

Boston, MA, USA

# AVENUE OF THE ARTS

## DESIGN GUIDELINES STUDY

Review of Tasks 1.0 and 2.0  
Existing Conditions and  
Board Approved Projects Analysis  
4.08.2015

SASAKI

RWDI





## **Public Meeting #2:**

- **Review of Public Meeting #1**
- **Presentation of Existing Conditions and Zoning Analysis**
- **Discussion of Potential Future Sites**
- **Next Steps**



An aerial map of a city grid, likely Cambridge, Massachusetts, showing a dense network of streets. The map is overlaid with semi-transparent green and blue areas, possibly representing parks, water bodies, or specific project zones. The text is overlaid on the map.

## Why is this study looking primarily at the institutional area?

- ***This is not a redesign of the roadway itself and is not directing the use of City funds for improvements; large number of projects permitted; comprehensive look at area before Article 80 Large Project Review***

What we heard at Meeting #1



An aerial photograph of a city grid, likely Huntington Avenue, showing a dense network of streets, buildings, and green spaces. A river or canal is visible on the left side. The text is overlaid on the map.

**How can the study be expanded to include more of Huntington Avenue and the surrounding area?**

- ***Identify elements which can be used more extensively, i.e. sidewalk materials, landscape, lighting, signs, site furnishings; discuss options for increasing ground floor uses which support neighborhood needs***

**What we heard at Meeting #1**





## How can the study be expanded to include transportation?

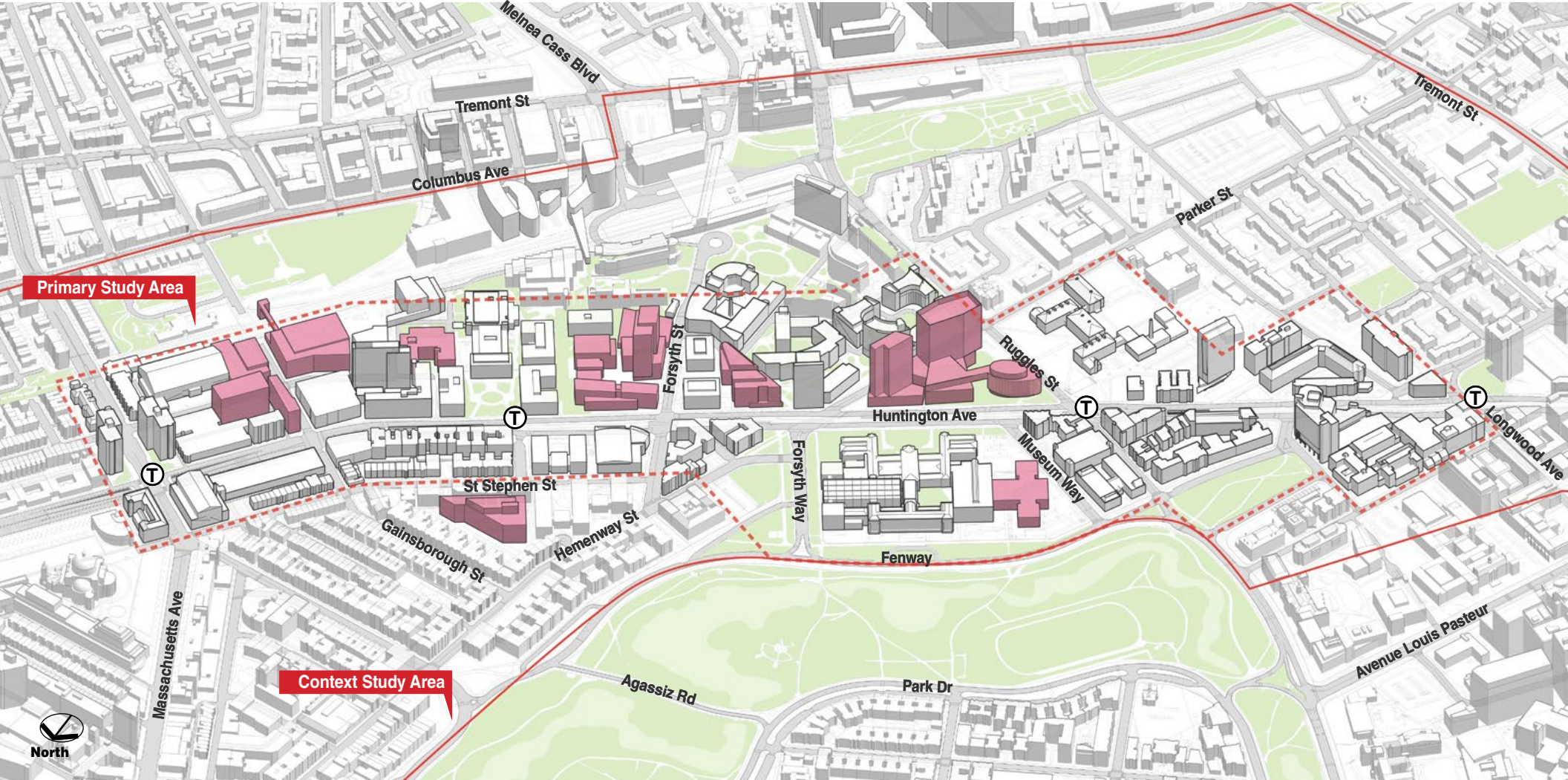
- ***Highlight ways in which Guidelines relate to potential strategies for:***

- **More reliable Green Line service**
- **Better bike and ped connections between the Southwest Corridor and the Emerald Necklace**
- **Shared parking**
- **Traffic signal coordination**
- **Pedestrian friendly plazas**
- **More Hubway stations**

What we heard at Meeting #1



# Board Approved Projects







**To ensure a successful future, the Avenue of the Arts must address the following themes:**

## **MOBILITY**

Organize the safe and efficient movement of people, cars, bikes and transit

## **PLACEMAKING**

Provide visual continuity and identity through building form and landscape

## **PROGRAMMING**

Create a vibrant mix and appropriate scale for a variety of uses

## **COMFORT**

Provide a comfortable pedestrian environment year round



# How do we understand the Avenue?

**MOBILITY**

**PLACEMAKING**

**PROGRAMMING**

**COMFORT**



Avenue of the Arts @ St Alphonse St.





Continuous Streetwall / Varied Massing

Street Trees

Institutional Identity

Transit

Building Setback

Pedestrians

Shade

Fencing

Width of Side Walk

Avenue of the Arts @ St Alphonsus St.



# How do we understand the Avenue?

**MOBILITY**

**PLACEMAKING**

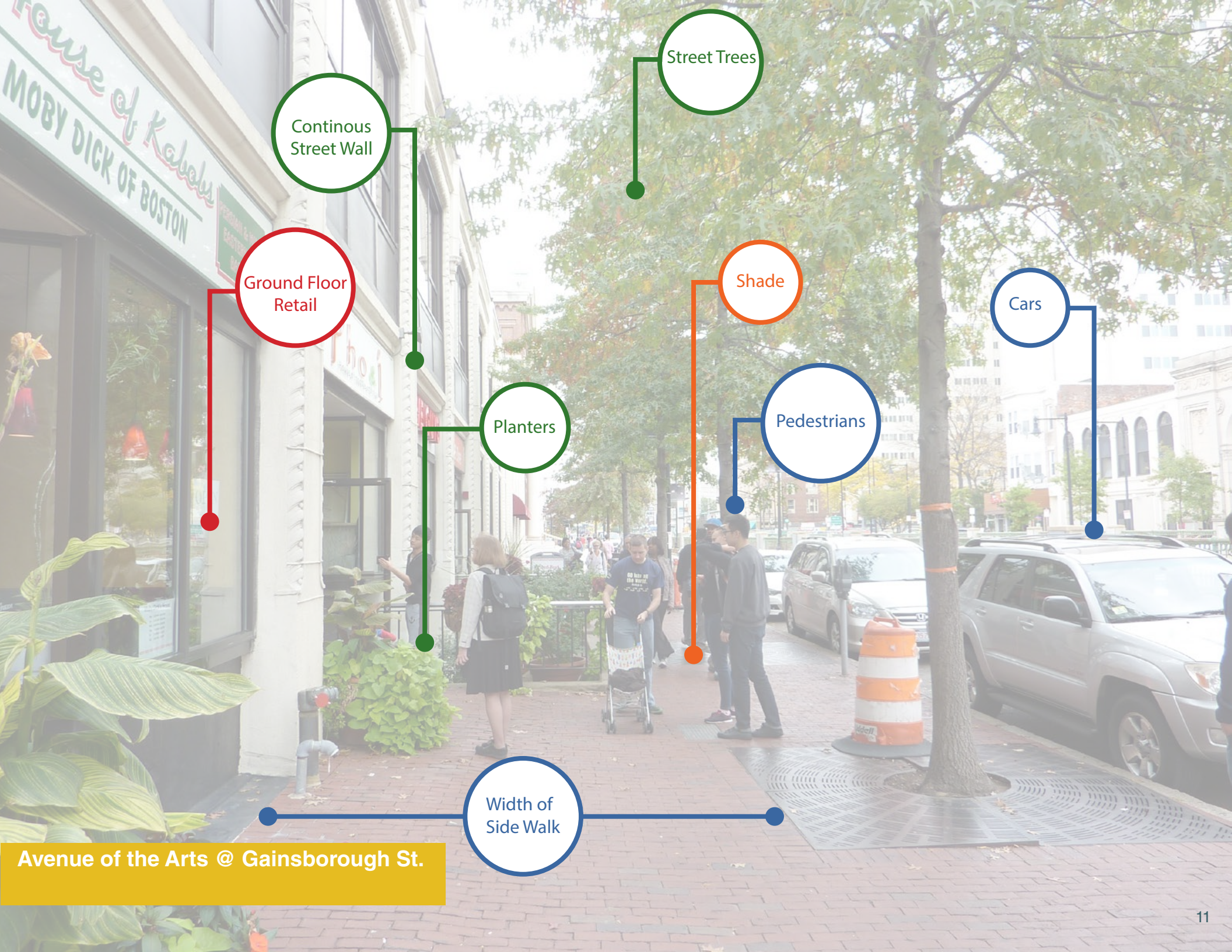
**PROGRAMMING**

**COMFORT**



Avenue of the Arts @ Gainsborough St.





Ground Floor Retail

Continous Street Wall

Planters

Street Trees

Shade

Pedestrians

Cars

Width of Side Walk

Avenue of the Arts @ Gainsborough St.



# How do we understand the Avenue?

**MOBILITY**

**PLACEMAKING**

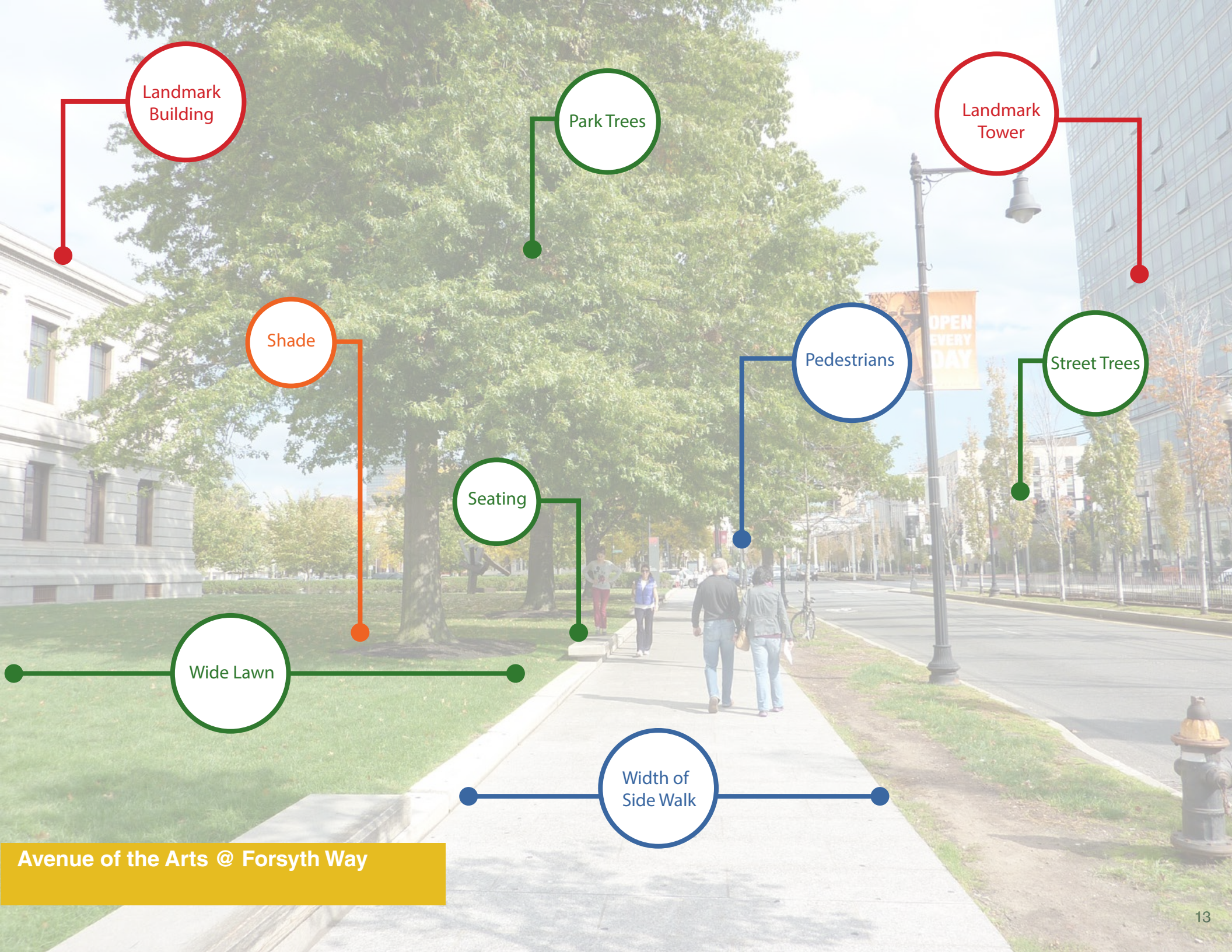
**PROGRAMMING**

**COMFORT**



Avenue of the Arts @ Forsyth Way





Landmark Building

Park Trees

Landmark Tower

Shade

Pedestrians

Street Trees

Seating

Wide Lawn

Width of Side Walk

Avenue of the Arts @ Forsyth Way



# MOBILITY

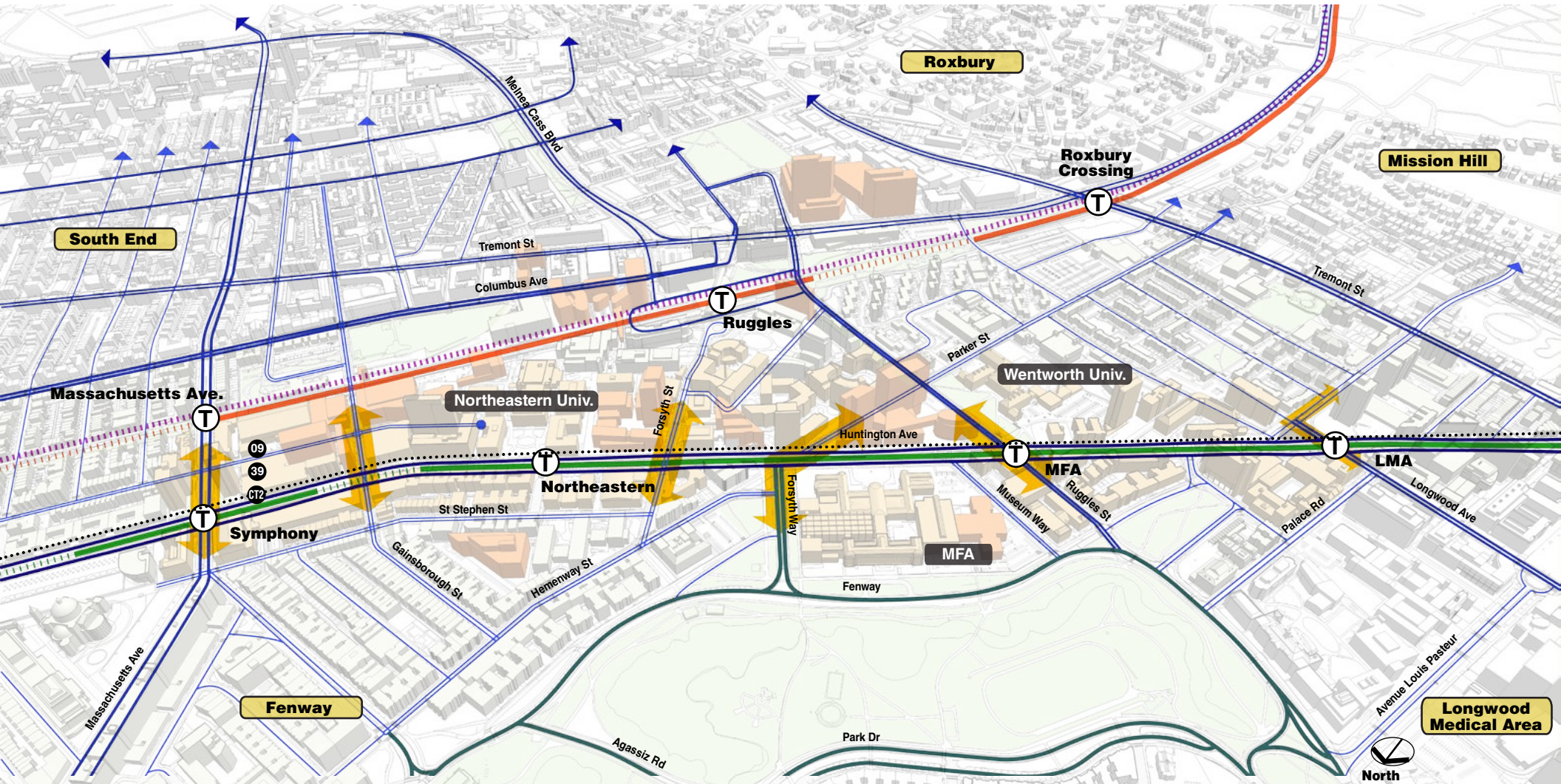
PEDESTRIANS  
BIKES  
VEHICLES  
(CAR, BUS, TRAIN)





# MOBILITY

- Huntington Avenue is both a conduit and a barrier to mobility.
- Mis-aligning street grids cause points of discontinuity, contributing to congestion on Huntington Avenue, one of the few streets that connect neighborhood to neighborhood



Road Network and Transit System

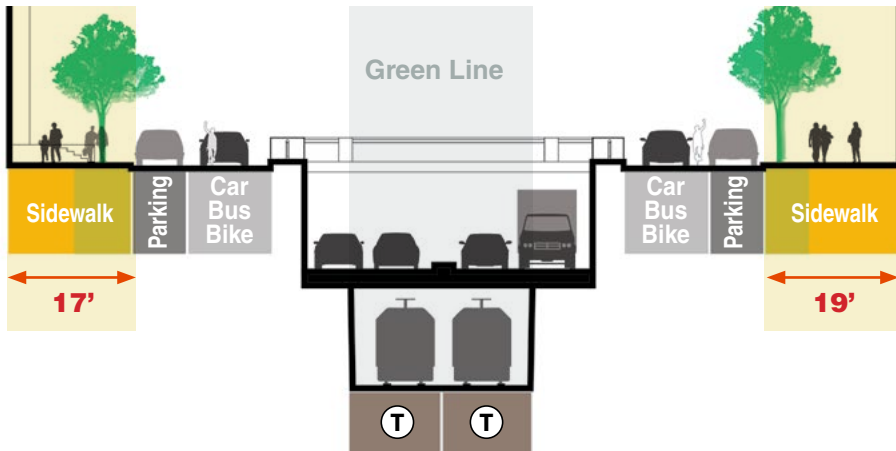
- Orange Line
- Green E Line
- Commuter Rail
- MBTA Bus Lines



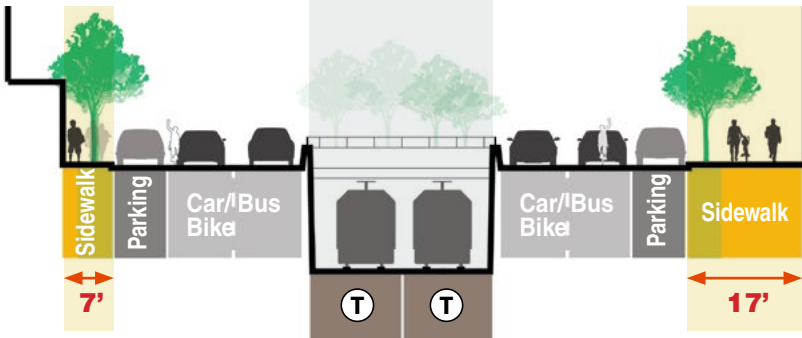
# MOBILITY

Sidewalk widths and quality vary greatly along Huntington; the Green Line acts as a barrier

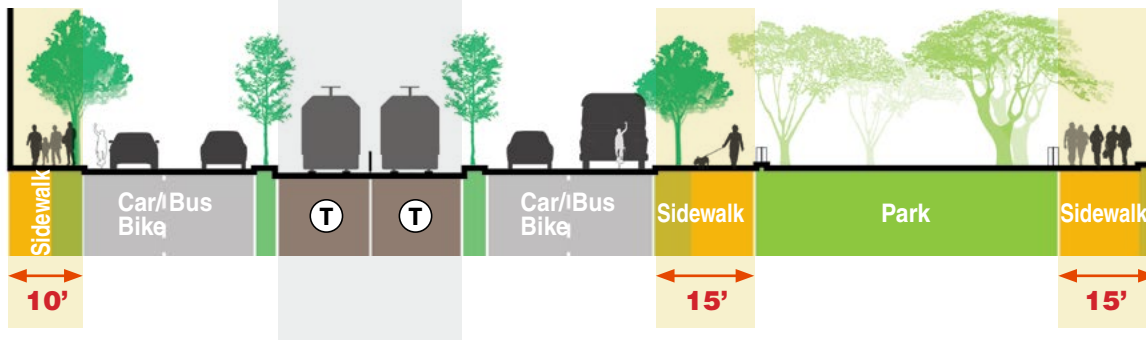
## North of Gainsborough Street



## North of Forsyth Street



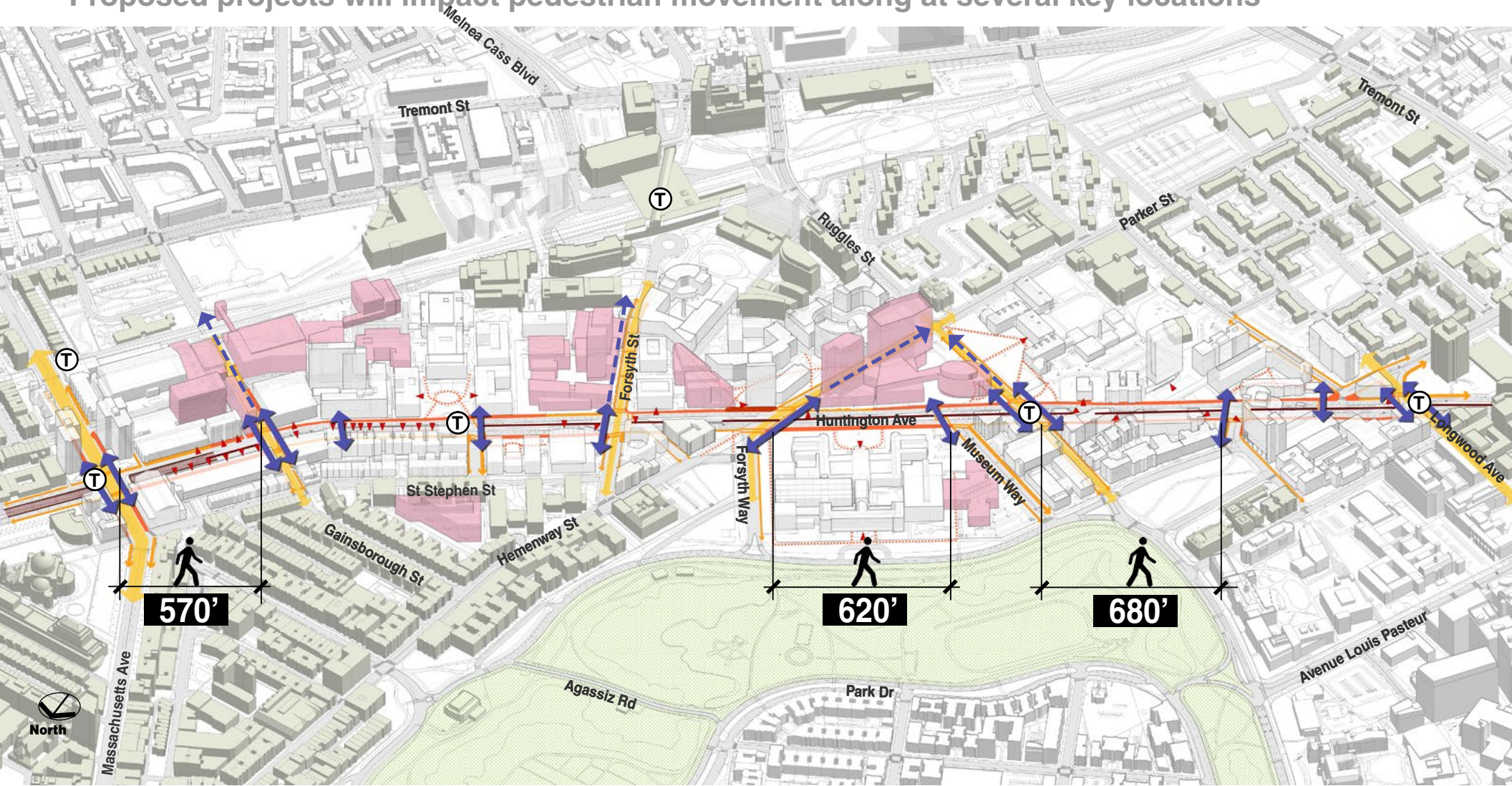
## North of St. Alphonus Street





# MOBILITY

- Pedestrian crossings along Huntington are sporadic and often separated by great distances
- Proposed projects will impact pedestrian movement along at several key locations



↔ Pedestrian Crossings



# MOBILITY

## OBSERVATION:

*Future development must make the pedestrian experience more pleasant, safer, more attractive, and easier to navigate.*

- Ensure sufficient sidewalk width to accommodate comfortable pedestrian movement and meet ADA requirements
- Increase clarity and visibility of pedestrian crossing locations through signage, building massing strategies, or other means
- Where possible, provide more comfortable places for pedestrians to pause, wait for transit, and gather





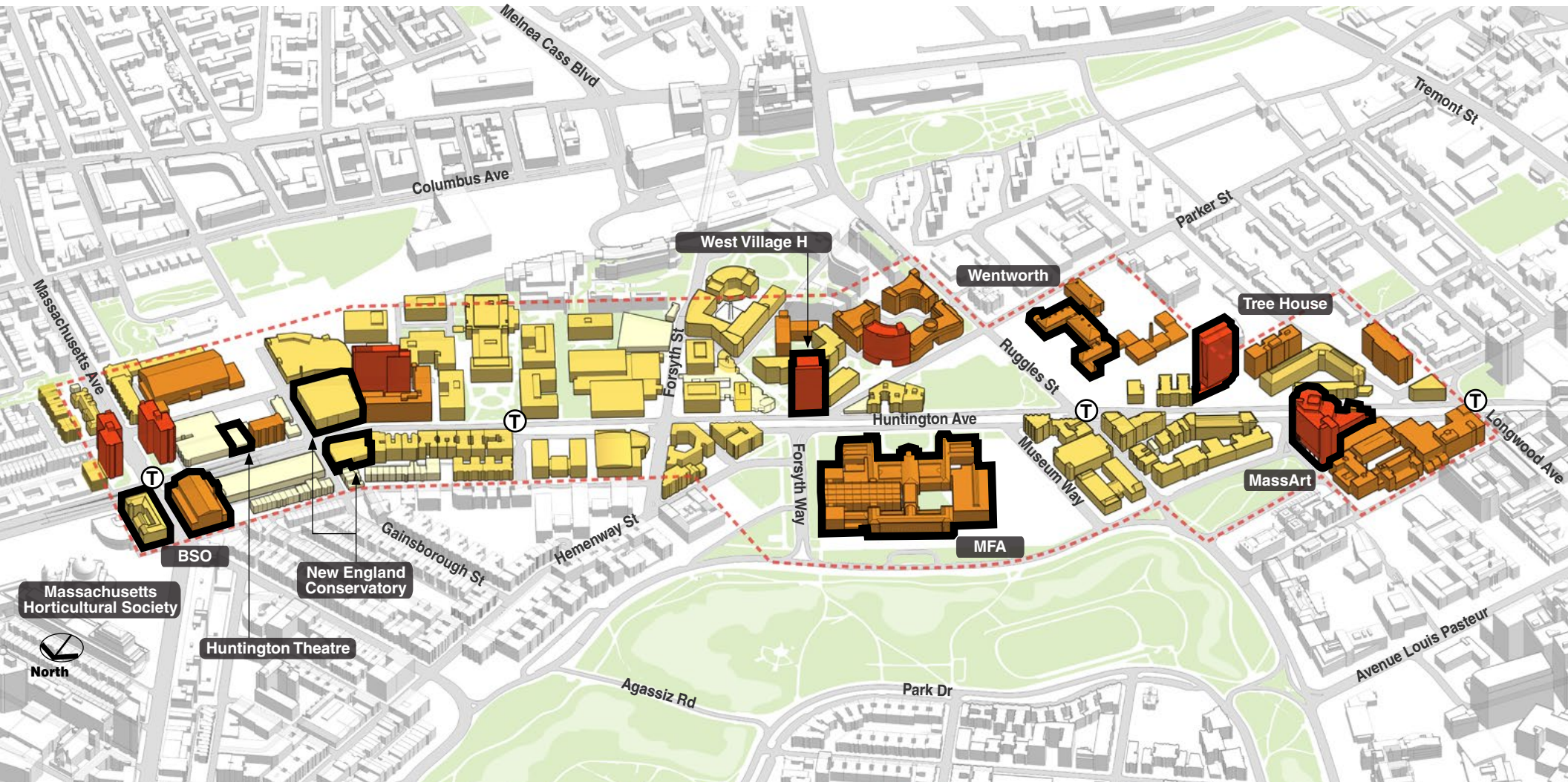
# PLACEMAKING



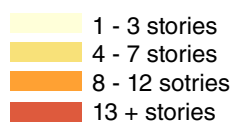


# PLACEMAKING

## Iconic Buildings



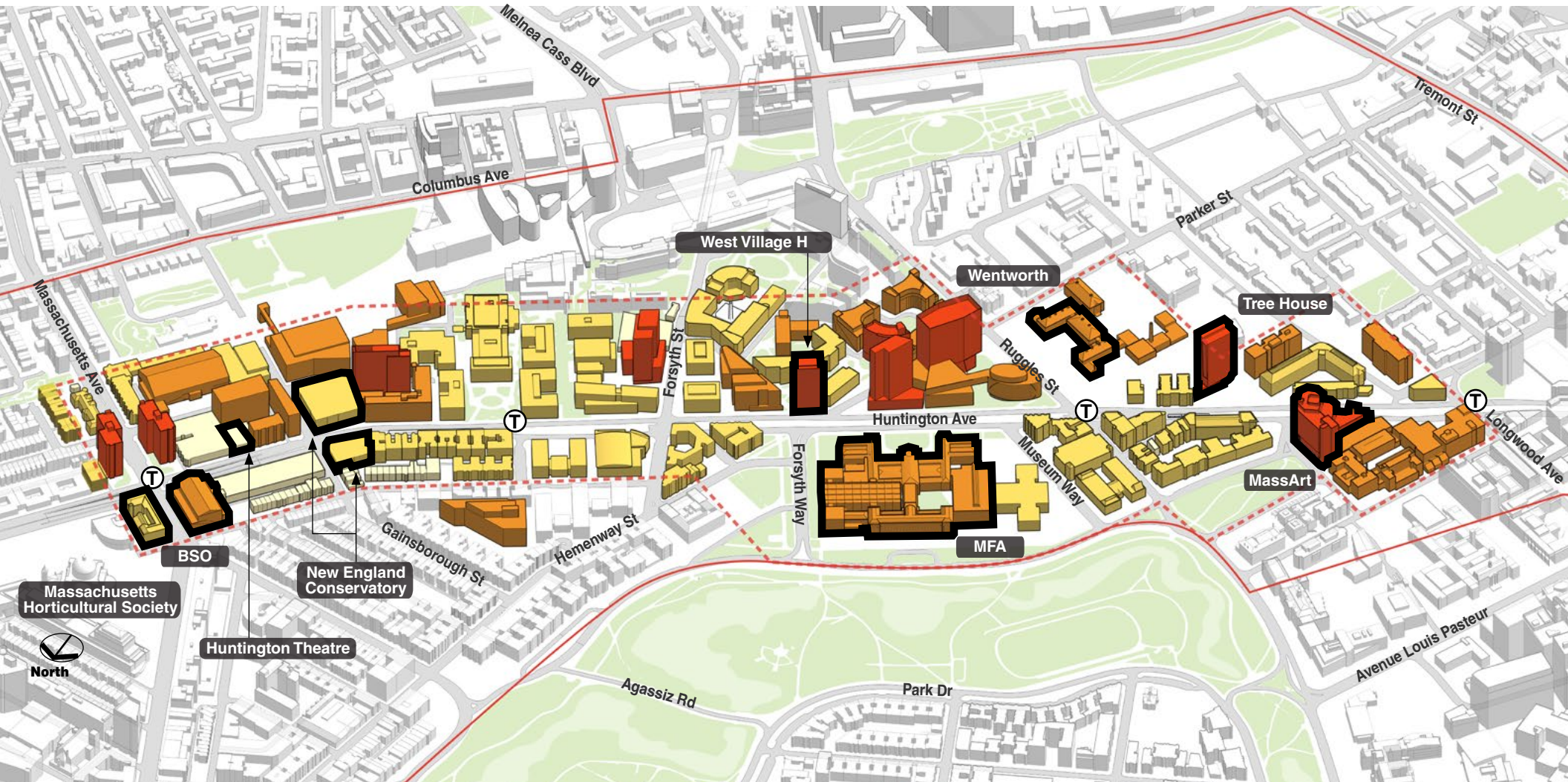
Building Heights - Existing Conditions





# PLACEMAKING

## Iconic Buildings



Building Heights - Proposed Development

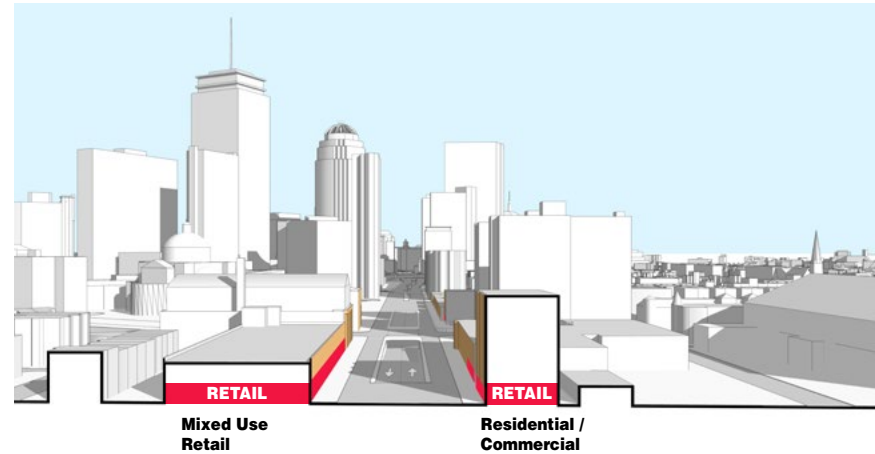
- 1 - 3 stories
- 4 - 7 stories
- 8 - 12 stories
- 13 + stories



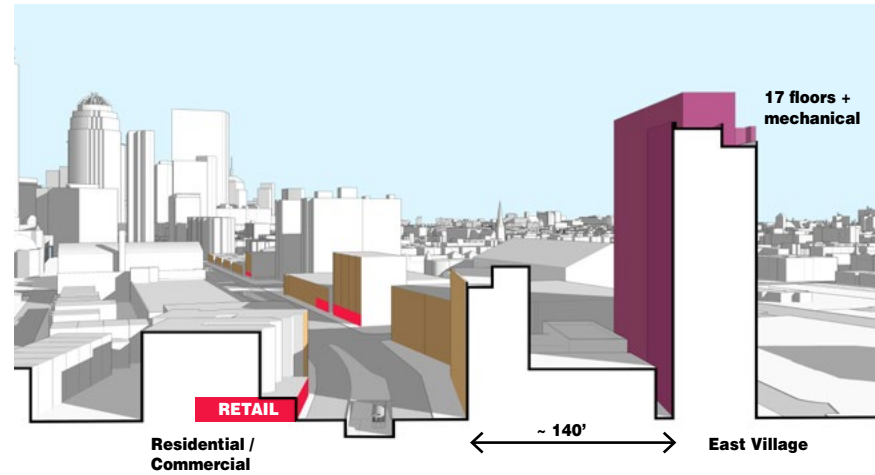
# PLACEMAKING

## Setbacks and Building Height

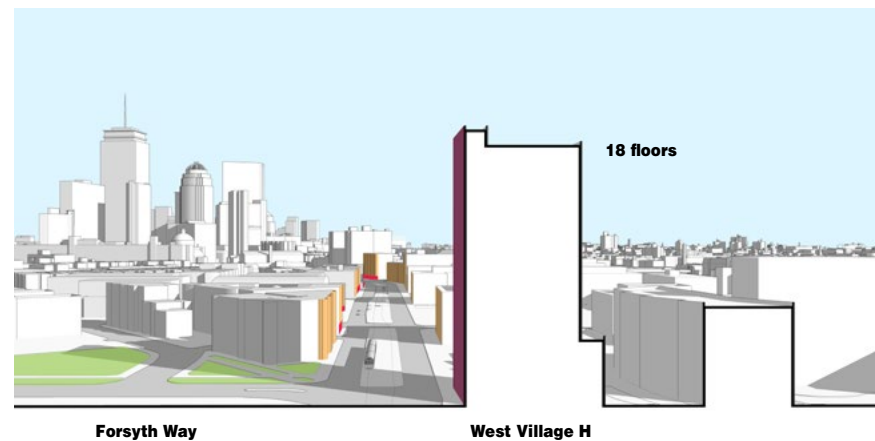
Symphony Retail Block



At YMCA / East Village



At Northeastern University / West Village H





# PLACEMAKING

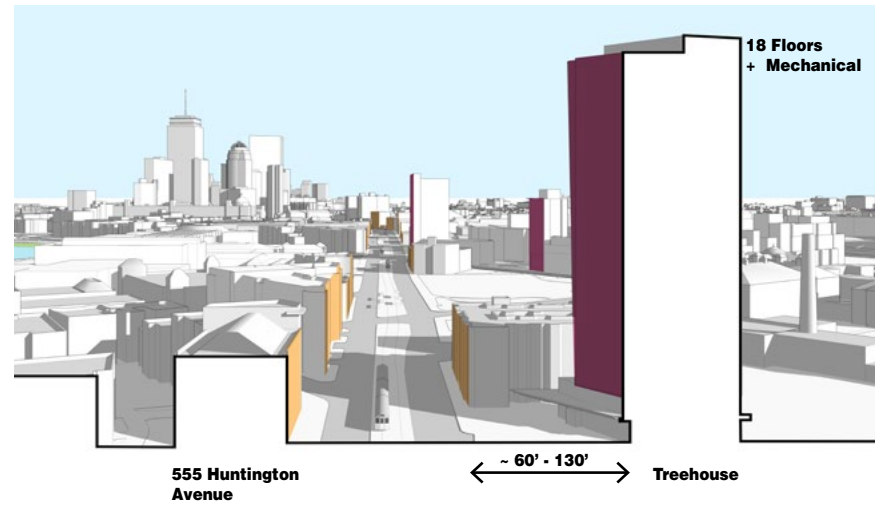
## Setbacks and Building Height

At the Museum of Fine Arts



MFA Front Lawn

At MassArt's "Treehouse"



555 Huntington Avenue

~ 60' - 130'

Treehouse

At MassArt and Wentworth



MassArt Tower

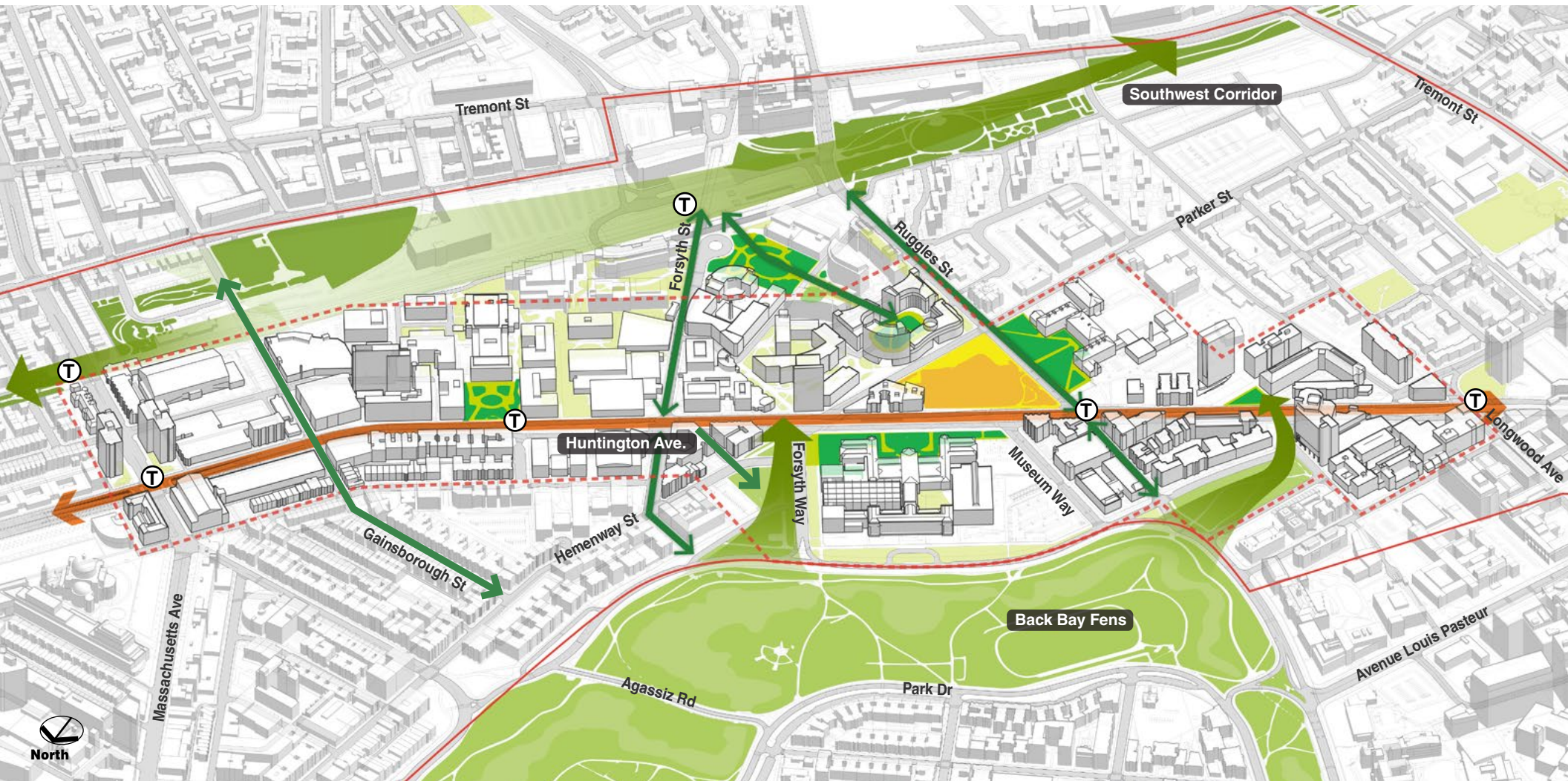
Baker Hall

610 Huntington Avenue



# PLACEMAKING

## Signature and Connecting Landscapes



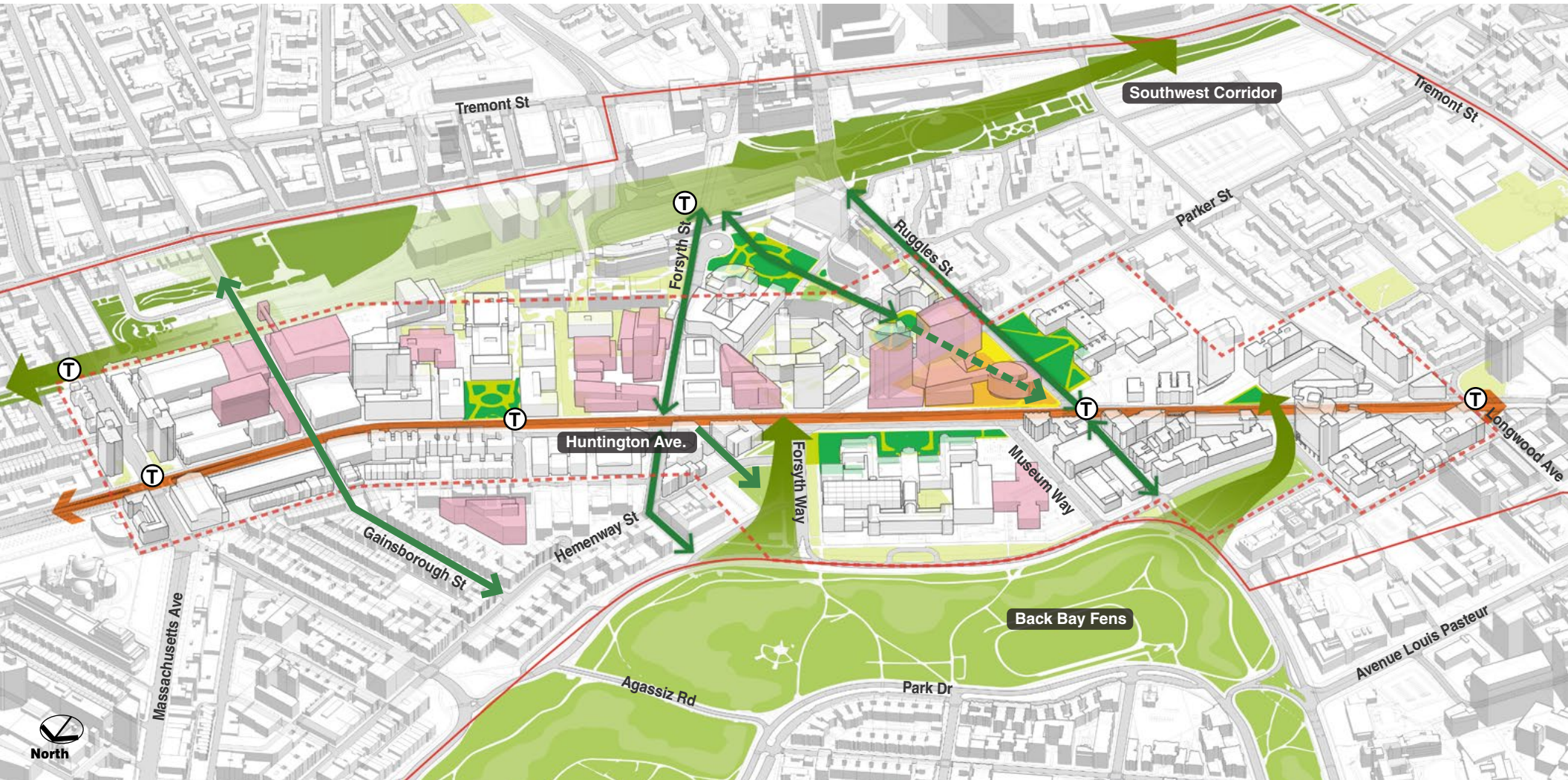
### Open Space Typologies

- Back Bay Fens
- Southwest Corridor
- Institutional Open Spaces



# PLACEMAKING

## Signature and Connecting Landscapes



### Open Space Typologies

- Back Bay Fens
- Southwest Corridor
- Institutional Open Spaces



# PLACEMAKING

The Avenue of the Arts public realm - elements of consistency





# PLACEMAKING

## OBSERVATION:

*Future buildings and open spaces should contribute to a cohesive “sense of place” along the Avenue of the Arts, even as they express their own identity.*

- Iconic buildings (those buildings that are tall, those that are architecturally significant, and those in prominent locations) should be carefully sited, high-quality in their design and materials, and active at the ground floor.
- New open spaces should contribute to and clarify desired patterns of circulation.
- “Fabric” buildings and “connecting” open spaces should contribute to a cohesive identity for the Avenue through their scale, massing, and level of quality in design and materials.





# PROGRAMMING

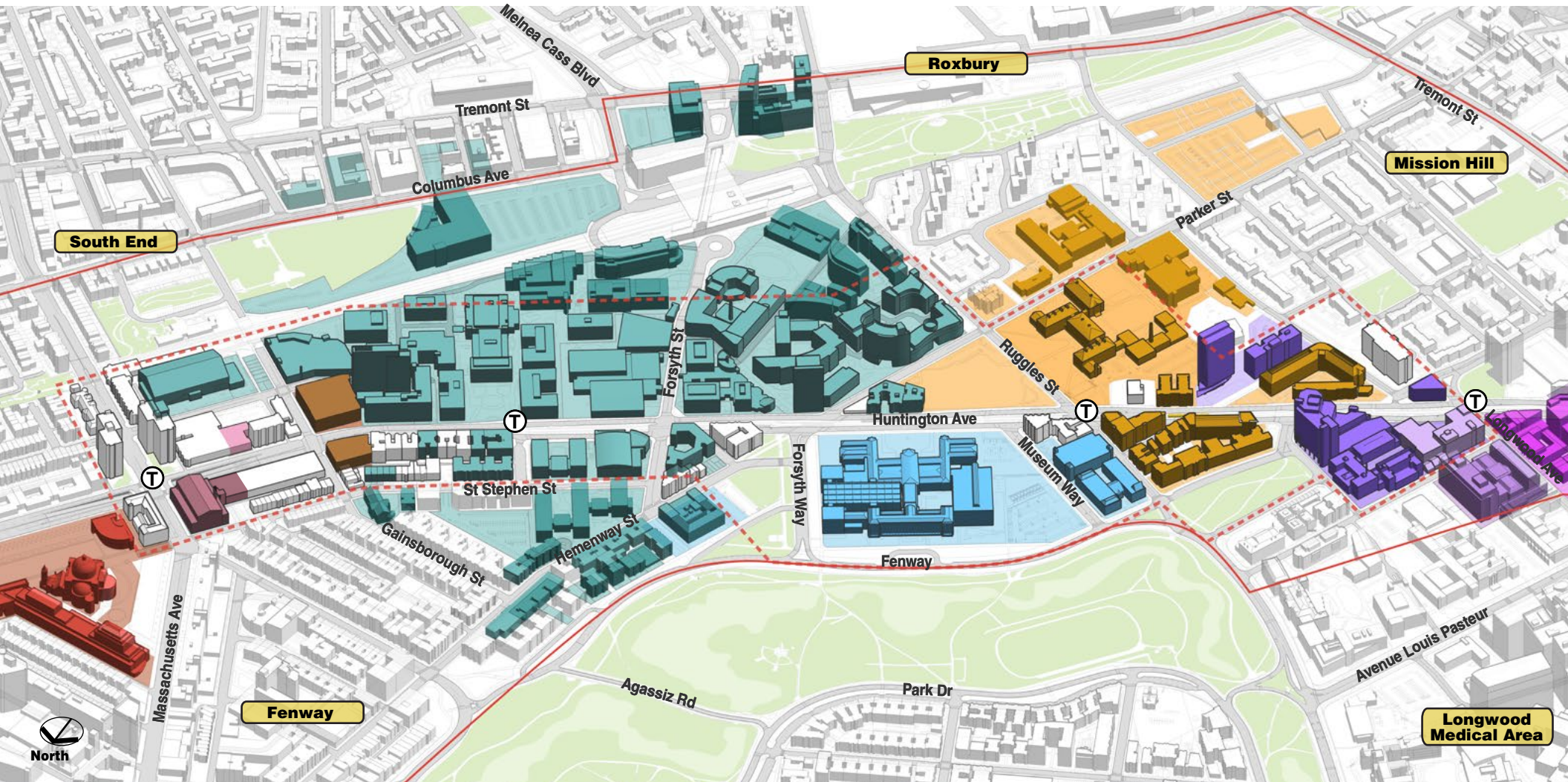
Shop  
Eat & Drink  
Learn  
Play  
Gather





# PROGRAMMING

## Institutional Ownership

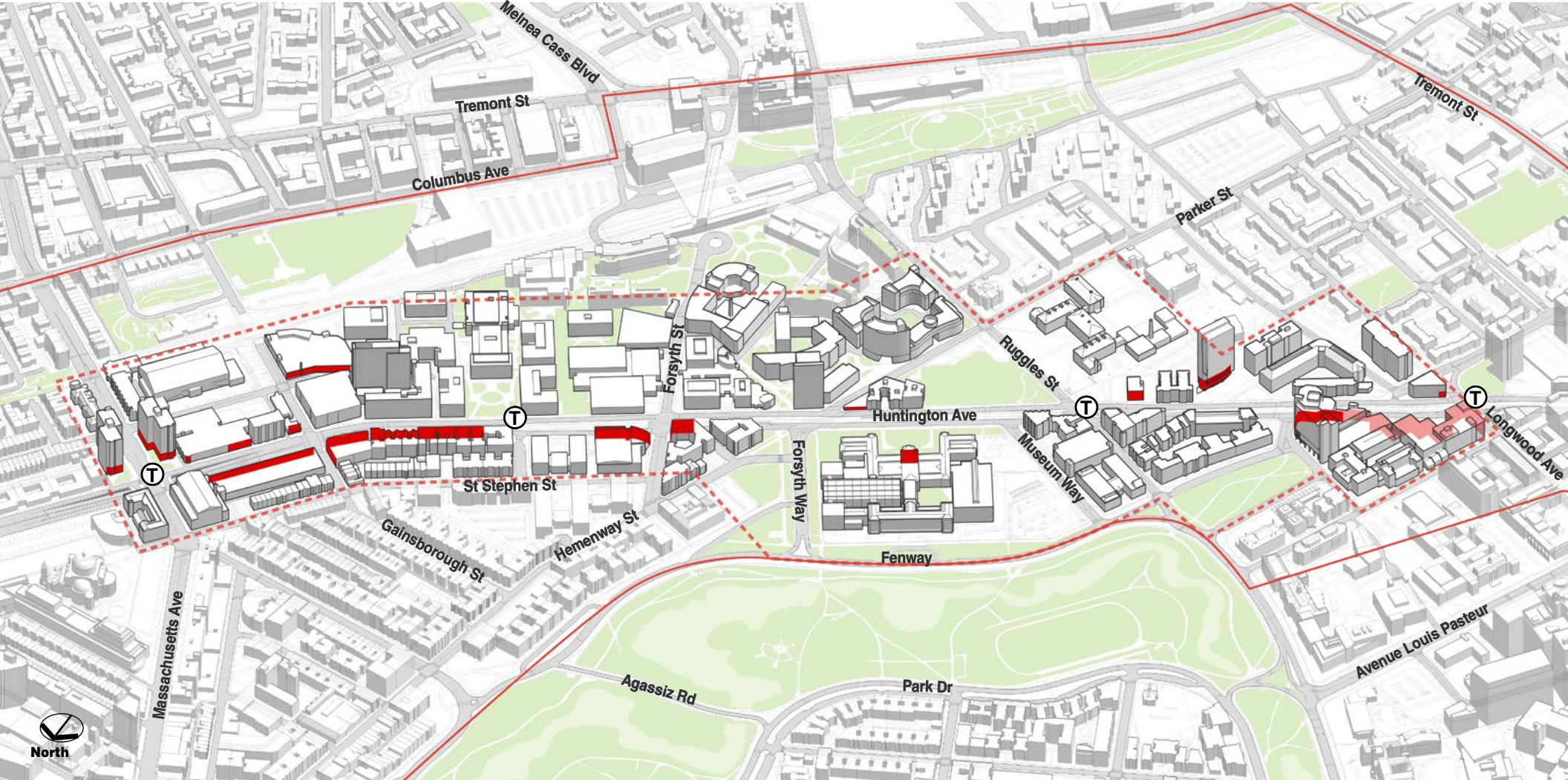


- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <span style="color: teal;">■</span> Northeastern University      | <span style="color: brown;">■</span> New England Conservatory       |
| <span style="color: orange;">■</span> Wentworth Institute        | <span style="color: pink;">■</span> Huntington Theatre Company      |
| <span style="color: blue;">■</span> Museum of Fine Arts          | <span style="color: purple;">■</span> MASS ART                      |
| <span style="color: red;">■</span> FCCS Christian Science Center | <span style="color: lightpurple;">■</span> Mass College of Pharmacy |
| <span style="color: brown;">■</span> Boston Symphony Orchestra   | <span style="color: magenta;">■</span> Harvard Medical School       |



# PROGRAMMING

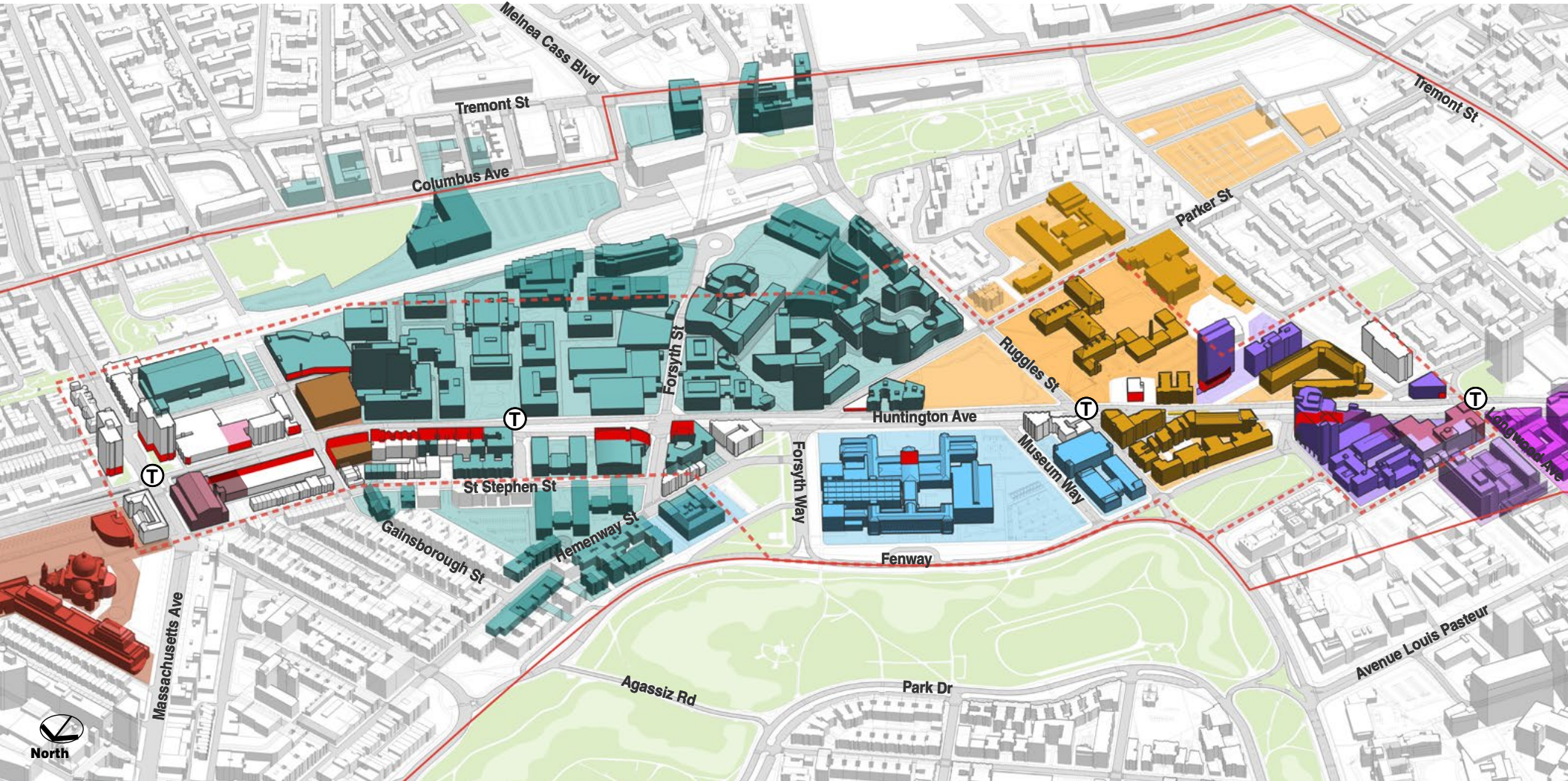
Ground-level activity along the Avenue of the Arts





# PROGRAMMING

Ground-level activity along the Avenue of the Arts and Institutional Ownership

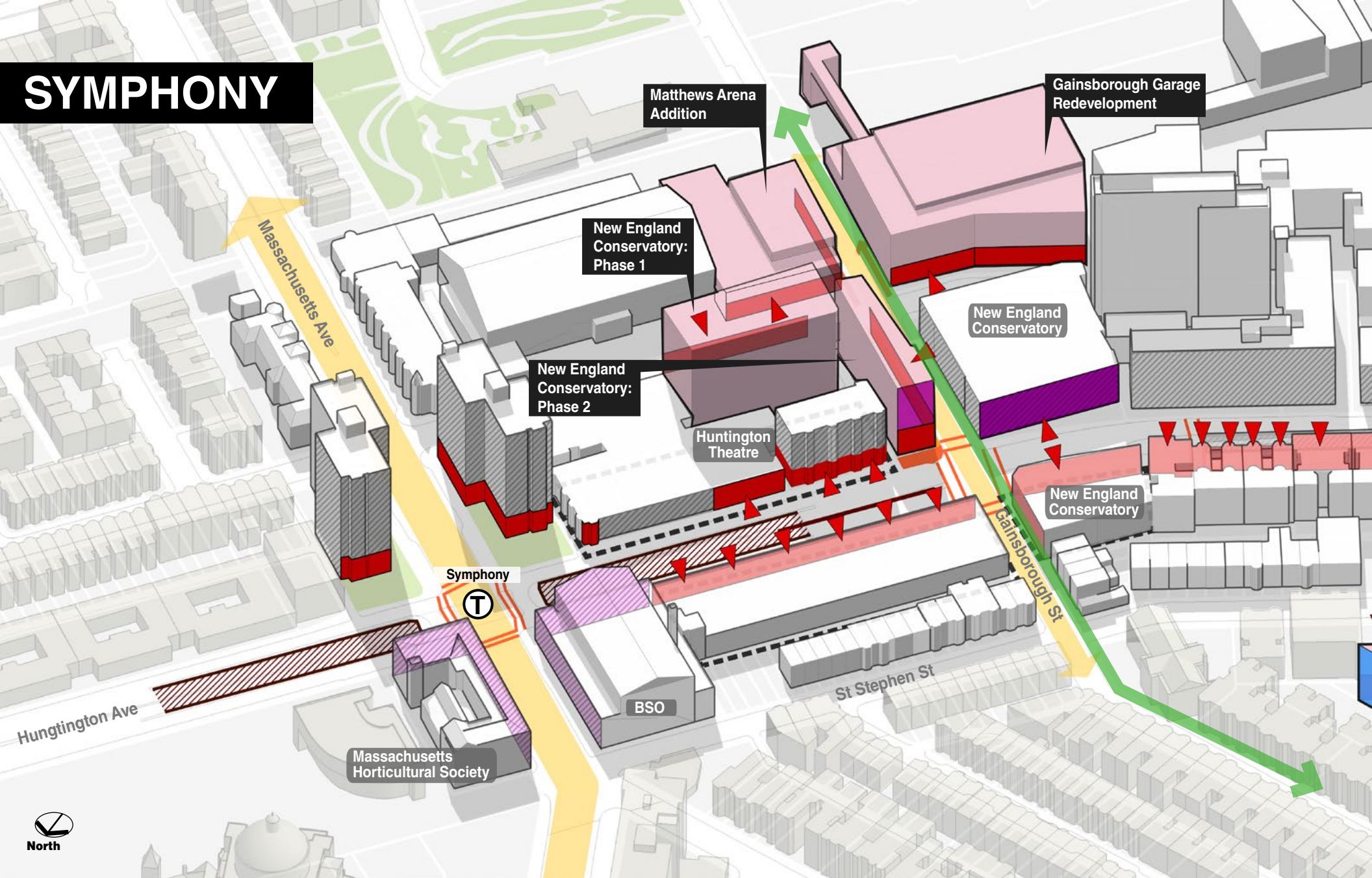


## Institutional Buildings

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #4db6ac; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Northeastern University       | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #c5e1a5; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> New England Conservatory   |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #ffcdd2; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Wentworth Institute           | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #e91e63; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Huntington Theatre Company |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #bbdefb; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Museum of Fine Arts           | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #9575cd; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> MASS ART                   |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #e57373; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> FCCS Christian Science Center | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #d1c4e9; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Mass College of Pharmacy   |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #a1887f; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Boston Symphony Orchestra     | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #e91e63; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Harvard Medical School     |



# SYMPHONY

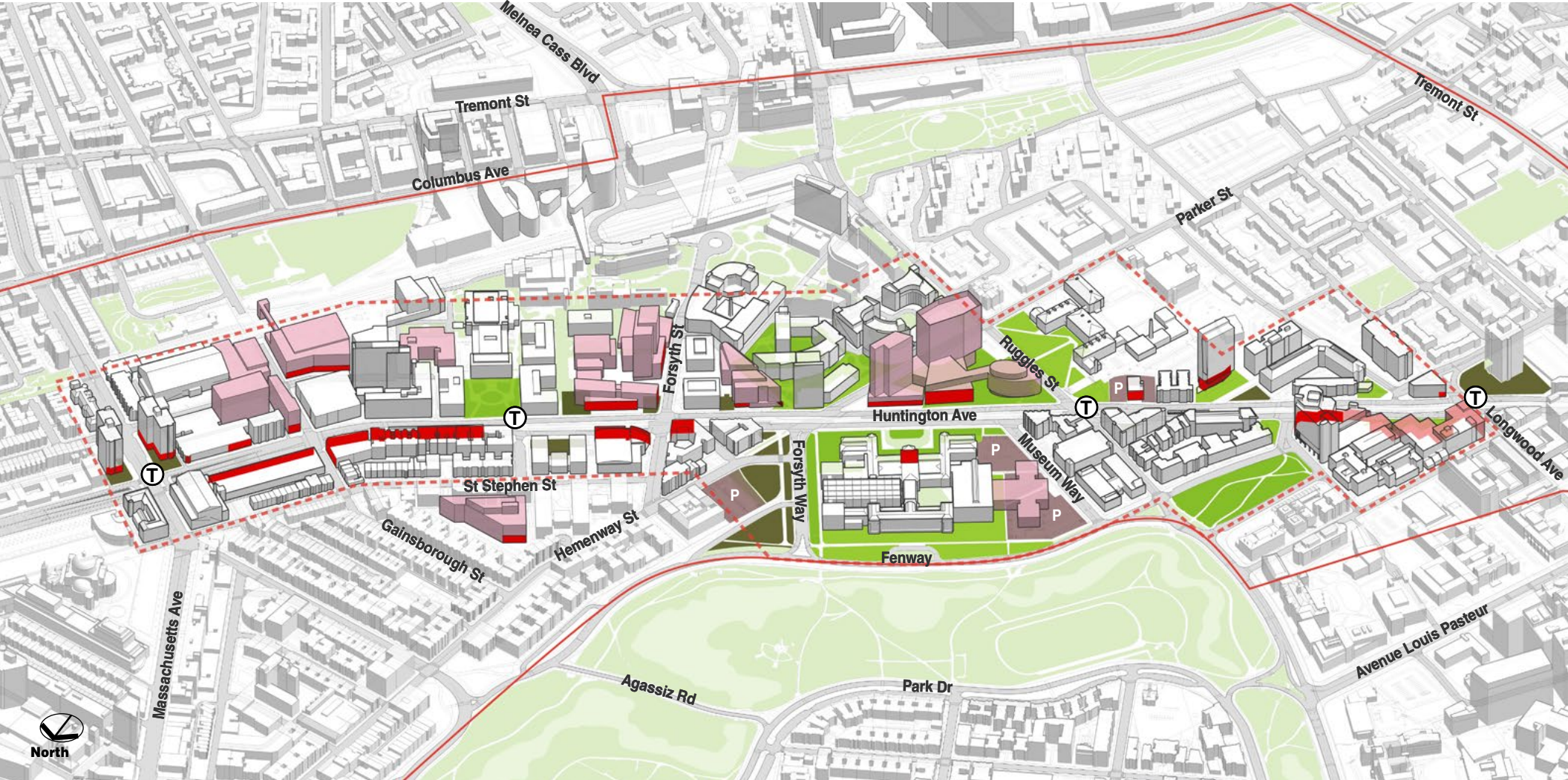


- Active Ground Floor
- Inactive Ground Floor
- Transparent Facade
- Iconic



# PROGRAMMING

Active and iconic open spaces along the Avenue of the Arts





# PROGRAMMING

Examples of institutional activation at the ground level - inside and out





# PROGRAMMING

## **OBSERVATION:**

*The Avenue needs even more activity. Existing buildings and open spaces should be active at the ground-level.*

- New buildings should prioritize public-facing program (shops, restaurants, galleries, transparent learning spaces) at the ground level, particularly on the sides that face the Avenue of the Arts.
- New open spaces should be designed to accommodate active programming (events, food trucks, art, seating...)
- Existing open spaces, particularly “signature” open spaces, should do an even better job of activating the Avenue of the Arts
- Activities should appeal to a wide range of users - students, residents, workers, and visitors





# COMFORT

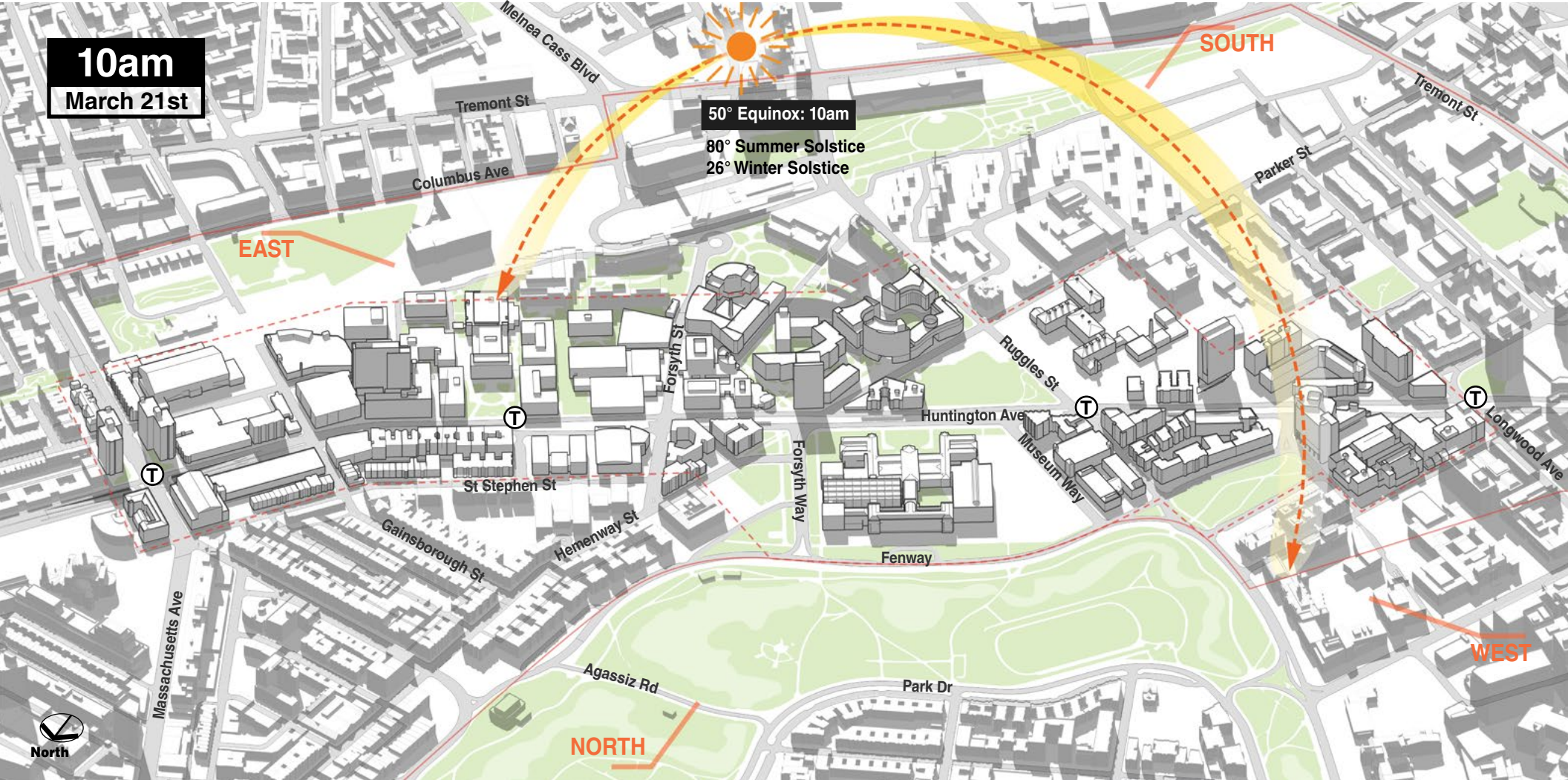
Shadows  
Wind  
Sun & Shade





# COMFORT

## Shadows

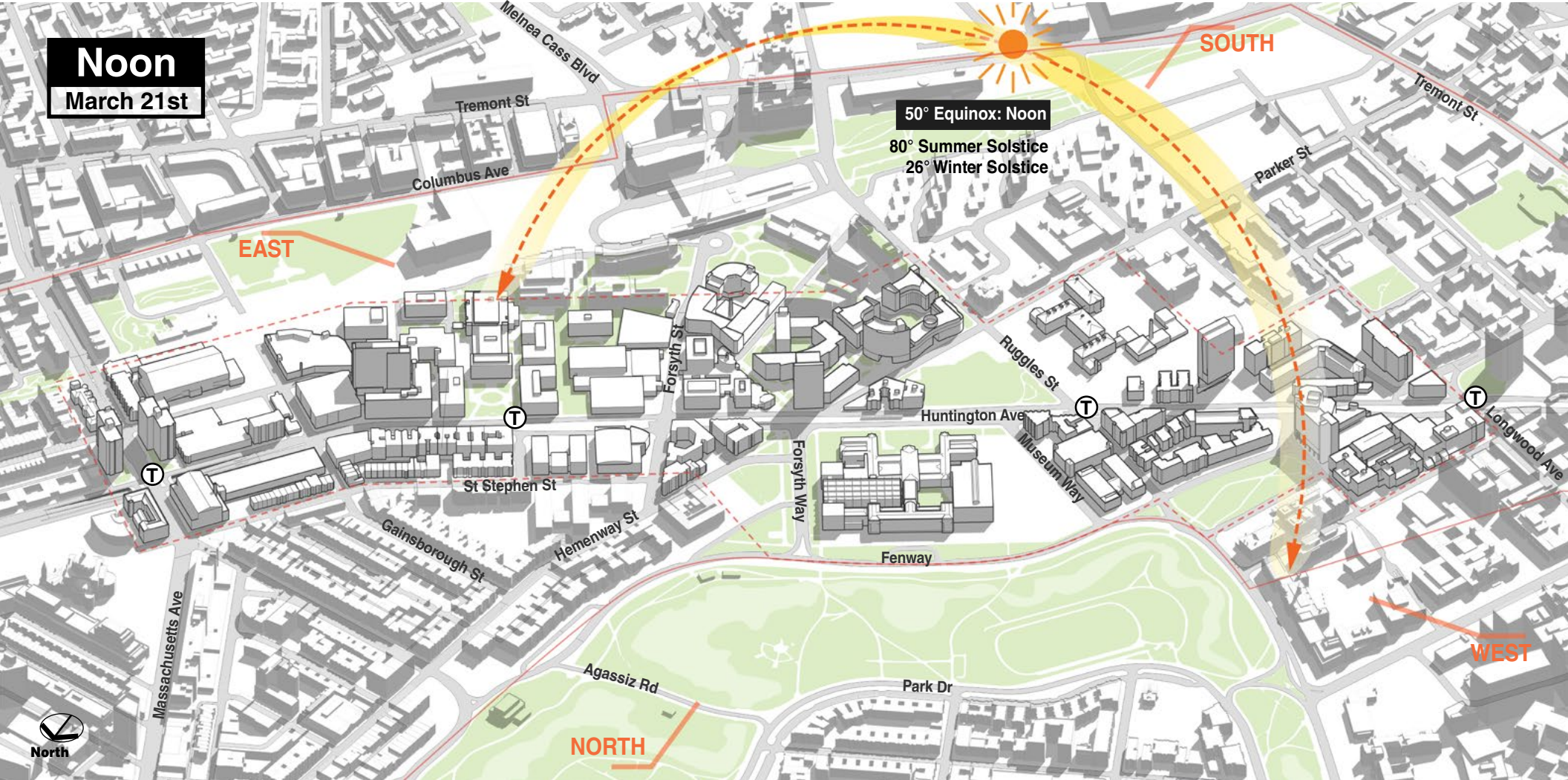


Existing Condition



# COMFORT

## Shadows

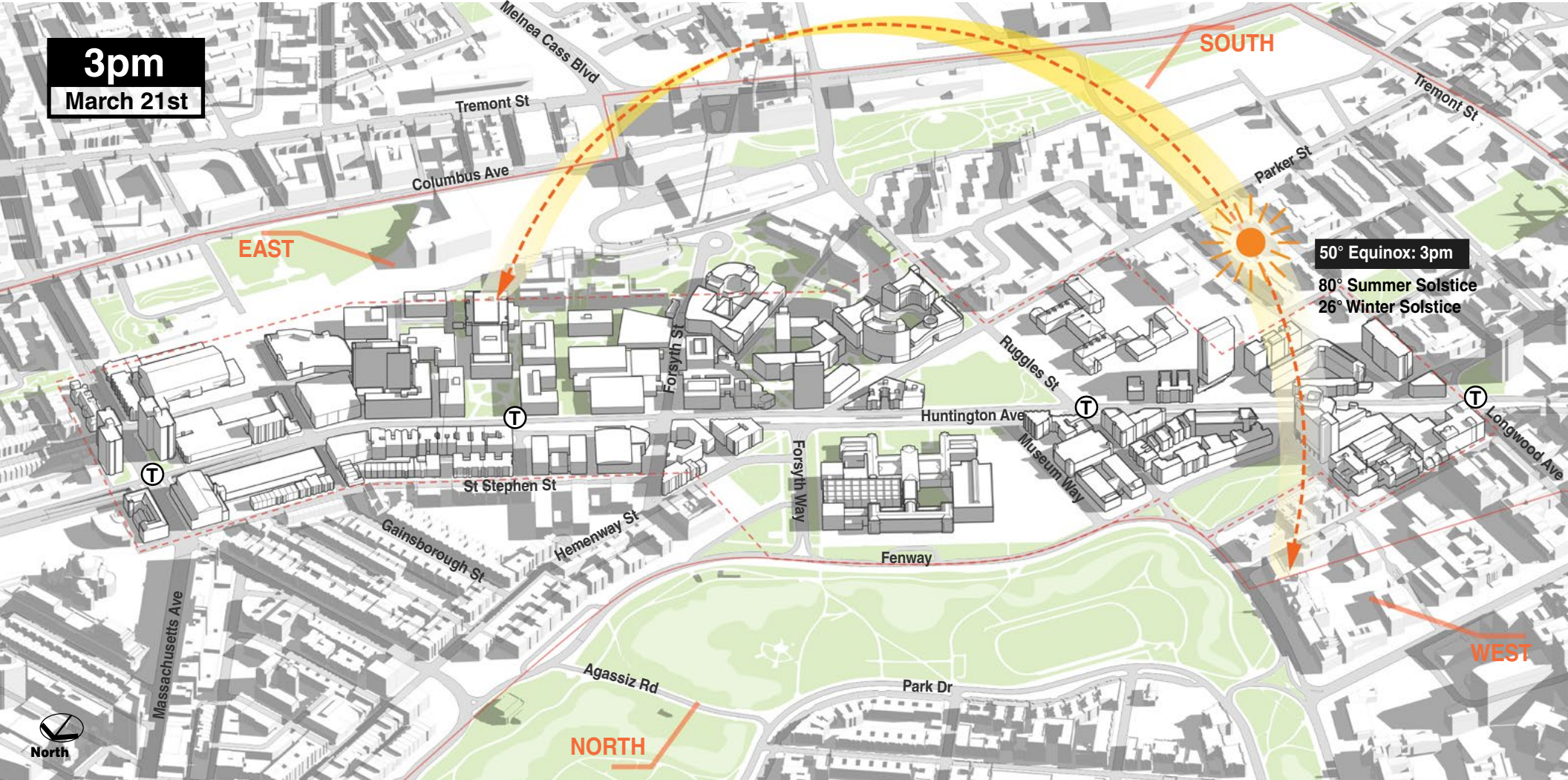


Existing Condition



# COMFORT

## Shadows

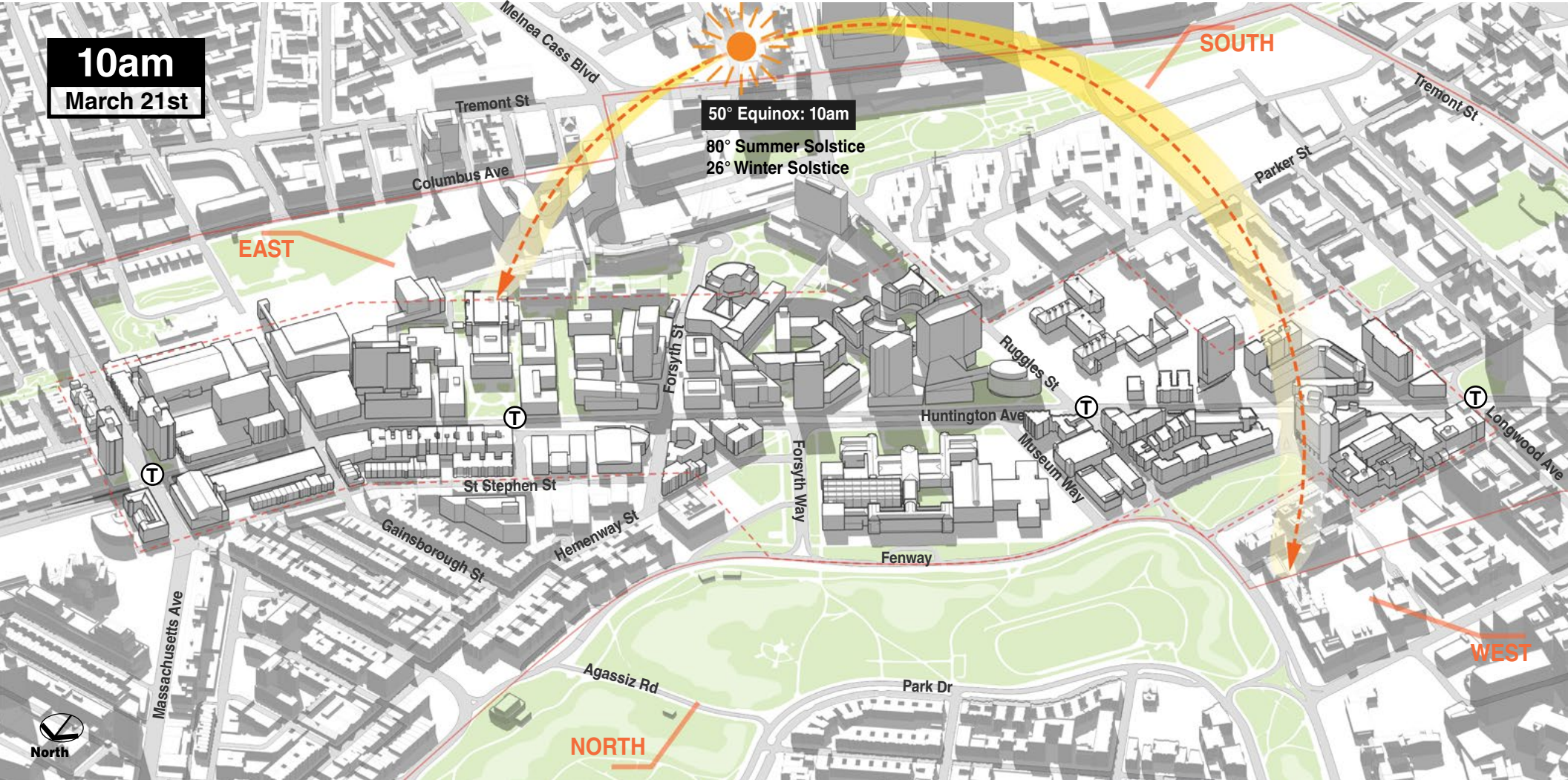


Existing Condition



# COMFORT

## Shadows

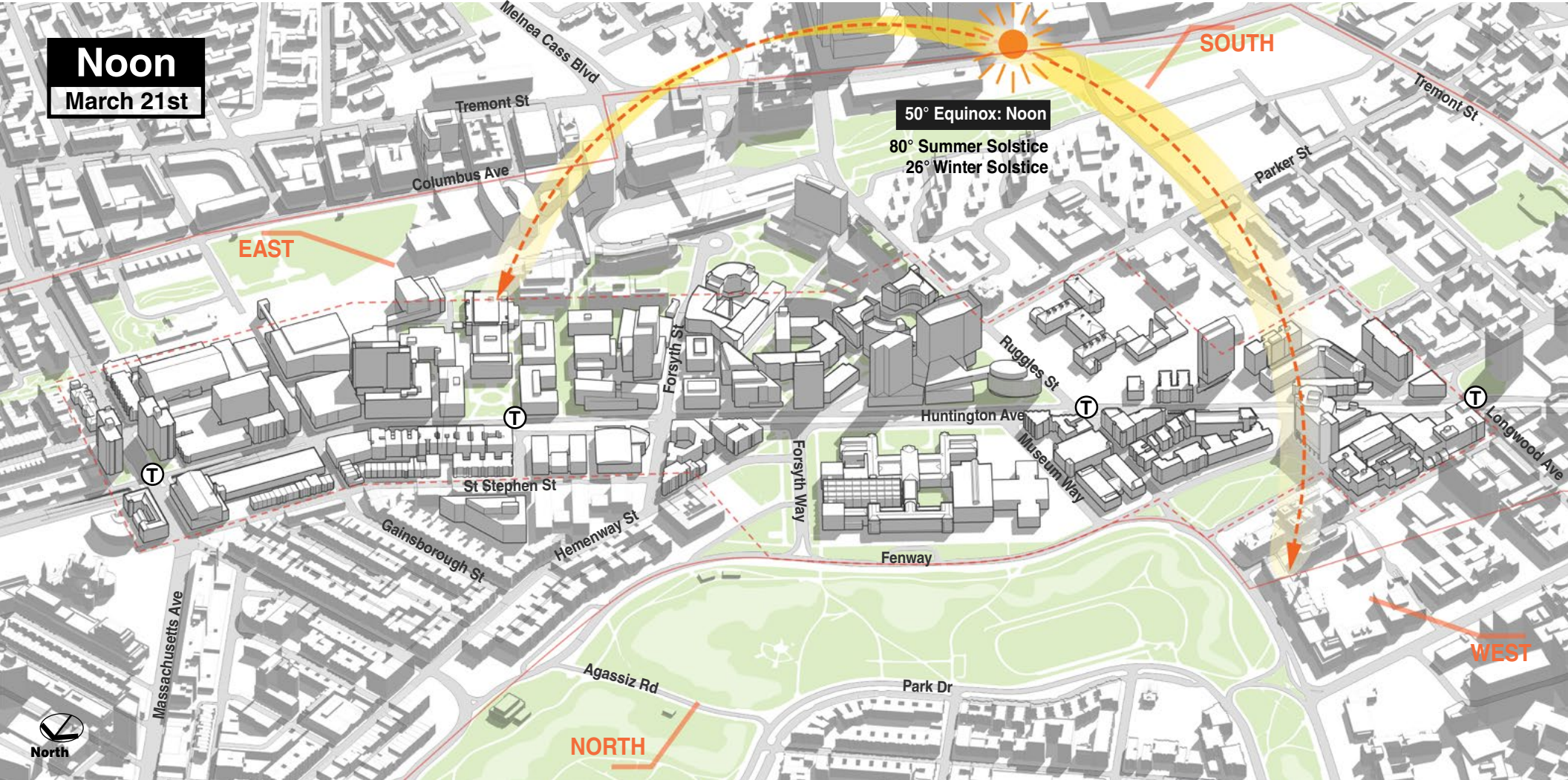


Approved Redevelopment



# COMFORT

## Shadows

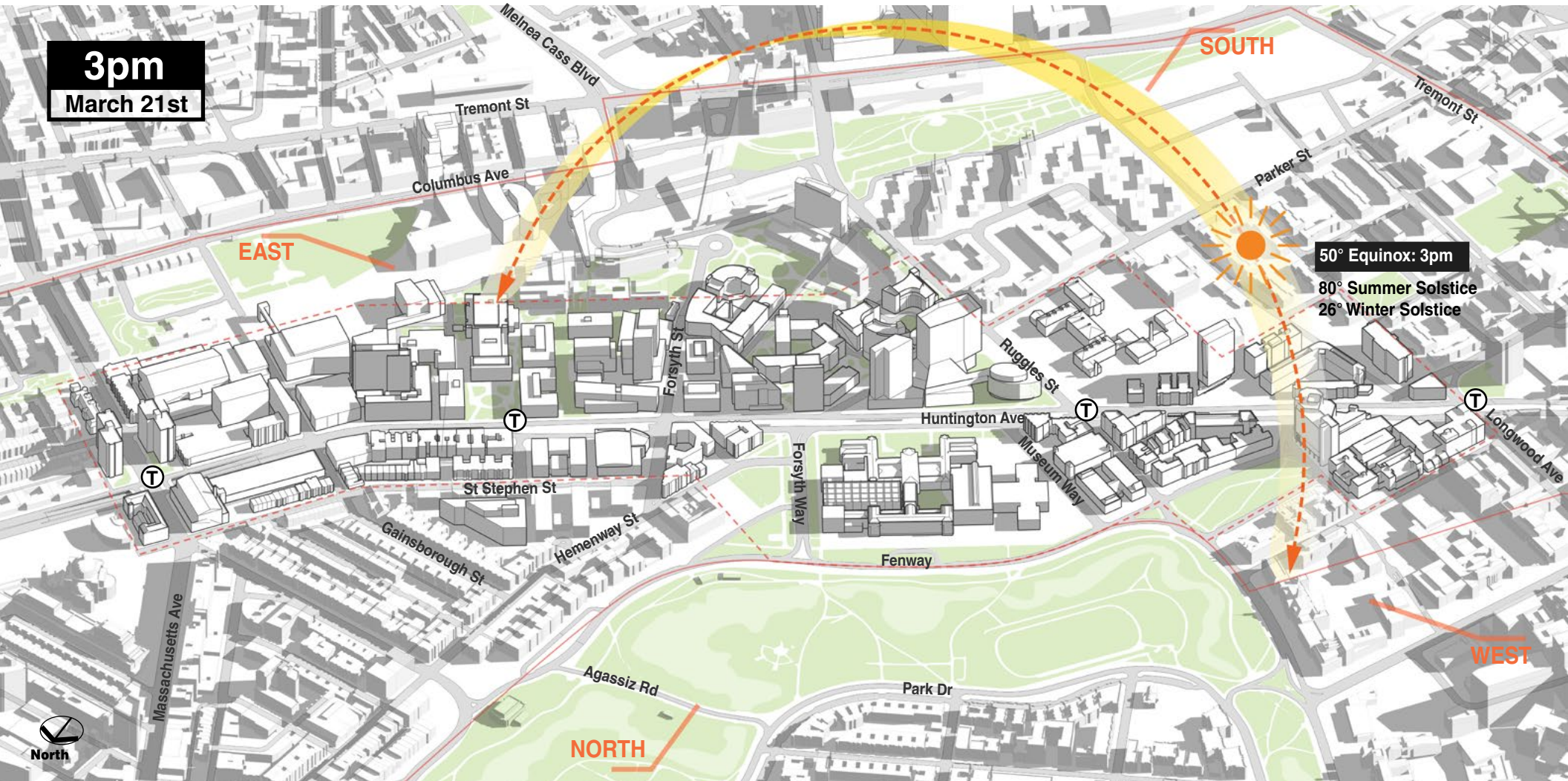


Approved Redevelopment



# COMFORT

## Shadows



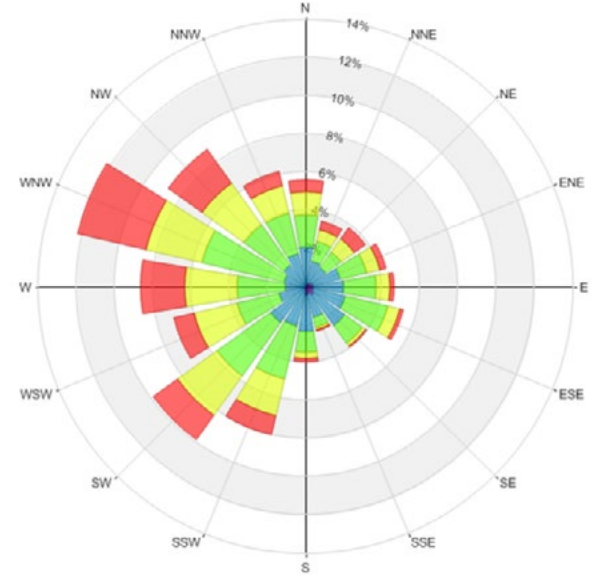
Approved Redevelopment



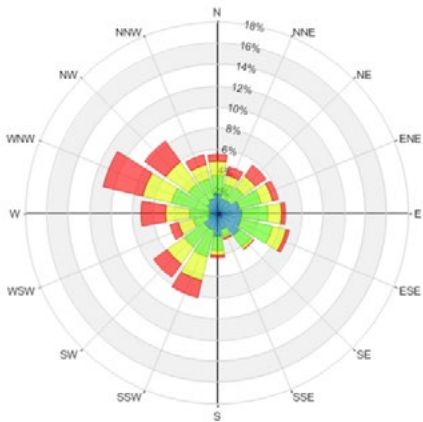
# COMFORT

## Wind

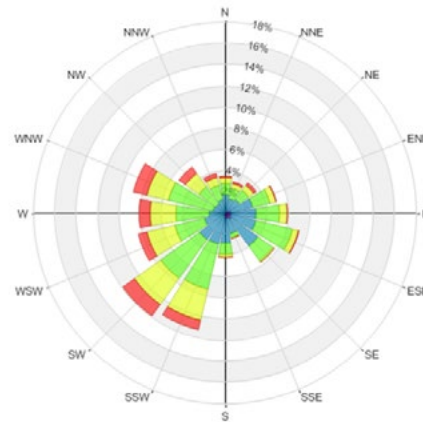
Given the location of the study area and its surroundings, winds from the **northwest** are considered to be the most important throughout the year, plus seasonal winds from southwest and northeast directions.



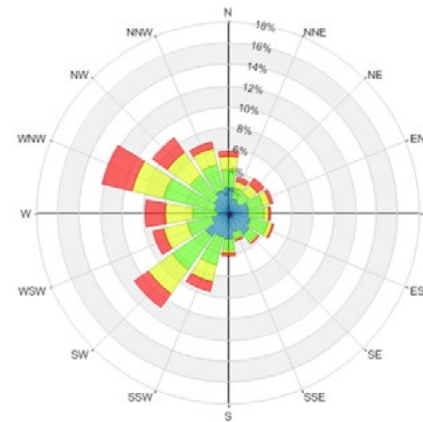
Annual Winds



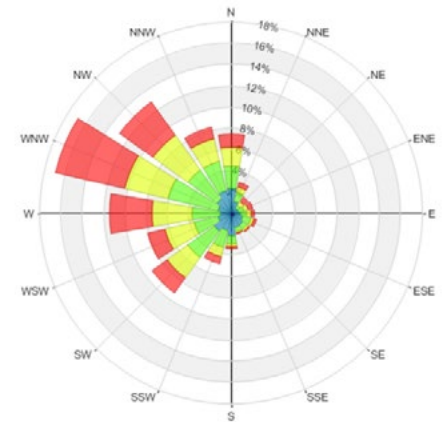
Spring (March to May)



Summer (June to August)



Fall (Sept. to December)



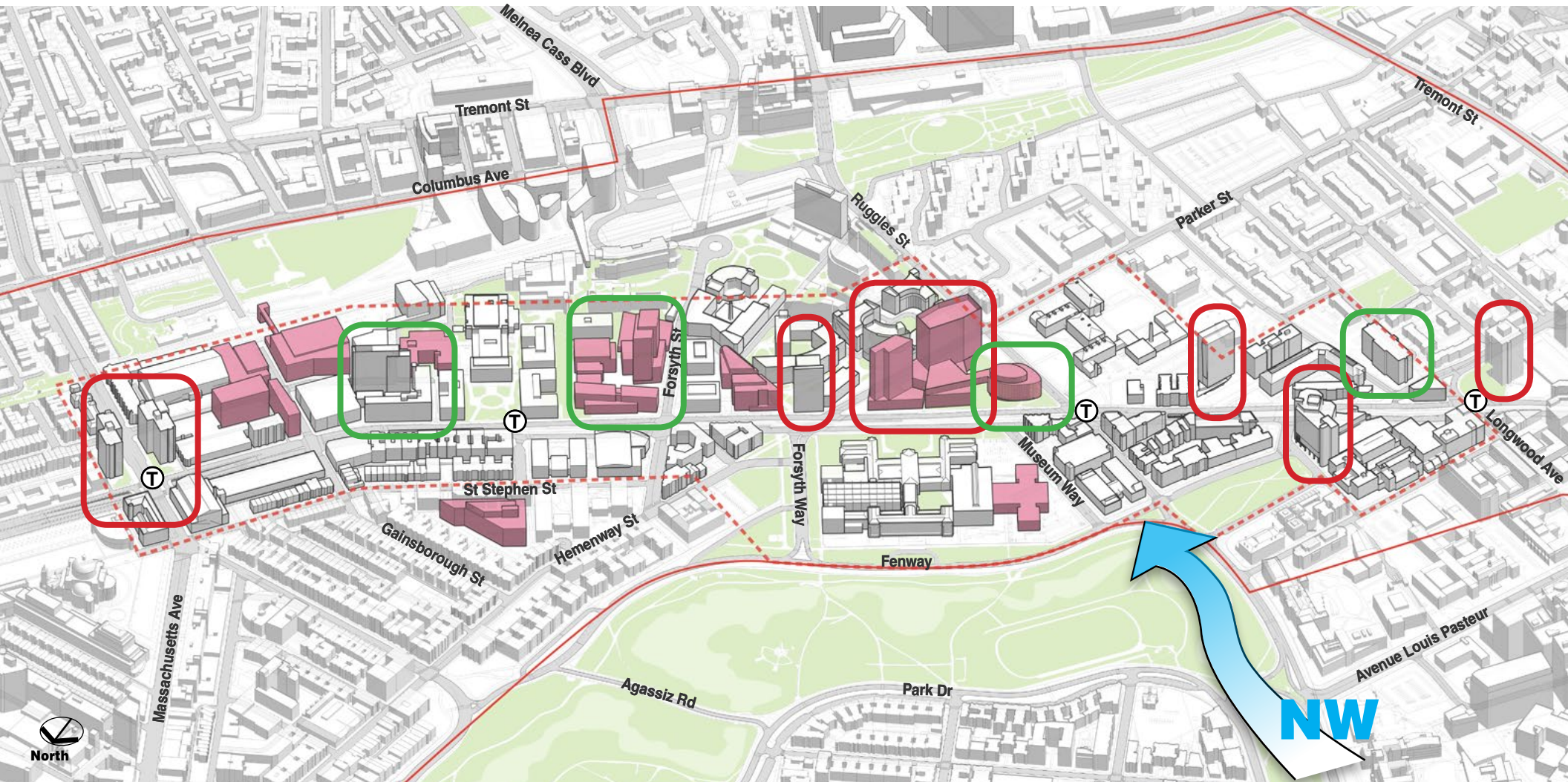
Winter (December to March)

Directional Distribution (%) of Winds (Blowing From) - Boston Logan International Airport (1981 to 2014)



# COMFORT

## Wind



Increased wind activity is often induced by:

- exposed slab buildings or point towers without a podium or setback
- two adjacent buildings with their gap aligned with the prevailing winds

Future tall buildings should be designed with a:

- narrower façade exposed to the northwesterly winds
- large podium or setback and/or setback from main pedestrian areas

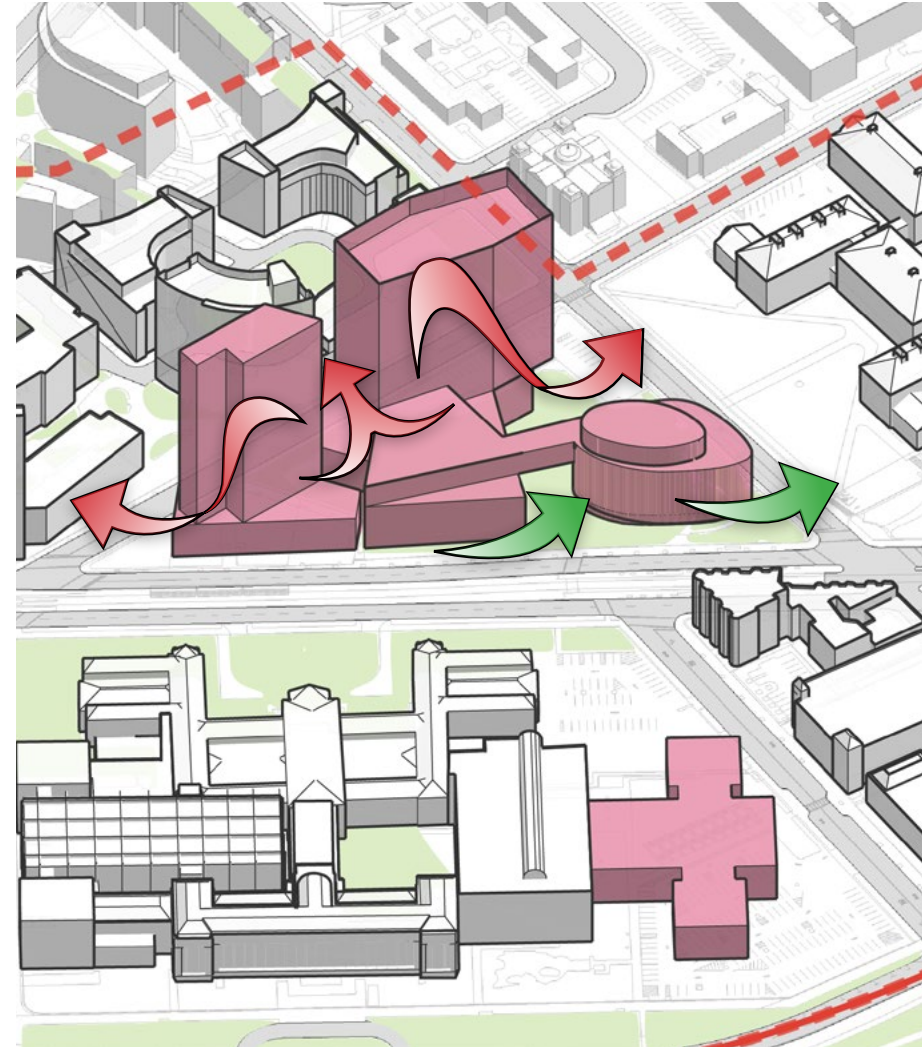


# COMFORT

## Wind



- A narrower façade exposed to the prevailing northwest winds
- A low podium structure around the tower
- A partially enclosed courtyard, but the area close to the tower could be too windy for a courtyard



- Limited wind impact on Ave, Arts and Ruggles due to lower heights and setbacks
- Larger façade perpendicular to the prevailing winds
- Flow downwashing and accelerations around tower corners
- Channeling flow between the towers



# COMFORT

## **OBSERVATIONS:**

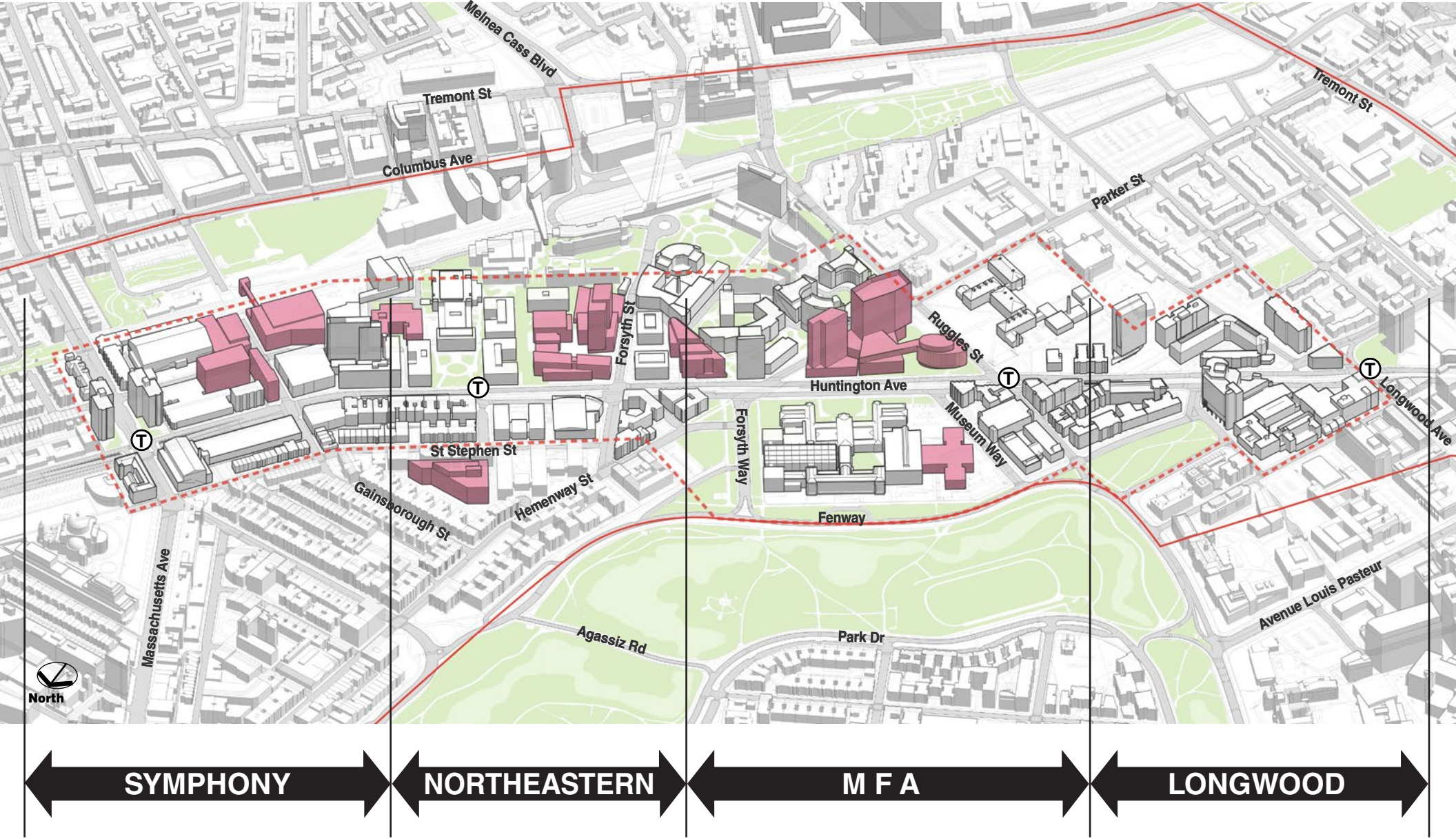
***New development should promote comfort along the Avenue by minimizing shadows, mitigating wind impacts, and providing a planting strategy that promotes comfort for pedestrians.***

- **Minimize shadow impacts on existing buildings and open spaces, particularly those that are actively used**
- **New developments should be configured to minimize negative wind impacts**
- **Design new open spaces and retrofit existing open spaces to provide places of comfort and respite for all constituents of the Avenue of the Arts (students, residents, workers, visitors)**





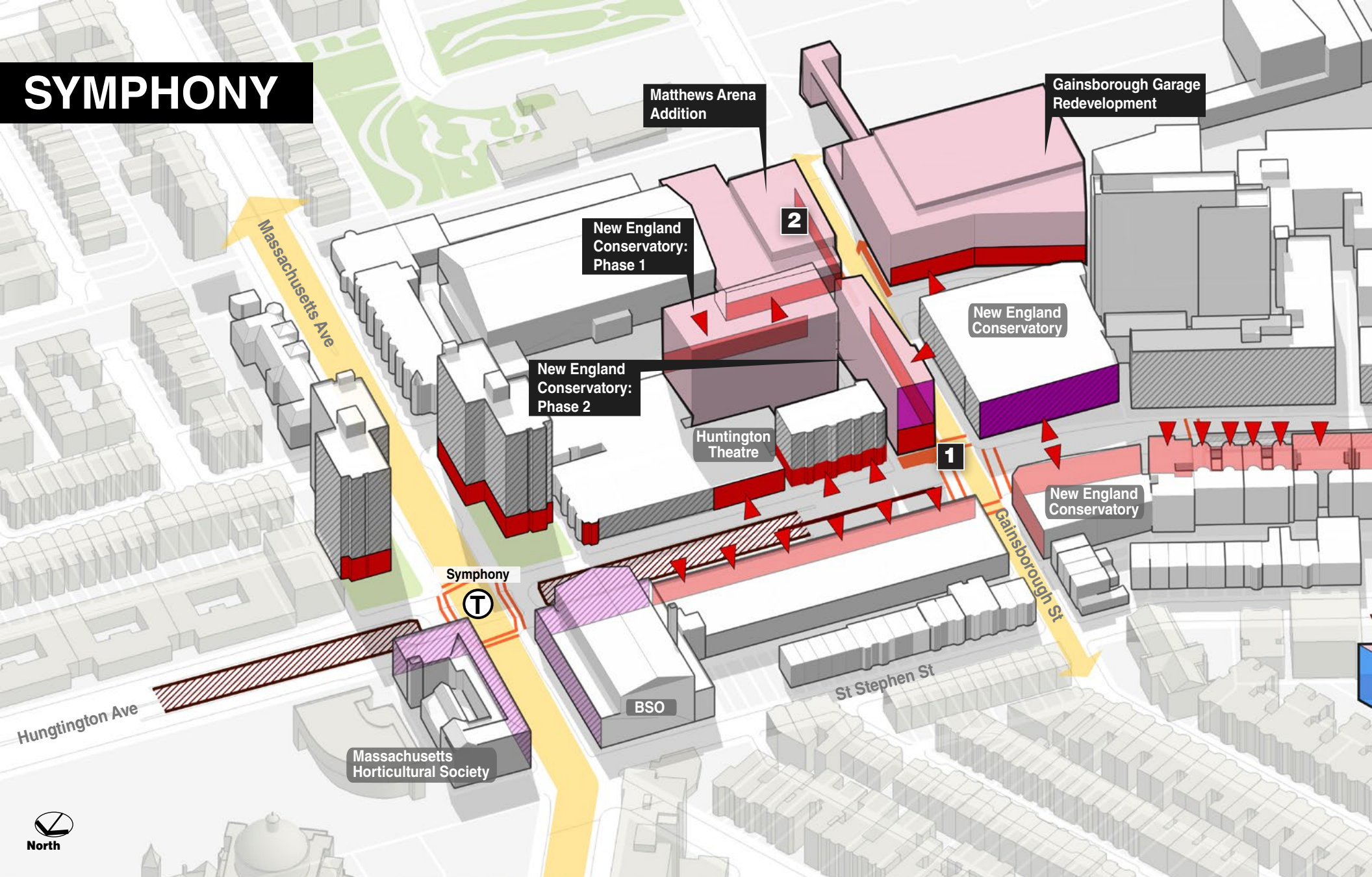
# Board Approved Projects



Approved Redevelopment



# SYMPHONY

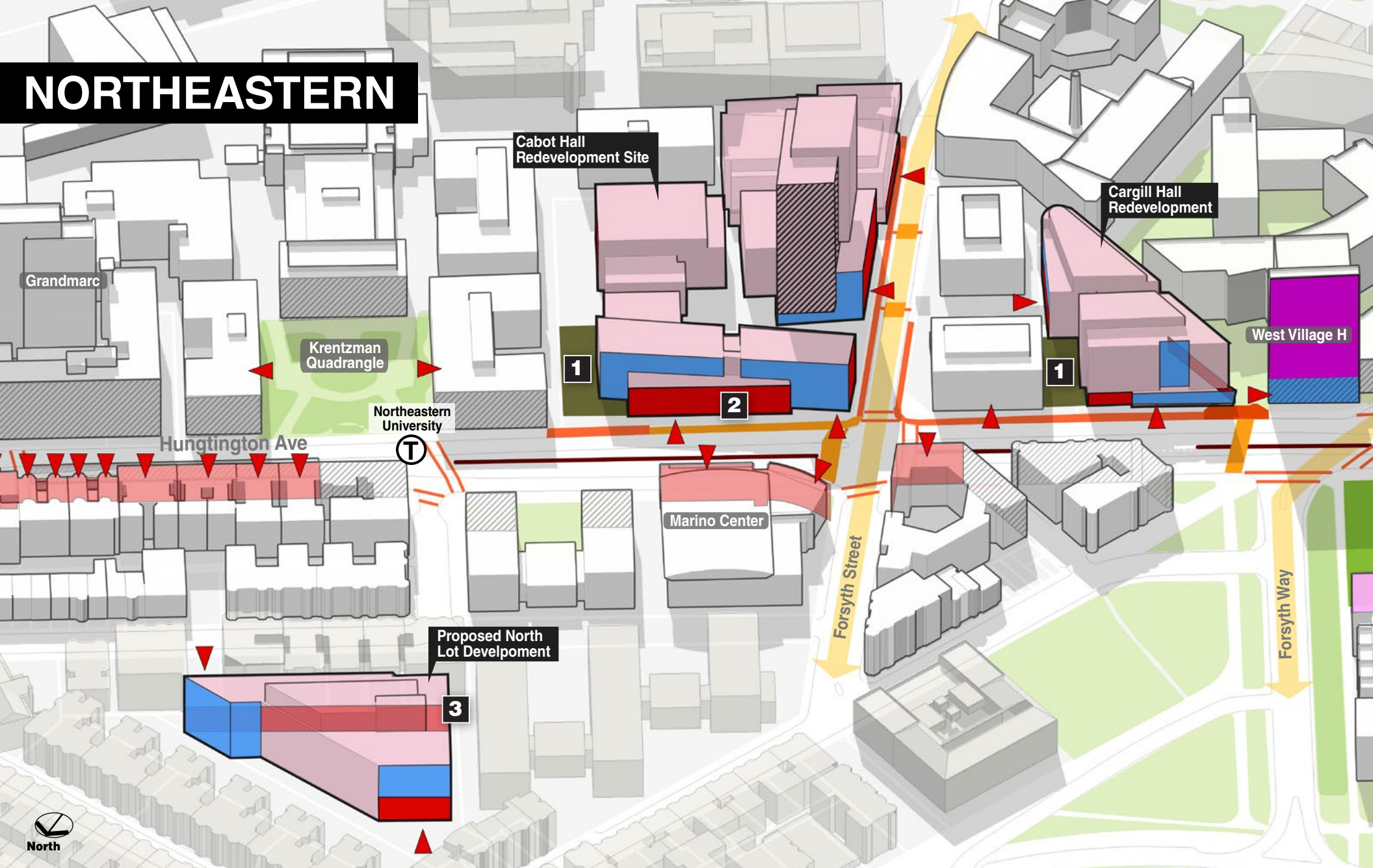


- 1** PROGRAMMING: Great opportunity for activation - both in the building and in the public realm - as this is a key corner and part of a very active block along Huntington
- 2** PROGRAMMING: Might this active ground floor use be best located elsewhere? Or could the Gainsborough Garage Redevelopment include active ground floor use to face it?
- MOBILITY: This connection along Gainsborough Street is a key link between the neighborhood and the SW Connector

- Active Ground Floor
- Inactive Ground Floor
- Transparent Facade
- Iconic



# NORTHEASTERN

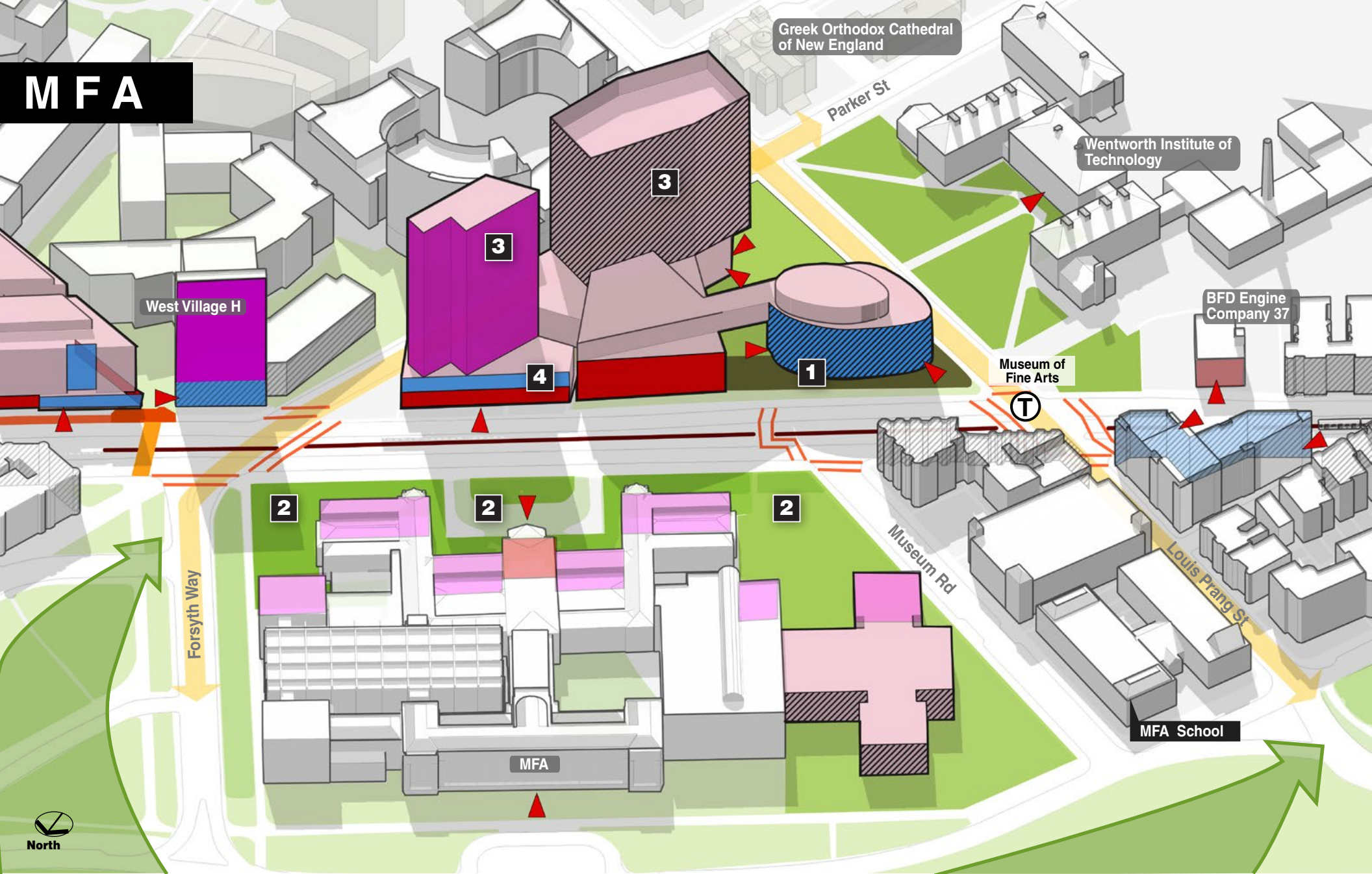


- 1 PLACEMAKING:** Could these gaps between buildings be eliminated to create a more continuous street wall and bring more forward-facing active uses to Huntington Avenue?
- 2 PROGRAMMING:** This block is a priority location for retail and other active ground floor uses and sidewalk improvements.
- 3 PROGRAMMING:** Could retail here move to a higher visibility location?

- Active Ground Floor
- Inactive Ground Floor
- Transparent Facade
- Iconic



# MFA

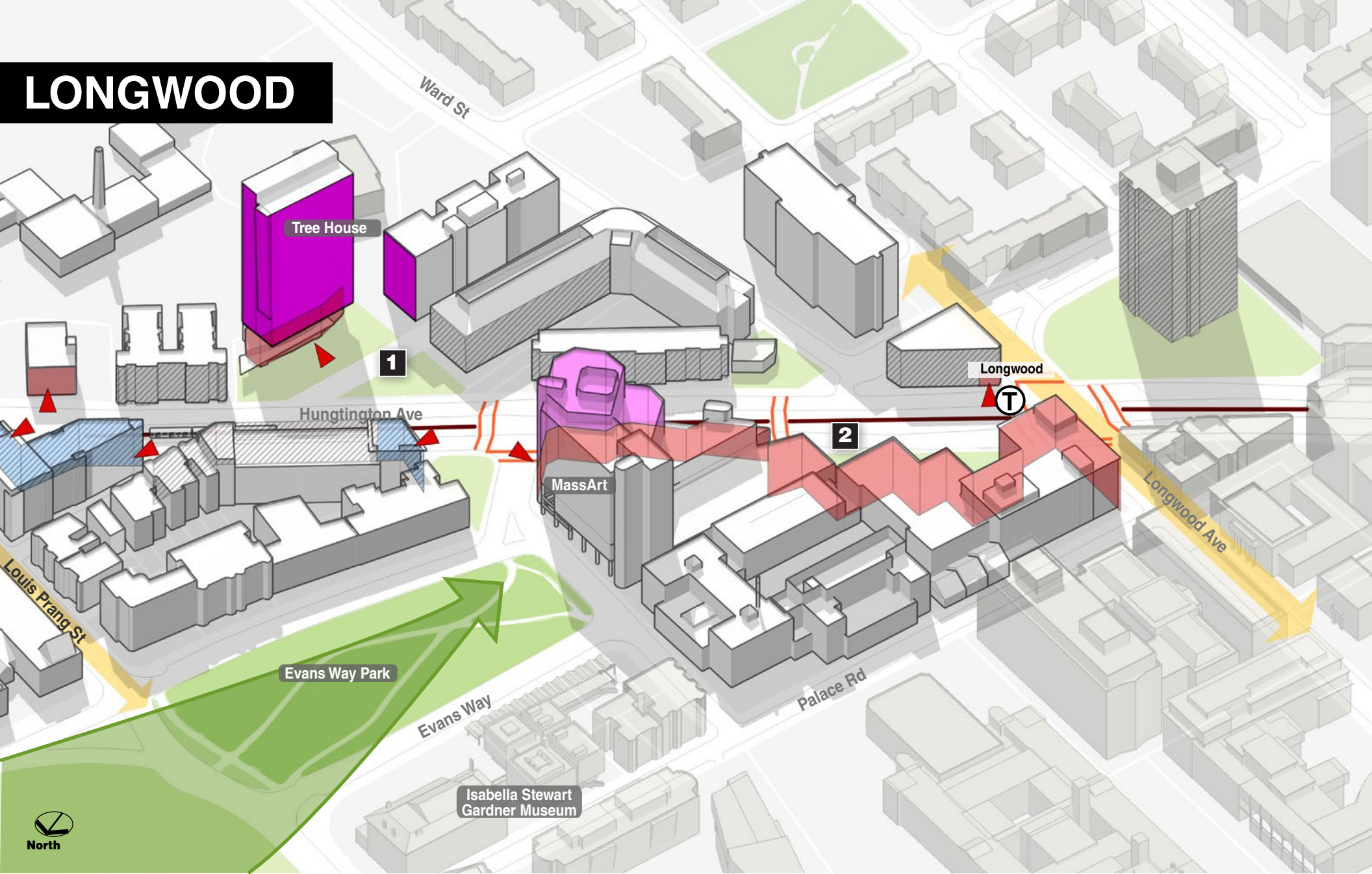


- 1 PLACEMAKING:** How does this building relate to Huntington - in terms of form and use?
- 2 PROGRAMMING:** Great opportunity for the front yard of the MFA to play a key role in the activities along Huntington
- 3 PLACEMAKING & COMFORT:** How do these tall buildings impact the public realm and character of Huntington in terms of form, shadows, wind impacts, and use?
- 4 PROGRAMMING:** This is a great opportunity for active use along Huntington

- Active Ground Floor
- Inactive Ground Floor
- Transparent Facade
- Iconic



# LONGWOOD

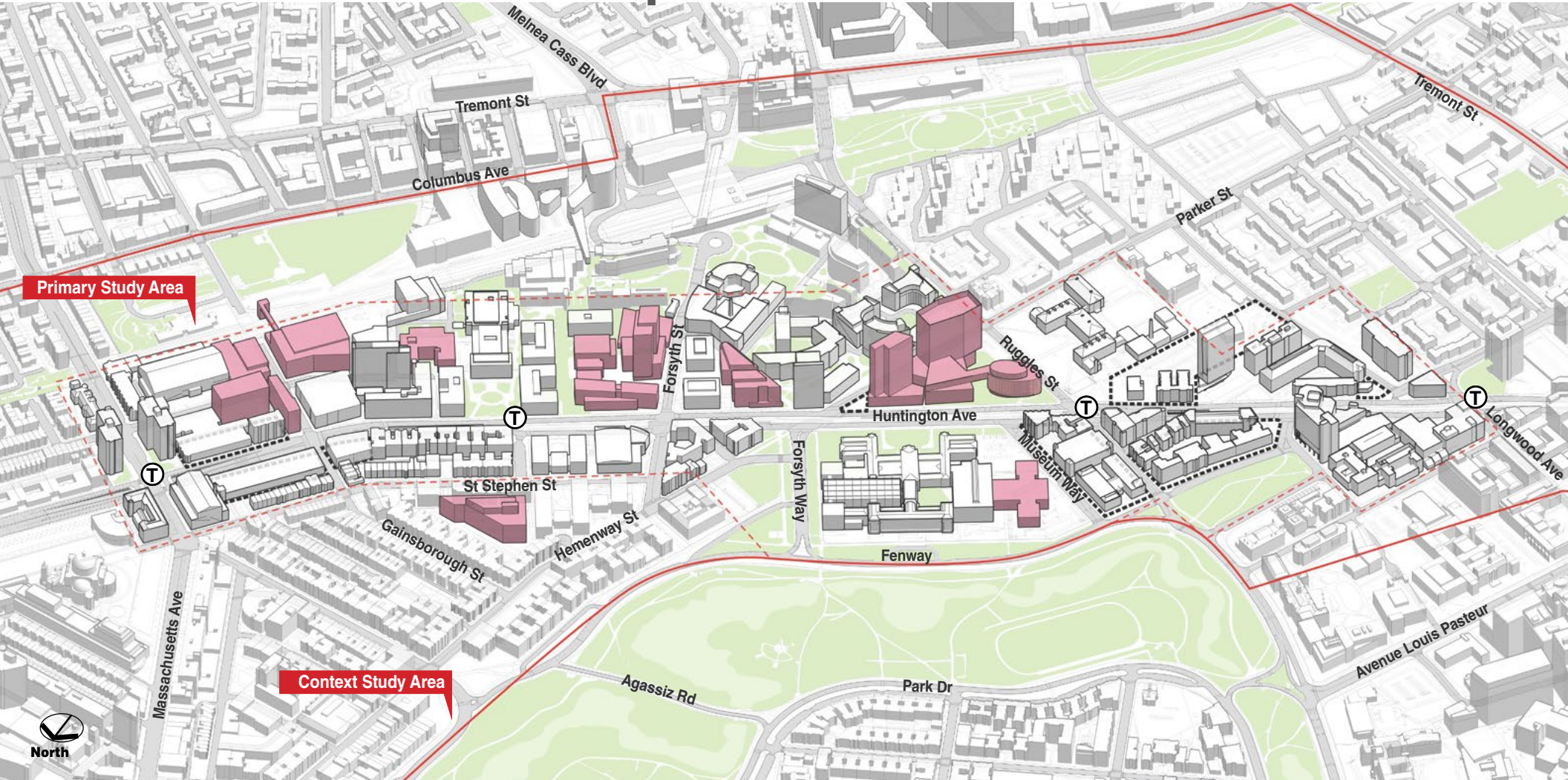


- 1 PLACEMAKING:** How can this collection of iconic buildings and their associated open spaces begin to feel more cohesive and connect to Evans Way Park, a historic link to the Fens?
- 2 PROGRAMMING:** What is the future of Mass Art's front door along Huntington Avenue? How can it be more active and how can the ground floor represent the activity going on inside the buildings?

- Active Ground Floor
- Inactive Ground Floor
- Transparent Facade
- Iconic



# Board Approved Projects + Potential Future Development Sites



Board Approved Projects





**For Public Meeting #3, May 6, 2015:**

- ***Begin generating alternative scenarios for development sites based of the four criteria outlined tonight***
- ***Begin analysis of potential future sites***
- ***Undertake more environmental analysis (wind and shadow)***
- ***Develop a way of evaluating pros and cons for each scenario***

**Next Steps**



# The Avenue of the Arts

