

# Downtown Waterfront Municipal Harbor Planning Advisory Committee



CITY OF BOSTON  
Martin J. Walsh  
*Mayor*



Boston  
Redevelopment  
Authority  
Brian Golden, Acting Director

Consultants:  
Utile, Inc.  
Durand & Anastas  
Noble & Wickersham

# Agenda

## I. District-wide Urban Design Issues

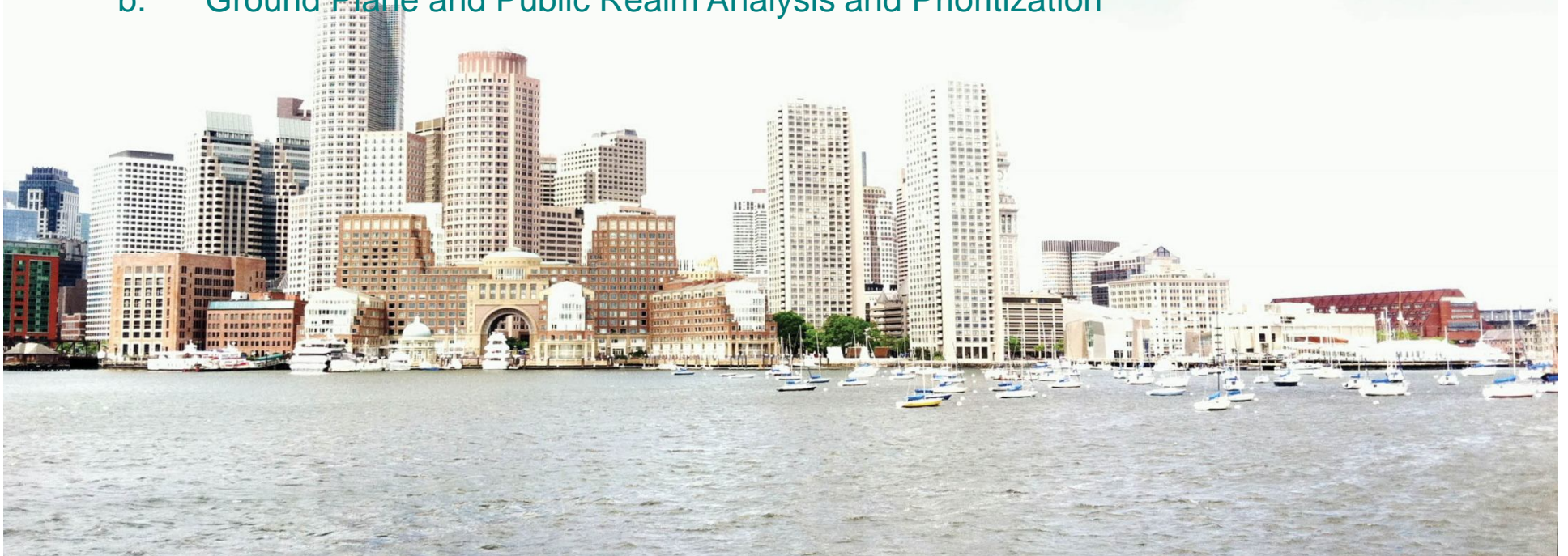
- a. Building Volume and Massing
  - Height
  - Relationship to the Water
  - Density
  - View Corridors.
- b. Ground Plane and Public Realm Analysis and Prioritization

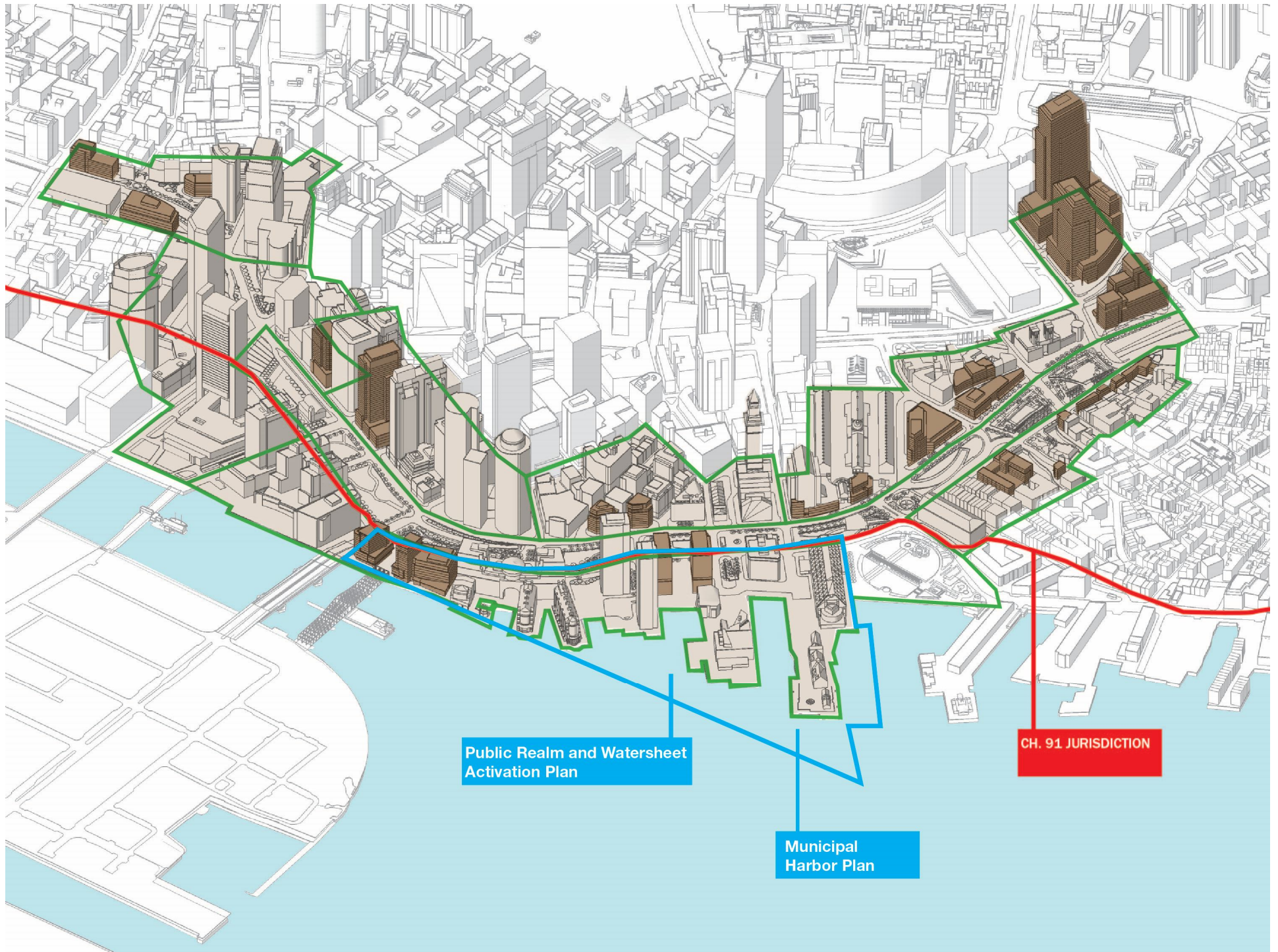
## II. Setting Priorities for the Municipal Harbor Plan

- a. Requested substitute provisions
- b. Public Benefits
  - Order of Preference
  - Creating priority zones
- a. How this relates to the public realm plan and potential offsets

# District-wide Urban Design Issues

- a. Built Environment
  - a. Heights
  - b. Views
  - c. Density
- b. Ground Plane and Public Realm Analysis and Prioritization





Public Realm and Watersheet  
Activation Plan

Municipal  
Harbor Plan

CH. 91 JURISDICTION

District-wide Urban Design Issues

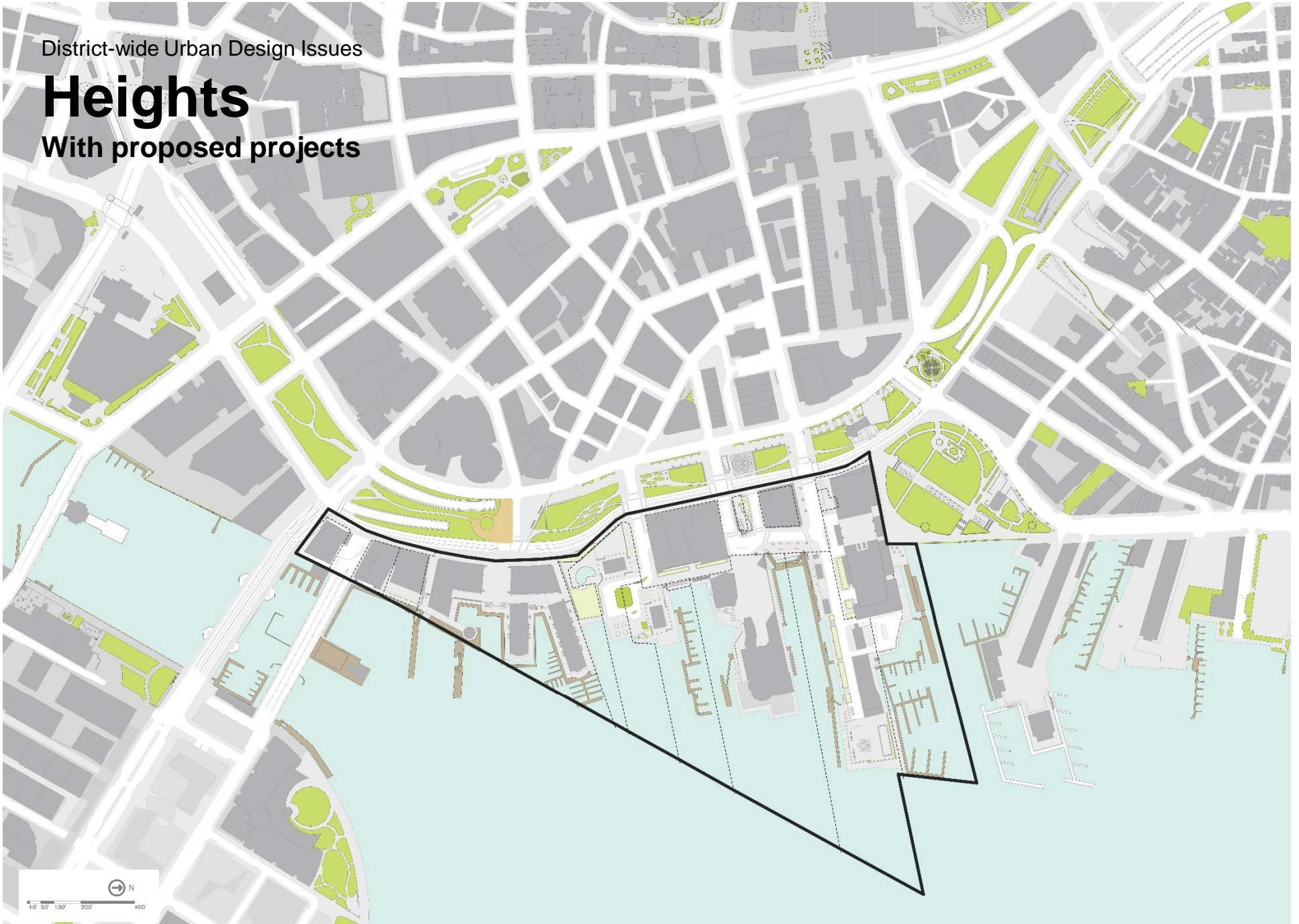
# Built Environment: Heights



District-wide Urban Design Issues

# Heights

With proposed projects



District-wide Urban Design Issues

# Heights: 100'



District-wide Urban Design Issues

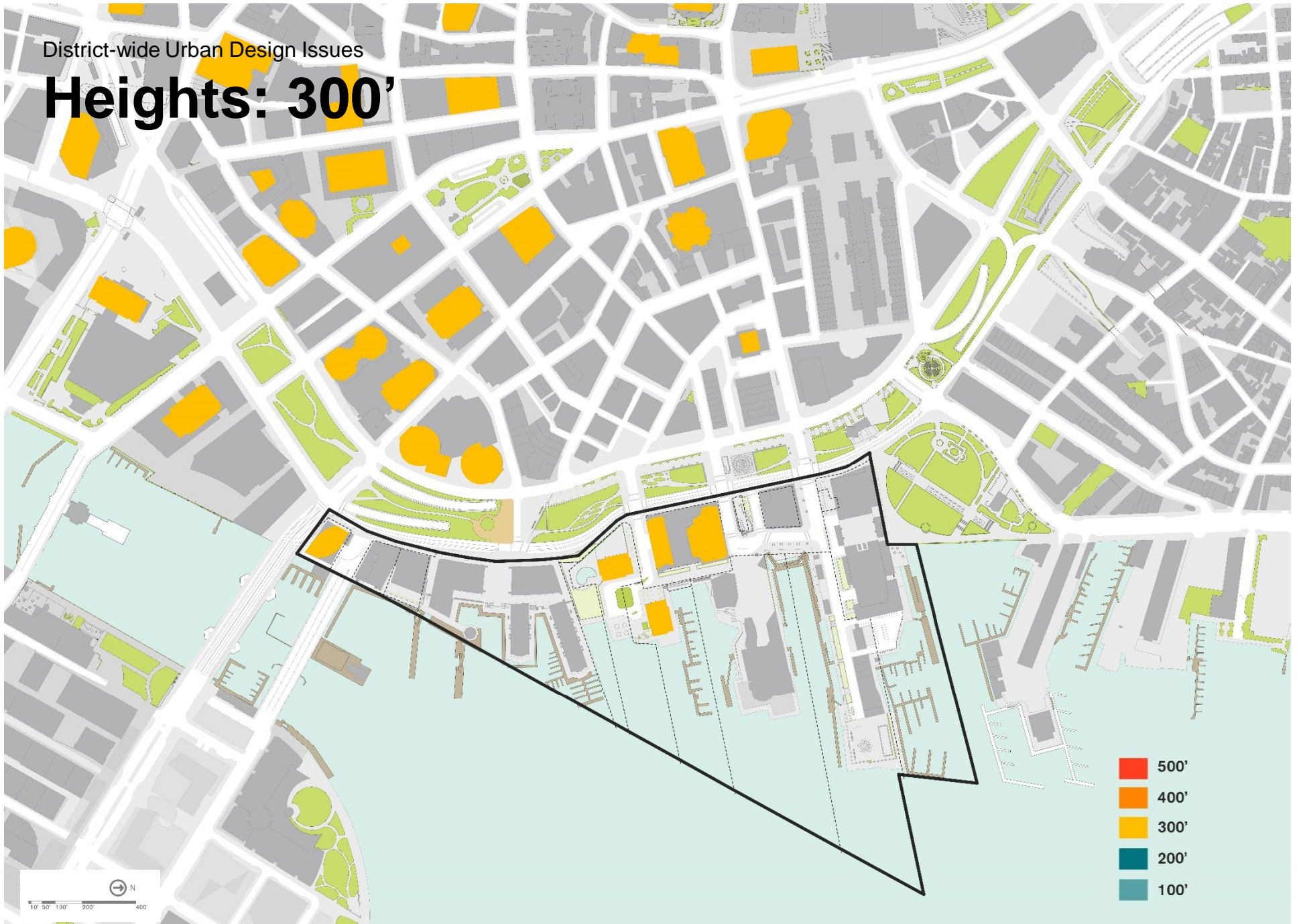
# Heights: 200'





District-wide Urban Design Issues

# Heights: 300'



District-wide Urban Design Issues

# Heights: 400'



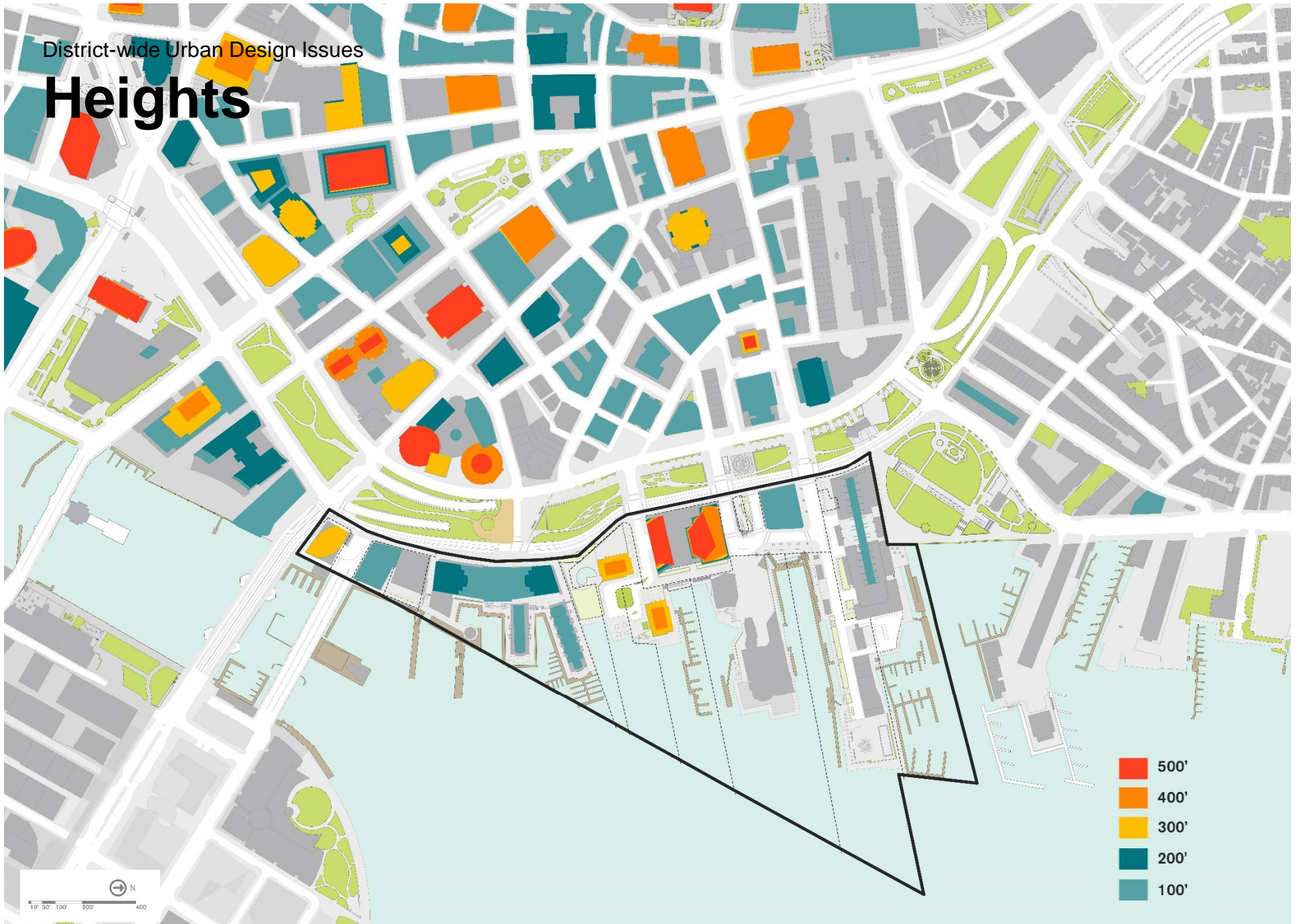
District-wide Urban Design Issues

# Heights: 500'



District-wide Urban Design Issues

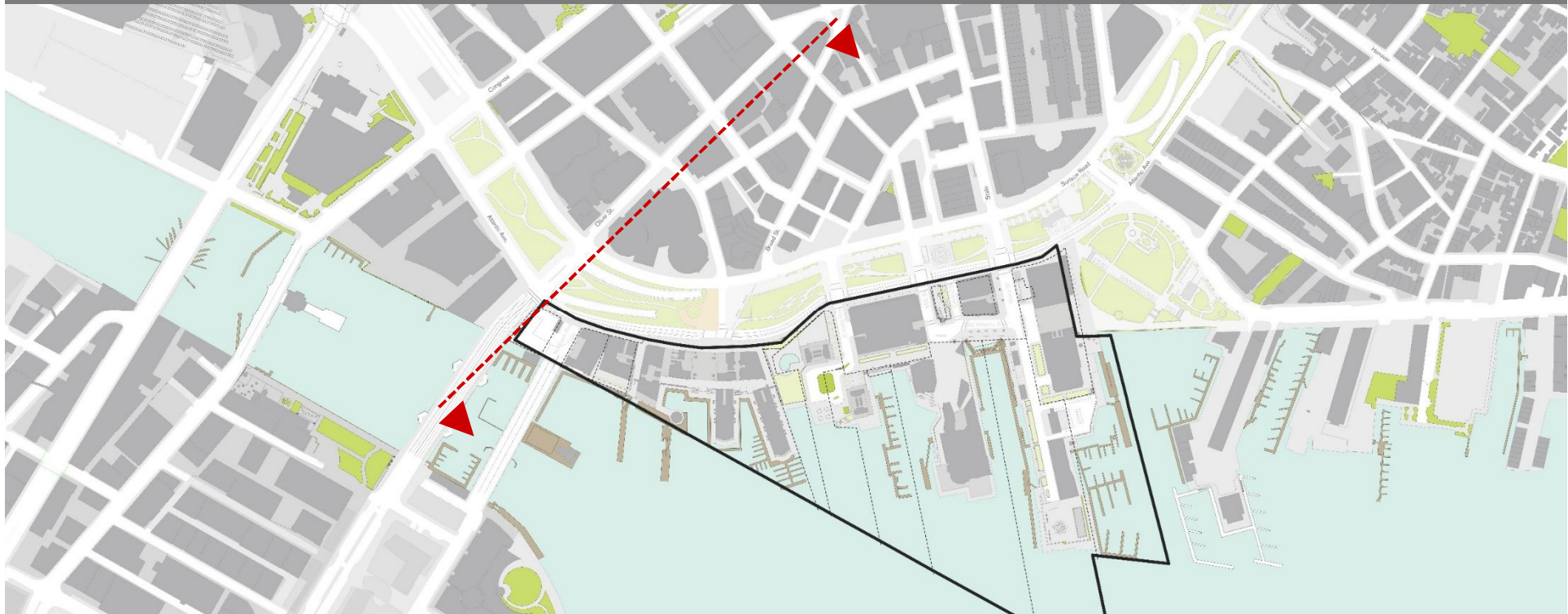
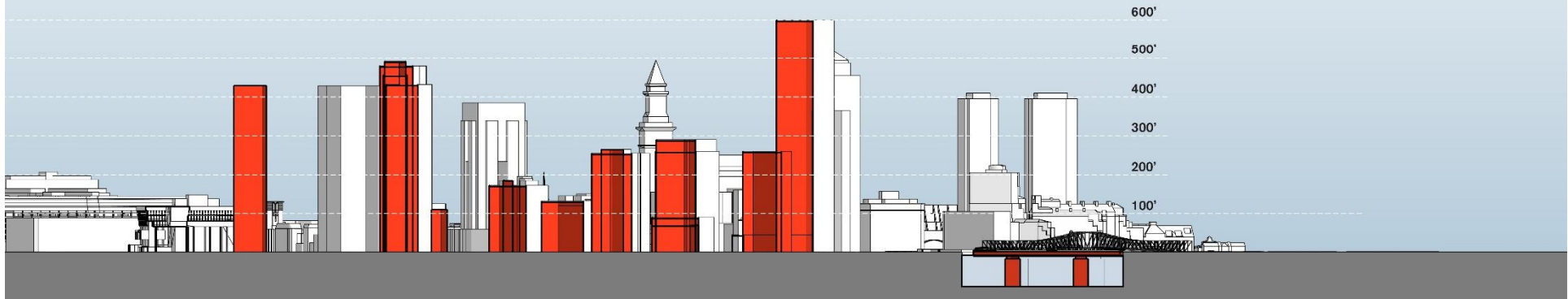
# Heights



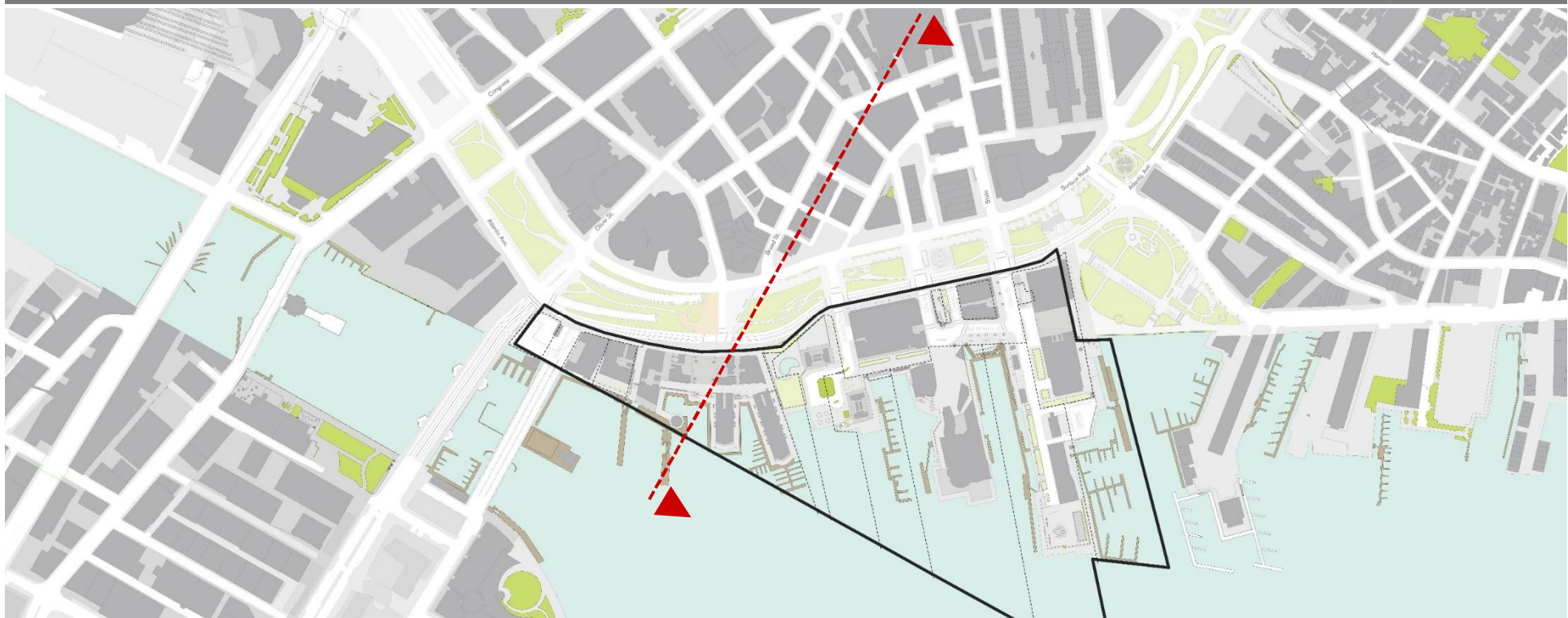
District-wide Urban Design Issues

# Relationship of Height to Waterfront

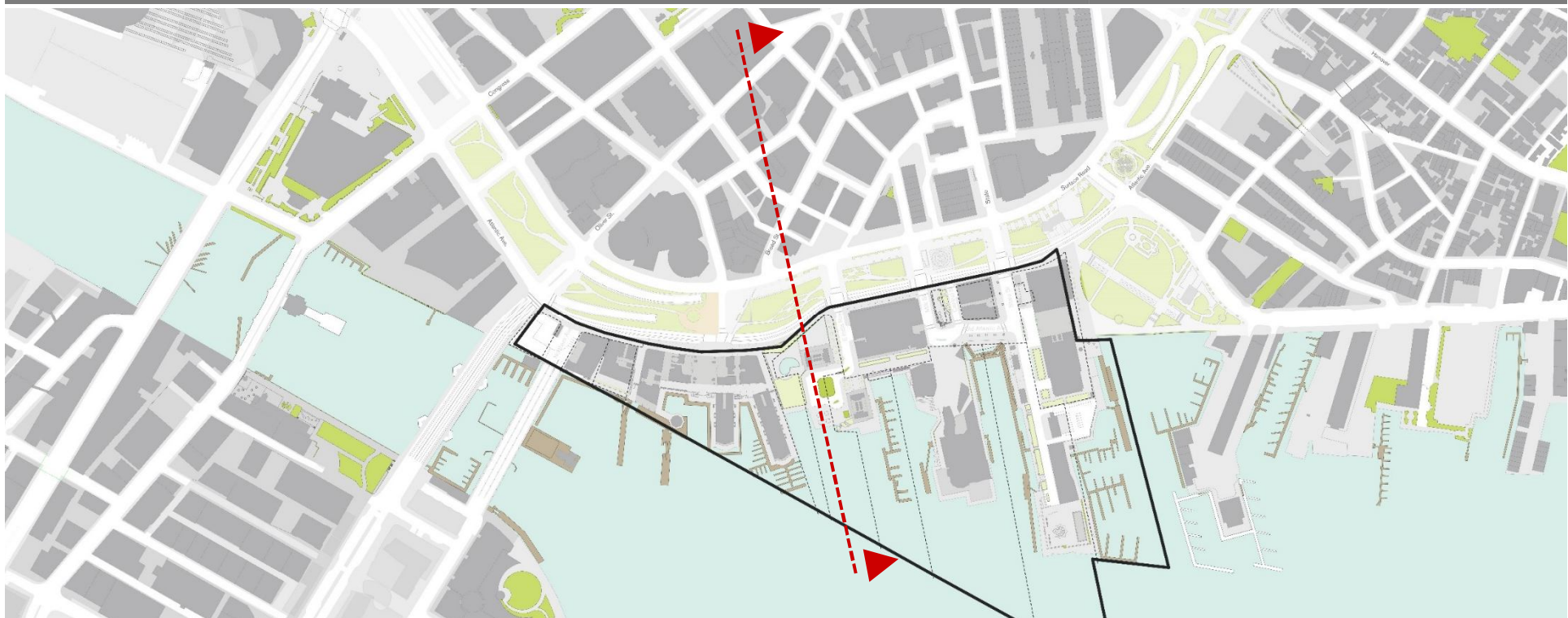
## Existing Conditions



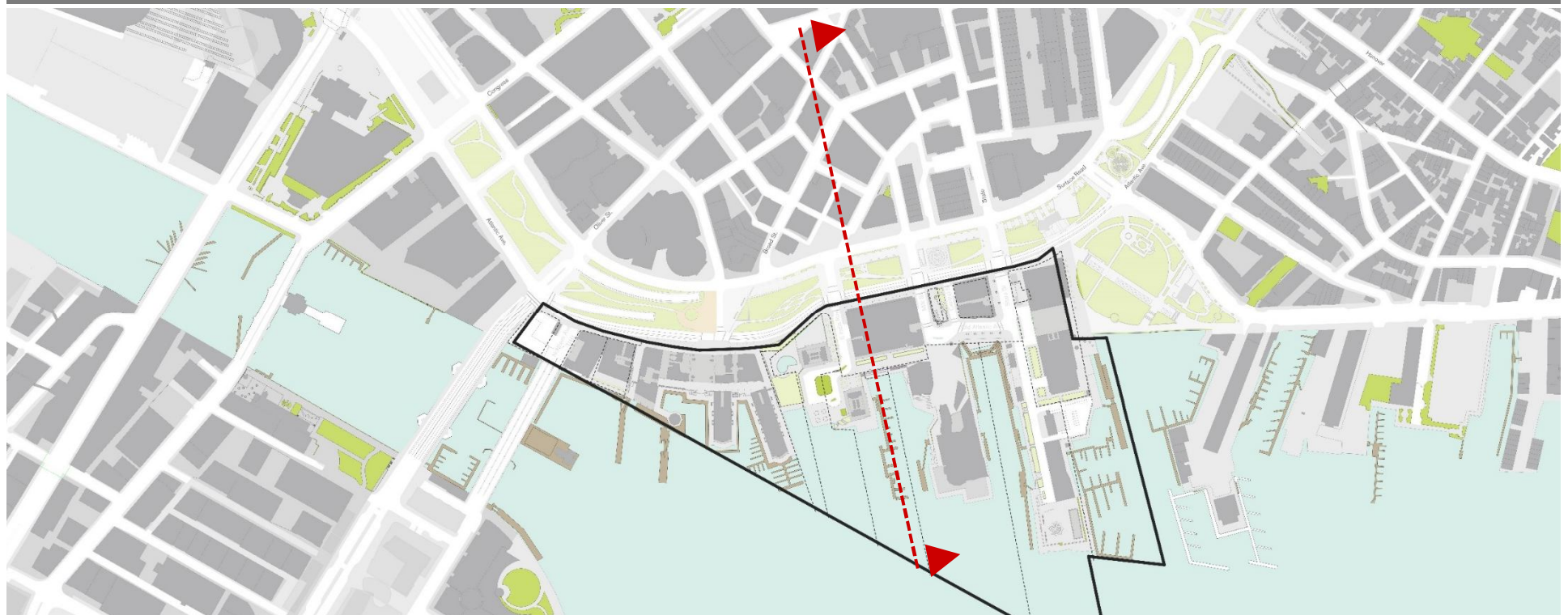
# Relationship of Height to Waterfront



# Relationship of Height to Waterfront

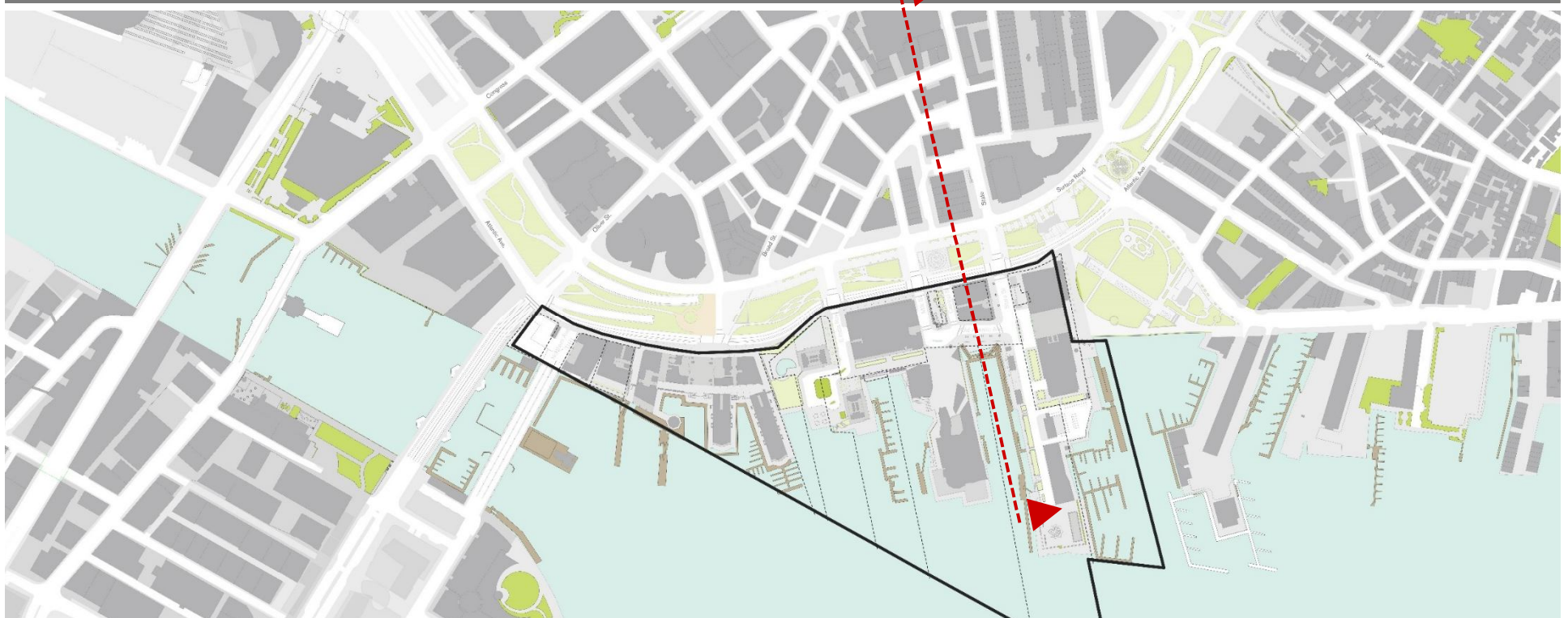
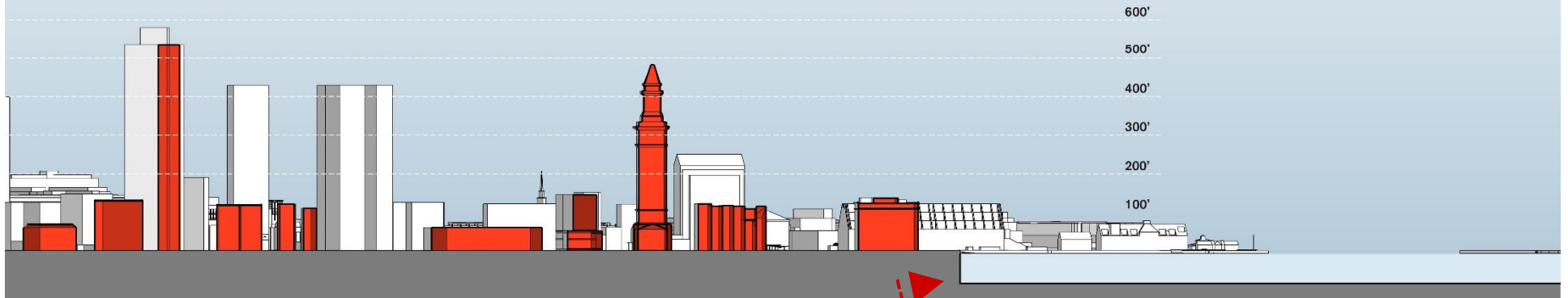


# Relationship of Height to Waterfront

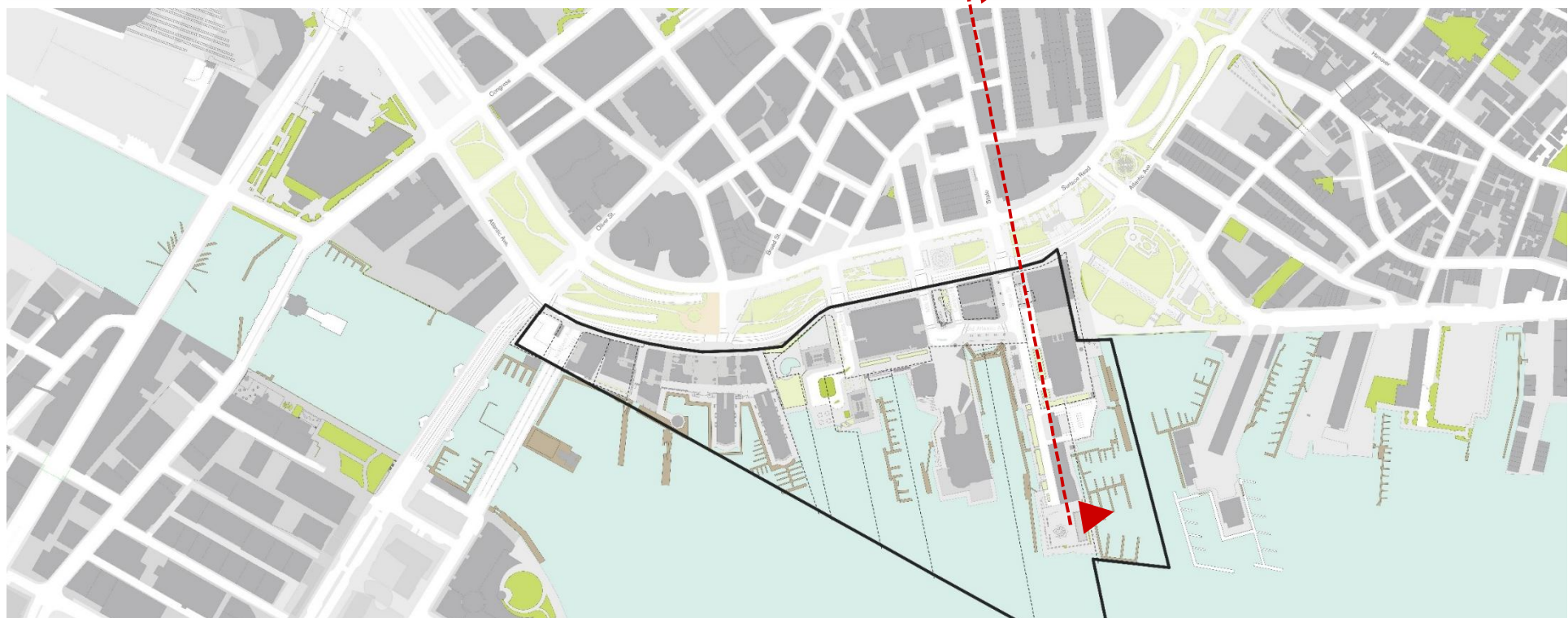




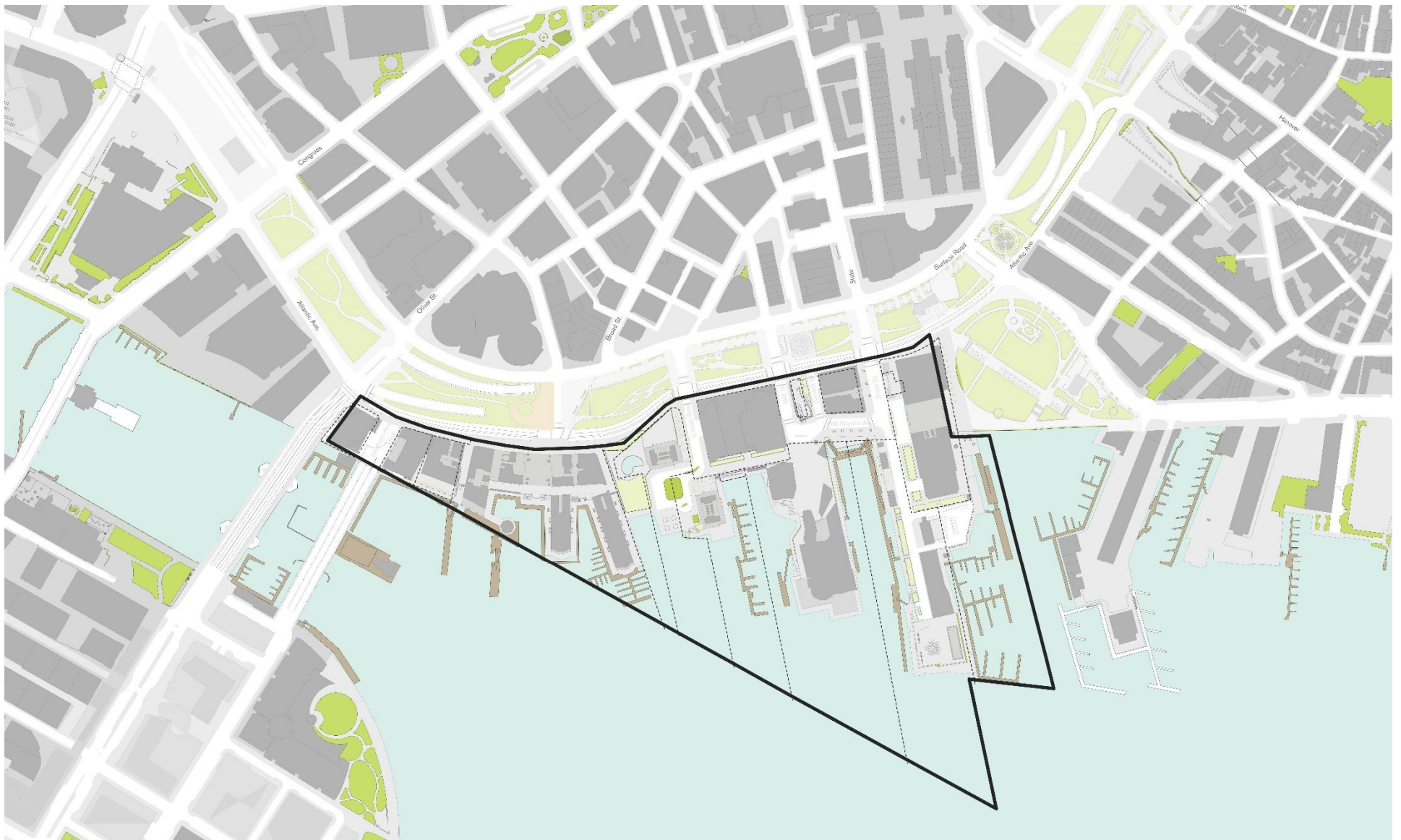
# Relationship of Height to Waterfront



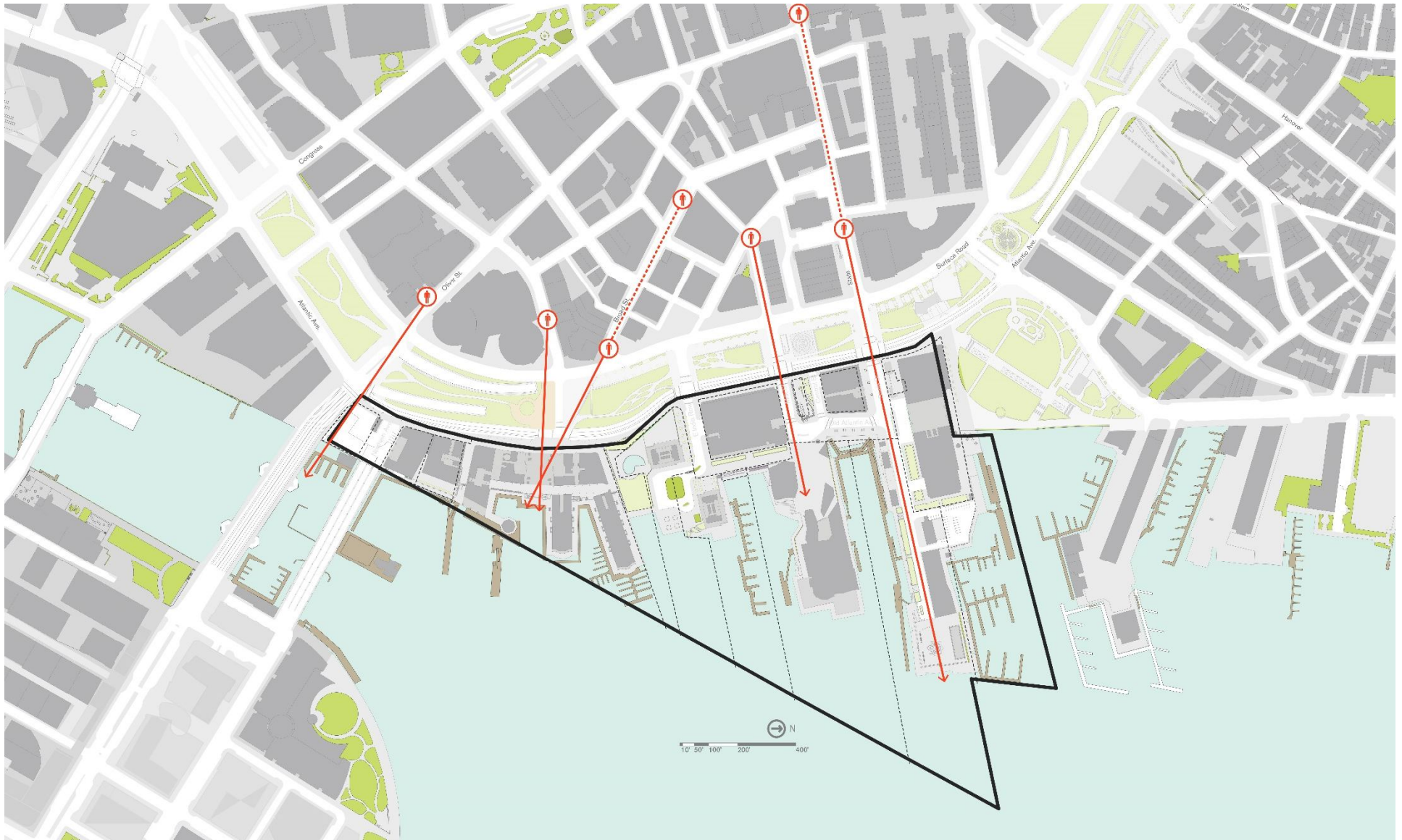
# Relationship of Height to Waterfront



# Views



# What to preserve or enhance? views of the water.



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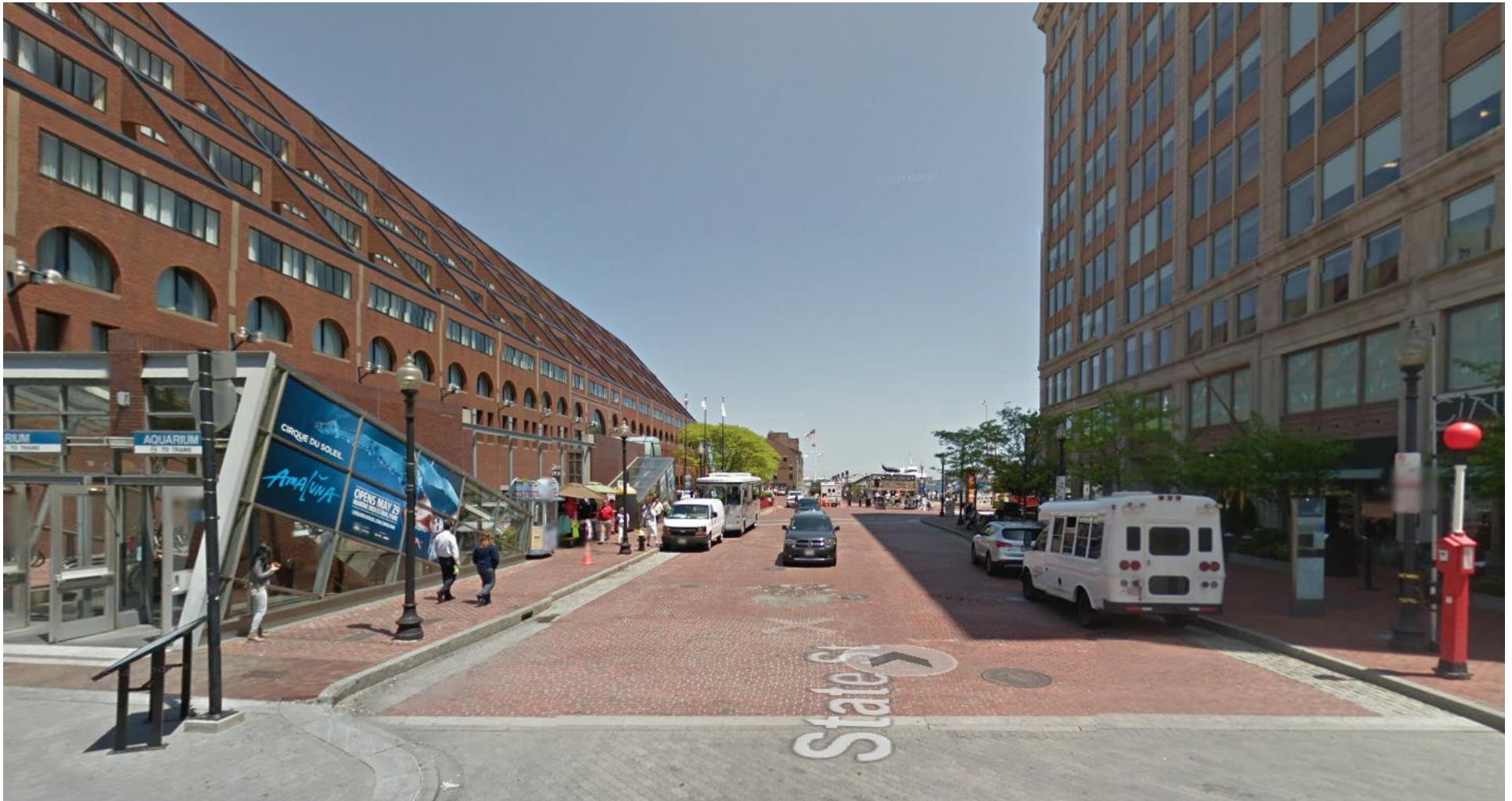
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# What to preserve or enhance?

## Views of historic assets.

### Custom House Tower

- 496 feet tall
- Construction began in the mid-1800s; the tower was added in the 1910s.
- Custom House District, which was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1973
- Before land reclamation was done in the mid-1800s, Boston's waterfront extended to this building.



Source: BPL, photographer Leslie Jones, c. 1929

District-wide Urban Design Issues

# What to preserve or enhance?

Views of historic assets.



District-wide Urban Design Issues

# What to preserve or enhance?

Views of the Custom House Tower.



Source: BPL, photographer Leslie Jones, c. 1930



District-wide Urban Design Issues

# What to preserve or enhance?

Views of the Custom House Tower.



Source: BPL, photographer Leslie Jones, c. 1929

District-wide Urban Design Issues

# What to preserve or enhance?

Views of the Custom House Tower.



District-wide Urban Design Issues

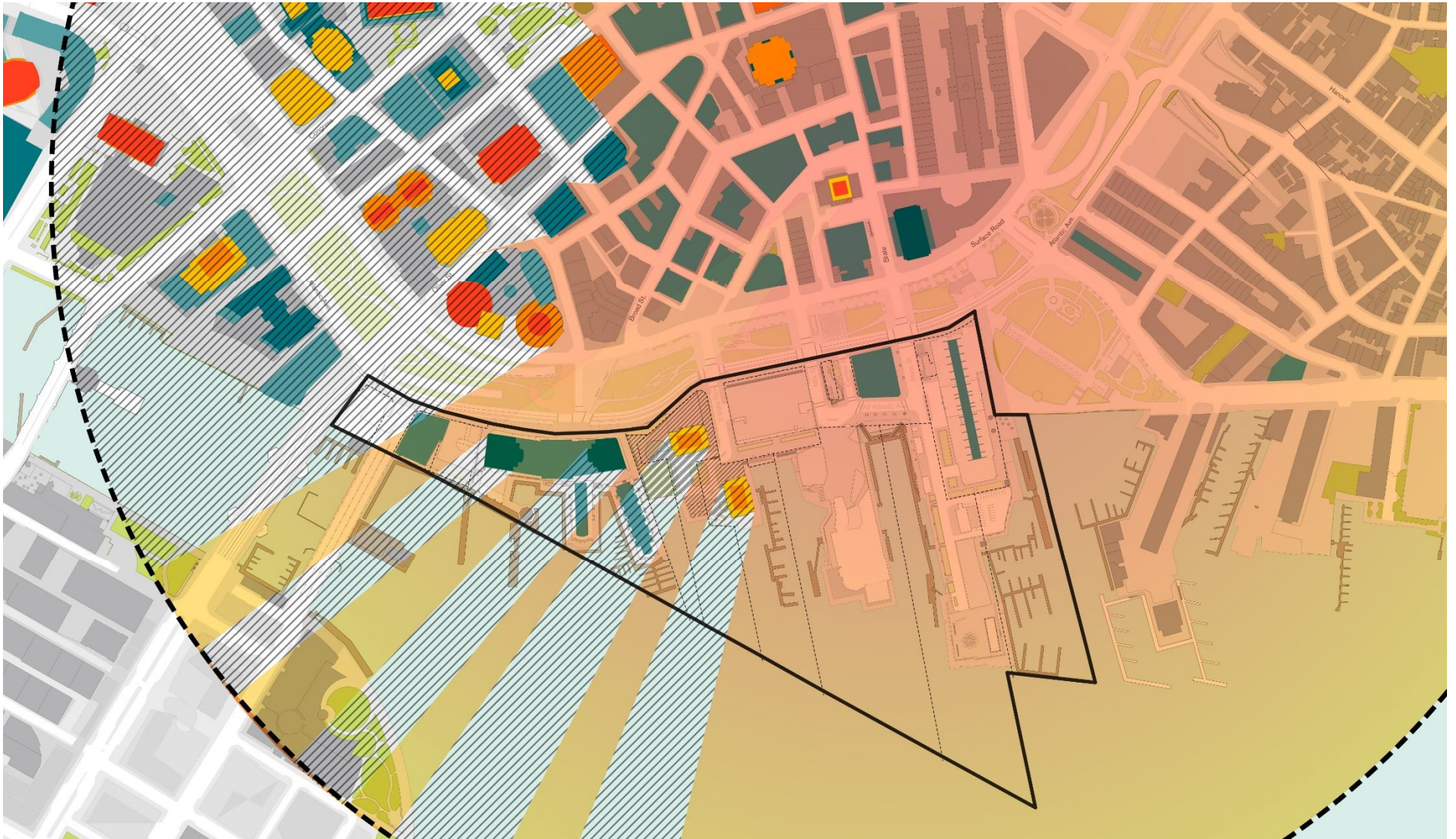
# What to preserve or enhance?

Views of the Custom House Tower.



# What to preserve or enhance?

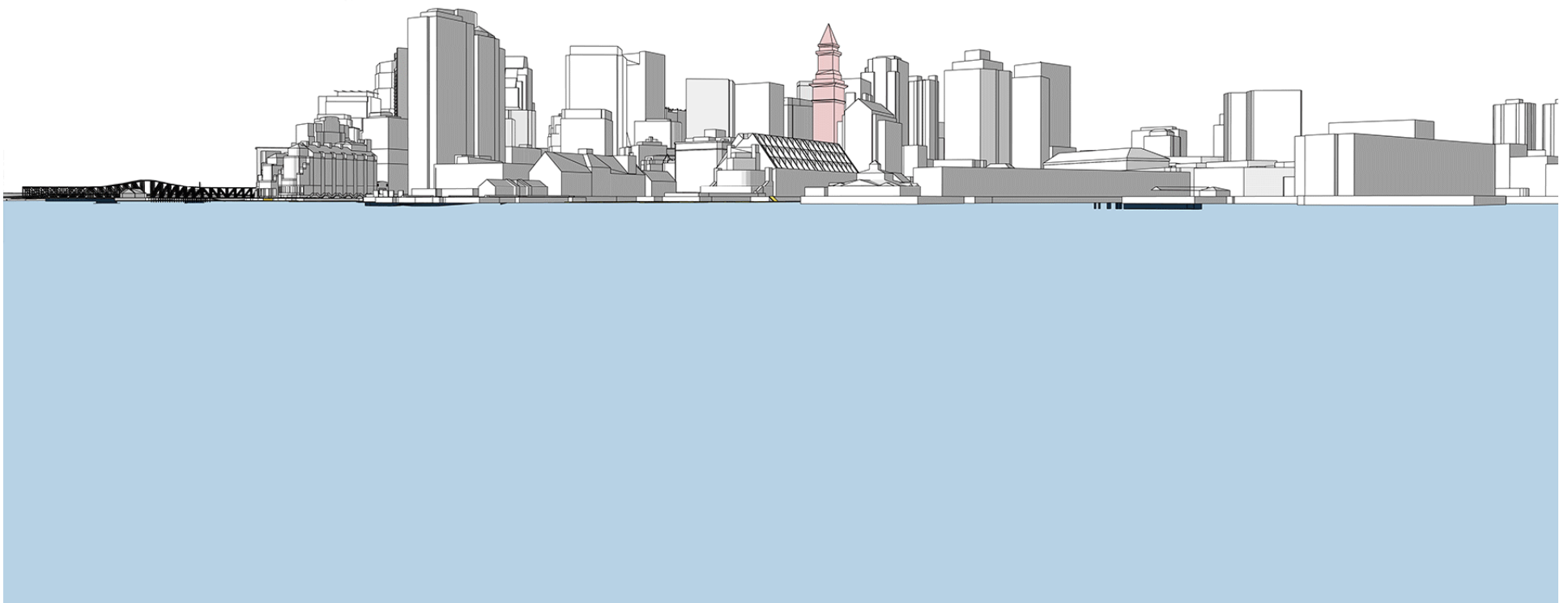
“Viewshed” of the Custom House Tower.



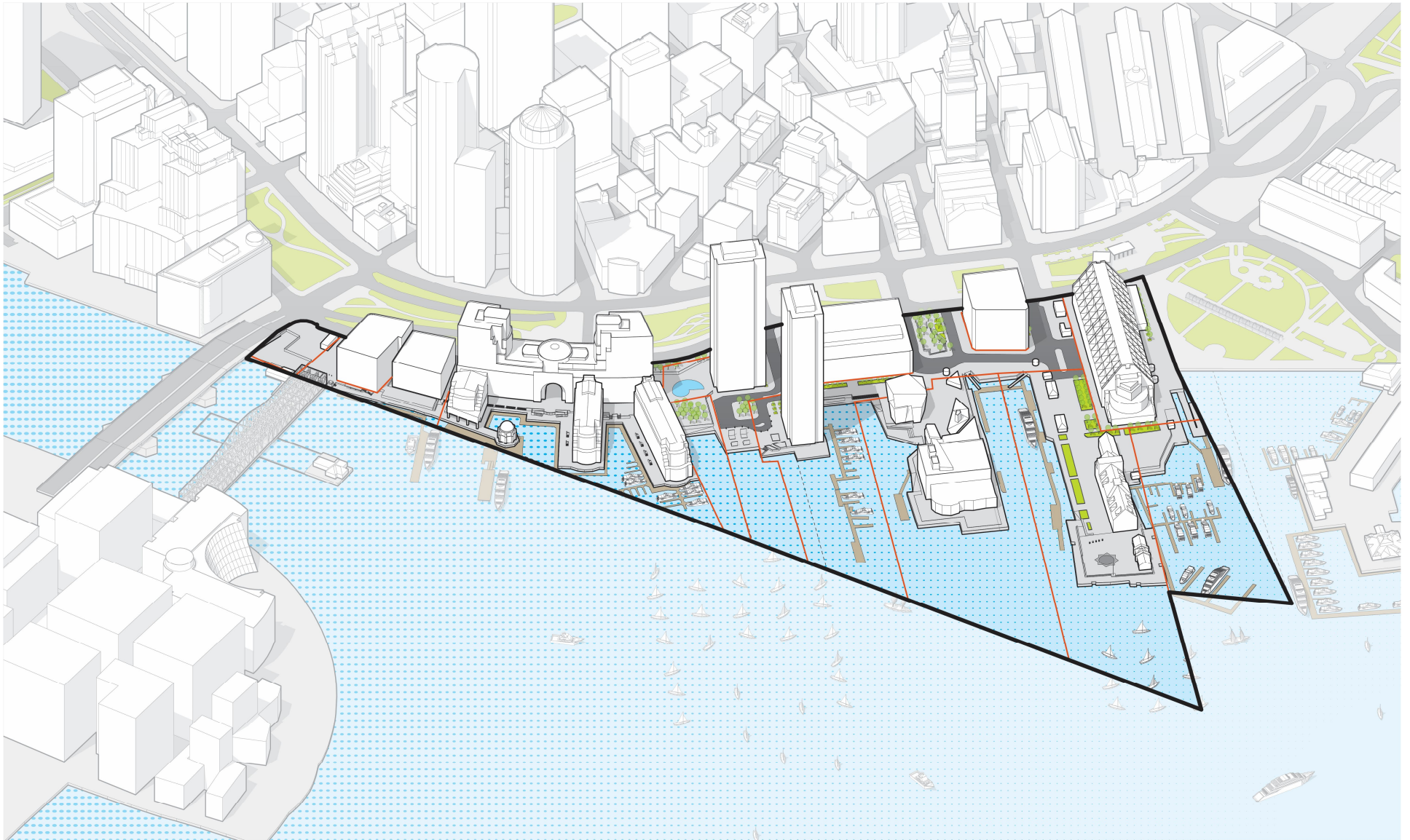
District-wide Urban Design Issues

# What to preserve or enhance?

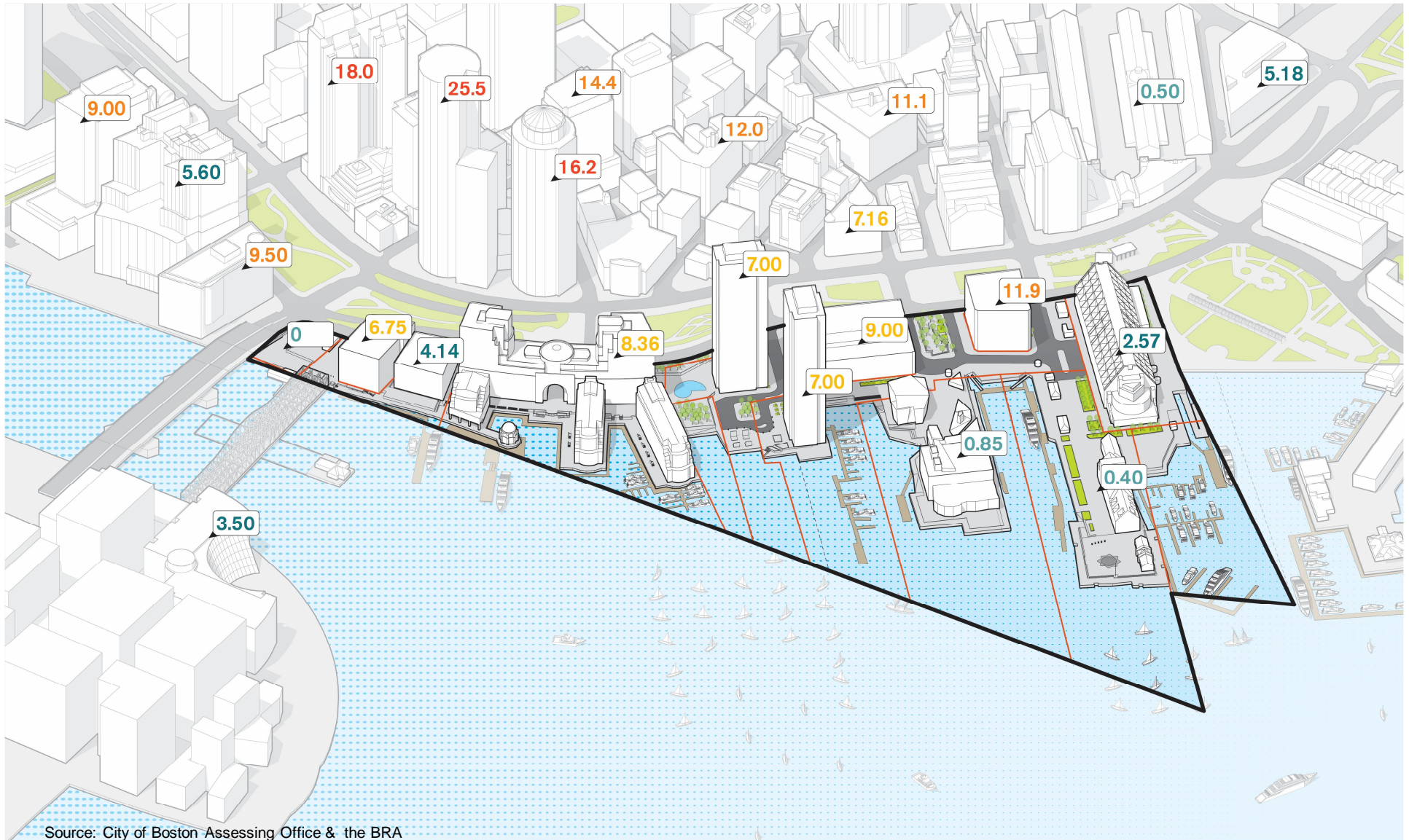
Views of the Custom House Tower from the water.



# Density

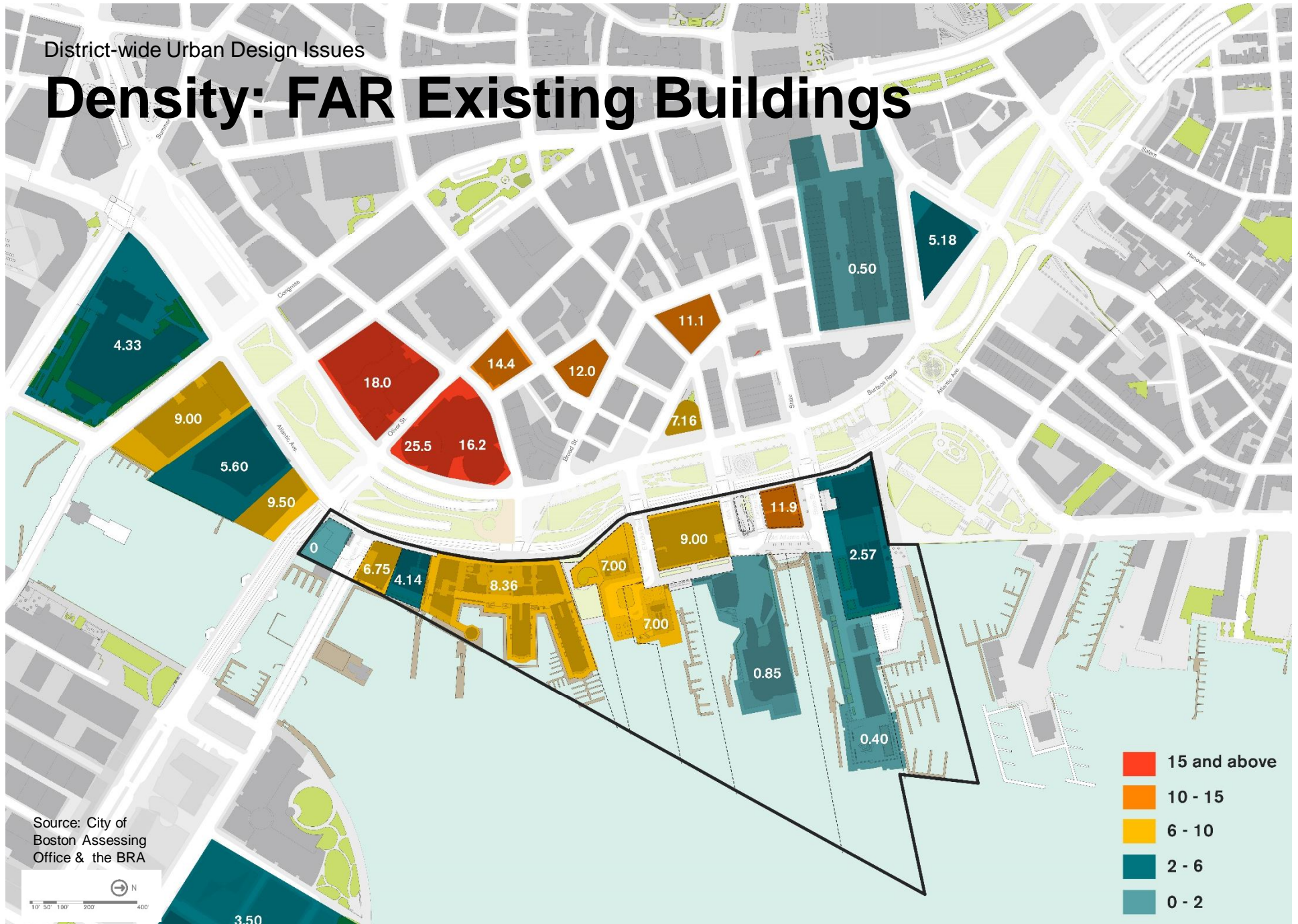


# Density: FAR



Source: City of Boston Assessing Office & the BRA

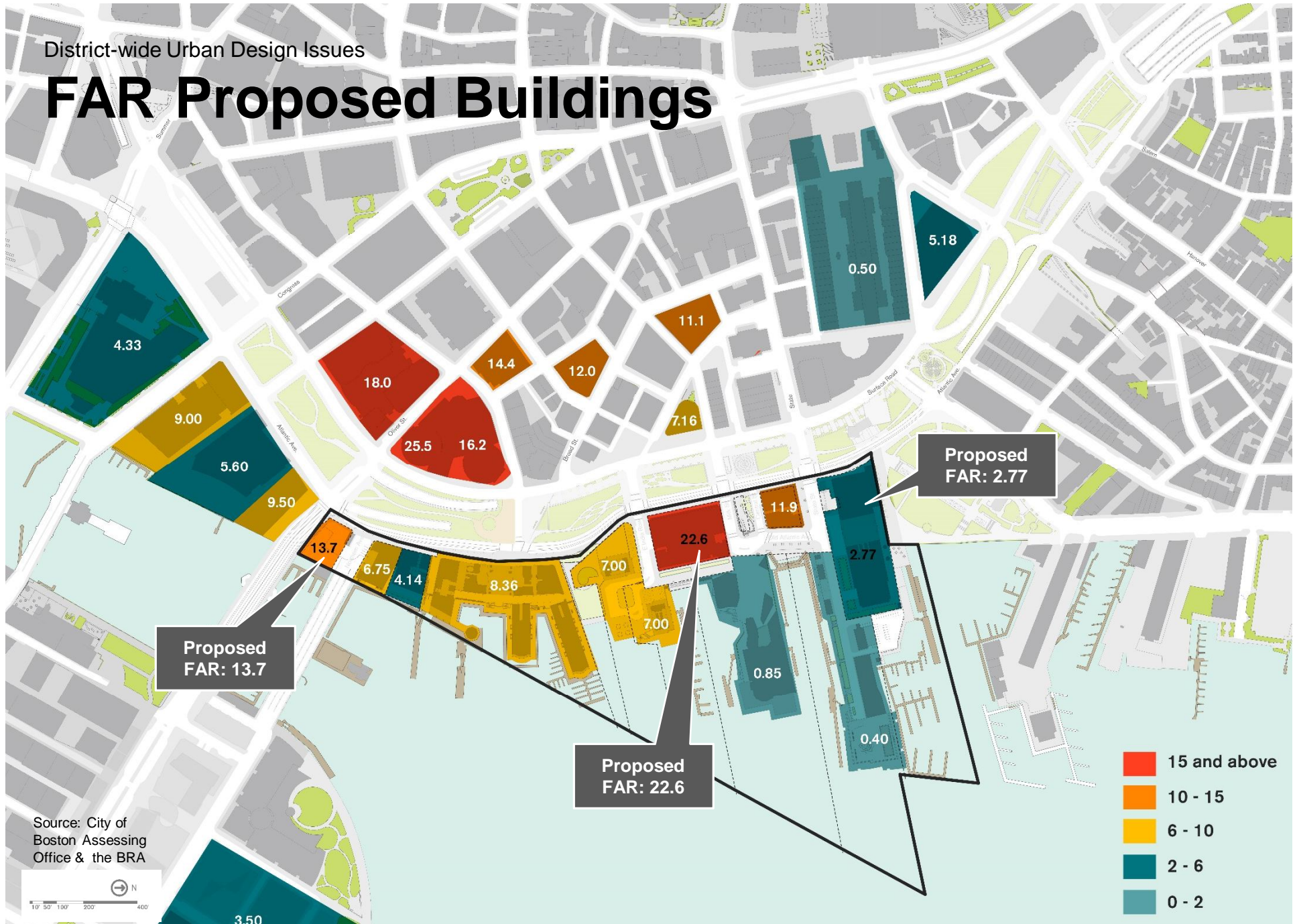
# Density: FAR Existing Buildings



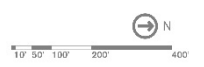
Source: City of Boston Assessing Office & the BRA



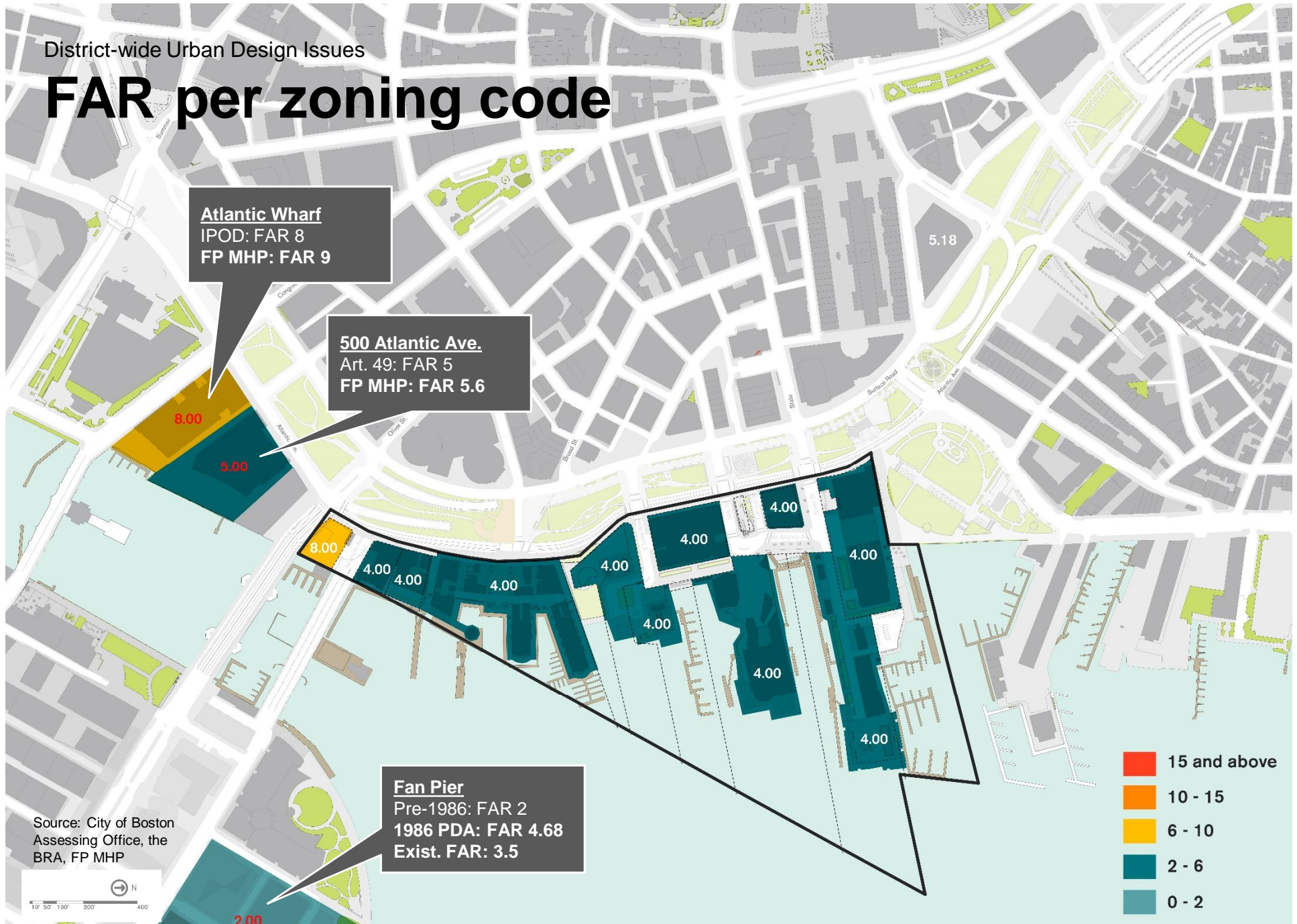
# FAR Proposed Buildings



Source: City of Boston Assessing Office & the BRA



# FAR per zoning code



# Public Realm



District-wide Urban Design Issues

# Public Realm: Open Space per Ch. 91



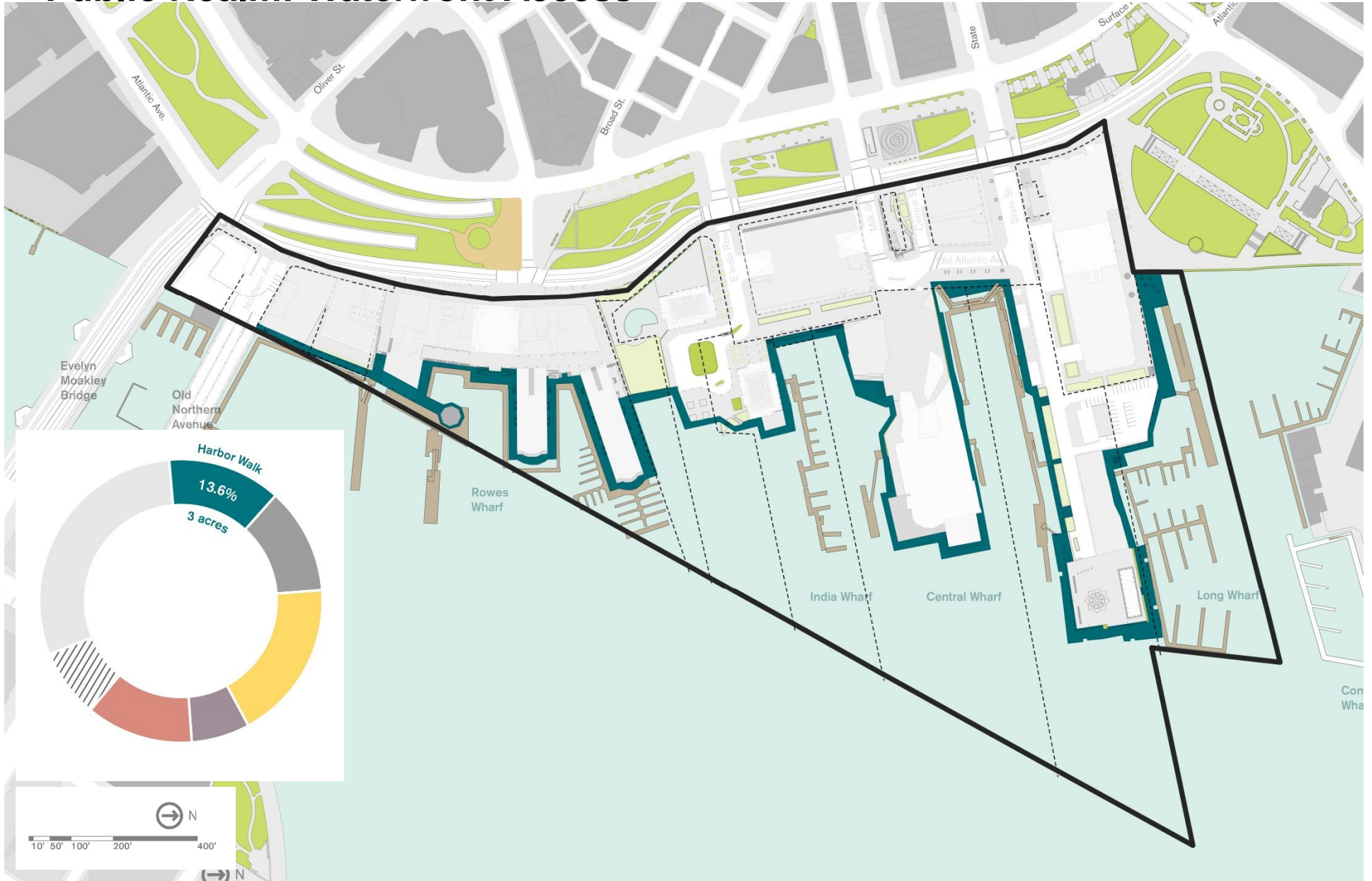
District-wide Urban Design Issues

# Public Realm: Open Space Inaccessible Areas



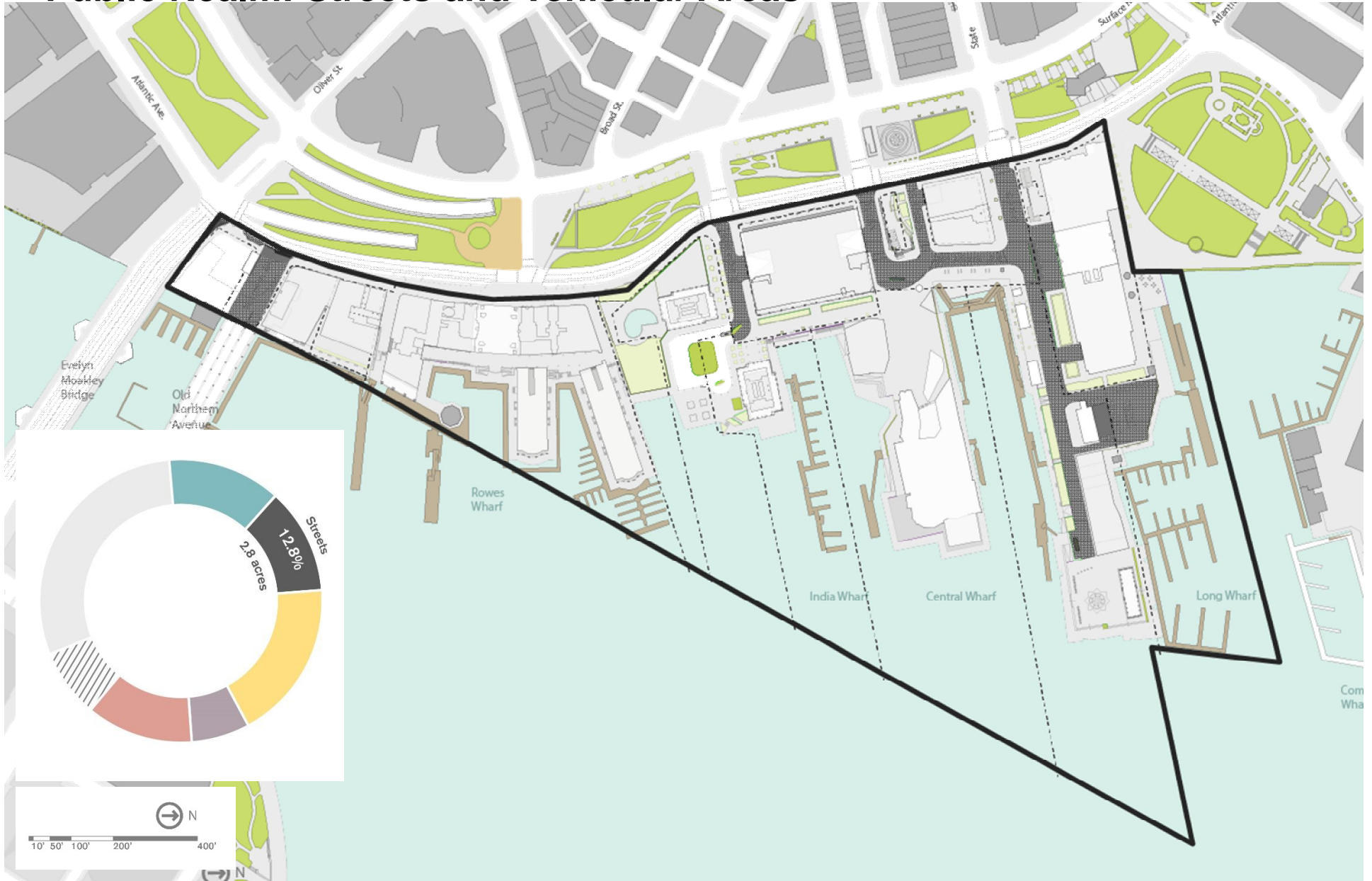
District-wide Urban Design Issues

# Public Realm: Waterfront Access

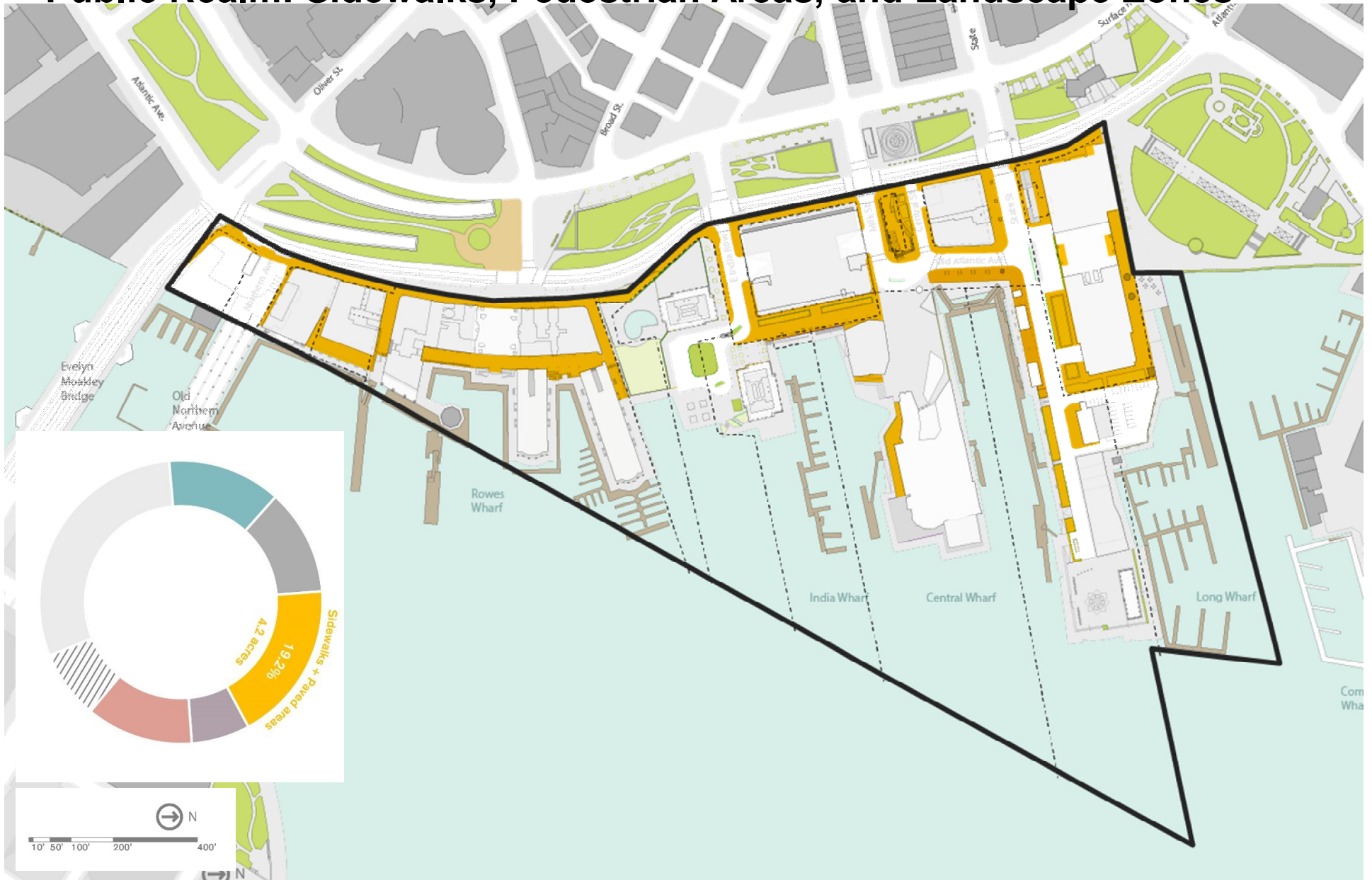


District-wide Urban Design Issues

# Public Realm: Streets and Vehicular Areas



# Public Realm: Sidewalks, Pedestrian Areas, and Landscape Zones





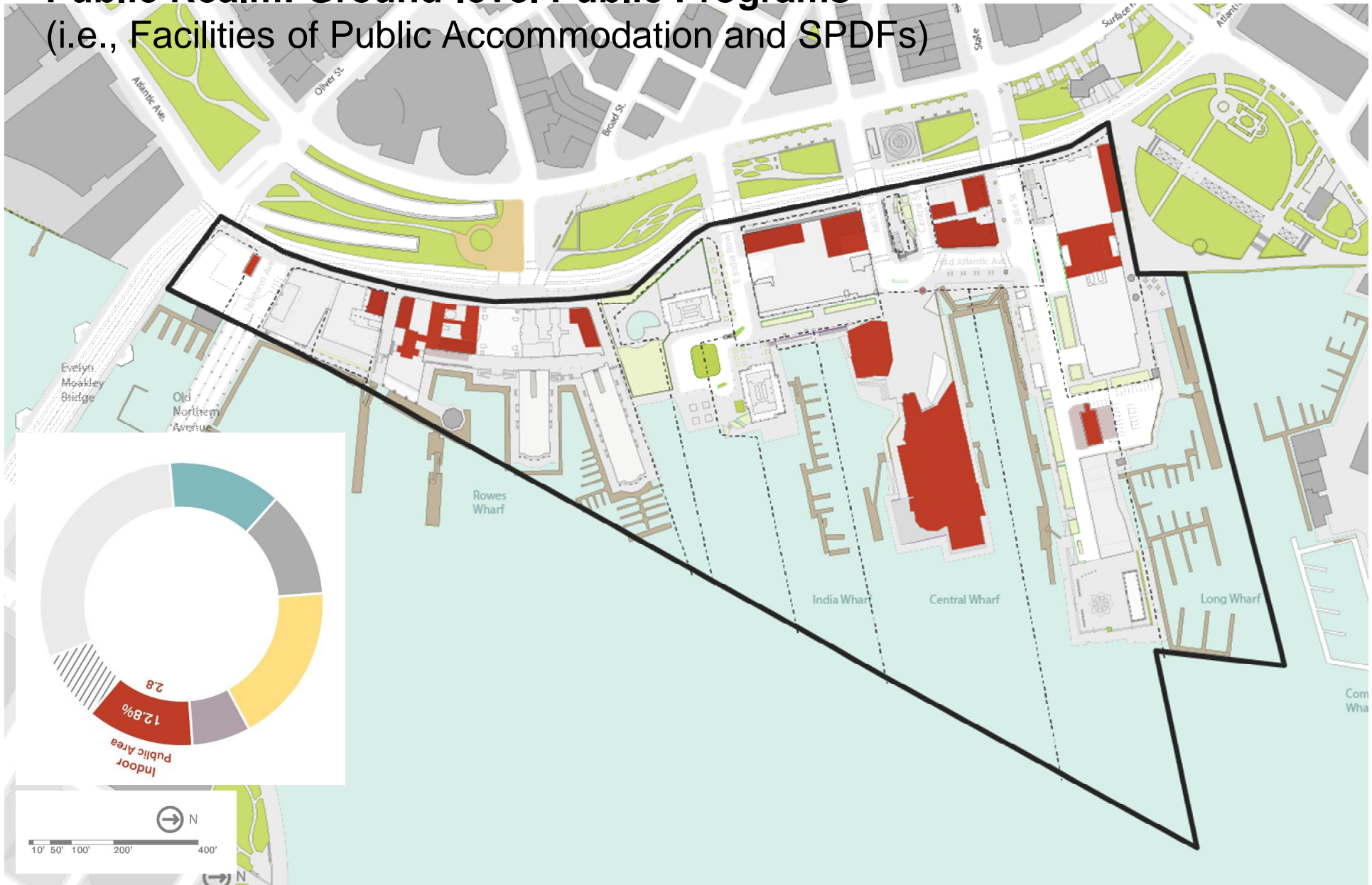
District-wide Urban Design Issues  
**Public Realm: Plazas**



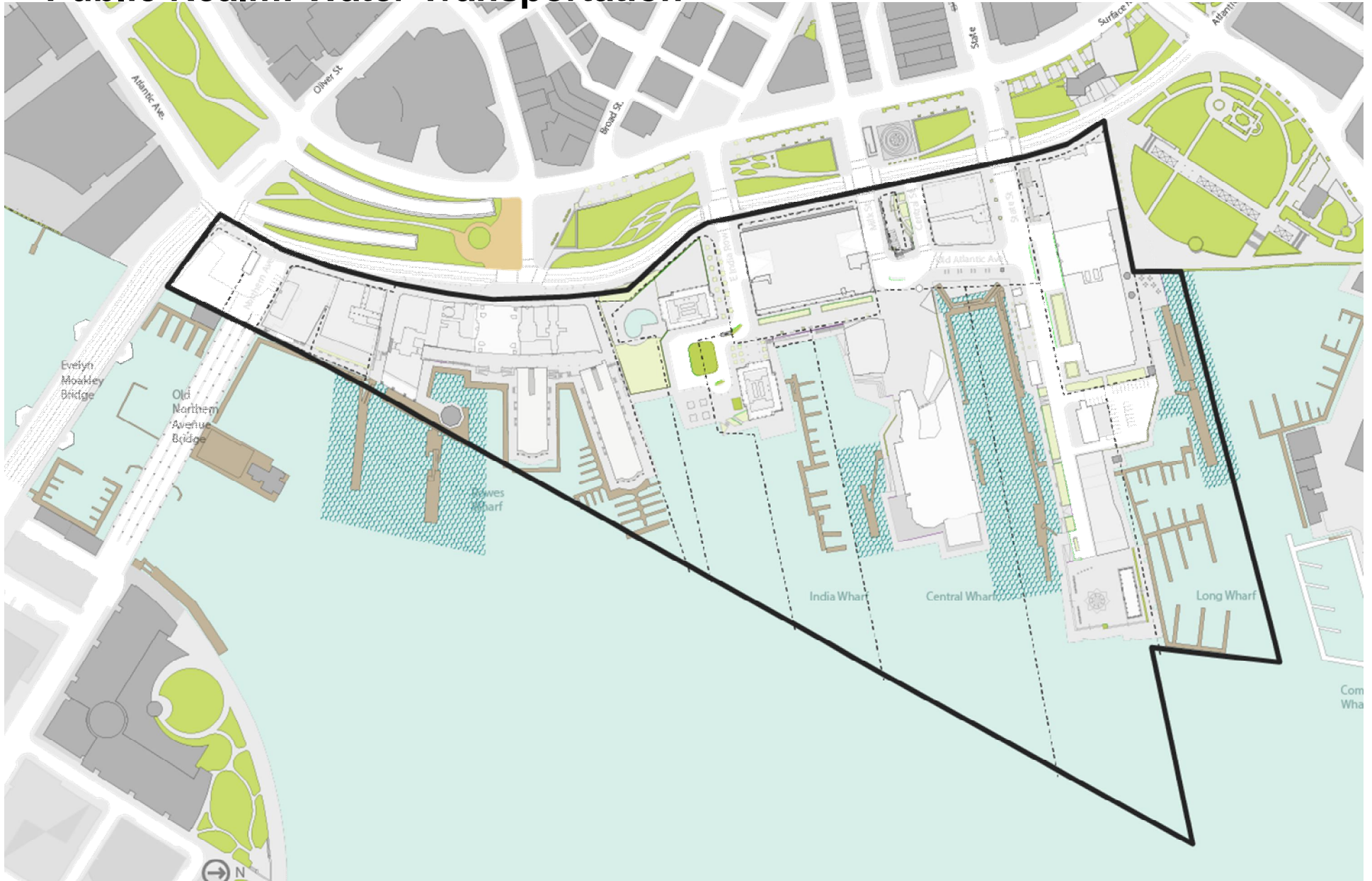
District-wide Urban Design Issues

# Public Realm: Ground-level Public Programs

(i.e., Facilities of Public Accommodation and SPDFs)

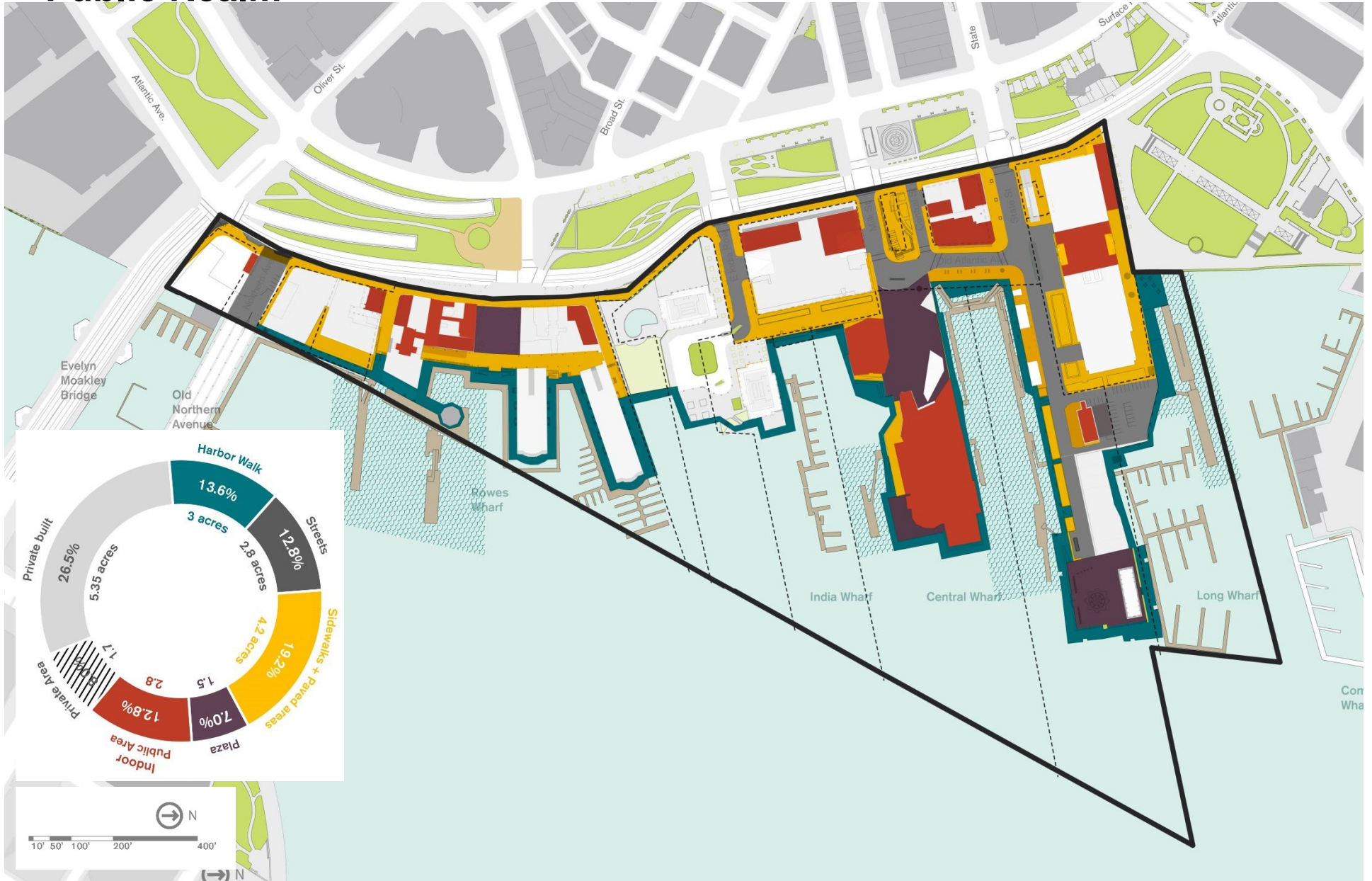


# Public Realm: Water Transportation



District-wide Urban Design Issues

# Public Realm

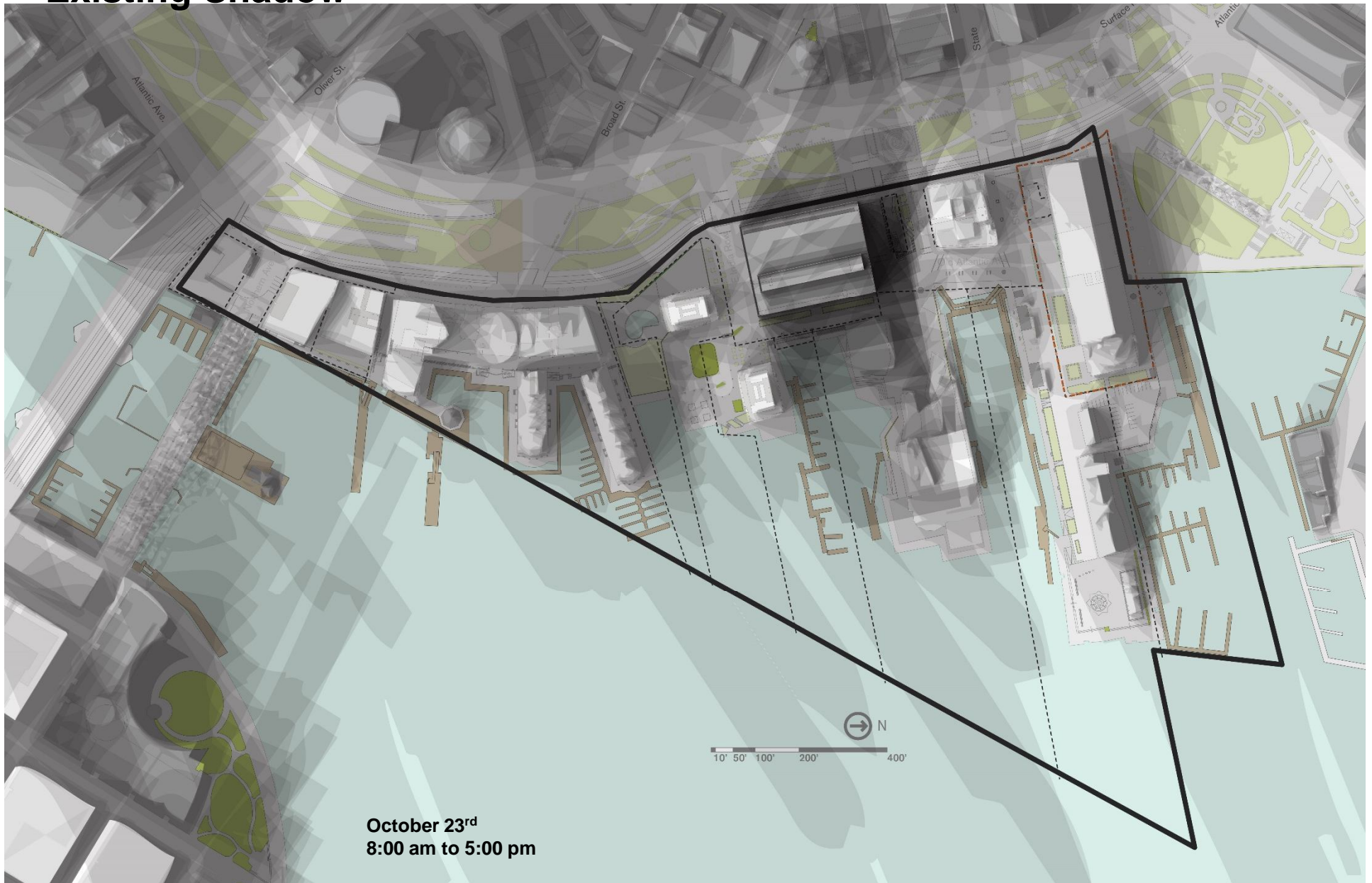


# Public Realm Prioritization Strategy



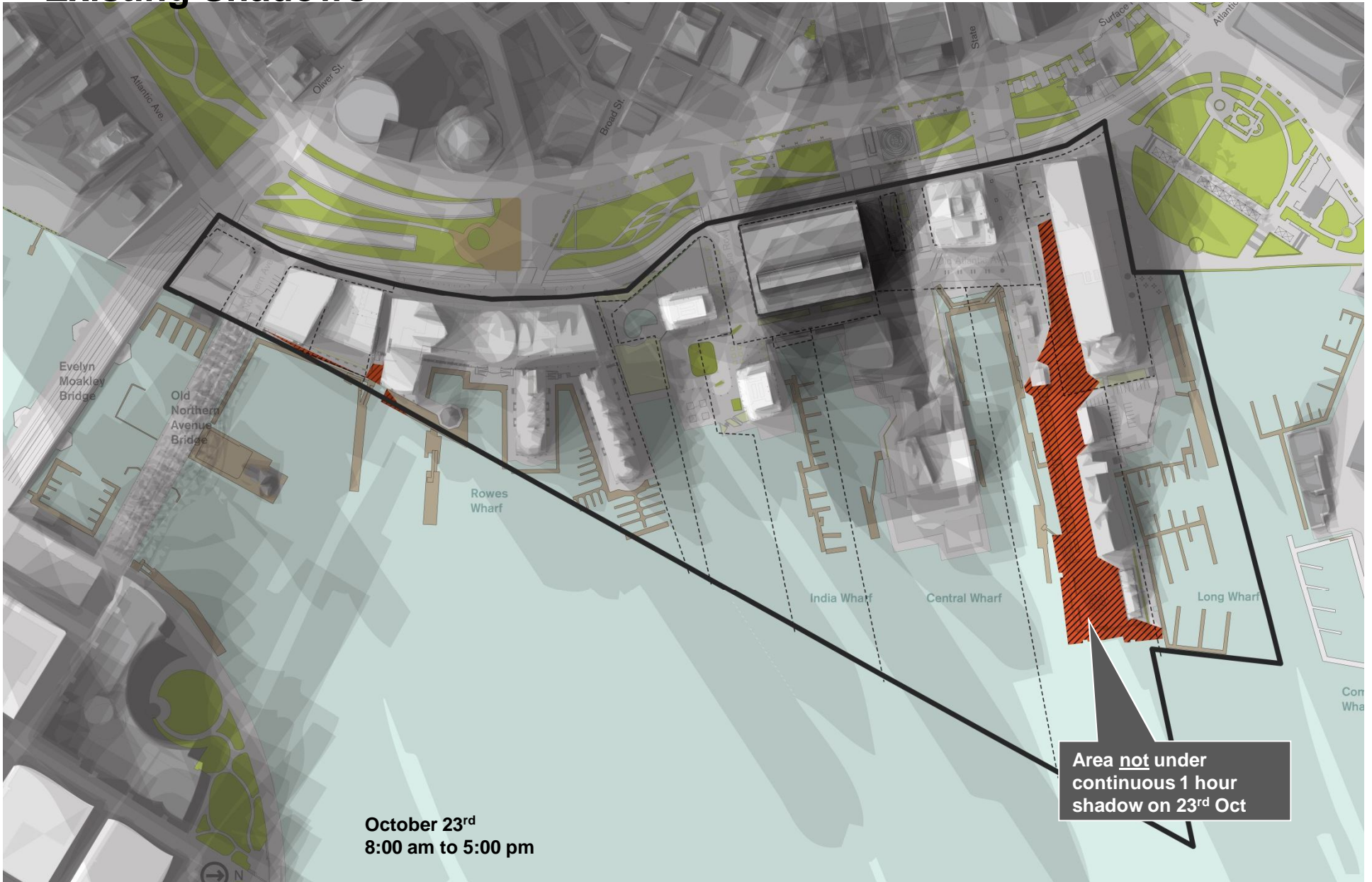
District-wide Urban Design Issues

# Existing Shadow



October 23<sup>rd</sup>  
8:00 am to 5:00 pm

District-wide Urban Design Issues  
**Existing Shadows**



October 23<sup>rd</sup>  
8:00 am to 5:00 pm

Area not under continuous 1 hour shadow on 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct

# Existing Shadows



Area not under continuous 1 hour shadow on 23rd Oct

October 23<sup>rd</sup>  
8:00 am to 5:00 pm

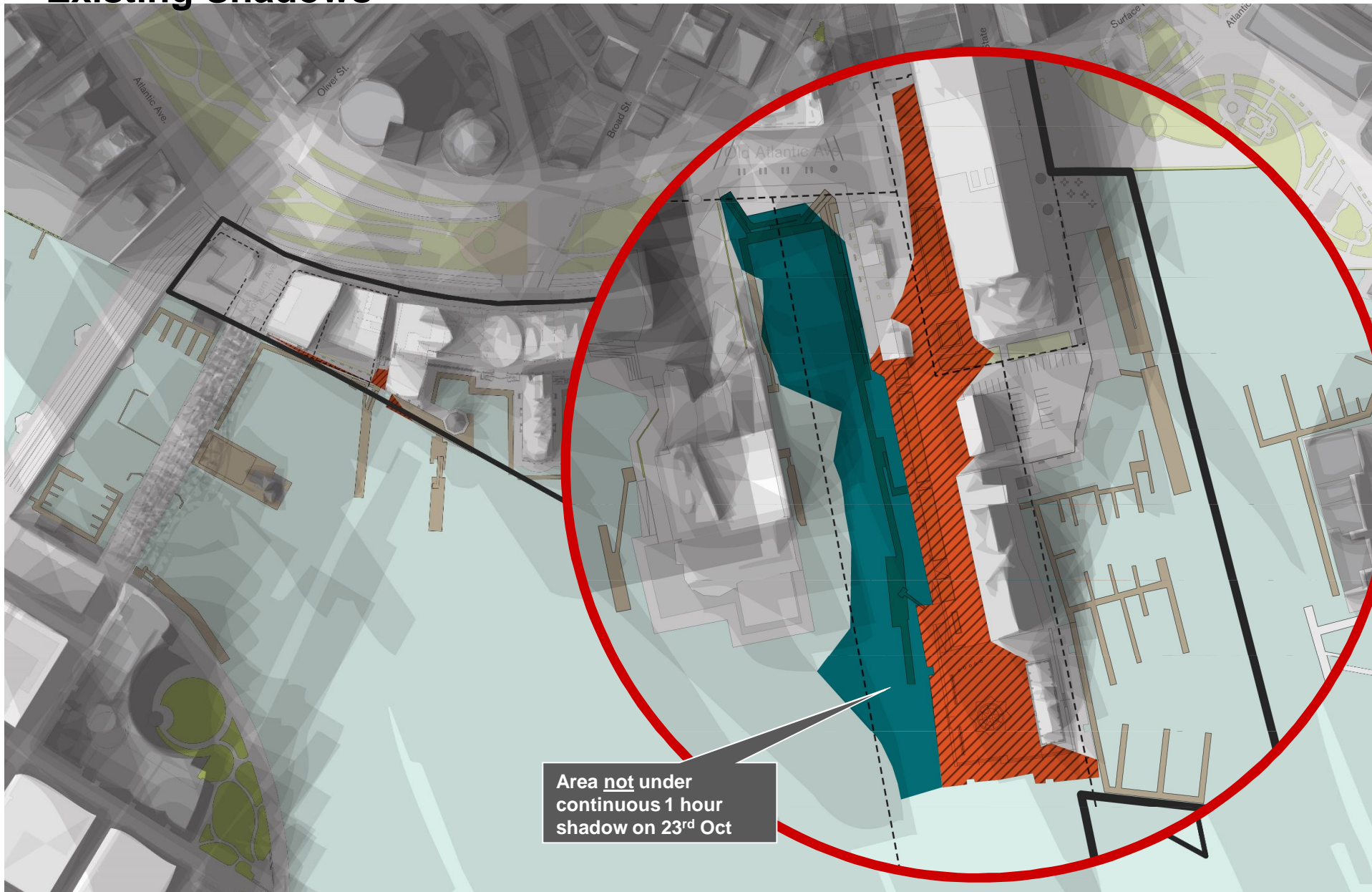


District-wide Urban Design Issues  
**Existing Shadows**



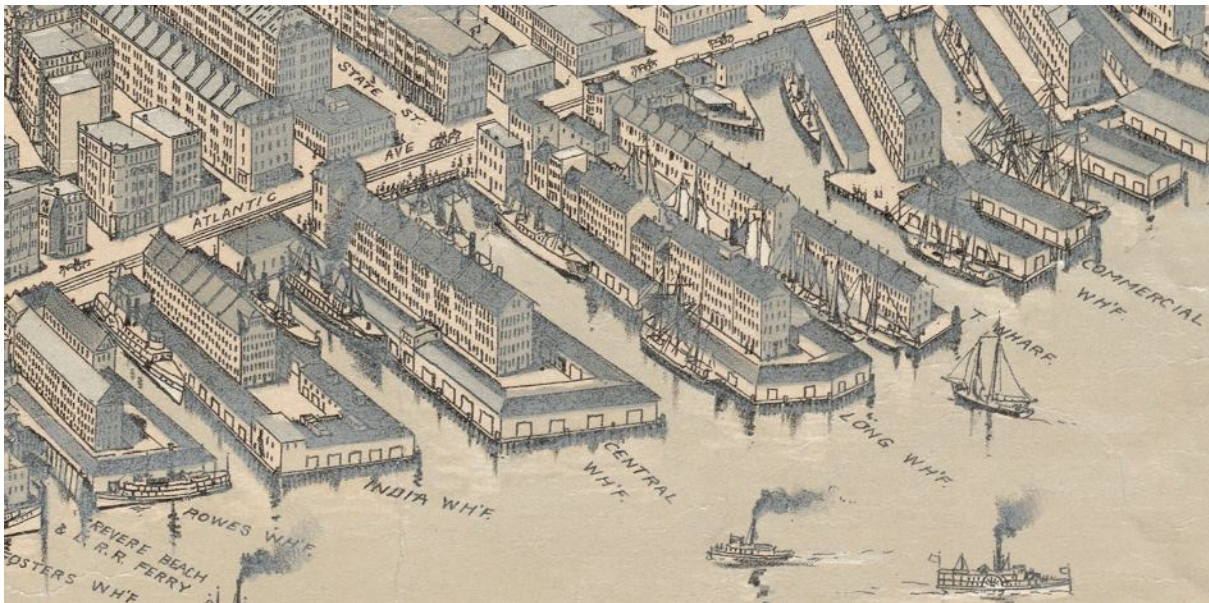
Area not under continuous 1 hour shadow on 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct

District-wide Urban Design Issues  
**Existing Shadows**



Area not under continuous 1 hour shadow on 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct

Downtown Waterfront  
**Historic and Public  
 Realm Assets: Long  
 Wharf**



Downtown Waterfront

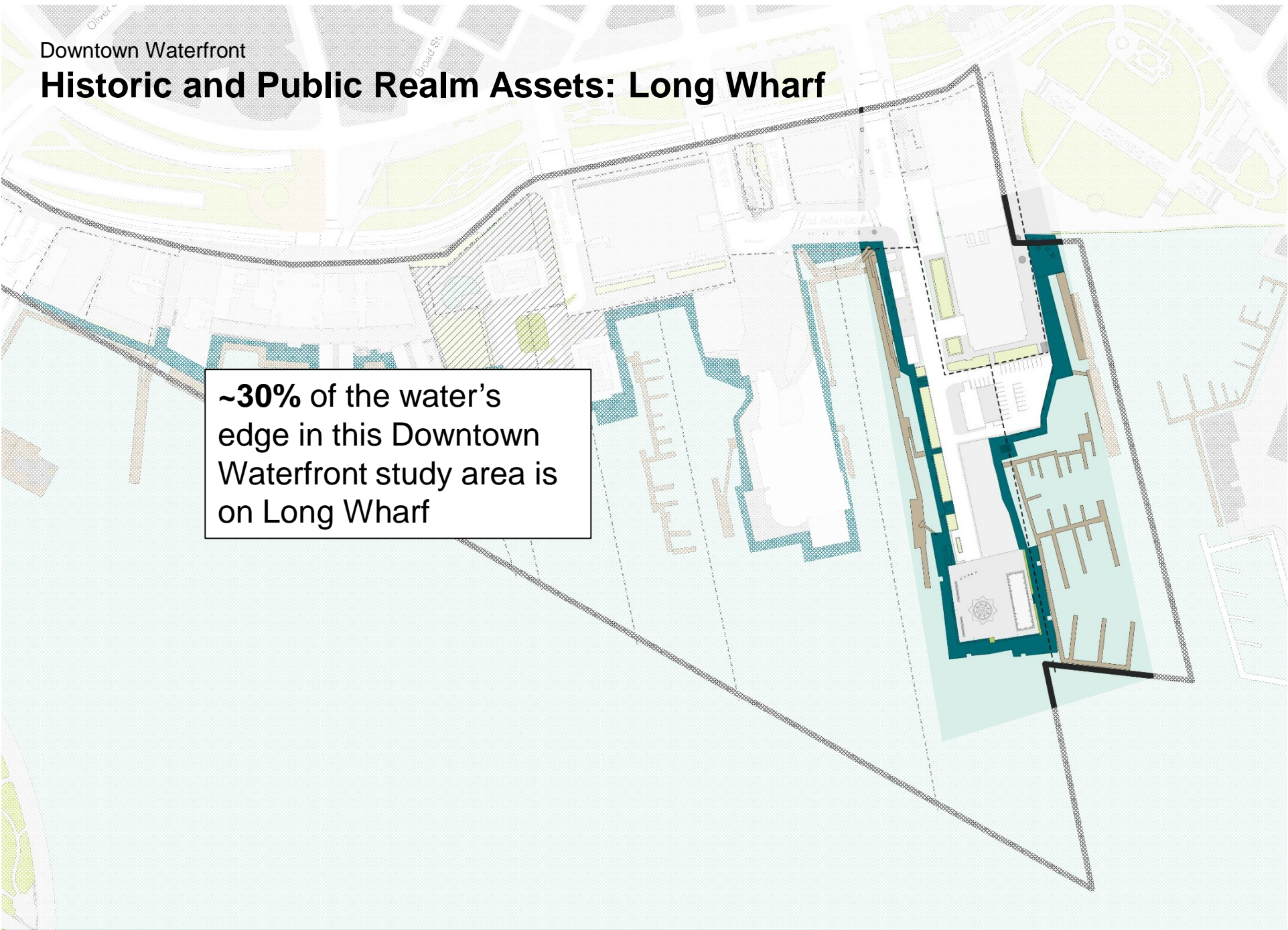
# Historic and Public Realm Assets: Long Wharf



Downtown Waterfront

## Historic and Public Realm Assets: Long Wharf

~30% of the water's edge in this Downtown Waterfront study area is on Long Wharf



Downtown Waterfront

## Historic and Public Realm Assets: Long Wharf Water Transportation Hub

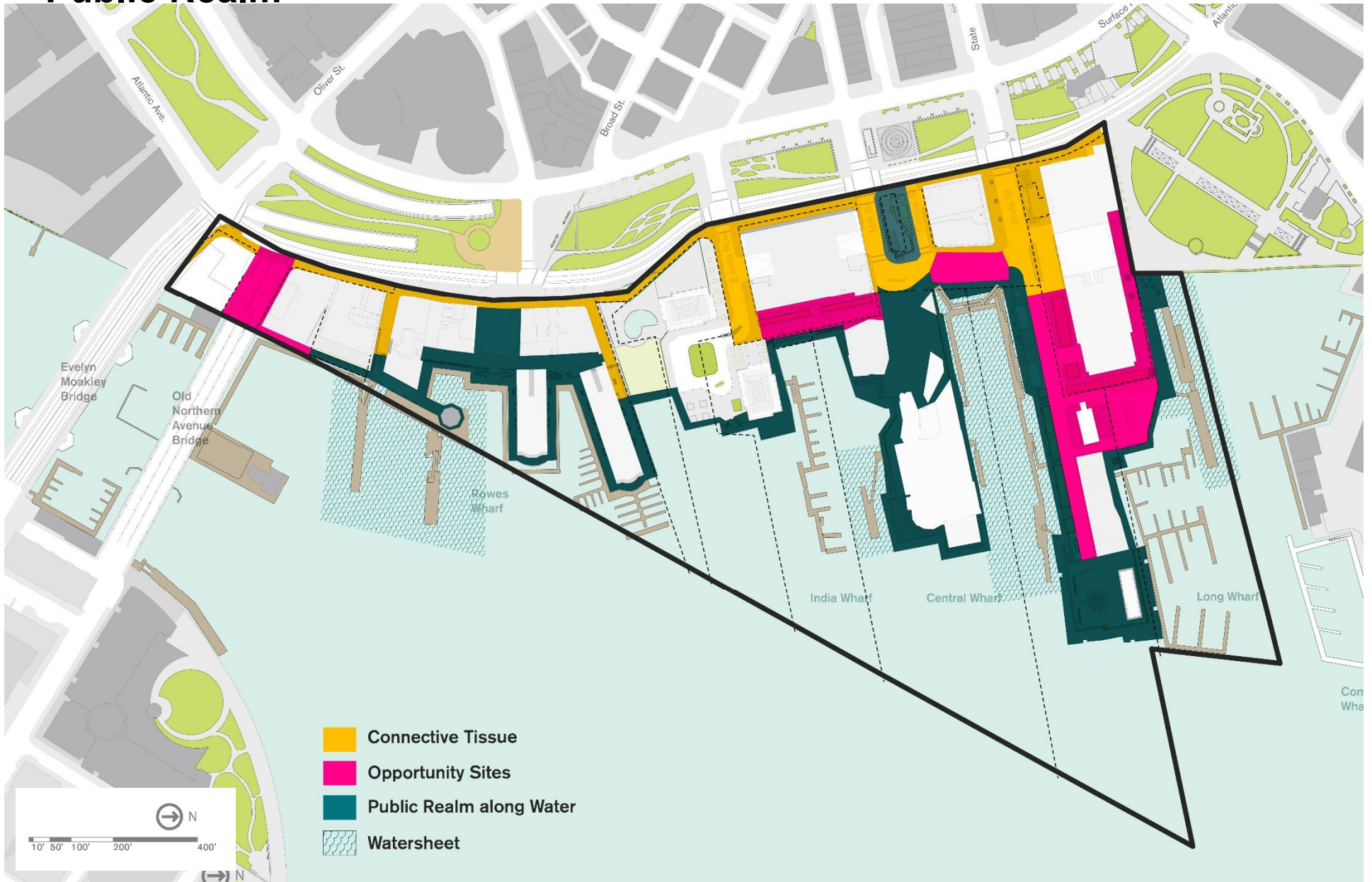


**Boston Harbor Cruises** estimates an additional 400K annual riders in the next 5 years.

**Harbor Island Alliance:** 2014 was their busiest year with approximately 125,000 visiting the islands, which is up 17% from 2013.

District-wide Urban Design Issues

# Public Realm



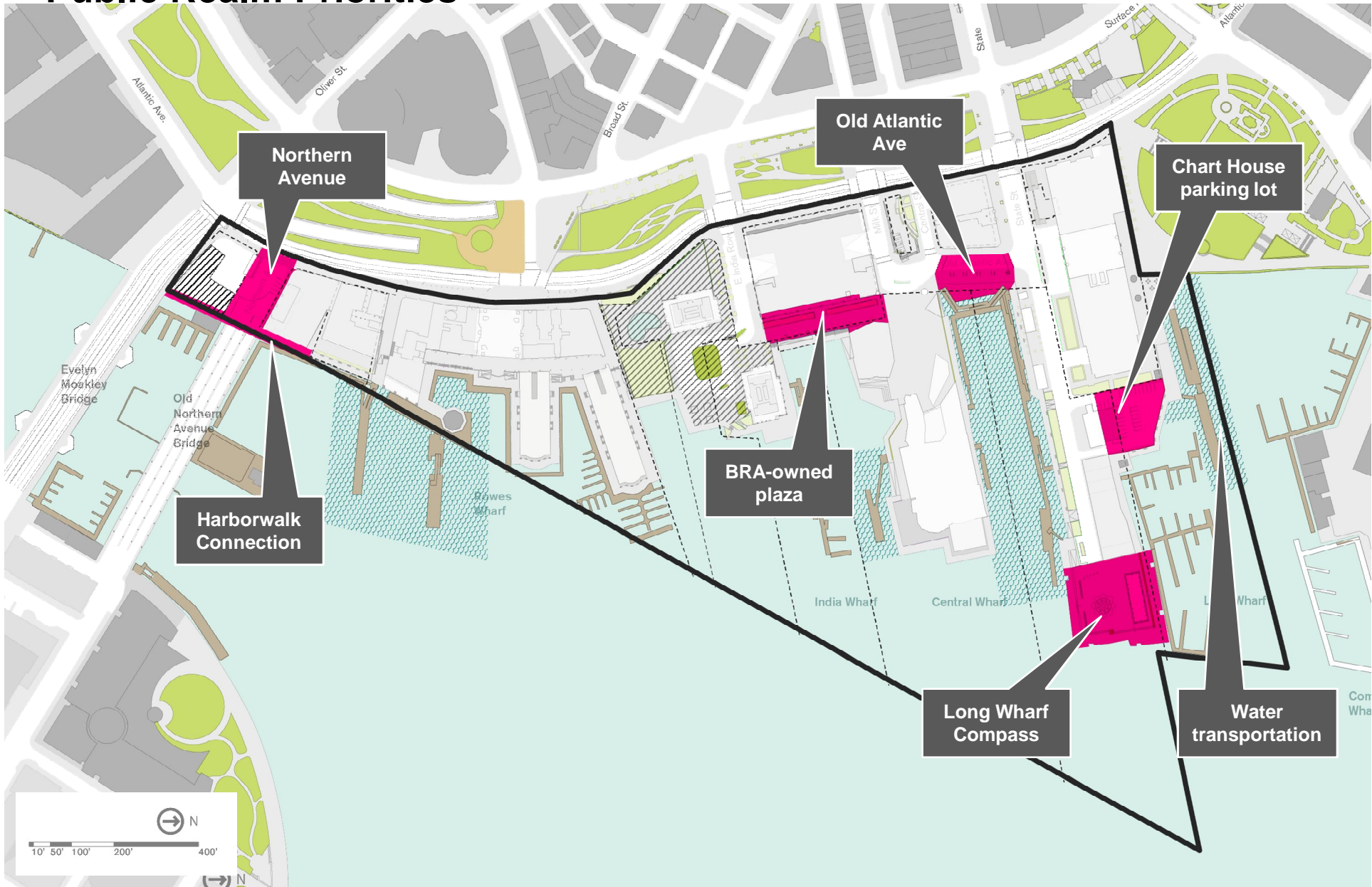
District-wide Urban Design Issues

# Public Realm





District-wide Urban Design Issues  
**Public Realm Priorities**



# Subdistrict Character and Goals

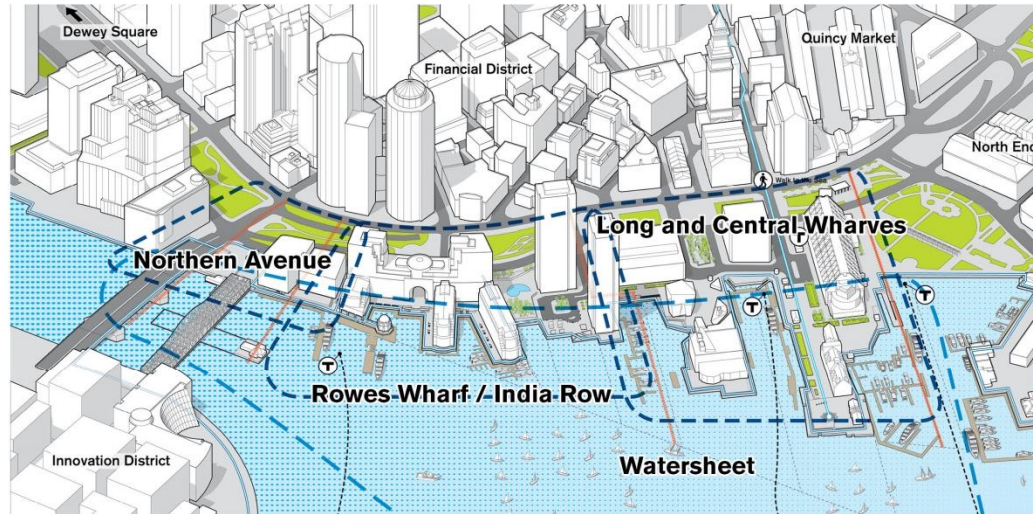


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## Subdistricts

The Downtown Waterfront can broadly be understood as four distinct areas, each with its own character and potential. Each of the Downtown Waterfront's subdistricts has its own distinct features, uses, and building styles. Moreover, each of the subdistricts connects to vastly different parts of the city, from the Innovation District to the North End. The goals for each subdistrict are driven by a desire to reinforce the specific character of each subdistrict. For example, the Northern Avenue section presents the opportunity to connect to the Innovation District; the India Row / Rowes Wharf area is mature and well-established and could benefit from clearer north-south connections; Long and Central wharves are where the city meets the harbor; and the watersheet offers the opportunity to experience the city and the harbor in a whole new way.

- **Northern Avenue**, spanning from the Moakley Bridge to the Coast Guard Building
- **Rowes Wharf and India Row** goes from 400 Atlantic Avenue to the Harbor Towers (which was the former India Wharf)
- **Long and Central Wharves**, which includes the Harbor Garage, Aquarium, and the Long Wharf Marriott
- In addition, the **watersheet** is a highly active place, and this plan considers it as a distinct zone in itself that needs its own spatial clarity and organization, with consideration to the adjacent uses.



**Northern Avenue**  
The Northern Avenue section is a key gateway between the historic center of the city and the city's newest destination neighborhood, the burgeoning Innovation District. This area, bounded by the Northern Avenue Bridge and the Moakley Bridge, is the gateway between these destinations. The challenges—and opportunities—here lie with how to facilitate passage between these neighborhoods and create a sense of entrance or arrival. Another key challenge is creating an accessible HARBORWALK path along the waterfront at both the Moakley Bridge and the Northern Avenue Bridge.



**Rowes Wharf and India Row**  
The Rowes Wharf and India Row area is a thin sliver of land between the Greenway and the water. It is home to a robust residential community and a range of restaurants and events venues at Rowes Wharf. Here, the focus is on facilitating passage from north to south, and connections from the Greenway to the water. Clear pedestrian and visual connections will facilitate north-south connectivity. Drawing people from the Greenway and Downtown to the water might require improving the lateral links by adding programming, retail or restaurant uses, or signage and lighting.



**Long and Central Wharves**  
This is the most active and programmed area of the waterfront. With the Walk to Sea, the Rings Fountain on the Greenway, and the Harbor Islands Pavilion, this is where Boston touches the water. The goal for Long and Central Wharves is to lead more people to the waterfront and fully utilize the space available, through programming, wayfinding, and management.



**The Watersheet**  
Building on decades of work and the clean-up of the Boston Harbor, the goal for the watersheet is to help more people experience the harbor. This requires a careful balance of different types of marinas and vessels, and a strong management plan to make the harbor friendly and inviting to all.



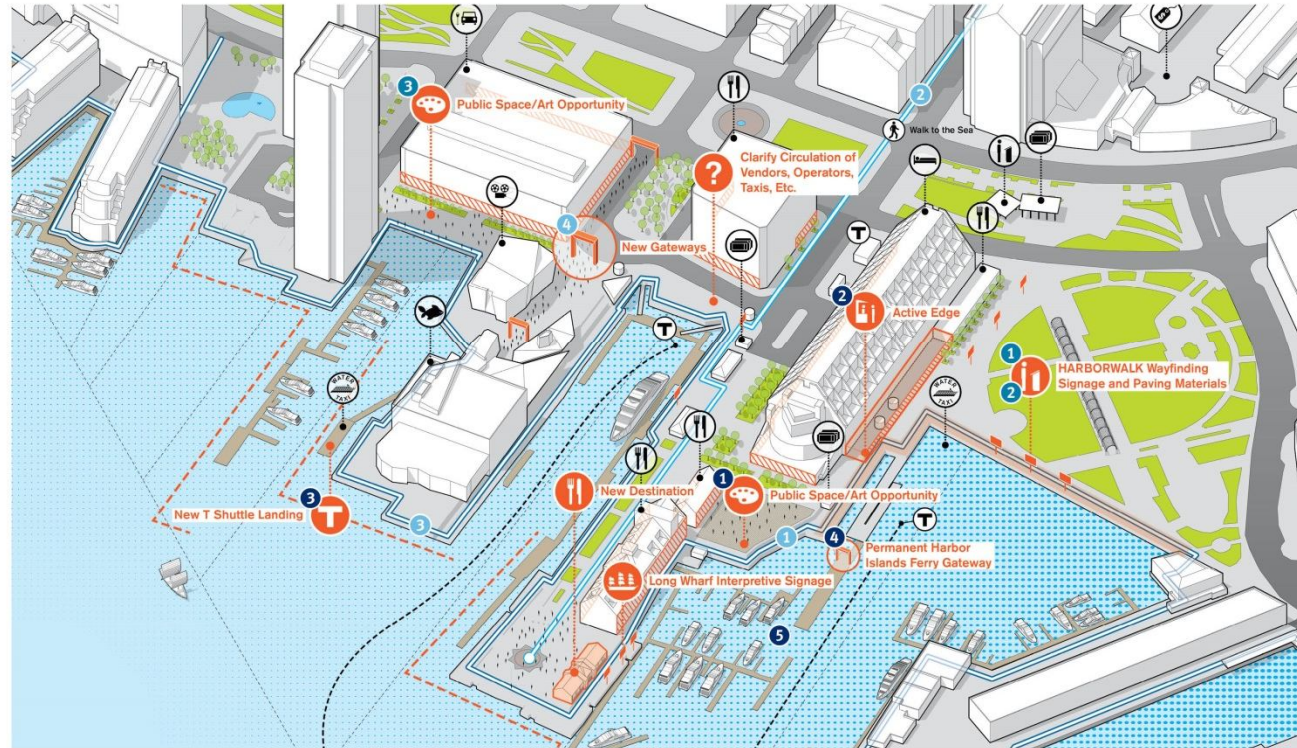
DRAFT MARCH 20, 2014

# Revisions Long and Central Wharves

Touch the  
Water



Boston Redevelopment Authority



21  
Long and Central Wharves

## Connectivity

- 1 Strengthening the connection to the North End is critical. This can happen through encouraging passing through the Marriott lobby, and improving the quality of the paths around the Marriott.
- 2 The Walk to the Sea should be strengthened and promoted. Encouraging more to travel to the end of the wharf could relieve some of the pedestrian congestion during peak tourist season, and lead to a greater appreciation of the harbor and Boston's maritime history.
- 3 The HARBORWALK should be strengthened to encourage north-south movement through the study area and to draw visitors to the ends of the wharves.
- 4 Gateway moments should be designed, such as one approaches the NEAq.

## Legibility

- 1 Signage should make clear both the HARBORWALK as well as HARBORWALK "shortcuts," such as around the Marriott. Overall maps of the HARBORWALK and the general district should be considered.
- 2 Coordinated signage can also make clear the ferry locations and schedules. This will alleviate confusion in the area. The overall area can be improved through coordinating paving materials, signage, etc. This will help clarify the public realm and direct people to the key amenities and open spaces.
- 3 Key landmarks, such as public art, large-scale signs, and digital displays, should be considered as navigation and wayfinding devices.

## Activation and Programming

- 1 Improving underutilized spaces, such as the hardscaped plaza between the Harbor Garage and the water, and parking lot and the end of Long Wharf, is a priority. Each should have a different character, ranging from quiet contemplative spots to very active.
- 2 Activating the edges of buildings is key to drawing people to this area and distributing foot traffic.
- 3 Expanding the water transit options, both in terms of destinations and regularity of service, is a key priority. Water transit can connect the Downtown Waterfront to other Boston neighborhoods, such as East Boston, as well as neighboring waterfront communities.
- 4 The Harbor Islands would benefit from a permanent gateway on the wharf.
- 5 The reconstruction of T Wharf and a reconfiguration of waterside on uses should be considered on the north side of Long Wharf.

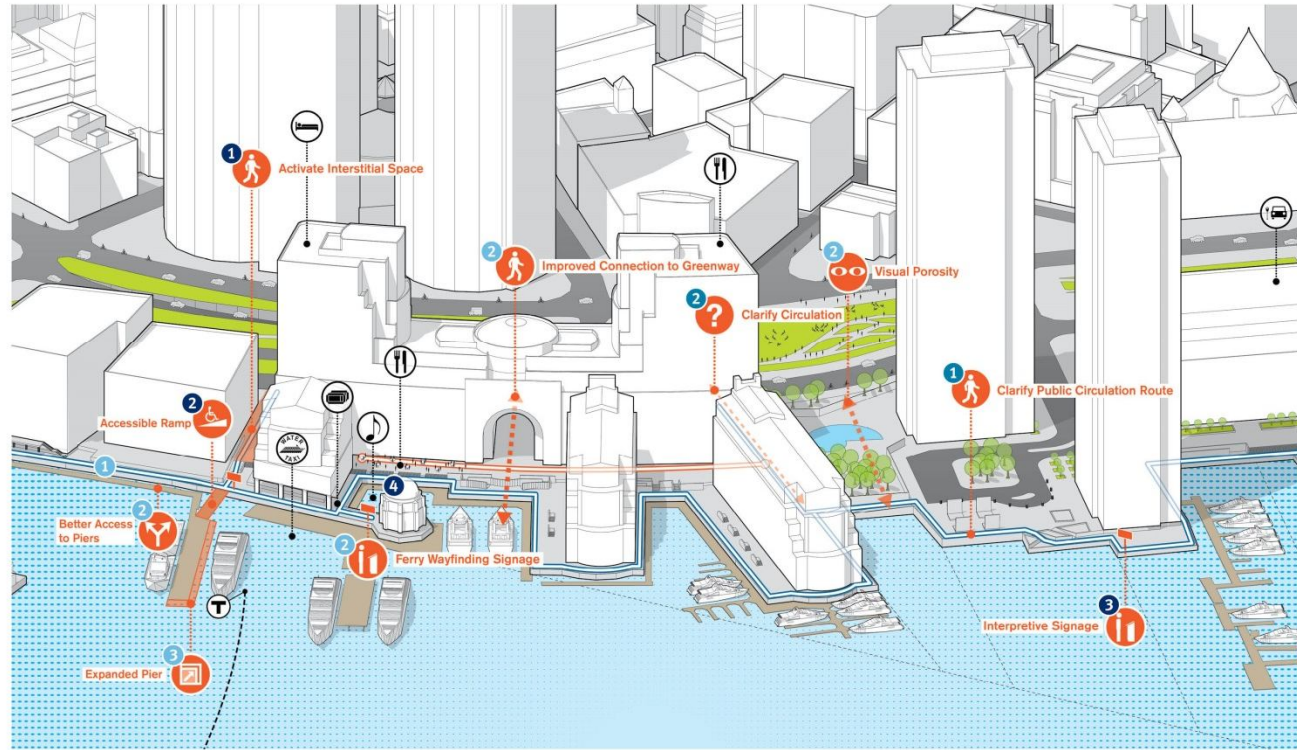
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# Revisions Rowes Wharf and India Row

Link the  
North to  
South, and  
East to  
West



Boston Redevelopment Authority



### Connectivity

- 1 Strengthen the north-south connections along the HARBORWALK and Atlantic Avenue. Improving pedestrian connections between the south and the north of the downtown will relieve congestion on the roads and on public transportation, and relieve pedestrian bottlenecks.
- 2 Visual connections from the Greenway to the waterfront should be enhanced and preserved wherever possible.
- 3 Enhanced access to piers and water transit would enable more commuters and visitors to visit the area. This includes accessible ramps, better access to side piers, expanded transit piers, and better signage.

### Legibility

- 1 Clarifying the pedestrian path through the Harbor Towers property is a priority for this area. The HARBORWALK is confusing and poorly marked. Proper signage will help, as will upgrades to the paving materials. If the Harbor Towers rethinks East India Row and the entryway to the Harbor Towers, it should consider how the landscape and streetscape can make clear the public path through this parcel.
- 2 Signage should make clear both the HARBORWALK as well as HARBORWALK "shortcuts," such as through Rowes Wharf. Overall maps of the HARBORWALK and the general district should be considered.

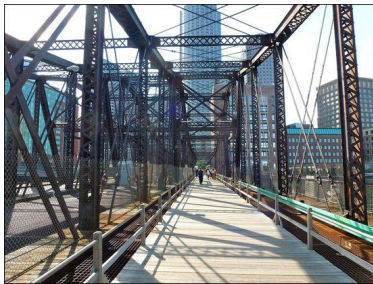
### Activation and Programming

- 1 The interstitial spaces in this area could benefit from programming, such as restaurant seating or benches. Adding programming to these areas could increase pedestrian activity between the water's edge and the Greenway.
- 2 Improving access to the water transportation centers, with accessible ramps and better access to piers will greatly increase activity at the water's edge.
- 3 Interpretive signage or symbols (e.g., public art) about the history of the waterfront would add to the experience of visitors or passersby.
- 4 Underutilized spaces, such as the pavilion at Rowes Wharf, should be programmed or made available for public use.

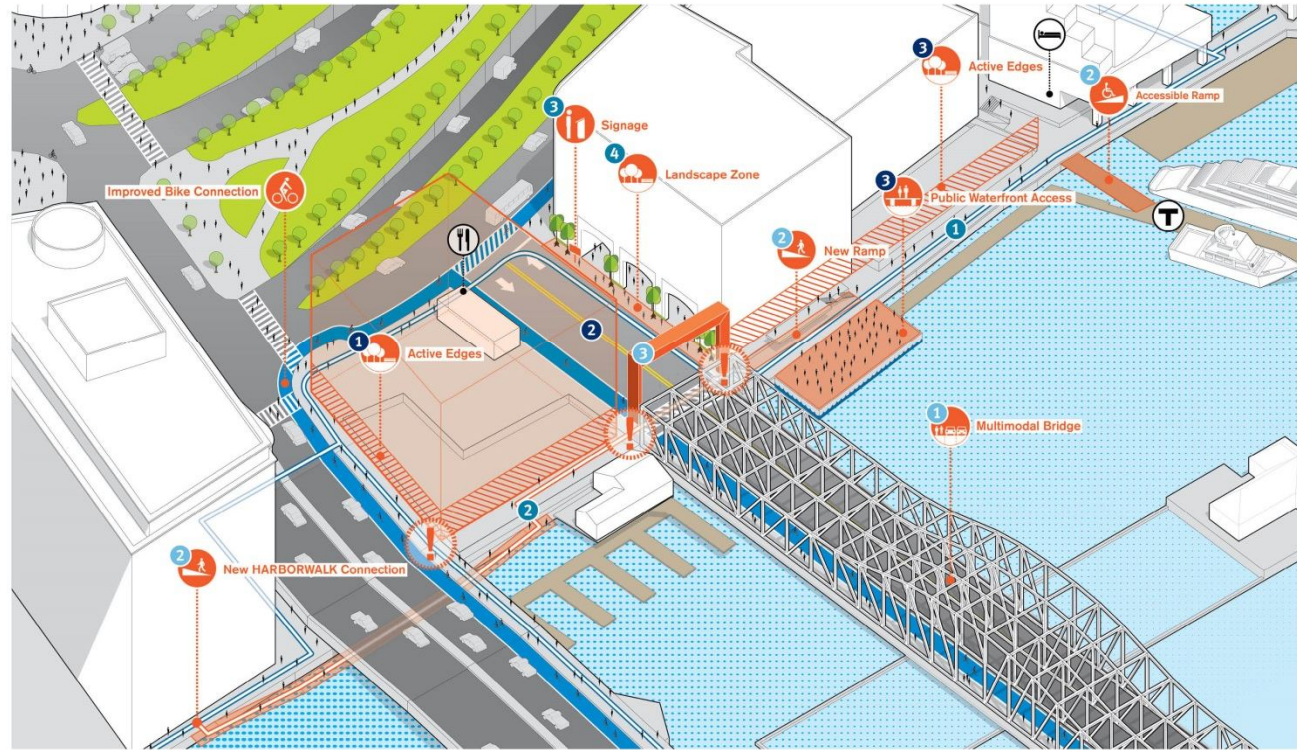
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# Revisions Northern Ave.

Gateway  
to the  
Innovation  
District



Boston Redevelopment Authority



### Connectivity

- 1 The Northern Avenue Bridge has the potential to become a model Complete Street. The renovation of this bridge could alleviate traffic congestion in South Boston and increase pedestrian and bicyclist connections to the Innovation District.
- 2 Accessible paths and waterfront access are critical to making the public realm a place for all people. Currently, the HARBORWALK jogs around the Moakley Bridge, and has an inaccessible area near the Northern Avenue Bridge. Creating ramps to the street level, or below the bridges, in both locations would add to HARBORWALK continuity and legibility. With any new development in this area, these should be priority public realm improvements.
- 3 Preserving and enhancing view corridors from the city to the harbor and along the HARBORWALK are key elements.

### Legibility

- 1 The HARBORWALK in this area is poorly marked, narrow, and inaccessible. New lighting and paving materials should be considered in this area. These would increase the sense of safety and the understanding of this as a public path.
- 2 The redevelopment of the Hook site should include a HARBORWALK connection along the waterfront.
- 3 Signage could direct pedestrians to the nearby attractions, such as the Aquarium, the Children's Museum, and the BSA Space, and offer interpretive information about the history of the area.
- 4 The renovation of the Northern Avenue Bridge will turn what now seems like an alley into a public thoroughfare. The renovation of the streetscape will contribute to the legibility of this as a street for all modes of transportation.

### Activation and Programming

- 1 New developments should activate the public realm with retail and restaurant uses along the ground level. The Hook site in particular presents the opportunity to activate all four sides of the parcel. The Coast Guard Building contains a cafeteria that is open to the public but little known. Encouraging awareness of this amenity can add to the activity along Northern Avenue.
- 2 Designing Northern Avenue as a welcoming thoroughfare poses a challenge because it is faced with loading docks and service areas. Design of this street should focus on making it welcoming to pedestrians with visible entrances to these buildings on Northern Avenue.
- 3 Unwelcoming edges facing the HARBORWALK should be redesigned to open up to the waterfront, and an expanded public realm should be considered in "bottleneck" areas.

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# Setting Priorities for the MHP

a. Requested substitute provisions

b. Public Benefits

- Order of Preference
- Creating priority zones

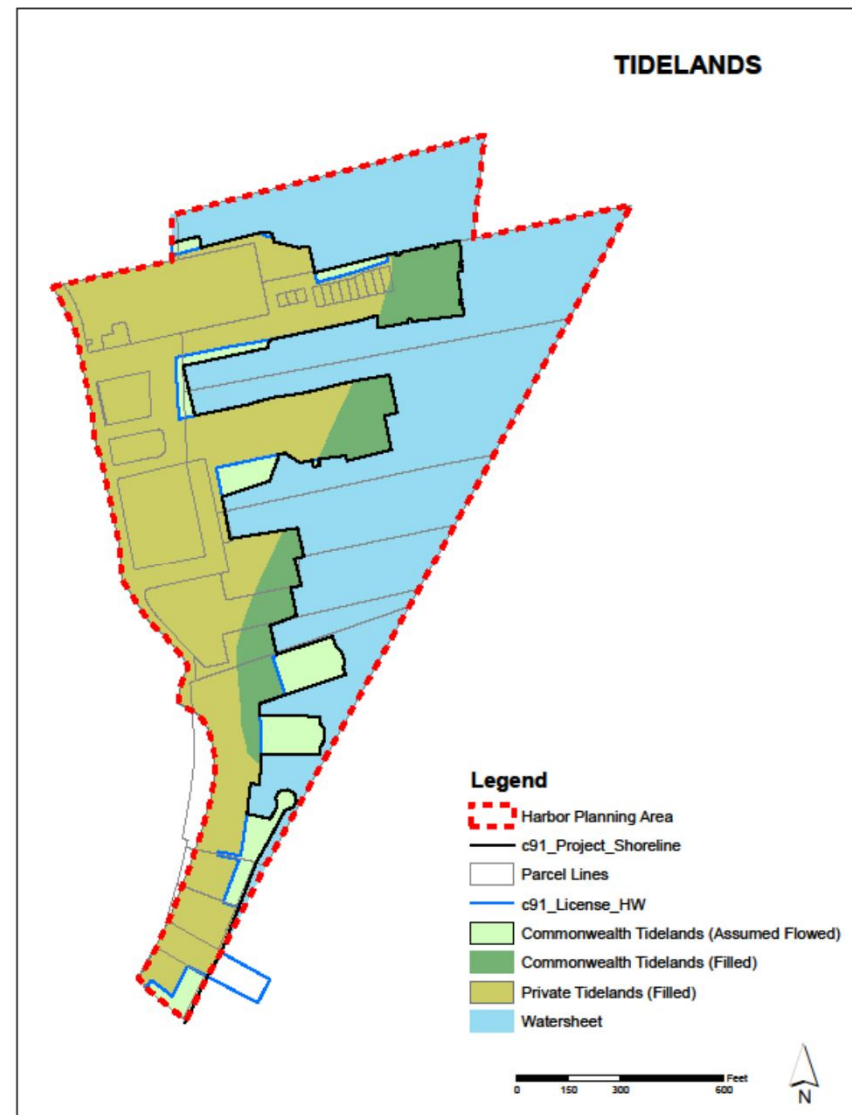
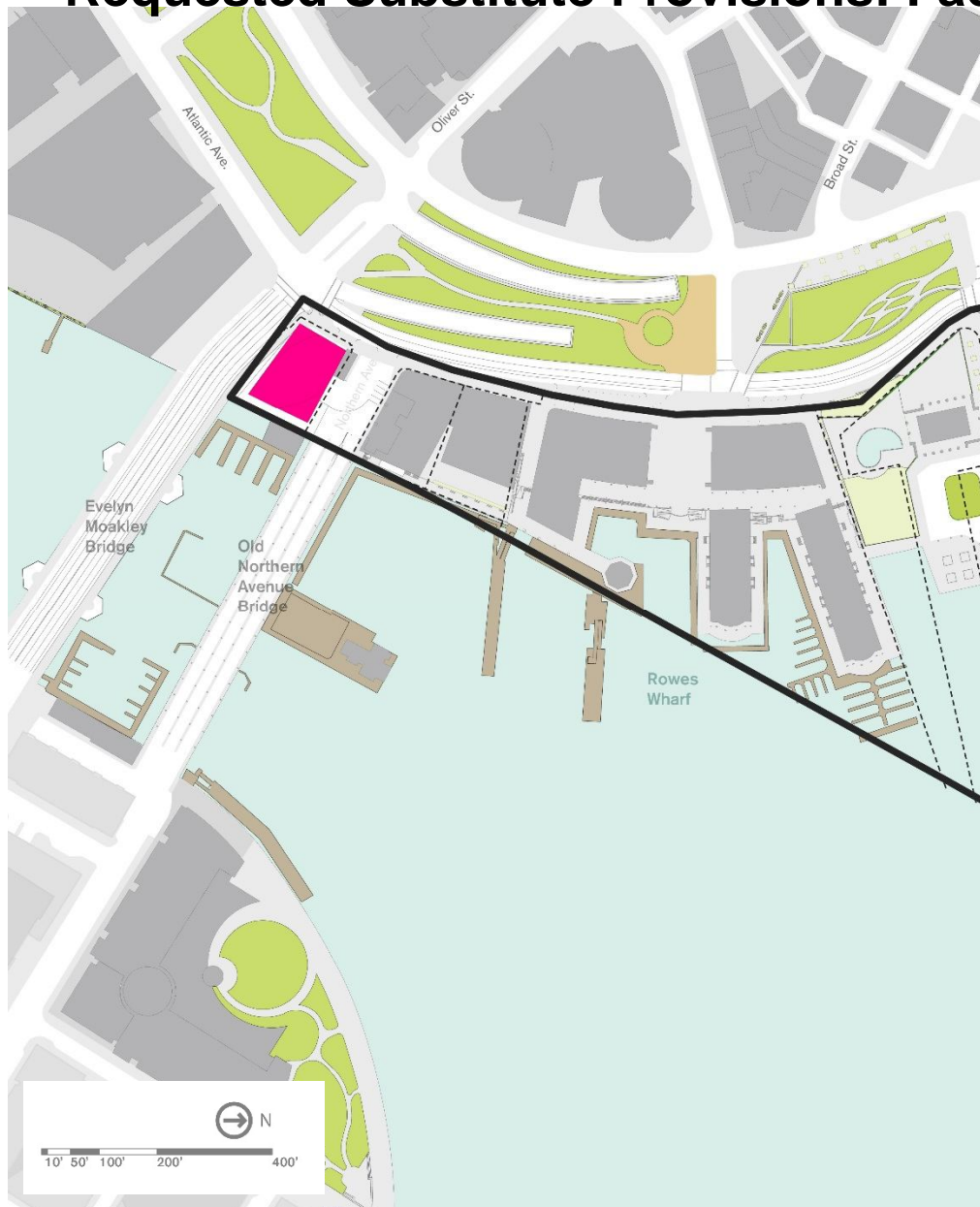
a. How this relates to the public realm plan and potential offsets



# Setting Priorities for the MHP Proposed Projects

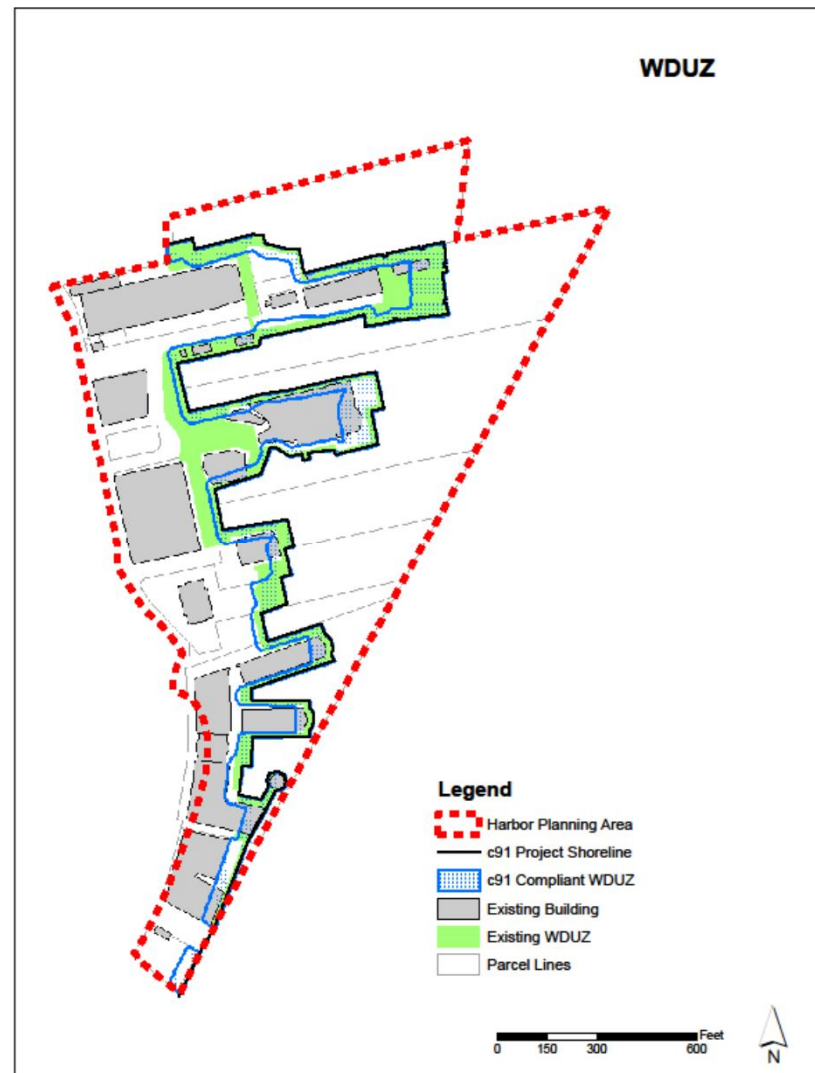
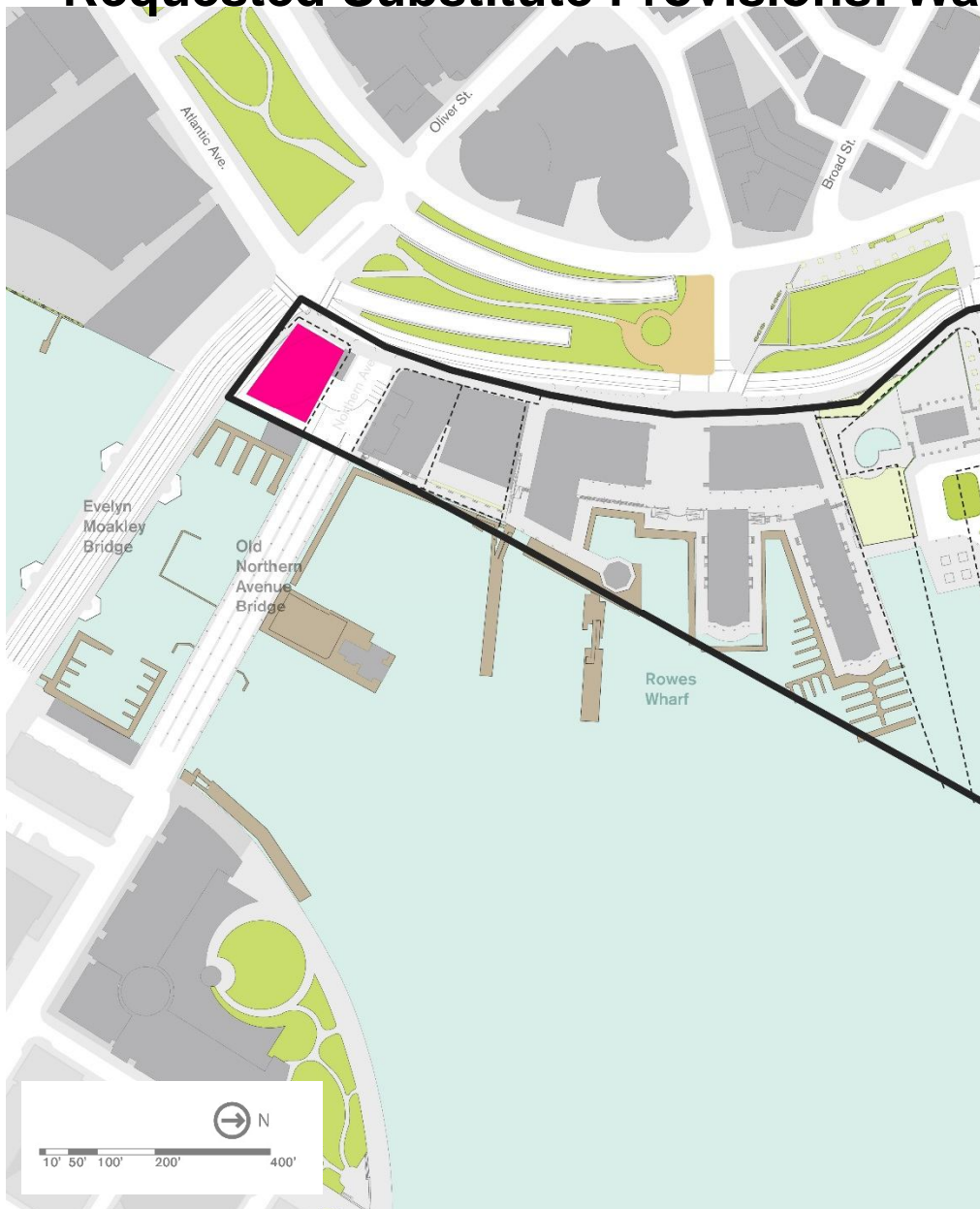


# Requested Substitute Provisions: Facilities of Private Tenancy



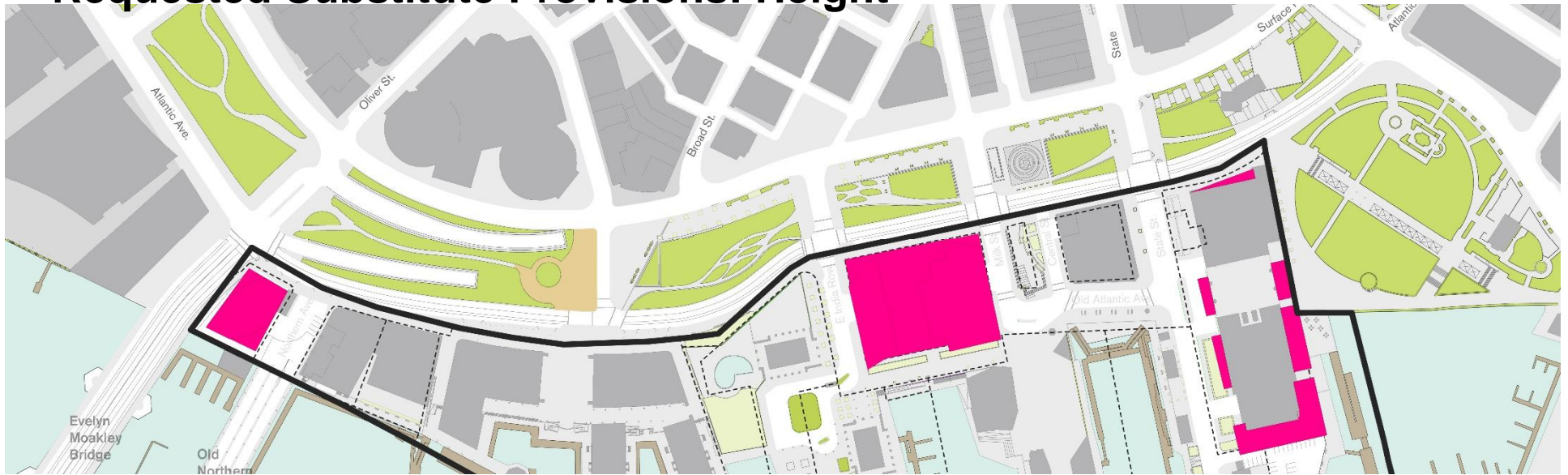


# Requested Substitute Provisions: Water-dependent use zone

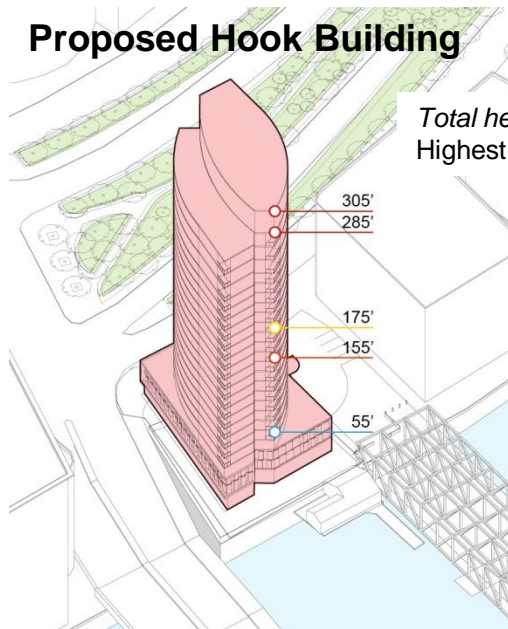


Setting Priorities for the MHP

**Requested Substitute Provisions: Height\***

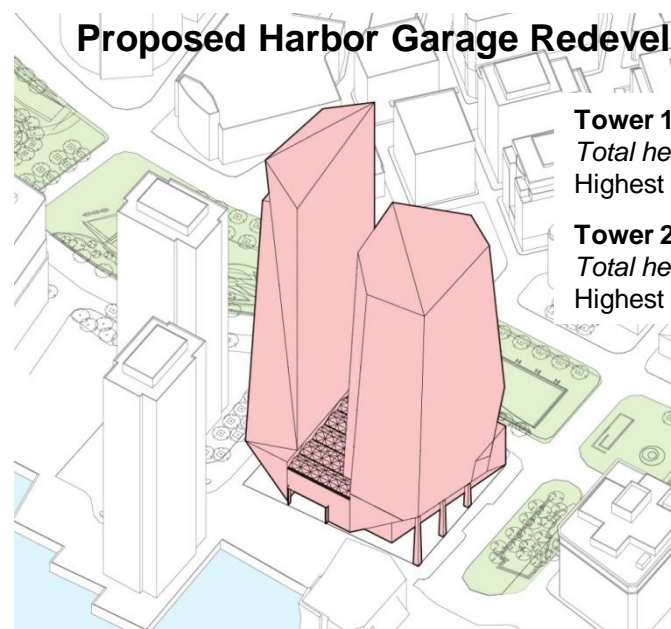


**Proposed Hook Building**



Total height – 305'  
Highest Occupiable floor – 285'

**Proposed Harbor Garage Redevelopment**

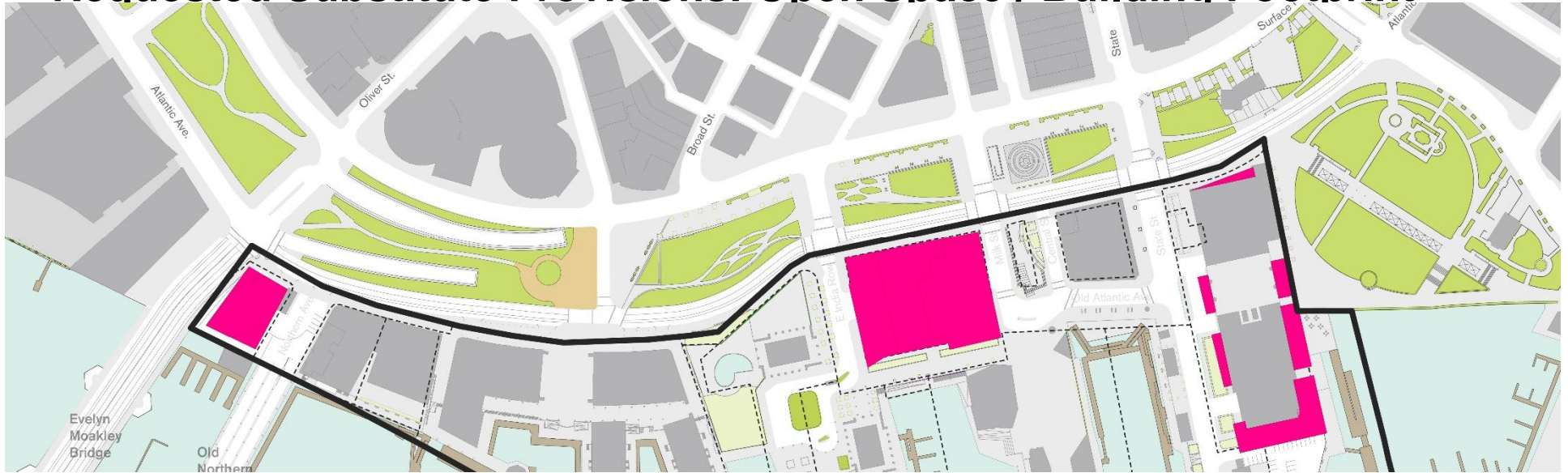


**Tower 1**  
Total height – 615'  
Highest Occupiable floor – 582'

**Tower 2**  
Total height – 538'  
Highest Occupiable floor – 485'

*\* For Ch. 91 purposes, height is based on the highest occupiable floor.*

# Requested Substitute Provisions: Open Space / Building Footprint



## Proposed Hook Building

**Proposed Building Footprint: 67.3%**

Building Footprint: ~13,500 SF

Total parcel size: 20,056 SF

Existing Building Footprint: ~5%

## Proposed Harbor Garage Redevelopment

**Proposed Building Footprint: 100%**

Building Footprint: ~58,000 SF

Total parcel size: ~58,000 SF

Existing Building Footprint: 100%

## Proposed Long Wharf Marriott Addition

**Proposed Building Footprint: 84%**

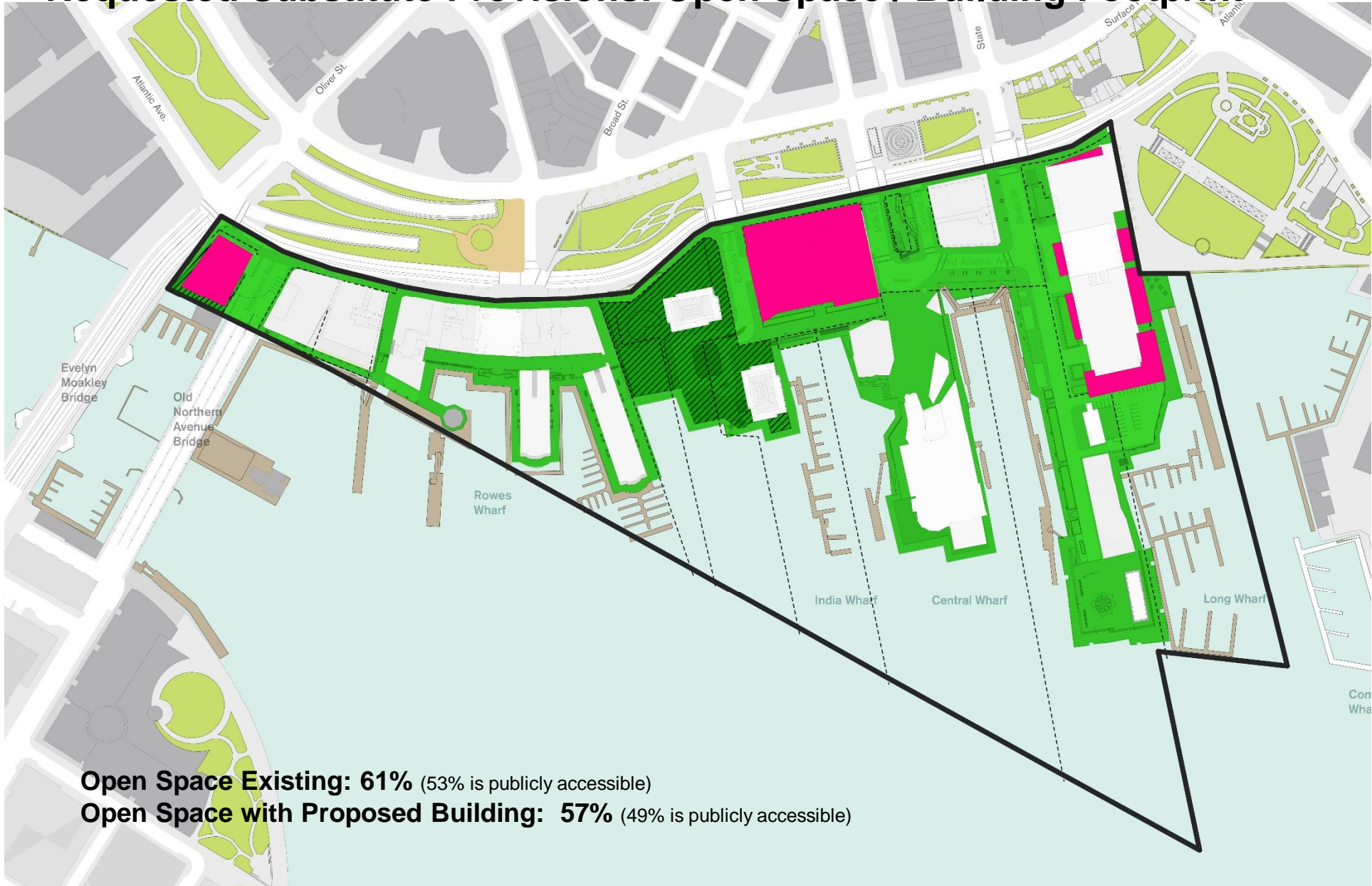
Building Footprint: ~90,630 SF (~21,600 SF addition)

Total parcel size: ~ 107,893 SF, *excluding MBTA Easement*

Existing Building Footprint: ~64%



# Requested Substitute Provisions: Open Space / Building Footprint



**Open Space Existing: 61%** (53% is publicly accessible)

**Open Space with Proposed Building: 57%** (49% is publicly accessible)

# Public Benefits

## Public Benefits (or offsets) should focus on:

- Activation of the Waterfront (programming)
- Access to the Waterfront (physical improvements)
  - Open space on waterfront
  - Access to the water's edge (paths, views, etc.)
- Water-dependent use and water transportation



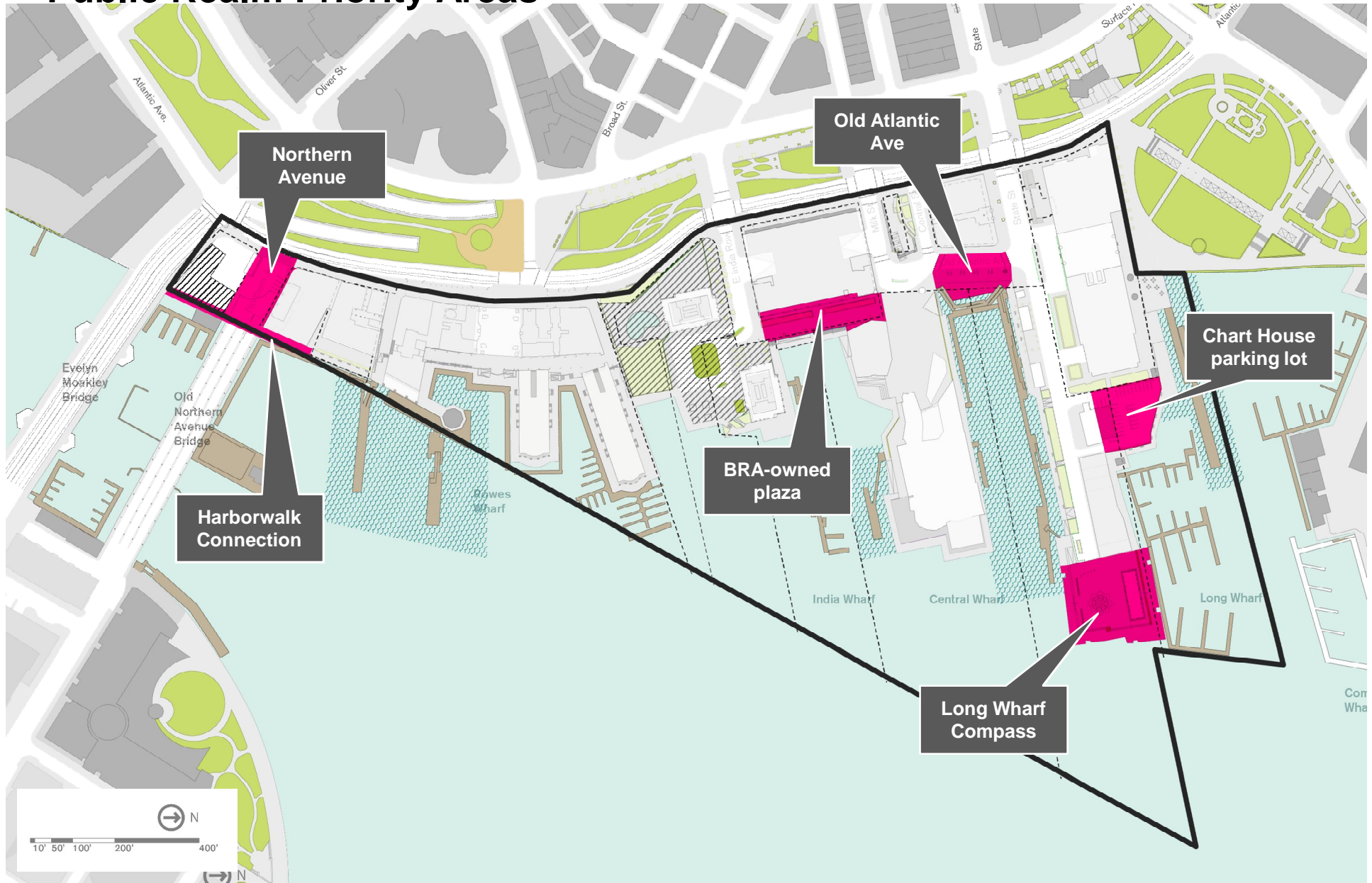
# Public Benefits: Prioritizing an Offset Strategy

Offsets should focus on:

1. **On-site improvements**
2. **Improvements to identified priority areas**
3. **Connectivity improvements** (to and from the city and along the water)
4. **Area-wide improvements** (e.g., management of public space, wayfinding, operating issues)
5. **Benefits outside of the jurisdiction** (planning area)



District-wide Urban Design Issues  
**Public Realm Priority Areas**



# Next Steps

## **The BRA and consultant team will prepare a draft MHP, which**

- Will reflect the City's and committee's priorities for the public realm and watershed.
- Will reflect the City's and committee's thoughts on acceptable substitute provisions (open space, height, FPTs).
- Will propose a hierarchy of offsets for various substitute provisions.

## **The MHPAC will review and comment on this draft.**

We will also review the revised public realm and watershed activation plan.

## **The BRA and consultant team will revise the draft, then submit it to the State.**

Then the State process includes:

- Public hearing and comment period (30 days)
- Consultation period (30-60 days)
- Secretary issues an MHP decision