

The 2005 Rotch Travelling Scholarship

Final Competition Program



Aerial photo of Union Square district courtesy of the BRA Boston Atlas

Mass Transit and the Arts

Arts Center and T Station for Union Square, Somerville, MA

PROJECT

The final competition project for the 2005 Rotch Travelling Scholarship will address two strategic urban planning issues facing the City of Somerville, MA: mass-transportation and urban re-development through the arts. This project will combine a new Green Line "T" station with work and exhibition space for the creative arts. This mixed-use facility shall create a symbolic gateway into Somerville and the Union Square district due to its location between Prospect and Webster Streets, two arterial streets leading to and from Cambridge.

ARTS-CULTURE

Somerville is a traditionally working-class city that lies just north of Cambridge and just west of Charlestown. While some parts of Somerville have undergone significant gentrification, Union Square has remained recalcitrant to market demands for new development typical of the region. As a result, artists have become attracted to the area due to the available live/work space and relatively low rents. The City of Somerville is undertaking an initiative, called the "ArtsUnion," to reinforce the arts-culture in Union Square as a key to attract investment. Additionally, the artist community in Union Square has become galvanized to insure that the arts won't be displaced by development stimulated by a new Green Line "T" stop.



Looking east: Prospect Street crossing over existing train line

MASS TRANSIT

As regional vehicular traffic increases annually, the municipalities surrounding Boston endure increased congestion and pollution. Moderating traffic can only be achieved by creating more mass-transportation options for commuters. In fact, one obligation that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts agreed to as a condition for constructing the "Big Dig" was to ameliorate certain mass-transit systems. The list of mass-transit projects promised by the state include an extension the Green Line "T" from Lechmere Station in Cambridge, MA, through Somerville, MA, and culminating in Medford, MA. The new Green Line extension would 'piggy-back' on the existing commuter rail line that runs through Somerville's Union Square.

SITE

This long triangular site is a residual urban parcel created by the confluence of transportation infrastructure. Two arterial streets, Prospect Street to the east of the site, and Webster Street to the west, bridge over existing train tracks and connect Union Square to Inman Square in Cambridge. The third side of the triangular site is created by Newton Street, a secondary residential street to the northwest of the site. The existing train line intersects the triangle at its southern tip. The train tracks are 25' below the elevation of the two bridges on Prospect and Webster Streets. [See site diagram for site elevations]. The site currently contains a defunct electrical sub-station and two used car lots: one at north end of the site, and one at the south end. For this competition, however, the site shall be considered vacant. The total site area is 51,000sf or 1.17 acres.



Looking south: Prospect Street on the left, Newton Street on the right

PROGRAM

This mixed-use facility should become a prominent landmark for the Union square district. There will be three primary components in this mixed-use facility: a new Union Square "T" station for the Green Line extension, gallery space for the exhibition of creative art works, and studio/work space to be rented by artists and craftspeople. All spaces must be made accessible to accommodate people with disabilities.

Green Line "T" Station:

4' high x 12' wide x 150' long raised train platforms on both sides of the tracks: platforms will extend under the roadway bridges but not beyond

Vertical and horizontal circulation for access to and connection of both train platforms

Elevator for accessibility to train platforms

Fare will be paid on the train: no token booth or turnstiles will be required

Train platforms and tracks do not require shelter, but you may span over them; Green Line trains are 16' tall from the level of the tracks

Gallery/Exhibition Spaces: these spaces may or may not be contiguous

[1] 500sf min. lobby

[1] 500sf office for gallery supervision and management

[1] 4000sf column-free, naturally lit gallery space, minimally 16' tall floor to ceiling, may provide flexible sub-dividing system

[1] 2500sf 'black-box' performance/theater/meeting space, minimally 16' tall floor to ceiling, no fixed seating required

[2] 300sf public restrooms

[1] 500sf storage/maintenance space

[1] 500sf loading dock

[2] 100sf freight elevators for multi-story solutions, may share with studio elevators

[1] 7500sf exterior exhibition space continuously open to the public

Work/Studio Spaces: all studio spaces shall be minimally 12' tall floor to ceiling

[15] 500sf studio/work spaces

[10] 1000sf studio/work spaces

[5] 1500sf studio/work spaces

[2] 300sf public restrooms

[1] 500sf loading dock

[2] 100sf freight elevators for multi-story solutions, may share with gallery elevators

[1] 2000sf exterior work yard

Vehicular Parking and Access:

20 vehicle parking spaces

30'-truck access to gallery/exhibition loading dock, may share with studio loading dock

30'-truck access to studio/work space loading dock, may share with gallery loading dock



Looking north at the southern tip of the site: Webster Street to the left, Prospect Street to the right

CRITERIA

Key criteria for evaluation of this project will include:

- ❖ Synthesis of site and program into a clear and cogent architectural solution
- ❖ Inventive organization for mixed-use program
- ❖ Resolution of sectional strategy on the multi-level site
- ❖ Resolution of the circulation for the different program elements
- ❖ Image of the facility as an urban landmark
- ❖ Visibility of the art works in the urban context
- ❖ Clarity, quality, and completeness of the presentation

MINIMUM REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

The presentation is limited to four 30" x 40" boards to be displayed side-by-side vertically. No models or projections from the boards are permitted. Model photographs or drawings, however, may be mounted on the boards. There is no advantage or disadvantage to use a computer to develop or represent your project. Your drawings should be clearly labeled but no descriptive text shall exceed 100 words. The following drawings are the minimal required documentation of your project:

1/32" site plan with north arrow

1/16" all floor plans

1/8" all building[s] elevations

1/8" lateral section

1/8" longitudinal section

[1 minimum] three-dimensional representation[s] of the mixed-use facility in its urban context

[1 minimum] three-dimensional representation[s] of the interior of the mixed-use facility

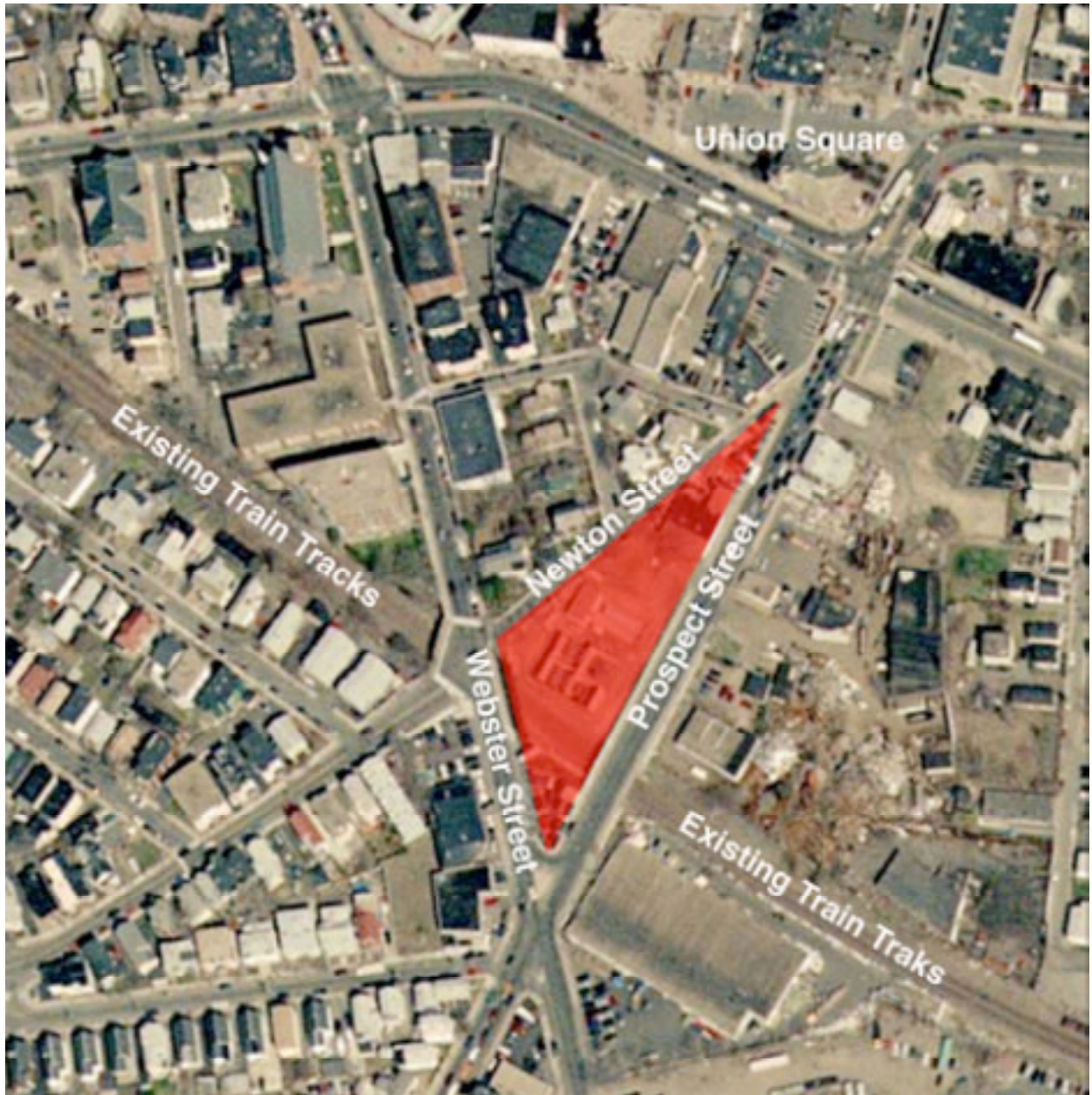
PROVIDED SITE DOCUMENTATION

Site plan

Site Section

Aerial site photo courtesy of the BRA Boston Atlas

Site photos



Aerial photo of Union Square district courtesy of the BRA Boston Atlas



Looking north at the southern tip of the site: Webster Street to the left, Prospect Street to the right



Looking northeast down Newton Street, project site is to the right



Looking south: Prospect Street on the left, Newton Street on the right



Looking at Webster Street bridge with existing train tracks below



Looking at Prospect Street bridge with train tracks below, defunct sub-station to the left



Looking from Prospect Street Bridge over project site to Webster Street bridge with train tracks below