



# AN EMERGING HAWTHORNE VISION

Produced by HDR for the Town of Swampscott  
April 3, 2024

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## 1.1 Overview

The Visioning of the Hawthorne Site is a crucial step in the Town's overall strategic planning. The process up to this point has included collaboration and inclusion of various other Town plans and objectives – all with a goal of creating a more inclusive, vibrant, and sustainable community. In December 2022, the Town hired HDR to develop and build consensus for a shared vision for this waterfront redevelopment, indicative of a proactive approach to community involvement and planning.

The coordination with various planning initiatives, such as the *Harbor & Waterfront Plan*, the *Swampscott Open Space & Recreation Plan*, *Swampscott 2025: The Master Plan*, and the Hadley School Feasibility Study, demonstrates a comprehensive and integrated approach to shaping the town's future. The level of community involvement through public workshops and surveys is commendable and ensures that the Vision for the Hawthorne Site reflects the aspirations and needs of the Swampscott community. This inclusive approach is intended to foster a sense of ownership among residents and stakeholders, enhancing the success and sustainability of the proposed waterfront development.

The Vision, once formally presented to the Select Board, will shape the next steps in the implementation plan for the property. Success will not only be measured by the approval of the Board, but also by the level of community engagement and enthusiasm that has been generated. Moving forward, communication and transparency will be key, keeping the community informed about progress, and incorporating feedback, as necessary. The collaborative efforts between the Town, HDR, Town committees, and the community represent a positive model for responsible and community-driven development.

## 1.2 Objective

In order to keep this study on target, a fixed and clear objective was established from the outset. The objective of this visioning process was:

To build consensus around a shared VISION for a waterfront redevelopment at the Hawthorne Restaurant property.

## 1.3 Findings/Recommendations

Through the visioning process, several key findings were identified. Below is an outline of the key findings and recommendations based on those findings:

- **Design an open space park:** The creation of a well-designed park can contribute to community well-being, offering a central gathering place for residents. Integrating cultural, municipal, and historical elements celebrating the Olmsted Historic District and the relevance of the community's Native American heritage can add depth to the project and foster a connection between the community and its past.
- **Celebrate the waterfront experience:** Celebrating the waterfront experience can create a unique and attractive destination for both residents and visitors, fostering a sense of place.
- **Anchor the project in the community:** A project anchored in the community's values, preferences, and needs is more likely to be embraced and sustained over the long term.
- **Enhance accessibility:** Improving accessibility ensures that the site is inclusive and easily navigable, promoting broader community engagement.
- **Provide for a fiscally responsible project:** Collaborative efforts with external partners can bring additional resources, expertise, and innovation to the project.
- **Sustainable and resilient design:** This overarching recommendation is aligned with climate change challenges, reduces environmental impact, and has the potential to contribute to long-term cost savings.



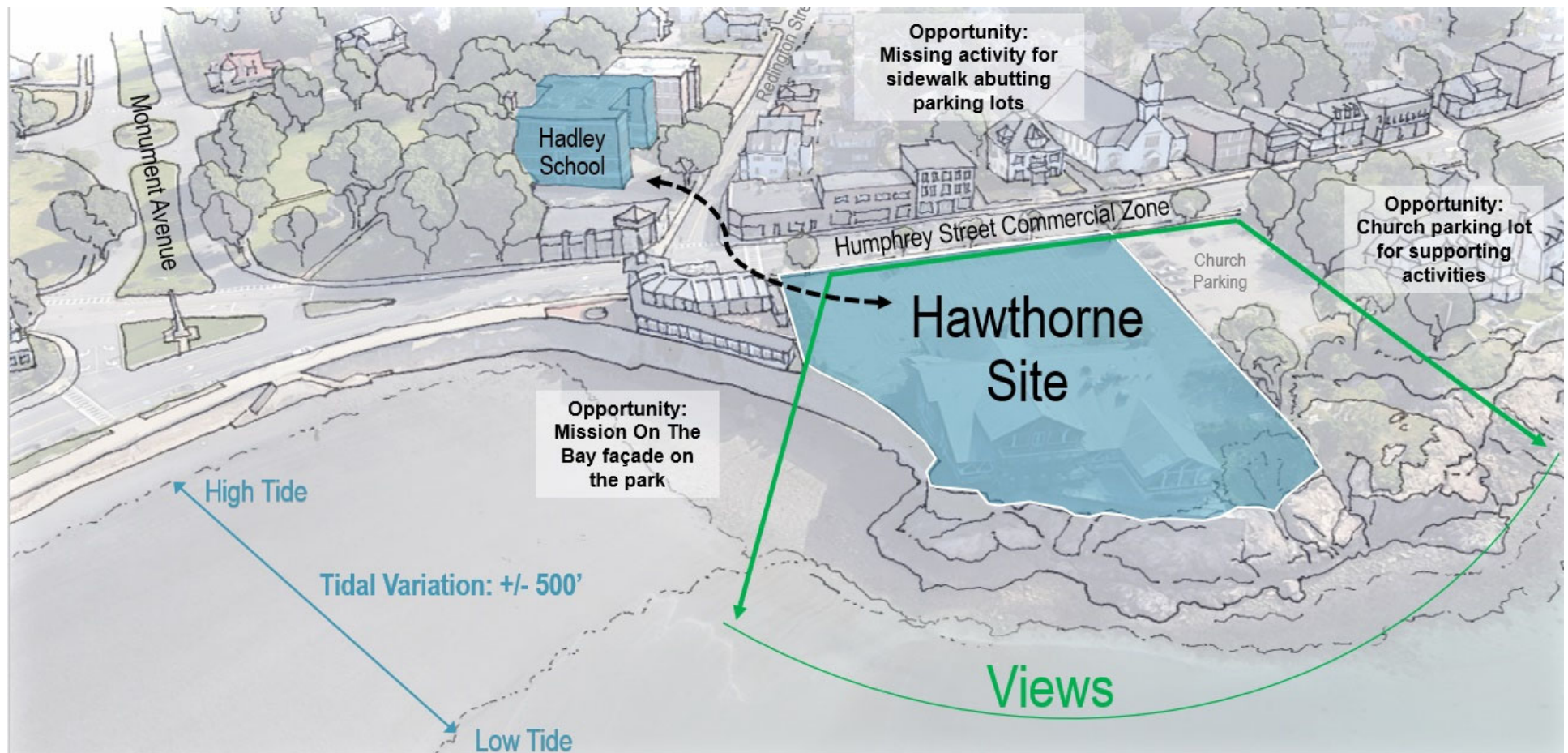
# THE DATA

## 2.1 A Unique Site

The site, at 149-169 Humphrey Street, boasts a unique location on Nahant Bay, providing breathtaking views of the Boston skyline. This is then coupled with its presence within the historic downtown on one of the largest parcels of land in the downtown. However, it faces challenges primarily related to its very large parking lot, impeding the full utilization of this waterfront property and failing to contribute to the vibrancy of the “main street”

activities. King’s Beach, located adjacent to the property, experiences significant tidal variation, resulting in a long beach at low tide but limited space during high tide. Environmental considerations, particularly during extreme weather, contribute to unpleasant odors along the waterfront.

Despite these challenges, the site is well connected, with key civic buildings such as the Hadley School, Town Hall, and Public Library in close proximity. It also enjoys accessibility along a bike route and recreational path leading to King’s and Fisherman’s beaches, offering potential avenues for enhancing the overall appeal and functionality of the area.



## 2.2 Public Meetings

There were two primary public meetings that provided significant data and feedback in the visioning process:

1. The Hawthorne Idea Exchange – January 28, 2023
2. Revisioning Hawthorne – April 26, 2023

## The Hawthorne Idea Exchange

The idea exchange was a half-day community brainstorming session that gathered several key suggestions and insights for possible future uses of the property. Community members emphasized the importance of maximizing views to Nahant Bay, indicating a potential design focus on optimizing the scenic aspects of the location. Furthermore, the suggestion was made to develop initiatives that would foster year-round day and night activities on the site, aiming to create a dynamic and lively environment.

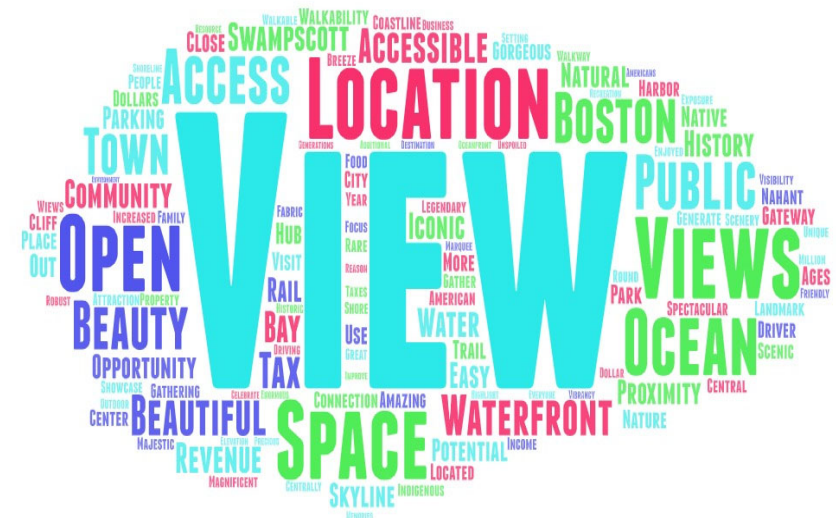
Participants proposed exploring connections with the repurpose of the Hadley School as part of the redevelopment plan. It was recommended to make use of the existing restaurant building during the transitional phases to optimize resources. Another focal point was the enhancement of the commercial district, suggesting strategies to invigorate and promote economic activity in the area.

A notable consensus emerged regarding the value of the site, with the shared perspective that it's too valuable for parking. This suggests a collective inclination towards exploring alternative uses or strategies to capitalize on the site's unique features and potential, moving beyond a conventional parking-centric approach. These insights provide valuable considerations for the comprehensive development and revitalization of the area.

### Most Important Use



### Most Important Value





## Revisioning Hawthorne

During the community aspirations phase, a series of design scenarios were generated based on concepts and ideas proposed during the Hawthorne Idea Exchange. The most promising ideas underwent further development, incorporating considerations such as landscape design, building approaches where applicable, accessibility measures, economic opportunities, and the potential contribution to the overall quality of community life.

These scenarios were presented to the community at the Revisioning Hawthorne event at the high school in April. Community members reviewed and worked in small groups to determine pros and cons of each scenario and provide insight as to any particular preferences.

Along with this, a survey was released to capture insights about the site and an assessment of economics, technical feasibility regulatory processes, and the expected level of community acceptance of the scenarios.



**1. Black Will's Cliff Park**  
*A seaside park for Swampscott.*



**2. Swampscott Town Square**  
*A new destination on Humphrey Street.*



**3. King's Beach Pier and Park**  
*A new Swampscott experience.*

## 2.3 Community Aspirations

Key feedback from the community included a strong preference for the site to primarily function as an **open space park**. Responding to the desire to **define Humphrey Street**, suggestions were made to strategically use architecture for this purpose. Additionally, there was a proposal to create a harbor walk, serving as a celebratory element **highlighting the rocks and scenic views** in the area.

These community aspirations and insights serve as inputs in shaping the design scenarios and evaluating their feasibility, ensuring that the concept plan aligns with the community's vision and enhances the overall quality of life in the town.

## ANALYSIS & COMPILATION

### 3.1 SWOT Analysis

In reviewing the site information and community feedback, a SWOT analysis was then performed in order to clearly outline the existing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the new vision of the Hawthorne property.

#### Strengths

- Unique waterfront location
- Olmsted and Native American heritage
- Location in the heart of Swampscott

#### Weaknesses

- Maintenance is an issue
- Mobility and accessibility
  - Parking is an issue in the area
  - Not specifically addressing other modes of transportation (bicycle and transit)
- A more vibrant main street for civic activities (day and night)

#### Opportunities

- The cliff and a board walk celebrating the rocks, bay, and views
- Activity along Humphrey Street to support local businesses (outside visitors and residents alike)
- Mostly a park aligned with Master Plan vision (design for all age groups)
- An iconic visitor destination

#### Threats

- A site adapted to climate: protect from winds, cold, and extreme heat
- Town fiscal constraints

## 3.2 Findings and Key Recommendations

The key recommendations arising from the planning and community input process are integral to shaping the envisioned transformation of the site.

Based on the findings, the design should emphasize the creation of an open space park, preserving the natural character of the area, with a dedicated allocation for green space to enhance its environmental and aesthetic appeal. To seamlessly integrate with the surroundings, any buildings are advised to be designed as an organic part of the landscape that connects to the street front but doesn't negatively take away from the open space. The development plan should aim to foster year-round engagement, incorporating diverse programs for both day and night activities aligning with the 2021-2028 Open Space & Recreation Plan goals.

Consideration for climate responsible development was highlighted in follow-up discussions and it's recommended that the project aim at being Net Zero for sustainable development and implement recommendations from the Harbor and Waterfront Plan (2020) for resilient design to promote and protect Swampscott's coastal resources.



# VISION & GOALS

## 4.1 An Emerging Vision

The emerging vision places a strong emphasis on **celebrating the waterfront experience**, maximizing views of Nahant Bay, and introducing a distinctive beacon for panoramic vistas. **Inclusivity and community integration** are key, anchoring the project in the community by identifying synergies with civic buildings and activities, ensuring public assets benefit residents and visitors alike, and engaging Humphrey Street in the site design process.

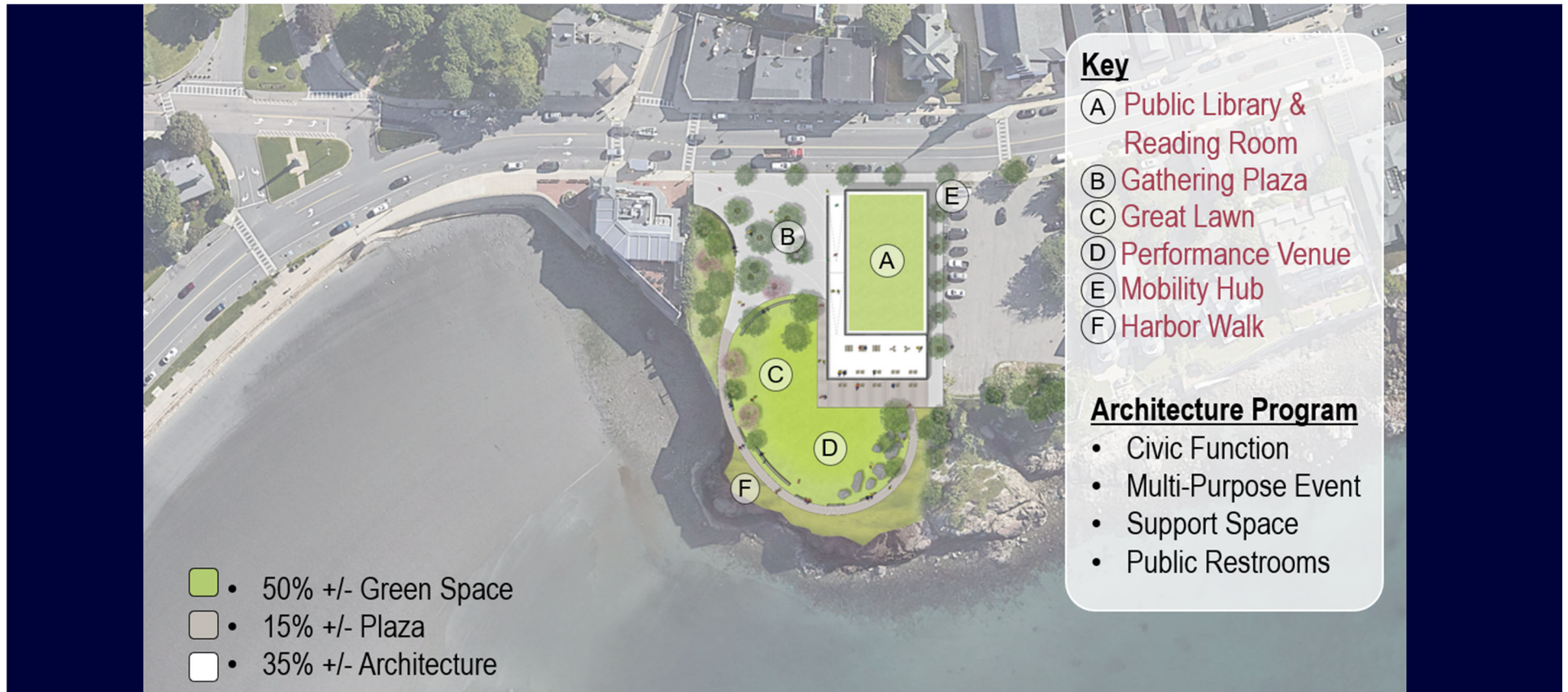
Accessibility is prioritized through the integration of multi-modal strategies. Fiscally-responsible planning is underscored, considering both capital and

operational costs, and allowing for special events to generate revenue for the Town. These recommendations collectively form a comprehensive and sustainable approach to the development, harmonizing **environmental preservation, community needs, and financial prudence**.

## 4.2 Redevelopment Goals

This is an exceptional opportunity for Swampscott to create something special, and through this process, a shared Vision for the Hawthorne site has emerged. The Vision leads to various important goals that the Town should focus on in further refining the concept for a development:

1. Primarily an open space park to celebrate this unique location,
2. A civic function that will create a regional anchor,



3. Draw people to the site year-round, and
4. Enhance the Humphrey Street commercial district.

The property's civic function will be very important. It will create a new center-of-gravity on the Swampscott waterfront and provide the Town with a valuable resource for years to come.

Through discussions and analysis, it was determined that the community is in need of expanding and growing the Swampscott Public Library. This might be a good civic use for this site, since it would have an appeal to all age groups, these spaces traditionally act as a "third place" for people's social life outside of work and home, and with extended opening hours would be able to meet the criteria informed by community input.

## 4.3 Concept Elements

The redevelopment concept for the Hawthorne property includes a number of key elements that support the vision and goals:

- Public Library & Reading Room
- Gathering Plaza
- Great Lawn
- Performance Venue
- Mobility Hub
- Harbor Walk





## 4.4 Alignment with Community Values/Balance of Ideas

The new library / media center would be complemented by a flexible and multi-use event space that could function in concert with the ongoing conversion of Hadley School to a boutique hotel. The combination of library and event space will activate the site year-round and provide ample opportunity for both daytime and evening events. Positioning the library function along Humphrey Street would enhance the liveliness of the downtown core. The multi-use event space would be located closest to the bay and would help to draw visitors to the waterfront year round. This event space would be “rentable,” providing for a revenue source for the

community while having the flexibility of building used for public events as well.

The design of the site should celebrate Swampscott’s history and recall Olmsted’s pastoral style, incorporating interpretive elements that could also include features and references to its importance for Native Americans, the community’s original inhabitants, as well as culminating with a harbor walk to enable relaxation along Nahant Bay. There would be ample seating options around the site, including exterior terraces adjacent to the new building. The iconic architecture of the building should integrate with the landscape design, providing opportunities to walk onto roof terraces that offer sweeping views of the bay. This is a clear opportunity for Swampscott to express a commitment to sustainable, net-zero, and resilient design.



The gathering plaza establishes a hardscaped area that provides a connection from the commercial street to the great lawn. This plaza could host pop-up events, vendor fairs, and informal get-togethers.

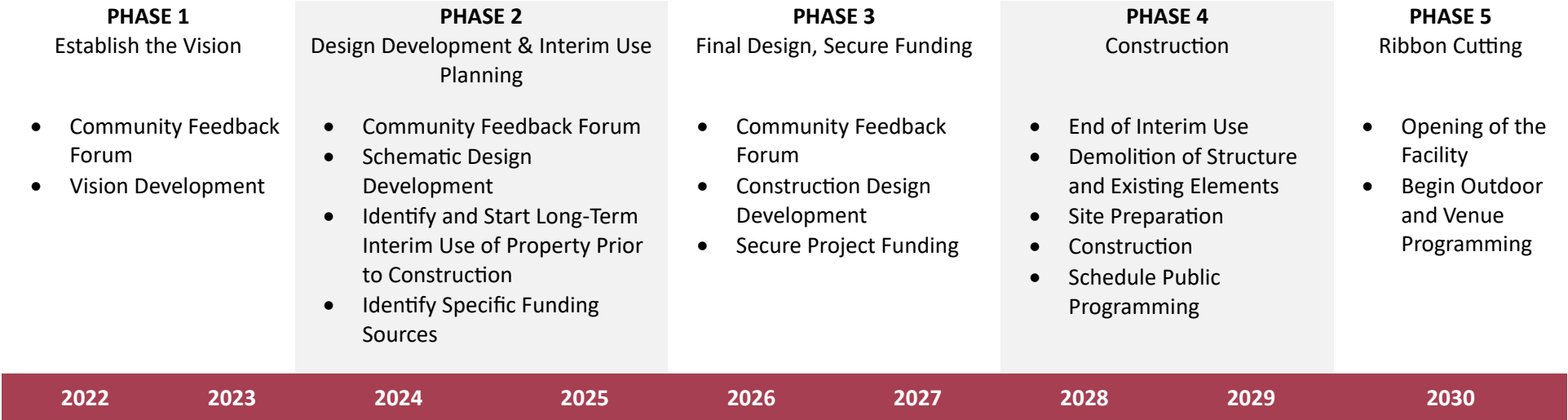
The great lawn is the town’s new “front lawn”, providing a natural space that gives the community access back to the waterfront. Residents and visitors can utilize the space for passive recreation while an area would be set aside for a stage/venue that would allow for public concerts, movies, or other performances.

## PHASING & IMPLEMENTATION

### 5.1 Project Phases

While this vision provides for the destination project, it will need to be phased in over time. Those phases will include:

- Phase 1. Establish the Vision
- Phase 2. Design Development & Interim Use Planning
- Phase 3. Final Design, Secure Funding
- Phase 4. Construction / End of Interim Use
- Phase 5. Opening of New Facility



### 5.2 Timeline and Milestones

The phases outlined will cover several years and include many important milestones. A detailed schedule will need to be developed once this Vision (the concept) has been approved that will provide more specific target dates and milestones.

A general timeline has been put together to kickstart this process below.

### 5.3 Financing

Like all community investments of this type, funding will be an important element to ensure it comes to fruition. Financing the construction of this project will likely include a combination of public and private sources.

Examples of financing sources:

- Government funding: state and federal grants, earmarks, and appropriations such as:
  - Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) Grant Program
  - Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund
  - Annual Community Project Funding Requests via Congressman Moulton
  - Earmarks request from state delegation



- Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program
- Municipal funding: capital improvement appropriations or bonds are a common way for local governments to finance large projects.
- Grants: private foundations may offer grants to support the construction of public facilities such as:
  - AARP Community Challenge Grant
- Private donations: Individuals, businesses, and philanthropic organizations may donate money towards the construction of the park and library.
- Corporate sponsorship: Businesses may sponsor the construction of the park and library in exchange for naming rights, advertising opportunities, or other benefits.

## CONCLUSION

### 6.1 Summary of Key Points

A shared Vision for the Hawthorne site is an important first step toward a successful design. The process allowed for defining preliminary guidelines for the Vision to establish key criteria moving forward:

- Reserves most of the site as an open space park.
- Activates the site with a civic program that will anchor the development in Swampscott.
- Integrates the architecture with the surrounding landscape design.
- Provides a flexible site and building program that can evolve over time.

#### Recommended Metrics

- Existing Site Area: 65,120 sf (1.495 acres)
- Maximum Floor-Area-Ratio (FAR): 0.5
- Minimum Open Space: 65% of site area
- Maximum Building Coverage: 35% of site area
- Maximum Building Frontage along Humphrey Street: 50%

#### Preliminary Building Programming (+/-30,000 sf)

- Library & Reading Room: 15,000 – 20,000 sf
- Mixed-Use Event Space: 5,000 – 10,000 sf (250-500 people)
- Building Support Spaces: 5,000 sf
- Mobility Hub: Addresses accessibility to the site and relieves pressure of parking demand (exterior)

### 6.2 Next Steps

The Hawthorne Vision represents a significant achievement for the Town in planning for a new community function and destination. Starting with the Hawthorne Idea Exchange, where we considered endless possibilities for the site, through surveys and community engagement, to a shared and achievable Vision for the future.

The recommended next step is for the Town to approve of the concept and move on to develop a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Schematic Design Development that will further define the project scope and program, establish a cost estimate, and propose possible funding sources.

HDR would like to commend the Town for the level of community engagement throughout this process.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Hawthorne Visioning was a one-year collaboration to create a long-term, transformative change for the community's historic downtown. The Town would like to thank all Swampscott residents who participated in the process.

From the Town:

- David Grishman, Select Board Chair
- Katie Phelan, Select Board Vice Chair
- MaryEllen Fletcher, Select Board member
- Peter Spellios, Select Board member
- Doug Thompson, Select Board member
- Neal Duffy, former Select Board
- Sean Fitzgerald, Town Administrator
- Marzie Galazka, Director of Community & Economic Development
- Pete Kane, Asst. Town Administrator / Director of Planning & Land Use

From HDR:

- Nathalie Beauvais
- Michael McPhail

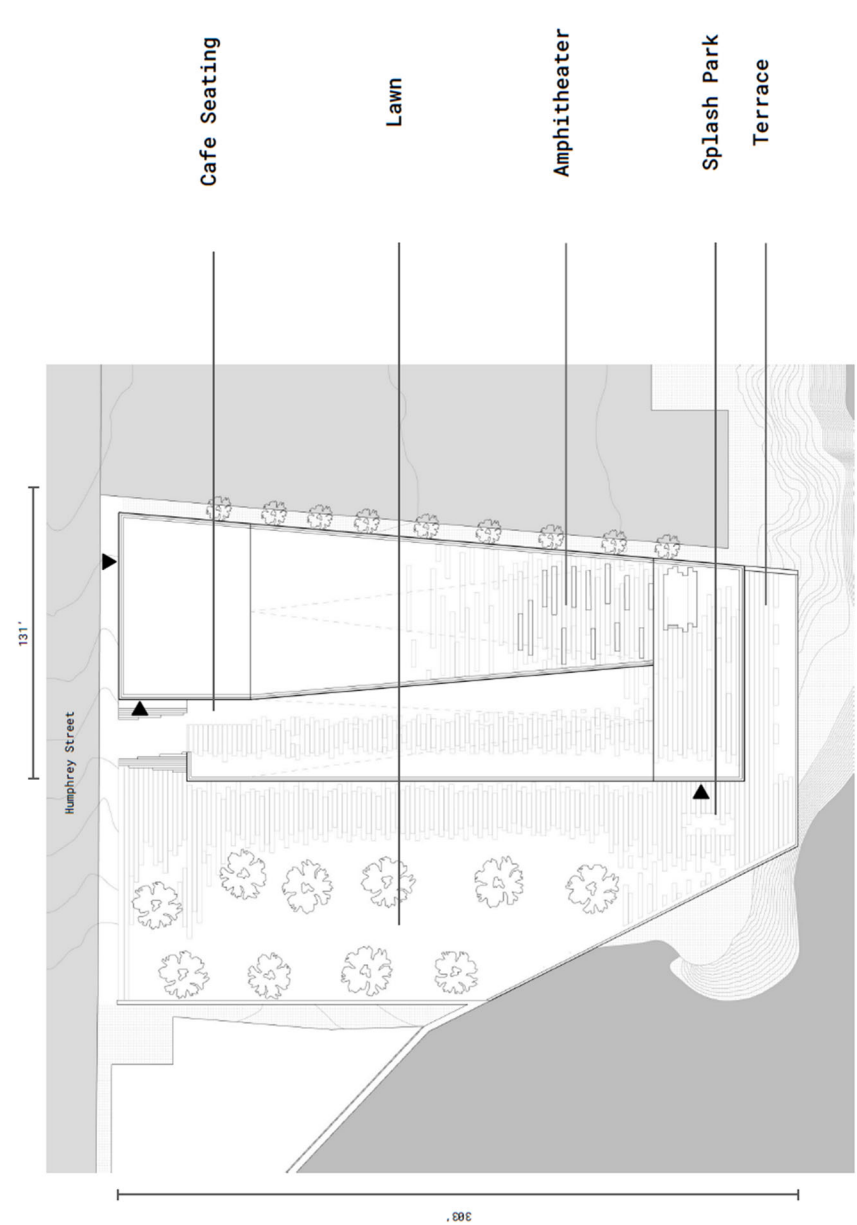
Images in “Appendix – Floor Plan Concepts,” “Appendix – Massing Process,” and “Appendix – Conceptual Views”:

- Höweler + Yoon

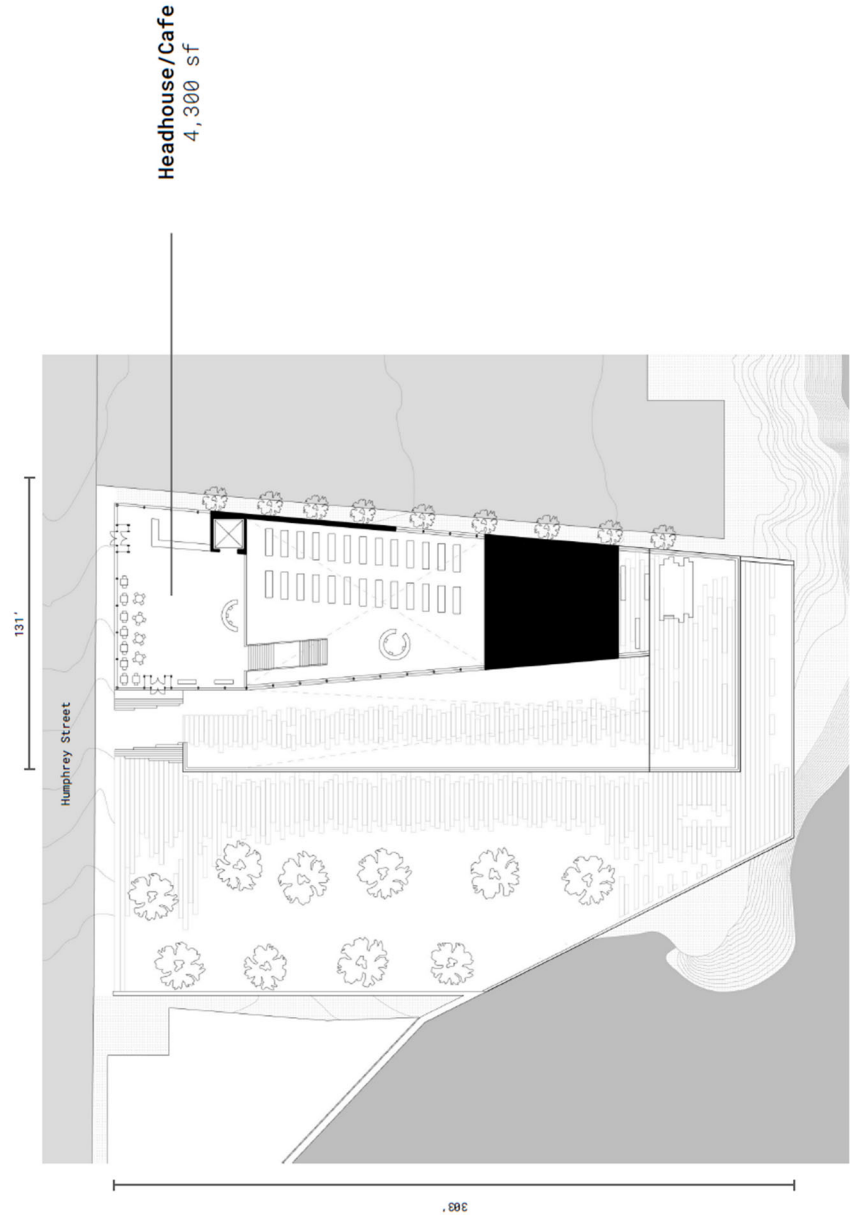


# APPENDIX – FLOOR PLAN CONCEPTS

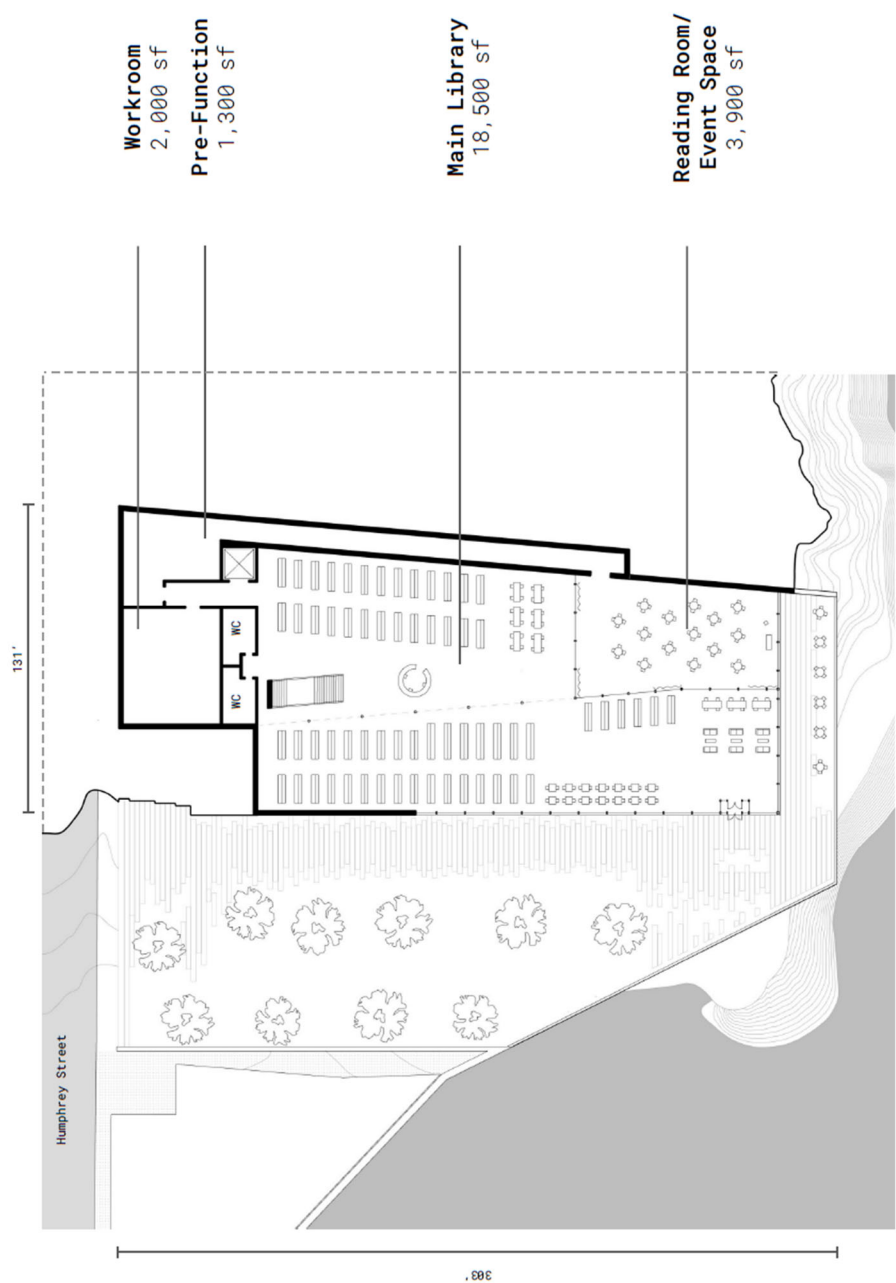
## Roof Plan



## Upper Level



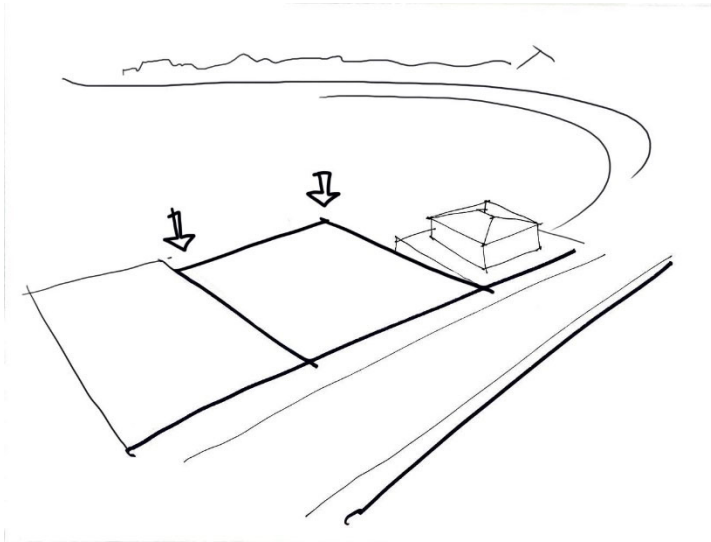
Lower Level



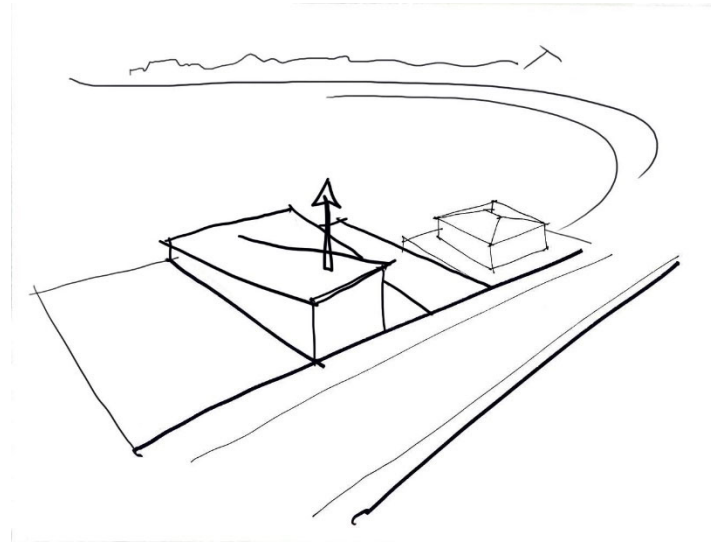


## APPENDIX – MASSING PROCESS

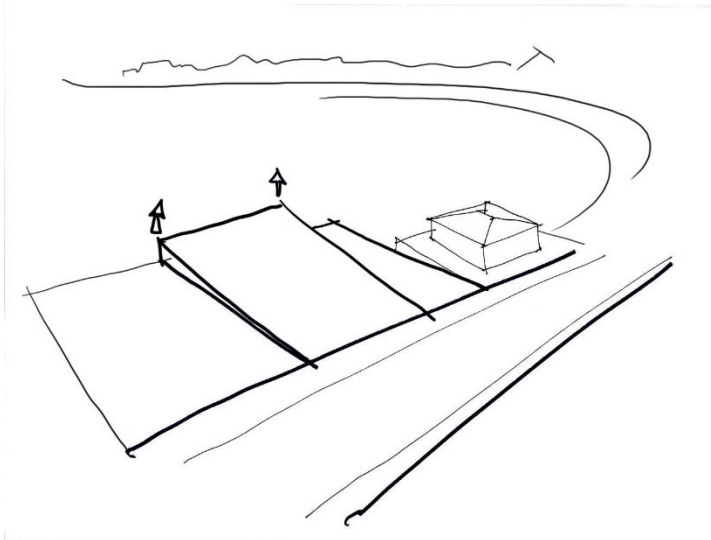
### 1- Pushed Down to Access Shoreline



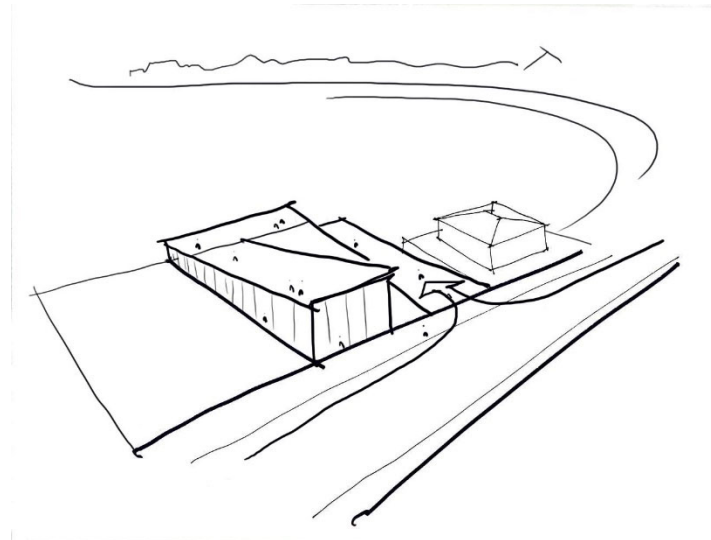
### 3- Pulled up to Create Street Presence & Access



### 2- Pulled Up to Create Views



### 4- A Landscape to Draw People In



## APPENDIX – PRECEDENT PROJECTS

Library at University of Technology Delft

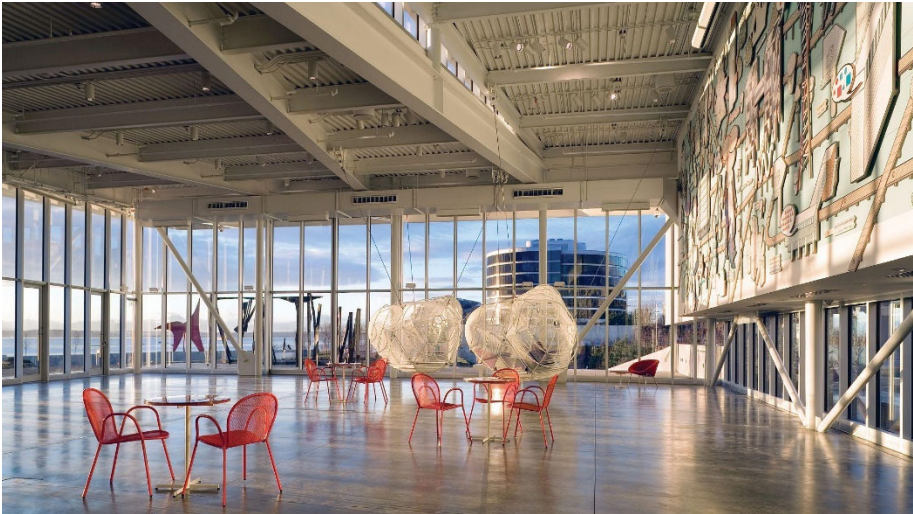
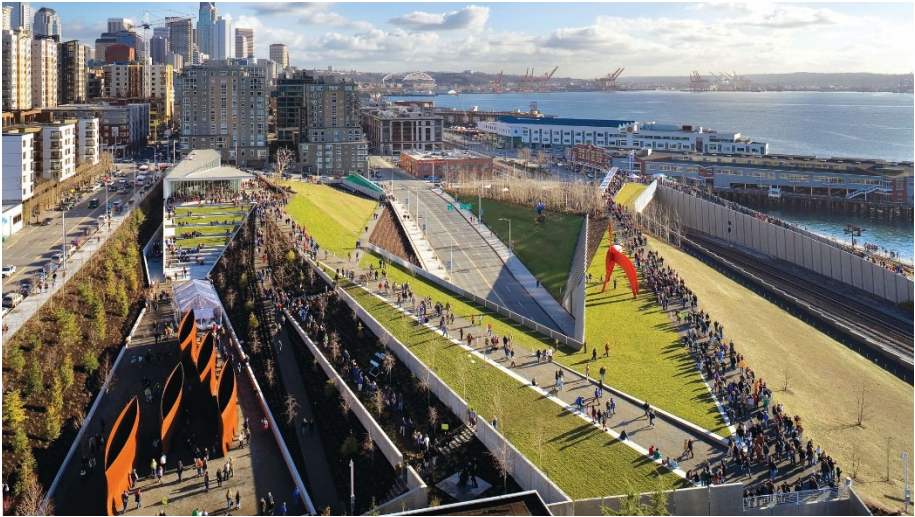


Samberg Conference Center at MIT





Olympic Sculpture Park





## APPENDIX – CONCEPTUAL VIEWS

### Aerial View – From Waterfront



### Street View



### Amphitheatre



### The Lawn





Rooftop Views



Library Interior



