Medford Square Master Plan | November 2005







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Medford Square existing conditions and study area

1 introduction



Medford Square is a classic New England Square, where a mix of uses come together in a compact urban village on the banks of the Mystic River. As a walkable district with transit service and opportunities for people to live, work, and play in a vibrant setting, the Square is at the forefront of the Commonwealth's smart growth initiative. Building on the heritage of the area, a number of development opportunities exist in the Square that together with civic improvements will reunite the different parts of the Square into a single thriving center that serves as the cultural, civic, and commercial heart of the City of Medford.

Through public and private investment, the goals for the future of Medford Square are to:

- Create a single identity for the Square by physically and visually uniting the east and west sides
- Encourage mixed use vibrancy with culture, retail, office and housing
- Enhance connections between the river, the retail streets, the surrounding neighborhoods, and regional open space
- Develop the pedestrian character of the Square by balancing transportation modes
- Achieve a higher and better use of land and create value for real estate.

The Master Plan for Medford Square highlights the current assets of the Square and recommends public and private improvements that will create a unified district that is pedestrian friendly and attractive for retail and other private investment. The Commonwealth created an incentive for local communities to develop master plans by providing funding through Executuve Order 418. The City utilized these resources to develop a vision plan. The visioning process created a format for updating a previous master plan prepared in the early 1990's. The vision, which incorporated some of the ideas of the earlier plan, established a basis for the current master plan. Residents, businesses, and the City agreed that the Square should have an active street life, diverse activities day and evening, with family and cultural activities, and should have more residential uses to enhance the qualities of a safe and walkable district.

The City commissioned the current Master Plan in the fall of 2004 to advance the Vision Plan and identify development sites and guidelines, define the riverfront access, recommend transportation and parking improvements, improve the retail tenant mix, and develop a strategy for implementation. The City's highest priorities for implementation are to advance development through the issuance of a developer's request for proposal (RFP) and to identify funding for the first phase of public improvements.

PROCESS

The current master plan builds on a previous visioning process to develop in more detail the development opportunities, ways to connect to the riverfront, and improvements to intersections, circulation, and parking. Strategies to implement the plan are a high priority for all involved, including recommendations for improving the retail tenant mix to make a more lively and interesting center that will invite a diverse population.

The master plan process began fall 2004 with stakeholder interviews, and an analysis of the site, traffic, retail mix, and the market. A number of alternatives were developed and discussed at a well-attended public meeting in December 2004. The alternatives explored a range of heights for redevelopment centered around three different concepts for open space: a riverfront park, a large green around City Hall, and an urban park connecting Riverside Avenue and the riverfront. Different circulation patterns were also discussed.

The presentation was posted on the City's website and stakeholders and residents were invited to submit comments via e-mail. During early 2005, the project team in concert with the City reviewed the public comments and established a preferred direction. This concept plan was refined and presented to the City Council and the public in April 2005.



The Mystic River as it flows through the southern edge of Medford Square

Existing Strengths

The Square lies at the confluence of the Mystic River, Interstate 93, and the Mystic Valley Parkway, between the energy of downtown Boston and the quiet residential neighborhoods around the Middlesex Fells Reservation and Tufts University. Regional transit connects the Square in all directions – to the commuter rail at West Medford, to the Orange Line at Wellington Station and Sullivan Square, and with express buses directly into downtown Boston.

The Mystic River flows peacefully through the Mystic and Alewife park system from the Mystic Lakes to Boston Harbor, passing along the entire southern edge of the Square. Yachts moor just down river of the Square, and the upstream portions of the river are suitable for small boats. The Mystic River Reservation lines the banks of the river upstream, offering passive recreation, active playing fields, the Condon bandshell, and leads to the Mystic Lakes on one branch and to Fresh Pond along the Alewife Brook Parkway. The 2,060-acre Middlesex Fells Reservation lies less than a mile north of Medford Square.

The historic buildings and narrow streets on the west side of the Square retain the charm that distinguishes Massachusetts towns, creating a convenient setting for retail businesses. The architectural details on key buildings create a memorable experience and a sense of arrival in a special place. Strolling through the Square, a number of unique historic destinations stand

CONTEXT

Medford Square gathers energy from surrounding neighborhoods and passing traffic and concentrates it into a network of streets on the banks of the Mystic River. This urban village represents the cultural heart of the City of Medford. In the Square are the City Hall, the Library, churches, the Chevalier Theater, and Springstep, a performing arts studio. Small shops line the streets. The Square is home to professional and medical offices, as well as many residences. Approximately 75,000 people live within a five-minute drive of Medford Square.

The Square enjoys tremendous highway visibility and excellent access from both Interstate 93 and Route 16, the Mystic Valley Parkway. The current configuration of roads, however, limits a number of important connections within the Square. The steady stream of traffic flowing from Salem Street to Main Street divides the Square into two seemingly separate worlds, with more historic and tightly arranged settlement patterns on the west and wide open areas with surface parking, broad arterials, and many one story buildings on the east. A band of high-rise towers establish a distinct zone along the edge of the interstate. On this east side, Clippership Drive acts as a bypass that circumnavigates the heart of the Square. Its relatively free flowing traffic separates the Square from the nearby riverfront, and both Clippership and the Interstate create an edge that is difficult to penetrate for residents living east of the highway.

The river is only visible from the Mystic Valley Parkway, but is difficult to access in most parts of the Square. The Parkway, which as Route 16 provides a primary access way from Cambridge to Interstate-93, separates the residential neighborhoods on the South Side from both the riverfront and the Square. Riverfront trails are discontinuous and break down at roadway and bridge crossings.

While the institutions represent a great deal of potential for the Square, they are currently disconnected from each other and there are few complementary uses, such as restaurants, that would help increase attendance and extended stays in the Square. With increasing conversion to professional offices, the remaining retail lacks critical mass and does not respond to the changing demographic of younger residents on the South Side.



The Center of Medford Square

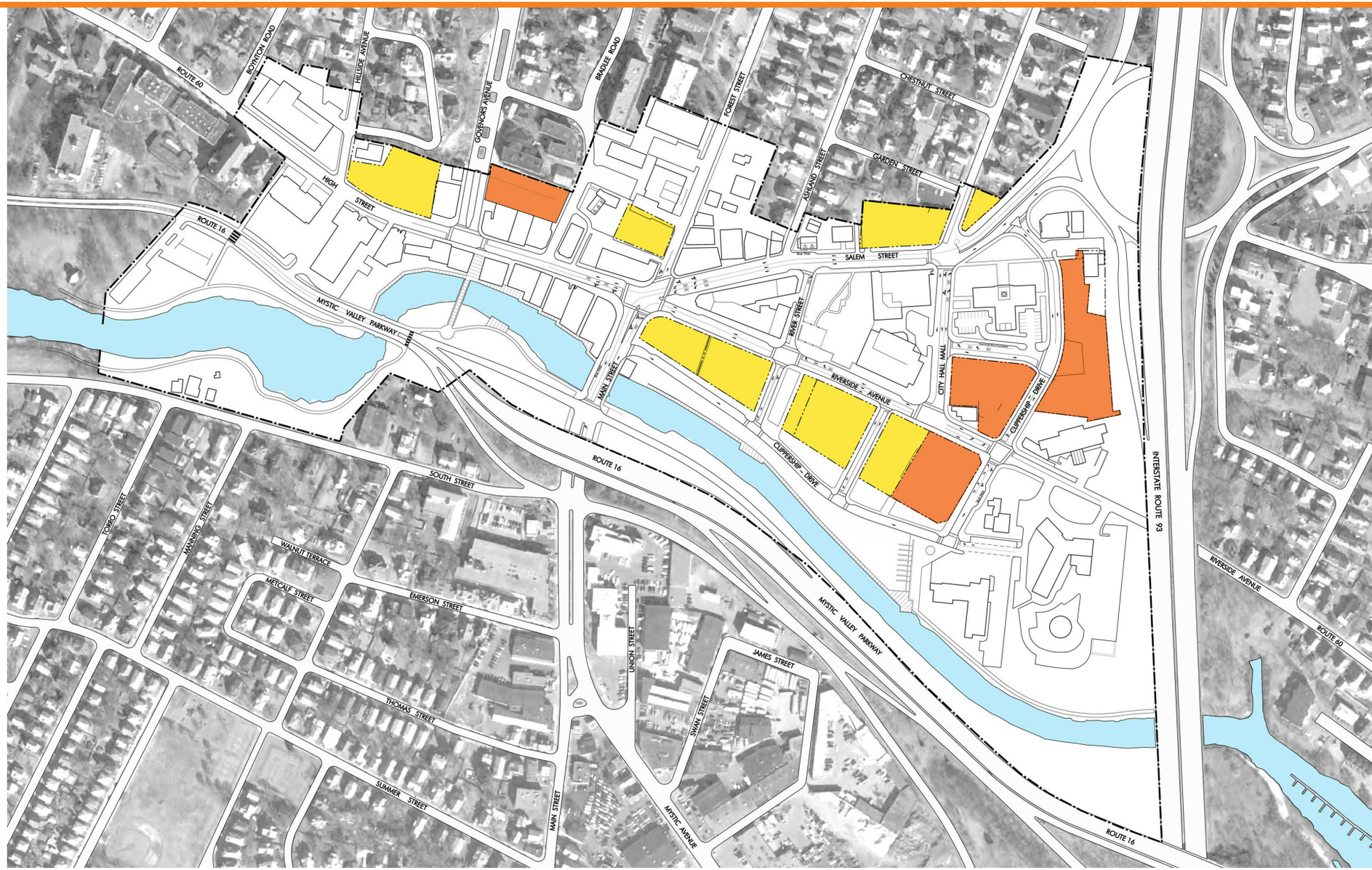


The Mystic River viewed from the Cradock Bridge

out including the 1683 Wade House on Bradlee Road, the armory, and the remnants of the canal system near the historic river crossing now marked by the Cradock Bridge.

From its founding, Medford Square has served as a crossroads with important visibility from both the adjacent highways and from the arterial roads that pass through its center. With this visibility and convenience, the Square serves as an important employment center for the City, with medical, government, and professional offices. Active retail businesses and professional offices line High Street and the immediate areas of the other streets emanating from the center of the Square.

Significant cultural and civic institutions define the gateways into the Square. Arriving from the Interstate and Salem Street (Route 60), City Hall and the dramatic modern architecture of the Springstep dance studio greets visitors. On the west, Route 60 enters the Square as High Street passing the public library and St. Joseph's church, school, and community center. Forest Street enters the Square from the north and is home to Chevalier Theater, a 2,061-seat auditorium featuring national performing artists and shows.



Development Potential

future development potential

city of medford ownership - priority parcel

development opportunities 2



A strong residential market in smart growth, inner suburban locations presents the best opportunity for new development in Medford Square. The most appropriate target markets for new market rate residential development would include young professionals, middle-aged singles and couples, empty nesters, seniors, college and graduate students, and families desiring a more urban lifestyle. Retail, restaurant, and personal services will continue to find market support in the commercial core, but office is unlikely to lead the transformation given the current market conditions.

Given Medford Square's relative proximity to downtown Boston, Cambridge, and north suburban employment centers, new development in the district could compete with residential projects in diverse inner suburban locations for this market, especially as Medford Square continues to build on the advantage of relative convenience and complements that with a more appealing environment in terms of physical amenities and shopping and restaurant opportunities.

The redevelopment opportunities in the Square are focused on three City-owned parcels on the east side, lining both sides of Clippership Drive as it passes from the river to Salem Street. By facilitating development on these three sites, the City will provide a catalyst for additional private investment and redevelopment in other areas of the Square. With public investment in streets and parks on the east side, the expectation is that the increase in real estate values will prompt mid-rise development, especially along Riverside Avenue, where most buildings are only one story. The higher buildings that exist along the highway corridor suggest similar heights for new development east of Clippership Drive.

DEVELOPMENT	PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT 0N CITY PARCELS	POTENTIAL CAPACITY ON PRIVATE PARCELS
Commercial/Retail	15,000 square feet	No Net Loss of Space
Residential	250 units	320± units potential
Public Parking	590 spaces	—

New development will capitalize on market forces to create a high quality environment throughout the Square. By developing a distinctive sense of place, new mixed use development on the east side will complement the more historic character that currently exists along the High Street corridor. On the west side, a number of key parcels provide opportunities for infill development that will enhance the area with a mix of residential, office, and ground floor retail.



Example of low-rise residential development

The current market suggests that most new development will be residential apartments and condominiums. Three to four story lofts, rowhouses, and apartments will extend the scale of the Square along Riverside Avenue. Parking will be integrated into these developments either wrapped by retail and other ground floor uses or set one half level or more below grade. Along the highway, new development could rise to 12 stories with integrated parking set against the highway embankment. This development should step down to three to four stories along Clippership Drive to relate to City Hall and Springstep.

Ground floor retail is to be encouraged especially along Riverside Avenue and the River Street extension. Key corners along Clippership Drive may feature restaurants with outdoor tables that take advantage of views of and activity along the riverfront park. Expansion of cultural uses such as gallery space could also be encouraged.

Adequate and well distributed parking will be an essential ingredient to the success of the Square. The parking that serves retail and office uses during the day provides important shared parking resources to meet the needs of the Chevalier Theater and Springstep evening and weekend performances.

The supply and the distribution of convenient public parking is critical to the success of the Square. On the west side, the recent demolition of the Governor's Avenue garage has put a premium on the need for replacement and expansion of the public parking supply. At the same time, infill development will displace cars and create additional parking demand that must be met, especially on the east side.

In the future, new parking will be distributed on both sides of the Square to be close to shops and other destinations and to minimize vehicle trips across the Square. On the west side, a replacement public parking structure is being considered for the Governor's Avenue site. At the same time, redevelopment of the CVS site may allow for public parking, depending on the mix of uses. On the east side, the City-owned lot behind City Hall is targeted for a public parking structure that will accommodate the displacement of existing surface parking serving City Hall as well as existing and new demand for retail uses. By increasing occupancy rates, the Harvard Vanguard parking structure could accommodate more cars. In the future, the addition of more floors to increase the overall supply on this site should be evaluated.



Example of high-rise development



Example of low-rise mixed-use development

HISTORIC SETTING

In Medford, the earliest settlement grew up around the first crossing of the Mystic River on the important roadway between Boston and Salem. The many historic connections that converged at this important bridge remain major thoroughfares connecting Medford to other town centers in the region: Main Street to Boston; Salem Street to Malden, Lynn, and Salem; Route 16 to Watertown Square; and Route 60/High Street to Arlington and Waltham. Riverside Avenue was a local connector along the north bank of the Mystic River, while Forest Street led to the picturesque woodlands in the Fells and in Stoneham.

As industry grew in Lowell and Lawrence on the Merrimack River, the idea of a canal was launched with much debate around its alignment. The Middlesex Canal was finally constructed through West Medford with a spur canal that connected to the Mystic River in Medford Square. A portion of the canal structure can be seen just downstream of the Cradock Bridge on the south bank.

Industry grew up around the banks of the Mystic River in particular rum and brick making factories and warehouses between Riverside Avenue and the river. The river made a majestic sweep in the area where today the two high-rise buildings for elderly housing have been built. Downstream a number of ship building enterprises turned out some of the fastest clipperships of the day. By the mid-20th century, as industry gave way to other uses, the east side of the Square became home to the "big box" retail of the day, including a grocery store, shoe store, and five and dime store.



1683 Historic Wade House

The major rail spine ran north through Wellington Station. Medford Square was served by a rail spur that cut through the east side of the Square. The alignment extended behind the town common, the back of the cemetery, and led to the station on Main Street just next to the Cradock Bridge.

By the 1930's the town common site was designated as the home of the new city hall, replacing the historic site on Main Street near the Cradock Bridge. Later in the century, land was taken to allow the construction of Interstate 93, which bisected the City and cut the eastern portion of the Square off from surrounding neighborhoods.



Historic Map of Medford Square - 1880



Medford Square Illustrative Plan

vision for the civic realm 3



By improving bicycle and walking trails along the river, Medford Square can become part of a more regional system of recreational connections with opportunities for alternative modes of transportation. Wider sidewalks, on-street parking, and realigned streets, many with two-way traffic, will offer an attractive setting for tenants and their customers to do business. A consistent wayfinding and signage system will help people navigate the Square, taking into consideration those who need to pass through and those with a destination in the Square.

Within the Square, a new park will grace the length of Clippership Drive, and improvements to existing parks will connect Clippership Park to the band shell and surrounding open space in the Mystic River Reservation upstream. Over time, a continuous boardwalk along the back of the historic buildings on High Street will provide an important connection and could serve as an amenity to the businesses on these properties.

A continuous waterfront promenade will run the length of Clippership Park, with opportunities for overlooks where views up and down the river will be enhanced. At the foot of the River Street extension, a landing will step down to a dock structure at the water's edge. At this point, fishing and tie-ups for small boats will be possible, as well as quiet enjoyment of the river's flow. At the east end, a fountain, public art, or park structure can provide a focus for activities in the park.



Waterfront promenade in New London, Connecticut.


Park fountain in Charleston, South Carolina



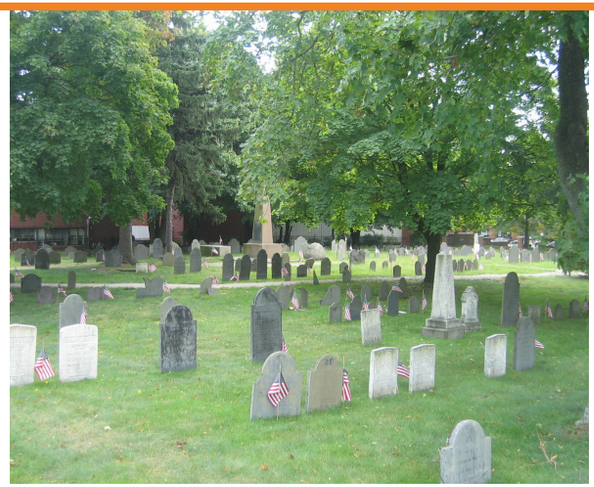
Waterfront overlook in Indianapolis

A canopy of street trees will line both sides of the newly realigned Clippership Drive, creating a more pedestrian friendly experience. The street, which will be one-way east bound, will have on-street parking along the entire length of the north side to serve retail customers during the business week and park users during the quieter parts of the evening and weekend. On Sundays and key festival dates, Clippership Drive can be closed for casual recreational use, farmer's markets, art festivals, music events, arbor day, and other civic celebrations.

A series of small parks will link the river with the active retail streets in the heart of the Square. When River Street is extended to the river's edge, a vibrant urban plaza will provide an ideal area for outdoor cafes, while opening up views between the cemetery, Riverside Avenue, and the riverfront. The cemetery, an important link to the City's historic past, today offers a quiet and peaceful open space that complements the busy street life along Riverside Avenue and Salem Street. A key pedestrian route connects the cemetery through Harvard Vanguard to City Hall. The reconfiguration of parking around City Hall will create a gracious common at the building's front door on Salem Street. Located at an important gateway into the Square, this new park will be framed by City Hall and Springstep and will provide a venue for popular local performances.

Interpretive elements and signage will offer visitors a glimpse into the continuing evolution and intertwined history of the river and the Square. Themes to be explored include the following:

- Significance of the bridge crossing that connected colonial Boston and Salem
- Clippership industry and connections to the global economy of the day



Interpretive opportunities exist in the Medford Square cemetery



Historic river wall along the Mystic River

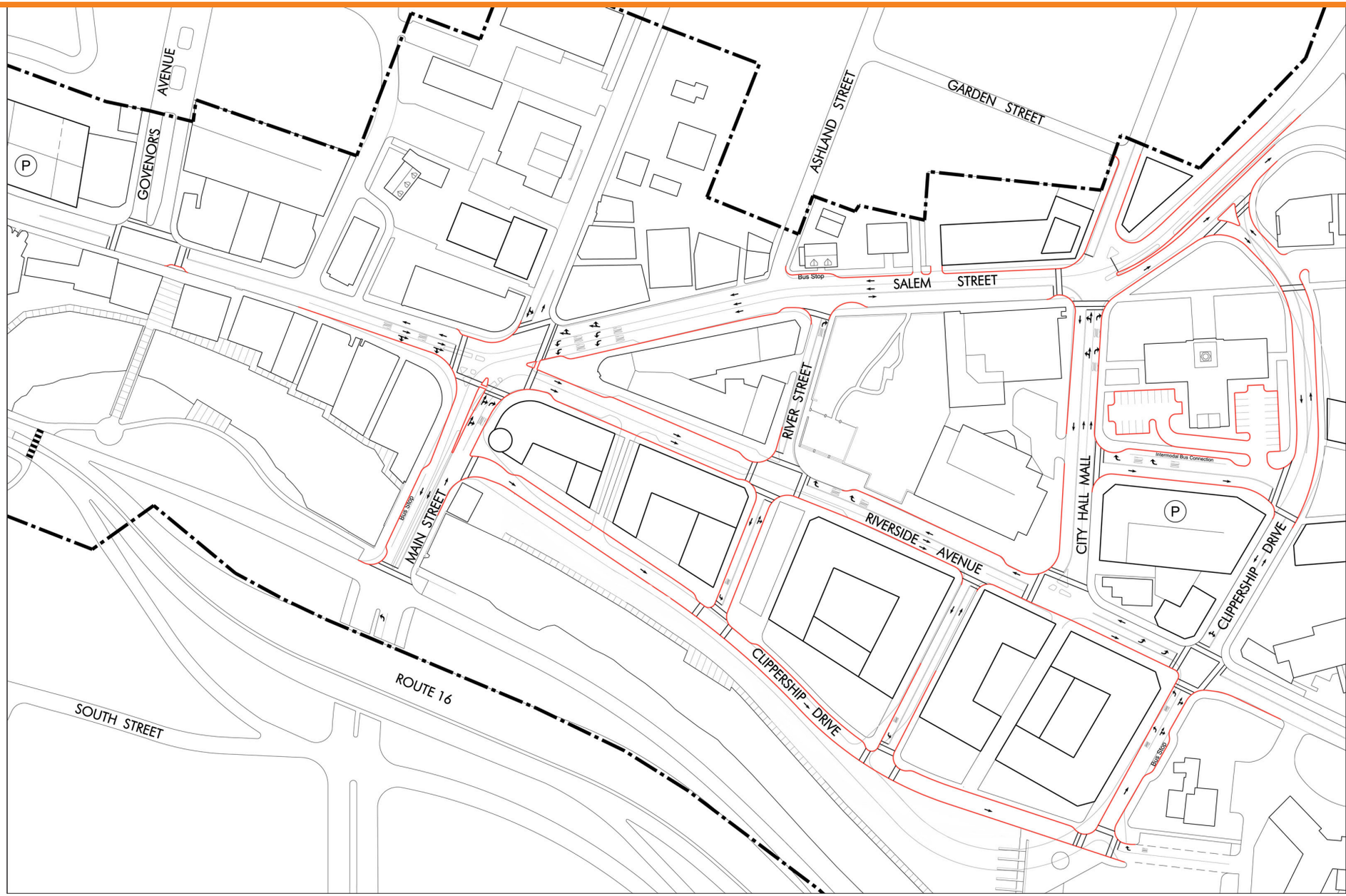


Historic markings allow opportunities for interpretive display

- Canal era and nearby lock structure
- Settlement patterns of the Square with its cemeteries, town common, public buildings, churches, businesses, rum distilleries, and other riverfront industries
- Accommodation of railroad, including the track alignment and station location
- 20th Century development including City Hall relocation, the change from industry to large footprint retail (grocery, Woolworth's) on the east side, and transportation patterns.

River-related interpretive elements can be integrated into the new Clippership park, while elements about the Square's industrial and commercial history could be part of the River Street park. The existing brick structure on the south side of the cemetery sits squarely on the former railroad alignment and is an ideal location to interpret both of these elements of the Square's development. Upstream riverfront improvements should address the river's natural history and connections to regional recreational resources.

Connecting the series of parks, the active retail uses, the residential and office uses will be a network of pedestrian friendly-streets. By bringing the automobile traffic into harmony with pedestrian needs, the Square will become safer and more attractive for casual foot-traffic, outdoor dining, and window-shopping. In the evenings, residential uses will help enliven the streets to create an 18-hour day and seven-day week. Incentives for a broader range of dining establishments will complement the performing arts venues, extending the duration of a visit and effectively shortening the perceived walk to parking.



Proposed Medford Square traffic circulation improvements

access and transportation 4



Existing Conditions

Medford Square is a five to ten minute drive from key fixed rail and subway transit hubs, including Sullivan Station, Davis Square Station, Wellington Station, Malden Center Station, and West Medford. MBTA bus routes connect the Square to all of these locations, and express buses take commuters to downtown Boston. By far the largest ridership is on the MBTA route (#101) connecting Malden Center, Medford Square, and Sullivan Station.

Regional highway access and visibility is a tremendous asset for the Square with Interstate 93 along the eastern edge and the Mystic Valley Parkway (Route 16) along the southern edge. State Routes 38 and 60 also cross through the Square connecting to Malden, Winchester, Somerville, Arlington, and Cambridge. Local streets lead to Tufts University on the south and the Middlesex Fells Reservation on the north, both of which are less than a mile away.

Medford Square accommodates a substantial amount of through traffic since it is the convergence of several local and state routes and because of the constraints to the regional road system due to the river and topography. Since there is no southbound exit from Interstate 93 directly to Route 16, traffic heading westbound and southbound to the South Side and the Tufts University area tends to find its way through the Square following Salem Street to Main Street, especially in the morning peak hours.

Currently, eastbound traffic on Route 16 connects directly to northbound Interstate 93; however, traffic from Main Street and the South Side tends to avoid the dangerous merge where the on-ramp to Route 16 crosses the traffic that continues eastbound on the Mystic Valley Parkway. Instead, many people choose to navigate Medford Square via Clippership Drive to the Salem Street rotary, especially in the evening peak hours.

The local circulation in the Square currently facilitates certain moves but precludes others, a pattern which inhibits retail success on the east side. After crossing from the west side to the east side of the Square, it becomes very difficult to circle back or to reach the north side of the Square. The only alternative at present is to turn onto Salem Street and pass through the heart of the five way intersection again. For emergency vehicles, the inability to travel directly from Main Street north to Forest Street is a notable problem.

For pedestrians, crossing from one side of the Square to the other is a perceived and real barrier. Many cars take advantage of the free right from High Street and use it to cut over to Clippership Drive, creating a confusing weave. The many small islands in the intersection provide only minimal refuge across a very large paved vehicular way. One way streets tend to encourage greater speeds, especially on Clippership Drive where there are no parked cars, and generous widths and turning radii exist.



Off-Street parking inventory in Medford Square



Several routes go through Medford Square

An on- and off-street parking survey taken on a fall weekday morning and evening peak hours indicates that off-street parking facilities, which hold 1,244 spaces, are operating at well below capacity levels in both the morning and afternoon. The Governor's Avenue structured parking, which was recently demolished due to structural problems, had the highest demand, which ranged from 84 to 91 percent. By comparison, the other structured parking at Harvard Vanguard has excess capacity with only about 66 percent occupancy. Many of these customers may be parking in the surface lots behind City Hall, which is about 60 to 79 percent occupied.

The large lot along the curve at Clippership Drive was only about 43 percent occupied, while the lots along the highway, which are furthest away from many activities in the Square were only about 25 percent occupied.

There are about 195 on-street parking spaces in the Square, most of which are one hour regulated. About 65 percent of the spaces are on the west side of the Square. On the east side, Clippership Drive, City Hall Mall, and parts of Riverside Avenue offer no on-street parking, which affects the success of retail and exacerbates higher traffic speeds.

LOT	CAPACITY	A.M. OCCUPANCY	P.M. OCCUPANCY
H Harvard Vanguard Structure	244	65%	67%
G Clippership Curve Lot	210	44%	41%
D Governor's Structure	164	84%	91%
L Highway Lots	134	26%	25%
A Bandshell Lot	125	34%	34%
K Back of City Hall Lot	123	79%	60%
F Clippership Lots	73	62%	75%
B St. Joseph's Lot	67	31%	27%
C Library Lot	36	64%	78%
I Salem Street Lot	27	30%	33%
E Citizens Bank Lot	23	83%	70%
J Front of City Hall Lot	18	100%	61%

TYPE	WEST	EAST	TOTAL
One-Hour	114	54	168
Two-Hour	0	11	11
Handicap	5	3	8
Unassigned	8	0	8
TOTAL	**127**	**68**	**195**

NOTE:
The Governor's Avenue Parking Structure (D) was standing at the time of the analysis. In Spring 2005 the structure was replaced by a 63 space parking lot.

Improvements

The proposed improvements will mitigate the barriers created by the traffic flows on Salem Street to Main Street and by the highway character and speeds that occur on Clippership Drive. Not only will the streets become more pedestrian friendly, but they will also be more welcoming to local traffic, while still accommodating through movements. Full study and design with input of local residents and businesses will be required prior to finalizing traffic circulation changes.

An important principle of the recommended improvements is to minimize the amount of traffic that needs to pass through the heart of the five-way intersection at Salem Street, Riverside Avenue, Main Street, High Street, and Forest Street. Local traffic headed for residential and retail areas on the east side will find it easier to reach their destination more directly and to circulate where necessary via two-way streets. The realignment of Clippership Drive will include a stop sign controlled, right-angled intersection near the senior center and the riverfront, making it easier for people to cross in all directions.

In order to allow drivers access from Salem Street directly to the east side of the Square, River Street, City Hall Mall, and the northern leg of Clippership Drive is proposed to become two-way streets. From River Street east, both Salem Street and Riverside Avenue will become two-way segments as well. Clippership Drive along the riverfront will remain one way east bound, but the roadway will be narrowed to one lane to allow for on-street parking. A series of small streets now connect Riverside Avenue and Clippership. As private redevelopment occurs in this area, the plan recommends the extension of River Street to create a more regular network of streets and to provide additional open space between the cemetery and the river.

The geometry of key intersections will be realigned to improve pedestrian crossing and will be coupled with updated signal timing. At the five way intersection, the sidewalks will be widened and the travel way narrowed by removing the many small medians and by reconfiguring lanes. Vehicles will be allowed to travel directly from Main Street to Forest Street, while the short cut from High Street to Clippership will be precluded. At Governor's Avenue, a traffic signal is recommended to facilitate southbound flows onto High Street and to make pedestrian crossings safer in this important civic and retail part of the Square. This recommendation will be evaluated fully in the design stage.

Signalized intersections at the eastbound and westbound ramps onto the Mystic Valley Parkway will greatly increase pedestrian safety along Main Street. The reactivation of these signals, along with the installation of new traffic signal controllers, loop detectors, and other signal equipment, can significantly reduce delay for vehicles on the off-ramps without significantly affecting traffic on Main Street.

In general, with improvements to the traffic operations and even with new development, traffic will continue to move through the Square at about the same level of service, with a slight increase in delays on some approaches and improved access on others. All the intersections will operate at levels of service that are typically termed acceptable for urban settings. At the same time, the addition of many new turning movements will allow vehicles much greater access throughout the study area. Several intersections that operate at unacceptable levels of service will be improved, including eastbound High Street and southbound Forest Street in the morning peak hour and northbound City Hall Mall and northbound Clippership at Salem Street in the evening peak hour.

The Square will become more transit friendly with a new intermodal center designated for the new roadway link behind City Hall and adjacent to the proposed parking structure. The roadway will have pull out areas for buses and consistent signage making this a destination for pedestrians and a central place for bus transfers. Another improvement will be to move the southbound bus stop in the heart of the Square further south onto the Cradock Bridge with a pullout area to minimize traffic backing up in this key location. A new bus stop is targeted for the area directly in front of the Senior Center, making it easier for senior citizens living in and visiting this part of the Square to reach destinations in other parts of the Square and the City.


RONA'S HAIRPORT
COSMETICS
GIFTS & FAVORS
OPEN

5 retail positioning



Medford Square must reinvent itself to be competitive. It must become a safe, clean, pleasant district with diverse eating and drinking places, and an array of small stores whose owners take great pride in their offerings and provide great service. It must show its unique qualities. There must be enough to do in Medford Square to make the shopping trip worthwhile for local residents who are most likely to return for repeat shopping trips.

Within Medford Square there are several quality retail and restaurant tenants with excellent business operations who draw a local and regional clientele. To achieve a compact and competitive shopping environment, the overall tenant mix needs to move away from an excess of personal care tenants and ground floor office uses to accommodate more establishments that offer eating, drinking, apparel, home furnishings, and gifts. In order to become known as a retail destination, the Square needs to develop a more positive image, addressing marketing, operational aspects, and physical improvements.

Market Positioning and Competition

Medford has the ability to satisfy the growing demand for a:

- Unique shopping experience with a diverse array of eateries and retail stores, entertainment and recreation
- An urban setting with a clean, safe, attractive appearance
- The ability to park the car and stroll or to walk through on the way to home or work
- Community gathering spots focused around cafés and bakeries
- The desire to shop for goods and services close to home
- High level of service, which is typically found in small independently owned specialty shops
- Shopping as a form of recreation, for which customers are willing to travel
- Shopping for cultural tourists, who combine the experience of historic, cultural, and natural features with associated eating and drinking.



Outdoor concert venue in Indianapolis

When retail is grouped together, customers can walk in and out easily, compare merchandise, return to a previously visited store, or explore different kinds of stores. Many municipalities are attempting to revitalize their downtowns as an amenity to their neighborhood residents.

Urban squares with local specialty retailers cannot compete directly with conventional retail, which is in great supply in and around Medford Square. They can, however, compete for the shopper who wants an interesting shopping experience with great service, a convenient location, and a merchandise selection that is different from that found at the malls. The most direct competition for Medford Square is other town center locations or shopping streets, such as West Medford, Teele Square, Davis Square, and Arlington Center.

Medford Square does have certain advantages to give it a competitive edge:

- Proximity to Boston
- Accessibility by major roads and highways
- New England village character with connecting residential streets
- The river and its close link with the Square
- Proximity to a major university
- Historical heritage
- Chevalier Theater & Springstep, major cultural venues.

In addition to long time residents and workers in and around the Square, Medford has the ability to draw in new constituents who will support additional retail area, including:

- Medford residents, the majority of which are between 25 and 44 years
- Tufts University's 12,000 students and faculty
- Cultural tourists already visiting the Boston region
- Residents from surrounding towns within a 10-minute drive time.

As a first step, Medford Square should develop the resident and Tufts markets, then move to developing the tourist market, and finally the regional market. This would be building a repeat customer base first and attracting the tourist and regional markets as development and marketing became established.

Physical Characteristics

The advantage of a village setting over a strip shopping center or a mall is the quality of the streets, the distinctive architecture, and unique natural and historic features. Compactness, ease of walking, available parking, restrooms, and way-finding signage are all important physical features. The mix of uses, and especially residential uses, contribute a round-the-clock committed constituency that makes a retail district feel safer throughout the evening hours and on weekends.

Retail-friendly streets are relatively narrow, have businesses on both sides, and offer attractive pedestrian environments with easy crossings and sidewalks that are protected from the traffic by parked cars and/or street trees where possible. Specialty retail thrives where traffic speeds are slowed by such measures as two-way streets, on-street parking, and traffic controls. The west side of the Square already offers many of these features.

For many people, a ten-minute walk (about 2,400 feet) establishes a reasonable distance to stroll, similar to a walk from the Medford Library to City Hall. A traditional mall, on the other hand, concentrates the retail experience even more, using a measure of about 1,000 feet, which is comparable to a walk from Governor's Avenue to River Street where most of the retail is now concentrated in the heart of the Square. Convenient parking needs to be located at either side of the Square to encourage visitors to enter, park, and continue into the heart of the district on foot.

The entire sequence of arrival needs to be considered from each point of vehicular entry. A clear and consistent wayfinding system will mark the through-routes, identify important cultural and civic destinations in the Square, and direct visitors to parking. Once people are on foot, additional detail can be provided about the specific location of retail shopping and other destinations. The signage system can expand the retail shopping experience by providing interpretive information about the Square, highlighting historic landmarks, and providing direction to riverfront amenities.

Medford Square features many historic buildings, especially on the west side. Maintaining and bringing out the architectural details of these buildings are essential to creating a distinctive shopping experience. The ground floor retail space on new buildings can use more contemporary and inventive design, while respecting the context of historic neighbors.

Operational Characteristics

Retailers follow people. Therefore, it is essential in the first instance, to draw people to the Square through festivals, special events, sales promotions, cultural venues, farmers and flea markets. Once a critical mass of visitors is established, retailers follow.

Shoppers are the ultimate judge of the retail environment. What customers say about the stores, selection of merchandise, and quality of service spreads



Ground floor retail in Cleveland

the good word. A concerted effort on the part of the owners, tenants, city, and retail associations can affect the maintenance and operational characteristics of the Square, shaping a positive identity with elements such as:

- Clean and updated storefronts and windows
- Clean sidewalks and entries
- Attractive exterior spaces, including plants, seasonal, or sale items
- Effective advertising that highlights the range of shops and the experience
- Clear orientation and information through signage that does not clutter the environment
- Real and perceived safety, especially in the evening
- Personal and quality service
- Consistent and predictable store hours.

A retail association can be particularly effective in promoting the Square by coordinating special events, recruiting desirable tenants, and by managing information about the Square, including a database of available properties. Medford can attract quality businesses by offering space at lower rents than competitive locations until a positive reputation is established.



Storefronts on High Street

Marketing

Marketing and attention to recruiting quality tenants will be essential for Medford Square to achieve its share of the market. To give itself an edge, the marketing program should focus on the dominant themes of the Square's unique history, its proximity to Tufts University, its village ambience, riverfront connection, and the distinctive cultural prospects for the Chevalier Theater and Springstep. The program can start slowly and build as the Square transitions with improvements. Marketing has a double purpose:

- To market the Square to potential consumers
- To market the Square as a place for business for new tenants.

MARKETING PROGRAM

Task 1: Identity and Safety

- Update the Medford Square Historic District Banners
- Create a logo for the Square for use in all advertising
- Coordinate police presence on the Square during evening hours
- Establish uniform store hours: 10 to 7 six days per week; 12 to 5 on Sundays
- Create an official "town center" for new image and identity

Task 2: Business-Friendly City

- Publicize storefront improvement program to existing merchants
- Create new sign guidelines with contemporary graphics
- Permit and encourage outdoor merchandising & sidewalk cafes
- Publicize availability of beer and wine licenses

Task 3: Events and Promotions

- Plan monthly retail promotions, such as Sidewalk Sales
- Plan seasonal sales events at national holidays
- Develop two signature festivals or special events
- Promote the historical heritage through lectures, architectural walking/biking tours
- Coordinate Chevalier Theater and Springstep and restaurants for special evenings

Task 4: Image Making

- Publicize information on events and developments to local media, to Tufts University, and to surrounding towns
- Create and disseminate articles for the media about: the historic buildings in the Square, the current merchants, the history of the river and special events
- Prepare and maintain a directory listing the stores, addresses and phone numbers of merchants, as well as any valid information on parking for the press and public
- Prepare a press kit on Medford Square with pertinent maps and information on Medford's history for Tufts and tourists for the hotel and other interested groups
- List special events at Tufts, in print media, on the radio, and on the Internet
- Advertise shops, restaurants, and sales promotions cooperatively in local and regional weekly newspapers



Springstep center for traditional and contemporary arts in Medford Square



Storefronts in the heart of Medford Square



Retail activity along the sidewalk



Sidewalk cafes attract shoppers

TARGETED RETAIL MIX

Retail that Attracts the University Market: Restaurants, Live Music, Cafes, Coffee Shops, Specialty Foods, Take-out Food, Convenience, Grocer, Bookstores, Music (records, tapes, CD's) Specialty Sports, Electronics, Outdoor and Casual Apparel and Shoes.

Retail that Attracts the Age 25-44 Population: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Children's Apparel and Shoes, Consignment/Second Hand Stores with Clothes and Home Furnishings, Boutique Gift Stores, Affordable Ethnic and Family Restaurants, Hobby, Pets, Home Furnishings, Furniture, Hardware, Off-price General Merchandise Stores.

Retail that Appeals to Women of the Region: (they still represent 80% of the shoppers) Women's and Children's Apparel, Shoes and Accessories, Bath and Body, Cosmetics, Specialty Food, Antiques, Home Furnishings, Specialty Gifts, Jewelry, Second Hand/Resale Clothes and Estate Jewelry.

Retail that Appeals to Tourists: Restaurants, Cafes, Souvenirs, Arts and Crafts, Museum Shops, Specialty Gifts, Seasonal and Weather-Related Items, Antiques and Second Hand Merchandise, Convenience, Photo/Camera.

Recommended Retail Mix

Improving the retail mix will take place over time in tandem with marketing efforts and physical improvements. The time it takes will depend on many forces, including the ability of stakeholders to coordinate efforts and take action, as well as the state of national and regional economies. Our retail strategy assumes a phased approach starting with improving the tenant mix in existing built space and building momentum for the future new development.

To make the most significant change in the tenant mix, efforts should go toward increasing food uses: more restaurants, followed by small cafes, ice cream shops, and any other food use with carry out items. Restaurants with quality food at moderate prices will attract families, students, visitors, nearby residents, including the elderly, and employees already working around the Square. Cafes of all kinds are important for variety. Some coffee houses feature open microphone evenings and poetry readings. Such activities would enliven the Square in the evenings. Starbucks eventually may be a candidate for the Square, depending on rental and lease conditions.

The more small eateries, bistros, and restaurants that open in the Square the more this will create energy and excitement and attract the various consumer groups. For people to come to cultural evening events, it is necessary to have complementary uses that stay open before and after the event. Bookstores, music stores, art galleries, video stores, restaurants, clubs, cafes, coffee shops, ice cream stores are favorites and together serve to draw customers.

The type of tenants that should be targeted are small independent retailers, whose space and parking requirements are not subject to corporate approval. Larger chain stores, both regional and national, are unlikely candidates at this time because they need dedicated parking, and a fully established retail district with a marketable identity and image. However, small boutique stores and some owner-owned and operated larger stores will consider areas in transition, such as Medford Square, if they see a future and rent conditions are favorable. Once an urban square has matured as a market with pedestrian traffic counts to satisfy corporate requisites, then chain stores often become interested. However, if an urban square has more than two or three national chains, the tenant mix loses its individuality and therefore its appeal. In Medford Square, the potential for national chains will be on the east side with newly developed space, and when that space does come on the market, the preferred uses will be restaurants as anchors at both edges and cafes surrounding the park. The infill of other ground floor retail will occur gradually and should relate directly to the consumers in the buildings.



guidelines for development 6



The guidelines for development in the Square are intended to create a compact smart growth district with residential, shopping, cultural activities, and employment in close proximity. In particular, the guidelines encourage an active pedestrian environment, balanced transportation access, distinctive architecture that respects the historic context, and ground floor retail on the primary streets. These guidelines can form the basis of development RFPs and can become the basis for the overlay district including the measure for project approval.

Uses

Mixed-use development is encouraged, including the following uses:

- Multi-family and attached dwellings
- Artist studios and live/work units
- Business, professional, medical, & governmental offices
- Bank
- Restaurant
- Retail store and personal service store
- Hotel and motel
- Place of worship
- Community center
- Theaters, museums, arts and cultural centers
- Educational institutions
- Child-care facility
- Public and private recreational uses
- Parking facility

Conditional Uses:

- Retail businesses over 15,000 sf
- Body art establishments
- Gas stations

Prohibited Uses

- Adult bookstore, theater, video store



Main intersection of Medford Square

Building Height and Massing

- The maximum building height is 75 feet except in the area between Clippership Drive and Interstate I-93, where the height of 120 feet may be granted with appropriate step-backs.
- Structures within 100 feet of the boundary of an SF-1, SF-2, GR or APT-1 district should not exceed 50 feet in height.
- New construction should be sensitive to the scale and character-defining features of the surrounding district, especially along High Street.
- New building structures must be placed to establish consistent street walls and to reinforce open space and view corridors; the open space should be positive and usable, not left over or remnant space
- Step-backs are recommended to maintain a consistent street wall at the edge of the property, while allowing more height on the interior of the block or against the highway.
- New building structures generally should not be set back more than 15 feet from the property line, and on retail streets should be set at the property line.

Building Rehabilitation

- Removal of inappropriate façade treatments and inappropriate infill of the original openings in structures is encouraged. Openings should be renovated to be consistent with the proportion and scale of the existing buildings and compatible with the existing materials.
- New windows should be consistent with the character and scale of existing buildings.
- In general, vision glass should be clear glass, and not reflective or smoked.

Pedestrian Environment

- The pedestrian environment on development projects should be clearly distinguished from vehicular circulation and parking areas.

Building Service

- Service areas, truck loading areas, mechanical units, transformers, and other utility and accessory structures should be sensitively located and should be designed as necessary to minimize their visual impact.
- Building service should be located on side streets where possible.
- Interior and/or lower level service, loading, and utility areas are encouraged.
- Adequate loading requirements must be provided based on the projected use. Typical loading requirements are one loading space per 50,000 sf except for restaurants and retails stores, which require one loading space per 15,000 sf.

Parking

- Adequate off-street parking must be provided, but the City and the private sector should have the goal of making the most efficient use of existing and proposed parking facilities and minimizing the area of land to be paved or developed for this purpose. In implementing this goal the City shall consider complementary or shared use of parking areas by activities having different peak demand times. Implementation of such complementary use of parking areas may result in permitted reductions in the parking requirements, especially for retail businesses.
- Parking may be provided at ground level, underground or in a parking garage. Parking garages can be freestanding or as part of buildings dedicated to other permitted uses. Wrapping parking with other development and/or activating the ground floor of parking structures with retail uses is highly encouraged.
- Parking structures should be placed in the interior of the block or the rear of the block and should be wrapped with active ground floor and upper level uses wherever possible. Blank walls on primary streets are discouraged. Parking entrances and exits should be on side streets wherever possible.
- Visible parking structures should have a facade that relates to the scale, proportion, and character of the district. Garage facades should have a balance of solid wall and openings arranged to complement the surrounding structures. Large blank walls and continuous sloped strip openings are not appropriate. Ramps and sloping floors should not be expressed on the outside of the building, and in particular not on a façade with frontage on a primary street.
- Surface parking lots should be screened from streets, open spaces, and adjacent residential uses through the use of planted buffers around the edges. These buffers should be composed of continuous tree masses and other planting materials, with a tree spacing of not more than 30 feet, although closer spacing is possible where soil volumes allow.
- Within parking lots, extensive paved areas should be mitigated by landscaped dividers between the parking bays. These planting beds should be not less than 10 feet wide in order to provide adequate soil volumes; trees should be set back a minimum of 3 feet from the curb. Tree spacing should not be more than 30 feet, but may be closer where soil volumes allow.
- Parking lot edges and islands should be defined by durable curbs that will withstand winter snow plowing and other vehicular damage. Granite curbs with a 6-inch vertical reveal are recommended, but vertical concrete curbs with a 6-inch reveal may be considered within parking lots.

Recommended parking requirements associated with various allowable uses in the Square are as follows:

USE	PARKING RATIO
Residential	1.5 spaces / unit
Lodging	1 space / room
Commercial Uses	1 space / 350 sf
Place of Worship	1 space / 140 sf
Community Center	1 space / 750 sf



Medford Square gateway at City Hall

Site Plan Approval Process

On City-owned parcels, the developer's RFP will specify the development review process. For all other parcels, the master plan recommends that a more consistent process of development review be in place.

Early in the concept plan phase, developers are encouraged to meet with City staff to understand the goals of the master plan and the overall site plan approval process.

As part of the site plan approval process, the following information should be documented and submitted at a scale of 1"=100' (elevations at 1/16" scale) for review and approval:

- New and existing building footprints and heights
- Pedestrian environment (location and materials of sidewalks, pathways, plazas, site stairs and ramps)
- Landscape planting materials and features (location, type and size of plant, fences, gates, walls, screening methods, etc.)
- Parking (location, type, access points, and assignment of parking to specific uses including shared use)
- Utilities (connections, extensions, and upgrades of water, sewer, storm, electric, gas, telecommunications, etc.)
- Lighting
- Construction phasing and staging (in written and/or graphic form)
- Outline specifications documenting a range of lighting fixtures, landscape materials, paving materials, and site furnishings.
- Site perspective, sections, and/or elevations suitable to demonstrate the character of the development.

Site plan approval should be issued if the development is in harmony with the purpose of the development guidelines and the master plan.

Public Realm

Streetscape Materials and Dimensions (Primary and Secondary Streets)

- The width of the travel lanes should be the minimum necessary to ensure traffic flow through the site at peak hours, without encouraging high speeds. A typical width of 11 feet for each travel lane is recommended for primary streets and 10 feet for each travel lane on secondary streets.
- Parallel parking helps separate the moving vehicles from the pedestrians and serves to calm traffic while expanding the supply of short term parking. The width of the parking lane should be minimal in order to keep the overall dimensions of the roadway narrow. The recommended width of the parking lane on both primary and secondary streets is eight (8) feet. Given the urban character of the site, the length of the parallel parking spaces should be 20 feet.
- Curbs should clearly distinguish the automobile zone from the pedestrian zone. Curbs should be durable, especially for winter snow plowing operations. Curbs should be vertical granite with a 6-inch reveal.

- Sidewalks and pedestrian zones along primary and secondary streets should provide a refuge for pedestrians. Sidewalks and pedestrian zones should meet ADA requirements for accessibility. Recommended widths are six (6) to eight (8) feet, with a clear zone not less than four (4) feet. The clear zone is unobstructed by light poles, signs, trees, or buildings.
- Materials on sidewalks and pedestrian zones should meet ADA requirements for accessibility and should be durable and easy to maintain. Recommended materials are concrete with the use of pavers, brick, or cobble in special locations or as special strips along the curb.
- Street trees should be spaced close enough to clearly define the street corridor when the trees are young. Street tree spacing should not be more than 30 feet. The spacing of the trees should also take into consideration the adequacy of the soil volume per tree and the likelihood of minimum tree canopy maintenance.
- Street trees should be set back from the curb in order to protect them from moving vehicles, opening doors and to reduce the effects of road salt. The recommended set back from the curb on both primary and secondary streets is not less than three feet.
- Trees should be planted within a continuous planting trench that provides adequate soil volumes for each tree (400 cubic feet). The recommended width of the planting trench is not less than 10 feet. The surface of the planting trench may vary to include grass, cobble, stone dust, or paving as appropriate for the urban character of the site. The excessive use of wood mulch is not recommended in the planting strips.
- Additional street trees or associated planting strips should be planted behind the sidewalk to screen adjacent parking areas.
- The palette of lighting, signage, and street furnishings should be consistent.

Pathways, Stairs and Ramps

- All site pathways and ramps should meet ADA requirements for accessibility.
- Primary site pathways in park areas should have a width of eight (8) to 12 feet; the width of secondary paths should not be less than five (5) feet.
- Site pathways should be finished with durable materials requiring minimal maintenance and meeting ADA requirements. The materials should be appropriate to the intended use of the pathways.
- Pedestrian lights should illuminate the primary site pathways
- Solid granite treads for site stairs are recommended.
- Site metal work, including hand railings and balustrades, should be compatible with the historic character of the district and the riverfront.



Illustrative Open Space Plan

Planting Materials

- Planting materials should not obstruct views to and from the river.
- The selection of species should be appropriate to the scale of the street and/or the open space. A diversity of street trees may be necessary to maintain their long term health, yet within this framework, a limited palette of plant species is preferred overall.
- Ornamental and flowering trees should be used only in large masses.
- Every effort should be made to preserve and maintain existing trees that are in good condition in order to have an immediate landscape effect while other new plant materials mature. If an existing tree is to be preserved, the area within the drip line of the tree should not be disturbed by construction.
- Low shrubs are recommended for screening cars within parking areas.

Lighting

- Street lighting should provide both pedestrian and street lighting. Lighting should provide nighttime orientation for vehicular traffic by identifying the district gateways and the primary street corridors through the district (High, Main, Riverside, Clippership, and Forest).
- Primary streets should have ornamental streetlights compatible with the character of the district, 15 to 18 feet high.
- Street lights throughout the district should be consistent in style; variations should be within a family of fixtures.
- Site lighting should be directed downward to minimize glare to adjacent properties using cut off fixtures.
- Primary pathways through the open space areas should be illuminated with pole fixtures, 15 to 18 feet high.
- Entrances to buildings and key site and architectural features should be highlighted to enhance nighttime orientation and to enhance security.
- Parking lots should have cut-off fixtures, 15 to 18' high.

Site Furnishings

- Benches, trash receptacles, bicycle racks, and other site furnishings should be compatible with the lighting.
- There should be a coherent palette for site furnishings throughout the site.
- Bicycle racks should be provided at key locations throughout the Square and along the riverfront park.

Signage

- Directional and interpretive signage throughout the site should be consistent and designed to complement the character of the site.

Landscape and Site Maintenance

- An irrigation system is recommended to ensure the success of the trees and other plantings, especially in the riverfront parks.


CRADOCK
BRIDGE.

7 implementation



In order to achieve the vision laid out in this document, each of the implementation issues must be recognized and addressed. These issues include:

- Phasing and investment
- Strategy for the developer's request for proposal
- Public funding mechanism
- Approvals process
- Roles and responsibilities.

Phasing and Investment

The goal of the phasing plan is to ensure that public and private efforts are synchronized. In general, each phase should create a coherent sense of place and a critical mass of activity.

In the first phase, the work will address traffic circulation and signalization throughout the Square and will complete the improvements around City Hall. This effort will include the developers RFP for the development along the highway, the intermodal center, and the public parking structure that will accommodate displaced parking in the area. Closing Clippership Drive to traffic on the weekends for recreational use is an immediate step that can be taken and involves very little capital investment. The estimated cost of public investment in the first phase is approximately $13 million including parks, streetscape, and public parking. The expected private investment is approximately $59 million, a ratio of $1 of public money leveraging $4.5 dollars of private investment.

Recommended first phase projects include:

- Traffic signalization in Square
- Main intersection in Square
- Clippership Drive north realignment
- City Hall Road South/intermodal center
- Riverside Avenue improvements
- Salem Street improvements
- East Side parking structure
- City Hall Park.

The definition of the second and third phase could follow one of two different approaches. One approach is to continue investment where it is most needed to develop a strong sense of place on the east side of the Square. This would involve the riverfront park and private redevelopment efforts along Clippership Drive.

Another approach is to balance investments across the Square, continuing with some of the smaller improvements to ensure a more immediate sense of accomplishment. In this scenario, the public investments would be targeted to improvements to the riverfront and public realm on the west side.

CIVIC PROJECT	TOTAL PROJECT COST
Streetscape	
Clippership Drive - South	$1,853,750
Clippership Drive - North	$928,750
City Hall Road South	$431,250
Riverside Avenue	$462,500
River Street Extension	$258,750
Salem Street	$871,250
High Street	$1,371,250
Intersection at Square	$528,750
Total Streetscape	**$6,706,250**
Traffic Signals	**$1,382,000**
Parking Structures	
East side parking (370 spaces)	$8,000,000
West side parking (220 spaces)	$5,000,000
Total Parking Structures	**$13,000,000**
Park	
Riverfront East - Park	$3,572,500
Riverfront West - Park	$392,500
Riverfront West - Pedestrian Bridge	$625,000
Riverfront West - Boardwalk	$1,332,500
Riverfront - Bandshell Parking Area	$865,000
City Hall Park / Parking	$363,750
River Street - Plaza	$260,000
Total Park	**$7,411,250**

Strategy for the Developer Request For Proposal

The City owns a great deal of the property on the east side of the Square. A title search and land survey are recommended to determine the exact property owners, easements, and leaseholds. Three parcels of land stand out as possible candidates for disposition through a developer's request for proposal (RFP). These properties are relatively large (over one acre), assembled parcels, and are currently used for surface parking, with varying rates of use.

We recommend that the developer RFP strategy for disposition of the City-owned properties in Medford Square incorporate the following major elements:

- Structure the disposition process as a two-stage (RFQ/RFP) process
- Invite developers to make proposals for individual or multiple City-owned parcels
- Invite developers to propose private or public approaches to developing and managing the public parking
- Attempt to integrate private properties in the City's RFP process
- Resolve unknowns, formulate a viable phased public improvement and financing plan, and secure funding commitments to the maximum extent possible.

The reasoning underlying these recommendations are as follows:

Structure the disposition process as a two-stage (RFQ/RFP) process

There are many ways that development could proceed in terms of such issues as design, percentage market-rate versus affordable, phasing, integration of single or multiple RFP sites or additional non-RFP'ed sites, and approach to public and private parking. It is difficult at this stage for either the City or potential developers to determine the approach(es) in all of these regards that will be most attractive to the City. Well-qualified developers will be most likely to enter the RFP process if they can ascertain with a relatively low investment of effort and cost, whether the City considers their conceptual approach to be on the right track and can determine that they are one of a relatively small number of finalists for a project. This can be accomplished with an initial stage RFQ which requests qualifications and general conceptual approach to key issues. Upon being short-listed, developers will then have sufficient incentive to expend the considerable effort and cost required to make the best proposals.

Invite developers to make proposals for individual or multiple City-owned parcels

Some developers (or non-residential end-users) might be attracted to a particular site, while others may require an opportunity of a magnitude presented by

the combined City properties. Inviting initial stage responses for single or multiple sites would elicit the broadest range of response. After receiving responses to the RFQ, the City can determine whether to narrow the preferred approach or leave it open for the second RFP stage. Teaming of initial stage respondents could also be allowed or encouraged, as determined to be in the City's best interests.

Note that this approach would have the draw-back of complexity in reviewing responses and determining how to proceed. If this is considered too great a draw-back and a single approach is preferred, then soliciting proposals from master developers for the combined City properties would be recommended.

Invite developers to propose private or public approaches to developing and managing the public parking

Public parking can be accommodated in facilities developed, owned, and/or managed by private as well as public parties. The most efficient way to deliver this may depend upon the specifics of a given development project. A public parking facility developed, managed and owned by the City can serve as a benchmark against which other proposed approaches can be evaluated. Unless the City has a strong preference, encouraging creative response from the development community may result in a more economically efficient solution.



First development area on City owned parcels

Attempt to integrate private properties in the RFP

The three City-owned development parcels are all viable development sites on their own. However, in each case, they can be made more efficient development sites and their attractiveness to potential developers can be enhanced by incorporating a single adjacent privately-owned parcel. Prior to issuing the solicitation, the City might outreach to the owners of these private properties to gauge their interest in pooling their properties in the RFP. Without the City acquiring the private properties, it could offer the property owners an equitable share of the overall disposition proceeds, with the owners retaining the right to hold back their property if a reasonable minimum price is not attained. A more traditional approach would be to purchase the private properties, which could be required by the private owners and for which certain public funding could be applicable. If reasonable agreements with the private property owners cannot be reached, the City should proceed to RFP its own sites, with the private properties potentially being added to the development by the successful developer.

Resolve unknowns, formulate a viable phased public improvement and financing plan and secure funding commitments to the maximum extent possible

The development opportunity will be most compelling to potential developers to the extent that the redevelopment strategy appears to be something that will happen. Accordingly, attracting developers to the RFP process and eliciting the best proposals will be enhanced to the extent that the City can present a viable phased public improvement plan and financing plan to pay for it, along with commitments (or strong indications of interest) from funding sources. The attractiveness of the RFP will also be enhanced to the extent items such land surveys, parking costing and design, and feasibility analyses are made available, portraying the opportunity and decreasing the initial work required of the respondent. Finally, the attractiveness of the RFP will be enhanced to the extent the City clearly communicates its preferences or requirements with regard to those specific project elements, design standards, and/or performance standards for which it as able to make well-considered determinations

Public Funding Mechanisms

This is a time of change for public funding resources needed to implement the redevelopment plan for Medford Square. There will be more scrutiny of projects and their host communities at the state level and increased competition for decreased funding at the federal level. This transformation implies both challenge and opportunity – challenge in that some traditional sources of funds are constrained and funders' patterns of selecting projects and, in some cases, their guidelines, are evolving; opportunity in that Medford may have the right "product" at the right time to attract certain resources in line with the Commonwealth's Smart Growth initiative, i.e. the proposed redevelopment plan could be exactly the type of project targeted by such funding and Medford's ability to move the plan to a "ready to go" state over the next few months may make it attractive for initial funding.

Medford should certainly pursue federal funding for major public improvements, both through individual earmarked appropriations and allocation of more general discretionary program funds distributed on a state-wide level. The project's conformance with the Commonwealth's Smart Growth goals would enhance prospects for allocation of those funds distributed through the MPO or MAPC. However, the constrained funding levels and vagaries of the competitive process imply a significant element of speculativeness to receipt of such funding.

New funding mechanisms available at the state level appear to provide particular opportunity for the Medford Square redevelopment strategy. The Commonwealth Capital programs, being coordinated by the Office of Commonwealth Development to support Smart Growth, include long-standing grant programs for public improvements, such as PWED and CDAG, as well as the new Transit-Oriented Development Program. The TOD program will provide $10 million in each of the next three years to fund parking, pedestrian and bicycle facilities (primarily in the form of grants) and mixed-income housing projects (primarily in the form of favorable secondary debt financing). Competition for the state programs is already intense and there will likely be an effective maximum aggregate funding, perhaps in the range of up to $4,000,000 to $5,000,000 for a very attractive project.

District Increment Financing and Tax Increment Financing also present significant opportunities for implementation of the redevelopment program. These mechanisms enable municipalities to utilize anticipated incremental real estate tax revenues generated by new development to make such projects feasible and fund related public improvements. With either mechanism, no new taxes are levied and current property tax revenues would neither be reduced nor redirected; the portion of incremental tax revenues to be utilized for a limited duration would be determined by the municipality to meet the needs of the situation.

Generally, DIF would be used to pay for the costs of public improvements with repayment of financing from the incremental tax revenues, while TIF would take the form of tax abatements used to subsidize a real estate project. The form of TIF which can be used for a primarily residential project requires at least 25% of units to be affordable at 80% or less of area median income, while DIF does not have use or affordability requirements.

The Commonwealth has supplemented the array of programs available to support mixed-income housing projects with the Priority Development Program which provides financing assistance primarily in the form of low/zero interest loans for mixed-income housing projects.

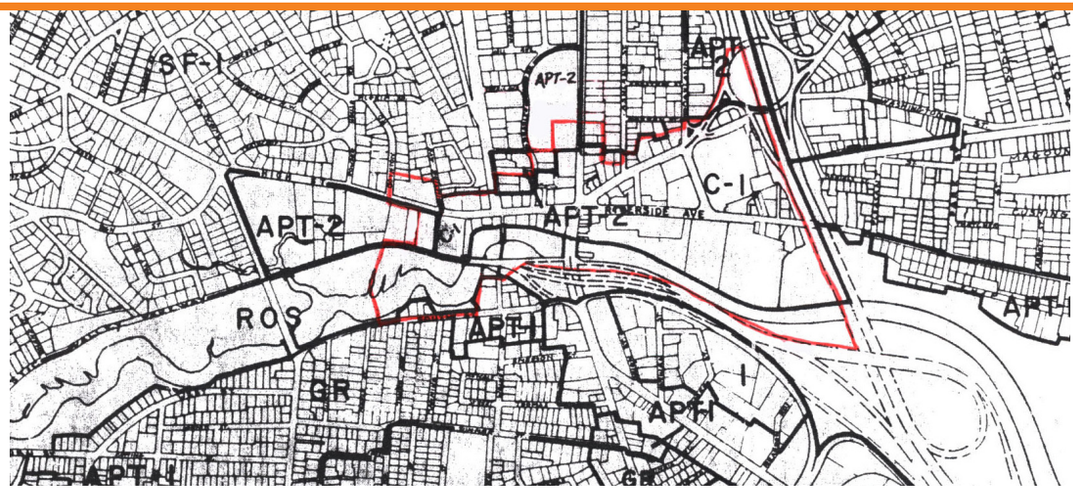
The Commonwealth's Chapter 40R program, which provides financial incentives for up-zoning for mixed-income housing in transit oriented and dense locations, may not be applicable if zoning density is not increased above the current level. At this stage, an effective financing plan for Medford Square would be targeted to comprise:

- Land disposition revenues (and/or internal subsidy of public improvements) from sale or lease of City-owned development sites
- Potential revenues and net operating income, if any, from public parking facilities
- Federal funding for public improvements through earmarked appropriations and/or allocation of more general discretionary grant and reimbursement programs
- State funding for public improvements from Commonwealth Capital programs (particularly TOD, PWED, CDAG, and Urban Self-Help)
- District Increment Financing utilizing a portion of the incremental tax revenues to be generated by the redevelopment strategy
- Project financing assistance for individual development projects by such means as Priority Development Fund and other long-standing state and federal programs.

A detailed financing plan, based on refined costing and financial analysis of parking economics, potential land disposition revenues, and potential incremental tax revenues available for DIF, will be necessary to formulate and pursue a specific funding program.

Close coordination with potential sources should be maintained to ensure that their requirements and preferences are fully understood and requests for assistance presented in the most compelling manner. In particular, meetings with the Office of Commonwealth Development and other key players such as DHCD should be arranged to promote Medford Square for inclusion in their funding plans and collaborate on the process or refining financing plans and applications.

Time is of the essence; the TOD program is scheduled to start taking applications for its initial funding round in June or July with a cut-off in September and CDAG reportedly may accelerate its application period for its next funding round to September or October.



SF-1 SINGLE FAMILY 1
APT-2 APARTMENT 2
GR GENERAL RESIDENCE
C-1 COMMERCIAL 1
ROS RECREATIONAL OPEN SPACE

Existing Zoning

Approvals Process

Zoning

An overlay district is recommended for the Square to provide the City with more control over the development outcomes and to provide the private development community with a more realistic set of guidelines that match market expectations. The intent of the overlay district will be to update the current zoning guidelines to reflect the master plan recommendations, to encourage smart growth, to promote high quality urban development, and to streamline approval processes.

The current zoning in the Square has layers of different requirements and in many cases ties dimensional requirements to specific uses. The current setback requirements and parking requirements do not reflect current market and smart growth approaches to urban development. A new process for consistent development review would ensure the highest quality development that is compatible with the character of the Square.

Building on the basic ingredients of the existing zoning, the overlay district needs to:

- Clarify the overall height and massing expected in the Square to create a vibrant urban district, taking into account the context of taller buildings along the highway corridor, the typical street wall heights on the retail streets, and the need to step down to adjacent residential districts with lower heights
- Clarify the allowed uses and desired outcomes, such as promotion of active ground floor uses
- Promote shared parking and update the parking ratios to reflect an urban mixed use village with available transit service.

A consistent review process should be established that is linked to a set of development guidelines. The review process should not hamper development, but instead should be viewed as a way of clarifying expectations through early review and facilitating approval for projects that meet the intent of the guidelines. By leveling the playing field, developers will benefit from a streamlined process that promotes investment in Medford Square.

Liquor Licensing

In the State of Massachusetts, retail licenses for the sale of alcoholic beverages to be drunk on the premises, called "pouring licenses," fall into five types: hotel, restaurant, tavern, club and general-on-premise. These are further divided into four categories based on the category of alcoholic beverages permitted to be served; all-alcoholic, wine only, malt only, or wine and malt.

The current liquor laws in the City of Medford only allow full liquor licenses for restaurants with more than 99 seats, and beer and wine licenses for restaurants over 19 seats. It is recommended that the City Council consider reducing the seating requirements for restaurants to obtain a full liquor license. The intent of the change is to allow smaller restaurants to have the ability to serve liquor at the dining tables as well as at a bar while customers wait for tables. In addition, it is recommended that shared parking be looked at as a solution to increase the utilization and efficiency of current parking lots.



Mystic River from the Cradock Bridge

River Regulations

The Massachusetts River Protection Act, under the Westland Protection Act, establishes policy to protect the natural integrity of rivers and to encourage and establish open space along rivers. Many of Medford's peer cities are considered "densely developed areas" with a designated 25-foot wide river corridor; however, Medford follows the typical river corridor definition of 200 feet, within which certain activities are limited.

In the case of Medford Square, the proposed riverfront park and realignment of Clippership Drive further inland are likely to meet the following criteria:

- Proposed work shall result in an improvement over existing conditions
- Replacement, rehabilitation, or expansion of existing structures improvement of existing roads cannot be located closer than existing conditions.

Similarly, proposed improvements to the parking area by the band shell are intended to minimize the amount of pavement next to the river and to improve the quality of the open space in this area. In all cases, stormwater management should be provided according to standards established by the Commonwealth.

Under Chapter 91 Waterways Program, the Commonwealth seeks to preserve and protect the rights of the public, and to guarantee that private uses of tidelands and waterways serve a proper public purpose. The proposed improvements in the Square meet the goals of this Act, including:

- Pedestrian access along the water's edge
- Public navigation rights and facilities to enhance public use and enjoyment of the water
- Public boat landings and transient dockage
- Creation of parkland
- Piers & floats for public recreational boarding facilities
- Fishing piers
- Interpretive display
- Interior facilities of public accommodation in private buildings (restaurants, museums, retail stores).

Any new structures, such as docks and boardwalks, and improvement to the water edge along Clippership Drive is likely to require Chapter 91 authorization, which is accomplished though the permitting process with the local Conservation Commission and the Department of Environmental Protection.



Mystic River Reservation

Roles and Responsibilities

Successful revitalization of Medford Square will take strong leadership and the concerted effort of the public sector, the private sector, and the non-profit organizations. These actions will occur simultaneously and will overlap as different entities bring to bear their organizational strengths and capacity. The most important factor is that everyone is working from many different perspectives toward the same objectives.

For the public sector, the City will take the lead in land disposition, policy changes, orchestrating funding requests, and public improvements, coordinating with the State Department of Conservation and Recreation and Mass Highway as necessary. By adopting this plan as a framework for development, the Mayor, the City Council, and all the City departments will be able to work toward a common goal of achieving a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly square with civic and cultural amenities and a positive environment for existing businesses and new private sector investment.

Like most cities today, the City cannot achieve this goal on its own. Revitalization requires partnerships that extend the capacity of the public sector. In Medford, the property owners, the tenants, Chamber of Commerce, the non-profits organizations, and the interested community members all have a role. The current Medford Square Revitalization Committee could evolve into a new and stronger organization that embraces the many different voices of the Square and helps channel these efforts toward a positive end.

City of Medford

As a first step, the City needs to adopt this plan as a framework for development in order to move forward on the recommendations below. With this in place, the City can take the initiative in the developer RFP process using the recent Commonwealth Priority Fund grant to address the following key steps:

- Prepare land surveys and title searches to document available parcels
- Conduct a financial feasibility analysis to determine the need for and extent of city participation to achieve the desired development program, including the potential disposition revenues and real estate taxes from City land to inform the financing plan, and the need for public parking and other incentives
- Develop a financing plan, to determine the sources of funding and their use on the project and to inform phasing
- Refine the development guidelines for the specific sites available
- Prepare and issue the developer's RFP.

At the same time the City needs to initiate the civic projects that will most enhance the quality of the environment, especially on the east side of the Square where change is needed the most. By advancing the concepts into design, the City can demonstrate its commitment to the projects, including generating accurate base maps, schematic design, and refined cost estimates.

A Community Improvement District should be considered as a means of ensuring that improvements in the Square contribute to the overall tax base while also funding the necessary public investments in streetscape, parks, and public parking. The City also will be an important partner in all private and civic efforts to recruit tenants, organize marketing and promotional events, and enhance business operations in the Square.

A Civic Council

A non-profit civic entity in the Square could become a galvanizing force for realizing change and could evolve out of the current Medford Square Revitalization Committee. The Board of a civic council for Medford Square should have the following attributes, which will require a reformation and/or expansion of the current committee:

- A more representative board comprising merchants, property owners, professionals, lay residents, and representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, Springstep, and the Chevalier Theater organization among others.
- A balanced board with members that can contribute either "talent, treasure, or time" in equal measure. To become effective, board members will need to take a more active working role, contribute funds that can help support professional staff, and/or provide wisdom and experience in city revitalization.

The advantage of a non-profit civic organization is that it can be geographically focused on the Square, while the City addresses the many different neighborhoods and districts within the municipal boundaries. A civic council has political independence and a continuity of leadership that endures over time. As a representative of the business sector, it needs to bring a business-like approach to recruitment, operations, and development in the Square. In order to move beyond a volunteer force, a steady funding stream needs to be achieved, whether that is through membership contributions, a special assessment like a Business Improvement District, and/or grants from Tufts and other organizations that will benefit from this organization or who target economic development enterprises.

Above all, this organization needs to build partnerships at many levels and in many directions. It must operate as a close partner of the City, extending the capacity of and complementing the public sector. The council must also be able to reach out to both the property owners and the merchants, understand each of these distinct perspectives, build bridges between them, and help orchestrate the operational changes that will take the Square to the next level. The Chamber of Commerce will be a key partner in this effort. With a diverse board, the civic council will also need to understand and represent the interests of the cultural institutions in the Square and look for joint strategies where business and institutional interests both can benefit.

As an advocate for the Square, the civic council needs to share the vision for the Square so that everyone is working toward the same goals. In Medford Square, the most immediate gaps that the civic council could fill are outlined below.

- Initiate promotional and marketing efforts involving all the merchants as well as the cultural institutions
- Develop a coordinated program of special events and festivals
- Assemble a database of space and property owners, including available space, parking, rents, lease conditions, and sales.
- Actively recruit quality tenants that will improve the overall mix in the Square
- Improve the operations working with merchants and owners to address sidewalk maintenance in summer and winter, trash removal, hours of operation, window treatments, and other similar actions.
- Research and make available information on grants, low interest loans, façade improvement funds, and other programs that will assist small business owners.

In the short term, different subcommittees of a working board could take on these tasks depending on interests. With additional funding, a downtown coordinator could be retained to provide full or part time staff to accomplish these tasks in conjunction with the board members. Ideally the downtown coordinator would have a dedicated space visible from the street that might be donated by a bank or other office centrally located in the Square.

Property Owners

To improve the retail environment in the Square, the recommended actions for the property owners are as follows:

- Adopt a proactive recruiting position
- Look for new retailers in other nearby urban locations
- Invite and host those of particular interest and suitability to Medford
- Be informed about improvements to the Square
- Negotiate a favorable rent structure for the desired tenant
- Negotiate tenant-friendly terms, such as, no cost improvements on the space or free rent for an initial time period
- Establish a relationship with local brokers
- Have a clean vacant space with exhibits from local students or artists
- Have a tasteful sign indicating whom to call for rent clearly visible in the window
- Attend local International Council of Shopping Centers meetings to meet prospects
- Be an attentive landlord to existing tenants.

Existing Tenants

Recommended actions for existing tenants are as follows:

- Tell business associates in other locations about Medford
- Maintain clean and updated storefronts and windows
- Change window displays bi-monthly
- Maintain clean sidewalks and entries
- Add plants or seasonal items to exterior space
- Bring selected or sales merchandise outside when possible
- Support cooperative advertising efforts and promotional events
- Survey customers and know where they come from and their preferences
- Provide personal and quality service, including such touches as a bowl of candies at the cashier
- Keep an updated database of customers
- Be informed about new products in and related to store theme
- Update the store's appearance and signs.

Cultural Organizations

Medford Square is fortunate to have two performing arts venues as well as the Library and a number of churches in the heart of the district. All of these institutions will benefit from an improved Square.

Springstep has expressed an active interest in becoming more engaged in the life of the Square both physically and through active participation. Having a place at the table on a civic council would give them that voice.

The Chevalier Theater, which is currently managed by a volunteer City-appointed Commission, would benefit from a comprehensive study addressing governance, programming, funding, and physical and operational use of this important facility. Even though each facility is unique, lessons could be learned from investigating successes and failures of other performing arts centers including Stoneham, the Arsenal Center for the Arts, the Newburyport Fire Station Center, and AS220 in Providence, among others. Many of these organizations have full-time staff members that are actively engaged in fund-raising and/or programming of their facilities. As a private not-for-profit entity, the organization may be better able to realize private gifts and donations. The challenge of the Chevalier will be how to respect the historic qualities of the building, while achieving more diverse programming and greater flexibility in the use of the space.

Summary

The success of any plan is ultimately determined by how it is implemented. Timely action is required to launch this effort; true partnerships will be required to sustain it. To achieve the potential of Medford Square requires both leadership and understanding. The public sector, private sector, and non-profit organizations are urged to embrace the concepts incorporated in this plan to work together to realize all of the many benefits of a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use center in the heart of the City.

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