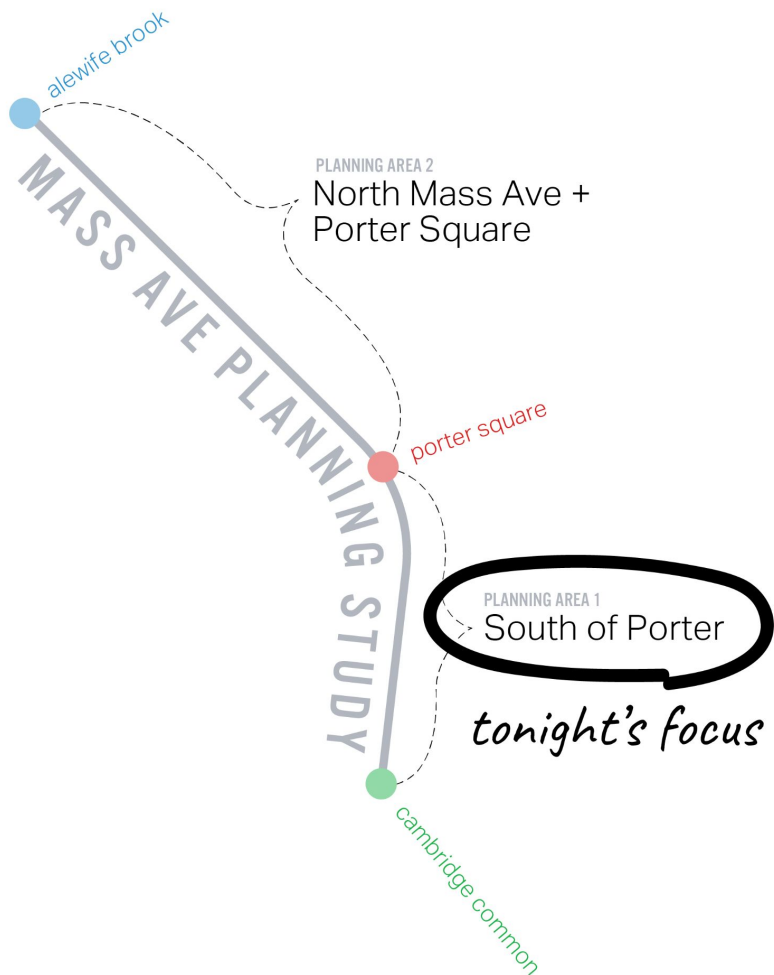


# Working Group Meeting #4

6/27/24

CAMBRIDGE COMMON TO  
ALEWIFE BROOK PARKWAY

\_INTERFACE STUDIO LLC

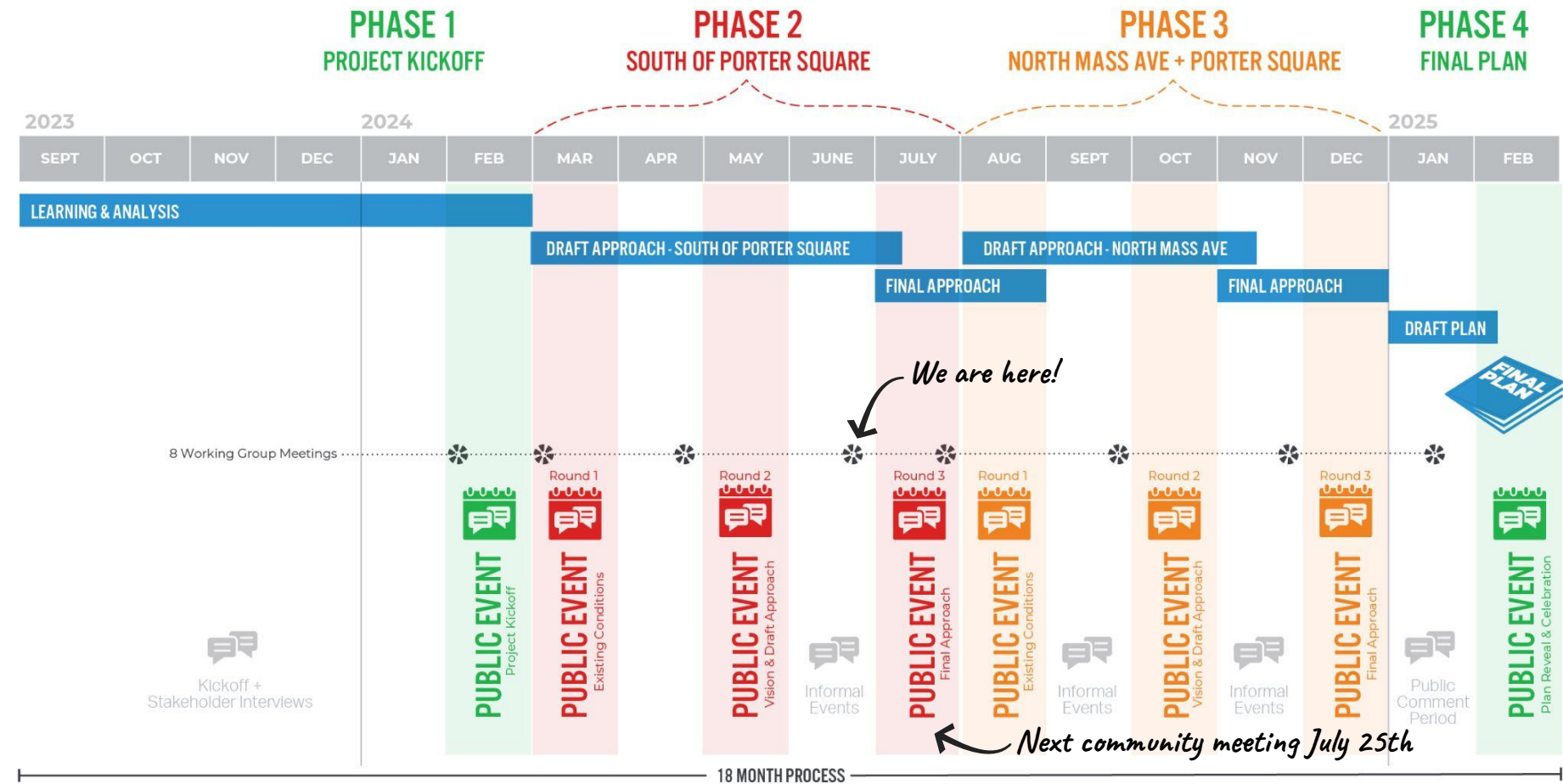


# AGENDA

## Working Group Meeting 4

- 01** Quick Refresh  
Project Process
- 02** Previous Community Meeting  
Summary and Report out
- 03** Special Discussion  
Development and Housing
- 04** Recommendations  
Presentation and Discussion
- 05** Public Q&A
- 06** Next Steps

# PROJECT SCHEDULE



# SOUTH OF PORTER SQUARE MEETING 2 SUMMARY





# OPEN HOUSE: MAY 29, 2024

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## Attendees

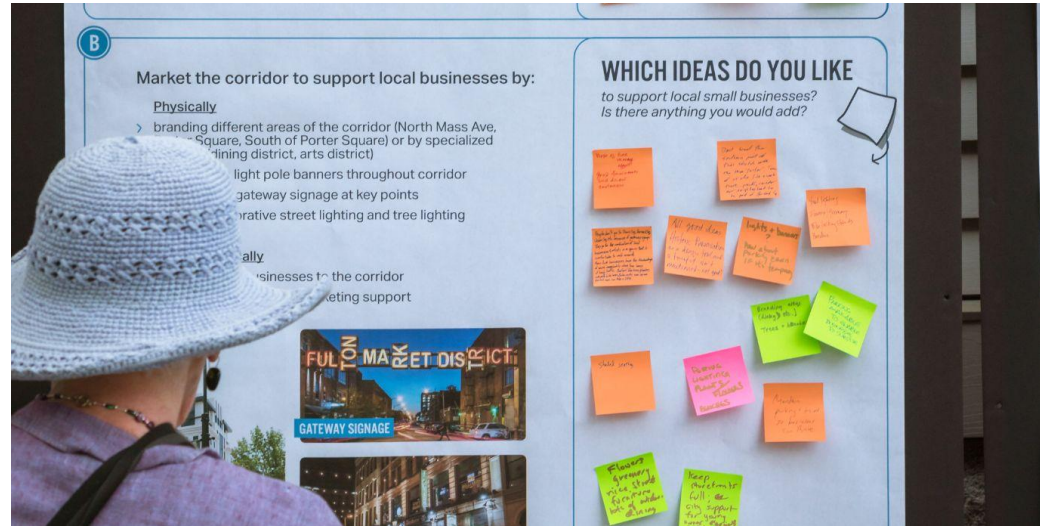
100+

## Purpose

**Present draft recommendations and gather feedback**

## Key Takeaways

**We're on the right track! Lots of positive reception for recommendations** and a few new ideas. Some things need a bit more discussion. We'll share what we discussed and some of that feedback when we walk through the recommendations...




# DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONS DISCUSSION

# UPDATED *(DRAFT)* RECOMMENDATIONS

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## MORE OF A NEIGHBORHOOD & DESTINATION

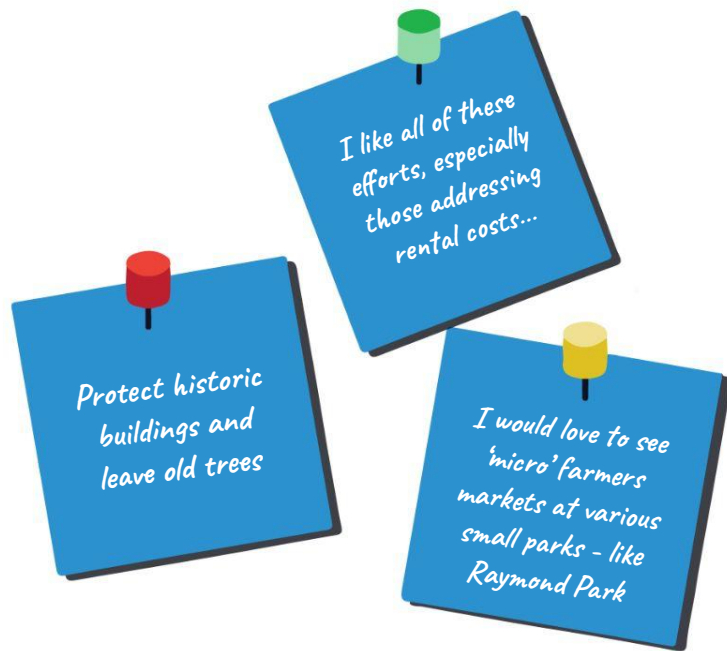
How can Mass Ave continue to provide neighborhood goods & services and foster an active corridor for residents and visitors?

- 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
- 
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# MORE OF A NEIGHBORHOOD & DESTINATION

## WHAT WE HEARD FROM THE OPEN HOUSE

- **Supporting local retail** (and affordable space) is a key priority for the community.
- Community members want to extend small business support to **new entrepreneurs** - not just existing local businesses - and **attract new businesses**.
- More **programming and marketing** opportunities to support the corridor was important but not a priority for participants
- Suggestions for events included **farmers markets and micro events**, as well as larger events like the Somerville Porchfest!
- Concerns about loss of parking due to the partial construction project (*we are conveying those to the partial construction team*)





# A. Foster a mix of local businesses including neighborhood-serving, family-friendly goods and services:

1. Support the creation of a local business association to support and attract new businesses and to organize community events and programming
  - a. Areas of support a local business association can provide includes:
    - i. Identifying business member needs (*loading, permits, marketing, etc.*)
    - ii. Streamlining loading zone process
    - iii. Advocating for commercial parking permits for employees
    - iv. Coordinating corridor business-to-business exchange
  - b. The local business association will guide the implementation of additional neighborhood & destination recommendations
2. Explore partnerships to create a community kitchen or other similar incubator spaces to encourage growth of small businesses and attract entrepreneurs
3. Explore ways to keep commercial rents affordable and vacancies low, *for example anti-displacement measures and policies that subsidize retail rents such as a Master Leases, grants, commercial co-ops, long term lease agreements, etc.*



# B. Market the corridor to support local businesses

### Physically by:

1. Creating a branding strategy to highlight the corridor's identity
2. Implementing the branding strategy through interventions such as:
  - a. Gateway signage at key points along the corridor
  - b. Light pole banners
  - c. Murals

### Programmatically by:

3. Recruiting new businesses to the corridor and helping attract businesses to spaces that have been long vacant through financial assistance and marketing by a business association
4. Providing business and marketing support with tools such as an online directory and user-friendly websites



## C. Organize and host more community events and performance art

1. Partner with local institutions such as Lesley University and Harvard University, organizations, property owners like Wilder Co., and businesses to organize and fund events
2. Connect with local artists and performers from the community and through programs at Lesley University and Harvard University

### START HERE

**What's one event that could happen tomorrow without a lot of structured support?**

Who would organize the event?  
What type of event would it be?  
Where would it take place?

*Event ideas we heard from the community included Somerville's Porchfest, micro events, and farmers markets*



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**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

## WHAT WE HEARD FROM THE OPEN HOUSE

- For participants at the open house, **greening** the corridor is a priority for the study area.
- The community wants to see more open space in general, but also draw better connections (like a linear park!) to existing open spaces.
- Open spaces for gathering, like pop-ups and outdoor dining (year round!) were on many participant's minds.
- The community also shared a desire for indoor, affordable community event spaces.

*Night lighting!  
...Inviting,  
human-level  
lighting along  
entire length....*

### WHERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES

*to make Mass Ave more inviting or  
build community identity?*

- = MORE ART!
- = MORE GREENERY!
- = GATHERING SPACES!



*More  
impromptu  
art!*



## MORE INVITING

### A. Share community identity through creativity and art

*Big walls need  
lively murals*

1. Identify locations for murals and public art such as larger walls and open spaces
2. Install decorative street lighting and tree lighting in key commercial areas
3. Activate vacant commercial spaces with art



**MURAL EXAMPLE**



**STREET AMENITIES EXAMPLE**

## MORE INVITING

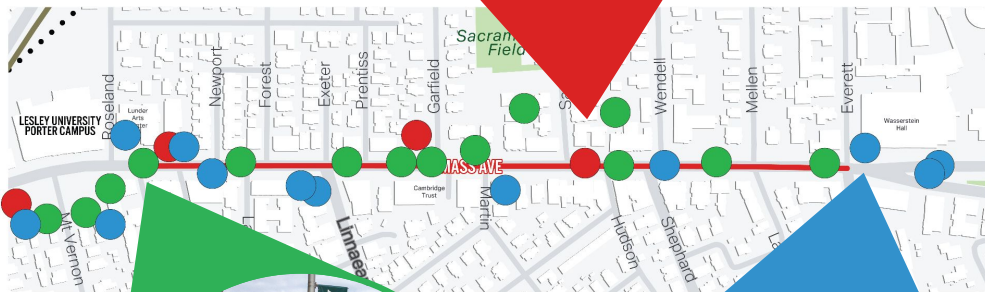
# B. Plant more trees and vegetation along corridor and open spaces

1. Install more street trees to develop large mature canopies
2. Enlarge existing street tree wells to provide more space for additional ground-level vegetation
3. Work with property owners to plant more trees and vegetation on their property
4. Coordinate with citywide green stormwater infrastructure mitigation measures

### WHERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES

*to make Mass Ave more inviting or build community identity?*

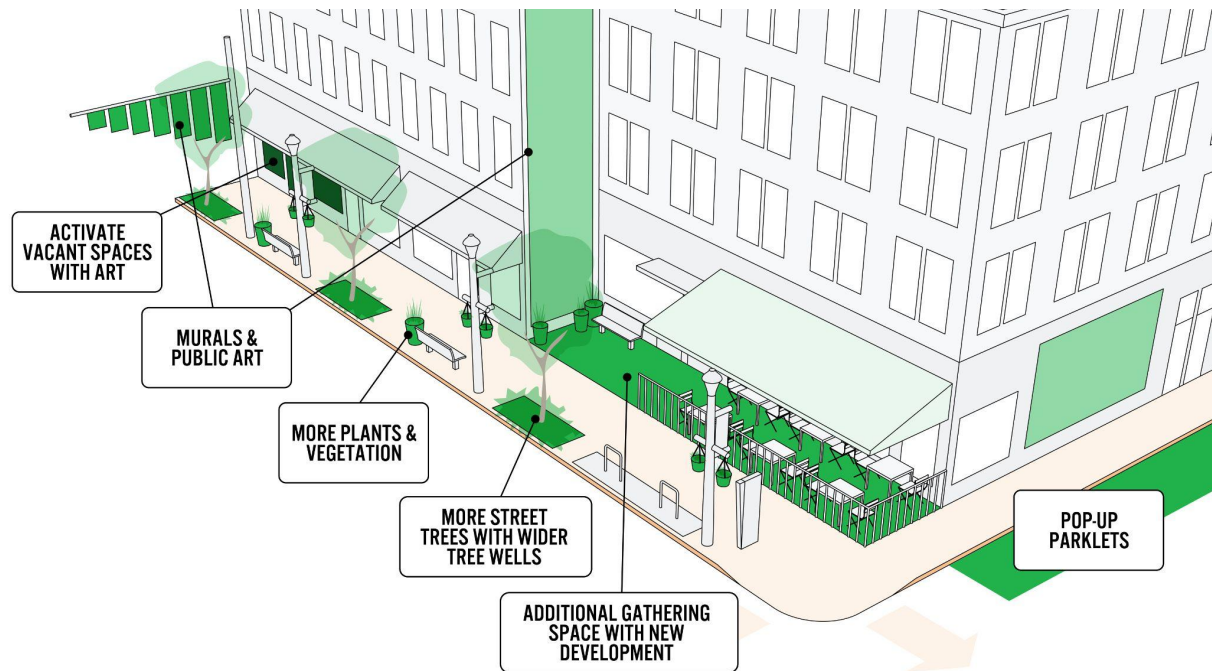
- = MORE ART!
- = MORE GREENERY!
- = GATHERING SPACES!



## MORE INVITING

# C. Create more places for the community to gather


1. Partner with property owners and institutions, such as Lesley University and Harvard University, to create more publicly accessible spaces
2. Identify opportunities for pop-up parklets on Mass Ave and side streets
3. Advocate for indoor, affordable community spaces for events and meetings on the ground floor in new development
4. Create meaningful connections to existing open spaces nearby



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# 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
- 
- A large orange circle at the bottom right of the slide, partially cut off by the edge.



# EASIER TO GET AROUND

## WHAT WE HEARD FROM THE OPEN HOUSE

- The community is eager for continued coordination with the partial construction efforts, and offered suggestions for more bus shelters, walk signals, and other elements. Retail parking and bike lanes remain a concern.
- Focusing on the sidewalk quality and amenities is a priority for Mass Ave.

*Think:  
people, more  
seating*

### WHERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES to focus on accessibility and comfort?



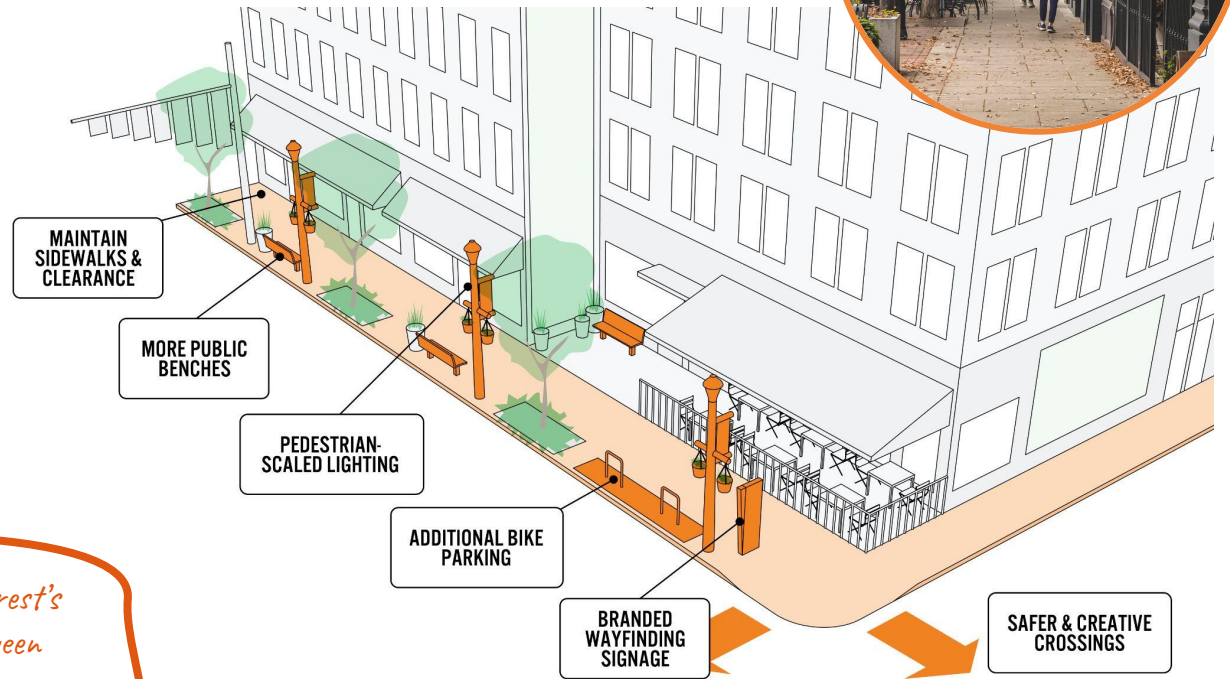
*Mass Ave  
should be all  
"sidewalk focus"*



## EASIER TO GET AROUND

### A. Ensure sidewalks are accessible for everybody

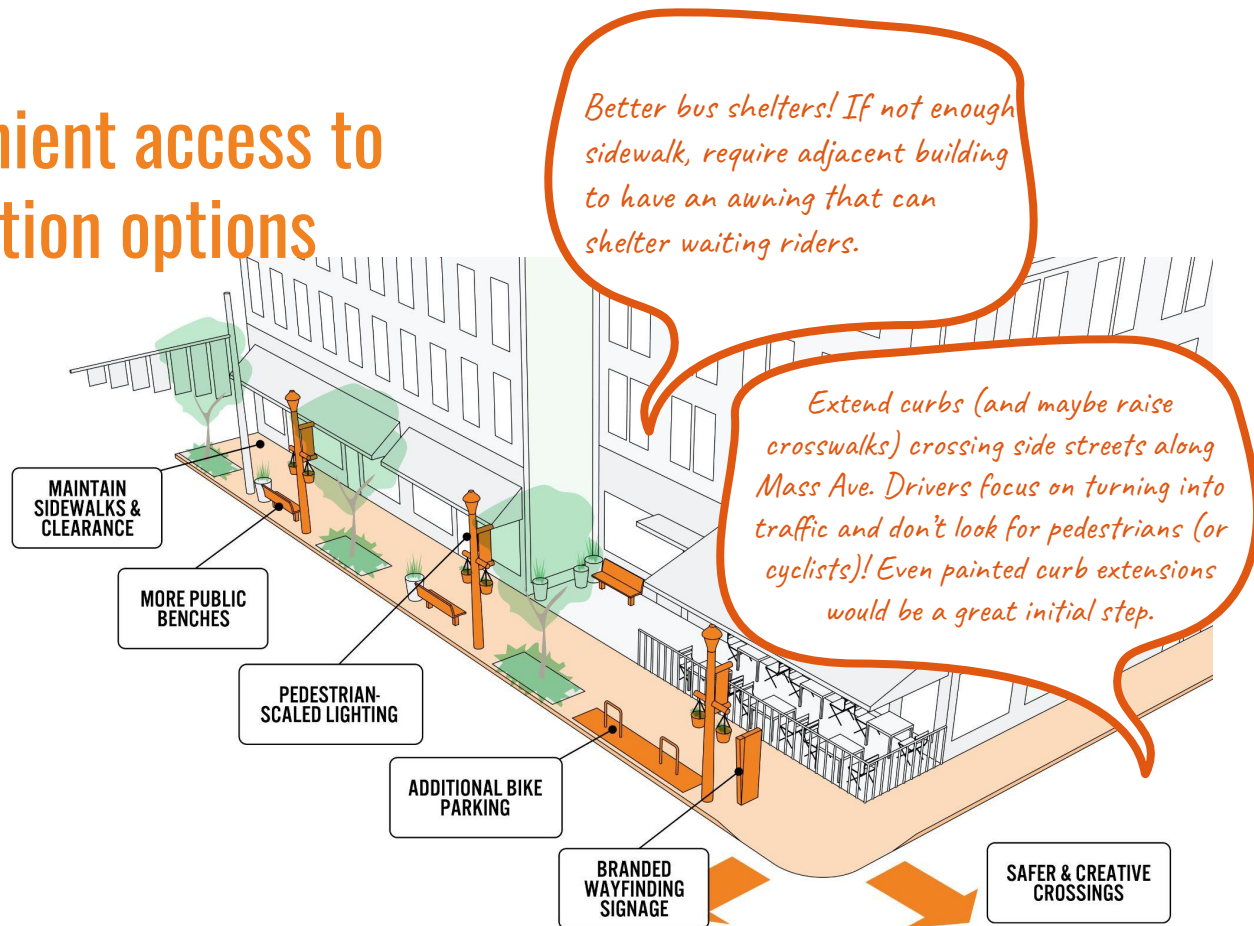
1. Maintain and repair sidewalks by reporting poor sidewalk conditions or sidewalk obstructions
2. Install more benches, bike racks, crosswalks, shade structures, and other public infrastructure
3. Balance sidewalk activity with access for people with mobility limitations, for example ensuring outdoor dining leaves enough sidewalk clearance



*Focus on Garfield's intersection, Forest's intersection, and sidewalk in between Chauncy and Langdon*

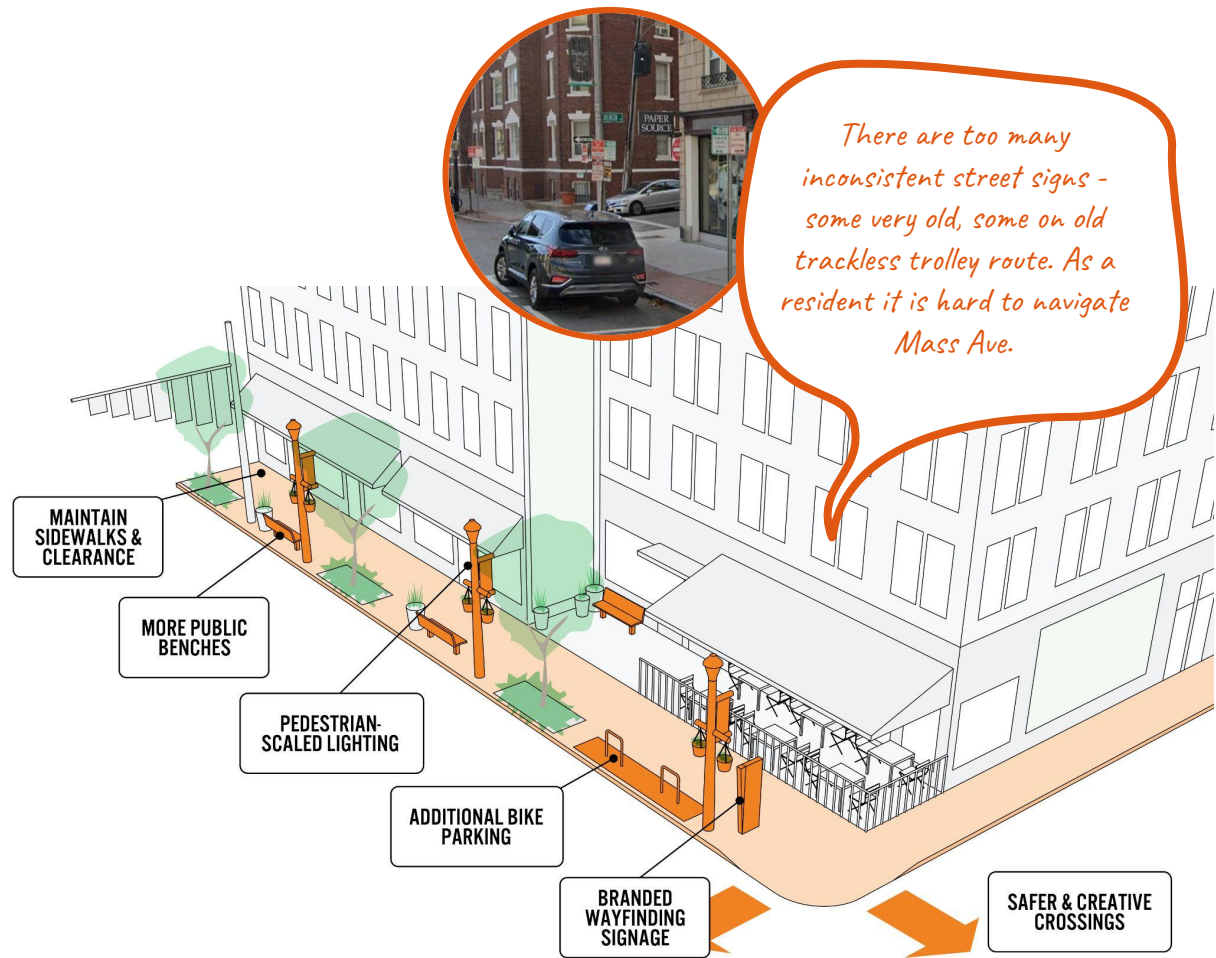
# B. Provide safe, convenient access to sustainable transportation options

1. Provide safer, more visible crossings on Mass Ave and perpendicular streets
2. Coordinate with MBTA to install more bus shelters where appropriate
3. Provide additional bike parking and blue bike station areas
4. Encourage shared off-street parking between businesses as recommended in the parking study
5. Coordinate with the city and the parking study to maintain reasonable loading and vehicle parking for businesses



## C. Streamline signage and wayfinding

1. Locate branded wayfinding signage at key gateways and destinations such as Mass Ave and Chauncy
2. Remove outdated and redundant signage
3. Install a variety of signage types including: pedestrian and roadways signage and sidewalk markers



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# MORE HOUSING OPTIONS

## How can Mass Ave provide more housing options?

- A. Encourage more housing/residents on the corridor
- B. Support a diverse mix of housing price points
- C. Encourage context-sensitive design

# MORE HOUSING OPTIONS

## WHAT WE HEARD FROM THE OPEN HOUSE

Nearly all of the responses from the building height activity recognized the need for additional housing along Mass Ave.

Concerns we heard included:

- Scale of the buildings
- Relationship of building to the street
- Access to sunlight and building shadows
- New development may impact the number of affordable retail spaces

Opportunities we heard included:

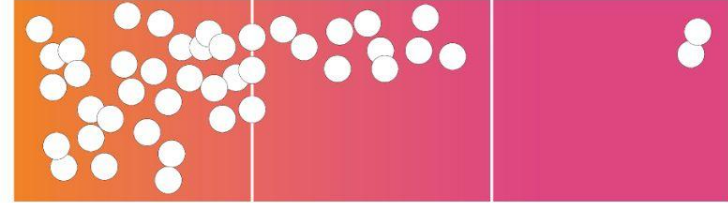
- Additional housing with an emphasis on affordable housing
- More residents could benefit businesses and transit ridership
- New development could create new community and publicly accessible spaces

### WHAT IF WE WENT UP...

A LITTLE  
(6-8 STORIES)

A LITTLE MORE  
(10-12 STORIES)

A BIT MORE?



*Keep existing character of street, but with only a mild increase in height.*

*Taller is fine - but not without limits and intelligent oversight...*

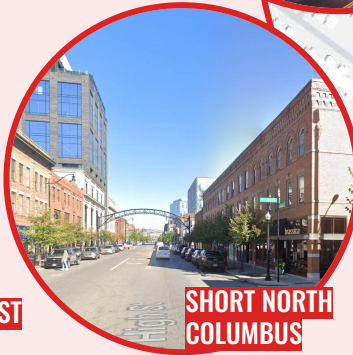
We heard additional ideas and questions that relate to citywide policies including airbnb rentals, foreign property speculation, vacant housing taxes and rent control. We are passing along what we heard to the city and are advocating for continued discussions around these ideas.



## MORE HOUSING OPTIONS

### A. Encourage more housing/residents on the corridor

- Adjust zoning along the corridor to allow for greater height to 8 stories or more
- Review density bonus allowances for additional housing and resident and community amenities such as community spaces, preferred ground floor uses, publicly accessible spaces, and greening



#### SUSCEPTIBILITY TO CHANGE

Interface Studio, March 2024

- South of Porter Square Study Area
- Some Potential
  - > Parking lots adjacent to active uses
- Moderate Potential
  - > Large parcels with potential
- High Potential
  - > One or two story commercial use
- Parcel within the Mass Ave Overlay District Historic preservation or National Register

# B. Support a diverse mix of housing price points

- Coordinate a mix of market and affordable housing developments along the corridor through the Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO), inclusionary housing policy, and housing trust fund
- Explore other strategies and funding mechanisms at the state and federal level for encouraging affordable and mixed-income housing



### AFFORDABLE HOUSING OVERLAY

The AHO allows the creation of new, permanently affordable housing that is denser than what might be currently allowed.



### INCLUSIONARY HOUSING

Market-rate developments of ten or more units are required to allocate 20% of residential floor area for low- and moderate- income tenants or homebuyers.



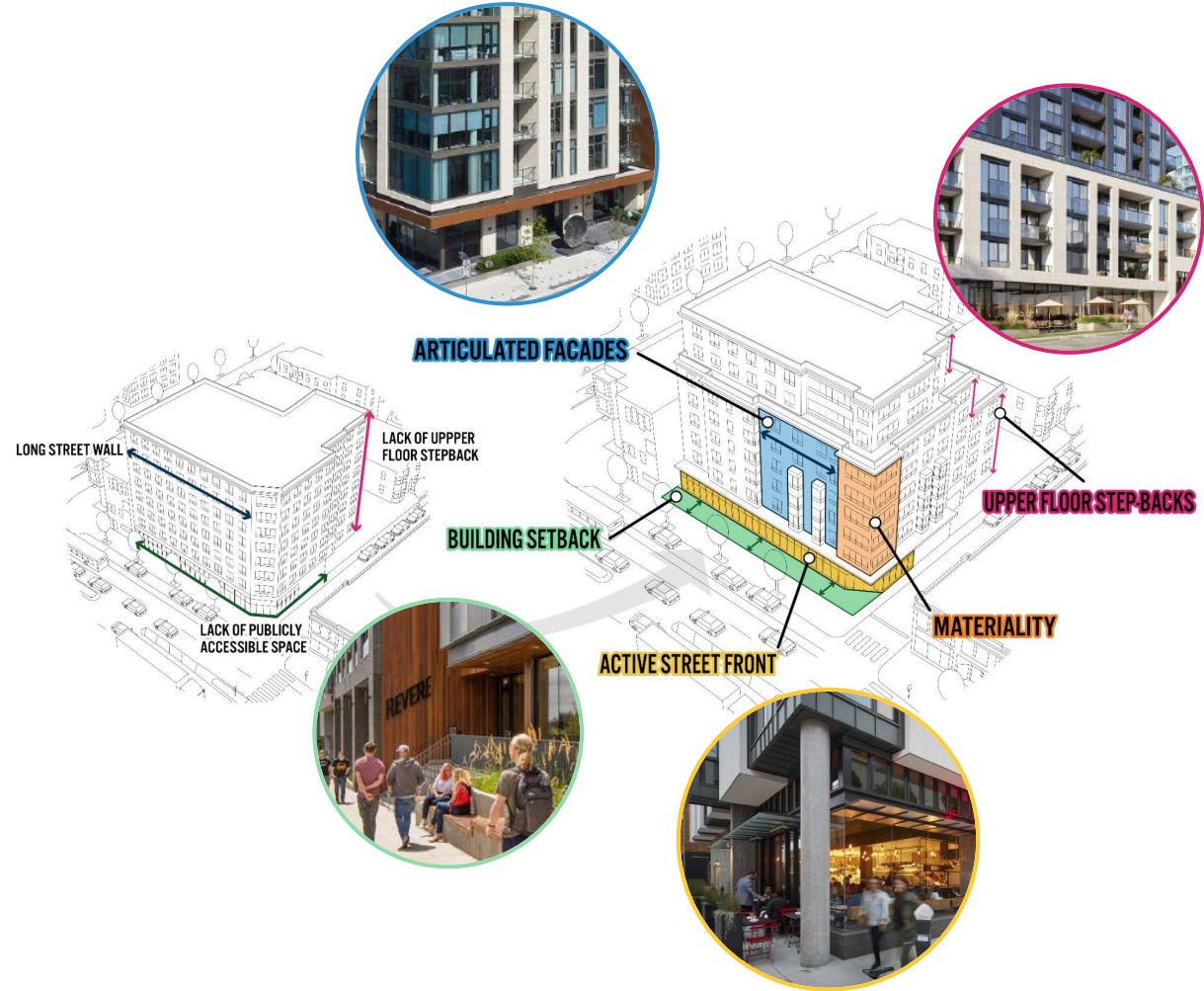
### CAMBRIDGE AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST

City funding and funding from contributions from non-residential developers of large projects.

## MORE HOUSING OPTIONS

# C. Encourage context-sensitive design

- Set standards for the scale of buildings and architecture styles (to align with Citywide design guidelines), for example, articulated facades, building setbacks, active street fronts, materiality, and upper floor step-backs
- Leverage new development to create more green and publicly accessible spaces (building setbacks, green roofs, etc)
- Prioritize the preservation of historic facades in future development, where possible



# WORKING GROUP DISCUSSION

- Are these draft strategies **heading in the right direction?**
- Is there an idea that **excites you?**
- Are there potential strategies missing that **you would like to see?**

# 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!

# PUBLIC Q&A

## TO ASK A QUESTION



Use [Q&A](#) to ask a question



**NEXT STEPS**

# PROJECT SCHEDULE

