



CITY OF CONCORD

REPORT TO MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Matthew R. Walsh, Interim Deputy City Manager - Development

DATE: November 14, 2022

SUBJECT: I-93 Bow-Concord Widening Project – “Bridge Park” Concept

Recommendation:

Accept this report and inform City Administration as to whether the City Council wishes to explore a “bridge park”, or other pedestrian bridge concept, as it may pertain to the State of New Hampshire’s I-93 Bow-Concord Project.

Background:

In the early 2000s, the NH Department of Transportation (“NHDOT”) began planning and permitting work for the widening of Interstate 93 located between the junction of Interstate 89 in Bow to approximately Exit 15 in Concord (the “Project”). The Project became known as the I-93 Bow-Concord Project.

The advent of the Project was the primary catalyst for the City’s 2006 Opportunity Corridor Master Plan (the “Plan”). The Plan served as the City’s policy statement to the NHDOT concerning Concord’s hopes and aspirations for the I-93 Bow-Concord Project.

NHDOT’s work on the I-93 Bow-Concord Project has been somewhat sporadic. However, the NHDOT recently refocused on the Project. Over the past few months, the NHDOT held a series of meetings with the Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce, the City’s Transportation Policy Advisory Committee (“TPAC”), and City Council. The purpose of these meetings was to reintroduce the Project to the community for the purposes of securing public input on key design details related thereto.

Discussion:

During the aforementioned community meetings, members of the public expressed interest in having the I-93 Bow-Concord Project include a “bridge park”. The “park” would be an elevated platform constructed over the I-93 rights-of-way intended for passive recreational activities, and pedestrian connectivity between Downtown and the Heights.

The concept of a “bridge park” was included in the City’s 2006 Opportunity Corridor Master Plan. The concept was expressly predicated on the following:

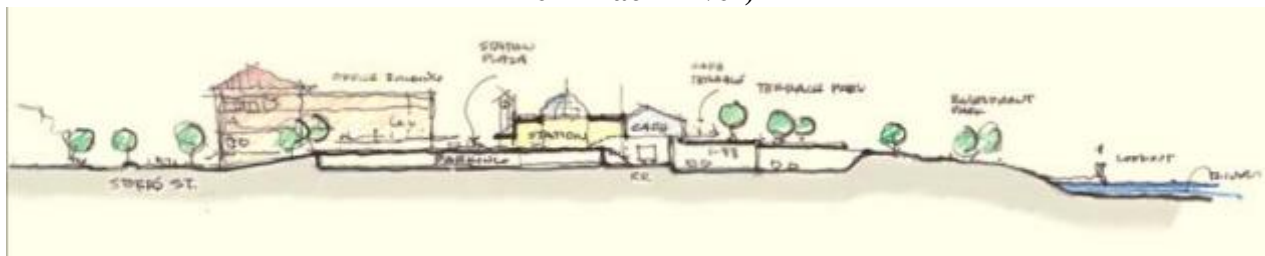
- A. That the Brixmor Shopping Plaza (a.k.a. Burlington Coat-Market Basket Plaza) located on Storrs Street would be acquired and demolished by the State to facilitate the interstate widening project. The acquisition and demolition of the Plaza was envisioned for the purpose of relocating the highway westerly away from the Merrimack River, thus advancing environmental and recreational interests related thereto.
- B. That the Brixmor Plaza, together with State of NH Liquor facility and CSX Rail Yard, would be redeveloped to a large mixed-use development. Said development as envisioned to include a new multimodal transportation center complete with rail station in anticipation of future highspeed passenger rail service to Concord;
- C. That the large electrical substation near the “Ralph Pill” building, and associated aerial transmission lines parallel to I-93, would be relocated away from the I-93 corridor;
- D. That the elevation of I-93 would be depressed to facilitate an aerial crossing for Loudon Road over the highway, as well as the bridge park and related improvements. Specifically, depressing the elevation of the highway was critical for the bridge park in order to maintain bridge clearances for the highspeed rail corridor (22’ clear) and the interstate highway.

These concepts from the 2006 Opportunity Corridor Master Plan are depicted in the graphics below. **It is important to note that none of these design parameters required to make these concepts viable are included in the NHDOT’s current vision for the I-93 Widening Project.**

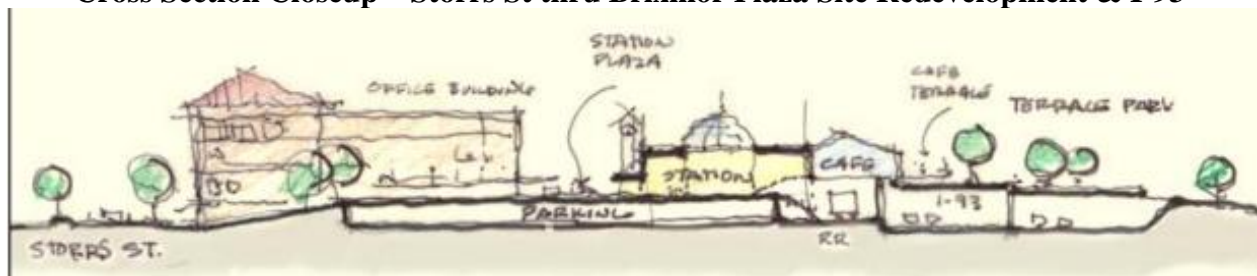
Graphic #1 – 2006 Concept. Redeveloped Brixmor Plaza & Adjacent Parcels Bridge Park (“Terrain Park”) over I-93. Includes Depressing Elevation of I-93 and Relocating I-93 Away from River



Cross Sectional View (Storrs Street thru Brixmor Site Redevelopment to I-93 & Merrimack River)

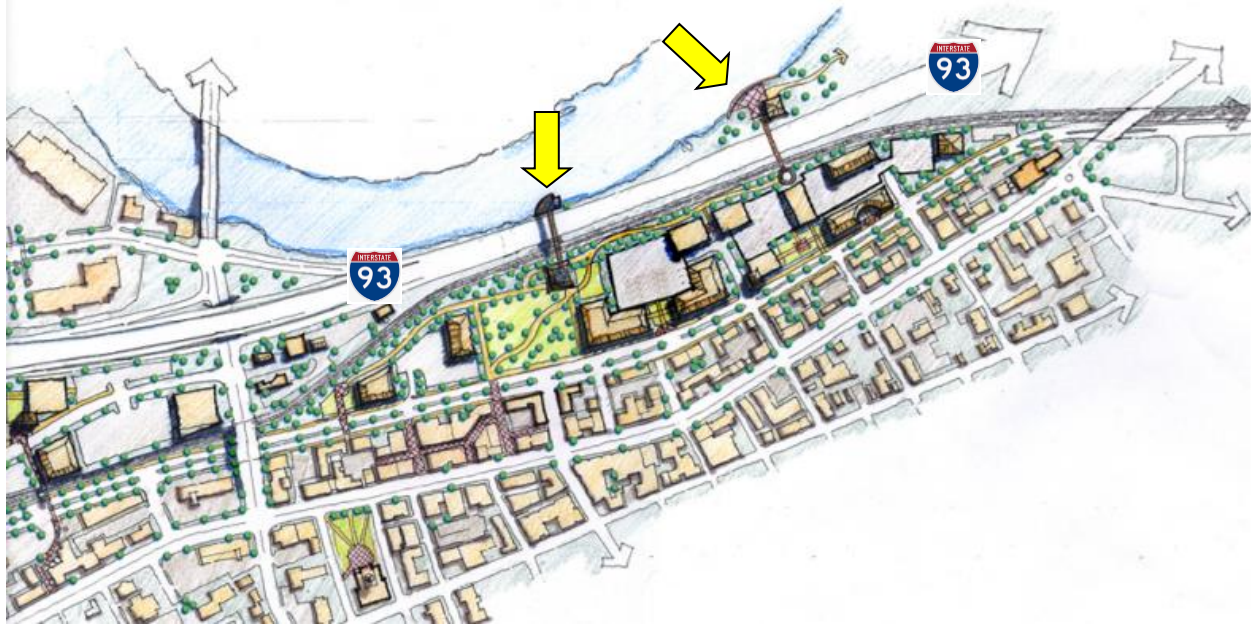


Cross Section Closeup – Storrs St thru Brixmor Plaza Site Redevelopment & I-93



In addition, the City's 2006 Opportunity Corridor Master Plan also explored pedestrian bridges across the I-93 Corridor, as shown below, in lieu of a "bridge park". However, these concepts were also predicated on some of the same basic design factors required for the bridge park, which are no longer incorporated into the NHDOT's preferred widening strategy.

Graphic #2: 2006 Concept. Redeveloped Brixmor Plaza & Adjacent Parcels with Pedestrian Bridges. Excludes Depressing Elevation of I-93 or Relocating I-93 Westerly from Merrimack River



Graphic #3: 2006 Concept. Redeveloped Brixmor Plaza & Adjacent Parcels with Pedestrian Bridge. Includes Depressing Elevation of I-93 and Relocating I-93 Westerly from Merrimack River



The lack of viability of these analyses within the context of the I-93 Bow-Concord Project, as presently envisioned by the State, is why renovations to the Loudon Road Bridge are being designed to include a 14' +/- wide pedestrian pathway to facilitate future extension of the

Merrimack River Greenway Trail as well as pedestrian connectivity between Downtown and the Heights. Design of said improvements to the Loudon Road Bridget are getting underway.

With these considerations in mind, should the City Council wish to revisit and further evaluate the concept of a bridge park, or other pedestrian bridge concepts through the I-93 Corridor, City Administration would solicit proposals from the City's on-call engineering consultants for the purpose of engaging one of said firms to:

1. Identify and evaluate one or more potentially suitable locations for a bridge park, or other pedestrian bridge, over the highspeed rail corridor and I-93, generally between Exit 13 and 14, to connect Downtown to the Merrimack River;
2. Develop concept plans for said structures, including profiles (cross sectional views) of said structure, together with layout plans, drawings and renderings therewith;
3. Develop plans demonstrating how said structure(s) would connect to Storrs Street, to the Merrimack River, and Loudon Road (if viable);
4. Identify private property acquisitions and major infrastructure improvements that would be necessitated to make such structure(s) feasible;
5. Develop preliminary cost estimates for each concept.

Upon receiving proposals, staff would return to City Council to seek an appropriation to fund said studies.