



thoreau path

Stoss Landscape Urbanism

landscape architecture, team lead

Boston, MA

Wojciechowski Design

signage design

Somerville, MA

Nitsch Engineering

civil + transportation engineering

site sustainability

Boston, MA

Davis Langdon

cost estimating

Boston, MA

Bryant Associates

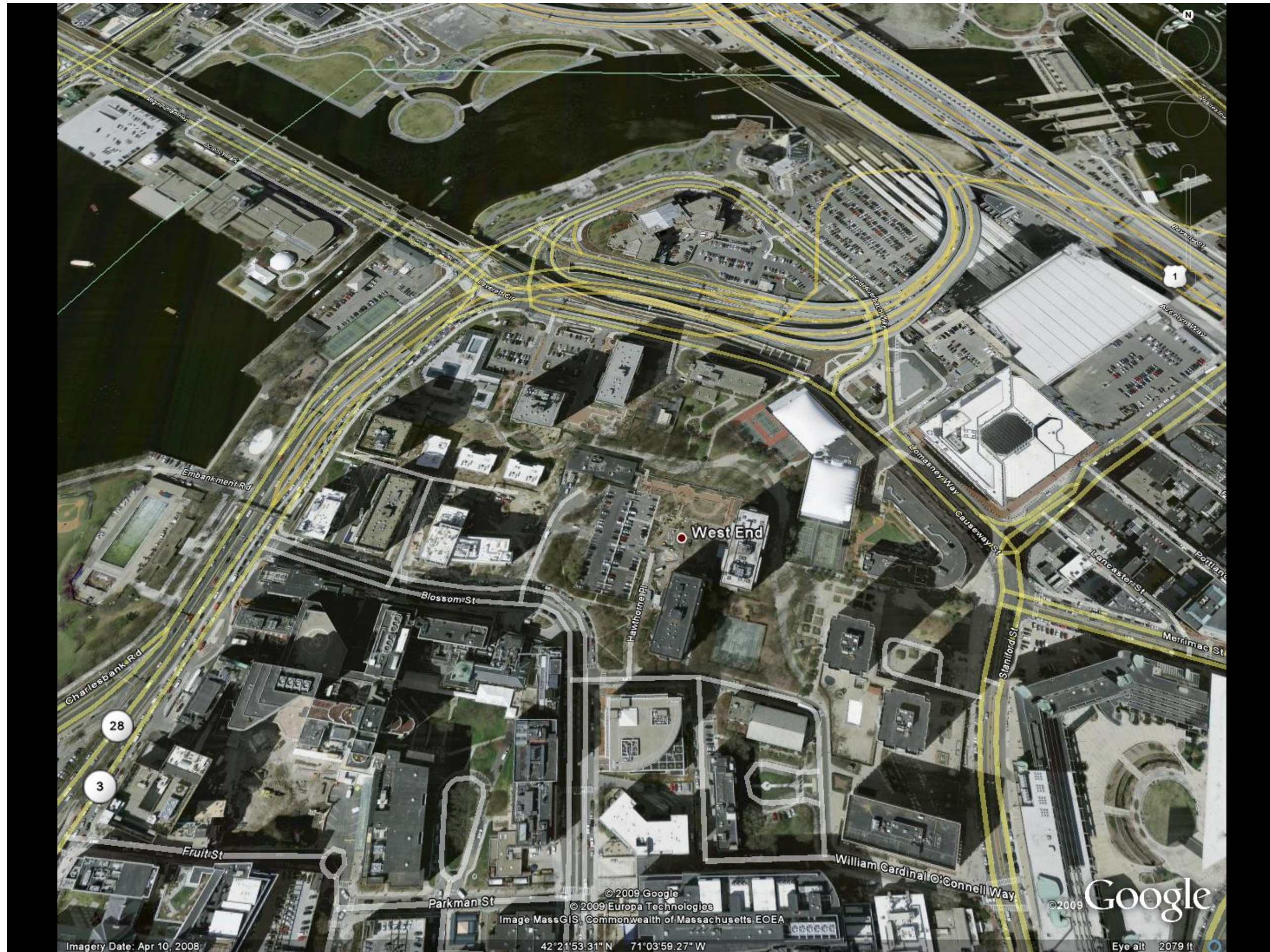
surveying

Cambridge, MA

McPhail Associates

geotechnical engineering + testing

Boston, MA







BRA0901 Thoreau Path

EXISTING CONDITIONS REPORT

- meeting
- coordination
- existing document review
- site analysis
- document preparation

PRELIMINARY DESIGN
(pathway, plantings, signage)

- coordination
- survey updates
- concept design
- concept drawings
- presentation drawings
- public meetings + review

PRELIMINARY DESIGN DRAWING SET

- coordination
- demolition plan
- materials plan
- layout plan
- planting plan
- signage plan
- site sections
- site details
- specifications
- cost estimate

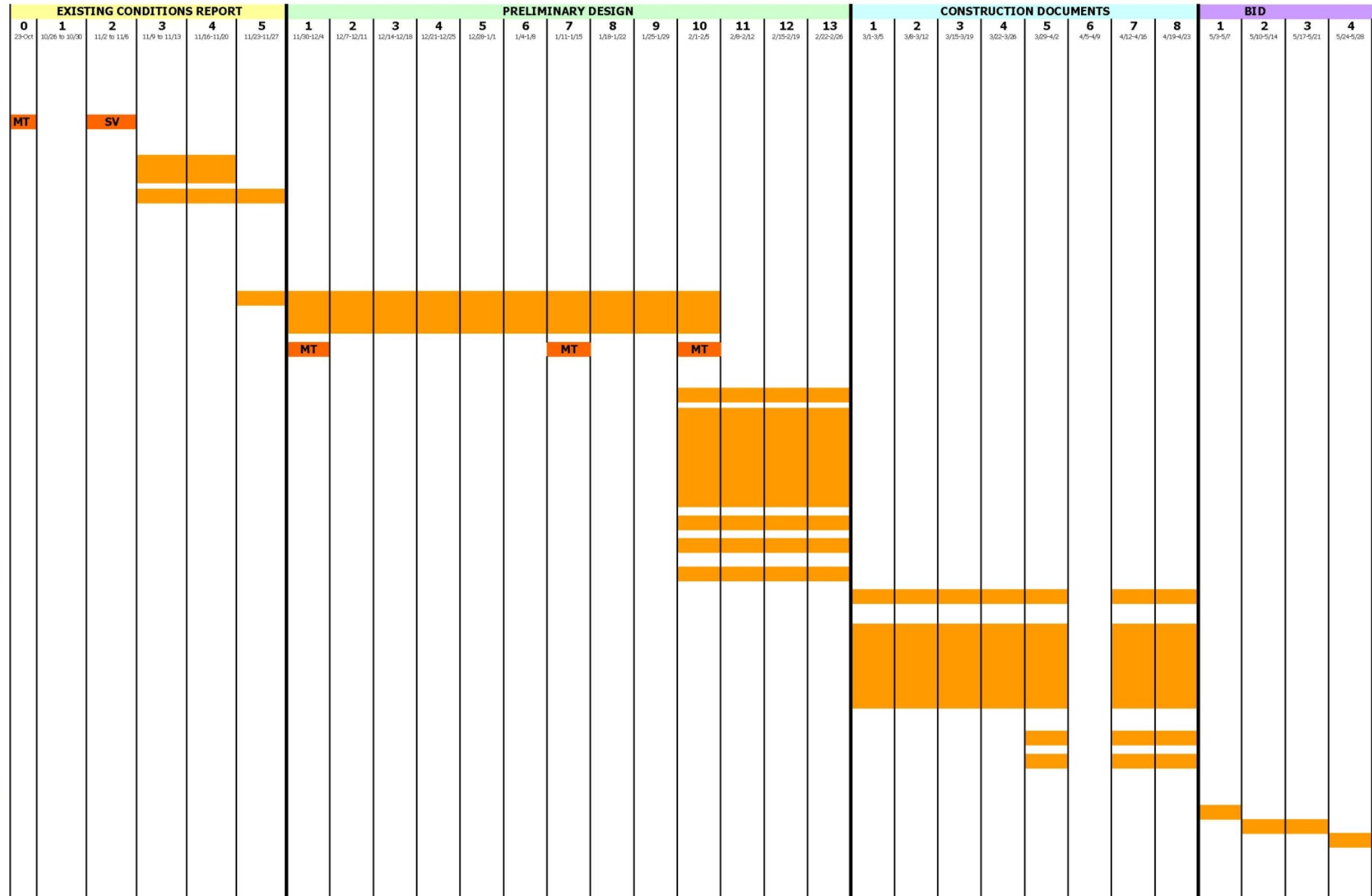
CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS

- coordination
- demolition plan
- materials plan
- layout plan
- planting plan
- signage plan
- site sections
- site details
- additional BRA requirements
- specifications
- cost estimate

BID

- pre-bid meeting
- respond to RFI
- analyze bid

CONSTRUCTION ADMINISTRATION



THOREAU PATH ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE

EXISTING CONDITIONS REPORT: NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2009

PRELIMINARY DESIGN: DECEMBER 2009 -JANUARY 2010

CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS: MARCH-APRIL 2010

BID PERIOD: MAY 2010

CONSTRUCTION: SUMMER-FALL 2010

THOREAU PATH ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE

EXISTING CONDITIONS REPORT: NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2009

---public meeting

PRELIMINARY DESIGN: DECEMBER 2009 -JANUARY 2010

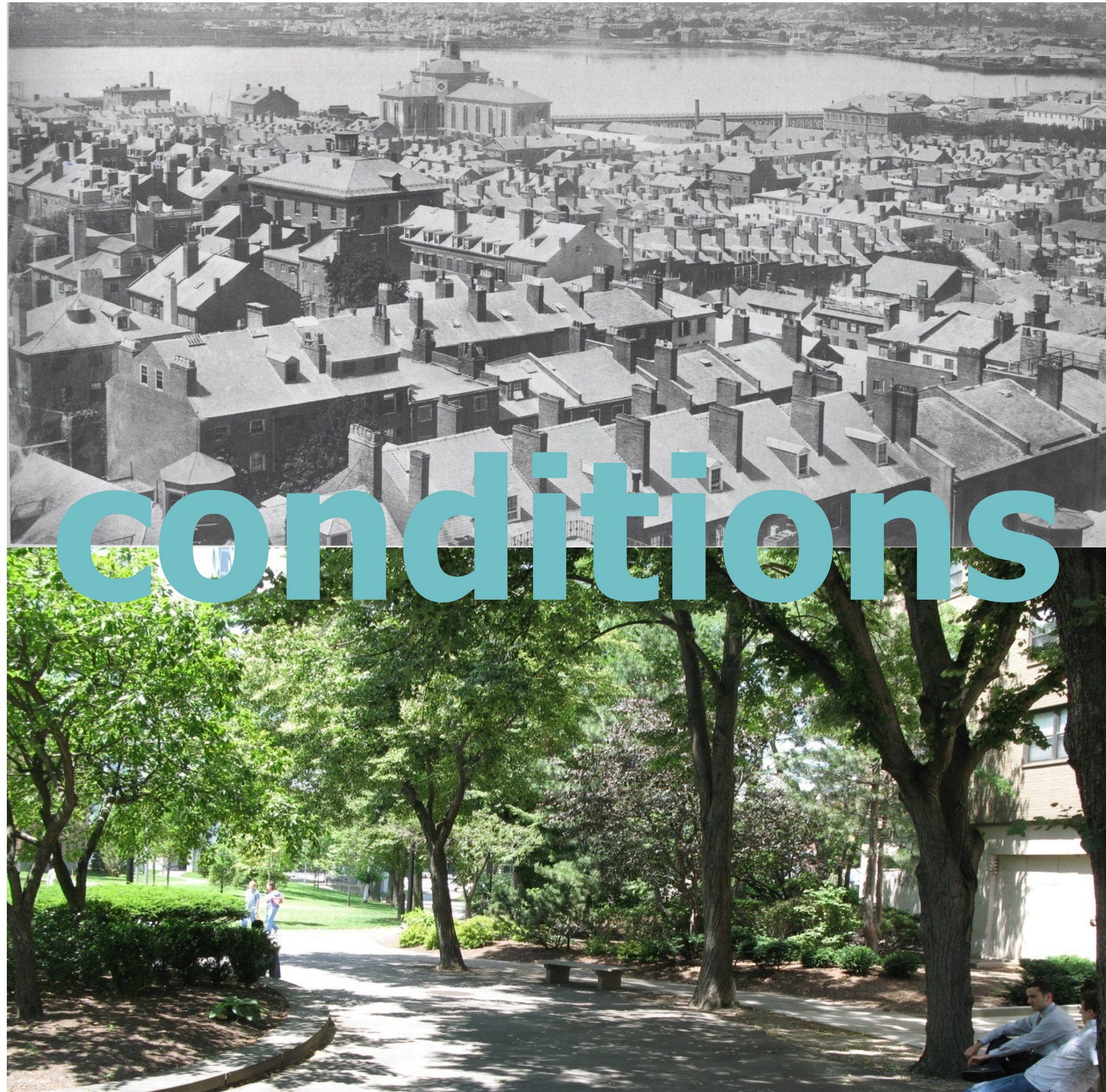
---public meeting

---public meeting

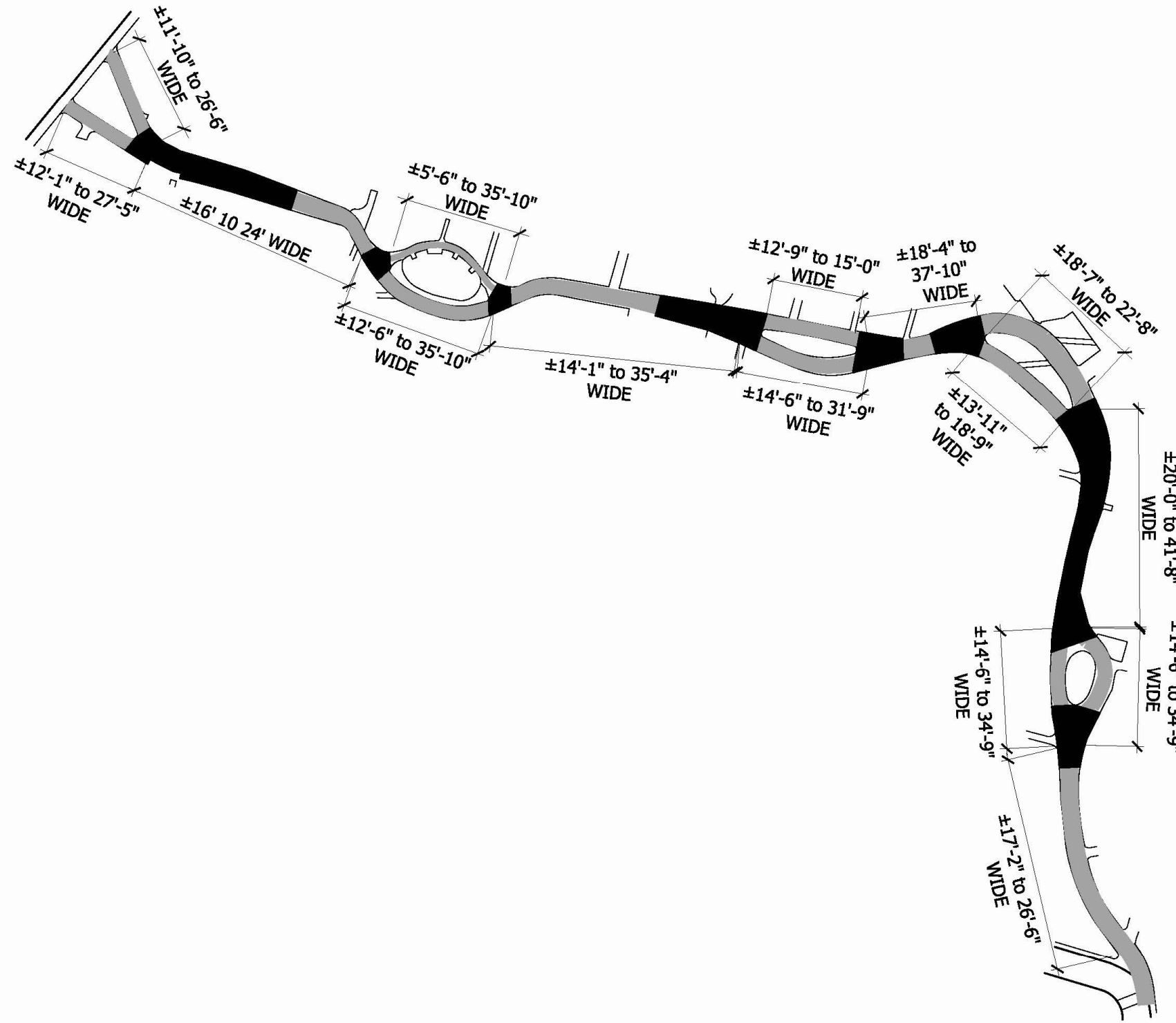
CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS: MARCH-APRIL 2010

BID PERIOD: MAY 2010

CONSTRUCTION: SUMMER-FALL 2010



conditions



THE CURRENT PATHWAY

The Thoreau Path is a pedestrian pathway that runs between many of the West End properties. Constructed in 1964 by the Boston Redevelopment Authority, the pathway makes its way from Cardinell O'Connell Way to North Charles Street with connections to Staniford Street, Lomasney Way and Martha Road as well as all of the neighboring properties. A vibrant pedestrian corridor, it serves both the neighborhood and the commuters passing through between North Station and Massachusetts General Hospital.

Yet, the pathway, while extremely functional for those who happen upon it, lacks identity and cohesiveness. There is much room for enhancement to what is now a strictly utilitarian way to get from here to there.

In its dimensions the pathway is at places very ample at over 30 feet wide and at places it narrows to a mere 5'-6". The areas over 20 feet wide are highlighted in black on the adjacent diagram and the dimensional range is called out. It is this diversity that needs to be studied and captured so that the pathway can be enjoyed to its upmost potential by those who use it daily and by those who happen upon it and need to understand it as a remnant of a historic place in Boston.

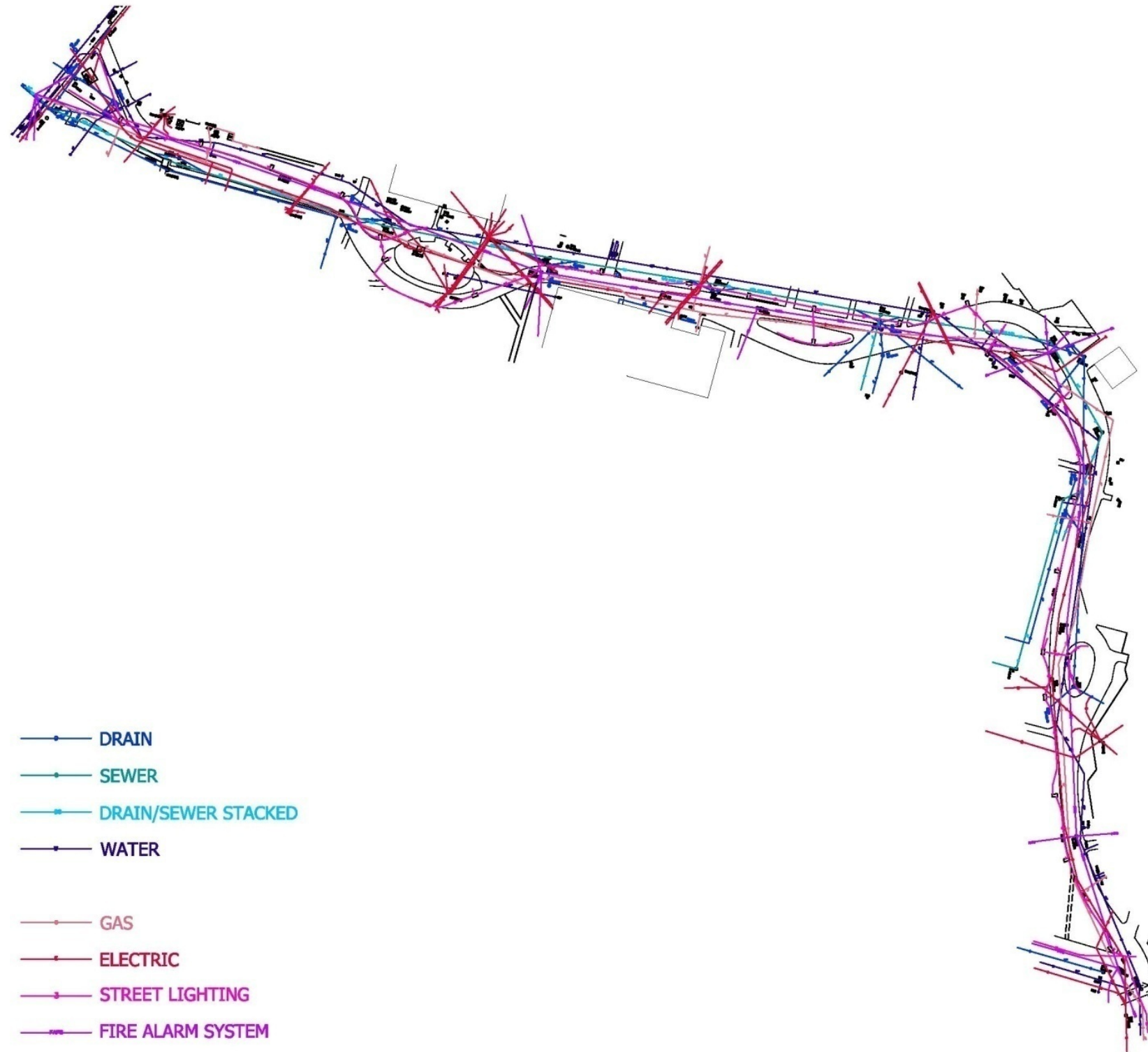
The path will be reviewed by the Boston Fire Department to ensure compliance with safety codes.

UTILITIES

The pathway is a major utility corridor, which electric, gas, storm, sewer, water and fire alarm systems running underneath the paved surface.

In addition, there is irrigation piping and street lighting for the irrigation systems and lights along the corridor.

All future work must be carefully coordinated with these underground systems and their access demands.





water



sewer



drainage



irrigation



fire



fire



fire alarm



gas



gas

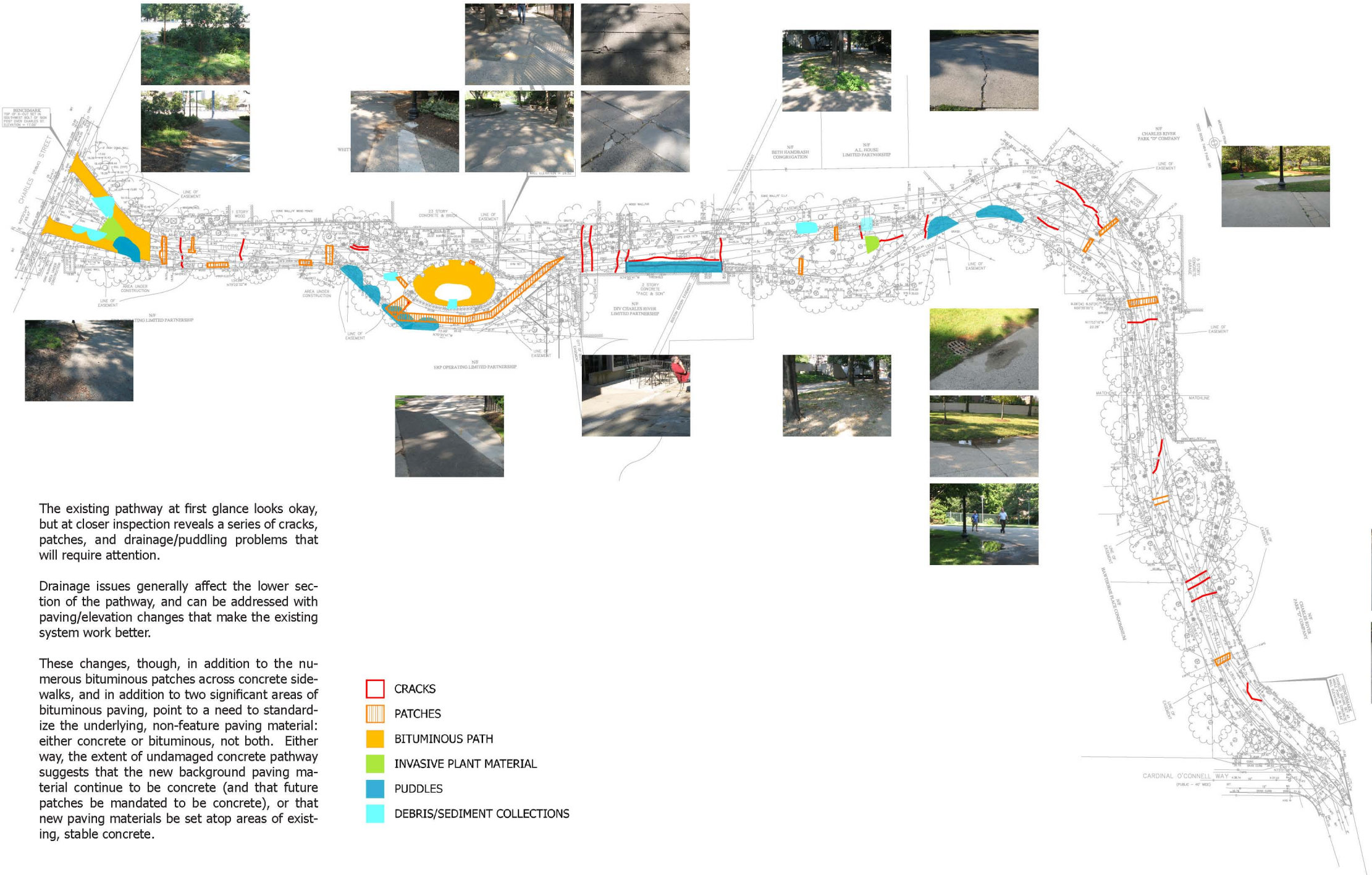


electric



electric

EXISTING CONDITIONS: PRELIMINARY STUDY: AUGUST 2009



The existing pathway at first glance looks okay, but at closer inspection reveals a series of cracks, patches, and drainage/puddling problems that will require attention.

Drainage issues generally affect the lower section of the pathway, and can be addressed with paving/elevation changes that make the existing system work better.

These changes, though, in addition to the numerous bituminous patches across concrete sidewalks, and in addition to two significant areas of bituminous paving, point to a need to standardize the underlying, non-feature paving material: either concrete or bituminous, not both. Either way, the extent of undamaged concrete pathway suggests that the new background paving material continue to be concrete (and that future patches be mandated to be concrete), or that new paving materials be set atop areas of existing, stable concrete.

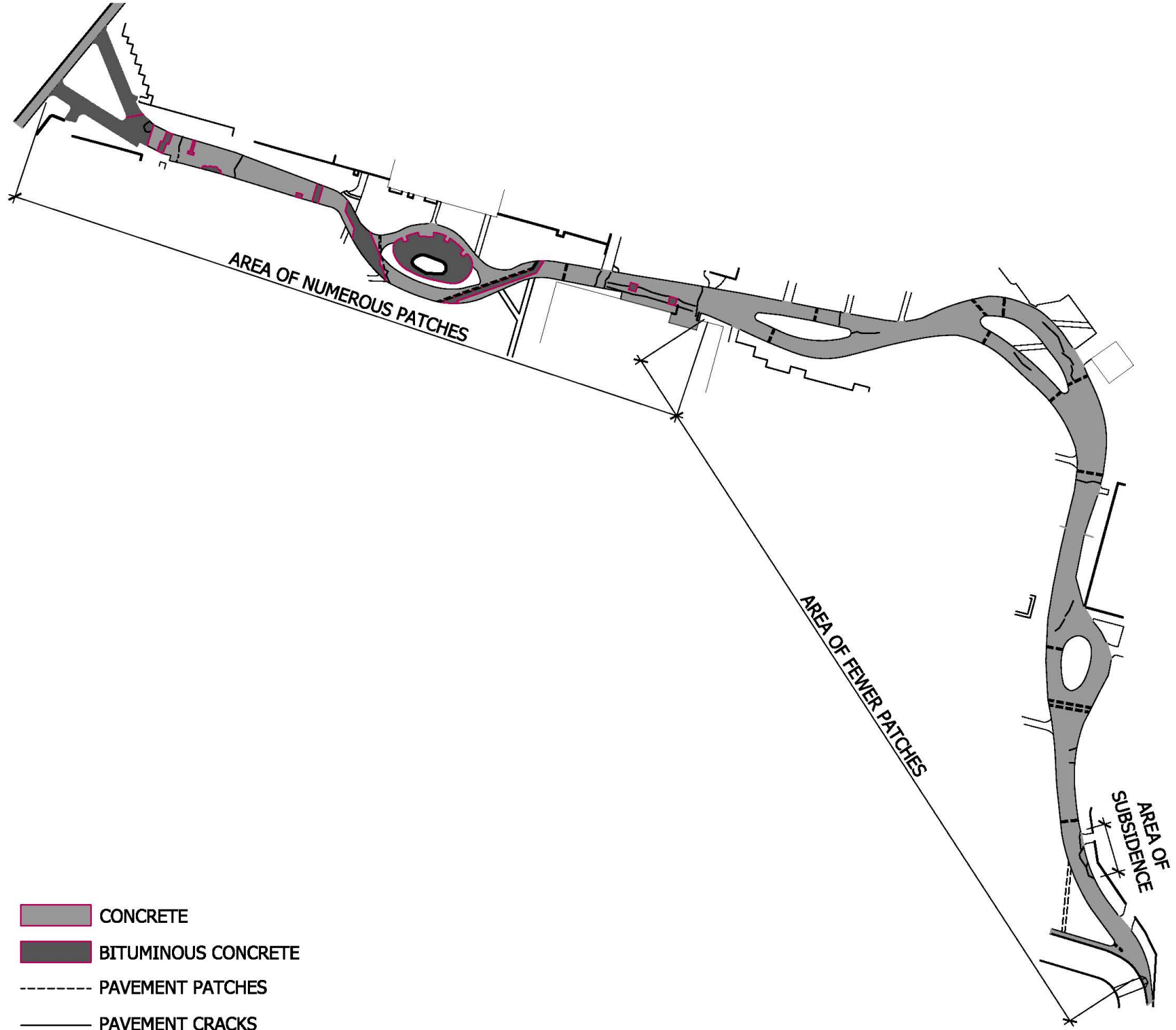
- CRACKS
- PATCHES
- BITUMINOUS PATH
- INVASIVE PLANT MATERIAL
- PUDDLES
- DEBRIS/SEDIMENT COLLECTIONS

PATHWAY SURFACE

The pathway surface is well-constructed and on first glance, in good overall condition. However, it has suffered from numerous patches following utility and construction work that has happened subsequent to the original pathway placement.

This work has left numerous visible patches and cracks, as well as locations where a concrete surface has been patched with bituminous concrete and vice versa.

In terms of structural failure, there is only one indication of this towards Cardinal O'Connell Way, where the soils beneath the path have likely failed and subsidence has occurred.



- CONCRETE
- BITUMINOUS CONCRETE
- PAVEMENT PATCHES
- PAVEMENT CRACKS



area of subsidence; pavement caving in; soils likely do not have structural capacity to support use;



pavement in poor condition



major patches/ incongruous materials



major patches/ incongruous materials



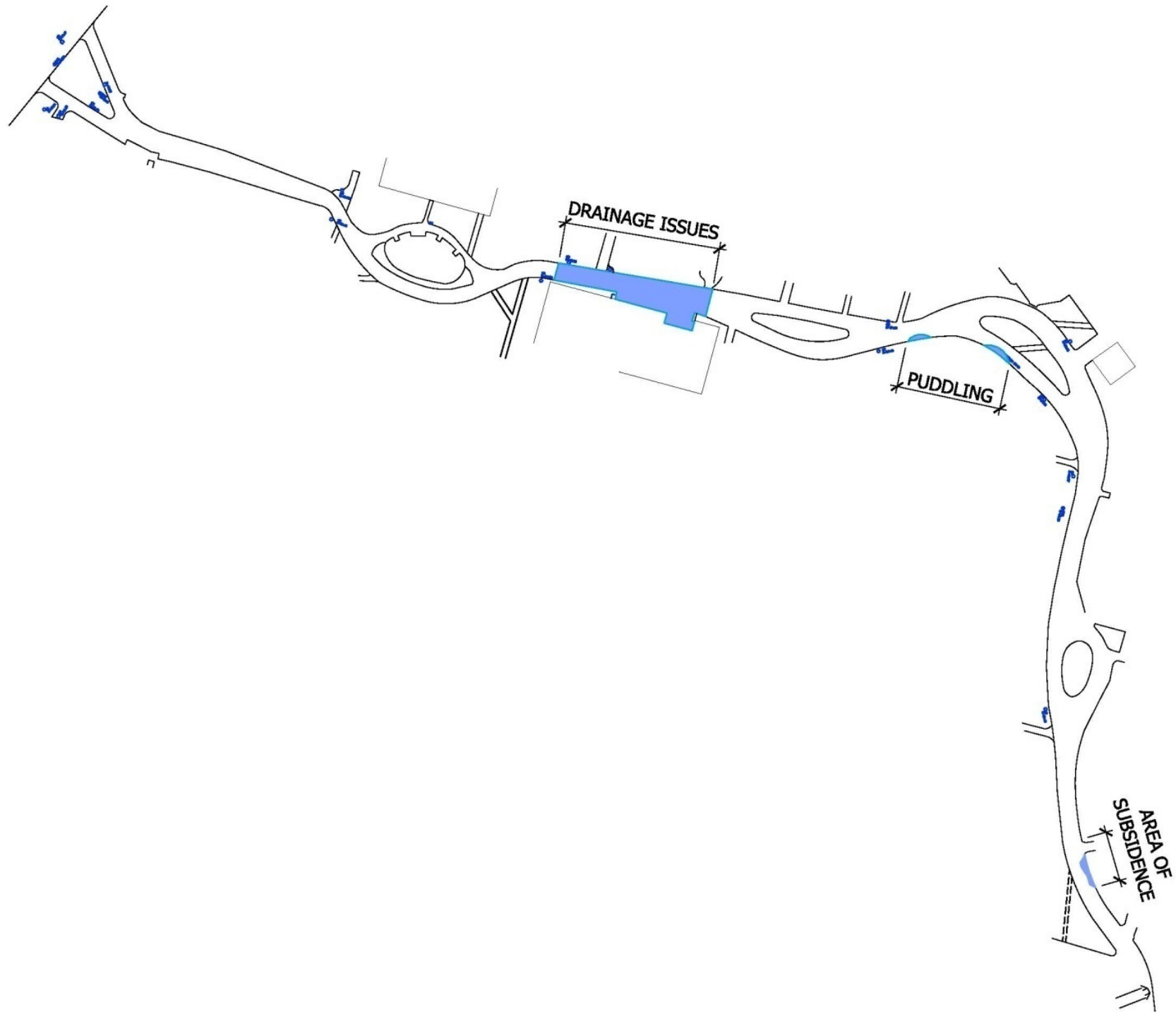
patches for utilities added to pathway



major areas replaced with asphalt paving



significant pavement cracks



DRAINAGE

While most of the Thoreau path drains properly, there are three problem areas.

At the southeast end of the site near Cardinal O'Connell Way, there is an area of subsidence where the soils under the pavement have likely failed and as a result the pavement has caved in and puddling is occurring.

There is an area of consistent puddling between the middle two nodes where the existing catch basins may not be at the actual low points to drain the stormwater area.

There are major issues in front of the Pace and Sons commercial building, where stormwater flooding concerns must be addressed.



bare patches of vegetation adjacent to most pathways

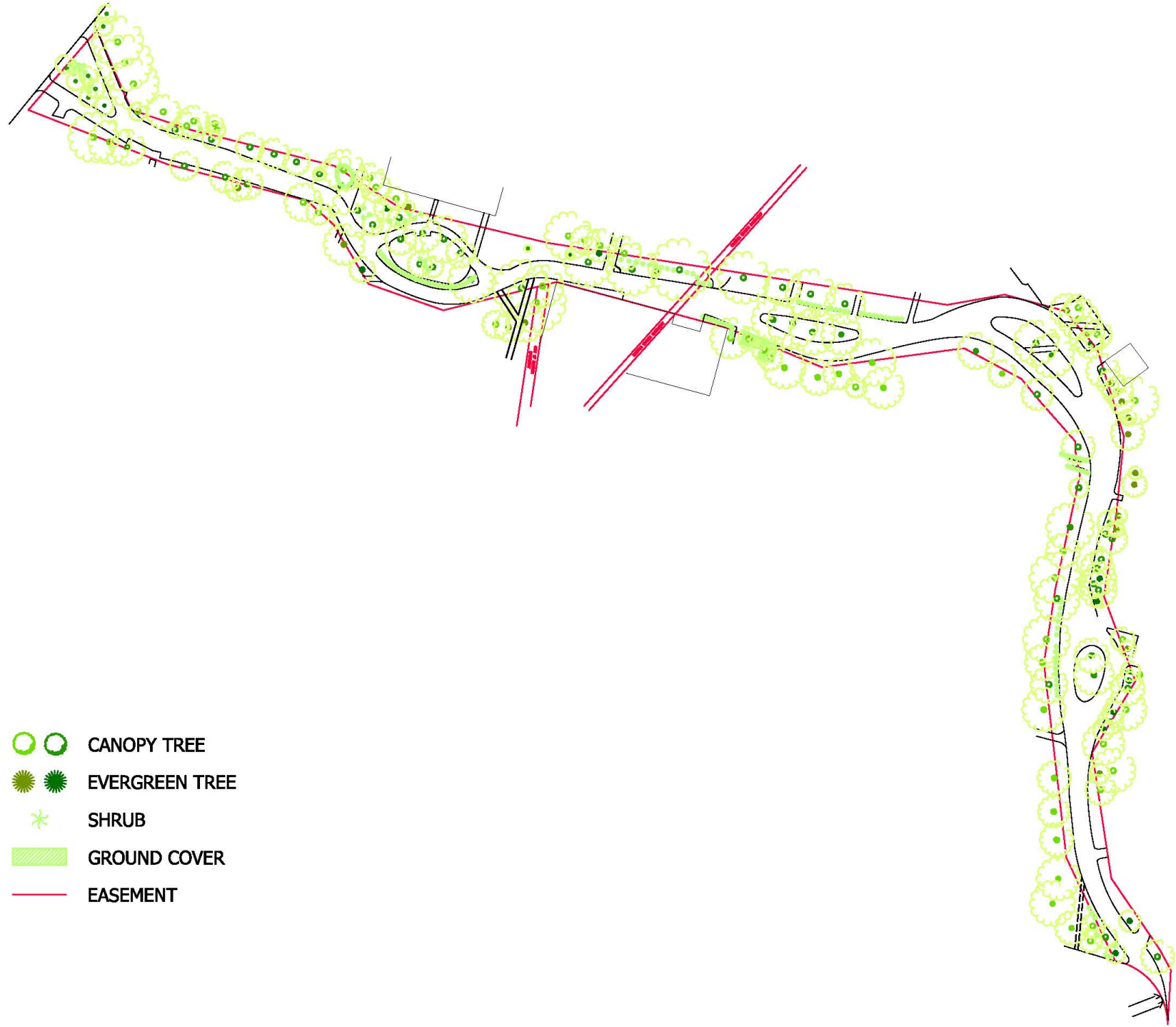
LANDSCAPE + VEGETATION

The existing canopy is mature, rich and robust and provides a great structure for the Thoreau Path. These existing trees should be pruned as necessary and protected throughout the improvement project.

The deciduous canopy is punctuated with evergreens, that mostly occur on the east end of the pathway.

The ground cover and shrub layer is spotty and largely serves as foundation planting for the adjacent properties—located outside of the easement and against the buildings—or as a way to screen private uses from public ones.

Some of the dense shrubbery isolates the spaces and should be reconsidered to open up programmatic uses. This is most notable at what is later referred to as the lowland node.



-  CANOPY TREE
-  EVERGREEN TREE
-  SHRUB
-  GROUND COVER
-  EASEMENT



rich canopy layer of mature trees



rich canopy layer of mature trees



trees are largely deciduous with some evergreens mixed in



dense shrubs isolate spaces; make areas undesirable



individual properties shrub layer creates piecemeal experience



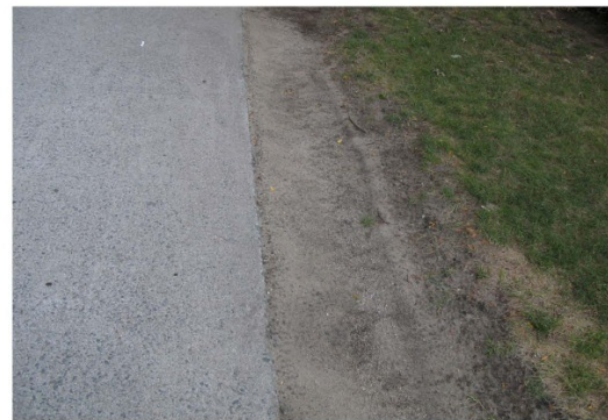
shrubs are used to protect adjacent properties from path



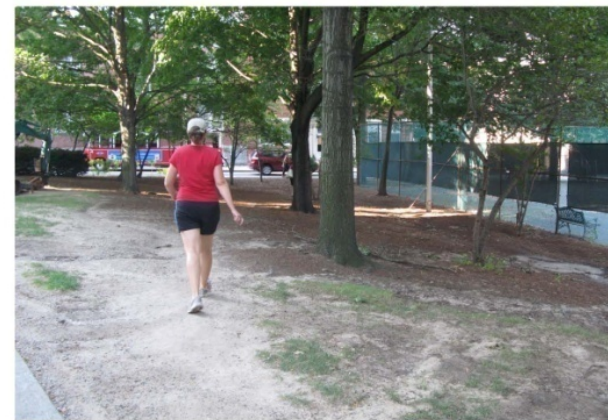
weeds in new plant beds



ground cover, where it exists, is spotty

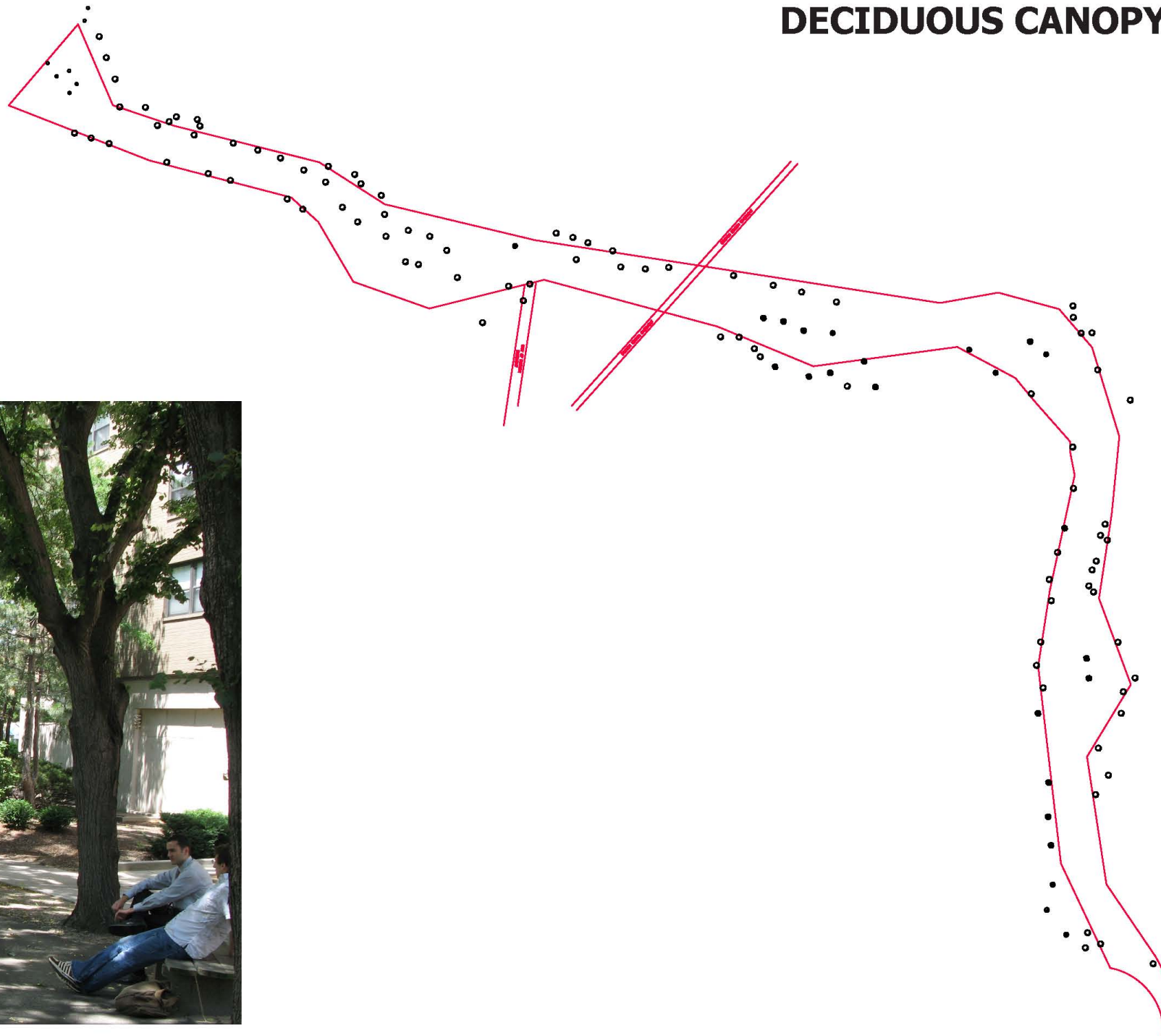


bare patches of vegetation adjacent to most pathways

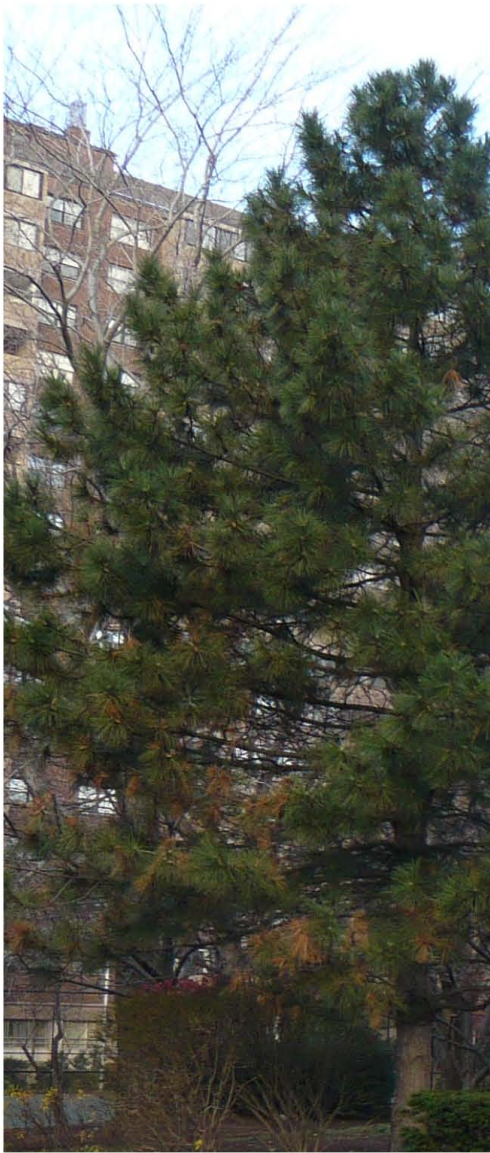


desire lines, worn through existing vegetation

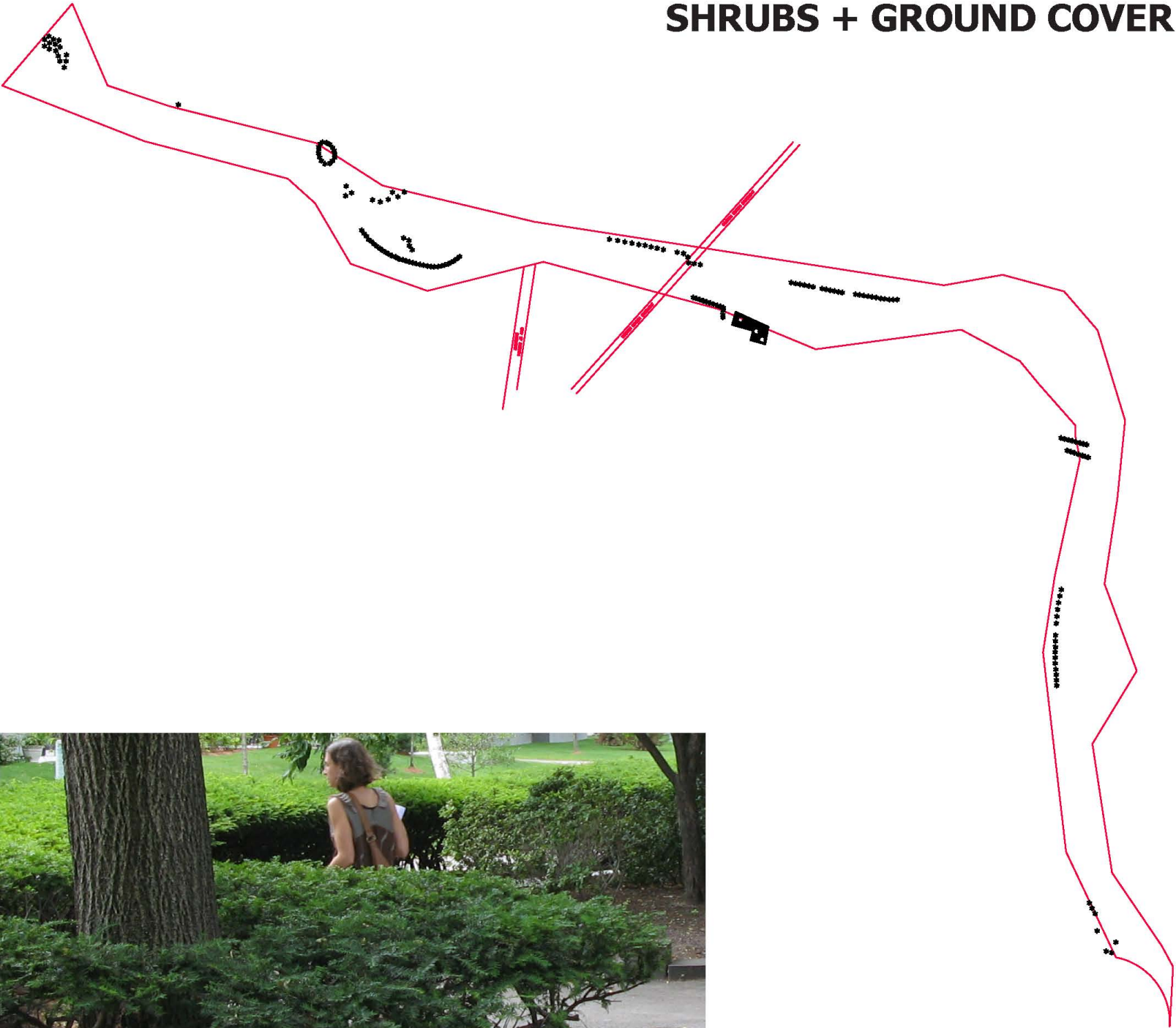
DECIDUOUS CANOPY



EVERGREENS



SHRUBS + GROUND COVER





rich canopy layer of mature trees



rich canopy layer of mature trees



trees are largely deciduous with some evergreens mixed in



dense shrubs isolate spaces; make areas undesirable



individual properties shrub layer creates piecemeal experience



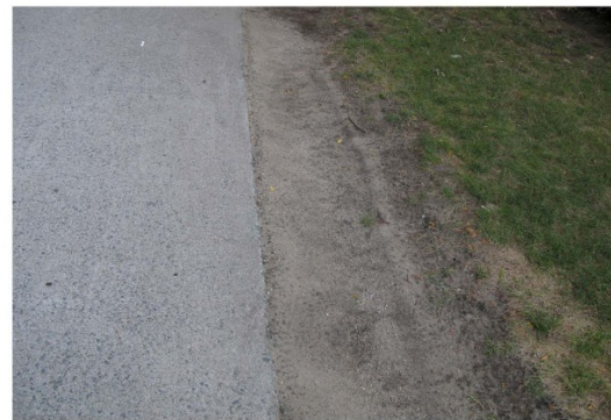
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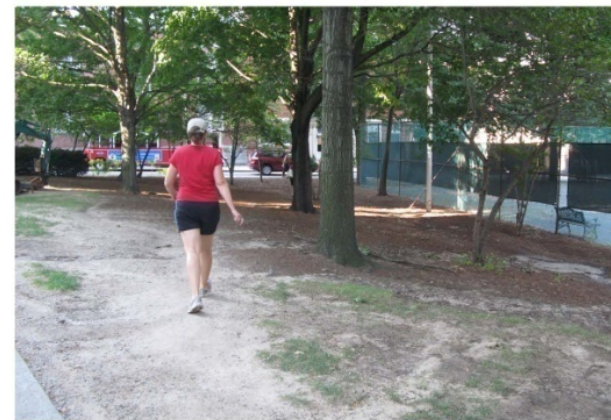
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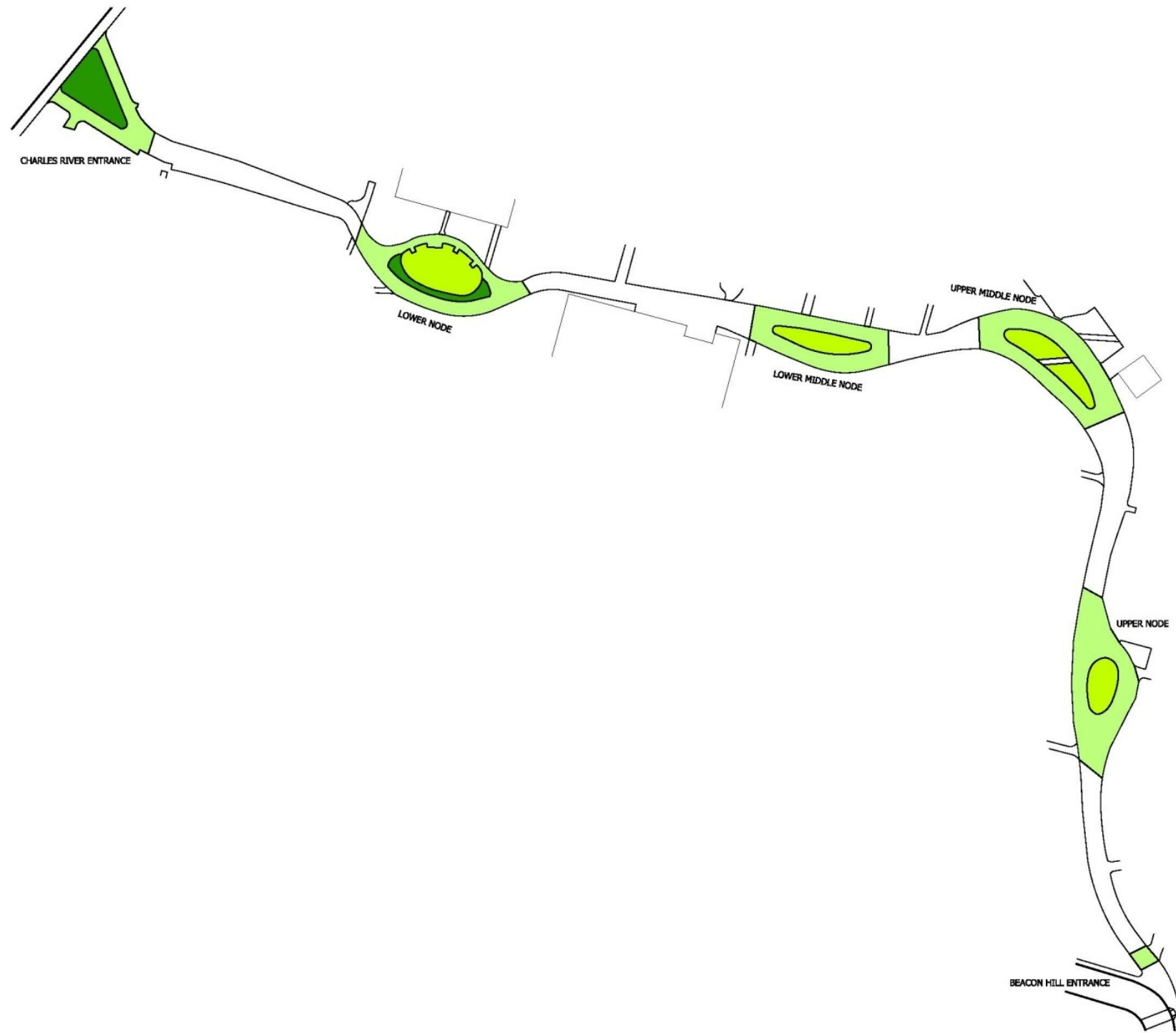
ground cover, where it exists, is spotty



bare patches of vegetation adjacent to most pathways



desire lines, worn through existing vegetation



MAJOR NODES

The main sitting and gathering opportunities at Thoreau Path center around the four nodes and two gateways, as identified on this plan.

In their existing condition, the nodes are merely places where the paths diverge to include a patch of potential landscape. The landscape, however, consists of a few trees and lights that could be greatly enhanced to provide places of identity and places of destination and gathering for the path.

WEST END ENTRANCE



UPPER NODE



UPPER MIDDLE NODE



LOWER MIDDLE NODE



LOWER NODE



CHARLES RIVER ENTRANCE



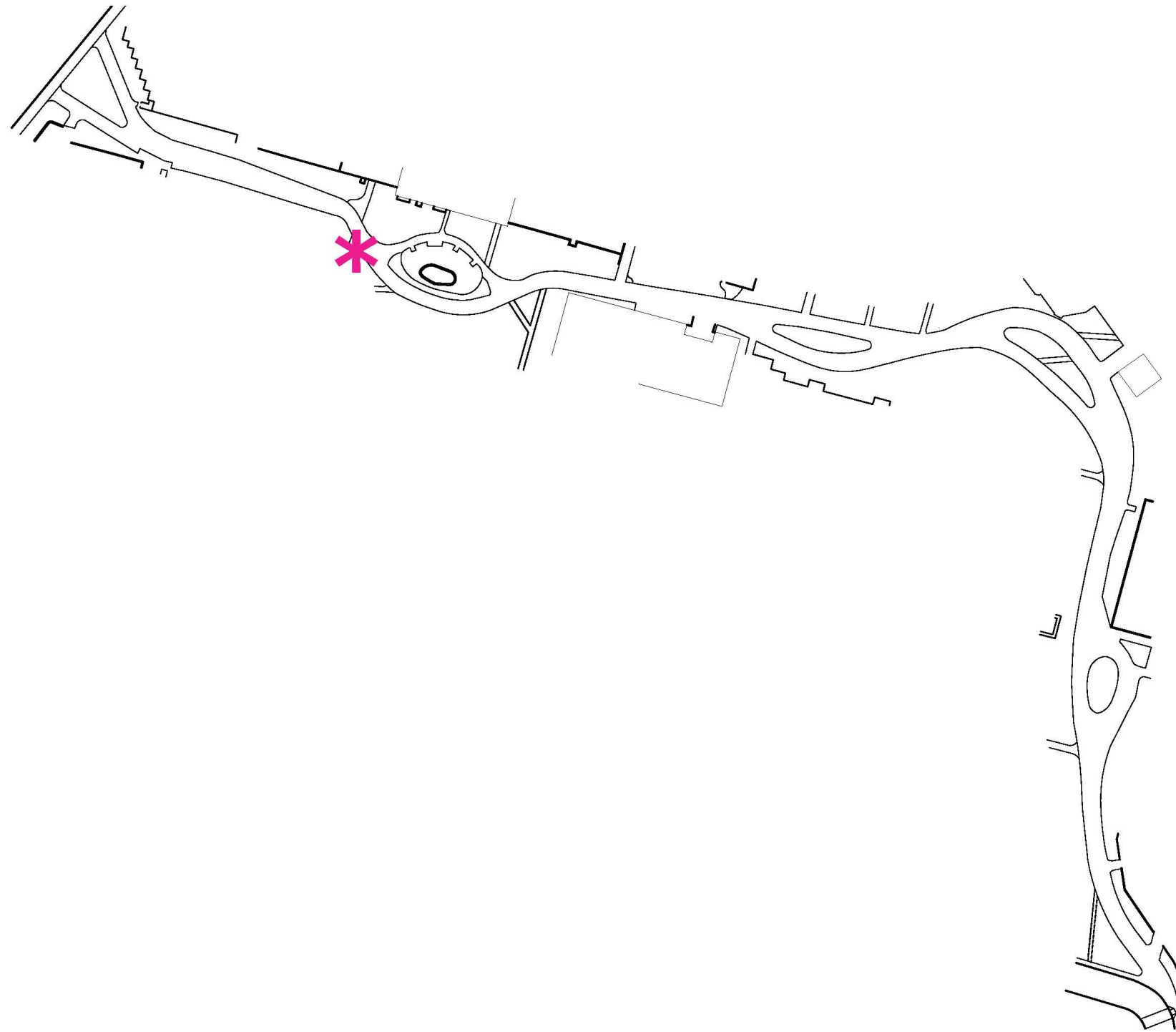


PATHWAY AMENITIES

The pathway has few amenities. In fact, there are only three benches, as well as one temporary trash receptacle outside of Pace and Sons deli. In the summer, there are tables outside of the deli which are well-used and add some vibrancy to the path experience.

To this end, there is a great opportunity to provide additional amenities to allow the pedestrian visitor to stop and linger—and to provide places along the entire distance of the pathway for gathering.





SIGNAGE

As of November 2009, there exists only one sign along Thoreau Path, located near the newly constructed West End Apartments. The main purpose of this sign is wayfinding, pointing pedestrians to the garage, the villa apartments, the Asteria apartments, the Emerson and Vesta apartments and to the Massachusetts General Hospital beyond.

The pathway will benefit from regulatory signage at the entrances to limit vehicular access to emergency vehicles only; and from gateway, interpretative and wayfinding signage to give identity to the path and to enhance the pedestrian experience.

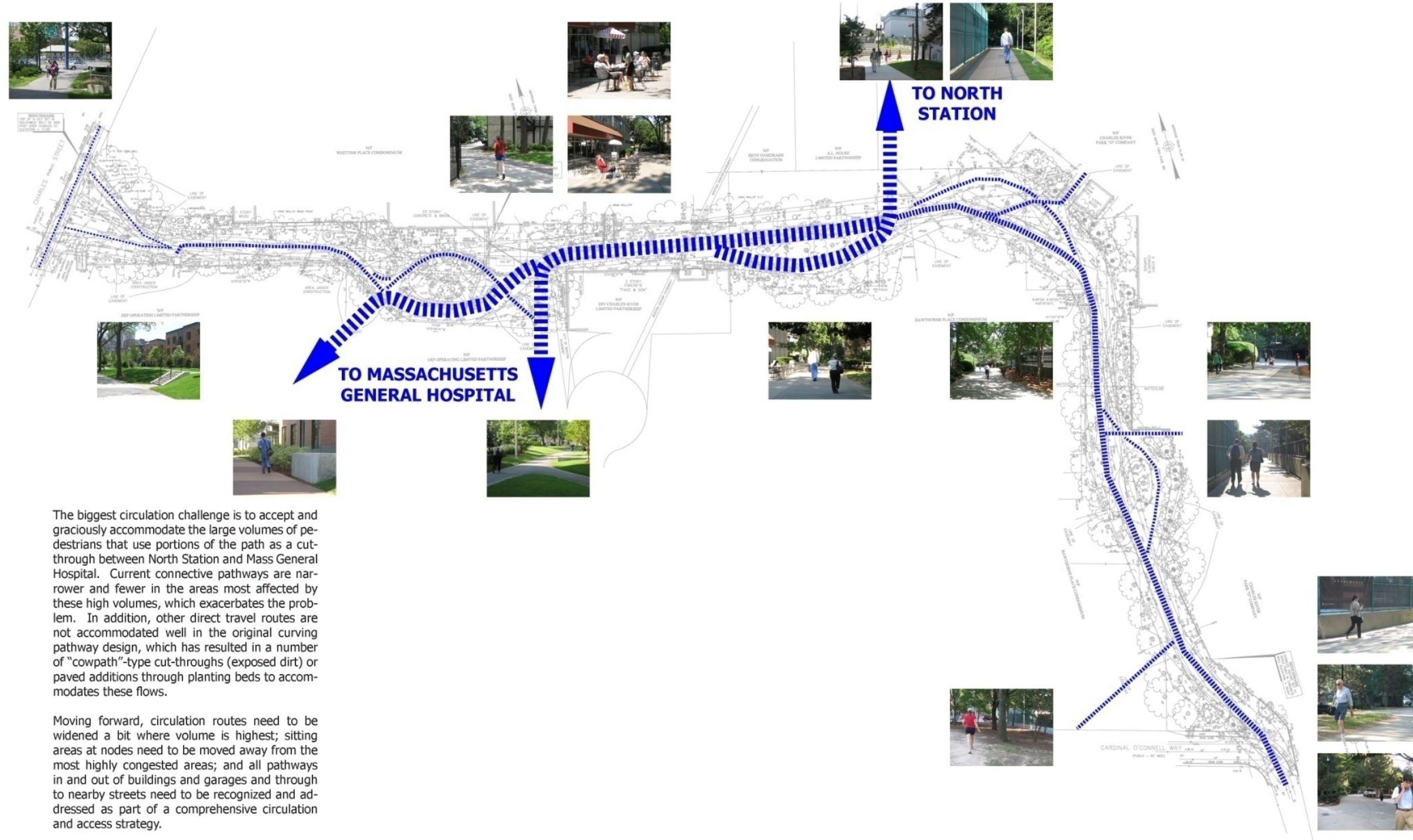


LIGHTING

The street lighting along Thoreau Path was installed with the 2007 street lighting improvement project and the lamps are distributed roughly 50'-75' on center with greater concentrations at the nodes.



EXISTING CIRCULATION PRELIMINARY STUDY: AUGUST 2009



The biggest circulation challenge is to accept and graciously accommodate the large volumes of pedestrians that use portions of the path as a cut-through between North Station and Mass General Hospital. Current connective pathways are narrower and fewer in the areas most affected by these high volumes, which exacerbates the problem. In addition, other direct travel routes are not accommodated well in the original curving pathway design, which has resulted in a number of "cowpath"-type cut-throughs (exposed dirt) or paved additions through planting beds to accommodate these flows.

Moving forward, circulation routes need to be widened a bit where volume is highest; sitting areas at nodes need to be moved away from the most highly congested areas; and all pathways in and out of buildings and garages and through to nearby streets need to be recognized and addressed as part of a comprehensive circulation and access strategy.



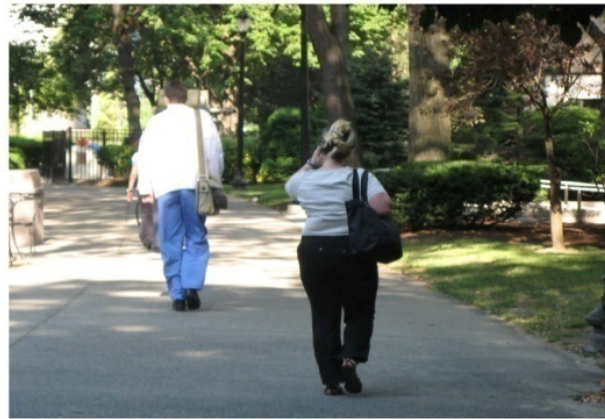
PEDESTRIAN ACCESS + USE

There are numerous access points to Thoreau Path and the path itself is always well-used, with two main constituent groups: residents who live in the adjacent buildings and commuters who cut through from the parking garages and North Station to Massachusetts General Hospital. There are two smaller user groups which are those persons with a destination including parents dropping children off at the Boston Children's School or persons going to the Boston Synagogue or to the deli and cleaners; and those runners cutting through from the Charles River to Beacon Hill.

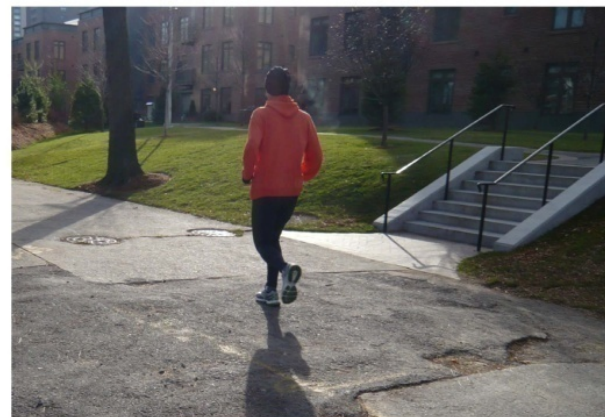
The heaviest use occurs in the middle of the path as indicated on the adjacent diagram, and there is much greater use on the west end of the site as opposed to the east end where the path practically dead ends into north Charles Street and the river beyond.

As previously mentioned in our earlier research included at the beginning of this report, the biggest concern is to accommodate all user groups satisfactorily and in a way that works for the often conflicting needs and desires of each group.

There are peak flows of users—those who use the path as a commuter cut-through—that need to be tactfully absorbed at points where the paths are the narrowest and direct pathways that need to be addressed within the existing path's sinuous layout.



commutes



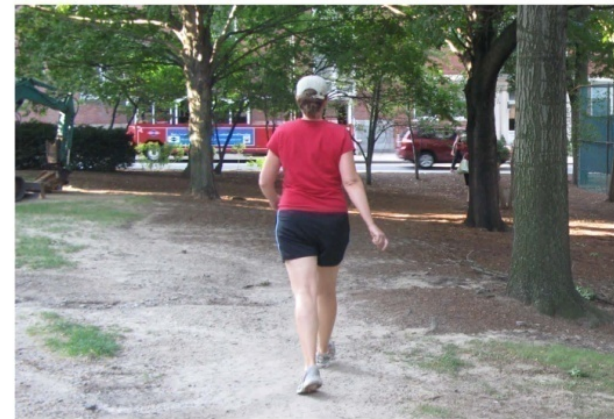
daily routines



neighborhood connections



construction and maintenance vehicles are prominent along the pathways



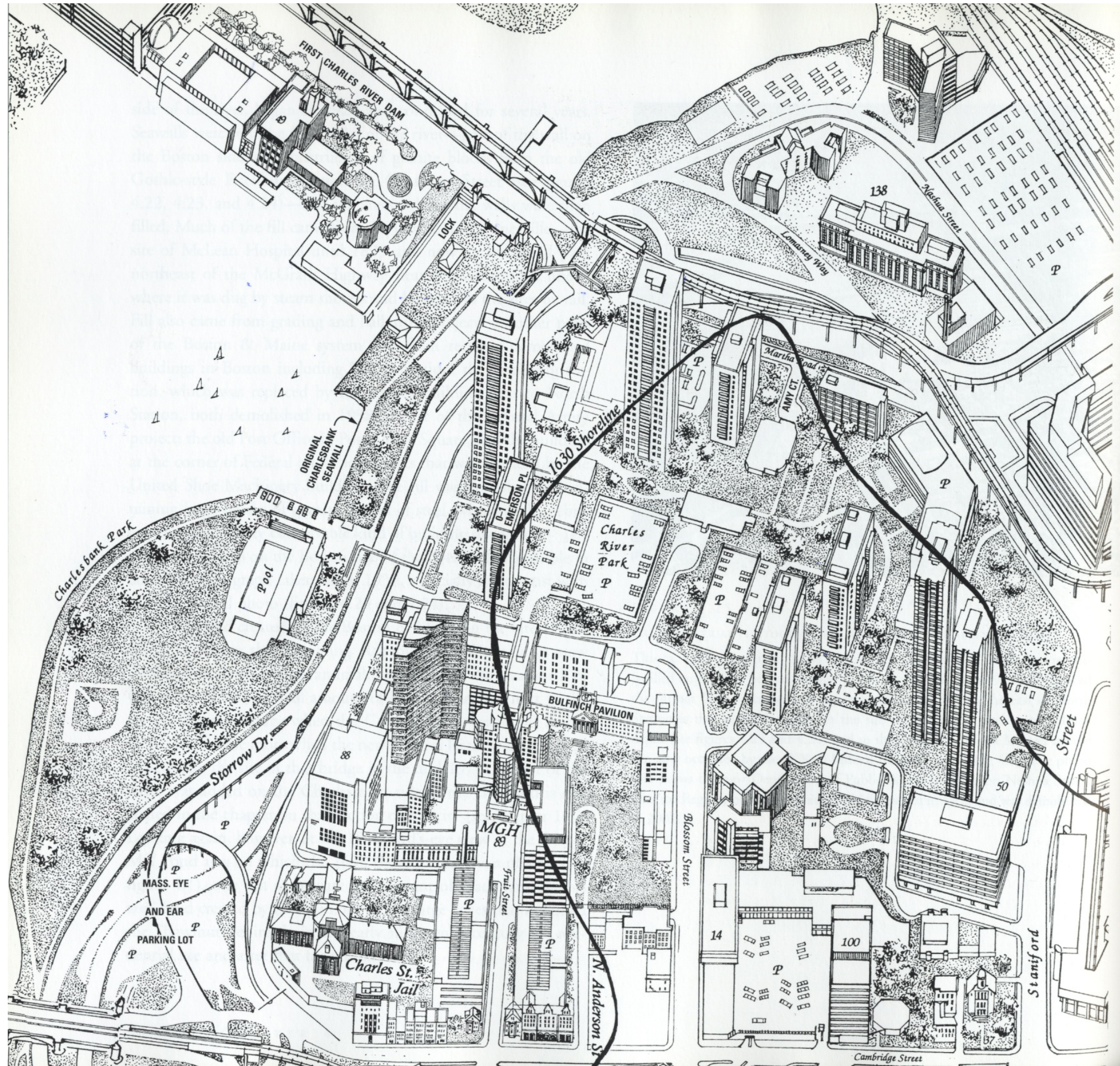
desire paths



history







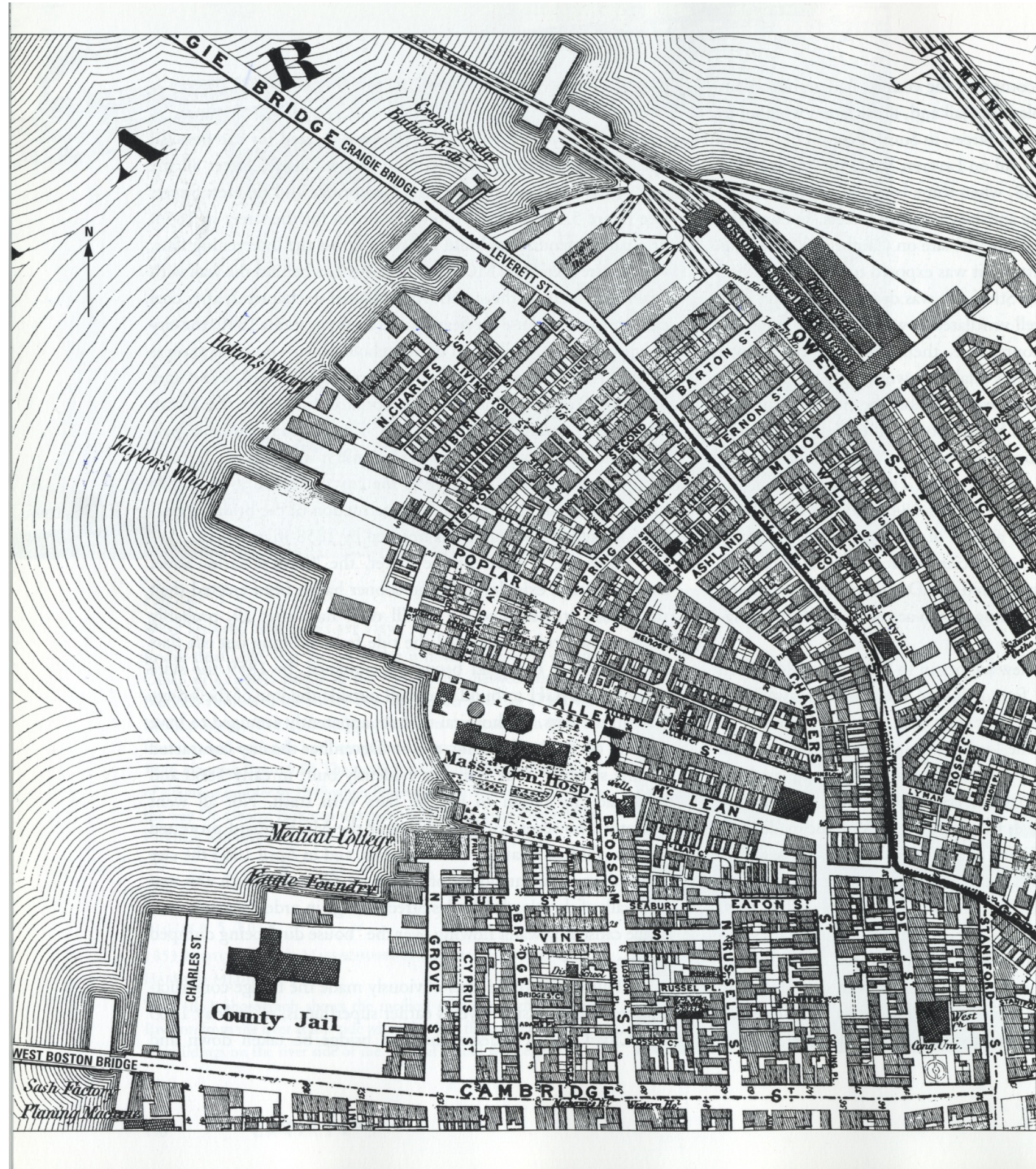


FIGURE 5.11
 WEST END ON 1852 MAP OF
 BOSTON BY I. SLATTER AND B.
 CALLAN

This map shows the land recently made for the Suffolk County (Charles Street) Jail and the new section of Charles Street in front of it. It also shows the Bulfinch Pavilion at MGH, a curving shoreline west of it, and the recently constructed Harvard Medical School building across from it on the river's edge.



geologic foundations
+
social histories

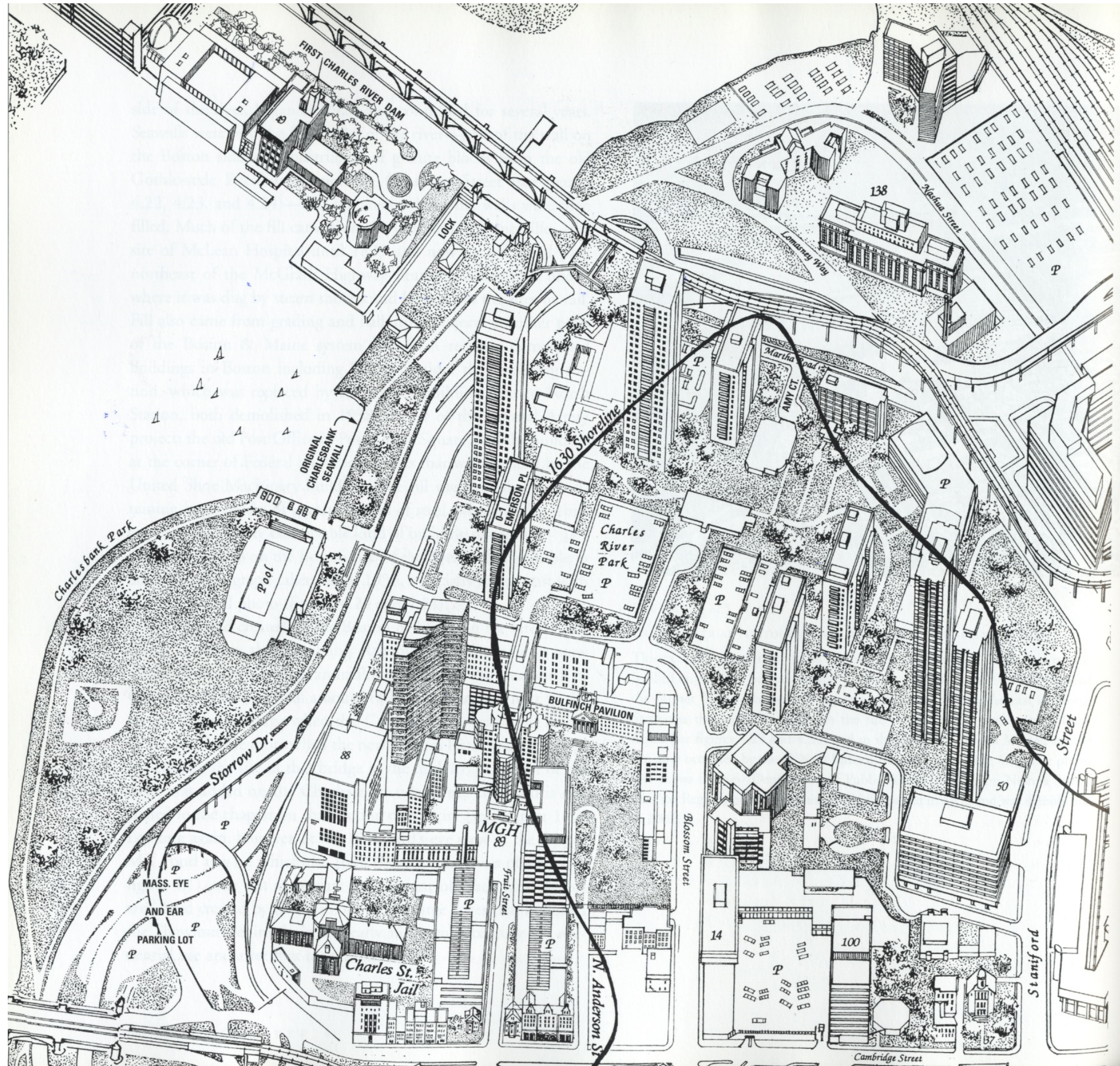
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geologic foundations

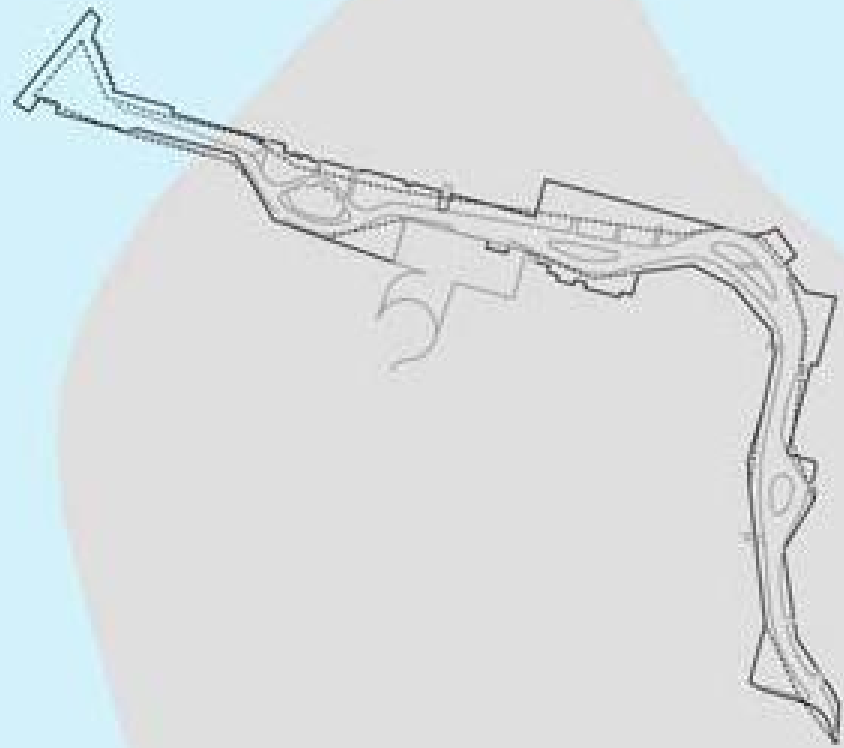
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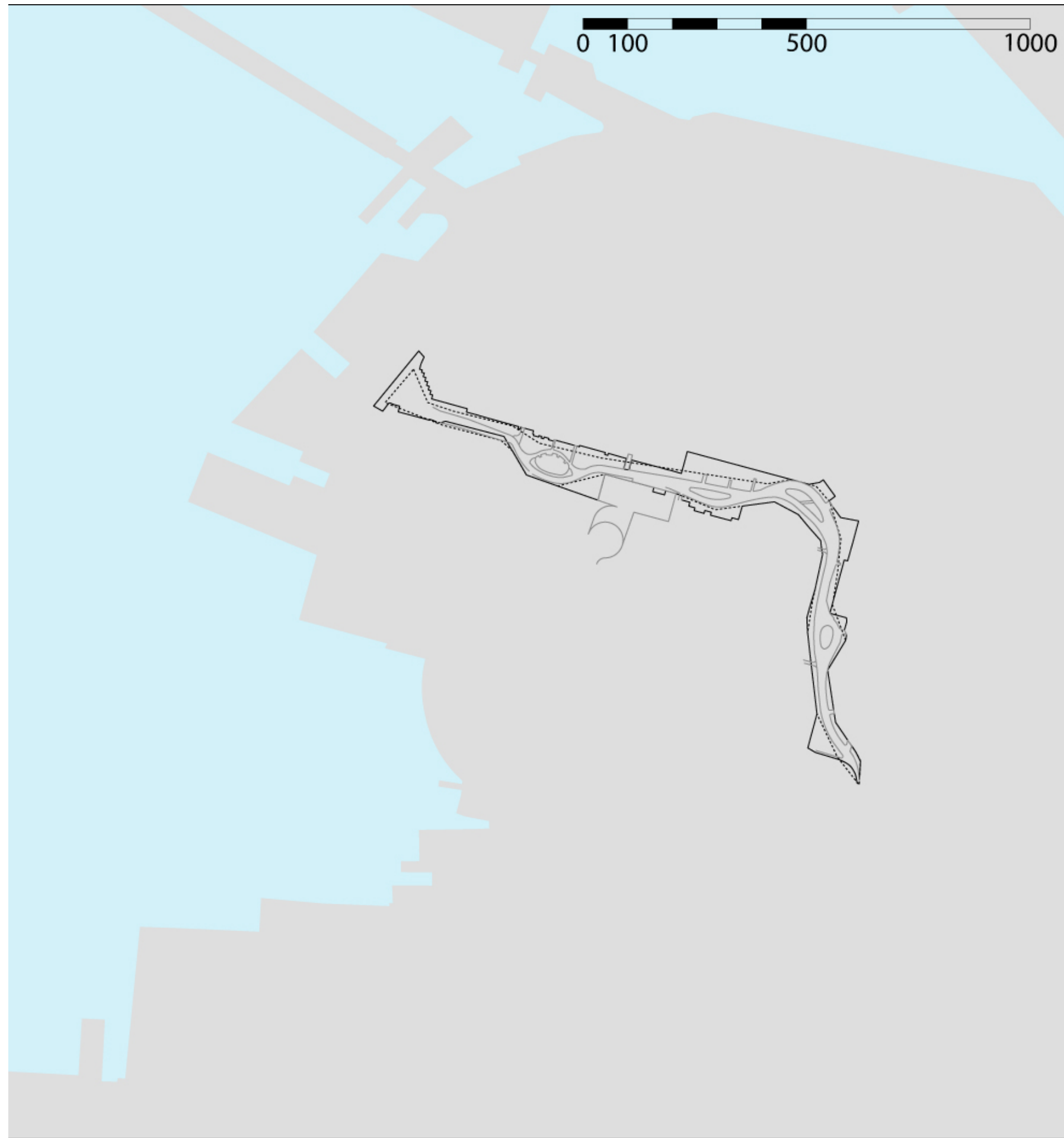
social histories

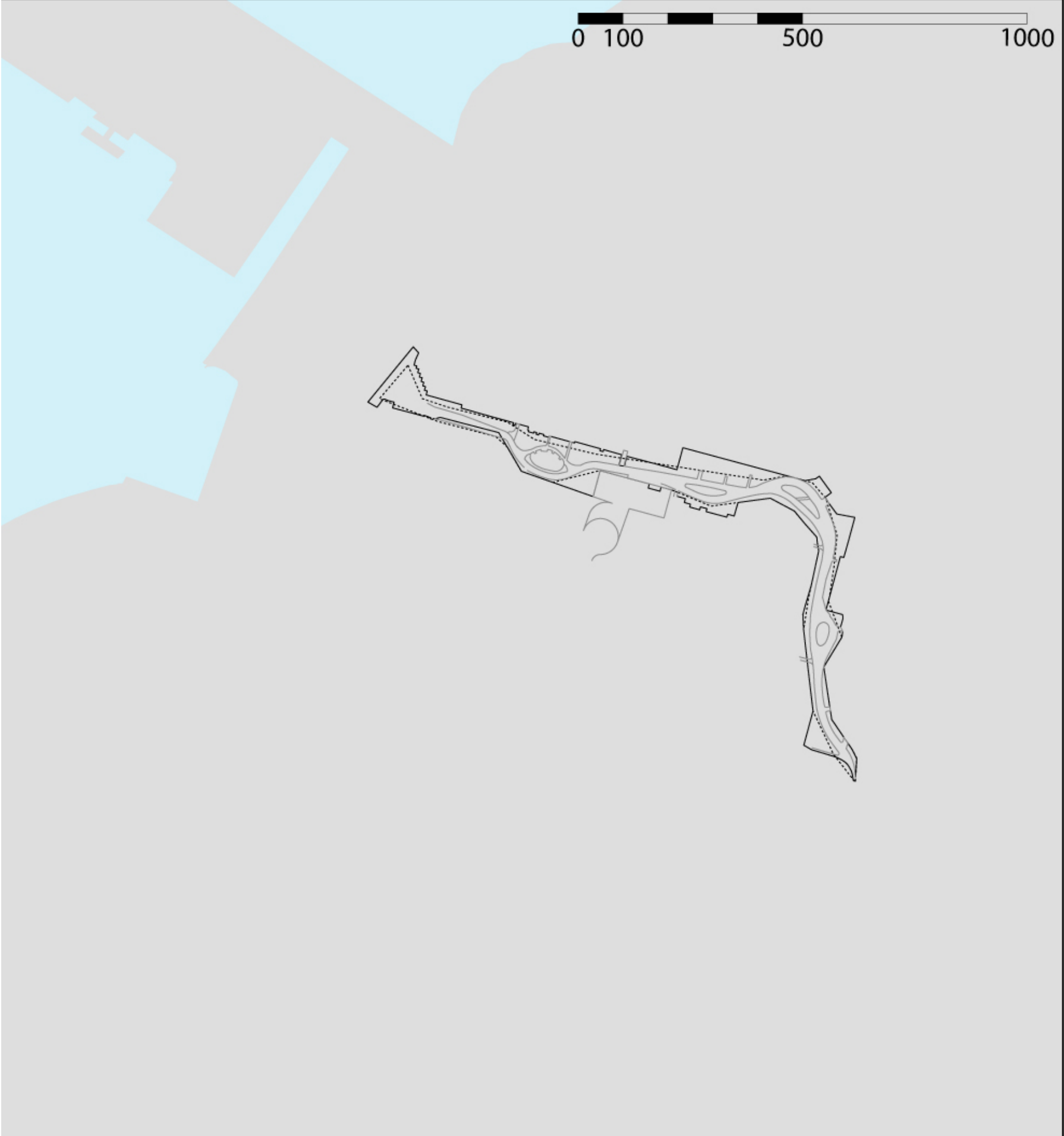




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geologic foundations
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social histories

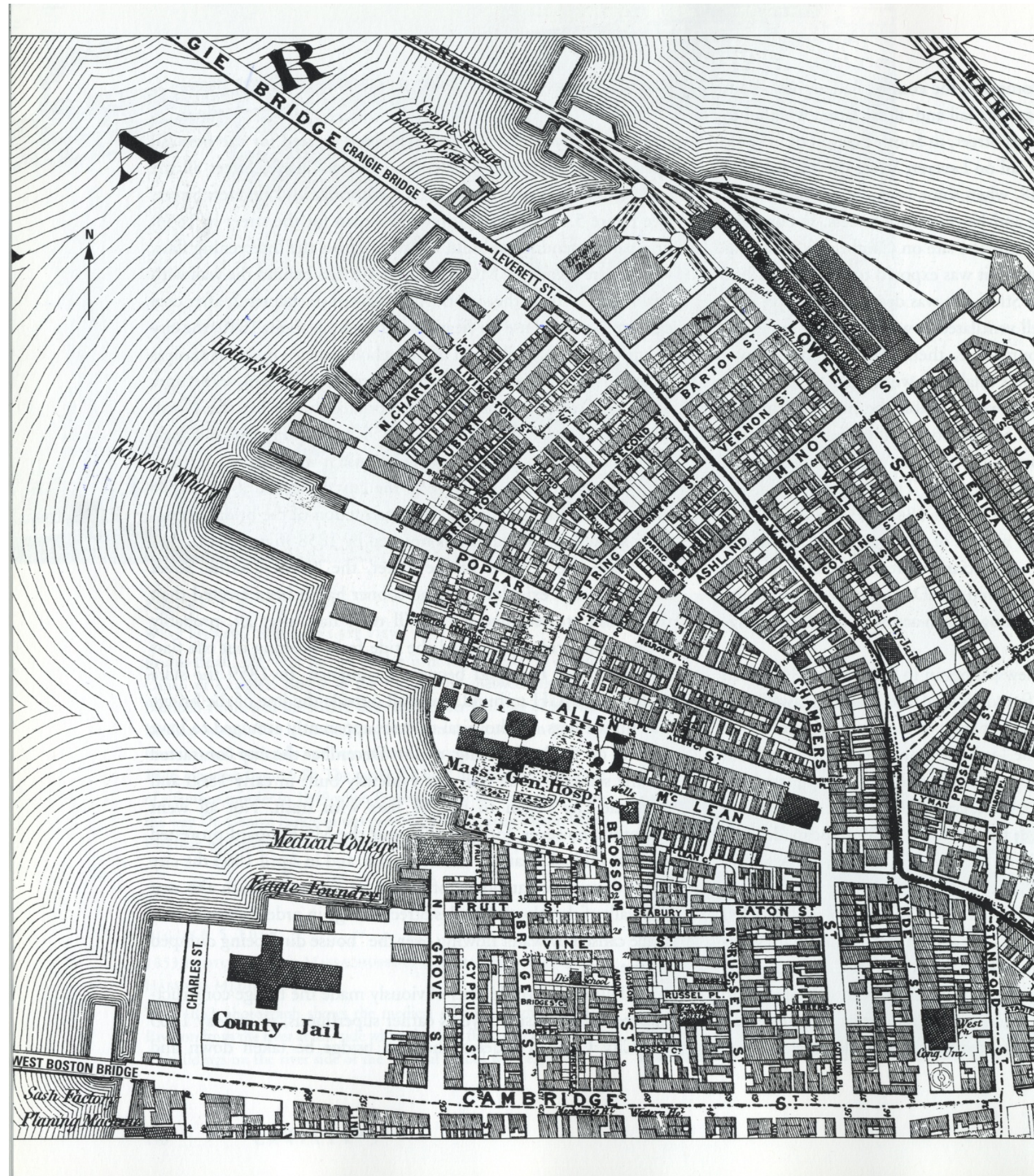
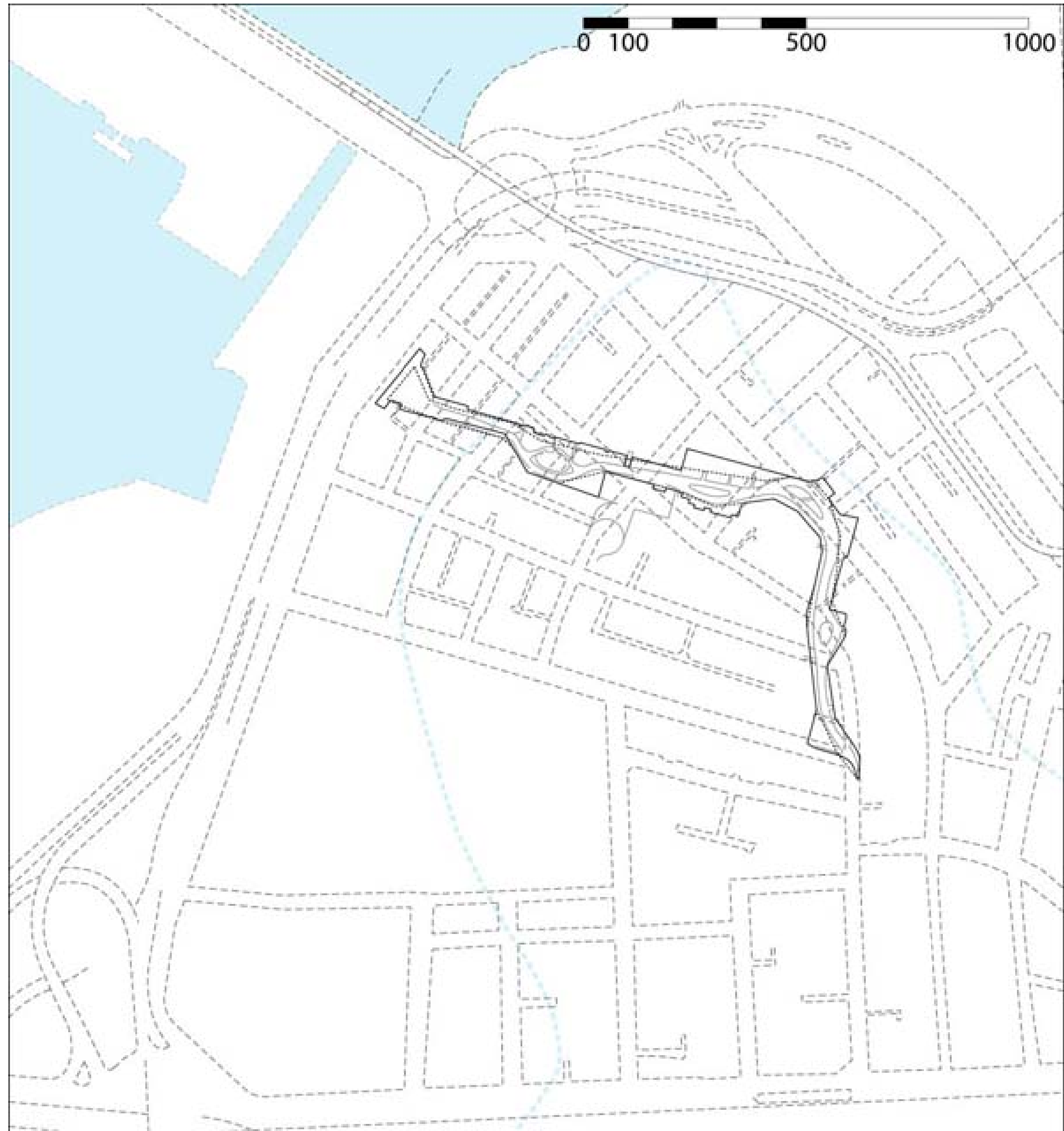


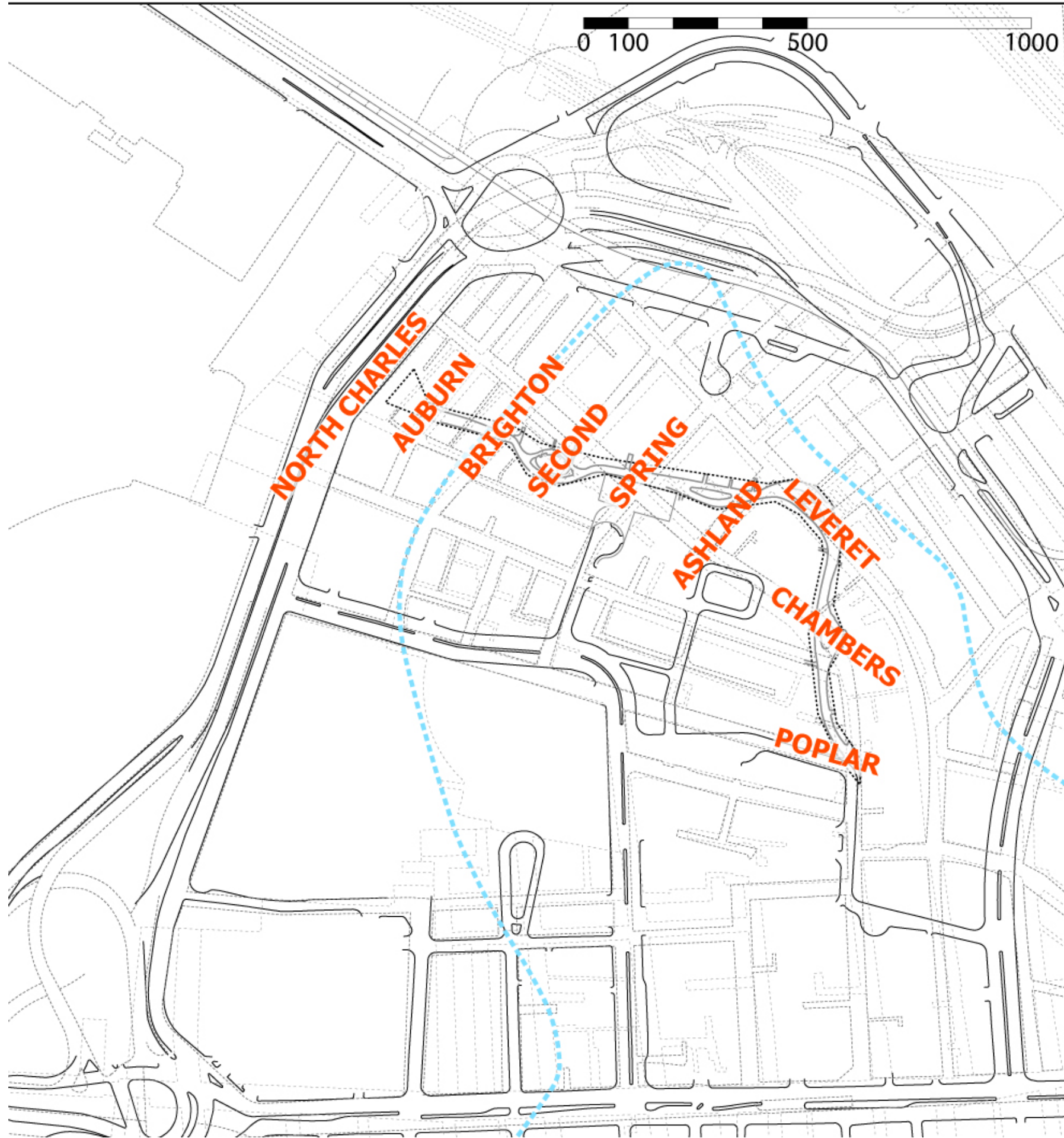
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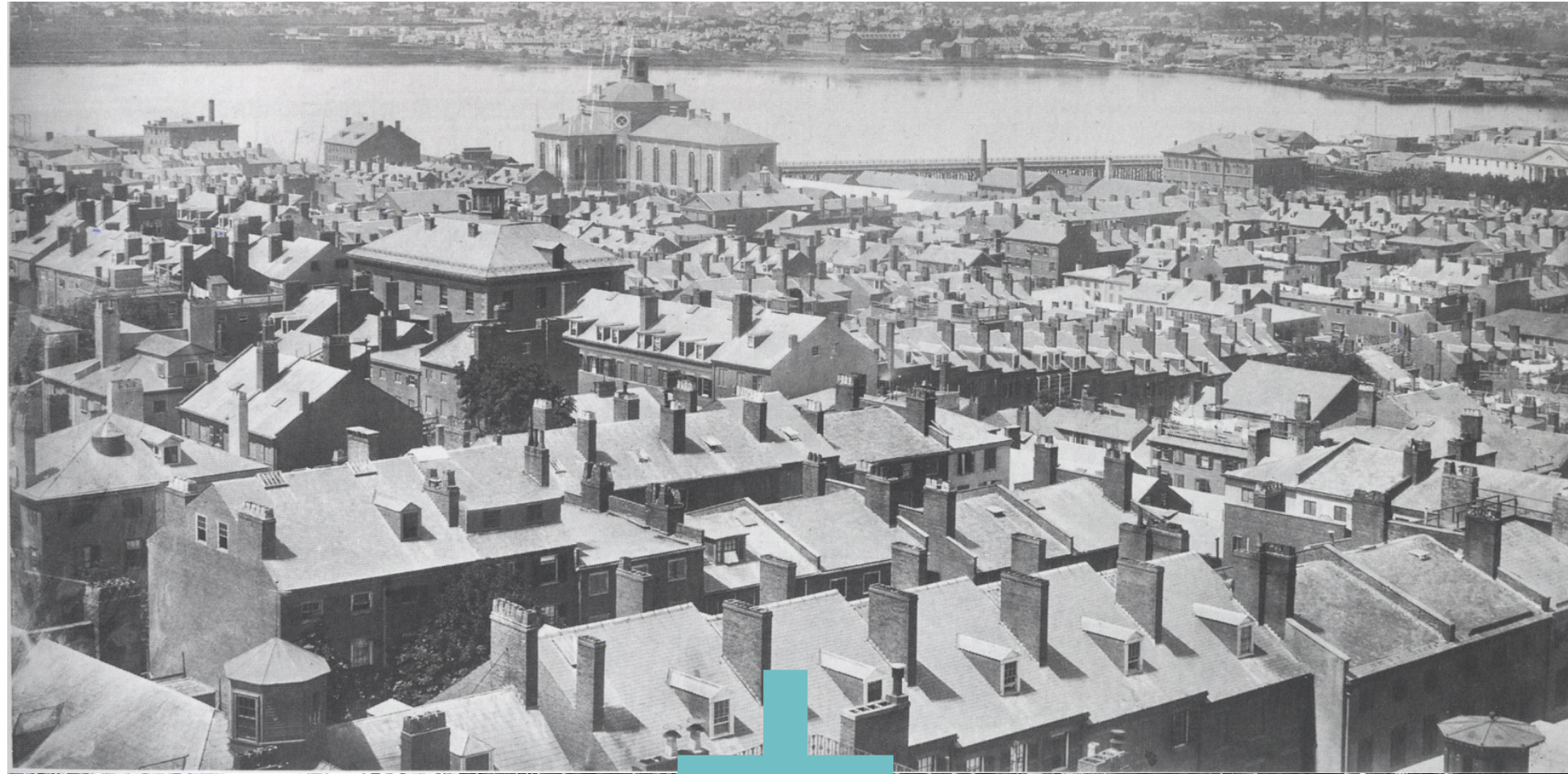








geologic foundations
+
social histories





thoreau path