

# EAST BANK

@ FOUNDERS

A DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT STUDY  
FOUNDERS PLAZA, EAST HARTFORD, CT

NOVEMBER 2019

Tecton  
ARCHITECTS



SIMPSON  
GUMPERTZ  
& HEGER





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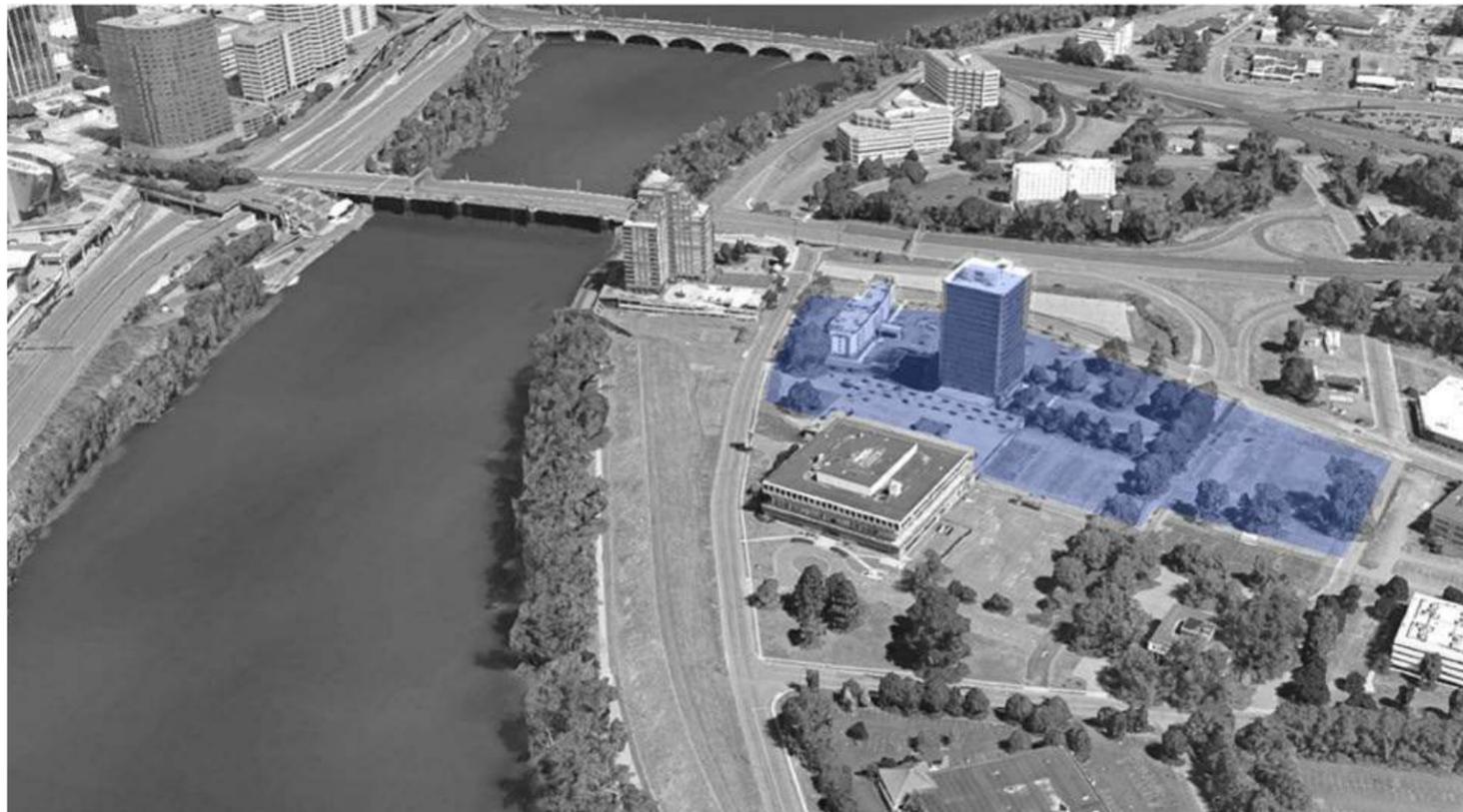
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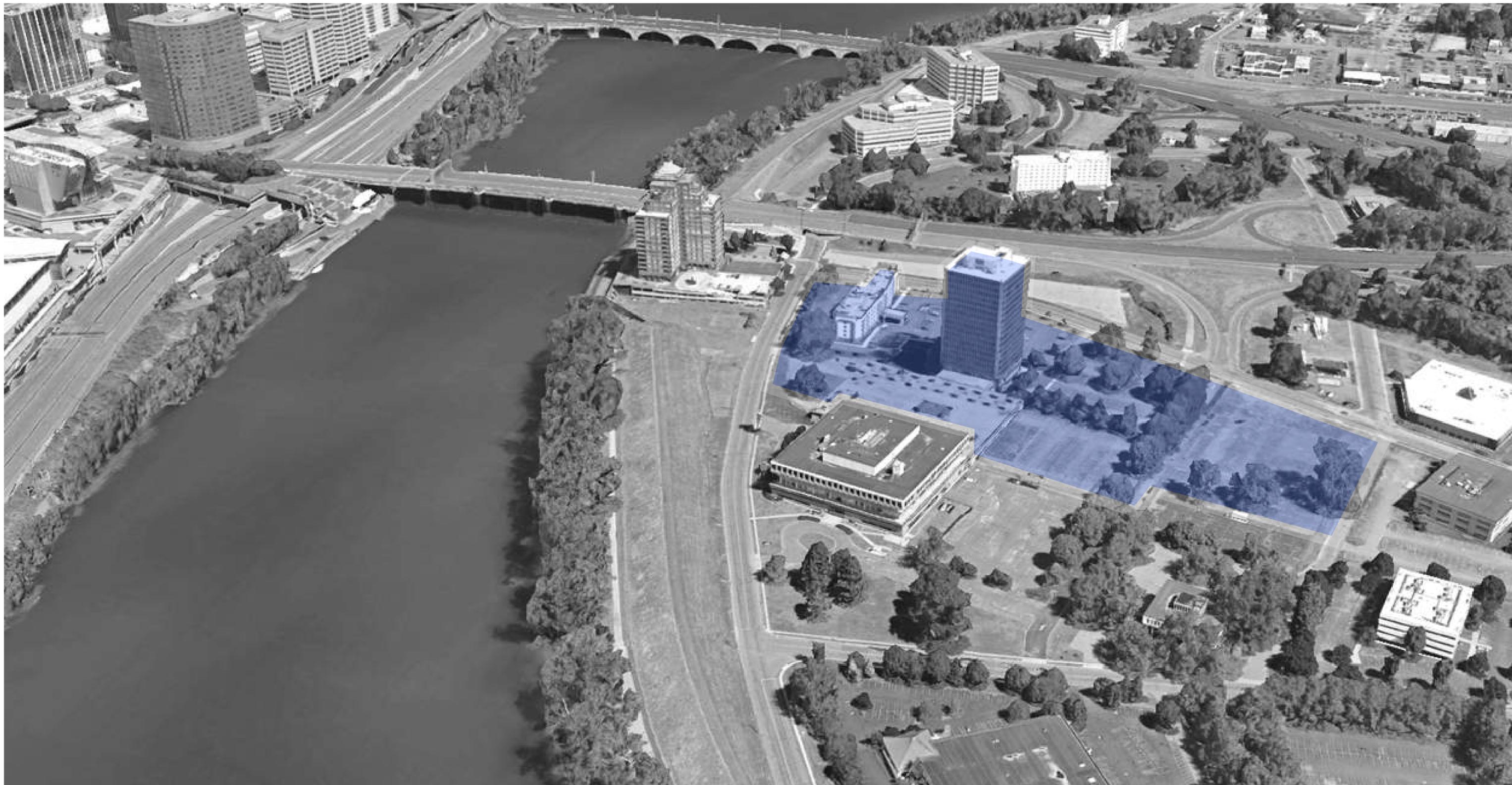


# A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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**ENVISIONING A PLACE FOR PUBLIC INTERACTION AND COMMUNITY ACTIVITY, A PLACE WHERE FAMILIES AND PROFESSIONALS WANT TO LIVE AND WORK, REQUIRES A SPECIAL INITIATIVE FROM A COMMITTED GROUP OF INFLUENTIAL STAKEHOLDERS.**

A team of architects, land planners, parking specialists, landowners, State and Municipal economic development leaders, and project finance and construction experts, set off on such a mission. In a series of workshops, this team explored the opportunities, constraints, goals and realities of creating a progressive, branded mixed-use destination on the Connecticut River in the Founders Riverfront District. This endeavor would need to leverage assets, progressive policy, public funding opportunities, and a singular vision to address under-performing riverfront property and the shortage of quality housing for the Town's high-level workforce.



## INTRODUCTION TO THE MISSION

A public-private trio of First Merchant Group, CRDA, and the Town of East Hartford embarked on a district development masterplan for an occupied 12.6-acre contiguous parcel on the riverfront. The district hosts active commercial buildings, but has been perceived as underdeveloped and ideal for new mixed-use residential density. Founders River District, and this property reside in an Opportunity Zone, and an area identified as a high priority in the Town of East Hartford's Plan of Conservation and Development (PoCD), along with other key redevelopment initiatives in and near Downtown. The district possesses notable assets such as access to highways and ample utilities, and pedestrian connections to riverfront amenities, including East Hartford's Main Street district and Hartford's cultural centers. However, development is constrained by these same assets - highways, existing structures, and a sizable river berm.

The stakeholders determined any successful future development would rely on maximizing assets and diminishing the impact of barriers, and saw structured parking as the key to freeing up land occupied by acres of surface parking, and enabling diverse development. The design team's charge: create a vision for the future that garners the best value from early public investments. Investments in structured parking and infrastructure should catalyze mixed-use development, ensuring momentum toward a desirable community destination for decades to come. These priorities set the stage for professional due-diligence and design concepts alike, as depicted in the pages that follow.

## RESOURCES

The design team drew upon a variety of contextual data and intellectual resources to better inform the planning process:

- Town of East Hartford, Connecticut Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) BFJ Planning - June 2014
- Precedent Riverfront & Urban Connectivity Developments:
  - Riverfront Recapture – Hartford, CT
  - River Common - Wilkes-Barre, PA
  - The High Line - New York, NY
  - Promenade Plantee, Paris France
- Property Survey, VHB - July 2019
- Aerial maps and imagery
- 111 Founders Plaza building files – current lease plans
- Founders Plaza Parking Structure As-built drawings, Charles DuBose - c1971



## THE TEAM

The following stakeholders, State entities and commissioned design professionals, engaged in a visioning process together:

### **Town of East Hartford:**

- Mayor Marcia LeClerc
- Eileen C. Buckheit, Development Director

### **Landowner & Advisor:**

- Larry Nirenberg, General Partner, First Merchants Group
- Thomas D. York, SIOR, Principal, Goman+York Property Advisors

### **CRDA | Capital Region Development Authority:**

- Michael Freimuth, Executive Director
- Robert Saint, Director of Construction Services
- Kimberly C. Hart, Venue Director

### **State of Connecticut**

- David M. Kooris, AICP, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Economic and Community Development

### **DESIGN CONSULTANT TEAM**

#### **Tecton Architects – Architectural Visioning**

- Ted Cutler, AIA, LEED AP, Principal
- Ernest Nepomuceno, LEED AP, Senior Architectural Designer

#### **VHB – Land Planning**

- Geoffrey M. Morrison-Logan, Principal, New England Regional Director Planning, Urban Design & Landscape Architecture
- Luke Mitchell, Senior Planner/Project Manager
- Paul Vitaliano, P.E., CT Director of Land Development

#### **Simpson Gumpertz & Heger – Parking Analysis**

- Sal A. Capobianco, P.E., Senior Principal
- Mike Bolduc, P.E., Senior Project Manager



## B. THE PHYSICAL CONTEXT

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*DISTRICT CONNECTIVITY*

*ACCESS & AMENITIES*

*BOUNDARIES & BARRIERS*

*ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES*

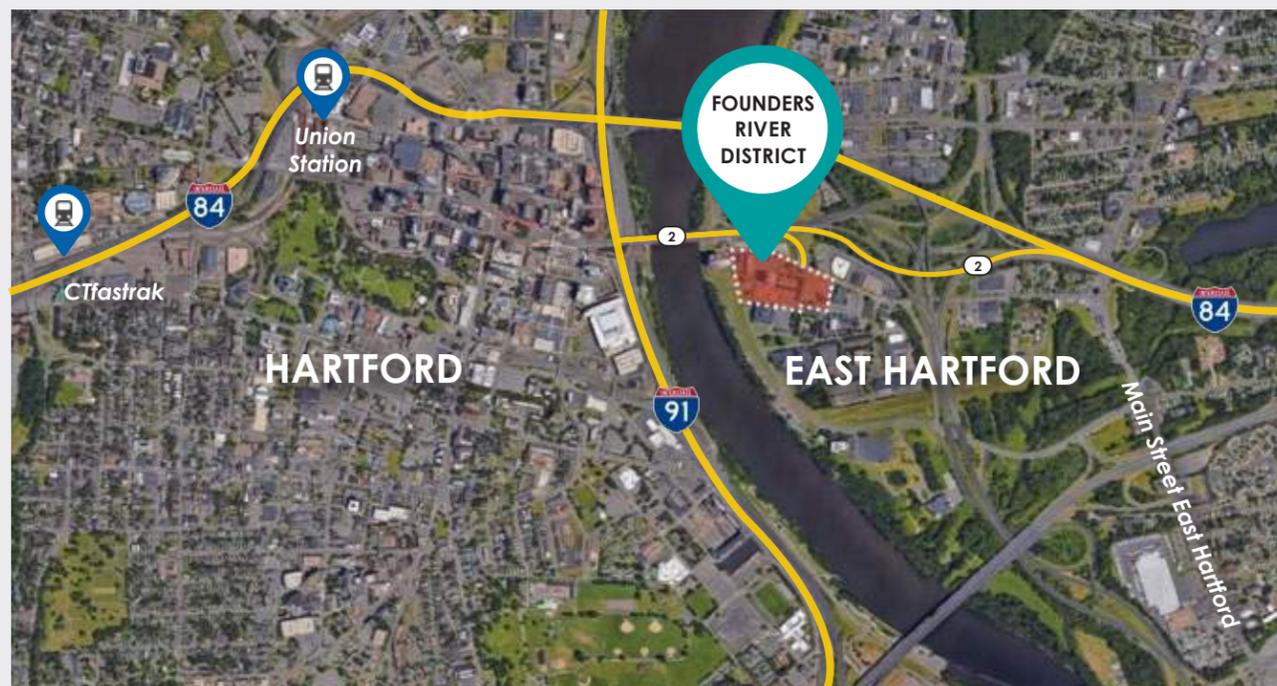
*REGULATORY IMPACT*

*INFRASTRUCTURE CAPABILITIES*

## THE PHYSICAL CONTEXT

### DISTRICT CONNECTIVITY

The Founders River District in East Hartford is very well-connected regionally. Route 2 is directly accessed at the northern edge of the site, linking Founders River District to Interstates I-84 & I-91. By car, the site is just 90 minutes from Boston or New York City, and about an hour to CT and Rhode Island shore destinations. Travel options are available such as CTfastrak busway and the CT Rail Hartford Line linking to Metro North and other Amtrak networks. On foot or bike, Founders resides close to many destinations in Connecticut's Capital Region, Downtown Hartford and East Hartford.



### ASSETS & AMENITIES

The site has many great assets and locational advantages. First and foremost, Founders Plaza and the Founders River District resides along the Connecticut River, with access to natural waterfront amenities, on-river activities, and ample views of the CT River Valley, Hartford's skyline, and Mortensen Riverfront Plaza. Founders represents one of the largest contiguous developable parcels in the Greater Hartford area, and likely the largest of its kind on the waterfront.

Founders also resides within a designated Opportunity Zone, within a patchwork of complimentary land uses in East Hartford, including residential neighborhoods, schools, industry and offices, and riverfront open space. East Hartford maintains a strong desire to enhance the connections between Founders Plaza and other hubs of activity like Rentschler Field, Silver Lane, the growing Goodwin College campus and surrounding area, and Main Street. Founders is already a long-time cultural destination, for decades hosting huge crowds of spectators for The 4th of July fireworks celebration. This underdeveloped site is primed to leverage this local vibrancy, and available tax incentives.

The site is located very close to Downtown Hartford, home to millions of square feet of office space, schools, restaurants, shopping, sports and entertainment and nightlife. Many of the residents and workers who spend time in Downtown Hartford already take advantage of the east side of the river, crossing the Founders Bridge on foot and bike to visit the Great River Park and its extensive riverfront trail system.

Downtown Destination	Distance	Walk	Bike	Car
Front Street Dining, UConn Downtown	.8 miles	16 min	8 min	7 min
Pratt Street, XL Center	.9 miles	18 min	10 min	8 min
Bushnell Park, Bushnell Performing Arts	1.0 miles	20 min	12 min	9 min
Union Station, Train	1.2 miles	25 min	15 min	10 min

***Our Development Plan aims to capture and enhance these connections by expanding upon Founders Plaza as a local destination for active and passive recreation. We believe the site has great potential to usher in a new era for Founders Plaza, and to establish it as an active, mixed-use, riverfront district.***

## THE PHYSICAL CONTEXT

### BOUNDARIES & BARRIERS

No project site is free of difficulties. Many of the assets outlined previously are countered with particular challenges. Although these may seem significant, each may be intentionally addressed and reconciled in a new development plan. Special consideration is given to the following challenges:

- The site is surrounded by highway infrastructure to the north. Although this is an advantage in terms of regional connectivity, it is a distinct disadvantage with regard to local foot and bicycle traffic. This highway infrastructure acts as a barrier, with few and some unwelcoming connections between Founders Plaza and East Hartford's Main Street retail district.
- There are 3 interconnected buildings central to the district and a 4th toward the western edge. Buildings include:
  - 111 Founders Plaza office tower to the north
  - A broad 3-story office building to the south, formerly Bank of America headquarters
  - A connected 2-level parking structure between
  - A Hampton Inn Hotel in the northwest corner

All but the Bank of America structure reside on the 12.6 acres owned by First Merchant. The interconnected buildings in particular create a physical wall or hard edge impacting planning flexibility, and the hotel occupies a prominent position closest to the pedestrian access point to the river walk and Founders Bridge to Hartford. These realities are addressed in the development plan concept in Parts E and F.

- The site is disconnected from the waterfront and Great River Park that runs north-south along the Connecticut River, by a Town road - East River Drive, and a tall FEMA-regulated berm (nearly 20 feet at its highest) to protect the area from seasonal flooding. This makes riverfront connectivity more challenging, and compelled the planning team to explore elevated public spaces and connections from Founders' existing and new architecture to the top of the berm and riverbank.
- Founders Plaza lacks historically significant urban fabric in the vicinity, which means that the design of the project will need to invent its architectural and urban typologies, rather than leveraging those of the past.



Visual barrier created by buildings



Berm as barrier



111 Founders

### ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

The site hosts existing architecture, described in other sections relative to amenities and barriers, and in a detailed condition assessment of the parking structure. This section specifically addresses existing architecture as a vital component of planning.

- 111 Founders is a 19-story, 250,000 gross square foot corporate office tower offering superior views of the CT River Valley. The facility is near lease capacity with consistent lease interest, and possesses newly upgraded common spaces. However, it currently lacks a sense of destination and connectivity to its surroundings. New development should leverage this business density and ideally transform street/plaza levels of the tower into retail and community spaces, consequently enhancing the sense of neighborhood belonging. 111 Founders is an iconic piece in the River District skyline, establishing future expectations and possibilities for new height and mixed urban density. This building may be key to a successful development plan.
- The Bank of America building is a postmodern low-rise concrete office headquarters, soon to be refit for a new large tenant. The lease is expected to be long term, but the longevity of the building is in question given its age and common difficulty with headquarters buildings accommodating mixed tenancies over time. This structure occupies a large footprint in an area ideal for urban lifestyle and views, and the architecture is not of a pedestrian scale and pallet. For the sake of the planning study this building remains a fixture in the distant future. Design attention should be given to how the on-grade and elevated entry facades can be engaged in some key areas, and screened by landscaping in others.
- The existing parking structure is discussed in more detail in Part C and via exhibits, but we forecast value in maintaining the 330-car parking capacity and endeavor to enhance its efficiency and yield when integrated into a new development.
- The Hampton Inn Hotel is a mid-rise building of standard corporate retail brand, in a well-manicured and pleasant setting. The ideal off-highway, riverfront location provides for a consistently vibrant business, while its transient use sustains a buffer to the highway barrier to the north. The development plan envisions possibilities of expanding, rebranding and interconnecting this facility into the new urban neighborhood fabric.
- To the east side of the target property in Founder's River District, there are sprawling on-grade parking lots. Further east (off property but in the District) are four 2 to 4-story commercial buildings with similar surface lots. Conditions eastward may look very accommodating for developers once initial momentum is achieved.

## THE PHYSICAL CONTEXT

### REGULATORY IMPACT

The Town of East Hartford has and continues to tool up for broader development, first adopting a progressive Plan of Conservation and Development (PoCD) in 2014 and recently retaining planning consultants for comprehensive regulation revisions - keying first on priority development districts such as Founder Plaza.

The PoCD identifies Founders Plaza as a key planning district, correctly stating that it has "great potential for economic development and enhanced waterfront access." It continues to describe the current condition of Founders Plaza as a "site comprised mainly of a series of disconnected parking lots" and calls for a pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use center to be developed. Further, the PoCD states that, "the primary objectives of the concept plan are to allow for new mixed-use infill development, improve access to and circulation within the site, make a stronger connection to the waterfront, and create an urban place with an identifiable center through the use of a publicly-accessible open space."

Development approvals of the 12.6-acre site and the adjacent properties in the district is expected to be largely governed by the Town of East Hartford Planning & Zoning Commission (via special permit as per below) with particular purview by the following public bodies:

- CTDEEP General Permit for stormwater management and construction activities
- Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) for traffic impact
- Office of the State Traffic Administration (OSTA) for traffic and drainage impact on State infrastructure
- CRDA or other grant funding administration for use of public dollars
- Army Corps of Engineer – in the event impactful improvements are proposed on the river berm and shores

The above specialty approvals are expected to be standard procedural submissions, but for the Army Corps of Engineers. While this agency commonly requires more time and process, there are precedents for transformative riverfront improvements such as River Common in Wilkes-Barre, PA (where the Corps actually shared in project funding) and Riverfront Recapture – directly across the river from our site in Hartford, CT.

Special permits aside, approvals will start with local regulations. Our team's analysis revealed that the East Hartford Zoning Regulations may not yet fully accommodate or fully foster a transformative waterfront development or developer-driven investment. Further, we found that some of the provisions in the Zoning Regulations are unclear and may cause investor hesitation. Founder Plaza is located in a B-4 zone (described on pages 135-146 of the Zoning Regulations). At a high level, the requirements in a B-4 zone seem quite accommodating for the intended mixed-use density along the river, but the adjacent table flags a few potential concerns.

### East Hartford Zoning Review

	Requirement	Commentary
A	"High density mixed-use high-rise development consisting of office/retail, restaurants and/or multiple-family dwellings in 1 or more buildings" is allowed by special permit, given a few provisions including the following:	<i>Is the Special Permit process clearly defined? Is there a chance it could be perceived as open-ended?</i>
2	A development site is defined as a parcel or parcels of land under the control of a single entity at the time the application for a special permit is made upon which the proposed development is to be constructed.	<i>Consider revising this language. There may be a case where more than one property owner joins forces but option property rather than close, before testing their success in the land approvals arena.</i>
3	The site shall have frontage on the Connecticut River. For the purposes of this section, frontage shall be defined as property that abuts the Connecticut River in which the applicant has a legal or equitable interest that gives the applicant and its assignees the right to limit building development on the property.	<i>Consider opening up this language. The Town of East Hartford owns E. River Drive and all parcels with frontage, isolating the entire Founders River District</i>
6	Buildings must be 30 feet away from one another.	<i>This language may be perceived to control density. Consider letting fire and building code govern, along with overall architectural review.</i>
B	Multiple Family dwellings (1-4 stories) is allowed by special permit, given a few provisions including the following:	<i>Zone B-4 allows highrise to 300', and mixed-use by special permit. Consider how this section could be misconstrued.</i>
C	Parking space requirements	<i>Prospective developers will expect less than 1.5 pe residential unit, and greater consideration for mixed-use shared parking. Consider adjusting or expanding upon the shared parking provisions.</i>
1	Residential: 1.5 spaces per DU	
2	Retail stores: 1 space per 250 GSF	
3	Restaurant: 1 space for every 3 legal occupants	
4	Provisions for shared parking are provided in section 404.8.	
D	General	
1	Max impervious surface is 85% of site	<i>Consider clarifying, or discounting elevated green plazas, green roofs, and alternative drainable paving materials from total impervious.</i>
E	Special Permit process (pages 24 – 29 of Zoning Regulations)	
1	Planning and Zoning Commission must conduct a public hearing and determine that the project is in accord with public interest, convenience and welfare	<i>Consider edits for clarify and predictability for developments in priority areas studied in the 4014 PoCD.</i>

As outlined in Part G: Recommendations, we recommend that the Zoning Regulations specific to priority development zones like Founders Plaza be revisited to ensure that a transformative, mixed-use development is allowed as-of-right.

## THE PHYSICAL CONTEXT

### INFRASTRUCTURE CAPABILITIES

The planning team has solicited feedback from utility providers and reviews with respect to the capacities and potential concerns with the infrastructure serving the district, in particular a potentially sizable initial phase of development. A summary of utility services, locations and expectations is provided below. Refer also to Exhibit A-Site Survey and Exhibit B-Utility Company Correspondence.



**Water:** Water is serviced to the area via a 20" main located on Pitkin Street and an 8" water main on East River Drive. A request has been made to the MDC to inquire as to any future projects or restrictions that would impede the development of the site for the proposed development program. Generally, providing the water demand for a project of this type is not an issue in this area. The elevations and size of the proposed buildings may require that pump equipment be installed to provide adequate pressure particularly for fire demand. This type of equipment is common and typically the responsibility of the private user to locate the facilities within the new structures.



**Sanitary Sewer:** A 12" sanitary sewer line is located on Pitkin Street and an 8" sewer line is located on East River Drive. A request has been made to the MDC to inquire as to any future projects or restrictions that would impede the development of the site for the proposed development program. VHB is not aware of any flow restrictions that would be imposed on new developments.



**Stormwater:** Surface drainage from the site currently traverses the neighboring property to the south and discharges to the municipal stormwater system on Hartland Street. There are additional catch basins on Pitkin Street at the northwest and northeast corner of the site. These systems flow in opposite directions and only collect minor amounts of runoff from the periphery of the site. There is a 21' stormwater pipe on East River Drive which collects street drainage and a small amount of runoff from the site. An inquiry was made to the Town of East Hartford engineering department. As expected, they do not believe that it would be difficult to meet the town's stormwater requirements through the use of stormwater detention and reduction of impervious area. Stormwater detention would be achieved through the use of underground features designed to mitigate the rate of discharge to the existing stormwater pipe network which ultimately discharges to Hartland Street. Since the site is mostly paved parking, any development will not greatly increase the amount of existing impervious area.



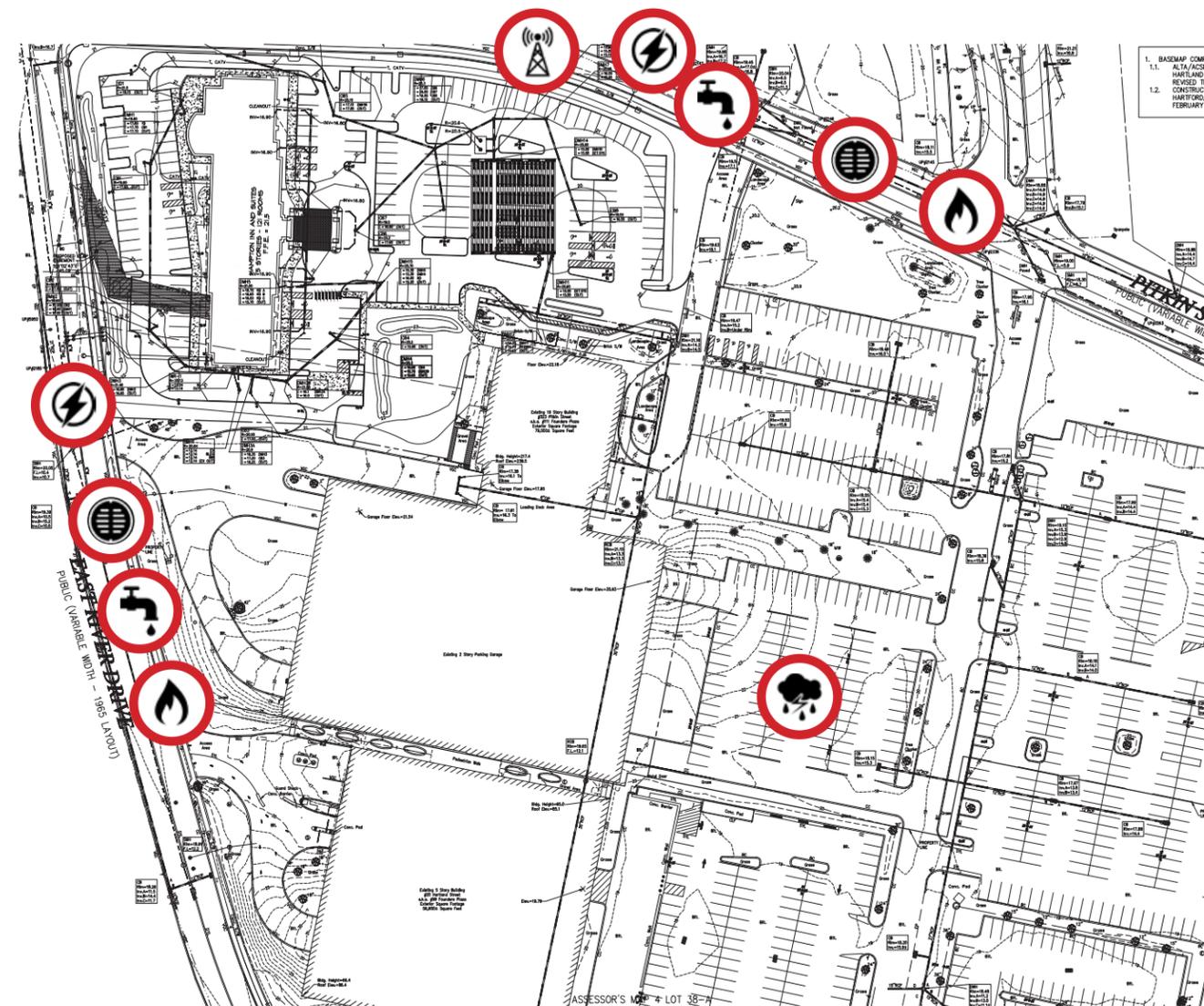
**Gas:** CNG has high pressure gas mains surrounding the site via a 12" gas line on Pitkin Street and a 4" gas line on East River Drive and Hartland Street. They feel that the site can be serviced but would not provide a definitive determination until the connected gas loads are provided.



**Electric:** Overhead electric and telecommunication lines are located on the north side of Pitkin Street and the west side of East River Drive. Eversource Energy has existing 23 kV distribution circuits in the area of Pitkin Street and East River Drive capable of providing service to the proposed development. The district is also served by redundant power transfer stations, providing highly reliable power, especially during extreme weather events.



**Telecom:** A request has been made to Frontier regarding expanding existing service to accommodate more users. We will continue to communicate with Frontier but typically service can be expanded, and the cost of potential upgrades can usually be negotiated.





## C. STRUCTURED PARKING ASSETS

**FOUNDERS PLAZA OWNS AND OPERATES THE 330-CAR PARKING STRUCTURE DIRECTLY ADJACENT TO AND SERVING ONLY 111 FOUNDERS.**

While it is heavily used, it does not serve the needs of a fully occupied office tower (with a growing demand for 5+ cars per 1000 SF), and has no excess capacity to support future site growth. Pursuant to findings further outlined in Exhibits C & D, and given its central location and current functional importance, the planning and ownership team determined this garage would remain, and upon repair and sensible expansion could well serve future demand and free up site development opportunities.

## STRUCTURED PARKING ASSETS

### NEEDED REPAIRS

The circa 1971 garage is a cast in place concrete structure with slab-on-grade, 2-way post-tensioned elevated slab and plaza deck, and precast perimeter spandrel panels. The structure is generally sound and spandrels and other components are in generally good condition. Regular upkeep is however long overdue. The following recommended repairs are summarized below:

- Repair selective concrete deterioration at spandrels, walls and columns.
- Repair or replace stair tower runs, landings, and rails.
- Repair and replace waterproofing and expansion joint and other joint sealants.
- Replace drains, flush and repair drainage lines.
- Replace plaza railings (refer to Expansion below).

Further investigation was recommended by the planning team. As of the publish date of this report, the following precautionary structural investigation had not occurred:

- Exploratory openings to assess the topside condition of the plaza deck, currently concealed by landscape material
- Exploratory openings in the underside of elevated decks to evaluate the condition of structural tendons

Hazardous Materials exist in small and localized quantities within the structure, as detailed in the attached Exhibit D. A summary includes:

- ACM Mastic – utility room floor and ceiling tile
- Lead Paint - striping lines
- PCB - Mechanical Room ceiling and door
- Miscellaneous Disposals - Light bulbs, ballasts and CFCs



### VALUE AND LIFESPAN

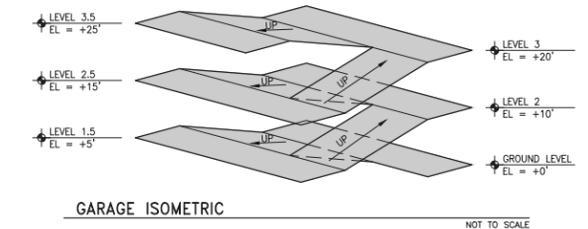
In the spectrum of parking structures, 2-way post-tensioned concrete is a very durable system with high strength and low concrete degradation over time. Based on technical surveys and findings, recommended repairs, and an on-going maintenance program the superstructure and deck are estimated to have a remaining lifespan of 25 to 30+ years. A high-level cost analysis is charted to the right, and refer to Aesthetic Considerations (below) for potential added costs likely associated with a future mixed use development.

### EXPANSION

The existing parking facility possesses no internal ramping between levels; both level 1 and 2 are accessed via exterior on-grade sloping pavement at both the east and west ends of the garage. Any expansion would require a new circulation strategy. Vertical expansion has been ruled out so as not to obstruct views of the river, but repurposing the top deck for parking and lateral expansion are considered viable, and such costs are considered above. The conceptual development plan in Part F considers a lateral low-rise expansion, with a modern and efficient structure providing internal circulation for both new and old, and a platform upon which new housing may be built.

### GARAGE COST SUMMARY

	Low	High
Garage Condition Upgrades	\$720,000	\$850,000
Garage Hazmat	\$60,000	\$80,000
Top Deck Car-Plaza Repurpose (95)	\$2,200,000	\$2,600,000
<b>Total Cost Range - RESTORE</b>	<b>\$2,980,000</b>	<b>\$3,530,000</b>
Cost Per Car (330 + 95 Cars)	\$7,000	\$8,300
Replacement Cost - New Precast	\$11,500,000	\$12,750,000
Remove Existing Structure	\$1,200,000	\$1,300,000
<b>Total Cost - NEW</b>	<b>\$12,700,000</b>	<b>\$14,050,000</b>
Cost Per Car (425 Cars)	\$30,000	\$33,000



### AESTHETIC CONSIDERATIONS

The primary goal of expanded structured parking capacity is to free up land and set the stage for viable and sustainable mixed-use development. Creating an attractive sense of place from the start is imperative. Dense urban development will include various uses and structures in close proximity, often with garage walls, surfaces and openings at the pedestrian level. Though not forecast in the above cost analysis, the following additional aesthetic features should be considered:

- Spandrel panels patterned with human-scale materials such as brick or stone
- Architectural mesh visual screening and green walls at open garage facades
- Architectural rails, benches and lighting at garage and plaza edges
- Additional plaza landscape and hardscape design features to enhance pedestrian flow and activity
- Placemaking branding and wayfinding



Boston Channel Center Garage



## D. THE VISION OF EAST BANK @ FOUNDERS

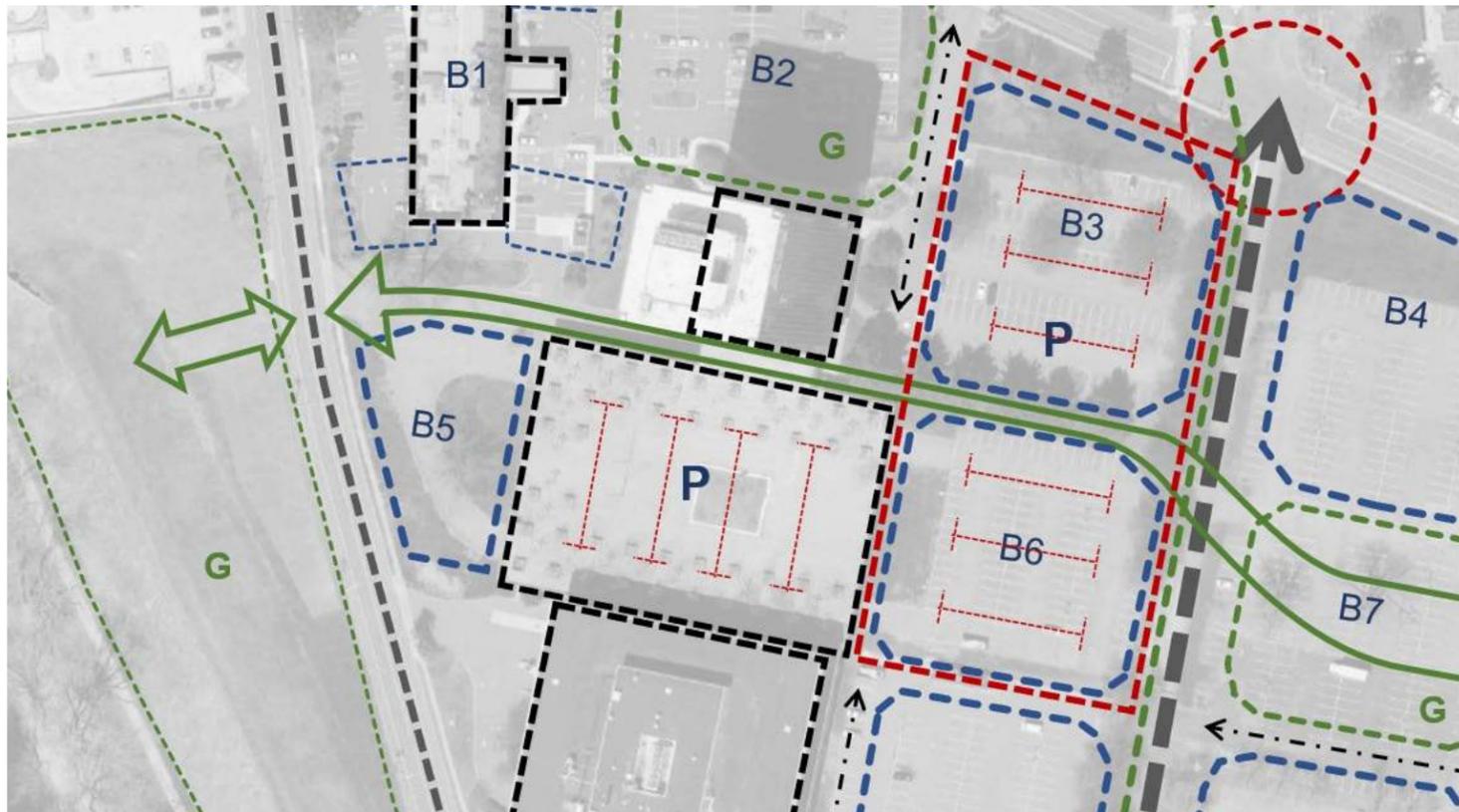
THE PLANNING TEAM AND STAKEHOLDERS TOGETHER CRAFTED A SET OF VISIONARY STATEMENTS THAT CAPTURE THE MISSION OF SUCH A TRANSFORMATIVE REDEVELOPMENT, A NARRATIVE THAT ALIGNS THE GOALS OF THOSE MOST INVESTED – FIRST MERCHANT GROUP AND THE TOWN OF EAST HARTFORD – AND SETS THE BAR FOR SUCCESS.

## THE VISION OF EAST BANK @ FOUNDERS

### THE NEW MIXED-USE FOUNDERS RIVER DISTRICT ENVISIONS A FUTURE:

- That leverages quality careers and a progressive workforce in East Hartford to promote dynamic and desirable new housing opportunities.
- That links commercial and cultural assets and destinations in our Town and our Capital City.
- That is a catalyst for immediate investment but embodies resiliency and flexibility, in planning and architecture, to adapt to an ever-evolving urban mixed-use lifestyle.
- Where neighborhood and the broader community can engage with a vibrant riverfront recreational park.
- That creates a safe, accessible, desirable, and sustainable place for residents, workers, and visitors alike.
- That re-brands Founders Plaza as a new, high-profile hub of urban activity with visibility throughout the State.





# E. THE MASTER PLAN

OUT OF COLLABORATIVE WORKSHOPS WITH ALL PARTIES CAME A DISTRICT FRAMEWORK DIAGRAM TO SERVE AS THE BASIS FOR THE NEW EAST BANK @ FOUNDERS.

## THE MASTER PLAN

### DISTRICT FRAMEWORK

This diagram performs a few key functions for the planning team and future development considerations:

- Suggests a viable parking program and approach to meeting parking needs over time
- Sets a planning block structure for future development
- Establishes a hierarchy of primary and internal roadways
- Identifies corridors and key connections for pedestrian and bike circulation
- Earmarks spaces for public activity and sense of belonging

Supplementing parking counts and freeing up land for development are vital first steps, coming in the form of a new parking garage (shown in dashed red line). The framework locates this adjacent to the site's largest corporate office user, engages with the existing parking garage, and begins to establish capacity and density for a potential phase 1 development.

As shown on the diagram, ten unique development "blocks," (labeled as B1 through B10) are identified. Block B1 represents the potential for expanding the existing hotel as the district, and the market evolves while Blocks B2, B7 and B10 represent the potential location of publicly accessible open space. All other blocks represent the potential site of new building projects.

The vehicular corridors are represented in thick, gray dashed lines. The central north-south corridor is shown in a thicker line, to show not only that this street will be wider than its counterpart to the east, but that it will be lined with retail and other active uses. This corridor, which connects directly to Route 2, will serve as the primary spine or armature of the new East Bank district.

Most importantly, the diagram features a large green arrow extending from east to west. This represents a critical connection from the new community commons and urban fabric to the riverfront, elevating pedestrian and bicyclist activity to the plaza level (existing and new garage rooftops), over East River Drive and to the top of the river berm. This singular feature may define the East Bank experience, drawing residents, visitors, and fireworks spectators alike.



### LEGEND

- |  |                                      |  |  |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|--|
|  | Pedestrian Link to Downtown          |  | Existing Building Constraints          |
|  | Potential Enhanced Points of Arrival |  | Future Public Green Space              |
|  | Primary N-S Avenue                   |  | Pedestrian Bridge Crossing to River    |
|  | Potential Secondary Internal Drives  |  | Potential Structured Parking Expansion |
|  | Proposed Development Block           |  |  |



## THE MASTER PLAN

### MASTER PLAN DEVELOPMENT DENSITY

Our Development Framework identifies opportunity beyond Founders 12.6 acres, and current zoning allows for building coverage up to 75%, impervious surface up to 85%, and building height is capped at 300 feet. The ultimate build-out of this district is hardly limited by these factors, rather by the housing market and the success of an initial project to brand East Bank and establish long-term momentum.

For the sake of this master plan, we consider the following conservative metrics and assumptions with a completely developed district:

- The initial phase will provide required parking for new housing as well as the currently high corporate demand
- Future development blocks will provide self-sustained parking, via wrapped or podium garages
- Parking demand will drop to or below 1 car per residential unit, assuming advancements in public transit access
- The corporate/residential shared parking overlap will start at 10% and may grow to 30% as the mixed-use district takes hold
- Early phase buildings will be up to 5 stories above parking (Type V-A and III-A construction), later phases reaching 10 stories (mix of Type V-A to Type I-B)
- Residential numbers are based on mixed rentals at an average of 1,000 gross SF per unit
- Retail, entertainment and business components will be up to 15% along the major north-south drive, but ultimately 8% to 10% of the total gross SF of all building new buildings

Based on the above metrics, the ultimate yield of the district redevelopment as defined could reach the following quantities:

	12.6 ACRE SITE ONLY	BROADER DISTRICT
• Residential Units:	700 to 800	1,800 to 2,000
• Total Retail Gross SF:	60K to 75K	160K to 200K
• Total Gross SF:	750K to 800K	1.8M to 2.0M
• Total cars:	650 to 750	1,800 to 2,000

Of course, the future is unpredictable and is framed by what we experience today. If East Bank at Founders generates substantial interest over time and the Greater Hartford housing market continues to grow, new residential high rises and destination retail and entertainment would not be out of the question. The initial phase, however, will likely fall into metrics supported by today's market outlook with an expected infusion of public funding. Refer to the Initial Development section for more information.



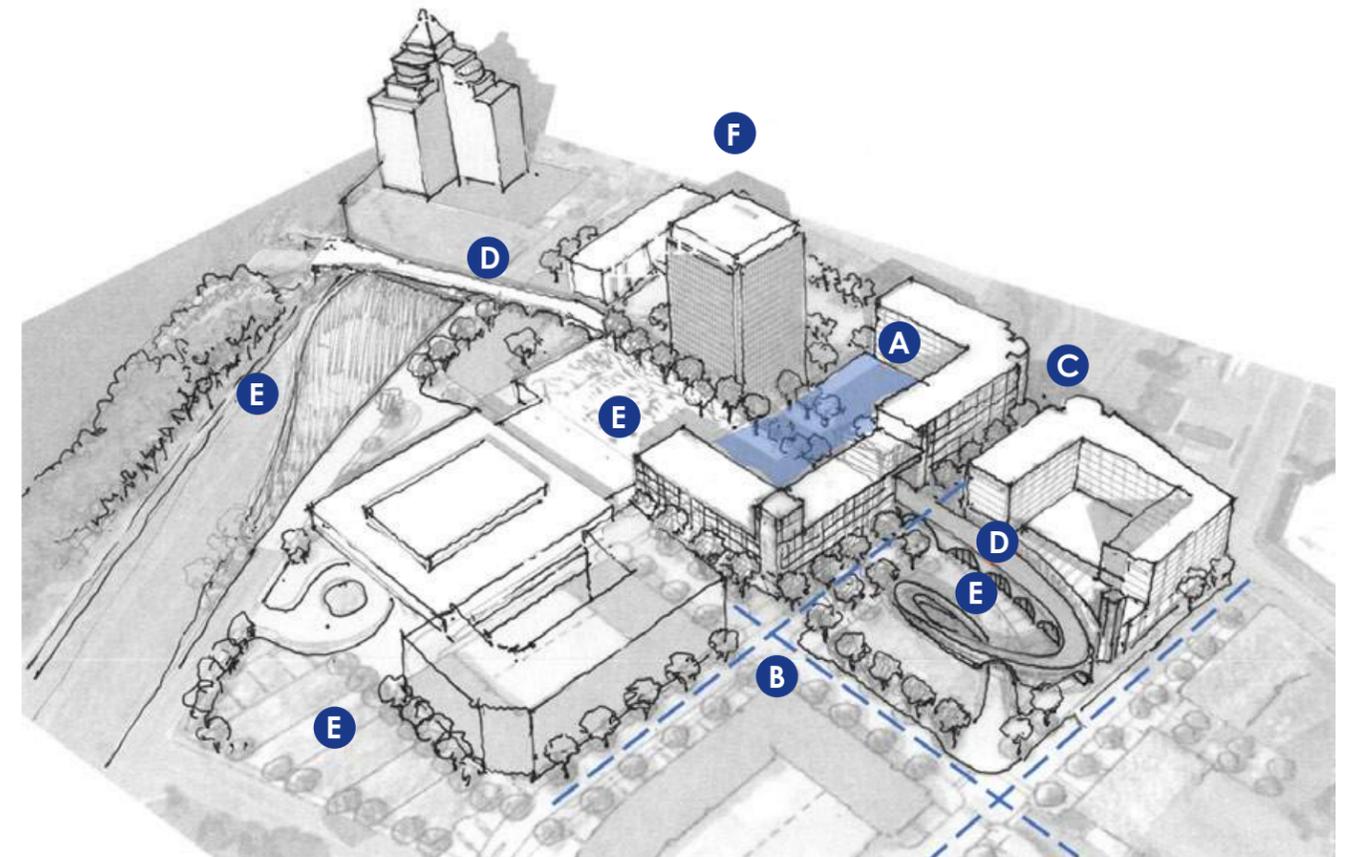
Note: This master plan predicts future growth opportunities beyond the property currently under control by the stakeholders defined in this report. Images and concepts are not intended to represent prior involvement or agreements with adjacent property owners.

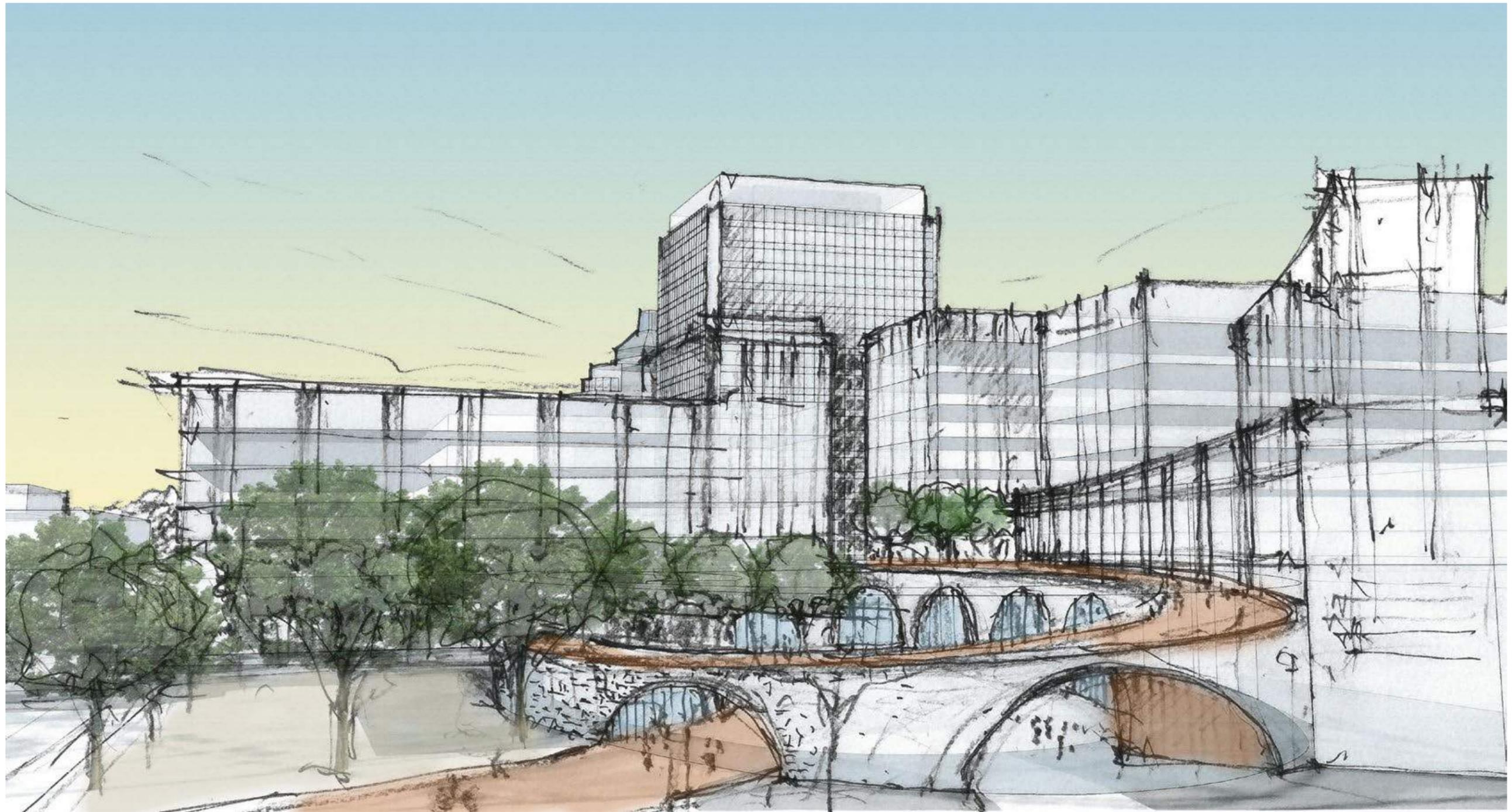
## THE MASTER PLAN

### VITAL CONNECTIONS AND URBAN PLAN ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The form and function of the East Bank Development Plan are products of collective goals, participation and feedback from the First Merchant Group, the Town of East Hartford, and economic development representation from CRDA and the State of Connecticut. For such an urban transformation along the river to be possible, the proposed development must achieve the following objectives as early on as possible:

- A Break the Current Parking Paradigm:** The currently high parking demand in 111 Founders Plaza has occupied acres of flat, developable land with parking lots that are completely vacant after working hours. The master plan calls for ample and convenient structured parking for corporate as well as future mixed uses, freeing up land and immediately changing the overall parking use metrics. Ideally, with each development phase, shared parking percentages will continue to rise.
- B Define the Building Blocks:** The District Framework depicts a logical scenario for multifamily, mixed-use development blocks, sustained by its own parking, blocks could be built in larger of smaller successive phases, allowing the development to adapt and evolve according to changing market conditions. East Bank's ultimate design may evolve, but each phase and every public and private investment should harken to, or revisit the master plan to ensure the ultimate goals and grander vision are maintained.
- C Establish a Front Door:** While the ultimate development will rely on many vehicular connections to and from the broader district and Town, success may lie with the immediate creation of a highly visible gateway arrival, extending the new East Bank brand far beyond the site. This gateway is ideally located on Pitkin Street, at the Route 2 interface.
- D Link East Bank to the Water:** As discussed, the District Framework urges the early introduction of an east-west pedestrian and bicyclist pathway to link the new development and its on-grade and elevated public spaces to the riverfront, and the Founders Bridge pathway to Downtown Hartford. As shown this singular feature can connect so many spaces, and immediately shape the East Bank experience.
- E Cherish the Great Outdoors:** Urban density must be counterbalanced by openness, light, and approachable and usable green space. The creation of attractive and well-programmed open spaces will create a sense of place, acting as a magnet for East Bank residents, workers, visitors, and spectators alike.
- F Grow the Base:** Ultimately, the development of this district must foster economic growth in the Town of East Hartford by solving the middle-housing gap, and the Greater Hartford region by attracting a high-quality workforce.

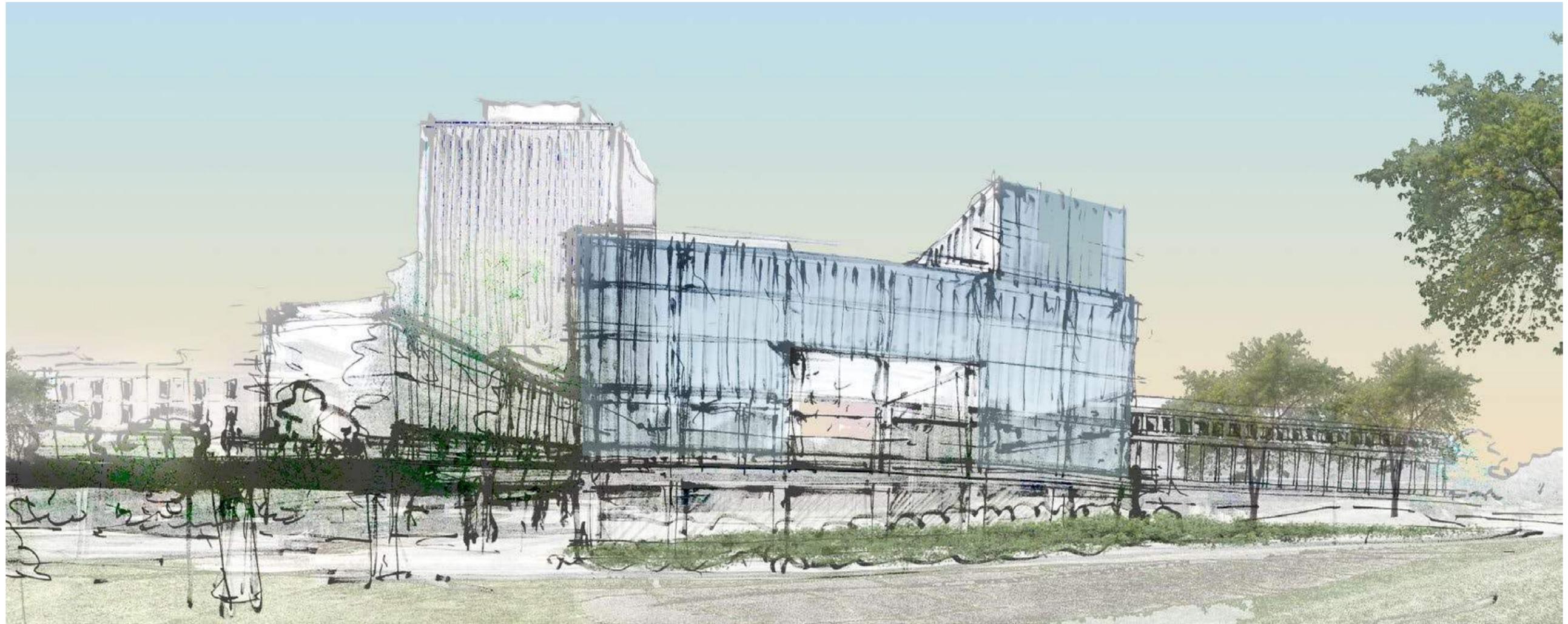




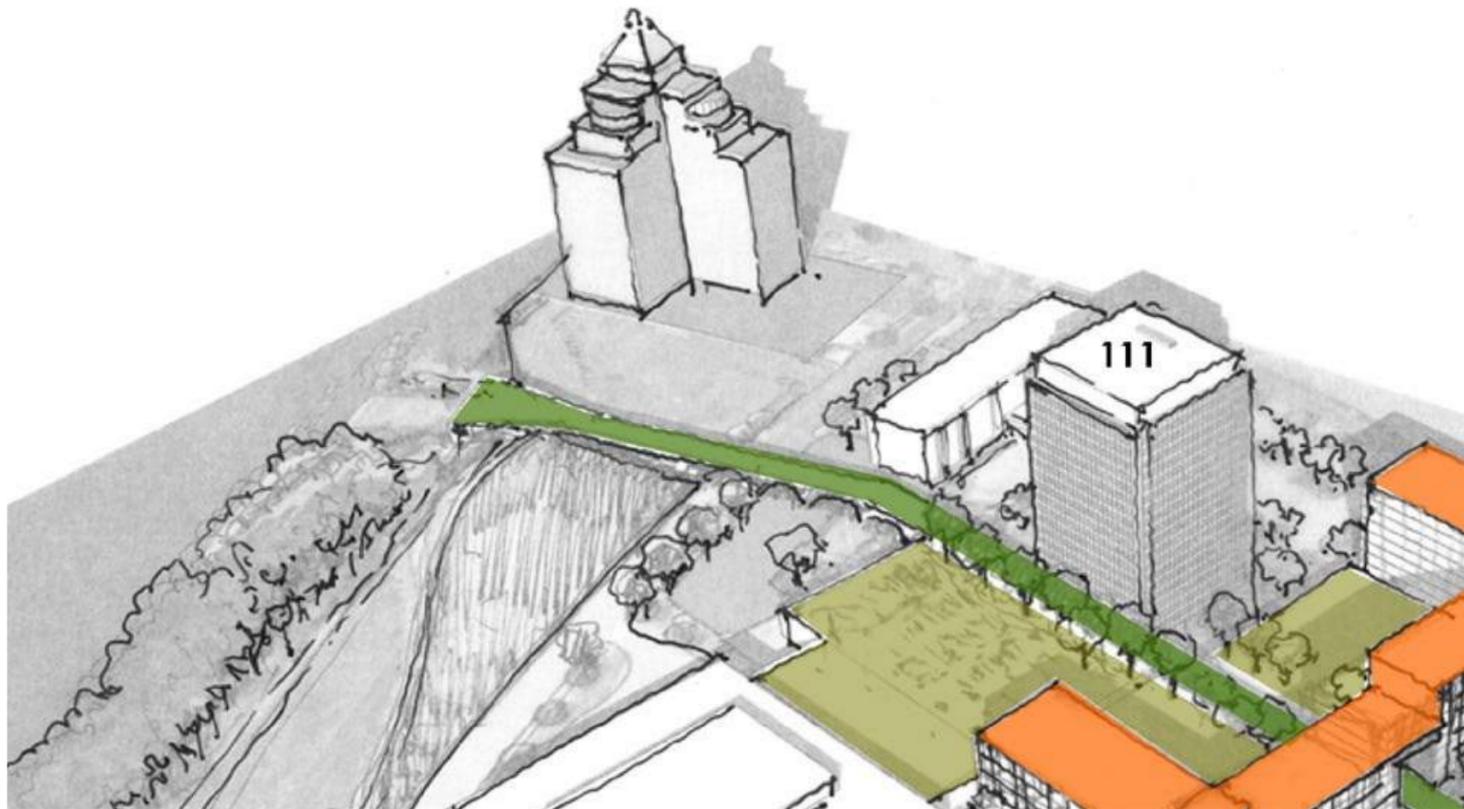
*District Park & East Bank Path Access*



**East Bank @ Founders**



*East Bank from CT River*



## F. INITIAL DEVELOPMENT

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WHILE AN IDEAL PHASE 1 PROJECT CAN ONLY BE DEFINED UPON DEEPER STUDY AND INVOLVEMENT BY A TEAM OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVESTORS AND DEVELOPERS, THE PLANNING TEAM FORECASTS AN INITIAL DEVELOPMENT THAT COULD FREE THE DISTRICT SITE FROM ITS PAST AND SET THE FUTURE VISION IN MOTION.

## INITIAL DEVELOPMENT

### EARLY COMPONENTS AND POTENTIAL YIELD

#### Refurbished Parking Structure including:

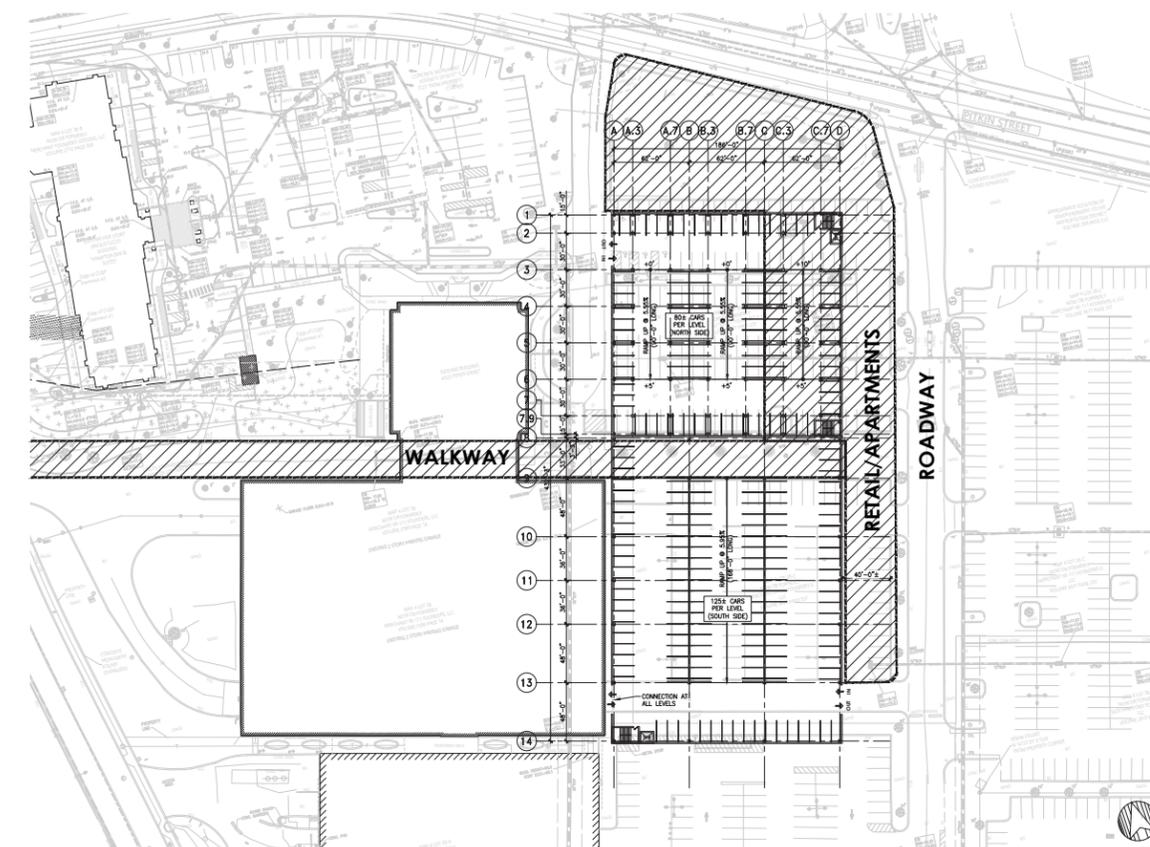
- All repairs and abatement as prescribed in this report (Exhibit C), while maintaining the existing 330 car capacity.
- Restoration of the top level for up to 100 additional cars, as well as a blended design of plaza hardscape and greenscape.
- Access to 2 existing levels and the plaza level (via the adjacent new garage lateral expansion).
- Upgrades to life-safety, lighting, striping, wayfinding, and controls.
- Aesthetic treatments to the facades and rails to appropriately blend with new development, particularly at the exposed north and west facades.

#### New Parking Structure, expected to be designed as follows:

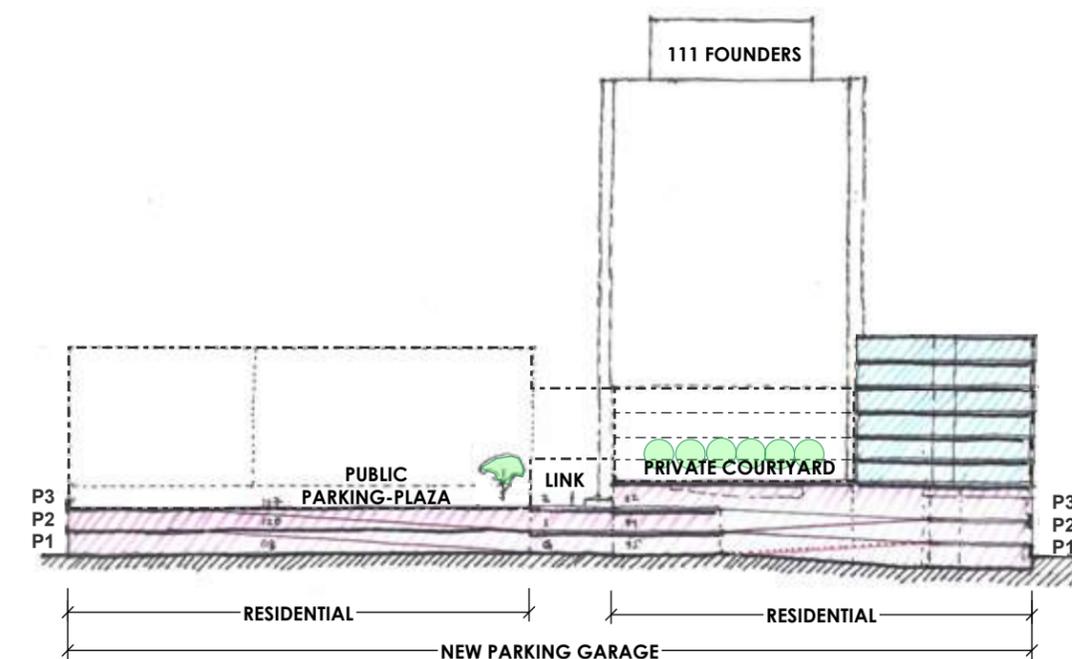
- **Capacity & Capabilities:** 550 to 600 cars on 3 levels, ramped to serve the existing garage and designed to accommodate new development above.
- **Construction Type:** Precast concrete construction with standard parking spans and fire ratings where required adjacent to mixed uses.
- **Structural Capacity:** The precast systems will create a podium to support multi-floor housing above, with columns aligning with parking grids, and future columns for the 4 to 6 stories of housing.
- **Internal Ramping:** Sloped parking levels in a helix system for efficient vehicular access between parking levels.
- **Attractive Spandrels:** Thin-brick or stone inlays and reveal patterns are to be considered, in addition to applied architectural metal and other panels.
- **Screening:** Architectural screening elements applied to the spandrels at the facade openings. Green walls are encouraged.
- **PARC:** A modern and adaptable Parking Access and Revenue Control system, designed to operate with key cards and credit cards, and capable of selective access to portions of the garage to mix business with residential uses.
- **Special Considerations:** A safe, well-lit and energy efficient facility is desired

#### Land & Infrastructure, associated improvements may include:

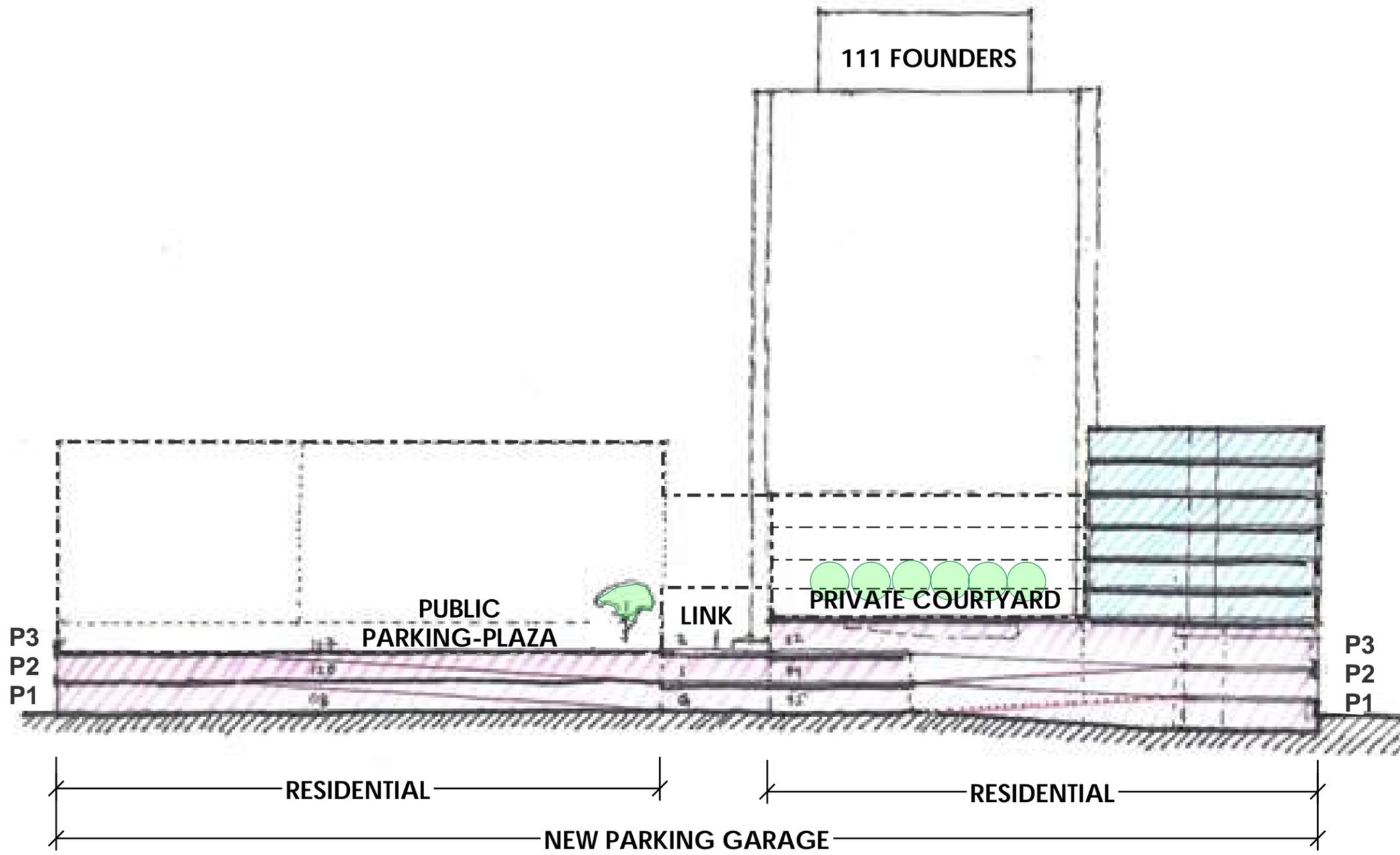
- Widened and improved intersection directly across from Route 2 access ramps.
- On-site roadway improvements to the proposed primary North-South internal drive, with sidewalks and bicycle-friendly provisions.
- Associated landscaping and wayfinding.
- Associated utility and drainage improvements.



Garage Layout



Site Section



## INITIAL DEVELOPMENT

### EARLY COMPONENTS AND POTENTIAL YIELD

**Mixed Use:** The parking and infrastructure improvements could support and initial investment in:

- 300 to 350 residential rental units in 150 unit phases if desired - a blend of studio/1 bedroom/2-bedroom
- Resident commons – pool and pool house, lounge, fitness, game room, dog suite, etc. based on market
- 20,000 to 30,000 gross SF of commercial lease space

Quantities are dependent on market trends and demand; target will ultimately be set by an owner-developer team.

**The Link:** Ideally, an initial investment will include the statement piece, an eventful, all-accessible pedestrian link from a phase 1 project to the riverfront. This may include:

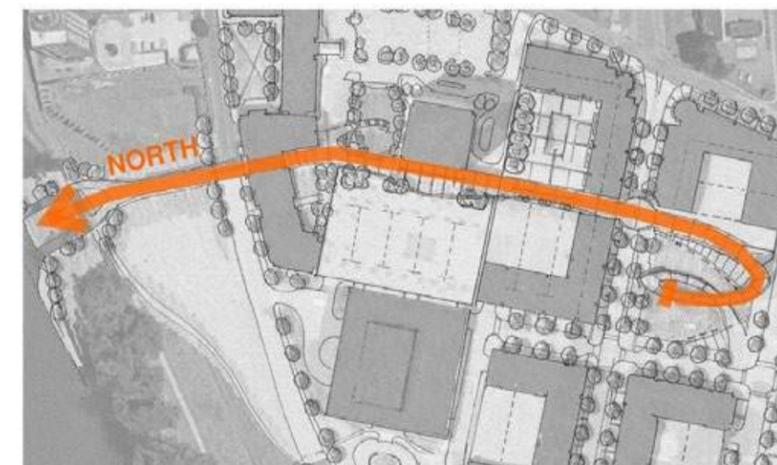
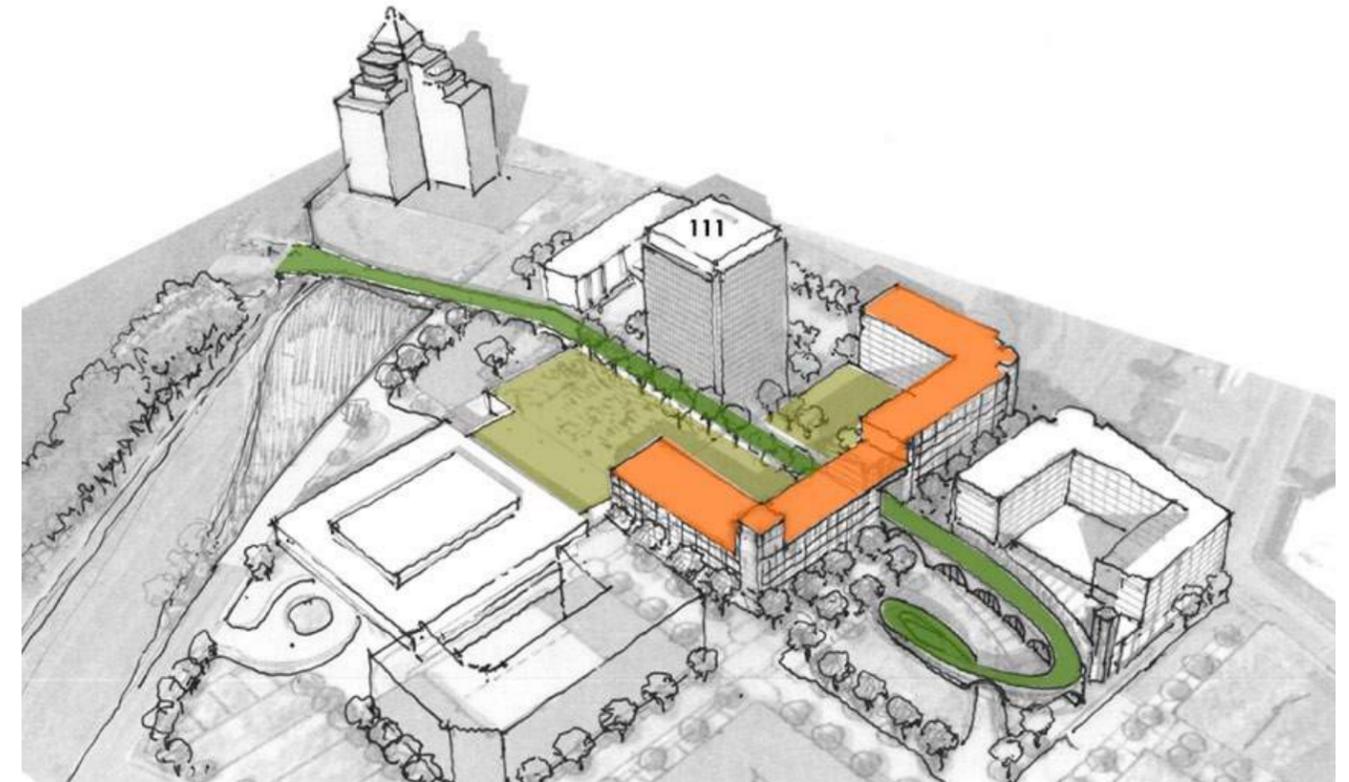
- Access from grade at the east of the site (via ramp or stair or elevator incorporated into new parking garage)
- Landscaped pathway eastward, atop new and refurbished parking deck and plaza
- An elevated bridge from the top deck of the existing parking garage, across East River Drive, and to the top of the river berm
- Future additional access to the link via ramps or stairs to East River Drive, 111 Founders and Hotel outside seating should be considered

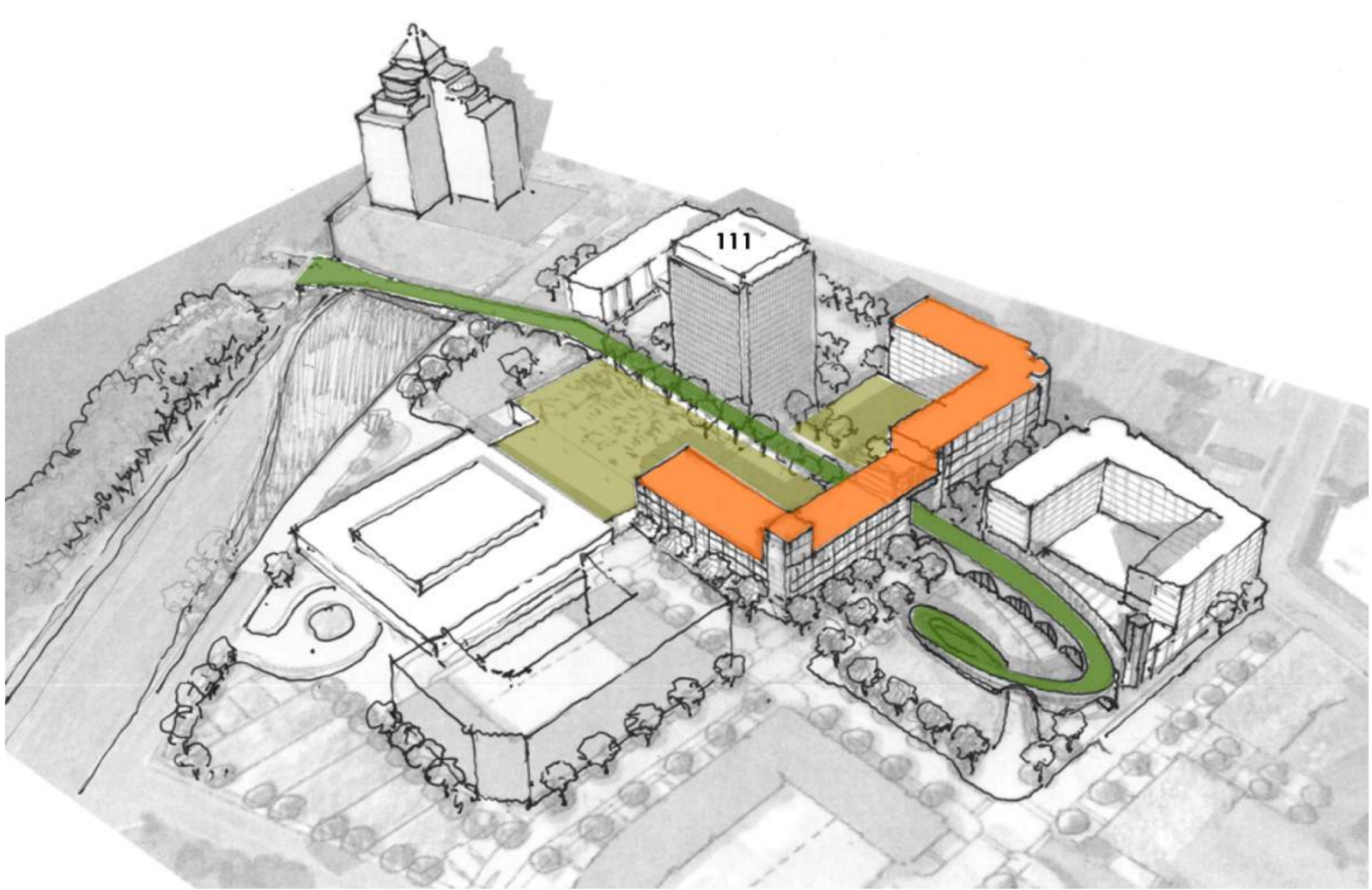
### VITAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

As discussed in Part E, the success for East Bank relies on key connections and planning accomplishments. Our recommended initial phase maintains a commitment to the master plan, with the understanding that this district will likely not be transformed in a single phase.

### PUBLIC-PRIVATE INVOLVEMENT

Attracting the interest of a qualified developer or investment partnership with the landowner is a prerequisite step, but public participation and funding is likely to be a critical factor in any initial phase, particularly in creating the parking density and common pedestrian link, in order to generate the needed momentum.







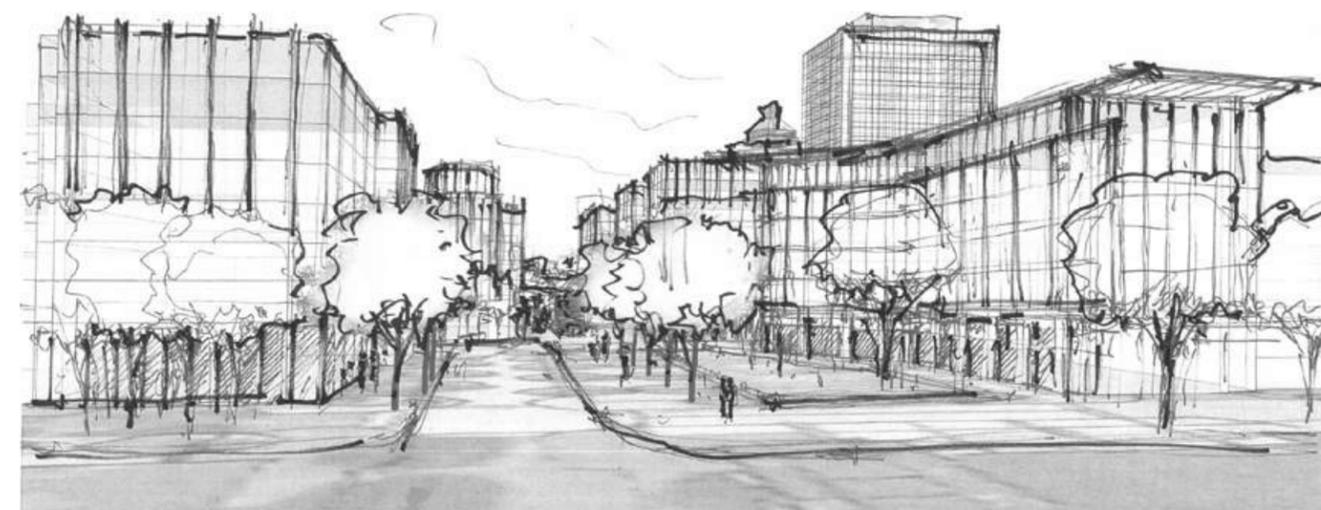
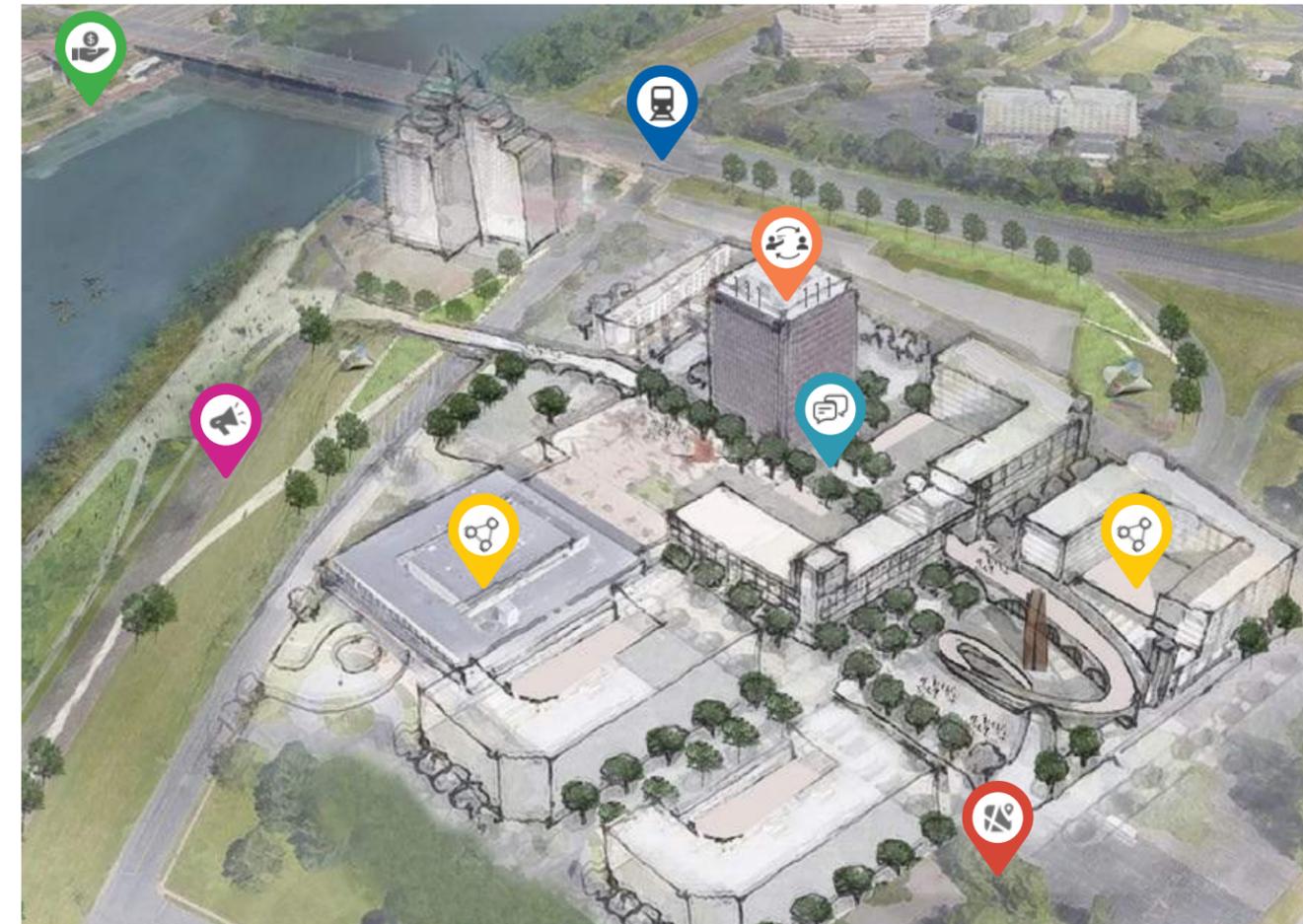
# G. RECOMMENDATIONS

THIS DEVELOPMENT PLAN, ALTHOUGH PRIMARILY FOCUSED ON THE SINGLE 12.6-ACRE SITE OF OPPORTUNITY, IS BASED UPON AN ASSESSMENT OF, AND VISION FOR THE ENTIRE FOUNDERS PLAZA RIVERFRONT DISTRICT. ACHIEVING THIS VISION IS A COMPLICATED UNDERTAKING REQUIRING THE PARTICIPATION OF MANY.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The current stakeholder group should take every opportunity to share their experiences, insight and commitment to East Bank, and engage others in a collaborative dialogue around collective goals, objectives, roles, and barriers. Success may rely on a well-coordinated phase 1 that overcomes past limitations, changes the paradigm, and sets the future plan in full motion. At the start, and to that end we offer the following recommendations:

- 
**Connect with Neighboring Property Owners:** Early engagement and collaborative dialogue with abutting and area occupants and owners can avoid misperceptions and resistance, and invite partnerships and support.
- 
**Solicit Private Developer Feedback:** The Development Plan establishes a block structure that can be built in one or multiple project phases with many developers. Discussions with real estate developers will bring insight to scale, salability, investment strategies, and risk. Such “market-sounding” meetings should involve at a minimum the current owner and Town of East Hartford leadership.
- 
**Revisit Zoning:** As previously outlined, the current regulations for the B-4 zone are inconsistent and in some cases conflict with the priorities in the 2014 PoCD and the vision defined for East Bank @ Founders. The Town of East Hartford has initiated a rewrite of zoning regulations. The planning team recommends prioritizing sections specific to the Founder Riverfront District, and giving developers the unique opportunity to offer feedback on the current and proposed language.
- 
**Establish a Support Structure:** Projects like this often involve many parties and interest groups with overlapping, even competing initiatives. To maintain clarity, consistent communication, and sure-handed decision making we recommend establishing a leadership consortium representing public and private stakeholders. The current representatives from First Merchant, Town of East Hartford, and CRDA is a great start. This group is poised to establish roles, objectives, beneficial new members, and protocol to maintain progress.
- 
**Funding:** Funding support will be critical in attracting lenders, investors and developers – especially for the initial project phases that must overcome costly infrastructure, parking and pedestrian connectivity solutions. Engaging the many potential sources of project-enabling funds early and in a coordinated fashion will give each agency insight into the overall impact collective support can have. Federal funding from Army Corps of Engineers, Connecticut DECD, CRDA, CT Innovations, OZ Tax Incentives, Municipal bonding and community grants, utility provider incentives, and even influential community leaders are all candidates worth pursuing.
- 
**Engage Public Transportation:** Linking this future population to existing alternative transportation such as CT Transit bus lines and CT Rail is a given, but beginning the conversation and early planning for a CT Fastrak stop at East Bank would legitimize the transformation, reduce the overall parking demand, and immediately enhance marketing and development opportunities.
- 
**Promote the Brand:** This masterplan must squash past experiences and perceptions and frame a new perspective, and fresh attitude about East Hartford's Riverfront District. This is a new frontier for the district. The name may change as the designs and players evolve, but establish a brand early and use it in every engagement to promote opportunity and tell the story of a new and dynamic urban lifestyle that is East Bank @ Founders.



East Bank @ Founders



## H. EXHIBITS

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*A. PROPERTY SURVEY, VHB - JULY 2019*

*B. UTILITY COMPANY CORRESPONDENCE*

*C. STRUCTURED PARKING ASSESSMENT FULL REPORT, SGH - OCTOBER 2019*

*D. HAZARDOUS MATERIALS REPORT, TERRACON - JULY 2019*