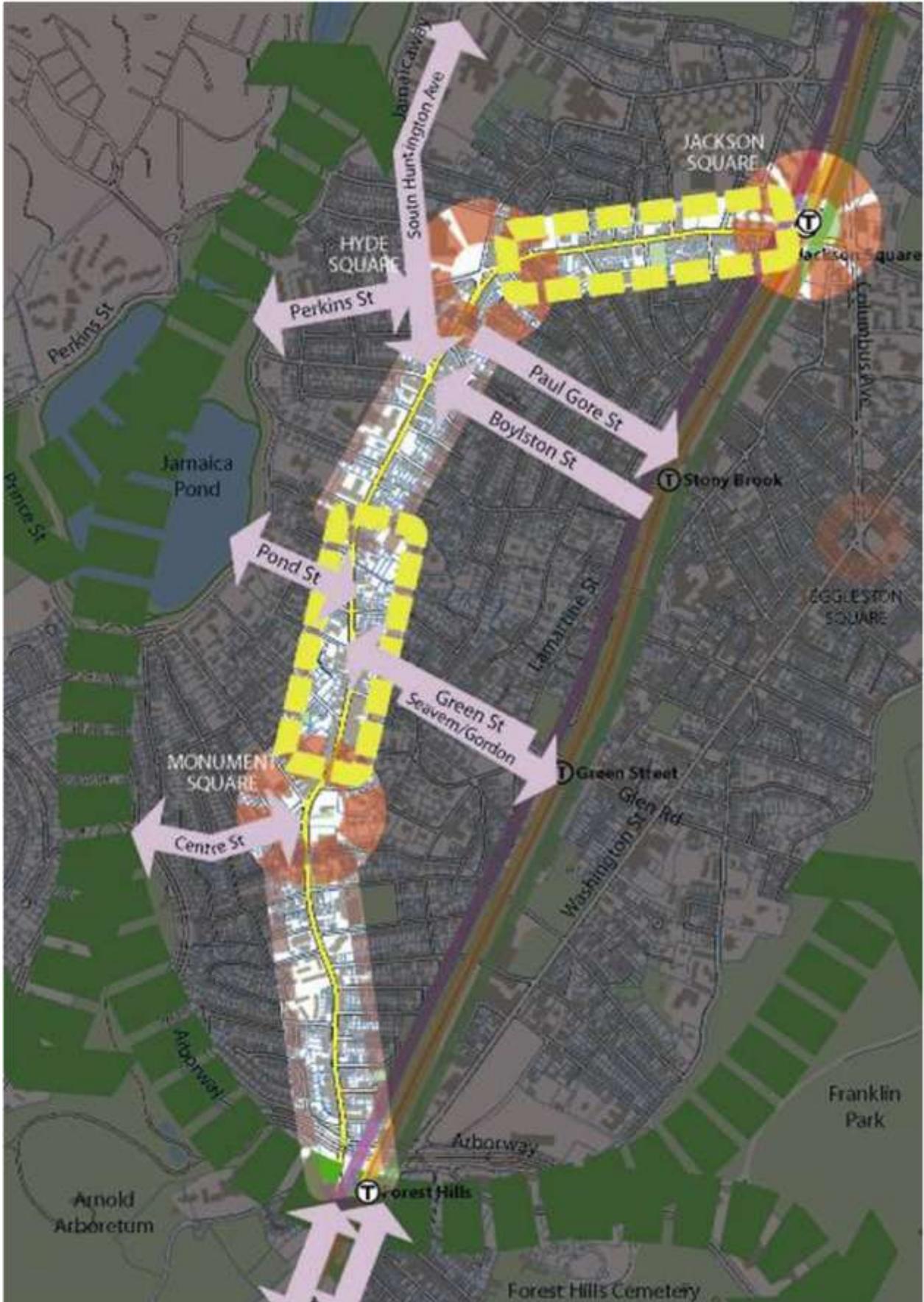


The Centre & South Streets Corridor



Centre and South Streets Streetscape & Transportation Action Plan

## 1. Introduction

The Centre and South Street corridor, a two mile stretch between Jackson Square and Forest Hills in the Boston neighborhood of Jamaica Plain (affectionately known as “JP”), reflects the neighborhood it serves. The distinct neighborhoods surrounding Centre and South Streets are highly active, vital areas with abundant community-based retail and service businesses, from the Latin flavor of Hyde Square, to the new restaurants and shops in JP Center and century-old institutions.

In addition, with access to abundant open space at Jamaica Pond and the Arnold Arboretum and convenient links to employment centers at Longwood, Back Bay and Downtown, JP is attractive to both residents and to those seeking entertainment. There is a strong mix of families, students, young professionals and the elderly, and artists from a variety of cultural backgrounds. As such, JP is a leading example of Boston’s “creative class” neighborhoods.

In its entirety, the Centre/South corridor is extremely active and supports substantial use by all modes of travel. With streetcar service discontinued only twenty years ago, and the tracks paved over in only the last few years, this corridor has a distinctive transit heritage. For many in this corridor transit use is a choice, not a necessity. Today, five MBTA bus routes serve the corridor, including Route 39, which has the second highest ridership of all MBTA routes. Pedestrian activity in this corridor is also extensive and particularly concentrated at the commercial nodes. The density of adjacent residential uses certainly provides fuel for this activity, as does the general narrowness of the streets and proliferation of commercial uses. Jamaica Plain is the bicycling hub of Boston. Parallel to both the Emerald Necklace and the Southwest Corridor, the Centre/South corridor is itself an active bicycling route as many neighborhood residents run their daily errands and travel locally on their bicycles.

### *Project Overview*

The purpose of the Jamaica Plain Centre/South Streetscape and Transportation Action Plan is to develop preliminary designs for streetscape and transportation improvements that will lead to a streetscape vision and viable construction projects at designated locations. The outcome is the Action Plan contained in this report of recommended improvements designed to:



## Action Plan

### Vision for the corridor

*What should the corridor look like in 3, 5, and 10 years?*

### Streetscape guidelines

*Corridor-wide streetscape elements, bicycle network plan, public transportation*

### Redesigned transportation nodes

*Traffic analysis: intersection redesign, with cost estimates*

### Parking management strategy

*Parking demand, curbside regulations, off-street parking facility locations*

- ◆ Improve safety and accessibility
- ◆ Enhance the pedestrian environment
- ◆ Promote bicycling
- ◆ Improve traffic-flow
- ◆ Manage parking
- ◆ Facilitate access to public transit

The Streetscape and Transportation Action Plan was undertaken by the City of Boston to build upon many ongoing efforts in the Centre/South corridor. With resolution of the streetcar issue, development underway in Jackson Square, and the continued activism of the Main Streets organizations and other community groups, the Centre/South corridor is poised to benefit from **the City's embrace of the Complete Streets philosophy**. The Streetscape and Action Plan is an interdepartmental planning effort led by the City of Boston's Transportation Department (BTD), the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA), and the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services (ONS). The City staff, along with the project consultant team lead by McMahon Associates, worked with Jamaica Plain neighbors, public officials, and other interested stakeholders along the Centre/South Street corridor over a two year period to develop the Action Plan.

## Public Process

The Action Plan was informed by an extensive community process. Over a dozen well-attended meetings involving residents, the business community, and advocacy groups were held. As part of the planning process, Mayor Thomas M. Menino appointed an Advisory Committee in the spring of 2009. The Advisory Committee consist of residents, non-profit organizations, businesses, and neighborhood associations. The Advisory Committee was responsible for assisting the City for the duration of the planning process, ensuring that community priorities were addressed at all stages of planning.

The Boston Transportation Department led and managed the planning initiative. **The BRA's role involved sending notices and presentation materials to the Advisory Committee, creating a project website and advertising meetings.** Open, public meetings were held monthly between Spring 2009 and November 2010. At these meetings, the consultants and City staff worked with the community in outlining its objectives, ideas, and plans. The community reviewed areas along the corridor, selected potential areas for improvement, discussed alternative scenarios, and provided their recommendations to the City on the selected concept plans.

## 2. Vision Statement

As a result of the public outreach process, a comprehensive Vision Statement was developed for the corridor. Beyond the immediate application to Centre and South streets, it was important that a vision also incorporate the larger City goals, such as increased tree canopy, sustainable storm water handling options, and provisions for bicycles. The Vision Statement is presented in the following section. It was developed through the aspirations expressed by the community in a series of workshops and served as the foundation for the recommendations in this document.

The Vision Statement is a consensus-driven starting point for future street-scape and transportation improvements within the Centre/South corridor. As **one of the Boston's significant transportation arteries, made up of distinct** neighborhood districts, overarching principles help guide what the corridor should look like 3, 5, and 10 years from now.



*Public meeting at the Agassiz School*

# Vision Statement



**Establish Centre/South as the area's MAIN STREET**, drawing out new and existing connections while celebrating the diversity of its people and places.

*Diverse, and unified...Beautiful, and functional  
Special, and ordinary...Connected, and stands alone  
is the vision for Jamaica Plain's Centre/South Street corridor.*

*A place where all uses and users are functionally and aesthetically integrated in a safe, convenient and accessible environment.*



Thomas M. Menino  
Mayor

## Build upon the corridor's identity to create a 21st century street with a Jamaica Plain character



The popularity of the stores and services along the corridor require an enhanced pedestrian network.

- Creatively utilize space adjacent to and behind buildings to enhance commercial vitality (Farmers Markets, Rear doors, outdoor seating)
- Provide special places for people to be along the corridor
- Celebrate the rich history of the corridor



Bright colors and storefronts with high transparency add interest to the sidewalk environment.

### Physical infrastructure

- Ensure a well-lit street environment, with fixtures and storefront lighting of appropriate scale
- Increase street trees/canopy with species appropriate to adjacent land uses

### Cultural infrastructure

- Create an environment and infrastructure that encourages people to choose car-free transportation
- Support a vibrant local business community
- Restore appropriate density along the corridor, with more mixed uses



Wider sidewalks allow for opportunities for outdoor café seating, enlivening the street.

- Preserve and expand public art (murals, et al) [Centre Street Artwalk]
- Encourage a sense of community responsibility and pride of ownership in the streetscape.
- Successfully marry design of public and private realms to provide a seamless sense of place.



Murals combined with the other public art and historic structures, offer the foundation for an "arts and culture walks".



Active sidewalks reflect the vitality of the Centre-South corridor and its restaurants.

- Employ sustainable design strategies for all softscape and hardscape installations, to **reduce the corridor's carbon footprint, increase energy efficiency, and promote sky lighting.**
- Plan appropriate space for community events and celebrations

- Reduce visual sidewalk/street clutter, with attention to removing the catenary poles
- Employ sustainable design strategies for all installations



Finding opportunities for additional sidewalk space is an important component of the vision.

## Create a place for all uses and users



- Preserve adequate traffic flow throughout the district
- Optimize management of parking resources
- Factor in the operational needs of businesses and business functions
- **Promote and enhance the neighborhood's transit system** including the proposed improvements to the route 39 corridor, to **serve Jamaica Plain's future and expand accessibility.**

- Provide additional resources to support high bicycling interest and activity with a safe, convenient bicycling environment
- Address the differing needs of users, including youth, elderly, and the handicapped community
- Develop a pedestrian friendly corridor with a focus on pedestrian nodes and continuous sidewalk paths



Pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles need to share the public realm, balancing the needs of all.

## Reinforce the Centre/South corridors as the local & regional center of Jamaica Plain

*Bus service offers connections to the wide range of goods and services along the corridor and to subway service.*



- Create gateway locations to and on the corridor
- Enhance connections to open spaces
- Integrate connections to and management of side streets
- Maximize connections to public transportation



*The corridor provides links to public open space along Centre and South streets and the nearby network of regional open spaces.*



### 3. “Great Streets” Corridor Analysis

#### *Great Streets Criteria*

The Centre/South corridor contains several neighborhood retail and cultural centers as well as identifiable subdistricts, both from a land use point of view and a topographic point of view. The corridor bends and rises and falls along **its length, limiting the view to discreet “rooms” along the path of travel.**

Hyde Square and Monument Square form major nodes within the corridor **but there are additional minor nodes as well. From a driver’s perspective** there is also the rate of travel to consider: traffic slows down in the commercial heart of Centre Street. These are just a few of the many overlapping patterns along the corridor that define its character.

In order to assess the various strengths and weaknesses along the corridor the consultant team undertook an analysis of the physical conditions that contribute to the quality of the street environment. This analysis allowed the consultant team to begin to identify:

- ◆ Quick fixes
- ◆ Short-term improvements
- ◆ Long-term improvements

**The criteria used for this analysis were taken from Allan Jacobs’ book *Great Streets*** which identifies eight criteria that must be present in order for a street environment to be considered successful. These are described on the following pages.

#### 1. Space to walk with some leisure

This criterion is the effective width of the sidewalk. That is the space unencumbered by street furniture, tree pits, signs or outdoor displays. Outside the commercial districts the sidewalk width was rated as adequate. In the JP commercial center between Pond Street and the Monument, Hyde Square, and the area between Jackson Square and Mozart Park, wider sidewalks would be an asset.



#### 2. Physical comfort

This criterion covers protection from the elements; whether that is providing shade in the summer or allowing sunlight in the winter. The tree canopy is a large part of this, providing both shade and sun at different seasons, but retractable awnings make a big difference in the absence of street trees. The portion of the corridor south of Hyde Square is roughly on a north-south axis and both sides of the street receive similar amounts of sunlight and shade.





The area from Hyde Square to Jackson Square is on an east-west axis with the northern side of the street receiving sunlight and the southern side in shadow for the majority of the day.

### 3. Definition

Definition is primarily created by the buildings that line a street; although walls and landscaped areas can also create definition. This criterion is most noticeable when it is absent. Along the Centre-South corridor the greatest lack of definition is seen where parking lots directly abut the sidewalk or where auto-related uses have paving all the way to the sidewalk.



### 4. Qualities that engage the eye

This criterion is about a balance between creating interest and preventing visual clutter. It is primarily influenced by the buildings that line the sidewalk, but vegetation also play an important role. In the Centre-South corridor building are, for the most part, nicely detailed. Most of the commercial buildings have well-designed window displays while a few storefronts are covered with signs that add clutter rather than interest. The triple-deckers and other residential buildings along the corridor are generally set back from the sidewalk and have fences, porches, and landscaping that add to the visual interest. The numerous, well-tended flower beds along the corridor also enhance the experience of walking along the street.



### 5. Transparency

Transparency is the breaking down of barriers between public and private areas. The best example is the large glass storefront window that allows views through the front of the building into the interior. In fact, this is an invitation to leave the public realm and enter the private. Sidewalk cafes similarly blur the distinction by bringing private space into public areas. It is interesting to note that those storefronts with awnings did not use window blinds or shades for sun control and created much higher levels of transparency. The commercial districts in the corridor generally ranked well in this criterion.



### 6. Complementarity

This means that buildings along a street have similarities in terms of scale, style and materials and create a visually comfortable whole. In the Centre-South corridor the buildings' age and style are the strongest aspects of this criterion. For the majority of the corridor the buildings do complement one another. However, there are notable exceptions of large-scale buildings, such as the Bromley-Heath development, that are physically out of character with the rest of the corridor.

## 7. Maintenance

Well-maintained buildings and streets are an indicator of vitality and pride of ownership. Generally, both commercial and residential properties along the corridor are well-maintained. In the public realm, the sidewalks and streets were generally well maintained. One noticeable element that is not well-maintained is some of the street trees; although this is more likely due to the initial installation than it is to maintenance.



## 8. Quality of design and construction

The use of appropriate materials and the workmanship to assemble those materials are the heart of this criterion. The fact that most of the buildings in the corridor have been there for a long time is a positive statement about the quality of design and construction.



It is important to note that physical components described by these criteria fall into both the private and public realms. The designs resulting from this study, by necessity, fall in the public realm but a truly great street is a partnership between private property owners and government.

### *Rating the Corridor by Criteria*

Using these criteria the team then broke down the corridor by building, building grouping, or open area and rated each of these segments as high, medium or low. A high rating indicated that all of the eight criteria were met; a medium rating indicated that most of the criteria were met, and a low rating indicated that few of the criteria were met.

The ratings were totaled and the results mapped to illustrate the pattern of strong and weak areas. Well over one-third of the corridor achieved a high rating. When medium-ranked areas were added to the high, over three-quarters of the corridor was included. The majority of the low-ranked areas clustered between Hyde Square and Pond Street. Generally, these were auto-oriented uses, parking lots and buildings with blank facades facing the street.

### *Streetscape Inventory*

In addition to the Great Streets analysis, an inventory was taken of the various streetscape elements. These elements included sidewalk and crosswalk materials, street lights, street trees and tree grates, benches, trash receptacles, public art and wayfinding signage. Other streetscape elements – those that are fixed by City standards or regulations, such as fire hydrants, mail boxes and traffic control equipment – were not inventoried. The purpose of the inventory was twofold: to identify any patterns created by the various



Best

*Great Streets: Top Ranked*

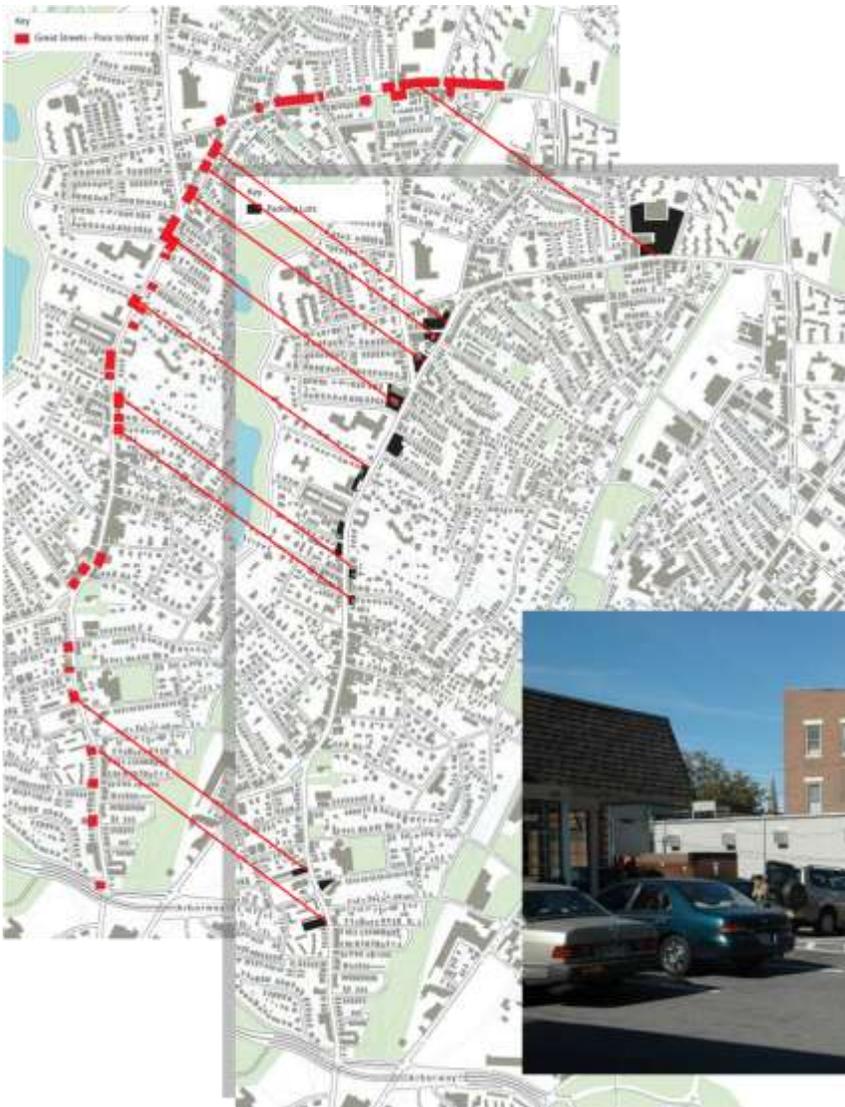


Best

Medium

*Great Streets: Mid-Ranked*





- Poor to Worst
- Parking Lots

*Great Streets: Low Ranked*



*One category of problem areas correlates with parking lots along the street.*

elements and to catalog the set of elements used in the corridor.

There were strong patterns in certain elements. For example, the regular width of street and sidewalk throughout the corridor adds to its visual consistency. The use of the cobra head street light fixture at a regular spacing is another element that adds visual consistency to the entire corridor, although cobra head fixtures are not a recommendation. Rather, the repetition of a vertical element enhances visual interest. Other elements were less consistent; such as building height, topography and views.

Fencing materials is one particular element that the team inventoried. With the exception of publicly owned land, fencing is part of the private realm. Because it is most frequently found at the back of sidewalk, to define the boundary between the public and private areas, it is an integral part of the pedestrian experience. Fencing in the corridor fell in to two general types of materials: metal picket and chain link. For the most part, the metal picket

type fences had a black finish and fit in well with the historic residential character of the areas where they were used. In contrast, chain-link fence – even when vinyl coated – produced an industrial look that was not in character with the residential neighborhood.

Street trees are a special type of element in the streetscape because they are part of a larger environment. For people walking along the corridor, there is a **“sense of green” in Jamaica Plain that is created by a combination of trees** and other plantings beyond the street itself. There are many very large trees in front and rear yards that are visible from the street; either directly or extending above low buildings. Some of these extend over the sidewalk and add to the tree canopy provided by traditional street trees. Other plantings, including shrubs, hedges, vines on fences, flower beds and boxes, and potted plants on the sidewalk all contribute to the sense of green. While street trees are one of the design elements in the public realm, it is important to remember that they are just part of the picture.

The overall conclusion drawn from the inventory is that some additional consistency would add to the strength of the corridor without detracting from those special areas and elements that make the Centre Street-South Street corridor unique.

## 4. Corridor-Wide Guidelines

A key element of the Streetscape and Transportation Action Plan is to define a unifying vision for the Centre/South corridor. While this is broadly defined in the Vision Statement, the Guidelines are where this vision begins to take physical form. The Guidelines provide a community defined set of corridor-wide standard elements. To establish greater continuity from Jackson Square to Forest Hills, the Guidelines provide consistency and quality to the corridor in keeping with the broadly defined vision to:

*Establish Centre/South as the area's Main Street, drawing out new and existing connections, while celebrating the diversity of its people and places*

The Guidelines developed by the community seek to ensure that the Centre/South corridor is both unified and reflects the unique areas in the Jamaica Plain neighborhood it passes through. Setting the tone for the look, feel, and function of the corridor were primary discussion points in the development of the Guidelines. They provide a framework to select sidewalk furniture, such as benches and streetlights, materials, and landscaping that will guide all future corridor improvements. Rooted locally, while seeking the best of current city, national and international practice, they reflect the following from the Vision Statement:

- ◆ **Build upon the corridor's identity to create a 21<sup>st</sup> century street with a Jamaica Plain character**
- ◆ Create a place for all uses and users
- ◆ Reinforce the Centre/South corridors as the local and regional center of Jamaica Plain

Guidelines are intended to provide not just the framework, but also the material choices and considerations that can be used to provide both the **base level of design and to "provide special places for people to be along the corridor" (Vision Statement). The community has identified and developed designs for locations where these Guidelines could be applied in the near-term.**



*"Create a place for all uses and users"  
(Vision Statement)*

The Guidelines inform:

- ◆ Concept designs for Hyde Square, Monument Square, and the Jackson Square-Mozart Park area.
- ◆ MBTA plans for the Route 39 Corridor Improvement Program, for early phased application and implementation of the plan.
- ◆ Development projects and improvements to private property along the corridor.
- ◆ Serve as a basis for the City to continue to upgrade the Centre/South Street corridor in keeping with the Vision laid out through this process.



### *Safety*

Safety, and the perception of safety, underlies all considerations for the Centre/South corridor. If an area feels unsafe, it will not be well-used. A vibrant, attractive well-used corridor with shoppers, residents, merchants, travelers and visitors all create a level of activity in which all users can feel comfortable. The allocation of the right-of-way equitable for motorists, bus riders, bicyclists, and pedestrians requires measures such as curb extensions, bicycle lanes, accessible bus stops, and improved corridor sight lines. Raised crosswalks parallel to the corridor enhance accessibility and will help to slow vehicular traffic. Enhanced lighting and well-timed traffic signals will add to safety.

### *Sustainability*

Environmental considerations are integrated throughout the corridor guidelines. Recycled content in materials, such as sidewalks and street furnishings, contribute toward material and resource efficiency. LED-technology for street lighting holds great promise for improved energy performance. Improved street tree plantings, permeable paving, stormwater management best practices, such as rain gardens, help reduce water pollution from runoff. Further, filtering in existing stormwater systems should be explored. All these contribute to a streetscape that is inviting and accommodating to various modes of travel—transit, walking, and bicycles— which helps encourage alternatives to single occupancy vehicle (SOV) trips, thereby reducing the carbon footprint typically associated with vehicular transportation.



*Residential uses above street-level retail contributes to the diversity of uses throughout the corridor, and encourages daily walking, biking, and transit use.*

### *Mixed Land Uses*

Encouraging a mix of uses throughout the corridor will enhance the Jamaica Plain neighborhood. An appropriate mix of uses provides convenient opportunities and options for residents and visitors to access **goods, services, arts, cultural and educational resources**. A “vertical mix” of uses with residential units in the upper stories of buildings containing ground-level retail can create a more vibrant streetscape. It also facilitates a walkable community, since residential, service, and retail are located in close proximity. Mixed use neighborhoods combined with streetscape amenities, transit connections, and pedestrian and bicycle accommodations create livable and accessible communities.

### *Continuity*

The Corridor-Wide Guidelines can vary by element in their recommendations for uniformity or diversity along the corridor. In each individual element described below. Some elements may be uniform for the entire length of the corridor; with sidewalk materials serving as one example. Other elements, such as street trees, may vary from one portion of the corridor to another. However, even elements that may vary will still relate to each of the other elements along the corridor as part of a family. The overall intent of the Guidelines is not to establish a homogenous look for the Centre/South corridor, but rather to define the **parameters within which the community’s character can best be expressed** in a way that still melds into a cohesive whole.



*Creatively utilize space adjacent to and behind buildings to enhance commercial vitality (Farmers markets, rear doors, outdoor seating)" (Vision Statement)*

### *Visual Clutter*

One challenge to accomplishing this unity with diversity is to reduce visual clutter throughout the corridor. In many instances, streetscape elements should recede to allow the storefronts and vibrancy of street life to gather prominence. They should allow historic or unique corridor destinations to be brought to the fore. In others, the Guidelines should **help to create “special” places that are nodes or destinations along the**



*The City of Boston has formally requested that the MBTA remove the remaining catenary poles.*

corridor. To accomplish this we need to look not only at what we want to build, but what should be removed. Competing and redundant onstreet signs should be consolidated or removed and unattractive existing street furniture (e.g. street lights, benches) must be replaced. The community also unanimously agreed to eliminate the remaining catenary poles, as they only detract from the corridor

### *Elements of the Palette*

Although buildings comprise the most visible elements along the corridor, streetscape elements including sidewalks, crosswalks and street lights are important elements that reinforce a particular look and feel for the corridor.

Opportunities vary within categories of elements. Signage and curb type, for example, need to maintain relatively strict consistency throughout the corridor. On the other end of the spectrum are benches and public art, which can draw from a wider array of options and exhibit substantial individuality.

### *Recommendations*

*Recommended Elements*



*Elements of the Existing Streetscape Palette*

- Street Lights**
- Street Trees
- Signs
- Wayfinding
- Benches**
- Trash Receptacles**
- Other Street Furniture
- Crosswalk Material**
- Sidewalk Material**
- Public Art
- Curbs





*The sidewalk is comprised of a number of zones. People tend to shy away from walking next to buildings and other edges and, where there is inadequate width, people walk everywhere.*

### Sidewalks

A large part of the vibrancy of the Centre/South Corridor is attributable to the pedestrian activity that takes place on the sidewalks. The community spent a substantial amount of time discussing ways to enhance the use of the sidewalk environment. With existing narrow sidewalks, even limited street furniture often restricts the ability to meet minimal ADA requirements, a condition exacerbated in places with an existing non-compliant sidewalk slope. In areas of high pedestrian activity (such as Centre Street leading to Jackson Square station), even relatively minor sidewalk widening of 1-2 ft. will be a significant improvement, as they will increase the typical functional path by up to 25%. Bumpouts at corners also reduce pedestrian crossing distance, and improve visibility and safety.

### Sidewalk Width

With a relatively narrow corridor right-of-way, sidewalks are typically no larger than 8' in width along much of Centre/South Streets, leaving little room for enhancements. Street trees, street furniture, café or sales space for merchants typically do not fit. Moreover, where street trees, or other amenities are present, they severely constrict the walking path, which is already too narrow to accommodate more than two people abreast.



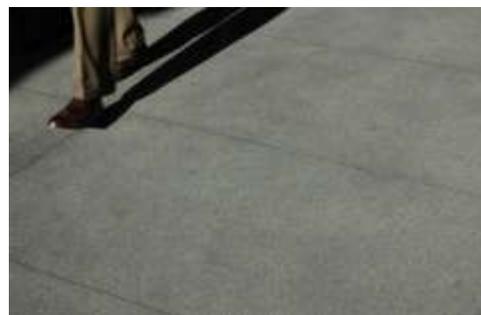
*Example of sidewalk widening concept for Center Street near Jackson Square*

Recognizing the current 5 ft. sidewalk constraint, the Guidelines recommend widening the sidewalk where possible. An overall widening to 10 ft. or even 20 ft. could be considered, but always must be balanced with bicycle facilities and parking. Widening at key locations to provide merchant/café space, bus stop waiting areas, and larger street trees is preferred. Exploring opportunities to offer additional sidewalk amenities by increasing use of private property at the back of sidewalk is recommended. Moreover, functional sidewalk width should be considered in all designs, as adding even small bumpouts provides an opportunity to group street furniture

(trees, lights, hydrants), often preserving both walking space and parking simultaneously.

Sidewalk Materials

Despite the width, sidewalks on the Centre/South corridor are generally in good condition, with many having recently been improved by the Boston Public Works Department. However, deficiencies in the pedestrian environment continue to exist. The Guidelines propose a simple, yet elegant, sidewalk material. The community preferred to have the activity of the corridor naturally convey the sense of vibrancy, rather than through overly complicated material choices. The preferred sidewalk material is concrete with a smooth finish, rather than a typical broom finish, and saw-cut joints rather than tooled joints. This will provide an even walking surface for those using wheelchairs or canes as well as people pushing strollers or pulling wheeled carts or luggage. The color of the concrete should be gray, rather than bright white, which can be achieved by using an additive such as carbon black additives to darken the color.



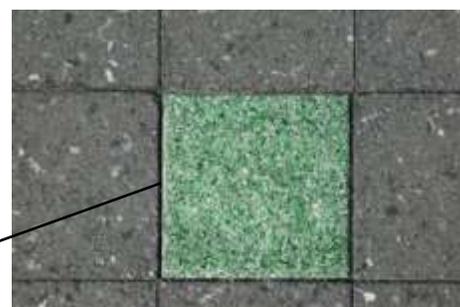
*Example of a sidewalk with darker gray color, smooth finish and saw-cut joints.*

Feature Strip

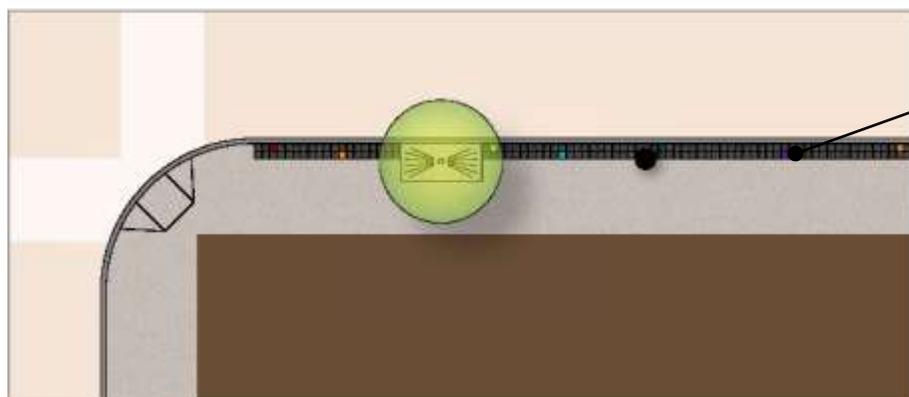
Typical Boston sidewalk flourishes can include a “feature strip” along either the curbline, or the back of sidewalk, which are often designed with brick. Instead of a uniform brick look, the Guidelines recommended a granite or concrete unit pavers, to be installed strategically in commercial or special areas. Sustainability was an additional factors for the feature strip, as granite pavers were seen both as exceedingly durable, and permeable. The granite pavers could be accented with recycled, colored glass inserts. The feature strip should be continuous from Jackson Square to Forest Hills in order to facilitate an “Art Walk” or a “History Walk,” featuring cultural



*Sidewalk bump outs provide an opportunity to group street furniture.*



*Occasional pavers can be substituted with colored pavers for an accent or with art pavers as part of the Art Walk.*



*Illustration of unit pavers at curb as a feature strip.*

aspects of the neighborhood. The Art or History walk could draw on the numerous themes that are tied to the Jamaica Plain neighborhood, in both residential and commercial areas. Regardless of the specific theme that is chosen, it should include the entire corridor as a unifying element. This could be in the form of a continuous strip with the a similar theme, or represented by markers at regular intervals that connect the corridor.



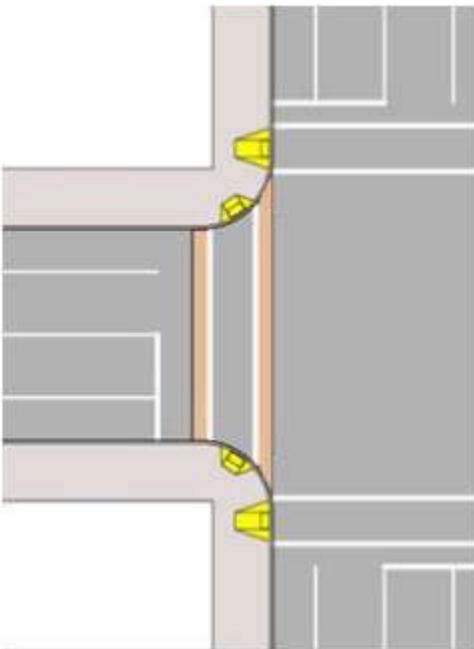
Example of ladder crosswalks.

#### Crosswalks

With a high level of pedestrian activity, crosswalks serve an important functional role within the corridor. Especially in commercial areas, the presence of safe, accessible pedestrian crossings contributes greatly to the comfort level of pedestrians and consequently the connectivity of the corridor. The Guidelines recommend that crosswalks and pedestrian ramps be frequent, safe and meet all accessibility requirements. Two primary recommendations were discussed at length and strongly endorsed:

- 1) Traditional *ladder crosswalks* should be used for all installations. In both residential and commercial areas, the ladder crosswalk was seen as preferable for its simple and straight-forward functionality, rather than special patterns.
- 2) *Raised crosswalks* were recommended for use across side streets. Commercial districts and the areas near transit stations were seen as the prime candidates for this application. Raised crossings were recommended as they would:

- ◆ Emphasize and define the pedestrian zone
- ◆ Improve safety by reducing turning speeds
- ◆ Slow traffic as it enters residential neighborhoods



3-UP, 3-DOWN raised crosswalks are recommended across side streets.

**While the term “raised crosswalks” encompass a wide variety of applications** currently in use, the Guidelines recommend a special type—a three-up/three-down crosswalk. In Boston, where typical curb reveal is six inches, raising the crosswalk three inches from the roadway creates a transition three inches up from the road, and three inches down from the sidewalk. The three-up/three down concept has two advantages over a flat crosswalk fully raised to sidewalk level. First, the slope from the roadway up to the crosswalk must not extend into the adjacent street which requires a shift of the crosswalk away from the intersection. Using a 1:12 slope, a three-inch raised crosswalk requires a three-foot shift in the crosswalk alignment; a six-inch raised crosswalk requires a six-foot shift, moving it further from the pedestrian desire line. Secondly, a flat crosswalk makes it difficult for visually-impaired

people to determine the location of the curb line and to know that they are stepping into the street.

#### Street Lights

**The Committee recommended the City’s standard “acorn” type street lights** with LED lighting designed to prevent glare and uplighting. This lighting style is in scale with the street dimensions and the architecture for retail, residential or other uses, reduces glare, and increases the night-time presence of retail storefront lighting. This fixture type should be used from Hyde Square south to Carolina Avenue at the South Street Mall to reinforce the historic and commercial center of JP. In prominent pedestrian locations, double acorns should be used as appropriate. Acorn lights should have the following characteristics:

- ◆ 13 to 18 ft. height
- ◆ Approximately 75 ft. spacing, adjusted as needed for LED
- ◆ Steel fluted poles with wide decorative base
- ◆ Black
- ◆ **Cutoff achieved with LED “aiming”**

"Pendant" style lights with a mast arm should be utilized north of Hyde Square to Jackson Square and south of Carolina Avenue to Forest Hills. These fixtures would complete the pattern that already exists on adjacent streets. Pendant lights should have the following characteristics:

- ◆ 23 to 28 ft. height
- ◆ 100 to 120 ft. spacing
- ◆ Steel fluted poles with decorative base
- ◆ Black
- ◆ Full cutoff
- ◆ LED if available

Light spacing should be coordinated with tree spacing for both retail and residential areas.

Both lighting types are City standards; therefore, their use will not place any additional burden on the Public Works Department



*Example of pedestrian scale light fixture with cap*



*Example of pendant lighting fixture.*

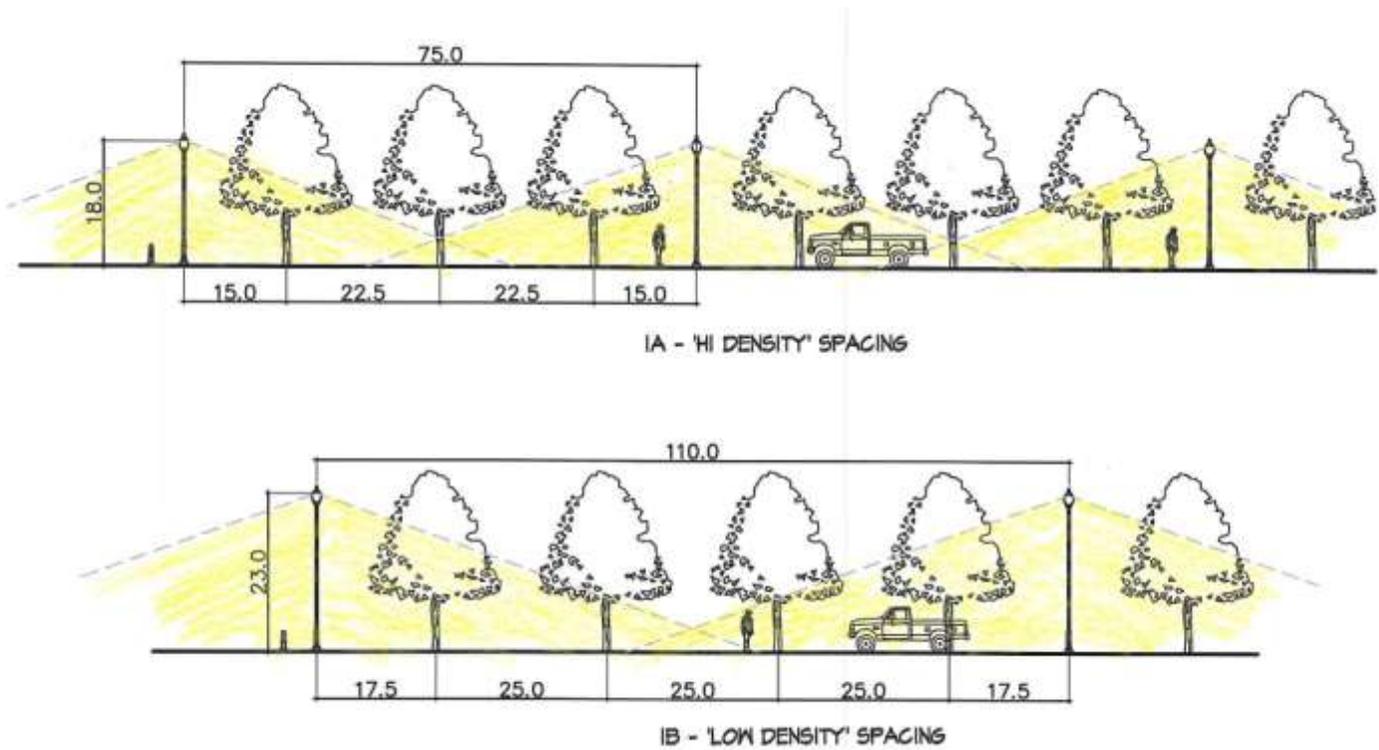


Illustration of strategies for street lighting and trees for Hyde Square south to Carolina Street (top) and for other parts of the corridor (bottom).

#### A Sense of Green

The Centre/South corridor boasts a distinct “sense of green,” that moves well beyond the simple presence of street trees. Some areas within the corridor benefit from a backdrop of trees, such as those located in the adjacent open spaces of Arnold Arboretum, the Jamaicaway, and Southwest Corridor. These are augmented by trees on private property, especially in small front and side yards of residences. Commercial areas, meanwhile, often rely on public street trees to provide shade, environmental, and aesthetic benefits. The “sense of green” contributes greatly to the livability and feel of the neighborhood as an urban oasis. Through the Action Plan, the “sense of green” was identified as having four components (opposite page).



1. Trees in the distance
2. Trees on private property
3. Traditional street trees
4. Lawns and shrubbery

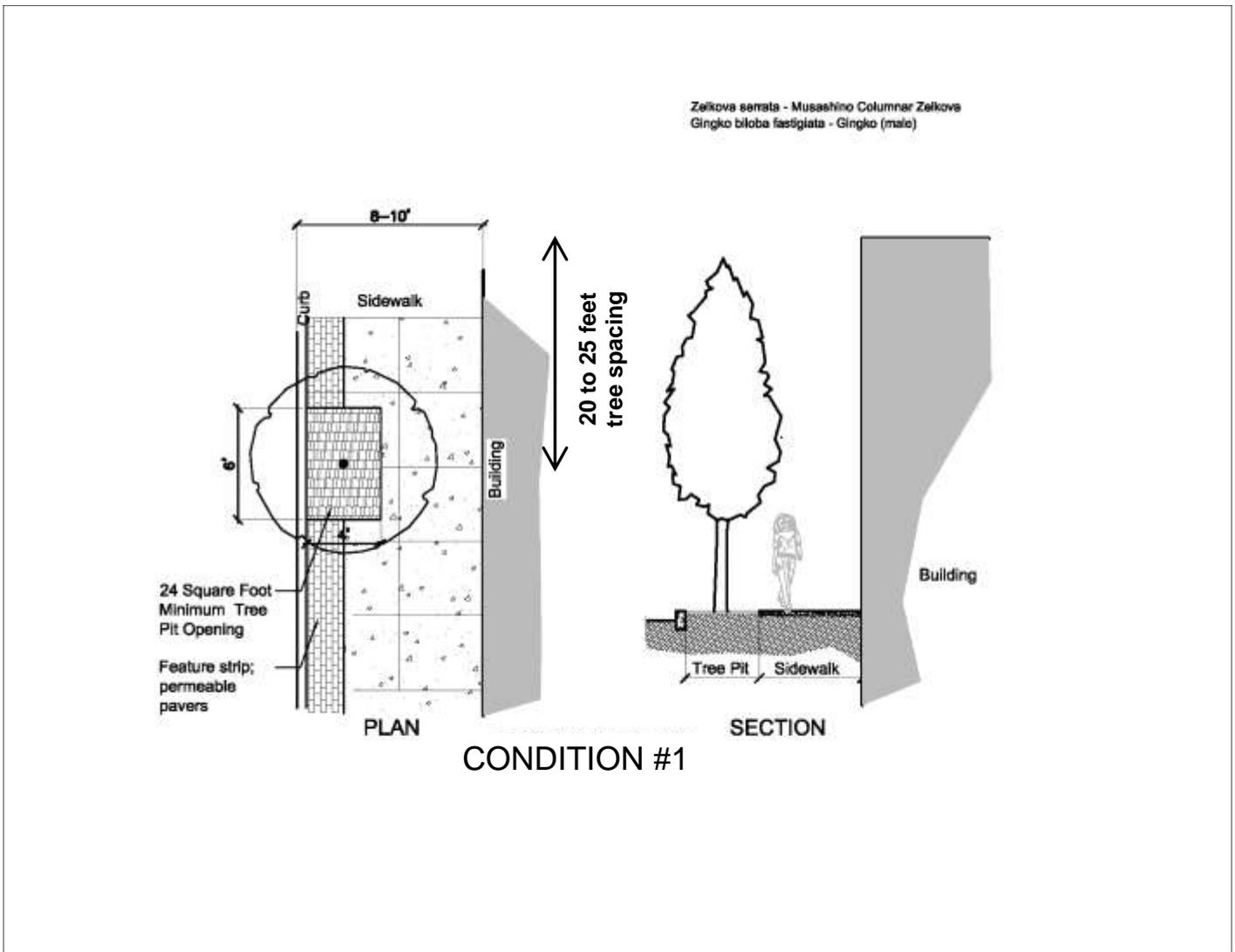
Street Trees

Street trees on sidewalks were seen as important for their contribution to the “sense of green”, but more specifically for the canopy and shade they could provide. The Guidelines recognize that this could be provided by street trees either in tree pits on the sidewalk, or from trees on private property whose canopies extended to provide sidewalk coverage. The Guidelines endorse a combination of both scenarios.

Trees that provide wide canopies were preferred in all but commercial areas, but trees need water, air, a growing medium and nutrients to thrive in an urban environment. Adding large shade trees in residential areas would enhance JP’s image as an “urban oasis.” They would contribute to sustainability goals by reducing the heat island effect within the corridor, improve both the air quality and the natural environment, and aid in increasing stormwater infiltration.



“A Sense of Green” Street Tree Analysis



Condition 1 street trees include Zelkovas and Ginkgo biloba.



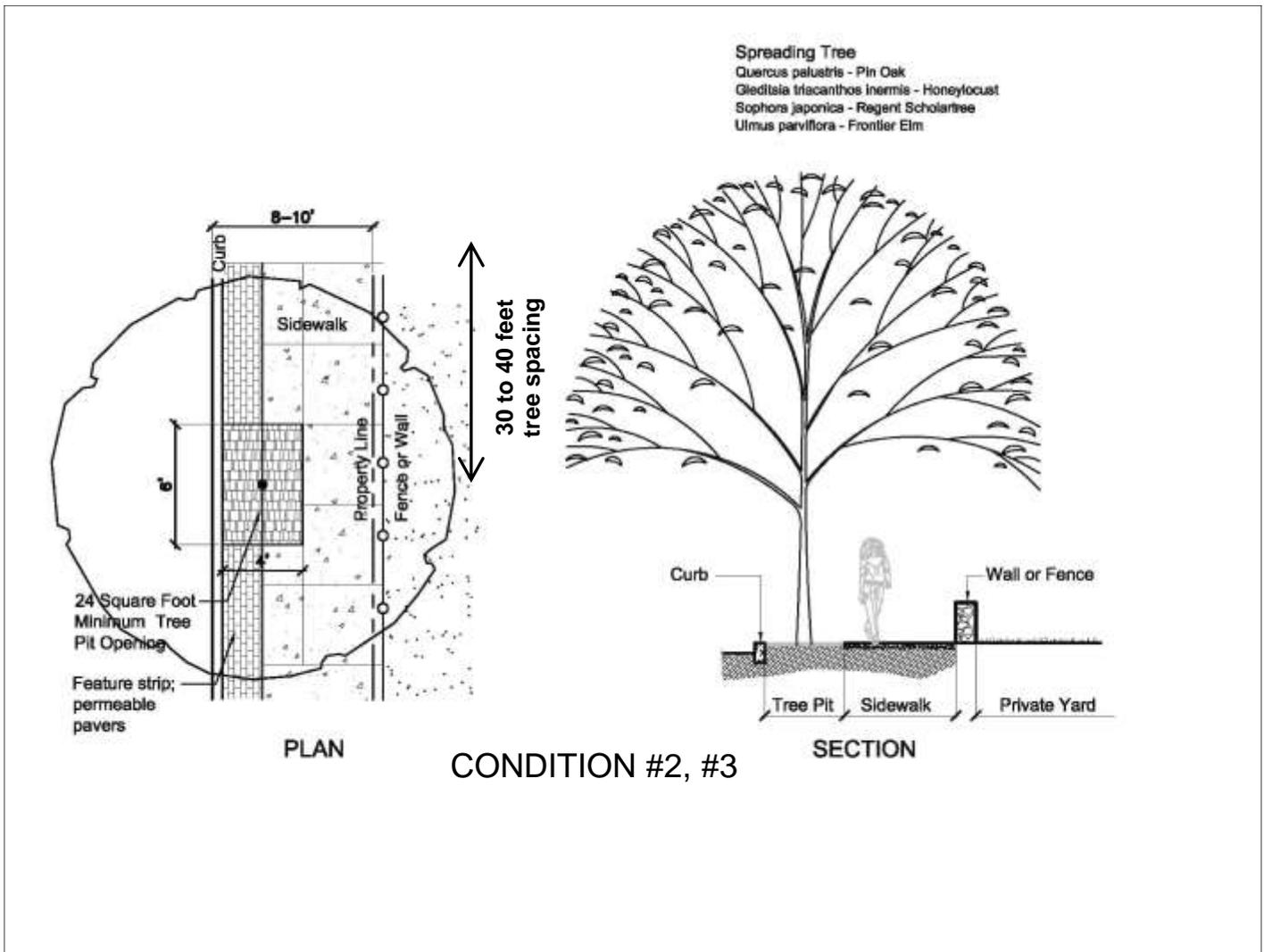
*Ginkgo biloba*



*Zelkova*

In commercial areas, trees should be placed and species chosen both to ensure storefront visibility and preserve sidewalk space. Along the Centre/ South corridor, recommendations were developed for three separate conditions.

Condition 1 covers trees on narrow sidewalks, especially in commercial zones. In these areas, buildings are typically located at the lot line and there are concerns that a spreading tree canopy would obscure building signs. All species in commercial areas should be chosen to have an upright form and branching should begin 8 to 10 feet above the walk surface. There are concerns that trees with a horizontal branching structure will obscure building signs and interfere with building facades. The Guidelines recommend trees with vase-shaped (*Zelkova serrata*) or narrow upright (*Ginkgo biloba*) canopies be planted as long as they are “high-branched” so



Condition 2 & 3 street trees include Honey Locust, Pin Oak, Frontier Elm, and Sophora.

as not to interfere with pedestrians or street-level signage. Young trees typically do not pose a detriment to visibility, but as trees mature and their crowns broaden, they should be able to be pruned so that visibility to the storefronts is maintained. In commercial areas, trees should also be planted along the neutral pier between tenant spaces. On sidewalks less than 7 ft. 6 in. from building edge to face of curb, street trees should not be planted.

Condition 2 is for places where a wider, spreading canopy is desirable. This condition typically involves sidewalks in residential or other areas where buildings do not abut the sidewalk. The Guidelines recommend providing repetition of species — 6 or more of the same species in a row with consistent spacing — in order to provide spatial organization, reinforce horizontal and vertical enclosure, and provide visual unity along sections of the street.



Pin Oak

Sophora



Honey Locust



Frontier Elm

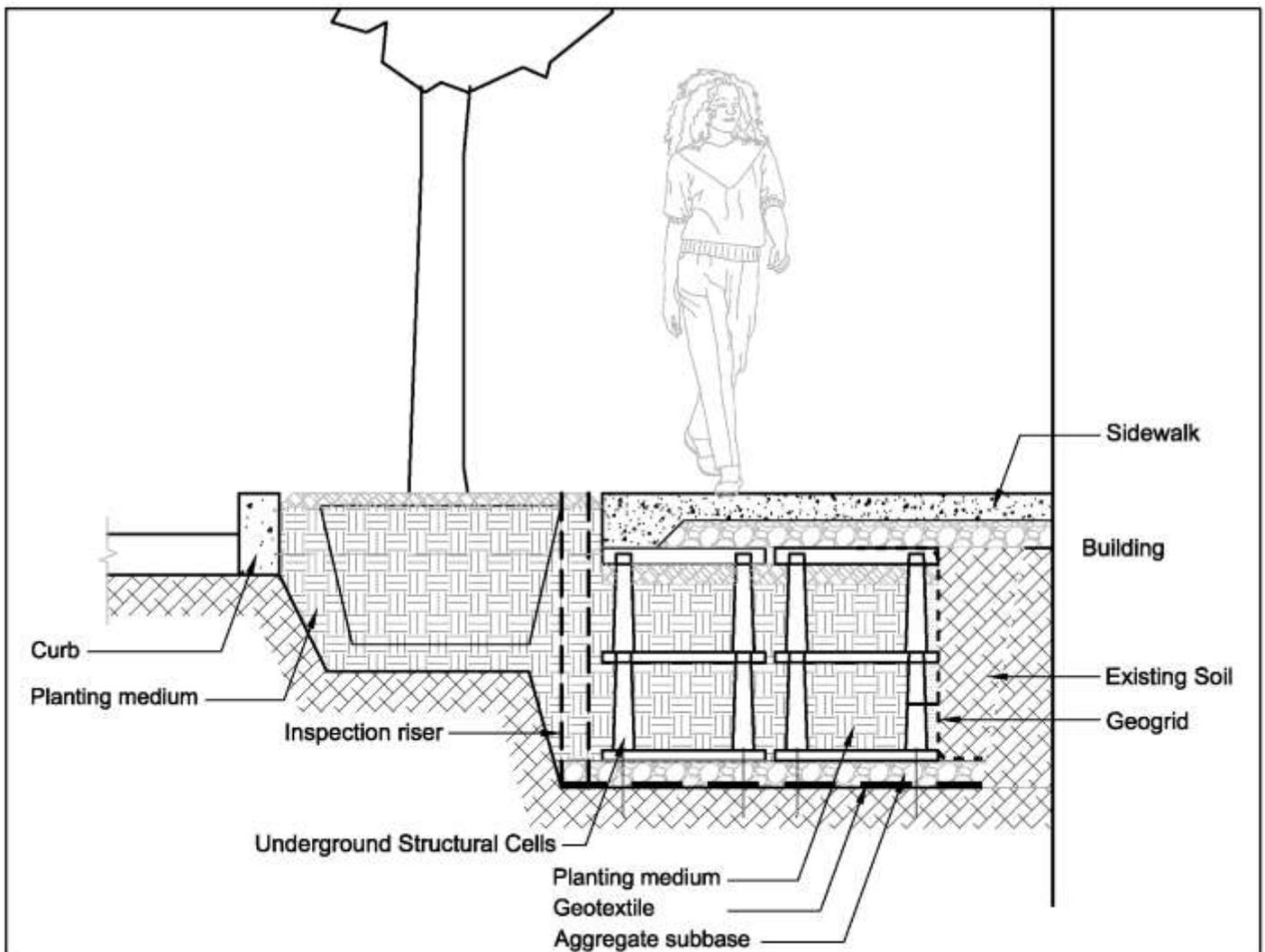
Condition 3 is for the largest trees, and typically involves wider sidewalks, or uniquely created places to thrive. Larger tree pits (5 feet by 8 feet openings) are required for these to thrive.

The Guidelines recommend trees should be:

- ◆ Spaced appropriately: 30 to 40 ft. on center for Condition 2 & 3;
- ◆ 20 to 25 ft. on center for Condition 1
- ◆ Plant variety throughout the corridor
- ◆ Group by species to create uniformity and maximize visual impact

#### Structural Cell Tree Pit

For sustainability and tree health, alternative technologies were recommended for further exploration. As shown below, installing underground structural cells can support the sidewalk, while providing additional growing medium for tree roots to grow into. Recapturing



*Illustration of underground structural cells for root growth beneath sidewalk.*

rainwater into tree pits using perforated pipes and rain gardens wherever possible also helps to promote tree growth. Permeable pavers may also be used on sidewalks surrounding tree pits to improve rainwater capture and infiltration.

The City of Boston requires a minimum sidewalk width of 7 ft. 6 in.(inclusive of the curb) in order to plant a street tree. In order to achieve the highest level of growth and health of the street trees, methods to extend the volume of soil around the tree roots and prevent soil compaction will be used.

#### Trees behind the Sidewalk

In conditions where the sidewalk is too narrow or busy to plant street trees, or to complement trees planted at the curb, locations where trees can be planted on private property behind the sidewalk should be identified.

**Boston’s tree planting program can provide for a tree on private property,** free of charge, if the property owner agrees to maintain the tree.

Of particular interest are those locations where asphalt parking lots abut directly against the sidewalk. Tree planting in these areas as part of a buffer between the parking and sidewalk are important to achieve a continuity of green along the corridor.



*Landscaped buffers between parking lots and the sidewalk can screen views to the lot as well as establish a stronger street edge.*

#### Benches

The community selected black-finish steel benches with four-leg configuration and center arm rest, bolted to the sidewalk, for installation throughout the corridor. This timeless look is well-suited to benches and other improvements that are expected to be in place for decades. Artist-designed benches add a splash of individuality to a location and help distinguish a particular neighborhood. The City and community should identify locations for artist-designed benches, to take advantage of the positive impact these furnishings can have on public spaces.



*Example of bench with center armrest, which divides bench into smaller segments for sitting.*

#### Trash Receptacles

It is recommended that the City-standard solar compactor for trash disposal be installed throughout the corridor. Newer units, with a combination



*City standard solar compactor (right) and combination trash/recycling unit (left)*

recycling receptacle are being tested in parts of Boston. Where possible, these units shown below are recommended for installation in the Centre/South corridor. The City should coordinate with the community as it develops a plan for locating units that are assigned to Jamaica Plain.



*Example of bike corral installation. Corrals typically can park 10 to 20 bicycles, using space otherwise occupied by one or two cars.*

*Photo credit:  
Jonathon Maus, BikePortland.org*

### Bicycle Racks

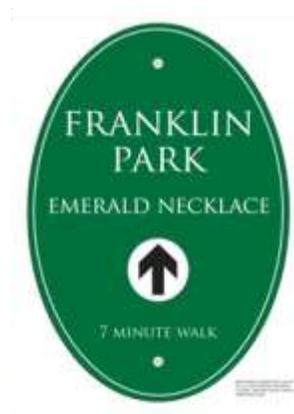
Similar to street bench recommendations, the City-standard post with circle, black finish is recommended for installation throughout the corridor. As Jamaica Plain has perhaps the highest level of bicycle use in the City of Boston, bicycle racks should be ubiquitous, especially near commercial areas and other corridor destinations. The City and community should also continue to explore locations where there may be an opportunity to replace an on-street automobile parking space with bicycle racks. The “bicycle corral” concept has been successfully implemented in other cities with cooperation from local businesses.



*City-standard bicycle rack*

### Newspaper Box Corrals

The high number of newspaper boxes along the corridor, particularly in commercial nodes, creates an eyesore in the pedestrian zone. Identify locations where groupings of newspaper boxes can be located and use black finished metal structures, bolted to the sidewalk. In Boston, no more than five are permitted in a single location. Proposed sidewalk extensions are ideal locations for newspaper boxes.



### Wayfinding

The objectives of a coordinated wayfinding plan are two-fold. First, signs should efficiently direct drivers to off-street parking lots. Second, pedestrian signs and maps should be located at key decision points, such as parking lots, bus stops, streets linking to T stations, and streets linking to Jamaica Pond and adjacent parks. Together, these elements serve to improve and maintain circulation throughout the neighborhood and connect visitors to local business and

other attractions.

The addition of blue P for parking signs to direct drivers to off-street lots are recommended, which turn drivers into pedestrians as quickly as possible and encourages the park-once-and-walk approach. Other signage should build on existing sign systems, such as JP Walks, MBTA and Emerald Necklace Conservancy, to locate information at critical decision points along the corridor. These locations should include off-street parking lots, bus shelters, and at intersections with streets linking to MBTA Orange Line stations and Jamaica Pond. The enhanced bus stops from the Route 39 Corridor Improvement Program also are ideal locations for coordination with wayfinding signage.

#### Public Art

Home to many artists and art organizations, Jamaica Plain residents clearly view art as an important expression of the community. A clear desire is to continue to develop artistic expression as part of the streetscape. The Centre South Corridor is home to numerous existing murals and public art, which **are an important feature in the neighborhood's identity. While seeking to** encourage the public expression of the Arts, the community wants to allow for the organic development of artistic expression. As places or nodes are developed, room for the arts should be provided, but should not be proscriptive.

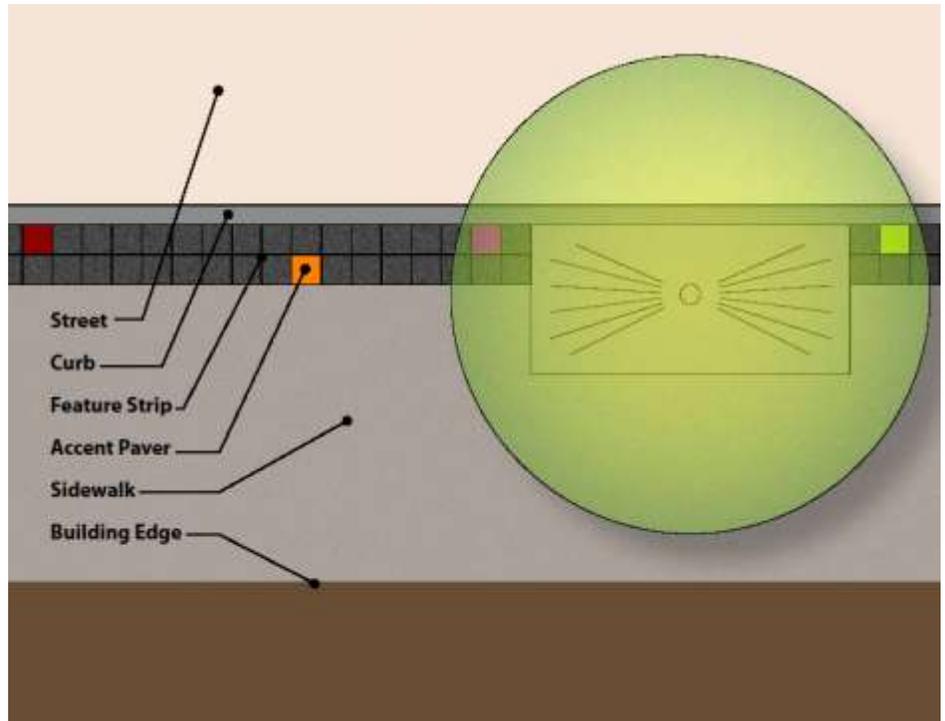
One coordinated approach to public art recommended was the creation of a Jamaica Plain Arts Walk from Jackson Square to Forest Hills. The large number of murals along the corridor could serve as a foundation, with additional locations identified for major art installations at critical decision



*Markers for murals, many of which are on side streets, can also be substituted for pavers in the feature strip as part of the Art Walk.*

*There are a number of theories regarding the origin of the name "Jamaica Plain". In the late 17th century, the name "Jamaica" first appears for the area of Roxbury between Stony Brook and the Great Pond. A well-known theory traces it to "Jamaica rum", a reference to Jamaica cane sugar's role in the Triangle Trade of sugar, rum, and slaves. However, a more likely explanation is that "Jamaica" is an Anglicization of the name Kuchamakin, regent to Chickatawbut, the underage sachem (chief) of the Massachusetts tribe.*

*Special pavers that call out aspects of the rich cultural heritage of Jamaica Plain can also be included as part of the Art Walk.*



*Individual pavers in the feature strip can be substituted with colored accent pavers or art pavers.*

points along the corridor. These ultimately could assist in navigation as well as enhancing the environment. The artist-designed benches described previously could supplement those elements. The proposed sidewalk feature strip could not only mark the path, but also be used as a framework for adding small, two-dimensional art elements along the corridor. Pavers in the feature strip could also be swapped out for identifiers of adjacent murals.

**JP’s many historic features could be incorporated into the Arts Walk.**

Partnerships should be explored to develop smartphone-accessible links or downloadable podcasts in conjunction with an evolving Art Walk.

*Additional Recommendations for Private Property*

*Fences, Walls and Hedges*

Boundary elements at the back of sidewalk, particularly for residential properties, form an important part of the streetscape by reinforcing the boundary between what is private and what is public. When done well, these elements also add to the beauty and visual richness of the streetscape. Unfortunately, the use of chain-link fencing along the corridor does not add to the beauty of the street. We recommend that, as opportunities for replacement of chain link fencing become available, that it be replaced with black metal picket-type fences already found along the corridor, or other appropriate materials.



*Examples of fencing types found throughout the corridor: chain-link fencing (right) should be replaced as opportunities arise.*

### Awnings

In addition to their visual impact, awnings can provide shade for pedestrians and reduce solar gain on the large windows typically found on commercial buildings. Particularly on narrow sidewalks where there is not sufficient room for street trees, awnings can provide shade as well as protection from rain.

The use of awnings, rather than window blinds, also reduces glare allowing for greater transparency between the interior and exterior of storefronts; a desirable quality in a commercial district.



*Awnings can provide shade on sidewalks too narrow for street trees.*

### Storefront Windows

A high degree of transparency between the sidewalk and the interior of storefronts is found in the most successful pedestrian environments. Windows that are blocked with signs, blinds and impermeable displays reduce this transparency and are to be discouraged.

Where security screens are used, the open grill screens, rather than solid, are preferred because they maintain the transparency as well as allow light to spill out onto the sidewalk at night.



*Transparency in storefronts contributes to a vibrant street environment.*

The two Main Streets organizations working within the corridor are continually available to merchants and property owners to aid with storefront improvements. The City has developed standards and programs which encourage design using National Main Street Standards and can help fund improvements. Designs encourage transparency, including lighting, and contribute to commercial vibrancy. Visual barriers are discouraged and security grills are prohibited in Main Streets-funded projects.