

Phase 3: Working group

#7

12/11/24

Welcome!

WORKING GROUP MEETING 5

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

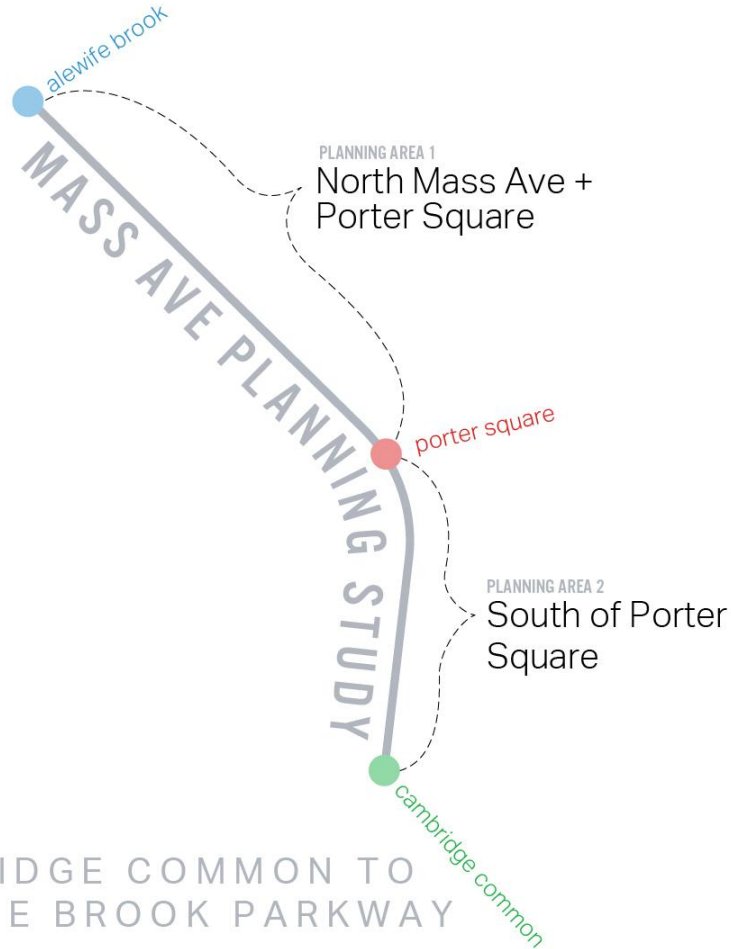
Ruth Ryals - resident and neighborhood association representative

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

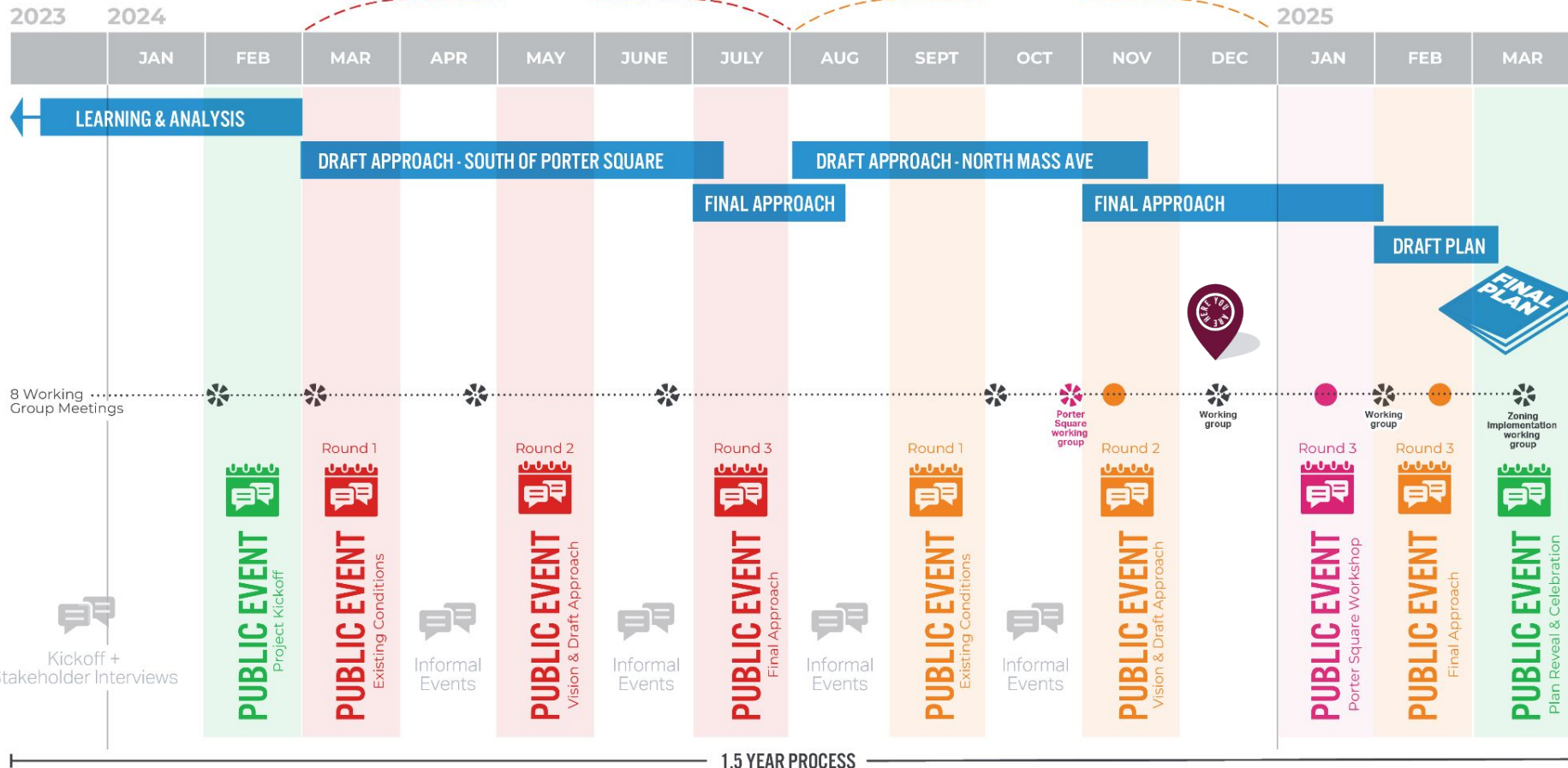
- 01** Project Background Recap
Study Area and Project
- 02** Public Input Summary on Density
- 03** Phase 3:
DRAFT Zoning Recommendations
- 04** Next Steps

PHASE 1 PROJECT KICKOFF

PHASE 2 SOUTH OF PORTER SQUARE

PHASE 3 NORTH MASS AVE + PORTER SQUARE

PHASE 4 FINAL PLAN



PROJECT BACKGROUND

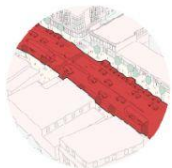
OUR CHARGE:

**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)

FOUR CONCURRENT CITY INITIATIVES



PARTIAL CONSTRUCTION

Planning and Design of the separated bike lanes along Mass Ave

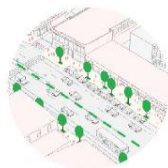
Near term



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

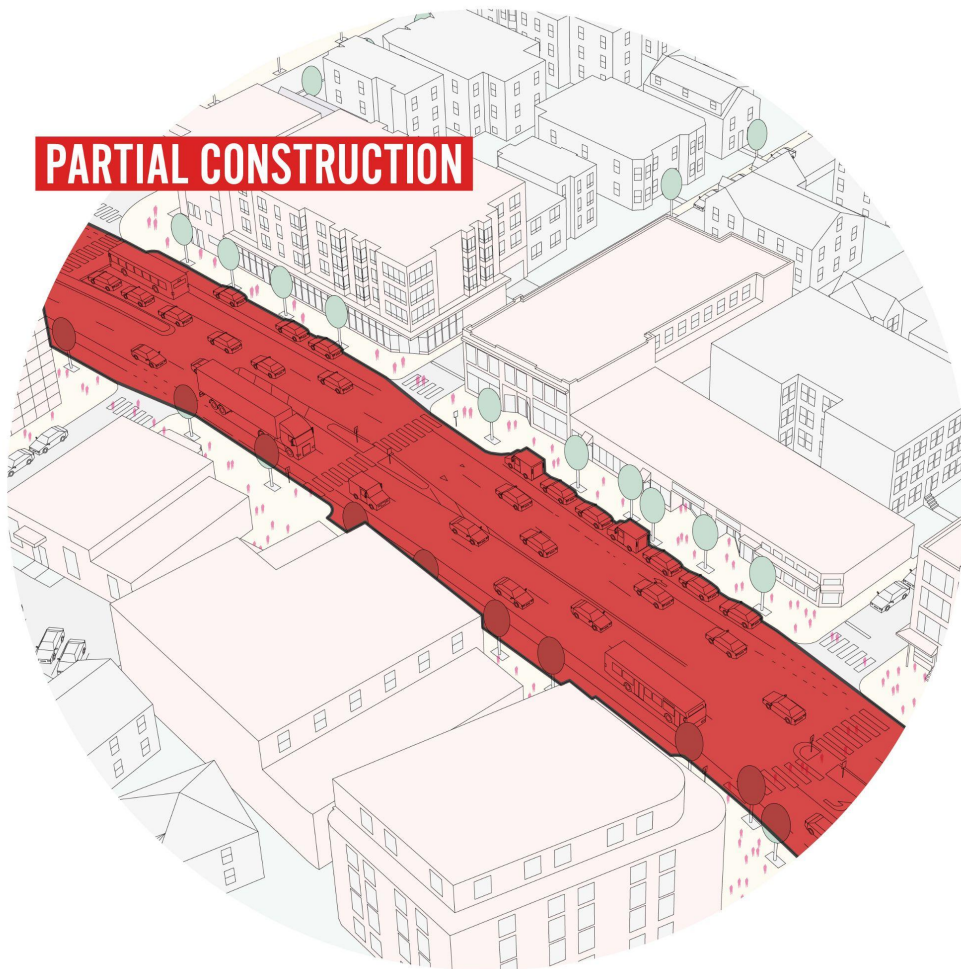


PLANNING STUDY

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



15 Years From Now



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:

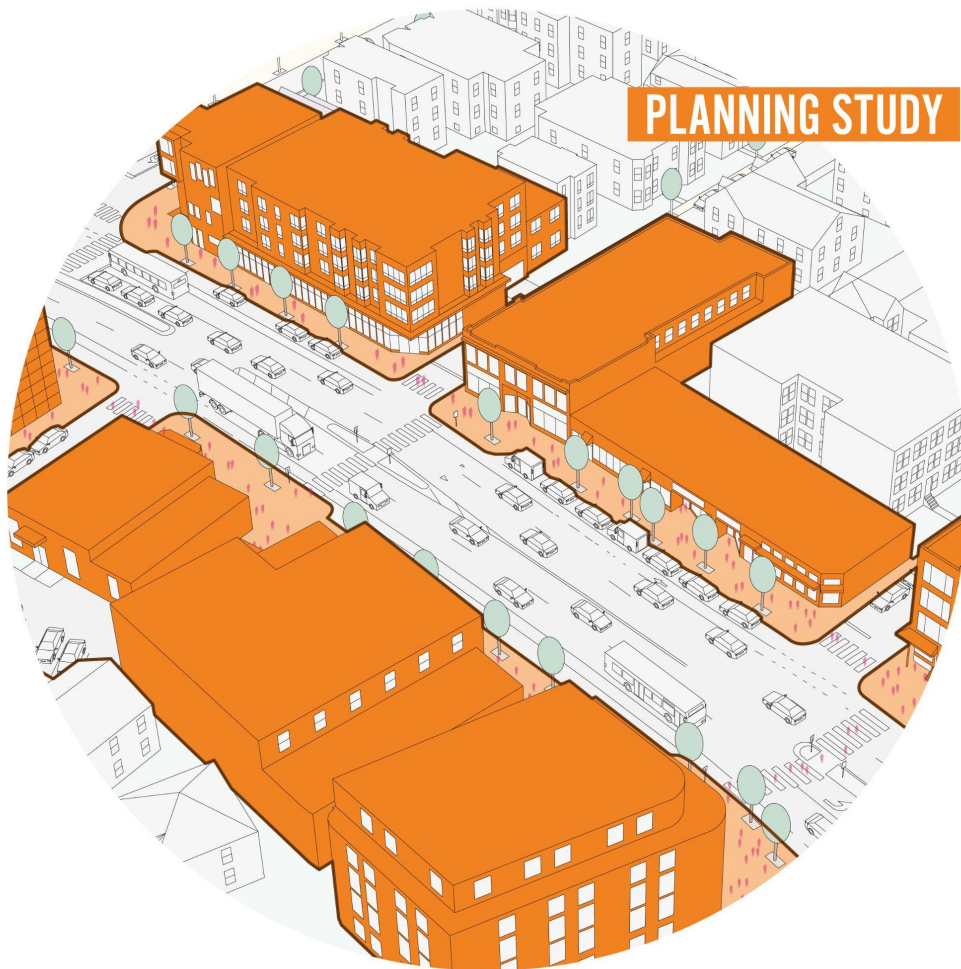
- The design of **separated bicycle lanes**
- Evaluating existing crossing locations for pedestrians and recommendations for additional crossing opportunities
- Curb use regulations (i.e., understand where parking/stopping/loading is possible and not possible)
- Options for bus priority to reduce travel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

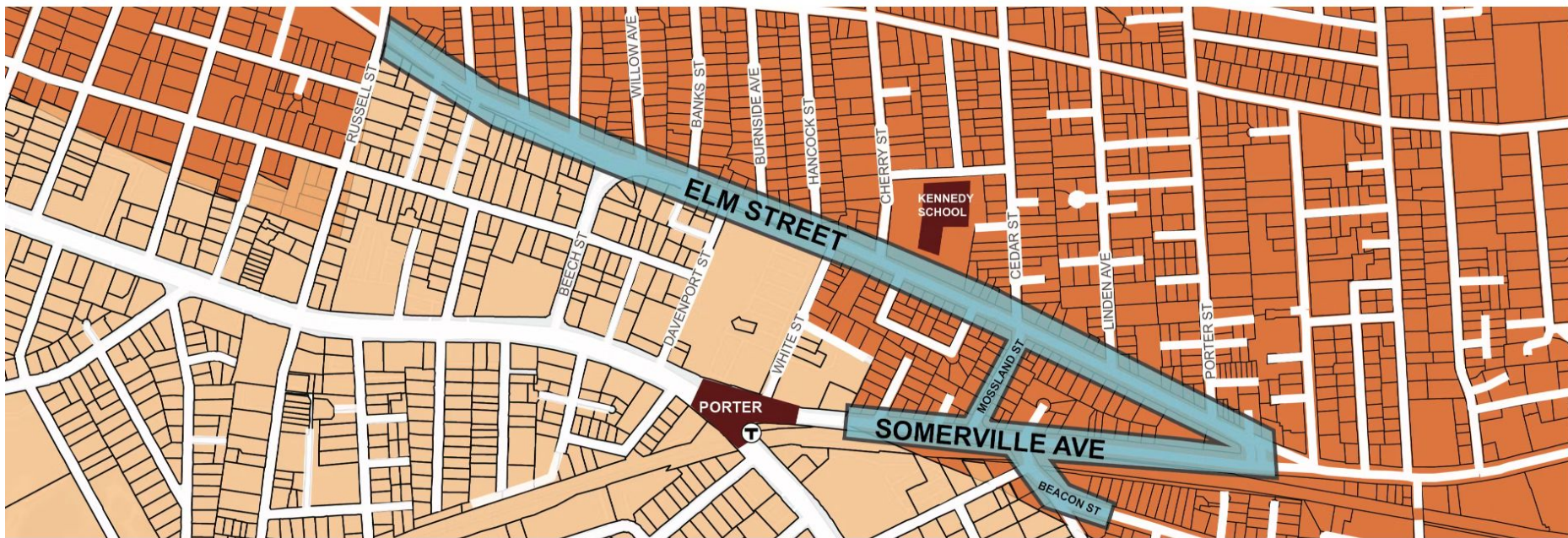
- Increasing density & housing opportunities along the corridor
- Addressing affordability issues
- Supporting small & local businesses
- Creating and enhancing vibrant sidewalks & public spaces

For more information:

www.cambridgema.gov/massaveplan

Questions or comments? Contact:

Drew Kane, Senior City Planner
dkane@cambridgema.gov



[Home](#) / [The Elm-Beacon Connector](#)

The Elm-Beacon Connector

RELATIONSHIP OF RECOMMENDATIONS + ZONING

OPEN HOUSE SUMMARY OF WHAT WE HEARD

Six stories only; regular developers will make tons of money"

I want to live in the "city" of Cambridge, not another suburban enclave - build with a vision that creates an active urban environment..."

"We should go tall 12+ by right on all those sections. Mass Ave is a boulevard and we are in a housing crisis."

1
Potential to Build Up A Little

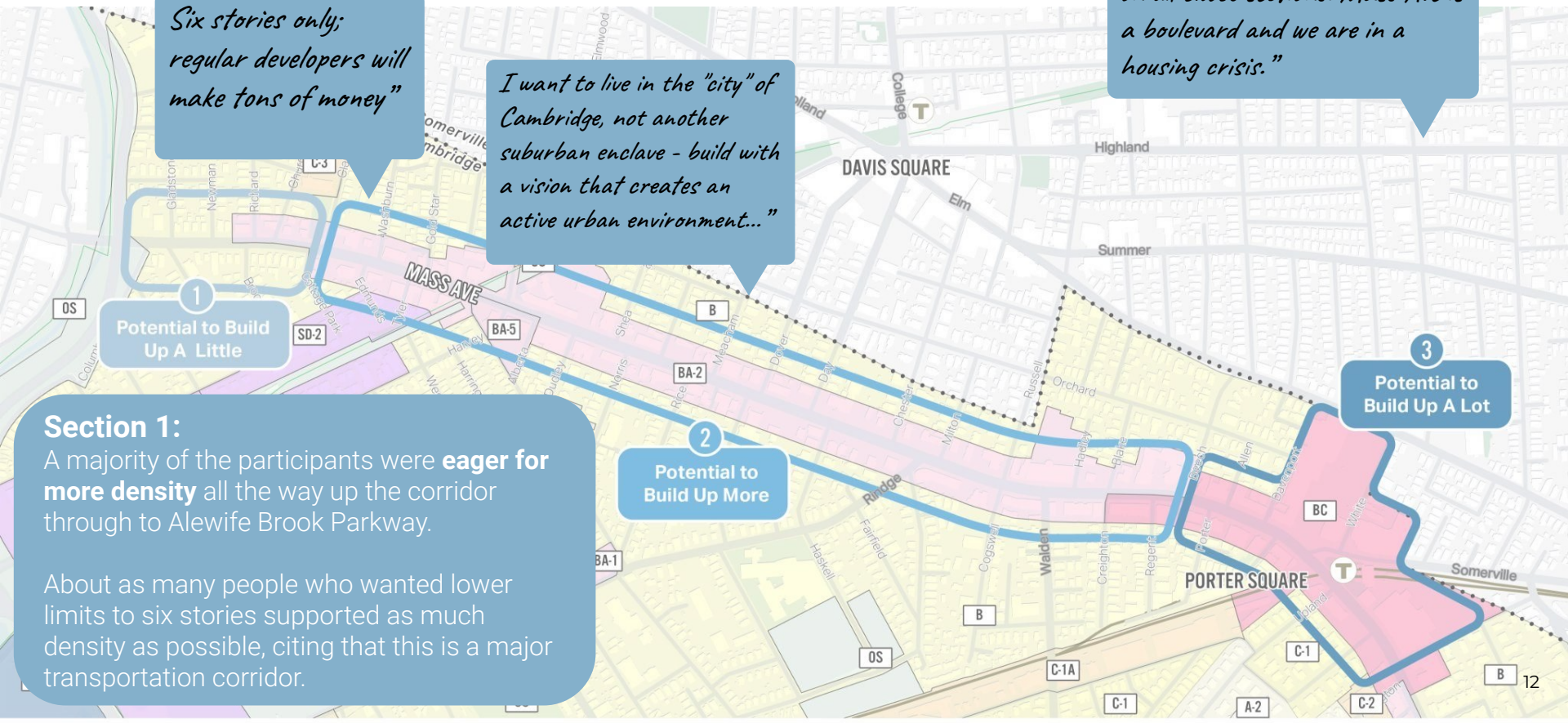
Section 1:

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

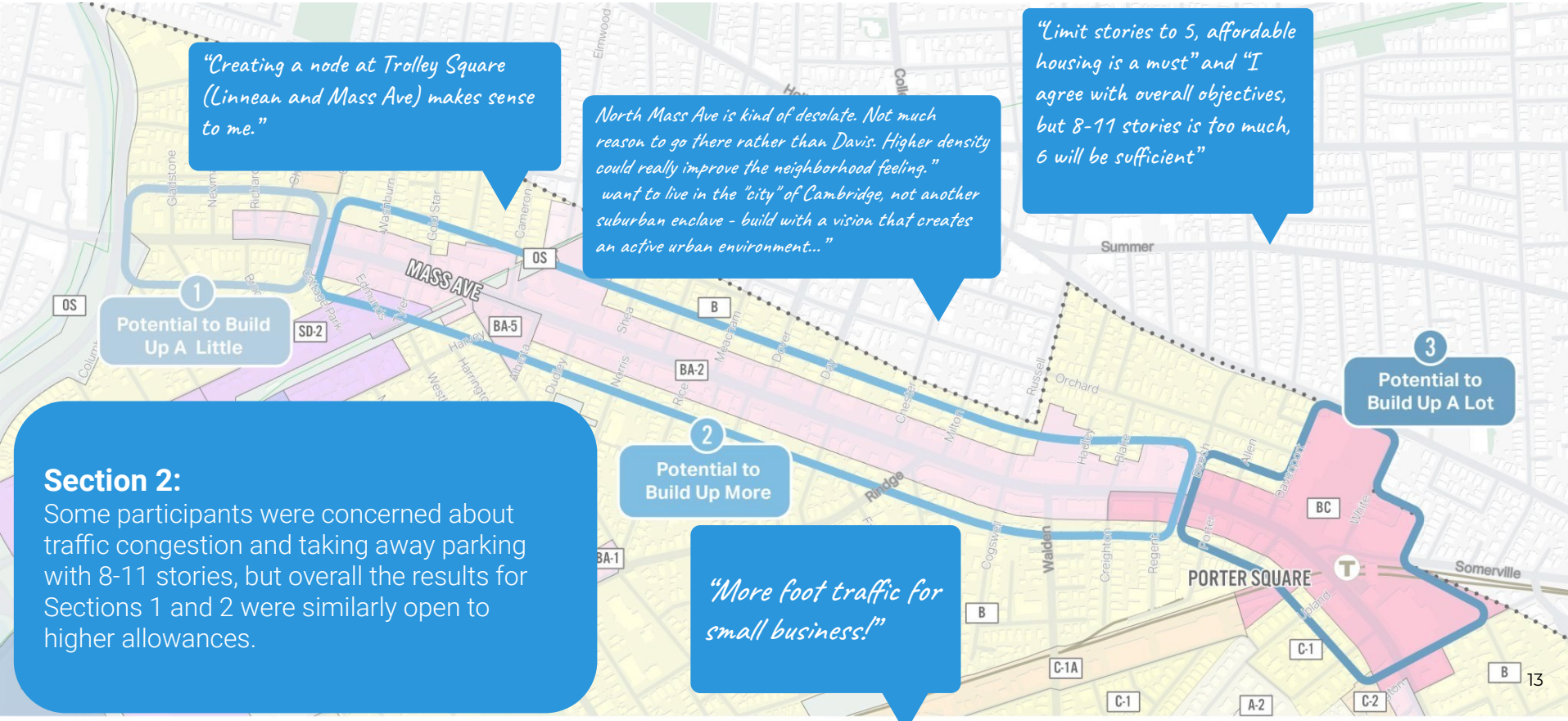
About as many people who wanted lower limits to six stories supported as much density as possible, citing that this is a major transportation corridor.

2
Potential to Build Up More

3
Potential to Build Up A Lot



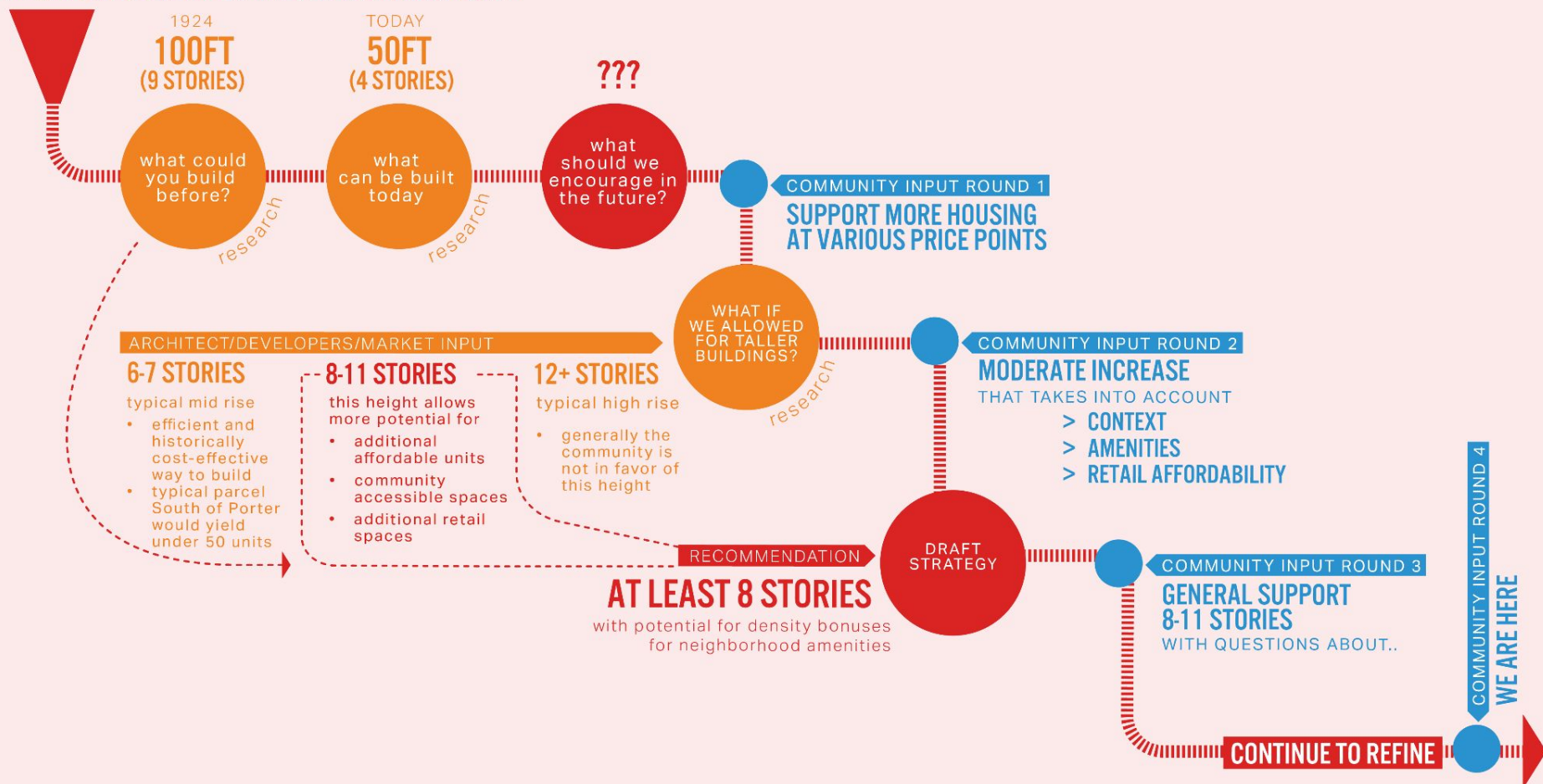
OPEN HOUSE SUMMARY OF WHAT WE HEARD



OPEN HOUSE SUMMARY OF WHAT WE HEARD



GOAL MORE HOUSING OPTIONS ON MASS AVE



Recommendations that speak to zoning

MASS AVE - 15 YEAR VISION

**MORE
HOUSING
OPTIONS**

**GREATER HEIGHT
FOR HOUSING**

**URBAN DESIGN
GUIDELINES
ENCOURAGE
CONTEXT
SENSITIVE
DESIGN**

**MORE OF A
NEIGHBORHOOD
& DESTINATION**

**INCENTIVIZE
GROUND FLOOR
USES**

**EASIER TO
GET
AROUND**

**MORE
INVITING**

**NEW
DEVELOPMENT
WITH SETBACKS
THAT COULD
PROVIDE:**

**PUBLICLY
ACCESSIBLE
OPEN SPACE**

**COMMERCIAL
SPACES WITH
OUTDOOR
ACCESS**

**ADDITIONAL
ROOM
FOR
MERCHANDISE**

**BETTER PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT ENCOURAGES INCREASED
USE OF ALTERNATIVE MODES, ADDITIONAL DENSITY
SUPPORTS ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION**

Recent comparable zoning initiatives

	Alewife Quad Zoning	Central Square Rezoning (in-progress)	Zoning for Multi-Family Housing
SIMILARITIES	Prioritize/incentivize neighborhood serving uses	Prioritizing the creation of housing by allowing additional height and density. Provide room for active retail and community spaces. Building scale sensitivity to adjacent neighborhoods	Increase density allowance to provide more housing units at diverse price points
DIFFERENCES	Some of the zoning is geared towards delivery of large infrastructure projects	District Vs. Linear corridor - Central is a more concentrated retail district Zoning boundaries include many City-owned properties.	Citywide vs area specific zoning Focused solely on housing

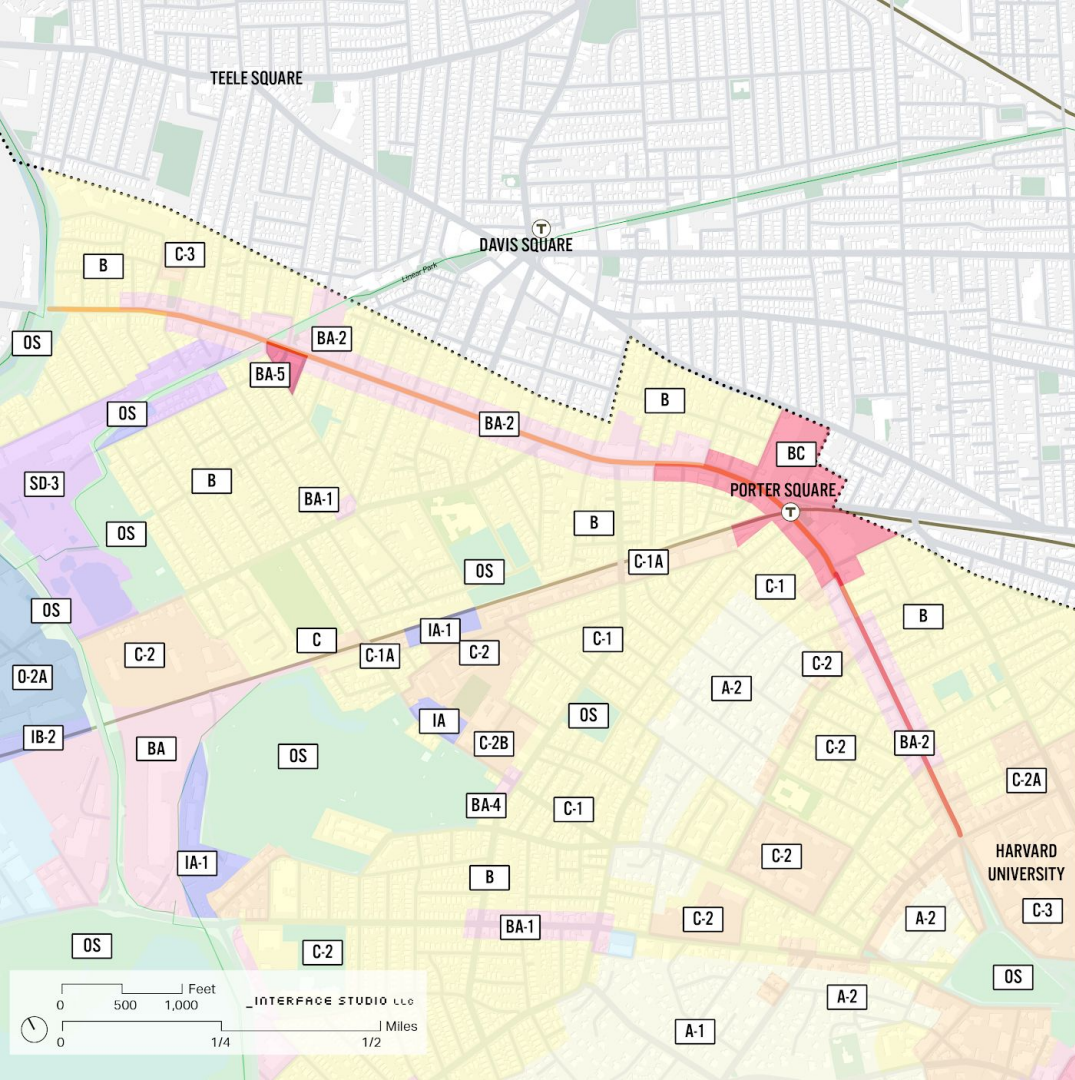
Zoning for Multi-Family Housing

- **If it passes, what would happen on Mass Ave?**
 - Base zoning will go to six stories by right for residential buildings, which is denser than current zoning allows for even mixed use buildings (50ft)
- **How might that impact our recommendations?**
 - Step down to neighboring zones: bulk control plane would start at height of the neighboring district

ZONING DISCUSSION

Our Zoning Principles

- **Encourage as much ground floor activity as we can, but recognize we can't 'have retail everywhere'**
 - Establish activity centers or nodes to concentrate retail activity
- **Loosen the belt as much as possible to avoid new commercial spaces from sitting vacant**
 - Make it easier to fill new commercial spaces
 - In areas of more activity, better define what uses we want to encourage on the ground floor



ZONING DISTRICTS

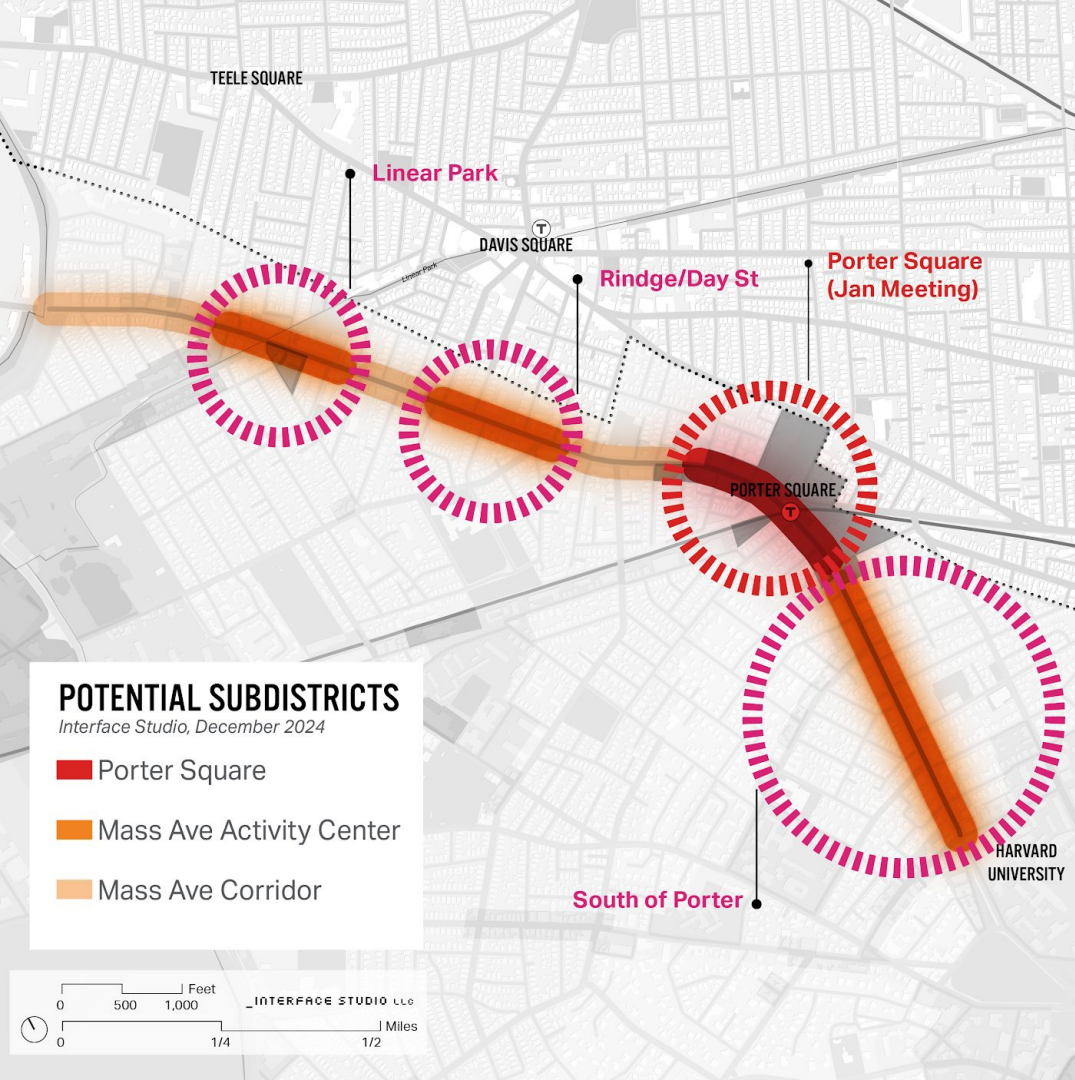
Interface Studio, October 2023

Base Zoning

A-1	C	IA-1
A-2	C-1	IB-2
B	C-1A	O-1
BA-1	C-2	O-2A
BA-2	C-2A	OS
BA-4	C-2B	SD-2
BA-5	C-3	SD-3
BC	IA	



-
- A number line is shown with tick marks at 0, $\frac{1}{4}$, and $\frac{1}{2}$. The word "Miles" is at the right end. A circle with a dot is positioned above the line between 0 and $\frac{1}{4}$.



SUB-DISTRICT TYPES

Define activity centers

- Porter Square
- Trolley Square
- *Other nodes?*
- *At regular intervals?*

How should we treat these activity centers?

- Active ground floor requirement
- *Higher Density?*

Arlington Line Treatment

- Not an activity center, consistent with the rest of Mass Ave

GROUND FLOOR USE REQUIREMENT

- **Requiring 'Active' Uses**

- Currently, we require active ground floor uses on the whole corridor
- We are now recommending a shift to only requiring at the activity centers and incentivize elsewhere
 - There's a precedent for this model from Central Square to require at active nodes and incentives in other areas
 - Some lessons learned from Mass & Main and unintended consequences on vacancies (i.e. independent local retailers)
- Potential for only requiring active ground floor uses for 'large' projects (not burdening smaller developments)



GROUND FLOOR USE REQUIREMENT

Alewife neighborhood serving uses in priority areas



**Retail & Consumer
Service establishments
(4.35)**



**Community
gathering spaces
(4.33.e.2)**



**Libraries
(4.33.f.3)**



**Daycare centers
(4.33.b.2)**



**Arts & Cultural
spaces (4.35.q.2)**



**Light industrial/maker
space (4.37 a through d)**



**Dentist/Doctor
office (4.33.b.2)**



**Healthcare facility
(4.33.d)**



**Any other use subject
to PB Review and
Approval**

What are the priority ground floor uses for Mass Ave?

Allowed by right:

- Retail
- Restaurant
- Bars
- Office
- Community Space or Park
- Craft Retail/Production Shop <2000sf
- Craft Beverage/Quick Service Food
- Food Hall/Stand
- Entertainment (Dance, Nightclub, Theater)
- Daycare
- Hotel

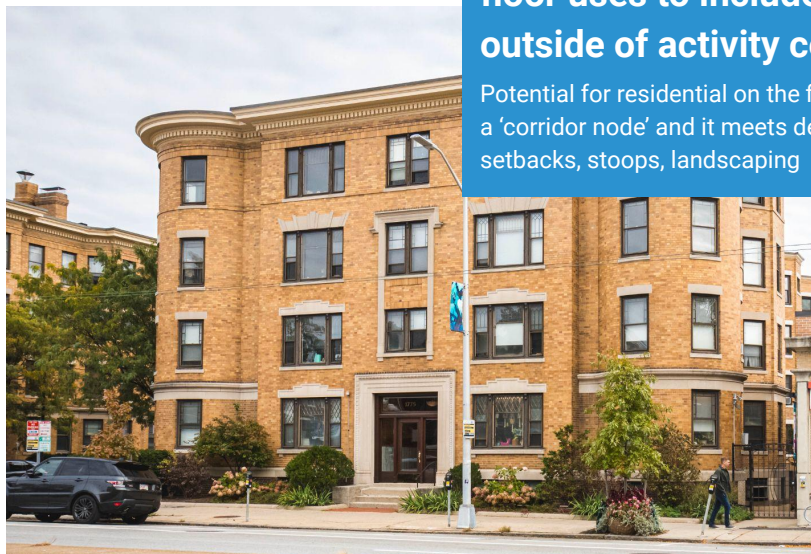
Allowed by special permit

- Bank
- Craft Retail/Production Shop > 2000sf
- Labs
- Residential Uses



Expand the definition of ground floor uses to include residential outside of activity centers

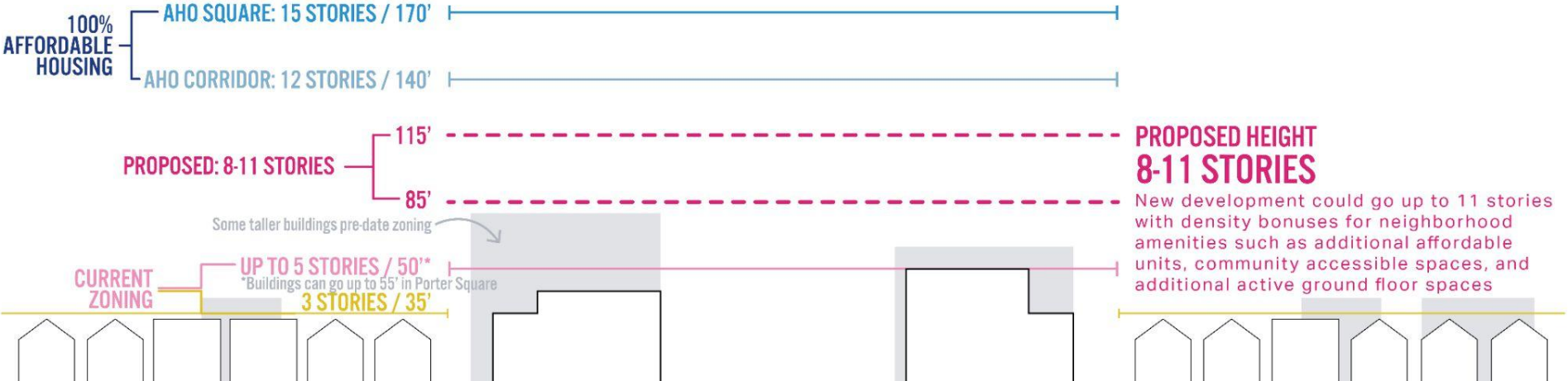
Potential for residential on the first floor if it's outside of a 'corridor node' and it meets design standards, such as setbacks, stoops, landscaping



HEIGHT AND DENSITY PROPOSED

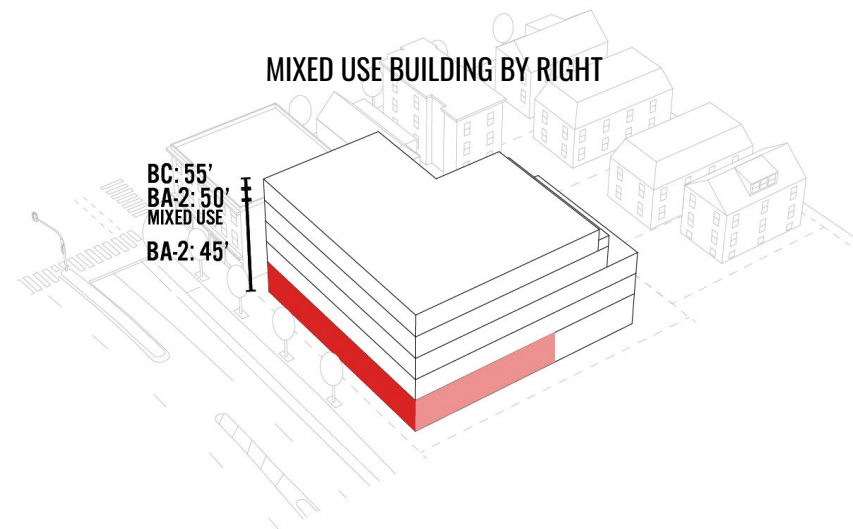
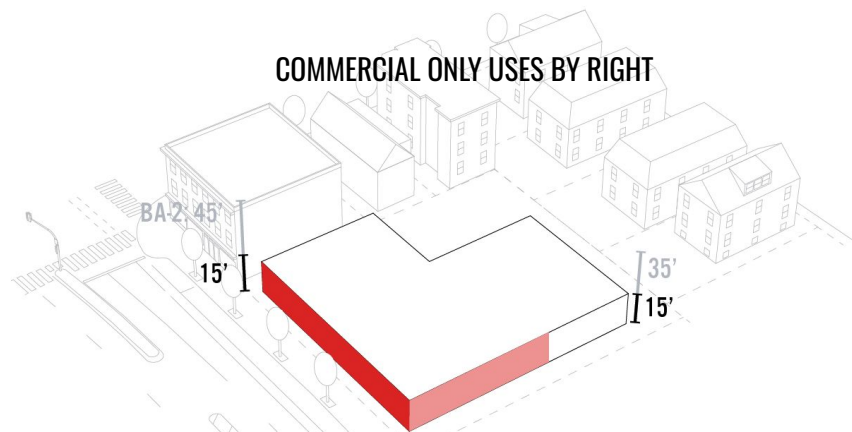
EXISTING: *In BA-2: 50' for mixed use;*
35' height limit within 50 feet of a residential district

PROPOSED: *In BA-2: 85' for mixed use; up to 115' with incentives*
65' height limit within 50 feet of a residential district



HEIGHT AND DENSITY ON MASS AVE TODAY

Not including Porter Square



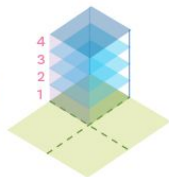
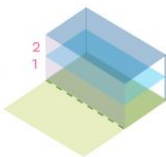
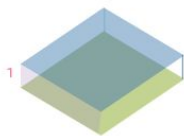
NOTE: F.A.R. CALCULATION APPLIES

FAR = 1.0

1 story covers
100% of the lot

2 stories covers
50% of the lot

4 stories covers
25% of the lot



How tall for non-residential? Is the priority to maintain what we have, or would we be ok with a taller commercial office or lab building?

PRIORITIES FOR INCENTIVES

Allow additional floors of housing if development provides a neighborhood use

All of Mass Ave:

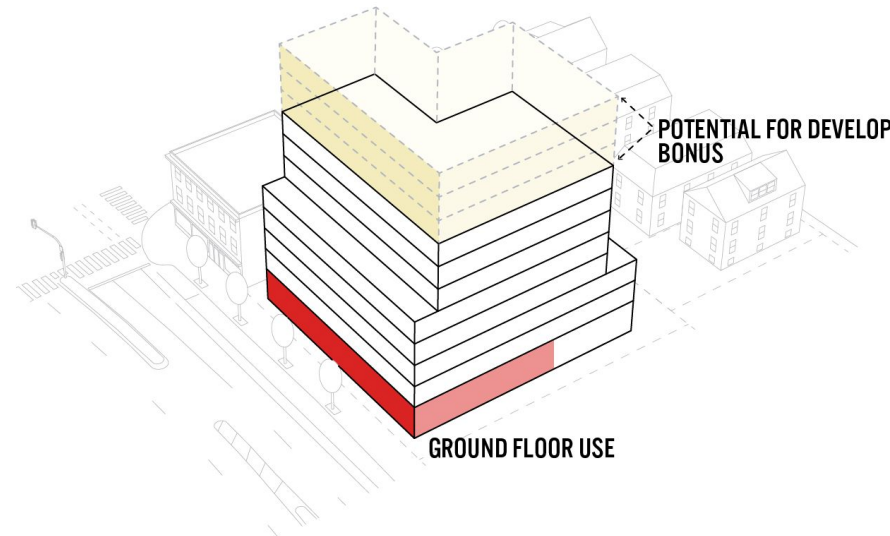
- Additional affordable housing units
- Shared community room or center
- Art related use
- Social Services
- Grocer
- Publicly accessible open space
- Preserving historic structures on site

Outside of Activity Center

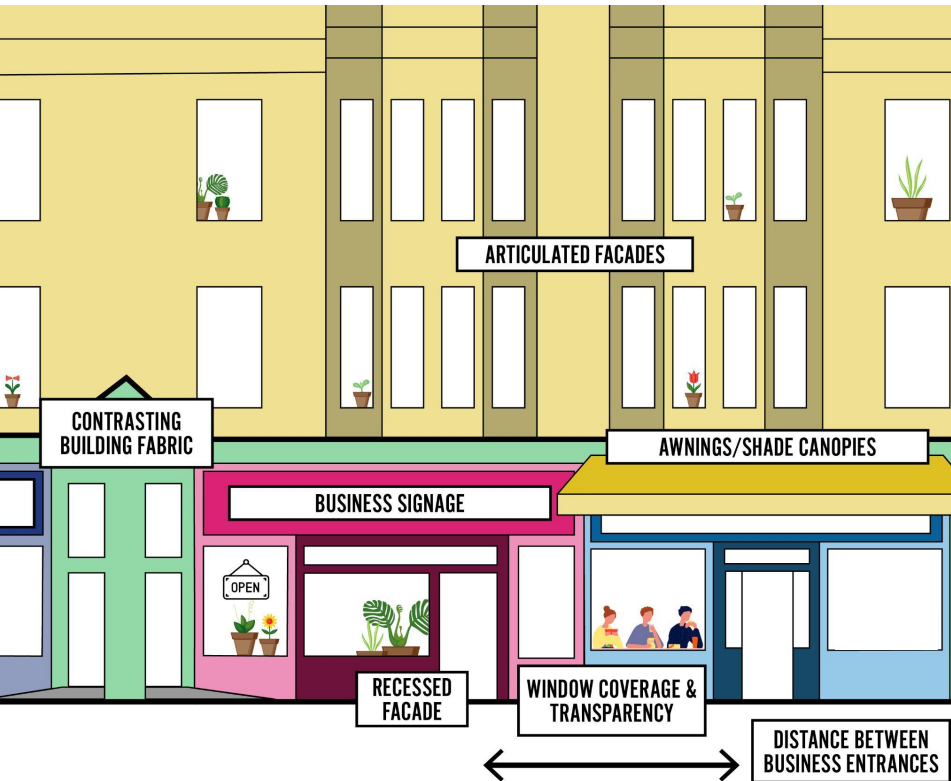
- Active ground floor use

Ways to do it:

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



DESIGN STANDARDS



Next Working Group Meeting on Zoning, we'll be discussing Design Standards, such as:

- Building setbacks and step backs
- Open Space
- Facade articulation
 - *Current zoning allows for a GFA and FAR exemption for enclosed bays and building projections within limits. It is not a requirement.*
- Window coverage/transparency to provide active storefronts
 - *Current requirements for ground floor windows is 25-75% of the facade. Reflective and opaque glass is not allowed.*
- Limiting curb cuts to create a more continuous streetwall
- Spacing of building entrances to provide a frequent rhythm of entrances and tenant spaces
- Subdividable ground floor spaces for a variety of tenants
- Screening of rooftop mechanicals to mitigate visual clutter
- Incorporating climate resilient measures where applicable
- Awnings and shade canopies

PUBLIC QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

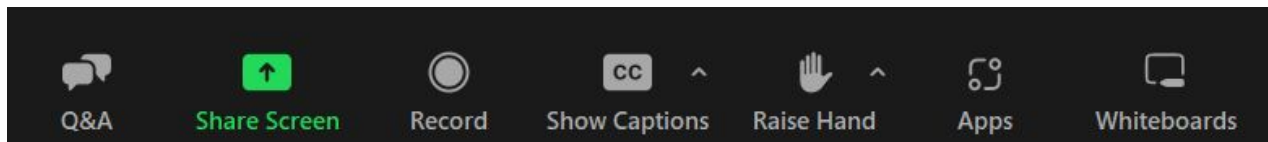
Your feedback is important

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.

NEXT STEPS

January:

- Host a **Community Workshop** focused on Porter Square

February:

- Host a **North Mass Ave Recommendations Meeting**

March:

- Release a draft plan for review

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