

33 Mystic Ave - Special Permits Narrative

November 1, 2024

The proposed development at 33 Mystic Ave seeks four special permits which will allow the project to align itself with the goals of the Assembly Square Neighborhood Plan. Those goals are to encourage the development of small parcels in Assembly Point, in contrast to the larger parcels to the north; to create height and density along the highway; to create a mix of uses and strong sense of place along the street; to create finer-grained development with human-scale design; and to add housing units.

Below are descriptions of the four Special Permits that the project seeks, each of which provide relief on a dimensional standard outlined in Table 7.4.8 of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance. The dimensional requirements in the ASMD are tied to the gross floor area (GFA) of the proposed building. The GFA of the proposed building is 11,911 sf. This places the proposed building in the 10,000 - 50,000 GFA dimensional standards.

1. **Lot Area** - The required lot area is 10,000 sf. The lot area of the existing property is 1,737 sf. The Neighborhood Plan for the Point encourages the preservation and development of small parcels into a unique collection of buildings, that stand in contrast to the larger and more conventional development to the north in Assembly Square. Waiving this lot area requirement would allow the project to meet the intent of the Neighborhood Plan in maintaining the small parcel size.
2. **Floor Area Ratio** - The maximum floor area ratio is 2.0. The proposed floor area ratio is 7.0. The SZO does not provide a definition for floor area ratio, so we have included the basement which is used for accessory uses (storage, trash, water room). Height and density along I-93 is identified as a goal of the Neighborhood Plan, and this special permit will allow the proposed development to create that density. The proposed FAR allows the building to be tall enough to create meaningful height along the highway and to engage with the proposed development context along the Mystic Ave corridor (1 Mystic Ave at 22 floors, about 1/8 mile away in Charlestown; the proposed 100' tall building at 45 Mystic Ave; the proposed development at Assembly Square Gateway, currently the Home Depot plaza).

NEIGHBOR

3. Building Height - The maximum building height is 50 ft. The proposed building height is 69'-11 ½". The reasons outlined above with Floor Area Ratio all apply here as well.
4. Lot Area / Dwelling Unit - The minimum lot area/dwelling unit is 600 sf. The proposed lot area/dwelling unit is 217 sf. One general observation about the ASMD dimensional standards is the larger the building, the less restrictive the standards become. This encourages the development of larger parcels, which is at odds with the goals of the Assembly Point Micro-District described in the Neighborhood Plan and summarized above. For instance, there is no Lot Area/Dwelling Unit requirement for projects over 50,000 GSF. Allowing higher levels of density on smaller parcels like this one will create the finer-grain development that the Neighborhood Plan seeks.

We believe this building and its streetscape will serve a gateway into the future Assembly Point Micro-District, and also become an example of the quality architecture and urban design that creates a thriving neighborhood. Granting these Special Permits along with the Site Plan Approval will allow this development to proceed and lead the way for a new, dynamic micro-district to emerge in Somerville.

Attached: See appendix for photographs and renderings illustrating the narrative.

Appendix

Photographs & Renderings



Existing
Mystic Ave
Context



Development Context along the Mystic Ave Corridor

NEIGHBOR



Assembly Square Gateway
Planned mixed-use
development

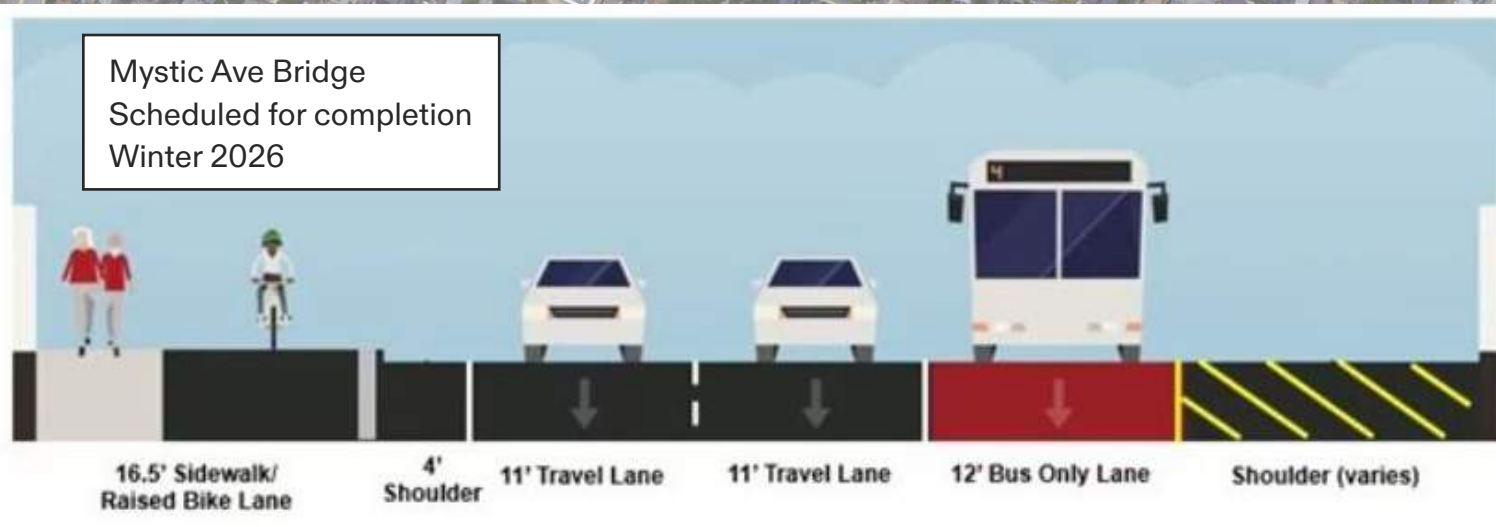
45 Mystic Ave
As proposed at 2/20/24
Neighborhood Meeting
7 Floors / ~100'



1 Mystic Ave
BPDA Board Approved
22 Floors / ~280'



Mystic Ave Bridge
Scheduled for completion
Winter 2026



NEIGHBOR

Raised Highway
Context -
33 Mystic Ave
from I-93



Assembly Sq. Neighborhood Plan

Height and
density along
highway



Future
Neighborhood
Context

Smaller parcels
prioritized in the
Assembly Point
District



View of
Existing
looking
South on
N. Union St



Site Plan

- Expand sidewalk on N. Union St
- Wide planted zone with seating
- Ground Floor Commercial Space
- Bike Room
- No car parking required



AROMATIC SUMAC



RUDBECKIA
VARIETIES



FIELD MAPLE



N. Union St
Elevation



Brick
Manganese Ironspot,
Smooth and Vertical
Score



Brick
Sand Color,
Flemish Bond



ACRE
Wood-like cladding
at Entry,
made of upcycled
rice hulls



Aluminum
Black window
frames and
storefront



View from
Mystic Ave
Looking East



Brick
Manganese Ironspot,
Smooth and Vertical
Score



Brick
Sand Color,
Flemish Bond



ACRE
Wood-like cladding
at Entry,
made of upcycled
rice hulls



Aluminum
Black window
frames and
storefront



Mystic Ave Elevation



Brick
Manganese Ironspot,
Smooth and Vertical
Score



Brick
Sand Color,
Flemish Bond



ACRE
Wood-like cladding
at Entry,
made of upcycled
rice hulls



Aluminum
Black window
frames and
storefront



View from
Mystic Ave
Looking North



Brick
Manganese Ironspot,
Smooth and Vertical
Score



Brick
Sand Color,
Flemish Bond



ACRE
Wood-like cladding
at Entry,
made of upcycled
rice hulls



Aluminum
Black window
frames and
storefront



View from
N. Union St
Looking South



Brick
Manganese Ironspot,
Smooth and Vertical
Score



Brick
Sand Color,
Flemish Bond



ACRE
Wood-like cladding
at Entry,
made of upcycled
rice hulls



Aluminum
Black window
frames and
storefront



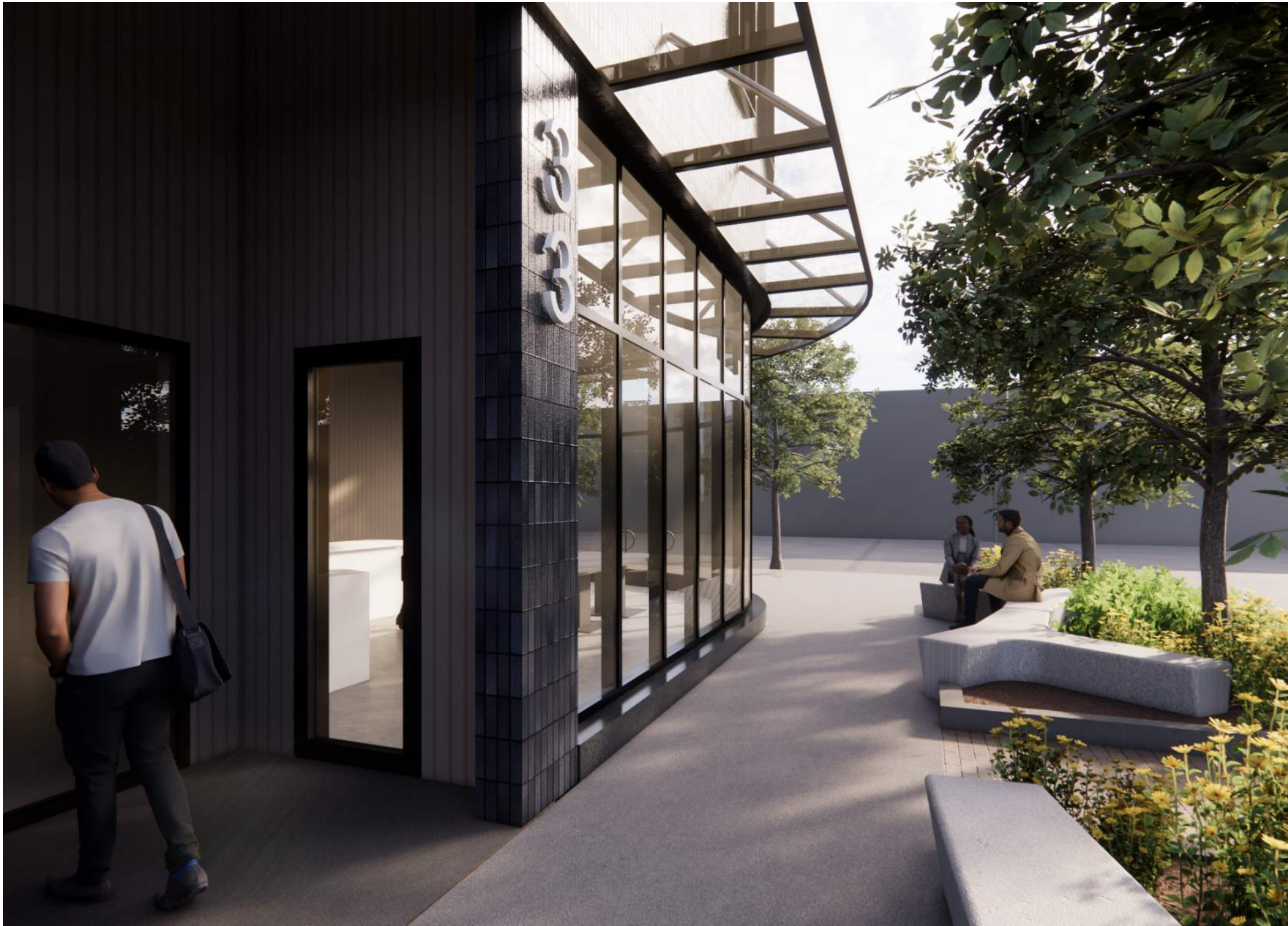
View from
N. Union St
Looking South



N. Union St Streetscape



Entrance at
N. Union St



Mystic Ave Streetscape



Landscape
Plan



AROMATIC SUMAC



RUDBECKIA
VARIETIES



FIELD MAPLE



Roof
Garden



SEDUM
VARIETIES



BUTTERFLY
WEED



ALLIUM



BEE BALM
RUDBECKIA



YARROW



CATMINT



SWITCHGRASS

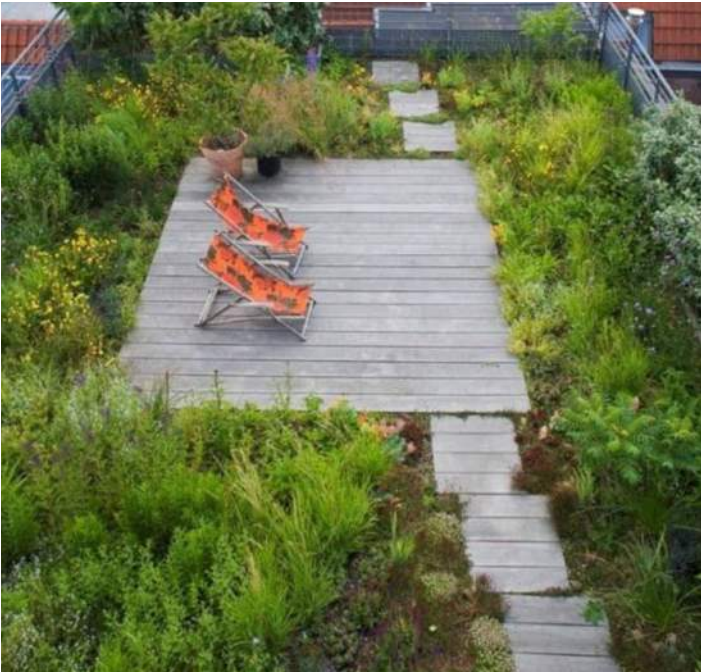
NEIGHBOR



TWIG BENCH



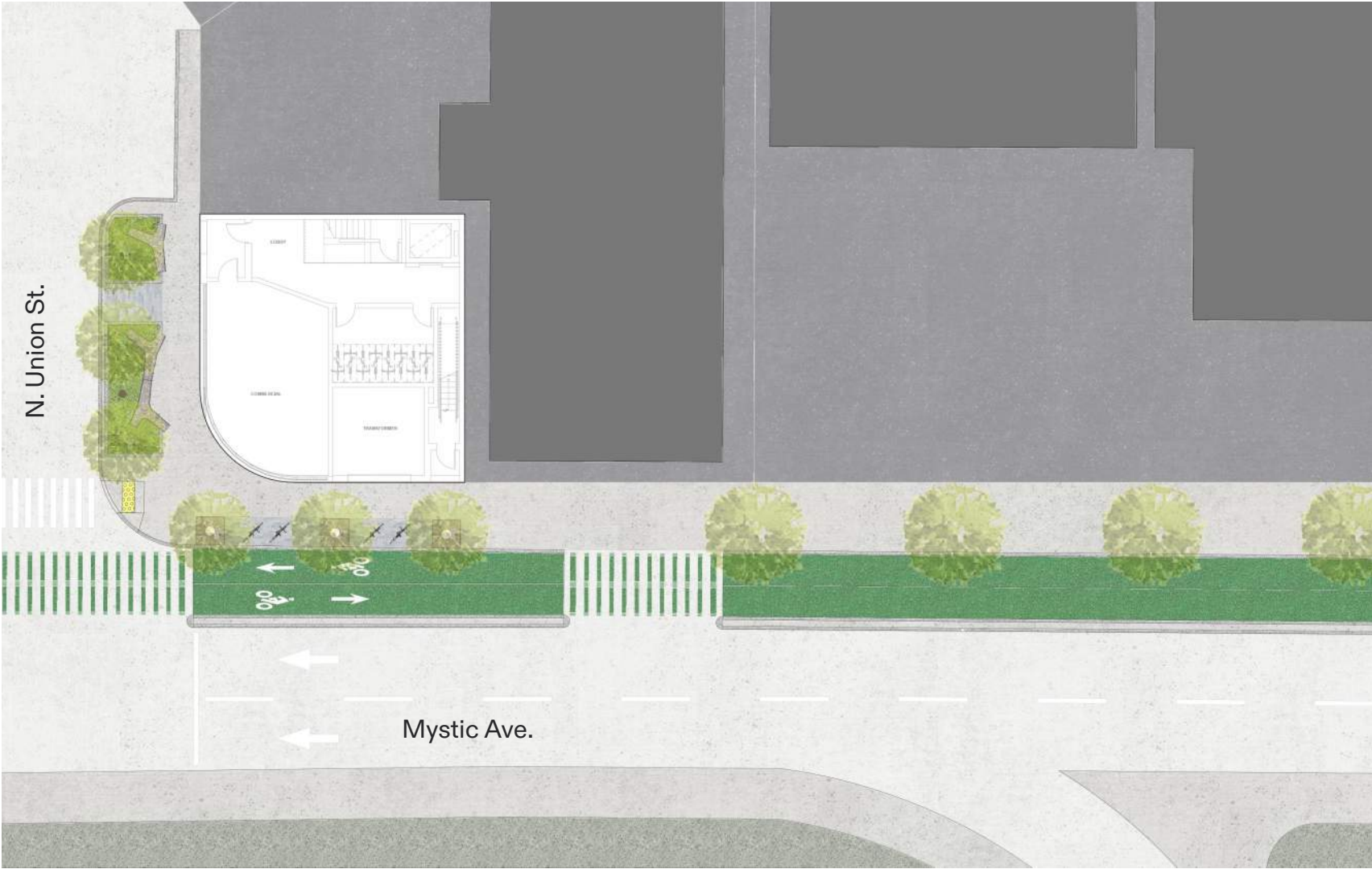
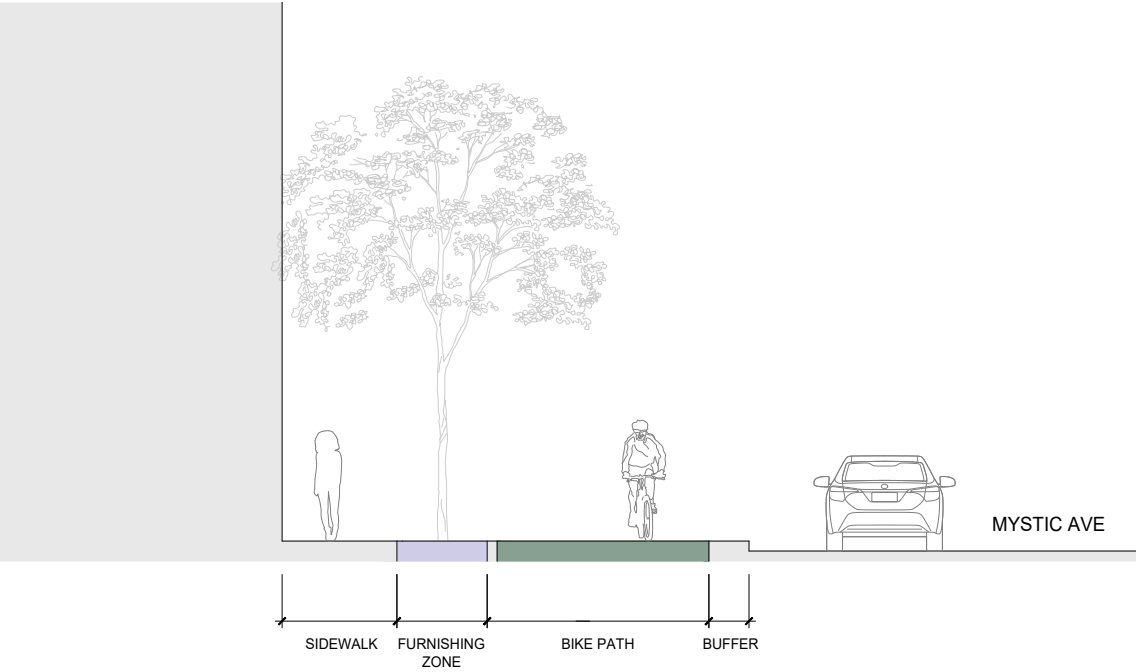
ROOF DECK



POLLINATOR/ SEDUM GARDEN



Potential
Mystic Ave
Improvements



33 Mystic Ave
Narrative

NEIGH

45 Mystic Ave
As proposed at 2/20/24
Neighborhood Meeting
7 Floors / ~100'



Assembly Square Gateway
Planned mixed-use
development

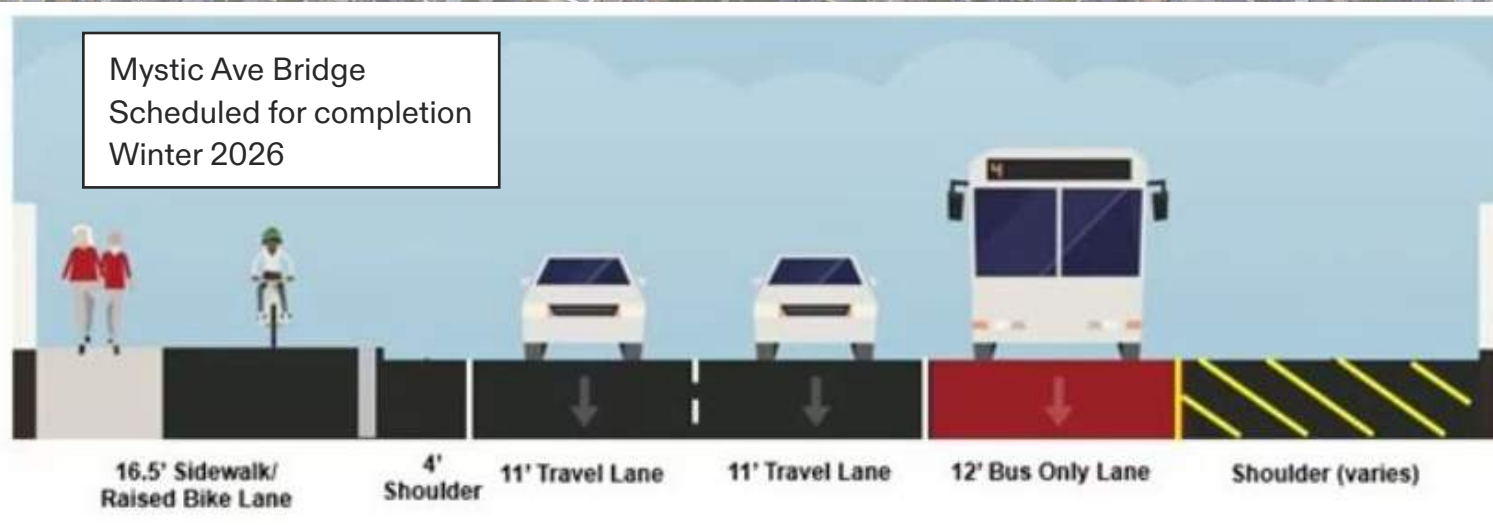
33 Mystic Ave
Proposed
6 Floors / 69'-11"



1 Mystic Ave
BPDA Board Approved
22 Floors / ~280'



Mystic Ave Bridge
Scheduled for completion
Winter 2026



NEIGHBOR

Thank you.