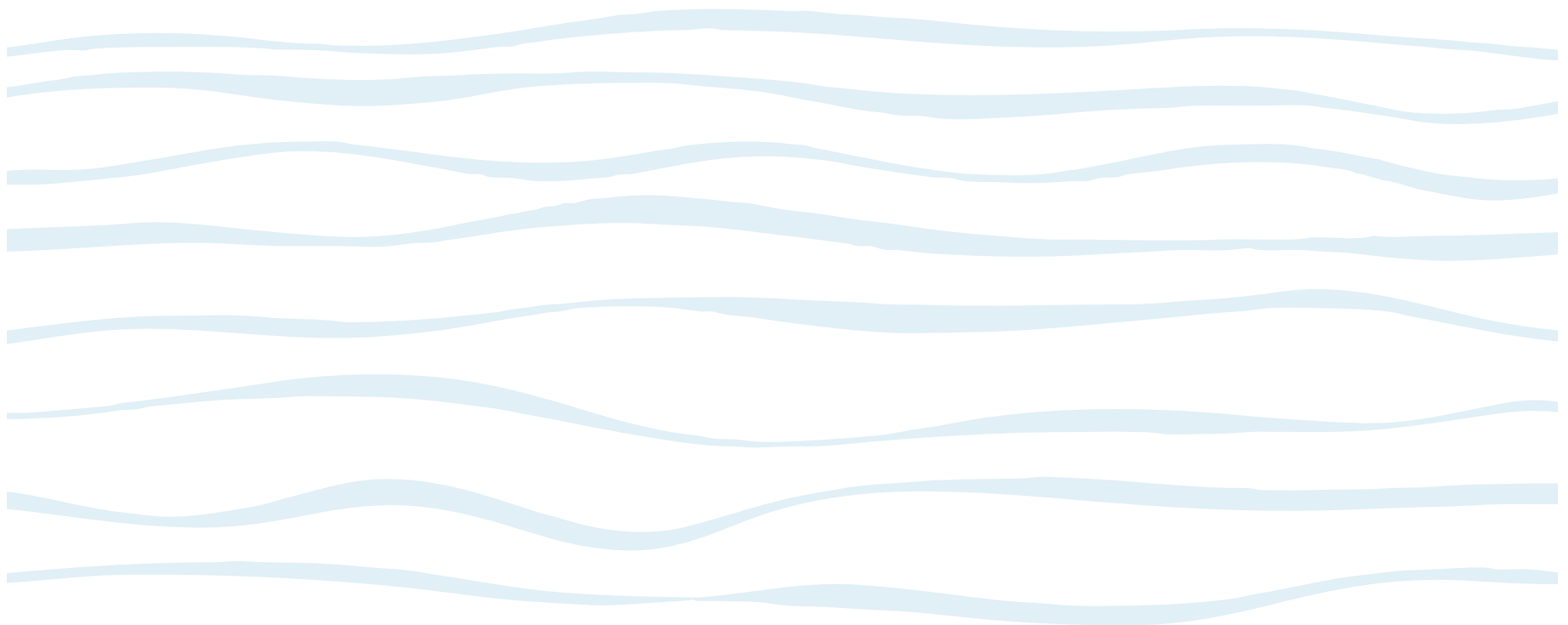




CAMBRIDGE RIVERFRONT PLAN: Reconnecting People to the Water

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
Community Development Department



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Susan Glazer, Deputy Director for Community Development

Beth Rubenstein, Former Assistant City Manager for Community Development

Riverfront Planning Team

Stuart Dash, Director of Community Planning

Roger Boothe, Director of Urban Design

Lester Barber, Former Director of Land Use and Zoning

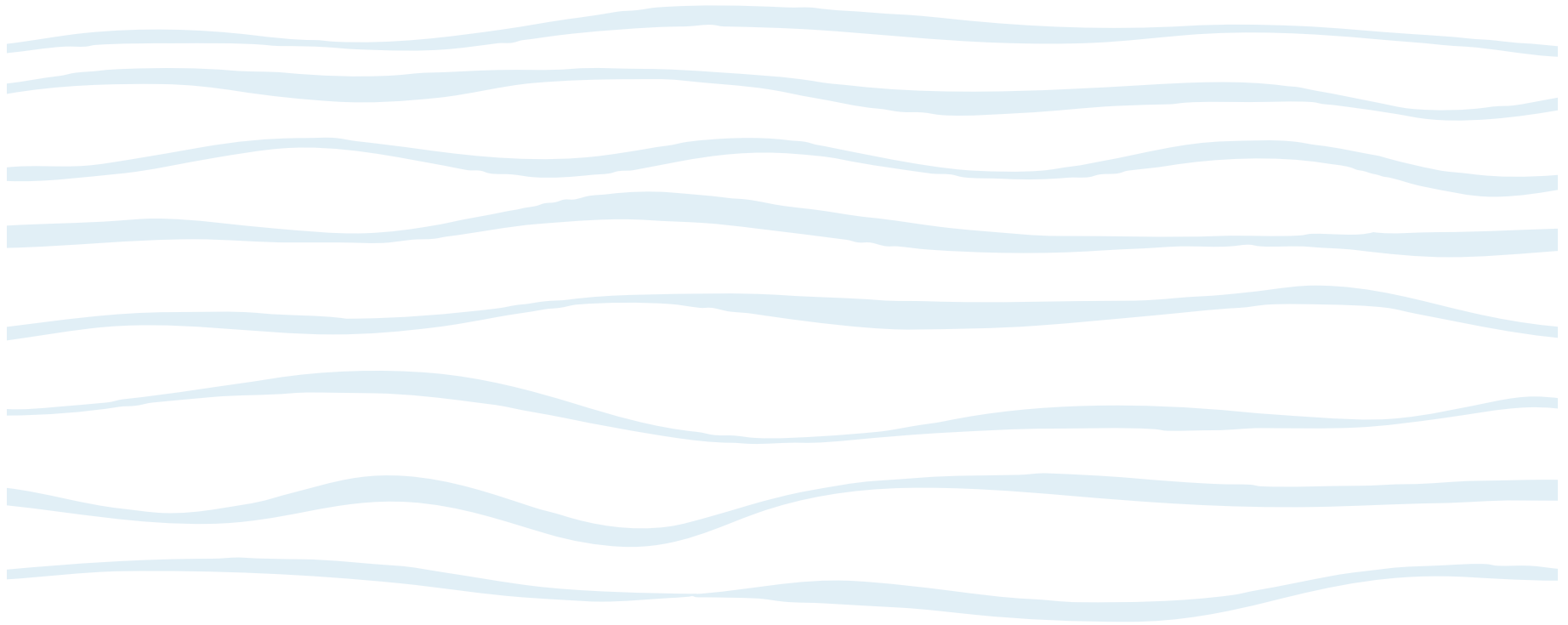
Iram Farooq, Senior Project Manager

Robin Shore, Graphics Director

Brendan Monroe, GIS Specialist

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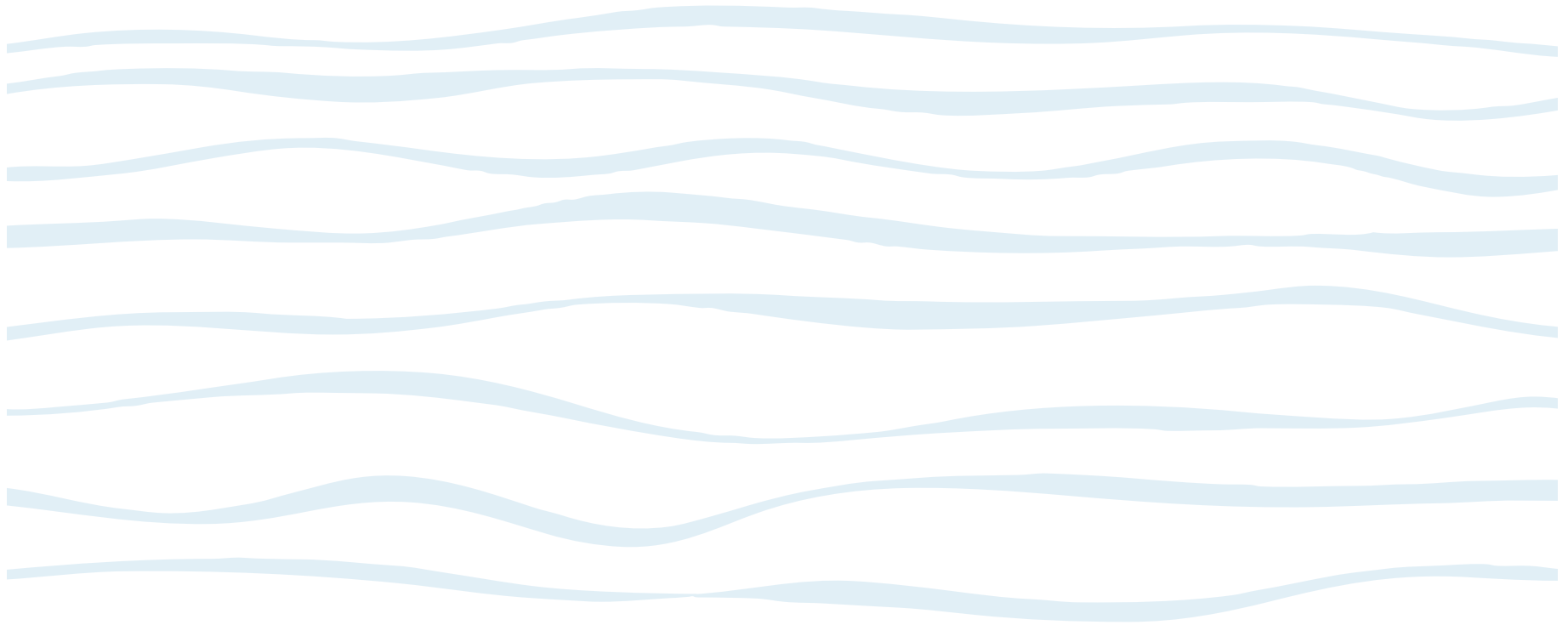
Spring 2011



CAMBRIDGE RIVERFRONT PLAN

Reconnecting People to the Water

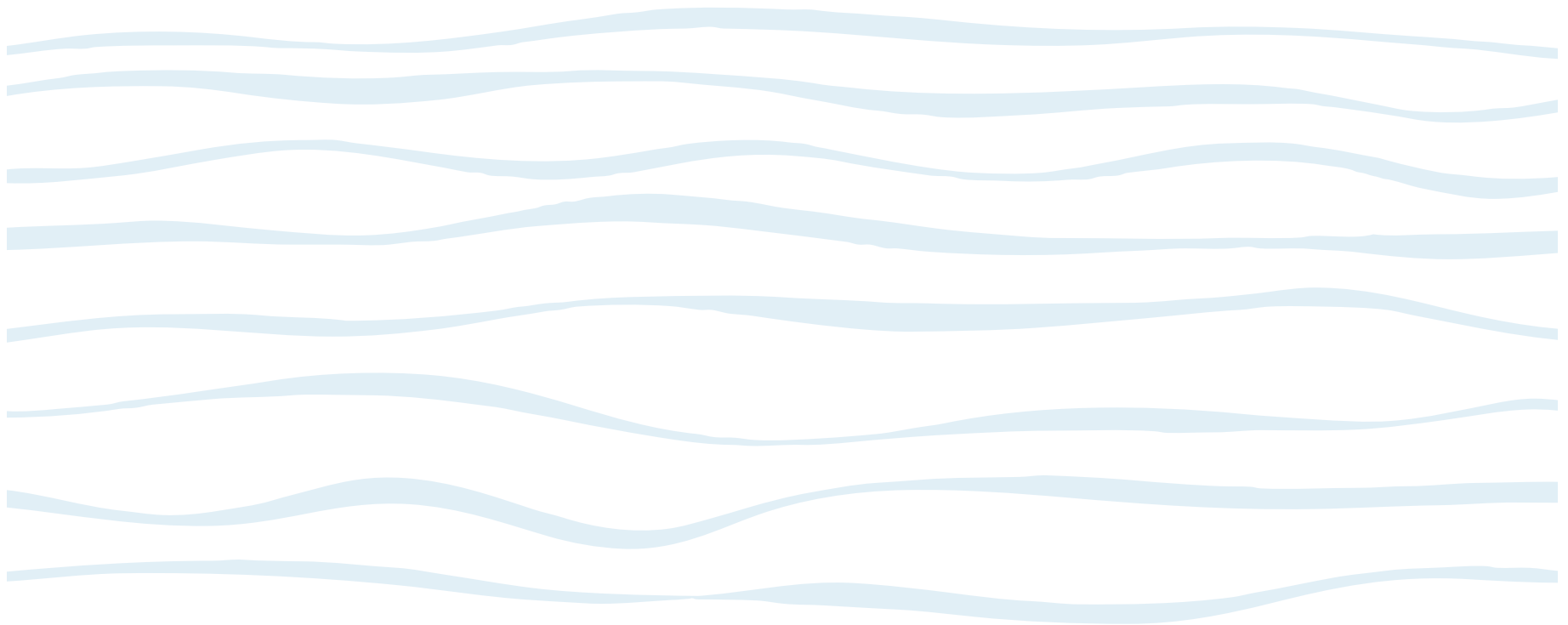
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Chapter One:

The Charles River in Cambridge





The Charles River in Cambridge: INTRODUCTION

The Charles Riverfront was given its urban form more than a century ago through the filling of Back Bay, the construction of seawalls along the main basin, and the creation of bridges connecting Cambridge to Boston. This evolution from marshes and mud flats to a beautiful urban riverfront has enabled city residents to access the water, with its dramatic vistas and opportunities for recreation.

The riverfront is a complex urban space that can be analyzed from many perspectives. This plan looks at the Charles from the point of view of a wide variety of people – residents, students, office workers, visitors, and others who want to move easily from locations in Cambridge down to the river, and to spend time enjoying the many pleasures of the open vistas of water, sky, and cityscape, whether quietly reading at the water’s edge, walking with friends in conversation, or bringing a family picnic to enjoy while watching sailboats glide across the river.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts (primarily under the aegis of the Department of Conservation and Recreation, DCR, and the Massachusetts Highway Department) owns the water and most of the direct frontage on it. At the same time the designs of a multitude of adjacent uses in Cambridge (MIT buildings, Harvard buildings, hotels, office buildings, housing, retailing, etc.) influence how people get to the river and how they use it. While the City of Cambridge does not directly own or control the riverfront, this report articulates a long term vision that should be helpful over the next few decades, as opportunities for collaborations arise.

This plan seeks to create a vision for how the river may become an even more valuable resource than it already is, one that is more easily useable for everyone and provides a richer and more inviting experience. To arrive at detailed plans and subsequent implementation, more focused processes will be needed, much like the recent City/DCR process for the rehabilitation of Magazine Beach, or, in the more distant past, the Metropolitan District Commission’s (MDC, now the DCR) agreement to the City’s design for narrowing and improving Cambridge Parkway, making a wider place for recreation along the river.

The purpose of this plan is to create a coordinated vision for how to realize more fully the original promise of the Charles River Basin in today’s context, and to improve the relationship between the riverfront and Cambridge’s built environments: its streets, buildings, and



Pathways along the Charles River are used by walkers, joggers, and bicyclists.



One of the few boat docks available to everyone, in East Cambridge near Front Park.

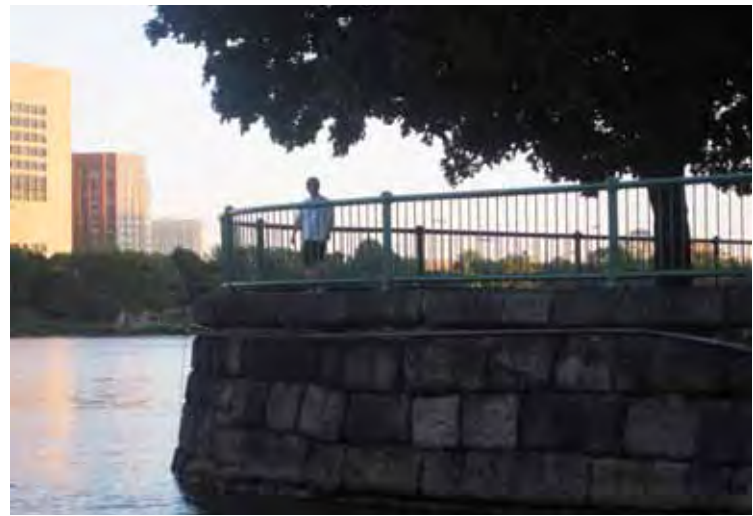
parks—both new and old. While Cantabrigians already appreciate the Charles as a unique regional resource, many obstacles (such as wide expanses of automobile traffic and lack of safe crossings) prevent easy access from abutting uses and neighborhoods, and detract from the enjoyment of arriving at the waterfront. It is important to capitalize, now and in the future, upon opportunities to create stronger physical design relationships that could be lost without a focused plan for improvement along the river. The underlying goal is to expand the formal and informal use of the riverfront, and thereby realize the full potential for liveliness offered by this defining physical feature of our community and region.

In this report, the accessibility and usability of each section of the river will be described with reference to the relevant threads of history that have led to the current connections to neighborhoods (or lack thereof) and opportunities for community activity. Important general issues are that 1) the experience of the river is generally through moving along its length, with few opportunities to sit contemplatively or to gather more communally, and 2) it is not always easy to get to the river from the city. At the end of the report, recommendations will be made to address these shortcomings.

The suggestions will include public sector actions such as how local street and open space improvements may be designed to enhance citizens' experience of the riverfront, and, potentially, the introduction of new design guidelines. Suggestions also include private development actions such as ways new projects may facilitate the community's appreciation of the riverfront through the introduction of activity and public uses along the waterfront; pathways and buildings designed to embrace the river, create view corridors; and design features that relate to the river. The overall strategy suggested in this plan is to be poised, as a community, to make improvements when opportunities arise, recognizing that any specific undertaking is likely to require a process involving many interested parties.



An underutilized green space at the corner of Lechmere Canal and the river.

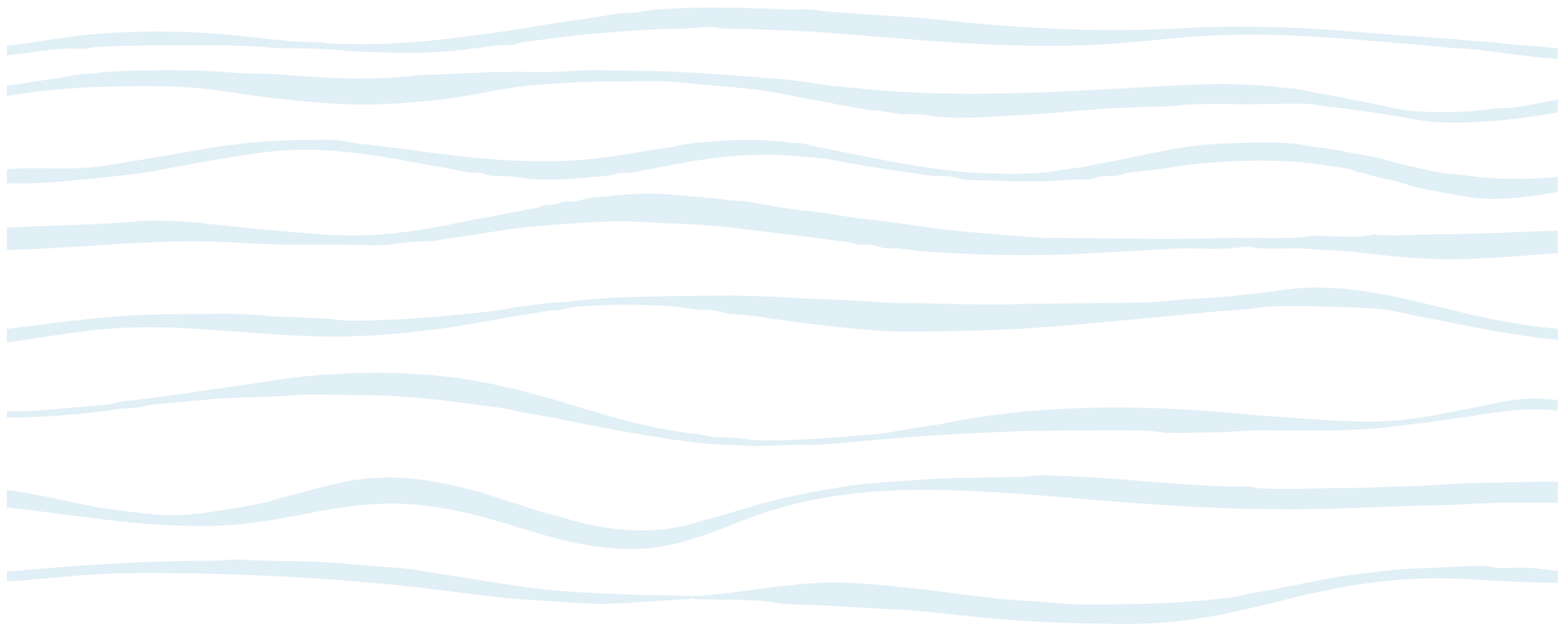


The stone wall at juncture of Lechmere Canal and the river offers a good lookout.

Chapter Two:

The Riverfront as a Whole





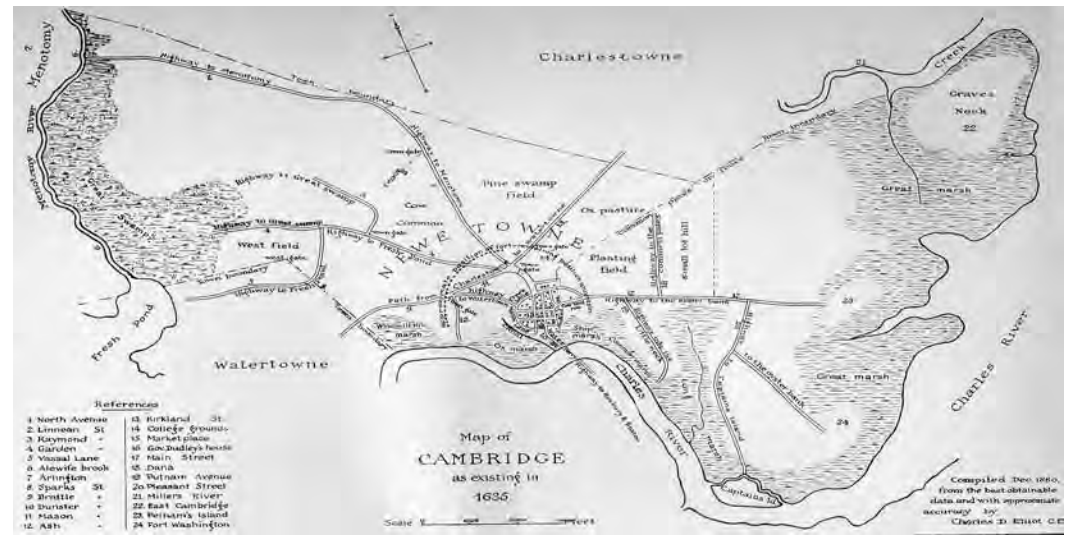
The Riverfront as a Whole: ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The character of the river derives from its historical roots as well as its environmental qualities. In encouraging expansion of the range of activities along the riverfront, it is important to remain consistent with both the environmental and historical attributes of the Charles. In the pre-Revolutionary era, the Charles' estuary—the rich aquatic environment between salt and fresh water—reached to what is now East Cambridge. Further west, Fort Washington was a Revolutionary battery established by Colonial forces on the water's edge.

The riverfront experienced many changes during the industrial revolution of the latter part of the nineteenth century. Railroad bridges were built to connect industrial East Cambridge with Boston Harbor, and the free flow between the river and the sea was forever changed. So blighted by industrial use was the North Point end of the river, that it was known until recently as “The Lost Half Mile.” From the mid- to late-nineteenth century, the filling of the bay that created Back Bay on the Boston side also led to the creation of seawalls on the Cambridge side of the Charles. Filling in the marshy areas along the Cambridge side resulted in Fort Washington no longer being on the water—it is now landlocked, bordered by the Grand Junction rail line and distanced from the Charles River by the MIT campus.

The magnificent, broad section of the Charles River Basin bordered by the Esplanade in Boston and the MIT campus in Cambridge is a man-made place, even though the water itself is an important natural feature. The character of the riverfront becomes less obviously man-made in the narrower section from Magazine Beach westward towards Harvard Square, and beyond Cambridge to the Watertown frontage.

In landscape architect Charles Eliot's vision, the Charles riverfront in Cambridge was conceived as a parkway along which carriages would slowly follow Memorial Drive, with riders enjoying the view, while people on foot promenaded closer to the water. With the end of horse-drawn carriages and the evolution of the slow moving early automobiles over the years, resulting in increased traffic volumes and speeds, Memorial Drive often seems a



Historic map from 1880.



Pedestrian access to the river is often impeded by multiple lanes of automobile traffic.

barrier of fast moving cars between the river and the rest of Cambridge, rather than an additional way to enjoy the river.

In recent years, though, there have been a number of attempts to transcend the barrier and create a stronger connection to the river – if not on a daily basis, certainly on summer weekends. In 1976, the Riverbend Park experiment began with the closing of part of Memorial Drive to automobile traffic on Sunday afternoons in the summer to allow picnickers, pedestrians, bicyclists, and skaters to enjoy the riverfront. While the physical extent of the closing and the hours have varied over the years, it remains an extremely successful way for people to enjoy the waterfront. The event now occurs weekly from the last Sunday in April through the second Sunday in November and extends from Western Avenue to the Eliot Bridge.

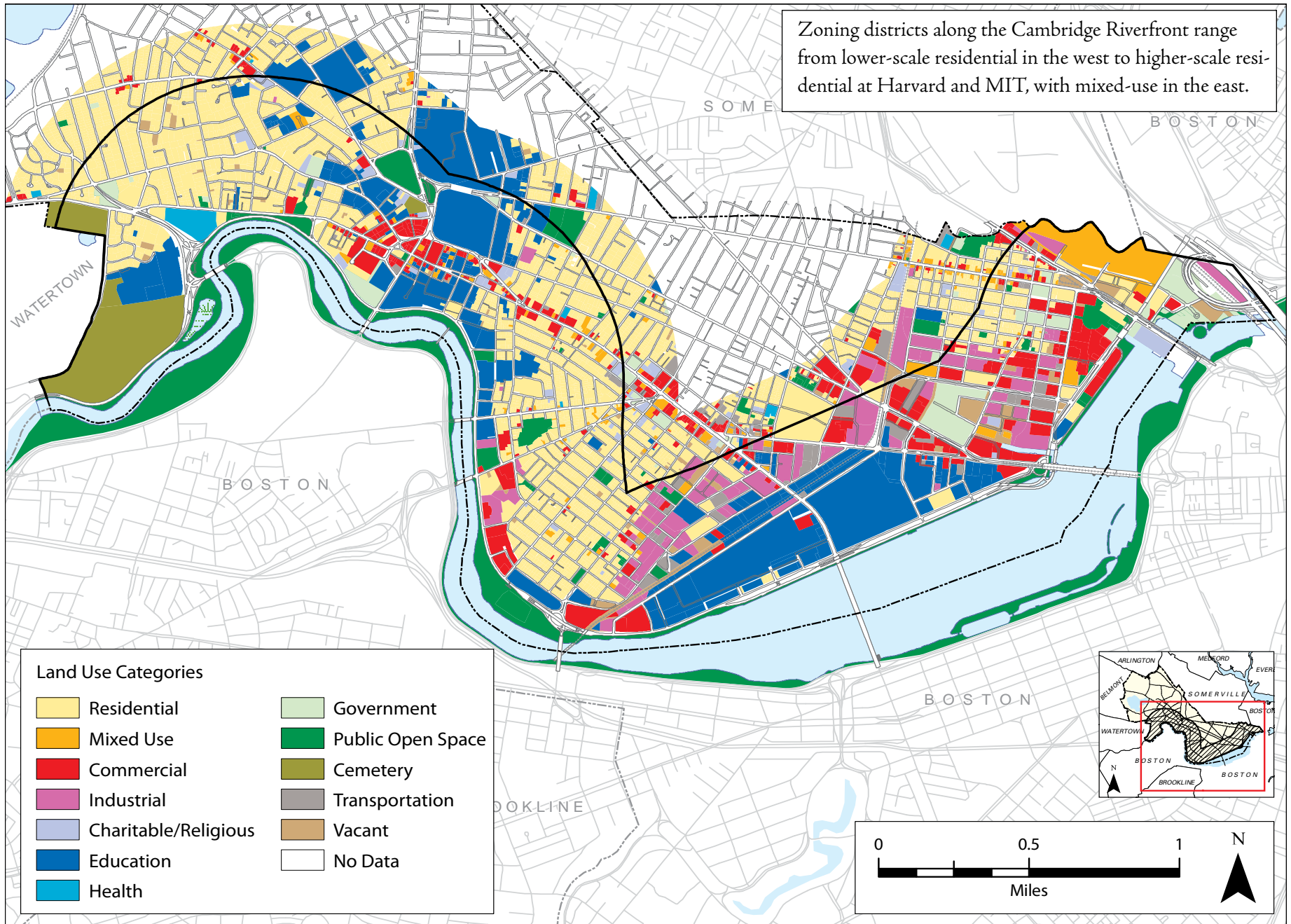
A number of seasonal festivals further draw people to the water and help celebrate the river – The Cambridge River Festival in June, July Fourth fireworks, the Dragon Boat Festival, and the Head of the Charles regatta. The Harvard Square May Fair and OctoberFest events also bring people and energy from the Square to the river. These events are generally focused close to the Harvard Square area and within the extent of the Riverbend Park closure. The areas further up and downstream are not generally as intensely or frequently used, although sections of the river in East Cambridge are beginning to see greater use and energy and might offer an attractive area of opportunity for public access and activity.

The buildings, and to some extent the pattern of current uses, along the Charles riverfront mirror Cambridge's history. The section of the riverfront in East Cambridge had an industrial flavor that has now transformed to an office and retail district, particularly at the East Cambridge Riverfront. North Point, which included industrial uses and unused rail yards, is evolving into a mixed use district. Two of Cambridge's most significant institutions, MIT and Harvard, occupy large parts of the riverfront with student residences, recreational fields, and academic uses. The western part of the riverfront is largely residential in nature.

In addition to the river itself, some of these adjacent uses are significant local and regional draws. These include the Museum of Science, CambridgeSide Galleria mall, Mount Auburn Cemetery, Mount Auburn Hospital, and a number of City parks.



A: Land Use and Zoning



Previous Planning for the Area

The future of the Charles River and its environs has been addressed over the years in a number of Cambridge planning processes, including the East Cambridge Riverfront planning, the Eastern Cambridge Planning Study, the Riverside Study, and a number of other neighborhood studies. The relevant recommendations from the neighborhood studies and the Green Ribbon Open Space Report are summarized in Appendix 1.

The **DCR Master Plan for the Charles River**, completed in 2002, reviews existing conditions, outlines historical, cultural, and natural resources, identifies opportunities, and proposes recommendations for improvements to the riverfront and adjacent parklands. A number of the Master Plan recommendations are focused on improving connections to the river and expanding informal day-to-day use of the Charles River Basin for each of the areas along the river in Cambridge. A list of the relevant recommendations is included on the facing page. In 2006 DCR carried out a survey of sidewalk conditions in the Charles River Reservation, from the Charles River Dam to Watertown Square.

The City's **East Cambridge Riverfront** planning effort of 1978 was a catalyst for the transformation of a blighted industrial area to the current mix of housing, retail, and office uses. Central to the urban design plan was the creation of nine acres of new parkland that helped establish many connections to the river today. Here is a description of the loop that now connects all of the Riverfront development, and makes it easy to access the Charles: Lechmere Canal Park links pedestrians, bicyclists, and boaters directly to the Charles River and also to the CambridgeSide Galleria arcade, which in turn connects to Charles Park. From there, one can walk across Edwin Land Boulevard to reach Front Park, which lies directly on the water. To complete the pedestrian circuit, the Cambridge Parkway was transformed from a 4-lane highway to a 20-foot wide road, with a 30-foot wide promenade at the water's edge, leading walkers and bicyclists back up to Lechmere Canal.

The 2001 **Eastern Cambridge Planning Study** set the stage for the transformation of North Point into a mixed use neighborhood and the introduction of housing as a mandated use in the Kendall Square area. Connection to the river, both for the existing Eastern Cambridge neighborhoods and the future residents, is highlighted as a major goal—the Broad Canal provides an opportunity to create such a connection. The planning for and approval of the **Cambridge Research Park/Kendall Square** development also identified this key



The City created Lechmere Canal Park in the 1980s as the centerpiece for the revitalization of the East Cambridge Riverfront.

SELECTED RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE DCR MASTER PLAN FOR THE CHARLES RIVER, April 2002

The following list of Master Plan recommendations is focused on improving connections to the river and expanding informal day-to-day use of the Charles River Basin for each of the areas along the river in Cambridge:

1. Create more opportunities for Basin users to get down to the shore and have close contact with the water.
2. Encourage alternative seating arrangement, especially along the water.
3. Redistribute crowded benches and place new benches where they afford good views, are accessible from paths, and are sufficiently set back from parkways.
4. Add tables, ash pits, and extra trash barrel in a few designated locations.
5. Locate concession stands and food carts where they will best serve the public and not intrude into the basin landscape.
6. Increase the availability of public bathrooms; supervise and maintain them regularly.
7. Reserve existing parking spaces for park users, especially in the lower basin.
8. Expand unstructured spaces for passive use throughout the basin.
 - a. Animate The Front with increased activity.
9. Strengthen pedestrian access.
10. Improve the continuity and safety of movement along and across the river.
 - a. Improve connections to the shore path at both ends of the Longfellow Bridge.
 - b. Establish a connection along the upstream side of the Museum of Science.
11. Restore and reuse the lock houses, stables, and boathouse.
12. Achieve adequate path widths while preserving the park-like condition of the basin.
13. Expand public access to the water and publicize public-access programs.
 - a. Maintain existing public boat landings and provide up to five new public boat landings.
 - b. Allow the public rowing program to build one new facility to serve the public.
 - c. Provide more launch sites for small, hand-carried boats.
14. Create river views.
 - a. Identify and protect key scenic vistas by managing vegetation and controlling development.
15. Increase the number of temporary parkway closures on weekends and extend the length of the season.

connection as did permit requirements for development on either side of the canal. Pedestrian links to Broad Canal, a small boat dock, and a walkway along the water were among the special permit requirements of projects in the area and they have been substantially realized in recent years.

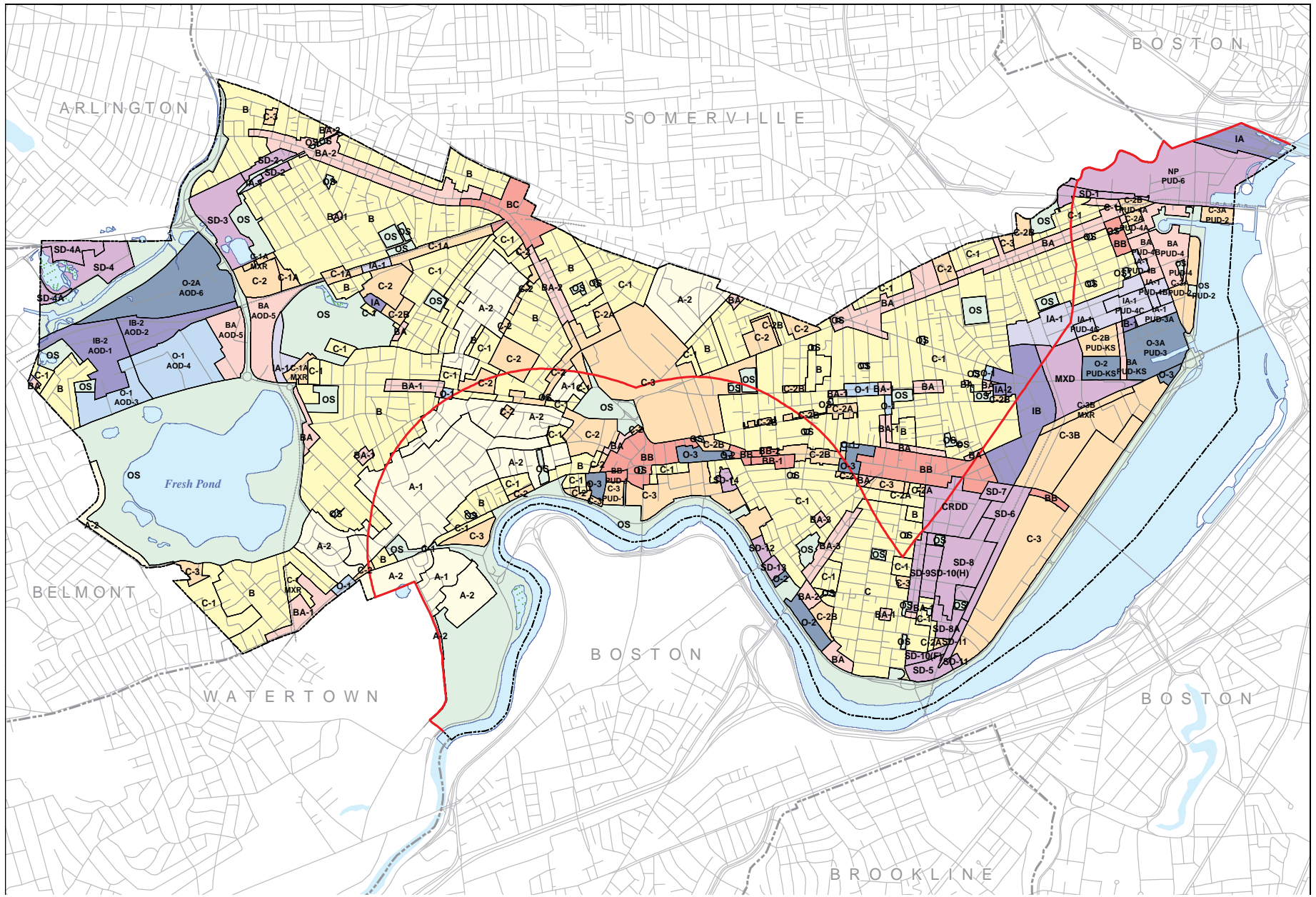
The 2002 **Riverside Study** was followed by the **Riverside Rezoning of 2003**, which facilitated construction of Harvard dormitories, required the university to create 33 units of affordable home ownership apartments in a former industrial building one block from the river, and set the stage for a new three-quarter acre City park (at the corner of Western Avenue and Memorial Drive) to be transferred by the university to the City. The new park, which opened in the spring of 2010, is a significant resource for the entire neighborhood, and creates a new focal point of open space directly fronting onto the river.

The **Memorial Drive Overlay District** was added to the Zoning Ordinance in 2004, following recommendations from the Riverside and Cambridgeport neighborhoods. The overlay district augments base zoning regulations in the area and establishes building and site development standards to enhance the appearance of future development along Memorial Drive. Overlay district guidelines encourage good building design and site development to enhance amenities available to pedestrians walking along Memorial Drive and the Charles River waterfront, to incorporate active uses on the ground floors of future buildings facing the river, and to encourage uses that will serve needs of residents of abutting neighborhoods and people enjoying the open space amenities along the Charles River.



New Riverside Community Park

RIVERFRONT ZONING DISTRICTS



B: Recent and Ongoing Public Improvements

The riverfront land in Cambridge is owned by the Commonwealth with the goal of ensuring that the river remains a public recreational amenity. This land is under the management of the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR); the principal roadways along the river are also under state control. In recent years, the DCR has embarked on a number of improvements along the Charles River Corridor.

Memorial Drive Improvements

The Memorial Drive Improvements project was a demonstration project identified in 2002 under the Historic Parkways Initiative. It is the first major design plan for the areas around the Charles River in sixty years, and extends from the Boston University Bridge to the Longfellow Bridge. The project is being implemented in two phases.

Phase I of the project was completed in 2004 through a partnership of DCR (then known as the Metropolitan District Commission, MDC), MIT, and NStar, with input from the City. This phase removed a travel lane and parking on the eastbound side of Memorial Drive to allow for expansion of the riverside open space by approximately 20 feet. Additionally, it enhanced access to the river by improving the Massachusetts Avenue and Memorial Drive intersection and signal, reconstructing the Harvard Bridge deck and railing, widening the sidewalk at the Cambridge viaduct, and improving the pathway connection to Longfellow Bridge.

Phase II started in 2010 with \$2 million for replacement of embankment fencing along the river. The remainder of Phase II work, scheduled to start in FY11, will include restoration of the historic railing on the granite seawall. Additional Phase II work is expected to include improvements to the Paul Dudley White multiuse path, installation of reconstructed historic pavilions, benches, lighting, improvements to the BU Bridge and intersection, shoreline stabilization, and other landscape improvements. Clearly, the realization of the second phase will greatly advance the vision of this riverfront plan.

North Point Park

North Point Park, a 14-acre park in the North Point section of the Cambridge waterfront, opened in fall 2007 and provides many opportunities for use by its neighbors in North Point, Eastern Cambridge, and the broader region. This park was conceived as a component



Addition of street trees along this section of Memorial Drive would create a more pedestrian friendly environment.



North Point Park

of the 40-acre New Charles River Basin in Boston and Cambridge, which is part of the mitigation for the ramps of the Central Artery project.

Magazine Beach Improvements

The City has partnered with DCR to improve the Magazine Beach area, which is one of the few areas along the river with a significant programmed active use component – including a swimming pool and playing fields. The project is planned in three phases: IA, IB, and II. Phase I, which includes stormwater management interventions and rebuilding and replanting approximately half of the riverbank along the eastern end of Magazine Beach, is ongoing. In 1999, the City contributed \$1.5 million towards the reconstruction of the playing fields—a Little League field, a full-size soccer field, and a half-size soccer field. This work was completed in spring 2010. Phase II will address the Paul Dudley White multiuse path realignment and improvement, creation of a new tot lot, picnic facilities, landscaping, and other site improvements. It will also aim to improve access to the site by creating an entry plaza at the pedestrian bridge landing and by improving the parking and drop-off area by the swimming pool.

Accelerated Bridge Program

The Accelerated Bridge Program (ABP) is the Commonwealth’s eight-year, \$3 billion program to repair bridges across the state that are currently structurally deficient or would otherwise become structurally deficient during the next eight years. As part of the recent transportation reform legislation, ownership of the bridges in the Charles River Basin has been transferred from the DCR to the newly created MassDOT (Massachusetts Department of Transportation). MassDOT is now responsible for the design and construction of bridges in the Charles River Basin that are included in the ABP program.

The Craigie Bridge at the Museum of Science, the Boston University Bridge, the Magazine Beach footbridge, the Longfellow Bridge (Phase 1 and 2), the Anderson Memorial Bridge at JFK Street, and the River Street /Western Avenue bridges are all included in the program. According to the ABP Project Summary Schedule Report of March 2010, the bulk of the work is expected to be completed by 2013, except for Phase 2 of the Longfellow Bridge, which is slated to continue through 2016.

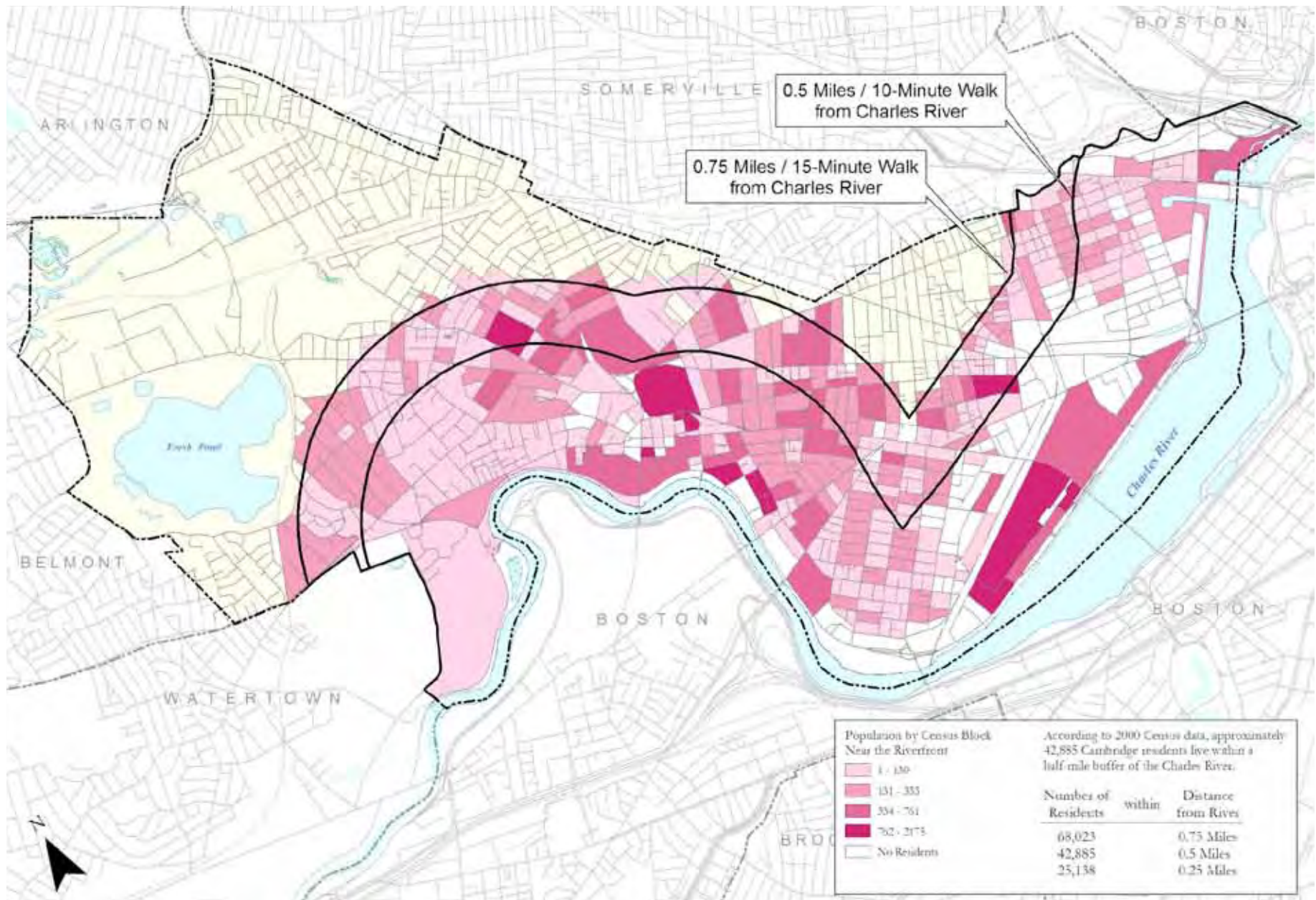


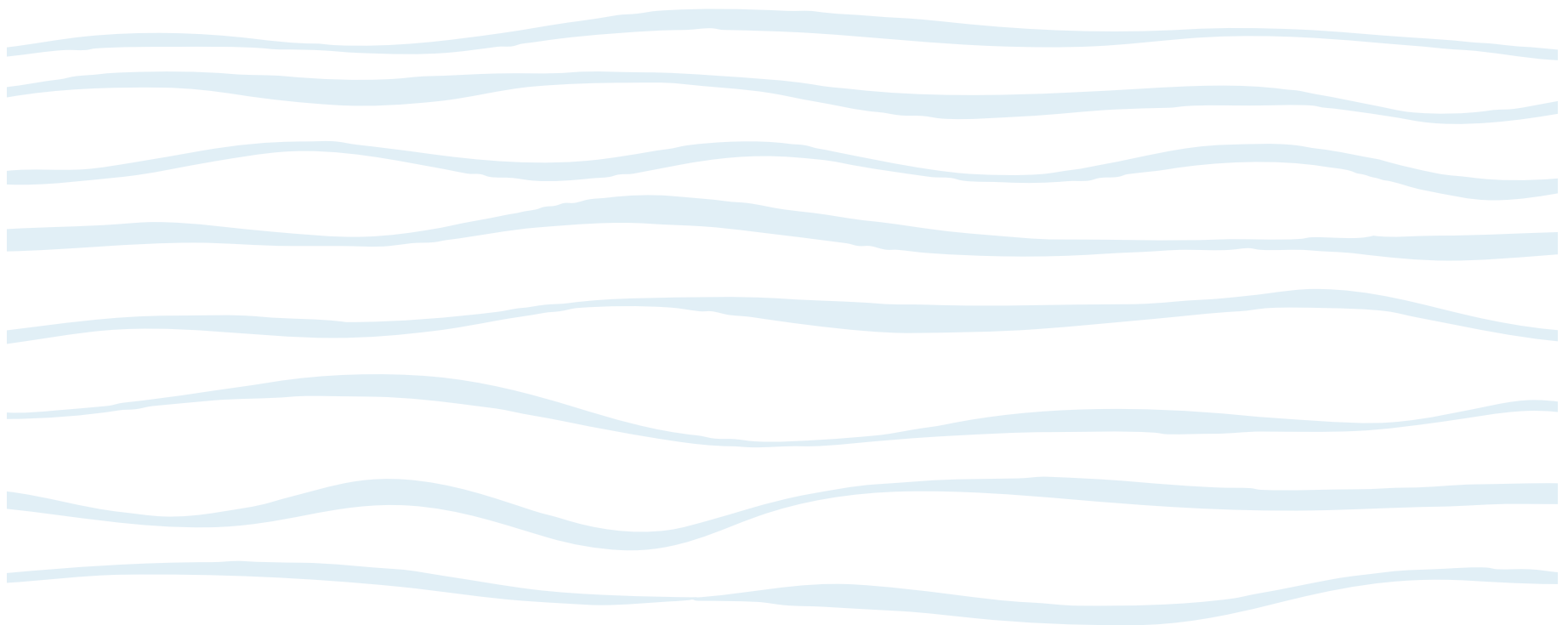
Magazine Beach seen from the water.

C: Access and Use

This map shows the parts of Cambridge within a $\frac{1}{2}$ mile (or a ten minute walk) and $\frac{3}{4}$ mile (or a fifteen minute walk) of the river. This area includes significant parts of the residential neighborhoods of East Cambridge, Cambridgeport, Mid-Cambridge, and Neighborhood 10, and almost all of Riverside. According to the 2000 Census, this is home to about 42,000 people. In other words, over 40% of the Cambridge population lives within a 10 minute walk of the river and an additional 20% lives within a 15 minute walk. Much of MIT and Harvard University also fall within this area, as do four significant city squares – Harvard, Central, Kendall, and Lechmere. These squares are well served by MBTA subway and bus routes. As a result, the river is within easy reach of the large number of non-residents who come to Cambridge each day to work, study, and play. The next section of this plan will take a closer look at the riverfront, to explore the functionality of the connections that help get all these people to the river.

POPULATION DENSITY NEAR THE RIVER



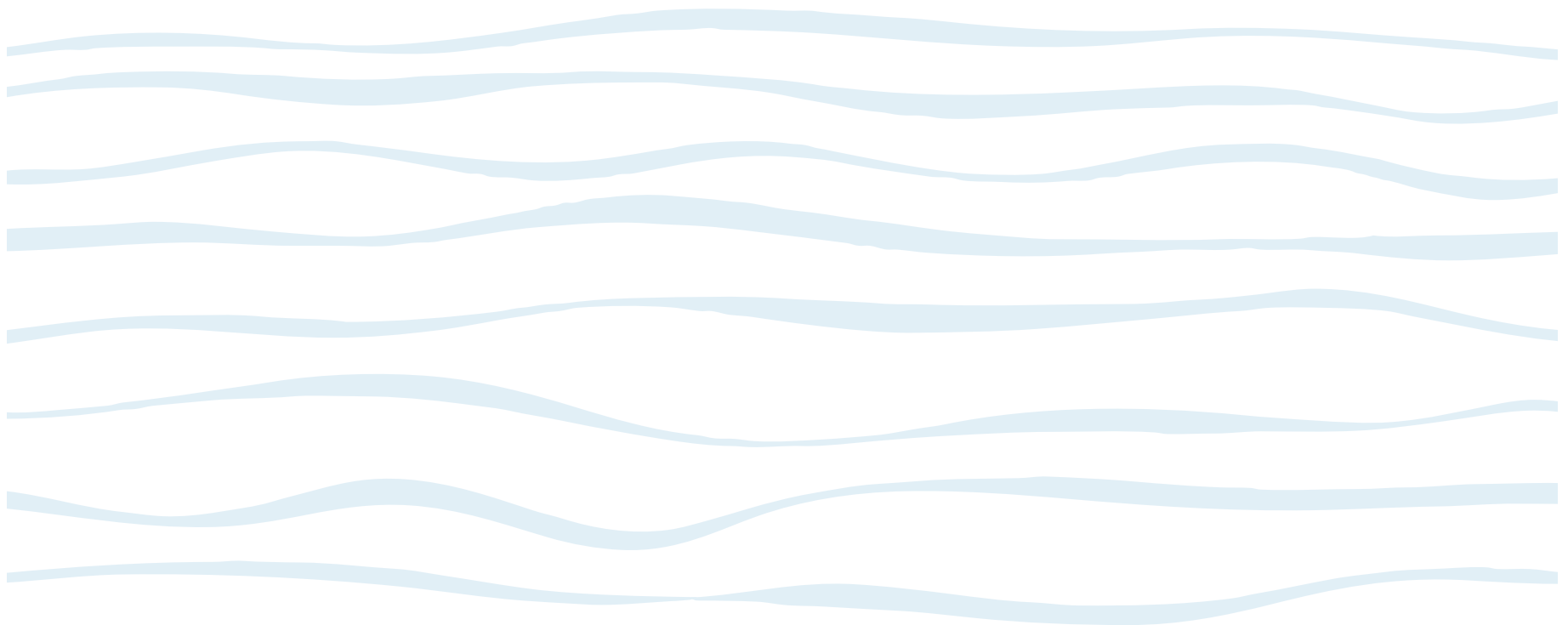


Chapter Three:

Area Specific Analyses

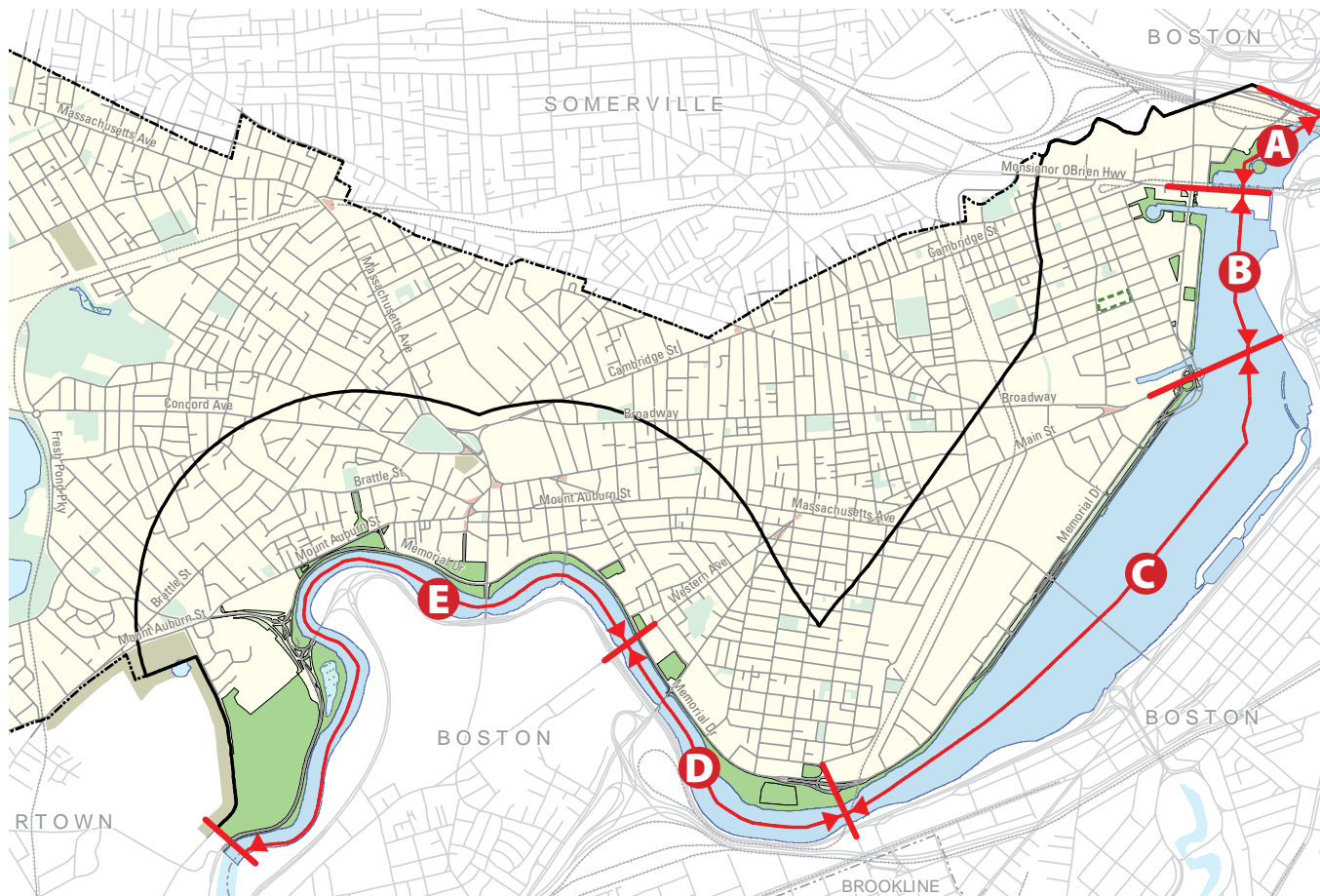


Photo Credit: Bob Coe



Area Specific Analyses: ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

This chapter is organized by following five sections of the river, from east to west.



A North Point



B Charles River Dam/Msgr. O'Brien Highway to Longfellow Bridge



C Longfellow Bridge to Boston University Bridge

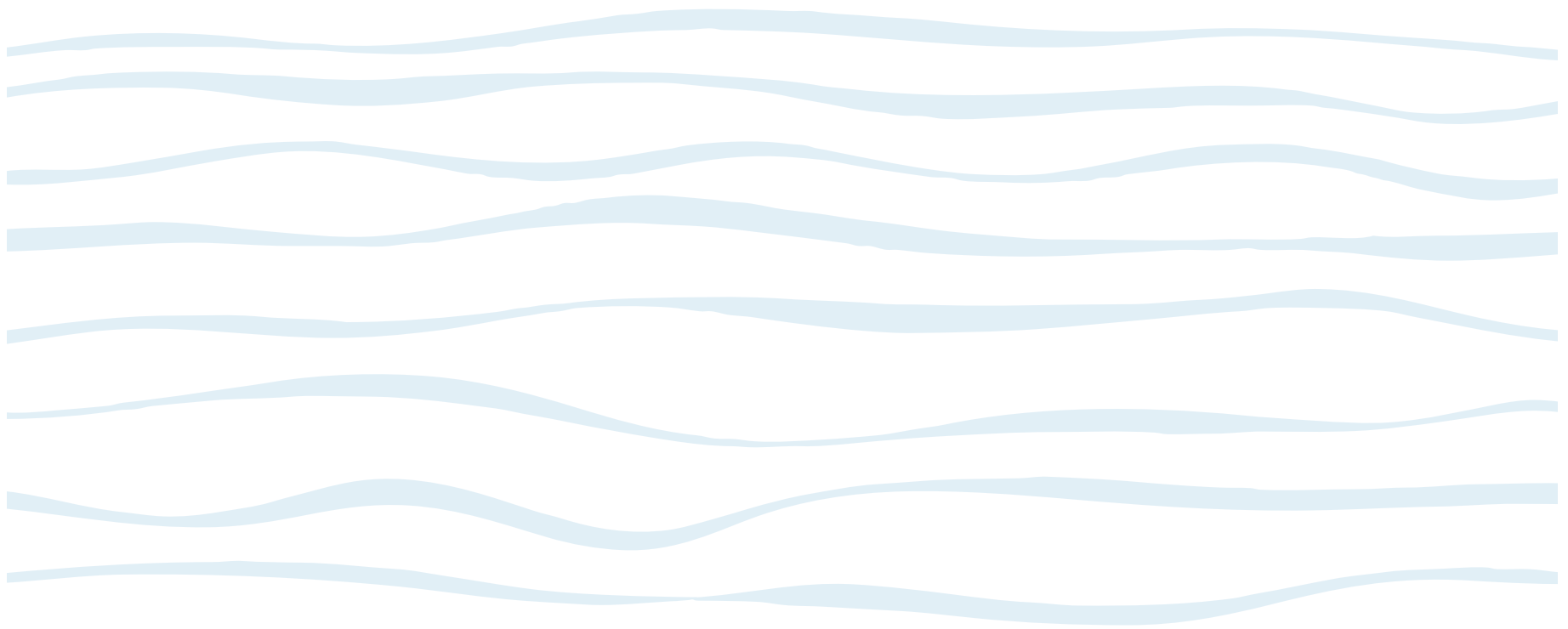


D Boston University Bridge to Western Avenue



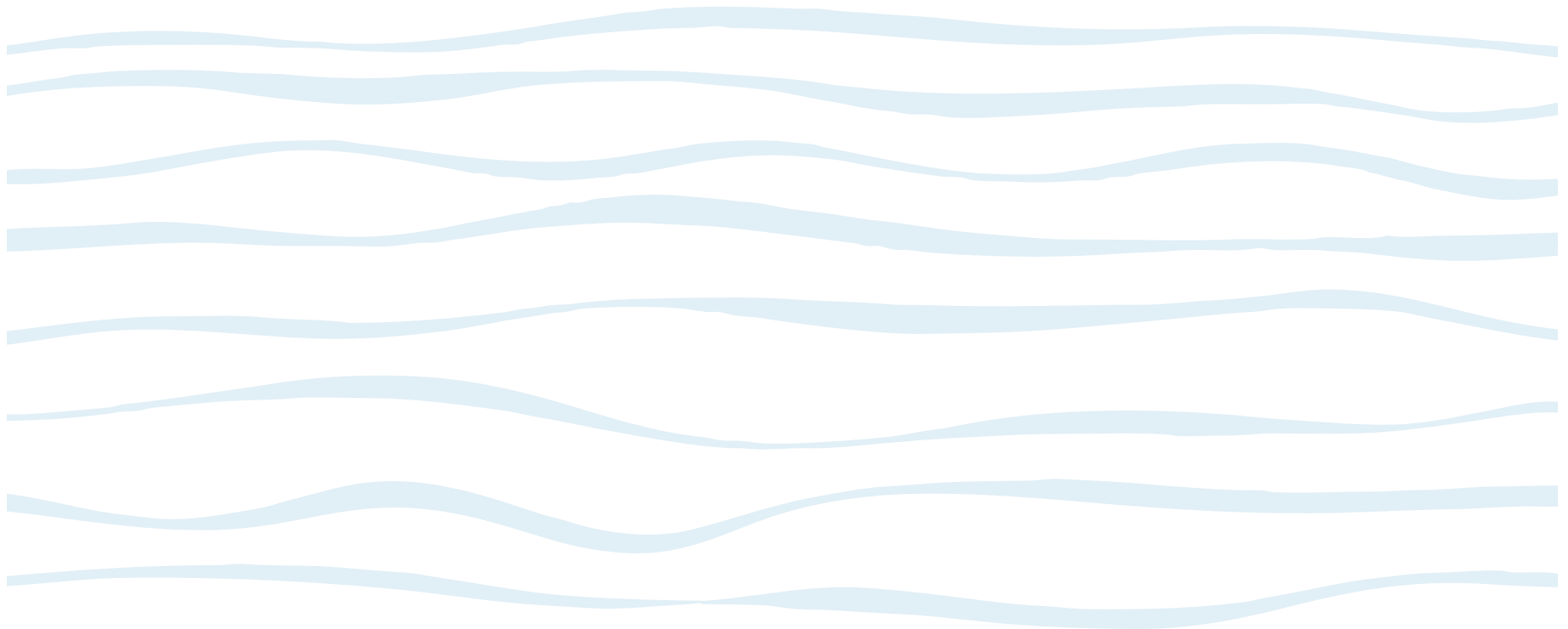
E Western Avenue Bridge to Cambridge/Watertown Line





A NORTH POINT





A. North Point

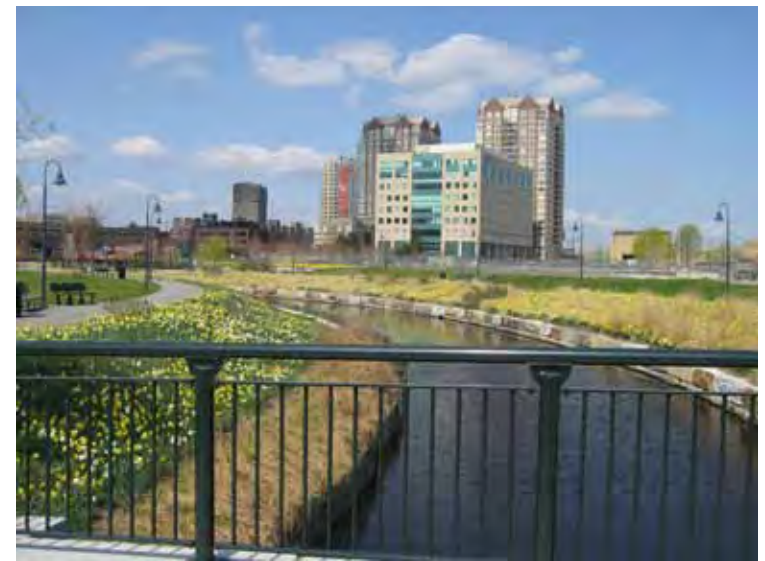
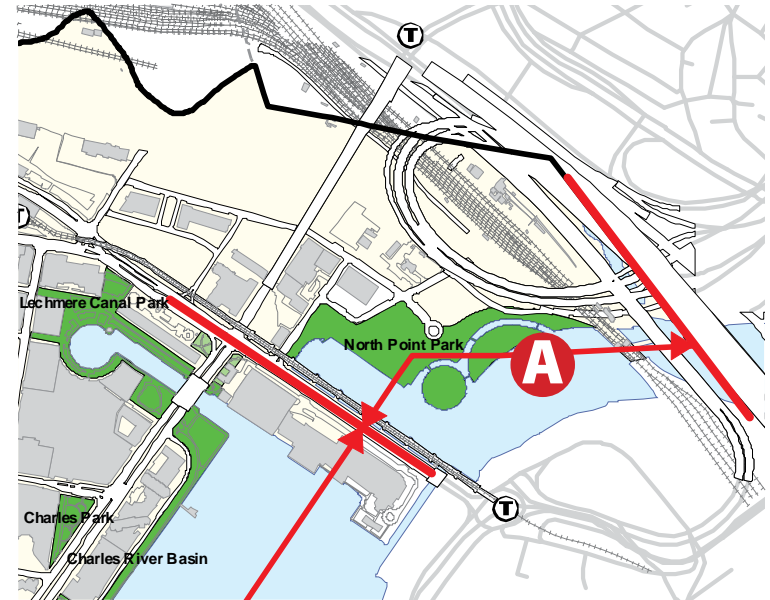
Overall Character

For most of the twentieth century, this section of the riverfront was so dominated by non-people-oriented use that it became known as “The Lost Half Mile,” rarely seen or visited by ordinary residents. The railroad has been the dominant use here, defining the character of the area since the early twentieth century, when the rail corridor was used exclusively for freight. Subsequently, passenger services, consolidated in 1973 by the MBTA from several private lines, made it a transportation corridor for people, bringing commuters to North Station on four lines via a bridge across the Charles River. Interstate 93 added significant automobile infrastructure into the corridor in the 1950s, and with the imposing concrete ramps built as part of the Central Artery project in the last decade, the automotive aspect of this rail corridor has intensified. Fortunately, many recent changes and planned future initiatives are helping to transform this corridor into a significant place of recreation and enjoyment for people.

The mitigation for the Central Artery highway project has focused significant planning and financial resources in this area. That effort has two components that make the area more useful and attractive. First, the Leonard P. Zakim Bunker Hill Memorial Bridge, a beautiful cable-stayed bridge across the Charles River, completed in 2003, transformed what could have been a utilitarian freeway component into a celebration of the connection between the River and Boston Harbor to the east. Second, the 40 acres of new parkland, the New Charles River Basin, is designed to transform The Lost Half Mile into a place for recreation and for bike and pedestrian circulation.

In the 1990s, two major buildings were constructed that brought people into the area during both day and evening hours, where it had been almost exclusively industrial in the past. The EF Centre building is the North American headquarters of an enterprise (Education First) that provides a number of international travel and training programs and other services. The housing development next door, (known originally as Museum Towers and renamed Regatta Riverview Residences) brought over 400 new residences into the area.

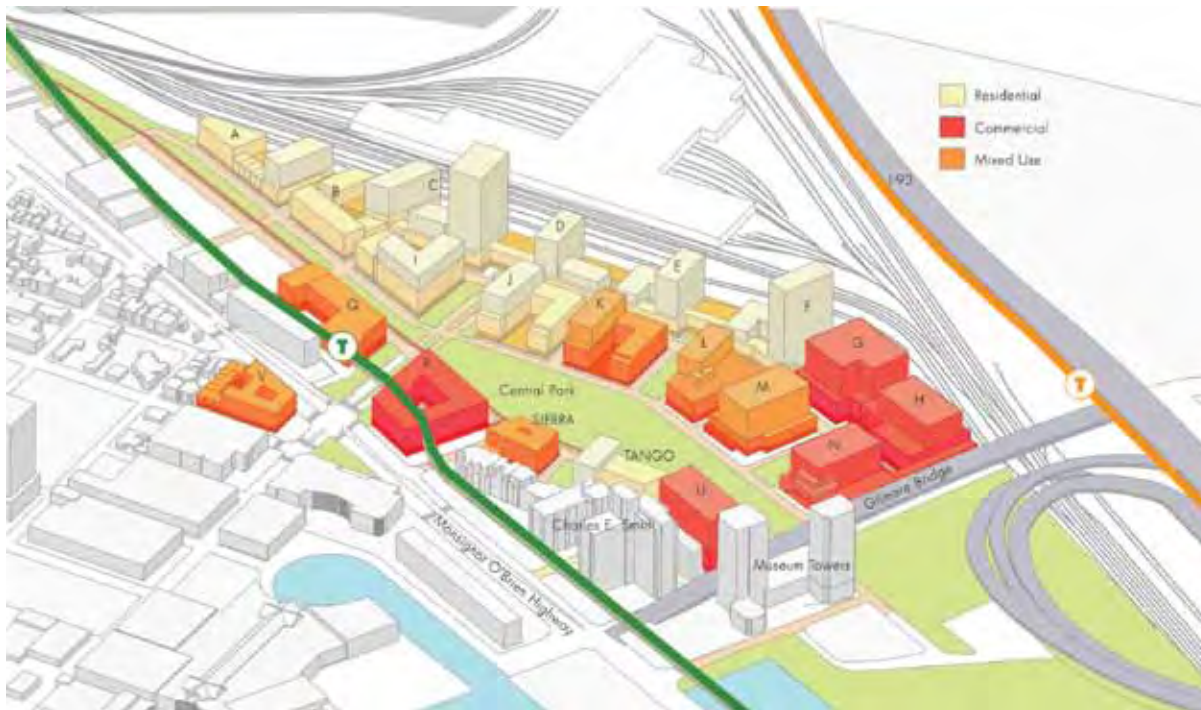
Although the Gilmore Bridge may be seen as an edge to the North Point riverfront, there is an extremely important multimodal link under it via North Point Boulevard,



North Point Park features new canals that bring the river closer to park users.

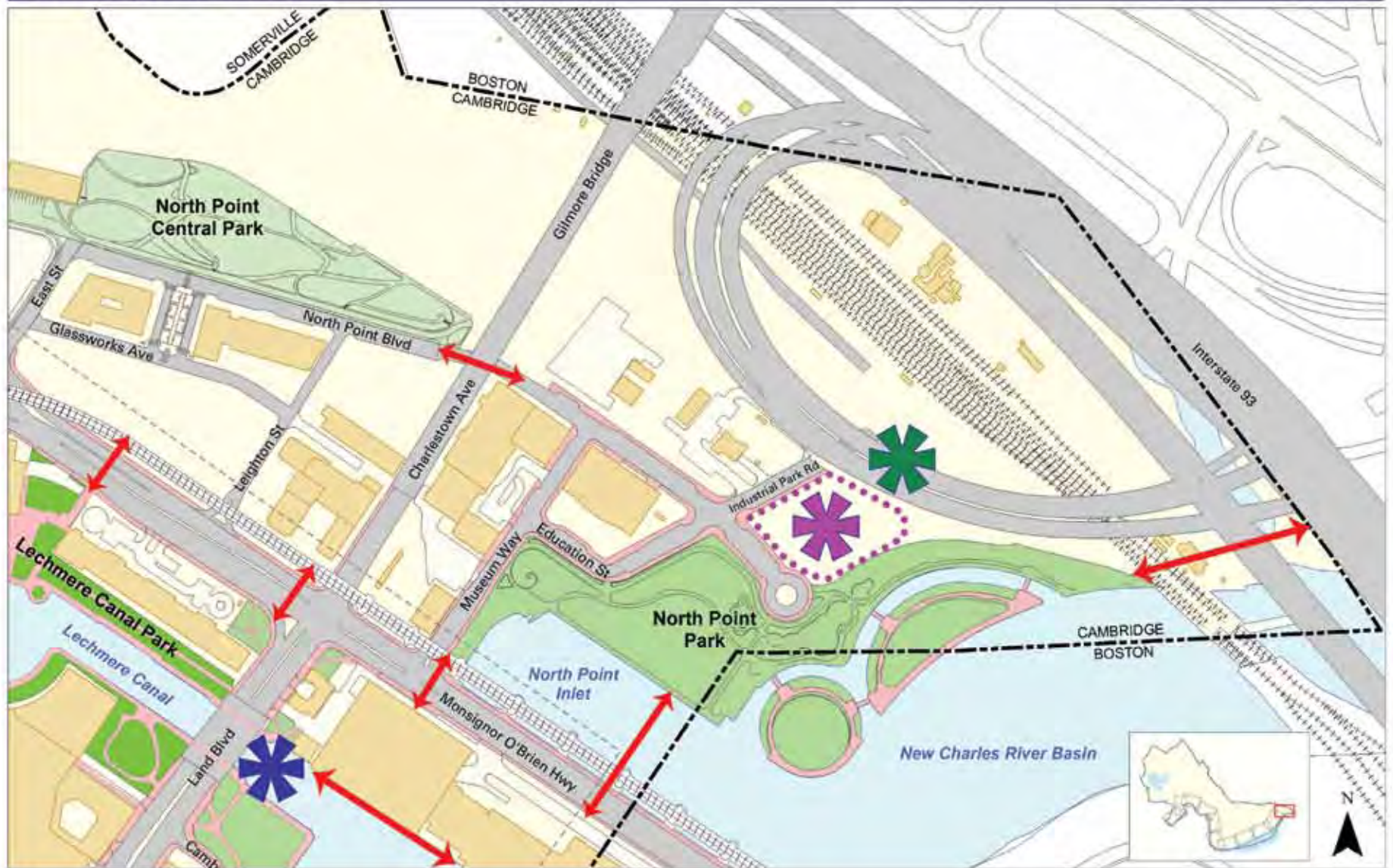
connecting the riverfront to the emerging 60-acre development area that has begun to take shape on the other side. Projects in this area have already begun to bring more people into North Point, with the construction of two condominium buildings and a significant new park. The ultimate buildout of the approved North Point plan envisions the creation of a new neighborhood with 5 million square feet of residential and commercial uses, projected to be realized over the next 10-15 years. The adjacent Archstone-Smith residential development has opened its first phase of 400 rental units, out of the total of over 700 units permitted.

Despite these very significant changes, elements of the area's industrial character remain. Within the highway ramp structures, Boston Sand and Gravel continues to be one of Boston's major suppliers of materials for concrete construction projects. In addition, the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) pumping station located along Industrial Way is a regional facility that will remain indefinitely—the relatively modest above-ground structures belie the massive underground pumping apparatus which facilitates the flow of water to downtown Boston.








This diagram for the 60-acre development area was part of the submission for a Planned Unit Development special permit, which the Planning Board issued in 2003.

NORTH POINT RIVERFRONT



LEGEND

-  Potential New Water Access
-  Potential New Open Space
-  Potential New Bicycle/Pedestrian Connection
-  Potential for Site (Re)development
-  Map Match Line

Issues and Opportunities

Connections

The ongoing and future transformation of the North Point riverfront depends upon many participants and a variety of initiatives. The area should continue to become a more attractive place for people as these changes take shape. For this area to succeed as an active place, users will need to be drawn from Lechmere Square and the North Point development area west of the Gilmore Bridge.

One of the key links that will soon be achieved is a pedestrian and bicycle bridge that will weave through the rail yard and highway ramps separating North Point Park from Paul Revere Landing Park in Charlestown. Like some of the other elements described above, this bridge is part of the state's \$90 million commitment to mitigation measures for the Central Artery ramps, and will benefit users of the regional park system. Construction is anticipated to begin soon.

Another component of the Central Artery mitigation commitments is the Inlet Bridge, intended to span the inlet along O'Brien Highway in front of the Museum of Science to a landing in North Point Park. This is a very important missing link and the City of



This rendering depicts a pedestrian bridge that would connect the Museum of Science directly to North Point Park. It has not yet been fully designed or funded.



This aerial photo shows the East Cambridge neighborhood on the right and North Point development in the middle.



This photo shows the proximity of the Museum of Science to North Point Park. Without the pedestrian bridge, it is quite a long walk from one to the other.

Cambridge has long advocated for it. This very short and visually direct connection would directly link the New Charles River Basin to the Museum of Science and the rest of Cambridge as an alternative to the current circuitous one-quarter mile walk over, and another quarter mile back, around the inlet. However, state funding for the Inlet Bridge is not identified at present. The bridge has been designed to the 25% completion level, but no further work on it has taken place for several years.

A multi-use path is also part of the North Point development plan. It traverses the first phase of the new central park at North Point, goes under the Gilmore Bridge via North Point Boulevard and is designed to ultimately connect bicycle paths from as far away as Bedford at the end of the Minuteman Trail through to Boston Harbor.

Open Space

North Point Park is the 14-acre park created over the last decade as part of the 40-acre New Charles River Basin described above. It opened in fall 2007, and now presents many opportunities for use by its neighbors, and by regional visitors. Given that it is relatively new and a significant amount of planned new development is yet to come in North Point, there are concerns about park use patterns, maintenance, and safety that need to be addressed by the emerging community in the area, working with the DCR and the City.



This rendering of the proposed skateboard park shows its proximity to the river.



An emerging multi-use path is on the left in this view looking from the North Point development area towards the Zakim Bridge, and on the right in the image below.



A planned new use that should bring people and added energy to the park is the proposed skateboard facility that has been championed by the Charles River Conservancy. A design has been completed and fundraising is ongoing.

Development

One of the most important ways to achieve safety is to encourage positive activities to occur in an area, and that has been evolving over the last few years in North Point. As noted above, the EF Centre and Regatta Riverview Residences are important neighbors. In addition, the duck boat tour concession that has been active for several years on the streets of Boston and on the Charles River is continuing to bring people to North Point, with an access to the water at North Point Park. At the same time, as development and recreational activity grow and thrive, occasional challenges arise. For instance, the noise from the duck tours and its impact on area residents has come up as an issue to be negotiated by the various users.

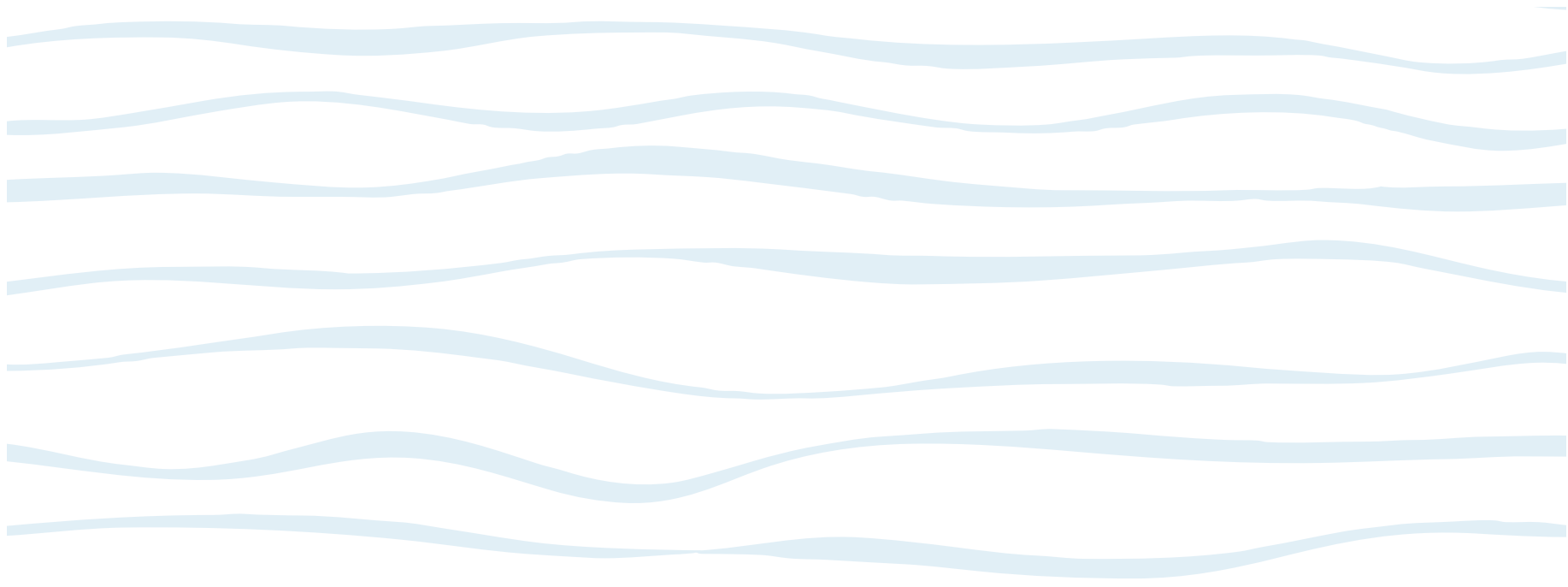
In the land-takings for the Central Artery and the parkland, a “remnant parcel” was left unprogrammed. This parcel, next to the future skateboard park parcel, could be developed with a building, and an expansion of EF Center is now under consideration. When developing this parcel, it will be important to consider issues of density, scale, height, etc. as well the interaction of the development with North Point Park and the connection to the new sinusoidal North Bank bridge.



This rendering shows how the pathway to the new North Bank Bridge will flow easily from North Point toward the Zakim Bridge and Charlestown.

B CHARLES RIVER DAM/MSGR. O'BRIEN HIGHWAY TO LONGFELLOW BRIDGE





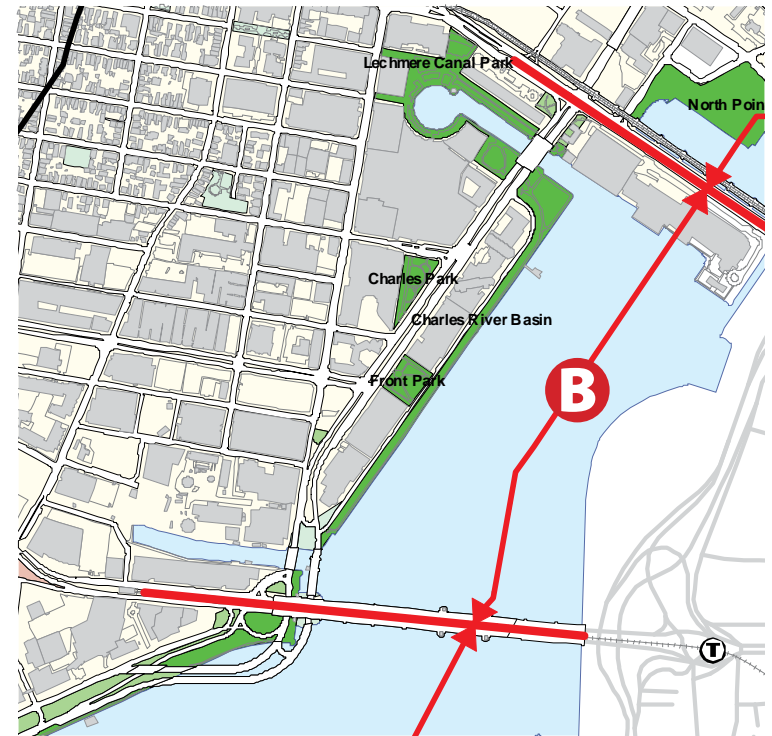
B. Charles River Dam/Msgr. O'Brien Highway to Longfellow Bridge

Overall Character

This section of the river is bounded by the Charles River Dam/Msgr. O'Brien Highway and the Longfellow Bridge, and forms the edge of the East Cambridge neighborhood. The Museum of Science sits atop the dam, forming the northern edge of this section and providing a strong cultural and educational presence. Development along the river includes a number of office buildings, the CambridgeSide Galleria mall, the Royal Sonesta Hotel, Hotel Marlowe, as well as three large residential buildings.

The first focused planning for this area was the East Cambridge Riverfront Plan of 1978, which set the stage for private development and the creation of substantial new open space resources – Lechmere Canal Park, Charles Park, and Front Park. Other areas along this section of the riverfront were subsequently addressed through planning for the Cambridge Research Park mixed use development project and the 2001 Eastern Cambridge Planning Study.

This section is closest to the residential neighborhood of East Cambridge, and hence provides the potential for the most direct connections between the neighborhood and the waterfront.



Looking towards North Point Park and the Green Line from Nashua Street Park.

CHARLES RIVER DAM/MSGR. O'BRIEN HIGHWAY TO LONGFELLOW BRIDGE



LEGEND

- Potential New Open Space
- Potential Open Space Improvement
- Potential Water Access Improvement
- Map Match Line
- Potential New Bicycle/Pedestrian Connection

Connections

Land Boulevard, a six lane highway with a wide central median, separates the Charles River from the rest of Cambridge in this section. There are currently two pedestrian crosswalks across Land Boulevard – one at Cambridgeside Place and the other at Binney Street. Both of these crossing locations are critical, and an additional crosswalk would help pedestrian flow. A possible location for a new crossing might be at the terminus of Rogers Street, where there is a clearly observable desire line. Additional transportation analysis of the street would be helpful in determining the feasibility of altering the wide pavement to better accommodate bicycles and pedestrians.

The Charles River Dam's lock system permits travel of recreational craft from the river to the harbor year round, and its fish ladder allows for passage of anadromous fish during the migration season in late spring. The development over the dam and the lock system is, however, a barrier to pedestrian and bicycle flow along the river side, where the Museum of Science and its parking garage prevent connections from Boston's esplanade to the Lechmere Canal. Design studies from a decade ago showed options for attaching a walkway along the river face of the museum, but no funding was identified to implement this very desirable connection.

Pedestrian improvements to O'Brien Highway, as envisioned in the plan and special permit for North Point, coupled with the Inlet Pedestrian Bridge discussed earlier, to connect the Museum of Science, would also make it easier to get around.

The area is well served by transit with the Green Line station at Lechmere and the Red Line station at Kendall. Both of these stations are hubs for bus service to other parts of Cambridge as well as to the surrounding communities of Boston, Somerville, Medford, and Arlington.

Among the key connector streets that provide access to the riverfront are CambridgeSide Place, Rogers and Binney Streets, with additional pedestrian connections at the CambridgeSide Galleria/Lechmere Canal Park and through One Charles Park (originally known as the Lotus Building). In general, the sidewalks in this section are in good condition. A number of roadway segments, however, would benefit from additional street trees. This includes parts of Rogers Street and the south side of Binney Street, some of which will likely



Cambridge Parkway was 80 feet wide before it was narrowed during the East Cambridge Riverfront project; it was narrowed to 20 feet to create a linear park for recreational use.



The pedestrian connection to the river is often impeded by roads and bridge infrastructure.

be accomplished as the Alexandria development, described in Development section below, unfolds over the next decade or more. Above-ground utilities further detract from the quality of the pedestrian experience in much of this area.

Crossing to the River: First Street and Land Boulevard

The two north-south streets that carry heavy traffic, particularly at peak hours, are First Street and Land Boulevard. People moving between the riverfront and the neighborhood as well as to some of the offices and residential development along First Street must cross these streets. As development continues in Kendall Square and along Binney Street, traffic demand on these arteries will likely increase. Every effort is being made by the City to ensure that Third Street will not join those ranks as a street with ever increasing heavy traffic volumes. To enable access to the riverfront, ensuring safe and convenient crossing of Third Street, First Street, and Land Boulevard is important.

The scale of Third Street generally keeps crossings convenient, particularly at the signalized intersections at Charles and Cambridge Streets and at the raised crosswalk at Thorndike Street. First Street has long been viewed as a street with the potential to be a walkable retail corridor, with the CambridgeSide Galleria mall to the east and independent retail enterprises along the western side of the street, including a number of popular restaurants. This vision has not fully materialized yet, but the growing residential population in the area and continued growth of nearby business uses will add to the number of people on the streets, and will increase the viability of retail here. On-street public parking on First Street along several blocks is being introduced with the goal of supporting retail activity.

Streets Connecting the Neighborhood and Kendall Square to the River

East Cambridge has a number of east-west streets that serve as a conduit to the river. Principal among them are Charles and Thorndike Streets. Additionally, Binney Street is a major connector to the river for people from the vicinity of Kendall Square and it is expected to be positively transformed as the plans for adjacent blocks are realized in the decades ahead.

Open Space

Museum Point

Much of the Charles River Reservation in this section is fairly narrow, but widens at Lechmere Canal. This area of approximately one acre, dubbed “Museum Point,” is a well-treed area that offers the dual opportunity to linger in a protected and buffered landscaped



Rogers and First Street, near River Court housing and Front Park



Museum Point, with its generous tree canopy could benefit from more benches and perhaps a boat launch.

environment and to gain enhanced public access to the river's edge. This provides an opportunity to linger and enjoy views of the Museum of Science, sailboats on the river, the Esplanade, and the Boston skyline.

This area is well connected to Lechmere Canal Park and the East Cambridge neighborhood via the pedestrian path that crosses under the Land Boulevard bridge. Currently, the Museum Point parcel is not well utilized or maintained and could be used in the future as a visible, active location for food carts or kiosks. The addition of comfortable furniture and other amenities for people to sit and picnic while enjoying the river, such as benches and picnic tables, would further animate this area. The seawall along Lechmere Canal steps down to the water here, offering a valuable opportunity for a boat dock for canoes and kayaks. An opportunity for water access could also be created across Lechmere Canal as part of a renovation of the historic boathouse adjacent to the Museum of Science garage.

Front Park

This one-acre City park, created during the East Cambridge Riverfront improvements of the 1980s, is one of the few parks in the city not separated from the river by a busy road. Given that it has not been renovated since its creation over 20 years ago, it would benefit from a fresh look. This important park on the water has the potential to be further enhanced and activated with improved public access to the water and additional amenities.

Cambridge Parkway, now 20-feet wide with low traffic volumes, would allow the possibility of creating a “shared street” section at Front Park, greatly improving the pedestrian connection to the Paul Dudley White multi-use path and the river's edge.

The private Charlesgate Yacht Club has a dock and boathouse across the street from the Sonesta Hotel. Additionally, there is a public dock across from Front Park that does not appear to be actively used. If access for small craft from the riverfront could be improved at this point, it would provide an excellent opportunity for canoe and kayak landing.

Broad Canal

This project, which has been unfolding over many years, will greatly improve connections from Broad Canal to the riverfront. The Broad Canal was built in the industrial era of the late 19th century to provide boat access to the industries in the Kendall Square district; it was not a place to entice pedestrians to stroll. The first step towards making



Front Park with the Esplanade housing on the left and the River Court housing in the background.



A public boat launch near Front Park.

the Broad Canal into an amenity was taken in the early 1980s with the Special Permit for the Riverview Office Building, which required the developer to provide a walkway along the southern edge of the canal. This pathway was useful, but clearly needed to be complemented by a walk on the northern edge.

The recent major reworking of the power plant site and the construction associated with a second special permit for a mixed-use complex (variously called the Lyme project, Cambridge Research Park, and now Kendall Square) have created that additional walk, fulfilling requirements of the development permits required for each of the abutting projects. The details took several years to work out, but are now substantially complete.

The existing access at the western end of Broad Canal links the existing southern walk with the new northern boardwalk. This space provides an opportunity to walk and sit at the head of the canal and serves as a pedestrian connection from the Kendall Square area. Just a short walk from the Canal is the public plaza at Kendall Square/Cambridge Research Park, which provides a home to a weekly farmer's market and a concert series in the summer, and a skating rink in the winter.

In addition to the canal pathway, there are facilities enabling small watercraft, such as canoes and kayaks, to go in and out of the water at the head of the Broad Canal. This activity helps connect people physically and visually to the river itself. There is an area for people to drop off and pick up their boats, and it is possible to leave a car in the Kendall Square garage while people are boating.

Development

This section of the riverfront is largely developed or planned/permitted for development. The underdeveloped parcels along Binney Street and First Street present the principal opportunities for change in this area.

First/Bent Street Parcels

There are a number of parcels between First and Second Streets that are currently underutilized – some vacant and used for surface parking, others with single-story warehouse structures verging on obsolescence (some of which are currently vacant). The Eastern Cambridge Planning Study (ECaPS) proposed that this area evolve into an appropriate mixed use transition area between the neighborhood and the larger office and retail develop-



The boat concession at Broad Canal adds color and activity to this welcome new link between Kendall Square and the river.



ment east of First Street. The residential development at One First Street in this district has added — residential units to the area. A plan by Jones Lang LaSalle that has been approved for development along Bent and Rogers Streets is expected to bring additional business use and housing in the near future.

Alexandria Development and Potential Future Parks

Alexandria Real Estate Equities, Inc. has proposed the redevelopment of a series of sites it owns near Binney and First Streets. Of particular importance to the riverfront are two new open spaces that are required by the approved development plan. The first is a two-acre park between Second and Third Streets, along Rogers Street. This is meant to be an active space with recreational benefit for the surrounding neighborhood. Since its location is only two blocks from the riverfront, it would become a welcome stepping stone on the path to the river's activity. Even closer to the river would be the second proposed open space, at the approximately three-quarter acre triangle formed by First Street, Land Boulevard, and Binney Street. A park at this location would help create a sense of entry into the district and create a link to Front Park.

Museum of Science Promenade and the Stable/Boathouse

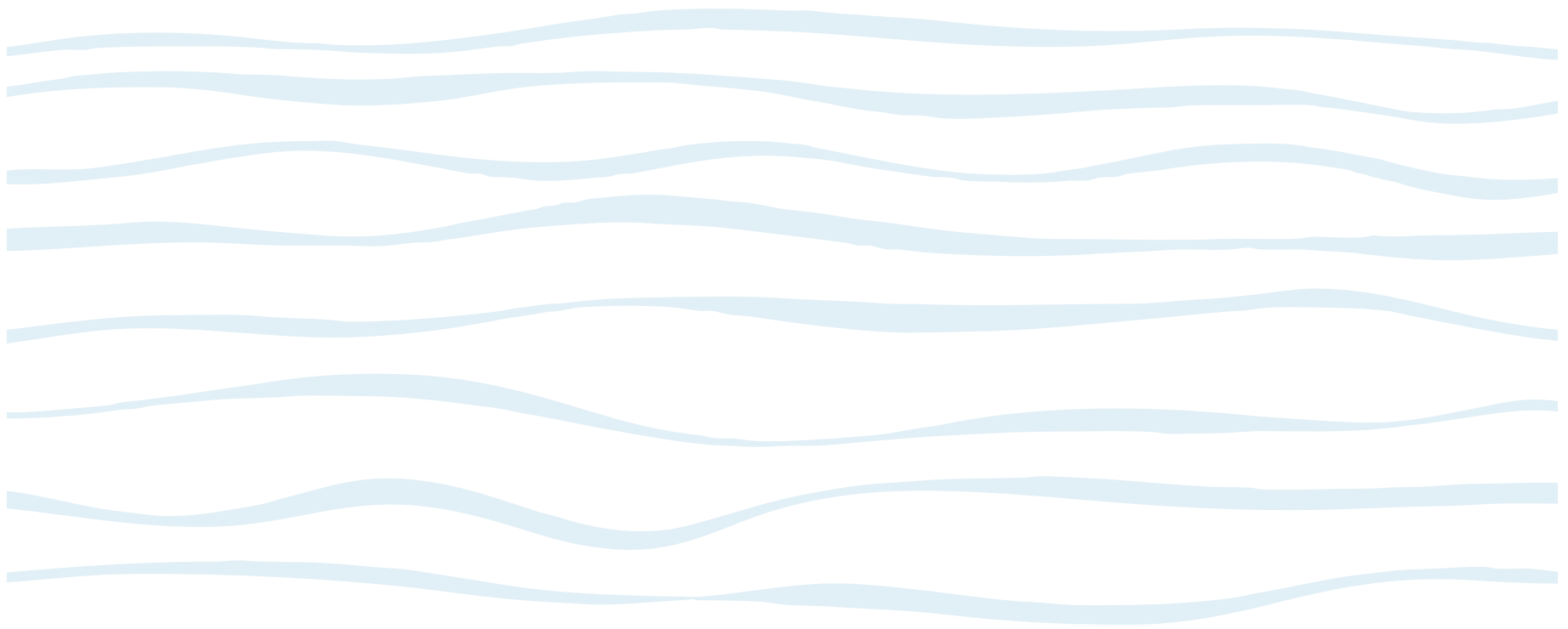
As noted earlier, there is great potential for a promenade along the river face of the Museum of Science, combining an important pathway connector between the Cambridge and Boston riverfront parks with an exceptional viewing experience. In addition, the DCR owns two historic buildings on the Charles River Dam — a stable and boathouse. Both buildings occupy an important place along the river corridor and are in need of restoration. If restored, these distinctive structures could offer a wonderful opportunity to supplement a new promenade and to provide activity and access to the water in a section where both are currently limited.



The historic boathouse is on the water, with the green-roofed stable just behind and to the left.

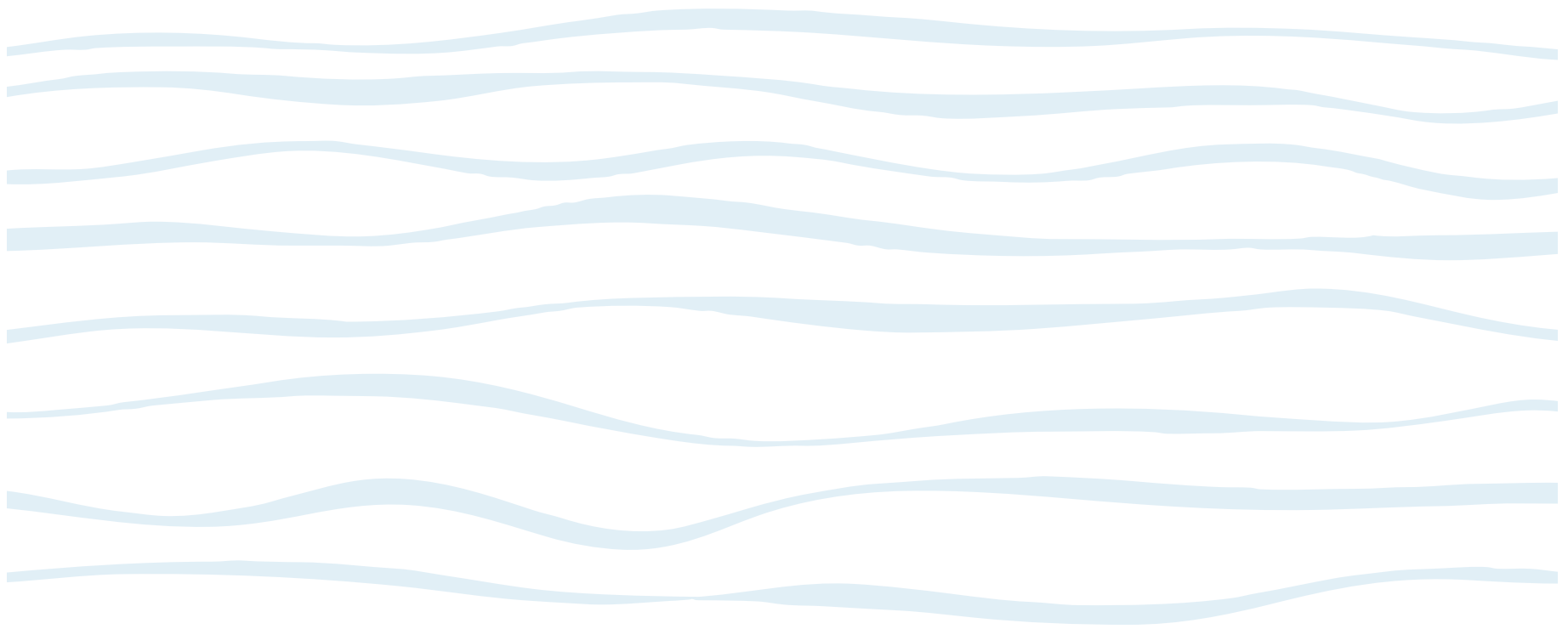


A new promenade along the face of the Museum of Science and its garage would be greatly beneficial.



LONGFELLOW BRIDGE TO BOSTON UNIVERSITY BRIDGE



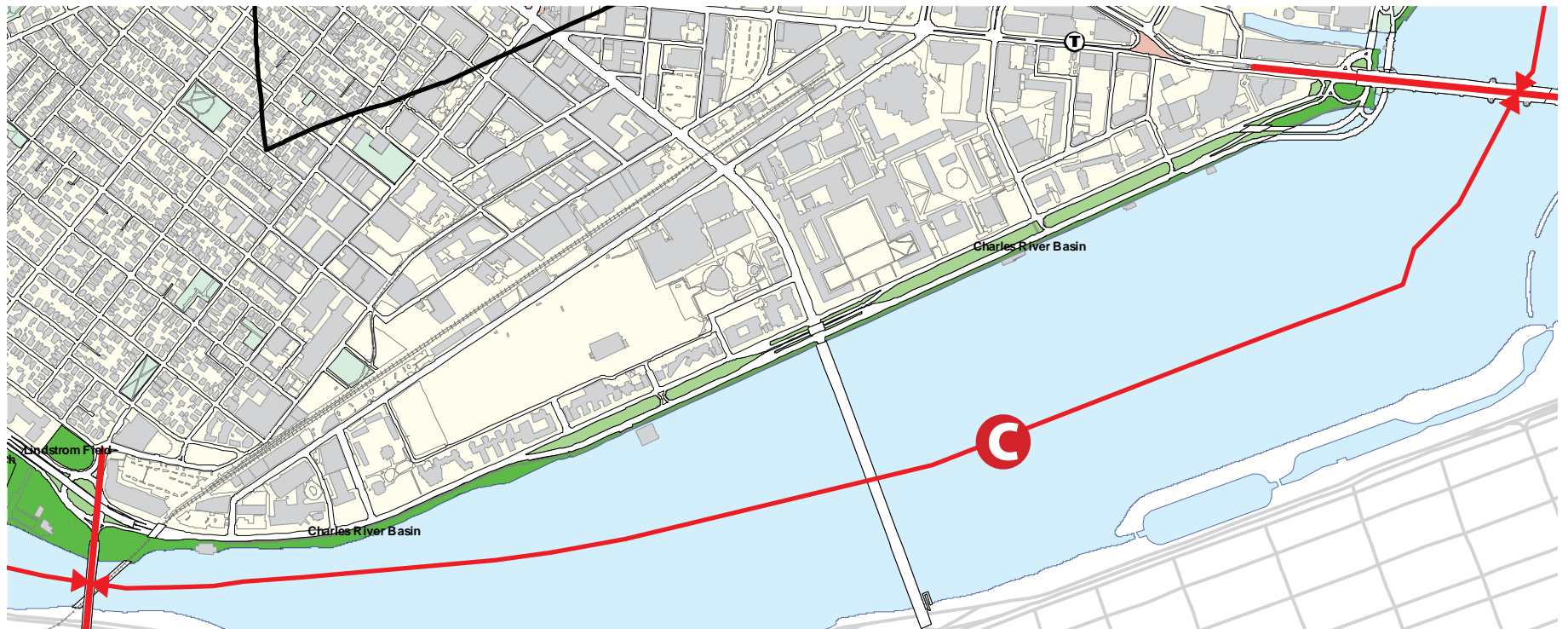


C. Longfellow Bridge to Boston University Bridge

Overall Character

In the 17th century, this frontage was known as the Great Marsh. During the American Revolution, Fort Washington was built near the midpoint as a point of defense for the American troops; during the Industrial Revolution, the arrival of strategic trains began the major transformation of this marshy border to an urban waterfront, including the construction of the man-made walls that define the river's edge today. MIT moved from Boston to Cambridge in 1912 and established its campus near the river, while industrial uses prevailed immediately along the water.

At the Longfellow Bridge end of this segment of the riverfront was The Electronics Corporation of America, a mid-twentieth century industrial operation that preceded the One Memorial Drive office project built in the 1980s. At the Boston University Bridge end, the Ford Assembly building built in 1913 was threatened with demolition also in the 1980s,



but MIT decided to renovate it as a significant historical landmark. The Hyatt Regency Hotel and some additional office uses round out the non-institutional abutters to the river.

While this section is now largely built out, a few opportunities remain for making minor improvements, such as creating more places to sit and better crosswalks, that could make this a friendlier environment for non-automotive users. To understand how people could best use this section of the river, it is helpful to consider the linear quality of the Charles River Reservation with its historic roadway, as well as the pattern of buildings that define the riverfront, and thereby seek to establish “eddies of activity” along this stretch.

The linear space is dominated by Memorial Drive, which is a regional roadway with very heavy automobile traffic that is a barrier to easy flow from the river to the community. At the same time, the greenway is an extremely valuable destination for people who walk, jog, and bicycle along the water’s edge. The flow of people tends to be continuous along the river, to destinations other than the river itself—there is not a lot of “pausing.” However, along this section, the Charles River is at its widest point in Cambridge so that there is spaciousness, an expansive feel to the scenery, that is not experienced so vividly elsewhere along the river. The recent widening of the open area along the divided portion of Memorial Drive has helped create more space for people; the next phase of improvements to this area will create more benches and places to pause along the river.

The pattern of buildings for the MIT frontage is dominated by two types of structures: the lower, linear residential structures such as Alvar Aalto’s Baker Hall, and point towers like the Tang building. On the eastern end, the only non-MIT building is the tower at One Memorial Drive; to the west, there is an ensemble of commercial buildings that includes both the Hyatt Regency Hotel and the Ford Assembly building. This pattern of buildings, along with many mature trees, provides a public edge to most of this section.

As for connections between the river and abutters, there are a number of larger streets that go a few blocks into the MIT campus and nearby areas; these include Wadsworth, Ames, Massachusetts Avenue, Audrey, Amesbury, and Vassar. There is also a series of one-block long connector streets near Massachusetts Avenue and Memorial Drive, making links between the river and the MIT campus: Danforth, Endicott, and Fowler Streets. What is in shorter supply are direct connections to this section from the nearest residential neighborhood—pedestrian crossing of the Grand Junction rail corridor occurs at only one point between the bridges.

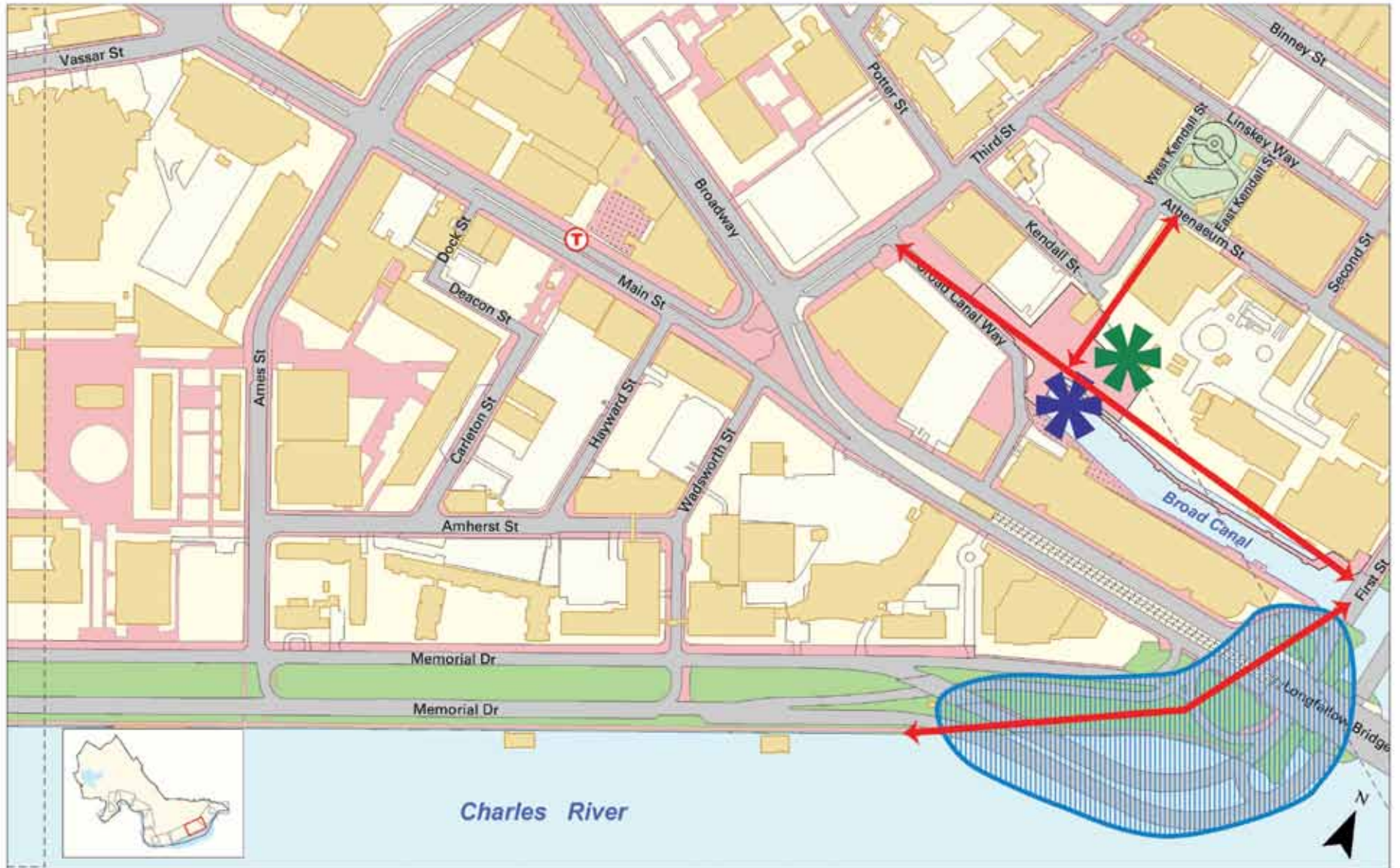


The Memorial Drive roadway environment can be difficult for pedestrians to negotiate.








Several gas stations and parking lots such as this one at MicroCenter make this stretch difficult for pedestrians.

LONGFELLOW BRIDGE TO BOSTON UNIVERSITY BRIDGE



LEGEND

-  Potential New Open Space
-  Potential New Water Access
-  Potential New Bicycle/Pedestrian Connection
-  Needs Further Study
-  Map Match Line

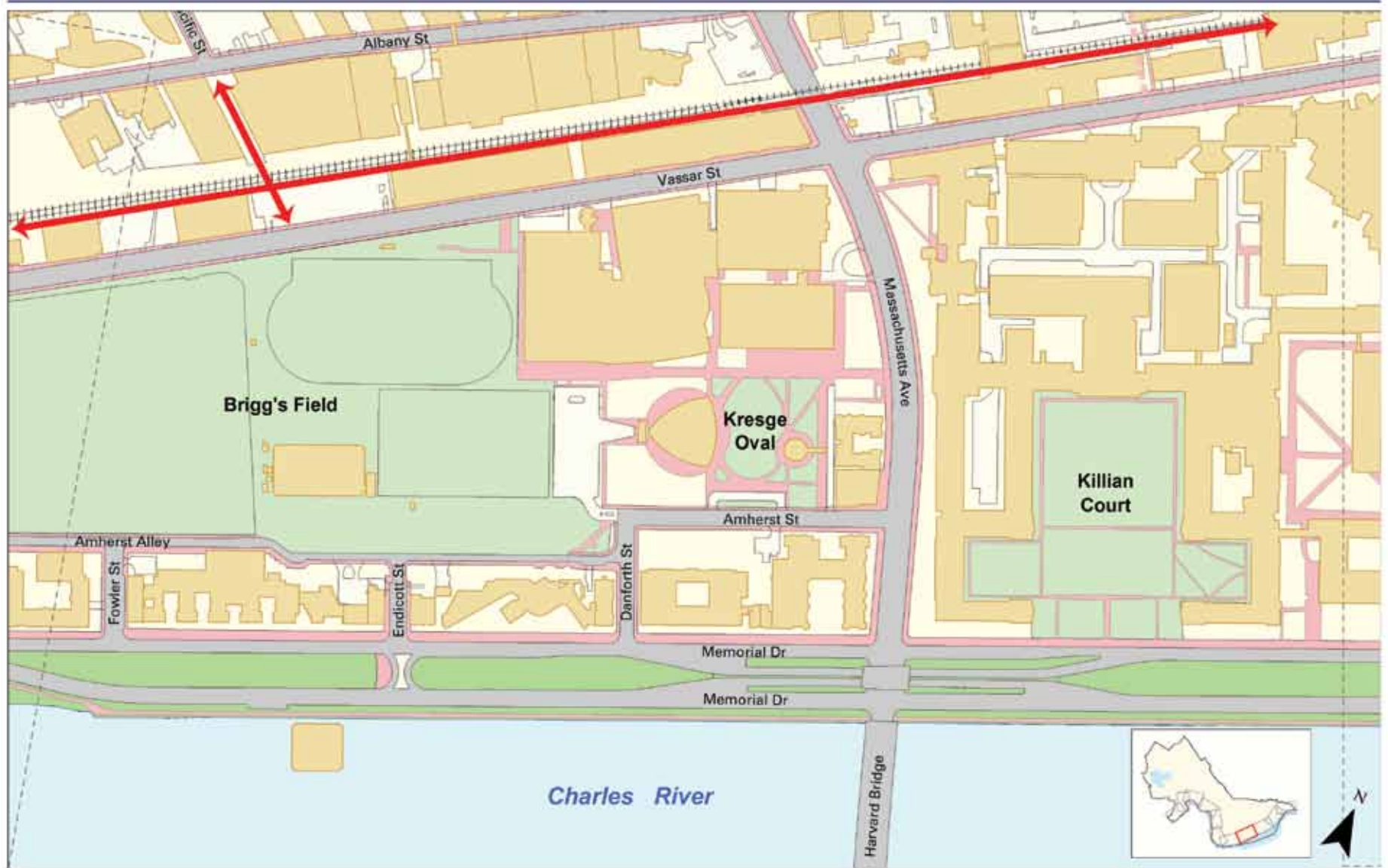
LONGFELLOW BRIDGE TO BOSTON UNIVERSITY BRIDGE



LEGEND

- ↔ Potential New Bicycle/Pedestrian Connection
- - - - - Map Match Line

LONGFELLOW BRIDGE TO BOSTON UNIVERSITY BRIDGE



LEGEND

- ↔ Potential New Bicycle/Pedestrian Connection
- - - - - Map Match Line

Issues and Opportunities

Although many of the abutting uses in this section are very well established and not likely to change significantly, there are many opportunities to improve conditions for users in the coming years. As discussed below, some of the access issues are being addressed currently, while others will take longer to resolve.

Connections

Massachusetts Avenue/MIT Gateway

The recently completed improvements to Massachusetts Avenue extend from Lafayette Square down to the river. This work addressed the need for a better street system, including extensive new tree plantings, safer and more attractive street lighting, bike lanes, and more clearly delineated crosswalks.

Vassar Street Improvements

Vassar Street is now much more pleasant to use. The now fully-implemented reconstruction plan includes bike tracks connecting from Kendall Square near the Stata Center to the river near the BU Bridge.

Rail Corridor/Urban Ring Alignment

At present, the rail bridge that spans Memorial Drive as it heads toward the BU Bridge has a rather dilapidated appearance. In the long term, the interface between the riverfront and the rail corridor may be much more important if plans for the Urban Ring are implemented. A multi-use path is envisioned to run along the rail corridor, which would facilitate circulation, especially for bicyclists.

Cambridgeport Roadways

A very important step in facilitating flows from lower Cambridgeport to the river was the renovation of the landmark Ford Assembly building, with associated site improvements that made it easier for pedestrians to circulate in this area. A decade later, the Cambridgeport Roadways Project succeeded in making an extremely important new connection between the riverfront at the BU Bridge and the University Park development area. A walk that was rather daunting 30 years ago is now a straightforward urban streetscape experience. MIT is advancing plans to extend Pacific Street, for pedestrians, over and across the railroad right of way, which should prove to be an especially valuable new connection for the nearby academic and research community and the residents of Cambridgeport.



The rail corridor looking north toward MIT.



Open Space

DCR Open Space along the Riverfront

The most direct access along the riverfront is on the DCR riverbank, which was recently widened in the section from the Longfellow Bridge to Massachusetts Avenue. The DCR master plan suggests further means of enhancing this frontage, through landscaping, the provision of park furniture, and the like.

MIT Campus along the Riverfront to Massachusetts Avenue

The MIT campus frontage along the river is generally characterized by a series of academic buildings, many of which have courtyards opening to the river view. The most important of these is Killian Court, at the heart of the original campus. This portion of the riverfront is enlivened by a variety of users, including, of course, many MIT students from the Institute's nearby residences. And, although the dominant presence is MIT, Boston University also has a foothold with its boathouse near the BU Bridge, which also enlivens this part of the river's edge.

Development

Sloan School/Gateway to Kendall Square

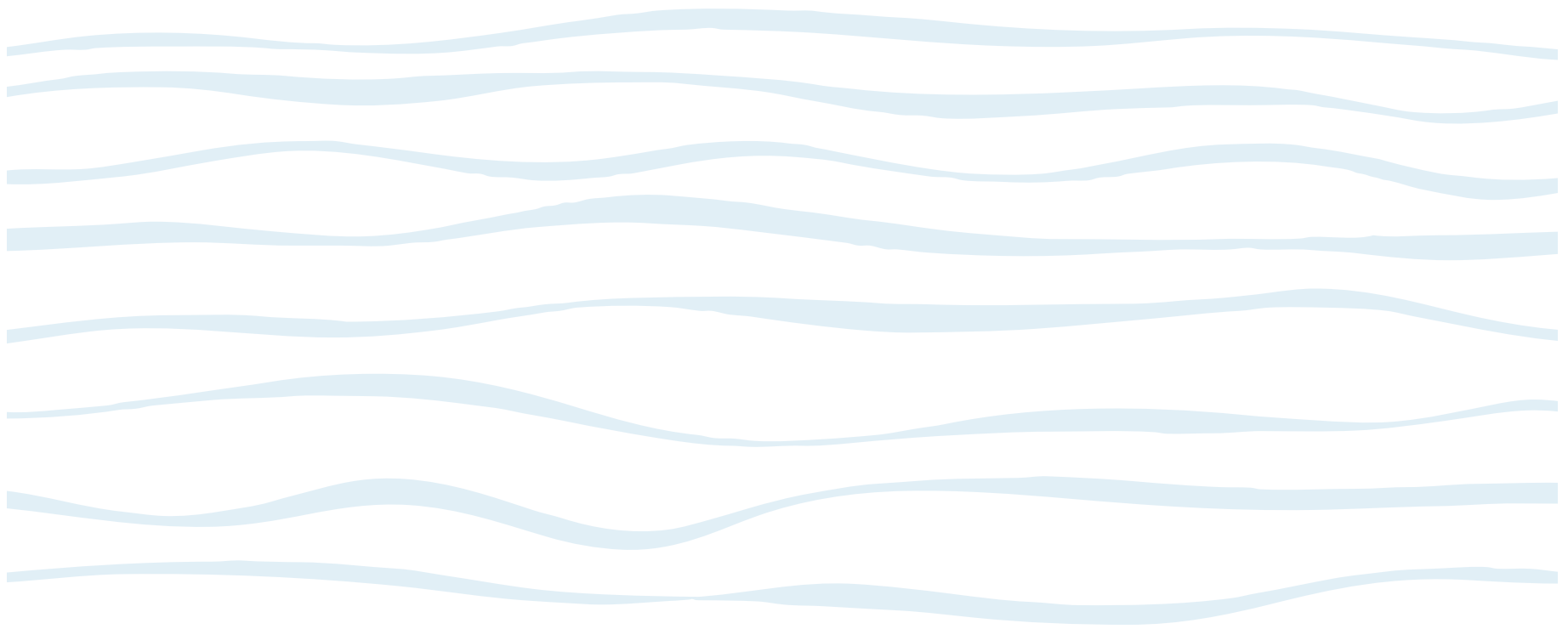
The MIT Sloan School obtained a special permit in 2007 to build a new complex on its site, which formerly presented a rather uninviting frontage on its Main Street side. The new plan has transformed the Main Street walk into a pleasant passage along a widened sidewalk going towards the river, alongside the "North Garden" open space which replaced the old expanse of asphalt. The complex extends around to Memorial Drive, where a new, welcoming "River Court" open plaza across from the MIT boathouse facilitates connections from the river to the Sloan School Complex and beyond towards Kendall Square.



The Boston University Boat House near the BU Bridge.



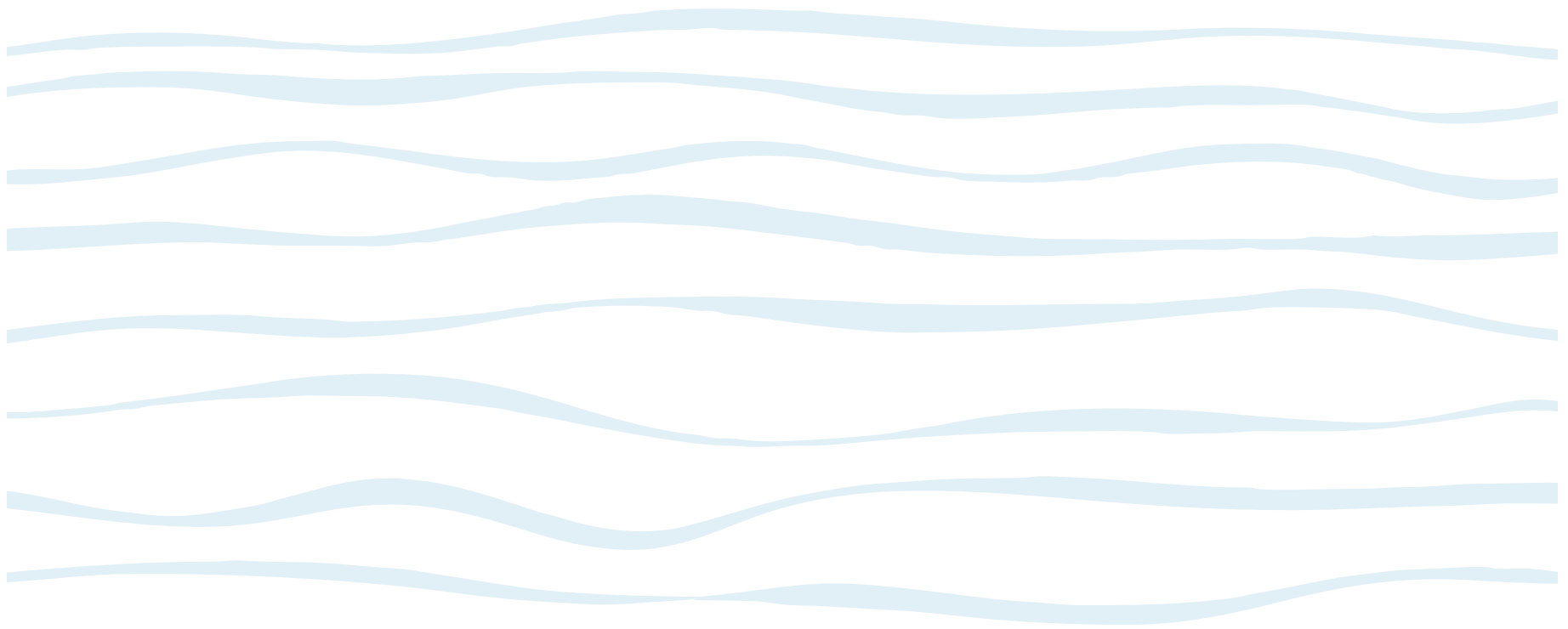
Congested streets on the MIT campus near the river make pedestrian access to the river difficult.



D BOSTON UNIVERSITY BRIDGE TO WESTERN AVENUE



Photo Credit: Laura Moskowitz



D. Boston University Bridge to Western Avenue

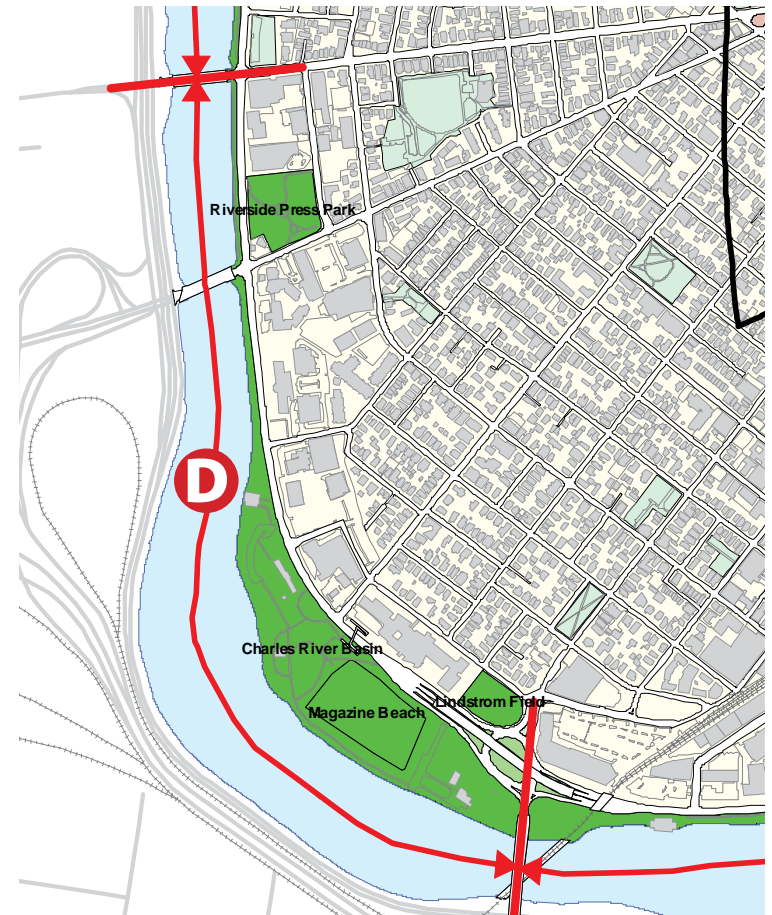
Overall Character

More than any other section of the riverfront, this one retains much of the work-a-day commercial character that once characterized the waterfront before the river was viewed as a scenic asset and a setting for more upscale development. While the East Cambridge Riverfront (Section B) and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology campus (Section C) have lost all trace of their past commercial grittiness over the last half century, here four gas stations continue to operate, along with a suburban-style drive-up shopping center.

Even the large scale developments of the past forty years—808 Memorial Drive, the Marriott Courtyard Hotel—while benefiting from the views offered by their prominent waterside locations, ignore at ground level the river and the bikers and pedestrians who walk along it; the dominant parking lots, parking garages and driveways reflect priorities of an age when arriving by car was routinely to be expected. The massive power plant at Western Avenue and the Ford Assembly Plant building are historical remnants of a time when the River was a natural resource to be more directly used for commerce.

However, away from the immediate river's edge, significant change is occurring. While not directly enhancing the enjoyment of the River's amenities, these changes have made the journey from the neighborhood to the river more enjoyable and a genuine urban experience. That journey from the Riverside and Cambridgeport neighborhoods occurs along a number of important roads: Brookline Street, Magazine Street, Pleasant Street, River Street and Western Avenue. The quality of the environments through which those roads pass will in one measure determine whether, from the perspective of neighborhood residents, the River seems naturally a part of their community and a routine element in their daily lives.

Several recent developments, just back from the river, help to reconnect the neighborhood to the River. The city block bounded by Putnam Avenue, River Street and Pleasant Street was not long ago a sea of fenced-off asphalt with parked cars and a utility substation. The substation remains, but the streets are now lined with townhouse and office buildings, and a small shopping complex that, while suburban in layout, presents well landscaped edges to the adjacent public streets; the precinct now feels like an urban neighborhood, perhaps for the first time in many decades.



Relatively new uses near the river include Whole Foods on the right and housing in the background, along Pleasant Street.

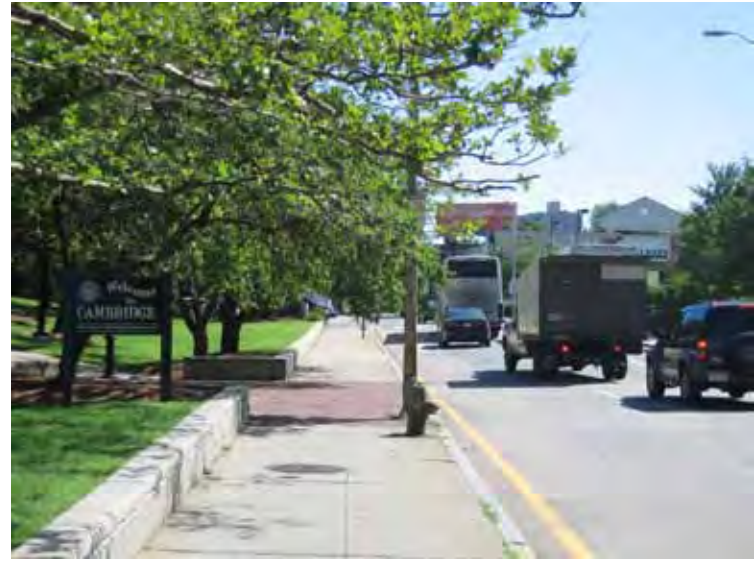
Twenty years ago the Ford Assembly Plant building was retrofitted to serve contemporary office functions; work is now underway to make additional improvements. The completion of roadway work in the former industrial area of Cambridgeport has resulted in pedestrian friendly improvements to lower Brookline Street and Waverly Street that make the river more accessible and the walk more pleasant along that route from the neighborhood.

Nearly thirty years ago, Riverside Press Park was built to the great benefit of the neighborhood, lower River Street and the Memorial Drive frontage. In combination with the redevelopment of the shopping center site across River Street, the approach to the river along this major route into the neighborhood has been much improved for pedestrians. The 808 Memorial Drive edge, dominated by vehicular circulation, service and car storage, is still less pedestrian-friendly.

The blocks abutting Blackstone Street have seen significant recent improvement. There have been small residential infill projects at the River Street end of the block while at the other end, the power plant complex of buildings has been transformed into offices and affordable housing (while the power generation function remains). The office conversion has been done to high environmental standards and includes attractive landscaping that replaced a large expanse of asphalt. The effect has been to make the blocks immediately adjacent to the river friendlier and more pleasant to walk through on the way to the river. The power plant itself, while an industrial use, has a monumental scale and iconic character that in some way complements this river setting; more attention to the pedestrian experience along its edges at ground level would greatly enhance its presence.

The Charles River's banks in this section have two quite different characters. On the one hand, some of the most expansive open space along the river occurs here, with playing fields, multiple bike and walking paths, boat launching facilities and a swimming pool at Magazine Beach. Some improvements have already been made to the site and there are plans in place for further improvements. The entire area has the advantage of considerable depth, where the noise and bustle of Memorial Drive can recede somewhat, and a more tranquil experience is possible.

The other half of the river edge loses much of its parkway feel as the path becomes little more than a sidewalk pinched between the river, which is down a steep embankment and the busy Memorial Drive. While river views are always pleasant, this is generally not a stretch of river on which to linger.



Riverside Press Park was created in the 1980s on the site of the nineteenth century book printing facility for Riverside Press.



Redevelopment of former industrial buildings has brought new vitality close to the river.

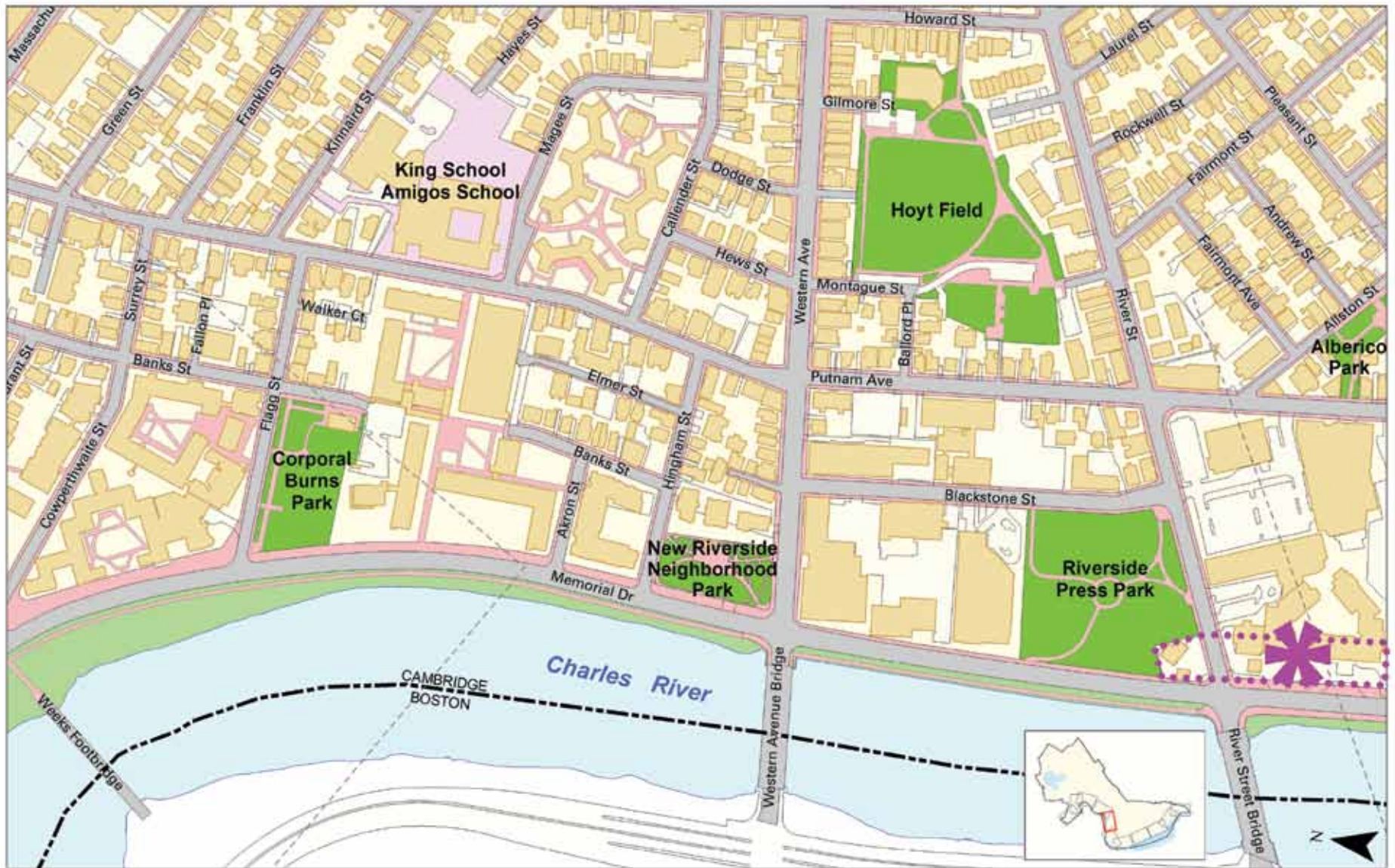
Memorial Drive along this stretch is burdened by the Boston University Bridge overpass and a grade-level traffic rotary, which in combination effectively cut off an easy pedestrian approach to the river from the Brookline Street pathway out of the Cambridgeport neighborhood. The pedestrian overpass, which is being rebuilt, technically makes the journey possible, but the river seems particularly remote at this location.

Further upriver, Memorial Drive at the River Street and Western Avenue intersections serves as a segment in a large traffic pattern feeding heavy Cambridge-bound traffic to and from the Massachusetts Turnpike and Storrow Drive on the other side of the River. If the Harvard campus expands across the river in Allston, the large volume of pedestrians who currently walk or bike along the River will likely be supplemented by many people who will be crossing the River to the new campus facilities. Ease of crossing all of these roadways by pedestrians and bicyclists will become an even more important issue than it is now. The imminent reconstruction of these bridges offers the opportunity to better serve pedestrians and bicyclists who travel over the rivers and along it for business or pleasure.



Curb cuts at gas stations can make pedestrian and bicycle access difficult, as shown in these two examples.

BOSTON UNIVERSITY BRIDGE TO WESTERN AVENUE

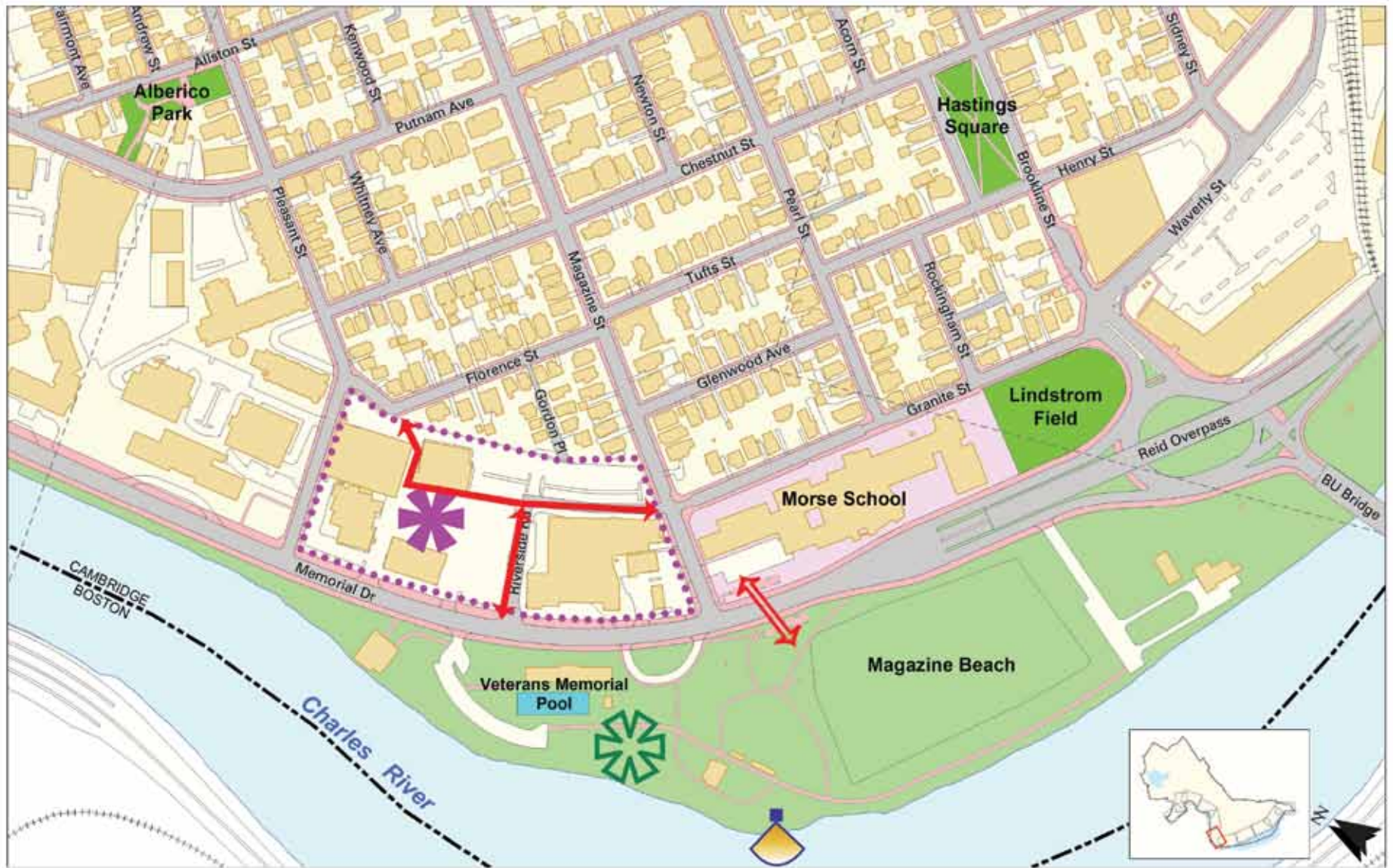


LEGEND

 Potential for Site (Re)development

 Map Match Line

BOSTON UNIVERSITY BRIDGE TO WESTERN AVENUE



LEGEND

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
|  Potential Open Space Improvement |  Potential for Site (Re)development |  Potential Bicycle/Pedestrian Improvement |
|  Potential Lookout |  Map Match Line |  Potential New Bicycle/Pedestrian Connection |

Issues and Opportunities

Connections

Brookline Street

As the final phase of a twenty-year plan to shift commuter and regional traffic destined for the commercial districts of University Park and the eastern half of the city out of the Cambridgeport neighborhood, Brookline Street was recently reconstructed with the goal of slowing vehicular traffic and making it easier for pedestrians and cyclists to use the street in safety. The roadway reconstruction created a more pleasant access route to the River from neighborhood streets; the new Waverly Street intersection now diverts traffic to the east, through the commercial portions of Cambridgeport, and has resulted in a greater allocation of space to pedestrians and bicyclists, separated from automobile traffic.

Open Space

Magazine Beach Improvements

As noted earlier, the DCR and the City have just completed the reconstruction of playing fields at Magazine Beach. The \$1.2 million construction project also includes creation of a drainage system at the site and rebuilding a parking lot next to the sewage outfall facility. Under the 1999 partnership agreement, the City contributed \$1.5 million for design and construction of the project and took responsibility for the ongoing maintenance of the improved site in exchange for priority use of the playing fields by Cambridge youth sports. While there is a design for a second phase of Magazine Beach improvements, including the picnic and playground areas west of the fields, construction funding is not yet in place.

Development

Riverside Road Shopping Cluster

The city-side stretch bounded by Magazine and Pleasant Streets is a commercial remnant from an earlier era (1950s, 1960s, early 1970s) when the automobile was the organizing principle for contemporary urban development and our historical neighborhood street pattern was viewed as slightly faded and old-fashioned. Parking lots still dominate the block, and they have actually engulfed a still extant city street, Riverside Road. The Shell gas station, Micro Center, Trader Joe's, Starbucks, and Marriott Courtyard Hotel are newer versions of uses that have existed on the site for decades. With the exception of the hotel, they are all squat, featureless buildings in an environment that is unwelcoming to pedestrians



Magazine Beach, seen from the water. The streambank plantings provide bank stabilization, but separate people from the river.

and generally not contributing to Memorial Drive in its role as an urban parkway, though the distinctive neon Shell sign has been designated as an historic landmark.

A number of unserved pedestrian desire lines cross the site from east to west; Magazine and Pleasant Streets are routes in and out of the neighborhood, and the Memorial Drive edge is part of a walking continuum along the entire river frontage. All of these elements are currently deficient as urban landscapes and pedestrian passages; the entire block is poorly integrated into the adjacent residential neighborhood and is inconsistent with the parkway image envisioned for Memorial Drive by Frederick Law Olmsted.

The Marriott Courtyard Hotel at 777 Memorial Drive has been recently renovated. To the east of the hotel, the current cluster of three commercial buildings (plus the gas station on a separate lot) could be envisioned as a new commercial and residential precinct, organized around a revived Riverside Road. This could include new buildings (or substantially re-worked existing buildings) facing onto Memorial Drive and the reclaimed Riverside Road, designed to mesh with the fabric of the adjacent residential neighborhood as they look outward to the world around them, with many windows and front entries onto adjacent sidewalks; surface parking consolidated into well designed structures; interior plazas, landscaped front yards, and pedestrian pathways to all abutting streets, whether as public sidewalks or private interior walkways; and an overall pedestrian environment to which all other circulation is subordinate.

Coordination of service with the adjacent hotel site could also be possible. A vision of such a new environment is incorporated into the zoning requirements of the Memorial Drive Overlay District, applicable to this site. The right mix of private market conditions and public incentives might encourage such a transformation to come to pass.

808 Memorial Drive

Choices made in the redevelopment of this site to high-rise housing in the 1960s remain today in the form of two gas stations at very prominent locations facing onto Memorial Drive at River Street, around which the development was designed. A large parking garage facing River Street does not enhance that street edge, and the small office building adds to the visual confusion.

It is the gas stations, however, that are most problematic. As useful as their services to passing motorists may be, their prominent location and the very nature of their operation di-



This parking area for the Micro Center/Trader Joe's site could be made more pleasant for people going to and from between the neighborhood and the river.



minish the parkway quality of Memorial Drive and create difficult conditions for other users of the roads and sidewalks. The frequent and busy curb cuts are challenging to traverse on foot or on a bicycle. Improvements here will likely be hard to come by as the sites are very constrained and ownership patterns may not make it easy to redevelop the sites. Incentive provisions in the Memorial Drive Overlay District, which were approved for housing proposed but not built at the 777 Memorial Drive site, apply here as well. Site constraints, however, are probably even more limiting here and the increased density allowed through incentives may not be welcomed at this site. It may be that a more vigorous redesign of the existing structures and redevelopment of the sites in their present use offer a better prospect for visual improvement in the short term.



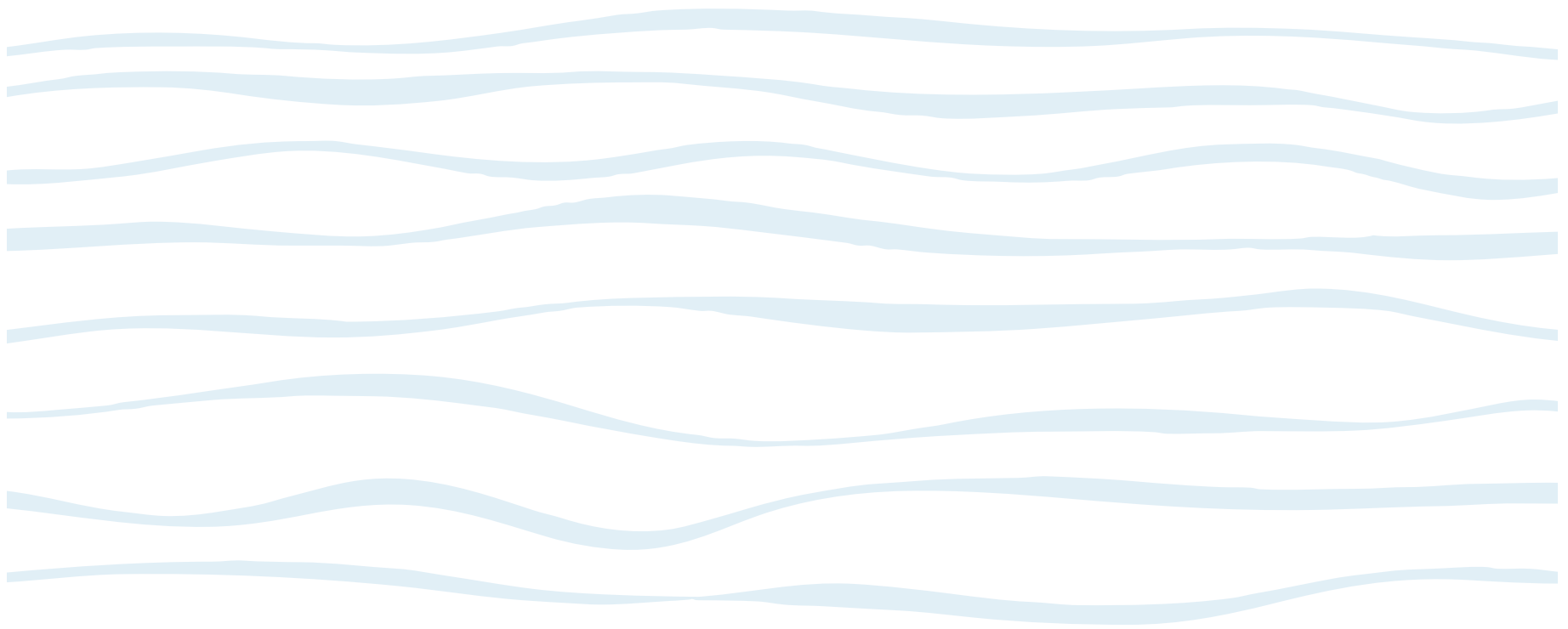
This hotel along the river was recently renovated.



A cafe with outdoor seating near the river helps create a sense of place and activates the sidewalk area.

E WESTERN AVENUE BRIDGE TO CAMBRIDGE/WATERTOWN LINE CHARACTER





E. Western Avenue Bridge to Cambridge/Watertown Line

Overall Character

After crossing Western Avenue heading up river, the character of the riverfront changes in interesting ways. As in Section B, the institutional presence is conspicuous and sets the tone for significant stretches of the River; here it is, most prominently, Harvard University and its River Houses. Furthermore, that red-brick academic character dominates on both sides of the River. The River is narrow enough here, and the landscape open enough, that there is a sense of a single, distinctive and coherent landscape, quite unique along the River's lower reaches.

Other institutions join the University to contribute significantly to the character of this segment: Saint John the Evangelist Church and Monastery, Mt. Auburn Hospital, Buckingham Browne & Nichols School, and the Cambridge Cemetery.

The commercial elements in the previous segment disappear along the riverfront in this section. Residential Cambridge comes right down to the river briefly after Harvard Square in an interesting and eclectic mix of elegant high-rise courtyard apartment buildings of the early 20th century, small wood frame houses from many eras, and two examples of large, fashionable, mid-twentieth century urban residential construction: the 19-story 1010 Memorial Drive point tower and the 8-story horizontal slab at 221 Mount Auburn Street. At the beginning of the segment residential Riverside is only a block away but it is screened by a veneer of riverfront dormitories.

A subtle use change also occurs along this segment. Though walking, jogging and biking occur along the entire waterfront, here the combination of a large resident student population immediately adjacent, the bustle and activity of commercial Harvard Square nearby, and the expansiveness of the adjacent green spaces alongside the river and Memorial Drive result in intensified leisure activity, with even more walking, jogging, and biking, as well as sitting, picnicking, sunning, and ball tossing. All of this activity is enhanced on Sundays in the warm months by the closing of a long stretch of Memorial Drive, known as Riverbend Park.

The intimate nature of the Charles here, particularly up river from the Weeks Memorial Footbridge, makes the boat traffic on the water a significant part of the shoreline experi-



The historic bench design used along the river, near St John's Monastery.



The pedestrian connection from the Weeks Footbridge towards campus is often busy.

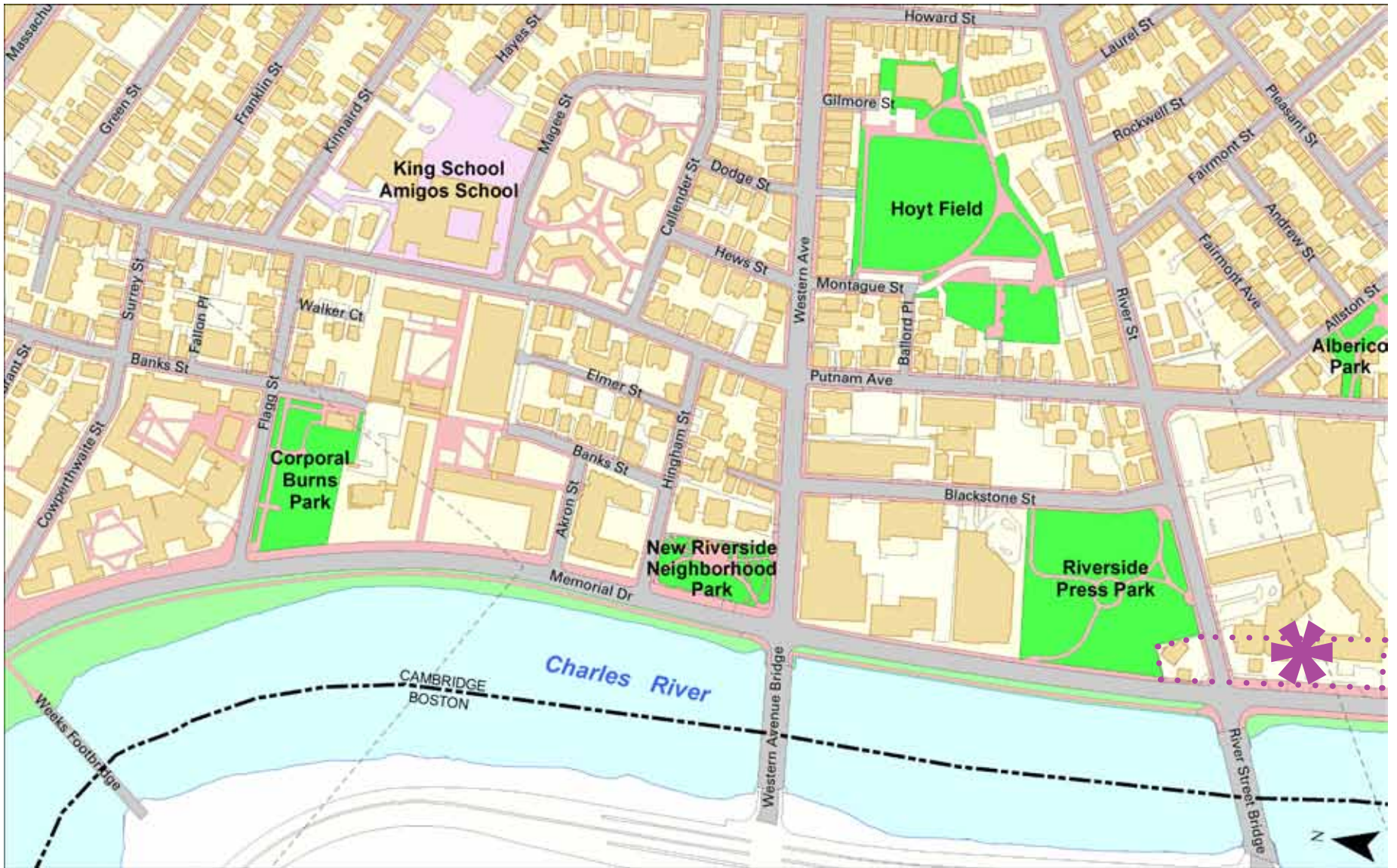
ence. Skulls and powerboats animate the scene, often originating from one of the boathouses that are sprinkled about this length of the River.

In this segment, Memorial Drive feels much like the road-in-a-park it was intended to be, except for the heavy volumes of traffic it always carries. That feeling dissipates quickly, however, at the swirling intersection of the Drive with Gerry's Landing Road and Greenough Boulevard at the approaches to the Eliot Bridge. Greenough Boulevard emerges out of that confusion as a continuation of the parkway (albeit feeling too wide for the traffic it serves), passing by the only large expanse of natural wetlands and woodland along the water in Cambridge, before entering Watertown.

It is easy to get to the river from the adjacent neighborhoods and from Harvard Square along the numerous roads that intersect Memorial Drive. While in a couple of instances, the River Houses and Mount Auburn Hospital most notably, a large block of private land ownership requires some lateral diversion to get to the river, no one is denied easy access to the amenities found there. The more challenging task, sometimes, is to make the short trip from the city side to the water side of Memorial Drive.



WESTERN AVENUE BRIDGE TO CAMBRIDGE/WATERTOWN LINE



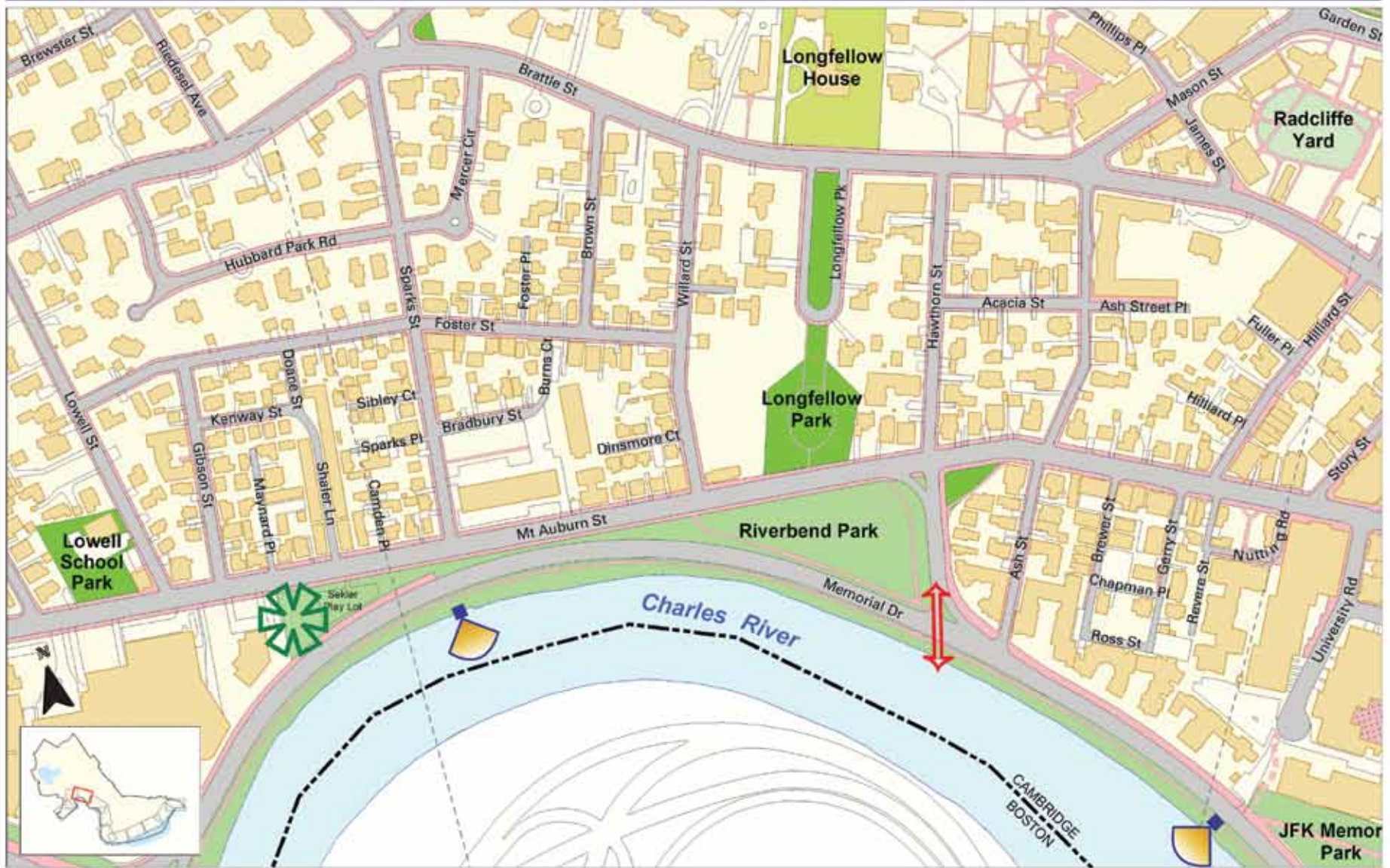
LEGEND



Potential for Site (Re)development

----- Map Match Line

WESTERN AVENUE BRIDGE TO CAMBRIDGE/WATERTOWN LINE




LEGEND

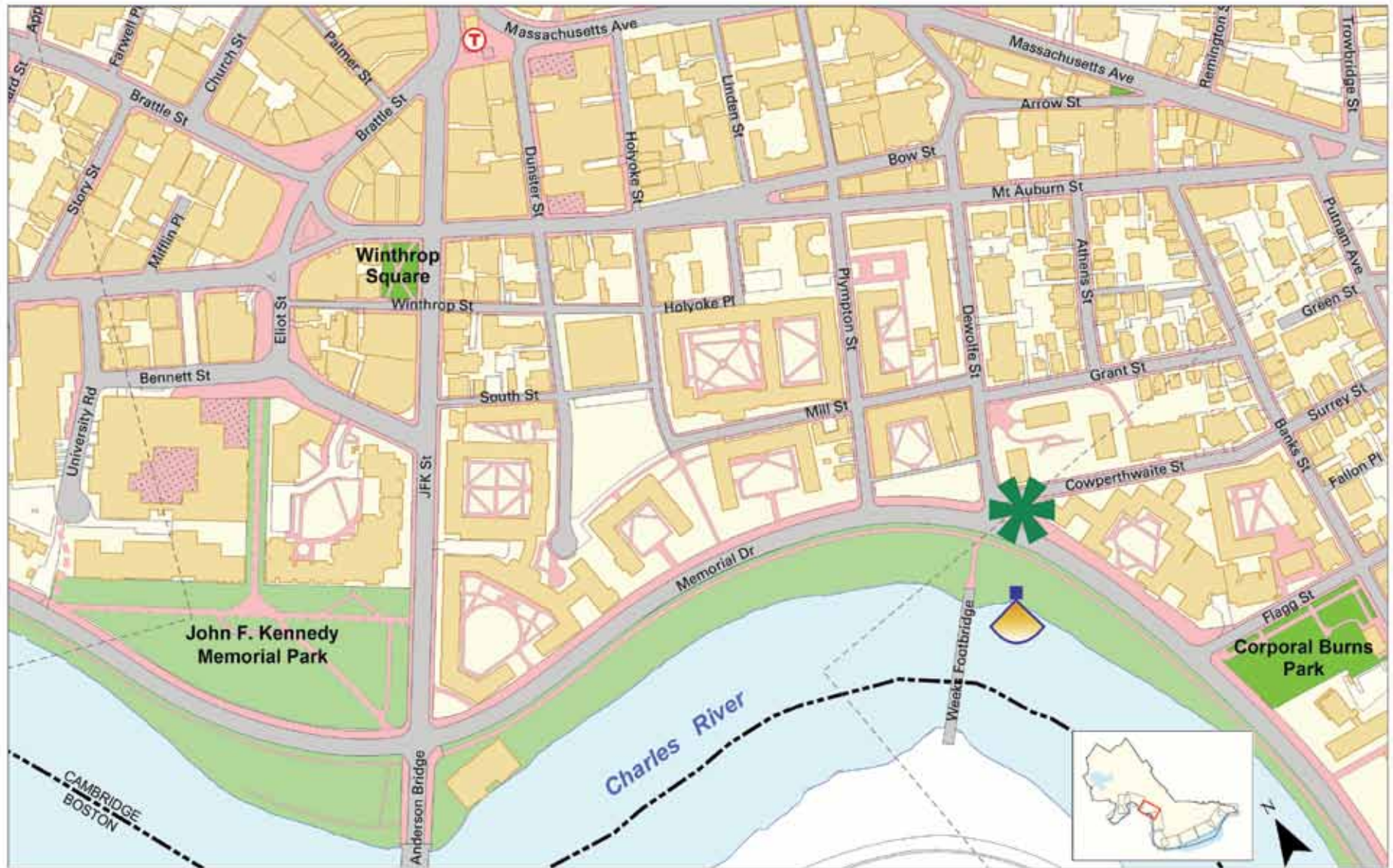
 Potential Open Space Improvement

 Potential Lookout

 Potential Bicycle/Pedestrian Improvement

 Map Match Line

WESTERN AVENUE BRIDGE TO CAMBRIDGE/WATERTOWN LINE



LEGEND



Potential New Open Space

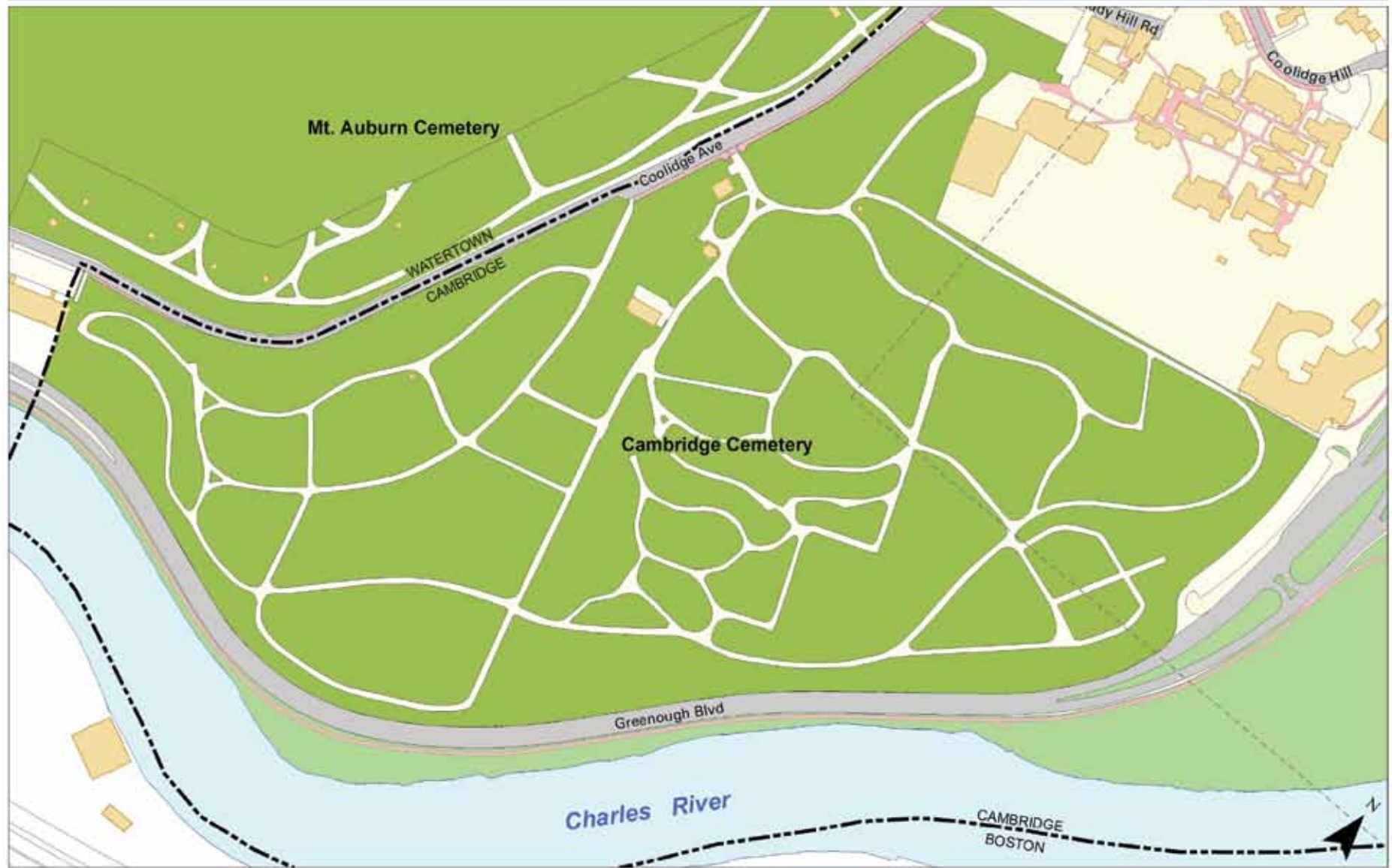


Potential Lookout



Map Match Line

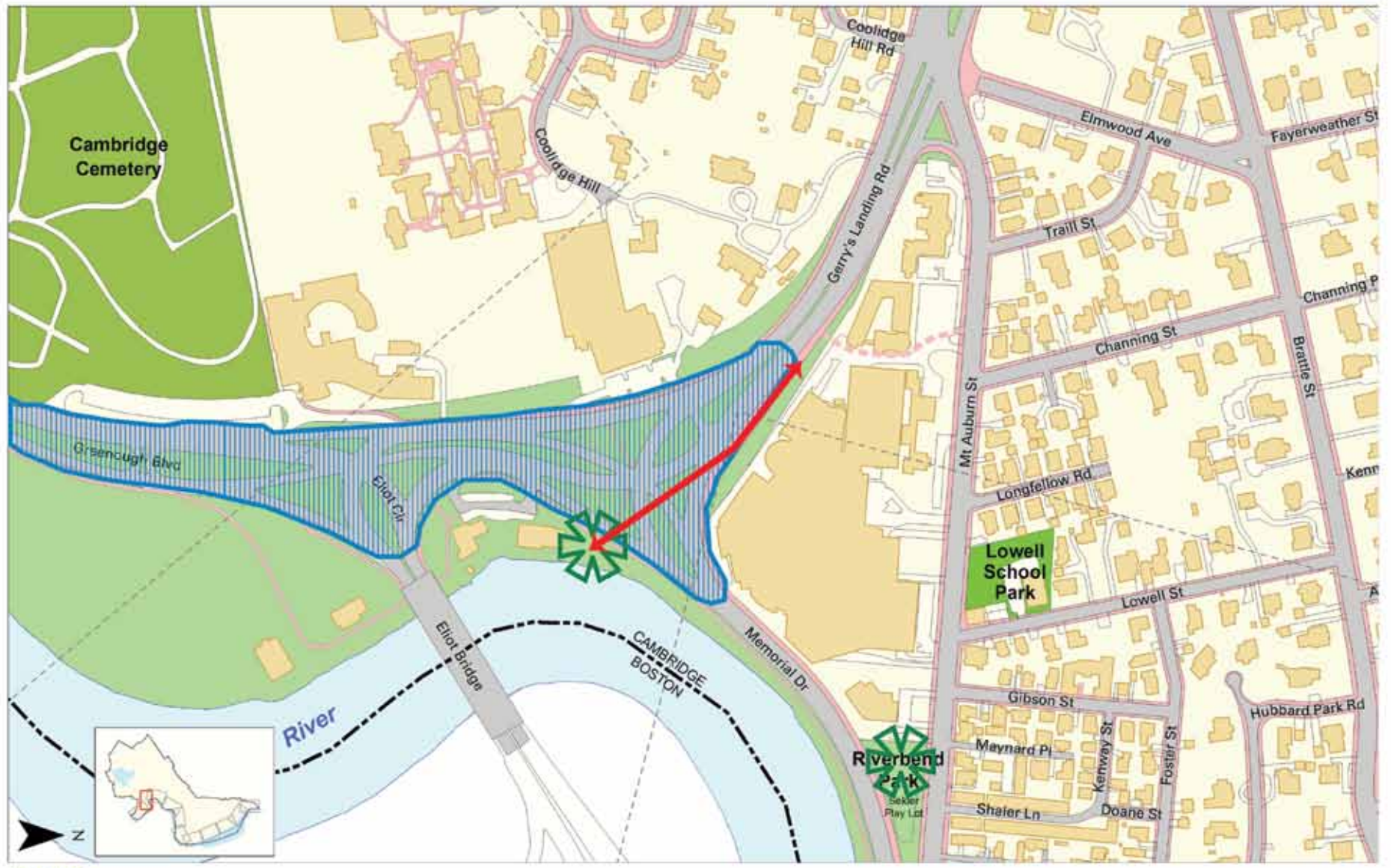
WESTERN AVENUE BRIDGE TO CAMBRIDGE WATERTOWN LINE



LEGEND

--- Map Match Line

WESTERN AVENUE BRIDGE TO CAMBRIDGE/WATERTOWN LINE



LEGEND

- Potential Open Space Improvement
- Needs Further Study
- Potential New Bicycle/Pedestrian Connection
- Map Match Line

Issues and Opportunities

Connections

The green, landscaped quality of most of the Charles River's edges in this section are much loved and carefully guarded from urban encroachment. Yet as pleasant as these environments are, and as much as they are used and enjoyed by many at all times of the year, the river and its water are actually little engaged by anyone, serving more as passive backdrop than anything else. Might the River be more directly engaged near Harvard Square? This could be achieved as the portal to a river transportation system that would allow anyone to be on the water for pleasure and to view the landward activity from a different perspective; or as a place where one might walk out into the River and over the water, to be surrounded by its sounds and smells; or as a place to eat, drink and socialize with intimate views of boats, birds, and clock towers.

Open Space

New Park at Western Avenue, Hingham Street, Akron Street

The parcels here, long owned by Harvard University, have been transformed from a garden center operating under various names for decades, to a cluster of affiliate housing for the University and a new City park. This new 3/4 acre park joins Riverside Press Park, a couple of blocks to the east, and Corporal Burns Park, a couple of blocks to the west, in providing open space amenities to the adjacent neighborhoods and residents of the city as a whole who venture down to the river. The design for this open space attempts to provide active areas as well as places for more contemplative enjoyment of the space and the river. The land slopes very slightly up from the river to help give users a better view of the water. The potentially intrusive garage head house has been made into an elegant feature, with a wooden trellis and facade. Near the new park, university-affiliate housing development has recently been occupied at Grant, Banks and Cowperthwaite Streets. This new housing replaced unattractive parking lots, knitting together a neighborhood of large dormitories and 19th-century wood frame housing, and providing a seamless backdrop to the passage from the interior of the city to the river.

Larz Anderson Bridge Neighborhood

The Reservation open space at the riverfront widens in the vicinity of Harvard Square and offers a unique experience on the Cambridge side of the Charles River: a bustling retail downtown district connected through intimate pedestrian paths, parks, and city streets to



The new park in Riverside is an attractive place from which to view the river.



The sewer outfalls provide rare opportunities to get close to the river.

an approachable and spacious river's edge. The pedestrian flow between the city and the river is constant and substantial. That dynamic suggests perhaps that there might be unrealized potential to engage people with the river in more diverse and interesting ways than currently occurs.

Development

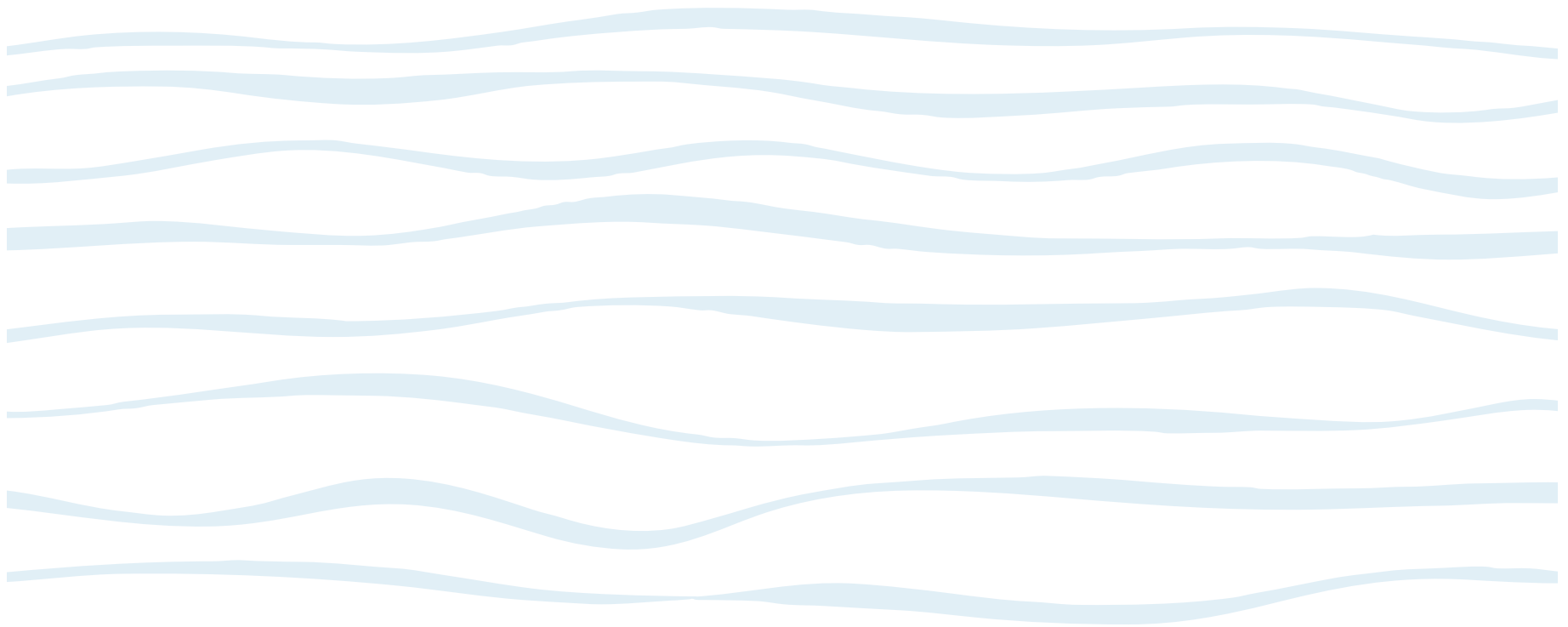
Mount Auburn Hospital

Mount Auburn Hospital has just completed a significant expansion. One benefit of that activity is the creation of a pedestrian walkway through the campus, providing access from the neighborhood on the other side of Mount Auburn Street to Memorial Drive and the river.



The recent expansion of Mt. Auburn Hospital includes a new pedestrian link from Mt. Auburn Street towards the river.



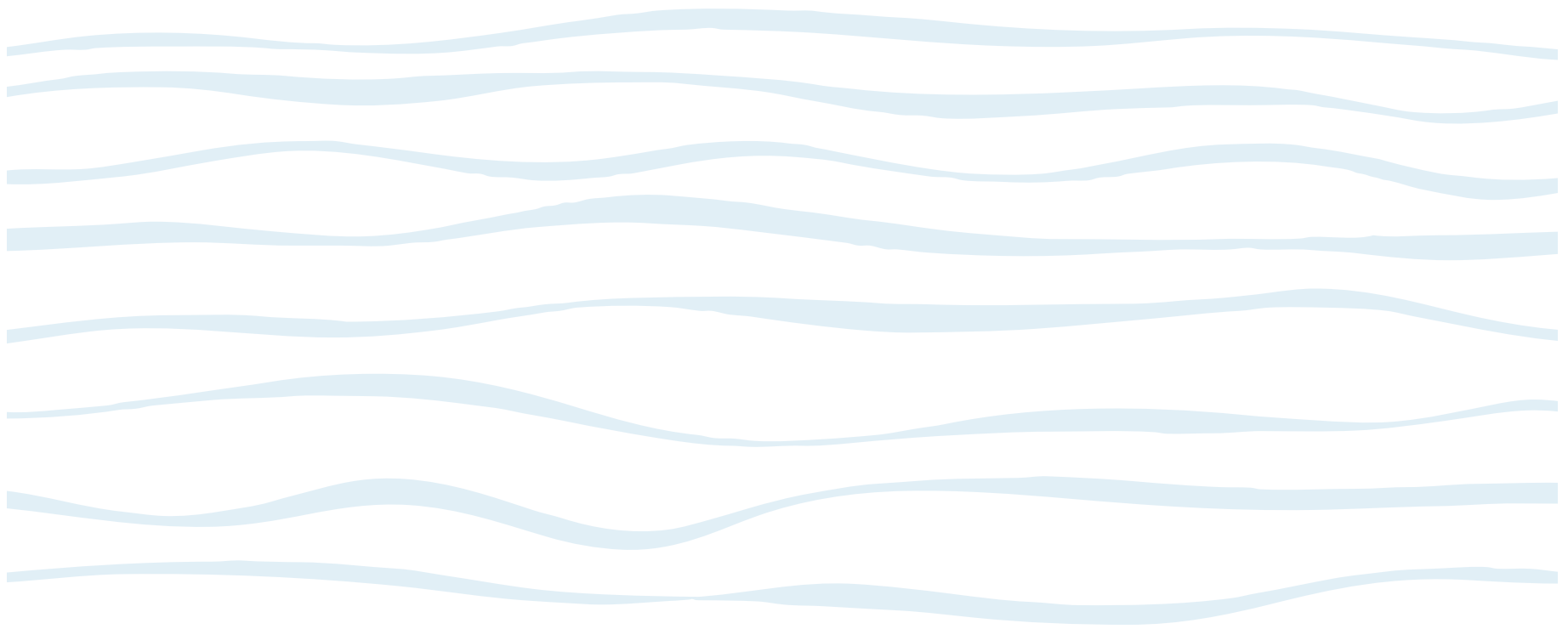


Chapter Four:

Improving Use of the Charles River in Cambridge



Photo Credit: Bob Coe



Improving Use of the Charles River in Cambridge

A. GOALS FOR THE RIVERFRONT AS A WHOLE

The Charles River is one of the most significant natural and recreational resources in Cambridge. Time and again, the riverfront has been identified as a cherished open space by the City's residents. This study attempts to identify ways to foster an active Cambridge waterfront that allows for a variety of experiences and is easily accessible from different parts of the City.

In general, the goals and recommendations listed here are consistent with those identified by the state Department of Conservation and Recreation's 2002 Master Plan for the Charles River, and further articulate the City's priorities within the wide-ranging recommendations of the DCR Master Plan. A list of the relevant recommendations from the 2002 Master Plan is included in the appendix.

Some of the properties discussed in this report are owned by the Commonwealth, some by universities and others by private owners. While the mix of ownership poses some challenges, this plan expresses the City's vision and goals for the riverfront, recognizing that implementation of the ideas outlined will require significant collaboration with property owners and people who live and work in the neighborhood. This plan attempts to set the stage for future discussions by identifying the City's priorities.

The issues and opportunities along the Charles riverfront discussed in Chapter 2 lead to the following broad goals for the future.

- Create an active environment along the waterfront. Work with the state Department of Conservation and Recreation to improve opportunities for both active and passive amenities which encourage visitors to linger and enjoy the riverfront.
- Encourage active and broadly engaging uses in development along Memorial Drive, particularly on the ground floor of buildings.
- Improve access to the riverfront for all users by improving existing connections from the city and by creating new ones where needed.

- Improve the public realm – e.g. tree planting and streetscape improvements along key corridors, circulation improvements such as improved crosswalks and signal timing, as appropriate.
- Improve connections – strengthen pedestrian access to the riverfront along existing streets and through large sites as (re)development occurs. Expand public access to the water by providing places where canoes and kayaks can launch and land.

B. AREA-SPECIFIC GOALS

Connections

Roadway Improvements

Convenient and easy connections between the riverfront and the rest of Cambridge are critical to access the river and the opportunities it offers for recreation, exercise, and relaxation. The Cambridge frontage along the Charles River is intersected by the Charles River Dam and seven bridges that allow traffic flow between the Cambridge and Boston sides of the river and towns beyond. Each of these links – the Charles River Dam, and the Longfellow, Harvard, Boston University, River Street, Western Avenue, Anderson, and Eliot Bridges — lies along major connector streets and carries significant vehicular traffic.

These connections are also along desire lines for people on bicycles and on foot as they connect the City's squares and major streets to the river. Principal enhancements that would help make these streets more navigable for all users are 1) street trees to provide shade and improve the walking environment 2) improved sidewalks that move towards ADA compliance and facilitate movement of pedestrians—particularly the elderly, people in wheelchairs and those with baby carriages 3) street lights that illuminate the corridors and improve safety, but also enhance the character and establish a cohesive image along the major connections to the river and 4) street furniture such as benches and trash cans particularly near bus stops. These measures should be kept in mind as the City embarks upon roadway improvements and when development is proposed in the area.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Connections.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the 17-mile Paul Dudley White multiuse path along the Charles River is a tremendous resource for bicyclists and pedestrians, providing a rec-



Longfellow Park is a welcoming green space connecting Brattle Street to the river.

reational as well as a significant commuter facility along the river connecting Boston, Cambridge, and Watertown. The DCR, which owns and manages the path, is looking to improve it by separating the bicycle and pedestrian uses where space permits. This is a long-term project, subject to availability of funds.

The City of Cambridge policy is to incorporate bicycle and pedestrian facilities along all City streets to the greatest extent possible. This is particularly important along the key streets that connect the river and nearby residential neighborhoods to facilitate river access and to provide a link to the bike path, which would offer numerous people the option to commute by bicycle or walking rather than by automobile.

In the North Point development permit, the City required the provision of a multi-use path through the site, providing a key connection between the river path and the proposed Somerville Community Path, which when open, will extend from the North Point Central Park to the riverfront open space system and will also be part of a significant regional connection from the Minuteman Path that begins in Bedford and goes all the way to the Charles River.

Open Space

With the DCR Charles River Reservation forming the spine, there currently exists a strong network of public open spaces near the river that helps create green connections between the neighborhoods and the river and provides a variety of experiences and recreation.

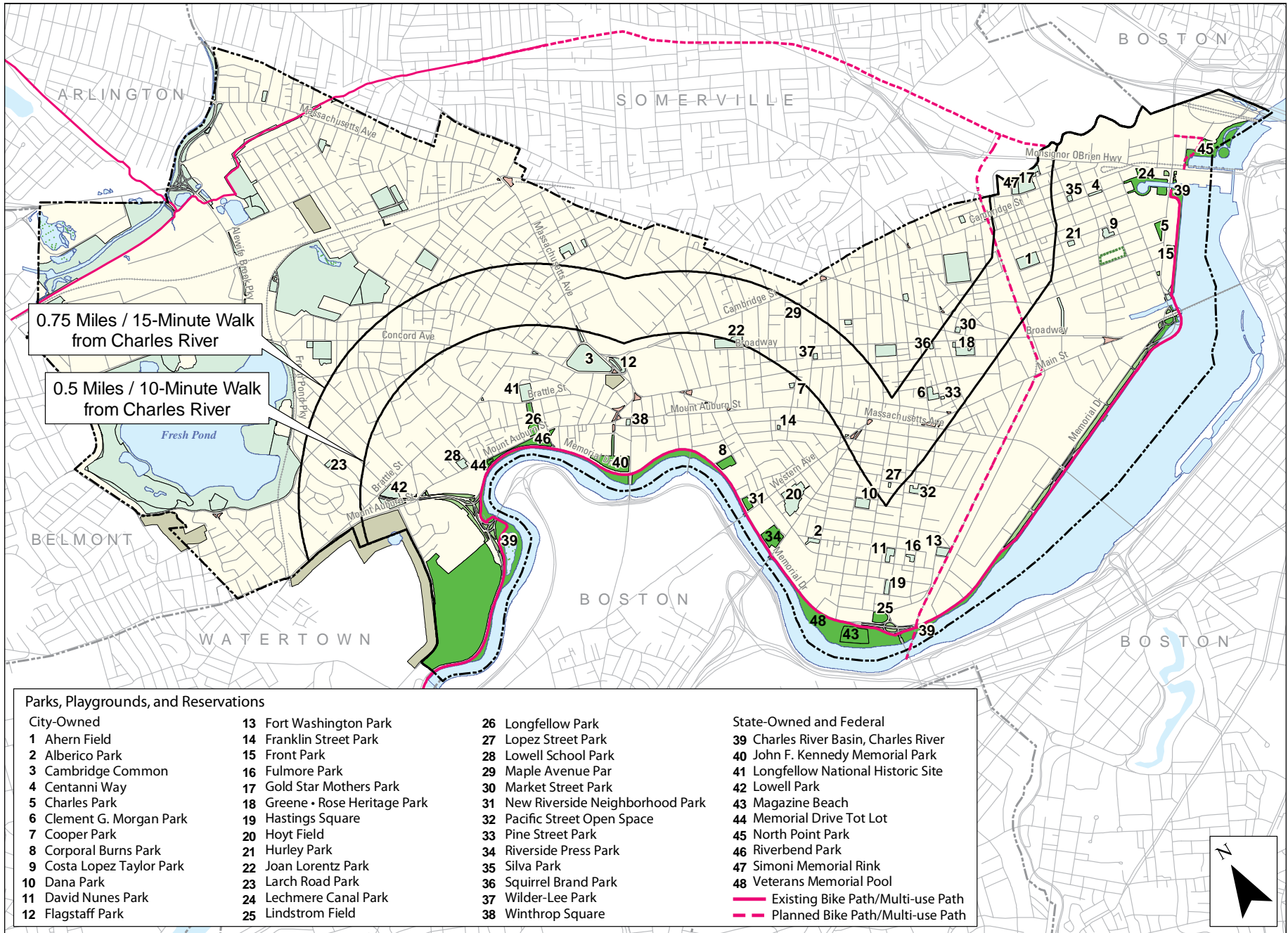
For much of its length, the Reservation on the Cambridge side is a linear corridor, just wide enough to accommodate the Paul Dudley White multi-use path for walking, jogging, bicycling, and skating along the river, with occasional benches along the way for people to sit and enjoy the views. A few areas are wider and offer an underutilized opportunity for passive recreation – gathering spaces, picnic areas, places to relax and contemplate such as those at 1) the open space at the mouth of Lechmere Canal across from the Museum of Science in East Cambridge, 2) Front Park and Cambridge Parkway, 3) Magazine Beach, 4) the open space adjacent to the Sekler Playlot between Memorial Drive and Mt. Auburn Street, and 5) Gerry’s landing in West Cambridge.

Magazine Beach is one of the widest sections of riverfront open space in Cambridge, part of which caters to active recreation with a public swimming pool, a spot for kayaks and canoes to enter the river, ballfields, and a tot lot. The City partnership with DCR will improve the



Pedestrian circulation around bridges needs improvement.

PARKS AND OPEN SPACE



Parks, Playgrounds, and Reservations

City-Owned

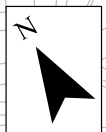
- 1 Ahern Field
- 2 Alberico Park
- 3 Cambridge Common
- 4 Centanni Way
- 5 Charles Park
- 6 Clement G. Morgan Park
- 7 Cooper Park
- 8 Corporal Burns Park
- 9 Costa Lopez Taylor Park
- 10 Dana Park
- 11 David Nunes Park
- 12 Flagstaff Park
- 13 Fort Washington Park
- 14 Franklin Street Park
- 15 Front Park
- 16 Fulmore Park
- 17 Gold Star Mothers Park
- 18 Greene • Rose Heritage Park
- 19 Hastings Square
- 20 Hoyt Field
- 21 Hurley Park
- 22 Joan Lorentz Park
- 23 Larch Road Park
- 24 Lechmere Canal Park
- 25 Lindstrom Field

- 26 Longfellow Park
- 27 Lopez Street Park
- 28 Lowell School Park
- 29 Maple Avenue Par
- 30 Market Street Park
- 31 New Riverside Neighborhood Park
- 32 Pacific Street Open Space
- 33 Pine Street Park
- 34 Riverside Press Park
- 35 Silva Park
- 36 Squirrel Brand Park
- 37 Wilder-Lee Park
- 38 Winthrop Square

State-Owned and Federal

- 39 Charles River Basin, Charles River
- 40 John F. Kennedy Memorial Park
- 41 Longfellow National Historic Site
- 42 Lowell Park
- 43 Magazine Beach
- 44 Memorial Drive Tot Lot
- 45 North Point Park
- 46 Riverbend Park
- 47 Simoni Memorial Rink
- 48 Veterans Memorial Pool

- Existing Bike Path/Multi-use Path
- Planned Bike Path/Multi-use Path



active recreation area here, but a large part of Magazine Beach is undefined and could be a more effective passive resource with the addition of amenities such as tables and seating, a pathway to the water's edge, and maintenance of existing lookout areas. Overall, ongoing maintenance of the Charles River Reservation, replacement of dead trees, additional seating and tables where space permits will help keep this resource vital and increase enjoyment of the river, not just for Cantabrigians, but for the regional population and visitors to the area.

The collection of City parks, publicly accessible private open spaces, and private open spaces near the river help complete this open space network and provide both active and passive recreation opportunities for people of all ages – Lechmere Canal Park, Charles Park, Front Park, open space at Cambridge Research Park/Kendall Square, Broad Canal, Fort Washington Park, Lindstrom Field, Riverside Press Park, Corporal Burns Park, John F. Kennedy Memorial Park, Riverbend Park, Longfellow Park, and Sekler Playlot. Improving this existing network to help the various park spaces realize their full potential is also important.

Recent and ongoing projects that significantly enrich and expand this network include 1) the Central Park at North Point, required by City zoning and the North Point development permit, 2) the DCR North Point Park, 3) the new public park at Western Avenue and Memorial Drive 4) Broad Canal and South Plaza of Cambridge Research Park/Kendall Square (improvements required by the City as part of development special permits). The new South Plaza creates a flexible space near the water that can accommodate passive recreation but is still available for programming by adjacent uses and the City. The project also provides a new point of access to the water through a dock for canoes and kayaks and a boardwalk that provides the long-awaited complement to the walkway on the other side of the canal.

This existing network of public and private open space accessible to the public should be strengthened, where possible. Any future parks and public spaces developed within a quarter-mile of the riverfront should be responsive to its proximity and create connections to the river. Opportunities will likely occur as part of the Alexandria Real Estate project in Eastern Cambridge and future development projects along the riverfront. When implemented, the project will create two open spaces – between Second and Third Streets at Rogers Street and a triangular park at the intersection of Land Boulevard and Binney Street.



The traffic island near the Weeks Footbridge could be made more pleasant.

Another opportunity exists in the small open space at the intersection of Memorial Drive, DeWolfe, and Cowperthwaite Streets. This area, across from the Weeks Footbridge, is a key point of connection between the neighborhood and the river. However, the open space at this corner has not been assessed with an eye to enhancing its visual appeal, and it currently lacks character. This is due, in part, to the practical constraint of underground steam pipes that make the area less hospitable to trees, but it seems possible that some landscaping attention could create an attractive plaza at this location.

The Cambridge section of the river does not present as many opportunities to get close to the water as is possible on the Boston side or further upstream in Watertown. Existing structures on the river, such as the concrete outflows that step into the river (some even with handrails), could be expanded slightly. With the addition of benches, these could create lookout points offering scenic vistas of the river. The existing boat dock off Cambridge Parkway could provide a place to commune with the river, if access to it could be improved.

The DCR closes Memorial Drive in Cambridge between Western Avenue and the Eliot Bridge on Sundays starting the last week of April until the second week of November, extending the park environment and creating a festive, car-free atmosphere on the river. Hundreds of people enjoy the river each Sunday to picnic, stroll, bicycle, and skate. It might be worth considering whether this event could be extended in duration. The success of this closure also invites the question of whether it might be possible to similarly activate the river's edge further downstream in East Cambridge, perhaps along Cambridge Parkway, which carries sparse traffic on most days, is close to Lechmere Station and Boston, and is proximate to other attractions such as Lechmere Canal, the CambridgeSide Galleria, and the Museum of Science.

Further opportunities to activate the riverfront include ideas such as encouraging water taxis to ply the river, for example between Lechmere Canal and Harvard Square and by allowing and encouraging food vendors – food carts in the parks, a food concession at Magazine Beach, and restaurants and cafes open to the public in currently private boathouses.



Access to the river at Front Park in East Cambridge.

Development

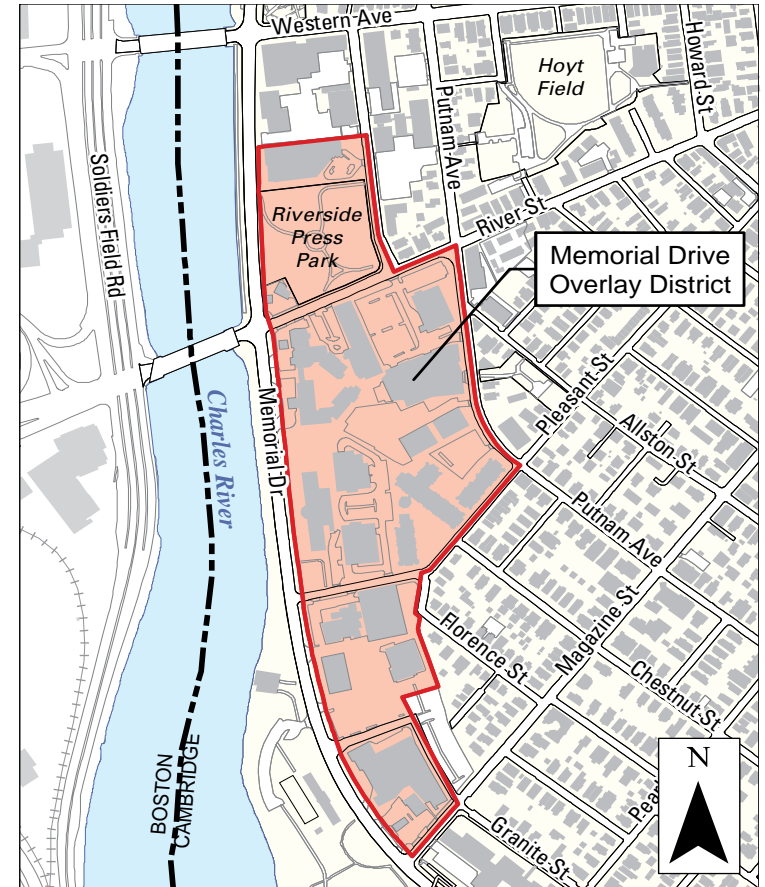
Design Considerations and Guidelines

The Memorial Drive Overlay District addresses the area along the river between Magazine Street and Western Avenue as shown. These are arguably the blocks with the most remaining development potential along the river. The overlay district creates an Area of Special Planning Concern: this triggers project review and a series of development guidelines to encourage active uses along the river, it encourages housing, and it improves landscaping standards.

Additional guidelines are recommended for development spanning the entire riverfront corridor, including development parcels within a quarter-mile of the river that may help provide critical connections to the river. Proposed corridor-wide design guidelines would encourage:

- Strong pedestrian and bicycle connections to the riverfront through large development sites and by improving adjacent streets, sidewalks and pathways.
- Active uses fronting the river such as retail, restaurants, residences, building lobbies and entrances.
- Public open spaces that front the river or that help to create a link in the open space network that connects to the riverfront.

These goals could be addressed by creating a Charles River Overlay and companion design guidelines or by referencing the Charles River Plan and, therefore, the above mentioned goals in Article 19 of the Zoning Ordinance, so that the broad goals may be considered during project review and site specific solutions developed along with project proponents.



Chapter 3 identified a few areas along the riverfront with remaining development potential that do not fit well with the vision for a green, vibrant, people-friendly edge along the river, and which would benefit from a transformation in use and character. These are principally the Micro Center/Trader Joe's shopping area across from Magazine Beach and the cluster of gas stations at the intersection of Memorial Drive and River Street. The transformation of these places, if deemed appropriate, would require further study with community members to refine the vision for the areas and possibly rezone the areas. At the shopping center site, the City's Riverside Road should be evaluated to determine how to make it more like a typical street, rather than being indistinguishable from the private parking lot.

C. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

This section provides a summary of recommendations noted throughout the report that would help to achieve the goals for the riverfront enumerated above.

Riverfront-wide Recommendations

- ✦ Support the creation of destinations along the riverfront, such as well-shaded seating clusters, food kiosks, trees, "look-outs" that would provide opportunities to pause and enjoy the views, and opportunities for informal and innovative play.
- ✦ Maintain and enhance the tree canopy.
- ✦ Encourage welcoming and active ground-floor uses along the riverfront.
- ✦ Improve the flow of pedestrians to and along the river. (Especially with more street trees, improved sidewalks, street lighting, and street furnishings such as benches.)
- ✦ Improve the flow of bicycles to and along the river throughout its length in Cambridge. (Especially with regard to connections from the Bedford to Boston Harbor route, to the Dr. Paul Dudley White path along the river, and to bicycles coming from Cambridge city streets.)
- ✦ Analyze the feasibility of additional boat access: areas to put in and take out canoes and kayaks as well as the possibility of a water taxi connecting points of interest on either side of the river banks.

RIVERFRONT-WIDE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Seek further improvements along the DCR-owned river frontage — benches, kiosks, trees, “look-outs” that would provide opportunities to pause and enjoy views of the riverfront
- Maintain and enhance tree canopy
- Encourage welcoming and active ground-floor uses along the riverfront
- Improve pedestrian flow to the river (street trees, improved sidewalks, and street lighting)
- Improve bicycle flow to and along the river
- Analyze feasibility of additional boat access
- Support regular events and activities that bring people to the river

LOCATION-SPECIFIC OPPORTUNITIES

1. Bridge to Paul Revere Landing in Charlestown
2. Future Skateboard Park
3. Future use of remnant parcel
4. Pedestrian bridge between North Point Park and O'Brien Highway
5. O'Brien Highway pedestrian improvements
6. Reuse of DCR stable and boathouse buildings
7. Museum Point improvements
8. Pedestrian connection along Museum of Science
9. Land Boulevard crossings
10. Front Park improvements
11. Planned new Rogers Street Park
12. Planned new triangle park at Binney and First St
13. Broad Canal improvements
14. DCR's Phase II plan —benches, kiosks, etc.
15. Grand Junction multi-use path
16. Improve existing and evaluate new crossing of the Grand Junction railroad track
17. Improve pedestrian and bike crossing of Memorial Drive at Magazine Beach
18. Phase II of Magazine Beach improvements – tot lot, pathways, improve lookout/river viewing area
19. Create vision for the Trader Joe's/Microcenter site – Riverside Road
20. Create vision for gas station parcels at Memorial Drive and River Street
21. Open space improvements at Memorial Drive and Dewolfe St
22. Utilize opportunities for scenic lookout using existing outfall areas
23. Improve Memorial Drive crossing
24. Improvements at Sekler Playlot
25. Pedestrian and bike improvements at intersection of Memorial Drive and Greenough Boulevard— crossings, sidewalks
26. Improve connection between Strawberry Hill and West Cambridge neighborhoods and river
27. Potential quiet lookout area near boat club /Jerry's Landing historical site
28. Hell's Half Acre wetland and potential open space
29. Vision for Greenough Boulevard



RIVERFRONT RECOMMENDATIONS LEGEND

	Potential New Water Access		Potential New Open Space
	Potential Water Access Improvement		Potential Open Space Improvement
	Potential for Site (Re)development		Needs Further Study
	Potential New Bicycle/Pedestrian Connection		Potential Bicycle/Pedestrian Improvement
	Potential Lookout		

- ✦ Support efforts to make the river swimmable and provide points of access for swimming.
- ✦ Support activities, both regular and special ones, such as the summer-long Riverbend Park and the variety of Charles River Conservancy and other cultural and sporting events that bring people to the river.

SEGMENT-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

A. NORTH POINT RIVERFRONT

Connections

- ✦ Over the longer term, complete the series of actions in Cambridge needed to link the regional multi-use path from Bedford to the Boston Harbor.
- ✦ Continue to support the pedestrian bridge, designed during the New Charles River Basin Citizens Advisory Committee process and required in the Memorandum of Understanding between the City and the State, linking North Point Park directly to O'Brien Highway.

Open Space

- ✦ Address the need for maintenance and safety monitoring of the emerging North Point neighborhood, especially the new DCR riverfront park.
- ✦ Continue to support the Charles River Conservancy on implementation of the planned skateboard park.

Development

- ✦ Meet with the Commonwealth to ensure that the future use of the remnant parcel complements the public's enjoyment of the riverfront.

B. CHARLES RIVER DAM/MSGR. O'BRIEN HIGHWAY TO LONGFELLOW BRIDGE

Connections

- Monitor the required pedestrian improvements to O'Brien Highway, as per the North Point PUD plan and permit.
- Keep a focus on the needed pedestrian connection along the river face of the Museum of Science—seek a process and funding to implement the design of more than a decade ago.
- Find ways to improve Land Boulevard for pedestrian access from the neighborhood to the river, such as additional crosswalks, reducing the width of pavement, etc.
- Along many pedestrian ways to the river, coordinate new street trees with public works projects as they are being designed and implemented.

Open Space

- Improve Museum Point by adding more tables and seating areas, boat access, etc.
- Enhance Front Park with more benches, landscaping, etc.
- Evaluate the Cambridge Parkway green space for improved use for a variety of activities.

Development

- Work with DCR to encourage appropriate, lively reuse of their stable and boat-house buildings located between the Museum of Science and Land Boulevard.

C. LONGFELLOW BRIDGE TO BOSTON UNIVERSITY BRIDGE

Connections

- ✦ Implement the plan for the Grand Junction multi-use path.

Open Space

- ✦ Seek further improvements along the DCR-owned frontage, as part of the next phase of the state's plan for this area—benches, kiosks, etc.

Development

- ✦ No changes anticipated along this frontage.

D. BOSTON UNIVERSITY BRIDGE TO WESTERN AVENUE

Connections

- ✦ Implement the plan for the Grand Junction multi-use path.
- ✦ Address the existing crossing of the Grand Junction railroad track at Fort Washington, by improving the pedestrian connection to the neighborhood as well as to Vassar Street.
- ✦ Encourage MIT's plans for an additional crossing at Pacific Street.

Open Space

- ✦ Monitor the next phase of Magazine Beach improvements, particularly with respect to elements such as trees, improved lookout/river viewing area, and planned improvements to the tot lot and pathways.
- ✦ Look for ways to increase the use of Magazine Beach as a destination for informal social activity for users of all ages—consideration of food kiosks, regular programs, etc.

Development

- ✦ Look for ways to improve access to the river from the neighborhood via the Trader Joe's site, particularly via the City-owned Riverside Road which is now indistinguishable from the private parking lot.

- Future redevelopment along the river should incorporate building design and site planning that responds to the river and includes active uses. Potential areas where change would be desirable include the Micro Center/Trader Joe’s site and the gas stations at River Street and Memorial Drive.

E. WESTERN AVENUE BRIDGE TO CAMBRIDGE/ WATERTOWN LINE

Connections

- Monitor Harvard plans to make stronger connections from Cambridge to Allston, especially looking at possible modifications to the Lars Anderson Bridge.
- Improve connection between Strawberry Hill and West Cambridge neighborhoods and river.

Open Space

- Consider enhancements along DCR property, such as waterside “look-outs” that would provide more opportunities to enjoy close-up views of the riverfront.
- Consider improvements at Sekler Playlot.
- Make pedestrian and bike improvements at intersection of Memorial Drive and Greenough Boulevard– crossings, sidewalks.

Development

- No changes anticipated along this frontage.

D. IMPLEMENTATION

CITY ACTIONS

Capital Improvements: Given state ownership of the land along the Charles River as well as Memorial Drive, the City of Cambridge will need to work in cooperation with the Commonwealth and other property owners to implement physical changes along the riverfront. However, there are some open space parcels, such as Front Park in Segment B, where the City has full site control. Improvements in these cases may be more easily implemented

through the City's normal park improvement process, funded through the City's capital budget. The same is true of sidewalk and roadway improvements along City-owned roads leading to the river. The priorities established in this plan will guide the city in future years as it identifies citywide priorities for capital improvements.

Zoning, Project Review, and Design Guidelines: This plan offers a vision for future redevelopment in areas along the river. The City may consider zoning changes and an expansion of design guidelines, particularly for parcels where development potential remains and change is desirable. Additionally, this plan will serve as a guiding document when City staff and the Planning Board review future proposed development along the river.

CAMBRIDGE COOPERATION WITH OTHER GOVERNMENT ENTITIES

As discussed earlier, the River and adjacent areas fall under the jurisdiction of many state and local agencies, and a significant amount of the riverfront land is under institutional ownership. All of these entities would have significant input and control over Implementation of changes along the river.

State agencies including the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the Department of Transportation (MassDOT) manage the Charles River Reservation and related infrastructure — Memorial Drive, Land Boulevard, Cambridge Parkway, Greenough Boulevard, Msgr. O'Brien Highway, the Charles River Dam, and the bridges across the river. Memorial Drive improvements and those along state roads and intersections will require collaboration with the DCR and MassDOT. In 2001, improvements were made at the Harvard Bridge and to the reconfiguration of Memorial Drive travel lanes to create improved public open space in that area through a partnership of the Commonwealth, the City, and MIT. This example serves as a model for future collaboration.

The City also partners with the DCR in the management and programming of the sports facilities at Magazine Beach. Improvements to this park are ongoing. Additional City-DCR collaboration may also be appropriate with respect to Museum Point, Riverbend Park, Sekler Playlot, and Gerry's Landing as outlined in the Open Space discussion above.

Among City of Cambridge agencies, the Conservation Commission has jurisdiction over actions within the 100 year floodplain of the Charles River, and the Cambridge Historical

Commission is responsible for protecting and preserving Cambridge’s significant buildings and neighborhoods, and thus has the authority to review changes to the riverfront.

CAMBRIDGE COOPERATION WITH PRIVATE ENTITIES

The Charles River environs is of great interest to institutions—such as Harvard University, MIT, and the Museum of Science—that own significant land along the waterfront, and to non-profit agencies—such as the Charles River Watershed Association (CRWA) and the Charles River Conservancy—whose missions are to protect and improve the environmental, cultural, and recreational resource that is the Charles River.

The Charles River Watershed Association works to study and improve water quality in the Charles. The Charles River Conservancy has been building a constituency for more active use of the riverfront. Both groups have helped bring people to the river—through the CRWA’s river cleanups and the annual Head of the Charles race and the Conservancy’s bridge lighting initiative and collaboration with Revels to produce the annual RiverSing event.

A series of boathouses, both private and institutional, lie along the state-owned Charles River Reservation. It would be desirable to see a public component accommodated within this existing infrastructure – the inclusion of restaurants and cafés open to the public, and access to bathrooms are ideas worthwhile to explore with the boat clubs and their parent institutions, as well as with the State.

Harvard University’s plans in Allston, now delayed but possibly to be implemented in the future, would, to some extent, impact the character of the waterfront and transportation patterns in sections of the riverfront, particularly the flow of bicycles and pedestrians across the river. Harvard owns a significant amount of land along the Cambridge riverfront, currently occupied primarily by student residences known as the river houses, and has partnered with the City to create the new Riverside Park, now a popular public destination along the Charles River.

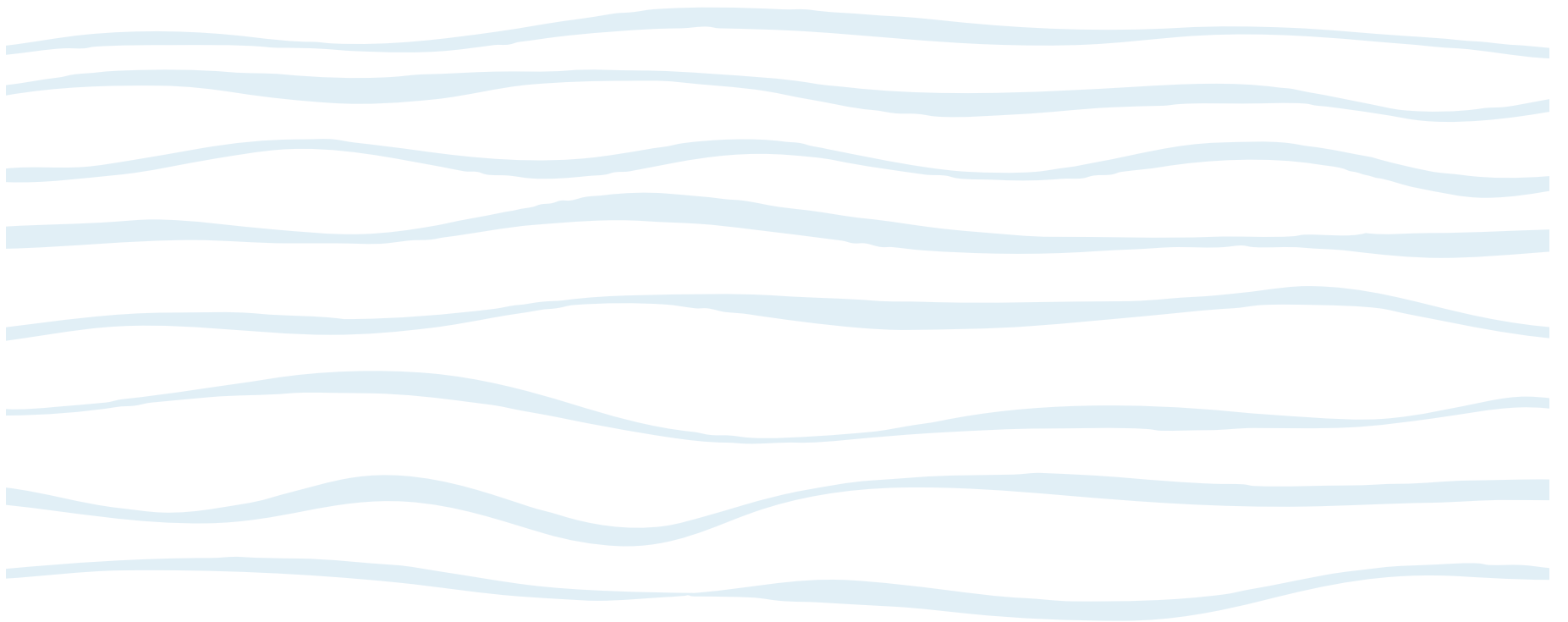
As mentioned above, MIT has partnered with the City and the State to improve the waterfront area in the past and ongoing development of the MIT campus, such as the recent Sloan School expansion, and could help further activate parts of the river’s edge. MIT’s role will also be crucial in providing improved connections across the railroad tracks that are currently a barrier between the waterfront and the Cambridgeport neighborhood, which is

home to new MIT dormitories in addition to the longstanding residential districts. Finally, the City has long hoped for an improved bicycle and pedestrian connection along the Charles River Dam, for which the Museum of Science's participation would be critical.

Continued collaboration and partnership among the City, State agencies, institutions such as Harvard, MIT, and the Museum of Science, as well as private property owners and the residents who live in neighborhoods near the river, will be a crucial ingredient in fostering positive change along the Cambridge riverfront.



The East Cambridge Riverfront is defined by projects from the 1980s, including 9 acres of new park land, housing, office and hotel buildings.





CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department, 344 Broadway, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

Voice: 617-349-4600 Fax: 617-349-4669 TTY: 617-349-4621 Web: www.cambridgema.gov/CDD