SQUARES + STREETS

OCTOBER 2026



CLEARY SQUARE SMALL AREA PLAN

CITY of BOSTON

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CITY OF BOSTON PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Boston's Planning Department was established by Mayor Wu in 2024 to restore planning as a core function of City government and to shape growth that serves Boston's residents and centers their needs. Our mission is to address our City's greatest challenges: resilience, affordability, and equity; we take real estate actions and prioritize planning, development, and urban design solutions that further these priorities. We seek to build trust with communities through transparent processes that embrace predictable growth.

The Planning Department's purpose is to: develop comprehensive short and long term plans for Boston's built environment, establish a consistent and predictable zoning code for the city, advance exceptional and inclusive design standards, provide predictability to guide development that is responsive to community needs, and plan for the effective use of public real estate.

The information provided in this report is the best available at the time of publication. This draft plan was published by the Planning Department in March 2026.

All or partial use of this report must be cited.

Visit our website
bit.ly/cleary-square

LETTER FROM THE CHIEF OF PLANNING



Dear Neighbor:

The City of Boston Planning Department is pleased to share the Squares + Streets: Cleary Square Small Area Plan, which sets a clear vision and set of expectations for public investment and future development in this neighborhood center. Since February 2024, the Hyde Park community has worked with the City of Boston Planning Department to shape this document into what we believe will allow the neighborhood to grow while also retaining its unique history and character. Staff have been working diligently with the community to ensure new investments in Cleary Square serve current and future residents and will create a resilient, affordable, and equitable neighborhood.

Residents, business owners, and visitors have expressed a deep sense of community in Cleary Square and admire its history of economic, social, and cultural resilience. In this document, you will see **recommendations specific to the needs of Cleary Square, which includes the expansion of publicly accessible open space, like the pocket park on River Street, cultivation of the existing arts and culture community, and safer pedestrian crossings and movement resulting from intersection redesigns on Gordon Avenue, Walnut Street, and Hyde Park Avenue.** Several recommendations address the challenges of both residential and commercial stability within Cleary Square, including strategies to mitigate displacement. Many recommendations came directly from the Cleary Square community members, and others were developed based on the vision for a future Square that stakeholders communicated to us.

Through this Plan, community members, private and public developers, City and interagency staff, and other stakeholders will have a common vision and framework to work toward. We invite you to partner with us to realize the vision outlined in this document, and we look forward to pursuing and implementing this Plan together.

Thank you to everyone who participated in this process.

Kairos Shen, Chief of Planning

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Cleary Square Squares + Streets Small Area Plan is the result of several years of Planning Department and other City departments' commitment to delivering one of the first Plans completed under the new City of Boston Planning Department. This Plan was developed as a result of hundreds of community members' involvement to provide insight on their experiences and visions for the future. To all of the individuals, families, business owners, young people, advocates, and community group leaders: thank you to all for participating in this planning process.

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CHAPTER 01

INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives an overview of the Squares + Streets planning initiative, which focuses on the City's mixed-use and transit-oriented neighborhood centers. It explains the goals and outcomes of the Cleary Square Small Area Plan, and summarizes how the Plan fits into the context of past planning work in Cleary Square.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THIS PLAN

WHAT THIS PLAN DOES:

PROPOSES PROJECTS AND RECOMMENDED COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Recommends public space enhancements, transportation improvements, streetscape upgrades, and policies to revitalize vacant spaces and strengthen the neighborhood's vibrancy by drawing more residents and visitors.

DEFINES A COMMUNITY VISION

Establishes a shared vision for the future of Cleary Square, driven by the feedback and aspirations of residents, local business owners, service providers, and other stakeholders.

RECOMMENDS POLICIES AND TOOLS

Recommends regulatory and policy tools such as zoning updates, business development strategies, and other measures to foster sustainable growth and opportunity.

Some recommendations will be fulfilled through private development or in collaboration with community partners. These recommendations may be affected by future market conditions or other unforeseen circumstances, but serve to guide these opportunities when they arise.

WHAT THIS PLAN DOES NOT DO:

MANDATE SPECIFIC USES OR PROJECTS ON PRIVATE LAND

It does not prescribe exact uses or developments for privately-owned properties, leaving room for flexibility and future decision making.

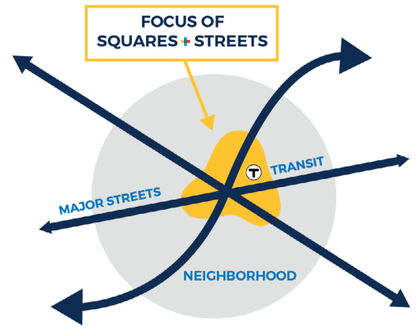
GUARANTEE A FULL BUILD-OUT

A future zoning map amendment for Cleary Square does not mean that the entire rezoned area will be redeveloped.

REQUIRE SPECIFIC LOCATIONS FOR PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT

Proposals for private developments in Cleary Square, including proposed locations and types of development, cannot be mandated by this Plan.

OVERVIEW OF SQUARES + STREETS



WHAT IS SQUARES + STREETS?

Squares + Streets is a citywide planning and zoning initiative that focuses on creating, preserving, and improving housing, public space, small businesses, arts + culture, and transportation in Boston's transit-served neighborhood centers outside of downtown. These neighborhood centers are mixed-use, where housing is located either directly above or near businesses, allowing many residents to get around without a car. They are also identified as places for growth to meet current and future housing demand while responding to needs identified in past planning processes. Squares + Streets areas represent opportunities to make place-based investments across many City departments.

WHAT IS A SMALL AREA PLAN?

Small Area Plans (SAPs) are place-specific plans, that address local issues. Squares + Streets SAPs in particular focuses on small, mixed-use, transit-served geographies. They identify short-term investment priorities through community engagement, and outline recommendations on a 5-10 year time horizon that direct funds for physical investment, policy tools, and City programs to planning areas.

WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF SQUARES + STREETS?

Mayor Wu announced the Squares + Streets Initiative in January 2023 with the following goals:

- **Ensure** every Bostonian has access to neighborhoods with everyday resources and services
- **Provide** more housing to support Boston's current and future residents
- **Pair** housing growth with areas that supply an abundance of commercial, civic, cultural, and transportation resources to expand benefits beyond access to housing
- **Deliver** zoning reform to transit-accessible hubs to support contextual growth in housing and commercial uses
- **Coordinate** near-term investments across City departments that address a range of needs, including transportation and open space improvements, small business supports, and cultural activation opportunities

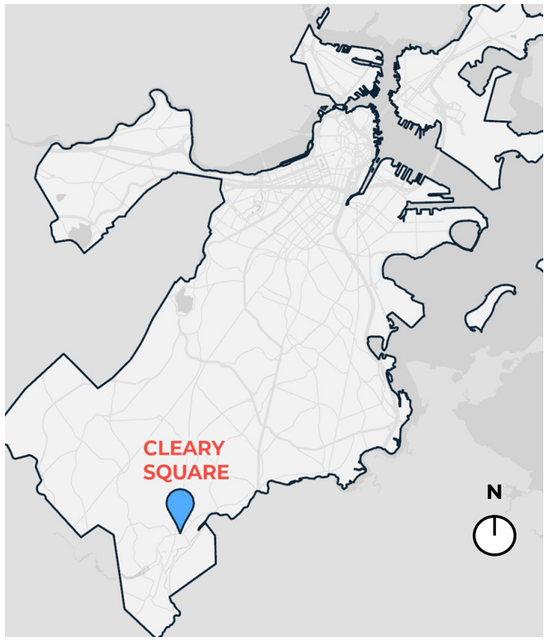
CLEARY SQUARE PLAN AREA

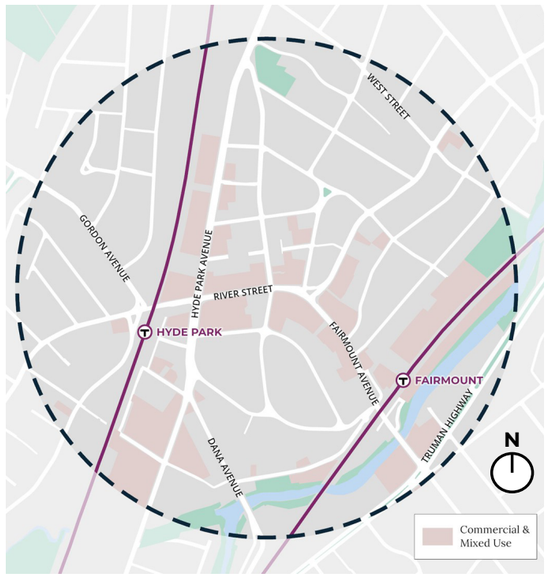
WHY CLEARY SQUARE?

Cleary Square, historically a mixed-use neighborhood center, is located approximately seven (7) miles to the south of Boston in the northeast corner of the Hyde Park neighborhood.

The Hyde Park MBTA Commuter Rail station and Fairmont MBTA Commuter Rail station directly connect the Square to downtown Boston, western Massachusetts, and Providence, Rhode Island, alongside four (4) local bus lines that provide access to other neighborhoods within Boston.

This area, which also includes Logan Square, retains a number of historic buildings and has a diverse retail mix of restaurants and shops. The area is surrounded by an abundance of historic, environmental, and cultural amenities, including facilities such as the Hyde Park Municipal Building, the Menino Arts Center, and the Hyde Park Public Library.





CLEARY SQUARE PLAN AREA

The Cleary Square primary plan area is a one-third (1/3) mile radius around the intersection of River Street and Hyde Park Avenue.

The planning area includes the main commercial core served by Hyde Park Main Streets (HPMS), with Logan Square at the center, and Hyde Park MBTA Commuter Rail Station to the west and Fairmont MBTA Commuter Rail Station to the east.

The study area is referenced in this document as "Cleary Square", "the Square", "the study area", and "the planning area". Unless otherwise noted, these terms refer to this plan area map.

PAST PLANS, STUDIES, AND CAPITAL PROJECTS

For many years, the City of Boston and its partners have studied and planned for the future development of Hyde Park. Key themes from previous Plans, such as encouraging long-term growth of businesses, encouraging various modes of moving around and through, and incentivizing opportunities for more open space creations has shaped the Square today. This new Plan builds on those past efforts.

HYDE PARK MARKET RETAIL STUDY 2009

The Hyde Park Market Retail Study, prepared by a consultant for the Boston Redevelopment Authority, focuses on advancing efforts in revitalizing Hyde Park's historic neighborhood center by conducting a retail market study for the main business district. The study focuses on Cleary and Logan Squares in Boston. This report presents results from an analysis of the district customer base and business mix, and their implications for revitalization.

Key recommendations from the study include:

- Create a clean and safe shopping environment that is universally accessible and easy for residents to navigate to and through.
- Increase consumer spending in the district by working with business owners to enhance products, improve public displays, and recruit new ground floor retail stores.
- Increase weekend and nighttime activity with weekly farmers and craft markets, more seasonal events and festivals in public spaces, and new arts and entertainment uses and restaurants.

HYDE PARK STRATEGIC NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN 2011

The Hyde Park Strategic Neighborhood Plan documents the conclusion of a two-year planning process by the Boston Redevelopment Authority staff and consultants for the neighborhood. The plan provides a blueprint for future development and identifies priorities such as transportation, open space, and streetscape improvements to be implemented over time, independent of the new zoning regulations. The plan also includes specific recommendations for the development of the zoning article for Hyde Park.

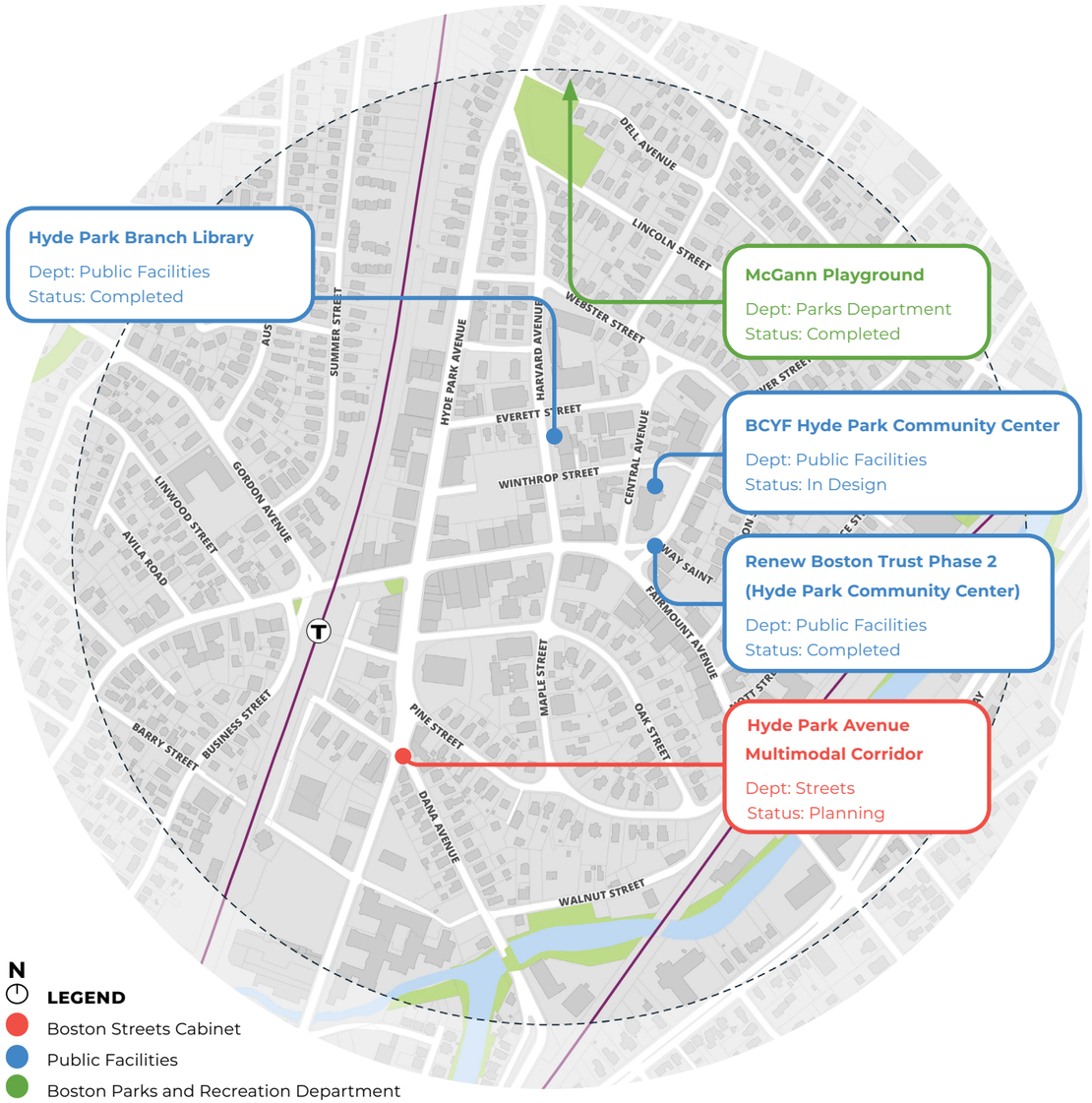
Some of the recommendations from the plan includes:

- Encouraging the long-term economic growth of the neighborhood's commercial districts by increasing visibility.
- Improvements to traffic circulation, parking and encouraging people to use other ways of getting around instead of cars, like walking, biking, or taking public transportation.
- Creating a series of open space subdistricts to prohibit future development of any publicly-owned open space and to provide greater protection of privately-owned open space.

EXISTING CAPITAL PROJECTS

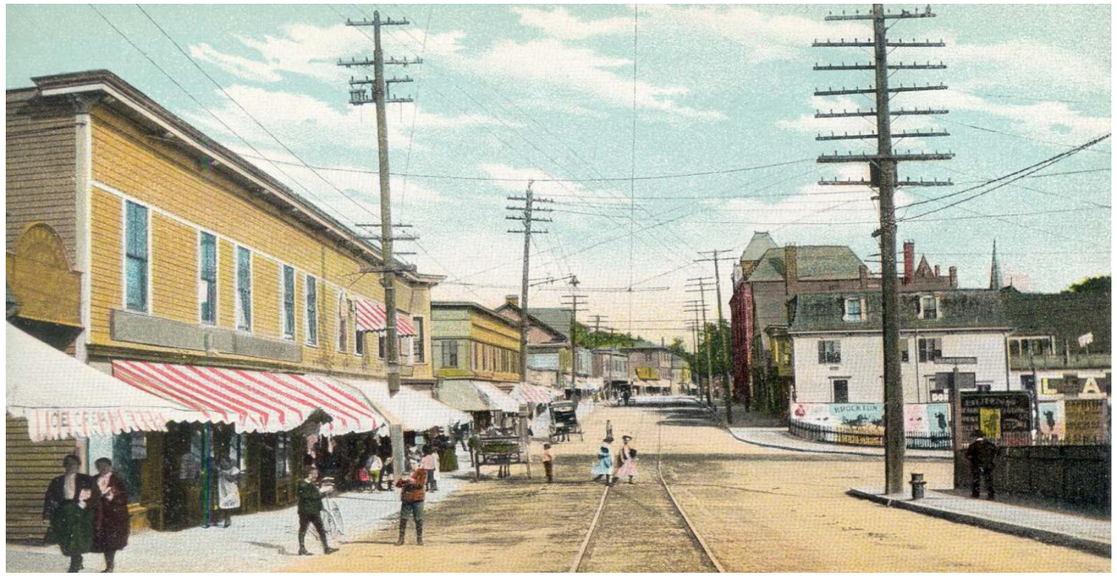
Squares + Streets Plans aim to align recommendations with existing capital projects and investments. Identifying these projects is also a way to avoid conflicting or duplicative investments. A list of planned, ongoing and recently completed capital projects that respond to existing community needs and City priorities are as follows:

PLANNED CAPITAL PROJECTS IN CLEARY SQUARE



HISTORICAL CONTEXT & BACKGROUND

Cleary Square's built form anchors efforts to preserve its heritage while supporting the growth of local businesses and residents.



Cleary Square and River Street, 1900. (Source: Boston City archives)

Before it became Cleary Square, and prior to the arrival of European colonial settlers in 1619, this land was home to the Massachusett Tribe. Devastating plagues and diseases were introduced to the region by the Europeans, and 90% of the indigenous population were wiped out. These diseases depopulated large areas of coastal land in what would become the Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay colonies. Hyde Park was initially part of three separate towns, all established in the first decades of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

John Elliot, a colonial settler, traveled to this region and formed settlements in what would be today South Boston, Hyde Park, Milton, Wrentham, Stoughton, Dedham, Sharon, Foxboro, and Canton.

River Street was an early principal route known as “the old highway between Dorchester and Dedham” laid out by William Sumner and William Robinson in 1662. The majority of the surrounding areas were unoccupied or used for farming.

The development of Hyde Park and specifically that of Cleary Square was influenced by industry and transportation corridors, which allowed the area to transition into a Boston suburb with the introduction of commuter trains, street cars, and automobiles. Buildings and roads were constructed around the railroad and a rapid period of expansion occurred shortly after railway lines were established through the commercial area in 1834 and 1846.

During this time, large regions of agricultural land were purchased and subdivided into residential neighborhoods. In 1867, community leaders fought to make Hyde Park a new town, likely after the famous park of the same name in London, England. The Town of Hyde Park was officially organized in 1868.

The Civil War encouraged industrial development along the Neponset River north of Logan Square and south of Cleary Square. By the 1870s, Hyde Park was known for its machine-tool industry. The Square became primarily residential developments to support the surrounding industrial needs. A center of commercial and civic activity developed between the two railroad stops by the end of the 19th century, with churches, theaters, hotels, municipal buildings, banks, and a variety of businesses that formed along the River Street and Fairmount Avenue corridor that would ultimately become the "downtown" area. Little remains from the commercial development of this period, with the exception of Bonnie-Keith Block at 74-84 Fairmount Avenue known as the Vertullo Building.



Riverside Theatre, 1897 (Source: Hyde Park Historic Society)



Vertullo Building, Cleary Square, Today (Source: Picture by Raisa Saniat)

In 1912, Hyde Park became the southernmost neighborhood of the City of Boston and Cleary Square went from a true city center to an urban village center, and the three- to four- (3-4) story commercial buildings were replaced with smaller one-to-two (1-2) story buildings. A concentration of municipal and institutional buildings developed in the Square during this period and many of the Square's most recognizable buildings today are from this period like the Hyde Park Library and the Hyde Park Municipal Building.

In the 1970s, Cleary Square, like many other neighborhoods in the city, experienced a period of decline, however, the population remained stable and continued to grow, mostly from Haiti and Dominican Republic. During this time, the Square began to become ethnically diverse. In 1990, Thomas M. Menino, who was a city councilor at the time, chose Cleary Square to be part of the Boston Main Streets program. One of the neighborhood initiatives that encouraged the creation of the Hyde Park Main Streets was the restoration of the Everett Square Theatre.

A full context of the history of Cleary Square through the lens of the built environment can be found on Appendix IV, Cleary Square Historic Context Study.



Hyde Park Municipal Building, 1915 (Source: Boston Pictorial Archive)



HYDE PARK LIBRARY IN THE LATE 19TH CENTURY

Source: Historic Preservation, Inc.

HYDE PARK LIBRARY TODAY

Source: Historic Preservation, Inc.





CHAPTER 02

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This chapter summarizes the result of over 36+ community engagement events led or attended by the Planning Department that shaped the Plan for Cleary Square.

A ***Full Engagement Report***, including a summary of themes and engagement events, can be found in Appendix I.

ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE

PRE-LAUNCH ENGAGEMENT
JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2024

Met with community members and stakeholders to learn about Cleary's history & understand neighborhood context and priorities.

Canvassed 200+ businesses *in Cleary Square as part of a business inventory.*

15 *stakeholder interviews* *with small business owners, neighborhood associations, elected officials, and non-profit community leaders that lasted through April.*





90 participants *at the kick-off open house hosted at Hyde Park YMCA.*

30+ *attendees* *at coffee hours hosted at the local library and community center. Coffee hours were held throughtout the planning process as needed.*

LISTENING AND LEARNING
MARCH - APRIL 2024

Held multiple formal and informal engagement events to educate & share information with community members so they could be better positioned to participate in the planning process.

40+ conversations *with community members at weekly office hours hosted at Starbucks on River Street and local library.*

Held **two (2)** *informal pop-ups at the local library and the Hyde Park Municipal Building.*

30+ *attendees* *at the housing and small business & zoning educational workshops.*





20+ participants *at a transportation and public realm walkshop in Cleary Square.*

Hosted the **What We've Heard So Far** *event with 30+ attendees to provide an overview of our engagement and discussion on main themes raised.*



VISIONING AND PLAN DRAFTING
APRIL - JUNE 2024

Continued working with the community to narrow down specific priorities and translate those priorities into Plan recommendations with other City of Boston Departments.

Hosted two (2) visioning sessions *(in person and virtual) with* **40+ *attendees*** *to determine community priorities across a range of topics and how to connect these to actionable steps.*

Hosted **Haitian-Creole and Spanish Focus Groups**.

Hosted separate visioning sessions for **Spanish and Haitian-Creole** *speakers.*

TIMELINE

COMMUNITY VETTING AND PLAN REVISING

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2024

Hosted workshops to reach more community members and to allow additional time for input before finalizing draft recommendations for Cleary Square.

Hosted a ***Small Business Focus Group*** *to gather input from local businesses, employees, and members of the business community*

25+ attendees *at a* ***Squares + Streets Zoning Deep Dive*** *hosted virtually to tackle the adopted zoning districts and overview*



Hosted an ***Arts and Culture Focus Group*** *to gather input from creatives and cultural key members of the community on the Arts Corridor*

Hosted ***two (2) Ideas Reception— Scares + Treats*** *and a similar pop-up on the weekend —a combination of* ***100+ attendees*** *engaged with the presented draft recommendations*

Held ***six (6)*** *informal* ***block walks*** *through the Square*

Attended ***Hyde Park Neighborhood Association special meeting t****o answer questions on draft recommendations*

Hosted ***two (2) Youth Visioning Workshops*** *to engage and listen to the Square's youth about their built environment, held in-person at the Hyde Park Municipal Building and local YMCA*



Held one (1) block walk with Councilor Pepén and hosted a focus group for Spanish speaking residents and business owners

Held a focus group with Black civic leaders to receive feedback about our Plan and process.

Worked with community members to add additional Squares + Streets zoning district options through a *text amendment adopted on December 10, 2025.*

FINALIZING PLAN + ADOPTION

JUNE 2024 - FEBRUARY 2026

Vet Draft Plan and Draft Zoning Map Amendment with the community and revise as needed

Release Draft Plan and Draft Zoning Map Amendment

Present at BPDA Board meeting to adopt Plan and approve Zoning Map Amendment

Present at Boston Zoning Commission Hearing to adopt Zoning Map Amendement

FACILITATING EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION

Hyde Park is a community characterized by its cultural and racial diversity, and the following summary highlights the team's efforts to engage a broader and more inclusive audience throughout the planning process.

Hosting an equitable process means that participants in Cleary Square Squares + Streets engagements are representative of the neighborhood and inclusive of groups who historically have not been engaged in planning processes.

Traditional and more formal meetings with pre-registration tend to attract fewer participants from low-income and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities (BIPOC). To address this, staff have intentionally conducted numerous pop-ups, block walks, coffee hours, and focus groups at various times of day and days of the week/weekend to engage more diverse groups.

Building strong interpersonal relationships was a key part of engaging communities of color and first-generation business owners. This was done by consistently showing up, being present, and building trust over time while being in person in the Square.

This effort involved consistently showing up in the community, participating in local events, and making sure our faces were visible and familiar.

The team was intentional about ensuring that accessibility to threshold languages was available at every event, walk, and pop-up.

The following engagement activities were targeted to hear from Cleary Square's Haitian Creole-speaking communities, Spanish-speaking communities, youth, and first-generation business owners. In order to meet these groups where they are, staff attended existing community events and coordinated with scheduled programming/classes.



"SCARES + TREATS" IDEAS RECEPTION

Staff, alongside Spanish and Haitian-Creole interpreters, hosted a Halloween themed pop-up Ideas Reception at the Pocket Park on River Street on October 30, atypical to a traditional planning process. The intention was to allow dialogue between staff and participants to be able to engage with the draft recommendations in less traditional format and utilization of an existing community space, which allowed for roughly 96% of the participants to be from communities of color. This event allowed residents to discuss recommendations with staff at various levels. An additional Ideas Reception was hosted on the weekend to allow for additional participants' availability.



BLOCK WALKS ALONG THE SQUARE

Staff, alongside Spanish and Haitian-Creole interpreters, facilitated six (6) block walks at peak hours, before and after the release of the draft recommendations, to talk to business owners in the Square. Thien Simpson, Hyde Park Main Streets Director, partnered with the team on several of these walks. The intention of these walks were to build interpersonal relationships by consistently showing up in the Square, while informing and gathering valuable feedback to incorporate into this planning process.



HAITIAN-CREOLE FOCUS GROUP SERIES

Staff hosted pop-ups at local Haitian businesses, including Fan Fan Bakery and Little Haiti, alongside Haitian-Creole interpreters. This provided an opportunity for Haitian-Creole speaking residents and regulars to learn and complete an activity about what they love and want to see improved in the Square.



ARTS AND CULTURE FOCUS GROUP

Staff facilitated a focused dialogue on the existing arts and cultural assets within the Square and brainstormed potential strategies to cultivate, preserve, and define an Arts Corridor within Cleary Square. Haitian-Creole and Spanish interpreters were present.



POP-UPS AND TABLING

Pop-ups at Bridgefest events, local Juneteenth Celebrations, and bus stops expanded outreach to more BIPOC residents, which allowed staff to interact with residents of the Square that typically would not have engaged with the planning process.



YOUTH FOCUS GROUP

Staff hosted two (2) youth pop-up workshops. One outside of the Hyde Park Municipal Building, which engaged youth attending local summer camp programs for a photovoice activity. The second was a graphic facilitation visioning hosted at the YMCA.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Below is a sample of community feedback on the strengths of the existing small businesses, diverse population, and community spirit in Cleary Square, as well as challenges related to attracting more foot traffic, improving public gathering spaces, and pedestrian safety.



EXAMPLES OF WHAT PEOPLE WANT FOR THEIR COMMUNITY:

Anti-displacement policies are important for a neighborhood with the diversity of Cleary Square

Walkshop

If a new store was opening up in Cleary Square, I would like to see retail (gift shops, bookstores, toy store, clothing store, etc.

Kick-off Open House

Loosen up on entertainment licenses so that it's not hard for restaurants.

Spring Survey

A memorial where people can gather and come together (flag raising)

Visioning Session

Social Club for Black and Haitian intellectuals to come together

Visioning Session

Some lights along River St. outside of Las Colombianas

Visioning Session

Need to encourage more active ground floor in the center Square.

Walkshop

Maybe use Riverside Theatre for movies/ films when there isn't a production. Don't know of any alternative programming at the Theatre currently

Visioning Session

Nightlife: live music, dancing, restaurants/bars

Spring Survey

More green space, lots of nature to walk around, green space used for concerts, picnics, etc -> connections to Neponset River.

Housing Workshop

CLEARY SQUARE GOALS

To realize the community goals for Cleary Square, this Plan proposes recommendations that require the collaboration of City departments, agencies, and private sector stakeholders, including community-based organizations.

Specific information about the recommendations that advance each of the 3 goals and their outcomes—such as policy, capital projects, and future City initiatives—can be found in the following topic-specific chapters.

GOAL 1: ACTIVATE + INCREASE THE VISIBILITY OF THE SQUARE

Outcome 1

Improve pedestrian, bus, train, and bike safety and reliability as key modes of transportation to, from, and around Cleary Square.

WHERE TO FIND SUPPORTING RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Transportation

Outcome 2

Provide diverse and multigenerational programming that brings all residents together through supporting the visibility of existing arts and cultural institutions.

WHERE TO FIND SUPPORTING RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Arts and Culture

Outcome 3

Diversify commercial uses and further activate the Square while providing protections and support for small BIPOC and Immigrant Owned businesses.

WHERE TO FIND SUPPORTING RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Small Business

GOAL 2: ENHANCE + STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY IDENTITY BY EXPANDING GATHERING SPACES

Outcome 1

Expand the existing pocket park on River Street to build upon an integral community anchor.

WHERE TO FIND SUPPORTING RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Open Space and Resiliency
- Land Use and Design Framework

Outcome 2

Give residents the ability to access the Neponset River by creating a new public park.

WHERE TO FIND SUPPORTING RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Open Space and Resiliency
- Land Use and Design Framework

Outcome 3

Establish an Arts Corridor to encourage arts-focused uses, such as galleries, performance spaces, and creative studios, in the commercial core.

WHERE TO FIND SUPPORTING RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Arts and Culture
- Land Use and Design Framework

GOAL 3: PRESERVE + EXPAND ON ASSETS FOR GROWTH

Outcome 1

Create opportunities for increased housing within the Square, including housing with deep affordability levels in part through leveraging public land.

WHERE TO FIND SUPPORTING RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Housing and Real Estate

Outcome 2

Expand land uses within the Square while preserving and further developing existing land uses, especially small businesses.

WHERE TO FIND SUPPORTING RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Land Use and Design Framework
- Small Business

Outcome 3

Support rehabilitation and preservation of existing historic structures which serve as community landmarks, such as the Everett Square Theatre.

WHERE TO FIND SUPPORTING RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Arts and Culture



CHAPTER 03

LAND USE AND DESIGN FRAMEWORK

This plan supports mixed-use growth in the existing commercial core of Cleary Square, near the Hyde Park and Fairmount MBTA Commuter Rail Stations, and in surrounding gateway streets.

The framework identifies what land uses to allow where, what the scale of new buildings should be, and what kinds of infrastructure and community improvements should accompany that growth to achieve the goals of the plan.

This chapter also summarizes present-day land use patterns and opportunities, and the Land Use and Design Framework for the future.

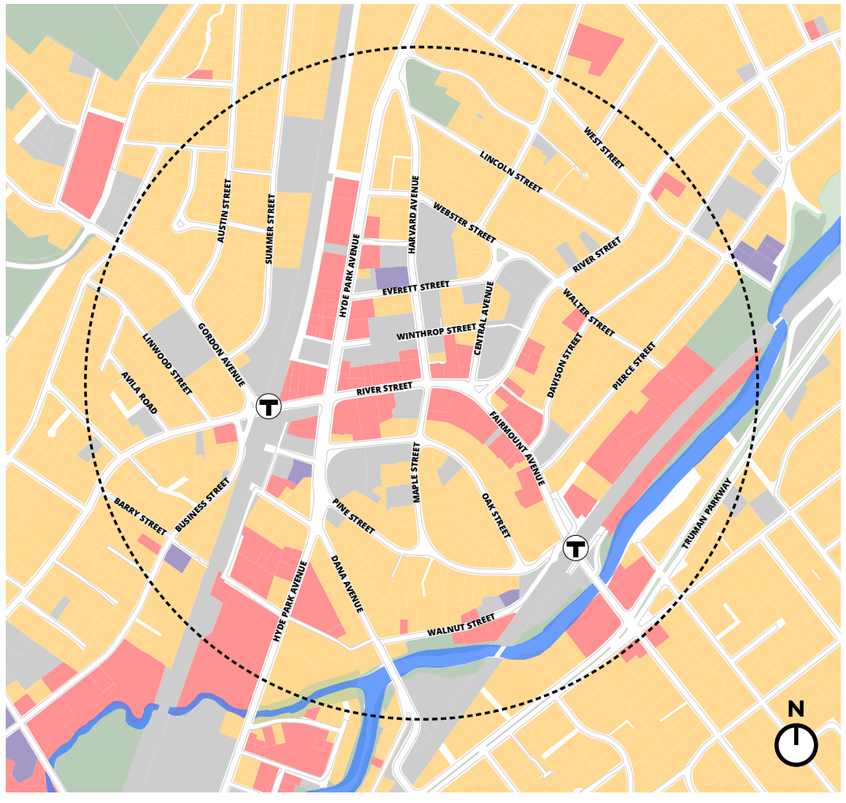
CLEARY SQUARE TODAY

Cleary Square today is a vibrant community with active civic institutions, historic architecture, a burgeoning arts scene, and diverse small businesses. Many community members want these existing aspects of the area to be maintained and strengthened in a future land use and design framework for Cleary Square.

The current regulations for the land use and design of Cleary Square do not support what exists in Cleary Square today, as the zoning rules do not allow for the uses and buildings that currently exist on the majority of properties.

PRIMARY MIXED-USE AREAS IN CLEARY SQUARE

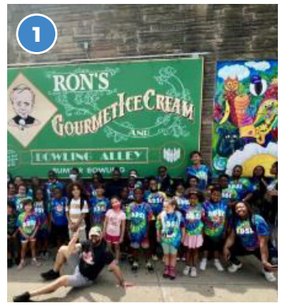
Source: City of Boston Assessing Data, 2024

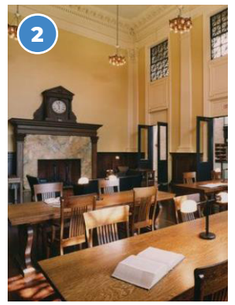


LAND USE LEGEND

Commercial and Mixed-use Residential Open Space Industrial Water Exempt
(Religious, Governmental, Non-Profit)

See the Zoning Existing Conditions Report in Appendix V for further analysis of how the dimensional and use regulations in existing zoning compares to existing buildings and recent development.



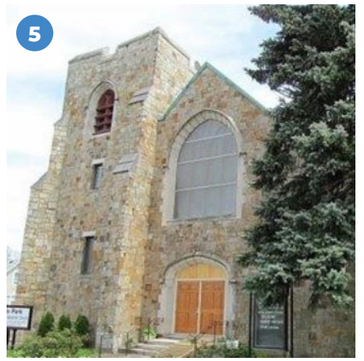














1. *Ron's Gourmet Ice Cream and Twentieth Century Bowling Alley* **2.** *Hyde Park Public Library* **3.** *Riverside Theatre* **4.** *The Private Office Barbershop* **5.** *Hyde Park Seventh-day Adventist Church* **6.** *Everett Square Theatre* **7.** *Hyde Park Municipal Building* **8.** *Hyde Park Mural at The Blinds Side* **9.** *Mural at Fairmount Station* **10.** *Mai Hair Braiding*













CLEARY SQUARE TOMORROW

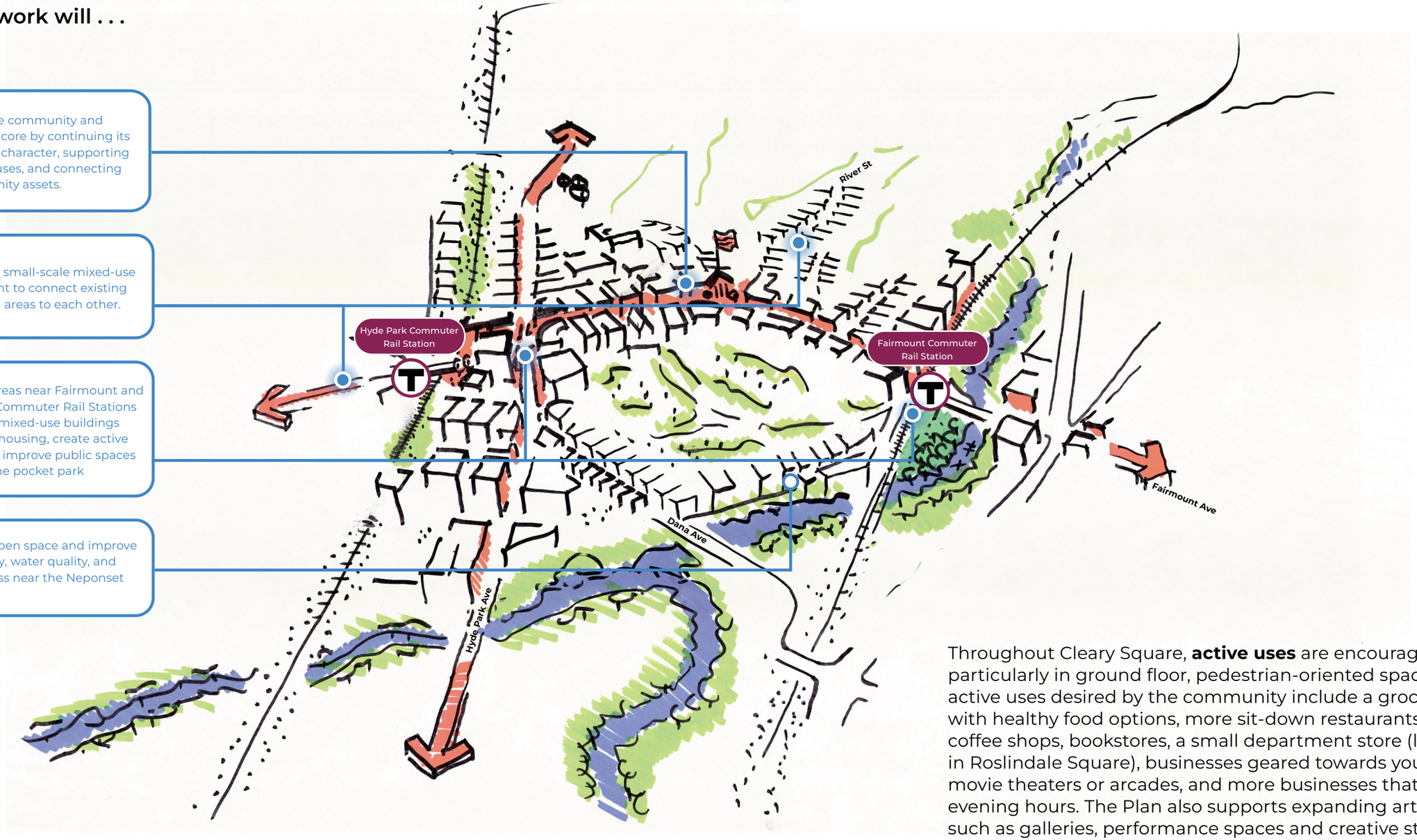
This Framework will . . .

Enhance the community and commercial core by continuing its commercial character, supporting active land uses, and connecting key community assets.

Allow more small-scale mixed-use development to connect existing commercial areas to each other.

Grow key areas near Fairmount and Hyde Park Commuter Rail Stations with larger mixed-use buildings to increase housing, create active streets, and improve public spaces including the pocket park

Prioritize open space and improve permeability, water quality, and public access near the Neponset River.



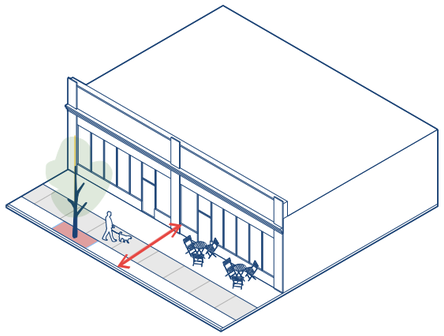
Throughout Cleary Square, **active uses** are encouraged, particularly in ground floor, pedestrian-oriented spaces. Specific active uses desired by the community include a grocery store with healthy food options, more sit-down restaurants, cafes or coffee shops, bookstores, a small department store (like Target in Roslindale Square), businesses geared towards youth like movie theaters or arcades, and more businesses that are open for evening hours. The Plan also supports expanding art-related uses such as galleries, performance spaces and creative studios. Active uses like these are encouraged throughout all of the mixed-use areas of Cleary Square.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Design Guidelines are a tool to help the land uses and density recommended by the Land Use Framework relate to the unique context of Cleary Square. They can be used by community members and Planning Department staff to advocate for design outcomes based on the Guidelines during the Article 80 Development Review process and for smaller projects that require design review to receive Zoning Board of Appeal (ZBA) approval.

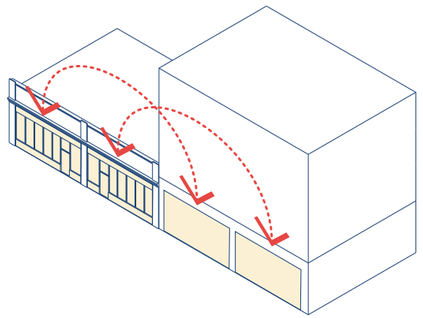
Area-specific design guidelines are found in blue text on following pages under “DESIGN GUIDELINES”

THE FOLLOWING AREA-WIDE DESIGN GUIDELINES REPRESENT DESIGN THEMES RELEVANT TO THE ENTIRETY OF CLEARY SQUARE.



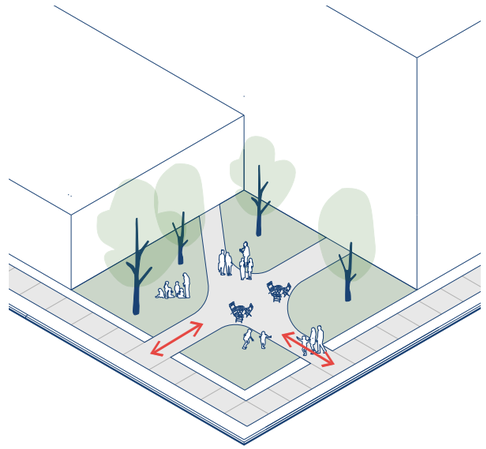
1. ACTIVATE FRONT YARD

All projects should use the space created by their front yard requirement to enhance the public sidewalk, especially where the existing sidewalk is not otherwise adequate for accessibility or the planting of street trees. There should be a minimum of 8' from the building to the back of the curb, although larger widths may be needed in some cases.



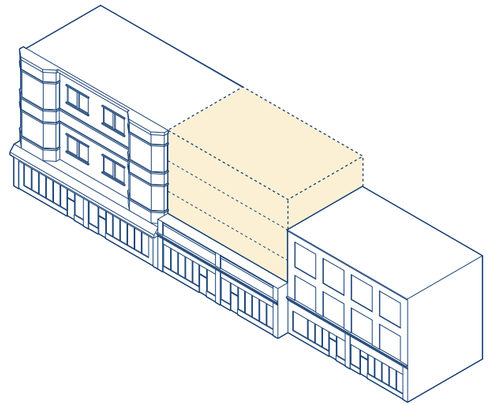
2. PEDESTRIAN SCALE STOREFRONTS

New ground-floor commercial spaces should identify architectural elements and patterns that give scale and rhythm to nearby existing commercial spaces– such as details, piers, window spacing, and more– and consider how these elements can inspire a similar scale and rhythm of storefronts.



3. OUTDOOR AMENITY SPACE

All new projects should meet the Outdoor Amenity Space requirement where the requirement exists by designing spaces that create new and enhance existing sites of community activation, such as publicly accessible open space and plazas. In addition, throughout the Square, design with trees in mind to retain existing canopy and provide sufficent space for new canopy to mature without conflicting with buildings. This includes planting in clusters to maximize shade benefits, where possible.



4. CREATIVE SENSITIVITY

Cleary Square contains a number of sites that are culturally, historically, or architecturally significant (see Appendix IV). New development that is adjacent to these sites must demonstrate sensitivity and creative responses in their massing, facade composition, and material palette. Redevelopment of or additions to these sites should try to maintain significant, character-defining features through adaptive reuse rather than demolition.

COMMUNITY AND COMMERCIAL CORE TODAY



Hyde Park Municipal Building



Hyde Park Public Library



Menino Arts Center

This area contains many important community assets, such as the Hyde Park Municipal Building, the YMCA, Hyde Park Public Library, and the Menino Arts Center.



Storefronts at River St, Fairmount Ave



Riverside Theatre Works



Central Ave

There is a tight fabric of small-scale, one- to three- story commercial storefronts and historic buildings along River Street and Fairmount Avenue. There are more residential and less active uses along Central Avenue.

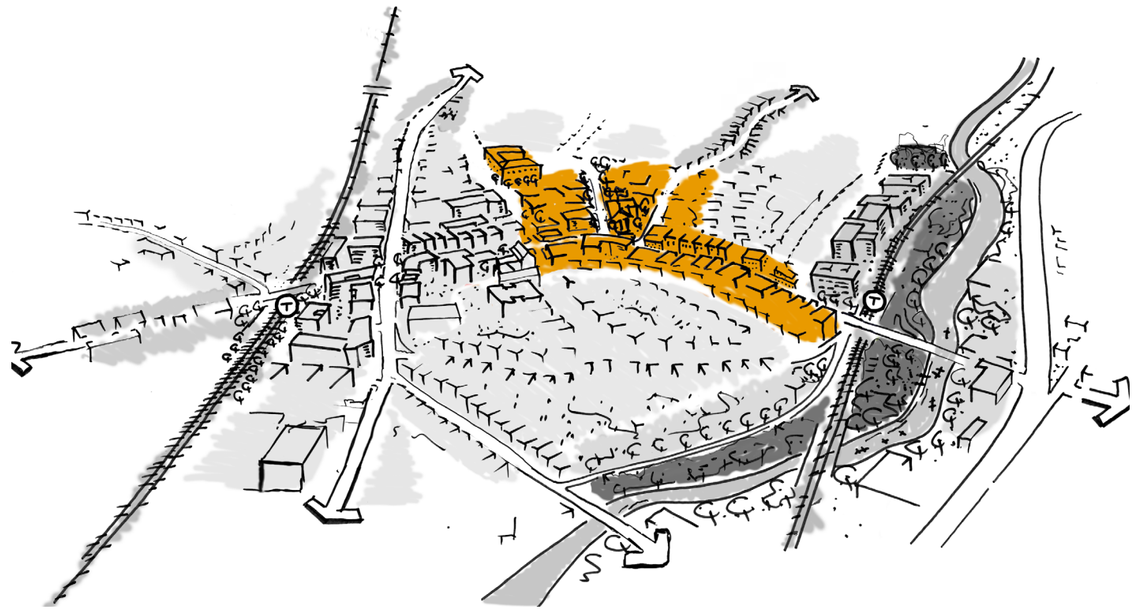


The Pryde Development

ADAPTIVE REUSE

The recent project The Pryde is an example of adaptive reuse, renovating an existing building (the former Rogers School) for a new use. The building now contains 74 affordable units, marketed to LGBTQ seniors. The project also contains a 10,000-square-foot community center. Because this project preserved an existing historic structure and created mixed-use and affordable housing, it aligns with the Land Use and Design Framework for Cleary Square.

COMMUNITY AND COMMERCIAL CORE TOMORROW



In the community and commercial core, there are **opportunities** to . . .

- create better connections between existing community assets
- support local businesses

. . . by strengthening existing commercial character, developing mixed-use housing, and increasing pedestrian activity.

COMMUNITY AND COMMERCIAL TOMORROW

Within the community and commercial core, the Land Use and Design Framework...

1. **Supports** existing commercial character through land use regulations that allow a variety of commercial uses, including upper-story offices, clinics, and arts and entertainment destinations.

2. **Discourages** ground-floor dwelling units fronting the main commercial corridors of River Street and Fairmount Avenue.

3. **Allows** for increased mixed-use growth, especially housing located over pedestrian-scaled commercial storefronts.

4. **Supports** the continued success of existing art uses and community destinations clustered in this area (such as the Riverside Theatre Works, Menino Arts Center, and the Switch). Encourages the establishment of new art uses to strengthen the arts corridor.

5. **Encourages** preservation of existing historic structures by allowing additions and buildings with similar yard and buildout patterns and allows development on vacant or underutilized lots.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Projects within the community and commercial core should . . .

1 Use creative signage to celebrate arts uses. Varied expression that celebrates and draws inspiration from significant existing architecture and signage is encouraged. Prioritize iconography, unique shapes, and individual-letter signs over flat panels.



Everett Sq Theatre sign on Fairmount Ave



Riverside Theatre sign on Fairmount Ave

2 Use architectural articulation to establish and emphasize the pedestrian scale of storefronts. These features can include but are not limited to cornices, watertables, details, material patterns, signs, awnings, operable windows, and others.



Storefronts at the corner of Hyde Park Ave and River St

3 Avoid creating new curb cuts along River Street and Fairmount Street and close existing curb cuts where possible.



Storefronts along River St

4 Activate the ground floor with arts and culture uses whenever possible. Use large, operable windows and doors that maximize transparency to showcase arts uses where appropriate.



Bow Market, Somerville



Garage B at the Speedway, Allston



Storefronts along Harrison Ave, SoWa Market - South End

COMMUNITY AND COMMERCIAL TOMORROW

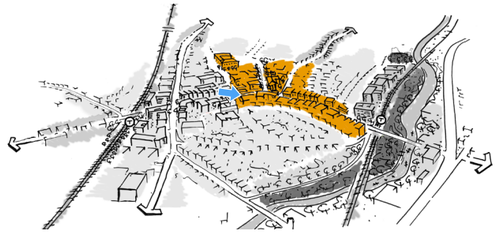
A POSSIBLE FUTURE FOR CLEARY SQUARE

a strengthened commericial area along River St and Fairmount Ave

Current Conditions:



looking east down River St and Fairmount Ave



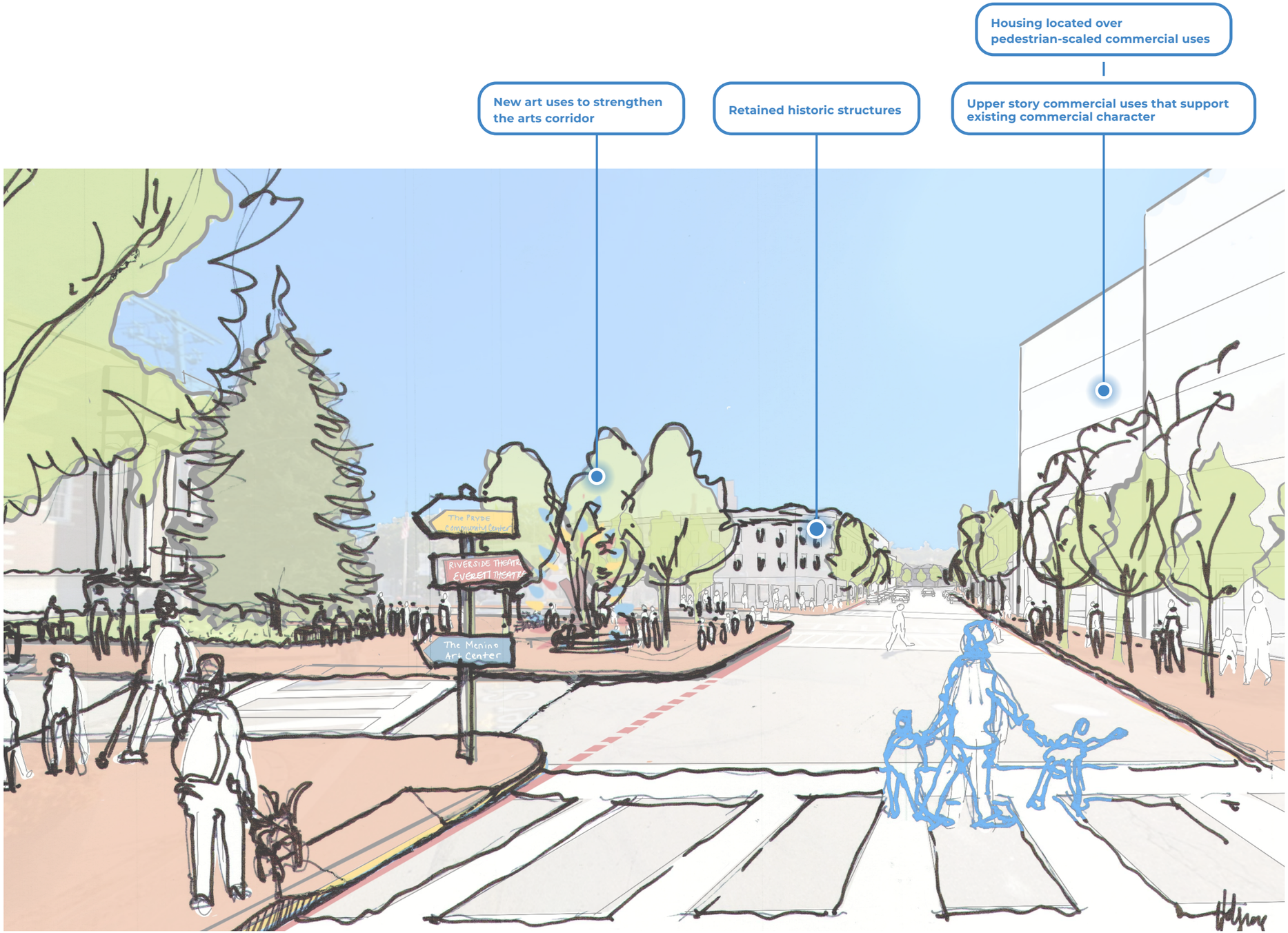
locator map

What is the arts corridor?

The idea of an arts corridor emerged through community engagement as a way to strengthen and connect the existing arts and cultural communities in Cleary Square.

The arts corridor is envisioned within the community and commercial core along River Street, Fairmount Avenue, and Central Avenue.

Multiple sections of this Plan contribute to the creation of the arts corridor, including the following Land Use and Design Framework and Design Guidelines for the community and commercial core. See Arts and Culture for more information.



an imagined view: a vibrant arts corridor down River St and Fairmount Ave

HYDE PARK AVENUE TODAY



Pocket Park, Hyde Park Ave and River St



The Fallon Building, Hyde Park Ave and River St



Storefronts, Hyde Park Ave and River St

The intersection of Hyde Park Avenue and River Street has the entrance to the Hyde Park MBTA Commuter Rail Station, the Pocket Park, and a tight fabric of small-scale, one- to two- story storefronts and historic buildings.



Commercial uses at Hyde Park Ave and Factory St



Gas station, Hyde Park Ave and Webster St



Apartment buildings, Hyde Park Ave and Dana Ave

Further from River Street, Hyde Park Avenue has more commercial uses with larger setbacks and off-street parking, as well as apartment buildings.



Municipal parking lot between Hyde Park Ave and the Hyde Park Library



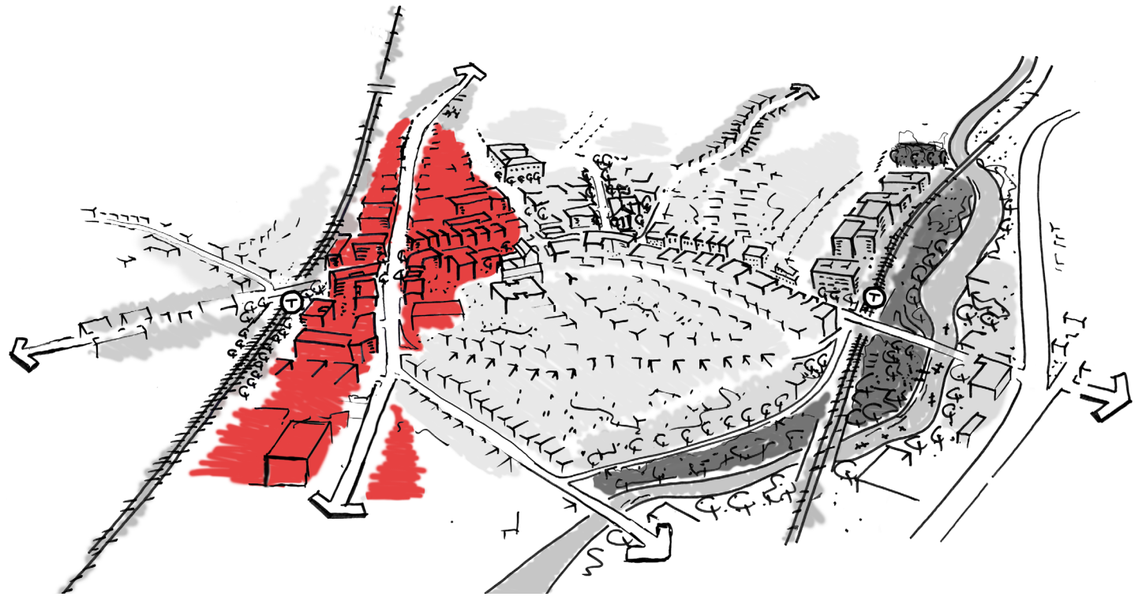
BPDA-owned lot on Pingree St

PUBLICLY OWNED LAND

For the municipal parking lot off of Winthrop Street (between Hyde Park Avenue and the Hyde Park Library), the Planning Department recommends that the City remain committed to preserving this parking resource and deferring any possible redevelopment for at least 5 years. See page 69 for more information.

Another lot on Pingree Street is owned by the BPDA, which will begin the disposition process to develop this lot for affordable housing as a result of this plan (see Housing and Real Estate).

HYDE PARK AVENUE TOMORROW



In this area along Hyde Park Avenue, there are **opportunities** to . . .

- increase the housing supply

- create an active entrance into Cleary Square

. . . by improving public spaces and developing mixed-use housing with active uses

HYDE PARK AVENUE TOMORROW

Within this area along Hyde Park Avenue, the Land Use and Design Framework...

1. **Allows** for higher-density mixed-use growth, especially housing located over pedestrian-scaled commercial uses.

2. **Provides** opportunities to utilize City-owned lots for community desired uses such as open space, public and affordable housing development, and public parking. Preserves parking on the Winthrop Street municipal lot and defers development there for at least 5 years.

3. **Focuses** development with active uses and public space improvements around the intersection of Hyde Park Avenue and River Street to create an active entrance into Cleary Square.

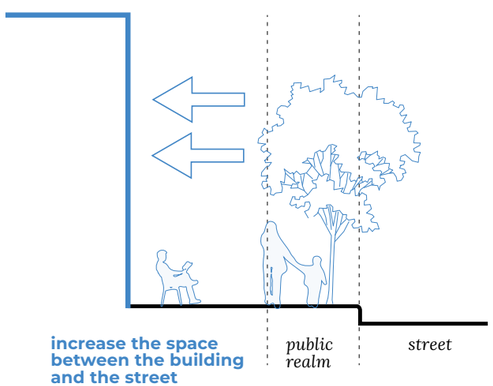
DESIGN GUIDELINES

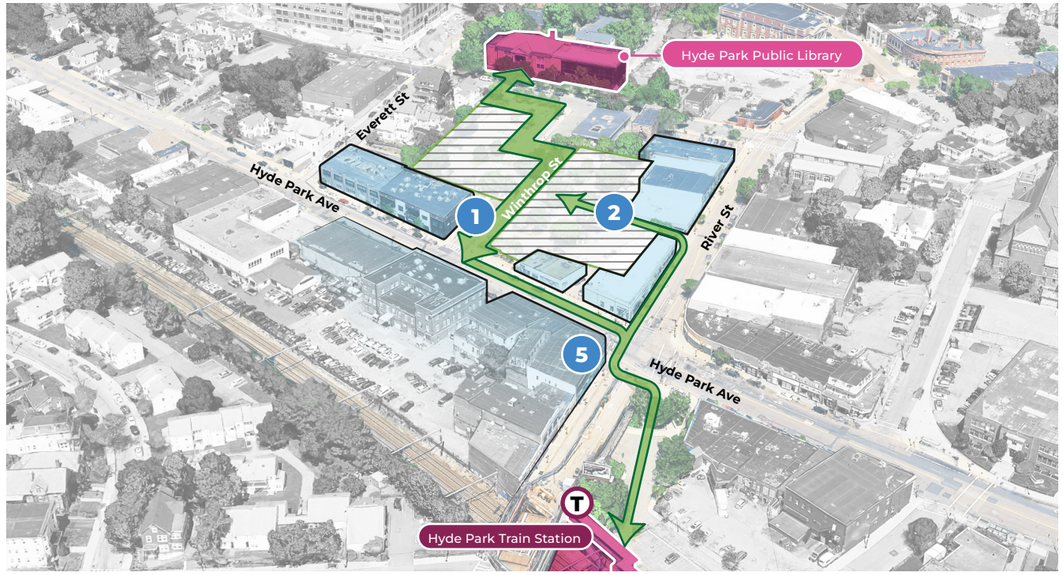
Projects within this area along Hyde Park Avenue should . . .

1. Integrate the municipal parking lot into the surrounding neighborhood street fabric, and Winthrop Street in particular.

2. Meet Outdoor Amenity Space and Building Lot Coverage requirements in zoning by expanding existing public realm assets and creating new publicly-accessible through-block pedestrian connections, in particular between River Street and Everett Street.

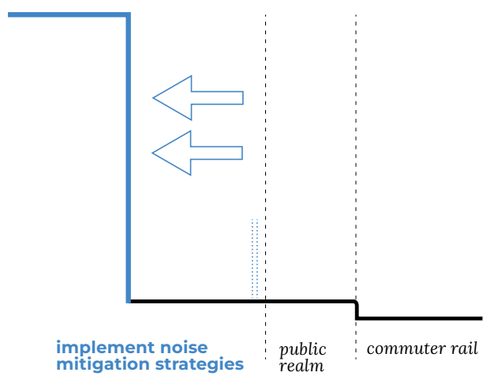
3. Enhance the public realm on the south side of Hyde Park Avenue, especially south of Dana Ave, by using Building Lot Coverage and Outdoor Amenity Space requirements to create more space between the building and street. This increased front yard can allow pedestrian-focused improvements such as additional street trees, planted buffers, public seating, and other green infrastructure.





Aerial Map Diagram, better public space and travel through activating the municipal lot

4. Mitigate noise on sites adjacent to the commuter rail through creative building massing and other screening strategies, subject to MBTA regulations.



5. Celebrate the intersection of Hyde Park Avenue and River Street as a major neighborhood gateway by locating required active uses and prominent architectural elements at the corner.



Talk and Wok Cafe, corner of Hyde Park Ave and River St

RIVERFRONT TODAY



Residential building on Truman Pkwy



Commercial uses on Truman Pkwy



U-Haul on Truman Pkwy



Garage on Walnut St



Open Space on Walnut St

This area contains a mix of residential uses, commercial uses, storage and vehicular uses, and limited-access open space.



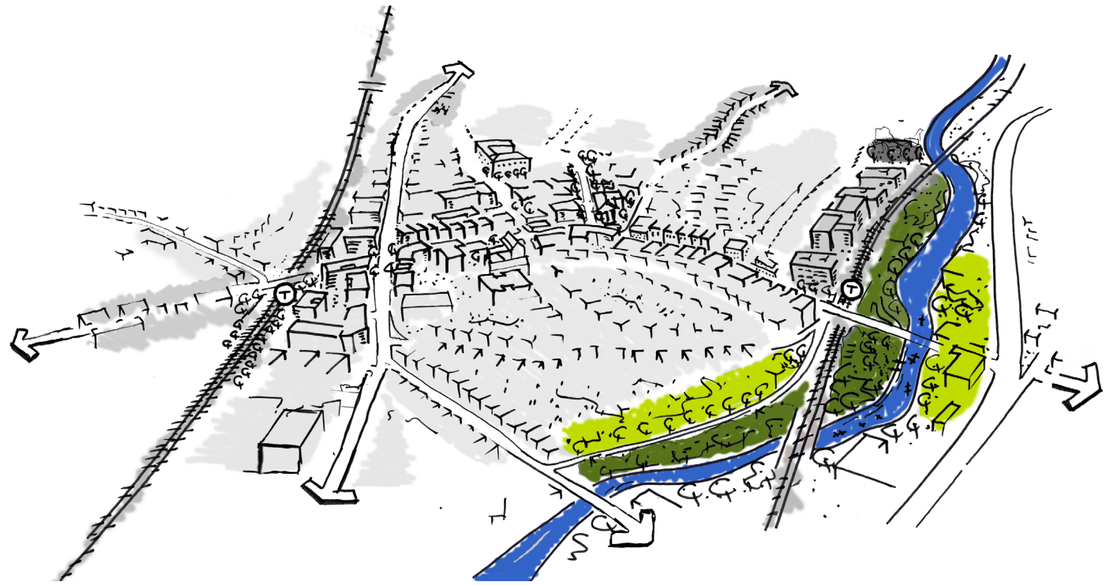
Former Lewis Chemical site

PUBLICLY OWNED LAND

The former Lewis Chemical site is owned by the Mayor's Office of Housing (MOH). Transferring this ownership to another public agency or nonprofit can facilitate the creation of a public park and connection to the Neponset River. Long term, this site could be connected to the Neponset River Greenway (see Open Space and Resiliency).

MOH also owns a vacant parcel on Walnut Street. This plan recommends disposition of this parcel after a community engagement process to determine the best use (see Housing and Real Estate).

RIVERFRONT TOMORROW



In the riverfront area, there are **opportunities** to . . .

- improve public connections to the Neponset River and Fairmount Station

- slow the movement of stormwater and improve water quality

. . . by creating and preserving open space.

RIVERFRONT TOMORROW

Within the riverfront area, the Land Use and Design Framework...

1. **Enables** the creation of new or improved public park space on publicly-owned land along the river (see Open Space and Resiliency).

2. **Encourages** connections between public park spaces through publicly-accessible open space on private property or additional public park spaces, including a possible trail connecting the West Street Urban Wild and the Fairmount Commuter Rail Station.

3. **Allows** some mixed-use development on non-parklands while remaining sensitive to riverfront locations near the Neponset River.

4. **Requires** all new developments to be designed to improve permeability, open space amenities, and public connections to open spaces along the Neponset wherever possible.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Projects within the riverfront area should . . .

1. Mitigate impacts on the river ecosystem by development immediately adjacent to the river through the maximization of permeable areas, the preservation of existing vegetation, and building siting informed by natural topography and flood patterns.

2. Enhance public access to the Neponset River to meet Outdoor Amenity Space requirements, where possible.

3. If new development is located along Walnut Street, construct a new public sidewalk.

4. Preserve existing tree canopy along Walnut Street wherever possible, and mitigate the loss of mature tree canopy through replacement.



Aerial Map, riverfront opportunity areas with associated design guidelines

NEAR FAIRMOUNT STATION TODAY



Auto repair shop and The Residences at Fairmount Station



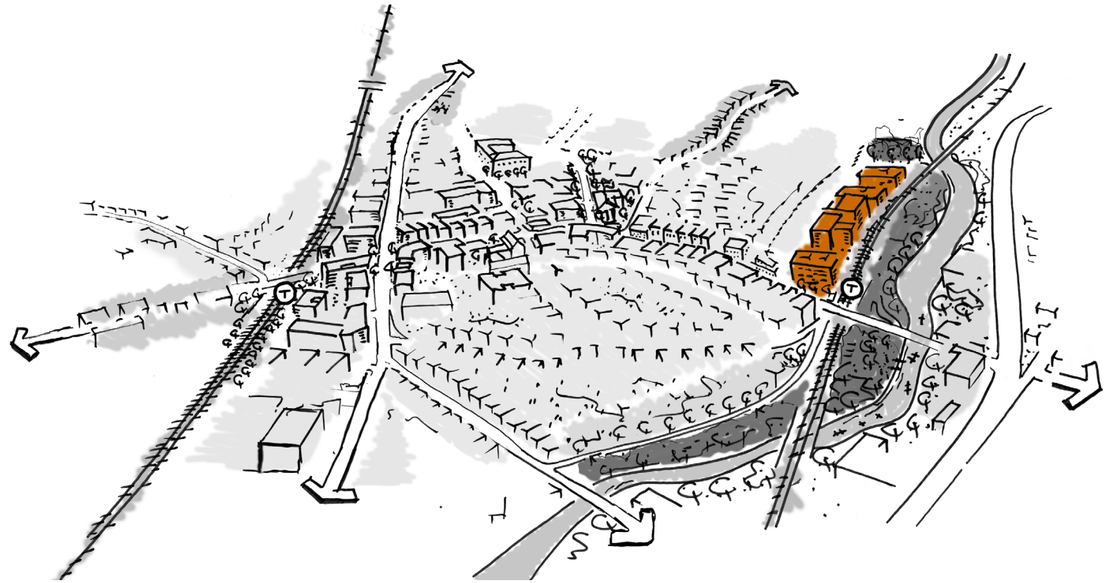
Auto repair shop, 54 Walter St



The Residences at Fairmount Station, 11 2nd New Way

This area contains a few large lots currently used for vehicular and other light industrial/storage purposes and one apartment building (The Residences at Fairmount Station).

NEAR FAIRMOUNT STATION TOMORROW



In this area near Fairmount Station, there are **opportunities** to . . .

- improve connections to Fairmount Station and open space

- add significant new housing to Cleary Square

. . . by allowing higher-density, mixed-use growth.

NEAR FAIRMOUNT STATION TOMORROW

Within this area near Fairmount Station, the Land Use and Design Framework...

1. **Provides** opportunities for higher-density, mixed-use growth, especially housing located over pedestrian-scaled commercial uses.

2. **Encourages** the development of new pedestrian, bike, and vehicular connections adjacent to the commuter rail.

3. **Allows** flexibility for developments to provide parking for tenants, visitors, and commuter rail riders.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

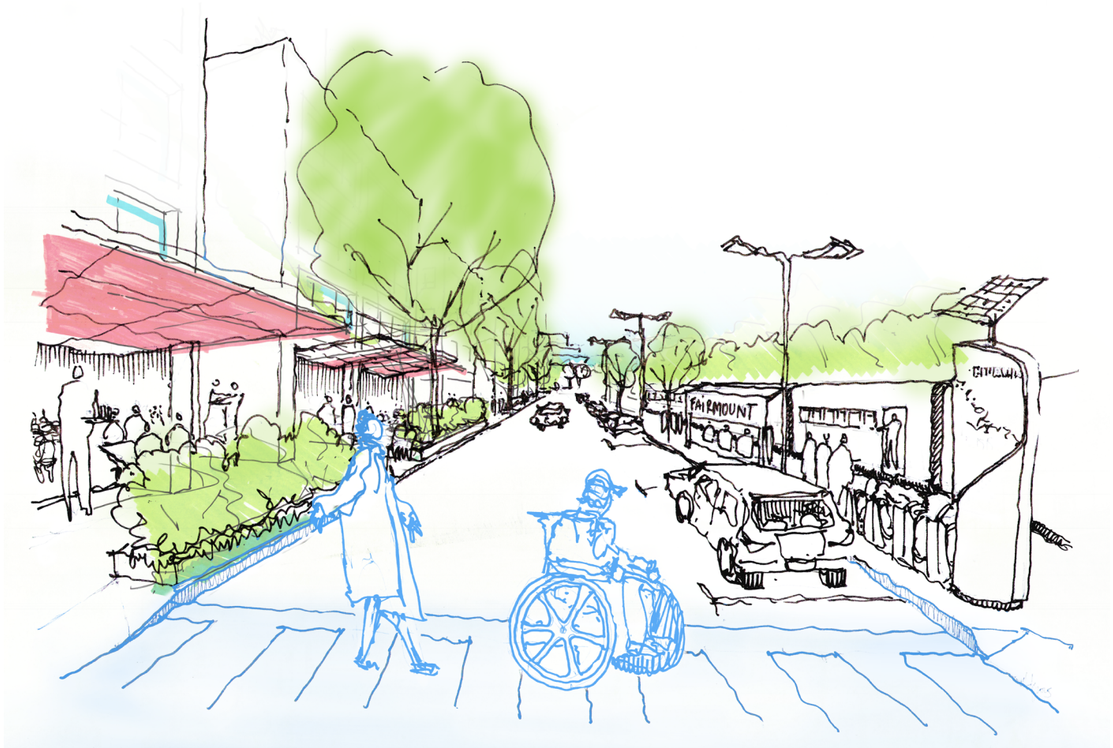
Projects within this area near Fairmount Station should . . .

1. Enhance pedestrian connections to the Neponset River and the nearby Urban Wilds to encourage recreation along the river. See Open Space and Resiliency Recommendations for more detail.

2. Maximize connectivity through the area and to adjacent areas by creating a new road and pedestrian path adjacent to the commuter rail tracks.

3. Create new connections within the existing street network, prioritize visibility and connectivity to Fairmount Station, and provide ample sidewalk width to allow for street trees, planted buffers, public seating, and other green infrastructure.

4. Compose massing and building orientation to minimize potential impacts on access to light, air, and views/access to the Neponset River, especially where larger developments might border small-scale residential uses.



One possible future for Cleary Square: *an imagined view of a new pedestrian connection near Fairmount Station*

Current Conditions:



looking north, down Fairmount Ct



locator map

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS TODAY



Residential uses on River St



Church on River St



Polish American Club



Residences along River St, west of Hyde Park Station



Residences along Hyde Park Ave

These areas are primarily residential with many smaller two- to three- story homes and some larger apartment buildings, along with civic uses such as churches.



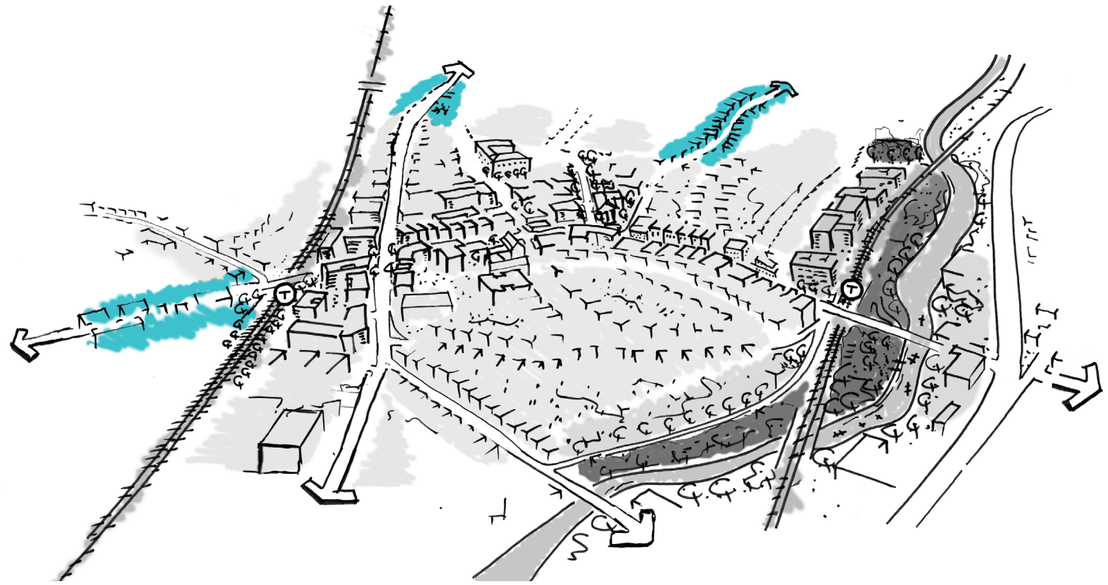
Commercial area at River St and West St

These areas connect Cleary Square to other nearby commercial areas on River Street and Hyde Park Avenue.

INDUSTRIAL AREAS

Community members said that it is important to maintain the existing light industrial area along Hyde Park Avenue to the south of the Cleary Square study area (where Roundhouse Brewing Company is) because it provides important work spaces for artists and small businesses. While these areas are outside of the Cleary Square Small Area Plan study area, and thus are not planned for any significant changes at this time, light industrial and surrounding areas in Hyde Park are complementary to Cleary Square and should receive focused planning and zoning attention in the future to support continued success of small business, productive businesses, and the overall community.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS TOMORROW



In the community connections areas, there are **opportunities** to . . .

- connect the existing commercial areas

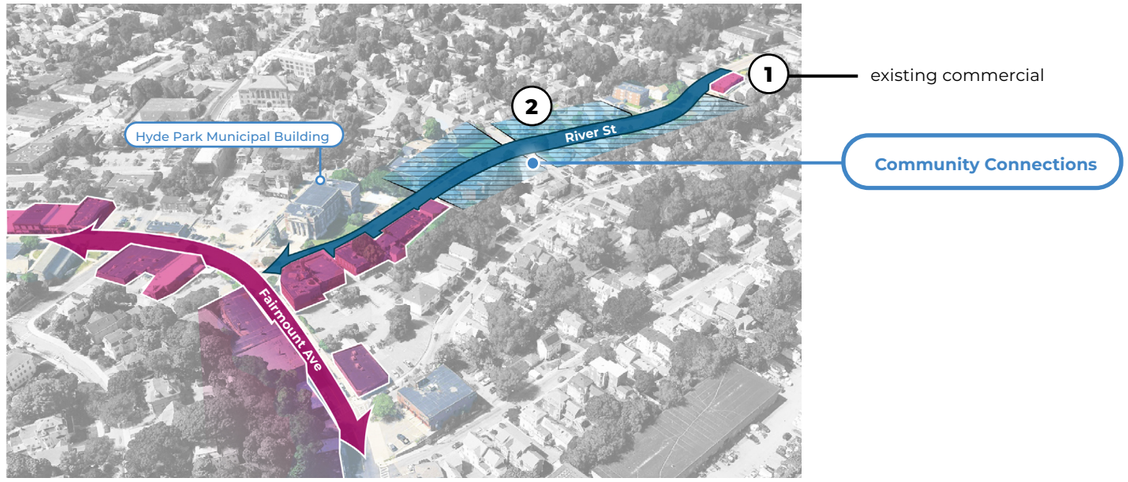
- create more active gateways into Cleary Square

. . . by increasing pedestrian activity.

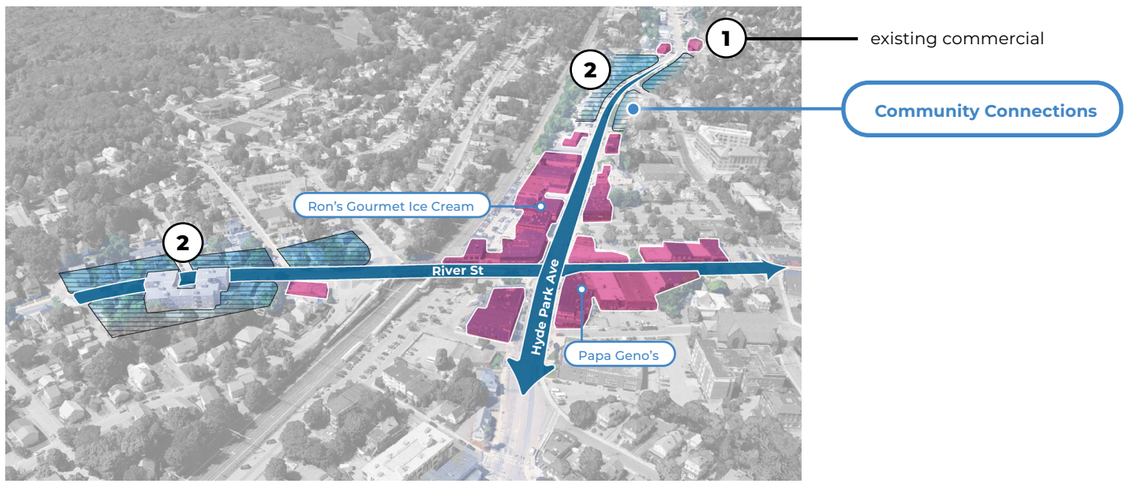
COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS TOMORROW

Within the community connections areas, the Land Use and Design Framework...

1. **Affirms** the small, pedestrian-scale form of existing commercial land uses that complement the community and commercial core.
2. **Supports** more pedestrian activity between existing commercial clusters by allowing opportunities for new mixed-use development.



Aerial Diagram: connecting the northern part of River St to the commercial core along Fairmount Ave



Aerial Diagram: connecting to the commercial corridor along Hyde Park Ave and River St

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Projects within the community connections areas should . . .

1 **Compose massing and building orientation to minimize potential impacts on access to light and air, especially where larger developments might border smaller-scale residential uses.**



Diagram in reference to Design Guidelines: The Residences at Fairmount Station, 15 Nott St

TRANSITIONAL RESIDENTIAL TODAY



One-to Three-unit homes on Pine St



Apartment building on Maple St



One-to Three-unit homes on Webster St



The Henry Grew School on Gordon Ave

These areas are predominantly residential, with mostly one- to three-unit homes and few larger apartment buildings, as well as the Henry Grew School.



The Joseph Malone Apartments



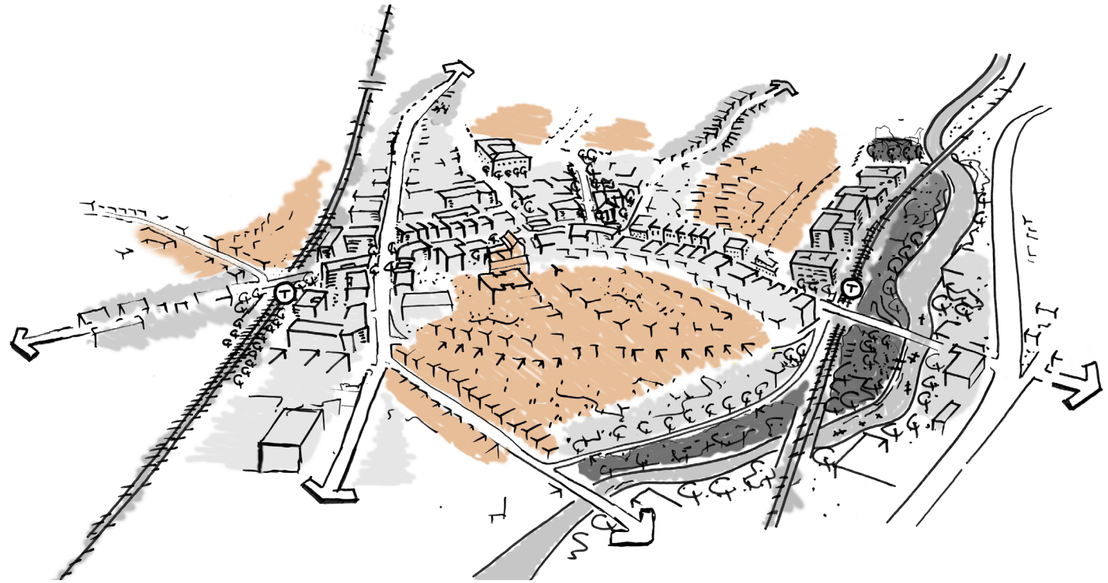
The Davison Apartments

PUBLICLY OWNED LAND

There are two Boston Housing Authority developments in these areas: The Joseph Malone Apartments, which contain 105 dwelling units within 13 buildings, and Davison Apartments, which contain 47 dwelling units within 3 buildings.

If the BHA in the future pursues redevelopment of these sites, it will require greater density to replace every existing public housing unit and potentially support additional new housing in mixed-use redevelopment.

TRANSITIONAL RESIDENTIAL TOMORROW



In the transitional residential areas, there are **opportunities** to . . .

- increase housing in places with easy access to the amenities of Cleary Square's mixed-use areas

- provide a transition in activity and scale from high-activity, mixed-use areas to lower-activity, residential areas

. . . by allowing for moderate residental or mixed-use development.

TRANSITIONAL RESIDENTIAL TOMORROW

Within the transitional residential areas, the Land Use and Design Framework...

1. **Grows** residential uses through new development or additions to existing buildings.

2. **Provides** opportunities for property owners to make improvements to existing buildings by allowing yard and build out patterns that are similar to what exists today.

3. **Continues** the existing residential character while allowing for some accessory and small-scale, ground-floor commercial uses, such as home occupations or corner stores.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Projects within the transitional residential areas should . . .

RHYTHM AND TEXTURE

1 Integrate building elements such as bays, balconies, porches, decks, chamfers, and front-facing courtyards (where space allows) to create texture in the streetscape and respect the established architectural rhythm and texture of the existing residential housing.





Above: Residential streetscape with examples of porches, bay windows, and projecting cornices

DIVERSE ROOFLINES

2 Explore a variety of roof forms beyond flat roofs to integrate new development into the diverse architectural character of these streets.



Example of a gabled roof



Example of a mansard roof with dormer



Example of a flat roof

SPACE FOR RESIDENTS TO GATHER

3 Locate outdoor spaces for residents — such as porches, balconies, gardens, play spaces, seating areas, and more — in the front and side yards of the building as required by zoning to create an active streetscape.







Examples of resident gathering spaces such as inset balconies (top), ground level and upper story porches (top right), and projecting balconies (right).





CATALYTIC SITES

Many sites in Cleary Square are **very unlikely to change.** The sites highlighted in **blue** and **green** are unlikely to change for the following reasons:

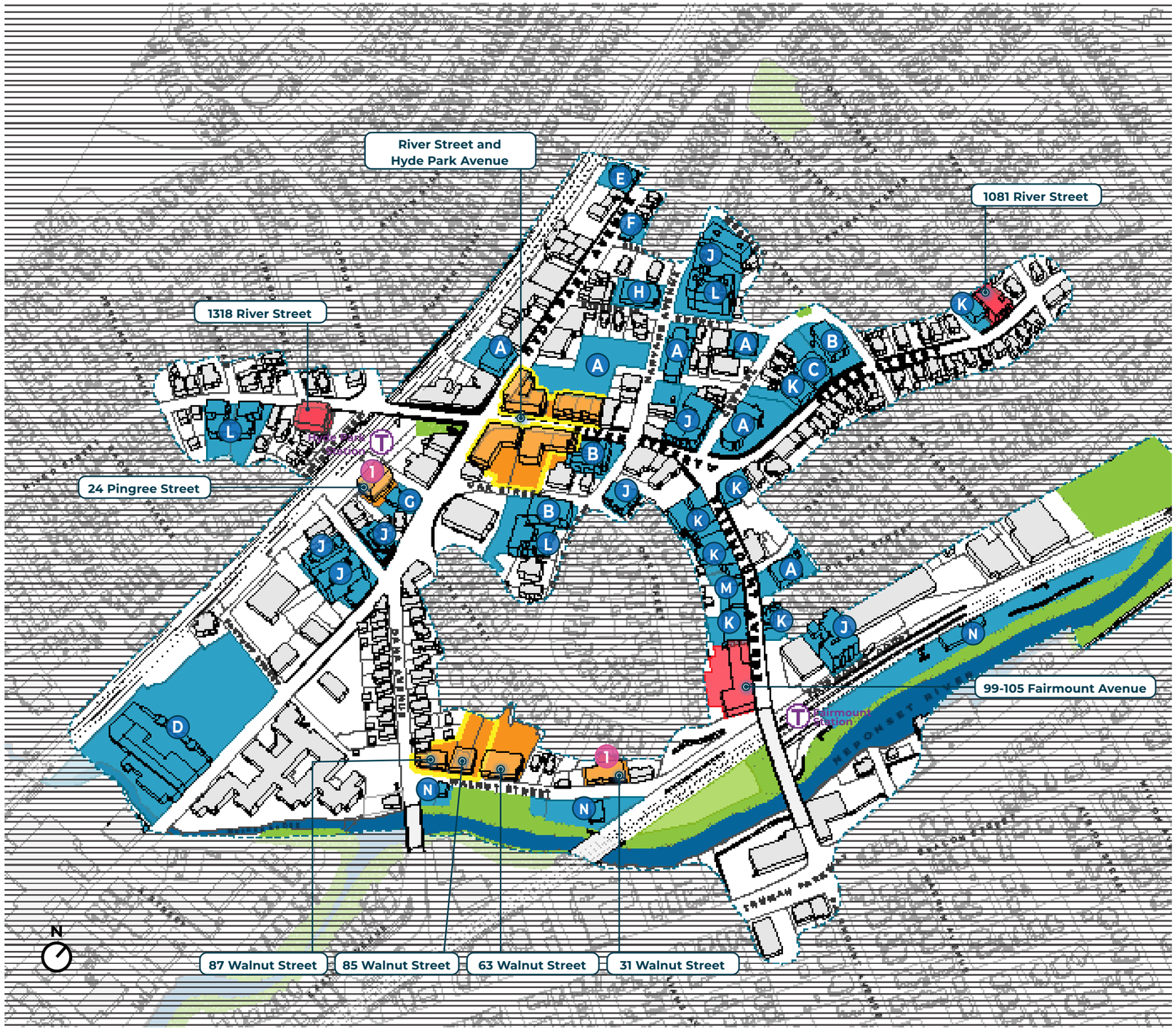
- **A** City-owned parcels with no plans for development
- **B** Historic church
- **C** Existing building with recent improvements/invesments
- **D** Grocery store, which tends to have longer leases
- **E** Gas station, which would require remediation
- **F** Billboard, which allows low-cost revenue
- **G** Infrastructure (substation)
- **H** Infrastructure (telecoms)
- **I** Subsidized housing, complex due to number of residents that would need to be relocated
- **J** Recent development
- **K** Existing building which is only slightly smaller than likely future zoning envelope
- **L** Existing building which is larger than likely future zoning envelope
- **M** Small lots with many owners
- **N** Parcel constrained by flood regulations
- Open space

Some sites in Cleary Square are **more likely to change in the near-term future.** Development of these sites would also **catalyze change** in the area and help **implement the goals of this Plan.** These Catalytic Sites are highlighted in **orange** and **pink**. We know they are likely to change for the following reason:

- **1** City-owned with plans to redevelop
- Property owner has expressed interest in redevelopment
- BPDA Board-approved project
- Small lots with common ownership

This map only focuses on the areas that are likely to be rezoned as a result of this Plan. For the sites that are likely to change, this map also shows what that change might look like. The following pages go into detail about these areas.

This Plan helps guide this change by setting new zoning regulations and design guidelines, since some change is likely to happen with or without this Plan.



RIVER STREET AND HYDE PARK AVENUE

The following is a guide for how possible future development of catalytic sites can meet the goals of this Land Use and Design Framework and overall Plan. Any actual future development at this scale will also go through the Article 80 review process to identify additional design and community priorities.

The intersection of Hyde Park Avenue and River Street contains a collection of lots under common ownership where there has been interest in redevelopment. These lots are at the intersection of two main streets (Hyde Park Avenue and River Street), next to the Hyde Park MBTA Commuter Rail Station as well as the Pocket Park, making the area a center point of community activity and a key gateway to Cleary Square.

A project here could produce about 150-200 new housing units, which would include about 25-40 income restricted units as required by Inclusionary Zoning (Article 79). This project would also be required to comply with Net Zero Carbon zoning (Article 37).



LEGEND

River Street and Hyde Park Avenue lots

Within this area, the Land Use and Design Framework...

Allows for increased mixed-use growth, especially housing located over pedestrian-scaled commercial storefronts, and

Focuses development on active uses and public space improvements around the intersection of Hyde Park Avenue and River Street to create an active entrance into Cleary Square.

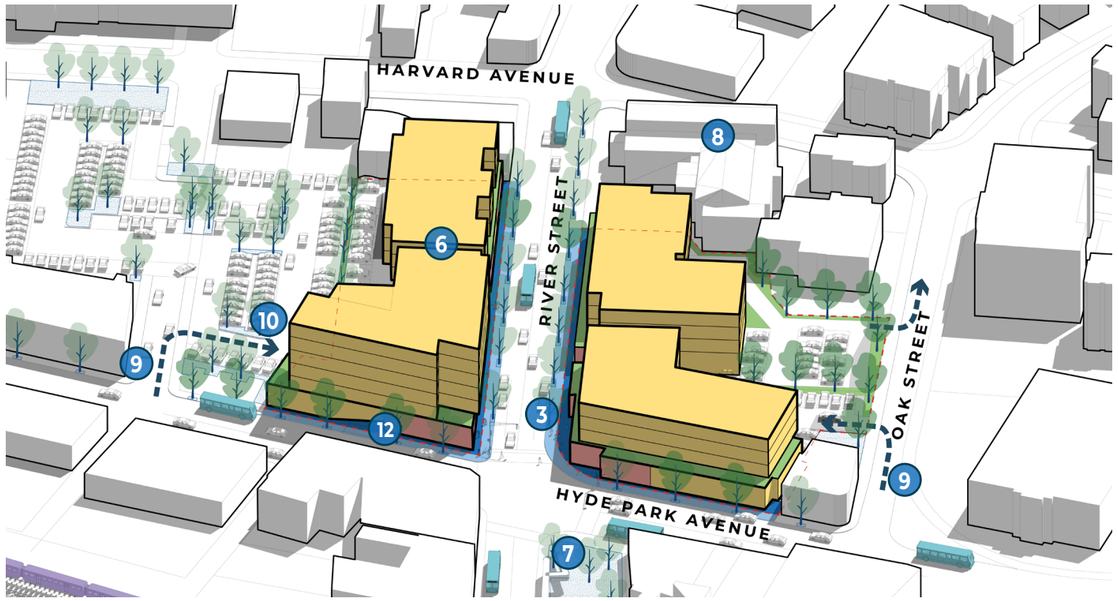


Catalytic site on River Street and Hyde Park Avenue

Redevelopment of this catalytic site should:

1. **Ensure** opportunities for existing businesses to return to new and improved ratail spaces (such as Boston Restaurant Bar & Grill, Delicias Colombianas, and ZAZ Restaurant & Catering). Many of these existing businesses are important community gathering places. This block also has some of the few sit-down restaurants in the area, which community members highlighted as a priority use.
2. **Celebrate** the intersection of Hyde Park Avenue and River Street as a major neighborhood gateway by locating required active uses and prominent architectural elements at the corner of the building(s).
3. **Extend** sidewalks in order to create a Complete Streets. Sidewalks should be at least 15-16 feet wide due to the commercial nature of Hyde Park Avenue and River Street.
4. **Meet** outdoor amenity space requirements by expanding existing public realm assets, such as the sidewalk and street trees, because of this location as a gateway to Cleary Square and center point of community activity.
5. **Include** public art or design features to help strengthen the identity of the Arts Corridor.

RIVER STREET AND HYDE PARK AVENUE



Possible 3D massing for catalytic site on River Street and Hyde Park Avenue

6. **Retain** through connection to the Municipal Parking Lot.
7. **Target** mitigation funds from Article 80-scale developments to community improvements such as enhancements to the Pocket Park.
8. **Respect** adjacency to the historic church with creative design and building placement.
9. **Limit** the number of vehicular access points to improve sidewalk conditions and pedestrian safety, especially on major streets. Use side streets such as Oak Street for parking access. Use Hyde Park Avenue rather than River Street for access to off-street parking due the the narrow width and high pedestrian activity along River Street.
10. **Explore** sharing vehicular access with existing municipal parking lot access for sites on the North side of River Street.
11. **Consider** the proximity to transit access and importance of ground floor commercial and open space when establishing parking ratio. The parking ratio should be no more than the maximum parking ratio indicated by the Boston Transportation Department (BTD) mobility score.
12. **Plant** street trees on sidewalks expanded by the project along Hyde Park Avenue and River Street. This block is partially in a Priority Zone identified by the Urban Forest Plan (see page 139). Approximately twelve new street trees could be added in addition to maintaining the existing eleven tree pits along the site.



Visaulization sketch looking east from the Pocket Park



Existing view looking east from the Pocket Park

24 PINGREE STREET

24 Pingree Street is a BPDA-owned lot. This Plan recommends launching a community engagement process to guide the disposition of this lot with a strong focus on affordable housing, prioritizing developments that address local needs, such as family-sized affordable units and mixed-income housing (see Housing and Real Estate).

The following is a guide for how possible future development of catalytic sites can meet the goals of this Land Use and Design Framework and overall Plan. Any actual future development at this scale will also go through the Article 80 review process to identify additional design and community priorities.



What is public land disposition?

A disposition process identifies under-used publicly owned land and engages in a community process to establish how those parcels should be developed by private entities.

This lot can provide additional affordable and/or mixed income housing near a major transit hub (the Hyde Park Commuter Rail Station) and can grow the commercial core of the Square. The housing developed here can be made available at higher levels of affordability, subject to public funding availability and requirements. This project would also be required to comply with Net Zero Carbon zoning (Article 37).

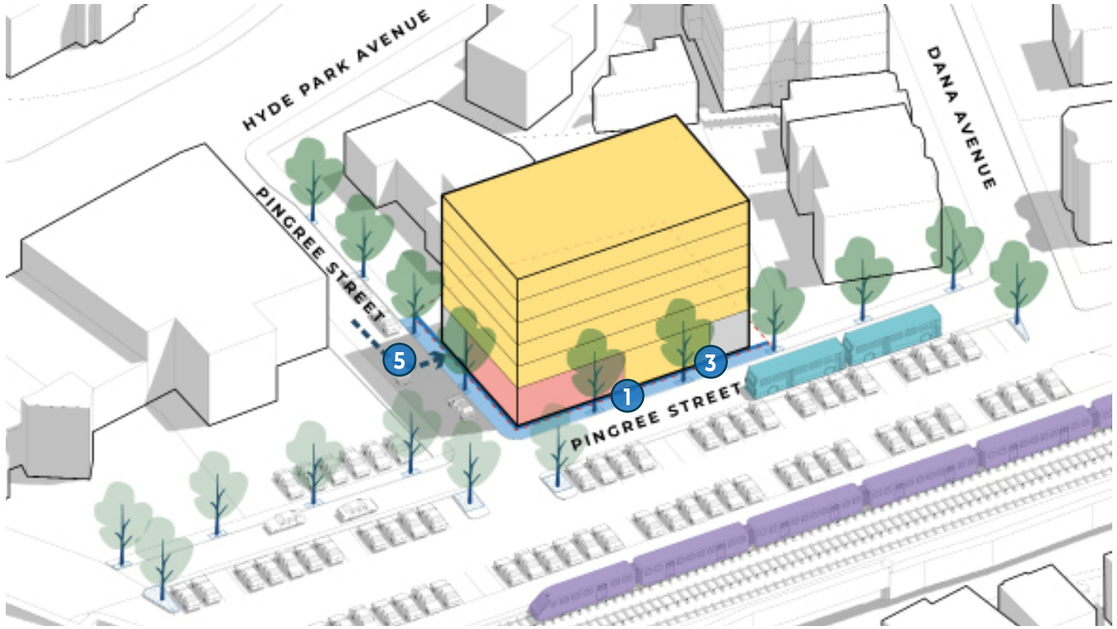
Within this area, the Land Use and Design Framework...

Provides opportunities to utilize BPDA-owned lots for community desired uses such as open space and public and affordable housing development.



Proposed site at Pingree Street corner facing the MBTA parking lot

24 PINGREE STREET



Possible 3D massing for catalytic site at Pingree Street



Visaulization sketch looking south from MBTA parking area

Redevelopment of this catalytic site should:

1. **Extend** sidewalks in order to creat a Complete Street. Sidewalks should be at least 12 feet wide to improve the street frontage along Pingree Street for pedestrians.
2. **Expand** the commercial core of Cleary Square with active ground floor uses.
3. **Mitigate** impacts of adjacent commuter rail through creative building massing, material selection, and other screening strategies, subject to MBTA regulations. Mitigation techniques could include adding street trees along the west leg of Pingree Street.
4. **Follow** the MOH Design Standards for the design of affordable housing units.
5. **Use** the north rather than west side of the lot for vehicular access to avoid conflict with bus layover space (see Recommendation T-11)



Existing view looking south from MBTA parking area

WALNUT STREET

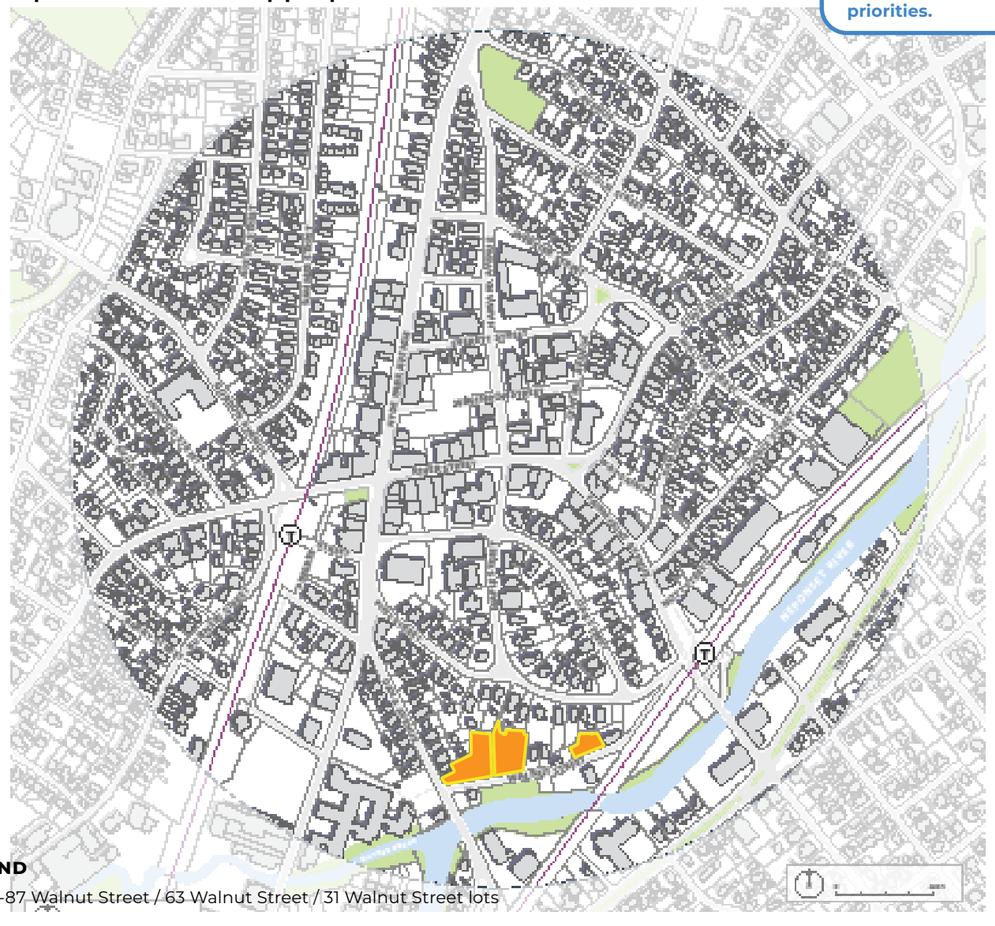
87 WALNUT ST / 85 WALNUT ST / 63 WALNUT ST / 31 WALNUT ST

There are various sites of potential change along Walnut Street.

85-87 and 63 Walnut Street are lots where individual property owners have expressed interest in redevelopment.

The parcel at 31 Walnut Street is a BPDA-owned lot which this plan recommends for disposition. This plan recommends starting a community process to determine whether the BPDA-owned lot should be developed for affordable housing, open space or another appropiate desired use.

The following is a guide for how possible future development can meet the goals of this Land Use and Design Framework and the overall Plan. For 31 Walnut Street, a future disposition process will include additional community engagement and consider community land use priorities. Any actual future development at this scale will also go through the Article 80 review process to identify additional design and community priorities.



LEGEND

85-87 Walnut Street / 63 Walnut Street / 31 Walnut Street lots

What is public land disposition?

A disposition process identifies under-used publicly owned land and engages in a community process to establish how those parcels should be developed by private entities.

These lots can provide additional housing near a major transit hub (the Fairmount Commuter Rail Station). On the BPDA-owned parcel new housing can be made available at higher levels of affordability subject to available public funding. These projects would also be required to comply with Net Zero Carbon zoning (Article 37).

Walnut Street currently does not have any sidewalk, which creates a safety concern for residents traveling to and from the Fairmount Commuter Rail Station. The potential private development here could be key to providing funding (through Article 80 mitigation funds) to create a new sidewalk along Walnut Street.

Within this area, the Land Use and Design Framework...

Requires all new developments to be designed to improve permeability, open space amenities, and public connections to open spaces along the Neponset wherever possible.



Proposed adjacent development sites 85-87 Walnut St and 63 Walnut St, as well as City-owned lot at 31 Walnut St

WALNUT STREET

87 WALNUT ST / 85 WALNUT ST / 63 WALNUT ST



Possible 3D massing for catalytic sites at 85-87 and 63 Walnut Street

Redevelopment of this catalytic site should:

1. **Meet outdoor amenity space and yard requirements** by supporting construction of new complete sidewalk along development sites.
2. **Target** mitigation funds from Article 80-scale developments on construction of sidewalk along full length of Walnut Street.
3. **Maximize** permeable area to prevent flooding and reduce runoff along the Neponset River.
4. **Reduce visual impact** of large facades along Walnut Street with the use of architectural details.
5. **Use creative grading strategies** to reduce impact to mature trees and integrate development into steeply sloping properties.
6. **Work with adjacent parcels** and professional landscape architects to minimize impacts of significant regrading during development.
7. **Limit the number of vehicular access points** by sharing access between adjacent developments whenever possible. Shared access to driveways can reduce curb cuts and improve the conditions of the pedestrian realm.
8. **Preserve** existing tree canopy wherever possible and ensure that trees are replanted as needed with species recommended by the Urban Forest Plan.



Visaulization sketch of 87 Walnut St looking east from Dana Ave and Walnut St



Visaulization sketch of 63 Walnut St looking east on Walnut Street



Existing view from corner of Dana Ave and Walnut St

WALNUT STREET

31 WALNUT ST



Possible 3D massing for catalytic site at Walnut Street

Redevelopment of this catalytic site should:

1. **Maximize** permeable area to prevent flooding and reduce runoff along the Neponset River.
2. **Reduce** visual impact of any future structures on the lot through the use of architectural details.
3. **Provide** access to outdoor amenity space by supporting construction of new public sidewalks, along Walnut Street, as needed, and creative use of grading to integrate development into steeply sloping properties.
4. **Site** future structures in a manner informed by natural topography, flood patterns, and mature canopy preservation.
5. **Work with adjacent parcels** and professional landscape architects to minimize impacts of significant regrading during development.
6. **Limit the number of vehicular access points** by sharing access between adjacent developments whenever possible. Shared access to driveways can reduce curb cuts and improve the conditions of the pedestrian realm.
7. **Preserve** existing tree canopy wherever possible and ensure that trees are replanted as needed with species recommended by the Urban Forest Plan.



Visaulization sketch of City-owned parcel looking east on Walnut Street towards Fairmount Commuter Rail Station



Existing view of of City-owned parcel looking east on Walnut Street towards Fairmount Commuter Rail Station

1081 RIVER STREET

This project has gone through the Article 80 review process and received approvals from the BPDA Board in 2023. However, it has not received final building permits or started construction, so the project could change in the future. Significant changes cannot be made without Planning Department review, community process, and BPDA Board approval.

The approved project is a four-story, residential building with 28 rental units (including six affordable (IDP) units).

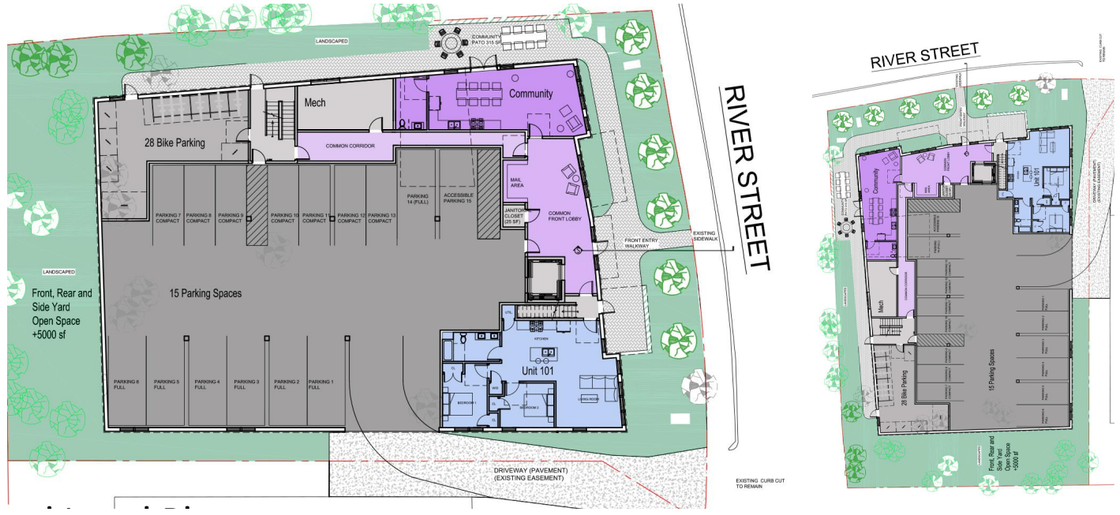


LEGEND

1081 River Street lot

Within this area, the Land Use and Design Framework...

Affirms the small, pedestrian scale form of existing commercial land uses that complement the community and commercial core.



Article 80 approved project Imagery - Full approved project cn be found on line on: https://bpda.box.com/s/9ro9spnm1u3tei07yjncq6r4gzsjfubj

The approved project includes these features which help achieve the goals of this Plan:

1. **Improvements to the sidewalk** widths and accessibility in front of the Site on the public sidewalks by removing existing pinch points created by an existing overgrown tree in the sidewalk, as well as removing the existing retaining wall at the front of the Site, both of which currently constrain pedestrian accessibility and passage on River Street.

2. $35,000 contribution to the City's Fund for Parks to **fund efforts to maintain green space at Ross Playground/Field and future West Street Playground** located near this Proposed Project in Hyde Park.

3. **Large front yard** which provides opportunities for trees and landscaping to buffer residents from the street.

4. **Fifteen (15) off-street parking spaces** (which is a ratio of 0.54)

5. **Twenty-eight (28) bicycle parking spaces**.

6. **Shared driveway** for parking access.

1318 RIVER STREET

This project has gone through the Article 80 review process and received approvals from the BPDA Board. However, it has not received final building permits or started construction, so the project could change in the future. Significant changes cannot be made without Planning Department review, community process, and BPDA Board approval.

This project was approved by the BPDA Board in 2021 and received approval for a Notice of Project Change in 2025. The approved project is a four-story residential building with thirty rental units (including four affordable (IDP) units) and one ground floor retail space.



Within this area, the Land Use and Design Framework...

Supports more pedestrian activity between existing commercial clusters by allowing opportunities for new mixed-use development.



Article 80 approved project Imagery - Full approved project cn be found on line on: https://bpda.box.com/s/1qx5k50rcl7qiyd3642ls3ssoikj5uql

The approved project includes these features which help achieve the goals of this Plan:

1. **Ground-level retail** to expand the commercial core of Cleary Square on the west side of the Hyde Park Commuter Rail Station.

2. **Improvements to the transportation infrastructure** at the corner of River Street and Business Street through permanent activation of the improved public plaza completed by the River Street Bridge project, or interim tactical safety improvements (if completed in advance of the River Street Bridge project).

3. **Twenty (20) off-street parking spaces** (which is a ratio of 0.67).

4. **Thirty (30) long-term secure bicycle parking spaces** and eight (8) visitor short-term bike parking spaces.

Recommendation T-16: Reconfigure the intersection of Gordon Ave/River St following the reconstruction of the River St Bridge to shorten crosswalks and slow turning vehicle speed.

How this development relates to Reccomendation T-16: Depending on this project's construction timeline, it will either make interim tactical improvements to the River Street/Business Street intersection, or further the capital improvements being made to this intersection by MassDOT's River Street Bridge Project.

99-105 FAIRMOUNT AVENUE

This project has gone through the Article 80 review process and received approvals from the BPDA Board in 2019. However, it has not received final building permits or started construction, so the project could change in the future. Significant changes cannot be made without Planning Department review, community process, and BPDA Board approval.

The approved project is a four-story, mixed-use building with 47 units (including six affordable (IDP) units) and two commercial retail spaces.



Within this area, the Land Use and Design Framework...

Allows for increased mixed-use growth, especially housing located over pedestrian-scaled commercial storefronts.



Article 80 approved project Imagery - Full approved project cn be found on line on: https://bpda.box.com/s/3zurh76afxberjrliyi305nfyr24h7r2

The approved project includes these features which help achieve the goals of this Plan:

1. **Construction of a raised crosswalk** to connect pedestrians to the Fairmount MBTA Commuter Rail stairway, subject to approval by the Transportation Department, Public Works, and the Public Improvement Commission.

2. $40,000 contribution to the Boston Transportation Department to implement **pedestrian, ADA, and bicycle access improvements** in the vicinity of the Fairmount MBTA Commuter Rail Station.

3. $20,000 contribution to the City's Fund for Parks, which will be targeted to fund **street trees and horticulture improvements** in Cleary Square and Logan Square.

4. Vehicular access on Maple Street instead of Fairmount Avenue in order to **minimize effects on traffic and improve pedestrian safety** along major corridors.

5. **Thirty-three (33) garage parking spaces** (which is a ratio of 0.7).

6. **Forty-seven (47) bicycle parking spaces.**

PARKING IN CLEARY SQUARE

Accessible parking is essential to the vitality of the Cleary Square business district. Hyde Park residents rely on convenient parking to access the services and amenities that make Cleary Square a thriving community hub, and businesses need employee and customer parking. **Preserving the accessibility of parking is a key priority - both today and in the future.**

SHARED PARKING:

In Squares + Streets areas, people often visit many businesses during one trip to the square. It's therefore important that there is parking that can service the whole area, as opposed to only a single building or business.

1. **Parking Lots and on-Street Parking:** City-owned parking spaces, such as on-street parking and the municipal parking lot off of Hyde Park Avenue, will continue to serve as important parking resources in Cleary Square.

PUBLIC PARKING IN CLEARY SQUARE

There are over 800 public parking spaces within the heart of Cleary Square. During parking counts completed in March 2024, parking utilization within the area ranged from a minimum of 39% utilized on Saturday morning to a maximum of 69% utilized midday during the week (See Appendix III).

2. **Shared Parking on Private Property:** Squares + Streets zoning districts allow property owners and businesses to share spaces or rent out unused parking spaces for other needs, including for residents, employees, or visitors to the Square.

3. **Garages:** The flexible dimensions of the Squares + Streets zoning districts will make it more possible to create additional parking through the construction of garages and structured parking within buildings. In particular, the Land Use and Design Framework of this Plan recommends allowing the possibility of structured parking by Fairmount Station to provide more parking for tenants, visitors, and commuter rail riders.

MBTA PARKING LOTS IN CLEARY SQUARE

During parking counts completed in March 2024, the MBTA lot at Fairmount Station was well-used during the week with utilization between 80% and 90% from 9AM to 4PM on Wednesday (See Appendix III).

THE MUNICIPAL PARKING LOT IN CLEARY SQUARE

Throughout our community engagement process, we consistently heard strong community support for maintaining parking on the municipal parking lot on Winthrop Street between Hyde Park Avenue and the Hyde Park Library. In response, the Planning Department recommends that the City remain committed to preserving this parking resource.

Some community members expressed interest in exploring additional uses for the lot such as affordable housing, a small business incubator, or cultural space, provided that the existing parking is retained or expanded. While these ideas offer meaningful opportunities to address displacement and support community growth, the Planning Department recommends deferring any such redevelopment for at least 5 years.

The deferral of any development consideration would allow the City to fully understand parking needs and patterns that result from the rezoning of Cleary Square, and would allow the City to incorporate those needs into any future planning or development of the site so that the lot can continue to serve as a shared resource and support for Cleary Square.



Aerial photo of the municipal parking lot



The municipal parking lot (with 111 spaces) at Winthrop St is the most well-utilized public parking lot in the area. Utilization of the municipal parking lot at Winthrop St ranged from a minimum of 17% on Saturday morning to 100% during the middle of the day on Wednesday.

PARKING IN CLEARY SQUARE

ACCESSORY PARKING:

All of the Squares + Streets zoning districts allow accessory parking, where parking is built alongside and to serve another use like a business or housing.

1. **Accessory to new buildings:**
   Many new buildings will include parking as part of the development. Projects over 20,000 square feet or with 15 or more units are reviewed through the Article 80 process to ensure they are designed to meet the community's parking and transportation needs, and to mitigate transportation impacts.

   For example, the recently approved B'Nai B'Rith Senior Housing Development at 1201 River Street was not required by zoning to provide parking because it is a fully affordable housing development. Even though there was no minimum parking required through zoning, the project includes 40 spaces to provide parking to residents.

2. **Accessory to existing buildings:**
   Many existing buildings have outdated zoning that requires that much more space on a lot be dedicated to parking than what currently exists. This means property owners need to get a variance to make positive changes, including turning existing storage space to living or commercial space or turning existing underutilized parking into outdoor dining space. It also means that parking minimums could encourage demolition of existing buildings in order to make space for parking required by existing zoning.

   Existing buildings with accessory parking can continue that use, and new accessory parking can be sized to preserve existing buildings and meet the need of new uses.



Aerial Diagram: Existing buildings with and without accessory parking

Businesses like the Bank of America and Lore Insurance are examples of businesses along River Street that have accessory parking like as is allowed in Squares + Streets zoning districts.

Other nearby businesses like Blue River Food Shop do not have accessory parking and can use shared parking like the municipal parking lot, or with owner permission, nearby private lots. This condition is also allowed and encouraged in Squares + Streets zoning districts.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Cleary Square is populated by many old buildings of varied styles that lend the area its character.

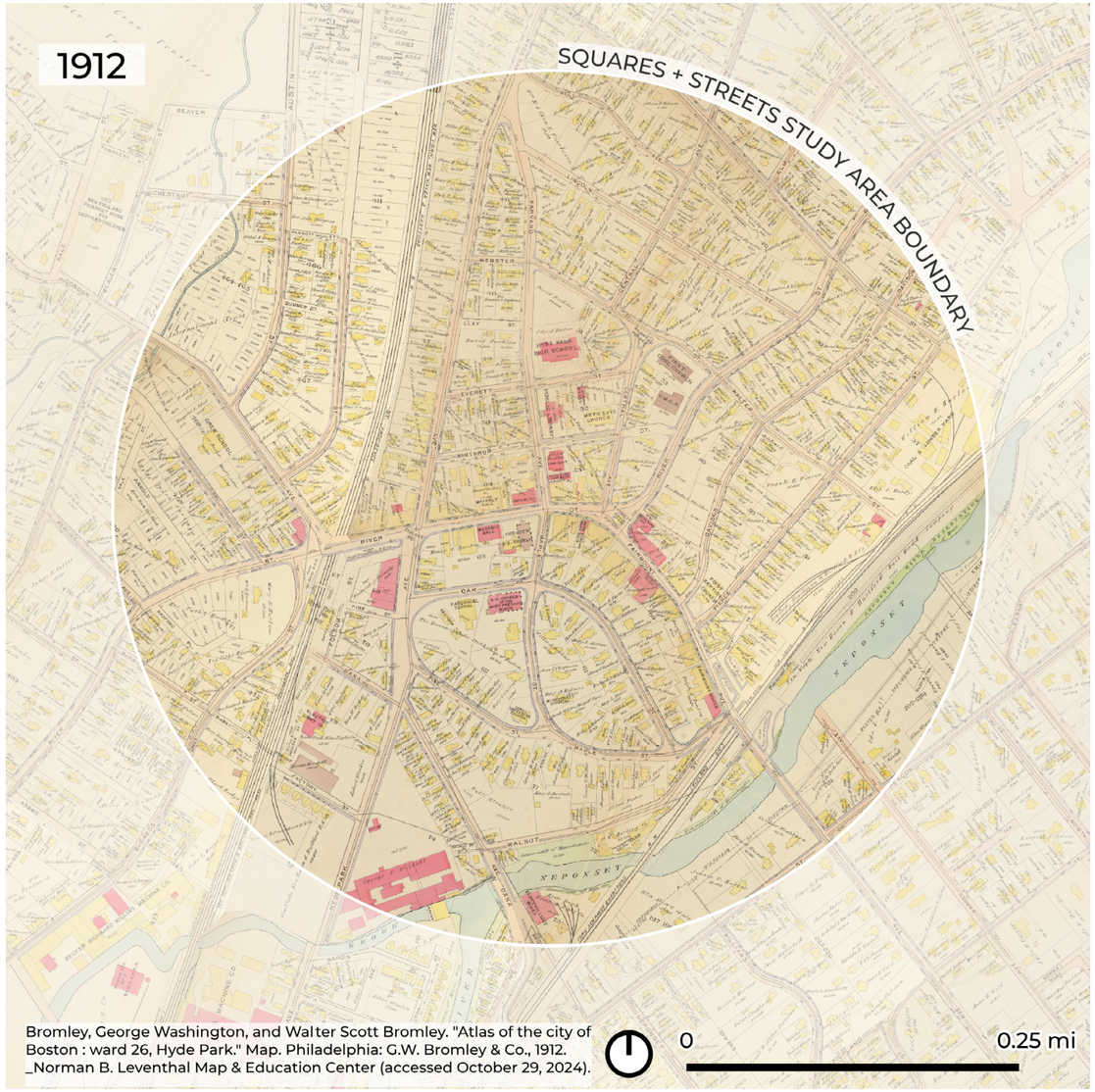
Yet many of these buildings are not inventoried in the database of the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) — an entity that serves as the State Review Board for state and federal preservation programs — or granted a historic designation by the Boston Landmarks Commission, which regulates physical alterations. See the map on the right for historically designated buildings and areas in Cleary Square. Buildings that do not have a historic inventory form, called an Area Form, are less likely to be preserved and adaptively reused. Squares + Streets will open up opportunities for development, and historic preservation tools should be leveraged to facilitate contextual growth that respects existing historic fabric.

A historic context study in this plan, prepared by Utile and VHB, identifies key features of Cleary's built environment today, including several inventoried historic structures and areas (*see* **Appendix IV**). This study lays the groundwork for an update to the Area Form for Cleary Square, which was most recently updated in 1982.

An Area Form documents the historic context for a defined area to understand how — and why — the buildings, institutions, layout, residents, and owners have evolved over time. This information is accompanied by a survey of all historic buildings and features, existing and historic photographs and maps.

Area Forms are used to evaluate whether the subject area (in whole or in part) or structures within the subject area meet the criteria for eligibility for the National or State Registers of Historic Places. These are important building or site classifications in state and federal historic regulatory review since they qualify buildings or structures for historic preservation tax credits and other funding incentives for adaptive reuse.

With the exception of landmarking a building, site, or district — which can be initiated through a citizens petition to the Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC) — a building's historic classification does not guarantee that it will not be significantly altered or demolished, in full or in-part. Rather, historic classification incentivizes property owners to seek alternatives to demolition and maintain historic fabric as the basis for contextual adaptation of existing buildings to support the evolution of the built environment.



Cleary Square in the early 20th Century, (Source: "Atlas of the city of Boston: ward 26 Hyde Park," 1912 by G. W. Bromley & Co. Leventhal Map & Education Center at the Boston Public Library)

LAND USE AND DESIGN

RECOMMENDATIONS:

LD-1. Update the zoning map to encode the goals for mixed-use and multi-family residential development in and around Cleary Square Based on the Land Use and Design Framework.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Planning Department*

LD-1a. Map Squares + Streets districts throughout mixed-use areas of Cleary Square, at key gateways to Cleary Square, to provide transitions to smaller-scale residential areas.

LD-1b. Map Open Space Zoning Districts on land designated as park space to reflect their status as protected and conserved open spaces.

LD-1c. Where this plan envisions continued small-scale residential uses and incremental growth, **update residential zoning** through future zoning reform to reflect existing built patterns, support safe walking routes to Cleary Square, and enable the development of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and small multi-unit residential buildings.

LD-2. Incorporate the Land Use and Design Framework in ongoing review of proposed projects undergoing planning review (such as through Article 80 or the Zoning Board of Appeal)

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Planning Department (Planning Review Team, Urban Design Division, Development Review Division)*
- *Zoning Board of Appeal* (ZBA)

LD-3. Complete an area form update - including an updated inventory of potentially historic structures - for the Cleary Square area to file with the Massachusetts Historic Commission (MHC).

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Boston Landmarks Commission* (BLC)



CHAPTER 04

HOUSING AND REAL ESTATE

This chapter presents a summary of existing conditions for Cleary Square's housing and demographic characteristics, and ties this data to key community engagement themes and recommendations for housing and real estate.

EXISTING CONDITIONS: HOUSING AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Cleary Square is a racially and ethnically diverse community. A rich history of immigration contributes to the neighborhood's diversity.

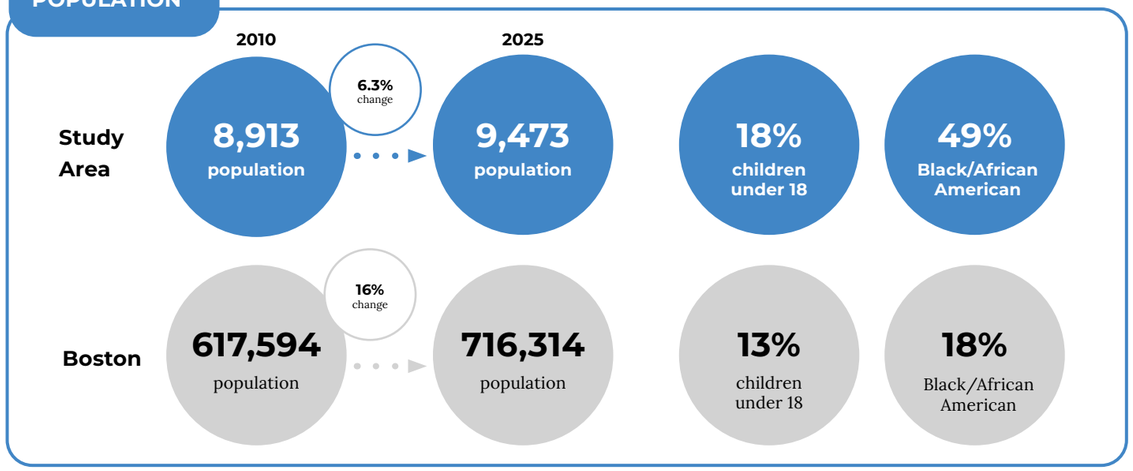
In Cleary Square, approximately 50% residents identify as Black/African American, roughly 25% of residents identify as Hispanic/Latino, and close to 20% of residents identify as white.

About 80% of the population identifies as non-White, making this area a BIPOC majority area. Since the 1970s, Hyde Park has continued to grow as one of the most diverse neighborhoods in Boston.

- **82% identify as non-White**
- **49% identify as Black/African American**
- **26% identify as Hispanic/Latino**

41% of this area's rental households spend **35% or more of their household income on rent**, a high level of rental cost burden and another indication of demand for additional income-restricted housing.

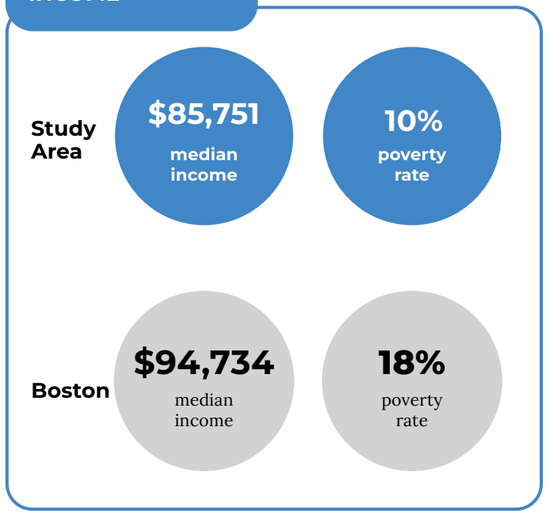
POPULATION



Given this, and the high percentage of population that is rent burderned, Cleary Square can benefit from utilizing City-owned lots for housing growth. This is particularly true for larger sites like the Pingree Street and Walnut Street lots.

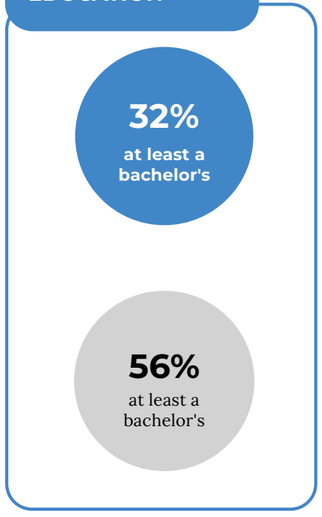
This area contains the highest percentage of people who identify as Black/African American population citywide. Given this, Cleary Square can benefit from anti-displacement strategies in place to mitigate displacement of a growing population.

INCOME



Cleary's median income compared to the city iillustrates a need to produce more housing in the neighborhood for lower incomes.

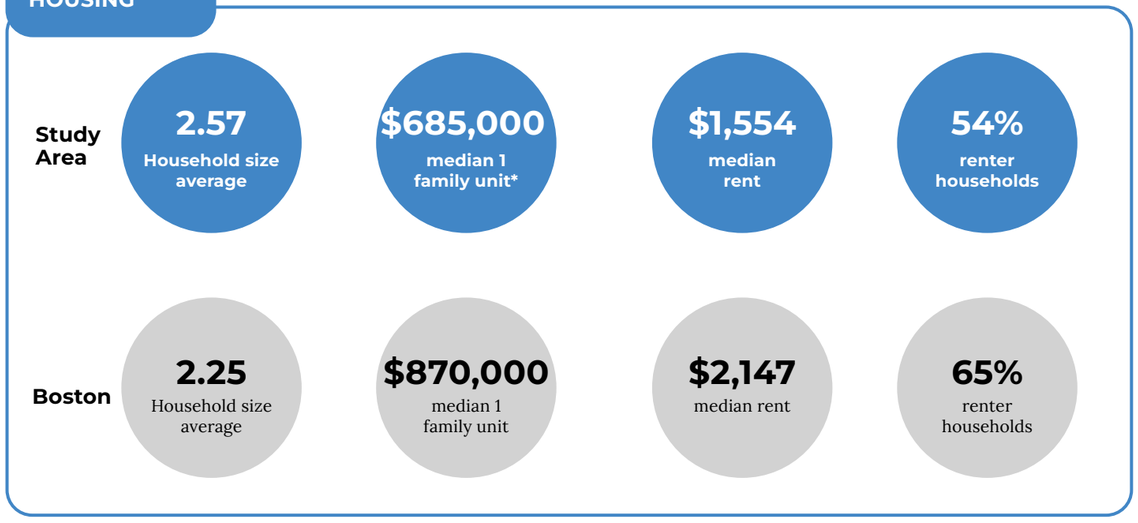
EDUCATION



Mixed-income housing in particular will help facilitate a more sociodemographically integrated community, supporting a key community goal.

** indicates data is reported at a neighborhood level - otherwise, the data is reported based on the geography of the study area*

HOUSING



Housing prices in Cleary are lower than city average for both rental and for-sale units, indicative of a relatively more affordable neighborhood to live in. Cleary Square has proportionally more middle-density housing structures than the city, likely a result of the industrial needs pre-war, triple-decker and smaller multifamily structures in the area. In addition to producing new housing, there should be focus on preserving existing affordable housing stock in Cleary Square.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The proposed housing strategies for Cleary Square prioritize creating a diverse range of housing options to enhance livability for all residents and support families in staying within the area.

By encouraging the development of different housing types that cater to various needs—such as multi-bedroom units for families, accessible rental homes for housing voucher holders, and smaller units for individuals or couples—the plan fosters a community that accommodates residents at every stage of life. These efforts aim to balance affordability and inclusivity, ensuring Cleary Square remains a vibrant and welcoming neighborhood. Redeveloping public parcels, like the Pingree Street lot, offers opportunities to blend community-desired uses with expanded housing choices. Whether through mixed-use developments, income-restricted housing, or market-rate units, this strategy will provide options for families, seniors, and young professionals alike.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THEMES AND PRIORITIES:

OFFER A VARIETY OF HOUSING OPTIONS

There is an ongoing interest in ensuring that new housing offers a variety of options to meet the diverse needs of Hyde Park residents. Community members have highlighted the importance of creating housing types that support families, including multi-bedroom rental units, townhomes, and homeownership opportunities, to allow families to grow and stay in the neighborhood. By prioritizing a mix of rental and ownership options, new housing developments can help maintain the community's character, foster stability, and ensure Hyde Park remains an inclusive and welcoming place for residents at all stages of life.

SOCIOECONOMIC INTEGRATION

There is a community desire to see integration of different types of housing that encourages a mix of income levels to help improve the quality of life for residents and strengthens the broader community in Cleary Square.

SUPPORT FOR MEASURES THAT ENSURE HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

There is concern that new development in the Square may not align with current household incomes, and a desire to address rising housing costs driven by new projects and investments. While Inclusionary Zoning requires 17% of residential square footage to be income-restricted at an average of 60% Area Median Income, with 3% set aside for voucher holders, many residents feel this does not fully address the community's needs.

DESIRE TO LEVERAGE PUBLIC LAND FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

There is strong community support for utilizing public land to create new housing that achieves greater affordability than what is usually offered by private developments. The Square's study area includes several opportunities to optimize public land for affordable housing initiatives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

LEVERAGE PUBLICLY OWNED LAND AND PARCEL ACQUISITION TO INCREASE AFFORDABLE HOUSING STOCK

H-1. Begin disposition of Pingree Street lot for affordable housing in Cleary Square: **Launch a community engagement process** to guide the disposition of the vacant lot on Pingree Street, with a strong focus on affordable housing for Cleary Square. Prioritize developments that address local needs, such as family-sized affordable units (2- and 3-bedroom apartments) and mixed-income housing.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Boston Planning & Development Agency* (BPDA)
- *Private Development*
- *Planning Department (Real Estate Division)*

H-2. Begin disposition of Walnut Street lot for community-desired use: **Conduct a community engagement process** to determine the best use for the vacant lot on Walnut Street.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Private Development*
- *Mayor's Office of Housing* (MOH)

Parcel acquisition describes the process of identifying empty parcels, income-restricted housing with expiring terms of affordability, or low-cost housing at risk of increasing in price.

H-3. Leverage the Boston Housing Acquisition Loan Fund to support responsible developers, such as CDCs and Community Land Trusts, in purchasing market rate properties and removing them from the private market. Acquisitions would be driven by community support and financial feasibility.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Private Development*
- *Planning Department (Real Estate Division)*
- *Mayor's Office of Housing* (MOH)

This will focus on properties in strategic locations, preferably near transit corridors to preserve affordability.

H-4. Create Guidelines for Public Acquisitions Develop clear acquisition guidelines to facilitate the purchase of key properties in Cleary Square.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Mayor's Office of Housing* (MOH)
- *Planning Department*

This will help guide future parcel acquisition processes to be streamlined with a clear set of guidelines for purchasing land.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

H-5. **Support** the City in moving forward tenant protection measures and other assistance programs, including requiring more landlords to provide earlier and more comprehensive notifications regarding evictions or displacement due to redevelopment.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Planning Department*
- *Planning Advisory Council* (PAC)

The **Anti-Displacement Action Plan**, released on March 19, 2025, serves as a roadmap for the City of Boston's work to confront residential, commercial, and cultural displacement citywide over the next two years. The plan builds on foundational work to understand community concerns and issues around displacement, assess our existing anti-displacement tools, and identify key gaps in our toolkit. The Action Plan seeks to address those gaps and strengthen protections for residents and small operators most at risk of displacement.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

How can Cleary Square leverage public assets?

WALNUT STREET

This Mayor's of Housing (MOH) owned lot offers a key opportunity for redevelopment to provide additional housing options near a major transit hub, Fairmount Commuter Rail Station.



Aerial Photo: Walnut St

PINGREE STREET

This BPDA-owned lot can provide additional housing near a major transit hub, Hyde Park Commuter Rail Station, and can grow the commercial core of the Square.



Aerial Photo: Pingree St



CHAPTER 05

SMALL BUSINESS

This chapter presents a summary of existing conditions for Cleary Square's commercial environment, and ties this summary to key community engagement themes and recommendations to support small businesses in Cleary Square.

A full ***Small Business Memo***, including sources and additional information, can be found in Appendix II.

EXISTING CONDITIONS: SMALL BUSINESSES

Cleary Square's businesses include a variety of uses serving the immediate study area, such as restaurants, take out spots, convenience stores, salons/barber shops, hair accessories boutiques, nail salons, tailors, professional services, and health clinics.

The Square is home to 381 businesses and 1,120 payroll jobs, many of which are small-locally owned businesses. Amongst these,approximately 45 percent of businesses in the Square have fewer than five (5) employees.

Many of the small businesses in the Square serve the local Spanish and Haitian-Creole speaking communities. This is largely reflected in the diversity of businesses located there, including Park54, Little Haiti, Fan Fan Bakery, ZaZ, Rincon, and Las Colombianas - making Cleary Square a particularly vibrant and unique place to spend time in Boston. While Cleary Sqaure is home to a variety of businesses, the largest industry by employment is information, finance, and professional and business services with 84 businesses employing 401 people.

That's all to say that Cleary Square is a locally-focused neighborhood commercial center. About 87% of people spending time in Cleary Square live within three (3) miles of the Square, and a majority (52%) of those people live within one (1) mile of the Square, while just over a third (34%) live within half a mile or from walking distance The people who come from further away tend to come from areas that are demographically similar to the immediate study area Most of the businesses rely on the immediate area as the focal customer base.



Businesses on Fairmount Street



Businesses on River Street



Businesses on River Street

Due to the low foot traffic during the evenings and weekends, some businesses within Cleary Square have minimal to no operational hours during those periods of time. The difference can be visibly seen when visiting the Square between the hours of 2pm-6pm from Tuesdays to Fridays compared to other days in the week. Recently passed state legislation to expand liquor licenses in Boston could help attract more food and beverage spots to the Square, boosting commercial activity after 6pm and providing additional foot traffic. For example, since this planning process began, one Hyde Park business, Boston Pickle Club, has been able to attain a new Beer and Wine license. The retail vacancy rate is very low (0.3%) in the Square, indicative of possible demand for additional retail space. Additional density can be a possible intervention to help create more retail spaces to serve the community (refer to Land Use and Design Framework).More importantly, it can be used to improve the quality of retail spaces to host a wider range of uses. A full Small Business Memo, including sources and additional information, can be found be Appendix II.



Businesses on the intersection of River Street and Hyde Park Avenue

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement in Cleary Square has highlighted several key priorities for supporting local businesses and fostering a vibrant commercial district.

Through a series of community forums, workshops, walkshops, and focus groups the Squares + Streets planning team learned about the community's vision for the future of Cleary Square's business corridor.

Cleary Square is home to a vibrant and diverse assortment of small businesses that are hubs for everyday community gatherings, and provide for the daily needs of local residents. Most, if not all, of the businesses are locally owned, and owners have developed deep and rich relationships with their regulars.

Working closely with the Office of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion (OEOI), the planning team crafted strategies to highlight the unique strengths of local businesses, attract a broader regional customer base, and unlock new opportunities for growing and diversifying Cleary Square's business ecosystem.



Kick-off Post -it note



Spring Survey comment



Cleary Square Business Owenr

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THEMES AND PRIORITIES:

STOREFRONT AND INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

Residents envision a more connected and vibrant Cleary Square, with improved infrastructure like upgraded traffic signals for improved safety and fewer sidewalk obstructions at key intersections along Hyde Park Avenue and River Street. These upgrades would enhance safety, highlight the area's unique character, and contribute to a unified identity for the Square. Paired with efforts like storefront updates and public art, these changes aim to create a welcoming and cohesive community hub.

DIVERSIFICATION OF COMMERCIAL USES AND FURTHER ACTIVATE THE SQUARE

Community members have expressed a strong desire for more diverse businesses in Cleary Square that reflect and serve the neighborhood's character. They're calling for affordable and healthy food options, cafes, sit-down restaurants, and casual daytime eateries that complement the current mix of ground-floor shops. Residents especially value businesses offering culturally relevant and affordable goods and services for Haitian Creole, Latinx, and other immigrant communities in the area

PROTECTIONS AND SUPPORTS FOR SMALL BIPOC AND IMMIGRANT OWNED BUSINESSES

Community members are deeply concerned about the need to protect and support first- and second-generation immigrant small business owners in the Square. Neighbors want to ensure these businesses can continue to thrive and remain a vital part of the community.

BRIDGE CLOSURE

Due to the bridge closure on River Street in 2024, there was community desire to see the impacted small businesses in the surrounding area be directly supported or provided technical assistance to continue operations until the bridge reopened in December 2024. Bridgefest, arts and culture event hosted in the summer, became a community-led effort to revive the area that started due to the bridge closure, and there is a community desire to see other similar interventions be introduced to address the need. Although the bridge has reopened as of December 2024, with MassDOT's larger plan to replace the entire bridge, interventions will be necessary to help support the directly impacted.

EXPANSION TO REGIONAL CUSTOMER BASE

Business owners are concerned that most of their customers come from the immediate area. They would like to see more opportunities to attract a broader regional customer base, which would help them grow and achieve higher profit margins.

NIGHTLIFE AND MORE ACTIVITY

Business owners are concerned about the limited foot traffic in the Square during evenings and weekends. There is a growing interest in exploring strategies to bring more energy and activity to the area, such as incorporating public art, nightlife events, and other creative interventions to make the Square a vibrant destination.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SB-1. Expand on indoor recreation (for youth), entertainment, affordable grocery store, retail, and restaurant land uses within the study area through appropriate rezoning in the community and commercial core and relevant growth areas, and through development review that supports the desired community uses. **(Refer to Land Use and Design framework)**

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Planning Department (Development Review Division)*
- *Private Development*

SB-2. Create a "Welcome to Cleary Square Marketing Booklet" tool for development by real estate agents, brokers, and developers that will encourage development of the desired community uses in Cleary Square.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Mayor's Office of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion (OEOI)*
- *Hyde Park Main Streets (HPMS)*

SB-3. Provide technical assistance resources for first and second-generation business owners, focusing on business development strategies during the first 3-5 years of opening as well as navigating online platforms such as UberEats.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Mayor's Office of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion (OEOI)*
- *Hyde Park Main Streets (HPMS)*

SB-4. Identify funding streams to be directed towards the ongoing beautification of the streets and sidewalks (including waste management, greenery, and lighting)through a private entity or community partnerships.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Public Works*
- *Mayor's Office of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion (OEOI)*
- *Keep Hyde Park Beautiful*

SB-4a. Ensure regular maintenance and waste removal along Hyde Park Avenue, from Dana Avenue to West Street, to keep the area clean and well-maintained.

SB-4b. Install street lights along Everett, Maple, and Walnut Streets to enhance safety and visibility for pedestrians.

SB-4c. Plant flowers in decorative planters along Fairmont Avenue and Davison Street to create a more attractive Square.

SB-5. Create a forum to engage business owners and introduce the RESTORE program, which offers opportunities for storefront improvements, especially the first-and second-generation business owners on the intersection of Hyde Park Avenue and River Street.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Mayor's Office of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion (OEOI)*
- *Board of Trade*
- *Hyde Park Main Streets (HPMS)*



For illustrative purposes only, recommendation SB-4a-d is being shown.

SB-6. Promote nightlife activities in the Square through appropriate zoning and creative solutions, such as encouraging late night dining and exploring Bring-Your-Own-Booze (BYOB) strategies, within Cleary Square.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Mayor's Office of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion (OEOI)*

SB-7. Explore citywide policies for tenants' first right to purchase and/or rent-to-own policies, and explore opportunities for knowledge-building of existing programs such as the Commercial Acquisition Assistance Program (CAAP) towards potentially vulnerable first and second-generation business owners in Cleary Square.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Mayor's Office of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion (OEOI)*

SB-8. Implement a temporary "social district" or block party pilot program to increase foot traffic by supporting community gathering spaces with partnerships from small businesses that have liquor licenses (in tandem with AC-5).

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Mayor's Office of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion (OEOI)*

SB-9. Expand outreach for the Legacy Business Program to support business owners that have been in operation 10+ years learn about and navigate the program in Cleary Square.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Mayor's Office of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion (OEOI)*



CHAPTER 06

ARTS AND CULTURE

Cleary Square is home to a dynamic and growing arts and culture scene, supported by small creative businesses and community-led events that activate public spaces and storefronts. Local artists and entrepreneurs continue to advocate for opportunities like pop-up galleries and performance venues and events.

To strengthen Cleary's cultural identity, an Arts Corridor will define the neighborhood's creative core, expand access to public art, promote inclusive programming, and revitalize landmarks like the Everette Theatre—aligning with Open Space and Resiliency and Land Use and Design Framework Chapter.

This chapter summarizes Cleary Square's cultural landscape, linking community insights to public art and placemaking strategies.

EXISTING CONDITIONS: ARTS AND CULTURE

Cleary Square is characterized by a blend of historical and cultural assets, including its role as a local commercial center. Hyde Park has a long-standing history of organizing and supporting Boston's arts communities. Artists, writers, and musicians have come together time and time again in Hyde Park, creating different communities and venues for sharing their creative work with the broader community.

While the Menino Art Center, Las Colombianas, Riverside Theatre, and the Switch are just a few of the local spaces identified as cornerstones for cultural programming, Cleary Square as a whole faces gaps in arts representation, especially in public art and accessible venues. Ongoing conversations with Hyde Park Main Streets and other stakeholders emphasize the need for collaborative cultural activation and visibility in Cleary Square.



Wall Mural: Hyde Park Day Parade, 1999 by Heidi Schork and a group of youth artists



Bridge Fest at the Pocket Park Summer 2024

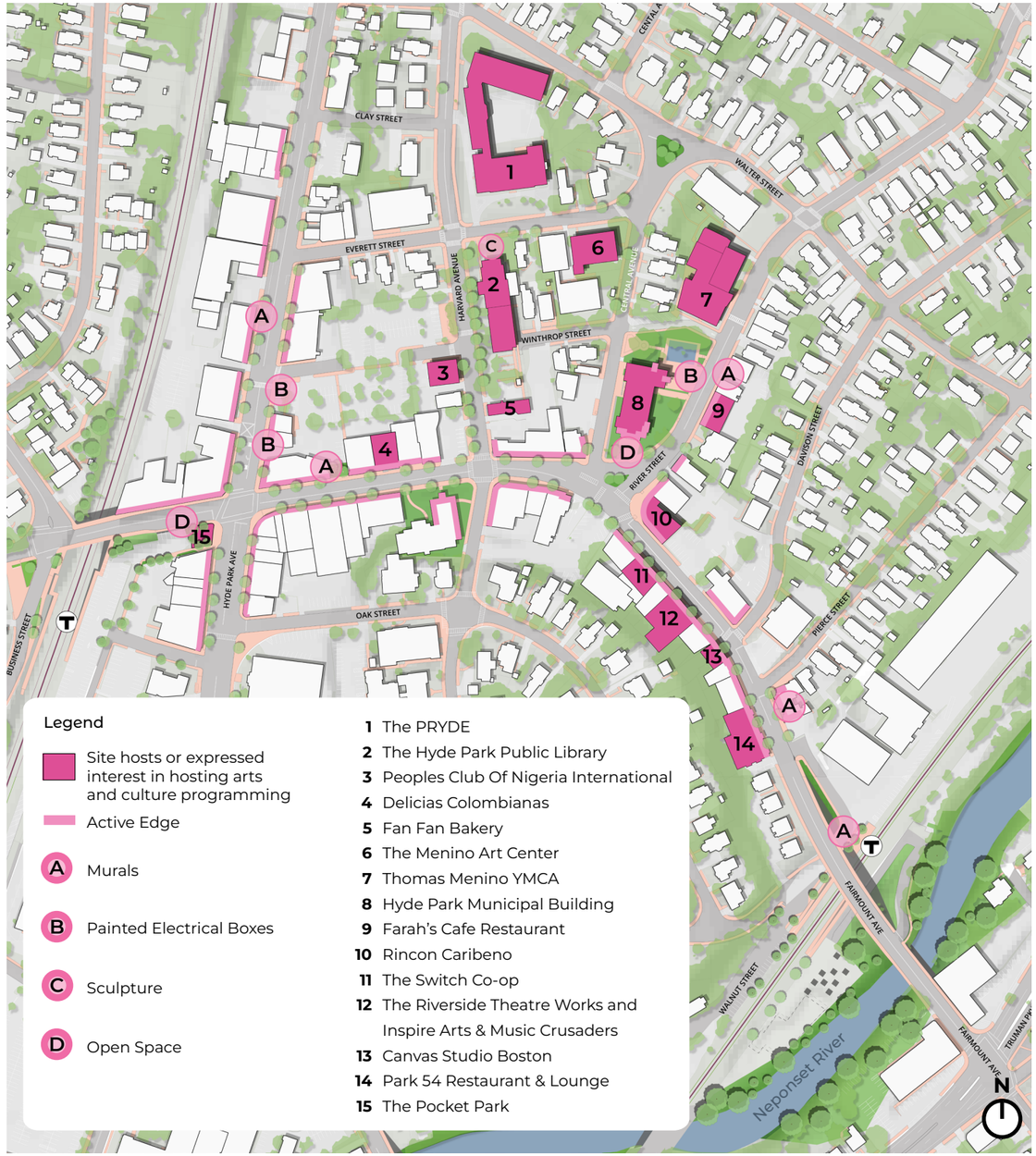


The Riverside Theatre Building and marquee



The Everett Square Theatre restored marquee

EXISTING ARTS AND CULTURE NETWORK CLEARY SQUARE



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Cleary Square community strongly desires a cohesive arts and culture identity that reflects its diversity, enriches public spaces, and expands artistic opportunities. An arts and culture corridor will serve as the foundation for this vision, unifying public art, cultural programming, and creative initiatives.

ARTS AND CULTURE THEMES AND PRIORITIES

ARTS CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT

Stakeholders envision a Cleary Square Arts Corridor or Connector along River Street, Fairmount Avenue, and Central Avenue that incorporates public art, enhances open spaces and provides a cohesive and identifiable arts and culture wayfinding identity. This corridor encourages a variety of arts and culture events, and incorporates zoning adjustments to support and encourage arts-focused uses in the commercial core (see the Land Use and Design Framewok).

ACTIVATION OF PUBLIC SPACES

The community seeks to upgrade existing spaces, such as the Pocket Park, into sites that better support diverse cultural programming, ranging from live performances to community celebrations (see the Open Space and Resiliency Recommendations).

REVITALIZATION OF CULTURAL ASSETS

The Everett Theatre is widely recognized as a potential resource for artistic and cultural expression but requires significant rehabilitation to meet community needs. While there has been sustained community support for its restoration, additional resources and coordination are needed. Partnering with the Boston Landmarks Commission and the Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture, developing a comprehensive funding strategy—leveraging public, private, and philanthropic resources—is essential to advancing this long-standing goal.

PUBLIC ART AND REPRESENTATION

Residents show a desire for murals, sculptures, and other forms of public art that celebrate the history and cultural diversity of the neighborhood and create welcoming gateways or artistic wayfinding opportunities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Establish an arts corridor, along River Street, Fairmount Avenue, and Central Avenue to encourage arts-focused uses, such as galleries, performance spaces, and creative studios, in the commercial core. (See the Open Space and Resiliency, Transportation, and Land Use and Design Recommendations for additional fulfillment of these recommendations).

AC-1. Introduce cohesive signage and wayfinding identity for Cleary Square to visually define and connect the artistic and cultural identity envisioned along River Street, Fairmount Avenue, and Central Avenue.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Planning Department*
- *Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture* (MOAC)

This pocket park serves as a vital hub for arts and culture programming, hosting community events like BridgeFest and other performances. This Plan also recommends transferring ownership to the Boston Parks and Recreation Department (OR-5), which would help unlock resources, streamline permitting, and enable more intentional design improvements that support its role as a flexible, well-equipped venue.

AC-2. Establish the identity of the Square with regular events and a robust network of public art installations.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Hyde Park Main Streets* (HPMS)
- *Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture* (MOAC)

AC-3. Designate the Pocket Park, on River Street, as a pre-permitted entertainment license site for regular cultural events such as performances, art exhibitions, and outdoor workshops.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Hyde Park Main Streets* (HPMS)
- *Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture* (MOAC)

AC-4. Partner with local institutions, organizations, and businesses to create a cohesive programming schedule at key cultural venues, including but not limited to the Menino Arts Center, Las Colombianas, The Riverside Theatre, and the Switch *(Also Roundhouse Brewing which is beyond the limits of our study area but is a critical supporter of arts and culture events).*

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Hyde Park Main Streets* (HPMS)
- *Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture* (MOAC)

AC-4A. Engage local organizations to develop an online collaborative cultural programming calendar and resource.

AC-4B. Implement consistent cultural programming in central spaces, leveraging key Cleary Square venues like the Menino Arts Center, The Hyde Park Public Library, and The Switch.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

ARTS CORRIDOR FRAMEWORK



RECOMMENDATIONS:

AC-5. Partner with local cultural organizations to create and maintain public art and ensure sustainable programming.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture* (MOAC)
- *Menino Arts Center + Switch*

AC-6. Collaborate with developers, through the Article 80 Development Review Process, to include arts related community benefits such as funding for public arts and arts programming in new projects.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture* (MOAC)
- *Private Development*
- *Planning Department (Development Review Dicision)*

AC-6A. Develop guidelines in partnership with the Planning Department and Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture for arts-related community benefits, such as funding for public art and arts programming, that the Planning Department can use in the negotiation process for new Article 80 Projects.

AC-7. Facilitate the designation of the Everett Theatre as an historic landmark in order to expand the funding stream possibilities for rehabilitation of the Theatre.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture* (MOAC)
- *Planning Department (Development Review Dicision)*

AC-8. Support the rehabilitation of the Everett Theatre by identifying and supporting funding streams or opportunities for restoration through private development or community partnerships.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture* (MOAC)
- *Planning Department (Development Review Dicision)*

AC-9. Install more interactive and community-inspired public art in high-visibility locations including central plazas, to enhance the neighborhood's arts identity and to serve as identifiable markers of place. Outdoor locations might include the Pocket Park, the Municipal Building plaza and its surrounding green space, Hyde Park Public Library Branch open space area, and around the commuter rail station.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture* (MOAC)
- *Hyde Park Main Streets* (HPMS)
- *Arts Connector Tool*

AC-10. Inventory the public art collection throughout Cleary Square to identify gaps in arts representation to help guide and site future public art installations.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture* (MOAC)

CHAPTER 07

TRANSPORTATION

This chapter presents a summary of existing conditions for Cleary Square's transportation assets and challenges. This summary relates to key community engagement themes and recommendations to support safety and mobility within Cleary Square.

A full ***Transportation Analysis Report***, including existing conditions, can be found in Appendix III.

EXISTING CONDITIONS TRANSPORTATION

CLEARY SQUARE EXISTING TRANSPORTATION ASSETS



BUS AND COMMUTER RAIL OPTIONS IN CLEARY SQUARE PROVIDE AN EXCEPTIONAL AMOUNT OF TRANSPORTATION CAPACITY: BUSES AND TRAINS THROUGH THE PLANNING AREA CAN CARRY MORE THAN 100,000 DAILY PASSENGERS.

- Bus and commuter rail serve over 7,500 daily passengers during both the morning and evening peak commuter times (8-9 AM and 5-6 PM).
- Two commuter rail stations, over 20 bus stops served by four bus routes, two bikeshare stations within 30 public bikes, public parking lots containing almost 300 spaces including four carshare spaces, and many public streets and sidewalks all provide connectivity for all modes of travel within Cleary Square.
- With the exception of painted bike lanes on Truman Parkway, there are no bike lanes or paths within the study area. Though the Neponset River Greenway is nearby and provides a continuous path for transportation and recreation from Truman Highway in Hyde Park to Tenean Beach in Dorchester, walking and biking access to the river and greenway is limited from Cleary Square.

A full ***Transportation Analysis Report***, including existing conditions, can be found in Appendix III.

KEY TRANSPORTATION TRENDS IN THE STUDY AREA THAT INFORM RECOMMENDATIONS

- From 2021 to 2023, 118 traffic crashes required an emergency response, with pedestrians (and bikers) disproportionately impacted in the Cleary Square study area. Although pedestrians are roughly five percent of travelers, they were involved in over 20% of all crashes. 86% of all crashes occurred on five major streets: Hyde Park Avenue, River Street, Fairmount Avenue, Dana Avenue, and Gordon Street, and 77% involved cars only.
- Nearly 4,000 daily riders use Cleary Square buses, with Hyde Park Ave/Pingree St/Oak St stops serving 1,600 passengers. While less frequent, commuter rail offers the fastest routes to Boston, with trips from Hyde Park Station to South Station and Fairmount Station to South Station taking under 20 and 25 minutes, respectively.
- Cleary Square has more than 800 public parking spaces, including 519 on-street parking spaces and 297 parking spaces in public off-street lots. Two municipal parking (one on Winthrop Street and one near Hyde Park Station) offer free medium-term parking (2-4 hours), while two MBTA lots (one at Hyde Park Station and one at Fairmount Station) provide long-term parking for a fee ($4 per day Monday-Friday and $2 per day on weekends). Currently, none of the public lots in the area allow overnight parking. Parking counts completed in March 2024, showed that parking utilization ranged from 39% on Saturday mornings to 69% midday during the week.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

There is a strong community desire for the following improvements by residents to address how people move through Cleary Square.

TRANSPORTATION THEMES AND PRIORITIES

SLOW CARS DOWN AND IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

Cleary Square is home to families and the community has expressed a need for safety measures in place to prevent cars from speeding down Cleary Square, allowing for more walkability with public safety as the primary focus.

EXPAND PUBLIC SPACE FOR BUSINESSES, BUS STOPS, AND STREET GREENERY

There is a strong desire to see expansion and improvement of the existing public spaces in Cleary Square, but also the need for the addition of more spaces for people to pause and rest while waiting for the bus or walking around.

MAKE IT EASIER TO TAKE THE COMMUTER RAIL

The community has expressed the need for better connection and access to the two (2) commuter rail stations within Cleary Square. There is a desire to see improvements made to create clear and accessible connectivity to encourage more commuter rail station riders.

MAKE THE BUS SAFER, QUICKER, AND MORE RELIABLE

There is a strong desire to see improvements on safety for bus riders throughout Cleary Square, especially on Hyde Park Avenue.

CREATE SAFER OPTIONS FOR BIKING AROUND THE NEIGHBORHOOD

The existing infrastructure does not support bikers to safely get around the neighborhood, and there is a desire to see increased access to the Neponset River Greenway and the City's bike network.

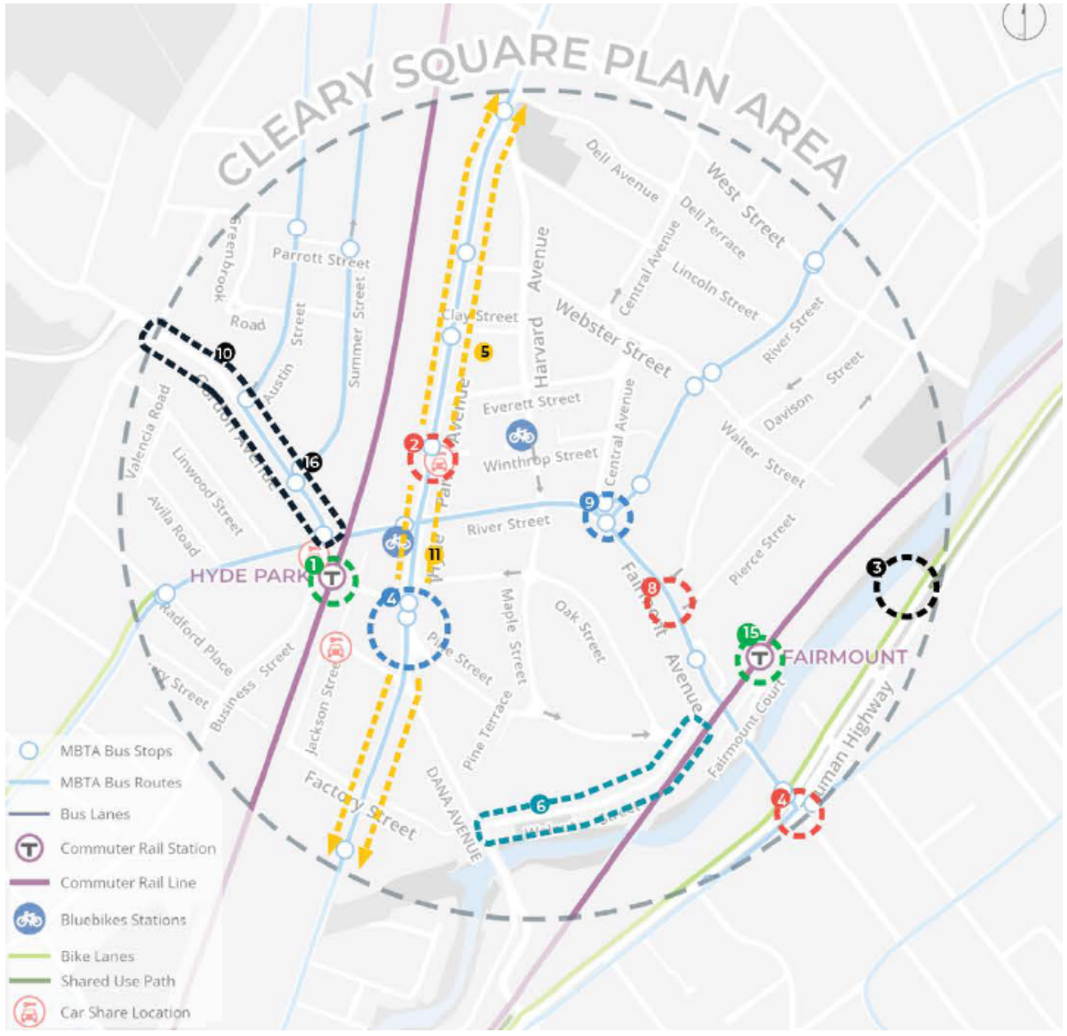
RESPOND TO EVOLVING PARKING AND CURBSIDE DEMANDS

The community has expressed concerns regarding parking accessibility around Cleary Square.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposed transportation recommendations have been developed to represent improvements that can be realized in the next ten years. They are focused around specific geographic areas that need safety improvements, coordinated with public space opportunities and recommendations, and/or are focused on impactful improvements to specific modes of travel.



T-1. Continue to advocate for lower fares (Zone 1A) for the Hyde Park station to reduce financial barriers to the Commuter Rail.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Planning Department*
- *Boston Streets Cabinet*
- *Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)*

Uneven fares and station access infrastructure create barriers to everyday use of commuter rail stations. This recommendation will help to reduce physical and financial barriers to the Commuter Rail.

T-2. Implement design features to improve crosswalk visibility and slow vehicles approaching the crosswalk at Hyde Park Ave/ Winthrop St.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Planning Department*
- *Boston Streets Cabinet*

This recomendation was completed on October 31st 2025 as a result of the Cleary Square planning process.

T-3. Work with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation to extend the Neponset River Greenway from its existing terminus east of Fairmount Avenue through the planning area, ultimately connecting to the Blue Hills.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Planning Department*
- *Boston Streets Cabinet*
- *Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)*

With few existing bike connections, people in Cleary Square lack safe and comfortable options for biking to local destinations or to the Neponset River. In addition, there is no Bluebikes station at Fairmount Station. By linking together a neighborhood-scale network of traffic-calmed streets that are comfortable to bike on, bike lanes on more major streets, and off-street paths, more people will have access to biking as an option for short trips around the neighborhood.

T-4. Coordinate with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation & Recreation to identify strategies to simplify the intersection and reduce conflict points at the intersection of Truman Parkway and Fairmount Ave/ Beacon St.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Planning Department*
- *Boston Streets Cabinet*
- *Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)*

RECOMMENDATIONS:

T-5. Provide faster and more reliable bus service for riders on **Hyde Park Ave** through use of bus priority design features.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Planning Department*
- *Boston Streets Cabinet*
- *Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)*

The City of Boston is currently developing a plan through the Southwest Boston Transit Action Plan led by the Boston Streets Cabinet that will develop and evaluate design measures to improve bus service on Hyde Park Ave. This recommendation will help create a safer, quicker, and more reliable bus experience on Hyde Park Ave.

T-6. Reconstruct Walnut Street to provide an accessible sidewalk, traffic calming, and formalized on-street parking from Dana Ave to Fairmount Station. The illustration on the right shows the options that are being explored.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Planning Department*
- *Boston Streets Cabinet*
- *Private Development*

T-7. Work with the MBTA to advance design for high-level platforms at both the Hyde Park and Fairmount Commuter Rail stations to improve accessibility.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Planning Department*
- *Boston Streets Cabinet*
- *Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)*

Uneven fares and station access infrastructure create barriers to everyday use of commuter rail stations. This recommendation will help to reduce physical and financial barriers to the Commuter Rail.

T-8. Evaluate pavement marking, signage, curbside uses, and signal strategies to clarify intersection operations and improve crosswalk visibility on Fairmount Ave between Pierce St and Davison St.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Planning Department*
- *Boston Streets Cabinet*

T-9. Explore reconfiguration options for the intersection of River St and Fairmount Ave to establish high-quality bus stops serving all routes planned under the MBTA's Bus Network Redesign, simplify the intersection for all travelers, and create additional public space for community uses, businesses and green infrastructure (see recommendation OR-1 for the related open space recommendation).

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Planning Department*
- *Boston Streets Cabinet*
- *Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)*

The Public Facilities Department has initiated pre-schematic design work in collaboration with the Streets Cabinet to enhance and modify the intersection.



Options for Walnut Street, Recommendation T-6

RECOMMENDATIONS:

T-10. Use traffic calming tools to improve crosswalk visibility and slow vehicle movement on Gordon Ave and surrounding streets.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Planning Department*
- *Boston Streets Cabinet*
- *Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority* (MBTA)

Gordon Ave was identified as one of the roads that is unsafe for pedestrians.

T-11. Reroute bus routes to eliminate the need for Routes 50 and short-turns of Route 32 to make a U-turn on Hyde Park Ave, including modest reconfiguration of the MBTA Hyde Park Commuter Rail Parking Lot. Use additional space no longer needed for bus U-turns on Hyde Park Ave to explore expanded public space opportunities for additional bus stop amenities, wider sidewalks, separated bike lanes, and green infrastructure.

T-12. Encourage new development projects to provide carshare to give residents as-needed access to cars while minimizing financial and space costs.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Planning Department*
- *Boston Streets Cabinet*

T-13. Study how people use street parking and public parking lots to make sure parking rules fairly and efficiently meet the needs for curb space.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Planning Department*
- *Boston Streets Cabinet*

Today, there are few carshare service providers in Cleary Square. The vast majority of on-street parking in the area is unregulated, meaning anyone can park there for any amount of time. As a result, residents, developers, and businesses have few options for efficiently managing the costs and space needs of vehicle parking.

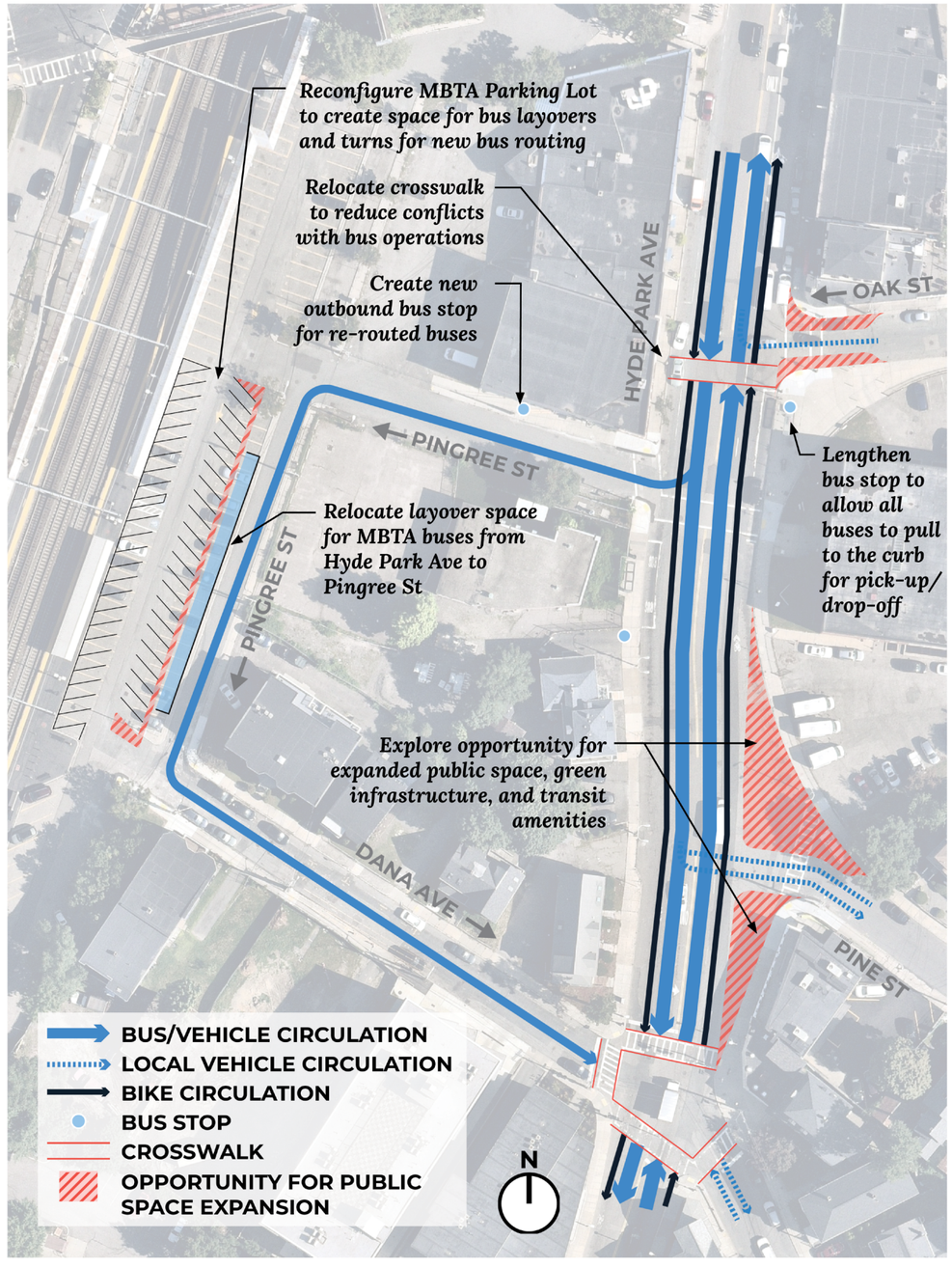


Illustration of recommendation to reroute buses, Recomendation T-11

RECOMMENDATIONS:

T-14. Provide a Bluebikes station at Fairmount Station.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Planning Department*
- *Boston Streets Cabinet*
- *Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority* (MBTA)

With few existing bike connections, people in Cleary Square lack safe and comfortable options for biking to local destinations or to the Neponset River. In addition, there is no Bluebikes station at the MBTA Commuter Rail Fairmount Station. By linking together a neighborhood-scale network of traffic-calmed streets that are comfortable to bike on, bike lanes on more major streets, and off-street paths, more people will have access to biking as an option for short trips around the neighborhood.

T-15. Reconfigure the intersection of Gordon Ave/ River St following the reconstruction of the River St Bridge to shorten crosswalks and slow turning vehicle speeds.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Planning Department*
- *Boston Streets Cabinet*
- *Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority* (MBTA)
- *Massachusetts Department of Transportation* (MassDOT)
- *Private Development*

Gordon Ave was identified as one of the roads that is unsafe for pedestrians.

T-16. Create a network of bike routes that provide connections to key neighborhood destinations including commuter rail stations, City services in Cleary Square, and the Neponset River Greenway.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Planning Department*
- *Boston Streets Cabinet*
- *Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority* (MBTA)

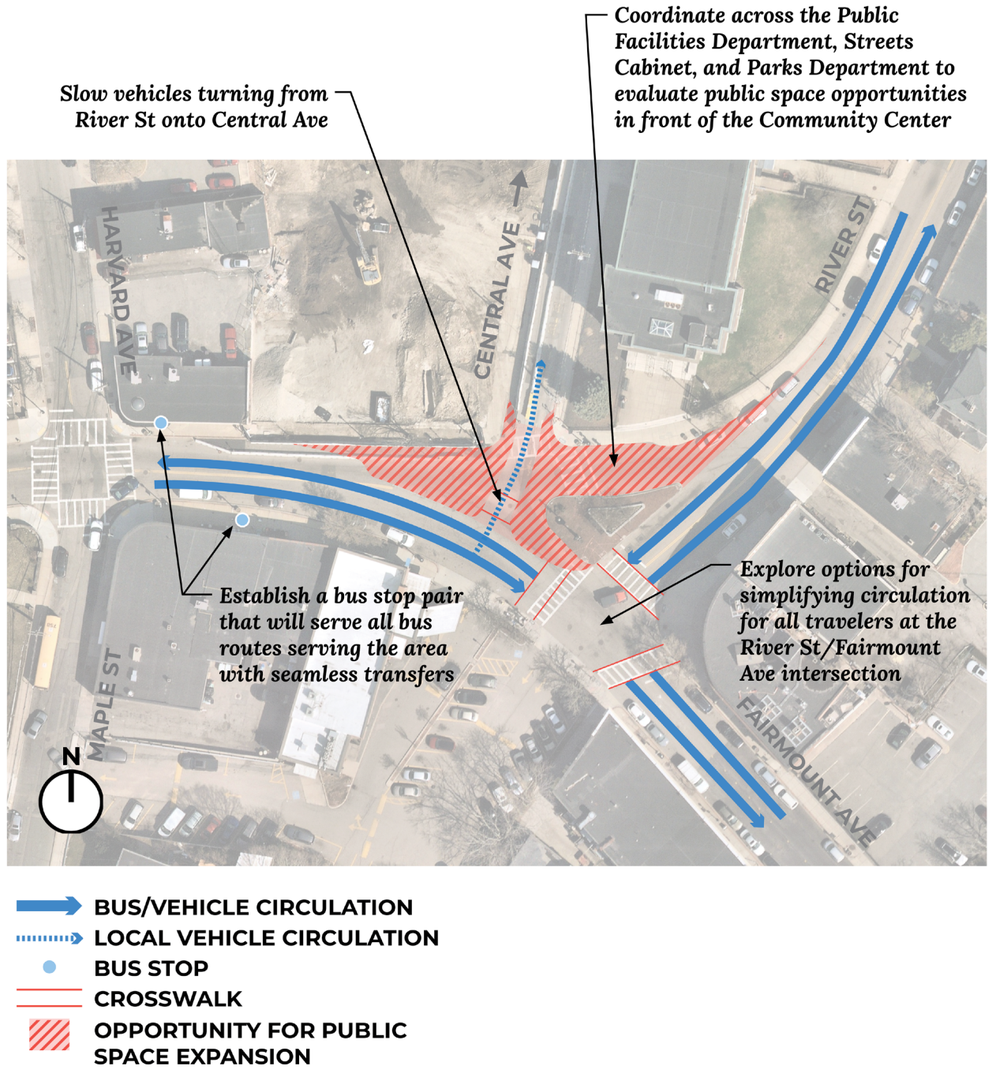


Illustration of Logan Square, Reccomendation T-9



Bridge Fest at the Pocket Park Summer 2024

CHAPTER 08

OPEN SPACE AND RESILIENCY

The Squares + Streets plans prioritize preserving and expanding open space to ensure Boston's growing population stays connected to these essential areas. Open space enhances residents' quality of life, supports public health, and strengthens climate adaptation efforts, as outlined in Climate Ready Boston, the Heat Resilience Plan, and the Urban Forest Plan.

EXISTING CONDITIONS: OPEN SPACE AND RESILIENCY

Most areas within Hyde Park are served by 1-3 parks according to the Parks Department's Open Space and Recreation Plan.

However, the neighborhood lacks public playgrounds, water play, direct access to the Neponset River, and infrastructure needed to support community events in public spaces.

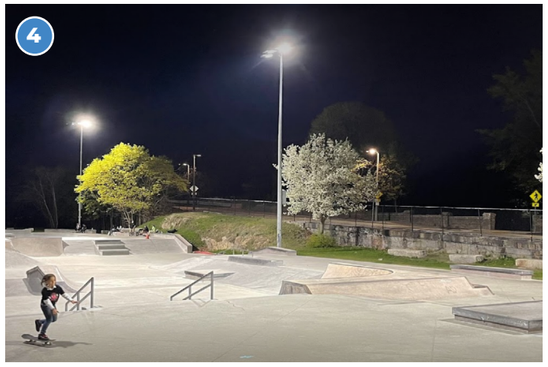
The open spaces immediately within Cleary Square are small plazas and Urban Wilds.

The Memorial Shell Park serves as an outdoor events space for the neighborhood. Many people living in Cleary Square travel outside the immediate study area for access to larger parks such as Franklin Park, Stony Brook Reservation, and the Neponset River Greenway.



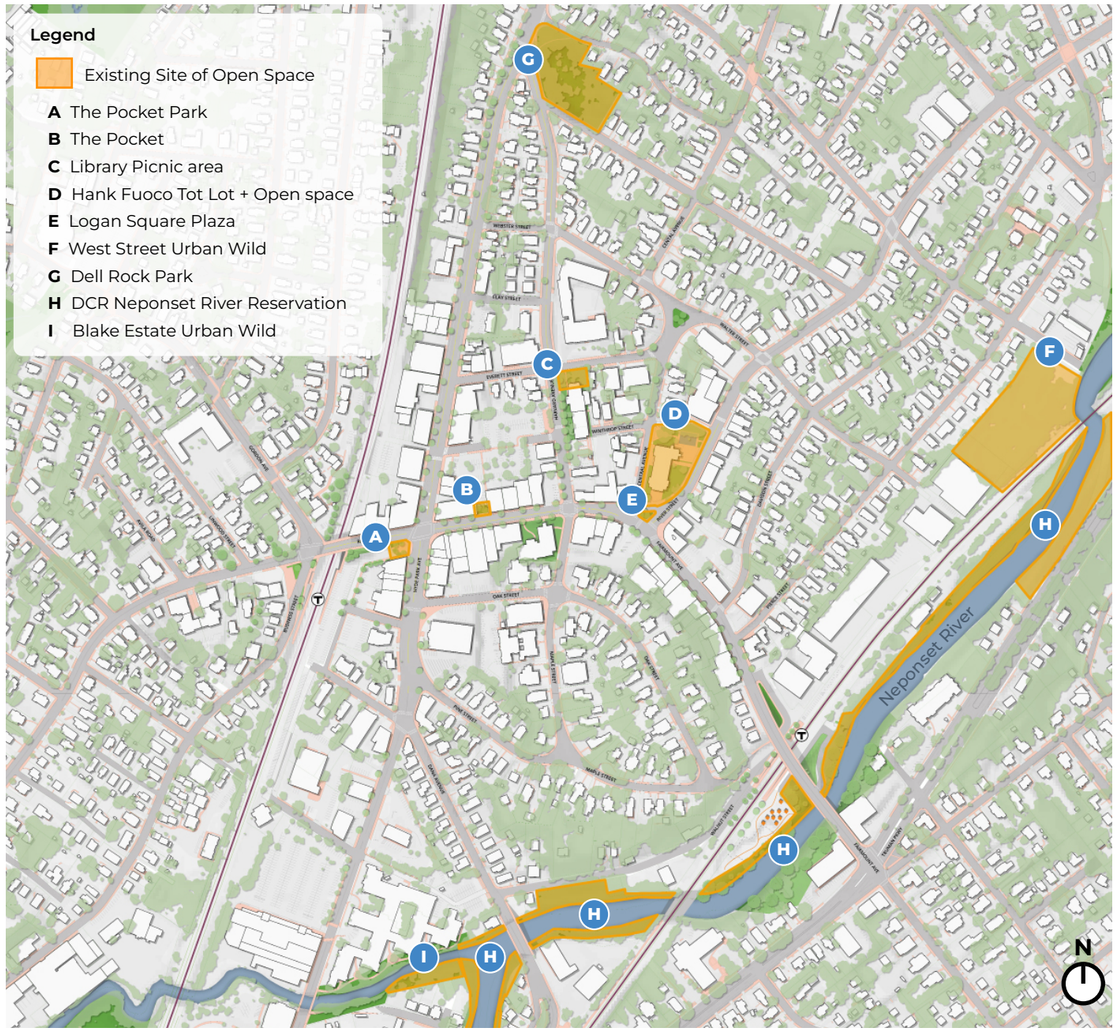


1. *Neponset River Greenway* **2.** *Logan Square Plaza* **3.** *Francis D. Martini Memorial Shell Park* **4.** *Reservation Road Park* **5.** *Neponset River (Former Lewis Chemical Site)* **6.** *Neponset River (Former Lewis Chemical Site)*





OPEN SPACE IN CLEARY SQUARE



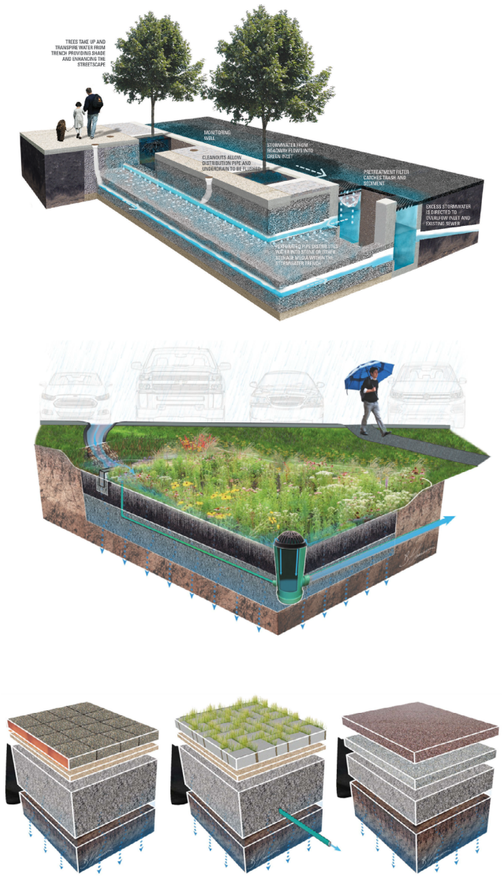




RESILIENCY

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

With the proximity to the Neponset River, capturing and infiltrating water to reduce flooding, slowing the movement of water to reduce erosion, and removing pollutants to improve water quality are of particular importance in Cleary Square. Green infrastructure opportunities, including surface vegetated features, subsurface infiltration, and porous paving, should be integrated within all public space improvements.

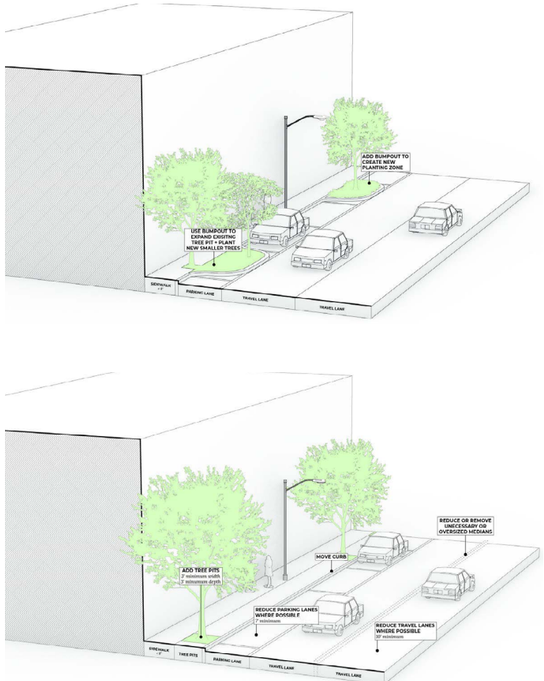


Examples of Stormwater Management

URBAN FORESTRY PLAN PRIORITY ZONES

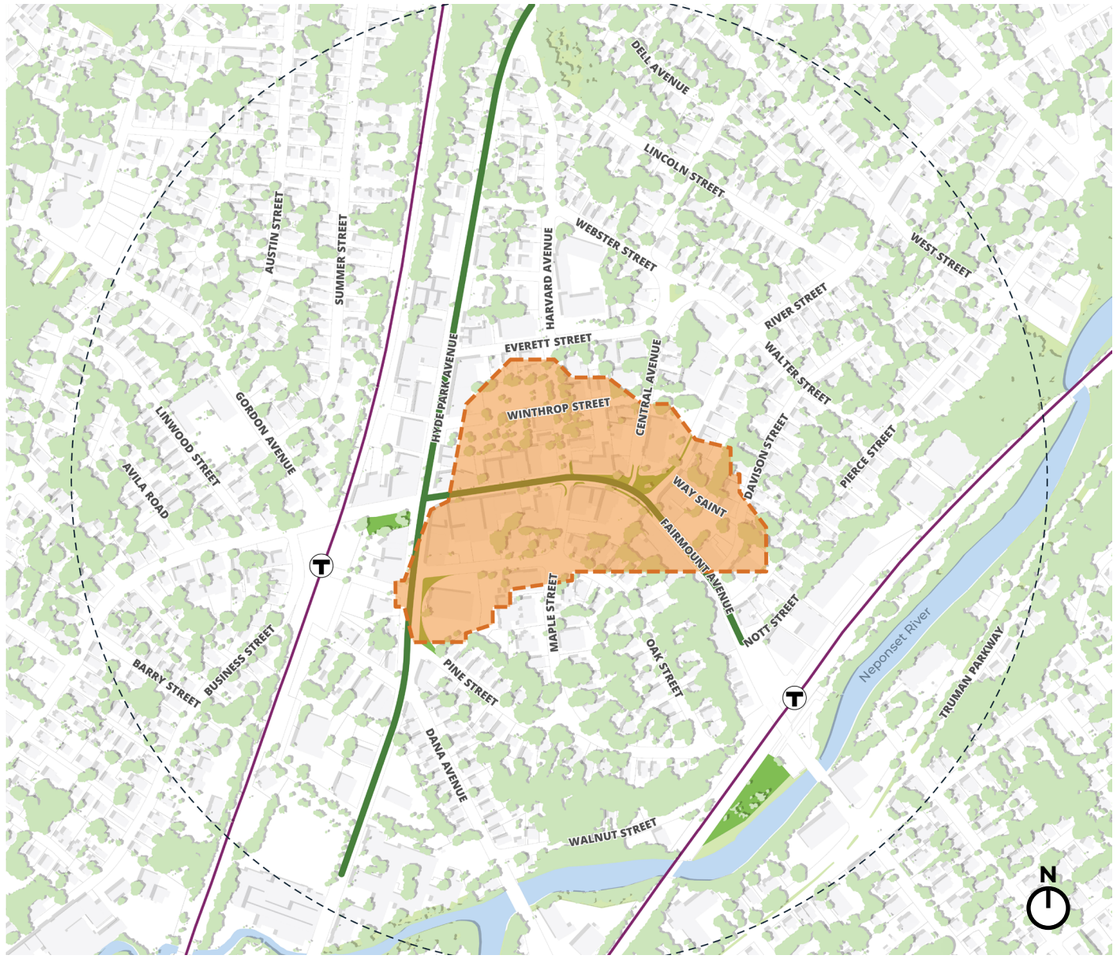
The center of Cleary Square (River St between Hyde Park Ave and Fairmount Avenue) is identified as a priority zone in the Urban Forest Plan. New development in this area should incorporate resilient strategies including retaining existing tree canopy, on-street tree planting, green infrastructure, cooling stations, and shade structures to mitigate urban heat.

In addition, opportunities with project proponents should be identified to retain existing canopy and promote on-site planting of shade trees on private property, where possible.



Examples of Streetscapes

URBAN FORESTRY PLAN PRIORITY ZONES IN CLEARY SQUARE



Urban Forest Plan, September 2022

This map illustrates the Priority Zones identified in the Urban Forest Plan for Cleary Square. Priority Zones, as defined by the City of Boston Urban Forest Plan, are areas with three or more overlapping indicators. These indicators include: Environmental Justice Census Blocks; Low Canopy count; Length of Heat Events; and Historically Marginalized Areas.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

OPEN SPACE ENGAGEMENT THEMES AND PRIORITIES

ENHANCE EXISTING OPEN SPACES WITHIN THE SQUARE

There is ongoing community interest in improvements to and expansion of the 'Pocket Park', a Streets Cabinet-owned plaza at intersection of Hyde Park andRiver streets. The community identified opportunities for improvements and programming in the small parklet, this park serves as an important anchor to the community and center of the arts and cultural programming in the Square today.

CREATE CONNECTIONS TO THE NEPONSET RIVER

Community groups are already working towards and pushing for creation of open space connections that enable recreation along the river, provide access to the river for kayaks and canoes, and connect to the Neponset River Greenway for walking and cycling.

EXPAND AND ACTIVATE THE PUBLIC SPACE

Key intersections and existing parklets within the Square could more meaningfully activate the Square through the addition of planting, seating, public art, outdoor dining, and cultural events. The community identified opportunities for improvements and programming in the small parklet in between buildings on River Street, the intersection in front of the Municipal Building, and the intersection in front of the Hyde Park Seventh-day Adventist Church.

INTEGRATE RESILIENCY

The community expressed interest in integrating resilient solutions in future improvement efforts. Integration of resilient solutions includes the expansion of the urban forest through street tree planting, particularly along Hyde Park Avenue, and the implementation of green infrastructure to manage stormwater adjacent to the Neponset River.

PARTNER WITH COMMUNITY GROUPS

There are many active community groups already working to improve the accessibility and quality of open space in the area, such as the Neponset River Watershed Association (NepRWA), the Hyde Park Neponset River Access Committee, and the Neponset River Greenway Council. These groups will be key partners for the City in implementing the recommendations of this Plan and in continuing to identify the evolving needs of Cleary Square.



IDENTIFYING OPEN SPACE OPPORTUNITIES IN CLEARY SQUARE

Cleary Square today has urban wilds, small plazas, and playgrounds, but residents must travel outside of the Square to enjoy larger public parks and connection to the Neponset River.

Public space improvements have the potential to create connections, serve as outdoor events space for arts and cultural programming, as well as making the neighborhood more resilient to extreme heat and stormwater flooding.

The open space recommendations identifies three major expansions to the open space system at important gateways into the neighborhood: improvements to the Pocket Park near the Hyde Park train station, a new plaza at the center of the Square as an entry from River Street, and a new open space at the river near the Fairmount train station.

TREE CANOPY

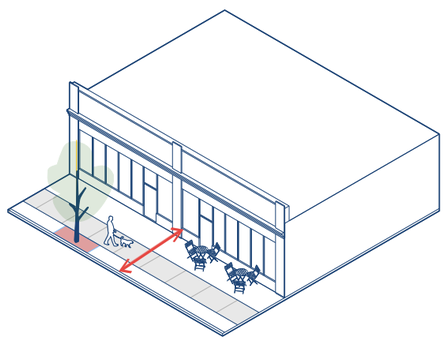
This Plan includes recommendations across topic areas to achieve the goal of protecting and increasing tree canopy.

Open Space and Resiliency: Recommendation OR-4 (in Open Space and Resiliency) is to plant street trees along Hyde Park Avenue and the streets identified as the Arts Corridor (River St, Fairmount Ave, and Central Ave). This recommendation will be completed by Private Development, Boston Parks and Recreation Department, Urban Forestry Division, and the 'Let's Keep Boston 'Cool' program.

Small Business: Recommendation SB-4 (in Small Business) is to identify funding streams to be directed towards the ongoing beautification of the streets and sidewalks, which may include planting street trees. This funding should include any available capital funding and any funding made available through future private development. The parties responsible for implementing this recommendation are Public Works, OEOI, and Keep Hyde Park Beautiful. This recommendation will be implemented in 1-3 years.

Land Use and Design Framework: This plan recommends rezoning the mixed-use and commercial blocks of Cleary Square with updated Squares + Streets zoning districts. These districts include updated requirements for yards, outdoor amenity space, and permeable area of lot, which should be utilized to allow space for trees on both private property and expanded public sidewalks.

In addition to specific tree planting priorities noted throughout the Land Use and Design Framework, the area wide Design Guidelines state that projects should design with trees in mind to retain existing canopy and provide sufficient space for new canopy to mature without conflicting with buildings. This includes planting in clusters to maximize shade benefits, where possible. The Design Guidelines also state that all projects should use the space created by their front yard requirement to enhance the public sidewalk, especially where the sidewalk is not otherwise adequate for the planting of street trees.





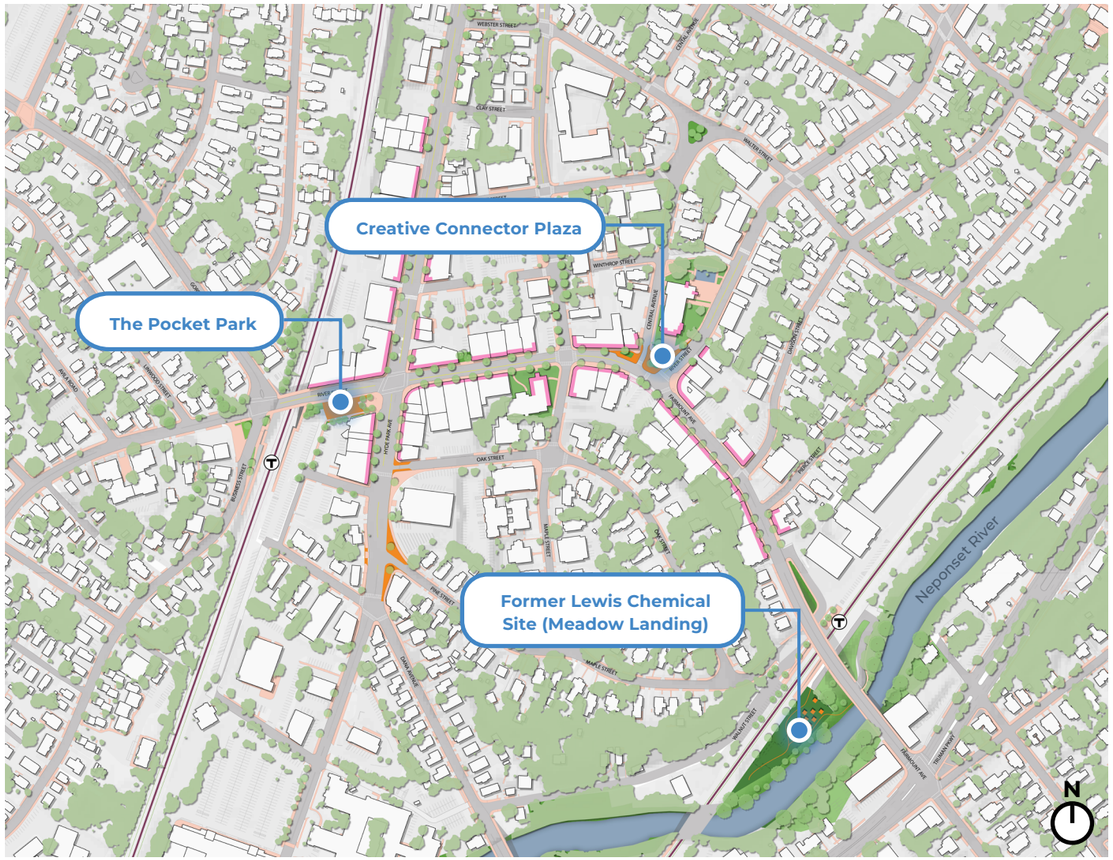
Current number of street trees and tree pits on Hyde Park Avenue, River Street, Fairmount Avenue, and Central Avenue.



There is also significant tree canopy on City-owned parcels, such as the municipal parking lot and the library lot. Therefore, the City's ongoing commitment to maintain tree canopy on City-owned sites is another important strategy for Cleary Square.

RECOMMENDATIONS

OPEN SPACE FRAMEWORK





Proposed expanded plaza in front of the Hyde Park Municipal Building

OR-1. Create a new plaza at River Street and Fairmount Avenue through intersection improvements directly in front of the Hyde Park Municipal Building (see recommendation T-9 for intersection improvements).

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Public Facilities Department* (PFD)
- *Boston Parks and Recreation Department* (BPRD)
- *Boston Streets Cabinet*

The Municipal Plaza in Cleary Square has the potential to serve as a key connector—linking open space, recreational facilities, and the emerging Arts and Culture corridor. By anchoring these three types of spaces, the plaza can support both passive recreation and cultural programming. The Public Facilities Department has initiated pre-schematic design work in collaboration with the Streets Cabinet.

OR-2. Transfer ownership of the former Lewis Chemical site from the Mayor's Office of Housing to a public agency or nonprofit in order to facilitate the creation of a public park and connection to the Neponset River.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Planning Department*
- *Mayor's Office of Housing (MOH)*
- *Boston Streets Cabinet*

The EPA completed removal work to clean up the Lewis Chemical Site in October 2024. As of June 2026, the site is being studied by a Licensed Site Professional to determine what further remediation may be necessary. The EPA is also using the site for staging to support the nearby Riverside Square cleanup and may continue to use the site for staging to support Phase 1 of the EPA Superfund Neponset River cleanup. Future planning of this site will need to be in coordination with all stakeholders, including the EPA and DCR (who owns the neighboring site). Additionally, the City should pursue possible interim uses of this site for public open space while further remediation planning and the use of the site for cleanup staging may delay full park creation.

This will facilitate and expand on the work the Neponset River Watershed Association has been leading to create a connection.

OR-3. Incorporate green infrastructure—such as vegetated surfaces, subsurface infiltration, and porous paving—into all public space improvements. In this plan, key projects include the Pocket Park, expanded public space along Hyde Park Avenue and at River Street/Fairmount Avenue, and a site along the Neponset River.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Office of Green Infrastrtucture*

Given its proximity to the river, Cleary Square should prioritize water capture and infiltration to reduce flooding, slow runoff to prevent erosion, and filter pollutants to improve water quality.

OR-4. Plant street trees along Hyde Park Avenue and the streets identified as the Arts Corridor (River St, Fairmount Ave, and Central Ave).

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Private Development*
- *Boston Parks and Recreation Department (BPRD) (Urban Forestry Division)*

This recommendation is intended to work in tandem with SB-4B.

OR-5. Transfer ownership of the Pocket Park from the Streets Cabinet to Boston Parks and Recreation Department in order to facilitate improvements to and expansion of the Pocket Park.

DEPARTMENTS/PARTIES RESPONSIBLE

- *Planning Department*
- *Boston Parks and Recreation Department (BPRD)*
- *Boston Streets Cabinet*

This pocket park serves as a vital hub for arts and culture programming, hosting community events like Bridgefest and other peformances. Transferring ownership to the Boston Parks and Recreation Department would help unlock resources, streamline permitting, and enable more intentional design improvements that support its role as a flexible, well-equipped venue for cultural events, such as electrification

CHAPTER 09

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

This Plan sets up an actionable framework for implementing recommended capital improvements, programmatic investments, and design and land use standards in Cleary Square.

In 5-10 years, the recommendations in this Plan will be fulfilled through planning, regulatory review, development and community action under the guidance of the Planning Advisory Council (PAC).

This Plan should be used continuously by all stakeholders involved based on identified roles in the table found in the following pages. The table breaks down how and when stakeholders should use this Plan so that the path towards fulfilling Recommendations has a clear path forward.

HOW TO USE THIS PLAN TABLE

Entity	When should they refer to the plan?	What should they look for?
PLANNING DEPARTMENT		
Zoning Reform Team	• Reviewing Zoning Board of Appeal (ZBA) cases • Assessing new opportunities for updates to the Zoning Code	• Utilize the Design Guidelines and Land Use and Design Framework **(Chapter 3)** to inform recommendations for projects that request a zoning variance or have an existing building nonconformity
Planning Review Team	• Reviewing Zoning Board of Appeal (ZBA) cases • Reviewing Article 80 Large and Small Projects	• Utilize the Design Guidelines and Land Use and Design Framework to inform recommendations for projects that request a zoning variance or have an existing building nonconformity • Refer to recommendations that identify private development as a responsible party to assess opportunities for community benefits through Article 80 • Use the Land Use and Design Framework to identify opportunities for building elements and community uses (such as housing, types of commercial uses, shared open spaces or publicly accessible ground floor or upper floor uses) that support this framework
Development Review Division	• Managing review process for Article 80 Large and Small Projects	• Refer to recommendations that include private development as a responsible party and advise project proponents accordingly
Urban Design Division	• Conducting design review for Zoning Board of Appeal cases • Reviewing Article 80 Large and Small Projects	• Refer to the Design Guidelines to ensure proposals advance these guidelines through new development
City Departments (Not Including Planning Department)	• Capital planning during 5-year budget cycle • Allocating annual operating funds • Determining investment opportunities through capital line items, contracts, or grants	• Refer to recommendations that include their department as a responsible party to inform capital planning, staffing, and budgetary needs
Zoning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeal	• Reviewing development proposals that request zoning relief or petition for new zoning	• Refer to the Land Use and Design Framework for context related to desired building and community uses (such as housing, commercial uses, shared open spaces or publicly accessible ground floor or upper floor uses) and place-based design elements that align with this framework
Property Owners and Developers	• Determining acquisition and/or development opportunities	• Refer to recommendations that include private development as a responsible entity to inform project scope, in-kind mitigation, and community benefits • Use the Land Use and Design Framework and Design Guidelines to inform key project elements, such as building form, design, and building uses/amenities

Entity	When should they refer to the plan?	What should they look for?
COMMUNITY DEVELPMENT ORGANIZATIONS, CIVIC ASSOCIATIONS, SPECIAL INTEREST COMMUNITY GROUPS, AND NON PROFITS		
Community Development Corporations (CDCs)	• Identifying areas and proposing opportunities for development projects or smaller scale improvements aligned with community priorities	• Refer to the Land Use and Design Framework to identify opportunities for building and community uses (such as housing, commercial uses, shared open spaces or publicly accessible ground floor or upper floor uses) that align with this framework
Individual Property Owners	• Proposing a new building use, alteration, or new construction of their property	• Refer to the Land Use and Design Framework to identify opportunities for building and community uses (such as housing, commercial uses, shared open spaces or publicly accessible ground floor or upper floor uses) that align with this framework
Civic/ Community groups and Individuals	• Participating in public review processes for Article 80 developments • Starting a community-led project or neighborhood improvement effort	• Refer to the recommendations that identify private development as a responsible party to hold developers accountable for providing community-desired amenities and investments • Refer to recommendations that identify community groups as a responsible party to help turn these ideas into reality!

SQUARES + STREETS

CITY of BOSTON