ACTIVATING COLUMBIA ROAD: REFRAMING A MISSING LINK

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Left to right: Christine Cousineau, Marah Holland, Lev McCarthy, Aqsa Butt, Xianzheng Fang, Carolyn Meklenburg, Megan Morrow, and Tony Lechuga.
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At first glance, Columbia Road appears to be a standard arterial road, running 2.4 miles through Dorchester and Roxbury, MA. However, its large width, high traffic, and sparse landscaping belie both its rich history and future potential. Home to several historic landmarks, including Boston’s oldest house, the Columbia Road corridor is bordered by two large parks, Franklin Park and Moakley Park. Franklin Park is part of the Emerald Necklace, a series of parks designed in the late 19th century by Frederick Law Olmsted, known as the father of American landscape architecture. Olmsted envisioned that a verdant Columbia Road would serve as a key link in this network, yet this vision was never realized. Instead, Columbia Road was widened to host a major streetcar route through the 1950s before becoming the four-lane road it is today.

Inspired by this unfinished historical plan, the City of Boston, as well as several other planning, design, and advocacy organizations, has proposed projects to turn this vision of a greenway into a reality. LivableStreets Alliance (LSA), a nonprofit 501(c)(3) advocacy organization dedicated to improving transportation systems in the greater Boston region, is one such organization committed to helping the City of Boston realize this vision.

Rather than add to this wealth of existing information, our Field Projects team set out to consolidate previous studies, recommendations, and outreach methods in an effort to inform LSA’s future community engagement along the corridor. It was our hope that by synthesizing current information and analyzing themes across existing planning processes, we could ultimately help LSA influence the City to prioritize action along this corridor. Our research methods included conducting a literature review of existing conditions and five primary documents, holding semi-structured interviews with key contributors to each document, reviewing case studies, and performing related spatial analysis through GIS mapping.

The following primary documents were identified in partnership with LSA as the most comprehensive and relevant plans or projects relating to Columbia Road:

- Fairmount Indigo Planning Initiative: Corridor Plan
- Boston Green Links
- Go Boston 2030 Vision and Action Plan
- Fulfilling the Promise: Community Building and the Emerald Necklace
- Imagine Boston 2030: A Plan for the Future of Boston

These documents were produced by planning agencies, private firms, and community organizers. Each document identifies particular needs, visions, and goals for Columbia Road. Our team interviewed key contributors from each document to gain a deeper understanding of the planning processes and outcomes. Along with these documents, we reviewed three case studies of comparable projects. Lastly, our research explored how a redesign could benefit mobility, open space, public health, and placemaking. Columbia Road is an important transportation corridor, so we sought to emphasize mobility in a multi-modal analysis of walkability, pedestrian experience, bicycle infrastructure, bus access and use, commuter rail access and use, and car use and parking.
Following this research process our analysis revealed three major themes:

- **Framing & Anchoring:** While the historic Olmsted connection is a big draw for architects and planners, it does not take into account current residents’ wants and needs. Similarly, the communities surrounding Columbia Road do not identify with the “Columbia Road corridor” as a distinct place or cohesive community.

- **Siloed Interests and Agencies:** The separate jurisdictions and goals among city agencies, planning processes, adjacent neighborhoods, and community interests complicate the process of addressing such a geographically expansive and socially complex corridor like Columbia Road.

- **Community Engagement:** The majority of the processes behind the primary documents included a community component. However, community engagement has yet to be done in a way that is corridor-wide, multi-lingual, and approachable for all residents.

These findings have lead us to make the following recommendations. First and foremost, we believe there is a need to demystify the idea of the Emerald Necklace and to reframe the purpose and motivations behind the Columbia Road project. We recommend moving away from this narrative and instead using community wants and needs to drive the decisions made for Columbia Road. Through a robust community engagement process, residents’ thoughts could provide a compelling, and more relevant, narrative for Columbia Road. Our research showed a significant opportunity to improve all modes of transportation along the corridor, as well as climate responsiveness, placemaking, and environmental health factors.

We also recommend thoughtfully questioning the motives for this project before proceeding with any redesign of Columbia Road. Defining who this project is for, why it is important for the project to move forward, and how it should be framed will ensure that the redesign will serve the contemporary needs of the corridor rather than simply follow the trajectory of a historical plan.

Once the project is reframed, the engagement process can follow. In order to ensure that the project will serve the best interests of the surrounding neighborhoods, community engagement processes must work across neighborhood boundaries, within related planning processes, and in collaboration with multiple city departments. We recommend enhancing communication between planning projects, such as those for Franklin and Moakley Park, and integrating those projects into the community engagement process for Columbia Road. This includes working collaboratively with the MBTA to dispel concerns of competing transit modes.

Lastly, we recommend creating and using multilingual outreach materials for all community engagement activities, building relationships with trusted community stakeholders, and collaborating with key entities along the corridor to ensure that the project will meet the needs of people who currently live on or around Columbia Road. We believe this expanded scope, combined with a comprehensive engagement process, will provide the City with the public input and support needed to push this project toward implementation.

The factors that make the Columbia Road corridor a challenge to tackle - its history, diversity, high volume traffic, and sheer length - are the same factors that will make an eventual redesign that much more impactful. A redesign has the potential to improve mobility access, public health outcomes, climate resiliency, and open space access. Our team hopes that after years of related planning and conceptualizing, the City of Boston can use this synthesized report to reframe, reflect, and focus in on this project.
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1. INTRODUCTION
The Emerald Necklace
Inspired by the example of Central Park in New York City, the City of Boston set out to establish a series of parks in the late 19th century. To accomplish this, they turned to the planner of Central Park himself, Frederick Law Olmsted, known as the father of American landscape architecture. Olmsted proceeded to construct a park system for the Boston Park Commission between 1878 and 1895. The core of this network came to be known as the Emerald Necklace, including five major parks and four connecting parkways. Today, the Emerald Necklace winds through the city of Boston and parts of Brookline from the Back Bay through Jamaica Plain, Roxbury and into Dorchester.¹

In 1897 plan to continue the park system, Olmsted envisioned that Columbia Road would be a greenway. This proposed greenway would connect Franklin Park, a key part of the Emerald Necklace, to the Boston Harbor, one of Boston’s greatest natural assets. Like the other connecting parkways, it would serve as a link in the larger Emerald Necklace network.²

This vision was never realized. Unlike the other parkways, Columbia Road was an existing street, with quickly expanding commercial activities and traffic needs. Although it was widened in 1897, it still lacked the road space needed to become a true greenway and was instead designed similarly to Blue Hill Avenue, with a streetcar line in the center.³⁴

¹ Zaitzevsky, Frederick Law Olmsted and the Boston Park System.
² Zaitzevsky, Frederick Law Olmsted and the Boston Park System.
³ Ibid.

Figure 1: Plan of the Emerald Necklace, 1894

Figure 2: The 1897 Plan of Columbia Road
Columbia Road has drastically changed since Olmsted’s time. What used to be a dirt boulevard for carriages and pedestrians is now a busy thoroughfare bisected by a sparsely planted median. Despite these changes, there is no doubt that a redesign of the corridor could still offer opportunities to improve mobility, public health, environmental justice, and placemaking along the corridor.

To this end, the City of Boston, as well as several other planning, design, and advocacy organizations, have proposed projects to turn this vision of a greenway into a reality.
Figure 6: Historic Timeline of Development along Columbia Road
LivableStreets Alliance

LivableStreets Alliance (LSA) is one of several organizations committed to helping the City of Boston realize this vision of transforming Columbia Road into a greenway. LSA is a nonprofit 501(c) (3) advocacy organization dedicated to improving transportation systems in the greater Boston region. LSA approaches their work with the knowledge that transportation is integrally linked to economic justice and public health. The organization advocates for solutions that help make communities more connected and livable for everyone.

LSA was established in 2004 by a group of volunteers working out of a bedroom in Cambridge. At this time, many organizations were focused on improving the use of streets in the Boston Metro area for a single mode, like walking or biking. LSA became the first multi-modal advocacy organization in Boston, focusing on the inclusive vision of “streets are for people.” This concept meant working not only to improve conditions for people riding bikes in Boston, but also to address issues for people walking and taking transit.

Today, LSA’s work has evolved into three priority programs: the Emerald Network, Vision Zero, and Better Buses. The Emerald Network is a proposed 200+ mile network of shared-use paths in the Greater Boston area; it builds upon the original Emerald Necklace, but extends beyond Boston proper to include suburban areas. When completed, the Emerald Network will be a system of safe, primarily non-motorized pathways that parallel routes in which many people already travel for commutes, pleasure, and exercise. Columbia Road is part of this vision as a proposed greenway.

The needs of today’s Columbia Road have shifted significantly since the 1800s. Therefore, LSA aims to encourage a renewed community engagement process to inform the pending redesign.

Unfortunately, the community has experienced several false starts over the years, but luckily, in 2019, there finally appears to be a confluence of planning action in the area. Plans are underway for Franklin Park and Moakley Park, located at either terminus of Columbia Road, the City of Boston is hiring twenty new transportation department staff, and the City has dedicated funding for this redesign project.

To this end, our Field Projects team has partnered with LSA to synthesize past plans, assess existing information, and provide recommendations for the Columbia Road corridor.
Greenways
The term ‘greenway’ can be used to refer to many types of corridors, including linear parks, like the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway in downtown Boston, off-road walking and biking routes, like the East Coast Greenway, or simply corridors with the ability to connect people and places. The Emerald Network recognizes four different types of greenways: park path, off-road, neighborway and greenway connectors. What all these types have in common are features that promote active transportation and a sense of place, such as connections to parks, lighting and seating, safe crossings, and plantings and street trees.

Greenways have the potential to deliver benefits in five areas:

- **Mobility** Greenways increase access to safe walking and cycling routes, extending the reach of multi-modal transportation networks.
- **Quality of Life** Access to green space and increased physical activity benefit both physical and mental health of greenway users.
- **Economic Development** Greenways provide better access to both retail and job opportunities; for every million dollars spent on greenways, sidewalks, and bicycle facilities, jobs are created.
- **Healthy Environment** Increased green infrastructure such as trees, bushes, plants, or grasses have the potential to reduce flood risk and air pollution.
- **Equity and Opportunity** Greenways can attract investment to neighborhoods by connecting people to transit and jobs that are otherwise inaccessible.

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7 LivableStreets Alliance, “Emerald Network.”
8 Emerald Network, “Home.”
Project Goals
Columbia Road has a long history, a complicated present, and a future filled with opportunity. Over the past decade, organizations including the Boston Planning and Development Agency, the Boston Department of Transportation, and the Boston Society of Architects have contributed to the conversation surrounding Columbia Road and the vision for what it could become. Rather than add to this vision, our research focused on consolidating previous studies, recommendations, and outreach methods in an effort to inform LSA’s future community engagement along the corridor. This consolidation will not only better inform future action, but it will also help demonstrate how the City of Boston is working towards its published goals and plans. We hope this synthesis will ultimately help LSA influence the city to prioritize action on this project.

In producing this report, the following questions guided our research:

1. What data and information currently exist for the Columbia Road corridor?
2. What are LSA and the Columbia Road stakeholders’ short and long term priorities?
3. How can LSA effectively engage and communicate with those who live along and utilize Columbia Road?
4. How can our team develop materials and synthesize data to best serve LSA’s community engagement strategies?
5. How can we package our findings in a way that helps LSA in their ultimate goal to influence the city to prioritize Columbia Road?
2. METHODS
The primary methods for this project included:

- Research and Literature Review
- Document Analysis and Interviews
- Case Studies
- Mapping

These methods informed an in-depth review of existing conditions, past planning projects, and community outreach. With the understanding that the surrounding neighborhoods may have experienced “survey fatigue,” we chose not to seek further community input for the purposes of our report. Instead, we turned to those who had previously engaged with the corridor to understand their findings and any actions their work may have inspired.

**Research and Literature Review**
Our online research and literature review identified existing conditions along the corridor including demographics, streetscape, environmental justice, public health, placemaking and public art, current development and planning projects, and mobility contexts.

**Document Analysis and Interviews**
The majority of our research focused on five primary documents that were identified in partnership with LSA as the most comprehensive and relevant plans or projects relating to Columbia Road.

**Primary Documents:**
1. Fairmount Indigo Planning Initiative: Corridor Plan
2. Boston Green Links
4. Fulfilling the Promise: Community Building and the Emerald Necklace
5. Imagine Boston 2030: A Plan for the Future of Boston

These documents were produced by planning agencies and community organizers that previously identified needs, visions, and goals for Columbia Road. By reviewing the online documentation and reports related to these documents, and by conducting interviews, as described below, our team was able to identify previously utilized practices for engaging and communicating with those living along Columbia Road.

We conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with key contributors from each of the five primary documents. This process allowed us to gather data on the motivations, visions, and goals of each of these primary documents.
CURRENT DATA
What data and information currently exist for the Columbia Road corridor?

STAKEHOLDERS + PRIORITIES
What are LSA and the Columbia Road stakeholders’ short and long term priorities?

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOOLS
How can LSA effectively engage and communicate with those who live along and utilize Columbia Road?

SYNTHESIZING DATA FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
How can our team develop materials and synthesize data to best serve LSA’s community engagement strategies?

PRIORITIZING COLUMBIA ROAD
How can we package our findings in a way that helps LSA in their ultimate goal to influence the city to prioritize Columbia Road?

Figure 11: Guiding Research Questions
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Case Studies
We reviewed three case studies of comparable urban greenway projects in Oakland, CA, Brooklyn, NY, and Los Angeles, CA.

Mapping
Our final research method employed mapping to assess existing conditions, understand the neighborhood context, and to identify gaps in resources. When available, we utilized existing maps included in previous reports.

We addressed the following topics:

Existing Conditions
Existing conditions, including site context, neighborhood and sub-neighborhood boundaries, demographics, locations of civic institutions, land use, street views, and nearby development projects.

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3. CONTEXT
Location and Demographics
Columbia Road is a major arterial road extending for 2.4-miles from the eastern corner of Franklin Park to Kosciuszko Circle at the southern point of Moakley Park. It extends through the Boston neighborhoods of Roxbury and Dorchester (see Figure 14). Within these neighborhoods, there are sub-neighborhoods which are especially useful for our analysis, as this is the scale at which residents and organizations typically relate (see Figure 15). One such sub-neighborhood, Upham’s Corner, is paramount to our research, as Columbia Road runs directly through the primary intersection that serves as the commercial and civic hub of the Upham’s Corner sub-neighborhood.

We defined the Columbia Road study area as census block groups within a ¼-mile of the roadway. Following this definition, the Columbia Road corridor consists of 44 census block groups. The corridor has low average incomes (see Figure 16), is composed of majority African American residents (see Figure 17), and has several areas where over 25% or more of residents are linguistically isolated (see Figure 18). The US Census Bureau uses the term linguistic isolation to describe households where English speaking is limited. The purpose of this measure is to determine where there are households who might need assistance to communicate with government, health providers, and social services. Other socially vulnerable populations in the corridor include children, seniors, and residents with disabilities. Nine percent of residents are over the age of 65, 23.6% are children under the age of 18, and 15.6% have a disability. Disability metrics include those residents that have hearing, vision, cognitive, ambulatory, self-care, and/or independent living difficulties. Please note that disability metrics were only available at the census tract level.

1 Siegel et al., “Language Use and Linguistic Isolation: Historical Data and Methodological Issues.”
2 U.S. Census Bureau, “American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.”
Columbia Road extends for 2.4-miles through Dorchester and Roxbury, Massachusetts, two municipalities within the City of Boston.

Source: MassGIS

Figure 12: Locus Map: Greater Context of Columbia Road

Columbia Road extends for 2.4-miles through Dorchester and Roxbury, Massachusetts, two municipalities within the City of Boston.
We defined the study area as the 44 census block groups within 1/4 mile of Columbia Road. A quarter mile is a common standard used for accessibility.
Columbia Road runs through three neighborhoods within the City of Boston: Roxbury, North Dorchester, and South Dorchester.
Five sub-neighborhoods border Columbia Road.

Figure 15: City of Boston Sub-Neighborhoods

Five sub-neighborhoods border Columbia Road.
Average household incomes along Columbia Road are lower than average compared with the City of Boston as a whole. The highest average income in the study area is $120,251 while the highest average income in the City of Boston is $336,169.
The majority of block groups bordering Columbia Road have a predominantly African American population. However, the northern portion of the road is bordered by majority White block groups and one majority Hispanic block group.
Several block groups along Columbia Road qualify as areas of linguistic isolation. The US Census Bureau uses the term linguistic isolation to describe households where English speaking is limited.

Figure 18: Linguistic Isolation

Source: MassGIS, MassEOEEA
Among residents in the Columbia Road corridor, 15.6% have a disability. Disability metrics include those residents that have hearing, vision, cognitive, ambulatory, self-care, and/or independent living difficulties. Please note that disability metrics were only available at the census tract level.

Figure 19: Percentage of Population with a Disability by Census Tract
Among residents in the Columbia Road corridor, 23.6% are children under the age of 18. According to the City of Boston, Dorchester and Roxbury have some of the highest percentages of teenagers in the City of Boston.

Figure 20: Percentage of Population Under 18

Source: MassGIS, ACS 2017 (5-year)
Among residents in the Columbia Road corridor, 9.2% are over the age of 65.

Figure 21: Percentage of Population Over 65

Source: MassGIS, ACS 2017 (5-year)
There are a number of different civic institutions surrounding Columbia Road, with churches and schools outnumbering other institutions significantly.

Figure 22: Distribution of Civic Institutions
Columbia Road Streetscape Types

Kosciuszko Circle

About .5 miles of two vehicular lanes with narrow-to-no median

Massachusetts Ave

About .9 miles of four vehicular lanes, with concrete planter median

Fairmount Commuter Rail Overpass

About .8 miles of four vehicular lanes, with tree-lined median

Blue Hill Ave

Figure 23: Streetscape Types
Over its 2.4-mile length, the Columbia Road streetscape varies. Starting at the southwest end, Columbia Road begins at a four-way intersection with Blue Hill Avenue. At this terminus, Columbia Road begins with six vehicular lanes, leaving a narrowed median, a bicycle lane going east and bicycle sharrows going west entering the Blue Hill Ave intersection.

Progressing northeastward from that intersection, the road narrows and takes the form of the majority of the corridor: four travel lanes, two in each direction, with parallel parking on both sides, three-foot demarcated bike lanes in both directions, and about a 14-foot median. Most of the corridor exhibits this standard streetscape, varying only at intersections. At primary intersections, the median is narrowed to accommodate turning lanes, and the bike lanes typically merge into the vehicular lanes as sharrows.

The median strip between travel lanes alternates among the four streetscape types described in Figure 23. Starting again at the intersection of Blue Hill Ave, the first type is a 4-foot concrete platform at intersections, where the addition of vehicular turning lanes narrows the median. Beyond the intersections, the standard streetscape described above includes about a 14-foot raised median that in some places is concrete with raised circular concrete planters, and in others is planted with a single row of trees. The row of trees type is found for about .8 continuous miles from the intersection of Blue Hill Avenue up to the Fairmount Commuter Line overpass. For the next .9 miles the median contains concrete planters. At the intersection with Massachusetts Avenue, the type changes for the last time to a narrow (about 4-foot) concrete median with two, and then eventually four, lanes of vehicular traffic up to where Columbia Road terminates at the Kosciuszko Circle roundabout.

On either side of the roadway, there is substantial diversity in the land use of adjacent parcels. Starting again at the Blue Hill Avenue intersection, the adjacent properties transition quickly from commercial, in the intersection, to residential. Continuing along the corridor, land use is predominantly residential with clusters of commercial, retail, and institutional uses at the primary intersections. Housing types range from single-family homes with sizeable lawns, to triple-deckers, to three or four story row houses and block-wide apartment complexes. There are very few unbuilt parcels, exceptions being a few parking lots and one or two vacant lots. The mix of uses outlined above results in an irregular facade plane. Some blocks are rows of single-family homes with substantial setbacks and wide spaces between houses; some blocks are uniform four-story brick residential structures right along the sidewalk; and some blocks are dominated by triple-deckers divided by driveways.
Figure 25: Land Use Variation Along the Section of Columbia Road Between Blue Hill Ave and the Fairmount Commuter Rail Overpass
Environmental Justice Communities

Our team used spatial analysis, as well as relevant reports, such as the Boston Open Space and Recreation Plan 2015-2021, Carbon Free Boston, and Coastal Resilience Solutions for South Boston, to gain a comprehensive understanding of existing conditions in terms of environmental justice, open space, and climate change resilience.

According to The Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA), environmental justice refers to “the equal protection and meaningful involvement of all people with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies and the equitable distribution of environmental benefits.” The enforcement of environmental justice principles is devoted to enabling everyone to live in and enjoy a clean and healthful environment and to be free of environmental pollution.

EOEEA defines environmental justice populations as neighborhoods that meet one of more of the following criteria:

- Block group whose annual median household income is equal to or less than 65% of the statewide median ($62,072 in 2010)
- 25% or more of the residents identify as a race other than white
- 25% or more of households have no one over the age of 14 who speaks English only or very well

Open space, as defined by the state of Massachusetts, includes conservation land, recreation land, town forests, parkways, agriculture land, aquifer protection land, watershed protection land, cemeteries, and forest land.

The Boston Open Space and Recreation Plan 2015-2021 examined the environmental justice populations and open space access in all Boston neighborhoods, including Dorchester and Roxbury. We similarly evaluated these aspects, with a focus on the Columbia Road corridor.

The distribution of open space along Columbia Road shows a diversity of open space types and scales - from closely clustered small pocket parks to the city’s largest park: Franklin Park (see Figure 28). Franklin Park and Moakley Park, at opposite ends of the corridor, offer nearby residents a substantial opportunity to enjoy open space and recreation; however, the Columbia Road corridor, as it currently exists, does not make these parks easily accessible. A redesign of Columbia Road could play a role in increasing access both to these parks and to the waterfront, providing added benefits and opportunities to spend time outdoors.

The Boston Open Space and Recreation Plan 2015-2021 points out that small parks, which are the most frequent along Columbia Road, often lack active facilities, such as athletic fields and courts. This particularly affects teenagers, many of whom use local recreation facilities to exercise or spend time with friends; therefore, Dorchester and Roxbury, which have some of the highest percentages of teenagers in the city, would particularly benefit from enhanced outdoor recreation space.

Although open space is fairly accessible to Columbia Road, all block groups in the study area meet the other criteria for environmental justice populations. Areas close by also qualify, or are close to meeting the criteria (see figures X and X). It is generally believed that low-income and minority communities are at greater risk of environmental burdens and at the same time lack environmental assets in their neighborhoods. Therefore, our assessment of existing environmental justice populations indicates that these areas need to enhance access to and quality of open space in order to improve residents’ quality of life.

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3 Mass.gov, “Smart Growth / Smart Energy Toolkit Modules - Environmental Justice (EJ).”
4 Ibid.
5 Mass.gov, “Environmental Justice Communities in Massachusetts.”
6 Massachusetts Document Repository, “MassGIS Data: Protected and Recreational OpenSpace.”

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42 Activating Columbia Road: Reframing a Missing Link
We also analyzed the social vulnerability, greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) levels, and flood risk along the corridor. We used the Social Vulnerability Index created by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to examine socially vulnerable populations in nearby neighborhoods. Social vulnerability refers to “the resilience of communities when confronted by external stresses on human health, stresses such as natural or human-caused disasters, or disease outbreaks.” The entire Columbia Road corridor exhibits a high level of social vulnerability.

GHGs were analyzed using the Carbon Free Boston report, which states that quantities of GHGs per trip in areas close to the inner city are far smaller than in outlying neighborhoods due to the shorter average trip distance and increased mobility options (see Figure 30). However Columbia Road hosts an immense traffic flow as a wide corridor and has a weak connection to existing public transit options. Lastly, flood risks are concentrated mainly along the coastline, but they are present at the northern terminus of Columbia Road. The proximity to a high risk coastal area coupled with high social vulnerability promotes an urgency to propose strategies for future development that improve resiliency, environmental justice, and accessibility to open space.

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8 Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, “CDC’s Social Vulnerability Index.”
All block groups in our study area meet the criteria for environmental justice populations for at least one category. Minority and income are the two most frequently identified categories along Columbia Road.
All block groups in the study area meet criteria for environmental justice populations, with most of the block groups meeting the criteria for two or more categories.
Low-income and minority communities are at greater risk of environmental burdens and at the same time lack environmental assets in their neighborhoods. Our assessment indicates that these areas need to enhance access to and quality of open space in order to improve quality of life for residents.

Figure 28: Accessibility to Open Space

Source: MassGIS
The entire Columbia Road corridor exhibits a high level of social vulnerability, with most block groups exceeding the 0.76 SVI Score.

Figure 29: Social Vulnerability Index
The entire Columbia Road corridor exhibits a high level of social vulnerability, with most block groups exceeding the 0.76 SVI Score.
This map depicts the relationship among three factors: the number of trips made to/from Boston, the GHG released per trip, and the distance from Boston. A color represents two dimensions: the number of trips that start or end in Boston, and the quantity of GHG released per trip. The blue inner core has a greater number of trips, but much lower GHG emissions per trip compared with outer regions.

Inset Graph: The vertical axis is the average number of daily trips to/from Boston; the horizontal axis is the GHG released per trip.
Although Columbia Road is not in immediate danger of flooding, some of the block groups in our study area are at risk of flooding, increasing the vulnerability for residents in those areas.
Public Health and Environmental Health

Land use decisions have a major impact on the public health of communities. This link between public health and the environment is referred to as environmental health. The World Health Organization defines environmental health as “a holistic consideration for the physical, chemical, and biological factors external to a person, and all the related factors impacting behavior.” Obesity, asthma, and stress, are some of the primary public health outcomes that correlate with urban living conditions. Limited access to open space and walkable destinations can lead to higher rates of obesity. Particulates from industry and vehicular traffic can cause asthma, an effect that can be counteracted by increasing green space and urban tree canopy. Contact with green space is associated with multiple mental health benefits, including stress reduction, and decreased rates of depression.

Data at the neighborhood and zip-code level provide insights into the health outcomes of residents along the Columbia Road corridor. Each year, the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) releases a report describing the current state of health for Boston residents. The most recent report from 2016-2017 offers some valuable data highlighting some of the public health disparities across the city’s neighborhoods.

The Columbia Road corridor is entirely contained within the zip codes 02121 and 02125. This area fared the worst in 14 of the BPHC’s 28 public health indicators compared to the city as a whole. These indicators include: social determinants of health such as percentage of residents living below the poverty level and unemployment rates; environmental health outcomes such as asthma emergency-room visits among children and asthma hospitalizations among children; and chronic disease rates such as hospitalizations for asthma, diabetes, and heart disease.

10 World Health Organization, “Health Topics: Environmental Health.”
11 Dallat et al., “Urban Greenways Have the Potential to Increase Physical Activity Levels Cost-Effectively.”
12 Alcock et al., “Land Cover and Air Pollution Are Associated with Asthma Hospitalisations.”
13 Roe et al., “Green Space and Stress.”
There is a growing body of research indicating that the concentration of asthma-related emergency room visits and hospitalizations, such as we see in the neighborhoods surrounding Columbia Road, is caused by Traffic Related Air Pollution (TRAP).\textsuperscript{15,16}

As part of the Fairmount Indigo Planning Initiative, a research team from Harvard University School of Public Health rode bikes along the proposed Fairmount Greenway route at rush hour in the morning and afternoon wearing equipment to monitor NO2 and PM2.5 levels. Their route included a large portion of Columbia Road, from Washington Street up to Massachusetts Avenue. Their findings were consistent with those of nearby Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection monitoring sites, that show air pollutant and fine particulate levels well below the annual standard set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.\textsuperscript{17} Although the findings do not reveal harmful levels of particulates or air quality, the Harvard researchers recognized that there is room to improve the methods. More geographically-refined research methods could be part of a citizen-science project to uncover the environmental causes of unequal public health outcomes for residents of the Columbia Road corridor.

\textsuperscript{15} Alotaibi et al., “Traffic related air pollution and the burden of childhood asthma in the contiguous United States in 2000 and 2010.”
\textsuperscript{16} Khreis et al., “Exposure to traffic-related air pollution and risk of development of childhood asthma: A systematic review and meta-analysis.”
\textsuperscript{17} Daouda et al., “Exposure Assessment of Fairmount Greenway.”
Placemaking and Public Art

The Design Studio for Social Intervention (DS4SI) defines placemaking as, “grounded in having communities imagine their uses of places in ways that build on their site specificity.” Placemaking interventions include interactive public art installations and outdoor markets. We created the following map (Figure 40) to identify the community’s accessibility to placemaking initiatives along Columbia Road. Along the Columbia Road corridor, these activities centered around the road itself and community-driven needs, with many activities also taking place along the Fairmount Corridor, half a mile of which intersects with Columbia Road. Many activities took place at the Upham’s Corner Fairmount train station and in the Four Corners neighborhood, with plans to connect with creative placemaking efforts all along the Fairmount Corridor. Much of DS4SI’s role has been through their core partnership with the Fairmount Cultural Corridor, described in more detail in the Primary Documents section.

As an example, in 2014, DS4SI, partnered with the Fairmount Indigo CDC Collaborative (also described further in Primary Documents) to do creative placemaking at the Upham’s Corner and Four Corner stations, a follow-up to placemaking activities the Fairmount CDC Collaborative held in 2012. According to DS4SI, the following happened at the Four Corners/Geneva and Upham’s Corner Station:

“Over 400 residents, merchants, youth and community leaders came by and contributed their ideas about how to make the areas surrounding the station into more vibrant destinations.”

DS4SI believes it is important to think of placemaking within the context of spatial justice, and therefore uses their placemaking efforts to engage the community in deeper conversations about belonging and community. These engagements are important to the context of the Columbia Road corridor, which, as we established, is home to several vulnerable populations.

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18 Design Studio for Social Intervention, “Placemaking.”
19 Ibid.
20 Design Studio for Social Intervention, “Placemaking.”
Activating Columbia Road: Reframing a Missing Link
Most placemaking and public art initiatives are within ¼ mile of both current Fairmount Line stops, Upham’s Corner and Four Corners.
A number of development projects are planned, projected, or recently completed along Columbia Road. These projects may have significant influence on the future plans for Columbia Road.

**Upham’s Corner Implementation**
At the time of writing, the Upham’s Corner Implementation project, a neighborhood pilot, is undergoing a process through which the City of Boston can prioritize the community’s vision for development projects.²¹ The goals of the community were previously outlined in past planning initiatives including Imagine Boston 2030 and the Fairmount Indigo Planning Initiative. Imagine Boston 2030 listed the Columbia Road Greenway as a priority project and the Fairmount Indigo Planning Initiative - Upham’s Corner Station Area Plan proposed a Dudley Street Gateway, where Columbia Road improvements could “extend a sense of unity in the district along Dudley Street to create gateways to the district from the rail station.”²²

The Upham’s Implementation process has engaged with the community through workshops to plan for development along Columbia Road, including the future of the Strand Theatre, Upham’s Corner Public Library, new affordable housing, and new affordable commercial space in Upham’s Corner. For example, a public meeting held in November 2018 identified community priorities, informed through previous community engagement, next to evaluations and guidelines for developers. These guidelines were implemented under three requests for proposals (RFPs) coming out under one cover - Strand Theatre and Public Library, DNI Parcels, and Municipal Lot. The public meeting was put together to initiate dialogue and feedback on preferred uses, hear resident input, and let the community know that developers would be held accountable to meet these criteria.²³

This unique “development without displacement” effort is guided by a partnership between the City of Boston, the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA), the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI), and the Upham’s Corner community.²⁴

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²¹ Boston Planning & Development Agency, “Upham’s Corner Implementation, Community Planning - Strategic Plans.”
²³ Butt, “Upham’s Corner Implementation Community Workshop.”
²⁴ Boston Planning & Development Agency. “Upham’s Corner Implementation.”
A number of development projects are planned, projected, or recently completed along Columbia Road. These projects may have significant influence on the future plans for Columbia Road.
Franklin Park

Franklin Park is the largest public park in the City of Boston. When Frederick Law Olmsted was commissioned to design an expansive park system in the 1880’s he sought to recreate some of the forms found in his most successful projects. Franklin Park, at the southern end of the Emerald Necklace, is a traditional Olmsted country park. When completed in 1885, the park’s 527 acres centered around an expansive rolling lawn which he called the “Country Park,” surrounded by forested trails in a manmade, recreated natural landscape. In 1896, the “Country Park” was converted into a golf course, which is still in operation in 2019, as one of only two public courses in the city. In 1912, a grand promenade along the western edge was converted into Franklin Park Zoo, which is still open in 2019. Some later major additions included Boston Public School’s George Robert White Schoolboy Stadium built in 1949, and Shattuck Hospital built in 1954 along the park’s western edge.25

Located in the geographic center of the city, Franklin Park has been a gathering place for generations for the adjacent neighborhoods of Roxbury, Dorchester, Jamaica Plain, Roslindale, and Mattapan, and also a tourist attraction for a broader public. As part of Imagine Boston 2030, the Imagine Boston team worked with the Franklin Park Coalition and the Boston Parks Department to lead a public process to reimagine a rejuvenated Franklin Park. This process received a financial boost in 2018, when the sale of a City-owned parking garage at 115 Winthrop Square resulted in a $163 million benefits package, $28 million of which was allocated to Franklin Park.26 In April 2019, Mayor Walsh launched a master planning effort, ahead of the $28 million revitalization. The City worked with the Franklin Park Coalition to select a master plan team, which will be led by landscape architecture firm Reed Hilderbrand working with Agency Landscape + Planning and MASS Design.27

At the time of writing, it is not yet clear what this planning process will involve, and what it will mean for the Columbia Road corridor. Franklin Park Coalition Executive Director Janna Cohen-Rosenthal characterizes this master plan as, “a generational opportunity to protect and enhance the public health benefits of our beloved park, while also developing new opportunity in partnership with the Park and Recreation Department.”28 There are many overlapping jurisdictions and stakeholders within the bounds of Franklin Park, and how much the master plan will look outward into the community to foster social and physical access is yet to be seen.

26 City of Boston. “Franklin Park Master Plan Announced by Mayor Walsh.”
27 Carlock, “Reed Hilderbrand to develop Franklin Park master plan.”
28 Carlock, “Reed Hilderbrand to develop Franklin Park master plan.”
Moakley Park
At the northeast end of Columbia Road, the street wraps into the Kosciuszko Circle rotary, where it continues along the western edge of Moakley Park. Moakley Park is about sixty acres of green space, primarily comprised of athletic fields and open lawns, nestled between Carson Beach and about 1,500 public housing units. Bounding the park to the west is the Mary Ellen McCormack development and the northern edge is mostly fronted by the Old Colony development. Both public housing developments are undergoing major reconstruction into mixed-use, mixed-income projects. Along with being the convergence of South Boston and the sea, Moakley park is the meeting point of multiple city initiatives; this convergence of waterfront climate resilience, open space access, and the redevelopment of the Mary Ellen McCormack and Old Colony housing complexes, all helped initiate the Moakley Park Vision Plan process.

The City of Boston Parks and Recreation is working with the Environmental Department to plan Moakley’s future. The first step in this process was a visioning effort, where as of spring 2019, the City had hosted a series of four public meetings and events meant to solicit public input. The City began with two community meetings, where attendees were asked to explain how they use the park currently, and what they would like to see in the rehabilitated public space. The third step in the planning process was a free celebratory event called “DISCOVER Moakley!”, where attendees were invited to participate in recreational activities, listen to live music, play with a beach-themed inflatable installation, learn about resilient landscapes, and explore some possibilities for the future of Moakley Park. The event was co-organized by Boston Parks and Recreation, Greenovate Boston, Save the Harbor/Save the Bay, Boston Harbor Now, The Trust for Public Land, and the Department of Conservation and Recreation.29 Similar to the process around Franklin Park, the planning process around Moakley is an opportunity to strengthen physical and social connections with the Columbia Road corridor. Seeing as this process is more oriented towards recreational opportunities and climate resilience

29 Whitesides et al., “The Vision Plan for Boston’s Moakley Park.”
Figure 43: Moakley Park Vision Plan Aerial

Figure 44: Children Play with a Beach-Themed Inflatable Installation as Part of DISCOVER Moakley!
4. PRIMARY DOCUMENTS
Over the last 25 years, city-wide planning in Boston has had various levels of support. Thomas Menino, Boston’s Mayor from 1993 to 2014, was the city’s longest serving mayor. He nicknamed himself an “urban mechanic,” Menino separated himself from the typical politician visioning, and even once said “visionaries don’t get things done.” His intense focus on ground-level improvements led him away from implementing long-range planning efforts, although some great planning did happen during his tenure. According to Alice Brown, Director of Planning at Boston Harbor Now and former Boston Bikes staff member, one of the things that did happen was the creation of Boston Bikes, which was a comprehensive bike program for the city. She mentioned that a decision was made early on in that process that there needed to be a path forward for additional planning processes in the city. The Boston Bikes Bike Network Plan, released in the final months of Menino’s tenure in 2013, spurred support for many more planning efforts to come. Columbia Road showed up as a small portion of the bike network, with a simple painted bike lane spanning most of the corridor.

After the Bike Network Plan was released, a group of people began meeting regularly to consider how to expand on the success of the Bike Network Plan. Brown recalled that as the bike planning was happening, people began to think about what an interconnected world of greenways could mean for the city, which led to LSA’s Emerald Network initiative. With this vision of the Emerald Network, Columbia Road started to be thought of as a future greenway. The corridor was viewed as an important piece to complete this idea of an Emerald Network around the city.

Marty Walsh assumed the office of the Mayor of Boston in January 2014, as the first new leadership in the city for over 20 years. Knowing this would be a significant shift for the city, Walsh put together transition teams to determine how to move forward. Almost every one of those transition teams recommended pursuing long-term planning efforts to guide the city’s decisions and actions for the next 5, 10, and 15 years. From these recommendations came planning initiatives related to climate change, art, mobility, housing, economic development, and more. For this report, we have analyzed five planning efforts as they relate to the future of Columbia Road.

1 Marquard and O’Sullivan, “Thomas M. Menino, Boston’s Longest-Serving Mayor, Has Died at Age 71.”
2 Ibid.
3 Brown, interview.
4 Ibid.
5 Brown, interview.
Figure 45: Timeline of Columbia Road Projects
The Fairmount Indigo Planning Initiative addresses strategies for business growth, housing development, public realm improvements, and employment opportunities along the 9.2-mile Fairmount Indigo Commuter Line. Beginning in 2012, Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) prepared this report along with a consultant team, other City departments, local foundations, neighborhood stakeholders, and a Community Advisory Group.

The Fairmount Indigo Planning Initiative impacts those who live within a half-mile of the Fairmount commuter rail line and provides opportunities to link neighborhoods and develop strategies to transform them into “complete neighborhoods.” The plan describes a “complete neighborhood” as follows: “places where resident and business needs for work, living, gathering, recreation, and health can be met. Each station area along the Corridor provides opportunities to improve prosperity, housing, mobility, a sense of place, open space, and overall quality of life. This plan defines the opportunities and component strategies that will result in communities that are diverse and “complete” over time.”

By strategically building complete neighborhoods, the plan seeks to reinforce a complete corridor connected by the Fairmount Line. In addition to the existing stations, the plan outlines several proposed stations, including one at Columbia Road. These proposed rail stations are also intended to improve economic opportunity both within and beyond the Fairmount Corridor. The Upham’s Corner and Four Corner station areas are in close proximity and relevant to study of Columbia Road corridor.


Columbia Road

The following strategies for a potential Columbia Road station area are outlined in the Fairmount Indigo Plan:

1. Future Strategy for Prosperity:
   - Invest in training and education, support small businesses.

2. Future Strategy for Home (neighborhood):
   - Prevent displacement, encourage mixed-use main streets.

3. Future Strategy for Place:
   - Reinforce culture, art and history, focus on the main street districts.

4. Future Strategy for Getting Around:
   - Improve walkability and public realm, integrate bus and shuttle connections.

5. Future Strategy for Parks/Public Space (ceylon park):
   - Continue streetscape improvements, create station plazas, expand community gardens.

6. Future Strategy for Quality of Life:
   - Build neighborhood safety and community, enhance neighborhood health, add core amenities and service, strengthen connections to institutions, and highlight corridor diversity.
The Fairmount Indigo Planning Initiative identified Upham’s Corner to be studied in further detail in a separate planning study, “Upham’s Corner Station Area Plan”.7

As of 2019, the City is planning a mixed-use center and corridor-wide arts and culture destination through the Upham’s Corner Implementation pilot project. This is a unique partnership between the City of Boston, BPDA, DSNI, and the Upham’s Corner community. Ten year growth capacities were identified for Upham’s Corner, which is an arts and cultural anchor neighborhood of the Fairmount Indigo Corridor. One of the community goals is to reinforce a walkable neighborhood orientation through public realm and open space improvements.8

The Fairmount Indigo Planning Initiative identified the Four Corners/Geneva Ave station area to be studied in further detail in a separate planning study, “Four Corners/Geneva Ave Station Area Plan”.9

The Fairmount Indigo CDC Collaborative

While our team was unable to interview anyone directly involved with the Corridor Plan, we spoke with several people involved in the Fairmount Indigo CDC Collaborative and other corridor planning efforts, such as the Fairmount Cultural Corridor. The Fairmount Indigo CDC Collaborative is an alliance of three community development corporations, Dorchester Bay Economic Development Corporation, Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corporation, and Southwest Boston Community Development Corporation, all working to strengthen vibrant, sustainable neighborhoods united by the Fairmount Indigo Line.10

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7 Boston Redevelopment Authority, “Fairmount Indigo Planning Initiative: Upham’s Corner Station Area Plan.”
8 Boston Planning & Development Agency, “Upham’s Corner Implementation, Community Planning - Strategic Plans.”
9 Boston Redevelopment Authority, “Fairmount Corridor Planning Initiative: Four Corners/Geneva Avenue Station Area Plan.”
10 Fairmount Indigo CDC Collaborative, “Home.”
David Queeley, Director of the Eco-Innovation at Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corporation, was peripherally involved in the work around Fairmount. When asked if he could describe some ways in which collaboration was successful in uniting the corridor, David cited the fact that Community Development Corporations (CDCs) are often tapped into residents in ways the City simply is not. This can serve as a useful example to strengthen the collaboration between the City and local CDC’s, neighborhood groups and councils, and other existing groups on the ground.

Queeley also offered his thoughts on the threat of green gentrification in this area of Boston. He shared, “A lot of people say ‘make the neighborhood better, but don’t make it too good because we don’t want people displacing us.’ If we or the City do anything that displaces people, I will consider that a failure.”

This strategy can also be observed in the Upham’s Corner Implementation process, in which community organizations and the City have worked collaboratively, resulting in an effective process. The Upham’s Corner plan seeks development without displacement, with development including new affordable housing and new affordable commercial space.

Michelle Moon, the Fairmount Greenway Project Manager Consultant for the Fairmount Indigo CDC Collaborative was able to comment on the importance of Columbia Road relative to the Fairmount Indigo Line. In our interview she mentioned that the streetscape design of Columbia Road has been overlooked partly due to the unbuilt station that centered around Columbia Road. Moon mentioned that train and subway corridors in Dorchester go north and south, unlike bus lines that go east and west, so bus connections have not been made to connect people to the Fairmount Line. Because stations such as Newmarket or Upham’s Corner are a little further away, there are fewer connections to Columbia Road – even though they are within ¼-mile. Through our interview, we were able to understand that although 0.5-mile of the Columbia Road Corridor falls within the Fairmount Corridor, it is not seen as part of the train-centric Fairmount Indigo Line station areas. Moon added that community organizations think “the introduction of bus rapid transit on Blue Hill Ave will compete with the Fairmount line and take away ridership even though it is different origins and destinations.” This may also be a concern on Columbia Road as bus transit improves in that area.

Alice Brown, who was interviewed in regards to Go Boston 2030, had similar thoughts on the relationship between the Fairmount Indigo Line and Columbia Road. She shared, “there’s been a full decade more thinking and passion and advocacy for the Fairmount corridor than for the Columbia Road corridor. I think we believe in it and have more of a community identity of being along the Fairmount line than being along Columbia road. They intersect, but they’re almost like parallel corridors that are having conversations about them.”

These comments highlight a common issue for the Columbia Road corridor: the street is considered a barrier between neighborhoods and residents do not see their neighborhoods as connected or sharing a sense of identity. When we asked Moon what could be done to reflect community needs in future plans, she said that the real challenge was to get people to buy-in to the idea that improving Columbia Road will be better, quicker and more efficient for all types of road uses. Moon said, “an enjoyable environment for people to take transit or for walking and biking along Columbia Road can all fit together on Columbia Road. The challenge is that you’re up against people that see Columbia Road as a highway that divides their communities, and there are a lot of people who like to drive their cars because they think it’s quicker than taking transit. It’s really a lot about changing people’s perceptions and their behavior, which is hard.”

11 Queeley, interview.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
14 Butt, “Upham’s Corner Implementation Community Workshop.”
15 Moon, interview.
16 Moon, interview.
17 Ibid.
18 Brown, interview.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
**Fairmount Cultural Corridor**

The Fairmount Cultural Corridor is “a creative placemaking initiative that combines collaborative efforts of residents, artists, community organizations and businesses to support vibrant, livable neighborhoods along the Fairmount Commuter Line, made stronger through an active local creative economy.” Key partners include the Fairmount Indigo CDC Collaborative, Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, Upham’s Corner Main Street, the Design Studio for Social Intervention (DS4SI), and the Boston Foundation.23

Lori Lobenstine, Program Design Lead at DS4SI, said that Columbia Road is very relevant to the residents, as this is where they shop and take the bus. In her opinion, the commuter rail has little presence. Lobenstine mentioned that in 2013 a fence was proposed along the median of Columbia Road to decrease jaywalking.24 DS4SI publicized it on the streets, with 97% of the 101 voters against a fence that benefited cars over pedestrians.25 The fence was controversial as it “offended those who thought it would be further used to separate the whiter, richer Jones Hill side from the other side.”26 These comments further demonstrate the positioning of Columbia Road as a dividing line as opposed to a united corridor. Drawing parallels between the various Fairmount Indigo planning initiatives helped our team understand what possibilities exist for a planning process on the Columbia Road corridor.

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22 Fairmount Cultural Corridor, “Home.”
23 Lobenstine, interview.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
The Green Links Initiative was originally inspired by a Greenway Links Charrette Competition hosted by LSA’s Emerald Network and the Boston Society of Architects in June 2014 which invited local firms and professionals to submit design ideas for missing links in Boston’s greenway network.27 Nine teams from leading local design firms submitted design concepts for green links. NBBJ, Nitsch Engineering, Kittelson & Associates, Klopfer Martin Design Group, and Lam partners submitted a proposed green link design for Columbia Road, highlighting safety, placemaking, sustainability, legibility of street signage, and a multimodal balance.28

As a result of this event, in 2015 the City dedicated funding to begin a process of identifying potential green links, defined as “missing bike and pedestrian connections that, when completed, will create a seamless network of greenway paths connected to every neighborhood.”29 NBBJ was hired to lead this process and they thought carefully about which links would provide not only better walkable and bikeable routes but also could achieve climate resiliency and social equity goals.30 It was through this process that Columbia Road was officially identified as a proposed green link which would connect Franklin Park and Moakley Park.

While the Green Links initiative is far-reaching, with proposed projects all across Boston, it appears that community engagement has been limited. In the process of identifying specific green links, the City, NBBJ, and LSA organized a series of community walks and rides in which planners were introduced to the community context and to neighborhood representatives. In October 2015, LSA hosted a design charrette in Upham’s Corner in which local planners, designers, and residents were given the opportunity to imagine what a Columbia Road green link could look like. In an interview with our project team, Amber Christoffersen, former Project Manager at LSA and organizer of this event, admitted that while this exercise was certainly helpful in visualizing the possibilities for the corridor, there were concerns about implementation and whether the project would indeed progress.31 Christoffersen also commented on how this process revealed issues along the corridor in addition to pedestrian and cyclist access. She told our team, “it isn’t all about walking and biking; that was our orientation but there are a lot of ways it can be improved.”32

Green Links is still an active initiative of Boston Transportation Department, with ongoing projects around Ruggles Station and the Fairmount Greenway; however, Columbia Road remains merely a proposed link. In an interview with our project team, Alan Mountjoy, a Principal at NBBJ, commented on the challenges facing the Columbia Road green link, including the sheer length of the corridor, the amount of funding required to implement such a project, and the lack of a constituency, or more specifically, the lack of awareness along the corridor that links to nearby parks are even possible. When referring to conversations with residents, Mountjoy recounted, “A lot of people said ‘As the crow flies, Franklin Park is only ¾ of a mile away... we never go there. Or if we did, we’d get in a car and drive there.”33
Mountjoy readily admitted that if the project were to move forward, it would require an extensive and in-depth community process, which simply has not occurred yet. Ironically enough, the most heavily circulated rendering of what a Columbia Road green link might look like - the same image used on the City of Boston’s Green Links website - is the rendering developed for the 2014 Greenway Links Charrette Competition, which was produced without official community input. The proliferation of this image is unfortunate in that it does not represent a community vision, but the fact that Columbia Road is again identified as a proposed project by the City of Boston is an encouraging start.

Figure 49: Proposed Design for Columbia Road Green Link
Go Boston 2030
City of Boston, March 2015

The Go Boston 2030 report is a City of Boston initiative that lays out transportation and mobility plans for the City over the course of the next 5, 10, and 15 years. Released in 2015, the report is based on 5,000 questions and comments collected from the public as well as the 650 people who participated in the initiative’s 2-day Visioning Lab, which included interactive walls and data infographics to help shape the report’s goals. The three guiding principles of the report are:

- Equity
- Economic opportunity
- Climate responsiveness

Over the course of two years, the City engaged with residents through a “Question Campaign,” roundtables, visioning workshops, an online portal, and project voting ballots. The goals that came out of that process focused primarily on expanding access, improving safety, and ensuring reliability.

The Go Boston 2030 community engagement process was managed by Alice Brown, Boston Transportation Department’s Project Manager for Go Boston 2030, who in spring 2019 is the Director of Planning at Boston Harbor Now. The first round of community engagement focused on a question campaign; a “What’s Your Question?” truck circulated the city’s neighborhoods, collecting residents’ questions about the future of transportation in Boston. Brown described that they “primarily used the question truck, but we had internet options and we had ads on the subway and things that few other plans will ever have the funding to do.”

The second round focused on collecting ideas about what Boston’s transportation future could be. This was done on maps and cards, at a bike trailer that went around the city, and with another online web interface. They also collected data through workshops around the city and a “Share your Trip” program, which allowed the Boston Transportation Department (BTD) staff to join a resident on their commute to work and get a sense of their barriers and challenges. These efforts gathered over 3,500 policy and project ideas, with close to 4,000 people voting on their top priority projects.

On Columbia Road, many of these efforts centered around the Upham’s Corner area rather than the whole corridor. Brown explained “By the time Imagine Boston began, every single one of the other plans had been through Upham’s Corner, not just somewhere on Columbia Road, but through Upham’s Corner.” Brown mentioned that their question truck went to Upham’s Corner, as well as the bike cart and a shared trip with BTD. All of these activities allowed planners to hear directly from people who lived or traveled through this section of the corridor. “It became, maybe even less Columbia Road but more Upham’s Corner, became the center of a lot of planning efforts. Everyone kept coming there. People had ideas. In terms of continuing to think of it as a greenway, that was still largely happening outside of the neighborhood.”

34 Brown, interview.
35 Ibid.
37 Brown, interview.
38 Ibid.
engagement activities generated a wealth of questions, ideas, and visions for pieces of Columbia Road, they still did not address the corridor as a whole. The idea of looking at Columbia Road as one cohesive project was, and still is, an idea that is not shared among residents, stakeholders, or some city staff. Brown commented on the segmentation by stating “I think by and large people are saying, the planning that’s happened since [Go Boston 2030] has been around the Upham’s Corner area and not the roadway in its entirety. That still remains an idea for advocates and planners.”

After the initial round of information gathering, the Go Boston 2030 team, led by Brown, spent the fall conducting workshops to further develop the vision for mobility and transportation around the city. The workshops had people sit in groups where everyone was from a different neighborhood. “People had such different stories of how they got there and how they get around. It instantly diversified the conversation, from reasons something wouldn’t work because you could commiserate around your loss of parking with your neighbor versus hearing how hard it was for someone to take the bus there. Or the lengths that someone went to take the bus to get there.”

Although the closest workshop to Columbia Road was in Dudley Square, approximately 1.5 miles away from the Upham’s Corner area of the corridor, conversations were beginning about Columbia Road and its potential.

In the final Go Boston 2030 report, the proposed Columbia Road Greenway is listed as a “top project” and “early-action project” that will create a “context-sensitive linear park” along the corridor in 5 to 15 years. Although Columbia Road is listed as a priority project, differing timelines are expressed in various sections. The following passage demonstrates the vision held by the City of Boston:

“With over 100-feet between building faces, Columbia Road is one of the widest streets in Boston. The proposed greenway would preserve vehicle travel in both directions while consolidating the median, sidewalks, and wider areas into a context-sensitive linear park stretching from Franklin Park to Moakley Park. The allocation of roadway space will be determined in conjunction with local residents and will include improved pedestrian paths and crossings, protected bike paths, and significantly more trees to transform this former boulevard into a vibrant green corridor that is connected to the Blue Hill multi use path to the south (p199), the Fairmount Greenway (p161), Dorchester Ave. Complete Street (p158), and the Carson Beach bike path, creating a continuous protected bicycling network into Downtown.”

- Go Boston 2030: Vision and Action Plan

The report highlights the important role that Columbia Road could play in connecting its adjacent parks, as well as the waterfront. Adding safe and comfortable walking and biking facilities would further the corridor’s goal of connection and unity. These facilities would improve public health by shifting modes to active transportation and away from car use, as well as improve air quality. The proposed greenway would also provide an essential last-mile connection for thousands of people to the Fairmount Commuter Rail at Four Corners Station and the Red Line at JFK/UMass Station. Columbia Road has the potential to become the central part of a continuous through connection from Dedham to Downtown, serving Hyde Park, Mattapan, Dorchester, and South Boston.
Fulfilling the Promise: Community Building & the Emerald Necklace
Boston Society of Architects, March-May 2017

In 2017, the Boston Society of Architects (BSA) hosted a four-part community education series with the goal of identifying community building opportunities and an action plan for the improvement of Columbia Road. Events were hosted at the BSA and open to the public. The first event focused on the community context and background, while the second and third events brought in representatives from other domestic and international greenway examples. The final event focused on implementation strategies. The BSA livestreamed these events and provided full videos of these four events on their website for those unable to attend.

After working on the 2024 Olympic Games bid for Boston and mapping city-wide assets, CBT Architects recognized the incomplete nature of the Emerald Necklace, especially the connection between Franklin Park and Moakley Park. They decided to explore existing conditions along Columbia Road and the meaning of completing Olmsted’s great vision. Acknowledging that the context of Columbia Road is very different from 100 years ago, they sought to reconstruct these ideas in a contemporary way.

Kishore Varanasi, Director of Urban Design at CBT Architects and the host of this event series, joined our field project team for an interview. He thought that the series was a well-run initiative, from the selection of panelists to the timing of events. He mentioned that the BSA was “looking for projects that create engagement with the community.” In his view, the focus of this series was not to create a design but to “create a conversation and define the problem a little more.” He also pointed out this topic was worth researching, especially given the fact that both Go Boston 2030 and Imagine Boston 2030 included the Columbia Road Greenway as a priority.

Varanasi also discussed what he saw as obstacles preventing the city from completing the Emerald Necklace. He discussed the lack of funding as a big problem and indicated that there is no consistent, strong idea about what needs to happen to Columbia Road. What’s more, communities with distinct contexts may have completely different concerns, so a comprehensive way of understanding nearby neighborhoods is needed.

“Unless and until there is a more concrete way of thinking about what needs to happen with the corridor, there is really no concrete way for the communities to engage.”
- Kishore Varanasi

As for public participation, on the one hand, Varanasi thought they did have some representation and attendance from surrounding neighborhoods; on the other hand, he mentioned that since this series was not a serious project, many communities were not involved. Furthermore, he admitted that if these events had been held in the Columbia Road neighborhood, perhaps they would have had better responses. He expressed concern with resident perception of the project and the difficulty of involving the community without getting their hopes up.

Overall, Varanasi believed that the attendees gained a great deal of knowledge and experience from these events, which they could then bring back to and incorporate into their professional practice.
Imagine Boston 2030
City of Boston, July 2017

On May 6, 2015, the City of Boston Mayor’s Office announced what was to be the first city-wide plan since the 1965-1975 General Plan for the City of Boston and the Region. Imagine Boston 2030 was one of a series of planning initiatives kicked off by the newly-elected mayoral administration to build on the momentum of a substantial city leadership transition process. In an interview with our project team, Natalia Urtubey, former Director of Engagement for Imagine Boston 2030, said the planning initiative stemmed from concerns of economic opportunity and housing affordability the mayor heard on the campaign trail. Urtubey described housing pressure as a driver of the initial suite of planning initiatives, and that community engagement was the leading factor in those processes. Imagine Boston 2030 overlapped in time or in content with at least 19 other City planning initiatives. Both Urtubey and Vineet Gupta, Director of Planning at the Boston Transportation Department (BTD), described Imagine Boston 2030 as an umbrella for all of these parallel planning initiatives.

The two-year Imagine Boston 2030 process culminated with the publication of Imagine Boston 2030: A Plan for the Future of Boston. To commemorate the publication, the City hosted a series of events meant to celebrate the initiative’s completion and launch the next steps towards implementation. In an editorial in The Boston Globe dated July 13, 2017, Mayor Walsh commemorated a recent launch event in Upham’s Corner, and lauded Imagine Boston 2030, saying, “it’s a driver of connection and consensus. It’s a plan of action. It’s a living document.”

This consensus was based on 15,000 resident inputs, collected over two years through a series of varied community engagement activities. Some of these engagement methods included neighborhood open houses, street team surveys, text message surveys, community workshops, and

47 City of Boston, “Mayor Walsh Announces ‘Imagine Boston 2030’ At Design and Architecture Summit.”
48 Urtubey, interview.
49 Walsh, “Envisioning Boston’s Future.”
online mapping tools, and “building blocks” visioning activities. Engagement happened in every city neighborhood. Imagine Boston 2030 staff combined this resident outreach with mayoral priorities, existing data, and research to identify broad goals, organize the goals into projects, and lay out actionable priorities.

The Imagine Boston 2030 plan identifies five primary goals:

- Encourage affordability, reduce displacement, and improve quality of life
- Increase access to opportunity
- Drive inclusive economic growth
- Promote a healthy environment and prepare for climate change
- Invest in open space, arts and culture, transportation, and infrastructure

Strategies to achieve these goals are organized into ten categories:

- Housing
- Health and Safety
- Education
- Economy
- Energy and Environment
- Open Space
- Transportation
- Technology
- Arts and Culture
- Land Use Planning

As a city-wide initiative, the Imagine Boston 2030 process involved communities along the Columbia Road corridor; some of the proposed initiatives would directly impact the corridor or adjacent neighborhoods.

Upham’s Corner was intentionally chosen as the location for one of the plan’s launch events because the neighborhood is specifically called out in the plan for several initiatives. Upham’s Corner is listed as one hub of the plan’s “Enhancing Neighborhoods” initiative, and a place where investment will “strengthen the community’s historic main street fabric, enable economic mobility and local innovation, and support a vibrant arts and culture hub.” Urtubey highlighted how Upham’s Corner is a pilot for Enhanced Neighborhoods but also combines all five of Imagine Boston 2030’s goals for growth areas: expanding neighborhoods, enhancing neighborhoods, creating a waterfront for future generations, generating networks of opportunity, and encouraging a mixed use core.

Since Imagine Boston 2030 concluded in 2017, the City has initiated an involved planning process in Upham’s Corner, which may serve as a model for implementation along other portions of Columbia Road. A description of the Upham’s Corner Implementation Plan can be found in the Current Development and Planning section of this report.

Franklin Park also emerged as a focus area for Imagine Boston 2030. In our interview, Natalia Urtubey described a brainstorming event that Imagine Boston 2030 and the Franklin Park Coalition led in February of 2017 to engage the community to reimagine and revitalize Franklin Park. This meeting was one part of a planning process around Franklin Park that Urtubey highlighted as an example of effective community engagement. Franklin Park has complex jurisdictions, but Urtubey applauds the way Imagine Boston 2030 engaged all the various city departments, elected officials, advocacy organizations, and residents, to ensure that the community knew a discussion was happening. She mentioned that Imagine Boston

51 Ibid.

53 Urtubey, interview.

**Imagining Franklin Park & Columbia Road**

*Last chance to inform the Imagine Boston 2030 Plan!
Did the last draft of the plan capture your feedback on Franklin Park correctly? What is missing?*

Learn about what’s happening with Columbia Road and share your vision on it for the future!

*Children & families welcomed!
Snacks provided!*

**Thursday, June 8**

4-6pm

**Franklin Park Golf Course**

1 Girl scout Drive

Boston 02131

Figure 55: Outreach Materials for the Imagine Boston 2030 community meeting on Franklin Park and Columbia Road
2030 framed the process well to residents, in a way that kept conversations realistic while remaining open to suggestions and ideas. More information about the implementation process around Franklin Park can be found in the Current Development and Planning Projects section of this report.

Among the specific investment actions described in the Imagine Boston 2030 plan is a recommendation to invest in Columbia Road as a “green and active corridor.” This same action item is found in the report in several places, first under the Upham’s Corner “Enhancing Neighborhoods” section, next under the Fairmount Corridor “Generate Networks of Opportunity” section, and lastly as a stand-alone transportation initiative, with explanatory text.

In our interview, Natalia Urtubey described the role Columbia Road plays in the Imagine Boston 2030 plan, and how it overlaps with neighboring initiatives:

“The reason Columbia Road is so important, aside from completing the Emerald Necklace, is that Columbia Road tends to be a throughway for residents of the City of Boston. So people are just driving through. They’re not stopping, and they’re not engaging with these neighborhoods. We really want to see a green active corridor, and really think about how the residents of the City of Boston can benefit from existing connections to both Franklin Park and Moakley Park.” - Natalia Urtubey

Columbia Road, Upham’s Corner, and Franklin Park feature prominently in Imagine Boston 2030, but the plan intentionally stops short of making any specific design or program recommendations. The nearest the document comes to an indication of next steps for Columbia Road is this statement in the transportation section, which is identical to language in Go Boston 2030:

“A community process will help set priorities for Columbia Road. Early guiding principles from neighbors and residents include street enhancements to make Columbia Road easy to navigate, multimodal, green, and reflective of the culture and creativity of the communities that live along the road.”

54 Urtubey, interview.  
Activating Columbia Road: Reframing a Missing Link
5. MOBILITY
Our primary documents highlight a range of transportation and mobility topics along the Columbia Road corridor. Go Boston 2030 and the Fairmount Indigo Planning Initiative, combined with other data sources such as Boston Bikes data, Bluebikes data, MBTA data, other local information gathering initiatives, as well as interviews with key stakeholders provided additional context for understanding the mobility challenges and opportunities on Columbia Road. The five primary areas of mobility along the corridor are walkability, bikeability, bus ridership, train ridership, and car use.

Figure 56: Bicyclist on Columbia Road
Walkability and Pedestrian Experience

Columbia Road is one of the widest streets in the City of Boston. The pedestrian experience could benefit from many enhancements throughout the corridor. The Go Boston 2030 report suggests reallocating a portion of the current road space to wider sidewalks, place-making areas, and more numerous and visible crosswalks in order to strengthen the residents and visitors’ ability to use the space by foot, both for safety and comfort. The City is also eager to make the corridor a greenway by planting a substantial number of trees that will add shade for pedestrians, collect air particulates, and increase comfort in the various sections of Columbia Road.

According to Boston’s Complete Streets Guidelines Columbia Road fits a “Neighborhood Main” street type, which should have a preferred pedestrian zone width of eight feet, with a minimum of five feet. There is also a greenscape/furnishing zone, which has a preferred width of six feet, and a minimum of one to six feet. The total width, including a frontage zone and curb zone should be a preferred 16.5 feet, and a minimum of seven feet.

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1 City of Boston, “Go Boston 2030: Vision and Action Plan.”
2 City of Boston and Boston Transportation Department, “Boston Complete Streets: Design Guidelines,” 23.
The City of Boston has a goal of increasing bicycling by a factor of four by 2030. Better biking facilities and connections to the greater bike network, especially from Franklin Park to the waterfront along Columbia Road, are clear goals that came out of the community process for Go Boston 2030.

The 2017 Boston Bike Counts recorded bike trips at one location on Columbia Road, at its intersection with Quincy Street. At this location, an average of 87 bike trips per day were counter over a 48-hour period, which represented 0.3% of all vehicles traveling through that location. This number is up from a counted 52 average bike rides at the same time and same location a year earlier in 2016, potentially indicating that more people are using Columbia Road by bike every year. Below are figures from Boston Bikes 2017 report illustrating how bike travel was distributed throughout the day, bike travel direction, and total bike trips versus car trips.

In addition to personal bike use, Columbia Road has significant access to Bluebikes, Boston’s regional bike sharing system. Bluebikes gives members access to more than 2,500 bikes and over 260 stations, designed to offer a one-way transportation option, similar to a bus or train. There are currently two Bluebikes stations directly on Columbia Road south of Quincy Street, and two proposed stations on the northern half at the intersections of Stoughton Street and Massachusetts Avenue. There are also multiple stations in close proximity to the corridor, as can be seen in the station map below.

3 City of Boston, “Bike Data.”
4 Ibid.
5 City of Boston, “Bike Data.”

Figure 59: Bicycle Counts on Columbia Road

Figure 60: BlueBikes Stations (Current and Proposed, Spring 2019)
Figure 61: Bike Lane on Columbia Road

Figure 62: BlueBikes Station at the Intersection of Columbia Road and Blue Hill Avenue
Columbia Road currently has limited bus access for most of the corridor, with the exception of the 16 bus that runs nearly the full length of the road from its intersection with Massachusetts Avenue through Franklin Park. At Massachusetts Ave, the 8 bus intersects Columbia Road and the 17 and 41 travel along Columbia Road until Upham’s Corner. At Upham’s Corner the 15 bus intersects the corridor, the 41 turns west onto Dudley Street, and the 17 turns south east onto Hancock Street. Further south on the corridor, the 19 bus crosses Columbia Road on Geneva Avenue and the 23 crosses on Washington Street. Lastly, the terminus of Columbia Road at Franklin Park has multiple bus routes that run north and south along Blue Hill Avenue including the 14, 22, 28, 29, and 45.

The Better Bus Project is an MBTA initiative to improve bus service on key bus routes throughout the Metro Boston region. This project is part of a larger $8 billion modernization effort, which includes replacing subway fleets, upgrading tracks, signals, and switches, reinventing the bus system to reflect changing demographics, replacing the fare collection system, and bringing all of the MBTA’s assets to a state of good repair.6

The 16 bus is one of 63 routes listed as priority routes in the Better Bus Project. The change will add midday and Saturday service to JFK/UMass on Route 16, which currently only operates at weekday peak times.7 The key changes for the route will include:

- About a 3-minute shorter wait time for 1,374 midday (25%) route 16 riders
- 69 passenger hours saved and 137 new passenger trips each weekday

According to the project proposal, the 16 bus is described as a “local route” which is defined as routes that provide service along major arterials and local streets and serve over 3,000 people per day. The 16 bus is the 22nd highest ridership route in the metro area, regularly carrying over 5,000 people per week day.8 This route, however, is infrequent. During the weekday, the 16 bus comes only once every 30 minutes, which is a low frequency for the number of passengers it moves up and down the corridor. Nationally, the accepted definition of frequent service is every 15 minutes or better from early morning to mid-evening routes. By this definition, only 26, or 15% of the MBTA’s 176 bus routes provide frequent service.9

In 2019, the MBTA made the decision to expand early morning service on a select number of routes, including the 16 bus. This resulted in 17 additional morning trips along the corridor, starting at 4:00am.10

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6 MBTA, “Better Bus Project.”
7 MBTA, “Route 16,” 2.
8 MBTA, “Better Bus Project.”
9 MBTA, “Better Bus Project.”
There are numerous bus stops along Columbia Road, most of which are serviced exclusively by the 16 bus. The majority of the bus stops directly on Columbia Road have an above average number of weekday boardings, between 207-814.
Activating Columbia Road: Reframing a Missing Link

Figure 65: The 16 Bus on Columbia Road

Figure 66: MBTA Better Buses Proposal for the Route 16 Bus

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>3</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>69</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>minute shorter wait time for 26 (24%) Route 5 riders at Andrew</td>
<td>minute shorter wait time for 1,374 (25%) of midday Route 16 riders</td>
<td>passenger hours saved each weekday</td>
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</tbody>
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83
The Fairmount Commuter Line has been a source of conversation and planning for decades. Often viewed as an underutilized asset, the line has significant potential to increase mobility for the people living along its route. The Fairmount Line travels through the Boston neighborhoods of Dorchester, Mattapan, and Hyde Park, providing ample opportunity to a population that has limited access to rapid transit services.\(^{11}\)

There are two Fairmount Commuter Line stops near Columbia Road: Four Corners/Geneva and Upham’s Corner. The railway travels above Columbia Road at Hamilton Street, bisecting the street about halfway from Blue Hill avenue to Massachusetts Avenue. According to the Fairmount Indigo Planning Initiative Corridor Plan, Columbia Road has been proposed as a potential station that will increase transit access in an area that is only serviced by the 16 bus.\(^{12}\) The area where the station is proposed includes commercial and light industrial uses along Quincy Street, Grove Hall and Bowdoin Street near the outer edge of a half mile walking distance. This area has one of the highest residential densities along the corridor, meaning that this stop could be well utilized if built.\(^{13}\) New development has also arisen on Quincy Street, including new housing and commercial redevelopment.

In order to realize this new station, the MBTA is recommending multimodal improvements such as increased bike connections at its stops, coordinating local bus schedules to ensure fast and reliable transfers stops, and improving the walkability of the area, specifically Quincy Street, Ceylon Street, and Columbia Road.\(^{14}\) The entire Fairmount Corridor has significantly less parking than most commuter lines, as this route is meant to be accessed by people walking, biking, or transferring from a local bus route. The following passage from the Corridor Plan highlights the multimodal priorities of the Fairmount Line:

"Walkability, pedestrian safety and comfort are the most critical improvements to residential access and quality of life in the short term. Enhanced access routes to the existing stations through improved pedestrian crossings and streetscape along primary routes would enhance ridership opportunities at those stations (Upham’s Corner and Four Corners) and reinforce alternatives to driving."\(^{15}\)

Although most commuter rail stops are spaced two to five miles apart to prioritize speed, the Fairmount Line stops are spaced at one mile intervals, similar to rapid train lines like the MBTA subway.\(^{16}\) This design prioritizes access over speed, a necessary factor for this line, considering that over 80% of Fairmount Corridor residents identify as a minority, and about 24% of residents live in a low-income household.\(^{17}\)

The Fairmount Line could provide better, faster, more frequent, and reliable service for the many transit-dependent riders along the line. The MBTA has already added weekday peak and off-peak trips, and has begun providing all-day weekend service.\(^{18}\) In order to continue to see improvements to transit service, access, and reliability, coordination between modes is a must.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COLUMBIA ROAD</th>
<th>Percent of Total Area</th>
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<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax Exempt</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>63.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mixed-Use</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 67: Columbia Road Uses Around the Proposed Rail Stop

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13 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
17 Ibid. 4.
18 Ibid. 1.
The Fairmount Line travels above Columbia Road at Hamilton Street, bisecting the street about halfway from Blue Hill avenue to Massachusetts Avenue. Columbia Road has been proposed as a potential station that will increase transit access in an area that is only serviced by the 16 bus.
Car Use and Parking

Columbia Road is a heavily traveled road via car or personal vehicle. According to MAPC’s 2010 Census block group summary on vehicle ownership, 18,475 vehicles are owned by people who live in our study area, block groups within one quarter mile of Columbia Road. There are currently 12,336 people who drive their vehicles to commute in our study area.

The northern point of the corridor intersects with I-93, the major north-south highway passing through the city. At Kosciuszko Circle, just past the ramp for I-93, multiple streets intersect at the rotary that provide vehicle connections to major areas like the University of Massachusetts, Boston, Joe Moakley Park, South Boston, and the Seaport, all of which have limited transit access. Moving south to Everett Square, the South Bay Shopping Center is located to the west, with a large surface parking lot, encouraging vehicle use. Further down the corridor, the Dudley and Stoughton intersection provides vehicle access to Dudley Square and the Dorchester Ave commercial area, both of which have ample on-street parking. There are multiple surface parking lots along Columbia Road, including at Cushing Ave, Hancock Street, Sayward Street, Quincy Street, Oldfields Road, and Washington Street. Almost the full length of the corridor has on-street parking on both sides of the street as well. These design features actively encourage vehicle use, while decreasing walkability and bike-ability along Columbia Road. If the bus system and bike infrastructure were improved, all or some of the 12,336 people who currently drive could use alternative modes of transportation, effectively reducing congestion along Columbia Road.

According to April 2019 Vision Zero Crash Data, Columbia Road is a high crash site, seeing 179 motor vehicle crashes on the corridor since record keeping began in 2015. This data includes crashes between two or more motor vehicles, motor vehicle and bicycle, and motor vehicle and pedestrian.

19 Metropolitan Area Planning Council, “Massachusetts Vehicle Census.”
20 American FactFinder, “Means of Transportation to Work.”
The majority of the block groups in our study area have more than 50% of people commuting to work by car, truck, or van. There are currently 12,336 people who drive their vehicles to commute in our study area.
6. CASE STUDIES
As part of our research process, we chose to highlight three case studies of similar roadway redesigns in comparable U.S. cities. These examples mirror the case of Columbia Road in many ways, from streetscape, to park connections, to complex local dynamics. We found great value in observing and analyzing how community engagement strategies were successful, or not so successful, in these examples.

Figure 70: Location of Case Studies
SAN PABLO AVENUE

Historically an African-American neighborhood with a prosperous business, music and cultural scene, the San Pablo Avenue area has experienced years of disinvestment. Over the last decade, the area has seen an increase in vacant land, abandoned homes, and incidents of crime. Gentrification has pushed many long-time residents out of Oakland. In 1980, African Americans made up 47% of Oakland’s population, but in 2018 it was down to 24.7%. In the 1950s, ‘60s and ‘70s, infrastructure projects like the interstate highway system, Bay Area Rapid Transit, and others displaced a significant number of West Oakland’s businesses and residents.

In 2014, the East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation formed the San Pablo Area Revitalization Collaborative (SPARC) to combat the downturn the neighborhood was experiencing. As of 2019, SPARC is a partnership of over 25 organizations, residents, and institutions. The group developed a mission to improve the health and wellbeing of the area’s roughly 8,000 residents living along the 1.5 miles of the corridor, as well as the surrounding neighborhoods in West Oakland. When forming the Collaborative, the founders made a conscious decision to not reinvent previous work on the corridor, but to instead build upon neighborhood assets, align efforts, and pool resources to reach their collective goals.

By working together, SPARC has identified their top priorities for action:

- Healthy Residents
  - Healthcare
  - Community & resident engagement
- Healthy Community & Housing
  - Green spaces
  - Housing options
- Healthy Economy
  - Business development
  - Jobs & work

SPARC has led a number of community projects to improve quality of life for people on and around San Pablo Avenue. One noteworthy project was the Paint the Town mural project in partnership with the City of Oakland. A well-known dangerous intersection on San Pablo Avenue was transformed with a colorful music-themed plaza, creating a road diet to decrease speeding traffic while reclaiming space for people. At the end of 2018, SPARC opened the first full-service grocery store on San Pablo Avenue in more than 10 years. In addition to healthy food options, the store provides local jobs for residents and space to hold community meetings. SPARC is also offering residents mini-grants and training to produce their own community projects, which have so far included median clean-ups, community gardens, and other street beautification projects.

The City of Oakland lists commercial buildings on San Pablo Avenue as “opportunity sites” for mixed-use development.

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1 East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation, “San Pablo Area Revitalization Collaborative (SPARC).”
2 Voynovskaya, “A Black Cultural Corridor Takes Shape on Oakland’s San Pablo Avenue.”
3 Ibid.
4 East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation, “San Pablo Area Revitalization Collaborative (SPARC).”
5 Ibid.
6 East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation, “San Pablo Area Revitalization Collaborative (SPARC).”
7 San Pablo Area Revitalization Collaborative, “Home.”
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
use construction, in accordance with the city’s West Oakland Specific Plan.\textsuperscript{10} The City-County Neighborhood Initiative, a collaboration of city and county agencies, community-based organizations, neighborhood groups, and the University of California, Berkeley, has been working in the area for over ten years. As part of this initiative, the City has organized walks with seniors to identify areas of potential improvements, one being a triangular park on San Pablo Avenue. In 2016, the City of Oakland received a $456,000 grant to renovate this park.\textsuperscript{11} This sparked push back from residents who were concerned that a physical renovation wouldn’t solve the social problems within it, including people hanging out and drug use. Local residents have been pushing for a larger investment in the community, beyond the park space. Although this corridor hasn’t had a full redesign process yet, the smaller changes both from local residents and the City have greatly improved its safety, beautification, economic vitality and the health of the surrounding residents. Previous to a full redesign process for Columbia Road, Boston could learn from the example of San Pablo Avenue to implement “early-action,” quick, community-based and supported changes to improve the corridor for those living and traveling along it.

\textsuperscript{10} Baldassari, “St. Andrews Plaza.”
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.
Fountain Avenue runs for 1.8 miles through East New York in Brooklyn, lying approximately 4 miles west of John F. Kennedy Airport. Like Columbia Road, it is a wide, busy road with parking on either side and a median running down the middle, a design which contributed to 73% of northbound and 63% of southbound vehicles driving above the speed limit. Unsurprisingly, it is a high-crash corridor, ranking in the top third of Brooklyn streets, with 14 serious injuries between 2012-2016.

Just half a mile from Fountain Avenue’s northern terminus lies Highland Park and its southern terminus leads directly into Shirley Chisholm Park: a new park proposed by New York State. This park will serve as an entrance to and connecting link of the Jamaica Bay Greenway, a planned 28-mile greenway network looping around Jamaica Bay and through Brooklyn and Queens. To increase safety, especially for cyclists and pedestrians, and to provide for easy access to the proposed park, the New York DOT proposed several “complete streets” improvements to the Fountain Avenue streetscape, including narrowing and organizing the roadway, installing curbside bicycle lanes, and removing parking spaces at some intersections.

Community engagement was carried out as part of a series of East New York Bike Network expansion projects. Outreach was conducted between Summer 2016 and Winter 2017 with presentations to the Brooklyn Community Board 5 Transportation Committee in February 2017. Further project-specific outreach was conducted between May and June 2017 with the help of this Transportation Committee. Engagement strategies included tabling at popular intersections and community spaces, such as the public library. While it is unclear what other events were organized relating to this particular piece of the network, previous bicycle network expansion plans in the area used a series of public workshops to discuss and prioritize typical designs and recommended routes. Past projects also organized bicycle neighborhood tours, helmet fittings, and bicycle safety education workshops.

13 New York City DOT and Vision Zero, “Fountain Avenue Park Access Improvements.”
14 Trottenberg, “East New York & Brownsville Community Bicycle Network Phase II.”

![Figure 74: Proposed Changes to a Section of Fountain Avenue](image-url)
Today, the project is still incomplete but NYC DOT has begun to install bicycle lanes on sections of the street. With Shirley Chisholm Park expected to open in 2019, these bicycle network improvements will play a large role in providing access to the park. Seeing as these street improvements mirror those envisioned for Columbia Road, the City of Boston could learn from NYC DOT and take note to observe their process over the next few years. In August 2015, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti...
launched his city’s Vision Zero Initiative in response to an alarmingly high number of endemic traffic fatalities; every forty hours, an Angeleno lost their life in a traffic collision. In announcing the Vision Zero Initiative, Mayor Garcetti kicked off a process of redesigning city streets and instilling regulatory strategies to reduce the death toll to zero by 2025.  

Since that announcement, LA’s Vision Zero Initiative has progressed slowly, and nowhere has this beleaguered pace been more admonished than along Temple Street, a 2.3 mile stretch of roadway that serves as the main commercial corridor for the Filipinotown neighborhood.

Temple Street is a busy road, and like Columbia Road, has four lanes of traffic with parallel parking on either side, but unlike Columbia Road, Temple Street has no central median. The road runs parallel to part of Route 101, and the neighborhood street is commonly used by drivers trying to leapfrog traffic on the 101.

The roadway is notoriously dangerous for all users. The California Highway Patrol Database shows that from 2009 to 2017, 34 people were severely injured and five people died in traffic crashes. The city has responded by including Temple Street as one of its 40 Vision Zero priority corridors listed in the Vision Zero Action Plan. But the process to make Temple Street safer has ground to a widely-publicized, and much-critiqued halt.

In July 2017, the city of Los Angeles Vision Zero team held a public workshop to gain community input into some proposed safety improvements. Prior to that meeting, the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) released a tentative plan for some pilot infrastructure improvements, meant to be the first step in a community-involved, long-term solution. Those improvements included a road diet to trim the four road lanes down to two, with a continuous central vehicular left turn lane, and add new bike lanes in both directions. Crosswalk signals would be retimed to give pedestrians a head start in front of turning vehicles, and new speed feedback signs would be installed. A second round of improvements proposed new high-visibility flashing crosswalks at three primary intersections, and left-turn signals for vehicles.

These proposed changes ran into staunch opposition from Los Angeles City Council members citing concern for local businesses’ economic wellbeing and increased travel times for driving pass-through commuters. This site-specific

16 Tinoco, “LA Taps the Brakes on Temple Street Road Diet.”
17 Linton, “Vision Zero Safety Improvements Planned For Temple Street.”
opposition is in the context of city-wide opposition to road diets, the most famous example being a lawsuit filed against LADOT for another Vision Zero initiative road diet.18

In the face of this opposition, a coalition of activists, community organizations, artists, and residents joined together to encourage LADOT to proceed with the traffic calming improvements as planned, and not give in to the city council and outside lobbying groups. This coalition worked to inventively activate the street, highlight LADOT’s inaction, and raise awareness of how dangerous Temple Street was and remains. These groups, led by social engagement consultants, Public Matters, organized two community-based education and engagement projects along the Temple Street corridor. In 2017 and 2018, the coalition organized participatory festivals and activations that were directed and informed by an in-depth community engagement process. Public Matters led outreach meetings with local stakeholders, presented Vision Zero materials to over 1,300 community members, coordinated with local businesses, and worked with a diverse group of stakeholders and residents to design, plan, and enact the many activities involved in the Slow Jams activations and festivals. Some of these activations included walk- and bike-tours, participatory musical performances, parades, murals, and community conversations.

Since the initial road diet was announced in 2017, the road diet has faded from view, but some incremental improvements have been made. As of this writing, LADOT is initiating a “Temple Street - Beverly to Beaudry Project” that includes extensive resurfacing, curb and sidewalk repair, painted curb extensions, flashing crosswalks, pedestrian head-start signals, and new traffic signals. The activists view these improvements as inferior to the initial proposal, and indicative of LADOT’s prioritization of politician and special interest groups over neighborhood resident demands. The final streetscape of Temple Street is still undecided, but the process has a lot of lessons to offer streetscape improvement initiatives along Columbia Road.

18 Linton, “‘Keep L.A. Moving’ Organization Files Lawsuit Against Playa Del Rey Street Safety Improvements.”
7. ANALYSIS
Our team has identified three recurring themes in the process of researching the Columbia Road corridor, previous planning initiatives, and similar case studies. These themes are: framing and anchoring, siloed interests and agencies, and community engagement.

Framing and Anchoring
In every primary document and in almost every mention of this project, the Columbia Road Greenway is positioned as an extension of Olmsted’s Emerald Necklace. While this is a natural way to frame the project, it may not resonate with as many people as we would expect. The historical connection to Olmsted is a much larger draw for architects, planners, and long-term Bostonians, but does not take into account the immigrants, communities of color, or newcomers to the area since Olmsted’s time. Therefore, this positioning may not be the most effective way to garner community support and buy-in. However, reframing to center the community does not have to entirely negate the Olmsted history. This romantic vision of a completed Emerald Necklace does have potential benefits in a reimagined community process along Columbia Road. As we have seen, leveraging the Olmsted legacy is an effective way to garner attention and resources. Is there a way for a new framing of the Columbia Road corridor to remain community-driven, but be fueled by Olmsted-inspired energy and support?

In a similar vein, the way in which this project has resurfaced in the past few years has anchored its subsequent positioning. For example, the way in which the project was first envisioned as part of the BSA’s Greenway Links Charrette Competition, then promoted as part of the Boston 2024 Summer Olympics Bid, before making its way into the Go Boston 2030 and Imagine Boston 2030 reports, has prevented any organic planning processes from taking shape. Each planning initiative has built off of the previous one, eventually leading back to the charrette, which we previously mentioned, was developed without community input. What this means is that planners have found it difficult to steer away from these prior processes and they may never have the opportunity to approach this project as a clean slate; the motivations and beneficiaries of such a project have been lost over time. However, despite this obstacle, we at least interpret the enduring nature of this project as a good sign that implementation will one day occur.

Lastly, many key contributors highlighted the difficulty in framing this project as pertaining to the “Columbia Road corridor.” Looking at a map, it appears this 2.4 mile road is an integrated, well-connected route; however, in actuality, the corridor is quite divided, with no real centralized sense of place among residents. Neighborhood boundaries come right up to, but do not cross Columbia Road. The heavy car traffic splits the corridor down the middle, and busy intersections splice up the area into disconnected blocks. People living in the area relate to Uphams Corner or Grove Hall, Dorchester or Roxbury, but our research found that Columbia Road is seen as a boundary and an edge, not a connection or a public place. There is an intense need to forge connections across neighborhood boundaries and between major nodes, such as Upham’s Corner and Franklin Park. Only when we connect these disjointed places can a planning process address Columbia Road in its entirety.

Siloed Interests and Agencies
In addition to hindering a sense of place along the corridor, neighborhood boundaries also contribute to a division of community involvement and interests. Neighborhoods naturally define communities and neighborhood identity is, of course, valued and important. However, the multiplicity of neighborhoods and community groups along Columbia Road complicate the planning process. Future engagement strategies will need to work between and among these multiple areas and groups to be successful.

Previous planning initiatives have steered in the opposite direction, using fragmented approaches which divide engagement by sub-neighborhoods. While this can appear to be more efficient, it results in neighborhood isolation and miscommunication across neighborhood boundaries. When a plan spans such a large area, planners must take the extra step to relay information and promote collaboration across neighborhood boundaries. The City must similarly work to break down barriers between zones, specifically between adjacent planning projects and between related city
agencies. For example, in 2019, planning processes are underway for Franklin Park, Moakley Park, and Upham’s Corner – all adjacent to Columbia Road. Although these processes are managed by different entities (Parks and Recreation and the Boston Planning and Development Agency), they must take into account areas of overlap and efficiency. When the Columbia Road project officially begins, the Boston Transportation Department must similarly work to communicate with these adjacent developments.

Within a single planning process, there is also the difficulty of communicating and coordinating with multiple city agencies, such as the Public Works Department (PWD), Boston Bikes, and the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA). The Columbia Road corridor will require special attention to this challenge, due to its length and mixed-use nature. The Boston Complete Streets guidelines provide excellent resources outlining public agency fiduciary responsibilities and where they intersect.1

Community Engagement
Community engagement has also emerged as a major theme of our analysis. While engagement strategies varied widely among the planning projects described in the primary documents and case studies, processes were generally multifaceted. Within specific planning processes, engagement strategies often included a design component, such as a charrette or visioning process, an active, event-based component, such as a neighborhood bike ride or pop-up event, and an online component, such as a portal or question campaign. We have observed that a multifaceted engagement strategy encourages involvement by many parties; for example, design professionals can contribute their expertise through more formal charrettes, neighborhood residents are engaged through site-specific, pop-up events, and residents unable to engage in person can contribute through online portals. It is important for planning processes to devise a community engagement strategy that includes several different avenues for engagement, so as to involve as many people as possible in ways that are most comfortable and available to them.

Communications and marketing surrounding the engagement process are just as, if not more, important than the engagement processes themselves. Events, portals, and contact information must be made widely available to residents affected by planning processes. In our analysis, creative advertising appeared to be especially effective, such as with the Go Boston 2030 ideas on the Street pop-up, transported via cargo bike. Communication must also be made accessible to the linguistically isolated communities of greater Boston. It is imperative that materials be produced in multiple languages and tailored to the neighborhoods in which they are distributed. This has not always been prioritized in past planning processes, which has led to limited engagement from certain communities.

In some instances, community members and leaders have been given the opportunity to lead engagement processes from within the community. This strategy can produce effective results by engaging more people simply via neighborhood connections, rather than by forced participation. The Design Studio for Social Intervention has many good examples of ways to do this.2 Similarly, engagement processes that call on specific resident groups to participate, such as business owners or local organization members, can tap into knowledge that top-down processes may not be able to.

When it comes to Columbia Road, it has become clear that past planning processes did not engage with residents along the corridor at a deep enough level. Particularly at the early stages, when the project was first resurfacing, the planning process was very top-down. After a while, it appears that the project sometimes lost sight of who it was really meant to impact and why it was necessary. As it progressed through larger city efforts, residents were brought in on a larger scale, but still not at the scale necessary to garner widespread buy-in and advocacy. Engagement efforts focused on particular nodes, such as Upham’s Corner, or the intersection with Blue Hill Avenue, but not often on a corridor-wide level.

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1 City of Boston and Boston Transportation Department, “Boston Complete Streets: Design Guidelines,” 250.

2 Design Studio for Social Intervention, “Civic Engagement.”
Due to the diversity of the Columbia Road corridor, the threat of gentrification is that much more intimidating for residents living in the area. Therefore, when a community engagement process begins, it is imperative that it includes strategies to prevent displacement, ensure affordable housing, and promote neighborhood continuity. The Upham’s Corner Implementation process is leading by example in this respect in how it is working with the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative to ensure affordable housing and commercial space is prioritized in the planning process.

At the time of writing, funds have been allocated to the Columbia Road project for fiscal year 2019. However, if a request for proposals (RFP) for a community engagement strategy is not released by the end of June, the funds will be reallocated and the budget must be renewed in the new fiscal year. The City has expressed an interest in hiring a Corridor Transportation Planner before proceeding with the RFP, but action will likely be delayed and current funding lost. Our research revealed a broad consensus from the Boston planning community that Columbia Road is due for constructive attention and investment. So what should be the next step? The three themes identified above inform what our team thinks an equitable, effective, and sustainable process for Columbia Road should entail. In the next section, we will outline specific recommendations for this process.
8. RECOMMENDATIONS
The original goal of our partnership with LSA was to build out the research, data collection and visualization, and planning components of the Columbia Road Greenway. This project was intended to help promote a holistic vision for this corridor that addresses issues of environmental and transit justice, climate-smart policies, and promotes a healthy multi-modal Boston. After our initial meeting with LSA and some preliminary research, we determined that the most useful role we could play would be to compile all existing information instead of developing additional new information, since there was already a wealth of existing information about the corridor.

It is our hope that this report will be used to reference all existing information about Columbia Road, including mobility, public health, environmental justice, placemaking, and climate readiness. LSA will be using this report to further their community engagement strategies along the corridor, focusing on residents, frequent users, businesses, and key stakeholders. This report is also intended to encourage city action for both targeted early-implementation projects as well as larger corridor reconstruction.

Through our historical research, we identified the significant role that Olmsted’s vision held, and still holds, for completing the Emerald Necklace. This vision has been the driving narrative behind referring to Columbia Road as a “greenway.” However, we question this continued use of Olmsted’s vision as the reason for moving this project forward. Although, as was evident from our research, we have found extensive community benefits to greenway designs, this vision was not developed by the community who lives in or around the corridor. Much of the work that has been done, from visioning, planning, and design, has not included community voice. We recommend moving away from this narrative and instead using community wants and needs to drive the decisions made for Columbia Road. Our research showed a significant opportunity to improve all modes of transportation along the corridor, as well as climate responsiveness, placemaking, and environmental health factors. Through a robust community engagement process, residents’ thoughts could provide a compelling, and more relevant, narrative for Columbia Road. This may result in a design that more accurately reflects community priorities, rather than leading with a historical vision of Columbia Road as a greenway.

We recommend asking all parties involved a series of questions about motives for this project before proceeding with the redesign of Columbia Road. Who are these improvements for? There can be many answers to this question, including neighborhood residents, people passing through, employees, tourists, and more. Ultimately, the project should benefit the people who live there, and not cause displacement, although it can benefit additional groups as well. Why do we care about moving this project forward? Is it because the neighborhood is underserved? Or is it because there is a gap in the Emerald Necklace? Should it become a “greenway”? Should it be framed as a “greenway”? Language and framing are essential to ensure that the final product meets its goals. Concepts like “Vision Zero,” “greenways,” and “complete streets” all come with different assumptions, benefits, and effects. Which do we want? What are the unintended consequences of completing this project? And lastly, how can this project be applicable to other corridor projects in Boston, like Blue Hill Avenue?

At the time of writing, there are many planning and development projects happening around Columbia Road. Two of them, as we have discussed, are the Franklin Park and Moakley Park planning processes. In addition, there are multiple development projects in progress in Upham’s Corner and other areas in close proximity to the corridor. We recommend enhancing communication between planning projects, and integrating those projects into the community engagement process for Columbia Road. This will ensure that the community is aware of all changes happening, and that they are able to contribute to the conversations around park access, new businesses, and additional housing.

Transportation is a critical aspect of the Columbia Road project and we have learned that there are concerns about competition between modes. We recommend working collaboratively with the
route changes and mode shifts. Knowing that this report did not create any new research but rather compiled existing information, we recommend extensive, in-depth research be conducted in all related and adjacent neighborhoods to hear from residents about their vision for Columbia Road.

To improve the process going forward, we recommend creating and using multilingual outreach materials for all community engagement activities, building relationships with trusted community stakeholders, and collaborating with key entities along the corridor to ensure that the project will meet the needs of people who currently live or work on or around Columbia Road. Working within the City of Boston’s Complete Streets Guidelines will be essential to ensure safety, climate responsiveness, and efficient mobility. It may be useful to connect with planners, advocates, and/or city officials involved with the three case studies we presented in our report in order to learn more about their challenges, successes, and best practices for moving forward. We propose that project managers and the city engage in a thoughtful, action-oriented process to determine anti-displacement policies and practices that will ensure people who lived in the corridor before the redesign will still be able to live there after the redesign. Displacement after built environment changes is a significant concern that should be addressed with a specific, actionable plan prior to the project breaking ground.

Finally, we recommend further research be conducted for a more comprehensive understanding of the needs, wants, and desires for Columbia Road. For example, a news analysis could be completed to understand the public support or opposition for the project, and to strategize about how to address recurring community concerns. A more thorough transportation analysis of road use would be helpful to understand the challenges and opportunities, as well as the unintended consequences of
9. APPENDIX
Glossary

**Columbia Road Corridor:** The 44 block groups within ¼ mile of Columbia Road.

**Complete Neighborhoods:** Places where resident and business needs for work, living, gathering, recreation, and health can be met. *(Boston Redevelopment Authority)*

**Complete Streets:** Streets designed and operated to enable safe use and support mobility for all users. Those include people of all ages and abilities, regardless of whether they are travelling as drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, or public transportation riders. *(US DOT)*

**Community Development Corporation (CDC):** CDCs engage local residents and businesses to work together to undertake community development programs, projects and activities, which develop and improve urban, rural and suburban communities in sustainable ways that create and expand economic opportunities for low- and moderate-income people. *(Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations)*

**Environmental Health:** A holistic consideration for the physical, chemical, and biological factors external to a person, and all the related factors impacting behavior. *(World Health Organization)*

**Environmental Justice:** Neighborhoods that meet one of more of the following criteria: Block group whose annual median household income is equal to or less than 65% of the statewide median ($62,072 in 2010); 25% or more of the residents identify as a race other than white; 25% or more of households have no one over the age of 14 who speaks English only or very well. *(Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs)*

**Gentrification:** The process of repairing and rebuilding homes and businesses in a deteriorating area (such as an urban neighborhood) accompanied by an influx of middle-class or affluent people and that often results in the displacement of earlier, usually poorer residents. *(Merriam-Webster)*

**Green Gentrification:** How green initiatives cause and/or enhance gentrification *(Gould, Lewis)*

**Greenway:** A corridor of undeveloped land preserved for recreational use or environmental protection. *(Merriam-Webster)*

**Linguistic Isolation:** Households where English speaking is limited. *(US Census)*

**Placemaking:** Grounded in having communities imagine their uses of places in ways that build on their site specificity *(DS4SI)*

**Request for Proposal:** A project funding announcement posted by a business or organization for which companies can place bids to complete the project *(Investopedia)*

**Sharrows:** Road markings used to indicate a shared lane environment for bicycles and automobiles *(National Association of City Transportation Officials)*

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Sources of Graphics

**Cover Page and Chapter Pages:** Photos by Lev McCarthy

**Report Layout:** Aqsa Butt

**Basemaps:** Marah Holland and Megan Morrow

**Figure 1:** Harvard University, Harvard Map Collection ([https://iiif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/ext:aHR0cHM6Ly9paWlmLmxpYi5oYXJ2YXJkLmVkdS9iYW5pZmVzdHMvaWRzOjMwNTM=](https://iiif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/ext:aHR0cHM6Ly9paWlmLmxpYi5oYXJ2YXJkLmVkdS9iYW5pZmVzdHMvaWRzOjMwNTM=))

**Figure 2:** Map reproduction courtesy of the Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center at the Boston Public Library ([https://collections.leventhalmap.org/search/commonwealth:1257b8974](https://collections.leventhalmap.org/search/commonwealth:1257b8974))

**Figure 3:** Boston City Archives ([https://collections.leventhalmap.org/search/commonwealth:1257b8974](https://collections.leventhalmap.org/search/commonwealth:1257b8974))

**Figure 4:** Lev McCarthy

**Figure 5:** Google Maps, with added graphics by Xianzheng Fang ([https://www.google.com/maps](https://www.google.com/maps))

**Figure 6:** Lev McCarthy

**Figure 7:** Emerald Network ([https://www.emeraldnetwork.info/vision](https://www.emeraldnetwork.info/vision))

**Figure 8:** Emerald Network ([https://www.emeraldnetwork.info/](https://www.emeraldnetwork.info/))

**Figure 9:** American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials ([https://www.emeraldnetwork.info/](https://www.emeraldnetwork.info/))

**Figure 10:** City of Boston Archives, Imagine Boston 2030, Xianzheng Fang, Aqsa Butt

**Figure 11:** Aqsa Butt

**Figure 12:** Aqsa Butt, MassGIS

**Figure 13:** Aqsa Butt, MassGIS

**Figure 14:** Aqsa Butt, MassGIS, Boston Planning and Development Agency ([http://www.bostonplans.org/](http://www.bostonplans.org/))

**Figure 15:** Aqsa Butt, MassGIS, Boston Planning and Development Agency ([http://www.bostonplans.org/](http://www.bostonplans.org/))

**Figure 16:** Megan Morrow, MassGIS, ACS 2017 (5-year)

**Figure 17:** Aqsa Butt, MassGIS, 2012 ESRI, U.S Census Bureau, NAV/TEQ

**Figure 18:** Aqsa Butt, MassGIS, Mass EOEEA

**Figure 19:** Megan Morrow, MassGIS, 2017 ACS (5-year)

**Figure 20:** Megan Morrow, MassGIS, 2017 ACS (5-year)

**Figure 21:** Megan Morrow, MassGIS, 2017 ACS (5-year)

**Figure 22:** Xianzheng Fang, MassGIS, Reference USA

**Figure 23:** Lev McCarthy

**Figure 24:** Lev McCarthy

**Figure 25:** Lev McCarthy, Google Earth

**Figure 26:** Xianzheng Fang, MassGIS, Mass EOEEA

**Figure 27:** Xianzheng Fang, MassGIS, Mass EOEEA

**Figure 28:** Xianzheng Fang, MassGIS

**Figure 29:** Xianzheng Fang, MassGIS, US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention


**Figure 31:** Xianzheng Fang, MassGIS, FEMA

**Figure 32:** Boston Public Health Commission ([http://www.bphc.org/healthdata/health-of-boston-report/Documents/_HOB_16-17](http://www.bphc.org/healthdata/health-of-boston-report/Documents/_HOB_16-17))

**Figure 33:** Design Studio for Social Intervention ([https://www.ds4si.org/placemaking](https://www.ds4si.org/placemaking))

**Figure 34:** Design Studio for Social Intervention ([https://www.ds4si.org/placemaking](https://www.ds4si.org/placemaking))
Figure 35: Design Studio for Social Intervention (https://www.ds4si.org/placemaking)
Figure 36: Design Studio for Social Intervention (https://www.ds4si.org/placemaking)
Figure 37: Design Studio for Social Intervention (https://www.ds4si.org/placemaking)
Figure 38: Design Studio for Social Intervention (https://www.ds4si.org/placemaking)
Figure 39: Design Studio for Social Intervention (https://www.ds4si.org/placemaking)
Figure 40: Aqsa Butt, MBTA, MassGIS, DS4SI, Fairmount Cultural Corridor
Figure 41: Aqsa Butt
Figure 42: Aqsa Butt, MassGIS, Boston Planning and Development Agency, MassBuilds
Figure 43: City of Boston (https://www.boston.gov/departments/parks-and-recreation/moakley-park-vision-plan)
Figure 44: Stoss Landscape Urbanism (https://www.boston.gov/news/connecting-people-and-gaining-input-through-discover-moakley)
Figure 45: Xianzheng Fang
Figure 46: Boston Redevelopment Authority (http://www.bostonplans.org/getattachment/653f6e4d-a482-4163-ad39-11876d8f656a)
Figure 47: Lori Lobenstine
Figure 48: NBBJ (https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/livablestreetsalliance/pages/6395/attachments/original/1553280429/7_Columbia_Road_Final_Presentation-min.pdf?1553280429)
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Figure 50: City of Boston (https://www.boston.gov/departments/transportation/go-boston-2030)
Figure 51: City of Boston (https://www.boston.gov/departments/transportation/go-boston-2030)
Figure 52: Boston Society of Architects with added graphics by Aqsa Butt (https://www.architects.org/programs-and-events/fulfilling-promise)
Figure 53: City of Boston (https://imagine.boston.gov/)
Figure 54: Lev McCarthy
Figure 55: Boston Planning and Development Agency (http://www.bostonplans.org/news-calendar/calendar/2017/06/08/imagining-franklin-park-columbia-road)
Figure 56: Lev McCarthy
Figure 57: Lev McCarthy
Figure 58: Lev McCarthy
Figure 59: Boston Department of Transportation https://www.boston.gov/sites/default/files/document-file-02-2018/2017_boston_bike_counts_report.pdf
Figure 60: Lev McCarthy, Bluebikes (https://member.bluebikes.com/map/)
Figure 61: Lev McCarthy
Figure 62: Lev McCarthy
Figure 63: Lev McCarthy
Figure 64: Marah Holland, MassGIS, American FactFinder Census 2010
Figure 65: Lev McCarthy
Figure 66: MBTA (https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5c2e4ea0a9e028ddcab570eb/t/5c49d4db21c67c91563b738c/1548342491724/Route+5+%26+16_Accessible_Final.pdf)
Figure 67: Boston Redevelopment Authority (http://tamcc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/BRA_CAG_Corridor-Profile_2013.pdf)
Figure 68: Aqsa Butt, MBTA, MassGIS
Figure 69: Marah Holland, MassGIS, American FactFinder Census 2010
Figure 70: Google Maps with added graphics by Xianzheng Fang
Figure 71: East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation (https://ebaldc.org/what-we-do/neighborhood-collaborations/sparc/)
Figure 72: SPARC Oakland (https://www.sparcoakland.com/projects)
Figure 73: SPARC Oakland (https://www.sparcoakland.com/)
Figure 75: New York City Department of Transportation (https://www1.nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/east-new-york-fountain-hinsdale-snediker-jun2017.pdf)
Figure 76: Public Matters (https://publicmattersgroup.com/vztssj181030/)
Interview Questions

The following questions were prioritized in the interview process. Due to the varied work of interviewees, we adjusted questions as necessary.

• (In referencing a specific section of a primary document) What research methods did you use in determining this?
  ◦ What data sources did you use?

• What kind of community outreach did your organization perform in the process?

• If your organization was tasked with doing this project again this year, what would you do differently?

• What was the aftermath/follow-up of your project?

• What were the priorities of your organization at the time? What kind of instruction did you receive from the city?

• What were the priorities of the City of Boston?

• What do you perceive to be the biggest obstacle preventing the city from completing this project?

• Do you have any recommendations of other organizations we should research or speak with?
A Sample of Community Organizations Along and Near the Corridor

Alternatives for the Community and Environment
The Bird Street Community Center
Boston Cyclists Union
Bowdoin Geneva Main Streets
Bowdoin Street Health Center
Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corporation
Columbia-Savin Hill Civic Association
Design Studio for Social Intervention
Dorchester Bay Economic Development Corporation
Dorchester Unified Neighborhood Association
Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative
The Emerald Necklace Conservancy
Fairmount Cultural Corridor
Fairmount Indigo CDC Collaborative
Fields Corner Main Street
Four Corners Main Street
Franklin Park Coalition
Greater Four Corners Action Coalition
Greater Grove Hall Main Streets

Hancock Street Civic Association
Harvard Street Neighborhood Health Center
John W. McCormack Civic Association
Jones Hill Association
Kroc Corps Community Center
Lena Park Community Development Corporation
Meetinghouse Hill Civic Association
Project R.I.G.H.T. Inc.
Southwest Boston Community Development Corporation
Saint Mark’s Area Civic Association
Sip & Spoke Bike Kitchen
Talbot Norfolk Triangle (TNT) Neighbors United
Upham’s Corner Health Center
Upham’s Corner Main Street
Upham’s Corner West Side Neighborhood Association
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