

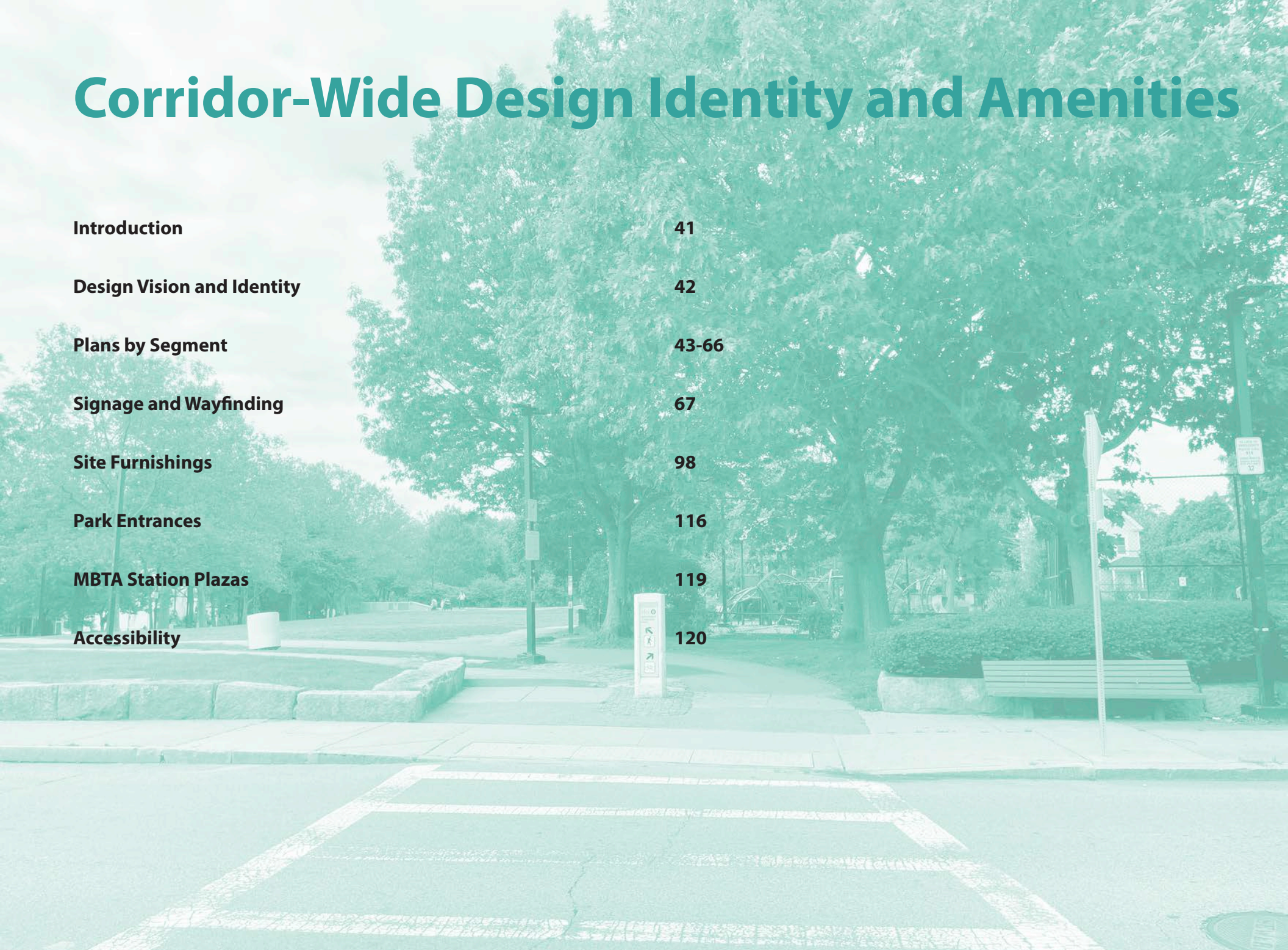
A photograph of a park corridor. A paved path leads from the foreground into the distance, flanked by grass and trees. A fence and a tall chimney are visible in the background. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent teal rectangle containing the title.

4

Corridor-Wide Design Identity and Amenities

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Corridor-Wide Design Identity and Amenities

Introduction

The Southwest Corridor Park is a groundbreaking space that spans three neighborhoods, each contributing to the park's unique character while sharing consistent elements that define its overall identity. These character-defining features include the tree-lined path system that offers shade and beauty, the granite block walls that provide a sense of continuity and durability, and the various recreational facilities and expansive lawns that cater to diverse user needs.

Despite the park's segmented nature, there is a strong need for a more consistent identity and cohesive signage throughout the entire stretch. This will help park visitors easily navigate and appreciate the park's offerings regardless of the neighborhood they are in. Additionally, the park's furnishings need to be unified, ensuring they are not only durable but also appropriate for the current and anticipated future uses.

As the number of park users grows and Boston's population continues to rise, the amenities offered within the park must evolve to meet these changing demands. Recreational trends are shifting, and the park needs to adapt by introducing new features and upgrading existing ones. This includes widening the paths to better accommodate the increasing flow of pedestrians and cyclists, ensuring that bike racks are plentiful and conveniently located, and placing a greater emphasis on creating shaded areas to enhance comfort for park visitors.

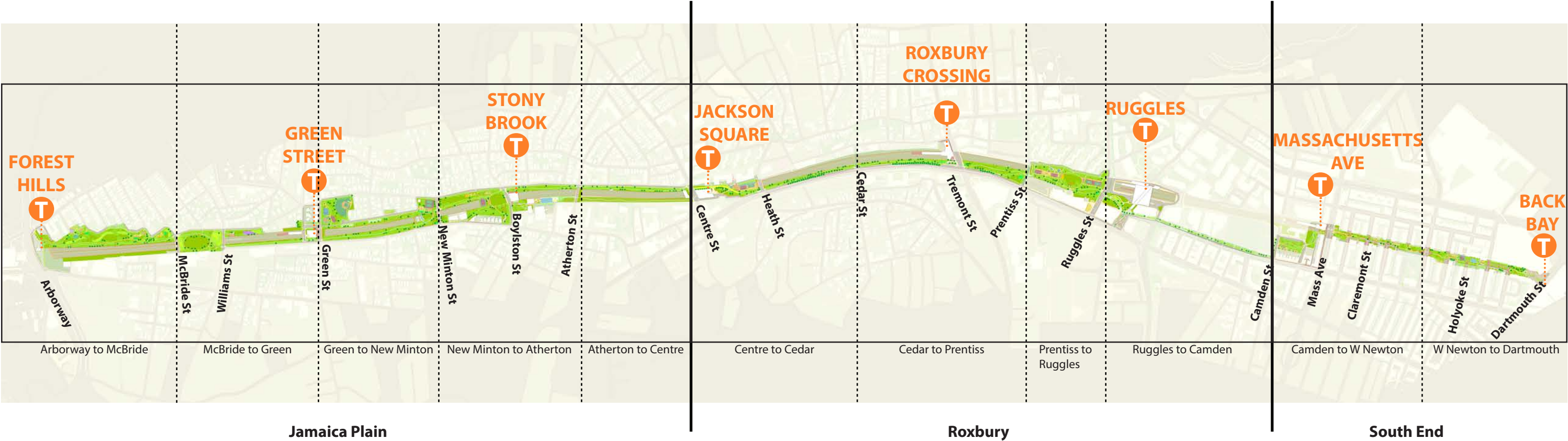
Implementing these key improvements will unify the park across its three neighborhoods, creating a cohesive and user-friendly environment that responds to the needs of its diverse and growing user base.



Design Vision and Identity

The 4-mile-long, 52-acre Southwest Corridor Park spans three vibrant Boston neighborhoods, blending consistent elements with distinctive community expressions. The park’s character-defining features, such as the tree-lined path system, granite block walls, and varied recreational facilities, provide a cohesive identity that unites the park across its length. These elements ensure a sense of continuity, offering shade, beauty, and durability.

However, it is equally important that the park reflects the individuality of the communities it serves. Each neighborhood brings its unique flavor, traditions, and needs to the park, making it a dynamic and living space that resonates with its users. Balancing these consistent elements with community-specific features allows the park to celebrate the diversity of Boston while maintaining a unified aesthetic and functional coherence.

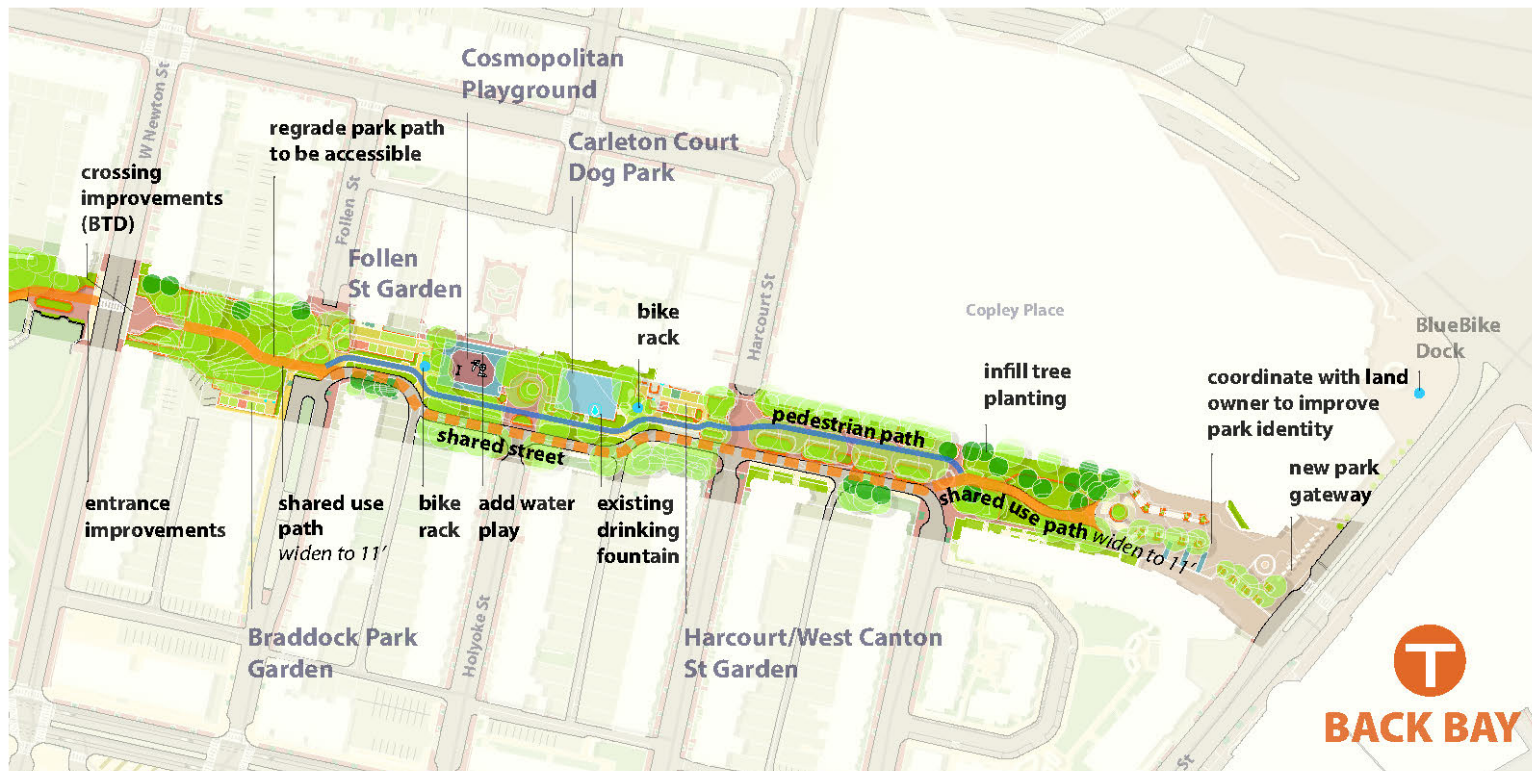


West Newton to Dartmouth

A gateway is needed at Dartmouth Street to better identify the park and guide people into it. The existing public art and map kiosk are too understated to effectively serve this purpose. However, the challenge for this area is that the “gateway” is on land owned by a private developer. Outreach to the developer is necessary to encourage improvements to this area, enhancing both its aesthetic appeal and environmental quality.

The park entrance along Dartmouth Street should clearly identify the park, providing seating and incorporating planting beds and trees to soften and shade the existing plaza space. This would create a more inviting and recognizable entry point, improving the overall experience for visitors and integrating the park more seamlessly into the surrounding urban landscape. By collaborating with the private developer, it is possible to transform this area into a welcoming gateway that reflects the park’s character and serves the community effectively.

Starting at Yarmouth Street, the landscape of the Southwest Corridor Park becomes lush and gardenesque, gardenesque, the result of countless volunteer hours spent tending to it. The path system in the South End is a single sidewalk that, in most cases, runs parallel to a road. For recommendations regarding the path system, refer to the mobility and access section.

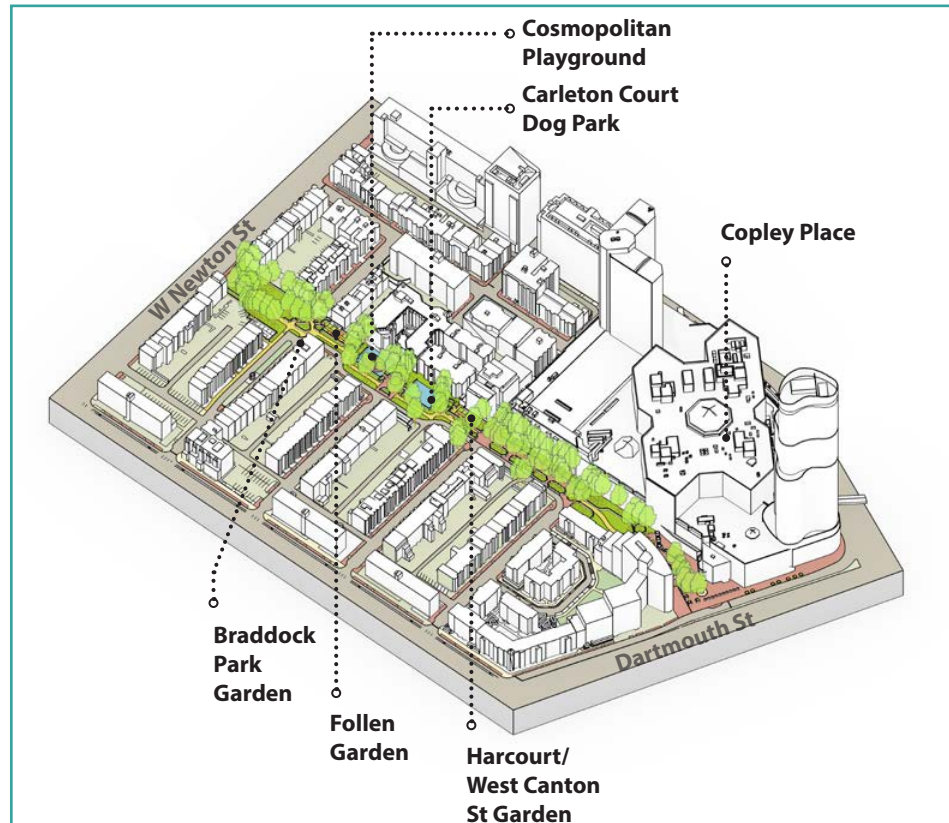


West Newton to Dartmouth (continued)

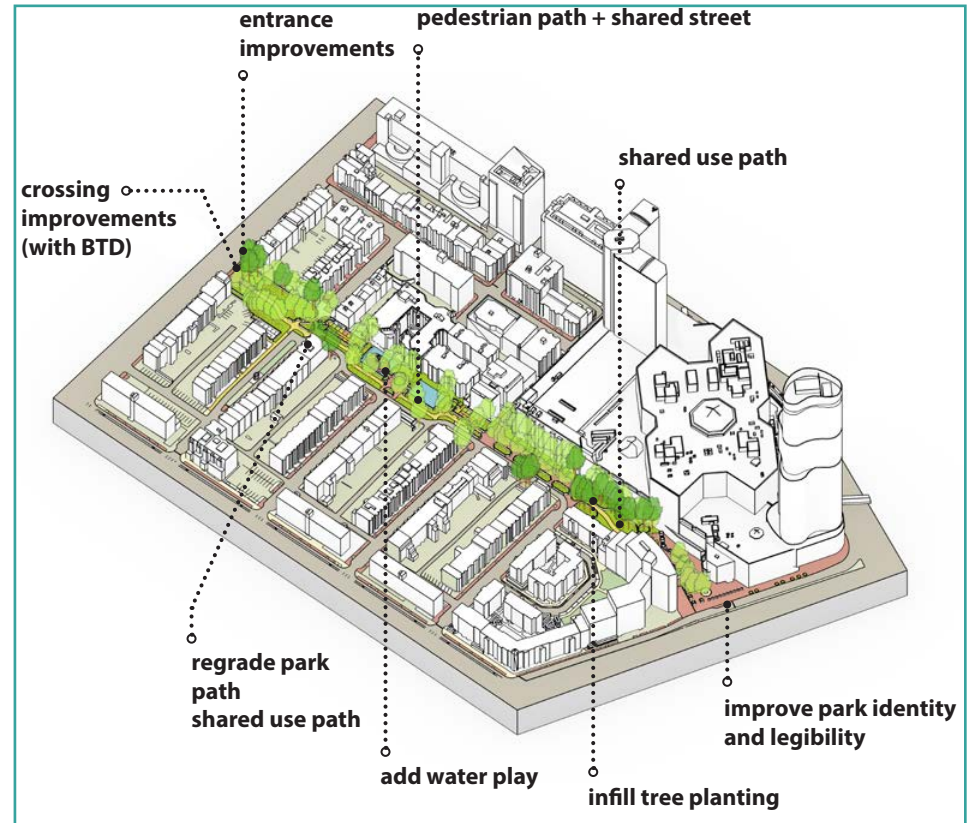
The Carleton Court Dog Park is a well-used and well-managed facility overseen by a dedicated friends group. This park has successfully adapted a former court space, incorporating appropriate fencing and maintaining good vegetation around its perimeter, making it an ideal and secure environment for dogs.

The Cosmopolitan Playground is a tot lot equipped with play structures designed for young children. Planned improvements include upgrading the fencing and gates to enhance safety and accessibility, and adding a small water play area in one corner to provide additional recreational opportunities for the children.

Additionally, the path at West Newton Street needs regrading to achieve a longitudinal slope of less than 5%, ensuring better accessibility and usability for all park visitors.



Existing Condition



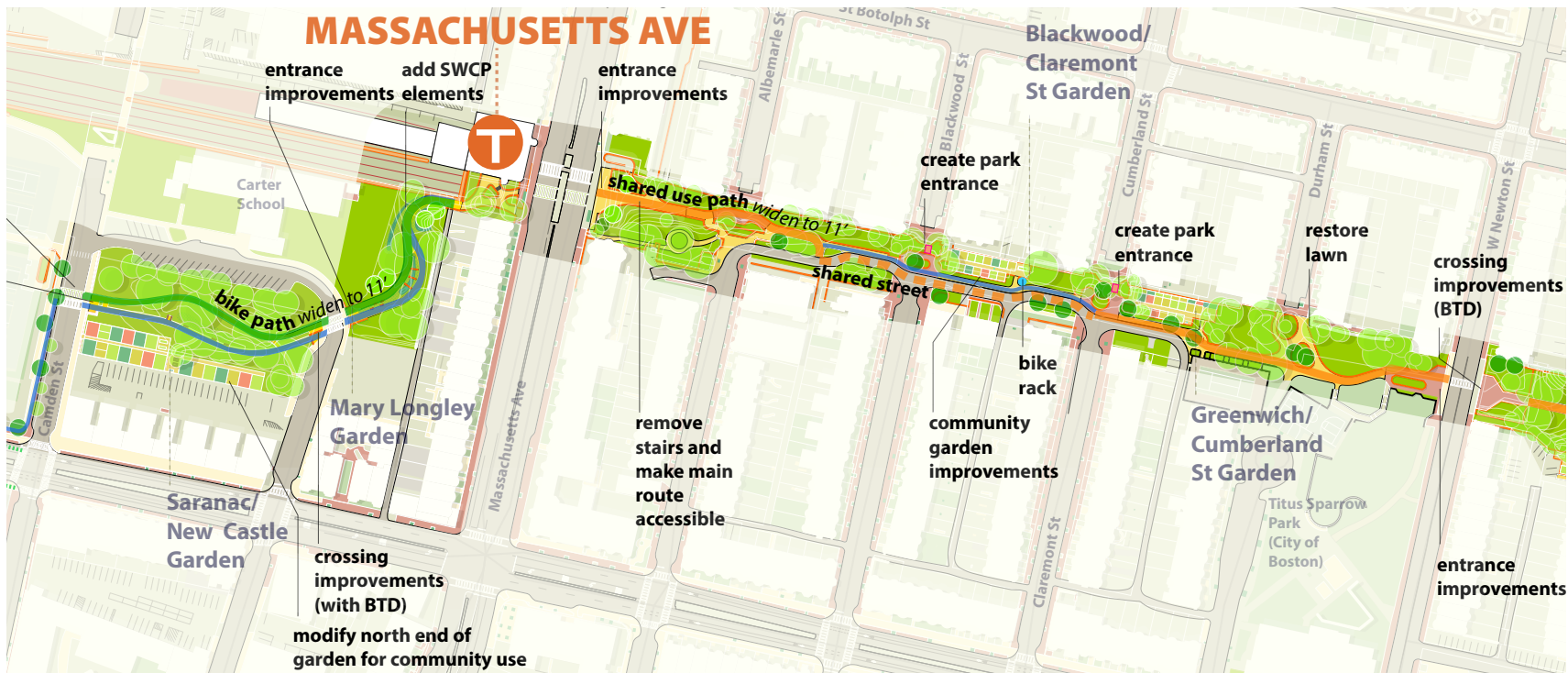
Proposed Condition

Camden to West Newton

Throughout the South End portion of the park, bike rack locations should be strategically placed near key destinations such as the community gardens, playground, and dog park. Modern bike racks with large pads should be used to accommodate typical bikes as well as e-bikes and cargo bikes.

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) has been studying improvements for all of the SWCP community gardens as part of a separate project. In the South End, these improvements will address accessibility, replacement of materials that are at the end of their useful life, drainage, infrastructure, and fencing.

Lateral park entrances should be added at both Cumberland and Blackwood Streets. Re-grading, reconfiguration of the granite block walls, and planting are needed to integrate these entrances.



Camden to West Newton (continued)

North of Massachusetts Avenue, the path should be re-graded to replace the stairs and ramp with a single, accessible path. It may be possible, with coordination with the MBTA, to remove the overhead structure at the back of the Massachusetts Avenue sidewalk, opening up the view north to the city skyline.

To help identify the park entrance adjacent to the Massachusetts Avenue MBTA station, gateway signage will be added (refer to the signage recommendations). The MBTA plaza could be regraded to remove steps and ramps, making it more usable with the introduction of more green space.



Existing Condition

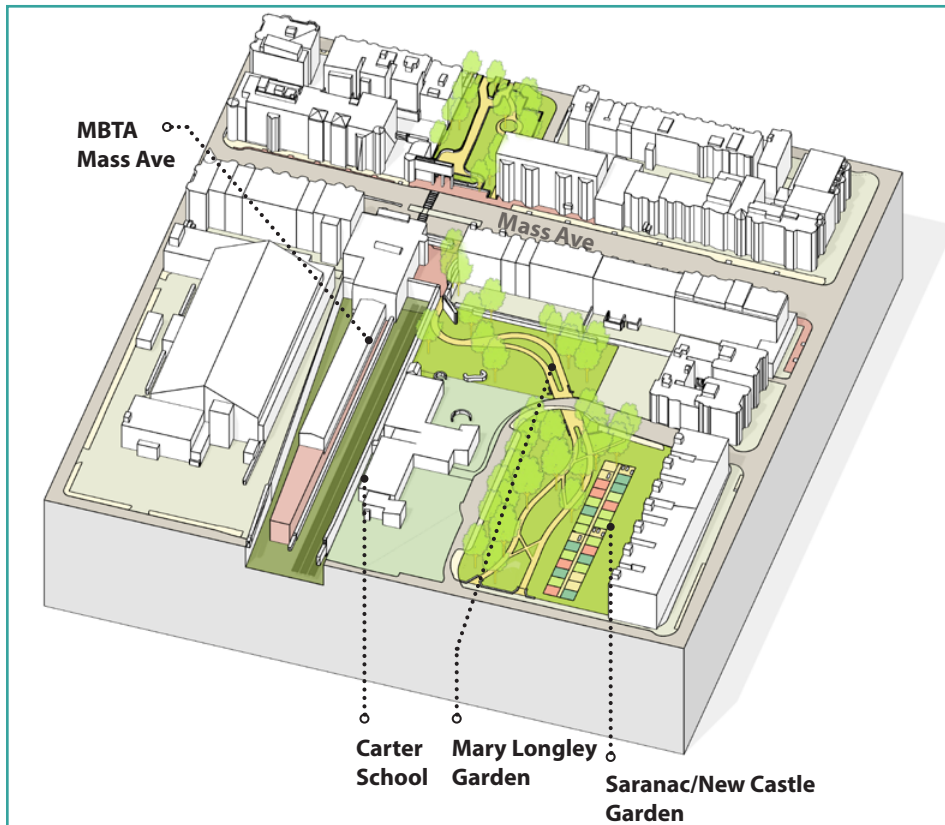


Proposed Condition

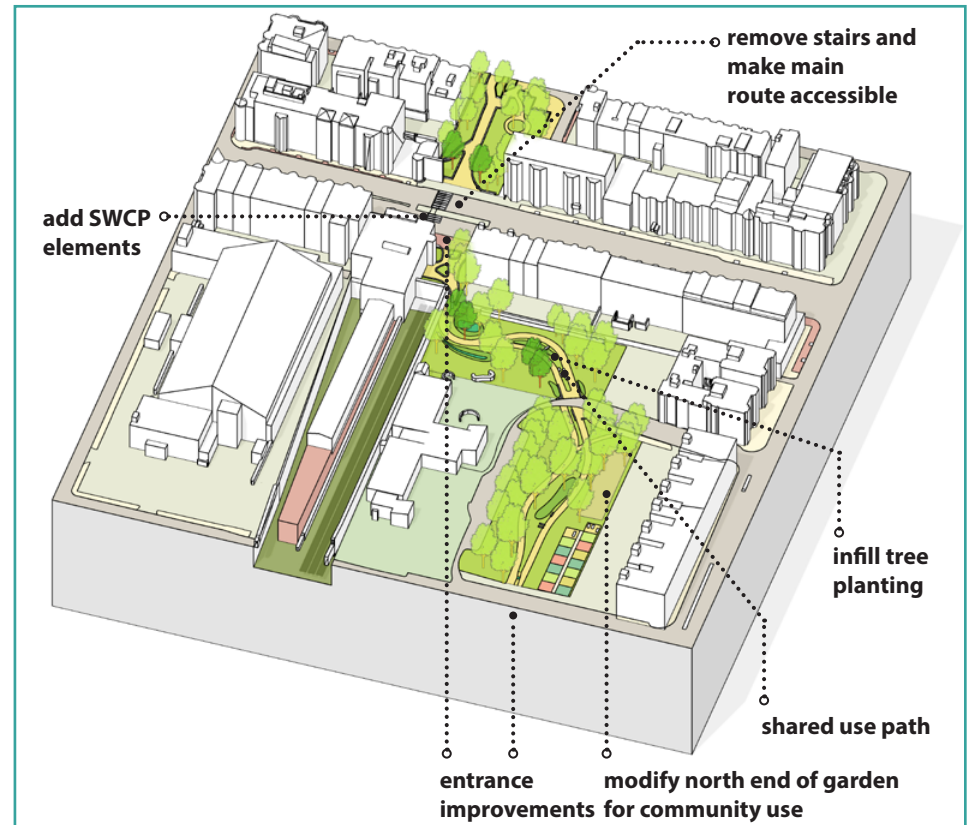
Camden to West Newton (continued)

Heading downhill and south from the MBTA station, the dual path system will be lined with new trees. The Southwest Corridor Park Conservancy is planning to develop the Mary Longley garden in this area, extending the gardenesque character past Massachusetts Avenue.

New housing on Northampton Street and the construction of the Carter School will bring significant changes to the section of the park from Northampton to Camden Streets. To improve the park, the existing trees should be pruned to allow more light into the space. The yew shrubs, wood steps, and small-scale stonedust paths should be removed.



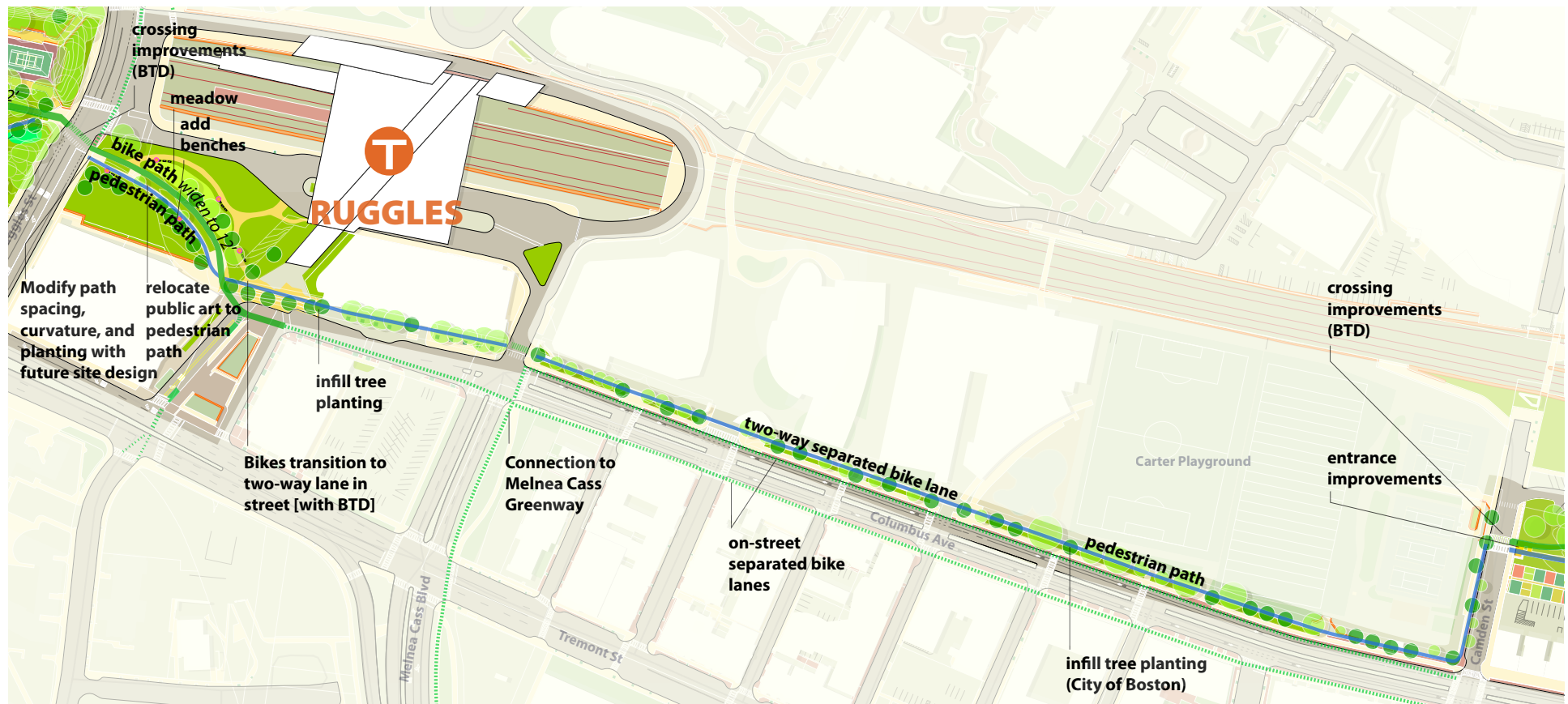
Existing Condition



Proposed Condition

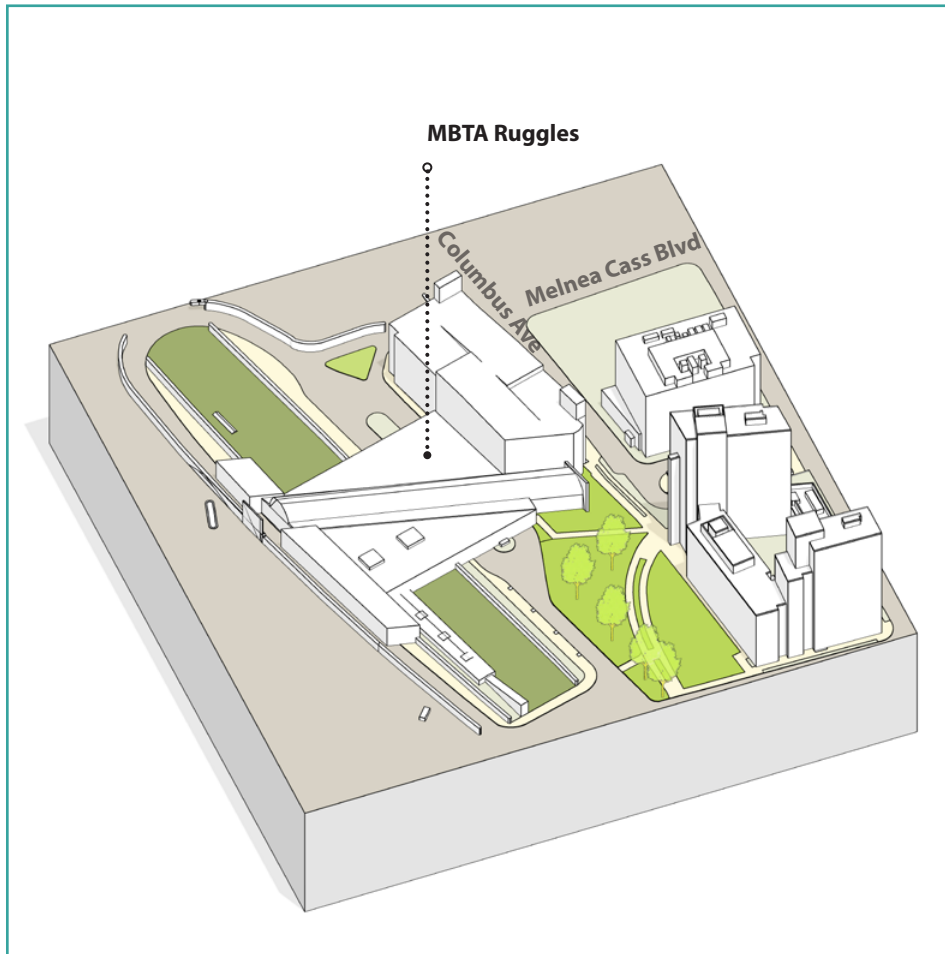
Ruggles to Camden

The park deviates from the rail corridor and consequently the park character changes considerably between Ruggles and Camden Streets, transitioning from a lush, green park to a linear path system integrated into the streetscape. This section features a more urban character, with the dual path system running parallel to busy streets and adjacent buildings. The lush vegetation of other parts of the park are replaced by a design that emphasizes connectivity and mobility within an urban setting. Trees and landscaping are still present but are more interspersed with hardscapes and infrastructure elements, creating a corridor that serves as both a recreational path and a critical urban transit route. Coordination with the City of Boston is needed to support new tree planting in this area to restore the landscape and ensure a healthy, green environment for park users.

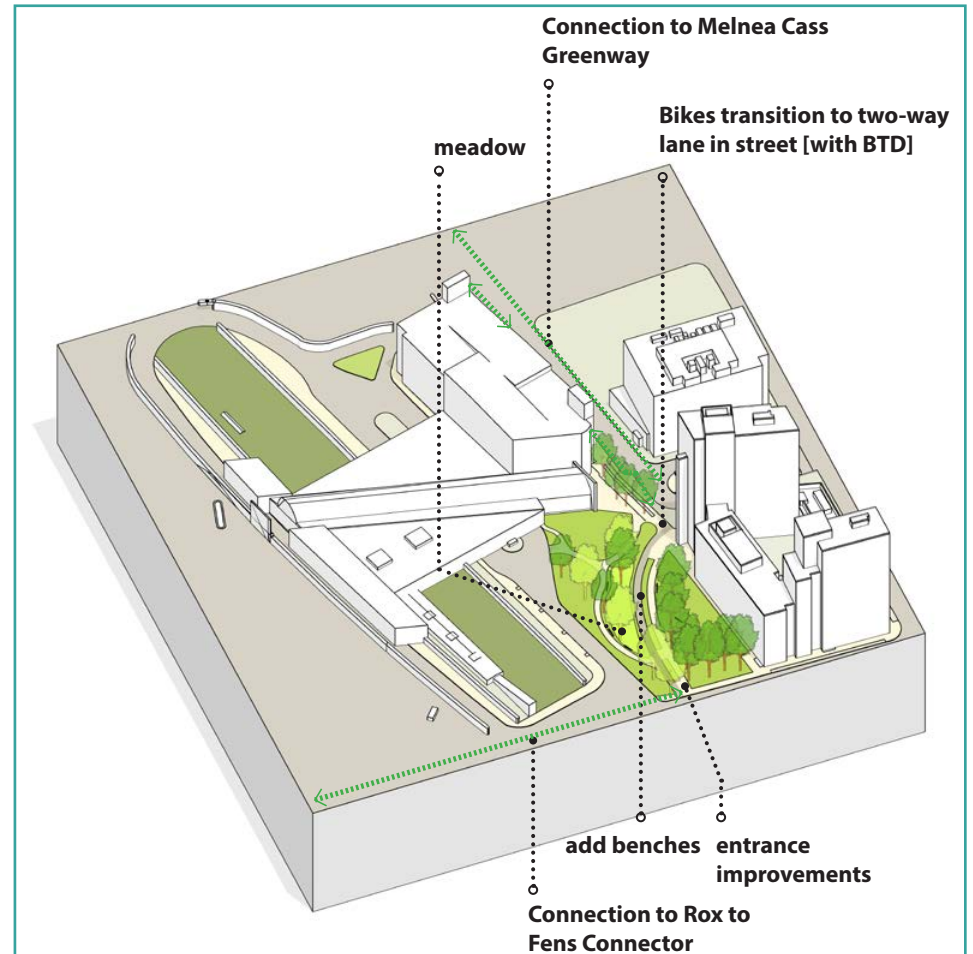


Ruggles to Camden (continued)

From Ruggles Street to the Ruggles MBTA station, the barren landscape should be transformed with an influx of tree planting to provide shade and spatial definition. This will enhance the visual appeal and comfort of the area, making it more inviting for park users. Additionally, the public art in this section should be relocated along the pedestrian path to create a more engaging and aesthetically pleasing experience. For the bicycle path, the existing concrete pavement should be replaced with asphalt, offering a smoother and more durable surface for cyclists.



Existing Condition



Proposed Condition

Prentiss to Ruggles

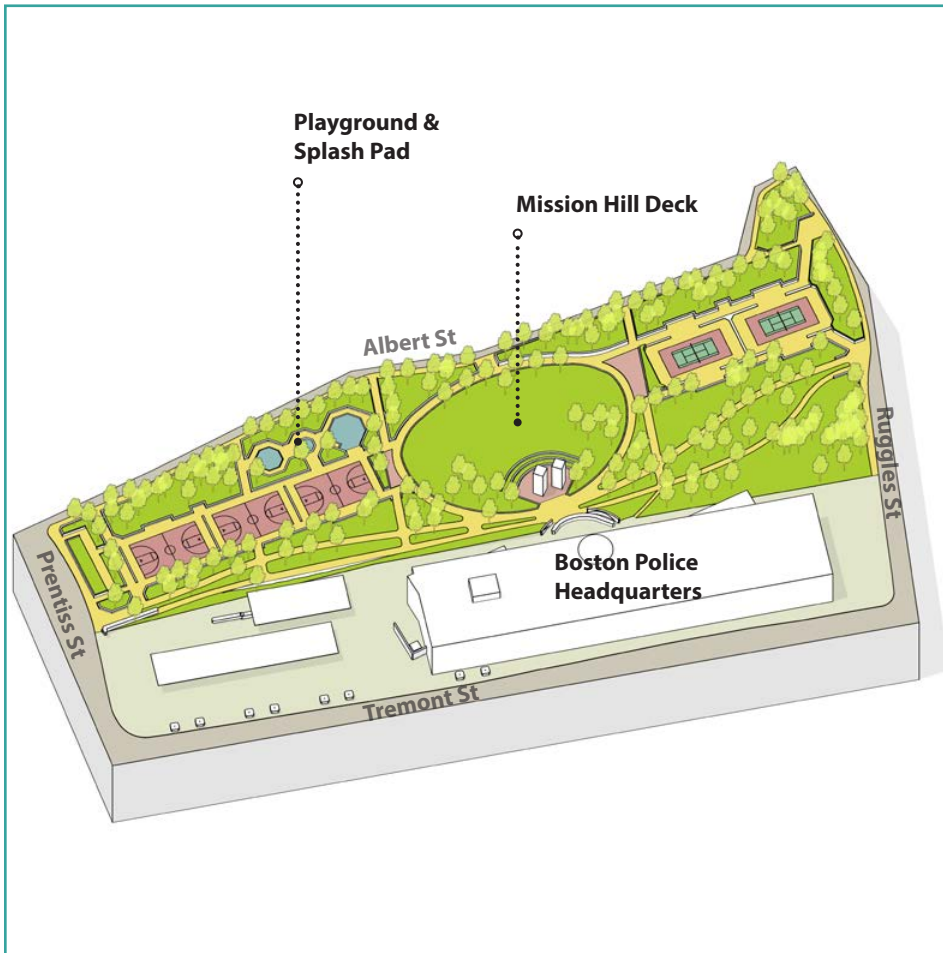
Mission Deck is an essential open space for the community, offering shade, vegetation, and a variety of recreational facilities such as basketball and tennis courts, a water play area, a playground, and a community gathering space. To enhance its functionality and appeal, the following improvements are recommended:

1. **Diverse Court Usage:** While maintaining two basketball courts, converting the middle court into an outdoor fitness area with shaded seating and a drinking fountain is recommended. Integrating skateboard-friendly features into the entire court area would also attract more users and diversify recreational opportunities.
2. **Court Murals:** When resurfacing the courts, commissioning a mural by a local artist can showcase local culture, history, and artistic talent. Murals bring vibrant colors and visually appealing designs to otherwise plain surfaces, enriching the park's aesthetic and cultural value.

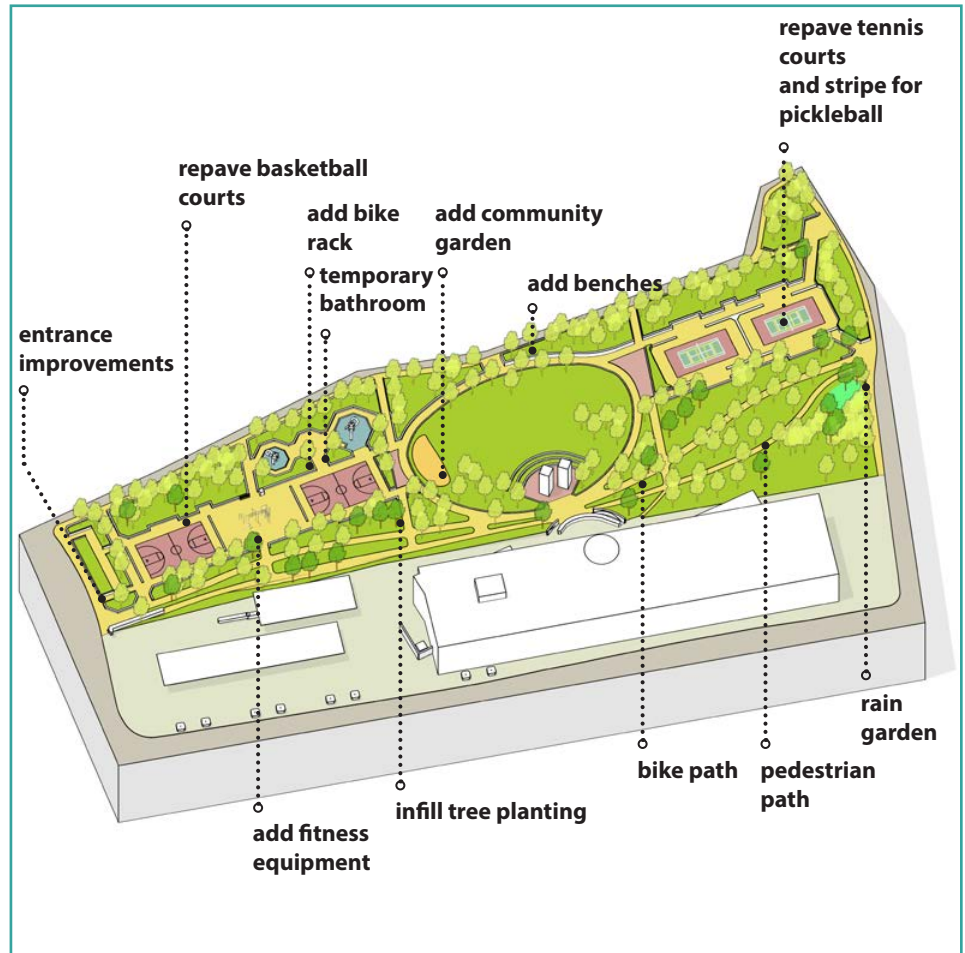


Prentiss to Ruggles (continued)

3. **Community Garden:** The oval lawn, currently utilized for informal, passive use and some community events, could benefit from the addition of a community garden. This would provide the community with the opportunity to grow fresh food. The garden model will be determined by the SWCP gardeners and the community.
4. **Accessibility Improvements:** Throughout the corridor, accessibility improvements are needed to provide access to features that currently have barriers. For instance, the amphitheater in this area is only accessible via a path with steps. Regrading to remove the steps would make it more accessible to all visitors.



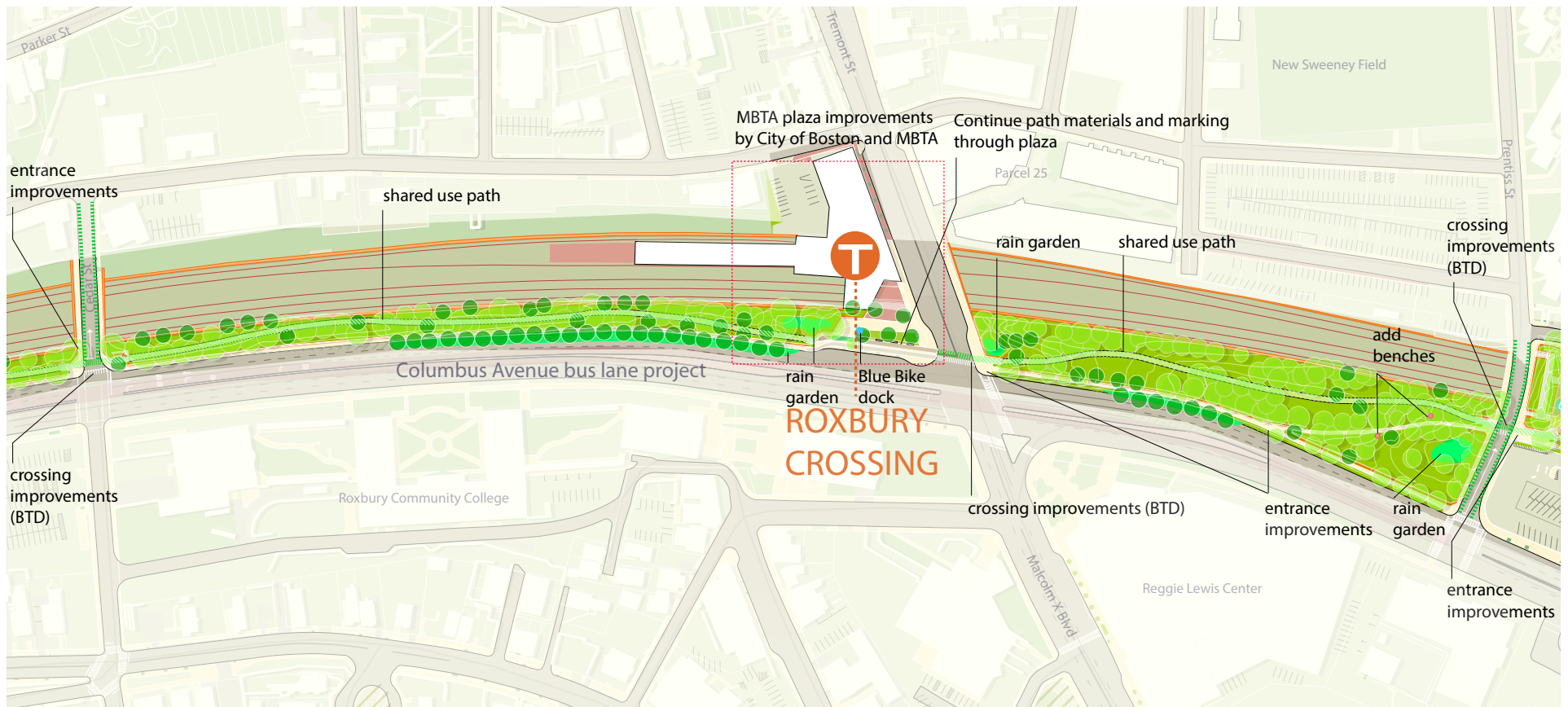
Existing Condition



Proposed Condition

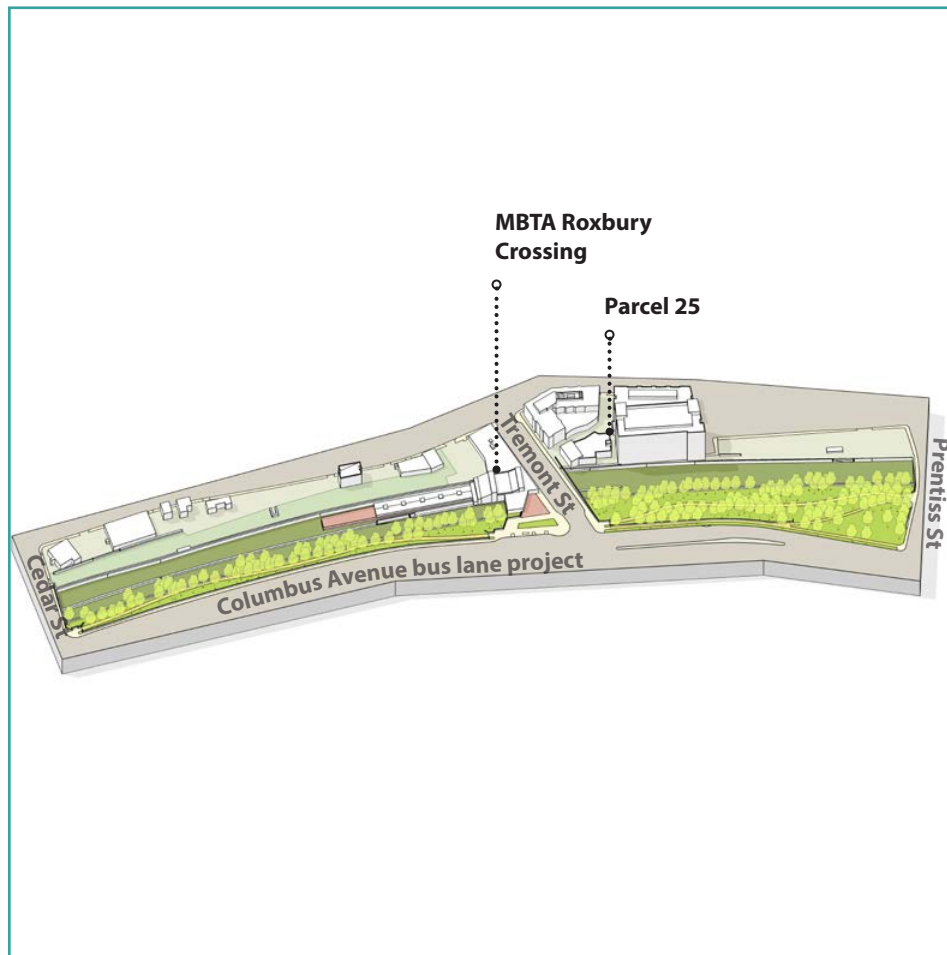
Cedar to Prentiss

As the park crosses through Roxbury, it becomes a very narrow corridor, just wide enough for the dual path system. Trees struggle in these challenging conditions, but maintaining a robust tree canopy is critical for the surrounding community and for the comfort and enjoyment of park users. Greater emphasis is needed in this area for new tree planting and aftercare, including existing tree pruning, watering, soil decompaction, and amendment.

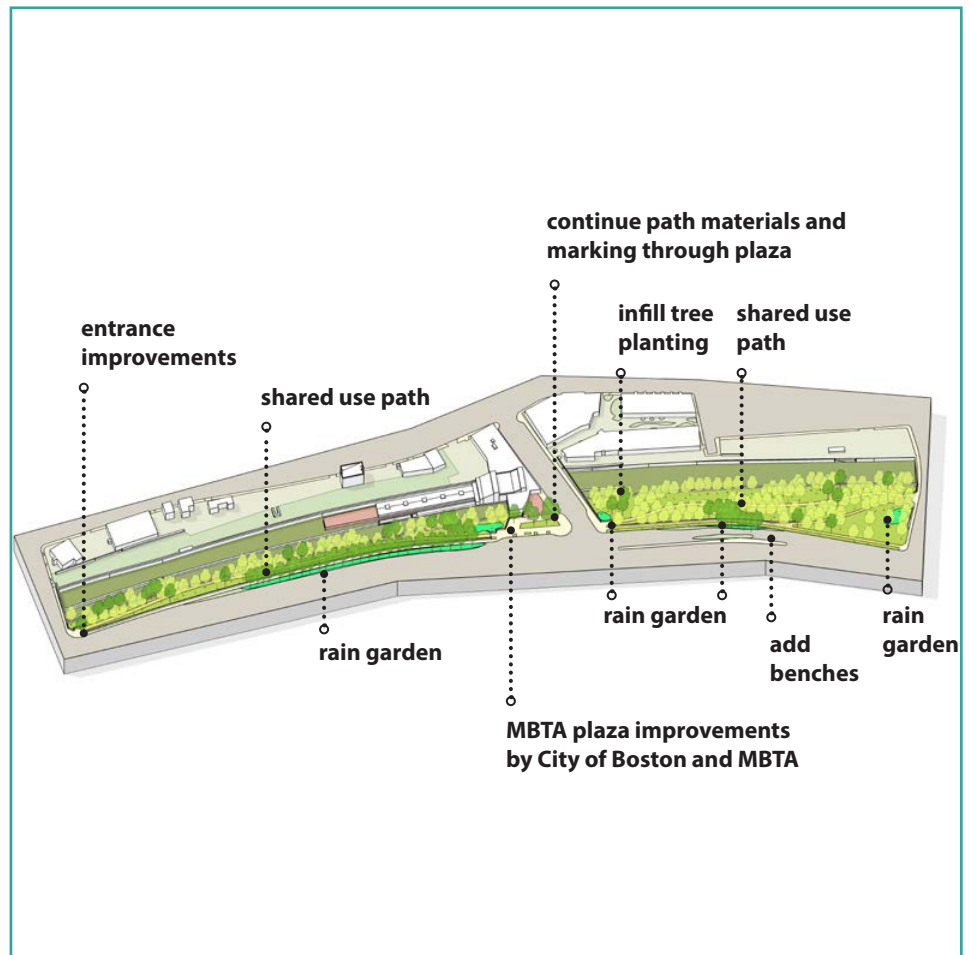


Cedar to Prentiss (continued)

The Columbus Avenue Bus Lane project, being designed by the City of Boston and the MBTA, will help calm traffic and introduce green infrastructure. This project will include long lines of trees that will buffer the park, providing additional shade and environmental benefits. This project will also renovate the MBTA plaza clarifying paths of travel, addressing accessibility issues and improving tree planting.



Existing Condition

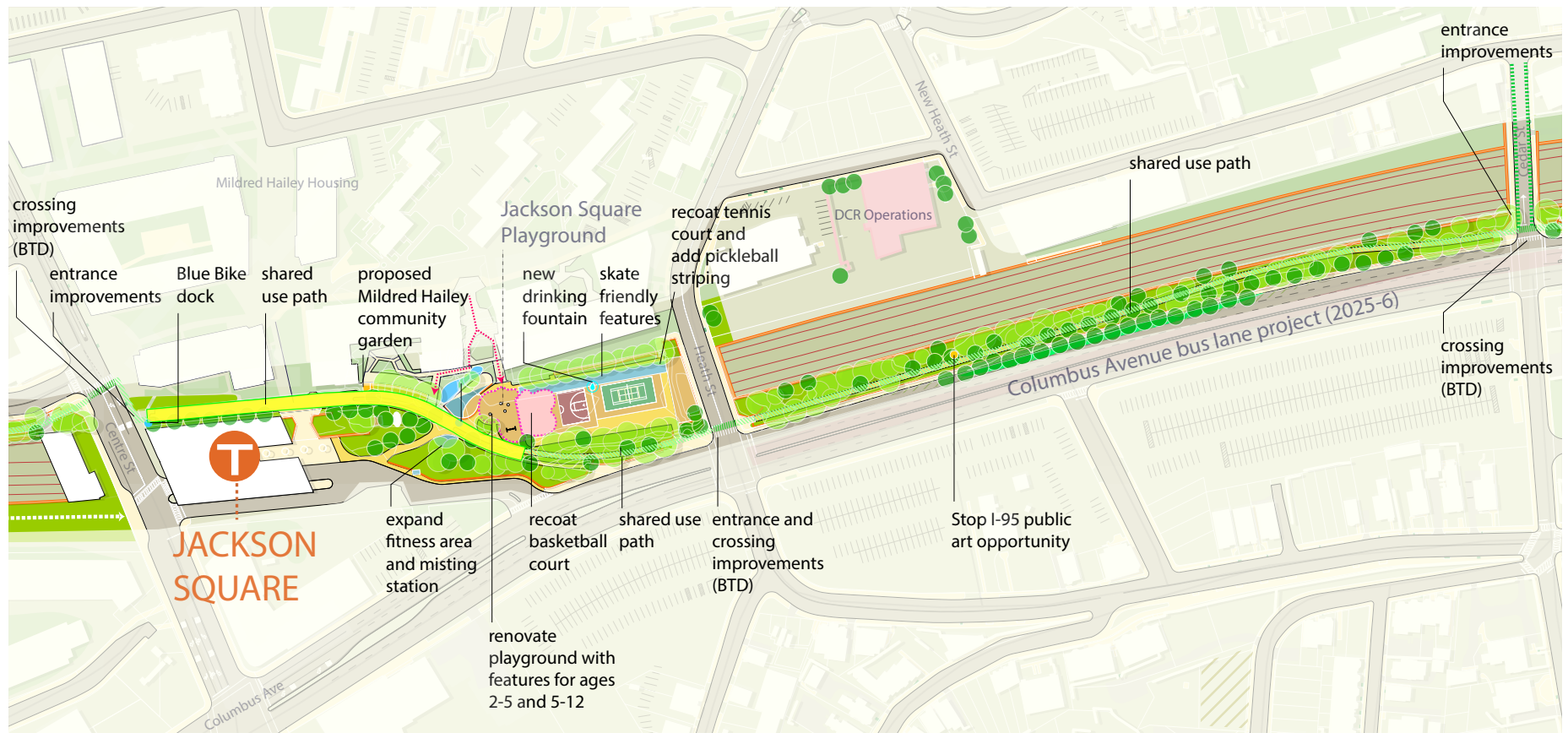


Proposed Condition

Centre to Cedar

The narrow corridor between Heath Street and Cedar Street necessitates a focused effort on new infill tree planting, accompanied by thorough aftercare to ensure the health and longevity of the trees. The Columbus Avenue Bus Lane project will complement these efforts by introducing green infrastructure and street trees, which will provide crucial buffering from traffic, enhance environmental benefits, and offer additional shade.

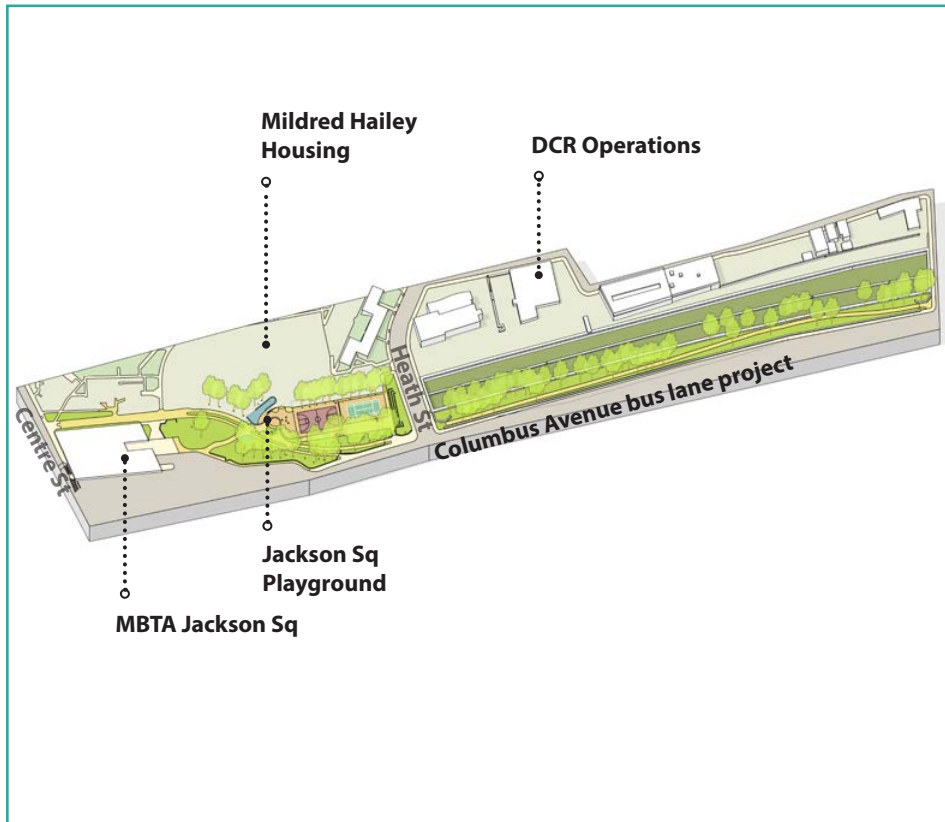
At Jackson Square, improvements to the playground will have a significant impact on the surrounding decked landscape. Expanding the playground may require reconfiguring existing elements. Possible design options include converting the full-court basketball area to a half-court or replacing the zipline with new play equipment tailored for younger children. Additionally, incorporating fitness equipment, shaded seating, and skateboard-friendly features will enhance the functionality and appeal of the area.



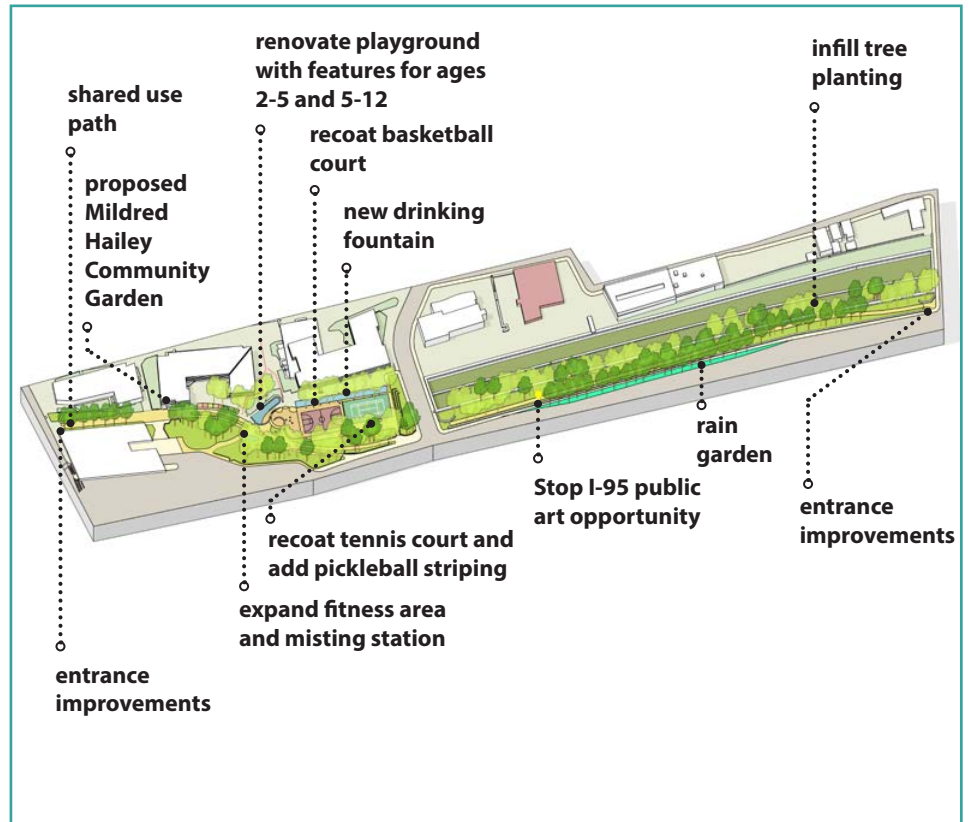
Centre to Cedar (continued)

North of Jackson Square, the dual path system will merge into a single shared-use path, which will help clarify circulation and optimize park space around the playground. With the new Mildred Hailey development influencing pedestrian circulation, adjustments will be necessary to guide circulation routes around the play area effectively.

If future expansion of the park becomes feasible, extending decked landscapes over the rail corridor north of Jackson Square would be highly advantageous. This expansion would not only increase green space but also enhance recreational facilities and potentially establish a public presence for the DCR Operations building. Such an initiative would create a more cohesive park environment, integrating additional amenities and fostering greater community engagement.



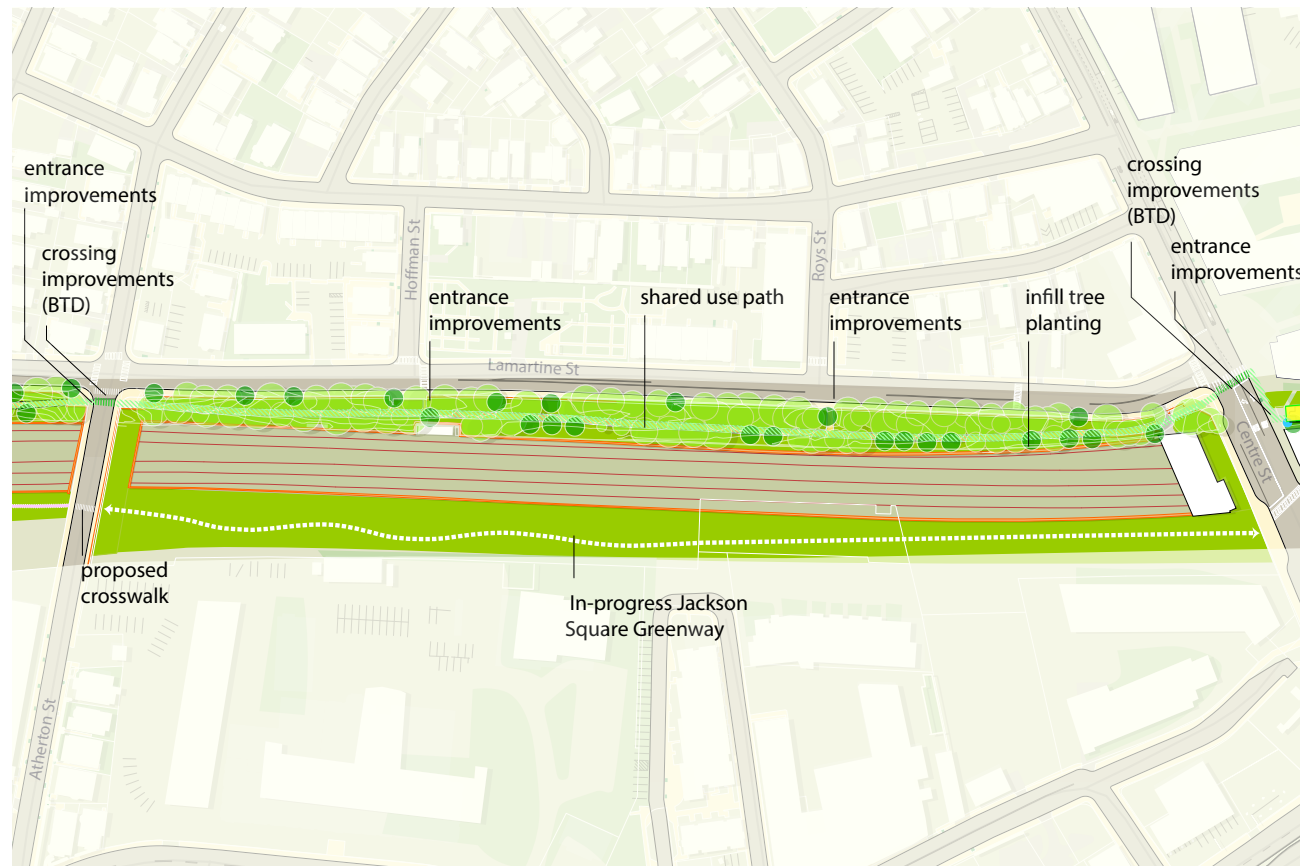
Existing Condition



Proposed Condition

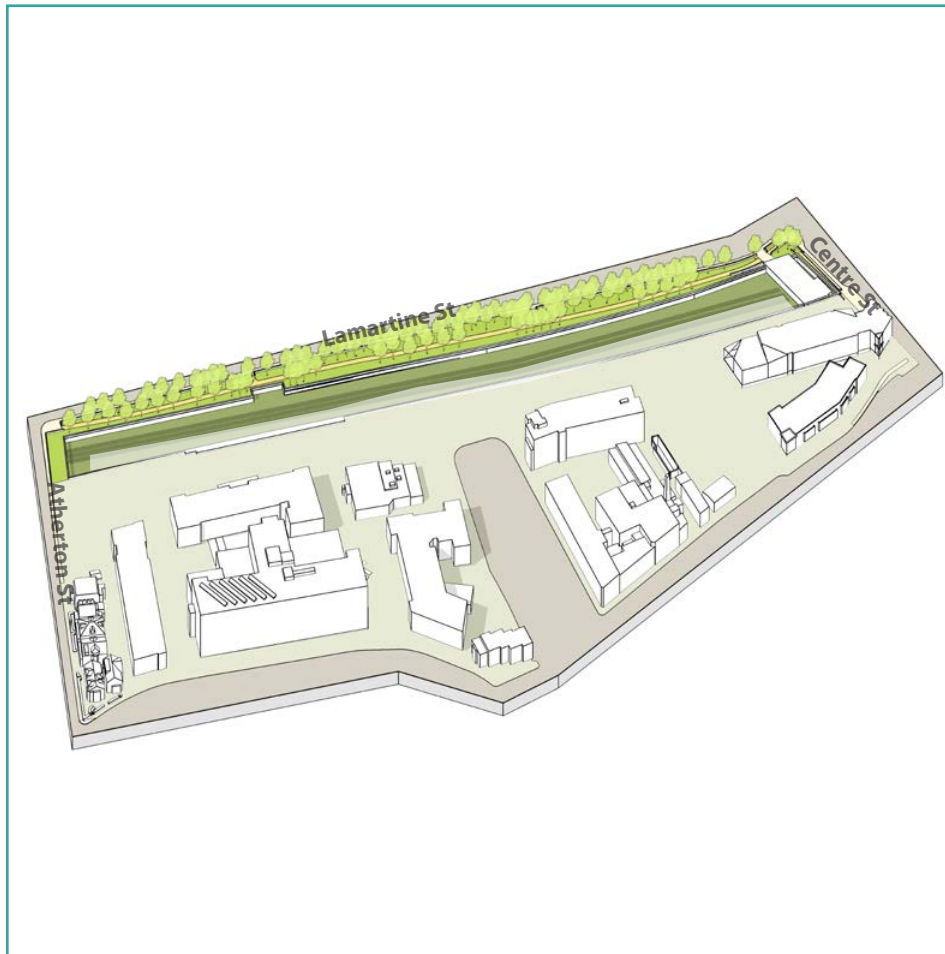
Atherton to Centre

The narrow park corridor between Atherton and Centre, though still constrained, offers a more comfortable experience due to the residential uses across Lamartine and the additional tree canopy. Feedback from park users has consistently highlighted the need for improved road crossings, with the City of Boston responsible for determining the necessary enhancements.

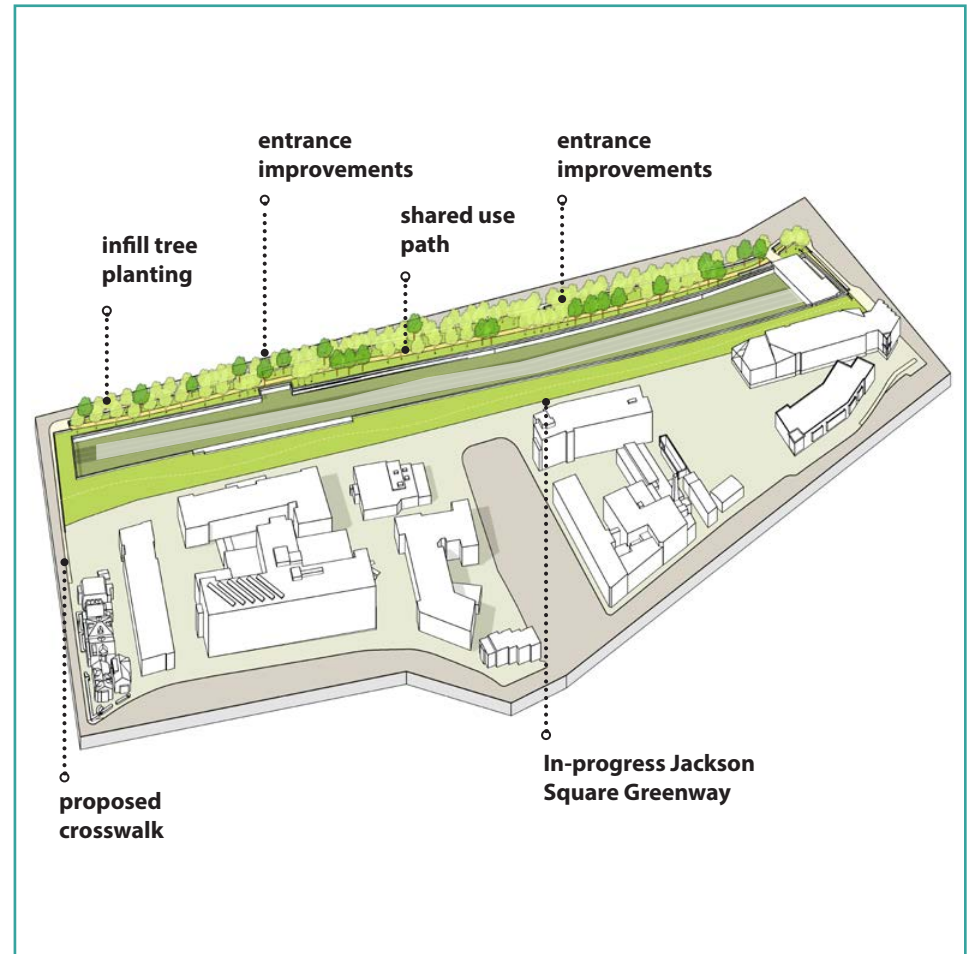


Atherton to Centre (continued)

To the east of the rail corridor, the Jackson Square Greenway is being developed by private developers. This expansion will significantly enhance connectivity to the Kelly Rink facility and the new housing projects in the area. Once an overgrown and underutilized buffer between parcels and the rail corridor, this development promises to transform it into a vibrant, integrated part of the park.



Existing Condition



Proposed Condition

New Minton to Atherton

The park's recreational opportunities in the Stony Brook area stand out as some of the most popular and well-utilized within the Southwest Corridor. This section of the park features several vibrant hubs of activity that cater to a diverse range of interests and needs. Each hub offers distinct amenities, contributing to a dynamic and engaging environment for residents.

The Stony Brook area is renowned for its varied recreational options, making it a central destination for community members. The well-frequented basketball courts and well-designed playgrounds attract families, while the expansive lawns and picnic areas provide spaces for relaxation and social gatherings. The integration of water play facilities further enhances the area's appeal, especially during warmer months.

In addition to these features, the Stony Brook area boasts several community-driven initiatives, such as the popular community garden. This garden is highly valued by local residents, providing opportunities for urban agriculture, community bonding, and educational programs about sustainable practices.



New Minton to Atherton (continued)

The presence of these diverse activity hubs makes the Stony Brook area a focal point of engagement within the park. Each hub complements the others, creating a rich tapestry of recreational opportunities that cater to various interests and age groups. The ongoing success and popularity of these spaces highlight their importance to the community, reinforcing the need for continued support and enhancement.

One major issue with **Kelly Rink** is its lack of connectivity to the surrounding park, which diminishes ease of access and integration with other park amenities. Additionally, the rink suffers from poor visibility, which can limit its prominence and accessibility for new and existing visitors. Furthermore, the facilities at the rink have surpassed their initial temporary design, indicating a need for upgrades and improvements to better serve the community and meet current standards.

DCR is currently exploring options to enhance the Kelly Rink's usability and extend its ice skating season. One potential solution under consideration is the addition of a roof structure, which would allow for a longer skating season by protecting the rink from weather-related disruptions. Additionally, relocating the Zamboni garage could improve access and functionality, streamlining maintenance operations.

To further optimize the rink's year-round use, there is interest in adding pickleball striping, which would introduce a new recreational activity and maximize the rink's utility during the off-season. Improving connectivity is also a priority. The pedestrian route from Boylston Street should be redesigned to be more direct and inviting, enhancing the overall accessibility and integration of the rink with its surroundings.

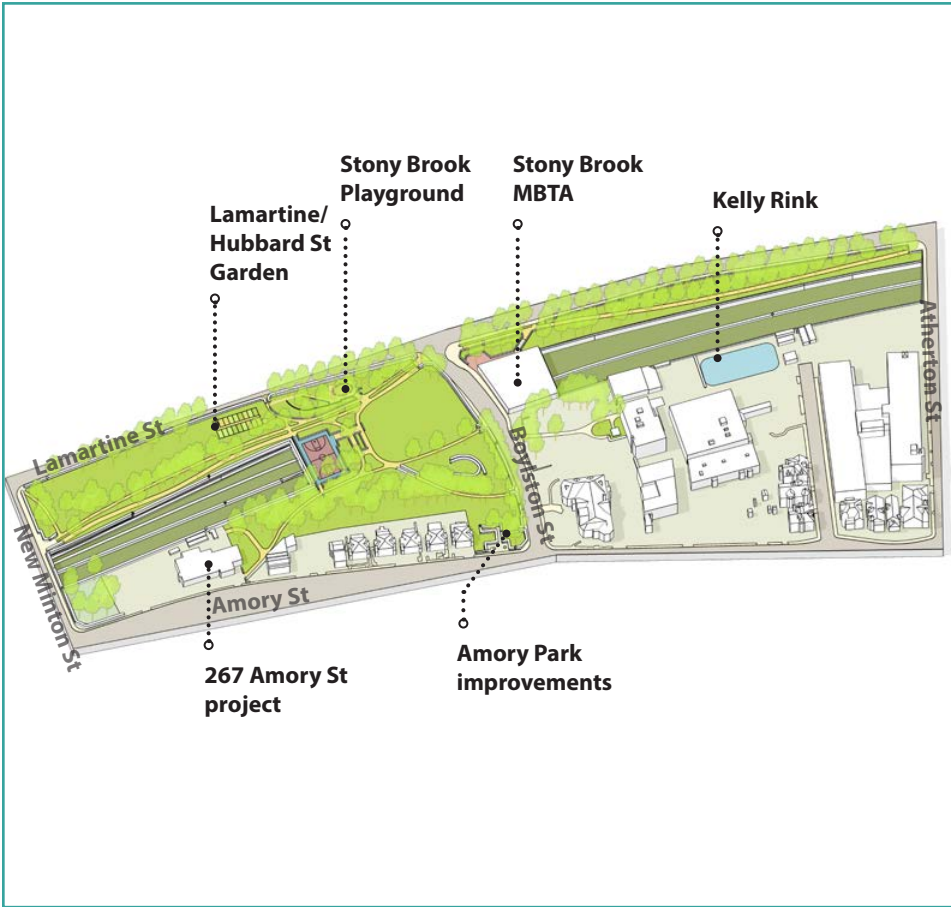
A new pathway from Atherton Street and the Jackson Square Greenway could be developed, contingent upon modifications to the lease agreement between the MBTA and Northeastern University. Furthermore, if parking for Legal Services is no longer required or can be relocated, this would free up valuable space adjacent to the rink. This area could be repurposed for a children's traffic park, skateboarding facilities, or improved pedestrian circulation, thereby increasing the rink's appeal and functionality for diverse community needs.

When the **interpretive plan** is developed, this area of the park could provide rich stories of the past ecology, settlement, and industrialization. Both the natural course of Stony Brook and the altered alignment now in the Stony Brook Conduit could be interpreted for park users who are otherwise unaware. Interpretive sign, public art, or other placemaking strategies should be explored. The **amphitheater** within the park serves as a venue for both public events and passive recreation. To ensure equitable access for all users, it is essential to establish an accessible route to the amphitheater.

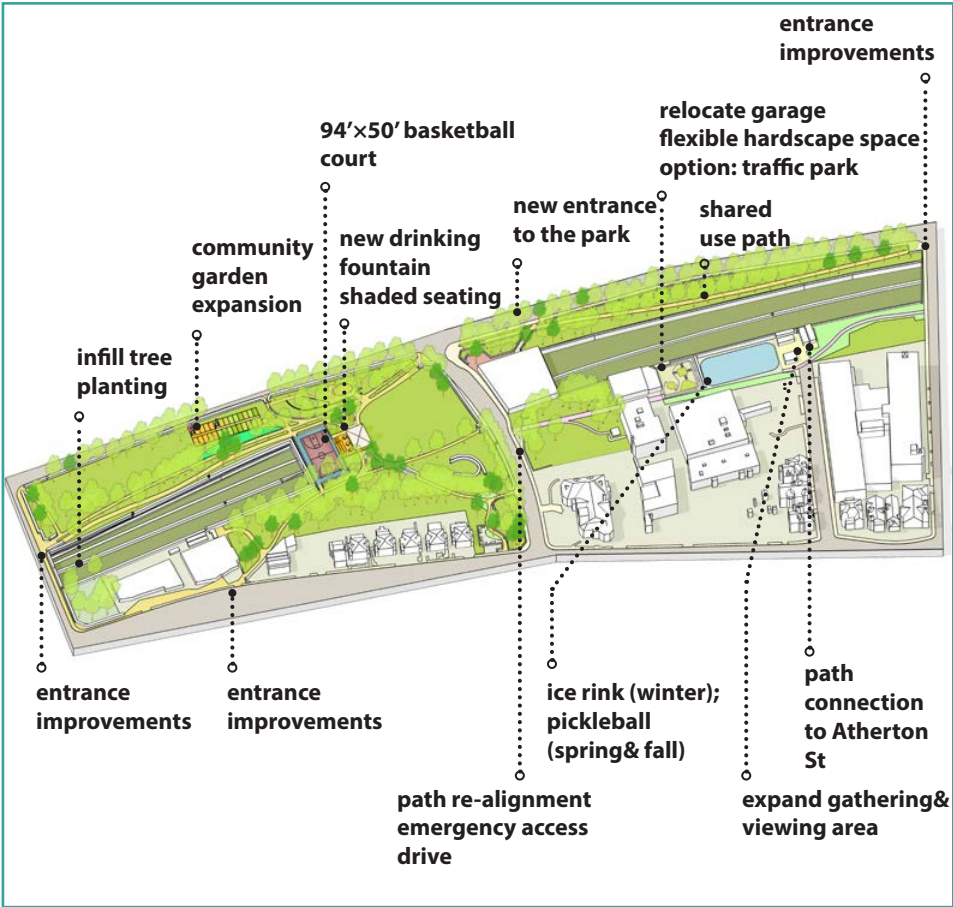
Additionally, the granite stairs located at Boylston Street pose a barrier on a heavily trafficked path. Removing these stairs and regrading the path to create a smooth, accessible surface will enhance overall accessibility and ease of movement for park visitors.

The Lamartine/Hubbard **community garden** is highly valued by the community and is currently the most sought-after garden space. To accommodate the increasing demand and better serve the community, a slight expansion of the garden is recommended.

New Minton to Atherton (continued)



Existing Condition



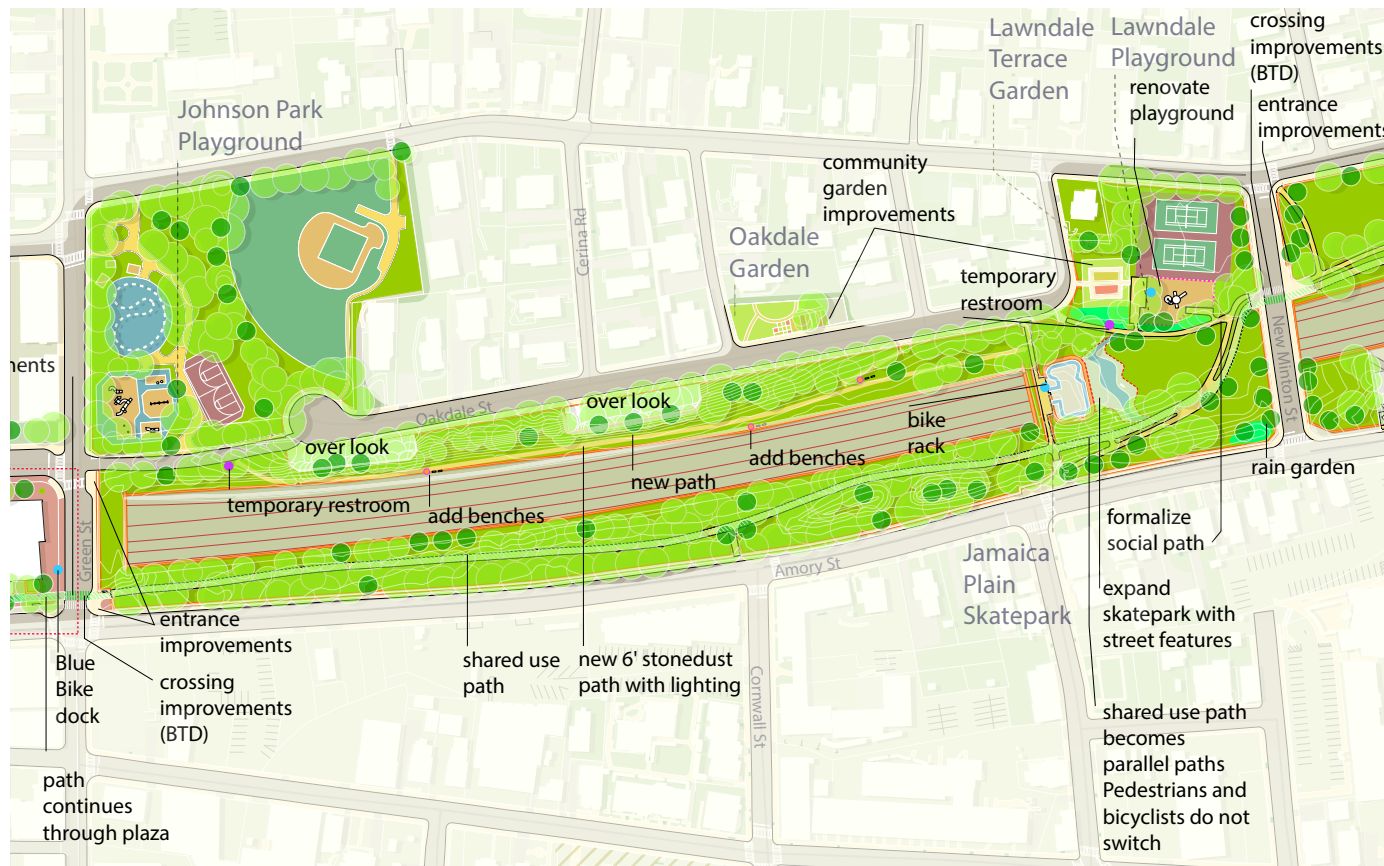
Proposed Condition

Green to New Minton

The park spans both sides of the rail corridor, providing a variety of circulation options for its users. On the east side, the formal dual path system will be enhanced, while the west side will see the addition of a new stonedust path, complete with lighting to improve visibility and safety.

A significant upgrade to the playground is recommended to modernize this currently underutilized asset. Alongside the playground renovation, the entrance to the tennis court should be separated from the playground area. The tennis court itself will be repaved and striped for both tennis and pickleball, catering to a broader range of recreational activities.

The existing skatepark, which is designed for advanced skaters, will benefit from an expansion to include a street course. This new addition will accommodate a greater number of users, particularly those with less advanced skills, in response to community feedback.



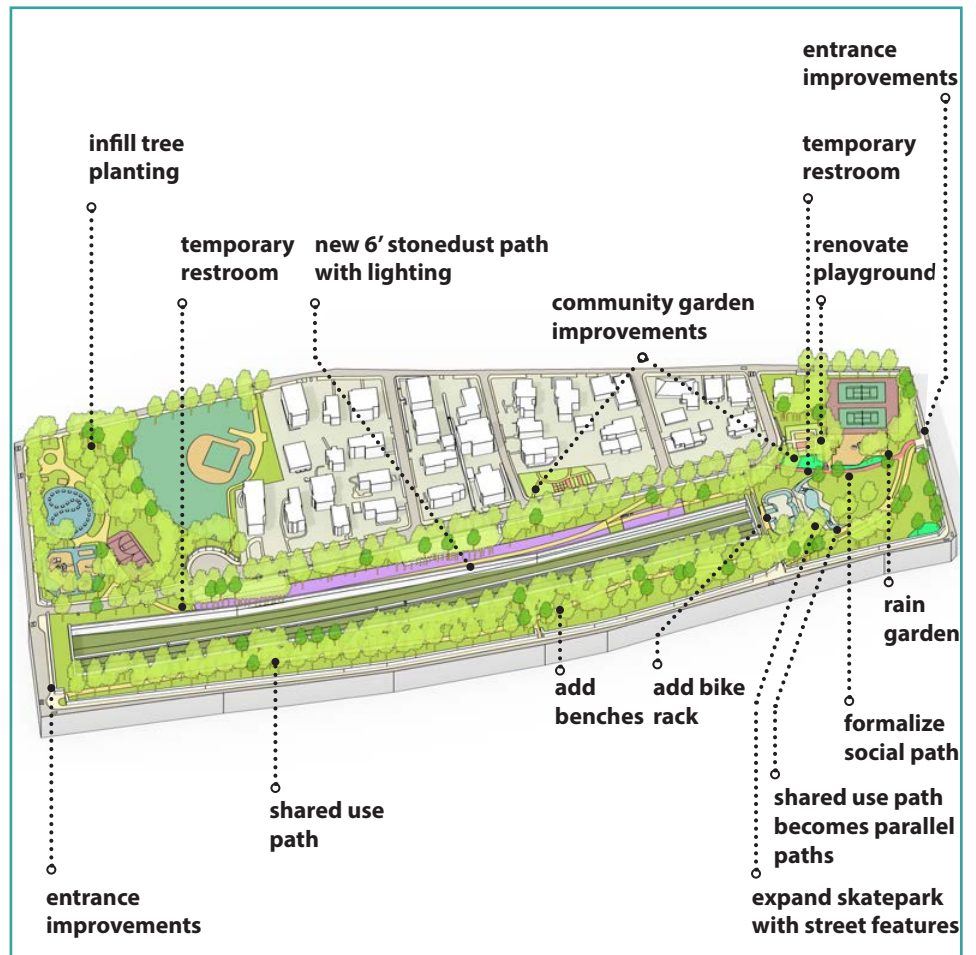
Green to New Minton (continued)

Oakdale Street and its sidewalk will continue to serve as an alternative route. Overlooks within this area will remain understated and unprogrammed, preserving their current minimalistic character.

Johnson Park, which is highly utilized, does not require any immediate improvements at this time, reflecting its current adequacy in meeting community needs.



Existing Condition



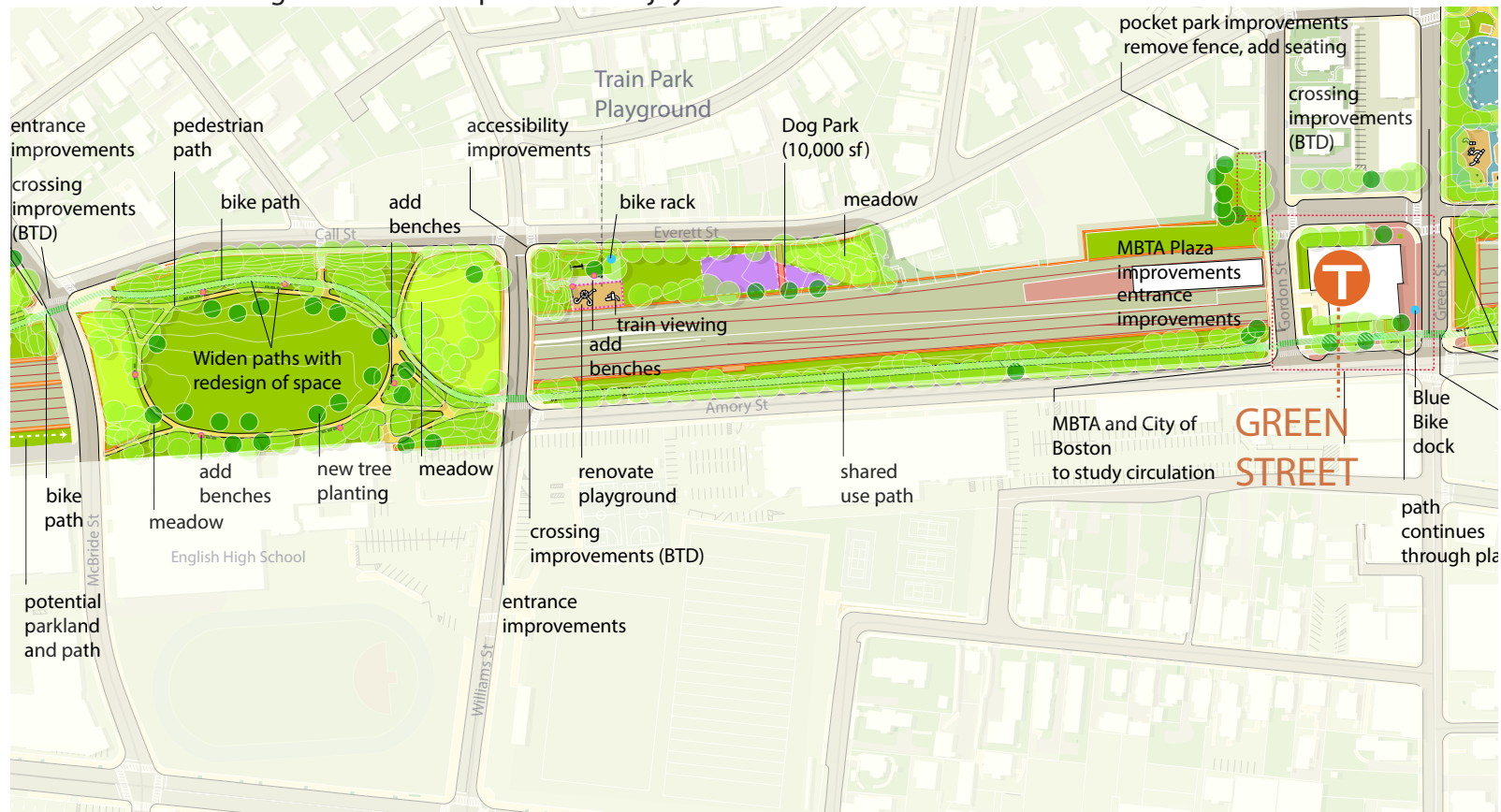
Proposed Condition

McBride to Green

The community has emphasized the importance of preserving the open nature of the oval lawn along Call Street, advocating for its enhancement without heavy programming. To improve this space, the focus will be on upgrading the path systems, planting additional trees, installing benches, and converting some of the turf grass into meadow areas in the less-utilized sections. This approach will maintain the lawn's open feel while adding functional and aesthetic improvements.

The Train Park playground is slated for a comprehensive renovation to address existing accessibility issues and enhance its usability. Given the significance of train viewing at this location, the redesign will incorporate features that highlight this aspect and cater to the interests of visitors.

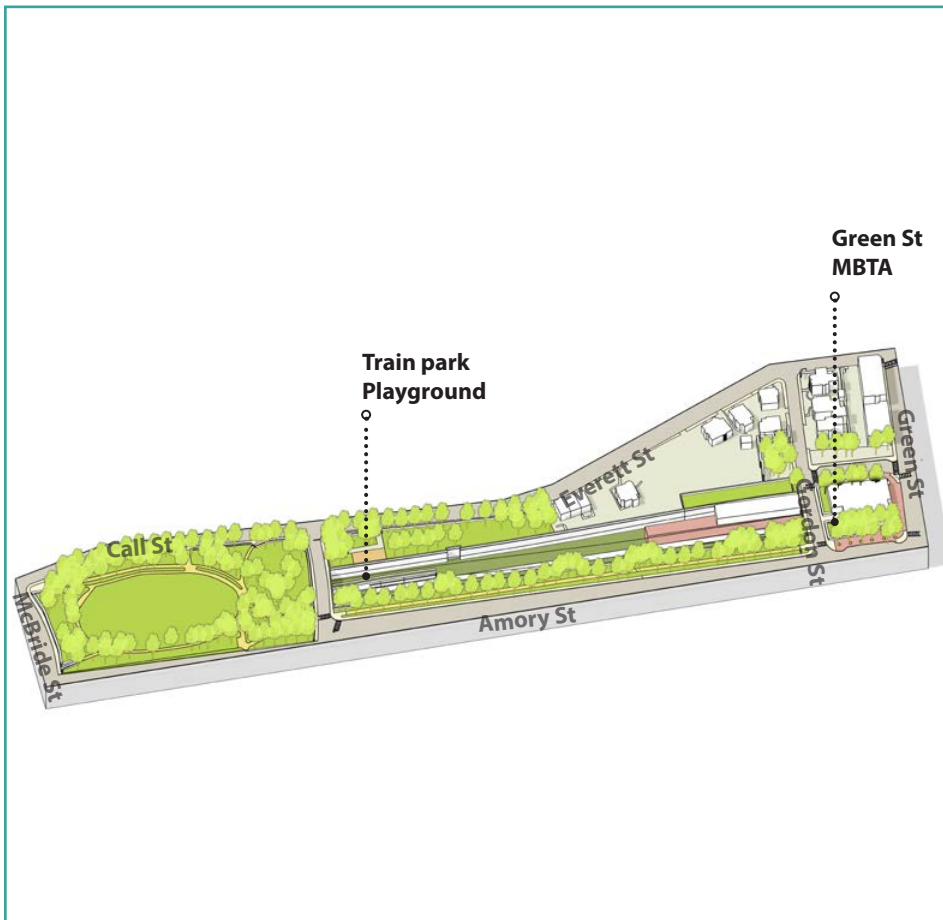
A new dog park is proposed for the area between Everett Street and the rail corridor. This addition will offer the much-requested off-leash space, providing a dedicated area for dogs and their companions to enjoy.



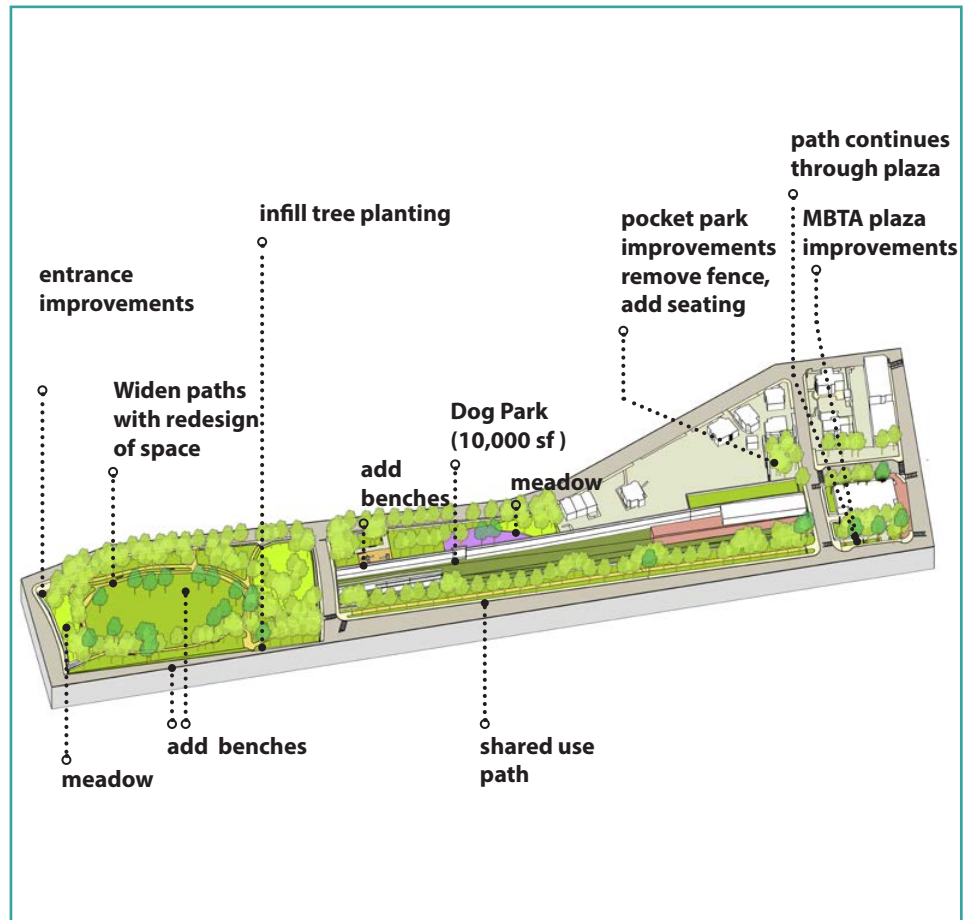
McBride to Green (continued)

Improvements are also planned for the small pocket park at the corner of Gordon Street and Woolsey Square. Enhancements will include the addition of a path and benches, complemented by diverse planting, including species that support pollinators, to increase the park's ecological value.

The Green Street MBTA plaza requires a more extensive renovation, which will be undertaken once the MBTA can schedule the project. This renovation will focus on clarifying paths of travel, addressing accessibility issues, and improving tree planting to enhance the functionality and aesthetics of the plaza.



Existing Condition

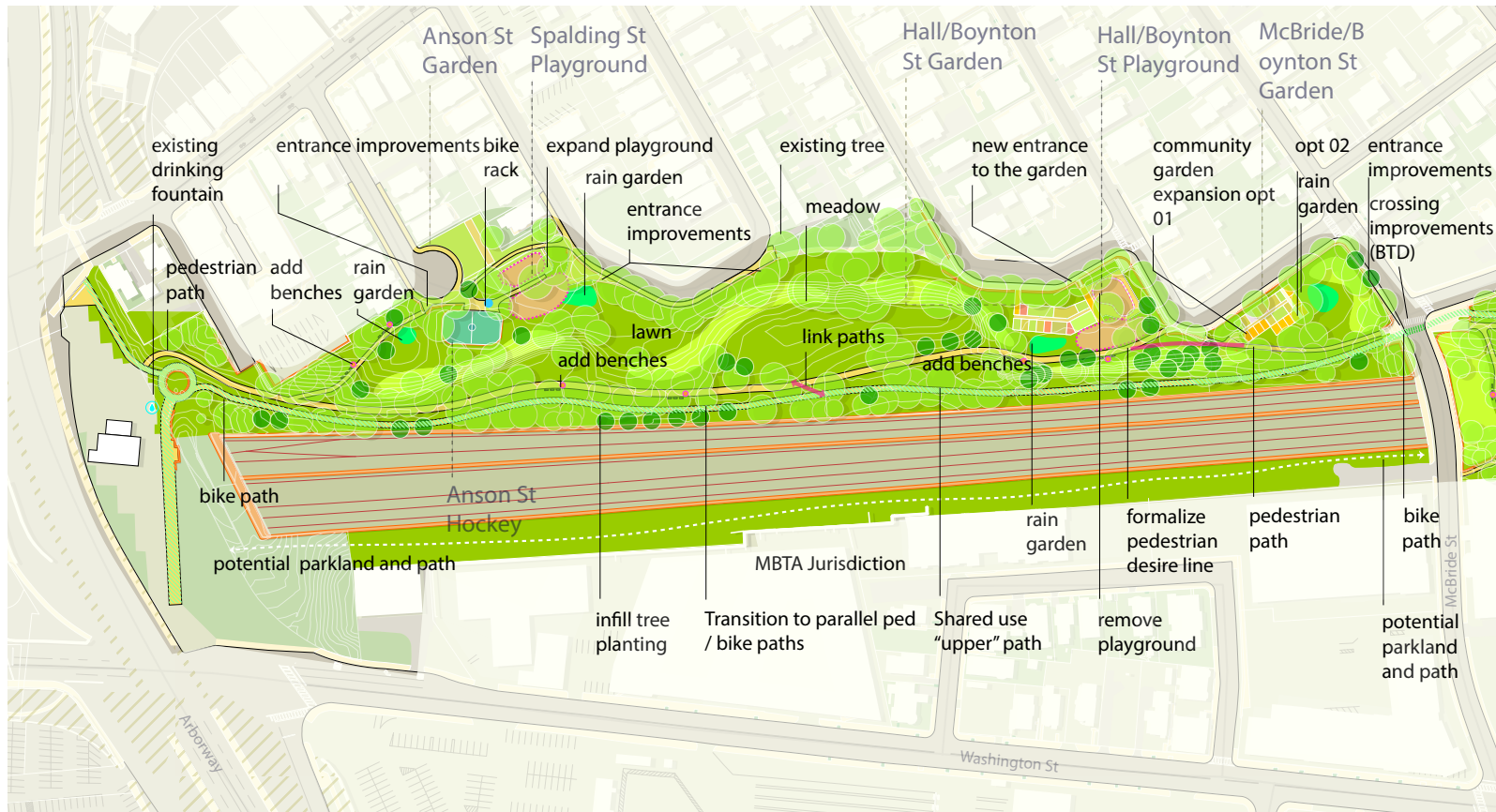


Proposed Condition

Arborway to McBride

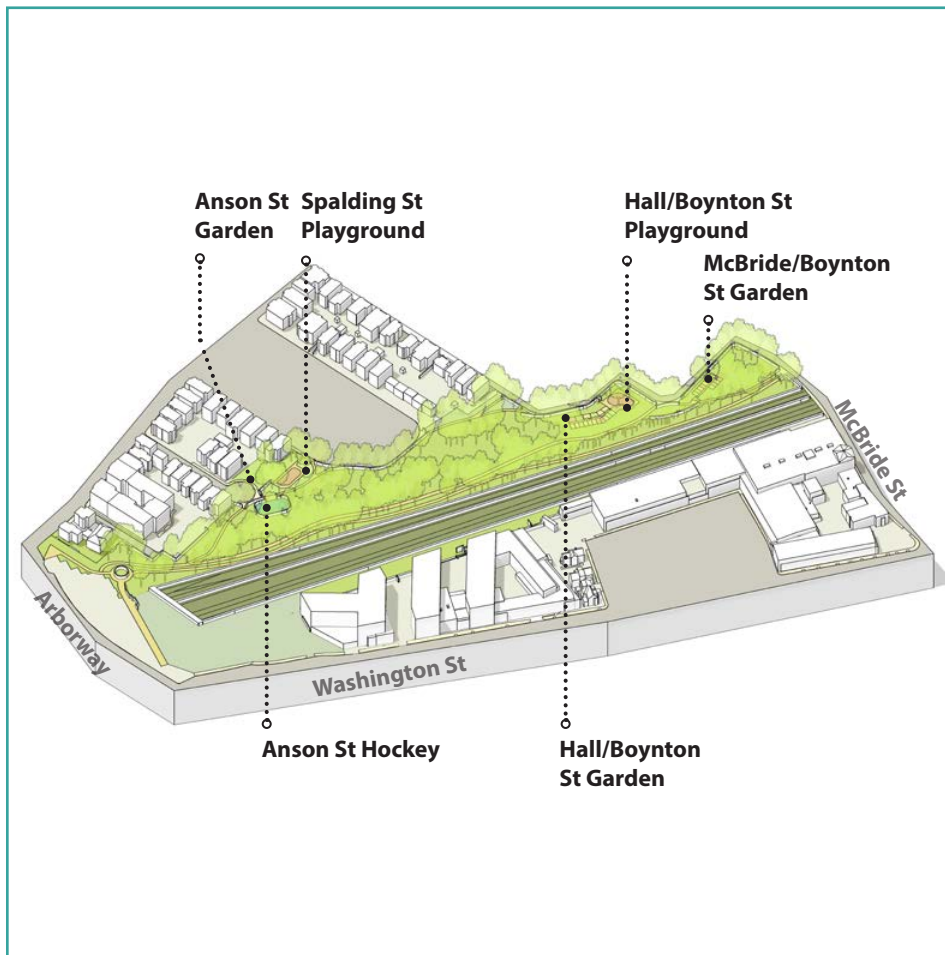
To preserve and enhance the park's distinctive character, it is important to maintain its rolling topography and the varied outdoor rooms that define its landscape. One way to enrich this character is by converting turf on transitional slopes to native meadows. This approach will not only enhance the aesthetic appeal but also increase biodiversity. In the park's low points, integrating rain gardens can help manage stormwater by allowing it to infiltrate the ground while providing additional ecological benefits.

Combining the two playgrounds in this area is recommended to create a more engaging play space that caters to a broader range of children. This consolidation will offer a more cohesive and stimulating environment for play, making it a central feature of the park.

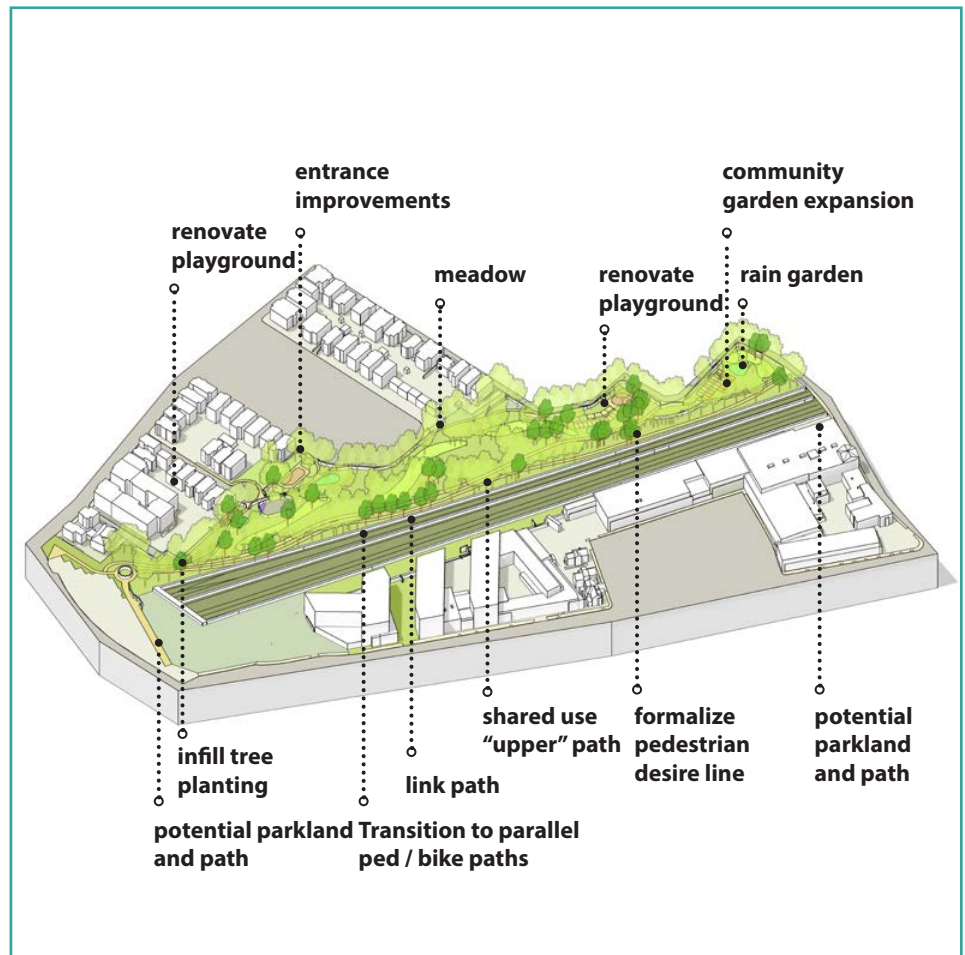


Arborway to McBride (continued)

Additionally, expanding the community garden is a desired improvement, provided that it does not come at the expense of other park activities. This expansion will support local gardening efforts and contribute to the park's community-oriented amenities.



Existing Condition



Proposed Condition