

# BRAINTREE ELECTRIC LIGHT DEPARTMENT

## Brownfield Revitalization + Community Engagement



November 11, 2010



## DOCUMENT INTENT:

This document reflects and reports on a community engagement process that took place between designers and Town of Braintree stakeholders, including members of the Braintree Town Council, Braintree Planning Board, Mayor of Braintree Joseph Sullivan, Braintree Electric Light Department (BELD) representatives, members of the East Braintree Civic Association, members of the Braintree Yacht Club, and the broader Braintree community between January and May 2010. The effort concentrates on a 1.6 acre parcel of land along the Monatiquot River in Braintree, Massachusetts that is currently owned by BELD.

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## COMMENTS/QUESTIONS

This document is not intended as a final plan or series of plans, but rather as a brief to reflect the aspirations and concerns of the participants in the planning process. The document invites comments and perspectives that will inform the Town of Braintree as the BELD property evolves over the coming months.

[Comments on this document may be made to Christine Stickney via email at: CStickney@braintreema.gov](#) or by written comments to: Office of Planning and Community Development, Town of Braintree, 1 JFK Drive, Braintree, MA 02184.

## CDRC-BOSTON

The Community Design Resource Center of Boston plays a significant role in the civic life of Greater Boston by bringing together planning and design expertise with communities and organizations in need. The CDRC engages architects, landscape architects and designers in building a network of volunteer support to bring about community change by providing high-quality, professional services. This outreach is geared towards clients which would not otherwise have access to such services.

## CDRC-BOSTON TEAM

This work was carried out by professionals (architects, landscape architects and planners) associated with the Community Design Resource Center of Boston (CDRC-Boston), a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization.

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Front cover: Braintree Electric Light Department,  
view looking northeast (2010)

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Above: Switch House, BELD 44 Allen Street, view looking northwest (2010)

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Above: Braintree Electric Light Department, view looking north, (1941) Source: "Images of America - Braintree", John A. Dennehy, 2010

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Older cities and towns are rediscovering their industrial cores and underutilized properties. However, the transition of brownfield or former brownfield sites into viable redevelopment projects is beyond the means of many developers who work in urban settings. They must contend with a myriad of hurdles that can impede a site's rehabilitation.

Such challenges can include the burden of possible contamination and clean up costs, land acquisition and/or assembly, and neighborhood groups who are naturally concerned about the impacts of congestion and change.

In the case of the BELD site, there are **five outstanding attributes** that - taken together - offer prospects for success and make the property particularly enticing for redevelopment:

1. The waterfront site seemingly has **minimal contaminants**;
2. Opportunities for a new, **publicly accessible waterfront park** abound as well as pedestrian connections to adjacent recreation spaces;
3. Two existing buildings on the site provide a link to the town's industrial past and are poised for **reuse opportunities**;
4. The site is near a **commuter rail station** and streetscape enhancements between this property and the station are funded and under design;
5. The opportunity exists to create a sustainable program that includes a **mix of uses** responding to community needs, market demands and synergies with economic development initiatives across the bridge with the **Braintree/Weymouth Landing**.

The community engagement process that occurred over the course of six months and three public meetings garnered ideas about the future of the site. Residents were concerned about four major thematic aspects that would be impacted with the site's redevelopment: transportation, public access, zoning and scale of development.

Participants demanded **access to the river**, now inaccessible. There was unanimous consensus that a portion of the site be dedicated to **public open space**. There were concerns about the negative impacts of parking and traffic congestion in an area already burdened with **transportation challenges**. Regarding zoning, there was apprehension about new regulations taking place across the river in the Landing and how that would influence **density on this site**. Finally, there was concern about how much development may be proposed and what **uses** may emerge.

However, participants also recognized that progress on the site's redevelopment had been stymied by hesitancy to embrace a new vision and that the waterfront property - located at a **crucial gateway** to the town - needed to move forward from "eyesore" to genuine community asset.

Three **conceptual proposals** were presented as possible development futures for the site if market potential emerges and a developer can be identified. Each proposal contains a major, publicly accessible open space with riverfront access. The proposals explore a range of uses in a variety of development scales that will transition the site from a vacant, previously industrial property into a cherished community asset and **beautiful place**.

The time is now right to capitalize on the existing infrastructure of the BELD site and marshal the momentum of public will to move beyond dreaming and planning and into implementation.

## ARTS and CULTURE

Two existing buildings would be reused for live/work artist lofts complemented with an amphitheater.



## CONFERENCE/WELLNESS CENTER

Existing buildings would be reused and a new structure (in the location of the former Boiler House) constructed for the Wellness Center; cafe and riverfront park.



## ACTIVE ADULT COMMUNITY

All new construction in "village character" for over-50 demographic; community gardens.



# INTRODUCTION

## PROJECT GOALS

The near term purpose of the effort was to establish an **effective participatory process** that could align the goals of the property owner with the surrounding community and the Town of Braintree. The long term objective of the engagement is to enable the redevelopment of a vacant, former industrial property to proceed into a vibrant and **economically-feasible community asset**. The three public meetings that were held as part of this effort sought to create a new vision for the property that could be shared by all and identify and unravel barriers to the site's disposition to **move the project forward**.

The planning process also sought to garner public opinion, synthesize community aspirations and flag areas of potential concern. This report serves as a springboard for more dialogue about the site's rehabilitation.

The design proposals contained herein are **conceptual in nature**; much more work needs to be done to advance the ideas. They explore a range of design, program and development scenarios to elicit public comment and to test the tolerance for potential redevelopment. The report concludes with itemizing **essential next steps** that are necessary to enable the site to be redeveloped and provides recommendations for **cooperative planning initiatives** in the years ahead.

## REGIONAL CONTEXT

Incorporated as a Town in 1640, Braintree, Massachusetts is located ten miles south of Boston. The town is bordered by Quincy on the north, Weymouth on the east, Holbrook on the south and Randolph to the west. The Town of Braintree has approximately 34,000 residents. The neighborhood context surrounding this site includes residential areas within the Town of Weymouth.

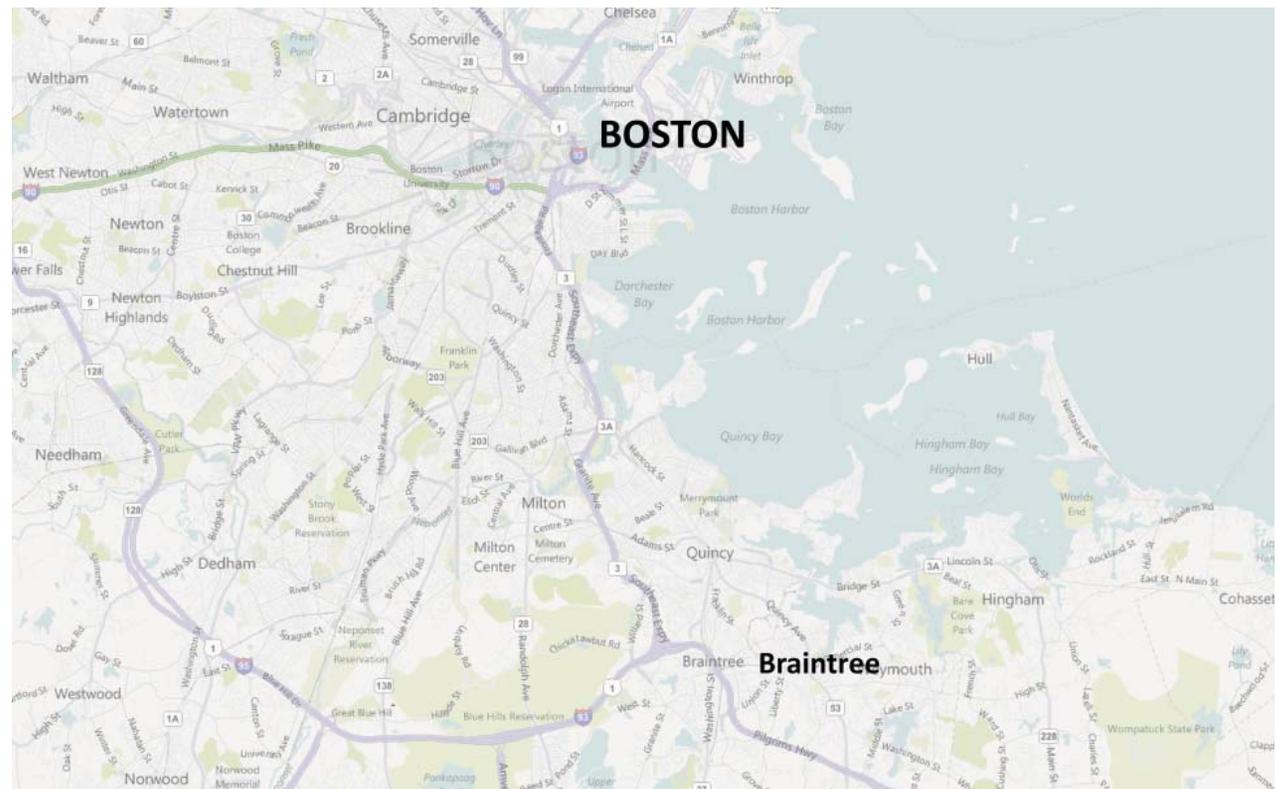
2.  
Braintree Electric Light Department

Therefore, the neighborhood context surrounding this site comprises an area of 2.4 square miles and approximately 14,000 residents within a ten minute walk or bike to the project site.

Braintree has excellent transportation access north into Greater Boston and south towards Cape Cod with Route I-93 and Route 3. There are two rail lines that lead into the city, the MBTA Subway and the Commuter Rail. Braintree Station is the last stop on the Red Line subway approximately four miles from this site. The Greenbush Line of the Old Colony Commuter Rail has a stop directly across the bridge from the BELD property. This station opened in November 2007. There is one MBTA Bus line (Route 225) that accesses the area.



Above: Neighborhood context and relationship of BELD site to MBTA East Braintree/Weymouth Landing Commuter Rail Station (2010).



Above: Regional context (2010)

## THE SITE TODAY

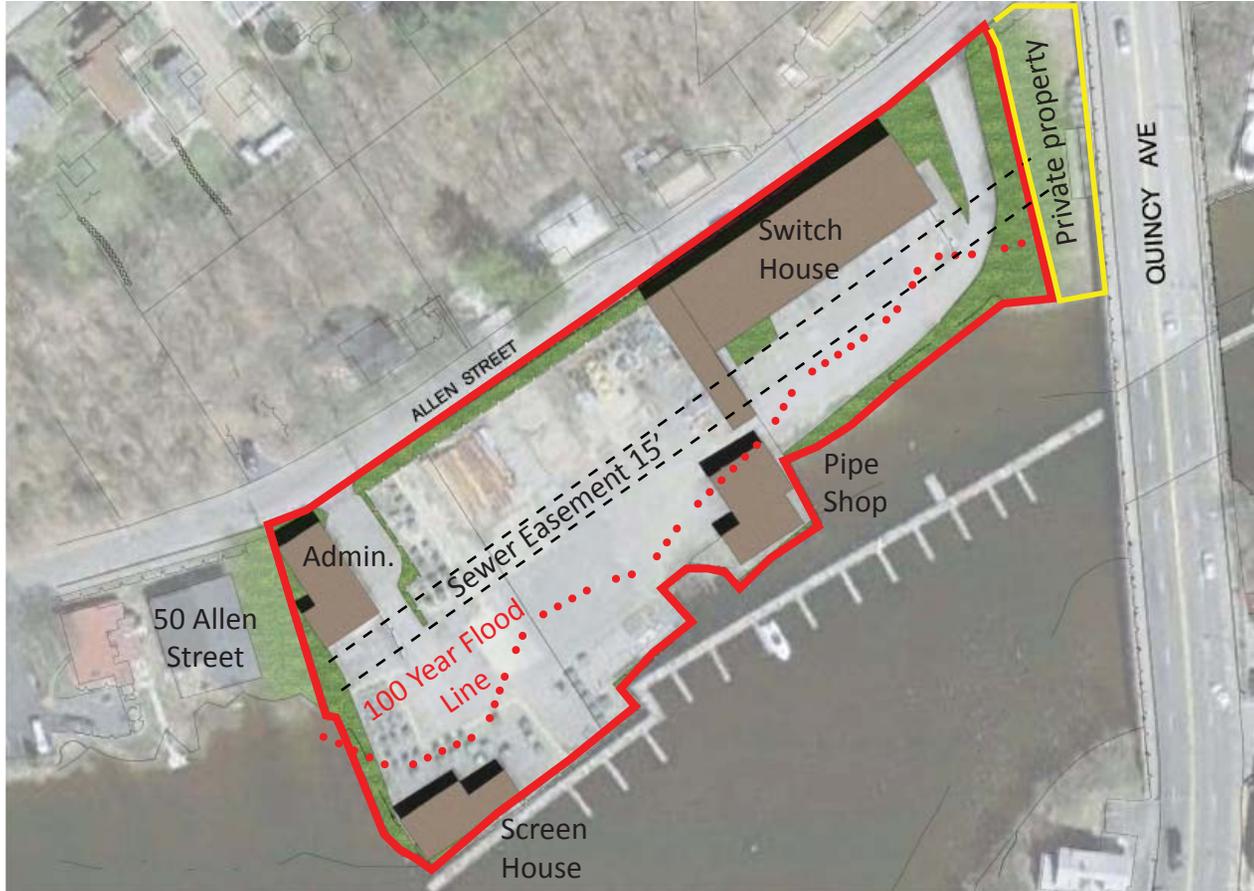
The BELD Allen Street site is a **1.6 acre parcel** of land in the neighborhood of East Braintree, within the Town of Braintree. The property is bounded by Allen Street to the north, an empty private lot to the east and the Monaquot River to the south. To the west the property abuts 50 Allen Street, the Starling Furniture Company.

The site is adjacent to the historic village of Weymouth Landing and is within easy walking distance to the MBTA commuter rail's Weymouth Landing-East Braintree stop on the Greenbush

Line. **Watson Park** is a large open space to the east and is separated from the site by the **Braintree Yacht Club** and Quincy Avenue which is a busy arterial street.

The site itself is mostly flat at an elevation approximately 12 feet below Allen Street. Access to the property is via two drives on the east and west ends of the site. A retaining wall borders the edge of Allen Street where a previously existing building was demolished in 1993.

A significant portion of the property lies within the



Above: Site Plan (2010), 1.6 acre BELD property outlined in red.

## SITE CHARACTERISTICS:

**Ownership:** Braintree Electric Light Department

**Parcel Size:** 1.6 acres. Parcel does not currently include narrow privately-owned .3 acre property directly to the east and adjacent to the Quincy Street Bridge.

**Frontage:** 500' on Allen Street

**Topography:** Site slopes 12' north to south, very hilly surrounding terrain

**Zoning:** Currently zoned Commercial (auto body, contractor yards, manufacturing, day care, garage, auto sales). At this time, this site is not included in the Braintree/Weymouth Landing Overlay District that is under study with the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission (MAPC).

**Environmental Condition:** An Environmental Site Assessment Conducted by Earth Tech (1997) reported "no significant areas of environmental concern" and recommended "no further investigation of the property at 44 Allen Street in Braintree, Massachusetts". However, this assessment was preliminary in nature and was not intended to fulfill the Phase 1 Initial Site Investigation requirements of the Massachusetts Contingency Plan (310 CMR 40.0000) or the requirements of the American Society of Testing and Materials (ASTM) designations E 1527 and E 1528.

**100-year flood plain** of the Monaquot River and has a documented history of flooding. In addition, a 30 inch MWRA sewer main bisects the property from east to west.

## Existing Buildings

There are four existing buildings on the property:

### 1. Pipe Shop

This small, one story building in the middle of the site appears to be structurally unsound and is currently within the 100 year flood zone.

### 2. Screen House

This small, one story building on the west end of the property appears to be structurally unsound and is currently within the 100 year flood zone.

### 3. Administration Building

#4 Allen Street is a two story, 4,000 square foot early twentieth century neoclassical building which formerly housed administrative offices for BELD.

### 4. Switch House

#44 Allen Street is a 14,000 square foot, two-story brick building built in 1935. This building is the largest building on the property and fronts Allen Street. It is a poured in place concrete structure with brick masonry and steel trussed roof.

The former boiler house and generator rooms, portions of the 44 Allen Street facility, were demolished in 1993. The area where the former boiler house was located consists of concrete slabs, foundation walls and gravel. The property today is mostly paved and is surrounded by a chain link fence.

The residential architecture of Allen Street across from the site contains a number of vernacular buildings post-dating the 1840's arrival of the South Shore (Old Colony) railroad.

4.  
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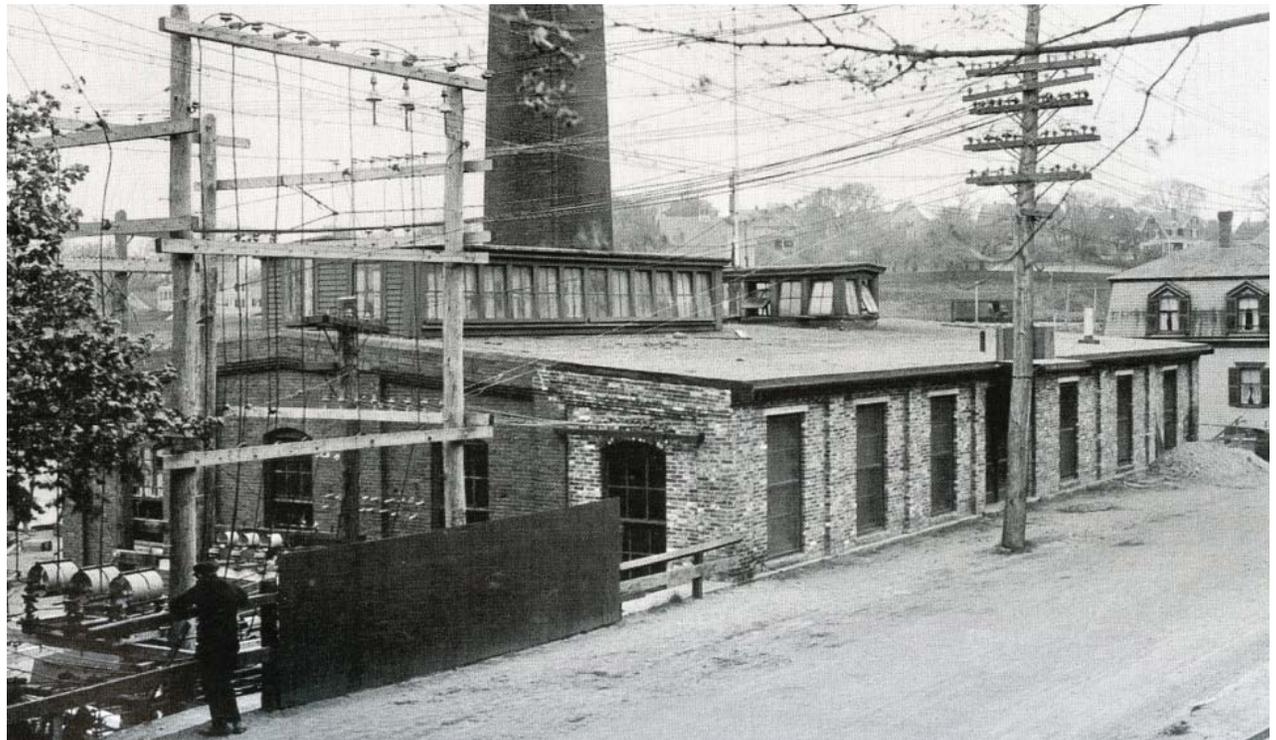
## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The area around the site was used for boat building as early as the seventeenth century. The property to the west (50 Allen Street) is the former Starling Boat Company and is one of the last vestiges of maritime manufacturing facilities on this portion of the Monaquot River. The area also emerged early on as a place of industry, with a significant number of mill sites along the river.

The 44 Allen Street property has been owned by BELD from the early 1890's. It had been used as a power generating station from around 1892 until the early 1970's when the power generation operations were shifted to BELD's Potter Station facility. From 1970 until 1993, the site was used for storage and office space.

While the use and storage of hazardous materials on the property had occurred since the facility began operations, there are few traces remaining of this industrial heritage. At one time, the site contained four 30,000 gallon above ground storage tanks (AST's) within a concrete dike; a 275 gallon AST, a 30,000 gallon underground storage tank (UST); a 3,000 gallon UST; a 500 gallon UST, a station service transformer and three distribution system transformers.

Coal was the primary fuel at the generating station until conversion to No. 6 oil in the early to mid 1940's. From that time until the decommissioning of the station in the early 1970's, No. 6 fuel oil was stored in the four 30,000 gallon AST and the 30,000 gallon UST located on the property.



Above: BELD Boiler House (now demolished), view looking west along Allen Street (1921) Source: "Images of America - Braintree," John A. Dennehy, 2010

# SITE ANALYSIS

## OPPORTUNITIES + CHALLENGES

The BELD site plays an important role as a cultural and environmental touchstone both for the town and for its surrounding neighborhood. Redevelopment of the property demands a careful calibration of open space and new uses which can help to activate the site without adversely affecting the surrounding context.

Challenges and opportunities for the site's rehabilitation exist in the following areas:

### Neighborhood/Civic:

- Located on an edge between a quiet residential neighborhood and a lively commercial district.
- Neighbors are well organized with specific opinions about what they wish to see.

- Surrounding sites include influential social institutions such as two yacht clubs, the town recreational fields, and beaches.
- Town mayor and administration have an active interest in creating a signature, visionary project.
- The Board of Directors of the company formerly operating on the site seeks assurances that the vision will be economically viable.
- Keeping neighborhood connections has been deemed very important to stakeholders.

### Historic:

- Site history can be traced back to pre-European contact era.
- Important local sea port during colonial times.
- Buildings of historic architectural and cultural importance in the vicinity.



Above: Aerial perspective of BELD site looking west.



Images of Existing Site: Top: Administration Building, Middle: Screen House. Bottom: Retaining wall of former Boiler House and Generator Rooms which were demolished in 1993.

- Site played an important part in the development of the electric power industry.
- Site played an important part in the economic development of the town and its image.

**Environmental:**

- Located in an estuarine area at the mouth of a river, the site has tidal flats.
- Site has high coverage of impervious paving.
- A portion of the site lies within the 100-year flood plain and resides under the jurisdiction of local, state, and federal environmental agencies.
- Smelt run has recently been reintroduced in a stream nearby.
- Site has undergone initial environmental testing (1997) and deemed to have “no remaining significant areas of concern”.

**Economic:**

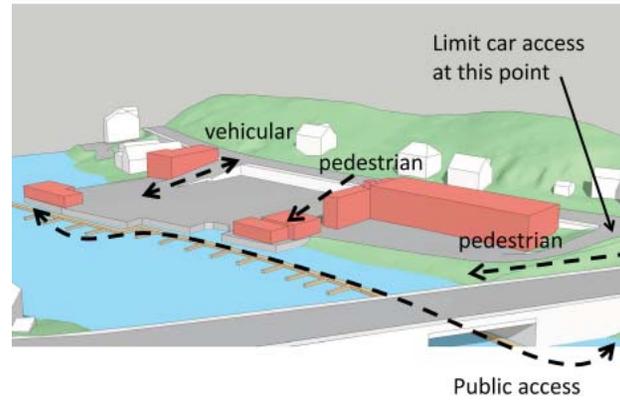
- Close to a busy commuter rail station.
- Close to major roads and bus routes.
- Close to a lively commercial area.
- Mixed-use development proposed for nearby.
- Site lies at an entry “gateway” at bridge.
- Project needs to be economically viable for owner and Town.

**Design/Architectural:**

- Industrial buildings reflect history of site but current structural integrity has not been assessed.
- On site parking for cars associated with new uses would need to be provided.
- Large proportion of site lies within flood zone.
- Steep grade change from the street (12’).
- Signature, visible site from many points in neighborhood, along river and from Braintree/Weymouth Landing.
- Site access is tricky via narrow neighborhood street or under bridge along river.
- Boat access for Braintree Yacht Club needs to be maintained.

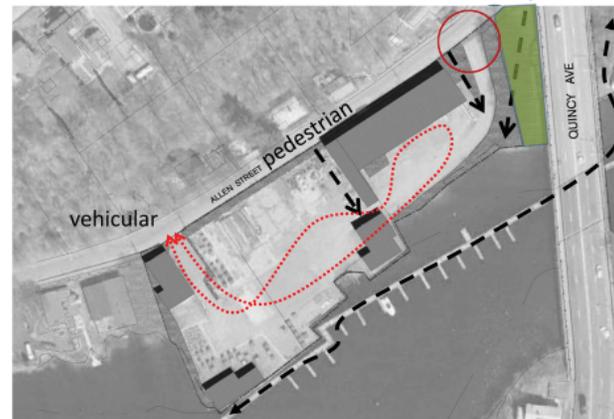
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**URBAN DESIGN DIAGRAMS**

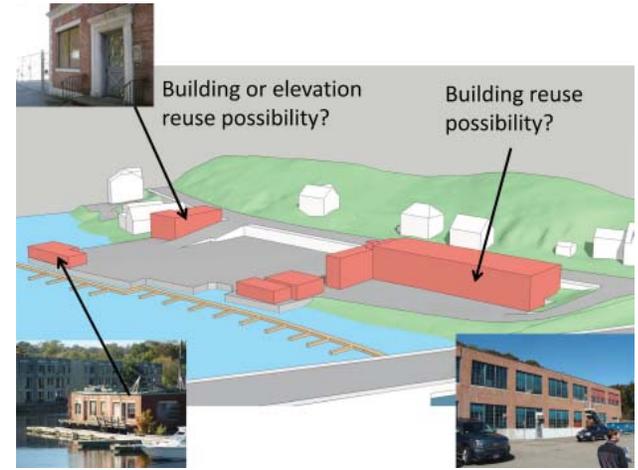


**ACCESS**

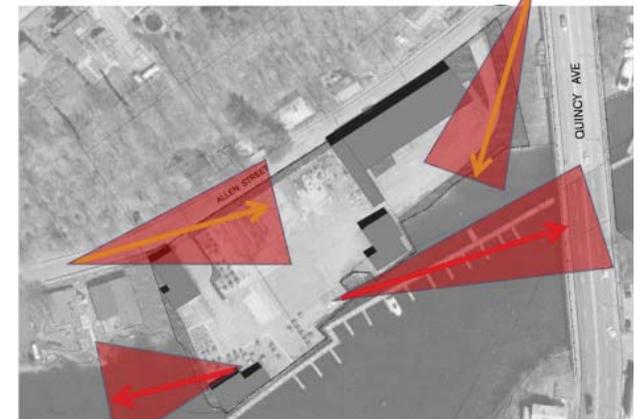
Limit car access at this point



**SITE BOUNDARY**



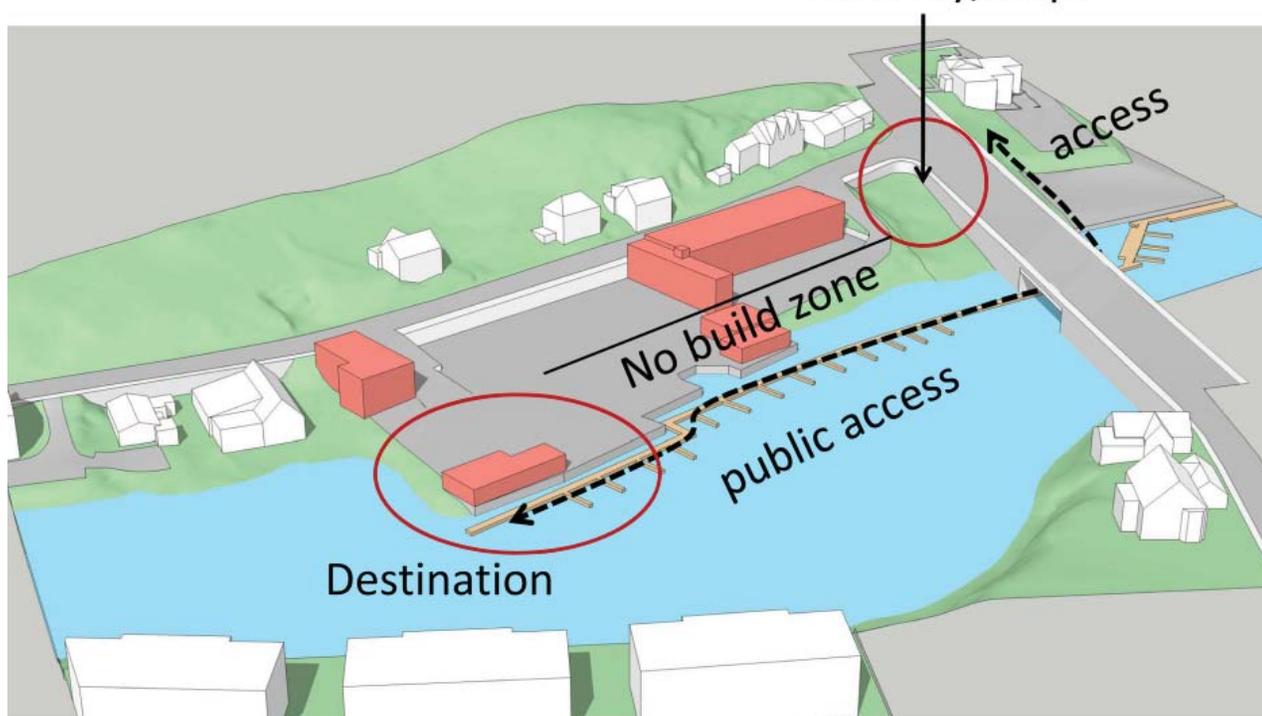
**VIEWS**



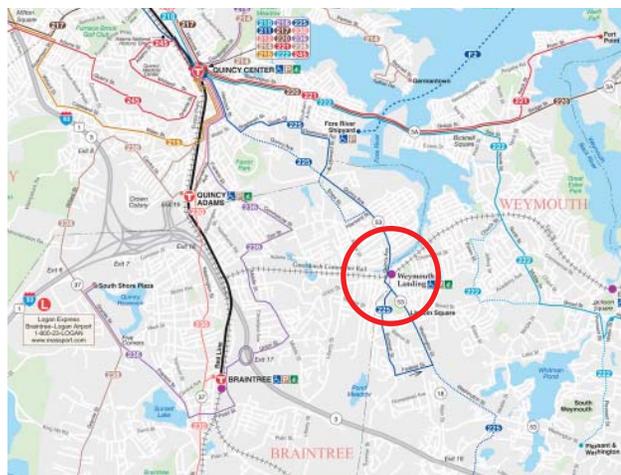
**FLOOD PLAIN**



## “Gateway/steps”



Above: Defining site features that will impact development of the site include the 100 year flood plain, and access under the Quincy Avenue Bridge that is necessary to provide connections to the open space network of Wilson Park. More discussion is necessary to resolve the relationship of public access along the river with the Braintree Yacht Club which utilizes boat slips in front of the site along the river. The west portion of the site is ideal as a destination. The corner of Allen Street with Quincy Avenue is a gateway opportunity. Negotiations with the private property owner of the sliver parcel between the BELD site and the Quincy Avenue Bridge are necessary for the revitalization of the property.



Above: MBTA commuter rail station at East Braintree/Weymouth Landing.



Above: MAPC initial planning recommendation included BELD site as part of the Core district; district outline now ends south of Quincy Ave bridge.

## BRAINTREE/WEYMOUTH LANDING REVITALIZATION:

In 2009, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) began a planning study that focused on the revitalization of the Braintree-Weymouth Landing business district. While the BELD site is not directly included in this study, the property would benefit immensely from a revitalized village center on the other side of the river with enhanced shopping, transit and community facilities.

### SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Supporting new development with zoning and incentives;
2. Improving the walking/biking experience; recommendations to enhance pedestrian space linking BELD site and Landing;
3. Making efficient use of existing parking;
4. Strengthening and diversifying the business mix;
5. Enhancing the sense of place and aesthetics;
6. Leveraging waterfront connections.

A Braintree-Weymouth Landing **Zoning District** has been proposed that would encourage revitalization and new development consistent with the village character of Weymouth Landing. The district would build on the Landing's historic role as a strong village center spanning two municipalities.

It would be an important focal point for neighborhoods in both Braintree and Weymouth which will benefit from a more vibrant, attractive, walkable and useful village center. The Landing's many assets (access, waterfront, infrastructure) make it appropriate for substantial development.

# COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

Workshop participants began by establishing a set of guiding principles that would help shape the kind of environment around the BELD site that should be fostered and the qualities of place that need to be maintained:

1. Showcase the river;
2. Provide a riverwalk connection, public access and parking;
3. Create a quiet, peaceful and beautiful setting;
4. Utilize salvageable existing buildings (when possible);
5. Calm surrounding traffic;
6. Maintain views for Allen Street neighbors;
7. Be an asset for the community.

## PUBLIC PROCESS:

In order to get a sense of the aspirations and concerns of the residents, the Office of Community Planning and Development convened a series of three public meetings to engage residents in a discussion of the issues facing the site. Meetings were held in the Watson Recreation Building directly across Quincy Avenue from the BELD site.

### Public Meeting #1:

January 14, 2010: Brainstorming Session

Open discussion with representatives of East Braintree Civic Association; identification of community pressures and concerns; articulation of possible program opportunities involving the site's reuse.

### Public Meeting #2:

March 25, 2010: Site Analysis and Visioning

Recap of concerns generated from the first meeting; analysis and evaluation of precedent case studies for the landscape and buildings; feedback gathered on site opportunities and concerns, programming and partnerships; creation of a list of audience generated "design principles" for the site; presentation of initial urban design analysis of the site.

### Public Meeting #3:

May 27, 2010: Site Recommendations

Presentation of riverwalk concept that connects the Braintree Yacht Club with Metropolitan Yacht Club; presentation of three (3) site-specific design alternatives combining public access and variations of open space with new site uses and programs; summary of feedback and comments.

## COMMUNITY CONCERNS

Workshop participants were mainly concerned with the following four themes that would be impacted by the site's redevelopment:

1. Transportation: Parking and traffic congestion
2. Access: Public access to river is limited/denied
3. Zoning: Impact of MAPC zoning recommendations on the Landing
4. Development: How much development, site uses and design aesthetic.

Meeting participants voted on a series of precedent boards as a basis to initiate discussion and reveal community expectations. In addition, design principles were crafted by the audience to guide future development discussions. (A full list of meeting minutes can be found in the Appendix).



Above: Image from Community Meeting #2. Over 40 people attended each of the three Public Meetings which were convened by the Office of Community Development and Planning.



Above: View of site looking northwest from Quincy Avenue Bridge.

### Meeting #1 Ideas

- Provide for an attraction and meeting place
- Celebrate the river
- Parkland and green space, walkway
- Public boat and kayak launch, docks
- Amphitheatre/ bandstand
- Overlook, benches and water viewing area
- Clean waterway/estuary information
- Parking and congestion relief
- Create a boater's destination
- Restaurant/bar or music venue
- Light reuse for building(s): art studios, educational

### Meeting #2 Ideas

- Showcase the river (in a humble manner)
- Calm surrounding traffic
- Provide passive, quiet, contemplative recreation
- Reuse buildings on site
- Use granite, brick, and local building materials
- Winding pathways, accessible river's edge
- Educational opportunities (nature, history, energy)
- Provide views, light, and congestion relief
- Village style residential for active adults
- Cafes, outdoor dining
- New England "style" design (village character)
- Family-oriented programs (concerts, gardening, picnics)
- Provide an asset to the community

### MOVING FROM IDEAS TO IMAGES

The CDRC design team developed **three alternative scenarios** based on ideas that were generated from the first two meetings and feedback from precedent images that were shared with workshop participants. Each scenario strived to address recommendations that were brought forward by the community about possible programs on the site.

The scenarios intentionally spanned **a range of building scales**. Residential, Arts and Culture and a Conference/Wellness Center each included a significant open space component but also contained uses that could generate some economic benefit to the Town. Maintaining an **appropriate balance** between publicly-accessible open space, access to the river and enhancing the site's vitality and security with new uses was the goal.

Two of the three scenarios (Arts and Culture and Conference/Wellness Center) demonstrate the potential for adaptive reuse of two existing buildings on the site. The Conference/Wellness Center included the possibility for a future new building in the general location of where the former Boiler Facility had been raised.

A third option (Active Adult Community) explored the possibility of demolishing all four structures on the property and building anew. The three scenarios were kept intentionally separate for clarity although future development plans may warrant a combination of the schemes.



Above: The overwhelming community sentiment for workshop participants was for the site to contain a publicly accessible green space with quiet, passive uses.

# THREE POSSIBLE FUTURES

## Landscape Strategy:

Interactive riverwalk terminating at community amphitheater  
Rain gardens and boardwalk  
Gateway corner at Allen Street and Quincy Ave to feature native plant restoration  
Allen Street Overlook plaza with parking below

## Program Strategy:

Artist Lofts in former Switch House  
Cafe in former Administration Building  
Amphitheater  
Sculpture Garden  
Roof Terrace

## Development Strategy:

Reuse existing structures  
Switch House: preserve structure and renovate for artist lofts/studios (possible roof addition necessary)  
Administration Building - preserve structure and façade and renovate for Café  
Single entry to site on east side  
Parking at ground level of Switch House, (1.5 spaces per artist studio recommended)  
Public parking below Outlook Terrace

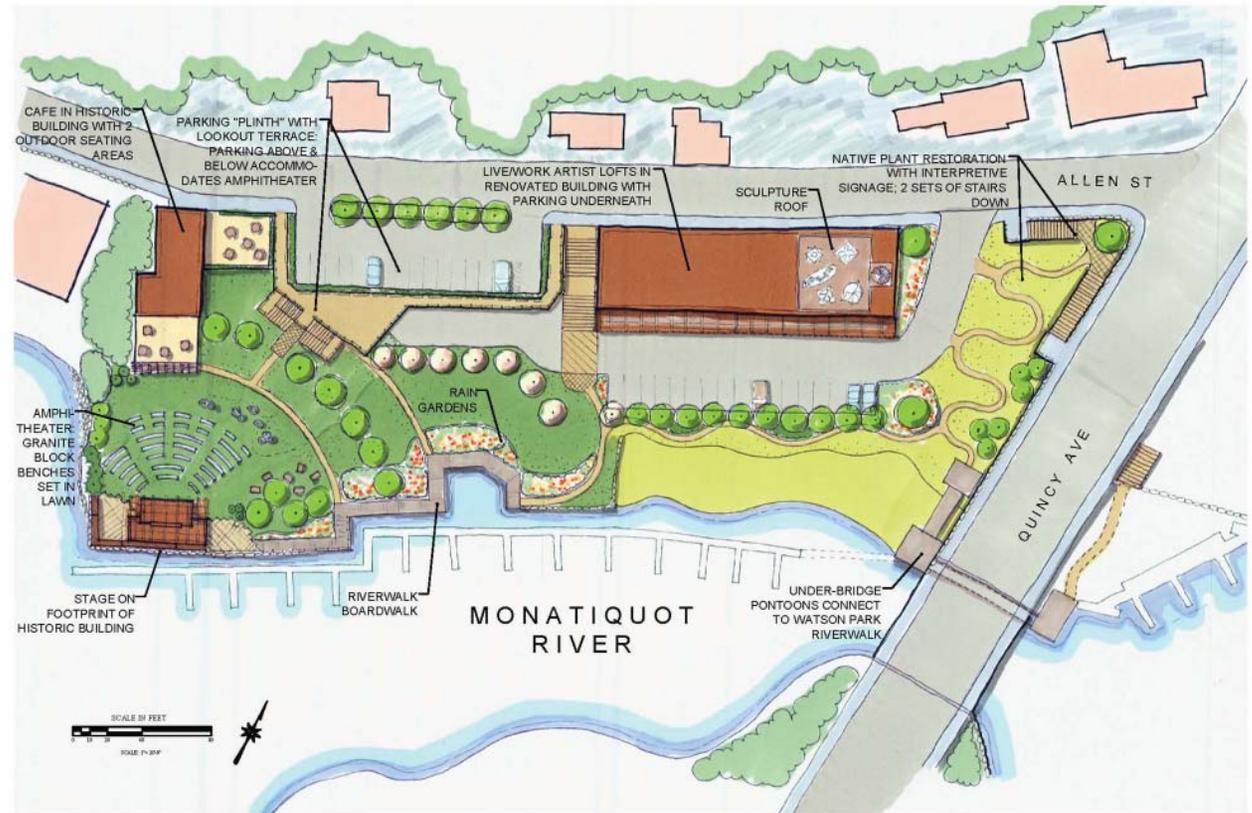
## Community Feedback:

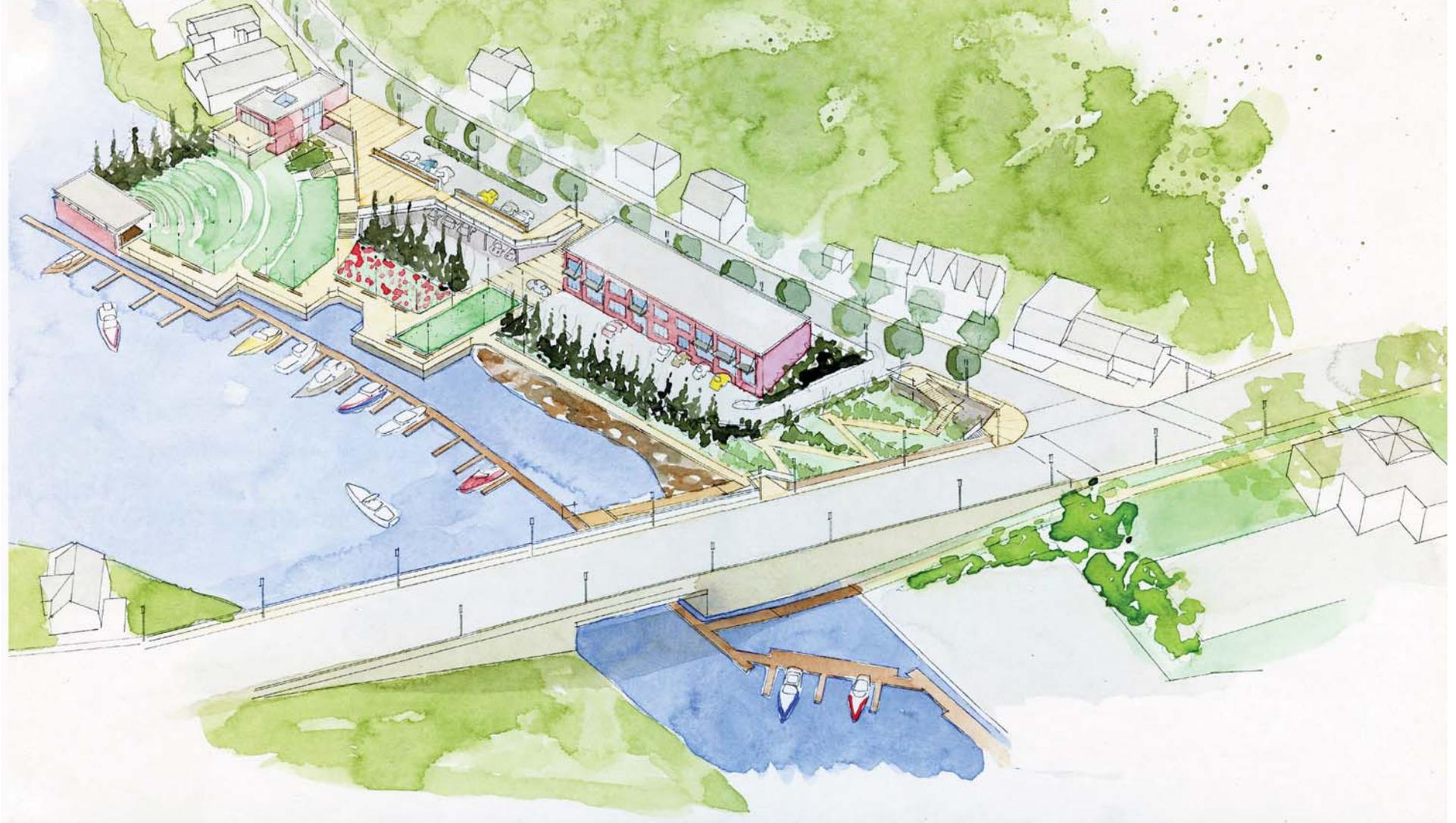
Grassed amphitheater with granite benches universally preferred for open space.  
Limit paving and large scale structures within amphitheater.  
Brick studios with expansive south facing glass well received.  
Evidence of previous historic use of site important to overall design.  
Rooftop terrace and café well received.  
Parking demand generated by amphitheater needs to be studied so as not to place too much traffic onto Allen St. and Quincy Ave.  
Culture theme deemed as asset to the community with many possible synergies with other art related partners.

## 1. ARTS + CULTURE

### CONCEPT:

Capitalize on the potential to reuse the existing buildings for arts related activities and live/work studios. The landscape theme engages art with a rooftop sculpture garden and performance venue on the west portion of the site, furthest away from the noise associated with Quincy Avenue. The widest portion of the site can accommodate a modest-scaled amphitheater with the south facade of the Screen House remaining as a stage backdrop.





## Landscape Strategy:

Strolling riverwalk along passive park  
Gardens and bike paths  
Gateway corner at Allen and Quincy feature  
tower pavilion with plaza and fountain  
Green roof strategies on existing buildings  
and potential new building (Phase 2)

## Program Strategy:

Conference & Wellness Center  
Retreat associated activity spaces  
Gazebo & kayak launch

## Development Strategy:

Switch House - preserve structure and renovate for conference & wellness center  
Office Building - preserve structure and façade and renovate for kayak & bike rental  
Additional new building located along Allen St in location of former Boiler House  
New construction minimizes impact on views for Allen Street neighbors  
Single vehicular entry to site on west side  
Concealed parking below and behind Switch House Building and new building

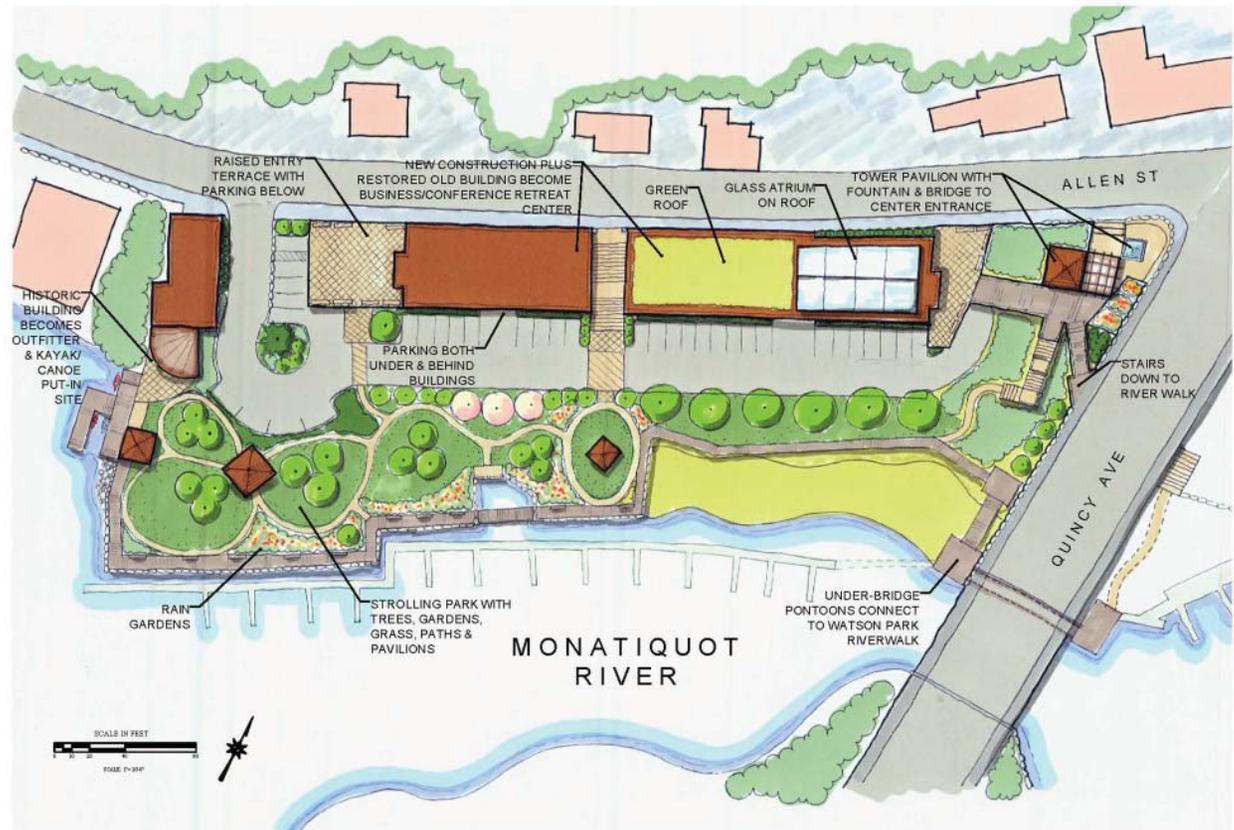
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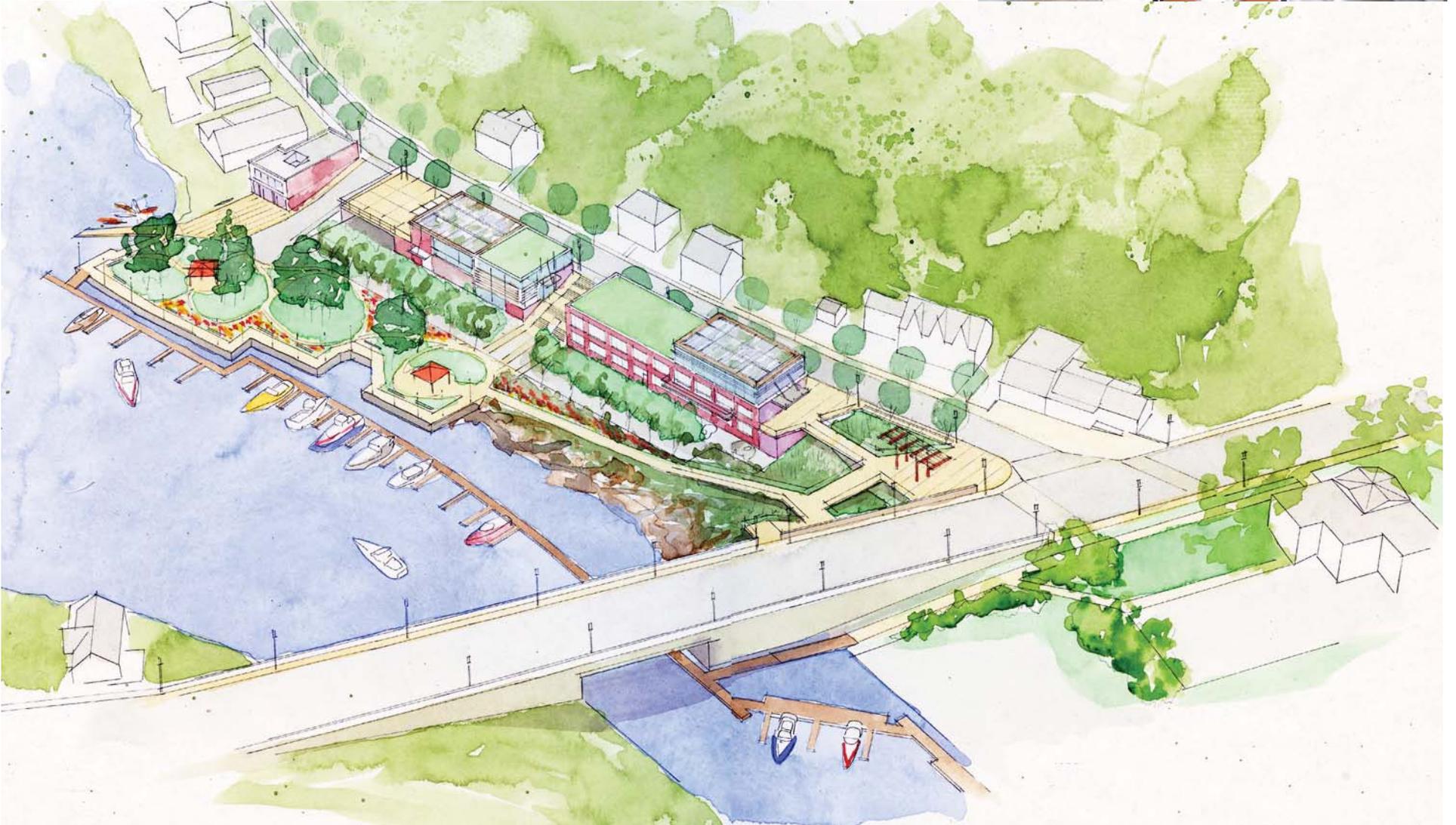
Natural, grassy park with benches, gazebo well received as alternative to amphitheater.  
Limit paving and on-site parking.  
Maintain neighborhood scale.  
Concerns that new construction will overwhelm village character.  
Locate new building sensitive to views, streetscape and adjacent property owners.  
Solar, passive energy strategies could be deployed and preferred.  
Kayak launch well received.  
Coordinate any water related uses with Braintree Yacht Club slips.

# 2. CONFERENCE/ WELLNESS CENTER

## CONCEPT:

Capitalize on the idyllic setting and proximity to Boston by developing a business retreat center. Reuse of the Switch House contains meeting rooms and breakout conference spaces. A second phase of development adds additional amenities (health and kitchen facilities). Open space design creates quiet, contemplative environment for public.





## Landscape Strategy:

Riverwalk journey with small destinations, interpretive "timeline" signage  
Small planted "yards" and community gardens  
Gateway corner at Allen and Quincy to feature community facility with terraces and overlook  
Rhythm of design created by north-south access stairs leading to the water at (3) different locations on property

## Program Strategy:

Active adult housing, 55+ community  
Common building at site corner  
Outdoor recreation areas, bocce court  
Community gardens

## Development Strategy:

All new construction (existing buildings demolished)  
Dual entry to site at east and west ends from Allen Street  
Modest building setbacks and staggered units along Allen St allow for planting in front yards  
Concealed parking at lower level garages for all individual units

## Community Feedback:

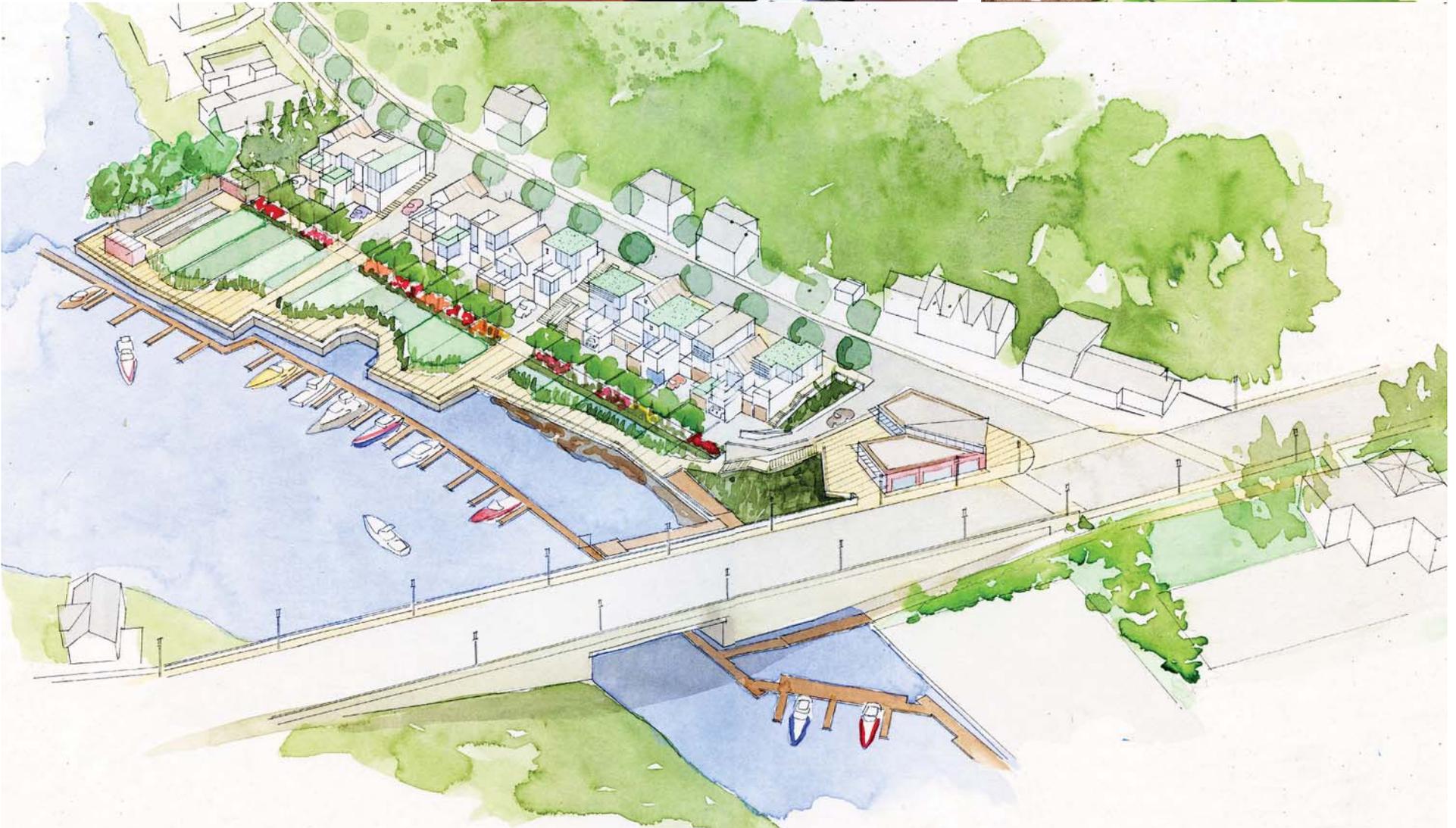
Too much density will create negative impacts to area already congested with traffic.  
Concerns about scale of residential buildings.  
Private residences could discourage community use of open space.  
Important to maintain public access to riverwalk.  
Locate new buildings sensitive to views, streetscape, neighboring properties.  
Large scale "condominium" development discouraged.  
Interpretive timeline and community gardens well received.

# 3. ACTIVE ADULT COMMUNITY

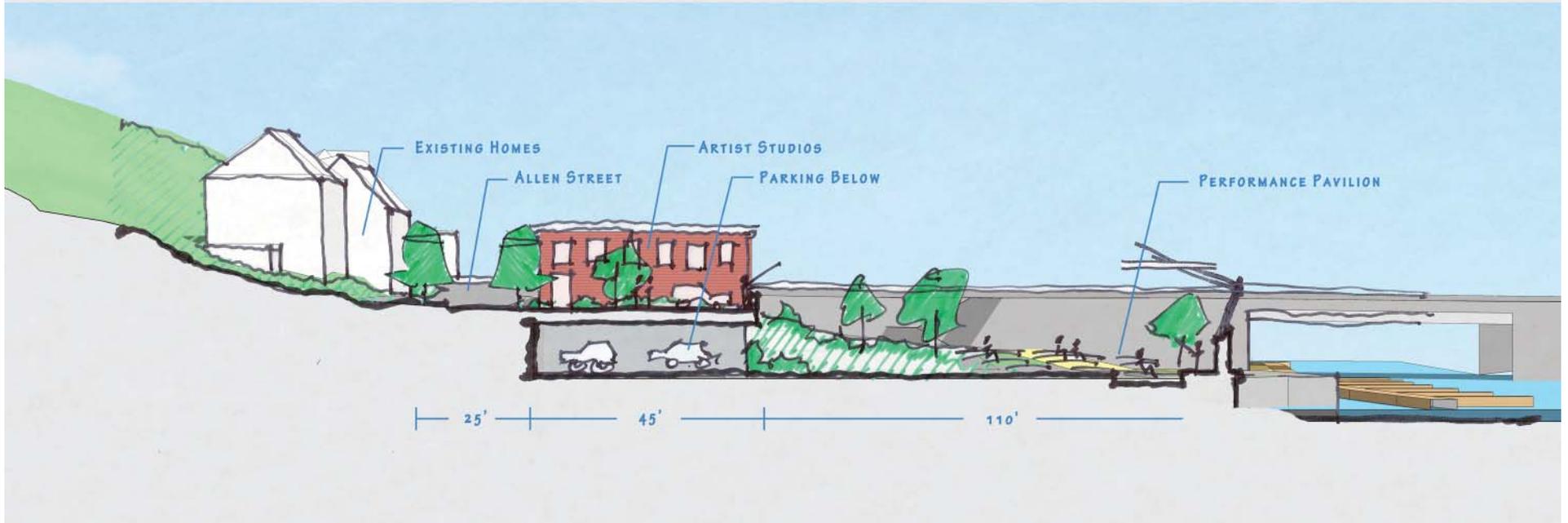
## CONCEPT:

New woodframe construction creates new housing opportunities to the neighborhood in close proximity to the Commuter Rail Station. Open space strategy creates small gardens for use by residents and neighborhood. Community facility at intersection of Allen Street and Quincy Avenue provides space for community events and/or small scale retail.

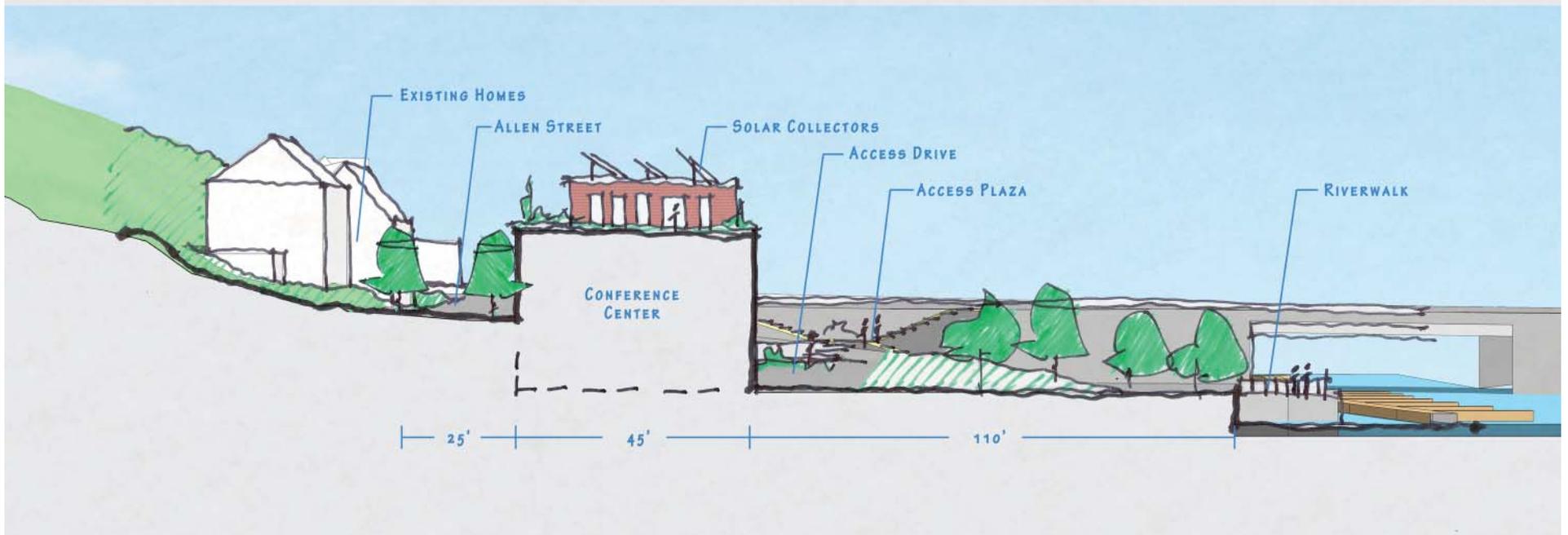
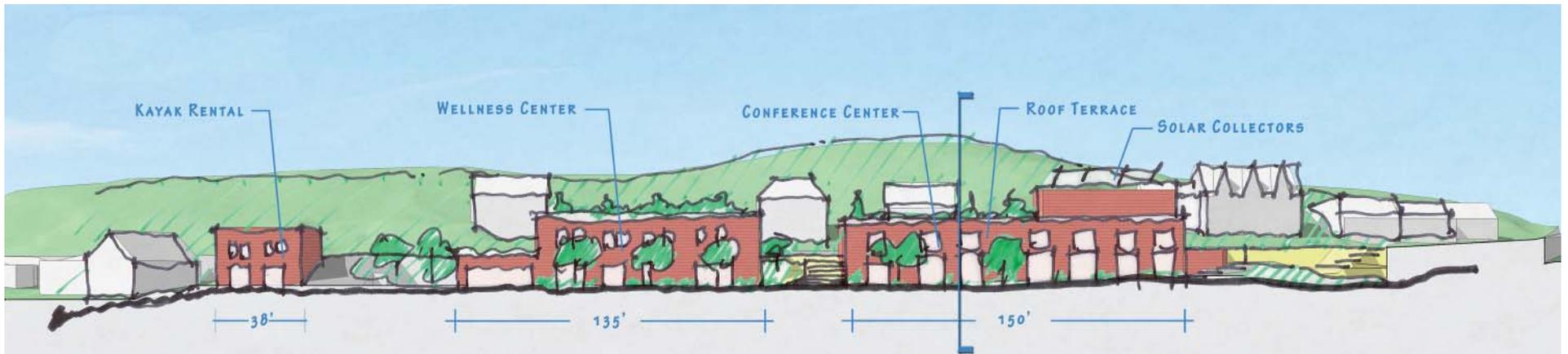




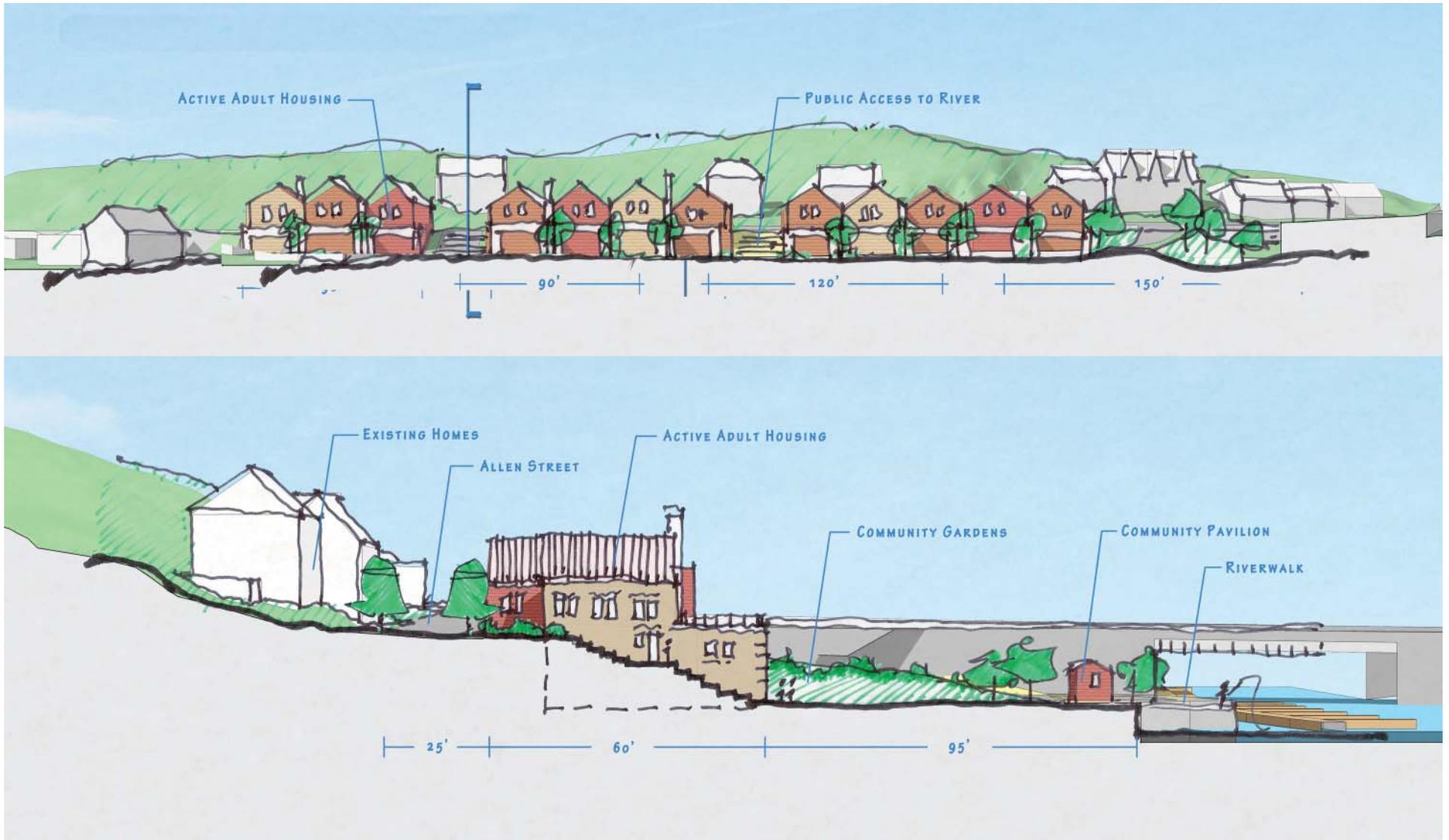
# 1. ARTS + CULTURE



## 2. CONFERENCE / WELLNESS CENTER



### 3. ACTIVE ADULT COMMUNITY



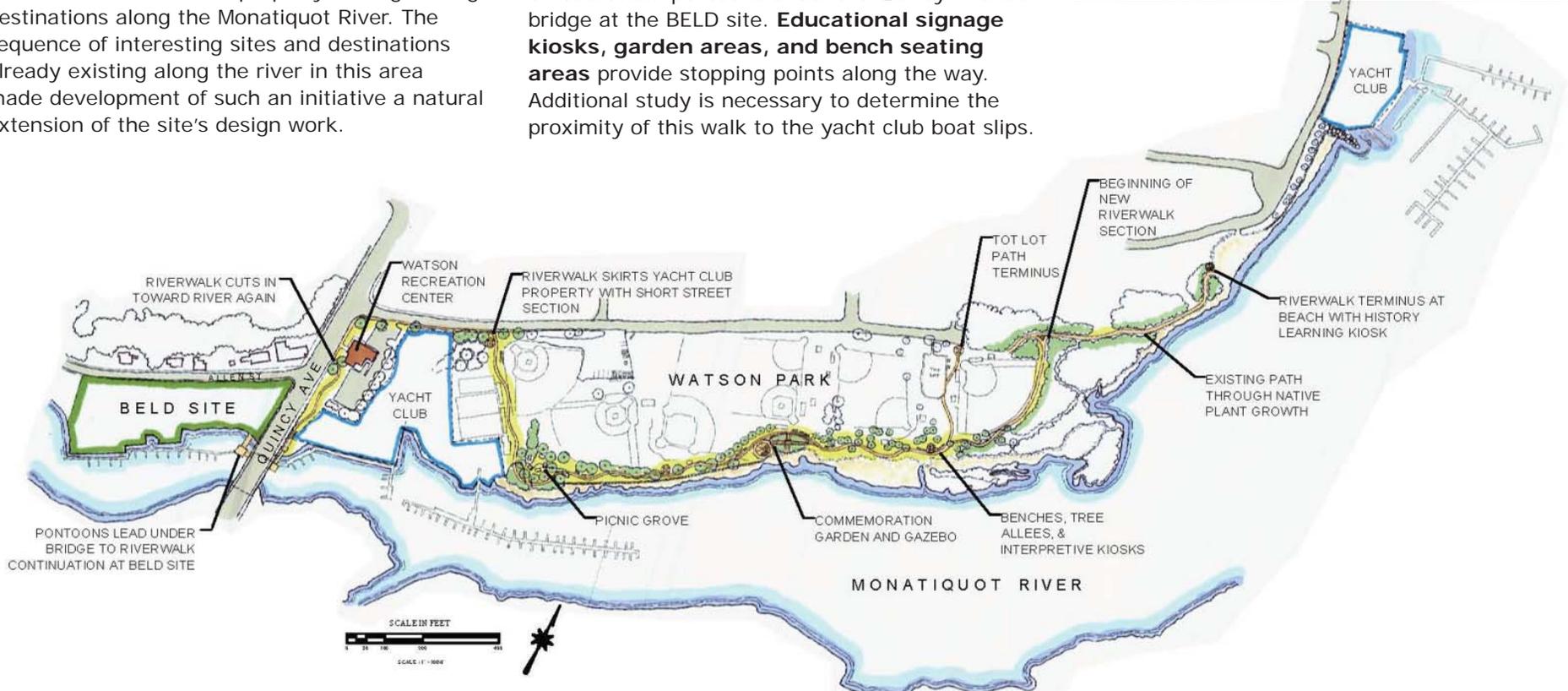
## THE MONATIQUOT RIVERWALK



Along with concepts for the BELD site development, the CDRC team explored an idea for a riverwalk. This **pedestrian and bike trail** would connect the BELD property to neighboring destinations along the Monatiquot River. The sequence of interesting sites and destinations already existing along the river in this area made development of such an initiative a natural extension of the site's design work.

A concept plan for a riverwalk was developed to accompany the site proposals and to engage the various stakeholders in a dialogue about how the site could connect with its surroundings. The "big idea" for the riverwalk is that the stroll along the river becomes a journey through different aspects of nature, with civilized destination stops along the way. The walk **connects two yacht clubs**, one adjacent to the BELD site (Braintree) and one at the mouth of the river to the east (Metropolitan).

The primary path winds along the riverbank at the edge of the extensive Watson recreational fields; it then moves inward past the town recreation building before returning to the river and leading on boardwalk pontoons under the Quincy Avenue bridge at the BELD site. **Educational signage kiosks, garden areas, and bench seating areas** provide stopping points along the way. Additional study is necessary to determine the proximity of this walk to the yacht club boat slips.



Top left: Image of example Riverwalk. Top right: Aerial image of BELD site (orange), Watson Park (green) and the Braintree and Metropolitan Yacht Clubs (purple). Above: Conceptual Plan for Monatiquot Riverwalk.

# FROM PLANNING TO IMPLEMENTATION

## TEN STEPS FOR MOVING FORWARD

Implementation of the BELD rehabilitation project will require entrepreneurial skill, political leadership and public negotiation. While there is **some community skepticism** about the likelihood that progress can be made on a site that has been vacant for so long, the BELD property appears to contain **significant potential** for transformation into a community asset.

The site is poised for new life under a **mixed-use program** with riverfront access and **public open space**, cultural and/or business establishments and rehabilitation of one or more of the structures into residential development. Depending on site configuration and design, a possible second phase of new construction may be possible. Under such a scenario, benefits would accrue to:

- 1) BELD in the elimination of its current maintenance costs as well as a reduction of its demolition costs;
- 2) The Town of Braintree in the return of a portion of the property to the tax rolls; and
- 3) The town's residents in the form of new riverfront public open space and additional housing opportunities.

However, a number of pre-development steps and additional analyses are necessary - related to the physical and economic conditions of the property and to the market - to ultimately determine the **economic viability** of such a scenario and to determine the financial impact to BELD and the Town of Braintree. These necessary steps (which would be conducted in addition to a refined site plan and landscape design process) are outlined below.

### 1. Environmental Testing and Permit Analysis

Conduct additional testing to complete the environmental assessment to a level that conforms to ASTM Phase 1 ESA. Create a spread sheet of all federal and state permits, associated costs and time constraints required for the property.

### 2. Funding and Infrastructure Study

Identify additional funding sources available for environmental cleanup on the site (should it be necessary), and explore opportunities for the creation and funding of a natural, systems-based treatment solution for the sewer and storm water outfalls on the property.

### 3. Physical Conditions Assessment

Analyze two of the buildings on site that are not within the 100 year flood plain (Office and Switch Buildings) as to their structural stability, foundations, mechanical systems, and potential for re-use under state and national historic tax credit guidelines. Complete a site survey of existing conditions.

### 4. Initial Development Plan Reuse

Assuming that the above assessment indicates viable reuse potential, a preliminary development plan and layout for their reuse would be prepared.

### 5. Ancillary Uses Assessment

Assess the site as to the ability to provide necessary ancillary needs such as parking, service, loading, etc.

### 6. Flood Plain Analysis

An analysis of the site and the proposed uses would be undertaken to determine the flood plain and elevation impacts on the project.

### 7. Market Assessment

For each alternative for the former BELD site, divide program of spaces into leasable

/ saleable space "by type" for the three conceptual redevelopment alternatives: arts/culture, conference, and/or housing. Prepare market assessment for each of three conceptual redevelopment alternatives including: market/potential users for various components of the alternative, review of complimentary / competitive adjacent and nearby uses, analyze competitive market for the uses in the alternative, identify and profile comparable redevelopment projects and lessons learned, estimate market pricing and absorption / timing for uses in the alternative.

### 8. Program Analysis and Project Phasing

Evaluate with planning team financial, community and economic development benefits of re-development alternatives and identify preferred development scenario as warranted. A suggested project phasing program will be developed based upon the market demand and site improvement schedule.

### 9. Development Pro Forma

Conduct financial analysis for the preferred redevelopment alternative from the prior tasks to determine the economic costs and potential fiscal impacts of the proposed development, including attractiveness to investors and potential taxes generated. Financial analysis would include: cash flow analysis, financial pro forma analysis and ROI, sensitivity analysis, opportunities for development and/or operating partners and public funding, review of socio-economic benefits of each use.

### 10. Town/BELD Participation options

Based upon the pro forma, a determination will be made as to the level of revenue participation by the Town of Braintree and/or BELD that the project could support. Revise market and financial analyses to support ongoing project planning and financing.

## CONCLUSION

The BELD site lies at the confluence of a number of factors that bode well for its transformation. First of all, it is a **waterfront site** with great views and access. The site is a three minute walk to the recently opened East Braintree Commuter Rail station (Greenbush line), from which one can arrive via **public transit** into downtown Boston's South Station in just 22 minutes.

Redevelopment of a major portion of the property into publicly accessible open space will finally allow **access to the Monatiquot River**. There are also opportunities to connect this site to a larger framework of open space to the east. Across the river and to the south, the emerging **Braintree-Weymouth Landing** has outstanding potential as a pedestrian-oriented village center with shopping, transit and community destinations in close proximity. **Streetscape enhancements** funded through a \$2.4 million Public Works and Economic Development grant are in the design phase that will help to connect this site to the Landing.

While the architectural character of the context that surrounds the BELD site has lost much of its significance due to alterations, additions and demolitions, two of the existing buildings of the Braintree Electric Light Department provide a link to the town's industrial past. The former Switch House and Administration Building are poised to become wonderful **reuse opportunities**. There is an opportunity to rehabilitate these buildings to **showcase the town's industrial heritage** and activate the site with new uses.

Together with the adjacent Starling Boat Company Shop - just west of the property - this modest collection of buildings **represent some of the last vestiges of maritime and manufacturing facilities** on this portion of the Monatiquot River. They are historically and culturally significant.

Their rehabilitation would contribute to the historical heritage of the town and provide an opportunity to showcase cutting edge, sustainable redevelopment practices.



Above right: Residential loft conversion of former industrial building in South Boston. Below: Interior image of existing BELD Switch House.

## ABOUT THE TEAM

### **Wayne Benson, Jr., AIA**

RKB Architects

Wayne is a registered architect and owner of RKB Architects which specializes in design-build commercial, industrial and cold storage projects. He has designed more than 2.5 million square feet of industrial/warehouse space including over 800,000 square feet of specialized cold storage space for clients like The Home Depot, Gillette and Preferred Freezer. Wayne is a graduate of The Boston Architectural College and Wentworth Institute of Technology and resides in Easton, Massachusetts with his wife and two children.

### **Matthew W. Emond, Associate AIA, LEED AP**

Dewing & Schmid Architects

Born in Braintree and raised on the South Shore, Matt jumped at the chance to work with this great community to promote the natural potential of the BELD site. Matt earned a Bachelor's degree from Brown University and a Master's degree in Architecture from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. He is currently a job captain with Dewing & Schmid architects in Concord, and is a member of the Open Space Committee in Marshfield, MA.

### **David Gamble, AIA AICP, LEED AP**

Gamble Associates

Gamble Associates is an architecture and urban design practice based in Boston that focuses on neighborhood revitalization. David Gamble is a Design Instructor in the Urban Planning and Design Department at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design and is the incoming Co-Chair of the Urban Design Committee of the Boston Society of Architects. He is the immediate Past President of the Community Design Resource Center-Boston and was the CDRC Board Liaison to the Braintree team.

### **Paul Hajian, AIA**

Hajian Architects

Paul Hajian is a founding principal and president of Hajian Architects, Inc. and a professor of architecture at Massachusetts College of Art and Design, where he is Chair of the Architecture Department. His practice, teaching, and research focus on the transformation of places and he has extensive experience in the adaptive reuse of existing structures, many of which have resulted in award-winning projects. He is Past President of the Community Design Resource Center of Boston.

### **Brian Gregory, Designer**

Gamble Associates

Brian Gregory is an architectural designer working in the Boston area. Since finishing his undergraduate degree in architecture, he has worked in various firms investigating the complex relationships between institutions and the urban fabric surrounding them. He is currently pursuing his Masters of Architecture degree at Northeastern University. He resides in East Boston.

### **Michael P. Maloof, LEED AP,**

Wilson Architects Inc.

Michael is an architectural designer with Wilson Architects Inc. in Boston. Classically trained in traditional architecture and urban design at the University of Notre Dame, Michael is constantly working to broaden his understanding of sustainable, community based design through diverse project experiences and new design challenges. A native of Duxbury, Massachusetts, Michael takes pride in giving back to the local community through his involvement with the Community Design Resource Center-Boston.

### **Amanda Sloan, Affiliate ASLA**

Gates, Leighton & Associates

Amanda Sloan is a landscape designer with Gates, Leighton and Associates Landscape Architecture in East Providence, RI. A graduate of Wesleyan University, she is an elected member of the Planning Board in her hometown of Sharon, MA, and was a founding Board Member of CDRC-Boston. An artist and an environmentalist, she is especially interested in exploring all the ways design can connect people and nature. Amanda was Project Leader for the Braintree effort.

### **Karen Spence**

Community Design Resource Center-Boston

Karen Spence, Director of Projects, joined Community Design Resource Center of Boston (CDRC-Boston) in December 2008. Before joining CDRC-Boston, Karen worked and volunteered for a variety of small startup non-profit organizations performing marketing, web and graphic design, outreach, event management and promotions. Prior to entering nonprofit, Karen worked in the high tech industry for over 20 years in hardware, software, firmware, and internetworking through various roles including marketing management, customer service/relations, technical assistance, web/graphic design and systems integration. Within that time frame, Karen also held brief stints in architectural marketing and legal research.

### **Andy Hazelton, AIA**

S/L/A/M Collaborative

Andrew Hazelton received an MLA degree from Harvard in 1986 and became a licensed architect in 1989. He works as a project manager for the SLAM Collaborative in Boston. Andy has many years of experience designing biotechnology and academic science projects, with SLAM as well as other Boston-area firms. He is interested in affordable housing issues and earlier in his career managed housing construction projects--mostly inner city apartment rehabilitations--for the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development.

# APPENDIX

## REFERENCE MATERIAL

1. Metropolitan Area Planning Council (2009). *Braintree-Weymouth Landing Revitalization: Planning Report and Recommendations* [Draft for Community Review]. Braintree, Massachusetts & Weymouth, Massachusetts
2. Metropolitan Area Planning Council (2010). *Proposed Braintree-Weymouth Landing Zone Project: Draft ("The Landing District")*. Braintree, Massachusetts.
3. Earth Tech (1997). *Environmental Site Assessment, Braintree Electric Light Department: 44 Allen Street Braintree, Massachusetts*. Braintree: Braintree Electric Light Department.
4. Braintree's Historic Resources (2002). Area Q: East Braintree – Front & Allen Streets c. 1850-1920.
5. Ken Sessler & Dorothy-Veronica White, *The Monaquot River and America's First Iron Works* (East Braintree Civic Association Newsletter, Braintree Massachusetts). Nov. 2004, at 2.
6. Massachusetts Department of Transportation. *Commuter Rail Schedule*. (Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority). January 11, 2010
7. *Survey of Town of Braintree Electric Light Department Property* [Map]. (1960). Braintree, Massachusetts. Factory Mutual Engineering Division, Surveyor.
8. *Plan of Land Braintree, Massachusetts* [Map]. (1974). Harry S. Feldman, Surveyor, Boston, Massachusetts.

## MEETING MINUTES

### Public Meeting #1:

Allen Street Brainstorming Session w/ East Braintree Civic Association  
Watson Recreation Department, Braintree 1/14/10

David Gamble-CDRC, Moderator  
Amanda Sloan-CDRC, Recorder  
Christine Stickney-Braintree Planning Dept./Town

I. CDRC / Meeting Introduction (David Gamble)  
"No plans, no agenda, we're here to understand your perspective."

#### II. Open Floor to all Attendees

-Question: What authority do we have? How much weight do we carry? Can we give a timeline?  
• Community Favored Design will most likely be carried into development; we must start with a vision, present it to all interested parties, & pass it along to the Mayor.

-Comment: Jim Regan, BELD: \$500K has been allotted to tear down the existing structures, as agreed in the new power plant deal. He also informed us that the town has to vote to accept the Allen Street property from BELD.  
• Would BELD agree to leave buildings in place?

-Concern: Many residents are wary of the MAPC zoning suggestions put forth in the new Weymouth Landing studies. Many EBCA members feel the 4-5 story housing suggestion for Allen Street is too high & overdeveloped.  
• Find all MAPC Reports & Docs

-Question: How much development, and what kind, could feasibly occur given the floodplain restrictions on the site?  
• No habitable building in the floodplain areas; do we have wiggly room?

-Comment: Sewer Line through property  
• What other utilities exist here?

-Suggestion: Parkland, green space, walkway

would be desirable (unanimous)

-Suggestion: If pool is built in Watson Park, could we use this site for its parking?

-Concern: No more development, we are overrun (See Quincy Ave., Quirk, Keyspan as examples)

-Concern: Summer parking in East Braintree is horrendous (along Watson Street, Edgehill Road etc.); Traffic through the landing is also quite heavy during rush hour & high activity periods. (Traffic signals noted as a possible cause for congestion)

-Question: Have alternate locations been proposed for the Pearson Pool?

• Did the town dismiss Allen Street as a location in previous meetings?

-Comment: In response to what would you like to see, one attendee responded "Anything but housing".

-Suggestion: Thayer Academy has approached Braintree for a waterfront Boathouse location, could Allen Street accommodate?

• Contact Christine & Thayer to learn more

-Suggestion: Walkway, kayak launch, clean waterway/estuary information

-Suggestion: Overlook, benches, water viewing area (absent in Watson Park; see Smits' beach for example)

-Comment: Direct abutters (across Allen Street) may be rental properties

• Confirm & invite them to future meetings

-Suggestion: Braintree Yacht Club has a public launch, but not enough vehicle & trailer parking; could Allen Street accommodate a public boat launch & parking?

• Conduct spatial comparison/study

-Comment: Empty Commercial buildings are

numerous in the Landing, but would still be preferable to housing on Allen Street.

- Some neighbors like the old BELD Office Building

-Suggestion: Could we continue the 'Village Effect' proposed for the Landing across the bridge to Allen Street?

-Comment: How might this site offer parking, traffic, and congestion relief?

-Suggestion: Could a community center work here? Was this proposed years ago? Is there a town need?

-Suggestion: Amphitheatre/ bandstand; provide and attract & celebrate the river.

- 14,000 people within walk/bike range: Pull them to the Waterfront

-Suggestion: Could we hang a walkway under the bridge & extend Watson Park?

-Comment: Maintain boater's access; but no more slips needed by BYC

-Comment: PWED Grant will provide funds for infrastructure improvements to the Landing and across to Allen Street (sidewalks, lighting, landscaping etc.)

-Suggestion: Could Allen Street play a part in restoring the Herring Run?

- Contact Dept. of Marine Fisheries & Conservation Commission

-Comment: Whatever path we take, let us be sure we act in cooperation with the Weymouth Landing project; Programmatically & Aesthetically

-Suggestion: Could we create a boater's destination? (Restaurant/Bar, Music Venue, Dock/ Meeting place)

- Do these opportunities exist along the Fore River?

-Suggestion: Light use for reused buildings (Art

Studios, educational etc.)

-Suggestion: Science, Wildlife, & History park for educational use (similar to Nut Island on Hough's Neck)

-Question: If the existing buildings were removed, would we be able to rebuild?

- Contact Christine & zoning for answers

-Comment: At low tide, boats are beached this far up river (concern for boat launch, docking, kayaking etc.)

-Question: Where does the Army Corps of Engineers jurisdiction end?

-Comment: Contact Fore River Watershed Association for input & ideas

-Question: Will the property abutting the bridge be in play? (Christine is working on it)

-Comment: Allen Street is very narrow and is difficult to maneuver when cars are parked on one side

-Comment: This will act as a Gateway to Braintree, what do we want it to say?

### III. CDRC Wrap Up

-Homework: Respond to all questions above & conduct all needed research

- See MAPC Report(s)
- Prepare Scale comparisons & site maps (parking & large programs sf's)
- Prepare a set of Design Principles to guide future meetings

-Next Step: Schedule Group of Groups meeting around February 15th

- A more formal, prepared brainstorming session (No proposed designs presented)
- Invite all interested groups & neighbors

-Down the Road: CDRC Team Charette (mid-late of February)

- Layout (3) design schemes
- Form teams & assign deadlines

-Pass it on: Present schemes to public & turn over to town (late March-early April)

## MEETING MINUTES

### Public Meeting #2:

Allen Street Visioning  
Watson Recreation Department, Braintree 3/25/10

David Gamble-CDRC, Moderator  
Wayne Benson, Matt Emond, Amanda Sloan CDRC-Presenters

Social Intro & Precedent Board Dot Voting:

1. Riverwalks
2. Amenities
3. Residential
4. Iconic Structures
5. Waterfront park
6. Amphitheatre
7. Building Reuse

I. CDRC / Meeting Introduction (David Gamble)

"What are our program & users?"

"What size & scale should it be?"

"What are the most important parts of our vision?"

II. Audience Driven Design Principals

- To Showcase the river
- To provide a quiet, peaceful, & beautiful setting
- To Calm Surrounding Traffic
- To utilize salvageable existing buildings
- To provide parking, river walk connection, & access for all
- To maintain views for Allen street neighbors
- To feel suburban & be an asset and an attractor for the community

III. Precedent Board Commentary

1. Riverwalks:

-Like:

- Clean River's Edge (Pope John Paul Park, City Point)
- Pavilion, Benches for contemplation
- Granite, Brick, New England Materials

-Dislike:

- Too much program & People
- Lawns, geese, trash cans

2.Amenities:

-Like:

- Paths, pavilions, café
- PV Panels & Educational Opportunities

-Dislike:

- Pool, sports fields, traffic, boat launch, kayaks

3.Residential:

-Like:

- New England Village; small scale
- Over 55 Housing
- Community Green

-Dislike:

- Condos & Rental Units for commuters
- Modern feel

4. Iconic Structures:

-Like:

- Boardwalk
- Historic Relics

-Dislike:

- Gateway attractor, out of place design

5.Waterfront park:

-Like:

- Stone, brick, New England materials
- Passive open space
- Promenade
- Connection to Watson Park

-Dislike:

- Sports fields, busy activities

6.Amphitheatre:

-Like:

- Venue for church concerts
- Family oriented
- Grass seating; picnic feel

-Dislike:

- Large capacity
- Formal setting

7. Building Reuse:

-Like:

- Studios
- Gardens
- Restaurant w/ Patio

-Dislike:

- New floors are too high for neighbors on Allen Street

IV. Next Steps

- Filter feedback into essential design principles
- Develop 3 schemes of building & landscape
- Present to Mayor & Citizens for approval

## MEETING MINUTES

### Public Meeting #3:

Final Proposal Presentation

Watson Recreation Department, Braintree 4/23/10

Presentation Outline

I. Introduction by David

II. Landscape Schemes by Amanda (Passive / Gardens / Amphitheater)

-Public Response:

III. Building Scheme A by Brian (Arts & Culture)

-Public Response:

IV. Building Scheme B by Mike (Conference & Wellness)

-Public Response:

V. Building Scheme C by Matt (Active Adult Community)

-Public Response:

VI. Concluding Statements:

-Final Public Response

# CONTRACT LETTER



11/10/09

Re: B.E.L.D. Site – Allen Street

His Honor Joseph C. Sullivan, Mayor of Braintree  
Ms. Christine Stickney, Director of Planning and Community Development

Dear Ms. Stickney and Mayor Sullivan,

We are pleased to be working with you as a team of volunteer designers on behalf of the Community Design Resource Center of Boston. We are excited about the potential that lies in the Braintree Electric Light Department site on Allen Street and we look forward to activating the collective imagination of Braintree's residents as to its redevelopment.

We are writing today to request a kickoff meeting with you both, as soon as possible in the coming weeks, to define and clarify the range of programmatic possibilities that would be welcomed on this site. In addition to this request, we would like to outline for you our proposed plan of action for the next few months' time:

Step 1 (*Mid-November*) – Kick-Off Meeting w/ Mayor Sullivan & Ms. Stickney

- Present Preliminary Concept Sketches
- Define Range of Potential Programs
- Agree on concepts or directions for further development

Step 2 (*Late January*) – Public Meeting #1: Three Schemes

- Present three design schemes for site in a Public Forum
- Receive Feedback on each from Community Groups
- Select One or More Schemes to Develop Further

Step 3 (*Late February*) – Public Meeting #2: Developed Design(s)

- Present Developed Scheme(s) to all Interested Parties
- Document Feedback
- Seek Volunteers for Possible Allen Street Redevelopment Committee

Step Four (*Early March*) – Turn Over Work to Town of Braintree/Allen Street Redev. Committee

- Provide a Bound Project Summary w/ all Design Work & Resident Feedback
- Provide a Written Outline of Recommendations for How to Move Ahead

As has been discussed earlier, even though we know that your intent is ultimately to build this project, the CDRC's work is intended to be "pre-design" only. That is, the CDRC's role is to help you more precisely define the parameters of and your vision for the project so that you can then move ahead to fundraising and full architectural design. The CDRC will not provide permit drawings or construction documents as part of this Scope of Work.

Please let us know when you are both available to meet with us; we expect the discussion to take no longer than an hour. We are energized by the complexity and the spirit of this project! Thanks again for this opportunity.

With best regards,

*The CDRC-BELD/Allen Street Design Team:*

1. Amanda Sloan
2. Wayne Benson
3. Andrew Hazelton
4. Michael Maloof
5. Brian Gregory
6. Matt Emond

## MEETING ANNOUNCEMENTS



December 29, 2009

Mr. David Oliva, Chair, East Braintree Civic Association  
172 Edgehill Road  
Braintree, MA 02184

Dear Mr. Oliva and Members of the East Braintree Civic Association,

We are a team of volunteer designers working on behalf of the Community Design Resource Center of Boston (CDRC-Boston). CDRC was recently contacted by Braintree's Department of Planning and Community Development for assistance in conceptual visioning for the BELD site on Allen Street. We would like to take this opportunity to introduce ourselves, and also invite you to a meeting with us.

As you may know, CDRC-Boston is a non-profit organization linking architects, landscape architects, and other designers with community projects throughout greater Boston. We work on a pro bono basis, using a collaborative process that strives to involve all members of a community who may have a stake in the future of a particular project. For the BELD site, we would very much like to meet with the East Braintree Civic Association, listen to your views, and incorporate your ideas for the site as we move forward to create a range of concept ideas for the consideration of the entire Braintree community.

We understand that planning director Christine Stickney has been in touch with you and that Thursday, January 14<sup>th</sup> has been suggested as a good date to meet with you. Christine reserved space at the Watson Recreation Center at 7 p.m. on that evening. If this is good for you, we would be delighted to meet with you then!

Our hope for this meeting is that it can serve as a "listening session" for us, so that we can fully understand not only the concerns you may have about the BELD site, but also your dreams for this place. I have taken the liberty of enclosing an invitation flyer for your use in publicizing the meeting to your members, if this will be helpful to you.

We look forward to meeting you on the evening of the 14<sup>th</sup>. Please do not hesitate to contact Amanda Sloan at 617-365-6477 if you have any questions before then.

Yours most sincerely,

The CDRC BELD Site/Allen Street Design Team

Amanda Sloan  
Wayne Benson  
Andrew Hazelton  
Michael Maloof  
Brian Gregory  
Matt Emond



## YOU ARE INVITED

The Community Design Resource Center of Boston (CDRC-Boston) extends an invitation to all members of the East Braintree Civic Association

Please come to a Community Design Meeting to discuss ideas for the future of the BELD site on Allen Street.

**What:** A listening meeting so we can hear your ideas

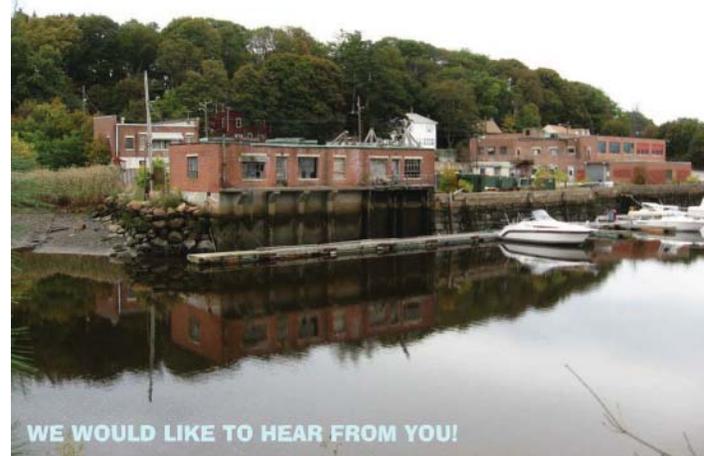
**When:** Thursday, January 14, 2010 at 7 p.m.

**Where:** Watson Recreation Building, 85 Quincy Ave.

**Why:** A CDRC design team is drawing up various conceptual schemes for the site and we would like to know your views beforehand

**Who:** This is a meeting for EBCA and CDRC. CDRC-Boston is a non-profit organization linking architects, landscape architects, and other designers with community projects throughout greater Boston. We work on a pro bono basis, using a collaborative process.

### WHAT COULD THIS BE?



WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Questions? Please call Amanda Sloan, CDRC liaison, at 617-365-6477



**YOU ARE INVITED**

The Community Design Resource Center of Boston (CDRC-Boston) extends an invitation to all interested parties. Please come to a Community Design Meeting to discuss ideas for the future of the BELD site on Allen Street.

**What:** An interactive presentation to shape your collective vision for the site.

**When:** Thursday, March 25th, 2010 at 7 p.m.

**Where:** Watson Recreation Building, 85 Quincy Ave.

**Why:** A CDRC design team is drawing up various conceptual schemes for the site and we would like to know your views beforehand

**Who:** This is a meeting for the CDRC to survey community interest. CDRC-Boston is a non-profit organization linking architects, landscape architects, and other designers with community projects throughout greater Boston. We work on a pro bono basis, using a collaborative process.

**WHAT COULD THIS BE?**



**WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU!**

Questions? Please call David Gamble, CDRC liaison, at (617)292-9912 28.



**PUBLIC MEETING #3 -YOU ARE INVITED**

The Community Design Resource Center of Boston (CDRC-Boston) extends an invitation to all interested parties. Please come to a Community Design Presentation to discuss ideas for the future of the BELD site on Allen Street.

**What:** An interactive presentation on the re-use potential of the site.

**When:** Thursday, May 27th, 2010 at 7 p.m.

**Where:** Watson Recreation Building, 85 Quincy Ave.

**Why:** The CDRC design team has heard your voices and is ready to present a range of open space and site redevelopment scenarios.

**Who:** This is a meeting for the CDRC to survey community preferences. CDRC-Boston is a non-profit organization linking architects, landscape architects, and other designers with community projects throughout greater Boston. We work on a pro bono basis, using a collaborative process.

**WHAT WILL THIS BECOME?**



**WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU!**

Questions? Please call David Gamble, CDRC liaison, at (617)292-9912

## PRESS COVERAGE

### Town to air options for vacant site

By Matt Carroll  
GLOBE STAFF

East Braintree residents tonight will be able to weigh in on the future of the former Braintree Electric Light Department site on Allen Street, another step in what has turned out to be an unusual departure from how municipalities approach development.

The public meeting, at 7 p.m. in the Watson Building at 85 Quincy Ave., will review various development scenarios put together by the Community Design Resource Center of Boston, a nonprofit working for free.

The center proposes three options for the 1.6-acre property, located along the Monaquot River. Each includes a public riverwalk and open green space, with some development, said David Gamble, president of the design center. The options include an active adult community, a conference/wellness center, and artist lofts.

More detailed plans about each proposal will be unveiled at the meeting, Gamble said.

The design center was brought in to help lead a collaborative effort between the town and residents to come up with a preliminary plan. The center's involvement is a change in how many communities approach development because the collaborative effort is aimed at helping to forge a consensus. In many communities, the developer comes up with an idea for a parcel, and it is then presented to residents. Bitter conflict can result if residents

oppose the plan.

Braintree officials hope to reach a consensus with neighbors over the next few months. Whoever eventually develops the property will use their ideas as a blueprint, knowing that residents and the town have already approved the general idea.

The Allen Street site was left vacant when the municipal light company relocated more than a decade ago. Gamble said he hopes the plans for the property will illustrate how a development can help support and pay for open space in town.

The design center provides preliminary planning and design work for cash-strapped nonprofits and public organizations. "They should all be commended," said David Oliva, chairman of the East Braintree Civic Association, speaking about the design center and town officials.

The process has worked well, he said. Two other meetings have been held.

Mayor Joseph C. Sullivan called the property a "signature site," close to Weymouth Landing, which is also the site of a collaborative revitalization between Braintree and Weymouth, and the MBTA commuter rail's Weymouth Landing-East Braintree stop on the Greenbush line.

Sullivan said he hopes a plan for the electric plant property, which has been used for more than a century and has several old buildings on it, can be completed by the end of the summer.

*Matt Carroll can be reached at mcarroll@globe.com.*

Sat/Sun, May 29-30, 2010 The Patriot Ledger 13

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LOCAL

BRAINTREE

## Ideas unveiled for old light plant

### Options include artist lofts, wellness center, condos for seniors

By Fred Hanson  
THE PATRIOT LEDGER

Artist lofts. A conference and wellness center. Town house condominiums for older residents with open space along the river.

Those are ideas the Community De-

sign Resource Center of Boston has come up with for the site of the original Braintree Electric Light plant on Allen Street.

The townhouse development, which would involve tearing down all four buildings on the property, was unpopular with about three dozen residents and town officials who attended a meeting Thursday night to unveil the three proposals.

"There's a couple we like and one we don't," said at-large Councilor Leland Dinee, who lives in the area.

He said the design which includes

22, three-story town houses "look to me like a wall" and would discourage public access to any riverfront open space.

David Oliva of Edgell Road said by tearing down the buildings "you're losing the history of the area."

Dorothy Veronica White of Beechwood Road added that new housing would make the area "terribly congested."

David Gamble of the nonprofit design center said the condominium development is the most likely of the three concepts.

"It's the market that drives these

things," he said.

The proposed artist lofts would be built in one of the light department buildings along Allen Street, with the former offices housing a cafe. It would include a riverfront amphitheater which could seat 185 people.

The retreat and wellness center would add a new building on the site, and include a canoe and kayak launch. The former offices would be used for a related business.

Gamble said that in meetings with residents during the past few months, the discussion has shifted from using

the 1.6-acre site as a park only to allowing some development.

"It's been a helpful dialogue," he said.

Mayor Joseph Sullivan noted the property has sat unused for 14 years.

"The point of this whole process has been to get things moving because it can't lay fallow another five or 10 years," said Christine Stickney, Braintree's director of planning and community development.

*Fred Hanson may be reached at fhanson@ledger.com.*

## Condos not wanted on ex-BELD plant site on Allen Street

By Robert Aicardi  
GateHouse News Service  
Posted Apr 02, 2010 @ 03:38 PM

Braintree — There may not be a consensus yet about what should be done with the site of the original Braintree Electric Light Department (BELD) plant on Allen Street, but several of those who attended a March 25 meeting at the Watson Building on 85 Quincy Ave. made it clear what they didn't want to see there: condos.

"I like the idea of a village look," a woman said.

"We have to live in East Braintree with a lot of things that are extremely unpleasant for us," said Dorothy-Veronica White, a member of the East Braintree Civic Association. "We're really congested here."

"We're here to listen to you about a very important site in the town," Boston architect David Gamble, who is working with the Community Design Resource Center of Boston, told the audience at the outset of the meeting. "We're not going to show you any designs tonight, but in the months ahead, we'll be getting there."

Gamble introduced Karen Spence, the center's director of projects, and said that the shortest project the center has worked on lasted two months while the longest lasted 20 months.

"We kicked off things in January," he recalled. "The key questions are: how much development should there be and what kind? Tonight we'd like to elicit more feedback on site opportunities so we can create a list of design principles for the site."

Gamble made it clear that the issue was about Allen Street, not the revitalization of Weymouth Landing that had been discussed two nights earlier at a meeting sponsored by Braintree and Weymouth's departments of planning and community development.

"That's not our charge," he said. "That's not our scope."

Gamble advocated moving forward when it comes to determining the fate of the Allen Street area that Mayor Joseph Sullivan referred to as "a special place."

"What you don't want to do is create a stalemate situation," Gamble said. "Now is a great time to plan for redevelopment."

Sullivan spoke about the importance of making the property productive again.

"It has sat unused for 14 years," he said.

"What we want to do is explore options," Gamble said. "We want to show you what actually could happen."

Among the possibilities mentioned during the discussion were a residential development and a waterfront amphitheater/bandstand.

A follow-up meeting is tentatively set to take place in May.

Anyone who would like to offer suggestions can e-mail Gamble at [david@gambleassoc.com](mailto:david@gambleassoc.com) or Braintree Planning and Community Development Director Christine Stickney at [cstickney@braintreema.gov](mailto:cstickney@braintreema.gov).

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## TOWN APPRECIATION



Joseph C. Sullivan  
Mayor

Department of Planning and Community Development  
90 Pond Street  
Braintree, Massachusetts 02184  
Phone: 781-794-8230 Fax: 781-794-8089

Christine Stickney, Director  
Melissa M. Santucci, Principal Planner  
Kelly Phelan, Conservation Planner

June 14, 2010

Ms. Karen Spence,  
Director of Projects  
Community Design Resource Center  
320 Newbury Street  
Boston, MA 02115

Re: Town of Braintree – BELD Site  
Allen Street

Dear Karen,

On behalf of the Town of Braintree, I wish to express our sincere gratitude to your organization for their hard work and dedication to our project on Allen Street. I can not express in words the appreciation I have for all the members of the Team assembled that assisted us with this difficult and controversial project. The Team was successful in taking the project to a higher level of community input and participation through trust and confidence that community officials were unable to obtain before their arrival.

We continue to strive forward with the sound groundwork that your organization prepared for us with the neighborhood and we are hopeful that you will in soon hear of our efforts to develop the site in accordance with one of the three visions presented.

If I can be of any future assistance to your organization through my professional capacities as a planner, please feel free to call upon me. The mission of your organization is an admirable one and I would be glad to assist any way I can. I appreciate all the time and effort put forward by the Team as representatives of the Community Design Resource Center and wish your organization much success in your future endeavors.

Sincerely,

  
Christine Stickney, Director  
Planning and Community Development

