Agenda

01 Introduction 5 min
Introduction to project, team, timeline, and process

02 Review of Global Best Practices 5 min
Review of guidelines from 48 places around the world

03 Review of Cambridge Existing Guidelines 5 min
Review of existing Cambridge guidelines documents

04 Highlights & Emerging Takeaways from Staff Workshop 3 min
July 12, 2022 Staff Workshop takeaways

05 Next Steps for Observation & Engagement 2 min
Update on September Observation and Community Engagement Plan

06 Questions for Planning Board
Discussion
The Team

We’re working together over this 18-month process to develop a vision for Cambridge’s urban design guidelines.
To provide direction and guidance to:
- Developers
- City Departments
- Planning Board
- General Public

On desired form and character of
- Future Development
- Public Realm
PHASE 1
2022
MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV

- Biweekly core team meetings throughout

PHASE 2
2023
DEC JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL

- Community Engagement
- Information Gathering & Analysis
- Vision & Design Principles
- Revisions to Section 19.30
- Citywide Guidelines

PHASE 3
AUG SEP OCT

- Task 1 Community Engagement Strategy
- Task 2 Public Space/Public Life Study
- Task 3.1 Draft
- Task 3.2 Final Vision & Design Principles
- Task 4.1 Draft
- Task 4.2 Final proposed changes to Section 19.30
- Task 5.1 Draft
- Task 5.2 Final Citywide Guidelines
- Task 6.1 Draft
- Task 6.2 Final Public Realm Design Manual

Closeout
- Task 7 Powerpoint slide deck
- Task 8 Citywide Urban Design website mock-up
- Task 9 Source & copyright info
- Task 10 Electronic submission

We are here!
Review of Global Best Practices
Core Research Questions
We explored how guidelines took shape from inception to rollout.

FOUNDATION  How are guidelines generated?
AUDIENCE  Who do guidelines speak to?
FORMAT  What format are guidelines in?

STRUCTURE  How are guidelines organized?
ACCOUNTABILITY  How are guidelines used to ensure accountability?

ALIGNMENT  How do guidelines relate to / interact with other city regulations and documents?

APPLICATION  How are guidelines implemented and used across different city agencies?

ADAPTABILITY  How often are guidelines updated, and what systems are in place to do so?

Priority Content Areas
SUSTAINABILITY  How do guidelines address environmental and resilient design?
EQUITY  How do guidelines address equity from formation to rollout?
We reviewed guidelines from around the world.
We interviewed planning officials from three cities.

New York City
Department of City Planning

Washington, D.C.
Office of Planning

Toronto
City Planning Division
Guideline Style & Format

/ DEVELOPMENT  How are guidelines generated? Who do guidelines speak to?
/ ORGANIZATION  How are guidelines organized and related to other city plans?
/ IMPLEMENTATION  How are guidelines used across different city agencies to ensure accountability?
/ UPDATES  How often are guidelines updated, and what systems are in place to do so?
GUIDELINE DEVELOPMENT

Form follows audience — with the best examples using clear language, searchability, and accessible visuals.

Q. How might Cambridge format its guidelines in a way that maximizes clarity, with room for updates over time?

For Applicants → Need applicability, guidance, clarity / Best practice example: Streetscape Manual, Toronto

For Reviewers → Need compliance check and quality design consideration criteria / Best practice example: Complete Streets Design Handbook, Philadelphia

For Public → Need engagement and learning opportunities / Best practice example: Complete Streets Design Guidelines, Boston
GUIDELINE ORGANIZATION

Within the guideline document, organization can vary depending on City priorities and audience. Beyond the document, many cities draw connections between sets of guidelines and plans.

Within the Guidelines

Urban design elements
Pedestrian access, building facade, signage, lighting, landscape...

→ Best for public-facing

Urban space typology
Streets, plazas, waterfronts, etc.

→ Best for project applicants to understand expectations

Urban design principles
Sustainability, connectivity, human-scale, etc.

→ Best for public-facing, applicants, and reviewers to check compliance

Land use & Building Typology
Residential, commercial, mixed-use, industrial...

→ Best for project applicants and reviewers to check compliance

Beyond the Guidelines

Citywide Plan
Many cities build guidelines off of existing policies, principles, and values established in the citywide General / Comprehensive Plan.

Relationship between Guidelines, Zoning Code, and Community-specific Design Requirements
Some cities’ guidelines work in conjunction with the city’s zoning code, area-specific regulations, and citywide topic-specific regulations for project reviews.

Q. How might Cambridge select an organizational structure for guidelines that is easy to understand and intuitive to apply?
GUIDELINES IMPLEMENTATION

By providing clear go/no-go guidelines, cities can avoid excessive back-and-forth with applicants. Some sets of guidelines also delineate policy applications for different audiences.

Q. How might Cambridge help applicants by providing clear guidance on priority elements to abide by, and what to avoid?
GUIDELINE UPDATES

Most updates happen on an ad-hoc basis; they don’t tend to function as adaptable, living documents.

Q. How might Cambridge create a clear process and system for updating the guidelines over time?

"Periodically amended as necessary to maintain consistency with statutory policies and to evolve with international best practice aspirations."
- Calgary, AB, CAN

"Plan Submissions for development will serve to clarify, update and improve upon the suggested standards."
- East Gwillimbury, ON, CAN

"May be amended as necessary by the City Planning Commission."
- Los Angeles, CA

"If necessary, the guide will be reviewed in order to accommodate emerging best practice and ongoing continuous improvement."
- Croydon, UK

"The urban design principles get refreshed every five or so years as practices change and evolve."
- New York City, NY

"Intended to evolve and adapt to incorporate new treatments and techniques as they are developed and put to use."
- Boston, MA

Most cities have no clear system for updating!

Interactive formats are more likely to be updated regularly.
Priority Content Areas

/ SUSTAINABILITY  How do guidelines address environmental and resilient design?
/ EQUITY  How do guidelines address equity from formation to rollout?
Environmental goals tend to exist in separate documents from UDGs and focus on buildings, and boost accountability when enshrined into policy. If not, it's better if they have defined checklists and success metrics.

Q. How might Cambridge effectively link to other tools for reference, while setting clear benchmarks for using urban design of buildings and the public realm to advance climate action?
LOOKING OUTWARD

EQUITY

Most cities focus on creating an inclusive process, rather than setting equity standards in guidelines themselves. If equity is in guideline content, it is often only addressed in terms of accessibility for all modes and abilities.

Q. How might Cambridge center equity — in all its forms — in the content, process, and implementation of the guidelines? What does equity mean to Cambridge, and within the context of the guidelines?

**SNAPSHOT / EQUITY AS GUIDELINE PROCESS**

- Engage architects, designers, and engineers of color
- Engage residents of all ages
- Make sure meetings, notices, and materials are accessible
- Reflect community input in the final outcome of guidelines
- Eliminate disparities in race, class, gender, other dimensions of diversity
- Be clear, specific and direct so that outcomes can be measurable
- Mandate accountability in zoning or implementation plans
- Enact zoning code that supports human-scale development and connectivity

**SNAPSHOT / EQUITY AS GUIDELINE CONTENT**

“Public realm should be accessible for all regardless of age or ability.”

“The use of curbside space should be distributed equitably to support the needs of all users.”
Opportunities
Review of Global
Best Practices

➔ **STRIVE FOR SIMPLICITY** / Use clear language / visuals to make it easier for everyone to adopt the guidelines — a tool for reviewers to check compliance, for applicants to abide by best practices, and for the general public to participate meaningfully in public reviews.

➔ **FORMAT FOR FLEXIBILITY** / Be flexible with format and platform — beyond a text-heavy report. For example, short booklets and digital platforms open the door to wider distribution, ease of navigation, and regular updates. (Note: With more formats, more clarity is needed to delineate audience and purpose)

➔ **EMBED GOALS IN CONTENT + PROCESS** / Make the guidelines a platform for advancing citywide goals and issues (e.g., equity, sustainability) — by embedding these goals as high-level principles, into design recommendations, and into the process of developing and implementing the guidelines.

➔ **SET THE STAGE FOR DESIGN EXCELLENCE** / While design excellence wasn’t a focus of the guidelines best practice research, there is an opportunity for guidelines to clarify standards of design excellence for a city.
Review of Existing Cambridge Guidelines
We reviewed the City’s Area-specific and Citywide guidelines.
Guideline Style & Format

/ AUDIENCE Who do Cambridge’s guidelines speak to?

/ FORMAT How are Cambridge’s guidelines formatted?

/ UPDATES How often are Cambridge’s guidelines updated, and what systems are in place to do so?
GUIDELINE AUDIENCE

Most guidelines are addressed to applicants, City staff and the Planning Board. Recent guidelines include the general public as one of their intended audiences.

Q. How might Cambridge's guidelines be accessible to all of their intended users?
GUIDELINE FORMAT

Earlier guidelines tend to use narrative texts, while more recent ones have shifted to a bullet point objectives format.

Q. How might the format of Cambridge’s guidelines balance clarity and nuance?
GUIDELINE UPDATES

Cambridge has only updated three of its guidelines in the past. These updates occurred for very different contextual reasons.

Q. What might trigger Citywide and area-specific guideline updates in the future?

Looking Inward

- Central Square (2012)
  - Updated to provide guidance around historic preservation.
  - Not codified in the Zoning Ordinance.

  - Updated again in 2019 in response to concerns about the goals, jurisdiction, and administration of the district.

- Alewife (2020)
  - Updated to address the district’s unique environmental and infrastructure challenges.
  - Planning effort to address vacancy and encourage desired development.

OverUnder / Gehl
Guideline Content

/ GAPS          What is missing from Cambridge’s Area-specific & Citywide Guidelines?
/ SUSTAINABILITY How do Cambridge’s guidelines address environmental and resilient design?
/ EQUITY        How do Cambridge’s guidelines address equity?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GAPS</th>
<th>Historic Development Context</th>
<th>Built Form</th>
<th>Open Space</th>
<th>Streets &amp; Sidewalks</th>
<th>Mobility</th>
<th>Sustainability</th>
<th>Equity</th>
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## SUSTAINABILITY

Most guidelines do not address sustainability.

- Earlier guidelines refer to the efficient use of resources and encourage LEED compliance.
- Some highlight environmental comfort principles, such as shadows, wind and noise mitigation, lighting and vegetation.
- Recent guidelines get into more detail about building performance.
- Alewife addresses sustainable site design, resilient building design and response to flood events.

### Looking Inward

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sustainability</th>
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<th>Review</th>
<th>Process</th>
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*“...protecting buildings from flooding, designing buildings to minimize the impact of extreme heat events, and maximizing the use of passive strategies for thermal comfort.”*  
– Alewife Design Guidelines

*“...buildings should be designed to minimize energy use and the embodied energy of their components.”*  
– Volpe Site Design Guidelines
### Equity

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#### Half of the guidelines do not address equity.

- Some guidelines include sections on **universal access & design**.
- Some discuss **affordable housing** and **business retention** as broad goals.

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“Celebrate and maintain the mix of old, new, venerable and funky enterprises activating the Central Square Cultural District.”

– Central Square Design Guidelines

“Ensure that outdoor spaces provide comparable facilities for all people regardless of their ability to climb steps. Use technology to help compensate for limitations in sensory abilities.”

– Kendall Square Design Guidelines
Opportunities
Review of Existing Cambridge Guidelines

➔ ADDRESS GAPS IN KEY CONTENT AREAS / Update older, outdated guidelines, lacking in the areas of sustainability, open space and bicycle mobility. Make use of the guidelines to tackle issues of equity and sustainability, both key goals for the City set in a number of recent plans, such as the Envision Cambridge comprehensive plan, the Climate Change Preparedness Plan, the Resilient Cambridge Plan, and the Urban Forest Master Plan.

➔ WORK TOWARDS A CLEAR & TRANSPARENT PROCESS / Build on recent efforts to make guidelines clear and accessible to a broader audience. Provide a step-by-step description of the building review process, including required materials and City departments and authorities involved. Provide information on the historic development context of Cambridge’s neighborhoods.

➔ DESIGN FOR FLEXIBILITY & ADAPTABILITY / Create a clear template for future area-specific and citywide guideline updates.
Highlights & Emerging Takeaways from Workshop
## Highlights & Emerging Takeaways from Workshop

1. **Avoid redundancy and confusion across City departments and documents**
   - e.g.,
   - → Adopt a quarterly inter-agency meeting to keep documents up to date and integrated
   - → Reflect all the agency goals and constraints in the guidelines
   - → Provide a master ‘table of contents’ that links out to respective departments’ guideline documents

2. **Communicate guidelines in as clear and simple a way as possible, balancing clarity and nuance**
   - e.g.,
   - → Use plain language
   - → Use simple visuals
   - → Consider alternative media (website, dashboard, etc.)

3. **Monitor and update the guidelines (and related documents) over time**
   - e.g.,
   - → Create a document that reflects the moment without being too prescriptive
   - → Deploy updated post-occupancy checklist of new developments to identify common pitfalls and the efficacy of the Guidelines

4. **Celebrate Cambridge's eclectic built environment**
   - e.g.,
   - → Advise projects to respond to immediate surroundings to embrace neighborhood-specific character
   - → Embrace sense of history and modern amenities in equal measure
   - → Focus on goals to and provide clarity on how Guidelines can be applied on a site-by-site basis

5. **Sharpen understanding of how the Guidelines can advance equity in both process and content**
   - e.g.,
   - → Set a clear and understandable working definition of equity as it relates to the Guidelines
   - → Clarify the ways that equity needs to be embedded into the content and implementation of the Guidelines

6. **Advance climate action through the content and format of the Guidelines**
   - e.g.,
   - → Consider a checklist or point system for rating project incorporation of climate-friendly features
   - → Use climate responses as a way to create a sense of place
   - → Incorporate sustainable transportation across sets of guidelines (climate, mobility, urban design, etc.)
Next Steps for Observation & Engagement
## Community Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broader Community</th>
<th>Project Proponents</th>
<th>Advisory Committees</th>
<th>City Boards</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>AUDIENCE</strong></td>
<td>Youth, students, young professionals, seniors, homeless, immigrant, AAPI, Black, Hispanic, Haitian, Arabic</td>
<td>Designers, developers</td>
<td>Bicycle Committee, Pedestrian Committee, Planting Committee, Transit Committee, Disabilities Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FORMAT</strong></td>
<td>● PSPL Survey</td>
<td>● Working group meetings</td>
<td>● Working group meetings</td>
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<td>● Public meetings</td>
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<td>● Walkshops</td>
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<td>● Outdoor events</td>
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<td>● Focus groups</td>
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<td>● Basic website</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CONTENT</strong></td>
<td>● How do people move around in the city?</td>
<td>● How do project proponents view the process?</td>
<td>● How do the guidelines and design manual impact each group’s priorities?</td>
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<td>● How do they interact with each other in public spaces?</td>
<td>● What is working?</td>
<td>● What is working well?</td>
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<td>● What are people’s favorites spaces in Cambridge?</td>
<td>● What are some of the shortcomings?</td>
<td>● What could be improved?</td>
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<td>● What are places that need improvement?</td>
<td>● What would they change?</td>
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<td>● What are design guidelines and why are they important?</td>
<td>● Have they used the City’s existing Citywide and Area-Specific guidelines?</td>
<td>● How can we incorporate concerns around transportation and access into these documents?</td>
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<td>● How does the process relate to the Citywide plan?</td>
<td>● What do they like about them? What would they change?</td>
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</table>
The Gehl public life app will be used to:

➔ Understand how people move through and spend time in Cambridge’s public realm today

➔ Reveal opportunities to update the guidelines based on people’s lived experience of the built environment
Questions for Planning Board
Questions for Planning Board

➔ **IN-SCOPE VS. OUT-OF-SCOPE** / What is in the scope of Cambridge Urban Design Guidelines (UDGs)? i.e., How citywide is “citywide”?

➔ **CURRENT GUIDELINES** / How do you use the guidelines today? What is working well? What’s not working well? (i.e., guideline content, guideline process / implementation)

➔ **FUTURE GUIDELINES** / Drawing from global inspiration and knowing the Cambridge context, what does success look like? What would you like to see in the updated UDGs?