

Talbot Norfolk Triangle Master Plan at Codman Square

Prepared for: Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corporation

September, 2007

Prepared by:



SAS/ Design, Inc.
architecture & urbanism
251 Harvard Street, Suite 18
Brookline, MA 02449
Tel: 617-232-9335
Fax: 617-232-9337
Email: info@sasdesign.com



table of contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
EXISTING CONDITIONS	
STUDY AREA	2
1/4 MILE WALKING RADIUS	3
CIRCULATION SYSTEM	4
EXISTING LAND USE PATTERN	5
STUDY AREA 1: "AUTOMALL TRIANGLE" SITE	
"AUTOMALL TRIANGLE" FOCUS AREA	6
"AUTOMALL TRIANGLE" 3D MODEL VIEW	7
"AUTOMALL TRIANGLE" PLANNING	8-10
STUDY AREA 2: COMMUTER RAIL PARCELS	
COMMUTER RAIL FOCUS AREA	11
COMMUTER RAIL 3D MODEL VIEW	12
COMMUTER RAIL PLANNING	13-15
STUDY AREA 3: NEW ENGLAND AVENUE PARCELS	
NEW ENGLAND AVENUE FOCUS AREA	16
NEW ENGLAND AVENUE 3D MODEL VIEW	17
NEW ENGLAND AVENUE PLANNING	18-20
STUDY AREA 4: SYRIA TEMPLE SITE	
SYRIA TEMPLE FOCUS AREA	21
SYRIA TEMPLE 3D MODEL VIEW	22
SYRIA TEMPLE PLANNING	23-25

I. OVERVIEW

The Fairmount/Indigo CDC Collaborative, which includes CDCs in North Dorchester, Codman Square, Mattapan, and Hyde Park, initiated a comprehensive community visioning process to address growth opportunities centered around transit-oriented development at each of four key neighborhood areas that historically contained rail stations along the Fairmount Commuter Line, in Dorchester, Mattapan, and Hyde Park.

This effort highlights the importance for this commuter rail corridor to become a vibrant and diverse residential and economic growth model for the Greater Boston Area. The intrinsic relationship of the neighborhood areas with the Fairmount Commuter Line identifies a need for improved public transportation and mass transit for residents, business owners, and the workforce.

The *Talbot Norfolk Triangle Master Plan at Codman Square* is the result of the collaboration between Codman Square NDC, Talbot Norfolk Triangle Neighbors United, Codman Square Neighborhood Council, and the Working Committee composed of the following members: Sephus Osborne, Steven Small, Joan Peterkin, Monique Dillon, Britton Levy, and Helen Griffin.

These community-based organizations and individuals share the common goal of improving the quality of life, providing affordable housing and ownership opportunities for residents, and promoting economic growth and workforce development. The *Talbot Norfolk Triangle Master Plan at Codman Square* was created to achieve these shared objectives focused on the immediate neighborhood within the Talbot Norfolk Triangle, with an emphasis on enhancing the potential for development near the proposed station on the Fairmount Commuter Rail Line.

II. STUDY AREA

The study area for the *Talbot Norfolk Triangle Master Plan at Codman Square* is bounded by Talbot Avenue to the north, Norfolk Street to the south, and the existing Fairmount Commuter Rail Line to the west. The intersections of Talbot Avenue and the Commuter Rail Line, Norfolk Street and New England Avenue, Southern Avenue and Darlington Street as well as key linked parcels along New England Avenue formed the framework for discussion related to the physical and qualitative issues and opportunities for the community master planning process.

III. COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN

The community master planning process was structured around three participatory meetings organized and conducted with representatives from each community organization, interested parties, and local residents and neighbors. The objective of the first community meeting was to describe the existing historic, visual, and physical characteristics of the neighborhood; solicit discussion and input; and establish *common ground* among the participants to create a cohesive vision and blueprint for positive change in the neighborhood.

The second community meeting was structured to solicit ideas from the community for possible redevelopment scenarios for each of four focus areas within the Talbot Norfolk Triangle study area. This included a presentation and discussion of case studies, a hands-on charrette where the participants used foam block models to illustrate their preferred concepts for potential redevelopment options for the focus areas, and a presentation by the participants of these ideas for consideration.

At the third community meeting, the consulting team presented feasibility studies with drawings, models and program analysis for each of the focus areas based on the models and ideas created by the participants.

IV. MASTER PLANNING STRATEGIES

Much of the discussion from the first two community meetings demonstrated the interest to provide additional growth in the Codman Square area that would maintain and enhance the existing character of the neighborhood so as to not overshadow, but rather to strengthen the fabric of the community in the Talbot Norfolk Triangle.

Four locations for further development were investigated within the study area; each presented a set of challenges and opportunities for providing appropriate mixed-use development, mixed-income housing, and streetscape and open space improvements.

In addition, it was critical in the process to provide a cohesive plan that incorporated any new development into the existing neighborhood regarding scale, style and use, while still maintaining some of the auto and light industrial uses currently in place.

Study Focus Area 1 - The “Automall Triangle” Site

- The site characterized as the “Automall Triangle” is located at the southwest corner of the study area, bordered by the Fairmount Commuter Rail Line to the west, Woodrow Avenue and Norfolk Street to the south, and New England Avenue to the east. This area currently has a variety of auto-related uses that produce traffic congestion for the residents of the neighborhood.

Study Focus Area 2 - Commuter Rail Parcels

- This area, bordered by Talbot Avenue to the north, New England Avenue to the east, and the Fairmount Commuter Rail to the west, currently has a mix of light industrial and commercial uses. Its close proximity to the proposed commuter rail station makes this a very intriguing focus area to examine for the potential of a true Transit Oriented Development opportunity.

Study Focus Area 3 - New England Avenue Parcels

- Major underdeveloped areas in the Talbot Norfolk Triangle include the parcels located along the western edge of New England Avenue, from Southern Avenue to Mallard Avenue. These parcels are currently owned by a local church. This underutilized area is at the edge of the neighborhood, with little to no visibility; it provides an opportunity to create a linking residential connection between two of the focus areas and the surrounding streets.

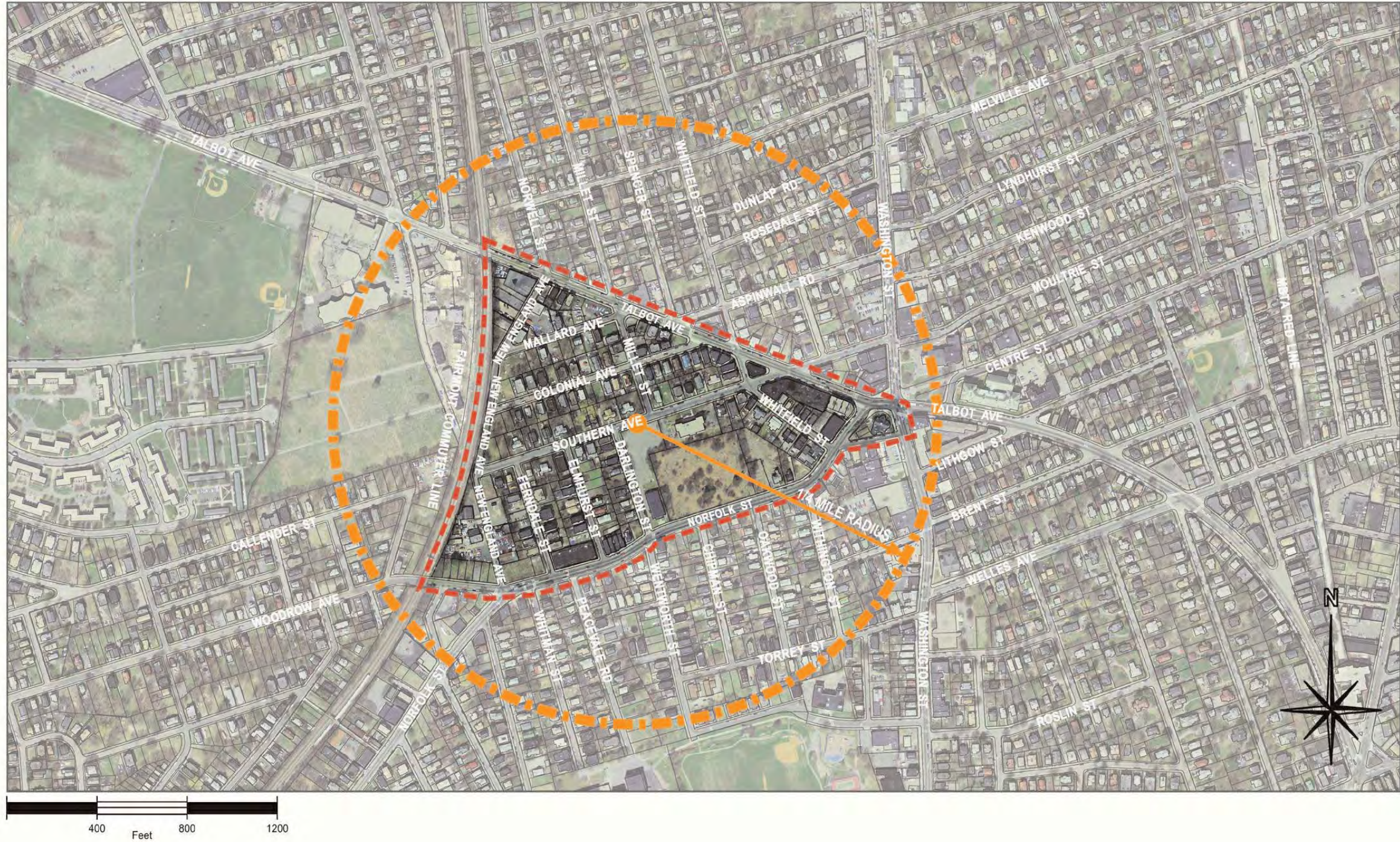
Study Focus Area 4 - Syria Temple Site

- Located at the corner of Darlington Street and Southern Avenue, the Syria Temple parking lot is adjacent to the existing Whittier School Multifamily Apartments and the existing historic cemetery. This site has the potential to become the civic “heart” of the neighborhood that could include a local market, a community activity space, with residential development above. The site is currently used by the Syria Temple as an overflow parking lot.

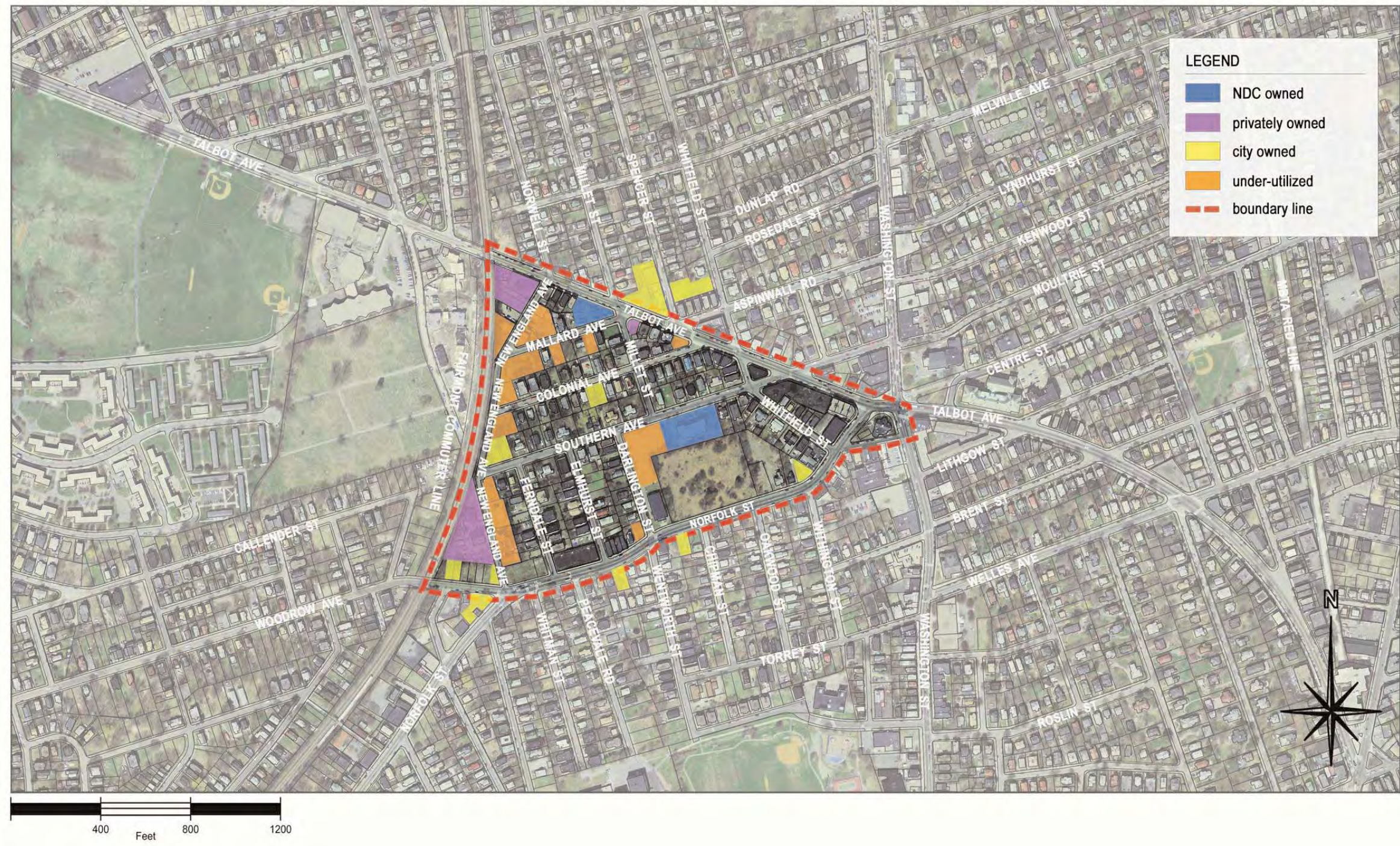
existing conditions











study area 1: "automall triangle" site

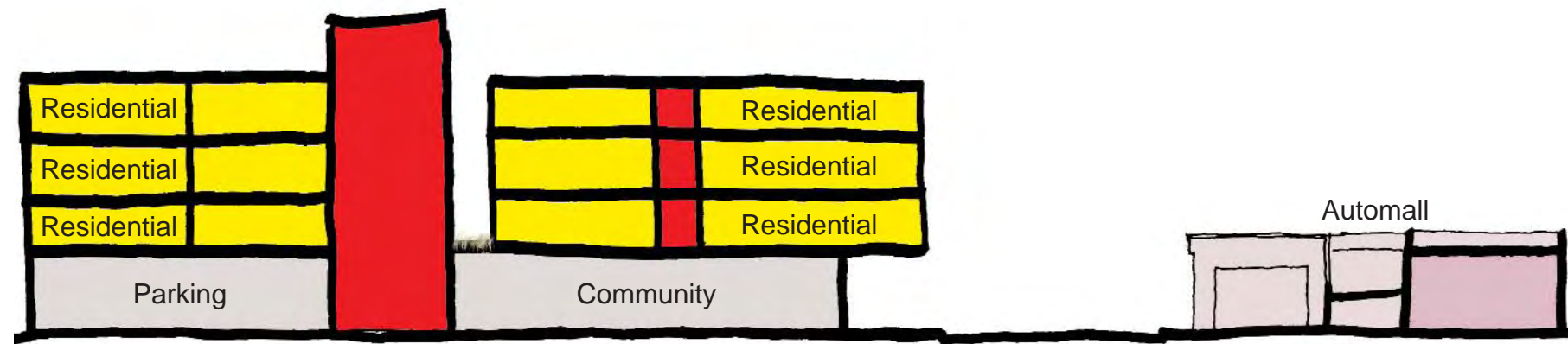




DESIGN PRINCIPLES:

- CONSOLIDATE AUTO-RELATED USES
- CREATE AFFORDABLE HOUSING
- PROVIDE OFF-STREET PARKING
- INCREASE GREEN SPACE OPPORTUNITIES
- IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE





Typical East/West Section

I. SITE PLANNING STRATEGY

This part of the study area, located north of Woodrow Avenue and Norfolk Street, east of the Fairmount Commuter Rail Line and west of New England Avenue, is currently referred to as the Automall. This is due to the high concentration of auto related uses that line both sides of New England Avenue at this location. This type of use, while creating a viable economic stimulus for the area, congests the entry into the Talbot Norfolk Triangle. The transient uses are also conducive to illegal activities that detract from the neighborhood.

The general consensus of the participants in the community charrette is to consolidate the auto-related uses to the empty parcels east of New England Avenue. As a result, the parcels west of New England Avenue can be used for a high-density multifamily development at the edge of the neighborhood. This strategy creates a critical mass of residents at this corner of the study area acting as a catalyst for enhancing the neighborhood.

The overall development of this parcel could accommodate up to 60 residential units, centered around a courtyard at level two, with a level of covered parking below. An option for this development could include a community activity center along New England Avenue.

Parking Level

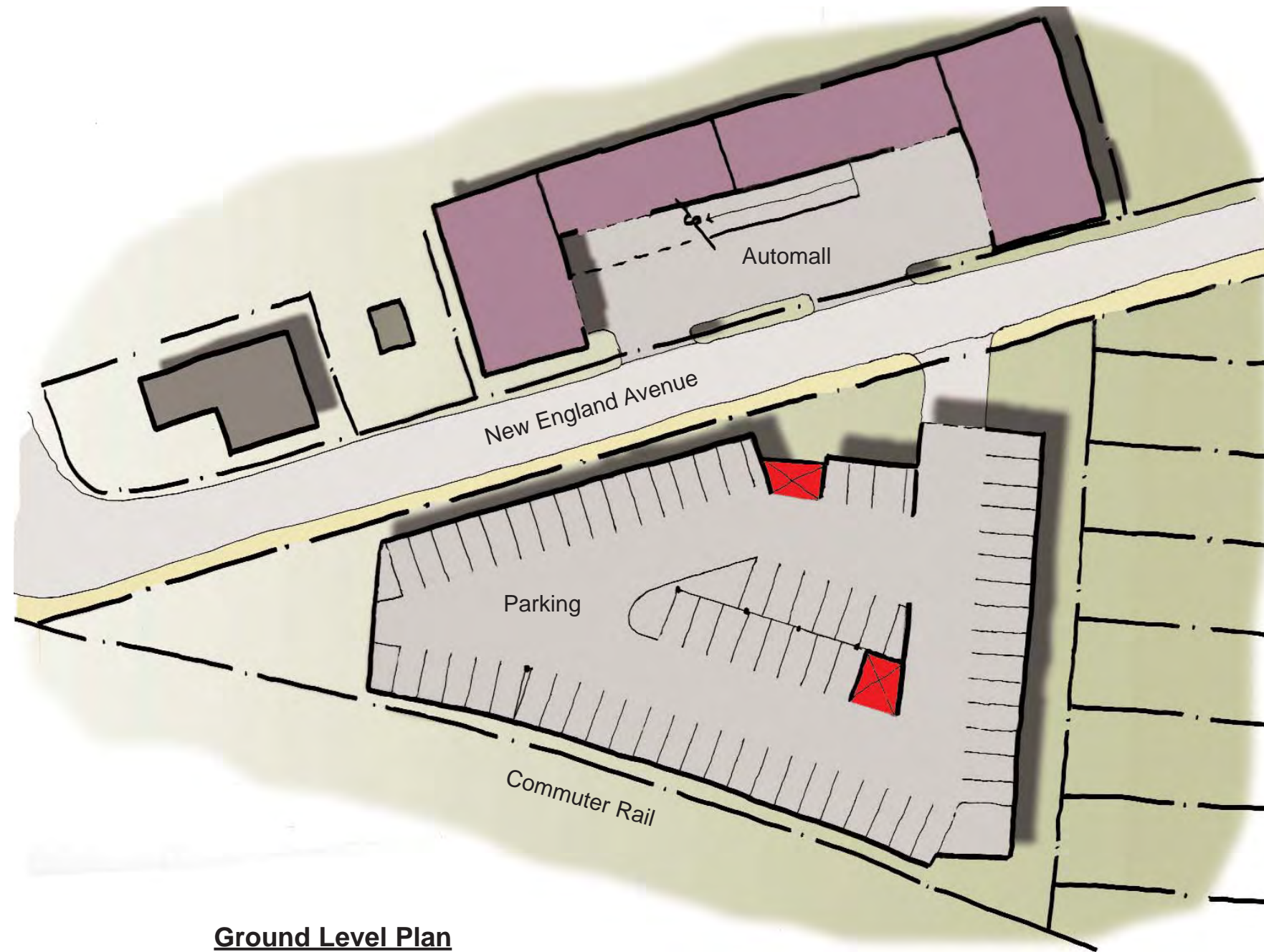


Courtyard Level



Upper Residential Level





Ground Level Plan

II. PROGRAM DISTRIBUTION

A. Mixed-use Retail

In order to continue the existing resource of the auto-related businesses, the first part of this strategy is to relocate the uses currently located along the west of New England Avenue to the empty parcels to the east of New England Avenue. This would require a reduction in the number and types of businesses, which could help alleviate the existing congestion issues related to on-street storage of repaired automobiles.

The strategy provides a courtyard-shaped structure up to 21,000 square feet with spaces for different trades to use, as well as a shared courtyard and ramp to get to the vehicle storage level above. This would mean that all of the cars currently occupying space would be moved off of the street, to provide for the greatest amount of ground level working space.

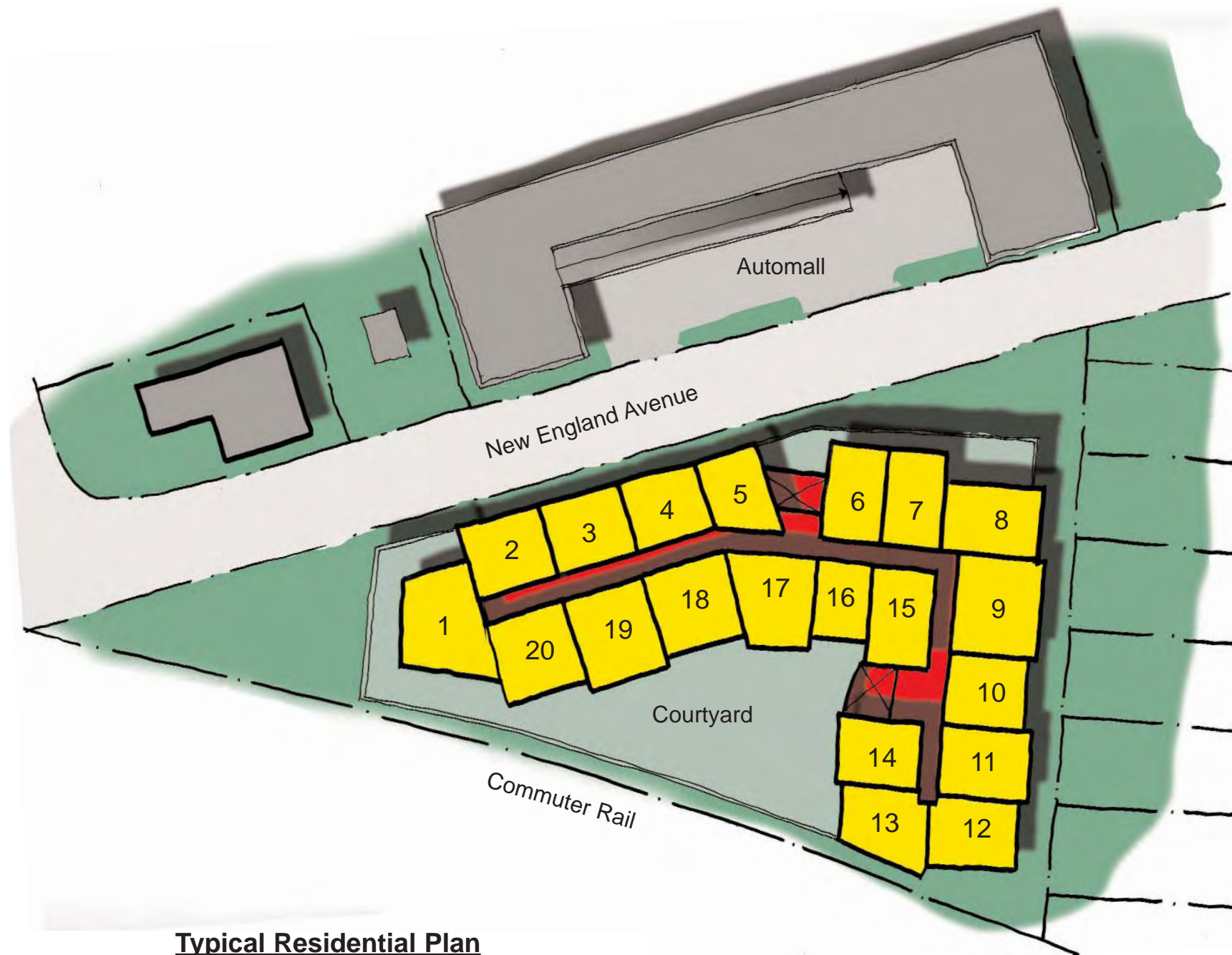
The relocation and reduction in the total area of the existing use is in the best interest of the community and maximizes the highest and best use of the land.

B. Residential Development

The benefit of this strategy is to create up to 60 units of new housing in an area where it can take advantage of the proposed commuter rail stop. This development could provide an opportunity for more affordable housing in the neighborhood.

The units could be arranged in an L-shape fronting New England Avenue to the east and the rear of the new residential development along Woodrow Avenue. This strategy allows for a double-loaded corridor to provide units that would surround a landscaped courtyard at the second level.

The units could extend 2-4 stories in height depending on market demand, with a maximum of 4 stories above the first floor parking deck. This feature would not only act as a buffer to the noise created by the adjacent Fairmount Commuter Rail Line, but would also be an amenity for the residents. This would enhance the quality of life within the neighborhood.



Typical Residential Plan

C. Community Functions

An option for this development could include a community activity center along New England Avenue.

D. Parking

This strategy could provide a full floor of parking located slightly below grade, solely for the use of the residents and their guests. This eliminates the need for any on-street parking and relieves congestion. An additional benefit of this lower level parking is to elevate the development of the courtyard and residential units to a location level with, or slightly above, the adjacent commuter rail.

E. Green Space

A central principle of this strategy is to provide as much landscaped, useable open space as possible on the parcel for the residents use, mitigation of the heat island effect and the reduction of any on-site water run-off. Two areas are designated for green space in this strategy. The courtyard mentioned above would be the first. Its character would be that of a pocket park for residents, with planters, benches, shade trees and potential elements of flowing water fountains or trellised green walls that would create another barrier between the adjacent commuter rail line and the development. This space would be accessible only through the building and would thus be a safe haven for residents to let their children play while they can enjoy being in the fresh air.

The second area of green space development could be the triangular space located at the north of the parcel. This area would consist of native plantings (to reduce the amount of long term water and maintenance) and would also provide an area for run-off water gathered on the property to drain back into the aquifer.

F. Overall Improvements

The development of this parcel could provide a significant number of residential units, depending on market conditions. Transferring the auto-related uses to a smaller parcel will allow the businesses to continue operating without taking over an important urban space in the Triangle.

study area 2: commuter rail parcels

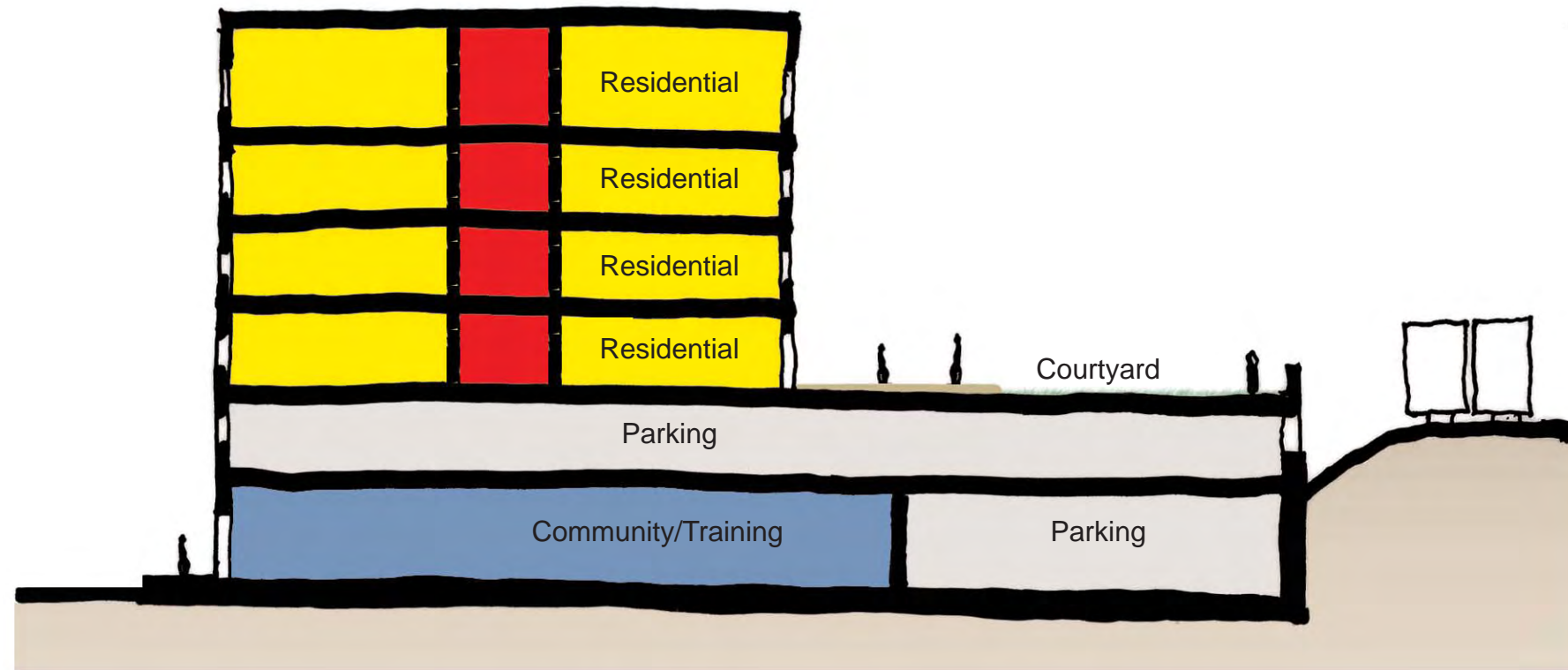




DESIGN PRINCIPLES:

- TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT
- CREATE AFFORDABLE HOUSING
- SMALL-SCALE RETAIL USES
- COMMUNITY USES AND JOB TRAINING
- PROVIDE OFF-STREET PARKING
- SHARED PARKING FOR COMMUTER RAIL
- INCREASE GREEN SPACE OPPORTUNITIES
- IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE





Typical East/West Section

I. SITE PLANNING STRATEGY

This focus area is closest to the proposed location for the new commuter rail station. The site consists of several parcels forming a triangle that is bordered on the east by New England Avenue, on the west by the Fairmount Commuter Rail Line, and to the north by Talbot Avenue. The site is currently used by a number of commercial and auto-related uses. It is the consensus of the participants in the community charrette that this is an underutilization of the land and could be enhanced by the strategy that follows.

The development of this site is consistent with the overall goals of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the City of Boston; to provide for transit-oriented development that reduces the number of vehicular generated trips on and off of this site by providing accessible, affordable housing located adjacent to a major transit node into the city center of Boston.

The overall organization of this site fronts Talbot Avenue and New England Avenue with small scale retail shops, a residential lobby, and a community-oriented space with a small parking garage behind. At the second level, there could be a level of parking that could be shared, which would reduce the number of total spaces. The residential units would be located above the parking deck and could be shaped to follow the Talbot and New England street fronts below.

Parking Level

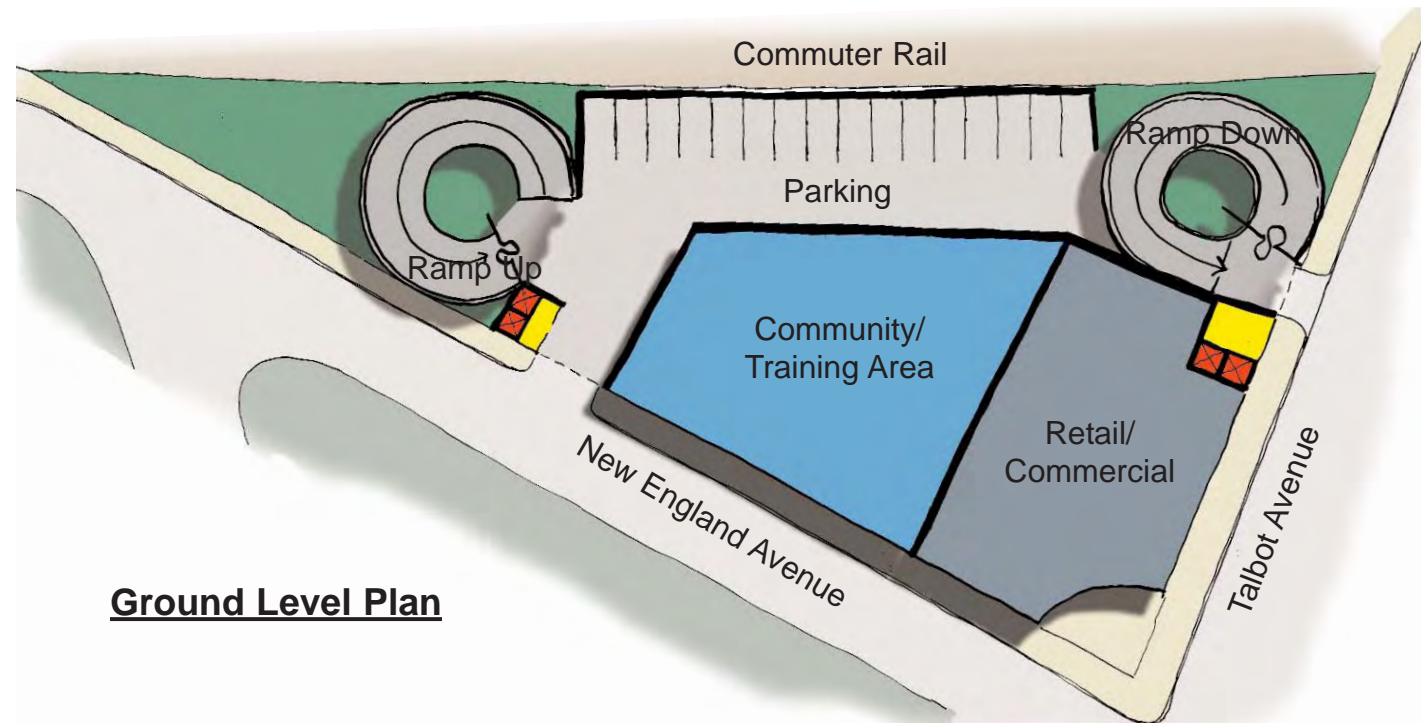


Courtyard Level

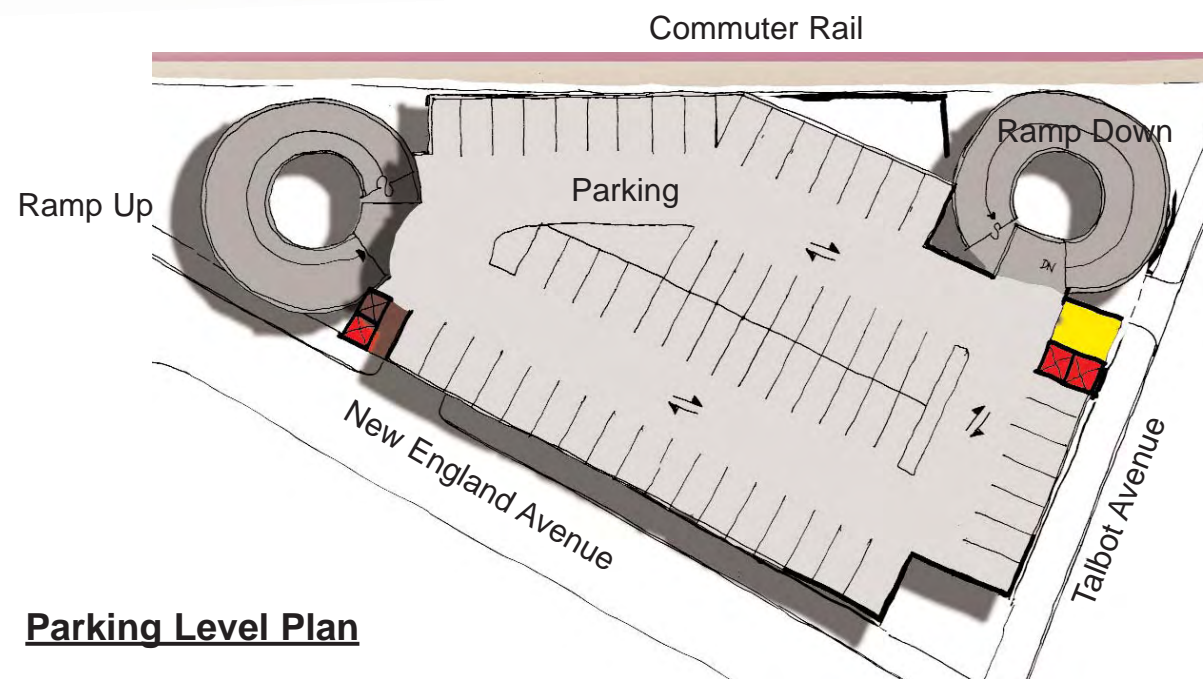


Upper Residential Level





Ground Level Plan



Parking Level Plan

II. PROGRAM DISTRIBUTION

A. Mixed-use Retail at Talbot Avenue

Absent from the existing area near the commuter rail is any type of retail opportunity that could be seen as an amenity to local commuters as they come and go from their daily commute into Boston. These could be small-scale shops that could be locally owned and operated, providing potential jobs for the neighborhood.

The types of appropriate retail that could be allowed into these spaces would include, but not be limited to, convenience stores, barber shops, dry cleaners, coffee shops, a small diner, etc. From the feedback given during the community planning process, it would be wise not to include all types of retail, as auto-related uses, dollar stores and nail salons were spoken of as over-present in the neighborhood and were not desired by the residents.

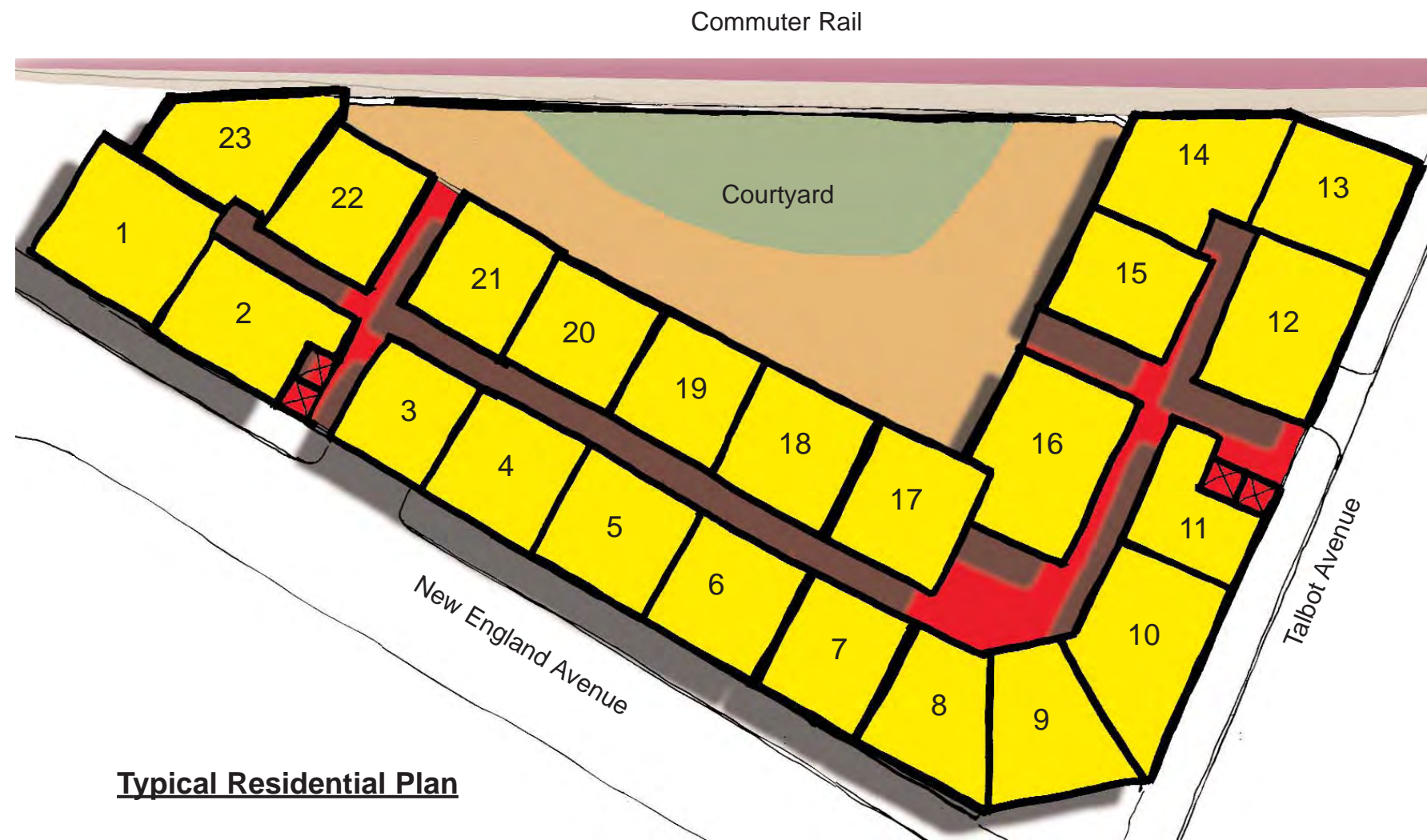
B. Residential Development

The benefit of this strategy is to accommodate up to 40 units of new housing in an area where it can take advantage of the proposed commuter rail stop. This strategy provides an opportunity for more affordable housing located in the neighborhood.

The units could be arranged in an L-shape building fronting New England Avenue to the east and fronting Talbot Avenue to the north. This would allow for a double-loaded corridor to provide units that would surround a landscaped courtyard at the second level. This feature would not only act as a buffer to the noise created by the adjacent Fairmount Commuter Rail Line, but would also be an amenity for the residents. The units could extend up to 1-2 stories depending upon market demand.

C. Community Functions

A major component to any new development in the neighborhood, desired by the participants of the community charrette, is a place for the community to gather for events and meetings. This strategy would create a space that could contain up to 9,000 square feet of community space along the street front of New England Avenue. The ground floor would be flexible to provide multiple configurations of space.



Typical Residential Plan

D. Parking

The strategy for the parking on this site is to provide a small, covered, public (two hour) lot behind the retail and community activities room that would provide a buffer between the rail and the program uses. In addition, the second level of the public lot is a deck for the residents to use as their private parking. This would be accessed on the southern end of the site by a circular ramp up and ramp down at the northern, Talbot Avenue side. This would provide up to 50-60 spaces for use by the residents and may provide an option for TDM parking opportunities if the MBTA is interested in that option. A major benefit to this strategy is to elevate the residential component above the level of the train and separate the public uses from the private residential uses. The parking deck at the second level could be screened by either green climbing vines or a planted green wall, similar to the separation between the courtyard and rail line.

E. Green Space

A central principle of this strategy is to provide as much landscaped, useable open space as is possible on the parcel for the residents, mitigation of the heat island effect and the reduction of any on site water run off. Two areas are designated for green space in this strategy. The courtyard mentioned above would be the first. Its character would be that of a pocket park for residents with planters, benches, shade trees and potential elements of flowing water fountains or trellised green walls that would create another barrier between the adjacent commuter rail line and the development. This space would be accessible only through the building and would be a safe haven for residents to let their children play while they can enjoy being in the fresh air.

The second area of green space development would be the triangular space located at the south of the parcel. This area would consist of xeriscaped plantings similar to those near the Automall site and provide an area for run-off water gathered on the property to drain back into the aquifer.

F. Overall Improvements

The development of this parcel would provide a significant number of residential units. This would increase the housing stock in an area that will soon become a transit-oriented community due to the implementation of the new commuter rail station. This site would also provide a secondary node of services and a public meeting space near the new commuter rail station, benefitting both the community and residents above.

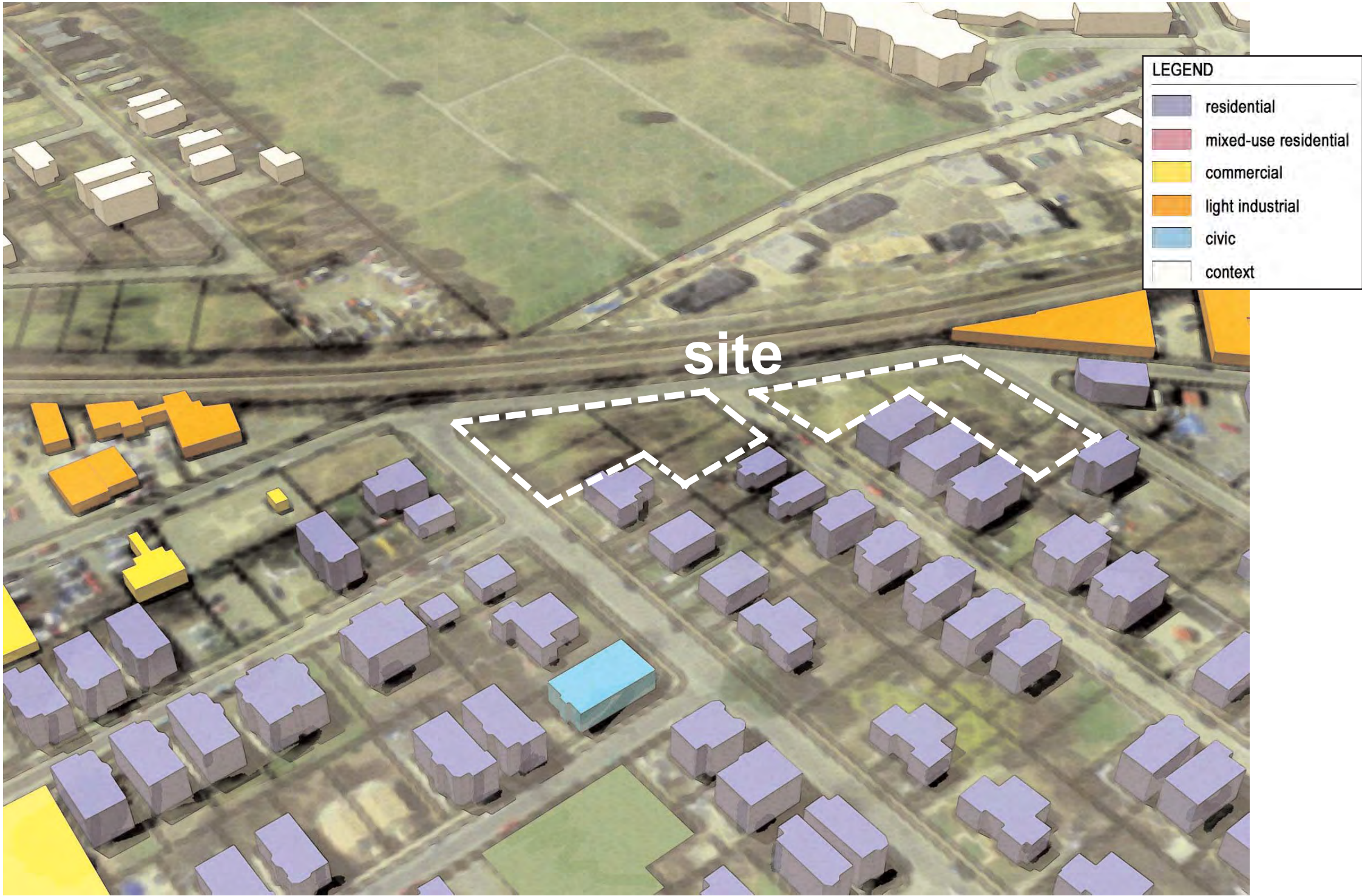
study area 3: new england avenue parcels





DESIGN PRINCIPLES:

- OWNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES
- LOW DENSITY HOUSING
- CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT
- PROVIDE OFF-STREET PARKING
- INCREASE GREEN SPACE OPPORTUNITIES
- IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE





Typical North/South Section along New England Avenue

I. SITE PLANNING STRATEGY

As it exists today, New England Avenue is a major western connector through the study area. It was noted by the neighborhood that this is a vehicular cut from Norfolk to Talbot. It is a street that has many vacant lots along its buildable edge. These vacant parcels that stretch from Mallard Avenue to Southern Avenue along the eastern side of New England Avenue are now trash-riddled, overgrown and under-utilized. Enhancing this end of the neighborhood with smart development, in scale with the surrounding neighborhood, could provide the necessary connection of the north and south ends of the western edge of the Talbot Norfolk Triangle.

The consensus of the participants in the community charrette was that low-density housing would be the major use for these parcels. The community recognized that creating a non-residential program at this location would be detrimental to the business district in Codman Square. With the proximity to the new station these parcels were seen as ideal to provide mixed-income housing to attract those wishing for a simple commute into Boston at an affordable price.

View From Southwest



View From Southeast





Ground Level Plan

II. PROGRAM DISTRIBUTION

A. Mixed-use Retail

There is no mixed-use retail considered for this location.

B. Residential Development - Cluster Housing

The existing neighborhood consists of triple decker housing which include the required off street parking for each unit. This type of housing is characteristic of the general Boston area and would be the conventional approach to these lots to continue to build economical, traditional units in this style. It was the consensus of the community that they would like to see more family-oriented housing, conducive to providing areas for families to gather inside and out, as well as eliminating any additional on-street parking.

The strategy was introduced in the form of cluster housing. This concept groups units of housing together around either a common court or parking area which reduces the need for too many curb cuts and provides space to meet.

The units could be grouped in clusters of four to twelve units per building with garaged parking and a building swing space at the ground floor of each. This could provide up to 38 units on a site that, if developed conventionally, may only yield 18-24 units.

A key component of this strategy is to move each cluster of units to the edge of the site, reducing the lot front and side setback to zero. This would be similar to the units along New England Avenue proposed in earlier developments within this report. The benefit to creating high-density buildings that go up a maximum of 3 stories (which would be in scale with the surrounding housing) is that the space gained by the building clusters provides small play/sitting areas outside, shielded from the street with visibility from inside the units.



Typical Residential Plan

C. Community Functions

As stated, a major component to any new development in the neighborhood is a place for the community to gather for events and meetings. As an option, if the neighborhood felt that there was enough community-oriented space, a ground floor unit at these locations could be used instead.

D. Parking

To provide parking for a higher density of units, there would need to be ground floor garage spaces that would be supplemented by small groupings of exterior parking spaces. By clustering the development, there is an opportunity to provide porous pavement in areas that would serve as a place to gather and play outside. This type of pavement would contain grass and look as if it were a lawn, but in fact would be structured to be driven over in cases of emergency vehicles and the occasional moving truck.

E. Green Space

The green space provided in this strategy is the result of clustering the development to maximize open space opportunities in a more traditional “yard” for families outside the buildings.

F. Overall Improvements

The development of these parcels could be seen as an opportunity to promote ideas for a truly sustainable community-oriented development. These parcels could also enhance this end of the neighborhood with a high quality level of housing that takes advantage of the new station and potential other developments in the area.

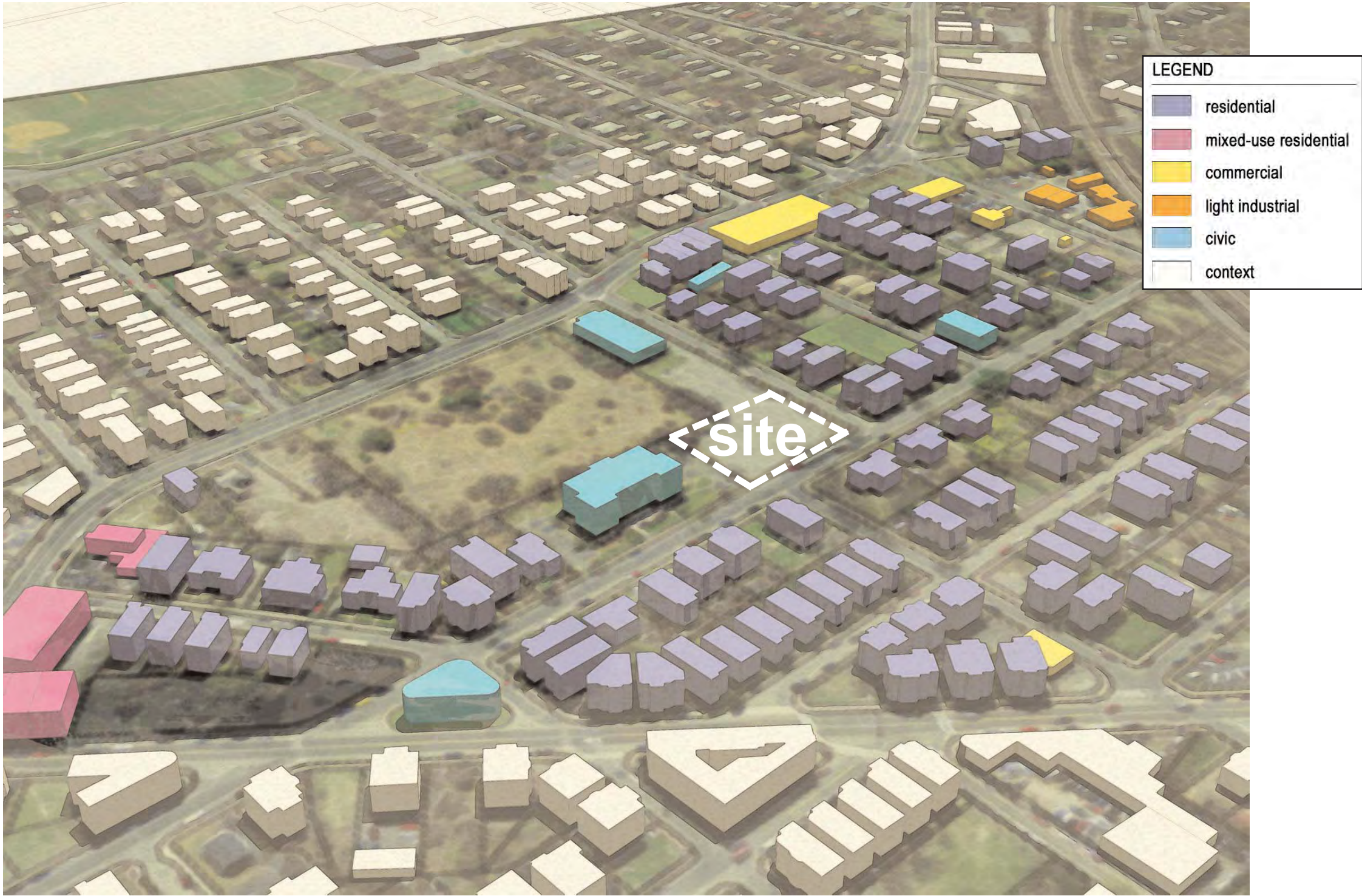
study area 4: syria temple site





DESIGN PRINCIPLES:

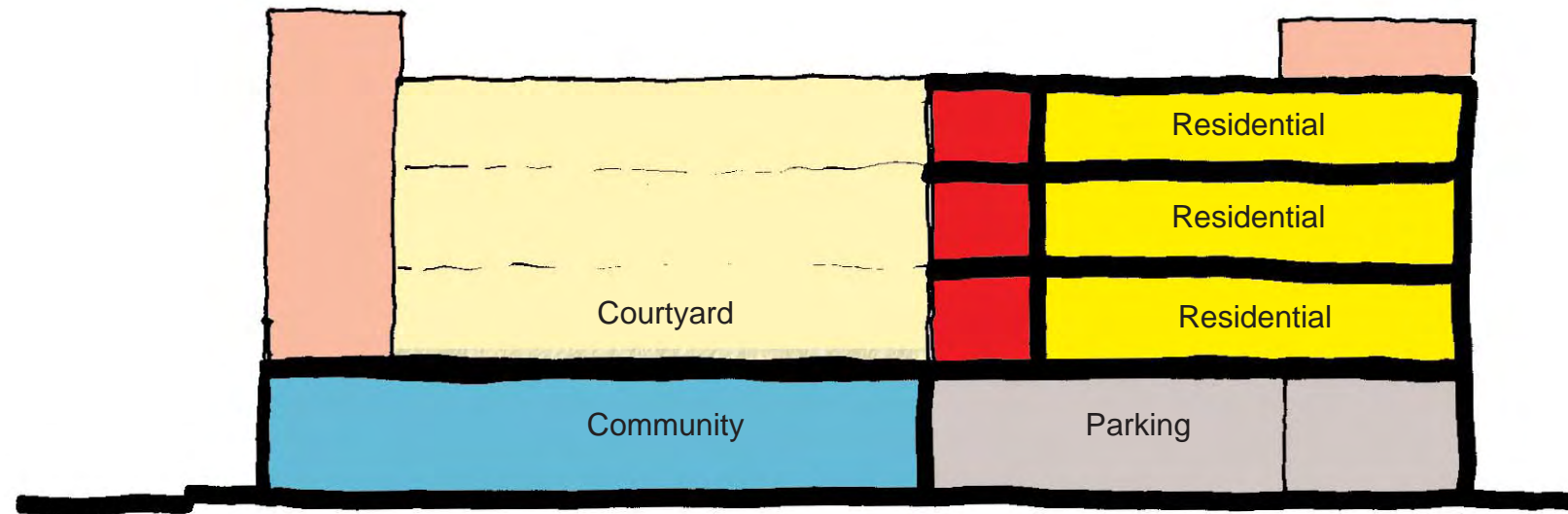
- COMMUNITY USES
- CREATE AFFORDABLE HOUSING
- PROVIDE OFF-STREET PARKING
- INCREASE GREEN SPACE OPPORTUNITIES
- IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE



I. SITE PLANNING STRATEGY

Located at the corner of Darlington Street and Southern Avenue, the Syria Temple parking lot is adjacent to the existing Whittier School Multifamily Apartments and the existing historic cemetery. It was the consensus of the participants in the community charrette that this site has the potential to become the civic “heart” of the neighborhood that could include a local market, a community activity space, with residential development above. The site is currently used by the Syria Temple as an overflow parking lot.

The proposed development program could consist of up to 8,000 square feet, including a community activity center, ground floor parking, and up to three level of residential units above the ground floor. The suggested massing and density are similar in scale and context to the neighboring Whittier School Apartments. The introduction of community-related uses at this location strengthens the quality of life in the neighborhood.



Typical Section at Courtyard

Parking Level

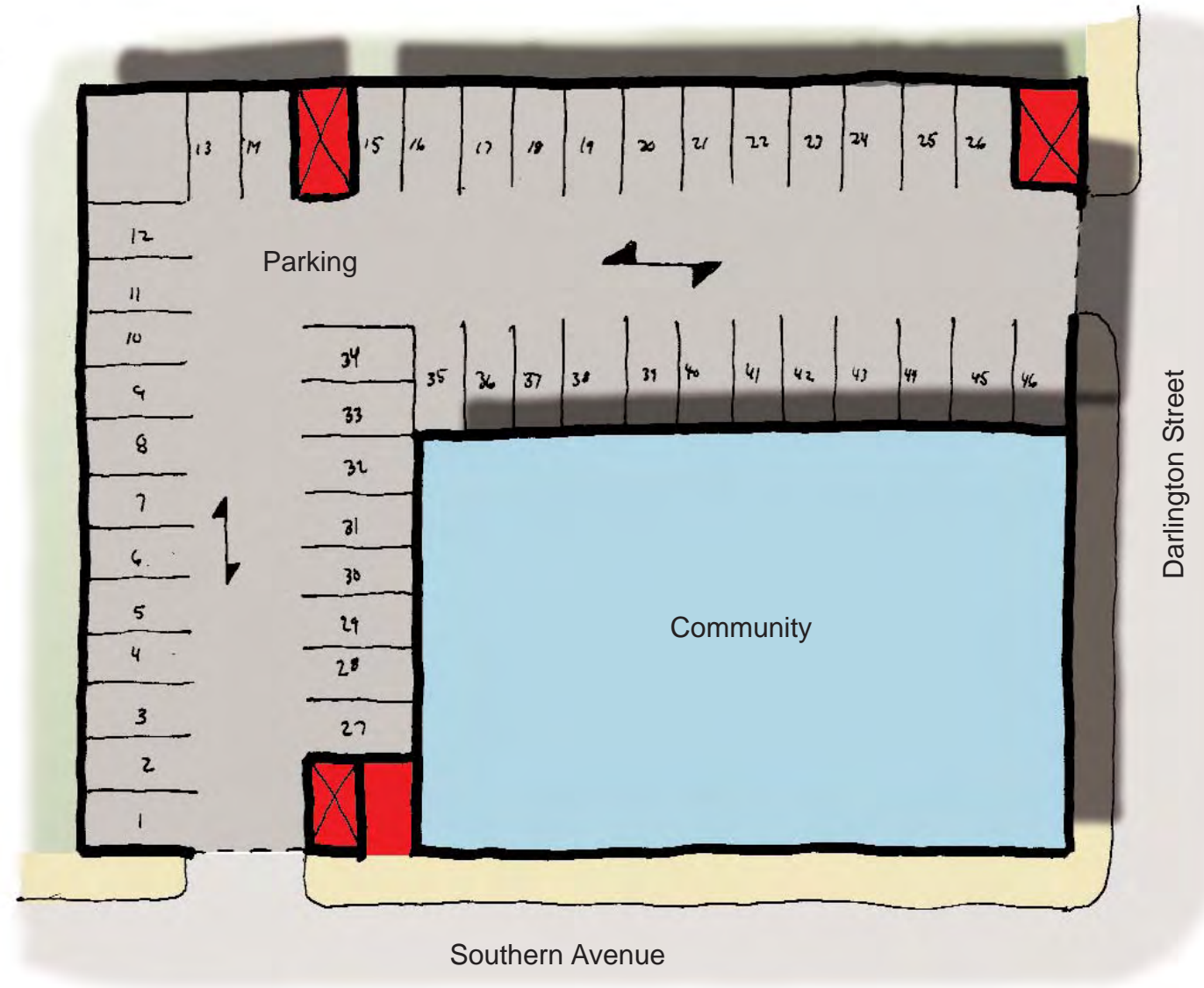


Courtyard Level



Upper Residential Level





Ground Floor Plan

II. PROGRAM DISTRIBUTION

B. Residential Development - Courtyard Apartments

The apartments on the second floor of the building and above could be wrapped around a small rooftop courtyard that provides light deep into the block of the building. Each unit would either have views onto the courtyard below, or the surrounding green and community.

C. Community Functions

The ground floor of this proposed development could contain a multi-functional community center of up to 8,000 square feet. Located on the corner of two access streets into the neighborhood, this would be a central location that would be the jewel of the neighborhood network of small-scale public gathering spaces. Functions included could be job training, educational programs, after-school programs, senior-oriented activities and community meeting halls.

D. Parking

The parking for this development concept is located on the ground floor adjacent to the community center and beneath the residential units on the second and upper floors. The parking could provide up to 35 spaces for residents and 10-12 swing spaces for either guests or community events. This parking area would be located along the rear of the site to ensure that the street image of this development would be the public gathering space.

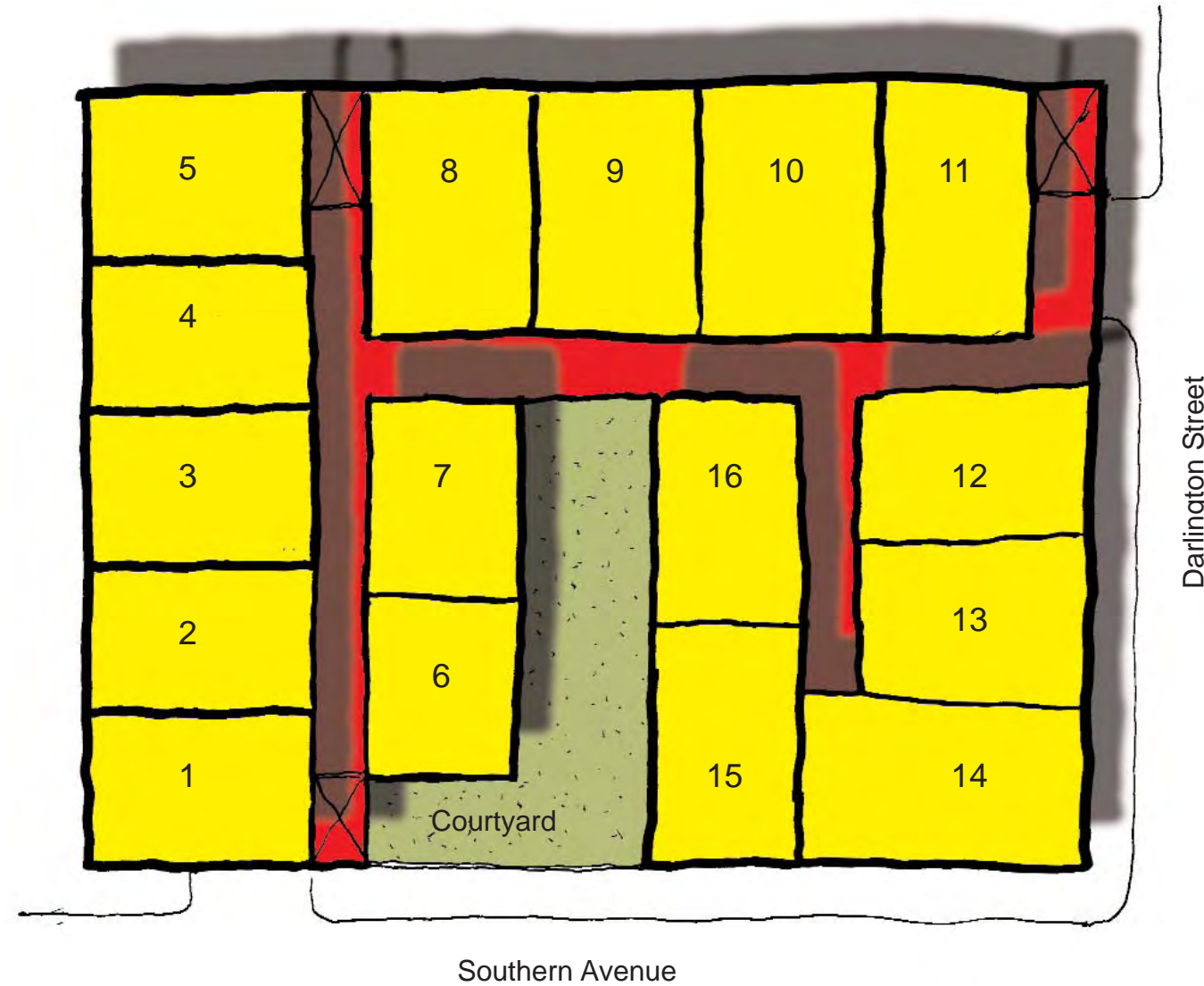
E. Green Space

A green courtyard could be developed on the roof of the community center to provide a small landscaped area for residents and people using the community center.

F. Overall Improvements

It was the consensus of the participants in the community charrette that this site should be considered the “heart” of the neighborhood and that the best possible use of this site is a mixed-use development of residential and specifically community uses.

This development could be seen as a gateway to further enhance the community’s interaction and improve the quality of life for this community.



Typical Residential Floor Plan