



# RINDGE NEIGHBORHOOD

Open Space Vision for Improved Connectivity

## Prepared for



### **Cambridge Redevelopment Authority**

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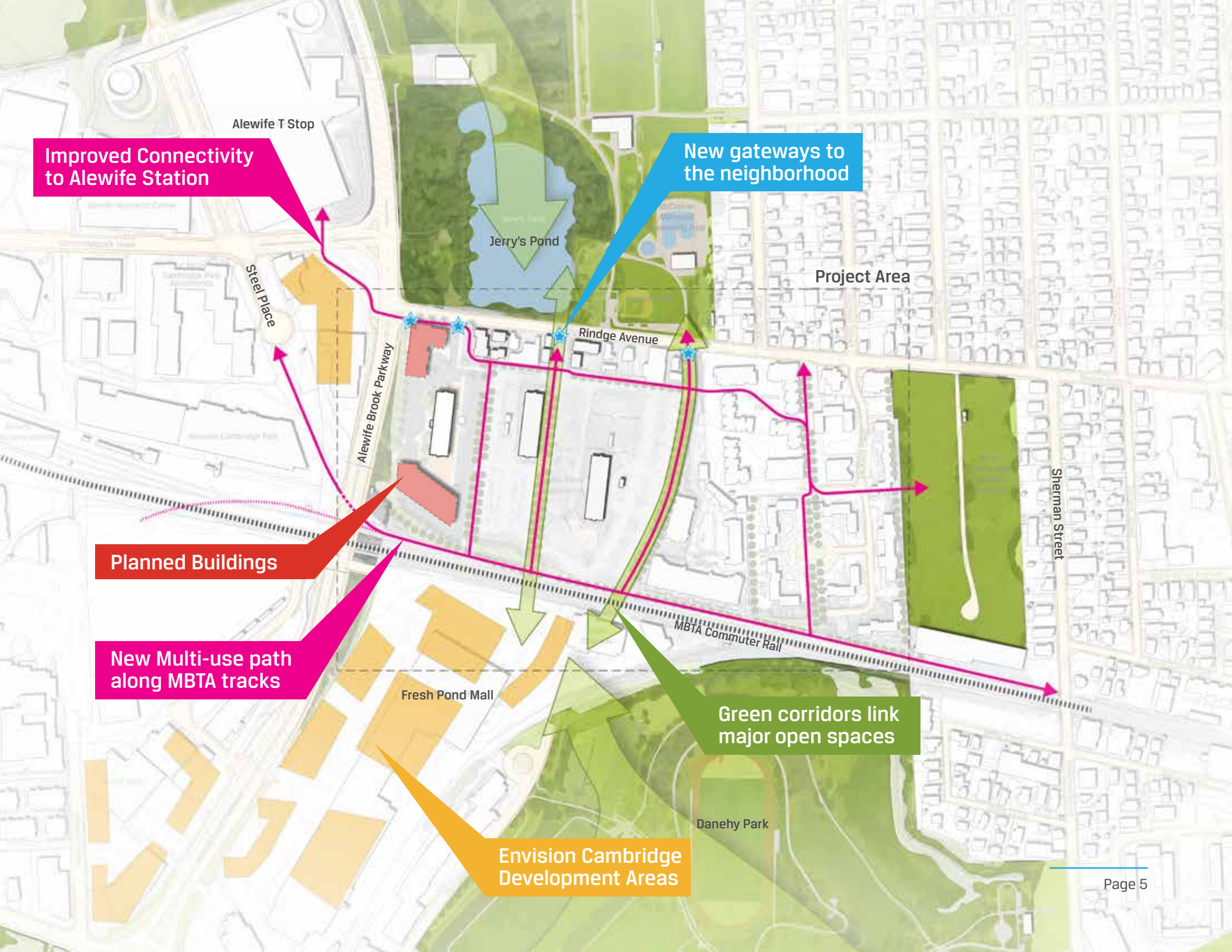
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# 1. A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Rindge Avenue neighborhood, located in North Cambridge, is a largely affordable residential community positioned between Rindge Avenue, Alewife Brook Parkway, the North Cambridge Cemetery, and the Fitchburg Commuter Railroad. Over the last 15 years, the area surrounding the Rindge Avenue neighborhood has seen immense change, including significant commercial and residential development, and improvements to open spaces such as Danehy Park, Russell Field, and Fresh Pond. Yet, while nearby to these resources, the community lacks convenient access to these important amenities. What is missing are better connections within the neighborhood and to the larger Alewife district. This needs to change.

The Rindge Avenue community deserves an exceptional public realm, one in which moving between places is easy, at all times of day and for people of all ages and mobilities. While Alewife Brook Parkway/Route 2 will continue to serve as a primary artery for the region for a long time to come, and the MBTA commuter tracks represent a significant physical barrier, there are improvements that can be made to pathways and street intersections in the near term that will make a big difference to foster the growth of a network. Investment in just a few concentrated areas will also signal that the distance between the area's assets are closer than they appear. Building on prior planning efforts, this study provides a vision, conceptual approach, and near and short term recommendations, to enhance connectivity within the neighborhood to better connect residents to the natural landscape and local amenities nearby.



Alewife T Stop

Improved Connectivity to Alewife Station

New gateways to the neighborhood

Jerry's Pond

Project Area

Steel Place

Rindge Avenue

Alewife Brook Parkway

Sherman Street

Planned Buildings

New Multi-use path along MBTA tracks

Green corridors link major open spaces

Fresh Pond Mall

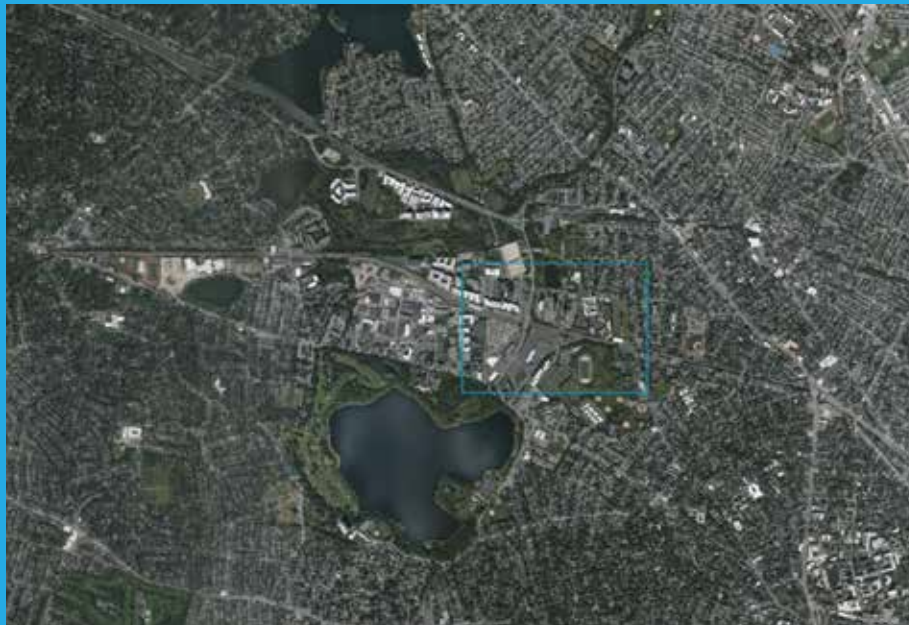
MBTA Commuter Rail

Envision Cambridge Development Areas

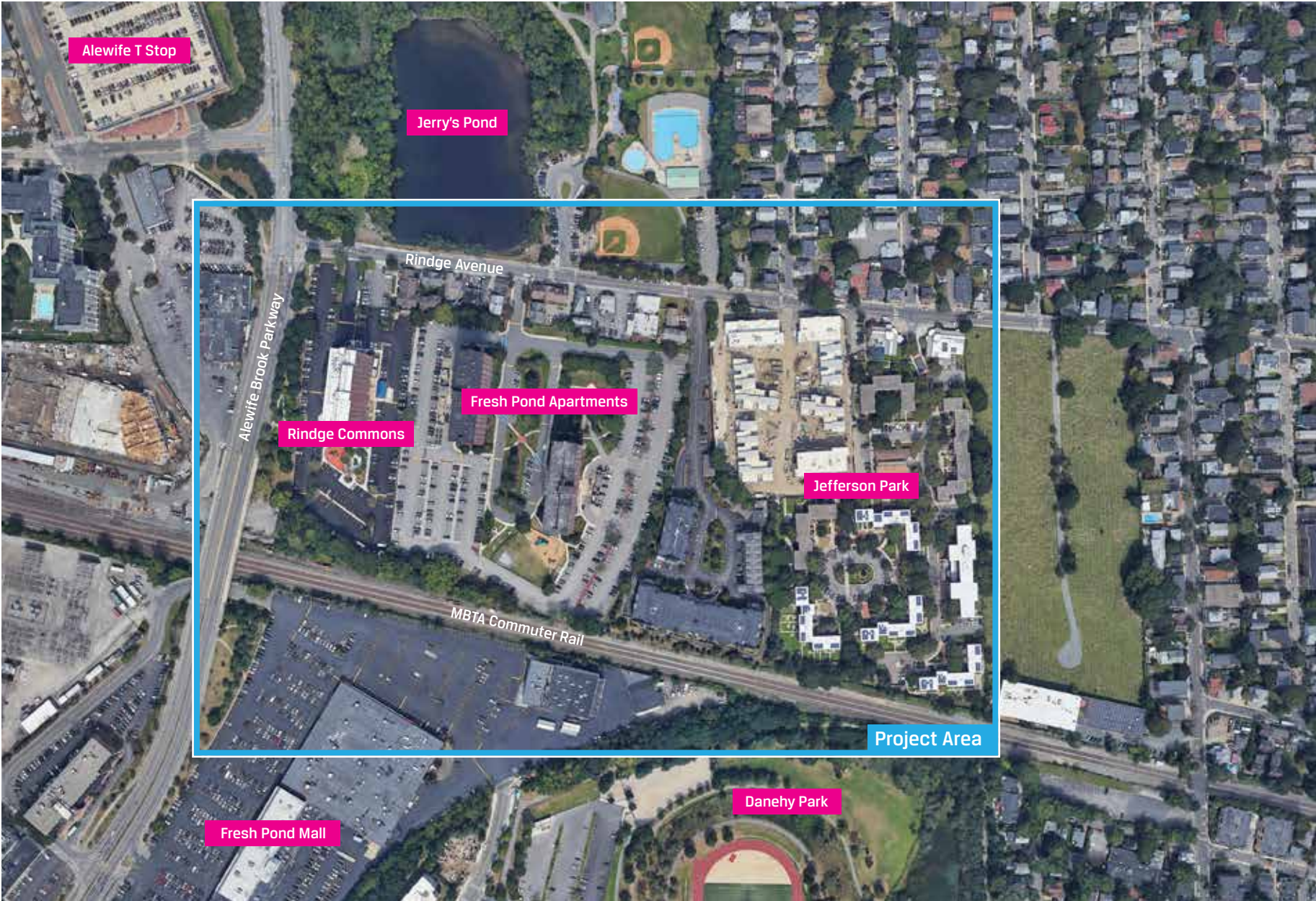
Danehy Park

## 2. EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS

While geographically proximate to important community resources, including the Alewife T-Station, Russell Field and Pool, the Fresh Pond Shopping Center, and Danehy Park, the Rindge Avenue neighborhood lacks direct and convenient access to these amenities. Instead, the neighborhood exemplifies an area where physical barriers - while providing a measure of privacy and security - prevent the movement of people to allow them to take advantage of local amenities. Instead, how people walk and bike around the area is based more on negotiating the barriers between destinations (and avoiding cars) than a coherent, legible and connected network.



*The goal of this project is to establish an open space plan that improves connectivity to better connect the Rindge Avenue community to nearby natural and local amenities.*

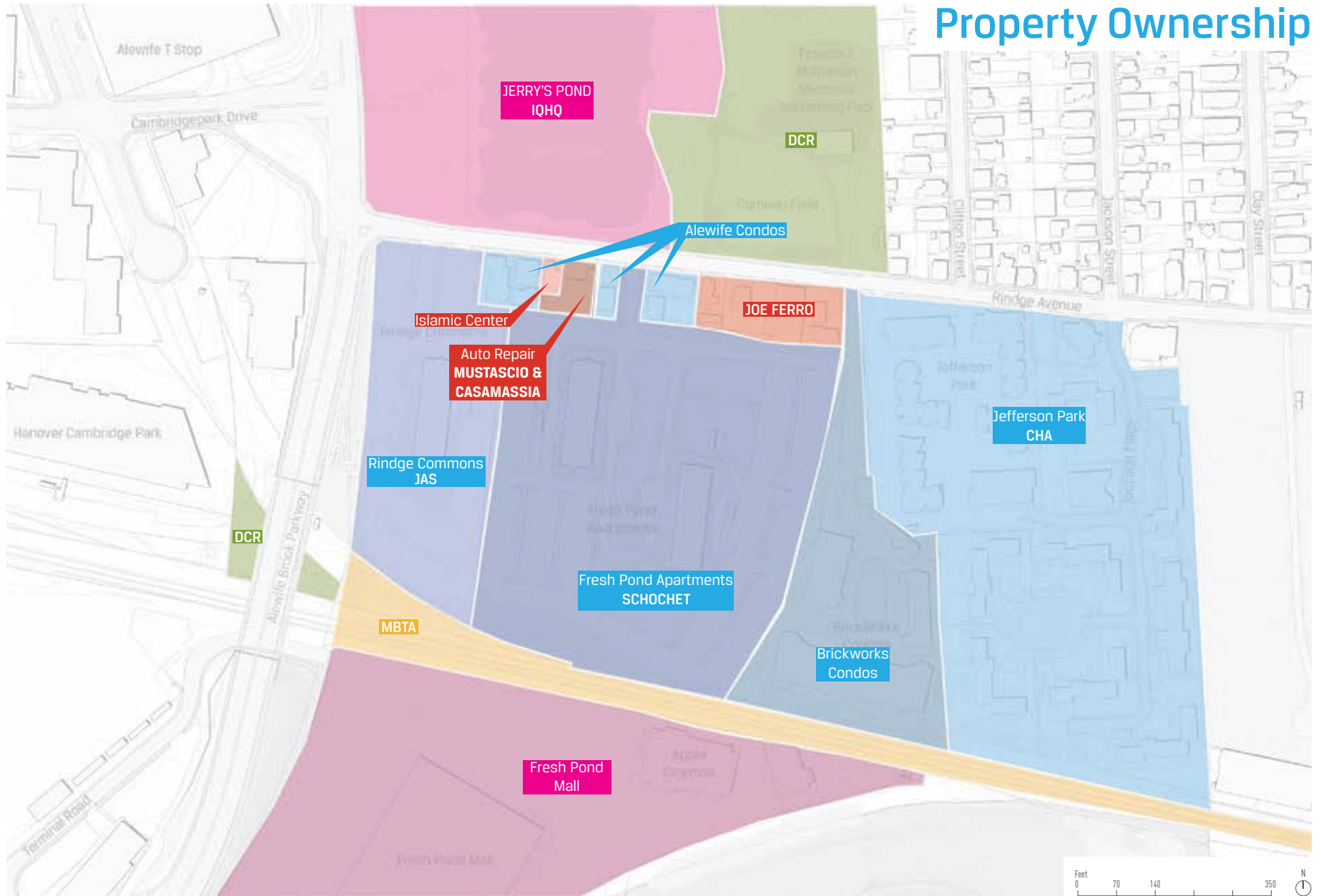


# Existing Conditions





# Property Ownership



# Connectivity

## Barriers



# Connectivity

## Barriers

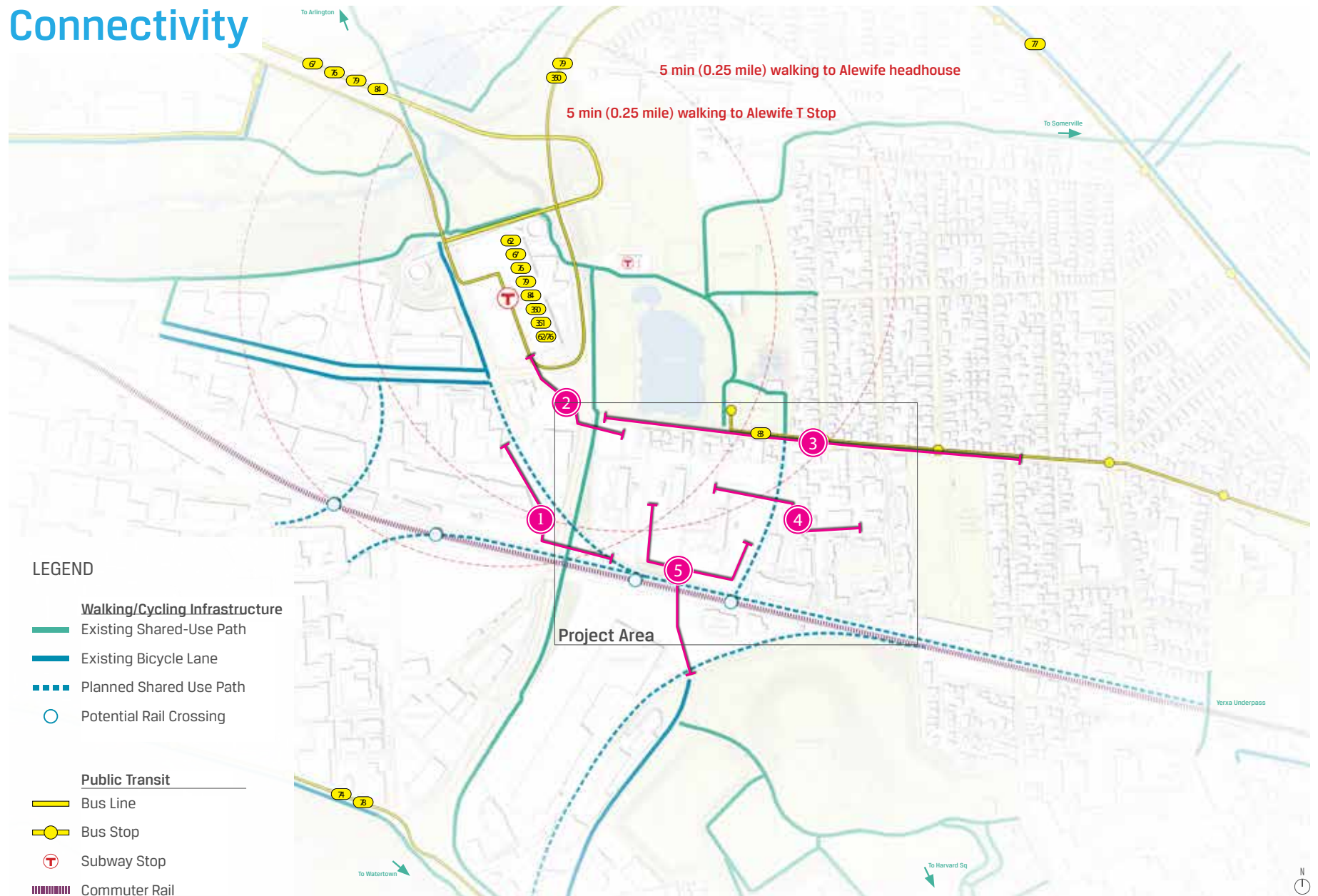


Pedestrian connection to Alewife T Stop



View from Fresh Pond Mall towards project area

# Connectivity



## Issues

- 1 **ALEWIFE BROOK PARKWAY UNDERPASS**
  - Missing connection between Cambridge Park developments and Rindge Neighborhood
  - Underutilized DCR parcel could provide a potential link under Alewife Brook Parkway
- 2 **ALEWIFE RED LINE T STOP**
  - Insufficient connection from project area to Alewife T Stop
  - Long waiting times at pedestrian signal along Alewife Brook Parkway, cracked sidewalks, and unsafe crossing at Cambridge Park Drive (missing median, faded markings)
- 3 **RINDGE AVENUE**
  - Missing bike lane serves as a barrier to Jerry's Pond due to insufficient crossings
- 4 **RINDGE NEIGHBORHOOD**
  - Fences compromise connectivity between the residential towers and adjacent properties
- 5 **FRESH POND MALL / DANEHY PARK**
  - Narrow existing sidewalk along Alewife Brook Parkway
  - No bike + ped crossing for 2,300 feet between Alewife Brook Parkway and Sherman Street

## Prior planning efforts

### Envision Alewife District Plan 2019 Conceptual Street Plan, *p.127*



### Cambridge Bicycle Plan 2015 Bicycle Network Vision, *p.91*



# Open Space



Russell Field



Francis J. McCrehan Memorial Swimming and Splash Deck



Danehy Park



Magnolia Park

# Open Space



Fresh Pond

# Open Space





## Open Spaces

### 1 ALEWIFE BROOK RESERVATION

- Important recreation area along Alewife Brook that is home to dense wooded areas, nature trails, and wetlands
- Includes Fitchburg Cutoff Path that connects Alewife with Belmont

### 2 MAGNOLIA PARK & THORNDIKE PARK

- Park featuring a playground, picnic tables community garden, half court basketball and soccer/lacrosse field
- Easily accessible right off the Minuteman Bike Path

### 3 RUSSELL FIELD + FRANCIS J. MCCREHAN POOL

- Russell Field sits within a small park that contains two Little League fields and a soccer field
- The Francis J. McCrehan Memorial Swimming Pool and Splash Deck is one of only a few public pools in Cambridge and a valuable asset to the community

### 4 JERRY'S POND

- Privately owned by IQHQ
- Local residents and advocacy groups are trying to make this site available to the public again

### 5 DANEHY PARK

- 50-acre recreational facility built on the site of former city landfill
- Park offers walking trails, multiple playgrounds, picnic areas, and recreational fields

### 6 FRESH POND RESERVATION

- Consists of a 162-acre open space surrounding a 155-acre Fresh Pond Reservoir
- Fresh Pond Reservoir is a vital part of the drinking water supply system for the City of Cambridge

## Prior planning efforts

### Envision Cambridge 2019

Open Space Network, p.52



### Alewife District Plan 2019



### Urban Forest Master Plan 2019

Public Meeting #3:, p.22



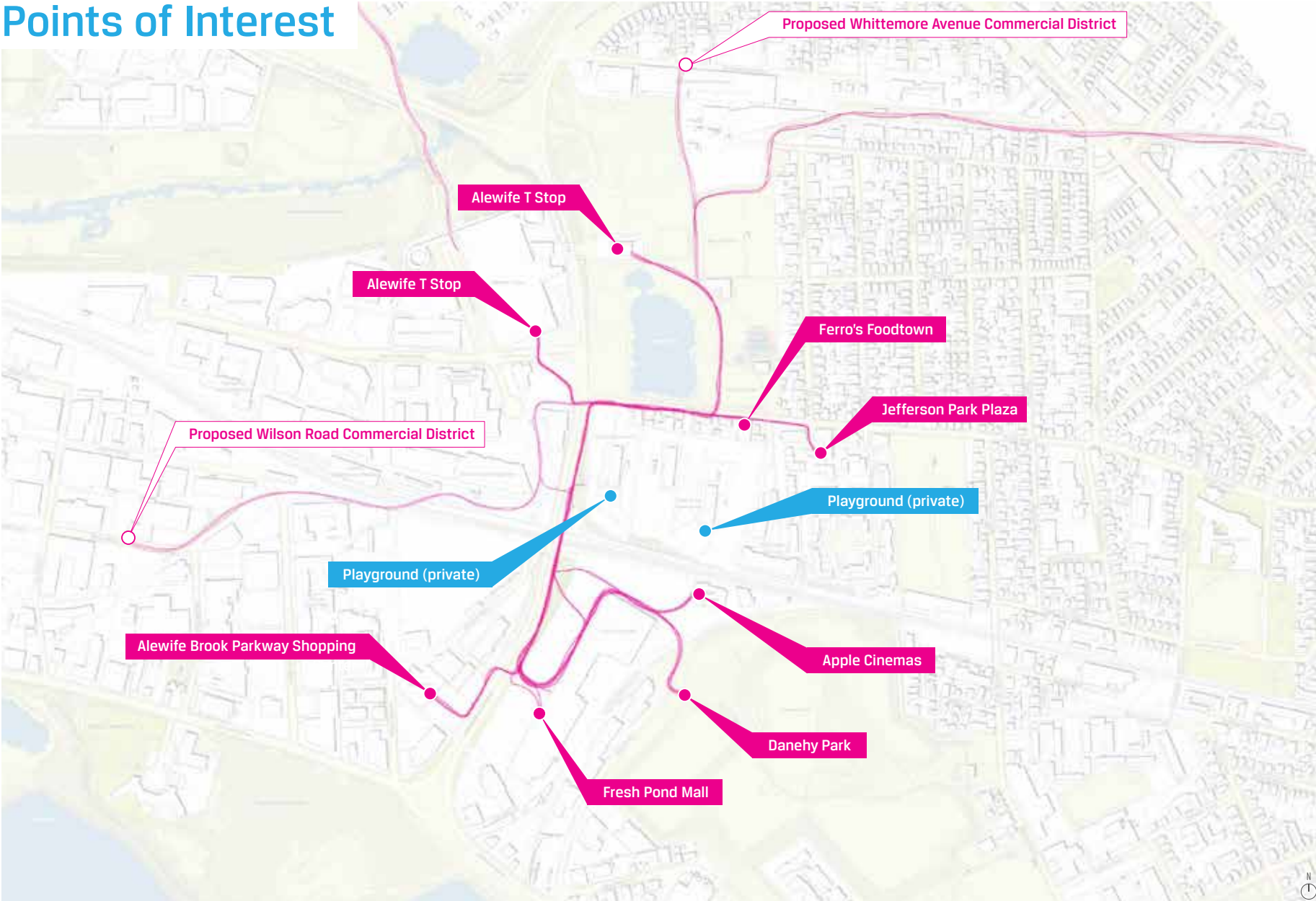
# Points of Interest



# Points of Interest



# Points of Interest



## **Prior planning efforts**

### **Alewife District Plan**

#### **Wilson Road**

##### **Subdistrict Recommendations**

*"Create a 'Main Street' along Wilson Road as the civic center of the light industrial area to accommodate active ground floor uses, including showrooms for fabrication spaces."*

**p.107**

##### **Economic Recommendations**

*"Target light industrial businesses with a strong retail component on Wilson Road."*

**p.150**

##### **Subdistrict Development Objectives**

*"Promote neighborhood supporting retail along Concord Avenue and Wilson Road."*

**p.161**

### **Alewife District Plan**

#### **Whittemore Avenue**

##### **Subdistrict Recommendations**

*"Mark the western gateway into the city through a landmark commercial development located at the terminus of the Concord Turnpike."*

**p.107**

##### **Whittemore Avenue Goals**

*"Encourage commercial use along Alewife Brook Parkway."*

**p.97**

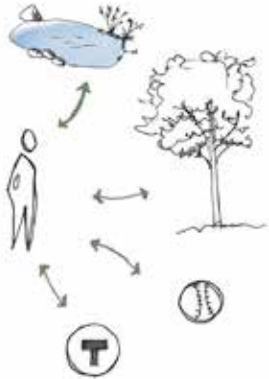
### 3. CONCEPTUAL APPROACH



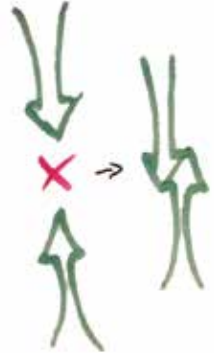
*The concept focuses on enhanced pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure throughout the neighborhood, a continuous open space network and a robust urban design framework that highlights existing assets and anticipates future development.*

# Urban Design Diagrams

1. Connecting people



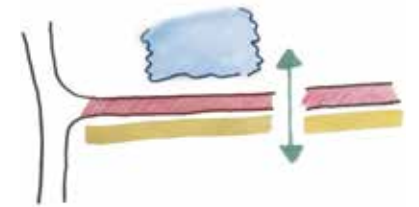
2. Link existing open spaces into a network



3. Enhance pedestrian and bicycle connections



4. Improve Rindge Avenue streetscape



5. Increase connections between properties



6. Form gateways to the neighborhood



7. Anticipate a (future) rail crossing



8. Prepare for changes over time



# 1. Link existing open spaces into a network





## 2. Enhance pedestrian and bicycle connections



Pedestrian connection to Alewife T Stop

### 3. Improve Rindge Avenue streetscape



## 4. Increase connections between properties



## 5. Form gateways to the neighborhood



Low density along Rindge Avenue

# 6. Anticipate a (future) rail crossing



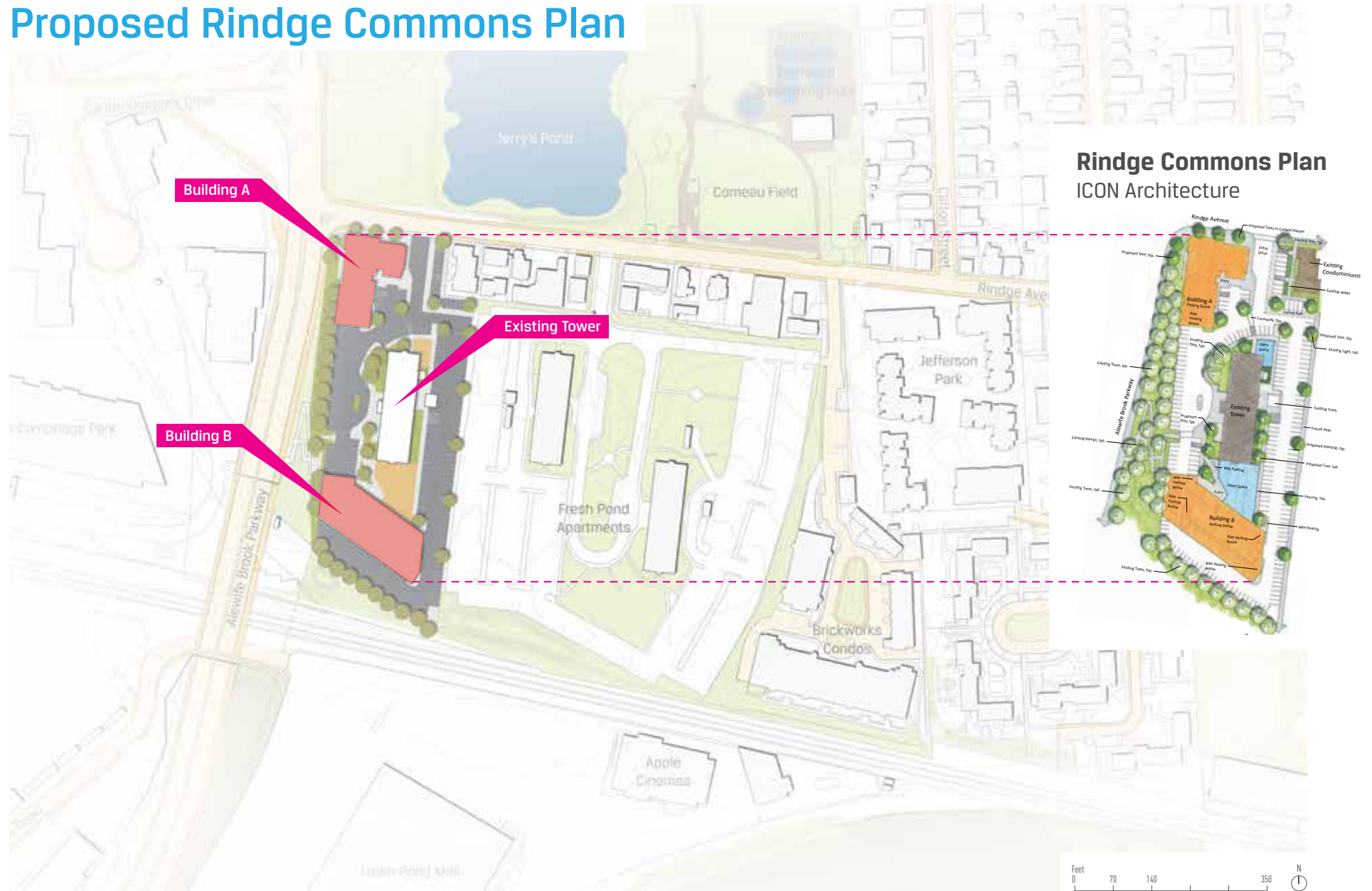
View from Fresh Pond Mall towards project area

## 7. Prepare for mobility changes over time



Surface parking surrounding the buildings

# Proposed Rindge Commons Plan



# Connectivity

## North Cambridge Railroad Safety Project Ped + Bike Facilities, 1999



**Alewife District Plan**  
Ped + Bike Bridge, p.133





# Open Space



Example image



Community Path, Somerville

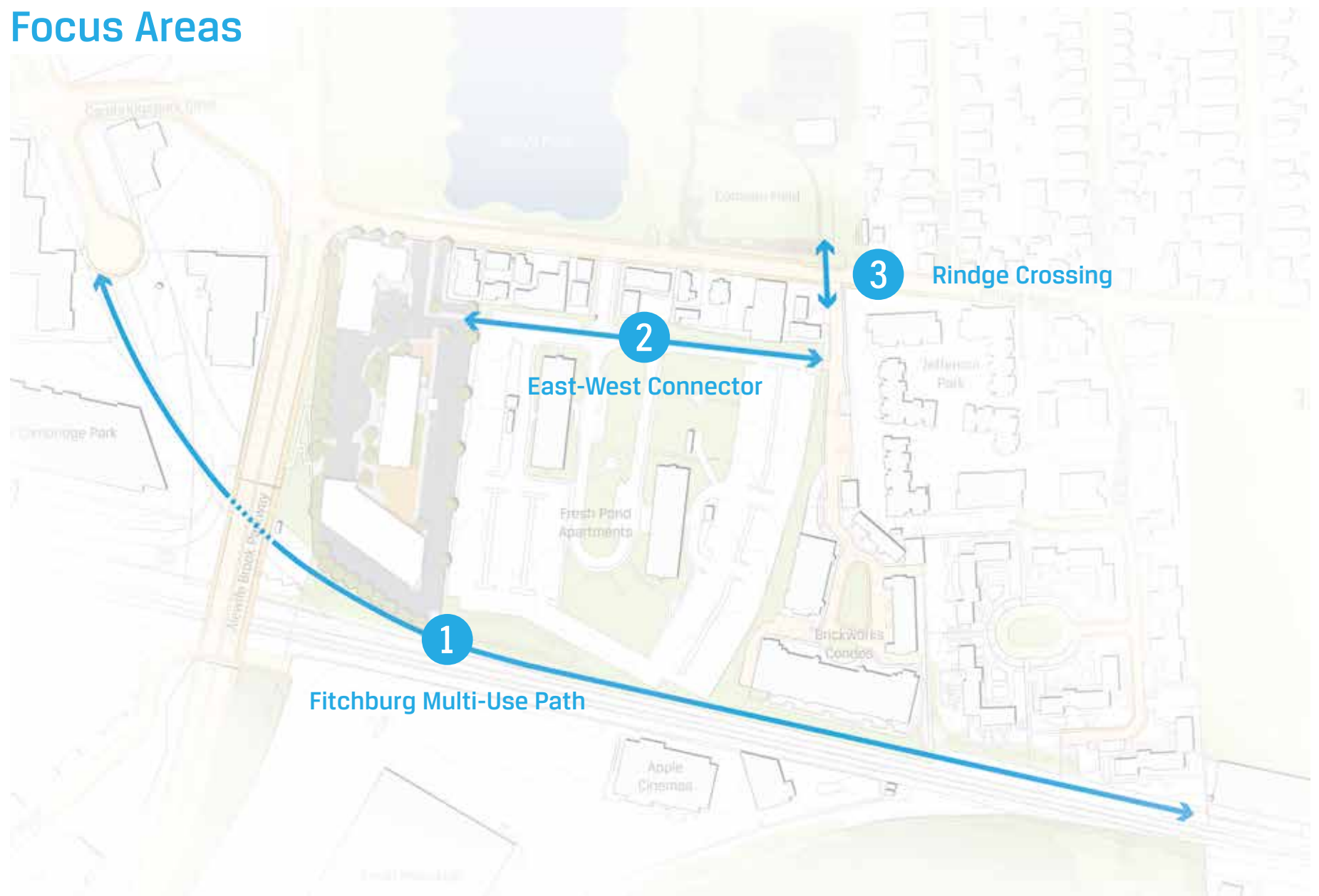
# Potential Block Structure



## 4. FOCUS AREAS

*Three Focus Areas in particular represent opportunities to form a more coherent network and overcome some of the physical barriers.*

# Focus Areas



# 1 Fitchburg Multi-Use Path



Existing conditions along  
Commuter Rail tracks



# 1 Fitchburg Multi-Use Path

Existing conditions between Just-a-Start property and Commuter Rail tracks



# 1 Fitchburg Multi-Use Path

Existing conditions at Alewife Brook Parkway underpass and at the end of Steel Place



## 2 East-West Connector

Existing conditions on the Fresh Pond Apartment site





### 3 Rindge Crossing



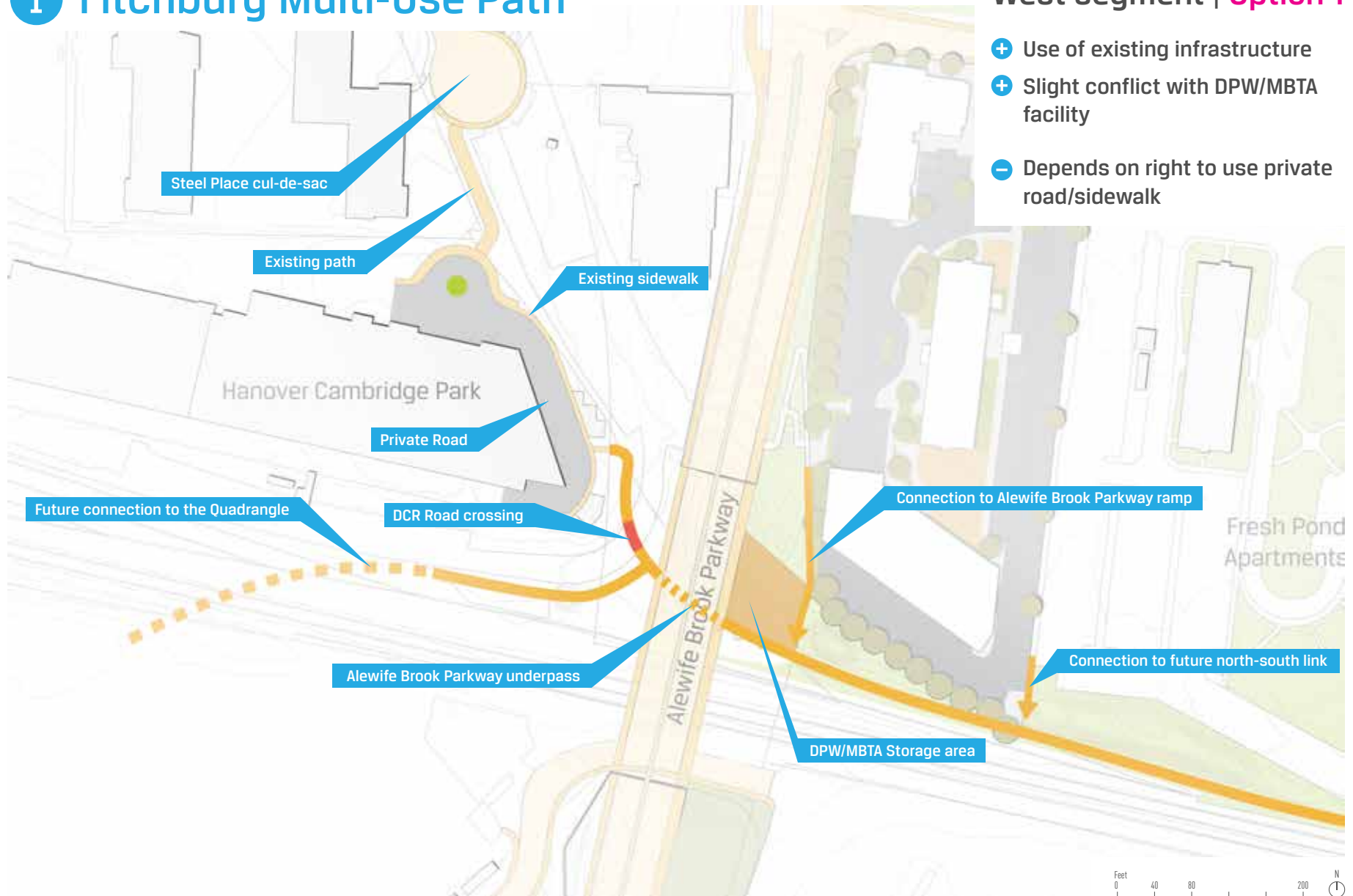
Existing conditions along Rindge Avenue



# 1 Fitchburg Multi-Use Path

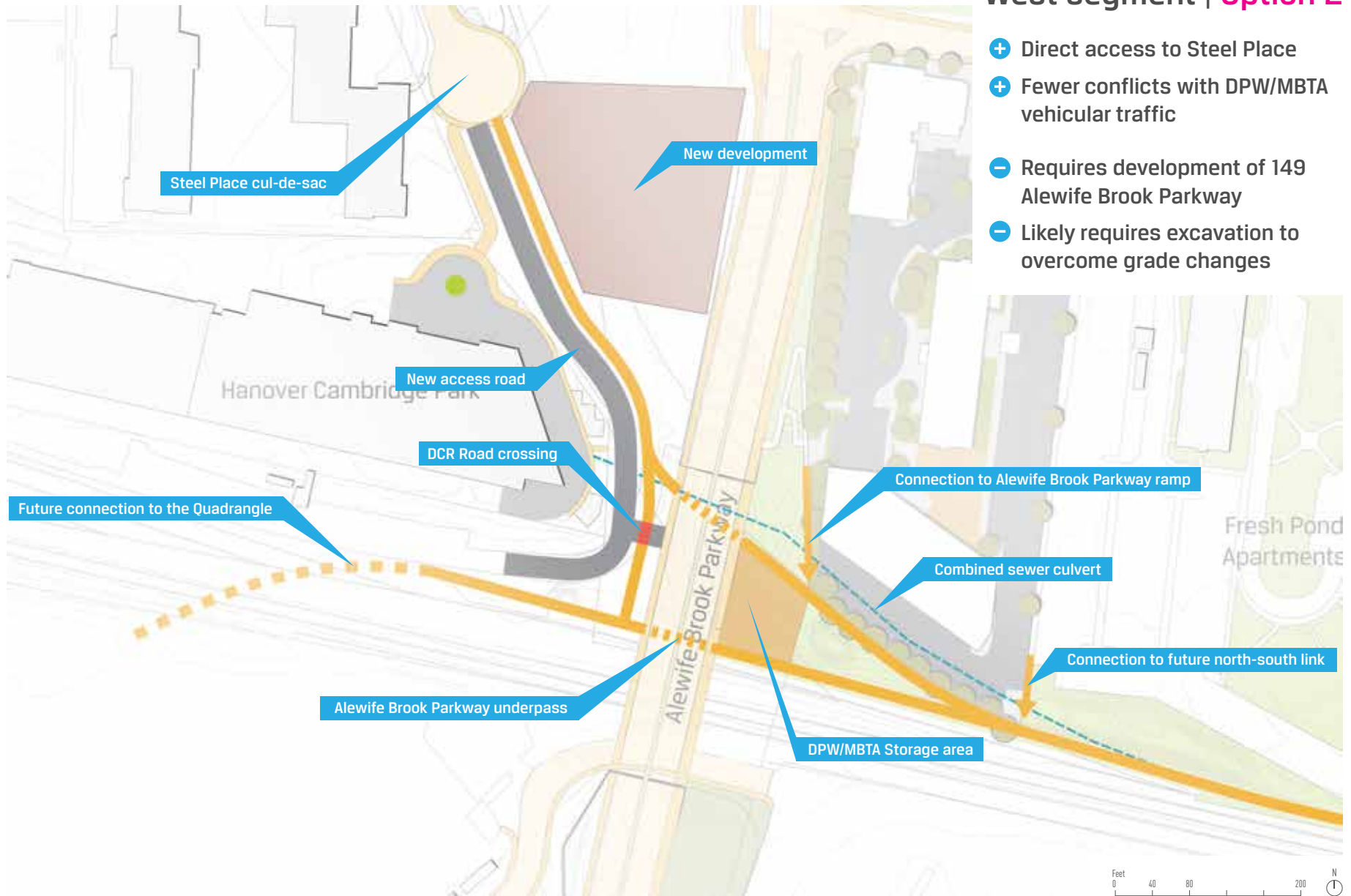
## West segment | Option 1

- + Use of existing infrastructure
- + Slight conflict with DPW/MBTA facility
- Depends on right to use private road/sidewalk



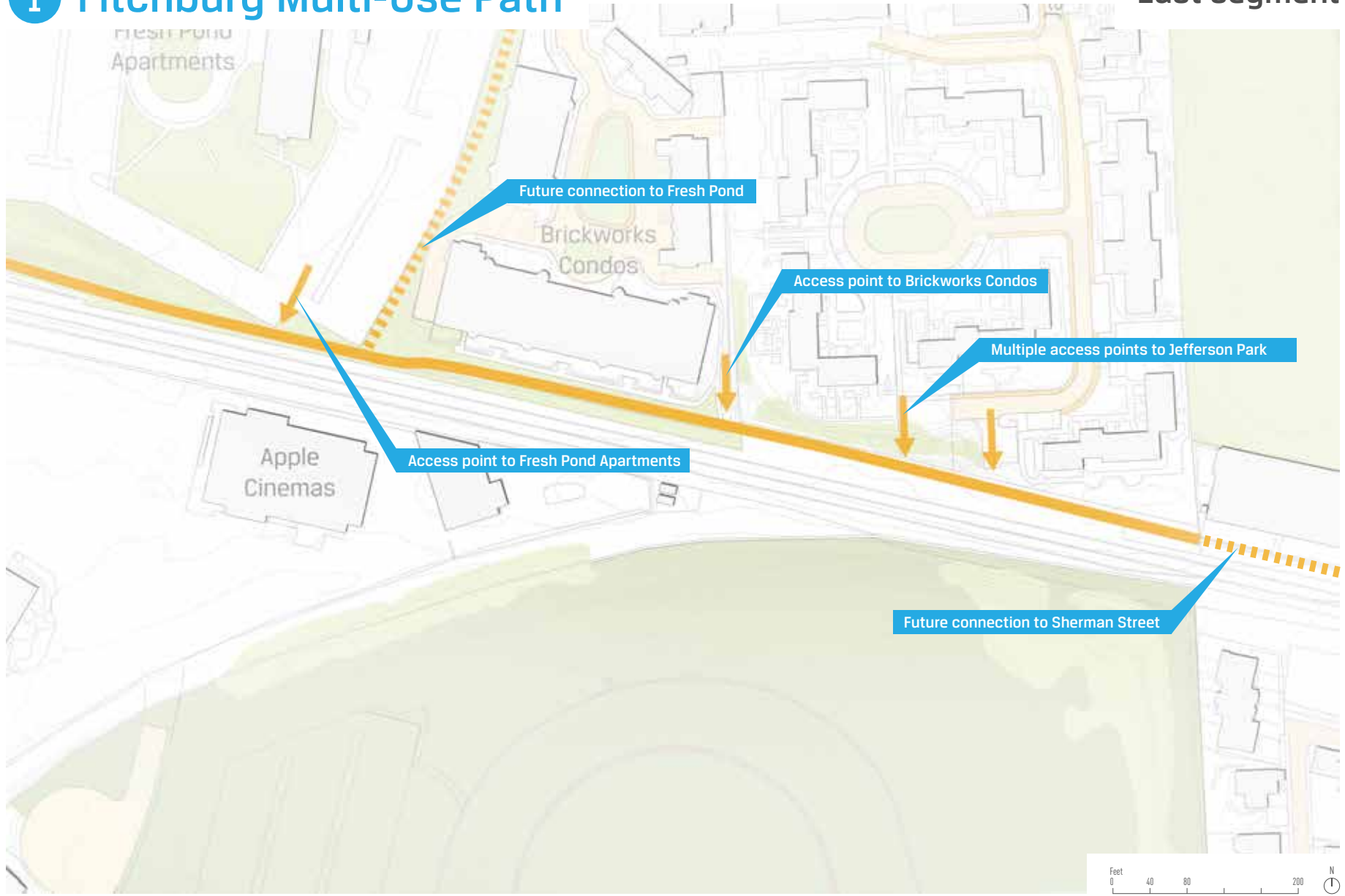
## West segment | Option 2

- + Direct access to Steel Place
- + Fewer conflicts with DPW/MBTA vehicular traffic
- Requires development of 149 Alewife Brook Parkway
- Likely requires excavation to overcome grade changes



# 1 Fitchburg Multi-Use Path

East segment



# 1 Fitchburg Multi-Use Path



Existing conditions



Commuter Rail tracks

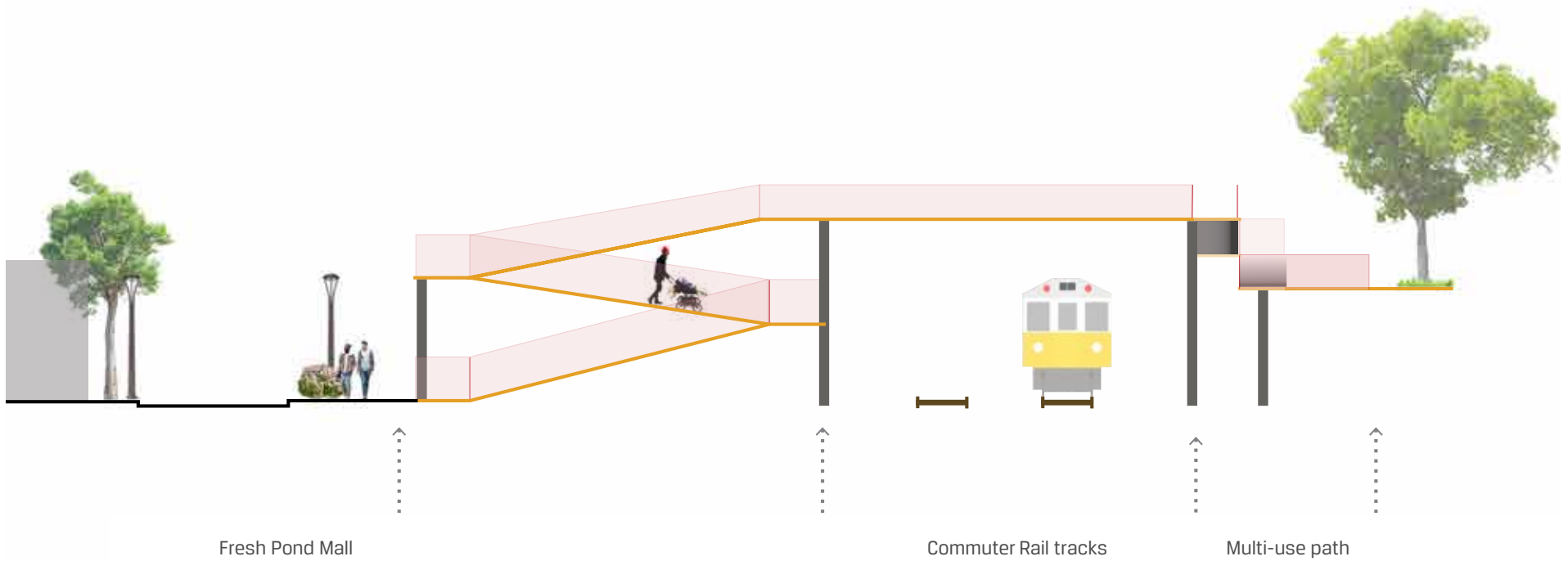
12' Multi-use path

Surface parking

# 1 Fitchburg Multi-Use Path



Existing conditions





Multi-use paths link neighborhoods and provide incentives for a healthy lifestyle

# 1 Fitchburg Multi-Use Path



Multi-use paths become neighborhood asset over time



Multi-use paths serve as catalysts for development





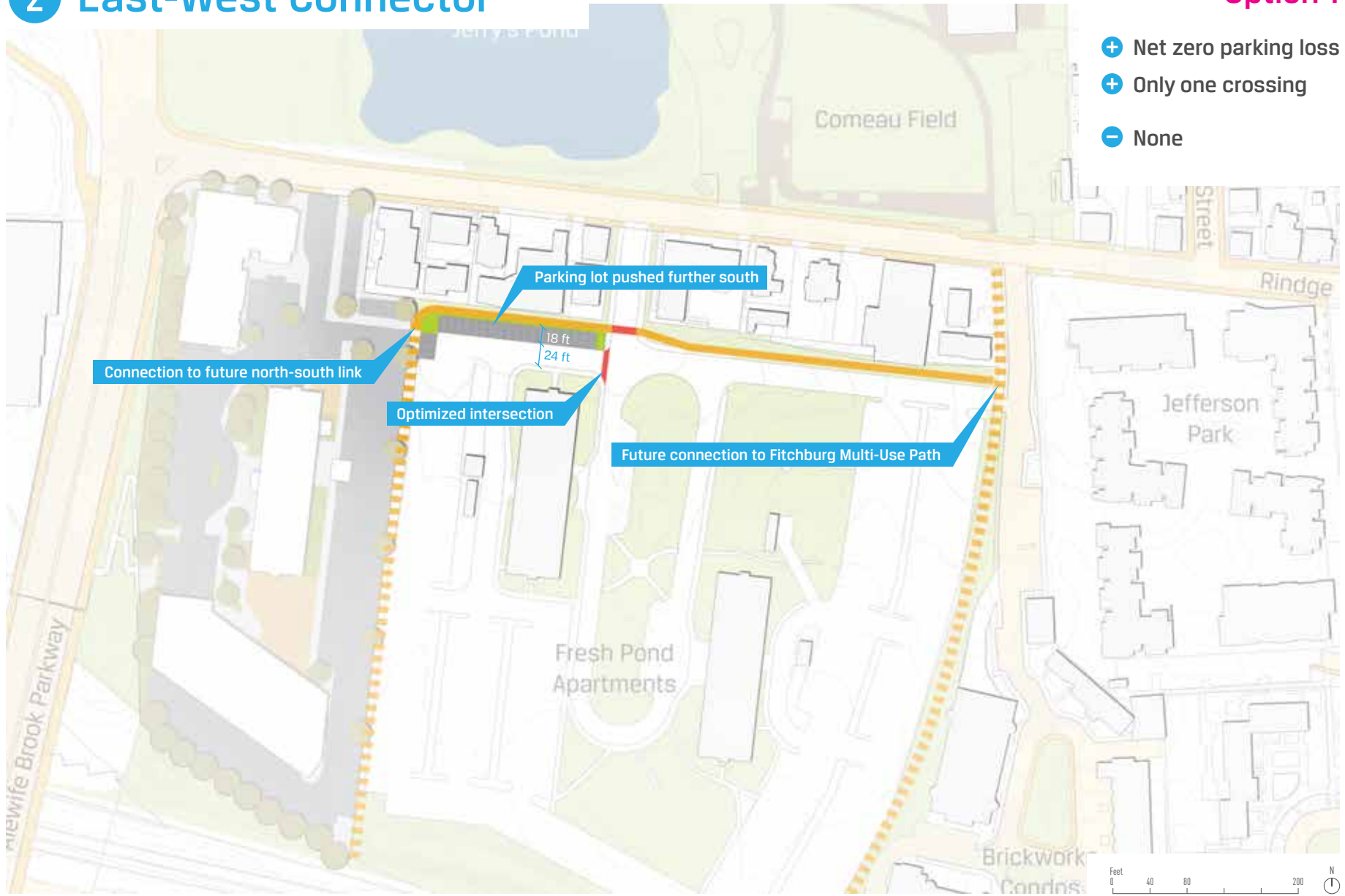
# 1 Fitchburg Multi-Use Path



Area below structures can be transformed into attractive urban spaces

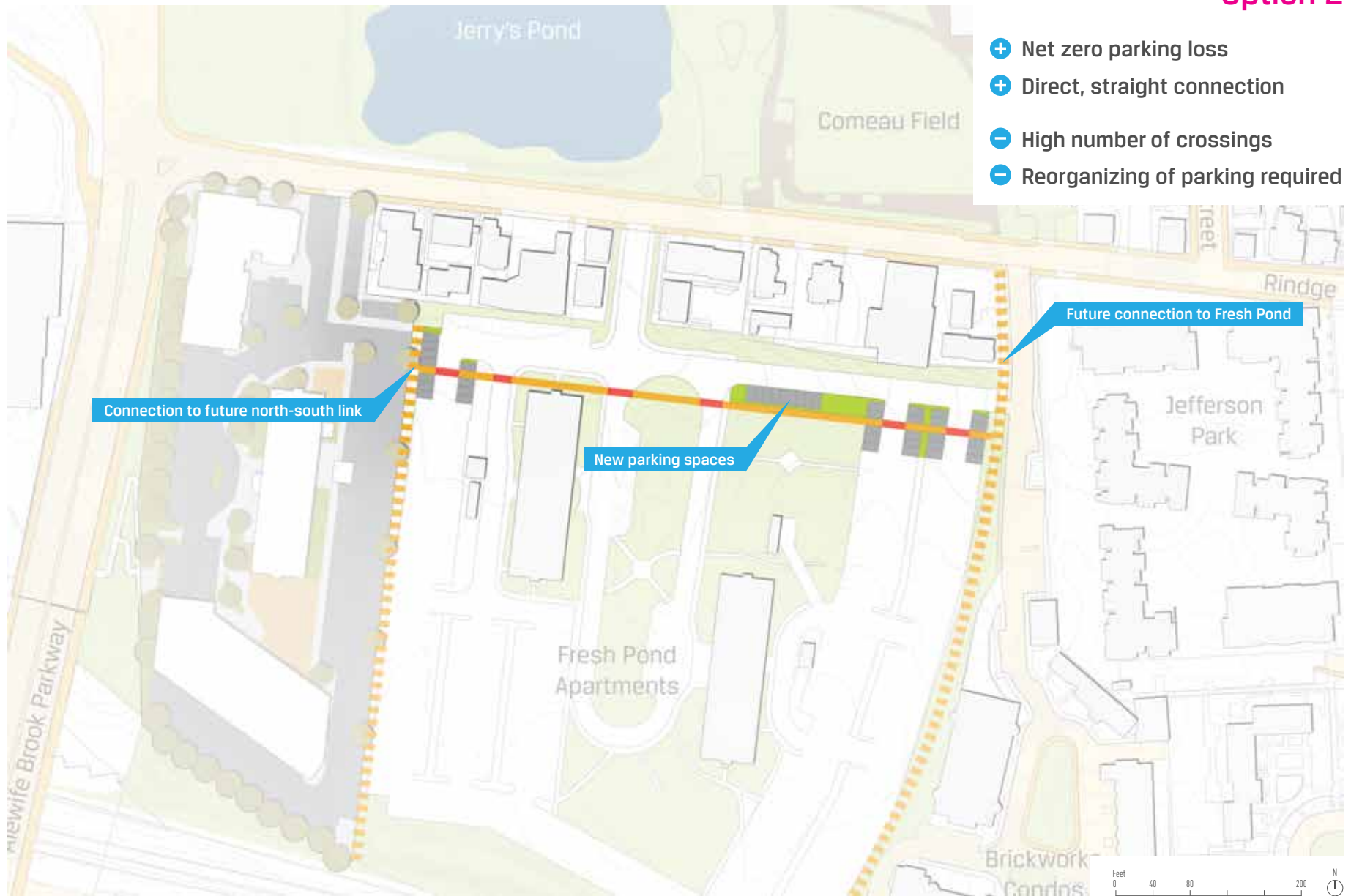
## 2 East-West Connector

### Option 1



## Option 2

- + Net zero parking loss
- + Direct, straight connection
- High number of crossings
- Reorganizing of parking required



## 2 East-West Connector



Existing conditions



8'

Surface Parking

East-west connector

Existing building

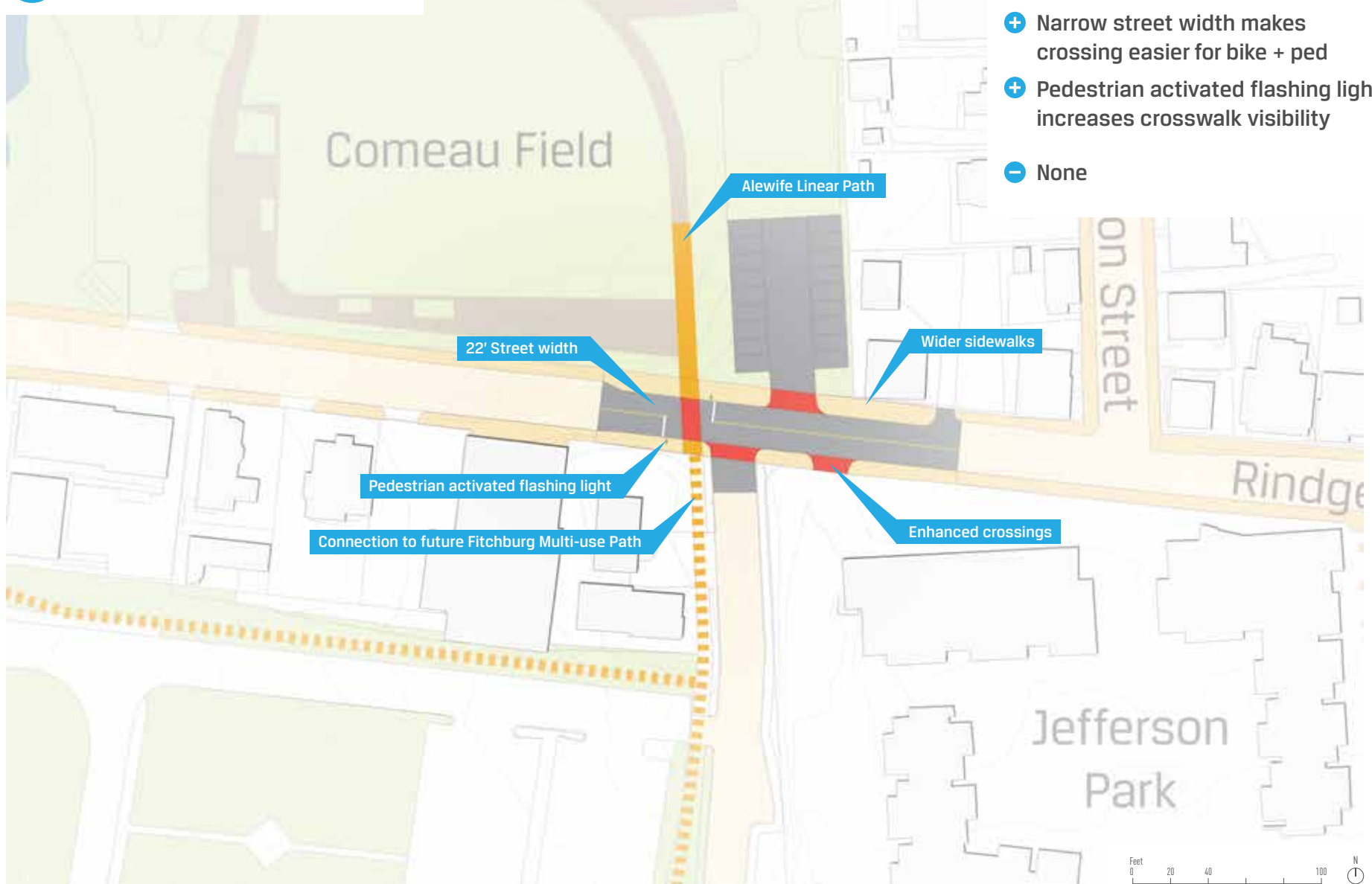
## 2 East-West Connector



### 3 Rindge Crossing

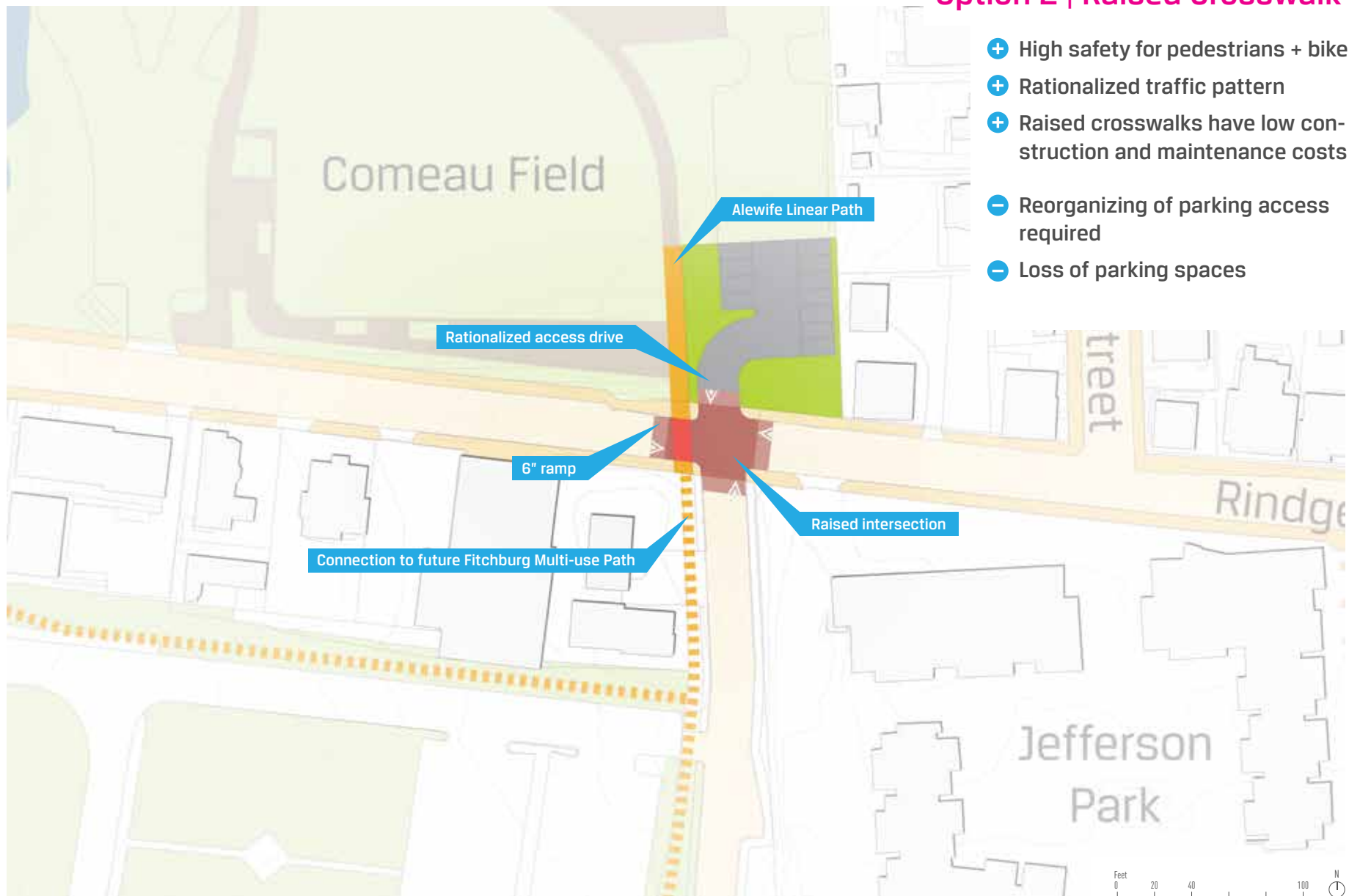
### Option 1 | Road Diet

- + Narrow street width makes crossing easier for bike + ped
- + Pedestrian activated flashing light increases crosswalk visibility
- None



## Option 2 | Raised Crosswalk

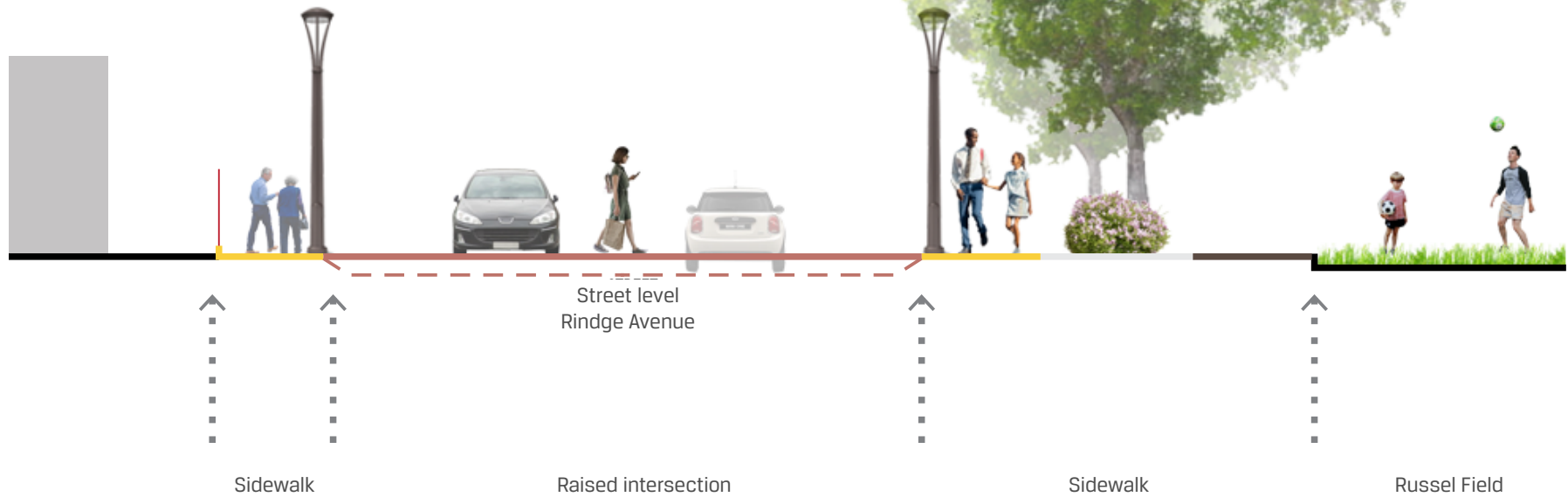
- + High safety for pedestrians + bikers
- + Rationalized traffic pattern
- + Raised crosswalks have low construction and maintenance costs
- Reorganizing of parking access required
- Loss of parking spaces



### 3 Rindge Crossing



Existing conditions





### 3 Rindge Crossing



Narrow roads and bulb outs reduce traffic speeds

### 3 Rindge Crossing



## 5. LONG TERM LINKAGES

*In the long-term, a pedestrian and bridge connection over the tracks forms the missing link across the biggest physical barrier.*

















# 6. PHASING

# 1 Fitchburg Multi-Use Path

Option 1

- Planning and design of the Fitchburg multi-use path can start immediately
- Grade changes and potential excavations need to be further analyzed
- Right-of-way needs to be negotiated with DCR and property owners west Alewife Brook Parkway
- **Short term**
  - » Begin design/construction of east segment from Sherman Street to the junction with future north-south link
  - » Establish a concept that continues to allow the DPW / MBTA to use the area under the Alewife Brook Parkway bridge as a storage facility
- **Long term:** transform this area into a neighborhood asset that brings together residents from both sides of Alewife Brook Parkway



## 1 Fitchburg Multi-Use Path

- Planning and design of the Fitchburg multi-use path can start immediately
- Grade changes and potential excavations need to be further analyzed
- Right-of-way and exact location of multi-use path needs to be negotiated with property owner/development partner of 149 Alewife Brook Parkway
- **Short term**
  - » Begin design/construction of the east segment
  - » Establish a concept that continues to allow the DPW / MBTA to use the area under the Alewife Brook Parkway bridge as a storage facility
- **Long term:** transform this area into a neighborhood asset that brings together residents from both sides of Alewife Brook Parkway
- Estimated construction start: East segment 2022, west segment 2025



## 2 East-West Connector

Option 1

- Planning and design of the East-West Connector can start immediately
- Exact location of existing trees needs to be further analyzed
- Alternatives for boardwalk need to be developed (material, height, width, etc.)
- **Short term**
  - » Seamless connection to the Just-a-Start site plan proposal needs to be coordinated
  - » open gate to allow connection to Brickworks Condos access drive
- **Long term:** Anticipate junction with trail running along the Schochet property line
- Estimated construction start: 2022



## 2 East-West Connector

### Option 2

- Planning and design of the East-West Connector can start immediately
- Further investigate traffic implications and pedestrian safety where the path crosses access drives
- **Short term:**
  - » Seamless connection to the Just-a-Start site plan proposal needs to be coordinated
  - » open gate to allow connection to Brickworks Condos access drive
- **Long term:** Anticipate junction with trail running along the Schochet property line
- Estimated construction start: 2022



### 3 Rindge Crossing

#### Option 1 | Road Diet

- Planning and design of a safe connection across Rindge Avenue and an attractive entry-point into the neighborhood can start immediately
- **Short term**
  - » Road markings and flexible bollards can be installed and tested over the course of a few weeks
  - » Implement the results in the final design
- **Long term:** Evaluate parking needs and combine surface parking to reduce the number of curb cuts
- Estimated construction start: 2022





### 3 Rindge Crossing

#### Option 2 | Raised Crosswalk

- Planning and design of a raised intersection and an attractive entry-point into the neighborhood can start immediately
- **Short term**
  - » Further evaluate the pros and cons of raised intersection in that location
  - » Analyze traffic implications of shifted access drive
- **Long term:** Evaluate parking needs and combine surface parking to reduce the number of curb cuts
- Estimated construction start: 2022



architecture  
urban design

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