

FAIRMOUNT INDIGO PLANNING INITIATIVE

# UPHAM'S CORNER STATION AREA PLAN

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# DRAFT



CITY OF BOSTON  
Martin J. Walsh  
*Mayor*



Boston  
Redevelopment  
Authority

## Upham's Corner

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# Study Purpose

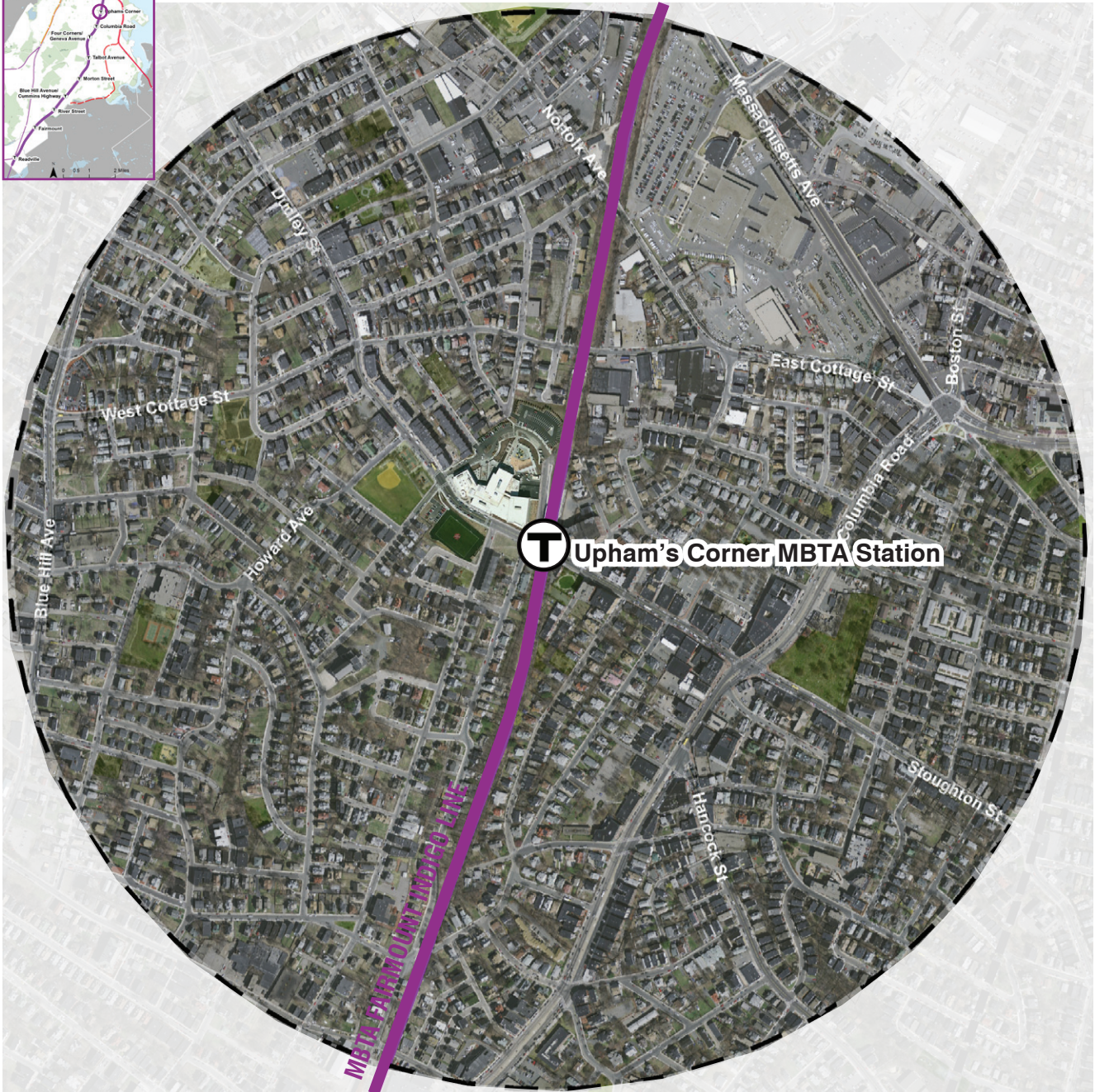
As part of the City of Boston's Fairmount Indigo Planning Initiative, the Upham's Corner Station Area Plan establishes a framework for future improvements and investment to enhance both the commercial center of Upham's Corner and the surrounding neighborhoods. The study has included a year-long process with community workshops and public meetings under the guidance of a Working

Advisory Group (WAG) comprised of local residents, business owners and stakeholders. The Station Area Plan embraces the MBTA Fairmount Indigo line as a transit amenity and looks to guide physical and economic development, encourage sustainable and transit-oriented growth, prioritize economic prosperity for current residents and businesses and incorporate existing planning initiatives into one shared vision.



Fairmount Indigo Corridor Context

The study area for the Upham's Corner Station Area Plan includes portions of Roxbury and Dorchester within 1/2 mile of the Upham's Corner rail station.



## Community Vision

The community vision was created through a community planning and visioning process that included a community workshop, community open houses, discussion with a Mayoral appointed Working Advisory Group (WAG), many in-person visits to each Station Area neighborhood, stakeholder, resident and advocate interviews and an analysis of the existing conditions of the Station Area. The Vision Statement sets a direction for future efforts in Upham's Corner. The Community Goals add more detail to the statement.

### Vision Statement

**Upham's Corner is a revitalized commercial, cultural and community center that is a celebration of diversity and an arts and cultural anchor of the Fairmount Indigo Corridor.**

### Community Goals

The goals of the community vision are to:

- Strengthen businesses and activity to revitalize and support the commercial and cultural center
- Provide new housing opportunities near the station and Main Streets District to support vitality
- Reinforce a direct connection between the center of activity and the rail station
- Reinforce a walkable neighborhood orientation through public realm and open space improvements to enhance Station Area quality of life
- Protect existing community assets found in the current residents, businesses, and historic sites and buildings of Upham's Corner
- Minimize displacement of current residents and businesses to preserve diversity



*The Strand Theatre a cultural anchor to Upham's Corner*

The vision builds on Upham's Corner's rich history as a commercial hub in Boston. The Station Area Plan seeks to position Upham's Corner for new economic prosperity and to reinforce it as an important hub of cultural activity in the Fairmount Indigo Corridor. The cultural anchor of the Strand Theatre and new community amenities, such as the Salvation Army Kroc Center, anchor a renewed and evolving station area and neighborhood center.

Key recommendations of the community vision have been outlined by topic areas including Prosperity, Home, Place, Getting Around, Quality of Life and Public Space. The Station Area Plan balances recommendations in each topic area to reinforce a high quality livable district and neighborhood.



PROSPERITY



HOME



PLACE



GETTING AROUND



QUALITY OF LIFE



PARKS AND PUBLIC SPACE

# Illustrative Vision Plan

An illustrative plan of the community vision is shown below. The illustration reflects the physical strategies that are part of the Station Area Plan including new transit-oriented development near the rail station, new mixed-use development at the Main Streets district, new infill residential development in the surrounding neighborhoods, streetscape improvements to critical connections and an expanded open space network.



- Legend*
- Existing Blocks
  - Existing Buildings
  - Existing Open Space
  - Main Street District
  - Potential Development
  - Potential Open Space
  - Main Street Gateway

*Recommendations illustrated within the study area for the Upham's Corner Station Area Plan includes portions of Roxbury and Dorchester within 1/2 mile of the Upham's Corner rail station*

## Key Findings



### Prosperity

- 1 Redevelop City-owned Maxwell Property to bring new investment
- 2 Address negative impact of Leon Building - short and long term
- 3 Reinforce Upham's Corner as an arts and cultural destination
- 4 Strengthen an active and walkable Main Street District



### Home

- 5 Encourage a mixed-use Main Street with new residential uses
- 6 Increase housing choice with multi-family near rail station
- 7 Infill vacant lots with new housing opportunities
- 8 Minimize displacement of existing residents



### Place

- 9 Reinforce Dudley St/Columbia Rd connection to station
- 10 Improve wayfinding to Upham's Corner
- 11 Strengthen gateways into Upham's Corner



### Getting Around

- 12 Create a multi-modal hub connecting to rail station
- 13 Enhance safety with neighborhood street improvements
- 14 Link connections as per Greenway Concept Plan



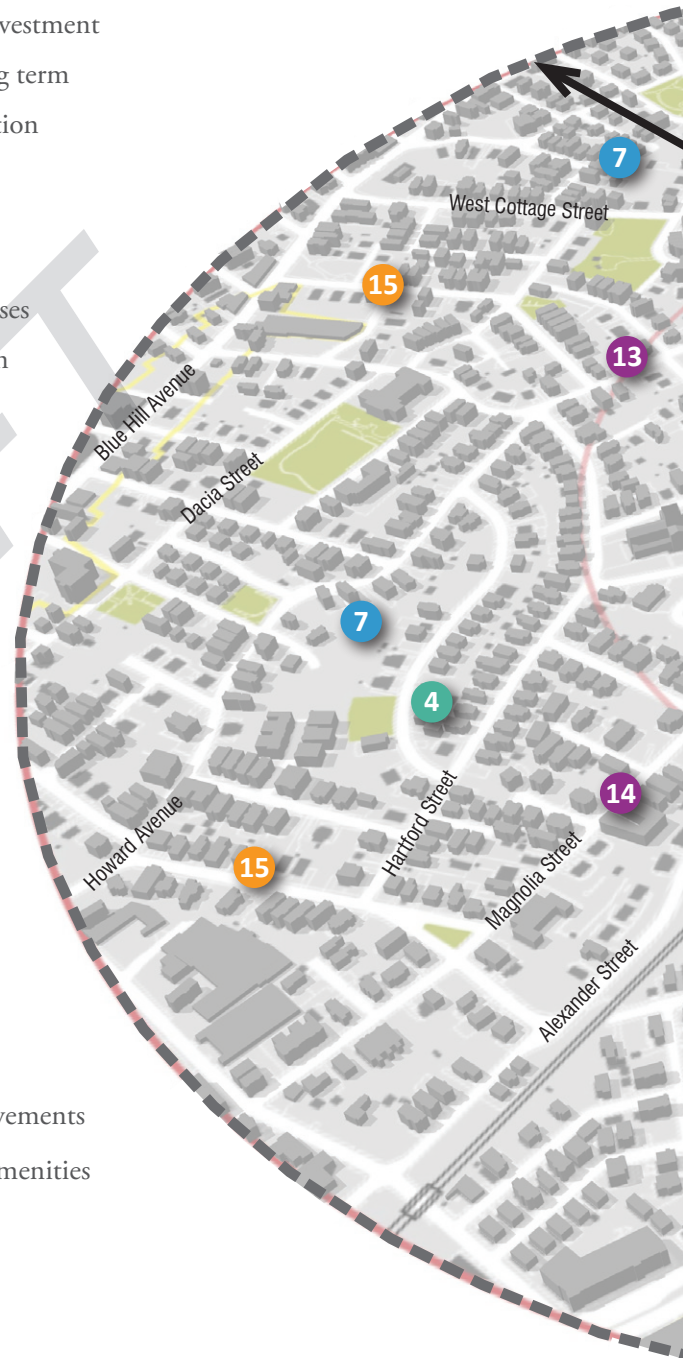
### Parks/Public Space

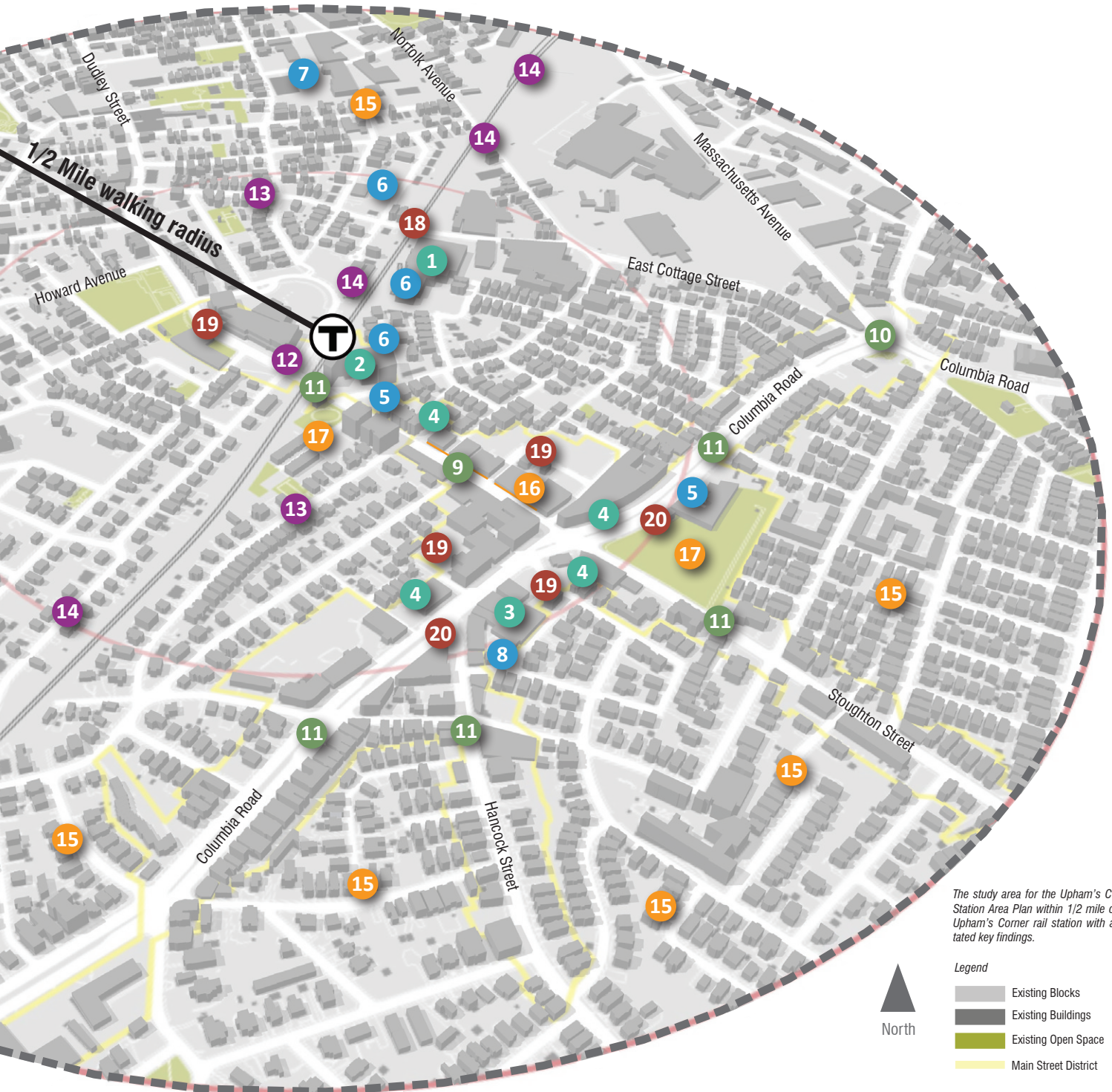
- 15 Establish new neighborhood open spaces/agriculture sites
- 16 Expand public space with rebalanced public realm improvements
- 17 Improve access to existing public space and community amenities



### Quality of Life

- 18 Add a new station entrance and platform connection
- 19 Encourage shared/managed public and private parking
- 20 Promote public art as a consistent feature of the district





The study area for the Upham's Corner Station Area Plan within 1/2 mile of the Upham's Corner rail station with annotated key findings.

- Legend
- Existing Blocks
  - Existing Buildings
  - Existing Open Space
  - Main Street District





## Prosperity

Strengthen business activity to revitalize and support Upham’s Corner as a commercial and cultural anchor. The approaches to reinforcing the prosperity of the Station Area follow:

- A Identifiable and Attractive** - an attractive central district must be identifiable at its entry points and draw in residents and visitors at the rail station and Columbia Road.
- B Mixed-use Activity** - renovation and redevelopment should add new residential activity above active ground floor uses to support a vibrant retail district.
- C Cultural Complements** - new and existing retail and restaurant businesses should complement the Strand Theatre to reinforce the district as a destination for cultural events.
- D Local-serving Businesses** - small businesses need to sustain active patronage from local residents to grow and thrive. Conversely, residents need to drive local spending.
- E Training and Connection** - coordinate community, health, and training centers as a network to serve residents and businesses to connect to opportunity and partners.



## Home

Provide new mixed-income housing opportunities near the station and Upham’s Corner Main Streets District to support vitality and prosperity. The approach to housing in focuses on the following characteristics:

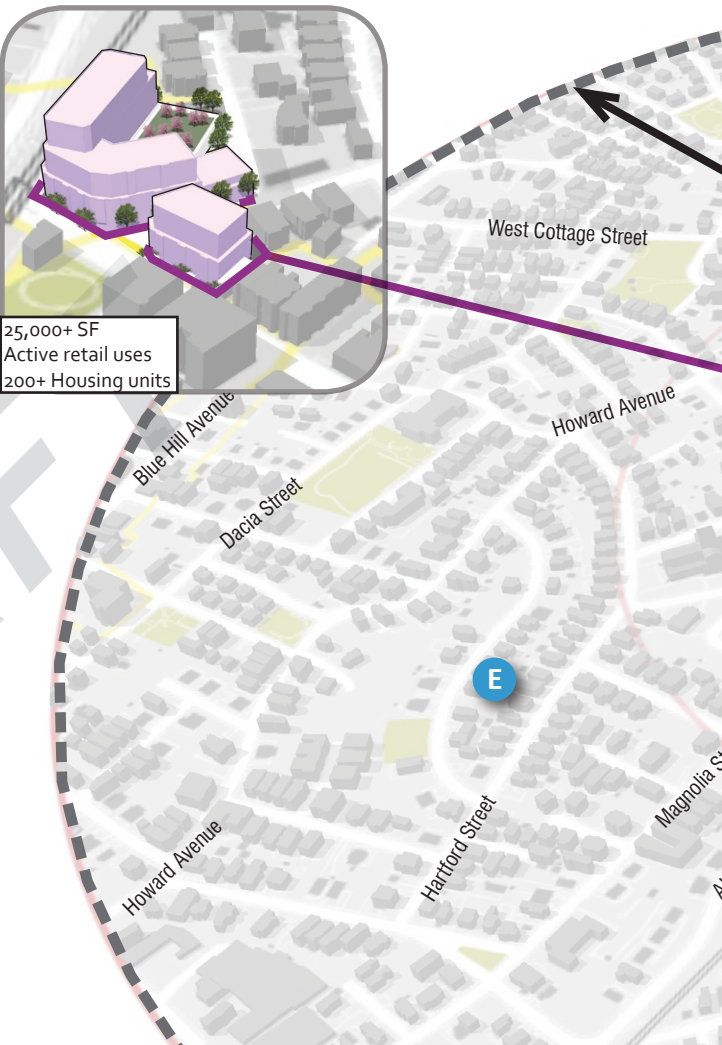
- A Transit Orientation** - underutilized properties directly adjacent to the rail station are an excellent opportunity to provide residential uses that promote transit and walking.
- B Mixed-use Activity** - add new residential units above ground floor retail uses to support a vibrant commercial district through targeted redevelopment.
- C Multi-Family Models** - projects that bring a critical mass of units efficiently with conventional stick-built construction and surface parking are the most economically feasible.
- D Mixed Income** - new housing must provide opportunities for diverse income levels including market rate and workforce units that also bring new opportunities for current residents.
- E Neighborhood Infill** - strengthen blocks and promote infill development using City programs and lands as a model.

### Leon Electric Building

Corners of Dudley St and Humphreys St



25,000+ SF  
Active retail uses  
200+ Housing units



### Potential Redevelopment of Key Sites

Commercial/Light Industrial (Gross Square Feet)	50,000
Residential (Units)	460
Retail (Gross Square Feet)	60,000

The following area calculations are based upon hypothetical redevelopment scenarios on (5) sites in Upham’s Corner selected by the Upham’s Corner Working Advisory Group (WAG). Potential redevelopment would require reinvestment in private property and modification to current zoning regulations to achieve. The scenarios tested the scale and feasibility of potential redevelopment at these key locations.





50,000+ SF  
Jobs producing uses  
100+ Housing units

**Maxwell Property**  
65 East Cottage Street

**ATCO Supply Parcels**  
Columbia Rd at North Burying Ground

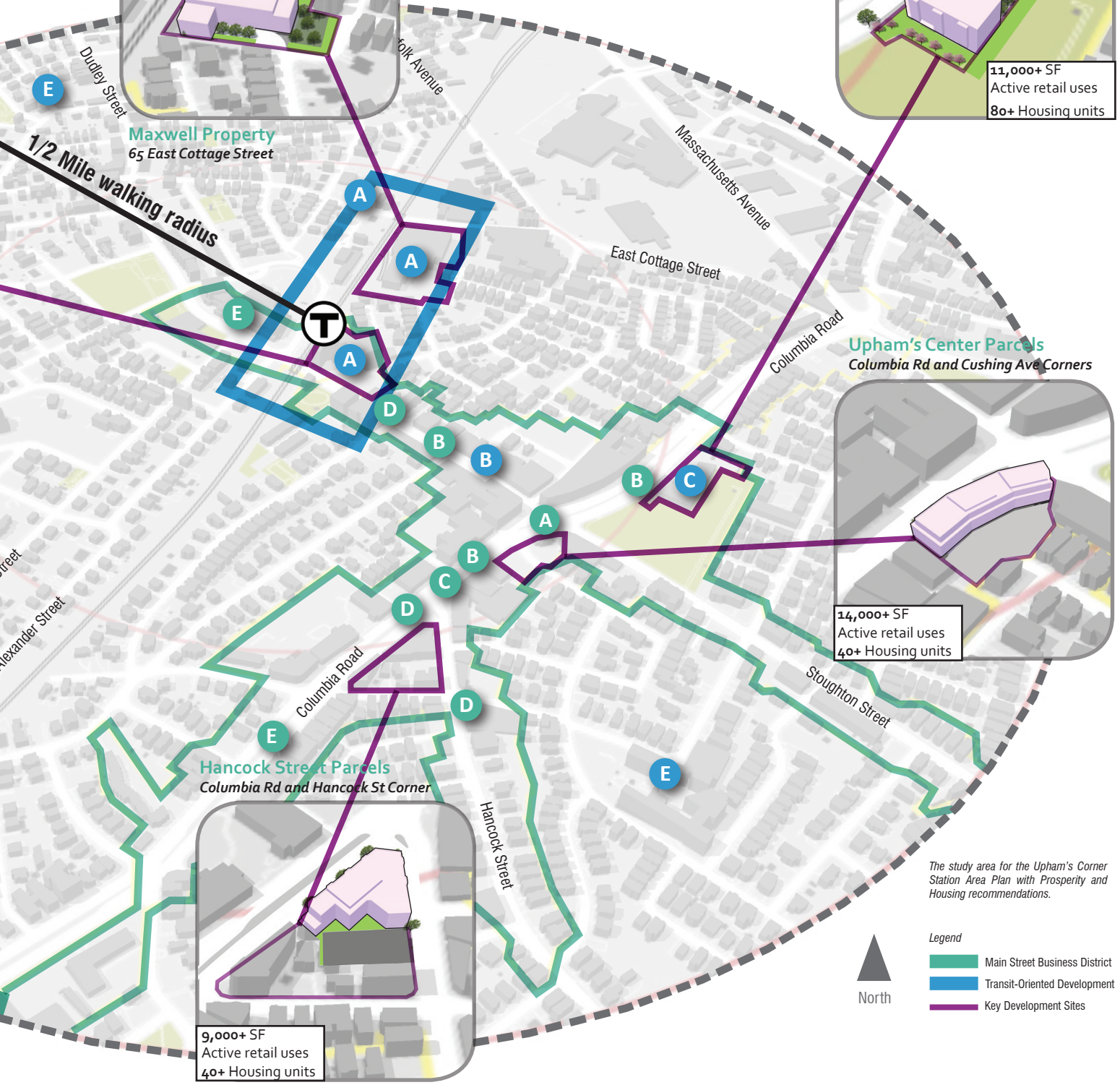
11,000+ SF  
Active retail uses  
80+ Housing units

**Upham's Center Parcels**  
Columbia Rd and Cushing Ave Corners

14,000+ SF  
Active retail uses  
40+ Housing units

**Hancock Street Parcels**  
Columbia Rd and Hancock St Corner

9,000+ SF  
Active retail uses  
40+ Housing units



The study area for the Upham's Corner Station Area Plan with Prosperity and Housing recommendations.

- Legend
- Main Street Business District
  - Transit-Oriented Development
  - Key Development Sites

## Place

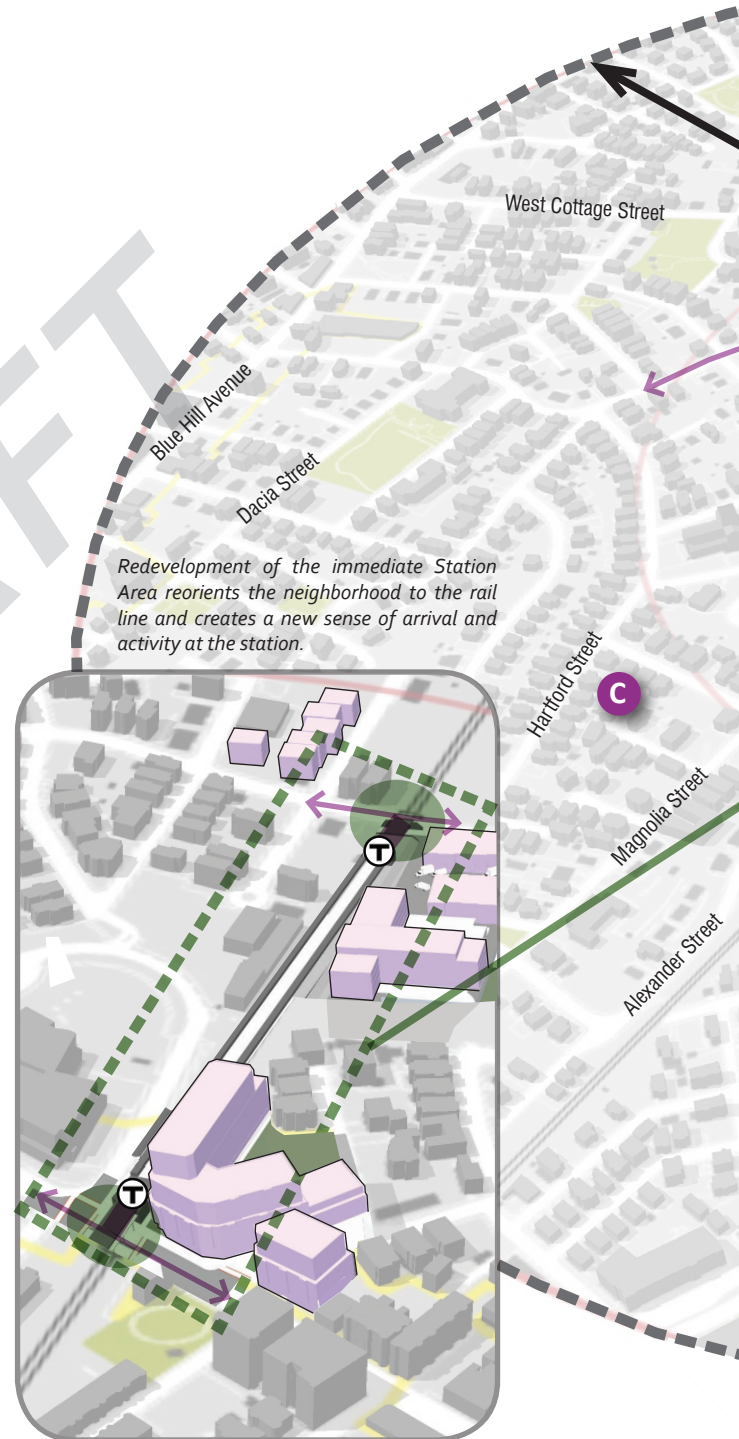
The physical environment of the Station Area should express the distinctiveness and vitality of the heart of the district and provide visual cues for attractive and stable neighborhoods. The following principles have been identified to reinforce the physical environment of the Station Area:

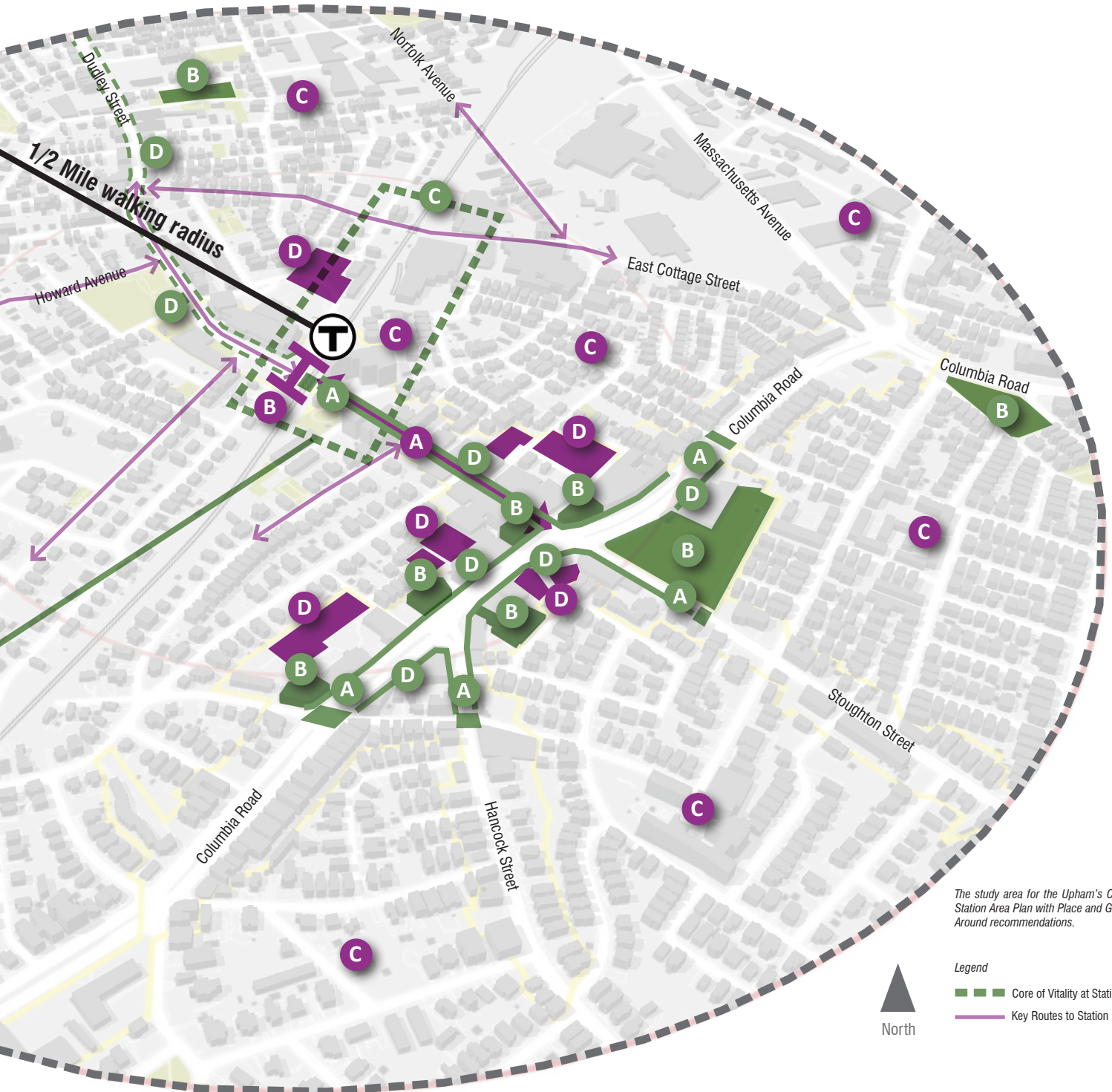
- A Main Street Gateway** - signify entry points into the district through redevelopment and streetscape improvements along primary street connections and at the rail station.
- B Highlight Historic Assets** - the distinctiveness of the Station Area is enhanced by preserving, but also actively re-using historic buildings and sites. New development should respect the historic scale of approximately 5-story buildings.
- C Vitality at the Station** - allowing larger building massing adjacent to the station can transform the sense of arrival at the station and reinforce district continuity.
- D Active Ground Floor** - reinforce continuity of active ground level use with transparency and entries at the street. Active ground floor uses should coordinate with adjacent public realm amenities.

## Getting Around

Connections to the rail station and the public street network can be improved to emphasize a sense of place, reinforce walkability, increase bike and vehicle safety and reduce congestion for buses. The following approaches get more out of the Station Area public realm:

- A Dudley Street Gateway** - Columbia Road improvement treatments, landscape, lighting and materials should extend a sense of unity in the district along Dudley Street to create gateways to the district from the rail station.
- B Mobility Hub** - the rail station entry at Dudley Street needs to become a central collection point for accessible mobility options with wayfinding for walking and easy connections to Hubway, bus routes, and car and taxi cab pick-up.
- C Walkable Neighborhoods** - walking is central to promoting rail station access and a vital Main Street District, all surrounding neighborhoods should provide continuous and safe sidewalks and crosswalks to these destinations.
- D Managed Parking** - public and private parking resources require coordination, wayfinding and improvement in visual appeal district-wide to maximize utilization.





The study area for the Upham's Corner Station Area Plan with Place and Getting Around recommendations.

- Legend
- Core of Vitality at Station Area
  - Key Routes to Station





## Parks and Public Space

A deficiency of publicly accessible open space around the Station Area (relative to other neighborhood averages) should be addressed. The following approaches have been identified to improve neighborhood access to strategically located open space amenities:

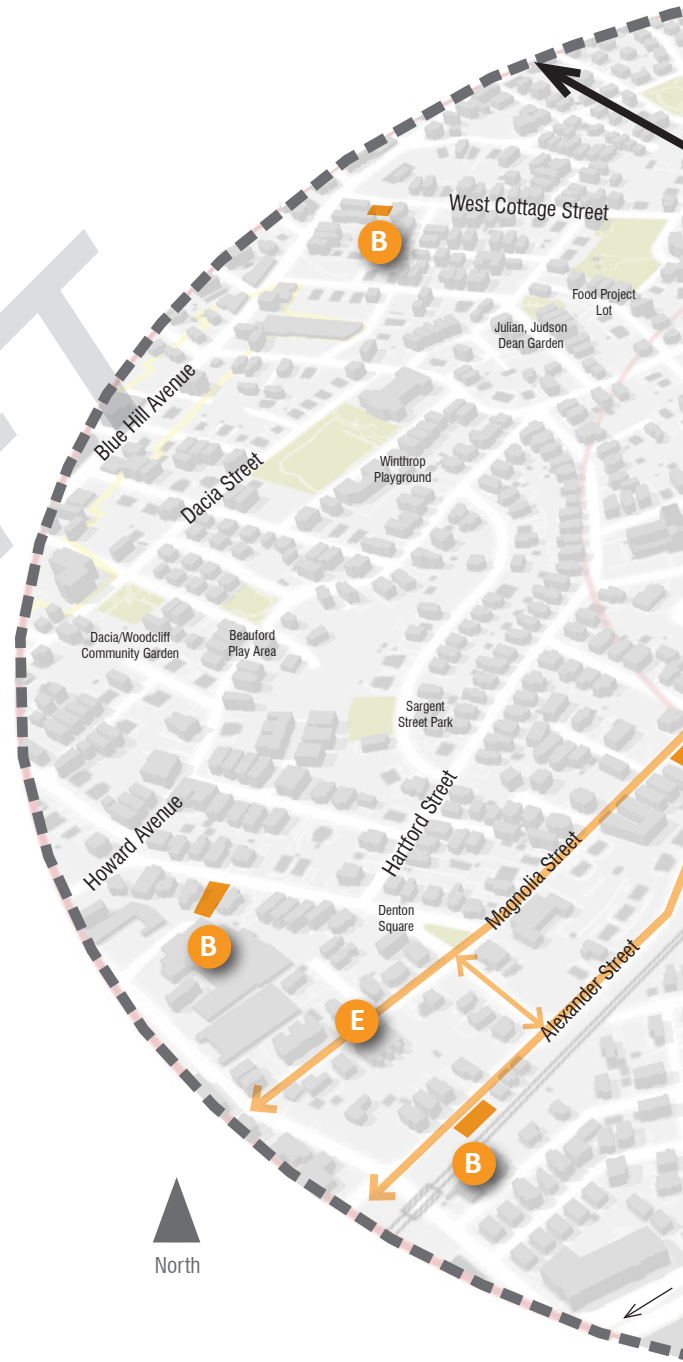
- A Publicly Accessible** - improve openness of existing public or private open spaces including activity along the edges and street frontages of the North Burying Ground.
- B Convert Vacant Parcels** - strategically convert vacancies into amenities including playgrounds and agriculture.
- C Development Requirements** - provide incentives for new public open space to be included in new large development projects.
- D Right-of-way Users** - expand sidewalks for uses such as public art/space, trees and outdoor seating
- E Open Space Networks** - use the Boston bike network and Fairmount Greenway Concept Plan to connect to nearby open space resources.

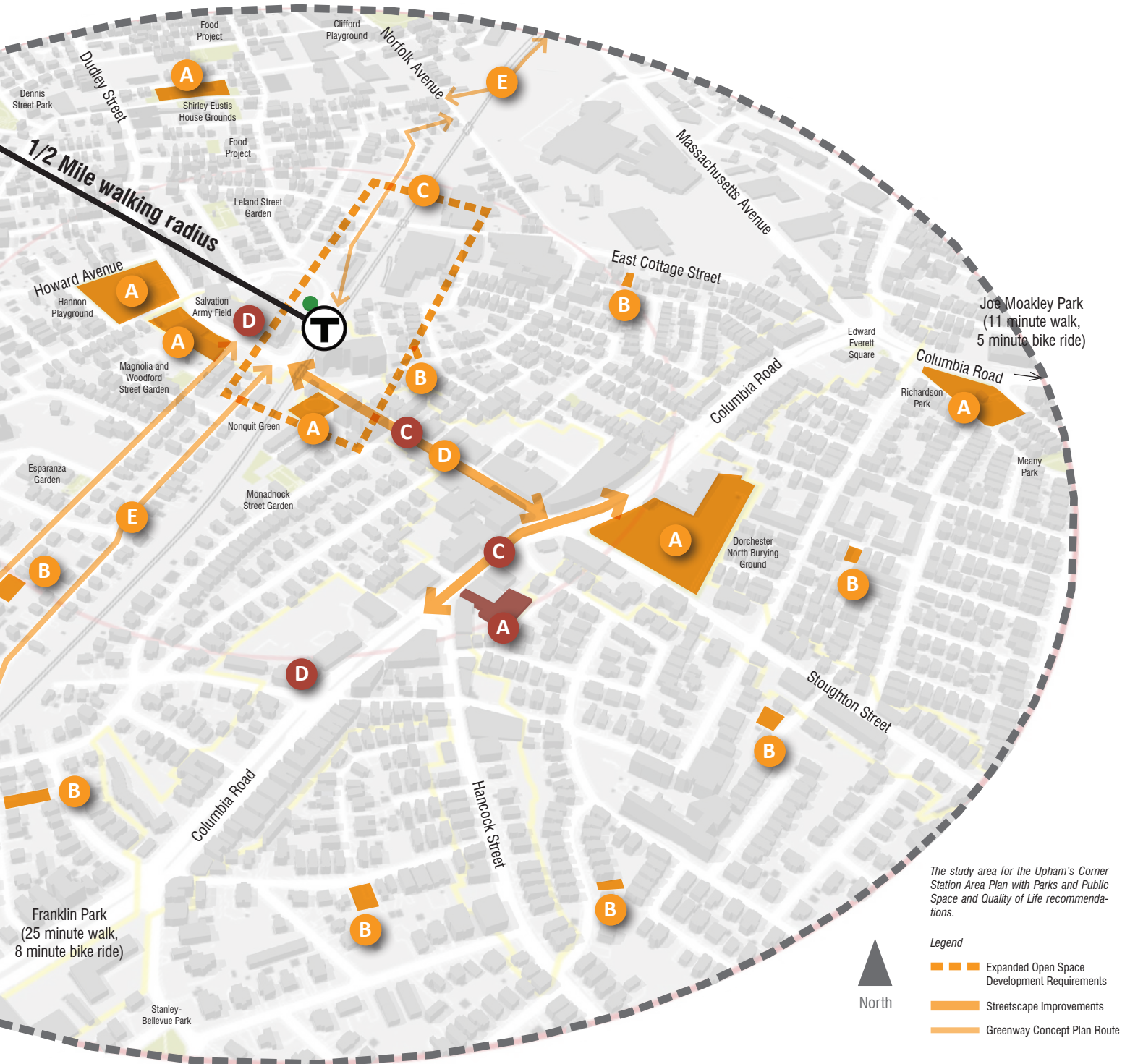


## Quality of Life

The Station Area is anchored by the unique cultural asset of the Strand Theatre and a vital collection of community and health centers, historic buildings and residences that provide strong anchors. The following approaches build upon existing amenities to improve quality of life:

- A Art and Culture** - capitalize on the unique district opportunity to showcase public art, artists, and performance.
- B Public Safety** - address resident, business and visitor safety concerns through active and thriving ground floor uses, well-lit pedestrian-oriented streets and a renewed sense of pride.
- C Traffic and Parking** - reduce congestion on Dudley Street and Columbia Road with turn lane improvements, relocated bus stops, and parking management.
- D Community Amenities** - reinforce events and programs at community centers, health centers and training centers through a coordinated network information and displays to connect the community.
- E Sustainability** - become an exemplar of healthy neighborhoods socially, economically and environmentally.





## Upham's Corner Implementation Actions

*The Implementation Actions are the critical components of Station Area strategies highlighted as actionable items.*

The community vision outlined for Upham's Corner is not achieved through a single action or solution, but through a series of purposeful and strategic changes that position the Station Area for a positive and incremental evolution over time. This continuum of positive change is already underway and can be expedited with the following key actions:

### **Attract Redevelopment**

The disposition of the Maxwell Property provides a very important opportunity for the City and community to promote Upham's Corner and to engage private investment with enthusiasm and positivity. In strategic locations, adopting a development friendly tone within the community along with several of the actions listed below will be an effective first step to attracting strategic redevelopment to other key properties in the Station Area and attracting investment into the community.

### **Modify Zoning**

A major step toward strategic growth and redevelopment is modification to the existing zoning. Several zoning modifications are justified by this community vision and were supported by the community in this process. First, dimensional regulations within the Neighborhood Shopping (NS) Subdistrict, roughly correlated to the Main Street District, should be increased to allow a mixed-use redevelopment height of 5 to 6 stories. Additionally, a gateway district should be established adjacent to the station that would allow more density for transit-oriented development with a height of 8 to 10 stories. Parking regulations should be decreased to acknowledge the Station Area as a transit-advantaged location and to provide

more potential land area for active uses. Lastly, modification of the Neighborhood Shopping Subdistrict boundary to capture the key sites would reinforce continuity of the district.

### **Enable Development Guidelines**

Many important community goals have been formulated and articulated through this planning process. Existing urban design guidelines are in effect for the Neighborhood Shopping (NS) subdistrict and Neighborhood Design Overlay District and should be expanded to articulate shared parking arrangements, active ground floor uses, and height setbacks to reinforce the continuity of the street wall and consistency with historic buildings.

### **Leverage Publicly-Owned Land**

City-owned property should be strategically and sequentially disposed to build momentum for redevelopment. A public disposition and community process should establish development guidelines and potential community benefits for each property. These guidelines should be consistent with the overall vision identified in the Station Area Plan and the specific development guidelines referenced for particular key sites.

### **Reinforce the Main Street District**

Build upon the strength of the existing businesses and vitality of the Main Street District with facade and signage improvements working with the City of Boston Main Streets Program. Consider a special assessment of business improvement district program in which businesses would contribute to an improvement and maintenance fund for the district. The funds could be used for agreed upon improvements or create a revolving loan fund to assist business owners.



### **Enhance Walkability and Mobility**

Unlocking the benefits of enhanced rail access at Upham’s Corner is as much about the characteristics of enhanced access to the station as it is about the characteristics of rail service at the station. The Station Area must be a safe and comfortable walkable environment that provides convenient and accessible connections to other modes of transportation.

### **Invest in Street Improvements**

In a Station Area with many demands upon street network, it is very important that the streets and public realm perform multiple functions. Improved streetscape conditions and traffic signal improvements are critical for traffic and bus transit circulation. The addition of expanded sidewalk and public plaza space is equally as important at the center of the Main Street District. The street network must be viewed as a rich and active public space that is used by cars, transit, pedestrians and bikes.

### **Promote Main Street Economic Development**

Upham’s Corner should take a proactive lead in promoting the Fairmount Corridor and building it up as it evolves so that the long term synergy and opportunities that the Corridor brings will return to Upham’s in the future. A “match-making” initiative should be undertaken to approach the type of food-oriented tenants the community would like to see in the district, that support the activity at the Strand Theater, and connect them to potential properties or with landlords or developers. These efforts should continue to partner with the City’s Office of Business Development and work with the City to support revitalization efforts.

### **Share and Manage Parking**

A coordinated and managed approach to parking in the Station Area and commercial center is needed to reinforce efficient land use, convenience, and high levels of activity. Many of the public and private surface parking areas in Upham’s Corner are underutilized on a daily basis. A coordinated approach to shared parking and parking management should be created and agreed to such that the adequate parking supplies of the district are used more effectively.

### **Leverage the Strand Theatre**

The cultural anchor of the Strand Theater provides a calendar of events when the Upham’s Main Street Community should focus its efforts. Hours of operation should be catered to the event, advertisements for local businesses placed on event programs, information or special offers for local restaurants promoted. Each event at the Strand Theater should be viewed as an opportunity to showcase all that Upham’s Corner has to offer.

### **Expand Public Art Programs**

The activities, art events, and installations created as part of the ArtPlace initiative are extremely valuable cultural and community building features. The use of public art to promote Upham’s Corner as an active, vital and creative place should be expanded and include both temporary and permanent installations. The art murals that are a part of Upham’s Corner should be expanded upon and become a significant feature of positive community expressions. The focus of this effort should be upon the most visible and well-traveled portions of the Station Area and should be designed to maximize impact and public engagement.



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