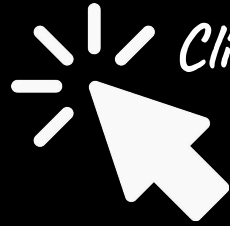


Phase 3:
Porter Square
Community
Meeting

01/30/25

Welcome!

PLEASE SIGN IN

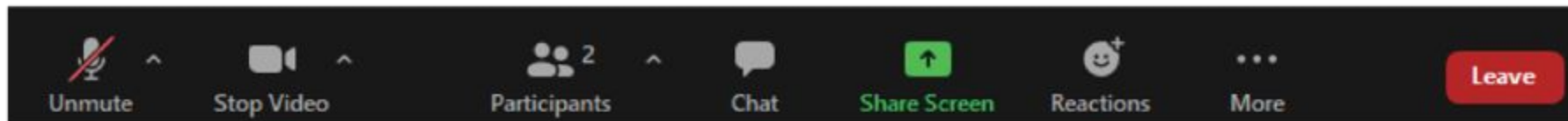


Click the link in the chat to sign in

Or scan:



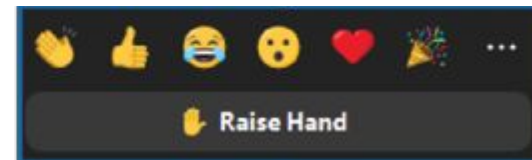
GETTING TO KNOW ZOOM



Please stay **muted** until called on

If you are comfortable you can leave your **video** on

Use **Chat** to comment or ask questions and send to **"O_Information"** in the dropdown menu



Use **Reactions** to **Raise Hand** during the Q&A



Press ***9** to **Raise Hand**

REC

Note: We will be recording this meeting to share online with any interested stakeholders who were not able to attend.

OUR TEAM

PROJECT LEAD:

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT (CDD)

Melissa Peters, Chief of Planning Strategy

Drew Kane, Senior City Planner

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:

CDD - EOD (Economic Opportunity and Development) Division

CDD - Environment & Transportation Division

CDD - Housing Division

CDD - Zoning & Development Division

CDD - Community Planning Division

DPW - Dept. of Public Works

TPT (Traffic, Parking, and Transportation)

CHC - Cambridge Historical Commission

DHSP - Department of Human Services Program (Council on Aging and Commission for Persons with Disabilities)

CDD CET - Community Engagement Team

GIS - Geographic Information System

CONSULTANT TEAM:

INTERFACE STUDIO

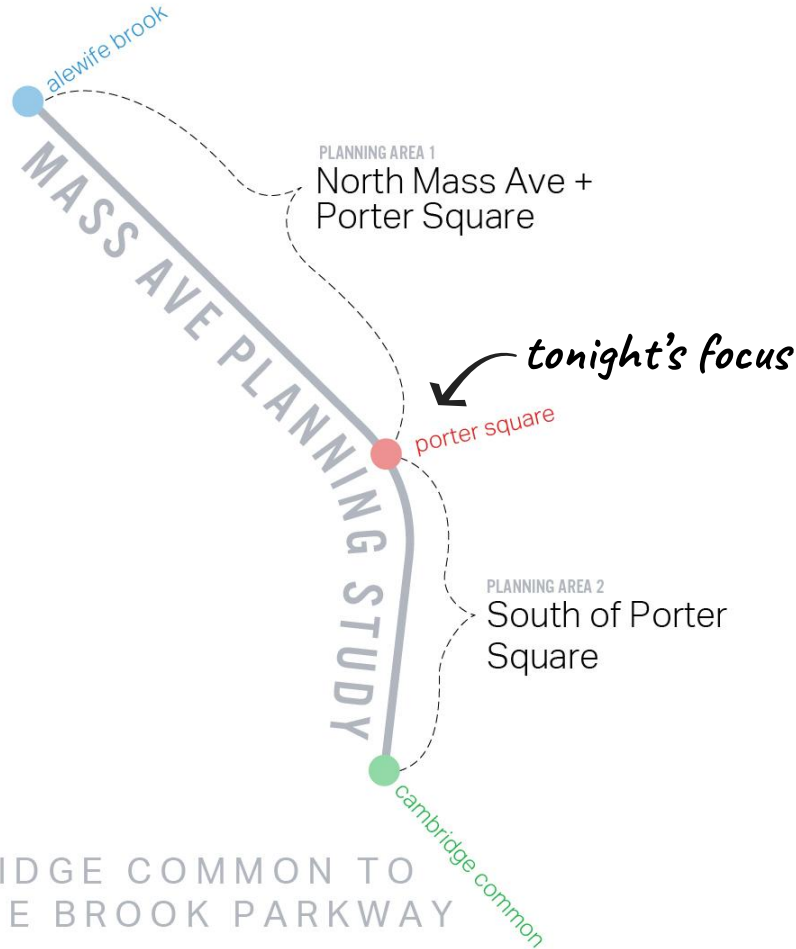
Lead, planning and urban design

CAMBRIDGESEVEN

Architecture

CONSULTECON

Real estate and housing



CAMBRIDGE COMMON TO
ALEWIFE BROOK PARKWAY

AGENDA

- 01** Project Background Recap
Study Area and Process
- 02** The Future of Porter Square
Community Process
- 03** Draft Urban Design
Recommendations + Breakout
- 04** Draft Zoning Recommendations +
Breakout

PROJECT BACKGROUND

OUR CHARGE:

**WHAT DOES
MASS AVE
LOOK LIKE 15
YEARS FROM
NOW?**

... and HOW do we get there?

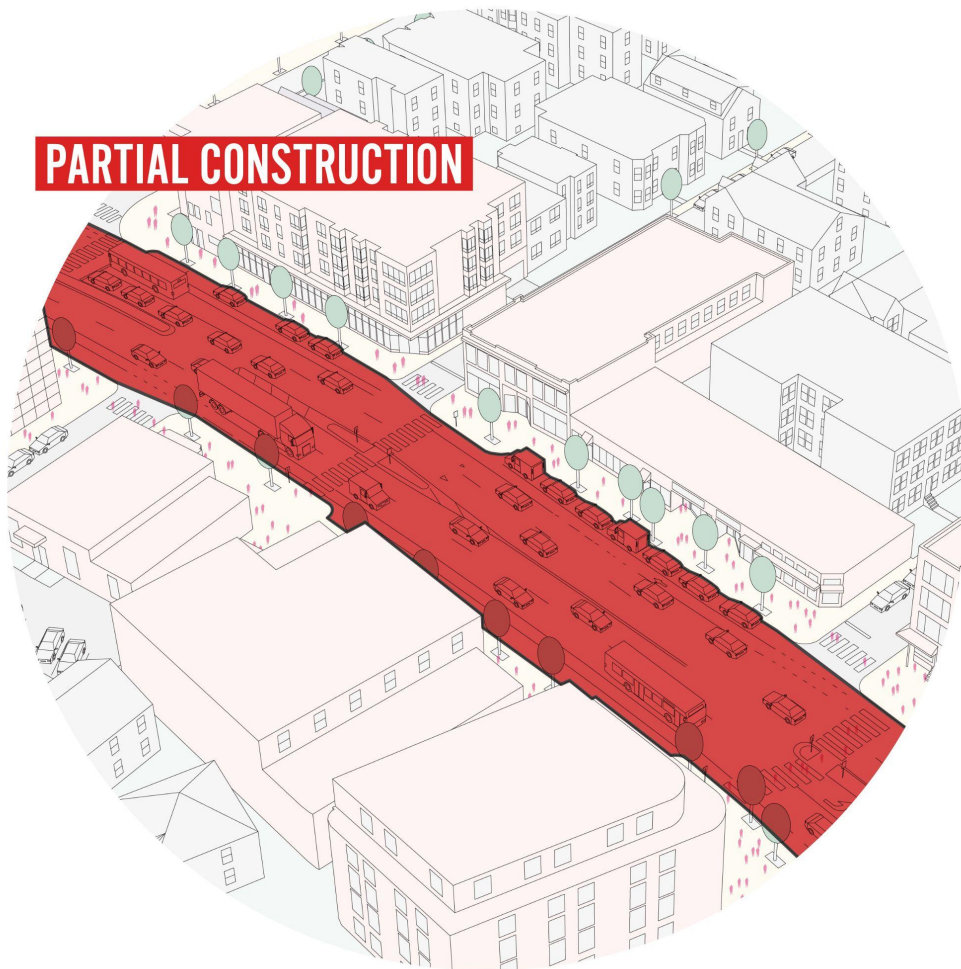
- Prioritization of goals and implementation
- Coordination with other planning initiatives
- Policy recommendations
- Proposed changes in zoning
- Complementing future Citywide Design Guidelines
- Long term infrastructure projects (public realm, open spaces, sidewalks, etc)

OUR ROLES:

WE ARE ALL
CONTRIBUTING
TO A COMMON
VISION AND
GOALS

ROLES CLARIFICATION

- **The Community** is informing the goals and strategies of the plan
- **Working Group** is a representative body that serves as a sounding board that guides and advises the planning efforts
- **Planning Department** is authoring the plan
- **City Council** is the deciding body and adopts proposed policy changes
- **City Departments** are implementing the plan



The Mass Ave Partial Construction is focused on the near term street design of Mass Ave, curb to curb. The project was initiated in response to the city's Cycling Safety Ordinance (CSO) and includes:

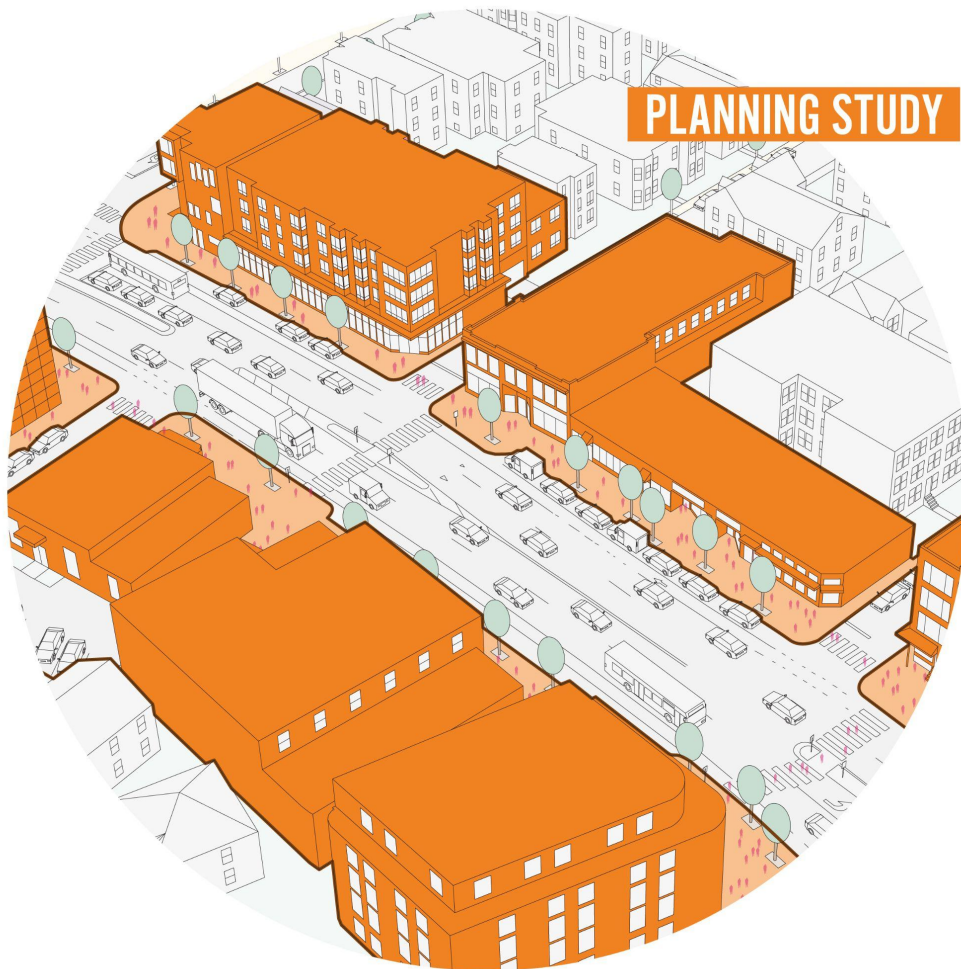
- The design of **separated bicycle lanes**
- Evaluating existing crossing locations for pedestrians and recommendations for additional crossing opportunities
- Curb use regulations (i.e., understand where parking/stopping/loading is possible and not possible)
- Options for bus priority to reduce travel times and improving the reliability of MBTA buses

For more information:

cambridgema.gov/massavepartialconstruction

Questions or comments? Contact:

massave4@cambridgema.gov



This Mass Ave Planning Study (MAPS) is a planning effort help map Mass Ave's future for the next 15 years and will focus on areas including:

- Increasing density & housing opportunities along the corridor
- Addressing affordability issues
- Supporting small & local businesses
- Creating and enhancing vibrant sidewalks & public spaces

For more information:
www.cambridgema.gov/massaveplan

Questions or comments? Contact:
Drew Kane, Senior City Planner
dkane@cambridgema.gov

FOUR CONCURRENT CITY INITIATIVES



For more information on the Partial Construction:

cambridgema.gov/massavepartialconstruction

Questions or comments? Contact: massave4@cambridgema.gov



PHASE 1 PROJECT KICKOFF

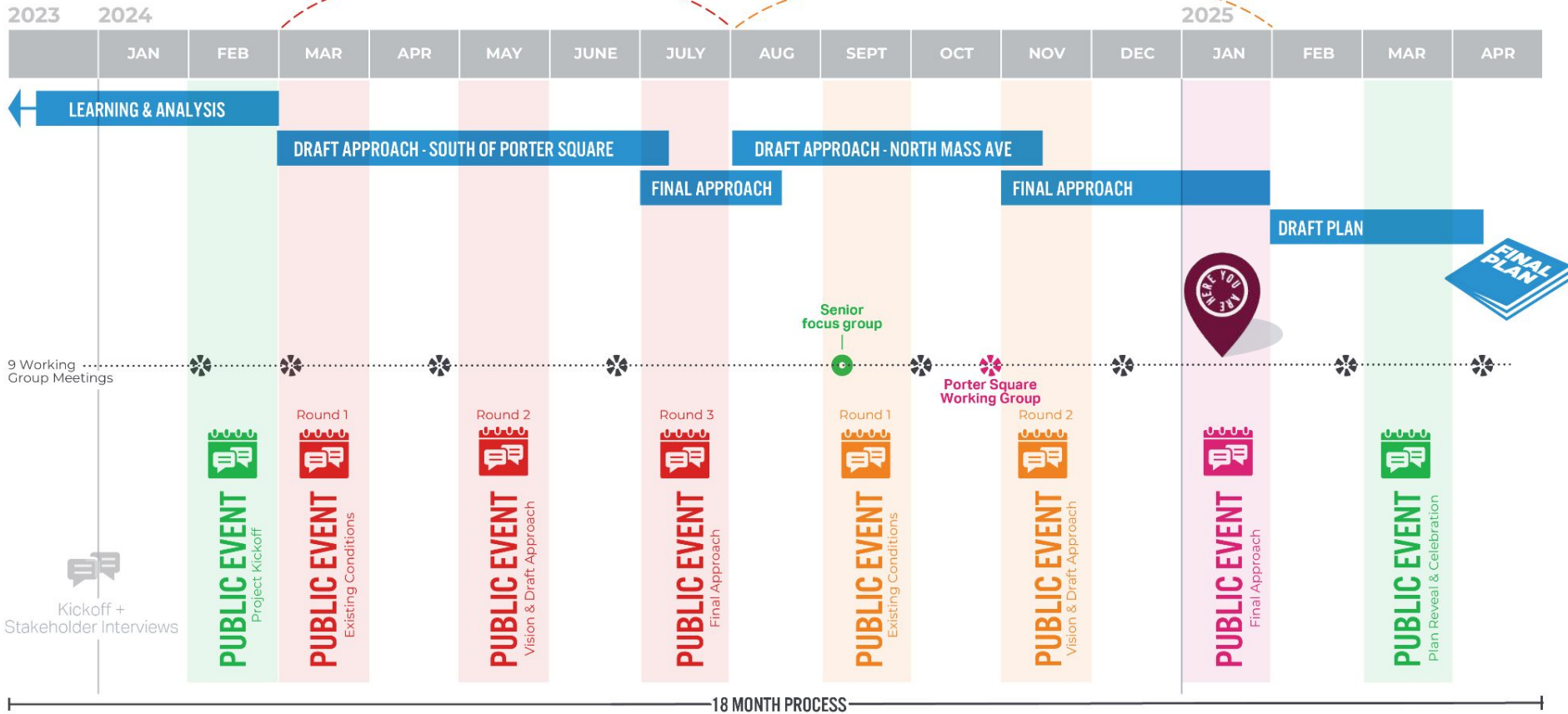
PHASE 2

SOUTH OF PORTER SQUARE

PHASE 3

NORTH MASS AVE + PORTER SQUARE

PHASE 4 FINAL PLAN

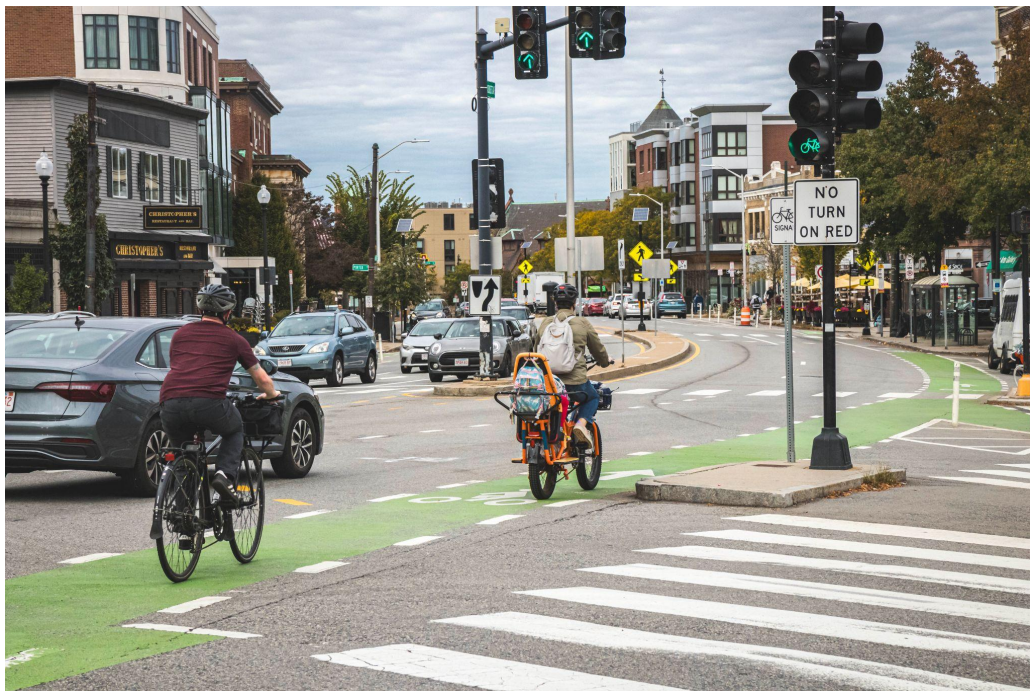


The Rand Estate, 1813 - 1952



The Porter Square Shopping Center, opened in 1956





COMMUNITY INPUT

WHAT HAVE WE HEARD ABOUT PORTER SQUARE?

PORTER SQUARE SUMMARY OF WHAT WE HEARD

SHOW PS SOME LOVE

"The old rotating overhead sculpture could use some revitalizing freshening."

"No one really occupy this space. Needs more greenery"

PROVIDE BETTER OPEN SPACE

"Porter Square seriously needs a sizable plaza-type area that supports gathering/is inviting to hang out in, instead of smaller barely used/poorly activated spaces like this one scattered about."

"The current layout is a concrete jungle, unpleasant to be in.."

MORE SQUARE/LESS PARKING

"It would be great if Porter could be a pleasant place to be when not in a car, but as it is, every corner feels like an island in a sea of traffic."

"Right now this isn't even a 'square'. It's a parking lot."

"I think the top priority should be finding ways to make this area more pedestrian- and cyclist-friendly."

BUILD UP

"Can we change zoning and be creative about having a multi use space in Porter that incorporates housing over existing retail space and finding clever solutions that allow for parking and account for influx in cars."

"Probably a bit further out, but consider air rights development over the tracks approaching Porter!"

"1 story buildings are a missed opportunity. Adjust zoning so that all the beautiful buildings currently along the corridor are legal again, and more."

How should the corridor evolve in the next 15 years?

MORE OF A NEIGHBORHOOD & DESTINATION

Reframe the corridor as a **livable walkable neighborhood** with improved amenities, including green spaces and places for children. There's also more pop-up shops, events, and active storefronts to create a **more vibrant atmosphere**.

MORE INVITING

Focus on creating a **more attractive** Mass Ave and public spaces through greening, public artwork, wider sidewalks, and adding more benches.

EASIER TO GET AROUND

Aim for a balanced and integrated transportation network that **prioritizes pedestrians** and improves accessibility.

MORE HOUSING OPTIONS

Balance density and traffic concerns with the need for **more housing development along Mass Ave**. Address the need for affordable housing, particularly for seniors, and integrate it into the existing neighborhood fabric.

**MORE OF A
NEIGHBORHOOD
& DESTINATION**

**ZONING ALLOWS
FOR GREATER HEIGHT
FOR POTENTIAL
HOUSING**

**URBAN DESIGN
GUIDELINES
ENCOURAGE
CONTEXT SENSITIVE
DESIGN**

**EVENTS +
POP UPS**

**MORE VIBRANT
ATMOSPHERE**

**RESTORED
PUBLIC
ART**

**MORE
HOUSING
OPTIONS**

**MORE
INVITING**

**MORE
TREES +
PLANTINGS**

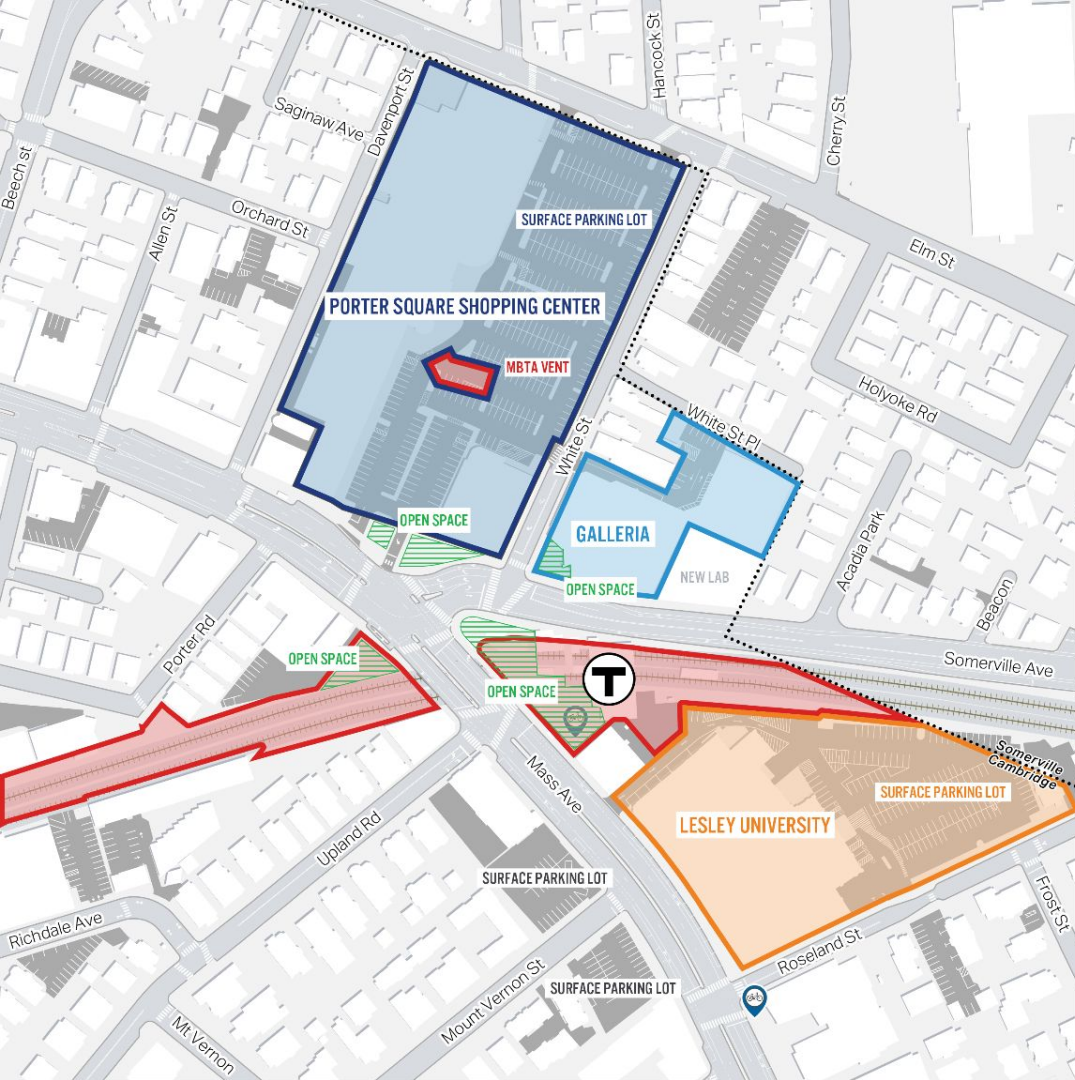
**IMPROVE
ACCESSIBILITY**

**EASIER TO
GET
AROUND**

**PRIORITIZE
PEDESTRIANS**





Porter Square Vision






THE FUTURE OF PORTER SQUARE



PORTER SQUARE CONTEXT

Interface Studio, August 2024

-  Rail
-  City Boundary
-  Blue Bike Station
-  MBTA Station

-  Green/Open Space
-  Porter Square Shopping Center
-  Porter Square Galleria
-  MBTA
-  Lesley University



An aerial photograph of a city street grid, likely Porter Square, showing a mix of residential and commercial buildings, trees, and parking lots. The image is slightly faded to serve as a background for the text.

Zoning Principles for Porter Square

1. **Remains a retail destination** that preserves space for small businesses and large format retail opportunities (i.e. supermarket)
2. **Provides more housing**
3. Creates a **more connected and walkable place** that breaks up the super block
4. Explores a **shared district parking** model
5. Includes a 'significant' **open space**
6. **Simplify the code**



1. REMAINS A COMMERCIAL DESTINATION



2. PROVIDES MORE HOUSING

COMPARABLE MIXED USE SITES



Mass and Main



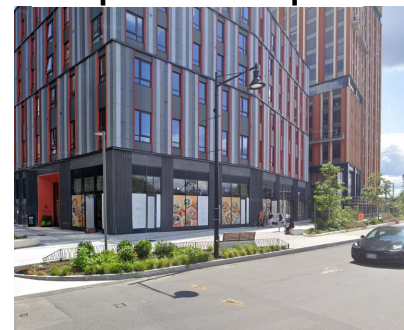
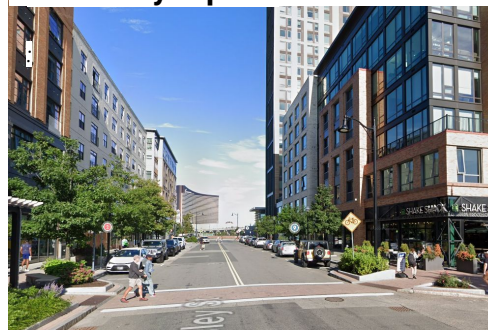
Cambridge Commons

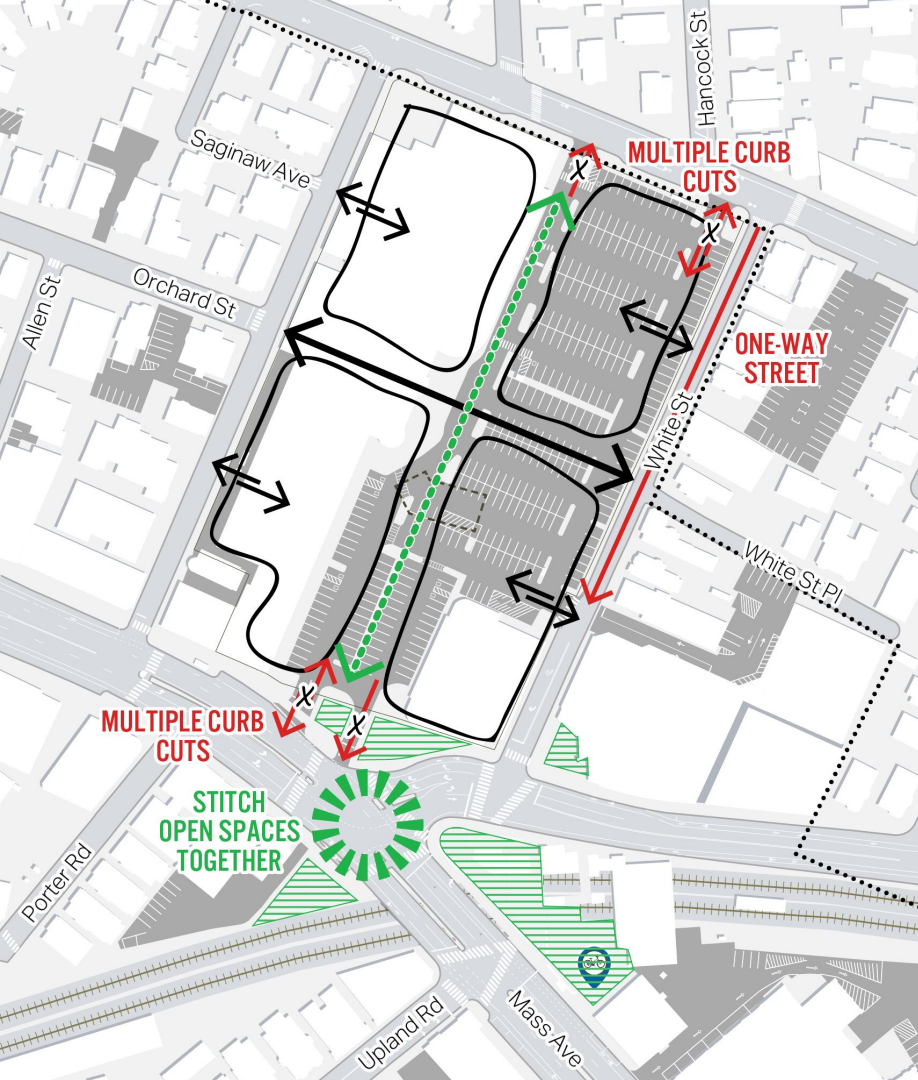


Assembly Square



Prospect Union Square





3. MORE CONNECTED & WALKABLE

Explore future potential to:

- Remove curb cuts on Mass Ave and Elm St to limit pedestrian/bike conflicts
- Remove loading on Davenport
- Create a pedestrian/bike connection directly from Somerville to Porter Square
- Connect Orchard St and White St.

- Address access issues
- Provide opportunities for connection
- Create an open space network

4. EXPLORES A SHARED PARKING MODEL



Parking is screened from view with a mix of shops and residences. Rooftop solar panels on the parking garage provide energy savings and cooling benefits.

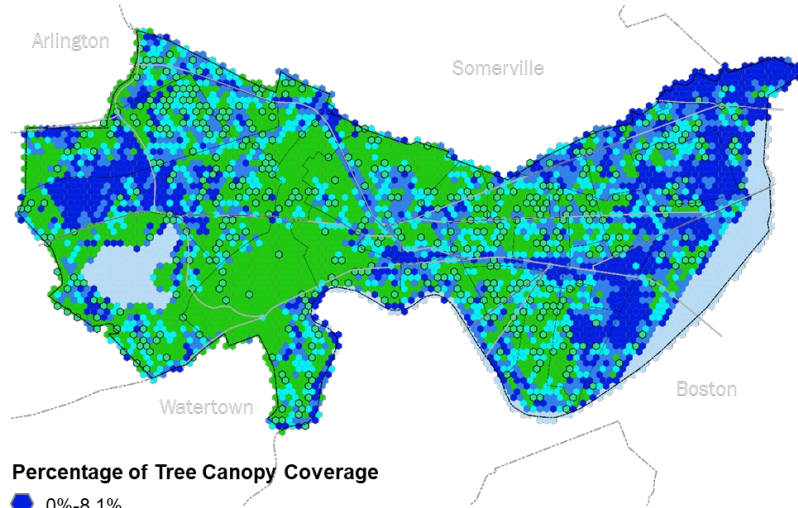


Pike & Rose shopping center redevelopment with an example of a new wrapped parking deck

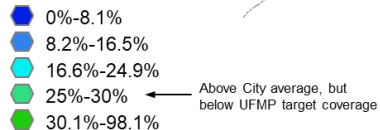
5. INCLUDES A SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

Tree Canopy Density

When evaluating improvements to parks, or locating new parks, increasing the tree canopy can provide shade and cooling.

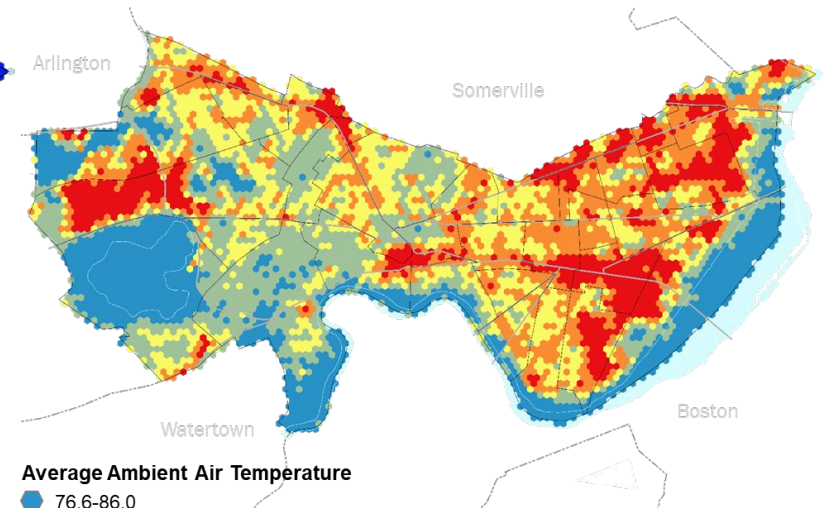


Percentage of Tree Canopy Coverage

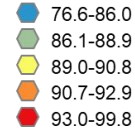


Urban Heat Island

Finding opportunities to reduce heat in open spaces, or building new open spaces, can help to reduce localized temperatures.

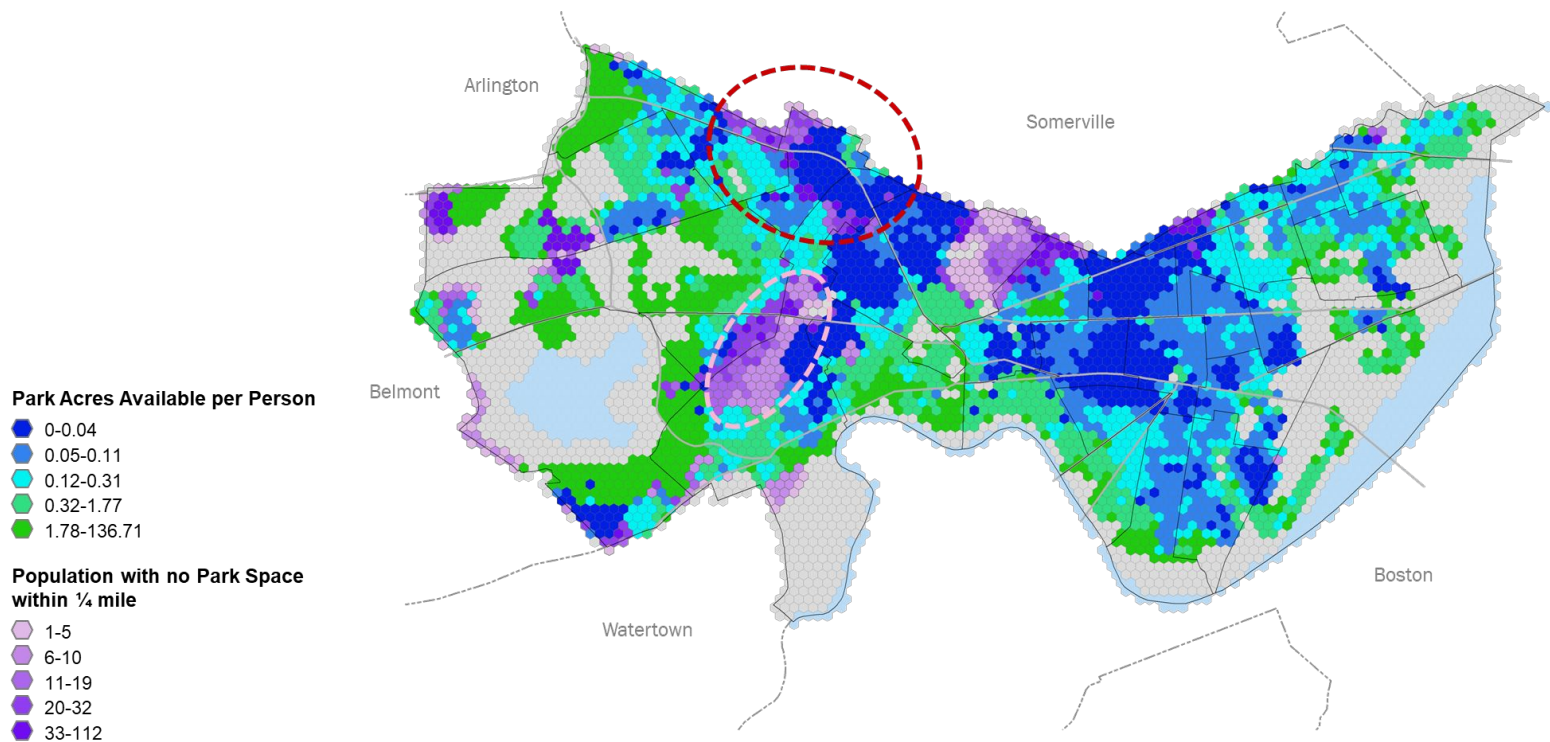


Average Ambient Air Temperature

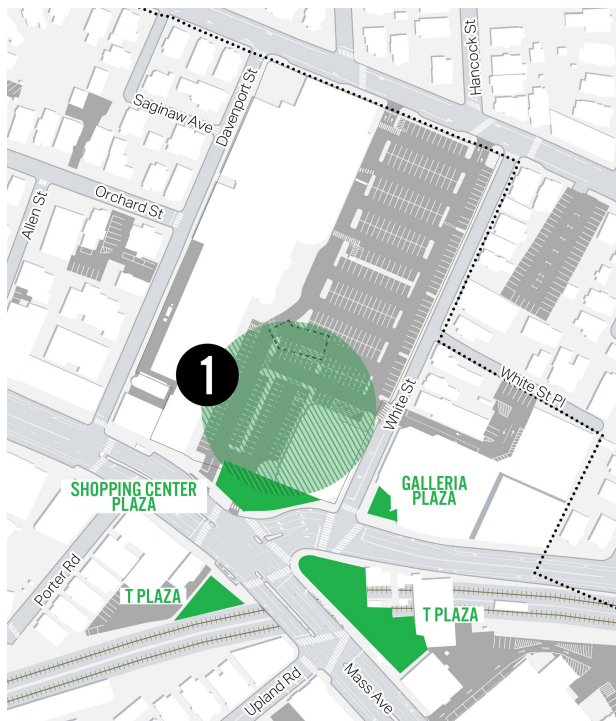


5. INCLUDES A SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

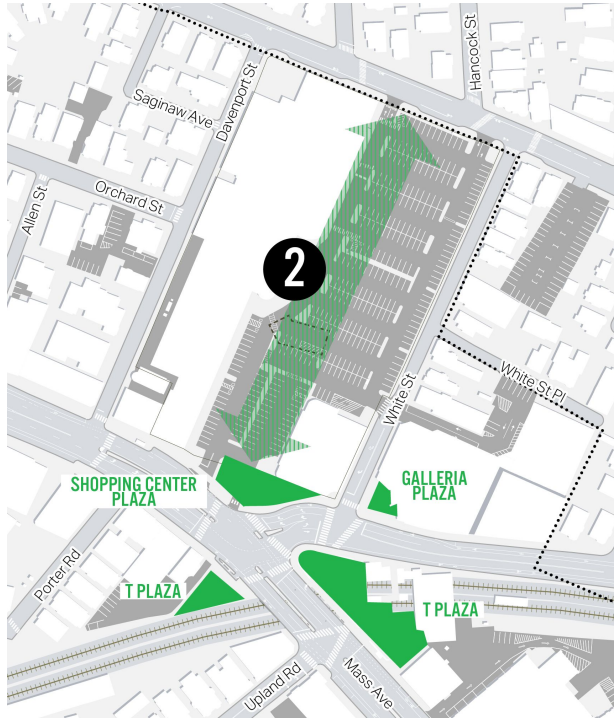
Accessible Open Space Per Resident



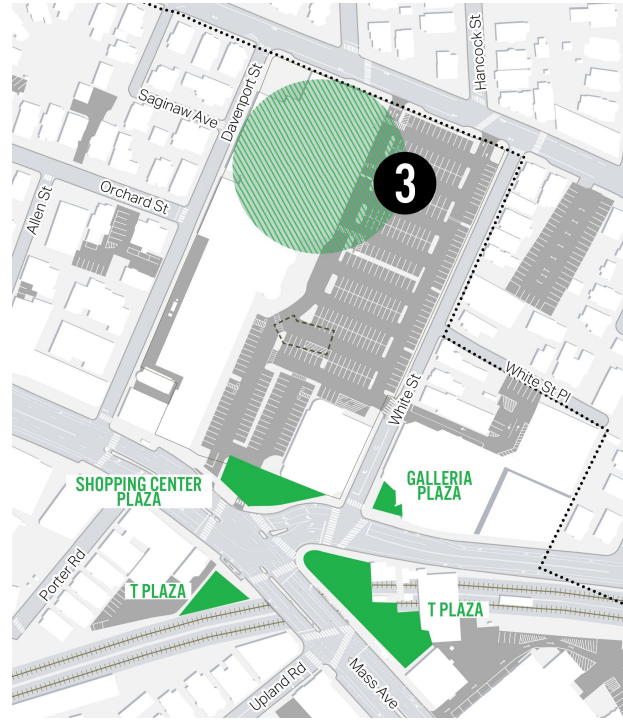
5. INCLUDES A SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC OPEN SPACE



- 1** OPEN SPACE FRONTING MASS AVE MORE CIVIC/PUBLIC IN NATURE AND HAS A RELATIONSHIP TO THE T



- 2** OPEN SPACE INTERNAL CONNECTIVE OPEN SPACE CONNECTS NEIGHBORHOODS



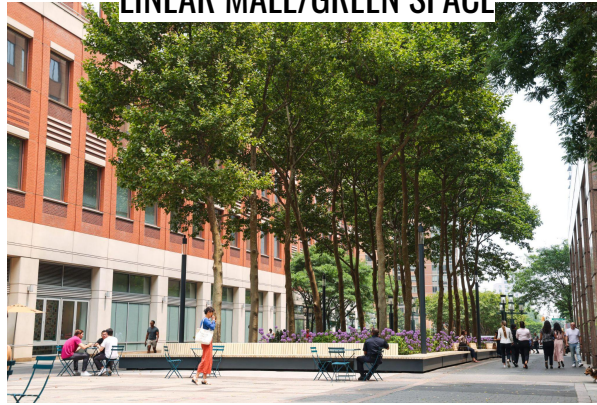
- 3** OPEN SPACE OFF MASS AVE THAT FEELS MORE NEIGHBORHOOD ORIENTED

5. INCLUDES A SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

PROGRAMMABLE PLAZA



LINEAR MALL/GREEN SPACE



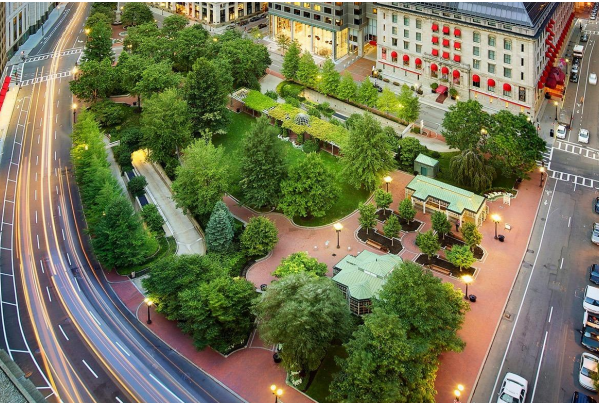
NEIGHBORHOOD PARK



Think about a potential public space at Porter Square. What would you do there?

5. INCLUDES A SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

POST OFFICE SQUARE, BOSTON – 1.7 acres



Many uses and spaces in a small site



A social destination for everyone



MIX OF USES FOR PORTER SQUARE?

We've heard already that the community would like to see:

- Shopping/Retail/Restaurants
- Housing
- Community Space or Park



Quick Poll: What would you prioritize in addition to shopping, housing and open space?

Rank these uses from 1 to 5, 1 being your highest priority, 5, being your lowest priority:

- Office
- Entertainment (Dance, Nightclub, Theater)
- District Parking
- Hotel
- Lab

BREAKOUT GROUPS

(15 MINUTES)

Main discussion questions:

1. **Where would you locate a new open space and why?**
2. **What would you do there in the future?**

Your feedback is important

Here are the guidelines for tonight's discussion:

- We want to give **as many people as possible the opportunity to be heard**. If you've already had a chance to speak, or if someone else has voiced your comment, please let people with new ideas be heard.
- Respect the experiences of others
- Listen to each other & divergent perspectives
- Stay on topic and strive to be succinct
- Each person has **two minutes** to speak.
- If we're unable to hear from all raised hands, you can **send your comments/questions directly to Drew Kane** by phone: 617-349-4640 or by email: dkane@cambridgema.gov

PORTER SQUARE ZONING POTENTIAL

What is Zoning?

Zoning regulates...

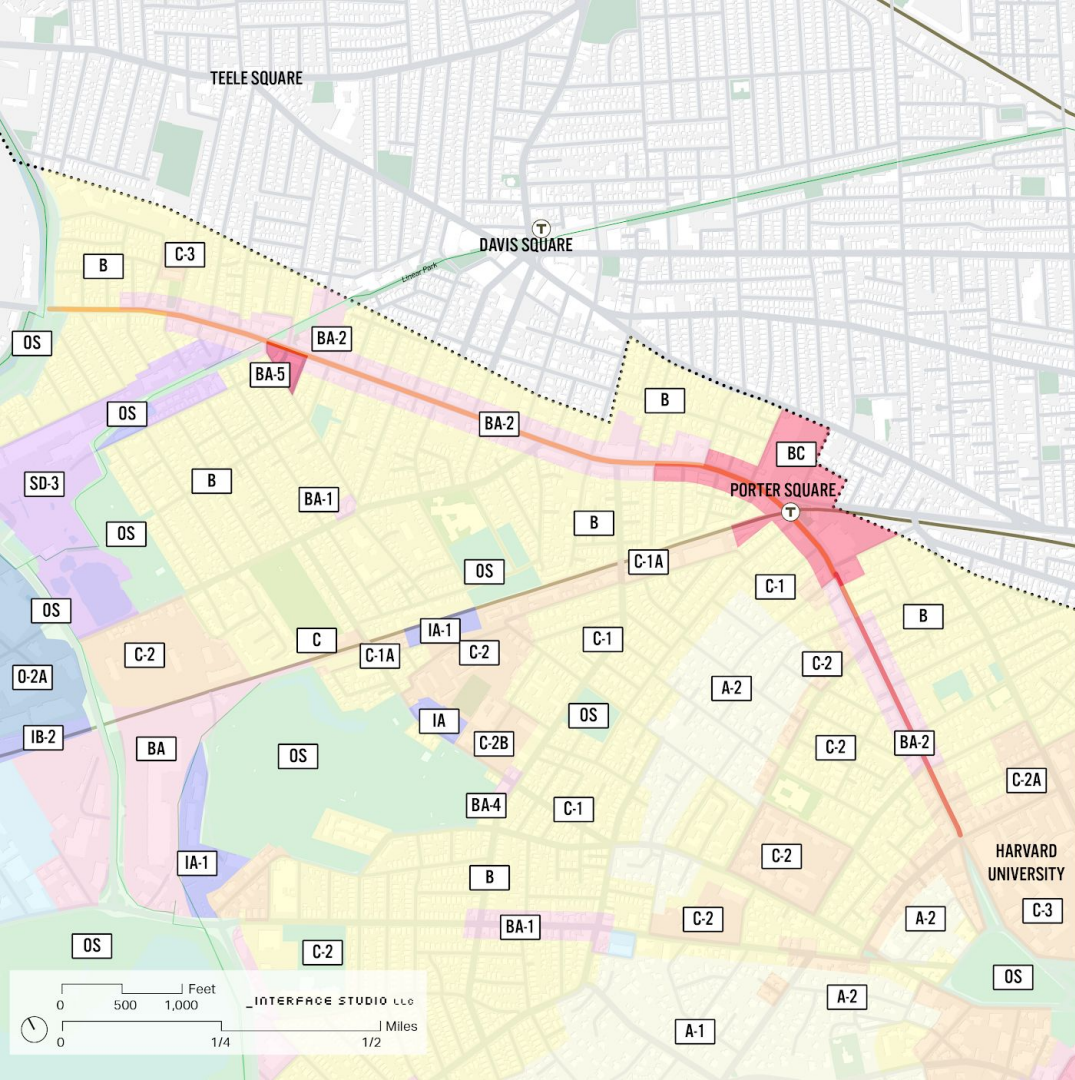
- How land can be used (residential, commercial, etc.)
- Building size and shape
- Where buildings are located on a lot
- Other site or building characteristics (open space, parking, etc.)

Zoning does NOT regulate...

- Who can own land
- How businesses operate
- How buildings are constructed and what materials they use
- Matters subject to other state or federal regulation (e.g., building codes, licensing, taxation)

Zoning can be used to prioritize or incentivize certain uses or site characteristics by relaxing regulations for the uses we want

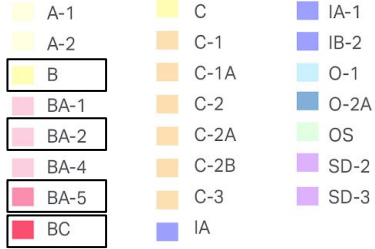
The following slides are to explore potential zoning changes only, there currently are no development plans for Porter Square



ZONING DISTRICTS

Interface Studio, October 2023

Base Zoning



Base Zoning: BC

Dimensional Requirements

Minimum Lot Width (ft)

None

Min lot size (SF)

None

FAR

Commercial 1.25 / Residential 2.0

Height

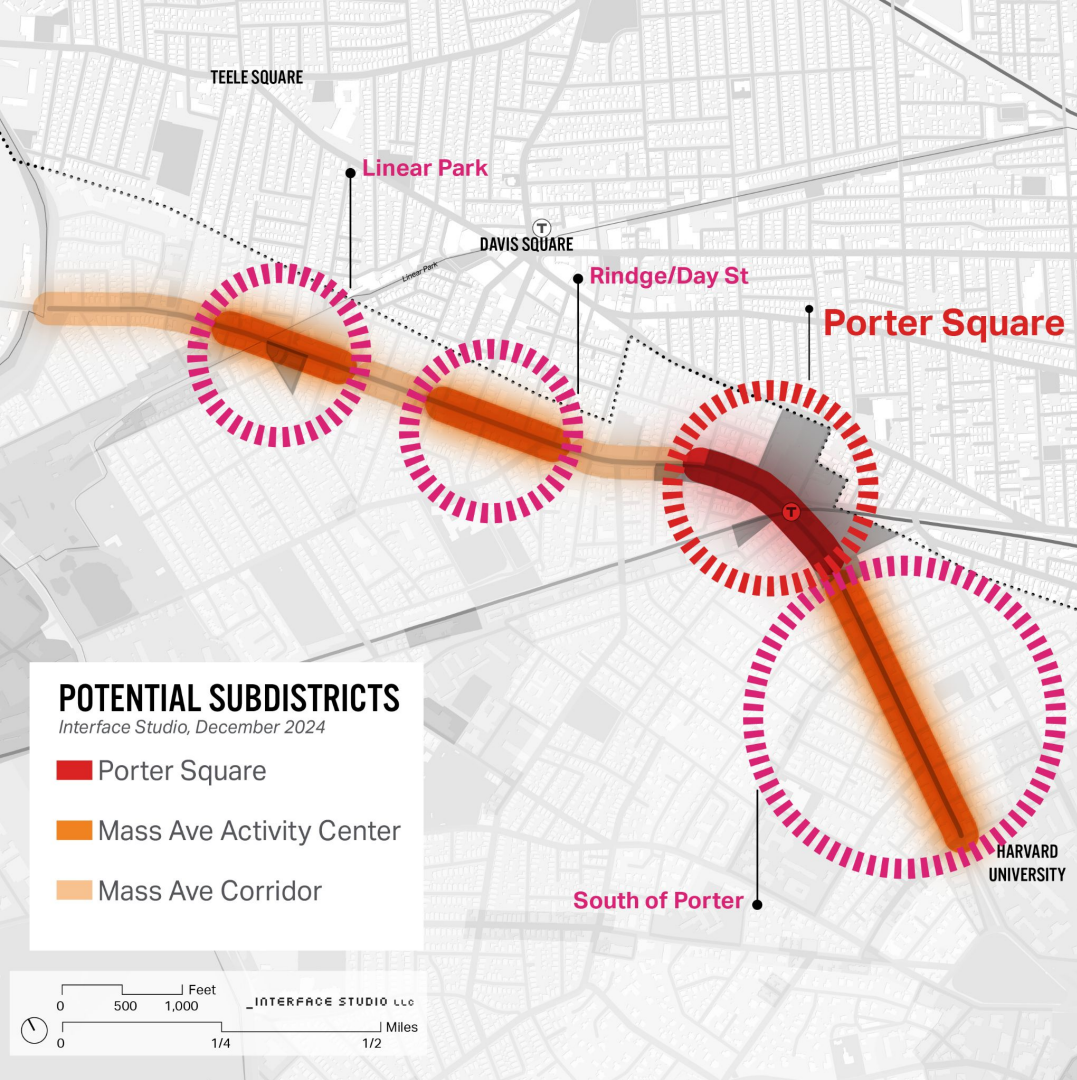
55' Max Height

Setbacks

20' rear

Private Open Space to Lot Area

None



Porter Square Zoning Approach

Porter Square is the main activity center and can support the highest density (up to 18 stories) on the corridor.

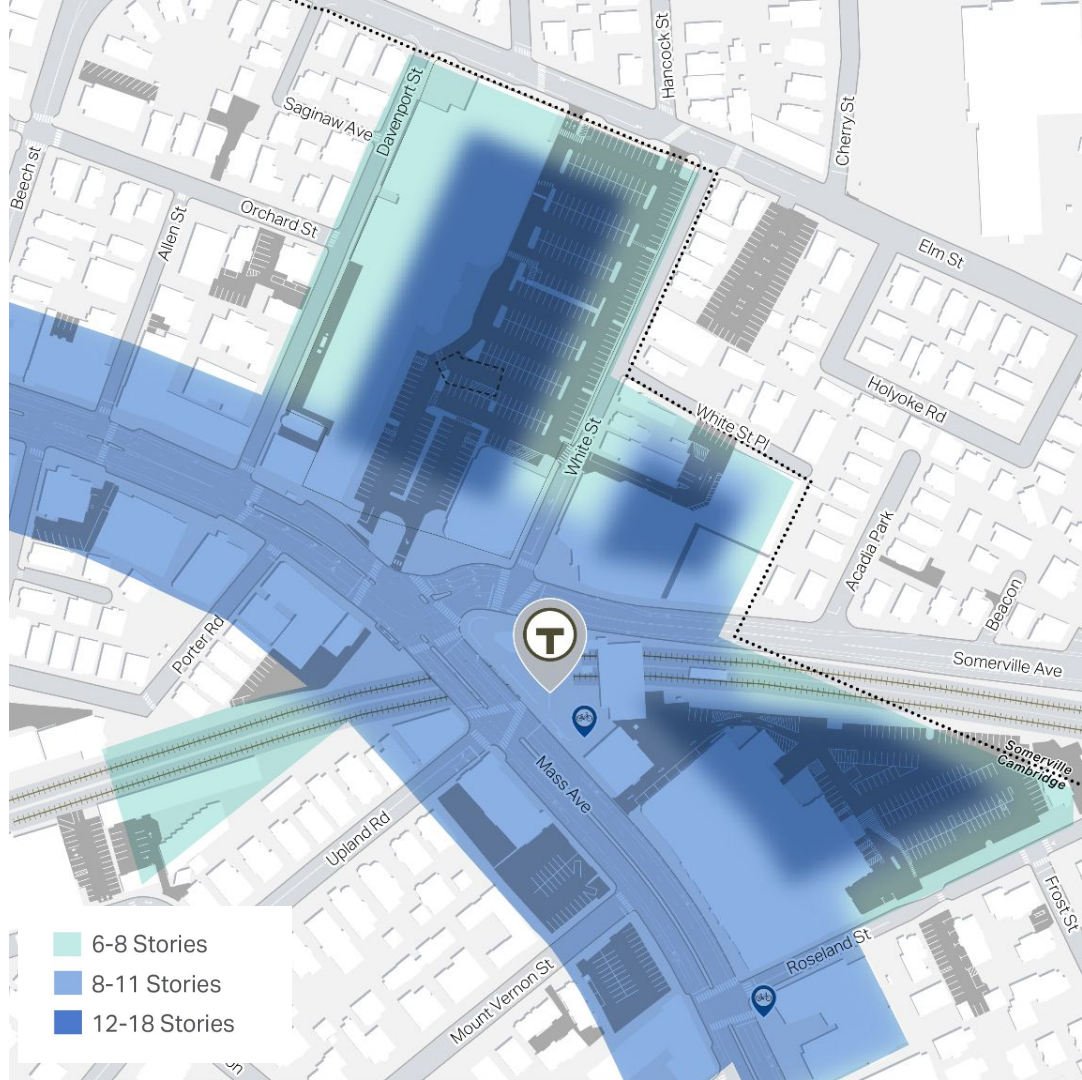
Why?

- Large parcels that can support larger development types
- Adjacency to T (commuter and subway)
- Existing commercial center for the neighborhoods
- Less impact on adjacent neighborhoods

OPTION 1: INTERNAL TO SITE

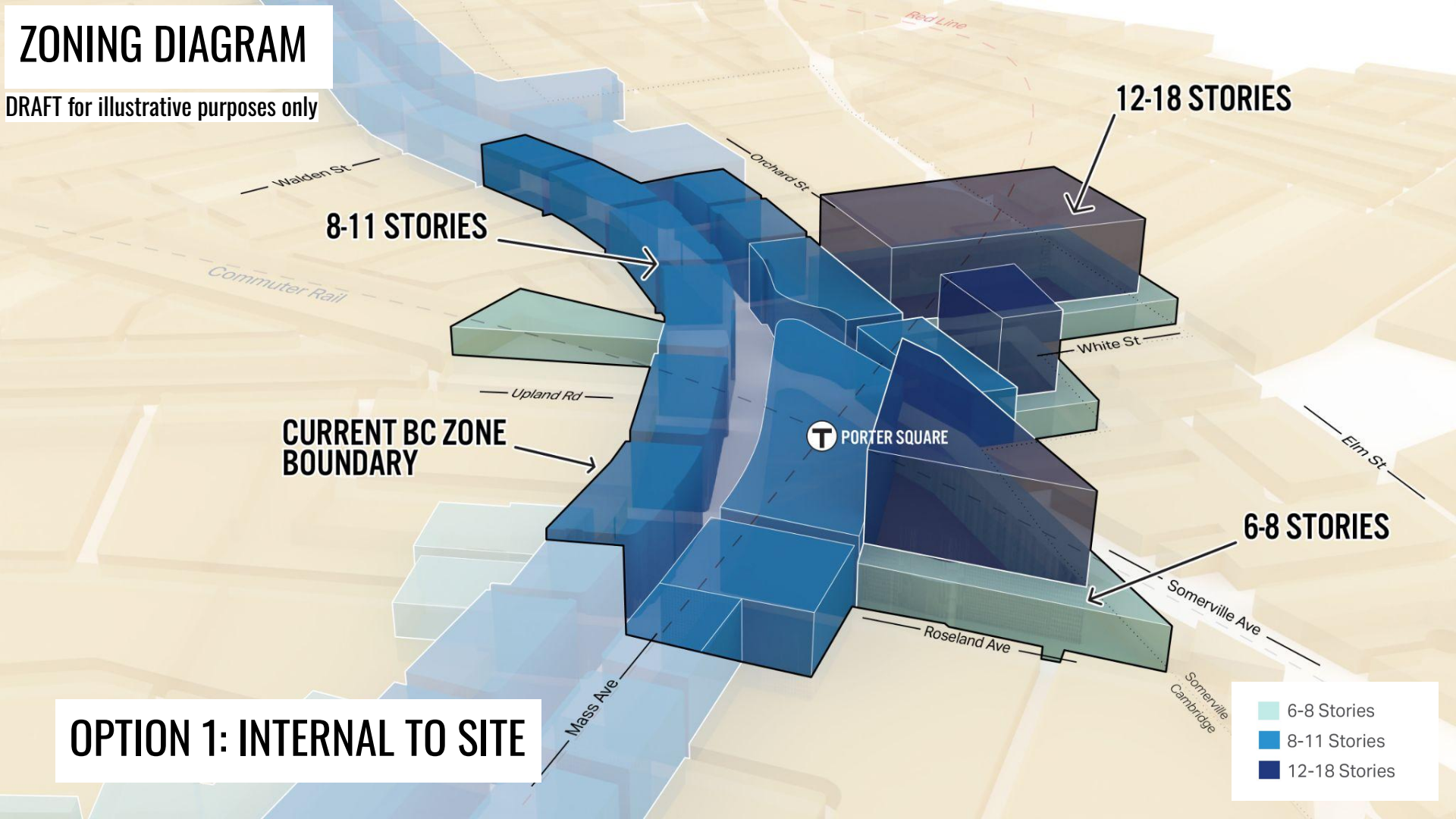
18 story applies to the center of the largest sites

- Advantages:
 - Steps down to surrounding community
 - Maintains 8 to 11-story street wall along Mass Ave
 - Maximizes the amount of density
- Disadvantages:
 - Doesn't provide a signature gateway experience



ZONING DIAGRAM

DRAFT for illustrative purposes only



OPTION 2: RADIAL

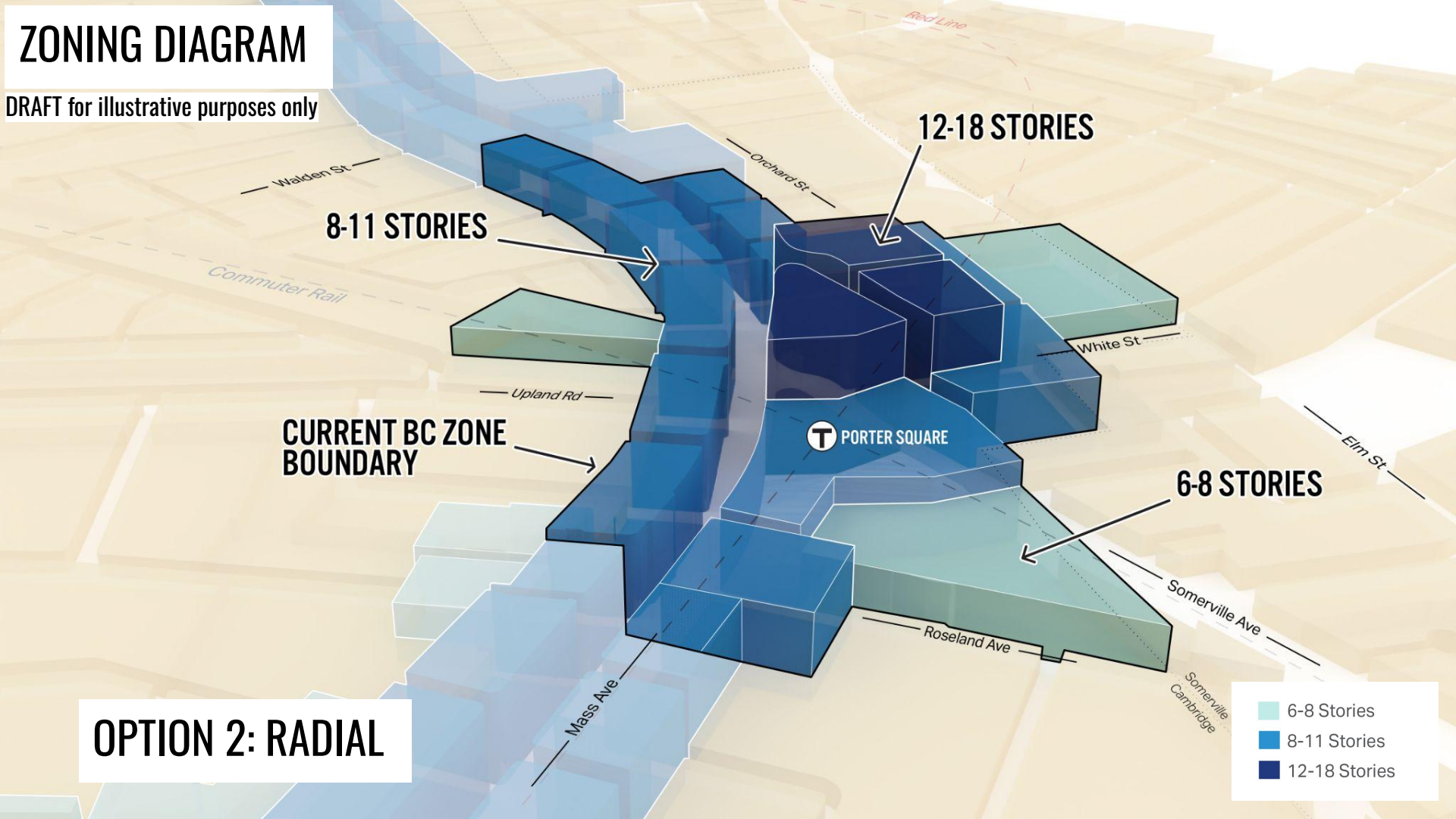
18 story applies closest to the transit center

- Advantages:
 - Steps down to surrounding community
 - Concentrates density closed to the T stop
- Disadvantages:
 - Limits the amount of density

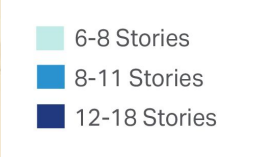


ZONING DIAGRAM

DRAFT for illustrative purposes only



OPTION 2: RADIAL



OPTION 3: LINEAR

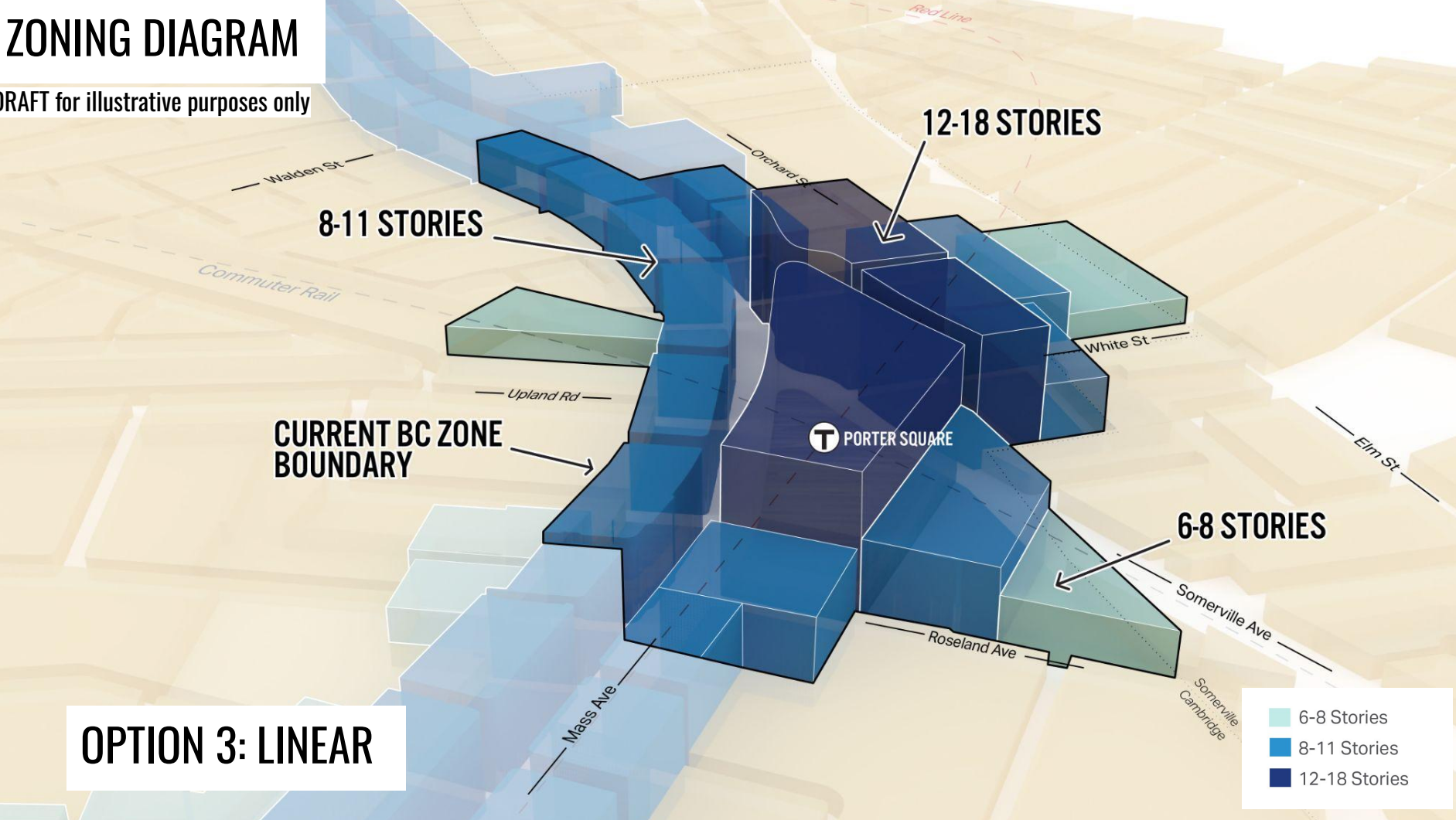
18 story applies closest to Mass Ave on the largest parcels

- Advantages:
 - Steps down to surrounding community
 - Concentrates density closed to the T stop
- Disadvantages:
 - Limits the amount of density



ZONING DIAGRAM

DRAFT for illustrative purposes only



Context Sensitive Design

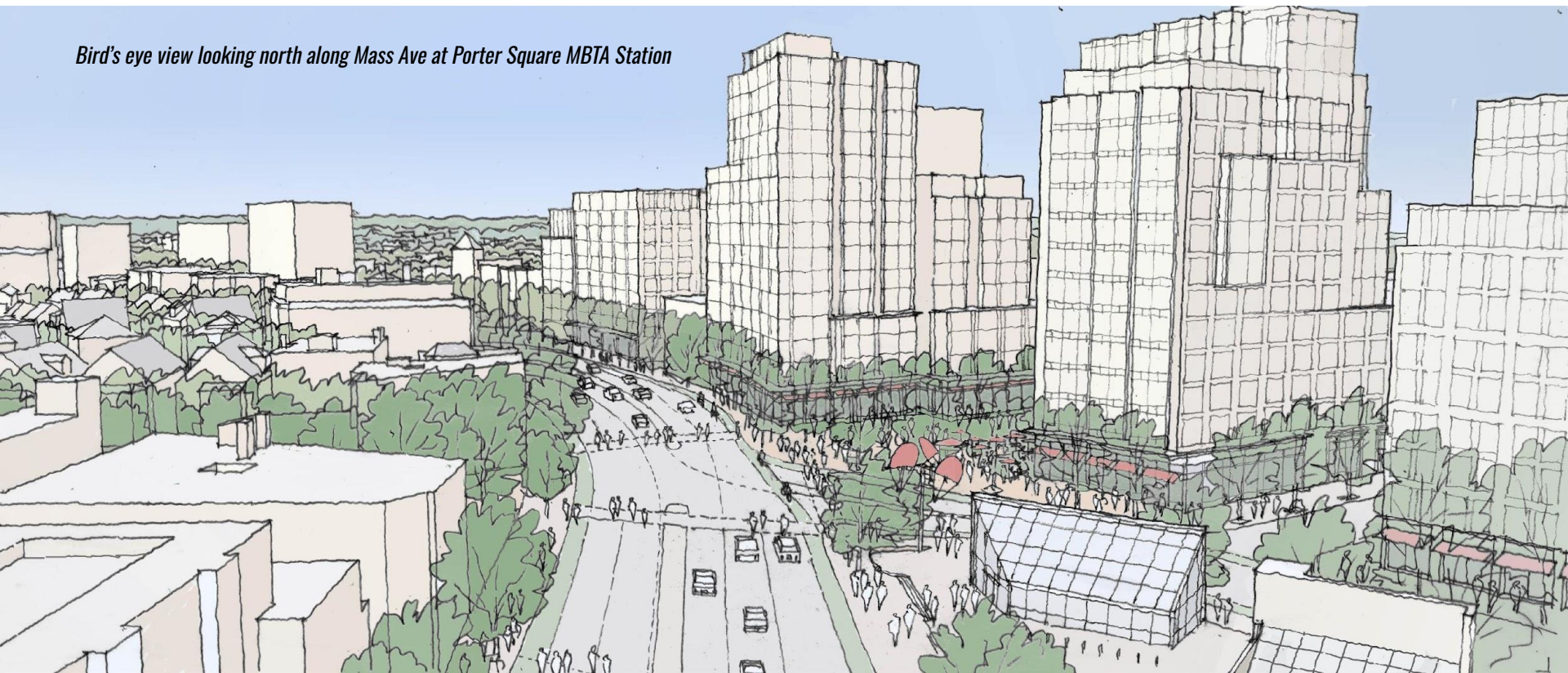


Example from Mass and Main



How could Porter Square evolve over the next 15 years?

Bird's eye view looking north along Mass Ave at Porter Square MBTA Station



DRAFT for illustrative purposes *(not a current development proposal)*



Looking north at Somerville Ave from Porter Square MBTA station

DRAFT for illustrative purposes *(not a current development proposal)*

How could Porter Square evolve over the next 15 years?

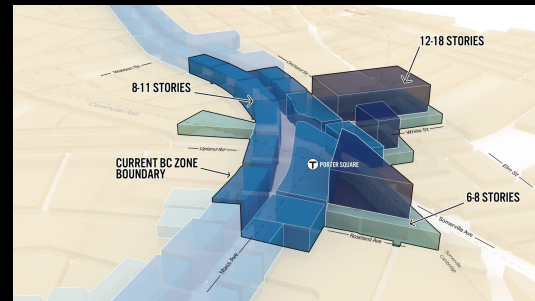
BREAKOUT GROUPS

(30 MINUTES)

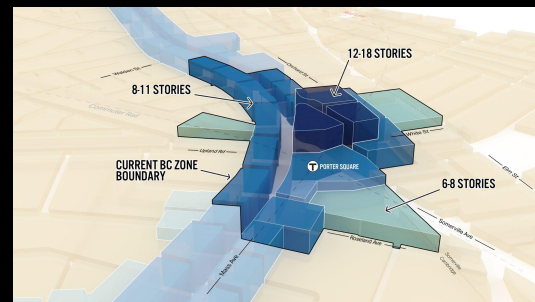
Main discussion questions:

1. **What are your hopes for the future Porter Square?**
2. **What is your preferred option for a zoning approach?**
3. **What should we keep in mind when it comes to taller, higher density development in Porter Square (parking, massing, scale, etc)?**

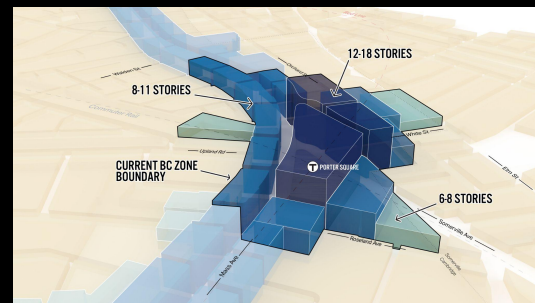
Option 1: Central



Option 2: Radial



Option 3: Linear



Additional Feedback?

Your feedback is important

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- We want to give **as many people as possible the opportunity to be heard**. If you've already had a chance to speak, or if someone else has voiced your comment, please let people with new ideas be heard.
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Visit www.cambridgema.gov/massaveplan to sign up for our email list!

NEXT STEPS

February:

- Reconvene our **Stakeholder Working Group**

March:

- Host the next **Community Meeting** to discuss final recommendations for Mass Ave
- Release **Draft Plan**

April

- Finalize Plan

You can send your comments/questions directly to Drew Kane by phone: 617-349-4640 or by email: dkane@cambridgema.gov

Visit www.cambridgema.gov/massaveplan to sign up for our email list!