A BETTER CITY

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A GUIDE TO PLACEMAKING

FOR MOBILITY

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CONTENTS

A Better City is a diverse group of business leaders united around a common goal—to enhance Boston and the region's economic health, competitiveness, vibrancy, sustainability and quality of life. By amplifying the voice of the business community through collaboration and consensus across a broad range of stakeholders, A Better City develops solutions and influences policy in three critical areas central to the Boston region's economic competitiveness and growth: transportation and infrastructure, land use and development, and energy and environment.

A GUIDE TO PLACEMAKING FOR MOBILITY

INTRODUCTION

From "pavement to plazas," to parklets, and to pop-up interventions, municipal rights-of-way are fast becoming essential to the public realm in many cities. In Boston, efforts to improve infrastructure for people walking, biking, and waiting for the bus have led to new combinations of design features that make our streets and sidewalks feel like places to spend time in, rather than spaces to simply move through. *A Guide to Placemaking for Mobility* introduces a framework of analysis for understanding the relationship between mobility and public realm. Furthermore, this document provides an overview of the history of Boston's public realm, and describes emerging design and planning strategies to improve the places and corridors that make up Boston's mobility system.

A Guide to Placemaking for Mobility is part of a research series produced via the Public Realm Planning Study for Go Boston 2030, Boston's city-wide mobility action plan. Experiential Quality was a key theme of Go Boston 2030's Question Campaign in 2015, and developing public spaces on streets and at transit stations that are welcoming, safe, and fun is a primary goal of this new transportation plan. In order to achieve these objectives, A Better City partnered with the Boston Transportation Department to develop the Public Realm Planning Study and *A Guide to Placemaking for Mobility* for Go Boston 2030, in an effort to establish a public realm action plan for the City of Boston.

What is the Public Realm?

The public realm, at its most utilitarian level, is the space people move through to get from place to place. To that end, its design should be optimized to facilitate efficient mobility across a full range of modes, from cars to pedestrians, bikes, transit, and everything in between. Public realm initiatives operate around a central philosophy: that traveling through a city should be a positive experience for all. Since commuting through Boston is the primary interaction between citizens and the public realm, enhancing the mobility system is a powerful way to improve it.

In Boston, the public realm is more than just public space. The public realm encompasses all of the physical objects that occur on or in streets, pathways, rights-of-way, parks, and publicly accessible open spaces. When discussing mobility, the public realm includes any public or civic buildings and any facilities that provide access to the mobility network, including transit stations. The experience within the public realm is also dependent on what happens while you are there—events, interactions, performances, sounds, smells, and emotions are also part of the public realm. South Station isn't just where we catch the train; it's also where we look at public art, where we pick up our visiting friends and family, and where we eat lunch. Roxbury Crossing isn't just where we transfer from train to bus; it's also the front door for many educational and religious institutions and the intersection of three unique neighborhoods. The Charles River Esplanade isn't just part of our bicycle route to work; it's also where we watch fireworks, listen to the Boston Pops, and stroll with our loved ones on summer days. In this way, the space of mobility is also a social, cultural, and civic place. A train car is also a living room; a transit station is also a festival site; a bus stop is also a monument. Designing for mobility in the city of Boston must include consideration of all the integrally-linked and richly-layered facets of our collective lives.

1800'S AND EARLY 1900'S

QUINCY MARKET (1826)

THE EMERALD NECKLACE (1870)

Much more than an exquisite greenway, the Emerald Necklace symbolically connected many of Boston's most important places, landscapes, and landmarks. Its creation established a model for park infrastructure that has been emulated worldwide since.

BACK BAY (1880)

Back Bay is famous for its rows of preserved 19th-century Victorian brownstone homes, cultural institutions like the Boston Public Library, shopping districts like Newbury Street, and promenades like Commonwealth Avenue.

THE GREEN LINE (1897)

As the first subway in America, the Green Line not only transformed how people got around, but redefined the urban landscape by creating spaces for social activity and cultural expression at its key stops. The construction of the subway seeded swathes of the city for redevelopment and modernization.

THE CHARLES RIVER ESPLANADE (STARTED IN 1930'S)

BOSTON'S PUBLIC REALM

Historical Context

Boston has a long history of successfully combining mobility and public space priorities through transportation infrastructure investments, and it has established world-class places with a pioneering spirit. Boston's public realm legacy was built over many centuries in response to dramatic social, economic, and cultural change. This legacy begins with the city's founding and early growth in the late 17th and 18th centuries. Boston Common, Quincy Market, and Long Wharf represented significant public investments in our agricultural and maritime economies. However, much of their value to Boston over more than three centuries lies in the communal spirit and civic ambition that shaped them. The timeline below highlights historic urban endeavors that helped to shape Boston's present-day public realm.

DECODING BOSTON'S PUBLIC REALM: A FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

Boston's public realm can be analyzed through a historical lens, but it can also be understood as a collection of parts. This section will categorize the components of Boston's mobility system as either *places* or *corridors*, and then further into specific typologies. In addition to the role that these spaces play in transportation, these classifications are based on the human dimension of mobility—or what it feels like to be in, or pass through, a space as a pedestrian, bicyclist, or transit rider.

The definitions on the following pages are based on the ways people commonly use the mobility system. They include places where people access the greater mobility system, like transit stations and Hubway bicycle rental docks, as well as routes that people take to travel to or between those access points. While these definitions are comprehensive and embody all of the components that make up the

MID-1900'S TO EARLY 2000'S

THE FREEDOM TRAIL (1951)

Delivering one of the greatest draws in tourism for the city, the red brick line of the Freedom Trail not only helps visitors find their next destination, it literally ties together centuries of historical sites both large and small to tell the story of how our nation came to be.

CITY HALL PLAZA (1960'S)

City Hall Plaza, well on its way to incorporating innovative public realm interventions, embodies the aesthetics of its building era and continues to host regional celebrations, including musical performances and cultural festivals.

PEDESTRIANIZATION OF DOWNTOWN CROSSING (1979)

HARBORWALK (1984)

### SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR PARK (1987)

As a leading example of transit investment doing much more than conveying passengers, the Southwest Corridor Park has promoted fine-grained, multi-modal mobility at the human scale and established a seam that unites neighborhoods of the Back Bay and South End to Jamaica Plain and Roxbury.

THE CENTRAL ARTERY PROJECT AND ROSE KENNEDY GREENWAY (2008)

One of the country's largest and most transformational single urban investments, the Big Dig replaced the elevated Central Artery (I-93) for the Rose Kennedy Greenway, Boston's grandest boulevard and proudest civic space.

FIGURE 1: When we think about mobility we don't always think about how the spaces we use to get around the city make people feel. Planning for mobility should include efforts to enhance the sense of place.

mobility system, they are neither objective nor mutually exclusive. For example, one person may consider a corridor to be a greenway that they use to ride their bicycle from one part of town to another, while another may consider the same corridor a pedestrian promenade along which they walk with their family on weekends. Nevertheless, these categories represent each of the ways people use different parts of the mobility system.

This glossary in turn provides a framework of analysis to better understand how spaces could be improved to both serve their mobility role and become more successful places. Each *place* and *corridor* has its own goals for placemaking, and the mobility system overall has a set of goals that apply to every space in the system. Placemaking refers to a people-centered approach to planning and design of public space. These practices focus on elements that enhance the experience of living, working and playing in a place, and often begin with small-scale, strategic improvements. A place-making goal describes a condition that, if present, it would significantly improve the user experience. The evaluation of spaces based on these goals begins to suggest ways to strategically improve Boston's network of mobility spaces.

"EACH PLACE AND CORRIDOR HAS ITS OWN GOALS FOR PLACEMAKING, AND THE MOBILITY SYSTEM OVERALL HAS A SET OF GOALS THAT APPLY TO EVERY SPACE IN THE SYSTEM."

TABLE 1: The Human Dimension of Mobility: Summary of Spatial Typologies

TYPOLOGY	CHARACTERISTIC	SCALE	EXAMPLES
PLACES			
Mobility Hubs	Major destinations and inter-modal transfer spaces within the mobility system	Regional Citywide	• North Station • South Station • Back Bay Station • Logan International Airport
Gateways	Places that people pass through on their way to regionally significant destinations	Regional Citywide	• Downtown Crossing • Copley Square • Aquarium • Long Wharf
Squares	Primary places of neighborhood activity that are served by rail or bus transit	Neighborhood	• Haymarket • Codman Square • Sullivan Square • Andrew Square
Centers	Secondary places of neighborhood activity served by bus or rail transit	Neighborhood	• Stony Brook • Codman Square • Roxbury Crossing • Broadway
Points	Any smaller places where people access the greater mobility system	Neighborhood	• Car-share stations • Bike-share stations • MBTA stations • Bus route stops
CORRIDORS			
Greenways	Pedestrian and bicycle thoroughfares separated from other transportation modes	Regional Citywide	• Charles River Esplanade • Southwest Corridor • East Boston Greenway
Transit Collectors	Prominent pedestrian connections to hubs, gateways, squares, and centers	Neighborhood	• Dartmouth Street • Hyde Park Avenue • Massachusetts Avenue
Neighborhood Bridges	Pedestrian connections between neighborhoods	Neighborhood	• Cambridge Street • Washington Street • Berkeley Street Bridge
Pedestrian Promenades	Corridors that function as destinations	Neighborhood	• Centre Street • Newbury Street • Boylston Street
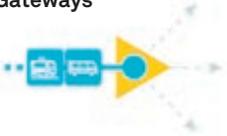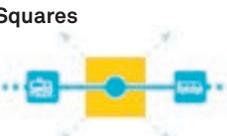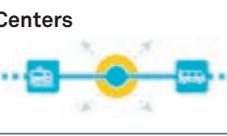
FIGURE 2: Boston's Mobility Network
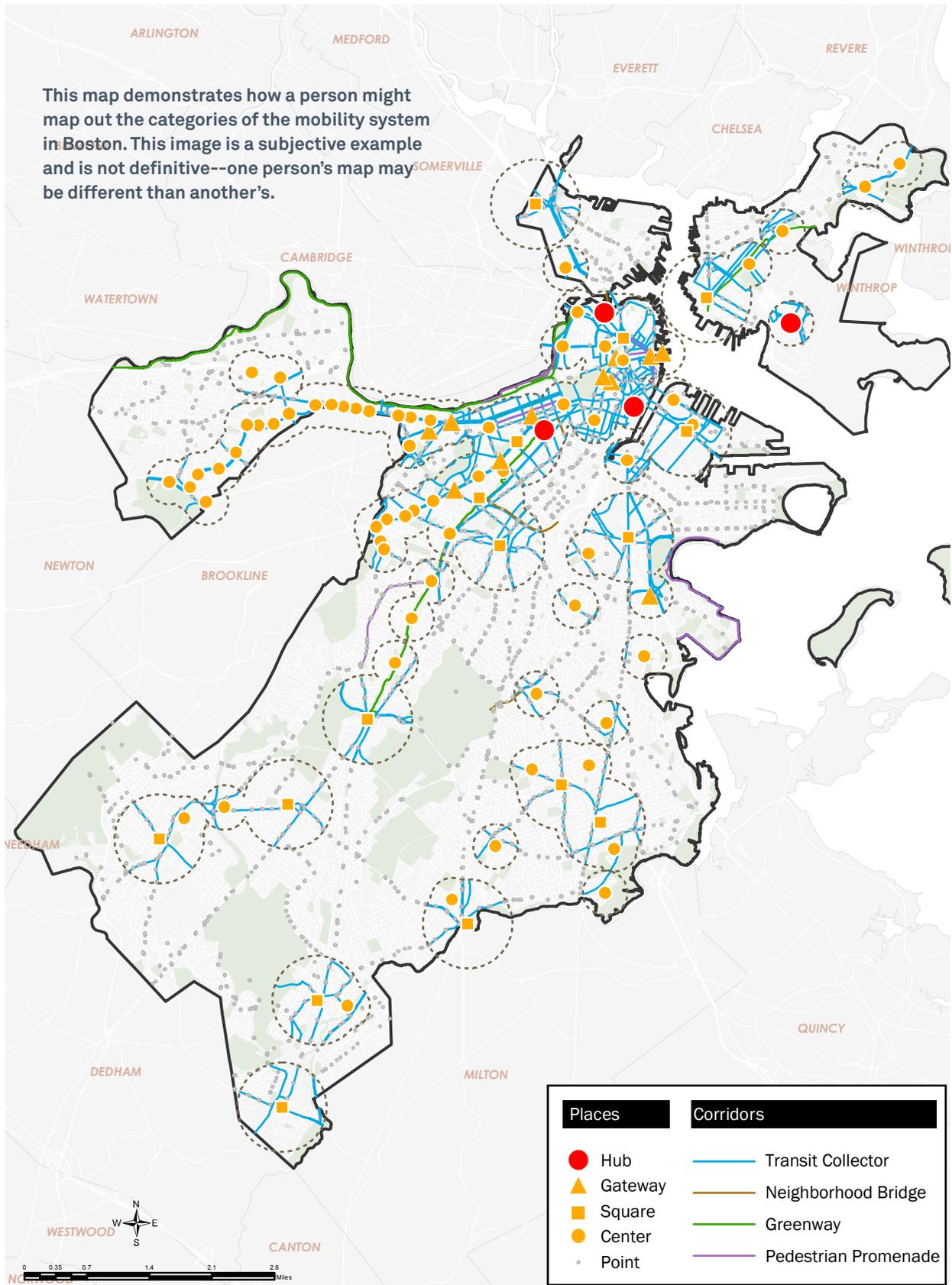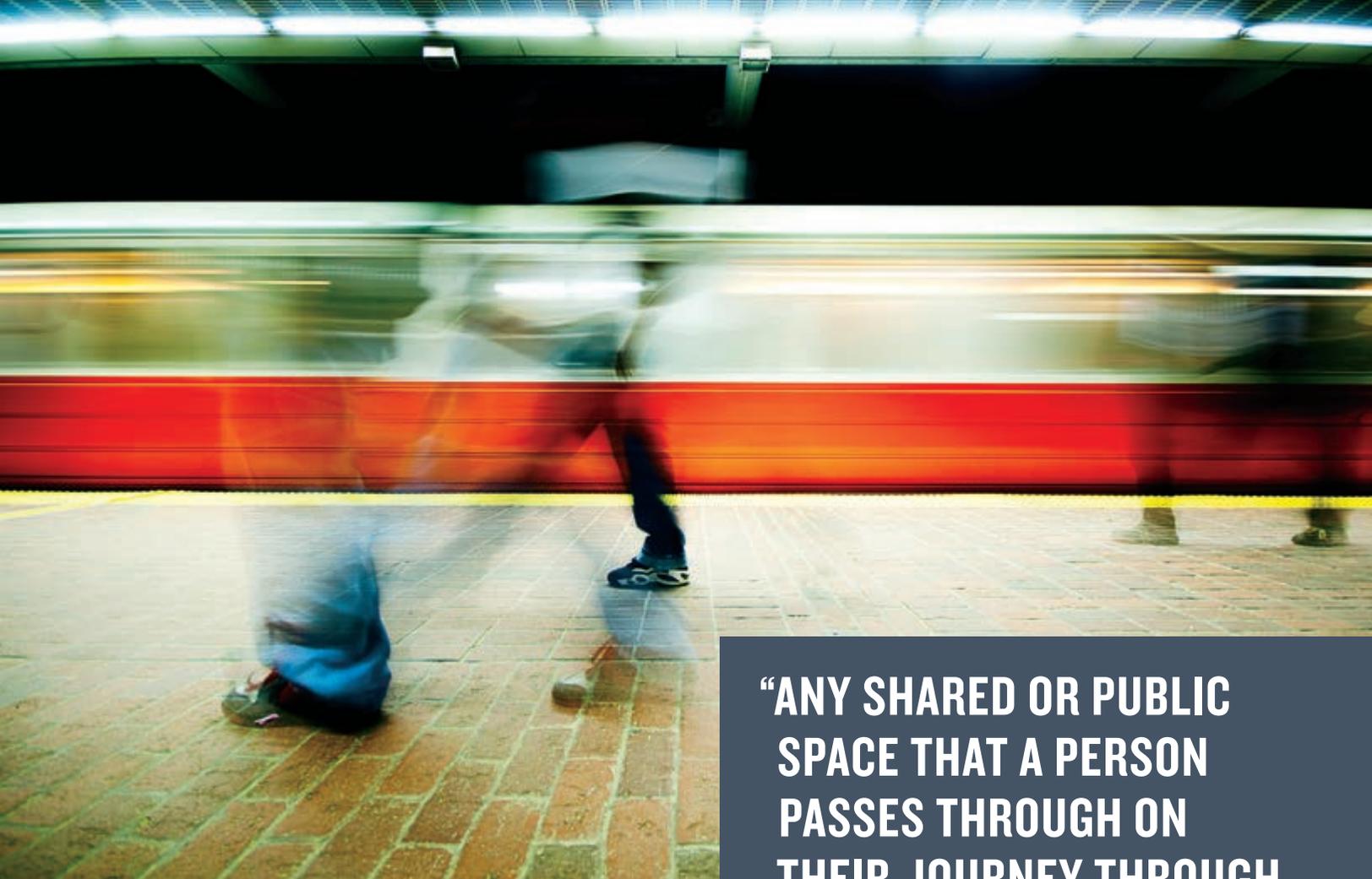
This map demonstrates how a person might map out the categories of the mobility system in Boston. This image is a subjective example and is not definitive--one person's map may be different than another's.

Places		Corridors	
●	Hub	───	Transit Collector
▲	Gateway	───	Neighborhood Bridge
■	Square	───	Greenway
●	Center	───	Pedestrian Promenade
·	Point		

> **"ANY SHARED OR PUBLIC SPACE THAT A PERSON PASSES THROUGH ON THEIR JOURNEY THROUGH THE CITY IS PART OF THE MOBILITY SYSTEM."**

THE MOBILITY SYSTEM

The mobility system includes all modes, locations, roads, pathways, events and interactions that make up the city's mobility network.

The mobility system includes all of the places and corridors that people use to get around in Boston. The system includes streets, sidewalks, bikeways, trails and highways, train stations, train car interiors, bus stops, and public plazas outside of transit stations. Any shared or public space that a person passes through on their journey through the city is part of the mobility system.

Any part of the mobility system should achieve four overarching placemaking goals:

* **Safe and Accessible:** The mobility system should ensure the safety of users and exceed all accessibility standards. For example, all spaces should surpass the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act and any local safety standards.

* **Branded:** The mobility system should be clearly identified as part of Boston's mobility system. Users should be able to recognize features of

the mobility system and know they are in Boston while traveling through the city.

* **Experiential:** Use of the mobility system should be a positive experience. Features of the mobility system should create comfortable physical environments for the people it serves and help enhance the social, cultural, and civic dimensions of transportation.

* **Resilient:** The mobility system should be ecologically prepared. It should endure and recover from shocks, including climate catastrophes, social or economic disruptions, and other unforeseen events.

PLACES

Places are physical locations defined by their role in the city's mobility system. A place in the mobility system is a space that plays a role in how people get around, and that users identify as unique compared to other spaces. A place is a location that can be

named, like a plaza, train station, bus stop or boat ramp.

Places should accomplish the overarching goals of the mobility system listed above, and additionally have their own set of placemaking goals:

- **Social:** A place should encourage interaction between different users. In addition to accommodating the movement of people, a successful place in the mobility network should facilitate conversation, gathering, events, and other social uses.

- **Cultural:** Places should tell the story of the surrounding neighborhood, region, or city. They should illustrate the character, history, and values of the people who use it through art, design, events, or other forms of expression.

- **Civic:** Places should serve a civic purpose. They should feel open and inclusive to all people while fostering a sense of local ownership over public space. Civic places can also be landmarks that people recognize, featuring notable design or architecture exemplary of the area.

Places are sub-divided into the categories below based on their role in Boston's transportation network:

Mobility Hubs

Mobility Hubs are major destinations and inter-modal transfer spaces within the mobility system. They generate significant activity and are widely recognized as vital to regional transportation. People use hubs as an entrance point to and exit from Boston, as transfer points from one train line or travel mode to another, and as central landmarks and meeting points.

Hubs are used by large numbers of people and should thus offer a variety of social spaces to accommodate both large gatherings and brief social encounters between individuals. As regionally significant places, hubs should feature art or design that expresses the character or tells the story of the region. Hubs should be civic spaces that feature design and architecture unique to Boston, yet open to all people.

Gateways

Gateways are places that people pass through on their way to regionally significant destinations. Gateways can be transit stations near popular points of interest or intermediary gathering spaces between them.

Successful gateways not only help people get to their destination, but also feature social, cultural, and civic aspects themselves. Gateways should provide meeting points and gathering spaces for small groups and large crowds. The cultural character of a gateway should relate to the nearby facilities. A gateway should be accessible and open to all people regardless of their final destination.

Squares

Squares are primary places of neighborhood activity that are served by rail or bus transit. Squares feature a concentration of pedestrian movement in a neighborhood and include the spaces around heavily-used transit stations or intersections of major streets and transit lines.

A square should feel like the core public social space in a neighborhood. It should offer room and amenities for social gatherings, crowds, and events as well as public spaces to facilitate brief social encounters between neighbors and friends. A square should tell the story of the surrounding neighborhood and feature unique civic services, art, or design.

Centers

Centers are secondary places of neighborhood activity served by bus or rail transit. Centers include moderately-significant transit stations, and they may accommodate social events or gatherings, but are not always considered to be the nucleus of the neighborhood.

Centers should provide spaces for social gatherings and encourage interaction between neighbors. Centers should feature art or design that reflects the culture of the people who use them. Neighborhoods should feel a sense of ownership over their centers, but they should also feel open and accessible to anyone.

Points

Points are any smaller places where people access the greater mobility system. Points include bus stops along heavily-used routes, Hubway bicycle rental docks, and surface Green Line stations.

Points should support brief social encounters. They should feature art, design or cultural expression that tells a short story about local issues. Points are ubiquitous throughout the mobility system and should feel universal to Boston but unique to other cities.

CORRIDORS

Corridors are linear spaces that pedestrians use to get to or from one place to another. A corridor is a route that many people use consistently and may connect or pass through several places. Corridors include pedestrian spaces like sidewalks, crosswalks, trails, and paths.

Corridors should accomplish the overarching goals of the mobility system: they should be *safe* and *accessible, branded, experiential,* and *resilient*. In addition, corridors have their own set of placemaking goals:

> "POINTS ARE ANY SMALLER PLACES WHERE PEOPLE ACCESS THE GREATER MOBILITY SYSTEM. POINTS INCLUDE BUS STOPS ALONG HEAVILY-USED ROUTES, HUBWAY BICYCLE RENTAL DOCKS, AND SURFACE GREEN LINE STATIONS. "

- **Helpful:** A corridor should help users find their way. It should help users know the time, distance and route to their destination.

- **Informative:** A corridor should help people discover activities in the neighborhood around them. It should feature information about neighborhood news and events and interpret the story of the places it is connected to.

- **Inviting:** Corridors should be inviting. They should make people feel comfortable and safe. They should feature high quality design and be regularly maintained. Corridors must exceed all accessibility standards.

Corridors are sub-divided into the categories below based on their role in Boston.

Greenways

Greenways are pedestrian and bicycle thorough-fares separated from other transportation modes. Greenways are similar to highways, but they are used for non-automobile modes and provide access to distant parts of Boston or the greater region.

Greenways should regularly feature information about a user's location in correlation with the route and distance to nearby landmarks or destinations. Greenways should include elements that tell a story about the corridor. They should be accessible and user-friendly for a variety of non-automobile trans-portation modes including pedestrians, bicycles, roller-blades, long boards, roller-skates, etc.

Transit Collectors

Transit collectors are prominent pedestrian connec-tions to hubs, gateways, squares, and centers. They are the routes on which pedestrians converge as they approach transit stations. Transit collectors include the sidewalks along main streets, pedestrian paths, and open public spaces directly leading to transit station entrances.

Transit collectors should clearly define the route to the transit station. They should make information about the region or neighborhood accessible to users and feature high-quality design that is unique to their neighborhood.

Neighborhood Bridges

Neighborhood bridges are pedestrian connections between neighborhoods; they are the routes that pedestrians would typically take to walk from one part of town to another. On occasion, these can be actual bridges, like the bridge to South Boston near Broadway Station on the MBTA Red Line or to the Seaport from the Downtown Waterfront.

Neighborhood bridges should help users know when they are leaving and entering different neighbor-hoods. They should make the route and distance to nearby neighborhoods apparent. They should provide information about current news and events in the neighborhoods they connect. They should feel safe, inviting and accessible.

Pedestrian Promenades

Pedestrian promenades are corridors that function as destinations. People may visit pedestrian prome-nades in order to walk along them, see other people, view nature, or shop.

Pedestrian promenades should clearly commu-nicate or label the streets and routes that they include. They should share information about local news and events. They should feature high quality, unique design.

EVALUATING THE PUBLIC REALM

THIS SECTION demonstrates how this framework of analysis can be applied to assess the public realm in Boston. The plaza outside of the Roxbury Crossing MBTA station is a center – a non-central place of neighborhood activity that is served by bus or rail transit. The center lies between two neighborhoods, Roxbury and Mission Hill, and people who use the plaza are often transferring between five different transportation modes: bicycling, walking, taking the bus, riding the subway, or driving. This plaza is located across the street from significant civic facilities like Roxbury Community College, the Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center, and the Reggie Lewis Athletic Center. It is within walking distance from other schools and a nearby commercial area, and the Southwest Corridor Park passes directly through this plaza. Columbus Avenue, Tremont Street and Malcolm X Boulevard generate high amounts of surrounding vehicle traffic.

As a center, the plaza should fit the social, cultural, and civic needs identified in this framework by providing spaces for small-scale social gathering and encouraging interaction between the different people using the space; featuring art or design that reflects the different cultures of the people who use it and tells the story of the neighborhoods nearby; and creating a sense of ownership over the public space via its open and accessible nature.

The primary social elements of the public space are its benches and the space within bus shelters. While providing a resting place for pedestrians, the benches face away from each other and are spaced far apart; with this organization, they do not encourage social interaction. The bus shelters can motivate people to gather close to each other, especially in inclement weather, but they do not necessarily encourage people to interact with each other. The general landscape of this plaza does little to celebrate the diverse cultures that use the space. There is one inconspicuous monument in the space, but no

FIGURE 3: The site analysis evaluates the area outside the MBTA Roxbury Crossing Station.
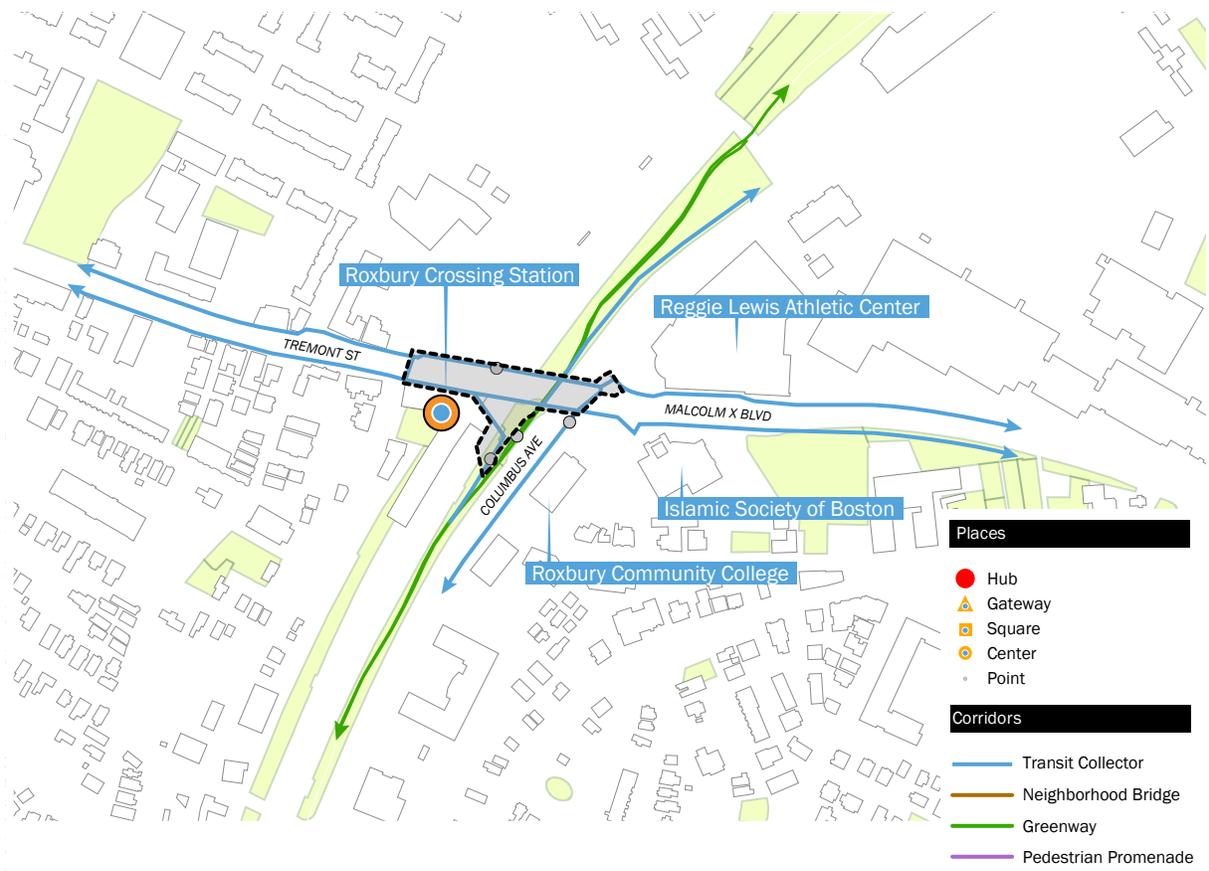
interpretive elements reflect the contemporary users of Roxbury Crossing. The plaza is civic in that it is open to the public, but it does not always feel open to everyone at the same time; the existing spatial design leads to chaotic and potentially dangerous encounters between pedestrians, bus riders, and cyclists using the Southwest Corridor path. While some design elements of this public space, like its granite posts and informational signs, link its character to the rest of the Southwest Corridor Park, the plaza is otherwise generic in design and does not feel unique to the neighborhood.

Given this evaluation, any new intervention in the Roxbury Crossing plaza should focus on civic programming and physical improvements that would promote social interaction. New design features should reflect the culture of the people and neighborhoods that use the place. This location would tremendously benefit from wayfinding elements to articulate the way in which bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit-riders navigate the space.

STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING THE PUBLIC REALM

How do we make our mobility spaces better places? There are countless examples of improvements and projects that Boston and other cities around the world have undertaken in order to enhance the public space of mobility systems. The following tables showcase a selection of placemaking strategies that have been most success in turning mobility spaces into fun and thriving public places.

These projects range from top-down, government-funded infrastructural projects to bottom-up, neighborhood-driven art projects. Depending on the site and its regional significance, it may be more appropriate for the City (or even State or Federal Agencies) to guide implementation of a project. However, some spaces are more significant to the neighborhood that uses them than the region as a whole, and their improvement could be implemented by neighborhood-

FIGURE 4: Diagram identifies spatial conditions negatively impacting the user experience in Roxbury Crossing.
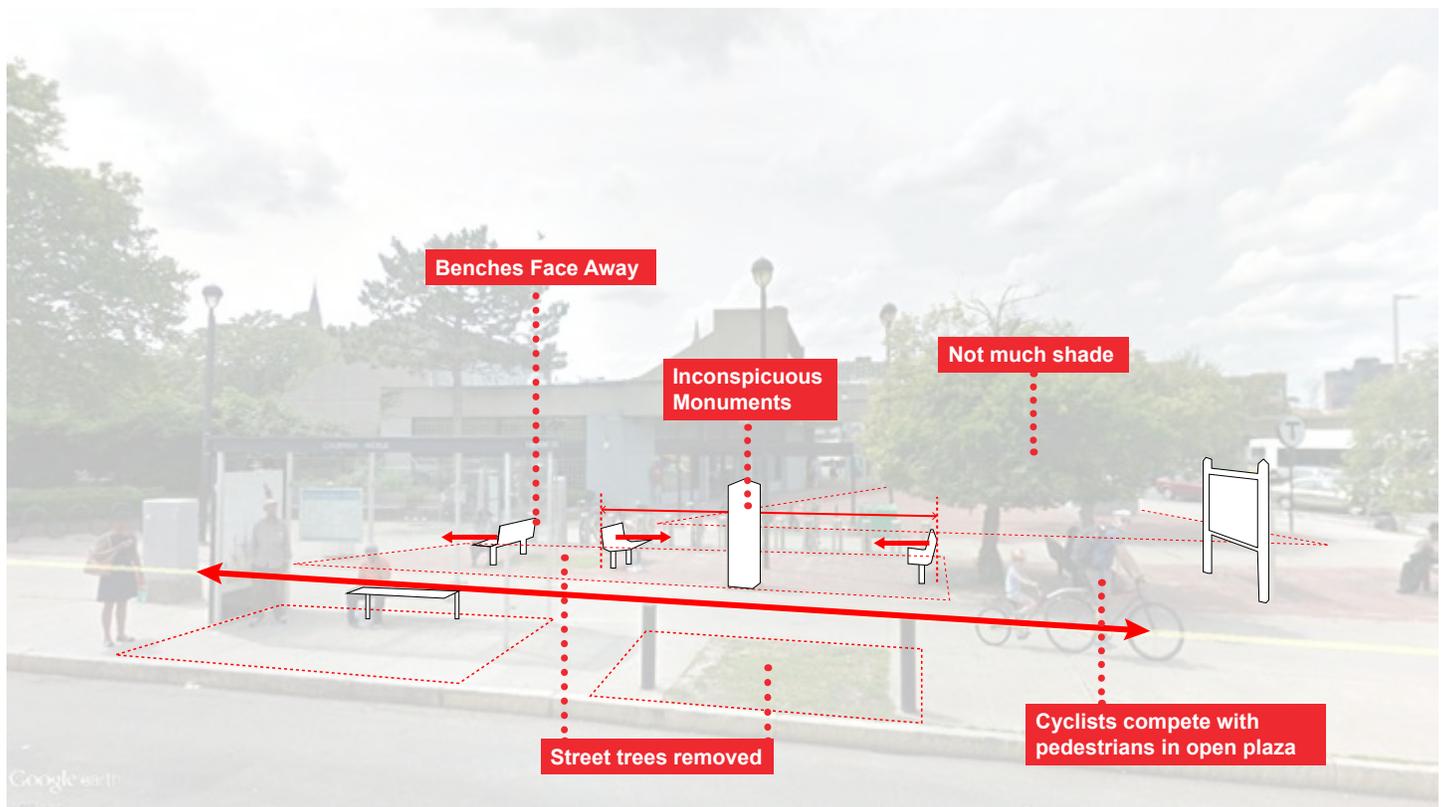
based, grassroots organizations or local artists and designers. Some interventions may cost more or less to install and maintain, which may in turn inform which organization should implement them.

The types of interventions presented here are categorized as *passive*, *interactive*, or *temporal*. Passive interventions are permanent adjustments to the built environment that change how people physically move through spaces, including sidewalk expansions, conversion of roadway into pedestrian space, or static pieces of public art. Interactive interventions, like fountains, exercise facilities, push-button heat lamps, and collaborative digital art, are additions to the built environment that encourage social activity or play. Temporal interventions are projects that only exist temporarily, including events, performances and farmer's markets.

"THERE ARE COUNTLESS EXAMPLES OF IMPROVEMENTS AND PROJECTS THAT BOSTON AND OTHER CITIES AROUND THE WORLD HAVE UNDERTAKEN IN ORDER TO ENHANCE THE PUBLIC SPACE OF MOBILITY SYSTEMS."

TABLE 2: Passive

STRATEGIES	PLACEMAKING GOALS						RELATIVE COST	
	Social	Cultural	Civic	Helpful	Informative	Inviting	Install	Maintain
New public places (e.g. square, community "room")	●	●	●				$$$	$$
Converted roadways (e.g. Woonerfs)	●						$$$	$$
Retrofitted public spaces (e.g. plaza, amphitheater, pavilion)	●	●	●				$$$	$$$
Public art (e.g. murals, sculptures)		●			●		$$$	$
Streetscape (e.g. landscaping, furniture, trees, lighting)	●	●	●	●		●	$$	$$
Public realm amenities (e.g. drinking fountains, signage)				●	●	●	$$	$$
Transit amenities (e.g. well-designed shelters, seating, etc.)	●	●		●		●	$$	$$
Transit branding/ marketing			●	●	●	●	$$$	$
New activity centers (land use) near hubs, nodes	●	●	●			●	$$$	$$$
Surface re-designed infrastructure (e.g. painted walks)	●	●	●	●	●	●	$$$	$$
Structurally re-designed infrastructure (e.g. bumpouts)				●		●	$$$	$

Dots indicate the placemaking goals accomplished by the strategy.

"Faces of Dudley" mural in Roxbury.

TABLE 3: Interactive

STRATEGIES	PLACEMAKING GOALS						RELATIVE COST	
	Social	Cultural	Civic	Helpful	Informative	Inviting	Install	Maintain
Interactive art (musical installation, digital screens, etc.)	●	●	●			●	$$	$$
Real time information (transit schedule, tweet-board, etc.)	●	●	●	●	●	●	$$$	$$
Interactive fountains	●		●				$$$	$$$
"Third place" retail (e.g. news stand, café)	●	●	●				$$$	$
Recreation (e.g. workout stations, playgrounds)	●		●			●	$$	$
Digitally interactive 2D/"paper" signage (e.g. QR codes)	●	●		●	●	●	$$$	$
Interactive amenities (moveable chairs, buttons, etc.)	●	●		●		●	$$$	$$
Public games (e.g. crosswalk "pong", chess tables)	●	●				●	$$	$

Dots indicate the placemaking goals accomplished by the strategy.

Street Pianos in Boston.

TABLE 4: Temporal

STRATEGIES	PLACEMAKING GOALS						RELATIVE COST	
	Social	Cultural	Civic	Helpful	Informative	Inviting	Install	Maintain
Pop-up public spaces (e.g. parklets, temporary art)	●	●	●				$	$
One-time community events (e.g. festivals, concerts)	●	●	●				$	$
Regularly scheduled open programming (e.g. market)	●	●	●				$	$
Group-sponsored events (e.g. yoga, potlucks, bike rides)	●	●	●				$	$
Seasonal installations (e.g. holiday exhibits)	●	●			●	●	$$	$
Mobile place-making (e.g. art trucks)	●	●				●	$	$
Temporary service location (e.g. weekly CSA pick-up)	●					●	$	$
Small-scale/temporary wayfinding	●	●		●	●	●	$	$

Dots indicate the placemaking goals accomplished by the strategy.

Playway in Coleman Street.

> **"BOSTON HAS BEEN HOME TO MANY SUCCESSFUL PLACE-MAKING INITIATIVES, LED BY BOTH GOVERN-MENT AGENCIES AND INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY GROUPS. "**

SMALL INTERVENTIONS LEAD TO BIG CHANGES

American cities, including Boston, have entered a new era of public space. Rather than conceiving public realm improvements as large capital investments, cities are resorting to tactical interventions to improve and expand its network of public spaces. Known as placemaking, these strategies are expressions of *urban acupuncture*. They start as small, strategic interferences and over time grow incrementally into larger infrastructural projects. Boston is no stranger to this trend. For the past few years, the city has been home to many successful placemaking initiatives, led by both government agencies and independent community groups.

The following section provides examples of how the placemaking strategies presented have been successfully implemented in Boston. It demonstrates the importance of developing new systematic ways to channel this enthusiasm and potential.

Efforts led by the City of Boston

- The Boston Transportation Department has developed neighborhood playways, installed parklets, and worked to improve the public realm in squares like Audubon Circle and Central Square.

- Boston's Complete Streets provides guidelines for enhancing streets and sidewalks for pedestrians and cyclists.

- Boston's Public Works Department is redesigning Edward Everette Square, Upham's Corner, and North Square to give them neighborhood-focused identities.

- Boston Bikes advocates for and supports artistic bicycle racks throughout the city.

- The Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics has launched their second Public Space Invitational. Winners of the first round built an interactive musical installation in bridges, lit up a neighborhood park and brought portable libraries to the Greenway.

- An interagency partnership established a food truck program, which has brought more people outside to eat lunch and socialize.

- The City of Boston and the Boston Society of Architects launched an ideas competition in the spring of 2016 to redesign the Northern Avenue Bridge into a destination.

- On August 8th, the Office of Neighborhood Services led Open Newbury Street. This initiative temporarily eliminated vehicular traffic from a segment of Newbury Street, reclaiming the roadway for people.

Efforts led by Community Organizations

- A coalition of advocacy and non-profit groups, in partnership with the City, hosted a total of six "Circle the City" events that closed streets to cars in order to open them to programming for people walking, biking and skating.

- The Design Museum has added benches to the Fort Point Channel, installed "pattern walk" by wrapping stark concreted pillars of commercial buildings, and is developing an Urban Innovation Gallery under the I-93 Overpass.

- Washington Gateway Main Streets, a collaborator of the Design Musem, is developing strategies for improving placemaking on Washington Street with the Congress for the New Urbanism New England's "DoTank."

- Neighborhood-based arts and music events including Porchfest and Illuminus have brought communities together around a shared public space experience in Boston's streets.

- The Rose Kennedy Greenway has used programming and art installations to bring life to the heart of Downtown Boston. The Fairmount/Indigo Line CDC Collaborative worked with artists to improve commuter rail stations and the public realm around the MBTA Fairmount commuter rail line.

- The South End Food Trucks transform surface parking lots in SOWA into food destinations.

- The UpTruck is a mobile arts lab created to engage residents on the streets of the Uphams Corner community.

ENVISIONING A VIBRANT PUBLIC REALM

Boston faces a number of social, economic, and environmental forces that will shape its future public realm. Within Boston's increasingly fragmented neighborhoods, the loss of organic community calls for a public realm that creates a new generation of "third places," or places distinct from home or work. In addition, competition between Boston and our peer cities for increasingly scarce knowledge workers–the determinant natural resource for our growing innovation economy–calls for a public realm that constantly experiments with new ways to promote walkable and vibrant communities.

New investment in mobility and the public realm should strive to harness these forces in order to promote broad-based community benefit. Boston needs a public realm that invites people to interact, get to know each other, and share ideas as a community across multiples lines of division. A Guide to Placemaking for Mobility aims to equip its reader with a framework of analysis to think critically about the public spaces that comprised our transportation network and reimagine ways to improve them. This effort supports the overarching goal of the Public Realm Planning Study for Go Boston 2030, which is to enhance the shared, public spaces that people use to get from one place to another in Boston.

PHOTO CREDITS

A GUIDE TO PLACEMAKING

FOR MOBILITY