

Central Square Cultural District Demonstration Project

AGENDA

- Introductions
- About the CRA
- Overview of Demonstration Plan
- Project Timeline
- Engagement Process
- What We've Heard
- Discussion



ABOUT THE CAMBRIDGE REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

- The Cambridge Redevelopment Authority (CRA) is an urban redevelopment agency enabled by Massachusetts General Law Chapter 121b.
- The CRA is committed to implementing creative development projects and initiatives that promote social equity and environmental sustainability.
- The CRA is a separate entity from the City of Cambridge. The CRA does, however, frequently partner with the City to facilitate publicly beneficial real estate development projects.



ABOUT THE CAMBRIDGE REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

The CRA currently supports a number of projects across Cambridge including:

- Since 1965 The CRA stewarded **Kendall Square** as a center for innovation. The CRA uses revenue generated from development in Kendall Square to support community serving projects throughout Cambridge.
- In 2015, the CRA launched the **Forward Fund** grant program to invest in Cambridge's non-profit community and provide funds to plan and implement capital projects. Through the fund the CRA has awarded over \$3 million in grants to local non-profit organizations.
- In 2019, the CRA purchased the building at **99 Bishop Allen Drive** in Central Square to preserve it as affordable space for nonprofit social service programs.



DEMONSTRATION PLAN BACKGROUND

- Investment mechanism available to Redevelopment Agencies under state law (*MGL c.121B §46 (f)*)
- Document that allows identified techniques to be tested within Demonstration Plan Area
- Enables the CRA to undertake **social purpose real estate projects** to support the stabilization of Central Square as a Cultural District
- Projects would undergo their own planning and approval process



DEMONSTRATION PLAN PURPOSE

To enable the CRA to:

- Preserve and expand **cultural institutions and facilities** in Central Square
- Support **commercial vitality** in Central Square, particularly for small, independently owned businesses
- Facilitate the development of **mixed income housing**, particularly among underutilized properties and lots



TIMELINE

Engagement (November-early March)

- Continued engagement through February
- Public open house (3/3)

Drafting plan and feedback (March-May)

- Distribute draft plan (late March)
- Second public forum (early April)
- Stakeholder and City Manager feedback (mid-late April)
- Finalize plan (late April-early May)
- CRA Board consideration (targeting May)



Open House

Share your ideas to support the Central Square Cultural District!

The Cambridge Redevelopment Authority is creating a Demonstration Plan for Central Square - a toolkit focused on supporting cultural preservation, mixed-income housing, and commercial vitality.

Food and beverages will be provided.
Habrá interpretación disponible
提供翻译服务(国语,粤语)

March 3rd (5-7pm)

Street Theory Collective
541 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge MA
RSVP: bit.ly/RSVPOpenHouseCentral

CAMBRIDGE REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY



WHO WE'VE ENGAGED

- Central Square BID
- Cambridge Community Center
- Cambridge Community Foundation
- Cambridge Community Television
- Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee
- Cambridge Housing Authority
- Cambridge Nonprofit Coalition
- Central Square Theater
- Community Art Center
- The Dance Complex
- City of Cambridge
 - Arts and Cultural Planning
 - Community Development
 - Economic Opportunity and Development
 - Housing
- City Seniors Advisory Council
- Just A Start
- NAACP
- YWCA
- YMCA



WHO ELSE WE'RE ENGAGING

- Religious institutions
- Nightlife businesses
- Developers/property owners
- City elected officials
- Broader community (Open House on 3/3)
- Neighborhood associations



IDEAS WE STARTED WITH

- Development and disposition agreements
- Technical assistance
- Capital improvement loans
- Property acquisition
- Building and property leases
- Publicly beneficial real estate cost support (leverage CRA 121B tax exemption)



SUGGESTIONS WE'VE HEARD SO FAR

Categories:

- Public or non-profit ownership of space
- Loan programs
- Social housing
- Technical assistance
- Community place making
- Development and disposition agreements



Public or non-profit ownership of spaces for:

- Early-stage retailers (building off CRA's work at 1175 Cambridge Street)
- Arts production
- Economic opportunity (for example: commissary kitchen)
- Lower cost/commitment office space

IDEAS FOR CRA

Establish loan programs to support:

- Building upgrades to support nightlife and live music (for example: sound proofing)
- Capital improvements to buildings owned by nonprofit cultural institutions (accessibility, building stabilization)
- Development financing
- Property acquisition (rapid response, potentially revolving)



Social housing:

- Public private partnerships to advance mixed income housing with affordability beyond IZ requirements
- Artist housing strategy
 - Ensure housing opportunities closer to venues/production space
 - Cultivate non-City partners to create and operate artist focused housing

Direct technical assistance:

- “Real Estate 101” training for nonprofits
- CRA staff support around capital fundraising and project planning
- CRA staff support for construction project management

IDEAS FOR CRA

Community placemaking:

- Grants to support public art and local identity in public open spaces
- Coordination with DPW/MBTA on public art/street furniture for branding
- Explore placemaking within ground level, indoor, publicly accessible spaces (ie. banks in Central Square)

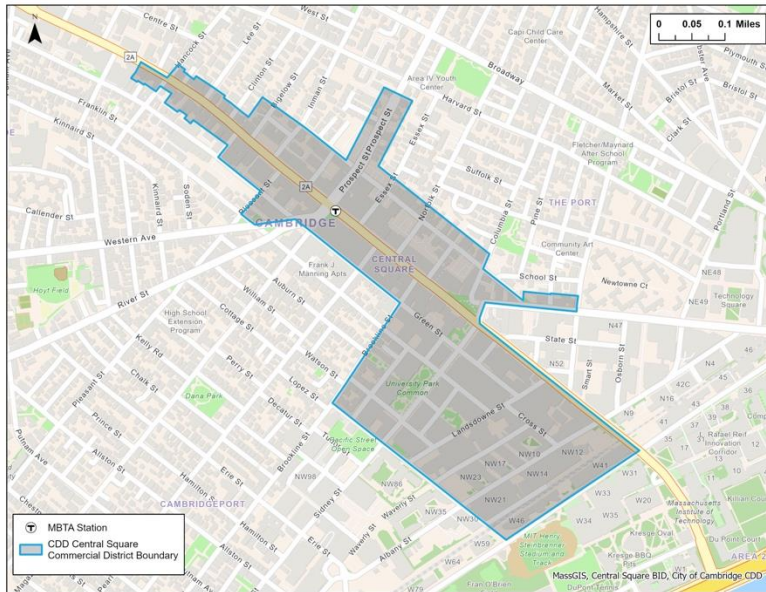
Development and disposition agreements

- Supporting community-identified uses, benefits in disposition of City Lots

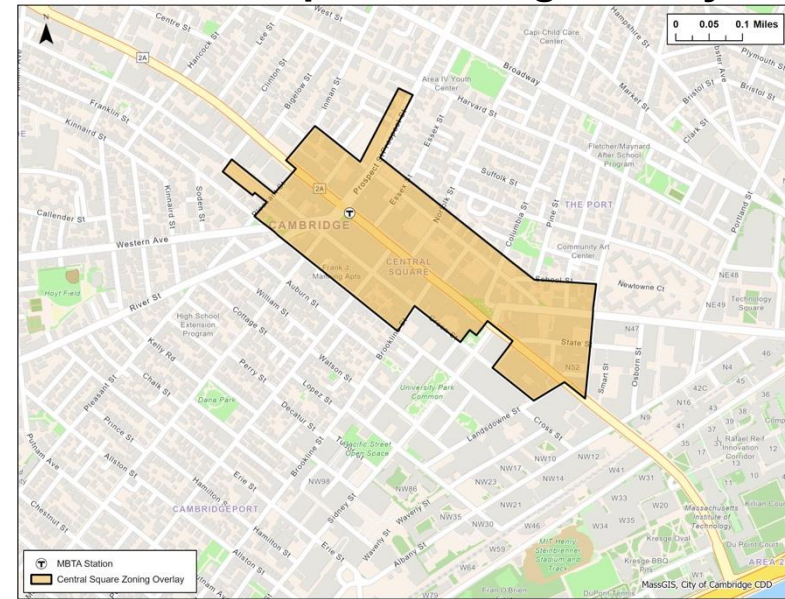


INITIAL BOUNDARY CONSIDERATIONS

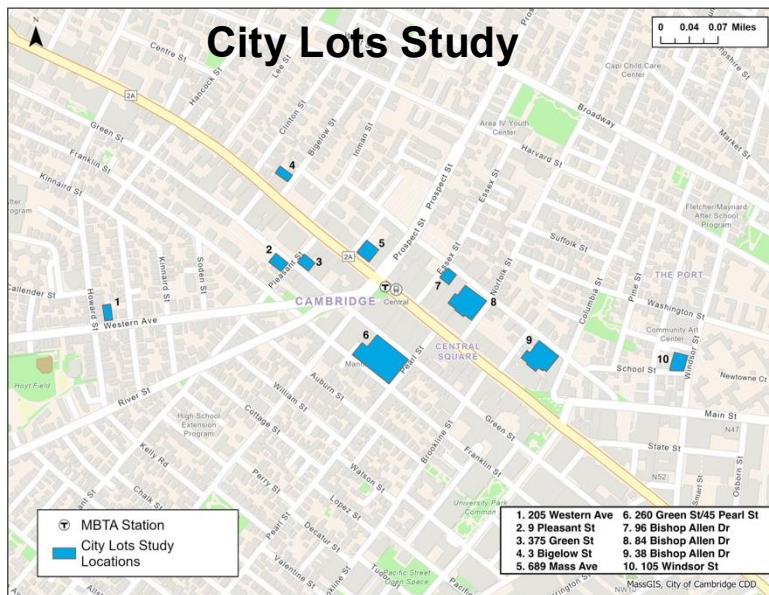
Central Square Commercial District



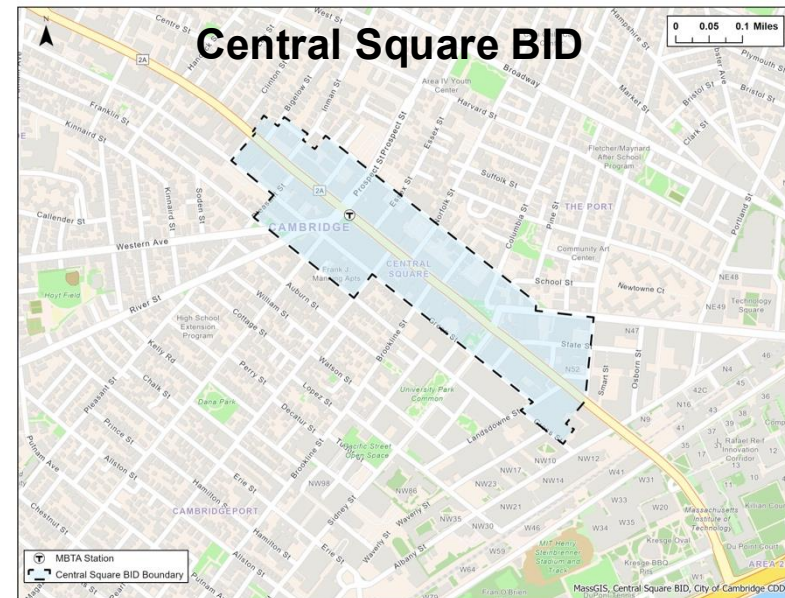
Central Square Zoning Overlay



City Lots Study



Central Square BID



DRAFT BOUNDARY PROPOSAL

Considerations:

General alignment with Central Square Rezoning

Extension north along Mass Avenue to Putnam Square to support business vitality

Include City Lots Study parcels

Avoid unnecessary inclusion of parks, low density residential, public housing

Do these boundaries make sense to you?



DISCUSSION

Which initiatives/tools resonate the most?

What's missing?