

Chelsea Creek Municipal Harbor Plan – Community Vision

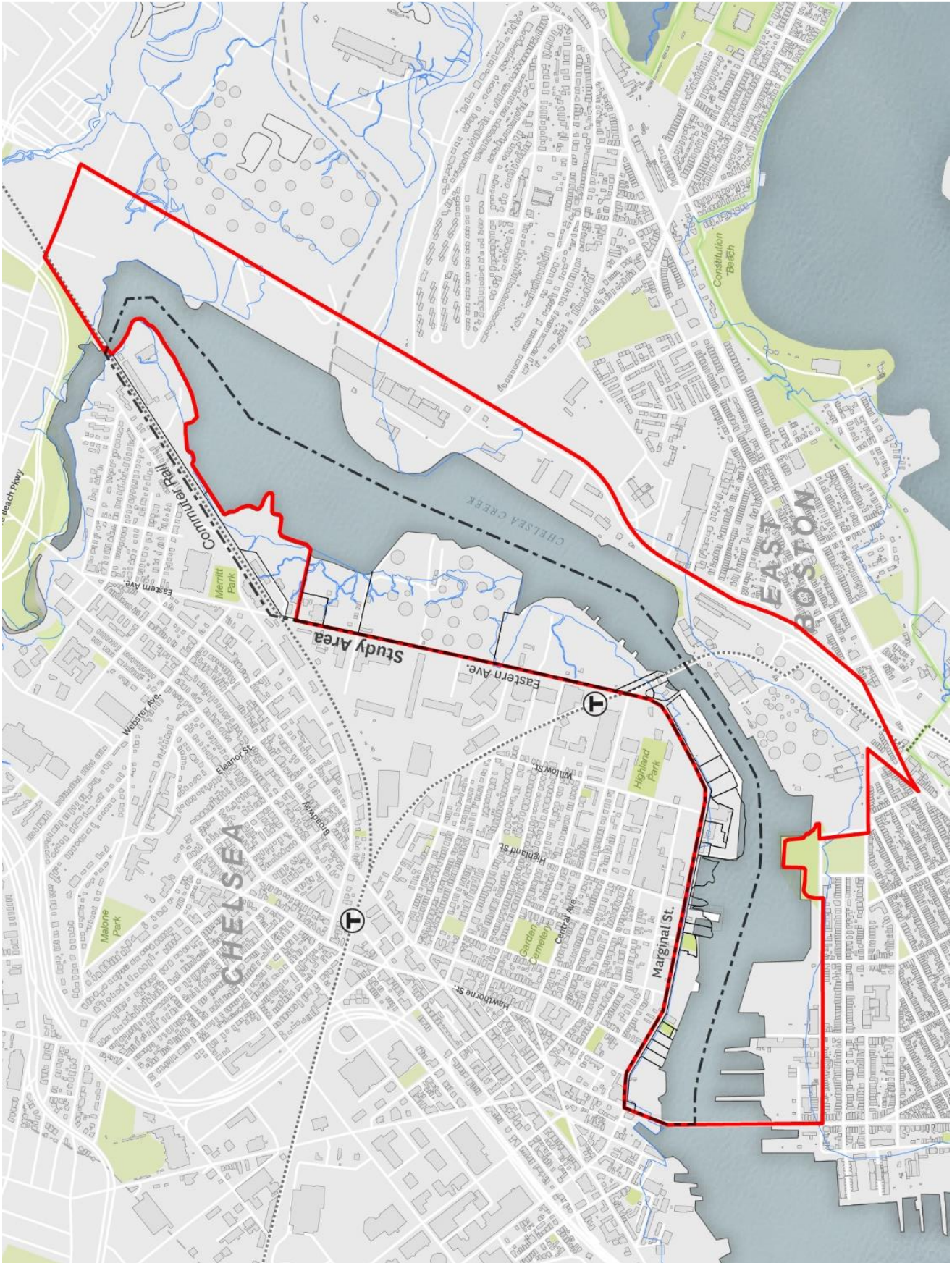
The vision for the Chelsea portion of Chelsea Creek builds upon the area's considerable history as a driver of the local and regional economy while simultaneously addressing the need to reclaim strategic locations for recreational and cultural uses by residents in nearby neighborhoods. To that end, the Municipal Harbor Plan and Designated Port Area Master Plan present strategies and guidelines designed to (1) enhance public access, (2) increase density of living-wage jobs for Chelsea residents, (3) preserve the industrial and commercial character of the waterfront and adjacent upland area, and (4) encourage water-dependent industrial uses and opportunities that contribute to the local tax base.

Public Access: More specifically, public access in urban environments such as Chelsea presents opportunities to foster a sense of community through shared space, to reconnect residents with their waterfront, to develop an appreciation of current and historic land uses and natural resources, and to promote physical activity. Water and sediment pollution, industrial activity, isolation from upland communities, federal policies, and state regulations have created challenges to securing safe public access within the planning area. This harbor plan builds upon the notion that carefully sited public access and related programming can create many benefits, including bringing positive attention to—and even celebration of—working waterfronts, while allowing waterfront industrial activities to occur safely and efficiently.

Living-Wage Jobs: This plan is developed with the vision that the waterfront can create and sustain local, living-wage jobs and promote affordable living conditions for the existing population of Chelsea. The City is home to a large workforce that is well-positioned to support industrial and commercial operations. The need to preserve and expand the local job market on existing industrial land is critical as the greater Boston area economy continues to add new jobs and faces growing pressure to meet increasing residential demands. Maintaining the waterfront and the adjacent upland for industrial and commercial uses not only has the potential to increase local jobs, but will also limit the pressure for gentrification in adjacent neighborhoods.

Industrial Character: Linked to the vision of improving community perception of the working waterfront through increased public access, the harbor plan and DPA master plan also recognize the special role that the Chelsea Creek DPA plays in the state and regional economy. With high-end residential developments, private boating facilities, and other exclusive uses competing for waterfront locations across the Commonwealth, the City acknowledges that its waterfront is a unique resource that should be protected for water-dependent and other appropriate industrial uses, even if this protection sometimes conflicts with other community goals. However, while the resource is regional, the burdens of preserving this resource fall disproportionately on an environmental justice community. Areas upland of the DPA will be zoned to buffer residential communities from heavy industrial uses. The community envisions a Chelsea Creek where shipping traffic is not prioritized over reliable mass transit; where there are reasonable time restrictions on the opening of movable span bridges.

Regulation: The plan recognizes that zoning and DPA regulations have constrained and suppressed economic development opportunities along the waterfront and that they are currently unaligned. The city intends to address this challenge by implementing strategies that preserve the potential for water-dependent industrial uses, while still realizing jobs and revenue from temporary uses capable of occupying DPA parcels. The community seeks to encourage the development of flexible spaces for temporary and supporting uses that can enable both water-dependent and light industrial or manufacturing uses, especially those with minimal negative environmental impacts, high rates of job creation, and benefits to the local community.



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