THE COMMUNITY

- Preserve the essential character of North Allston's residential areas already threatened by regional economic pressures.
- Expand the affordable options for potential homebuyers and renters, relieving the pressure on the local housing market, and ensuring no new development in traditional neighborhoods.
- Guide growth to areas in which change is viewed as desirable and in ways that support new community amenities, such as a walkable Main Street, and promote increased economic opportunity for residents and businesses.



The stability of North Allston's residential areas is represented by its well-maintained streets and by much of its housing stock.



#### FOR HARVARD

- Accommodate the University's teaching and research mission by providing long-term campus-growth opportunity.
- Enhance the quality of campus life to attract the Harvard community to live, work, and study in North Allston.
- Create a residential campus to meet Harvard's housing needs, including the University-wide goal to provide housing for 50% of its graduate students.
- Enhance access to North Allston from the Cambridge and Longwood Medical Area campuses and elsewhere.



Among the Harvard Business School's most recent campus development initiatives is the new Spangler Center at Western Avenue.



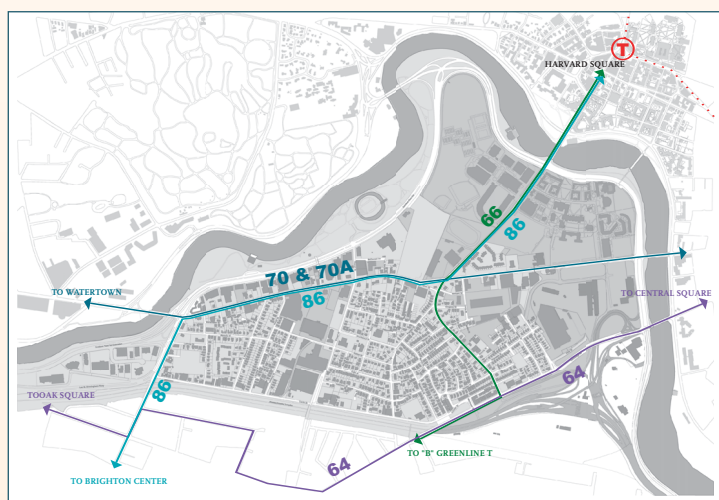
The Weeks Bridge serves as a pedestrian connection between Harvard's Cambridge and North Allston campuses.

## FOR THE CITY

- Create housing opportunities affordable to a wide range of people.
- Preserve and create jobs that serve Boston's diverse workforce.
- Promote economic growth.
- Create new transportation services.
- Preserve, enhance, and increase open spaces and public realm opportunities for an expanding population.



North Allston is increasing its role in Boston's economic future.



One objective of the planning study is to identify opportunities for building on the existing local and a regional transportation infrastructure. Shown are the existing MBTA bus routes that serve the study area today.

## A BRIEF LOOK AT NORTH ALLSTON'S HISTORY

*A tradition of maintaining continuity while finding opportunity in the face of change is a major characteristic of North Allston's history. Since its origins in the early 17th century as an agricultural and cattle-raising outpost of Cambridge, the area has witnessed intense transformations: from a market town and center for the beef industry (still reflected in the name of Market Street, which once witnessed cattle drives); to a streetcar suburb built along Western Avenue, which continues to serve as North Allston's Main Street; to a major rail transportation center, vestiges of which are visible today in the Allston Yards; to textile factories once located where the Brighton Mills shopping center now sits; to the small- and medium-sized industrial businesses scattered through the neighborhood.*



Cambridge Street houses, with Windom Street in the center and B&A roundhouse construction in foreground, ca. 1900. The four houses on either side of Windom Street are now gone.



A 1920s view across North Harvard Street toward Cambridge.

*North Allston's residential streets provide ample evidence of the neighborhood's stability, with rows of well-maintained houses, many of which have been passed down from one generation to the next. Where once many of North Allston's residents walked to jobs at the railroad yards or at the mills, they now commute to other communities or other areas of the City. Still, much of North Allston continues to be defined by the quality of its social network – by the degree to which a simple walk through its streets or conversations with its residents displays a tightly knit community, many of whose members have lived in North Allston their entire lives. While remaining welcoming to the new populations arriving in the City and in the neighborhood, they preserve a culture of neighborly cohesion that is a signature of North Allston. Today, North Allston residents include large numbers of immigrants, young professionals, and students, as well as its longer-term residents.*

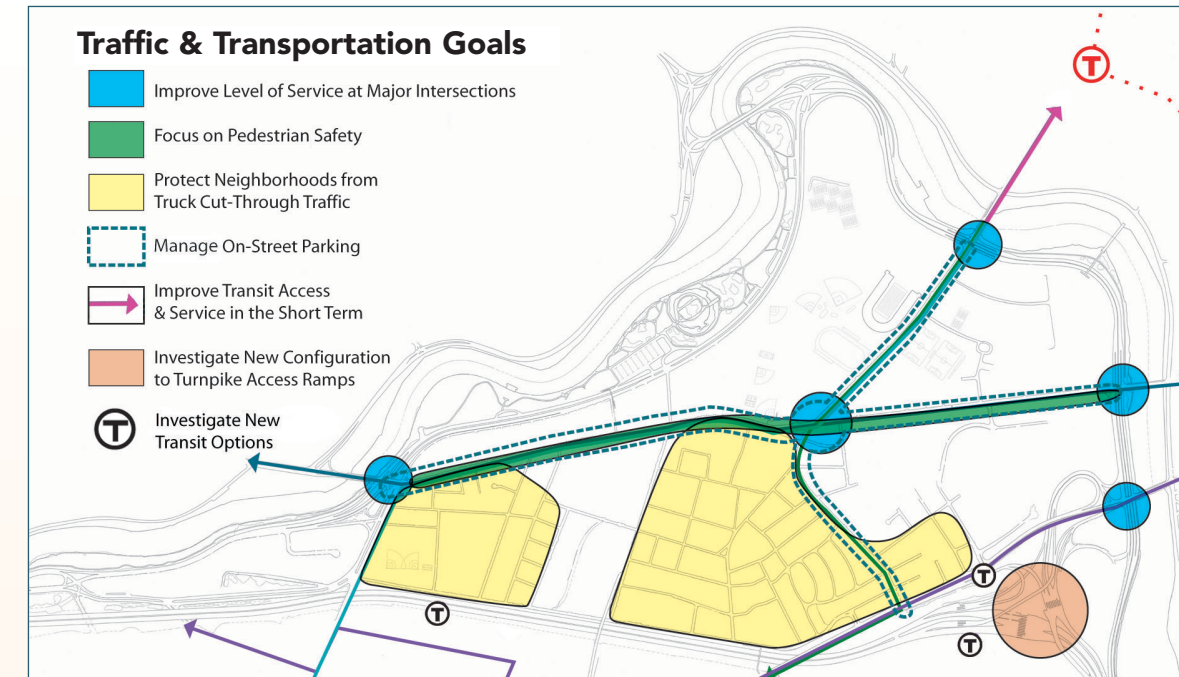
## Achieving the Goals

The planning study identified and addressed core challenges inherent in the shared goals:



### HOUSING

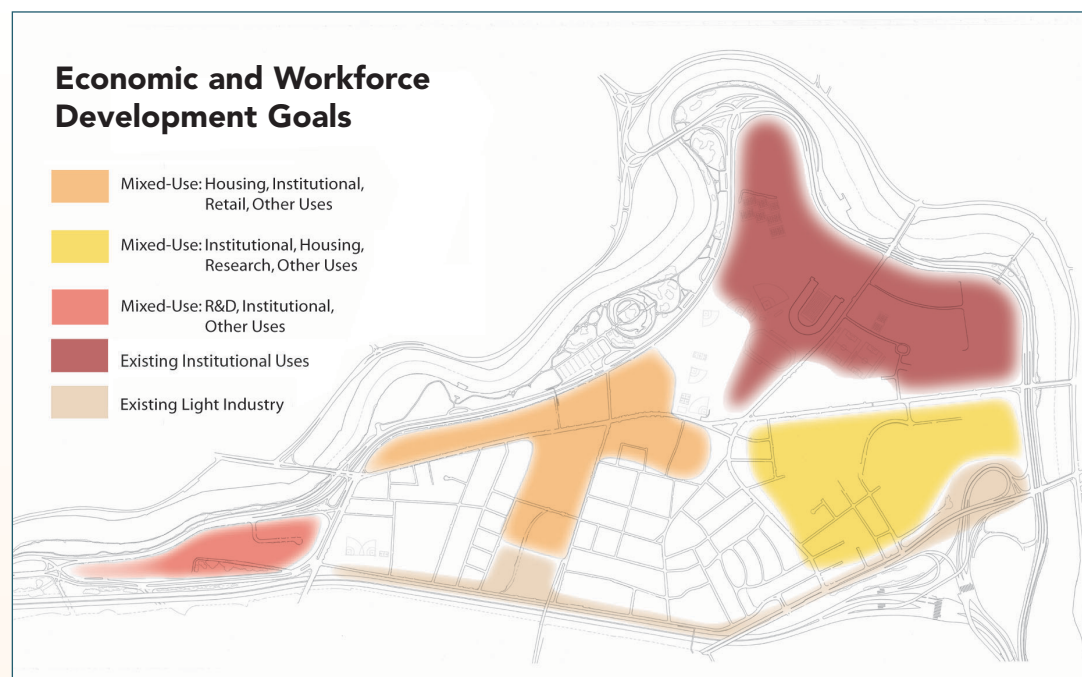
- Meet the demands for housing generated by an influx of Harvard students, faculty, and staff in North Allston, while ensuring that financial resources and land required for community housing are not diverted in the process. Meeting the housing demands in North Allston will also be in accord with the City's desire to have all academic institutions accommodate the maximum number of students, as well as in accord with Harvard's ten-year goal, first enunciated in 2001, of housing approximately 50% of its graduate students.
- Create a range of densities for new housing in ways and in locations that enhance community livability. Such housing would support development of a walkable Main Street and expanded community-serving retail and services, without undermining the traditional character of existing residential neighborhoods.
- Acknowledge the need for careful transitions in scale, vehicular circulation, and design between existing residential neighborhoods and new development.
- Integrate new Harvard and community housing to form lively new neighborhood settings.
- Address concerns about the dismantling of traditional one-, two-, and three-family housing stock in existing neighborhoods.



### TRANSPORTATION

- Address existing traffic congestion along major streets while preventing further congestion of local streets as a result of either institutional or non-institutional development.
- Explore strategies to accommodate demand for on-street parking on the neighborhood's major thoroughfares.
- Seek an integrated approach to transportation improvements that includes new transit options; minimize auto trips generated by Harvard or any other new development; investigate new configurations of the Turnpike access ramps to avoid drawing traffic through the neighborhood; and expanding pedestrian/bicycle networks.
- Address the community's longstanding concerns about heavy truck traffic through the neighborhood.
- Resolve concerns about pedestrian safety, particularly at the Western Avenue/Birmingham Parkway intersection and at Barry's Corner.





#### ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Leverage the significant economic development opportunities afforded by Harvard's planned presence in North Allston, to create new well-paying jobs – jobs accessible to Boston residents across a spectrum of skill and education backgrounds, supported by new workforce-development and training strategies.
- Balance the preservation of existing jobs and businesses, as articulated in the City's various economic development initiatives, with new opportunities generated by major investment in economic development and new job creation.
- Continue support of Boston's – and the region's – economy through the preservation of rail and truck infrastructure deemed essential through joint study by the City and Harvard.
- Manage the impact of change in North Allston's business profile in a way that fosters good will in the business community while meeting the objectives of expansion and growth.



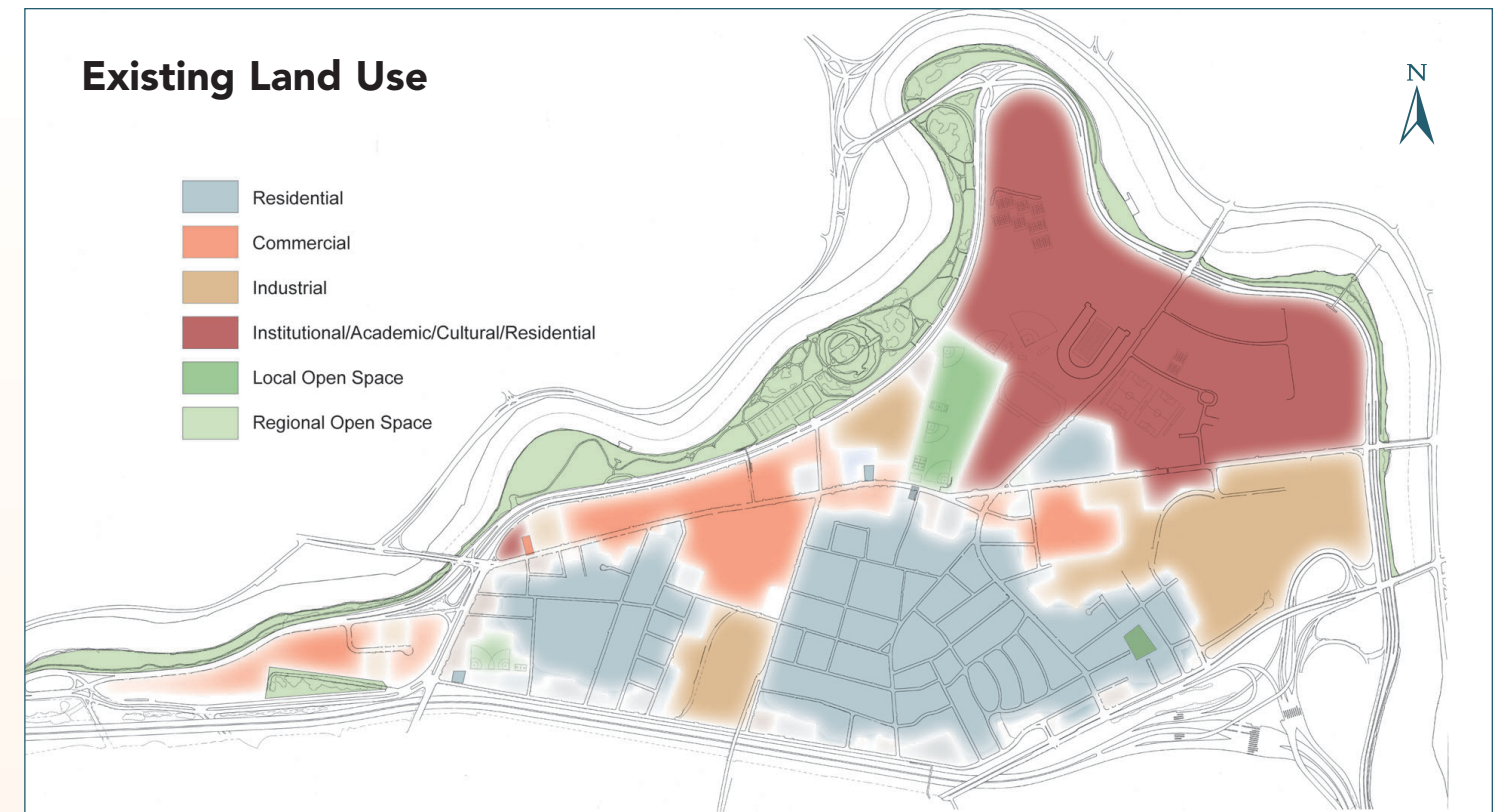
#### PUBLIC REALM

- Expand the limited number of neighborhood parks by creating new parks and improving access to Smith Field.
- Convert Western Avenue into an amenity-rich, pedestrian-friendly commercial district, with streetscape designs and improvements that reflect these new uses.
- Enhance access – both visual and physical – to the Charles River from the traditional neighborhoods and other parts of the community.
- Ensure that any new academic and other development not be walled off from the neighborhood physically or visually.
- Use identifying signage to help establish gateways, connections and nodes of pedestrian activity, and to reinforce North Allston's sense of place.

### From Challenges to Vision to Strategic Framework

The land use diagram on the facing page is intended to capture the overall shape of North Allston's future as articulated during the planning process. It reflects the overarching objective of reinforcing the area's qualities as an urban village while managing the benefits that will accrue as North Allston witnesses major investment by Harvard and others over the next several decades. While ensuring the continued integrity and cohesion of the existing residential neighborhoods (reflected in the existing land use diagram at right), the proposed land use plan proposes a series of new mixed-use sub-areas. While sensitive to the desire for an overall pedestrian-friendly environment, the proposed uses respond to the need for new housing; to the aspiration for increased open space and an integration of "town" and "gown"; to the contributions of higher education to Boston's and the region's overall economy; and to the wish to preserve the kinds of "Back Streets" industrial uses and related jobs identified as significantly important to the City and the region.

The plan emphasizes institutional uses in the east, near the existing Harvard campus; residential uses in the central portion between the two existing neighborhoods; and R&D uses further west. Given current zoning and the pre-



vailing industrial commercial uses, particularly in the east (Allston Landing North) and central (Brighton Mills/Holton Street) sub-areas (beige in the existing land use diagram), continued planning and analysis will be required to ensure the appropriate mix of uses on each site. (See pages 21-22 regarding the Special Study Areas.)

This common vision served as the basis for a set of Guiding Principles that are detailed beginning on page 16. These principles are designed to inform future initiatives in housing, public realm improvements, transportation and mobility plans, economic and workforce development objectives, and overall neighborhood revitalization. They in turn form the core of the Strategic Framework and the accompanying sets of short- and long-term

implementation steps (see the last chapter).

To illustrate how the goals and aspirations of all major stakeholders might be translated into physical terms, Mayor Menino presented a conceptual portrait of a new North Allston, first to the North Allston Planning Group in June 2003, and then to the public the following September. This portrait – captured on pages 8 and 9 – expresses the priorities discovered during the planning process, and illustrates what could occur in North Allston over the next 20 years. Rather than precluding other design options, the images represent one possible approach to giving physical shape to the Framework's principles.

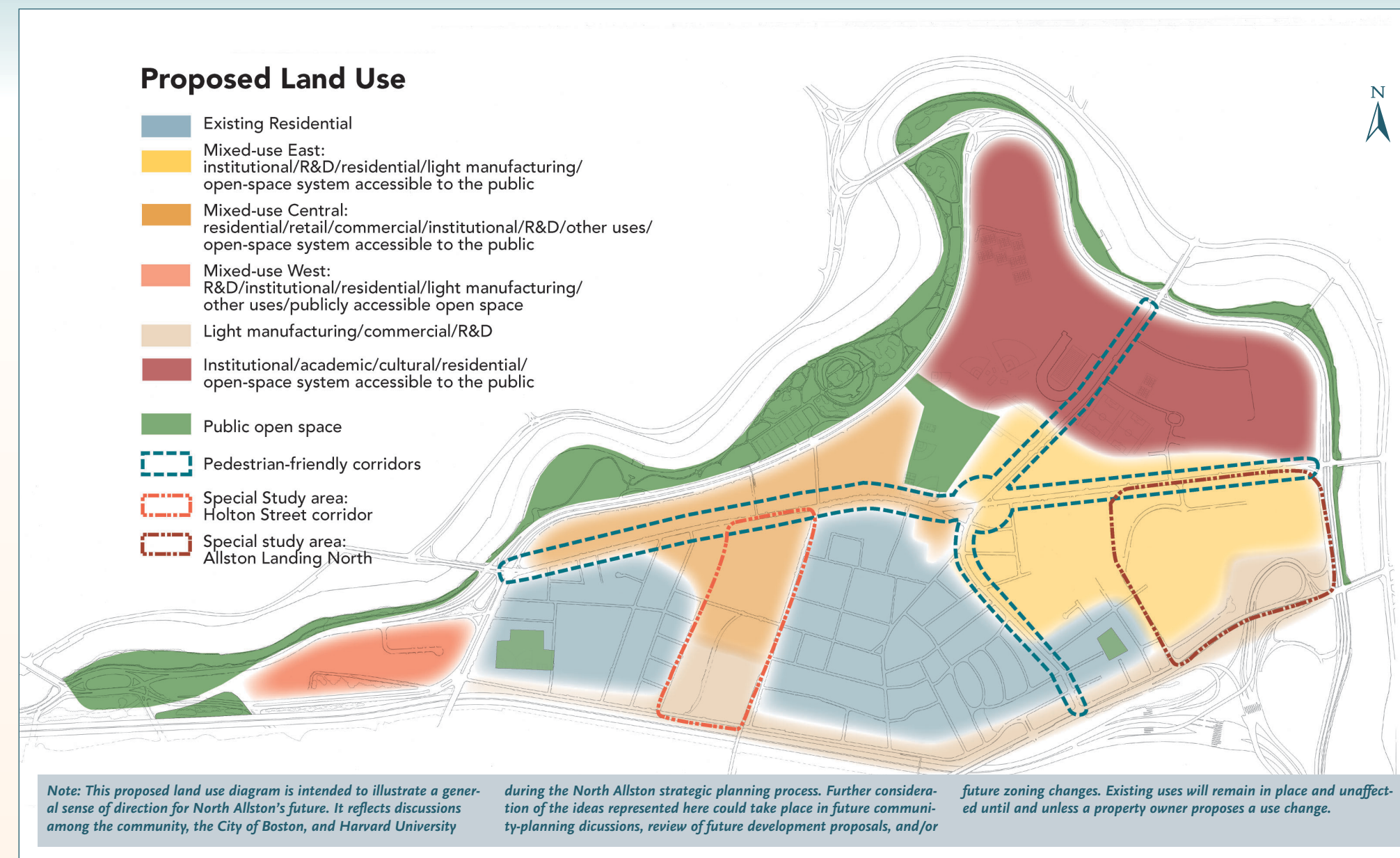
Key elements include:

LAND USE, URBAN DESIGN, AND PUBLIC REALM

- Conversion of large stretches of Western Avenue into a walkable Main Street, including a new mixed-use square at North Harvard Street and Western Avenue that would serve as a new neighborhood crossroads and could include a new museum or other important cultural facility.
- Redevelopment of the Brighton Mills shopping center west of Barry's Corner as a mixed-use center in which a blend of ownership and rental units above ground-floor retail lines new streets and a public square.
- Improvement of the North Harvard Street and Western Avenue streetscapes.
- Creation of permeable campus edges as well as pedestrian and view-corridor connections to ensure that the Harvard campus is part of, rather than distinct from, the larger community.
- Creation of gateways at either end of Western Avenue, signaling the importance of this major neighborhood corridor.
- A new neighborhood pocket park, and a newly-"greened" Everett Street corridor, including potential relocation of the Department of Public Works yard to accommodate a new public space.
- Improved visual and physical connection to the Charles River at the Telford Street and Everett Street crossings, as well as through enhancement of Smith Field.

HOUSING

- Working toward achieving over 20 years a goal of 2,400 to 2,800 new housing units in North Allston. Community housing to be built by Harvard and private developers may reach between 400 and 800 new units. New housing would be affordable to a wide range of incomes and family types. New housing would also be in addition to the enhancement, or possible redevelopment, of Charlesview, a large affordable development located in North Allston.
- Protection of the two existing traditional neighborhoods.



TRANSPORTATION

- Improved transportation access and options, including reduction of truck and cut-through traffic, improved pedestrian crossings, and signals on North Harvard Street and at the Western Avenue/Birmingham Parkway crossing, enhancement of existing bus routes, exploration of an expanded Harvard shuttle service, and exploration of new express bus and commuter rail opportunities.
- Joint initiatives by the City and Harvard to work with the MBTA to secure new commuter rail and/or transit access for North Allston.

All of these elements – revitalized streetscapes, improved open spaces, strengthened connections to the river, new housing, improved transit, creation of a new Main Street, and others – will serve to guide Harvard in its own vision for a new campus, and therefore highlight the opportunity for and benefits of cooperation among the community, the University, and the City. The deliberative process itself created momentum for on-going collaboration that will inform the steps needed to bring the vision to fruition.

# THE CONCEPTUAL VISION FOR NORTH ALLSTON



Existing conditions: View of Brighton Mills from Western Avenue



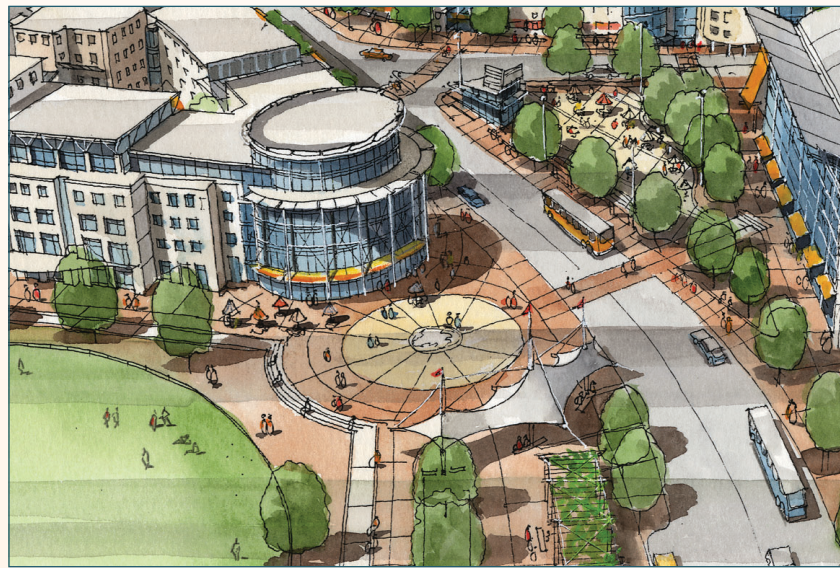
**Brighton Mills transformed to mixed-use district**



Existing conditions: Looking north on Everett Street.

**Everett Street Promenade lined with new development**

**Smith Field is broadened and edged with active uses, with no net loss of open space**



**A new Barry's Corner providing common ground for both residential neighborhood and academic community**



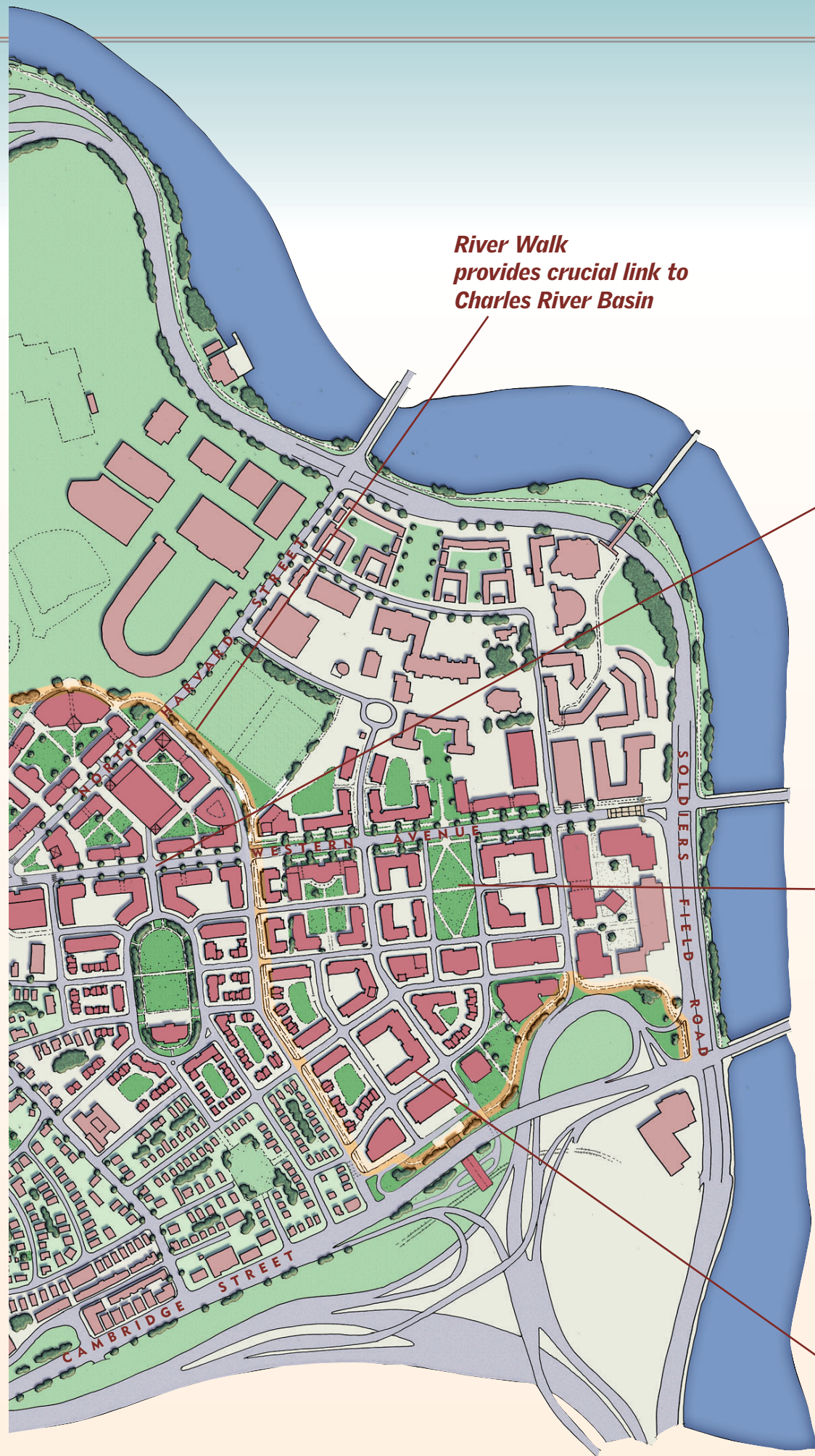
Existing conditions: Looking west at Barry's Corner intersection of North Harvard Street (left) and Western Avenue (right).



**Development west of Market Street produces higher density commercial, residential, and retail uses**

**Streetscape improvements along Western Avenue create a strong western gateway**

**New local streets knit the Brighton Mills district together with adjoining neighborhoods**



**River Walk provides crucial link to Charles River Basin**



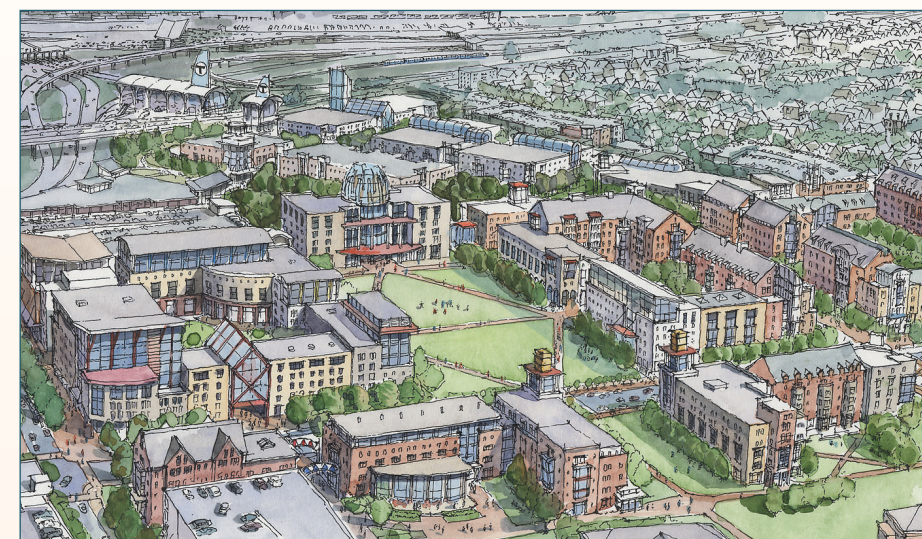
**New mixed-use institutional and residential district built around distinctive new open space**



Existing conditions: Looking east along Western Avenue.



Existing conditions; Looking west along Western Avenue, with Barry's Corner in the distance.



**Future campus integrated into community embraces both sides of Western Avenue to create attractive eastern gateway to North Allston**



**Enterprise campus supports expanded economic-development opportunities**



Existing conditions: Allston Landing North, with Genzyme in the distance at the right.

### From Framework to Full Plan to Implementation

Many details of future development in North Allston must await the results of Harvard's internal planning process. These will flow into the City's Institutional Master Plan (IMP) review process (See pages 51-54 for a description of the IMP process). Through the IMP review, the City, the University, and the North Allston community will formulate the specifics of a balanced plan within the context of the Planning Framework and will negotiate a benefits package for both the community and the City.

#### Pre-Development Initiatives

Until the IMP review, the current planning group will monitor the early, or Pre-Development, initiatives that will set the stage for later development. These initiatives will include the following:

##### HOUSING

- Planning will begin for both Harvard-affiliate and community housing.

##### TRANSPORTATION

- The recent completion by Harvard of a transportation model will serve to evaluate traffic impacts as development proceeds.

- In addition to a study concerning the development of a new truck route to circumvent North Allston's residential streets, a study sponsored by the State Executive Office of Transportation and Construction (EOTC) is proposing to investigate the economic impact of the CSX rail yards on Boston and the region. The rail yards are immediately to the south of the North Allston study area, and the City is expected to participate in the EOTC review.

##### ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Motivated by the city's Back Streets policy for retaining small and medium-sized businesses and jobs, development strategies for Allston Landing North and the Holton Street Corridor (home to a number of small manufacturing and related businesses) will be preceded by special studies. These studies are designed to resolve remaining land-allocation issues within the City of Boston, including Allston-Brighton, for business preservation, expansion, and relocation.
- The City will undertake a study, to be funded by Harvard, that will look at job and business displacement impact and at Harvard's potential contribution to the City's economic-development goals.

##### PUBLIC REALM

- Initial efforts include Harvard's funding of streetscape, sidewalk, and urban design improvements along Western Avenue and North Harvard Street.
- Harvard will enhance its maintenance agreement for Smith Field, in addition to continuing its current partnership with the City in supporting maintenance of the Field's Little League diamonds.
- In the context of campus master planning and the IMP, Harvard will work with the City and community to identify and implement appropriate open space opportunities, such as new tot lots and pocket parks.

#### Early and Later-Stage Development

As the University moves through the IMP review process, the Framework will continue to inform negotiations and decisions about the major areas of housing, transportation, economic and workforce development, and public realm. Details on the development timeline, as well as on expectations, are set forth in the report's final chapter (page 56).

What began as the concerned response of a community and a city to a series of major institutional moves became the platform for a jointly created future, as expressed by the implementation goals as well as the Framework as a whole. The cooperative enterprise will continue to inform the planning process as it moves into implementation and as development in North Allston moves off the page and onto the street.



*"This planning process provides the unique opportunity to think boldly about the future of North Allston. The decisions we make now will affect the lives of those who will come after us far into the future."*

**Mayor Thomas M. Menino**



*From the Vision Statement:  
"North Allston gives honor to Boston's tradition of great urban districts."*



*From the Vision Statement:  
"The very real challenges stem from North Allston's multiplicity of uses and people, from tensions between industry and neighborhoods."*



*From the Vision Statement:  
"Harvard has endorsed a policy of integrating neighborhood and campus."*



## CHAPTER 2: WORKING TOWARD A COMMON VISION

### Introduction

The ingredients for a more livable, vibrant North Allston were initially set out by the planning group in an overall Vision Statement that guided the creation of the Strategic Framework for Planning. Participants in the process recognized that the community's interests and those of the City of Boston and Harvard were aligned to ensure that Harvard's plans for North Allston acknowledge the existing North Allston neighborhood fabric. As expressed by Harvard President Lawrence Summers in October 2003, the University has "a historic opportunity to build our long-term academic strengths, while contributing to the vitality of one of our important home communities." Leveraging this "historic opportunity" required that the mission of a nearly 400-year-old institution be melded with the concerns and desires of a traditional community of 15,000 residents and with the economic and social policies and priorities of a major regional center. The single most potent element of the Framework – and of the Vision Statement itself – is the care with which it respects the existing neighborhood and those who participate in its life, while identifying the ways in which the University and the neighborhood can strengthen each other and become contributing elements to a new joint signature for North Allston.

## VISION STATEMENT

*North Allston gives honor to Boston's tradition of great urban districts. The area encompasses a diverse community of traditional neighborhoods, a world-renowned university, cutting-edge research, time-honored light industrial jobs, local shopping, and the Charles River – all within walking distance of each other. These elements have been further cohered and reinforced by the presence of the river to the north and Turnpike to the south. The result has been a uniquely vital "urban village," a closely-knit community in which people of many ages, ethnic backgrounds, incomes, stages in life, and family types can live, work, shop, study, and play.*

*The North Allston community's long-term commitment to activism has helped its residents face the very real challenges that stem from its multiplicity of uses and people, tensions between industry and neighborhoods, affordability and economic growth, new opportunities and beloved tradition. As it moves into the 21st century, the community has the chance to build on the energy inherent in its diversity and to invigorate North Allston as an even more livable place, one that offers an unusually broad range of services, housing options, job prospects, educational and cultural opportunities, recreation – all the components that shape and contribute to quality of life.*

*Harvard University's plans for expansion offer both challenges and opportunities to North Allston; the community has advocated for, and Harvard has endorsed, a policy of integrating neighborhood and campus to avoid the "town/gown" separation that characterizes other communities that host major universities. Both the community and Harvard recognize that the University brings important resources to North Allston. Ongoing community-based planning with Harvard sets the stage for the University to enrich the quality of life of all those who are part of North Allston and in ways that minimize the costs to the community.*

*The goal of this Planning Framework is to identify realistic and implementable ways to enhance the district's livability, to acknowledge those areas where change is embraced as well as those areas where the existing physical environment is to be maintained, and to manage and diminish accompanying negative impacts. The vision translates into broad objectives for a human-scaled urban village:*

- **Housing opportunities that serve a wide range of people, ranging from long-time residents seeking to remain in the neighborhood to newly arrived members of the Harvard community.**
- **Transportation options that encourage transit use, walking, and bicycle use; reduce reliance on automobiles; reduce truck traffic on residential streets; and promote pedestrian safety for neighborhoods and Harvard's campus.**
- **Land uses that reinforce the quality of life and character of this urban village:**
  - Creation of employment opportunities for the full spectrum of Boston residents, ranging from traditional industry to state-of-the-art research, in places of work that are good neighbors;
  - Preservation of the scale and character of existing residential neighborhoods;
  - Expansion of community-serving retail and other services, concentrated to form a walkable, traditional Main Street in the heart of North Allston;
  - Introduction of significant new cultural facilities, such as museums associated with Harvard;
  - Expansion of partnerships with Harvard to increase educational and economic opportunities for the community.
- **Public realm improvements that enhance livability:**
  - Creation of new parks, and improved existing parks, to serve neighborhood residents;
  - Transformation of Western Avenue into a more pedestrian-friendly neighborhood Main Street with streetscape and related improvements;
  - Improvement of access and visibility for connections to the river;
  - Community access to Harvard's campus.

## Community Planning Workshops, Charrette, and Resulting Scenarios

*Early in the development of the Framework, a series of community workshops and a charrette produced four scenarios for strengthening North Allston and accommodating Harvard's expansion. The four scenarios shared certain assumptions, including:*

- Keeping the bulk of campus expansion east of North Harvard Street;
- Using new housing for residents and Harvard affiliates to create a transition between the campus and the existing residential areas;
- Improving connections to Harvard Square and to the river;
- Making Western Avenue more hospitable for pedestrians, cyclists;
- Supporting continued commercial and business uses along Lincoln Street.

## Learning from the Alternative Scenarios

The four scenarios were integrated and the resulting composite expanded on the overall vision while suggesting priorities. Specifically:

- Alternatives offering a tight physical integration of Harvard with the neighborhood were generally preferred over alternatives featuring more separation.
- The retail at Allston Square should be neighborhood-focused rather than high-end or chain businesses.
- Much stronger connections were preferred between the neighborhood and the river, with ideas ranging from corridors off Western Avenue to the establishment of a new civic center on riverfront land with river views.
- Small park areas along Everett Street and elsewhere were seen as an attractive amenity greatly adding to the quality of life in the neighborhood.
- Smith Field's size was deemed important because of its role in providing needed athletic fields.
- The community embraced the idea of change on Western Avenue – including its transformation into a pedestrian-friendly Main Street with streetscape improvements, neighborhood-serving retail and services with housing on upper floors, and a pedestrian orientation.
- A desire was expressed to match increases in height and density with new public spaces, affordability, appropriate transitions to existing neighborhoods, good design, and enhanced pedestrian and visual connections to the river.
- The community clearly expressed the desire for new housing that would include a substantial number of units affordable to local residents.

- The Brighton Mills shopping center – particularly the supermarket – was seen as a much-needed community asset, but at the same time it required major rethinking including the possibility that it could anchor more pedestrian-friendly redevelopment.
- The community wanted to maintain a voice in shaping Harvard's campus facilities, not just the edges, in ways that affect community quality of life and character.
- There should be ongoing community review.

In the context of the City's "Back Streets" policy, a pair of forums gave voice to the concerns of North Allston's business community to ensure integration of those concerns into the plan:

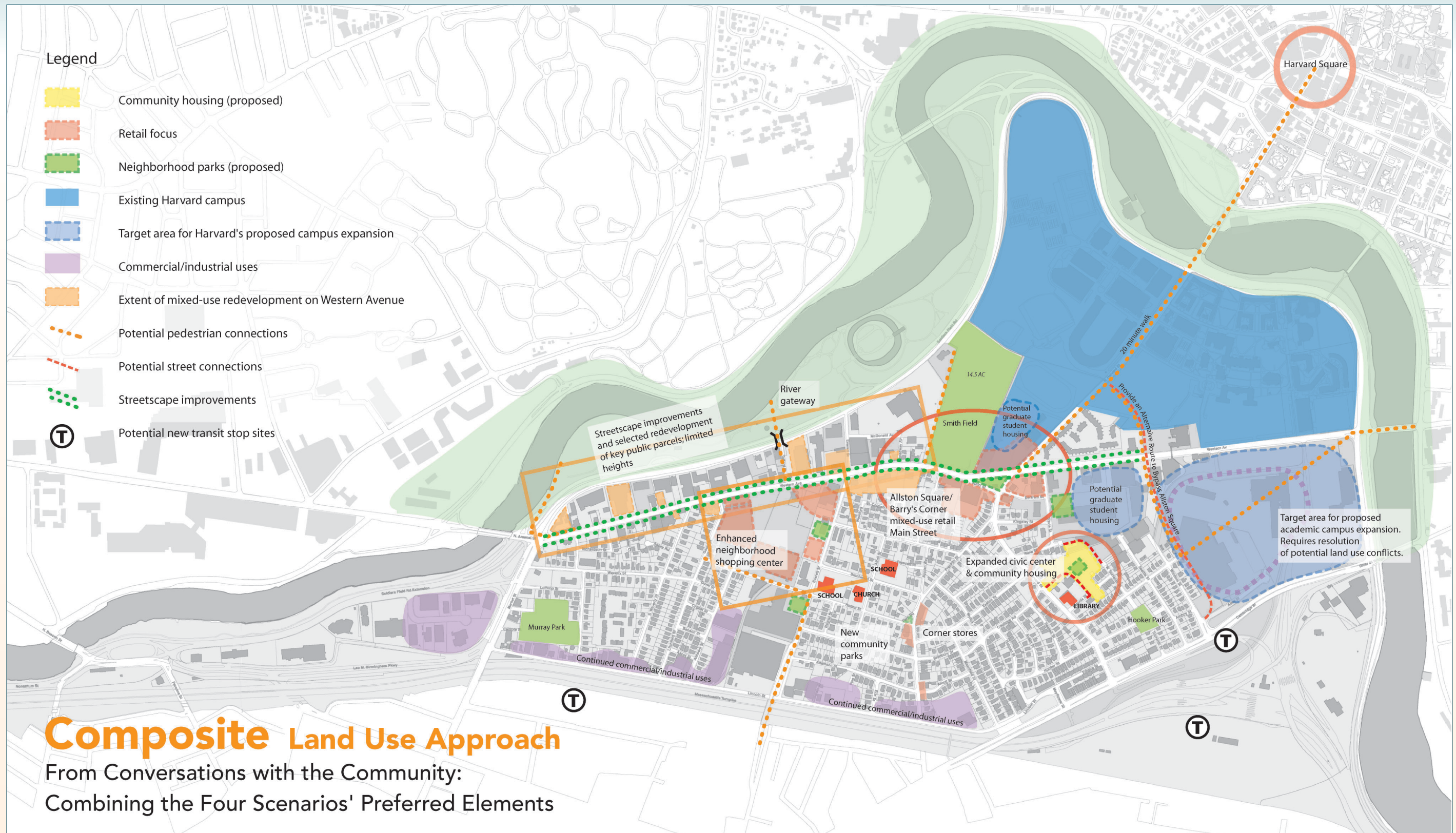
- Attend to the businesses in North Allston that need or wish to stay but will likely have to relocate as a result of Harvard's expansion.
- Ensure that Harvard's development timeframe is appropriately publicized to mitigate its impact on lease renewals.
- Recognize the added pressures put on businesses that are required to relocate.
- Ensure that the plan addresses infrastructure and roadway improvements that can catalyze development.

## Creating a Composite Land Use Approach

The most valued aspects of each scenario were incorporated into a single map that became the basis for the plan's guiding principles.

### COMPONENTS

- Selected redevelopment of key parcels along the western section of Western Avenue;
- Relocation and enhancement of selected Western Avenue uses with streetscape improvements;
- An enhanced neighborhood shopping center that preserves many existing uses currently located there, particularly the supermarket, and improves its pedestrian orientation;
- Development of Barry's Corner as a central core, with neighborhood-focused retail as well as some community housing;
- Small neighborhood parks along Everett Street and elsewhere to serve the local community;
- New housing for both community and Harvard faculty and graduate students;
- A more pronounced connection from the neighborhood to the river.



# Composite Land Use Approach

From Conversations with the Community:  
Combining the Four Scenarios' Preferred Elements

The composite scenario draws from the most commonly-valued aspects of each of the four preceding scenarios.



From the Guiding Principles:  
 "...permeable transition between community and campus..."



From the Guiding Principles:  
 "...Support and enhance livability in residential neighborhoods..."

## The Guiding Principles

Guiding Principles for planning were created to link the results of the scenario workshops and charrette to the Vision Statement. The community, Harvard, and the City also agreed that the principles would play a central role in shaping future planning and in ensuring that development projects adhered to the Framework's goals. As with the vision, the principles are based on the need to reinforce North Allston's qualities as a place of social and economic health while managing the benefits that come from major investment by Harvard and others over the next several decades. Having captured the major areas of agreement among all stakeholders in this planning process, the principles provide a set of development guidelines that will serve as reference points for future planning within North Allston.

### LAND USE: *Mixing Residential, Institutional, and Business*

**Background:** The overriding land-use goal is to reinforce North Allston's qualities as an urban village where multiple activities exist within walking distance of each other. This common goal represents an important underpinning not just for land-use planning, but for every dimension of planning for North Allston's future. A corollary, given Harvard's anticipated presence in the community, is that the University's future activity should maximize economic, social, urban design, and related benefits for the community while minimizing costs.

### Guiding Principles for Land Use

- Support and enhance the livability of residential neighborhoods by preserving the predominant scale and character of existing neighborhoods, eliminating barriers between neighborhoods and among neighborhoods and river and public parks, and ensuring that adjacent industrial businesses physically reflect their importance to the neighborhood's livability.
- Expand housing opportunities to ensure that the existing community will have adequate options by addressing existing shortages, by accommodating additional demand generated by Harvard's expanded presence in the community, and by meeting the City's mandate for the creation of housing affordable to Boston's working households.
- Protect, support, and expand North Allston's role as a primary locus and generator of jobs aimed at and accessible to a heterogeneous workforce representing of a range of education and skills across an array of present and future industries and technologies.
- Ensure that the future of rail and truck access deemed to be essential to Boston's and the region's economies are included in the Institutional Master Planning process.
- Create a permeable transition between community and campus that invites the community into the campus and the campus into the community, and that avoids any sense of a "town/gown" separation.
- Create a walkable commercial and mixed-use "Main Street" along Western Avenue from North Harvard Street toward Brighton Mills and a vibrant commercial center at Barry's Corner.

## HOUSING: *Preserving Community Character and Affordability*

**Background:** North Allston's residential neighborhoods are characterized by a rich variety of housing options that range from single-family detached homes to apartment complexes. Preserving and enhancing the special qualities of these neighborhoods raises a number of issues: They need protection from development that conflicts with the scale and character of residential streets, and from traffic impacts associated with new development. It is essential to try to reduce conflicts between trucking and residential uses and to preserve the diversity of household types, ages, ethnic background, and incomes that characterize these neighborhoods. At the same time, North Allston shares the Boston-wide pressure for additional housing at many price levels. Harvard's growth in North Allston will bring significant further demand for housing, as well as opportunities to create new housing.

### Guiding Principles for Housing

- **Develop public policies and incentives that encourage the development of new housing options to serve a wide range of incomes, household types, and ages.**
- **Provide significant new housing to meet the current needs of the community, temper the impact of the region's housing-market imbalance, and mitigate the anticipated effects of new development, including Harvard's expanded presence along with other private development.**
- **Create housing that supports Harvard's academic mission and that contributes to a mixed-use urban environment.**
- **Create a wide range of new housing options to serve people who qualify for various types of affordable housing, as well as those who do not typically qualify but cannot afford market-rate housing.**
- **Plan and design housing that enhances the quality and character of North Allston by respecting the scale and housing types found in the existing neighborhoods and by locating higher-density housing away from those neighborhoods to the east of North Harvard Street and to the north of Western Avenue.**
- **Promote partnership opportunities among the City, the State, nonprofits, the private sector, and area institutions (especially Harvard). Capitalize on the skills, expertise, and capacities of each entity to facilitate, expedite, finance, build, maintain, and ensure the long-term viability of new housing initiatives, especially those aimed at preserving and enhancing the richness and diversity of the neighborhood.**
- **Identify early-action and longer-term funding sources needed to create a wide range of new housing.**



*From the Guiding Principles:*  
 "...respect the scale and housing types found in the existing residential neighborhoods and locate higher density housing away from them..."



*From the Guiding Principles:*  
 "...housing that supports Harvard's academic mission."  
 Shown: new graduate student housing at One Western Avenue near the Charles River.



The Honan Allston Public Library remains one of the neighborhood's most significant public spaces.



From the Guiding Principles:  
 "...improvement of existing parks that more effectively serve neighborhood residents..."



Smith Field along Western Avenue.

## PUBLIC REALM: *Contributing to a Sense of Place*

**Background:** The overriding vision of North Allston as an urban village is as much an objective for the public realm as it is a land-use goal. A sense of community already exists not only in the green open spaces – from Smith Field to Hooker Park – but in such civic assets as the new library branch, the Gardner Elementary School, the Joseph M. Smith Community Health Center, and McNamara House. The principles are designed to build on these assets, including the design and use of new open space to strengthen the relationship of Harvard's campus to the North Allston community.

## Guiding Principles for the Public Realm

- Create open space, and improve existing parks, in ways that more effectively serve neighborhood residents.
- Increase community benefits associated with new development by promoting partnerships between the City and non-public landowners to develop new open spaces and improve and maintain existing ones to improve streetscapes.
- Transform Western Avenue into a more pedestrian-friendly neighborhood "Main Street" by using a variety of streetscape-improvements techniques.
- Improve access and visible connections to the river.
- Provide for permeability of and community access to Harvard's campus.
- Use signage to establish gateways, pedestrian connections, and nodes of pedestrian activity, and to reinforce North Allston's sense of place.

## TRANSPORTATION: *Criteria for Successful Movement*

**Background:** North Allston already faces of traffic congestion, regional traffic displaced onto local streets, truck traffic along residential streets, and similar challenges to its quality of life. These problems are exacerbated by the presence of large retailers that draw regional traffic into the community as well as cut-through traffic related to the nearby regional highways. The community also lacks good regional transit access.

An important goal of the North Allston Strategic Framework is to establish objective performance measures to track improvements and deficiencies within North Allston's transportation network. The building of an area-wide traffic model – a computer database that tracks transportation performance while predicting impacts to the transportation system given changes in land use – is a critical part of the community's ability to measure progress and determine next steps. An area-wide traffic model based on agreed-upon data and assumptions will also create a standardized core of knowledge that all stakeholders can use as a basis for decision-making.

### Guiding Principles for Transportation

- Ensure that Harvard's expansion is pedestrian- and bicycle-oriented and emphasizes transit and pedestrian access.
- Institute measures to monitor and mitigate traffic generation and performance associated with Harvard and other significant private development.
- Emphasize land uses — such as housing, academic facilities, and research rather than commercial office space — that generate less traffic.
- Manage on-street parking regulations.
- Protect residential neighborhoods from cut-through and truck traffic by creating and enforcing a Neighborhood Safety Plan.
- Redirect regional traffic from local streets onto the regional road network.
- Enhance Western Avenue and North Harvard Street as pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly environments.
- Promote initiatives to create new regional transit that serves both the residential community and Harvard.
- Address negative impacts on quality of life in North Allston such as existing truck and traffic circulation.



From the Guiding Principles:  
“... enhancement of Western Avenue and North Harvard Street as pedestrian-friendly environments...”



*From the Guiding Principles: "...ensure a careful integration of...emerging opportunities with current neighborhood industrial, infrastructure, and workforce assets..."*

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: *Growth of Economic Opportunity; Retention, Training, and Growth of the Workforce***

**Background:** The Guiding Principles for economic development are intended not only to capitalize on new opportunities presented by Harvard's new economic prominence in North Allston, but also to ensure careful integration of these opportunities with current industrial, infrastructure, and workforce assets.

### **Guiding Principles for Economic Development**

- Build on North Allston's infrastructure and economic strengths to expand and deepen its contribution to the city's and the region's economy.
- Enhance economic opportunity and the quality of life for businesses, workers, and residents.
- Capitalize on the opportunities afforded by the area's changing economic and social dynamics — including the increased presence and activity of Harvard — to support existing businesses, create new industries, provide new services, and promote job growth for a variety of education and skill levels.
- Support existing and new businesses through the City's varied business development initiatives; analyze the need for and feasibility of allocating land for business preservation, expansion, and relocation within the City of Boston; develop relocation-assistance policies and programs; and undertake infrastructure initiatives, including transportation improvements.
- Enhance the City's and the neighborhood's existing and future workforce through hiring commitments, training, and proactive intervention.



## Two Special Study Areas

Of particular significance will be the application of the Guiding Principles to two areas designated as subjects of further special study to be undertaken as part of, or prior to, the IMP or other zoning processes: (1) the Holton Street Corridor and (2) Allston Landing North. Industrial uses currently dominate in each, with the area from Holton Street south zoned for light industrial uses and Allston Landing North zoned as an Economic Development Area.

Both areas represent major opportunities for North Allston, the City, and the University by: (1) developing a zoning strategy that creates a mix of uses that in turn provide attractive, pedestrian-friendly links through Holton Street between the two residential neighborhoods to the east and west; (2) developing a rezoning strategy for Allston Landing North, the largest contiguous parcel of the newly-acquired Harvard properties, that best achieves the Framework’s overall goals while supporting the priorities set forth by the North Allston community, the City, and Harvard; and (3) analyzing how industrial uses can continue to be developed and supported in the City of Boston.

The major issues for each of the two special study areas are set forth below, as is a proposed set of inter-related goals, or scope. Each study will result in a set of strategies, including zoning strategies, by which those goals can be achieved.

### HOLTON STREET CORRIDOR

This special study area is bound on the north by Western Avenue, on the south by Lincoln Street, on the east by Everett Street to the east and on the west by Litchfield, Holton, and Antwerp Streets.

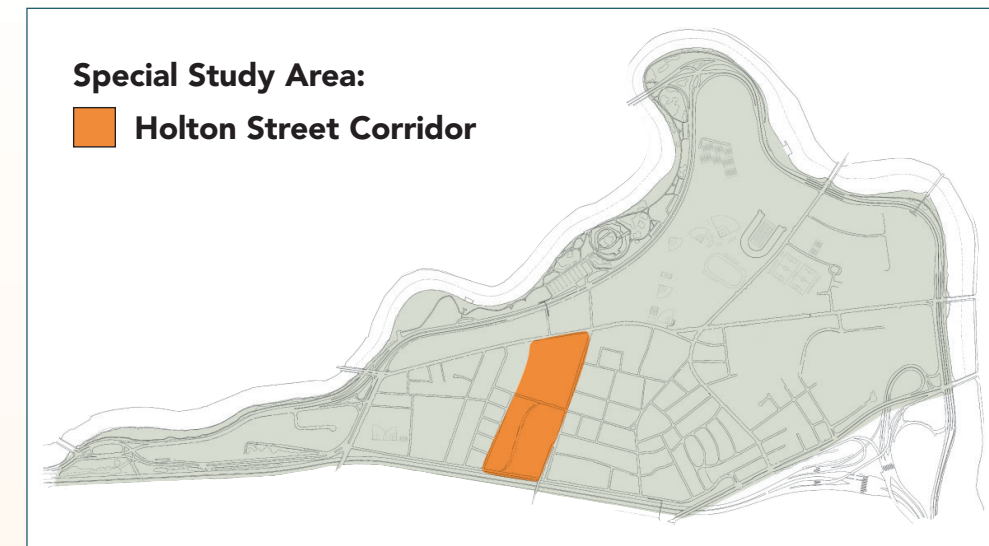
#### A BRIEF PORTRAIT OF THE AREA

The Brighton Mills shopping center and industrial businesses directly adjacent to residential areas present challenges such as cut-through truck traffic. Additionally, the size and siting of the shopping center and large industrial users undermine the pedestrian scale and character of the residential neighborhoods, effectively cutting them off from each other.

#### A PROPOSED SCOPE OF STUDY

##### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Develop the Holton Street Corridor to serve the collective economic-development objectives of the major stakeholders. Within this analysis, consider relationships to property across the turnpike at Brighton Landing.



##### LAND USE

- Provide an appropriate, economically viable mix of uses for the area that will support:
  - A range of housing choices
  - Strengthened retail, including a neighborhood supermarket and neighborhood retail along Western Avenue
  - Expanded opportunities for new and existing neighborhood businesses and jobs.

##### URBAN DESIGN

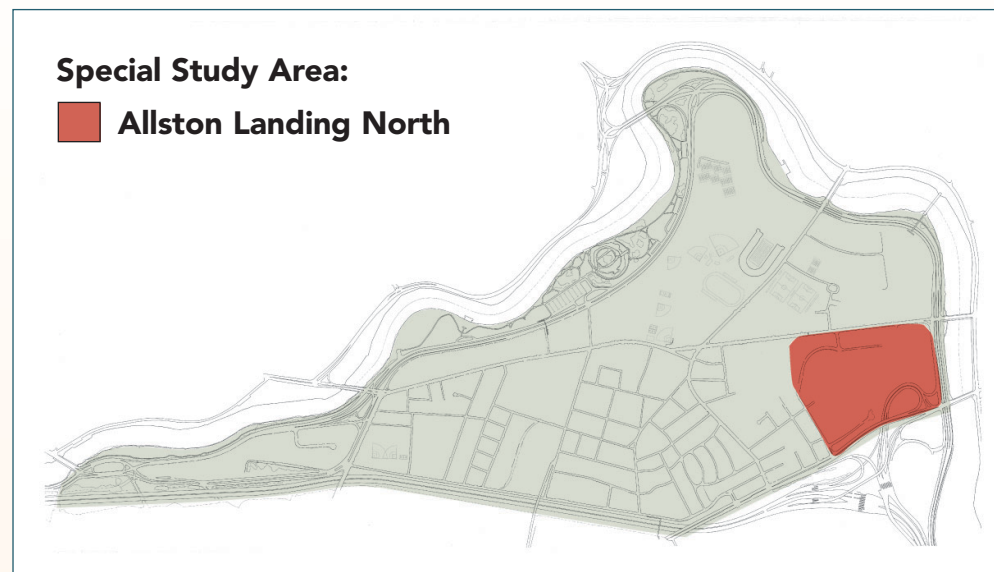
- Establish a system of walkable blocks for mixed-use infill development.
- Ensure transitions in land use and scale from the surrounding neighborhoods to new development with higher densities towards Western Avenue and lower densities towards the residential edges.
- Incorporate new neighborhood-focused open space, including one passive park.
- Provide buffers between residential and industrial uses.

##### CONNECTIONS

- Create better east/west pedestrian connections to unite existing residential districts into a more cohesive neighborhood.
- Improve connections to neighborhood shopping along Western Avenue.
- Ensure appropriate siting of future industrial and commercial uses to decrease impacts on residential neighbors while improving transportation access for commercial and industrial traffic.
- Strengthen links to Herter Park and the rest of the Charles River Basin.

##### ENVIRONMENTAL

- Incorporate brownfield considerations as development proceeds in the Holton Street Corridor.
- Balance the desire for quality of life and neighborhood livability with considerations of turnpike noise and development-generated traffic.



## ALLSTON LANDING NORTH

Allston Landing North extends along Western Avenue on the north and along Cambridge Street between Soldiers Field Road and Windom Street.

### A BRIEF PORTRAIT OF THE AREA

This 50-acre site consists primarily of industrial, manufacturing (including biomedical), and transportation-related businesses, and includes a large warehouse abutting North Allston's easternmost residential neighborhood. The transportation focus takes advantage of the regional access provided by the adjacency to the Massachusetts Turnpike.

## A PROPOSED SCOPE OF STUDY

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Leverage new investment by Harvard and other developers to generate important new economic engines for the city and the region, thereby stimulating new job creation in the area.

### LAND USE

- Support a mix of uses
- Focus residential activity closer to Barry's Corner in order to strengthen local retail businesses and generate nighttime activity.
- Include Cambridge Street in new opportunities for economic development and jobs.
- Consolidate commercial and light industrial uses in areas with good truck routes and access to highway and rail facilities.
- Resolve land-use and transportation conflicts associated with existing and proposed development.

- Follow the EOTC-led study of Allston Landing South to understand the long-term redevelopment potential of Allston Landing South.
- Plan for a dedicated industrial area in the City of Boston that joins community and business interests to establish an attractive employment center with well-defined geographic boundaries and identity.

### CONNECTIONS

- Develop new transportation-access strategies that lessen or eliminate land-use conflict and mitigate adverse impact of development on residences and businesses.
- Identify, protect, and enhance vital road and rail infrastructure deemed vital to the City and regional economies.
- Strengthen pedestrian connections from the existing neighborhoods to Western Avenue, Harvard's athletic fields, and the Charles River Basin.

### URBAN DESIGN

- Create an accessible model for campus design, including accessible open spaces, that supports a system of public streets linking residential neighborhoods to Western Avenue and the river.
- Ensure development along both sides of Western Avenue that encourages an active pedestrian environment.
- Develop structured or underground parking set back from the street.
- Establish height limits along Western Avenue and near existing residential neighborhoods.

### ENVIRONMENTAL

- Incorporate brownfield considerations as development proceeds in Allston Landing North.



Aerial Photo of North Allston and surrounding area.



Conceptual Vision for North Allston's future.

## Sketching the Plan

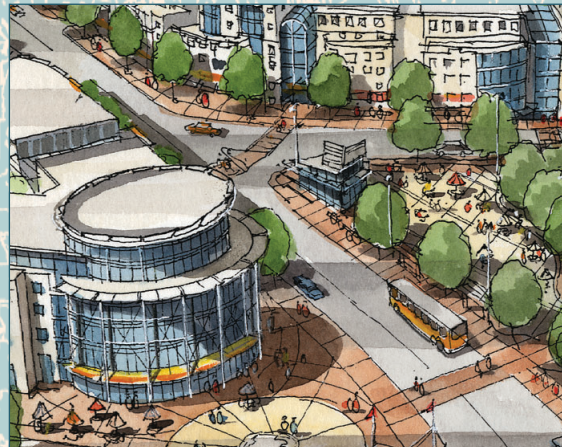
The Planning Group's deliberations on the Vision Statement, the scenarios, and the Guiding Principles culminated in the development of an illustrative plan emphasizing the imperatives of walkability, livability, permeability, and economic vitality. Presented by Mayor Thomas M. Menino to the North Allston community at large on behalf of the Planning Group, the plan – detailed in the following chapter – sets forth a model for growth

and change that preserves the most desirable features of North Allston's traditional neighborhoods. It illustrates a mix of new uses encompassing the highest levels of graduate education and leading-edge research as well as significant amounts of retail and new mixed-income housing – all within the context of an exceptionally vital 21st-century urban village.

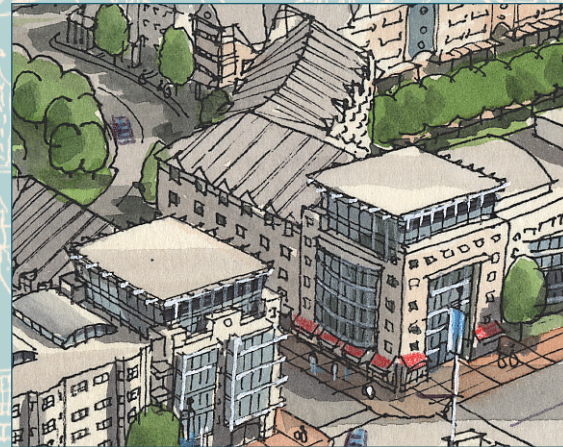
*Elements of the Conceptual Vision for North Allston:*



*Lively public realm...*



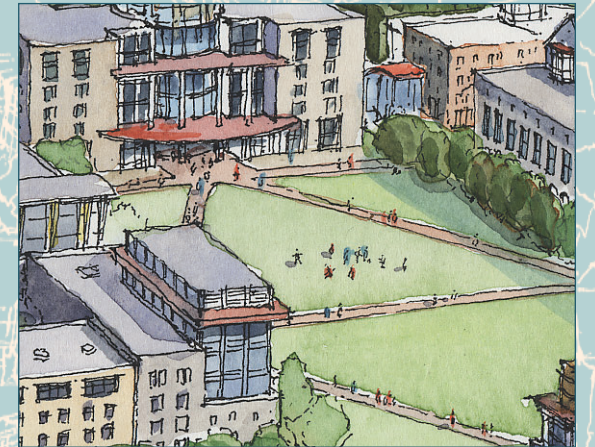
*New intersection of North Harvard Street  
& Western Avenue...*



*Mixed-use along Western Avenue...*



*New enterprise campus...*



*New institutional uses.*



*Smith Field's playing areas – including this tot lot – continuing to serve a wide segment of the neighborhood.*



*Biotech leader Genzyme's manufacturing facility in North Allston represents new economic vitality for the community, the City, and the region.*



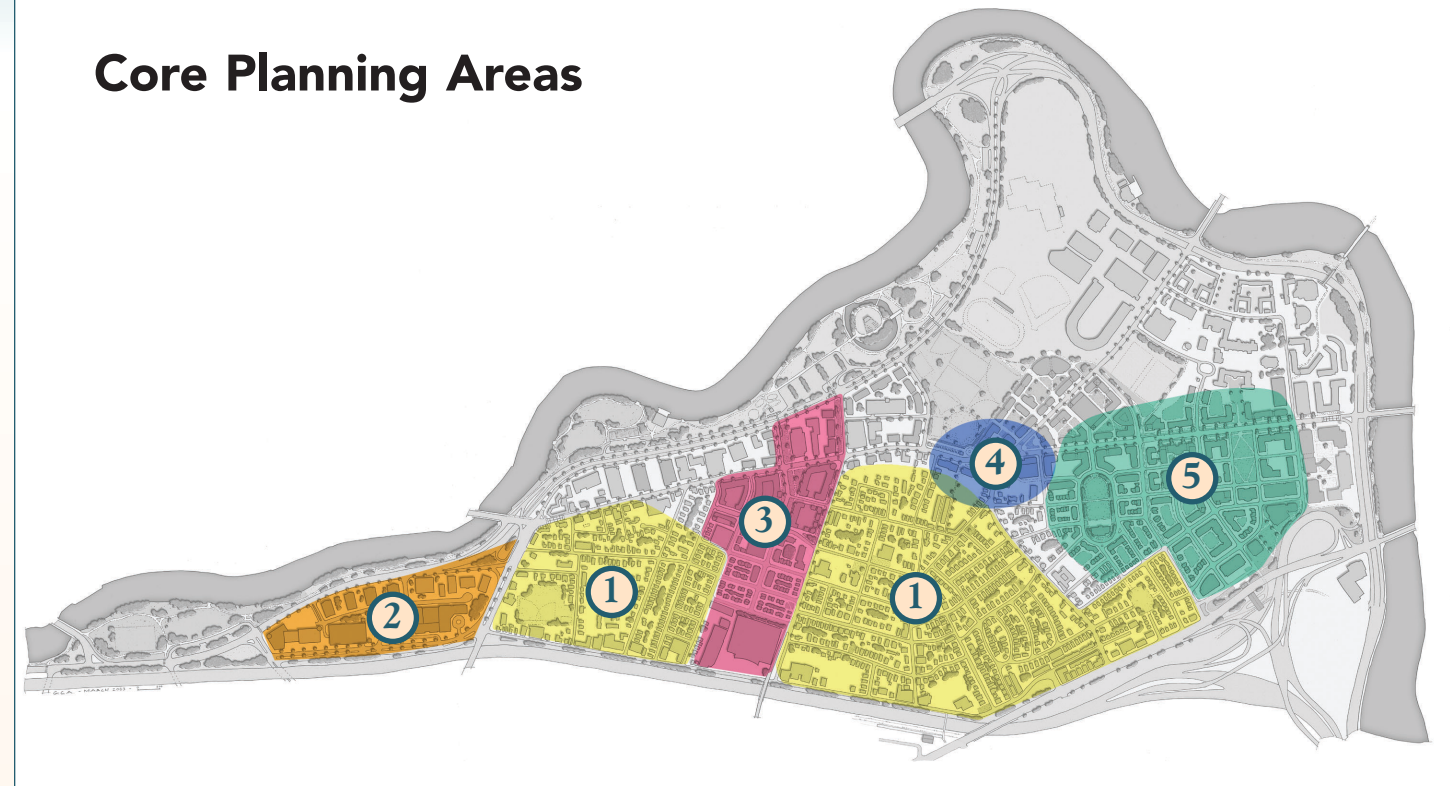
*The Weeks Bridge entrance to the Harvard Business School campus in North Allston will have its counterparts in future links between Harvard's new campus and the North Allston neighborhoods.*

## CHAPTER 3: A FRAMEWORK FOR PLANNING

### Introduction

Intense commitment by all stakeholders to a four-year planning process led to the North Allston Strategic Framework for Planning, giving shape and substance to the future outlined in the community vision. As a conceptual model, the Framework is designed to stimulate alternative development scenarios for North Allston. It represents a general perspective shared by all parties that the guidelines and priorities will provide a foundation for all planning and development, particularly as Harvard puts forth its new Institutional Master Plan and as future development begins to take place. Building on partnerships established during the planning process, the Framework sets the stage for continuing dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders to ensure that its goals remain both desirable and achievable. Its goal is to inspire both current and future residents, students, workers, and other stakeholders, and to provide a starting point for further thought and action.

## Core Planning Areas

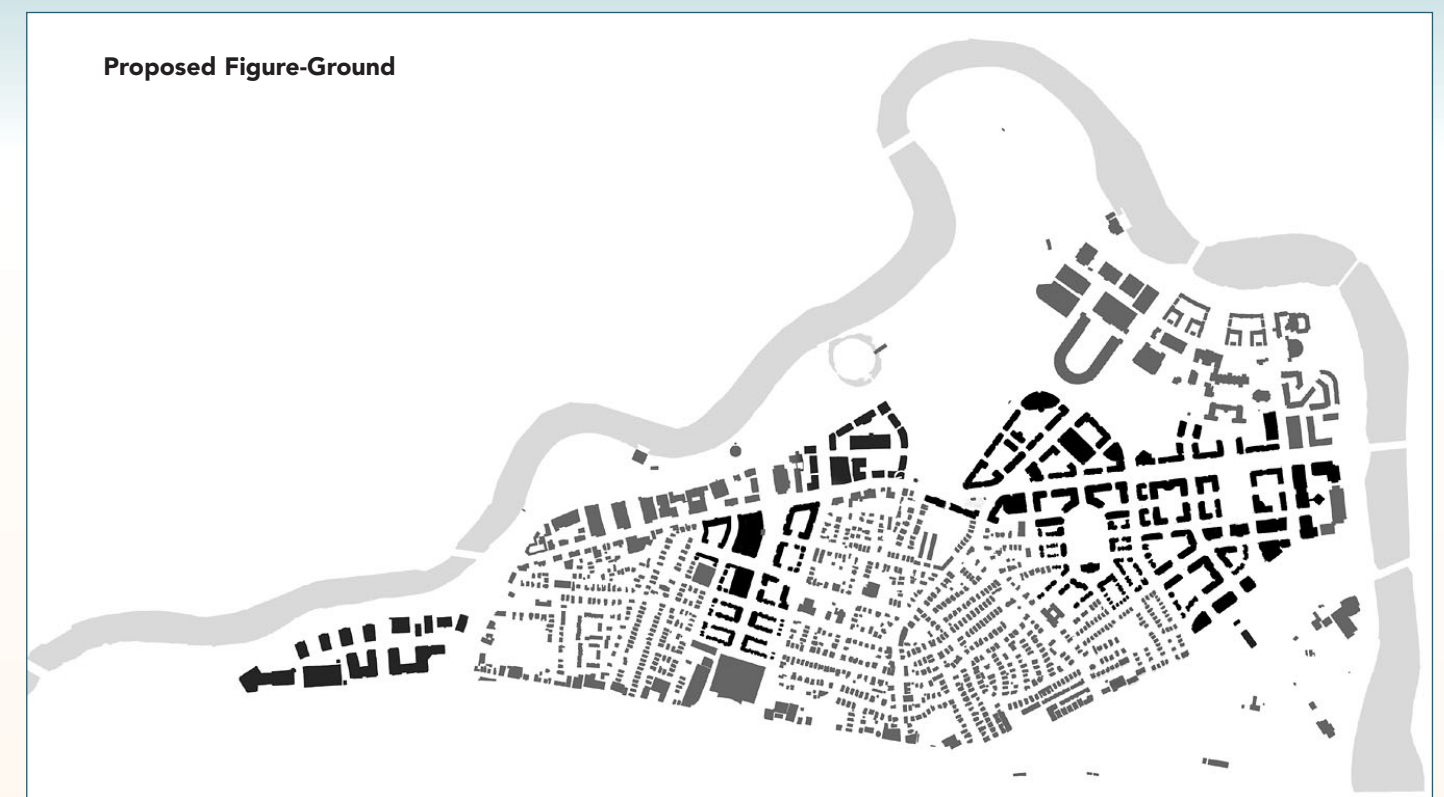
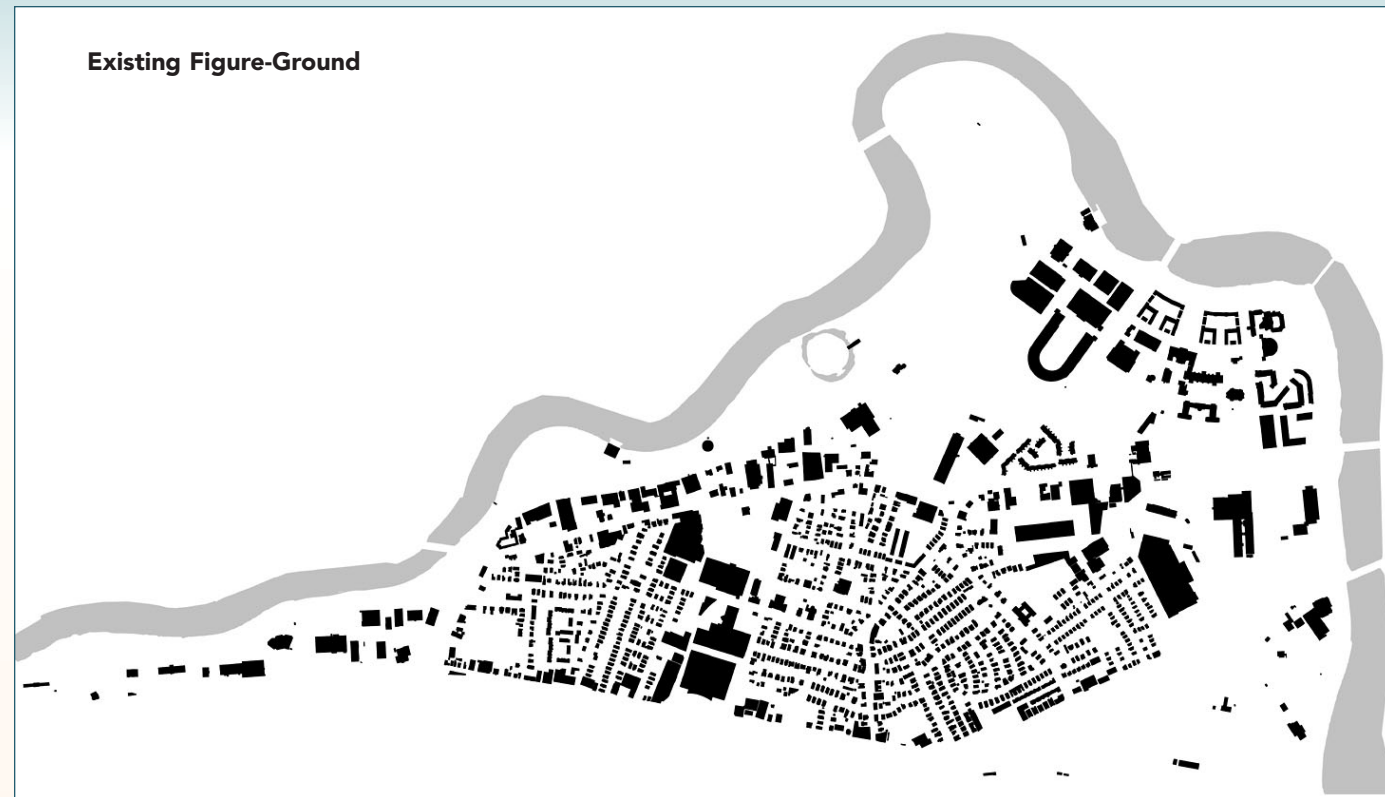


### A Framework for Community and University Growth

**Background:** As articulated in the Vision Statement on page 13, the Framework’s aim is “to invigorate North Allston as an even more livable place, one that offers an unusually broad range of services, housing options, job prospects, educational and cultural opportunities, recreation – all the components that shape and contribute to quality of life.” The Framework is intended not just to shape future land-use decisions but also to guide every dimension of planning for North Allston’s future.

The Framework encompasses five geographic planning areas:

- ① The existing traditional neighborhoods are preserved and protected from significant change.
- ② The Riverview Triangle forms the western gateway to North Allston, between Birmingham Parkway and Soldiers Field Road, which has the potential for significant new housing, academic, research, and other uses.
- ③ Brighton Mills, including the existing shopping center and the Holton Street corridor – while preserving community-serving retail, including a supermarket, and weighing the importance of existing industrial uses on the site – can emerge as a mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly district that provides new connections between the two adjoining neighborhoods.
- ④ Barry’s Corner can emerge as a lively community-serving, pedestrian-friendly Main Street opening onto Smith Field and extending toward Brighton Mills and Harvard’s campus.
- ⑤ A new mixed-use district and campus near the traditional neighborhood will include a lively mix of housing serving both Harvard and the community; academic and research uses; and possible consolidation, if deemed necessary and feasible as the result of a special study, of current industrial uses reflecting Boston’s Back Streets and other economic development policies.



The “figure-ground” maps illustrate (a) the existing relationship of the built environment in North Allston to the surrounding streets and open space and (b) the same relationships as proposed in the Framework plan. The latter reflects the way in which the plan aims to create new districts that are more closely aligned with the scale and dimensions of the existing neighborhoods.

## Key Qualities of the Framework

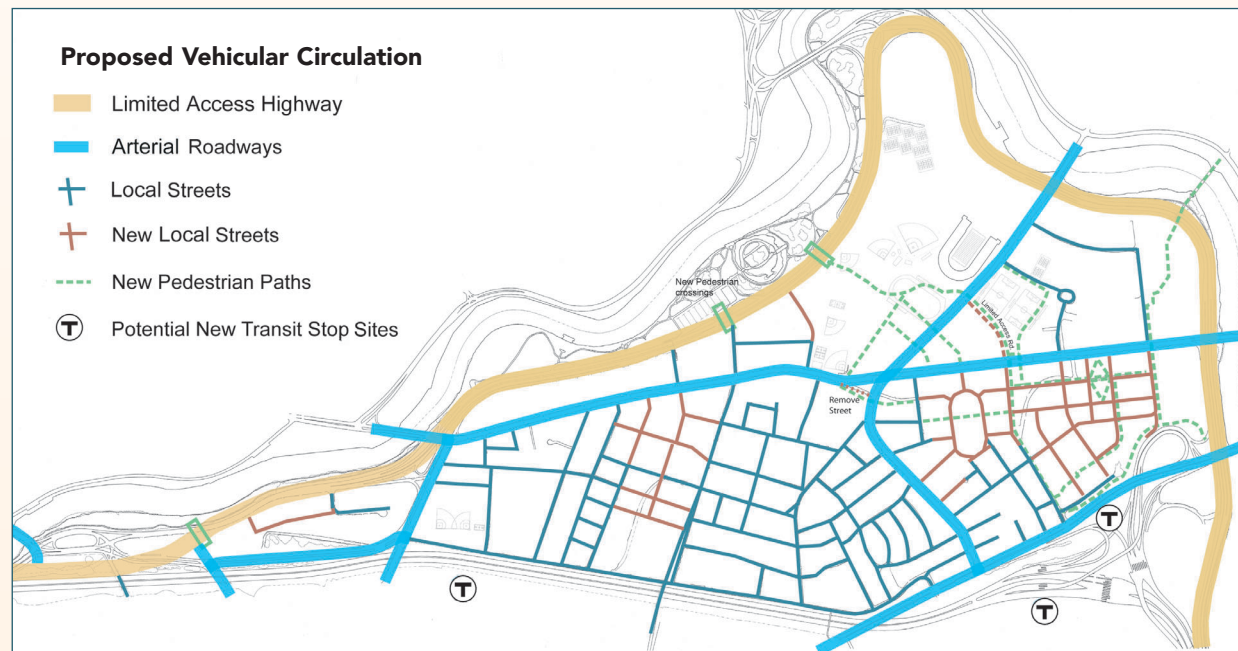
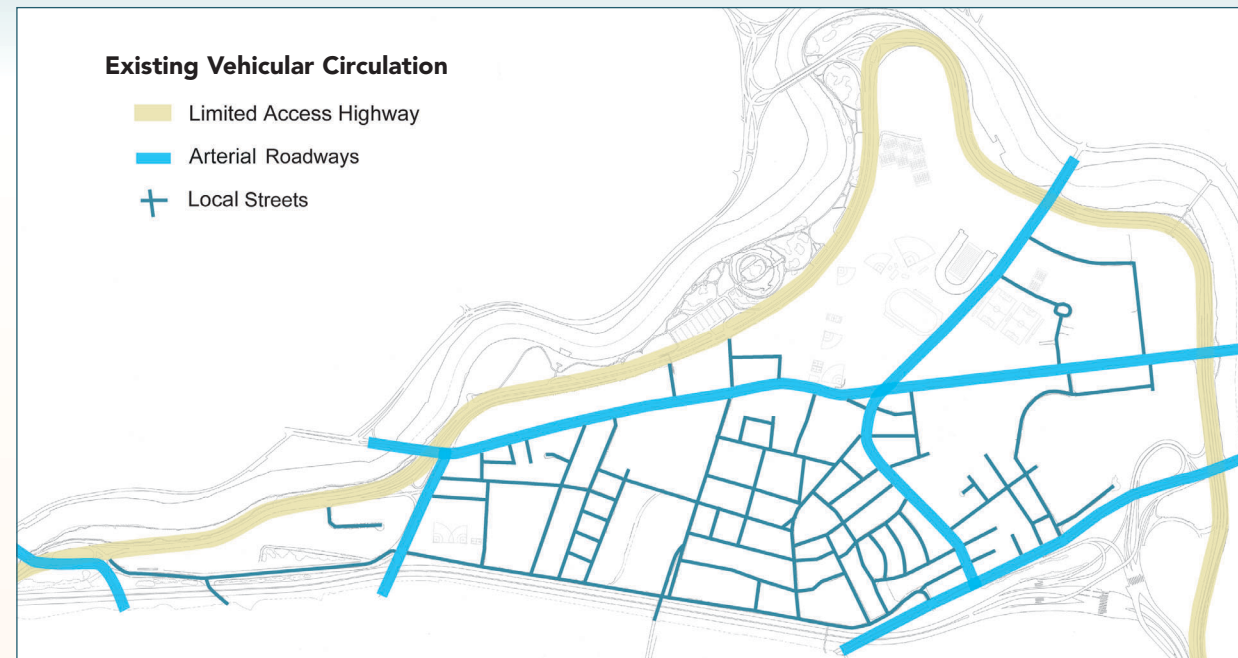
### URBAN DESIGN

Other than North Allston’s two traditional neighborhoods, the pattern of streets, buildings, and open spaces in the study area is often fractured and discontinuous. Large building footprints representing commercial and industrial uses exist next to traditional residential parcels.

Transitions between commercial activities along Western Avenue and other major streets and residential areas are often poorly defined. Many of North Allston’s residential streets have a wonderful scale and pedestrian-friendly character, qualities that are needed in most of the community’s commercial areas. Two of North Allston’s greatest community resources – Smith Field and the Charles River – are physically isolated from the life of the community.

As detailed on the following pages, the components of the Framework are presented as suggestive of what might eventually occur in North Allston rather than as a final proposal or final plan. The Framework proposes a pattern of development that emphasizes community-building. A system of local streets connects existing neighborhoods to a new mixed-use area and to Harvard’s new academic and research facilities. Planning calls for more civic character in design and location of new buildings – in particular a conscious effort to provide pedestrian-friendly uses for buildings along major streets and to design and locate taller buildings in ways that avoid introducing abrupt shifts from the character of traditional neighborhood streets.

Major community-focused streets – especially portions of Western Avenue that comprise the future Barry’s Corner but also Harvard Street and Soldiers Field Road – are better defined with building edges addressing a more pedestrian-friendly environment. The edge of Smith Field at Western Avenue is enhanced with fountains and other active uses that treat this frontage as a public park, thereby inviting the neighborhood in, without diminishing its recreation facilities. A valued view corridor is preserved between Western Avenue and Harvard Stadium.



*These two circulation patterns contrast the present road system with a future one characterized by a finer-grained arrangement of streets and walkways that reinforce North Allston's quality of life and support its vision for a human-scaled urban village.*

To strengthen the pedestrian link to Harvard Square, campus development is extended along North Harvard Street. Streetscape improvements include the burying of overhead utilities as recommended in Harvard's 1998 Institutional Master Plan; in the future, students and residents alike should be able to walk back and forth to the river and to Harvard Square along a comfortable and attractive street lined with active uses. View and pedestrian corridors are provided to insure a sense of connection and shared community between Harvard facilities and the adjacent neighborhood streets. Many new Harvard buildings will form green quads and courtyards that will be accessible to both Harvard and the larger community.

The Framework addresses height and massing of new buildings to ensure in general the preservation of the traditional character of residential neighborhoods while allowing the kind of significant new development that will bring substantial benefits to North Allston. Thus, west of North Harvard Street the Framework envisions heights of up to 35' on the southern side of Western Avenue and a mix of heights on the north side, with further community review of buildings with heights over 35' and an expectation that these taller buildings would offer substantial public benefits such as additional affordable housing and public space. To the east of North Harvard Street, building heights of 55-95' would be permitted, with taller buildings based on further community review and commensurate benefits.

#### PUBLIC REALM AND OPEN SPACE

**Background:** The lack of safe and convenient pedestrian access to the Charles River Reservation for residents presents a major planning challenge. In addition, open space resources within the neighborhood itself are scattered and hidden. While North Allston has two neighborhood parks – Murray Park and Hooker Park – and one community park – William Smith Playground – it lacks any substantial urban squares, plazas, or promenades.

To mitigate these conditions at least partially, the Framework proposes a system of parks, pathways, and squares that increases the amount of land dedicated to open space and, more important, creates a broader range of quality public places to support a variety of activities. The Framework identifies opportunities for pocket parks for passive enjoyment or tot lots, providing amenities for those residential areas underserved by open space, such as the neighborhood south of the Gardner School.

As noted above, the face of Smith Field to the community, along Western Avenue, will be transformed into a more active park that includes play fountains for children, outdoor cafés, public seating, and/or similar features to invite more active public use of this important space. The play fields would be preserved and enhanced.

The Framework identifies opportunities for two prominent community promenades to the river. The first, located between the two traditional neighborhoods, would be





The vision suggests opportunities for an open campus with links to the River that serve pedestrians and bicyclists. The campus pathway shown in this drawing illustrates this concept.

along a tree-lined Everett Street. It would provide new pedestrian-scale street lighting, and would connect, via a new park that replaces the salt pile north of Western Avenue, to an existing pedestrian bridge to the river. The second promenade, envisioned as a new River Walk, would pass between the eastern traditional neighborhood and a new mixed-use neighborhood. It would offer a tree-lined extension with pedestrian-scaled lighting from Cambridge Street along Windom Street, through Harvard's existing campus to Smith Field and Herter Park and the Paul Dudley White bicycle path that leads to the Esplanade (see illustration above). As part of the River Walk, a generous green that bridges Western Avenue just east of the existing Charlesview Apartments would frame

views to the athletic fields and the landmark Harvard Stadium. If such a vision were implemented, neighborhood children would be able to leave their front door and walk along the pathways next to athletic fields on their way to and from the river.

Overall, the Framework's approach to North Allston's public realm reflects a fundamental belief that successful open spaces are the extension of adjacent activity-generating land uses. They require land-use and zoning strategies that go hand-in-hand with the vision of creating a vibrant pedestrian-friendly environment whose character is unique to North Allston.



Hooker Park (above) and Smith Field (right) represent the kinds of neighborhood and community parks central to the present and future livability of North Allston.

#### EARLY-ACTION PRIORITIES

Streetscape and urban design improvements along Western Avenue and North Harvard Street, together with improvements to Smith Field and creation of additional new public realm at Barry's Corner, would represent important steps in achieving North Allston's potential as an even more livable urban village. It would demonstrate the value of Harvard's expanded presence to both residents and members of Harvard's own community.

#### ISSUES

- Crowding and limited accessibility of neighborhood parks.
- Inadequate access to the river.
- Ensuring neighborhood visual and pedestrian access to the new academic/research campus.

#### OPPORTUNITIES

- Creation of permeable new campus.
- Creation of new and expanded parks, enhanced access to the river, and pedestrian-friendly Main Street.

*The following pages illustrate in detail the plan as developed by the community, Harvard, and the city. They include identification of the new opportunities for Brighton Mills and Barry's Corner, as well as major contributions outlined by the Strategic Planning Framework in the areas of housing and economic development.*



*The proliferation of auto-related uses along Western Avenue, including the large surface parking lot in front of Brighton Mills, reinforces an environment not friendly to pedestrians or cyclists.*

## Brighton Mills

**Background:** While retaining the supermarket as an important element in the commercial life of the neighborhood, a reconfigured, mixed-use, newly vital Brighton Mills could integrate institutional and academic uses, housing, new retail, and a system of public streets and squares. The result would be a greatly enriched public realm for North Allston. Along the southern edge of Brighton Mills, Holton Street is currently an industrial corridor. Careful attention will be paid to addressing the interests of existing employees and potential new businesses, particularly those involved in industrial uses in the vicinity of Holton Street.

The redevelopment of Brighton Mills as a whole, including the Holton Street corridor, will provide a significant enhancement of the neighborhood's public realm and generate important new civic spaces, demonstrating the potential community-building value of Harvard's growth in North Allston.



*The existing Brighton Mills shopping area (above) and a proposed transformation into a mixed-use neighborhood center (facing page) that retains the supermarket, creates an activity-rich, walkable district with enhanced visual and pedestrian access to the Charles River, and includes the Everett Street Corridor, shown on the right hand side of the illustration.*

### ISSUES

- Big-box strip mall dominated by a four-acre parking lot fronting on Western Avenue.
- Large number of retail vacancies at western edge of mall.
- Important shopping area characterized by un hospitable pedestrian environment.
- Industrial/residential friction.

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Transform the shopping center, and the area immediately surrounding it, into a pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use, environment that could combine a variety of institutional and other uses with approximately 200,000 square feet of new and existing retail space and approximately 500 units of new mixed-income housing (for both renters and owners), structured parking, and attractive public squares.
- Reflect the diverse character of buildings found in North Allston – ranging from traditional one- to three-family houses to modern research buildings and a deep-rooted industrial tradition – in the design of new buildings; ensure that new buildings respect the scale and character found along nearby existing residential streets.

- Reconnect neighborhoods by extending existing streets through the site.
- Emphasize Everett Street as a major corridor through the neighborhood to the Charles River by creating a wide promenade lined with new development along the west side of the street, leading to the main at-grade crossing to Herter Park and the Charles.
- Enhance Western Avenue physically, with new streetscape design, and economically, by dispersing new local retail along the avenue. Streetscape improvements include wider sidewalks, street furnishings, buried utility lines, and a freestanding arbor along Smith Field for vendors or a farmer's market.
- Link Brighton Mills along Western Avenue to Barry's Corner with streetscape improvements and infill development that combine to form an important new pedestrian-friendly Main Street.



Study area plan showing location of Brighton Mills.



Brighton Mills building footprints and streets.



Conceptual vision for redevelopment of Brighton Mills and Holton Street Corridor.

## Barry's Corner

**Background:** A central underpinning of the vision for North Allston is the creation of a walkable, neighborhood-oriented square, called Barry's Corner. The square could include well-landscaped public spaces, wide sidewalks with street trees, and other elements designed to make it an attractive new center residents, workers and visitors. The square can be further enriched through improvements along the Western Avenue edge with a possible museum or other cultural or community facility, fountains, outdoor cafés, play sculptures, and similar community-enhancing amenities.

### EARLY-ACTION PRIORITIES:

The four-block stretch of Western Avenue linking Brighton Mills and Barry's Corner will become North Allston's retail Main Street, creating a new focal point for the neighborhood. Early streetscape and design improvements at the shopping center facing Western Avenue, as well as along Western Avenue itself, will signal all-important early stages of development. These steps will in turn stimulate new private investment.

### ISSUES

- Dangerous, pedestrian-hostile major intersection dominated by auto-related uses at North Harvard Street.
- Lack of pedestrian-friendly environment along Western Avenue heading west from North Harvard Street.
- Poorly defined transition between commercial and industrial businesses along Western Avenue, and adjacent residential blocks.
- Lack of street edges, and sense of place.

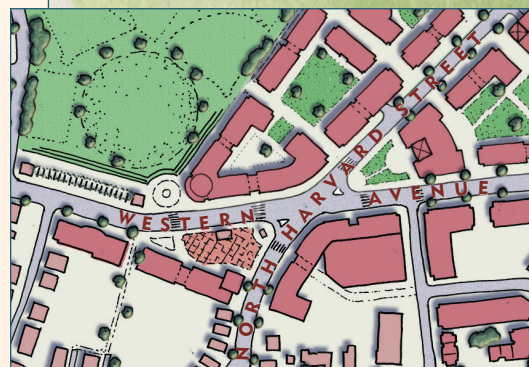
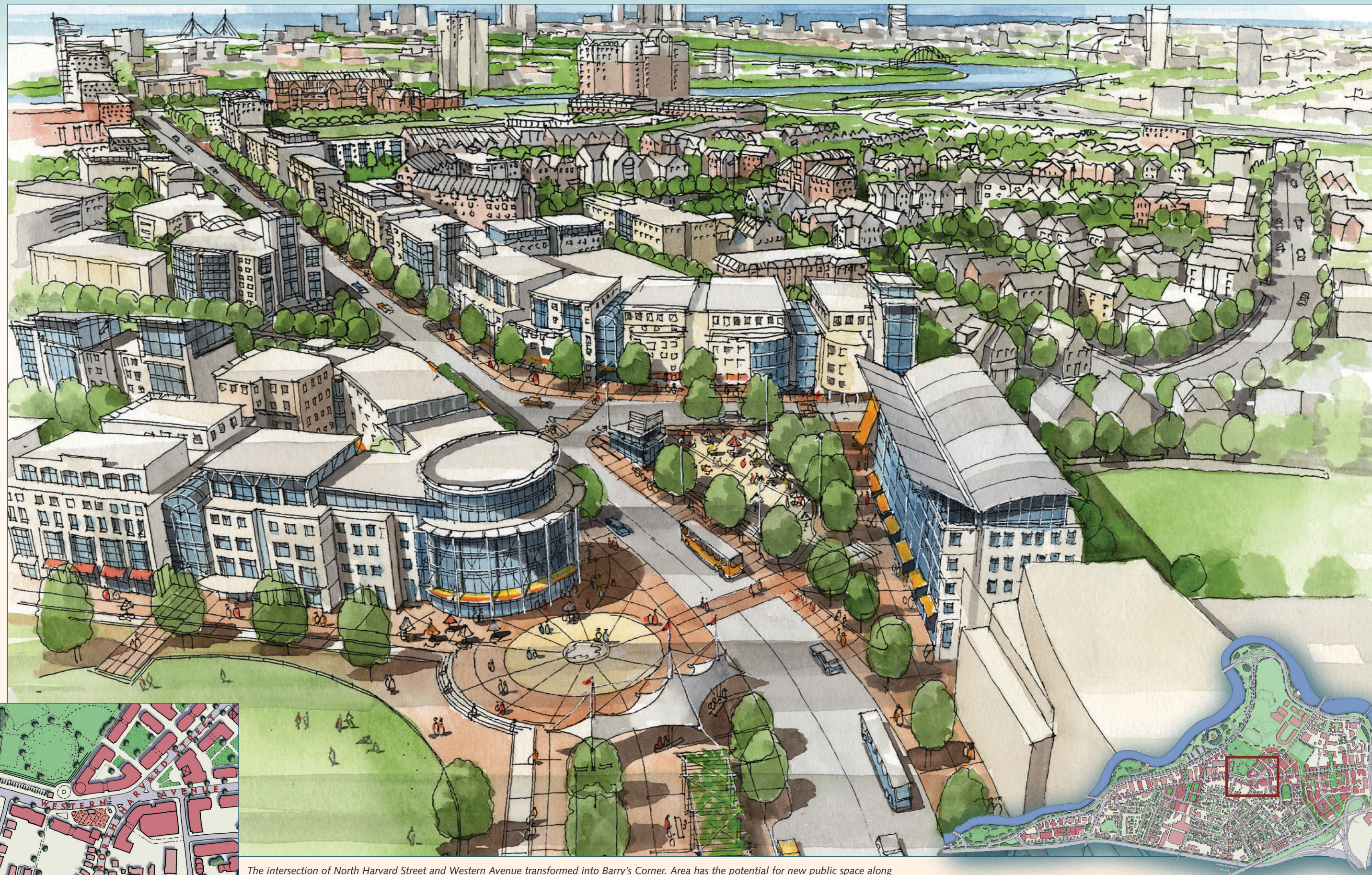


Two views of the current intersection of Western Avenue and North Harvard Street, the potential site of North Allston's new center.



### OPPORTUNITIES

- Create a vibrant mixed-use area with a major new public space at North Harvard Street.
- Transform Western Avenue into a pedestrian-friendly, neighborhood-serving Main Street.
- Create a main street-like environment with approximately 200,000 square feet of community-serving retail and services, with housing, academic, and other uses located on upper floors.
- Transform Smith Field into a year-round neighborhood park while preserving its recreational facilities.
- Introduce seamless connections from the residential neighborhood to the Charles River and Herter Park.
- Develop a significant new cultural facility or other community center as a neighborhood and regional attraction.

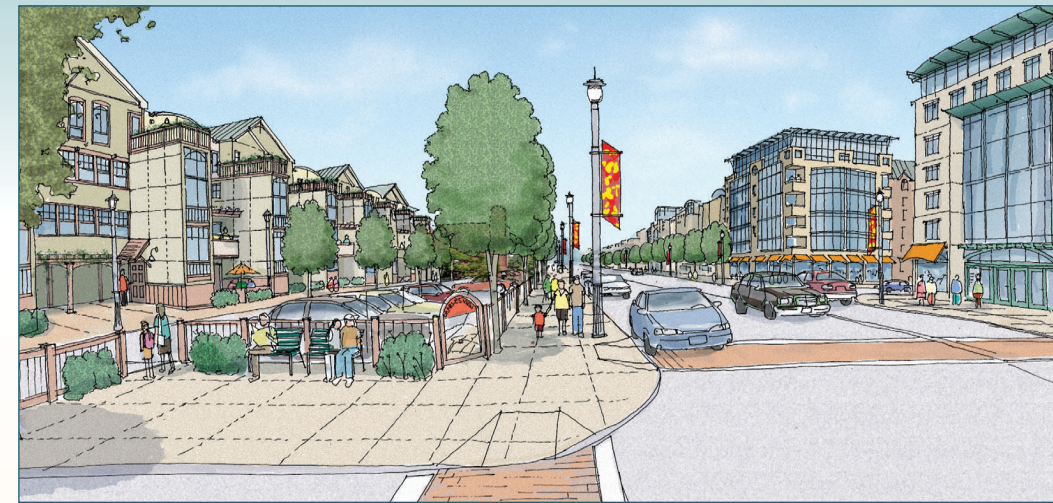


Barry's Corner building footprints and streets.

The intersection of North Harvard Street and Western Avenue transformed into Barry's Corner. Area has the potential for new public space along Smith Field (lower center); new mixed-use development – institutional, residential, and retail – along the eastern edge of the park, and new housing and neighborhood-serving retail along Western Avenue (from upper left to lower center) and North Harvard Street (from right to left center).

Study area plan showing location of Barry's Corner.

New housing may include improvements to older mixed-income housing. Below: Current view of Charlesview along Western Avenue. Right: One potential redesign of Charlesview facades and parking area.



Currently the site of industrial and related uses, this segment of Western Avenue could accommodate both community and university-related housing when these uses are relocated.

## Housing for Boston

**Background:** In general, it has been estimated that North Allston can accommodate up to 2,400-2,800 new housing units. The goal of this plan is to try to achieve this level of housing development in the area. Within the plan's timeframe of 20 or more years, it is expected that private developers, non-profit developers, and Harvard University will create a significant quantity and many forms of new housing at many locations in North Allston. These may include new community units, preservation of affordable units, and new student beds. Community housing built by Harvard and private developers may reach between 400 and 800 units, with Harvard's contribution to community housing created in tandem with institutional development and aligned with the City's goals for affordable housing.

While preserving existing housing and existing residential neighborhoods, the Framework envisions that much of this new housing will be part of a new mixed-use neighborhood that serves both Harvard and the larger community. This potential neighborhood, located generally east of North Harvard Street and south of Western Avenue, will aim to enhance the nearby established residential areas by being sensitive to their scale and character while fulfilling Harvard's institutional, academic, and other needs within that area.

Finally, the Framework acknowledges the fundamental importance of preserving Charlesview housing development's affordability, regardless of ultimate location either on-site or newly placed within North Allston.

### EARLY-ACTION PRIORITIES:

Harvard's anticipated presence in North Allston adds to the neighborhood's critical need for more housing serving the widest possible range of people. Immediate attention should be paid to the development of both community and university housing, with the goal of 200-400 units of community-oriented housing within the early development phases.

### ISSUES

- Need for more affordable rental and owner-occupied housing to serve the larger community.
- Low vacancy rates and record high sale prices: Average condominium prices up by 50% over the last five years; single-family prices up by over 80% in the last five years.
- Need for significant new housing to meet the needs of the existing community and the substantially increased demand that will be generated by Harvard's expanded presence will generate in North Allston.
- Traditional neighborhoods fully built out; existing housing stock should not be subdivided into additional units.
- New housing that complements diversity and richness of established residential neighborhoods.

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Preserve existing housing and traditional neighborhoods.
- Create, with Harvard and other developers, 2,400 to 2,800 new units in Barry's Corner, Brighton Mills, the Riverside Triangle, west of Market Street, and the new mixed-use neighborhood.
- Provide a wide range of housing opportunities serving long-time residents, new neighbors and Harvard affiliates.
- Match the scale of the new residential blocks and development to that of the housing found along abutting neighborhood streets, with transitions to taller buildings at Western Avenue and east of North Harvard Street
- Maximize housing opportunities to support commercial, industrial, and retail businesses.
- Reinforce North Allston as a safe, vibrant, and livable neighborhood.



Conceptual vision for redevelopment along Western Avenue east of Barry's Corner.

Study area plan showing location of potential new housing.



Building footprints and streets.



*The transportation assets located in Allston Landing North, seen here looking toward the Genzyme manufacturing facility along Soldiers Field Road, contribute to the major resources for maintaining the economic health of the area and the region.*

## Economic Development

**Background:** Higher education and research are two of the Boston region's most important sources of economic growth and new jobs at every level. Harvard's expanded role as an economic engine in Boston is expected to promote job growth for a variety of education and skills levels as well as generate new industries and provide new services for the area. The University is already the third-largest employer in Massachusetts, employing more than 15,000 people on all its campuses.

As economic sectors shift and evolve, it is essential to identify appropriate areas in the City of Boston for future expansion of established businesses that provide industrial and related jobs. Supporting these uses through appropriate access, zoning, streetscape improvements, and other measures is as important as supporting education-

related expansion, as these businesses provide existing employment opportunities and expand to provide new ones. A key component of the Framework's implementation will include the identification and allocation of land in the City for business preservation, expansion, and relocation. Implementation will also include joint development by Harvard and the City of a relocation program to assist University tenants who relocate because of Harvard's plans for institutional development. This is part of a larger Business and Workforce Support Program to be formalized in an agreement between Harvard and the City. Additionally, the program will address the feasibility and desirability of developing a consolidated business center where businesses could be relocated.

### EARLY-ACTION PRIORITIES

The economic growth opportunities generated by Harvard's anticipated presence in North Allston require the development of appropriate job-training strategies for neighborhood and City residents. At the same time, as the neighborhood's economic profile changes, the City will continue to provide assistance through its economic development initiatives to North Allston's industrial businesses and workers to ensure continuity and/or expansion of those businesses and the jobs they support.

### ISSUES

- Expansion of employment opportunities to more fully reflect Boston's economic strengths and insure that North Allston and the City benefit from emerging areas of economic growth in the future.
- Development of new or enhanced workforce development programs to increase and improve the neighborhood – and the City's – employment base.
- Protection of existing, viable jobs and businesses currently located in North Allston.
- Determination of neighborhood and citywide economic benefits directly linked to Harvard's institutional plans for Allston Landing North.
- Preservation of rail/truck transfer facilities deemed to be essential.

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Integrate economic development-related uses that provide a wide spectrum of new jobs in areas like the mixed-use neighborhood, Brighton Mills, Barry's Corner, and the Riverview Triangle in the western part of North Allston.
- Partner with Harvard to create new jobs and implement a workforce development strategy for area residents.
- Initiate special studies of Holton Street Corridor and Allston Landing North.
- Apply design principles to integrate the new academic precinct and the economic development campus.
- Buffer the nearby residential neighborhood with a landscaped walk to Western Avenue and the River.
- Create a central green with ample structured parking.





Building footprints and streets.

Conceptual vision for redevelopment of Allston Landing North.



Study area plan showing location of redeveloped Allston Landing North.

*Western Avenue (right side of the photograph) will serve as the major gateway into a new institutional precinct that contains a mix of academic, residential, r&d, and light manufacturing uses. This new precinct can be integrated with the existing neighborhood.*



### Harvard in North Allston 02134

**Background:** Harvard's potential benefit to the region's higher education and related knowledge-based industries – particularly given the importance of these sectors to the region's overall economy – offers a unique opportunity for North Allston to realize major economic and quality-of-life gains.

The Framework envisions an expanded Harvard presence that is woven into the fabric of North Allston, reinforcing its qualities as a diverse urban village. Because Harvard's holdings represent a significant portion of North Allston's non-residential land area, the University's adherence to this objective represents an important underpinning for every dimension of planning for North Allston's future.

#### ISSUES

- Integration of the new academic precinct with the adjoining residential neighborhoods.
- Mitigation of possible traffic and housing impacts on the neighborhoods.

#### OPPORTUNITIES

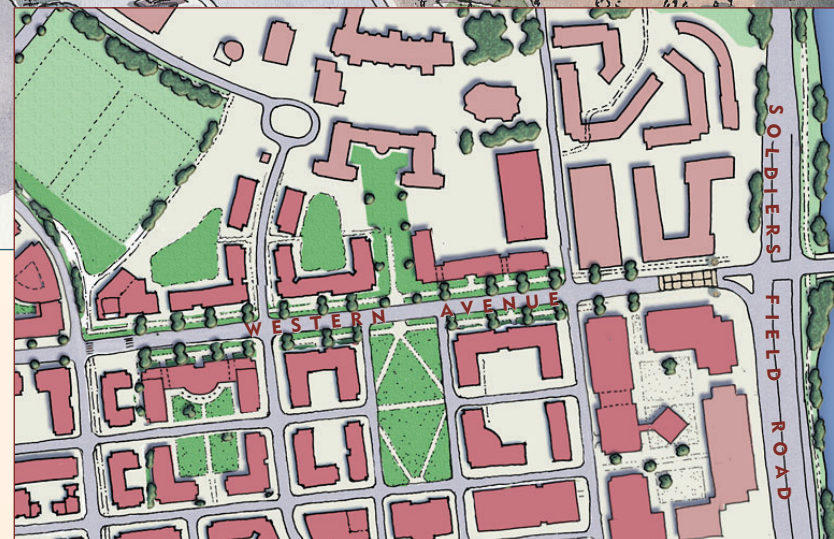
- Ensure that Harvard's North Allston campus will offer community-accessible features such as campus open spaces.
- Strengthen and expand public-private partnerships with Harvard to increase educational, economic, and housing opportunities available to Boston residents.
- Develop new programmatic links to support local schools.
- Integrate the campus in a neighborhood-wide open space system connecting the community to the Charles River.
- Strive to provide visual and physical pedestrian connections throughout the campus, with a system of pathways that offer appropriate access through the campus to the River.
- Line Western Avenue with a mix of housing for both the community and Harvard affiliates.

- Create urban design guidelines that integrate the campus into the neighborhood, with buildings facing public streets.
- Ensure that Harvard's campus embraces both sides of Western Avenue to create an eastern gateway to North Allston.
- Ensure that academic buildings of no more than five stories line Western Avenue, with higher buildings set back closer to the Mass Turnpike edge.

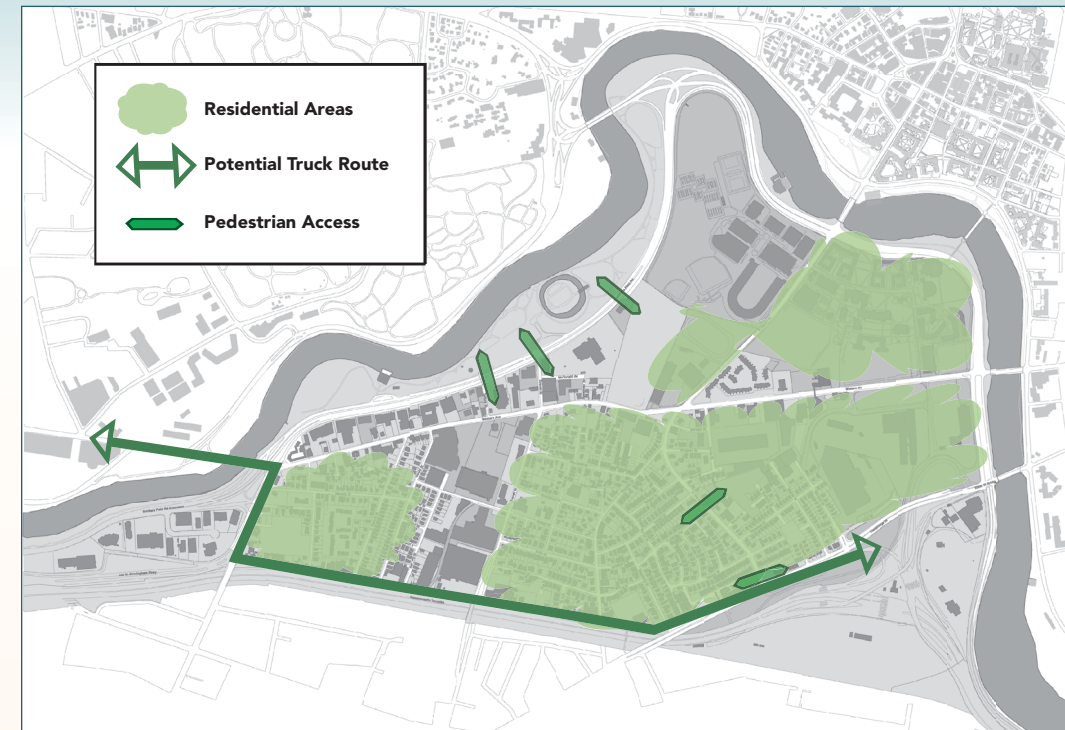
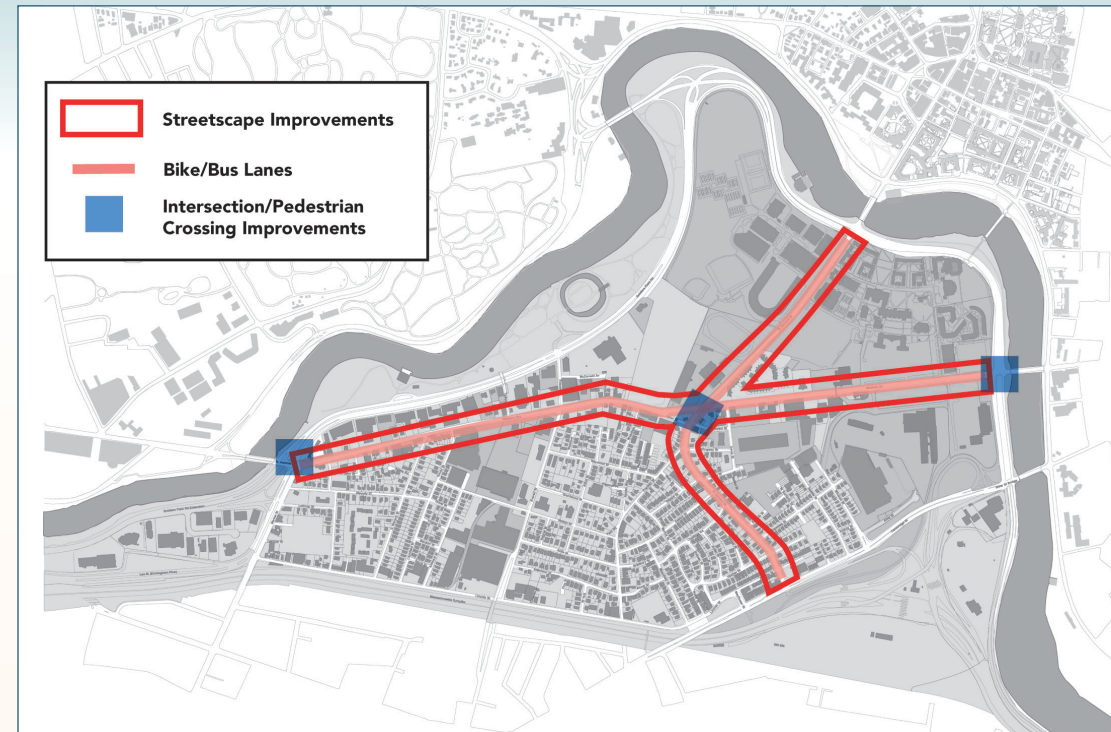


Conceptual vision for new mixed-use institutional and residential district, including Harvard's new campus.

Study area plan showing location of new mixed-use institutional and residential district.



Building footprints and streets of new mixed-use district.



## Transportation

**Background:** Transportation analyses conducted during the planning process indicated that improvements would be needed for North Allston to accommodate new housing and other development described earlier, including academic, research, and other uses. Improvements should emphasize non-vehicular access to Harvard's new facilities, such as expanded shuttle routes, new public transportation projects, bus routes, and development of a perimeter truck route.

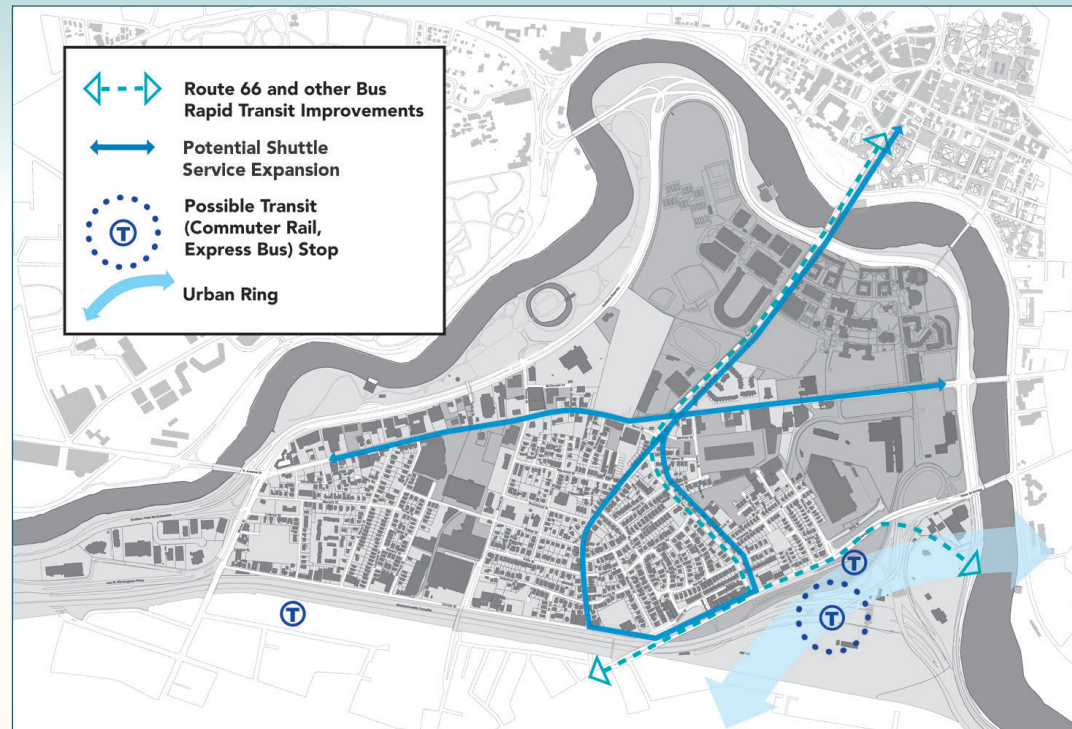
Harvard agreed during the planning study to monitor its expansion to insure that transportation improvements keep pace with growth and that new development does not diminish quality of life in the study area. The University has already established an approach to discouraging the use of single-occupancy vehicles through the application of physical resources, commuter services

programs, and an ongoing commitment to a residential academic campus. It emphasizes transit, bicycle, and pedestrian modes. According to Harvard's 2000-2001 "Town-Gown Report for Cambridge," 27% of its employees commute by driving alone while 73% use other transportation modes.

Key to monitoring the impact of new development and the effectiveness of proposed transportation improvements is the maintenance of Harvard's area-wide transportation model that tracks vehicle and pedestrian volumes, intersection performance, and transit ridership. This computer model will need to be regularly updated to reflect changes in land use and in transportation patterns. Containing assumptions and data available to the community, the model will inform the ongoing planning process and review of development proposals in the context of the Framework's principles.

### EARLY ACTION PRIORITIES

In order to accommodate new development, an area-wide transportation plan as well as plans for system improvements, mitigation of traffic and parking impacts, pedestrian safety, transportation-demand management, enhanced options for pedestrians and bicycles, and truck-traffic management are required in advance of associated development phases. Options for public transportation, such as "Fast-Track" rail connections to downtown Boston, Back Bay, and the Urban Ring, will be particularly critical to moving forward with new development.



ISSUES

- On-street parking on North Harvard Street and Western Avenue.
- Conflicts between local residential and truck and auto through-traffic.
- Congestion at major intersections.
- Possible increased congestion due to campus and related development.
- Concerns about pedestrian safety.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Emphasize pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access to Harvard's future new facilities in North Allston and avoid reliance on automobile access.
- Create neighborhood safety plan to minimize truck through-traffic within the residential neighborhoods while encouraging a safe, pedestrian-oriented environment through such interventions as neck-downs.
- Make Western Avenue and North Harvard Street more pedestrian-friendly.
- Improve public transportation access and service in the short term, with particular attention to the #66 bus route, one of the 15 busiest in the MBTA system.

- Locate and design commuter rail stations to facilitate "Fast-Track" rail connections to downtown Boston and Back Bay.
- Investigate new link to Phase II of the Urban Ring project, and a dedicated Bus Rapid Transit route between Kendall Square in Cambridge and the Longwood Medical Area in Boston as well as to downtown Boston and Back Bay.
- Study a possible intermodal transportation center at Allston Landing South, including analysis of freight and commuter rail access (study to be conducted by Executive Office of Transportation and Construction/EOTC and Harvard).
- Improve access to the Charles River for both pedestrians and cyclists.
- Locate new development to minimize neighborhood impacts.
- Improve on-street facilities for bicycle riders.
- Expand university shuttle services.
- Assign safety priorities to Western Avenue/Birmingham Parkway intersection and to Barry's Corner.
- Improve access to industrial facilities and lessen impact on residential neighborhoods.

Next Steps

The Framework projects North Allston's future into the next several decades by setting the vision, goals, and guiding principles for future development to be proposed by Harvard and other developers in North Allston. Already underway is a joint City-Harvard initiative – the North Allston Business and Workforce Support Program. In addition, landscaping improvements in the Brighton Mills Shopping Center and at Harvard's 175 North Harvard Street facilities will begin the transformation of that part of North Allston.

For the longer term, and with the Framework as context, Harvard will begin work with the City on its Institutional Master Plan. That process will also establish development rights in conformity with the Framework. As the Framework moves into implementation, the stakeholders, including the community, will participate in the review process.



*From the Guiding Principles for the Public Realm:  
"Improve access and visible connections to the river."*

*Shown: Herter Park and the Charles River,  
across Soldiers Field Road.*

## CHAPTER 4: IMPLEMENTATION

### Overview

The North Allston Strategic Framework for Planning sets forth the vision, goals, and guiding principles for future development in North Allston. It lays the foundation for continuing dialogue, collaboration, and partnership for many decades. Although much of the focus will be on the unfolding of Harvard's new campus in North Allston, the Framework is also intended to facilitate private investment. Other developers are expected to contribute and respond to North Allston's renewed vitality as a diverse and appealing urban village.

Many details of future activity in North Allston will be developed through Harvard's internal planning process and the City's Institutional Master Plan (IMP) review process. The IMP will allow the City, the University, and the North Allston community to formulate the specifics of a balanced plan that will provide community benefits, encourage non-institutional development to advance community goals, and meet the needs of the University in the 21st century.

### Community Participation

The community representatives in the Planning Group, both residents and business people, shaped the Framework to reflect the concerns and goals of the neighborhood. Representatives of the Harvard University Allston Campus Task Force, which serves as the commu-



nity review group for Harvard's current Institutional Master Plan in Allston, shared their experience and knowledge of Allston-Harvard issues as members of the Planning Group. The Framework will be presented to the Boston Redevelopment Authority Board as the guiding document expressing the community's goals.

The North Allston community will continue to play an essential role in the Framework's implementation. With the experience and background gained in working on the Framework, Planning Group members will continue to provide community input, guidance, and advice as the Framework is linked to increasingly detailed phases of planning. Harvard will share frequent updates on its planning process and decision-making, and support the ongoing, multi-stakeholder planning process.

### Maintaining Dialogue and Communication

To ensure ongoing communication and dialogue among stakeholders, the BRA and Harvard will set up information systems. In 2002, Harvard President Lawrence Summers created the Allston Initiative, a department focused specifically on the planning for Harvard's new Allston campus. In addition to the Initiative's website – [www.hpai.harvard.edu](http://www.hpai.harvard.edu) – that has already been established, other potential communications systems may include an information post at the Honan Allston Public Library, an e-mail news system, and a mailing list. In addition, the community participation process will depend on regular reports in public meetings by Harvard, the BRA, and the advisory group regarding progress on all elements of the Framework and any other developments.



*Continued involvement of the planning group will be essential to the successful implementation of the Framework.*

This chapter describes implementation in three phases. Members of the Planning Group will remain involved as the community partner throughout these implementation phases.

#### Phase I

Pre-Development from completion of the Framework to the filing of the IMP by Harvard:

This phase is likely to last two or more years. It will include planning activities and early actions as described in this document.

#### Phase II

Early Development of the filing of the IMP to the first renewal of the IMP:

This phase will include the IMP process and implementation of certain program and development activities, in terms of both campus development and community benefits. This phase is expected to last for five years or more.

#### Phase III

Later Development includes renewal of the IMP and continued physical development of the new campus and the community. Harvard's campus build-out is likely to be a 50-year endeavor.

Implementation activities fall into six categories:

- Community and City Planning
- Campus Planning and the Institutional Master Plan
- Economic Development and Workforce Development
- Housing
- Public Realm: Open Space and Urban Design
- Transportation



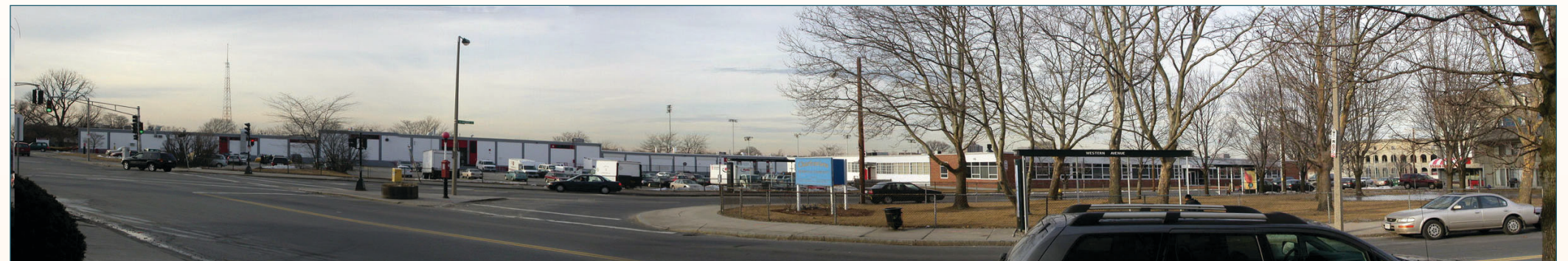


Harvard University's proposed edge improvements. (Photos courtesy Copley Wolff Landscape Architects and Harvard University)

### A Strategic Sequence of Planning, Development, and Programs

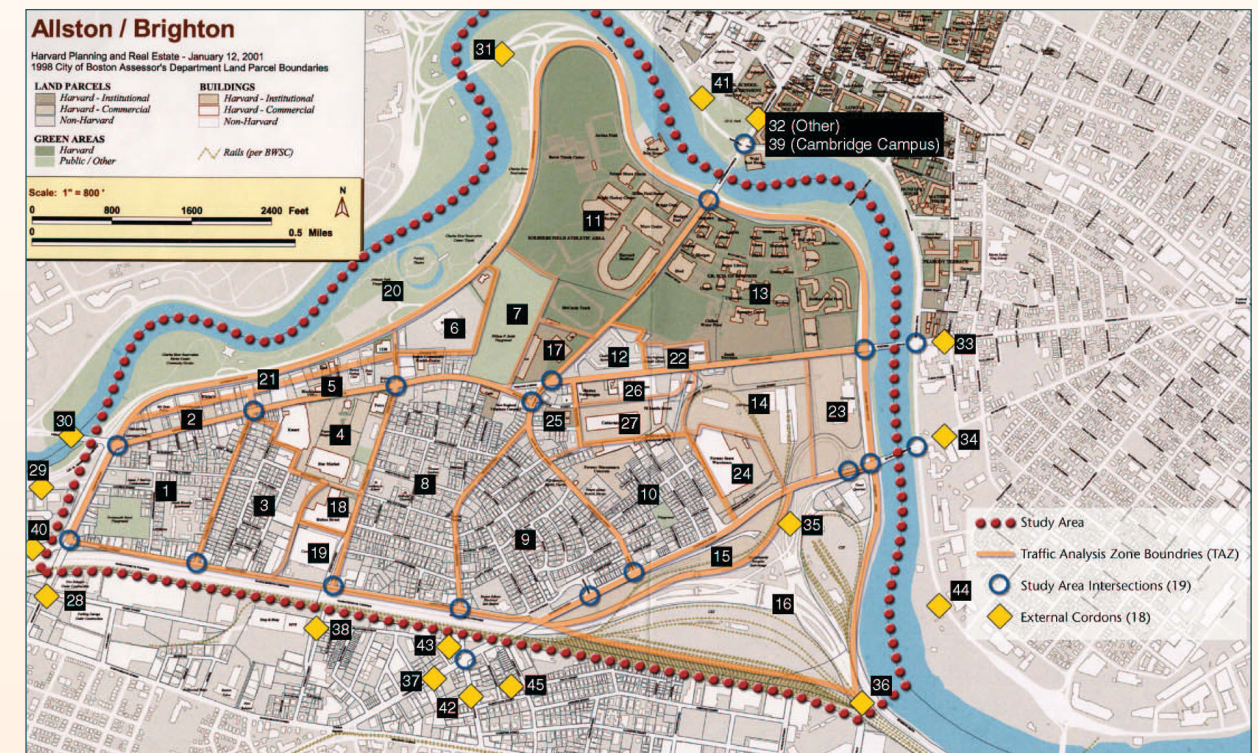
The Framework's vision and principles establish a flexible planning vehicle for meeting the University's institutional needs, preserving and enhancing North Allston's character as a neighborhood, and attracting new private investment that will complete the Framework's full vision. A strategic sequence of planning, development, and programmatic actions will function as the catalyst to further the possibilities for private investment.

- **Public realm improvements.** Streetscape and urban design improvements, as well as civic amenities such as parks and plazas, may be provided early in the implementation process. A high quality of design and amenities in the public realm will improve neighborhood life and give confidence to potential private, non-institutional property owners or developers that the value of their investments in property and improvements will be supported by the surrounding public environment.
- **Transportation and mobility planning.** To accommodate new development the following will be pursued; an area-wide transportation model; plans for system improvements; mitigation of traffic and parking impacts, neighborhood safety plans; transportation-demand management; new options for public transportation, pedestrian and bicycle access; and truck traffic management. These should be undertaken in advance of associated development.



Existing conditions at 175 North Harvard Street and 219 Western Avenue.

- **Business and economic-development.** The City and Harvard will work together to assist University tenants in North Allston through this period of transformation. Harvard will work with the City to clarify how the University's development plans can help the City attain its economic development objectives of business retention and economic expansion.
- **Workforce development.** The City and Harvard will work together to establish programs that address worker displacement, workforce development, and employment commitments before the impacts and opportunities created by new development affect existing local workers and the labor market.
- **Mixed Uses at Brighton Mills and Barry's Corner.** Strategic improvements around the Brighton Mills shopping center and mixed-use development near the intersection of North Harvard Street and Western Avenue will create critical focal points for old and new residents of the neighborhood and stimulate new private investment.



An early diagrammatic outline of the North Allston transportation model enabling detailed analysis of multiple traffic and transportation scenarios. (Image courtesy of VHB, Inc., and Harvard University)

### Pre-Development: Early-Action Steps

The initial stage of the plan's implementation begins with this document and will last until Harvard files a new Institutional Master Plan. Anticipated early action steps include the following activities:

#### COMMUNITY AND CITY PLANNING

The Planning Group will continue to meet, as needed, to provide input on the early-action projects such as the special studies of the Holton Street Corridor and Allston Landing North. The BRA and Harvard will continue to work on issues such as business and workforce support. The focus of work will change as agreements are reached on specific issues.

#### CAMPUS PLANNING AND THE INSTITUTIONAL MASTER PLAN

Harvard has been moving forward to identify how expansion in Allston can meet its institutional needs. In October 2003, Harvard President Lawrence H. Summers released a letter to the Harvard community describing the "broad outlines of a larger Allston plan." He identified a set of "programmatic planning assumptions" to guide further university thinking about the Allston campus including:

- New space for basic and applied sciences
- Possible relocation of the Graduate School of Education from Cambridge and the School of Public Health from the Longwood Medical Area

- Expansion of graduate student housing in locations that would ensure appropriate integration of the University into the community and, in the longer term, the possible creation of some faculty housing
- Improved, reliable systems of transportation
- New space for cultural activities, such as museums
- Consideration in the long term of creating new undergraduate houses in Allston close to the Charles River

Since the release of this letter, Summers convened four faculty task forces: Allston Life; Professional Schools; Science and Technology; and Undergraduate Life. Each released a report in Spring 2004; the faculty emphasized creating an Allston Campus that enhances the community as well as being fully integrated with Harvard.

In particular, the Allston Life Task Force focused on creation of a sense of place and the physical components of the new campus, examining housing, transportation, retail development, and culture (museums and the performing and visual arts). This Task Force developed four alternative frameworks for the physical organization of the campus but did not choose among them, using them only for illustrative purposes. Two of these alternatives – "Allston Square" and "Allston City" – envision greater integration of University uses and populations into the North Allston community, though the Task Force noted that a pure form of any of the four Frameworks would not be likely.

The Allston Life Task Force articulated a set of planning assumptions that reinforce – and are reinforced by – key planning principles of the Framework:

- "All transportation options should be sensitive to the environment, minimize stress on the existing transportation system and offer significant community benefits."
- "Cultural and arts development in Allston should serve the needs of both the University and the broader community."
- "Access to the Charles River and sufficient open space throughout the Allston campus will enhance the quality of campus and community life."
- The highest university housing priority is for graduate students, but housing for postdoctoral fellows, visiting scholars, and undergraduates are also possible.
- Providing affordable community housing is "a critical component of a vital and stable Allston."

In June 2004, the university announced the selection of a consultant team led by Cooper, Robertson & Partners to plan the Allston campus. This team will use the Guiding Principles of the Framework as the basis of Harvard's plan.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

The Framework’s economic development principles focus on the important balance between supporting the businesses and employees in North Allston now and ensuring that the new economic opportunities resulting from Harvard’s expansion will benefit a wide range of Boston businesses and residents. It is important to support the continued viability of North Allston businesses and associated jobs, within Allston-Brighton, if feasible, or elsewhere in the city. Businesses located on Harvard-owned land will need assistance to ensure their continued economic health during the period of change and new economic development that is anticipated in North Allston.

The North Allston Business and Workforce Support Program created by Harvard and the City will assist University tenants who relocate because of Harvard’s plans for institution development. The Support Program also includes a new North Allston Career and Business Center, at which City staff will provide business development services and career training for individuals. In addition, a “Doing Business with Harvard” web information sheet was created to make Harvard’s decentralized

procurement more understandable to local businesses. The Program will be formalized in an agreement between Harvard and the City. Other requirements for hiring Boston workers and supporting other city jobs programs and purchasing policies will be incorporated into the IMP process.

As discussed earlier, two Special Studies will be conducted during the Pre-Development Phase. The purpose of these Special Studies is to enhance the economic development value of these areas while meeting the overall quality-of-life goals and principles of the Framework.

The Holton Street Corridor Study will focus on ways to encourage neighborhood-serving businesses in a mixed-use context while continuing to provide areas for industrial and commercial activities buffered from residential areas. The Allston Landing North Study will focus more on planning for a mix of uses, predominantly institutional, that can enhance opportunities for a Harvard campus and job creation for the City of Boston while allowing residential and other uses in the Barry’s Corner area.

**Geographic Boundries of Areas for Special Study**



**Holton Street Corridor**



**Allston Landing North**





*The importance of serving a variety of housing markets is reflected in North Allston's current mix of housing types, and will shape the development of future housing.*

## HOUSING

The Framework's housing principles reflect the understanding that the housing demands of new development must be offset by the creation of housing for Harvard affiliates and community residents.

Despite record rent levels, North Allston remains one of the most "affordable" neighborhoods in Boston and houses people priced out of other neighborhoods. Harvard's expansion further into North Allston raises fears that higher rents, gentrification, and dislocation of current residents will result. The demographic and housing profile of North Allston revealed by census and economic data shows the need for an affordable housing strategy with a mix of approaches to contribute to neighborhood stability. With a high percentage of renters, sub-

stantial turnover in rental households, and average household income insufficient for the purchase of the median-price single-family home or payment of typical rent for a two-bedroom apartment, North Allston's housing market remains vulnerable to upward price pressure.

Community housing and Harvard-affiliate housing constructed to accompany the development of Harvard academic and research facilities will bring additional population and market demand to North Allston. Community housing built by Harvard will be created in tandem with institutional development, thereby mitigating the impacts of Harvard's expansion on the neighborhood's housing market.

## THE PUBLIC REALM: OPEN SPACE AND URBAN DESIGN

The Framework's public realm principles are directed toward enhancing North Allston's sense of place with streetscape improvements, new and improved open space, enhanced linkages to the Charles River, and creation of an academic precinct that welcomes its non-academic neighbors. Urban design and open-space improvements, as well as housing, will lay the groundwork for future institutional and private-sector development and investments in North Allston. The neighborhood needs more open spaces and improvements for existing parks. Attractive banners, streetscape elements, and civic spaces will enhance the environment for residents and visitors alike.



*The community will benefit from the creation of a new landscaped corridor along Everett Street to the river.*

Several elements of the public realm plan for North Allston, such as edge improvements at Brighton Mills and 175 North Harvard Street, will begin in the Pre-Development phase. As the University and its consultant team plan for the new campus, the open space and landscape plan will be guided by the Framework's emphasis on a permeable campus and will coordinate with the City's open-space goals. A banner program for Western Avenue, as well as other early streetscape benefits will contribute to the creation of North Allston's new sense of place. A study of how to create a green corridor from Everett Street to the river will be an important part of the early efforts to begin meeting community and City goals for open space.

#### TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

The Framework's principles emphasize the importance of an effective transportation system to support the flow of people and goods that will accompany new development in North Allston, while managing traffic and protecting neighborhoods. The transportation system will integrate pedestrian and streetscape improvements or project-specific intersection improvements with such essential components as a peripheral truck route, bike and bus lanes on the main arteries, intersection improvements at North Harvard Street and Western Avenue, expanded transit services, and improved connections to regional road networks.

Harvard has created an initial area-wide transportation model that can be used to evaluate both the immediate and cumulative impacts of specific development proposals. Future developers will be asked to contribute to the updating of this computer model and will work

with the Boston Transportation Department to finalize and update its assumptions and data. These developers will be encouraged to use the model at their own cost in regulatory submissions to City agencies and MEPA or NEPA review of large projects.

Other Pre-Development transportation planning will focus on enhancing transit through service improvements on existing bus routes; improving the safety and amenity of the pedestrian experience; developing urban design guidelines for the streetscape; identification of a peripheral truck route and other neighborhood-protection plan elements; development of a long-term parking plan; and integration of transportation plans with other City transportation initiatives, such as parking management programs. Harvard will study the possibility of opening its shuttles to neighborhood residents.

**ALLSTON LANDING SOUTH:  
A STUDY OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL IMPACT**

*A contract for a study of the transportation issues associated with Allston Landing South is expected to be awarded in 2005 by the State Executive Office of Transportation and Construction (EOTC) under an agreement between EOTC and Harvard, which has purchased Allston landing South. The study will “examine the feasibility, costs, benefits and relationship of certain transportation functions (present, new or potential) associated with the Allston Landing South Property.” Among these functions are:*

- Landside freight rail access to the Port of Boston
- A commuter rail station at Allston Landing South
- Urban Ring service
- Reconfiguration of the Massachusetts Turnpike at Allston
- Layover and lay-up space for the MBTA commuter rail system
- Continued rail freight service and distribution in the metropolitan area
- Connections to the local street system
- “Fast Track” rapid rail connections to downtown Boston and Back Bay

*The study will analyze alternative transportation scenarios and their respective costs and benefits. The purpose of the study is to “assist the stakeholders in making informed decisions that maximize transportation benefits to the Commonwealth and to the City.”*



*Allston Landing South is the subject of a major transportation impact study sponsored by the State Executive Office of Transportation and Construction and expected to begin in 2005.*

**The Early Development Phase:  
The Institutional Master Plan and Development Begins**

COMMUNITY AND CITY PLANNING

The Institutional Master Plan (IMP) that the University renewed with the City in 2002 does not have zoning permission for institutional uses outside the boundaries of the current Allston campus. In order for Harvard to build a new campus, the University will need to submit a new IMP containing its proposal. This new IMP will be the vehicle for creating the detailed plan of Harvard development in Allston, guided by the planning principles (pages 16-20) and the Framework.

In developing the IMP, the City will ensure continuity between the work of the Planning Group and the work of the Task Force. The latter will make advisory recommendations to the BRA on the IMP, and members will be involved in project review to ensure that projects are consistent with the IMP. The public at large will also have opportunities to comment throughout both the IMP and the project review processes.

### CAMPUS PLANNING AND THE INSTITUTIONAL MASTER PLAN PROCESS

IMP Review is part of the City of Boston's development review process under Article 80 of the Boston Zoning Code. The purpose of development review is to examine the impact of development projects on surrounding areas and on the City as a whole. IMP Review was established because institutions like universities and hospitals regularly wish to renovate and expand their physical facilities to meet new needs. An institution is required to update its master plan on a regular basis and to amend it whenever a project is added or changed over a minimum threshold.

An IMP is a comprehensive development plan that describes an institution's existing facilities, long-range planning goals, and long-range development program. It thereby gives the community and the BRA a context within which to evaluate all of the institution's proposed projects and their overall effect on the neighborhood. Once approved, an IMP provides overlay zoning for future institutional development as described in the plan. The projects described in the IMP can be built, subject to review of specific proposals under Large or Small Project



*Some recent developments in North Allston, including the Honan Allston Public Library, have included landscaping along the street edge – a model for much of North Allston's future public realm.*

Review (or Article 80) in which design and direct project impacts are examined. Review can encompass a variety of issues, including design, historic preservation, traffic and parking, environmental impacts such as shadows and noise, impacts on infrastructure systems such as water and sewer, and a project's contribution to cumulative changes in the character of a district or neighborhood.

The Mayor's Green Building Task Force recommended in 2004 that the City require LEED certifiability for Article 80 (development review) projects, as one of its ten major recommendations of ways the City can cause and encourage green building development in Boston. The City and

BRA are currently studying how this requirement may be implemented through the Article 80 process and in other City processes. The City fully supports the goals of green building and strongly encourages all development to maximize the use of sustainable materials, systems and practices. It is anticipated that Harvard University's program for "Greening the Crimson" will ensure that its new development in North Allston will incorporate green building practices and set high standards for sustainable development. (Note that LEED references Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, a green building rating system currently used as a national standard, developed by the U. S. Green Building Council.)

Since 1989 Harvard has filed IMPs for the existing Allston campus which includes the Harvard Business School, Harvard College's athletic facilities, and University administrative and support facilities. The 1997 IMP included plans for the graduate student housing that opened in 2003 at One Western Avenue, as well as several projects at the Business School. Two existing facilities, 1230 Soldiers Field Road and 25 Travis Street, were added via an amendment to the IMP in 2002. A five-year renewal took place later in 2002, when Harvard renewed the plan without proposing further changes. If projects described in the plan are to proceed, Harvard's 2002 IMP must be renewed no later than 2007.

The Institutional Master Plan for the expanded Harvard campus in Allston will be unprecedented in scope and complexity and will reflect the University's more detailed understanding of how the new Allston Campus can help it meet future needs and challenges as articulated by the Framework, as well as by the University's own planning goals.

#### STEPS IN THE IMP REVIEW PROCESS

The IMP Review process includes these steps:

- Harvard files an Institutional Master Plan Notification Form with the BRA that will include a summary of the information to be presented in the IMP.
- Public comment period for 30 days.
- The BRA issues a Scoping Determination within 45 days. The Scoping Determination is based on the BRA's evaluation of the IMPNF and the public comments received. It sets forth the information that must be presented within the plan under these categories:
  - Mission and Objectives of the Institution
  - Existing Property and Uses
  - Needs of the Institution, including facilities for academic uses, service, research, offices, housing, patient care, public assembly and parking, as well as a detailed student housing plan
  - Proposed Future Projects
  - Transportation and Parking Management and Mitigation Plan
  - Pedestrian Circulation Guidelines and Objectives
  - Urban Design Guidelines and Objectives
  - Job Training Analysis
  - Community Benefits Plan
  - Workforce Development Analysis
  - Green Building/Sustainable Development Approach
  - Additional Elements – other requirements set by the BRA.
- Harvard will revise its IMP based on the requirements of the Scoping Determination
- Public comment period for 60 days
- Adequacy Determination
  - BRA staff evaluates the plan, taking into account the public comments.
  - The Harvard University Allston Campus Task Force, created for community review of the IMP, makes advisory recommendations to the BRA.
  - A public hearing on the IMP is held before the BRA Board.
  - The hearing and a vote on the adequacy of the IMP occurs within 90 days or more of filing of the IMP.
- The BRA petitions the Zoning Commission for approval of the IMP.
- The Zoning Commission publishes a notice of hearing at least 20 days before the public hearing.
- The Zoning Commission holds the hearing and votes on the IMP.
- If approved by the Zoning Commission, the IMP goes to the mayor for final approval.



The IMP review process will be guided by the Framework's goals and principles to create a permeable and welcoming campus characterized by design quality excellence and integrated with the neighborhood through the planning and design of entrances, pathways, view corridors, open spaces, amenities and building locations. The IMP process also includes specific agreements on community benefits and mitigation of impacts.

Through the IMP, regulatory and transitional processes will be established to make possible the emergence of Harvard's new Allston campus. These will include revision of current zoning to permit creation of a new institutional precinct that will also include non-academic uses, and development of regulatory elements that permit the coexistence of institutional and non-institutional uses – existing, interim and future.

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

In addition to a continuation of the Business and Workforce Support Program, the Early Development phase will see the creation of specific plans for retail development in order to enhance North Allston's sense of place and serve both the community and the emerging campus population. As campus development proceeds, Harvard

and other employers support the creation of new job opportunities for Boston residents.

The results of the Holton Street Corridor and Allston Landing North special studies will serve as the foundation for the IMP treatment of these areas. After the approval of the IMP, new or expanded retail and other commercial uses are expected to be part of the early mix of development either at Barry's Corner or Brighton Mills.

#### HOUSING

All of the stakeholders have recognized the value and importance of creating housing early in the implementation of the Framework. Creation of both University and community housing is an essential element in the vision for a shared neighborhood and permeable academic community. Harvard will not directly dislocate any current residents of North Allston through its expansion and development activities. As noted earlier, community housing built by Harvard will be created in tandem with institutional development. New residences will help create a mixed-use environment at Brighton Mills, define the transition from academic to community areas, and provide the increased market demand needed for expansion of retail shops at Barry's Corner.



Major current uses on Allston Landing North include trucking facilities, shown to the left of Western Avenue.

The new housing units will include a mixture of types for both ownership and rental, with a goal of 20% affordable to households at 80% of the Boston median income or below and a substantial proportion affordable to middle-income households (up to 120% of median income).

It is anticipated that most of the Harvard-affiliate housing to be created in North Allston will satisfy the demand created by students, faculty, and staff associated with the new campus. As noted earlier, the University's policy is to house a greater percentage of graduate students and their families. In 2001 it established a 10-year goal to house 50% of its graduate students. Currently housing 40%, the University will achieve its goal by building in its host communities, including North Allston.

A goal of the Early Development phase is the creation of 200-400 units of community housing, including affordable housing, in tandem with the development of housing for Harvard affiliates. Charlesview Apartments will continue as an affordable development, either in the current location or elsewhere in North Allston.

#### PUBLIC REALM

During the IMP Review process, open-space concerns will focus on guaranteeing the permeability of the Harvard campus through a network of open spaces accessible to the community. The “greening” of the Everett Street corridor and close coordination with the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) on increasing access to the river will be another aspect of Early Development planning. All developers active in North Allston will be expected to support the Boston Parks and Recreation Department and the DCR as the primary suppliers of open space in the neighborhood.

New open spaces serving neighborhood residents will enhance the relationship between the North Allston residential community and the University. As described on page 10, Harvard will work with the City and community, in the context of campus master planning and the IMP, to identify future campus and neighborhood open space opportunities. Harvard will enhance its current partnership with the City. Today, it maintains the Little League diamonds at Smith Field; its contribution will be expanded to weekly rubbish removal.

Streetscape improvements will accompany new development. During the IMP Review process, the BRA and Harvard, with input from the Task Force, will develop design guidelines consistent with the Framework’s vision and principles to harmonize urban design in the public realm with specific projects. Early design and implementation of improvements in the public realm along Western Avenue and North Harvard Street will help structure the

character of future development. Improvements at Brighton Mills and Western Avenue will set the stage for the later transformation of Western Avenue into a pedestrian-friendly, neighborhood Main Street. Streetscape and sidewalk improvements along the length of Western Avenue will include street trees, sidewalk widening, neck-downs at intersections, pedestrian crossing treatments, and strategies to define the street edge.

#### TRANSPORTATION

As the development process advances, implementation of the transportation planning will begin with improvements in pedestrian and bicycle routes, transit service, the neighborhood safety plan, and parking. The transportation model will be updated regularly to assure its usefulness as projects move forward. It is possible that many of the initial planning decisions that emerge as a result of the EOTC’s Allston Landing Study will require more intensive planning and design, while others can be implemented right away.



*Assistance to existing businesses within North Allston will constitute an important aspect of the implementation plan.*



*Cabot, Cabot and Forbes demonstration noise-reduction wall is an example of private investment in North Allston's public amenities.*

## Later Development: University Development and New Private Development

### COMMUNITY AND CITY PLANNING

The North Allston community and the City will continue to partner with Harvard and other developers as the physical development of North Allston unfolds. Review of specific projects will focus on the details of how each fits into its immediate surroundings as well as how it exemplifies the Framework's Guiding Principles. Harvard will be required to regularly update its IMP, which will give the community and the City the opportunity to evaluate cumulative impacts, the degree to which completed planning and development have fulfilled the Framework's goals, and whether adjustments are necessary.

### CAMPUS PLANNING AND THE INSTITUTIONAL MASTER PLAN

Renewal and updating of the IMP process will give the University the same opportunity to evaluate new development and its success in meeting community, City, and University goals.

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

As Harvard academic programs become part of the expanded Allston campus and the life of North Allston, the City and Harvard will explore opportunities for potential business partnership and business-incubation opportunities compatible with Harvard research activities in such areas as life sciences. Through workforce development programs that will be part of the IMP process, Boston residents will have access to jobs and career advancement opportunities at Harvard and with emerging businesses in the area.

### HOUSING

The Framework envisions the eventual creation of up to 2,800 housing units in North Allston, including housing for Harvard affiliates, Harvard-supported community housing, and privately-developed housing. Housing types and costs will be appropriate for a range of different households and income groups.

### THE PUBLIC REALM: OPEN SPACE AND URBAN DESIGN

Implementation of the new campus plan and the Everett Street greening study will bring new open spaces to North Allston. Urban design improvements will be expected along Everett Street, Holton Street, Franklin Street, and Lincoln Street. Private developers in addition to Harvard will help fund these improvements, following the Cabot, Cabot and Forbes demonstration project along the Massachusetts Turnpike. A Harvard museum complex and/or arts center could provide the opportunity for a signature public space.

### TRANSPORTATION

Regular updating of the transportation computer model, including contributions from non-Harvard developers, will be an ongoing task. Major investments in transportation infrastructure will occur in the later phases of development.

## Summary Timeline

The accompanying table sets forth the overall implementation plan for North Allston's future. It captures the priorities set forth during the planning process and provides a "check list" for the Plan's roll-out.

	PRE-DEVELOPMENT	EARLY DEVELOPMENT	LATER DEVELOPMENT
<b>Community/ City Planning</b>	Planning group continues providing input on early-action projects, special study areas, and other pre-development action items	City and citizen project review groups participate as the IMP and specific projects advance Task Force identified for IMP Task Force makes advisory recommendations to the BRA on the IMP Public comment opportunities throughout the IMP process	City and citizen project review groups participate as specific projects are advanced
<b>Campus Planning and Institutional Master Plan</b>	Harvard planning for campus development in North Allston, including IMP preparation	Detailed planning for later phases of campus development Harvard files and City approves IMP Implementation of the IMP/Article 80 review process	Renewal of the IMP with new or expanded areas
<b>Economic Development</b>	BRA will continue to address industrial business needs proactively Special studies on the Holton Street Corridor and Allston Landing North: analysis and study of Harvard and non-Harvard owned sites to support mixed-use zones focused on economic development Pre-development economic benefits	Continue to provide support to commercial and industrial businesses based on needs assessment Implement findings regarding special study areas Encourage appropriate new or expanded retail and commercial business opportunities in emerging mixed-use, institutional or residential areas	Continue support to industrial and commercial businesses in area Foster additional economic development with Harvard Identify opportunities for potential business partnerships and business-incubation opportunities compatible with emerging Harvard campus life (life sciences, cultural, etc.)
<b>Workforce Development</b>	Pre-development workforce benefits Planning for workforce development	As the new campus emerges, Harvard/employers support creating jobs and career-advancement opportunities for Boston residents Other workforce initiatives to be determined through IMP process and other Large Project Reviews	Implementation of programs agreed to in IMP process including access to jobs for Boston residents and career advancement opportunities
<b>Housing</b>	Planning for Harvard-affiliate and community housing	Development of affiliate housing in tandem with expansion of academic/institutional development Development of community housing in tandem with academic/affiliate housing development, with the goal of approximately 200-400 units, including affordable housing Planning for the future of Charlesview	Up to 2,800 units of new housing including Harvard-affiliate housing, Harvard-supported community housing, and non-institutional private development as part of mixed use Brighton Mills redevelopment
<b>Public Realm, Open Space, and Urban Design</b>	Planning for new campus open space and landscape plan with City open space plan and goals Pre-development public realm benefits Everett Street corridor greening study	Streetscape improvements begin in conjunction with development projects Barry's Corner improvements and public space Creation of new neighborhood open space in conjunction with institutional or private development projects	North Allston open space plan implemented through Harvard and other developers
<b>Transportation</b>	Harvard transportation model for pre-development planning with appropriate city agencies EOTC's Allston Landing Multimodal Transportation Study Coordinate with other City plans, such as Access Boston Study opening H.U. shuttles to neighborhood residents	As institutional and other private development emerges: transportation and parking improvements for pedestrians, bikes, vehicles Regular updating of the traffic model, including contributions from non-institutional developers	Implementation of appropriate transportation infrastructure Regular updating of the traffic model, including contributions from non-institutional developers





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# NORTH ALLSTON

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