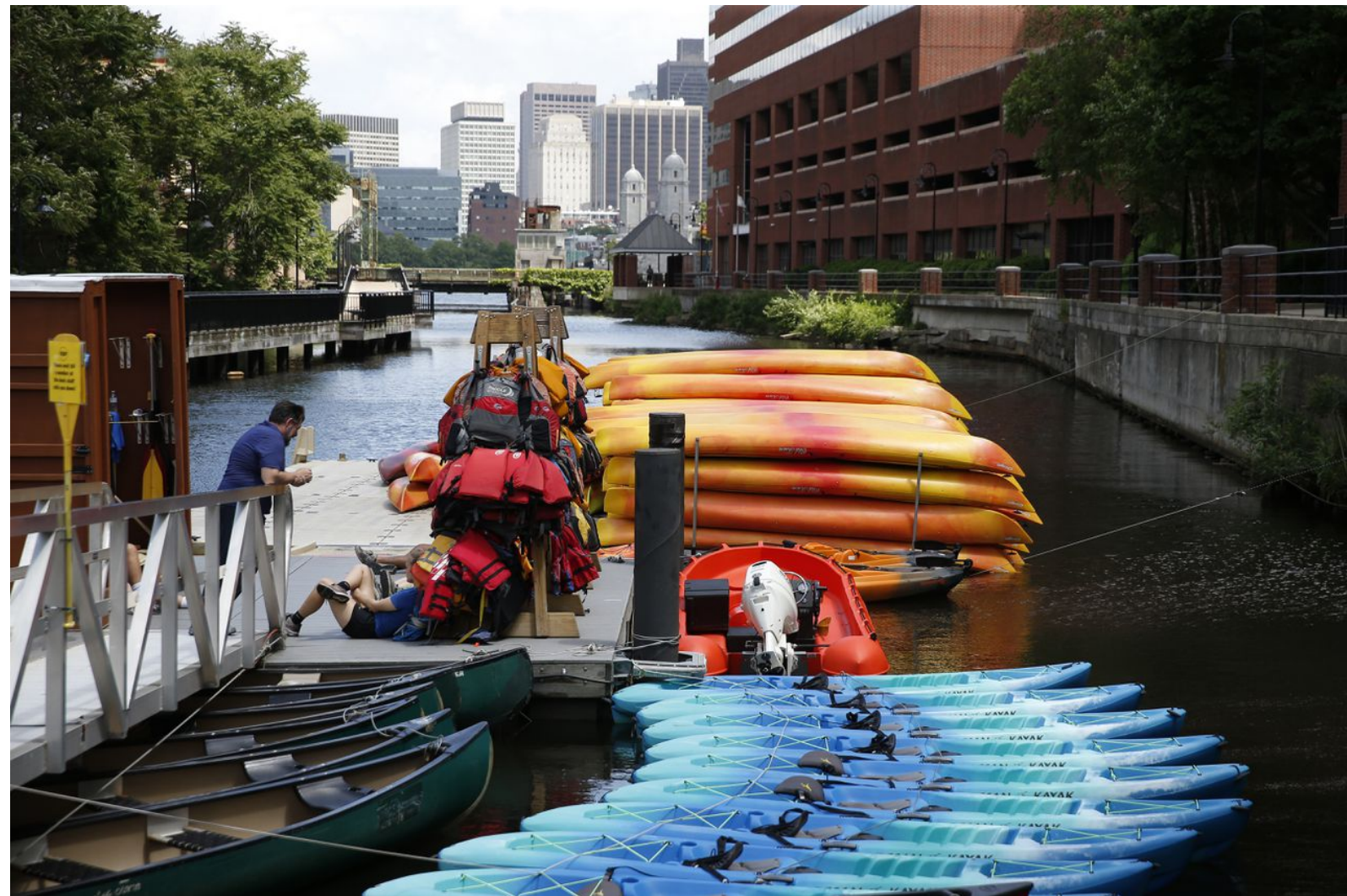


ON THE STREET

# Now, a push to bring more culture — and connection — to Kendall Square

By [Tim Logan](#) Globe Staff, Updated June 15, 2022, 12:30 p.m.



Today, there are improved links to the Charles River, which has long felt cut off from Kendall by old industrial buildings and MIT's campus. JONATHAN WIGGS/GLOBE STAFF

The [On the Street](#) series looks at the past, present, and future of neighborhoods in Greater Boston.

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There's a public rooftop garden in the center of Kendall Square that is hidden from view.

It's been there for two decades, but the garden has always seemed off-limits: You had to take a parking garage elevator to find it, and when you did, you might feel like you were intruding on the Google office — on the other side of a big glass wall — where staffers sat gazing out from their laptops.

That garden could easily be a stand-in for Kendall itself: A lovely place to be ... if you were among the chosen welcomed to be there.

For the longest time, Kendall Square mostly felt like a place to go to work — an overgrown office park with few cultural attractions

For the longest time, Kendall Square mostly felt like a place to go to work — an overgrown office park with few cultural attractions or connections to the rest of Cambridge. But lately that’s been changing.

The rooftop garden, for one, will soon reopen with a grand new entrance to draw in the public, with stairs down to the Red Line station and bright signs to let people know it’s there. It’s one of several new parks and public spaces that aim to make the neighborhood more physically inviting, while a collection of indoor amenities promise to make the culture of Kendall more open to all.

Like the rooftop garden, being redone as part of a new tower for Google, many of them have been negotiated as part of the development projects springing up almost everywhere in the neighborhood.

As part of its plan for a corridor of new buildings along Binney Street, developer Alexandria Real Estate Equities agreed to donate a block of grassy space along adjacent Rogers Street. In September, it debuted as a hilly park — and immediately popular winter sledding hill — named for longtime City Councilor Tim Toomey. A new lab building BioMed Realty is launching on Third Street will include a 300-seat performing arts center on the ground floor. MIT’s planned redo of the federal government’s 14-acre Volpe transportation research center promises public amenities to come.



Canal park offers a break for some fresh air and a walk near Kendall Square. JONATHAN WIGGS/GLOBE STAFF

Then there are improved links to the Charles River, which has long felt cut off from Kendall by old industrial buildings and MIT’s campus. Something as simple as the boardwalk that runs along Broad Canal has helped to make it more accessible, said Jesse Baerkahn, president and founder of Graffito SP, which consults with several Kendall developers on retail and neighborhood development.

“The Charles River hasn’t moved,” he said. “But the development community is figuring out how to better make those connections.”

They’re figuring out connections with the city at large, too. MIT, for instance, has been running shuttles from nearby neighborhoods to help people get to community events at its newly built plaza off Main Street, and it’s working on ways to get Cambridge kids better engaged with the MIT Museum when it reopens in its new location — in the center of Kendall Square — later this year.

“It is imperative that what we’re doing here and Kendall represents the desires and aspirations of the neighbors,” said Sarah Gallop, co-director of MIT’s Office of Government and Community Relations.

Those desires are also front and center at The Foundry, a long-planned “hub for creative exploration” set to open in September in an old factory building just north of Binney Street. When the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority sought proposals for the 37,500 square-foot space several years ago, there was one that envisioned making it all co-working space.

“The community pushed back on that idea,” said Diana Navarrete-Rackauckas, the Foundry’s executive director. “They wanted something that was about creativity and the arts.”

So what will open in September will be a mix. Office space — some of it low cost — on the upper floors will help pay the bills while the ground floor will be dedicated community space featuring an art gallery, a demonstration kitchen, a 130-seat theater, and a dance studio. Programming will be aimed not just at workers in Kendall Square but also at residents of neighboring East Cambridge. Navarrete-Rackauckas is hoping it’ll be a place where they come together.

“There’s a real divide between living and working in East Cambridge and Kendall Square,” she said. “To create a space like The Foundry, that’s literally in the middle, it’s a great opportunity. I’m really excited by the chance to have everyone learn from each other.”

*Read more about Kendall Square and explore the full [On the Street series](#).*

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