



Volpe Working Group

Cambridge Community Development Department  
Michael Dennis & Associates

Volpe Site: Site Design



# Volpe Site - Site Design

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Principles (So Far)

Interlude – Urban vs. Suburban Strategies

Comparative Districts

*Discussion*

Three Potential Approaches to the site

*Discussion*

# Volpe Site - Site Design

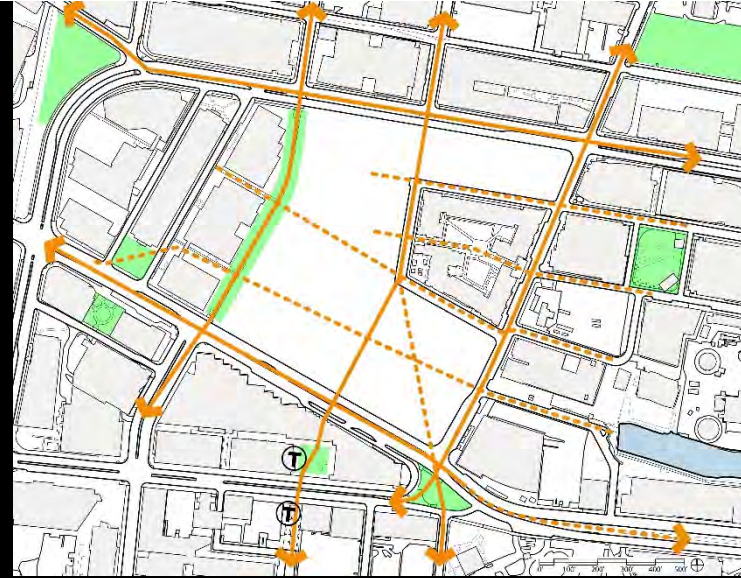
Recapitulation of principles (so far) for  
*Open Space*  
and  
*Ground Level Life*





## Open Space: “Center of Gravity” for Kendall Square.





## Open Space: Connectivity





## Open Space: Inclusiveness





## Open Space: Comfort





## Ground Level Life/Community Space: Activation of Streetscape





## Ground Level Life/Community Space: Attracting the Broader Community

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Principles (so far)





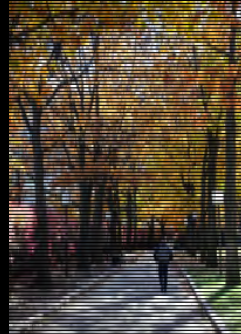
## Ground Level Life/Community Space: Civic Participation / Local Ownership



“Center of Gravity”



Connectivity



Inclusiveness



Comfort



Activation of Streetscape



Attracting the Broader Community



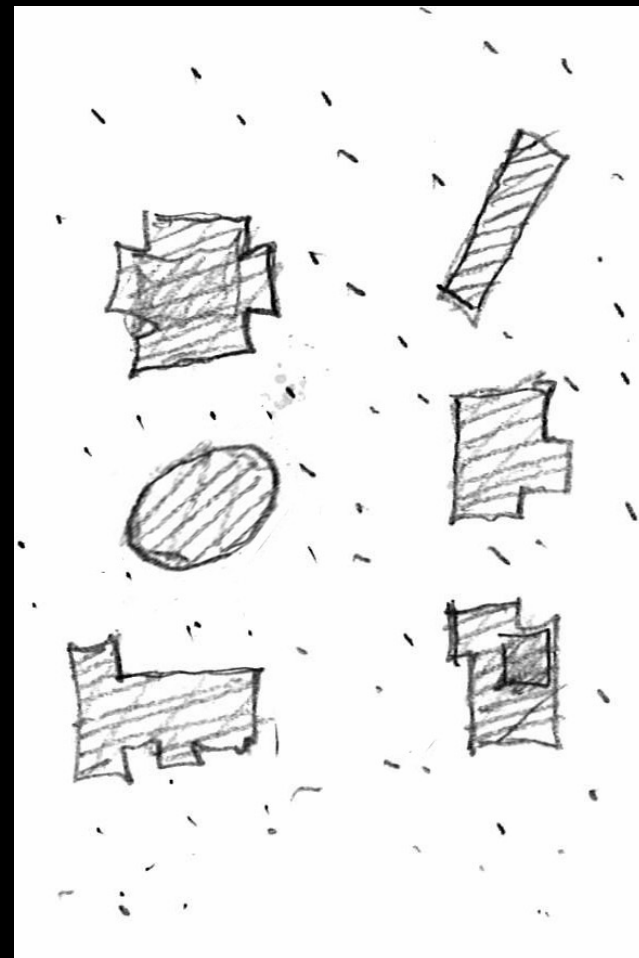
Civic Participation / Local Ownership

# Urban and Suburban Spatial Strategies



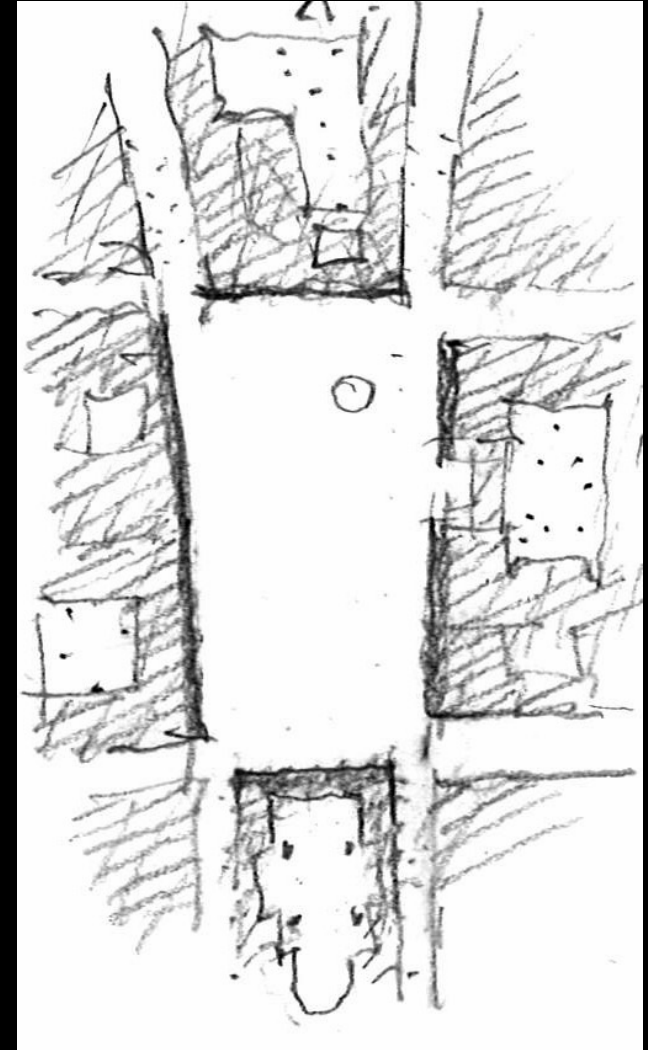
## In The Suburban Condition:

- Buildings are the primary focus of attention.
- Open space is residual, a field on which buildings are placed and a buffer between buildings.
- Privacy is achieved through distance and screening by landscape.
- Buildings are designed to be seen from all sides.
- Building masses sprawl into open space.
- Architecture often assertively emphasizes the uniqueness of the building's program and/or identity.
- Densities are generally low. As density is increased, privacy tends to be lost.



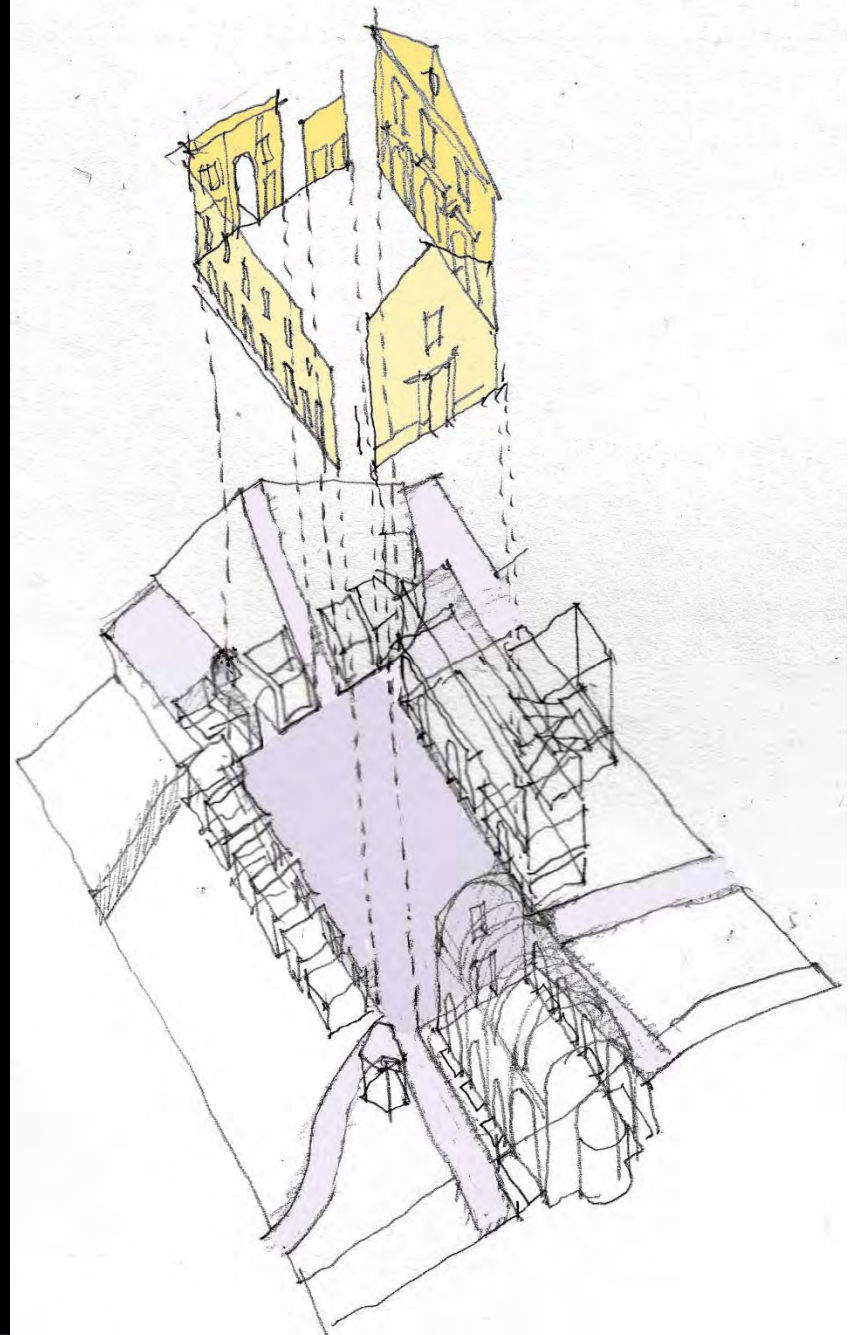
## In The Urban Condition:

- Space is the primary medium of design and focus of attention.
- Public open spaces – streets, squares, parks, and courtyards – are like rooms at the scale of the city.
- Open spaces constitute the Public Realm
- They connect disparate places, functions, individuals, programs, and meanings.
- The shared and interconnected spaces of the public realm enhance community.
- Building facades define public space.
- Architecture and landscape design work together to create the spaces of the public realm.
- Privacy is achieved by the demarcation of thresholds between spaces.



# The Urban Condition

Space – room-like urban space, whether street, park, or square – is a vessel for experience, for memory and possibility, and for human connection.





# The Past and Future of the City:

- Architectural and urban design since WW2 has generally avoided urban strategies and embraced suburban strategies.
- The low-density suburban paradigm is inherently less efficient in the use of land, energy, and resources.
- Even in higher density manifestations, the suburban paradigm's de-emphasis on the public realm is at odds with a sense of community: it prioritizes private privilege over public engagement.



## The Past and Future of the City:

- There is a growing realization that the city – the good and dense city of streets and squares and parks – will be instrumental in addressing the social and environmental issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- This will include adapting the design principles that made the traditional city a joy to be in to contemporary circumstances of scale and density.





# Comparative Contemporary Urban Districts

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Cambridge Research Park – Cambridge

University Park – Cambridge

Assembly Row – Somerville

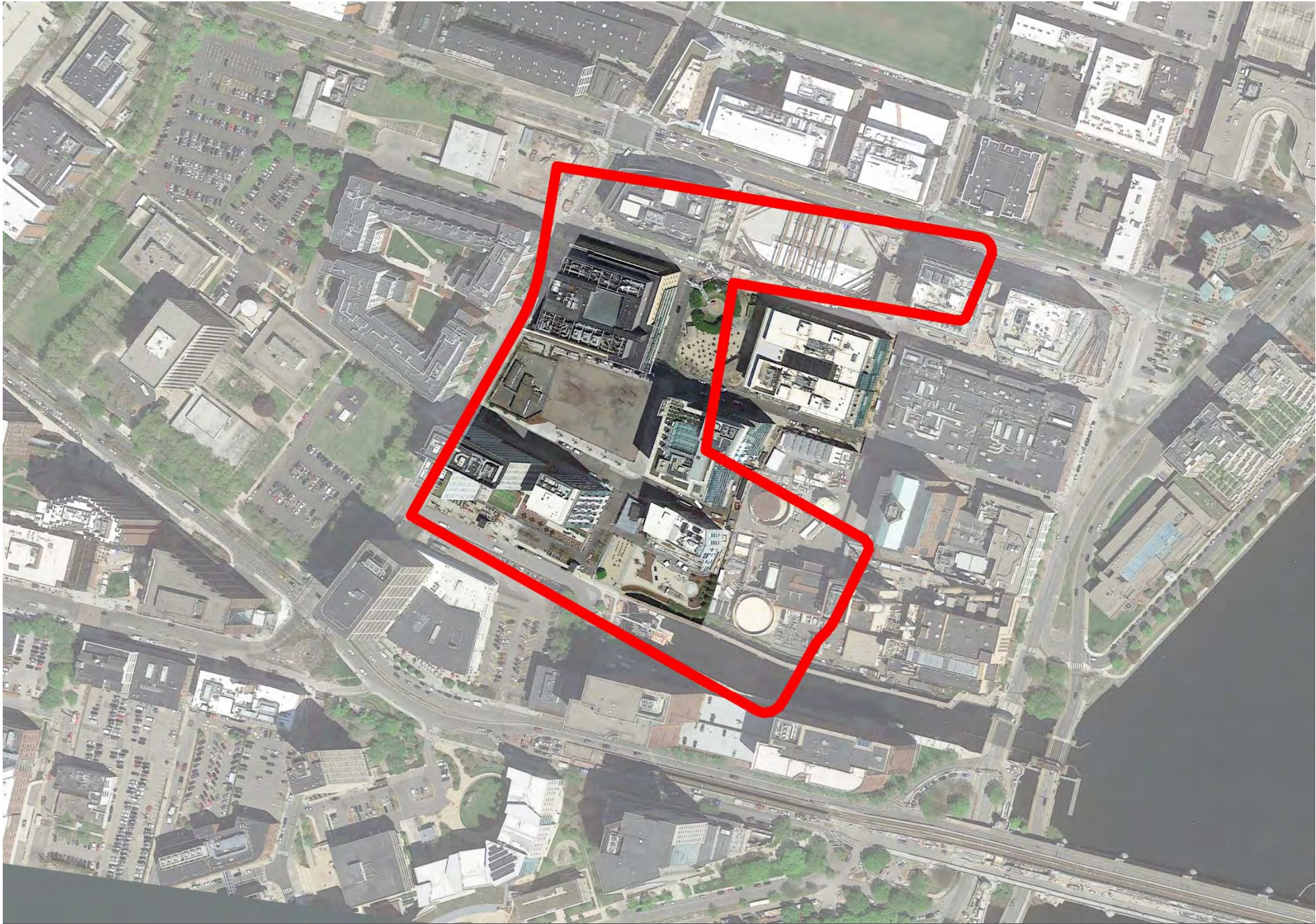
Seaport District – Boston



# Comparative Contemporary Urban Districts

- What do you feel when you visit these districts?
- What are their strengths and weaknesses?
- How do they relate to the principles we've developed so far?
- Do you feel invited to be in them?
- How do they connect with their surroundings?
- Will they attract diverse user groups and be active at different times of day?
- Do they provide a range of socially intimate spaces and/or space for community programming?
- How would you imagine using this place in your daily life?



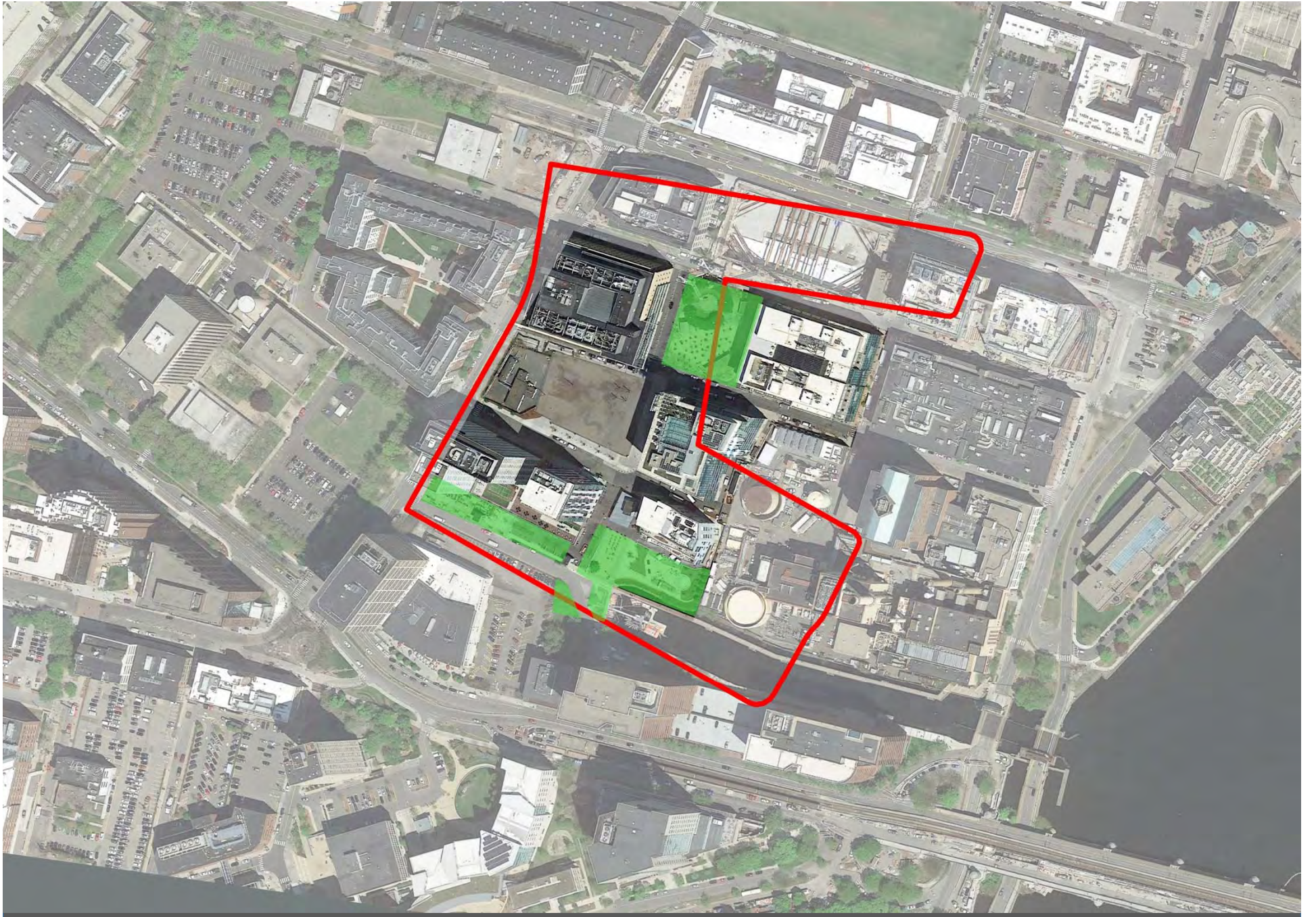


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Cambridge Research Park





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University Park - Cambridge





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University Park - Cambridge









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Assembly Row - Somerville









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Boston Seaport District



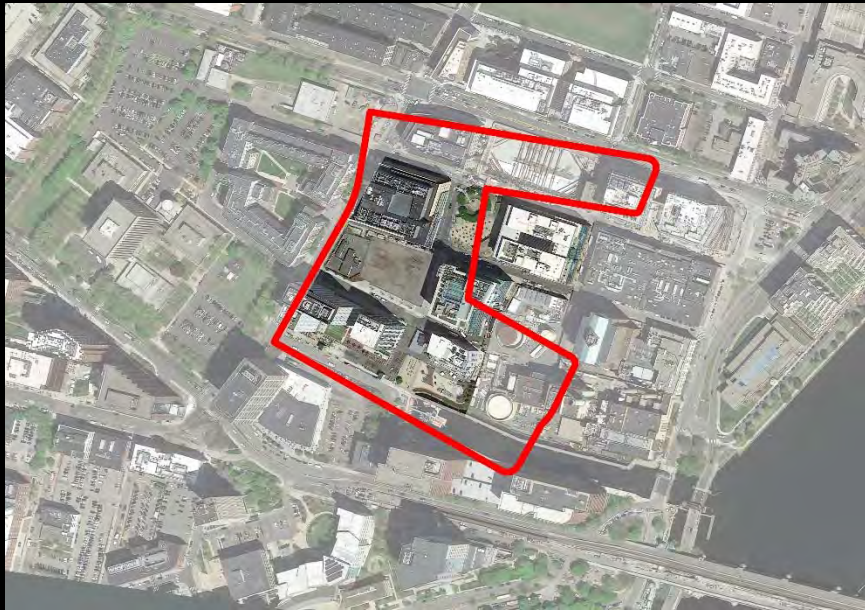


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Boston Seaport District







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Volpe Site



# Site Design

## Three potential arrangements of the site's Public Spaces



North/South Park along Fifth Street



Park at Broadway and Third Street



Central Park on Fifth Street, and  
Public Square on Broadway



# Site Design Intentions of the Three Approaches:

Public open space – room-like urban space: street, park, and square – is a *Vessel* for experience, for memory and possibility, and for connection.





# Site Design Intentions of the Three Approaches:

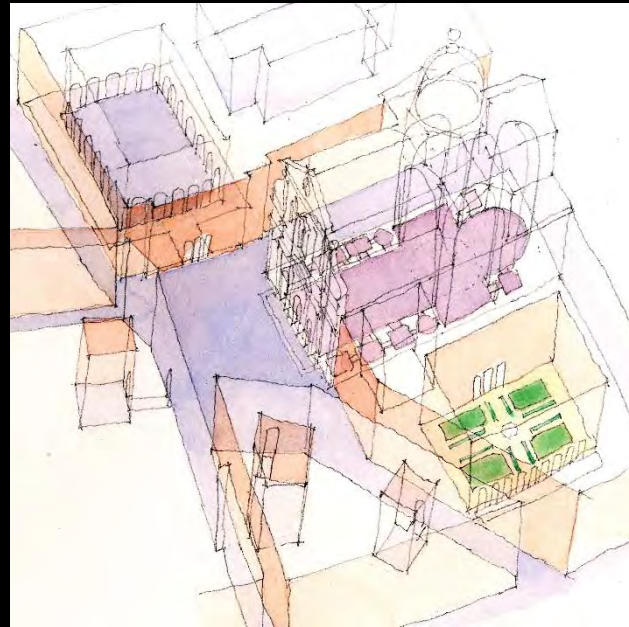
Ground Level Life –  
shopping, eating, playing,  
meeting, talking,  
demonstrating, exhibiting –  
is the glue.





# Site Design Intentions of the Three Approaches:

The site's *Civic Structure* – the form and arrangement of its interconnected public open spaces: streets, parks, and squares – should be designed to make the Volpe site a good place to be, and an integral part of the city.





# Three potential arrangements of the site's Public Spaces



North/South Park along Fifth Street



Park at Broadway and Third Street



Central Park on Fifth Street, and  
Public Square on Broadway





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North/South Park





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North/South Park along 5<sup>th</sup> Street - Retail













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Park at Broadway and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street





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Park at Broadway and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street - Retail





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Park at Broadway and 3rd Street



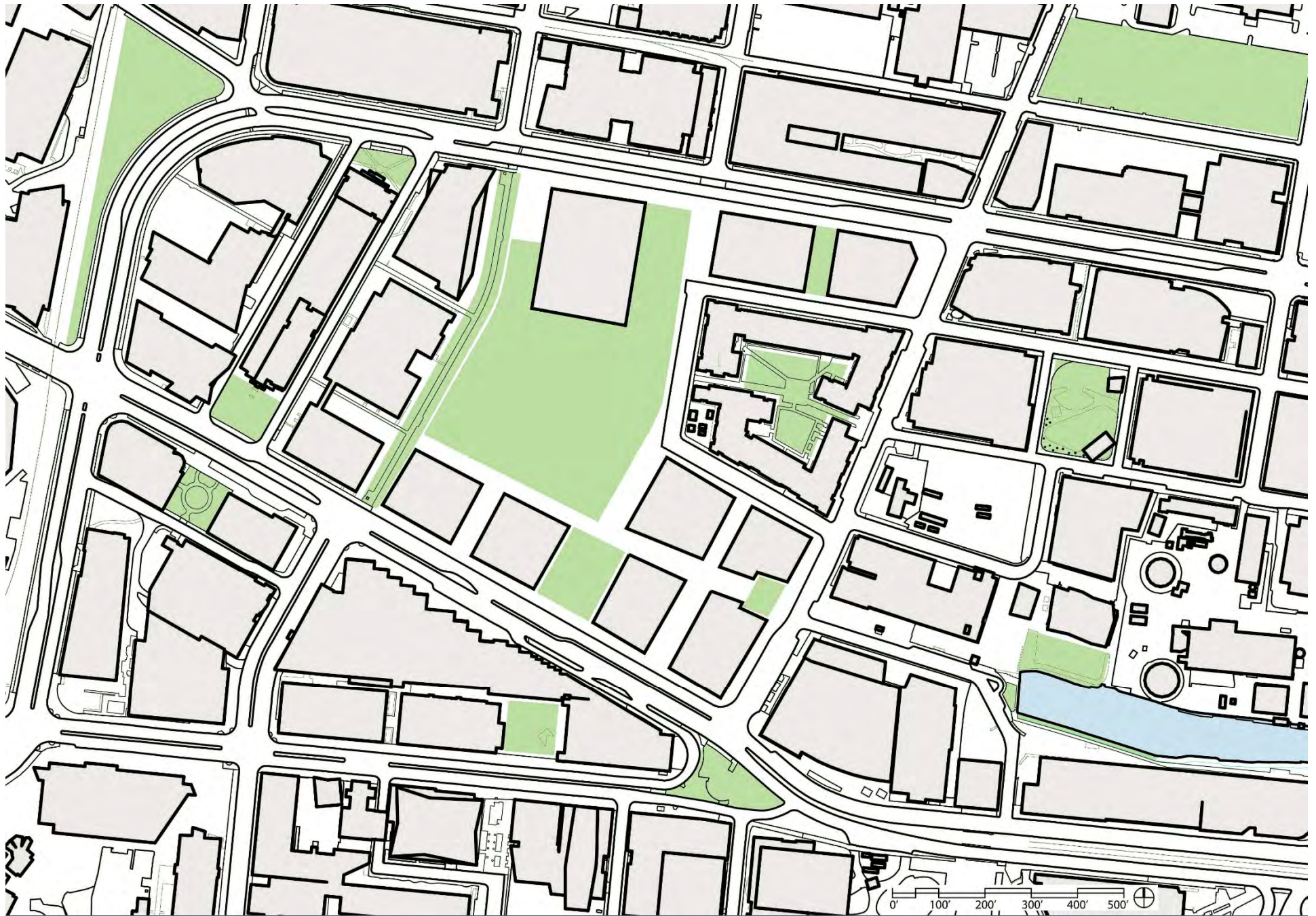


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Park at Broadway and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street with  
Public Square on 5<sup>th</sup> Street





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Central Park, with Public Square on Broadway



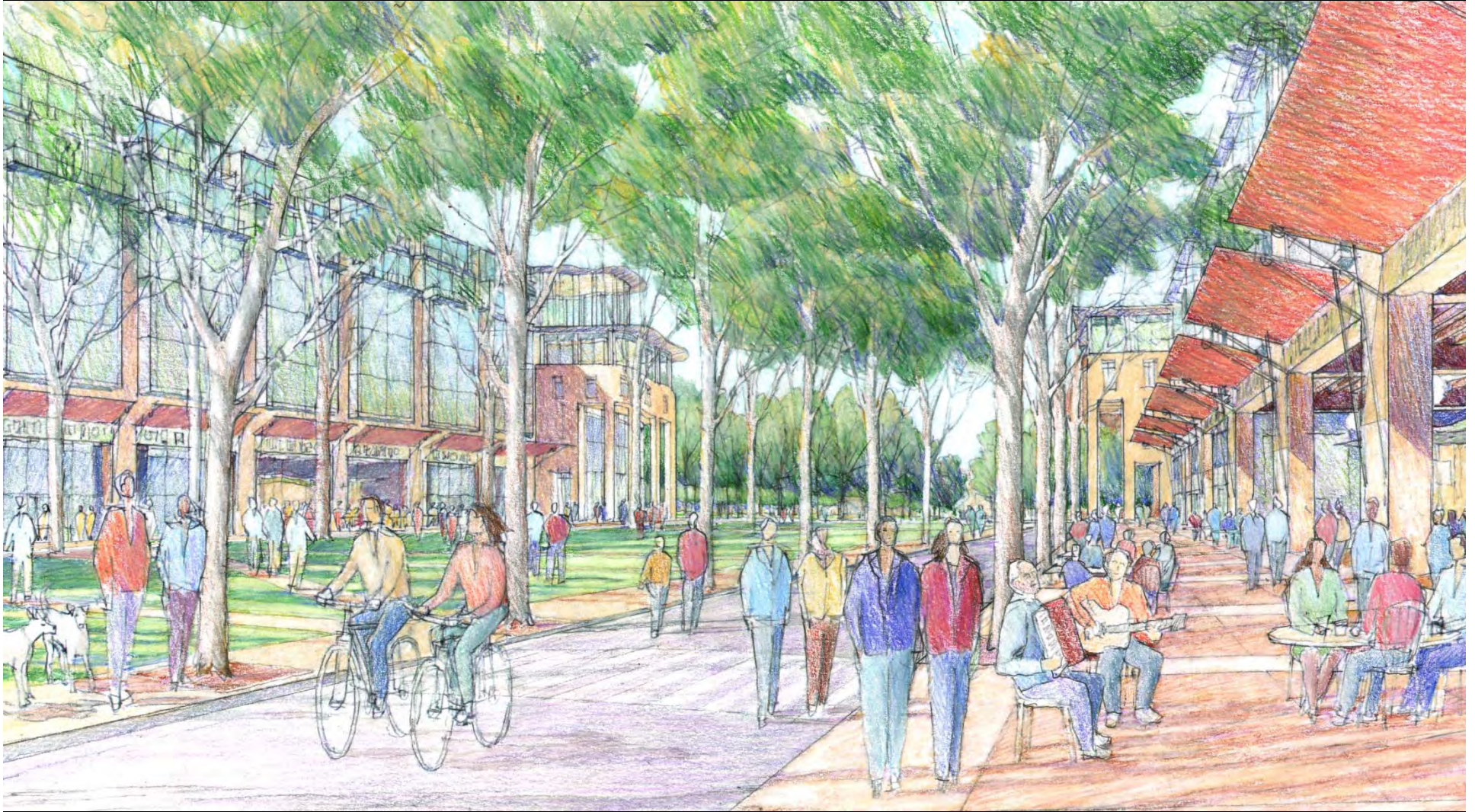


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Central Park, with Public Square on Broadway





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Public Square with Ground Floor Retail  
and Office and Residential on Upper Floors





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Central Park and Public Square On Broadway





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Central Park, Public Square on Broadway,  
with Galleria



# What do the three approaches have in common?

- Public open space is primary.
- Public open spaces are coherent.
- Public open space is the forum for community.
- A variety of types and sizes of spaces provide “niches” for different kinds of uses.
- Ground level uses - retail and community - are the glue.
- Architecture defines public space.
- Landscape design reinforces the configuration and character of the spaces.
- The landscape of the new Volpe Building is integrated with the entire district.



# Three potential arrangements of the site's Public Spaces



North/South Park along Fifth Street



Park at Broadway and Third Street



Central Park on Fifth Street, and  
Public Square on Broadway

- What are the distinct benefits/drawbacks of each approach?
- How do the different approaches reflect the principles we've already discussed?
- What should be the priority outcomes for the site?





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