

Phase 3:  
Working group

#8

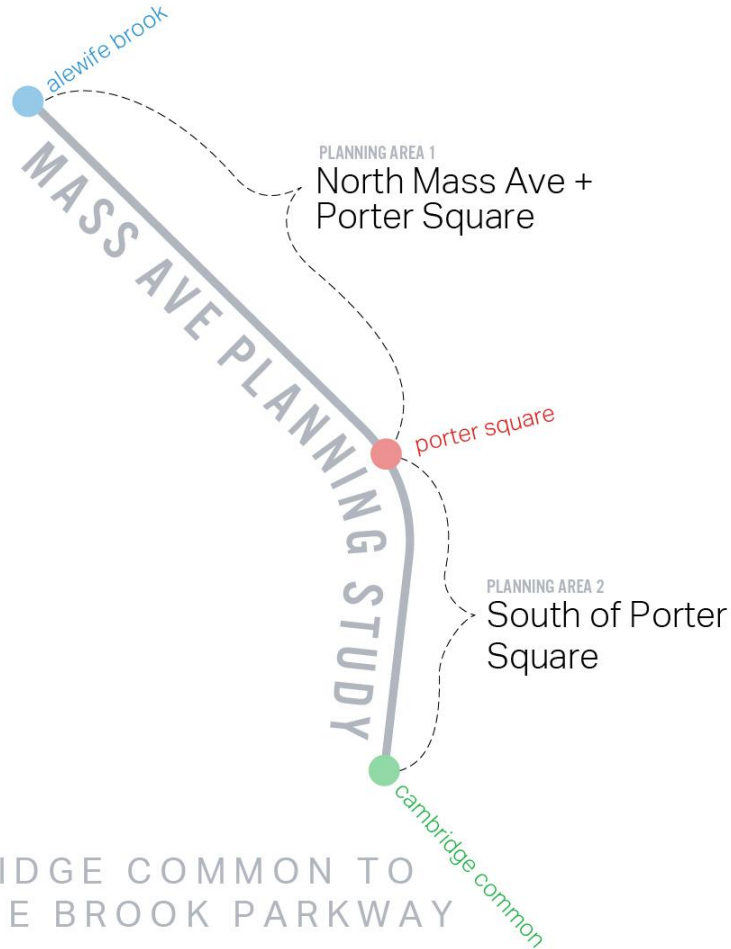
02/26/25

# Welcome!

## WORKING GROUP MEETING 8

**Jannet Arevalo** - resident and urban designer  
**Josiah Bonsey** - resident and local business owner  
**James Burns** - resident  
**Polly Carpenter** - resident and architect  
**Camilla Elvis** - resident  
**Magdalena Gomez** - resident  
**Crystal Klaahsen** - local business owner  
**Sharmil Modi** - commercial property owner and developer  
**Anna Restuccia** - resident  
**Michael Rome** - resident and former business owner  
**Ruth Ryals** - resident and neighborhood association representative  
**David Sullivan** - resident and former City Council member  
**Neheet Trivedi** - resident  
**Mark Verkennis** - institutional representative, Harvard University

*If you are here from the  
general public, you'll be able  
to ask questions at the end  
of the meeting.*



CAMBRIDGE COMMON TO  
ALEWIFE BROOK PARKWAY

# AGENDA

- 01 Project Recap
- 02 Community Input Summary
- 03 Phase 3:  
DRAFT Recommendations  
North Mass Ave and Porter Square
- 04 Next Steps

# PROJECT RECAP

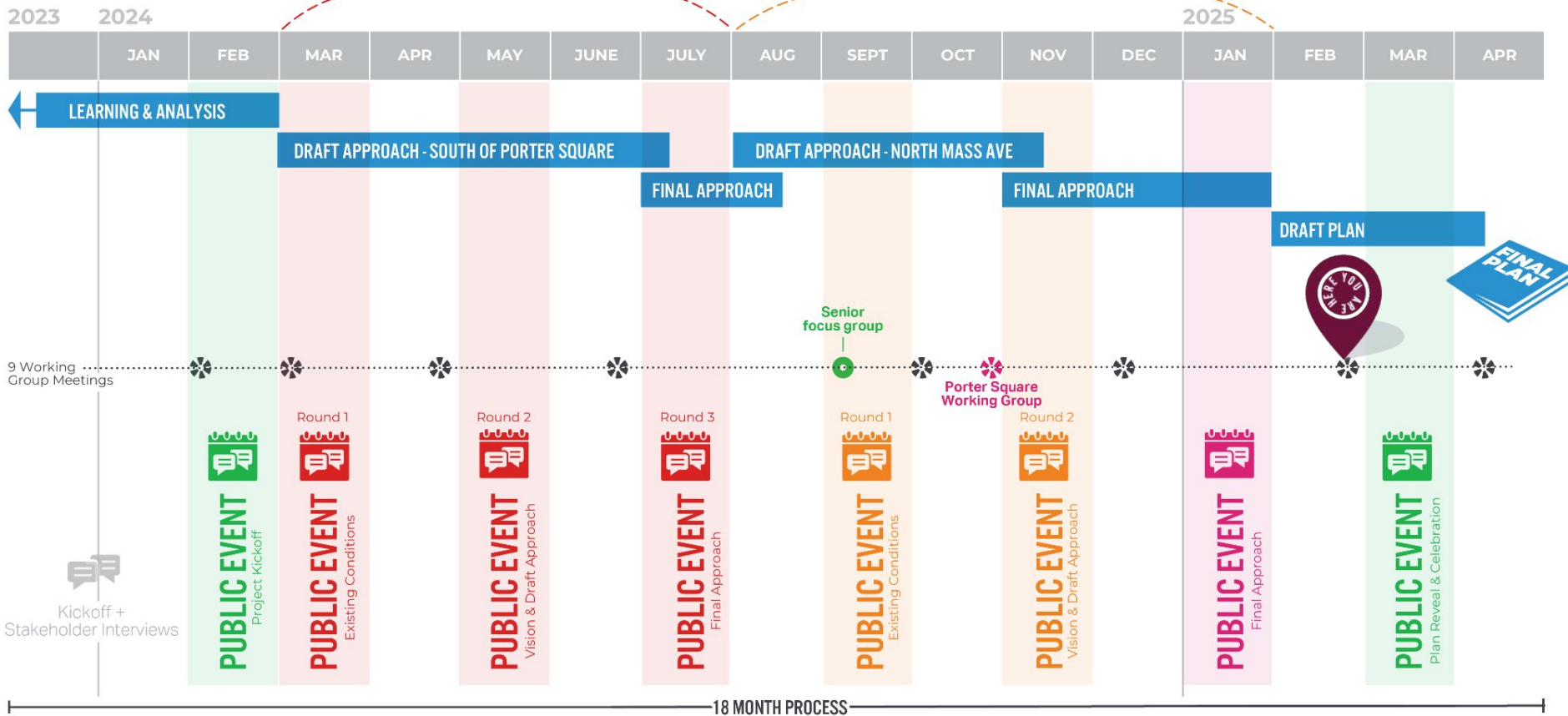


## PHASE 1 PROJECT KICKOFF

## PHASE 2 SOUTH OF PORTER SQUARE

## PHASE 3 NORTH MASS AVE + PORTER SQUARE

## PHASE 4 FINAL PLAN



# OUR CHARGE:

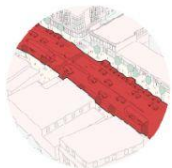
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**WHAT DOES  
MASS AVE  
LOOK LIKE 15  
YEARS FROM  
NOW?**

**... 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)

# FOUR CONCURRENT CITY INITIATIVES



## **PARTIAL CONSTRUCTION**

Planning and Design of the separated bike lanes along Mass Ave

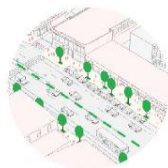
Near term



## **IMPACT STUDY**

Assessing economic impact of bike lanes to businesses along Mass Ave

Annually For The Next Five Years



## **COMBINED SEWER OVERFLOW MITIGATION**

Exploring Green Stormwater Infrastructure Mitigation measures to prevent Combined Sewer Overflow events on North Mass Ave.

Five -10 Years From Now



## **PLANNING STUDY**

Vision plan for the properties surrounding Mass Ave, including Zoning, Urban Design, Housing and Business Supports.



15 Years From Now

# FOUR CONCURRENT CITY INITIATIVES



**For more information on the Partial Construction:**

[cambridgema.gov/massavepartialconstruction](http://cambridgema.gov/massavepartialconstruction)

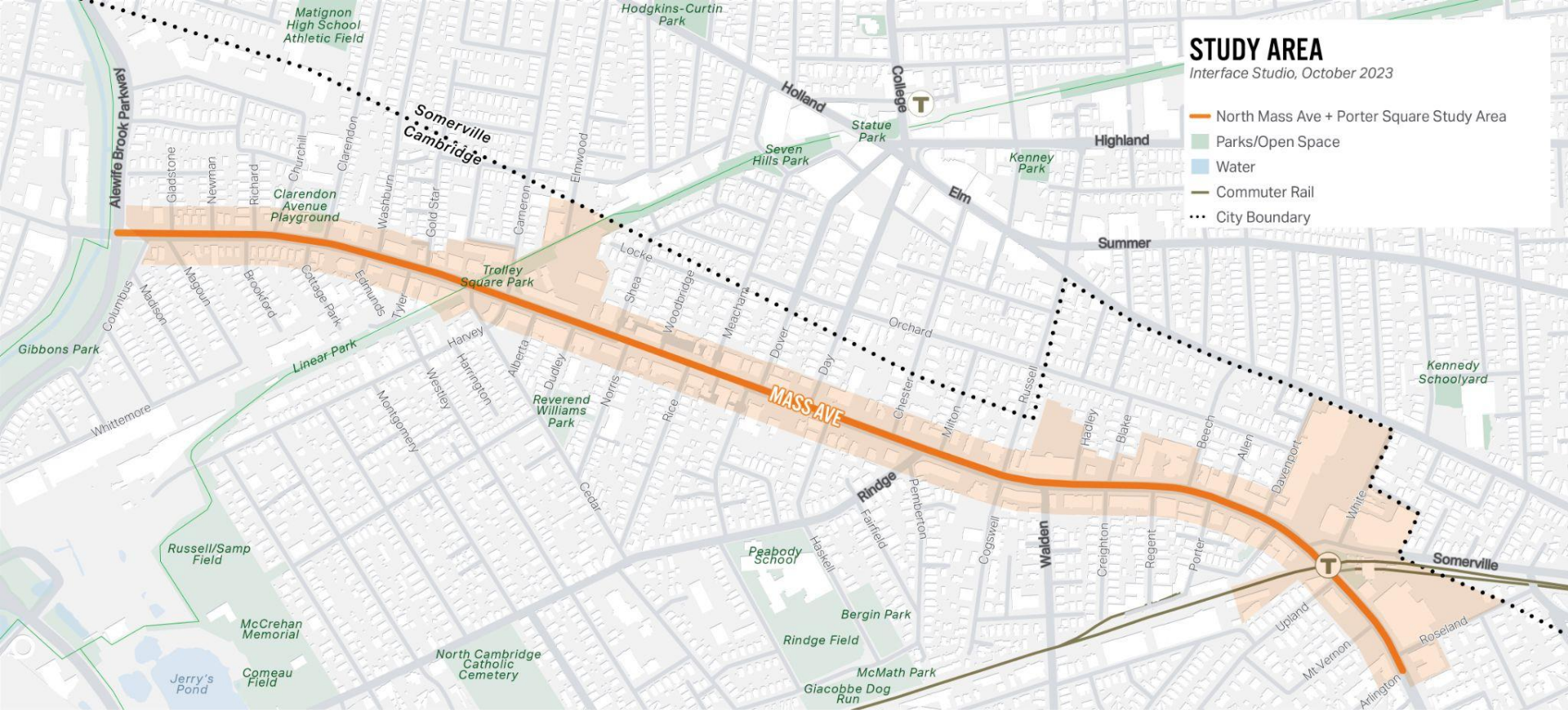
**Questions or comments? Contact:** [massave4@cambridgema.gov](mailto:massave4@cambridgema.gov)



# STUDY AREA

Interface Studio, October 2023

- North Mass Ave + Porter Square Study Area
- Parks/Open Space
- Water
- Commuter Rail
- City Boundary





# PHASE 3 ENGAGEMENT RECAP

## SEPTEMBER 25, 2024 KICK-OFF - VIRTUAL

70+ Attendees / 160 registered

**Kick-off for North Mass Ave and Porter Square, presentation of existing conditions, and conversations around the future of the study area**

## NOVEMBER 13, 2024 @ LESLEY UNIVERSITY

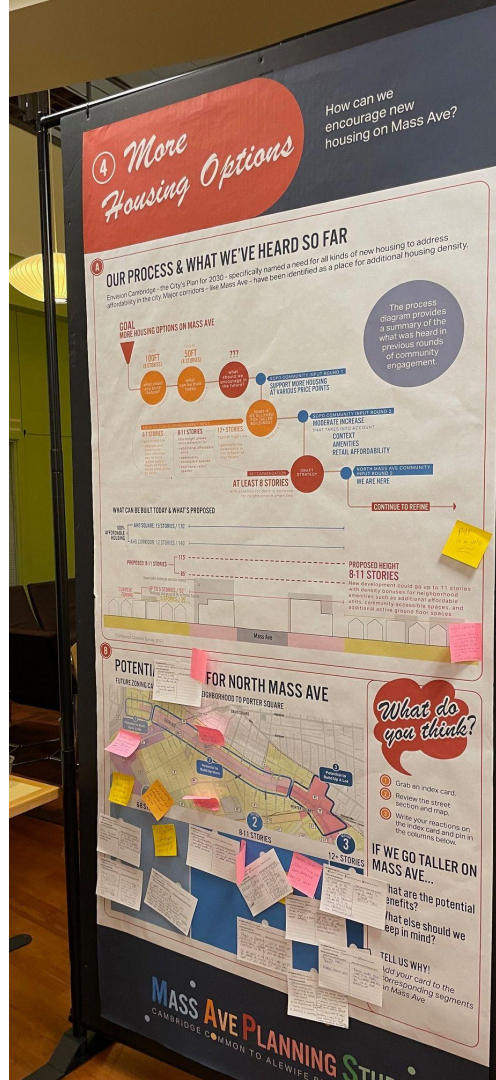
80+ Attendees

**Present draft recommendations for North Mass Ave and gather feedback**

## JANUARY 30, 2025 - VIRTUAL

90+ Attendees / 318 registered

**Present draft recommendations for Porter Square and gather feedback**



# COMMUNITY INPUT

*WHAT HAVE WE HEARD ABOUT NORTH MASS AVE  
AND PORTER SQUARE?*

# NORTH MASS AVE SUMMARY OF WHAT WE HEARD

- South of Porter Square has more students and institutional anchors whereas North Cambridge has more families
- South of Porter Square has a higher density of walkable blocks. North Cambridge is less dense, has more auto oriented (and sometimes destination) business, and more diverse businesses
- Key anchors include Porter Square, Linear Park, Trolley Square and Alewife Brook Parkway
- Heavy focus on pedestrian experience and urban design, particularly as it ties to Porter Square
- Traffic congestion was top of mind



# NORTH MASS AVE OPEN HOUSE

## SUMMARY OF WHAT WE HEARD

### Section 1:

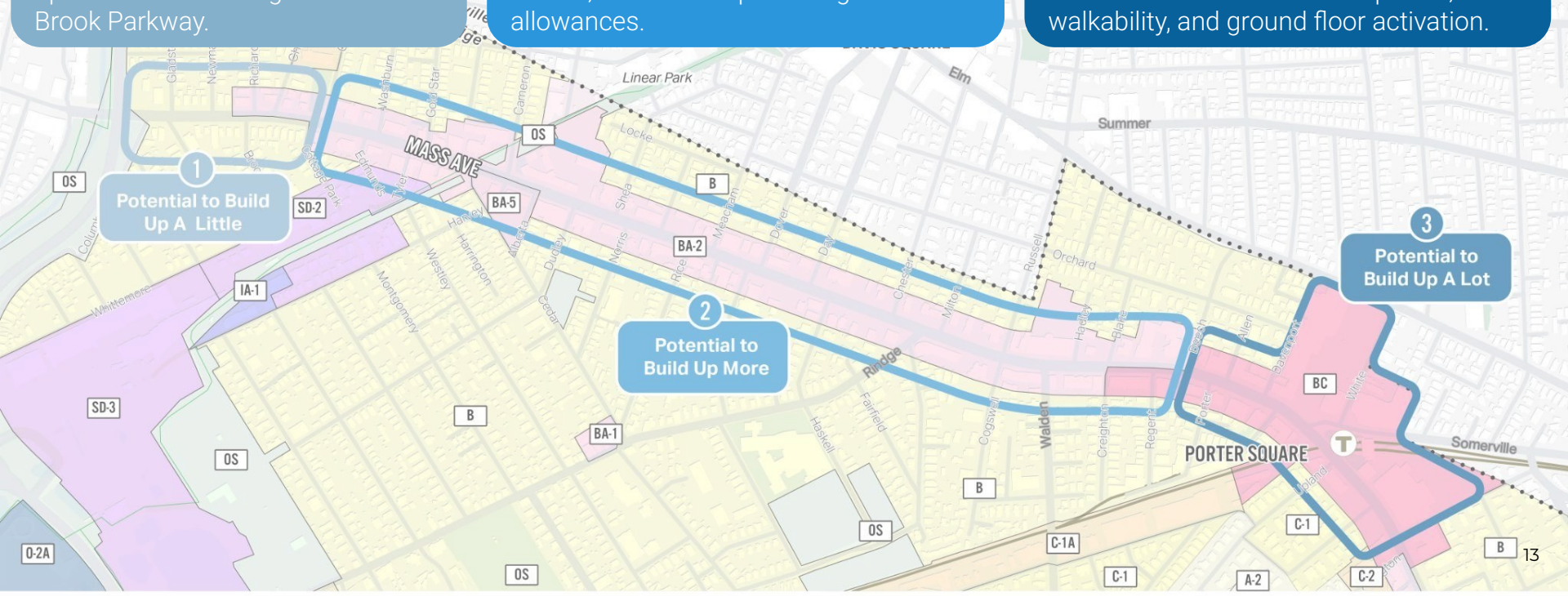
A majority of the participants were **eager for more density** all the way up the corridor through to Alewife Brook Parkway.

### Section 2:

Some participants were concerned about traffic congestion and parking with 8-11 stories, but overall open to higher allowances.

### Section 3:

In Porter, people are not as hesitant to significantly increasing heights to benefit from Transit-Oriented Development, walkability, and ground floor activation.



# 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."*

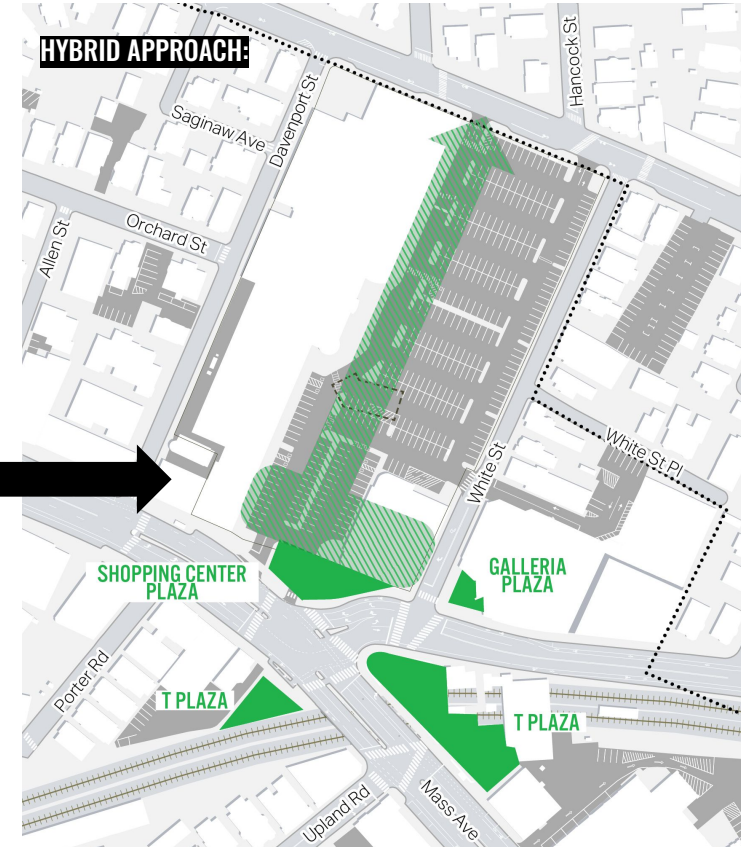
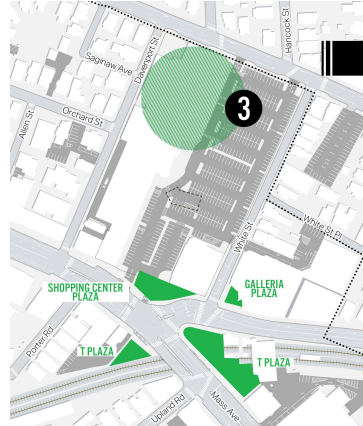
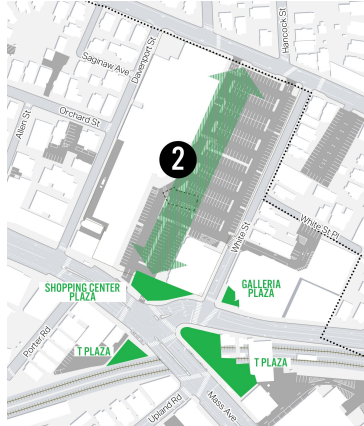
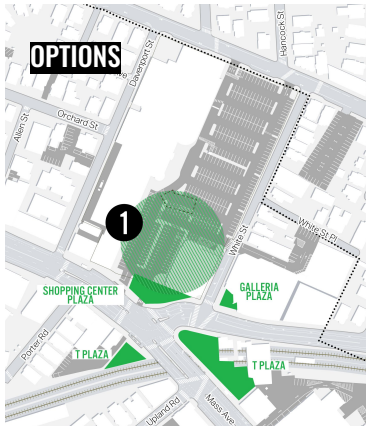
*"Probably a bit further out, but consider air rights development over the tracks approaching Porter!"*

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



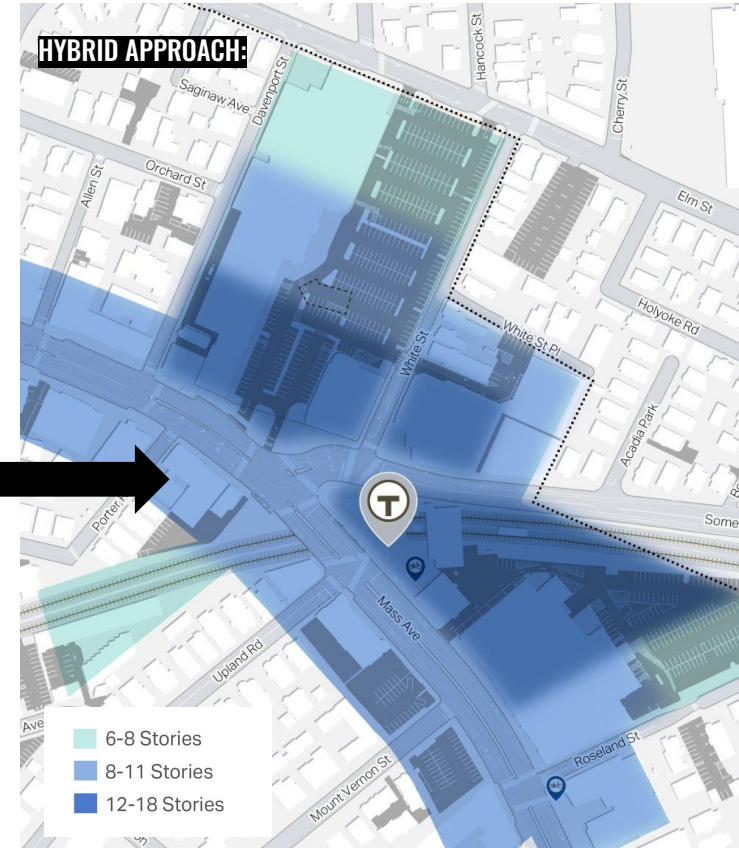
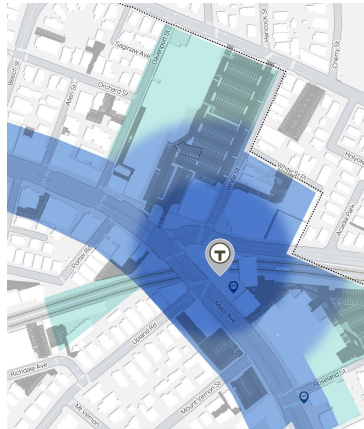
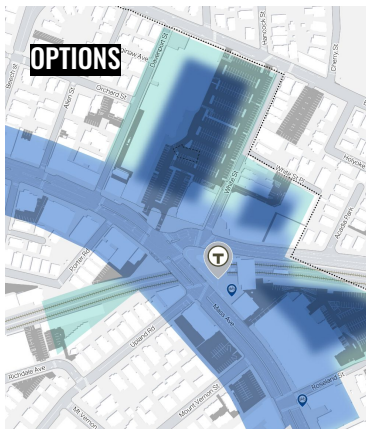
# PORTER SQUARE SUMMARY OF WHAT WE HEARD

- Appreciation for the long term thinking, but interest in interim activations - a Porter Square Glow Up - Activate with seating, shade, more plants/trees
- Emphasis on public space that supports and is linked to the commercial businesses
- A place for all - agree with Post Office Square comparison “can relax but also active programming”
- A space that is lush, a respite from the hustle and bustle of Mass Ave
- A hybrid that integrates the best of all three - retail supporting space that offers a respite AND supports better connection to Davis square/access through the site.



# PORTER SQUARE SUMMARY OF WHAT WE HEARD

- Desire for density along Mass Ave but with thoughtful transitions to residential areas. Respects nearby neighbors (in terms of shadows) and is varied (avoids wall or continuous height)
- Maintain a lively commercial mix with small businesses, retail, and entertainment, creating a walkable, destination-worthy experience
- Lots of interest in building up closest to the T - seen as less impactful on surrounding neighbors.
- Hybrid approach: Concentrate massing on Mass Ave and the T



## 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, 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, gathering spaces.

### 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**

**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**


**HOW THE VISION  
SHAPES  
RECOMMENDATIONS**

# UPDATED *(DRAFT)* RECOMMENDATIONS

A large blue circle on the left side of the slide, partially cut off by the edge.

## MORE OF A NEIGHBORHOOD & DESTINATION

How can Mass Ave continue to provide neighborhood goods & services and foster an active corridor for residents and visitors?

- A. Foster a mix of neighborhood-serving, family-friendly goods and services
  - B. Market the corridor to support local businesses
  - C. Organize and host more community events and performance art
- 
- A blue circle at the bottom center of the slide, partially cut off by the edge.



# A pop of color

to brand Mass Ave around Porter Square



CORRIDOR GATEWAY SIGNAGE



WAYFINDING SIGNAGE



LIGHTPOLE BANNER



SIDEWALK STENCIL



COLORFUL FURNITURE



**MORE  
INVITING**

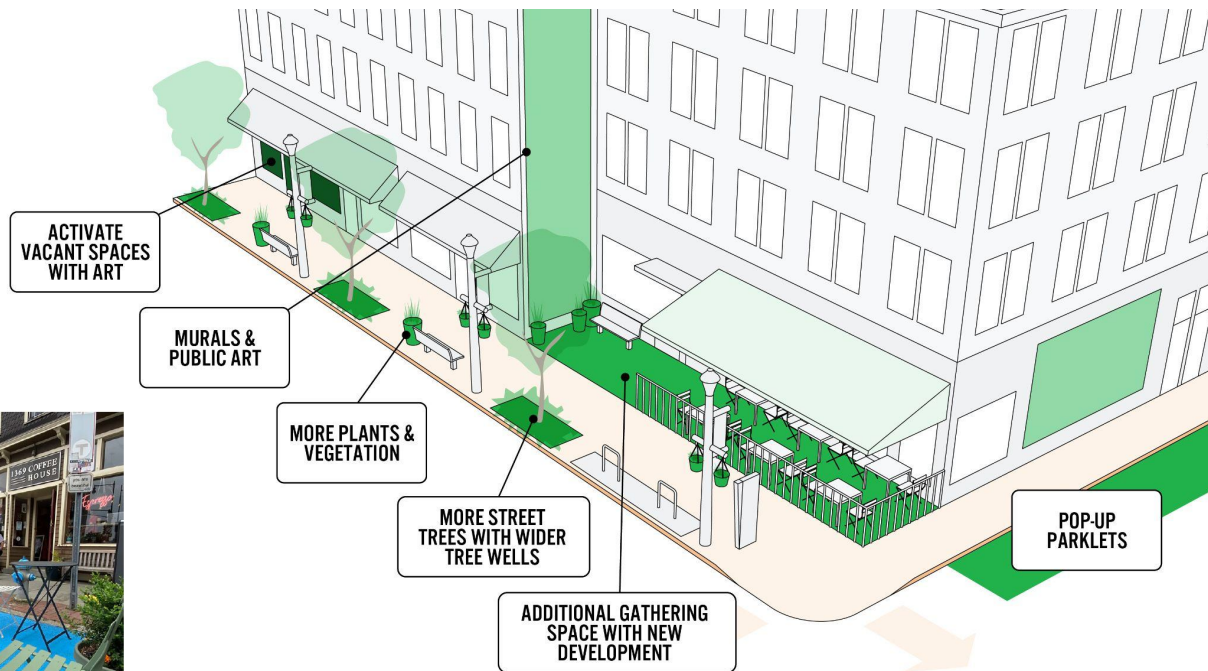
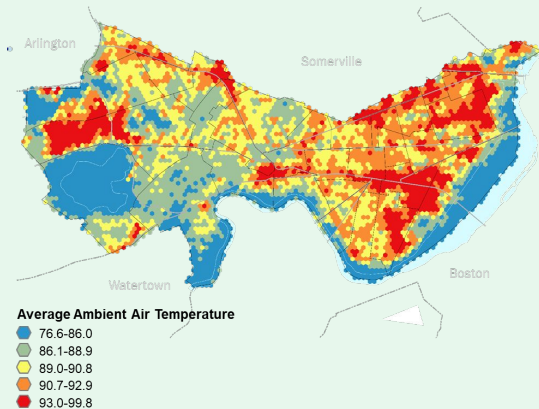
What are ways to build more community identity along Mass Ave, make it greener, and to create more places to gather?

- A. Share community identity through creativity and art
- B. Plant more trees and vegetation along corridor and open spaces
- C. Create more places for the community to gather

# MORE INVITING

## Urban Heat Island

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





**BANNERS &  
ARTISTIC SIGNAGE**

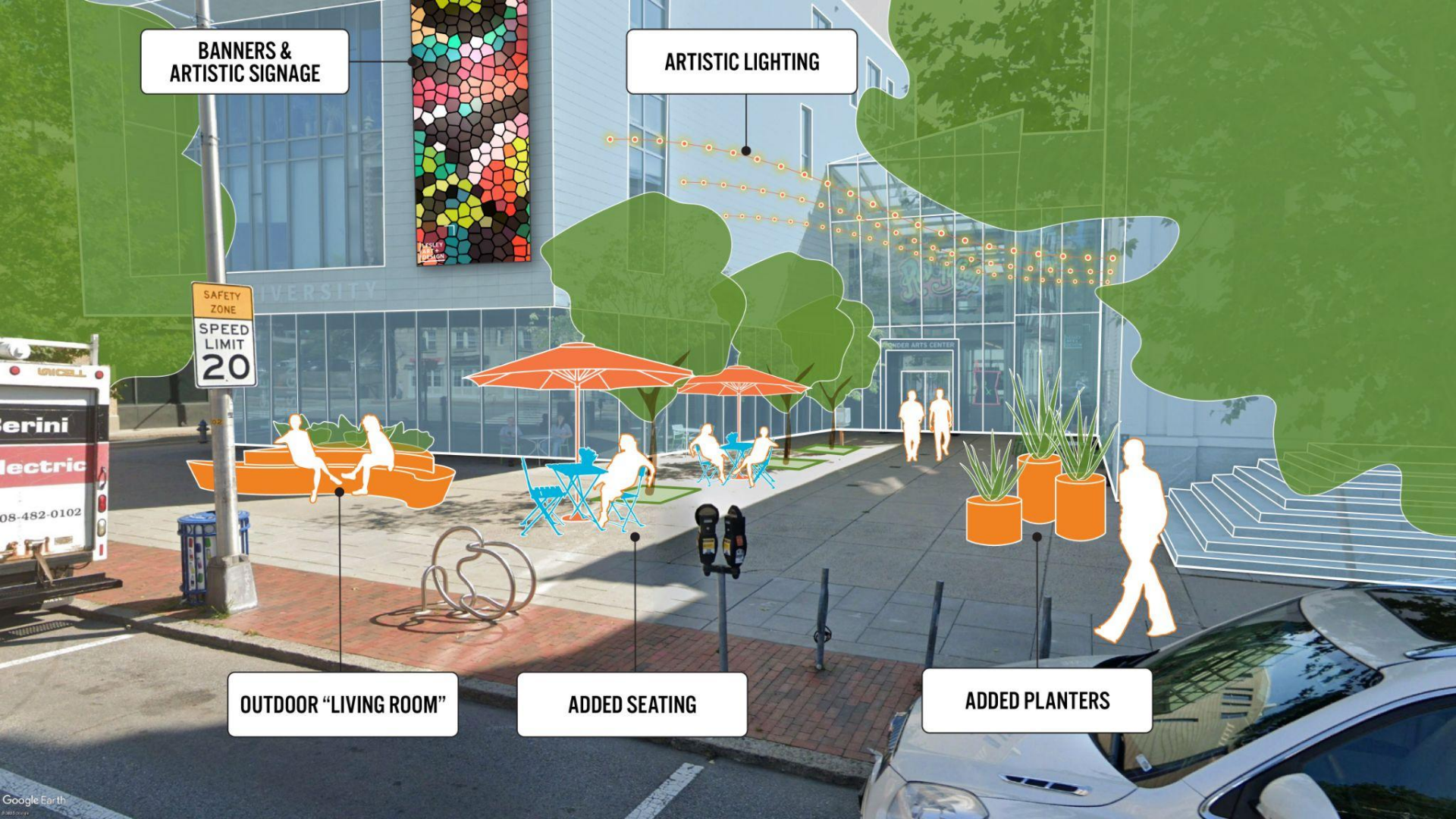
**ARTISTIC LIGHTING**

SAFETY  
ZONE  
SPEED  
LIMIT  
20

**OUTDOOR "LIVING ROOM"**

**ADDED SEATING**

**ADDED PLANTERS**



# EASIER TO GET AROUND

## What are ways to make it easy for everybody on Mass Ave to access and navigate the corridor?

- A. Ensure sidewalks are accessible for everybody
- B. Provide safe, convenient access to sustainable transportation options
- C. Streamline signage and wayfinding
- D. Consider circulation planning initiatives to further study key intersections - Porter Square, Linear park, and Alewife Brook Parkway



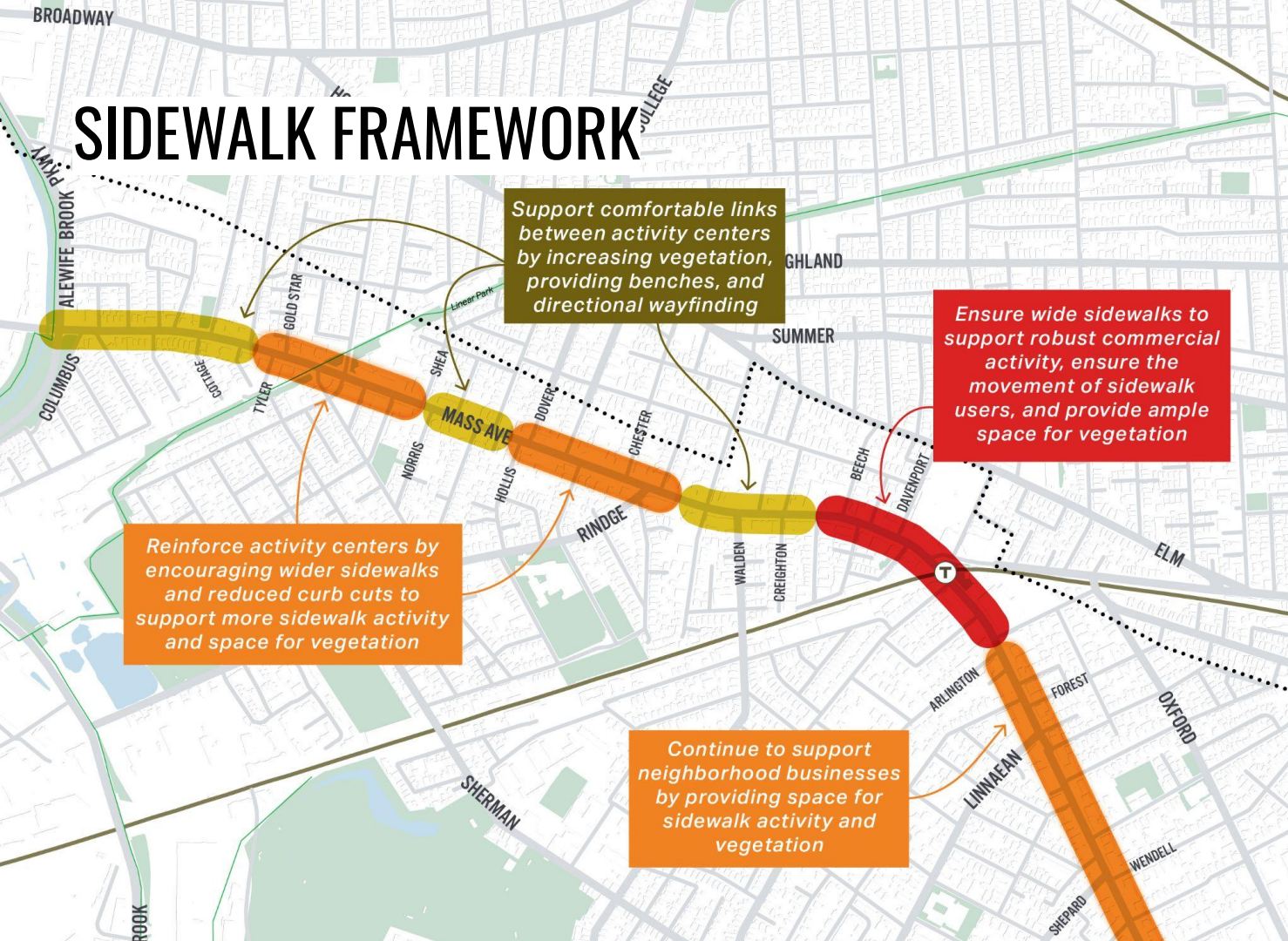
# SIDEWALK FRAMEWORK

*Support comfortable links between activity centers by increasing vegetation, providing benches, and directional wayfinding*

*Ensure wide sidewalks to support robust commercial activity, ensure the movement of sidewalk users, and provide ample space for vegetation*

*Reinforce activity centers by encouraging wider sidewalks and reduced curb cuts to support more sidewalk activity and space for vegetation*

*Continue to support neighborhood businesses by providing space for sidewalk activity and vegetation*

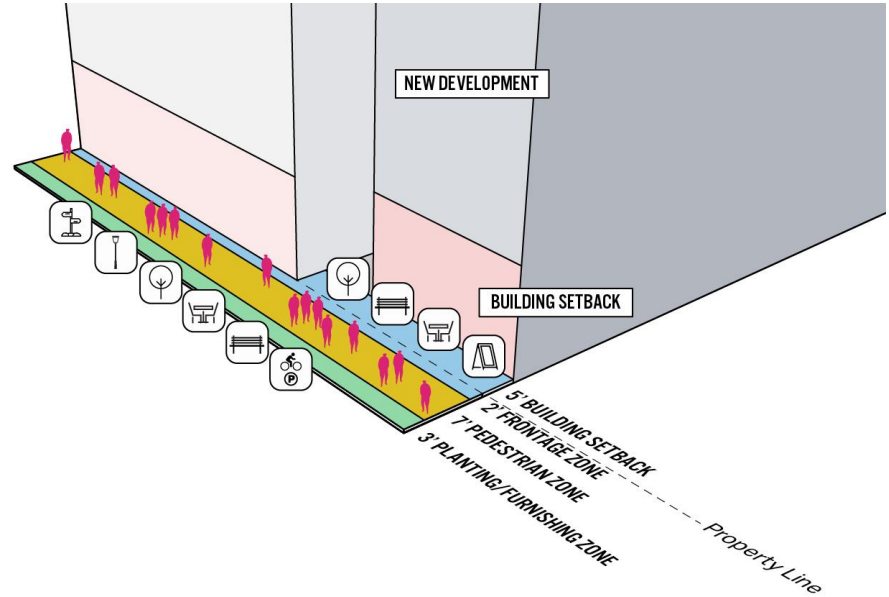


# MASS AVE SIDEWALKS

Much of Mass Ave has relatively narrow sidewalks (12ft) for a commercial corridor of this scale.

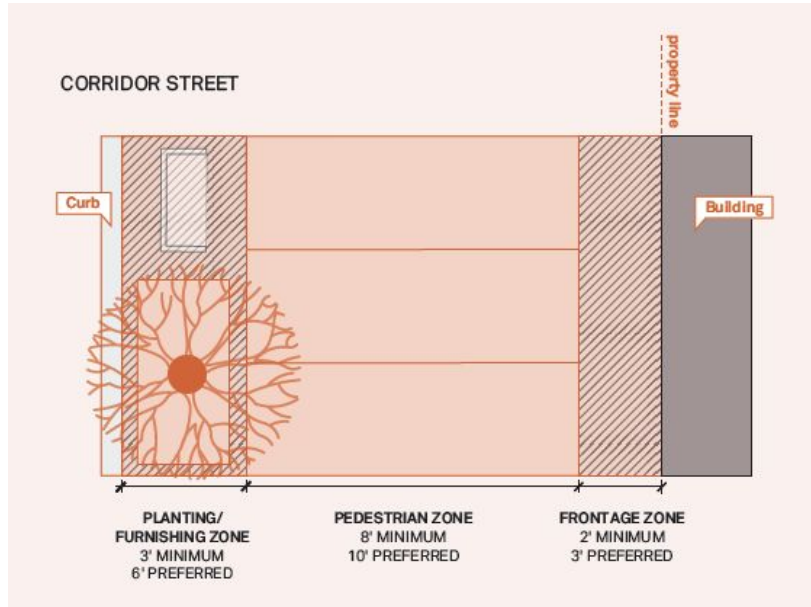


Mass Ave today based on existing zoning code:

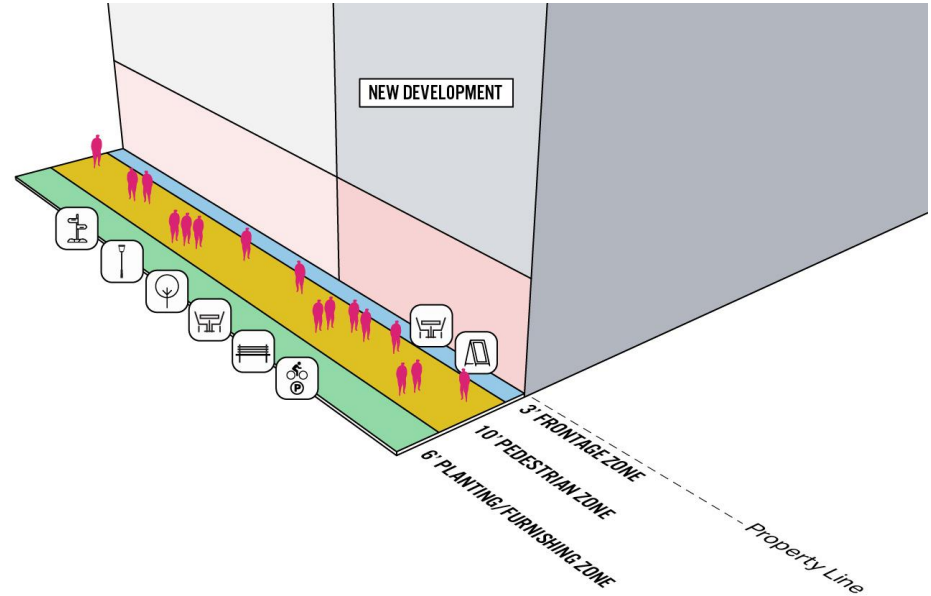


# MASS AVE SIDEWALKS

The Citywide urban design guidelines call for a minimum 13ft wide sidewalks, with a preferred width of 19ft.



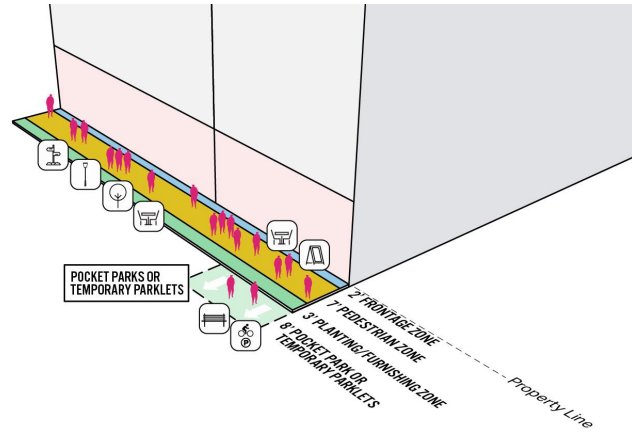
Preferred width for Mass Ave:





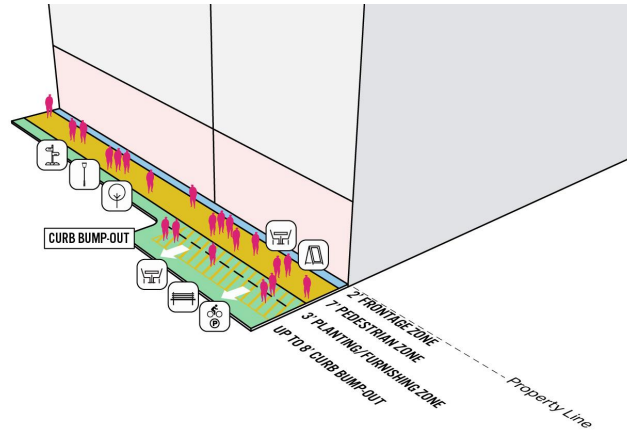
# HOW CAN WE ACHIEVE WIDER SIDEWALKS ON MASS AVE?

## Temporary Parklets



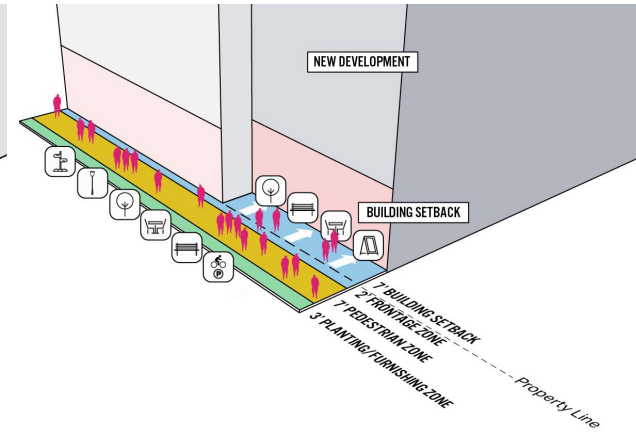
Utilize part of the right of way (existing striping, parking space, etc) to create a temporary bump out with moveable furniture

## Curb Extensions

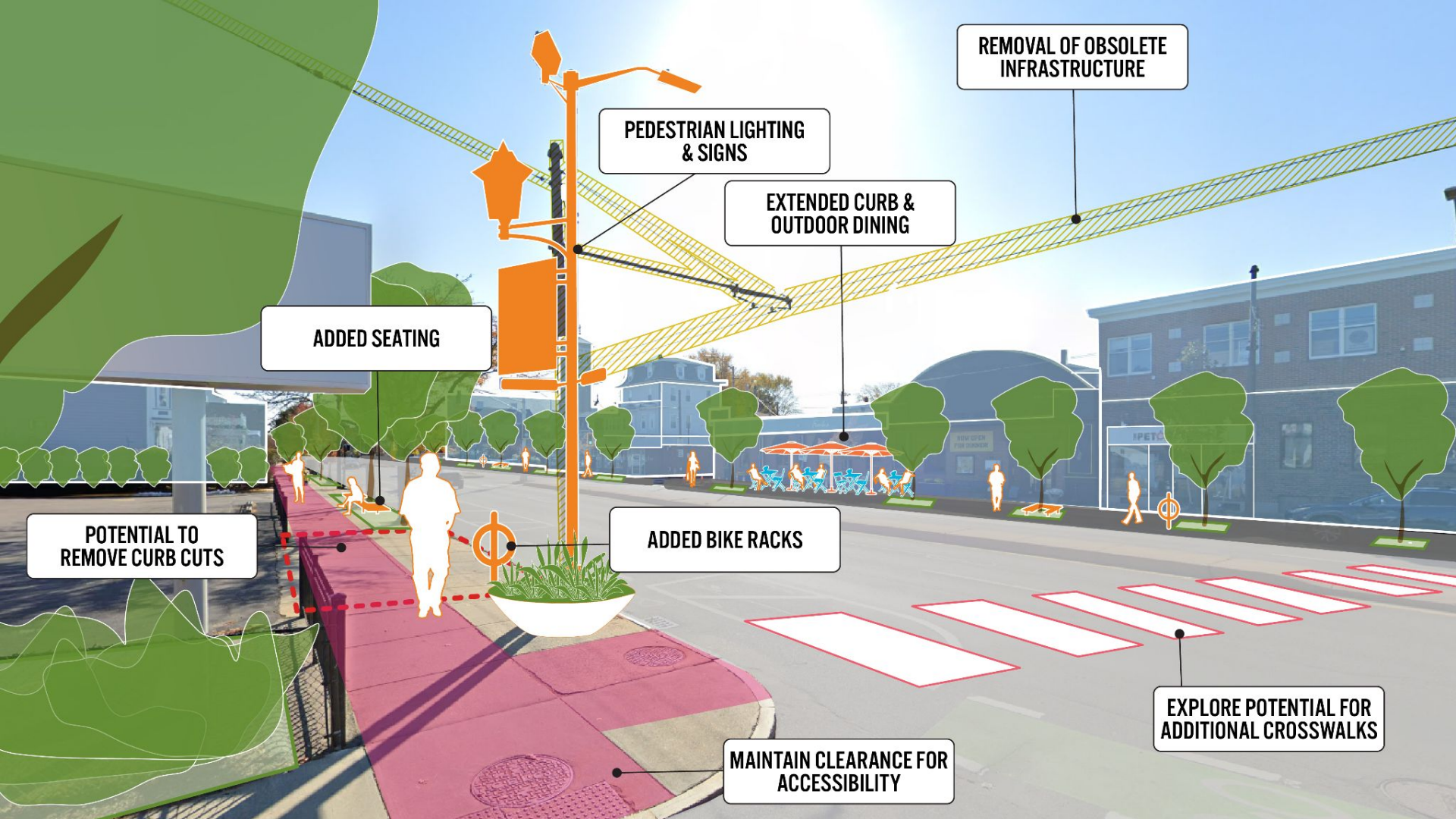


Extend the sidewalk into the right of way to create more space

## Increased Building Setback



Adjust the required building setback from 5ft to 7ft to provide a sidewalk width total of 19ft



REMOVAL OF OBSOLETE  
INFRASTRUCTURE

PEDESTRIAN LIGHTING  
& SIGNS

EXTENDED CURB &  
OUTDOOR DINING

ADDED SEATING

POTENTIAL TO  
REMOVE CURB CUTS

ADDED BIKE RACKS

EXPLORE POTENTIAL FOR  
ADDITIONAL CROSSWALKS

MAINTAIN CLEARANCE FOR  
ACCESSIBILITY

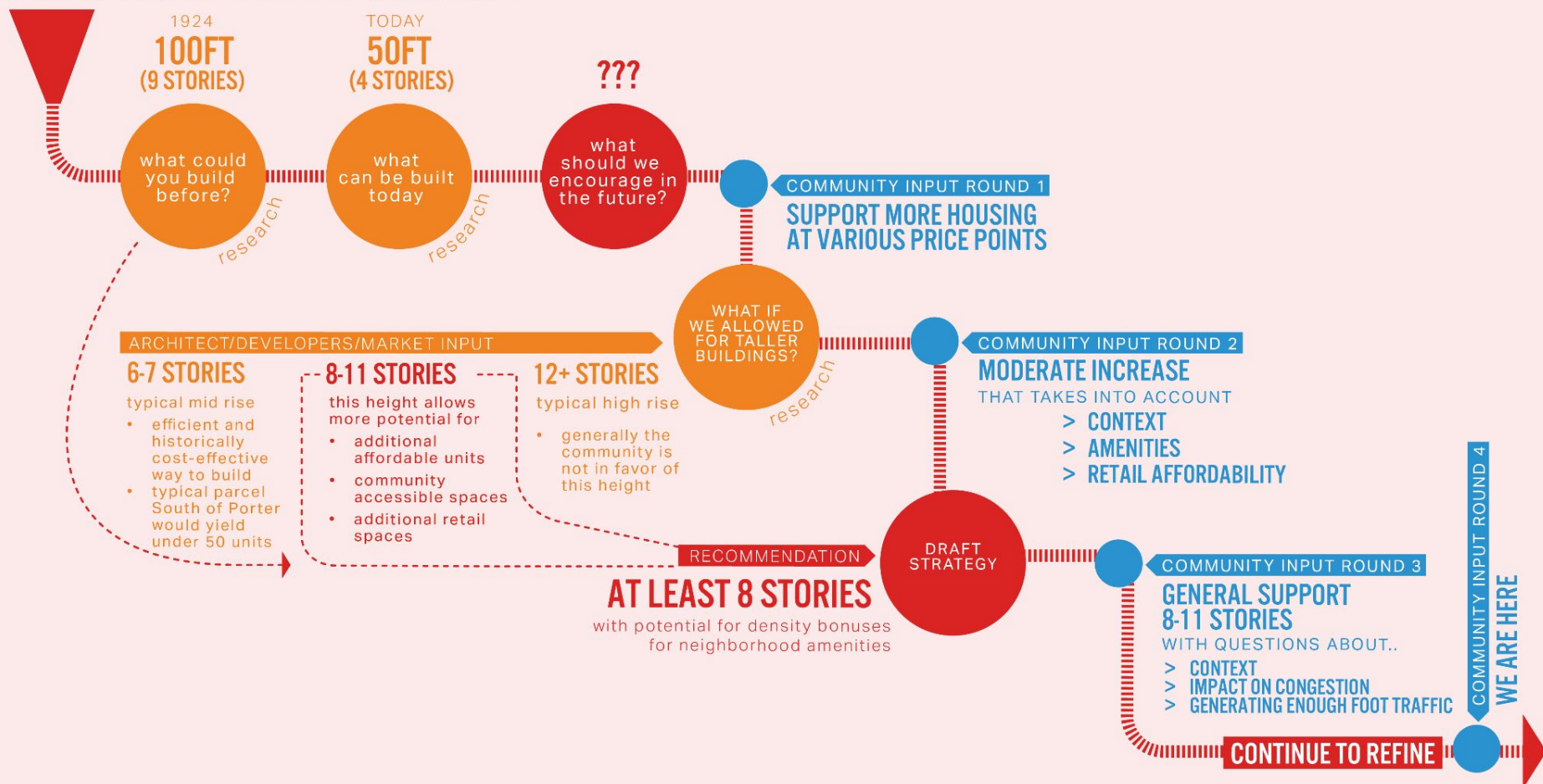
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# MORE HOUSING OPTIONS

## How can Mass Ave provide more housing options?

- A. Encourage more housing/residents on the corridor
- B. Continue to support City policy for a diverse mix of housing price points
- C. Encourage context-sensitive design

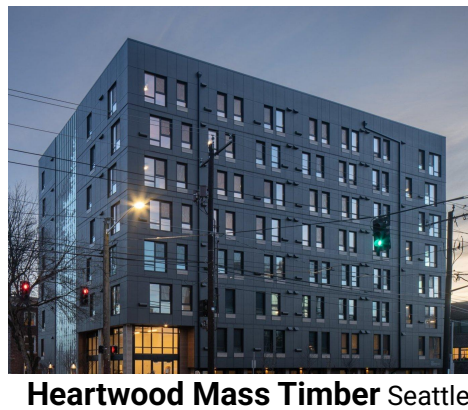
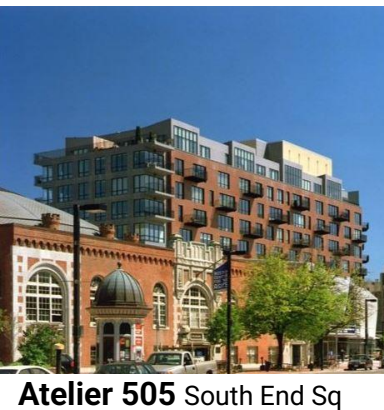
# GOAL MORE HOUSING OPTIONS ON MASS AVE





# NORTH MASS AVE

COMPARABLE MIXED USE SITES





# PORTER SQUARE

COMPARABLE MIXED USE SITES



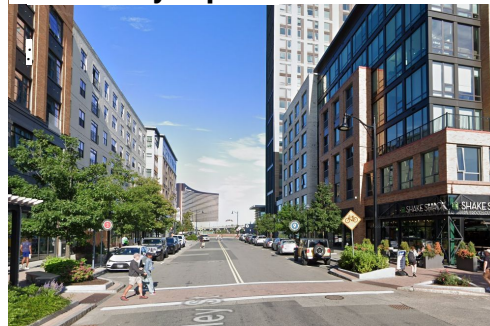
**Market Central**



**Cambridge Crossing**



**Assembly Square**



**Prospect Union Square**





MORE OF A  
NEIGHBORHOOD  
& DESTINATION

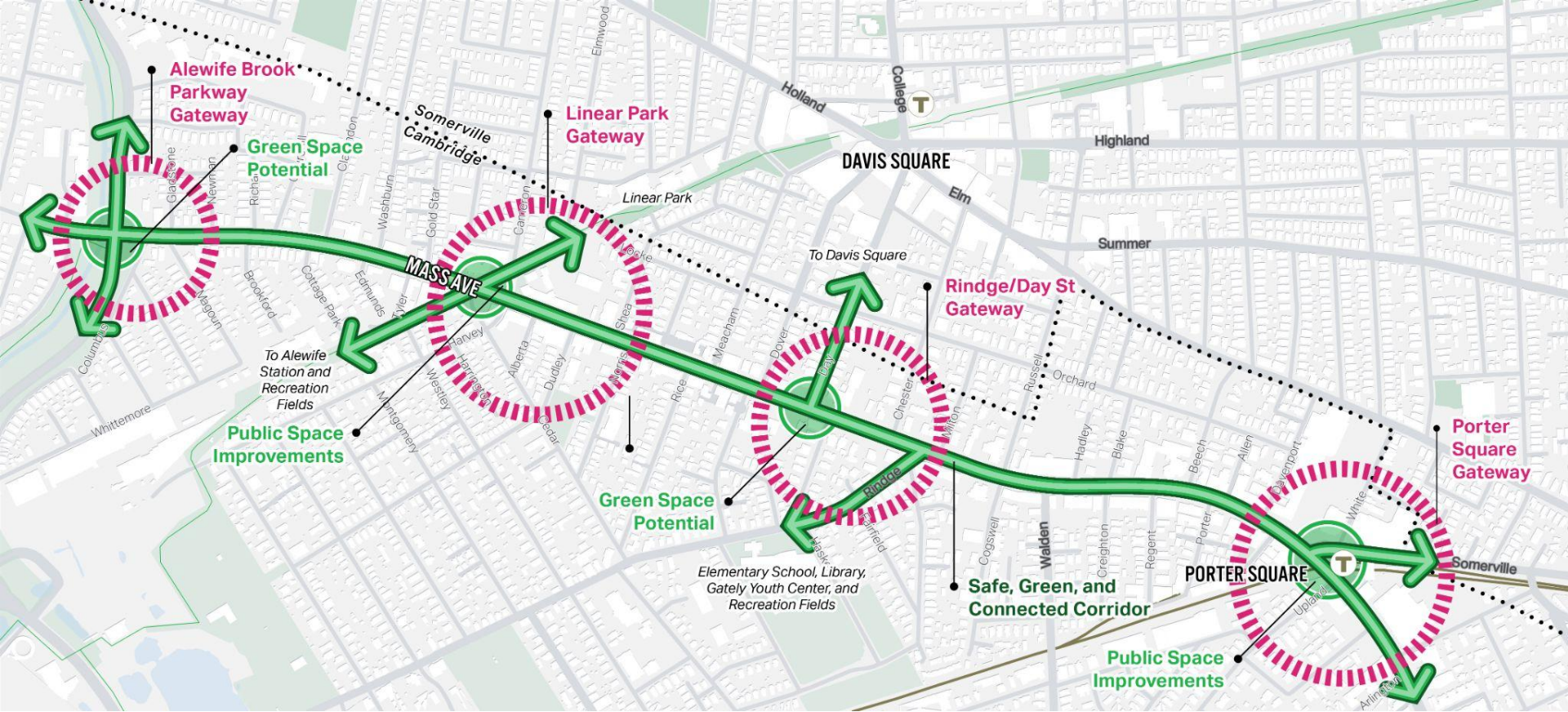
MORE  
INVITING

EASIER  
TO GET  
AROUND

MORE  
HOUSING  
OPTIONS

*Bringing it all together...*





# GATEWAYS FOR GREENING AND PUBLIC SPACE IMPROVEMENTS



# CONDITIONS ALONG N MASS AVE





# ALEWIFE BROOK PARKWAY

KEY GATEWAY TO CAMBRIDGE AND ALEWIFE GREENWAY

EXPLORE OPPORTUNITY FOR GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

REDUCE SIZE OF CURB CUTS WHERE POSSIBLE

A GREENER, MORE INVITING MASS AVE

OPPORTUNITY FOR BLUE BIKE STATION

EXPLORE OPPORTUNITY FOR GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

BRANDING/WAYFINDING SIGNAGE

ALEWIFE GREENWAY

PEDESTRIAN/CYCLIST CROSSING FOR ALEWIFE GREENWAY

KEY GATEWAY & INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS

Cambridge City Limits  
Arlington City Limits

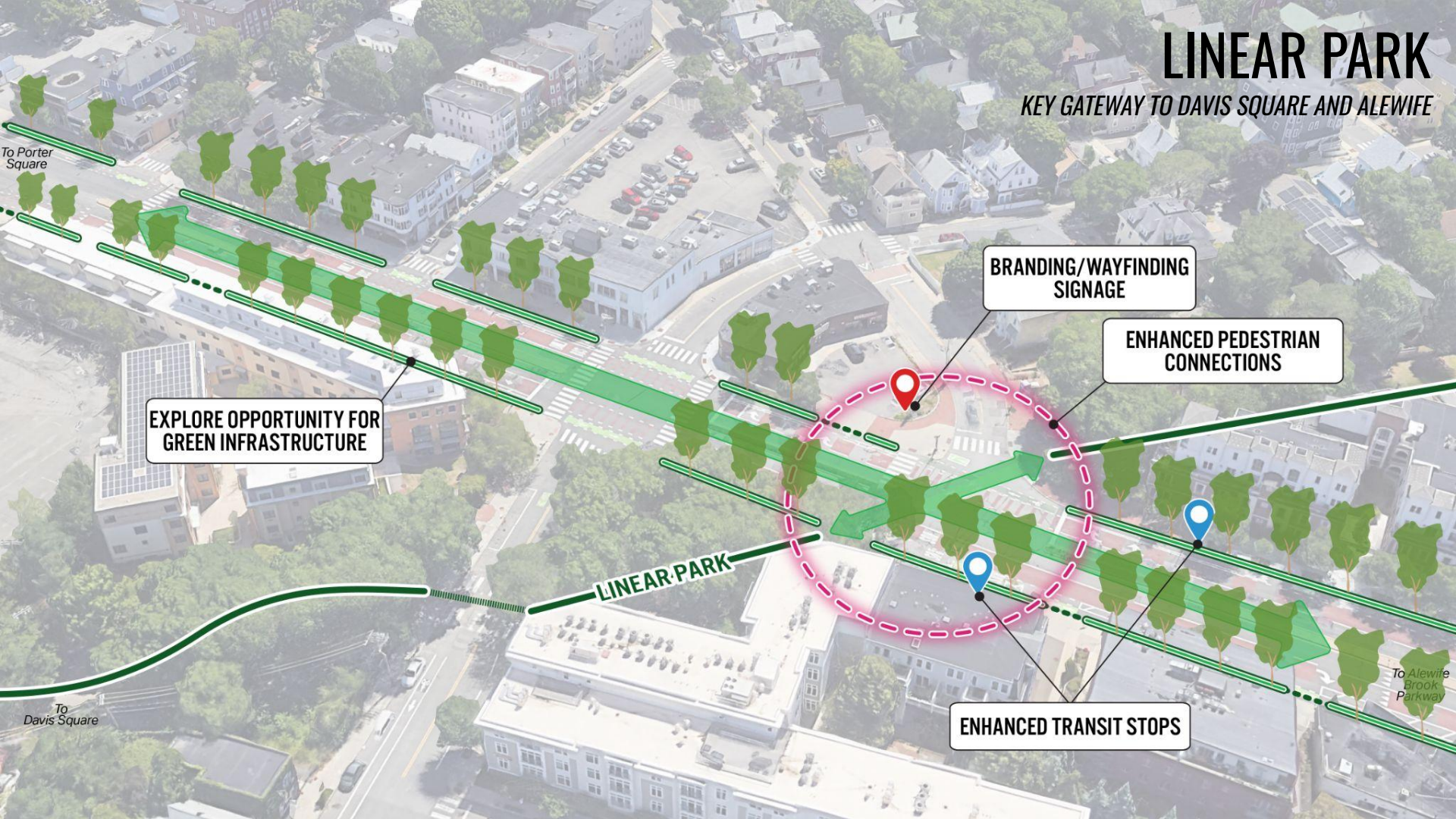
To Arlington

To Porter Square



# LINEAR PARK

KEY GATEWAY TO DAVIS SQUARE AND ALEWIFE



BRANDING/WAYFINDING  
SIGNAGE

ENHANCED PEDESTRIAN  
CONNECTIONS

EXPLORE OPPORTUNITY FOR  
GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

LINEAR PARK

ENHANCED TRANSIT STOPS

To Porter  
Square

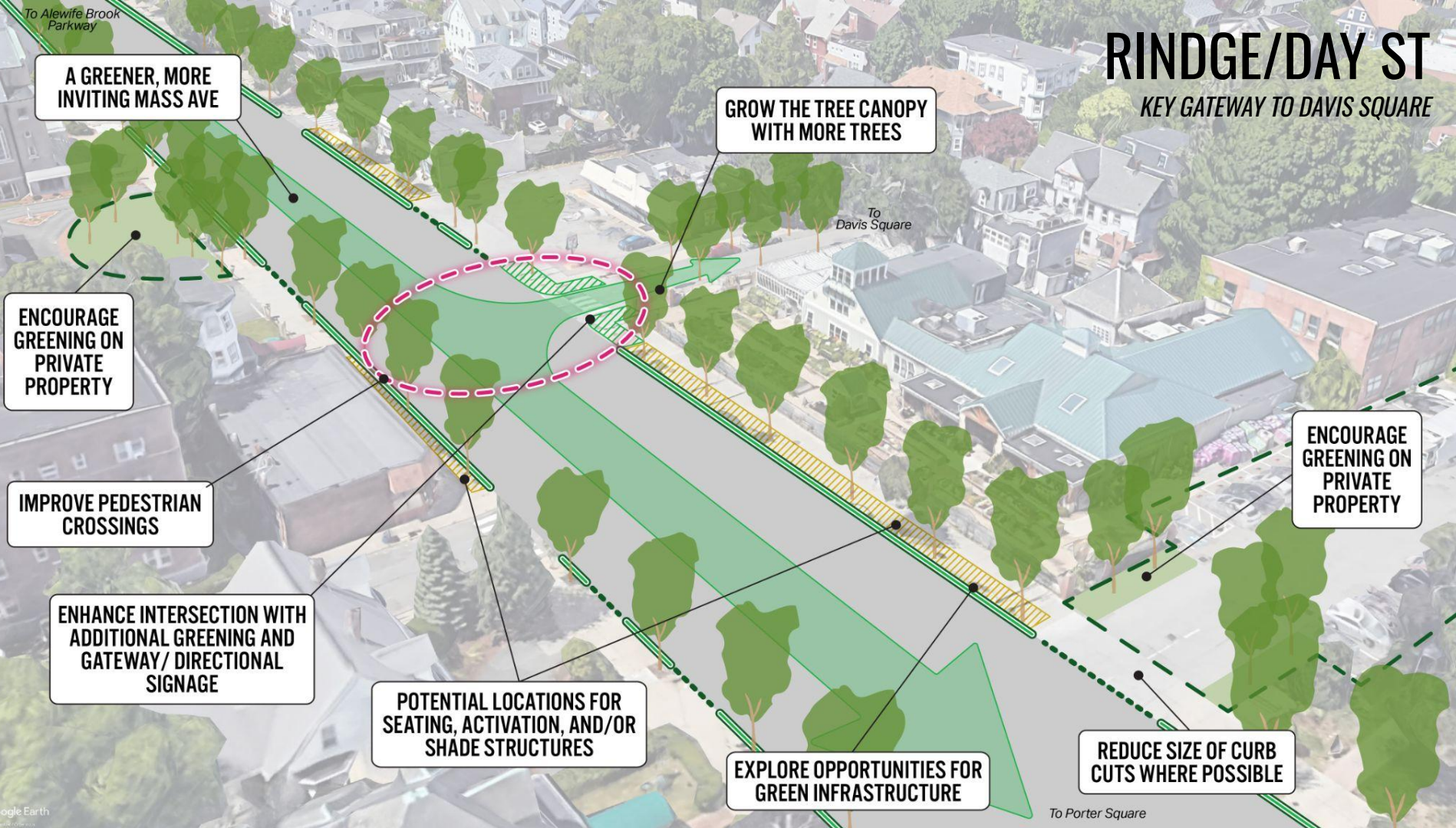
To  
Davis Square

To Alewife  
Brook  
Parkway



# RINDGE/DAY ST

KEY GATEWAY TO DAVIS SQUARE



A GREENER, MORE INVITING MASS AVE

GROW THE TREE CANOPY WITH MORE TREES

ENCOURAGE GREENING ON PRIVATE PROPERTY

IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS

ENHANCE INTERSECTION WITH ADDITIONAL GREENING AND GATEWAY/ DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE

POTENTIAL LOCATIONS FOR SEATING, ACTIVATION, AND/OR SHADE STRUCTURES

EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

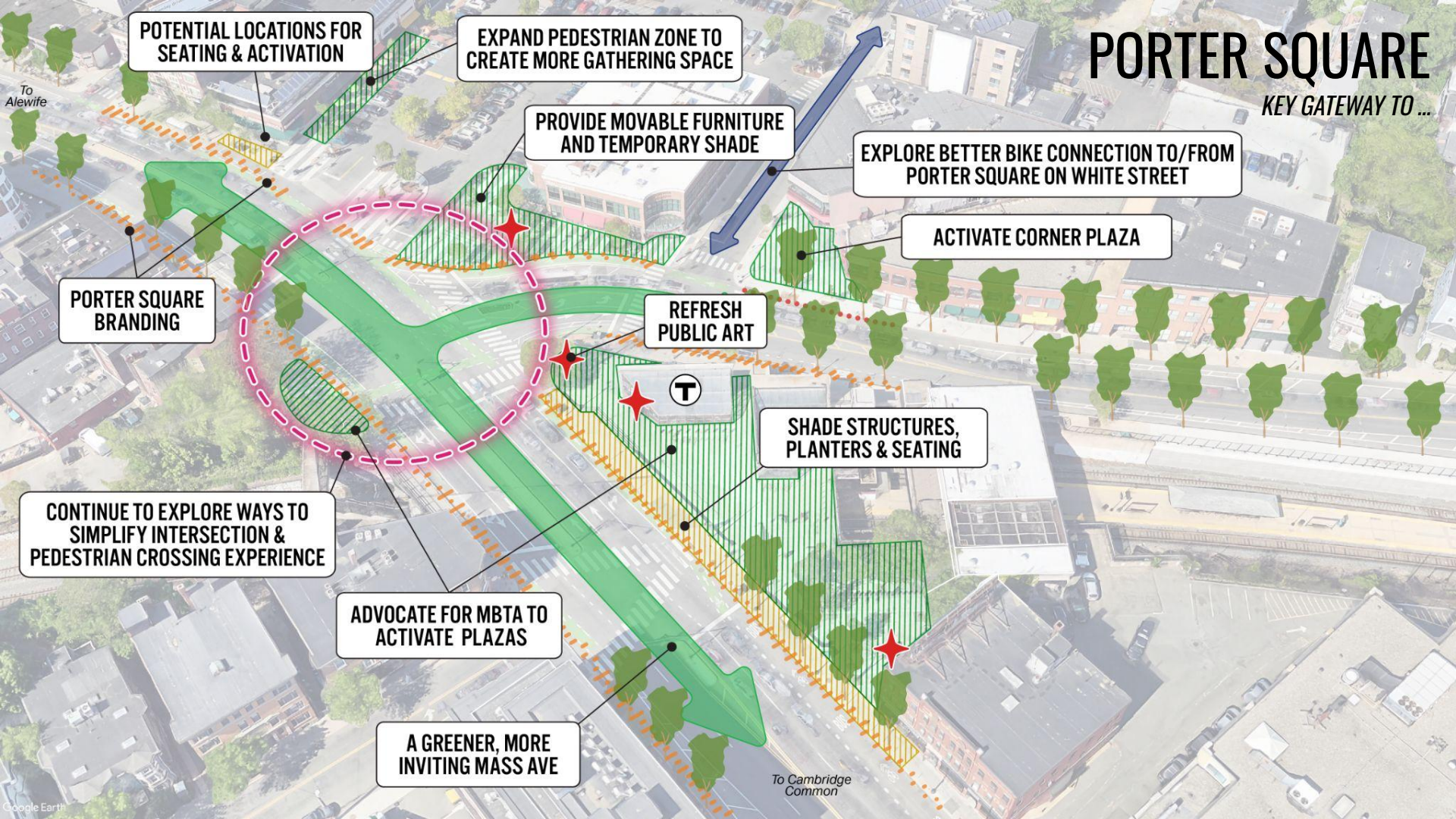
ENCOURAGE GREENING ON PRIVATE PROPERTY

REDUCE SIZE OF CURB CUTS WHERE POSSIBLE



# PORTER SQUARE

KEY GATEWAY TO ...



POTENTIAL LOCATIONS FOR SEATING & ACTIVATION

EXPAND PEDESTRIAN ZONE TO CREATE MORE GATHERING SPACE

PROVIDE MOVABLE FURNITURE AND TEMPORARY SHADE

EXPLORE BETTER BIKE CONNECTION TO/FROM PORTER SQUARE ON WHITE STREET

ACTIVATE CORNER PLAZA

PORTER SQUARE BRANDING

REFRESH PUBLIC ART

SHADE STRUCTURES, PLANTERS & SEATING

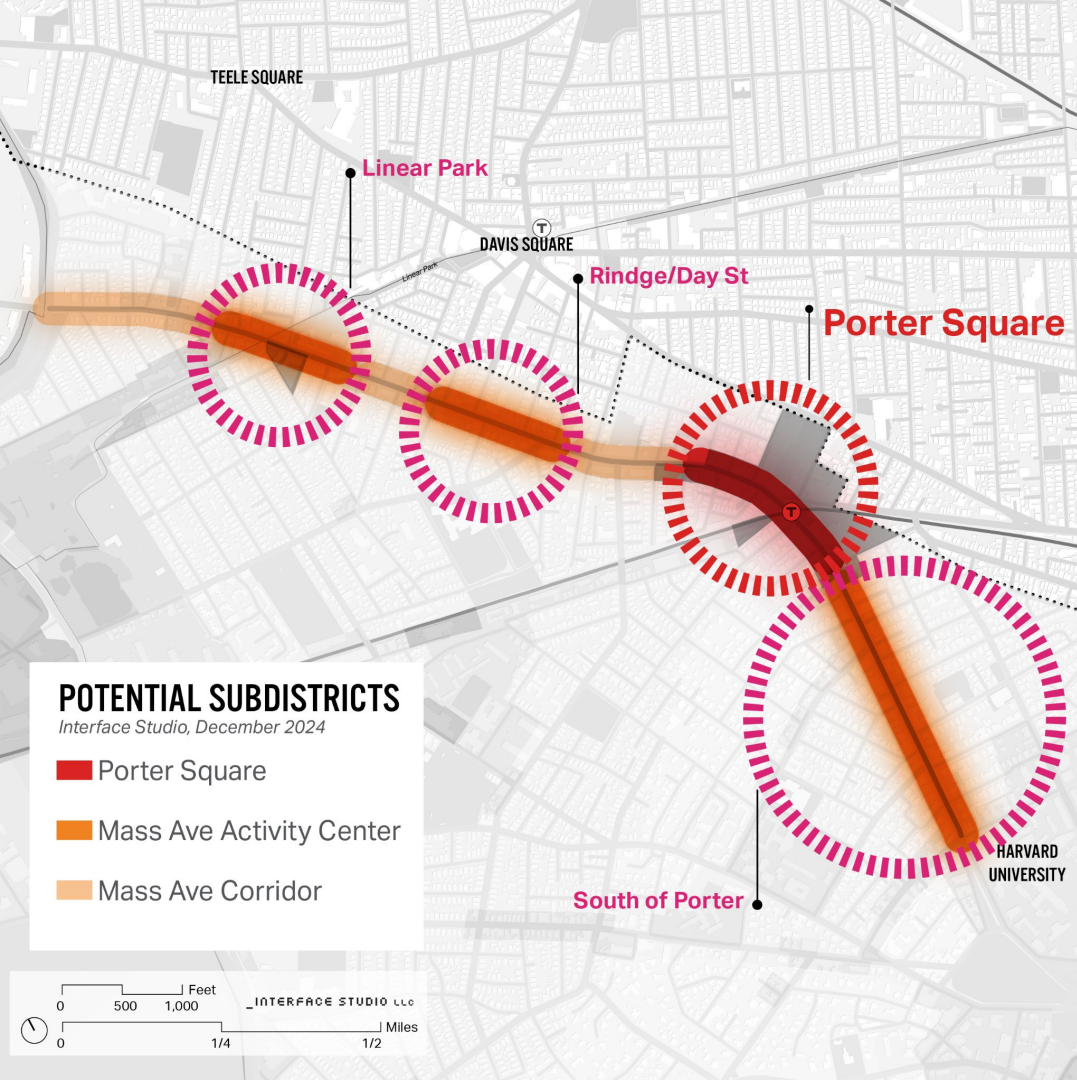
CONTINUE TO EXPLORE WAYS TO SIMPLIFY INTERSECTION & PEDESTRIAN CROSSING EXPERIENCE

ADVOCATE FOR MBTA TO ACTIVATE PLAZAS

A GREENER, MORE INVITING MASS AVE

To Cambridge Common





# ZONING APPROACH

**Three subdistricts that prioritize mixed use development in different ways.**

Zoning Principles:

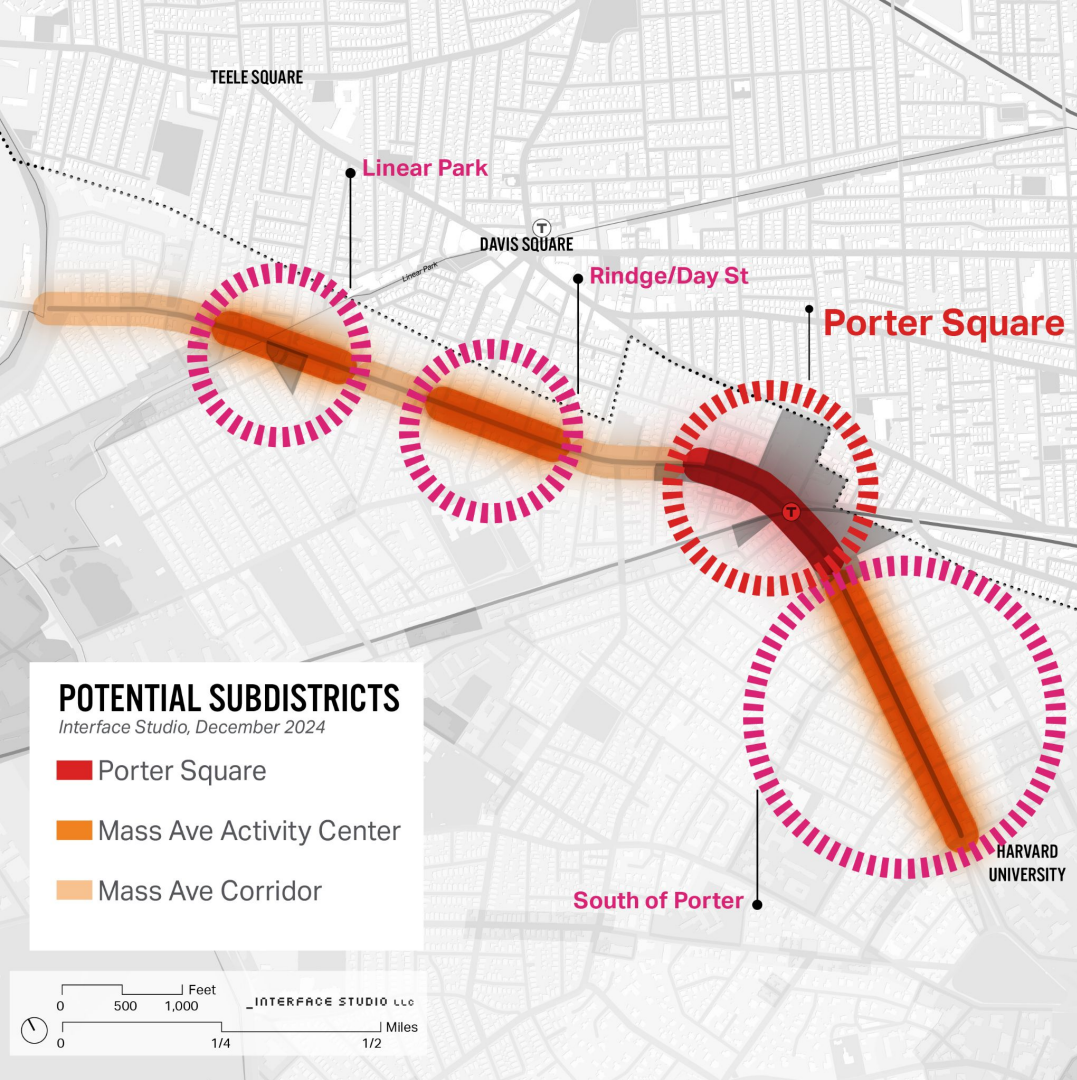
Overarching: build more housing units

## MASS AVE CORRIDOR / ACTIVITY CENTERS

- Establish activity centers to encourage and concentrate retail activity
- Promote walkability, biking and transit use

## PORTER SQUARE

- Remain a retail destination
- Create a connected and walkable place
- Explore a shared district parking model
- Include a 'significant' open space



# ZONING APPROACH

## Mass Ave Corridor

**8-11 stories**, with potential to incentivize community amenities

## Mass Ave Activity Center

**8-11 stories with active ground floor restrictions**, with potential to incentivize community amenities

## Porter Square

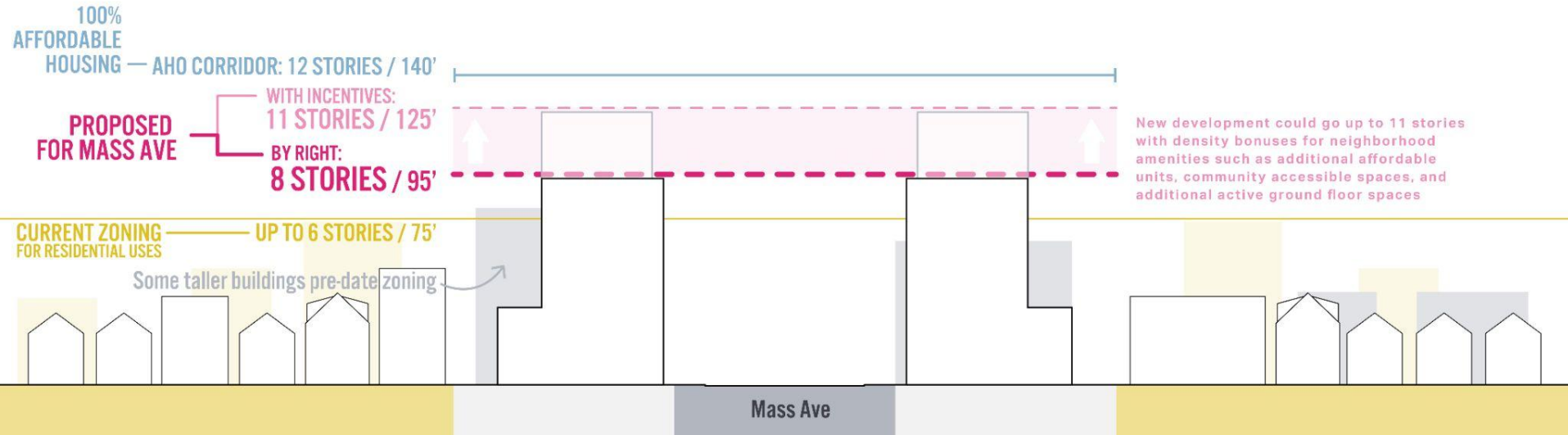
**12-18 stories with active ground floor restrictions in concentrated locations**

# HEIGHT AND DENSITY - MASS AVE

## PROPOSED

**EXISTING:** *In BA-2:* 75' (6 stories) for residential uses

**PROPOSED:** *In BA-2:* 95' (8 stories) for residential/mixed use; up to 125' (11 stories) with incentives



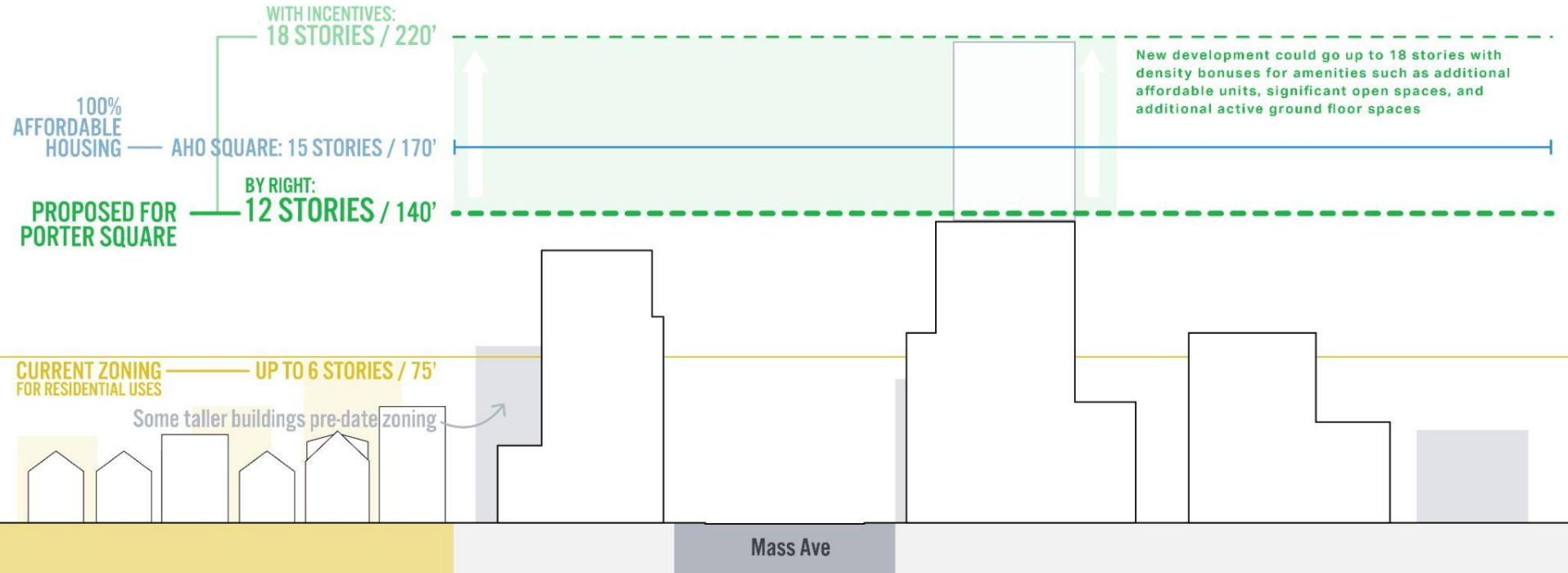


# HEIGHT AND DENSITY - PORTER SQUARE

## PROPOSED

**EXISTING:** *In BC:* 75' (6 stories)  
for residential uses

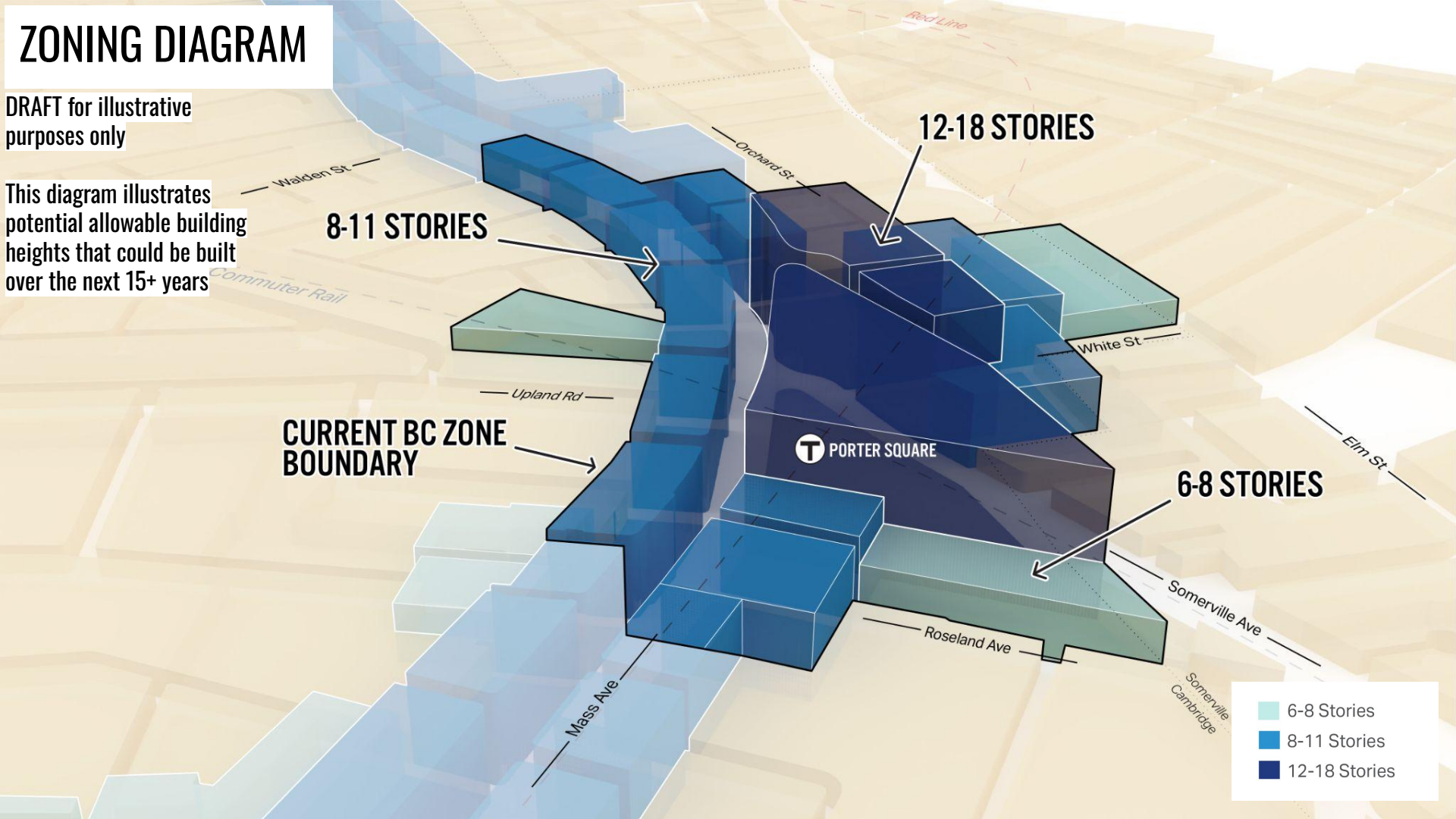
**PROPOSED:** *In BC:* 140' (12 stories) for residential/mixed  
use; up to 220' (18 stories) with incentives



# ZONING DIAGRAM

DRAFT for illustrative purposes only

This diagram illustrates potential allowable building heights that could be built over the next 15+ years



**How could Mass Ave evolve over the next 15 years?**

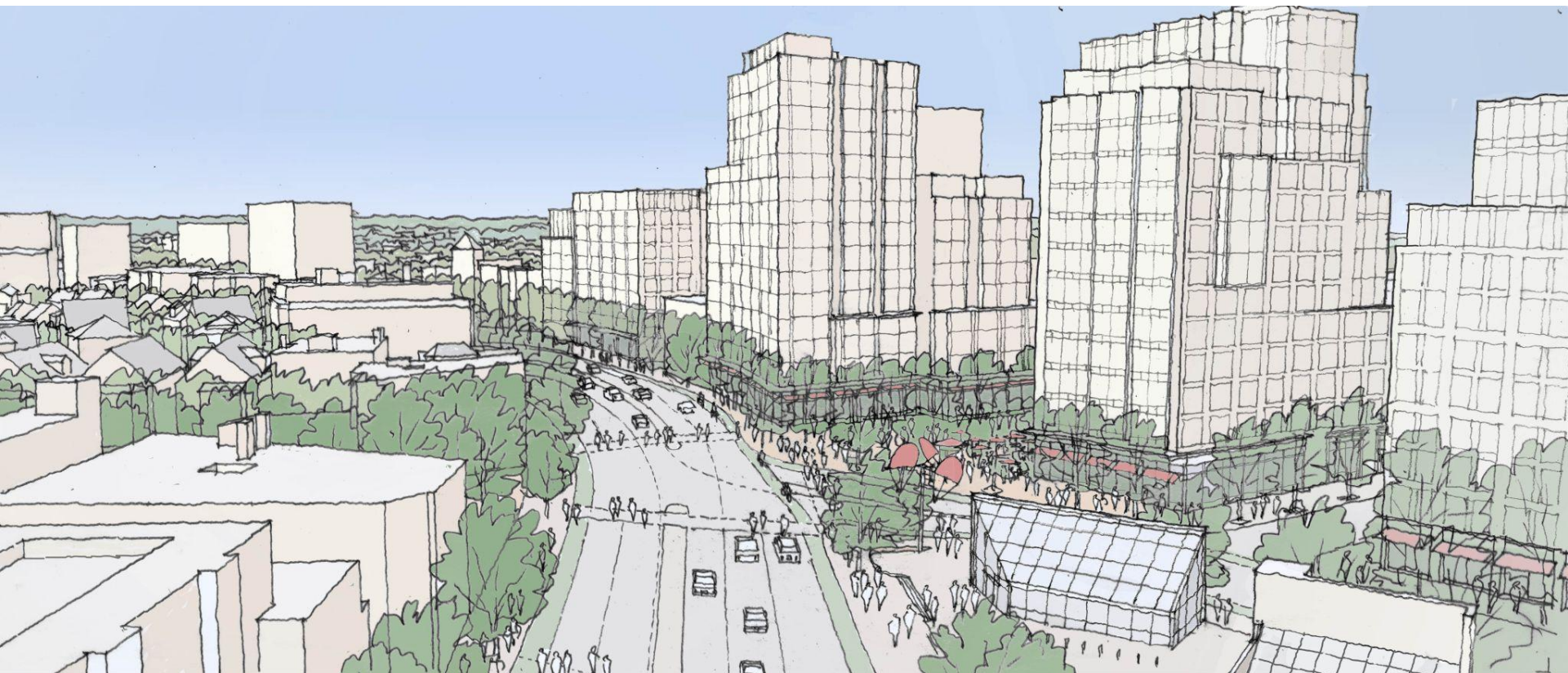


# How could Mass Ave evolve over the next 15 years?





# 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)*



# How could Porter Square evolve over the next 15 years?



Looking north at intersection of Mass Ave and Somerville Ave from Porter Square MBTA station

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

*Working group Discussion  
tonight:*

# Are these recommendations helping to meet our goals?

## MORE OF A NEIGHBORHOOD & DESTINATION

Reframe the corridor as a **livable walkable neighborhood** with improved amenities, 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, gathering spaces.

## 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.

# PUBLIC QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

## Your feedback is important

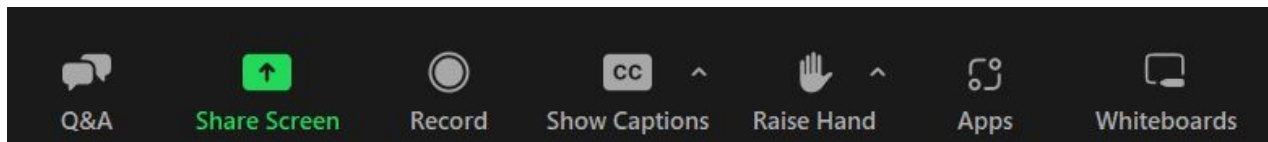
Here are the guidelines for tonight's discussion:

- 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 by 7:15 pm, you can **send your comments/questions directly to Drew Kane** by phone: 617-349-4640 or by email: [dkane@cambridgema.gov](mailto:dkane@cambridgema.gov).

Visit [www.cambridgema.gov/massaveplan](http://www.cambridgema.gov/massaveplan) to sign up for our email list!



# RAISE YOUR HAND TO ASK A QUESTION



Use **Q&A** to type a question

Use **Raise Hand** to ask a question  
and we will unmute you!



On your phone, use \*9 to request to speak,  
we'll read the last 4 digits of your phone number when it's time for you to speak.

# NEXT STEPS

## March:

- Working Group meeting on zoning
- Create a draft plan

## April:

- Host a final **Community Meeting**
- Public **review of draft** and comments
- Release **final plan**

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