

CIVIC SPACE STUDY

45 MYSTIC
45 MYSTIC AVENUE
SOMERVILLE, MA

Aligned with 45 Mystic Ave Office/Lab Development

Study performed by Verdant Landscape Architecture
for BURNS REALTY + INVESTMENTS

DRAFT JUNE 2023

CIVIC SPACE STUDY

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Executive Summary

45 Mystic Avenue is currently a single story brick and masonry building and parking area operating as an auto repair shop in the ASMD special zoning district. Access to the site is via Mystic Avenue, with a single, wide curb cut into the parking area. This portion of Mystic Avenue is a three lane, northbound only roadway that parallels Route 93 along its east side. To the north, Mystic Avenue has connections to Route 28 and Route 93 northbound.

The project proposes to demolish the existing structure and construct an office/lab building including a loading zone and zero-vehicle parking. The footprint of the building is shaped to accommodate an at-grade outdoor civic pocket plaza area contiguous with the public realm streetscape/sidewalk. The designated lot for the plaza is orientated to maximize the southern sun exposure.

The building will be constructed with frontage along Mystic Avenue northbound. The eastern portion of the lot, approximately 2,319 +/- square feet of land, will be transformed into a civic pocket plaza. The plaza will be designed through an interactive public process and will involve a team of City staff from the legal, landscape/public space, and regulatory planning disciplines working with the development team and the neighborhood.

Existing Conditions Analysis

1.1 Study Area

The study area, 45 Mystic Avenue Lot, is currently part of a larger lot, Assessors Map 101 Lot 9. The 45 Mystic Avenue Lot has approx 68 linear feet of frontage along Mystic Avenue and is approx. 4' from the back of sidewalk to the front building facade.

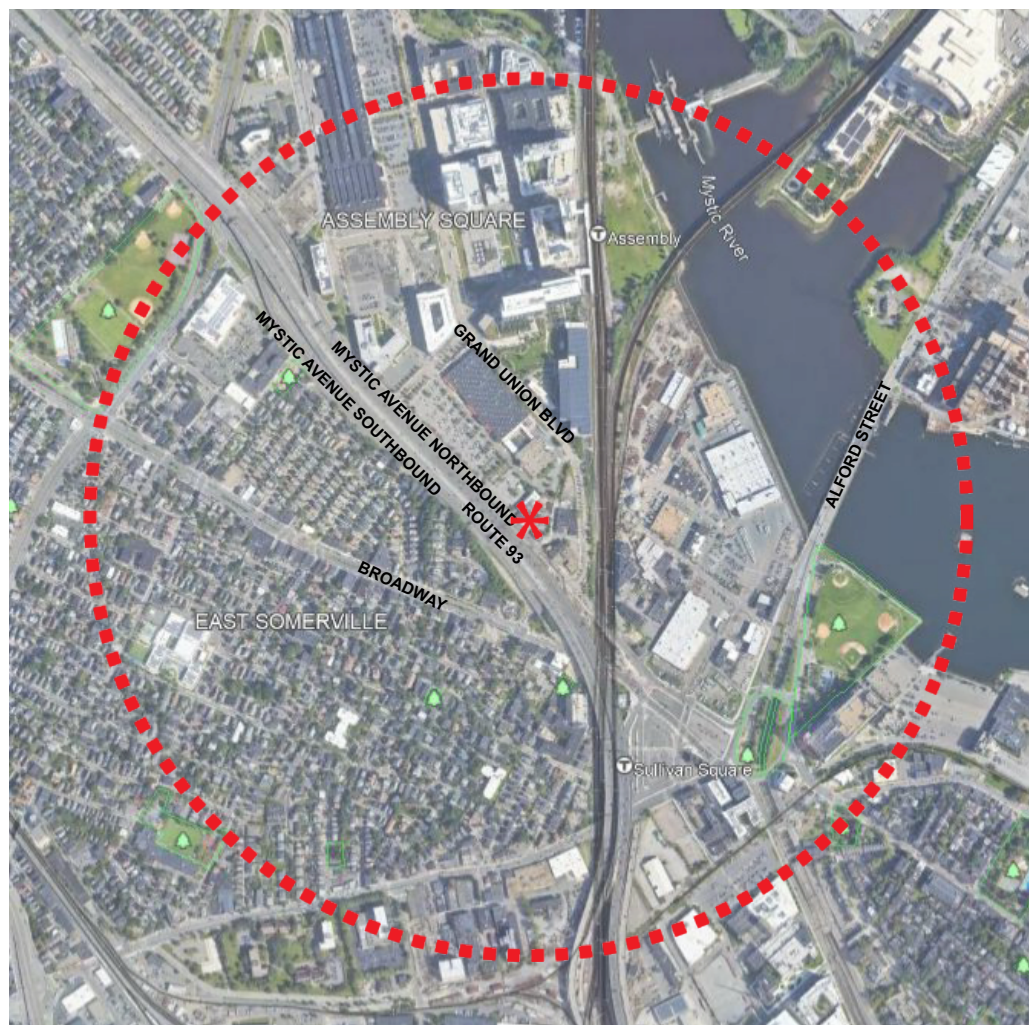
Surrounding Neighborhood:

This portion of the Assembly Square Mixed-Use Special District presents an eclectic mix of building forms, styles, scale, and uses. Immediate abutting properties consist of single story masonry commercial structures with older storefronts. Immediately across Mystic Avenue lies Route 93 highway.

The 45 Mystic Avenue Lot is currently paved and used as an auto-mechanic shop. The Lot is fenced with chain link on two sides, with the portion along the east property line residing within the abutter's property. The western property line is not fenced and directly abuts the building at 55 Mystic Avenue.

The concrete public sidewalk adjacent to the 45 Mystic Avenue Lot is cracked and spalling in some areas.

Both the 45 Mystic Avenue Lot and the adjacent public sidewalk contain no existing trees or vegetation.

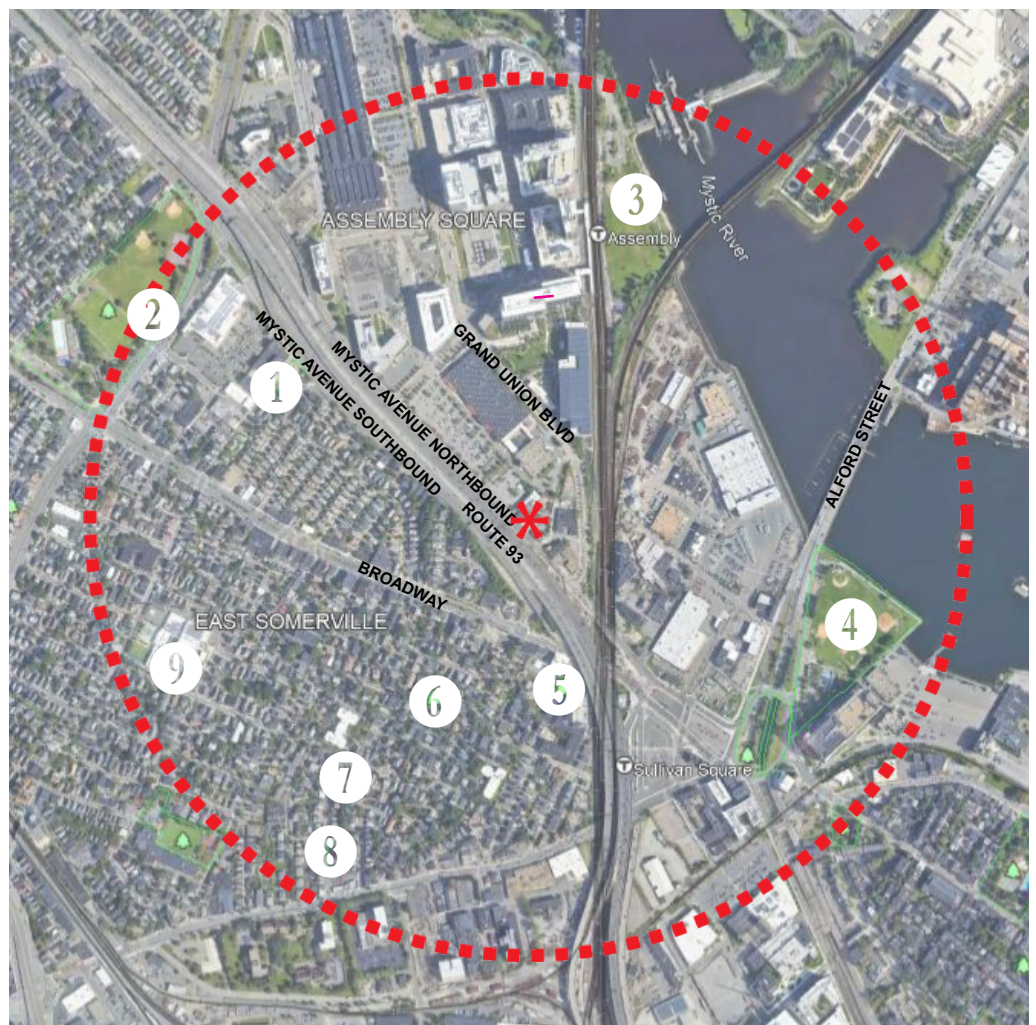


See Figure 1.1 Existing Conditions Study Area

Existing Conditions Analysis

1.2 Study Area Civic Spaces

- 1 Chuckie Harris Park
- 2 Foss Park
- 3 Draw Seven State Park
- 4 Ryan Playground
- 5 Caldwell Play Area
- 6 Perkins Street Park
- 7 Symphony Park
- 8 Florence Playground
- 9 East Somerville Community Schoolyard



See Figure 1.2 Study Area Civic Spaces

Existing Conditions Analysis

SUMMARY TABLE Civic Space

	NAME	TYPE	SQUARE FOOTAGE	ACREAGE	% of TOTAL	CIVIC USES (Top 3)
1	Chuckie Harris Park	Park	17,859.6 SF	0.41	1.10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • water play • tot lot • seating
2	Foss Park	Park	593,287.2 SF	13.62	36.38%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • playground • tot lot • athletic fields
3	Draw Seven State Park	Park	530,560.8 SF	12.18	32.53%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scenic vista • fishing • athletic fields
4	Ryan Playground	Park	390,733.2 SF	8.97	23.96%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • athletic fields • playground • tot lot
5	Caldwell Play Area	Park	4,791.6 SF	0.11	0.29%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • playground
6	Perkins Street Park	Park	6,969.6 SF	0.16	0.43%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • playground • baby swings • water play
7	Symphony Park	Park	9,147.6 SF	0.21	0.56%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • passive recreation • water feature • stormwater capture
8	Florence Playground	Park	11,325.6 SF	0.26	0.69%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • playground • tot lot • water play
9	East Somerville Community Schoolyard	Park	66,211.2 SF	1.52	4.06%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school garden • playground • athletic fields
	Totals		1,630,886.4 SF	37.44 Acres	100%	

DESCRIPTION

- The study area includes nine neighborhood parks that together total 1,630,886 sq.ft. and represent 100% of the available civic space. The largest neighborhood park is Foss Park at 593,288 sq.ft. The predominant civic use within these spaces is playground followed closely by athletic fields.

Existing Conditions Analysis

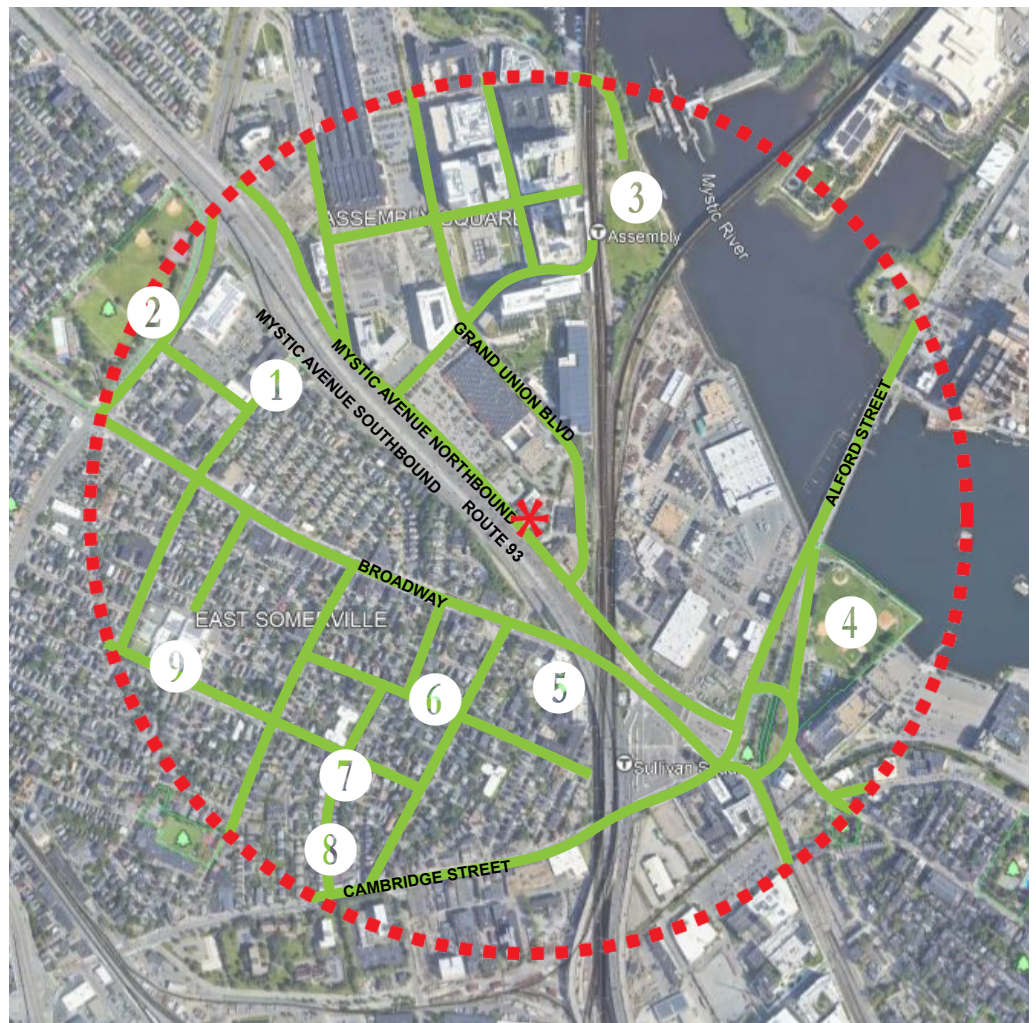
1.3 Walkshed Analysis

The walkshed analysis reveals the walkability of the nine parks within the study area. The diagrammatic green lines indicate Walkshed Analysis within the 1/2 mile radius from the 45 Mystic Avenue Plaza Lot.

An analysis of “walksheds” can help us understand the difficulties of walking to and from central points. What is telling from the graphic Figure 1.3 is that there are multiple factors limiting pedestrian access to the 45 Mystic Avenue Parcel: Route 93 limiting southwestern access, and both commuter and subway tracks limiting access from the east.

Civic spaces within 1/2 mile radius:

- 1 Chuckie Harris Park
- 2 Foss Park
- 3 Draw Seven State Park
- 4 Ryan Playground
- 5 Caldwell Play Area
- 6 Perkins Street Park
- 7 Symphony Park
- 8 Florence Playground
- 9 East Somerville Community Schoolyard



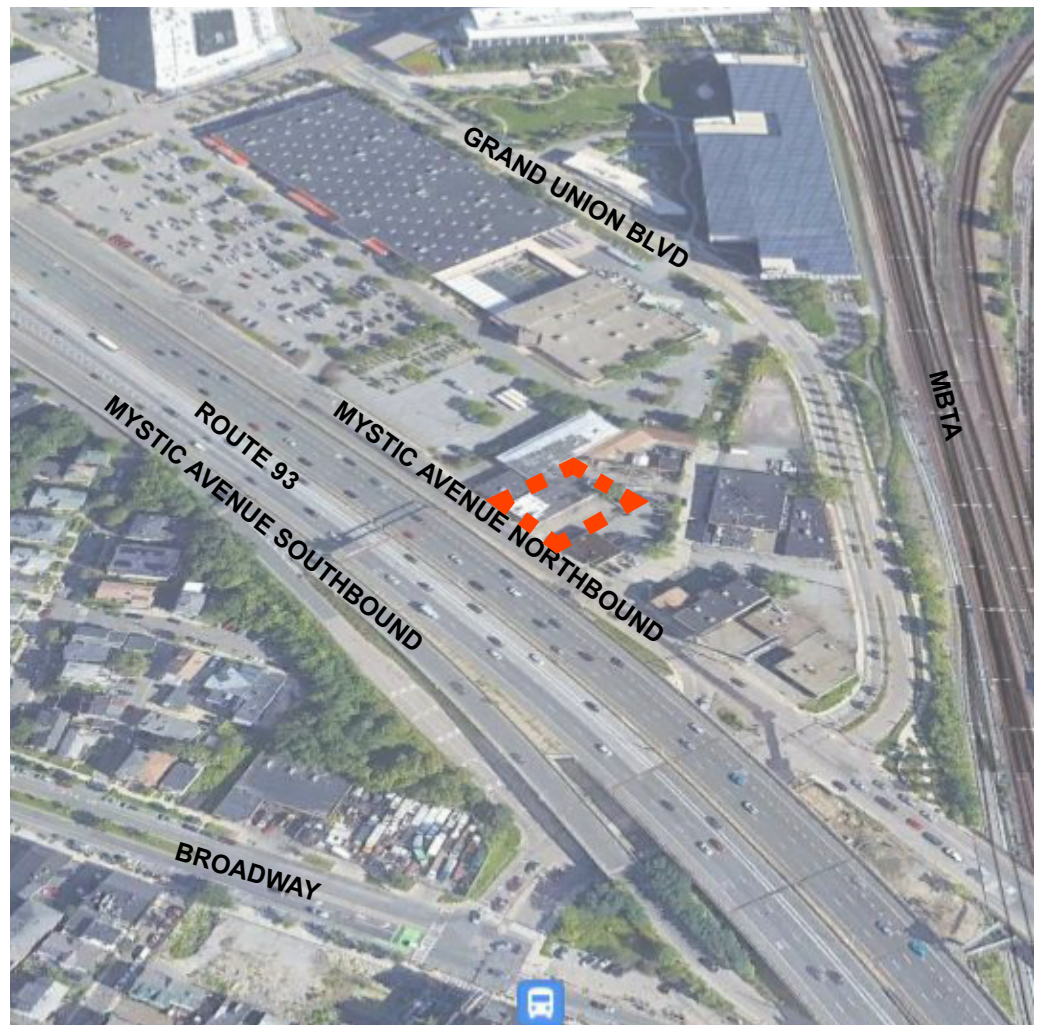
See Figure 1.3 Walkshed Analysis

Existing Conditions Analysis

1.4 Context Maps

Surrounding Neighborhood:

This portion of the Assembly Square Mixed-Use Special District presents an eclectic mix of building forms, styles, scale, and uses. Immediate abutting properties consist of single story masonry commercial structures with older storefronts. Immediately across Mystic Avenue Route 93 highway.



See Figure 1.4 Context Map

Existing Conditions Analysis

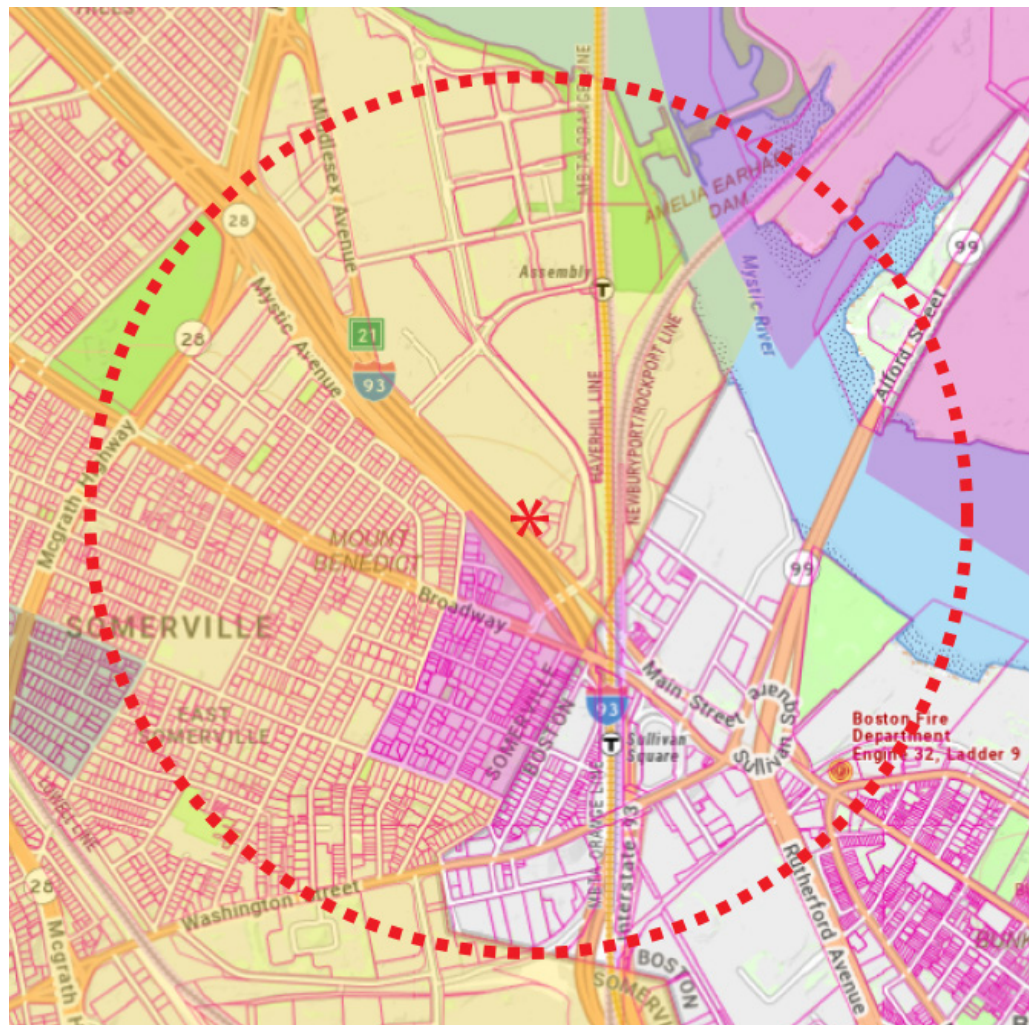
1.5 Demographic Analysis

Census 2020 Environmental Justice Populations

- Minority
- Income
- English Isolation
- Minority and Income
- Minority and English Isolation
- Income and English Isolation
- Minority, Income and English Isolation

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Property Tax Parcels



Existing Conditions Analysis

1.5 Demographic Analysis TRACT 3501.03

POPULATION BY RACE

Label	Census Tract 3501.03, Middlesex County, Massachusetts
Total:	1,210
Population of one race:	1,176
White alone	948
Black or African American alone	88
Asian alone	63
Some Other Race alone	77
Two or More Races:	34
Population of two races:	32
White; Black or African American	1
White; Asian	2
White; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	2
White; Some Other Race	24
Black or African American; American Indian and Alaska Native	1
Black or African American; Some Other Race	2
Population of four races:	2
White; Black or African American; American Indian and Alaska Native; Asian	2

Sources: 2020 US Census Bureau and 2021 American Community Survey

Existing Conditions Analysis

1.5 Demographic Analysis TRACT 3501.03

AGE BY GENDER 5-Year Projection

	Census Tract 3501.03, Middlesex County, Massachusetts	
Label	Estimate	Margin of Error
Total:	2,260	±230
Male:	1,132	±199
Under 5 years	28	±29
5 to 9 years	9	±13
10 to 14 years	36	±26
15 to 17 years	1	±7
18 and 19 years	19	±14
20 years	5	±9
21 years	12	±20
22 to 24 years	143	±83
25 to 29 years	160	±55
30 to 34 years	224	±79
35 to 39 years	113	±39
40 to 44 years	43	±40
45 to 49 years	72	±65
50 to 54 years	67	±60
55 to 59 years	44	±23
60 and 61 years	61	±72
62 to 64 years	25	±22
65 and 66 years	15	±13
67 to 69 years	12	±12
70 to 74 years	5	±7
75 to 79 years	13	±12
80 to 84 years	19	±14
85 years and over	6	±9

Female:	1,128	±127
Under 5 years	73	±37
5 to 9 years	36	±27
10 to 14 years	39	±32
15 to 17 years	2	±5
18 and 19 years	0	±12
20 years	10	±11
21 years	5	±9
22 to 24 years	97	±64
25 to 29 years	144	±59
30 to 34 years	205	±85
35 to 39 years	103	±50
40 to 44 years	60	±44
45 to 49 years	64	±65
50 to 54 years	34	±26
55 to 59 years	100	±40
60 and 61 years	30	±31
62 to 64 years	10	±10
65 and 66 years	7	±9
67 to 69 years	9	±10
70 to 74 years	23	±16
75 to 79 years	14	±13
80 to 84 years	33	±24
85 years and over	30	±19

MEDIAN AGE BY GENDER 5-Year Projection

	Census Tract 3501.03, Middlesex County, Massachusetts	
Label	Estimate	Margin of Error
Median age --		
Total:	33.9	±1.3
Male	33.6	±2.1
Female	34.1	±1.7

Existing Conditions Analysis

1.5 Demographic Analysis TRACT 3501.03

OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS 5-Year Projection

	Census Tract 3501.03, Middlesex County, Massachusetts					
	Occupied housing units		Percent occupied housing units		Owner-occupied housing units	
Label	Estimate	Margin of Error	Estimate	Margin of Error	Estimate	Margin of Error
Occupied housing units	1,025	±71	1,025	±71	218	±51
RACE AND HISPANIC OR LATINO ORIGIN OF HOUSEHOLDER						
One race --						
White	791	±99	77.2%	±8.7	168	±42
Black or African American	39	±27	3.8%	±2.6	11	±11
American Indian and Alaska Native	0	±12	0.0%	±3.4	0	±12
Asian	148	±88	14.4%	±8.3	22	±21
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	4	±8	0.4%	±0.7	0	±12
Some other race	12	±14	1.2%	±1.4	12	±14
Two or more races	31	±30	3.0%	±2.9	5	±7
Hispanic or Latino origin	88	±78	8.6%	±7.5	12	±14
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	715	±102	69.8%	±9.9	168	±42
AGE OF HOUSEHOLDER						
Under 35 years	476	±95	46.4%	±8.9	34	±26
35 to 44 years	145	±62	14.1%	±6.0	21	±19
45 to 54 years	112	±70	10.9%	±6.8	39	±22
55 to 64 years	177	±82	17.3%	±7.7	42	±23
65 to 74 years	43	±20	4.2%	±1.9	26	±17
75 to 84 years	48	±24	4.7%	±2.3	40	±22
85 years and over	24	±16	2.3%	±1.5	16	±12
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF HOUSEHOLDER						
Less than high school graduate	62	±41	6.0%	±4.0	22	±19
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	200	±82	19.5%	±7.8	46	
Some college or associate's degree	134	±66	13.1%	±6.2	40	
Bachelor's degree or higher	629	±93	61.4%	±8.6	110	
YEAR HOUSEHOLDER MOVED INTO UNIT						
Moved in 2017 or later	203	±65	19.8%	±6.4	0	
Moved in 2015 to 2016	323	±107	31.5%	±9.2	11	
Moved in 2010 to 2014	194	±67	18.9%	±6.7	22	
Moved in 2000 to 2009	146	±52	14.2%	±5.2	56	
Moved in 1990 to 1999	60	±26	5.9%	±2.5	52	
Moved in 1989 or earlier	99	±30	9.7%	±2.9	77	

Sources: 2020 US Census Bureau and 2021 American Community Survey

Existing Conditions Analysis

1.5 Demographic Analysis TRACT 3501.03

OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (CONT.) 5-Year Projection

	Percent owner-occupied housing units		Renter-occupied housing units	
Label	Estimate	Margin of Error	Estimate	Margin of Error
Occupied housing units	218	±51	807	±77
RACE AND HISPANIC OR LATINO ORIGIN OF HOUSEHOLDER				
One race --				
White	77.1%	±12.1	623	±109
Black or African American	5.0%	±4.8	28	±25
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.0%	±14.8	0	±12
Asian	10.1%	±8.6	126	±86
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.0%	±14.8	4	±8
Some other race	5.5%	±6.2	0	±12
Two or more races	2.3%	±3.2	26	±29
Hispanic or Latino origin	5.5%	±6.2	76	±76
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	77.1%	±12.1	547	±107
AGE OF HOUSEHOLDER				
Under 35 years	15.6%	±10.1	442	±98
35 to 44 years	9.6%	±7.9	124	±61
45 to 54 years	17.9%	±9.4	73	±69
55 to 64 years	19.3%	±9.6	135	±81
65 to 74 years	11.9%	±8.0	17	±12
75 to 84 years	18.3%	±9.4	8	±11
85 years and over	7.3%	±5.4	8	±10
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF HOUSEHOLDER				
Less than high school graduate	10.1%	±8.1	40	±32
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	21.1%	±8.5	154	±86
Some college or associate's degree	18.3%	±10.0	94	±64
Bachelor's degree or higher	50.5%	±12.8	519	±88
YEAR HOUSEHOLDER MOVED INTO UNIT				
Moved in 2017 or later	0.0%	±14.8	203	±65
Moved in 2015 to 2016	5.0%	±7.0	312	±106
Moved in 2010 to 2014	10.1%	±8.7	172	±66
Moved in 2000 to 2009	25.7%	±12.3	90	±41
Moved in 1990 to 1999	23.9%	±9.5	8	±10
Moved in 1989 or earlier	35.3%	±10.7	22	±17

Existing Conditions Analysis

1.5 Demographic Analysis TRACT 3501.03

OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (CONT.) 5-Year Projection

	Percent renter-occupied housing units	
Label	Estimate	Margin of Error
Occupied housing units	807	±77
RACE AND HISPANIC OR LATINO ORIGIN OF HOUSEHOLDER		
One race --		
White	77.2%	±11.0
Black or African American	3.5%	±3.1
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.0%	±4.2
Asian	15.6%	±10.6
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.5%	±0.9
Some other race	0.0%	±4.2
Two or more races	3.2%	±3.7
Hispanic or Latino origin	9.4%	±9.2
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	67.8%	±12.5
AGE OF HOUSEHOLDER		
Under 35 years	54.8%	±10.8
35 to 44 years	15.4%	±7.6
45 to 54 years	9.0%	±8.6
55 to 64 years	16.7%	±9.7
65 to 74 years	2.1%	±1.5
75 to 84 years	1.0%	±1.4
85 years and over	1.0%	±1.3
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF HOUSEHOLDER		
Less than high school graduate	5.0%	±3.9
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	19.1%	±10.0
Some college or associate's degree	11.6%	±7.8
Bachelor's degree or higher	64.3%	±10.8
YEAR HOUSEHOLDER MOVED INTO UNIT		
Moved in 2017 or later	25.2%	±8.2
Moved in 2015 to 2016	38.7%	±11.7
Moved in 2010 to 2014	21.3%	±8.0
Moved in 2000 to 2009	11.2%	±5.2
Moved in 1990 to 1999	1.0%	±1.2
Moved in 1989 or earlier	2.7%	±2.0

Existing Conditions Analysis

1.5 Demographic Analysis TRACT 3501.03

HOUSEHOLD INCOME 5-Year Projection

	Census Tract 3501.03, Middlesex County, Massachusetts						
	Households		Families		Married-couple families		Nonfamily h
Label	Estimate	Margin of Error	Estimate	Margin of Error	Estimate	Margin of Error	Estimate
Total	1,025	±71	420	±78	323	±72	605
Less than \$10,000	1.3%	±2.0	0.0%	±8.0	0.0%	±10.3	2.1%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	1.0%	±1.1	1.2%	±2.1	1.5%	±2.7	0.8%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	2.8%	±1.9	3.3%	±2.9	1.5%	±2.5	2.5%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	10.0%	±6.6	9.0%	±7.4	8.7%	±8.4	12.4%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	5.9%	±3.6	5.7%	±5.7	5.9%	±6.9	6.0%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	14.2%	±5.9	22.9%	±10.5	22.9%	±12.8	6.6%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	7.6%	±4.5	5.0%	±4.0	6.5%	±5.1	9.4%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	28.7%	±9.3	24.3%	±11.1	23.5%	±12.1	31.7%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	12.7%	±5.4	18.1%	±9.3	17.0%	±9.9	8.9%
\$200,000 or more	15.8%	±7.7	10.5%	±5.8	12.4%	±7.4	19.5%
Median income (dollars)	107,726	±4,647	106,034	±38,912	106,131	±35,255	108,176
Mean income (dollars)	121,273	±16,148	115,730	±17,023	N	N	124,764
PERCENT ALLOCATED							
Household income in the past 12 months	29.5%	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)
Family income in the past 12 months	(X)	(X)	20.7%	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)
Nonfamily income in the past 12 months	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	35.5%

Sources: 2020 US Census Bureau and 2021 American Community Survey

Existing Conditions Analysis

1.6 Adjacencies

Adjacency Specific Use

Existing Schools

- **ESCS** = East Somerville Community School
- **PHAU** = Prospect Hill Academy Upper Elementary Campus

Daycare

- **CC** = Children's Center at Assembly Row

Senior Services NA

Elderly Housing NA

Affordable Housing > 6 units NA

Residential > 6 units ▲

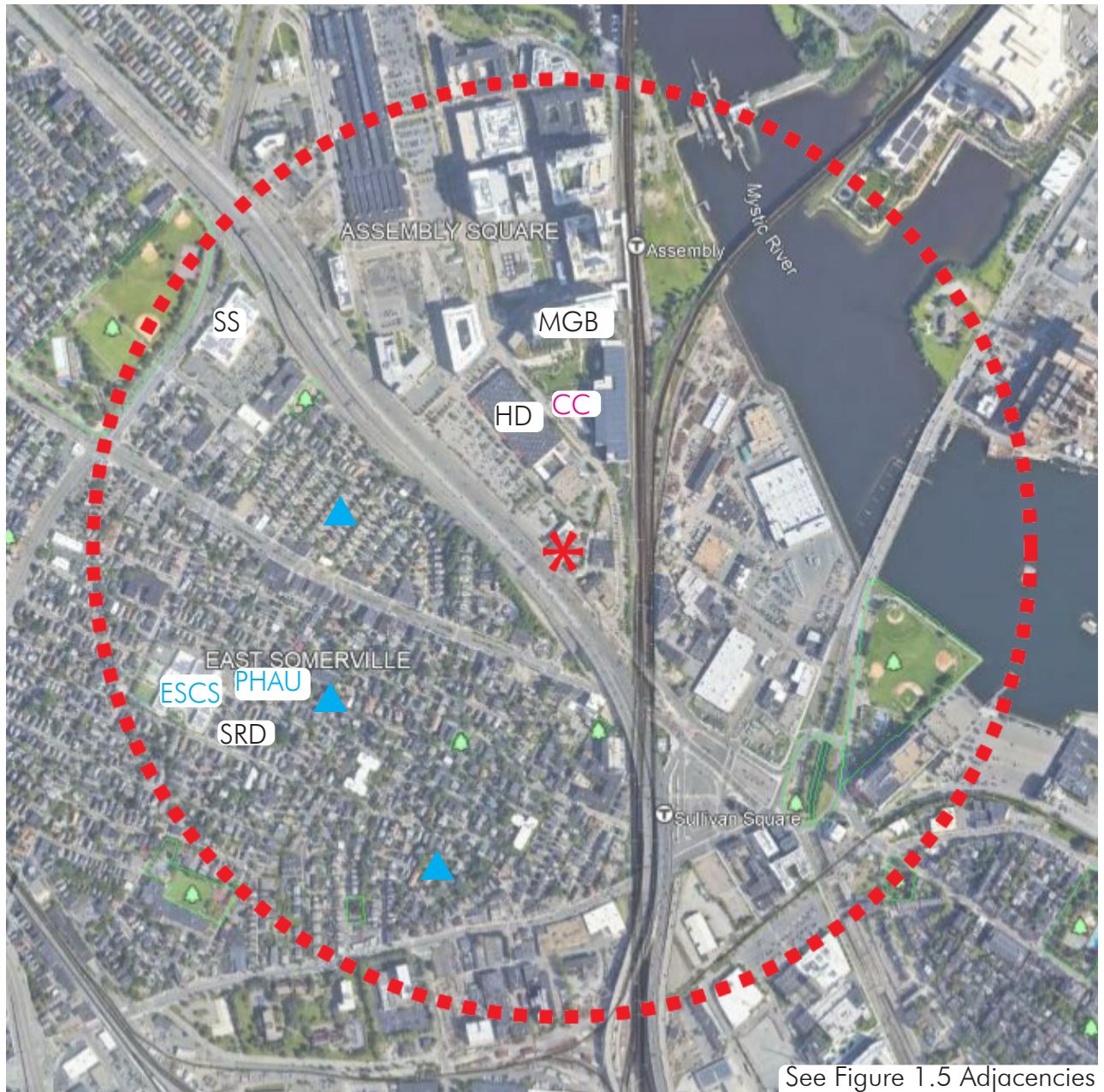
- 16 Webster Street
- 34 Wisconsin Avenue
- 49 Myrtle Street

Large Employers

- **SS** = Stop & Shop
- **HD** = The Home Depot
- **MGB** = Mass General Brigham

Religious Institutions

- **SRD** = Shrine of the Red Diamond



See Figure 1.5 Adjacencies

Needs Assessment

2.1 Existing Plans

The project team studied the SomerVision2040 and Open Space Creation Task Force for the City's Public Realm goals. The project team also used Chapter 13 Public Realm of the City of Somerville Zoning Ordinance as a reference for the future designs of the Mystic Avenue Pocket Plaza.

The bulk of the 45 Mystic Avenue office/lab building and street level commercial space is being constructed to the western portion of this lot. Approximately a third of the lot frontage zone, directly along Mystic Avenue, will be transformed into a public pocket plaza, providing both a pedestrian connection and buffer from the Mystic Avenue traffic.

2.2. Departmental Feedback

During the initial permitting process of the Master Plan Special Permit (MPSP) that encapsulates the overall 45 Mystic Avenue development including both the proposed office/lab development and the proposed civic space, the project was preliminarily reviewed by both the Planning & Zoning Boards of the City, as well as the Neighborhood.

Three Draft Concept Plans for the pocket plaza were presented to the Planning & Zoning Boards of the City of Somerville during the MPSP process prior to the Nov. 2022 Civic Space Neighborhood Meeting. The City appreciated the variety of designs brought forth, and stressed the need for durability and a 'maintenance-mindset' when discussing specific materials and plant selections during future refinement of the design. Additionally, the City acknowledged the site's close proximity to both Route 93 and Mystic Avenue, noting the challenges of the small size of the site and the current state of the neighborhood, as well as noting an existing wind-tunnel effect and the caution of road-salt tolerance.

Design and refinement of the Proposed Civic Space will consider the initial feedback provided, as well as any further feedback received during the complete City review process and Site Plan Approval process.

We are looking forward to further Departmental feedback as we move through the Pocket Plaza's Development Review Process and any possible upcoming Neighborhood meetings.

Needs Assessment

2.3 Findings from Existing Conditions Analysis

The Assembly Square neighborhood is a mix of commercial and mixed-use developments of varying scales. The proposed 45 Mystic Avenue development is under City review with both office/lab space, and additional amenity/conference space including a public gallery and maker space.

We expect the main users of the 45 Mystic Avenue Plaza to be the professionals working above in the offices/labs, and to a lesser degree employees and commuters of the nearby commercial area for lunchtime use. Due to the site's location tucked a couple of blocks away from the commercial area at Assembly Row, weekend and afternoon-evenings may be filled by nearby residents as well.

The existing civic space analysis shows a variety of civic spaces within 1/2 mile radius of 45 Mystic Avenue. The smallest being Caldwell Play Area and the largest being Foss Park. Seven out of the nine in the 1/2 mile radius study area have Playgrounds and/or Tot Lots. Only two out of the nine allow dogs. Three out of the nine have Sports Fields. Only two out of the nine are passive parks. Additionally, there are no existing public plazas within the 1/2 mile radius of 45 Mystic Avenue.

The compilation of the latest demographic information as provided by the US Census generally concludes the Census Tract #3501.03 to be a pre-dominantly 22-59 year old population, and typically renters with an annual household income range of \$100,000-150,000. The census tract is noted as minority as well as minority and English isolation in regard to Environmental Justice. A general space for small to mid-size gatherings and 'lunch socials' may be appreciated by the surrounding population described above.

Due to the 2,319SF +/- size of the Mystic Avenue Plaza, larger scale gatherings and uses are not suitable. However, small scale uses such as Outdoor Seating and a Water Feature may be appreciated.

Needs Assessment

2.4 Summary Of Existing Civic Space Programs + Needs

	CIVIC SPACE PROGRAM (From Inventory of Parks and Open Space CoS)	Chuckie Harris Park	Foss Park	Draw Seven State Park	Ryan Play- ground	Cald- well Play Area	Perkins Street Park	Sym- phony Park	Florence Play- ground	E.Som. Com- munity School- yard	Totals Per Program
	Historic Property										0
	Landmark										0
	Scenic Vista		x	X							1
	Community Garden	X									1
	School Garden									X	1
	Urban Agriculture										0
	Lawn	X	X	X				X			4
	Shade Arbor/Gazebo			X				X			3
	Performance Space	X						X			2
	Plaza										0
	Water Feature		X					X			2
	Tables	X	X	X			X		X		5
	Seating	X	X				X	X	X	X	6
	Drinking Fountain	X					X	X	X		4
	Lighting	X	X	X			X		X	X	6
	Playground (5+)	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	7
	Tot Lot (2-5)	X	X		X				X		4
	Skateboard Elements										0
	Water Play	X	X				X		X		4
	Dog Park (OLRA)										0
	Dogs Allowed		X	X							2
	Sports Courts	X	X				X			X	4
	Sports Fields		X		X					X	3
	Ice Hockey/Skating										0
	Stormwater Capture	X						X			2

Needs Assessment

2.5 Neighborhood Feedback

During the initial 45 Mystic Avenue MPSP process with the city of Somerville; Verdant LA designed a “Place Holder” pocket plaza for this space. We made it very clear at each Planning Board and Zoning Board meeting that this was a place holder and we would be reaching out for neighborhood feedback regarding their needs and wants.

On September 13, 2022, the first of two neighborhood meetings was held online and moderated by City Councilor Matthew McLaughlin of Ward 1. The focus of this meeting was the overall proposed development at 45 Mystic Avenue. The design team presented current preliminary architectural and landscape plans, emphasizing the placeholder for the forthcoming civic pocket plaza. The purpose of this first meeting was for the Design Team to gather initial ideas from the Neighborhood.

On November 21, 2022, the second neighborhood meeting was held online and moderated by the Team’s Permitting Attorney: Attorney Anne Vigorito, Law Office of Richard Di Girolamo. The focus of this meeting was on the proposed civic space within the 45 Mystic Avenue development. The Design Team presented the Civic Space Study, the inventory of existing civic spaces within the study area, and Site Analysis Diagrams. The Design Team also presented the Neighborhood with different preliminary sketch schemes for the Pocket Plaza to gather their initial comments, wants, and needs for the plaza space. The general response was excitement for the plaza as an overall concept, but not yet sold on the design concept. The overwhelming response from the Neighborhood was the desire for as much tree canopy as possible, and a strong buffer from the busy adjacencies of Mystic Avenue and Route 93.

Needs Assessment

2.6 Conclusions - Civic Space Proposal

The 45 Mystic Avenue Civic Space proposal is forthcoming pending further review by City Departments and the Neighborhood.



