

# BROOKLINE'S GATEWAY EAST PUBLIC REALM PLAN

Issued by

## FINAL PLAN

**The Gateway East Citizens' Advisory Committee**

**Department of Planning and Community Development**

**Town of Brookline**

Jeff Levine, AICP, Director & Project Manager

**Economic Development Department**

**Town of Brookline**

Catherine Cagle, Director & Project Manager

Von Grossmann & Company

Rizzo Associates, Inc.

October 2006



## **GATEWAY EAST CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

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Gil Hoy	Co-chair
John Bain	Parks & Recreation Commission
Dorothy Bell	Town Meeting Member Precinct 6
Robert Daves	Two Brookline Place Design Advisory Team
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Craig Halvorson	Two Brookline Place Design Advisory Team
Linda Hamlin	Two Brookline Place Design Advisory Team/Planning Board
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Terri Schmitz	The Children's Book Shop
Stacey Sweeney	The New England Institute of Art
Donald A. Warner	Two Brookline Place Design Advisory Team
Neil A. Wishinsky	Town Meeting Member Precinct 5

## BACKGROUND

The Gateway East area of Brookline is at a crossroads. Physically, it is a site where many roads, bicycle routes, and pedestrian paths come together, all within reach of the MBTA Green Line at Brookline Village. In a larger sense, there are a variety of opportunities facing this area that can help improve it for visitors and residents. This Final Report elaborates on an Interim Report issued in October of 2005. The project and initiatives of the Interim Report remain largely unchanged; this Final Report adds the Citizens' Advisory Committee's recommendations for the streetscape design to be implemented in the district, considerations of land use, and an update on the advancement of the specific capital improvement projects identified in the Interim Update.

The recommendations of the Gateway East Public Realm Plan will:

- Increase the connection between the Emerald Necklace, the MBTA station, and Brookline Village;
- Improve the ability of pedestrians and bicycles to cross Route 9 safely and swiftly;
- Reduce confusion and improve the overall traffic situation in the area;
- Make the Gateway East area more attractive and livable; and,
- Identify the area as "Village Square", based on historic maps of the neighborhood.

These recommendations represent the current consensus among members of the Gateway East Citizens' Advisory Committee and are offered to the Board of Selectmen at this time for their consideration.

## INTRODUCTION

The Gateway East area is a critical point of entry for Brookline, with important motor vehicle, pedestrian, bicycle and public transit connections. It is considered an extension of Brookline Village, with Route 9 (Washington Street), a major regional highway, at its core. Route 9 is intersected by other important routes: Washington Street connects to the heart of Brookline Village, and Brookline Avenue connects to Boston's Longwood Medical Area and Kenmore Square. The Brookline Village MBTA station is a center of activity, and the historic, Olmsted-designed Emerald Necklace park system is a recreation resource and important pedestrian and bicycle route.

However, the Gateway East area faces challenges; for example, Route 9 is very wide, reflecting the consequences of urban renewal plans and designs implemented in the 1960's. In spite of confusing circulation and heavy traffic, many pedestrians and bicycles cross Route 9 at unprotected locations. A major new development is proposed in a key location within the district, at Two Brookline Place. This effort to plan the Public Realm in Gateway East is an early initiative identified in the Brookline Comprehensive Plan, to meet a strong desire in the Brookline community to improve the quality of the environment for pedestrians, bicyclists, residents and businesses. The following are the findings of an eighteen-month process undertaken by the Town and its Citizens Advisory Committee:

- identifying a list of projects and their rough costs;
- develop a standard streetscape palette for the district;
- consider land use as a component of the public realm; and,
- strategize and initiate implementation of improvements.

All of these efforts focused on selecting strategies to ensure meeting the goals and defining principles of the study. The plan and identified projects are shown on the following page.



## GATEWAY EAST PUBLIC REALM PLAN

This planning process identified eight capital improvement projects to address safety and quality of the public realm in the Gateway East area.

- T** IMPROVEMENTS TO THE MBTA STATION
- W** WALNUT STREET/JUNIPER STREET REVISED JUGHANDLE
- 9** ROUTE 9 IMPROVEMENTS
- P** PEARL STREET REDESIGN
- R** BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN CONNECTION, EMERALD NECKLACE
- J** PLAYGROUND IMPROVEMENTS AT JUNIPER STREET RESIDENCES
- S** WAYFINDING SIGNAGE SYSTEM (throughout area)
- B** BRIDGE DEMOLITION





## DEFINING PRINCIPLES

The following principles developed in coordination with the Steering Committee have guided the definition of the initiatives resulting from the Gateway East process:

- Define a strong, green gateway to Brookline and Brookline Village;
- Reduce the dominance of Route 9 and streets in the area, investigating ways to reduce pavement;
- Improve safety and convenience for pedestrians and bicycles at street crossings;
- Improve automobile circulation while moderating speeds through the area;
- Address pedestrian bridge: repair, replacement or removal;
- Expand integrated pedestrian connections between Brookline Village, residential areas, the Emerald Necklace, the MBTA D Line, and throughout the area;
- Establish a safe and convenient pedestrian crossing of Route 9/Washington Street to reconnect the Emerald Necklace for park visitors;
- Create a strong and safe nighttime environment through use of lighting;
- Create attractive, permeable, and transparent building facades along street;
- Introduce coordinated furnishings and signage;
- Ensure the Two Brookline Place design is integrated with the scale, character and connection networks of the study area;
- Create an active, vibrant street environment with restaurants and community-oriented retail;
- Expand public space and teen recreation activities;
- Introduce appropriately-scaled infill development at key locations to reinforce the street edge of Route 9;
- Make the T station a safe, attractive community gathering place, and improve bus stops to make them safe and attractive waiting spaces;
- Coordinate efforts with state and Boston agencies; and,
- Coordinate project planning with early cost estimates to set priorities.

All efforts will include and address streetscape elements (paving, street furniture, street lighting), based on standards developed in early 2006. The selected palette reflects a slightly contemporary twist on existing Brookline Village standards, in keeping with Gateway East's eclectic mix of architectural styles. Further, its application reinforces the planted landscape of the Emerald Necklace by introducing additional street trees along parcel edges at this important crossroads in and gateway to Brookline.

## IDENTIFIED PROJECTS

### IMPROVEMENTS TO THE MBTA STATION

#### T.1 Hire a design consultant to revise design

- Improve shelters with village character preserved
- Create strong axis connecting to the Emerald Necklace
- Increase shelter and shade, especially on the outbound platform
- Introduce appropriate materials and luminaires
- Organize furnishings and expand gateways/entry points to the platform area, eliminate obstacles to pedestrians
- Add signs to promote clear and attractive pedestrian connections to the Village, the Emerald Necklace and the bus.

*The Town hired Lozano Baskin & Associates in October of 2005 to develop a design proposal for the station area.*

#### T.2 Consider most appropriate phasing of improvements



### WALNUT STREET/JUNIPER REVISED JUGHANDLE \$1.9M

*The Town has identified funding for the design of this project, and anticipated a procurement process for a designer in Fall of 2006.*

#### W.1 Preserve function of jughandle, improve clarity of jughandle for drivers

- Walnut Street, extended to create a new signalized intersection at Pearl Street, with improved vehicular access and new pedestrian crossings
- Improved intersection spacing (400' to High Street, 400' to Brookline Avenue)
- Removing the pedestrian bridge and combining the Fire Station with parcel remaining creates a new city block

#### W.2 Improve access for Juniper Street residents

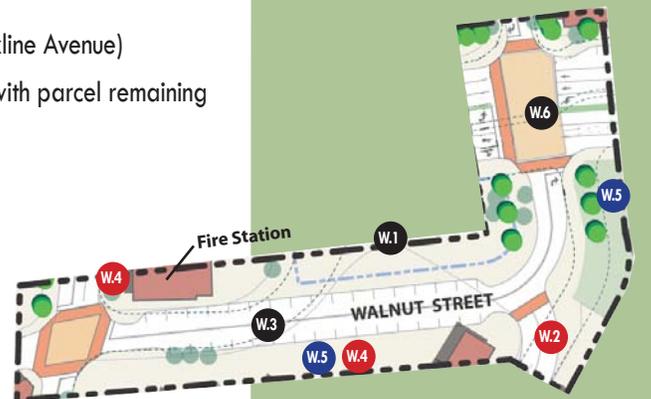
- Improved pedestrian access via new signal-protected crossing
- Closest surface crossings are currently 400 feet east or west of desire line
- Improved vehicle access via Walnut Street to High Street

#### W.3 Improve access for Pearl Street, Brookline Place

- New left turn from Route 9 to Pearl Street

#### W.4 Narrow lanes and reduce unnecessary pavement

- Narrow lanes to 11' where practical
- Create parallel parking lanes with curb extensions to preserve parking supply, buffer pedestrians, and calm traffic on both sides of the street

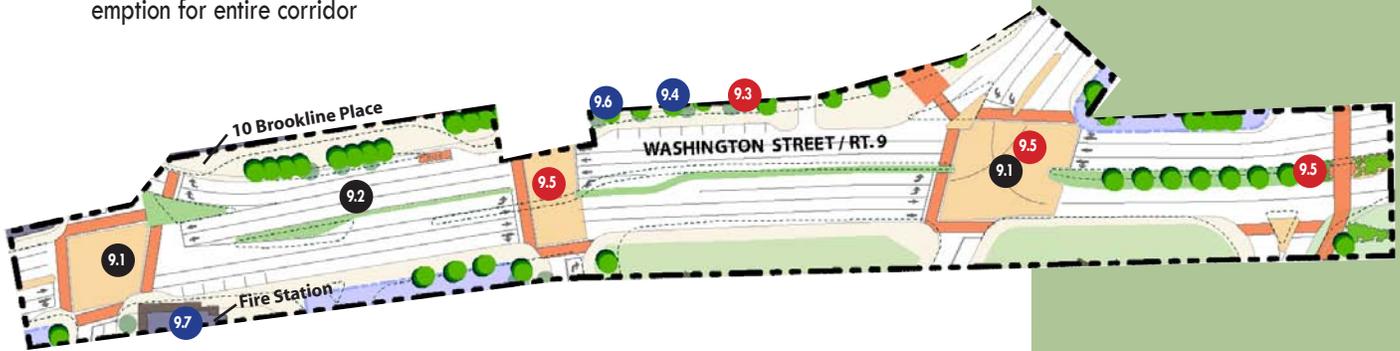


#### KEY

- Pedestrian Improvements
- Traffic Improvements
- Visual/Historic Improvements

**W.5** Widen sidewalks, improve pedestrian environment

**W.6** Install a new traffic signal at Washington Street/Pearl Street/Walnut Street to provide a protected crossing for the major (50+ pedestrians/hour) demand. Provide new traffic signal controllers, improved traffic management system, and emergency signal pre-emption for entire corridor



### **ROUTE 9 IMPROVEMENTS \$900K**

**9.1** Signal Timing - Eliminate split phase at Washington Street to reduce congestion

**9.2** Narrow lanes and reduce unnecessary pavement

- Narrow lanes to 11' where practical
- Improve lane alignment, eliminate excess pavement
- Remove bus lane at 10 Brookline Place and widen sidewalk, although stop remains

**9.3** Widen sidewalks and improve pedestrian environment with wayfinding signs

**9.4** Introduce streetscape elements based on the Gateway East standards

**9.5** Create safe, convenient pedestrian crossings

- All new pedestrian signals to include countdowns and audible signals
- New crosswalk added on east crossing of Washington Street to High Street
- New crosswalk added with wide refuge at island for Emerald Necklace travelers
  - Special paving, in-pavement lighting for strong visual cues for drivers
- Other crossings get shorter with narrower roads, wider sidewalks, larger islands

**9.6** Introduce street trees along parcel edges

**9.7** Preserve fire station access

#### KEY

- Pedestrian Improvements
- Traffic Improvements
- Visual/Historic Improvements

### **BRIDGE DEMOLITION \$250K**

*The Town has identified funding for the design of this project, and anticipated a procurement process for a designer in Fall of 2006.*

There is currently no accessible crossing of Route 9/Washington Street near Pearl Street, because the pedestrian bridge is closed due to structural deficiencies combined with the lack of an at-grade crossing at a signalized intersection. It is a high priority to reestablish an accessible crossing as soon as possible.

The existing pedestrian bridge would need significant investment for repair. The bridge and the

stair/ramp structure are visual obstacles that block important views of the Route 9 corridor and the historic Emerald Necklace bridge. In addition, pedestrians and bicycles must go up, over and down, well out of their way to cross Route 9 via the bridge.

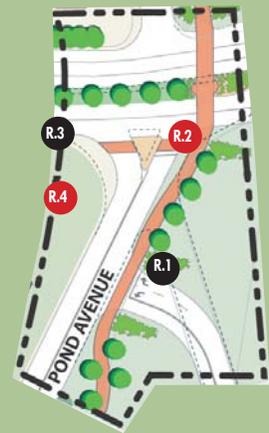
The pedestrian bridge would be removed and replaced by a signal-protected at-grade crossing of Route 9, between Pearl Street and a realigned Walnut Street.



**BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN CONNECTION, EMERALD NECKLACE \$520K**

The strategy outlined in this report has several strengths, but may not be the definitive approach. The Town will seek funding for a more detailed alternatives analysis and design effort to address this critical bicycle and pedestrian connection.

- R.1 Hire a designer to investigate alternative approaches to address this crossing and alternative approaches to River Road’s configuration for pedestrian and bicycle access
- R.2 Improve access for Emerald Necklace pedestrians and cyclists
  - Direct connection to Route 9 crossing
  - Improved geometry, narrower crossings allow a more comfortable connection for bicyclists and pedestrians
  - Relocated Riverway access point allows a more comfortable transition between that roadway crossing and a second crossing at Washington Street for bicyclists and pedestrians.
- R.3 Narrow lanes and reduce corner radii where possible to reduce unnecessary pavement
- R.4 Widen sidewalks, improve pedestrian environment



**PLAYGROUND IMPROVEMENTS AT JUNIPER STREET RESIDENCES \$400K**

- J.1 Work with Brookline Parks and Recreation to plan for a remedy to the inappropriate materials and programming at these open spaces

The Town of Brookline has committed \$30,000 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding to be used for the redesign of the playground.



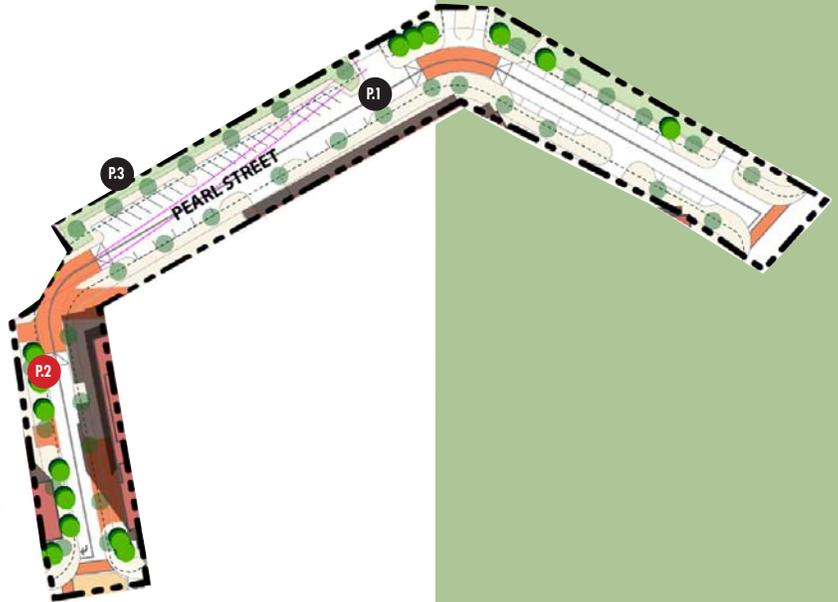
**WAYFINDING SIGNAGE SYSTEM \$40K**

- S.1 Hire a designer to develop directional signs with a distinct Village identity
- S.2 Include directions to important destinations
  - Brookline Village
  - MBTA Station
  - Emerald Necklace
  - Parking (Station Street, Brookline Place, Town Hall)



## PEARL STREET REDESIGN \$380K

- P.1** Narrow lanes and reduce unnecessary pavement
- Narrow lanes to 11' where practical
- P.2** Eliminate on-street parking on the west leg of Pearl between the curve and Route 9, widen sidewalks to improve pedestrian environment
- P.3** Maintain and manage on-street parking for short-term use
- Parallel spaces lost because of traffic calming and driveways are replaced by creating diagonal parking along the north edge of Pearl Street.



## STREETSCAPE PALETTES

With the range of projects identified for the Public Realm Plan in the Interim Report, the Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC) reconvened in February of 2006 to establish a streetscape "palette" of standard materials and fixtures, for the streetscape finishes to be part of each project. This palette, once implemented, will ensure a degree of continuity in the appearance of the public realm in Gateway East, and strengthen its identity as part of Brookline Village.

Materials for the palette were selected to achieve the following goals:

- Contemporary expression to coordinate with district architecture;
- Close coordination with Brookline Village streetscape finishes to create a sense of connection, and also allow for small variations;
- Coordination with Town standards; and,
- Reinforce the strong identity of the existing trees and plantings for Gateway East.

Higher priority for careful selection and consistency is placed on the most visually dominant materials in a streetscape environment: paving, street lighting, and street trees. Paving creates the strongest sense of consistency, connection or change, with a large area acting as a "carpet" along which pedestrians travel. Lighting, or changes in luminaires, are tall and repetitive, noticeable over large areas. Street tree plantings provide a buffer between the pedestrian and the road and are the most effective tool to achieve a "green gateway" concept. A **secondary** level of priority is placed on street furnishings and art, as they are more sporadic in the environment. Benches, bollards and refuse and recycling receptacles make a strong integrated system if all pieces are coordinated, but are less powerful with

frequent exceptions. Artwork is a beneficial exception, accenting the “background” nature of the standard palette.

Special consideration was given to options for the mid-block pedestrian walkway connecting the Brookline Village MBTA station through the Two Brookline Place site to the Emerald Necklace. The private property is planned for redevelopment, and approvals granted by the Town of Brookline outline guidelines for the treatment of the path and the building facades that will help define it. This pathway is an essential element of the pedestrian environment and offers considerable opportunities for creative treatments: pedestrian-scaled lighting, multi-scaled planting designs, special paving finishes such as colored, recycled glass aggregate for concrete, public art installations, and integration of the walkways with anticipated plazas. The design of this element will be subject to review in the development process.

Currently in Gateway East there is a hodgepodge of fixtures, furnishings and materials. Existing streetscape palettes in other areas in Brookline may serve as prototypes for consideration for a new streetscape palette. The CAC looked at and considered:

- the historic-looking gas light streetlights in Brookline Village, together with concrete sidewalks and brick accent strips, and black-metal furnishings;
- the contemporary furnishings and fixtures being installed on MBTA Green Line stations: asphalt pavers, shoebox lighting, sleek metal benches and the like;
- gooseneck, shop-styled shaded luminaries newly installed along Harvard Street in Coolidge Corner, together with concrete sidewalks and brick accent strips; and,
- historic-looking acorn and pendant fixtures to be installed along Beacon Street as part of its reconstruction.

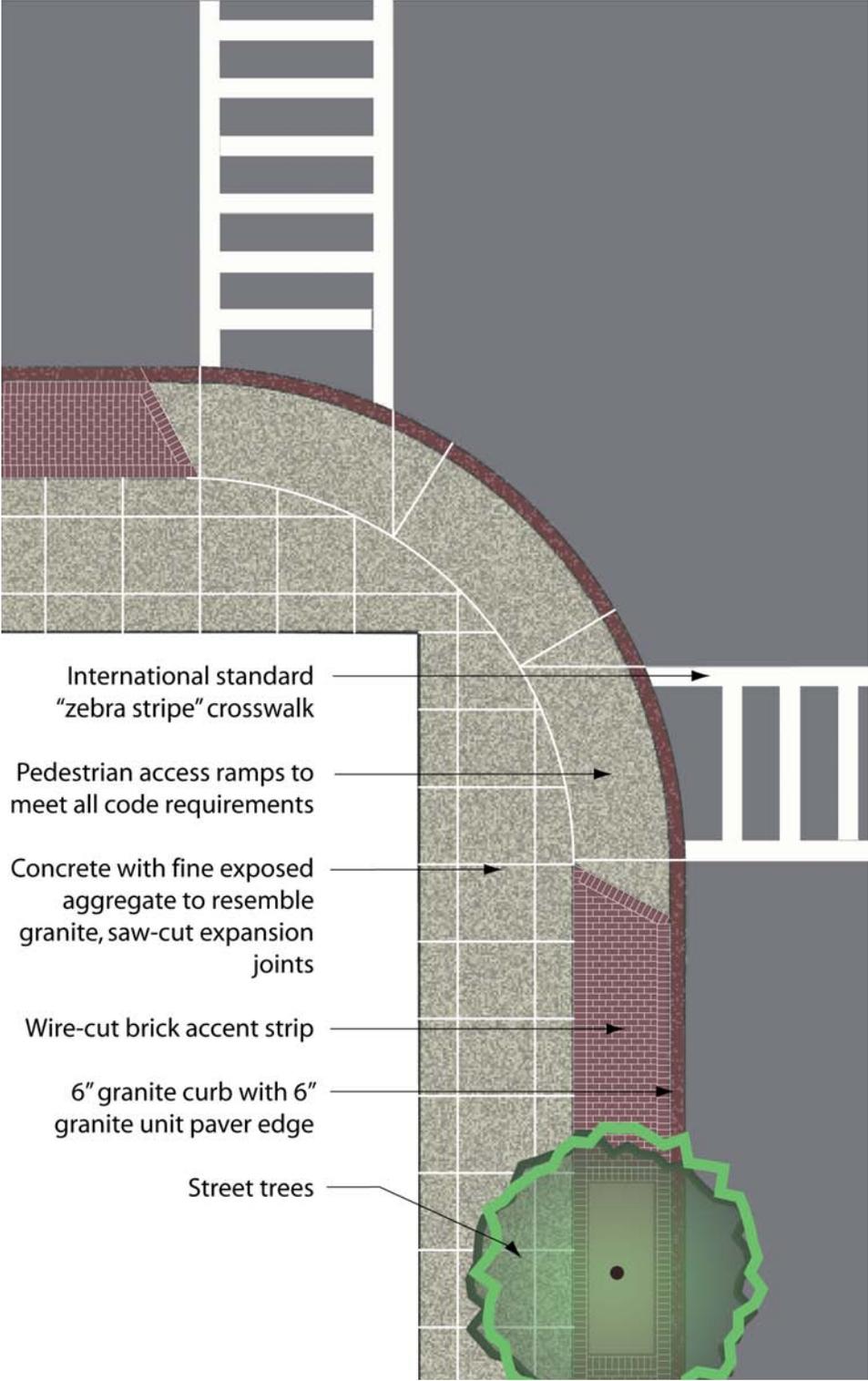
To address public art as an element in the public realm, it is recommended that a process be established for fund and encourage locally-produced art installations be incorporated into this project.

Recent advances in understanding the technology of accessibility in streetscapes have led to a strong preference for the use of concrete along paths of travel. Its smoothness and durability create the best long-term surface for accessible sidewalks, minimizing impediments to those with physical limitations. The desire for color and texture in streetscapes may still be achieved with unit pavers or alternative materials in an accent strip along the curb. The accent strip is also the best location to organize signs, meters, fire hydrants, street trees, and the other curbside infrastructure found on sidewalks.

The elements of the streetscape must be considered individually for durability, appropriateness of use, and attractiveness, but also for their coordination with the overall palette of elements. Discussion of palette options, weighing elements currently used in Brookline with newer concepts, led to the collection of the following palette:

<p>Sidewalks</p>	<p>Walkways of concrete with fine, exposed aggregate and resembling granite; accent strips with wire-cut brick unit pavers in a traditional brick color. Paving pattern will incorporate edging patterns around manholes, tree pits and edges. <i>Potential Enhancement:</i> Recycled glass aggregate in a rainbow variety of colors.</p>
<p>Street lighting</p>	<p>Continuation of the Lumec fixtures used along Harvard Street in Coolidge Corner, to create a sense of continuity between the two districts. <i>Potential Enhancement:</i> Pedestrian-scaled, reflective downlights for public plazas and mid-block pedestrian connections.</p>
<p>Benches and refuse/recycling receptacles</p>	<p>Landscapeforms Scarborough, enameled black steel with a contemporary twist on the traditional, and specified with a central arm rest.</p>
<p>Bollards</p>	<p>Sanderson precast concrete with fine aggregate finish similar to walkways: Arbutus or 21" Sphere</p>
<p>Curbs</p>	<p>Granite curbs</p>
<p>Crosswalks</p>	<p>International Standard Reflective 'Zebra Stripe' <i>Potential Enhancement:</i> In-pavement lighting</p>





*Illustration of application of streetscape palette, with "running bond" brick pattern in accent strip to replicate details in Brookline Village.*

## STREET TREES

The Brookline Tree Planting Committee made the following recommendations about the placement and species of new street trees for Gateway East. Their recommendations do much to enhance the existing trees of the Emerald Necklace. Generally, their recommendations included:

- Adding trees on each side of Olmsted Park at Curley Overpass;
- Along Washington Street, if possible a double row of trees at 2 & 10 Brookline Place (ideally in long tree trenches and not individual tree pits); and,
- Creating a “Punch Bowl Grove” at the Walnut St. intersection, identifying the historic site of the Punch Bowl Tavern.

The plan of tree plantings below includes the following schedule of species:

American beech	5
Pin oak	17
Red oak	23
Sargent cherry	10
Scarlet oak	8
Silver linden	9
Small ornamentals	33
Sugar maple	4



American Beech



Pin Oak



Red Oak



Sargent Cherry



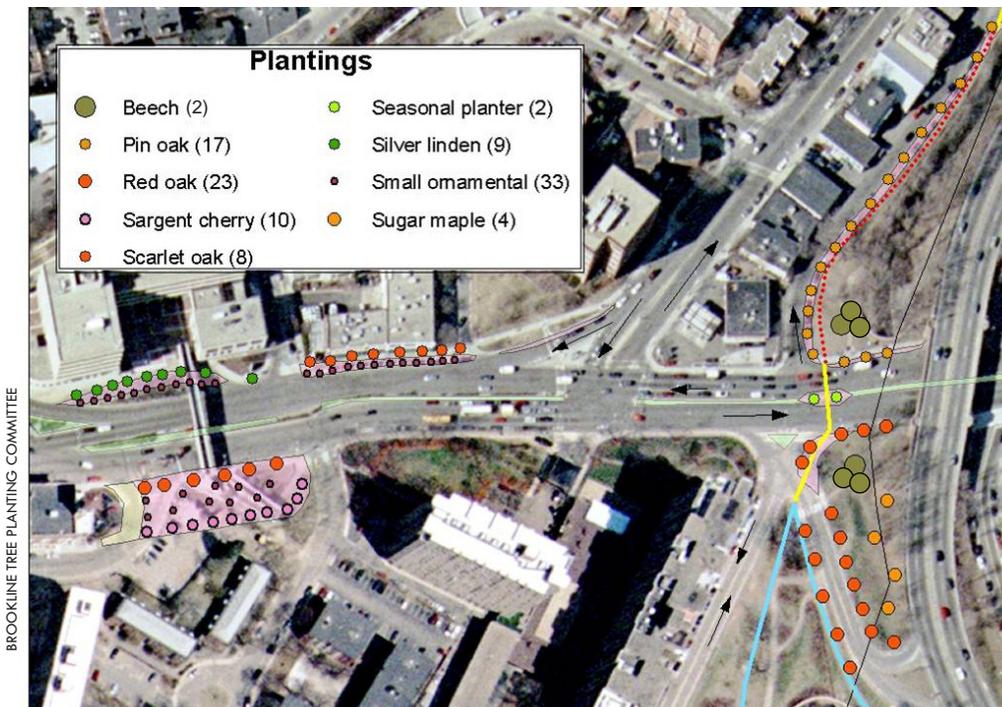
Silver Linden



Redbud (Ornamental)



Sugar Maple

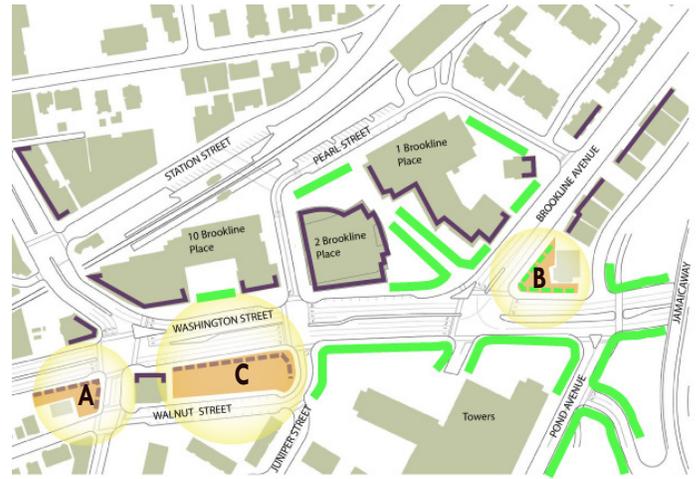


## LAND USE

The CAC expressed an interest in considering land use issues as part of the public realm. While it is not within the purview of this study to implement land use changes on private property, it is appropriate for this study to begin to outline some goals for future land use patterns.

The Gateway East project area includes at its core the space of Washington Street/Route 9, and the buildings that define that space. It is a large space, and historic or large buildings adjacent help frame it – the bank building, the firehouse, 1 Brookline Place, the tall Brook House and the dense landscaping in its front yard, and the future 2 Brookline Place development will contribute as well. There are three key locations with modest structures that do not contain the space of the street, but rather allow it to leak out:

- A - The southwest corner of High and Washington (currently a Dunkin Donuts)
- B - The northeast corner of Brookline and Washington (currently a gas station)
- C - The pedestrian bridge's landing site at Walnut and Washington will be vacated with the demolition of the bridge and expanded with the relocation of Walnut Street as part of this project



Three key parcels are important to consider in future land use concepts because of their role in terminating key views and shaping space.



Diagrams show opportunities for edge treatments at the three key parcels:

- indicates existing edge treatments
- indicates where new edge treatments are proposed
- indicates on-site parking that could be screened with new edge treatments

Each of these sites terminates an important view on an approach to the Gateway East project area, making their appearance even more of an issue.

### ***Interim Treatments***

There are a range of interim treatments to create stronger edges on these parcels and improve their appearance that the Town of Brookline may consider in coordination with the private land owners:

- Minimize curb cuts: number and width

Reducing the number of locations where cars enter traffic will contribute significant improvements to roadway operations. In addition, fewer curb cuts mean more space available for planted buffers and other edge treatments.

- Create green buffers
- Add street trees
- Utilize furnishings, fencing, short walls

Each of these three treatments create a stronger edge where a building façade is not in place. Further, the plantings and street trees contribute to this project's goal of adding street trees in the area.

- Reduce amount of, size of signs

The Town of Brookline regulates signs through Article 7 of the Town Zoning By-law and the Planning Board has the role of reviewing applications for commercial signs. Size is one of the criteria applied to sign applications by the Planning Board. The Town may work with business operators to ensure that signs in the Gateway East area meet the guidelines.

At the gas station, there may be opportunities to reduce the number and size of curb cuts, while maintaining great access to the station. Currently, there are cars parked for days in locations that block part of a curb cut; that is one location that seemingly could be narrowed without impacting operations. Longer planting beds and additional street trees in this location would contribute greatly towards the continuity of plantings in Gateway East, especially given the proximity to the Emerald Necklace. A similar strategy is applicable at the Dunkin Donuts site, to create a stronger, green edge there.

The bridge landing parcel would be reconfigured with the implementation of the Walnut Street/ Pearl Street intersection. It would become a standalone parcel on three sides, with the fourth side attached to the fire station. The interim treatment of street trees would be useful in this location.



Existing Condition



Addition of Brick Wall



Additional Street Trees

The gas station at Brookline and Washington was used to show how subtle edge treatments may improve the pedestrian environment. At top, the existing view. In the middle, a brick landscape wall is added to screen uses beyond. The bottom image includes additional street trees and shows their screening benefits.



Existing Condition



Additional Proposed Plantings and Windows

Existing buildings may also consider renovations or treatments to create softer or more transparent facades. In this example, 10 Brookline Place creates larger windows at ground level, and adds plantings.

## Long Term Treatments

The CAC also considered the long-term futures of these parcels, and the nature of their redevelopment. For any redevelopment in the project area, these general guidelines would apply:

- Transparent building facades, meaning much glass area and the ability to see activity inside the building, especially on the ground floor;
- Active ground floor uses, such as retail or restaurants;
- Appropriate building heights, with three stories being a target height that the CAC views as being in keeping with the area's context;
- Expanded residential, commercial, or recreation space; and,
- Retained green buffers/street trees at Brookline and Washington.

The following image depicts in a diagrammatic fashion an example of the spatial benefit and impact of a building on one of the three key parcels.

*If a building were developed on the site where the bridge landing is today, it might be about this size and shape - three stories tall.*



*Without a new building developed on the site, it may look like this.*



## **IMPLEMENTATION**

By breaking the plan into discreet projects, the phasing of design and construction of the Gateway East Public Realm Plan was defined to allow early implementation for projects as opportunities arise.

With the MBTA Brookline Village Station Design process underway, and the Walnut Street Redesign scheduled, the implementation of specific action items from the plan were underway prior to completion of this report.

The Town of Brookline is studying funding and scheduling to establish the most efficient and effective means of implementing these initiatives and making the Gateway East vision a reality.

Perhaps the most important result of this plan is the CAC's recommendation to rename the Gateway East area as

### **“Village Square”**

in order to commemorate the historic name of the area, and utilize a name with clear connections with Brookline Village.