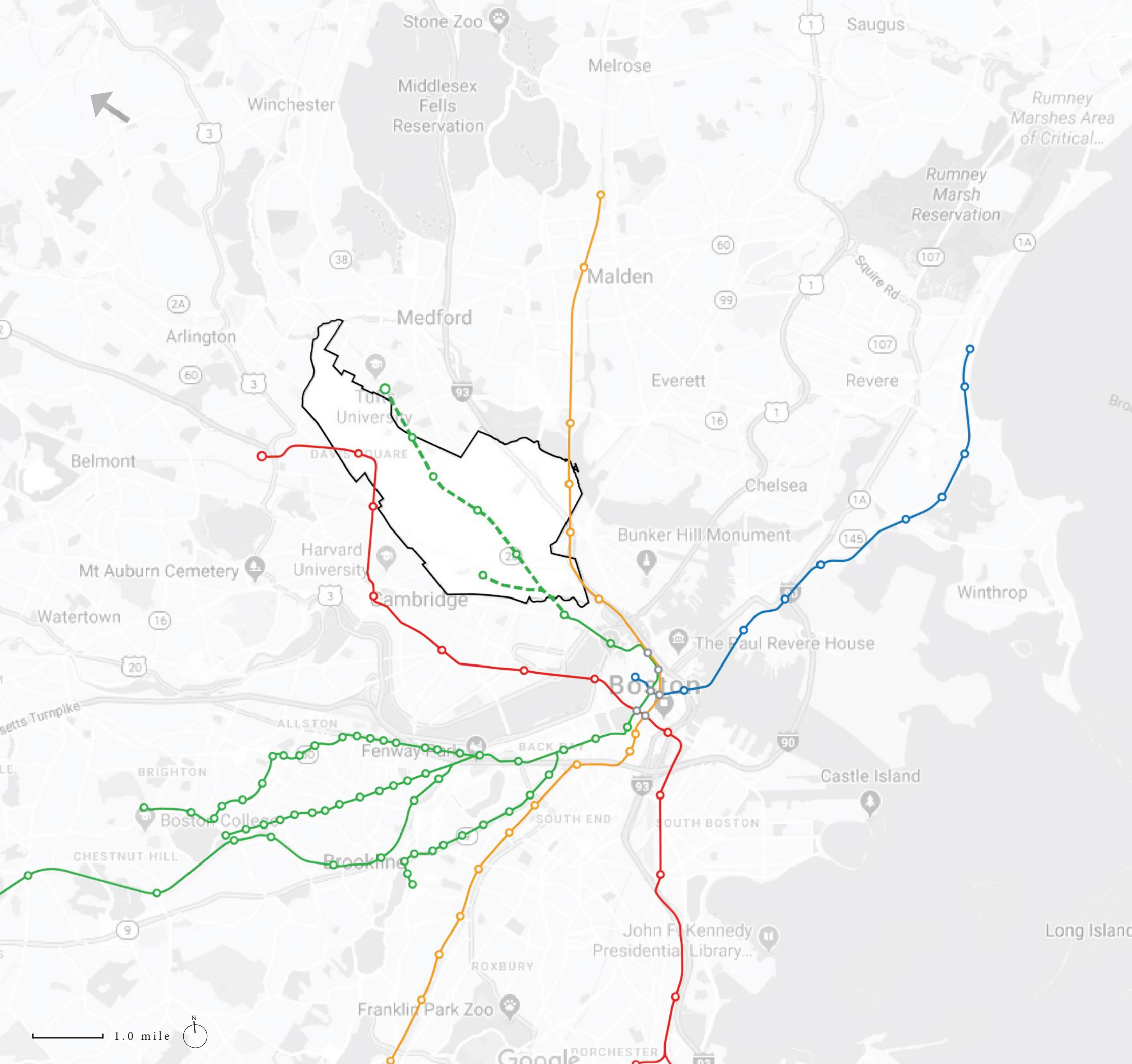


Peter Rose + Partners  
architecture | urban design

# GILMAN SQUARE URBAN STUDY



## GILMAN SQUARE URBAN STUDY

Previously, MBTA's subway system served Somerville solely on the periphery.

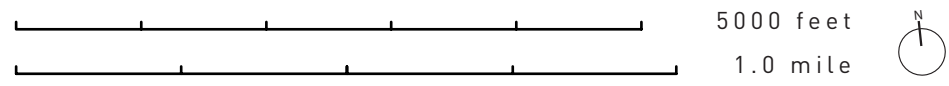
Currently under construction, the Green Line Extension is about to vastly change Somerville's connectivity to the greater Boston area.

The majority of Somerville residents will be within a half mile of a subway stop.

# GILMAN SQUARE URBAN STUDY



Zooming in....



# GILMAN SQUARE URBAN STUDY

Somerville Squares

Red and Orange T Lines

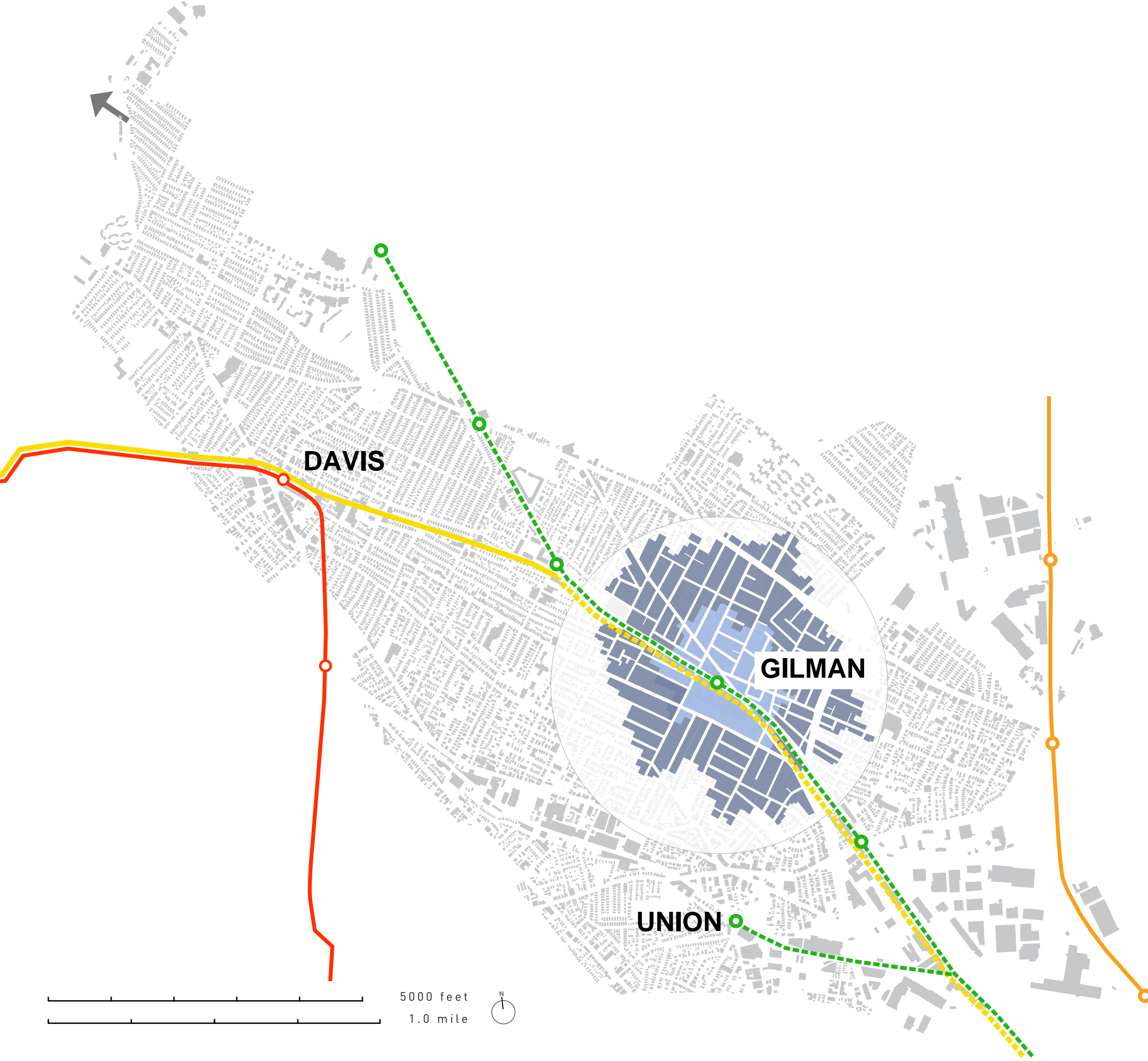
New Green Line

Community Path **[yellow line]**

1/2 Miles Radius **[circle]**

5 Minute Walk **[light blue]**

10 Minute Walk **[dark blue]**



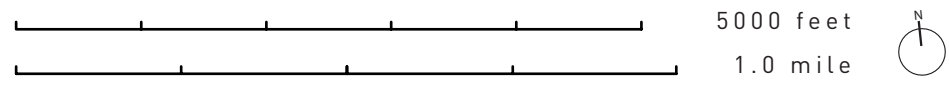
Centrally located, Gilman Square is adjacent to several civic buildings, including City Hall, the main branch of the Public Library, and Somerville High School. With this new connection, it has the opportunity to become a vibrant part of the city.

Source: Gilman Square Neighborhood Plan

# GILMAN SQUARE URBAN STUDY

- Somerville Squares
- Red and Orange T Lines
- New Green Line
- Community Path
- 1/2 Miles Radius
- 5 Minute Walk
- 10 Minute Walk
- Gilman Square**

Zooming in again....

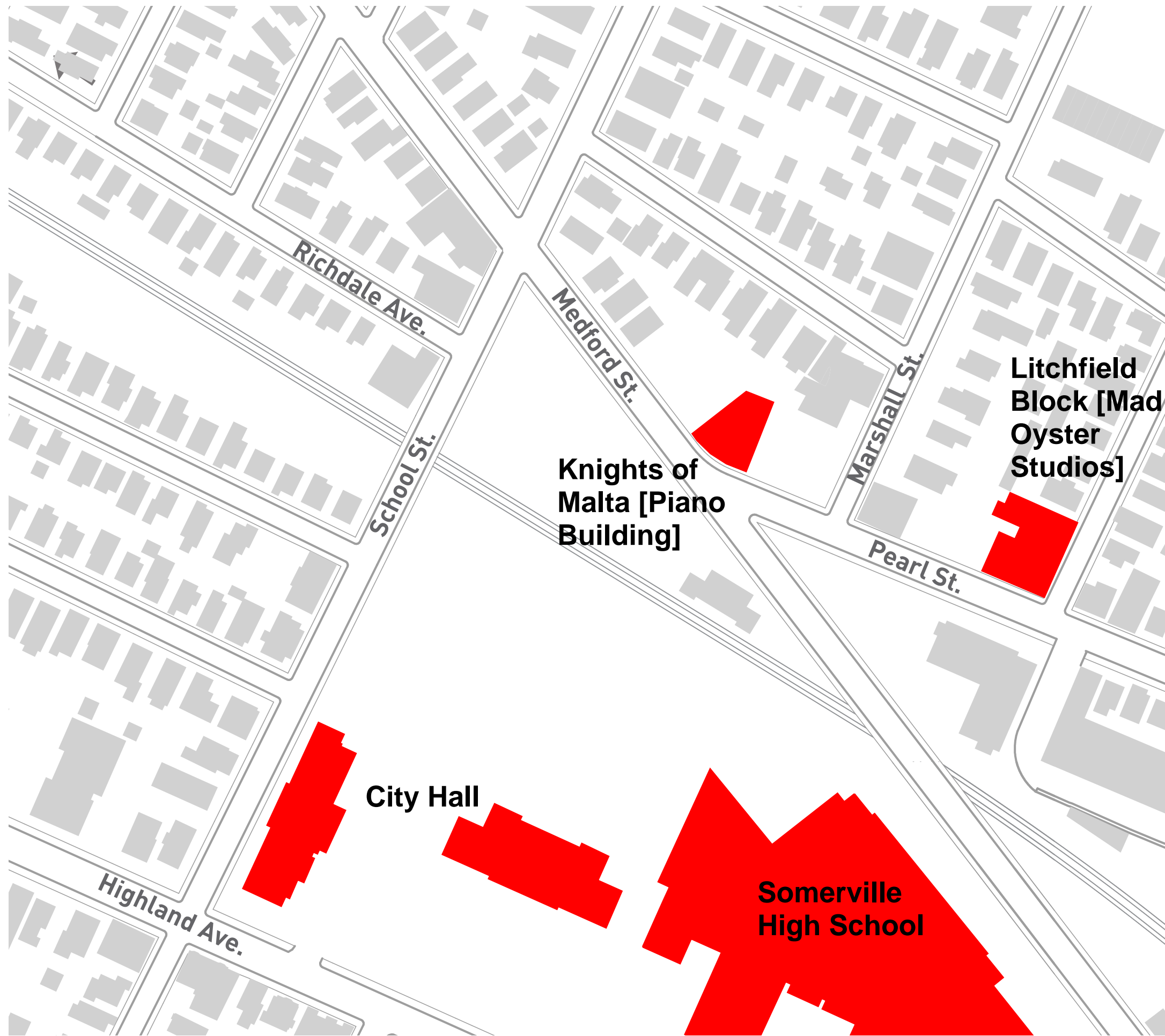


# GILMAN SQUARE

## Site Topography



The steepness of Central Hill presents itself as both a challenge and an opportunity.



## LANDMARKS

Historic Buildings  
[and Somerville High School]



**Knights of Malta [Piano Building]**



**City Hall**



**Litchfield Block [Mad Oyster Studios]**

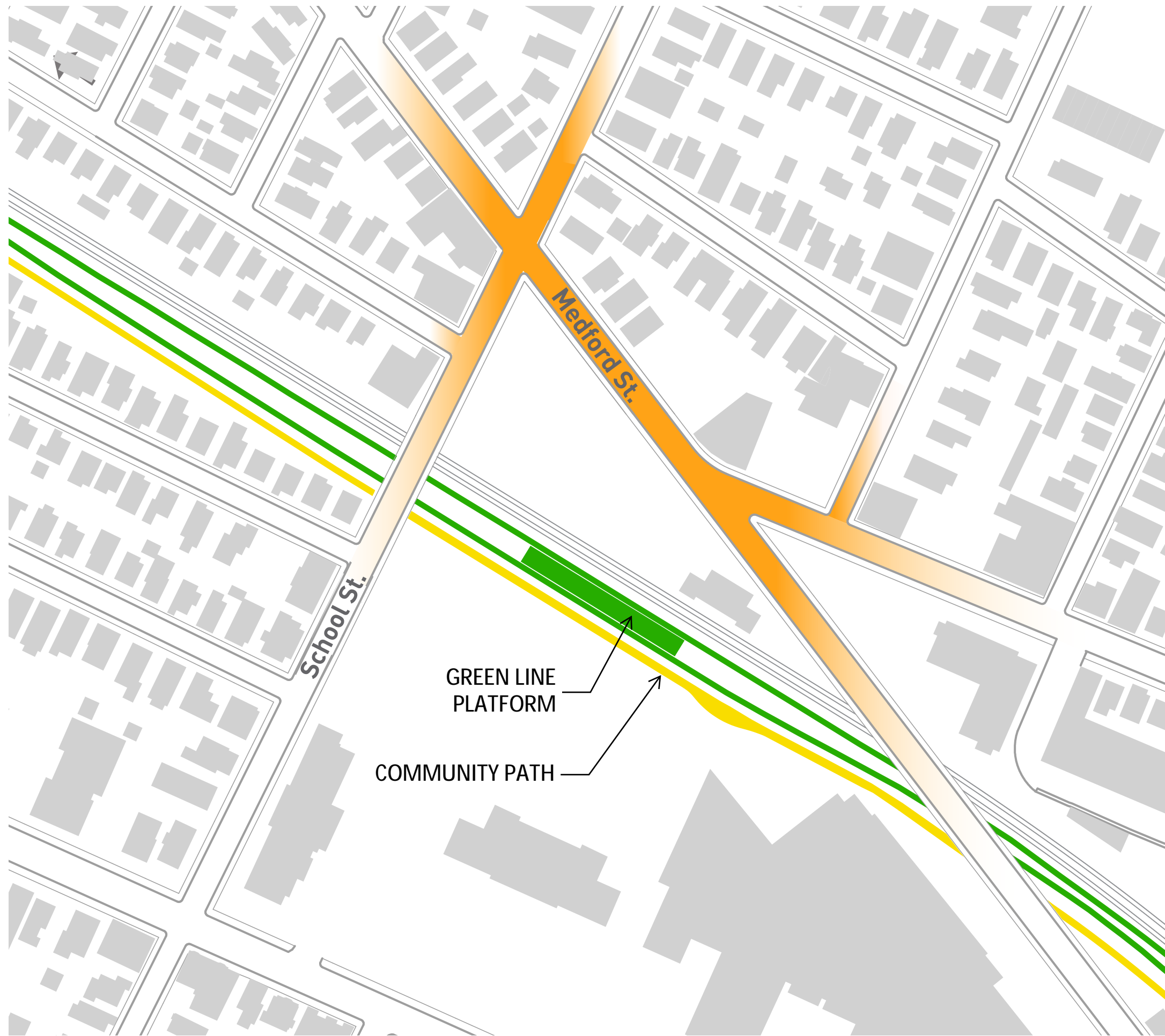
## GREEN AND COMMUTER LINES



The Commuter Line (purple) will be placed to the north of the Green Line track, making at-grade access to the Green Line not possible.

The Green Line platform is planned to be accessed from School Street and the commuter path (green dots), but does not provide direct access from Medford Street.





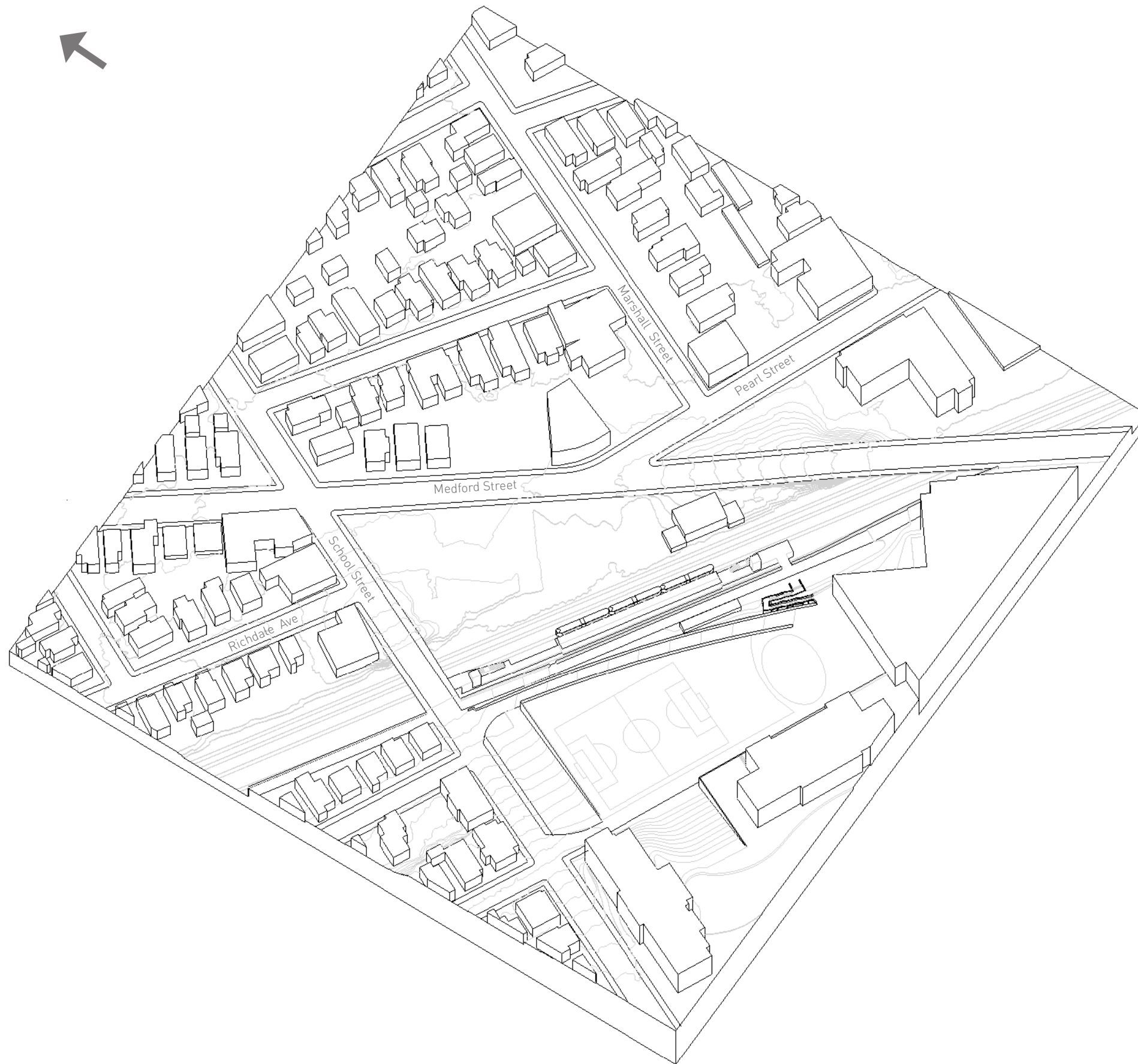
## ACTIVE STREETScape

Medford Street has the potential to become a vibrant, active street w/ restaurants, cafes, shops and public amenities.

IT IS A DETRIMENT TO BOTH THE STREET AND THE GREEN LINE THAT A DIRECT CONNECTION DOES NOT EXIST.

The T will draw a large number of people, who can then sustain the businesses and the life of the street.

**WHEN AN ACTIVE PUBLIC REALM CONNECTS TO THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT THAT SERVES IT, THE RECIPROCAL BENEFITS TO EACH ARE SUBSTANTIAL.**



## Existing conditions

While the areas surrounding the square are densely packed with typical Somerville double- and triple-deckers, the square itself has several vacant sites.

## A CASE FOR DENSITY [PLEASE READ!]:

Our city and many other major urban areas are suffering from a housing shortage, which is driving prices up, and creating a **CRISIS** in the **AFFORDABILITY** of housing. Many families who have called Somerville their home for decades are driven out.

Another **CRISIS** is the **ENVIRONMENTAL** one. The scientific community agrees that we urgently need to reduce carbon emissions or we risk irreversible changes.

The **GREEN LINE EXTENSION** is **REALLY IMPORTANT** and we believe that public transit is essential to democracy. It provides the ability to move freely and inexpensively. It unlocks access to good jobs without the costs of owning a car, or without having to sit in 2 hours of traffic every day. It's about providing a good quality of life and good opportunities for ALL.

Given the affordable housing and environmental crises we face and the importance and benefits of easy access to public transit, we propose that areas directly adjacent to the T stop should be made as dense as possible. This will provide more housing, more jobs, and more easy connections to jobs in other parts of the city. Also, this will encourage people to use the public transit, benefiting the environment by taking cars off the streets and benefiting the public transit authority through increased ridership.

## A CASE FOR DENSITY [CONTINUED]:

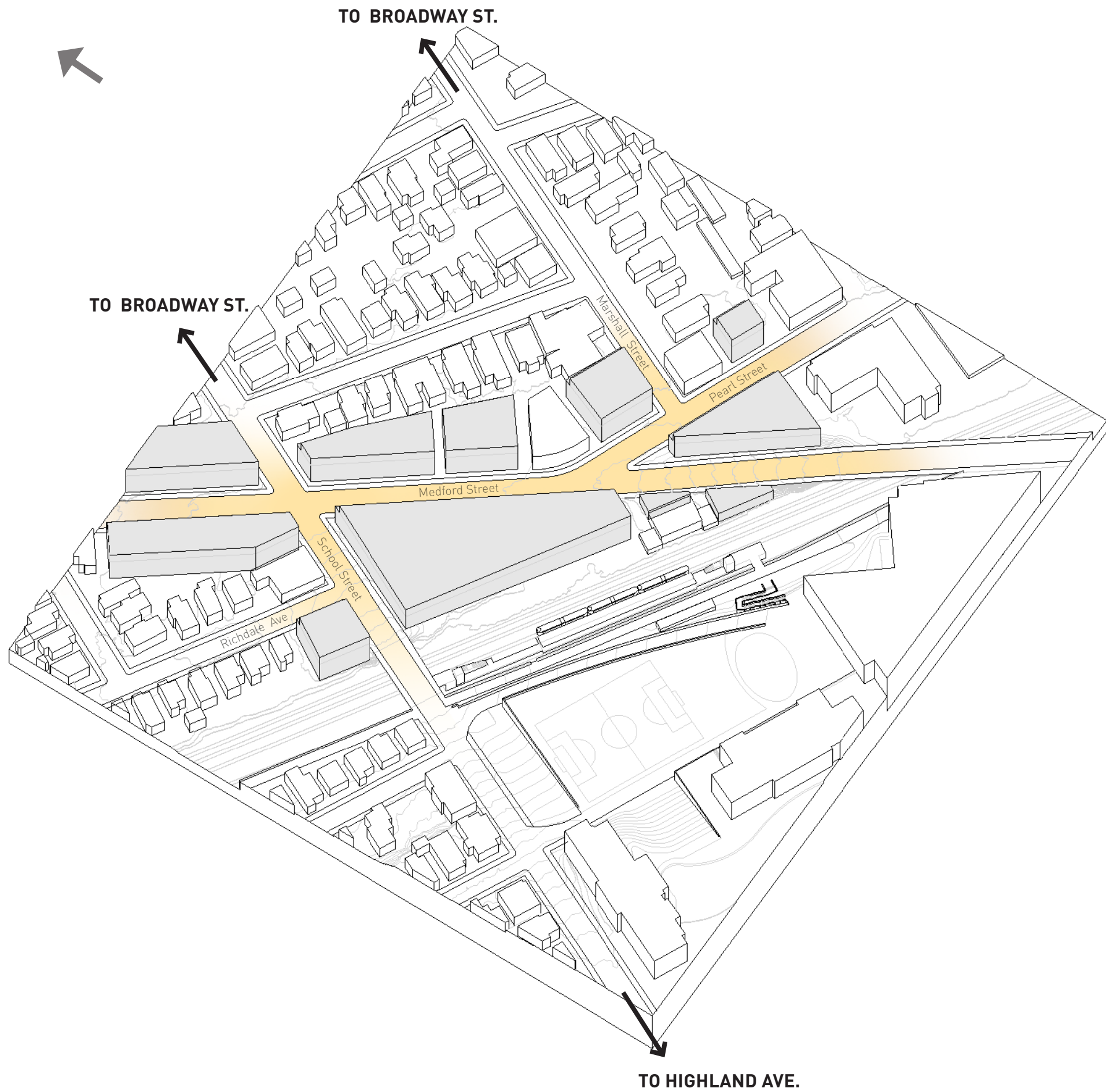
And most importantly, by our calculations (which assume some areas along Medford would become denser, though that would be solely up to those owners and may happen gradually), the square as proposed should be able to **ADD as many as 100 UNITS OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING**, simply by following the existing zoning requirements.

# BUT!

## WE MUST CONSIDER THE PUBLIC REALM FIRST!

We have to strategically plan the public and green spaces so they provide the greatest benefit to the residents.

We have a lot to gain if we carefully masterplan. There's immense potential in this place, and the pages that follow illustrate an urban design scheme that addresses and considers all challenges, incorporates the neighborhood mission, values, and visioning, and proposes a way of organizing the Homans site to create a connection to the T and a public realm that is sun-filled, green, vibrant, and flexible for many uses and events.



- Existing condition
- Vacant sites
- Buildings
- Future sites
- Buildings
- Areas

## Active streetscape

To the left is a three-dimensional illustration of potential areas of density (new buildings in grey), which revisits the idea that Medford Street has the opportunity to become an active street, full of life.



- Existing condition
- Vacant sites
- Buildings
- Future sites
- Buildings
- Areas
- Active streetscape

## Urban landscape

A high-quality urban landscape is essential. Beautiful, tree-lined streets would be lovely to walk through, and the benefit of sunshade in the summer will be immense. The benefits of street trees are innumerable.

Also, the T platform is highlighted in yellow, further showing the disconnect from the street life.



- Existing condition
- Vacant sites
- Buildings
- Future sites
- Buildings
- Areas
- Active streetscape
- Urban landscape

## Green line T stop (platform)

Zooming in again...



- Existing condition
- Vacant sites
- Buildings
- Future sites
- Buildings
- Areas
- Active streetscape
- Urban landscape
- Green line T stop

## Mid-block to platform

Current proposal - 650'

Currently, a center-point on Medford Street is a significant distance from the T platform, made to seem longer than its actual length as a consequence of being steep.

In addition, School Street's steepness does not meet ADA accessibility standards (it is close to it, but slightly over).

This would be a very difficult, if not impossible, climb for anyone with accessibility issues.





- Existing condition
- Vacant sites
- Buildings
- Future sites
- Buildings
- Areas
- Active streetscape
- Urban landscape
- Green line T stop

## Mid-block to platform

Current proposal - 650'

Alternate proposal - 350'

Our proposal is to directly connect Medford Street with the platform through a public square and a park.

This would be a connection of one center of activity to another (the lively street to the active T platform). The benefit here is **SUBSTANTIAL** for both.

The businesses on Medford would receive the foot traffic of the T, adding to their commercial viability and continued vitality.



- Existing condition
- Vacant sites
- Buildings
- Future sites
- Buildings
- Areas
- Active streetscape
- Urban landscape
- Green line T stop
- Mid-block to platform

## Civic square

**6,394 sf**

The square [in yellow] could be a series of terraces, that gently and accessibly bring one up through the space. Potentially composed of 3 levels, each with 4 large trees, the space would be ideal for summer and winter markets, public art, performances, public events, or simply sitting on a table or bench and eating ice cream. The activities that could happen here are countless.



- Existing condition
- Vacant sites
- Buildings
- Future sites
- Buildings
- Areas
- Active streetscape
- Urban landscape
- Green line T stop
- Mid-block to platform
- Civic square

## Linear park

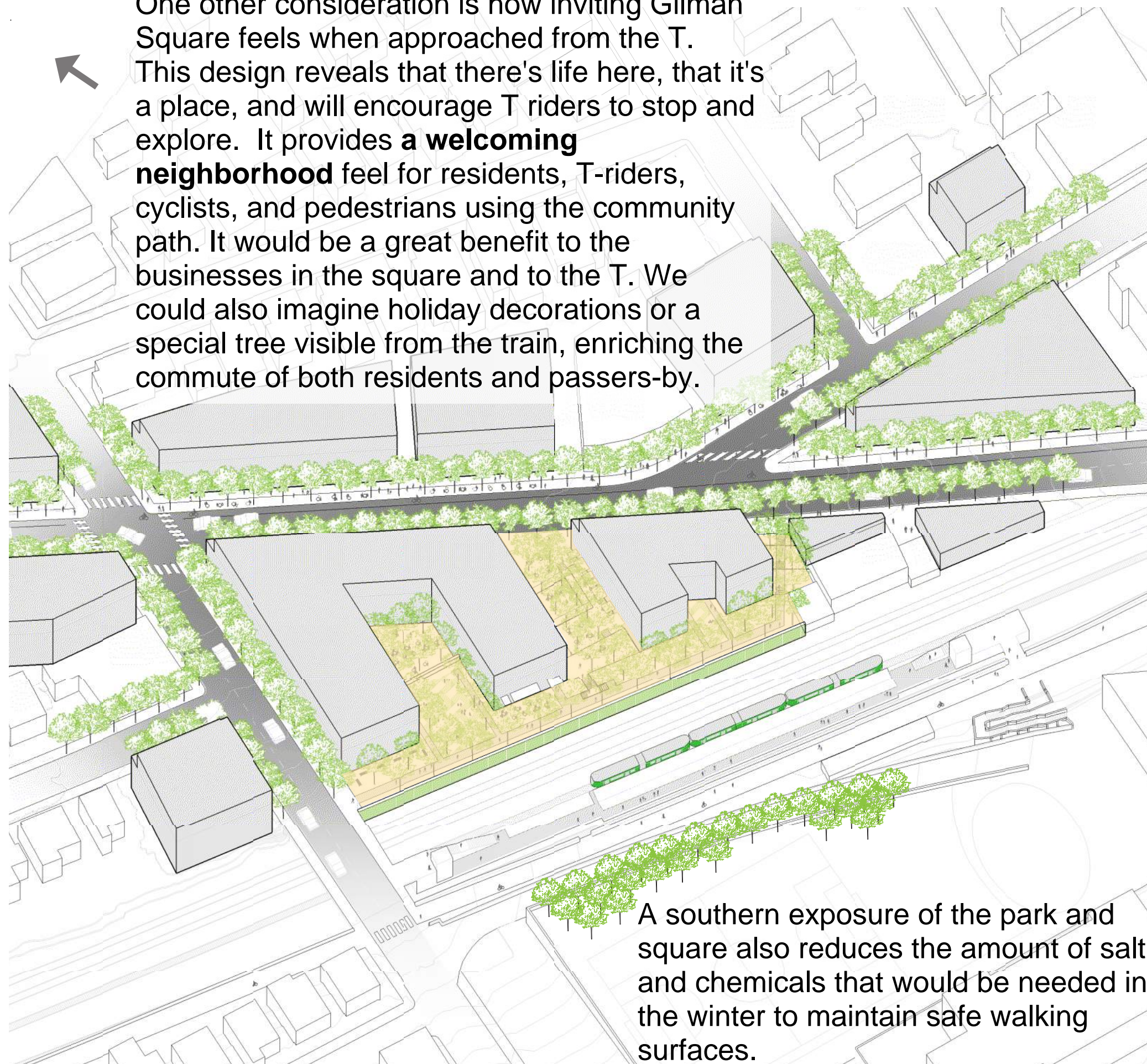
**17,530 sf**

An elevated linear park on the south side of the buildings would provide a **SUN-FILLED, BEAUTIFUL PATH** for all.

The linear park connects pocket parks, which could be conceived as grass or planted.

Due to the topography of the site and Central Hill, the park is on the same level as School Street and one level above Medford Street. From Medford St, as the public square rises through the series of terraces, it meets the park through an easy stair (and an elevator for accessibility).

One other consideration is how inviting Gilman Square feels when approached from the T. This design reveals that there's life here, that it's a place, and will encourage T riders to stop and explore. It provides a **welcoming neighborhood** feel for residents, T-riders, cyclists, and pedestrians using the community path. It would be a great benefit to the businesses in the square and to the T. We could also imagine holiday decorations or a special tree visible from the train, enriching the commute of both residents and passers-by.



- Existing condition
- Vacant sites
- Buildings
- Future sites
- Buildings
- Areas
- Active streetscape
- Urban landscape
- Green line T stop
- Mid-block to platform
- Civic square
- Linear park

## Total open space

**23,924 sf**

\*Existing triangle park is 13,433 sf

The total open space is composed of both green and paved areas.

The orientation of both the park and the square, with the sun in mind, will make them pleasant to be in for the majority of the year, including the winter, when the sun is precious [see Appendix A]. This makes a huge difference in how we feel as we walk to the T. It would also expand the amount of time we feel comfortable being outside, sitting in the cafes and restaurants in the square, increasing this time by a couple of months.

A southern exposure of the park and square also reduces the amount of salt and chemicals that would be needed in the winter to maintain safe walking surfaces.



- Existing condition
- Vacant sites
- Buildings
- Future sites
- Buildings
- Areas
- Active streetscape
- Urban landscape
- Green line T stop
- Mid-block to platform
- Civic square
- Linear park

## Bridge

The linear park would connect to the platform through a convenient and beautiful bridge.

Imagine a cafe at the end of the bridge (in the building), where one can get a cup of coffee or stay warm in the winter, and quickly get to the platform a couple of minutes before the train arrives.



- Existing condition
- Vacant sites
- Buildings
- Future sites
- Buildings
- Areas
- Active streetscape
- Urban landscape
- Green line T stop
- Mid-block to platform
- Civic square
- Linear park
- Bridge

## Ground floor retail frontage

A significant amount of ground floor retail could be added to the square.

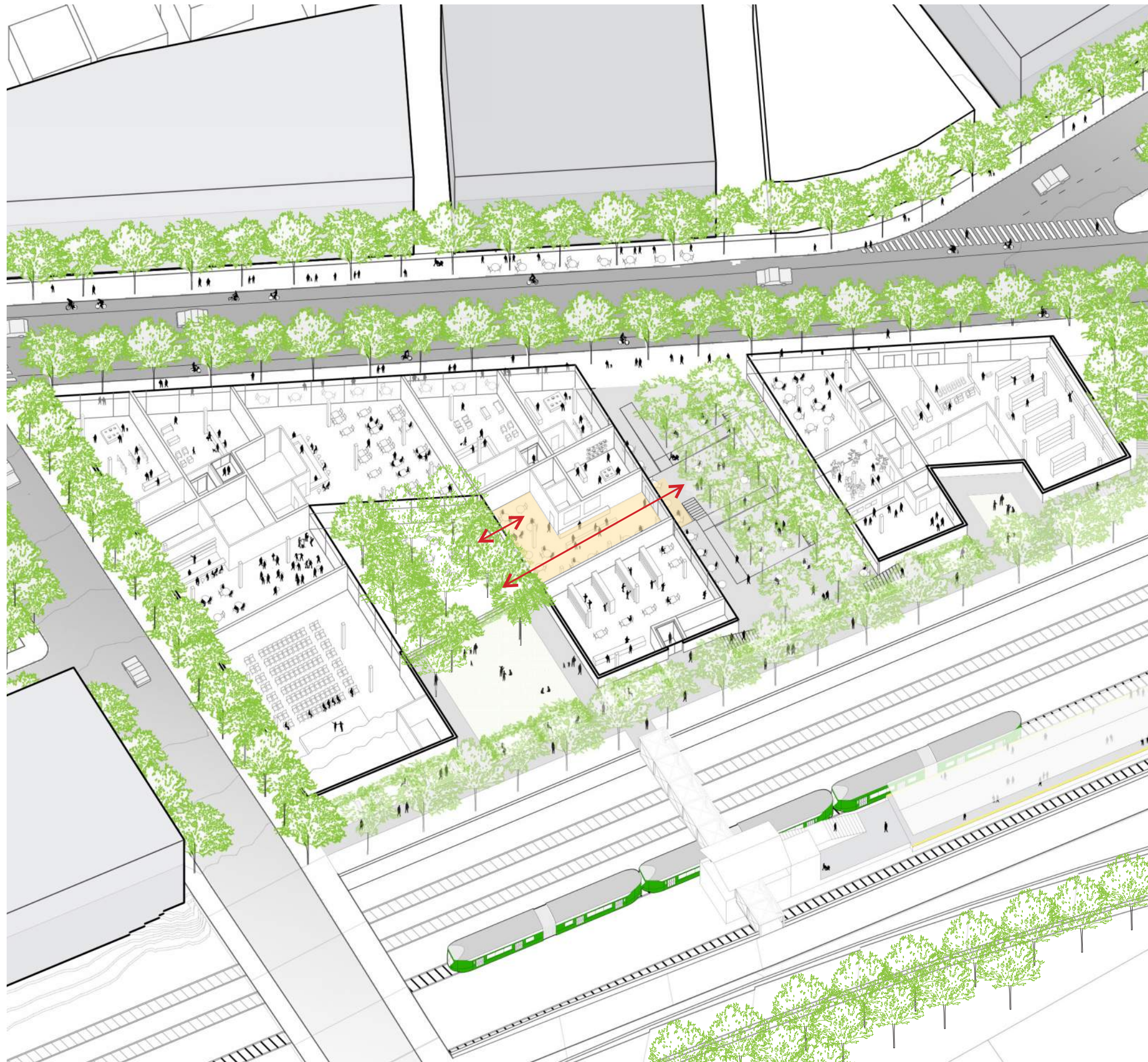
This also assumes that a significant amount of the new building square-footage will be allocated to commercial space. This benefits the retail on the ground floor by providing for an 18-hour day of activity, so our favorite lunch and dinner spots would be just as busy during the weekday, as they would be on the weekend, making those businesses successful. GSNA is working very hard to ensure we will have local businesses in square.



- Existing condition
- Vacant sites
- Buildings
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- Areas
- Active streetscape
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- Green line T stop
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- Bridge

## Ground floor retail

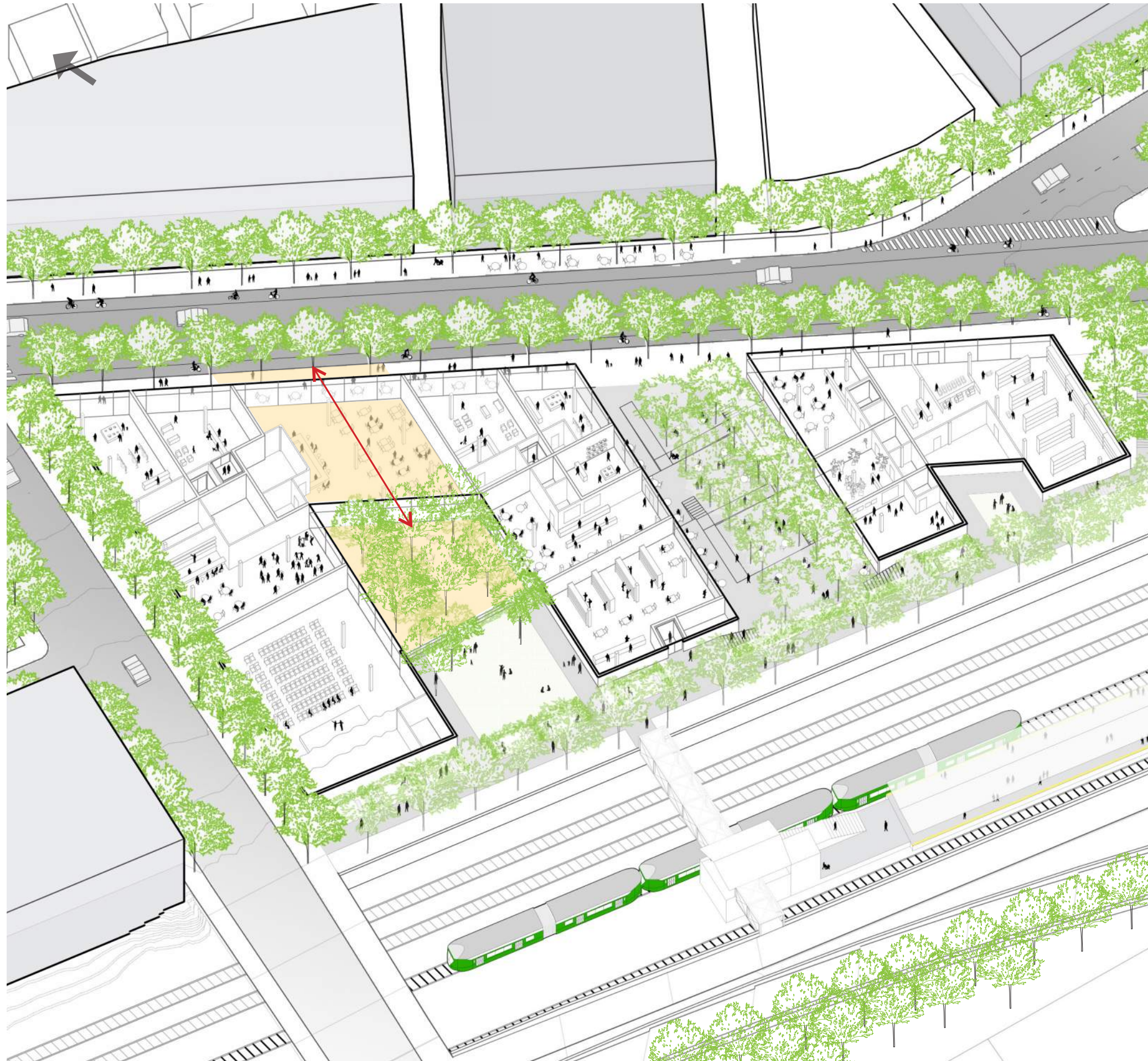
The retail would serve all aspects of the public realm - the street, the square, and the linear park - and it would be further activated and energized by the foot traffic provided by the T.



- Existing condition
- Vacant sites
- Buildings
- Future sites
- Buildings
- Areas
- Active streetscape
- Urban landscape
- Green line T stop
- Mid-block to platform
- Civic square
- Linear park
- Bridge

## Ground floor retail





- Existing condition
- Vacant sites
- Buildings
- Future sites
- Buildings
- Areas
- Active streetscape
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- Mid-block to platform
- Civic square
- Linear park
- Bridge

## Ground floor retail

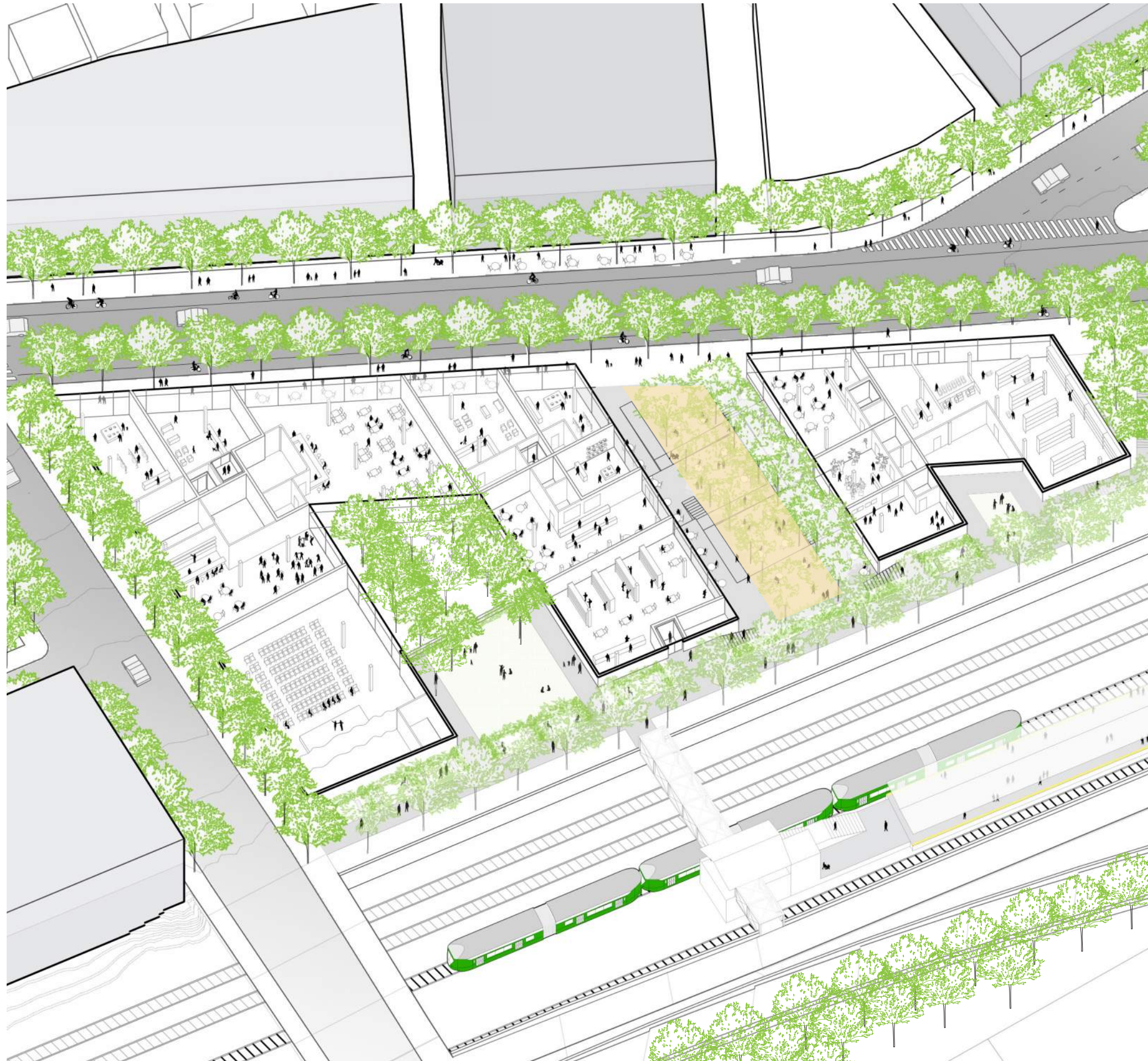
An outdoor area that is level with the street but sunken from the elevated park could become a beautiful courtyard with trees further expanding the outdoor space for a great restaurant.



- Existing condition
- Vacant sites
- Buildings
- Future sites
- Buildings
- Areas
- Active streetscape
- Urban landscape
- Green line T stop
- Mid-block to platform
- Civic square
- Linear park
- Bridge

## Ground floor retail

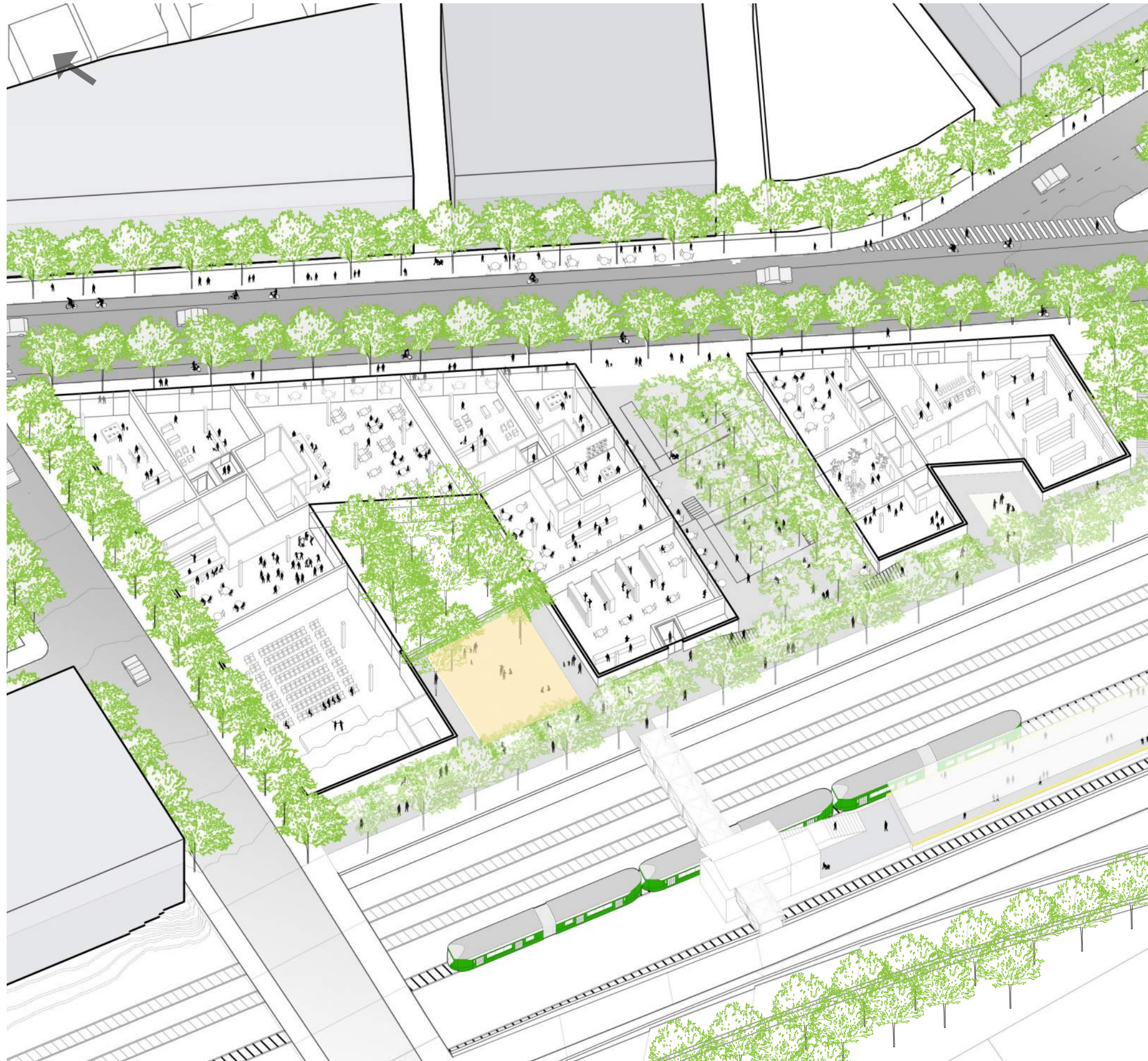
The space highlighted in yellow could be on the level of the park, and be a home to the coffee shop we mentioned previously - convenient to the T and a warm refuge in the winter.



## Civic square scenarios



Public art, markets, and activities are only a few examples of what is possible in the square.



## Pocket park scenarios



## Section Through the Homans Site

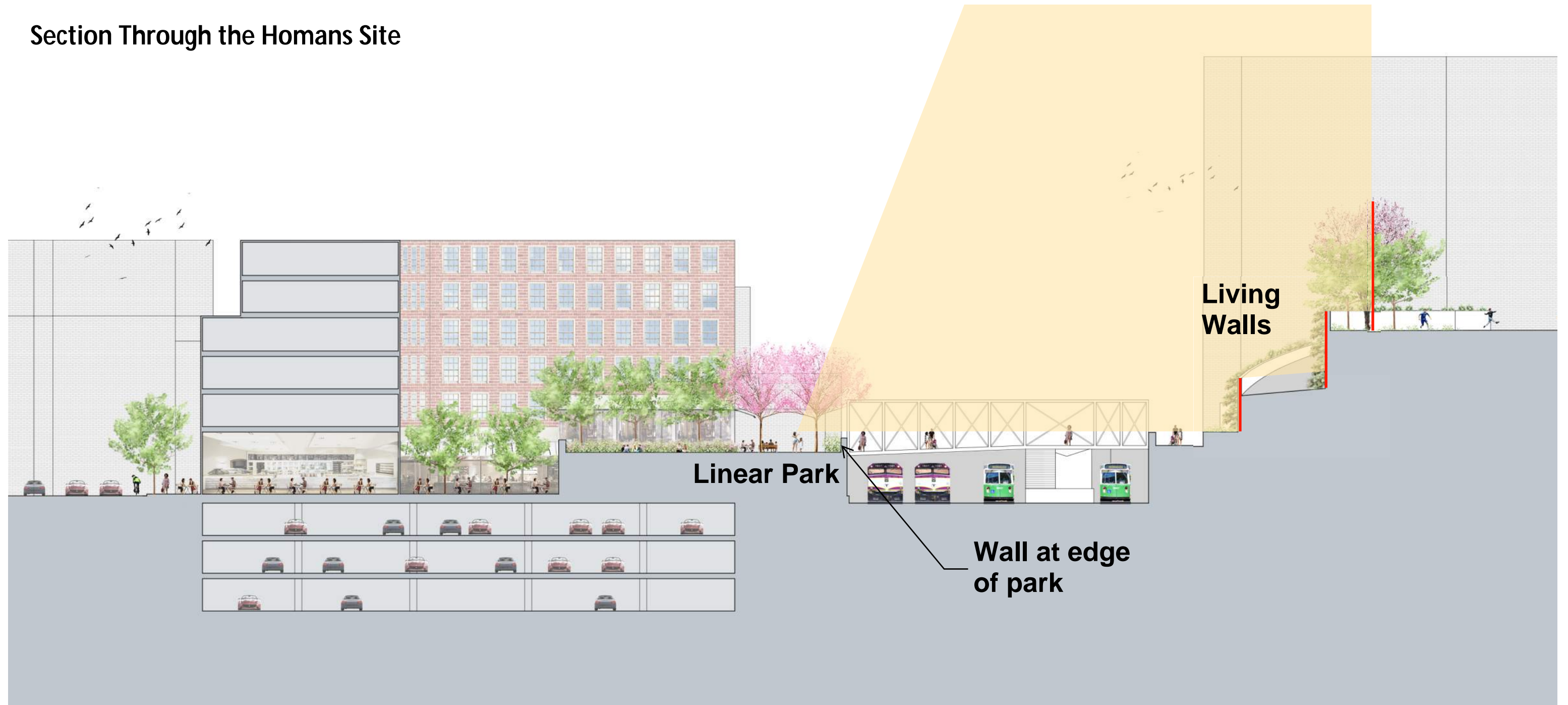


Neighborhood Parking

We may consider parking under these buildings and parks, if possible (this may not be, given the granite recently discovered nearby). It would serve the community, the teachers at the high school, and the businesses in the area. Neighborhood parking is a concept borrowed from Europe, where these are often found under urban parks. The neighborhoods still largely rely on public transit, but it relieves the pressure on buildings and streets to provide parking [the streets often don't have parking spaces]



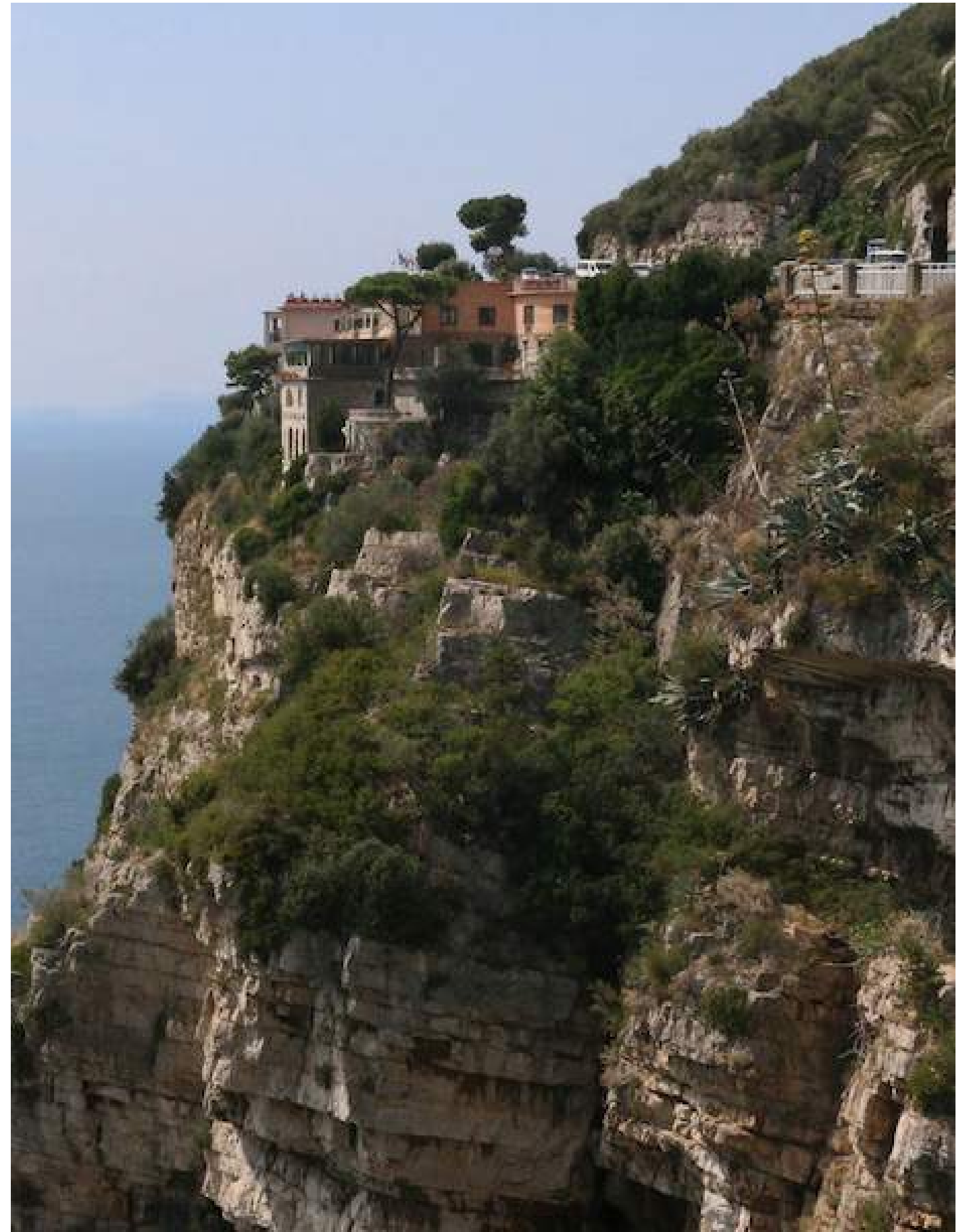
## Section Through the Homans Site



Locating the park to the south also provides an opportunity to expand its perceived size. The walls that retain Central Hill should be made beautiful and thought of as living walls. The amount of sky would also vastly expand, making the park feel spacious, reaching far beyond its physical constraints.

On the Homans side, a wall at the edge of the park would block the trains from view. In a few years, the trains will be electric and quiet.





**Examples of living walls - natural and man-made**



Highlighted in yellow is the restaurant space and its tree filled outdoor courtyard. Sunken from the elevated parks, it could be an lovely neighborhood space.

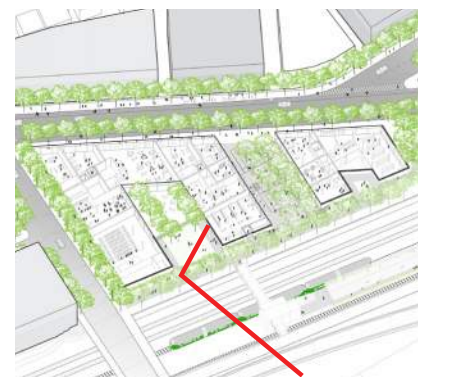






A tree-lined stroll on the way to the T, showing the cafe, the bridge, and a partial view of the pocket park. The living walls retaining the edge of Central Hill will vastly expand the perceived space and size of the park.

A beautiful wall would block the trains from view [unless one walks to the edge]. In a few years, the trains will be electric and quiet.

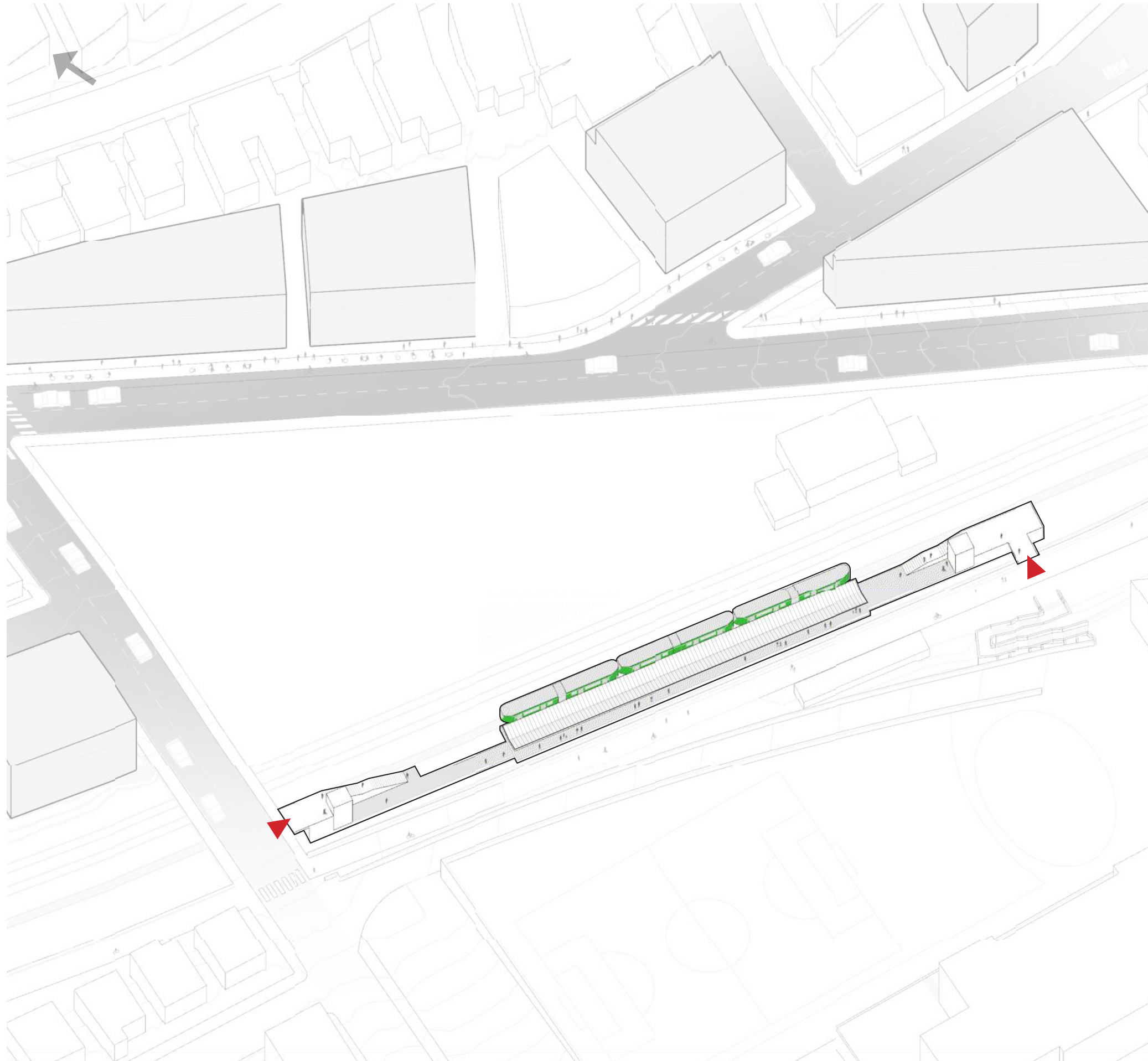




A public square, gently terraced and a series of ramps and alternate stairs provide an easy and lively journey to the T for all.

The terraces could be filled with public art, used for seasonal markets, neighborhood activities, performances, and many other uses. Some could be filled with public seating, not associated with a business.



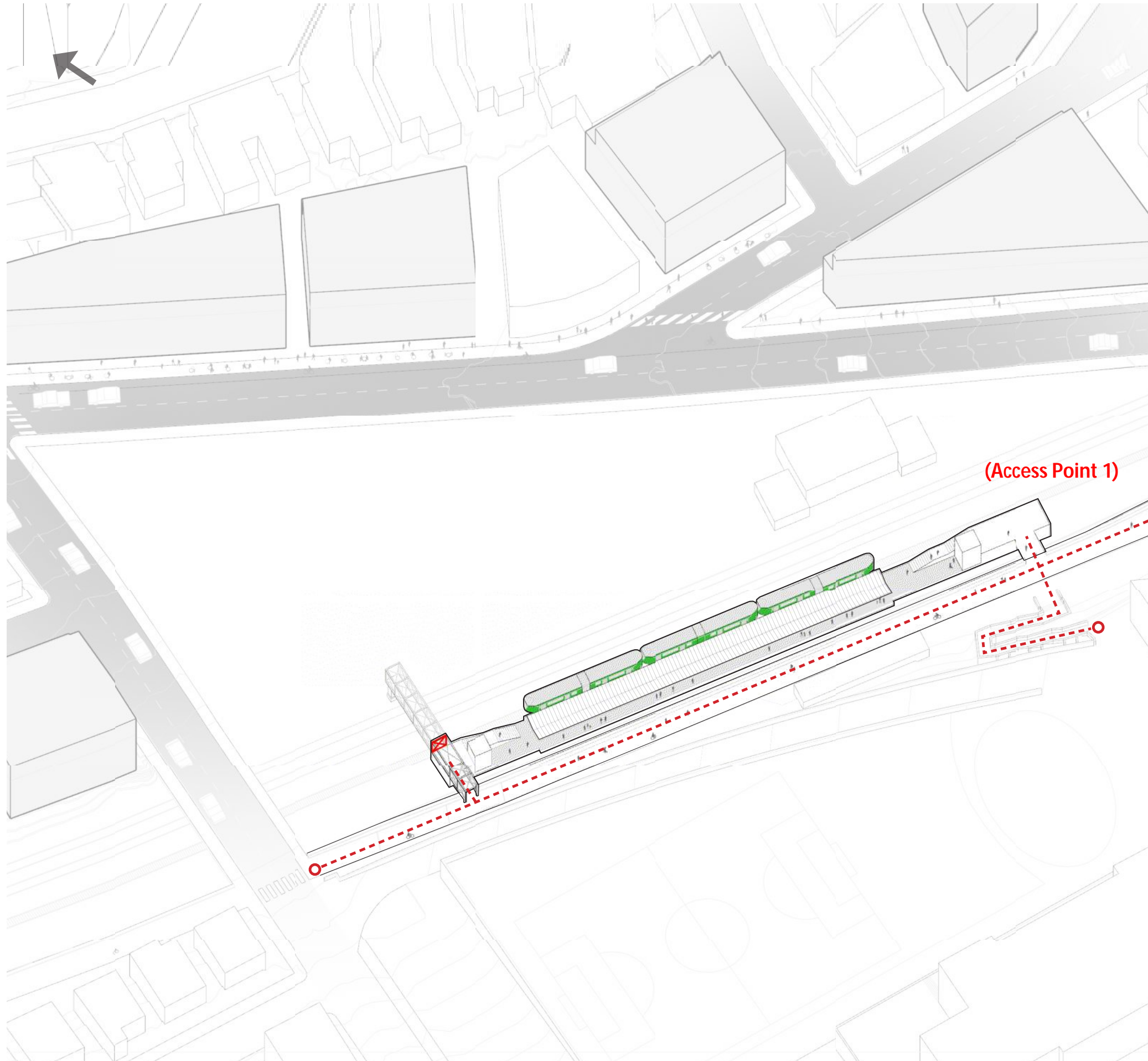


## Green Line T Station

MBTA proposal

Points of entry

This slide shows the current design for T access.



## Green Line T Station

Alternate proposal

Shift platform 15 feet

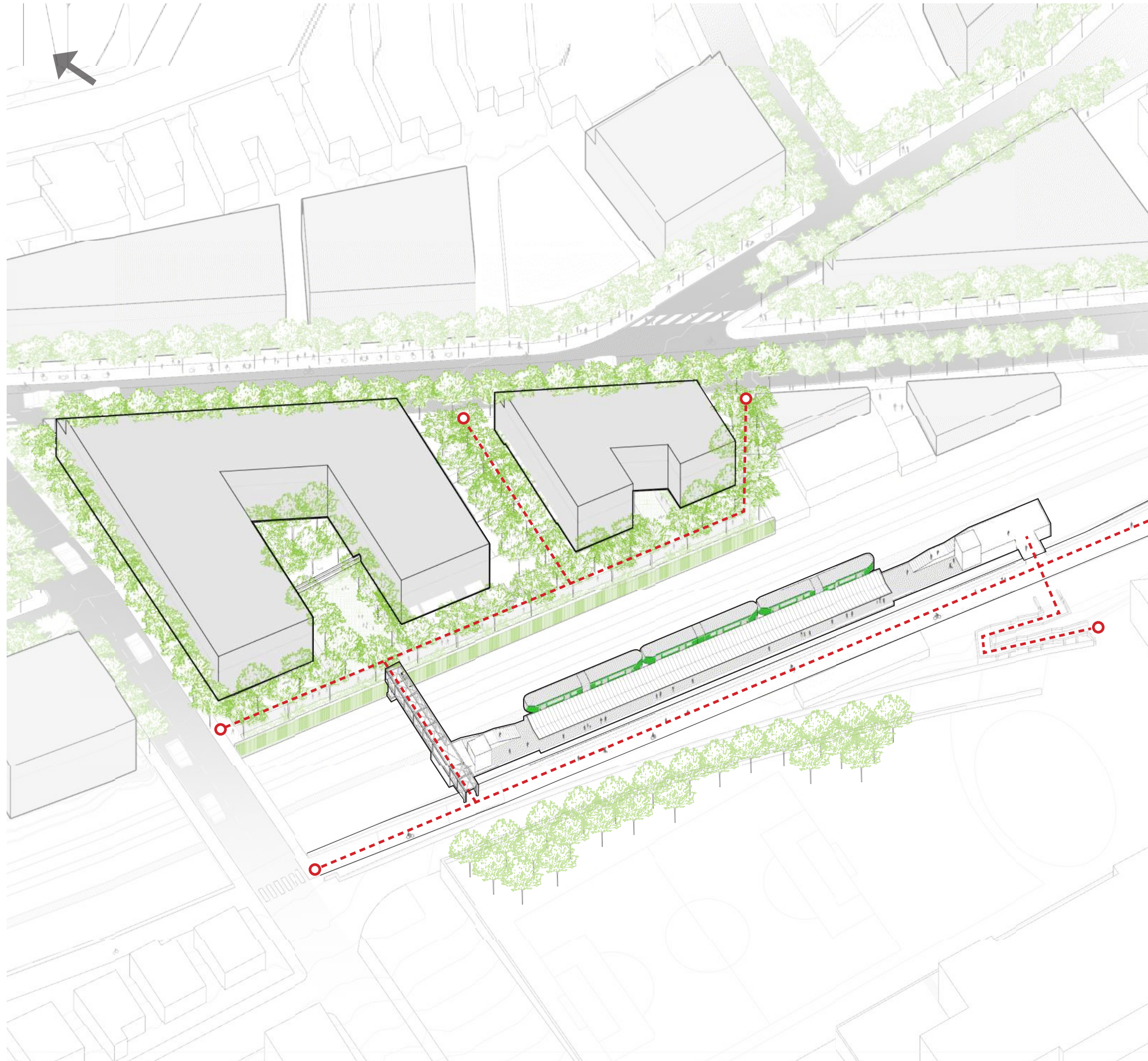
Community path

Operation prior to development

### HOW THIS MIGHT BE MADE POSSIBLE:

To get buy-in from the MBTA and GLX, they could replicate and mirror the design for the access at the bottom of the school stairs (Access Point 1)

Prior to the development of the Homans site, the access to the T would be similar to how it is planned now, from School St.



## Green Line T Station

Alternate proposal

Shift platform 15 feet

Community path

Operation prior to development

Operation after development

### HOW THIS MIGHT BE MADE POSSIBLE [cont.]:

Once the Homans site is in development, the developer and/or the city could connect a short bridge across.

## WRAP-UP THOUGHTS:

With the addition of the T stop and the new High School building, Gilman Square is in the process of changing substantially. The critical mass of the two projects and proximity of City Hall establishes Gilman Square as a place of civic importance. The study prioritizes affordability and environmental crises while carefully considering connectivity, public space, green space, commercial vitality, multiple modes of transit, and the community's needs and dreams. The goal of the study is to provide some sense of how development on the Homans site might be shaped and configured to make Gilman even better - for the public, for the city, for the businesses, for the public transit, and even for the developers. The more economically viable this project becomes, the more developers can invest in the public realm, which will benefit us, the neighborhood. Beautiful parks and public squares can become a reality!

Thank you for taking a look! We welcome any feedback on this study and look forward to discussing it further.

# APPENDIX A



June 21

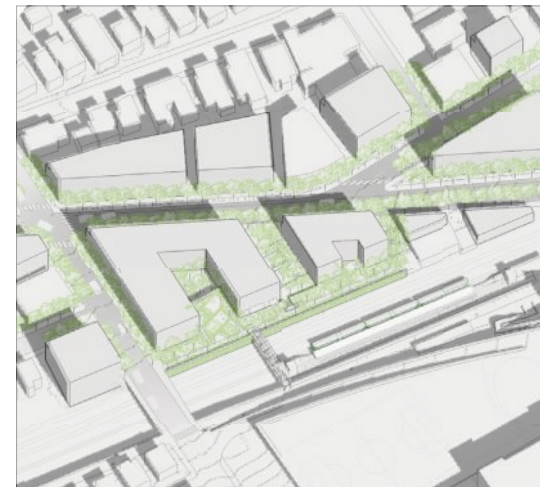
March 21 / September 21

December 21

9:00 am



1:00 pm



5:00 pm



- Existing condition
- Vacant sites
- Buildings
- Future sites
- Buildings
- Areas
- Active streetscape
- Urban landscape
- Green line T stop
- Street to platform
- Civic square
- Linear park
- Bridge
- Ground floor commercial/cultural space
- Data of proposed study

## Sun study

**At 1:00 pm, the civic plaza, the linear park, and the pocket parks along the linear park are all sunny in all seasons.**

**The linear park is in the sun all-day, all seasons.**

**At least one side of the sidewalk on Medford Street is sunny most of the time.**