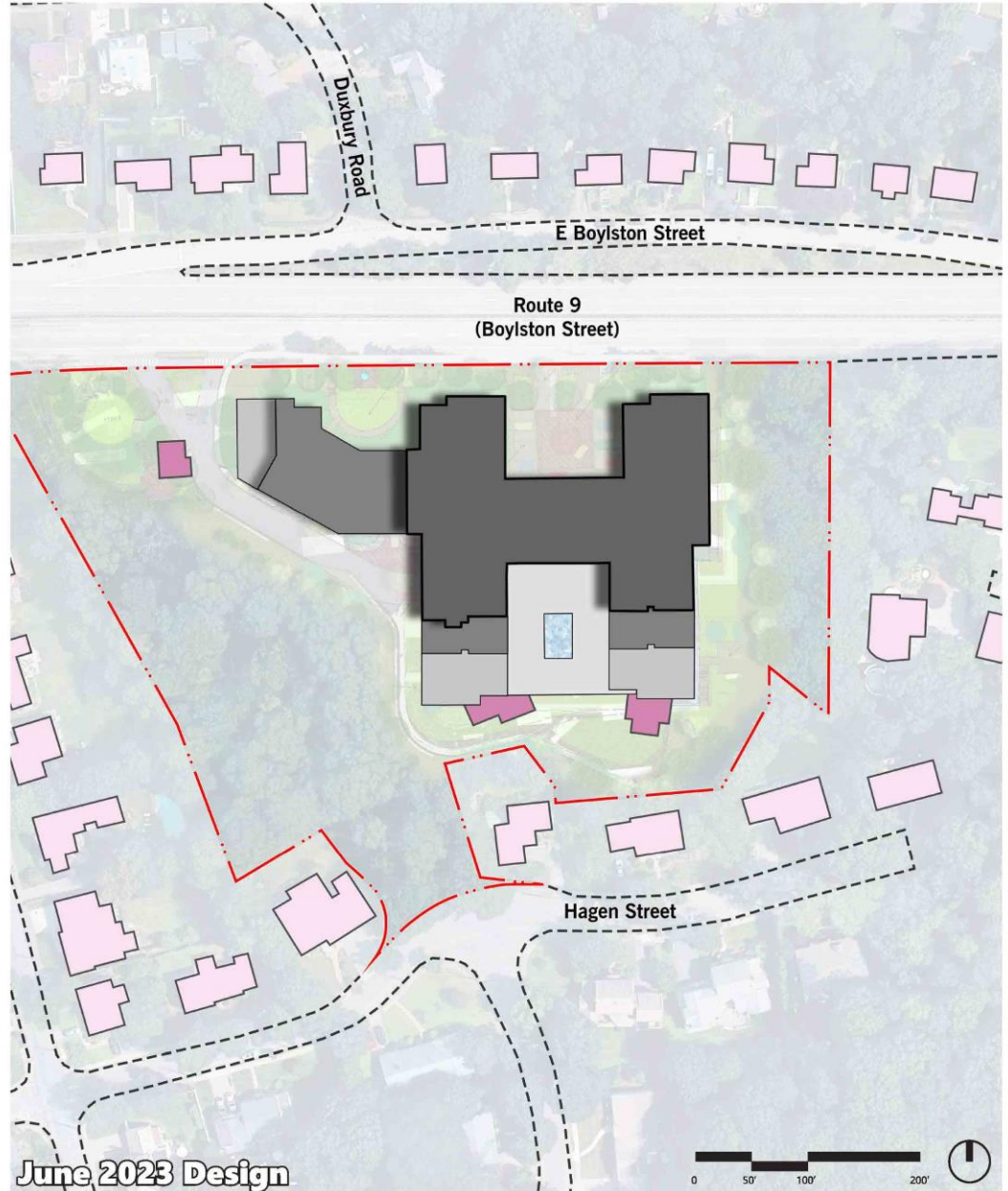
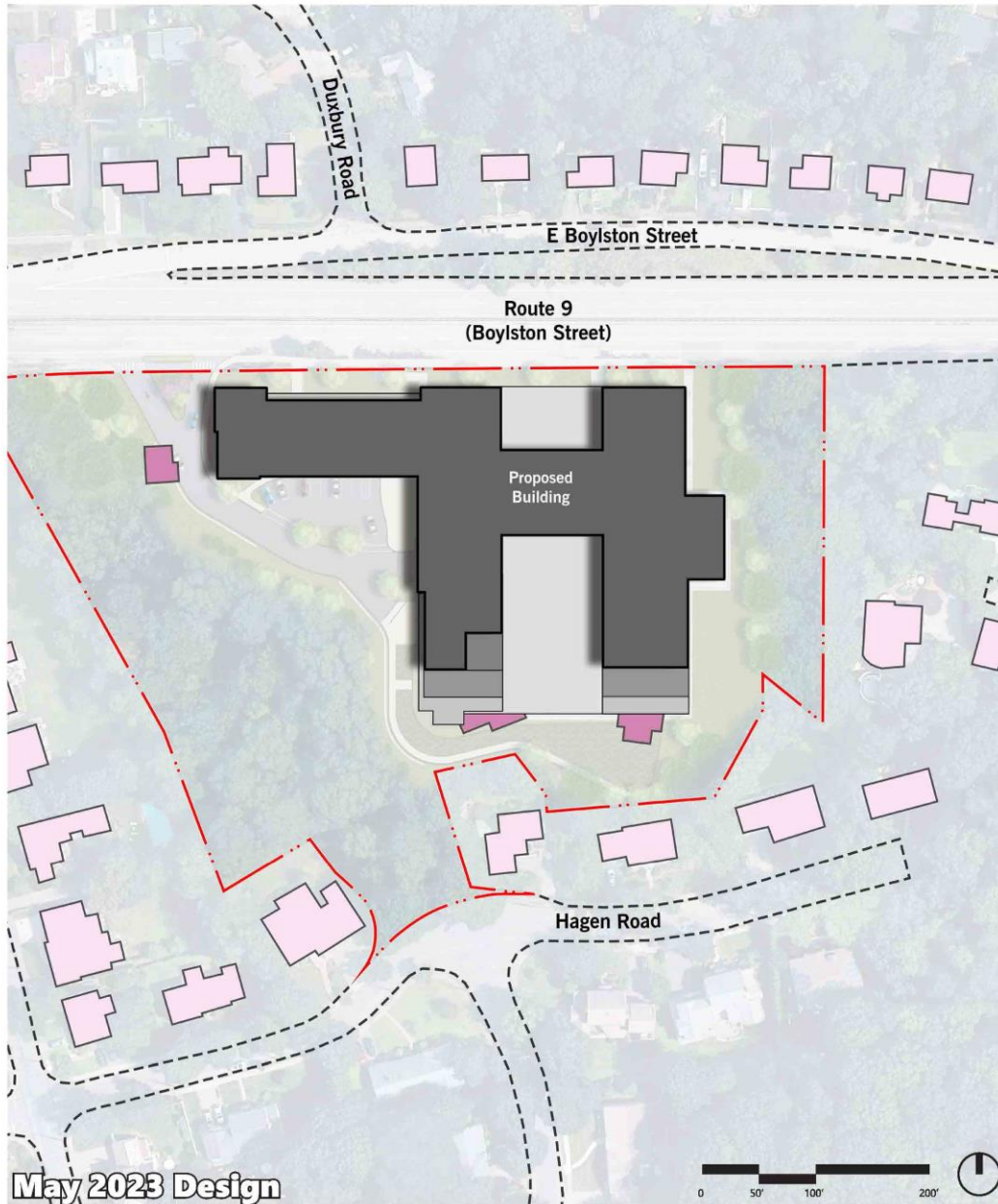


528 BOYLSTON STREET URBAN DESIGN REVIEW

July 24, 2023

Design Comparison



Address: *528 Boylston Street | Newton, MA*

Lot Size: *5.82 Acres*

Total Units: *198*

1BD *38 Units | 19.2% | 750 SF*

2BD *100 Units | 50.5% | 1,063 SF*

3BD *60 Units | 30.3% | 1,350 SF*

Parking Spaces: *273 Total*

Affordability: *25%*

FAR: *1.66*

Open Space %: *65.3%*

Urban Design Considerations

Current residential single-family zoning on the site does not provide guidance on massing or density and the surrounding area does not have a small area plan or other guidance on urban design considerations. Despite the lack of design guidance, NBBJ has identified the following design considerations for our site review:

- **Respect and protect adjacent residential neighborhood:** Keep buildings as far as possible from abutting neighbors and reduce heights near residential neighborhoods. While the project may not conform to height restrictions, setbacks and max site coverages should be respected.
- **Enhance environmental conditions:** The location along Paul Brook is an opportunity to enhance environmental conditions and provide more public access to the brook. The Brook is currently constrained within a concrete channel that could be removed to provide better conditions for wildlife.
- **Provide connectivity:** The site lies between Hagen Road and Route 9 which currently has no public access. Allowing the public through the site may provide convenience for Newton residents to travel to the nearby Newton South High School or to nearby crossings of Route 9 on Parker Street.
- **Improve pedestrian accommodations on Route 9:** The current pedestrian accommodations on Route 9 are neither pleasant nor accessible for persons with disabilities. At a minimum, the site plan should improve those conditions along the site frontage, but additionally off-site improvement would be desirable to connect to any nearby transit locations.

Newton Project Comparison

The size of the proposed building at 528 Boylston is comparable to recently approved 40B developments in Newton.

528 Boylston Street

Building Length: 360'
Total Units: 199
Parking Spaces: 273 (1.37 per unit)



Northland Needham St.

Typical Building Length: 350'
Total Units: 800
Residential Parking Spaces: 800 (1.0 per unit)

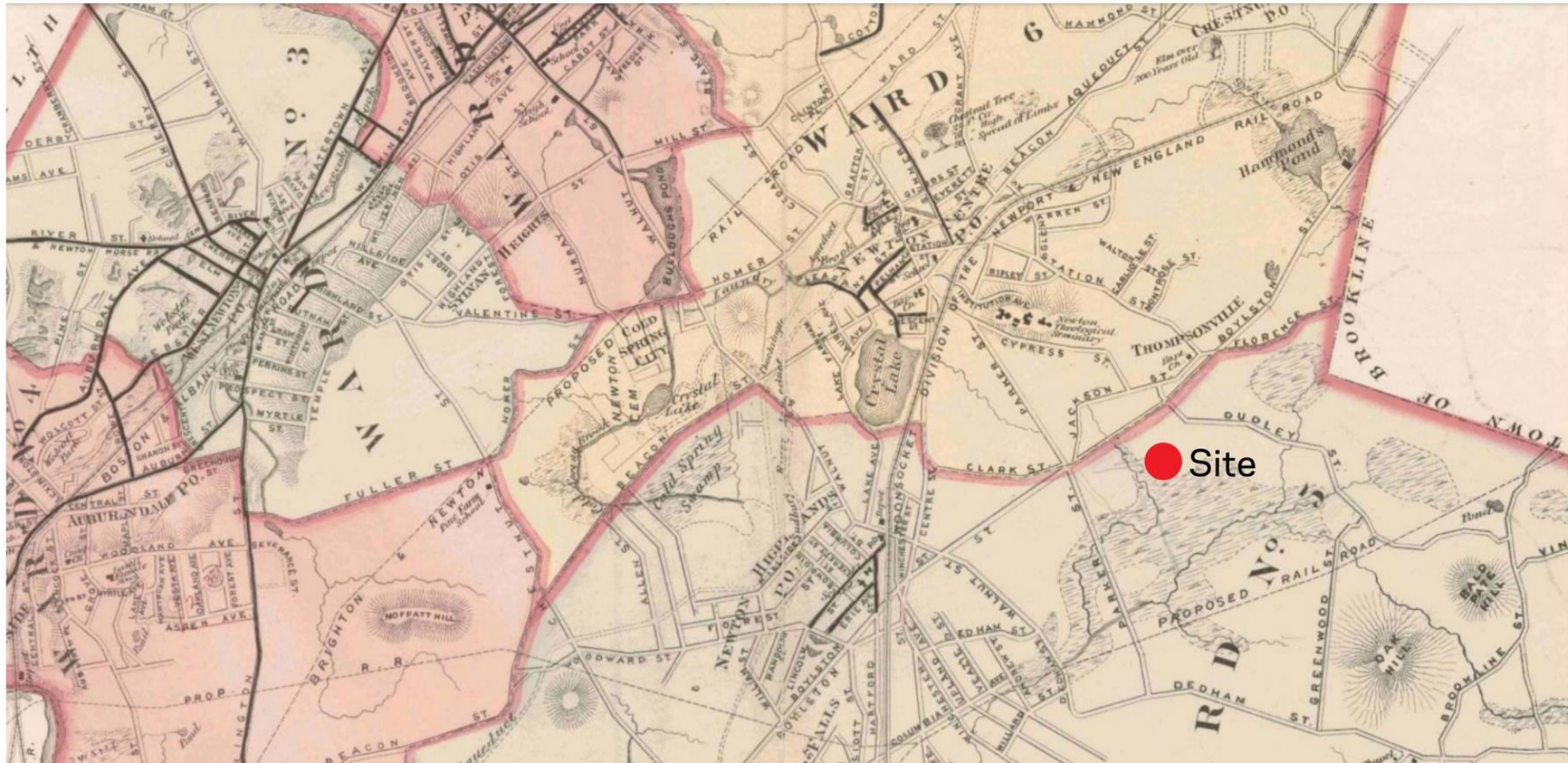


15 Riverdale

Typical Building Length: 300'
Total Units: 204
Residential Parking Spaces: 236 (1.16 per unit)

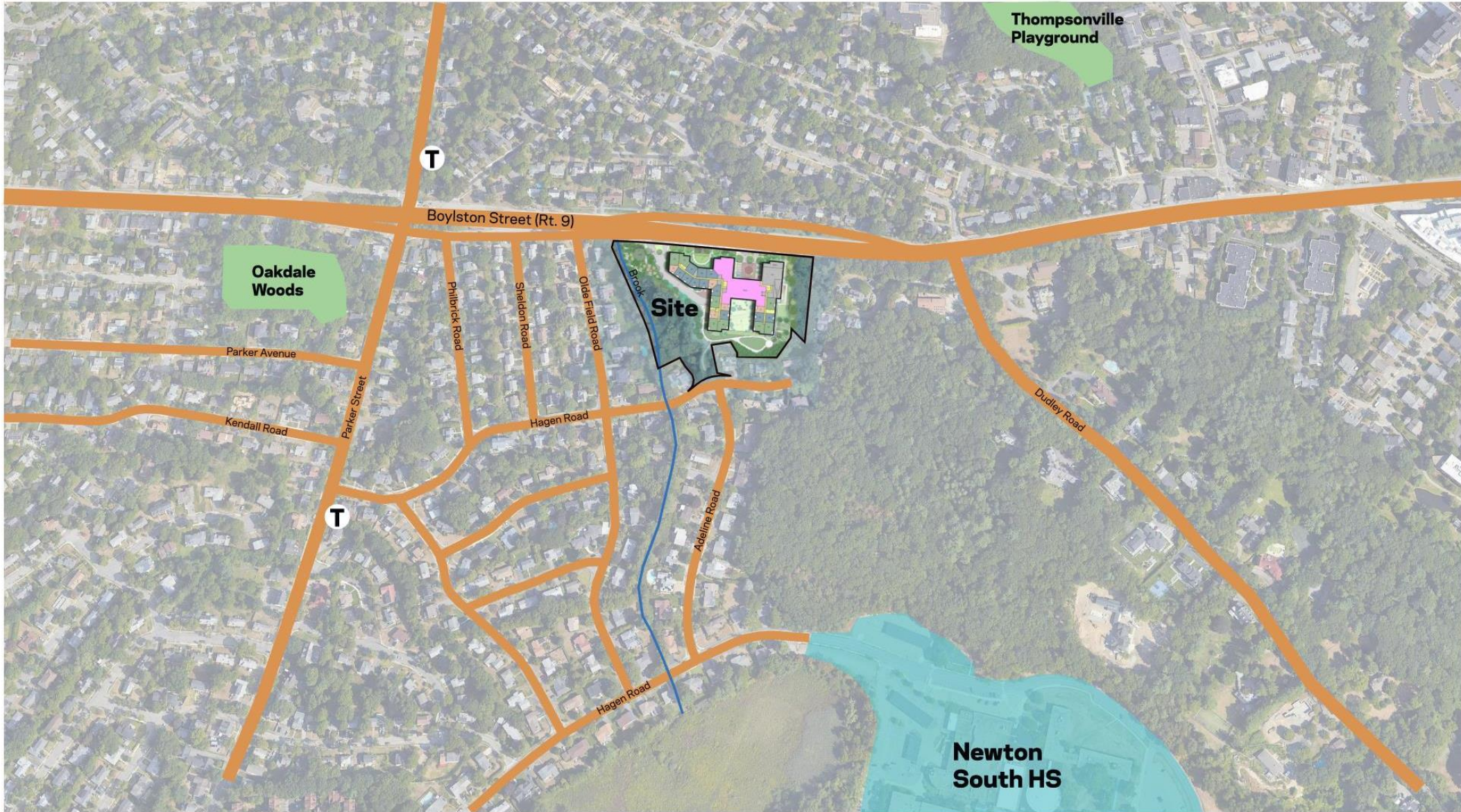


Site History

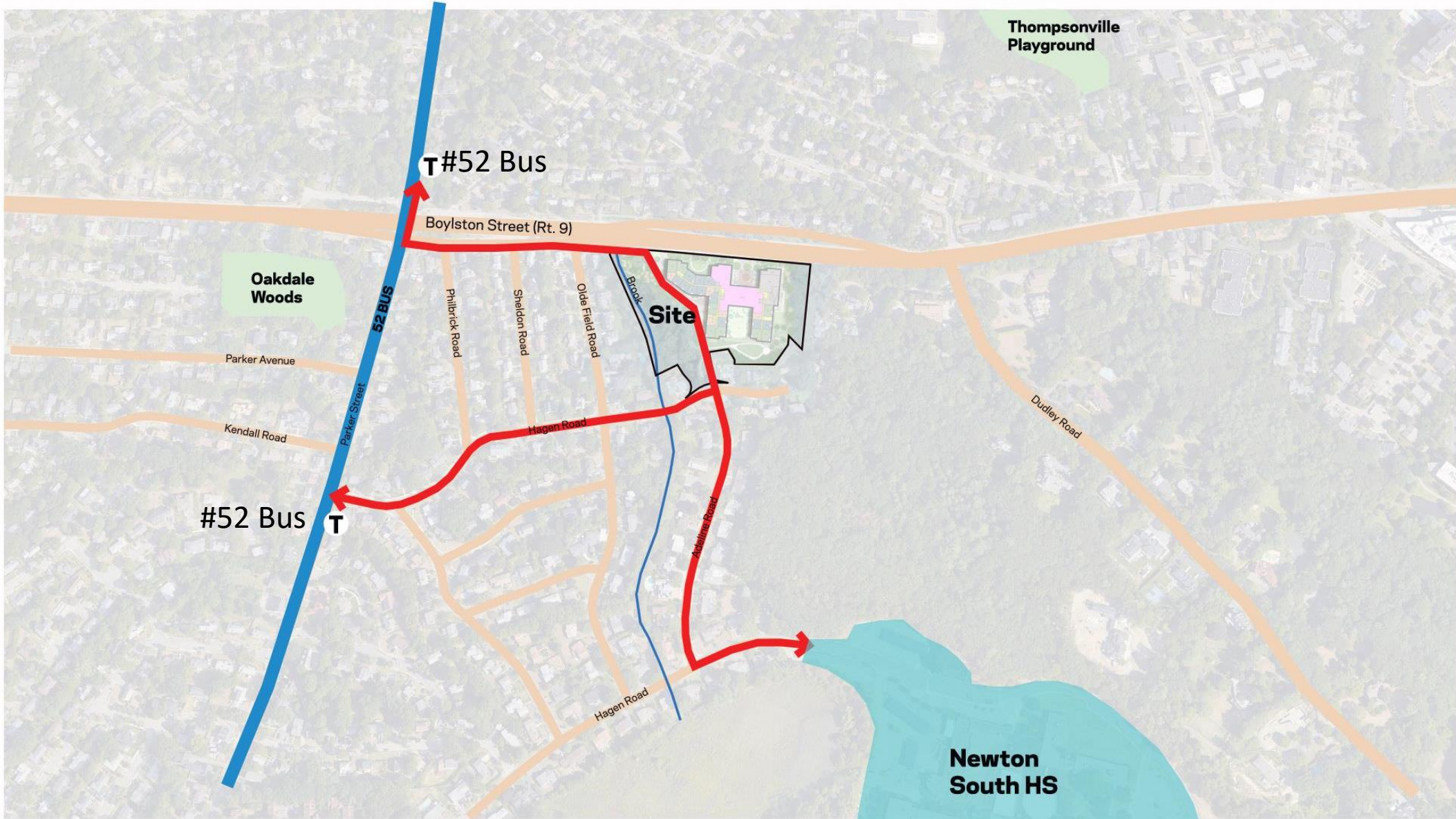


1874 Historic Map

Context



Context



Site Photos



Boylston looking east



Boylston looking west



Boylston looking east at Sheldon Road



Ledge outcrop along Boylston Street

Boylston Street Frontage

Boylston Street Frontage

The revised plan shifts the building further away from Boylston Street, creating opportunities for additional buffering and transitions in massing to establish a human scale. (However, the setback proposed still does not fully comply with current zoning setback of 30' in SR2 zones) We encourage the applicant to fully take advantage of this additional space by including a wider planted buffer separating the sidewalk and Boylston Street.

Trees could be planted within this buffer to provide shade and physical protection for pedestrians. Alternatively, we would encourage an additional physical barrier to provide more protection for pedestrians. For example, this could include a continuous low stone wall or slight grade separation along the Boylston Street frontage, perhaps made of reclaimed stone from any required building excavation rather than the highway traffic barriers found on the site today.

At a minimum this should be done on the site, but potentially offsite improvements should be considered to connect the project with nearby transit facilities on Parker Street.

Boylston Street Frontage

The current conditions for the Boylston Street frontage include a narrow sidewalk with no street trees or pedestrian buffer, overhead utilities, and no ground level activity. The applicant has proposed a wider sidewalk and new landscaping between the sidewalk and the proposed building. While this is an improvement over the existing conditions, we encourage the applicant to consider adding a wide tree-lined landscape buffer along the edge of the street to provide additional screening and protection for pedestrians. We also encourage the applicant to consider burying all overhead utilities.

Existing Conditions



Overhead Utilities
Narrow sidewalk with no buffer for pedestrians

Example: Portland, OR



Wide planting strip with shade trees

Wide sidewalk with lush planting on both sides

Smaller protected "outdoor rooms" with active building frontage

Open Space

The project includes two courtyards along Boylston Street, one south-facing elevated courtyard, a small pocket park at the northwestern corner of the property, and conservation land along the western edge of the site adjacent to Paul Brook. Although this represents a significant amount of open space, we have the following recommendations:

Reconsider the location of a **pocket park along Boylston Street**. The noise and pollution from the roadway will limit the functionality of a park at this location unless significant steps are made to buffer pedestrians. This could include grade changes, low walls, additional landscaping, or small structures that can shield the roadway.

Consider making a strong **north-south linear park** that connects Boylston Street to Hagen Road. This could include a 10'-12' wide continuous multi-use path for both pedestrians and bicyclists, providing a safe connection to community facilities including Newton South High School. Additionally, gateway and interpretive signage could be included to further improve the accessibility and functionality of the space – one that can be enjoyed by both residents and the surrounding community.

Enhance Paul Brook and the existing conservation land by **removing invasive species** and providing greater accessibility (ex: boardwalks and interpretive signage).

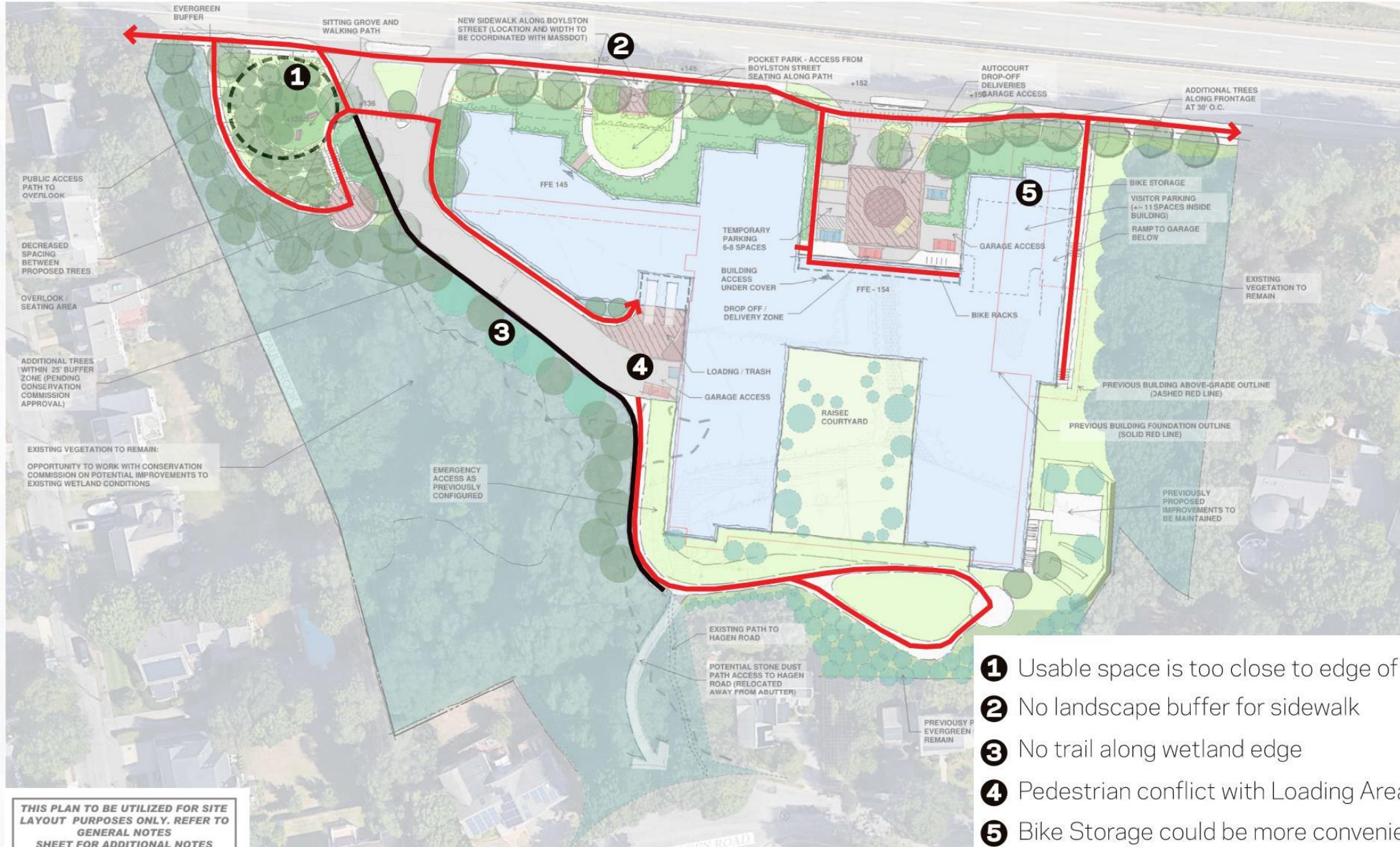
Provide additional information on the design of the proposed open spaces, including retaining wall details, paving materials, plant materials and quantities, signage, and lighting. Additionally, we request that the applicant provide detailed site sections (including the Boylston Street frontage) and 3d ground level vignettes.

During our site walk we noticed **beautiful rock outcrops** on the east side of the site. Can some of these outcrops be preserved and/ or featured in the landscape design?

Landscape Plan

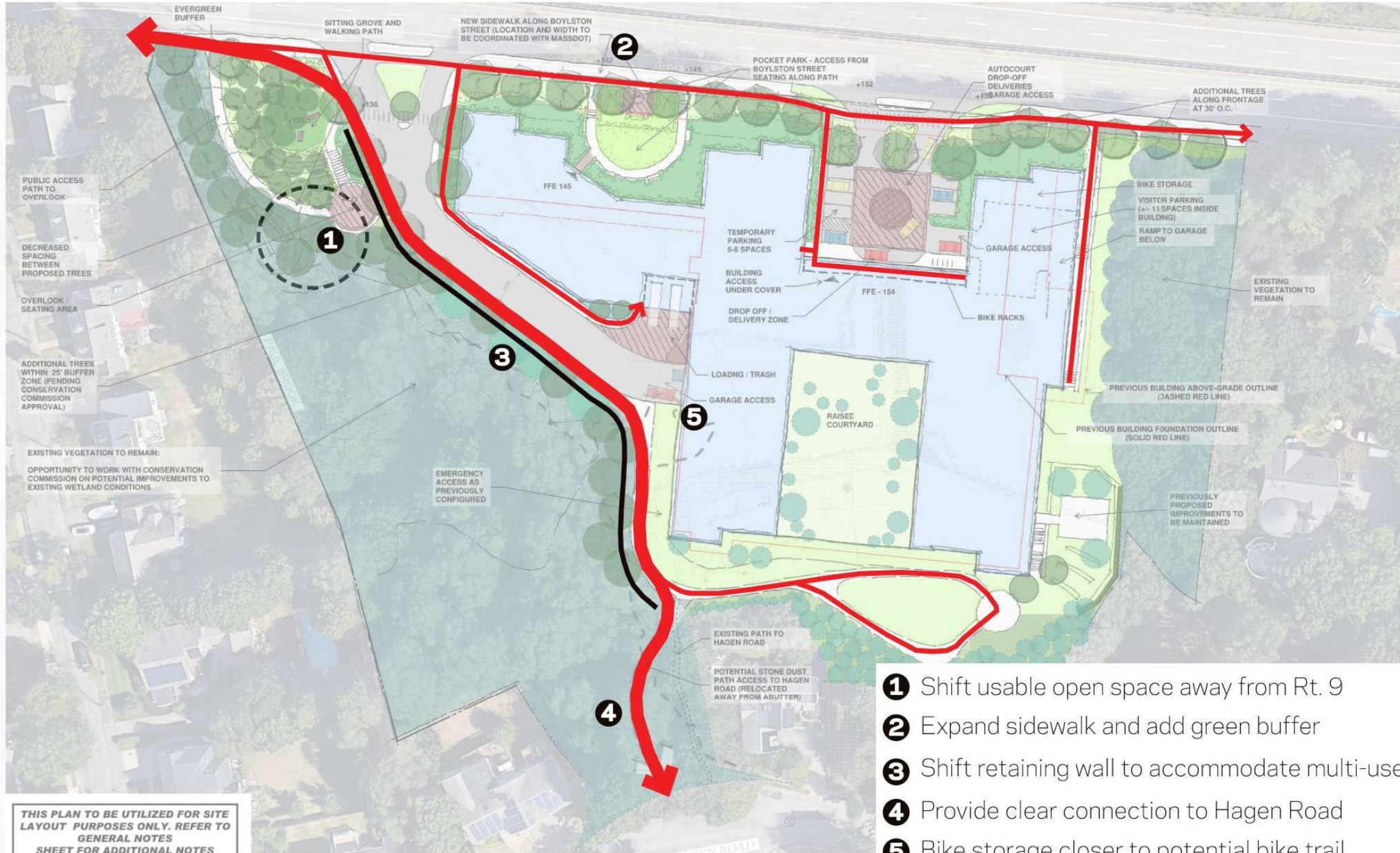


Bike and Pedestrian Circulation



- 1 Usable space is too close to edge of Rt. 9
- 2 No landscape buffer for sidewalk
- 3 No trail along wetland edge
- 4 Pedestrian conflict with Loading Area
- 5 Bike Storage could be more convenient

Bike and Pedestrian Circulation



Conservation Area with Multi-use Trail



Building Massing and Scale

Recommendations:

Building Footprint Size

The proposed building is 420' long and 270' deep. Although this building footprint is significantly larger than abutting residential single-family buildings, it is consistent with other recently approved 40B developments in Newton, including the Dunstan East project in West Newton and the 40B project at 15 Riverview Avenue along the Charles River.

Building Massing and Scale

The applicant has reduced the size of the building from 244 units to 198 Units in the latest submission. This has allowed the applicant to include a range of building heights between 4 and 6 stories, including terracing at the west side and south side of the building adjacent to single family residential properties. The revised plan also includes an additional courtyard facing Boylston Street that helps break up the scale of the building, giving the impression that there are multiple buildings rather than one large building. While these adjustments have made considerable progress, the building still has an imposing façade along Boylston Street. We encourage the applicant to consider additional measures such as bays, balconies, material changes, or other elements to bring down the scale. As mentioned in our prior memo, a 5-story building expression along Boylston Street is preferred since it will provide a more human scale along this important frontage. The current proposal for pitched roofs appears to reduce the mass of the building and conforms to residential standards that allow higher elevations for peaks than for flat roofs. Additionally, we request that the applicant provide detailed building sections, full building elevations, and more information on specific materials and colors.

Second Level Floor Plan





View 3



View 1



Promote Low Impact Development

It is not clear how the existing wetlands and stream will be protected and whether the project will meet the Massachusetts Stormwater Management Standards, including any phosphorous reductions. We recommend that the applicant provide a narrative describing how the existing wetland and stream will be protected and enhanced, including any innovative stormwater strategies (green roof, rain gardens, etc.) that may be utilized.

Site Lighting and Overhead Utilities

We would like additional information on the proposed site lighting strategy, including the location and type of streetlights, landscape lighting, building lighting, and the relocation of existing overhead utility lines. Additionally, we strongly recommend that the applicant bury the existing overhead utilities located along Boylston Street.

Proposed Amenities

The project applicant proposes significant amenities that are in a central location within the building, including a portion that will help activate the Boylston Street frontage. However, we feel additional consideration should be given to the location of the bike storage. The current bike room is proposed on the east side of the building with access from Boylston Street that may not be convenient for most riders. We anticipate that more riders will be arriving from the west or conversely from the south on Hagen Road, suggesting another location for the bike parking may be more convenient.

Location of Service and Parking Entrances

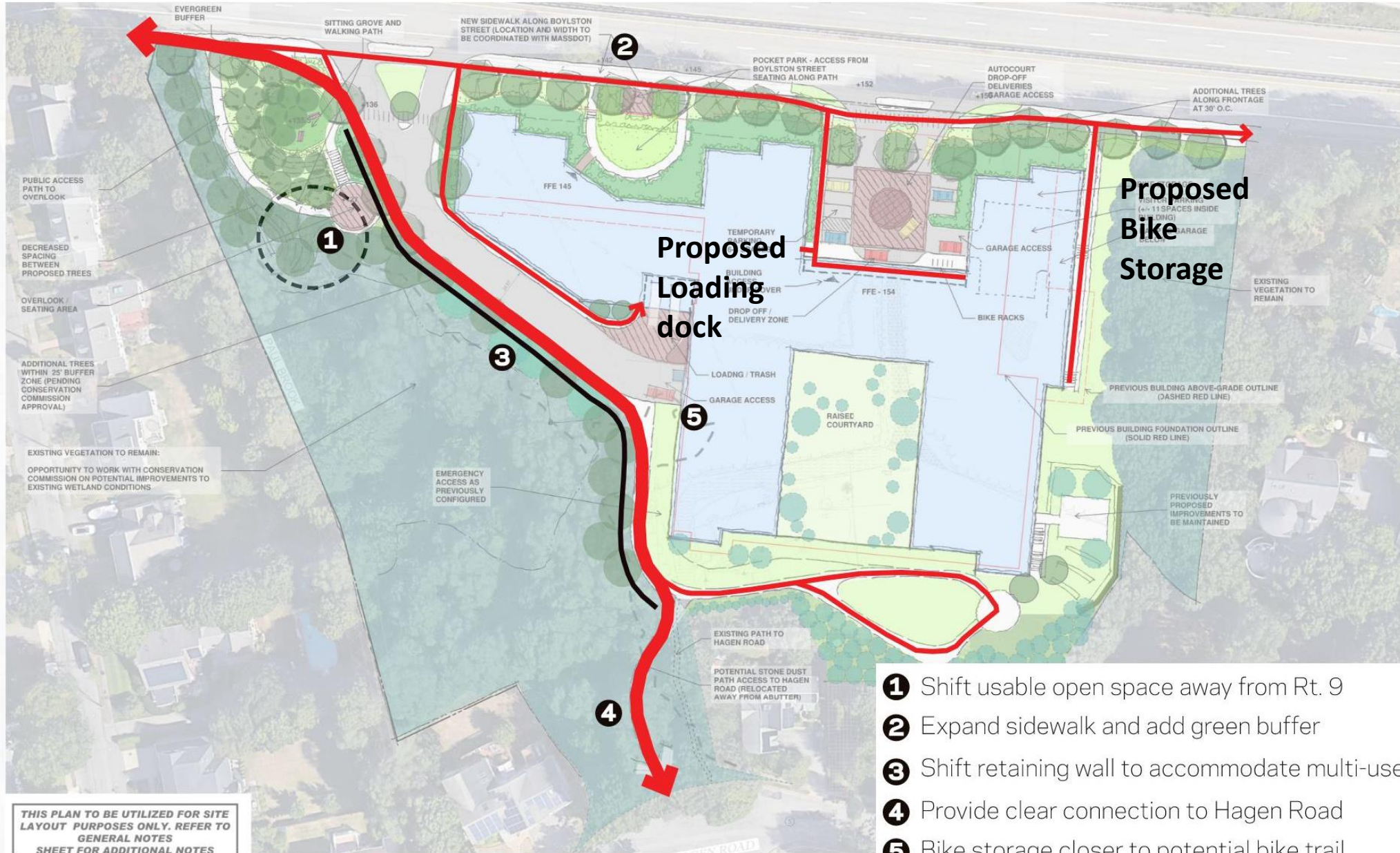
The revised design submission includes an additional parking entrance adjacent to the new drop-off area along Boylston. We think that this additional entrance provides functionality (allowing someone to drop off someone at the main entrance and then go directly into the garage without needing to get back onto Boylston Street). It may also better distribute the traffic volume across the site. However, this new configuration requires two curb cuts along Boylston Street rather than the single point of entry in the initial proposal. We recommend that the traffic engineer provide additional analysis to verify that there will be no additional safety concerns for vehicles or pedestrians.

The loading dock for the project is located at the back of the building adjacent to one of the parking garage entries, minimizing the impact on Boylston Street. We request that the applicant provide a truck turning study along with additional information that highlights how noise and lighting associated with the loading area will be mitigated to protect abutting single-family homes.

Guest Parking

The site plan includes a small parking area at the main entrance on Boylston Street that includes 6-8 parking spaces. Will there be additional guest parking provided? If so, will these spaces be located within the garage?

Bike and Pedestrian Circulation



Additional Information

- Site sections through courtyards showing building massing
- Building elevations (all sides)
- Street level rendering along Boylston Street illustrating pedestrian experience
- Ground level rendering of conservation land on west side showing public access path and improvements to wetland area
- Architectural rendering of rear elevations
- Shadow study
- Proposed streetlights, building lighting and landscape lighting
- Landscape details (including section along Boylston Street and design of retaining wall along wetland)