



IMPROVEMENTS TO THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Deploy Common-Wide Strategies	56
Restore and Clarify Park Edges and Entrances	86
Connect and Upgrade Core Visitor Amenities	108
Enhance and Diversify Active Recreation Opportunities	126

The Boston Common Master Plan's vision for the Common will serve the people of Boston and visitors alike while protecting this special place for generations to come. The plan imagines a future for the Common that embodies civic access and engagement with a profound sense of identity and a deep-rooted connection to this historic yet vibrant city. To meet the vision's guiding principles, goals, and objectives, recommendations for improvements to the built environment are categorized into four distinct actionable themes:

- Deploy Common-wide strategies
- Restore and clarify park edges and entrances
- Connect and upgrade core visitor amenities
- Enhance and diversify active recreation opportunities

Summarized in the following pages, the themes—and project ideas within each theme—work from the edges of the park inward and focus attention on both distinct upgrades to specific areas of the park and broader strategies that can be applied across all themes and project ideas, as articulated in the section covering Common-wide strategies.

Opposite: Recommendations with the respective project ideas and goals each satisfy below; **Below:** Pedestrians walking along Liberty Street Mall





DEPLOY COMMON-WIDE STRATEGIES



Tree Planting



Seating



Access and Wayfinding



Event Infrastructure



RESTORE AND CLARIFY PARK EDGES AND ENTRANCES



CONNECT AND UPGRADE CORE VISITOR AMENITIES



ENHANCE AND DIVERSIFY ACTIVE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

PROJECT IDEAS

Accessible Entrance at the Shaw 54th Memorial



Charles Street Midblock Crossing at Mayor's Walk



Park Street Station Plaza



Boylston Street Station Plaza



Beacon and Charles Street Entrance



Boylston and Charles Street Entrance



Park Perimeter Upgrades



Improvements to the Frog Pond and Pavilion



VIC Addition and Park-side Plaza



Improvements to the Parkman Bandstand



Improvements to Parkman Concessions Plaza



Connections with the King Memorial



Landmark Loop



Athletic Field Upgrades and Reconfiguration



Court Expansion



Enclosed Dog Recreation Area



Tadpole Playground Expansion





DEPLOY COMMON-WIDE STRATEGIES

Tree Planting	60
Seating	63
Access and Wayfinding	69
Event Infrastructure	79
Monuments	83



COMMON-WIDE SYSTEMS TODAY

The Common today is the result of many incremental changes over time. Though the park has warped and shifted to meet the changing needs of the public, this accumulation of varied treatment approaches to park-wide natural and built elements over time has resulted in some gaps in the physical appearance and function of the Common.

With some notable exceptions, the location of trees act as a record of the original design intentions for the park. However, canopy cover has been lost, some areas have been over planted with flowering trees that are not part of the park's historic character, and nearly half of the park's trees need attention.

Given the park's use, regular pathway repair and up-keep is required for ADA access and safe movement through the park. The level and type of pedestrian travel through the Common do not coincide with pathway widths, so circulation routes are perceived as disorienting and confusing. Overall, the Common's linear corridors move people through the park with limited orientation to find and enjoy destination areas.

Today, the scale and frequency of events challenge many of the park's high-use lawn panels and basic amenities. Those panels with utility hook-ups or have the space to support larger crowds are the most popular and the hardest to maintain. Bathrooms are also in limited supply; the trailer with additional bathrooms for use on MacArthur Mall provides seasonal relief for the permanent restroom facilities on the Common.

Finally, and importantly, the Common's collection of historic monuments is robust, from small plaques to the Shaw 54th Memorial. These monuments punctuate important nodes in the Common but suffer from a lack of intentionality in their layout.

Above: View toward the Parade Ground and Monument Hill;
Opposite: Historic image of Beacon Mall, circa 1885

RECOMMENDATIONS

Approaches that focus on the malls, trees, lawns, walking paths, and monuments across the park will be important to overall park success and will benefit the more localized proposals. These elements are foundational to this historic landscape. Strategies are intended to formalize and enhance critical systems that already exist but need direct attention. The advantage of site-wide strategies is that they take an all-encompassing look at the park and add a layer of intentionality, setting a precedent for the future of the park that actively responds to public needs. Upgrades to trees, seating, access, and wayfinding and event infrastructure will benefit the park daily and support the more specific requests and needs put forth by park users and the city.

Similarly, a site-wide strategy for monuments that incorporates thinking around the Common's size, its intensity of use, and protection of greenspace is needed. Creative alternatives to permanent monuments and opportunities for new memorials should be explored to tell untold stories and spark curiosity and dialogue.



TREE PLANTING

New trees will be planted to enhance and frame views, fill in gaps in the existing tree canopy, and better define pedestrian malls. Selections for new plantings will align with existing species and the Common's historic character, provide shade for new seating, and add environmental capital to downtown Boston for future generations.

SEATING

An overall seating strategy includes recommendations for enhancements to pedestrian malls, more seating capacity installed at regular and predictable intervals, activation of social nodes, and support for active recreation.

ACCESS AND WAYFINDING

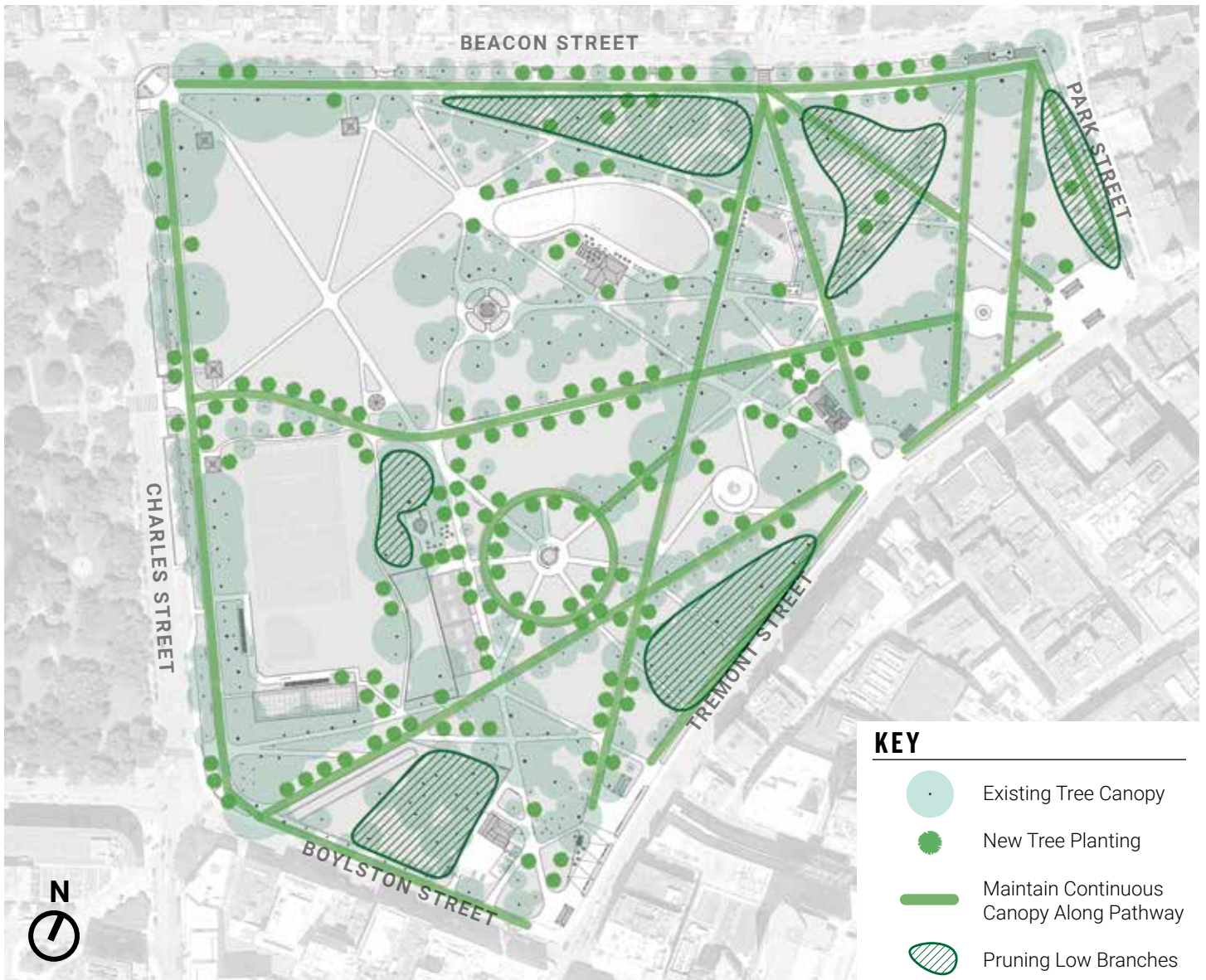
The proposed circulation strategy designates an interior loop that connects amenities, provides more direct ADA routes from park entrances to core park amenities, reinforces the hierarchy of pathway widths, and adds clear wayfinding/directional signage around the interior loop, at critical nodes, and park entrances.

EVENT INFRASTRUCTURE

More robust infrastructure will allow for events of varying sizes to be better distributed, activate single-use areas of the park in different ways, and afford high-use areas to rest more easily. Additionally, the Common's existing restrooms and concessions will be upgraded. More of each will be added to distribute these conveniences across the park and to allow for visitors to comfortably spend the day at the park.

MONUMENTS

Defining an intentional approach to the monuments on the Common, through the formation of a working group, will explicitly address questions of equity by asking which stories are told and given precedence.



Top to bottom : Plan of the proposed overall tree planting strategy; Beacon Street Mall tree allée; **Opposite**: Pruning low branches of the existing canopy along the ball fields will improve visibility in this area





TREE PLANTING

The Common has suffered significant canopy loss in recent years. The gaps in tree cover have altered the pedestrian experience along long linear corridors that were once flanked by allées, depriving visitors of both shade and the intended design benefits that trees provide. The tree canopy has also thinned out or been completely removed in areas historically more shaded, such as the Parkman Bandstand and Frog Pond. These breaks in the tree line result in a patchy visual appearance that undercuts the park's power of place. To address these periodic removals, in recent years, trees have been replaced in a gradual fashion—trees that are lost to disease, damage, or time are replanted as funds become available. Still, these efforts cannot keep up with the scale of canopy restoration needs. Identifying overall tree planting strategies will hasten progress and improve the visual character and resilience of the Common.

Recommendations under this master plan seek to provide a cohesive program for tree planting as phased improvements are implemented across the park. Under this strategy, new trees will be planted to enhance views, fill in gaps in the existing tree canopy, and better define pedestrian malls. These plantings will align with the existing species and the Common's historic character of canopy trees over lawn, providing shade for new seating areas, maintaining areas for sun seekers, and laying the foundation for climate resilience in the future.

Enhance Views and Raise Canopy

The architecture of a tree—its trunk, branches, and leaves—holds the inherent capacity to define and enhance views. The rhythm of trunks in an allée, the sweep

of a branch framing a monument, or the dappled light streaming through a canopy all work to bolster a park's character. At the Common, new tree plantings will frame important views, just as the plantings along Liberty Mall achieve a strong connection to the State House today. Adding new trees and pruning low branches will create visual avenues that highlight major park elements and provide connections for visitors that will enhance a sense of scale and place in the park.

Tree planting and pruning can supplement wayfinding and circulation improvements, gently guiding visitors down corridors towards popular destinations.

Fill Gaps in the Tree Canopy

As time passed, trees in the Common have died, been damaged, or removed, leaving holes in the canopy. On days when a lot of visitors come to enjoy the Common, this patchy canopy creates competition to find a free tree to sit underneath. Adding new trees in prominent seating and lawn areas will create a more uniform shade canopy that allows for a more equitable enjoyment of the Common. New tree plantings around the Parkman Bandstand and the VIC Plaza will provide much needed shady spots for seating and passive recreation in that area which was historically planted with trees. Additionally, trees along pathways and plazas will entice people to pull off the main drag for a quick rest under the cool cover of the canopy. Deliberately planting new trees to fill in gaps in the tree canopy will carry many positive social, visual, and environmental benefits.

Better Define Pedestrian Malls

The strong lines of the pedestrian malls and major paths have softened over time by the gradual loss of trees in key areas. Now, the voids between otherwise evenly spaced trees appear uneven and unintentional. Adding in new tree plantings will help reinstate the historic regularity of plantings along pedestrian malls and major internal paths while simultaneously reinforcing them as iconic in the Common's landscape vernacular. New allées could also be added in areas to delineate spatial boundaries, such as along Mayor's Walk, which will make the pedestrian experience more pronounced and pleasant. Species should be selected for consistency with the existing trees at the Common while also turning an eye towards seasonal interest. Spring blooms or dramatic fall color will make these new allées exciting visual elements and add a new thread to the fabric of the Common

Plant for Overall Climate Resilience and the Park's Future

One of a tree's best features is that it tends to get better with age. Existing trees should continue to receive regular maintenance to raise and thin canopies for both the tree's health and improved growing conditions for lawns. Many trees exhibit signs of distress that cause suckering near the base of the tree. The suckering, which is unattractive, should be removed on a regular basis as this has no negative impact on the health of a tree.

Over time, canopies grow wider and denser. Socially, a mature tree provides a meeting place for friends, backrests against which one can read a book, and a striking visual cue. Environmentally, a mature tree, especially when part of a larger contingent, provides many benefits that combat climate change. Trees ab-

sorb air pollution and sequester carbon to improve air quality. Large swaths of green canopy can provide a localized defense against heat island effect. Roots grow deeper and stronger, warding against soil erosion and contributing to a landscape's overall health. The larger, the healthier, and the more established the tree, the more environmental benefits it can provide. Ultimately, planting new trees is a concrete long-term investment in collective generational wealth that will not only benefit today but will also pay dividends for generations to come.

Early Action Projects:

- Fill in gaps along existing established pedestrian malls where widths will not be adjusted, such as Beacon Street Mall.
- Raise the canopy in low visibility areas as marked on the proposed overall tree planting strategy plan.

Below: Parkman Bandstand today; **Opposite, from top, left to right:** Granite curb with small granite pad; Granite curb with concrete pad; Cast iron and wood bench set back with a concrete curb and no pad; Granite curb with no pad; Cast iron and wood bench set on top of a granite curb and concrete pad; Ramping curb and no pad; Concrete curb with gutter on a concrete pad; Brick curb and a brick pad



SEATING

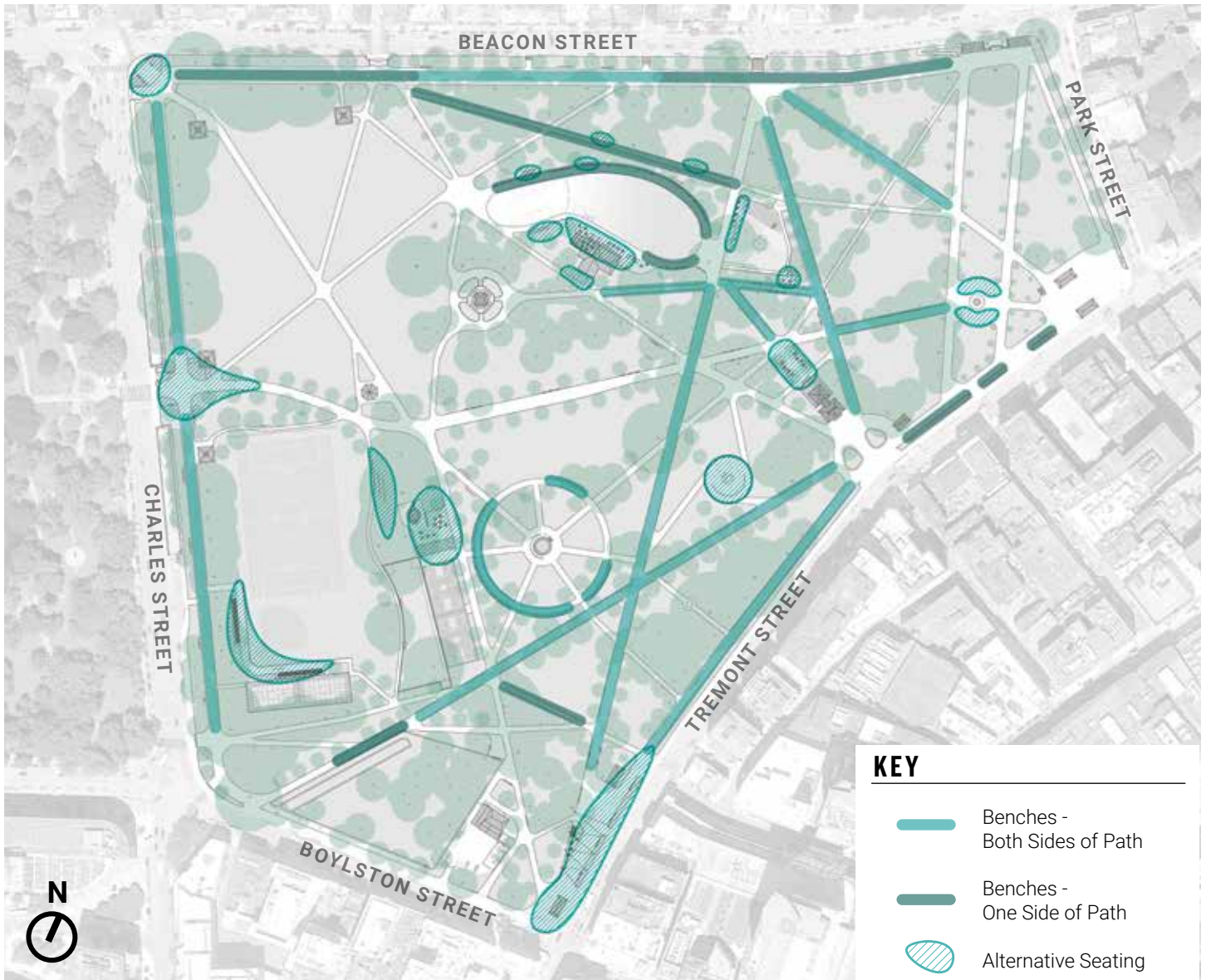
Seating across the Common is varied. Given the range in style and irregular distribution, crafting an overall strategy will bring cohesion to the seating program and integrate it into the overall character of the park. Seating types fall into five basic categories, including:

- Wood slats with concrete stanchions (along pedestrian malls and pathways) - poor to fair condition
- Victorian style with steel stanchions with wood slats (installed at Brewer Fountain) - fair to good condition
- Stone (located at Parkman Plaza and Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument) - good condition
- Seating walls (cobble retaining walls along Mayor's Walk for example) - poor condition
- Café tables and chairs (at Brewer Fountain, Parkman Concessions Plaza, and Frog Pond)

The iconic Boston Common bench has evolved over time. Earliest paintings from 1885 depict a crossed cast-iron backless bench. The curved stanchions transformed into a backed version in the early 1900s. By the 1930s, the cast concrete pier was the Common's standard and dubbed the Londino Bench. Its straight back supports were clean and simple lines against the wood slats. Today, the bench exists in a trove of variations with more curved cast concrete back supports and installations that are not necessarily consistent with the bench's original dimensions. When considering the relationship of the bench to an adjacent pathway or plaza area and the variation in bench pad types (if there is a bench pad), literally dozens of bench installation conditions prevail at the Common. Refer to the images to the right for a photographic summary of the numerous conditions. Basic guidance from the 1996 Management Plan are as follows:

- The number of benches on the Common could be increased. (There were 390 at the time of the plan's production.)
- Bench installation details require refinement to ensure consistency in design and color and installation methods.
- Bench installations should contain pavement below for reduced maintenance.
- Bench installations should be located immediately adjacent to pathways to allow a person using the bench to extend their feet out onto the surface beyond the pathway gutter, but not overhanging or





extending beyond the curb so as to be exposed to snow plows.

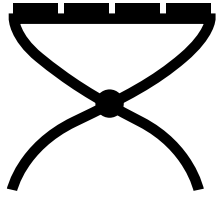
- Horizontal alignment should be consistent with benches set parallel with the gradient of the adjacent pathway.
- In the interim, existing installations require repair, straightening, and painting.
- Eliminate the seat wall at Boylston Street Station Plaza.

Specific master plan recommendations build upon the 1996 Management Plan guidance above, but offer a cohesive approach to bench, cafe seating, and other types of seating installations moving forward. They are contained in the following themes:

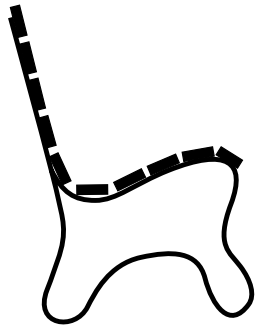
Pedestrian Mall Enhancements

Benches should be placed in consistent regular intervals along pathways. In high traffic areas, benches can be located underneath a few of the shade trees, while in low traffic areas, benches could be distributed in more frequent intervals. Making seating options predictable and, most importantly, available, will increase enjoyment of the Common and attract even more people to enjoy what the park has to offer.

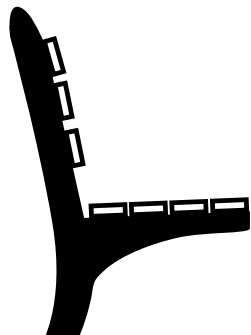
Enhancing seating along the pedestrian malls is an opportunity to work in tandem with efforts made to improve the tree canopy. There are gaps in the rhythm of planting and seating, and the two are only sometimes coordinated. Attempts should be made to intertwine planting and seating along pedestrian malls to convey a uniform visual experience, though not every bench needs to be fully shaded for there to be visual consistency between the two.



Crossed Cast Iron 1885
Boston Common at Twilight



Bent Iron Strapping 1906
"Under The Elms"



Cast Concrete Pier 1936
Soldiers in the Park



Opposite: Plan of the proposed overall seating strategy



Increase Capacity

Today, there are approximately 238 benches on the Common (down from 390 at the time of the Management Plan) including several benches that are unusable because of their state of disrepair.

Regular daily use, snow plows, and weather conditions result in fissure of the wood slats, cracks in the bench pads and stanchions, bleach, rust, and more over time. Efforts should be made to replace benches that have been removed or damaged over the years with new ones in areas that experience the highest need.

A new bench system will be phased in over time to fully upgrade the existing benches while also providing a higher level of accessibility at both new and existing bench locations. These new benches will be designed to include both backed and backless options. Backless benches will be added in areas where the bench has active uses on both sides, creating more porosity between different spaces in the park. Armrests should be considered as an accessibility measure; armrests help the elderly and all park users more easily stand up from a seated position. In this way, benches can be used to further the social agenda of the park, making the experience more equitable and accessible for all visitors.

Activate Social Nodes

Often, seating is a magnet for social activity. Providing more different types of seating will positively contribute to the social life of Boston Common, attracting a diverse constituency to enjoy and program spaces as they see fit. A range of seating types should continue to be offered that suit contextual conditions and provide accessibility and comfort.

Seating improvements will activate social nodes and increase gathering capacity. New café tables at the Boylston Street Station Plaza and the new park-side plaza at the VIC could service vending options in the area. These tables will stylistically complement the existing café tables at Brewer Plaza and at the Parkman Concessions Plaza. Café tables will help amplify upgrades made to the vending program, making the Common a clear choice to meet for lunch, coffee, or a mid-afternoon snack. These tables will make dining and gathering at the park more comfortable, accessible, and pleasant.

New seating amenities should also be distributed in non-plaza areas to support passive and active recreation. Terraced seat walls built into the slope near the athletics area could become a team gathering place to discuss strategy or a snack station for youth soccer. Similar introductions built into the slopes at the Frog Pond will offer more spots to sunbathe and enjoy the water. Finally, seating nodes serve an important role in providing areas for general rest and relaxation, which is a central use of the park.

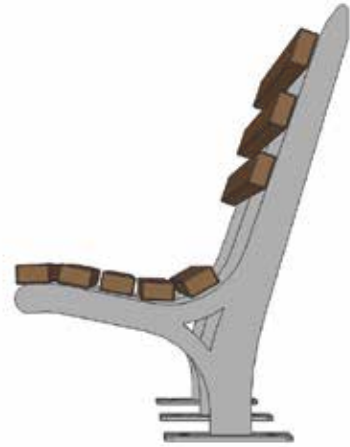
Above: Existing seating along pathways in Boston Common;
Opposite: 3D views of one of the proposed bench options

Bench Design Consistency

An adjusted approach to the installation of new benches at Boston Common is recommended as follows:

- **Victorian Style Bench** – Use of the Victorian bench should be limited to plazas rather than linear pathways. The Victorian style bench should only be installed flush with pavement, meaning it should not be installed behind curbs that exhibit reveals. The bench height is not adjustable and installations behind curbs with reveals are too high in relation to the walkway pavement, causing feet to dangle rather than rest on the ground.
- **New Boston Common Standard** – The current Londino-style concrete and wood bench should be phased out. The design of the bench is too difficult to reproduce with consistency in appearance and quality. The newest generation of this bench type is located along Oliver Wendell Holmes Path and in the vicinity of the Soldiers and Sailors Monument, and even these newest installations exhibit variations in appearance. A new, standard bench design was progressed during this master plan effort (see design alternatives at right). The standard would be more easily reproduced with the ability to have improved and consistent fabrication. Steel will replace use of concrete as a stanchion material. It is this type of bench detail that would allow for more standardized fabrication, be easier to maintain and repair, and greatly improve both functional and visual performance.
- **Granite Pads** – In addition to the bench itself, adding a granite pad below the bench where feet rest was a recommendation from the Management Plan. The granite pads have been successful and so they could continue to be installed, however the depth of the pad should be increased. When constructed with greater depth, a simple, clean, and elegant look that simplifies lawn mowing and trimming operations will be established.
- **Backless Benches** – Potential locations where backless benches should be thoughtfully considered introduced to provide vantage points in both locations.

Benches in disrepair have a very adverse impact on the aesthetic qualities of the Common. It is important that a mechanism is put in place to replace benches and other site amenities quickly and proactively. An inventory of standard benches should be maintained, and a reasonable number of benches be acquired, stockpiled, and regularly replenished as inventory for repairs or replacements.



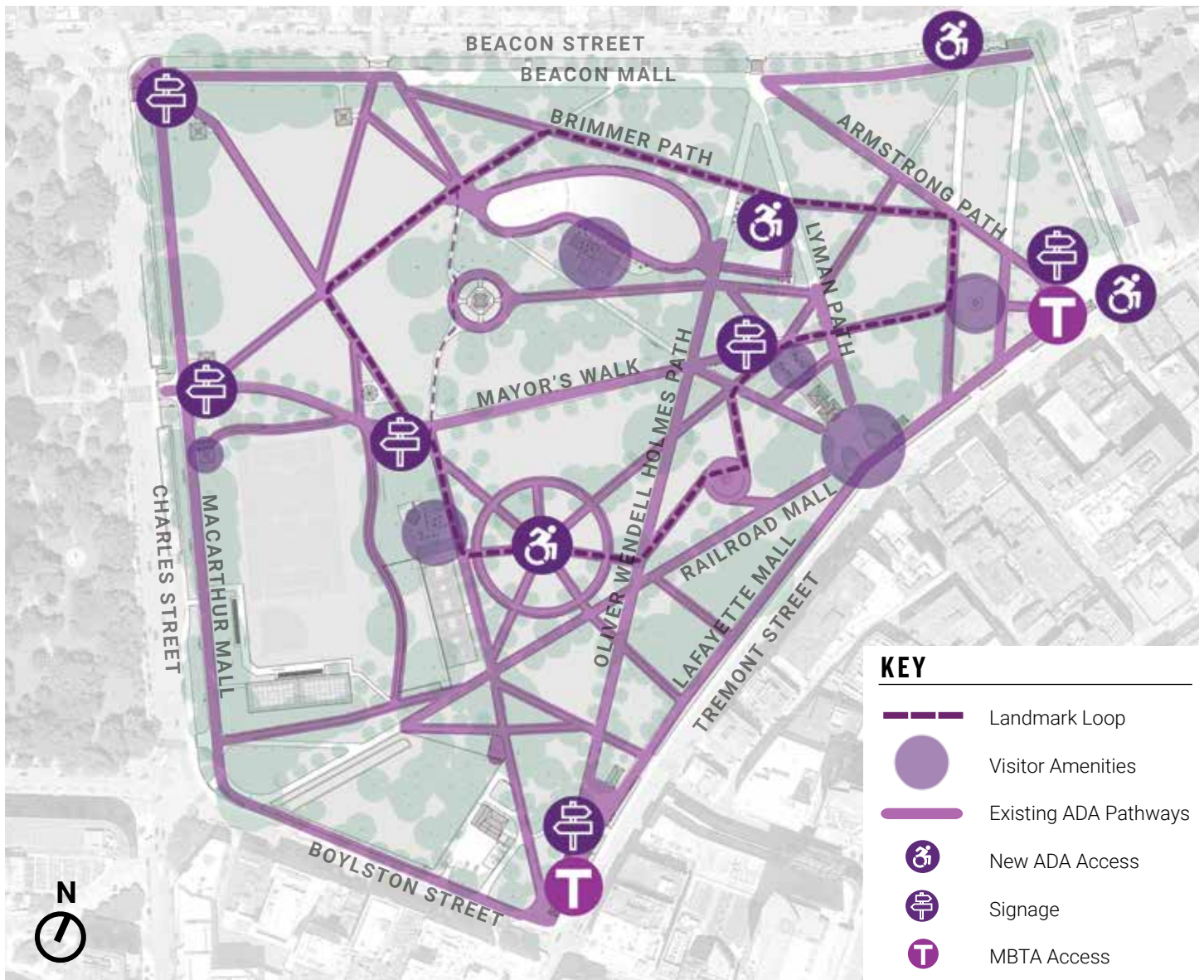
New standard benches should be installed at the back of sidewalk (i.e., not proud of the curb), allowing for a comfortable relationship between one's legs and the surface of the pathway and protect the benches from plow damage. An adjustable stanchion via in-ground installation will allow the bench to be installed where curb conditions are flush, and where a 4" or 6" reveal is reflected. The bench will be outside of the travel way to ease pedestrian travel and reduce opportunities for vehicular collisions.

Early Action Projects:

- Finalize the new Common bench design. Develop a backless counterpart and backed option that can be mounted on a seat wall. Coordinate with a bench manufacturer for production of the benches to be ready for the first phase of improvements on the Common that will require benches.
- Create an inventory of the current benches and their condition.

Below: Cafe seating at Brewer Fountain **Opposite:** Plan of the proposed overall access and wayfinding strategy





ACCESS AND WAYFINDING

With 50 acres of grass, pathways, and plazas, a visitor could spend hours exploring Boston Common, following tree-lined avenues, or circling the Frog Pond. Pedestrian malls crisscross the landscape, transporting park-goers from node to node, though many of these paths slip past intended destinations or are in serious need of renovation. For all its benefits, the circulation, access, and wayfinding within the park could use some upgrades to make the visitor experience more intuitive, safer, and enjoyable.

This section details mechanisms that will improve access and wayfinding within the park, addressing perennial issues within the Common, such as: difficulty navigating to various areas of the park, keeping the historic landscape in line with accessibility standards, protecting pedestrians from high-speed cyclists, and making paving improvements.

Wayfinding and Directional Signage

Finding your way through the Common is not intuitive; ironically, even the VIC is difficult to find. The visitor experience on the Common will be markedly improved by implementing a comprehensive approach to wayfinding and informational signage.

Adding signs at critical nodes and informational markers at destination amenities will clarify wayfinding across the park. A combination of “You are Here” maps to each location will set expectations as to where park features are in relation to one another. The signs will be intentionally placed at locations that visually connect to one another, so visitors can easily move between markers until they reach their destination. Above all, it is important that the number and design of any new vertical signage be consistent with the Common’s historic character.

Interactive information and mapping should be made available via a complementary virtual platform that

incorporates an interpretive self-guided tour and fun facts about the Common. With its layered history at the center of life in Boston, the Common's dynamic past should be more accessible. Relaying stories that were integral to the park's development will help tourists tap into the city's history and enable locals to glean new insights about familiar spaces. Digital information can serve as a flexible supplement to the fixed directional signage placed around the park. For those who prefer physical maps, copies of the online mapping and information can be made available in the VIC and at the proposed informational kiosk at Deer Park Maintenance Yard. Collectively, these wayfinding recommendations will serve to improve park user orientation and circulation, while deepening the public's relationship to and appreciation of the Common.

Direct ADA Connections

Pathway connections are of critical importance to the functionality of an urban park. The case is no different at the Common, which stitches together key destinations both along its edges and within the park. At its highest point (elevation 86) in its northeastern corner, the Shaw 54th Memorial and the State House meet at the intersection of Beacon and Park Streets. The park's western edge (Charles Street) marks the park's lowest point at elevation 13. With over 70 feet of topographical change within the park, providing accessible connections from park edges to core destinations is a challenge and can sometimes require circuitous routes. Gaps in accessibility include:

- Park Street Station Plaza, from the intersection of Park Street and Tremont Street to the two MBTA
- Railroad Mall at the corner of Boylston and Charles Streets, along the edge of the Burying Ground
- Oliver Wendell Holmes Path between Frog Pond and the Joy Street entrance
- Lyman Path between Tadpole Playground and the Joy Street entrance
- Liberty Mall from Armstrong Path to the Shaw 54th Memorial
- Beacon Street Mall between the Spruce Street entrance (at the Founders Memorial) and Joy Street entrance
- Park Street Mall from Park Street Plaza to the Shaw Memorial. While it is a popular route as part of the Freedom Trail, the slope percentage of this pathway matches that of the street. Providing accessibility along this pathway would threaten the integrity of Liberty Mall, which already has an accessible connection from Park Street Plaza to the Joy Street entrance by way of Armstrong Path
- Two of the three pathways connections to the Soldiers and Sailors Monument

The Master Plan recommends that the focus of accessibility be on access to key park features, rather than on regrading paths that follow natural topography. The recommendations that follow provide the most direct,





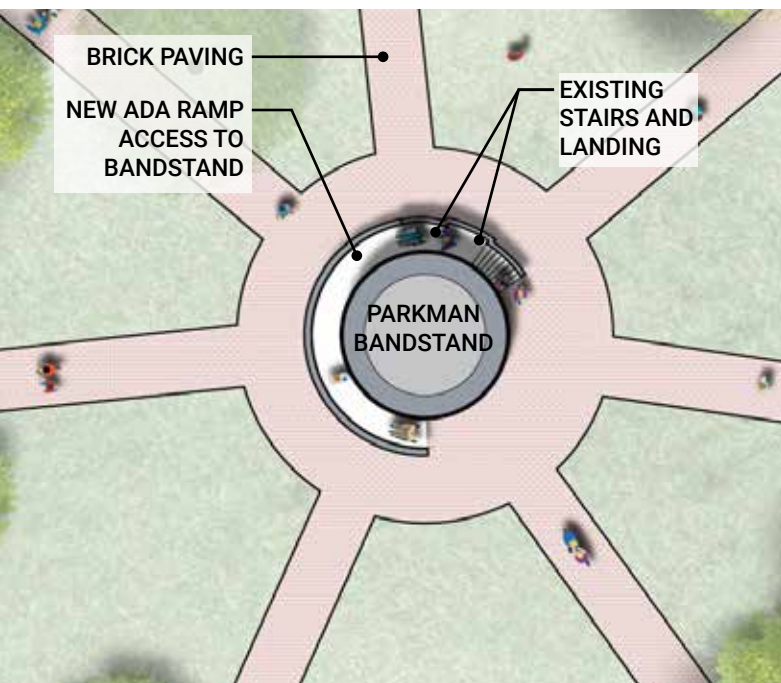
accessible routes of travel from park edges to core park amenities. These include:

- Constructing a switchback ramp from the bottom of the Shaw 54th Memorial to the top, built into the embankment between Beacon Street Mall and Beacon Street.
- Adding a second entrance to an expanded Tadpole Playground at the intersection of Brimmer and Lyman Paths. A ramp would be incorporated into the playground's interior edge that connects this second entrance with the main playground entrance at Frog Pond along Oliver Wendell Holmes Path.
- Constructing a fully accessible ramp up and into Parkman Bandstand that blends into the Bandstand's iconic architecture.
- Establishing a fully accessible route of travel from the corner of Park and Tremont Streets to each of the MBTA headhouses. This would be achieved through a combination of ramps and stairs (akin to the installation at the Government Center MBTA station) that negotiates the five feet of topographic change between the intersection and the headhouses.

Amongst all the recommendations included in the master plan, accessibility upgrades top the list. Together, these four major construction projects will achieve direct, universal access to every park amenity.

Top to bottom: Existing view of the proposed accessible ramp location at Beacon Street Mall; Example of digital park engagement; Example of digital mapping; **Opposite:** Fingerpost, marker and poster signage at Jubilee Gardens in London work together for a cohesive and recognizable wayfinding approach





Perimeter Bike Lanes

Contrary to park rules, bicyclists travel through the Common as a cut-through to get to and from destinations in downtown Boston. Desire lines through the Common primarily travel west and east, from the Beacon and Charles Street entrance and Boylston and Charles Street entrance through to Park Street Plaza, to Winter Street via the opening just east of Brewer Fountain, and to Parkman Plaza.

During the public engagement process, many discussions focused on safe use of bicycles on the Common—both the merits for and reasons against. By and large, bicyclists travel through the Common for safety reasons, to circumvent one-way adjacent streets, avoid the Beacon Street hill, and shift away from vehicular traffic on the surrounding streets. Even so, bicycles traveling at high speed through the Common endanger pedestrians in the park. Mayor’s Walk, at 20 feet wide at its widest spot, and Railroad Mall, at approximately 12 feet wide, are two of the heaviest traveled pathways within the park (pedestrian counts of 6,300 and 4,200 per day); pedestrian/bicyclist collisions are common. Brimmer Path is also a desire line for many bicyclists traveling between Back Bay and downtown. This path is just 10 feet wide and sees moderate pedestrian use. With the tree allée planted inches from both curb edges, Brimmer feels particularly tight to support both bicyclists and pedestrians.

As a result, the master plan supports the Boston Transportation Department’s roll-out of better bike facilities on the streets surrounding the Common, in downtown Boston and across the city, as part of their effort to realize recommendations included in the Go Boston 2030 Mobility Plan. Bike corridor projects along Tremont Street, Boylston Street, Beacon Street, and Charles Street include buffered and separated bike lanes that are protected by parallel parking and flex posts and painted in highlighter green. Off-set intersections, bike signals, intersection conflict markings, and bike boxes are other design elements that will be integrated into these improvements. The Common’s park administrator, in coordination with Boston Police and Park Rangers, will encourage use of these dedicated bike lanes and continue to enforce the “No Biking” regulation in place on the Common. More information on the park administrator can be found in the Operational and Management Upgrades chapter.

Top to bottom: Parkman Bandstand today; Proposed plan of ramp addition to Parkman Bandstand; Rendered view of the proposed ramp; **Opposite, top to bottom:** Bikes on the Common today; Public input on bike routes of travel through the Common at Open House #1

Pathway Refurbishment

Generally, pathways will be improved in an ongoing manner as funding becomes available and implementation of specific park areas is rolled out. Future pathway upgrades should adhere to the following general design guidelines:

- **Material Considerations** – Consistent with the guidance from the 1996 Management Plan, bituminous concrete, or asphalt, should be considered the material of choice and suitable for most applications. The premise is that pathways, the critical conveyors of millions of Bostonians and visitors alike each year, should recede into the landscape. Asphalt tends to lighten in color as it ages to a nondescript medium to light gray. As such, greater visual emphasis is given to the landscape including lawns and shade trees and other interesting vertical elements that dot the Common. Asphalt pavement is also desirable from economic, sustainability (longevity), and maintenance perspectives. The profile for bituminous concrete shall be rated for “heavy loading” to accommodate the limited use of service vehicles on the Common.
- **Replacement of Older Pathways** – Older concrete pathways should continue to be phased out and replaced with asphalt pavement. Specialty pavers (granite) should continue to be used selectively (and typically not along pathways) but within plaza areas, such as how they are used at the Brewer Plaza. Future gathering spaces, such as the proposed interior plaza at the VIC, spaces around Frog Pond Pavilion, areas of Park Street Plaza and Boylston Street Station Plaza, and the Parkman Concessions Plaza, shall be considered for specialty pavers in keeping with these signature spaces.
- **Pathway Edges** – Pathway edge treatments should be simplified and adhere to the following recommendations:
 - Remove cobble edges, serving as sloped curbs or as feature strips at the back of standard curb installations (Railroad Mall and Mayor’s Walk, notably), as pathways are refurbished. The detail is costly and difficult to repair to original appearances when damaged.
 - Eliminate combination concrete curb and gutter installations as pathways are refurbished.
 - Maintain the narrow (4-inch top width) granite curbs as a visually lighter installation across the vast majority of the Common. Consider wider (6-inch top width) installation where it





Top to bottom: Existing curves of Mayor’s Walk; Table of the curb reveal height and their proposed locations across the Common; **Opposite:** Proposed pathway materials plan

might be warranted by the scale of the space. Reveals of 9 inches should be considered on rare occasions where there may be extenuating circumstances (ie: subsurface conditions or maintenance considerations).

- Adhere to a standardized granite curb type as Common pathways are refurbished. Installation details should also be standardized to ensure strong structural integrity. Granite curb reveal options should be limited, with some flexibility allowed to match design intent and to help protect adjacent landscape zones. Recommendations for curb reveals are summarized in the table at right.
- Installing curbs with a flush condition or high reveal (> 6 inches) should be limited. A flush or low reveal condition will not offer the desired level of protection to adjacent lawns and landscape elements. Curbing is currently flush throughout much of the Parade Ground, which has proven aesthetically and functionally successful particularly for large-scale events, and this should be retained even though deterioration is evident in the asphalt surface and adjacent turf conditions.
- Where no curb is present, curbing shall not be installed in the future unless extenuating circumstance require the change.
- Where flush curbs are recommended to be raised, drainage may flow across the top of

Curb Reveal Height	Application
4 inches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major pathway corridors • Other high volume use zones • Minor, less heavily traveled pathways
6 inches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rare occasion • Special purpose
9 inches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rare occasion • Extenuating subsurface conditions
No curb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On pathways without curbing currently

the curb to lawn areas. Adjusted drainage approaches will be needed, and this might include redirecting flows longitudinally, introducing linear drains along curb lines, or creating gaps or openings to allow water to drain onto adjacent lawns areas.

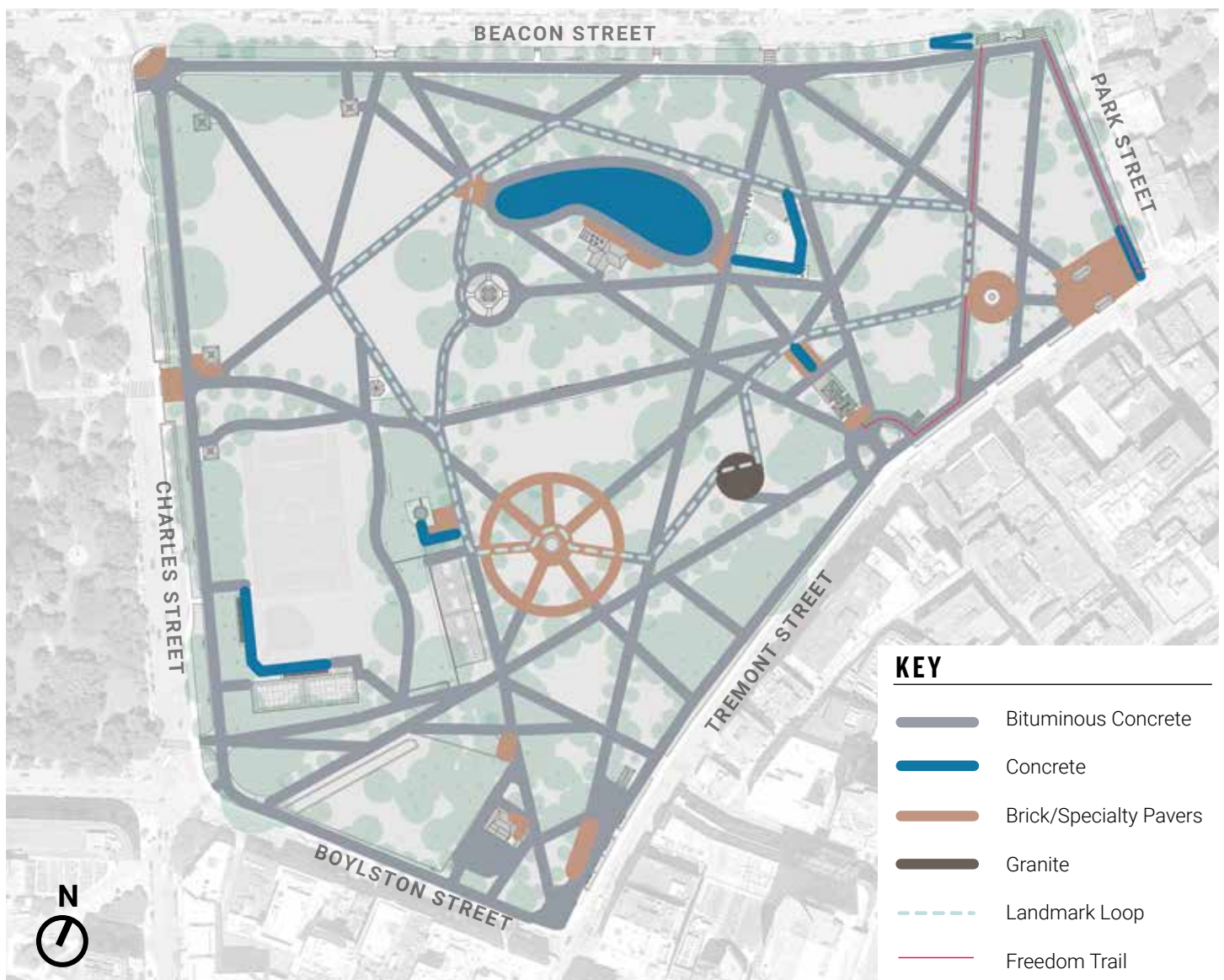
- Curb installations at a height of 9 inches may be used where the roof of the MBTA tunnel is shallow to the surface (e.g. under Lafayette Mall and adjacent pathway connections). The use of a 9-inch reveal should only be considered if there are extenuating circumstances related to subsurface conditions.

In addition to general pathway design guidelines, the following recommendations outline improvements for specific pathways:

Parkman Bandstand – Legacy brick pathways were reconstructed in 1997 in accordance with the original Olmsted Brothers’ improvement plans circa 1912. As a

result, these pathways are virtually unchanged in over a century. There are two other “legacy” brick pathways that are located to the north of the tennis courts (connecting Mayor’s Walk to Railroad Mall and to the north of Frog Pond) that are in fair and very poor condition, respectively. Both pathways exhibit extreme cross pitches, and both are not ADA compliant. With refurbishment needed, these spoke extensions beyond the Bandstand’s iconic wheel should become asphalt in their next reconstruction to reinforce the wheel motif around Parkman Bandstand. The iconic wheel and interior spokes connecting to the Bandstand shall remain as brick paving. The two other pathways mentioned above should also become asphalt in their next refurbishment.

Mayor’s Walk – As the primary east-west artery through the Common and as a direct connection to the central spine of the Public Garden, the Mayor’s Walk sees the most daily pedestrian use of all the pathways. For all its use, it is by far not the widest pathway on the Common. The asphalt walkway varies in width; it is just 16





feet wide from Brewer Fountain to the Carty Parade Ground and then widens to 20 feet as it approaches the Public Garden entrance. Conversely, the less traveled pedestrian malls are wider; MacArthur Mall is 24 feet wide, and Beacon Street Mall is 32 feet wide. This is due to how the Common developed over time. Three of the four perimeter pedestrian malls were the first pathways constructed in the park between 1814 and 1844, along with Railroad Mall which connected the downtown area with the new railroad station at Park Square. The Mayor's Walk was a relatively late addition in 1888, to respond to increasing foot traffic from the growing Back Bay neighborhood through the Public Garden into the Common. The Mayor's Walk was last reconstructed in 1976 and needs upgrading and realignment. Specific recommendations for Mayor's Walk include the following:

- Standardize its width to be consistent throughout the entire pathway. Despite its use, the Mayor's Walk does not warrant the same treatment as the tree-lined perimeter promenades do as signature features within the Common. Widening the Mayor's Walk would detract from the malls and impact their historic character that is so intrinsic to the Common's identity.
- Introduce minor layout adjustments to the pathway to smooth and easy tight curves.
- Eliminate retaining walls at former tree locations.
- Remove the badly deteriorated cobble edge and replace with a simplified granite curb installation, as noted in the general pathway recommendations.
- Introduce a tree allée to frame the Mayor's Walk, specifically between the Charles Street Midblock Entrance along the Parade Ground. Tree planting above the Boston Common Garage will only be possible with an upgraded roof design that allows for the proper planting depths and eliminates the need for a full repair every 30 years. This cyclical maintenance program for the roof causes great disruption to the Common and does not allow for significant improvement to above-ground conditions.

Railroad Mall – Railroad Mall, too, was last repaired nearly four decades ago in 1985 and is due for an upgrade. Repairing cracked pavement, correcting failing stormwater infrastructure, and regrading in key areas will all contribute to improving this critical corridor that connects the southwestern corner at Boylston and Charles Streets with Parkman Concessions Plaza and the VIC. Proposed improvements include:

Left: Existing pathways near the Burying Grounds; **Opposite:** Existing pathway to be removed



- Replace cobblestone apron flanking the pathways with a simplified vertical granite curb.
- Upgrade stormwater infrastructure to accommodate modern-day climate conditions and more frequent rainfall events.
- Adjust the pathway grading to ensure positive drainage and maintain the current accessible routes. Unfortunately, it is not possible to achieve accessibility in the stretch just east of the ballfields without major disruptions, such as tree loss or extreme re-grading. The pathway just north of that stretch provides an alternative accessible route.
- Plant trees to fill in the gaps in the allée as previously outlined.

Soldiers and Sailors Monument Pathways – These pathways were refurbished in 2015, which mostly included full-depth reconstruction and the installation of new granite curbing. The pathway leading up to the monument from the Mayor’s Walk (closest to the Parade Ground) was realigned to provide a more graceful curve and to better frame the view up to the monument. Of the three pathways to the monument, only this pathway is accessible. The amount of topographic change across the other two pathways does not allow them to become accessible in the future. Except for the leg running from Oliver Wendell Holmes Path to the Frog Pond, all pathways were reconstructed using the “heavy loading” criteria due to vehicular use.

Beacon/Charles Street Entrance to Tremont/Boylston Street Entrance – Unnamed pathways include one legacy brick pathway with direct connections across the Common. With steady pedestrian use throughout the day, these pathways are in poor condition and require refurbishment.

Brimmer Path – Refurbishments to include curb upgrades, gravel base reuse, and slight adjustments to the pathway’s alignment that can better withstand significant pedestrian traffic volumes.

Pathway Removal from Walnut Street Stairs to Frog Pond/Tadpole Playground – Currently paved partially in brick, this pathway connection is in poor condition and sees little use. Removing the pathway entirely will expand the uninterrupted sloping lawn behind the Frog Pond to provide greater range of use as a meaningfully sized lawn panel.

Other Pathways in Poor Condition – There are other, relatively minor pathways that exhibit poor physical conditions. These pathways should be considered for refurbishment as part of other potential capital projects referenced above based on geographic proximity and be prioritized based on the extent of use.

To ensure capital dollars are well spent, we suggest sampling of the pavement and subsurface materials is completed during the planning and design phase associated with any pathway refurbishment effort. In this way, all materials can be characterized, and determination can be made as to if gravel base materials can be salvaged or replaced. When a pathway is refurbished, associated drainage should be repaired/upgraded as well.

Landscape Zones along Pathways

The landscape zones that line most pathways are worn, compacted, and otherwise compromised as described in the Inventory section of this report. These areas impact the character of the Common. The goal is to improve conditions through a variety of means, as follows:

- Rejuvenate lawns along pathways, giving priority to areas exhibiting the poorest conditions. To ensure optimum growing conditions, existing topsoil should be tested to make sure that it is suitable for a landscape that receives heavy foot traffic, with a lot of shade and little or no water during drought periods.
- Rejuvenate lawns annually. Amend topsoil to achieve a better growing media and seed all impacted areas with proven blends. Critical to the success of such a program is the establishment of comprehensive grow-in and maintenance protocols including protecting improved areas, watering, fertilizing, and mowing until turf is established.
- Strengthen soil horizons in high-use event spaces



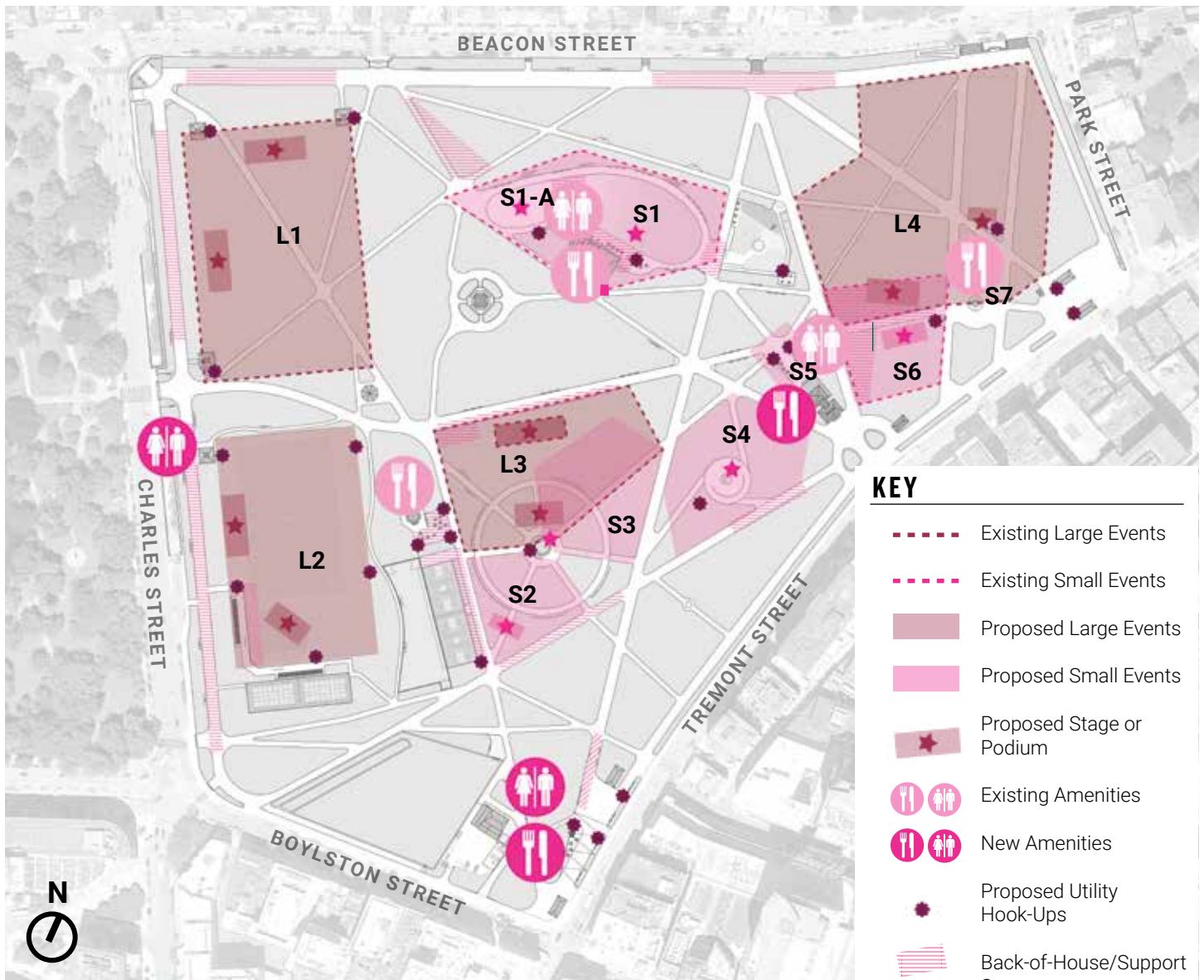
through the installation of a reinforcing mesh to be embedded in the upper layer of topsoil.

- Improve the transitions between top of curbs and adjacent lawns. At present, the back sides of many curbs are frequently exposed with abrupt changes in elevation. This impacts turf quality, aesthetics, makes maintenance more difficult, and introduces tripping hazards. A better relationship between lawn and top of curb would have the lawn pitching slightly up gradient as it extends away from the curb for three to five feet. To better achieve this, the elevations of certain pathways may need to be adjusted downward when reconstructed.
- Current lawn maintenance practices should also be assessed, and adjusted approaches identified where appropriate, including the possibility of outsourcing certain practices having to do with aeration, slice seeding and fertilization.

Early Action Projects:

- A more detailed list and accompanying drawings of the locations receiving signage and the signs needed per location is the next logical step to improve wayfinding. For directional signs, a template for each type of sign needs to be developed that will complement the existing signage design. A standardized map will be developed and can be adapted from the mapping in this master plan. For interpretive information to be located online, information will be vetted with Boston Parks and Recreation and Friends staff, then implemented.
- A switchback ramp from the bottom of the Shaw 54th Memorial to the top, built into the embankment between Beacon Street Mall and Beacon Street.

Left: Typical pathways, benches, lighting, and trees of the Common;
Opposite: Plan of the proposed event infrastructure strategy



EVENT INFRASTRUCTURE

Visitors to the Common enjoy a range of iconic backdrops—the city skyline, park sightlines, and historic architecture. Along with easy access to the park by way of two subway stops, parking available in an underground garage, and nearby hotels for events that draw out of town attendees, hosting events at the Common is very desirable. As the number of programs at the park has grown, piecemeal solutions have been implemented to keep up with the demand. However, the entire strategy around event infrastructure is reconsidered through this master planning effort to provides room for growth while also protecting the greenspace and its many user groups from the negative impacts of overuse by events.

New infrastructure should support the high-level management solutions with physical improvements (management upgrades are included in the next chapter). Areas designated as back-of-house zones within each

designated event area will be constructed with more robust materials (e.g. thickened pavement) and include or be proximate to utility hookups, Wi-Fi hot spots, and other support infrastructure that would serve event organizers and park staff, security, and food service to simplify logistics and reduce the amount of equipment that might be brought in per event (to further reduce vehicular impact on the Common).

As part of many proposed locational improvements, more robust infrastructure will allow for events of varying sizes to be better distributed. Improving and protecting the Common's surfaces will allow hardscape and lawn areas to better serve event and programming needs beyond their daily functions. Additionally, the Common's existing restrooms and concessions will be upgraded. More of each will be added to distribute these conveniences and thereby, events across the park.

Overall, a system-wide approach to event infrastructure upgrades, aligned with management recommendations,

will spread events and programs across the Common, which will activate new areas of the park in exciting and different ways. This approach will offer amenities that provide support for alternative and innovative programming, while allowing some currently over-subscribed zones to be periodically restored.

Event Distribution

One of the simplest measures to protect the historic fabric of the Common is to map out a protocol for events and program distribution. Capacity restrictions are also recommended, which are outlined in more detail in the next chapter. Allocating event space based on event size will streamline event management and promote transparency for both staff and applicants. Events will be better spread throughout the park to alleviate pressures on any one area. As shown on the event infrastructure map, event distribution recommendations include the following:

- Officially designate Parade Ground, Liberty Mall, and Parkman Bandstand as large event spaces. Additional large event space will be designated for the athletics area.
- Designate small events zones at Parkman Bandstand, King Memorial, Frog Pond, and VIC park-side plaza.
- Identify temporary stage and back-of-house locations per site.
- Events making use of paved event spaces will be given priority over those desiring lawn areas. Paved areas will be better able to better handle regular event use than lawns. Scale and size of event, time of year, and other factors will be at play in locating events in the park.
- Maintain Liberty Lawn as a free speech zone that will never be occupied by permitted events. Park

Street Plaza also serves in this capacity and should be protected for free speech.

Ultimately, creating a proactive system for event distribution will mitigate some potential damages and help park staff to anticipate post-event needs. With how much programming is planned for the Common, the city will be considering alternative venues for events on a case-by-case basis in the future. Reducing overall pressure on the Common, coupled with additional infrastructure and operational upgrades, will allow the park to become the premier venue that it should and can be.

More Restrooms

As event infrastructure is upgraded to better support use, visitor conveniences must also be upgraded. One item at the top of nearly every stakeholder meeting and public outreach event was the need for more public restrooms. With just a handful of stalls available between the VIC and Frog Pond, restrooms at the Common frequently require crowd control on a daily basis. The bathrooms at the VIC alone see over 200,000 annual users. For all these reasons, providing additional restroom facilities is a vital part of improving the park.

To cover the expanse of the Common, restroom facilities should be added in a few key areas:

- New facility within the athletics area towards the Mayor's Walk
- New plaza space with park information along the public-facing side of the Deer Park Maintenance Yard expansion
- New restrooms within the VIC expansion
- Expanded restrooms within an upgraded Frog Pond Pavilion

All bathrooms will be installed with public health and safety in mind. Regular maintenance and security checks will be paramount to their success.





Above: View of proposed splash pad during summer;
Opposite: Pilot restrooms sponsored by the Friends

Wi-Fi Access

Providing internet access across the park will support daily use, event organization, and future programming opportunities. Right now, internet service is strongest on the park edges and weakens toward the middle. The gap presents a roadblock for event operators, park staff, visitors, and even those looking for a remote work location. Vendors would also likely benefit from consistent service for their operations. Bringing consistent, reliable Wi-Fi across the entire park would open a new realm of possibilities. New visible infrastructure will be necessary to carry Wi-Fi into the center of the park.

Event Support Space Considerations

Back-of-house operations are vital in supporting a successful event. Without proper planning, these backstage areas can become messy, sprawling jungles of wires and equipment. An overall strategy that provides advanced planning for event support spaces will make event organizers more eager to comply with regulations and help park staff manage events by building in predictability to set-up and tear-down routines. A comprehensive approach will also help to minimize damage to the park's turf and mature trees.

When it comes to considering the economy of space at the Common, some of the hardscaped areas can be multipurpose in supporting events. For instance, the proposed basketball courts could be used as temporary storage areas for trailers, dressing rooms, or other heavy equipment needs for events at the athletics area or large and multi-day events at the Bandstand. Prioritizing space for event support in hardscaped areas will help prevent damage to the lawn panels. Designating paved areas for operational use will give event organizers clear direction on where to set up.

As mentioned in the event distribution section, many events will require some sort of stage or pavilion. The park's infrastructure should incorporate in-ground an-

chor points at each of these proposed stage locations to streamline the installation process. Event organizers, should be responsible for procuring temporary walkways, ramps, etc., as a part of their permit.

Any of these stage or supplementary event spaces that place heavy equipment on top of lawn panels should employ turf protection strategies to mitigate damage. Specific strategies are outlined in the next chapter. By creating a system that simplifies event organization and support, the Common can spend fewer resources on event management, mitigate damage, and protect the long-term health of the park.

Utility Upgrades

Behind every great park and event is strong utility infrastructure. Right now, the Common is home to a complicated web of water and irrigation lines, electricity connections and control vaults, and stormwater drainage infrastructure. These connections help manage many of the everyday needs at the park but should be simplified to make large events easier to manage and execute.

Currently, the park's electrical system is separate from the Street Lighting Department's electrical system that supports all pathway lighting. At a minimum, the park's outdated electrical system should be replaced with a more modern and eco-efficient model, as well as upgrades that consolidate and simplify maintenance and repair efforts. Moving forward, BPRD should coordinate with the Street Lighting Division of Public Works to provide more and better street lighting. Additionally, a new electrical system will be practical in preparing for the holiday season; running holiday lights through an older system can result in power leakages and higher electricity bills. Placement of the electrical system should consider the proposed event locations map so that electrical outlets and supplementary water



hook-ups can be deployed in accessible and convenient locations that do not interrupt or move too far from the overall system. Additionally, undergrounding the holiday lighting system by adding pole boxes at the bases of selected trees will eliminate the seasonal, tangled eyesore. By upgrading the electrical system, daily, seasonal, and one-time events will see tangible benefits.

Utility upgrades should also include speaker hook-ups, a standard practice for parks like Boston Common. These hook-ups should correlate with stage locations for maximum convenience. To protect against any unnecessary sound pollution, a sound engineer should be engaged to conduct a further study of technologies or positioning that can help reduce noise to the greatest extent possible. Containing sound is one measure to ensure that all users across the park can enjoy either the event or another park use. It will also minimize impacts on nearby neighbors. Speaker hook-ups could center around a utility node that also contains a sleeve or direct burial raceway for audio and lighting signal and communication lines, which would run from the control booth to the backstage area. Concentrating all utilities in a common area will keep events focused and efficient, benefiting event organizers, park staff, and visitors alike.



Early Action Projects:

- Add the necessary equipment to the Concessions building and other existing poles and structures that will bring Wi-Fi into the center of the park.
- Add the new restroom facility to the west side of the Common at the Public Garden mid-block entrance.
- A utility master plan tied to these master plan recommendations has been recently drafted. Findings and recommendations from that plan should be reviewed as these master plan recommendations are considered and implemented.

MONUMENTS

Category	Monument
Iconic Features of the Common	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brewer Fountain • Parkman Bandstand • Soldiers and Sailors Monument • Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th
Related to Boston Common	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liberty Mall and Steps • Blackstone Memorial Tablet • Nova Scotia Tree Tablet • Marquis de Lafayette Monument • Parkman Plaza Statues (3) • Fox Hill Plaque • Papal Mass Tablet • Central Burying Ground • Carty Parade Ground • Oneida Football Tablet • Founders Memorial • Frog Sculptures • Great Elm Plaque • Regiment Memorial
Related to Downtown Boston	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boston Massacre Memorial
Connections to the City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commodore John Barry Monument • Declaration of Independence Plaque • Edward Filene Tablet • Royal Navy Plaque • Nurses Plaque • Guild Steps and Plaques

Many sculptural gifts given to the city have found a home at the Common. As the city’s major civic green-space and highly visible across Beacon Street from the State House, Boston Common is considered the preeminent location for displaying the city’s significant artworks. Brewer Fountain by Paul Lienard was the first sculpture on the Common and arrived in 1867, a gift of Gardner Brewer. Most of the sculptures, plaques, and monuments were installed on the Common through the mid to late 20th century with the last being the Nova Scotia tablet installed in 2017 along the Mayor’s Walk near the site of the holiday tree, to commemorate the centenary of the Nova Scotia fire and Boston’s help to that city. Today, the Boston Arts Commission has a moratorium for permanent memorials, with the King Memorial installation as a notable exception given that it represents an important part of the untold social and political history of Boston.

Much more discussion on monuments and art on the Common is needed as an outgrowth of this master plan. As a first step, the pieces currently on the Common were inventoried and categorized into four types as outlined in the table on this page.

The master plan recommends that a “Boston Common Arts Working Group” is assembled to tackle the myriad questions surrounding the current public art and memorials on the Common and a program moving forward. Developing a set of guidelines will help to articulate goals and subsequent actions to realize that vision. The work should connect with several organizations, including the New England Foundation for the Arts, the Northeast Indigenous Arts Alliance, and others to facilitate the addition of BIPOC artists to the team. Led by a consultant who specializes in parks and public art, a working group of stakeholders with diverse perspectives would be assembled to design the process before launching into the work. Several topics are included below that will need to be addressed by this working group:

- Consider pieces categorized in the “Related to Downtown Boston” and “Connections to the City” as potential relocations to other places in the city where their presence may be more appropriate.
- Consider alternatives to signage in interpreting memorials.
- Make use of current technology to share histories that do not necessarily need a physical presence on the Common.
- “Art is event and event is art.” Determine guidelines around arts programming as a temporary in-

Above: Table outlining the monuments on the Common and their categorization; **Opposite, top to bottom:** Setup for Shakespeare on the Common, 2019, Cafe seating at the Concessions Plaza today



KEY



Iconic Features of Boston Common



Related to Boston Common



Related to Downtown Boston



Connection to City of Boston

- 1 Blackstone Memorial Tablet
- 2 Brewer Fountain
- 3 Nova Scotia Tree Tablet
- 4 Marquis de Lafayette Monument
- 5 Commodore John Barry Monument
- 6 Parkman Plaza Statues (3)
- 7 Declaration of Independence Plaque

- 8 Boston Massacre Memorial
- 9 Parkman Bandstand
- 10 Edward Filene Tablet
- 11 Fox Hill Plaque
- 12 Royal Navy Plaque
- 13 Papal Mass Tablet
- 14 Nurses Plaque
- 15 Soldiers and Sailors Monument
- 16 Oneida Football Tablet
- 17 Founders Memorial
- 18 Great Elm Plaque
- 19 Frog Sculptures
- 20 Guild Steps and Plaques
- 21 Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th Regiment Memorial
- 22 Liberty Mall and Steps
- 23 Carty Parade Ground
- 24 Central Burying Ground
- 25 The Embrace and Freedom Rally Plaza
- 26 WWI Mine

stallation that promotes the Common’s historical and cultural legacy. A short list of locations across the Common, such as Park Street Plaza, Boylston Street Station Plaza, and Mayor’s Walk at the Parade Ground, shall be studied as viable siting locations. The “Boston Common Arts Guidelines” will identify funding sources and opportunities designated exclusively to enhance and activate the public realm with installations and ongoing arts programming.

- Develop a timeline for the action items outlined in the plan that consider the operations and maintenance associated with artworks, both permanent and temporary, and articulate the roles and responsibilities for each park partner in maintaining and enhancing these pieces.
- Evaluate and provide recommendations around the moratorium on permanent memorials.

Early Action Project:

Assemble a “Boston Common Arts Working Group” of stakeholders with diverse perspectives. Assembly of the working group should be coordinated with the Monument Review Task Force forming in partnership between the Friends and the Art Commission with the responsibility of reviewing monuments on Commonwealth Avenue Mall, the Common, and the Public Garden.



Right, top to bottom: The Great Elm in historic paintings; Frog sculptures masked during the pandemic, 2020; Historic photography of the Shaw 54th Regiment Memorial; **Opposite:** Existing plan marking each monument and its categorization



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RESTORE AND CLARIFY PARK EDGES AND ENTRANCES

Accessible Entrance at the Shaw 54th Memorial	90
Charles Street Mid-block Crossing at Mayor's Walk	92
Park Street Station Plaza	95
Boylston Station Plaza	98
Beacon and Charles Street Entrance	101
Boylston and Charles Street Entrance	103
Park Perimeter Upgrades	105



PARK EDGES AND ENTRANCES TODAY

The sense of arrival and entry around the Common varies. Overall, the conditions along the edges today are timeworn, and the impact of the thresholds that were once well-delineated by structural elements such as granite piers and perimeter ornamental fencing have diminished over time. This issue is most noticeable with how variable gateways are treated around the park. How these entry spaces are organized, be it through ornamental fencing, piers, or paving, is inconsistent and often ill-defined, which does not provide the strong gateway experience that entering this special park should have.

RECOMMENDATIONS

How people arrive at and move through Boston Common is foundational to their overall park experience. The gateways, entrances, and edges at the Common are not a peripheral project; they are the building blocks of creating and sustaining a world-class park. Whether entering from downtown, Chinatown, the Public Garden, or Back Bay, the entryways around the park ought to communicate to all visitors the strong park identity through a clear and consistent aesthetic.

Upgrading and improving the entrances around the Common will involve tapping into the unique character of each of these edge spaces while simultaneously including design elements that unify them. A major step in upgrading the Common's edges is to improve the func-

tion of its many entryways. A study of the entryways as they exist today or how they were organized in the past brought about a family of architectural forms as the basis of these recommendations. While upgrading the entryways around the park will help unify the Common, these improvements should also be used as an opportunity to amplify the individuality of the park's many different plazas. Once complete, upgraded entrances will celebrate the Common as a special place, reflect its history, and provide important wayfinding cues.

Above: Existing view of Park Street Plaza; **Opposite:** West Point cadets entering from the Charles and Beacon St. corner, 1929



ACCESSIBLE ENTRANCE AT THE SHAW 54TH MEMORIAL

Creating a connection that runs from Beacon Mall to Beacon Street will serve the park-wide strategy for greater accessibility.

CHARLES STREET MID-BLOCK CROSSING AT MAYOR'S WALK

Improvements to this crossing will encourage continuity with the Public Garden and ease the transition between park spaces.

PARK STREET STATION PLAZA

Providing ADA accessibility, a formal gateway and edge treatment, and special paving will be integral in redefining and revitalizing this high-use gateway.

BOYLSTON STATION PLAZA

Upgrades to the Boylston Station Plaza will clarify the threshold between sidewalk and park space and incorporate new specialty paving and utility connections that can support semi-permanent vending.

BEACON AND CHARLES STREET ENTRANCE

Improvements at this gateway will shepherd in special paving and vendor designated areas, seating, tree planting. The vehicle access point will be redefined to promote pedestrian safety.

BOYLSTON AND CHARLES STREET ENTRANCE

A new mountable curb, a refurbished gateway, and planting enhancements will help make this entrance more conducive to movement into and out of the park at this corner.

PARK PERIMETER UPGRADES

Upgrading all the park's entrances will enhance circulation patterns, contribute to the visual rhythm of the park, and improve the overall pedestrian experience.



ACCESSIBLE ENTRANCE AT THE SHAW 54TH MEMORIAL

While the Shaw 54th Memorial is one of the most visited monuments on the Common and in the city, its State House facing side is not accessible from the park side, and the accessible route to the foot of its stairs requires visitors to leave the park. Situated on a high point in the most northern area of the park, the existing pathways from the park's interior to the Memorial have slopes of up to 13.5%. The shortest pedestrian route, which begins at the VIC, is over 1,200 feet in length. To be ADA compliant, the accessible route would need to be even longer than the existing path. On top of this, the existing stairs from Liberty Mall to the Beacon Street sidewalk and Memorial Plaza, which are part of the Memorial itself, span an elevation change of 9.5 feet, which is a difficult height to negotiate for most people. Upgrades to the Shaw 54th Memorial will confront these realities and work with the centuries-old topography to make the area more accessible and comfortable for visitors of all abilities.

A multi-million-dollar effort spearheaded by a partnership of the Friends, the city, and the National Parks Service to restore the Shaw 54th Memorial was completed in 2021. Accessibility here has been a longstanding issue, but this recent restoration effort has increased calls for a significant intervention that supports accessibility. The first of these improvements, the pedestrian bump-out on the Beacon Street sidewalk in front of the Shaw 54th Memorial, accommodates pedestrians by providing more space for standing as well as movement, especially important given the high volume of

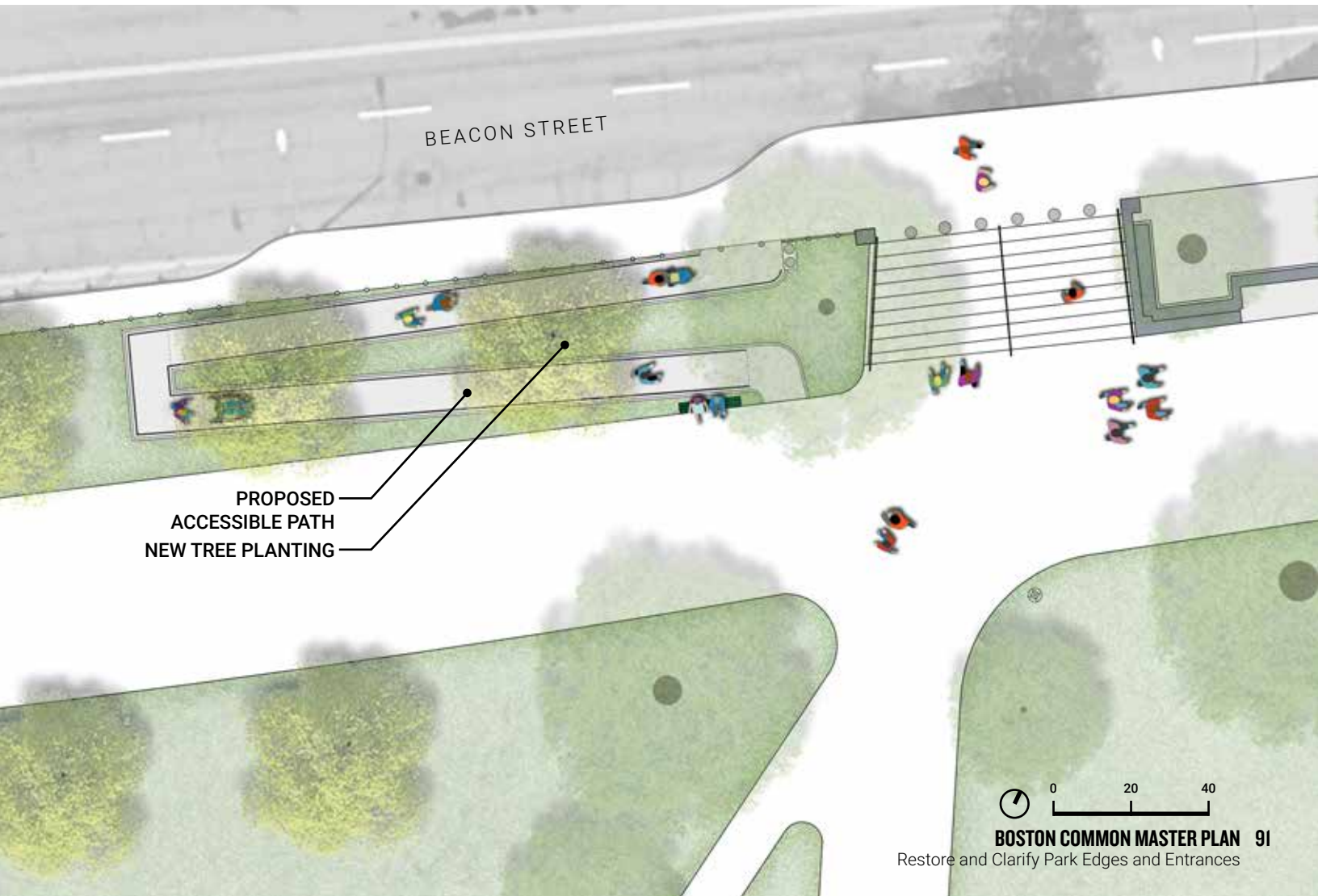
tour groups and other visitors to the Memorial. This bump-out was a separate effort by Boston Transportation Department (BTD), completed in 2021.

In addition to the bump-out, this master plan supports a previous recommendation in the 2016 Shaw accessibility study to construct a switchback ramp to run from Beacon Mall to Beacon Street, which will allow for accessible pedestrian travel from the bottom of the stairs to the top. In the future, this ramp will correspond to the anticipated need for an additional emergency egress route for the Red Line. This potential MBTA egress project should be thoughtfully designed to integrate with the layout and viewsheds of Liberty Mall while addressing access and egress needs. All in all, bringing accessibility improvements to the Shaw 54th Memorial will connect the northeastern corner of the

Early Action Project:

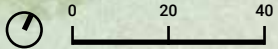
- Along with accessibility improvements at Park Street Station Plaza, this entire project is earmarked as an early action item that will promote accessibility in this corner of the Common.

Above: Proposed accessible entrance location; **Opposite, top to bottom:** Area where proposed accessible entrance will be located; Proposed map of the accessible entrance at the Shaw 54th Memorial



BEACON STREET

PROPOSED
ACCESSIBLE PATH
NEW TREE PLANTING





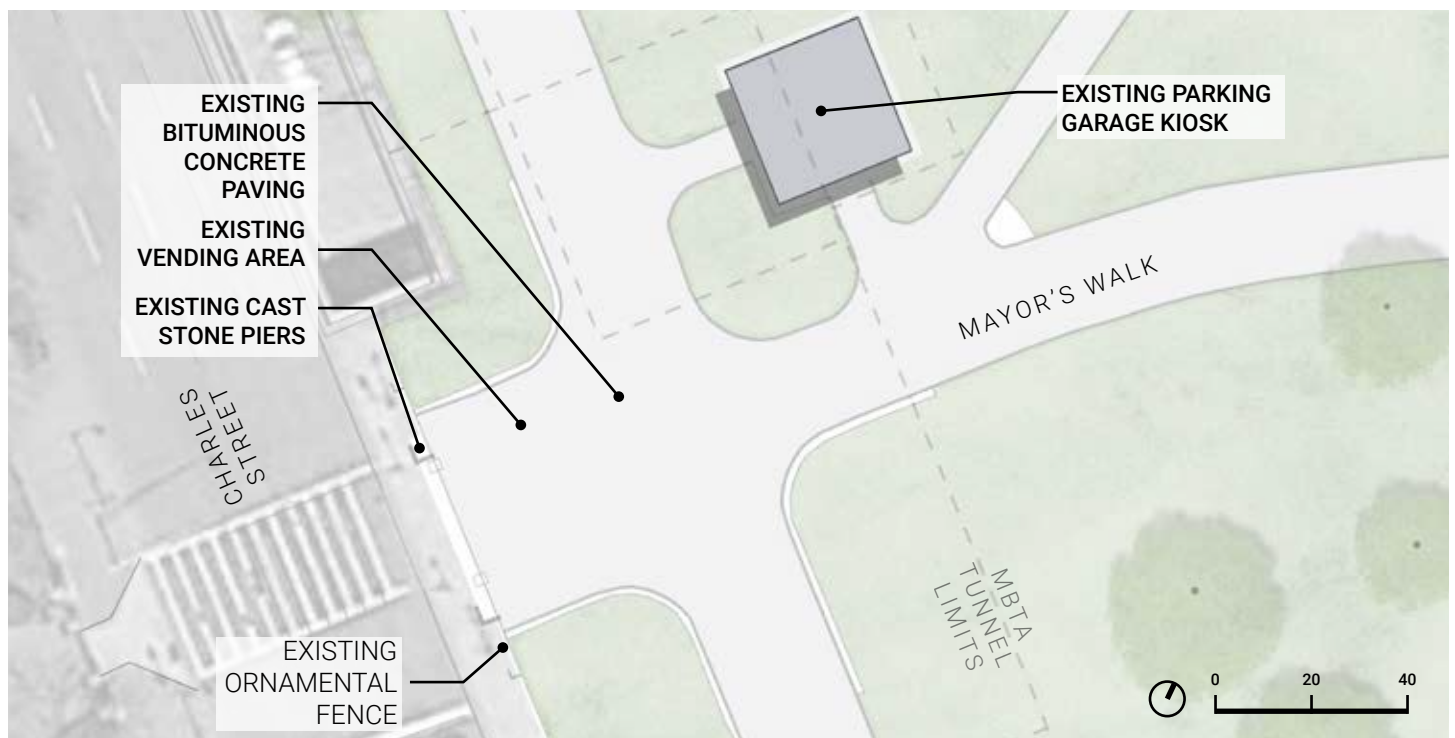
CHARLES STREET MID-BLOCK CROSSING AT MAYOR'S WALK

The Charles Street Mid-Block Crossing is one of the most visually under-performing entrances into Boston Common. In stark contrast with the framed entry into a lushly planted Public Garden just across the street, the pair of austere piers that mark the western threshold of Boston Common are too small to signal a dynamic and important entry point. In addition, specific deficiencies that should be addressed include:

- The stark difference between the Public Garden and Boston Common at this entrance negatively impacts the visitor's impression of the Common.
- The sparse tree canopy, both at the entrance and lining the adjacent pathways, diminishes the park's character.

- The damaged or otherwise aging paving lessens the entrance's visual appeal and presents safety issues as well.
- Just beyond this entrance, the Mayor's Walk jagged alignment makes for an awkward walking experience, which is exacerbated by the amount of volume of foot traffic it receives.
- The lack of clarity surrounding vending zones contributes to a disorganized jumble of vendors and visitors.
- The scarcity of restroom access on this side of the park does not best serve park use.

A variety of upgrades will help elevate this entrance so that the Common can welcome visitors and express its unique identity. To start, the Charles Street Mid-



Block crossing needs to establish a stronger visual connection to the Public Garden, which sits just across the street. The simplest and most effective way to diminish this difference is to increase the scale of the entrance at the Common with a gateway that elegantly and clearly marks the entry point into the park. This gateway should build from the established family of architectural forms, adding two large piers that flank either side of the crosswalk, and connect to two medium piers by ornamental fencing at the outer edges of the entryway. Historic replica bollards will occupy the wide area between the two large piers to mark this space as a pedestrian-only zone. A large crosswalk, possibly elevated, will connect the Garden and the Common in a way that improves pedestrian travel across the heavily trafficked and wide Charles Street. Further improving pedestrian safety will be a dedicated bike lane that spans the length of Charles Street, which is being led via a separate effort by the BTB. An enhanced arrival sequence will help the Charles Mid-Block crossing better match its surrounding context and strengthen the overall pedestrian experience on this side of the Common.

In addition to the gateway upgrades, the transition from the Public Garden to Boston Common will be supported by tree plantings and pavement treatments. Special paving should be deployed in a few areas to define vending areas and to differentiate seating nodes. This paving will visually break up the ground plane and cre-



Top to bottom: Existing view looking into the Garden from the Common; Existing view looking into the Common from the Garden; Proposed plan of the Charles Street Mid-block Crossing; **Opposite, top to bottom:** Bird's eye view of the proposed entryway onto the Common; Existing plan of the Charles Street Mid-block Crossing



ate more intentional vending zones, all of which will contribute to the organization of the space. Along with paving, new tree plantings will accentuate upgrades made to the entryway and soften views into the park. Right now, canopy coverage in this area of the park is little to none, so filling in the tree allée will create a more seamless transition between the Public Garden and the Common. Planting in this area is scant because there is just a few feet between the Boston Common Garage’s roof and the grass. In the future, it is vital that efforts are made to implement solutions for redesigning the roof to have longer than a 30-year lifespan, the repair of which is disruptive to the use of the Parade Ground and to the Common as a whole. This upgraded roof should accommodate tree pits for planting on top and coordinated with restoring the formal tree allée that runs down the Mayors Walk. The Mayors Walk visually and physically continues the central spine that moves through the Public Garden into the Common, which makes it a key extension of the entryway.

Finally, new restroom facilities should be added nearby in the space adjacent to the Common’s athletics complex. For the past few years, the Friends have set up temporary restroom structures in the warmer months, the enormous use of which has underscored the great need for bathroom facilities on the Common. In 2019 over a six-month period, approximately 140,000 people used the facility. More recommendations on the restroom facility were discussed previously in the “Enhance and Diversify Active Recreation Opportunities.”

Early Action Project:

- If phasing is needed, paving and gateway upgrades are recommended to be completed first. Vending upgrades around the garage kiosk and tree planting can be stand-alone projects.

Below: Section elevation of the proposed gateway into the Common at the Charles Street Mid-block Crossing; **Opposite, top to bottom:** Existing conditions plan of the Park Street Station Plaza; Existing view of the plaza looking toward Liberty Mall; Existing view within the plaza looking toward Winter Street





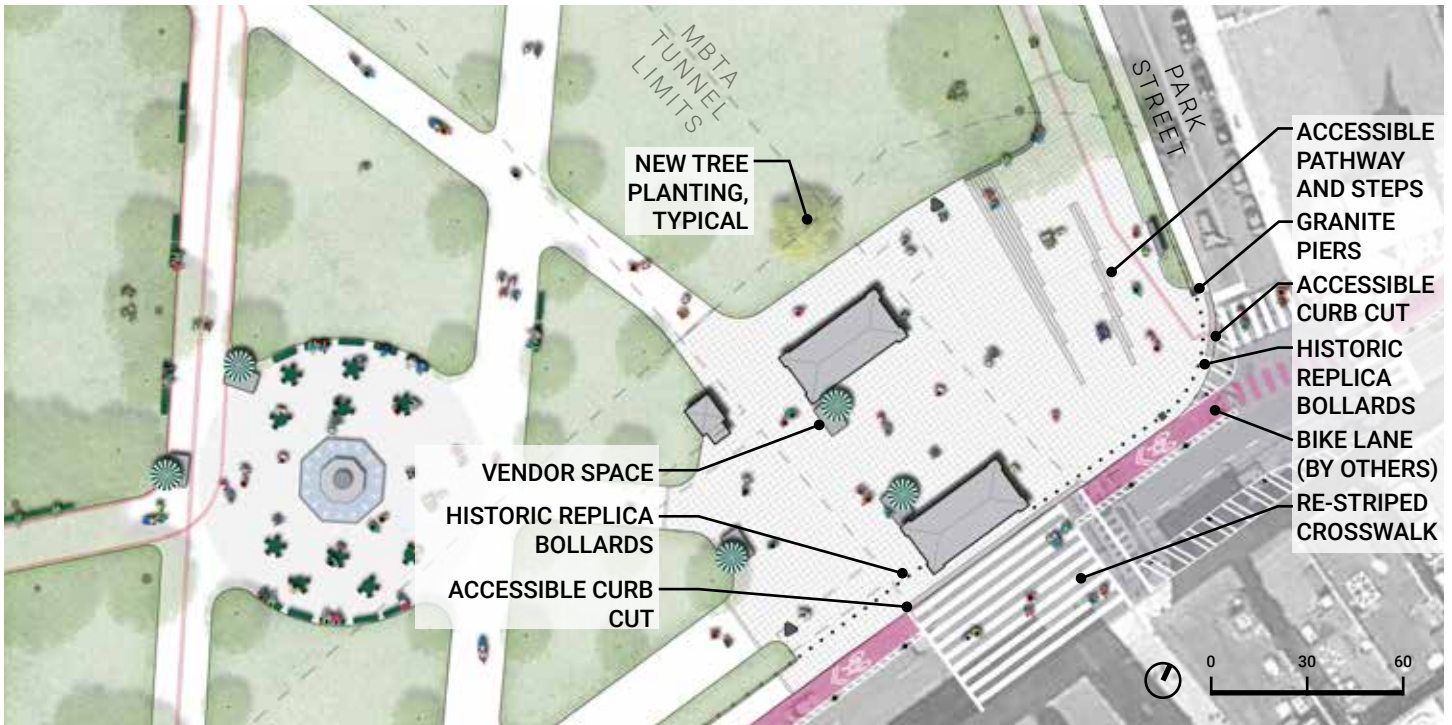
PARK STREET STATION PLAZA

Park Street Station Plaza is the single busiest area in Boston Common. With a pre-pandemic daily average of over 40,000 pedestrians crossing through Lafayette Mall East and over 20,000 coming through Park Street Station itself, this entry plaza has historically supported an incredible amount of activity every day. As such, any upgrades that look to improve the visual experience of this area must also be explicitly functional. Some of the existing issues that must be addressed include:

- The lack of accessible paving and grading renders this area unusable for those who require gentler slopes or wheelchair accessibility.
- The lack of a defined “edge” makes the space feel unbounded, bringing it too close, both visually and physically, to the adjacent traffic-lined street.
- A practice of scattered vending carts across the plaza impedes pedestrian flow and leaves the plaza feeling disorganized and cluttered.
- The paving has a patchwork character and is in severe need of repair.

The most pressing feature needed in an improved Park Street Station Plaza is full accessibility from the corner of Tremont and Park Street to the MBTA headhouses. Right now, the plaza slopes at an inaccessible and inconsistent angle, making traversing the space for those in a wheelchair treacherous and, ultimately, inequitable. Integrating a combination stair and ramp system into the plaza will establish a fully accessible route through





the plaza to the MBTA headhouses. This feature, like the system recently built at Government Center, combines stairs and ramps in a space-saving manner that keeps the flow of pedestrian travel open. In this model, the ADA-compliant ramp is not segregated from other areas but is built right into the heart of the plaza. Ultimately, the journey through Park Street Station Plaza to the headhouse will become more accessible, more equitable, and more comfortable for all its visitors.

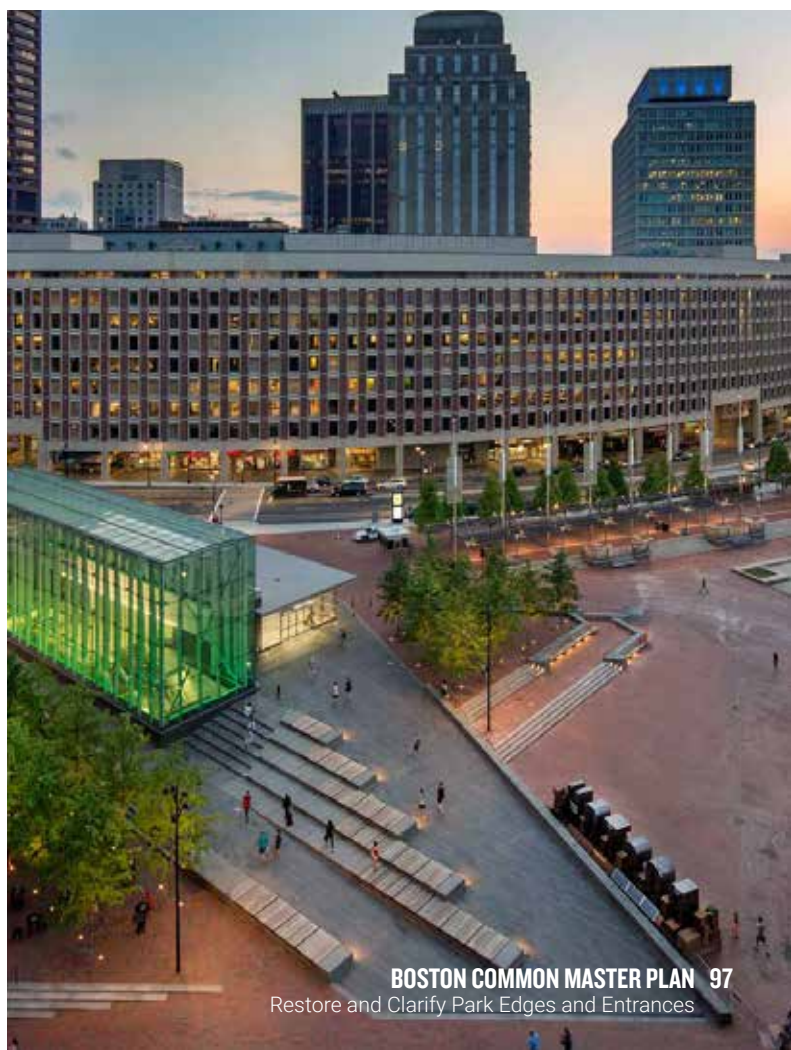
Like with the other entryway improvements, efforts should also be made at Park Street Station Plaza to enhance pedestrian arrival with a new, historically grounded gateway. Two new medium piers should be added at the corner of Park Street and Tremont Street to define this edge. A line of historic bollards will fill in the area between the piers leaving a porous, yet clear, barrier in place. New entryway additions will help clearly define this high-use area and ensure that pedestrians definitively understand when and where they enter the Common.



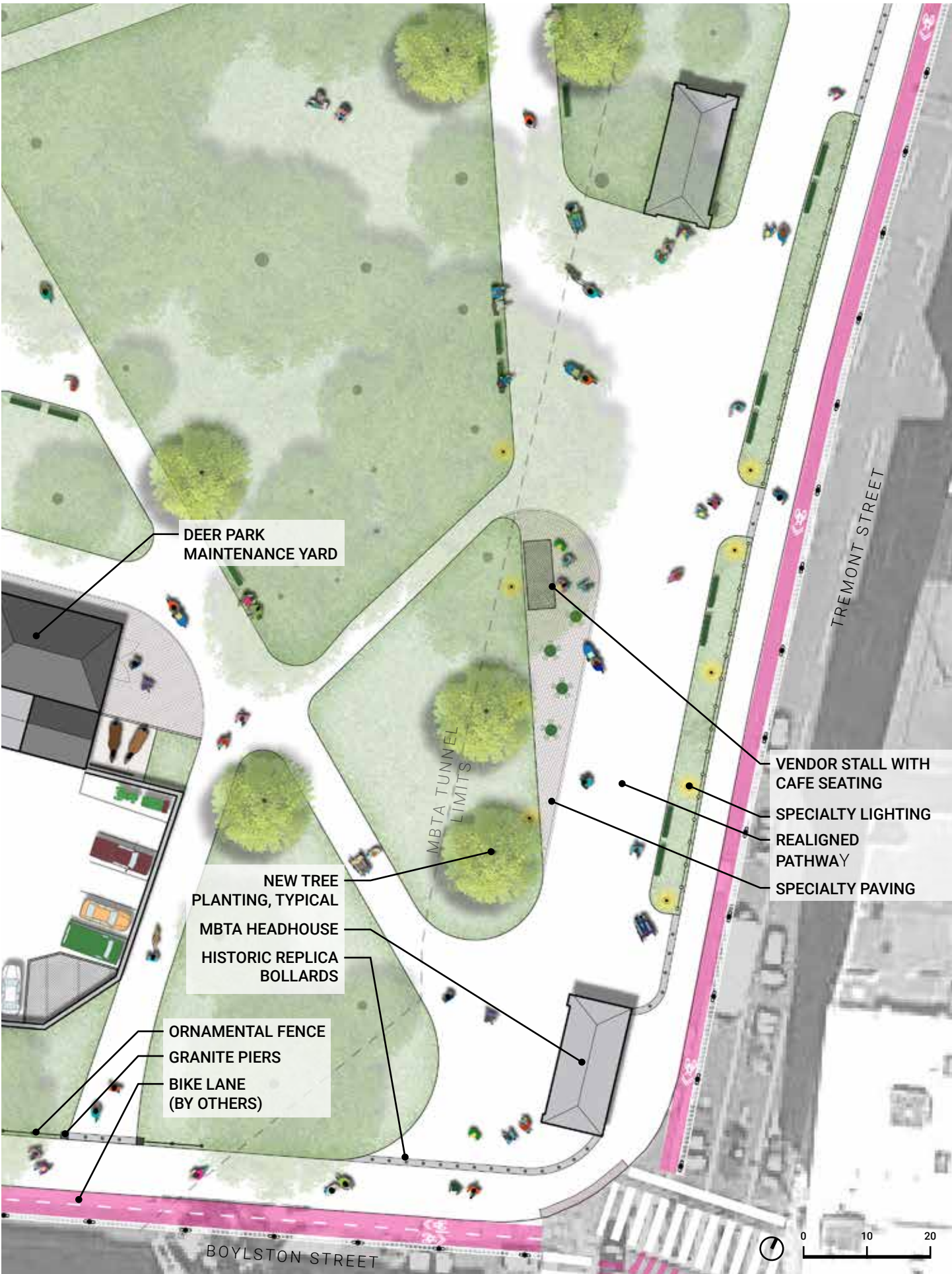
The final element of these plaza upgrades is support infrastructure for vending and programmed use. A new paving condition will delineate these spaces and be different from the bituminous concrete that is the preferred standard pathway pavement throughout the park. A specialty paving scheme will define the parameters of the plaza and clarify zones for vending. In doing so, the current vending sprawl in the plaza will be organized by the ground plane. This paving should be selected with maintenance in mind, ensuring that oil and grease spills from food carts can be cleaned with ease and be consistent throughout the Common in all vending and plaza spaces. Defining vending zones also protects the iconic viewshed towards the State House. Along with limiting other obstructions like tree planting, vertical structures, and vehicular parking, new paving will visually clarify the limits of the plaza, give vendors a clear zone to operate within, and communicate the singularity of this plaza space.

Early Action Project:

- Advance conceptual design of this plaza space. Further develop the proposed grading scheme to achieve accessibility from the corner of Park and Tremont to each of the MBTA headhouses, including the relationship between the subsurface roof of the subway and proposed elevations at the plaza level.



Right: Precedent images of stair and ramp combination at Government Center, Boston; **Opposite, top to bottom:** Proposed plan of the Park Street Station Plaza; Existing view inside the plaza looking toward the corner of Park and Tremont Street; Section cut through the plaza parallel to Tremont Street, from Park Street to the lawn just west of the plaza, near Brewer Plaza



DEER PARK
MAINTENANCE YARD

NEW TREE
PLANTING, TYPICAL

MBTA HEADHOUSE

HISTORIC REPLICA
BOLLARDS

ORNAMENTAL FENCE

GRANITE PIERS

BIKE LANE
(BY OTHERS)

MBTA TUNNEL
LIMITS

VENDOR STALL WITH
CAFE SEATING

SPECIALTY LIGHTING

REALIGNED
PATHWAY

SPECIALTY PAVING

TREMONT STREET

BOYLSTON STREET



BOYLSTON STATION PLAZA

Boylston Station Plaza is the second most traveled plaza in Boston Common, largely because of the MBTA station there. It is also frequented by the residential population of downtown and Chinatown, and by theatergoers. Right now, the plaza area appears utilitarian and unwelcoming.

Its vast open asphalt ground plane hosts the two MBTA headhouses, a few traffic signals, and a deteriorating seat wall. The plaza's design communicates that it is more of a place to pass through than to occupy for any amount of time. Renovating this plaza will address the following issues:

- The entrance is used heavily by both visitors to the Common and for commuting pedestrian traffic. Materials need to be durable to stand up to constant wear.
- The large expanse of asphalt is unprogrammed and lacks organization.
- The former café located here was a positive addition and activated the large swath of open pavement but is no longer in operation. The lack of vending options leaves this space unoccupied for much of the day.
- Seat walls are in poor condition.
- Shade is minimal.
- This corner lacks a strong sense of arrival and visual interest.
- The MBTA headhouse and Tremont Street curb alignment create a pinch point at the Boylston Street corner which is unwelcoming to pedestrians.
- Lack of definition at the Boylston-Tremont corner blurs the boundary between city and park.

In the future, improvements to the physical and programmatic quality of this plaza will differentiate it as a functional yet social space, enticing more visitors and locals enjoy all that the space has to offer. Goals to be achieved in this space include:

- Enhancing the pedestrian arrival experience, which is influenced by the character and relationship of this plaza to its adjacencies, relationship to the headhouses, pathway connections, and visual consistency with other park entrances.
- Providing a more deliberate connection to Deer Park Maintenance Yard.
- Providing support infrastructure for vending and programmed use. Encouraging positive activity and programming. The seat walls should be eliminated.
- Increasing park-wide wayfinding.
- Coordinating emergency egress, accessibility and station improvements with the MBTA.

Recommendations for improvements to Boylston Station Plaza include clearly delineating the plaza's boundaries, which will visually separate park edge from city street. Adding a row of historic replica bollards will visually define the large plaza versus city sidewalk and street at this corner of the park. At the secondary entrance on Boylston, two medium piers and a short span of ornamental fencing should be added to mark a deliberate connection to Deer Park Maintenance Yard. Additionally, the BTD is considering a tighter radius on the corner of Boylston and Tremont, which would give more breathing room between the edge of curb and the headhouse. All together, these recommended improvements to the edge condition of the plaza will enhance a previously ill-defined entrance.

Activating Boylston Station Plaza will require adding in a few physical and programmatic structures that encourage activity. The scale and level of activity at this corner would support the introduction of a more extensive, seasonal food vendor.

Below: Existing image of Boylston Station Plaza; **Opposite:** Proposed plan of the Boylston Street Plaza area





Café seating, special paving, and possibly specialty lighting will define this space and provide a distinctly social space for people to gather. Support infrastructure, like electrical outlets and easy water access, should be added as needed to facilitate these efforts. Upgrades of this kind to Boylston Station Plaza will communicate that this area is not reserved solely for commuters passing through but can also serve a greater social purpose as a gathering place for the neighboring community and educational institutions.

All these plaza upgrades will be strengthened by implementing paving upgrades and wayfinding consistent with the gateways previously discussed in this section. Developing a cohesive paving strategy and directional signage should mirror efforts at Park Street Station Plaza to create continuity within the park and to mark the Boylston Station Plaza as a special place. Changes to the ground plane will differentiate the many areas within this plaza, bringing a new level of refinement to Boylston Station Plaza.

Even today, Boylston Station Plaza successfully enables quick, clear connections to Lafayette Mall, connections to Deer Park Maintenance Yard, and other pathways. Maintaining these connections will be critical in any future renovations to the plaza. Currently, the MBTA is planning accessibility and egress improvements to the platforms beneath both Park Street and Boylston Plaza; any changes to the plaza should be closely coordinated to maintain the continuity of Lafayette Mall and main pathway connections and to create space for platform emergency egress and accessibility requirements for the below-ground station.

Early Action Project:

- Introduce a new vending station offering unique food/retail items to bring positive activity and community connection to the plaza.



BEACON AND CHARLES STREET ENTRANCE

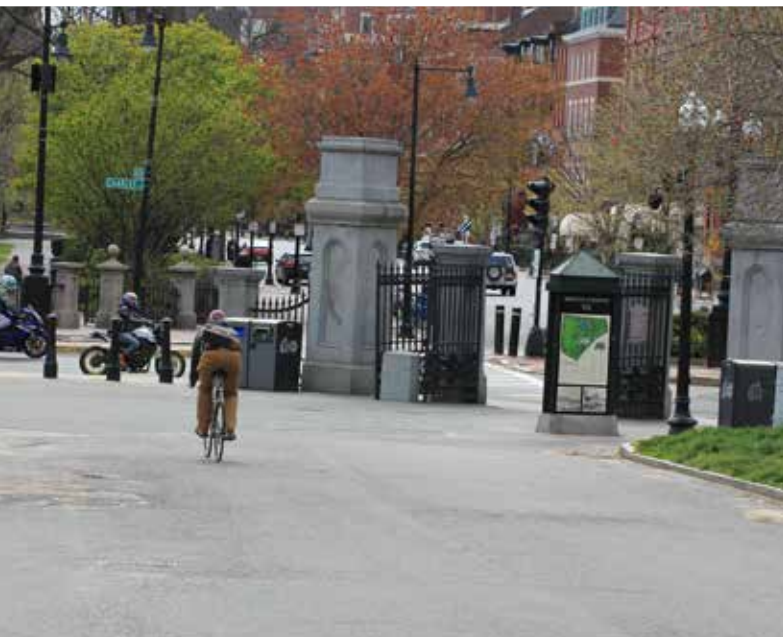
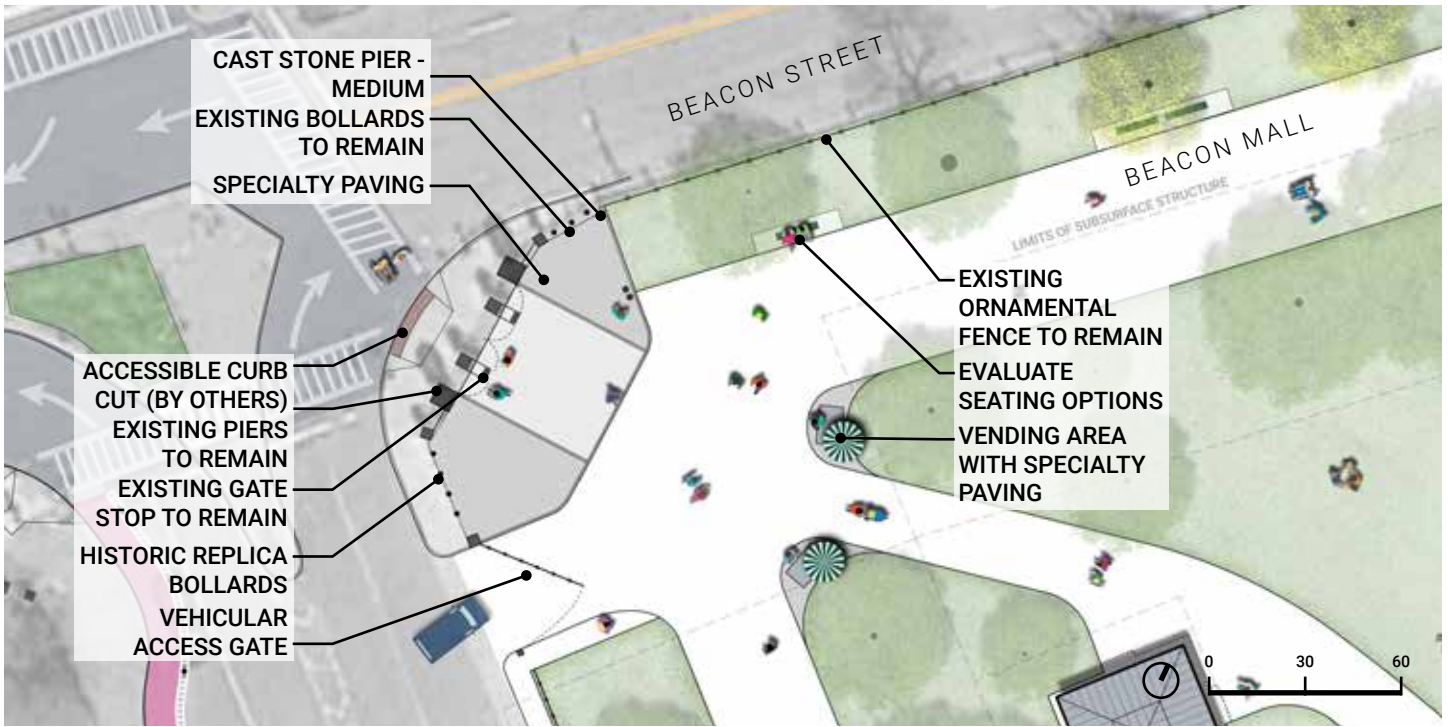
The Beacon and Charles Street entrance sits at the northwest corner of the park, across the street from the Public Garden, private homes, and commercial establishments. This entrance warrants attention as a critical gateway for the Beacon Hill neighborhood and one of the main vehicular access locations into the park. Currently, the entryway is divided into three portals by two large and two medium piers, with two small piers transitioning to the wrought-iron fencing further out. This layout has stood the test of time and is a successful example of a historic Boston Common gateway that defines a critical threshold. Special paving is recommended to replace a portion of the current asphalt pavement to help distinguish this area from the surrounding pathways and connect it visually to the other park entryways. Siting intuitive locations for wayfinding/directional signage at each entrance will ensure that visitors can easily find and make use of them.

On either side of the entry, historic replica bollards will replace or add to the existing line of bollards to frame the entrance, protect pedestrians from vehicular traffic, and further define the edge. The bollard-lined entry will be closed off by a controlled gate entry, ensuring that only permitted vehicles can enter the park. A gate attendant kiosk should also be considered for this corner to allow a staff person to actively monitor vehicular entry here, since this has historically been the main access point into the park. Though outside the purview of the master plan, new crosswalk striping on the road and curb cuts should be added to promote pedestrian safety and accessibility. Collectively, these measures will enhance pedestrian and bike safety and clarify vehicular access points, streamlining and simplifying circulation routes at this entry.

In addition to the efforts to the main entry area, a few other visually focused projects will ensure that the space is functional and enjoyable. First, designating

Top to bottom View of the existing entrance; 1970s-era view from a similar angle; **Opposite, top to bottom:** Bird's eye view of the Boylston Station Plaza; Precedent of Emerson Cafe that once sat within the plaza





vendor zones will condense and organize their activity into an appropriate amount of space. Another project will be restoring the historic tree allée along Beacon Mall, filling in any gaps in the tree canopy with new planting as needed. Taken together, these upgrades to the entrance at Beacon and Charles Streets will help reduce clutter and better define the threshold, making it a welcome for visitors to come into the Common.

Early Action Project:

- Plant deciduous trees in keeping with the species along Beacon Mall to restore the historic tree allée and fill in the gaps.



Top to bottom Proposed plan; Existing view of the entrance from Beacon Mall; Existing view of the existing entrance, from across Beacon Street; **Opposite:** View of the existing entrance

BOYLSTON AND CHARLES STREET ENTRANCE

The two entrances at Boylston and Charles Street provide an access point from this side of downtown Boston into the Common. While this entryway serves fewer daily visitors and is in relatively good condition, a few new additions that are limited in scope will make this area more visually welcoming, functional, and conducive to movement within the park.

As an intermediate gateway, the two medium piers lining each entrance should be refurbished as needed to make these entrances consistent with overall family of architectural forms. At the entrance further south along Boylston Street, a mountable curb should be installed that can act as a secondary entrance for vehicles that need to access this area of the park. This secondary vehicular access is only intended for occasional use - to reduce vehicular turning at Charles Street or support direct access to special events at the athletic fields. The pathways should be slightly reconfigured to allow for this type of vehicular access and to aid in pedestrian flow.

New tree planting is another simple effort that will strengthen the entryways and guide visitors along pathways. More specifically, adding new tree plantings to frame the entrances will help contribute to the feeling of arrival. Finally, though vending is limited in this area, a small area of specialty paving should be installed at

the lawn panel between the two entryways to define a vending area. Given the recommended upgrades to the athletics complex just beyond this entrance, vending needs will certainly increase in the future. Additionally, the BTD is planning upgrades to this corner around bike safety, which can be coordinated with any improvement plans within the bounds of the park property. These strategic improvements, though small in their physical footprint, will enhance the visitor experience and clarify how people negotiate space within the Common.

Early Action Project:

- Continue coordination with the BTD on roadway enhancements around bike safety. Replace the vertical granite curb with mountable curb in the location where vehicular access is allowable under limited conditions.





Top to bottom Proposed plan; View of the existing entrance from inside the Common; **Opposite, top to bottom:** Early 1900s image of Park Street Station Plaza; Architectural elements for entryway consistency

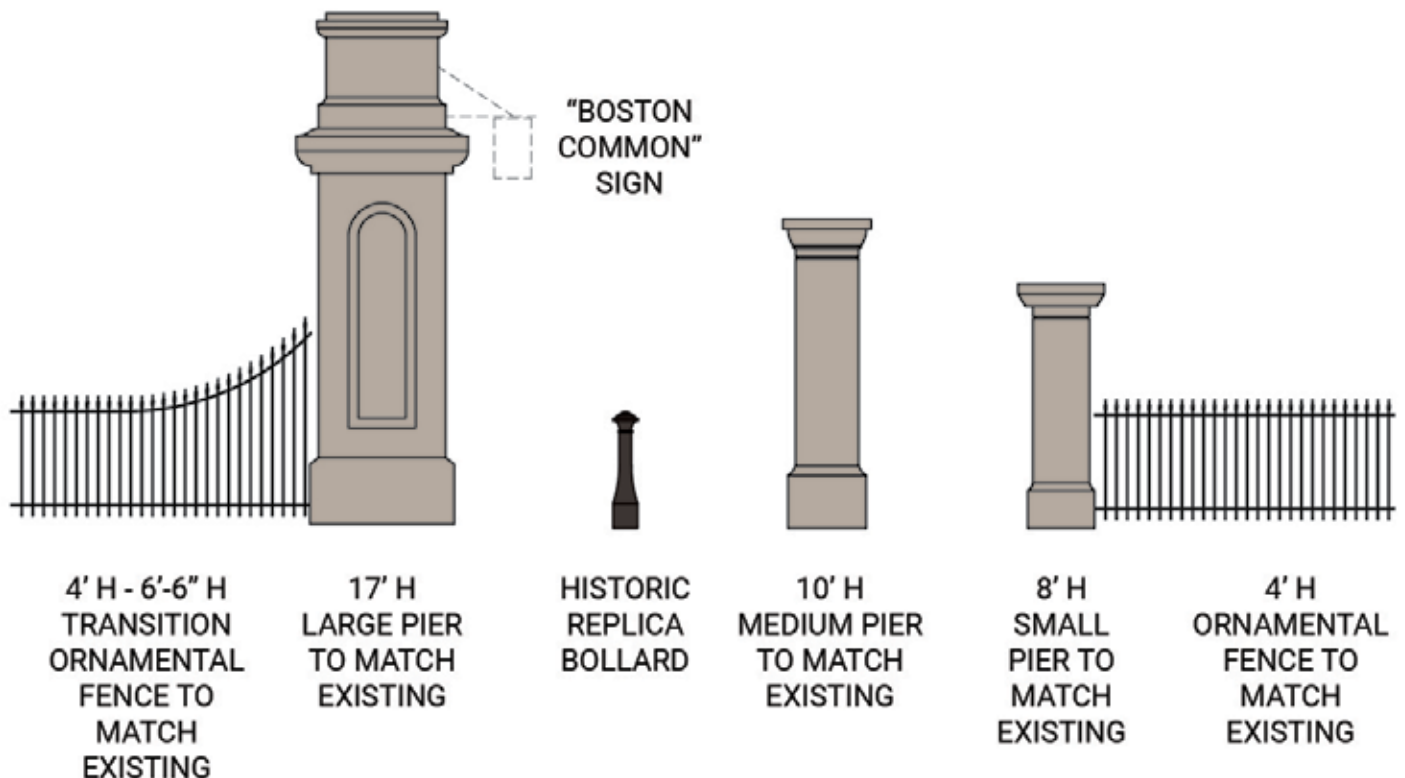


PARK PERIMETER UPGRADES

Right now, the entryways at Boston Common are stylistically inconsistent, diverging in terms of paving, scale, historic elements, and general feel. The first step towards upgrading the entrance strategy should involve bringing cohesion and clarity to the many entryways at the park, which can be done in part by introducing a family of architectural forms that utilizes historic elements of the Common's entrances, either present today or in the past. This set of forms specifies the standard elements that can be used in different combinations as

needed to tie the entrances of the Common together. These include:

- 17-foot tall large pier
- 10-foot tall medium pier
- 8-foot tall small pier
- Historic replica bollard
- "Boston Common" park sign
- Common's iconic and traditional wrought-iron ornamental fence





To deploy this family of architectural forms, entryways are categorized into major, intermediate, and minor classifications, and plazas. Each classification brings with it a grouping of elements that can be used in combination to create a gateway appropriate to the scale and function of that entry. The chart on the opposite page describes each category, the elements included, and the proposed locations.

Proposed locations are primarily based on pedestrian traffic documented during the analysis phase of this master plan. Use of space (i.e., is the gateway a plaza, a pathway, stairs, etc.) factored into the assessment, which incorporates the spatial layout of the entry point and its adjacencies. Most gateways tie into existing ornamental fencing and most also intend to limit vehicular access, apart from a few key locations discussed in the next chapter. Deploying each of these elements at the appropriate locations will bring specific identities to the entrances, contributing to a greater consistency across the park and elevating the pedestrian experience as visitors enter the Common.

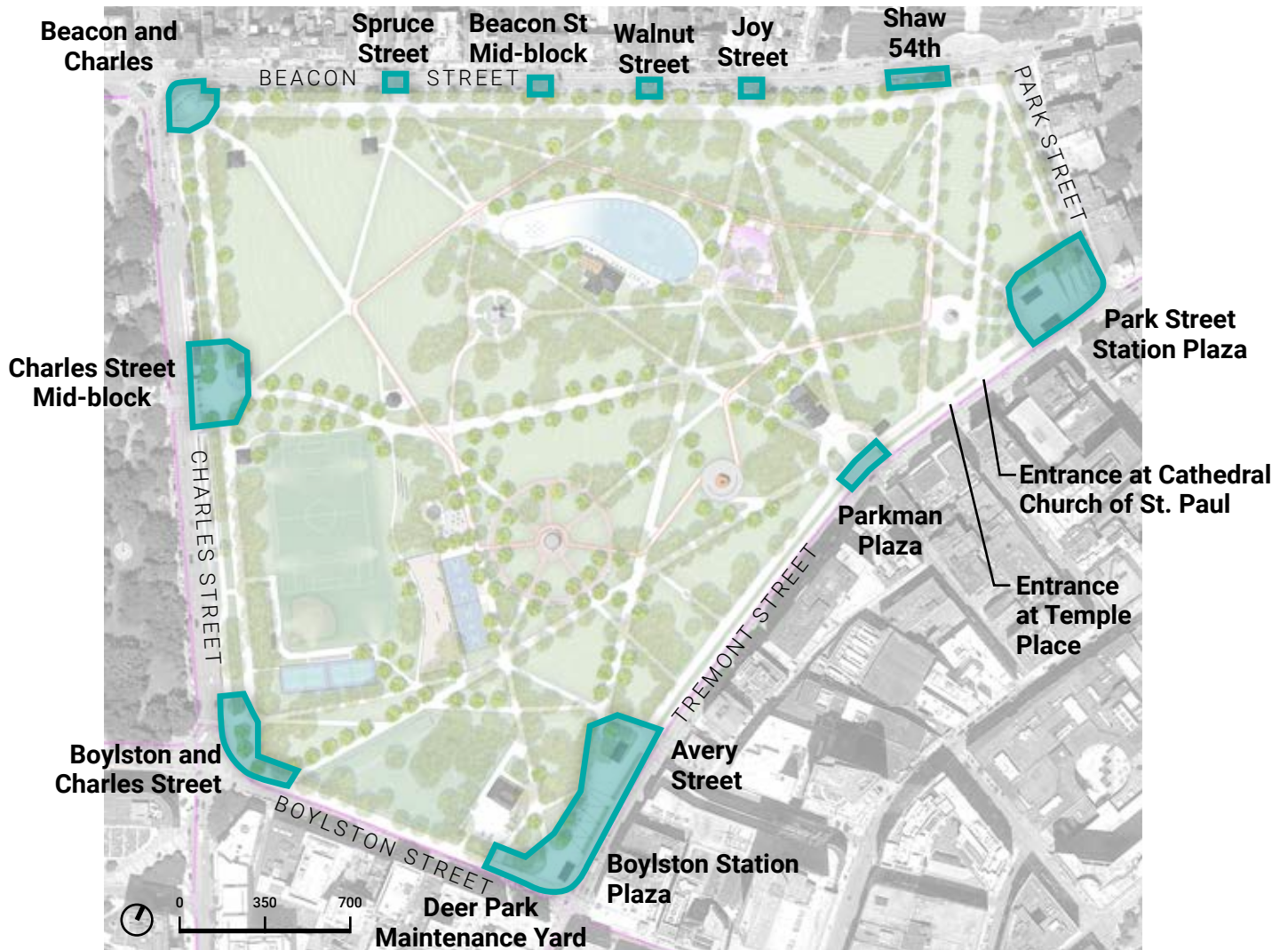


Early Action Project:

- Plant deciduous trees in keeping with the species along Beacon Mall to restore the historic tree allée and fill in the gaps.

Top to bottom: Existing view of the Walnut Street Stairs after they were renovated in 2015; Existing view of one of the entrances at Charles and Boylston Street; Existing view of the Shaw 54th Memorial Entrance; **Opposite:** Proposed plan with entrances marked and labeled; Accompanying table below indicating a categorization per entrance





Category	Architectural Form	Proposed Locations
Major and Plazas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 17-foot tall large pier 10-foot tall medium pier Historic replica bollard "Boston Common" park sign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beacon and Charles Street Charles Street Mid-Block Entrance Boylston Station Plaza Park Street Station Plaza
Intermediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10-foot tall medium pier Historic replica bollard The Common's iconic and traditional wrought-iron ornamental fence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boylston and Charles Street Entrance Adjacent to Deer Park Maintenance Yard Avery Street Entrance Parkman Plaza Temple Place Entrance Cathedral of St. Paul Mid-block Shaw 54th Memorial Entrance Joy Street Entrance (defined by the ornate Guild Steps)
Minor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An 8-foot tall small pier Historic replica bollard The Common's iconic and traditional wrought-iron ornamental fence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walnut Street Stairs Spruce Street



CONNECT AND UPGRADE CORE VISITOR AMENITIES

Improvements to the Frog Pond and Pavilion	112
VIC Addition and Park-side Plaza	115
Improvements to the Parkman Bandstand	118
Improvements to the Parkman Concessions Plaza	121
Connections with the King Memorial	122
Landmark Loop	124



CORE AMENITIES TODAY

Boston Common's core amenities have a gravitational pull that draws visitors into the park, often encouraging them to stay and explore for longer than anticipated. While these features still attract and serve visitors, many of the park's current offerings are in severe need of expansion, upgrades, or both. Equipment needed to operate facilities has passed its useful life expectancy. Plazas and buildings are undersized or require reorganization for better use of space, such as at Frog Pond and the VIC. While core park features can support some amount of activity, a fresh round of upgrades is both necessary and well overdue to serve the modern park user well.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This master planning effort is an opportunity to bridge the gaps between core recreation, cultural, and social spaces across the Common in a way that is intentional and intuitive. Not only does this group of proposed improvements aim to rejuvenate some of Boston Common's iconic visitor experiences, like the Frog Pond, but they also add new facilities and infrastructure that support diverse uses, offer activities and amenities for multiple ages and abilities, create cohesive visitor information resources, and expand upon the park's current restroom capacity to better serve demand. Together, these projects will enhance the public perception of what the Common has to offer, establishing a new era for the park as a historic yet contemporary destination in downtown Boston.

Above: Bird's eye view of Parkman Bandstand; **Opposite:** Historic view of the Frog Pond



IMPROVEMENTS TO THE FROG POND AND PAVILION

Iconic in its own right, the Frog Pond should be fully renovated to include an expanded pavilion, a new splash pad, and an improved wading pool complete with accessible entries. Support infrastructure, and improved pond refrigeration will allow for better multi-season events and flexible programmed use.

VIC ADDITION AND PARK-SIDE PLAZA

An expansion of the VIC building will offer additional, much-needed restrooms and Common-focused information. A new outdoor space on the park-side of the VIC will connect to the Mayor's Walk, making it the logical starting point for the Landmark Loop and supporting visitor activity on the Freedom Trail.

IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PARKMAN BANDSTAND

Upgrading the Parkman Bandstand will include adding a fully accessible, architecturally appropriate ramp that allows for universal access to its interior space. Pathway improvements, perimeter tree planting, and new seating options are recommended.

IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PARKMAN CONCESSIONS PLAZA

Upgrades to the Parkman Concessions Plaza will make it a more functional outdoor eatery and small gathering space.

CONNECTIONS WITH THE KING MEMORIAL

Physical and visual connections to the Embrace from across the Common will both connect this new dedicated space to its surrounding landscape and celebrate its own uniqueness.

LANDMARK LOOP

An interior loop will connect signature features within the Common's core area. Signage will be key to the loop's success. On the ground, the route can be lined with accent banding to differentiate it from the other park pathways.

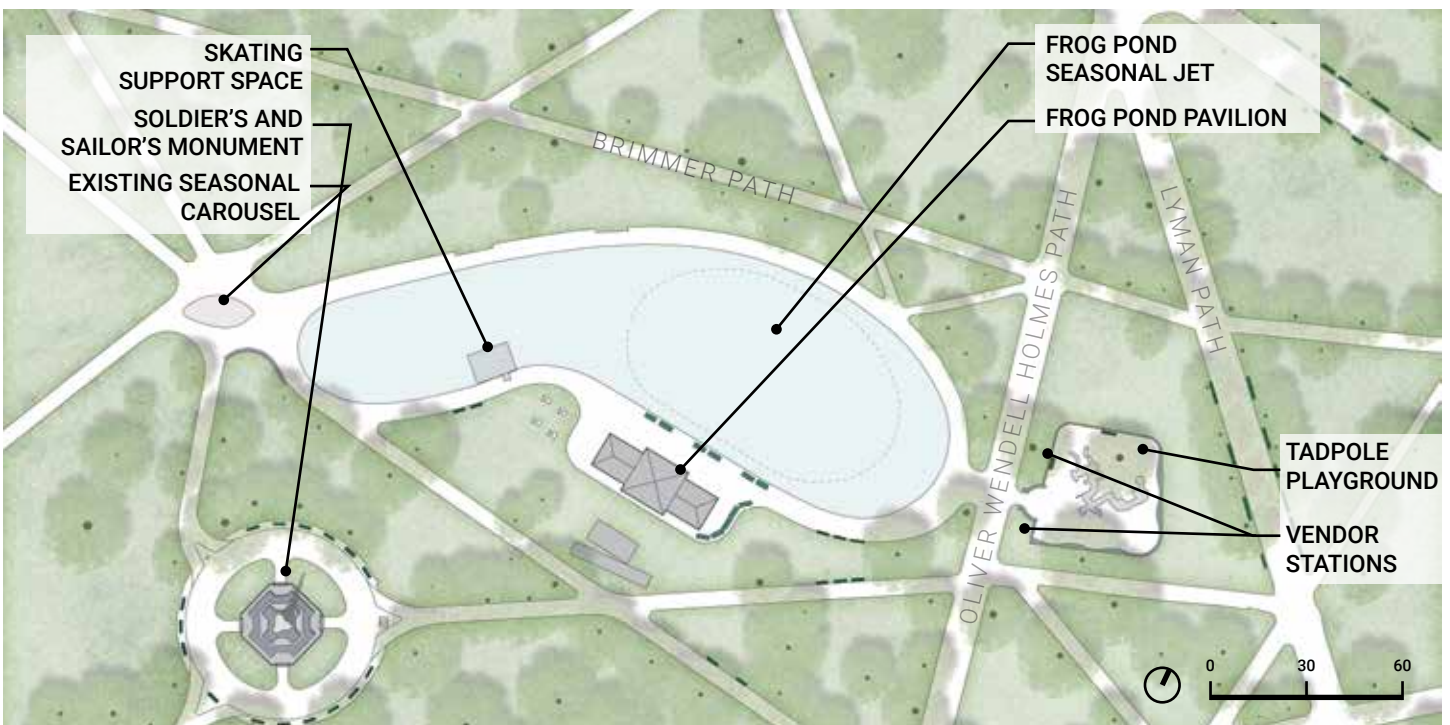
IMPROVEMENTS TO THE FROG POND AND PAVILION

Boston Common's Frog Pond is an institution and iconic in the City of Boston in its own right. Treasured by the people of Boston, the pond has been present here in some form since prehistoric times. As noted in the 2018 Frog Pond Master Plan Study, prepared by Bargmann Hendrie + Archetype. Inc., Frog Pond evolved from a natural spring-fed pond on the Shawmut Peninsula to its current paved and curved form as a wading pool. The arrival of municipal water in Boston was greeted in 1848 with a massive Water Celebration at the Frog Pond including a dramatic jet of water, which has been a part of the pond's character ever since. Treasured for its leisure value through the centuries, Frog Pond has always been a recreational magnet for wading in the summer, skating in the winter, and a stroll around its

edges in the spring and autumn. The Frog Pond bears a heavy recreational responsibility at the park, and as a result, has gone through several cycles of deterioration and renovation. Upkeep of the pond is exceedingly difficult, and the Frog Pond Pavilion building is undersized to serve both the maintenance needs of the wading pool and daily use of visitors for its bathrooms, concessions, and locker room offerings; the Frog Pond Master Plan Study cites wait lines of 20 to 25 people during peak hours in the summer and notes that the restrooms do not meet the current state plumbing code. Basic upgrades are needed at a minimum but should be integrated into the broader recommendations for this area of the Common as outlined herein.

Recommendations from the Frog Pond Master Plan Study will be incorporated into an expansion of the existing Pavilion building, which include:

- Additional restrooms, office space, storage, and



support areas.

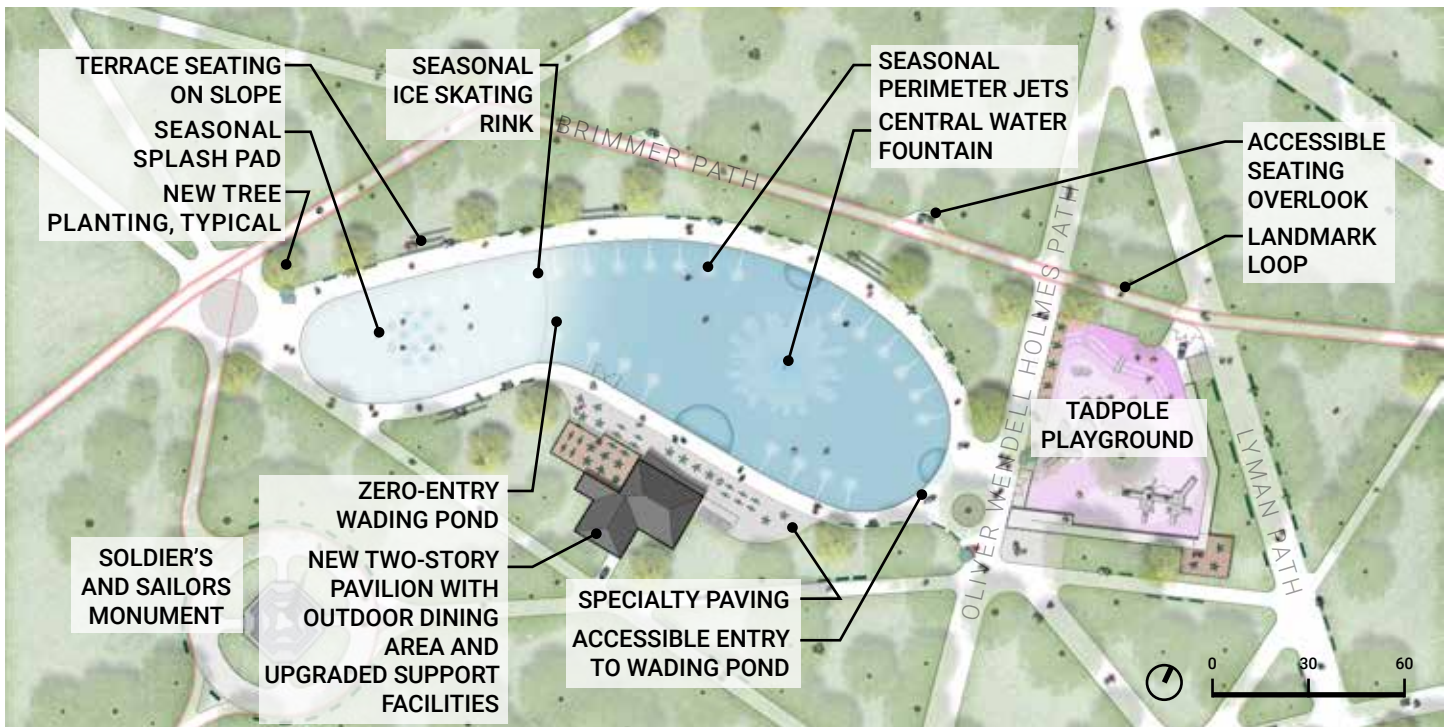
- Climate-controlled interior spaces that support ice skate rental operations and ice rink maintenance.
- Folding glass doors that dissolve the boundary between indoors and outdoors and extend event space in fair weather.
- A café or restaurant that could include a prep kitchen, a seating area, a bar and potential permanent chiller, and an outdoor patio seating that overlooks the Frog Pond. Depending on the ultimate size of the building, the food options could range from an elevated grab-and-go to a casual café or even a full commercial restaurant.
- Develop a licensing approach and contractual agreement with a vending service to sell beer and wine at the Frog Pond. This would activate the park in the early evenings and increase revenue potential. The same vendor can also support events and other programming at the Frog Pond or elsewhere on the Common.
- Garage storage (interior) for the Zamboni if possible. The 2018 Frog Pond Master Plan Study continues the current practice of locating the Zamboni outside, due to space restrictions.

While the iconic curved form of the wading pool will stay intact, the ground plane will shift to become a zero-entry wading pool on the west side. Whereas now a curb with an 8-inch to 10.5-inch reveal around the perimeter prevents accessible entry into the water, this change to the pool's profile will break down any real or perceived barriers to entry. Design efforts will also include a flush spray area in the western lobe of the pond that will double as a storage space and snow and ice dump in the winter. Spray jets flush with the pavement will be user activated during the swimming season and serve as a new and dynamic addition to water activities at the park.

Outside of the summer season, the spray area can become a flexible event space complete with utility hookups for small events. The proposed restaurant could make use of this space for spillover seating or special events, like seasonal weekend retail markets that could be located here and aligned with the restaurant's food offerings. In spring and fall, the paved spaces afforded by a flush spray pad will become especially useful when some events can be relocated there and no longer on the heavily used lawn panels across the



Top to bottom: Existing view of the Frog Pond from the Oliver Wendell Holmes Path; Existing seasonal refrigeration equipment; aerial view of skating; **Opposite, top to bottom:** Existing view of the Frog Pond looking from the carousel; Existing conditions plan



Common that are particularly sensitive to compaction. It may even be possible to plow this space to host winter events that were not previously possible. Improvements to Frog Pond itself will create a spectrum of uses, allowing people to interact with the pond in a way that makes sense for them and expanding use opportunities through all seasons.

Adjustments to the Frog Pond's profile will be accompanied by additional amenities around the pond's perimeter to upgrade the whole area. The pathways surrounding the pond will be resurfaced and the Frog Pond Pavilion's entry plaza space will be upgraded to match the special paving treatment at Brewer Plaza and other gathering nodes. Additional runs of bench and terraced seating around the edge of the pond will expand seating options. On a typical summer day, the sloping lawn just above the pond often becomes overcrowded; more and better seating will relieve some use

of the lawn. New tree plantings will be coordinated with these seating options to create pockets of shade and respite. In short, investments in upgrading the Frog Pond area will match the current and projected levels of use and expectations for supportive infrastructure without sacrificing its character.

Early Action Project:

- Begin a comprehensive redesign process for the entire Frog Pond landscape and building, including upgrades to Tadpole Playground (as outlined later in this chapter).

VIC ADDITION AND PARK-SIDE PLAZA

Open 362 days a year, from 9:30 am to 4:30 pm, the Visitor Information Center (VIC) is run by the not-for-profit Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau (GBCVB) in support of the City of Boston. The center is the unsung hero of the Common and the city, yet it is not well served by the park. Much can be done to make the interior and exterior spaces function at a higher level. Today's physical and operational conditions include the following:

- The VIC is highly visited because it is considered the “unofficial start to the Freedom Trail.” Peak visitation is May through October. Visitors are unloaded by the busload at Parkman Plaza in front of the VIC along Tremont Street for private tours and use of the restrooms.
- VIC itself is too small and only has two doors facing Tremont Street and not interior to the park.
- Six GBCVB staff members occupy a small counter.
- Due to the small size of the interior space of the VIC, a VIC staff member will sometimes come out on the plaza to increase tour sales.
- Lines for the restrooms are out the door. The Men's room has three urinals and one stall. The Women's restroom has three stalls. Demand for restrooms versus ticket buyers for tours requires crowd control. Of the approximately one million visitors annually to the VIC, about 200,000 of those solely come for use of the restroom.
- There is no official map or brochure for the Common, which is often requested. People often come

to the VIC to ask about the Great Elm, the only tree that existed in 1634 and no longer alive. Recommendations for informational and interpretive mapping are included in the following chapter.

- The Freedom Trail Foundation is currently working on a cohesive signage plan for the Freedom Trail. New signage will include information to encourage visitation of the sites.
- Parkman Plaza was recently renovated and it is already deteriorating. The concrete pavement is cracking, and it is difficult to plow.

Difficult to find, under-sized, and over-programmed, the VIC's location on the Common is neither intuitive nor convenient for visitors who need it most; it is often confused with Park Street Plaza's MBTA headhouses. While recent investment in Parkman Plaza addressed its deteriorated condition, improved circulation, and added seating within the plaza, this master plan is seeking to bring more prominence to this important resource and fold the VIC into the Common in a way that makes it feel a more a part of the park than it does today. By adding a building expansion to the back of the building and a companion plaza space that connects to Mayor's Walk interior to the park, the VIC will become a beacon when people pass by on this central spine through the park, meander from the Frog Pond, or view from a further vantage point. Additional pathway connections to The Embrace and 1965 Freedom Rally Memorial Plaza will encourage a strong link with this important emerging park feature that will undoubtedly draw a new and diverse group of visitors to the Common. New pathway connections will help point pedestrians towards the VIC, which will be better equipped to provide visitors with the resources they need to have the ultimate park experience.

Below: Existing view of Parkman Plaza and the VIC from Lafayette Mall; **Opposite, top to bottom:** Proposed plan; View of proposed splash pad during summer





Bringing more people to the VIC will mean investing in physical infrastructure that can support a greater number of people. Specific recommendations for the VIC include:

- Expanding the building’s footprint by approximately 1200 square feet will provide new and improved visitor amenities, such as informational signage, safe public restrooms, and items for purchase (e.g. tickets to the Common’s guided tour offerings, branded Boston Common and Freedom Trail gear, food and beverage vending, and mapping and informational brochures). Any upgrades will require in-depth design studies to ensure that the new addition will complement the VIC’s architectural style and fit in seamlessly with its surroundings. The plan recommendation is that this expansion extend the footprint of the building to the rear and offer a new primary entrance from within the Common.
- Creating a new park-side plaza will support the addition and connect the VIC into the fabric of the Common. Features would include new paving, tree

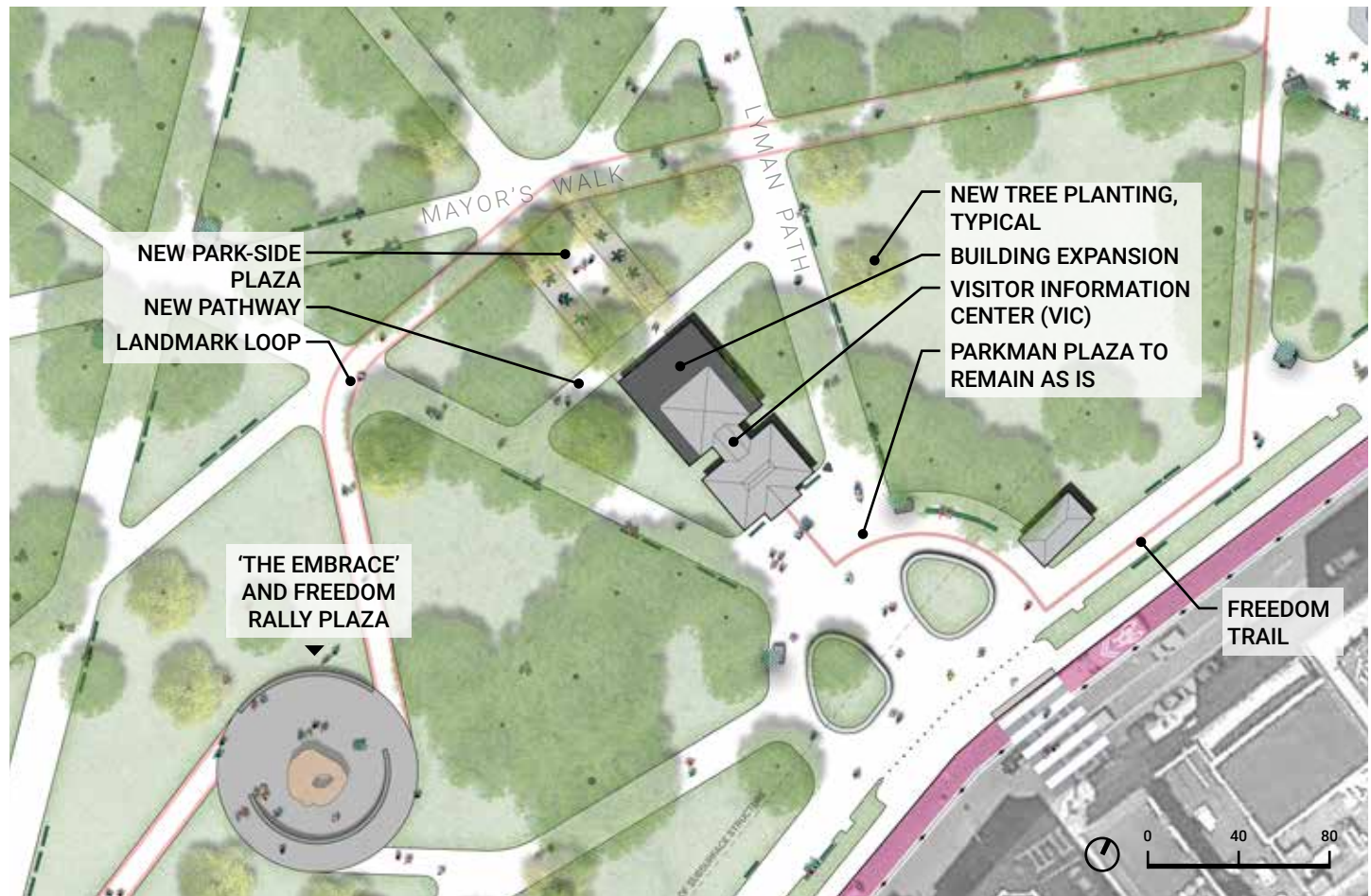
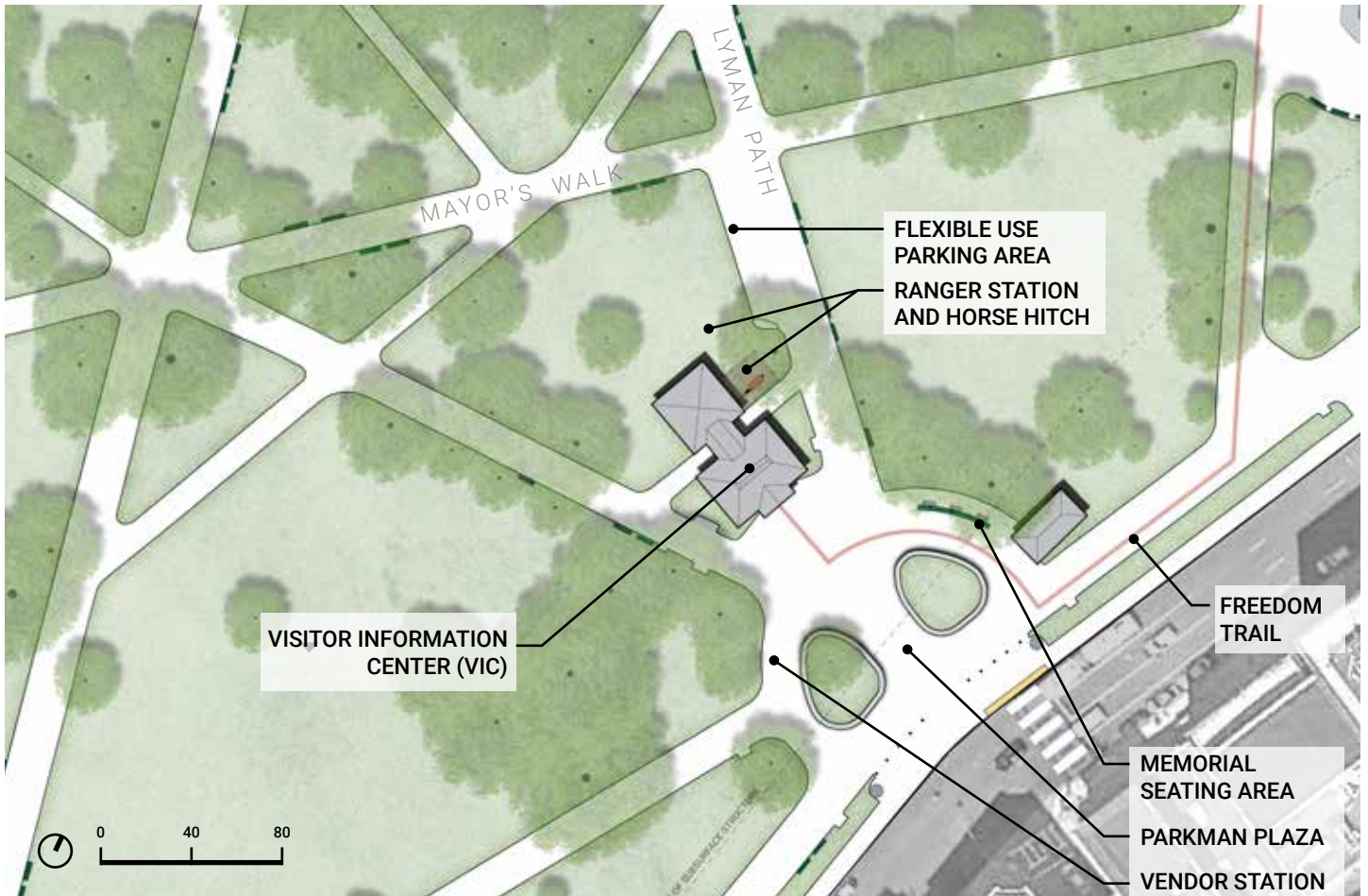
plants, space for tours or groups to gather, and café-style seating like that at Brewer.

The combination of filling the VIC with more visitor resources and better defining its location within the park will help shift the VIC into an era in which it can serve as an easily identifiable place to find resources, information, or simply add to the experience of enjoying a day in the park.

Early Action Project:

- Partner with an architectural consulting firm to develop massing and building program studies for the VIC’s building expansion.

Top to bottom: Existing view of the park-side plaza area; View of proposed plaza interfacing Mayor’s Walk and VIC; **Opposite; top to bottom:** Existing conditions plan; Proposed plan



IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PARKMAN BANDSTAND

With its signature architecture and striking brick radial pathway “spokes,” the Parkman Bandstand is a quintessential feature of Boston Common. Created in 1912 in response to a growing interest in providing park amenities for visitors, it was used throughout the first half of the 20th century as a site for popular puppet shows and a gathering place for civic events. Except for a few years of puppet shows in recent years, it has not seen programmed use for some time. Whether it acts as a focal point during protests or rallies, a place for students to congregate during the school year, or as a shaded gathering space during the summer months, Parkman Bandstand is one of the most photographic elements of the Common. Despite its place as one of the Common’s hallmark features, the Bandstand itself has become almost an ornament in the landscape and today acts more as a backdrop for events happening in its vicinity. Adding a ramped connection from the brick pavement surrounding the Bandstand up to its interior space will allow for universal access and support more use of it for oration and regular daily passive recreational use. As an integrated new piece of architecture to the building façade, the walkway should include the following features:

- It should sit tightly against the Bandstand.
- It could include a landing that serves as a lower, second podium for smaller events that might call

for a more intimate connection with the speaker.

- As a counterpart to the existing stairs, a new ramp and stairs may share a common landing such as the existing landing at the top of the stairs.
- It should be designed in such a way that it looks and feels as if it has been there since the Bandstand was first installed, seamless in material, color, and architectural style.
- Based on initial study, it may not need handrails if its slope is less than 5%. If handrails are required or desired, they should be in keeping with the historic aesthetic of the Bandstand.

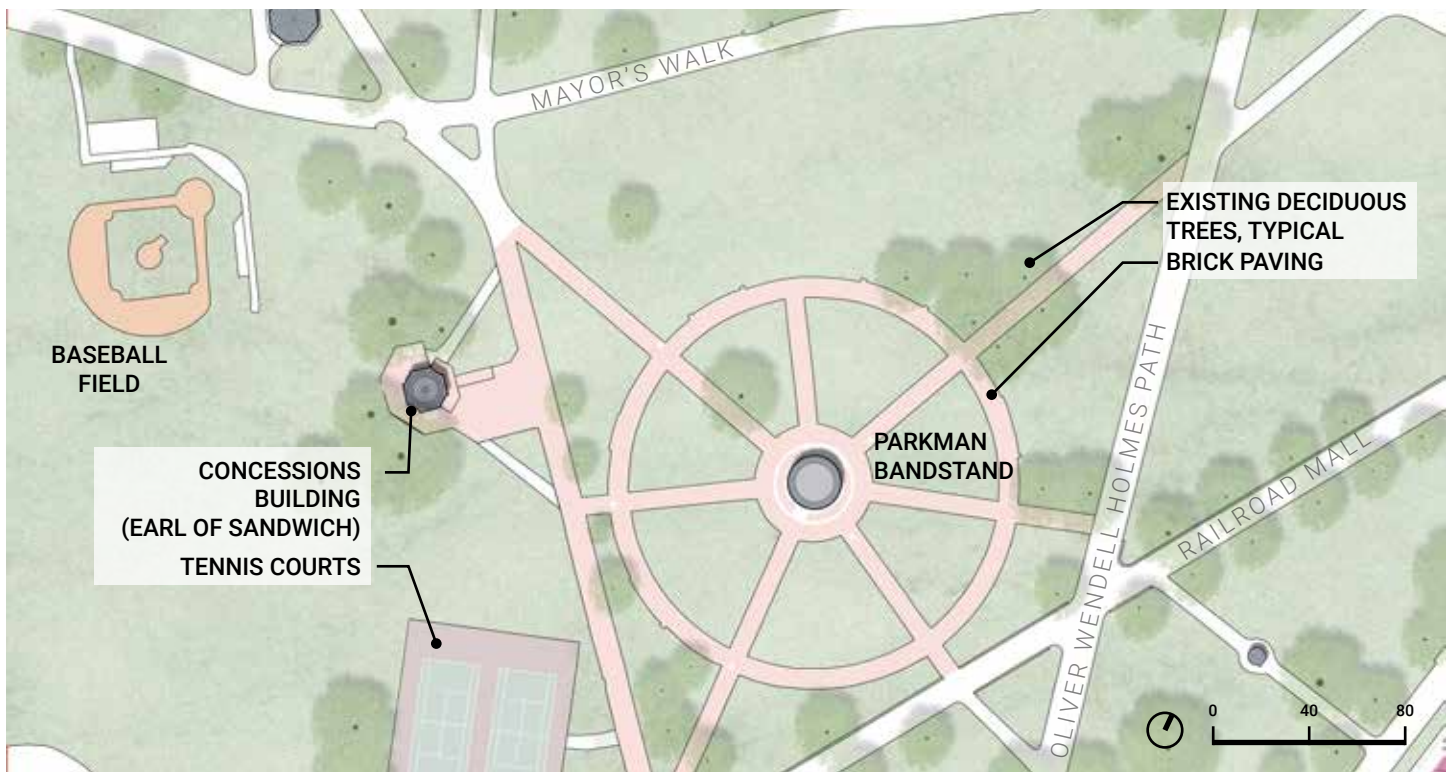
This simple addition to the Bandstand will underscore its importance as a central location in political discourse and gatherings, casual hangouts, and programmed events.

In addition, accessibility upgrades, pathway improvements and a standard approach to tree planting and seating are recommended.

Pathway Improvements

While the brick pavement forming the spokes and wheel pathway connections surrounding the Bandstand is historically significant, individual bricks are popping, weeds are growing, and accessibility is a challenge. The brick

Below: Existing conditions plan of Parkman Bandstand, **Opposite, top to bottom:** Rendered view of the proposed improved Parkman Bandstand; Proposed plan of Improvements to Parkman Bandstand



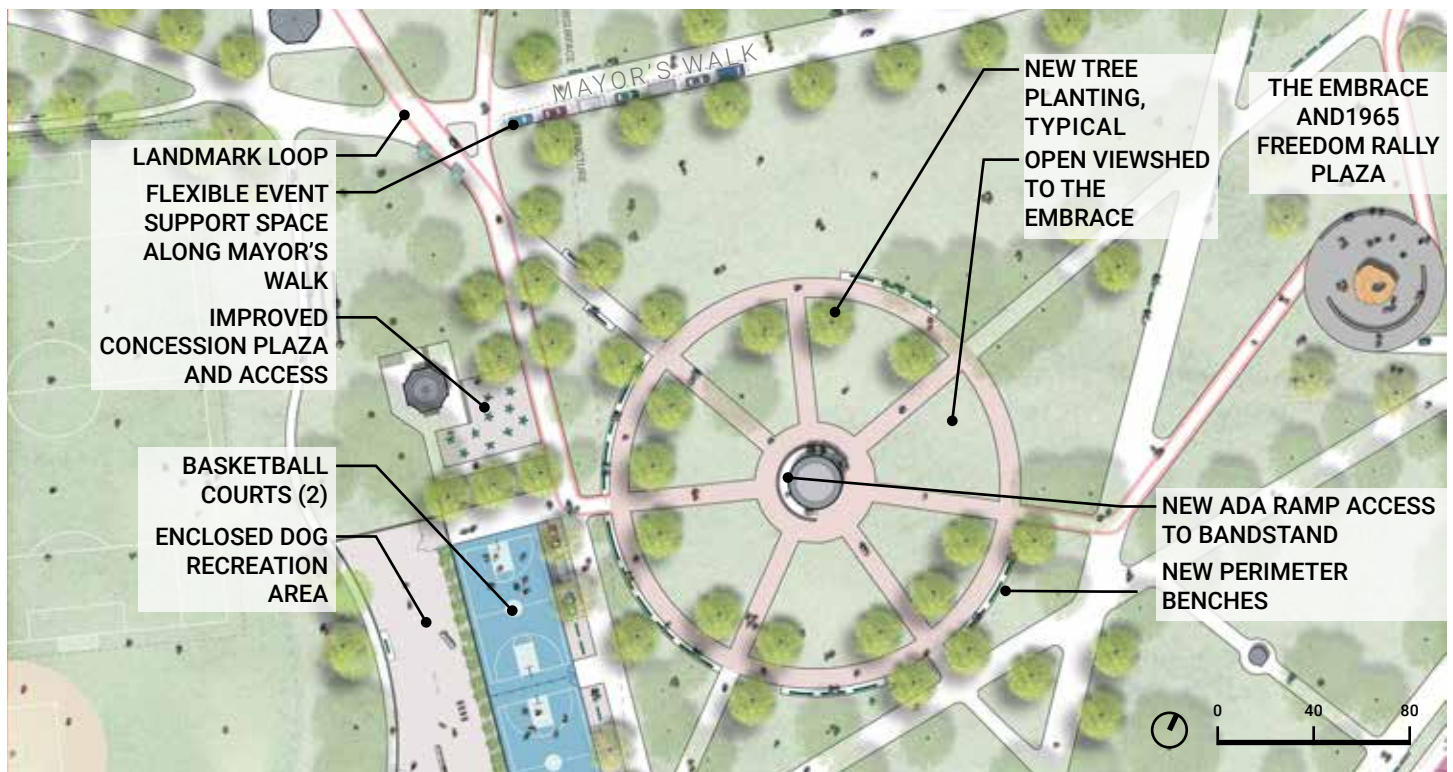


pavers are at the end of their useful lifetime and require replacement. In the refurbishment of the pathways, it is recommended that the brick pavement comprise only the “wheel” and interior pathway “spokes.” All spoke extensions beyond the wheel and the pathway along the Parkman Concessions Plaza and tennis courts should be converted to asphalt pavement. This change will emphasize the Bandstand as the heart of this iconic pathway and return to its original layout.

A modified profile for the brick pathways should be considered, however, to reduce maintenance and accessibility issues in the future; rather than a brick edge, a flush curb edge would keep the running bond pattern in place.

Tree Planting and Bench Seating

A new tree planting and seating strategy will add much-needed shade and rest areas, increasing the Bandstand’s every day and special event capacity. Historically, benches and trees encircled the Bandstand; the current lack of seating and shade are out of step with the original intent of this space. Proposed are banks of bench seating along the exterior edge of the wheel in all the sections apart from two—one to preserve event capacity needed to support large events and the other to maintain visual connections to the King Memorial. These benches may be either backed or backless depending on their location around the



wheel. For instance, benches closer to the Parkman Concessions Plaza and basketball courts may want to be backless to maintain flexibility in which direction a user can sit. Other areas that are more one-directional would make use of a backed bench. Tree planting will follow suit with a line of trees planted on the interior side of the wheel, at regular intervals. As evidenced in the historical image below, trees once filled this entire space and created a much different feel than the open expanse felt today. Bringing back some of the tree plantings will prove to soften this landscape and provide much needed relief from the hot midsummer sun. More shade will, in turn, invite more use of this space on a regular basis. Additional tree plantings will line the critical pathway connections into this space to add even more scale and canopy cover.

A final practical change will be to provide various support infrastructure for events and other programmed use. This could include turf reinforcement to help the lawn panels hold up better to heavy use, as well as

utility outlets, and areas for back-of-house operations. These support infrastructure elements could be laid out with guidance from the new tree planting and seating arrangement to keep certain view corridors clear and accessible, which will be especially important when considering visual connections to the proposed King Memorial and elsewhere. Ultimately, each of these proposed improvements to the Parkman Bandstand will enhance its existing character while carving out new opportunities to engage park visitors.

Early Action Projects:

- Install benches and plant trees around the Bandstand.
- Advance the design study of a ramp at the Bandstand to explore and refine material selections, layout and orientation, and grading.

Below: March 4, 1929, Bird's eye view of Boston Common and Parkman bandstand from Herald building; **Opposite, top to bottom:** Existing view of the Parkman Concessions Plaza; Existing conditions plan of the Parkman Concessions Plaza; Proposed plan of the Parkman Concessions Plaza



IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PARKMAN CONCESSIONS PLAZA

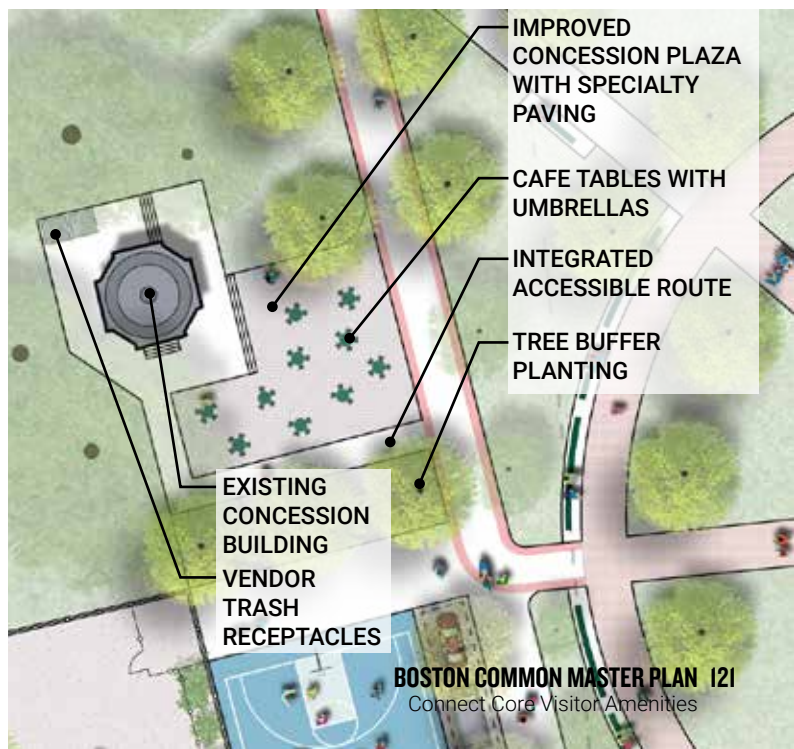
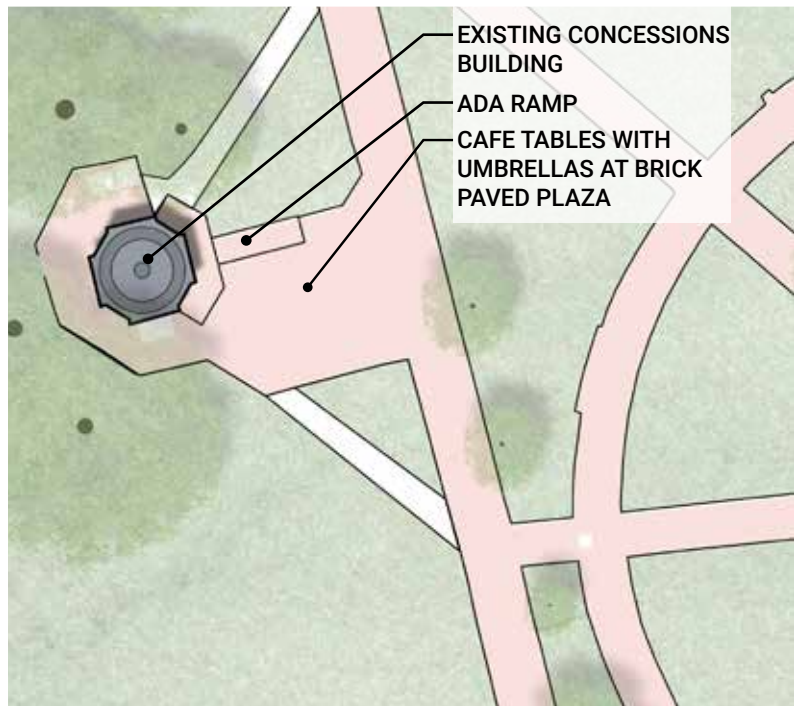
The Parkman Concessions Plaza, currently leased to the Earl of Sandwich, sits at the center of recreational activity. Just west of the Parkman Bandstand and directly adjacent to athletics and the proposed enclosed dog recreation area, the plaza is rightly situated to serve as a prime vending and seating area for a wide variety of constituents. Whether it's a place to grab a half-time refreshment or to meet with fellow dog owners, the space can support all types of social interactions, and only slight modifications would be needed to easily add more functionality to this space. These physical upgrades include:

- Resurfacing, expanding, and adjusting the layout of the plaza to better integrate ADA access into the space. New surfacing will be consistent with other specialty paving areas in the park. The accessible connection to the ordering window should be seamlessly integrated into the plaza space, so materially and aesthetically the Concessions Plaza and building together feel like one cohesive and complete space.
- Offering more café table and chairs for outdoor dining to supplement the existing grouping accommodate the anticipated uptick in vending and general activity in the vicinity.
- Adding a line of tree plantings that separates the plaza from the adjacent recreational facilities to provide more greenery and relief from the sun.
- Protecting the existing mature canopy trees and critical root zones with any new installation.

The master plan also recommends consideration be given to vending options that provide diverse offerings for users who may be interested in different food options than what is currently offered. New food choices might ignite more activation in the Concession Plaza and draw more positive use into the park. Overall, improvements to this space will encourage visitors to linger, take part in active recreation nearby, and make use of the facility on a more regular basis.

Early Action Project:

- In tandem with the reconfiguration of court facilities in the area, conceptual design of the plaza should be advanced.





Above: Proposed plan of the King Memorial; **Opposite, top to bottom:** Rendering of the King Memorial; Historic image of Martin Luther King Jr. at Parkman Bandstand

CONNECTIONS WITH THE KING MEMORIAL

Once constructed, the King Memorial will honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Coretta Scott King, and other civil rights leaders in Boston, inspiring a reflection on their life-long dedication to racial and economic justice. King Memorial envisions an inclusive and equitable city for all. Its introduction into the Common is significant, and while it will stand on its own strength, the memorial is woven seamlessly into the historic fabric of the Common through accessible pathway connections, tree planting, lawn restoration and reinforcement, and material considerations. To guarantee all of this, the master plan team regularly met with the King Memorial design team as they progressed through design and construction documentation on this new space for the Common.

New connections to and through the memorial have been added. Spurs off Railroad Mall and between Parkman Bandstand and the VIC will usher visitors towards the memorial in a logical pattern. Visual connections from the Mayor's Walk and the VIC will draw visitors from these high-use areas over to the King Memorial

to explore and engage in its message. As a stop on the Landmark Loop, signage and directional markers will be added as needed to emphasize routes and access points. Thinking about these connective efforts now will ensure that the King Memorial continues to be well integrated into the park in the future, elevating the rest of the Common through its presence.

Early Action Project:

- BPRD and FOPG will continue to work closely with the King Memorial team to provide guidance as needed to ensure that clean connections with the adjacent pathways are made, high-quality trees are selected, and soil amendment and turf reinforcement are properly installed.





LANDMARK LOOP

Since the 1600s, Boston Common’s circulation system has developed from informal dirt ways leading to major destinations within and beyond the Common to paths that were later formalized with paving. By 1814, there were tree-lined malls along four of the five edges of the Common, and by the early twentieth century many paths crisscrossed the park, formalizing more desire lines. Today, the linear pathways through the park are effective in moving people from one end to the other, but they are less successful in encouraging people to stay and enjoy the park. Effectively, the only partial loop around the park is created by the pedestrian malls that form four of the Common’s five edges. Within the park itself, angular connections between paths make the visitor experience of traveling through the park awkward.

Signature features like the Frog Pond, Parkman Bandstand, the Parade Ground, Soldiers and Sailors Monument, and Brewer Fountain will be joined by an expanded Tadpole Playground, a new park-side plaza at the VIC, and the King Memorial. A clear and intuitive

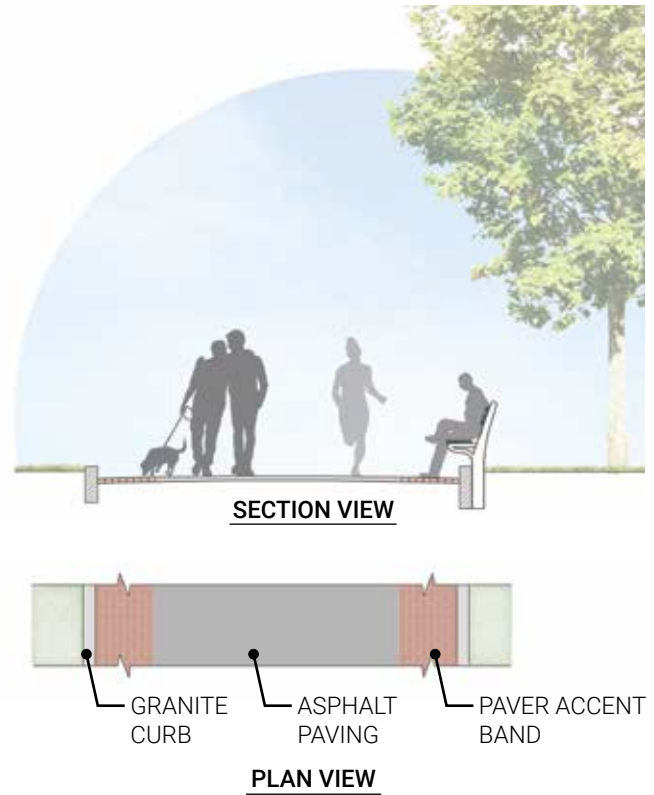
interior path that connects these six character-defining features will transform them from disparate features to cohesive and connected attractions. Playfully dubbed the “Landmark Loop,” this interior trail will improve the visitor experience by making the Common’s offerings more accessible, supporting the park’s overarching purpose, history, and culture as the civic heart of Boston.

Practically speaking, the interior loop will be applied to the existing pathways by way of signage and pavement markings. Signage will be key to the loop’s success; consistent iconography shall be developed to mark each stop on the educational walk. At the closest node to a core amenity, a wayfinding sign will list its name, include the branded symbol designating the “Landmark Loop” and point directly to the destination to ensure clarity between the landmark and the directional signage included on the trail. On the ground, an accent band could line either side of the existing pathway such that no major construction is needed for the loop to be marked. Whereas the brick line of the Freedom Trail runs as the centerline within a pathway, the loop path could be outlined with a complementary accent band.

Information and mapping that articulates the designated route and its “stops” will be incorporated in informational brochures available at the VIC, as well as potential digital applications. Detailed descriptions, surveys, games, and other means of engagement will ground the visitor in the Common’s unique amenities. A permanent digital exhibition could even be developed that places people, via an app on their smart phone, in the location of historical views and proposed updates so that visitors can see “then and now” transformation of spaces.

Early Action Project:

- Begin development of a Landmark Loop signage collection that is coordinated with early action projects in “Access and Wayfinding” portion of the Common-wide Strategies section.



Top to bottom: Section of the proposed paver accent band into existing pathways that would form the Landmark Loop; The accent band super imposed on an existing pathway; Existing view of the Freedom Trail as reference; **Opposite:** Plan of the proposed Landmark Loop route



ENHANCE AND DIVERSIFY ACTIVE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

Athletic Field Upgrades and Reconfiguration	130
Court Expansion	135
Enclosed Dog Recreation Area	138
Tadpole Playground Expansion	141



ACTIVE RECREATION ON THE COMMON TODAY

Active recreation opportunities on the Common are enabled by their physical infrastructure. These spaces withstand an enormous amount of regular planned and unplanned use, and all the current active recreation facilities need renovation. The master plan presents an opportunity to rethink these spaces, consider the broader vision for the park, and incorporate new amenities that might serve visitors to the Common even better than today.

RECOMMENDATIONS

More than just for active participants, recreation serves to enliven a park, even for passive users walking by. Whether it's stopping to catch a quick baseball play, hearing the bounce of a soccer ball off of a cleat, or seeing a cute pooch basking in the sun, crafting a rounded recreation program makes a park more layered and dynamic. Together, these proposed amenities will organize recreation areas at Boston Common in a manner that allows for expanded play and chance encounters.

With an eye toward creating new and better opportunities for recreation, the Common can better serve athletes, dog owners, playground goers, and general park visitors for years to come. Collectively, these recommendations will reinforce one another to serve a diversity of users, meet current recreational demands, and support fresh programming that will add new dimension to the park.

Above: Bird's eye view of the athletics area;
Opposite: Historic image of the athletic fields

ATHLETIC FIELD UPGRADES AND RECONFIGURATION

Reconfiguring the ballfields will allow for more flexibility in the type of recreational opportunities that the Common can offer. A re-imagined athletics complex with a multi-use ballfield and multi-use rectangular field will support a wider range of programming and provide an auxiliary space to support large events.

COURT EXPANSION

Relocating the tennis courts will provide a more logical and protected spot for tennis on the Common and allow its current space to be re-purposed for new amenities. Two new basketball courts will line with the edge of Parkman Bandstand area and form a boundary with a new enclosed dog recreation area. With limited fencing needed, these basketball courts can double as a back-of-house zone for periodic larger events at Parkman Bandstand.

ENCLOSED DOG RECREATION AREA

The recommended court reconfiguration allows for an appropriately sized enclosed dog recreation area to be accommodated in the underutilized space between the new courts and the athletic fields. A dedicated space for dogs will remove this use from the lawn panels currently designated for the off-leash program. The high demand of these lawn panels makes it difficult for them to be rested and restored after off-leash dog use.

TADPOLE PLAYGROUND EXPANSION

An expanded Tadpole Playground will introduce more diverse and accessible play equipment that serves a wider range of ages and abilities. Upgrades will include a secondary gate at Brimmer Path, accessible connections from Brimmer Path to the Frog Pond, dedicated stroller parking, improved seating options, and tree protection. Under these recommendations, the Tadpole Playground's footprint would increase three-fold to better meet the demands of this important park feature.





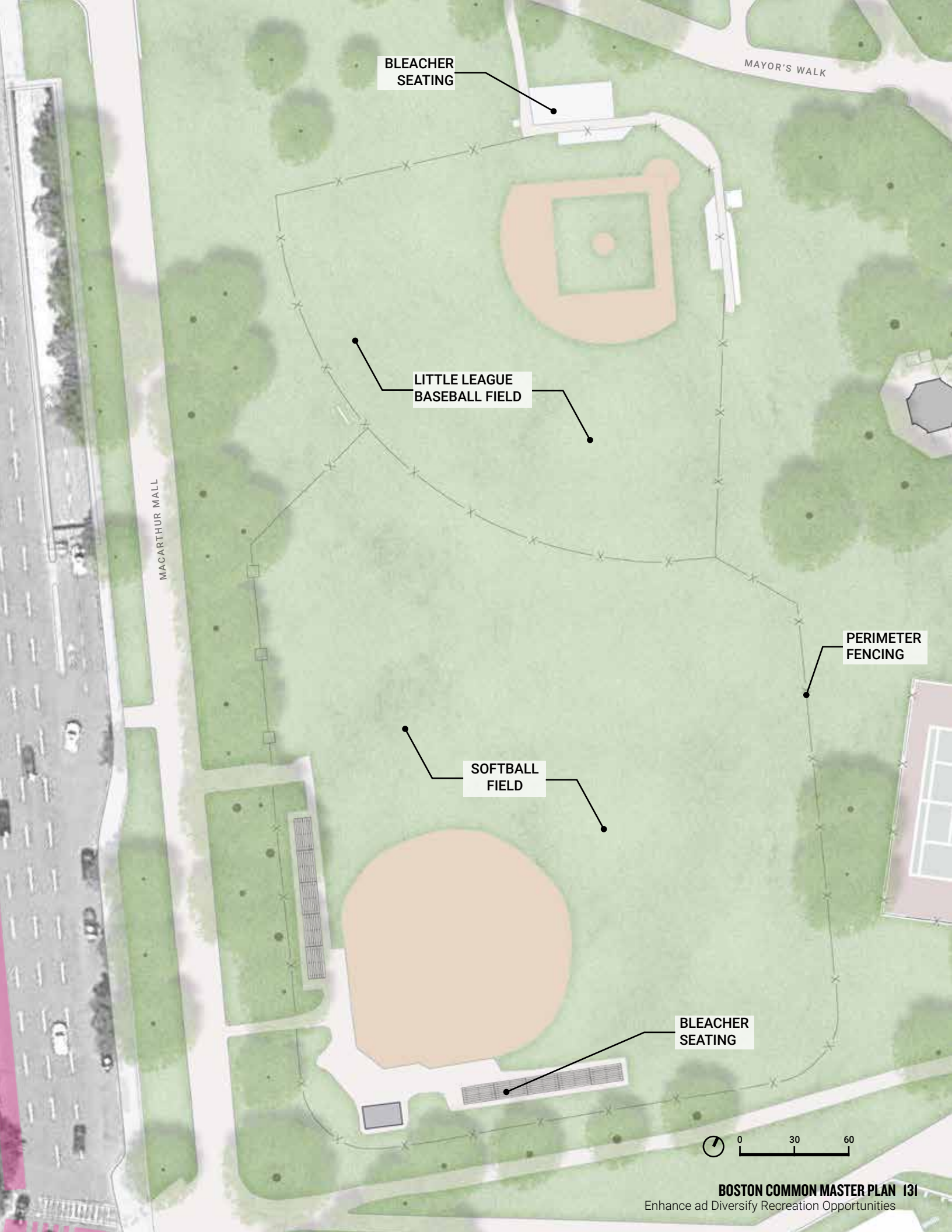
Top to bottom: Existing view of the ball field condition; Existing view of the outfield fences; **Opposite:** Existing conditions plan of the sports fields

ATHLETIC FIELD UPGRADES AND RECONFIGURATION

Right now, field layout and infrastructure limit the usability of the Common's two ballfields. Bordered by the Mayor's Walk to the north, Railroad Mall to the south, MacArthur Mall's tree-lined edge on the west, and a sloping hillside behind the Concessions Building and the tennis courts to the east, this corner of the park is quieter and less frequented by park visitors. The playability and conditions surrounding the ballfields today are outlined below and were collected from stakeholder feedback and public input. Each item will be directly addressed through specific master plan recommendations:

- Field conditions and basic amenities are substandard, including:
 - Baseball infields are subject to excess water, which limits the playing time.
 - Wearing patches are ever-present in the outfield/grass areas from "non-permitted play."
 - The two permanent outfield fences bifurcate the playing space and limit the ability for soccer and other team sports from play.
 - Activities are forced to stop at 6 pm in the spring and fall due to poor visibility and inadequate lighting.
 - Three storage containers are located at the fields for equipment and are maxed out.





BLEACHER SEATING

MAYOR'S WALK

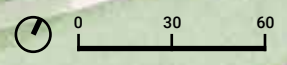
LITTLE LEAGUE
BASEBALL FIELD

MACARTHUR MALL

PERIMETER
FENCING

SOFTBALL
FIELD

BLEACHER
SEATING



- The bleacher seating used for spectators is at capacity and can be improved.
- Restrooms are far, the closest being those in the VIC.
- Demand for the fields is high, examples of which include:
 - Soccer and flag football programming is growing.
 - Groups compete for space (student groups from neighboring universities, public, youth programming).
- Neighboring park activities are incongruous or obtrusive, including:
 - Negative activity takes place behind the Concessions Building.
 - Mayor's Walk is just steps away from one of the ballfield's backstops, intermingling active play with the visitor experience to an uncomfortable degree. A backstop located essentially in the middle of an otherwise open lawn area of the contiguous Parade Ground and athletic fields is a visual disruption and functional impediment.

Given the demand for soccer and other team sports, the overarching recommendation for sports field upgrades will be to build in greater flexibility to the playable field space for a more diverse range of sports. These fields should be reconfigured to increase the types of use of the fields, a goal that can be accomplished by eliminating one baseball field and installing a full-size multi-use rectangular field. Removing the two permanent outfield fences that limit maximum (or "flexible") use of one of the largest open areas on the Common and reducing the amount of infill will provide for a wider range of formal and informal athletic play. Eliminating these obstructions will also create a more open environment, making the field area a more desirable space for large special events. Turf protection strategies outlined in

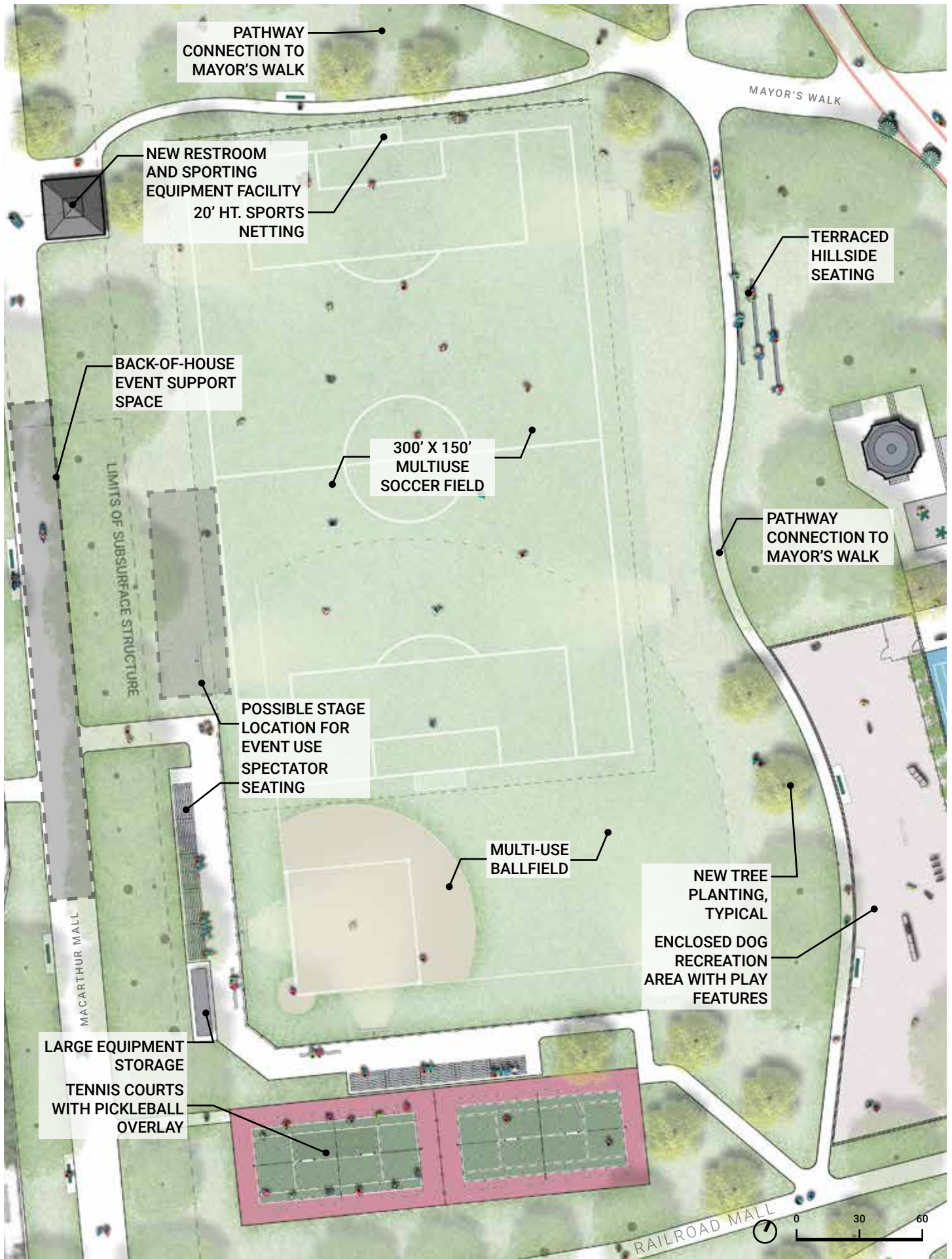
the next chapter would be needed anywhere heavy equipment is being placed on top of lawn panels to mitigate damage.

Today, the ballfield immediately south of the Mayor's Walk impacts the visitor experience along this most popular route through the Common. It is particularly close to the pathway as the entrance across Charles Street from the Public Garden nears, which makes pedestrians uncomfortably close to game play. Removing this field and replacing it with a multi-use rectangular field shifted south closer to the other ballfield will provide much-needed breathing space between a refurbished athletics complex and the Mayor's Walk. While there will still be a need for sports netting to catch fly soccer or lacrosse balls, this netting is less visually obtrusive than chain link backstop fencing currently in place along the Mayor's Walk. In addition to the overall reconfiguration of space, recommendations for sports field upgrades include the following:

- Relocated multi-use ballfield with a clay infield and moveable pitcher's mound to allow both Little League and softball to be played.
 - Full replacement of the existing backstop and perimeter fencing. Movable outfield fencing.
 - New player's benches and open-air dugout shelters.
 - Upgraded bleaches for spectator seating.
 - New scoreboard.
- Formal natural turf multi-use rectangular field, striped for full-size soccer play. Lacrosse or other striping can also be overlaid as desired.
 - Terraced spectator seating will be built into the slope behind the Concessions Building, closer to field play.
- Addition of a Restroom and sporting equipment

Below: Existing view of the proximity of ball fields to Mayor's Walk;
Opposite: Proposed plan of the sports field upgrades







rental facility (located in the northeastern corner between Mayor’s Walk and the athletic complex). This facility is discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

- Fully accessible and connected to the larger pathway network.
- Staffed with a park attendant who can manage daily use of the fields and rent Frisbees, balls, volleyballs and nets and other sports equipment to facilitate pick-up games and informal use on the fields and courts.
- Large equipment storage space—two soccer goals, six or more lacrosse nets, portable mounds, etc.
- Limited grab-and-go concessions like snacks and water bottle refill.
- Sports lighting for the entire athletic complex
- Better pathway connections
 - Connections to the multi-use ballfield’s player’s benches and spectator seating will be revamped. Formalize arrival at the sports fields will make the overall travel experience more intuitive.
 - A new pathway along the eastern edge of the sports complex will connect Railroad Mall with the Mayor’s Walk more intuitively and likely reduce negative behavior in this area.

- Strategic pruning of low tree branches to improve visibility and reinforce this new circulation scheme.
- Support infrastructure for large events will be located along MacArthur Mall and utilities run underground as needed for speaker hookups and other utility upgrades. Refer to the previous section on overall event infrastructure strategy for specific recommendations and locations for support infrastructure.

Through providing much-needed amenities and support infrastructure, updating the field layouts, and adding new kinds of play described later in the section, the Common will become home to a revitalized and revamped athletics complex fit for more frequent and better equipped sports use in the future.

Early Action Projects:

- Design and construct the pathway connection between the Mayor’s Walk and Railroad Mall and the terraced seating along the way. Pruning low branches of the trees along this pathway could also be included.
- Pilot grab-and-go concessions catered to athletics (water filling, hydration drinks, protein bars, fresh fruit, etc.) at the new restroom and sporting equipment rental facility.

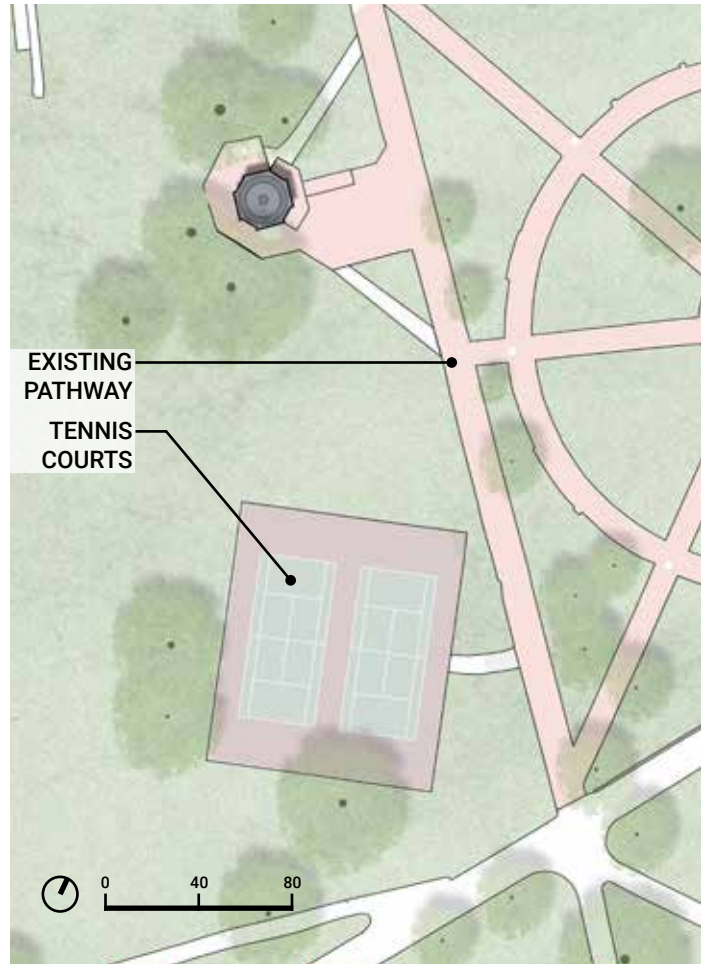
COURT EXPANSION

Two tennis courts sit side-by-side between the ball fields and Parkman Bandstand today. Their current layout is oddly incongruous with the existing pathway alignment. Without historic documentation as to the intention behind their placement, the footprint is perplexing. It results in leftover slivers of lawn that often remain unused. Two recommendations are included under this project idea: the introduction of basketball courts onto the Common and the relocation of tennis courts to another spot within the athletics complex. Discussion on each sub-project idea is included below:

Introduction of Basketball Courts

Two new basketball courts are proposed to fit along the pathway that runs alongside Parkman Bandstand. Basketball is one of the country’s most popular sports for people of all ages and can serve twice the capacity of a tennis court in roughly the same amount of space. By bringing basketball to the Common, the park will increase its recreational program to fulfill previously unmet needs.

The new basketball courts should be set in a line, aligning them along the shorter court edge, to clear as much space as possible for an enclosed dog recreation area that will be discussed in more detail in the following pages. This new location for the courts would also allow them to provide back-of-house support space for the occasional small and large events making use of the area surrounding Parkman Bandstand. The courts will only be used for this purpose seldomly, so as not to interfere with their daily recreational use. Further, basketball courts do not necessarily require full ten-



Top to bottom : Existing conditions plan of the tennis courts; Existing bird’s eye view of Common, with courts near Parkman Bandstand; **Opposite, top to bottom**: Existing use of the ball field; Precedent example of terraced lawn seating



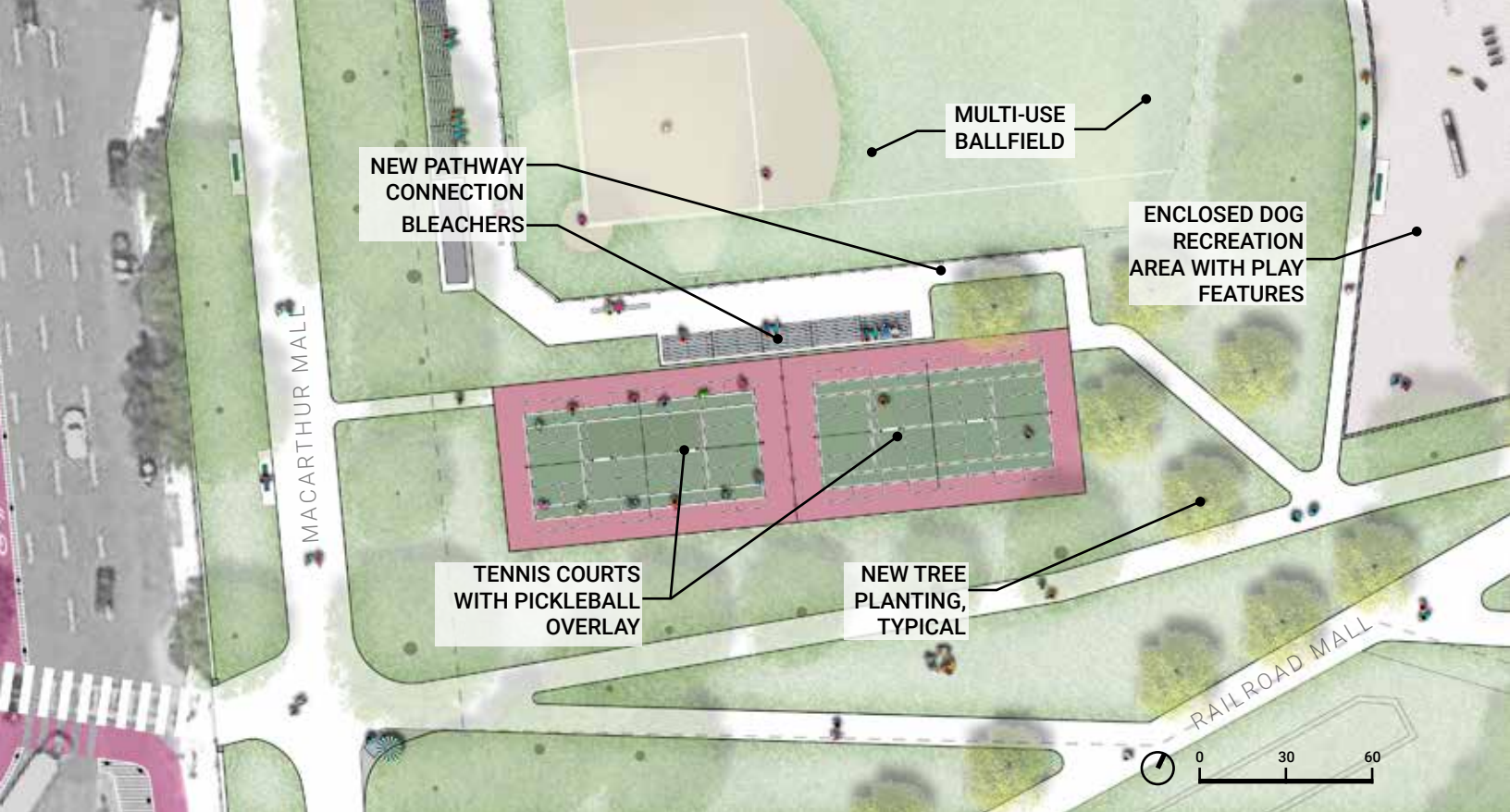


foot height perimeter fencing around all four edges. It is recommended that the Parkman Bandstand side of the courts be free of fencing to facilitate connections between these spaces. To ensure long-term durability, the basketball courts should be constructed in a manner that anticipates year-round heavy use.

Tennis Court Relocation

The tennis courts should be moved to sit along the short edge of the multi-use sports field, closer to Boylston Street. Right now, this pocket of grass is underused, making it a prime candidate to host a new type of program. The tennis courts should be reset in a line, aligning them along the shorter court edge, to better organize space around the athletics field. Placing the tennis courts in this area will help consolidate the sports program and clear space for some new recreational amenities on the Common.

Pulling the tennis courts in line with the sports fields will leave room for a small rest area between the courts and the sports fields, which will sit along the pedestrian path that bifurcates the two. This rest and seating area will cater to the possibility of a small tennis tournament, or simply accommodate the everyday spectator. Ultimately, moving and realigning the tennis courts will create space for more amenities while also renovating and expanding the facilities for the tennis playing community.



Early Action Project:

- To mitigate any loss in current recreation options and programs, the tennis courts should first be relocated (and Little League shifted to the north to accommodate the courts). This move would create the space needed to add the new basketball courts and enclosed dog recreation area to the Common's upgraded athletics complex.

Top to bottom: Proposed plan of the tennis courts; Existing view of the space between tennis and athletics slated for an enclosed dog recreation area; **Opposite, top to bottom:** Existing view of the tennis courts; Proposed plan of the basketball courts



ENCLOSED DOG RECREATION AREA

Balancing input from stakeholders, including from those who take part in the current off-leash dog program, was an essential part of the master plan efforts. Through the work of the Friends' Common Canine subgroup and BPRD, there are four lawn panels dedicated for off-leash dog use on the Common. These panels include:

- The Parade Ground Panel - approximately 23,300 square feet
- The panel along Armstrong Path at Joy Street - approximately 25,200 square feet
- The Mayor's Walk panel - approximately 51,900 square feet
- The panel along Railroad Mall - approximately 17,700 square feet

Given how generous these four spaces are for off-leash use, it is no surprise that the program has become a well-loved and much appreciated aspect of the Common for those who live nearby with their furry companions. Over the years, the program has fostered a community of neighbors who meet daily to mingle,

swap stories, and generally let their city-dwelling dogs socialize and expend some pent-up energy.

Both the benefits and challenges that the rotating program currently present has led to the recommendation that creating a dedicated space for dogs on the Common would offer a strong, if imperfect, solution to a very complicated matter with competing viewpoints. Apart from all the good that the off-leash program affords, there are a few particularly challenging aspects that need to be resolved:

- Above all, park visitor safety is of paramount importance. Some park users (especially children) who are afraid of dogs in general feel a heightened sense of anxiety as they move through the park near to where an off-leash panel is located. These off-leash panels are not fenced, and there is a potential for unwanted interaction with dogs taking part in the off-leash program.
- The lawn panels dedicated for off-leash use are nearly impossible to maintain. Once a panel becomes an off-leash zone, it can no longer be enjoyed by non-dog owners. It takes years to rejuvenate the soil and for grass to regrow, if at all.



- Use of the Parade Ground for an off-leash dog program conflicts with that space as the preeminent venue for large special events on the Common. Dog owners make use of the lawn panel all times of the day and night, which is a positive use of the park, but the dogs interfere with any other use that may need to take place in the relative vicinity of the off-leash panel. Because of the heavy permitted use of the Parade Ground for special events, that dog panel cannot be fenced and protected long enough to restore the turf damaged by dog use.

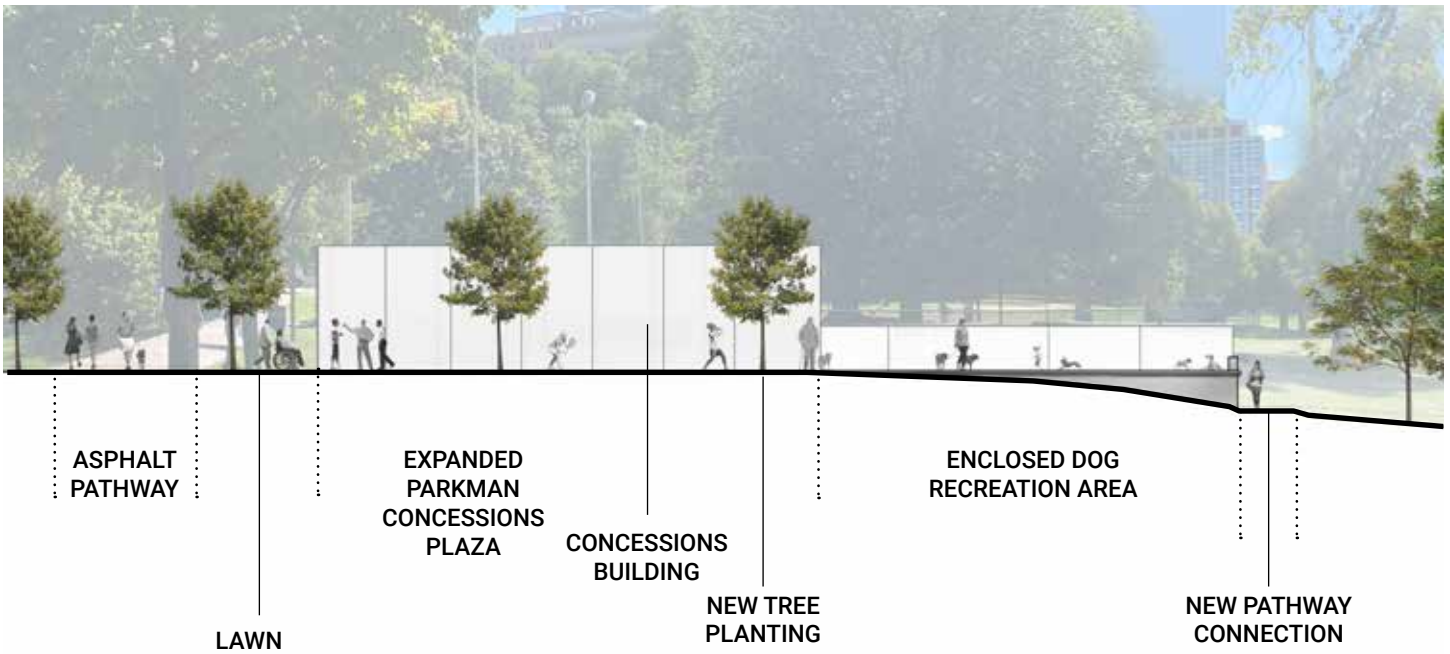
During the conceptual design process, several different areas of the Common were considered for a permanent enclosed dog recreation area. The area that ultimately resonated as appropriate and large enough to handle the physical wear of an enclosed dog recreation area was the space created by relocating the tennis courts and aligning the two new basketball courts adjacent to Parkman Bandstand. At approximately 15,000 square feet, this is the recommended amount of space that can be reasonably dedicated to a singular use in a compact, historic park with huge competing demands. The master planning team surveyed seven local dog parks ranging in size from the smallest, Ronan Park in Dorchester at 6,400 square feet, to Bremen Street Dog Park in East Boston at 22,650 square feet, which runs under a highway overpass. At its minimum conceptual square footage, this proposed enclosed dog recreation area space on the Common is well within the scale of dedicated dog parks in Boston's parks.

As shown in the preceding plan views in this section, an off-leash dog recreation area would activate a segment of the Common that has been historically underutilized, which would be a great new benefit overall. This proposed dog recreation area will give dog owners a place for their exclusive use, relieving those visitors who might be afraid of dogs and accommodating the dog-owning constituency in a specific and appropriate manner. Double-gated entries would be provided at two locations: at the north side of the basketball courts and along Railroad Mall.

When funding is secured for these improvements, detailed design of the dedicated off-leash area will take place with the opportunity for more public input. Its exact square footage, layout material selections, and connection to the rest of the park will all be studied and coordinated with the current needs of park users, dog owners, and the Common Canine community, as well as maintenance considerations. Some elements to support regular, heavy use include waste receptacles, hose bibs, or other equipment that could ease



Top to bottom: Existing view of the off-leash dog area at Mayor's Walk; Existing view of the off-leash area along Railroad Mall; **Opposite:** Existing locations of the off-leash dog areas along the Parade Ground during winter



operations. Depending on space considerations, the enclosed dog recreation area itself could host a range of fixed equipment for dogs to run through, around, and on top of. The rotating off-leash program would be phased out after the new enclosed dog recreation area is constructed and opened for public use.

Early Action Project:

- Other recreational adjustments need to take place in coordination with or in advance of the enclosed dog recreation area installation (i.e., court relocations and additions). Off-leash areas will continue to operate until that time.



Top to bottom : Section cut through the proposed basketball and enclosed dog recreation area; Difillipo Park, North End (8,300 square feet); Peters Park, South End (14,000 square feet); **Opposite, top to bottom**: View of the existing play structure within the playground; Existing view outside the playground looking toward Frog Pond; Existing view of the playground from Frog Pond

TADPOLE PLAYGROUND EXPANSION

Last renovated in 2002, the Tadpole Playground is overdue for improvements. The needs placed on the playground have outgrown the equipment; the small footprint is usually overcrowded with parents and caregivers lined along the seat wall perimeter, parked strollers take up a large area of the play space, and kids toppling over each other on the lone play structure. There are no swings, no spinners, no tactile play, no elevation change, and limited inclusive play elements. With the playground's adjacency to the Frog Pond that has a recreational draw year-round on its own, the Tadpole Playground is severely undersized for the use it receives today as the sole playground within the Common. The playground is much beloved and frequented by neighboring residents, nearby schools, and visiting families looking for a place that their kids can expend some energy. The closest playgrounds in the area are:

- Myrtle Street Playground at 0.3 miles away (7 minutes) in Beacon Hill
- Eliot Norton Park at 0.5 miles away (14 minutes) in Bay Village/Tufts Medical Center area
- The Esplanade Playground at 0.7 miles away (16 minutes) on the Charles River
- Clarendon Street Play Lot at 0.7 miles away (16 minutes) in Back Bay.

With the limited number of robust play spaces within the downtown area serving the city's youngest demographic, there is great opportunity for Tadpole Playground to better serve the community's needs.



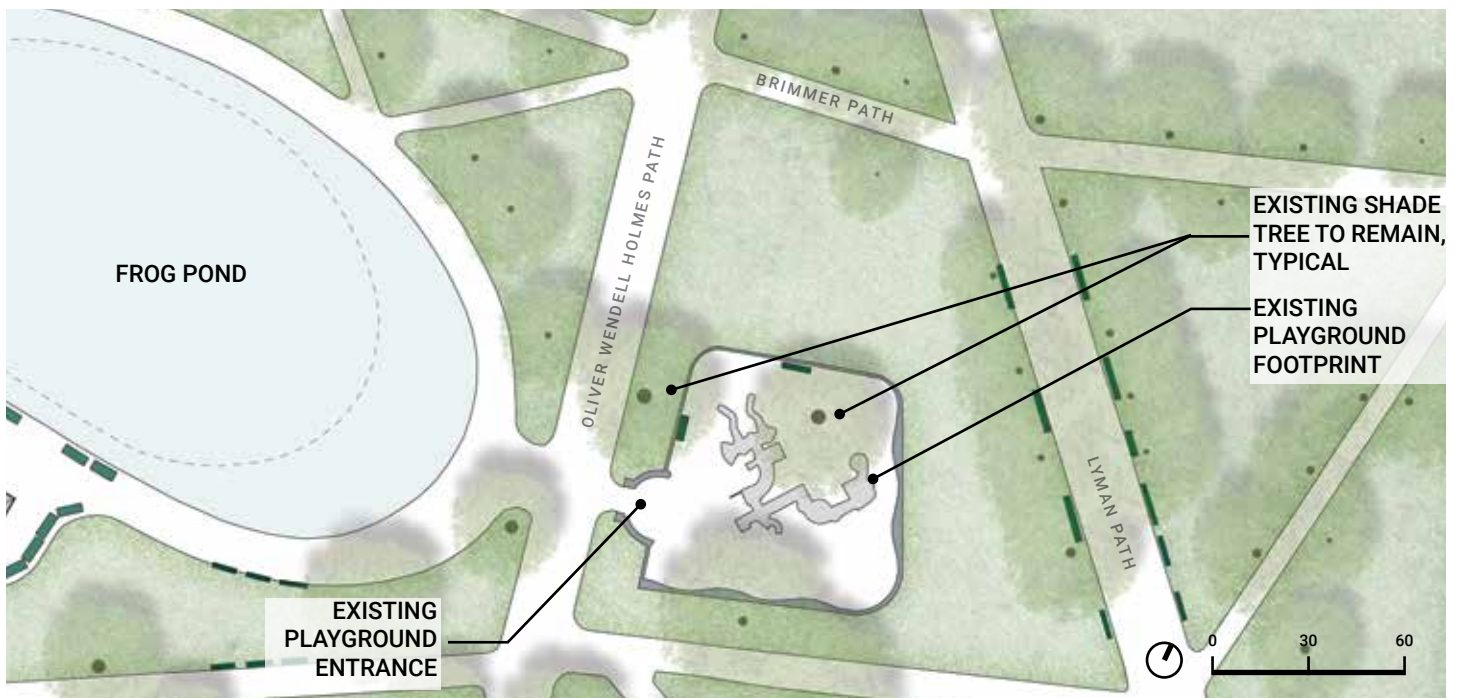
The large post and platform combination play structure is intended to serve kids of many ages. The playground includes a seat wall, backed benches, and a circular bench surrounding a tree. Another seat wall and a somewhat whimsical fence enclose the playground; the wall is nearly three feet tall on its outer edge. Frog sculptures are incorporated both throughout the play area and in the iconic gateway signage at the playground's singular entrance across from the Frog Pond. Expanding the playground and filling it with diverse play opportunities will attract more residents and visitors and better support the wider range of ages and abilities of the children who come.

Under these recommendations, the Tadpole Playground's footprint would increase from roughly 5,500 square feet to around 15,000 square feet, nearly tripling the space. Expanding the overall play footprint will create opportunities for new and different types of play, new accessible connections, and expanded playground amenities. These include the following:

- New play equipment will be introduced that expands play value. Swings and spinners of varying types are recommended because of the unique swinging motion they provide that is not available with any other kind of equipment. Swings should include a range of options for both small and big kids, and for those people who require hard-backed seating and mobility accommodations.
- While play pieces should address gaps in the playground's offerings, these play pieces must also adhere to ADA standards and be selected based on

their ability to engage a wide variety of age groups.

- Expanding the playground's footprint will mean that about 12 feet in topographic change will be incorporated into the play area. Beyond just play equipment, play value can be built into this natural topography to introduce play experiences that can only be found here on the Common.
- The big, existing shade tree in the middle of the playground must be protected.
- The theme of playground accessibility will extend to the area's entrance gates. First, a new accessible entrance should be added along Brimmer Path, as none currently exists. A ramp should be added between the two entrances for ease of use, space-saving, and multi-functional design. Improved accessibility measures will make it so that people of all abilities are able to enjoy the playground.
- Stroller parking will be added in three locations at the perimeter of the playground. Specially paved zones will denote areas designated for stroller parking and allow the playground to be unencumbered by strollers within its bounds.
- A vending location will be incorporated into the improvements in this special pavement area alongside one of the stroller parking areas. This spot next to the playground's main entrance is ideal to serve both Frog Pond and Tadpole Playground users.
- More and better bench seating will be added.





- New café seating area with tables and chairs in two locations will offer a rest area for kids to catch their breath and have a snack, or a space for parents and guardians to hang out while keeping an eye on the kids at play. Adding seating nooks will make the Tadpole Playground a multi-generational space where kids, families, and friends can happily spend an afternoon.

Incorporating the Common’s topographic and arboreal qualities will make this playground a true place of discovery and adventure, a uniquely special place to run, jump, and play. Collectively, these upgrades to Tadpole Playground will build upon the great elements of the existing playground, transforming it into a modern and inclusive version that serves the needs of a growing, dynamic population.

Early Action Project:

- This entire project is early action. Embedded in this process is continued public input to shape the proposed improvements for the playground, equipment to include, play value that is incorporated, overall aesthetic, etc.

Top to bottom: Existing view from around Brimmer Path; Proposed plan for the Tadpole Playground; **Opposite:** Existing conditions plan of the Tadpole Playground

