

June 1, 2017

LaGrange Street – Landscape Narrative

One of the outstanding features of the proposed building, situated at the edge of Boston's historic Chinatown District, is its transit-oriented approach to site development. Supported by mass transit station adjacencies, the site celebrates the pedestrian experience within the city's dense urban core.

The project proposes to extend the LaGrange streetscape improvements previously established by the site's neighbor, The Kensington. New, ADA-compliant sidewalks will run the entire length of LaGrange street, providing an accessible, pedestrian connection between Tremont Street and Chinatown. Specialty pavers will edge the sidewalk and wrap the front edges of the building, introducing a higher grade of materials at residential and retail entries, reinforcing an alternate program from the rest of LaGrange Street.

The building's façade wraps the corner of LaGrange and opens onto Tamworth in the effort to galvanize the reprogramming of the existing service alley into a pedestrian-only zone. The project proposes to tabletop the entirety of Tamworth Street in order to create a continuous, flush walking surface, further emphasizing the alley's pedestrian program. Additionally, the tabletop approach introduces an accessible route along Tamworth, a component that the street currently lacks.

Hefty, moveable planters will serve to restrict vehicular access on both ends of the alley, allowing Tamworth to establish a pedestrian-only thoroughway bolstered with pop-up café areas and public seating. The building will introduce a retail amenity along Tamworth Street, thus providing retail infrastructure that will further engage outdoor activation. Moveable planters, benches, and tables support a flexible layout that can easily adjust to fit changing programmatic needs. The moveable planters will be coupled with mountable curbs at each end of Tamworth, providing not only a visual and physical indication of the alley's new program, but will also ensure pedestrian safety through the restriction of vehicle access.

In redefining the alley as a pedestrian street, it is necessary to establish a trash collection zone and pick-up schedule for all of the users of Tamworth, allowing the alley to ensure service vehicle access only during off-peak hours.

Tamworth Street is currently characterized by inadequate lighting and non-compliant sidewalks, making the alley read as an uninviting, vehicular-dominated space. In this regard, one of the most critical components of Tamworth's improvement is the introduction of effective, consistent lighting. By embracing site lighting as a placemaking element, the design team hopes to foster a sense of security and discovery along Tamworth. The rhythm of vertical lighting along the alley serves to reinforce through-movement, while shadowcasters will project light patterns onto the paving, bringing a playful element to Tamworth's new program.

The project's goal of instituting an accessible, pedestrian-only space with pop-up programming, retail support, and placemaking lighting within a high-density, underutilized area is much-needed approach to urban core development; elevating the pedestrian as the key design focus is critical to effectively engage with both the community and existing neighborhood at large.