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## Towards Civic Brutalism

Daniel Abramson

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# Daniel Abramson

Director of Architectural Studies, Boston University



Moving Forward:

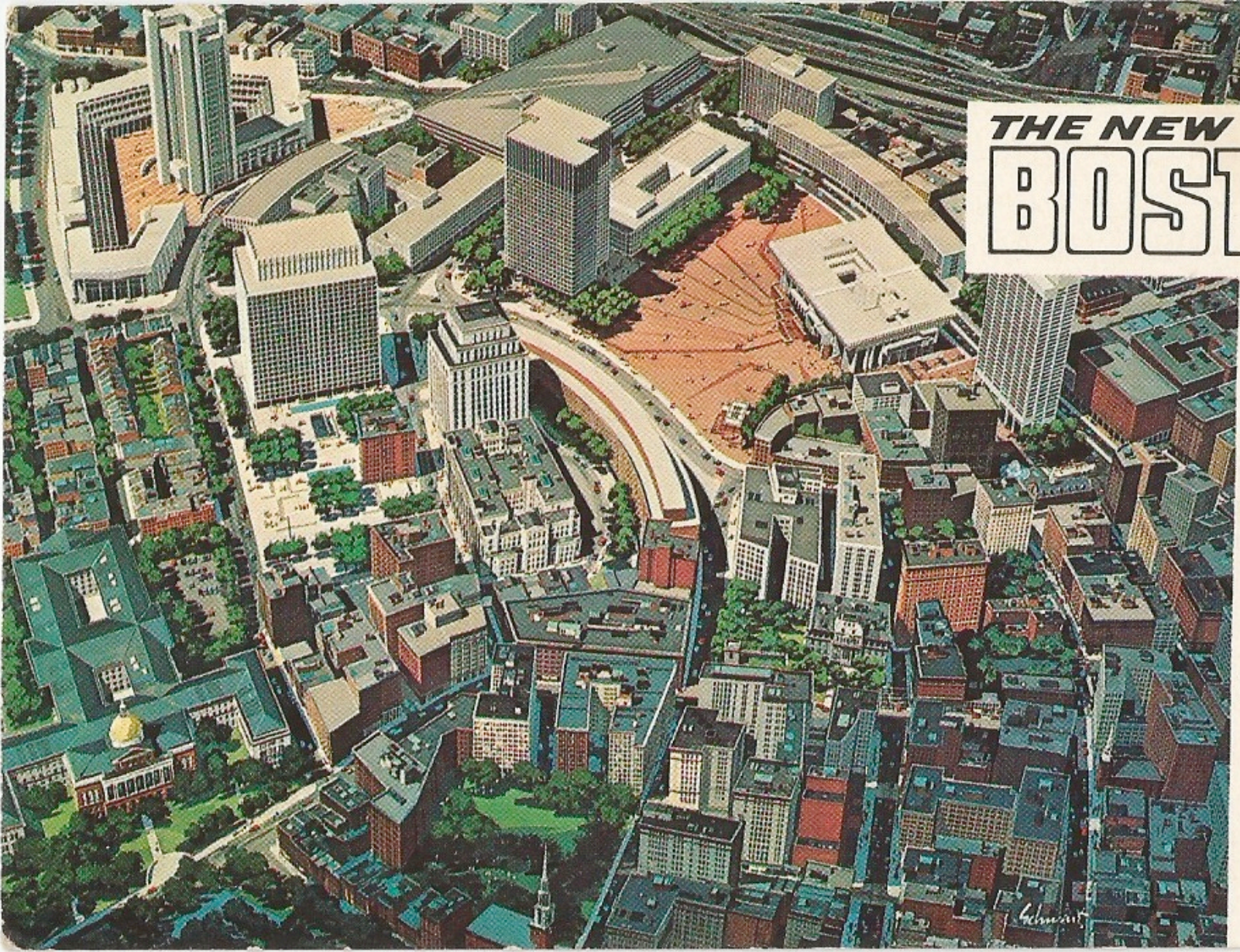
# Towards Civic Brutalism

Daniel M. Abramson  
*Boston University*

23 October 2021







**THE NEW**  
**BOSTON**  **N**

THE  
NEW  
GOVERNMENT  
CENTER  
•  
BOSTON  
MASSACHUSETTS

Government Center, Boston, 1957-72





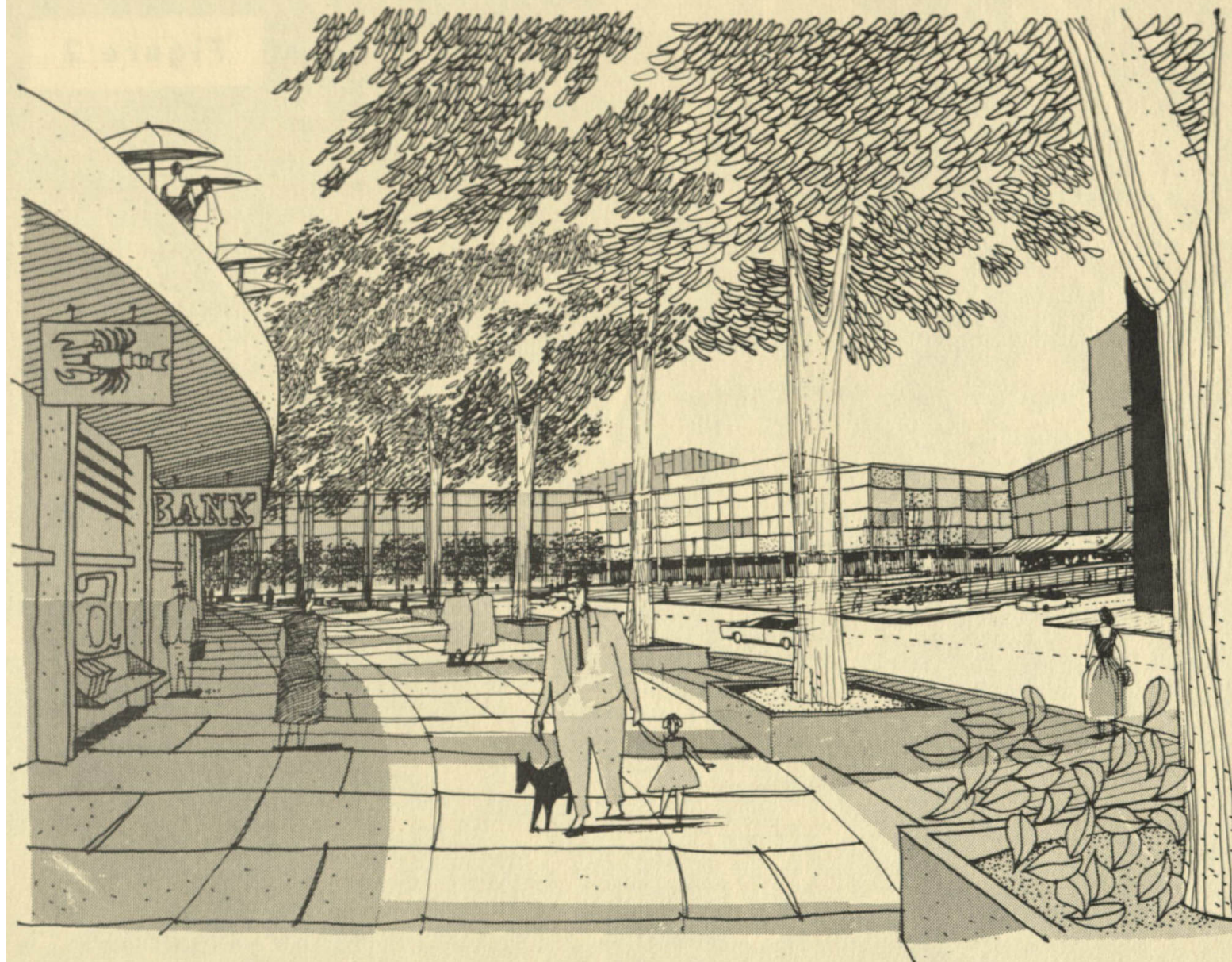


Boston City Hall



Massachusetts State Service Center: Lindemann Center (left), Hurley Building (right)





Approaching the square  
from Tremont Street

Civic Square, Government Center preliminary master plan, 1959

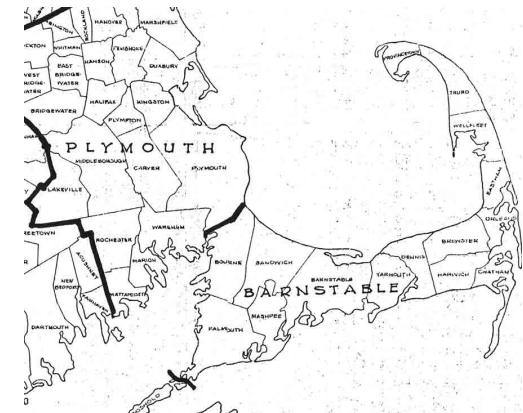




Boston City Hall



Massachusetts State Service Center: Lindemann Center (left), Hurley Building (right)







“

**Red Brick Tundra...  
Windswept Desert.**

- BOSTON HERALD 2016

**A howling concrete void...more than  
8 acres of windswept emptiness.**

- BOSTON MAGAZINE 2016

**A failure...bleak, expansive,  
and shapeless.**

- PROJECT FOR PUBLIC SPACES HALL OF SHAME 2002

”





Massachusetts State Service Center: Lindemann Mental Health Center (left)

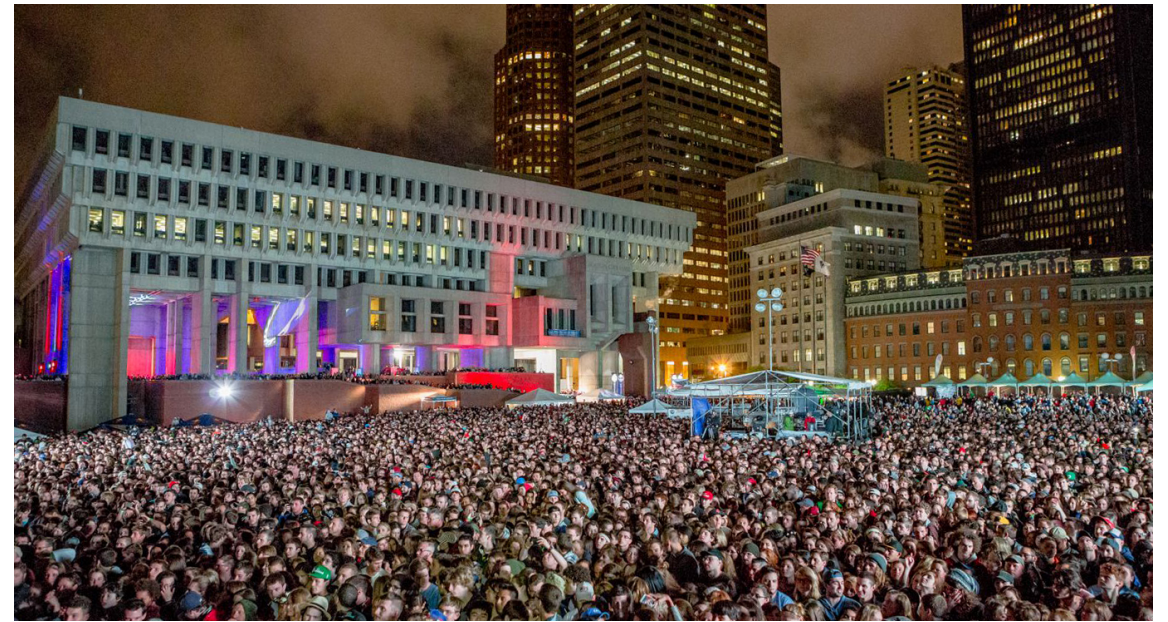
“I love this building”  
“The building is strong, clean! It helps me to be healthy.”  
“You know when they say, ‘You’re so ugly, you’re beautiful’? The building’s like that. It’s so ugly, it’s beautiful”

Robert Desjarlais, *Shelter Blues: Sanity and Selfhood Among the Homeless* (1997)





1970s-80s: tens of thousands at concerts and championships



“That building over there gets a bad rap . . . but from here it looks beautiful.”

*Boston Calling Music Festival, 2013*



Boston Winter, 2016-17

“I will fight anyone who says it’s not a beautiful building.”

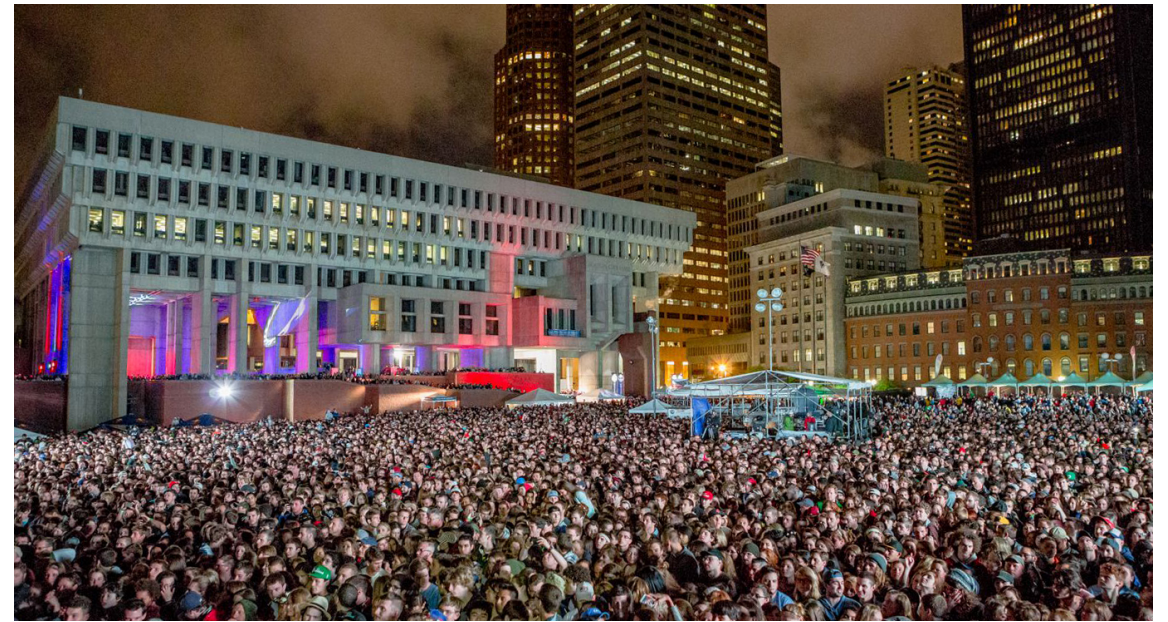
City Hall Councilor Michelle Wu, 2021







1970s-80s: tens of thousands at concerts and championships



“That building over there gets a bad rap . . . but from here it looks beautiful.”



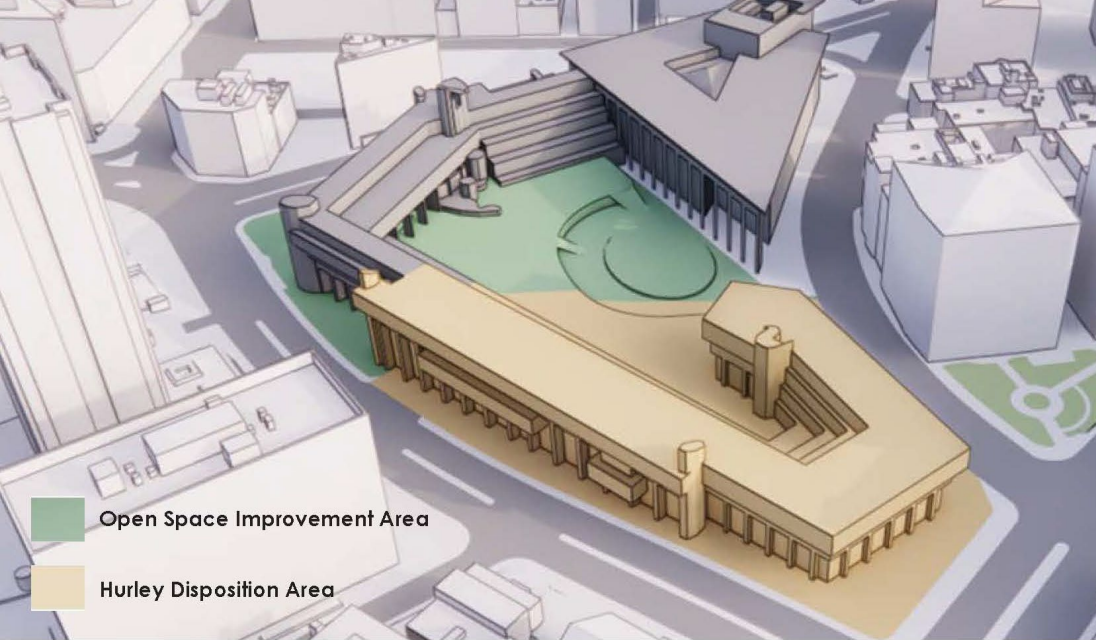
Boston Winter, 2016-17



HUBWeek, 2017-18







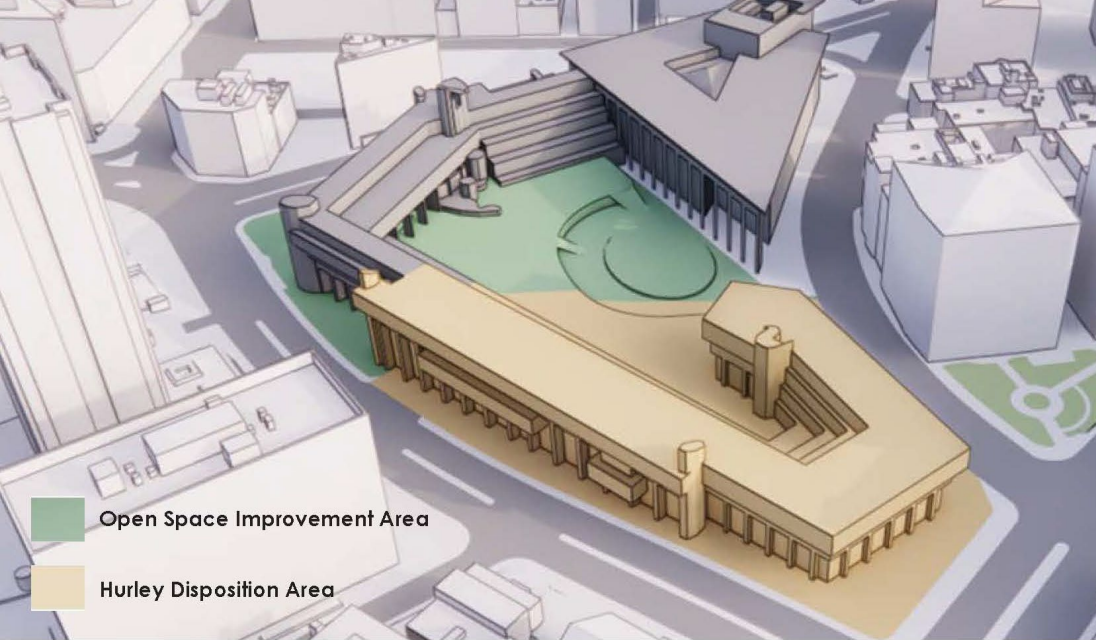
Hurley Building Redevelopment design guidelines, 2020



Boston City Hall Plaza Renovation, 2017-22







Hurley Building Redevelopment design guidelines, 2020



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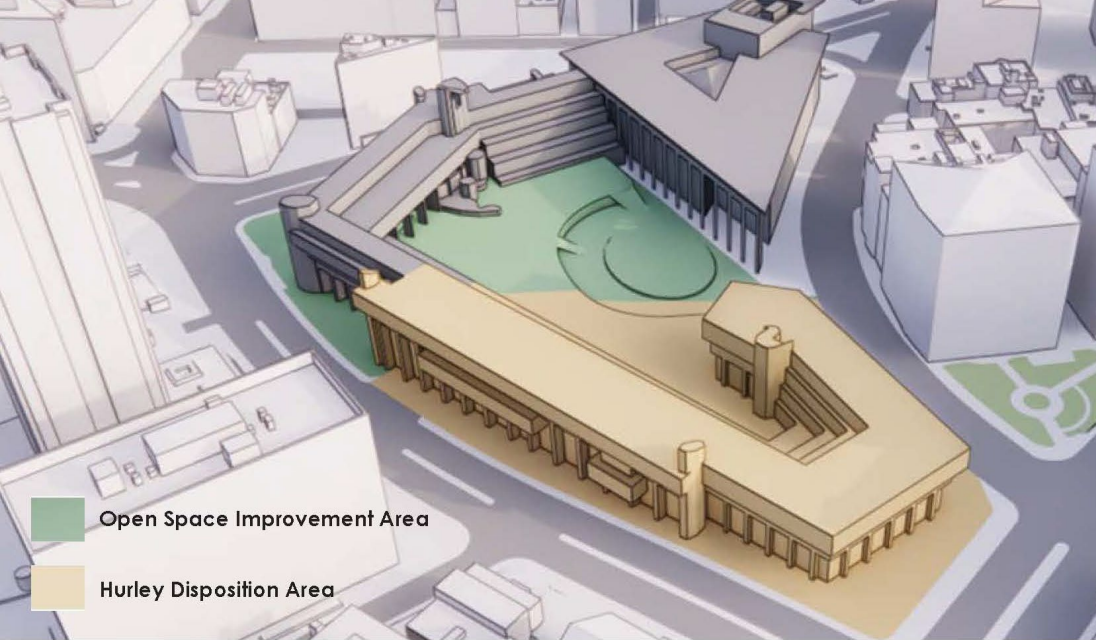
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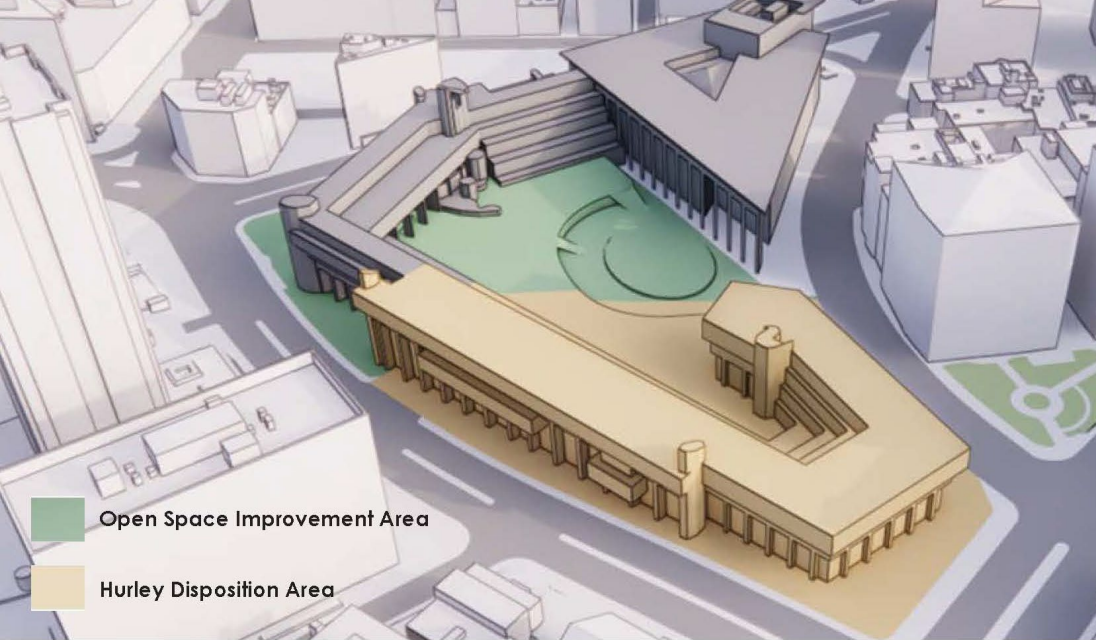


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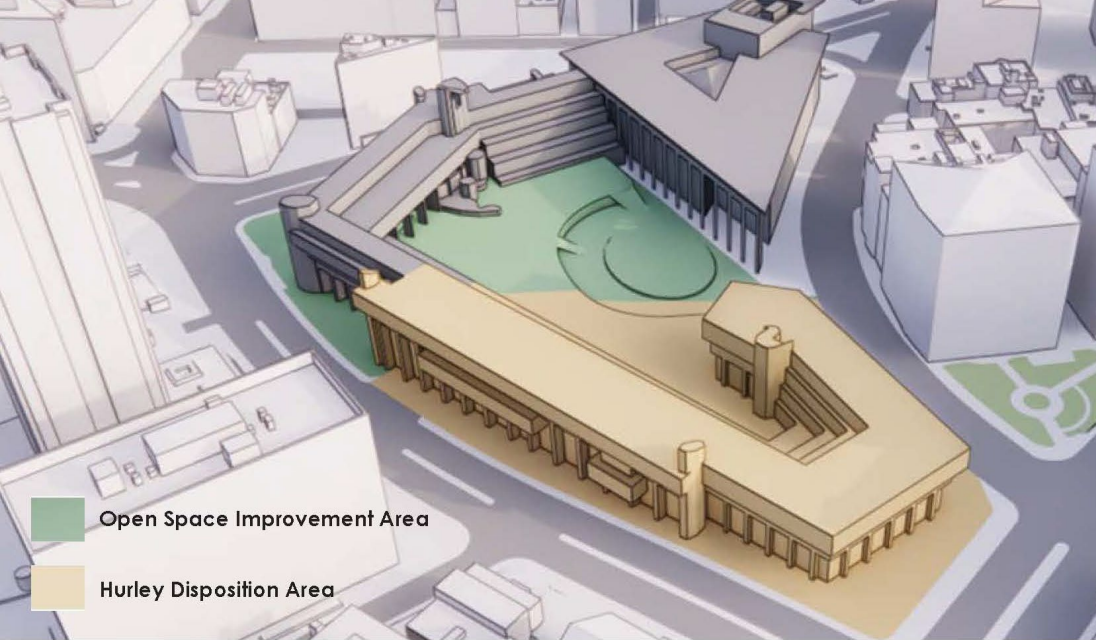


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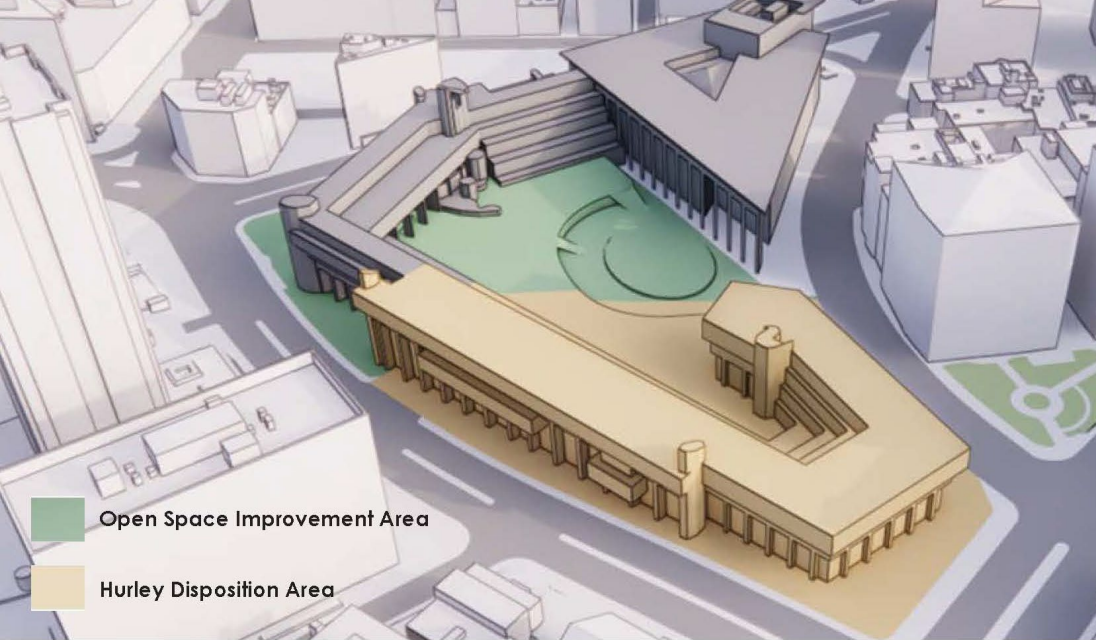


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activate citizenship

