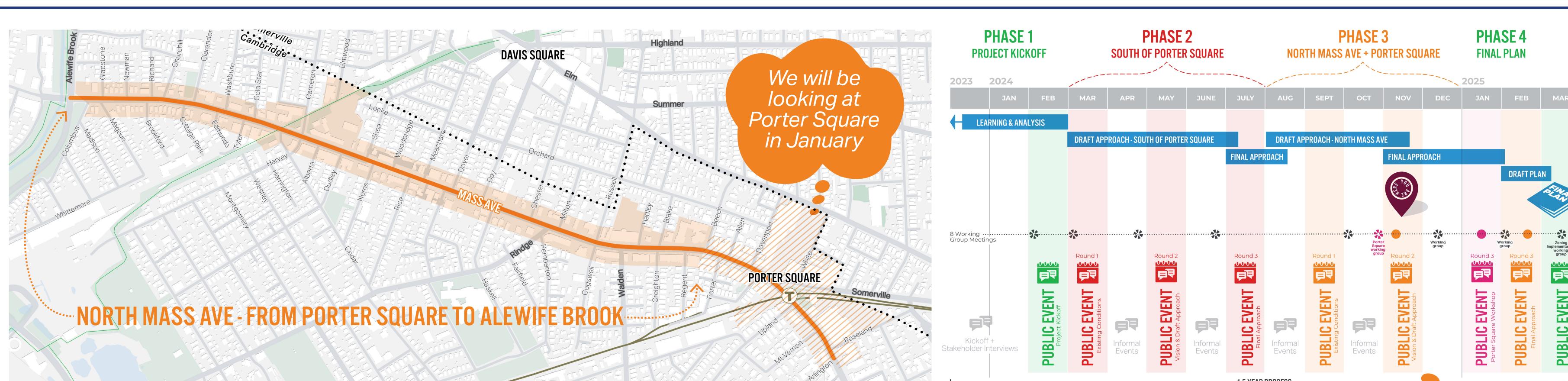
# Introduction to the MASS AVE PLANNING STUDY



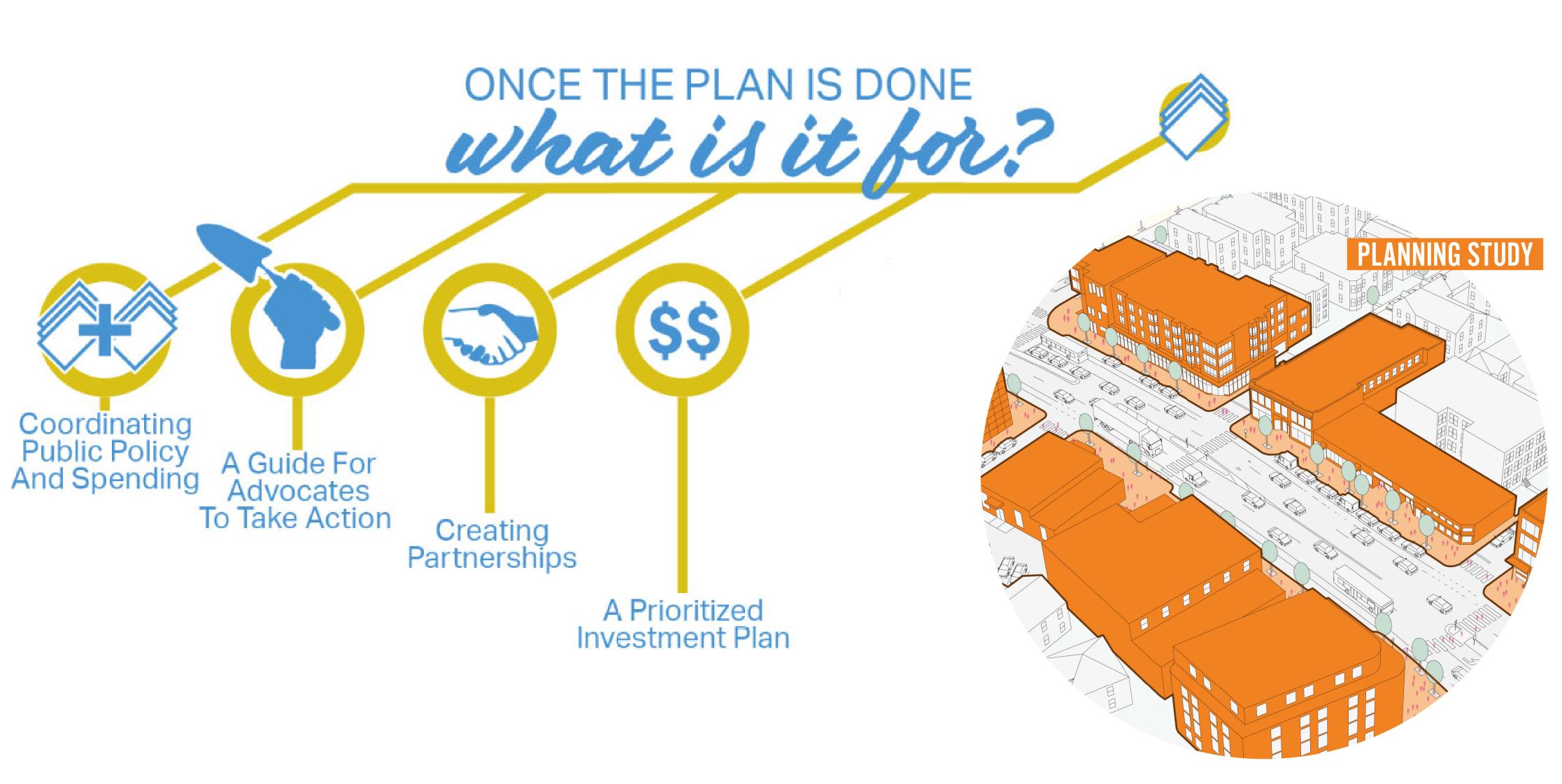
CAMBRIDGE COMMON TO ALEWIFE BROOK PARKWAY

#### WHAT IS THE PLAN?

Building from Envision Cambridge, Mass Ave Planning Study (MAPS) will develop a shared vision for the future of North Mass Ave, Porter Square and South of Porter Square with a meaningful community engagement process. **This meeting focuses on North Mass Ave.** 

Where we are
in the process

This is the second North
Mass Ave public event. The
last few months focused on
South of Porter Sq - many of
the ideas are relevant to the
entire corridor, but we are
also creating new ones
tailored to North Mass Ave.



#### WHY PLAN?

MAPS will help direct Mass Ave's future for the next 15 years and will focus on:

- Increasing density & housing opportunities along the corridor
- Addressing affordability issues
- Supporting small & local businesses
- Creating a vibrant and comfortable urban environment

# The Draft Vision

The following vision and ideas emerged from community input. Tonight, the team is looking for **YOUR FEEDBACK** on the draft ideas and how they may apply to North Mass Ave.

BY 2040, MASS AVE IS...

1) A Neighborhood & Destination

Reframe the corridor as part of a livable, walkable neighborhood with improved amenities, active storefronts and community events.

2) More Inviting

Focus on creating a more attractive Mass Ave where people want to spend time with high-quality public spaces, greening, public artwork, wider sidewalks, and benches.

(3) Easier 70 Get Around

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

(4) More Affordable

Encourage more housing and commercial development along Mass Ave, particularly affordable housing, while considering traffic concerns and the existing neighborhood fabric.



# 1) Meighborhood & Destination

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

# Here are some preliminary ideas:

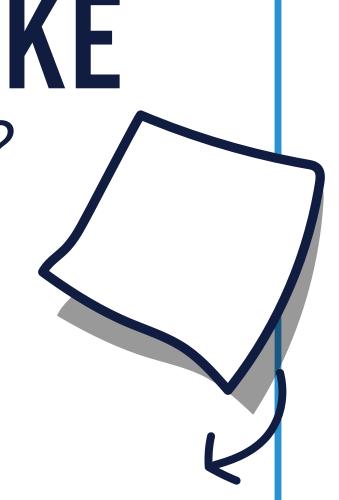
Foster a mix of local, neighborhood-serving, family-friendly goods and services by:

- supporting the creation of a local business association to attract new businesses and organize community events
- targeting outreach to existing businesses on available grants and programs
- research precedents for keeping commercial rents affordable and vacancies low



#### WHICH IDEAS DO YOU LIKE

to support the commercial corridor?



#### Market the corridor to support local businesses by: **PHYSICALLY**

- > creating a branding strategy to highlight the corridor's identity
- > implementing the branding strategy through interventions like: gateway signage at key points along the corridor, light pole banners, and murals

#### **PROGRAMMATICALLY**

- > recruiting new businesses to the corridor and using financial assistance and marketing to activate vacant spaces
- > providing business and marketing support with tools such as an online directory and user-friendly websites

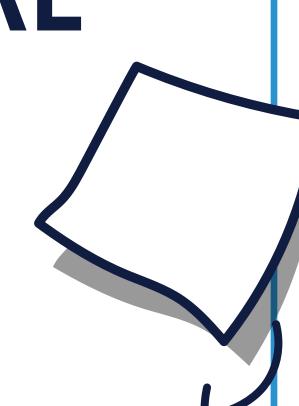




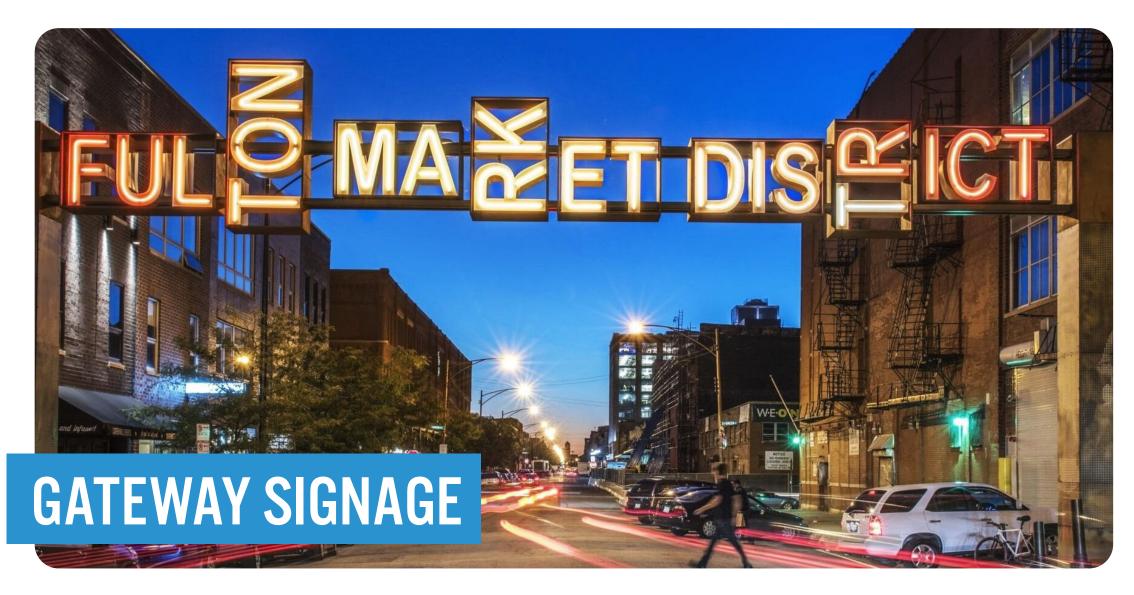


#### WHICH IDEAS DO YOU LIKE

to support local small businesses? Is there anything you would add?





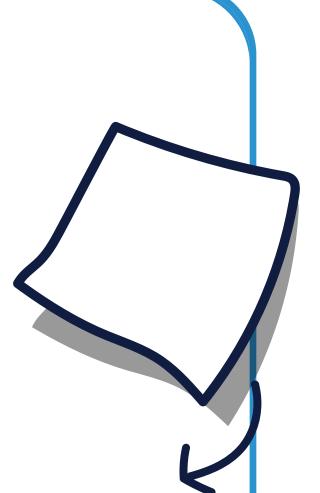




### WHAT KIND OF EVENTS

would you like to see on Mass Ave?

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



#### Organize and host more community events and performance art by:

- partnering with local institutions, organizations, and businesses to organize and fund events
- > connecting with local artists and performers







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

### Share community identity through creativity and art by:

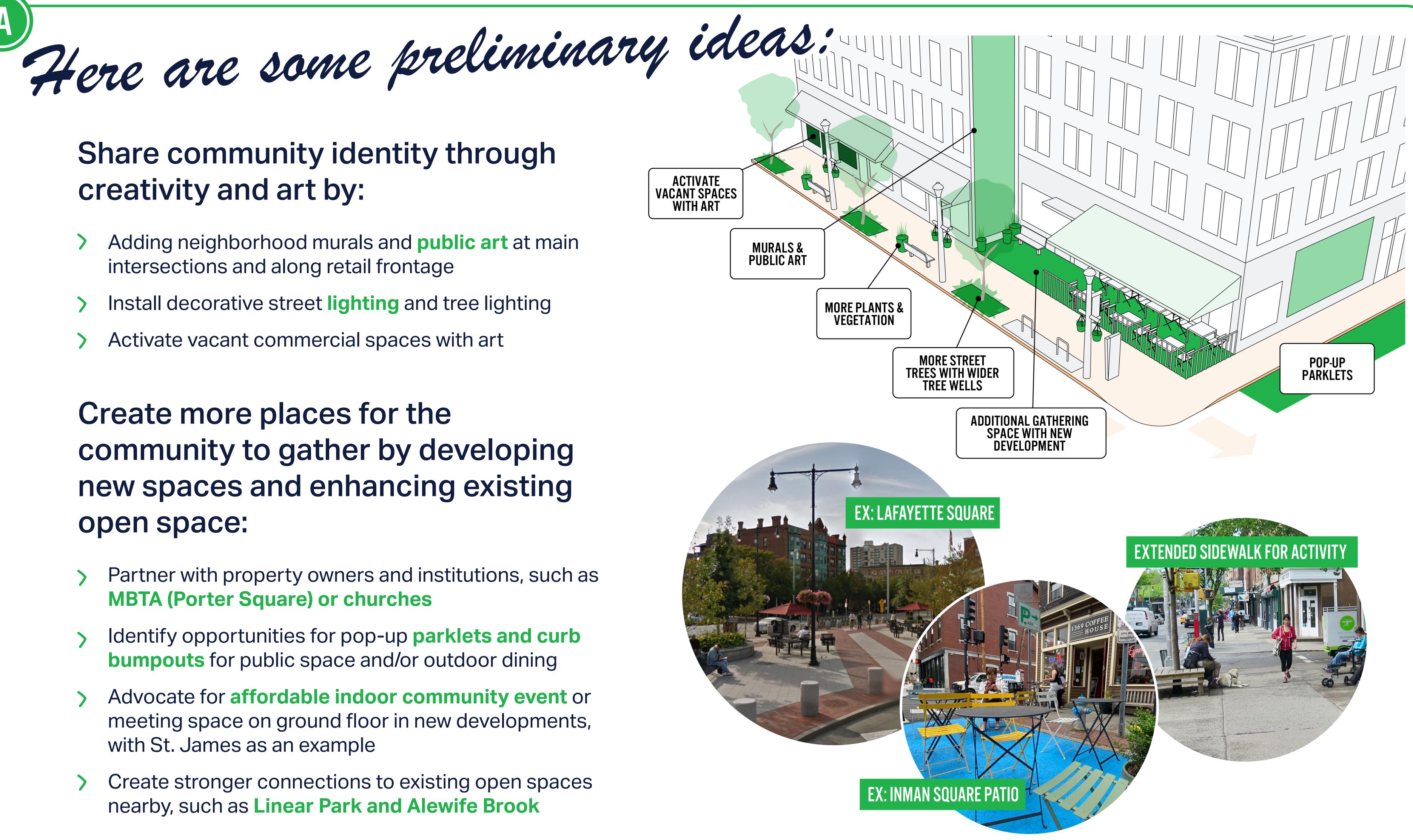
- Adding neighborhood murals and public art at main intersections and along retail frontage
- Install decorative street lighting and tree lighting
- Activate vacant commercial spaces with art

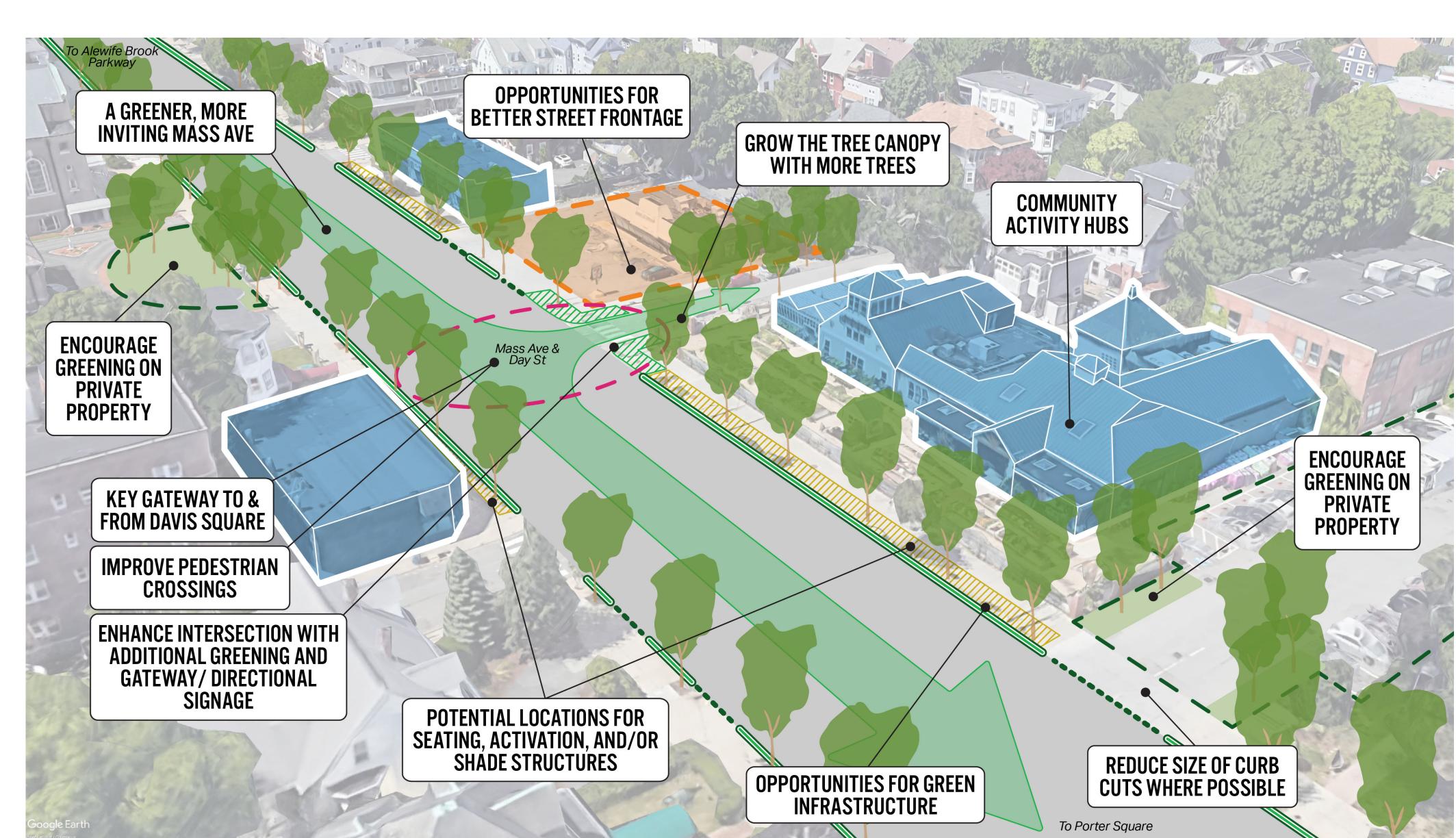
#### Create more places for the community to gather by developing new spaces and enhancing existing open space:

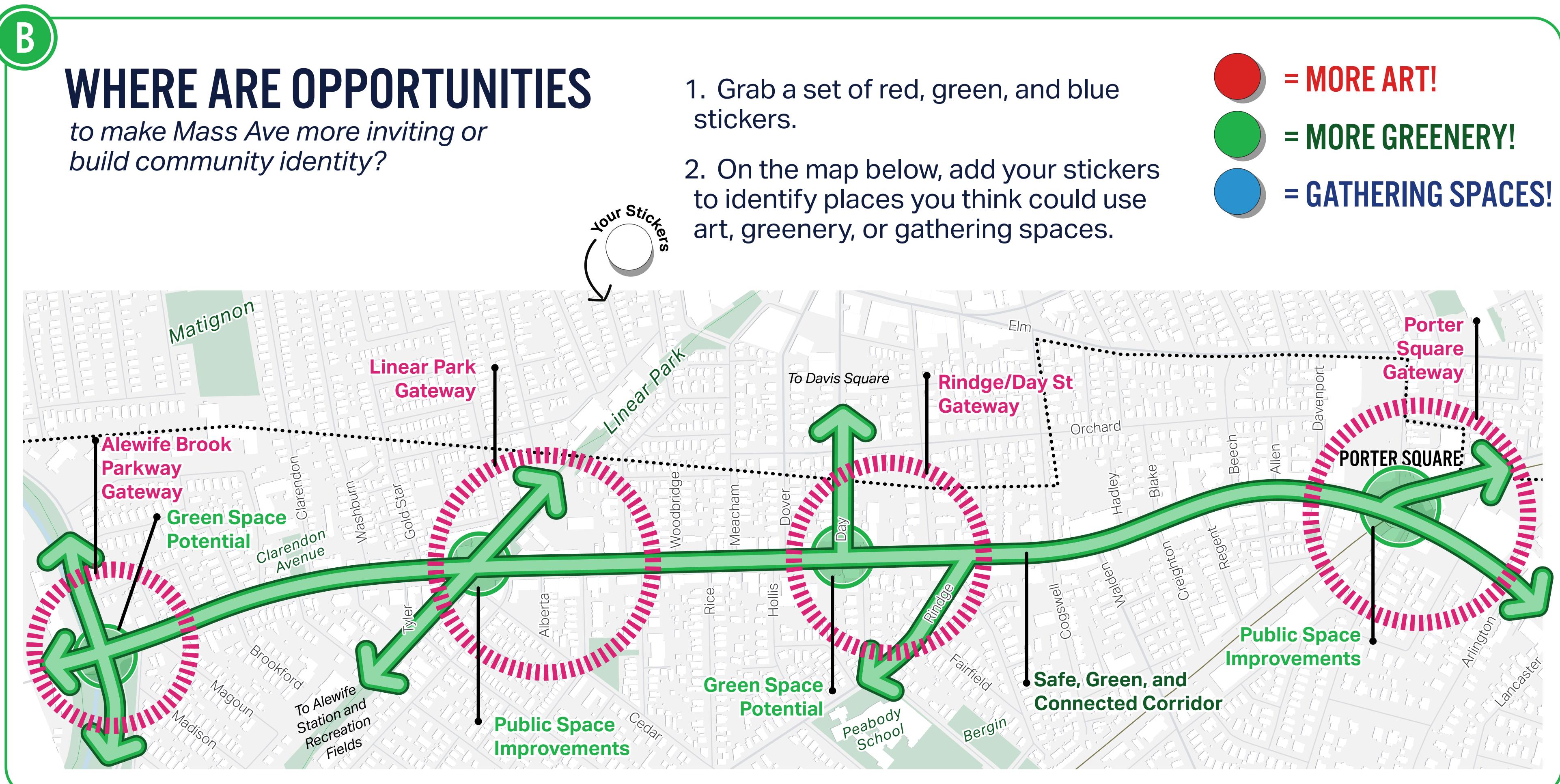
- Partner with property owners and institutions, such as MBTA (Porter Square) or churches
- Identify opportunities for pop-up parklets and curb bumpouts for public space and/or outdoor dining
- Advocate for affordable indoor community event or meeting space on ground floor in new developments, with St. James as an example
- Create stronger connections to existing open spaces nearby, such as Linear Park and Alewife Brook

#### Plant more trees and vegetation along corridor and open spaces by:

- Installing more shade elements and street trees where possible. Shading can be a short-term solution while the tree canopy grows in, or in areas where trees are not possible
- Use setbacks in new development for landscaping
- Enlarge existing street tree wells to provide more space for ground-level vegetation
- Work with property owners to maintain trees and vegetation on their property
- Coordinate with citywide green stormwater infrastructure mitigation measures











# 3 Easier to get Around

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

A

Here are some preliminary ideas:

Ensure sidewalks are accessible for everybody by:

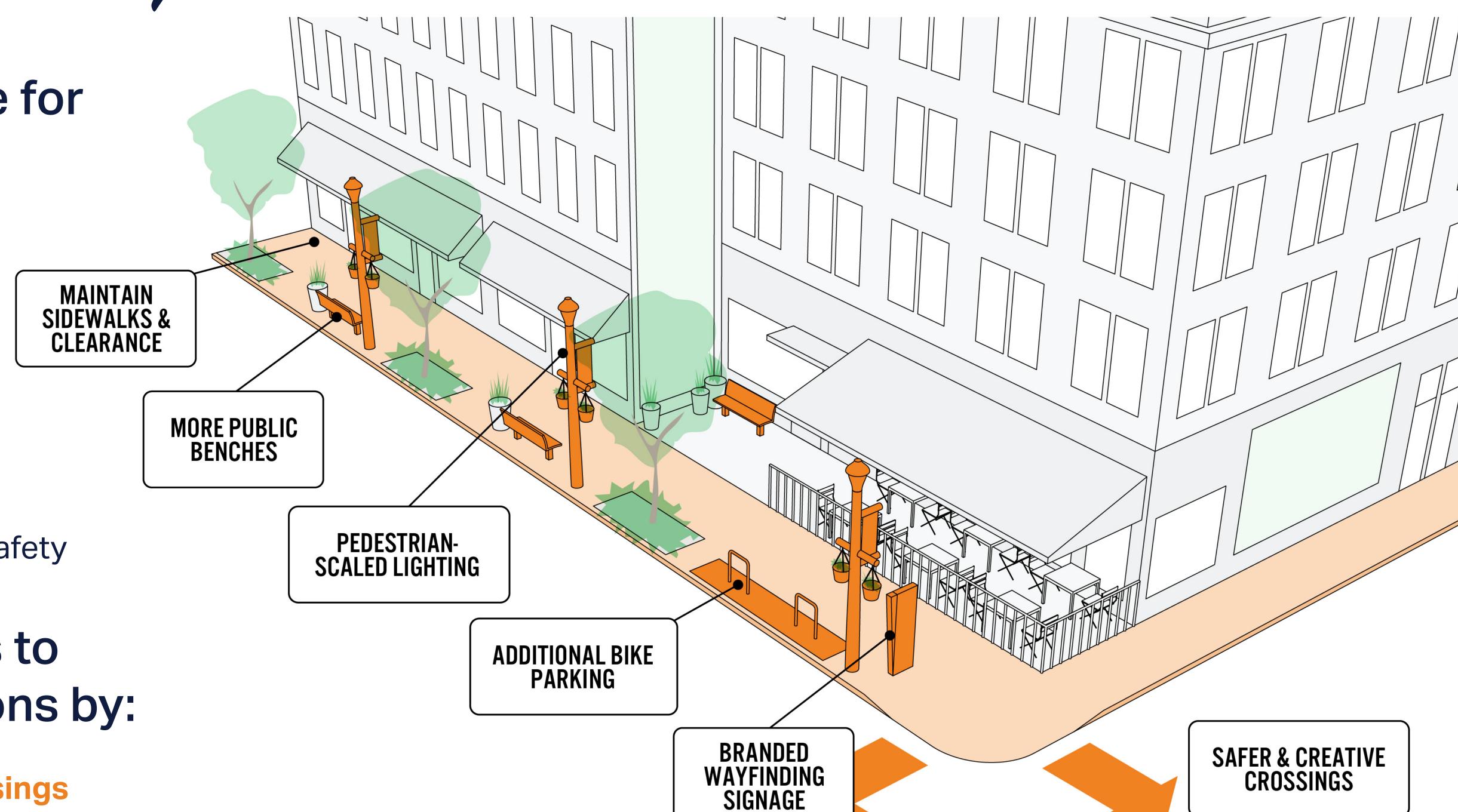
- > maintaining and repairing sidewalks
- installing more benches, bike racks, crosswalks, and street furniture
- balancing sidewalk activity with access for people with mobility limitations
- > improving pedestrian-scaled lighting
- > reducing curb cuts for pedestrian/bicyclist safety

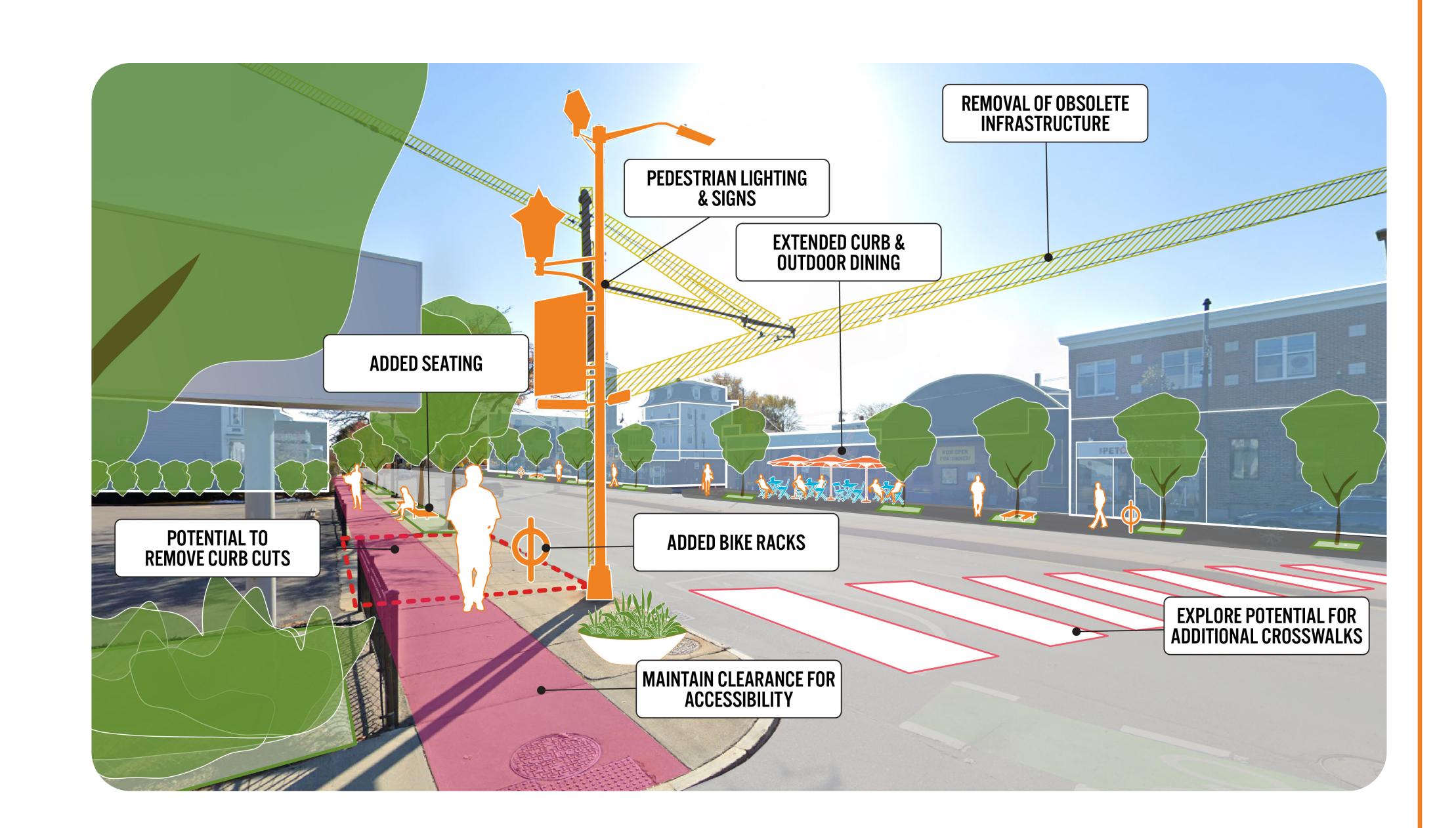
### Provide safe, convenient access to sustainable transportation options by:

- > providing safer, more visible pedestrian crossings
- > coordinating with MBTA to install more bus shelters
- > providing additional bike parking and blue bike stations
- Jooking at more flexible off-street parking regulations, like shared off-street parking between businesses
- maintaining reasonable loading and parking
- > providing safer, more comfortable bicycle facilities with separated bike lanes
- improving bus delay and bus unreliability with bus lanes where appropriate
- > reviewing traffic circulation patterns as future development on Mass Ave is proposed

#### Streamline signage and wayfinding by:

- > strategically locating branded wayfinding signage, for example, key gateways (see map below)
- > removing outdated and redundant signage
- installing a variety of signage types (ie. pedestrian-scale) based on new Citywide Urban Design Guidelines (currently in development)

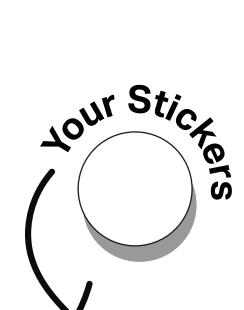




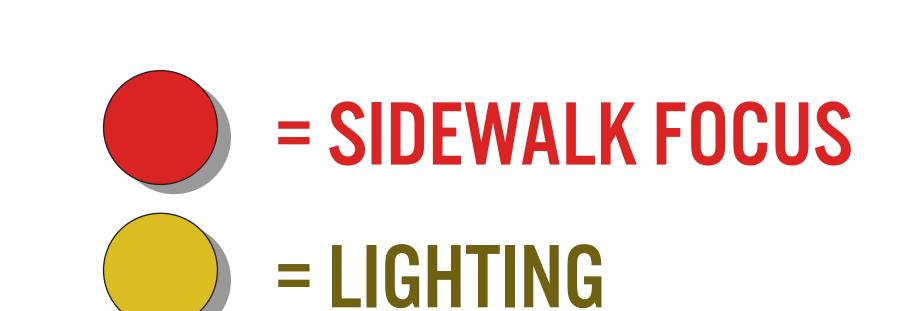
B

#### WHERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES

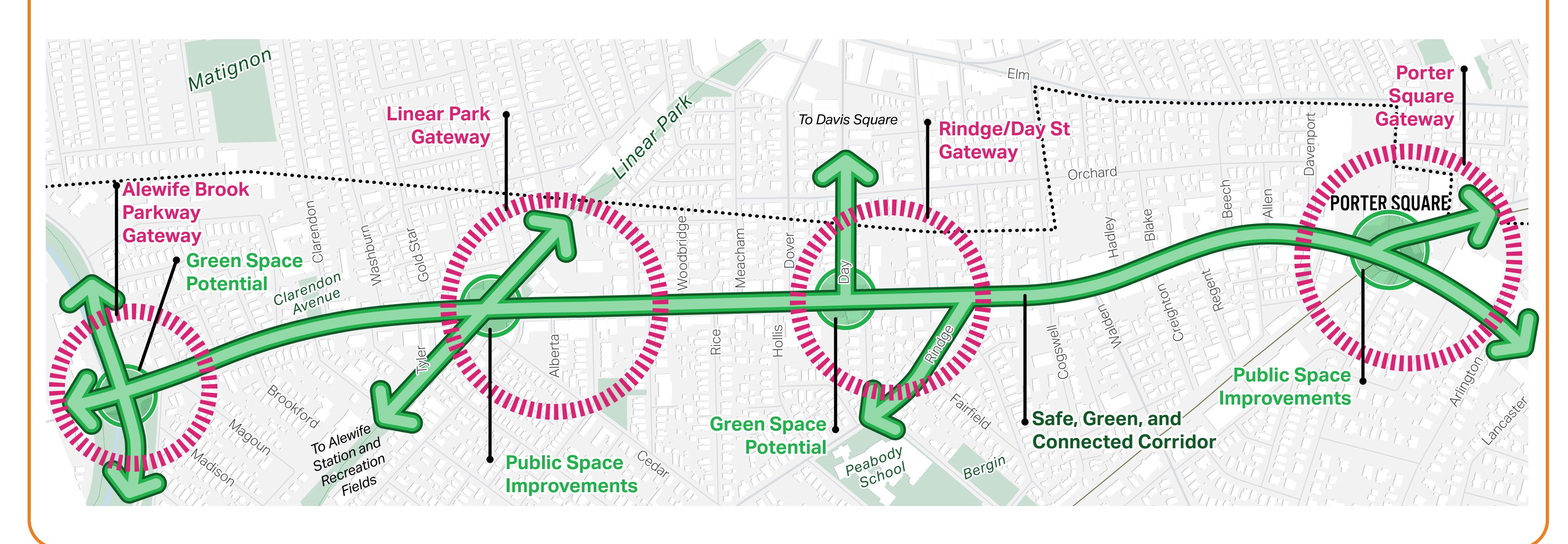
to focus on accessibility and comfort?



- 1. Grab a set of red, green, and blue stickers.
- 2. On the map below, add your stickers to identify places you think could use a focus on getting around.



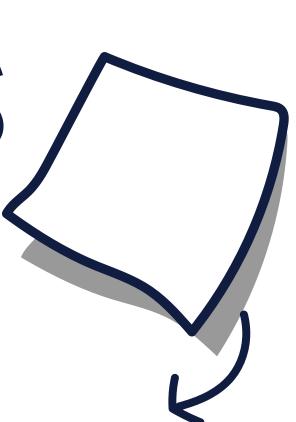






#### WHAT ARE YOUR IDEAS

for making Mass Ave easier to get around?



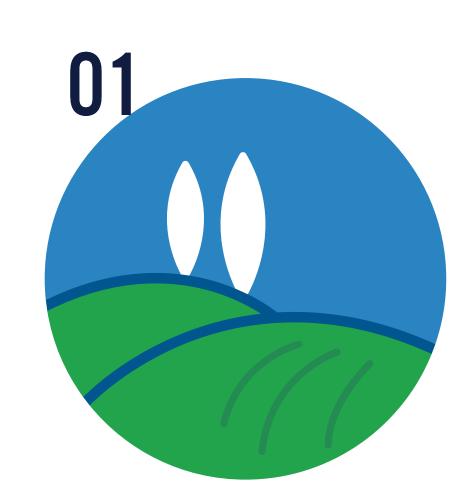


# 4 More Alfordable

# Affordable Housing 101!

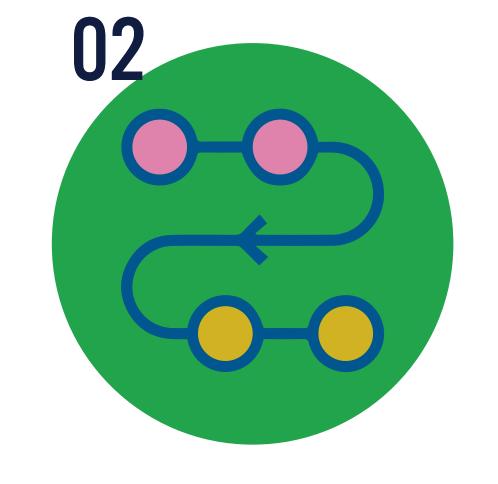


### WHAT CONTRIBUTES TO HOUSING COSTS?



#### LAND

Land is scarce in Cambridge, making it expensive.



#### **PROCESS**

Requirements that add time, process, or set standards.



#### CONSTRUCTION

Inflation has made the cost of labor and materials worse.



#### CAPITAL

High interest rates have made the cost of borrowing money higher.



#### PROFIT

These increased costs lower profit margins for developers, who need a return on investment.



### WHAT IS AFFORDABLE HOUSING?

Housing is generally considered "affordable" if a household spends no more than 30% of their income to live there.

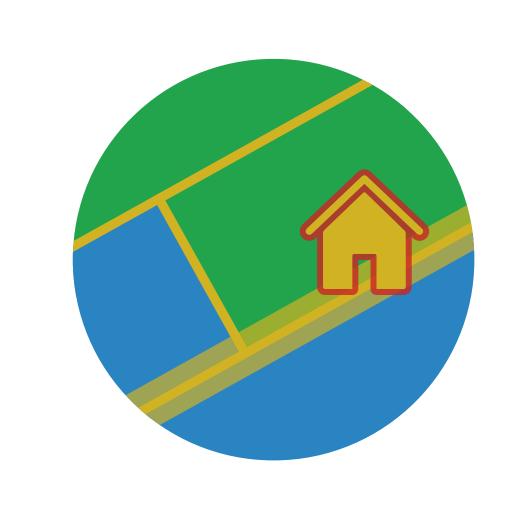
Someone can find their housing affordable, even if it is market rate. There is also Affordable Housing - which is when a unit is restricted to a household at a certain income.





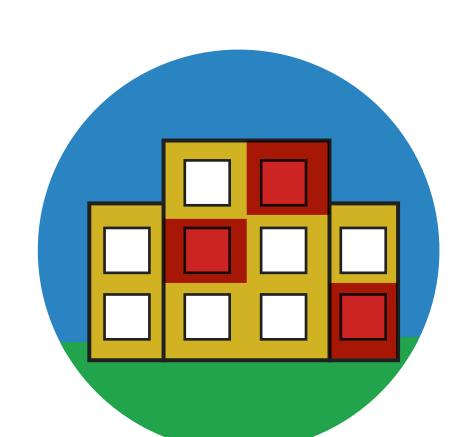
### HOW DOES AFFORDABLE HOUSING GET BUILT?

The City of Cambridge is adding affordable units to the market in a few ways. Housing builders use City and other available public and private funding to create new affordable housing through:



#### 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.



# 4 More Housing Options

How can Mass Ave better support a mix of housing options and price points for the community?

A

### WHAT IS ON MASS AVE TODAY?













ONE-STORY RETAIL

AUTO RELATED IISES

LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

FOUR-STORY MIXED USE

INSTITUTIONS

**APARTMENTS** 

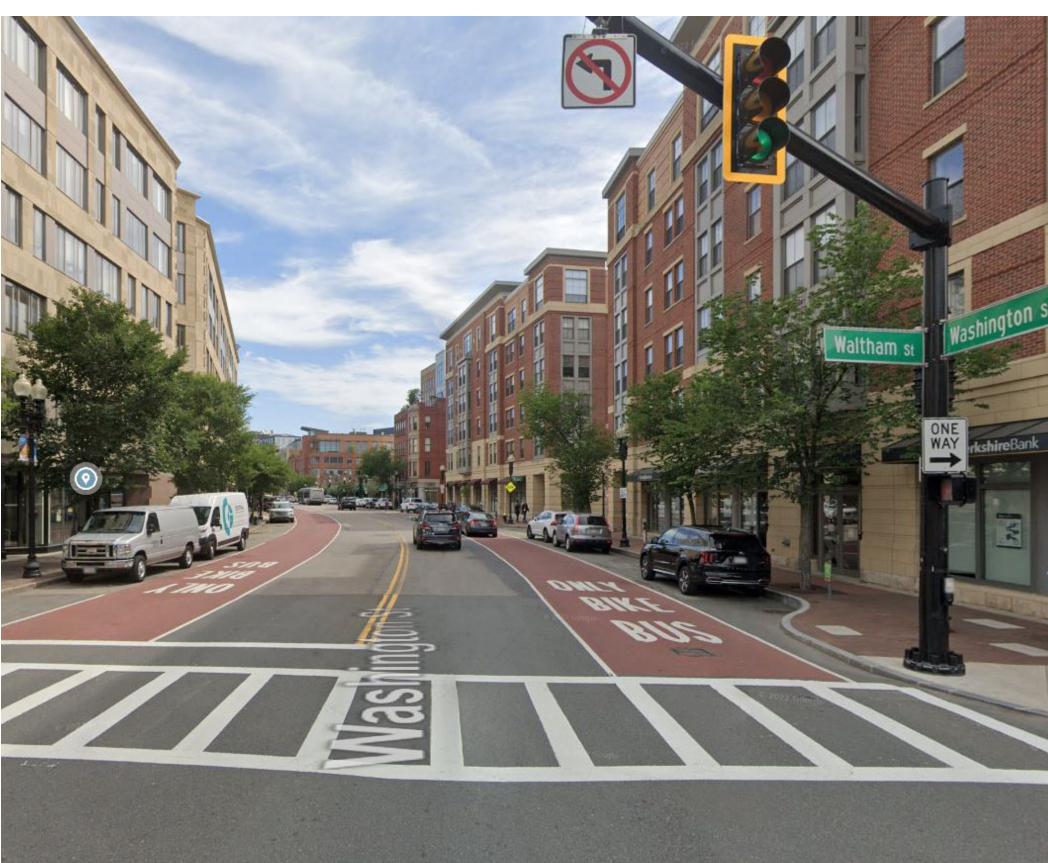
What does a corridor this wide feel like...

### ...IN OTHER PLACES?

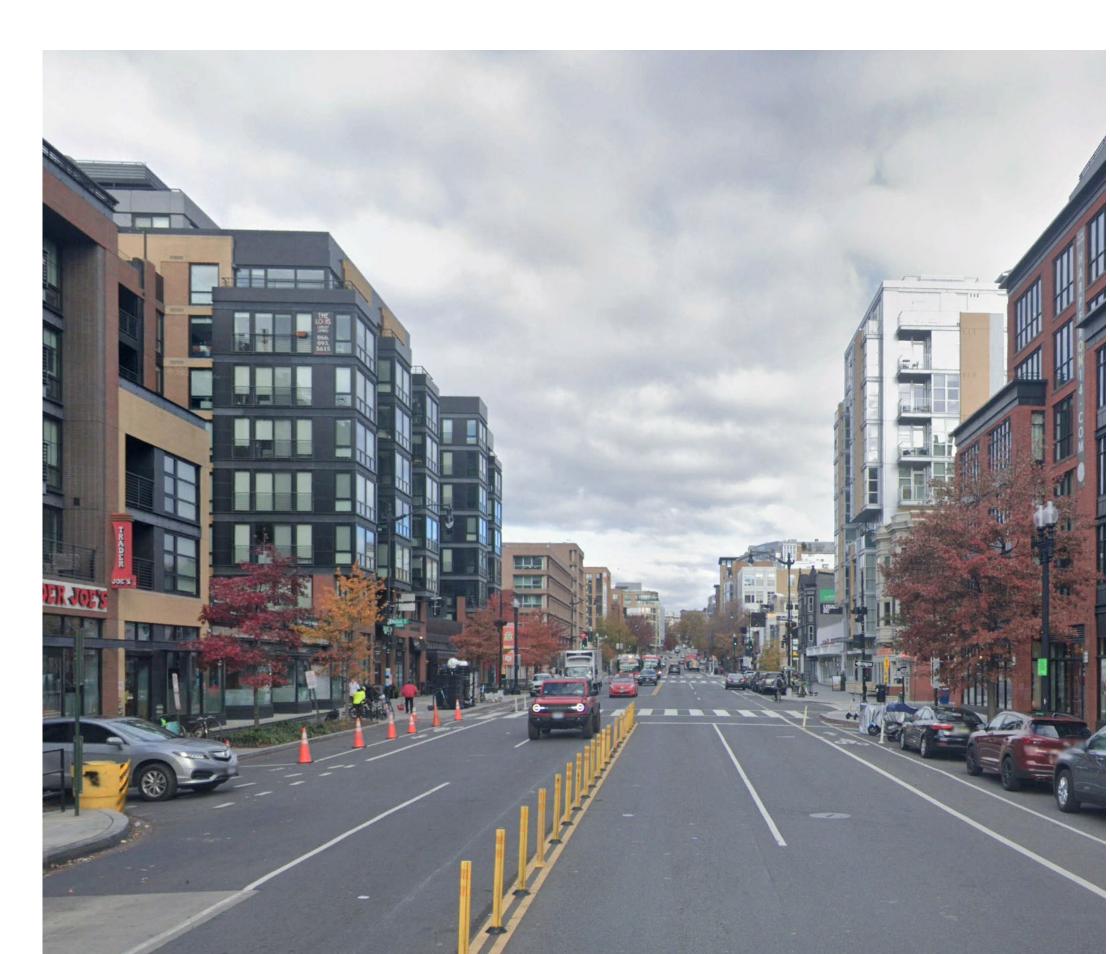
Mass Avenue is about 100 feet wide between the buildings. In other places where the road is this wide, it's common to have some taller buildings that help create a sense of place and more activity.



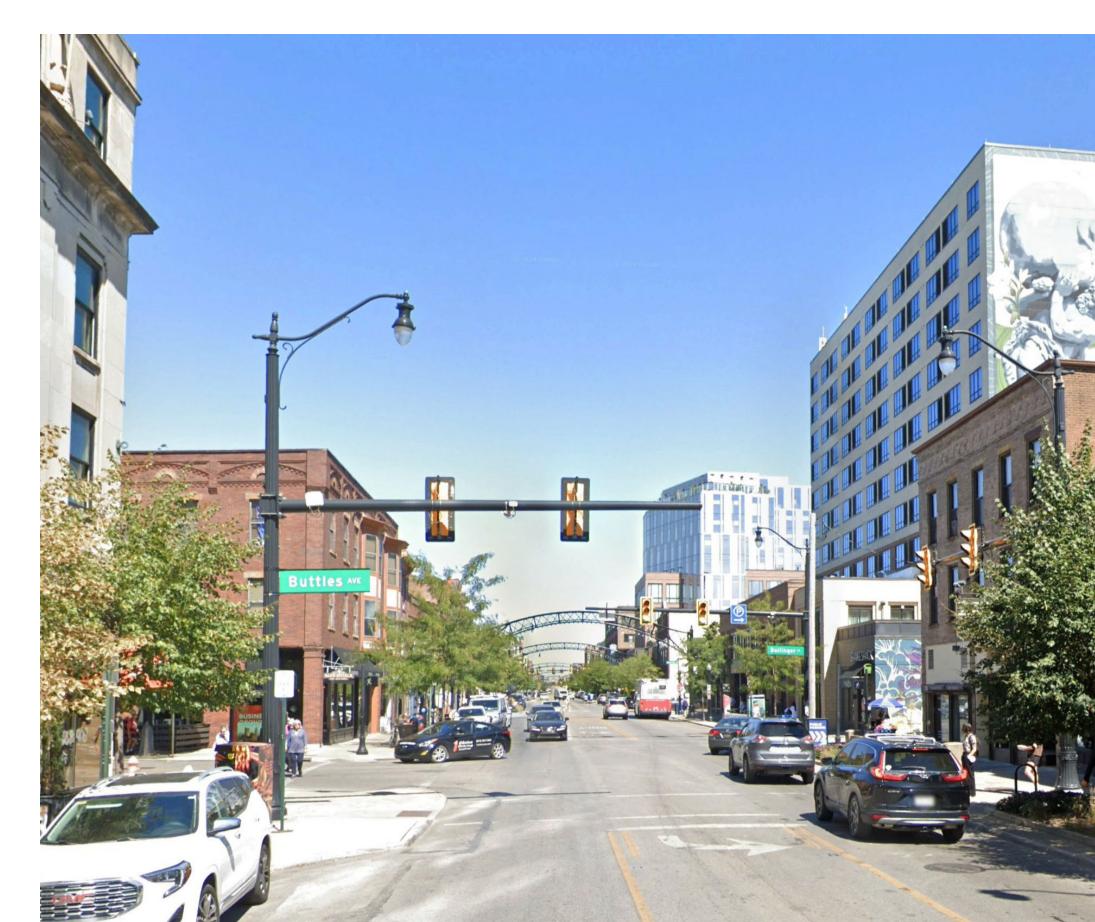
MASS AVE, CENTRAL SQUARE



WASHINGTON ST, BOSTON

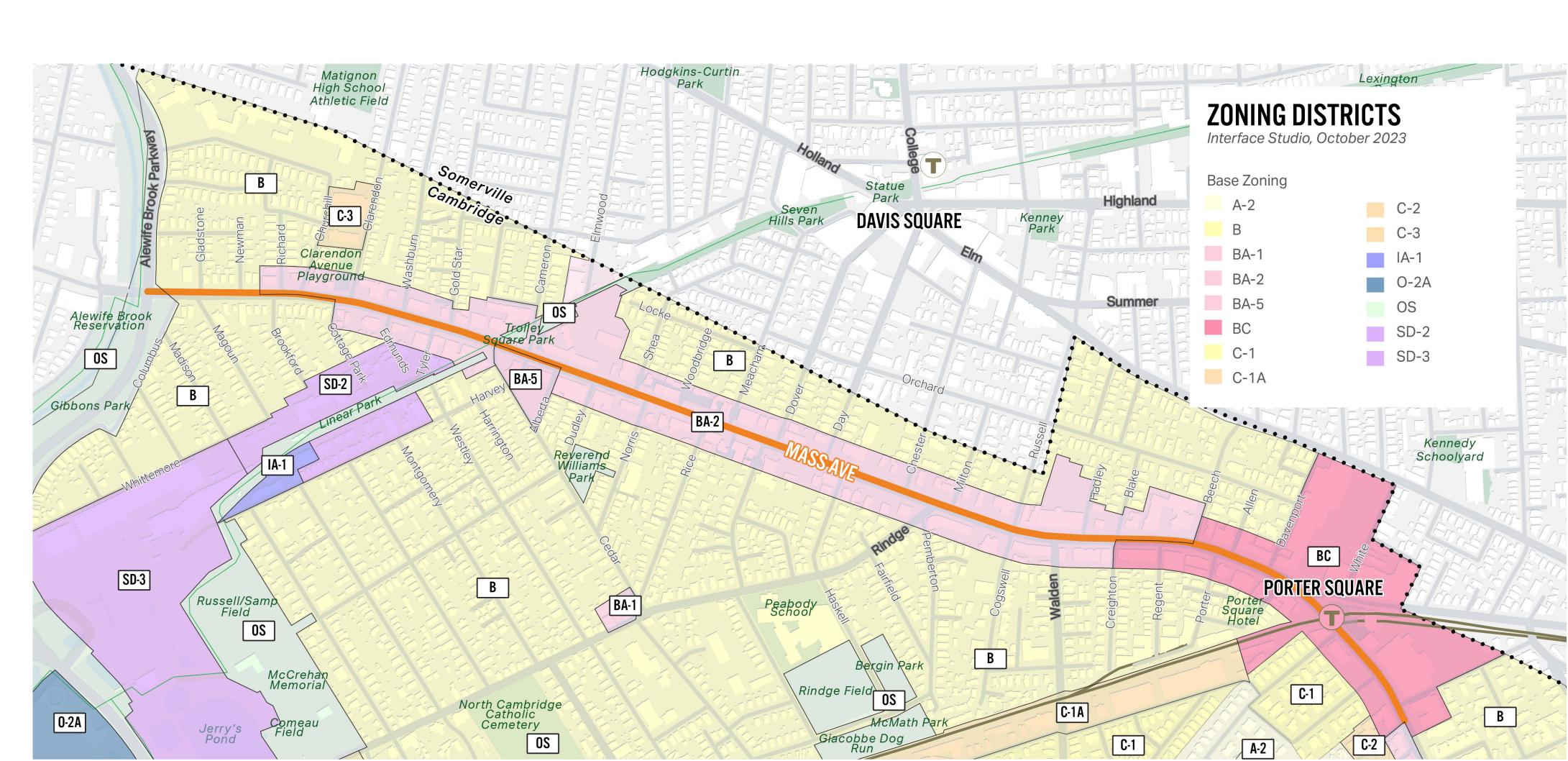






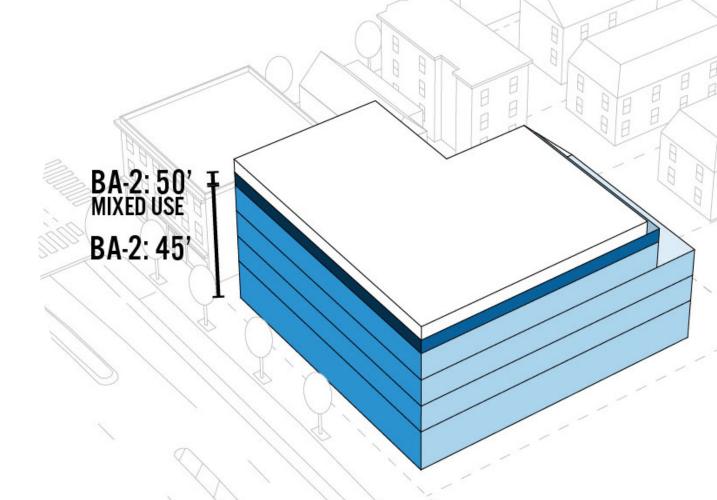
SHORT NORTH, COLUMBUS

### WHAT CAN BE BUILT TODAY?



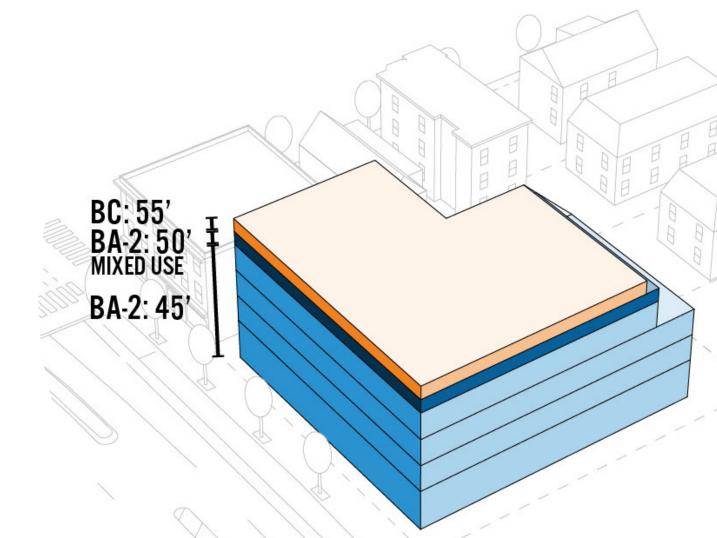
Above map: base zoning that touches the North Mass Ave and Porter Square study area includes B, BA-2, BA-5, and BC.

North Mass Ave and Porter Square is regulated by the *Mass Ave Overlay District (MAOD)*, which intends to promote retail, design, and pedestrian amenities.



The BA-2, the most common zoning base district, allows:

MAXIMUM HEIGHT: 50'
REQUIREMENTS: GROUND FLOOR
NON-RESIDENTIAL USES
STORIES: 4

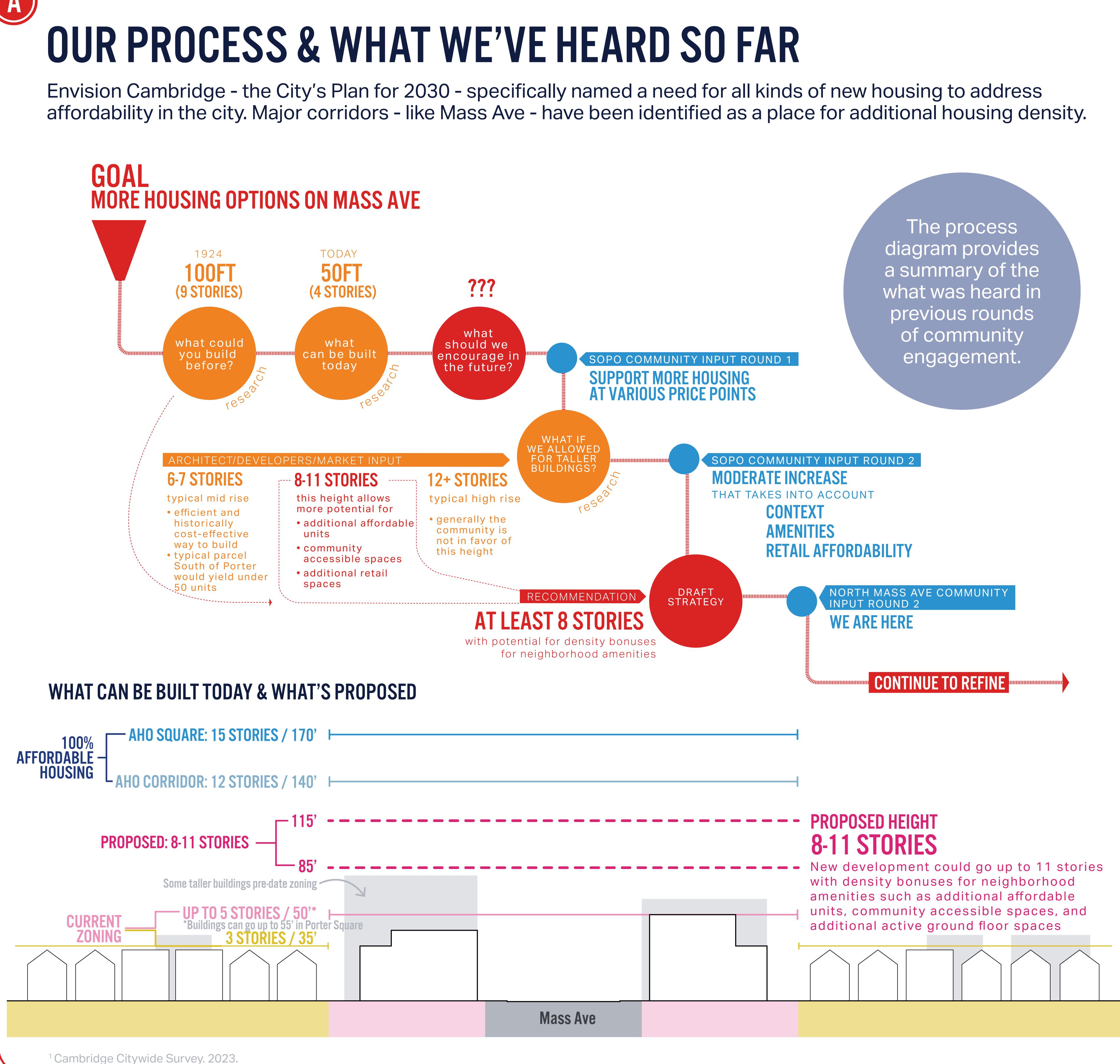


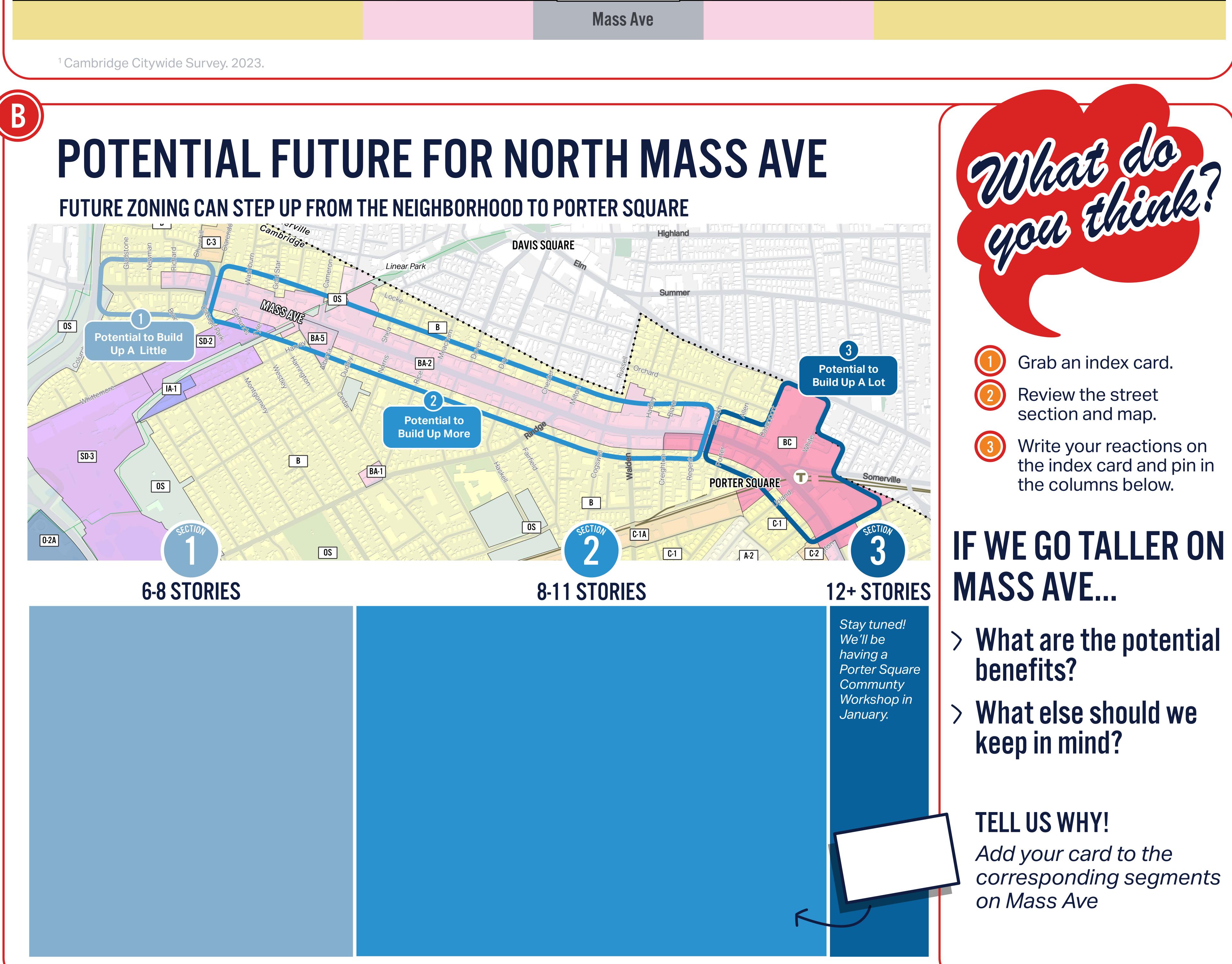
The BC, the Porter Square zoning base district, allows:

MAXIMUM HEIGHT: 55'
STORIES: 5

# 4 More Housing Options

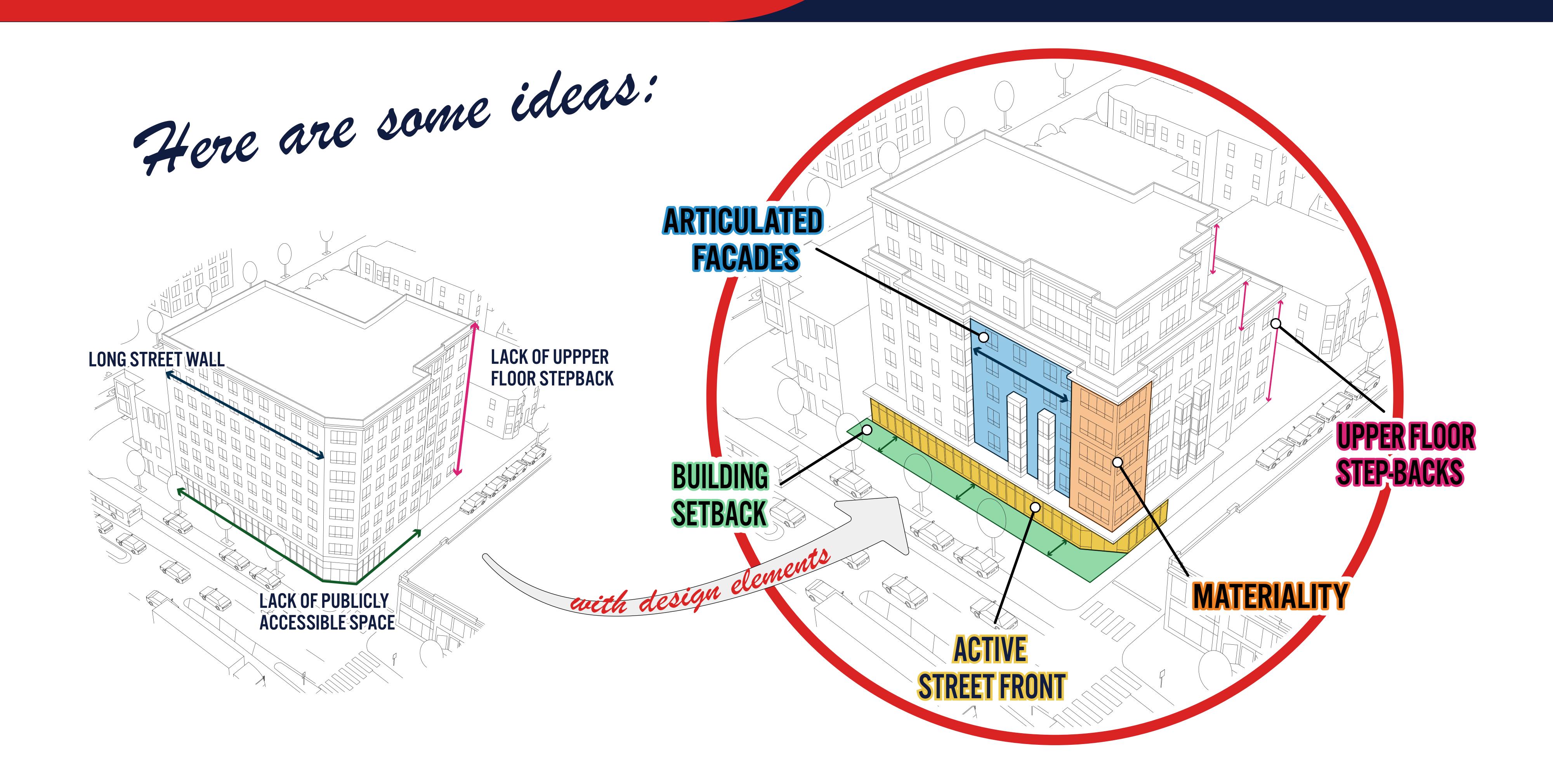
How can we encourage new housing on Mass Ave?





# 4 More Housing Options

How can we use new developments to contribute positively to the neighborhood?



#### ACTIVE STREET FRONT

An active street front typically includes restaurant or retail use but other active uses, including office and residential can contribute to energetic street life. A ground floor that is designed for transparency, access, and flexible programs can be active.



## ARTICULATED FACADES

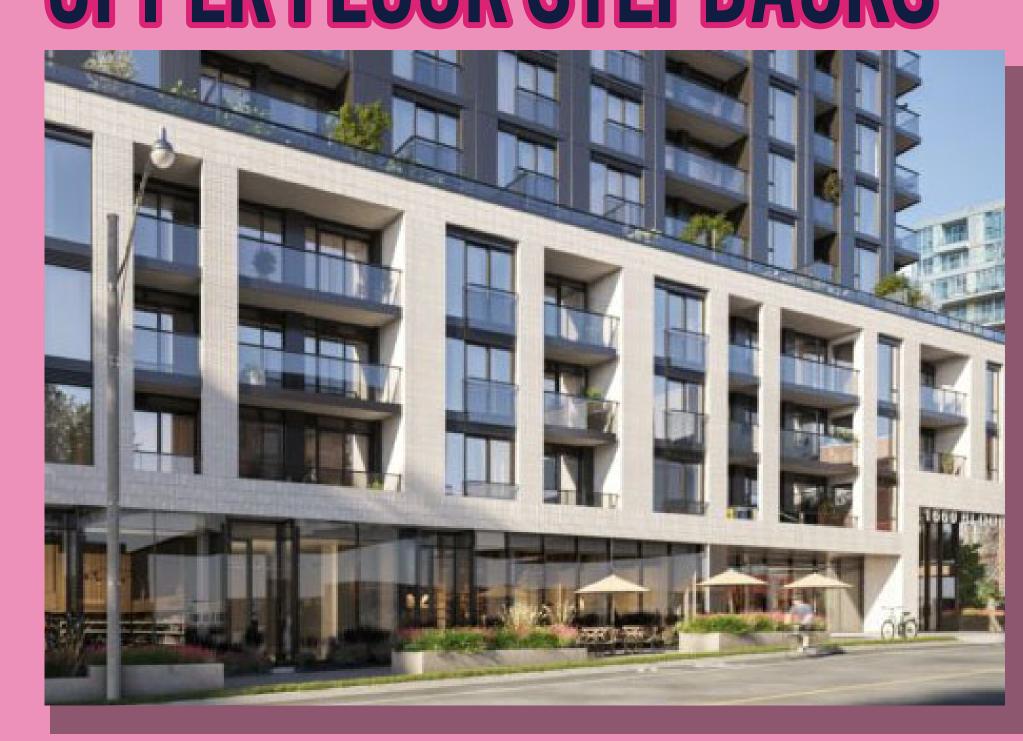
Articulated facades means the pattern of a building's windows, doors, balconies, and bays. Using articulated facades can add depth, interest, and even shelter from sun, wind, and rain.

#### BUILDING SETBACK

A building setback pushes a building away from the street to allow for widened sidewalks, plazas, porches, street-trees, and rain gardens. Setbacks can add additional ground level activity, whether public or semi-private.



#### IPPER FI MAR STEPRACKS



Stepbacks reduce a building's volume as it rises. Setbacks can reduce a building's shadows, its mass, and overall sense of scale.

#### MATERIALITY



Materiality means using brick, wood, glass, metal, or many other materials. Materiality can contribute to a building's scale, texture, color, and reflectiveness. They are a primary way that buildings can relate to one another.

#### DO YOU HAVE OTHER IDEAS

for using design elements to contribute to the neighborhood and street?

