



# Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Action Plan





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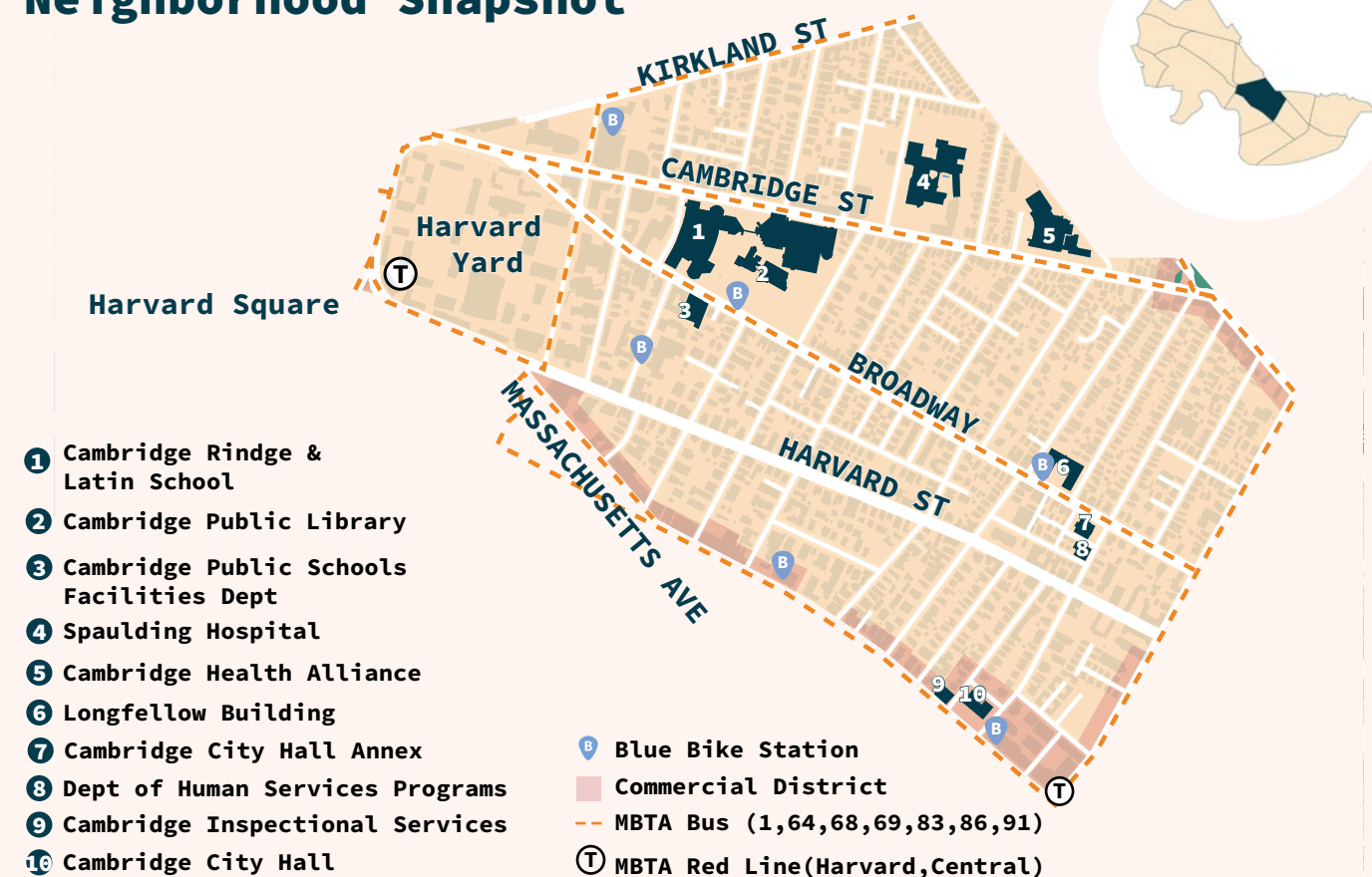
# Introduction

## Neighborhood Action Plans

Neighborhood Action Plans are a one-year planning process to understand neighborhood priorities and identify projects and policies to improve day-to-day life. Action Plans are done in one year so we can progress through all the neighborhoods and update the plans every few years.



## Neighborhood Snapshot



### Density

At more than **50 residents per acre**, Mid-Cambridge is one of the densest areas of Cambridge.

### Land Use

Mid-Cambridge is a predominantly residential neighborhood with many government, hospital, and university facilities. About 60% is residential, 31% government or institutional uses, 2% mixed use, and 1% open space.

### Community Resources

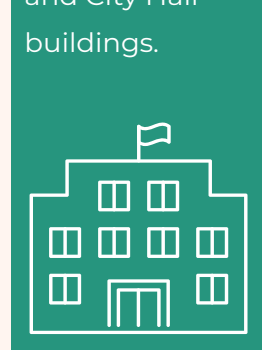
include 5 public parks and playgrounds, 2 schools, 1 library, health services, and City Hall buildings.

### Neighborhood Organizations

Neighborhood organizations in Mid-Cambridge include the **Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association**.

### Neighborhood planning

The last neighborhood plan update for Mid-Cambridge was in **2011**.

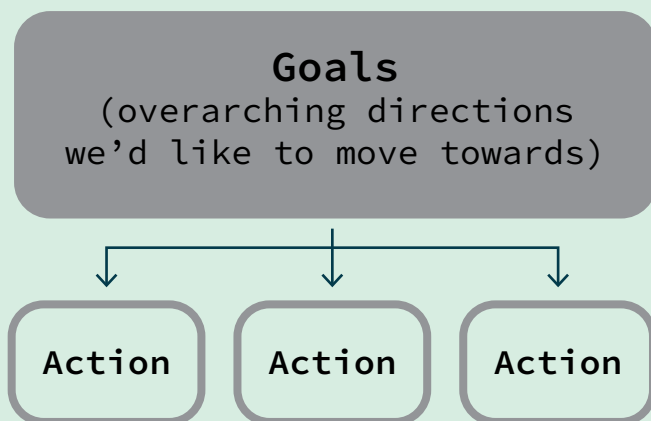


DATA SOURCE: U.S. Census, 2020 Decennial Census

# Neighborhood Goals

Working with the community, we identified 27 actions to help improve day-to-day life in the neighborhood. These actions are organized into the following eight goals.

How to read this document:



(specific items that can be done to work toward Goals)



(1)

Improve access to different types of outdoor activities.

(2)

Add and improve green spaces and plantings.

(3)

Make it safer and more comfortable for users of all modes to move around the neighborhood.

(4)

Help keep our streets and public spaces clean.

(5)

Encourage the reuse of vacant or underutilized lots and closed businesses.

(6)

Expand affordable housing opportunities.

(7)

Slow traffic through the neighborhood.

(8)

Increase opportunities for gathering and community building.

# Goal 1

## Improve access to different types of outdoor activities.

Public spaces can be designed and used in many different ways. Some of the uses in Mid-Cambridge include playgrounds, seating, plazas, tot lots, lawns, and ball courts. There is opportunity to re-arrange or add new uses to be sure there is access to a variety of outdoor activities throughout the neighborhood.



## Actions

### 1.A

**Develop a parks framework plan to diversify neighborhood park amenities over time.**

Park renovations in a neighborhood do not always happen at the same time. A community process and plan for future park uses will help the network of parks in the neighborhood adapt over time to include different types of amenities.

### 1.B

**Improve education and messaging about where and when dogs can be off leash.**

### 1.C

**Manage the War Memorial courts in a way that preserves access to a variety of court sports.**

We heard in community engagement that dogs and going to dog parks can be a great way to meet and connect with neighbors. We also heard that some people are uncomfortable where dogs are off leash, and that can be a barrier to enjoying park spaces. Clearly designated times or spaces for dogs to be off leash can help us share our neighborhood park spaces. As our parks change over time (see Actions 1A, 2B), we can identify what opportunities there are for encouraging the community benefits that off leash access provide, while making sure people feel welcome in our parks and open spaces.

We've heard a request for better management of the tennis courts at Joan Lorentz Park to balance use by different sports and users.

We've heard a lot of discussion about dogs in neighborhood parks.



## Goal 2

# Add and improve green spaces and plantings.

“[Green space is] Always desirable, both for our health, air quality, and general feelings of well-being.”

Trees, gardens, parks, and other green spaces are an important part of a healthy city. Green spaces help clean our air, absorb stormwater, provide shade, and provide comfortable and calming places for us to build community or spend time alone.



## Actions

### 2.A

Explore establishing a volunteer gardening program, where community can get involved in planting and maintaining plant beds and green spaces in parks.

### 2.B

Continue program of park improvements through renovations or targeted improvements in parks.

The following parks in Mid-Cambridge are prioritized for improvements: Maple Avenue Park, Old Longfellow School Playgrounds, Paine Park, and Wilder-Lee Park.

### 2.D

Promote the Forest Friends program to help neighbors care for street trees.

In 2019, the City completed an Urban Forest Master Plan (UFMP) that assessed the existing urban forest, and proposed ways to sustain and expand the benefits these trees provide. The UFMP found that 25% of Mid-Cambridge was covered by tree canopy, which is the 7th highest percentage of our 13 neighborhoods.

### 2.C

Keep parks and public spaces clean and keep equipment in working order.





# Goal 3

## Make it safer and more comfortable for users of all modes to move around the neighborhood.

Cambridge is committed to designing our city to help people to get around without driving. It is important that people are safe no matter how they travel in the neighborhood.

We've heard many sidewalks are challenging to navigate because of uneven bricks and narrow paths around big street trees.

"I am a constant biker and avoid Broadway completely because of the number of unprotected left turns as well as lack of a bike lane."



### Actions

#### 3.A

Use the Citywide Urban Design Guidelines to make sidewalks and plazas that are safer and more comfortable for people who walk.

#### 3.C

Promote the Traffic Calming Request Form to notify the City when vehicles are parked too close to crosswalks.

We heard from the community that cars parked too close to crosswalks make it difficult for people using the street and people using the crosswalk to see each other.

#### 3.B

Encourage residents to use Commonwealth Connect (also known as SeeClickFix) to notify the City about damaged sidewalks.

#### 3.D

Bring the Healthy Aging Group Ride Series to the neighborhood to encourage more people to bike.

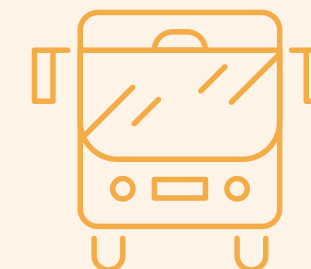
#### 3.F

Separated bike lanes on Broadway from Quincy St to Hampshire St by April 30, 2026.

The process for this work will follow the protocols laid out by the Cycling Safety Ordinance. This section of Broadway is one of the Cycling Safety Ordinance groups called the "The Special4". To be completed no later than April 30, 2026.

#### 3.E

Use the Street Code to educate all users of the road about rules, etiquette, and how to get around town safely.



# Goal 4

## Help keep our streets and public spaces clean.

We've heard a request for more public trash and recycling bins and a concern about rats in the neighborhood.

Rodents are an unavoidable part of city life, but there are several ways the City and our neighbors can help keep their population down. Many of the ways we prevent rodents also have the benefit of making our public spaces better places to be!



### Actions

#### 4.A

Promote the Private Property Rodent Control program, and encourage residents to use Commonwealth Connect (also known as SeeClickFix) to report rodent sightings.

#### 4.B

Replace open waste receptacles at parks, open spaces, and streets with enclosed receptables.

#### 8.C

Pilot a community clean-up day program in a neighborhood park or other public space.

This event can help build community, foster neighborhood pride, and help keep our public spaces clean.

#### Did you know?

The City offers free rodent control services for homes with up to four units. Even if you're a renter, you can ask the City to inspect, bait/trap, and follow-up inspect your home at no cost! Go to [www.cambridgema.gov/rodents](http://www.cambridgema.gov/rodents) for the details and application.

"...public trash cans could help keep the trash from tempting rats. Also it would keep the public from discarding trash in our front yard which happens often."





## Goal 5

**Encourage the reuse of vacant or underutilized lots and closed businesses.**

Even temporary vacancies through normal turnover can have a negative impact on how people view an area. There are a few ways we can help fill vacancies, and improve any negative perception of the place.

## Actions

### 5.A

Use the Central Square City Lots Study to recommend uses for vacant and underutilized properties around Central Square.

### 5.B

Develop a succession planning training program to help business owners prepare for the future of their businesses.

### 5.C

Promote the vacant storefront database to connect potential small businesses with viable commercial spaces.

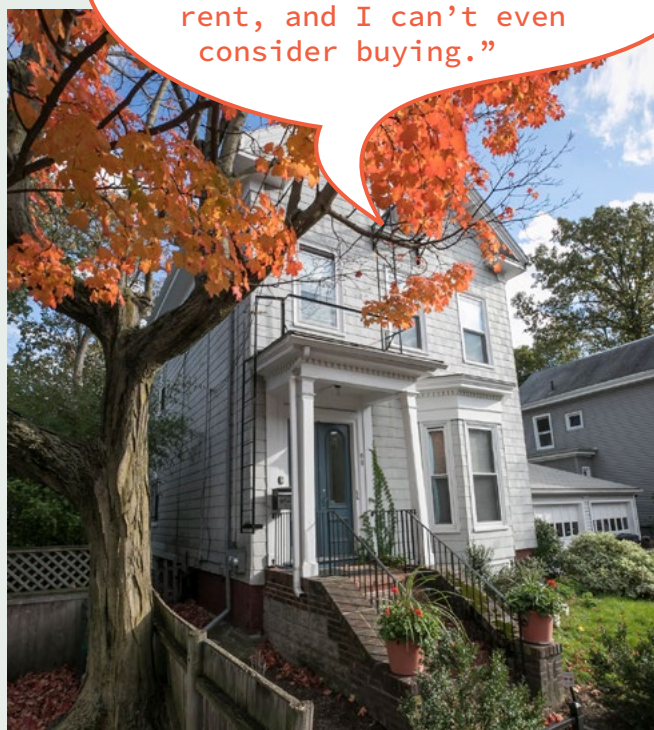
“It’s better for the neighborhood in many ways to use these spaces as opposed to letting them sit vacant. Would love to see the City support more small/local/independent businesses in the empty storefronts, and more smart density in the vacant lots. Fewer parking lots/asphalt!”



# Goal 6

## Expand affordable housing opportunities.

“It’s so expensive to rent or buy in this area. Many people who I know would like to live here can’t afford the rent, and I can’t even consider buying.”



For many years housing affordability has been a top concern for Cambridge residents, and a top priority for the City. Rising housing costs, and a lack of affordable housing makes it very difficult for people to stay in Cambridge or move here.

### Actions

#### 6.A

Promote the City’s free first-time homebuyer classes to people interested in finding a home in the neighborhood.

#### 6.B

Promote the City’s free affordable housing classes and information sessions, to spread knowledge about opportunities for affordable rental and homeownership.

#### 6.C

Encourage people to sign up for the affordable Homeownership Resale Pool.

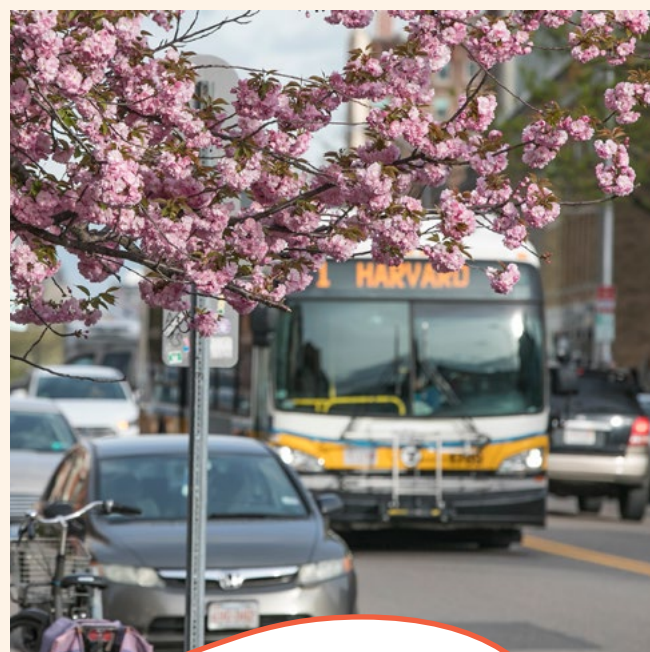
People we spoke to during the Action Plan process mentioned concern about the increasing housing costs in Mid-Cambridge. Several people were worried they would not be able to afford to stay in the neighborhood. Other people said they want it to be easier for a more diverse group of people to move to Mid-Cambridge. These concerns are shared across Cambridge. In a 2023 citywide resident survey, affordable housing was the most mentioned issue. Since 2015 rents in Cambridge have increased almost 40% and home prices have gone up nearly 50%, while median income has only increased by around 20%. Actions to address the affordable housing crisis are a City priority, and often require citywide action. Although they are beyond the scope of any individual Neighborhood Action Plan, the actions on this page help to connect people to resources and support citywide efforts.



# Goal 7

## Slow traffic through the neighborhood.

Neighbors who participated in the Action Plan process noted that people drive dangerously fast through the neighborhood. This makes people walking feel afraid and unsafe, particularly while crossing the street. There was particular concern for children's safety.



We've heard people observe other people driving dangerously fast on Harvard St and Broadway.



### Actions

#### 5.A

Encourage community members to utilize the Traffic Calming Request Form to request traffic calming measures at specific locations in the neighborhood they think could benefit from slower vehicle traffic.

#### 5.B

Continue to implement traffic calming during street reconstruction.

#### Examples of traffic calming techniques:

Raised crosswalk intersections



Curb extensions



# Goal 8

## Increase opportunities for gathering and community building.

“... people need places, especially free public spaces with seating and tables, to gather.”

Meeting neighbors and building a sense of community can help create a sense of belonging, expose people to new and different ideas, and build networks of friendship and trust.



### Actions

#### 8.A

Increase funding to support more block parties, and create clear and accessible guidelines to help residents organize block parties.

#### 8.B

Evaluate and refine the Play Streets program to improve the experience of planning and participating in Play Street events.

#### 8.D

Promote programming and facilities at Main Branch Library.

In 2023, the City offered \$200 to residents who organize block parties and play streets in their neighborhood. Mid-Cambridge hosted several of these events in 2023, and we hope to have even more in the coming years! Learn more about hosting a block party here:

[www.cambridgema.gov/iwantto/applyforablock-partypermit](http://www.cambridgema.gov/iwantto/applyforablock-partypermit)

We've heard neighbors want more public or privately-owned places to gather, like community rooms, coffee shops, and other local businesses.



# What's Next?

## How can YOU be involved?

**I LIVE IN MID-CAMBRIDGE!**

My neighborhood wrapped up an action plan in 2023, and I would like to stay involved!

I'd like to learn more about my neighborhood!

I'd like to learn more about NPI!

I'm interested in starting a community group or learning about other community building opportunities!

**I LIVE IN A DIFFERENT NEIGHBORHOOD!**

Visit the NPI webpage to learn more about neighborhood planning in your area

For the latest information on how to be involved, visit the Action Plan webpage:

[www.cambridgema.gov/npi/midcambridge](http://www.cambridgema.gov/npi/midcambridge)




Scan the QR code with your smartphone camera

OR

Click on the box!


Review neighborhood snapshots & previous plans



Sign up for neighborhood email updates!



Visit the NPI page of the City's website



E-mail your neighborhood planner, Gary Chan, at [gchan@cambridgema.gov](mailto:gchan@cambridgema.gov)

Review community resources



**HAVE QUESTIONS? E-mail your neighborhood planner!**

**Gary Chan:**  
[gchan@cambridgema.gov](mailto:gchan@cambridgema.gov)

# About the Neighborhood Planning Initiative

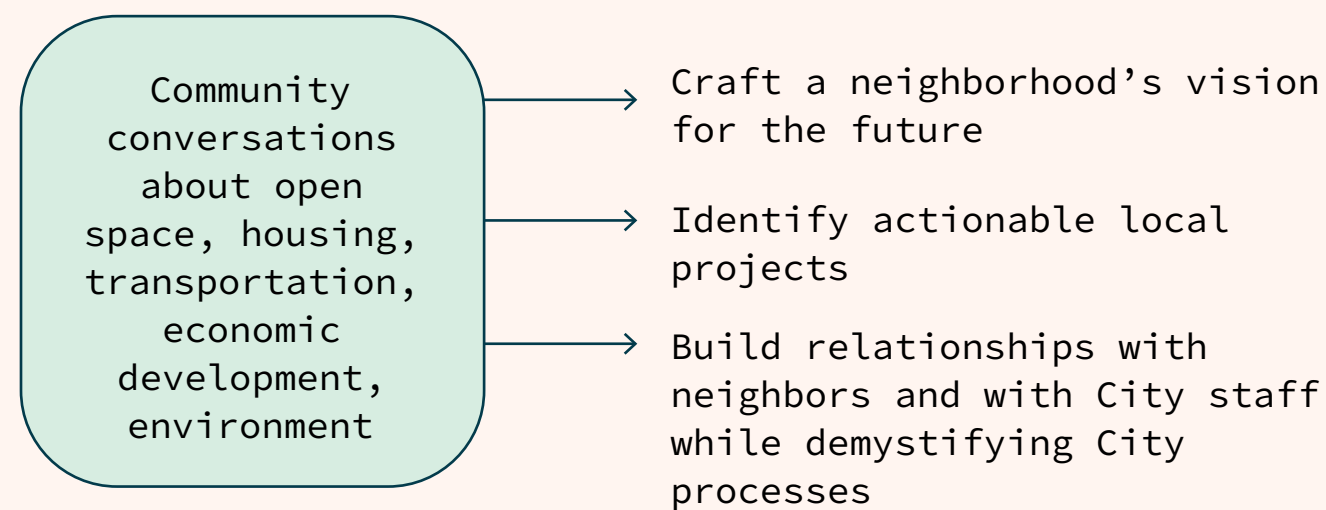
## What is NPI?

Cambridge's Neighborhood Planning Initiative (NPI) gives everyone in Cambridge access to local planning! City staff work with community members to improve the places that are central to daily life.

NPI includes four parts:



## What Do Action Plans Do?



Action Plans are updated often so that community priorities can inform other planning efforts.

It will take 4-5 years to finish a Neighborhood Action Plan for all 13 neighborhoods. The Action Planning schedule was developed by looking at data-driven indicators of relative planning need across neighborhoods. This helped to identify areas that might most benefit from early action planning.

