

**BOSTON
SQUARE
TOGETHER**

**OPEN HOUSE 3
FULL REPORT**

Thursday, October 3, 2019

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OVERVIEW

The Boston Square Together project is a community-focused planning process where neighbors, business owners and local partners worked together to create a vision for the heart of the Boston Square (BSQ) area. The BSQ Together partners, comprised of Oakdale Neighbors, Amplify GR and Boston Square Neighborhood Association, are committed to advancing an equity-focused vision by integrating the Project Principals (page 5) and using Health, Education, Arts & culture, Recreation, and Technology (HEART) as a design framework.

The Boston Square Together team hosted three open houses to gather community feedback on a development project intended to take place on an approximately 9-acre site in the business district of Boston Square. This report includes feedback shared from the community at each of the events.

At these meetings, individuals had the opportunity to share goals for the development and give candid feedback about the assets they'd like to see included in the project. More than 250 individuals participated in the process, of which approximately 70% identified as residents of the Boston Square area (defined by Hall, Giddings, Burton and Eastern). Of the remaining participants, the majority were area business owners, employees or churchgoers.

The neighborhood engagement process attempted to serve as a funnel to first identify community priorities to ultimately incorporate those priorities into the future development site. On August 15, the team shared the Partner Project Principles and listened to community priorities. On September 5, the team presented three different concepts for neighbors to review and share input. At the final event on October 3, the team presented a more refined vision to the community, which was built off of the feedback gathered at previous events.

Area residents were invited and notified of the open houses by: 1) direct invitation from neighbors who serve and support our work, 2) direct mailers sent to each address within the Hall Street, Giddings Avenue, Burton Street and Eastern Avenue area; 3) door-to-door invitations placed in doors by the Amplify GR engagement team, and 4) Facebook event advertisements.

Next steps:

The Boston Square Together team, comprised of local community organizations and partner developers, will present to the City of Grand Rapids. Pending approval and amendments from city council, the team is set to break ground on the project beginning in 2020. New community amenities are set to be available by 2022. To learn more about the approval and financing process, visit bostonsquaregr.org.

The following report details feedback received at each of the open houses, along with the finalized vision for the site.

Key:

Remarks in **blue** indicate feedback from a person that lives in the BSQ area.

Remarks in **red** indicate feedback from a person that works or owns a business in the BSQ area.

Remarks in **yellow** indicate feedback from a person that has other interests in the BSQ area.

Remarks with a **♥** indicate multiple people left the same comment.

PROCESS



PROJECT PRINCIPLES

»»» By working with a group of committed neighbors and local community organizations, we are dedicated to achieving the following objectives on the 9-acre site:

An equity focused design in the H.E.A.R.T. (Health, Education, Arts & Culture, Recreation and Technology) of the Boston Square business district

Affordable housing options for a wide range of income levels

Homeownership opportunities on both the site and in surrounding neighborhoods

High-quality and sustainable design

Dedicated community spaces

Emphasis on construction contracts for minority and women-owned companies in the 49507 area

Neighborhood-based construction employment opportunities

Dedicated spaces for local business ownership, with an emphasis on reflecting the diversity of 49507

High-quality Early Learning Center

FEEDBACK

Meeting 1

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JOBS & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Economic opportunities without displacement

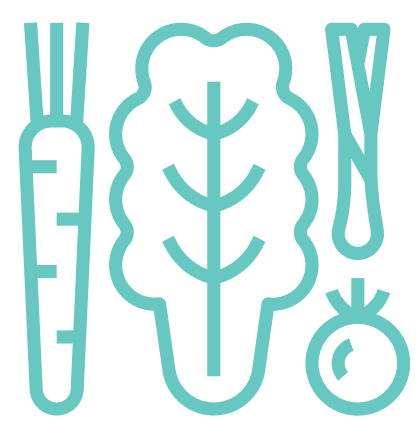
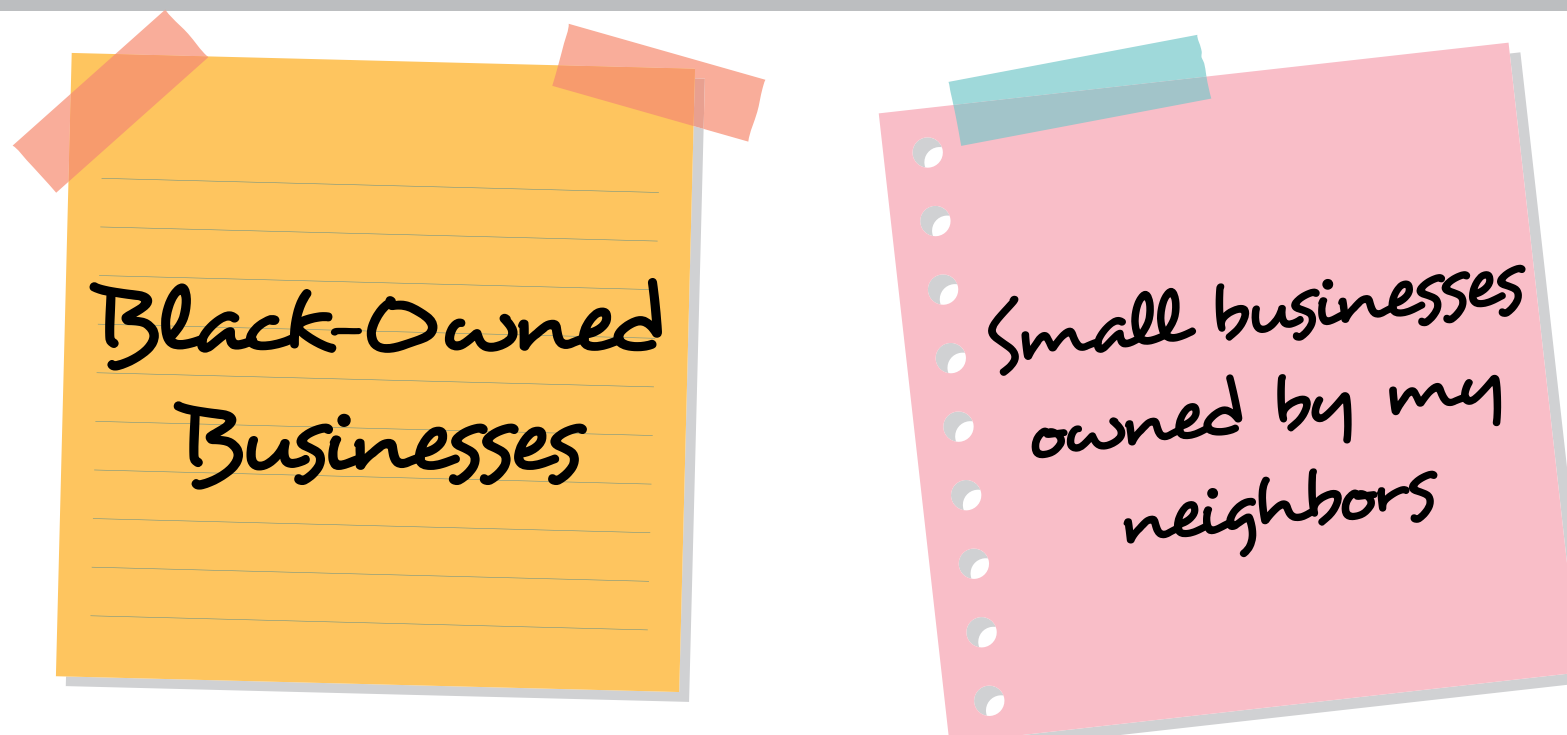
ORIGINALLY, WE HEARD THE NEIGHBORHOOD COULD USE:

YOU CONFIRMED AT OPEN HOUSE #1 THAT YOU'D LIKE TO SEE THINGS LIKE:

HERE'S HOW WE'D LIKE TO INCLUDE YOUR FEEDBACK INTO THE 9-ACRE SITE



Business ownership reflective of the community



Fresh food/ local market



Retail



Multi-generational gathering spaces (recreational, entertainment, etc).



Banking



Restaurants



Good paying jobs and economic opportunities for all



Work with neighbors, business and neighborhood organizations to attract and retain employers that meet the needs of the community.

Ask for Employer commitments in exchange for reduced rent/ fees.

NEIGHBORHOOD BUILDING BLOCKS

A community that caters to the needs of neighbors today and tomorrow

➤➤➤ At open house #1, we heard the following activities and amenities are priorities for the community.

Education & Programming



129 likes

Open Green Space



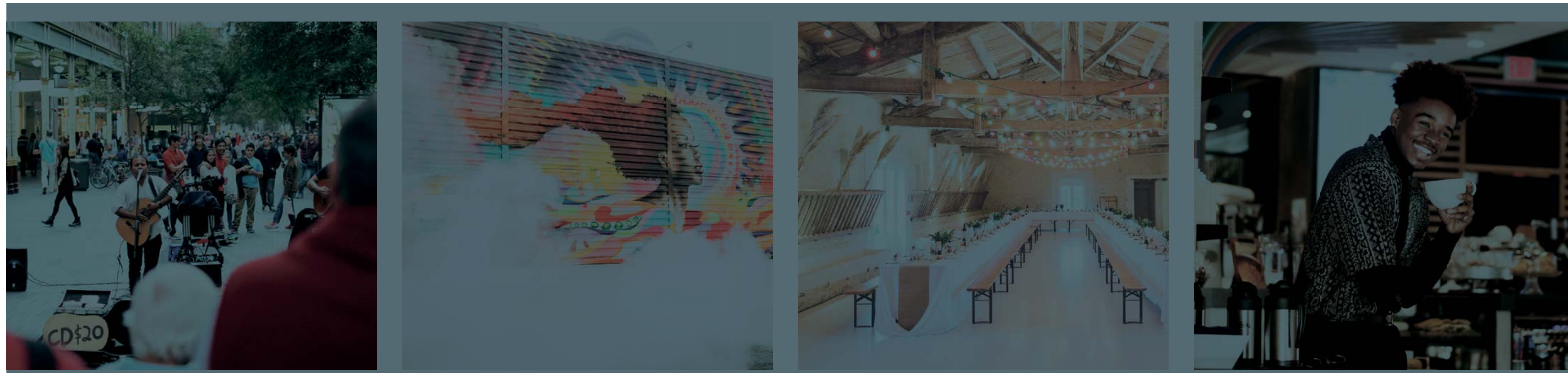
114 likes

Sustainable Food



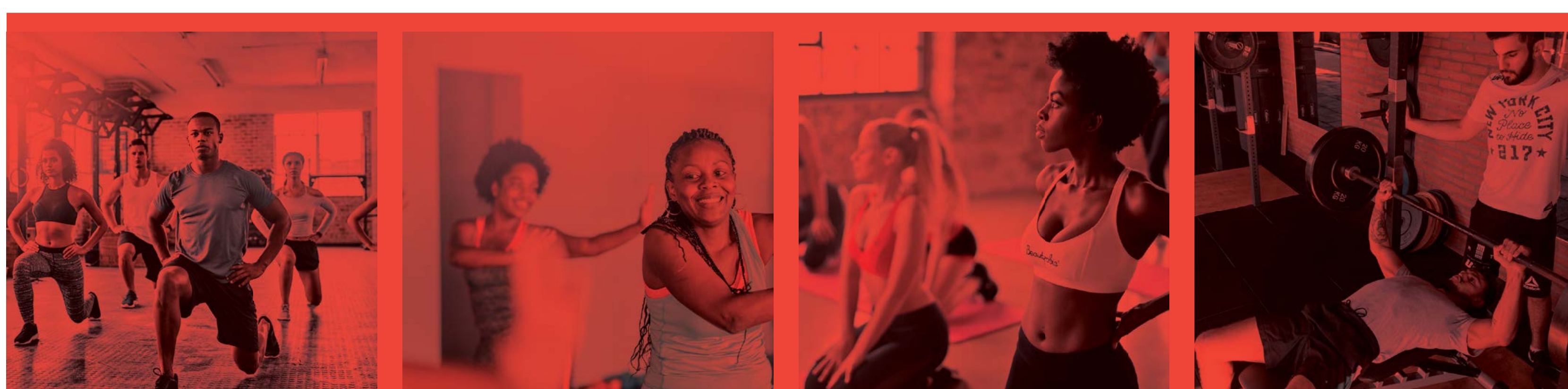
111 likes

Arts & Culture



100 likes

Health & Wellness

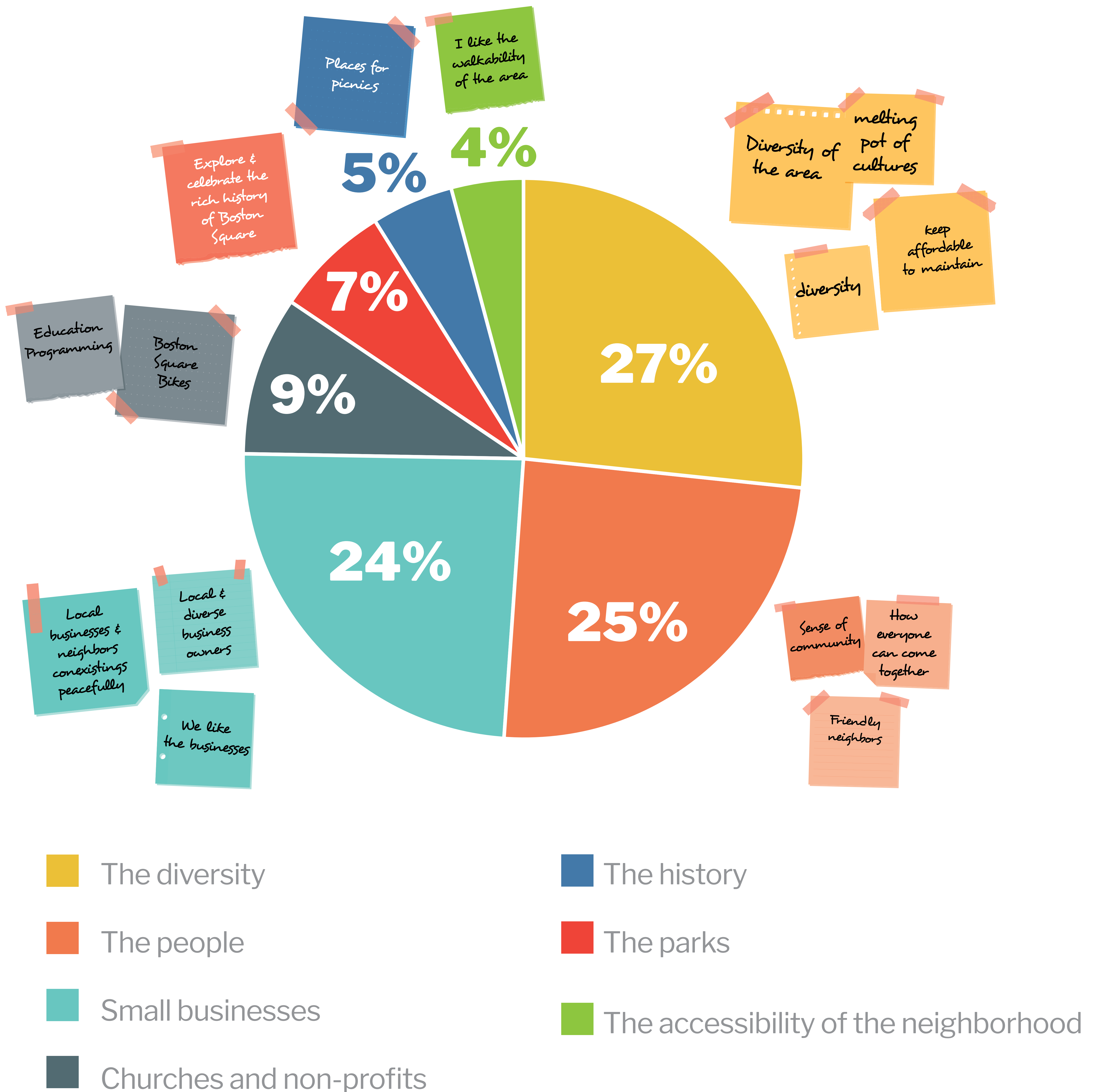


97 likes

NEIGHBORHOOD BUILDING BLOCKS

A community that caters to the needs of neighbors today and tomorrow

»»» According to our community, the following cultural assets make Boston Square unique:



BOSTON SQUARE TOGETHER

DESIGN

A community that caters to the needs of neighbors today and tomorrow

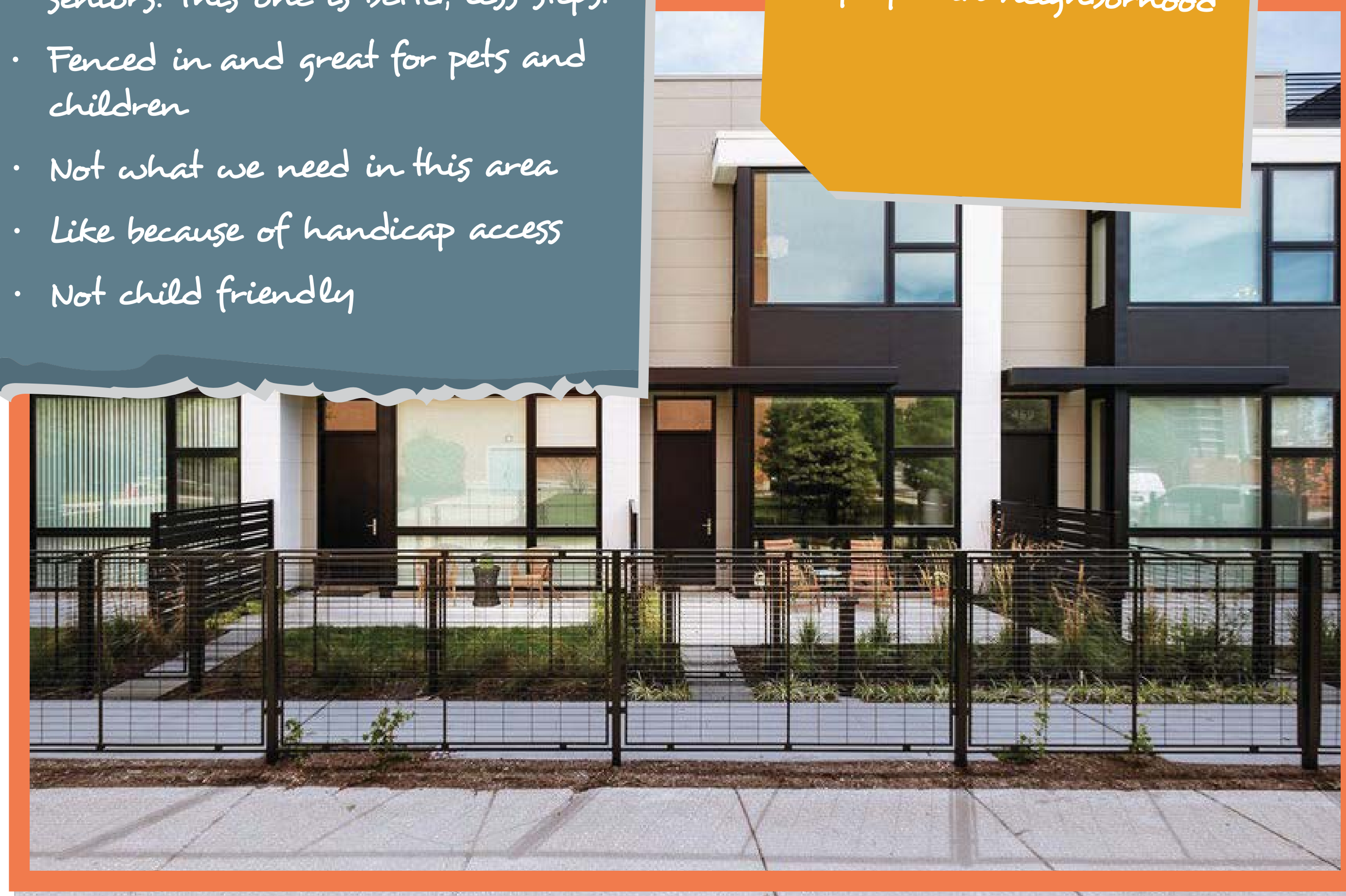
Townhomes:

- No privacy. Too close together.
- There is nothing to show the parking area
- Has a warm feel. Could open up more and have a pop of color, landscaping, etc.
- Like the garage
- Don't care for townhomes. Too tall.

- Has a nice warm feel.
- Too compact for the neighborhood.

- Are these safe?
- I like outdoor space
- Want some more one story for seniors. This one is better, less steps.
- Fenced in and great for pets and children
- Not what we need in this area
- Like because of handicap access
- Not child friendly

- Love porch for plants and to be able to sit out and enjoy sun
- Like it because less people in neighborhood



TOTAL: 21

Blue: 10 Yellow: 9 Red: 2

TOTAL: 38

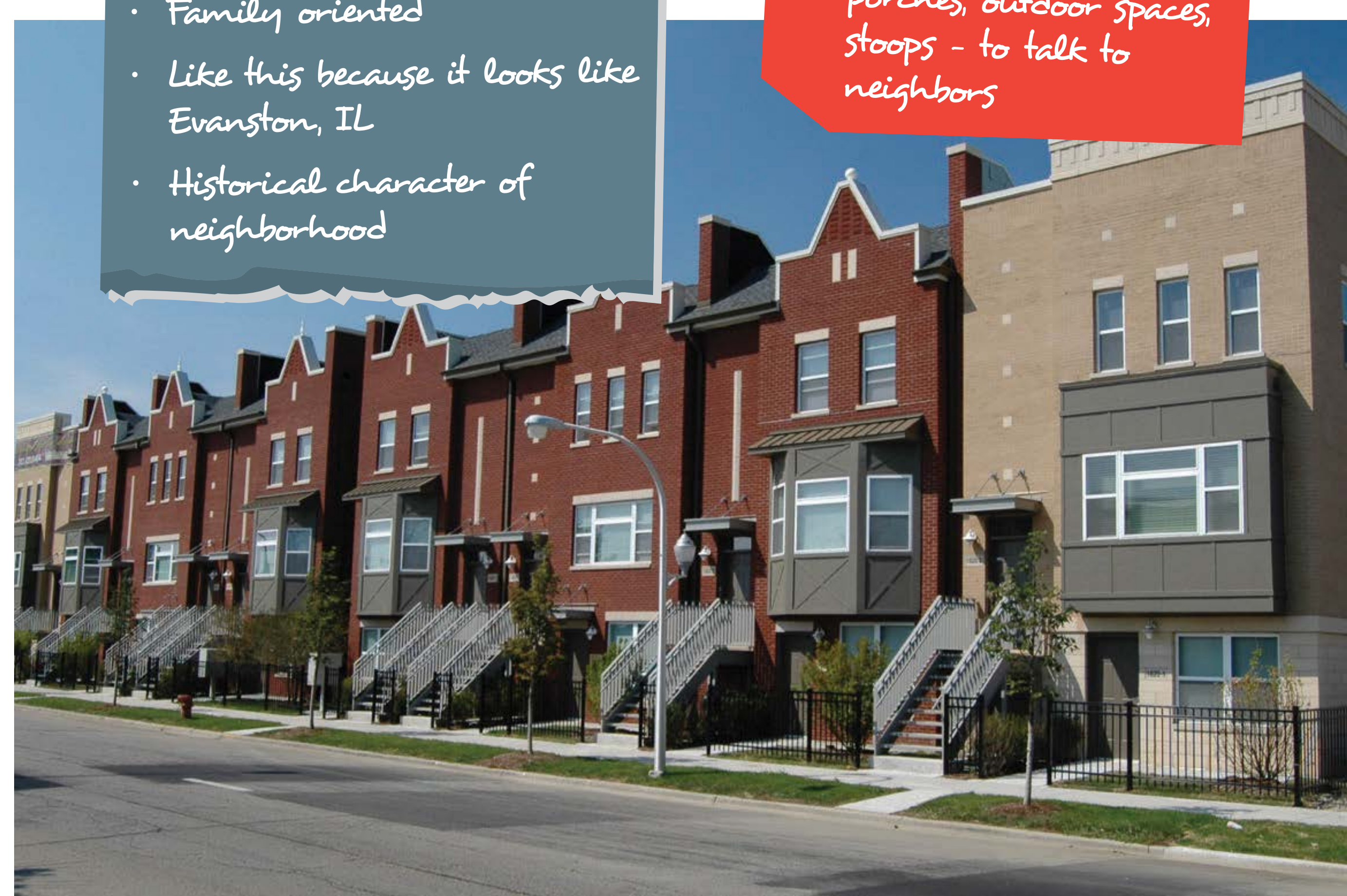
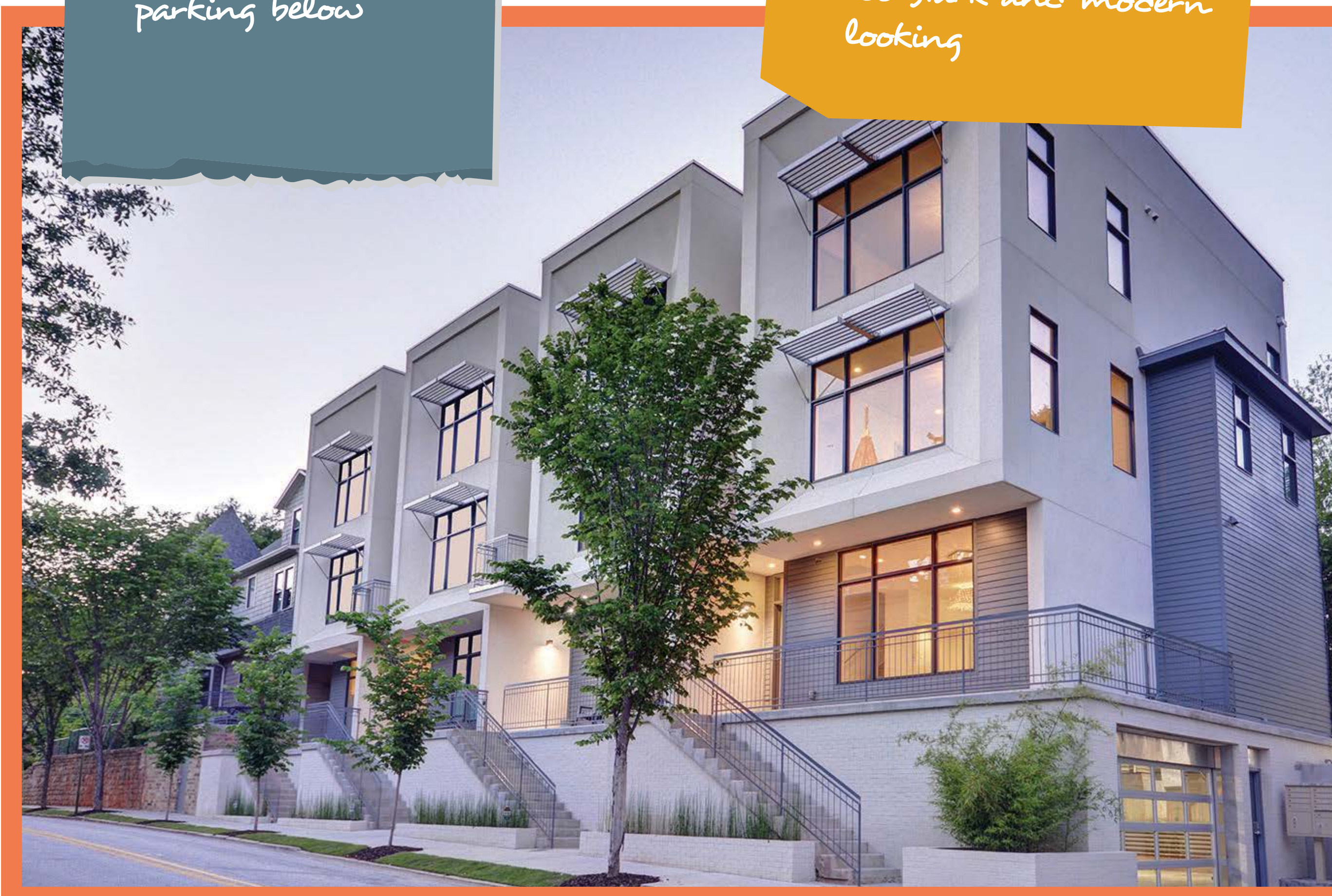
Blue: 27 Yellow: 9 Red: 2

- Like the clean lines
- Like modern and parking below

- Modern. Lots of light.
- Too stark and modern looking

- I think it fits well with existing buildings
- This looks too Dutch
- Family oriented
- Like this because it looks like Evanston, IL
- Historical character of neighborhood

- Townhouse design is great!
- I like the option of porches, outdoor spaces, stoops - to talk to neighbors



TOTAL: 35

Blue: 29 Yellow: 5 Red: 1

TOTAL: 26

Blue: 19 Yellow: 6 Red: 1

BOSTON SQUARE TOGETHER

DESIGN

A community that caters to the needs of neighbors today and tomorrow

Three Story Multi-Family:

- Very nice. Warm and inviting.
- Update housing
- Too high levels for seniors
- Looks too enclosed
- Nice lighting and transparency
- This with more green space
- No Green space

- Too big city feel

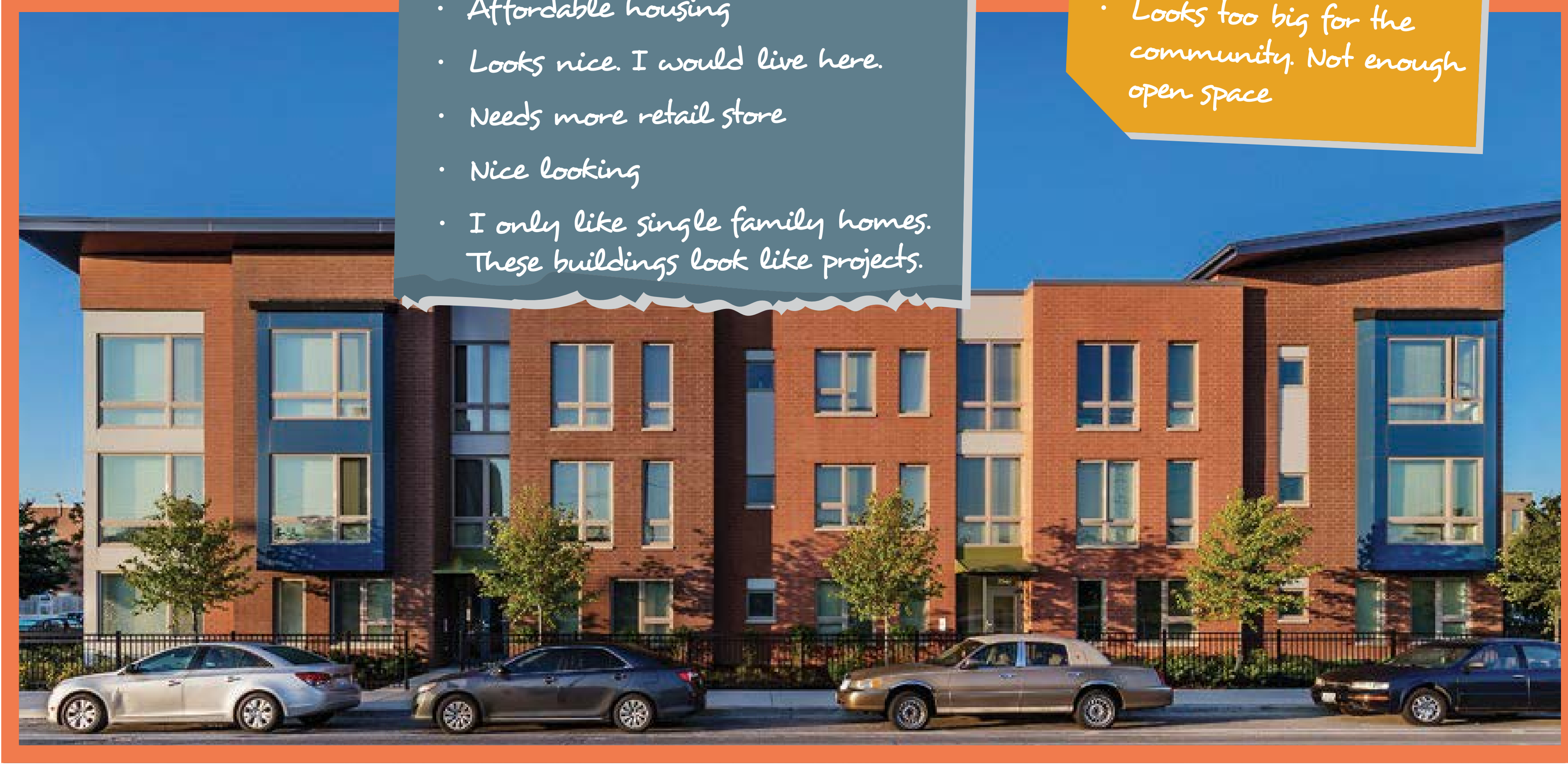


TOTAL: 19

Blue: 13 Yellow: 6 Red: 0

- Go well
- Has the look of nice yet still affordable
- Too much for too little space
- Affordable housing
- Looks nice. I would live here.
- Needs more retail store
- Nice looking
- I only like single family homes. These buildings look like projects.

- Too many people in the neighborhood
- Looks like you can house more people and keep it affordable
- Looks too big for the community. Not enough open space.



TOTAL: 23

Blue: 13 Yellow: 7 Red: 3

- Too stark
- Looks very nice for the Boston Square
- Cold feeling
- This looks like a pop up house
- Use materials that celebrate and empower Michigan AND 49507
- Beautiful



TOTAL: 11

Blue: 10 Yellow: 0 Red: 1

- I like the balconies
- Balconies might be dangerous for families with children
- Darker color of brick looks modern high class
- I like the natural materials used here.

- There should be porch space - brings neighbors outside their homes.

- Balconies - outdoor spaces for apartment



TOTAL: 42

Blue: 31 Yellow: 6 Red: 5

BOSTON SQUARE TOGETHER

DESIGN

A neighborhood design informed by neighbors for neighbors

Mid-Rise Buildings:

- Not too tall
- I fear this is a little too big for our community, but I like the efficiency of housing
- Very nice
- Too tall and anonymous
- Looks more upscale - likes
- Too much
- Too big for the space
- Building with housing and stores
- Too large
- Too congested

- Screams high rent. Not affordable for most residents.
- Too packed, too dense
- Absolutely beautiful
- Holds a lot of people
- Too "big city"
- Would not want community to be TAXED out of their homes

- Not what we need here
- Too many other areas in the city look like this
- Likes that there is more room inside with bays
- Neighborhood Assoc, residents, business owners
- Like projecting bays and balconies

- No community feeling
- Tall buildings don't fit neighborhood
- Like the design. More color on building
- These buildings seem too big/compact for our neighborhood
- Too many people in the neighborhood



TOTAL: 28

Blue: 17 Yellow: 8 Red: 3

TOTAL: 8

Blue: 8 Yellow: 0 Red: 0

- Looks like college dorm
- No. Looks like a nursing home.
- Too many different colors of brick, clashes with green shutters. Not enough trees.
- Too congested and tall
- Too tall for space
- Looks like it would cost too much for a low income family
- ...would date the building quickly (fad)
- Enjoy the mixed colors. Feels more friendly
- Avoid "norm-love" architecture, please.

- This appears to be a big jail or projects. Not a home
- Too many units
- Looks like projects & too many different colors
- Looks like dorm
- Too big. Feels like housing project.

- Sidewalks, height, balcony
- Make sure parking is always available for residents



TOTAL: 2

Blue: 0 Yellow: 2 Red: 0

TOTAL: 11

Blue: 7 Yellow: 3 Red: 1

BOSTON SQUARE TOGETHER

DESIGN

A neighborhood design informed by neighbors for neighbors

Streetscapes:

- Social spaces - likes
- Don't like the apartments, but the streetscape is nice.

- I love outdoor space
- Able to sit out during warm weather. Social area

- Like the plants and space
- Like the plant space too but maintenance should be a must to keep up the landscape
- Need living infrastructure that is both functional and beautiful
- Might be nice
- Like that it is level in case of fire w/some security
- Looks like a canyon
- Like because it's exotic, like a different country

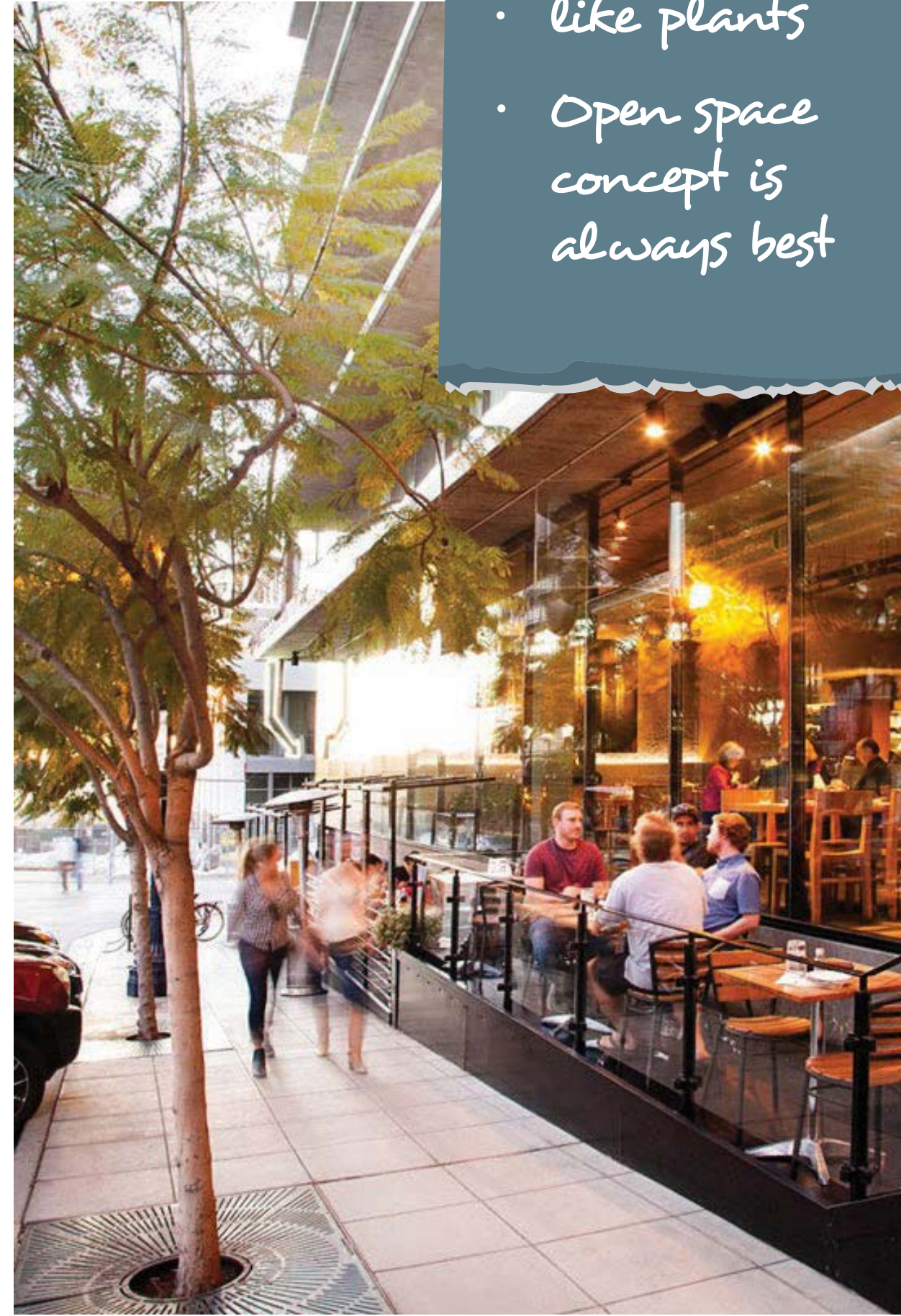
- Green space integrated into the area (co-op community garden)?
- More green space and community gardens
- Look in each other's windows

- Buildings with porches, balconies, outdoor spaces to talk to fellow neighbors builds community

- like plants
- Open space concept is always best

- I didn't like this. Because you can look into your neighbor's house and they can look right into yours.

- This streetscape design offers lighting / in+out exits + entrances. It appears to be populated well with security.



TOTAL: 22

Blue: 10

Yellow: 9 Red: 3

TOTAL: 23

Blue: 15

Yellow: 6 Red: 2

TOTAL: 25

Blue: 16

Yellow: 5 Red: 4

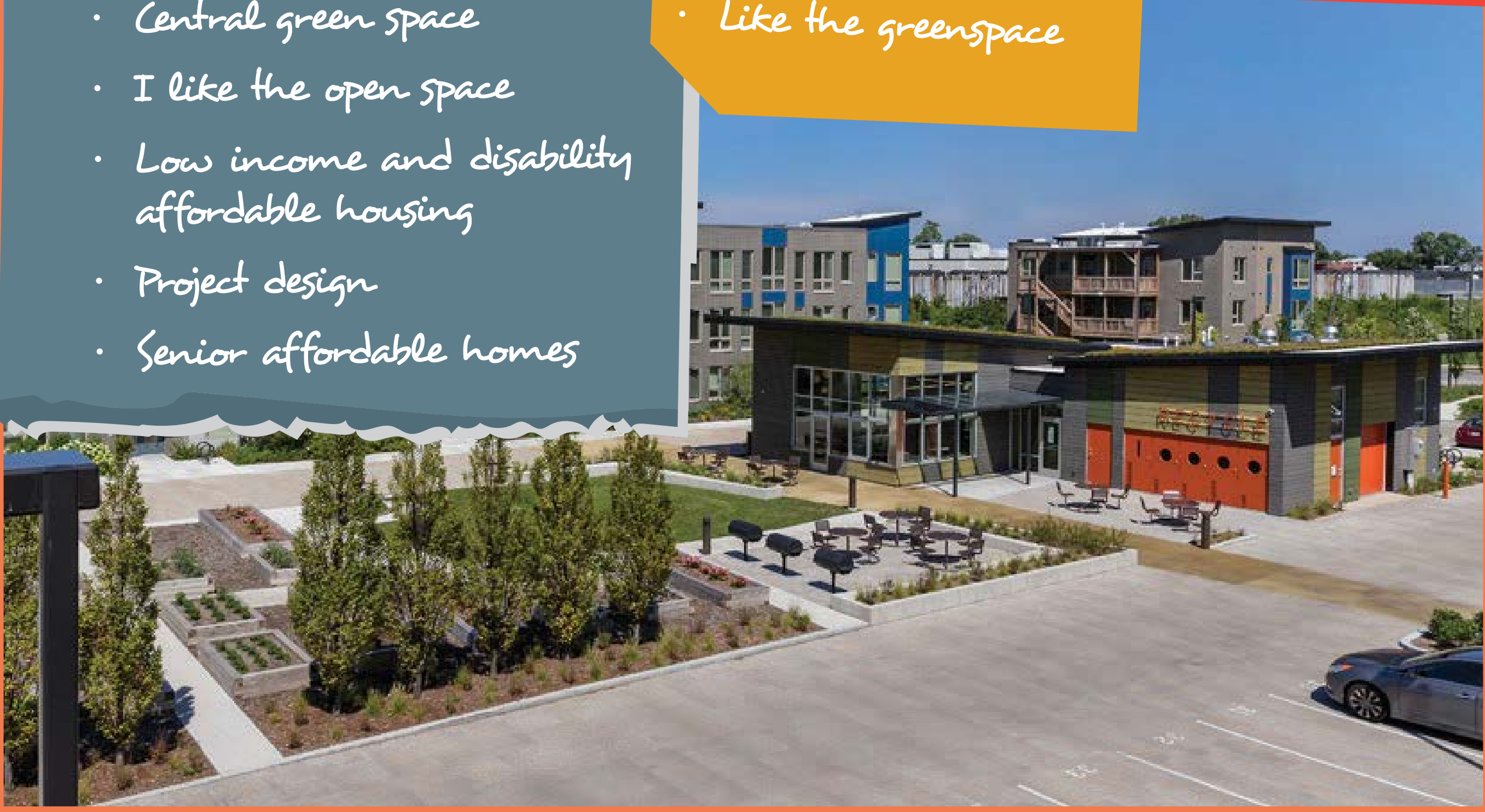
- The space is nice and open, could incorporate public art, and performance spaces
- Like community garden & socialize. For health issues
- Central green space
- I like the open space
- Low income and disability affordable housing
- Project design
- Senior affordable homes

- People in the inner city sometimes don't have a car so it's important to have housing close to grocery, stores, etc.
- Like the greenspace

Bigger green space plan for bigger trees - helps cool neighborhood

- Catching up with change in times
- No green space
- Well lighted walking area with trees. Looks modern.
- I like the brick and the trees are welcoming and classic

- This doesn't have a neighborhood feel



TOTAL: 35

Blue: 26

Yellow: 7

Red: 2

TOTAL: 25

Blue: 15

Yellow: 5

Red: 4

BOSTON SQUARE TOGETHER

DESIGN

A neighborhood design informed by neighbors for neighbors

Mixed-Use Buildings:

- Keep businesses and restaurants floor level. This design implies needing distance from your neighbors.
- Like mixed use but need green space
- Seems a refreshing place to be
- Like the balcony but can't see inside space for quick access to the outside
- I like the green balcony
- Love the outdoor space
- Love this one
- Like outside roof
- Like seating at roof
- Not enough outdoor seating
- Like idea of business and housing
- Great!

- Creative gathering space
- I really like this design, but I don't want the neighbors/neighborhood to feel intimidated as if they are being TAXED out!
- I like the green outdoor feeling
- I like the green space and modern design but don't want to be taxed out of my neighborhood
- Love the outdoor mixed with the housing



Add porches to this design

- I love the mixed use building idea, but there should be 30 min parking available for people to run in for coffee/food. More green space and community gardens
- More affordable housing

Love the Bridge Street Market. Local business and very convenient. Local vendors.



- Parking space?
- Affordable housing + small business = community
- I like housing that has something function for the other neighbors i.e. grocery, coffee, etc.
- Love the market but bridge street is expensive!! Make it affordable for our community!
- Convenient store on bus line
- Good idea
- Market focusing on local products
- My favorite
- The scale is too large on all of these
- Good market design, looks upscale and inviting
- I like Bridge St Market, but it will be too much in our neighborhood

TOTAL: 76

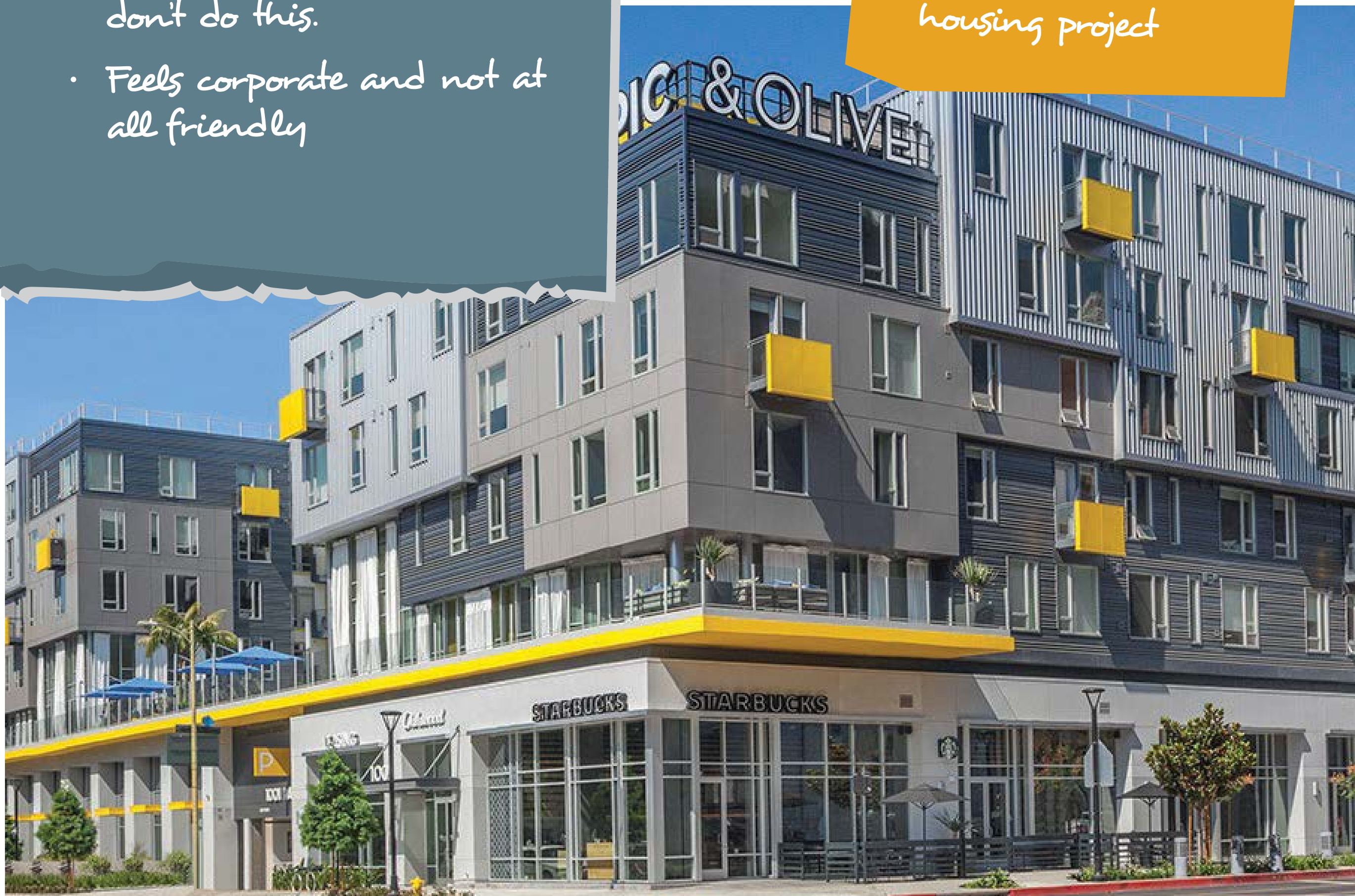
Blue: 54 Yellow: 18 Red: 4

TOTAL: 48

Blue: 33 Yellow: 10 Red: 5

- No green space
- Need _____ that reflects the values/culture of the neighborhood. Bland/gray buildings don't do this.
- Feels corporate and not at all friendly

Too big, feels like housing project



TOTAL: 1

Blue: 1 Yellow: 0 Red: 0

- Seems like they are trying to stack us on top of each other
- This looks like a school or firehouse. Yuck
- Too tall for neighborhood
- I like that mixed use meets the housing and retail needs.
- No green space

Not enough green space
Looks like communism

I like mixed use but none of these designs tickle my fancy! Too fancy.



TOTAL: 4

Blue: 4 Yellow: 0 Red: 0

FEEDBACK

Meeting 2

OPEN HOUSE 2 COMMUNITY INPUT



CONCEPT A INSPIRATION: GREENSCAPES

- TOWNHOMES
- APARTMENTS
- MIXED-USE
RETAIL/COMMERCIAL
- ADDITIONAL PEOPLE
THAT HAD THE SAME
COMMENT

Concept A creates a green space environment that activates and engages the community with spaces ranging from passive/pensive to active/hands-on spaces.

GENERAL

- I like this concept best
- Likes that there will be development – nothing to see now (dog walker)

CONFIGURATION OF GREEN SPACES

- ♥♥♥♥♥ Likes open space
- Loves parks
- Likes play spaces
- I want a plaza with seating
- ♥♥♥♥♥ Likes green spaces
- Likes the green space that is more open to the community

LOCATIONS OF AMENITIES

- Likes food market location
- ♥♥♥♥♥ Likes location of Early Learning Center
- ♥♥♥♥♥ Likes Community Hub
- Likes the shapes, a little bit of everything

STREET LOCATIONS & CONNECTIVITY

- ♥♥♥♥ Likes esplanade
- ♥ Likes how it is connected
- Likes the flow
- Likes the continuity
- Green streets

WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO LIVE/PARK?

- Likes the midrise apartments
- Likes taller buildings in center
- ♥♥♥ Likes the mixed-housing
- ♥♥♥♥ Townhomes

LOCATION OF BANK, SMALL BUSINESSES, MARKET, MODERN HARDWARE, ETC.

- Likes the place for small businesses
- Likes that it is blended
- Likes business on the outside
- Likes the market space
- Local businesses
- Hardware store
- I want to keep the Hardware Store

OPEN HOUSE 2 COMMUNITY INPUT



CONCEPT B INSPIRATION: GATEWAY

- TOWNHOMES
- APARTMENTS
- MIXED-USE
RETAIL/COMMERCIAL
- ADDITIONAL PEOPLE
THAT HAD THE SAME
COMMENT

Concept B celebrates Boston Square as a destination by creating an entryway that invites the surrounding community to partake in the activities taking place on the site.

GENERAL

- Not cluttered as Concept A
- Looks like a maximizing of profit rather than livability

CONFIGURATION OF GREEN SPACES

- ♥♥♥ Open space is good
- More open to surrounding community
- Space in one area together
- Could this be a city park?
- North more private, south more public space
- Open space for food trucks, movies at night
- No green space, not benefiting the surrounding neighborhood
- Need park for community
- Likes the corner gateway area
- Play access
- Green space, outdoor / indoor community space
- Walking park, trail
- Likes the safety of closed-off area

LOCATIONS OF AMENITIES

- Housing, employment, education
- Need Bridge Street Market concept
- Community health
- Likes Early Learning Center in Community Hub

STREET LOCATIONS & CONNECTIVITY

- Need to allow through traffic
- Flow connecting existing streets (Oakdale, Boston, Kalamazoo)
- Invited into space outside of development area

WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO LIVE/PARK?

- Family parking
- Parking convenience
- Move and don't demo housing on Kalamazoo
- Affordability
- Senior living?
- Not too tall of buildings
- Great parking spaces
- Need more parking for Early Learning Center, food center

LOCATION OF BANK, SMALL BUSINESSES, MARKET, MODERN HARDWARE, ETC.

- Employment IN the community
- Commercial in main street
- BBQ
- Business on Kalamazoo
- ♥ Is there enough parking? Likes the parking layout
- Increase black business ownership if possible
- Laundromat needed
- Growth to ownership of space
- Financial literacy

FINAL *Concept*

FINAL CONCEPTS

The following pages of this report are the finalized vision that was shared with community members at the final Boston Square Together event. For each community asset, you'll see the feedback and comments shared by neighbors.

The Boston Square Together team is proud to present the following community assets for the heart of Boston Square:

- **A community park:** This concept is in response to the neighborhood's desire for more green space. The park will include an amphitheater and a creek with native edge planting.
- **Food hall:** At the first two community events, neighbors shared that they'd like more business opportunities for local entrepreneurs. The food hall provides local business owners an incubator to launch their retail and food-based businesses. Additionally, the hall will provide more affordable food options for residents in the area.
- **Community hub:** A gathering space for neighbors to come together and congregate to celebrate, worship or host events.
- **Early childhood learning center:** Studies have shown that early childhood learning is essential in the development of our youth. The early learning center was included to fulfill a need brought forward by neighbors for more affordable childcare. Additionally, the center will serve as a haven for learning opportunities.

*The plan and timeline are subject to change based off of feedback from city council and financing.

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OUR NEIGHBOR'S SHARED VISION

Inspiration: You



A COLLECTIVE COMMUNITY DESIGN

BOSTON SQUARE TOGETHER

PARK

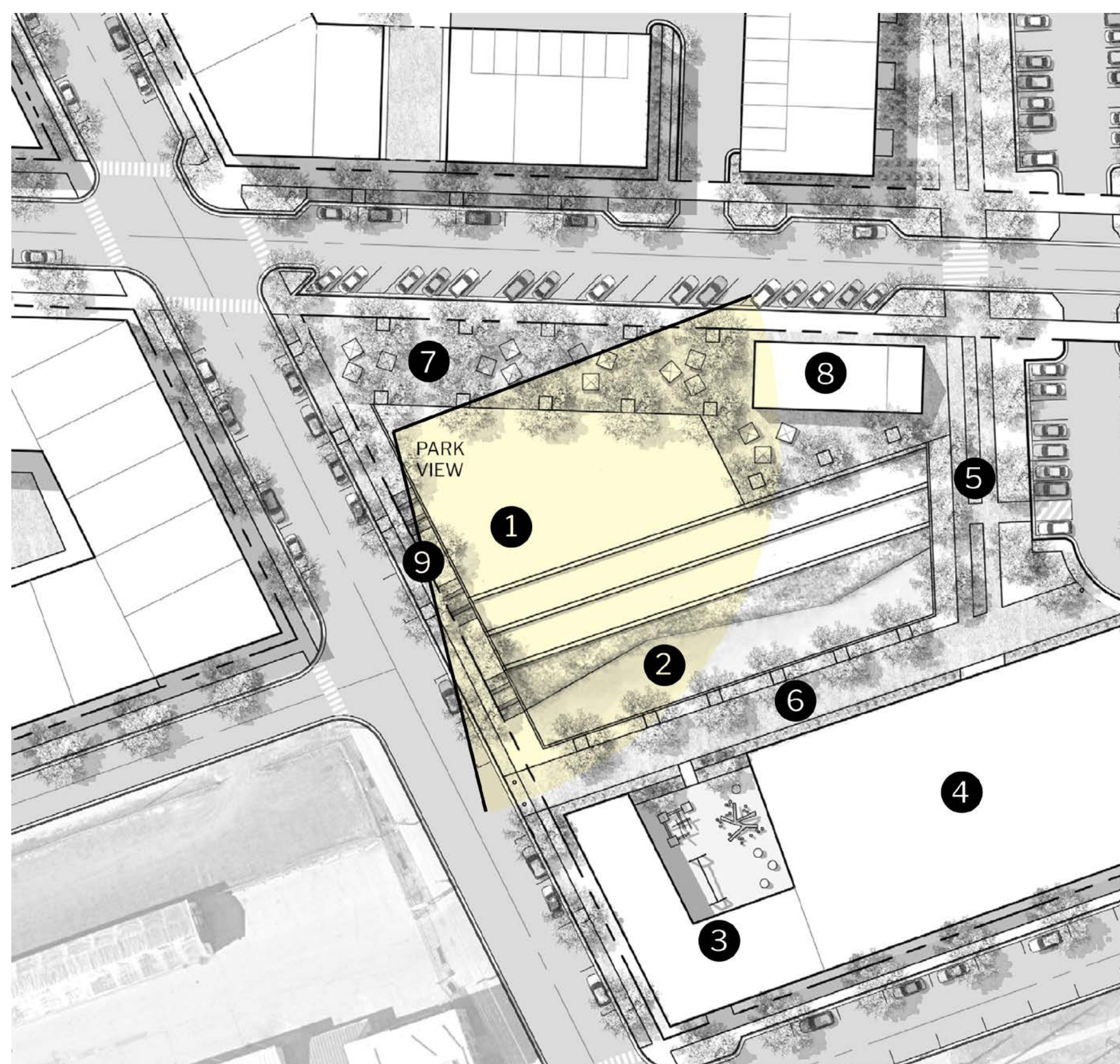


For the greenway I think more paths so people can get to more places.

I am really excited about the park!

Maybe add:

- Outdoor movies at the tiered seating shown
- Stages for outdoor festivals, singing



1. Amphitheater
2. Creek with Native Edge Planting
3. Early Learning Center with Tot Lot
4. Community Hub
5. Greenway
6. Promenade
7. Food Hall Terrace
8. Pavilion
9. Street Furniture and Planters

Maybe have a little less slant on the green space going to the creek.

Lighting is important. The amphitheater area should be well lit at night

The park will be a great amenity where the entire community will come together.

We really need a park!

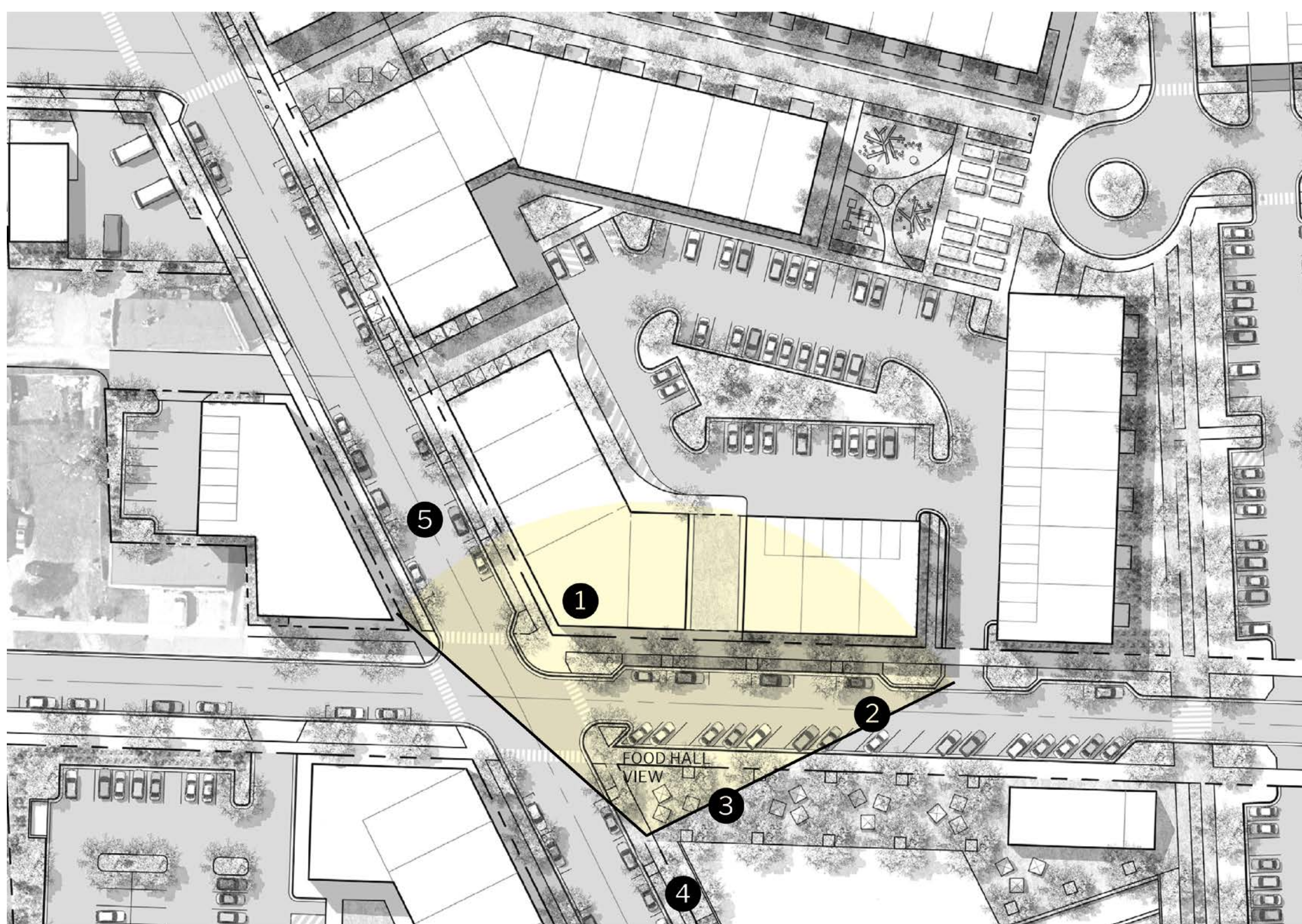
Please make sure to include edible landscaping (berries, pink currants, beach plums, herbs, pie cherries, etc.). Maybe add compost bins and rain barrels, pollinator beds, etc.

For the community garden - will you teach those in the community how to garden as well as provide fruit + veggies.

Worried the creek will be dirty/polluted. Mosquitos?

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FOOD HALL



1. Food Hall
2. Evergreen Street Extension
3. Food Hall Terrace
4. Street Furniture and Planters
5. Activated Kalamazoo Avenue

Love the roof terrace overlooking Kalamazoo!

Need affordable spaces for new businesses

You really listened to us and it shows on the site plan.

The mock-ups need more diversity ranging from the park (activities), business opportunities, and ownership for people of color.

I love the idea of a food hall!

Local art/artists work throughout.

A COLLECTIVE COMMUNITY DESIGN

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GREENWAY

For the greenway I think more paths so people can get to more places.

Early learning center must keep kids safe. Adult activity separate from kids.

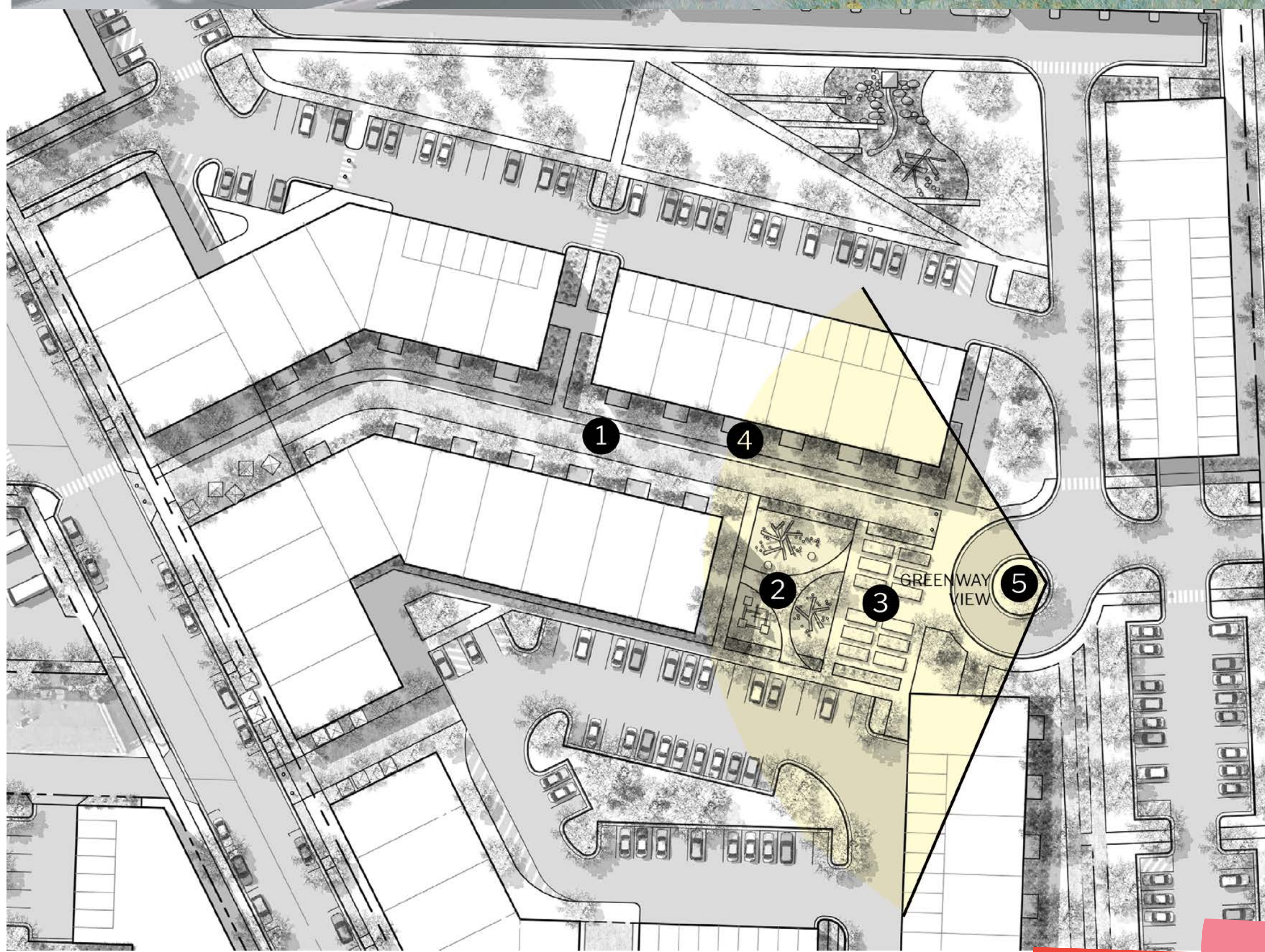
Art/sculpture. Local artists.

I like the layout but the architecture feels a bit cold.

Heated sidewalks, outdoor fire pit

Love putting cars underground so green can prevail. Excited about entrepreneurship opportunities.

Love all ideas!!
Green Space



1. Greenway
2. Playground
3. Community Garden
4. Unit Gardens
5. Vehicular Drop-Off and Pick-Up

A COLLECTIVE COMMUNITY DESIGN

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Connect with our community's children for a great library. They need a location.

What impacts does this development have on the surrounding areas in the Boston Square district (i.e. taxes, property value, etc.)?

Neighborhood scaled utility solutions (sanitary + energy + water)

Where is the soul of Boston Square?

Please make sure to include edible landscaping (berries, pink currants, beach plums, herbs, pie cherries, etc.). Maybe add compost bins and rain barrels, pollinator beds, etc.

Please make sure that you make it clear how neighbors can use the pavilion. No "who you know" rentals.

Love how you incorporated the best ideas from each concept into the final plan.

Thank you for incorporating so much community input! Especially 3-BR rentals.

Diversity in all things including architectural expression

Love the energy + warmth

Thank you for including housing for seniors.

Excited to have a quality ELC on the site.

Like that the ELC has its own playground, separate from the large more public park.

Someone said they were thinking of selling their home but are now planning to stay because of the future plans!

CONCLUSION

The Boston Square Together development plan would not have been possible without participation from our neighbors. As we move forward in the approval and development process, we look forward to these important conversations with our neighbors and community.

We will continue to send email updates to Boston Square Together attendees and neighbors throughout the process and look forward to deepening the dialogue about important amenities for those that live, work and play in the Boston Square neighborhood.

Moving forward, we urge those with questions and ideas to always feel free to share them in-person or via the contact form on the Bostonsquaregr.org website.

Thank you for your support and interest as we work toward making Boston Square stronger, together.

