A Citizen's Vision for Allston Landing

Looking at the Allston/I-90 opportunity from the River and the Community's Point of View





Allston Landing

From the 19th-century Watertown dam to Boston Harbor, the Charles River winds its way in front of some of the best education and health sciences institutions in the world, along densely packed neighborhoods with picturesque sailboats and rowing shells skimming along the water's surface, and past its bridges, lagoons, and such beloved venues as the Hatch Shell, the Community Boat House and the Boston Museum of Science. The Charles is an attractive, connective ten-mile corridor running through the heart of our urban area.

That is... except for a stretch right in the center...

In Allston, between the River Street and BU bridges, competing needs of rail, turnpike and Soldiers Field Road have reduced the park to a narrow, dangerous sidewalk along the river's edge.

Massive redevelopment will need to occur. Together, we can use needed environmental and water quality improvements within an integrated open space framework to turn this blighted land into a shiny new gem of an urban district, a centerpiece of this place we call Boston ... an example for the world.



Allston Landing site today.



Allston Landing sits in the middle of the Charles River Basin.

Design Principles and Objectives

- Improve water quality and open space while balancing the goals of the owner (MassDOT) with the open space objectives of all concerned: the stakeholders, the greater Allston-Boston-Cambridge community, and the river environment.
- Apply progressive urban design goals, for this is a major citybuilding exercise that seeks to make Allston Landing an integrated, street-activated, identity-rich neighborhood on a site larger than the Prudential Center and Copley Place combined.
- Integrate Allston Landing into its surrounding urban fabric by designing a road network that makes strong bus, bike and pedestrian connections to and from Commonwealth Avenue both

- north and south, as well as east-west connections to other points in the city.
- Facilitate air-rights development, greater connectivity to surrounding areas, and lower investment-capital and maintenance costs by rebuilding the Mass Pike at-grade.
- Incorporate a significant amount of affordable workforce housing into the mixed-use development to create a vibrant 24/7 neighborhood.
- Incorporate public open space per existing Allston metrics: 5 acres of protected open space per 1,000 residents.
- Develop a continuous and uninterrupted esplanade along the Charles River with both pedestrian and bicycle paths, as part of the larger regional circulation network.
- Create a large, open public gathering space by rebuilding Soldiers Field Road at least 300 feet away from the Charles River, creating a flexible-use, highactivity park with a river inlet.

- Create a multipurpose green landscape and stormwater management corridor that connects the Allston community to the Charles River with pedestrian and bicycle paths, in a way that avoids vehicular conflicts.
- Connect the Commuter Rail's Allston Station to the river in a direct, accessible, visually attractive manner.
- 11. Make the "Throat" a unique, engaging urban design feature of Boston that can serve as a model for riverside and waterfront development throughout the country and the world.
- 12. Incorporate narrow streets and paths into the vision to form Allston Landing into a rich pedestrian urban environment.

LET'S MAKE IT REAL!

The Vision

Allston Landing is about people. It first focuses on those living in Allston and those who use the Charles River and its bordering parklands. But the resulting vision is much more inclusive than that. It provides benefits to a host of key stakeholders: Cambridgeport, abutting universities (Harvard, Boston University and MIT), Houghton Chemical Company, and the traveling public.

This plan divides Allston Landing into four sub-areas, plus the required rail and turnpike areas below the proposed air-rights development. Each has its own typology, use mix, themes and character. The open space opportunity in each is the focus of this vision. Each has its obvious champions:

Salt Creek

Champions: Harvard; Water Quality entities; the Allston Community; Boston

Anticipated Primary Program: Residential mixed-use

Open Space Features:

- A tree-lined grand boulevard leading to the active "West Station" plaza
- The long-anticipated "People's Pike" linking the Allston community with the park and river
- An activity-laden, ecologyfocused linear park
- Salt Creek Stormwater containment and cleansing corridor

Table Top

Champions: Harvard; Water Quality entities; the Allston Community; Boston

Anticipated Primary Use: Full-range mixed-use

Open Space Features:

- Major intermodal transportation hub and central connection point
- West Station Plaza and Belvedere with views and clear access to the river and parklands below
- Strong connections to Commonwealth Avenue, BU and Brookline
- Direct access from Allston via Cambridge Street Bridge improvements

River Park

Champions: DCR; Boston; Charles River Conservancy; Charles River Alliance

Anticipated Primary Use: Active and passive outdoor recreation, education and entertainment

Open Space Features:

- Major new Allston park of many open public uses
- The length of the water's edge, an active Allston Esplanade, along and even over the river
- "Allston Cove" A new piece of river
- New foot/cycle bridges connecting Cambridge with Boston

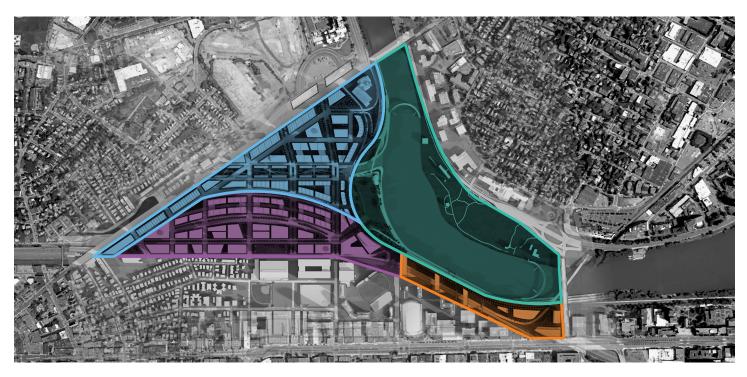
BU River Village

Champions: Boston University; DCR; Boston

Anticipated Primary Use: Institutional "air-rights campus"

Open Space Features:

- Rail, Pike and Soldiers
 Field Road at-grade (this
 requires moving park
 pathways onto or over the
 river)
- Major BU "air-rights" opportunity above the Rail and Pike barrels
- A public, multi-use park/ promenade above the Pike, overlooking the river.



Open Space Network

Boston's Allston Landing sits at a critical juncture of river, universities (Harvard, BU, MIT), neighborhoods, and the cities of Boston and Cambridge. Twice the size of the Prudential Center, it is possibly our era's greatest urban design challenge and opportunity.

Much more than a transportation project, Allston Landing's planning and design must be holistic and inclusive, integrating issues of environmental quality, climate change, social equity, alternative transportation modes, high-quality water-related open space, and the needs of future generations.

Its development must also respect the goals and objectives of the owners of the land: Harvard University, Houghton Chemical, and, of course, MassDOT.

Phase I

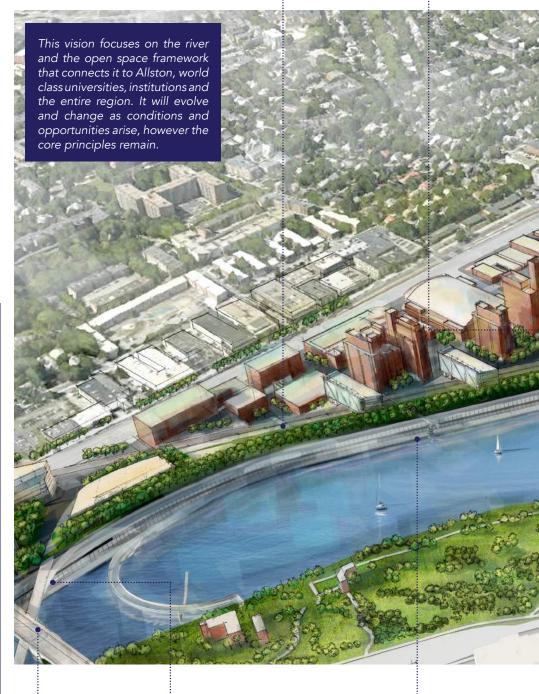


In addition to rail and pike improvements, the initial MassDOT work should include:

- Soldiers Field Road aligned and configured to accommodate a large, active River Park, with safer bike/ foot access at the BU bridge and at River Street and depressed and covered sections as necessary to allow seamless open space to flow to the river;
- Improvements as required to provide safe and pleasant park movement along the river through the "Throat" area:
- A core air-rights platform, plus clearances for future air-rights development;
- 4. The Salt Creek stormwater initiative;
- 5. Strong bus, bike and pedestrian connections to Commonwealth Avenuve;
- The "Houghton High Line," a multi-purpose, limited use railspur and public promenade an elevated platform.

Access points from BU onto the "High-Line"

The
"Belvedere,"
from Cambridge
Street to
Commonwealth
Avenue



New park path alignment under BU Bridge Grand junction bike/pedestrian path to East Cambridge/MIT The Allston Esplanade

West Station Plaza and the "High-Line" Belvedere Bus/bike/ pedestrian connections to Commonwealth Avenue

The "Bridge to West Station" complete street connection

Broad, tree-lined pedestrian/bike connections into Allston from the Cambridge Street Bridge



Relocated and reconfigured Soldiers Field Road River Park **Allston Cove**

Salt Creek Linear Park Bike and foot bridges to Cambridge and Magazine Beach Reclaimed parkland with safer pathways at river street

Allston Landing





Allston Landing





Salt Creek

In this low-lying part of the site, the owner, Harvard University, has the opportunity to create one of the most diverse and environmentally sustainable mixed-use communities in the nation, incorporating 'best use' practices across all of its social, physical and environmental aspects.

Build Out

This 16-block at-grade area is bounded by Cambridge Avenue, the Mass Pike, and the Soldiers Field Road/Houghton Spur rights-of-way. With its fine-grained street grid, and its accessibility to the river via a multipurpose linear park, it can accommodate many uses.

Given its proximity to Allston and its unique open-space amenities, an urban residential mixed-use is recommended for this area. The residential uses should focus on affordable workforce housing, with a focus on building a 'walk to work' neighborhood.

For purposes of this vision, multifamily structures are assumed. Building heights range from 4 to 8 stories with ground level commercial uses, particularly along Cambridge Street and fronting the river and the Salt Creek.

Open Space

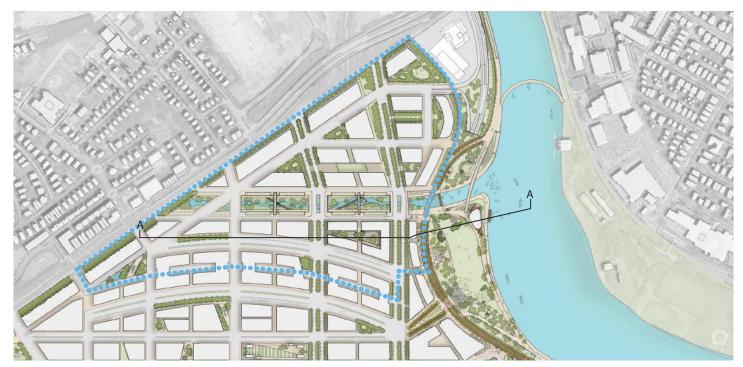
While dotted with small parks, playgrounds and plazas associated with individual blocks of development and its grid of 'complete streets,' the main open-space feature of this area is the Salt Creek Park, which weaves biking and walking trails, with lounging and picnic areas, and is potentially edged with trellises,

pergolas, shops and kiosks into a rich 'rope' of open space activities leading down to the river, greatly enhancing adjacent property values along the way.

This park is a major environmental enhancement related to the water quality of the Charles River. It is the core part of a major stormwater enhancement program that reroutes Salt Creek, currently buried in a century-old underground viaduct, into a state-of-the-art day-lighted stormwater treatment facility, similar to that found today at Alewife Brook.



Salt Creek Aerial.



The Salt Creek neighborhood is the at-grade portion of the build-able site.



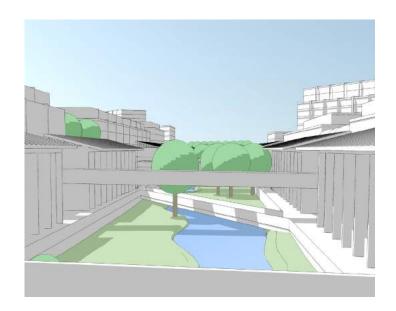
A-A: Longitudinal Section through Salt Creek Park.

Movement

This area, with its "complete streets" urban grid, serves pedestrians, bikers and vehicles well. The streets are in many forms, ranging from alleyways to high-volume boulevards, primarily serving traffic to and from the Mass Pike.

However, its main feature is the long-sought "People's Pike," a set of safe and generous bike and pedestrian pathways that connect Allston to the river along the Salt Creek Linear Park.

Bus and jitney shuttle services run regularly along Cambridge Street and the two new boulevards crossing this area from Harvard's Allston campus en route to West Station and Commonwealth Avenue beyond.



Salt Creek





Table Top

This is Harvard's air-rights development area at Allston Landing. Its platform spans both railyards and the Mass Pike. Fully built out, it would cover more than xxx buildable acres, yielding more than 4 million sf of new development.

Build Out

The West Station Transportation Center is the major organizing feature of this air-rights platform. Commuter rail, bus, taxi and drop-off facilities are located here. Major bike and pedestrian pathways lead here.

Building heights are shown as six to ten stories; however, actual height will be determined by uses and density required to economically justify air-rights development.

It is assumed that high-value properties with river views and those along Cambridge street will have 24/7 uses, such as hotels, commercial, front office and residential, while the interior of the platform will be devoted to more office, research and technology manufacturing.

The top of the platform is approximately 26 feet above the top of the rail of the train tracks below and 22 feet above the eight turnpike lanes. To facilitate future development,

sub-surface analysis and actual construction of the initial Phase One area around the Transportation Center should be built as part of the MassDOT I-90/Rail project.

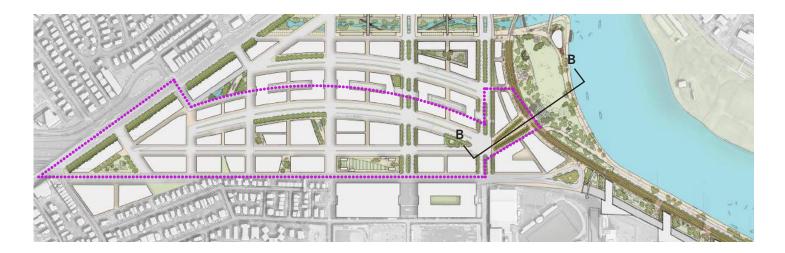
Open Space

Small parks, playgrounds and plazas are associated with individual blocks of development, and an overall grid of 'complete streets' is modified to accommodate the rail and turnpike alignments below.

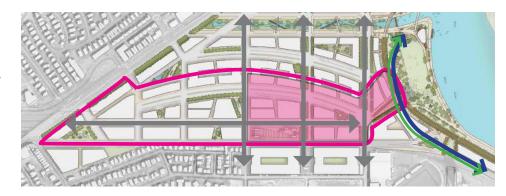
The primary open space on Table Top is an active plaza running from the main entry/egress form West Station directly to the Belvedere, with open views and convenient access to the river beyond. This plaza is imagined as a active open-air marketplace with outdoor cafés, well-shaded with tree and fabric canopies.



Table Top Aerial.



The First Phase (I-90/rail reconstruction) should include a reconfigured Soldiers Field Road, an initial air-rights platform centered on West Station, the Charles River Belvedere, and key arterial connecting streets.



B-B: Section from West Station to the River Park.

Movement

This area, with its tree-lined "complete streets" urban grid, serves pedestrians, bikers and vehicles equally well. The streets are in many forms, ranging from alleyways to high-volume boulevards, primarily serving traffic to and from the Mass Pike.

Rail commuters can walk directly from West Station to the Charles River Belvedere and down to the river, as well as to adjacent development. There is easy access along the Belvedere to new BU development in the "Throat" area.

Streets from Table Top connect to Allston via the Cambridge Street Bridge, north to Harvard, and south to BU and Commonwealth Avenue.



Air-rights development was a major part of the I-5 construction in Seattle.

River Park

At River Park we can create a coordinated, planned park that straddles both sides of the Charles, connecting Boston and Cambridge in ways never before imagined. Allston Landing can provide the waterside land to make it happen.

Today

On the Boston side of the Charles in this central area is only a narrow path shared by cyclists, walkers and joggers. It lies between the heavily traveled Soldiers Field Road, with the Mass Pike looming overhead and an unkempt river bank. It is a dangerous and very unpleasant experience for those moving along it.

On the other side of the river, Magazine Beach in Cambridge is undergoing significant redevelopment as an active programmed recreation area with ballfields, the Riverside Boat Club, the DCR swimming pool, and the historic powder magazine that gives the area its name.

No direct and dedicated bike/footpath connections link these two sites.

On the river itself, rowing is the major activity. At the Basin's midpoint is one of the widest stretches of the Charles, open to new uses and users.

The Vision

While the ultimate intent is to make this area one large, active park venue spanning and incorporating the river, this work focuses on the Boston side of the park and potential new cross-river connections. The Boston park, Allston Landing, would have several distinct venues:

The Allston Esplanade

This is a 40-60 foot wide biking/jogging/strolling corridor running along side the river from the BU Bridge upriver to the River Street Bridge. Improvements include a realigned segment under the BU and Grand Junction Bridges; a wide,1,000-foot-long causeway suspended above the river in the "Throat" area; a broad riverside pathway along the water's edge; a bike/foot bridge over Allston Cove with widened parkland providing safer movement with the removal of the River Street off-ramp and the construction of a bike/pedestrian underpass at the River Street Bridge.

The Meadow

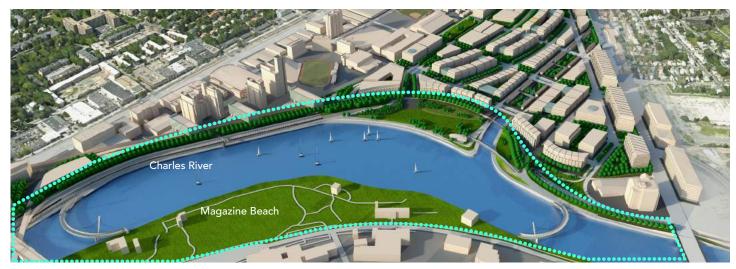
This new centrally located waterside park venue with programmed activities is both a local and a regional destination attraction. It features a large multipurpose lawn, as well as a hillside that buffers the venue from vehicle impacts and connects the air-rights platform, perhaps with a grand stairway and seating area



Allston Esplanade pathway safety enhancements at River Street ...



... and at the BU/Grand Junction Bridges.



River Park is just that... a waterside park with a beautiful river running through it!

for concerts, a sledding hill, sloping play areas, sunning areas, and a birch grove for shaded relaxation. Drifts of trees are found at the lawn edges for picnicking and lounging.perhaps with a grand stairway/ seating area for concerts; a sledding hill; sloping play areas, sunning areas and a birch grove for shaded relaxation. Drifts of trees are found at the lawn edges for picnicking and lounging.

The Cove

Salt Creek empties into this cove, which is created as part of flood-retention remediation caused by other activities in the area.

We imagine the cove to be an active docking area for canoes and kayaks, as well as dinner boats, a ferry shuttle, and occasional private craft.

A major feature of this area is a four-season dockside restaurant with shaded seating area.

Charles River Belvedere

The Belvedere is an elevated promenade structured on a platform above the westbound lanes of the Mass Pike and running from Commonwealth Avenue to River Street. It shares this platform with

potential BU air-rights development and associated outdoor activities. It is accessible from the Allston Esplanade at several locations along its length.

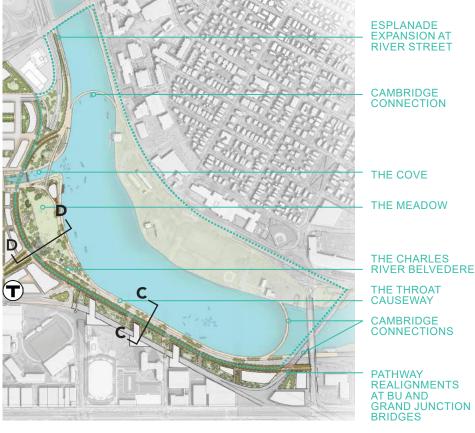
Cambridge Connections

River Park includes both sides of the river, serving the people of Allston and Cambrdgeport, the nearby university students, and, indeed, the entire region. Both Allston Landing and Magazine Beach are better when strongly linked to each other, and the river is made into a stronger amenity for the region.



Comprehensive urban design integrates buildings, water, highway, bike/foot paths, and stormwater treatment into the larger openspace framework.

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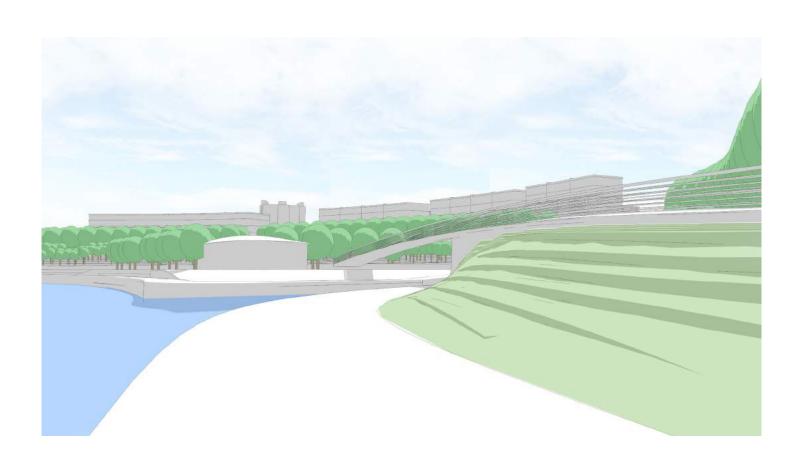


C-C: Cross Section at the "Throat."

D-D: Section from West Station to the River.

River Park





BU River Village

With easy access to the elevated Charles River Belvedere promenade, this can be a unique Boston University airrights development opportunity with up to a million square feet of new university facilities on the Charles.

Build Out

The major opportunities for air-rights development at Allston Landing lie at either end of the "Throat" area, i.e., to the east at Commonwealth Avenue or, adjacent to West Station.

The mid-portion of the air-rights development platform is a narrow strip, approximately 60 feet wide, above the eastbound lines of the turnpike. The platform above the westbound lanes is reserved for the Charles River Belvedere. At least three at-grade spring points lie on BU parcels from which large scale development could connect with structures spanning the rail lines and landing on the air rights.

Building heights are shown as six to ten stories; however, actual height will be determined by uses and density required to economically justify air-rights development. Given their prominence on the Belvedere, the promenadelevel floors should have a maximum of transparency, accessibility, and public commercial and service use.

The top of the air-rights platform is approximately 22 feet above the turnpike lanes. To facilitate future development, sub-surface analysis and actual construction of the area adjacent to the Transportation Center should be coordinated and built as part of the MassDOT I-90/Rail project.

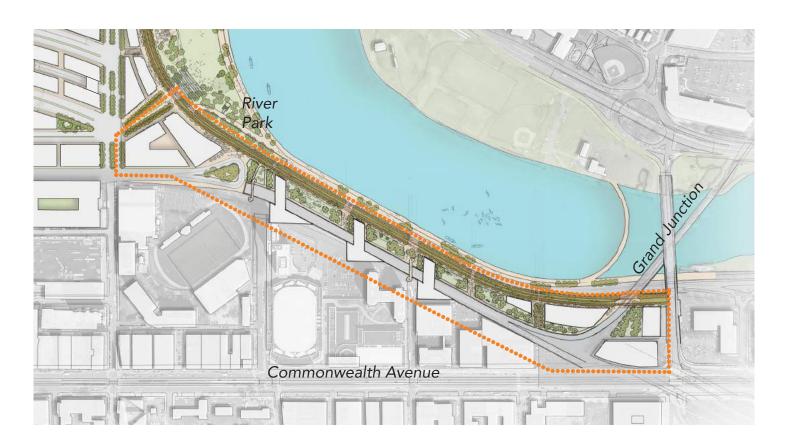
Open Space

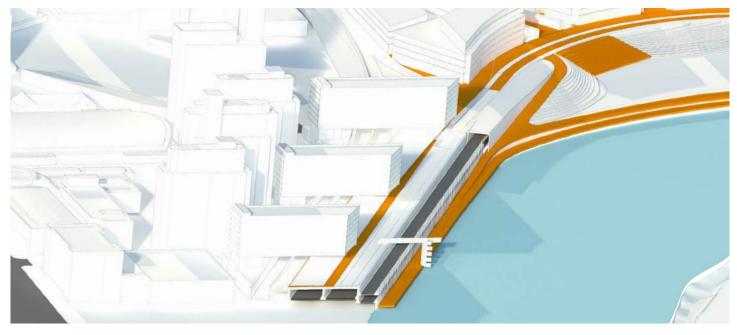
The proposed Charles River Belvedere promenade overlooks River Park and the Charles River, with open views to both.

The Belvedere is imagined as an active, well-shaded promenade, with kiosks, lounging pods, lookout points, with grand viewing for the Head of the Charles and a host of outdoor activities.



The view to the river from West Station.

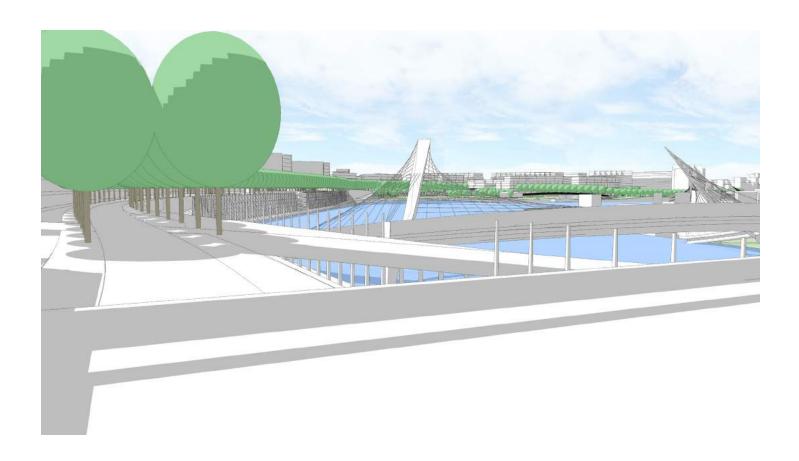


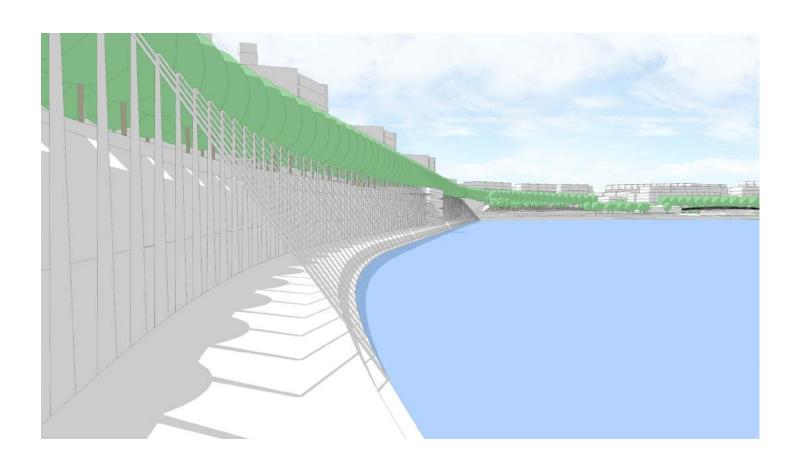


Movement

Movement along the Belvedere accommodates both foot and service traffic. As stated above, air-rights development and the Belvedere promenade are easily accessible from adjacent BU land and Commonwealth Avenue in several locations. Shallow ramps lead up from the Allston Esplanade.

BU River Village





Open Space & The Environment

Open Space and Environmental Quality are infrastructure considerations every bit as important as the transportation network. MassDOT's I-90 plan must ensure they work together to make a greater whole.

Open Space

Public open space has often been called the "lungs of the city," vitally important for the health of the individual, the community, and even the wildlife living among us. An open space infrastructure that builds connectivity and identity is essential.

We must avoid a fragmented and "parcelized" design approach, e.g., discreet parks that can be dropped into a neutral building grid. Such an approach features the street grid as the key structuring element,

with open space and environmental considerations seen as something that can be plugged in later.

Open space and the overarching demands of the environment must be seen as "infrastructure" elements that help structure the overall development framework. In perhaps the best example, at the vision's proposed Salt Creek Park, both its role (as pedestrian and stormwater corridors), and huge scale, are integral to the overall infrastructure framework,

not simply additive, dispersed parts.

The auto-focused, fragmented approach is too simplistic, with the street grid as the key structuring element and open spaces as parts that can be plugged in



Allston Landing's vision is built on an open-space network of large waterside parklands, plazas, promenades, vest-pocket parks, connecting pathways, and streetscapes.

The Environment

Allston Landing primarily lies in what were historically marshlands, near the midpoint of the Charles River Basin, with a long buried Salt Creek running through it. We must therefore review the ecological and environmental conditions that can be alleviated or resolved, not only for this site, but also for the Basin and river.

Site Clean-up

This site has been a major transportation corridor and storage hub for goods, rail cars and trucks. Toxic spills and micro-particulate pollution are inevitable and must be dealt with. As development moves forward, we must also protect from further harm. Both its environment and the many people who will live, work and play in this area, particularly with regard to the river and its future uses.

Stormwater Treatment

The design and placement of stormwater treatment systems can be a significant environmental and placemaking strategy where parkland, pathways, and a day-lighted 'best practices' stormwater treatment system are interwoven. Nearby examples of successful stormwater / open space systems include: Olmsted's century-old Muddy River and the recent DCR stormwater landscape at Alewife, both bundling amenity and stormwater together as an integrated amenity.

Other Pollution Mitigation

Micro-particulate pollution is a growing concern around transportation corridors. The steady trend away from fossil fuels will help, but even frictional tire wear is a problem. Sound and visual pollution are significant intrusions on both quiet parklands and activity venues. Solid, impermeable walls and roof-decking are recommended for rail and turnpike corridors directly abutting parkland and adjacent development.

Perhaps the most effective strategy for ensuring a healthy environment in this era of climate change and scarcer resources is to:

- Concentrate on making Allston Landing a major public transit hub, that is efficient and convenient that public transit becomes the preferred mode of travel.
- 2. Use Allston Landing as an environmental education venue, helping its users to better understand the consequences of our decisions on the quality of life for our children and grandchildren.

THE 20% OPEN SPACE APPROACH RECOMMENDED IN THE PLACEMAKING STANDARDS (ITEM #48) CAN EASILY SUPPORT A WIDE AND CONTINUOUS OPEN SPACE CIRCULATION SYSTEM WITH A DESTINATION PARK ALONG THE RIVER.

Transportation Network

A comprehensive transportation network includes components large and small: rail infrastructure; a reconfigured interstate interchange; a re-envisioned and tamed Soldiers Field Road; a new overlaying street grid with a variety of street types; and safe, pleasant dedicated pathways accommodating bikers, runners, walkers... using 21st-century ideas and technology.

The Rail Network

Relocate commuter rail tracks, and build a new West Station and support yards per the existing MassDOT alternatives.

Modify the Grand Junction alignment and the two 'at-grade' schemes, in order to:

- Allow more feasible air-rights development in the 'Throat' area;
- 2. Facilitate Commuter Rail movement across the Grand Junction Bridge and into Cambridge and North Station.

I-90 Interchange

This vision assumes an at-grade solution to rail, Pike and Soldiers Field Road reconstruction. The core open space proposals can also be accommodated with the elevated scheme.

Dimensional widths, while providing space for future air-rights development, must infringe as little as possible on the Charles River and adjacent parklands.

Off-ramps and frontage roads must be adjusted to allow a reconfigured Soldiers Field Road and a finer urban street grid.

Soldiers Field Road

Recommendations include:

- Restore Soldiers Field Road and Storrow Drive to high-volume parkway status, with slower speeds and more at-grade intersections.
- Make the Basin a corridor for alternative public transit initiatives, including jitney routes and dedicated bikeways for commuters.
- Driverless electric cars are coming, and this could be a great place to introduce them to the region as a form of flexible public transit.
- Start this process now at Allston Landing, as vertical and horizontal reconfigurations will allow highpriority parkland along the river.

While there are several feasible alternative ways to achieve the park goals, in this illustrative concept Soldiers Field Road remains two lanes in each direction: however. in the 'Throat area' the westbound lanes are elevated, stacking directly above the eastbound lanes. In the center section, the road is placed in a cut-and-cover section to allow free pedestrian movement down into the park. Finally the roadway enters a box section, passing under salt creeks, allowing free movement for bikers and pedestrians to the park and the river.



Urban Streets

Streets, from boulevards to alleys, will be alive with bike and pedestrian movement, as well as significant street activity, such as sidewalk cafes and 'pop-up' events. The streets, as well as the many small plazas adjacent, will be well shaded with appropriate plantings and built campy/overhang shading.

Street widths and amenities follow the recommendations of Boston Complete Streets and the BRA Placemaking Study. Vehicular travel lanes and widths are kept to as minimum.

Major Pathways

Both through and local movement by foot and bike is as important as motorized traffic. While the street grid layout provides a flexible overlay of routes, several are particularly important.

Along the river:

- The new Allston Esplanade is a segment of the PDW Bikeway, including bridge underpasses for walkers and bikers.
- Cruising the BU Belvedere on the riverside of the air-rights platform, is a shored movement corridor for strollers, cyclists, ljitney pedal taxis, service vehicles, and the occasional Houghton delivery.

Also... Water taxis and ferries servicing the length of the Basin.

From Allston:

1. A renovated Cambridge Street

- Bridge and a revamped corridor along Cambridge Street to the river;
- 2. Salt Creek Linear Park into the heart of Allston Landing riverfront;
- A new air-rights street from Cambridge Street Bridge to West Station and the Belvedere and Park beyond.

From BU, Comm. Ave. and Brookline:

Ramps to the air-rights platform:

- via Malvern, Alcorn and Babcock Streets;
- 2. via new BU Development sites onto the "Throat" air-rights area;
- 3. at the intersection of Commowealth Avenue and the BU Bridge.

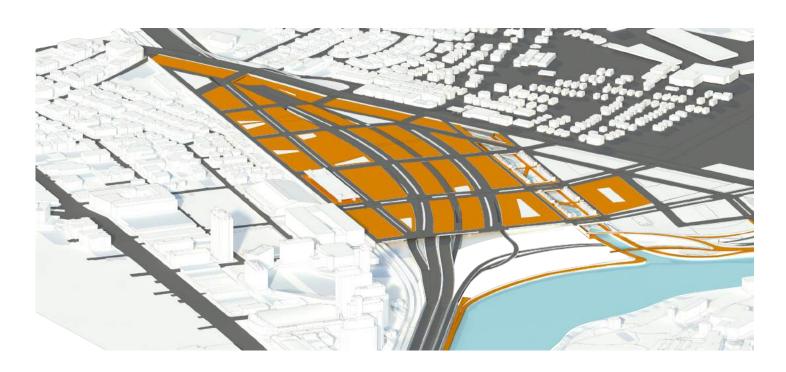
DON'T FORGET, FUTURE CROSS-RIVER CONNECTIONS TO CAMBRIDGE!

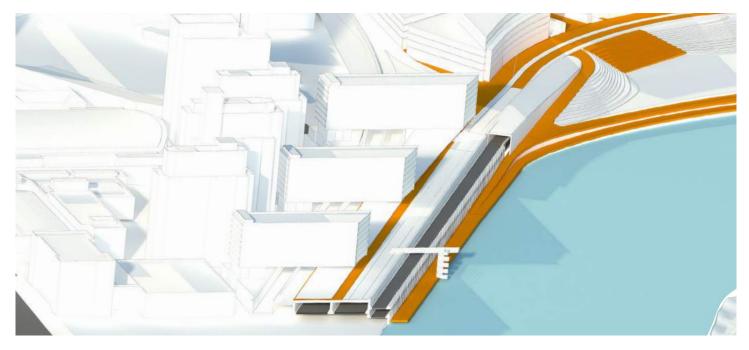


Transportation Network

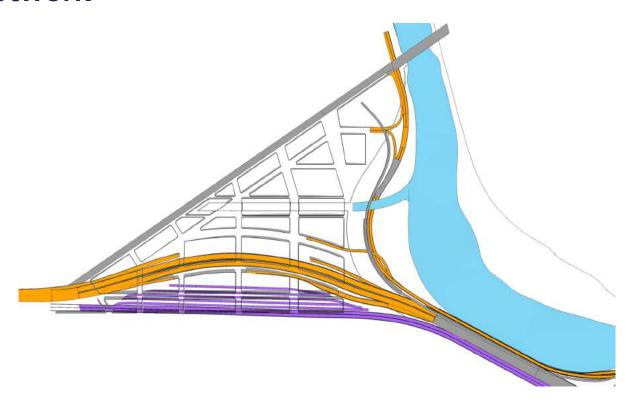


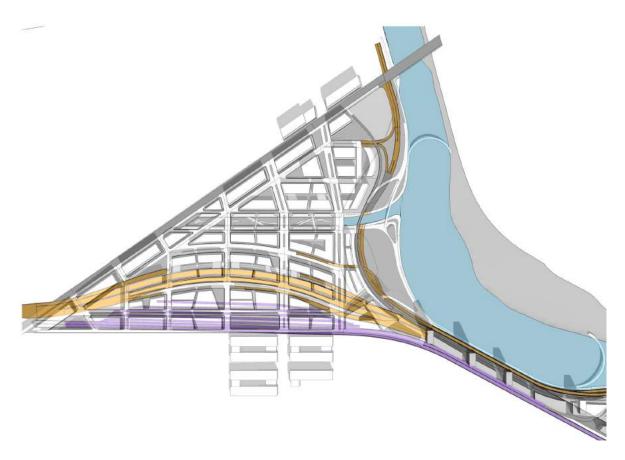


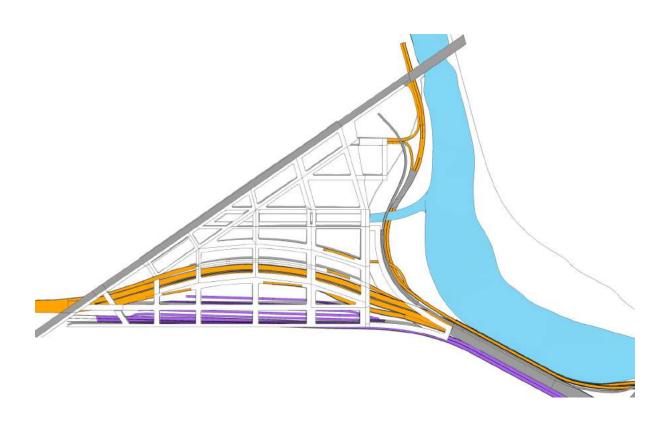




Transportation Network









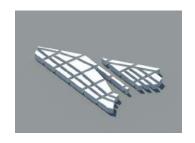
Building Heights

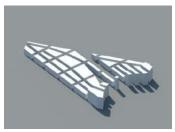


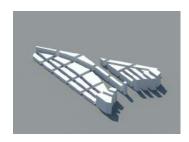


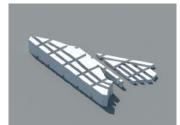


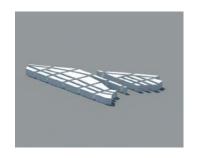


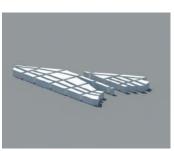


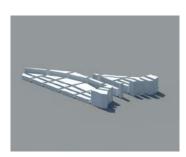




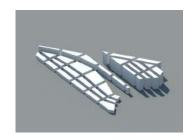


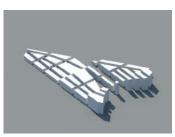


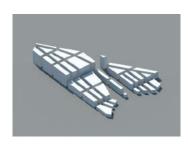


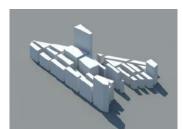


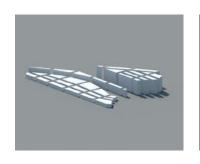


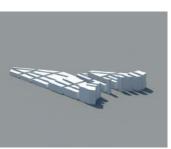


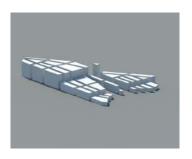


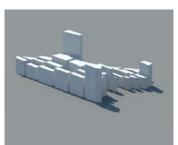












Info

Project Animations



YouTube Channel: goo.gl/4xkYZ9



Acknowledgments

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