

FAIRMOUNT INDIGO PLANNING INITIATIVE

BLUE HILL AVENUE/ CUMMINS HIGHWAY STATION AREA PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



CITY OF BOSTON
Martin J. Walsh
Mayor



Boston
Redevelopment
Authority

Blue Hill Avenue/Cummins Highway
Working Advisory Group (WAG) Members

Corey Allen
Vilma Beraducci
Amenyonah Bossman
R. Kelly Cameron
Lisa Dix
Dieufort J. Fleurissant
Joanne Freeman
Jaques Dady Jean
Lincoln Lamond, *Co-chair*
Allentza Michel
Robert Peters
Tina Petigeny, *Co-chair*

Prepared for **City of Boston, Martin J. Walsh Mayor**
Boston Redevelopment Authority

With support **The Boston Foundation**
From **The Garfield Foundation**



CITY OF BOSTON
Martin J. Walsh
Mayor



Boston
Redevelopment
Authority

Prepared by The Cecil Group, Inc.
HDR, Inc.
McMahon Associates, Inc.
Shook Kelley, Inc.
Byrne McKinney & Associates, Inc.
Bioengineering Group
SAS Design, Inc.

Study Purpose

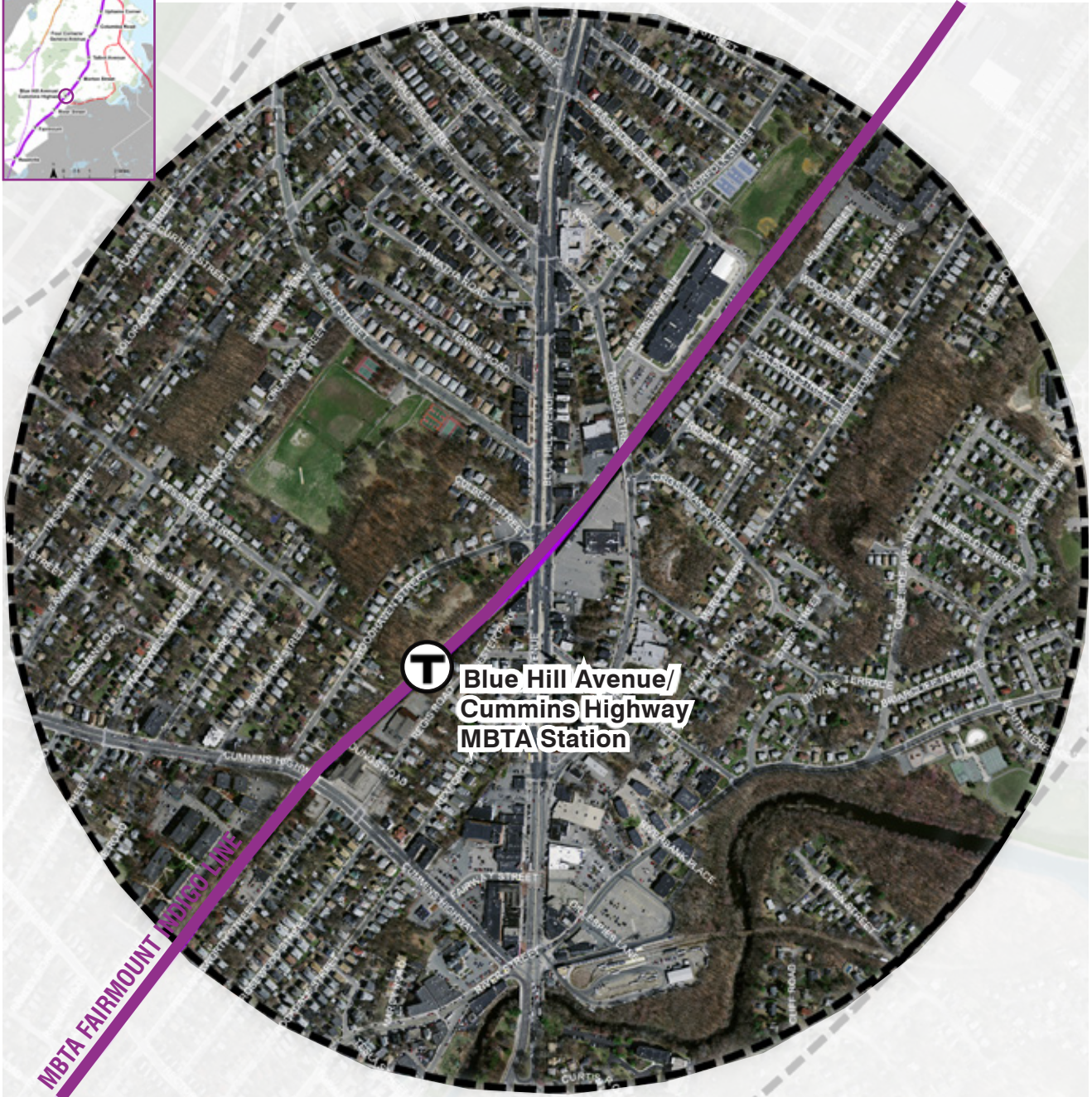
As part of the City of Boston's Fairmount Indigo Planning Initiative, the Blue Hill Avenue/Cummins Highway Station Area Plan establishes a framework for future improvements and investment to complement the transit infrastructure at a new MBTA station and to enhance both the commercial center of Mattapan Square and the surrounding neighborhoods. The study has included a year-long process with community workshops and public meetings under the guidance of a Working

Advisory Group (WAG) comprised of local residents, business owners and stakeholders. The Station Area Plan embraces the MBTA Fairmount Indigo line as a transit anchor and looks to guide physical and economic development, encourage sustainable and transit-oriented growth, prioritize economic prosperity for current residents and businesses and incorporate existing planning initiatives into one shared vision.



Fairmount Indigo Corridor Context

The study area for the Blue Hill Station Area Plan includes portions of Mattapan within 1/2 mile of the rail station including Mattapan Square.



Community Vision

The community vision was created through a community planning and visioning process that included a community workshop, community open house, and a series of eight meetings with a Mayoral appointed Working Advisory Group (WAG), many in-person visits to each Station Area neighborhood, stakeholder, resident and advocate interviews and an analysis of the existing conditions of the Station Area. The Vision Statement sets a direction for future efforts in the Blue Hill Ave/Cummins Highway Station Area. The Community Goals add more detail to the statement.



Mattapan Square is the commercial center of the Station Area

Vision Statement

The Blue Hill/Cummins Highway Station Area is a safe and walkable community with high quality residential neighborhoods, a vital commercial and cultural district at Mattapan Square, excellent transit access and affordability.

Community Goals

The goals of the community vision are to:

- Reinforce residential community with safe streets, high quality parks and housing that is renewed while retaining affordability
- Minimize displacement of current residents and businesses to preserve diversity of the community
- Strengthen commercial and cultural activity in Mattapan Square

The Station Area Plan seeks to leverage transit for new economic prosperity and to reinforce the Station Area as an important hub of commercial and cultural activity in the Fairmount Indigo Corridor. The recently built Mattapan Health Center reinforces a health orientation and supporting economy that is evolving within the Station Area and its neighborhood center.

Key recommendations of the community vision have been outlined by topic areas including Prosperity, Home, Place, Getting Around, Quality of Life and Public Space. The Station Area Plan balances recommendations in each topic area to reinforce a high quality livable district and neighborhood.



PROSPERITY



HOME



PLACE



GETTING AROUND



QUALITY OF LIFE



PARKS AND PUBLIC SPACE

Illustrative Vision Plan

An illustrative plan of the community vision is shown below. The illustration reflects the physical strategies that are part of the Station Area Plan including new transit-oriented development near the rail station, new mixed-use development within the Mattapan Square Main Streets district, new infill residential development to stabilize surrounding neighborhoods, streetscape improvements to form gateway enhancements to the Main Street districts and to enhance critical connections to the rail station and surrounding attractions.

- Legend
- Existing Blocks
 - Existing Buildings
 - Existing Open Space
 - Main Street District
 - Potential Development



Cummins Highway Station Area Plan includes portions of Mattapan within 1/2 mile of the rail station

Key Findings



Prosperity

- 1 Redevelop City-owned Cote Ford Property to bring new investment
- 2 Leverage MBTA Parking Lot Parcel as a community development catalyst
- 3 Improve utilization of existing upper level commercial space
- 4 Strengthen storefront and small business programs
- 5 Expand training and education for local wealth creation



Home

- 6 Maintain affordability and minimize displacement of residents
- 7 Invite mixed-income and mixed-use redevelopment near station
- 8 Infill residential to strengthen neighborhoods
- 9 Expand homeownership programs to build local investment



Place

- 10 Improve character of Mattapan Square Main Streets
- 11 Strengthen gateways at Blue Hill Avenue
- 12 Reinforce culture and public art
- 13 Expand restaurant offerings
- 14 Highlight the Neponset River as a unique asset



Getting Around

- 15 New station entry improvements at Blue Hill/Cummins
- 16 Mattapan Square intersection improvements
- 17 Blue Hill Ave/Cummins Highway streetscape improvements
- 18 Enhanced parking management in Mattapan Square



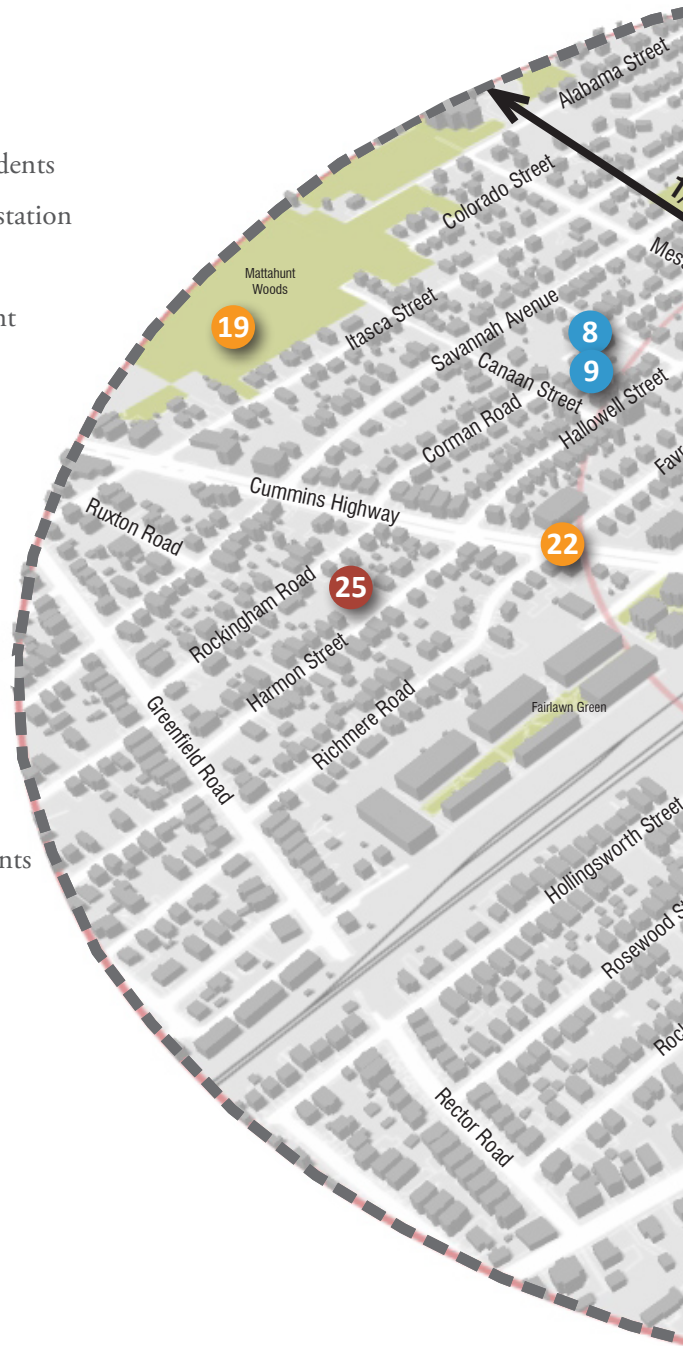
Parks/Public Space

- 19 Improve safe connections to existing parks
- 20 Enhance lighting and safety at existing parks
- 21 Enhance gateway connections to the Neponset River
- 22 Rebalance streetscape and sidewalks for pedestrians



Quality of Life

- 23 Address Station Area crime and safety concerns
- 24 Expand cultural/community/gathering space offerings
- 25 Reinforce community and family orientation





The study area for the Blue Hill Ave/Cummins Highway Station Area Plan within 1/2 mile of the rail station with annotated key findings.

- Legend**
- Existing Blocks
 - Existing Buildings
 - Existing Open Space
 - Main Street District



The recommendations within each topic area have been prioritized by the community as part of a community open house and online review of the draft Station Area Plan.



Prosperity

Strengthen local wealth creation in the Station Area through business, training and entrepreneurial support. The following approaches are intended to build prosperity for current residents and small businesses:

- A Focus Redevelopment Investment** - Community supported investment in key properties, such as mixed-use redevelopment at Cote Ford, creates a positive momentum for future redevelopment.
- B Add Destination Attractions and Activities** - Build upon assets such as the Neponset, the Health Center and Branch Library to build community attractions and destinations.
- C Reinforce Local-serving Businesses** - Match local needs with local businesses and services, recruit missing services and expand locally supported commerce.
- D Targeted Matches for Vacancy and Use** - Create incentive programs, funding and resources to expand utilization of vacant upper floor spaces and to expand availability of modern and code compliant space.
- E Expand Training and Connection** - Connect residents and businesses to new opportunities for training and education to expand economic prosperity in the Station Area.



Home

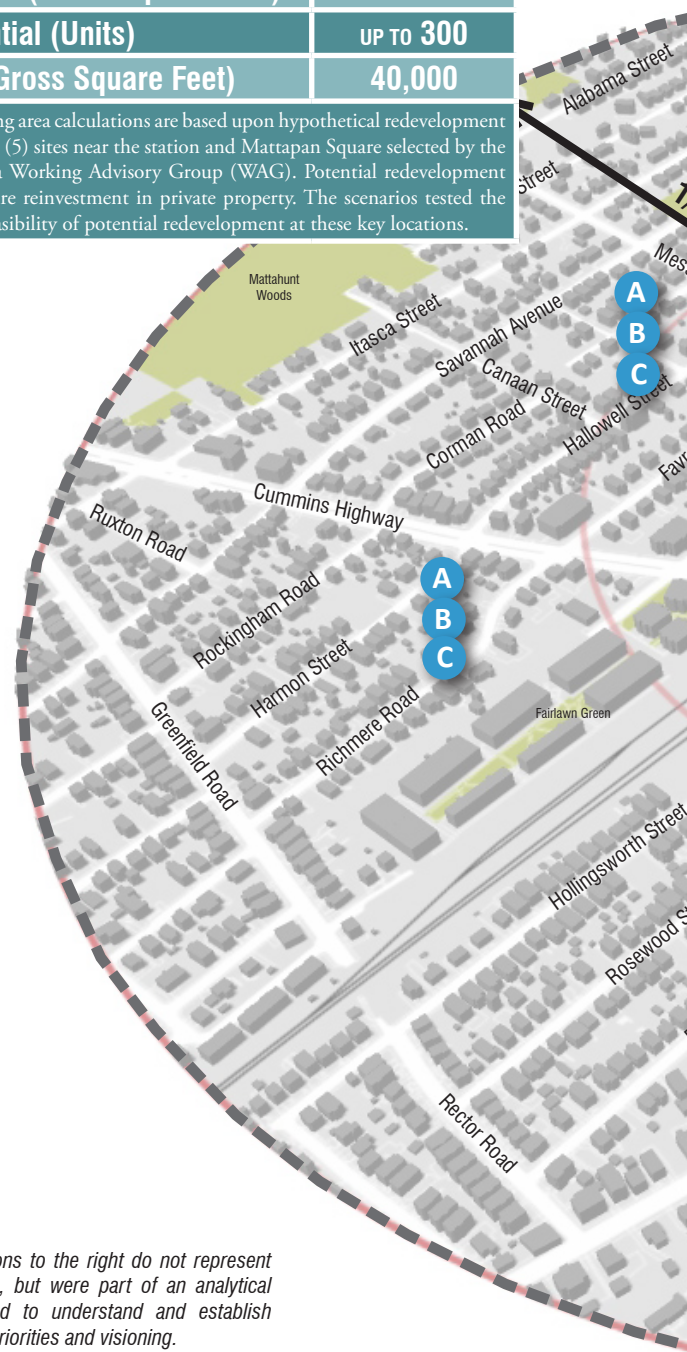
Provide new mixed-income housing opportunities near the station and stabilize existing neighborhood streets to support vitality and prosperity. The approach to housing in the Station Area focuses on the following:

- A Retain Diversity and Affordability** - The creation of new housing should expand opportunity for mixed-income diversity, homeownership and senior housing. New units should add quality housing choices that add supply as part of a strategy to retain area affordability.
- B Improve Housing Quality and Sustainability** - Create incentive programs for upgrading housing quality, utility infrastructure, and sustainability with energy and building envelope modifications or facade improvements.
- C Add Neighborhood Infill** - Vacant neighborhood properties should be utilized as new housing to stabilize residential streets.
- D Focus Transit-oriented Housing** - New housing units should be focused on properties adjacent to the transit stations and Main Streets district to reinforce walkability.
- E Expand Mixed-use Activity** - Upper level residential units should be added to the Main Street district to add vitality and economic activity.

Potential Redevelopment of Key Sites

Commercial/Light Industrial (Gross Square Feet)	17,000
Residential (Units)	UP TO 300
Retail (Gross Square Feet)	40,000

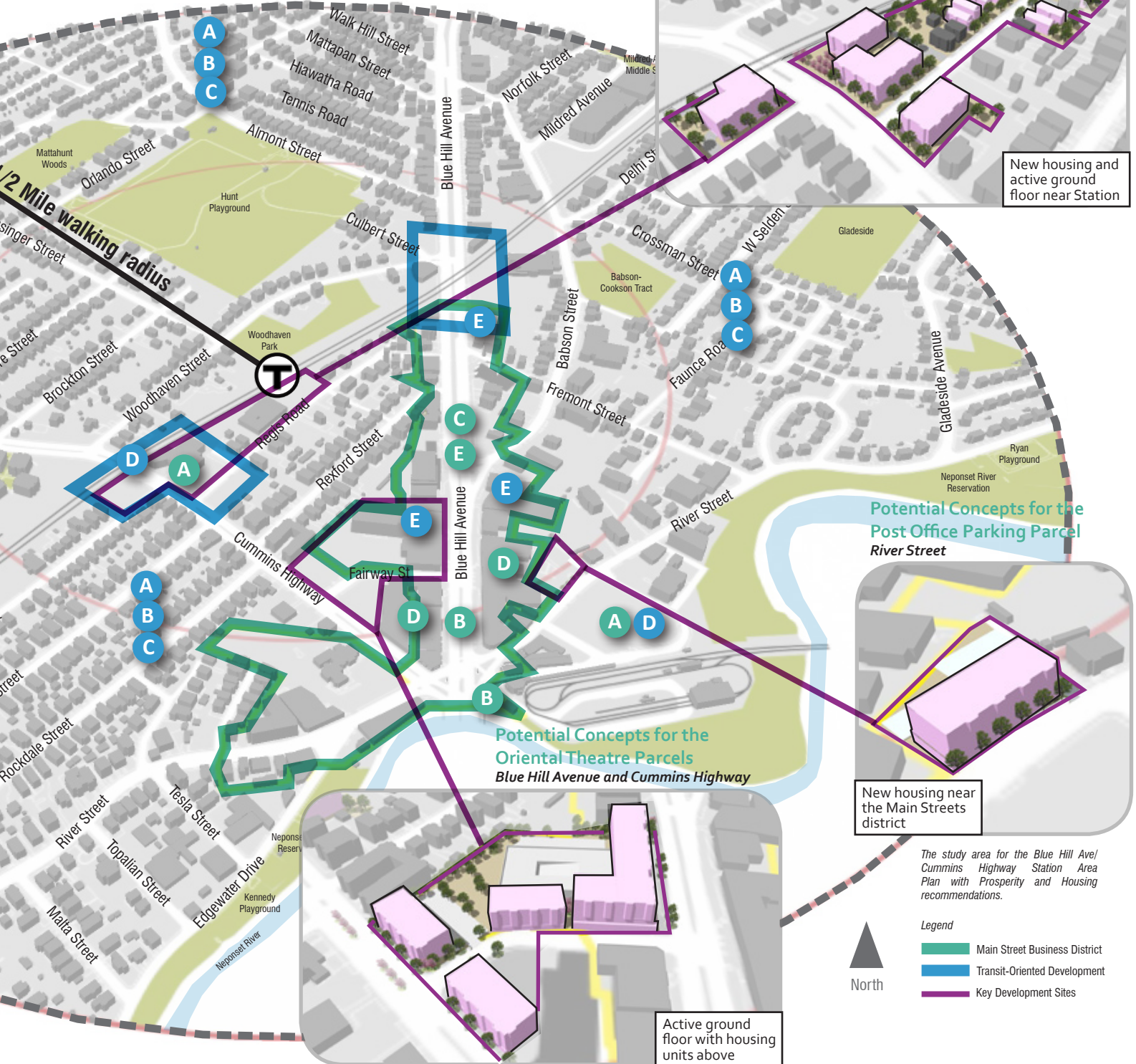
The following area calculations are based upon hypothetical redevelopment scenarios on (5) sites near the station and Mattapan Square selected by the Station Area Working Advisory Group (WAG). Potential redevelopment would require reinvestment in private property. The scenarios tested the scale and feasibility of potential redevelopment at these key locations.



The illustrations to the right do not represent final designs, but were part of an analytical process used to understand and establish community priorities and visioning.



Potential Concepts for the Cote Ford Parcels
Cummins Highway and Regis Road



Potential Concepts for the Post Office Parking Parcel
River Street



The study area for the Blue Hill Ave/ Cummins Highway Station Area Plan with Prosperity and Housing recommendations.

- Legend**
- █ Main Street Business District
 - █ Transit-Oriented Development
 - █ Key Development Sites



The recommendations within each topic area have been prioritized by the community as part of a community open house and online review of the draft Station Area Plan.

Place

The historic and cultural narratives of Mattapan Square are diverse and strong. The Station Area's character and physical environment should reflect the longevity of the location as an important City node and crossroads:

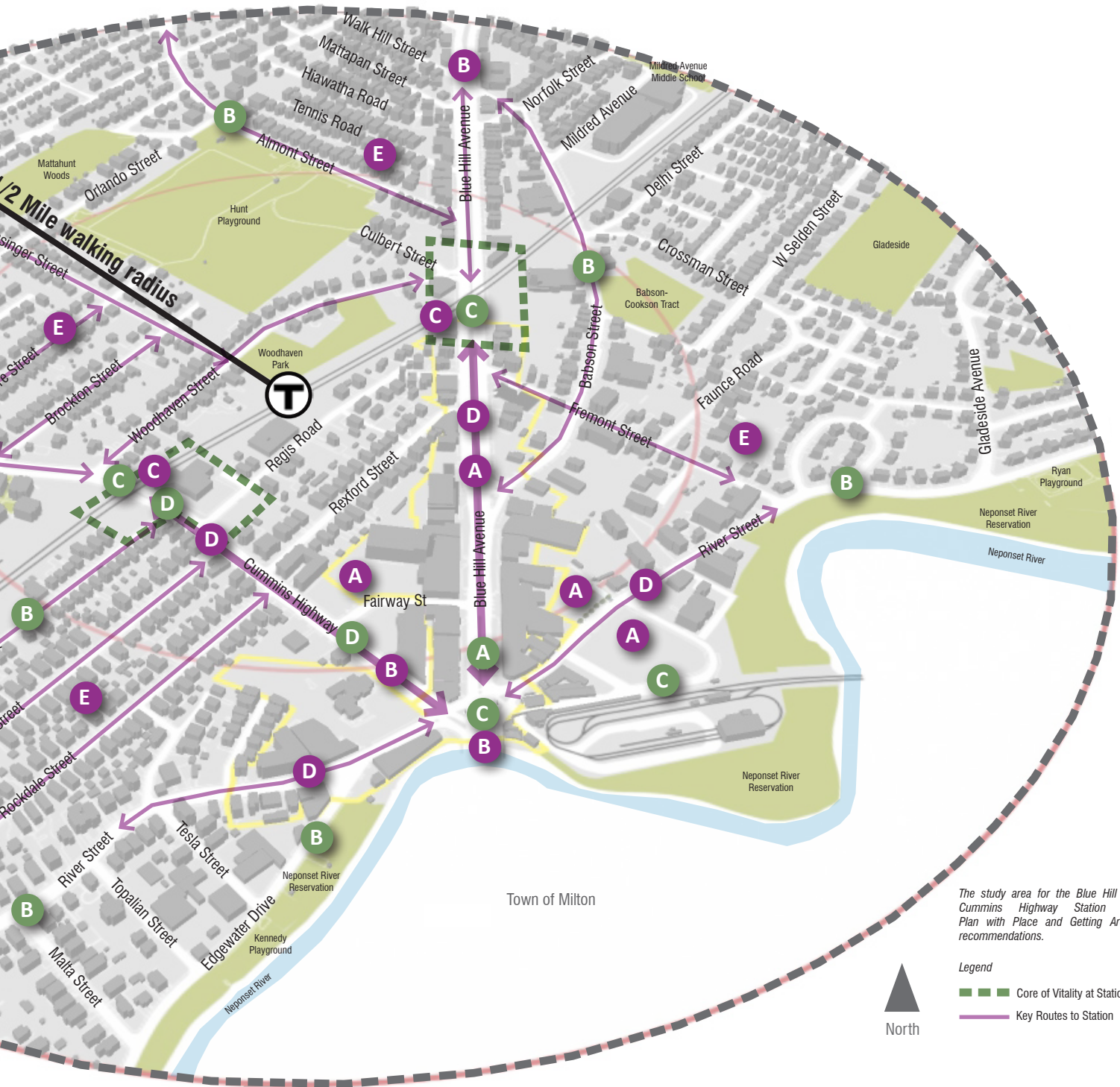
- A Enhance Vibrancy of the Square** - Storefront, streetscape and public realm improvements should be used to improve the character and attractiveness of Mattapan Square and reinforce it as a vital center of the community.
- B Reinforce Family-oriented Streets** - Surrounding residential streets should be reinforced as safe and walkable places that connect neighborhoods to transit and centers of activity with continuous walks, marked crossings, and expanded street trees.
- C Preserve and Maintain Character** - Community pride must be reflected in the preservation, maintenance, appearance and general attractiveness of the physical environment and character of the Mattapan Community.
- D Connect Vitality to the Station** - Activity and vitality of Mattapan Square should be extended on Blue Hill Avenue and Cummins Highway to the rail station entries.

Getting Around

The new rail station at Blue Hill Avenue/Cummins Highway would enhance connections to downtown. The following approaches enhance connection and circulation within the Station Area for all modes of transportation and leverage the new transit investment:

- A Manage Parking** - Optimize convenient parking for Mattapan Square, particularly on Blue Hill Avenue, increase utilization and efficiency of off-street parking lots.
- B Reduce Congestion and Improve Circulation** - Develop an improvement plan with funding for future study for vehicular and pedestrian circulation improvements at the primary intersection of Mattapan Square.
- C Enhance Station Entries** - Improve pedestrian crossings near stations with considerations for bus transfers and vehicle pick-up and drop-off.
- D Reinforce Public Realm Connections** - Enhance public realm between Mattapan Square and station entries.
- E Increase Neighborhood Walkability** - Add pedestrian crossings, curb extensions, and wider sidewalks at primary residential streets leading to transit locations.





The study area for the Blue Hill Ave/ Cummins Highway Station Area Plan with Place and Getting Around recommendations.

- Legend
- Core of Vitality at Station Area
 - Key Routes to Station



The recommendations within each topic area have been prioritized by the community as part of a community open house and online review of the draft Station Area Plan.

Parks and Public Space

Publicly accessible open space is well-distributed around the Station Area (relative to other neighborhood averages). Rather than add new open spaces, access, use and safety of existing resources should be enhanced. The following approaches have been identified to improve neighborhood open space amenities:

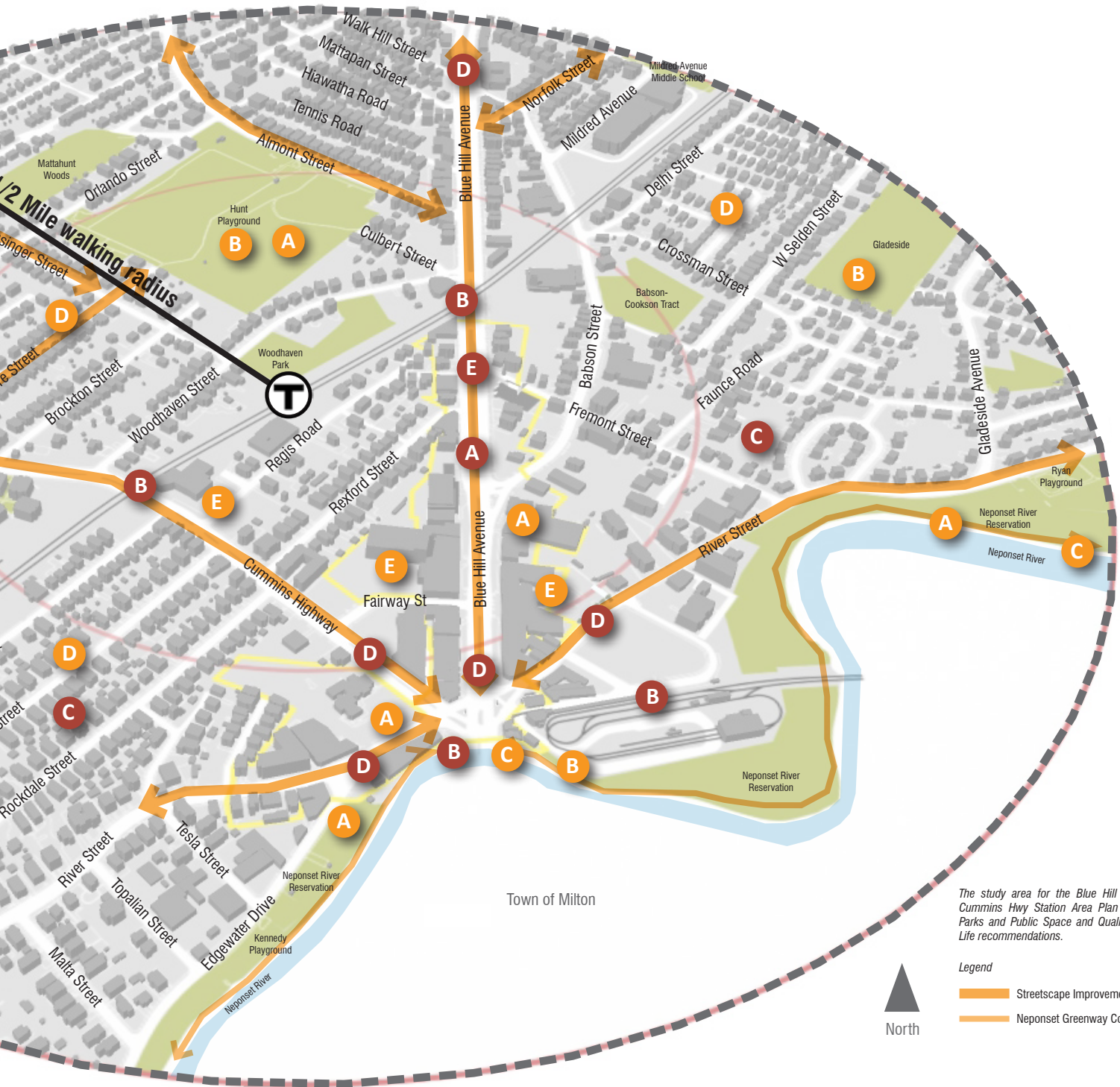
- A Reinforce Family-Oriented/Youth Activity** - Recreation activities, playing fields and playgrounds should be reinforced with equipment to emphasize families and youth.
- B Improve Lighting and Safety** - Parks and public spaces should be enhanced with additional lighting and maintenance to reinforce visibility and safety.
- C Expand Neponset River Access** - Public access to the Neponset River and future Neponset Greenway for bicyclists and water recreation should be enhanced at Mattapan Square.
- D Enhance Pedestrian Access and Walkability** - Add pedestrian crossings, curb extensions, and other amenities at primary residential streets leading to parks and public space.
- E Create Development Requirements** - New development should require considerations for improvements to parks, streetscape, infrastructure or new open space.

Quality of Life

The Station Area is anchored by the Main Streets district and quality of life enhancing amenities, such as the Mattapan Health Center. The following approaches build upon existing amenities to improve quality of life:

- A Build Opportunity and Success** - Focus partnerships and programs on local wealth creation and youth development. Create a new paradigm of success stories and opportunity in Mattapan.
- B Expand Sustainability** - Build capacity for alternative modes of transportation, community gardens, energy upgrades and housing improvements.
- C Enhance Public Safety** - Build community perception, respect and safety with residents and businesses support for positive activity and community stewardship.
- D Address Traffic and Parking** - Develop street improvements to balance high traffic volumes and parking needs in Mattapan Square and promote alternative modes of transportation.
- E Narrate History and Culture** - Celebrate the local history, community, arts and culture by expanding public art, sculpture, arts programs and community events.





The study area for the Blue Hill Ave/ Cummins Hwy Station Area Plan with Parks and Public Space and Quality of Life recommendations.

- Legend
-  Streetscape Improvements
 -  Neponset Greenway Concept Plan



Blue Hill Ave/Cummins Hwy Implementation Actions

The Implementation Actions are the critical components of Station Area strategies highlighted as actionable items.

The community vision outlined for the Blue Hill Ave/Cummins Highway Station Area is not achieved through a single action or solution, but through a series of purposeful and strategic changes that position the Station Area for a positive and incremental evolution over time. This continuum of positive change is already underway and can be expedited with the following key actions:

Strengthen and Improve Mattapan Square

The Mattapan Square Main Streets district is the focus of commercial and community activity nearest the station. It is important to strengthen and improve the character and business environment of the Square to build positive activity near the station and to anchor the community. A Storefront Improvement program with a revolving loan fund, a business improvement district or small business assistance grants can all assist in the improvement and beautification of Mattapan Square.

The local Main Street district should be empowered to create programs and connections that reinforce opportunities, links and connections on the Fairmount Indigo Corridor. Parallel efforts between other Corridor Main Streets districts should be reinforced in Mattapan Square. In particular this effort should look for complementary cultural and public arts efforts that could expand this aspect of the Station Area.

Invite Positive Investment at Cote Ford

The Station Area would benefit from market-based private investment to redevelop underutilized properties.

One such property, the Cote Ford site, is City-owned and will be publicly disposed for redevelopment. This property and process are important to build momentum for investment at a critical location adjacent to the new rail station and can bring increased vitality and activity to Cummins Highway and Mattapan Square while better connecting the station and the Main Streets district. The community should set high expectations for reuse of the property consistent with the community vision of mixed-use redevelopment with community space and the highest attainable level of sustainability. Under any reuse scenario, environmental issues on the site must be appropriately remediated.

Develop Innovative Resident, Small Business and Entrepreneurial Training

Mattapan Square should not only be a center of commercial activity, but also a center of innovative training and resource centers for residents, small businesses and entrepreneurs. Programs and partnerships should focus upon adding productive uses to upper floor vacancies dedicated to building the capacity for local wealth creation and prosperity.

Improve Traffic in the Square

The critical intersection at the center of Mattapan Square between Blue Hill Avenue, Cummins Highway and River Street, should be the focus of additional study and strategic circulation improvements. Short term improvements may include pedestrian signals with countdown displays, additional crosswalks, and adjustments to signal timing. Additional study should focus on an origin-destination study of traffic movements, feasibility study of traffic signal phasing modifications or geometric changes and an investigation of potential design alternatives.

Rebalance Blue Hill Avenue Public Realm

Public realm improvements to Blue Hill Avenue should be considered according to Boston's Complete Streets guidelines to rebalance the needs of all users of the roadway including vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians. Improvements must prioritize the importance of Blue Hill Avenue as a city-wide connector and a source of high volumes of traffic that support businesses, but also should be a safe and comfortable walking environment for shopping and leisure.

Enhance Streetscape at Cummins Highway

The connection between the Rail Station entry and the center of Mattapan Square on Cummins Highway is critical for pedestrian access and connectivity. Streetscape enhancements should improve the safety, accessibility and comfort of walking conditions on the north side of Cummins Highway. Curb cuts on Cummins Highway should be relocated to side streets wherever possible to consolidate vehicular access and enhance continuity of pedestrian routes.

Retain a Diverse Resident and Business Population

The diversity of the Station Area, culturally, racially and socio-economically should be retained and built upon as a primary asset of the Station Area. Station Area strategies to reinforce this effort include adding new housing units to help retain Station Area affordability over time, including a mix of incomes as part of new development projects, and building local wealth through training, education, entrepreneurship and homeownership.

The long term dynamics of transit improvements and land value will tend to push rents higher over time. A homeownership program that empowers the local

community to invest in Station Area property helps to prevent displacement and to connect residents directly to long term benefits. This type of program may require a partnership between community development corporations, lending institutions and the City to provide education, investment and capital resources. This type of program could be coupled with an effort to revitalize problem properties and neighborhood issues sometimes associated with absentee landlords.

Maintain Community Voice and Presence

One of the greatest strengths of the Station Area is the very engaged and informed community of residents, advocates and business owners who support and represent the collective voice of the community. It is important to maintain this voice as part of the implementation tools and stewardship focused around the Station.

Enhance Connections to the Neponset River

Physical and functional connections to the unique natural asset of the Neponset River should be reinforced in Mattapan Square. Enhanced physical connections should be examined at the MBTA Mattapan Trolley station, pedestrian crossings at Blue Hill Avenue and public space and plazas down to the river. Functional connections should be explored for complementary businesses, recreational opportunities and public realm improvements that build upon this unique asset.

Blue Hill Ave/Cummins Hwy Prioritized Actions

The Working Advisory Group examined the priorities established by the community and identified several concrete actions for each that would provide an immediate next step to continue the enhancement of the Station Area.

The potential concrete actions provide an immediate next step to continue the enhancement of the Station Area and surrounding community. The following potential concrete actions are organized by each of the topic areas of the Station Area Plan.

Community Vision

The highest ranked priority of the Community Vision was to reinforce the residential community in the Station Area. The following concrete actions could advance that priority in the near term future:

- **Strengthen local community development corporation(s) to invest in Mattapan Housing** - a strong and active collection of community development corporations focused on Mattapan and the Station Area could direct investment and redevelopment with the intention of reinforcing the residential community.
- **Create a list of problem properties in the Station Area and target them for change** - a single property that is not cared for or that is a location of consistently disruptive behavior is destructive to the residential community. Several categories of problem properties should be created to inventory the location of properties with issues and associated with a plan of action to remedy those issues.

Prosperity

The highest ranked priority of Economic Development was to focus redevelopment investment in the Station Area. The following concrete actions could advance that priority in the near term future:

- **Continue community involvement in Cote Ford** - positive investment in the Cote Ford property will be a critical milestone for the Station Area community and

could potentially build redevelopment momentum for other opportunities in the area. The community should work with the Department of Neighborhood Development to ensure that one of the redevelopment proposals can be fully supported and implemented.

- **Come to community agreement regarding the next important redevelopment site (for example, the MBTA property)** - the milestones of the Mattapan Community Health Center and a built project at Cote Ford should be followed immediately at the next important and underutilized site. The community should come some level of agreement about what that site should be and continue efforts with the City, property owners and others to continue in the promotion of positive investment within the Station Area.

Home

The highest ranked priority of Housing was to retain diversity and affordability in the Station Area. The following concrete actions could advance that priority in the near term future:

- **Workforce housing units in new development at higher than the current requirement of 15%** - the current Inclusionary Development Policy requires that affordable housing units are required at a rate of 15% of the total market-rate units proposed. To preserve diversity and affordability that requirement should be increased for new development in the Station Area.
- **Expanded homeownership programs within the Station Area** - one of the most effective measures to allow the prosperity of residents to grow with the prosperity of the neighborhood is to increase, enhance and assist in expanding homeownership. This expansion may involve financial incentives, advising services or other programmed assistance.

Place

The highest ranked priority of Placemaking was to enhance vibrancy of Mattapan Square. The following concrete actions could advance that priority in the near term future:

- **Advocate for Blue Hill Ave/Cummins Highway/River Street improvements** - the plan reflects concept level direction for public realm investments on the three primary streets into Mattapan Square. Including

improvements on these roadway segments should be advocated for in the City's capital improvements budget.

- **Advance facade improvement program** - through assistance with the Boston Main Streets program a facade improvement program for Mattapan Square could be initiated through the use of a revolving loan fund, small grants or design assistance.
- **Create a "down with roll-down gates" campaign** - the prevalence of roll-down security gates in the retail district promotes the wrong impression of the community and does not build a sense of community or pride of place. A program to encourage business and property owners to remove gates would benefit the district.

Getting Around

The highest ranked priority of Mobility and Transportation was to manage parking in the Station Area. The following concrete actions could advance that priority in the near term future:

- **Encourage shared parking agreements** - by combining parking lots beyond parcel boundaries more efficient parking layouts and utilization can be achieved. Discussion of shared parking and brokering agreements between owners would benefit the district.
- **Perform a parking utilization study** - in a compact main street district, parking supply and utilization need to function properly. A full accounting of on-street and off-street parking use would inform a coordinated and district-wide parking strategy that would help to better serve resident and business needs.
- **Explore pro's and con's of resident parking restrictions and logistics of implementing** - the new rail station may change parking dynamics in the neighborhoods in the Station Area. The community should continue an open discussion regarding a variety of parking regulation measures such as resident parking restrictions or other tools to enhance convenient access to parking.

Parks and Public Space

The highest ranked priority of Parks and Public Space was to reinforce family and youth activities in the Station Area. The following concrete actions could advance that priority in the near term future:

- **Perform community survey to establish list of missing amenities** - the Station Area's open spaces

should serve the family and youth activities that are desired from the community. A survey of the existing park and public space amenities and a community survey of what is missing would allow those missing features to be identified.

- **Seek funding to install missing amenities** - advocating for missing open space amenities, youth programming or other resources would enhance the family-orientation of the Station Area.

Quality of Life

The highest ranked priority of Quality of Life was to build opportunity and success for residents and businesses in the Station Area. The following concrete actions could advance that priority in the near term future:

- **Promote existing training programs** - connect more residents in need to the training and assistance resources that already exist in the Station Area.
- **Create a new job/training connection in the Corridor** - as part of the benefit of connecting the resources of the Fairmount Indigo Corridor more directly, networks and connections between jobs in Newmarket or Readville should be promoted within the Station Area.
- **Use a vacant storefront "pop-up" help center** - a vacant storefront could be put to active and productive uses with a pop-up center for training, employment or homeownership services. The use could be temporary or rotate among vacancies with the permission of building owners.

Implementation Actions

The highest ranked priority of the Implementation Actions was to strengthen and improve Mattapan Square. The following concrete actions could advance that priority in the near term future:

- **Create one new event that focuses on local business support and community involvement in the Main Street** - an event that celebrates local businesses and makes direct connections between local business and local resident support may strengthen the vitality of the district.
- **Examine the potential benefits of establishing a Business Improvement District (BID)** - a small-scale business improvement district may help to both build a business community in the Square and provide some additional funding for clean-up, maintenance or programming.



FAIRMOUNT INDIGO CORRIDOR



CITY OF BOSTON
Martin J. Walsh
Mayor



Boston
Redevelopment
Authority

BLUE HILL AVENUE/CUMMINS HIGHWAY
STATION AREA PLAN SUMMARY
FEBRUARY 2015

FAIRMOUNT INDIGO PLANNING INITIATIVE
WWW.FAIRMOUNTINDIGOPLANNING.ORG