

Meeting 5
Overall Design and
Building Considerations

Needham Street Area
Vision Plan



Community Engagement Group

March 12, 2018

Meeting goals

- ❑ *City staff provide clear understanding of Special Permit process and get feedback on draft outline of Needham St. Vision Plan*
- ❑ *Community Engagement Group identifies and evaluates current and future design challenges and opportunities for the Needham Street Corridor to inform City of Newton Planning Team.*

Agenda

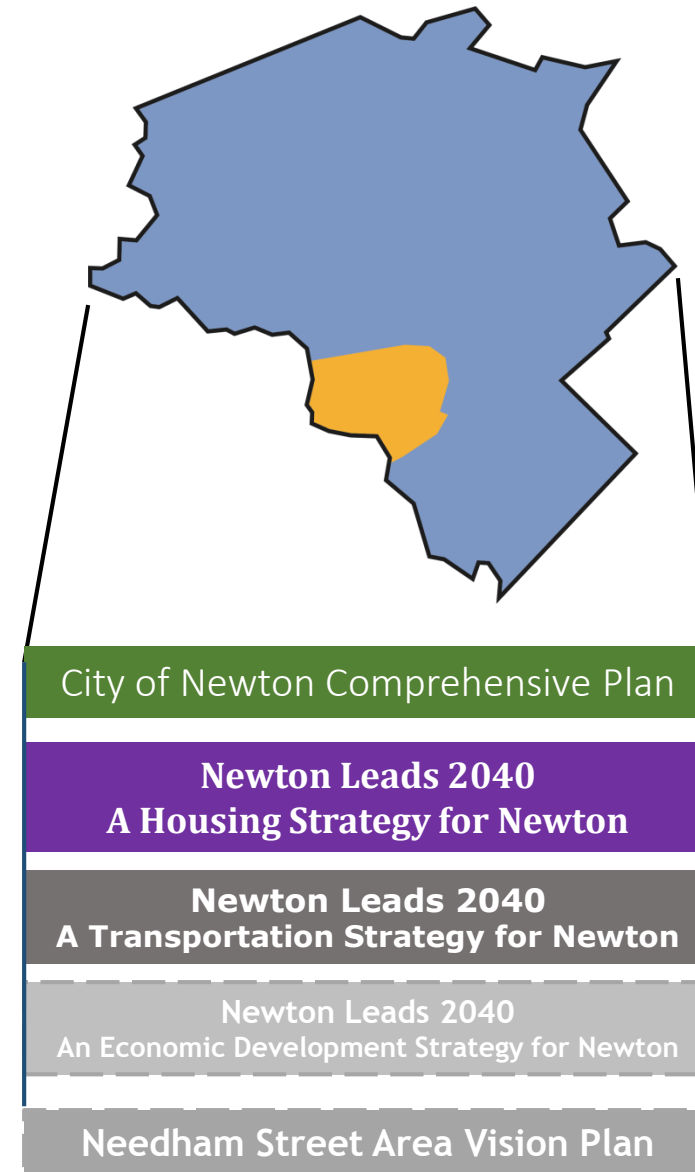
- Welcome
- Special Permit Process and Needham Street Area Vision Plan
- Vision Plan Draft Outline and Feedback
- Site Walk Observations
- Design Principles
- Group Discussion
- Public Comment

A Vision Plan is...

a guide for public policy action regarding a particular geographic area

based in..

- broader citywide strategies
- past studies & data analysis
- community engagement



What is a Vision Plan?

A Vision Plan is...

a guide for public policy action regarding a particular geographic area

based in..

- broader citywide strategies
- past studies & data analysis
- community engagement

a document that outlines...

- objectives for the future
- guidelines for development
 - infrastructure & systems (transportation, open space, utilities, etc.)
 - private development (scales, land uses, urban design, etc.)



2017

Community Engagement Process

Engagement Group & Public Forum

Drafting the Vision Plan

Present draft to Zoning and Planning Committee,
Planning & Development Board

2018

Final Needham Street Area Vision Plan
adopted by City Council as an amendment to
the Comprehensive Plan

Use to guide decision making for upcoming projects

Zoning Amendments

Guide private
development

Inform public
investments

Needham Street Area Vision Plan Process

How will the Vision Plan Guide Private Development?



Most new development along Needham Street will require a Special Permit from City Council, which will include multiple opportunities for staff, Councilors, and the public to provide input and shape the project according to goals identified in the Vision Plan.

Special Permit Process



- Conceptual project review with City staff from multiple departments.
- Opportunity to shape project according to identified policies and goals
- Opportunity to ensure applicant is aware of the Needham Street Area Vision Plan

Special Permit Process

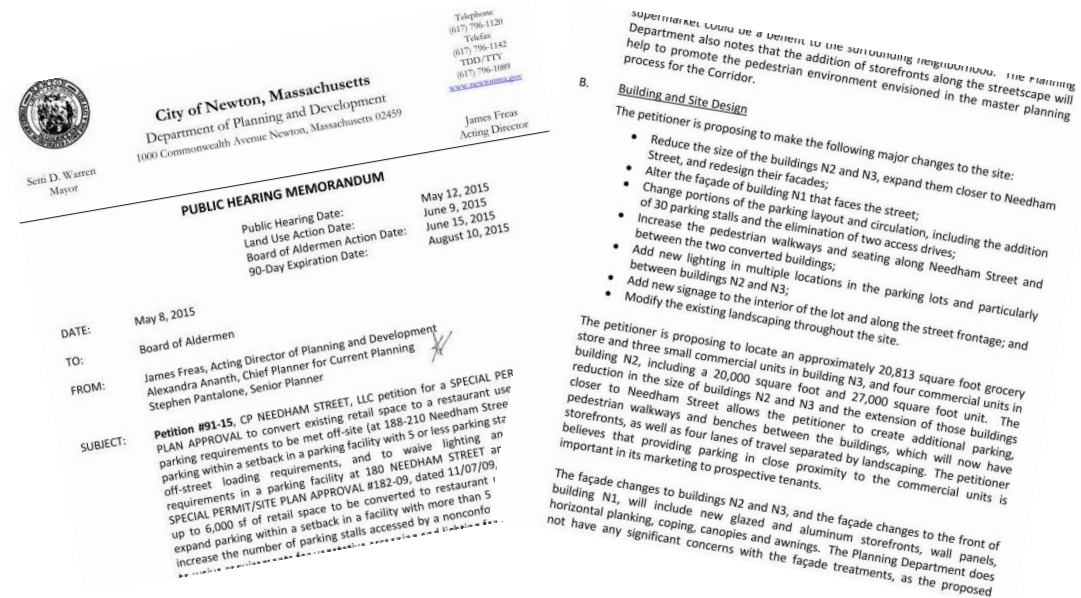


- Many projects along Needham Street will also require review and approval by other City commissions such as:
 - Urban Design Commission
 - Newton Historical Commission
 - Conservation Commission

Special Permit Process



- Staff identifies how project is and is not consistent with adopted policies
- Zoning Ordinance identifies criteria for considering the project and any waivers requested



Special Permit Process

Pre-application meetings

Zoning Review

Special Permit Application

Other Commission Review

Staff memo to City Council
Land Use Committee

Public Hearing

Land Use Committee vote

City Council vote

Appeal Period

- Opportunity for public input prior to Committee discussion and vote



Needham Street Area Vision Plan Draft Outline

- I. Needham Street Area Vision Plan Purpose
- II. Needham Street Area Vision Plan Engagement Group Participation
- III. Vision Plan Summary
- IV. A Vision for the Public Realm
- V. A Vision for Transportation
- VI. A Vision for Land Uses
- VII. A Vision for Design
- VIII. Non-Physical Considerations
- IX. Synthesis Map

Appendices

Site Walk Observations

- Transportation
 - Need more safe and connected streets, sidewalks, and recreation routes
 - Pathways from Needham Street to building entrances
 - Connection from Greenway to buildings
 - Parallel route to east of Needham Street
 - Network connectivity
- Design
 - Orientation and scale of buildings, parking lots, pedestrian access
 - Signage, street trees, street lights, lighting, seating, café use and potential
 - Landscaping on the Greenway
- People
 - Places to gather, sit
 - Human scale, visual interest
- South Meadow Brook – highlight views and access



Not much of a view from the Greenway



Informal but well-used path from Columbus Ave across Greenway and onto Needham St. Too late for maintenance



Artful birdhouses!



New gate connecting Greenway to Avalon



Outdoor café seating is hidden



LOVE the mill buildings!



Signs should be perpendicular to direction of travel

Attractive street light but no provision for banners or hanging flowers



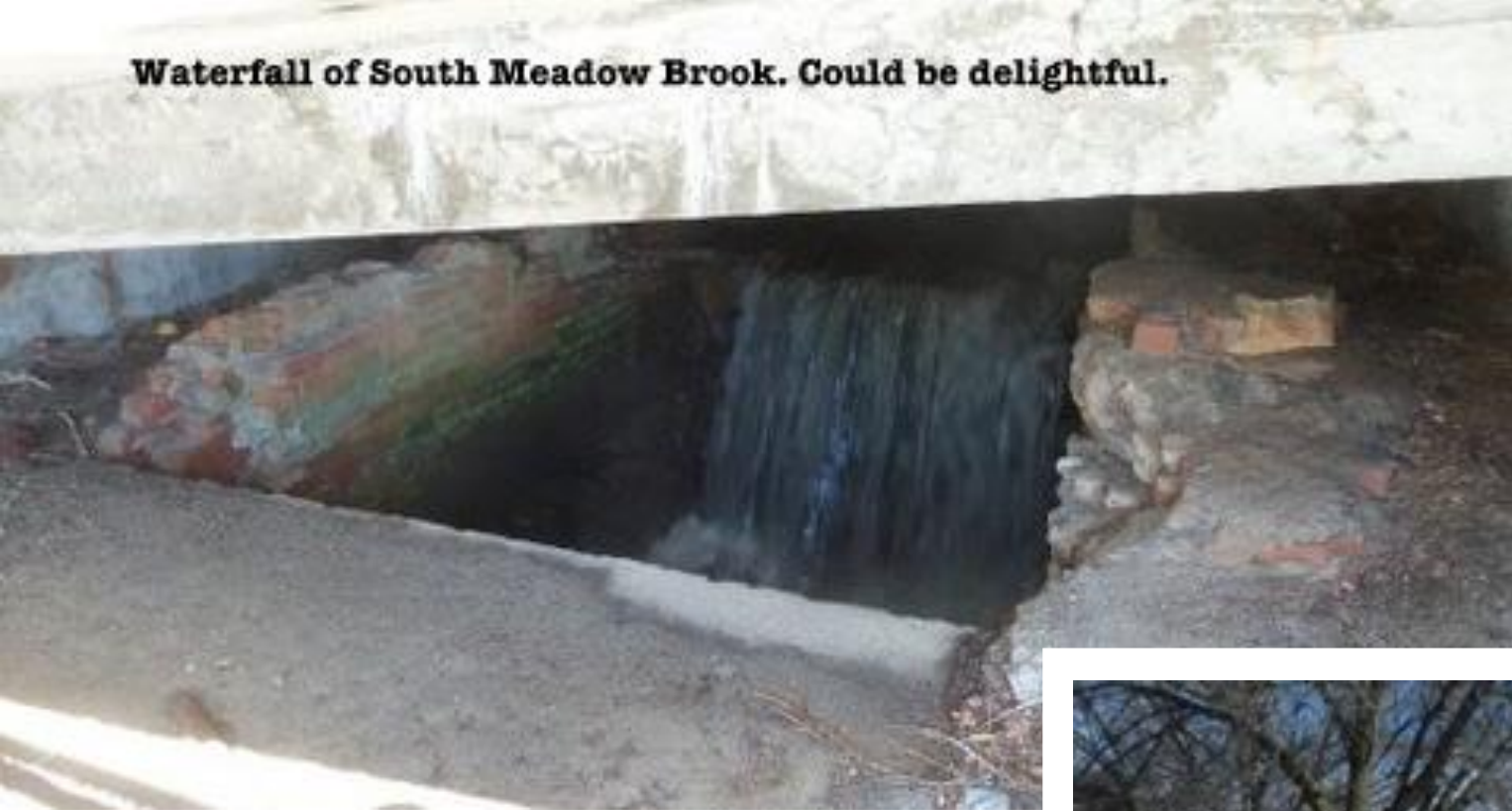
South Meadow Brook at Needham St. Needs: Signage, delineated path



Would prefer storefronts on street, parking in rear



Waterfall of South Meadow Brook. Could be delightful.



Whatever happened to store display windows?

WHAT YOU TOLD US WAS IMPORTANT

“A dynamic mixed use area with a sense of **vibrancy**... cars go at a slow speed...an area with **lots of diversity**...plenty of attractive and affordable **residential housing**...some mid-sized office buildings...even a **brewery**”

“A **diverse and walkable destination** with a mix use of spaces”

“A place that can attract businesses, by providing **outdoor seating**, greenspace, recycle and trash bins, curb appeal and pedestrian safety, designated space for electric vehicles, other shared transportation options”

“An area that is a greener and **more human place**”

“A corridor with a **district identity** as a neighborhood...a mix of housing and businesses...to create a **vibrant community**”

“A place with a **beautiful street** that is green, **alive with people**, and supported by thriving stores, theaters, and **walkable** options for people”

“An area where people can meet at **eminent public art**...there are **landmarks for way-finding...dedicated community facility** to provide education, meetings and performances; a place with a **park to rest** and **pleasing storefront displays**, and possibly **smaller shops** for new entrepreneurs and vendors; in addition an area where the **activity and liveliness continues into the evening.**”

“a **theater or concert hall** for people to go to before or after a dining experience; wellness centers and **unique specialty locations** fill the sustainable and diverse area”

“A place with lots of **outside seating**”

“A walkable district or a village..., larger parcels are obligated to provide **beneficial open space** to the public. There is a strong pedestrian street scale with **human scale buildings** amongst general wide sidewalks and **minimal front setbacks**...are no side setbacks or curb cuts are eliminated to create a more **cohesive corridor**”

“A corridor with the right intensity of use for the area with a **diversity of uses** that compliment one another”

“**promote bike** and walking safety as well as **public transportation**, and **buildings powered by renewable**...new construct or retrofits meet **LEED** or similar standards”

“A **N-Squared Innovation District** as a series of neighborhoods which together form a **live-work-play-learn ecosystem**...walkable, bikable and energetic with a social and transit hub ”

“An area with enough **color and texture in the buildings**...there is a **small theater** and or meeting space in a **community center** that people can rent out”

“area would change its name to **Innovation Street** and link the corridor’s identity to the **N2 District** forward thinking companies...a **farmer’s market** twice a week...**create greater parking efficiencies**...**extra wide sidewalks** and amenities, and a **continuity of trees and landscaping**”

“an area with **more places to sit** down...a **place for kids to go and play and eat** in one space; a **central outdoor place** for people to be able to eat or meet up and a place that stays **lively at all times of the day**”

“A place with **large and small-scale diversity** on both sides of the street ”

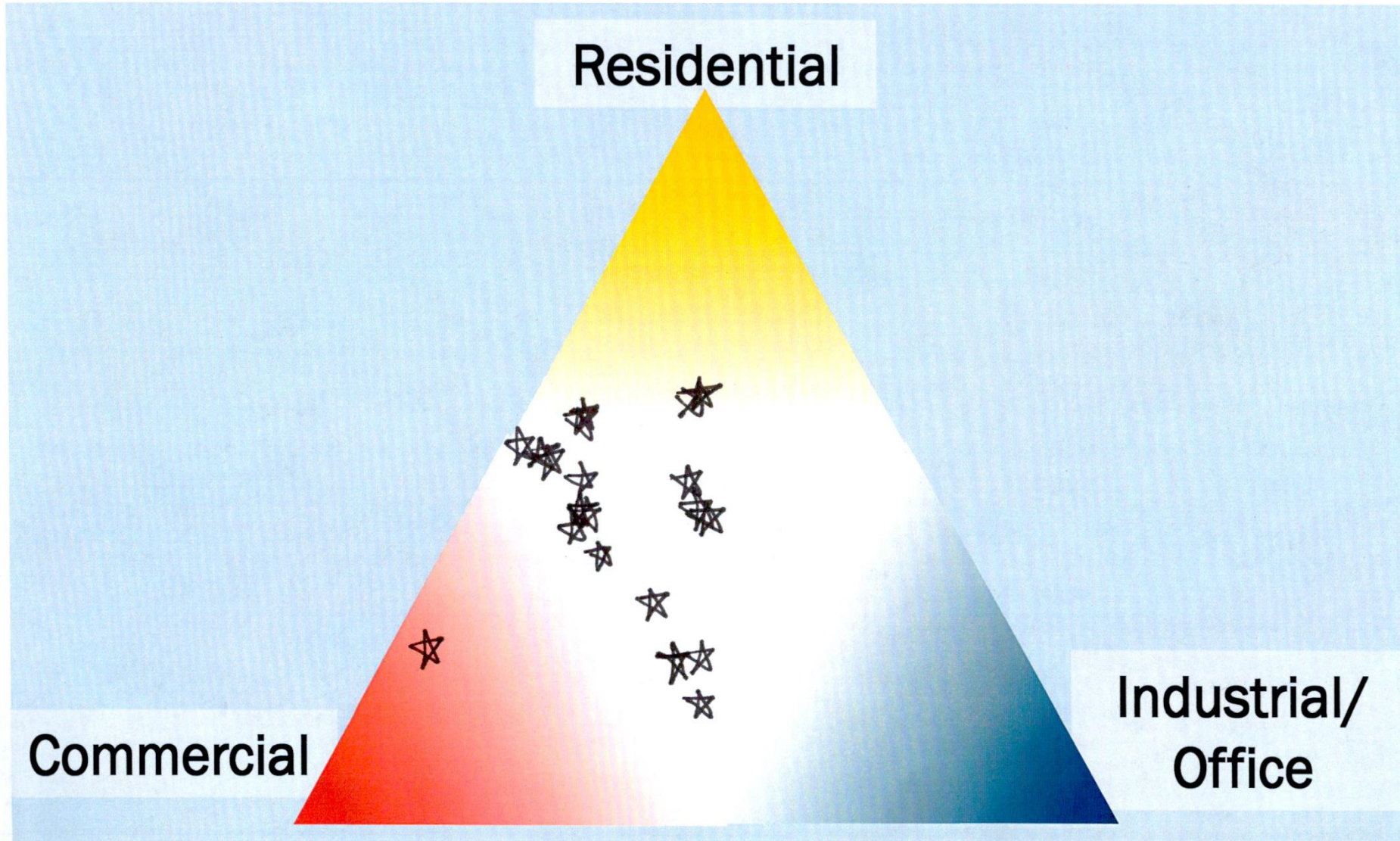
“A potential **new village with people of all ages**...an area that has worked towards improving the City’s housing shortage with an **ecofriendly high rise building** that compliments the community...there is also a **new senior center** and **tram** that acts as an attraction for older people in the City”

“An area with a **new hotel**...houses a **college satellite campus** with young people around the pedestrian friendly area

“An area where existing **stores coexist with the residents** along the street...there are opportunities along the shopping routes **to stop and sit and enjoy** the act of shopping; and there are **art galleries** and personalized stores”

“A **gathering spot** for parades, weddings, artists that also consists of **retail and residential spaces**”

Land Use Mix – Proposed



“Cities have the ability of providing something for everybody, only because and only when they are created by everybody.” - Jane Jacobs

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

They are general principles of design excellence and neighborhood compatibility to improve how new projects will look and work.



WHAT WILL THE DESIGN PRINCIPLES DO?

- Reinforce the zoning, goals, and values
- Promote design excellence and compatibility with context for new projects
- Improve the design review process for everyone by creating a common language

GOALS OF DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- Create a safe, comfortable, and efficient streetscape
- Enhance the urban experience with a vibrant mixed-use area/district at all times
- Create a unified and attractive physical environment
- Promote connections between parcels to increase the walkability among parcels
- Connect the sites to surrounding ecological system and open space network
- Support sustainability



Site Design



Built Form



Public Realm



Site Design



Built Form



Public Realm



Harmonize relationship between buildings, streets, and open spaces



Proposed typical street section along Needham Street











snalls

T.J. Maxx

Needham St



Create a defined and active streetwall





SHOWCASE

CINEMA DE LUX

SHOWCASE

LAWLESS HEAD
BREWERY

THE BEER HALL

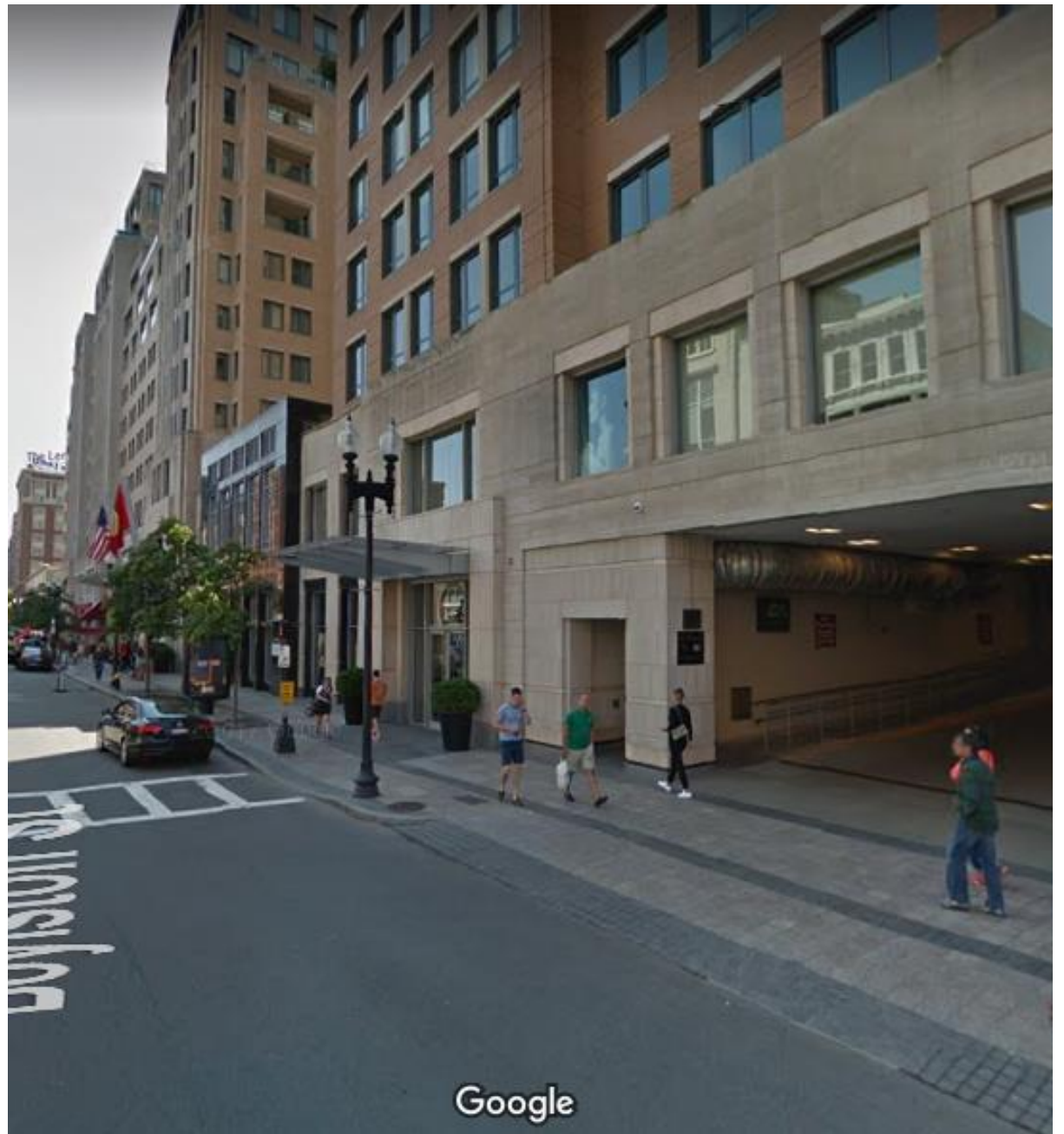
THE BREWERY





Organize uses to complement
the public environment







Integrate common open space and landscape with architecture



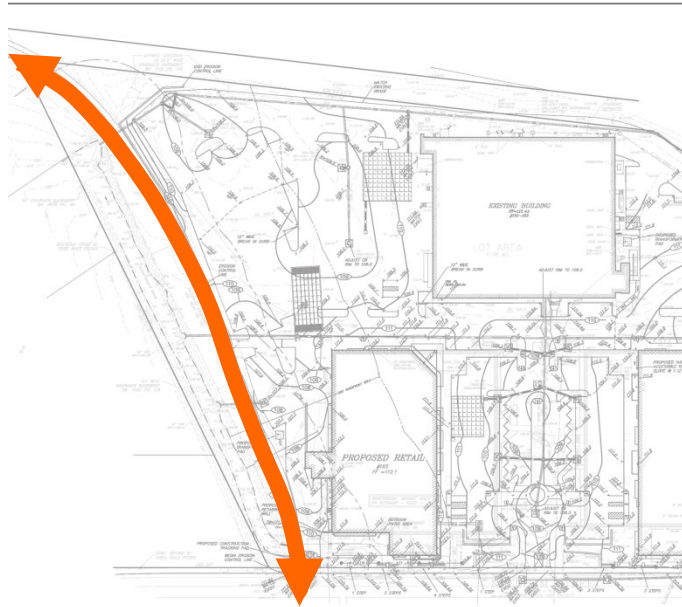


US



Recognize and enhance
unique conditions





Respect and exhibit natural systems and features





Site Design



Built Form



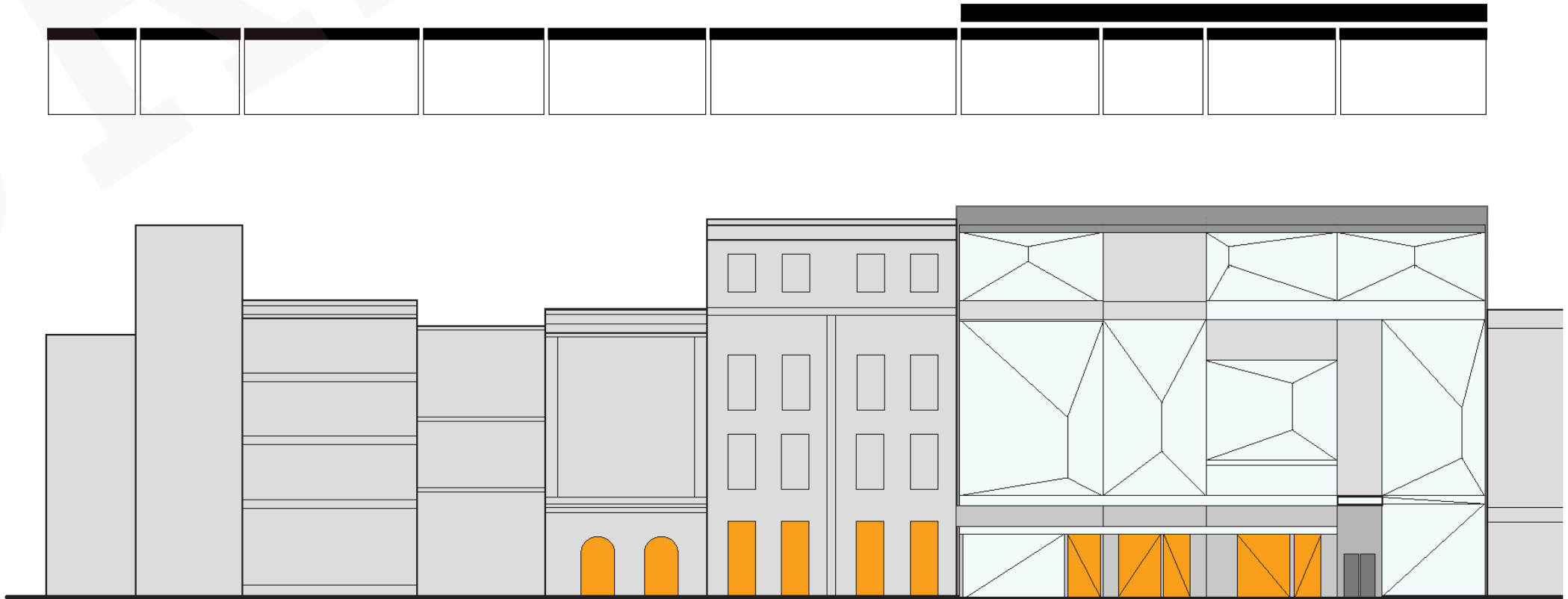
Public Realm

- “...the beauty of the world derives not from unity in variety, but also from variety in unity.” - Umberto Eco



Express a clear organizing architectural idea



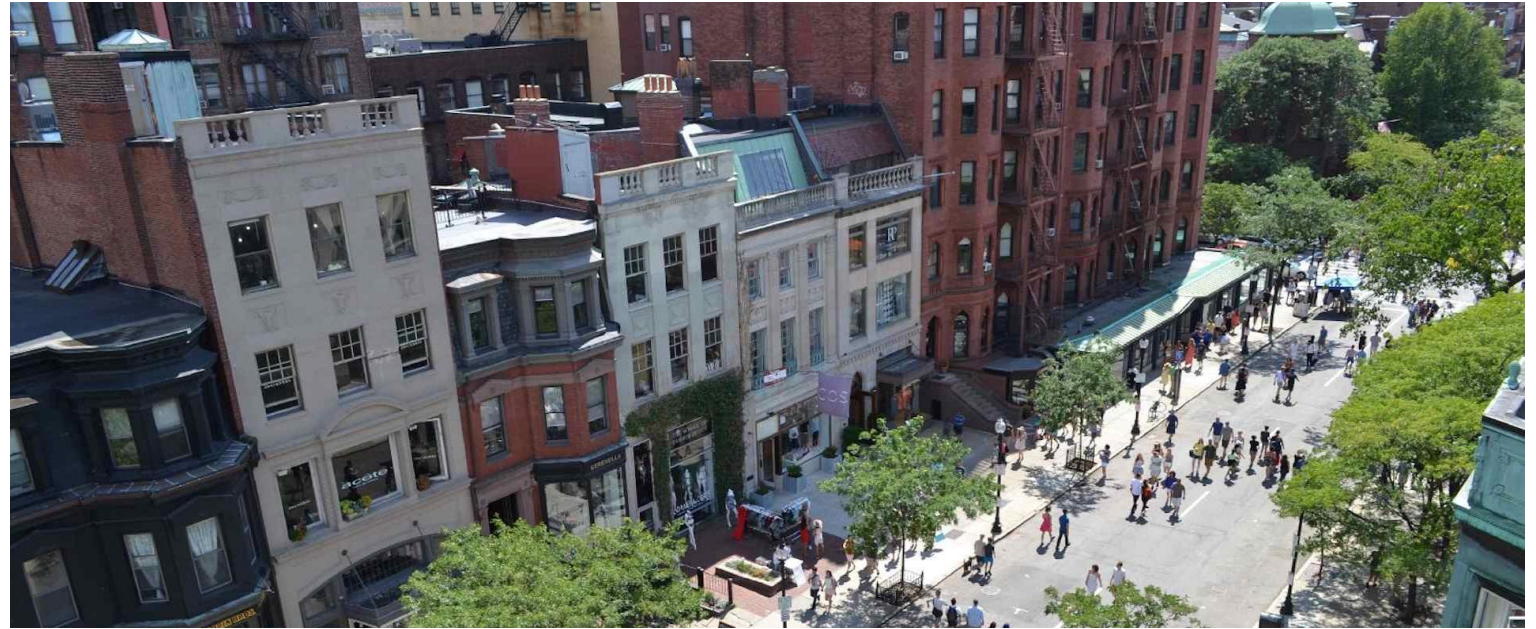


Modulate buildings vertically and horizontally

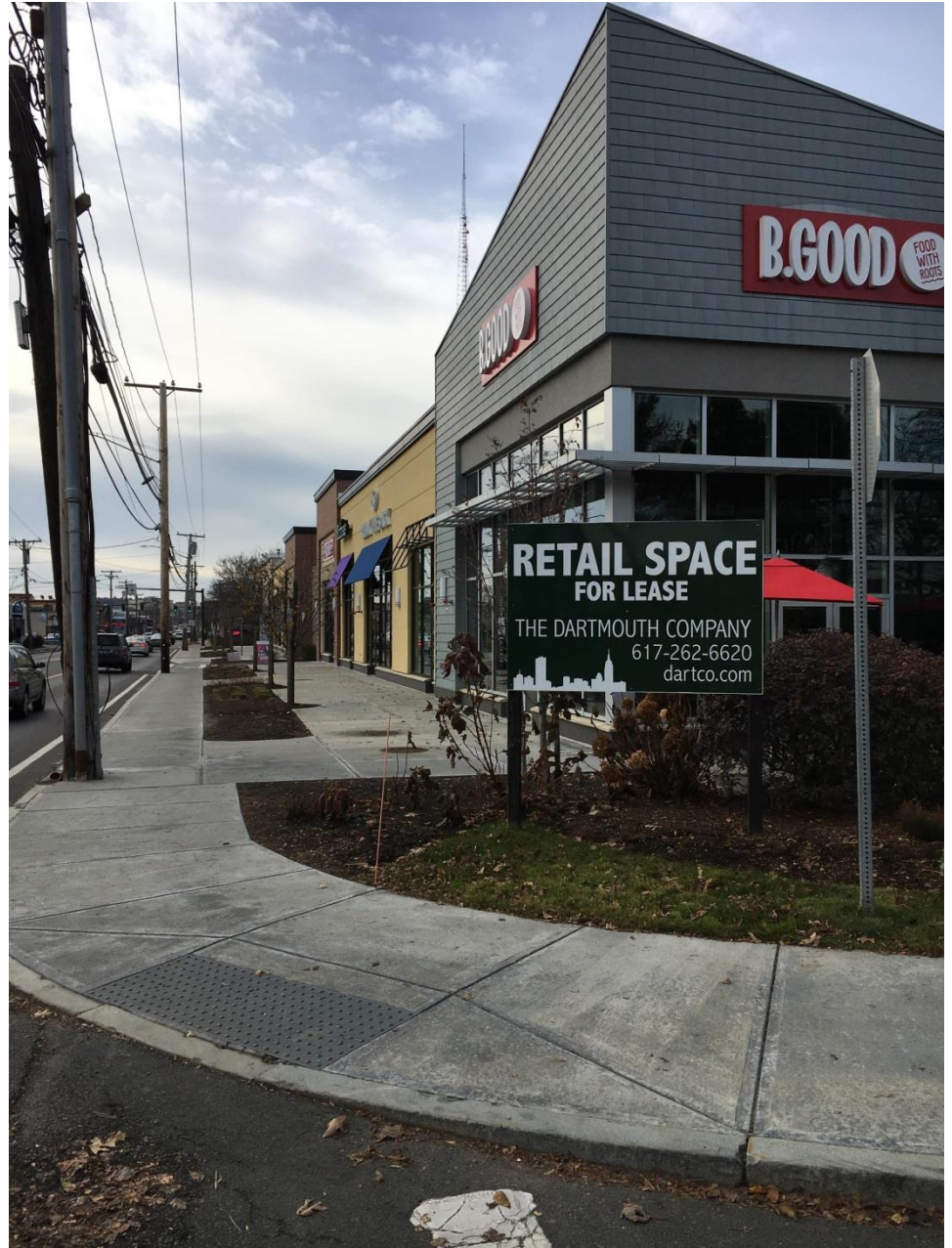








Harmonize the built form
with scale and materials





Shape the roofs of buildings



Render building facades with texture and depth





Coordinate building
elements



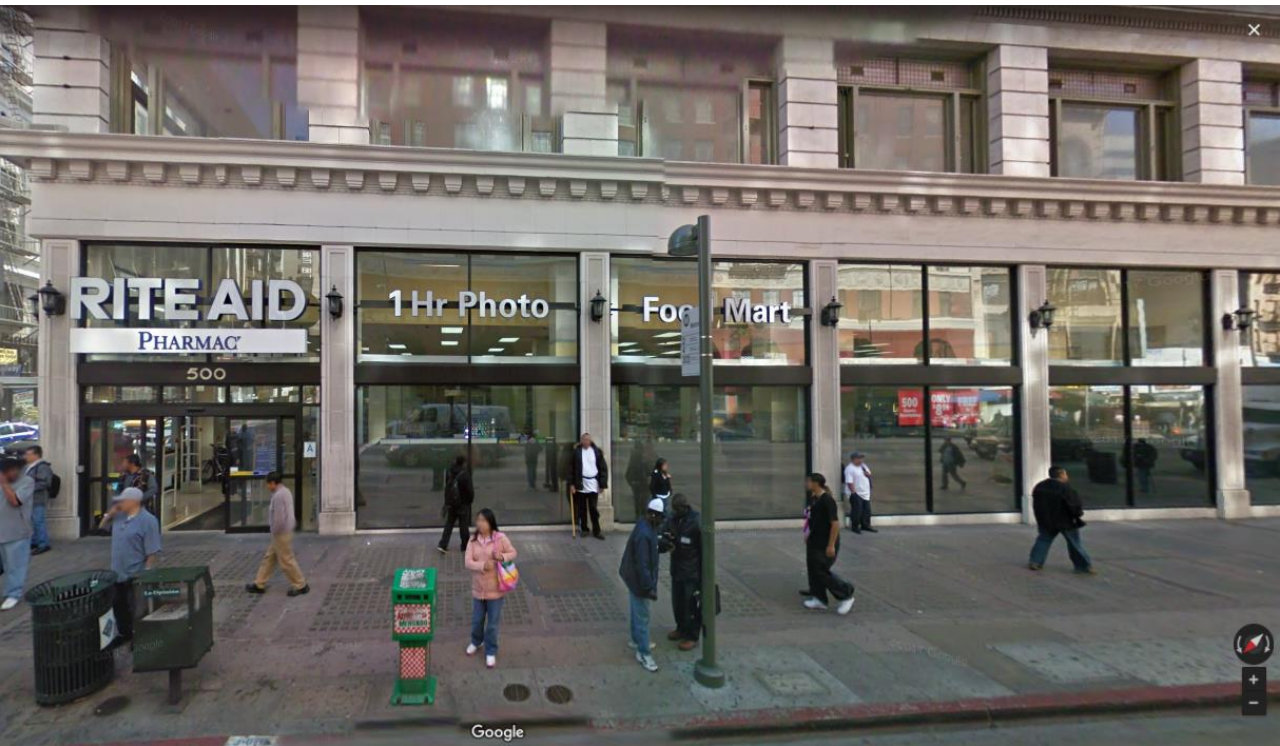
Design active building fronts





 alamy stock photo







Site Design



Built Form



Public Realm



Design public open space as an extension of the streetscape

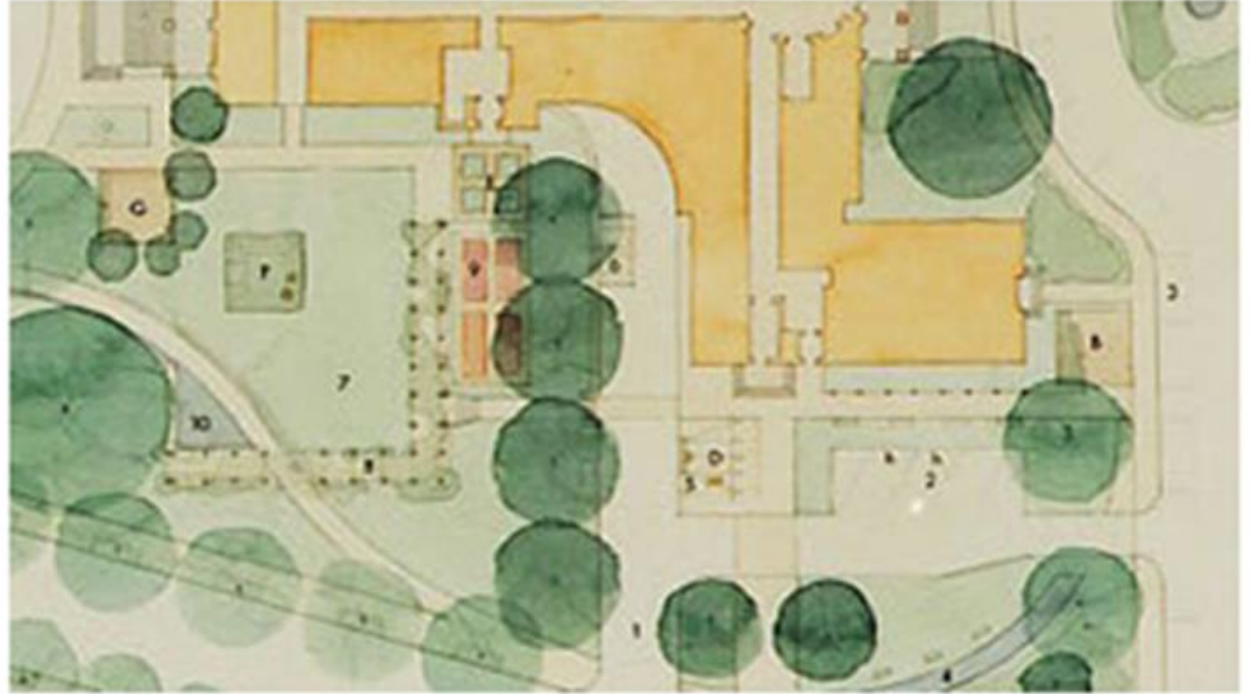
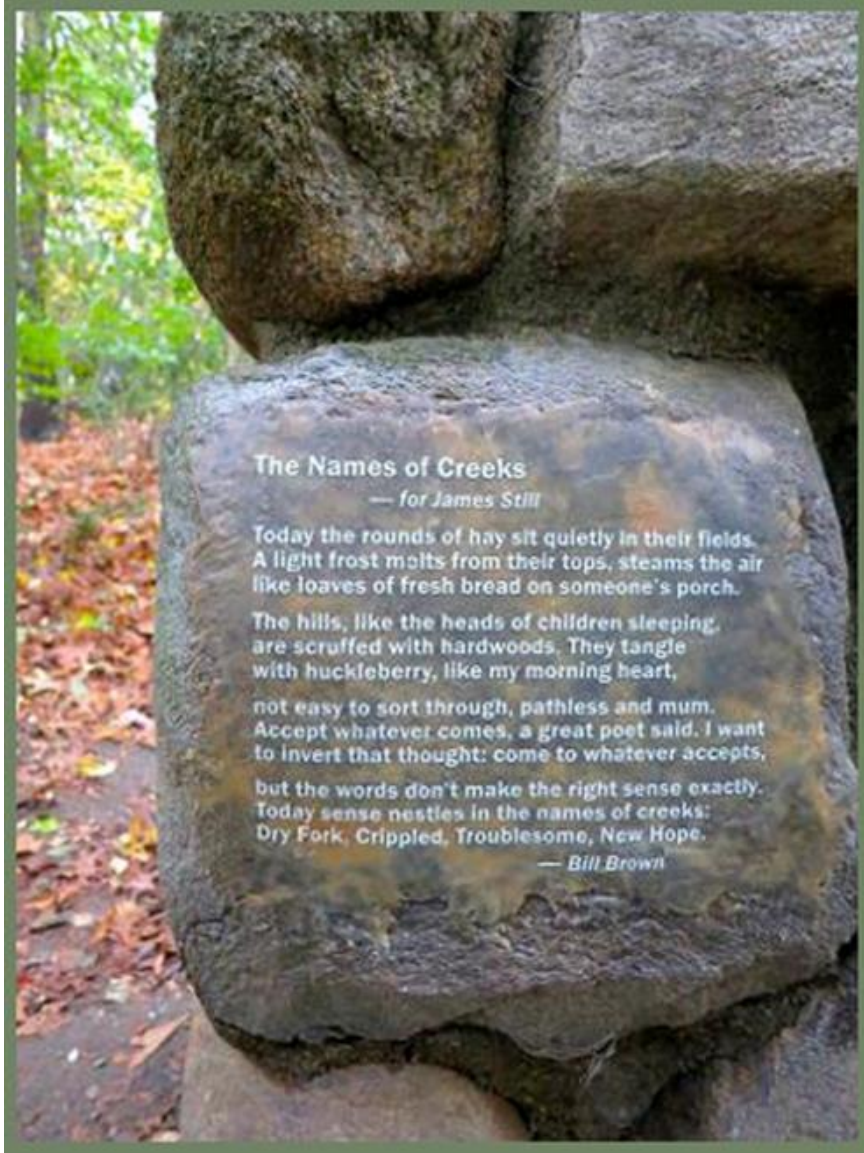




Locate and design public open space to maximize comfort and visual access



Express neighborhood
character in public open space



Salvatore A. Balsamo Millennium Park
Newton, MA
Completion: 2004



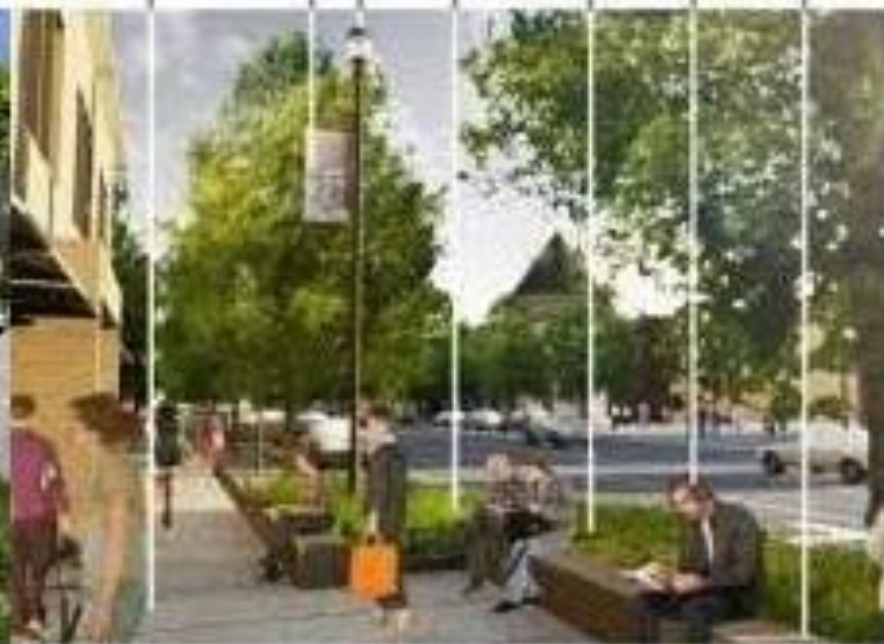
Design public open space to encourage social activity, play, and rest





Design sidewalks to enhance the pedestrian experience





SITE DESIGN

- Harmonize relationships between buildings, streets, and open spaces
- Create a defined and active street wall.
- Organize uses to complement the public environment
- Integrate common open space and landscape with architecture
- Recognize and enhance unique conditions
- Respect and exhibit natural systems and features

BUILT FORM

- Express a clear organizing architectural idea
- Modulate buildings vertically and horizontally
- Harmonize the built form with scale and materials
- Shape the roofs of buildings
- Render building facades with texture and depth
- Coordinate building elements
- Design active building fronts

PUBLIC REALM

- Design public open space as an extension of the streetscape
- Locate and design public open space to maximize comfort and visual access
- Express neighborhood character in public open space
- Design public open space to encourage social activity, play, and rest
- Design sidewalks to enhance the pedestrian experience

WE WOULD LIKE YOUR FEEDBACK ON THESE DESIGN PRINCIPLES:

- What did you like?
- What did you not like?
- What did we miss?
- How should we refine the design principles?

Public Comment