

CAMBRIDGE COMMON TO
ALEWIFE BROOK PARKWAY

Phase 4:
Working group

#9

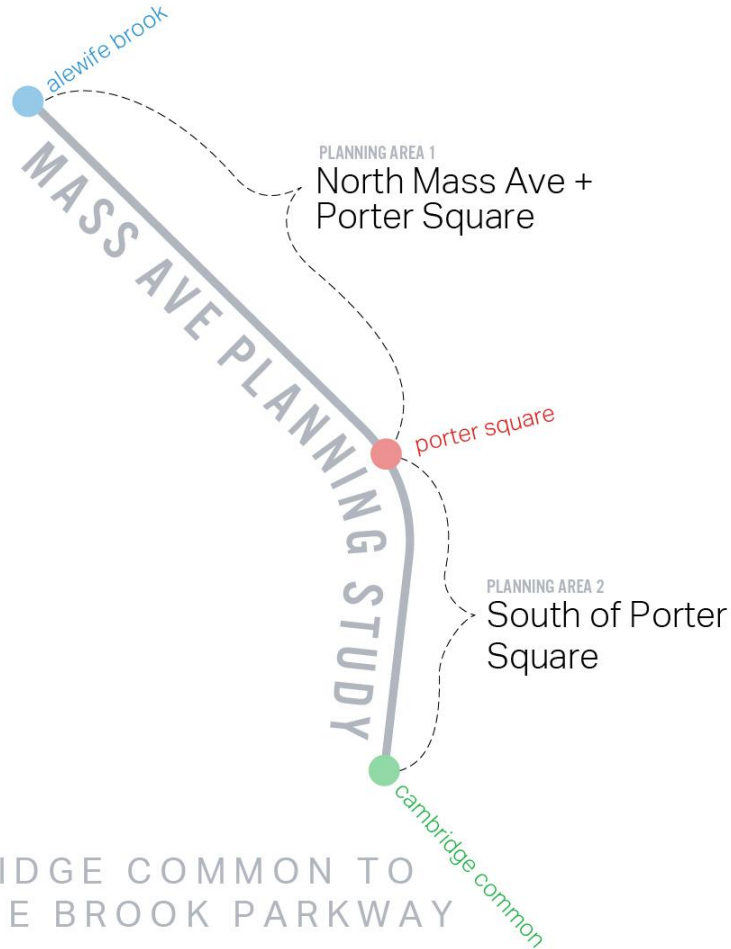
03/13/25

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 Phase 3:
DRAFT Zoning Recommendations
- 03 Zoning Discussion
- 04 Next Steps

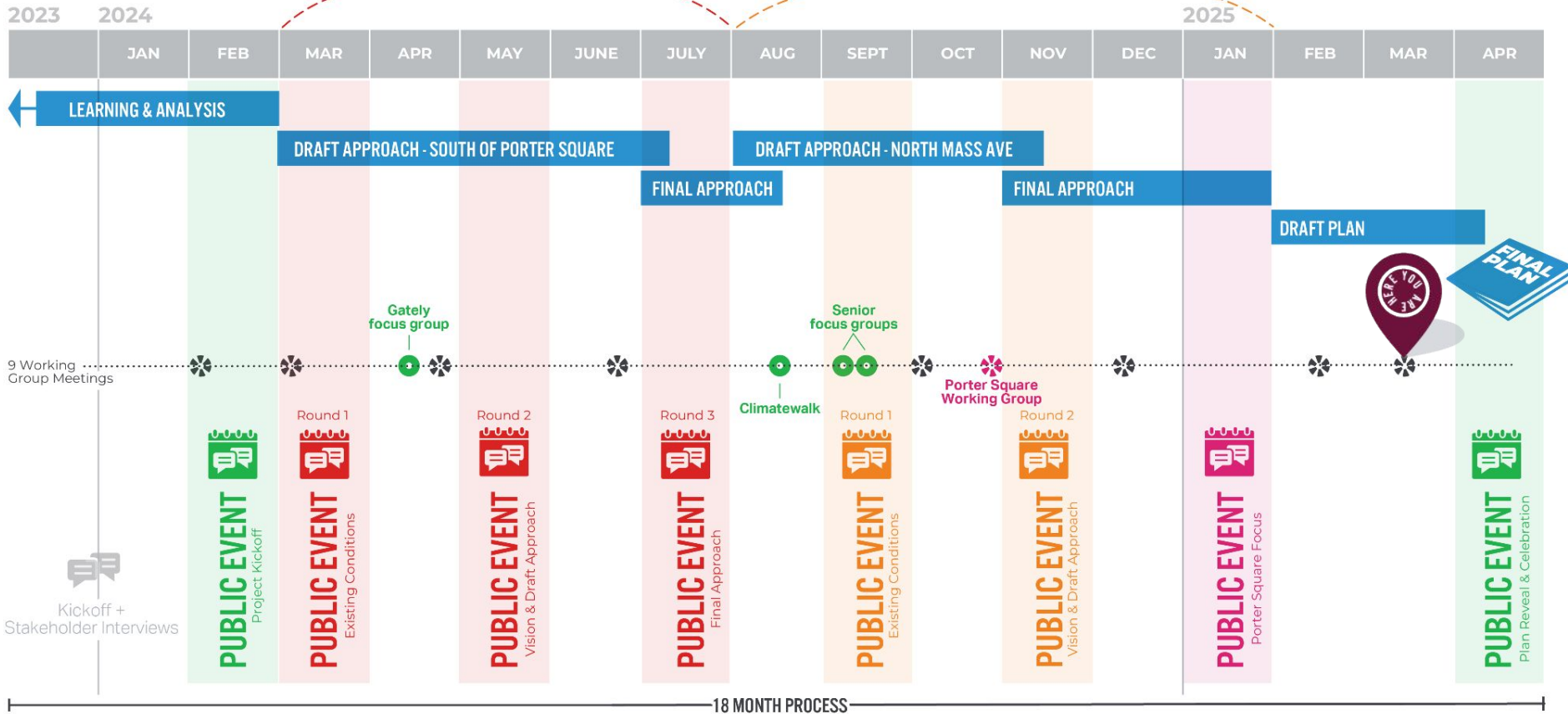
PROJECT RECAP

PHASE 1 PROJECT KICKOFF

PHASE 2 SOUTH OF PORTER SQUARE

PHASE 3 NORTH MASS AVE + PORTER SQUARE

PHASE 4 FINAL PLAN



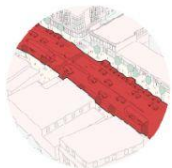
OUR CHARGE:

**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

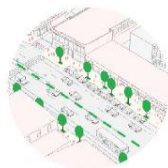
Near term



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

Questions or comments? Contact: massave4@cambridgema.gov



(DRAFT)

ZONING RECOMMENDATIONS

Zoning Priorities and Incentives

How can zoning prioritize different uses?

- Many zoning districts have different dimensional standards for residential and non-residential uses
- Prioritize by allowing taller and denser buildings for one type of use over the other

How can zoning incentivize preferred uses?

- Allow more space to be built for things that benefit the owner in exchange for dedicating space to uses that have a public benefit

Ways to do it:

- “Exempt” space from Gross Floor Area (GFA) limits if it is dedicated to a desired use
- Allow a development “bonus”

Zoning Priorities and Incentives

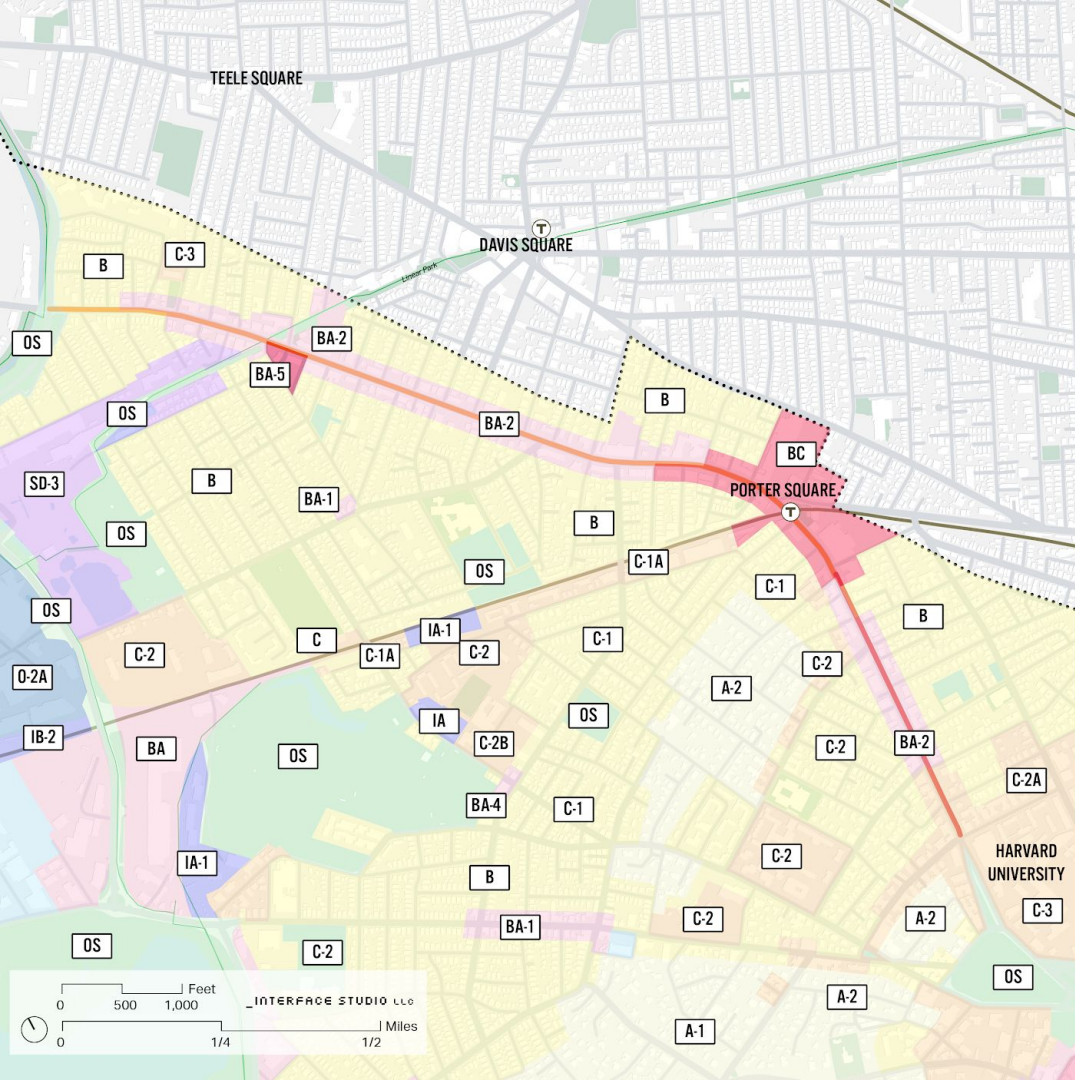
Can zoning require certain uses?

- Zoning sets the rules for what uses are allowed, but cannot compel a property owner to provide specific uses
- However, zoning can allow certain uses only if a desired use is provided
 - Ex. Housing is allowed only if the building includes ground floor retail

Important considerations:

- This only works if the cost of the “required” use is compensated by the value of other allowed uses
- Important to consider a range of uses that contribute to the planning goal, while remaining flexible to reduce potential vacancies

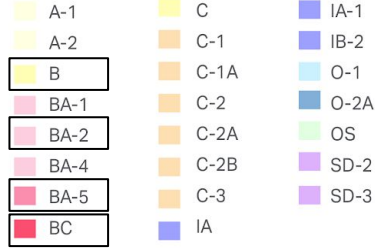
Existing BA-2: Active non-residential ground floor uses are “required” to maintain a mixed use environment



ZONING DISTRICTS

Interface Studio, October 2023

Base Zoning



Base Zoning	BC	BA-2
Height	Residential: 75', 6 Stories Non-residential: 55'	Residential: 75', 6 Stories Non-residential: 45'
FAR	Residential: N/A Non-residential: 1.25	Residential: N/A Non-residential: 1.0
Setbacks	Residential: None Non-residential: 20' rear	Residential: 5' front Non-residential: 5' front, 10' side, 20' rear
Open Space	None	None

MASS AVE PLANNING PRINCIPLES

OVERARCHING

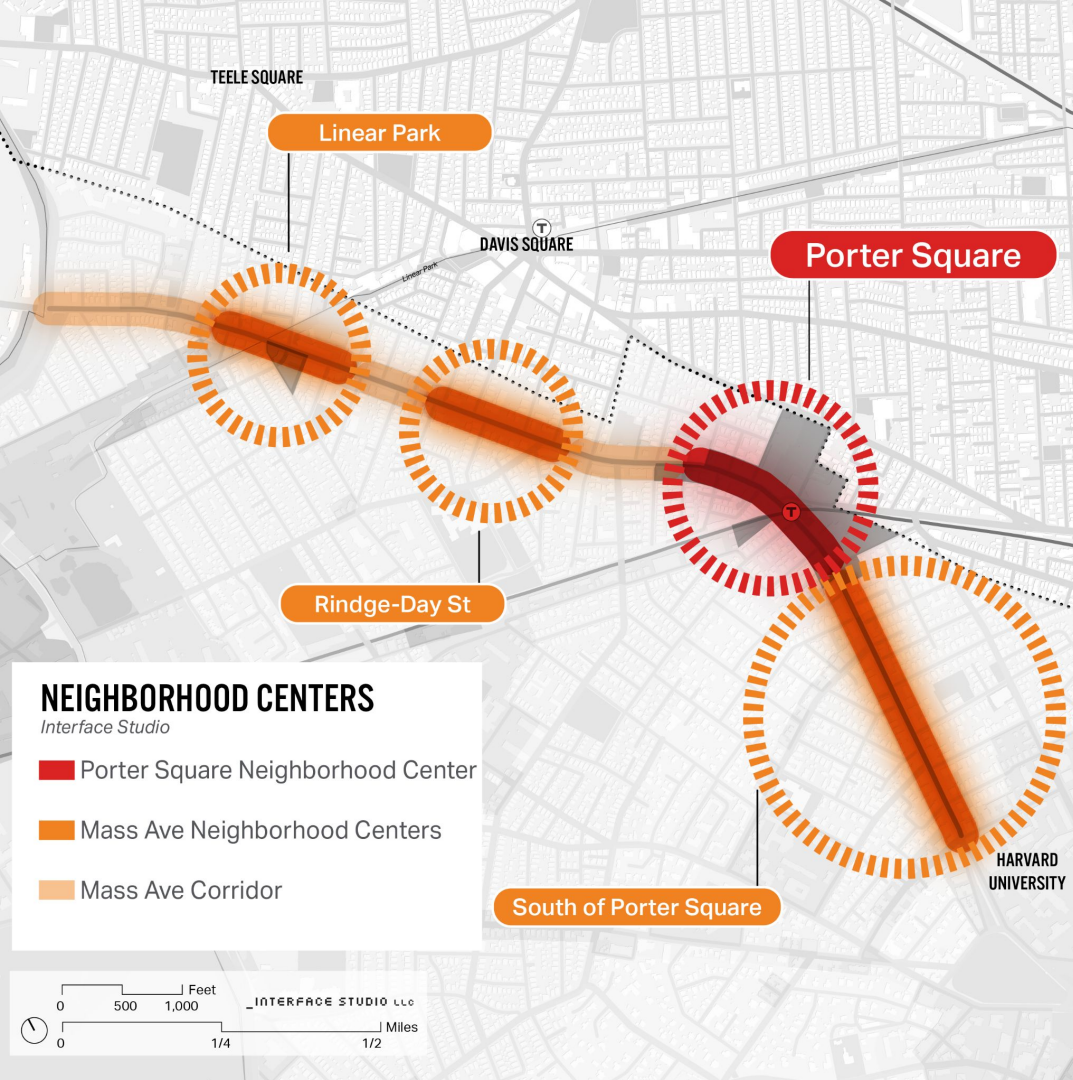
1. Allow greater heights for housing
2. Reinforce mixed-use character of the corridor
3. Provide retail flexibility

NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS

- Establish neighborhood centers to encourage and concentrate retail activity
- Require active ground floor use
- Promote walkability, biking and transit use

PORTER SQUARE

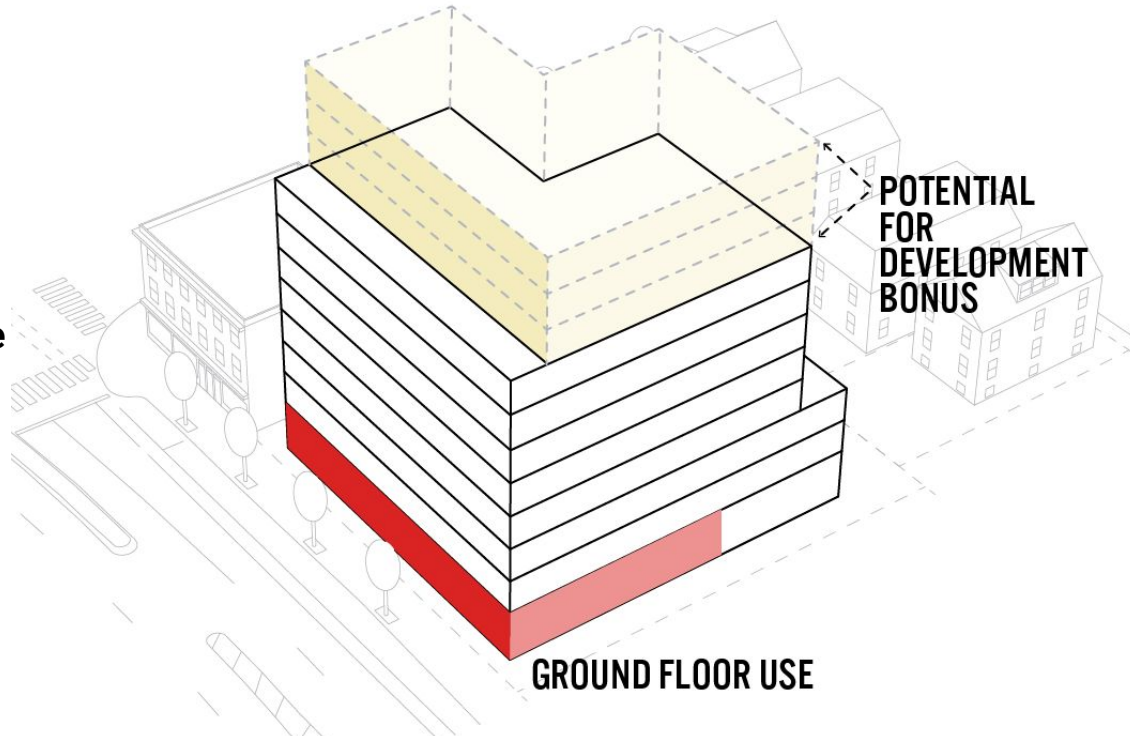
- Remain a retail destination
- Create a connected and walkable place
- Explore a shared district parking model
- Include a 'significant' open space



USES

USES

1. **Prioritize multi-family mixed use**
 - Highest heights allowed for mixed use with residential, lower heights allowed for non-residential
2. **Incentivize ground floor non-residential uses throughout the corridor**
 - Require active uses in neighborhood centers and Porter Square
3. **Additional community benefits?**
 - Community center
 - Other preferred uses?

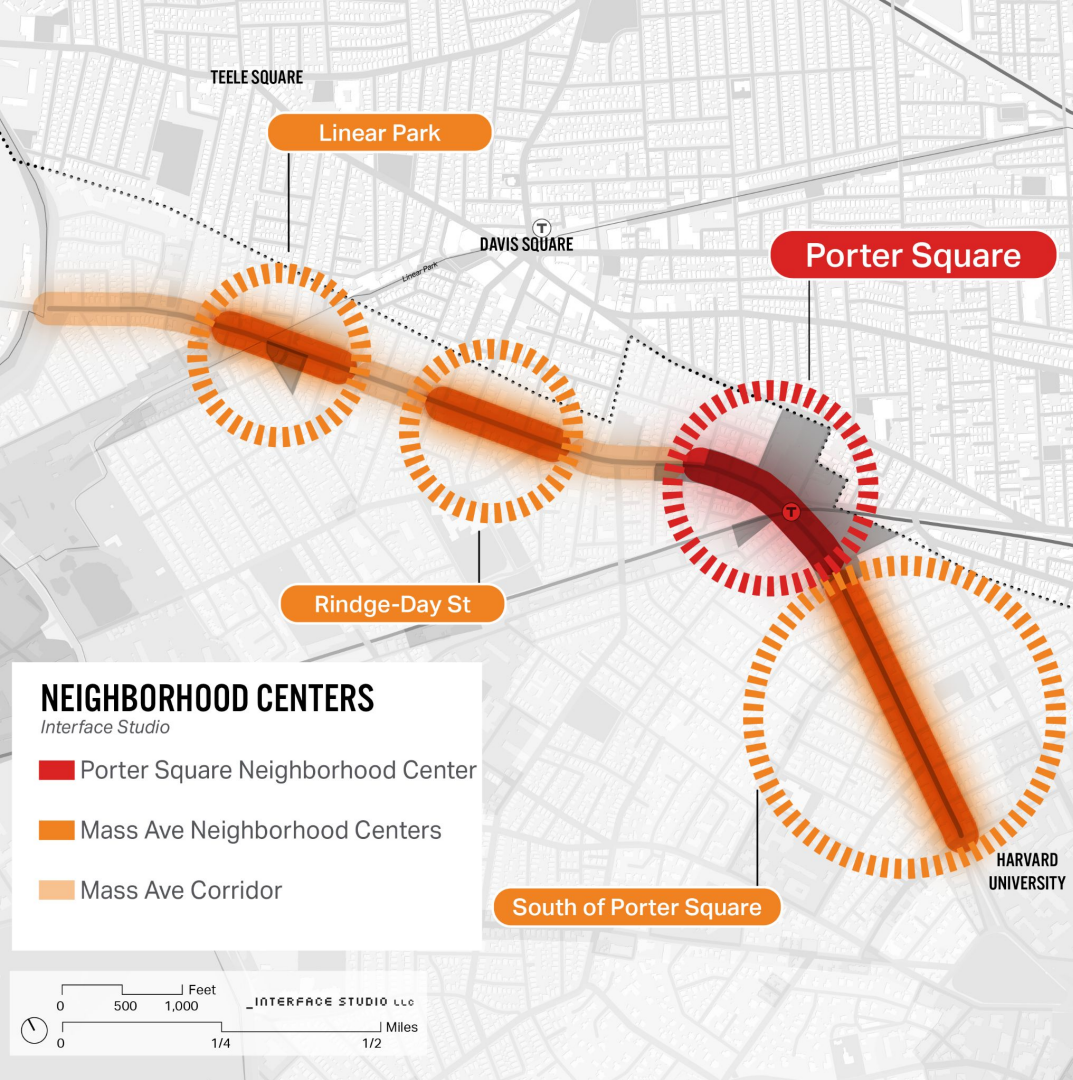


HEIGHT & BULK

HEIGHT - MASS AVE PROPOSED

Mass Ave Corridor

- **100% residential:** 8 stories
- **100% non-residential:** 45' (unchanged from existing)
- **Mixed-use:** 10 stories (non-residential portion up to 45')
 - *Active ground floor use required in neighborhood center but bonus is allowed throughout the district*
- **Mixed-use + (community benefit):** 11 stories (non-residential portion up to 45')

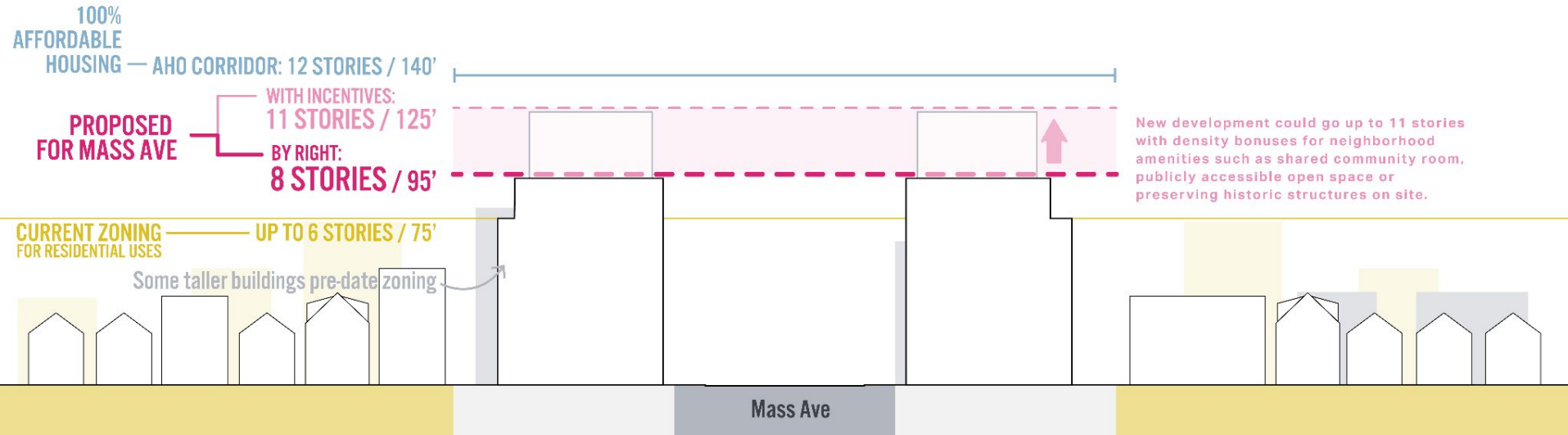


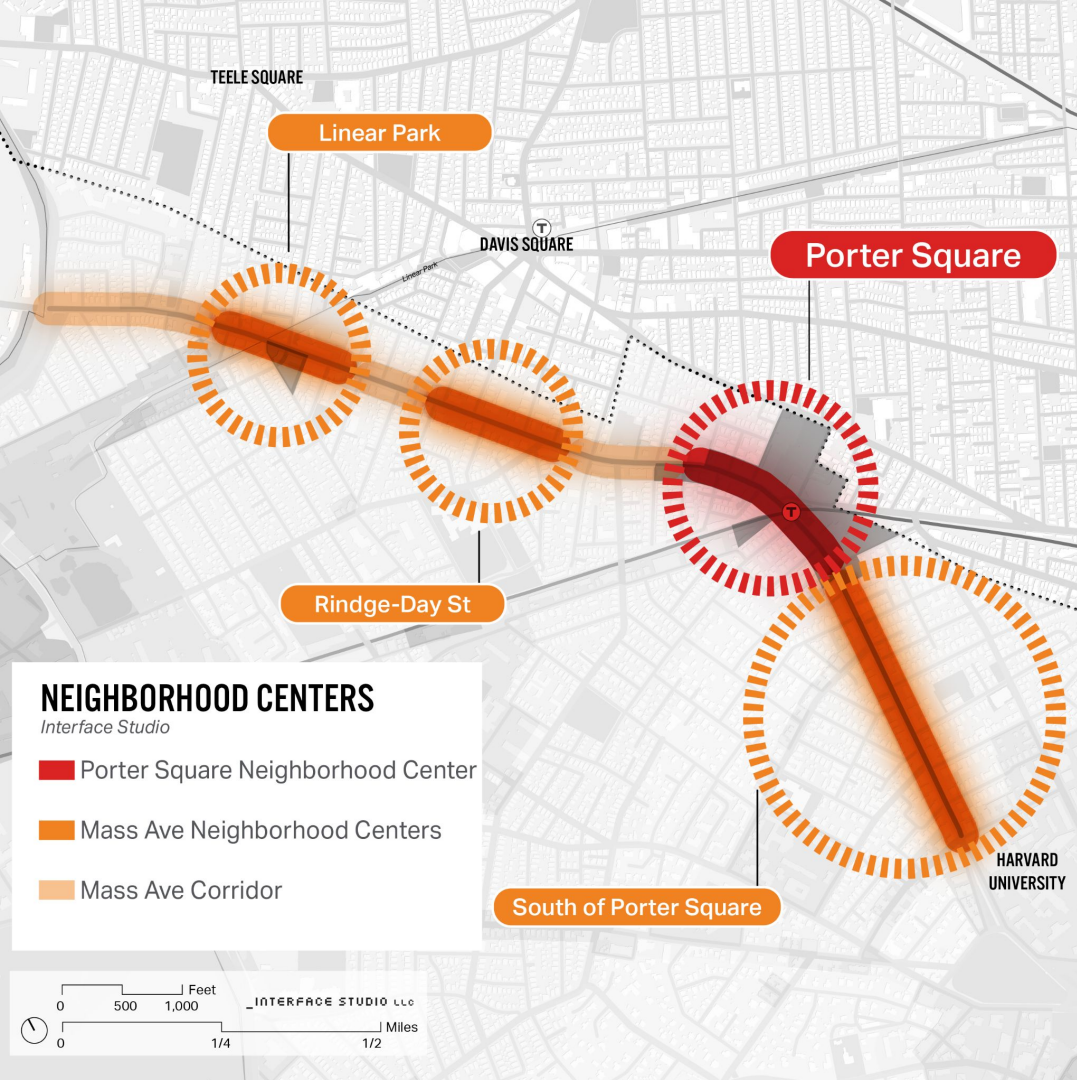
HEIGHT - MASS AVE

PROPOSED

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

PROPOSED: 95' (8 stories) for residential; up to 125' (11 stories) for mixed use with community benefit





HEIGHT - PORTER SQUARE PROPOSED

Porter Square

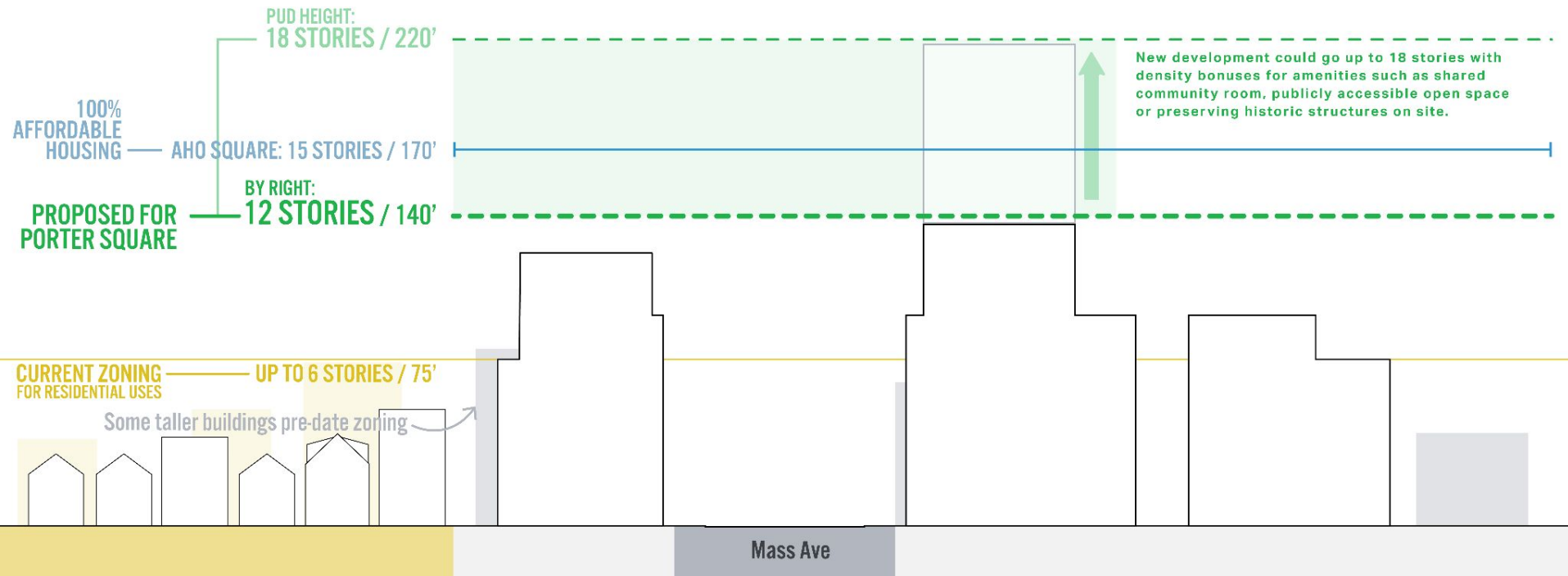
- **100% non-residential:** 55' (unchanged from existing)
- **Mixed-use:** 12 stories (non-residential portion up to 55')
 - *Active non-residential ground floor use required*
- **Planned Unit Development (PUD) height:** 18 stories (see PUD)

HEIGHT - PORTER SQUARE

PROPOSED

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

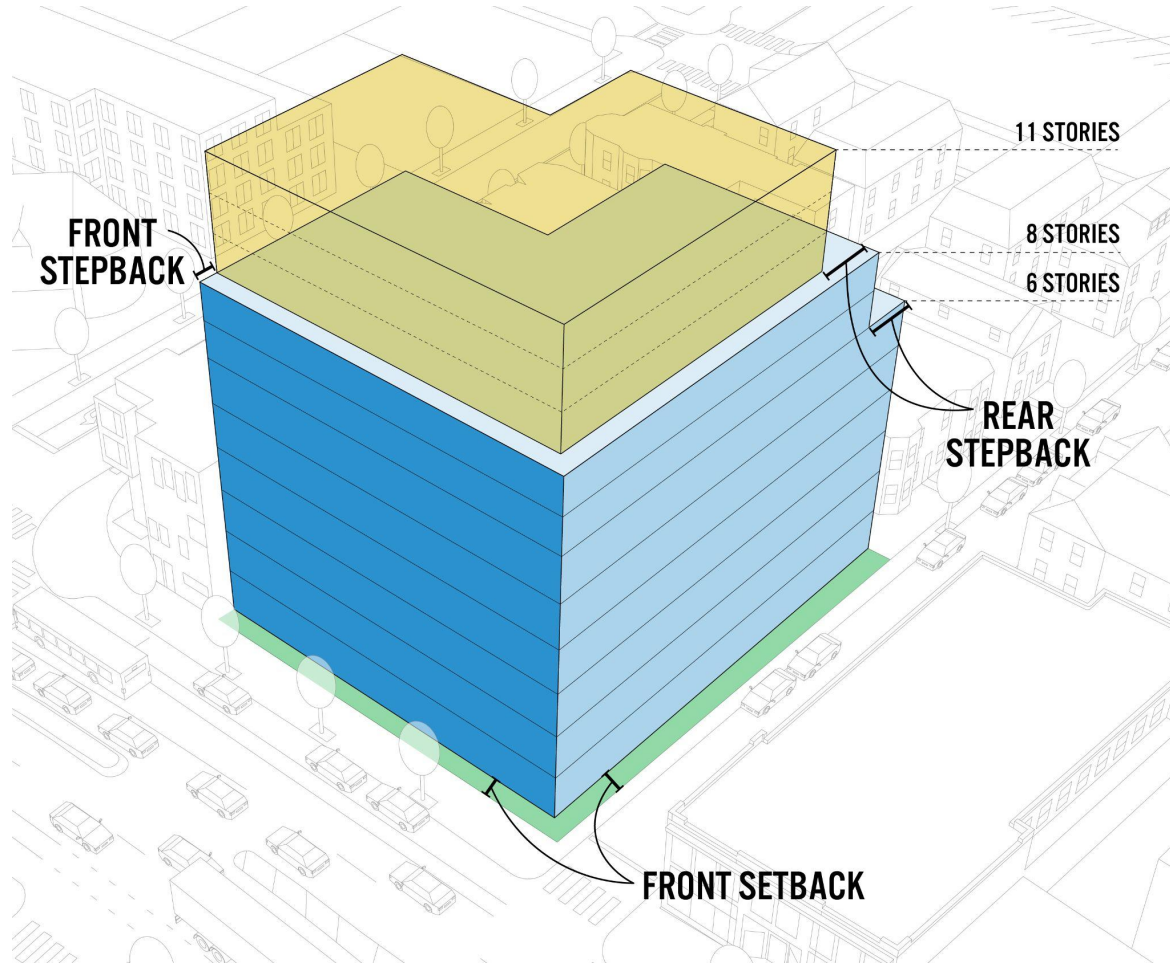
PROPOSED: *In BC:* 140' (12 stories) for residential/mixed use; up to 220' (18 stories) for PUD



BULK CONTROLS

Step backs:

- **Facing Streets:** After 8 stories
- **Facing Neighborhoods:** After 6 & 8 stories
- **Sides:** None

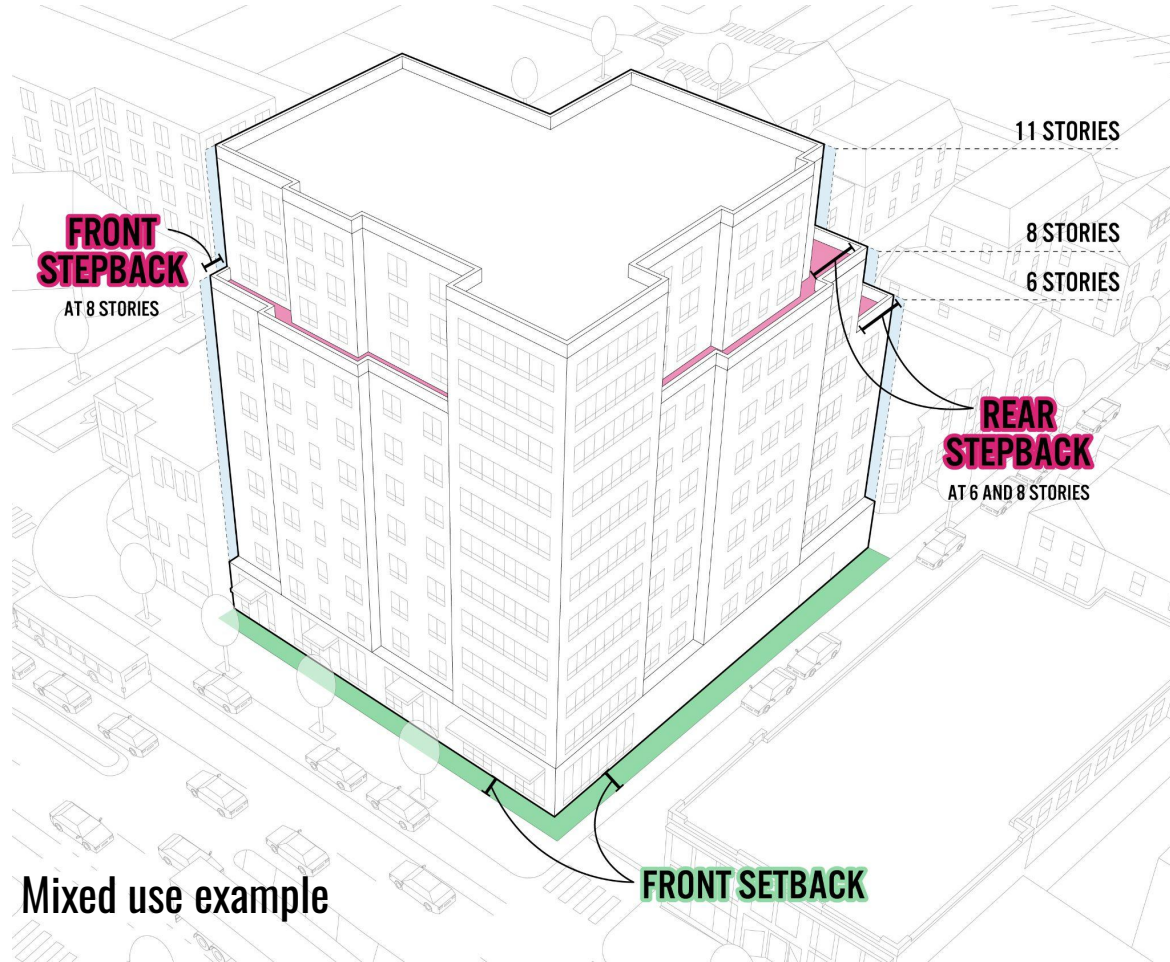
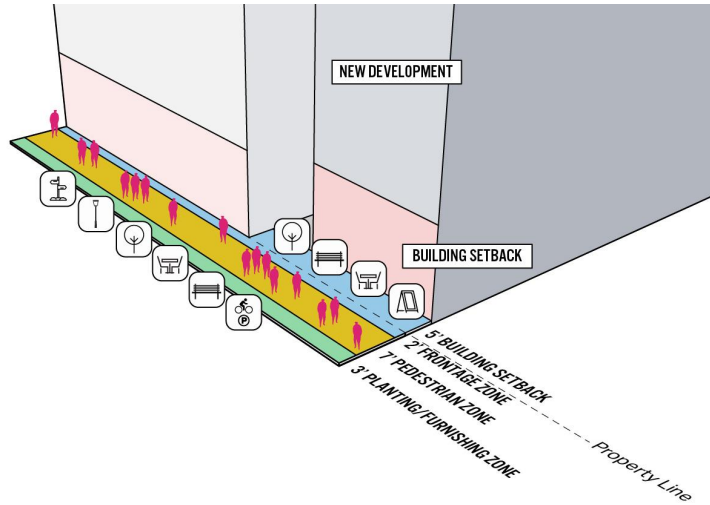


BUILDING & SITE DESIGN STANDARDS

BUILDING & SITE DESIGN STANDARDS

Setbacks:

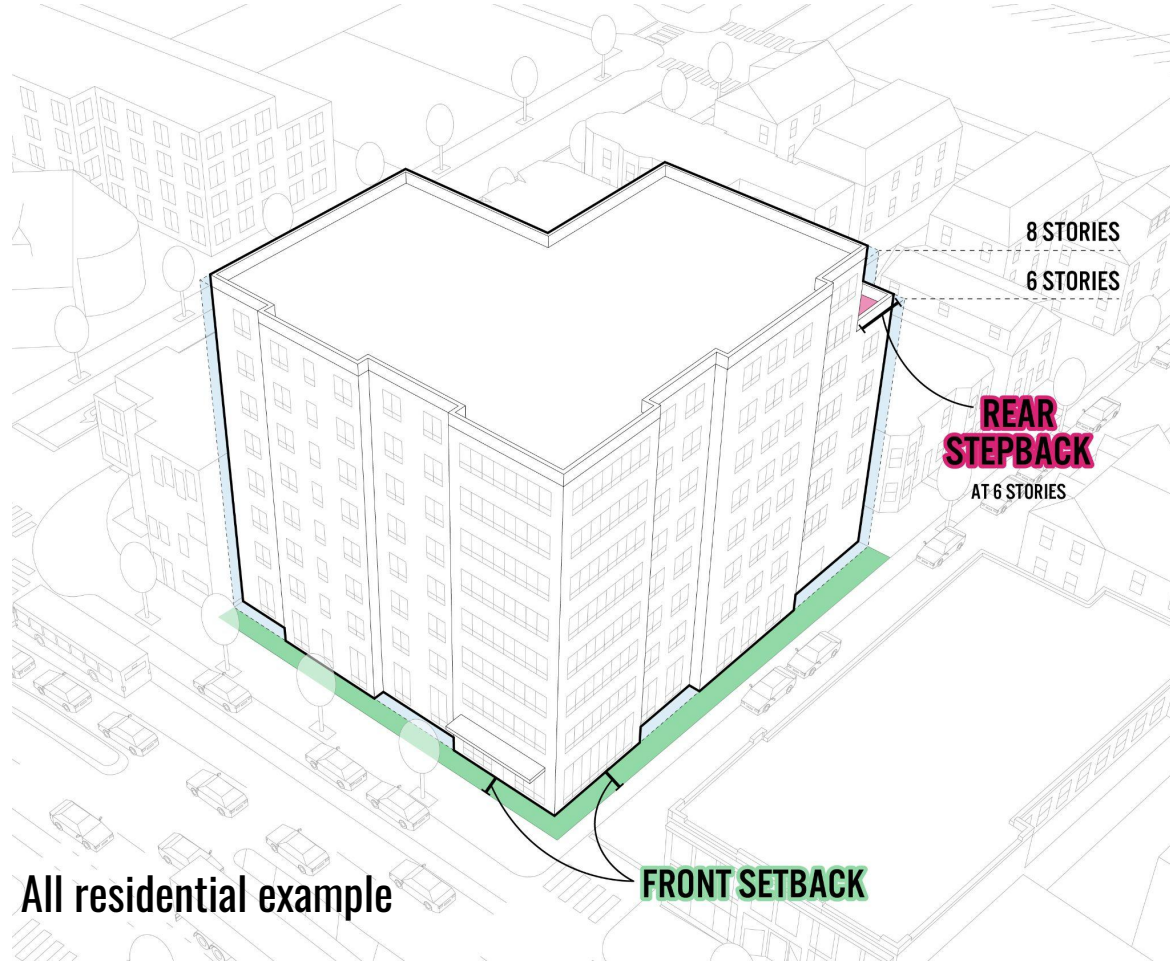
- **Non-Residential ground floor:**
 - 5ft extension of sidewalk



BUILDING & SITE DESIGN STANDARDS

Setbacks:

- **Residential ground floor:**
 - Extension of sidewalk or landscaped

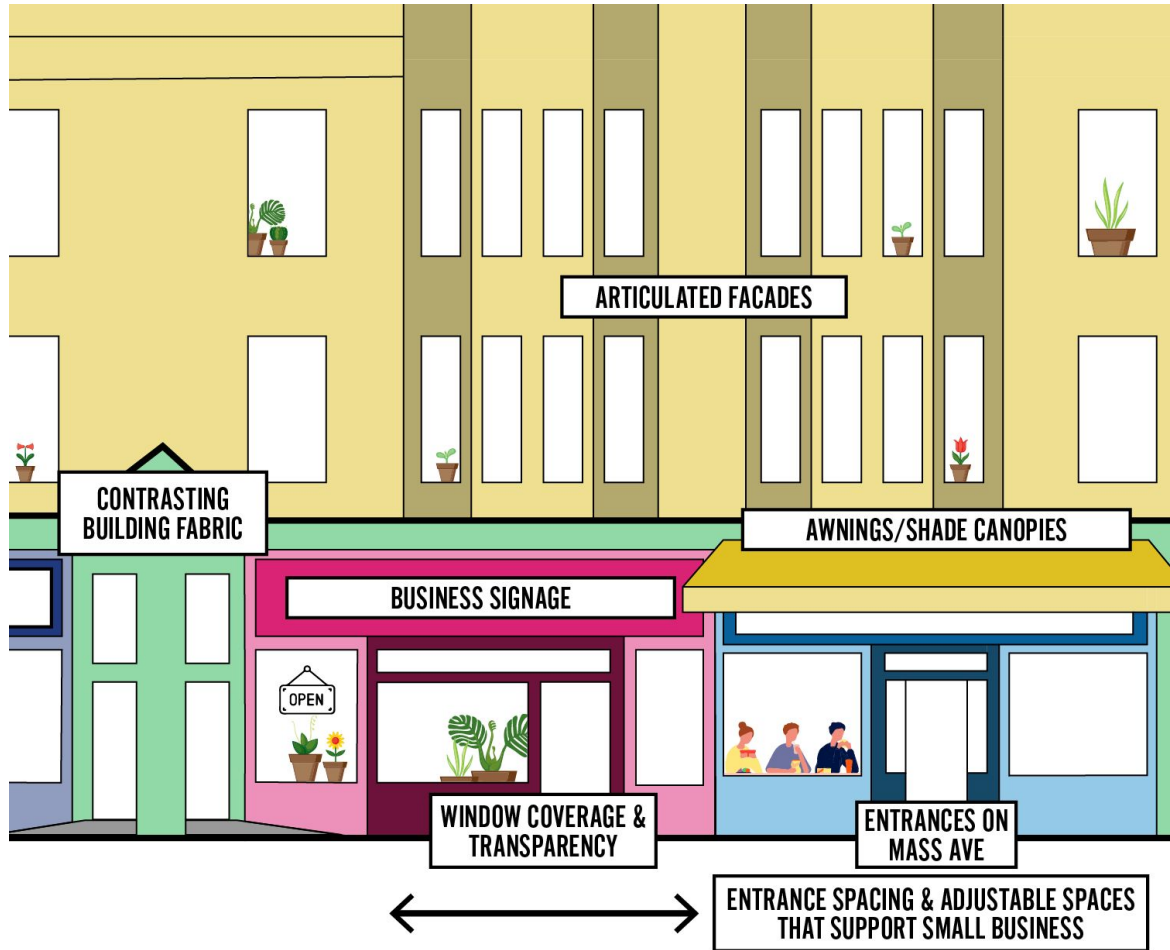


All residential example

FRONT SETBACK

ACTIVE GROUND FLOOR

- **Facade transparency**, ground floor and otherwise
- **Façade articulation**
- **Pedestrian scale** – frequent entrances, variation in ground floor uses
- **Minimum ground floor height**
- **Entrances facing Mass Ave** and located at ground level
- **Encourage frequency of entrances and flexible subdividable spaces**



OPEN SPACE REQUIREMENTS

Mass Ave Corridor

- **No open space requirements** in business districts
- Could incentivize publicly beneficial open space through development bonus
- Likely outcome could be a small **pocket park** or **plaza**



St. James courtyard



Trolley Square

OPEN SPACE REQUIREMENTS

Porter Square

- **No open space requirements** in business districts
- Could require publicly beneficial open space through PUD Special Permit process
- Likely outcome could be a larger **park** or **plaza**



The Common at Cambridge Crossing



MIT SoMa

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

HISTORIC BUILDINGS

- **Flexibility in zoning** when working with existing buildings that don't conform



Frost Terrace (1865, renovated 2021)



Henderson Carriage Repository (1892), now used for office and retail.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Interface Studio, January 2024

- South of Porter Square Study Area
- North Mass Ave + Porter Square Study Area
- ... City Boundary
- ▨ Historic Districts (Old Cambridge)
- Historic Landmarks and Easements
- National Register of Historic Places
- Massachusetts Ave Overlay District Historic Properties

Selected Historic Places

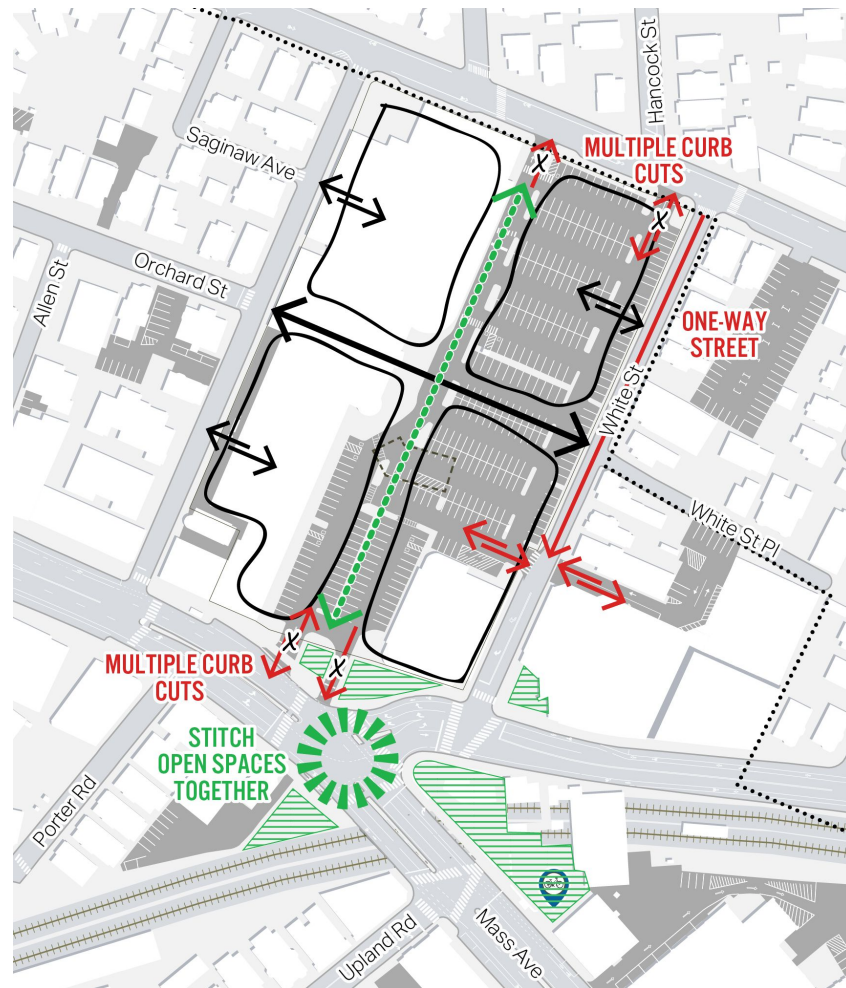
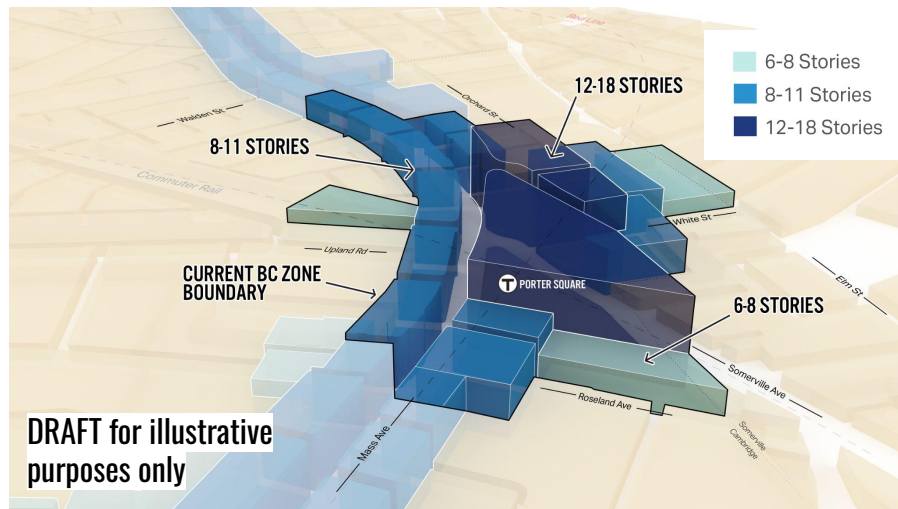
- 1 St. John's Roman Catholic Church
- 2 Henderson Carriage Repository
- 3 St. James's Episcopal Church
- 4 Cambridge Masonic Temple
- 5 North Avenue Congregational Church
- 6 Avon Hill National Register / Conservation District



PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT (PUD)

PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT (PUD) SPECIAL PERMIT: PORTER SQUARE

- Allows for higher intensity development in exchange for more substantial public benefits
- Permitted as a phased multi-site plan
 - Rigorous public review process including community meetings, at least two public hearings, and design review of each building



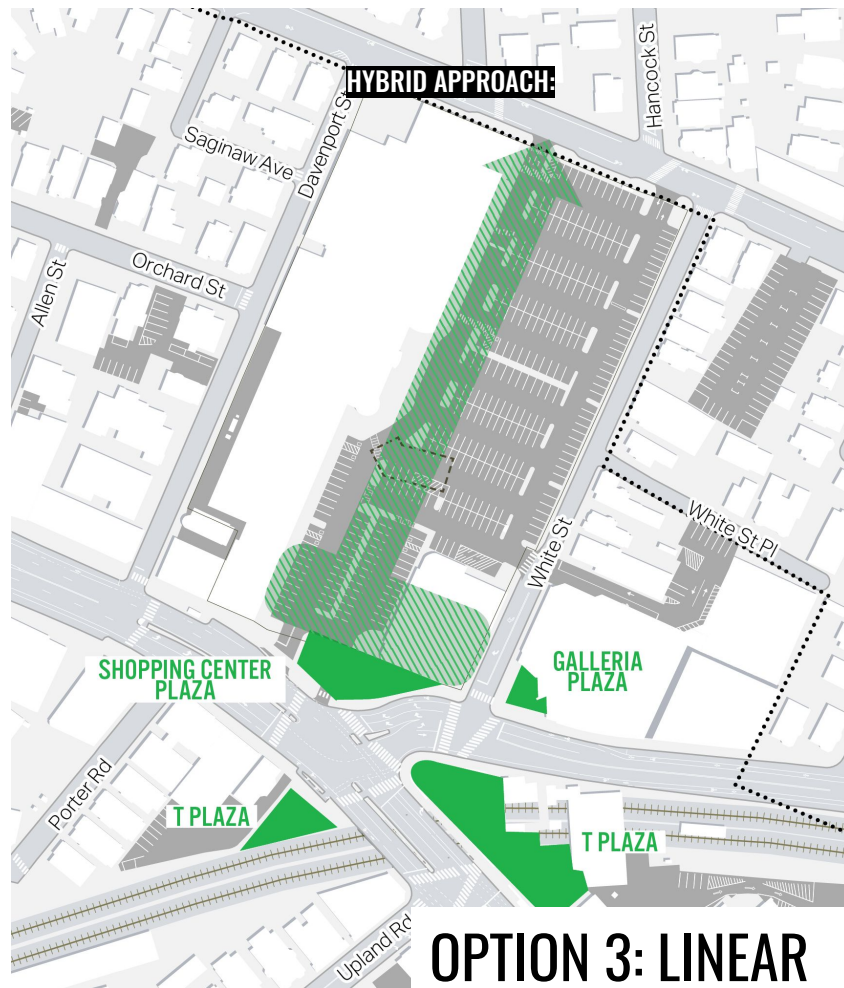
PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT (PUD) SPECIAL PERMIT: PORTER SQUARE

Development Benefits

- Relaxed dimensional standards
- Higher density development potential; up to 18 stories for residential
- Consolidated review (single process for multi-site development)

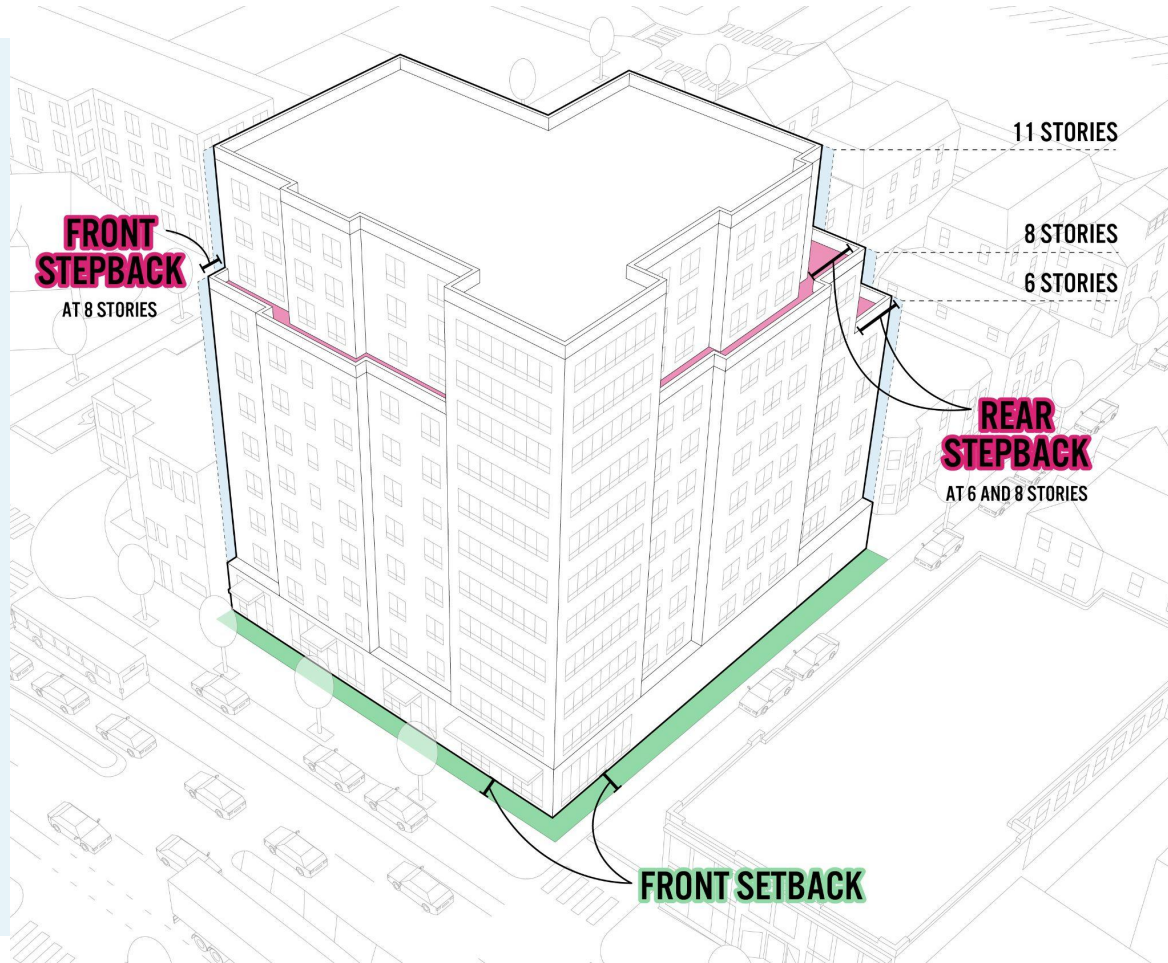
Public Benefits

- Required public open space
- Shared parking
- Destination retail



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What community benefits get you from 10-11 stories?
 - a. Specific uses?
 - b. Increased front yard setbacks?
 - c. Open space?
 - d. Historic preservation?
2. What community benefits get you from 12-18 stories in Porter?
 - a. Open space?
 - b. Shared parking?
 - c. Destination retail?
3. Publicly beneficial open space could be community benefit - what would that space look like?
4. Should preservation of historic buildings be a community benefit?



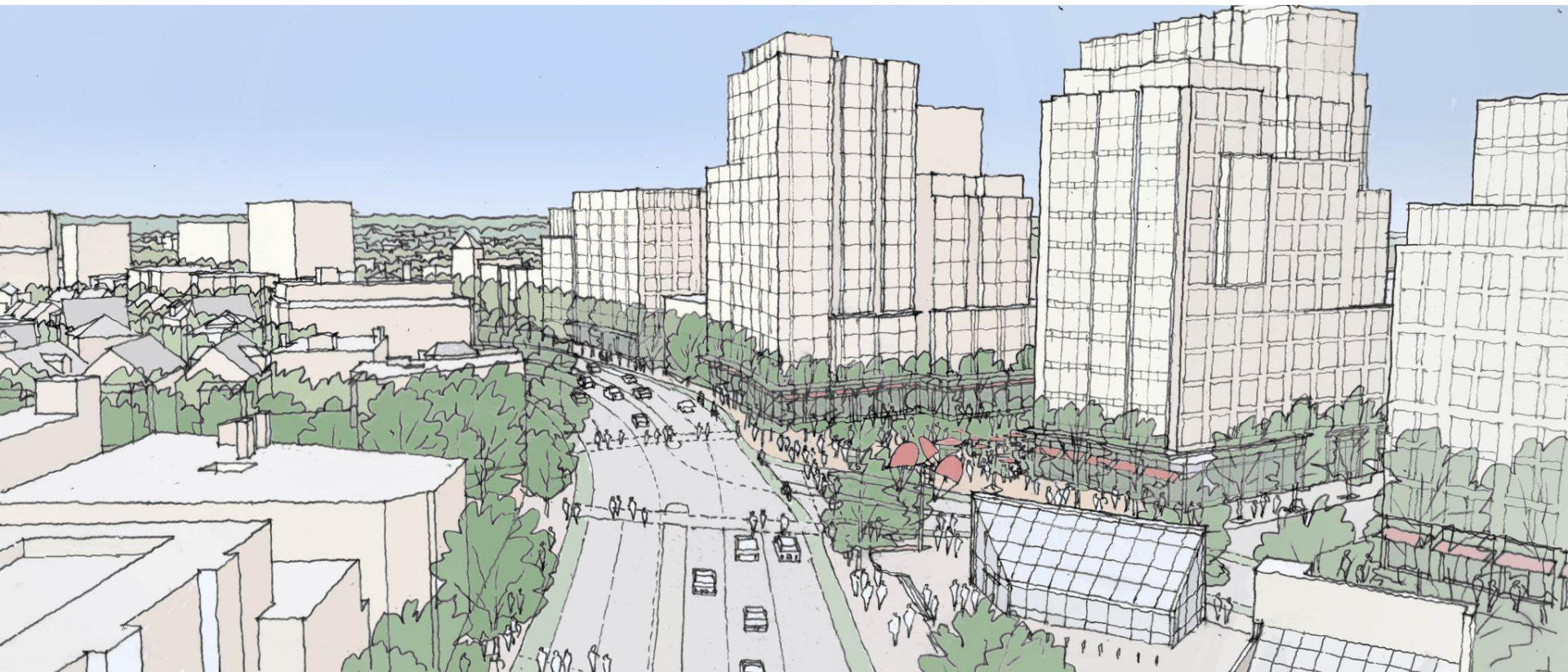
How could Mass Ave evolve over the next 15 years?



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 NEXT STEPS

- **Input Opportunities**
 - **Review Draft Plan (Early April release)**
- **Additional Participation**
 - **Community Meeting April 10**
- **Plan Implementation of Early Actions:**
 - Get involved in neighborhood organization (PSNA, Baldwin, or help organize North Cambridge neighbors)
 - Community gatherings and activation
 - Supporting the creation of a Mass Ave Business Association
 - Watch out for plan updates

PUBLIC QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

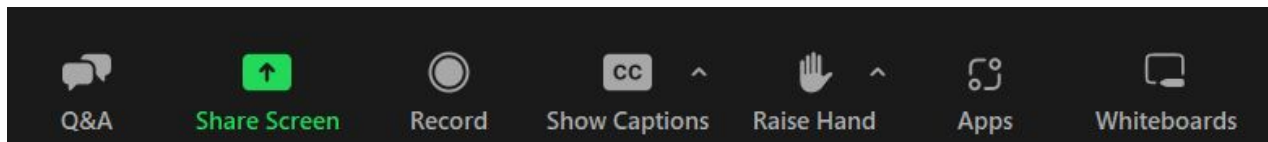
Your feedback is important

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.

Visit 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.

WRAPPING UP

March:

- Finalize draft plan
- Partial Construction meeting March 25

April:

- Host a final **Community Meeting April 10 @5:00pm**
- **Review of draft** and comments
- Release **final plan end of the month**

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

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