

Mayor David Maher's Red Ribbon Commission on the Delights and Concerns of Central Square

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Planning for Central Square... your thoughts...your ideas



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Agenda

- Overview
 - Understanding the opportunity
 - What we've seen and heard
 - Making it happen: planning process
- Discussion: Central Square...now and in the future
- Report-backs and summary



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UNDERSTANDING THE OPPORTUNITY

Finding the synergies between creating community and competing in the 21st century



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The right time and place: “demographics are destiny”

- The region’s diversified households need a variety of housing choices
 - More than half of all households in the region are singles and couples—double the proportion of 10 years ago
 - Family households still have an important place ... though they have dropped to under 25% of total
- These trends will dominate housing and neighborhood choices for 15–25 years



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America faces a long-term shortage of innovation workers

- 25-34-year olds were no more likely than the rest of the population to want to live in or near a downtown 20 years ago
- Today they are 33% more likely
- "Creative workers" in this age range are 53% more likely



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Changing demographics are changing values that shape our living environment

1950s to 1990s:

- Golf courses
- Large backyards
- Homogeneity
- Escape from work



2000s:

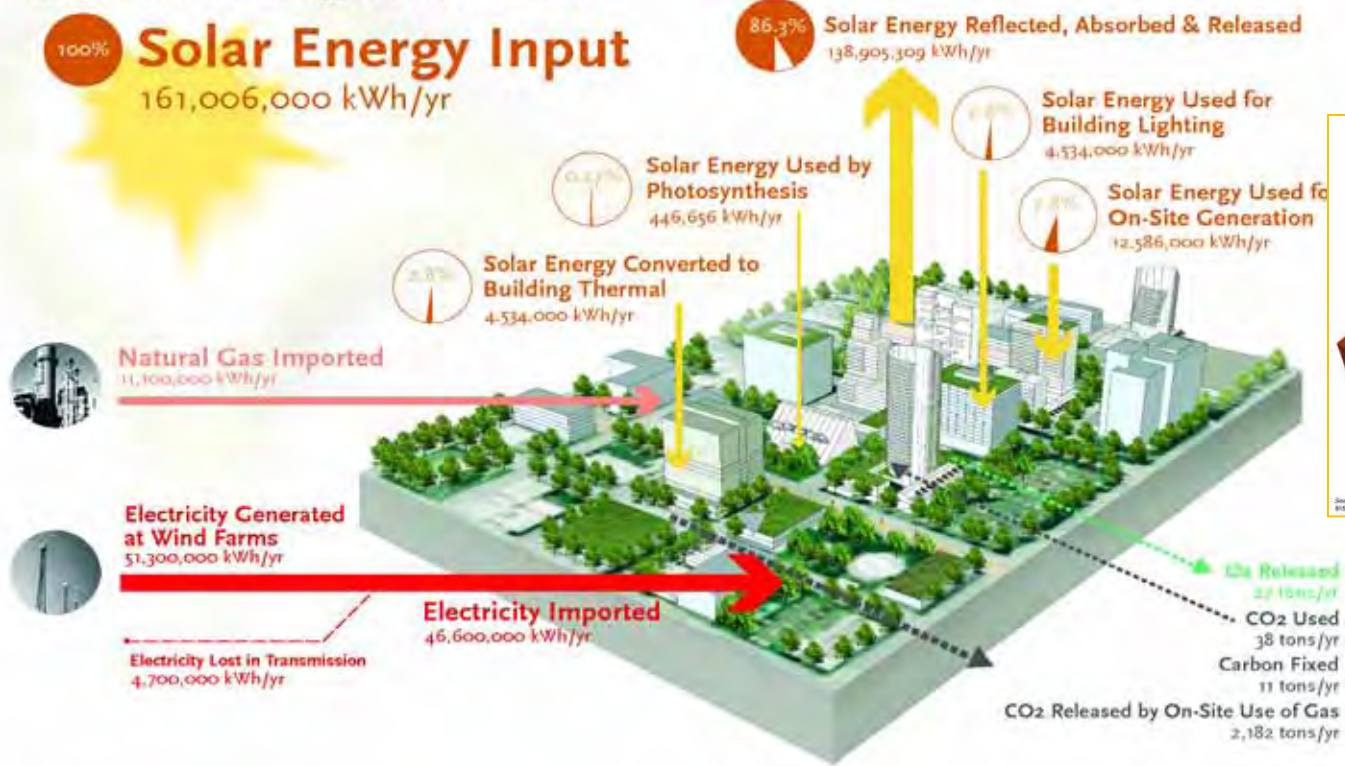
- Main Streets
- "Social places"
- Diversity
- Live near work
- Social and environmental responsibility



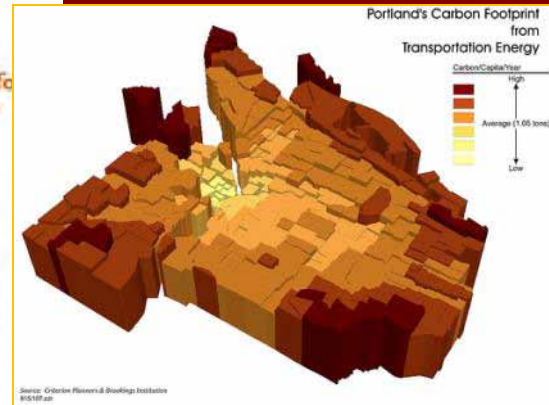
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Changing technologies offer opportunities to improve our natural environment

2050 Per Plan Energy Use Conditions



Note: This concept plan is not intended to represent specific planned or required development proposals



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SHAPING A CENTRAL SQUARE VISION

- Opportunities
- Precedents
- Preliminary urban design ideas



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Opportunity: Revive Central Square as the heart of a diverse community

- Celebrate its identity as one of the most diverse places around.
- Enrich the mix of uses with more housing, retail, arts.
- Create a more complete destination for more people.
- Improve connections to surrounding neighborhoods.
- Capitalize on transit connections.
- Build on groundwork of the Red Ribbon Commission.



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Opportunity: Transform Main Street into a place of community connections

- Front door of a mixed-use neighborhood
- Expanded range of housing choices
- Walkable place connecting Central Square to Kendall
- ...and to adjacent neighborhoods (Area 4, Mid-Cambridge, Cambridgeport)
- ...and to MIT



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Precedent: Downtown Asheville, NC



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Precedent: Washington, DC—U Street, Columbia Heights, Eastern Market



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Urban design: Vitality, community



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Urban design: Vitality, community



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Central Square: What we've heard and seen

- "Cambridge's downtown"
- One of the region's most diverse places—and celebrated for it
- An important transportation hub: Red Line, buses, shuttles, bikes, walking, driving
- Retail space is mostly full—but key vacancies and blank banks make it feel less so
- Lafayette Square has come alive with outdoor events and unique restaurants
- Generous sidewalk space needs more active use
- Research activities want to be near the vibrancy of Central Square
- Opportunity to add housing, retail and/or other uses at a range of scales in and around the square



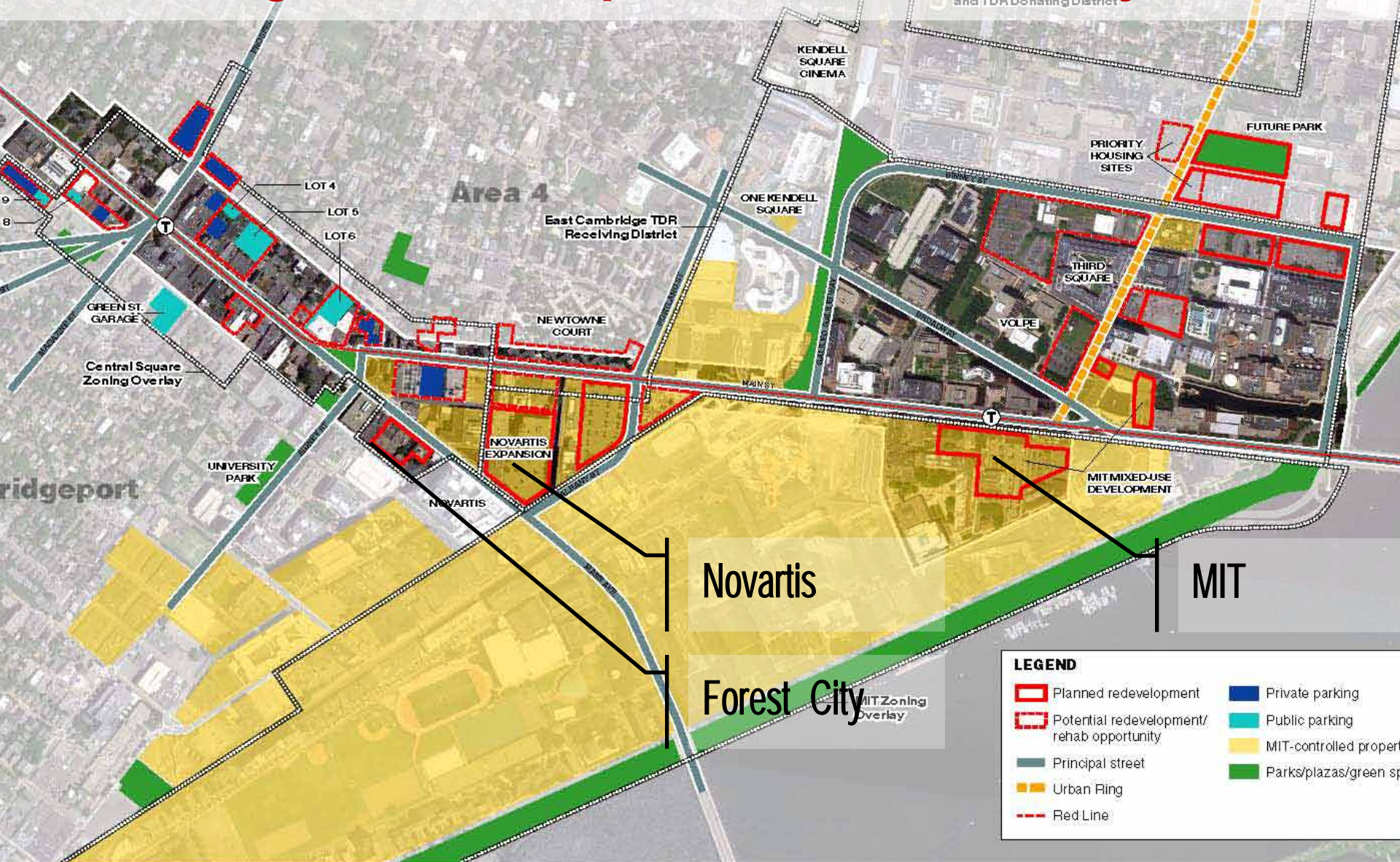
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Our next steps: analysis

- Diagram strategic locations for housing, retail, research.
- Test **buildout scenarios** based on public input and Committee discussions.
- Understand the **demographic** profile of residents, workers and visitors.
- **Transportation assessment**
 - Pedestrian and bicycle improvements; neighborhood connections
 - Red Line/bus capacity and other transit issues
 - Assess trip generation and parking needs; opportunities for improved utilization of existing parking?
- **Retail study** —what is Central Square's distinct niche, considering Kendall, Harvard, Inman Squares, etc.?
- Draft **design guidelines**—keeping the square active, pedestrian-scaled.
- Map **open spaces**—Which are succeeding? Which need improvements to reach their full potential? What others are needed?
- **Evaluate existing zoning** against current and future objectives.
- Show how Central can be a **sustainability** model.



Pending zoning petitions: informing criteria for places of community



LEGEND

	Planned redevelopment		Private parking
	Potential redevelopment/ rehab opportunity		Public parking
	Principal street		MIT-controlled property
	Urban Ring		Parks/plazas/green space
	Red Line		

Key development criteria areas highlighted by pending development proposals

- Land use
- Height and massing
- Support for the pedestrian environment
- Transportation and parking
- Sustainability
- Open space



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Novartis



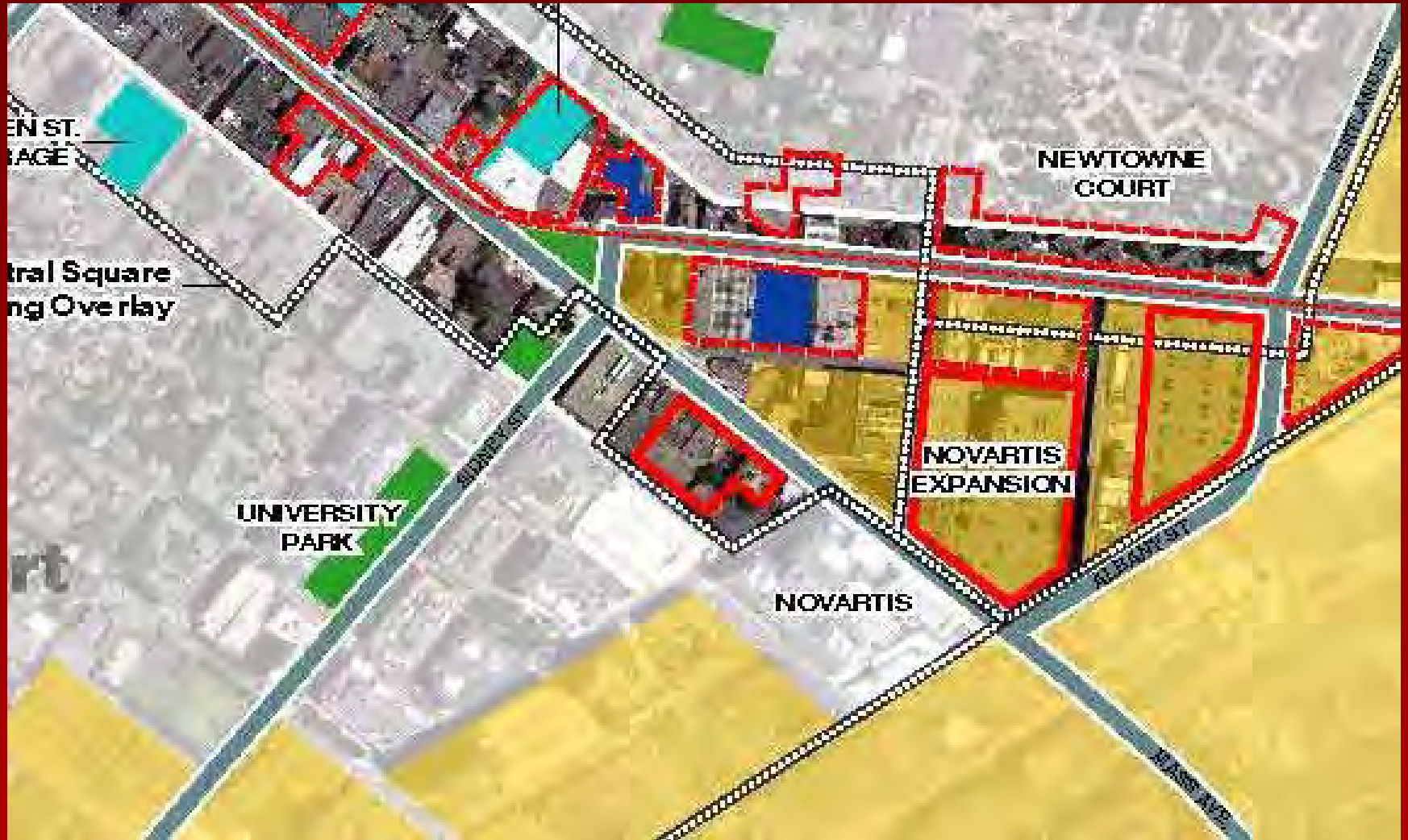
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Novartis



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Forest City



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University Park

Novartis
(Necco)
building



Proposed
building

Lafayette
Square

Discussion exercise: Central Square...now and in the future

Overview questions:

- What must be preserved?
- What's appropriate for change?
- What are your priorities?
- Who should be at the table?

...and focus on nine topics



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Topics for discussion

- **Identity:**
What has Central Square been? What is it now?
What should it be? Is there a single Central Square?
- **Public space(s):**
How are they experienced? How could they be experienced? Where are the most appealing examples? What are future needs?
- **Sidewalks (including street furniture and lighting):**
How well do these work currently?
Are changes needed?



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Topics for discussion

- **Housing:**

What is the current mix? Can or should that mix be modified/ expanded? Amount? Diversity? Other?

- **Transportation and neighborhood connections:**

Are those connections comfortable for people walking, cycling, using transit, driving? Do they make the right connections? Can they be made more convenient? More comfortable? How?



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Topics for discussion

- Retail and restaurants
What does Central Square have enough of?
What should it have more of?
- Arts, culture, and entertainment
What do we have? What's missing?



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Topics for discussion

- **Sustainability**

How can actions in Central Square lead to more environmentally sustainable design, planning and living? For individual buildings and for the square overall?

- **Cleanliness and safety:**

What do you think are key issues?



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Next steps

- Red Ribbon Commission recommendations
- Assemble steering committee
- Steering committee and public meeting series in autumn to shape the plan
- Coordinate with Kendall Square planning
- Complete plan by late 2011



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For more information:

www2.cambridgema.gov/cdd/cp/zng/k2c2/index.html



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