



# CITY COUNCIL

## ROUNDTABLE/WORKING MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Monday, December 12, 2022

5:00 PM

Sullivan Chamber  
795 Massachusetts Avenue  
Cambridge, MA 02139

### Roundtable/Working City Council Meeting to discuss Open Space Planning and Programming including the Public Space Lab

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Burhan Azeem	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Dennis J. Carlone	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Alanna Mallon	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Marc C. McGovern	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Patricia Nolan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
E. Denise Simmons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5:42 PM
Paul F. Toner	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Quinton Zondervan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sumbul Siddiqui	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5:29 PM

A communication was received from City Manager Yi-An Huang, transmitting the Agenda for the Roundtable/Working City Council Meeting to discuss Open Space Planning and Programming including the Public Space Lab.

**RESULT: PLACED ON FILE**

A communication was received from City Manager Yi-An Huang, transmitting a presentation regarding The Future of Open Space.

**RESULT: PLACED ON FILE**

Minutes Acceptance: Minutes of Dec 12, 2022 5:00 PM (Submission of the Record)

## MINUTES OF THE CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL ROUNDTABLE/WORKING MEETING

**Monday, December 12, 2022**

A roundtable/working meeting of the Cambridge City Council was held on Monday, December 12, 2022. The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by the Honorable Vice Mayor Mallon. Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2022 adopted by Massachusetts General Assembly and approved by the Governor, this public meeting was hybrid, allowing participation in person, in the Sullivan Chamber, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA and by remote participation via zoom.

**The Chair, Vice Mayor Mallon called the meeting to order and asked the Clerk to call the roll.**

**City Clerk LeBlanc called the roll.**

Councillor Burhan Azeem – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Dennis J. Carlone – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Vice Mayor Alanna M. Mallon – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Marc C. McGovern – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Patricia Nolan – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor E. Denise Simmons – Absent \*

Councillor Paul Toner – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Quinton Y. Zondervan – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui – Absent\*\*

**Present-7. Absent-2. Quorum established.**

**\*Councillor Simmons joined at 5:42 p.m. and was remote.**

**\*\*Mayor Siddiqui joined at 5:29 p.m. and was present in the Sullivan Chamber.**

The Chair, Vice Mayor Mallon led the Council in the Pledge of Allegiance and called for a moment of silence.

The Chair, Vice Mayor Mallon stated that pursuant to City Council Rule 24 C2, this is a roundtable/working meeting and there shall be no public comment. The Chair, Vice Mayor Mallon further noted that written comments will be accepted and made part of the record of the roundtable meeting and the opportunity for the public to make oral comments on items discussed at this meeting shall be at the regular meeting at which the item may be considered for action by the City Council.

The Chair, Vice Mayor Mallon stated that this roundtable meeting is to discuss the City's Open Space Planning and Programming including the Public Space Lab.

The Chair, Vice Mayor Mallon acknowledged City Manager Yi-An Huang and his team including Deputy City Manager Owen O'Riordan, Public Works Commissioner Kathy Watkins, and from CDD, Assistant City Manager Iram Farooq, Melissa Peters, Gary Chan, and Play Space Specialist Dan Wolf.

Minutes Acceptance: Minutes of Dec 12, 2022 5:00 PM (Submission of the Record)

Melissa Peters made opening remarks regarding the content of the formal presentation that was available to the public online, in the Sullivan Chamber and shown on screen. Melissa Peters turned it over to Gary Chan who covered the information provided in slides 8-38. The remaining slides were presented by Dan Wolf. A copy of the presentation, titled “The Future of Open Space, Open Space Roundtable, December 12, 2022” is attached to these minutes.

The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui thanked staff for the presentation and recognized Councillor Zondervan for comments and questions. Councillor Zondervan noted the need to create more open space which is a challenge given the density of the City which is already mostly built up and asked if staff had any creative ideas to accomplish this. CDD responded that they look at areas of the City where the need is greatest and to identify opportunities for acquisition, ways to make existing open space more accessible, and the potential to create open space through partnership with private entities. Councillor Zondervan also asked if we are looking at ways to better utilize existing open spaces to allow more activities to take place on them noting in particular the potential to do more on a golf course. CDD responded that they are looking at site specific opportunities and again focusing on the areas of the City where the need is the greatest.

The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui recognized Councillor Carlone who thanked CDD for a very good presentation that conveyed a lot of information and impressive analysis. Councillor Carlone noted that this was his favorite topic, and that public space is the soul of the City. Councillor Carlone noted the lack of public space in Cambridge and how far below the national average Cambridge is and highlighted his past efforts to create open space in East Cambridge that resulted in 12 additional acres. Councillor Carlone noted that open space has been lost to addressing other needs such as schools and housing. Councillor Carlone noted several opportunities to purchase property for open space that were missed and commented that he could not remember the last time the City purchased open space. Councillor Carlone also commented on the Alewife Quadrangle and Fresh Pond. Councillor Carlone noted that in certain neighborhoods the priority should be open space not other uses and that the City needs to have a budget to be able to acquire spaces in these areas quickly.

The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui recognized Councillor Nolan who asked how we would be benchmarking and measuring success and also asked about connectivity, and if the City had a policy regarding permeable surfaces. The City team responded and noted that they are focused on connectivity and that in some areas they have porous asphalt but in other areas it could not be done because of the underground utility conflict.

The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui recognized Vice Mayor Mallon who thanked Melissa Peters, Gary Chung and Dan Wolf for the informative presentation and acknowledged all of the work that went into it. Vice Mayor Mallon also acknowledged the work around community engagement to inform the presentation that she described as intense and creative. Vice Mayor Mallon commented on the success of shutting down certain areas to allow pedestrian traffic and asked if CDD was measuring the economic impact of these closures. CDD responded that they have not been measuring the economic impact but can look at this noting that they do not currently have access to sales data and would need to partner with businesses to obtain this. Vice Mayor Mallon stated she appreciated that teens were called out in the conversation noting they are often overlooked and do not have places to go. Vice Mayor Mallon noted that teen girls in particular

need safe spaces to gather with their friends. Lastly, Vice Mayor Mallon asked about streamlining the permitting process.

The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui recognized Councillor Azeem who noted that this was something that all Councillors seemed to agree on. Councillor Azeem noted that there can be a lot of open space activated on streets and because the City owns the streets it can be done quickly. Councillor Azeem also noted that he would like to see additional squares opened and mentioned the benefit to closing Central Square to traffic on Friday and Saturday nights. Councillor Azeem also noted other possibilities for creating public space including ideas for Norfolk Street and Memorial Drive and connecting to the river.

The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui recognized Councillor Toner who stated his support for closing areas for special events such as a winter stroll, feast or event like rib fest where the community knows they are going to happen and can prepare for them, and staff can prepare for them. Councillor Toner noted that making permanent changes in certain areas would be more challenging and stressed the importance of having deep conversations with folks in the neighborhoods and with the businesses impacted. Councillor Toner thanked all for their work noting that the presentation provided a nice summary.

The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui recognized Councillor McGovern who noted that he agreed with many points raised by Councillors and spoke to the challenge of being such a small City geographically and needing to be creative. Councillor McGovern also noted that he would be interested in information on other communities of a similar size. Councillor McGovern said he would love to see more activity and programming around Memorial Drive and he recalled a policy order that he had filed to close Mass Ave at Central Square from June through September that did not go anywhere. Councillor McGovern asked if we are working with our universities to open up some of their space. Councillor McGovern noted that whenever there is change there is pushback so having real data to show the value of the changes is very important. Councillor McGovern asked if the data available could be presented in tables or charts rather than or in addition to maps. Councillor McGovern also noted that it was important that every playground around the city be accessible to children with physical challenges. CDD staff responded noting the work being done with universities and to ensure that spaces are accessible to all.

The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui recognized Councillor Simmons who noted that this was an interesting conversation and thanked those involved for the presentation. Councillor Simmons noted that she agreed with Councillor McGovern that we need to be comparing ourselves to comparable communities and with Councillor Toner that it is important to truly engage those that will be impacted. Councillor Simmons raised several questions relating to engagement noting that she appreciated what had been done but was not clear if there was outreach to the Gately Youth Center, the Russell Youth Center, the Cambridge Learning Center and/or the Christian Life Center. Councillor Simmons asked how many of the senior buildings were reached and if the senior centers in Central Square and North Cambridge were involved. Councillor Simmons also asked if there was outreach at the High School, to the interfaith community, to the Margaret Fuller House or to any local barbershops. CDD staff responded noting the engagement that was done and that there is always an opportunity to do better. Councillor Simmons asked that going forward City staff be more intentional about reaching various populations including seniors. Councillor Simmons also asked about the Novartis development and making sure they have kept



their agreement and that other developers are also held to their permit requirements. Councillor Simmons also stressed the importance of ensuring true equity and diversity in all of our plans.

The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui recognized Councillor Toner who asked about liability on private property. The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui recognized Councillor Carlone for further comments around expanding community gardens, ways to bring energy to public spaces and the benefits of such spaces for addressing loneliness and supporting those suffering from mental health issues.

The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui noted that she agreed with a lot of what was said by Councillors. Further Mayor Siddiqui noted that what resonated with her was the mention of recess at Hoyt Field despite the heat wave and how important activities that involve our various nonprofits and youth are. Mayor Siddiqui also stressed how important the Starlight space has been and her interest in making that a permanent space. Mayor Siddiqui also commented on the need for community garden space, recalling a grant for this and interest from CRLS students. Mayor Siddiqui noted that prior to COVID she had not walked around Fresh Pond and that further that she believed a lot of folks including from the Fresh Pond Apartments and Rindge Towers don't know there is access to the space. Mayor Siddiqui noted that she is fully supportive of Jerry's Pond, and what IQHQ is doing there and asked what the City can be doing as a partnership because the City needs to doing more in North Cambridge. Mayor Siddiqui also noted inquiries from the public related to school parks that need upgrades and highlighted the existing free cash allocation and asked for guidance on how to communicate with those who reach out on how the work is prioritized.

**The Chair, Mayor Siddiqui recognized Councillor Toner who made a motion to adjourn. City Clerk LeBlanc called the roll.**

Councillor Burhan Azeem – Yes  
 Councillor Dennis J. Carlone – Yes  
 Vice Mayor Alanna M. Mallon – Yes  
 Councillor Marc C. McGovern – Yes  
 Councillor Patricia Nolan – Yes  
 Councillor E. Denise Simmons – Yes  
 Councillor Paul Toner – Yes  
 Councillor Quinton Y. Zondervan – Yes  
 Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui – Yes

**Yes-9, No-0, Motion Passed.**

The Cambridge City Council adjourned at approximately 7:00 p.m.

**Attachments:**

Attachment: CDC presentation, titled “The Future of Open Space, Open Space Roundtable, December 12, 2022”.

**Clerk's Note:** The City of Cambridge/22 City View records every City Council meeting and every City Council Committee meeting. This is a permanent record. The video for this meeting can be viewed at:

[https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/373?view\\_id=1&redirect=true&h=fe18dc1ebba734fcf2a4b1a0d80116c](https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/373?view_id=1&redirect=true&h=fe18dc1ebba734fcf2a4b1a0d80116c)

All meetings are “closed captioned”. After each meeting the “closed captioned transcripts” are available online at: <https://app.box.com/s/9qormcahynjt4pzpt1n5opixogl3q7k5> Please note that there is no editing of these “closed captioned transcripts” and they do not constitute a verbatim transcript prepared by a certified transcriber.

Minutes Acceptance: Minutes of Dec 12, 2022 5:00 PM (Submission of the Record)



# The Future of Open Space

Open Space Roundtable  
December 12, 2022






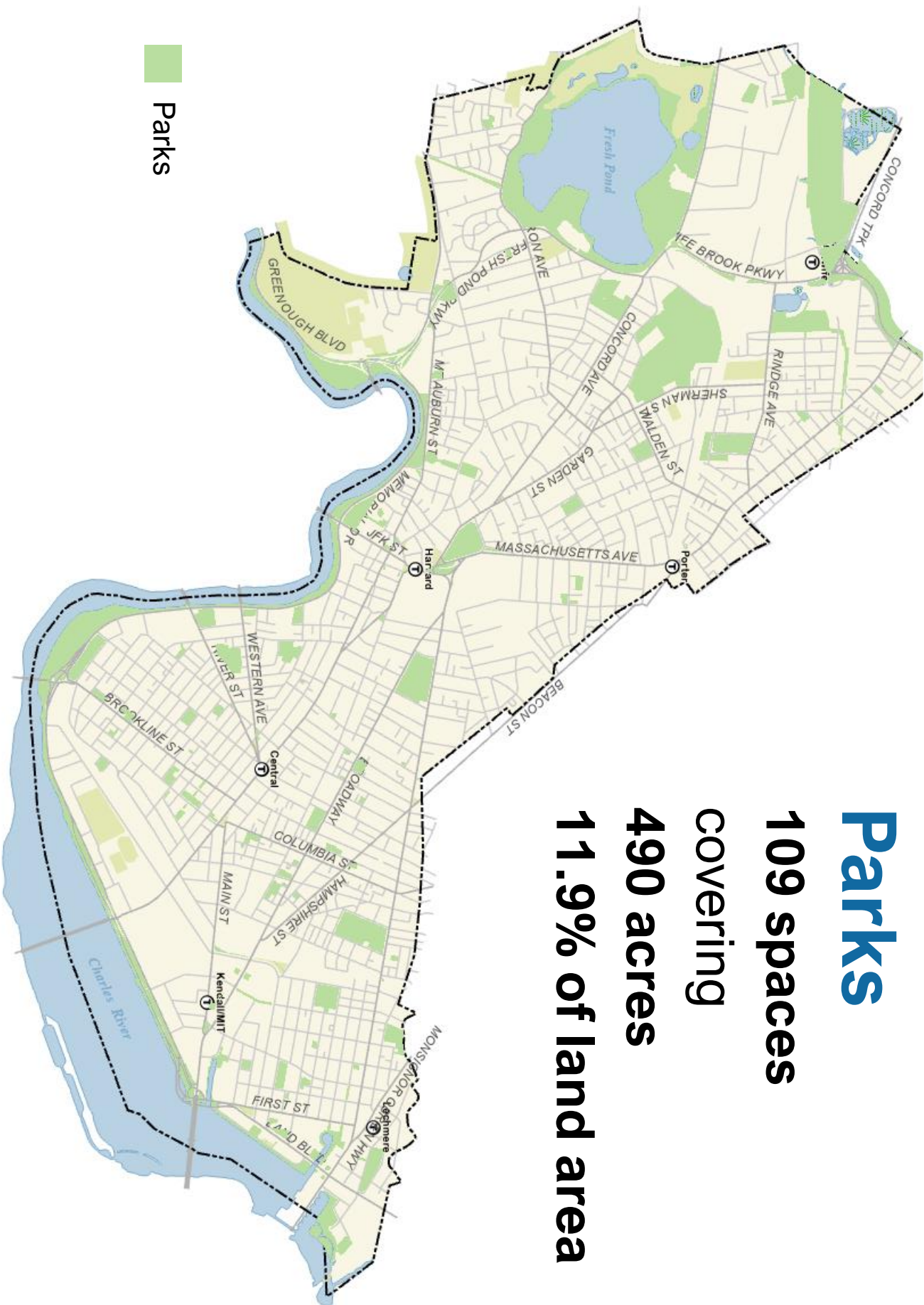
# What do we mean by “public space”?

- Public space is any outdoor space that is open to the public.
- Examples of public spaces are:
  - Parks
  - Plazas
  - Sidewalks
  - Streets
- Include both publicly and privately-owned spaces



**Parks**  
**109 spaces**  
**covering**  
**490 acres**  
**11.9% of land area**

 Parks

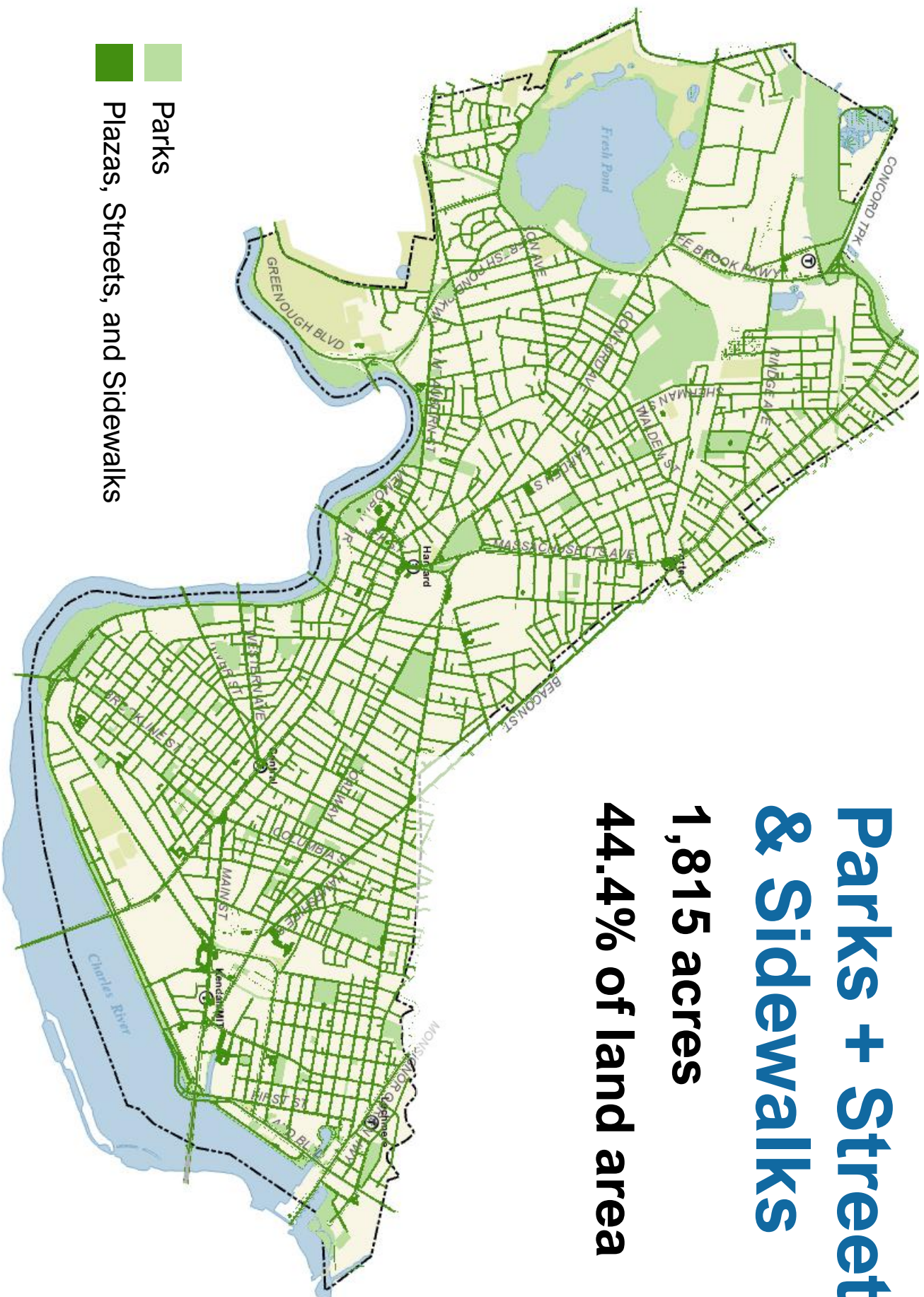




# Parks + Streets & Sidewalks

1,815 acres

44.4% of land area



- Parks
- Plazas, Streets, and Sidewalks



Open space is a key part of the City’s infrastructure for maintaining and increasing quality of life.



# CDD's Open Space Planning & Design

*Plan, design, and program public spaces to allow public life to flourish*

## Core Work Areas

- Open Space Planning
- Park and Public Space Design
- Public Space Programming
- Urban Design Guidelines
- Design Review of Major Development Projects





# Agenda

1. Open Space Planning
2. Public Space Lab
3. Discussion







# Our Parks Our Plan

Parks & Open Space Planning



# Purpose

- How can our parks and open space system reflect our community priorities and values?
- How should our open space system evolve over time?
- How do we use the public space that we have well?



# Cambridge's open spaces

321 acres

City-owned parks and open space

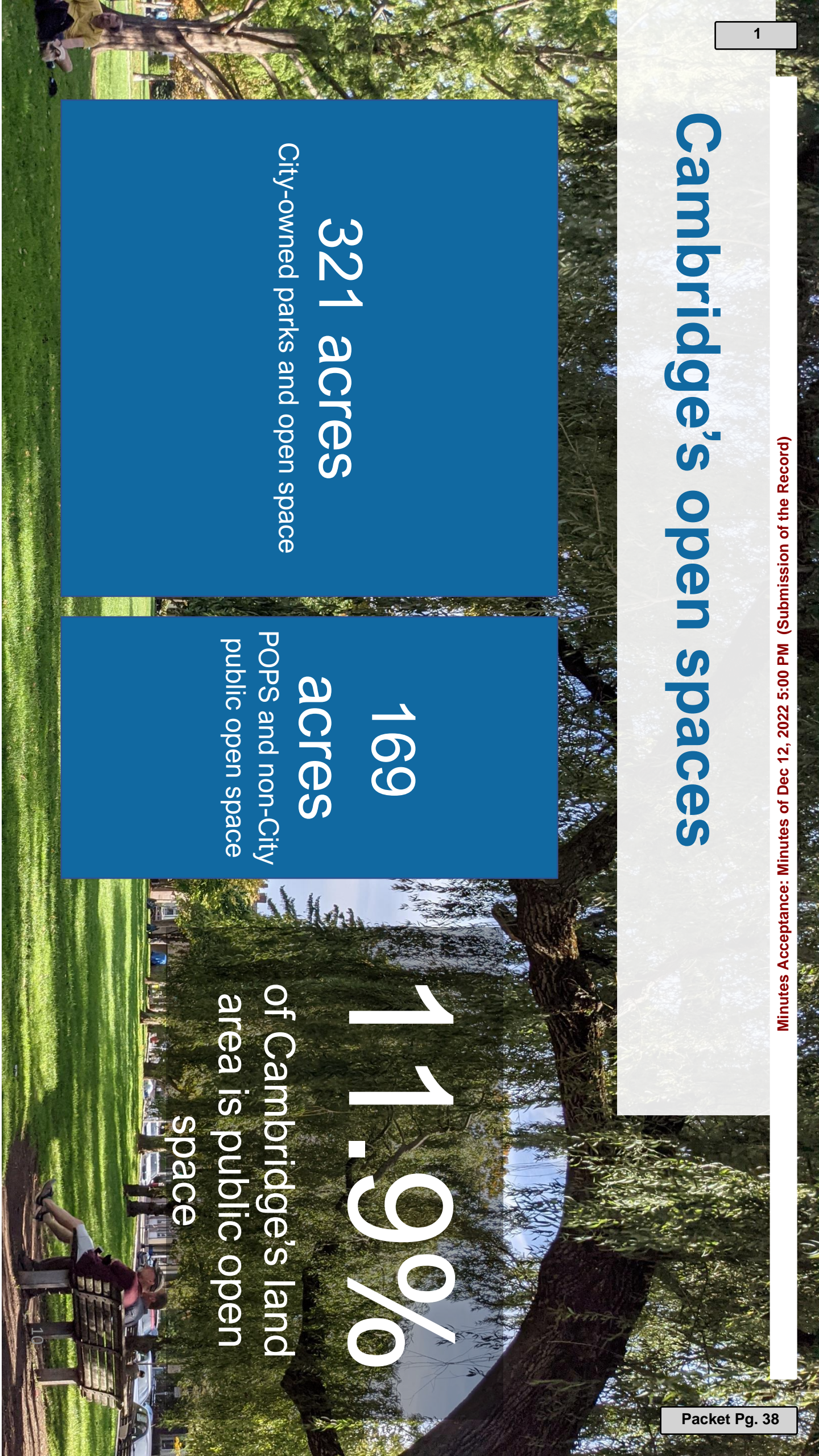
169

acres

POPS and non-City  
public open space

11.9%

of Cambridge's land  
area is public open  
space





# How does Cambridge compare?

Somerville  
~6% of  
land area

~2 acres per  
1000 residents  
(2019)

Cambridge  
11.9% of  
land area

4.1 acres per 1000  
residents (2020)

Boston  
~15% of  
land area

~7.6 acres per 1000  
residents (2015)



# Access to open space

Over 99%

of Cambridge residents live within  
a 10-minute walk of a  
park in Cambridge



# Challenges

- Developed urban context
- Population growth increases demand for open space
- Matching park facilities to needs and interests of community
- Competitive real estate market
- Multiple City priorities, e.g. community facilities, affordable housing, etc.



# Challenges

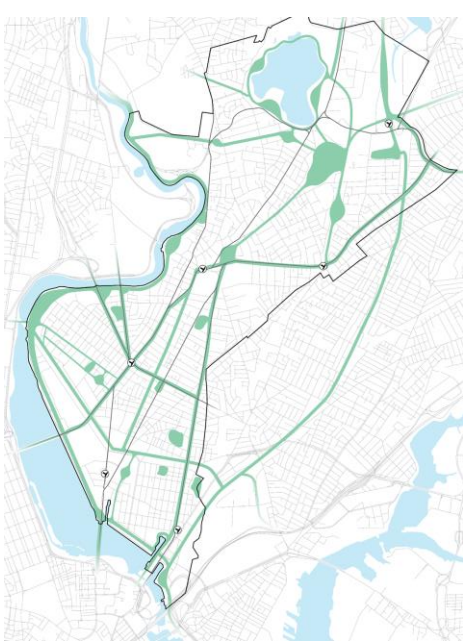
- Inequities in open space access
- Climate change
- Social disconnection – need for spaces to gather and form community bonds

**Parks and open spaces are some of the City's tools to address these challenges**



# Opportunities

- Create new open space working with private development or through other means
- Improve connections to existing open spaces
- Improve/redesign existing spaces
- Activating and programming public spaces



# Community Engagement

## Online Surveys

- *Tell Us How You Use Parks!* online survey
- *Community Values and Priorities* online survey
- *Park Use and Access* online survey
- *Vision and Goals Feedback* online questionnaire

## Community Meetings

- Kickoff Community Meeting
- Core Values and Priorities Community Discussion
- Visioning Workshop
- Setting Our Goals







# Our Open Space Vision

**Cambridge's parks and open spaces are essential and interconnected spaces that welcome all members of our diverse community.**

**Our parks and open spaces:**

- welcome people to engage in a wide variety of active or passive activities. In our parks and open spaces people can come to be together or spend time alone.
- are inclusive and accessible places for gathering, relaxing, being active, and playing in well-maintained facilities, landscapes, and nature.
- foster culture and the arts, providing spaces for spectacle and performance to express and inspire creativity.
- support our quality of life and provide places and moments where memories are made.

# Open Space Planning Goals

## ACCESS

- A** Make parks and park programs welcoming for all.
- B** Improve access to open space, with an emphasis in areas of high open space need.
- C** Make it easier for people to get to and travel through our parks and open spaces in ways that are active and sustainable.

## ACTIVITY

- F** Promote healthy play and active recreation for people of all ages, abilities, genders, and backgrounds.
- G** Increase active and passive activity in public spaces.
- H** Make comfortable spaces where people can gather and connect.
- I** Bring creativity, arts, and culture to parks and public spaces.

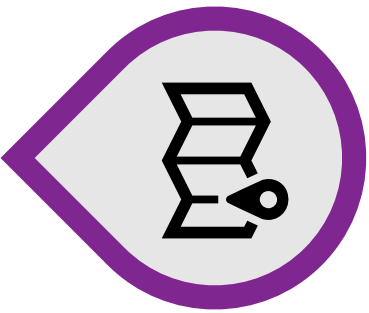
## DESIGN & MANAGEMENT

- J** Build high-quality parks that embody our community's priorities and wide range of interests.
- K** Aim to keep parks clean and keep equipment in working order. Improve how the City manages park maintenance.
- L** Improve how we share information about parks and open spaces. Highlight opportunities for learning and community building.

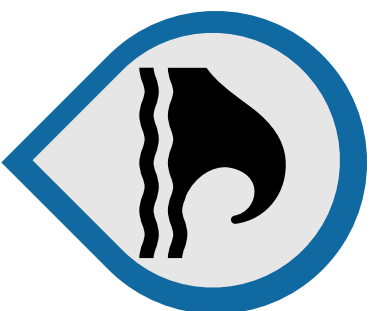
## ENVIRONMENT

- D** Protect and enhance natural areas.
- E** Use our parks and open spaces to make Cambridge more resilient to climate change. Design and program open spaces for a changing climate.

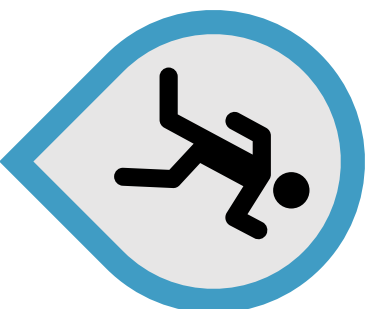
# Understanding Citywide Open Space Needs



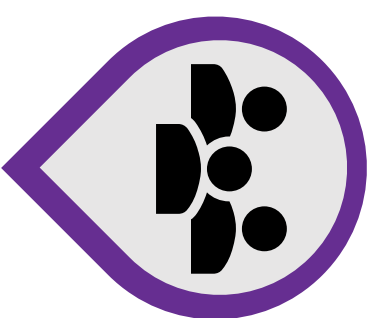
ACCESS



RESILIENCE



PUBLIC HEALTH



COMMUNITY

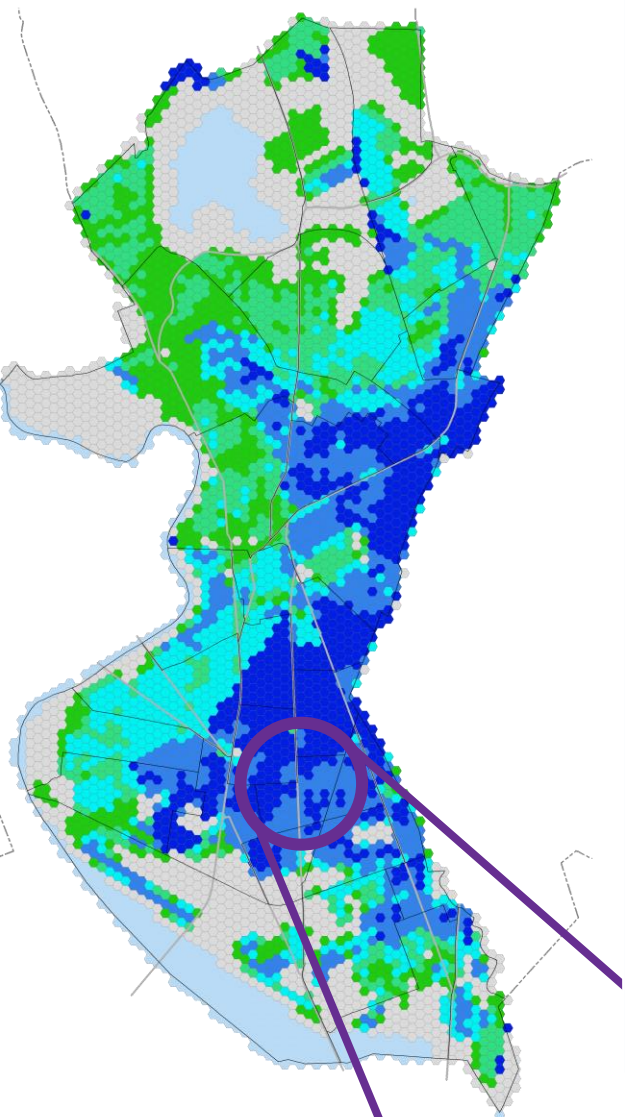


**We look at:**

- Access and Distribution
- **Climate Resilience**
- Public Health
- **Community**

**This helps us:**

- Identify priority areas for improving open space access and expansion
- Target early action/non-capital interventions (e.g., programming, planting prioritization)



Acres of Accessible Open Space per Person

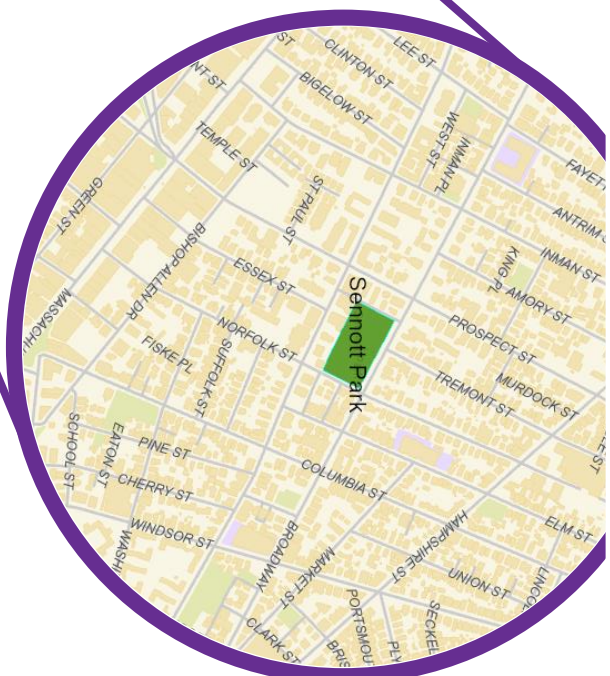
**Site-Level and Surroundings**

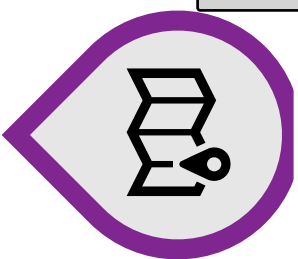
**We look at:**

- Condition and Past Improvements (age and condition of park; surfacing and equipment; maintenance challenges; site design)
- **Climate Resilience**
- **Community**
- Park Uses (gaps in access)

**This helps us:**

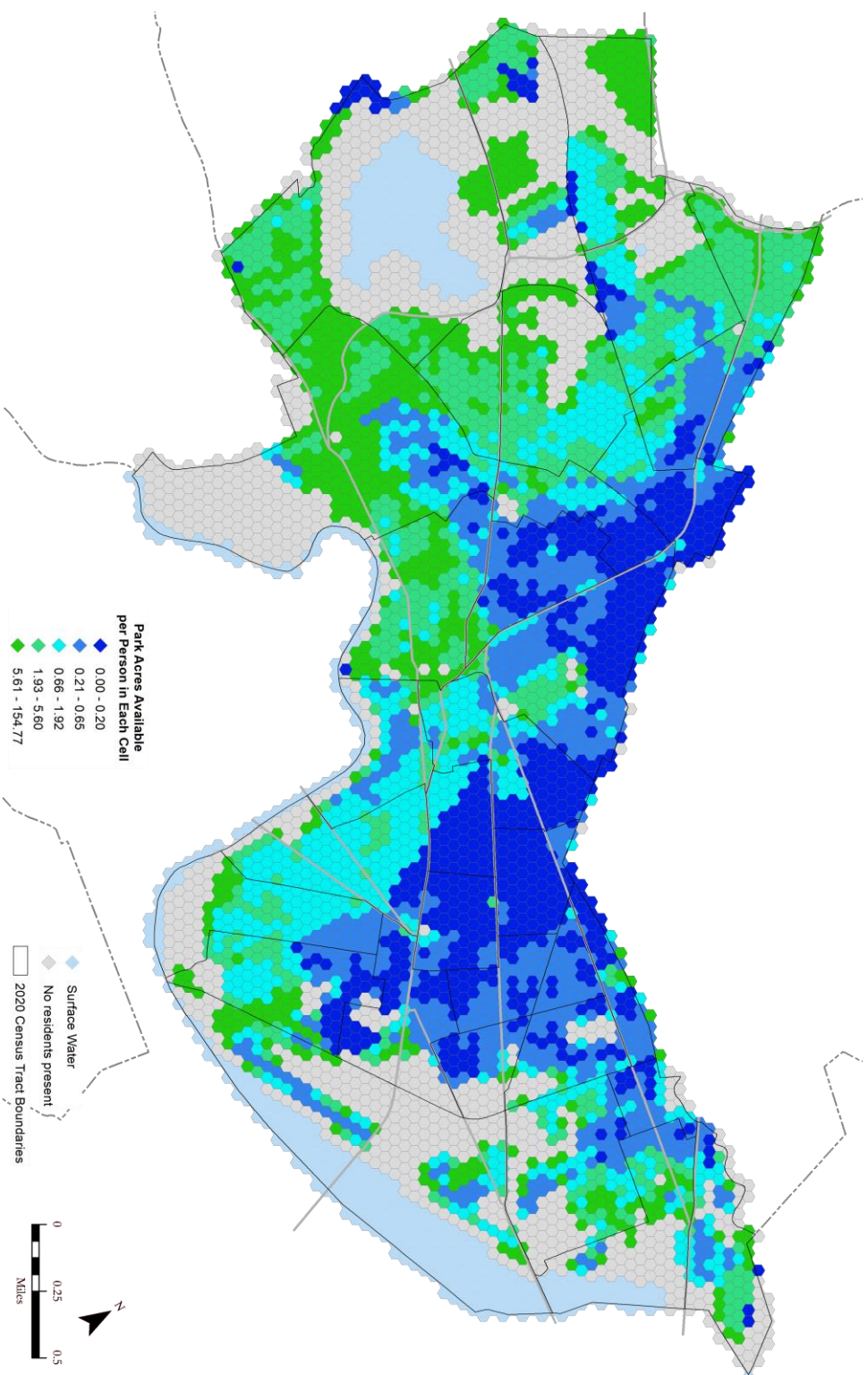
- Identify capital planning priorities
- Guide future park renovation processes





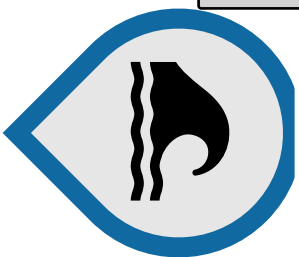
# Park Distribution and Access

- Proximity to different types of parks
- Acres of accessible open space
- Acres of accessible open space per person (i.e., factoring in population density)
- Acres of accessible open space per worker



Acres of Accessible Open Space per Person

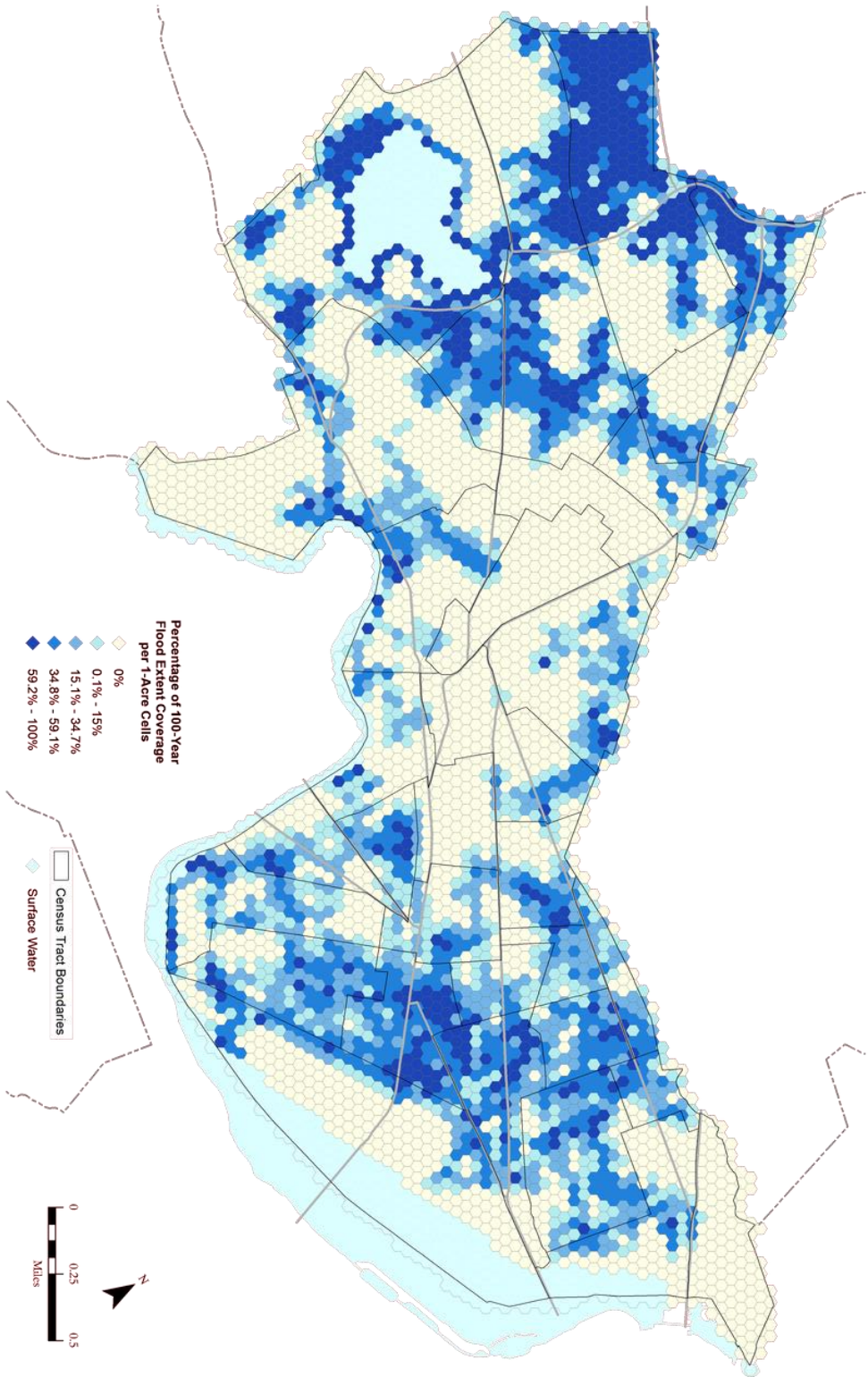




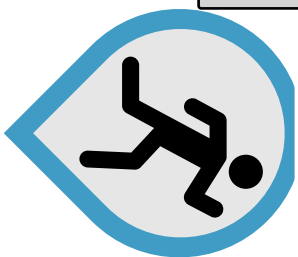
# Resilience

- Tree canopy coverage
- Urban heat island
- Flooding: Current FMEA 100-Year Flood and 2070 Projected 100-Year Flood

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## 2070 Projected 100-Year Flood (Flood Extend Coverage)



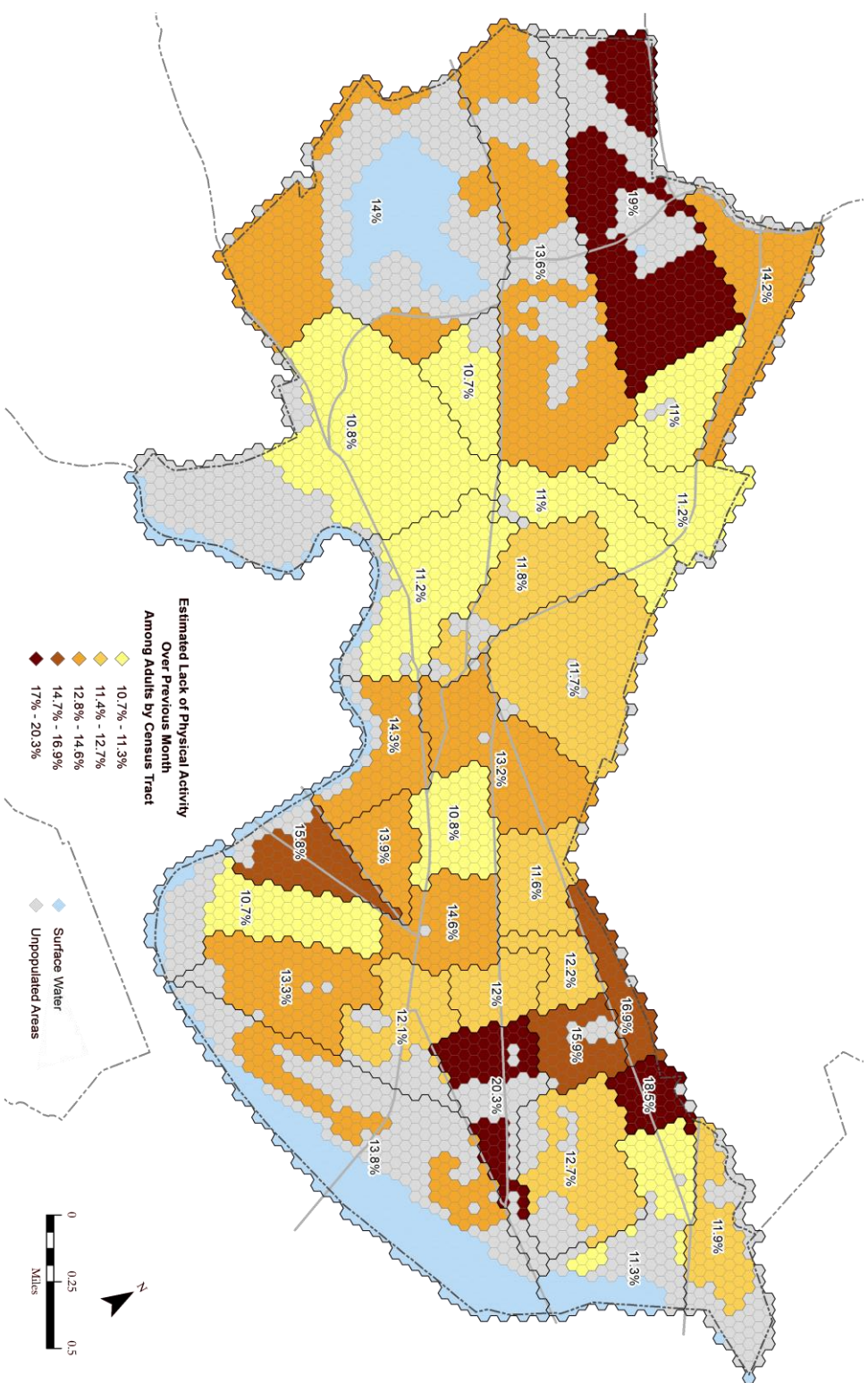
# Public Health

Minutes Acceptance: Minutes of Dec 12, 2022 5:00 PM (Submission of the Record)

Packet Pg. 52

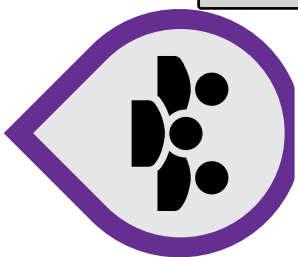
Estimated prevalence of:

- Asthma
- Diabetes
- High Blood Pressure
- Obesity
- Lack of Physical Activity (Self-Reported)



**Lack of Physical Activity Over Previous Month (Estimated Prevalence)**

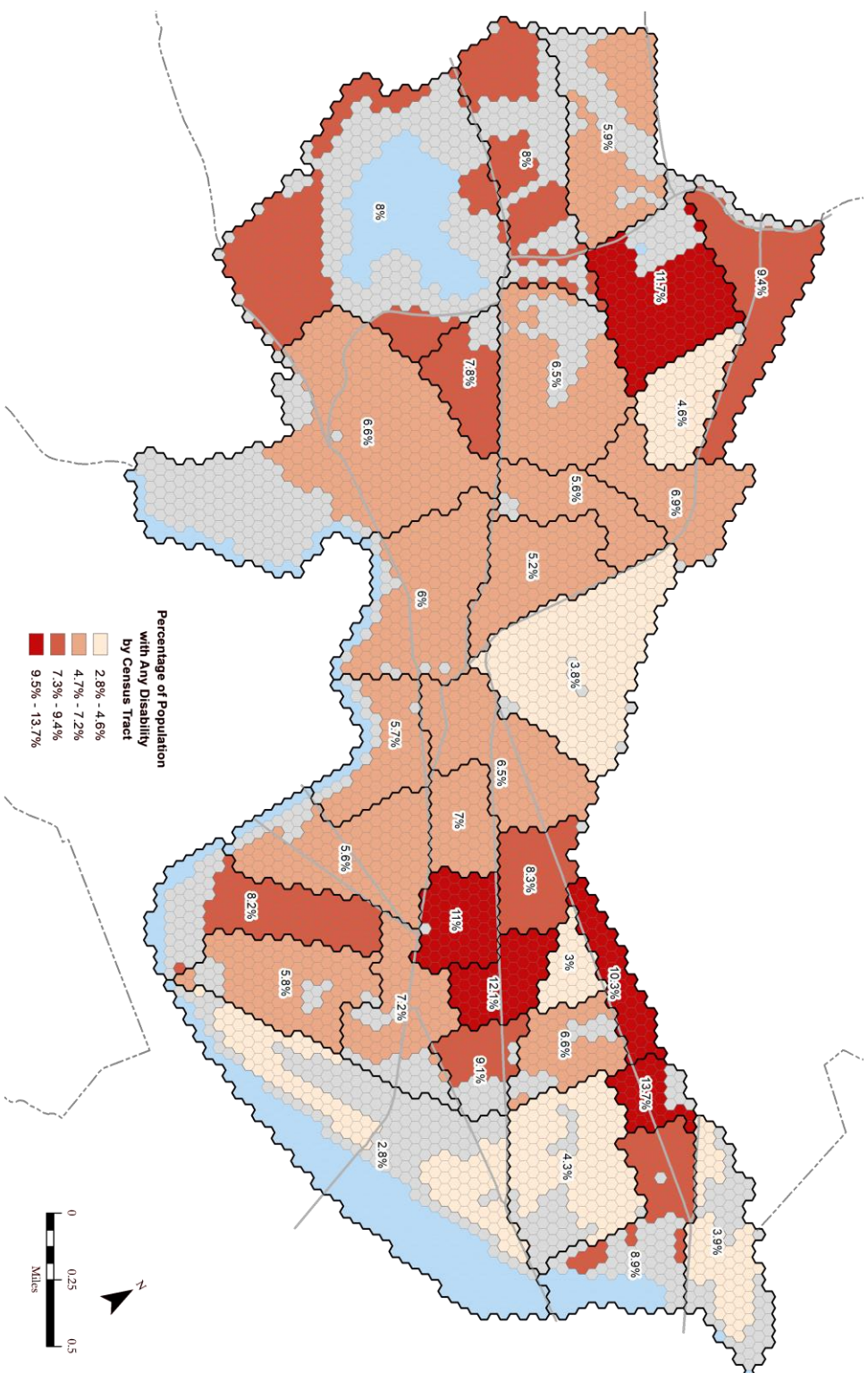




# Community

Minutes Acceptance: Minutes of Dec 12, 2022 5:00 PM (Submission of the Record)

- Family populations
- Seniors
- Disability status
- Income (proportion of population at 200% of poverty level or below)
- Race and ethnicity
- Population without vehicle access



Person with Any Disability (Percentage of Population)

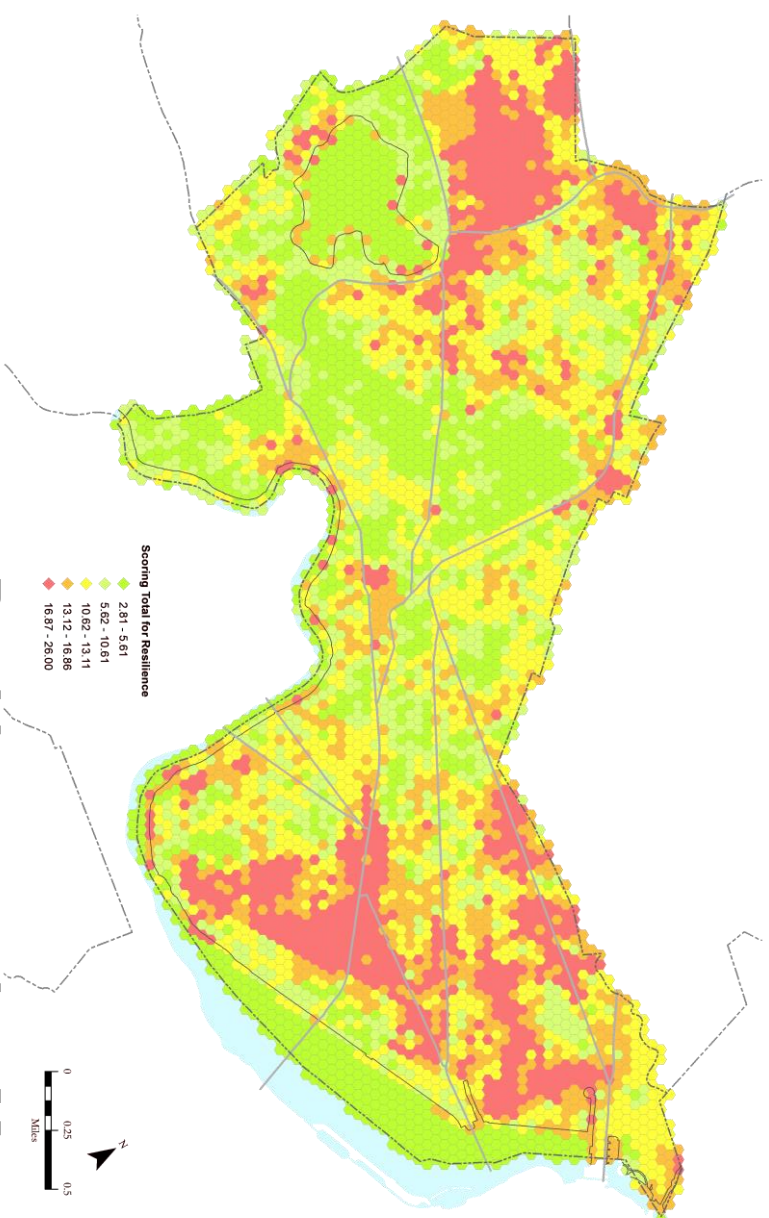
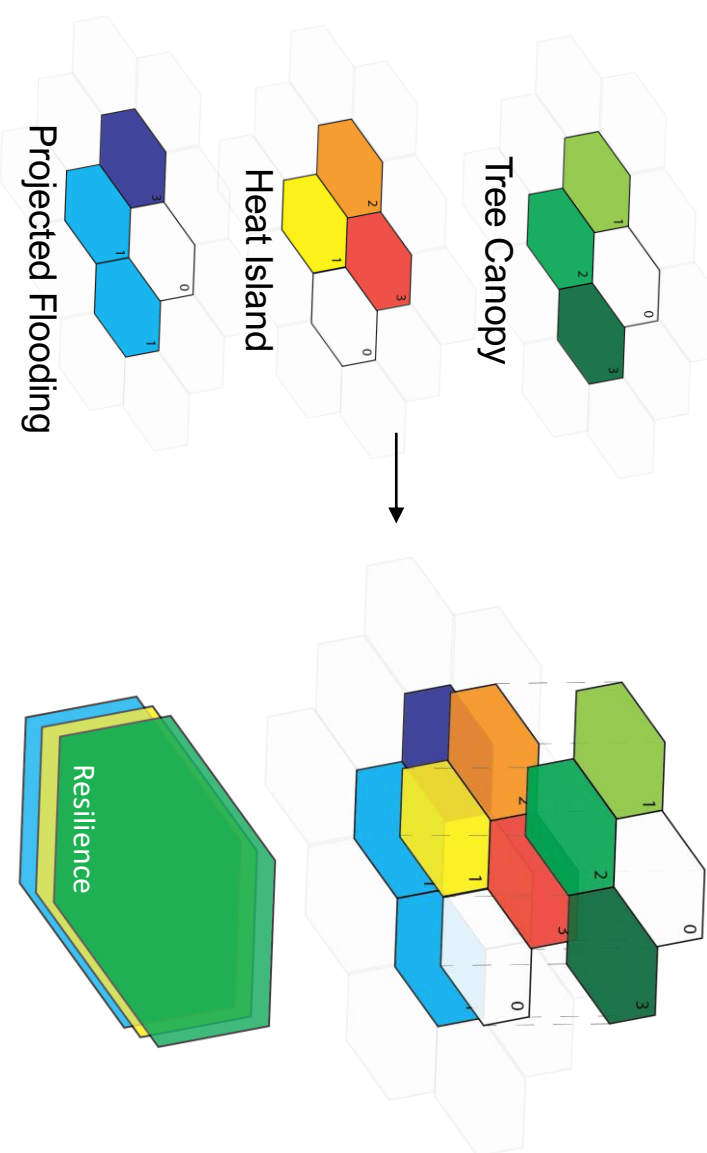


# What are areas of open space need?

We use these data to identify and understand geographic areas of open space need

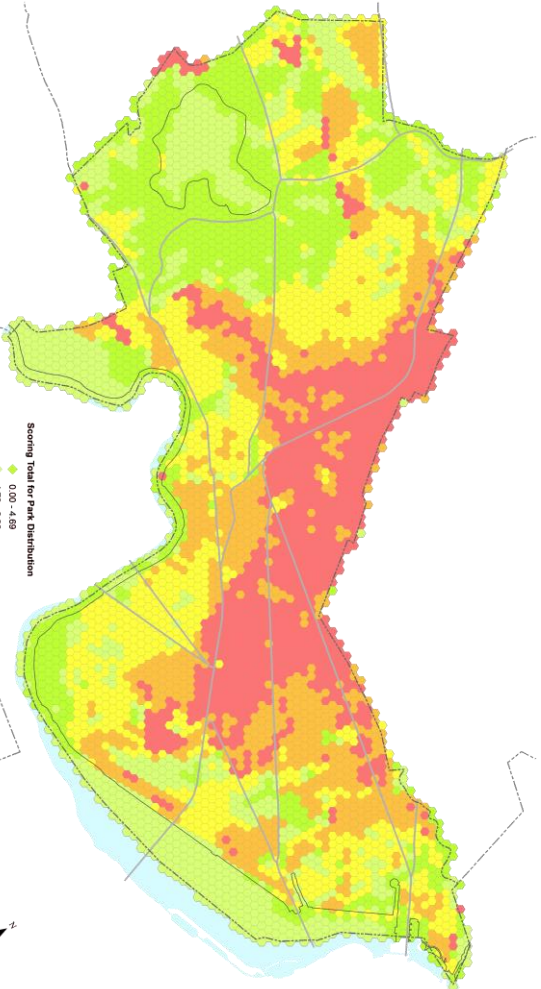
Individual cells have a value indicating open space need according to each metric

These are then “layered” to form an index for each category



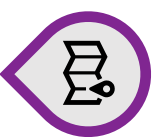
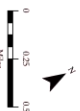
Resilience Index Map

# What are areas of open space need?



Scoring Total for Peak Distribution

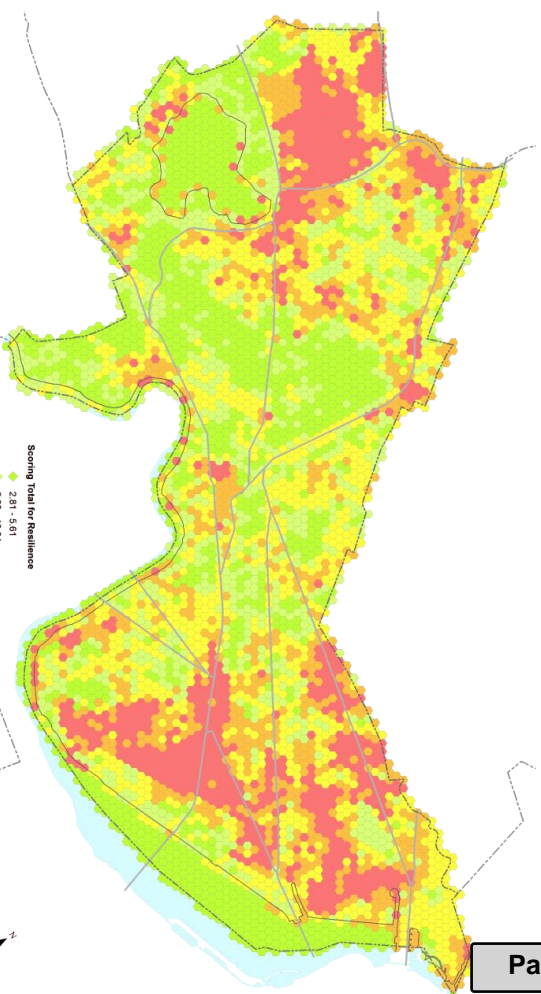
- 0.00 - 4.69
- 4.70 - 6.28
- 6.29 - 10.00
- 10.01 - 19.26
- 19.27 - 28.75



Access and  
Distribution  
Index



Resilience  
Index



Scoring Total for Resilience

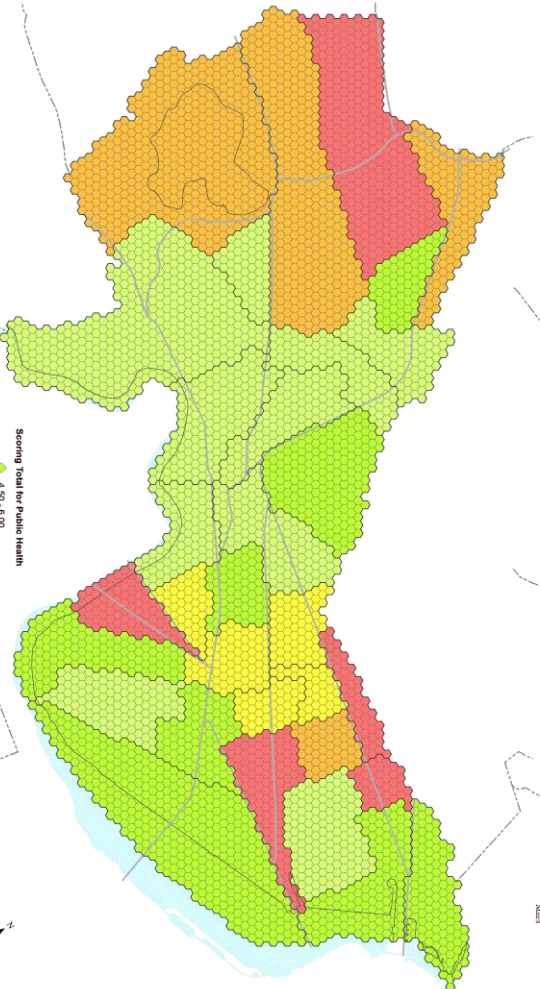
- 2.61 - 5.61
- 5.62 - 10.61
- 10.62 - 15.61
- 15.62 - 18.66
- 18.67 - 26.00



Public  
Health  
Index

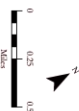


Community  
Index



Scoring Total for Public Health

- 4.50 - 6.00
- 6.01 - 7.50
- 7.51 - 10.50
- 10.51 - 11.50
- 11.51 - 15.50





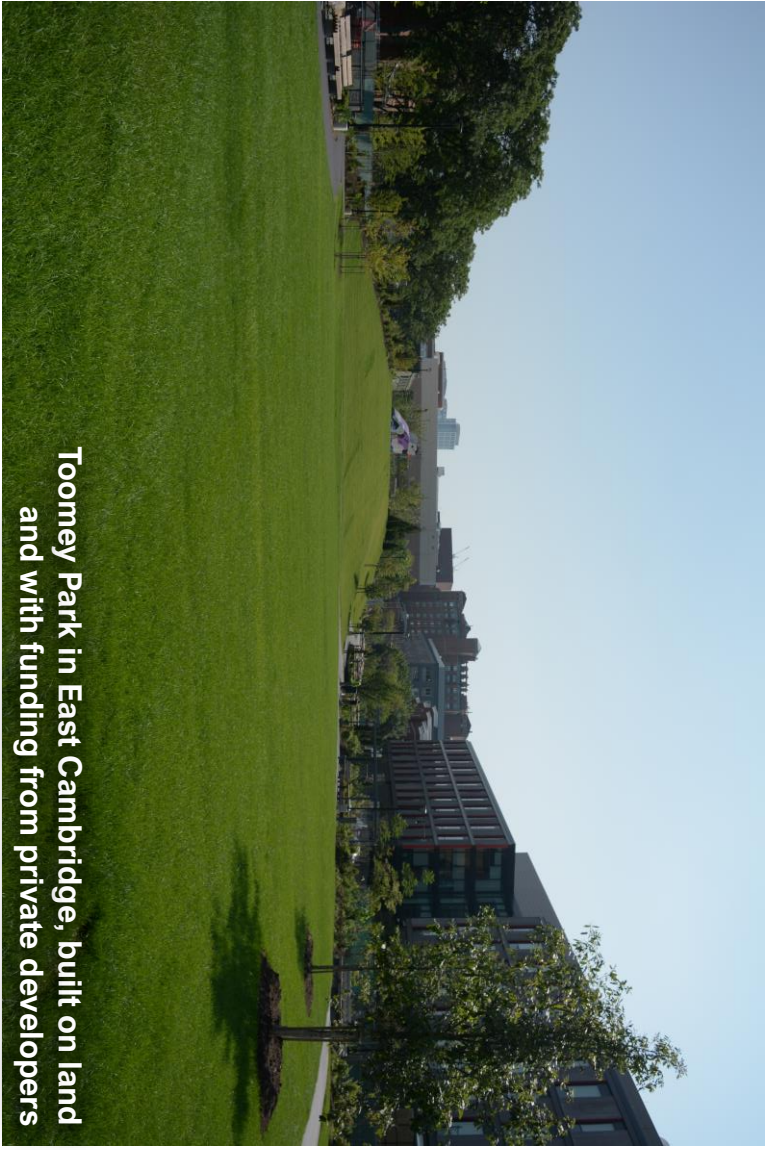
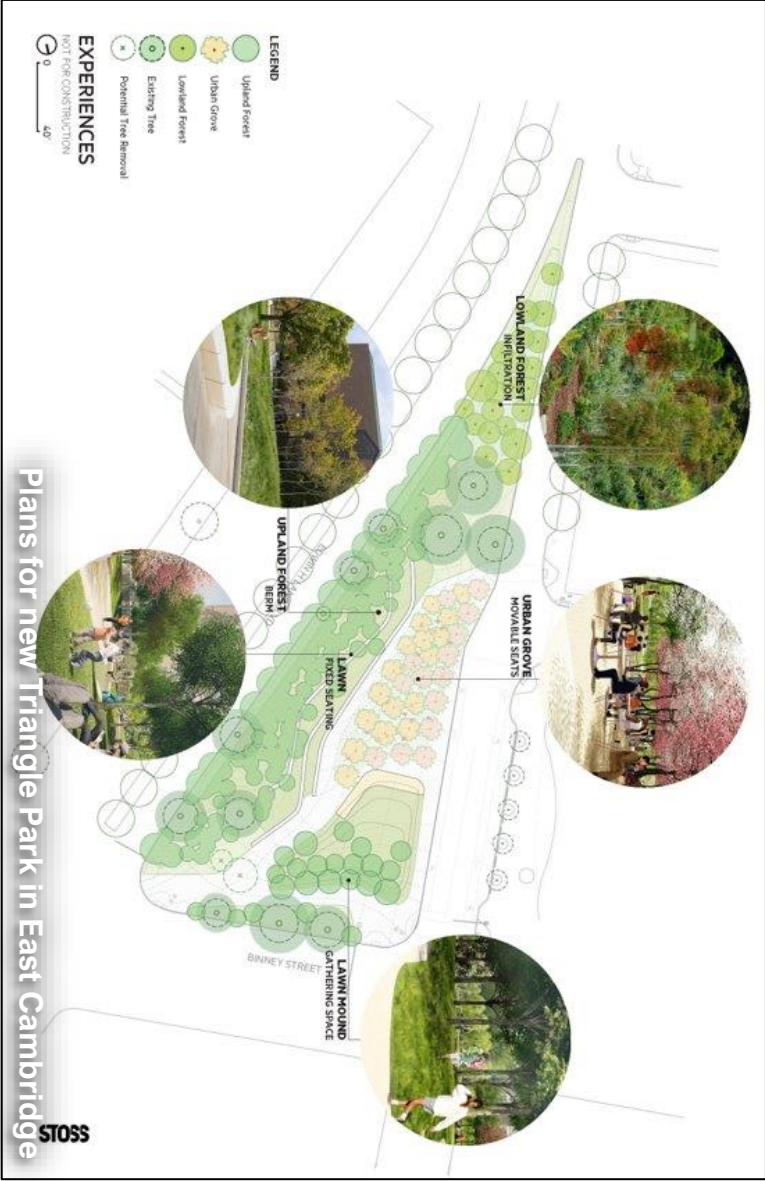
# Strategies to meet our open space needs

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# work with private development to create open space

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# use existing city land and monitor for acquisition opportunities

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Greene-Rose Heritage Park was built on land purchased by the City



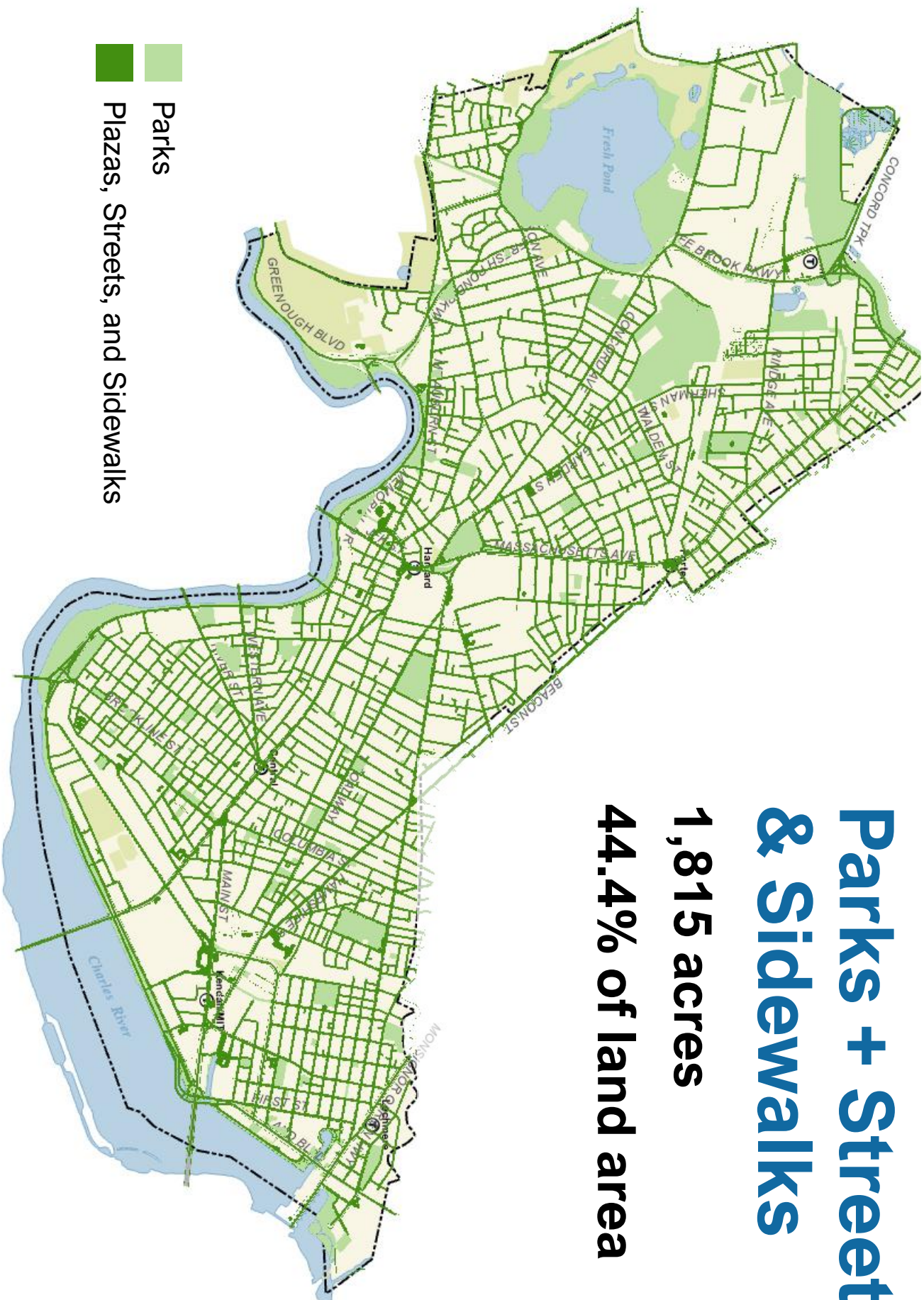
Former railroad right-of-way acquired by the City for the future Danehy-New St. Multi-Use Path



# Parks + Streets & Sidewalks

1,815 acres

44.4% of land area





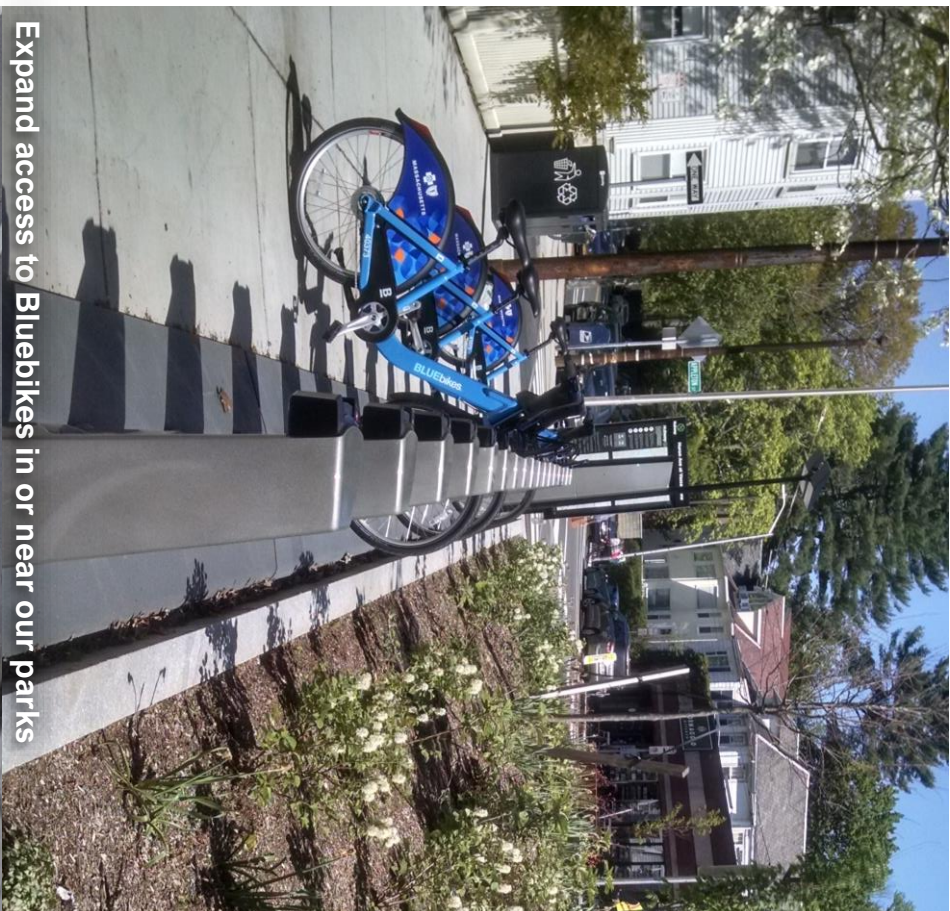
# (re)use right-of-way for open space—and people

Minutes Acceptance: Minutes of Dec 12, 2022 5:00 PM (Submission of the Record)





# Improve the journey to (and through) parks



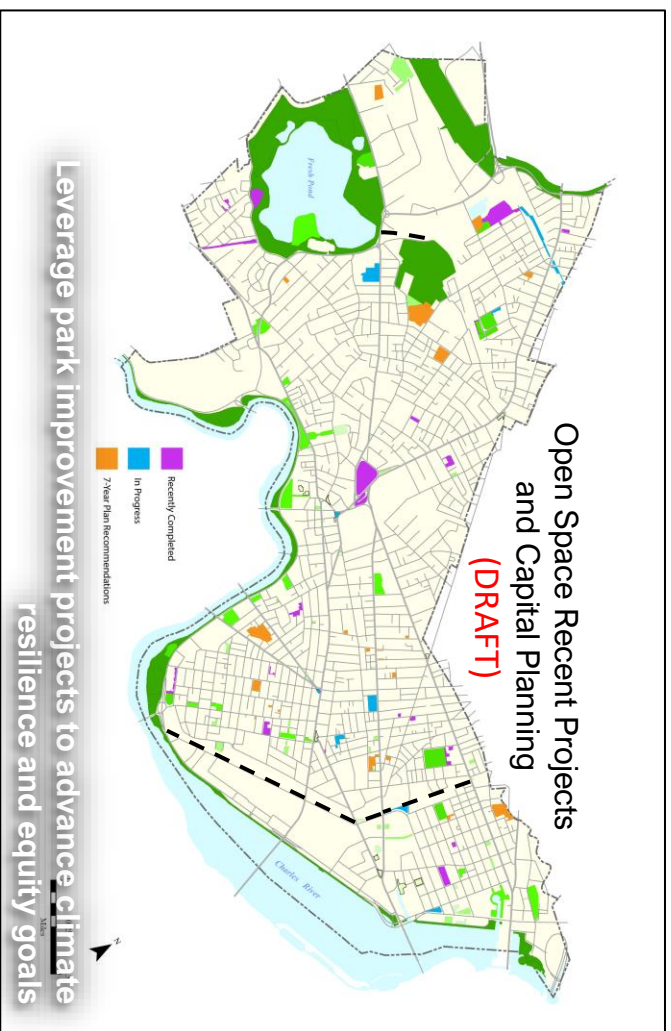
Expand access to Bluebikes in or near our parks



Continue to improve multi-use paths as both destinations and throughways



# Build and maintain high quality parks





# Protect and enhance natural areas (big and small)

Minutes Acceptance: Minutes of Dec 12, 2022 5:00 PM (Submission of the Record)



Planting native species and pollinators at Watson St will help create a resilient ecosystem

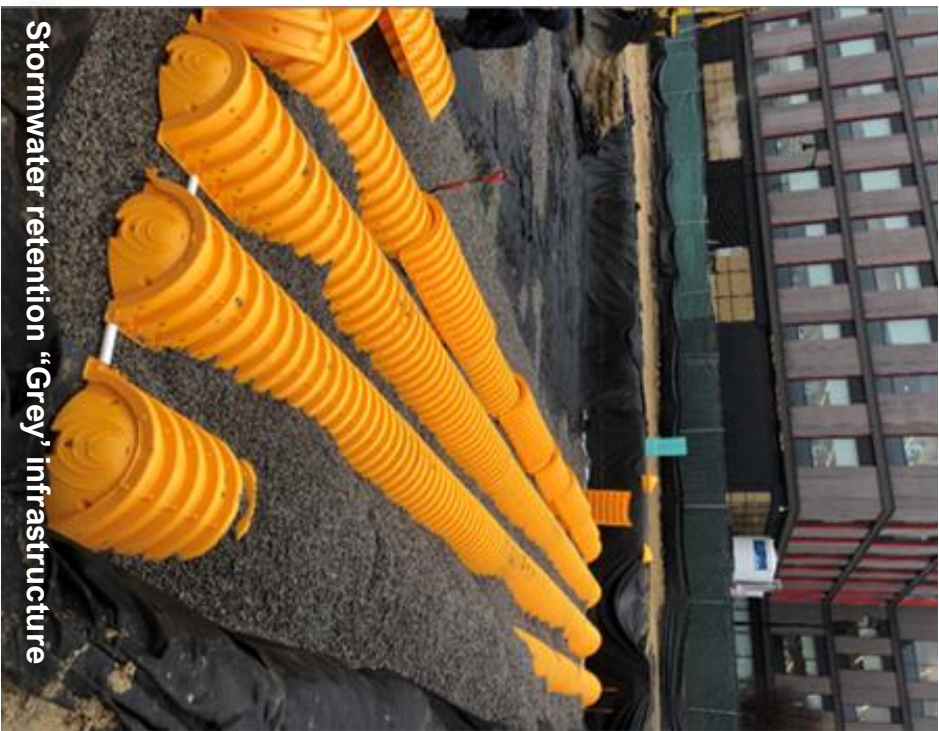


Continued stewardship of natural areas like Fresh Pond



# Climate: Reduce our footprint, mitigate the impacts

Minutes Acceptance: Minutes of Dec 12, 2022 5:00 PM (Submission of the Record)



Stormwater retention “Grey” infrastructure



Trees retain stormwater, provide shade, and clean the air



Permanent or pop-up water play can help us stay cool in the summer



# Make our parks welcoming to all



Design inclusive spaces



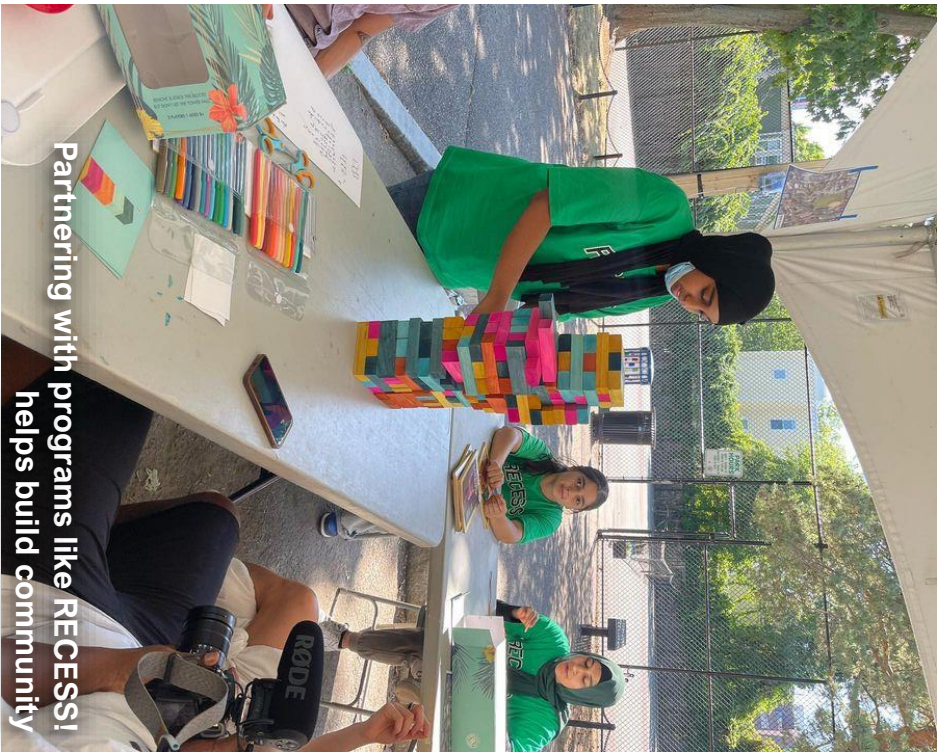
Collaborate with youth centers to engage with pre-teens and teens



# Make it easier to engage with parks



New and different ways to spread information about our parks



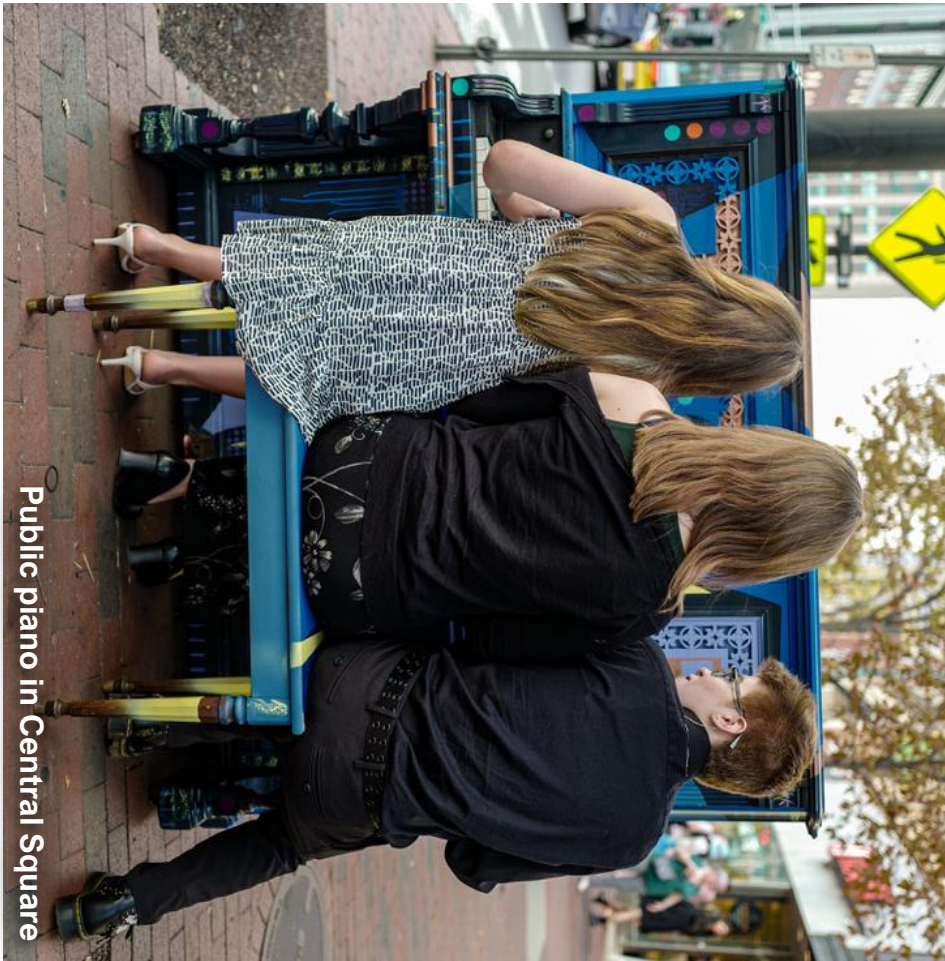


# Activating Public Spaces





# Streets as Places



Public piano in Central Square



Play Street in The Port

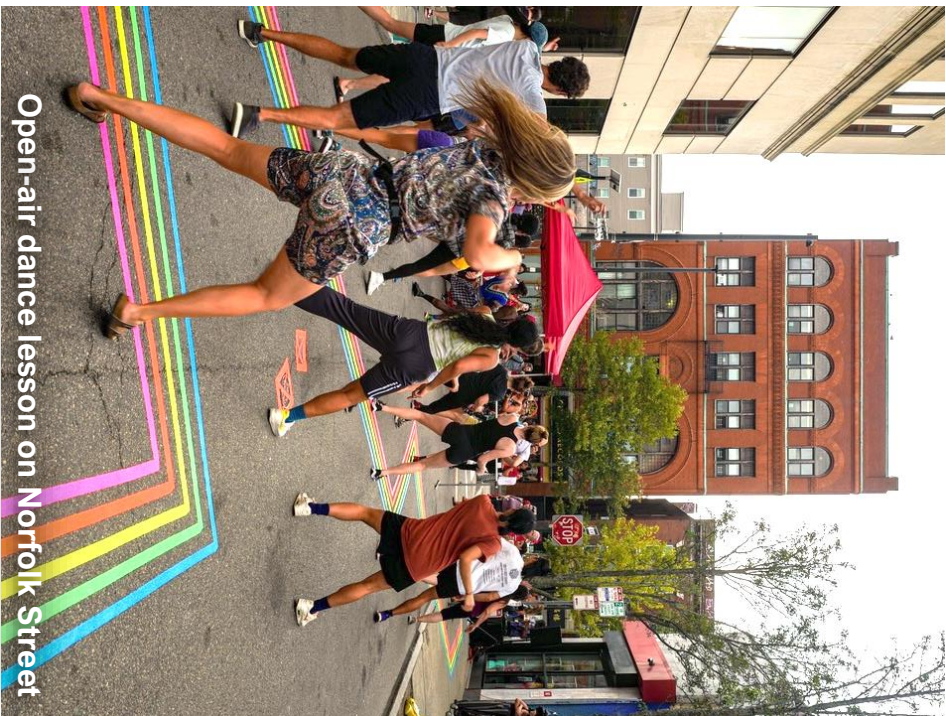


# CAMBRIDGE PUBLIC SPACE LAB





# Activating the Squares



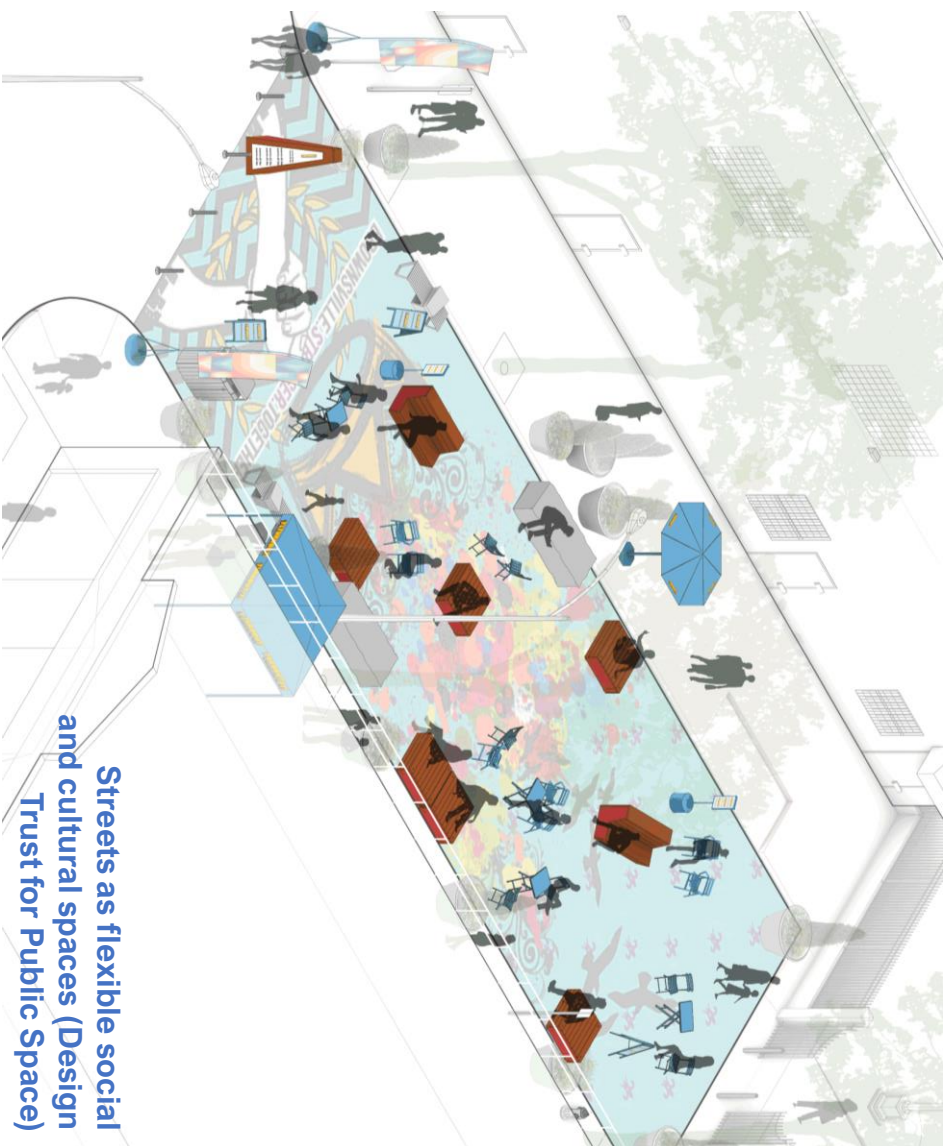
Open-air dance lesson on Norfolk Street



Play Street activities on Norfolk Street (Central Square)



# Urban Prototyping



Streets as flexible social and cultural spaces (Design Trust for Public Space)



Starlight Square



# CloudHouse



CloudHouse, a temporary shade structure in Greene-Rose Heritage Park



CloudHouse (from above)



# Cambridge Plays



A Trike Called Funk setting up a pop-up dance floor, with public seating in Porter Square



# Interactive Installations





# Play Streets

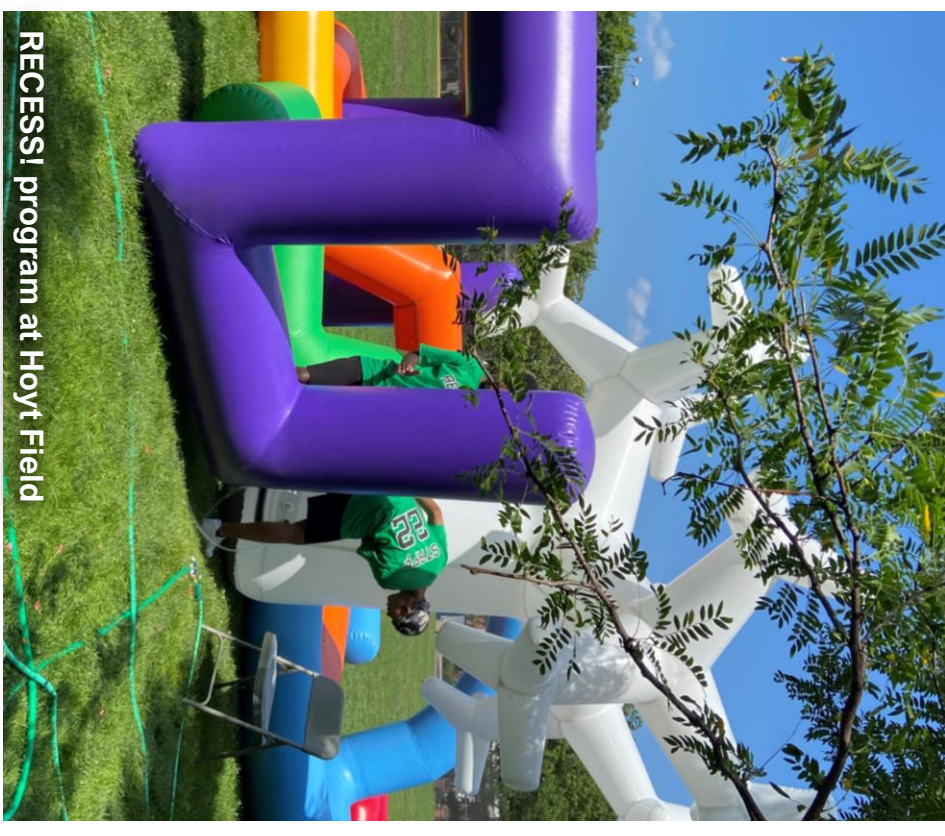




# Space for Teens



Play Street in Cambridgeport



RECESS! program at Hoyt Field



# Public Patios



Public patio in Inman Square



# Partnerships





“I would love to see more like them all over Cambridge.”

“Beyond rad.”

“It makes such a happy street.”

“Really inviting and convenient!”

“We grabbed Punjabi Dhaba and ate on the patio.”

“THESE ARE GREAT!!”

“The city needs more spaces like this.”

“FINALLY a space for sitting with a table!”

“Love, love, love!!”

“These have made the square more fun to spend time in.”

“Love the piano.”

“It’s an opportunity to have positive interactions with strangers!”

98%  
expressed  
support



# Questions

- Which goals or strategies resonate most for you?
- What kinds of spaces should we be using more actively or imaginatively?
- How could Council, staff, and community partners collaborate to advance this work?