



Route 7/15 NORWALK



PAC Landscape Subcommittee

November 21, 2019



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PAC Landscape Subcommittee
November 21, 2019
CTDOT State Project #102-358

Purpose of Meeting

- Section 106 Meeting Follow-up
- Review methodology of landscape assessment in the Environmental Document

WHY
ARE
WE
HERE?





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AGENDA

1. Introductions
2. Section 106 Consulting Parties Meeting
3. Phase I/II Public Report Revisions
4. Landscape: Past Guiding Principles
5. Existing Project Corridor Visual Environment
6. Proposed Approach for Evaluation of Alternatives
7. Next Steps



Section 106 Consulting Parties Meeting





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Consulting Parties meeting (May 2019)

- Provided overview of above-ground cultural resources
- Presented overview of archaeological resources
- Consulting Parties provided feedback





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What We Heard

- Provide insights into how the previous project compared to current alternatives
- Need to expand cultural landscape inventory/documentation
 - To inform design (when time comes)
 - Characteristics are integrated going forward



Phase I/II Public Report Revisions





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Revisions to the Phase I/II Public Report

- VIAA/APE development
- Air quality, traffic & vibration impacts
- National Register status of Silvermine Avenue district
- Expanded inventory of historic character-defining landscape features and integrity
- Developed proposed assessment criteria for design alternatives





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Revisions to the Phase I/II Public Report (cont.)

Expanded inventory of Merritt Parkway's historic character-defining features:

- Roadway Width
- Alignment
- Views
- Bridges
- Medians and verges
- Plantings
- Signage
- Guiderails





Landscape: Past Guiding Principles

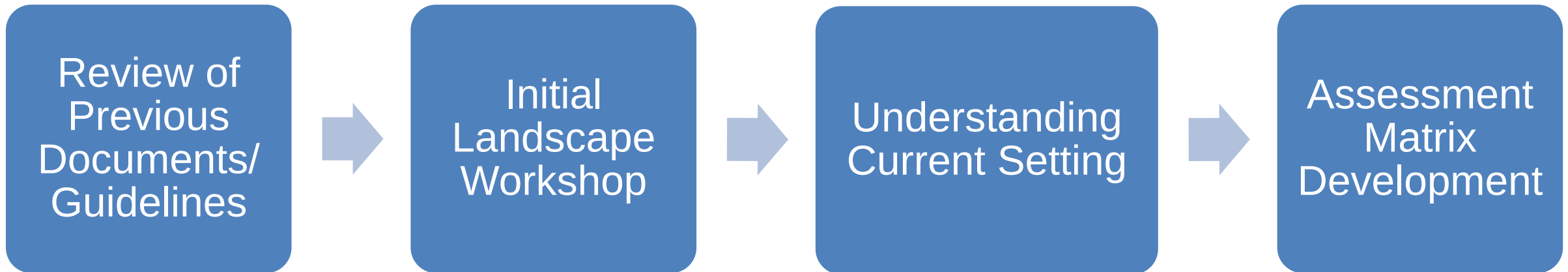




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Criteria Process Development





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Guiding Documents

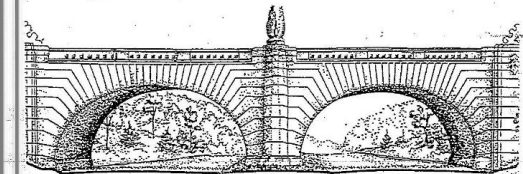
- Merritt Parkway Guidelines
- Merritt Parkway Landscape Master Plan
- Merritt Parkway Conservation and Restoration Plan: Bridge Restoration Guide



**A LANDSCAPE MASTER PLAN
FOR THE MERRITT PARKWAY**

MERRITT PARKWAY GUIDELINES

For
General Maintenance
and
Transportation Improvements



Prepared by:
The Merritt Parkway Working Group
June 1994



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Merritt Parkway Landscape Master Plan (1994)

Re-establish the quality of the landscape as it existed at the Parkway's peak (*in the 1950's and 60's*). To achieve a park-like quality...





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Master Plan (1994) | Design Goals

- Reinforce and re-establish the **variety and modulation of the spatial experience** by contrasting the mature forest with open lawns and meadows.
- Manipulate both **terminating and leading views** through screening, framing, and filtering by the addition of mass vegetation in some instances and thinning or removing overgrown vegetation in others.
- Provide **additional vegetation** to further enhance the vertical and horizontal alignment of the roadway and further enhance areas of overhead canopy.
- Bring the landscape closer to the Parkway edge while recognizing the required **standard of safety**.
- Keep **new plantings** in context with the **surrounding landscape character** and plant communities to provide **consistency** across the entire right-of-way and the median.
- Provide **seasonal color** through the massing of plants.
- Provide for a **consistent treatment** for the median including plant material, grasses, barriers, and guiderails.
- Provide **consistency in detailing**, signage, and other elements **contributing to the landscape**.



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Landscape Workshop (September 2018)





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What we heard

Most appealing

- Views of the natural environment and unique architecture, traffic calming effect of the Parkway and the plant variety and visibility

Least appealing

- Glover Avenue Apartments and the existing construction staging areas along with non-original bridges

Most important features

- Views, bridges, scale and natural resources



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Existing Project Corridor Visual Environment



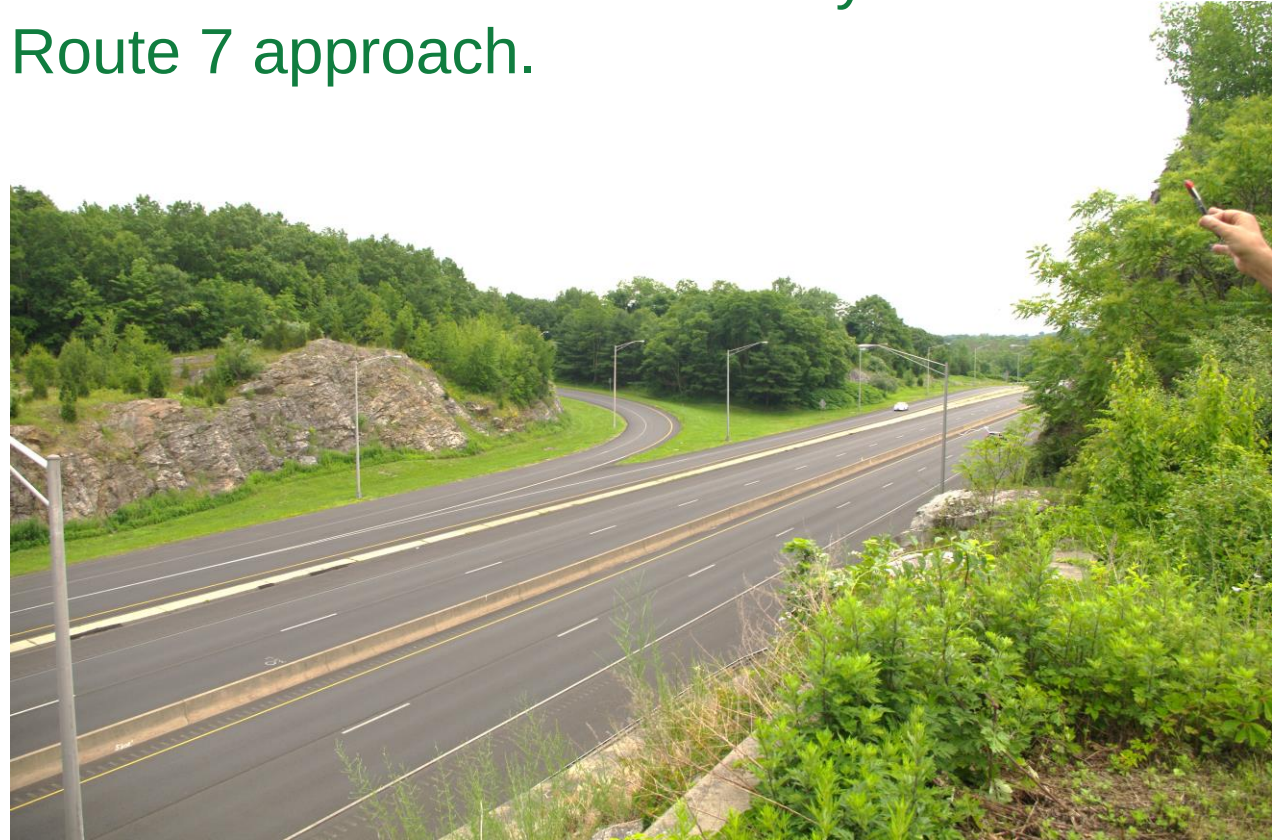
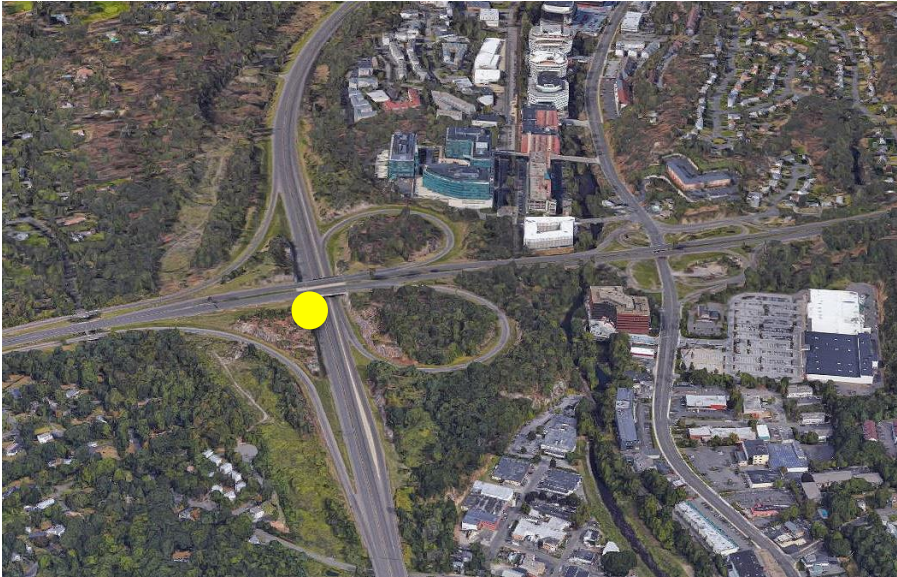


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Existing Setting

Positive attributes on Parkway exit and Route 7 approach.

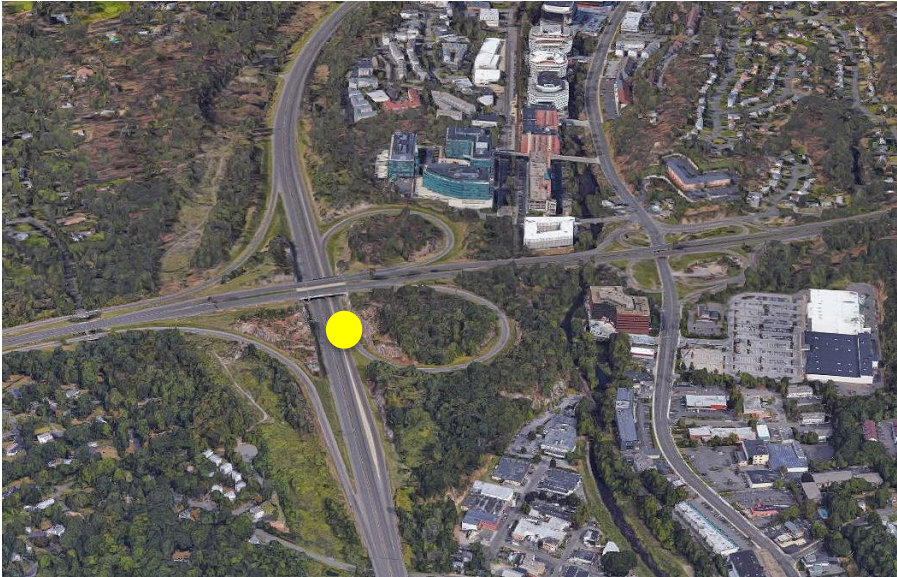




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Existing Setting



Parkway bridge lacks Parkway attributes.





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Existing Setting



Parkway bridge and access ramp approach lack Parkway attributes.

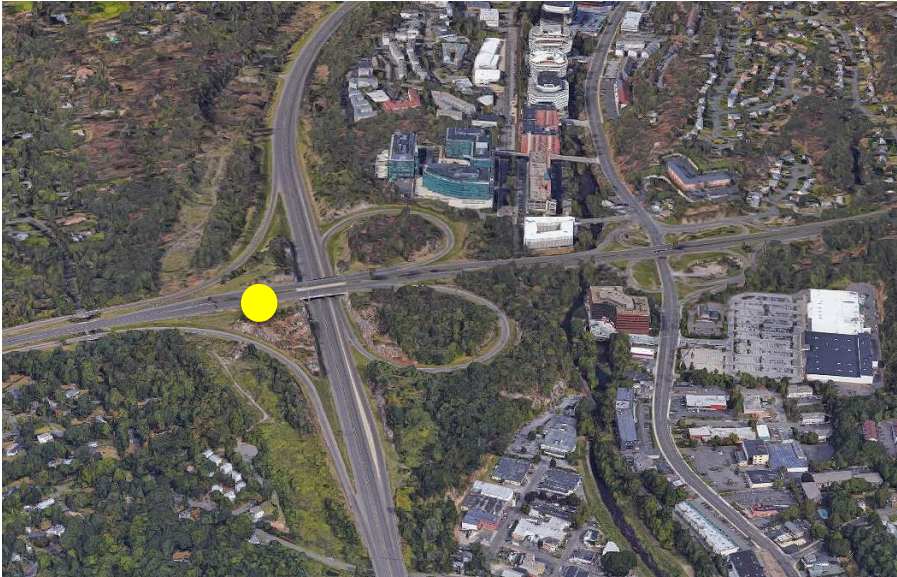




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Existing Setting



Non-characteristic amenities and overhead signage.

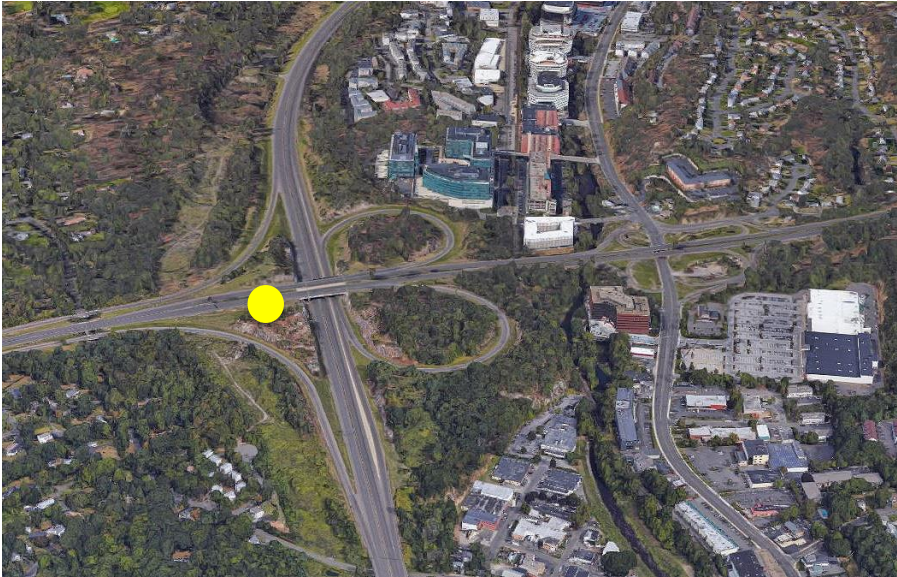




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Existing Setting



Distinctive outcrop and vegetation.

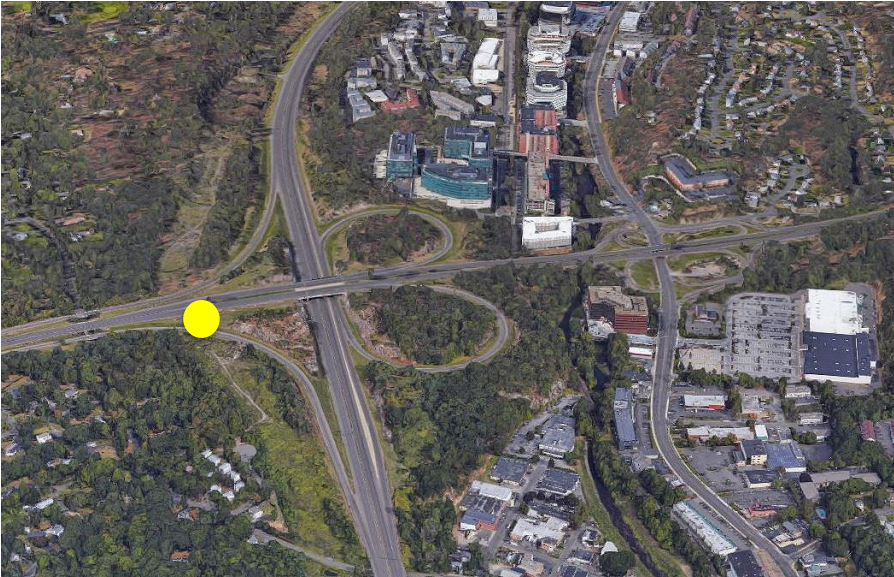




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Existing Setting



Lack of buffer. Overhead signage.

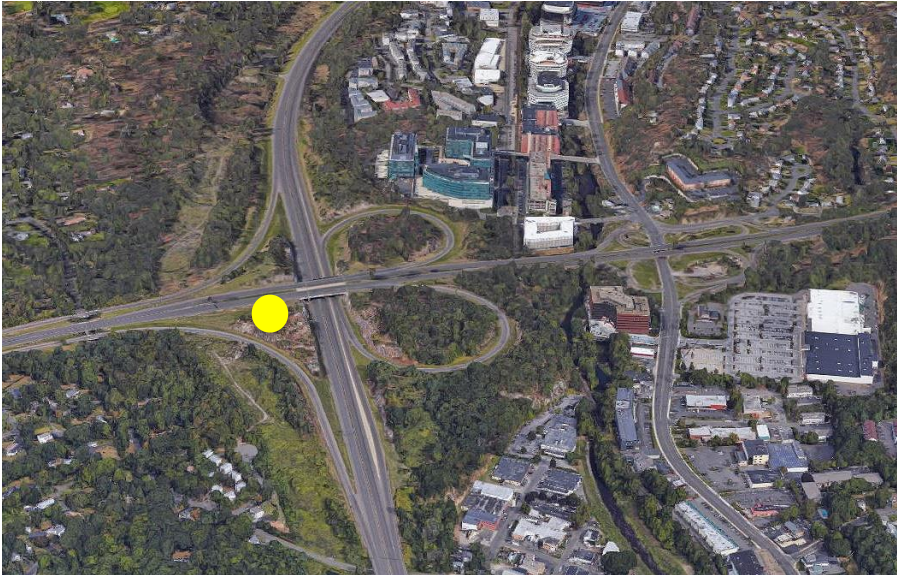




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Existing Setting



Utility corridor landscape maintenance.
Imposing signage and lighting.

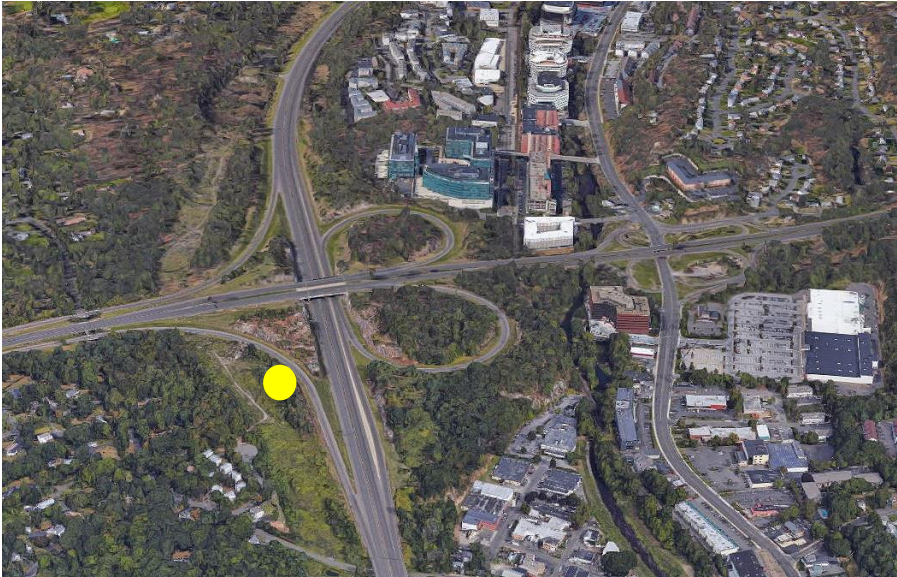




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Existing Setting



Ledge characterizes the Parkway/Route 7 interchange.





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Existing Setting



Topography constrains maintenance access. View of Parkway bridge is obstructed.

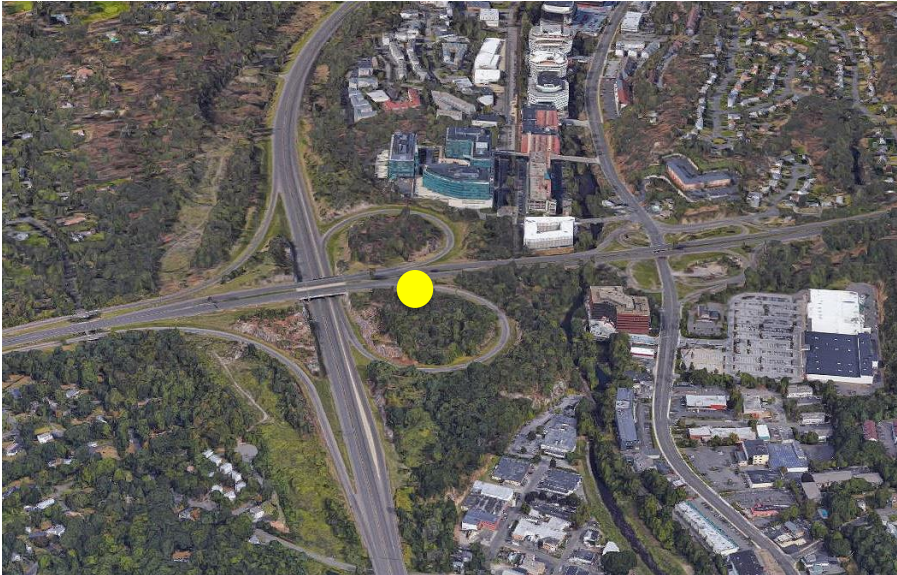




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Existing Setting



Modern light fixtures visible from Parkway. Ramp proximity to Parkway. Lack Parkway amenities.

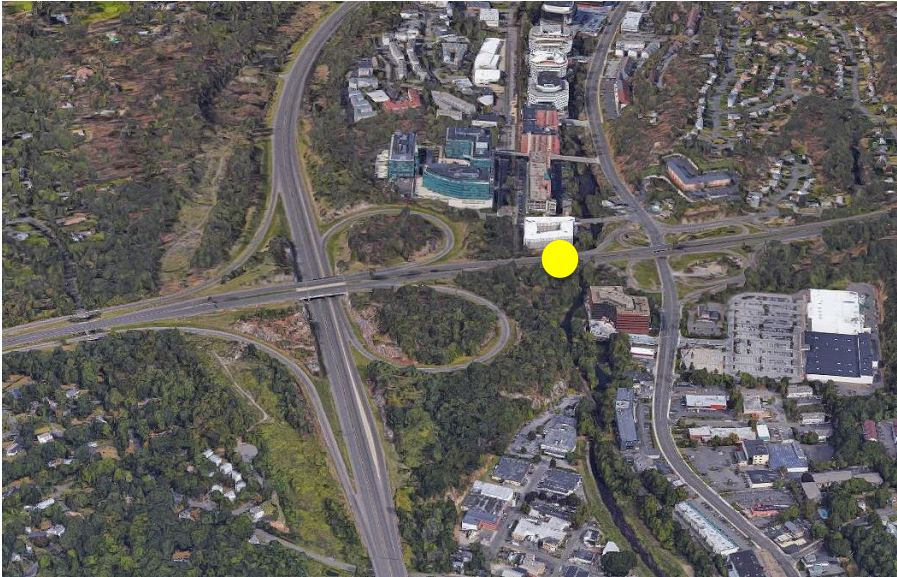




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Existing Setting



Compromised view of Parkway bridge.

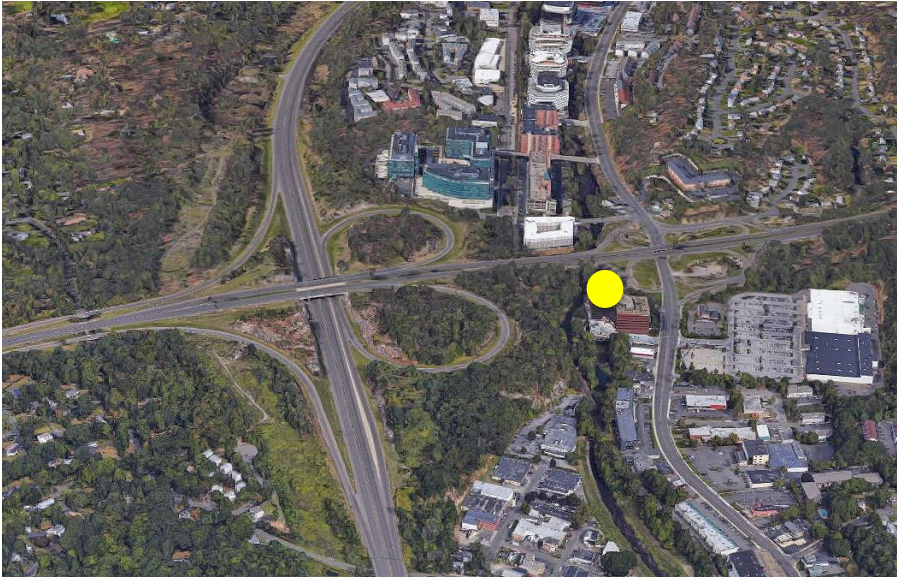




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Existing Setting



Diminished landscape.

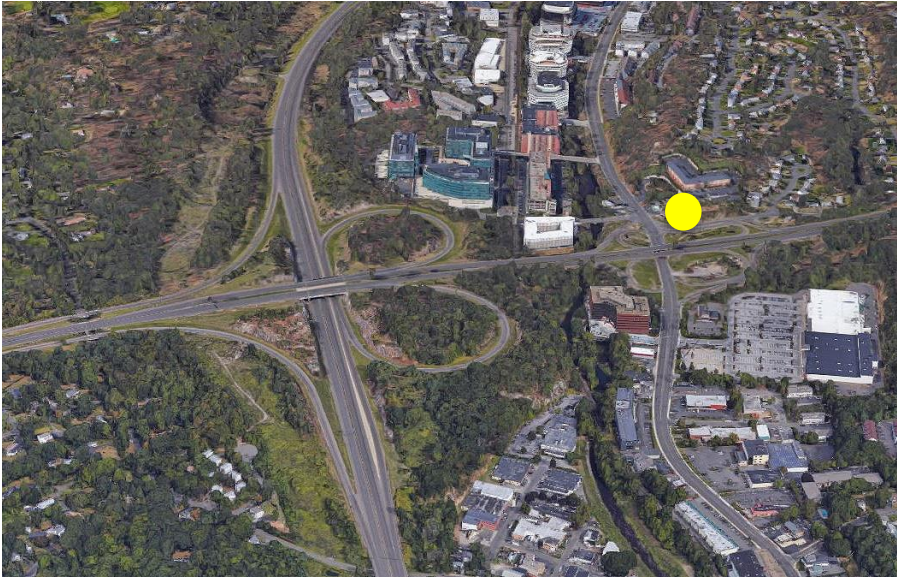




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Existing Setting



Cluttered intersection. Favorable landscape and slope on bridge approach..

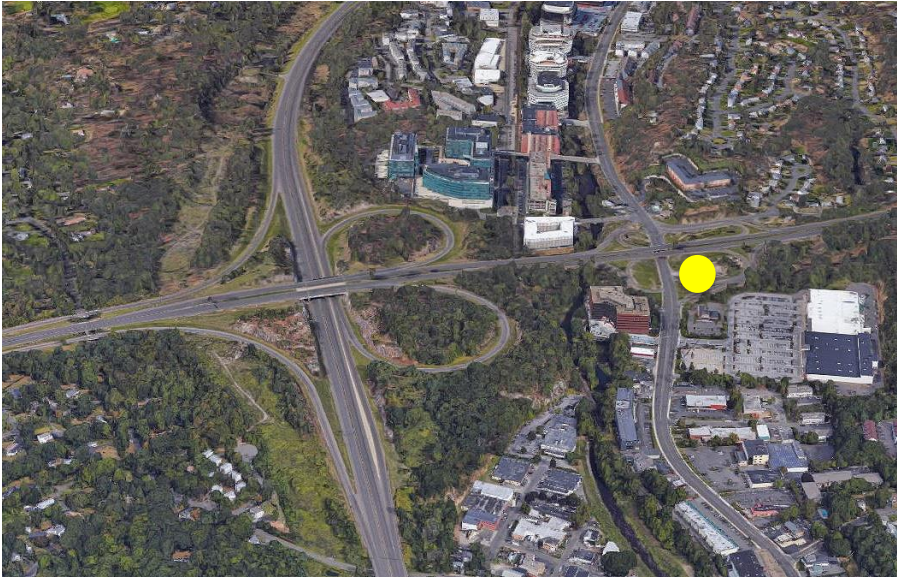




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Existing Setting



Staging area imposes on Parkway. Diminished landscape on Parkway surrounds.



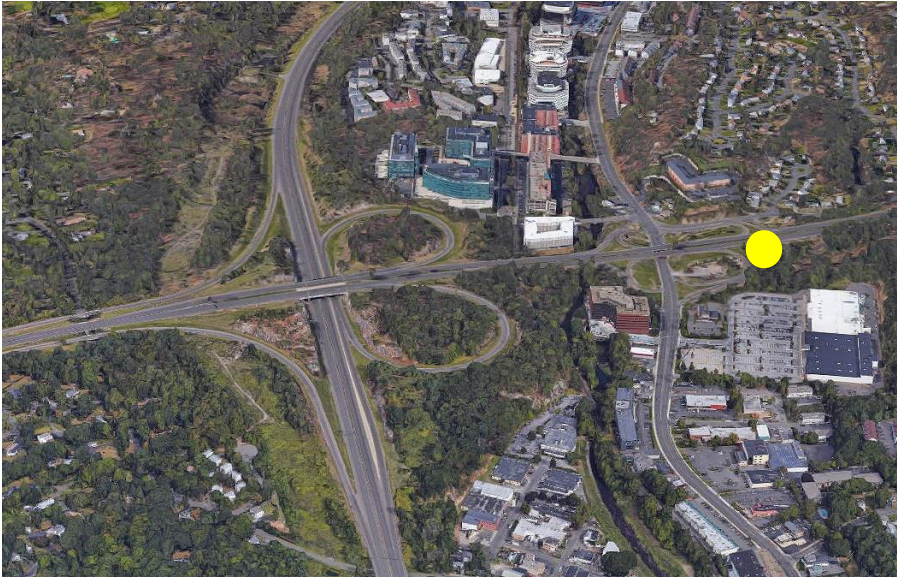


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Existing Setting

Depleted plant massing.





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Existing Setting



Development encroachment. Buffers diminished.





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Existing Setting

Landscape enclosure. Access constrained to steep slopes in right-of-way.



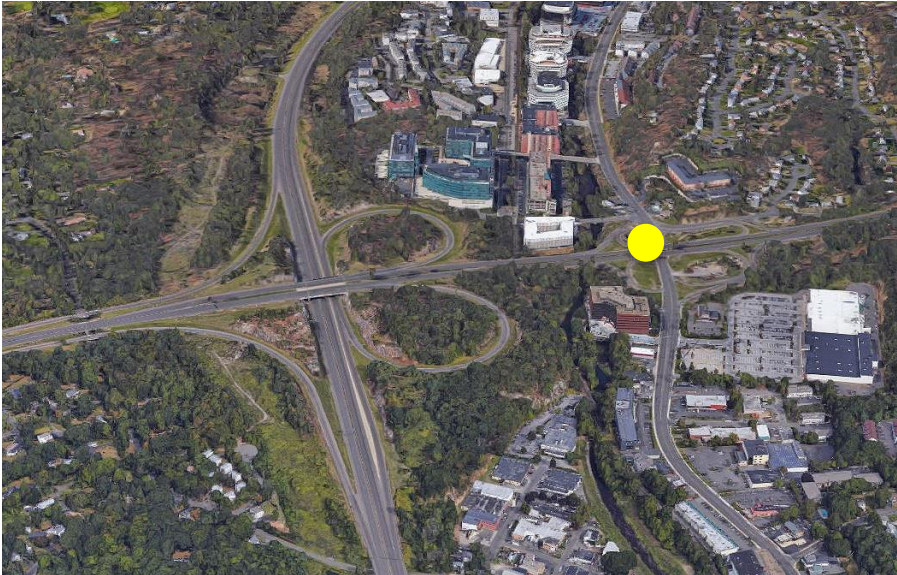


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Existing Setting

Commercial encroachment. Lack of buffer.

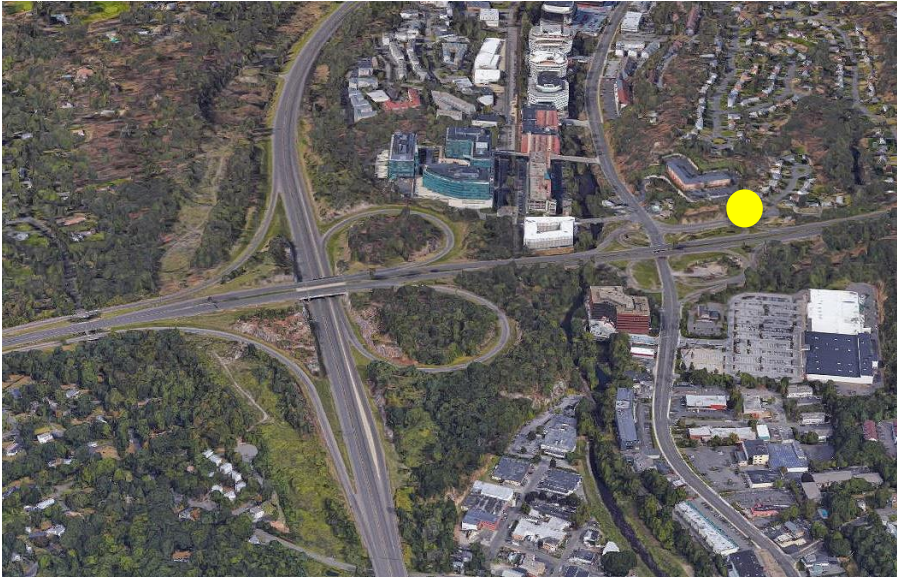




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Existing Setting



Invasive vegetation and imposing overhead utilities.

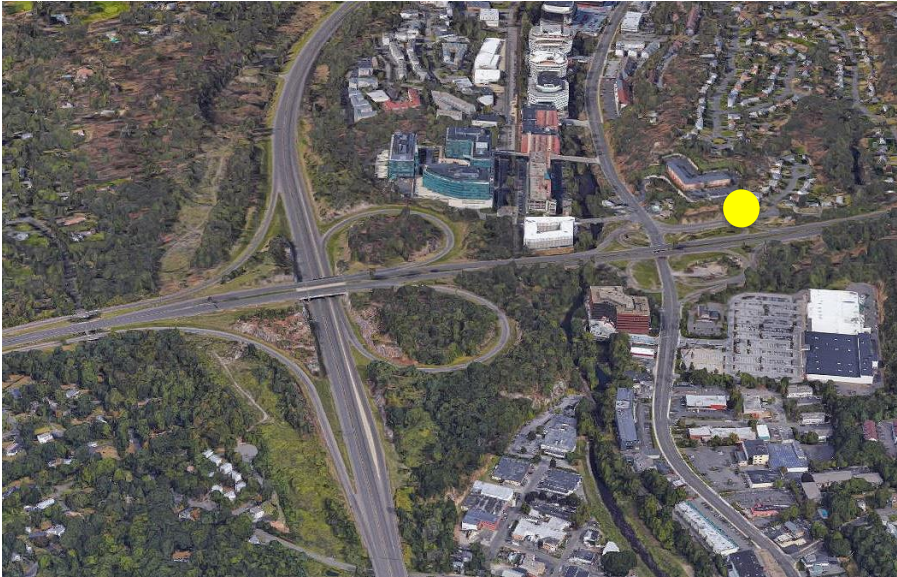




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Existing Setting



Deciduous buffer with invasive species.

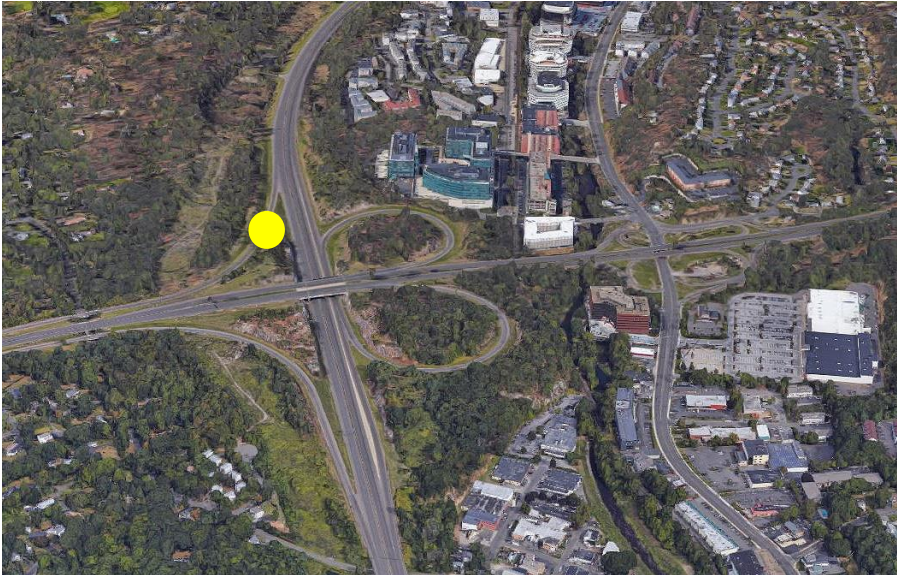




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Existing Setting



Characteristic landscape attributes on
Parkway access ramp.

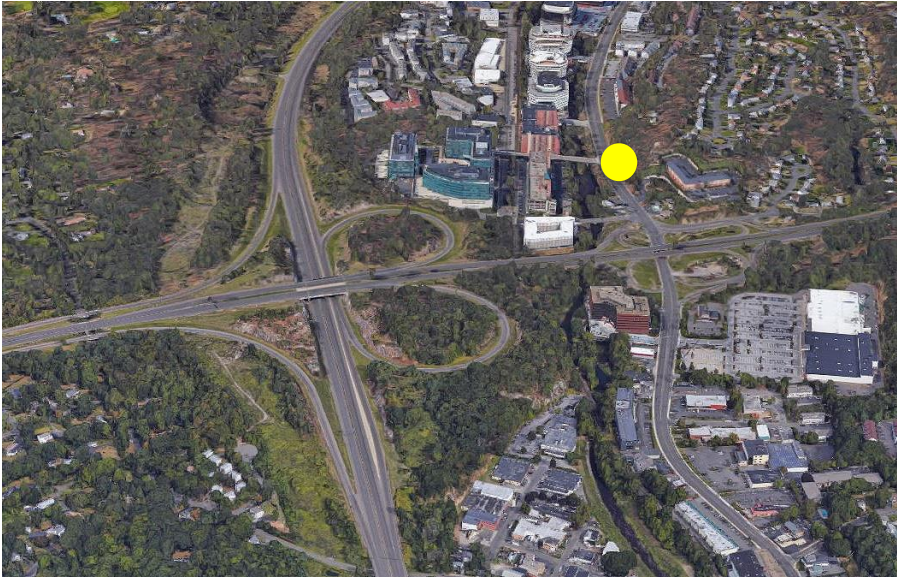




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Existing Setting



Parkway bridge approach lacks distinction.

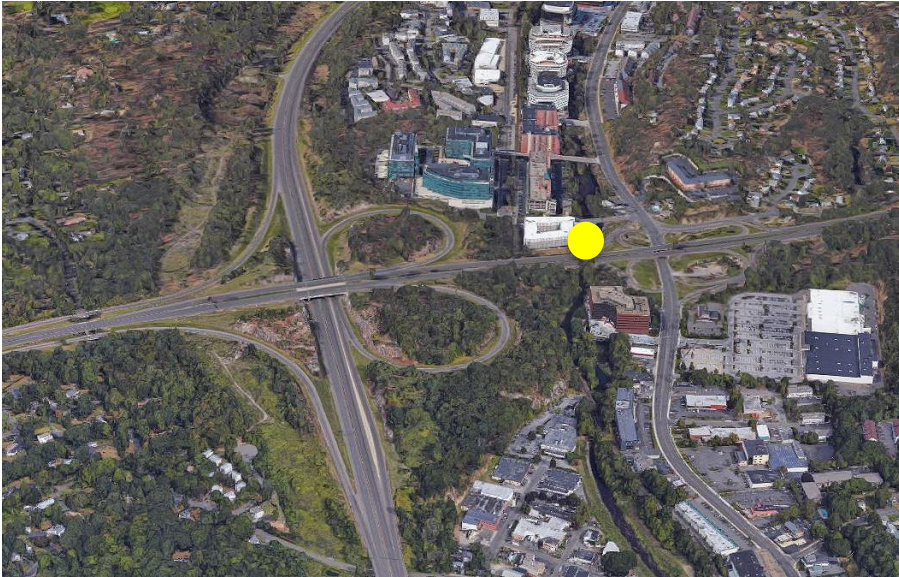




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Existing Setting



Access for maintenance constrained.

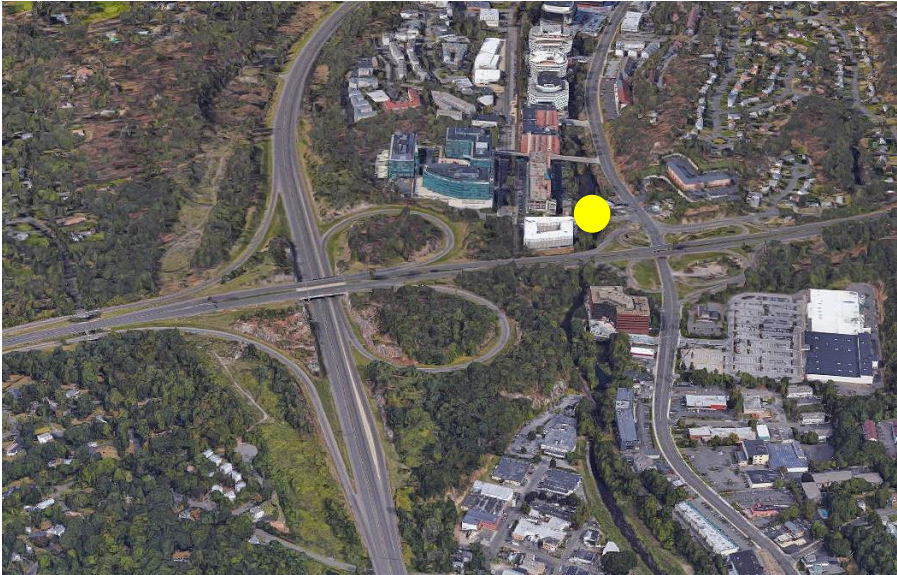




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Existing Setting



Obscured view of Norwalk River Bridge.



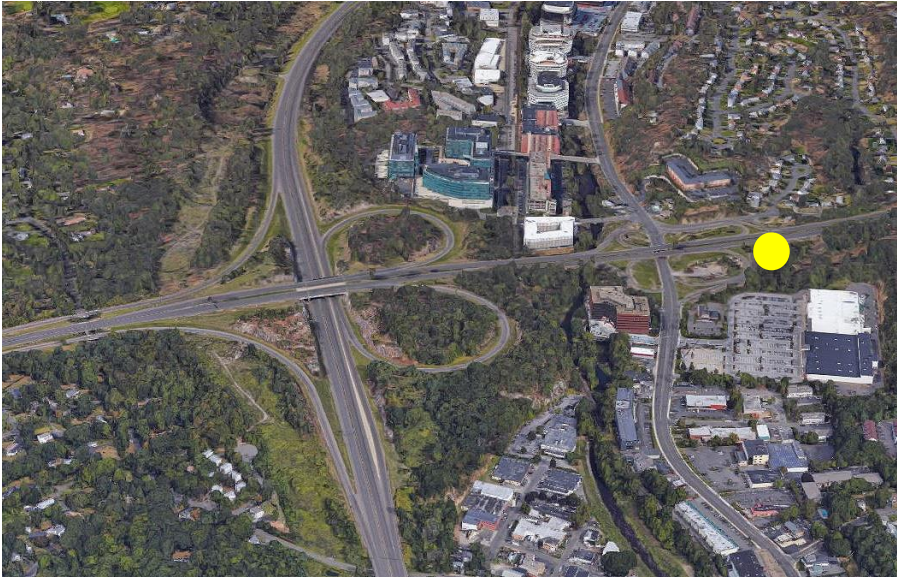


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Existing Setting

Mature canopy in decline.





Proposed Approach for Evaluation of Alternatives





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Category	Assessment Criteria
Views within, from, and to Parkway (all user groups)	Spatial organization, scale, focal points and park-like experiences
	Egress and access ramps are characteristic of the Parkway (scale, alignment, road-side)
	Bridge structures are prominent
	Distant landscape views beyond right-of-way (pastoral, architecture, scenic vistas)
Vegetation and planting design	Width of roadside adequate for planting
	Frame views, complement bridge structures, and screen unsightly views on road-side
	Specify non-invasive species and palette complementary of Parkway setting
	Seasonal interest and clusters of native and specimen plant species that provide contrast between ground plane, understory, and canopy
	Preserves existing buffer, woodlands, mature trees, and meadow
Topography	Built road-side transitions seamlessly into a naturalized vegetation
	Slight to moderate slopes on road-side conducive to views and landscape
Amenities	Design vocabulary is consistent and recognizable as the Parkway
Sustainability	Park-like landscape with ease of access for sustained maintenance
Natural features	Landscape reveals natural resources (watercourses, slopes, woodlands, rocky ledge)
Safety	Planting design and vegetated areas conform to CTDOT safety guidelines



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Implementing the Criteria

- Landscape architecture benchmark
- Used in EA/EIE to assess alternatives
- Carried forward into design





Next Steps





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Next Steps

- Finalize Phase I/II Report
 - Address comments received to date
- Continue Agency coordination
- Draft EA/EIE by early 2020
 - Distribute for review
- Public Hearing Spring 2020
- Finalize EA/EIE Summer 2020
 - Select Preferred Alternative
- Begin design work/apply landscape criteria





THANK YOU!
Questions?





Alternative 21D





Alternative 26

