

Appendix C: Civic Space Study

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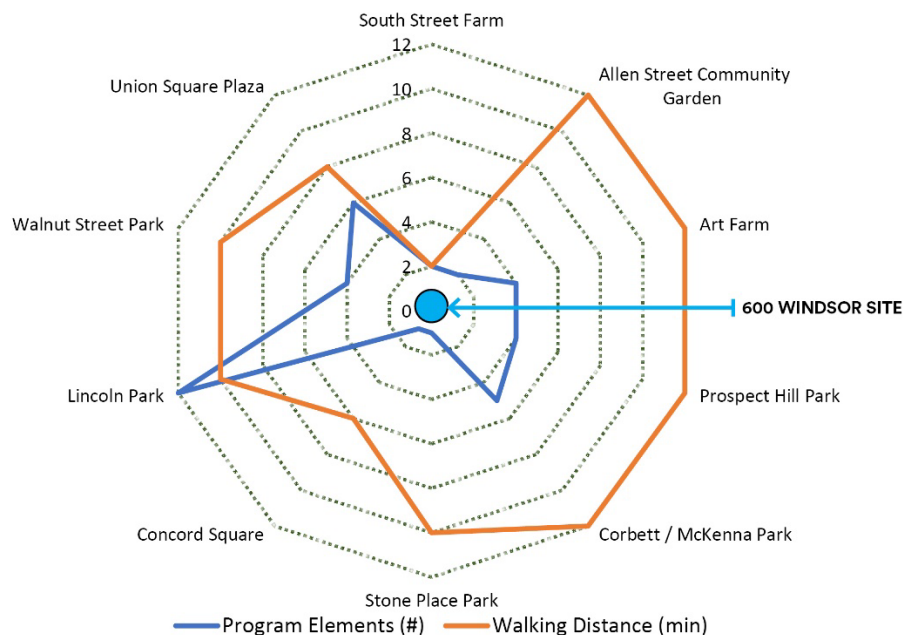
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Executive Summary

As transformational areas of concerted planning efforts, the Union Square and Boynton Yards districts are set to deliver considerable expansion of the public realm. As active participants on the SomerVision 2040 committee respecting *Public Space & the Natural Environment*, the applicant understands city-wide targets for new open space and endeavors that a new, 11,000 SF Central Plaza at 600 Windsor will be a part of the solution. While future, and proposed spaces are abundant and identified throughout the study that follows, the analysis quantifies only those presently existing.

Findings from the existing conditions observes ten existing Civic Spaces within the area of study, six of which are within a 10-minute walk of the subject site at 600 Windsor. These six spaces provide walkable access to over 330,000 SF (7.5 acres) of programmed open spaces. When considering the more than 12 acres of open space in the study area, the vast majority is associated with Parks (95%). Neighborhood demographics support the prevalence of neighborhood parks, playgrounds, and community garden functions found in the study area. As a primarily densely populated residential area, parks have long provided the outlet for outdoor functions in the neighborhood. Beyond size, existing open spaces are multi-purpose, uniquely programmed, to promote diversity and flexibility of both use and end user.



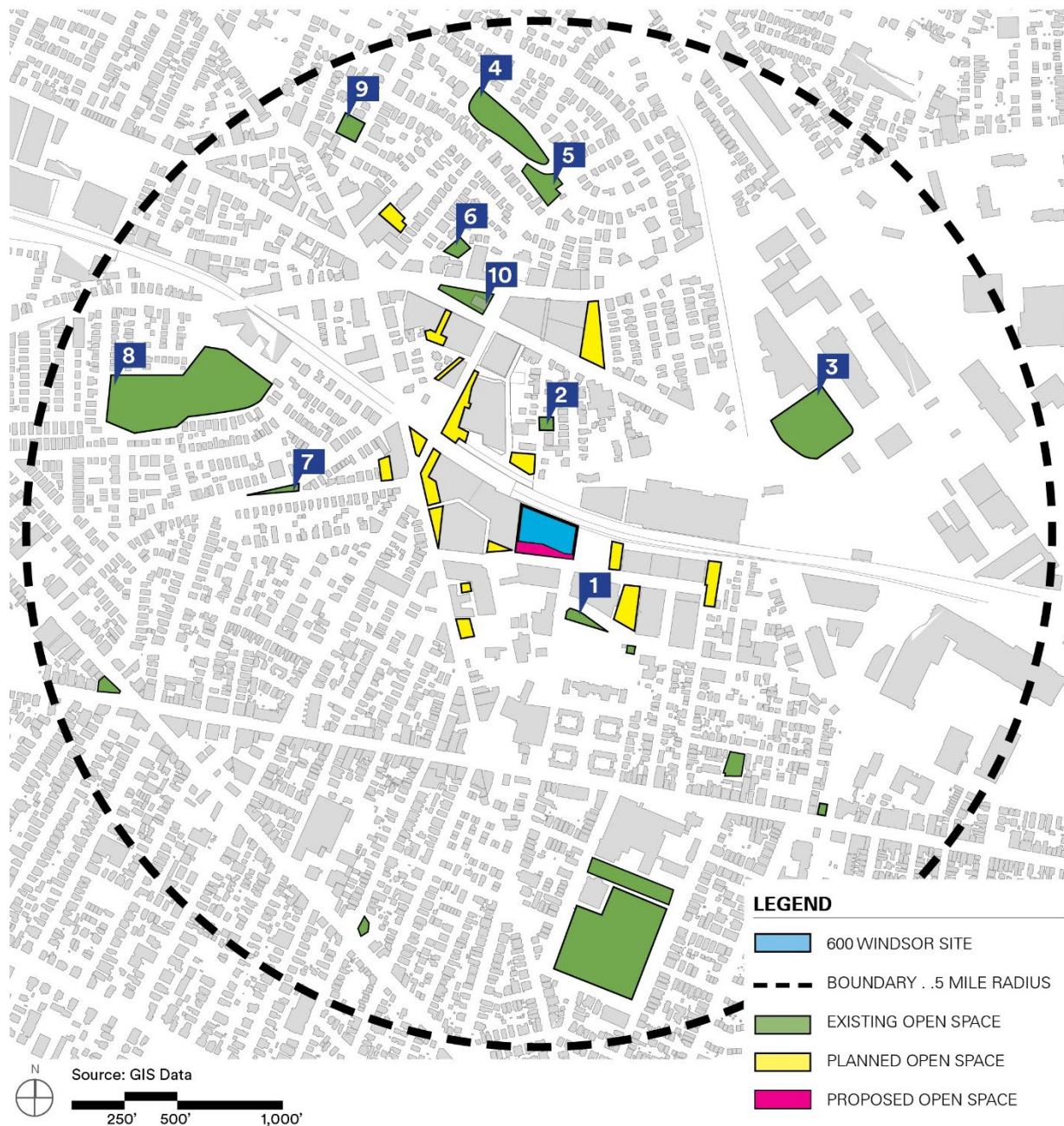
Inventoried program uses across existing study area spaces depict the distribution of function across the study area and their relative distance to the subject property at 600 Windsor.

Considering the transformational area of Boynton Yards and the commercial prioritization in the planning of new development, it is anticipated a more varied user base will populate the area's open spaces over time. The arrival of the MBTA Green Line will also afford unprecedented levels of access to this neighborhood and further increase the diversity of visitors to which the new Civic Space will respond. Developed as a Central Plaza, the proposed civic space at 600 Windsor will fulfill an important role by managing a confluence of users safely, through the expansion of the public realm at this important inflection point in the neighborhood. With a porous edge as an invitation for public use, the new Central Plaza will empower residents, old and new, to occupy the space – to sit, congregate, relax, and enjoy.

1 EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS

1.1 Study Area

The accompanying map below identifies a ½ mile radius surrounding the 600 Windsor property that is subject of this application. Identified within this boundary are the more than 12 acres of existing Civic Spaces located in Somerville. These ten unique spaces are inventoried on the following page to identify zoning type, scale, and civic uses within each space. With the subject property as central to two areas under transformation, Union Square and Boynton Yards, additional Civic Spaces that have been planned are also identified in yellow.



1.1 Study Area Civic Spaces

An inventory of existing open spaces within the study area can be observed below. Number designations provide for geographical reference of the Civic Space on the preceding page.

	Civic Space Name	Type	Size (SF)	Size (Ac)	% of Total	Civic Uses (top 3)
1	South Street Farm	NA	10,890	0.25	2%	Urban Agriculture, Arts
2	Allen Street Community Garden	Park	5,663	0.13	1%	Pocket Park, Community Garden / Tot-Lot
3	Art Farm	Park	91,476	2.10	17%	Urban Agriculture, Performance, Arts
4	Prospect Hill Park	Park	71,400	1.64	13%	Passive Use, Performance Space
5	Corbett / McKenna Park	Park	26,571	0.61	5%	Passive, Playground
6	Stone Place Park	Park	5,227	0.12	1%	Green, Passive Use
7	Concord Square	Park	5,330	0.12	1%	Green, Passive Use
8	Lincoln Park	Park	287,496	6.60	54%	Active, Passive, Athletic, Playground
9	Walnut Street Park	Park	9,583	0.22	2%	Passive, Playground
10	Union Square Plaza	Plaza	16,302	0.37	3%	Passive, Performance, Flexible Use
Subtotal Parks			502,746	11.54	95%	
Subtotal Commons			-	-	0%	
Subtotal Plaza			16,302	0.37	3%	
Study Area Totals			529,938	12.17		

The table above identifies each space 'Type' where applicable per the Somerville Zoning ordinance which provides for categorization across three Civic Space Types: Parks, Commons, and Plazas. Multiple 'Parks' and one 'Plaza' are captured within the study area. Each Civic Space Type has a 'Sub-Type' designation. Expanded observations of these study area civic spaces by sub-type is catalogued below:

Parks

The Park typology is represented by over 500,000 SF or 11.5 acres of open space and makes up 95% of the existing Civic Space study area. The Community Park sub-type makes up the largest share of the existing parks with two spaces totaling ~360,000 SF and 68% of the available Civic Space. The largest Community Park is Lincoln Park at over 287,000 SF. Active uses define the largest aggregate share of this Civic Space with sports fields, playgrounds, a skate park, a basketball court, parkour structures, and fitness equipment defining the park as a destination for activity. The second largest Community Park, Prospect Hill Park, provides for a passive use alternative to Lincoln Park. With large landscaped areas and meandering walking paths, the Park makes the most of its perch atop Prospect Hill which affords long vistas out over Somerville and Cambridge below.

Community Parks

	Civic Space Name	Type	Sub-Type	Size (SF)	Size (Ac)	% of Total
4	Prospect Hill Park	Park	Community Park	71,400	1.64	13%
8	Lincoln Park	Park	Community Park	287,496	6.60	54%
Community Park Sub Type Totals				358,896	8.24	68%

There are two Neighborhood Parks in the study area, together comprising 118,000 SF and 22% of the existing Civic Space study area. The largest of this is Art Farm at 91,000 SF. While still in a state of transition, Art Farm was conceived as a unique urban space to serve as park, urban agriculture site, and arts hub featuring the Art Farm community center with performance and exhibit spaces. While the site is

presently divided into a construction staging and urban agriculture, this study recognizes Art Farm as a future community destination for performance and arts, and the flexible, multi-purpose programming the Somerville Arts Council will administer. Corbett / McKenna Park provides for active recreation with a basketball court and playground equipment and is supported by tables and benches beneath mature trees.

Neighborhood Parks

	Civic Space Name	Type	Sub-Type	Size (SF)	Size (Ac)	% of Total
3	Art Farm	Park	Neighborhood Park	91,476	2.10	17%
5	Corbett / McKenna Park	Park	Neighborhood Park	26,571	0.61	5%
Neighborhood Park Sub Type Totals				118,047	2.71	22%

There are four Pocket Parks within the study area that total over 25,000 SF and 5% of the existing Civic Space study area. Pocket Parks are characterized by their smaller size, ranging from 800 to 10,000 SF. The largest study area pocket park is the Walnut Street Park at 9,500 SF and approximately ¼ of an acre. The Park supports both active and passive uses. Its tot-lot and playground exemplify its active potential for ages two and above, while a community garden defines it's a more passive identity. As a corner lot, the Walnut Street Park benefits from high visibility and multiple points of access. The Allen Street Community Garden provides raised garden beds and a small play area. More passive in nature, Stone Place Park provides bench seating beneath large shade trees, while Concord Square is an expanded island between two streets that is unprogrammed, save for a few benches at its widest, eastern end.

Pocket Parks

	Civic Space Name	Type	Sub-Type	Size (SF)	Size (Ac)	% of Total
2	Allen Street Community Garden	Park	Pocket Park	5,663	0.13	1%
6	Stone Place Park	Park	Pocket Park	5,227	0.12	1%
7	Concord Square	Park	Pocket Park	5,330	0.12	1%
9	Walnut Street Park	Park	Pocket Park	9,583	0.22	2%
Pocket Park Sub Type Totals				25,803	0.59	5%

Plazas

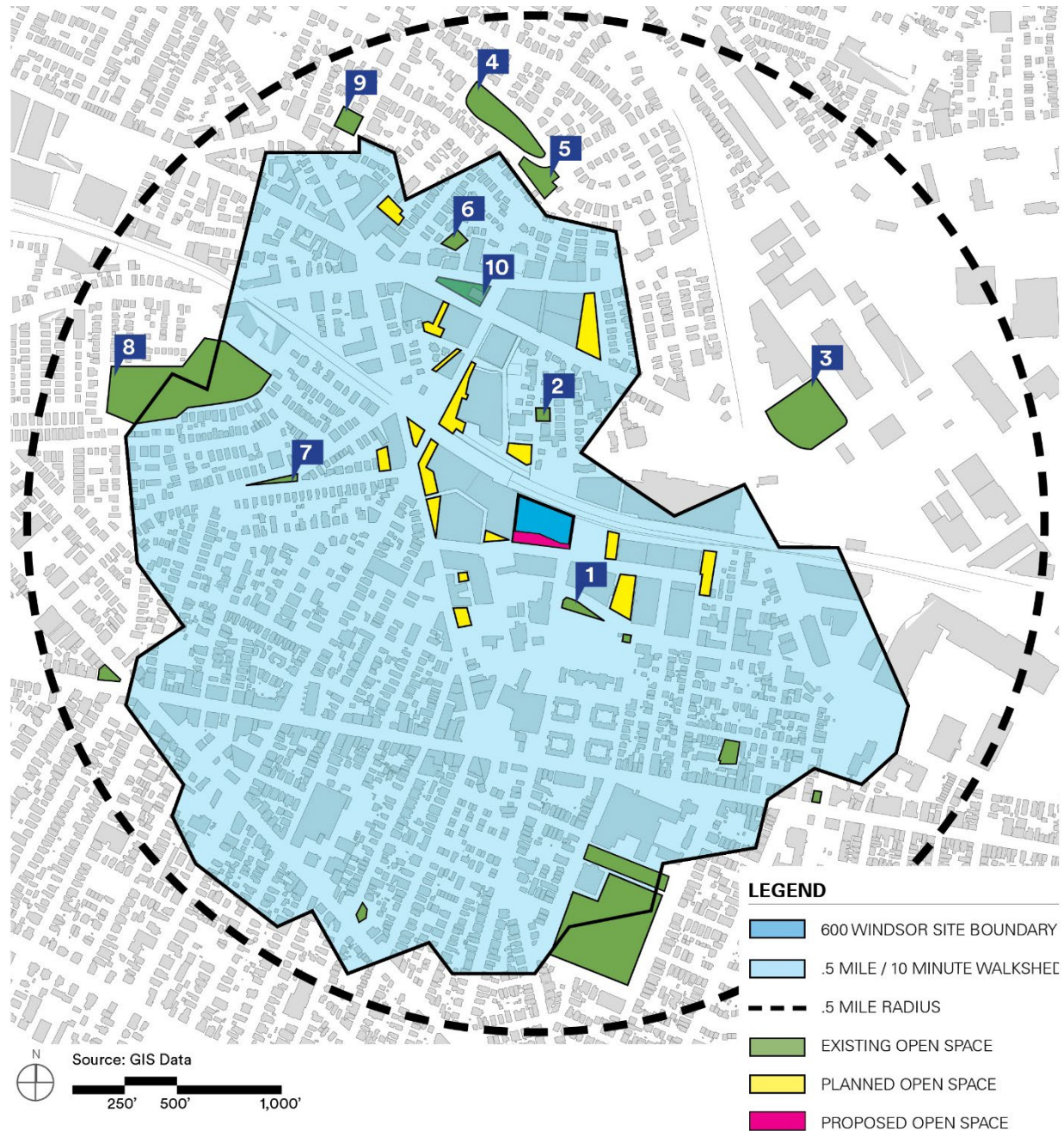
The Plaza typology is represented by 16,000 SF, making up 3% of the existing Civic Space study area. Plazas can be categorized as one of three of subtypes, Central Plazas, Through Block Plazas, and Pocket Plaza. The one plaza within the study area is Union Square Plaza and is a Central Plaza. Central Plazas are characterized by their larger potential area, demonstrative of their potential for civic and commercial activities and promote gathering through more generous seating. Union Square Plaza exemplifies this potential having long served as a neighborhood destination for community events, and festivals, while also serving as an extended porch for the multiple small businesses that define its north frontage. The Plaza is currently going through a 'reimagining exercise' to enhance its role in the neighborhood.

Central Plazas

	Civic Space Name	Type	Sub-Type	Size (SF)	Size (Ac)	% of Total
10	Union Square Plaza	Plaza	Central Plaza	16,302	0.37	3%

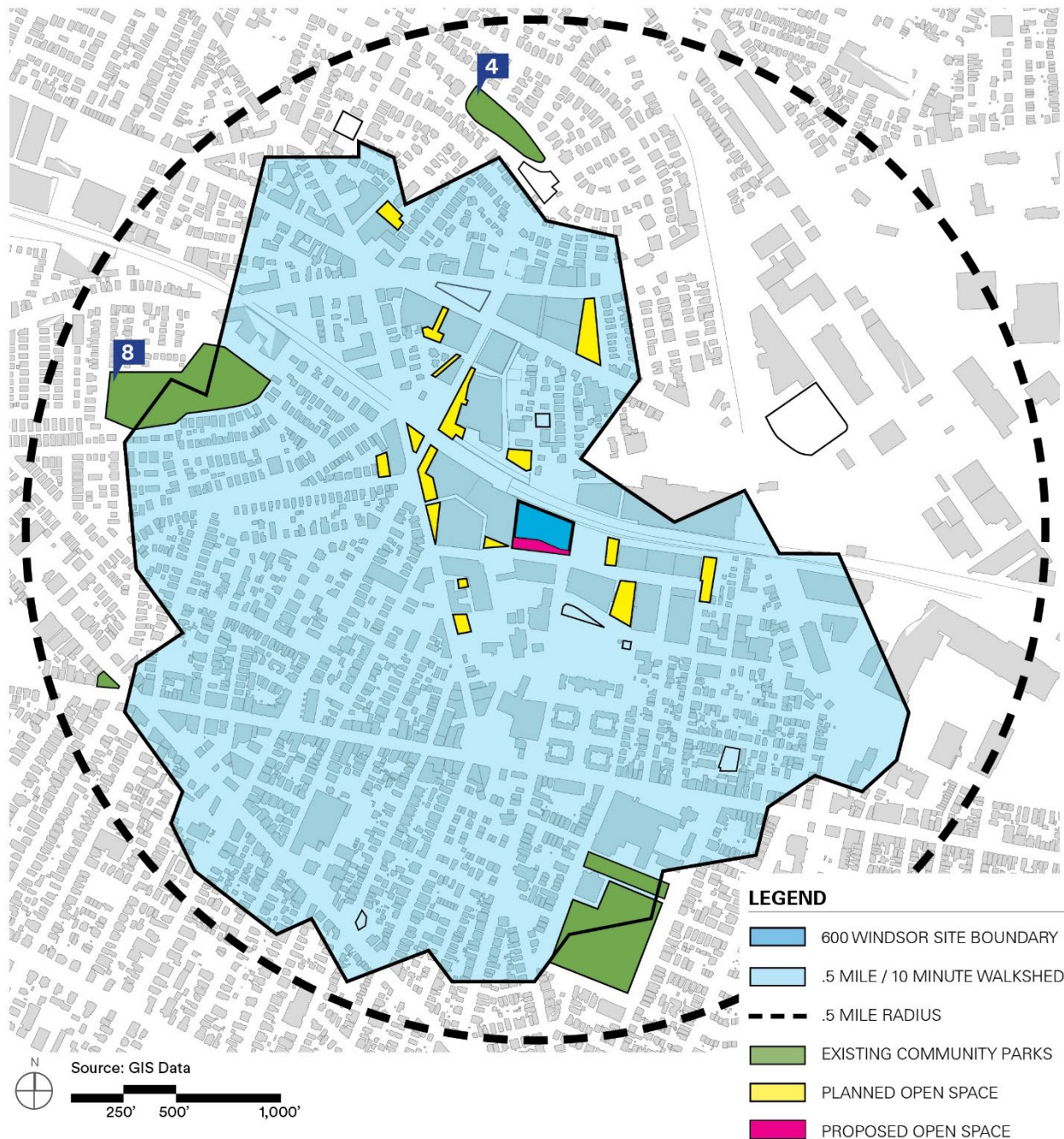
1.1 Walkshed Analysis | Summary

The map below introduces the 10-minute walkshed from the subject property at 600 Windsor and is represented as an irregular blue shape. The walkshed takes traversable paths and obstacles into consideration in defining potential reach. This market shed serves to depict the relative accessibility, in distance terms, of locations within walking distance. In summary, four of the ten study area civic spaces are more than a ten-minute walk from the new proposed civic space at 600 Windsor.



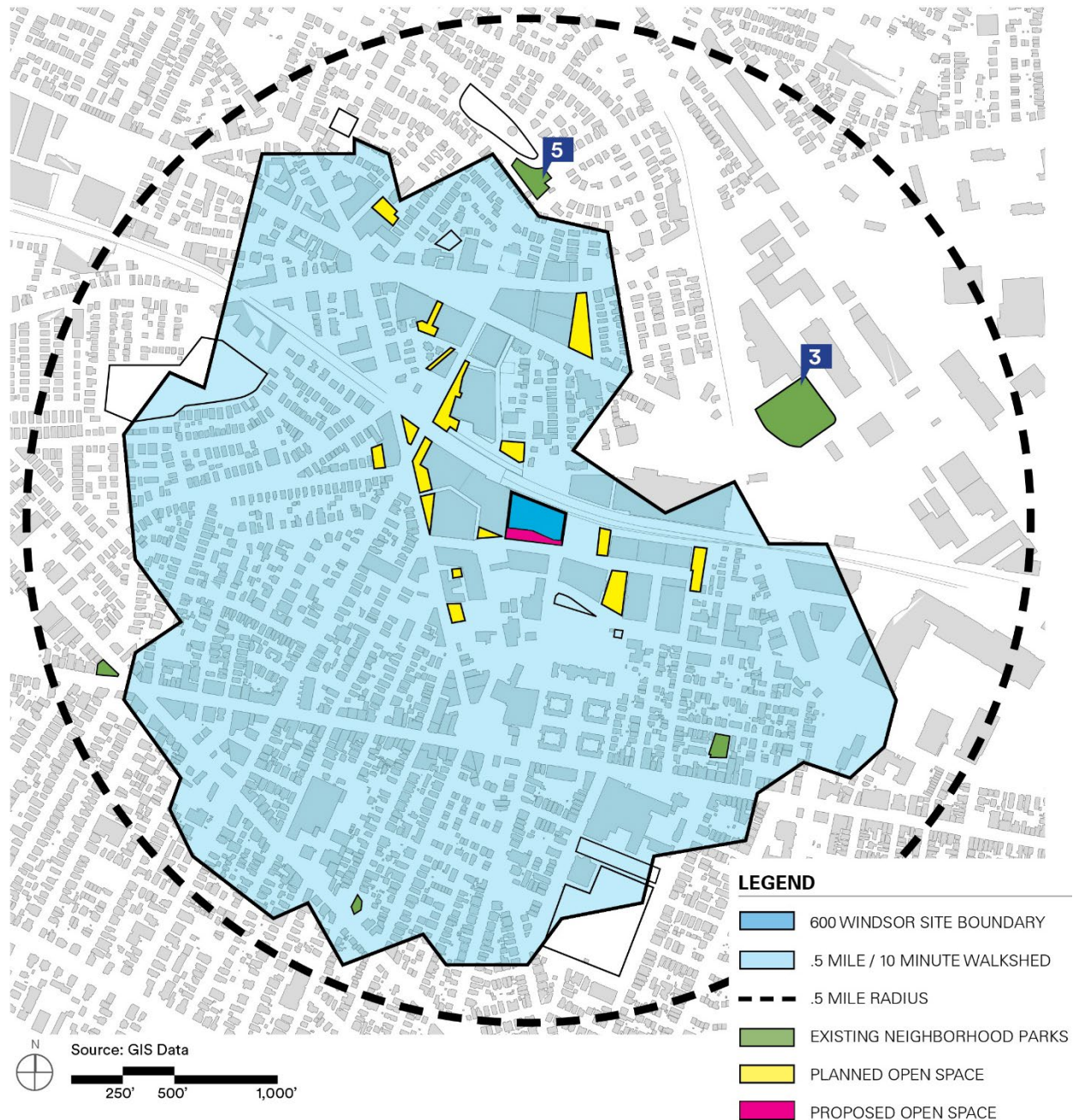
1.2 Walkshed Analysis | Community Parks

For existing open spaces of the Community Park sub-type, one of the two study area civic spaces is reachable within a ten-minute walk of the subject property at 600 Windsor. Observing beyond municipal boundaries into Cambridge, Donnelly Field, another Community Park is also accessible within ten-minute walk. Similar in scale to Lincoln Park, Donnelly is also a destination for active uses, with fields, courts, playgrounds, tot lots, and aquatic play features defining is area.



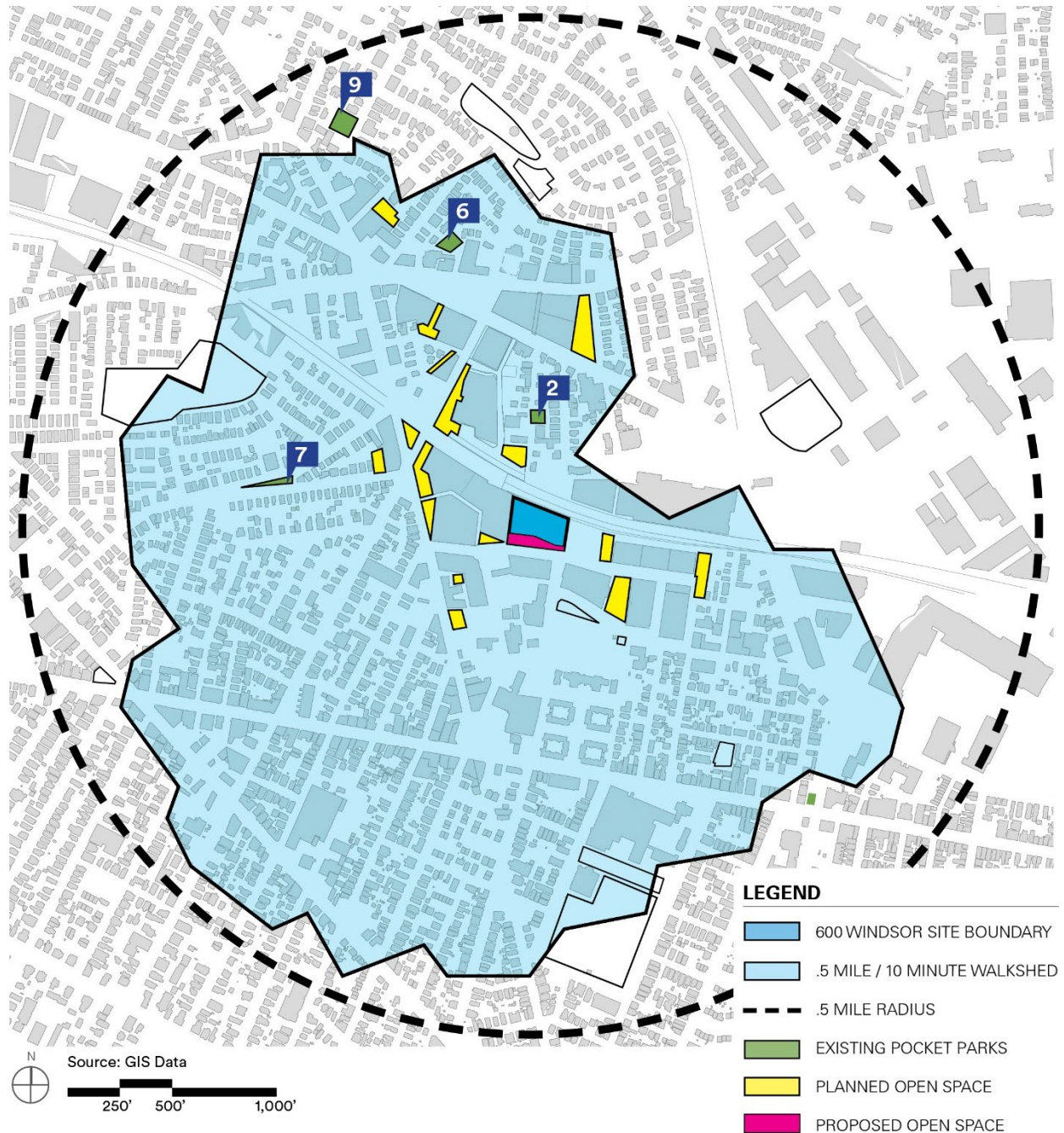
1.3 Walkshed Analysis | Neighborhood Park

For existing open spaces of the Neighborhood Park sub-type, both of the study area civic spaces are outside the reach of a ten-minute walk from the subject property at 600 Windsor. Conversely, Cambridge's Gannett Warren Pals Park does figure within walking distance and hosts playground equipment, tables chairs, and a green lawn area. Closer still, among the planned open spaces, two potential Neighborhood Parks have been proposed in the immediate Boynton Yards overlay area and total over 39,000 SF. The Union Square proposed open spaces include three additional neighborhood parks totaling an additional 45,000 SF.



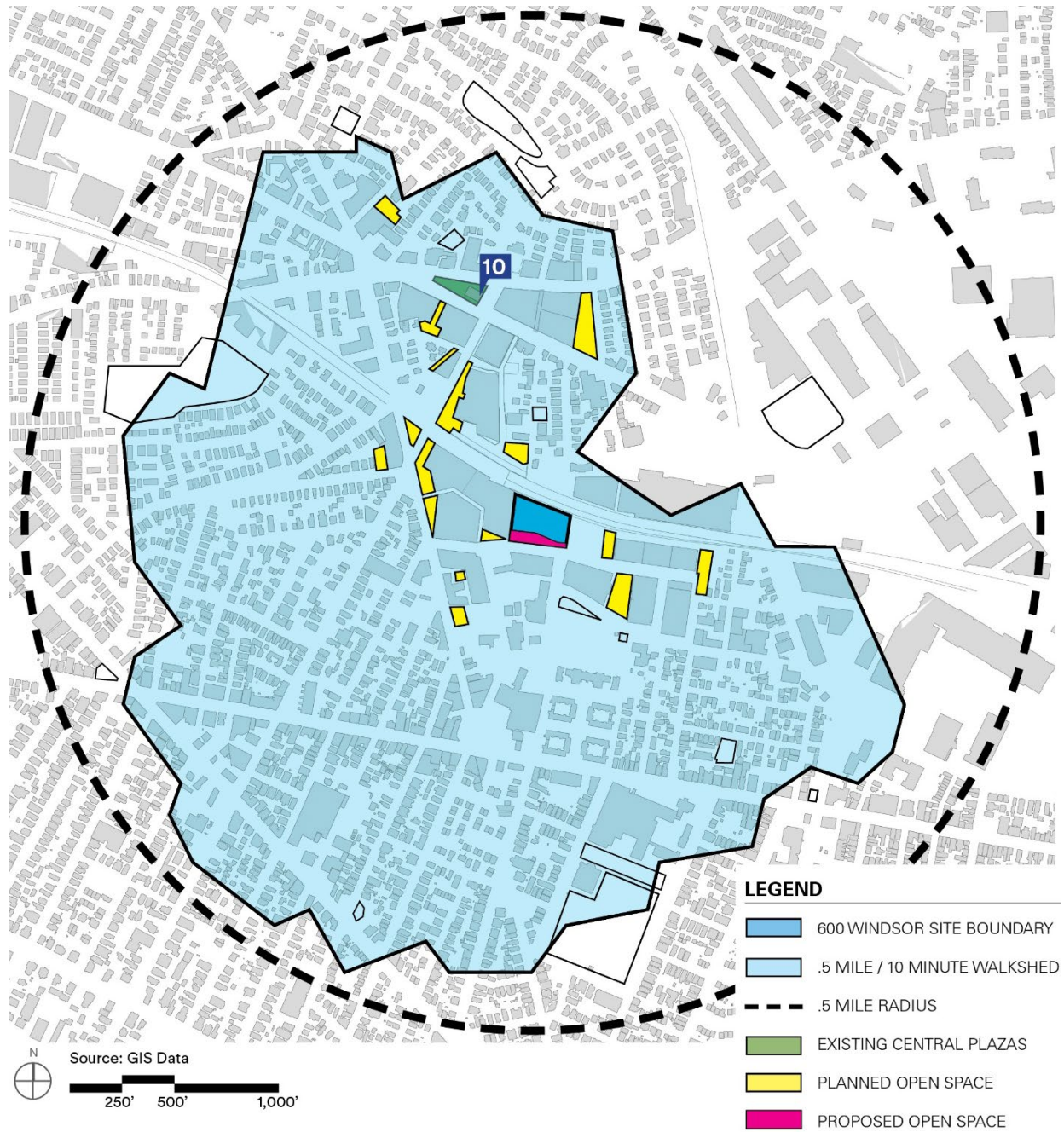
1.4 Walkshed Analysis | Pocket Park

For existing open spaces of the Pocket Park sub-type, three of the four existing study area spaces can be reached within a ten-minute walk from the subject property at 600 Windsor. The Walnut Street Park being the only space just beyond a 10-minute walk means the majority (63%) of Pocket Park square footage is accessible. Considering open spaces in planning, an additional Pocket Park of 7,000 SF is planned within the immediate Boynton Yards area, with additional Pocket Parks anticipated among the Union Square open spaces.



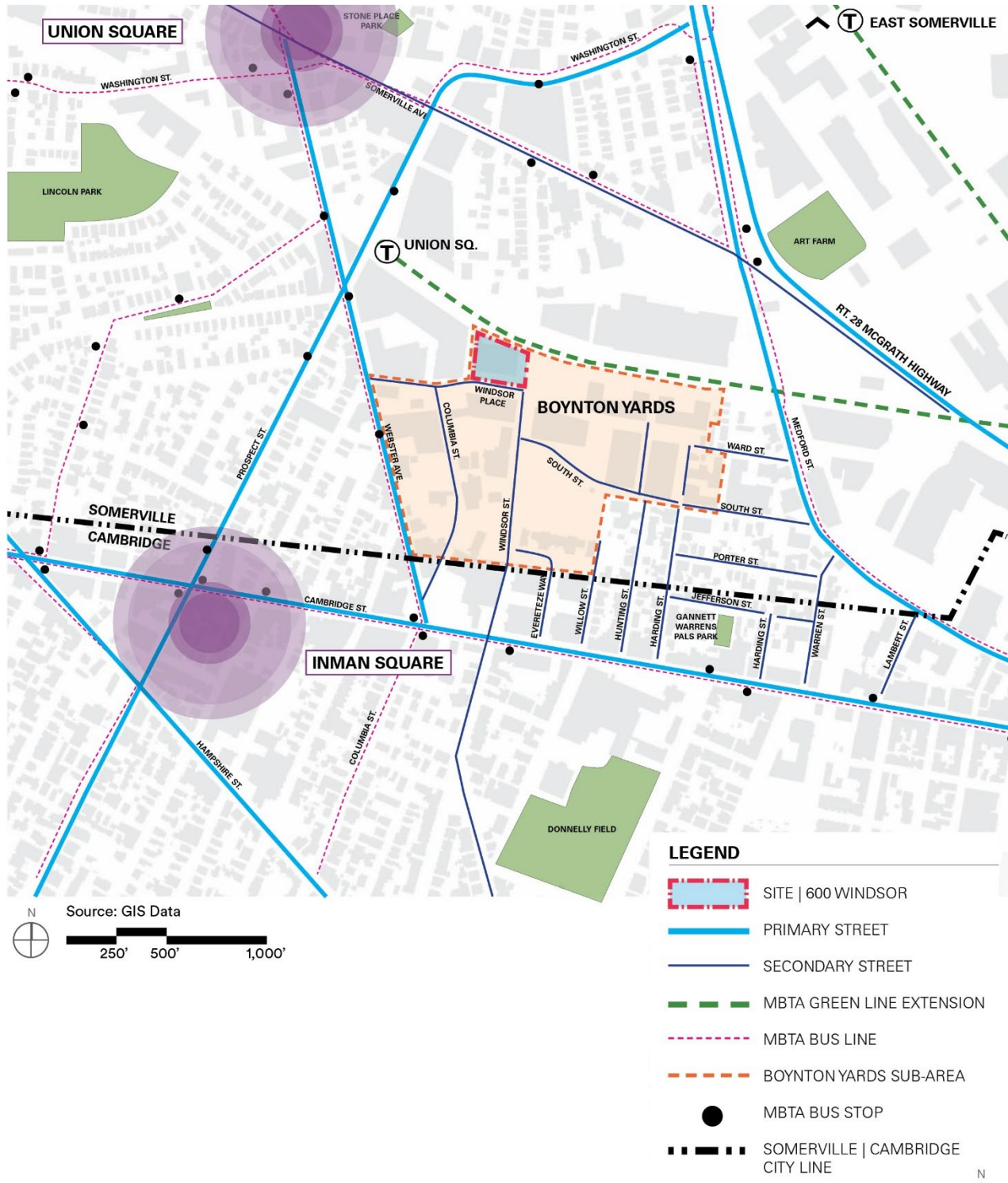
1.5 Walkshed Analysis | Central Plaza

For existing open spaces of the Central Plaza sub-type, the sole qualifier of Union Square Plaza can be reached within a ten-minute walk from the subject property at 600 Windsor.



1.6 Context Map

The map below provides for additional context respecting the location of the subject property identified in blue. The accompanying legend serves to provide identification of transit, primary and secondary travel ways, neighborhood landmarks, and the municipal boundary with Cambridge.



1.7 Demographic Analysis

According to the 2010 US Census¹, the study area captures portions of seven unique census block groups. In sum, the area represents over 4,000 housing units, 98% of which are occupied. 28% of the population within the study area are minority/non-white. Median income across the block areas between February 2019 and February 2020 is approximately \$70,000. Summary statistics of demographics by block group are identified below.

Census Block	Population	Housing Units	Occupied	Vacant	Median Age	Median Income	White	Minority	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Native American
351203-2	882	404	404	-	31	59,286	840	247	55	60	130	2
351203-3	1,064	498	498	-	32	88,750	899	158	29	50	74	5
351203-4	1,137	511	511	-	28	91,313	832	287	32	58	192	5
351204-2	1,707	769	718	51	30	61,356	1,137	513	116	173	218	6
351300-2	1,143	892	877	15	43	31,577	1,143	253	105	75	68	5
351300-3	801	304	283	21	32	96,528	691	201	34	91	59	17
351500-2	2,192	842	837	5	30	62,773	1,105	808	199	374	229	6
Totals	8,926	4,220	4,128	92	226	70,226	6,647	2,467	570	881	970	46
As %			98%	2%			72%	28%				

Study Area Environmental Justice Populations

The following Environmental Justice (EJ) data was accessed from MassGIS in September of 2021.² EJ data represents areas with high minority, non-english speaking, and/or low-income populations. The majority of the study area is characterized as minority or both minority and income populations.

'Minority Populations' are defined as "not Hispanic, white alone". The threshold for the EJ criterion is any Block Group with a percent minority greater than or equal to 25%.

'Income' impacted populations are those where annual median household income is not more than 65% of the statewide annual median household income.



¹ The Census Bureau did not release its standard 2020 ACE 1-year estimates because of the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on data collection.

² The 2020 data was compiled from the ACS 2015-2019 5-year estimates tables.

2 NEEDS ASSESSMENT

2.1 Existing Plans

Open space objectives in the Boynton Yards Overlay Area have been studied in an increasing level of detail over time. City wide open space goals within Somerville's comprehensive plan, *SomerVision 2030* were advanced to the neighborhood scale with the *Union Square Neighborhood Plan* in 2014. As part of the continued planning process for Boynton Yards, the district's infrastructure needs were studied in greater detail and began to inform a strategy to deliver on neighborhood planning goals. This 'PRISBY' study (*Public Realm Implementation Strategy for Boynton Yards*) identified the critical role of public realm planning, and identified mobility, infrastructure, and land use scenarios that might best address planning goals in light of existing conditions. Notably, open spaces in the district were consolidated in four primary areas, with the area of 600 Windsor being identified solely as a potential site for building development as depicted below.

Somerville's adopted zoning overlay district (December 2019) for the neighborhood further codified this objective. Together with the Boynton Yards Urban Design Framework, a large singular open space is required, central to the district.



Beyond the requirements of zoning, the development team has also reviewed the Open Space Creation Task Force Strategy Memo (August 2019) in the development of this application. Further, in continued interest in Somerville's open space goals, the applicant served as a *SomerVision 2040* committee member as an active participant on matters of 'Public Space and the Natural Environment'. With this background as

support, the development team understands and acknowledges the role of 600 Windsor to respond to existing open space plans for the neighborhood.

2.2 Departmental Feedback

The development team has met on numerous occasions with the City departments respecting this masterplan application. A group kick-off meeting was held on June 15, 2021 and included participation from the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development (OSPCD), the Public Space and Urban Forestry Division (PSUF), the Mobility Division, the Planning Department and the Office of Sustainability and Environment (OSE). A follow up meeting was held with the Mobility Division on July 7, 2021. Central to the discussion with Mobility was coordination and understanding of the intent for Windsor Place: its pedestrian prioritization and its role in providing the improvements necessary to deliver the safe passage of cyclists along its frontage. These comments were incorporated into conceptual materials advanced for review with PSUF on August 18, 2021. A subsequent coordination meeting was held on August 30th, with participants from Mobility, PSUF, Engineering, and the Planning Department. Feedback from departments has been incorporated into this application, a draft of which was provided for subsequent review by PSUF on October 22, 2021.

2.3 Findings from Existing Conditions Analysis

The analysis of existing conditions observed ten existing Civic Spaces within the study area, six of which were within a 10-minute walk of the proposal site at 600 Windsor. This results in walkable access to over 330,000 SF (7.5 acres) of programmed open spaces. Of the more than 12 acres of open space in the study area, 95% of it is dedicated to the 'Park' use type. Within the park typology, 71% of the area is attributable to 'Community Parks', 24% to 'Neighborhood Park's, and the remaining 5% to 'Pocket Parks'. The 'Plaza' use type is also represented among the existing conditions, contributing to 3% of the accessible area total. The 'Common' typology is not represented among the study area.

Beyond existing space typologies, each open space's program elements were also inventoried to identify relative availability of the diversity of open space functions present in the study area. As depicted on the table that follows, Community Garden functions are most prevalent within the study area with six occurrences. Consistent with findings of majority 'Park' use types, associated programs of playground structures, passive lawns, and picnic tables are also abundant, with four occurrences. Less prevalent open space functions within the study area include: athletic fields, plazas, dog parks, skate parks, nature paths, multi-function event spaces and adult fitness opportunities, each with one occurrence. When other open spaces proposed in the Boynton Yards overlay area are considered, limitations for dog parks, multi-functional event spaces, and adult fitness areas are improved with additional programming of these elements anticipated within a two-minute walk of the subject property.

Neighborhood demographics support the prevalence of neighborhood parks, playgrounds, and community garden functions found in the study area. As a majority residential area, densely populated in nature, parks have long provided the outlet for outdoor functions in the neighborhood. Considering the transformational area of Union Square and Boynton Yards and the commercial prioritization in the planning of new development, it is anticipated a more varied user base will populate the area's open spaces over time. The arrival of the Green Line will also afford unprecedented levels of access to this historic neighborhood and further increase the diversity of visitors.

Function/Program Element	1 South Street Farm	2 Allen Street Community Garden	3 Art Farm	4 Prospect Hill Park	5 Corbett / McKenna Park	6 Stone Place Park	7 Concord Square	8 Lincoln Park	9 Walnut Street Park	10 Union Square Plaza	Total Existing Occurrences	* Other Area Proposed	Total Existing & Proposed
Community Gardens	1	1	1		1			1	1		6	1	7
Dog Park								1			1	1	2
Parkour								1			1		1
Playground Structures		1			1			1	1		4		4
Historic				1						1	2	1	3
Passive Green				1		1	1	1			4	1	5
Basektball Courts					1			1			2		2
Athletic Field								1			1		1
Plaza										1	1		1
Water Activity					1			1	1		3		3
Multi-function Event										1	1	1	2
Picnic Tables					1			1	1	1	4	1	5
Rain Garden			1					1			2		2
Adult Fitness								1			1	1	2
Arts/Sculpture			1	1						1	3		3
Perform/Present	1		1							1	3	1	4
Skate Park								1			1		1
Nature Paths				1							1		1
Total Program Elements	2	2	4	4	5	1	1	12	4	6	41	8	49
Walking Distance from 600 Windsor (min)	2	12	12	12	12	10	6	10	10	8		2	

* Considers the additions proposed in the approved masterplan within the Boynton Yards Overlay District

2.4 Neighborhood Feedback

A first Neighborhood Meeting was held on August 5, 2021 via virtual teleconferencing. 58 individuals, inclusive of the Applicant's team, City Staff, and meeting hosts, registered for the meeting.

Although not a point of emphasis during the community meeting discussion, some general community feedback respecting open space was received during the meeting. Central to the discussion was conversation around the potential of redundant paths to and from the Green Line Station, with a right of way along the tracks, the space between buildings, and the planned public realm and bicycle infrastructure all being raised. The development team acknowledged the effectiveness that redundant paths might provide and noted the continued coordination that would need to occur with the City and other stakeholders regarding path prioritization and hierarchy as access to and through the district will necessarily involve more projects than 600 Windsor.

Another question addressed the approach for tree coverage and green space coverage, specifically advocating for more coverage where possible to address the urban heat island effect. The Project Team responded that different Civic Space typologies would result in distinct ratios of coverage, but that we shared the interest in expanding the urban tree canopy and the benefits shade provides. It was also noted that there would be additional opportunity around the building, beyond the boundaries of the Civic Space where additional measures could be taken.

Open space surrounding the buildings was also raised by another commenter, who commended the applicant's suggestion of a forty foot right of way between 600 Windsor and the adjacent building to the west on the D3 Block. The Project Team further identified the potential of this area as nice moment between buildings that will receive a great level of focus as the projects move through design.

The development team has aggregated the sum of comments received from the Neighborhood Meeting into the Master Plan Special Permit application as Appendix Item **C**.

2.6 Conclusion & Proposal

In conclusion, the subject property is well served by multiple public open spaces within a ten-minute walk. Varied programming across these spaces promotes the functional diversity inherent to spaces that are responsive to their context. Neighborhood demographics support the prevalence of neighborhood parks, playgrounds, and community garden functions found in the study area. When considered relative to the additional spaces proposed, there is a considerable expansion of public spaces occurring in the Union Square and Boynton Yards overlay districts, an expansion in which 600 Windsor will play a significant role.

600 Windsor's new Civic Space will approach 11,000 SF and be developed as a Central Plaza. As just the second space of this type within the study area, it will fulfill an important role given its location as a nexus of major circulation routes. In fronting Windsor Place, identified as a primary vehicular access way, the plaza will manage a confluence of users safely, cyclists and pedestrians alike, by expanding the public realm at this inflection point in the neighborhood. The public space will host a porous edge condition to invite users in, providing generous and unobstructed pedestrian circulation paths along its frontage. New trees will promote passive use of the space and add approximately 14,000 SF of new urban tree canopy to increase area shade. The primarily hardscape plaza will introduce multiple seating types, and be developed for passive recreation and civic purposes. Opportunities to expand the perception of scale of the space, through connectivity to surrounding open spaces will be further explored in design.

