RUTHERFORD AVENUE & SULLIVAN SQUARE

Public Realm & Open Space Workshop

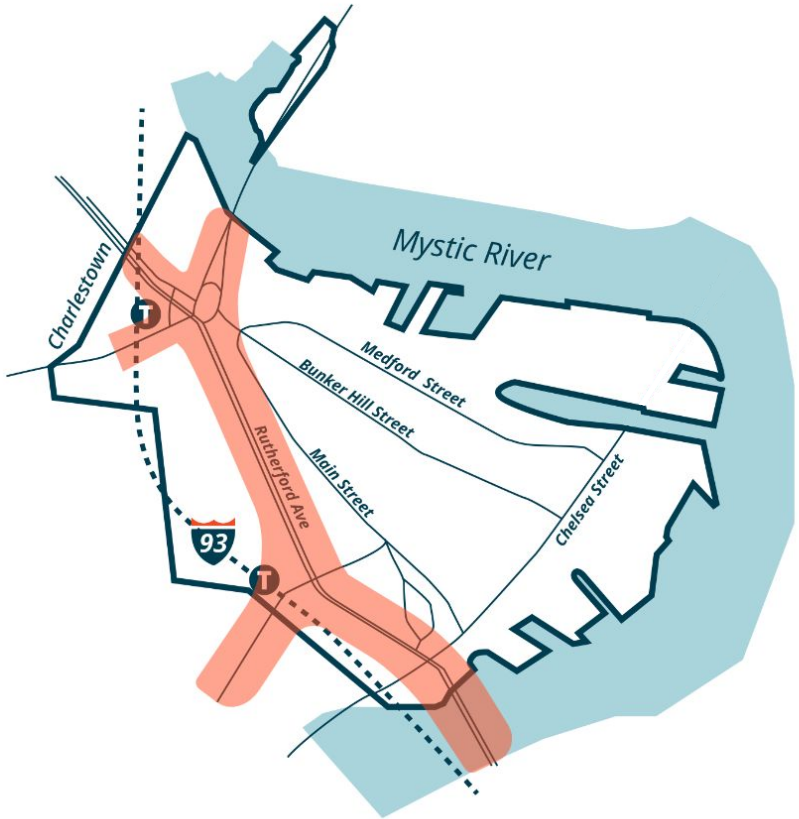
March 31, 2026

PROJECT OVERVIEW

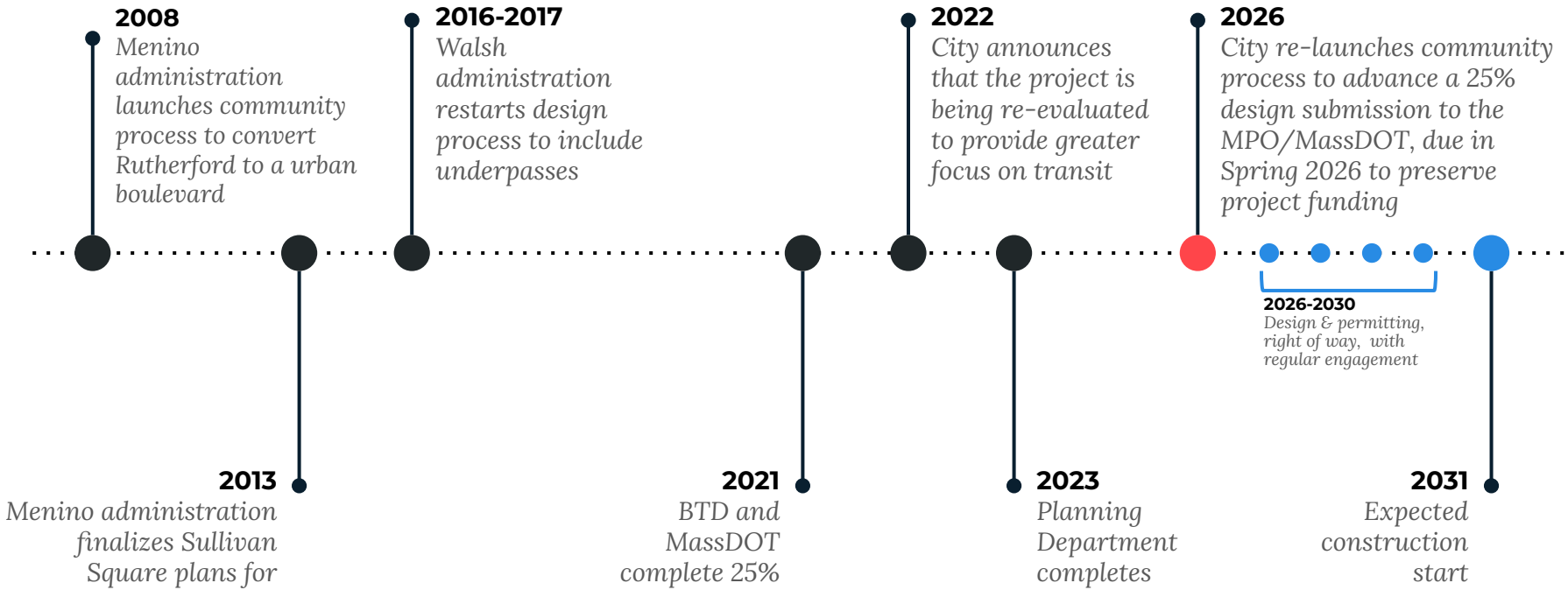
The **Rutherford Ave and Sullivan Square Design Project** is a **$200M** Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) project that will **reconstruct Sullivan Square** and convert **Rutherford Avenue into multimodal boulevard and linear park.** It is the largest fully-funded, municipally-led roadway project in the Commonwealth.

AGENDA

1. PROJECT OVERVIEW AND SCHEDULE UPDATE
2. OVERVIEW OF FEEDBACK SO FAR
3. PUBLIC REALM OPPORTUNITIES AND OPEN SPACE DESIGN
4. WORKSHOP



PROJECT HISTORY & TIMELINE



TONIGHT

To maintain funding for the project, a 25% design set must be submitted to MassDOT this spring.

Tonight's meeting is the **second in a series of three** before submitting plans to MassDOT.

We're here to **review progress** and **confirm community priorities for open space** associated with the project.

FEB 03	Charlestown Neighborhood Council (CNC)
FEB 11	**Community meeting #1** **General Project Update**
MAR 31	**Community meeting #2** **Public Realm & Open Space**
APR 28	**Community meeting #3** **Pre 25% Submittal Wrap Up**
MAY	Submit 25% Design to MassDOT

ICYMI - MAJOR PROJECT ELEMENTS

The project will address fundamental safety, accessibility, and mobility issues within the existing corridor. The project includes:

1. An **at-grade design** that eliminates flood-prone, space-intensive, and costly underpasses
2. Reorientation of the project area to serve local residents, with more comfortable sidewalks, **more places to cross Rutherford Ave**, and a **5+ acre linear open space**
3. Replacement of the existing crash-prone **Sullivan Square Circle** with a more neighborhood-scaled street grid
4. Opportunities for improved transit access and service including **bus priority lanes**

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK FROM FEBRUARY

Comments received on first meeting are summarized below:

TOPIC	COMMENTS	
Resilience	People would like to better understand how this project contributes to climate resilience goals in Charlestown	✔ ADDRESSED IN TONIGHT'S MEETING
Open Space Programming & Maintenance	People shared questions about how open space will be programmed and how project elements like the linear park and larger open spaces will be owned and maintained	✔ ADDRESSED IN TONIGHT'S MEETING
Traffic Configuration	People expressed both excitement and questions about a new traffic configuration in the project area	➔ ADDRESSED IN APRIL MEETING

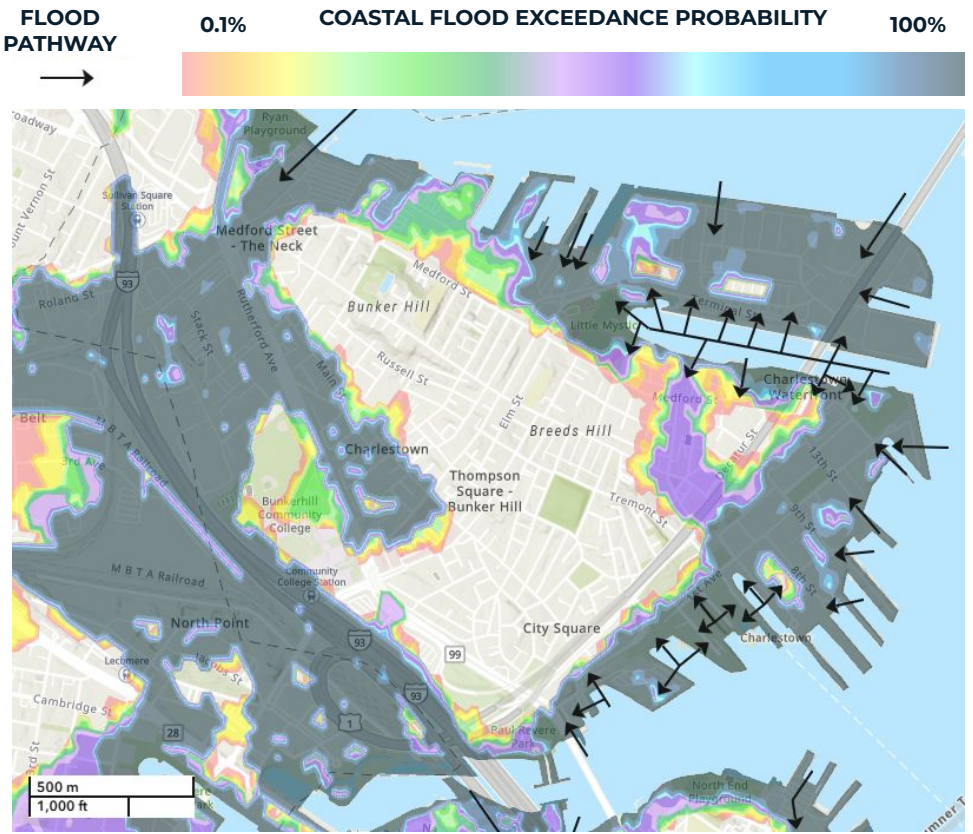
RESILIENCE

How does this project support and coordinate with ongoing resilience efforts in Charlestown?

RESILIENCE

The Rutherford Avenue/Sullivan Square project is coordinated with ongoing efforts to address Charlestown-specific climate change concerns:

1. Removal of flood-prone underpasses
2. Integrating with Ryan Playground Improvements
3. Tying into Main Street Interim Flood Protection Project
4. Building up urban tree canopy
5. Capturing stormwater through green infrastructure

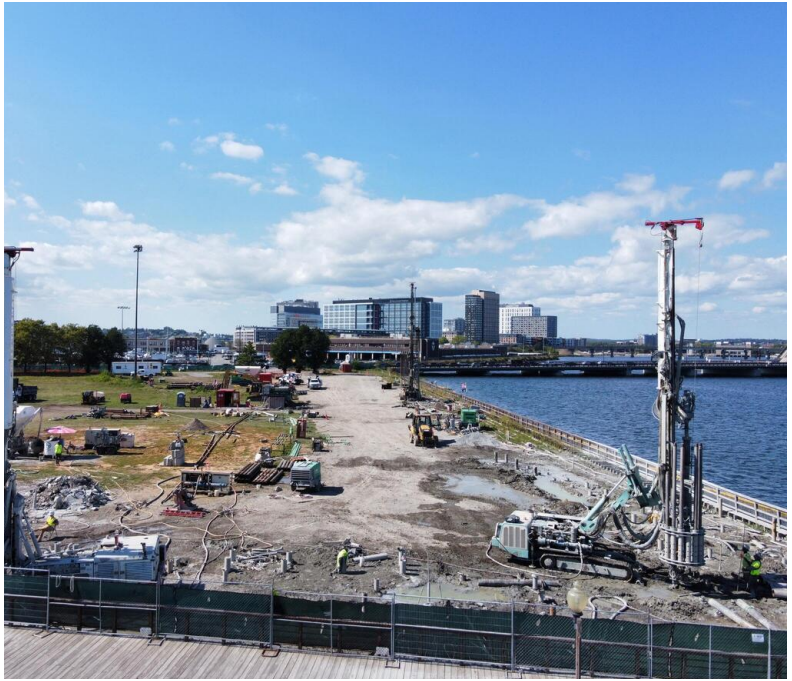


AT-GRADE DESIGN

We cannot design an underpass that would not be below the water table, creating cost, maintenance, and reliability issues.

Flooding and freezing that occurs today would continue, resulting in continued unexpected detours and delays. An at-grade design makes our transportation system more resilient and reliable.

RYAN PLAYGROUND IMPROVEMENTS



Questions? https://www.boston.gov/departments/parks-and-recreation/project/john-j-ryan-playground-improvements

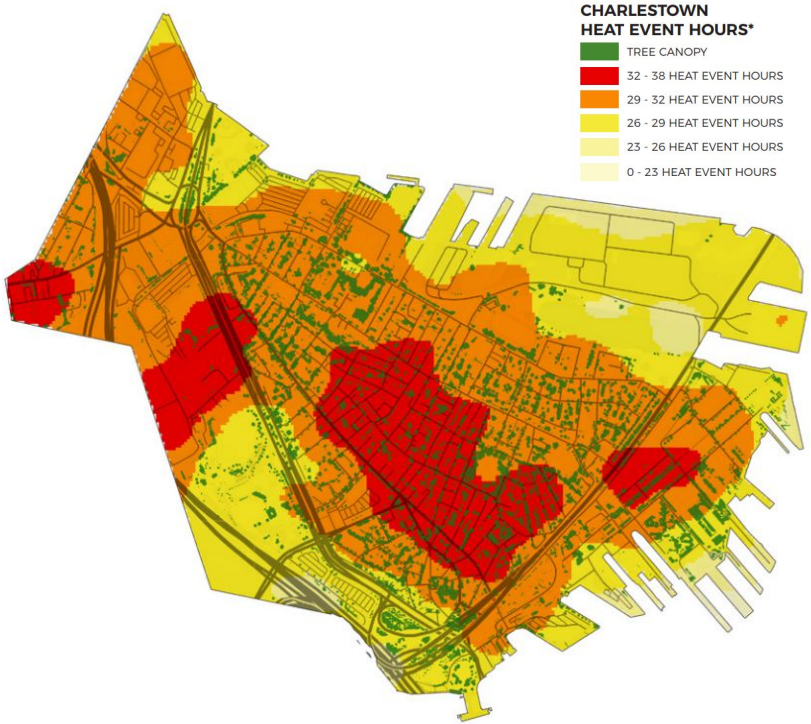
MAIN STREET INTERIM FLOOD PROTECTION

Questions? reach out to benjamin.matusow@boston.gov

BUILDING UP CHARLESTOWN TREE CANOPY

The project will plant **500+ new trees**, providing shade, improving air quality, reducing urban heat, and enhancing the overall comfort and character of the public realm.

Critically, the project will plant trees in several areas with little to no existing tree canopy (e.g. Sullivan Square).



CAPTURING STORMWATER

When it rains, stormwater must be captured and treated before it is returned to receiving waters like Boston Harbor and the Charles River. Large paved areas put stress on our vast network of underground stormwater infrastructure.

The project will reduce the amount of impervious land within the project area by approximately 22% and incorporate green infrastructure features. This will allow more water to be absorbed on-site, feed trees and plants, and reduce strain on the larger stormwater system.

PUBLIC REALM

How will the project area's public realm and open space be programmed? How will they look and feel?

PUBLIC REALM AND OPEN SPACE

Public realm refers to the shared spaces in a city that are open and accessible to everyone—parks, plazas, streets, and sidewalks—that shape daily life and connection.

Public realm is defined by three key aspects:

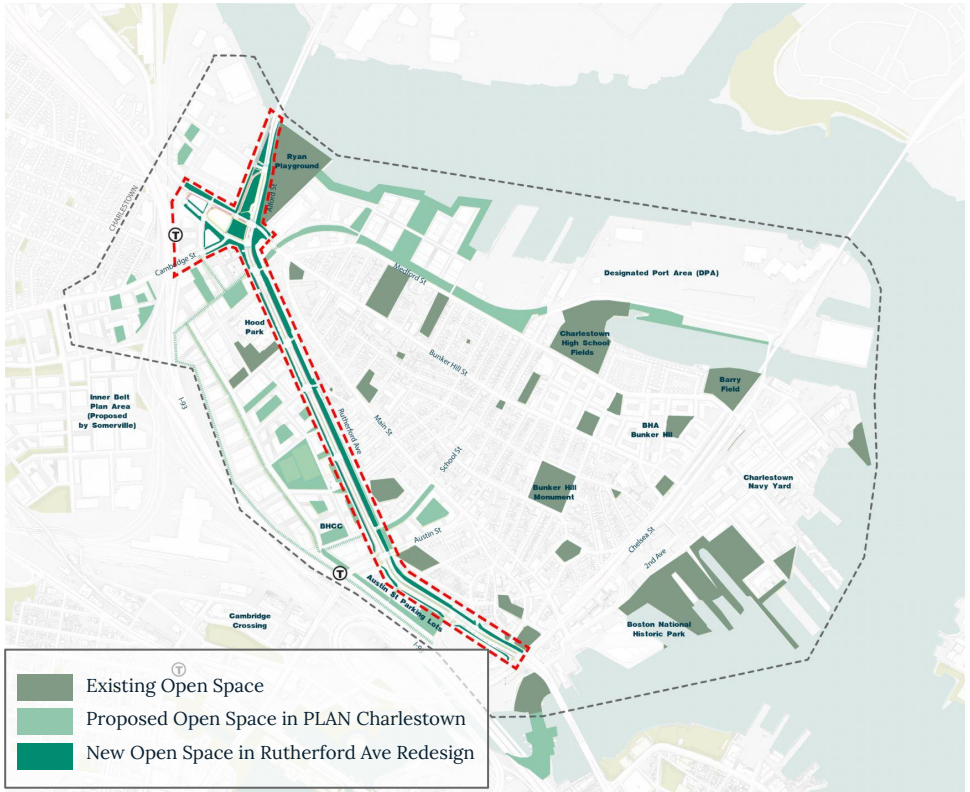
- **Location & Connectivity**: Where it is and how it links places together
- **Physical Qualities**: What it looks and feels like
- **Size & Experience:** How big it is and how people use it

Design choices - big *and*
small - add up to a big impact
on how a place feels.

LOCATION AND CONNECTIVITY

PLAN: Charlestown mapped existing open spaces, identified opportunities for new publicly-accessible spaces through private development (POPS), and captured community priorities for future open space.

This project will **connect several existing and planned open spaces** and deliver on community priorities identified across multiple planning efforts.



PHYSICAL QUALITIES

Material and furnishing choices help public spaces feel rooted in their neighborhood, while improving accessibility and overall comfort for everyone.

SIZE AND EXPERIENCE

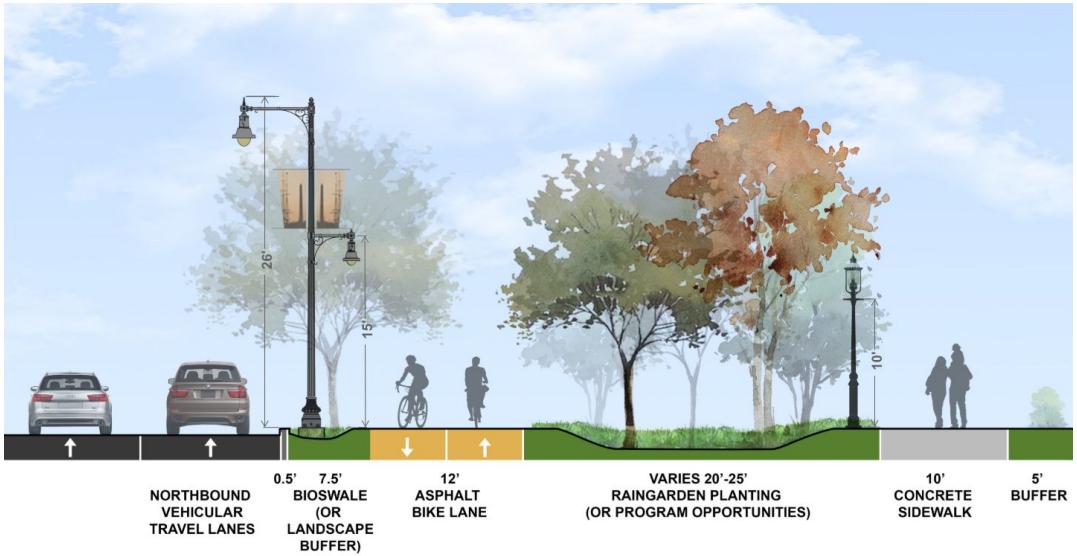
Active uses involve movement and interaction (play, sports, gathering), while passive uses support rest and observation (sitting, strolling, relaxing).

Size ≠ Use: Small spaces can be highly active, and large spaces can be quiet and passive. Design and programming matter more than footprint.

RUTHERFORD/SULLIVAN SQ OPEN SPACE

During the last review of the project design in 2021, the **community called for more active programming** than what was proposed.

In response to that feedback, **tonight's workshop focuses on identifying which open space design features you would like to see incorporated into the project.**



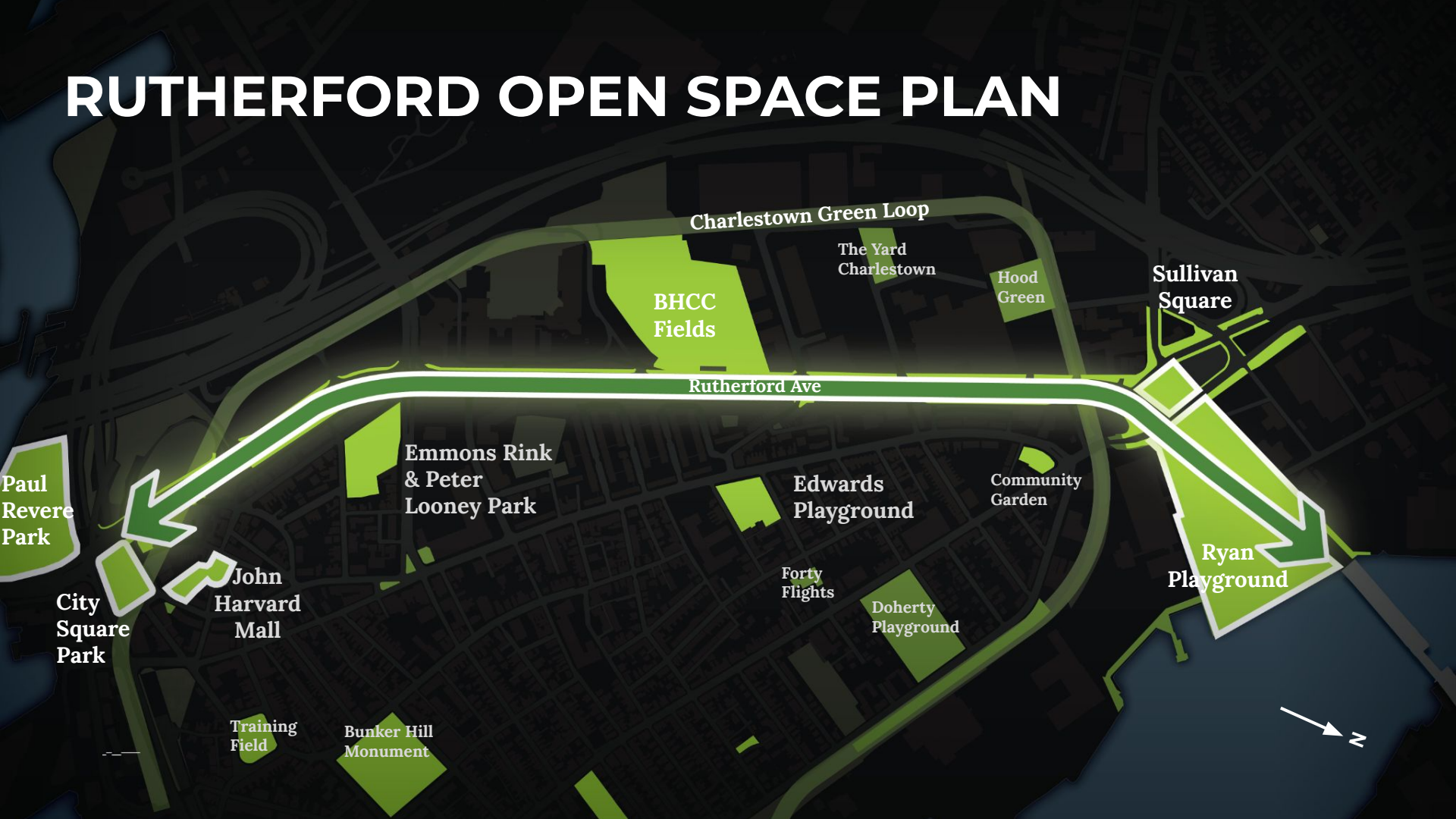
OWNERSHIP & MAINTENANCE

All portions of the project area are expected to be owned by the City.

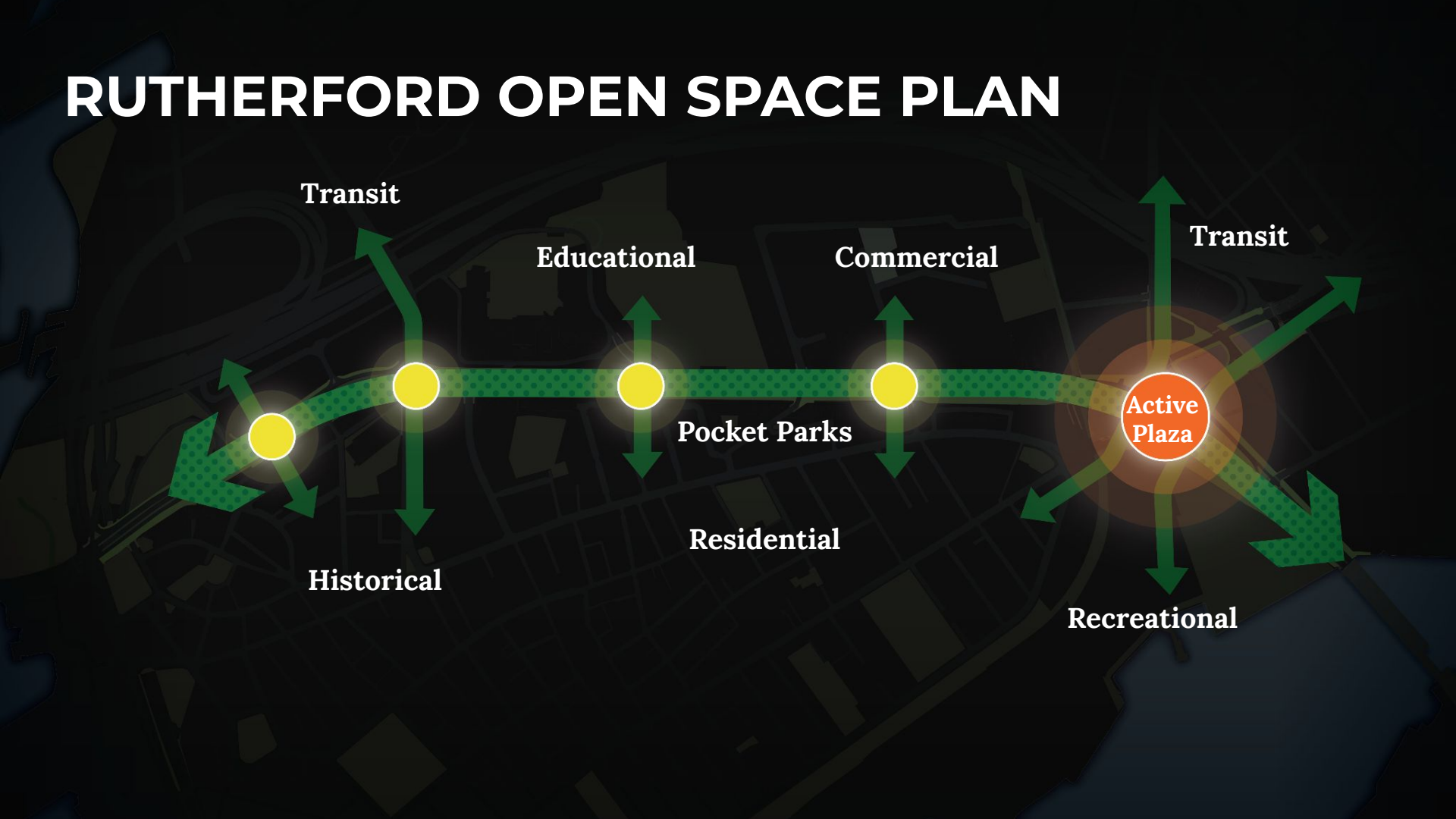
The best operation and maintenance arrangement for the various open spaces will be on a location-by-location basis and will depend on the type of design elements desired by the community and included in the project:

- Some elements already have well-established maintenance practices (e.g. trees within the right-of-way are maintained by Parks).
- Possible maintenance arrangements for different types of open spaces include:
  - *City maintained (Parks, Streets, Office of Green Infrastructure)*
  - *Third-party maintained (developer, nonprofit, "friends of", etc.)*

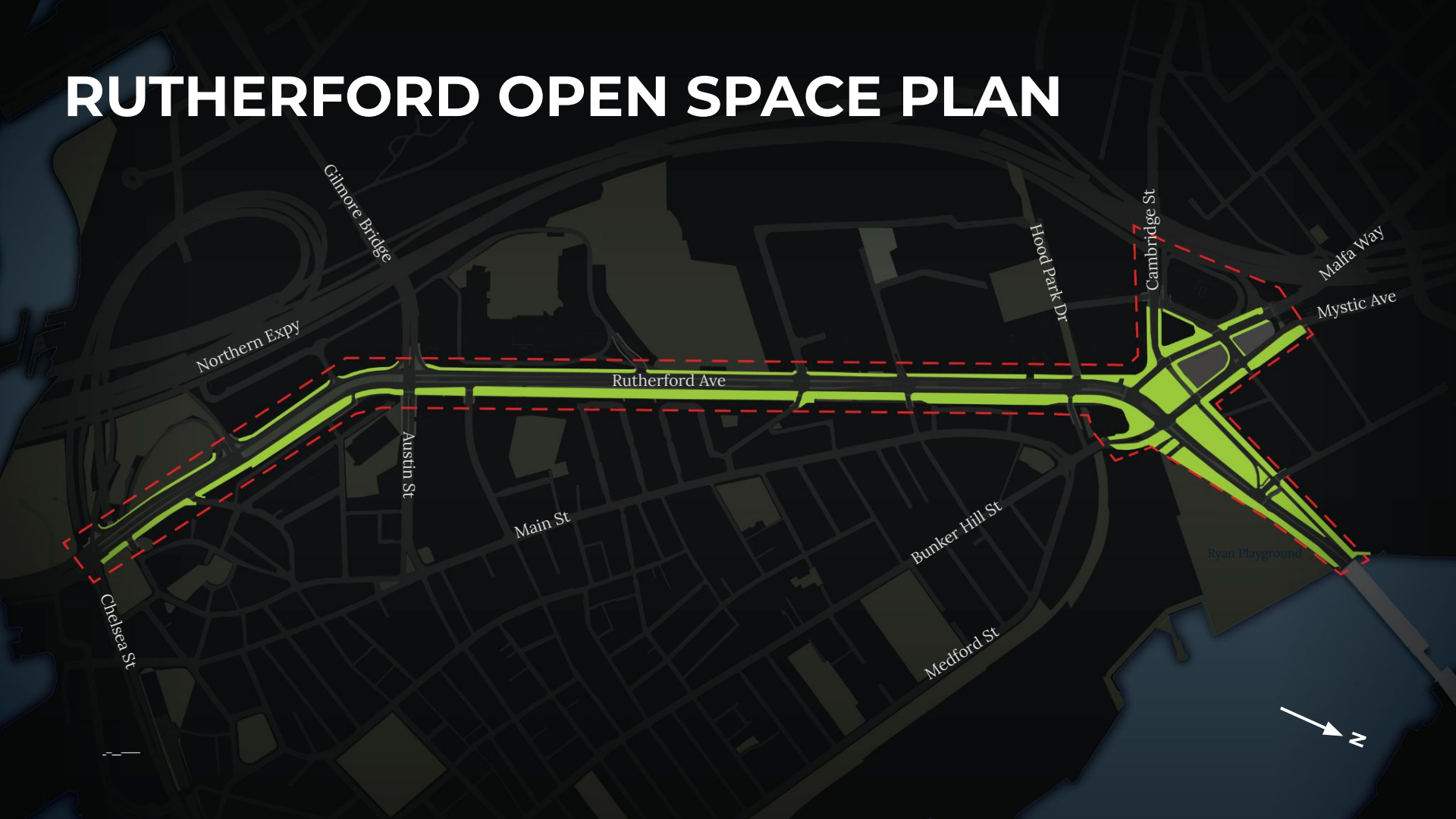
RUTHERFORD OPEN SPACE PLAN



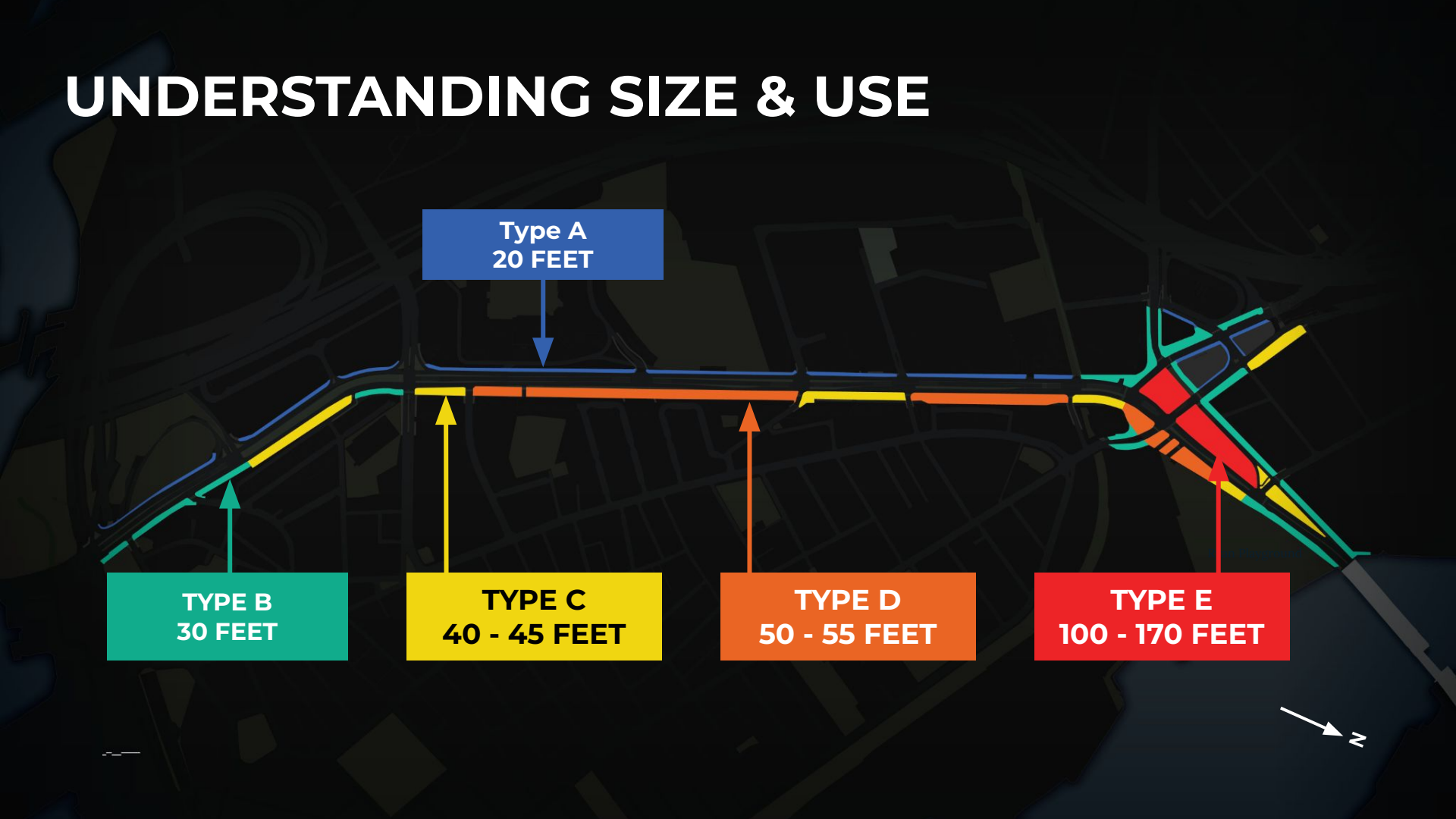
RUTHERFORD OPEN SPACE PLAN



RUTHERFORD OPEN SPACE PLAN

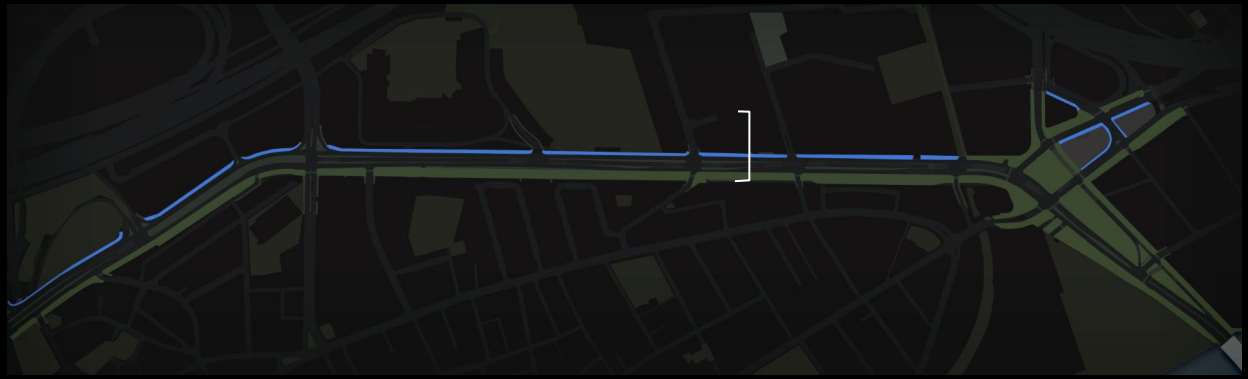


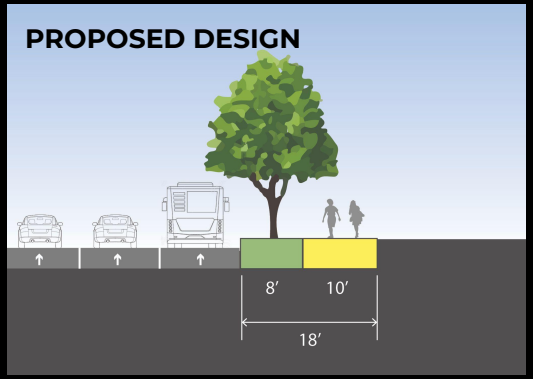
UNDERSTANDING SIZE & USE



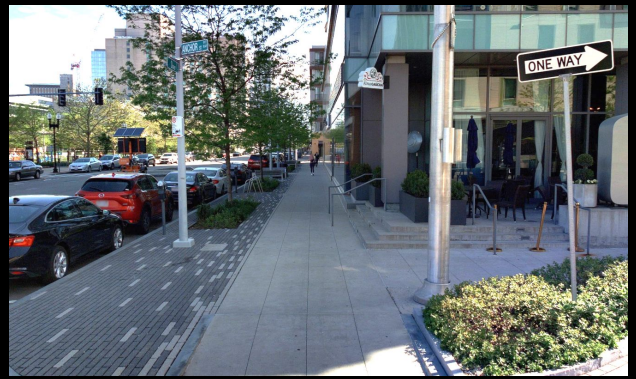
TYPE A: 20 FEET

BUFFER + SIDEWALK

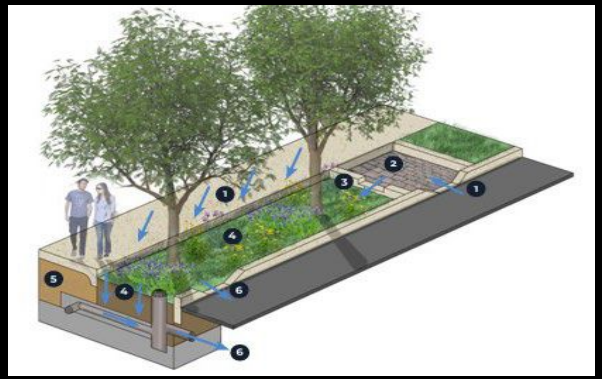




EXAMPLE IMAGES



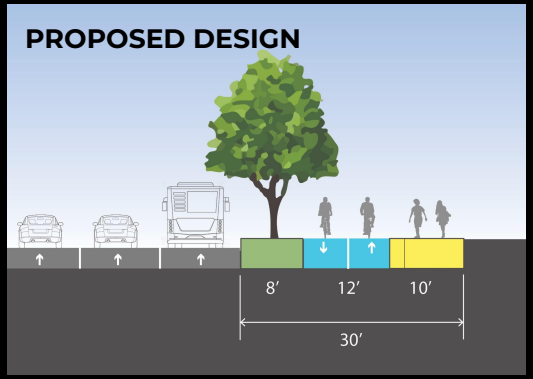
D STREET



PLANTED BUFFER

TYPE B: 30 FEET

BUFFER + **SHARED USE PATH** + SIDEWALK



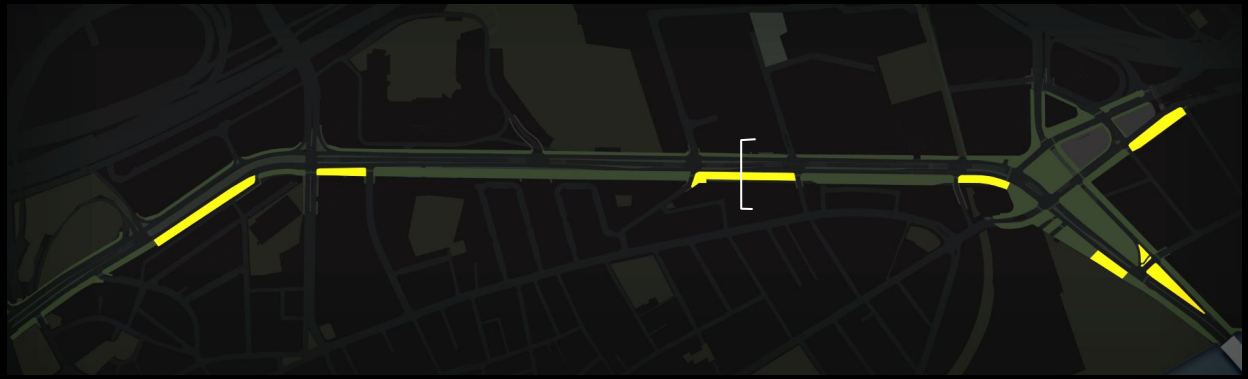
EXAMPLE IMAGES

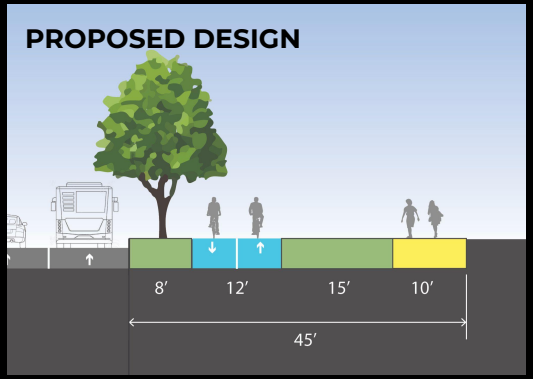
BI-DIRECTIONAL PATH (IMAGE CREDIT: TOM FUCOLORO)

PREMEARBLE BUFFER (IMAGE CREDIT: CENTRAL ATLANTA PROGRESS)

TYPE C: 40 - 45 FEET

BUFFER + SHARED USE PATH **+ 10’-15’ OPEN SPACE** + SIDEWALK





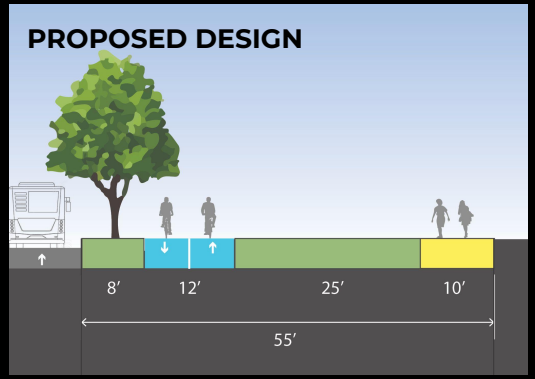
EXAMPLE IMAGES

COLUMBUS AVE (PHOTO CREDIT: TRAILLINK.COM)

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR (PHOTO CREDIT: URBNPARKS.COM)

TYPE D: 50 - 55 FEET

BUFFER + SHARED USE PATH **+ 20-25' OPEN SPACE** + SIDEWALK



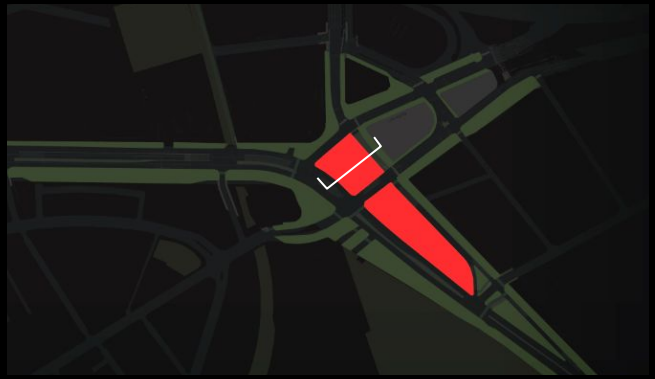
EXAMPLE IMAGES

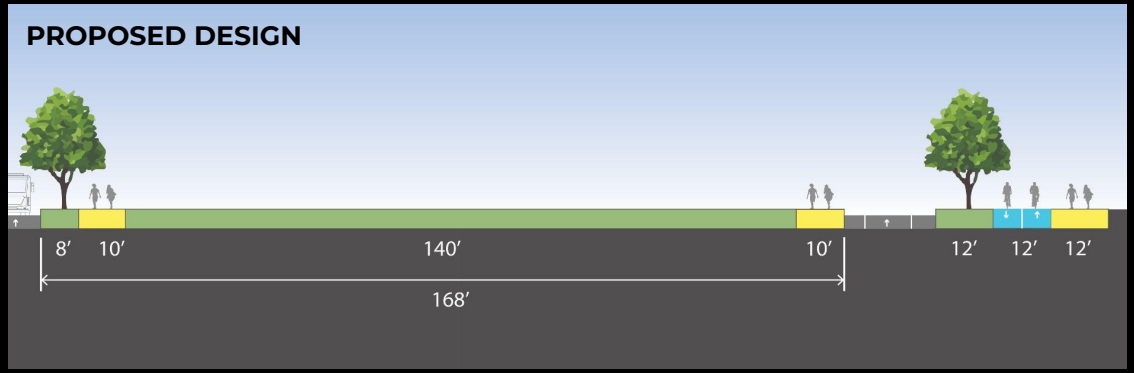
SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR PARK (SOUTH END)

LINEAR PARK (COURTESY OF THE CITY OF CAMBRIDGE)

TYPE E: 100 - 170 FEET

PARK AREA

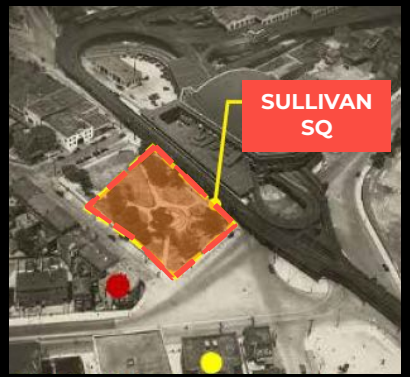




DEWEY SQUARE - ROSE KENNEDY GREENWAY

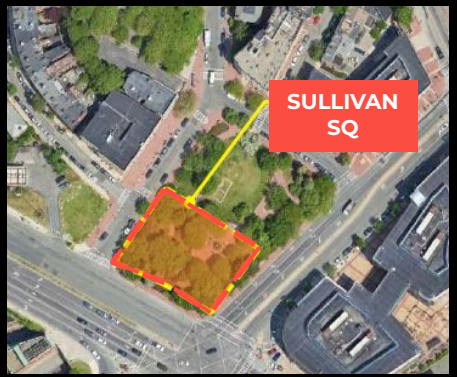
SULLIVAN SQUARE CONCEPTUAL SKETCH

TYPE E: 100 - 170 FEET SIZE COMPARISON



SULLIVAN SQUARE 1929

EDWARDS PLAYGROUND



CITY SQUARE PARK

ROSE KENNEDY GREENWAY

WORKSHOP

Share your vision for open space areas within the project area

HOW IT WORKS

1 PICK YOUR PROGRAMS

Write up to 3 program numbers on matching stickers

2 CHECK WHICH SPACE FITS

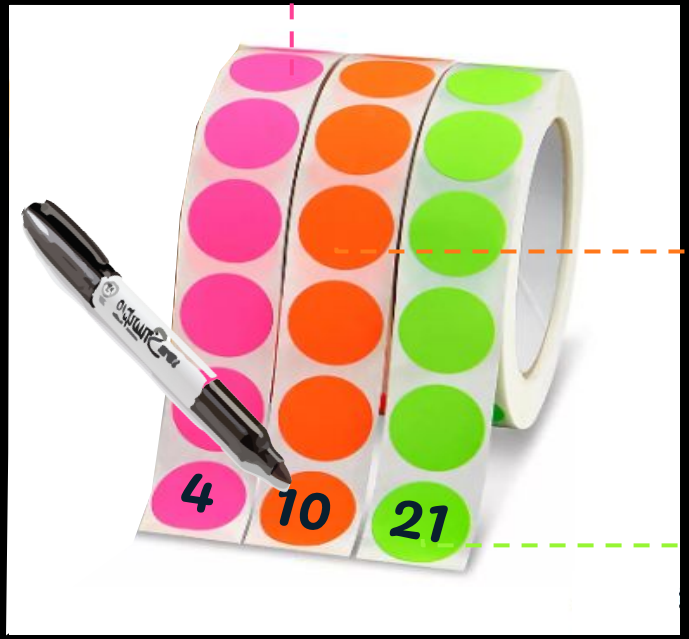
Look for Space Type C D E where your program can go

3 PLACE YOUR STICKERS

Stick it on the map where it fits best!

1. PICK YOUR PROGRAM

Write up to 3 program numbers on matching stickers
(No need to balance categories — choose what you like most)



ACTIVE SPACES

GATHERING SPACES

PASSIVE SPACES

2. CHECK WHICH SPACE FITS

Look for Space Type C D E where your program can go

This program can only fits in Type E.....

E

10 Hardscape Plaza

or or

This can fit in Type C, D or E!

C D E

21 Rain Garden / Bioswale

3. PLACE YOUR STICKERS

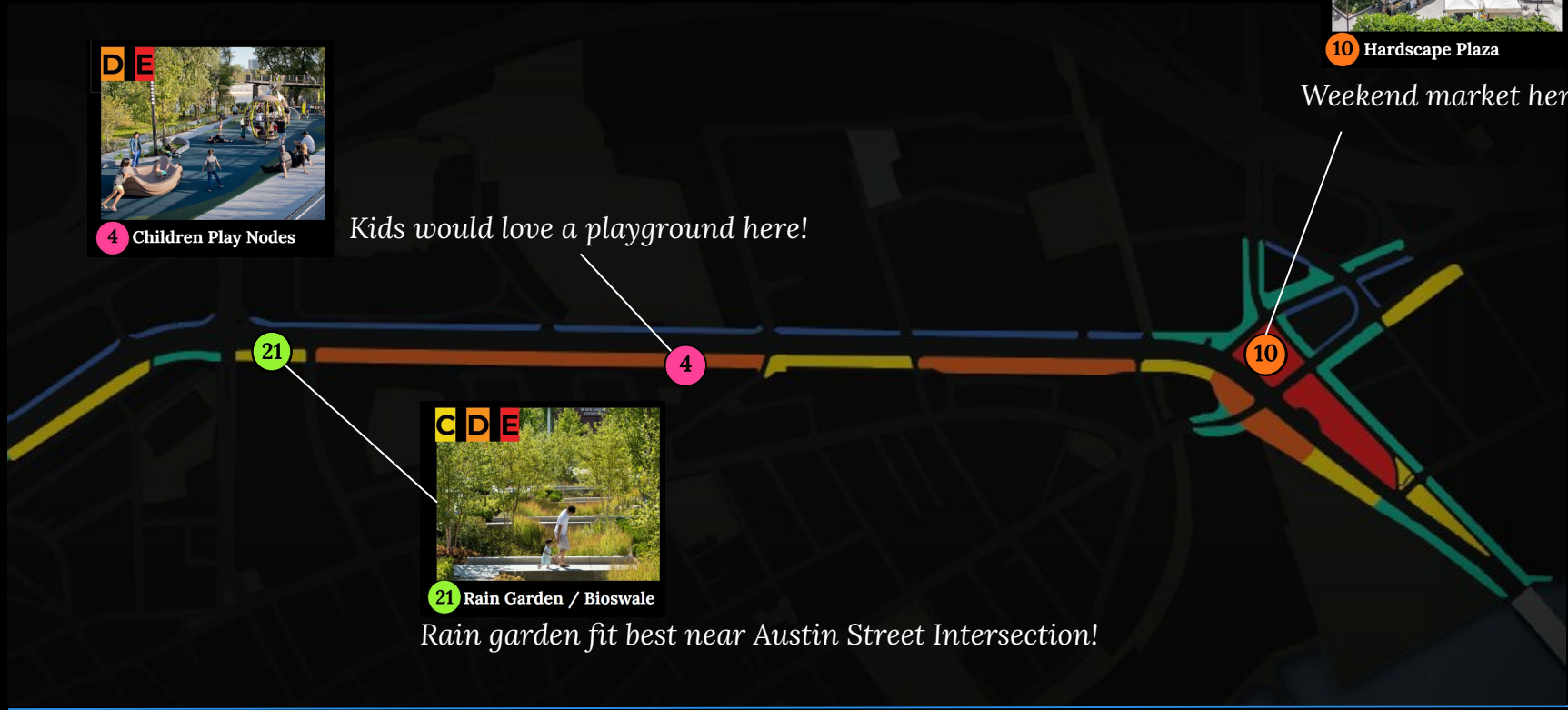
Stick it on the map where it fits best!

4 Children Play Nodes

Kids would love a playground here!

10 Hardscape Plaza

Weekend market here!



21 Rain Garden / Bioswale

Rain garden fit best near Austin Street Intersection!

PROGRAM TYPES

ACTIVE

1. Skate Dot
2. Fitness Stations
3. Agility Trail
4. Playground
5. Ping-pong Tables
6. Bocce Ball Court
7. Interactive Instruments
8. Warm-up / Stretch Zone

GATHERING

9. Pavilion / Pergola
10. Hardscape Plaza
11. Gathering Lawn
12. Performance Space
13. Special Seating Areas
14. Community Tables & Chairs
15. Café Spill-out Area
16. Pop-up Events

PASSIVE

17. Public Art Node
18. Native planting Garden
19. Community Garden
20. Dog Run
21. Rain Garden / Bioswale
22. Seating / Benches
23. Tree groves
24. Historical Sign and Marker