



South Boston Edison Power Plant

Planning Process Report

Edison Power Plant Workshop Outcomes

Over the next decade the Edison Power Plant site will undergo a transformation from an industrial relic that once provided energy and power for a growing city into a new, mixed-use development that will serve as a new source of vibrancy and enhance the South Boston community. The development of the 15-acre property will celebrate the site's history with the adaptive reuse of the 1903 Edison Turbine Hall and provide opportunities for new arts, civic and cultural uses, while creating new opportunities for jobs, housing, and businesses that can function with the adjacent port related uses along the Reserved Channel. After generations of the property being walled off from the community, new street networks and public realm activation will knit the district into the existing fabric of South Boston and allow for expanded access to the waterfront and create new, active open spaces.

Purpose and Process

In 2016 Exelon Corporation sold the decommissioned Edison Power Plant property, which dates back to 1898, to a joint venture of Redgate and Hilco Redevelopment Partners who intend on re-purposing the site for an expansive new mixed-use development project. Due to the prominence of the Edison Power Plant property in South Boston and the opportunities for its redevelopment to enhance the community, the Boston Planning & Development Agency (BPDA) initiated a public engagement process in early 2017 to better understand the priorities and aspirations of the neighborhood and affected stakeholders in advance of the City's Article 80 development review process. As part of the engagement process the BPDA hosted an open house event and walking tours of the Edison Turbine Hall to familiarize the community with the project site and its history, as well as review the regulatory and planning context related to the property. Two community workshops were also held in February through which the following Redevelopment Vision and Redevelopment Concepts were developed based upon resident and stakeholder comment and discussion. The Redevelopment Vision and Concepts are intended to assist in guiding the development plan for the site and future character of the Edison Power Plant redevelopment project.

Planning Area Context

The Edison Power Plant property is surrounded by a dynamic mix of residential, commercial and industrial uses, including the Massachusetts Port Authority's (Massport) Conley Terminal. Land use adjacent to the Reserved Channel is primarily governed by the state's Public Tidelands Act, Chapter 91, Designated Port Area standards, and the City's Maritime Economy Reserve zoning, which focus on water dependent

Figure 1. Opposite: Rendering of Massport's Conley Terminal improvements with Edison Power Plant Site Boundary in red.

Image from Massachusetts Port Authority

Figure 2. Opposite Left: Image of existing street condition at the Edison Power Plant Site.

*Opposite Right: Context map
Images from Developer Team and Planning Staff*



and marine industrial uses. Past zoning and planning initiatives that relate to the area include the 1999 Seaport Public Realm Plan, which envisioned 1st Street as more residential in scale and use, and the 2011 East & West First Street Planning and Rezoning effort (Article 68), which focused on use and dimensional standards to facilitate the development of a mixed-use district that reflects the changes in the community and protects both growing residential uses and existing commercial and industrial areas. Massport's adjacent Conley Terminal continues to function as the region's primary container and shipping terminal and is currently expanding its capacity to meet the needs of a growing port. As part of the expansion project Massport is also advancing efforts to mitigate port related impacts on the community, including the construction of the Thomas J. Butler Freight Corridor and Memorial Park, which will remove truck traffic from East 1st Street, and create new community open space that will function as a significant noise and visual buffer for adjacent residents.

Redevelopment Vision

Community

New development will involve and engage the South Boston community with programming and civic, cultural and retail uses that attract broad populations and are multi-generational in nature. Design and materials of new buildings and the public realm will be distinct and eye-catching yet respectful and contextual of the existing South Boston neighborhood. The development site plan and new uses anticipated for the property will serve community needs for gathering space, civic and cultural facilities, as well as new food and retail options.

Arts and Industry

The development will function as an “Arts and Industry” themed district with Edison Turbine Hall as the heart and soul of the site with its industrial and historic character serving as an aesthetic that defines the look and feel of new development. Art, cultural and civic uses will be integrated throughout the development with a focus on art that engages the public and utilizes innovative materials. Historic industrial and port-related attributes should be preserved with old industrial equipment, interpretive exhibits and signage that represents the history and role of energy production as a development theme.

Mix of Uses

A mixed-use development program will serve as a destination that attracts a variety of communities and demographics. Active ground floor uses throughout the development will draw people in, with more active use along Summer Street, and quieter uses along East 1st Street where there are existing residential homes. New residential populations will activate the district, while retail will serve community needs, and support and complement local businesses. New uses will be located and organized to function with adjacent port activity and ensure the continued operation of an active and thriving Conley Terminal.

Waterfront and Open Space

New waterfront open space will accommodate a number of uses and be designed, along with streets and sidewalks, to have a public rather than private character. The waterfront open space will provide opportunities for active recreation, retail and civic uses, as well as in-water and watershed uses that do not conflict with port related activities in the Reserved Channel. New open space will

Figure 3. Opposite: Images of Open House graphics, the walking tour, and the February workshop activity where community members discussed what they would like to see at the site

Images from Planning Staff



connect with existing Harborwalk and parks along East 1st Street, and create views corridors through the site to establish visual connections to the water from East 1st and M Streets.

Design and Public Realm

Building, roadway, sidewalk and open space design will be legible and welcoming to the public and create a sense of discovery and curiosity that engages and draws people into the site. The design and development program will take cues from the site's former industrial uses and scale, and establish a new district within the neighborhood with a distinct character and sense of place.

Connections and Access

Traffic congestion and parking needs have long been neighborhood concerns that new development should not exacerbate, and where possible, improve access to transit, mobility conditions, and multi-modal infrastructure.

Redevelopment Concepts

Placemaking, Preservation and Programming:

- Edison Turbine Hall restored for adaptive reuse and functioning as a focal point of the site's redevelopment. The structure's size and scale, extending from the Reserved Channel to East 1st Street, allows for a number of potential uses. The building design should be public in nature, visible from surrounding streets with porosity and connectivity to the surrounding public ways, sidewalks and Harborwalk.
- Flexible facilities and accommodations for a variety of arts and cultural uses, including indoor and outdoor space for art galleries and exhibits, areas for rehearsal and fabrication, and an amphitheater for theater performances and concerts. Partnerships with other arts organizations and universities in the city can also assist in programming and administering arts and cultural space. Additional facilities to support the arts and artists should be considered, such as artist live work space and an artist in residency program.
- Makerspaces for fabrication or advanced manufacturing that celebrate the industrial nature of the site, continue the tradition of jobs on the property, support small, industry skill based jobs, and provide job training.
- The integration of civic uses into the project, such as community center that can function as a venue for weddings and baby showers, community meetings and other events. Additional classroom space could also be provided for educational, tutoring, and mentoring programs.
- A variety of retail and commercial uses that can address the needs of the South Boston community and function to draw broad populations to the site. The Edison Turbine Hall is envisioned as an opportune location for an open market food hall with seating and public amenities that spill into the public realm. Potential businesses that could thrive include a bakery, coffee shop, small-scale restaurants, local public vendors, and a deli/butcher, with an interest towards "mom-and-pop" scale stores as opposed to larger retail chains. Other retail and commercial interests include shoes and clothing, a grocery store, book stores, theater, housewares, antiques and a microbrewery.
- Include a diverse mix of uses such as a boutique hotel that can draw visitors into the area and support local businesses. To ensure the district is active, vibrant, and diverse new residential units should be part of the development program that accommodates mixed incomes and encourages home ownership.



Figure 4. Above: Precedent images of programming & placemaking, centered around an arts & industrial character

Images from February Workshop Developer Team Presentation

Figure 5. Opposite: Conceptual diagram of potential, distinct placemaking & programmatic zones - conceptual graphic developed through community workshop discussions and does not illustrate the final design

Illustrative Graphic Summarizing Community Dialogue Input - Placemaking

1

Turbine Hall Marketplace

Arts & Industrial Focal Point

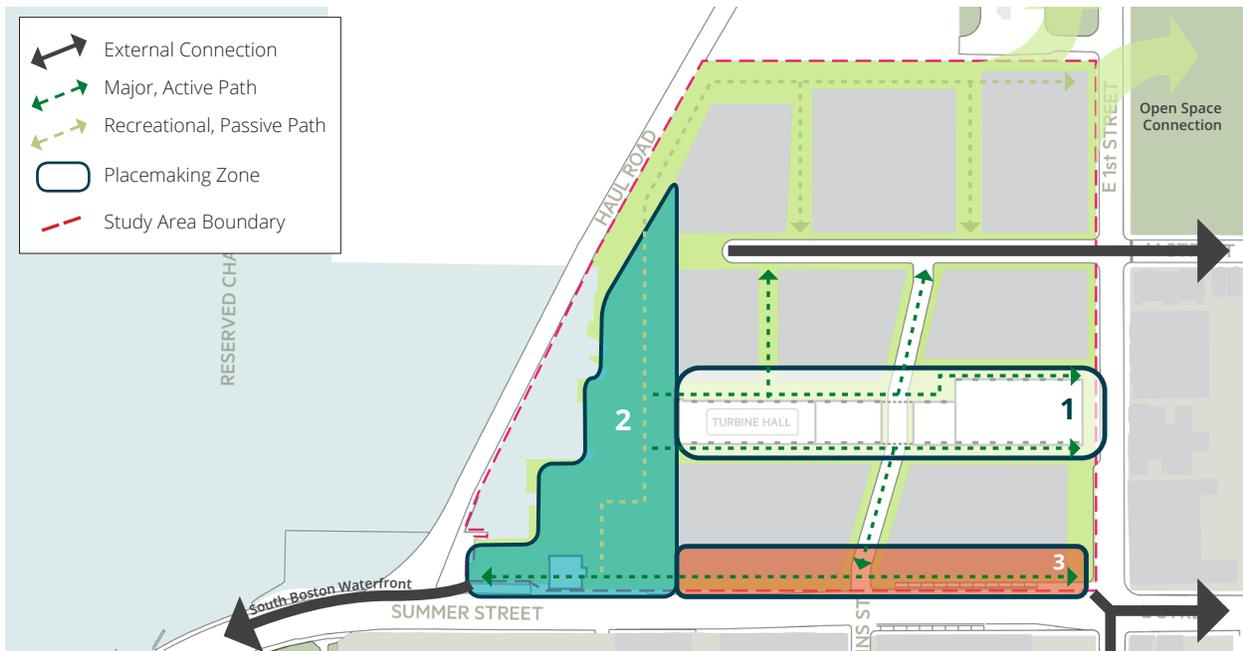
- Pop-up retail and art exhibits
- Small-scale 21st century industrial (microbrewery, maker-space)
- Theater
- Open seating and dining areas
- Specialty Food (butcher, bakery)

2

Waterfront Activation Zone

Complementary Outdoor Arts

- Outdoor market
- Outdoor gallery and sculpture
- Outdoor theater, open seating
- Active and passive recreation



3

Summer St Commercial Row

Active Retail on Neighborhood Edge

- Grocery store
- Retail complementing arts & industrial character

Site-wide

Mixed-use

- Residential, office, active ground floors
- Boutique hotel

With housing affordability an issue throughout Boston, and particularly acute in South Boston, the redevelopment should respond to the city's Inclusionary Development Policy, and support of workforce and senior housing.

- The "Arts and Industrial" theme should relate to the design and architectural vernacular of new development through maintaining existing architectural and industrial elements and new buildings that are contextual to the surrounding community with more brick rather than the glass office buildings that define the South Boston Waterfront. Creative exterior lighting elements can also enhance the new and historic architectural elements on the site.

Neighborhood Character and Open Space:

- Reimagine the Summer Street corridor to create a sense of arrival and function as a “Welcome to South Boston” experience. The East 1st and Summer Streets intersection should serve as a primary gateway to the site with landscaping and welcoming and functional wayfinding signage. Also improve the pedestrian experience and sidewalk width along the north side of East 1st Street with a broader sidewalk that may extend into and through Turbine Hall, and better connect the site to the open space resources along East 1st and M Streets, including the adjacent Butler Memorial Park.
- Improve the condition and character of Summer Street and East 1st Street that currently define the western and southern limits of the site. Removal of the oppressive building massing and walls along these public ways, with more generous sidewalks, landscaping, benches, lighting and building setbacks to make more pedestrian friendly and transition into the site. New roads and pedestrian points of entry into the property should function to create porosity and extend view corridors from the community and through the site to the waterfront.
- A human scale built environment at the ground and street level that provides visual variety and is pedestrian friendly. Building massing should vary in height throughout the site and have an open character with light and air between building elements to prevent creating a cavernous or canyon like street condition. New buildings should respect and frame Edison Turbine Hall and not overwhelm the historic structure. Building density should step up from the surrounding streets and existing community's height datum with new, higher building elements situated where there are existing tall structures on site and not exceed those heights. Greater density may also be more appropriate away from the community and toward the adjacent Conley Terminal and MBTA properties, while limiting shadows that discourages use of adjacent open space resources.
- Utilize building massing along the north and east side of the property as a buffer between site and Massport's Butler Freight Corridor and Conley Terminal. Other design, massing, noise mitigation and site elevation measures should also be considered to visually buffer the site from the freight corridor.
- New open space and parks that function to create a network through the property to the adjacent Butler Memorial Park and M Street, and establish a signature park along the site's waterfront that serves as a destination for the community. The waterfront park should have Harborwalk that integrates into



Figure 6. Above: Precedent images of neighborhood character and public realm for the interior of the site, centered around the historical character of Turbine Hall

Images from February Workshop Developer Team Presentation



Figure 7. Above: Precedent images of neighborhood character and open space for the waterfront plaza.

Left, Right Images from February Workshop Developer Team Presentation. Center Image: Brooklyn Bridge Park, Julienne Schaer.

pathways and greenspace around Turbine Hall as well as unifying elements and connections to Summer Street and the internal street and pedestrian network. A number of active and passive uses are desired for the waterfront open space with amenities such as a water taxi dock, kayak rentals, accommodations for fishing, as well as benches, lighting and mix of surface materials and vegetation. There should be attention on ensuring the waterfront open space is active year-round with street performances, summer movies, games and possibly a winter garden. Uses and activities along the waterfront and areas adjacent to Massport and MBTA property must be able to function with port, bus and trucking related activity.

- Activation and programming precedents to reference include the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center's Lawn on D; the City of Chelsea's PORT waterfront park; Downtown's Boston Public Market and South End's SOWA market; and, New York City's High Line and Seattle's Pike Place market.
- Emphasis on "greening" the site with street and shade trees, vegetation and landscaping that soften the built and industrial scale elements and encourage a natural flow of foot traffic through the site. Expansive walking paths, sidewalks and open space areas should be designed to provide cues and read as a destination for public use and interaction that is fully integrated with private uses.
- Incorporate climate-smart design including landscaping and structural elements to ensure resiliency against rising seas and storm surge, increased temperatures, and higher precipitation levels.
- Advance sustainable design and green building principles. As the site has historically served as an energy production facility, new development provides an opportunity to exemplify how energy production has evolved through the integration of renewable energy technologies and community energy solutions.

Mobility & Access:

- MBTA bus service to the City Point and L Street Corridor of South Boston is currently not meeting community transit demands. Given the size and mix of uses anticipated with the new development, greater transit service and capacity needs to be advocated for and accommodated with space for bus stops and possibly a transit center, or hub on the adjacent MBTA property. Ideas also include having an express No. 7 bus to connect quickly to the city at peak commuting hours.
- Advance alternative means of transportation that work for all age groups and demographics, and reduce dependence on cars, while recognizing that cars will continue to have an important role as a mobility option. The establishment of a mobility hub that brings together transit, bike and car-share resources along with water transportation would be a great resource for the development and community. Accommodations should be made on the property for programs and infrastructure for car and bike share, electric vehicles, water transportation and pedestrian wayfinding and amenities. Becoming an added “Southie Shuttle” stop connecting the development site to the South Boston Waterfront, South Station and Broadway corridor would also alleviate dependence on cars and be a great community benefit.
- Integrate a new street network into the primary roads serving the adjacent community and provide for visual and pedestrian connections into the site and down to the waterfront. Design should accommodate wide and landscaped sidewalks, bike lanes, and well-marked pedestrian paths and crossings both within the site and connecting to adjacent residential areas. Traffic calming measures, particularly on Summer Street should be implemented to reduce vehicular speeds and enhance pedestrian access and comfort.
- Provide adequate parking for the anticipated mix of uses, and ensure new development does not function to place greater demands on community parking resources. Explore options for providing some level of fee-based public parking for area residents and visitors, with an emphasis on night and weekend parking. On-street parking on roads internal to the project should be provided to maintain neighborhood character.

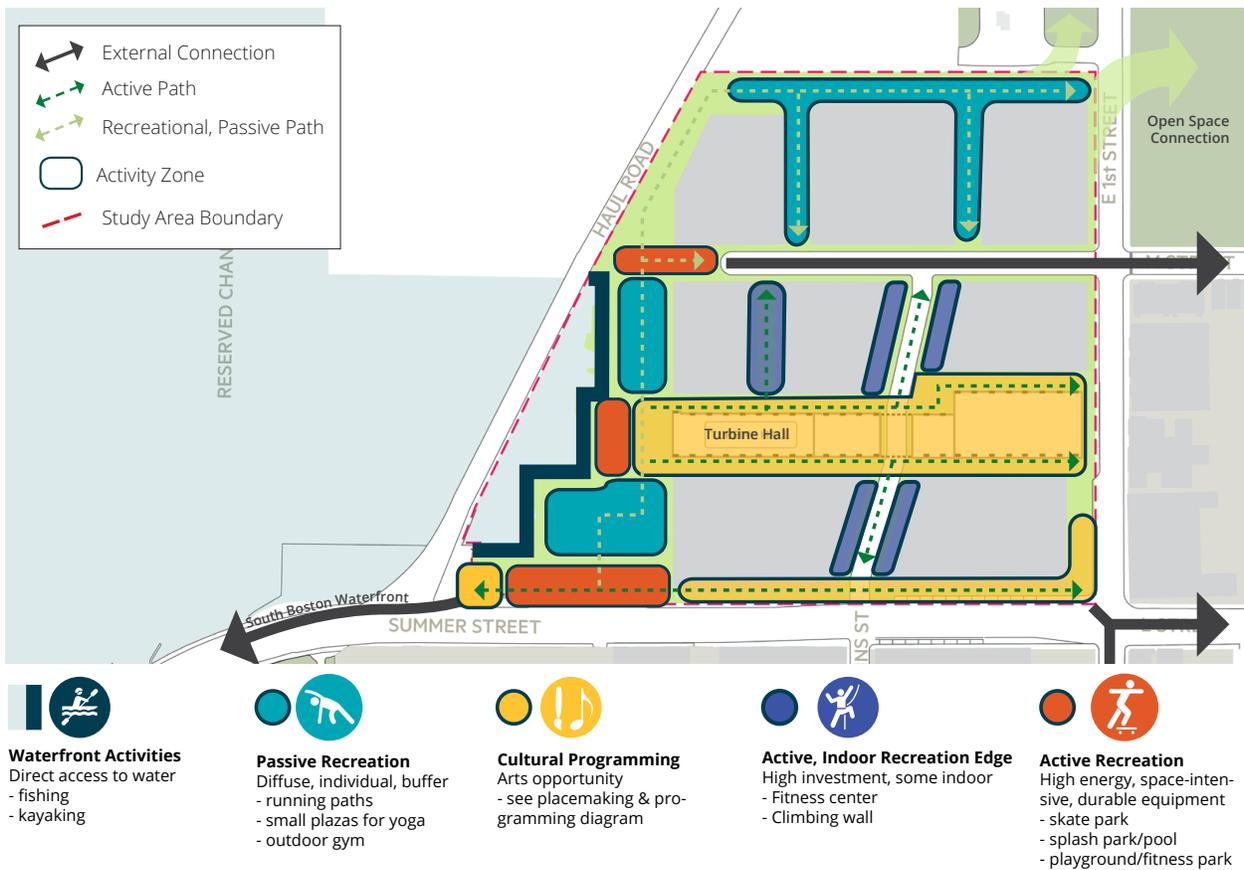


Figure 8. Above: Precedent images of walkable, multi-modal networks. Images from February Workshop Developer Team Presentation

Figure 10. Opposite: Conceptual diagram of potential, distinct open space active uses - conceptual graphic developed through community workshop discussions and does not illustrate the final design

Figure 9. Opposite: Conceptual diagram of potential connections - conceptual graphic developed through community workshop discussions and does not illustrate the final design

Illustrative Graphic Summarizing Community Dialogue Input - Activity Zones



Illustrative Graphic Summarizing Community Dialogue Input - Mobility & Access

