

# Upper East Side Neighborhood Revitalization Zone Community Vision



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**Upper East Side Neighborhood Revitalization Zone  
Community Vision**

**City of Bridgeport, Connecticut**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

The City of Bridgeport along with residents, business owners and other stakeholders in the Upper East Side community have been working together to develop a vision for the future of the neighborhood through the City's Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ) program. The NRZ program, authorized by the State of Connecticut, provides for a collaborative approach to neighborhood planning whereby local communities take a leadership role in creating a vision for their own future and ultimately developing a plan for achieving that vision.

In Bridgeport, the first step in creating a new NRZ is to organize the community and work with local residents and business owners to develop a vision for the future. This report describes this initial visioning phase of the NRZ plan development process. Through the fall of 2014 and winter of 2015, the City actively worked to bring Upper East Side residents, business owners and stakeholders together to discuss neighborhood opportunities and challenges and create a community vision. Working with consultants Collaborative Planning Studio and WXY Architecture + Urban Design, the City and the neighborhood crafted a vision for the future of the Upper East Side, which is described in this report. This vision is centered on making the Upper East Side a safe and welcoming walkable neighborhood with strengthened connections to the community's valuable open spaces.

The vision is accompanied by a series of conceptual design sketches that illustrate physical/urban design improvements that can be made to enhance the neighborhood and realize the community's aspirations for its future. This vision is intended to guide the development of a Neighborhood Revitalization Plan for the Upper East Side, which will be created by the community with support from the City of Bridgeport.

### 1.2 NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION ZONE BOUNDARY

The Upper East Side NRZ, established by a resolution of the City Council, includes the area bounded by Boston Avenue to the south, Route 25/8 to the west, the Town of Trumbull to the northwest, the Town of Stratford to the northeast and the Lake Success Business Park to the east (see Figure 1).

### 1.3 CREATING A VISION FOR THE UPPER EAST SIDE

The vision for the Upper East Side NRZ described in this report was developed through a community-based planning process, which included outreach to a range of neighborhood stakeholders through a series of small group meetings and workshops. An initial information meeting was held on January 8, 2015 to explain the NRZ planning process to the community. This initial meeting was followed by a series of stakeholder meetings including meetings with City department heads, the principals of the Beardsley and Hooker Schools, business owners and church leadership. The purpose of these small group meetings was to understand neighborhood challenges and opportunities from the perspective of a range of community stakeholders. These meetings included conversations with the following organizations and individuals:

#### *City of Bridgeport*

- Parag Agrawal, Planning Director
- Paul Boucher, Assistant Zoning Official
- Charles Carroll, Director, Department of Parks and Recreation
- Lamond Daniels, Mayor's Office
- Kristin Dubay-Horton, Health Director
- Captain Robert Gearing, Police Department, Patrol Division, East Command
- Diego Guevara, Zoning Officer
- Lynn Haig, Senior Planner
- Steve Hladen, Department of Parks & Recreation
- Deborah Thomas-Sims, Office of Neighborhood Revitalization
- John Urquidi, City Engineer

#### *Community Stakeholders*

- Andre, Vinny's Pizza
- Gregg Dancho, Beardsley Zoo
- Principal Lourdes Delgado, Hooker School
- Rev. Jarvis Tracey, Faith & Hope Ministries
- Principal Sharon Piverotto, Beardsley School

In addition to these smaller group meetings, the City hosted two community-wide public workshops to discuss revitalization opportunities and challenges with the community and obtain input on proposed vision concepts and design sketches. The



first workshop was a half-day event held on Saturday, February 7, 2015 at Beardsley School. The event included an opening presentation on existing neighborhood conditions and two work sessions. In the first session participants discussed neighborhood strengths and challenges and considered vision priorities. The second session was a mapping exercise where residents identified locations within the neighborhood where physical improvements are needed.

Following this workshop, the consultant team crafted a draft neighborhood vision and accompanying design sketches in consultation with City staff. The vision and designs were then presented to the public for comment at a follow-up workshop on March 26, 2015 at Hooker School. At this workshop, participants worked to refine the community vision and finalize the proposed design sketches. The outcome of this work is the Upper East Side Community Vision described in Section 4 of this report.



## 2. EXISTING CONDITIONS

### 2.1 NEIGHBORHOOD OVERVIEW<sup>1</sup>

The Upper East Side is home to 9,920 people. It is a racially diverse community. 42 percent of residents are White, 35 percent are African-American, 2 percent are Asian and the remaining population identifies as Other. 38.7 percent of neighborhood residents identify as Hispanic. 82.5 percent of residents have at least a high school diploma. 15.6 percent of Upper East Side households are headed by single mothers; 12.8 percent of households receive food stamps. There are 616 businesses in the neighborhood employing 2,900 people. Median household income is \$45,726 per year; median home value is \$180,728. Housing vacancy is low at 6.4 percent. 62 percent of neighborhood homes are owner occupied; 38 percent are renter occupied.

According to Bridgeport's Police Department, crime is relatively low in the Upper East Side compared with the balance of the City. Robberies occur mainly along the East Main Street corridor. Burglaries are largely concentrated in the Huntington Turnpike area from East Main Street to Broadbridge Road. Auto theft and theft from automobiles occurs mainly in Nob Hill and along Asylum, Horace and Goddard Streets.

### 2.2 LAND USE & ZONING

#### *Land Use*

The Upper East Side is mainly a residential area with significant open space assets (see Figure 2). North of Evers Street, the area is characterized by single family homes with two commercial nodes along Huntington Turnpike that serve the neighborhood. South of Evers Street there is a mix of single family, medium density and high density housing as well as commercial development along East Main Street and Boston Avenue. The NRZ contains two elementary schools- Beardsley School and Hooker School- and numerous churches. The Old Mill Green Library is located just south of the NRZ boundary on Boston Avenue. Open space within the NRZ includes the 100+ acre, Frederick Law Olmsted designed Beardsley Park, Connecticut's Beardsley Zoo, Glenwood Park, the new Nob Hill Park and Old Mill Green, adjacent to Boston Avenue east of Route 127. Lakeview Cemetery is located just north of Old Mill Green in the southwest corner of the NRZ. Northwest of the cemetery there is a small industrial area along Cogswell and Asylum Streets.

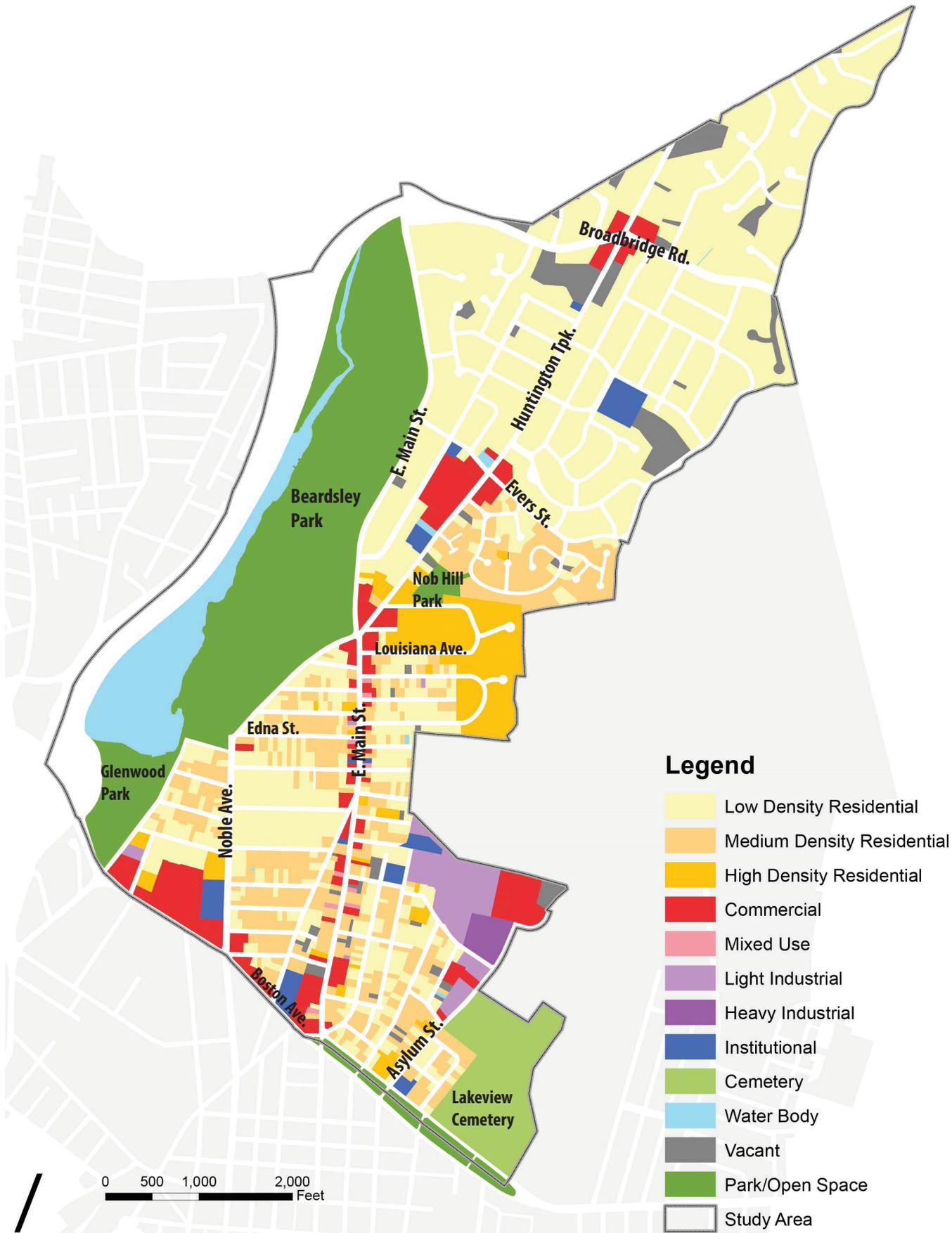
#### *Zoning*

Zoning within the neighborhood is generally consistent with existing land use. There are eight zoning districts within the NRZ boundary:

- Residential A (R-A): Single family
- Residential B (R-B): Two family
- Residential BB (R-BB): Two & three family
- Residential C (R-C): Multifamily
- Office/Retail (OR)
- Office/Retail General (OR-G)
- Light Industrial (I-L)
- Zoological Park (Z-P)

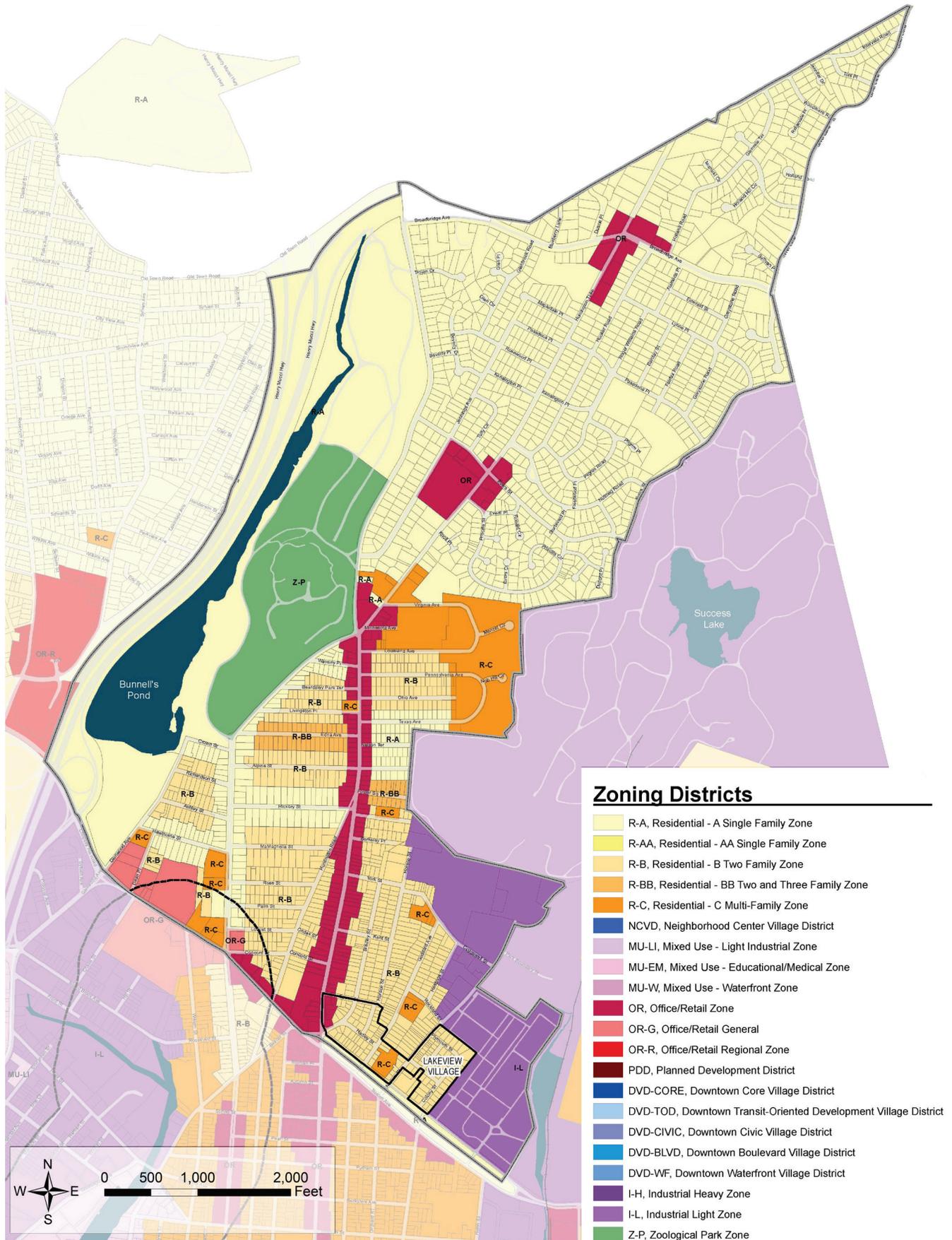
The portion of the NRZ north of Evers Street is zoned R-A; below Evers Street, the residential areas are zoned R-A, R-B, R-BB & R-C reflecting existing residential densities. The East Main Street corridor and the intersections of Huntington Turnpike with Evers Street and Broadbridge Road are zoned O-R. Boston Avenue includes a mix of O-R, OR-G and R-C zoning west of Route 127 and is primarily zoned R-A east of Route 127/just north of Old Mill Green. The industrial area in the southeast corner of the NRZ is zoned I-L and Beardsley Park along the western NRZ boundary is zoned Z-P.

<sup>1</sup> Data Source: 2010 US Census



**Upper East Side Neighborhood Revitalization Zone**  
**Bridgeport, CT**

Figure 2: Land Use Map  
 Source: City of Bridgeport GIS



**Upper East Side Neighborhood Revitalization Zone**  
**Bridgeport, CT**

Figure 3: Zoning Map  
 Source: City of Bridgeport

### 2.3 URBAN DESIGN

The Upper East Side is characterized by a variety of residential streetscapes. It includes tree-lined streets without sidewalks in low density residential neighborhoods north of Evers Street as well as denser neighborhoods with sidewalks in front of multifamily homes south of Evers. The quality of residential streetscapes varies substantially across the NRZ. Some streets are tree-lined and have well maintained sidewalks, while others lack street trees and have cracked sidewalks.

Streetscapes along the NRZ's commercial corridors vary widely as well. Along East Main Street/Route 127 south of Noble Avenue there are some areas with decorative sidewalk treatments and pedestrian scale lighting, while others have cobra-head highway lights and sidewalks in disrepair. Along the eastern side of Beardsley Park, there are no sidewalks on East Main Street and safe pedestrian access to the park is a concern. Huntington Turnpike is generally characterized by attractive streetscapes including decorative paving, pedestrian-scale lighting and street trees along its length between Evers Street and Boston Avenue.

The Upper East Side's open spaces present unique urban design challenges. Old Mill Green, a valuable stretch of passive open space along Boston Avenue, is flanked by high-speed one-way traffic and there are multiple vehicular cut-throughs along its length. These conditions create concerns with regard to safe pedestrian access and safe utilization of the open space. Beardsley Park, which runs along the western boundary of the NRZ, is not well connected to the neighborhood. High speed traffic along East Main Street coupled with a lack of sidewalks and safe pedestrian crossings contribute to the disconnect between the park and the neighborhood. The City is currently developing a Master Plan for Beardsley Park and will be extending the Pequonnock River Trail and bike path. Both of these projects present opportunities to enhance connectivity between the park and the neighborhood.



### 3. STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES & DESIGN IMPROVEMENTS

Based on field observations and input from residents, business owners and community stakeholders, a series of NRZ strengths and challenges were identified. Building on the neighborhood's strengths and addressing its challenges, as described below, serves as the basis for the Upper East Side community vision described in Section 4 of this report.

#### 3.1 NRZ STRENGTHS

Neighborhood strengths that were identified through the planning process generally relate to the Upper East Side's location and character. Stakeholders cited the following as assets that the community can build upon:

- Quiet residential streets
- Attractive streetscapes
- Architectural diversity
- Beardsley Park and Zoo
- Cultural diversity
- Restaurants
- Shopping
- Recreation
- Highway access
- Walking & biking routes
- Access to Old Mill Green Library

#### 3.2 NRZ CHALLENGES

Neighborhood challenges that were identified by stakeholders relate to needed physical improvements as well as the need to address social issues and public nuisances. Challenges to be addressed as part of the NRZ's neighborhood revitalization strategy include:

- Improve traffic safety
  - Enforce speed limits
  - Improve dangerous intersections such as Crown Street & Noble Avenue and East Main Street between Evers Street & Beverly Place.
- Improve pedestrian safety and access
  - Improve pedestrian access to Beardsley Park, particularly from East Main Street
  - Repair existing sidewalks
  - Provide new sidewalks linking residential areas to businesses
- Improve storefronts

- Enhance neighborhood gateways
- Improve appearance of industrial area
- Provide more parking for residential areas & storefront churches
- Make neighborhood cleaner
- Improve business stability
- Attract a grocery store to the neighborhood
- Improve park safety
- Improve the neighborhood's image
- Improve school performance
- Provide more activities for youth
- Address public nuisances include barking dogs, loud music and ATVs

#### 3.3 DESIGN IMPROVEMENT IDEAS

A group of design improvements building upon community strengths and addressing neighborhood challenges emerged from discussions of NRZ opportunities and issues. These design ideas focus on improving pedestrian and traffic safety, enhancing open space access and improving the appearance of business districts. They serve as the basis for the development of conceptual design sketches illustrating the community's vision for its future, which are presented in Section 4 of this report.

##### *East Main Street*

- Calm traffic and improve pedestrian safety along Beardsley Park
  - Add sidewalks, crosswalks & a pedestrian actuated signal
- Improve appearance of East Main Street storefronts and streetscapes

##### *Shopping Center at west corner of Huntington Tpk. & Evers Street*

- Reimagine as a community hub
- Create stronger relationship with restaurants across Huntington Tpk.
- Create strong linkage with Beardsley Park along Evers Street

##### *Old Mill Green*

- Reconfigure existing one-way road system to enhance pedestrian safety and improve access to Old Mill Green from the neighborhood and from Luis Munoz Marin School.
- Enhance use of the Green for passive recreation (walking/ bike path, chess boards, public art, etc.)

## 4. A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

**“The Upper East Side is a safe and welcoming walkable neighborhood with a vibrant neighborhood center and accessible open spaces.”**

### 4.1 COMMUNITY VISION

The vision outlined below builds on the Upper East Side’s strengths, including its stable residential neighborhoods and significant open space assets and addresses physical and social challenges identified by the community. As described in the previous sections of this report, this vision for the future of the Upper East Side emerged from the stakeholder outreach and community engagement process. The vision is centered on making the Upper East Side a safe and welcoming walkable neighborhood with strengthened connections to the community’s open spaces. Vision statements intended to guide the development of an NRZ Plan for the Upper East Side are as follows:

Vision 1: A safe and walkable neighborhood

- Improve pedestrian safety
- Improve traffic safety
- Improve neighborhood safety
- Improve police-community relations

Vision 2: An attractive and welcoming community

- Improve streetscapes with lighting, sidewalks & street trees
- Remove litter and keep streets clean
- Create strong neighborhood gateways
- Create a landscaped buffer between industrial and residential uses along Cogswell Street
- Improve the appearance of East Main Street storefronts
- Enhance neighborhood identity
- Enhance sense of community
- Provide activities for young people

Vision 3: A vibrant neighborhood center

- Create a new, pedestrian-scale community hub at Huntington Turnpike & Evers Street
- Create community gathering space
- Encourage uses that serve the community
- Create a clear link to Beardsley Park from Huntington Turnpike

Vision 4: Enhance access to open space

- Improve pedestrian access to Beardsley Park from East Main Street
- Improve the Beardsley Park playground and install a splash pad
- Make Old Mill Green an accessible neighborhood open space asset

### 4.2 DESIGN CONCEPTS

A series of design concept drawings were developed to illustrate physical improvements that can be made within the neighborhood to achieve these visions. These concepts are intended to demonstrate possible design solutions that would address challenges identified by the community. Their purpose is to be visionary in imagining what revitalization of specific areas might look like in the Upper East Side. Further analysis will be necessary in order to refine these ideas and determine appropriate pathways to implementation.

Figure 4 is an overview drawing that illustrates all of the proposed design solutions for the Upper East Side NRZ vision. Figures 5-9 provide further detail on proposed concepts for specific focus areas within the neighborhood including the intersection of Huntington Turnpike and Evers Street, Old Mill Green, and East Main Street’s commercial corridor.

#### *Design Solutions Overview*

As shown on Figure 4, there are several design solutions that can be applied in various locations throughout the NRZ to address issues such as improving pedestrian safety, improving traffic safety and creating stronger neighborhood gateways. These concepts include:

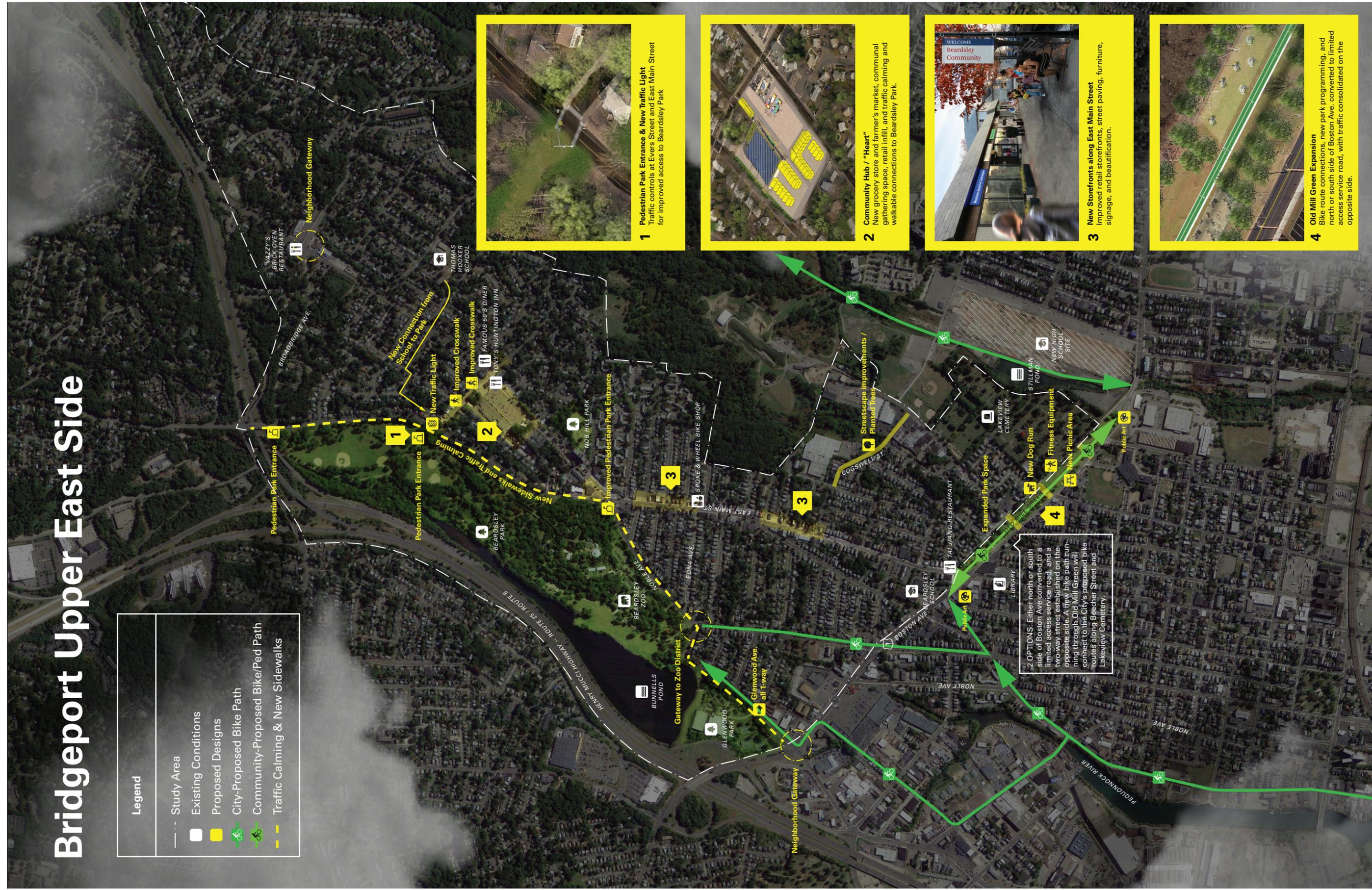
- Sidewalks and traffic calming along East Main Street adjacent to Beardsley Park
- Improved crosswalks
- Gateway treatments
- New bike paths
- New traffic lights

Examples of these types of improvements are shown on Figure 5.

# Bridgeport Upper East Side

**Legend**

- Study Area
- Existing Conditions
- Proposed Designs
- City-Proposed Bike Path
- Community-Proposed Bike/Ped Path
- Traffic Calming & New Sidewalks



**1 Pedestrian Park Entrance & New Traffic Light**  
Traffic controls at Evers Street and East Main Street for improved access to Beardsey Park

**2 Community Hub / "Heart"**  
New grocery store and farmer's market, communal gathering space, retail infill, and traffic calming and walkable connections to Beardsey Park.

**3 New Storefronts along East Main Street**  
Improved retail storefronts, street paving, furniture, signage, and beautification.

**4 Old Mill Green Expansion**  
Bike route connections, new park programming, and north or south side of Boston Ave. converted to limited access service road, with traffic consolidated on the opposite side.

**2 OPTIONS:** Either north or south side of Boston Ave converted to a limited access service road, and a two-way street established on the opposite side. A new bike path running through Old Mill Green will connect to the City's proposed bike routes along Beacher Street and Lakeview Cemetery.



**Upper East Side Neighborhood Revitalization Zone  
Bridgeport, CT**

Figure 5: Streetscape & Traffic Safety Improvement Ideas

### Community Hub

At the public workshop held on February 7, 2015, the intersection of Huntington Turnpike and Evers Street was identified as a hub area that could potentially serve as a community heart/gathering space. This site is currently a shopping center that includes several small retail stores and a vacant supermarket. The vision for this area, shown on Figure 6, includes:

- Removing the vacant supermarket building and constructing new residential homes and mixed use buildings with retail on the ground floor and residential above on the southern portion of the site;
- Introducing a green roof and/or solar panels on the roof of the remaining shopping center building;
- Reusing the remaining shopping center space as a grocery store;
- Introducing a pedestrian-scale roadway through the center of the site;
- Providing a landscaped buffer between the rear of the property and the single family homes on Jennings Avenue;
- Creating a community gathering space/town square on the site that could be utilized for community events and passive recreation; and
- Improved access to Beardsley Park along Evers Street with new sidewalks and crosswalks along Evers, a new pedestrian-actuated traffic light on East Main Street and an improved pedestrian park entrance at Evers & Main Streets.

*The images below illustrate potential opportunities for envisioning the future of a community gathering space at Huntington Turnpike & Evers Street.*



Sunset Triangle Plaza, Los Angeles, CA



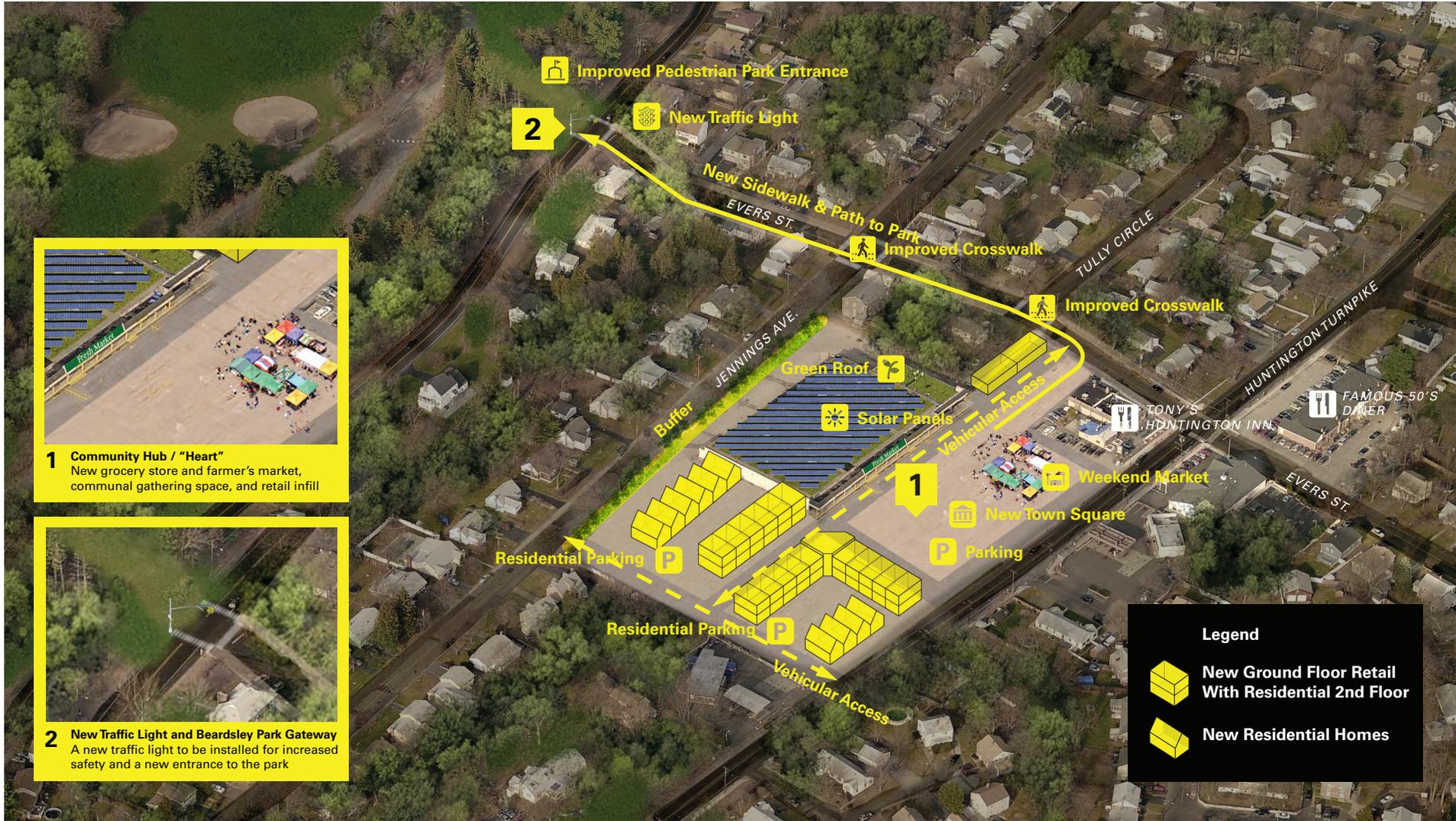
Westlake Park, Seattle, WA



Privately Owned Public Space, New York City



Hamburg, Germany



### *Old Mill Green*

Old Mill Green is a significant, but underutilized open space asset bounded by one-way Route 1 traffic to the north and south. It currently consists of green space and trees and is broken up by through traffic at Goddard Avenue, Asylum Street, Pembroke Street and a service road providing access to Lakeview Cemetery. Enhancing the use of this space and making it more accessible to the public is an important component of the NRZ's vision for improving open space access.

The design concept for Old Mill Green includes eliminating vehicular access points across the green to create more cohesive/continuous open space, providing a pedestrian/bike path along its center and programming the space with passive activities that could include elements such as picnic seating, fitness equipment and a dog run. Another important element of this concept is to reconfigure traffic circulation to provide for two-way Route 1 traffic along one side of the green and a service road along the other side. The reason for this reconfiguration is to calm traffic along Route 1 and enhance pedestrian accessibility to the green. There are three potential configurations for traffic around the green:

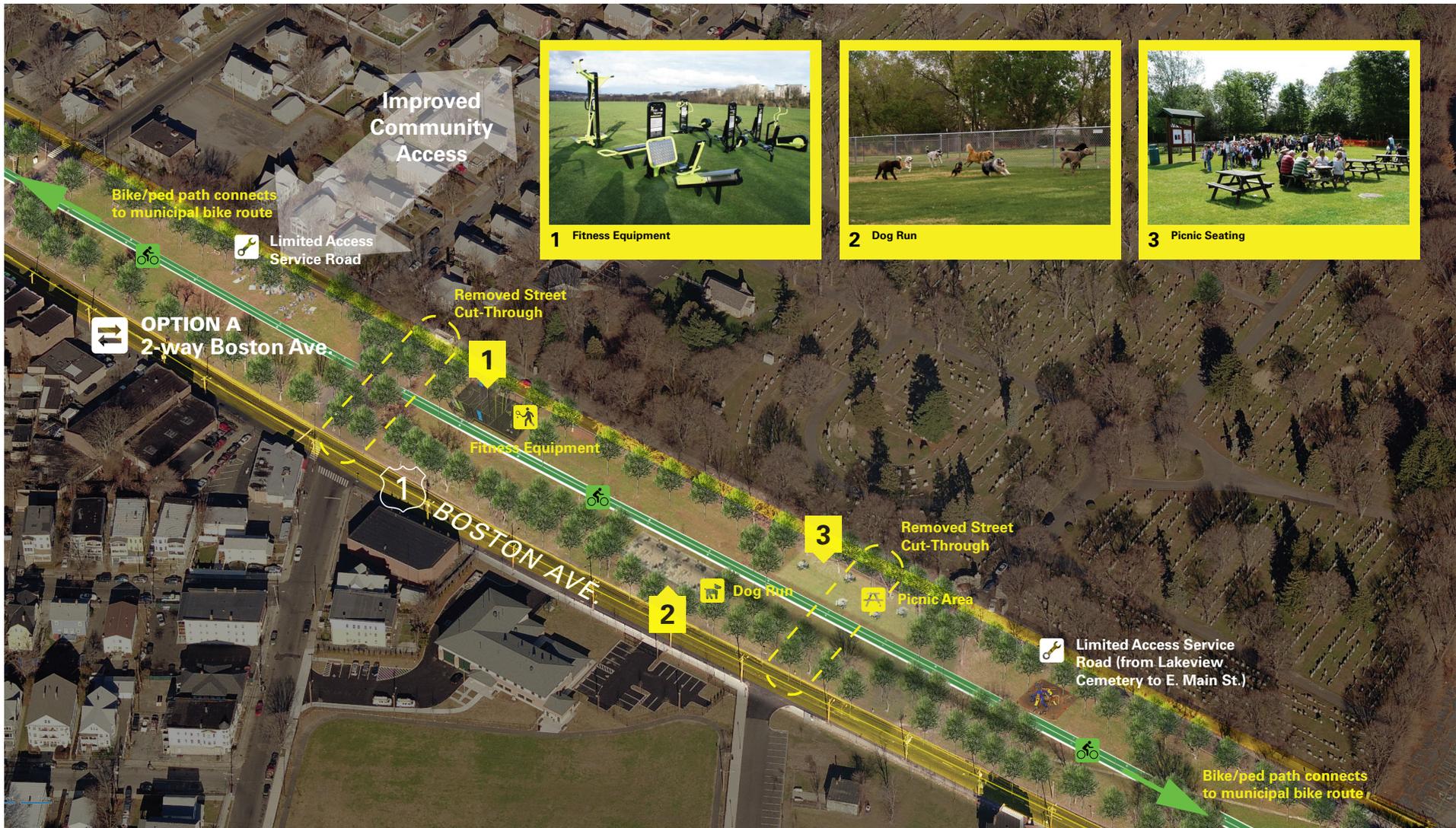
1. Two-way Route 1 traffic along the southern side of the green/service road along the northern side (see Figure 7)
2. Two way Route 1 traffic along the northern side of the green/service road along the southern side (see Figure 8)
3. Two-way Route 1 traffic along the southern side of the green from East Main Street to Pembroke Street, which then switches to the northern side of the green.

The advantage of placing the service road along the northern side of the green is that it will make the green more pedestrian accessible from the Upper East Side neighborhood and from the homes facing the green. The advantage of placing the service road along the southern side of the green is that it will make the green more accessible to Louis Munoz Marin School. A configuration that allows two-way Route 1 traffic to cross the green near Pembroke Street could achieve both goals. However, having traffic cross the green would interrupt the continuity of the open space. The optimal configuration of traffic around the green will require further

analysis/engineering and additional community input.

### *East Main Street Storefront & Streetscape Improvements*

East Main Street is an important neighborhood commercial corridor with a mix of businesses and residences. The quality of the streetscape varies along its length and could be significantly improved with basic storefront and signage improvements and the introduction of new street furniture such as benches, garbage







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Bridgeport, CT

Figure 9: East Main Street  
Storefront & Streetscape Improvements