

Southwest Corridor Park Action Plan

Welcome!

Public Meeting #2
February 28, 2024





Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Governor
Maura Healey

Lieutenant Governor
Kim Driscoll

Energy and Environmental Secretary
Rebecca Tepper

Department of Conservation and Recreation Commissioner
Brian Arrigo



DCR Mission

To protect, promote and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural and recreational resources for the well-being of all.



Zoom Logistics

Tonight's meeting will be recorded. The recording and slide deck will be available shortly after the meeting at:

www.mass.gov/dcr/past-public-meetings

ZOOM TIPS

Here is how you can participate during the question and answer part of the presentation.

DURING THE PRESENTATION:



VIA WEB:
Turn video on / off.



To use these non-verbal options click on participants (bottom of screen); these options will pop up in side bar.

DURING THE Q&A:



JOINING VIA PHONE?

Use *9 to raise hand to ask for audio / video permission to ask questions or provide comments.



VIA WEB:

Chat to ask questions / comments or provide responses to poll questions



Raise hand to ask for audio / video permission to ask questions or provide comments.

dcr
Massachusetts



Agenda

Welcome and Introductions [6:00 – 6:10]

Project Progress and Priorities [6:10 – 6:20]

What we Heard/Saw and Potential Design Ideas [6:20 – 7:25]

- Corridor-wide Elements [Q&A] 20 minutes
- Mobility, Circulation, and Access [Q&A] 20 minutes
- Park and Recreation Facilities [Q&A] 25 minutes

Next Steps [7:25 – 7:30]

Meeting Goals

- **Present findings that resulted from community engagement and data collection**
- **Present draft design ideas and recommendations that will become the basis of the Action Plan**
- **Gather public feedback on these ideas to ensure that they reflect community needs and desires**

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Each community along the Southwest Corridor Park has a unique history and relationship with their section of the park. Before community engagement began, the team understood it was critical to understand these nuances. It proposed using engagement methods outside of traditional public meetings to be receptive to the various lived experiences of residents and users of the park.

The engagement process strived to provide an equitable outreach approach that includes a diversity of voices. Outreach strategies included one on one interactions, meetings with government agencies, stakeholders and friends groups, presence at community events, interactive mapping and input surveys.



Inclusivity:
To ensure everyone who wants to participate in the public process has an opportunity to do so



Interactive + Fun:
The ability to foster opportunities for park users and residents to provide feedback in creative ways



Consciousness:
The recognition of past harm and complicated relationships between government and communities



Transparency:
Creating clear communication with community members about how their feedback is being used and next steps in the process



681

General Surveys



3
week

Street Ambassador deployment



45

location specific surveys



263

interactive map comments



8

community events attended



4

Open Houses
150 participants



1

public meeting*
123 public meeting participants



2

Community Focus Groups



Vision

This Action Plan will enhance this groundbreaking linear park forged from community activism to contribute to public health by encouraging walking, bicycling, and recreation.

The park will connect communities and serve as a common “backyard” offering a variety of urban experiences, exposure to nature, and will help mitigate the effects of climate change.

Priorities

- **Safety:** ensure repairs and re-design efforts provide safe and accessible paths and park features.
- **Equity:** improvements, amenities, and funding should be equitably distributed. Priority should be to given areas that have been underserved historically. The pathways and park should bridge and connect neighborhoods.
- **Adapt/Enhance:** community needs have changed since the park opening in 1990; therefore, update the park to be reflective of current and future needs. Ensure the park supports flexible uses.
- **Resilience:** help mitigate climate change impacts like heat island effect, poor air quality, and inland flooding by increasing the tree canopy coverage, diversifying the urban forest, and infiltrating more stormwater.

Design Goals

- **Adapt the park design for a Boston that has grown in population,** with new and diverse users.
- Share and interpret the significance and impact of the **community activism that formed this park.**
- **Improve the legibility of the park identity** corridor-wide, while allowing for unique placemaking.
- **Emphasize environmental stewardship** to better mitigate climate change through stormwater infiltration, diversification of plant species, and improved wildlife habitat.
- Improve mobility and **create a safe, welcoming, and accessible path system.**
- **Incorporate community needs and desires** representing a diversity of voices
- **Design for durability** and ease of maintenance and operations.

I. Corridor-wide Elements

Identity

Consistent park elements, signage, furnishings, design approach

Cooling

Shade from trees or structures, mitigating heat island effect

Stormwater

Drainage, managing rainwater, infiltration, inland flooding

Biodiversity

Increase the variety of life within the park i.e. plants, birds, insects

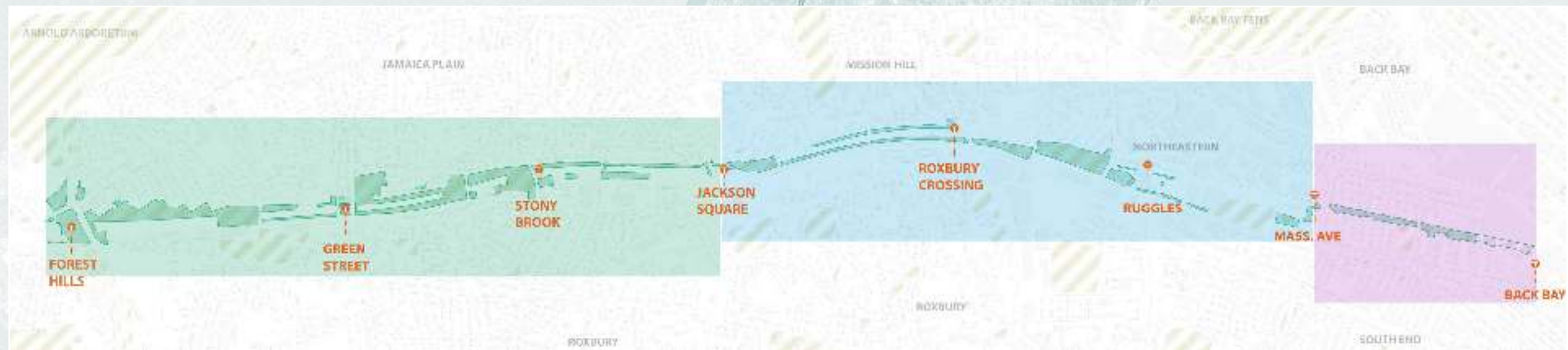
Interpretation

Communicate messages, stories, history, information, and experiences in the park

Identity

What we heard/what we saw

- While there is a strong foundation of consistent park elements i.e tree lined path system, granite blocks, there are also other inconsistent elements i.e. signage, furnishings.
- There is a desire to provide unique placemaking to highlight parts of the park
- Some park parcels are isolated and not used. Some underutilized parcels could be used to expand the park.



Design recommendations

- **Strengthen SWCP identity with new signage and consistent furnishings.**
- **Develop a signage family (identification, wayfinding, information, interpretation) that is unique to the SWCP.**
- **Replace “ribbon” bike racks with individual racks.**
- **Have one standard, contemporary bench for the SWCP.**
- **Continue to use concrete trash receptacle.**
- **Add 2-3 drinking fountains at Johnson Park, Stony Brook, and Mission Hill.**
- **Provide pads and screening for seasonal restrooms.**

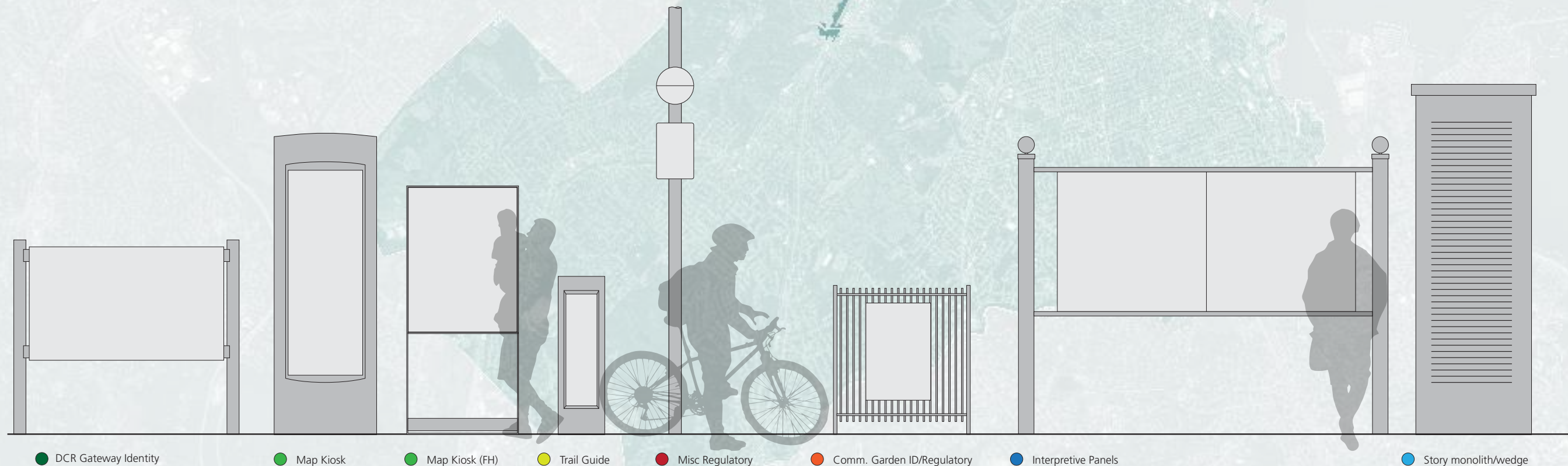
Identity



Existing Bench

Existing Trash Receptacle

Existing Dual Path System



Existing Signage Family

Signage and Wayfinding Goals

Building upon DCR standards, create a sign system that enhances the identity of the Southwest Corridor Park, improves wayfinding, and celebrates the history of the Corridor, and its neighborhoods.



Identify

Provide clear gateways that identify and lead visitors into the park.
Strengthen identity of park spaces and amenities.



Orient, Direct & Inform

Improve orientation for visitors and users.
Guide both pedestrian, and cyclists to amenities, within the park, and adjacent cultural destinations.
Direct pedestrian and cyclists to safe and appropriate pathways for travel.
Provide clear and consise use regulations at park amenities for users.



Discover & Inspire

Provide storytelling about the history, ecology, cultural legacy of the park and neighborhoods to enrich the visitor experience.

Existing Typologies



Gateway



Gateway



Interpretive



Public Art



Trail Guide



Map Kiosk

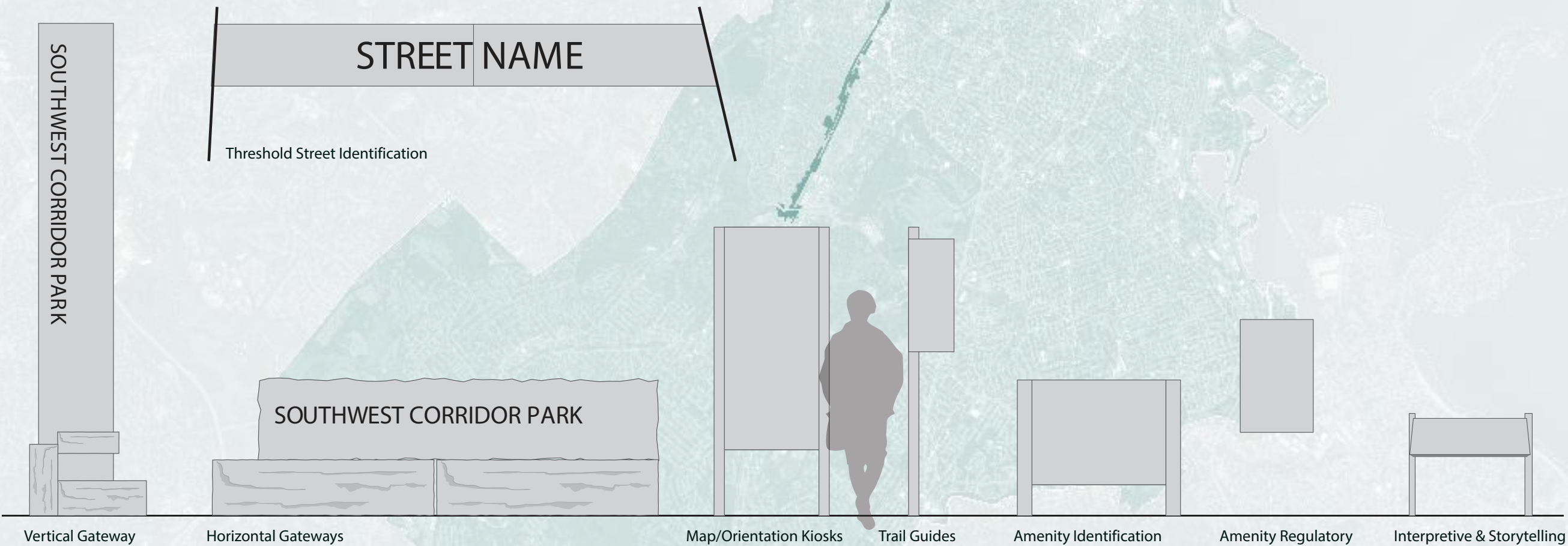


Amenity ID

Misc. Regulatory

Proposed Sign Typologies

The overall typology of the park will be similar, however the DCR park signage guidelines have been developed for a more suburban park. It is important to figure on the urban context of this park as well as augment with site specific integrated identification and an informative and engaging interpretive plan.



Cooling/Shading/Air quality

What we heard/what we saw

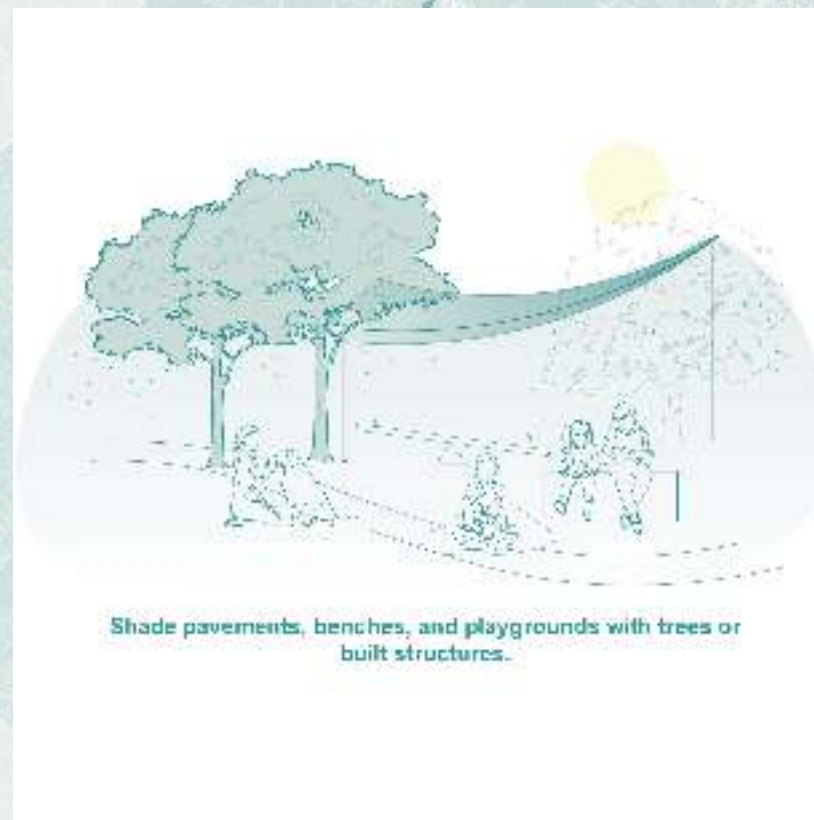
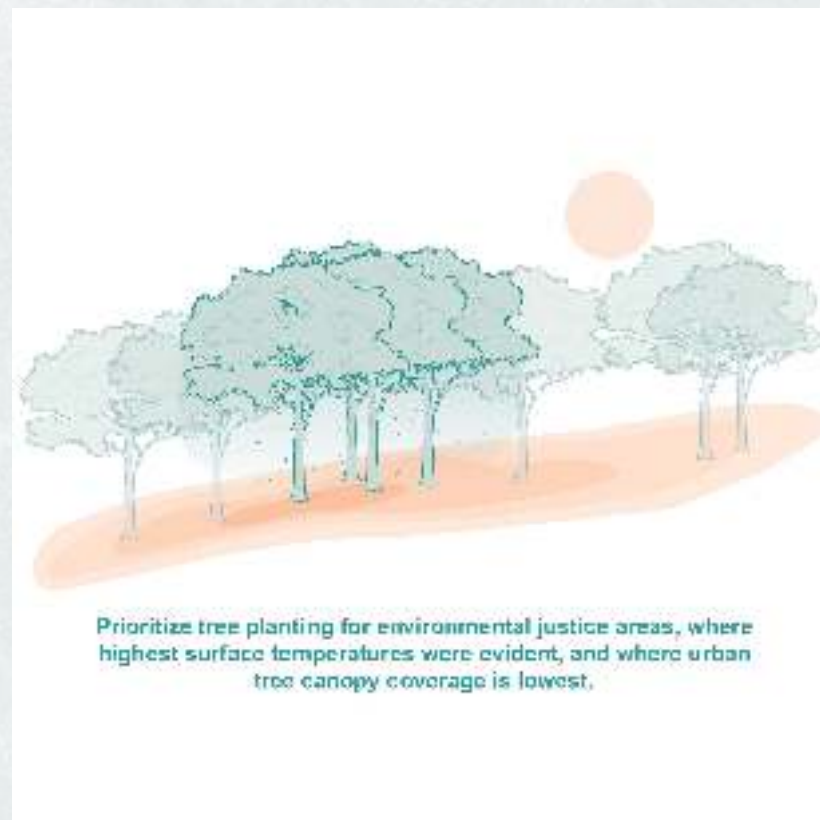
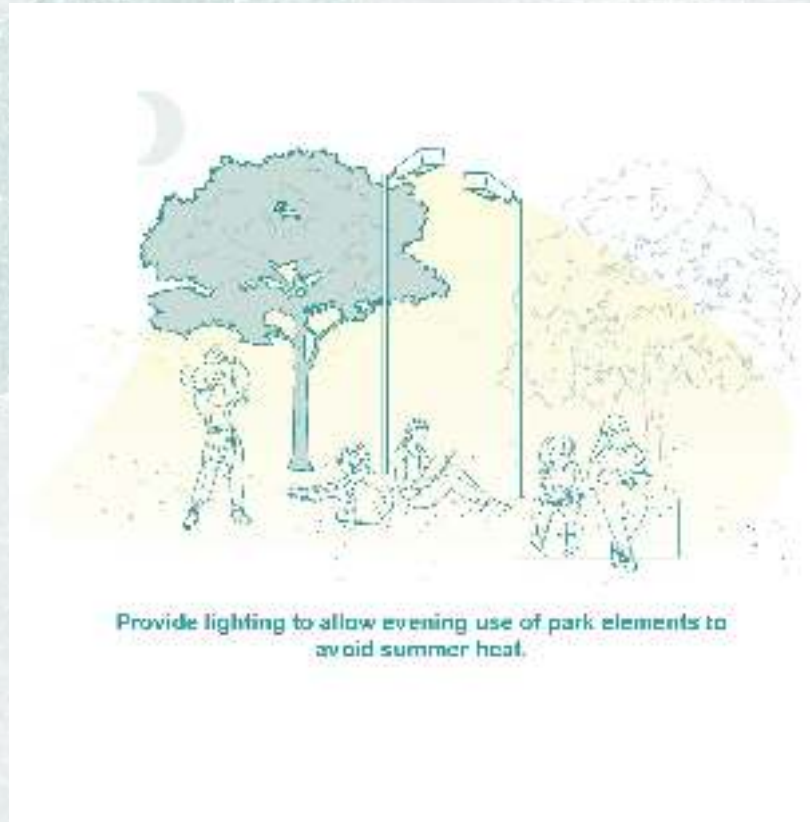
- In many places along the corridor there are environmental justice neighborhoods that are more susceptible to health issues related to poor air quality and high summer heat.
- Roxbury and the South End have tree canopy coverage below the city average.
- There are no shade structures within the SWCP.
- Splash pads exist at the Mission Hill deck, Stony Brook, and Johnson Park playgrounds.



Cooling/Shading/Air quality

Design recommendations

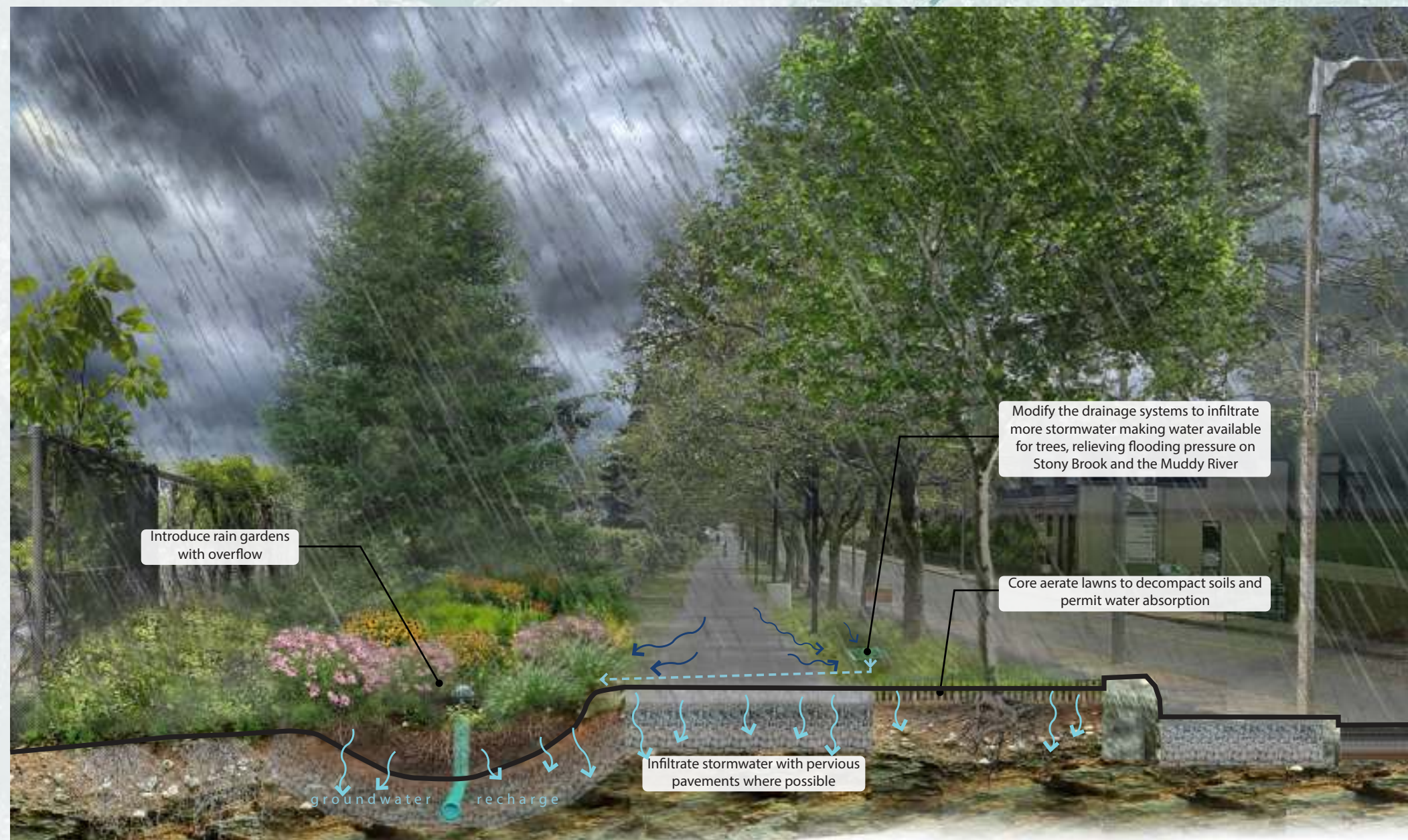
- **Prioritize tree planting in environmental justice areas.**
- **Shade pavements, benches, and playgrounds.**
- **Use light colored pavements where possible.**
- **Provide lighting for evening use to avoid summer heat.**



Stormwater

What we heard/what we saw

- The existing drainage system captures and distributes water quickly to the piped drainage system and water bodies.
- Storms will be more frequent and more intense



Design recommendations

- Infiltrate more stormwater
- Utilize pervious pavements
- Introduce bioinfiltration devices
- Aerate lawn areas

Biodiversity

What we heard/what we saw

- **Four tree species make up almost 50% of the park tree species**
- **2098 trees inventoried in the park**
- **78% of trees in good condition**
- **The landscape is mainly trees planted in lawn.**



Design recommendations

- **Increase diversity of trees species, introduce rain gardens with shrub and perennial planting, and convert some areas of turfgrass to native meadows.**

Interpretation

What we heard/what we saw

- The history and stories from the SWCP and adjacent neighborhoods are rich and should be told within the park.
- Civic engagement is a defining feature of the park - the design should celebrate this history and invite ongoing public participation



Design recommendations

- DCR to complete an interpretive plan for SWCP to identify the key themes and stories.
- Create a program and plan for site-specific public art and interpretation.
- This could include community-led public art and civic history programs; continued park stewardship and other public engagement activities

Meeting Norms

1. Share the microphone.
2. Accept that we might disagree with one another.
3. Chat is just as valid as questions asked out loud.
4. Please keep comments high level -- detailed discussions about specific topics can take place after this meeting.
5. There are many ways to learn more and give feedback: DCR's comment portal, online survey form, Storymap, and future public meetings and events.

Q & A 1 of 3

What are we getting right?

Is there anything we're missing?

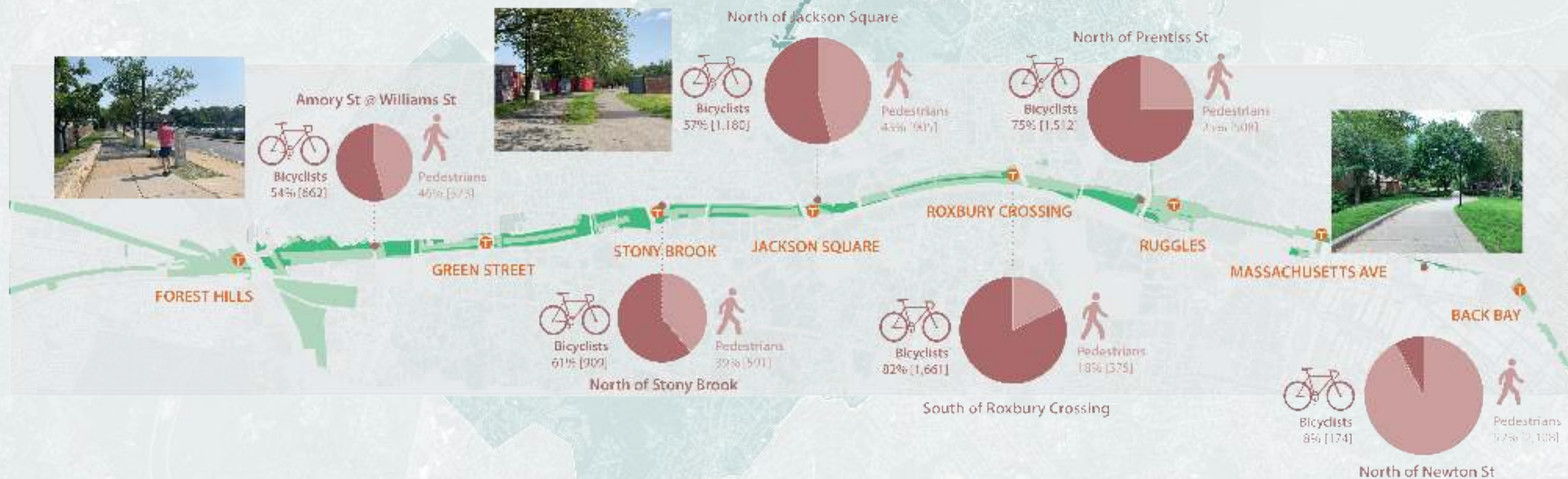
II. Mobility, Circulation, and Accessibility

- Path system
- Road crossings
- Circulation
- Accessibility

Bike and Pedestrian Paths

What we heard/what we saw

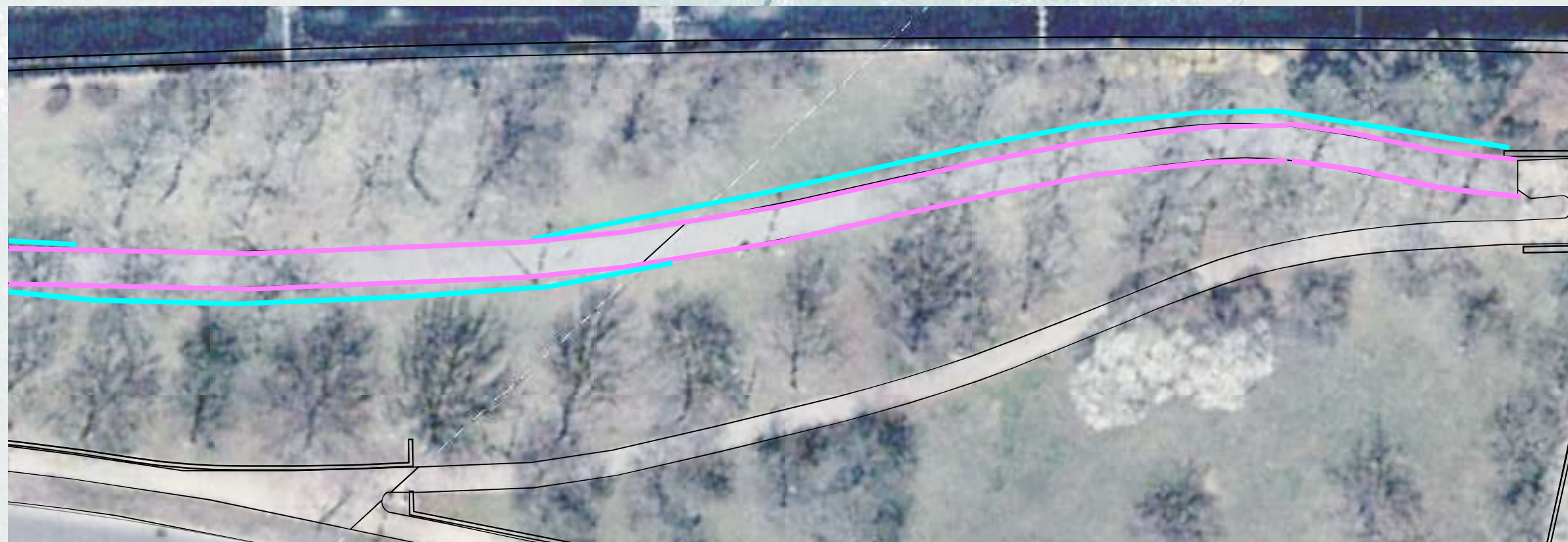
- **Bike path acts as a shared-use path:** People walking often choose to use the bike path instead of the sidewalk or pedestrian paths, which are narrow, lack shade, and are next to vehicle traffic.
- **High volumes of all users:** The current volumes of users both walking and biking are high enough to warrant two paths, which is especially true given the likely growth of e-Bikes.
- **The existing bike path is too narrow:** The current biking volumes are high enough that frequent conflicts are reported with the current bike path widths.



Bike and Pedestrian Paths

Design recommendations

- **Maintain the parallel paths in most locations.**
- **Widen the bike path to a minimum of 11'/recommended 13'**
 - **Especially in areas where the walking path/sidewalk can't be improved.**
- **Distinguish between the walking and biking paths to eliminate confusion:**
 - **Different surface materials between the two paths.**
 - **Use pavement markings like dashed yellow center lines on bike paths.**
- **Widen towards the MBTA track when possible to preserve trees that serve both walking and biking paths, as well as meet MBTA clear zones.**



Street Crossings

What we heard/what we saw

- **Curb ramps are narrow.**
- **Separate walking and biking paths merge just before the crossings, leading to confusion.**
- **Crossings are designed as regular crosswalks, not path crossings.**
- **Driver yielding behavior is unpredictable.**
- **Steep grade challenges on paths leading to crossings.**
- **Water pools in some crossings.**



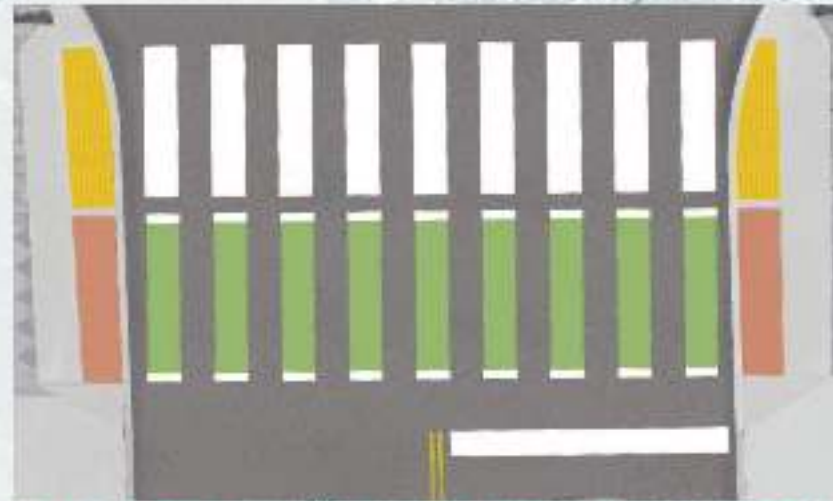
Signalized Street Crossings

What we heard/what we saw

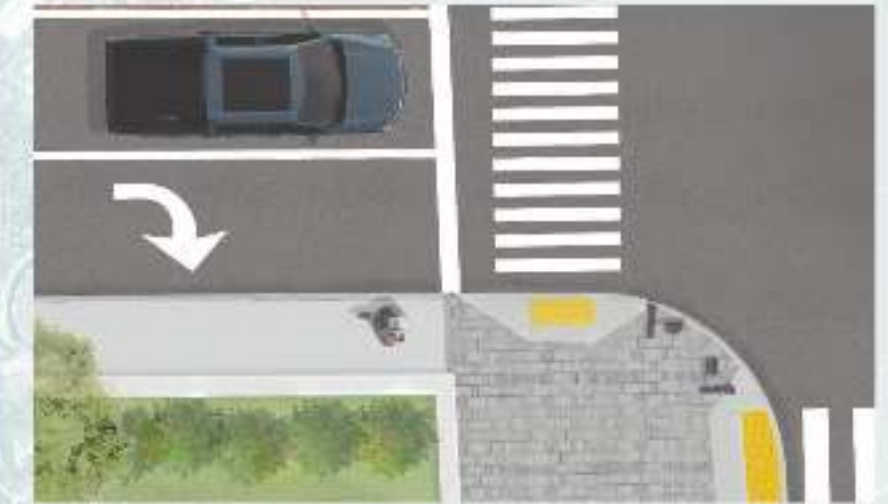
- **Waiting areas are small and can be crowded.**
- **Wait times can be long.**



Ample Plaza Space



Wide Ramps and Separate Bike and Pedestrian Crossings



Turn Lanes to Signal-Separate Conflicts

Design recommendations

- **Coordinate with MBTA and the City of Boston on design implementation.**
- **Wider curb ramps with separate crossing markings.**
- **Move obstructions to create smooth transitions and more waiting space.**
- **Separate conflicts with signals where possible.**



**Intersections under design process*

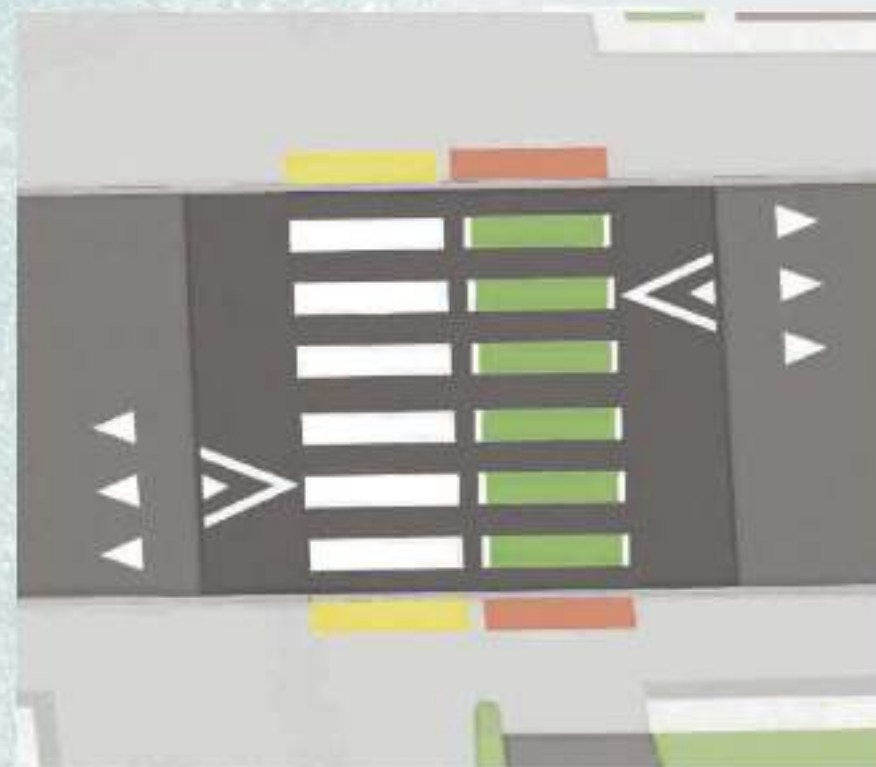
Unsignalized Street Crossings

What we heard/what we saw

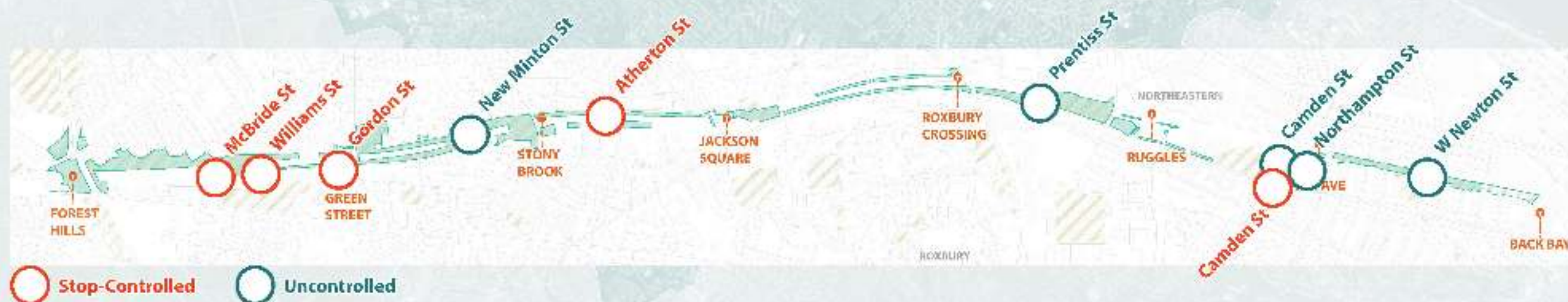
- Sightlines between drivers and path users can be obscured.
- Community members noted particular challenges at W Newton, Prentiss, and New Minton Streets

Design recommendations

- **Coordinate with MBTA and the City of Boston on design implementation.**
- **Wider curb ramps with separate crossing markings.**
- **Raised intersections to slow vehicles and smooth grade challenges.**
- **Relocate areas where pedestrian and bicycle paths cross away from intersections.**



Raised Crossing with Separate Pedestrian and Bike Markings



South End

What we heard/what we saw

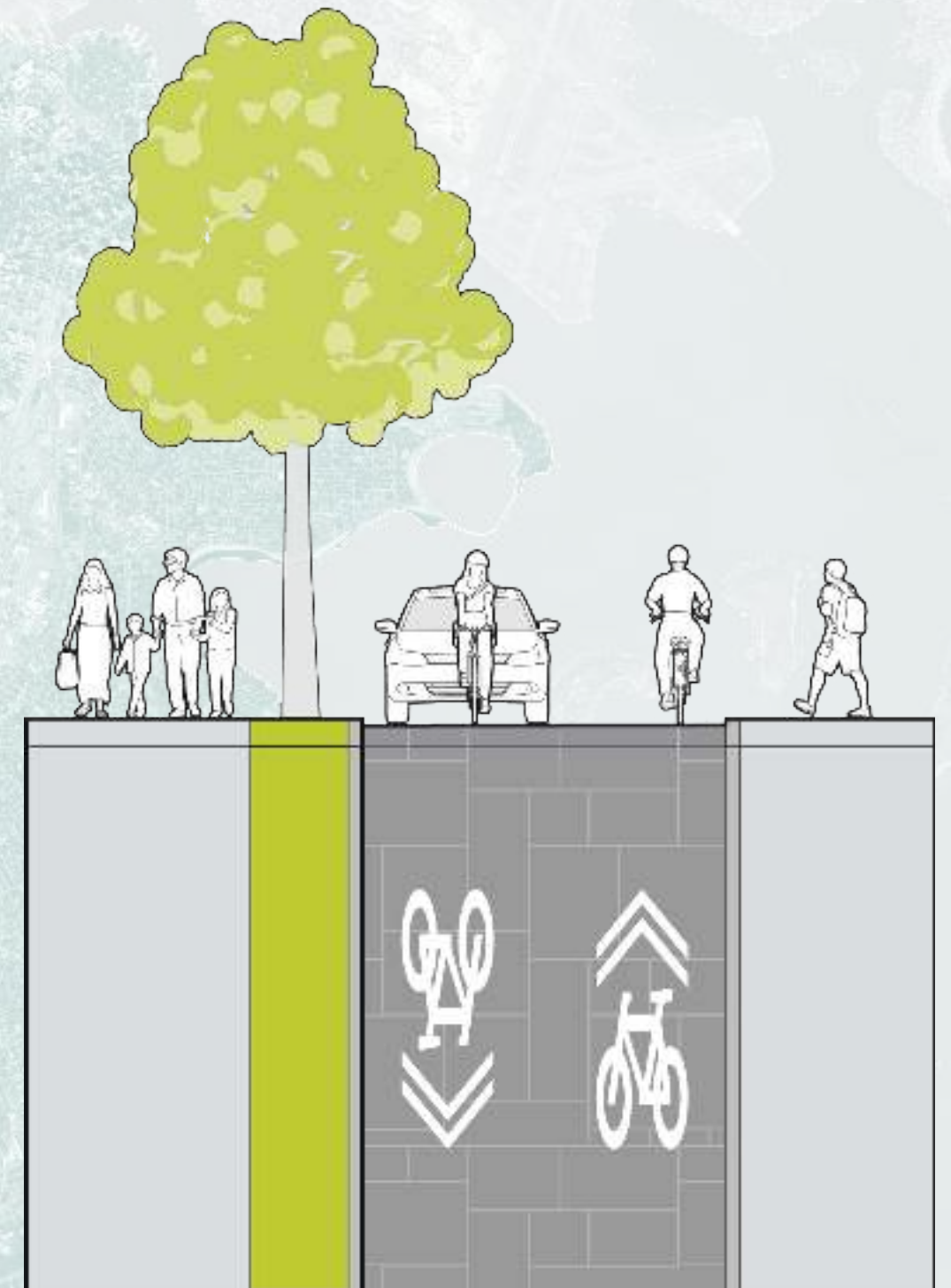
- **Narrow, missing, and misaligned curb ramps, leading to disability access challenges.**
- **High curbs.**
- **No dedicated bicycle path.**
- **Path is too narrow to be shared between people walking and people biking.**
- **Low vehicle volumes and speeds on streets adjacent to park.**
- **Access to park is limited, especially from Back Bay.**
- **Community members noted they would like park access to be created at Albemarle Street and Blackwood Street.**



South End

Design recommendations

- **Raise parallel street to create a smaller 2" to 3" curb height, allowing accessible curb ramps.**
- **Create a "shared street" along the park:**
 - **Add ramps dedicated for bicycle use**
 - **Allow two-way bicycle traffic on street**
 - **Consider paver or other material to signal priority for people walking and biking.**
- **Coordinate with the MBTA and the City of Boston to determine vehicle use in this section.**
- **Add park entrances connecting to Back Bay at Albemarle and Blackwood Streets**



Accessibility

What we heard/what we saw

- **The park was designed before the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) was enacted and there are many paths, materials and park features that do not comply with ADA.**



Design recommendations

- **Rehabilitate paths, signage, materials and furnishings to make them compliant. This will be a phased, multi-year effort.**
- **Coordinate with the City of Boston for curb ramps and sidewalks that they own.**

Q & A 2 of 3

What are we getting right?

Is there anything we're missing?

III. Parks and Recreation

- Playgrounds
- Sports Courts
- Community Gardens
- Skate Park
- Dog Parks
- Decks: park spaces that bridge over the tracks
 - Call Street
 - Stony Brook
 - Jackson Square
 - Mission Hill
- Kelly Rink

Playgrounds

What we heard/what we saw

- **Playgrounds are an important recreational element of the SWCP**
- **Four playgrounds have been renovated recently and five others require renovation**
- **Some playground have night lighting**
- **Splash pads are part of the Johnson Park, Stony Brook and Mission Hill playgrounds**
- **Train viewing is an important aspect of some playgrounds**



Playgrounds



Design recommendations

Playgrounds to update:

- Spalding Street
- Hall/Boynton Street
- Train Park
- Lawndale
- Jackson Square
- Add active play for older children at Jackson Square playground
- Add water play in South End: Titus Sparrow renovation does not include
- Phase out engineered wood fiber surfacing because MAAB does not consider accessible

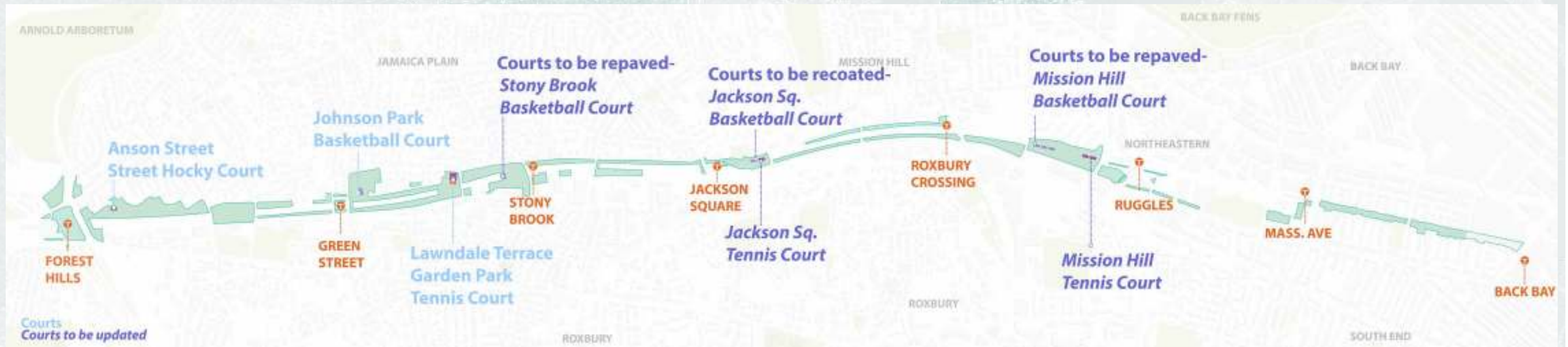
Sport Courts

What we heard/what we saw

- **Basketball and tennis are popular activities at certain times of day**
- **Poor condition paving and MBTA access covers in the courts effect play**
- **Pickleball is played on the Stony Brook tennis courts**
- **Some courts are used informally as dog parks**
- **Courts are also used for skateboarding**
- **Not all courts have lighting**
- **Fitness equipment is only located at Jackson Square**



Sport Courts



Design recommendations

- **Courts need to be repaved (Stony Brook and Mission Hill Deck)**
- **Courts to be recoated(Jackson Square)**
- **Tennis courts should also be striped for pickleball (Mission Hill and Jackson Square)**
- **Tennis practice wall should be at each court**
- **Fencing needed at Stony Brook basketball court**
- **Considering adding a basketball court at Stony Brook and set up for multi-use (futsal, pickleball)**
- **Add fitness equipment at Stony Brook, Jackson Square, and Mission Hill**

Community Gardens

What we heard/what we saw

- There is high demand for community garden plots with long waitlists in Jamaica Plain.
- There is desire for gardens near the Jackson Square and Mission Hill decks.
- The Mildred Hailey redevelopment includes a community garden facing the SWCP at Jackson Square.
- Renovations are needed to make the gardens ADA compliant, deter rodents, and improve function.



Design recommendations

- **Complete community garden renovation project**
- **Consider expansion of some Jamaica Plain gardens**
- **Add a community garden on the Mission Hill Deck.**

Skate Park

What we heard/what we saw

- **Current skatepark is suited for more advanced users.**
- **Street skating and beginners utilize the Kelly Rink parking and SWCP courts.**



Design recommendations

- **Introduce more skate friendly features in SWCP courts**
- **Expand skatepark to include street course.**

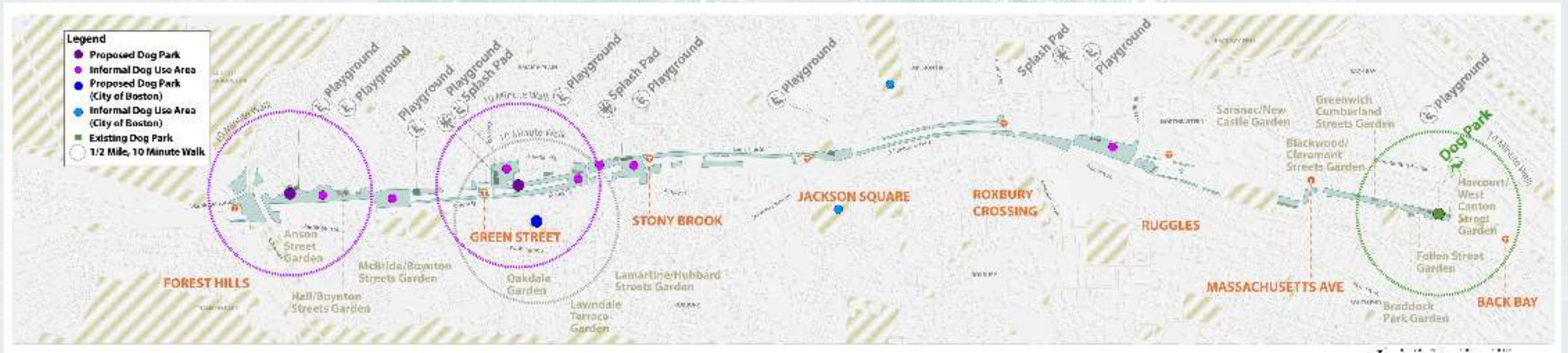
Dog Parks

What we heard/what we saw

- **High numbers of dog owners use the SWCP.**
- **Dogs need a fenced area to exercise and socialize.**
- **There is tension between dog owners and some park users (lawns, courts, etc.).**
- **Off-leash, unfenced dog areas are currently not feasible for DCR to enforce.**
- **Many dog owners would be willing to walk 10 minutes to use a dog park.**



Dog Parks



Design recommendations

- Combined with adjacent City of Boston open spaces, provide informal and formal dog areas that are approximately a 10 minute walk to most of the community.
- Provide a fenced dog park in Jamaica Plain.
- Consider a second fenced dog park in Roxbury in the future.

Decks

What is a deck?

- Decks are park areas over the railroad tracks at Call Street, Stony Brook, Jackson Square and Mission Hill.

What we heard/what we saw

- Large lawn areas are frequently used a variety of ways
- That flexibility is important and the spaces shouldn't be dedicated to other uses.



Design recommendations

- Allow for informal programming
- Expand court usage while allowing for new uses like skateboarding and fitness equipment
- Enhance seating/ circulation

Decks

Call Street Deck

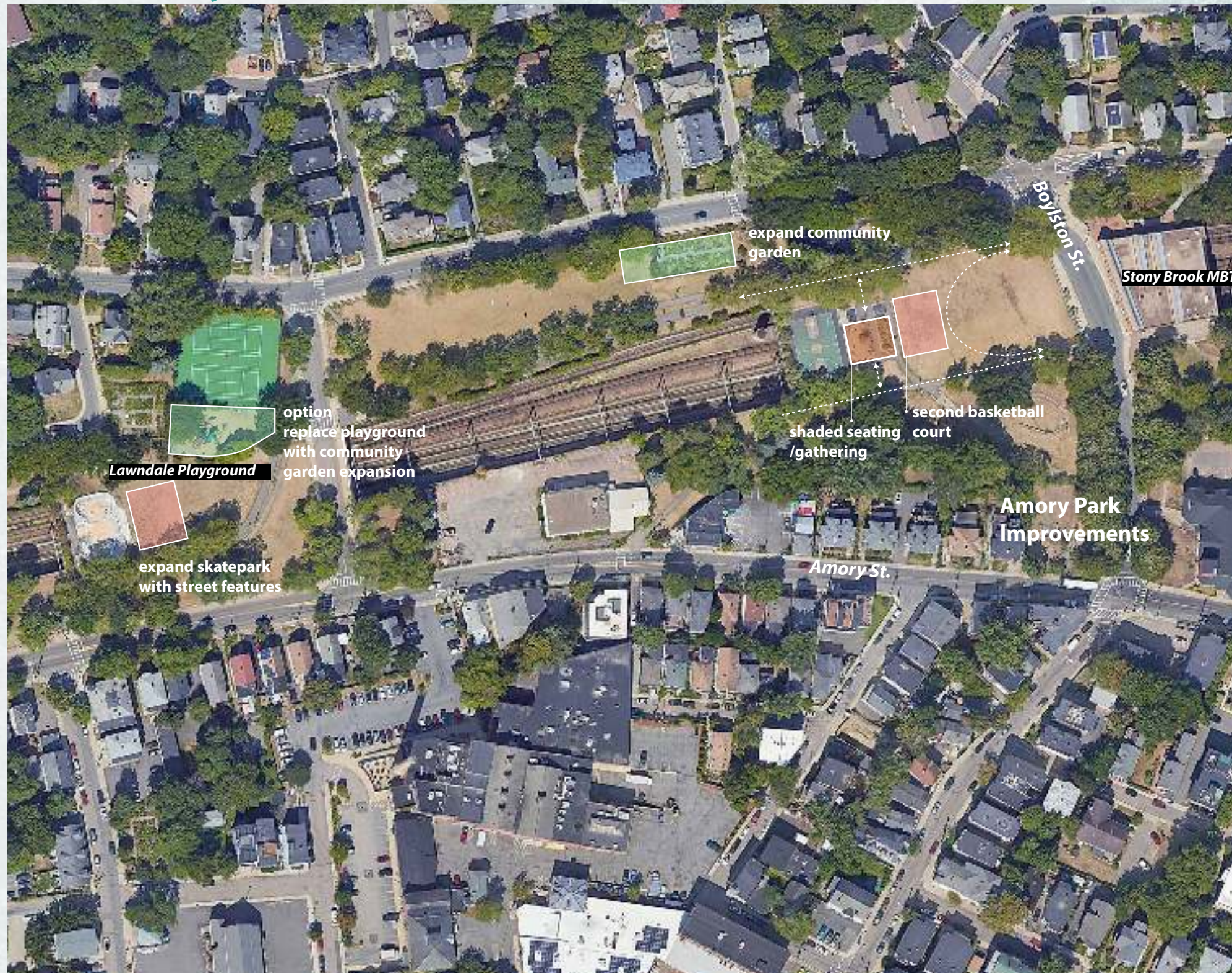


Design recommendations

- **Don't overprogram deck lawn areas, only add features that won't detract or take away from lawn use**
- **Renovate Train Park playground**
- **Add picnic tables near Train Park**
- **Improve Williams Street crossing**
- **Consider converting some lawn to meadow**

Decks

Stony Brook Deck

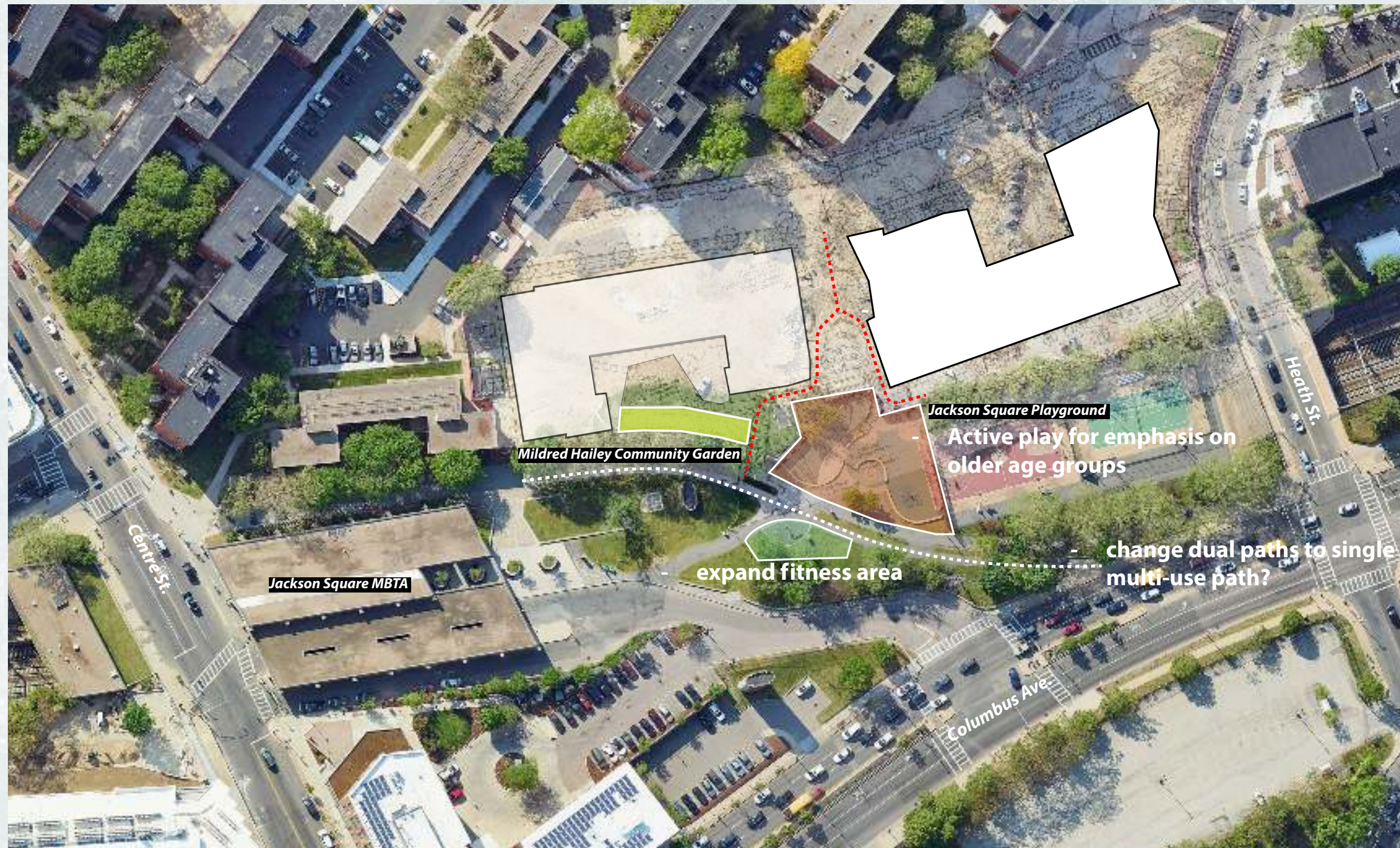


Design recommendations

- **Don't overprogram deck lawn areas, only add features that won't detract or take away from lawn use**
- **Expand skatepark with street course**
- **Renovate Lawndale playground or expand community garden into that space?**
- **Expand Lamartine community garden**
- **Add second basketball court?**

Decks

Jackson Square Deck



Design recommendations

- Add play equipment
- Expand fitness area
- Add misting station
- Single path through this area to minimize conflicts

Decks

Mission Hill Deck



Design recommendations

- **Don't overprogram deck lawn areas, only add features that won't detract or take away from lawn use**
- **Should middle basketball court have a different use?**
- **Add a community garden in the lawn area?**
- **Add pickleball striping on tennis courts**

Kelly Rink

What we heard/what we saw

- Kelly Rink is well loved and used, but is disconnected from SWCP.
- There is poor pedestrian and vehicular circulation.
- Deferred maintenance issues: surrounding pavement and skating facilities.
- Not welcoming/identifiable as skating rink.



Kelly Rink



Concept

Design recommendations

- **Modify the existing space to make better path connections and introduce more park character.**
- **Add connection to Atherton Street**
- **Need identity/signage**
- **Need more gathering and observation space**
- **Repair paving**
- **Offer year round activities (pickleball, skateboarding and roller skating, pop-up vendors i.e. farmers markets, beer garden)**

Q & A 3 of 3

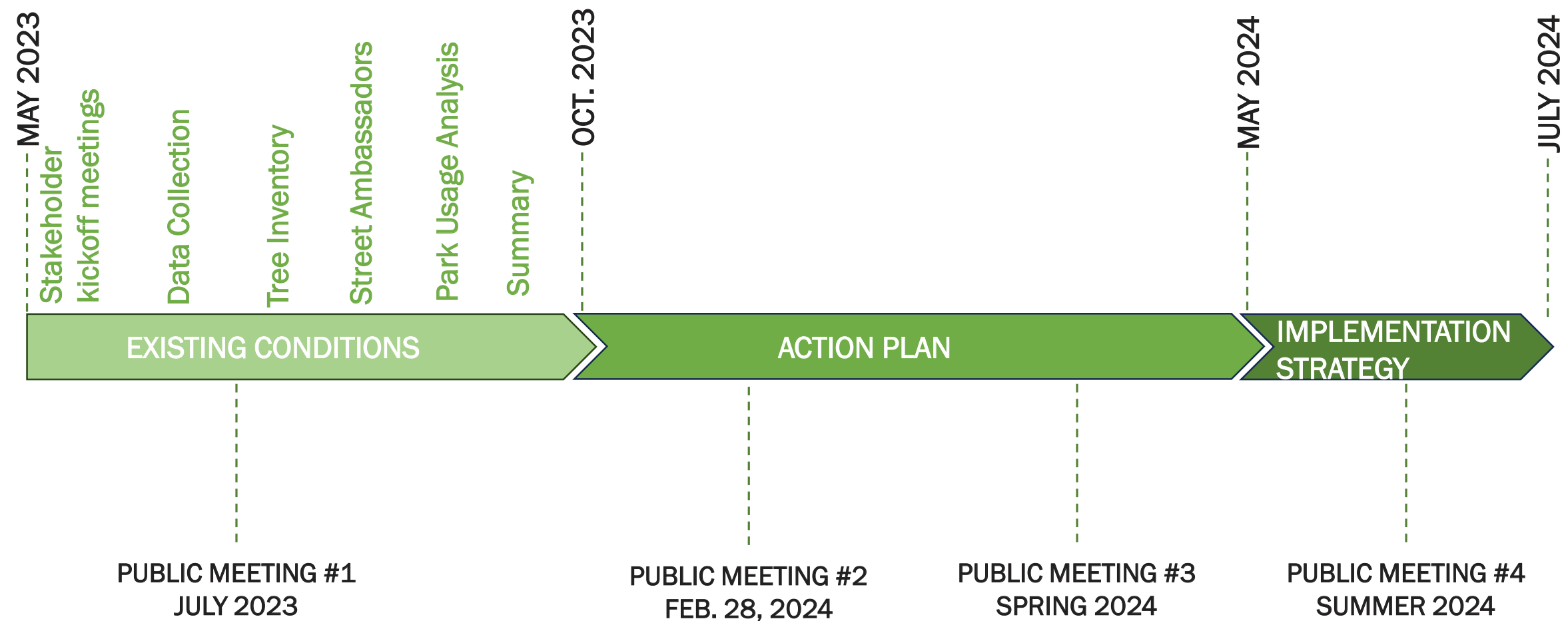
What are we getting right?

Is there anything we're missing?

Do you have other questions?

NEXT STEPS

- Public meeting to present draft recommendations: Spring 2024



STAY INVOLVED

- **Submit a public comment by March 20, 2024**
<https://www.mass.gov/forms/dcr-public-comments>
- **Fill out feedback form (link in chat)**
- **Scan the QR Code below to find project website + sign up for updates**



For more information on the Southwest Corridor Park Action Plan

An aerial perspective of a city grid. A central corridor, highlighted in light green, runs diagonally from the bottom left towards the top right. This corridor is flanked by rows of stylized trees, some green and some yellow, indicating a planned park or greenway. The surrounding city blocks are shown in a light gray, wireframe-like style. The text 'Southwest Corridor Park Action Plan' is overlaid in a teal color across the upper portion of the image.

Southwest Corridor Park Action Plan

THANK YOU!