



Medford Square Master Plan

An Economic Revitalization Strategy

Final Executive Summary
December 2017



Acknowledgments

Prepared for
City of Medford

With support from
Mayor's Office
Mayor Stephanie M. Burke

Office of Community Development
Lauren DiLorenzo, Director
Clodagh Stoker-Long, Economic Development Planner
David Fields, Land Use Planner

Prepared by
Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)

With funding from
District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA)
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Barr Foundation



Study Description

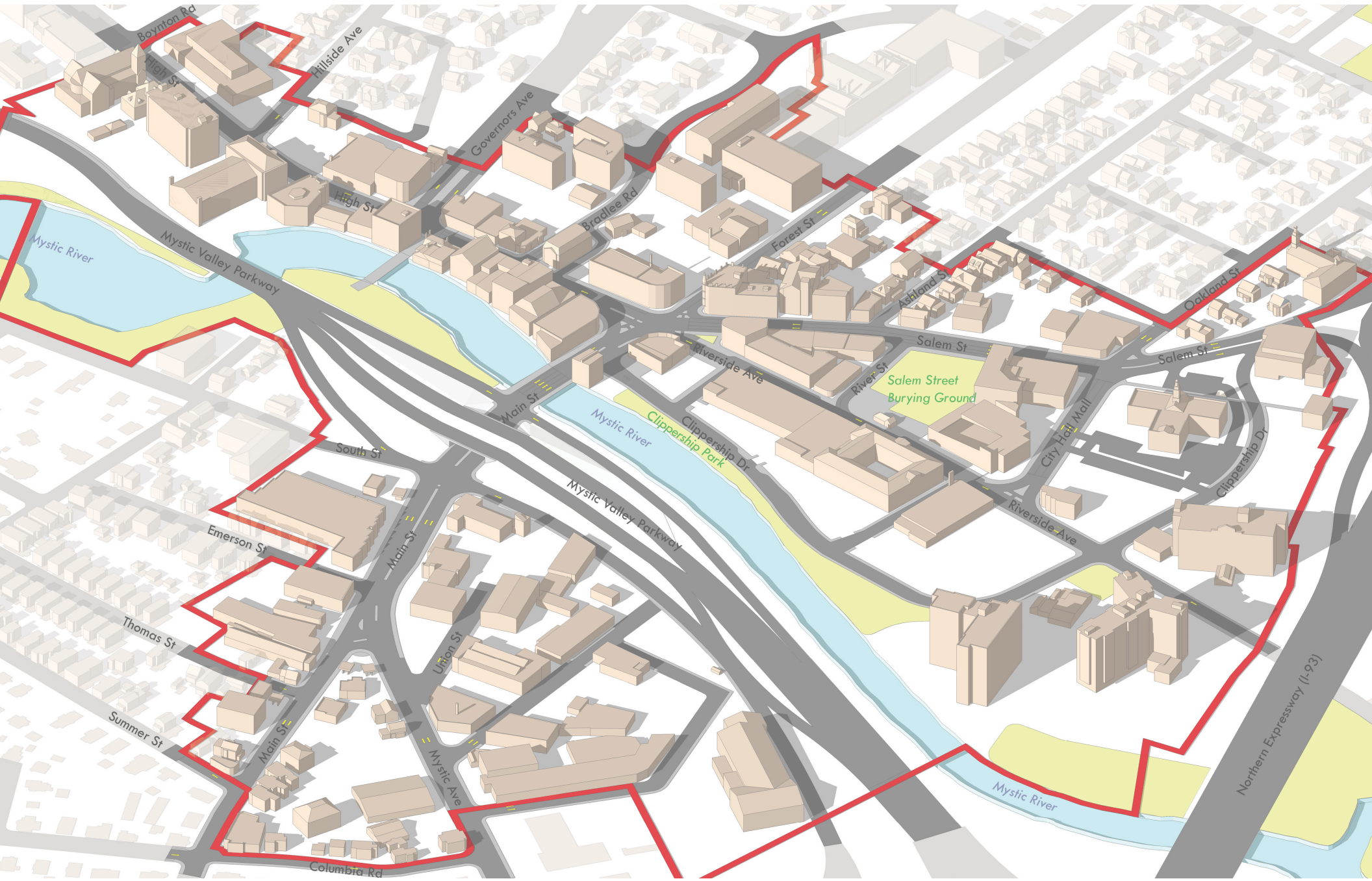
Medford Square is positioned to leverage new investment in mixed-use and walkable districts to invigorate vitality, expand access to health and cultural resources, and activate a revitalized downtown that offers a concentration of opportunities for live, work, and play in Medford and the surrounding area.

The City of Medford's Office of Community Development partnered with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council to prepare the Medford Square Master Plan to guide economic development and physical improvements. The Master Plan effort is part of the Community Compact signed with Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito in 2016.

The Master Plan defines coordinated strategies and actions that focus on immediate improvements and positioning of Medford Square for long term success. The major areas of focus include economic development and vitality, land use and sense of place, transportation and connectivity, and open space and quality of life.

The geographic area of Medford Square, as identified for this study and Master Plan, is shown on the following page.





Medford Square Study Area

Community Vision

The Community Vision has been framed by community conversations and feedback and builds upon previous studies and plans for Medford Square. The Community Vision establishes the Vision Statement and Goals which frame the Master Plan strategies and actions. All Master Plan elements, including the Community Vision, were articulated and supported by the community over a

series of three well-attended Community Forums. The Final Community Forum was attended by over 175 enthusiastic community members that expressed support for the vision, community goals, priorities, and strategies. Actions consistent with the vision statement should be supported and carry the weight of a well-informed community conversations that has expressed support for these concepts.

Vision Statement

Medford Square builds on its legacy and centrality as a historic center and energizes the community as a vibrant concentration of activity. At the heart of the City, Medford Square is an attractive district that mixes restaurants, shops, businesses, and services, while also being a great place to live.

Medford Square is a safe and attractive place to walk and bike and provides a unique pedestrian-oriented downtown experience that embraces the Mystic River as an opportunity for mobility, recreation, and special events. It is a well-connected transit hub that offers carfree convenience.

Medford Square embraces its architectural and historic heritage and is a civic, art, and cultural center hosting events that couldn't happen anywhere else in the City.

Community Goals

The following goals were identified in the previous Medford Square Master Plan and reconfirmed with the community through this Study. The goals are identified to further define the community vision and vision statement and to frame the Medford Square Master Plan strategies and actions. The goals for the future of Medford Square include:

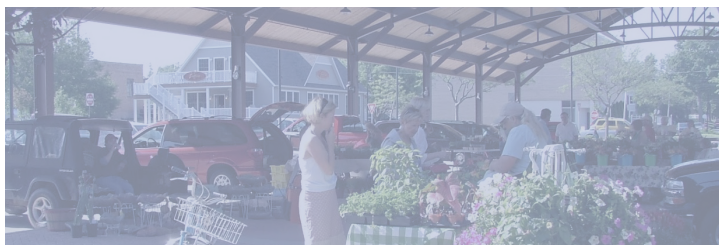


- ***Create a single identity for Medford Square by physically and visually uniting the eastern, western, and southern parts of the Square***
- ***Encourage mixed use vibrancy with culture, retail, office, and housing in Medford Square***
- ***Enhance connections between the Mystic River, vibrant streets of Medford Square, surrounding neighborhoods, and regional open space networks***
- ***Develop the pedestrian character of Medford Square by balancing transportation modes***
- ***Achieve a higher and better use of the land and create value for real estate in and around Medford Square***

8 Key Priorities for Medford Square

At the heart of the Master Plan strategies and actions are these **8 Key Priorities for Medford Square**. Each priority responds directly to major themes often repeated by community members and stakeholders. These priorities were presented to the community at the Final Community Forum and support was expressed for each of the key priorities and actions. The most frequently heard feedback from the community was

to take action on these priorities, and to not delay implementation. The most frequently highlighted priority by the community was to improve the street network and optimize the traffic patterns in the Square. This top priority was closely followed by improving the walkability and bikability in the Square. These two priorities should be pursued immediately with improvements that simultaneously address both.



Design images preferred by the community that reflect the key priorities

- 1 *Invite investment in new uses and improved vitality in the Square.***
Improved vitality in Medford Square will be accomplished through more efficient use of underutilized parking areas, buildings, and properties. Strategies and actions are outlined to welcome investments in these locations.
- 2 *Improve walking and biking to be attractive in Medford Square.***
Part of the attraction of the Square must be that it is a great place to walk and bike. Short term and long term strategies and actions are intended to enhance the safety and experience of walking and biking in the Square.
- 3 *Enhance the Square as a center of creative economy activity.***
The Square is well-suited to adding mutually beneficial creative enterprises, restaurants, and attractions to grow a concentration of active ground floor uses and positive community events.

- 4** ***Highlight the Mystic River as a central feature.***
The Square should leverage its position on the Mystic with active riverfront edges, recreational paths, new or improved open spaces, and creative ways to engage or interpret the historical relationship to the river.
- 5** ***Optimize street network efficiency and capacity.***
The street network must be optimized to accommodate future investment and increased activity in Medford Square. New approaches to the street grid in the City Hall Subarea provide the best opportunity for improvement.
- 6** ***Improve the Square's parks and plazas as an attraction.***
Every park and plaza is an opportunity to strengthen the experience in Medford Square and add to the reasons to visit. Investments in district open spaces should add flexibility, variety, landscape and art in the Square.
- 7** ***Protect the character and history of the district.***
The historic buildings and street character, particularly along High and Forest Streets, are a defining feature of Medford Square. Improvements and investments should complement these assets, not replace them.
- 8** ***Enhance district coordination and communication.***
Much of the success of Medford Square depends on coordinating and functioning as a unified district. A new district-level management entity is the best tool to directly address many issues that have been identified in the Square.



Design images preferred by the community that reflect the key priorities

Actions and Implementation Summary Table

Topic	Strategy
1 Open Space/Quality of Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create Concentration of Active Mystic River Edges • Enhance and Expand Medford Square Plazas • Embrace Culture and Arts Activity • Enhance District Management
2 Land Use/Sense of Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve and Interpret Medford Square Legacy • Improve Key Street Corridors and Reallocate Space • Enhance Efficient Parking Supply and Access • Enhance District Character and Integrate Public Art
3 Economic Development/Vitality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen Community and Civic Anchors • Refine Medford Square Zoning and Design Guidelines • Attract and Incentivize Mixed Use Redevelopment • Recruit Restaurants and Embrace the Creative Economy
4 Transportation Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote Mobility Choices and Transit • Improve Circulation and Connect the Street Grid • Redefine the Central Intersection for Walking • Mitigate Highway and Elevated Infrastructure

Short Term Action (1-2 years)	Mid Term Action (2-5 years)	Long Term Action (5-10 years)	Potential Lead/Partner
Support “Clippership Connector”	Design and pursue riverfront parks	Maintain expanded river parks	P and E&E/DCR
Improve Riverside Plaza	Expand tree planting program	Create new plazas in the Square	P/CD
Support Medford Square events	Create culture and arts district	Integrate arts policies in district	MO/MAC
Create Management Task Force	Form and authorize district manager	Sustain management organization	CD/MCC
Create local historic district	Increase historic interpretation	Create incentives for adaptive reuse	CC and CD/MHS
Test temporary pilot conversions	Key streetscape improvements	Expand streetscape improvements	E and P/CD
Promote shared parking agreements	Improve walk/bike to Square routes	Reduce parking in the Square	CC and CD/E and MCC
Maintain district banner program	Integrate district wayfinding	Expand public art installations	MO/MAC
Promote library programming	Sustain/improve Chevalier Theatre	Leverage each facility investment	MO/CC
Draft Zoning Ordinance	Adopt zoning and design guidelines	Expand zoning/guidelines to South	MO and CD/CC
Explore disposition process/partners	Dispose of property and develop	Encourage private redevelopment	MO and CD/CC
Identify and recruit restaurateurs	Explore/pilot incentives and tools	Explore restaurant convert program	MO and CD/CC
Add sharrows, bike lanes, bike signs	Create and enhance a transit hub	Improve routes and stop locations	MO and E/MBTA
Pursue CTPS Technical Study	Test circulation enhancement pilot	Create new street connections	MO and E/CD
Test temporary curb extensions	Implement signal improvements	Redesign integrating new circulation	E/CD
Traffic enforcement of speed	Improve landscape, art, barriers	Invest in reduced footprints/impacts	MO and E/CD

LEGEND:

MO = Mayor’s Office, **CC** = City Council, **CD** = Community Development, **E** = Engineering, **P** = Park, **E&E** = Energy and Environment, **MCC** = Chamber of Commerce, **MHS** = Medford Historical Society, **MAC** = Medford Arts Council, **DCR** = Department of Conservation and Recreation, **MBTA** = Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

1 Open Space and Quality of Life Summary Strategies

A Create Concentration of Active Mystic River Edges

Medford Square's relationship to the Mystic River should be improved to leverage this unique feature for the benefit of the district. The Medford Square riverfront should be incrementally transformed to be a focal point of open space, recreational, and resilience activity. This transformation may include enhanced riverfront plazas, outdoor seating areas, continuous multi-use paths, interpretive art installations, boardwalk connections, playgrounds, water access, a water taxi station, and flood protection measures. All improvements would be consistent with and support the goals for Medford Square, the *Medford Open Space and Recreation Plan* (2011), and *Mystic River Master Plan* (2009).

B Enhance and Expand Medford Square Plazas

The series of small open spaces and plazas that are a part of Medford Square should be amended and enhanced over time. Each plaza is an important component of quality of life in the Square and should be viewed as an opportunity to attract residents and visitors and increase usable community gathering space. Implementation of this strategy is already underway with the recent addition of the Krystle Campbell Peace Garden plaza and planned renovation of the Riverside Plaza. Future enhancements and expansions to plaza space in Medford Square should use investments to increase the flexibility of use, level of quality, and shared amenity of civic spaces in the center of Medford. Opportunities to provide unique experiences, additional tree cover, attractive places to sit, or connections to adjacent building activity should be encouraged.

C Embrace Culture and Arts Activity

Medford Square already benefits from strong and established cultural and arts events and activities that feature the Square as a central destination in Medford. Culture and arts activity can be a driver of local economic development and strengthen Medford Square as an attractive destination. The promotion of Medford Square as a culture and arts center should be combined with the targeted recruitment of creative enterprises in Medford Square. A concentration of creative enterprises, culture, and arts activity would increase the vitality of Medford Square, distinguish the Square among surrounding centers, and provide compatible small businesses that could provide an area of growth for the district.

D Enhance District Management

In order to strengthen positive change in Medford Square, direct guidance and management is necessary. The district is competing against other carefully managed centers and must guide its overall improvement with a similar approach. One such district management approach appears to be well supported by the community, a Medford Square Main Streets District. Another approach is a Medford Square Business Improvement District. An overall management structure that is supported by the community should be pursued. Either management structure should be able to fill the need to promote economic vitality, build community, and improve experiences in Medford Square. Main Streets districts have been a part of the success of many vibrant downtown districts throughout the Commonwealth.

1 Open Space and Quality of Life Summary Diagram



Potential Location and Illustration of Open Space and Quality of Life Strategies

2

Land Use and Sense of Place Summary Strategies

A

Preserve and Interpret Medford Square Legacy

The value of the historic and architectural assets of Medford Square should not be underestimated. The character and history of the Square is much of what distinguishes it from other places and makes it a unique and attractive setting for community and economic activity. The most effective way to promote preservation in the Square is through the creation of a local historic district. As is the case with the nearby Hillside Avenue Historic District, a district can be both a National Register District and a Local Historic District, established by the Medford City Council. The proposed district boundary would complement future redevelopment in other parts of the Square while providing additional oversight and stewardship where it is needed to embrace preservation of the Square's history.

B

Improve Key Street Corridors and Reallocate Space

The key streets in Medford Square provide local and regional vehicular connections and a critical supply of parking. Today, much of the space of the public right-of-way is devoted to driving and parking. However, the Square will never out-compete other nearby places for convenience of driving and parking. The streets should also provide safe and attractive routes for walking and biking. The strategic reallocation of space on key street corridors for pedestrians, bicyclists, and streetscape would greatly enhance the attractiveness of the district and strengthen the sense of place. Reconfiguration to add more space for trees, amenities, and places for people to sit or dine outdoors improves the district and the streets while enhancing safety for all patrons.

C

Enhance Efficient Parking Supply and Access

An adequate supply of convenient parking is critical to a downtown district. However, this parking supply should be provided as unobtrusively as possible through on-street parking, parking integrated with building foundations, parking structures, and placement behind buildings. The space requirements and visual impact of parking lots are disruptive to the vitality of a district and need to be minimized through the efficient use of parking and the integration of landscape and screening into surface parking lots. The utilization of parking is most efficient when shared across properties and used as a district-wide resource that encourages parking once and walking between multiple destinations. When parking is efficiently used and enhanced as an integrated district component, it can be reduced with surplus parking redeveloped for more active and vital uses that better contribute to a vibrant Medford Square.

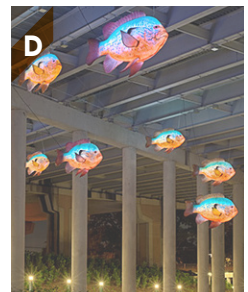
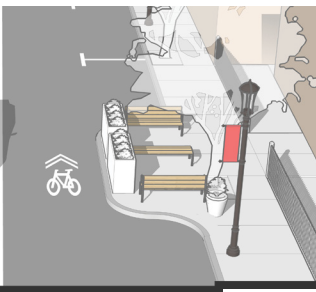
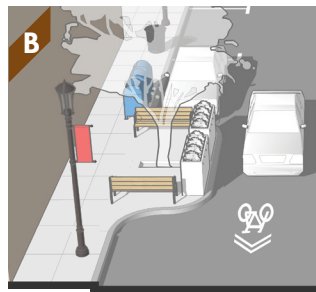
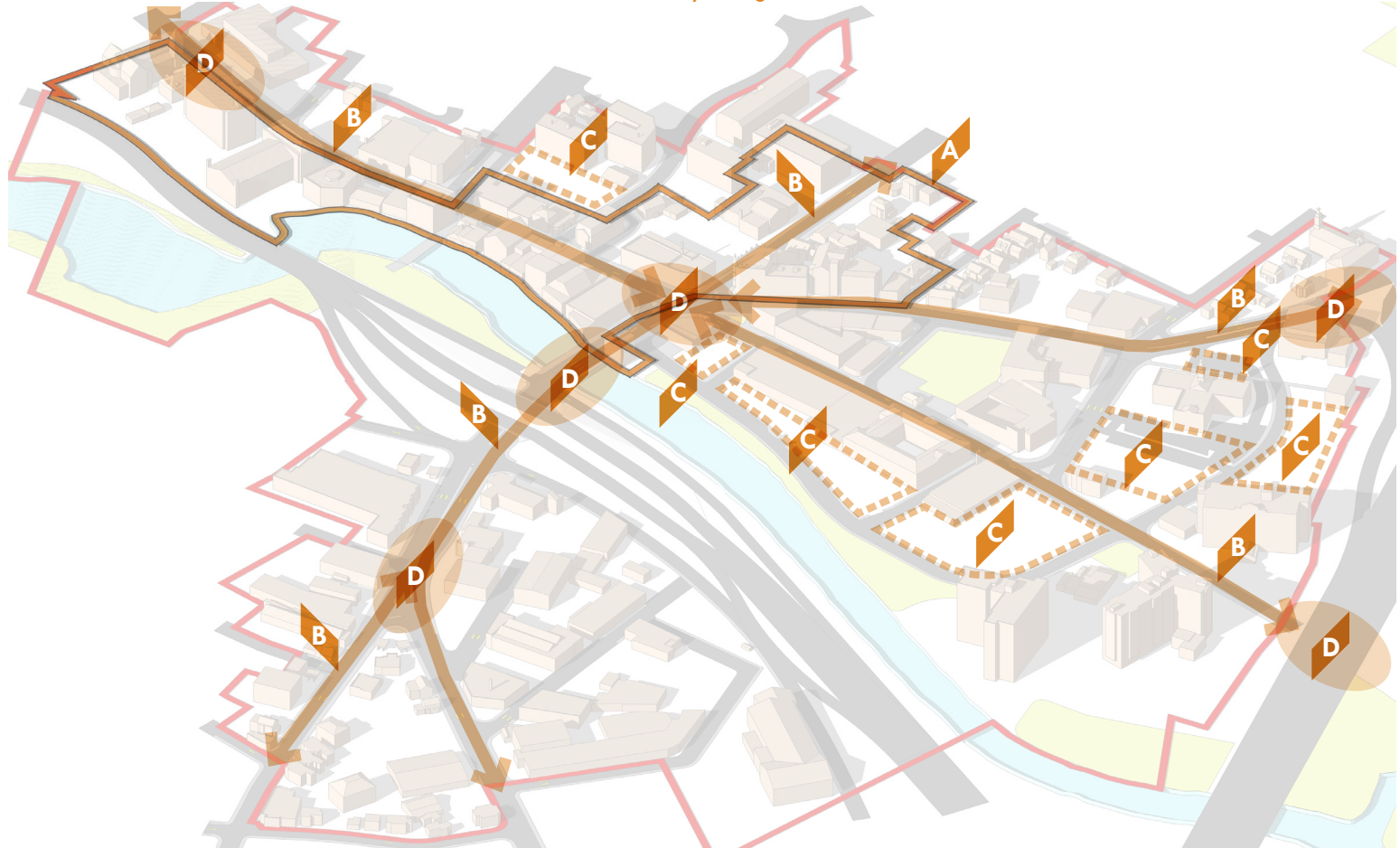
D

Enhance District Character and Integrate Public Art

The sense of character and attractiveness of an entire district is strengthened through incremental improvements in the design, quality, and vibrancy of the civic realm. These incremental improvements may include district gateway enhancements, the integration of public art, strengthened wayfinding, building facade improvements, and enhanced streetscape. Public art and a focus on design are important contributors to strengthening Medford Square as a center of culture and creative economy. It is important that every investment elevate the sense of place and character of Medford Square, particularly in the City Hall and Main Street subareas.

2

Land Use and Sense of Place Summary Diagram



Potential Location and Illustration of Land Use and Sense of Place Strategies

Economic Development and Vitality Summary Strategies

3

A Strengthen Community and Civic Anchors

Medford Square is the civic center of the City and includes several significant community anchors - City Hall, Medford Public Library, Police and Fire Headquarters, and Chevalier Theater. These four anchors are geographically distributed in the subareas of the Square and each provide a community destination and outlet for an array of city services. Investing in each of these community anchors should be viewed as a way to reinforce positive activity and destinations in the Square. The exterior spaces around these anchors should be targeted for investment to improve flexible exterior plazas, landscape, and amenities to promote extended visits to these destinations and enhance the perception of the Square.

B Refine Medford Square Zoning and Design Guidelines

The language of the “Commercial 1” zoning district, the most predominant district in the Square, is not clearly aligned with the community vision. A new base zone for a “Medford Square Mixed-use” district should be created to clarify the desired characteristics of development. The zone should allow context sensitive mixed-use development by right (75 feet/6-story maximum height) and discourage low density auto-oriented development. Parking requirements should be reduced to encourage dense development (1.1 space per dwelling unit or 1 per 400 commercial square feet). Design Guidelines should be used to align investments with the vision and to ensure that each new investment advances the top priorities of the Master Plan.

C

C Attract and Incentivize Mixed Use Redevelopment

The properties in Medford Square with the most immediate potential for redevelopment are under the control of the City of Medford and located near City Hall. This is an area of the Square that has a surplus of parking today. Redevelopment of these properties would increase the vitality and attractiveness of the Square and could increase the likelihood that other private Medford Square properties would also be redeveloped. In order to redevelop the properties, the City should proceed with a land disposition process that would review the City’s need for the properties, invite developer interest through a request for interest and request for proposals, and result in a development agreement between the City and a developer to invest in Medford Square according to the community vision.

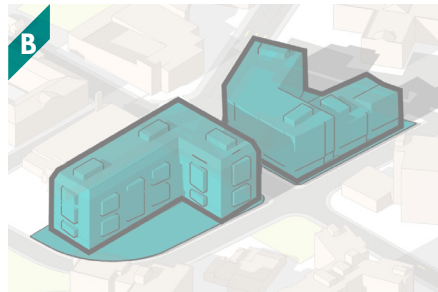
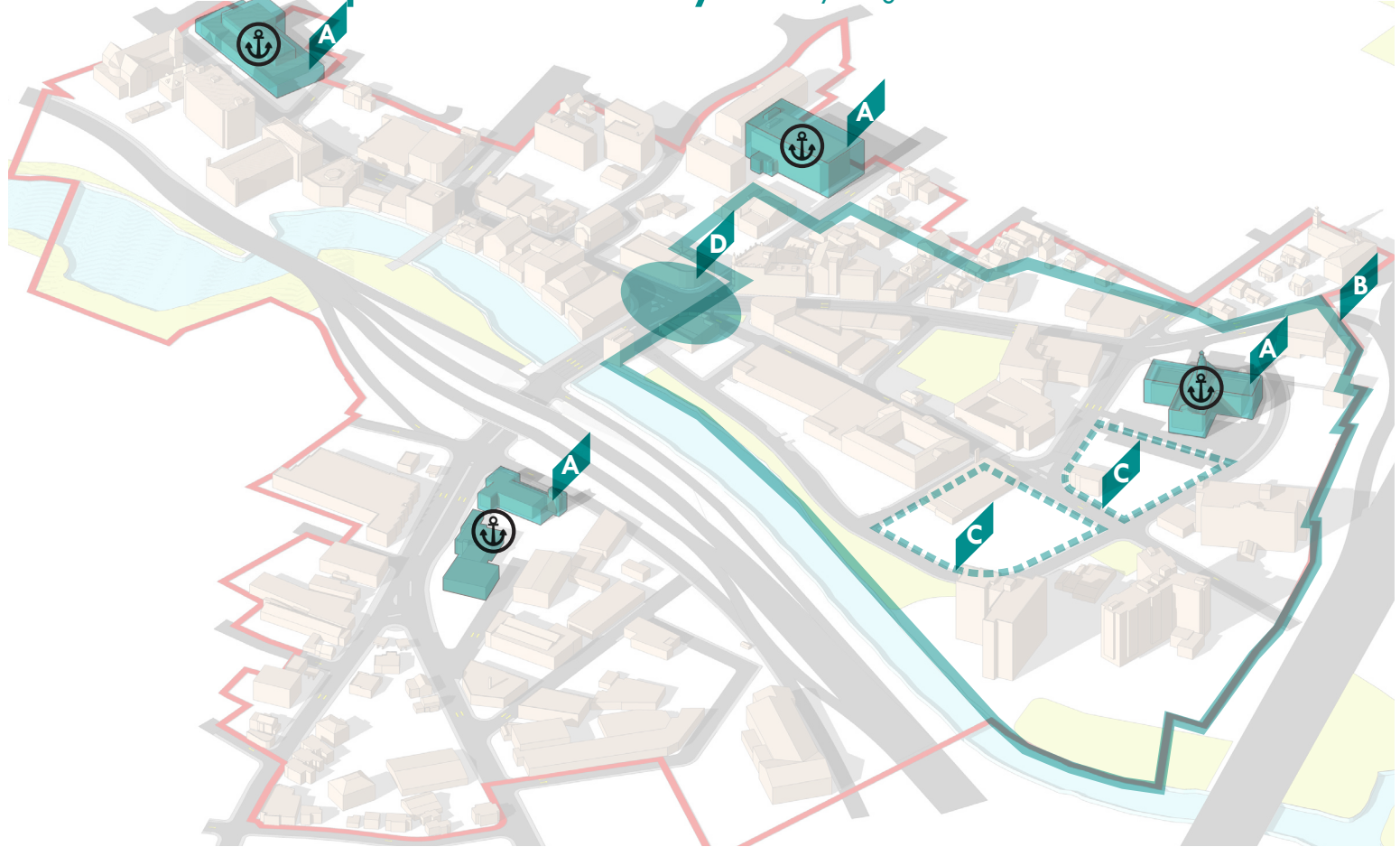
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D Recruit Restaurants and Embrace Creative Economy

In addition to the small businesses present in Medford Square, other business opportunities have been identified as part of a market analysis for the district. The most predominant types of supportable retail in Medford Square – clothing, furnishing, electronics stores, and full and limited service restaurants – would all help to alleviate current imbalances in the mix of businesses. Adding to the concentration of restaurants in the Square would strengthen the district as a destination for dining that would complement other arts and culture events and community anchors. A larger selection of quality restaurants would also complement the recruitment of creative economy enterprises in the Square.

3

Economic Development and Vitality Summary Diagram



Potential Location and Illustration of Economic Development and Vitality Strategies

Transportation and Connectivity Summary Strategies

A Promote Mobility Choices and Transit

The origins of Medford Square are linked to its positioning in the colonial transportation network of rivers, bridges, roads, and later rail and street trolley connections. Today, the Square offers a variety of mobility options, beyond driving a car. Those options can be made more attractive by increasing their convenience and efficiency. A mobility hub is one way to do this, while providing physical improvements in the Square. A mobility hub is a centrally located place of connection between complementary modes of transportation. It could link multiple bus routes, bike share, bike storage, car share, and pedestrian wayfinding for example. The mobility hub is intended to enhance access, reinforce transit-oriented development, and combine multi-modal transfers with plaza features and amenities.

B Improve Circulation and Connect the Street Grid

In the City Hall Subarea, the streets and blocks nearly form a well-connected and flexible grid. However, discontinuity in that grid currently exists due to the one-way street network and streets that do not fully connect across all blocks. This discontinuity reduces the circulation benefits and flexibility that are associated with a well-connected grid. Alternative circulation patterns in the City Hall Subarea should be explored, studied, and analyzed for benefits that could improve traffic flow and walkability in the Square. These patterns should be explored with potential extensions of River Street and City Hall Mall to Clippership Drive that could be combined with redevelopment or other reconfiguration options that may include closing Clippership Drive.

C

C Redefine the Central Intersection for Walking

In order to strengthen walkability in Medford Square, the central intersection at Salem Street, Riverside Avenue, Main Street, High Street, and Forest Street must be improved for pedestrians. In the short term, different approaches to the traffic signal phases and timing could be explored for changes that would benefit pedestrian circulation. A longer term solution and more intensive modification would improve the intersection geometry to reduce crossing distances for pedestrians and to slow traffic through the intersection. The design of the central intersection will be impacted by the exploration, study, and further analysis of circulation concepts in the City Hall Subarea to improve traffic flow and walkability.

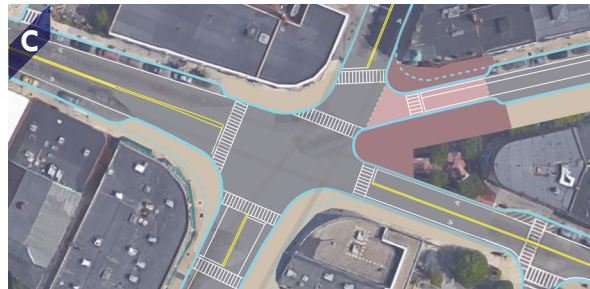
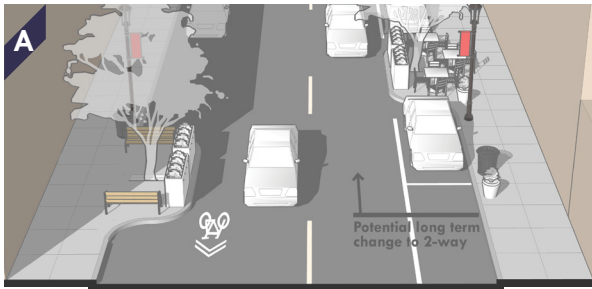
D

D Mitigate Highway and Elevated Infrastructure

Historic centers, such as Medford Square, have had to adapt to highway infrastructure and have experimented with a variety of methods to mitigate the impact of the close proximity to high speed vehicle access. Route 16 and Interstate 93 have been subject of investments for maintenance and improvements. Future roadway improvements and investments required for maintenance or other purposes should take into account this community vision for Medford Square. All improvements should reduce the impact of high speed vehicular travel and truck routes, on the local roads and accommodate regional traffic flows while not diminishing the safety and walkability of the Square. Large amounts of land dedicated to vehicular infrastructure should be considered for additional overlapping uses that more directly benefit the Square.

4

Transportation and Connectivity Summary Diagram



Potential Location and Illustration of Transportation and Connectivity Strategies

Medford Square Subarea Priorities

While the overall vision for Medford Square supports a unified district, the current conditions are not uniform across the entire Study Area. The following three subareas, highlight how strategy priorities may shift depending on location.

City Hall Subarea

The largest of the three subareas, the City Hall Subarea is also the focus of many near term improvements. Today, large surface parking lots and highway-oriented traffic patterns disrupt the continuity of the subarea’s pedestrian experience and visual attractiveness.

Investments in the subarea have the potential to be transformative, but will require coordinated and concentrated efforts to:

- Optimize parking, vehicular circulation, and street grid connections
- Structure and implement processes to redevelop large City-owned properties
- Update zoning to encourage mixed-use redevelopment investment
- Enhance open spaces and Mystic River connections

High Street Subarea

The most historically intact of the three subareas, the High Street Subarea, is in need of strategic and concentrated improvements that balance historic preservation. Historic buildings form a consistent and attractive frontage along High Street and define much of the character of Medford Square.

Improvements in the subarea should leverage historic assets and reinforce creative opportunities through coordinated efforts to:

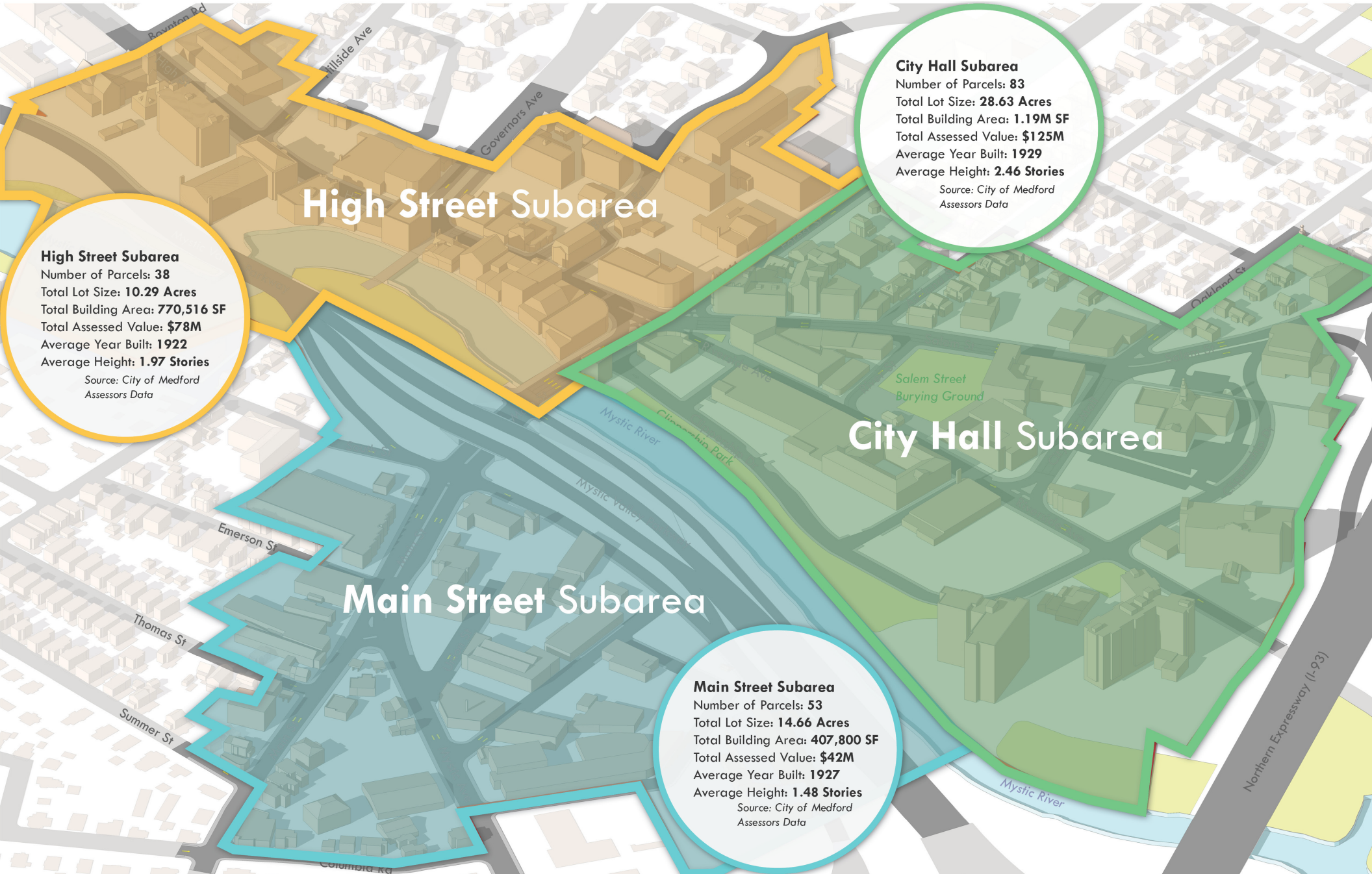
- Establish a Medford Square historic district
- Expand outdoor sidewalk activity and modest plazas
- Enhance direct Mystic River connections through existing bridges and plazas and future boardwalk connections
- Encourage adaptive reuse to welcome new restaurants and creative economy businesses

Main Street Subarea

The Main Street Subarea has not typically been considered as part of Medford Square. However, improved Mystic River connections and activation of river edges highlight the long term potential for improvements in the Main Street Subarea as a vibrant continuation of Medford Square.

Improvements in the Main Street Subarea should set the stage for a longer term transformation that will require coordinated efforts to:

- Expand proposed mixed-use zoning to the Main Street Subarea, when appropriate
- Strengthen the safety and experience of walking and biking
- Expand pedestrian-oriented sidewalk activity and modest plazas
- Enhance Mystic River connections and open spaces



High Street Subarea

High Street Subarea
 Number of Parcels: 38
 Total Lot Size: 10.29 Acres
 Total Building Area: 770,516 SF
 Total Assessed Value: \$78M
 Average Year Built: 1922
 Average Height: 1.97 Stories

Source: City of Medford Assessors Data

City Hall Subarea
 Number of Parcels: 83
 Total Lot Size: 28.63 Acres
 Total Building Area: 1.19M SF
 Total Assessed Value: \$125M
 Average Year Built: 1929
 Average Height: 2.46 Stories

Source: City of Medford Assessors Data

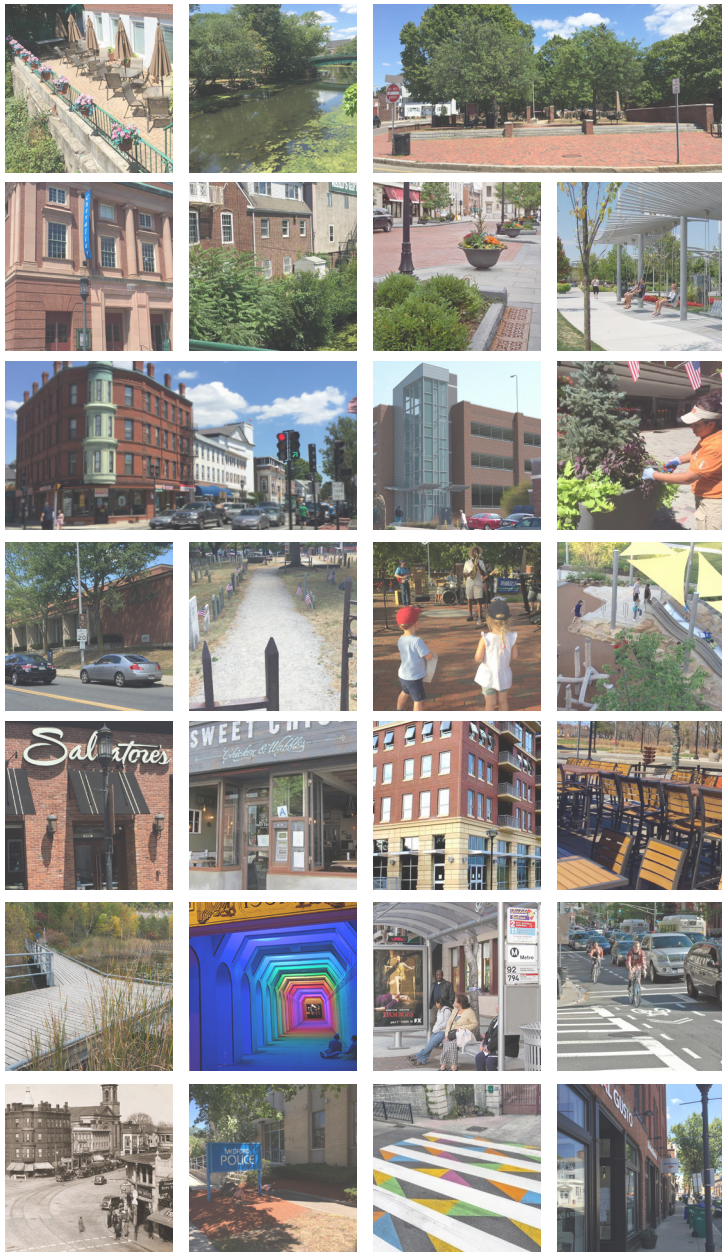
City Hall Subarea

Main Street Subarea

Main Street Subarea
 Number of Parcels: 53
 Total Lot Size: 14.66 Acres
 Total Building Area: 407,800 SF
 Total Assessed Value: \$42M
 Average Year Built: 1927
 Average Height: 1.48 Stories

Source: City of Medford Assessors Data

Medford Square Subareas



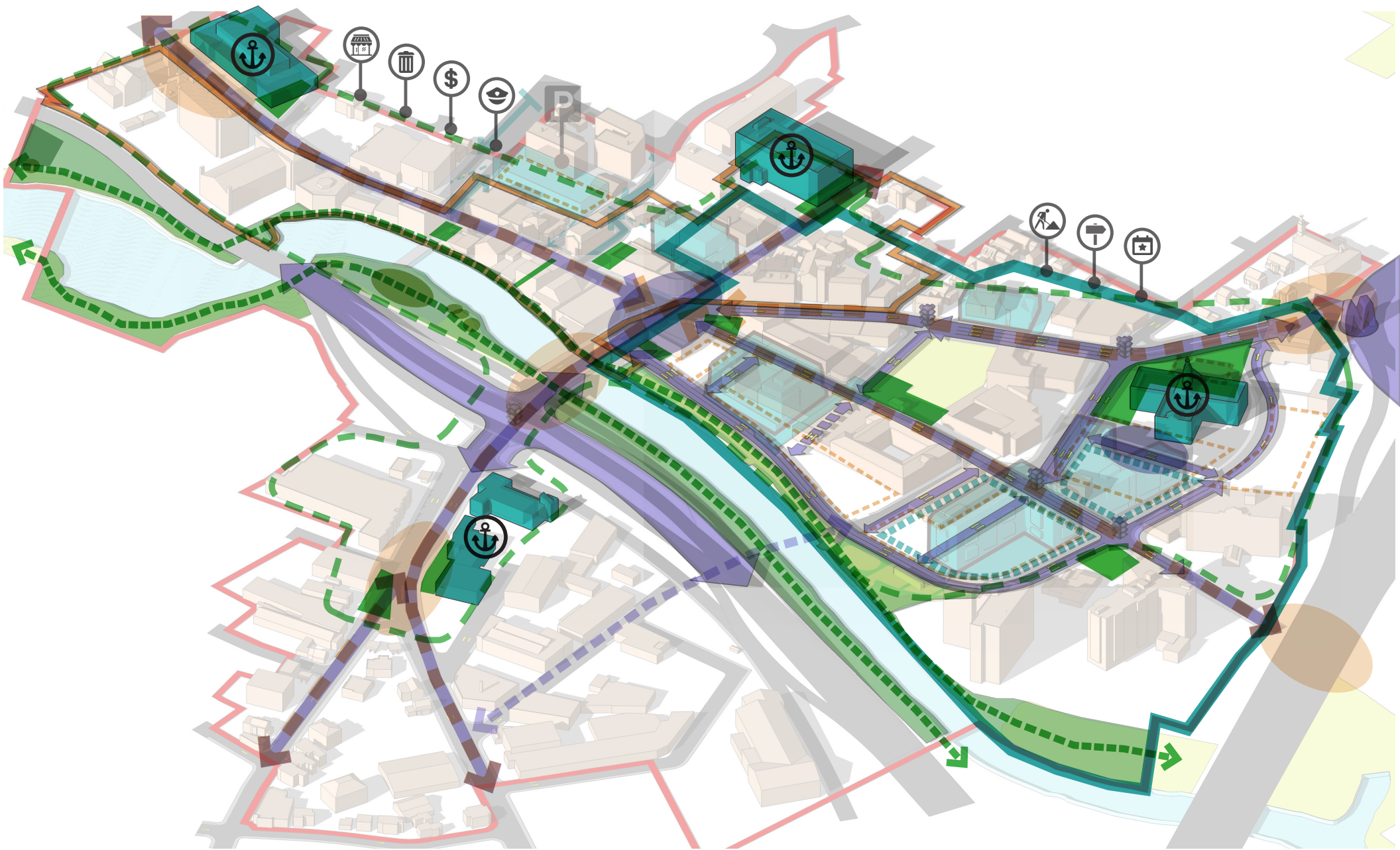
The unique potential of Medford Square

Medford Square Master Plan Looking Ahead

The Medford Square Master Plan strategies and actions are intended to position the Square for a thriving future that leverages its assets. The uniqueness of the history, architecture, relationship to the Mystic River, and convenience to Boston provide a strong foundation to advance multiple strategic efforts to strengthen the district as a place of pride for the City of Medford and the region.

For each strategy and action, persistence and effectiveness is critical in building and maintaining positive momentum for Medford Square. Each strategy and action is intended to respond to one or more of the goals confirmed by the community. The strategies and actions include both physical investments in Medford Square and improvements to the management, activities, and policies of the Square. Progress in both categories is required to advance Medford Square toward the community vision articulated in the Vision Statement.

The diagram on the following page depicts the general location of all Medford Square Master Plan strategies, which are distributed to have a positive impact on the entire district. The images to the left reflect the unique character of Medford Square today, combined with examples of the type of enhancements that could result from the implementation of the Master Plan.



Medford Square Master Plan Strategies Diagram

Study Process and Tasks

The community based planning process and analyses used to develop the Medford Square Master Plan was comprised of the following tasks and coordinated between MAPC and Office of Community Development.

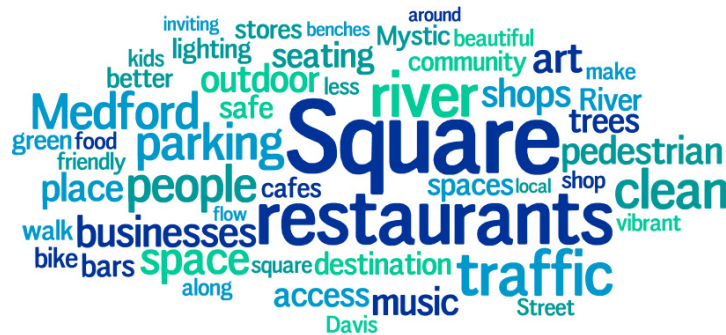
- 1 Task 1. Study Foundations and Current Conditions** - previous studies formed the core of resources to begin this planning effort and included the 2005 Medford Square Master Plan and 2010 Medford Square Parking Analysis.
- 2 Task 2. Market Analysis and Strategies** - an evaluation of the commercial, retail, and housing markets in the trade areas around Medford Square was performed.
- 3 Task 3. Redevelopment Analysis and Strategies** - an analysis of the susceptibility of Medford Square parcels to future redevelopment and an evaluation of the potential characteristics of future redevelopment in Medford Square was performed.
- 4 Task 4. Zoning and Parking Analysis and Strategies** - an analysis of the current zoning characteristics and parking utilization in Medford Square was undertaken.
- 5 Task 5. Civic Realm Analysis and Strategies** - an analysis of the components of the public realm and public facilities that comprise the civic realm including streets, sidewalks, plazas, and City buildings was performed.
- 6 Task 6. Multi-modal Access and Circulation** - an analysis of access and circulation for pedestrians, bicyclists, buses, and vehicles in Medford Square was completed.
- 7 Task 7. Health and Quality of Life Evaluation and Strategies** - an analysis of community health, open space, art, culture, and other quality of life components in Medford Square was undertaken.
- 8 Task 8. Final Report and Action Plan** - compilation of all analyses and planning work into an Executive Summary and Master Plan document was completed and presented to the community.
- 9 Task 9. Public Outreach and Community Engagement** - community meetings, stakeholder interviews, Medford Square district and site visits, and coordination meetings with City staff to inform the analyses and resulting Master Plan were completed throughout this process.

Community Engagement

The study process included well-attended community forums, presentations to the City Council, and individual interviews that engaged community members and stakeholders in the Medford Square Master Plan. Results of several of the forum exercises reflect this process.

Your future vision for Medford Square:

Attendees were asked to “use a few words to describe your ideal future version of medford square” The **top 50** most frequently used words in recorded ideal future versions, the larger the word the more frequently repeated:

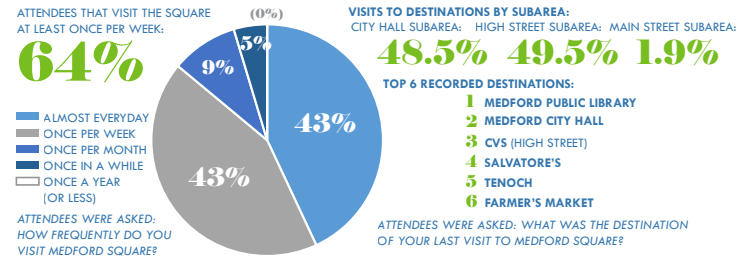


Your overall reaction to the draft strategies:

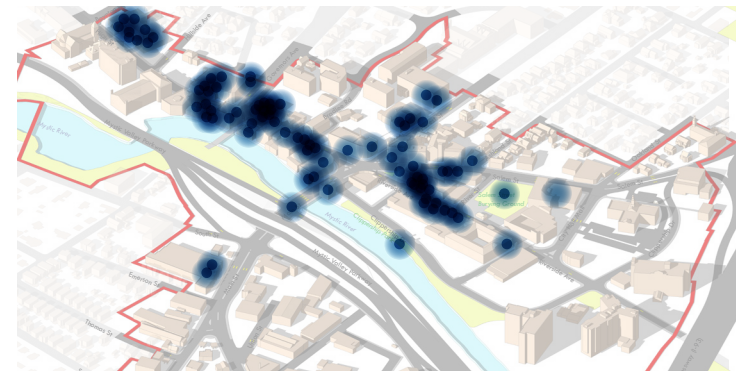
Meeting attendees were asked gauge their reaction to the draft strategies for Medford Square:



How frequent do you visit Medford Square?:



Your top destinations in Medford Square:



The concentration of dots shows the most popular destinations of meeting attendees' last visit to the Square



Attendees at the first community meeting



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