

FAIRMOUNT INDIGO PLANNING INITIATIVE

# FOUR CORNERS/ GENEVA AVENUE STATION AREA PLAN

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



CITY OF BOSTON  
Martin J. Walsh  
*Mayor*



Boston  
Redevelopment  
Authority

**Four Corners/Geneva Avenue**

*Working Advisory Group (WAG) Members*

Dynell Andrews-Blake, *Four Corners Main Streets*  
Davida Andelman, *Greater Bowdoin/Geneva Neighborhood Association*  
Katherine Bergeron, *Resident*  
Marilyn Foreman, *Erie/Ellington Civic Association*  
Hermitão (Beto) Rosa, *Bowdoin Geneva Main Streets*  
Antonio Hobbs, *Business owner*  
Caltor McLean, *Business owner*  
Danah Tench, *Resident*  
Theresa Latson, *Resident*  
Gary Webster, *Four Corners Merchants Association*  
Bill Perkins, *Business Owner, Boston ReStore, Inc.*

*Prepared for* **City of Boston, Martin J. Walsh Mayor**  
**Boston Redevelopment Authority**

*With support* **The Boston Foundation**  
*From* **The Garfield Foundation**  
**Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)**



**CITY OF BOSTON**  
Martin J. Walsh  
*Mayor*



**Boston**  
**Redevelopment**  
**Authority**

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# Study Purpose

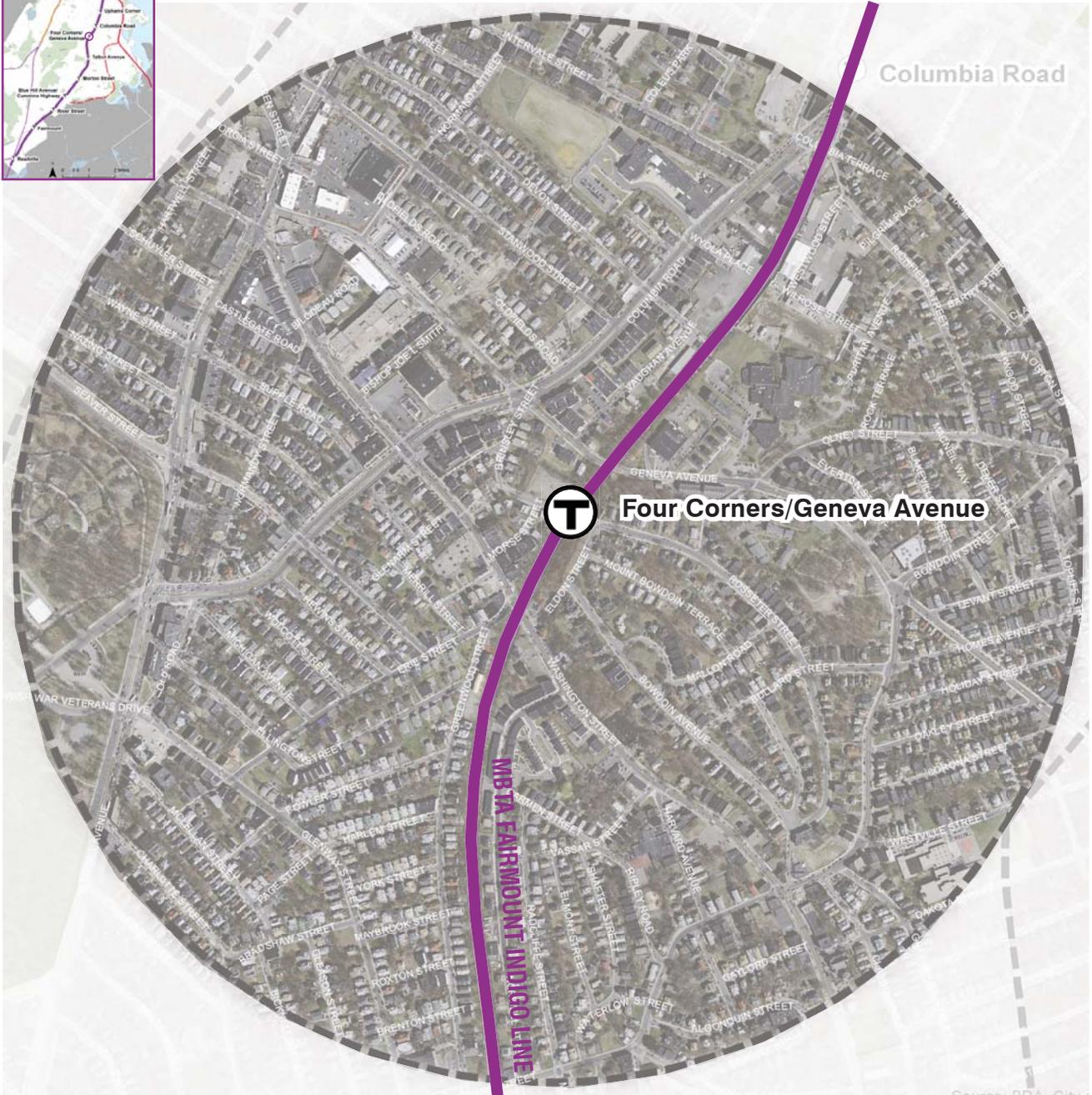
As part of the City of Boston's Fairmount Indigo Planning Initiative, the Four Corners/Geneva Avenue Station Area Plan establishes a framework for future improvements and investment to complement the transit infrastructure at the new MBTA station and to enhance three distinct Main Street districts at Four Corners, Bowdoin/Geneva, and Grove Hall and the surrounding neighborhoods. The study has included a year-long process with community workshops and

public meetings under the guidance of a Working Advisory Group (WAG) comprised of local residents, business owners and stakeholders. The Station Area Plan embraces the MBTA Fairmount Indigo line as a transit anchor and looks to guide physical and economic development, encourage sustainable and transit-oriented growth, prioritize economic prosperity for current residents and businesses and incorporate existing planning initiatives into one shared vision.



Fairmount Indigo Corridor Context

The study area for the Four Corners/Geneva Avenue Station Area Plan includes portions of Dorchester and Roxbury within 1/2 mile of the rail station.



# FOUR CORNERS/GENEVA AVENUE

## Community Vision

The community vision was created through a community planning and visioning process that included a community workshop, community open house, and a series of eight meetings with a Mayoral appointed Working Advisory Group (WAG), many in-person visits to each Station Area neighborhood, stakeholder, resident and advocate interviews and an analysis of the existing conditions of the Station Area. The Vision Statement sets a direction for future efforts in the Four Corners/Geneva Avenue Station Area. The Community Goals add more detail to the statement.

### Vision Statement

**The Four Corners/Geneva Avenue Station Area is a safe and walkable community with active and thriving Main Street districts that are supported by diverse residential neighborhoods, excellent transit access, and high quality open spaces.**

### Community Goals

The goals of the community vision are to:

- Minimize displacement and expand choices and opportunities for current residents and businesses to prosper and preserve community diversity
- Strengthen neighborhood-serving commercial and cultural activity in the Station Area Main Street districts - Four Corners, Bowdoin Geneva and Grove Hall - and enhance district gateways
- Provide new affordable, workforce and senior housing opportunities near the station and Main Street districts to support vitality
- Reinforce the residential community with safe and walkable streets and high quality parks
- Activate and reinforce direct pedestrian connections between the centers of activity and the rail station entries



Four Corners Main Street District



Pop-up Community Park in the Bowdoin Geneva Main Street District

The Station Area Plan seeks to leverage transit for new economic prosperity and to reinforce the Station Area as an important hub of commercial and cultural activity in the Fairmount Indigo Corridor.

Key recommendations of the community vision have been outlined by topic areas including Prosperity, Home, Place, Getting Around, Quality of Life and Public Space. The Station Area Plan balances recommendations in each topic area to reinforce a high quality livable district and a complete neighborhood.



# Illustrative Vision Plan

An illustrative plan of the community vision is shown below. The illustration reflects the physical strategies that are part of the Station Area Plan including new transit-oriented development near the rail station, new mixed-use development within the Main Street districts, new infill residential development to stabilize surrounding neighborhoods, streetscape improvements to form gateway enhancements to the Main Street districts and to enhance critical connections to the rail station and surrounding attractions.

- Legend*
- Existing Blocks
  - Existing Buildings
  - Existing Open Space
  - Main Street District
  - Potential Development
  - Main Street Gateway



*Recommendations illustrated within the study area for the Four Corners/Geneva Avenue Station Area Plan includes portions of Dorchester and Roxbury within 1/2 mile of the rail station*

# Key Findings



## Prosperity

- 1 Leverage New Investment and Target Assistance
- 2 Consider Main Street Districts Holistically
- 3 Concentrate and Add Destinations
- 4 Reinforce Local-serving Businesses
- 5 Leverage Vacant and Underused Lots



## Home

- 6 Encourage Multifamily Near Station
- 7 Focus New Housing in the Main Street Districts
- 8 Leverage Vacant Lots for Infill Housing
- 9 Retain Diversity and Affordability
- 10 Improve Housing Quality and Sustainability



## Place

- 11 Target Public Realm Improvements Near Gateways
- 12 Connect Consistent Sense of Place
- 13 Enhance Vibrancy of Main Streets as a Destination
- 14 Reinforce Continuity of Ground Floor Use



## Getting Around

- 15 Increase Neighborhood Walkability and Bikeability
- 16 Reinforce Public Realm to Station
- 17 Enhance Station Entries
- 18 Manage Main Street and Neighborhood Parking



## Parks/Public Space

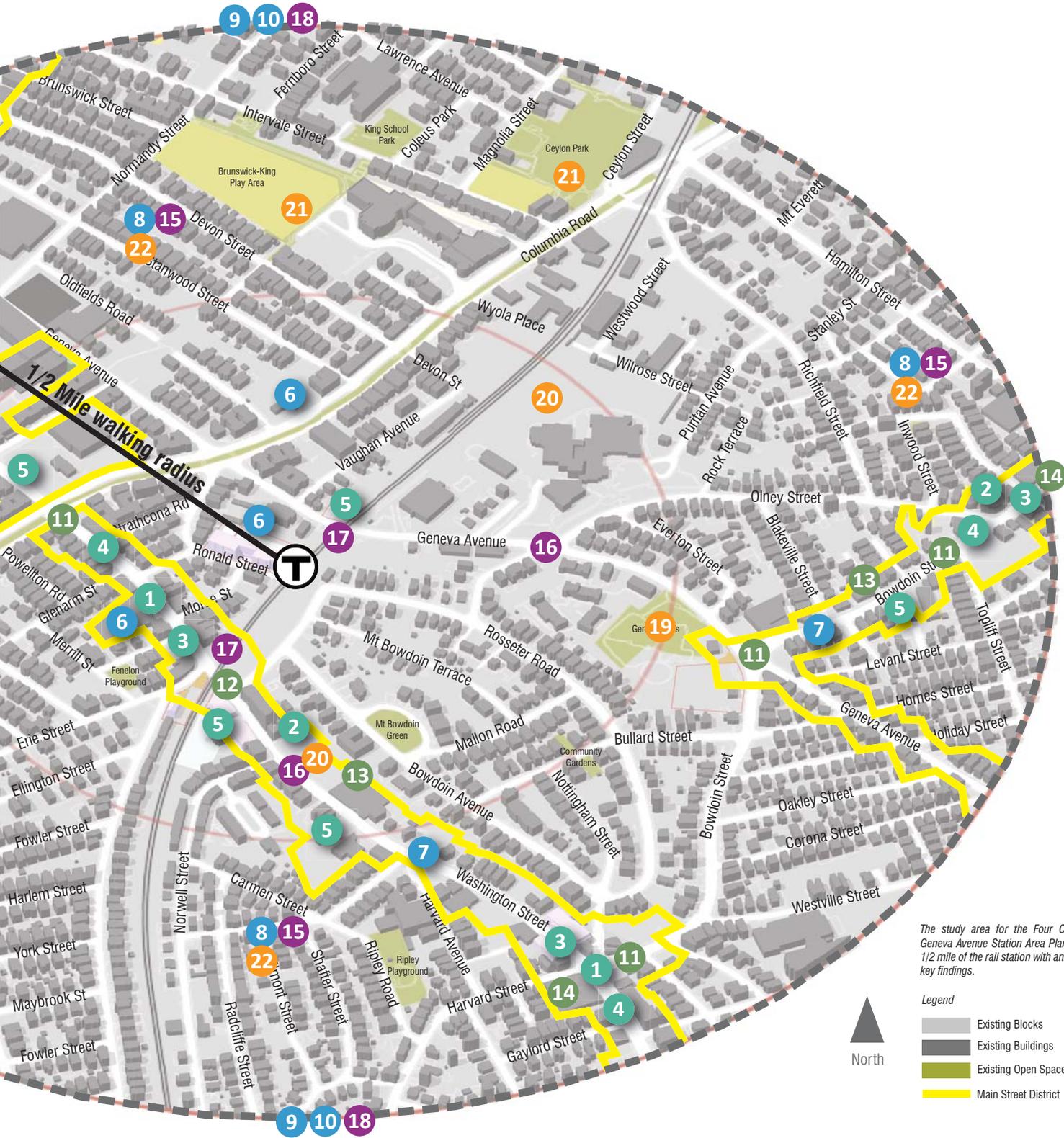
- 19 Expand Geneva Cliffs as a Focal Open Space
- 20 Leverage Underused Spaces
- 21 Improve Use of Existing Open Spaces
- 22 Strategically Add Open Space at Vacant Parcels



## Quality of Life

- 23 Enhance Public Safety
- 24 Connect Network of Arts and Culture
- 25 Building Opportunity and Success
- 26 Engage Youth Directly





The study area for the Four Corners/ Geneva Avenue Station Area Plan within 1/2 mile of the rail station with annotated key findings.

- Legend
- Existing Blocks
  - Existing Buildings
  - Existing Open Space
  - Main Street District



The recommendations within each topic area have been **prioritized by the community** as part of a community open house and review of the draft Station Area Plan.



## Prosperity

Strengthen local wealth creation in the Station Area through business, training and entrepreneurial support. The following approaches are intended to build prosperity for current residents and small businesses:

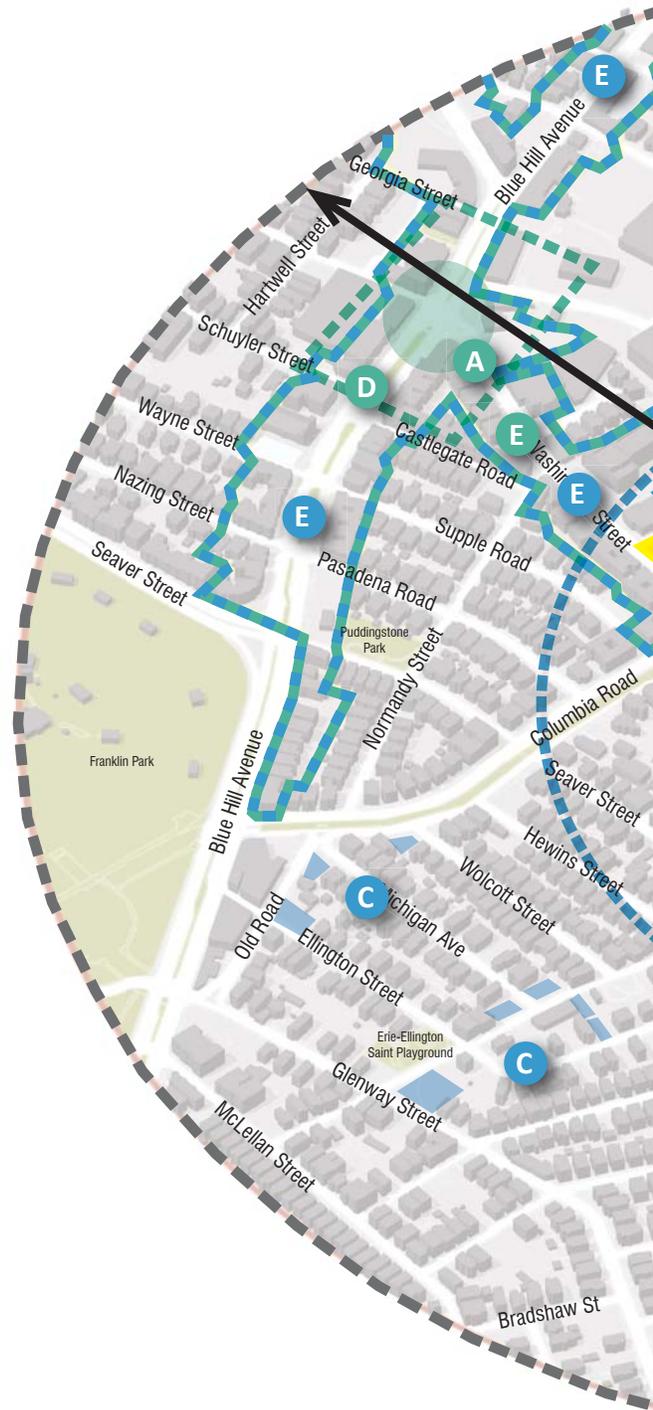
- A Reinforce Local-serving Businesses** - Promote local shops and restaurants, expand variety and directly connect local businesses to local spending residents.
- B Leverage Vacant Lots** - Reinforce redevelopment and opens space on vacant and underused property in key locations.
- C Leverage New Investment and Target Assistance** - Improvements to existing properties should be focused in nodes where redevelopment and new construction is occurring. Facade improvement and design assistance focused in these areas of private investment.
- D Concentrate and Add Destinations** - Retail, small business, entrepreneurial, cultural, and training activity should be directed to occur within the ground floor of Main Street districts.
- E Consider Main Street Districts Holistically** - Existing commercial nodes should be reinforced with new active ground floor uses, residential infill can occur within Main Street districts outside of the commercial nodes.

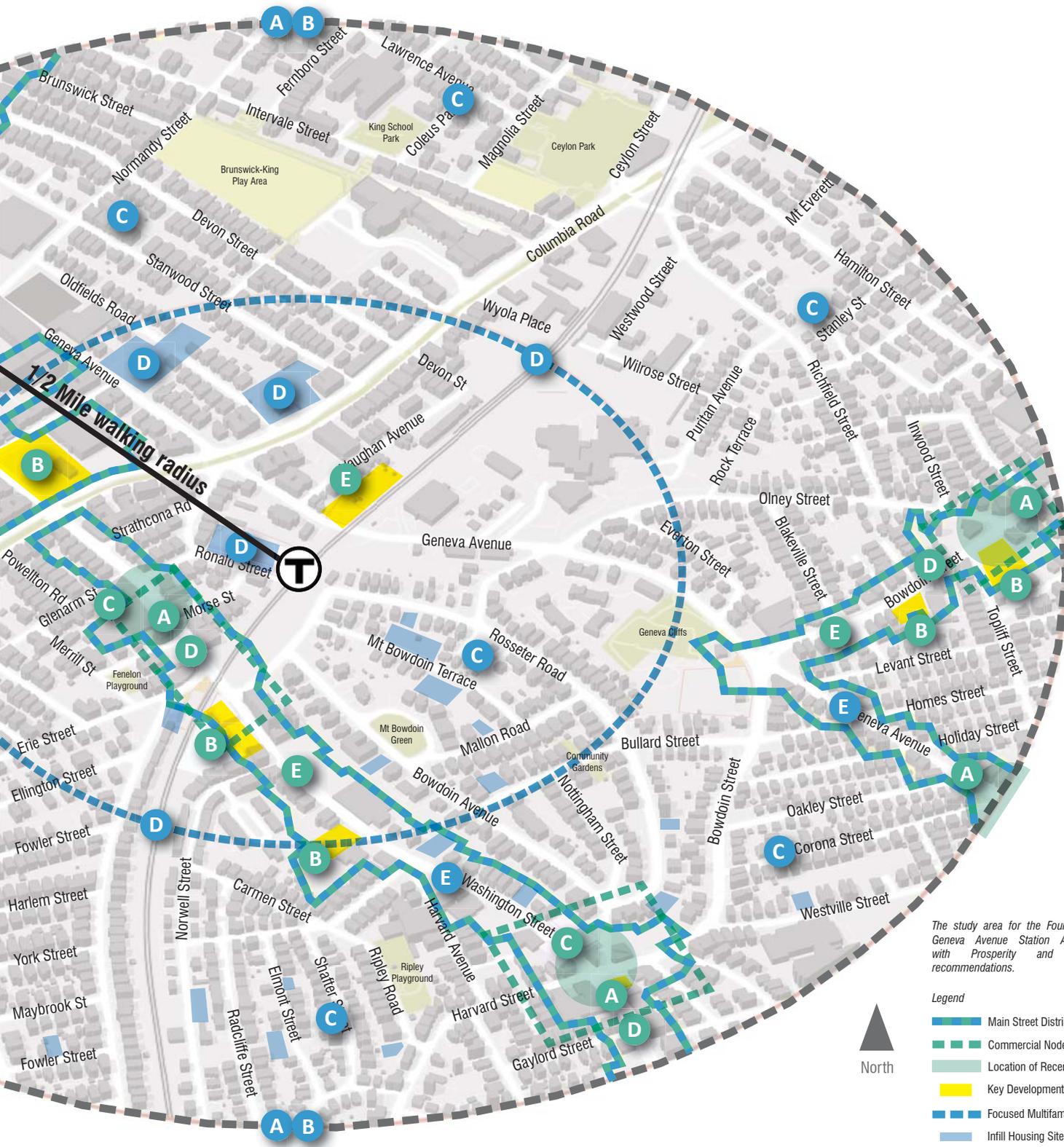


## Home

Provide new mixed-income housing opportunities near the station and stabilize existing neighborhood streets to support vitality and prosperity. The approach to housing in the Station Area focuses on the following:

- A Retain Diversity and Affordability** - Expand housing choice and opportunity for current residents to maintain community diversity and relative affordability with new housing and rental and homeownership assistance.
- B Improve Housing Quality and Sustainability** - Encourage residents and owners in the Station Area to improve existing homes through sustainability, energy efficiency and renovation assistance programs.
- C Leverage Vacant Lots for Infill Housing** - Add new housing to match the existing neighborhood street targeted for middle income and senior residents.
- D Encourage Multifamily Near Station** - Larger vacant sites within 1/4 mile of the station should be encouraged through zoning to redevelop at density beyond triple-deckers, but at a scale appropriate to the neighborhood.
- E Focus New Housing in Main Street Districts** - New housing in the Main Street districts should be encouraged above active ground floor uses to support district vitality and local businesses.





The study area for the Four Corners/ Geneva Avenue Station Area Plan with Prosperity and Housing recommendations.

- Legend
- Main Street District
  - - - Commercial Node Concentration
  - Location of Recent Investment
  - Key Development Sites
  - Focused Multifamily Housing
  - Infill Housing Sites



The recommendations within each topic area have been **prioritized by the community** as part of a community open house and review of the draft Station Area Plan.

## Place

The Station Area's character and physical environment should reflect the longevity of the location as an important City node and crossroads:

- A Preserve and Maintain History and Character** - Improve existing buildings, facades and open space character as part of new investment and redevelopment to maintain historic heritage in the Station Area.
- B Reinforce Continuity of Ground Floor Use** - Expand continuous ground floor uses and storefront activity in Main Streets commercial nodes to avoid gaps in vitality.
- C Target Public Realm Improvement Near Investments and Gateways** - Focus public realm improvement near recent investment to reinforce nodes near the rail station and in the Main Street district gateways
- D Enhance Vibrancy of Main Streets as a Destination for a Variety of Activities** - Use the Main Streets and rail station for event programming and community activities to reinforce them as destinations.
- E Connect Consistent Sense of Place** - Connect a sense of place directly and continuously from Station entry gateways to Main Street districts with streetscape, signage and art installations.

## Getting Around

The new rail station at Four Corners/Geneva Avenue enhances connections to downtown. The following approaches enhance connection and circulation within the Station Area for all modes of transportation and leverage the new transit investment:

- A Manage Main Street and Neighborhood Parking** - Support small businesses, protect residents and enhance transit access.
- B Improve Main Street Gateways** - Intersection improvements for pedestrian and vehicular safety and enhanced landscape should be focused at Main Street gateways.
- C Increase Neighborhood Walkability and Bikeability** - Enhance safe routes from neighborhoods to Main Streets and station entries using the Boston Complete Street policies for safer pedestrian and bicycle circulation.
- D Reinforce Public Realm to Station** - Washington Street and Geneva Avenue are key connecting streets to the station, enhance bike, pedestrian and bus amenities.
- E Enhance Station Entries** - Add small plaza spaces and expanded mobility hubs for bike or bus connections including bus shelters and places to sit. Explore access to platforms from locations in adjacent neighborhoods (for example - Ronald Street or the Holland School).





The study area for the Four Corners/ Geneva Avenue Station Area Plan with Place and Getting Around recommendations.

- Legend
- Core Vitality Area
  - Key Walkability Routes
  - Station Gateway
  - Main Street Gateway
  - Key Intersection



The recommendations within each topic area have been **prioritized by the community** as part of a community open house and review of the draft Station Area Plan.

## Parks and Public Space

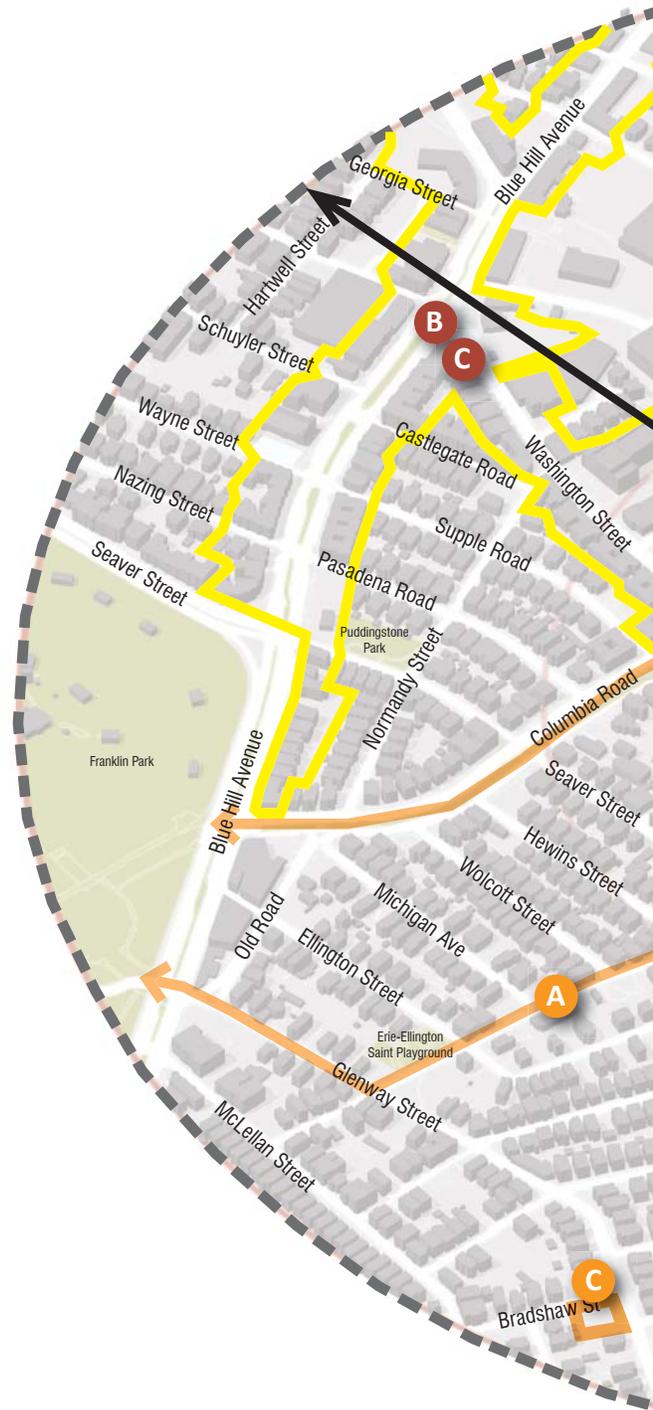
Publicly accessible open space is deficient in the Station Area (relative to other neighborhood averages). Strategic additions of new open spaces and enhanced access, use and safety of existing resources would address the issue. The following approaches have been identified to improve neighborhood open space amenities:

- A Improve Use of Existing Open Spaces** - Enhance routes to primary open spaces such as Franklin Park and make better use of urban wilds and the Holland School campus.
- B Expand Geneva Cliffs** - Improve on the existing open space asset, expand into adjacent underused utility parcels and enhance as a focal point of the Station Area open spaces.
- C Strategically Add Open Space** - Convert vacant lots to open space where gaps exist in the open space network adding small neighborhood pocket parks.
- D Leverage Underused Spaces** - Continue and expand the program of event spaces and pop-up parks in vacant lots to create highly visible and active gathering places.
- E Add Station Entry Plaza Space** - Expand and celebrate Station Entry points on Washington Street and Geneva Avenue to enhance the gateway, civic amenity and gathering space.

## Quality of Life

The Station Area is anchored by the Main Street districts and quality of life enhancing amenities, such as the Dorchester Arts Collaborative (DAC). The following approaches build upon existing amenities:

- A Enhance Public Safety** - Improve community pride and safety through focus on maintenance of public realm, lighting, and engagement of resident community.
- B Connect Network of Arts and Culture** - Encourage arts and cultural activity by connecting the surrounding network of arts and cultural sites back to the Main Streets.
- C Build Opportunity and Success** - Use Station and Main Street gateways to connect residents to existing community centers, training centers and Main Street businesses. Consider temporary storefront uses in Main Street districts to provide training or job connection opportunities.
- D Engage Youth Directly** - Bring the next generation of Station Area stakeholders directly into each of the Station Area strategies and create opportunities to link youth to the Main Street districts.





The study area for the Four Corners/ Geneva Avenue Station Area Plan with Parks and Public Space and Quality of Life recommendations.

- Legend
- Key Open Spaces
  - Open Space Connections



*The recommendations have been prioritized by the community as part of a community open house and review of the draft Station Area Plan.*

## Four Corners/Geneva Avenue Implementation Actions

*The Implementation Actions are the critical components of Station Area strategies highlighted as actionable items.*

The community vision outlined for the Four Corners/Geneva Avenue Station Area is not achieved through a single action or solution, but through a series of purposeful and strategic changes that position the Station Area for a positive and incremental evolution over time. This continuum of positive change is already underway and can be expedited with the following key actions:

### **Maintain Community Voice and Presence**

The collective community voice and presence of strong advocacy and representation of the Station Area preferences is an asset and benefit to the surrounding neighborhoods moving forward. The continued advocacy and support for community goals is an important action to carry forward as the Station Area continues to evolve over time.

### **Four Corners Streetscape Investment**

Invest in streetscape and intersection improvements at the critical Four Corners gateway and commercial node of Washington Street, Bowdoin Street and Harvard Street. Public realm improvements at this location combined with modest investments in several existing buildings would complete a transformation of this critical Main Street node. Intersection improvements should include improved intersection lane markings, pedestrian crossings and stop lines with recalibration of the signal timing based on current traffic volumes. Landscape improvements would further enhance the substantial investments underway.

### **Modify Zoning to Community Vision**

Modify Station Area zoning to be consistent with the Community Vision, for example allow multifamily housing in Station-adjacent areas as appropriate to the surrounding context or refining the dimensional characteristics for building height and density and off-street parking requirements in the Main Street districts to enable residential uses over an active ground floor.

### **Improve Bowdoin/Geneva Intersection**

Invest in streetscape and intersection improvements at the critical Bowdoin/Geneva gateway at Geneva Avenue and Bowdoin Street. Public realm improvements at this location could enhance this critical gateway into the district from the rail station. Intersection improvements should reconsider the optimal intersection configuration for a very broad, wide and skewed alignment between Geneva Avenue and Bowdoin Street. The current intersection has a large enough footprint that a roundabout could be considered as an alternative layout that could improve traffic flow and create an enhanced opportunity for a gateway landscape treatment for the Main Street district.

### **Expand and Improve Geneva Cliffs**

As part of the effort to expand and improve Geneva Cliffs, a dialogue should be opened with Eversource regarding the use of the land under their control adjacent to the current open space. Leveraging this underused land to expand Geneva Cliffs could further enhance a centrally located open space that should be a focus of the Station Area open space network.

### **Encourage Investment in Existing Buildings**

Although a focus of planning and implementation efforts is often placed on vacant land and new construction, a parallel effort to encourage investment in existing building assets should be actively pursued. Existing grant and assistance programs offered by the City should be targeted to specific buildings that would further complete the transformation of key Main Street commercial nodes. Design assistance and funding support for facade improvements would be most useful.

### **Recognize Community Planning for Bowdoin/ Geneva**

Concurrent to the Station Area planning process, a community-led planning process for Bowdoin/Geneva has been underway. As implementation actions are completed in the future, further community direction that is developed through the Bowdoin/Geneva process should be integrated and recognized in those efforts. Additionally, that process could advance a number of the strategies and actions outlined in the Station Area plan if aligned with the community planning efforts.

### **Open Dialogue with Key Property Owners**

The community vision and Station Area strategy can be used as a tool to engage owners of vacant private properties or properties that have had maintenance or other issues reported. A clearly articulated vision can be used to promote a community-based momentum and sense of pride that will get others, that may not have been involved in the process, to add their own complementary efforts to invest in and enhance the Station Area in the near future.

### **Dispose of Public Property for Redevelopment**

Strategically dispose of vacant publicly owned property for catalytic redevelopment consistent with the community vision. For example, disposing of the Ronald Street lots for multi-family or senior housing that is a higher density to leverage the transit-adjacent location and that is appropriate to the scale of the neighboring residences.



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FOUR CORNERS/GENEVA AVENUE  
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