

MASS AVE PLANNING STUDY

CAMBRIDGE, MA

MAY 2025

ALEWIFE BROOK PARKWAY TO
CAMBRIDGE COMMON

**CITY OF
CAMBRIDGE** | CDD
Community
Development

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THANK YOU! to everyone who contributed to the Mass Ave Planning Study by participating in an interview or sharing a vision for the future at an event. Many local voices helped shape this plan: neighbors, employees, businesses, community organizations, institutions, City staff and leadership—your words and ideas populate the pages that follow.

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INTRODUCTION

Our charge:

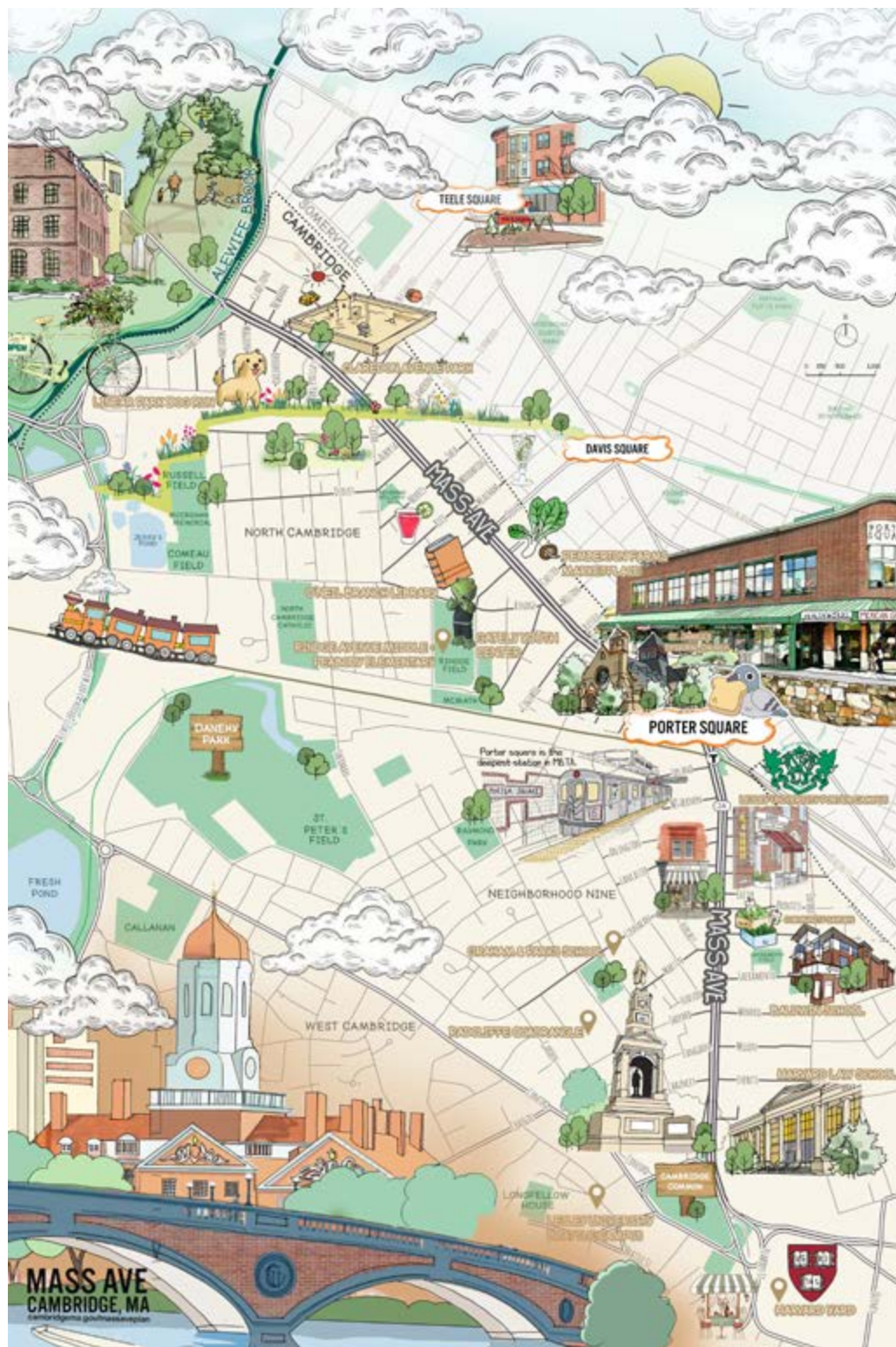
What could Mass Ave look like 15 years from now?

... and HOW do we get there?

Over the next 15 years, the city's actions will help facilitate change on Mass Ave, but it is important to note that it will happen incrementally and organically over time. This plan builds on the work of [Envision Cambridge](#), the comprehensive plan that set forth a vision and goals for the City of Cambridge. Our task was to create a plan **for the future of Mass Ave between Cambridge Common and Alewife Brook Parkway** with a meaningful community engagement process. The goals of this plan include:

- **Prioritization of goals and implementation** - Establishing clear, community-driven goals for the evolution of Mass Ave and implementing strategies and actions to achieve them.
- **Coordination with other planning initiatives** - Aligning with ongoing city planning, design, and construction efforts to ensure cohesive planning and development.
- **Policy recommendations** - Crafting policy recommendations that reflect the City's vision and community priorities, promoting sustainability and equity.
- **Proposed changes in zoning** - Recommending zoning updates that allow for and support increased development that is sensitive to adjacent neighborhoods while maintaining alignment with broader city planning objectives.
- **Complementing future Citywide Design Guidelines** - Ensuring proposed changes complement citywide design guidelines, including the Multifamily Design Guidelines, for a cohesive and vibrant environment.
- **Long term infrastructure projects (public realm, open spaces, sidewalks, etc)** - Guiding the future development of public spaces, improved sidewalks and recommendations for green infrastructure to enhance the public realm and integrate climate resiliency.





STUDY AREA OVERVIEW

This study focuses on Mass Ave from Cambridge Common to Alewife Brook Parkway. It's a vital corridor in Cambridge that, like many of the city's squares and mixed-use districts, serves as a hub of public life. Porter Square and Mass Ave are home to a diverse mix of small, independently owned businesses, citywide shopping destinations, historic neighborhoods, and key transit connections, including the MBTA subway and commuter rail station at Porter Square.

As one of Cambridge's most significant transportation corridors, Mass Ave links multiple neighborhoods to commercial districts, academic institutions, and public spaces. Overall, the study area spans approximately two miles.



PLANNING COORDINATION

In addition to building upon the recommendations of [Envision Cambridge](#), this planning process is happening alongside other city planning initiatives. Combined, these efforts by the City work together holistically to make Mass Ave a great street:

- **The Mass Ave Partial Construction** is focused on the **near term street design of Mass Ave, focusing only on the roadway between the two curbs**. 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/MassAve4A

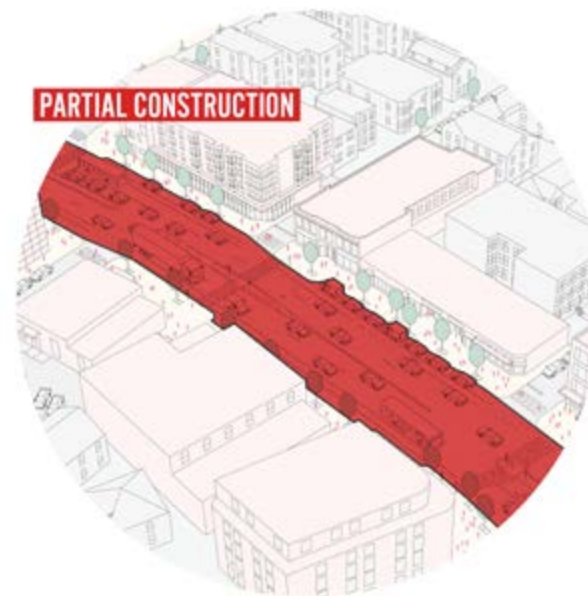
Questions or comments? Contact: massave4@cambridgema.gov

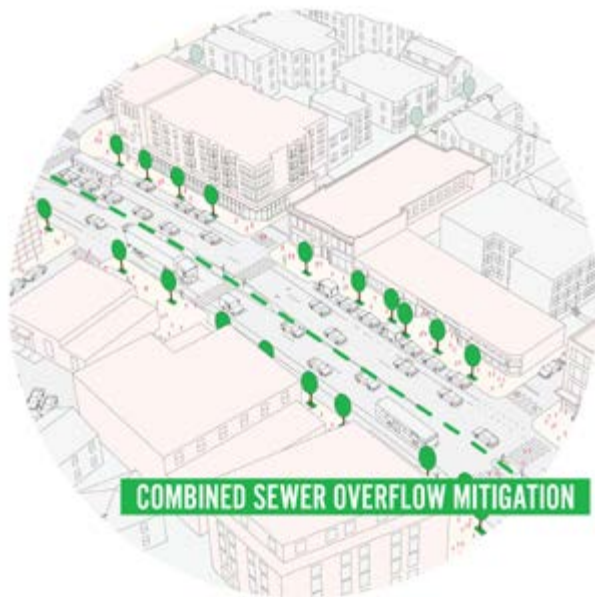
- **The Economic Opportunity and Development Division Cycling Ordinance Citywide Retail Impact Study** is an annual analysis to be conducted by the city for the next five years for corridors that have separated bike lanes or will have separated bike lanes and includes:

- *Analysis of retail sales and transportation data*
- *Business and customer surveys*

For more information: cambridgema.gov/CDD/Projects/EconDev/cyclingsafetyordinanceeconomicimpactstudy

Questions or comments? Contact: Pardis Saffari, Director of Economic Opportunity and Development, psaffari@cambridgema.gov





- **The Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Mitigation Study** is a study to develop updated CSO Control Plans in collaboration with the City of Somerville, Mass Department of Conservations and Recreation (DCNR) and Massachusetts Water Resource Authority (MWRA) with goals to:

- *Develop a new typical year to reflect future climate conditions*
- *Development, assess, and select alternatives for decreasing/eliminating CSOs*
- *Identify alternatives to improve water quality in the Charles River, Mystic River, and Alewife Brook*
- *Engage with the community throughout the process*
- *Consider and address impacts of CSOs on Environmental Justice communities*

For more information: www.cambridgema.gov/Departments/publicworks/cityprojects/2022/updatedcombinedseweroverflowcsontrolplan

Questions or comments? Contact: Jim Wilcox, City Engineer, jwilcox@cambridgema.gov

- **This Mass Ave Planning Study** Our study complements these other initiatives and is focused on a long-term vision for the corridor, including:
 - *Increasing density & housing opportunities along the corridor*
 - *Addressing affordability issues*
 - *Supporting small & local businesses*
 - *Creating and enhancing vibrant sidewalks & public spaces*

The planning team coordinated with the other three initiatives to share feedback and align recommendations.

HISTORY¹

Massachusetts Avenue (Mass Ave) is one of Cambridge's oldest streets, originally laid out in the early 17th century as a route to Concord. Its distinctive bend at Porter Square was designed to navigate around the foot of Avon Hill. The right of way, measuring 33 yards (99 feet) wide, follows an early English practice that allowed travelers to choose the path of least resistance over uneven terrain.

In the 18th century, it was known as the Great Road, and by the early 19th century, it was referred to as West Cambridge Road. After 1841, it became North Avenue. Following the completion of the Harvard Bridge in 1894, all newly connected cross-town streets were unified under the name Massachusetts Avenue.

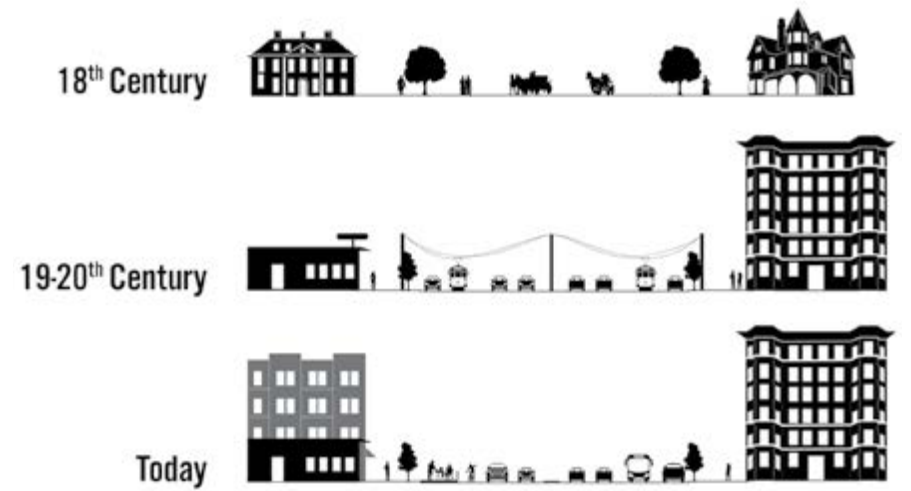
Over the centuries, the buildings along the street evolved in response to the dominant modes of transportation of their time:

- 1700s: Agricultural farm lots along The Great Road gradually gave way to Colonial and Queen Anne-style mansions as the street became North Avenue. During this period, horse-drawn carriages were the primary mode of travel.
- 1800s: The area surrounding what is now Massachusetts Avenue developed into a commuter suburb, spurred by the introduction of a streetcar system, including an electric trolley in 1890. This era saw the emergence of commercial buildings and shops along the street.
- 1900s: The trolley was removed in 1930, and Massachusetts Avenue evolved into an increasingly car-oriented commercial corridor, featuring a diverse mix of businesses and residents.

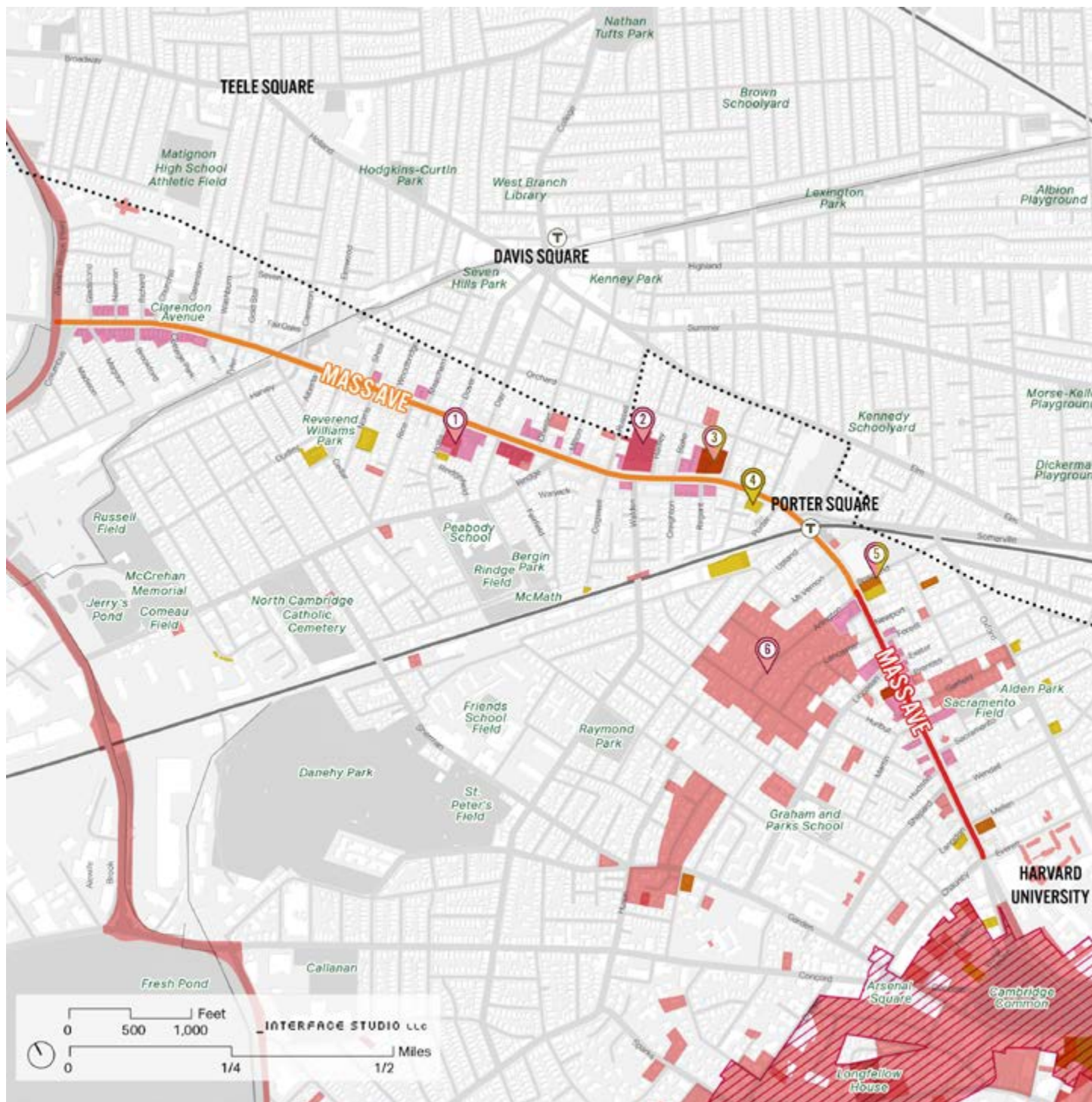
1. Summarized from information gathered by the Cambridge Historical Commission, *Building Old Cambridge: Architecture and Development* by Susan E. Maycock and Charles M. Sullivan.



Source: Preliminary Landmark Designation Report: Charles Hicks Saunders House, Charles Sullivan and Sarah Burks, Cambridge Historical Commission. March 24, 2023



Mass Ave over time



This map provides a visual overview of Mass Ave's historic preservation landscape. It highlights designated historic districts, individual historic landmarks and easements, properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and historic properties within the Mass Ave Overlay District. Understanding the location of these assets is essential for future planning along the corridor, as they help shape development decisions and ensure the preservation of the area.

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

STUDY AREAS

Given its length, the study area has been divided into **two sections** for focused analysis:

NORTH MASS AVE, INCLUDING PORTER SQUARE

- **Context:** Includes the North Cambridge area from Alewife Brook Parkway to Porter Square. Within .25 miles (a five-minute walk) of this section of North Mass Ave there are 16,250 people, 7,500 households with an average household size of 2.14.
- **Key Community Assets:**
 - Alewife Greenway
 - Clarendon Avenue Park
 - Linear Park
 - Institutions such as St. John the Evangelist and St. James Episcopal Church
 - Porter Square
 - Lesley University
- **Demographic characteristics**

12%



**YOUTH
UNDER 18**
[1,870 Residents]

37



MEDIAN AGE
[29 Citywide]

15%



**SENIORS
OVER 65**
[2,494 Residents]

38%

**FAMILY
HOUSEHOLDS**
[40% Citywide]

7%

**HOUSEHOLDS
BELOW
POVERTY**
[519 Households]

\$155,000

**2023 MEDIAN
HOUSEHOLD
INCOME**

Cambridge (2022)
= \$121,000

Data source: ESRI, ACS 2023 5-Year estimate for census tracts aligning with the "Service Area". Citywide, ACS 2022.



St. James Courtyard
1991 Mass Ave



One Story walkable retail
2265 Mass Ave



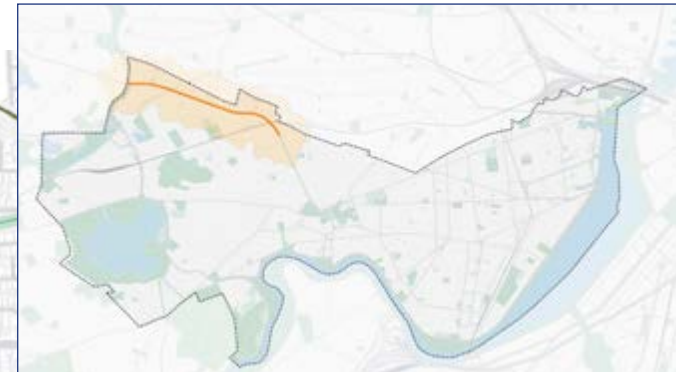
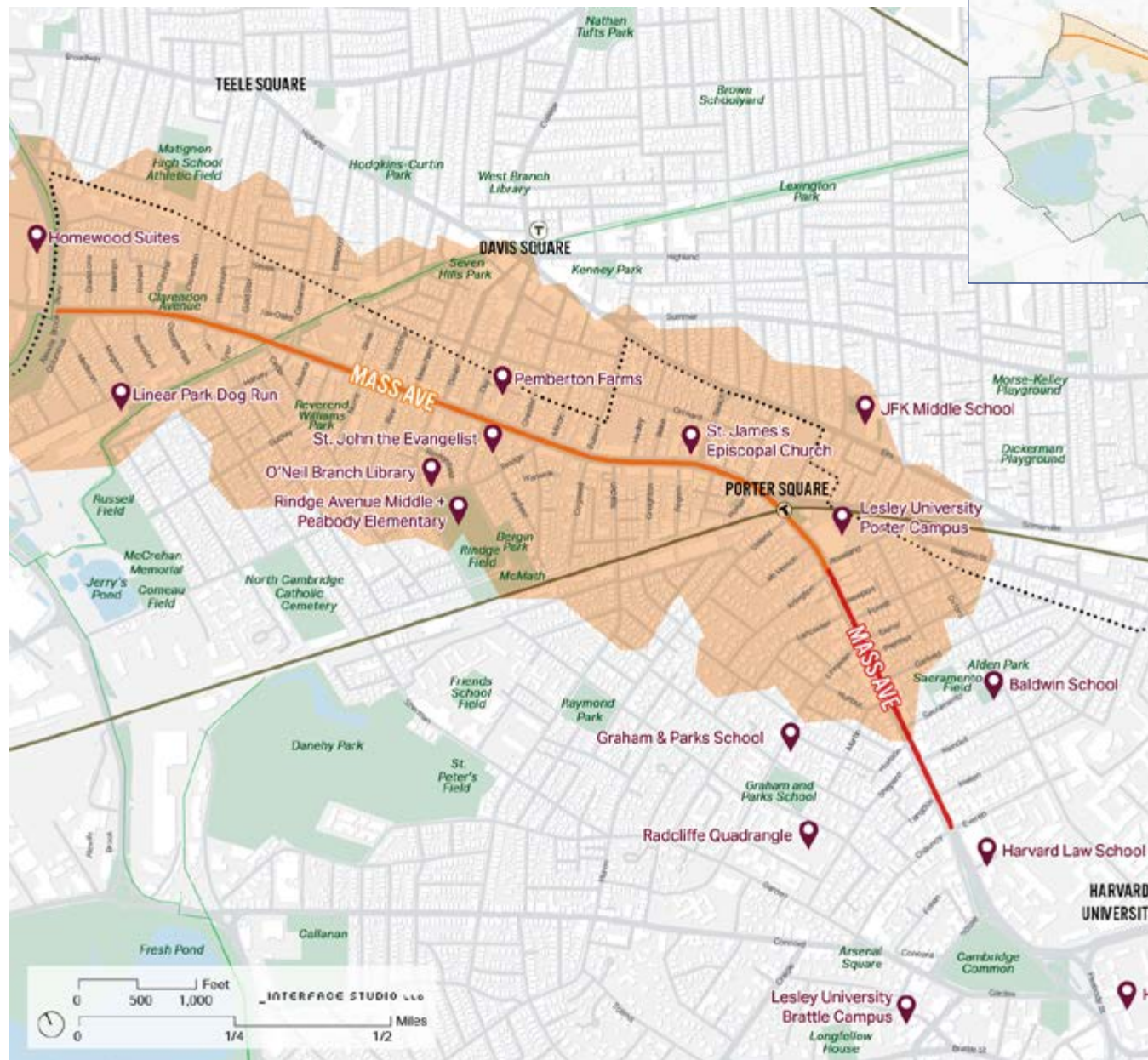
Plaza outside of Porter
Square T station



Linear Park



Auto-oriented uses
2535 Mass Ave



NORTH MASS AVE PRIMARY SERVICE AREA

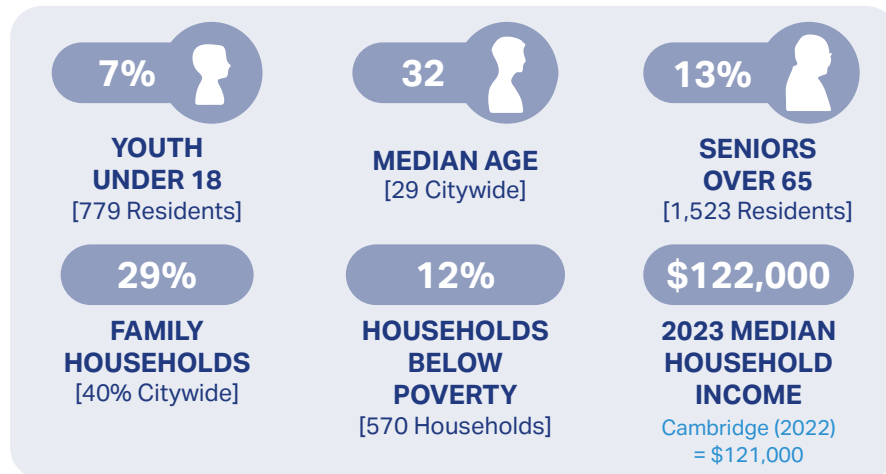
Interface Studio, October 2023

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

The primary service area for this study area is defined as a quarter-mile walking distance from Mass Ave, representing the area shown here in orange. This walkable radius helps focus planning efforts on the neighborhoods, businesses, and historic resources that are most likely to experience impacts from future development and investment along North Mass Ave.

SOUTH OF PORTER SQUARE

- **Context:** Includes Mass Ave from Arlington Street to Chauncy Street, and borders on Neighborhood Nine and Baldwin neighborhoods. Within .25 miles (a five-minute walk) of this section of Mass Ave, there are 11,100 people in 4,700 with an average household size of 1.89.
- **Key Community Assets**
 - *Sacramento Field*
 - *Baldwin School*
 - *Harvard University Law School*
- **Demographic characteristics**



Data source: ESRI, ACS 2023 5-Year estimate for census tracts aligning with the "Service Area". Citywide, ACS 2022.

One story retail near
1685 Mass Ave



Looking South
1682 Mass Ave



Frost Terrace Affordable
Housing Development



Looking North
1724 Mass Ave



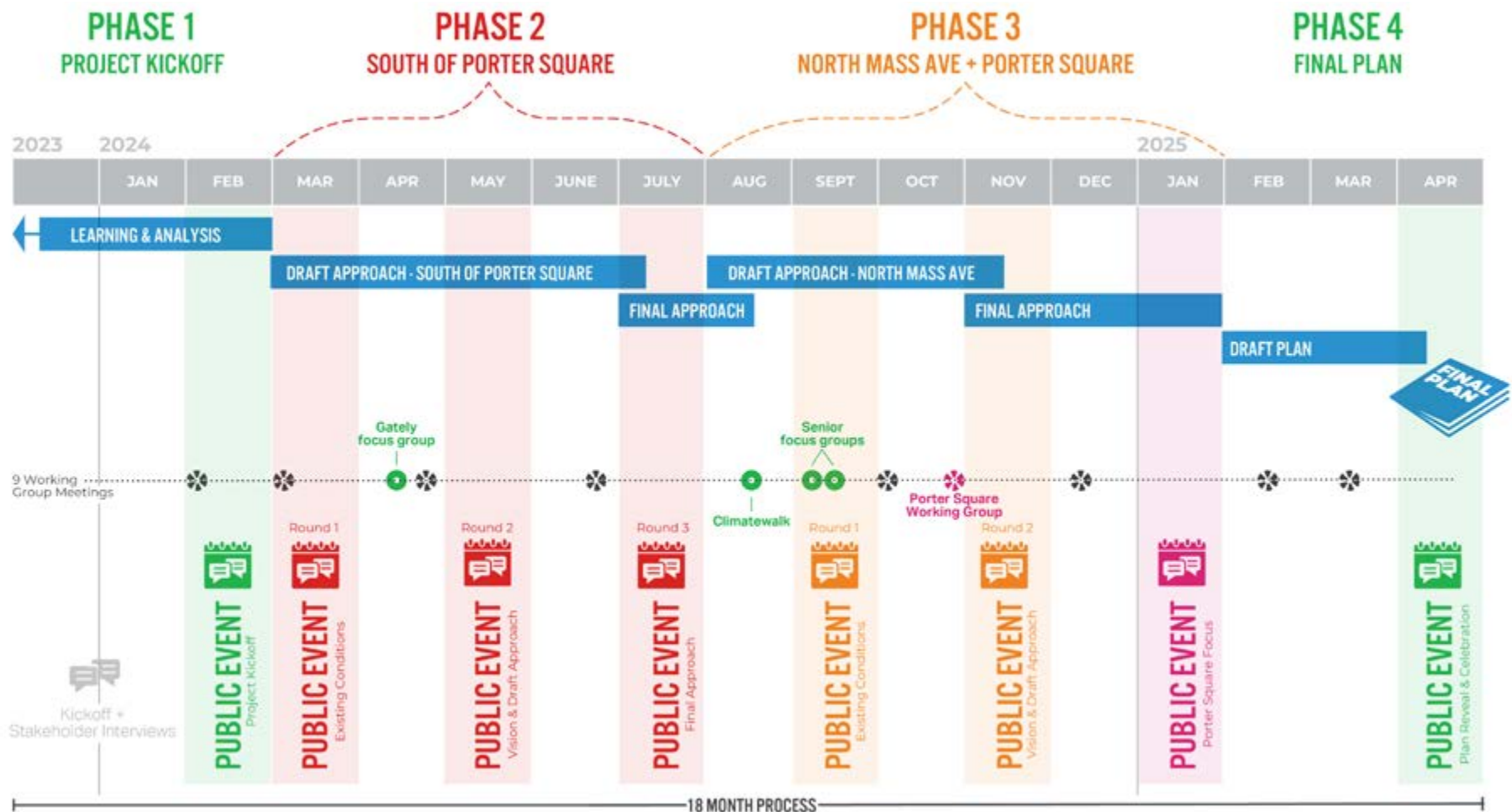
Newport Road Condominiums
1775 - 1783 Mass Ave

OUR PROCESS

PROJECT SCHEDULE

MAPS began in the fall of 2023. The process included eight community meetings and nine MAPS Working Group meetings, alongside targeted stakeholder meetings designed to gather input, share updates, and refine project goals. The engagement was structured by geography—starting with the South of Porter study area, followed by North Mass

Ave and Porter Square—and conducted in four phases. Phase 1 was the project introduction and information gathering. Phases 2 and 3 were area planning focused meetings, and Phase 4 were final recommendations. Once the final plan is complete, implementation phases are set to kickoff in summer 2025.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A robust and nimble community engagement plan was developed with the City of Cambridge to ensure an equitable process that would be accessible to all.

Community Meetings

There were four phases of engagement meetings. Phases 1 and 4 were for the entirety of the corridor, while Phases 2 and 3 had three meetings each for each of the two study areas - South of Porter followed by North Mass Ave & Porter Square. The City hosted both in-person and virtual community meetings to reach a diverse audience.

• Phase 1: Project Kick off

• FEBRUARY 29, 2024: PROJECT KICK-OFF

- » *FORMAT: Virtual Meeting on Zoom*
- » *ATTENDEES: 80 Participants / 193 registered*
- » *AGENDA: Project Introduction, Q+A, Breakout Room Discussion, Crowdsourcing Map Demo, Next Steps*

• Phase 2: South of Porter Square

• MARCH 27, 2024: SOUTH OF PORTER DRAFT IDEAS

- » *FORMAT: Virtual Meeting on Zoom*
- » *ATTENDEES: 50 Participants / 109 registered*
- » *AGENDA: Co-generate ideas to achieve the vision laid out by the community in meeting 1.*

• MAY 31: SOUTH OF PORTER DRAFT IDEAS OPEN HOUSE

- » *FORMAT: In person outdoor pop up at Lunder Arts Center*
- » *ATTENDEES: ~100 Participants*
- » *AGENDA: Share draft recommendations and gather feedback on priorities, place-based observations, and preferences*

• JULY 25, 2024 : SOUTH OF PORTER DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

- » *FORMAT: Virtual Meeting on Zoom*
- » *ATTENDEES: 67 Participants / 107 registered*
- » *AGENDA: Review final recommendations for South of Porter*

• Phase 3: North Mass Ave + Porter Square

• SEPT 25, 2024 KICK-OFF - NORTH MASS AVE

- » *FORMAT: Virtual Meeting on Zoom*
- » *ATTENDEES: 70+ Participants / 221 registered*
- » *AGENDA: 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

- » *FORMAT: In person indoor pop up at Lesley University*
- » *ATTENDEES: 80+ Participants*
- » *AGENDA: Present draft recommendations for North Mass Ave and gather feedback*

• JANUARY 30, 2025 - VIRTUAL

- » *FORMAT: Virtual Meeting on Zoom*
- » *ATTENDEES: 90+ Participants / 274 registered*
- » *AGENDA: Present draft recommendations for Porter Square and gather feedback*

• Phase 4: Final Plan

• APRIL 10, 2025 PLAN REVIEW AND CELEBRATION

- » *FORMAT: In person open house at Lunder Arts Center Atrium*
- » *ATTENDEES: 100+ Participants*
- » *AGENDA: Present final draft of plan and distribute executive summary newspaper.*



Mass Ave Planning Study Working Group

The 14-member working group, composed of local residents, business owners, neighborhood leaders and institutional representatives, was selected through an application process and approved by City Council. A complete description of the working group and its members can be found in the City Council packet from January 22, 2024 (page 88). Throughout the planning process the team met with the stakeholder working group nine times, including a walking tour to kick off the project. All meetings were open to the public, and provided the opportunity for public comment. A summary of the topics covered in each meeting are as follows:

1. February 7, 2024: Project Kickoff
2. March 14, 2024: South of Square
3. April 24, 2024: Mass Ave Walking Tour
4. June 27, 2024: Development & Housing Discussion with local experts
5. October 10, 2024: North Mass Ave
6. October 30, 2024: Zoning 101 by CDD
7. December 11, 2024: Draft Zoning Recommendations
8. February 26, 2025: Porter Square
9. March 13, 2025: Zoning Recommendations by CDD

Focus Groups

Focus groups were conducted to engage in targeted discussions with youth and seniors on the corridor:

- North Cambridge Senior Center
- Russell Apartments
- Burns Apartments
- Gately Youth Center
- Baldwin Neighborhood Council
- Baldwin Community Center
- Porter Square Neighborhood Association

Stakeholder Interviews

The Economic Opportunity and Development Division (EOD) at CDD reached out to every business in the study area to inform them of the planning process and offer individualized meetings. The team conducted approximately 30 meetings with a diverse range of businesses and stakeholders, including property managers, developers and institutions, such as Harvard and Lesley University.





Mailers and Advertisements

In addition to traditional outreach methods—such as promoting meetings and events through the City calendar, e-blasts to neighborhood associations, schools, community centers, and senior centers, and posts on CDD’s social media channels—the team implemented several targeted strategies. Bluebikes ads were installed at stations along the corridor, and two rounds of mailers were sent to 10,800 households across all mail routes intersecting the corridor. The team also distributed fliers directly to businesses and posted them along the corridor ahead of multiple meetings.

Crowdsourcing Map

An online collaborative map was created for the project and active for eight months. The “MAPS Map” received over 900 comments and 4,000 interactions, and provided the opportunity for the public to let us know their favorite places, and place specific ideas and insights.



“density but do it carefully”

- community quote

WHAT WE HEARD

Throughout this report you'll find quotes and key takeaways from the engagement process. Key themes from the engagement process include:

- **Underutilization of Mass Ave:** There is broad consensus that Mass Ave, particularly Porter Square, has significant untapped potential. While the corridor serves as a major thoroughfare, it is not fully realizing its potential as a holistic community.
- **Need for Mixed-Use Development:** Participants consistently emphasized the need for more mixed-use development along the corridor. In addition to increased housing, there were strong calls for neighborhood-serving businesses such as grocery stores, bakeries, breweries, coffee shops, and essential services like daycare and dry cleaning. North Mass Ave, in particular, was identified as an area that is currently under-served.
- **Affordability:** A central concern was affordability in nearly all discussions about housing and density. Participants stressed the importance of ensuring that new development benefits the entire community, with particular attention to the needs of cost-burdened populations.
- **Housing:** There was general agreement that Mass Ave can accommodate additional housing density. However, while there is interest in increased density, some participants expressed concerns about the potential impacts of taller, bulkier buildings on neighborhood character and scale.
- **Improved Walkability and Mobility:** Many community members advocated for a pedestrian focused approach that prioritizes people over cars, along with calls for better transit service, safer bike infrastructure, and more frequent transit options.
- **Public Realm Quality:** Several comments reflected the perception that portions of Mass Ave feel neglected and function more as a pass-through corridor than a place for people. Suggestions for improving the public realm included preserving existing trees, increasing shading, expanding green spaces, and integrating more public art. There was also interest in celebrating the cultural and historical identity of the corridor through thoughtful streetscape design.
- **Community Engagement:** Residents expressed a desire for more meaningful opportunities to engage in planning and development processes. There was also a clear request for greater transparency in how community feedback is being used to shape decisions.

“It’s a corridor for passing through, not stopping.”

- community quote



Additionally, engagement efforts revealed unique themes and priorities across different areas of Mass Ave:

- **North Mass Ave:** Community members are asking for more walkable retail options to replace the current auto-focused businesses. There is also a strong desire for more family-friendly amenities, along with growing concerns about traffic congestion as the area develops.
- **Porter Square:** Residents appreciate the amenities offered by the Porter Square Shopping Center and Galleria, but feel the broader area “needs some love.” They would like to see more greenery, additional trees, and upgrades to public spaces. While there is recognition that Porter Square could support more housing density, many residents emphasized the importance of including a significant open space should any major redevelopment take place.
- **South of Porter:** This area features more walkable blocks and is home to a higher number of students and young adults as its home to Lesley and Harvard Universities. Residents are interested in creating more spaces and events that bring people together to meet, socialize, and build community. There are also concerns about several long-standing vacancies in this part of the corridor that they hope can be addressed.

“Mass Ave should be a proud gateway into Cambridge.”

- community quote



VISION + GOALS

Mass Ave in the future -15 years from now and beyond - is envisioned as a great street; a cohesive and meaningful place with an inviting and engaging public realm that prioritizes the pedestrian experience and supports a host of different users and uses.

It will be a street that is attractive and walkable, with trees, active storefronts, and spaces to gather. Encouraging additional density, especially close to mass transit, is a key part to achieving this vision. More density will bring more people to Mass Ave to live, work, learn, play, and shop, supporting businesses, activities, and a thriving community, while also helping the city reduce vehicular travel and meet its sustainability goals.

The vision and goals for the Mass Ave corridor are organized into four core areas of recommendations, or “buckets,” that reflect the community’s priorities and planning objectives. This vision emerged through extensive community input gathered over the course of the planning process, including public meetings, working group meetings, stakeholder interviews, and the crowdsourcing map. Each of the following chapters corresponds to one of these focus areas and includes what we heard through engagement as it relates to that topic, key findings from data analysis, and strategies to help achieve the shared vision.

The Zoning and Urban Design chapter provides more detail on the city’s key implementing strategies for influencing the urban form and shaping the built environment: zoning and the Citywide Urban Design Guidelines and Multifamily Design Guidelines will help shape the built environment so that it can achieve the vision for Mass Ave.

Together, these elements provide a plan for guiding future policy or programs to improve Mass Ave.



Examples of streets that exhibit a public realm that is pedestrian and business-friendly (including wide sidewalks, street trees, and street furniture) and a mix of existing buildings and new ones that responding to the context of the neighborhood.

Four Key Themes

1

MORE OF A NEIGHBORHOOD & DESTINATION

TRANSFORM THE CORRIDOR AS A LIVABLE, WALKABLE NEIGHBORHOOD WITH IMPROVED AMENITIES AND PLACES FOR EVERYONE AND CREATE A MORE VIBRANT ATMOSPHERE BY ENCOURAGING POP-UP SHOPS, EVENTS AND ACTIVE STOREFRONTS.

2

MORE INVITING

FOCUS ON CREATING A MORE ATTRACTIVE PUBLIC REALM ALONG MASS AVE THROUGH GREENING, PUBLIC ARTWORK, AND MORE PLACES TO GATHER.

3

EASIER TO GET AROUND

DEVELOP A BALANCED AND INTEGRATED SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION NETWORK THAT FOCUSES ON ACTIONS TO IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY AND SPACE FOR PEOPLE WALKING.

4

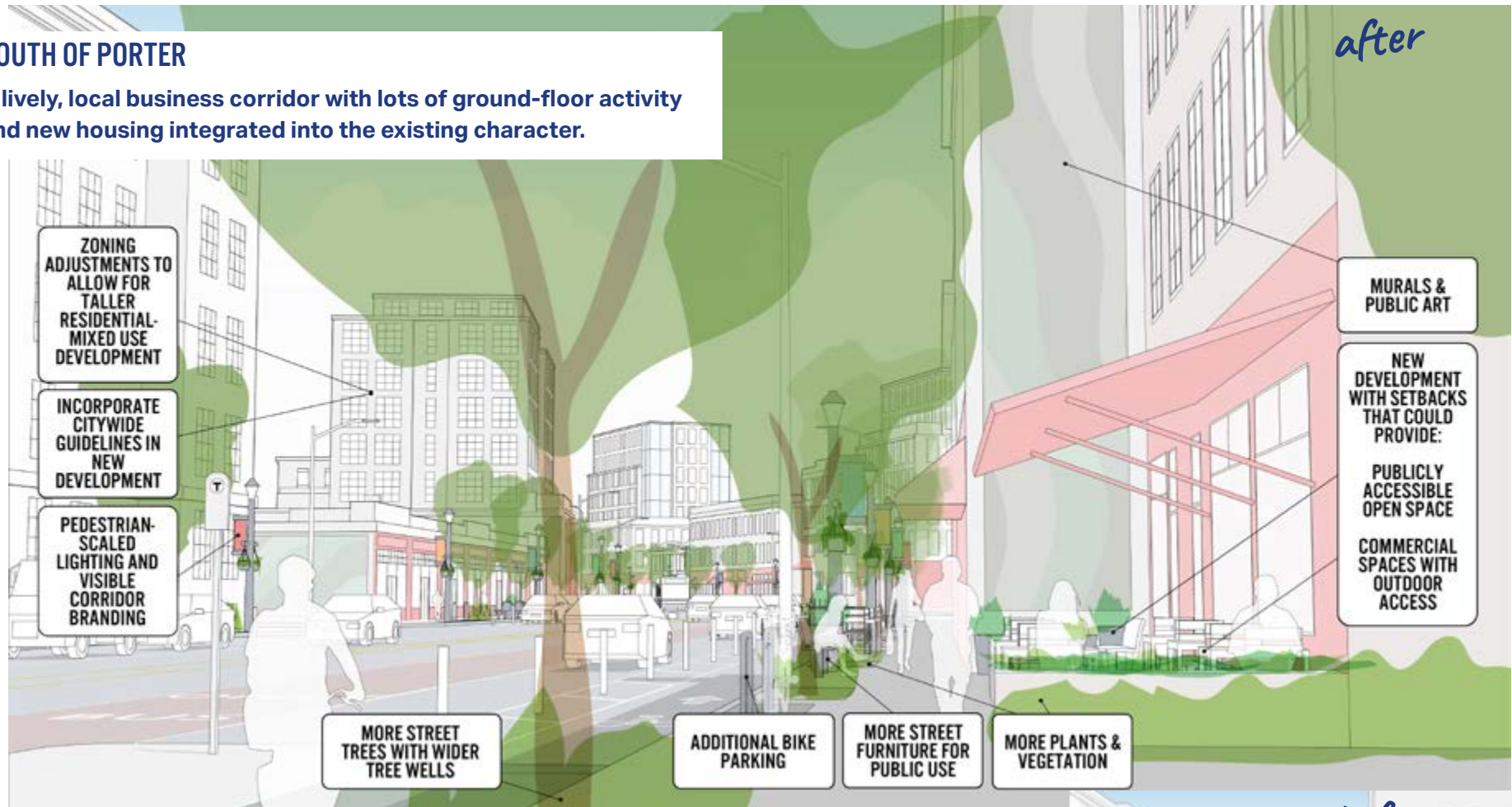
MORE HOUSING

ACCOMMODATE MORE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT ALONG MASS AVE THROUGH INCREASED DENSITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING. ADDRESS THE NEED FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND INTEGRATE IT INTO THE EXISTING NEIGHBORHOOD FABRIC.

Vision for Mass Ave as a Great Street

SOUTH OF PORTER

A lively, local business corridor with lots of ground-floor activity and new housing integrated into the existing character.

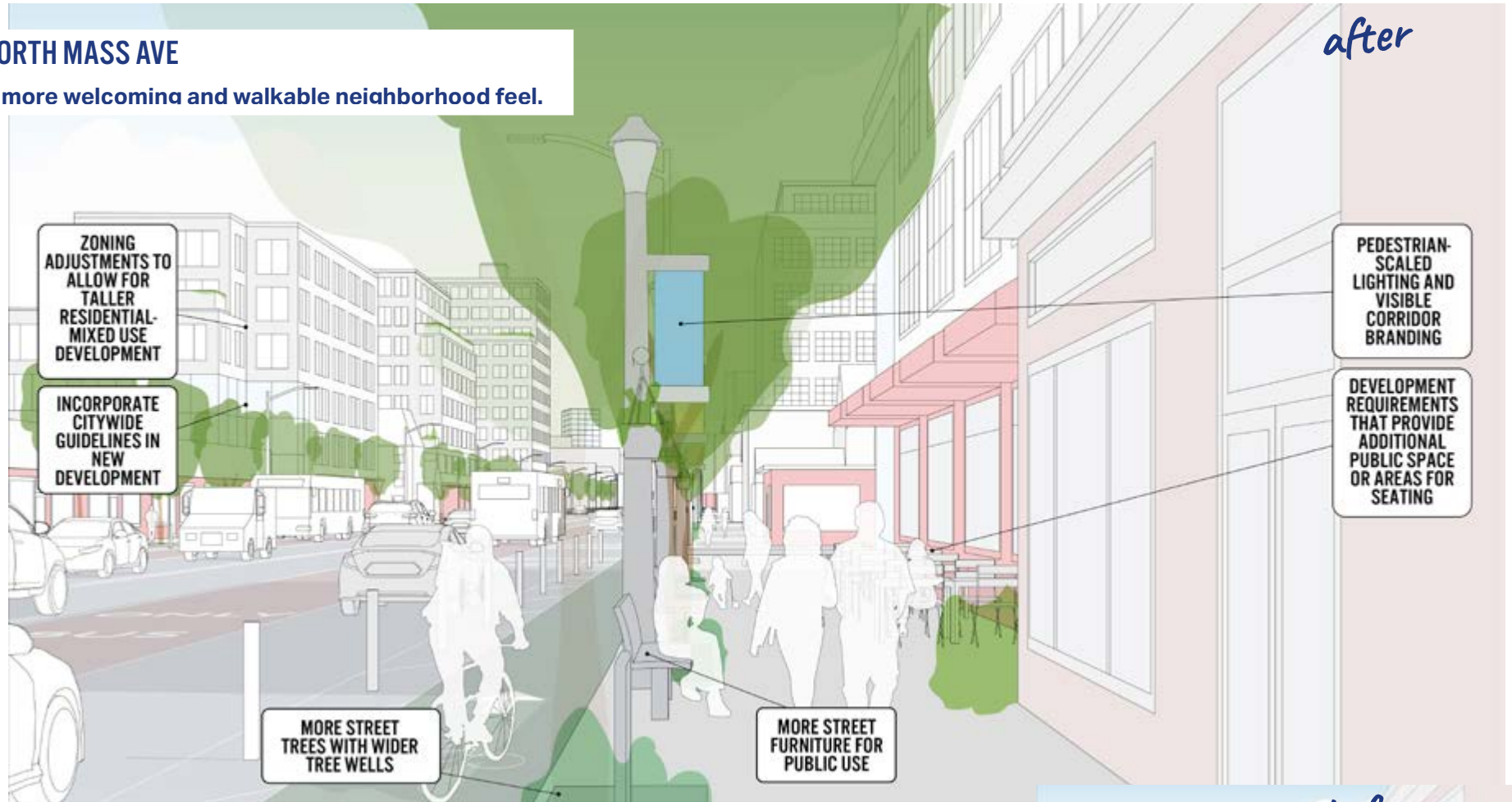


Before-and-after renderings highlight how incremental changes can transform different sections of the corridor and what Mass Ave could look like in the future. These renderings are for illustrative purposes only and do not represent specific development proposals or specific locations. Rather they reflect common streetscape features, land uses, and urban character seen along Mass Ave both north and south of Porter Square. They are intended to visualize how the recommended zoning and urban design strategies could shape the corridor over time.



NORTH MASS AVE

A more welcoming and walkable neighborhood feel.



after



before

1

MORE OF A NEIGHBORHOOD & DESTINATION

Transform the corridor as a livable, walkable neighborhood with improved amenities and places for all ages and abilities, and create a more vibrant atmosphere by encouraging pop-up shops, events and active storefronts.

“Make sure to keep ground floor retail and subsidize for small business (not chain) to keep area lively.”

- community quote

WHAT WE HEARD FROM ENGAGEMENT:

- Key priorities include supporting local businesses, maintaining affordable space for businesses, preventing displacement, creating opportunities for entrepreneurs, and attracting new businesses.
- Additional areas of interest include marketing the corridor and creating more things to do.
- Businesses could benefit from organizing to enliven the corridor. Individually, many small businesses do not have the capacity to act alone.
- Porter Square Shopping Center is an invaluable resource with a great mix of tenants, but the open spaces surrounding the Square could use improvements, such as temporary activation or “placemaking”.

WHAT WE LEARNED FROM ANALYSIS:

- Mass Ave is home to many legacy businesses that have served diverse communities in Cambridge. It is fairly mixed in terms of types of businesses.
- Although most businesses are neighborhood serving, some destination retail exists.
- Rapidly changing retail consumer patterns, such as online shopping and food delivery, have added competition and put added pressure on retailers to adjust their operations.



Top: Porter Square Shopping Center. Bottom: Pemberton Farms

KEY ANALYSIS:

BUSINESS MIX

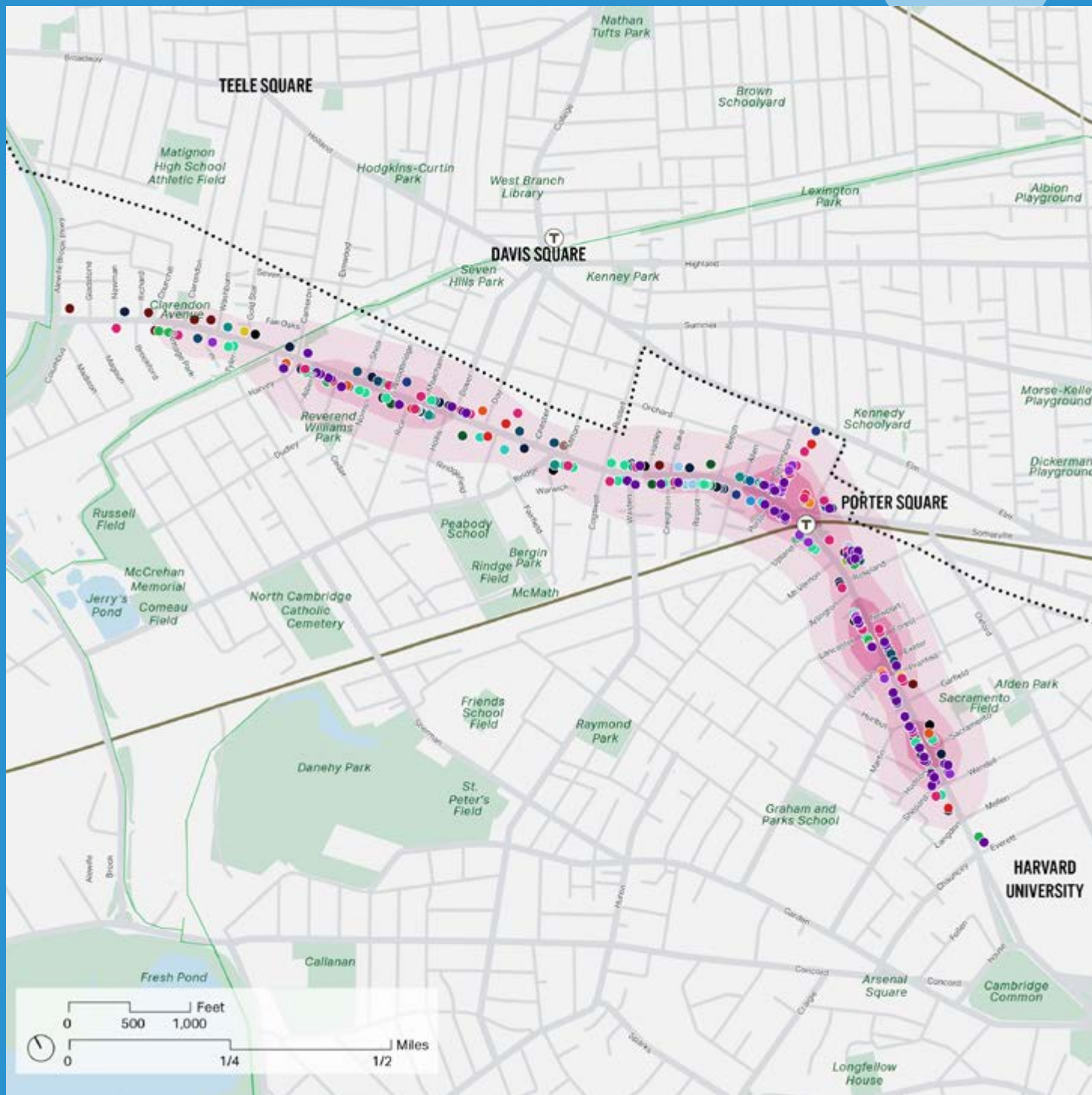
Businesses and services along Mass Ave support numerous neighborhood needs, but the corridor is also a destination. Mass Ave is home to institutional anchors such as Lesley and Harvard Universities, as well as several faith-based institutions that draw congregants from the region.

An analysis of ground floor businesses by Interface Studio in 2023 showed over 290 businesses on the ground floor along the length of the corridor from Alewife Brook Parkway to Cambridge Common. South of Porter Square has a higher density of walkable blocks, with a greater mix of businesses. North Mass Ave (including Porter Square) is less dense, with more auto oriented (and sometimes destination) businesses. Porter Square is a regional shopping destination, home to over 30 national and local businesses.

As of May 2024, the corridor is also home to 14 businesses that take part in the Cambridge Legacy Business Program (business operating 25 years or more), including:

- Andy's Diner
- Cambridge Naturals
- Clothware
- Commonwealth Lock Company
- Daniel R. Spierer Jewelers
- Elite Barbershop
- Frank's Steak House
- General Optic
- Guitar Stop
- Healthworks Fitness
- Jae Hun Kim Taekwon-do Institute
- Keezer's Classic Clothing
- NOMAD
- Pemberton Farms





BUSINESS LOCATIONS

Interface Studio

- Restaurant
- Cafe
- Retail
- Specialty Food Store
- Convenience Store
- Pharmacy
- Liquor Store
- Cannabis Store
- Gym/Fitness
- Salon/Barber Shop
- Services
- Daycare Center
- Social Club
- Lodging
- Post Office
- Bank
- Social Service Organization
- Medical Office
- Professional Office
- Institution
- Auto/Industrial
- Other (Funeral Home)
- Fewer/More Business Locations

RECOMMENDATIONS

A. FOSTER A MIX OF NEIGHBORHOOD-SERVING, FAMILY-FRIENDLY GOODS AND SERVICES

Supporting local businesses along Mass Ave helps create an exciting, welcoming, and family-friendly community where residents can find unique goods and essential services close to home. By prioritizing neighborhood-serving shops, restaurants, and service providers, we strengthen the local economy, foster connections among neighbors, and preserve the avenue's distinct character.

STRATEGIES

1. Conduct a feasibility study to create a playbook to form a local business association

There is strong support among businesses for establishing a business association, though many expressed limited capacity to help organize one. Such an association could play a key role in building capacity, coordinating events along the corridor, attracting new businesses, advocating for business needs, marketing the district, and guiding the implementation of additional Neighborhood & Destination recommendations described in this chapter.

New City action needed: conduct feasibility study

MASS AVE BUSINESS ASSOCIATION



ADVOCATES FOR BUSINESSES

i.e. Advocating for
commercial action



MARKETS THE CORRIDOR

i.e. Help to implement
branding and identity



PROVIDES BUSINESS SUPPORT

i.e. Streamlining licensing
and information and



ORGANIZES COMMUNITY EVENTS

i.e. Somerville's
Breakfast place events

[We need] "community/business associations that have full time staff to organize events, support retail, etc."

- community quote

2. Target outreach to existing businesses on available grants and programs

The City of Cambridge's Economic Opportunity and Development (EOD) division provides a range of services to support small businesses at all stages of development. These include succession planning, a storefront improvement program, a small business enhancement program for interior upgrades, marketing support, operational assistance, and a retail interior accessibility program in addition to various workshops and other resources. To maximize the impact of these resources, the City should conduct targeted outreach to businesses along Mass Ave, particularly in key neighborhood centers. [See map on page 27]

3. Explore ways to keep commercial rents affordable and vacancies low

Business owners express concern over commercial affordability in the city and potential displacement should redevelopment occur. Anti-displacement measures and policy considerations include:

- Working with partners across the region to identify interventions aimed at keeping commercial rents affordable such as master leases* and long term leases,
- Compiling and sharing resources on ownership opportunities through commercial condos,**
- Encouraging adaptable, sub-dividable spaces sizes to fit a range of tenants and changing business needs,
- Requiring diverse consumer-service ground floor uses in certain parts of the corridor to concentrate retail and entertainment. [For more detail see Urban Form & Zoning on page 84]

New City action needed: explore new anti-displacement measures, update zoning

Spotlight: Neighborhood Storefronts Project

The Neighborhood Storefronts Project is a Cambridge Redevelopment Authority (CRA) initiative that aims to support small businesses and entrepreneurs through the provision of affordable space. As part of this initiative the CRA is considering potential strategies that include acquiring ground-floor condo or enter into master lease agreements for the purpose of establishing a network of spaces that cultivate and support locally owned businesses.

For more information, visit:

www.cambridgeredevelopment.org/neighborhood-storefronts

Definitions:

* Master lease - A master tenant (such as nonprofit agency, service provider, or government agency) leases a unit or multiple units from a property owner, then subleases units to subtenants

** Commercial condo - independently owned unit that is a part of a larger multi-unit structure with different owners

B. MARKET THE CORRIDOR TO SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESSES

Marketing Mass Ave & Porter Square can boost local businesses by highlighting their unique offerings through coordinated promotions, events, and branding efforts to attract visitors and boost foot traffic.

STRATEGIES

1. Create and implement a branding strategy to highlight Mass Ave's identity

A business association (once formed) can spearhead the creation of a branding strategy that includes interventions such as gateway signage, light pole banners, and murals at key points along the corridor. Porter Square, in particular, is a good candidate for heightened branding in the public realm as the commercial and transportation hub of the area.

2. Recruit new businesses to the corridor

Filling vacant spaces with new businesses is a high priority. A business association (once formed) can help bring new businesses to the corridor by connecting more deeply with property owners of vacant spaces to better understand their desires, sponsor activations to mitigate the blight of vacant spaces, and connect them with EOD division resources that include technical and financial assistance programs and site finder service. For more information on EOD's vacant storefront initiative, visit: https://bit.ly/EOD_resources

3. Provide business and marketing support

While the EOD division offers a range of business development services and programs, a business association (once formed) could supplement these services with place-specific marketing initiatives such as an online directory, user-friendly websites, coordinated events and promotions.



IMAGINE IT!

A pop of color to brand Mass Ave around Porter Square

As a transit hub and main shopping area, Porter Square is a good place to start a branding strategy



LIGHTPOLE BANNER



COLORFUL FURNITURE



CORRIDOR GATEWAY SIGNAGE



SIDEWALK STENCIL



SHADED SPACES



WAYFINDING SIGNAGE

C. ORGANIZE AND HOST MORE COMMUNITY EVENTS AND PERFORMANCE ART

More programming like seasonal markets, community events and performance art along Mass Ave organized by a business association (once formed), and supported by City departments and programs, can activate public spaces, draw foot traffic to local businesses, and foster a stronger sense of neighborhood identity. By featuring local artists, musicians, and cultural programming, these events create dynamic, inclusive experiences that make Mass Ave a vibrant destination for residents and visitors alike.

STRATEGIES

1. Partner with local institutions to organize and fund events

Collaborating with local institutions like Lesley University and Harvard University, organizations like the Porter Square Neighbors Association, Gately Youth Center, or the Baldwin Neighborhood Council, property owners like Wilder Co., and businesses can provide the resources and support needed to bring engaging events to Mass Ave, such as Inman Square's Eats and Crafts, micro events, or farmers and seasonal markets.

"I would love to see 'micro' farmers markets at various small parks - like Raymond Park"

- community quote

2. Connect with local artists and performers from the community and local student population

Engaging local artists and performers brings unique cultural experiences to Mass Ave while supporting the creative community. By showcasing local talent, the corridor can foster a vibrant arts scene that enhances its character and draws more visitors.

IMAGINE IT!

What events could happen on Mass Ave?

Who would organize the event?

What type of event would it be?

Where would it take place?



INMAN SQ EATS AND CRAFTS



BALTIMORE AVE DOLLAR STROLL



CAMBRIDGE DANCE PARTY

2

MORE INVITING

Focus on creating a more attractive public realm and sense of place along Mass Ave through greening, public artwork, and more places to gather.

"It'd be great to have some green spaces, places to stop. It's not very welcoming for kids."

- community quote

"Can we deliver spring??"

- community quote

WHAT WE HEARD FROM ENGAGEMENT:

- Parts of Mass Ave feel run down, and more of a place to pass-through, not linger. Porter Square in particular could use a glow up.
- Residents would like to see more trees and plants.
- There's a need for more places for the community to come together and hang out on Mass Ave; however, people also recognized that the street itself is busy and spaces should be buffered from it.

WHAT WE LEARNED FROM ANALYSIS:

- Resilient Cambridge identified North Mass Ave and Porter Square as urban heat islands - areas in need of heat mitigation through increased tree canopy and shade.
- Porter Square is a priority area for the City's participatory budgeting, Cool Spots program, which hopes to add shade in the public realm during peak heat months.
- ClimateWalks, a program that analyzed and evaluated pedestrian-level thermal comfort along Mass Ave, found Porter Square and North Mass Ave to be prime areas for deploying cooling strategies.
- Public artwork, such as the Gift of the Wind sculpture, in Porter Square requires significant funding for restoration.



Top: MBTA Plaza. Bottom: Seating and planters along Mass Ave south of Porter Square

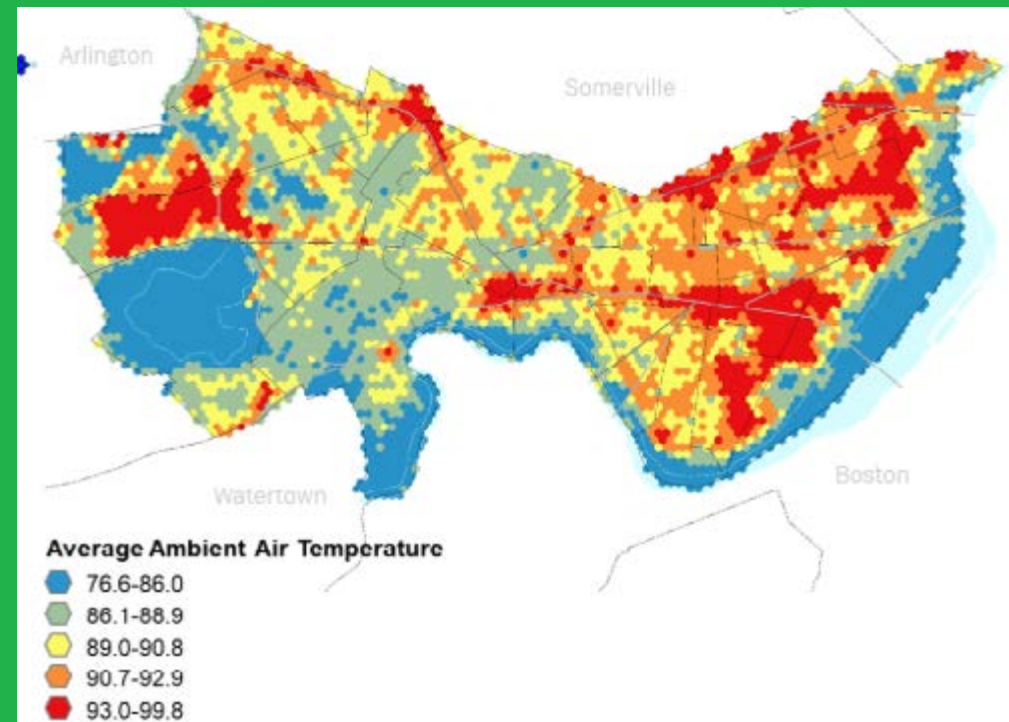
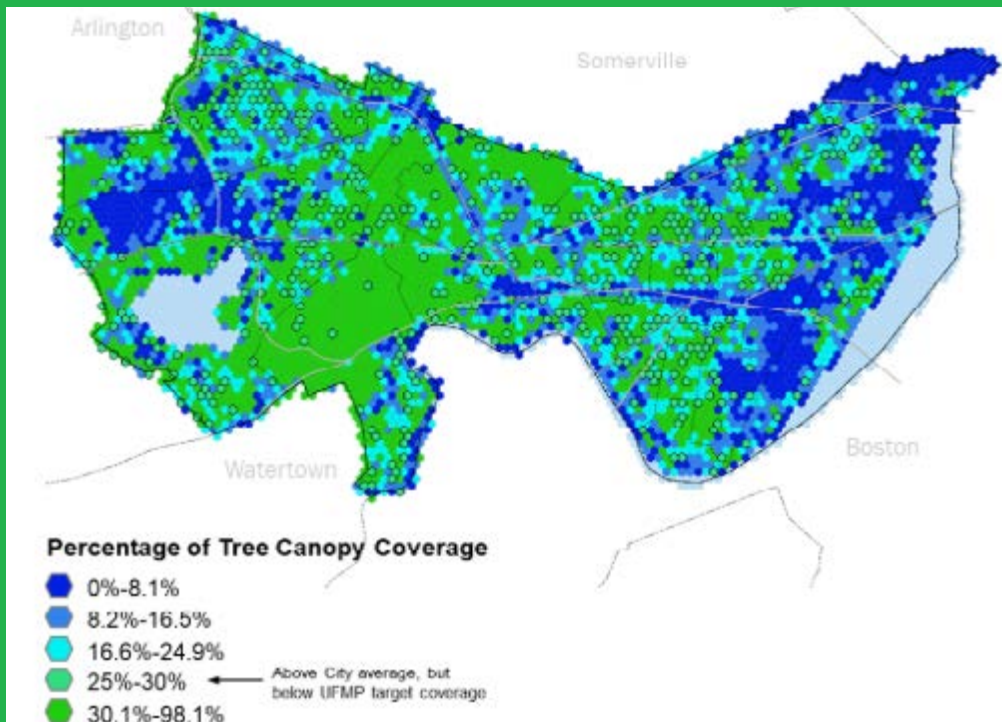
KEY ANALYSIS:

Tree Coverage

Mass Ave and Porter Square have limited tree coverage and shade, contributing to increased heat vulnerability for pedestrians. Expanding the tree canopy in these areas would enhance environmental resilience, improve pedestrian comfort, help to cool the corridor, and create a more comfortable and inviting streetscape.

Urban Heat Island

Mass Ave has been identified as one of the city's most intense urban heat island hotspots. Due to its high concentration of buildings, paved surfaces, and limited tree canopy, this area retains significantly more heat than surrounding neighborhoods. During heat mapping studies, Porter Square recorded some of the highest surface temperatures in Cambridge, underscoring the need for targeted cooling strategies like increased greening, reflective materials, and shade.

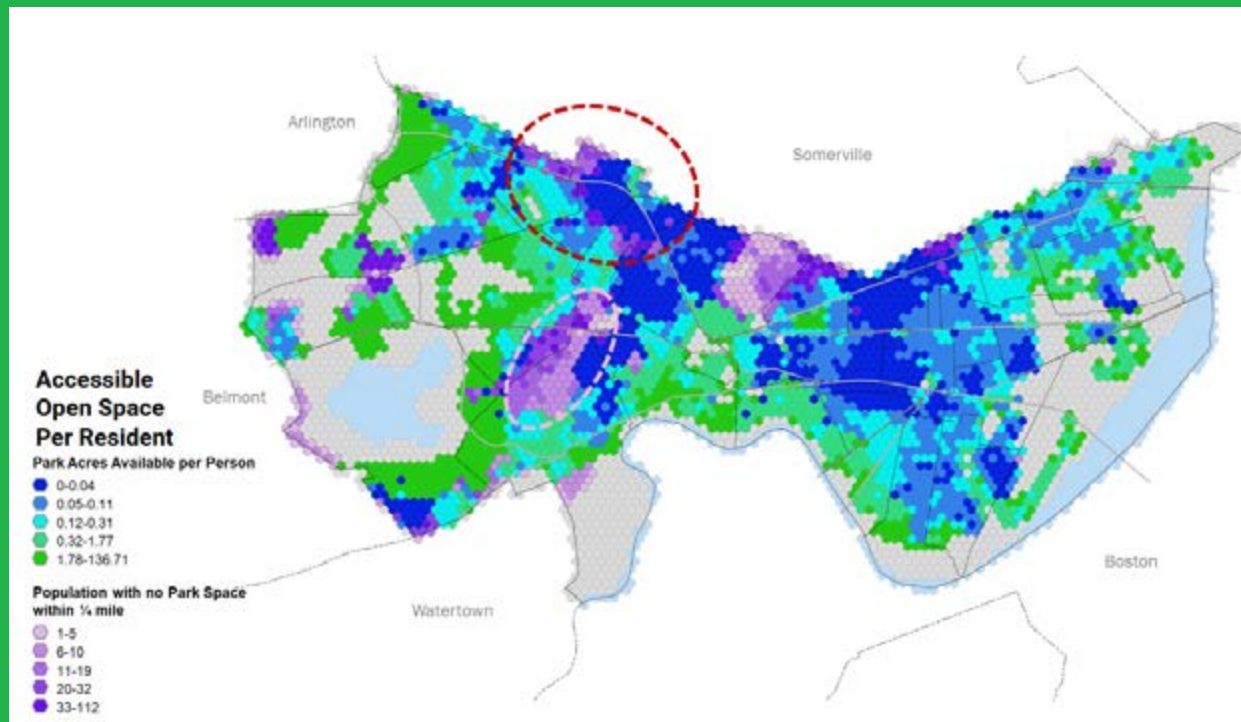


Access to Open Space

While North Mass Ave benefits from the Alewife Greenway, Clarendon Park, and Linear Park, Porter Square and the area south of Porter lack sufficient open space. The City's 2023 Open Space and Recreation Plan identified this area as having negligible open space for residents, especially considering the population density of the area. Enhancing connections to existing green spaces (including those off the corridor), greening and activating existing plazas and public areas, and integrating new open space into large developments can provide much-needed recreational opportunities, strengthen environmental resilience, and enhance the community's quality of life.

Combined Sewer Overflow

North Mass Ave experiences combined sewer overflow (CSO), which can lead to water pollution and drainage challenges during heavy rainfall. Green stormwater infrastructure, such as rain gardens, permeable pavement, and enhanced tree canopy, presents an opportunity to manage runoff more effectively while improving sustainability and enhancing the streetscape. Coordination with the Public Works Department and the long-term design of the street right-of-way will be needed to implement green stormwater infrastructure.



RECOMMENDATIONS

A. BUILD COMMUNITY IDENTITY THROUGH CREATIVITY AND ART

Public art, murals, and creative installations can tell local stories, highlight cultural diversity, and make shared spaces more welcoming and engaging for residents and visitors alike.

There are many ways of incorporating art into the Mass Ave streetscape including sculptural elements; areas designed for a performance program; artistic treatments of functional items; uniquely graphic themes to create corridor identity; artistic moments along a length of the avenue; or a mural program for privately owned walls visible from the avenue.

STRATEGIES

1. Target larger walls and open spaces as locations for neighborhood murals and public art

Adding neighborhood murals and public art to locations such as larger blank walls and inactive plazas can help activate Mass Ave and enhance its visual identity. A new business association, in collaboration with the Community Development Department and Cambridge Arts Council staff, can provide guidance and partner with property and building owners, to ensure that art and performances are thoughtfully integrated.

2. Install decorative street lighting and tree lighting in neighborhood centers such as Porter Square

Decorative lighting can enhance the ambiance, improve safety, and create a more inviting streetscape for residents and visitors. Thoughtfully designed lighting can also highlight local businesses, support evening activity, and contribute to a vibrant and welcoming atmosphere along Mass Ave.

3. Activate vacant commercial spaces with public art

With about [30 vacant spaces](#) along the length of the corridor, partner with EOD, Cambridge Arts Council and a newly formed business association to temporarily activate vacant spaces with artworks.



The Gift of the Wind is one of the few examples of public art along the Mass Ave corridor.

Spotlight: City of Cambridge CDD Small Business Challenge

In FY2018, the East Cambridge Business Association received support from the program to commission local business owners to design creative displays in vacant, first-floor spaces in the district.

Spotlight: Vacant Storefront Creative Design Contest

Between 2019 and 2023, CDD and the Cambridge Arts Council organized three design contests aimed at finding original artwork, photography, or designs that can be reproduced and used for temporary window displays for vacant ground floor storefronts. The goal of the project is to have a variety of work from which Cambridge property owners can choose to print and put into their vacant ground-floor storefronts for purposes of activation and placemaking.

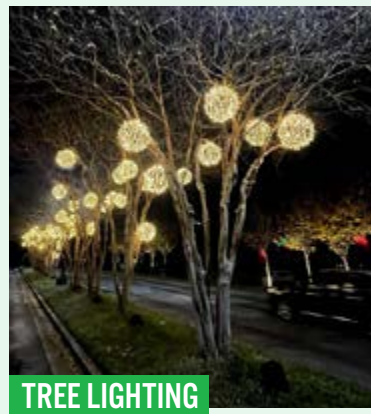
IMAGINE IT!

Art and decorative lighting

Opportunities to inject color, light and fun can be embraced to enliven Mass Ave

"Big walls need lively murals."

- community quote



Opportunities for Public Art - North Mass Ave

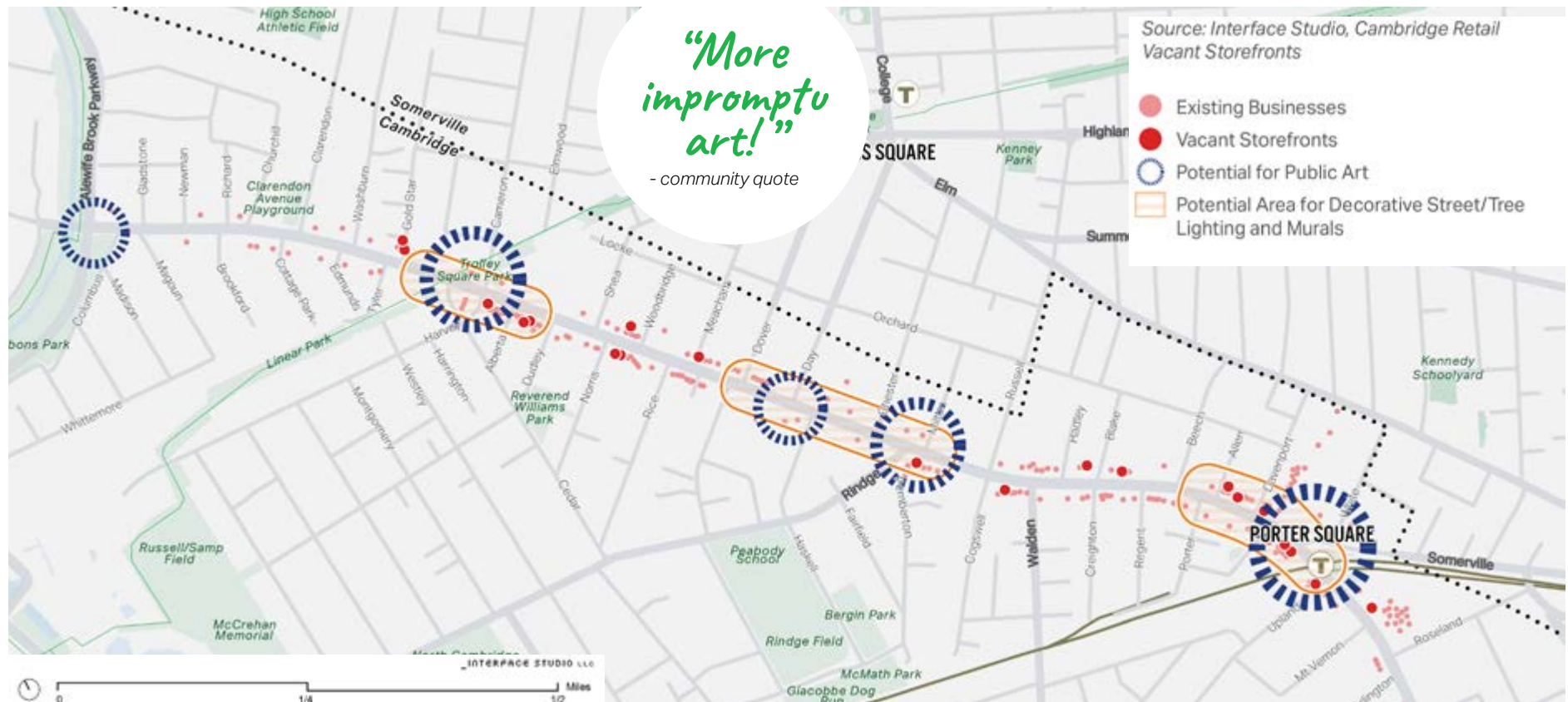
Encouraging public art along North Mass Ave will help create fun and inviting spaces along the corridor with pops of color, lighting, and activated vacant storefronts. Locations are identified below for opportunities for public art additions. Notable locations include Linear Park, Rindge-Day Streets, and Porter Square, where public art can complement existing businesses and help further define these areas. Alewife Brook Parkway is an important location that would benefit from public art as it is a key gateway on Mass Ave and a main entrance into Cambridge.

Specific locations to consider include spaces in key neighborhood centers and those that residents have specifically cited as long standing inactive spaces, such as:

2578 Mass Ave (former gas station)

1676 Mass Ave (former Evergood Market)

4 Hudson St. (former Rite-Way dry cleaning)



PORTER SQUARE

LESLEY UNIVERSITY PORTER CAMPUS

SACRAMENTO FIELD

BALDWIN SCHOOL

GRAHAM & PARKS SCHOOL

HARVARD

INTERFACESTUDIO LLC

0 1/4 1/2 Miles

“Night lighting! ...
Inviting, human-level
lighting along
entire length...”
- community quote

Public art at key intersections can serve as important local landmarks that can be used in reference to going to adjacent neighborhood destinations such as Sacramento Field, the Baldwin School, and Graham & Parks School.

-  Existing Businesses
-  Vacant Storefronts
-  Potential for Public Art
-  Potential Area for Decorative Street/Tree Lighting and Murals

B. PLANT MORE TREES AND VEGETATION ALONG MASS AVE AND OPEN SPACES

More trees are needed to help the city create Cool Corridors, as recommended by the City's [Urban Forestry Master Plan](#), for all modes of travel and activity with a goal of developing large mature canopies that can both mitigate heat impacts and beautify the corridor.

STRATEGIES

4. Install more street trees and maximize planting in public spaces

Resilient, native tree species should be planted in large tree trenches, where possible, as part of the City's tree planting goals for priority streets with plans for long term stewardship and maintenance. In areas where trees cannot be planted or while the canopy is still growing, temporary shading solutions such as umbrellas, shade sails, pergolas, and awnings can be installed, particularly in neighborhood centers, transit stops, and public seating areas. Partnerships with businesses and institutions can help fund and maintain these elements. See Pages 41-42 for tree planting and shading priority areas, and the Citywide Design Guidelines for planting guidance.

5. Enlarge existing street tree wells and provide more space for additional and contiguous ground-level vegetation

Expanding tree wells can promote healthier root growth and support the longevity of street trees. Space can also be provided for native ground cover and low-maintenance plants to enhance biodiversity and aesthetics, while maintaining tree health. Additionally, tree guards and permeable paving



Tree cover varies along the corridor



can be incorporated to prevent soil compaction and improve stormwater absorption.

6. Work with property owners to maintain trees and vegetation on their property

Encouraging property owners to plant and care for trees will be key to maintaining the overall greenery of the corridor. Neighborhood associations and a potential business association can help promote the City's coordinated greening program, such as the Forest Friends, to support businesses and residents in planting and tree maintenance efforts. Planters, rooftop gardens, and other plantings can also be encouraged to supplement tree plantings. In larger developments, green roof requirements also help mitigate heat impact and stormwater runoff.

7. Explore opportunities to expand public realm space for trees and more plantings

To make room for more trees and landscaping, many of the sidewalks along Mass Ave will need to be wider. As part of the long-term vision for Mass Ave, there are opportunities to create more space through a variety of options that include setbacks

“What about irrigation? You shouldn’t put in trees if you can’t take care of them.”

- community quote

“New development with setbacks could provide space for more greenery and make it easier to walk.”

- community quote

in new development and curb expansion in the design of the street right-of-way. The redesign of streets and sidewalks to make room for trees should be coordinated with the City’s 5 Year Sidewalk and Street Reconstruction Plan, 10 Year Sewer and Drain Infrastructure Plan, and the long-term design of Mass Ave. The City should also explore relocating underground utilities as part of the long-term reconstruction to allow for continuous street tree planting. [For more detail see Easier to Get Around on page 54]

8. **Coordinate with citywide green stormwater infrastructure mitigation measures**

To enhance stormwater management, tree trenches, bioswales and rain gardens can be incorporated along the corridor to hold stormwater runoff. Promote green roofs and rainwater harvesting systems in new developments along Mass Ave in combined sewer overlay areas in North Mass Ave.

New City action needed: coordinate for long-term street reconstruction to include spaces for trees, GSI and utility relocation

HOW TO DO IT

Four ways to add shade to Mass Ave

- Identify any municipal property appropriate for public plantings (such as Porter Square)
- Incentivize private property owners to plant trees in city Cooling Corridors (like Mass Ave)
- Incorporate shade elements in design guidelines (MAOD) that will apply to future development, including curbside street trees at 20’ to 30’ spacing.
- Prioritize shade elements (such as awnings, umbrellas, pergolas) as a design feature in future gathering spaces and on building facades



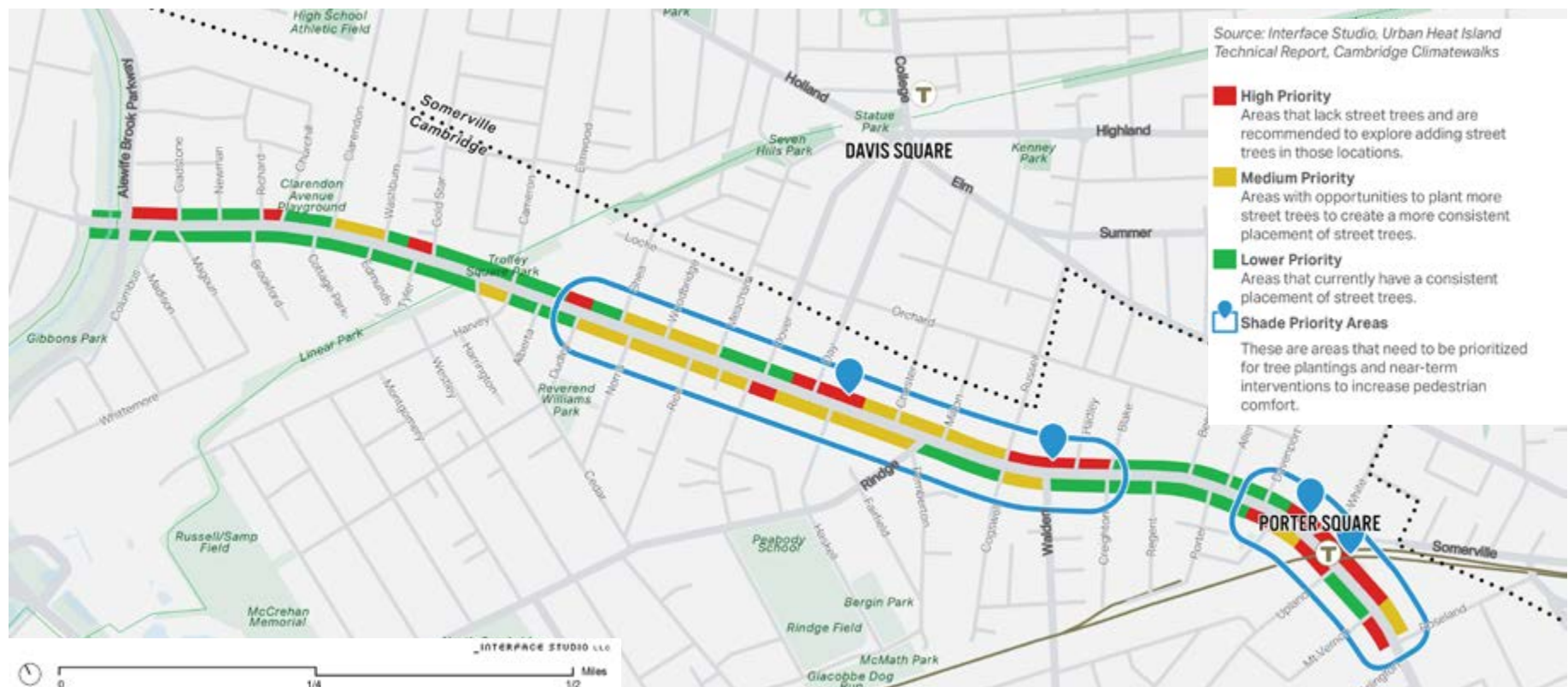
Opportunities for Trees and Shade - North Mass Ave

Based on a citywide shade study, as well as pedestrian-level thermal comfort analysis for North Mass Ave, priority shade areas were identified. These areas should be prioritized to receive additional street trees and shade structures to improve pedestrian comfort.

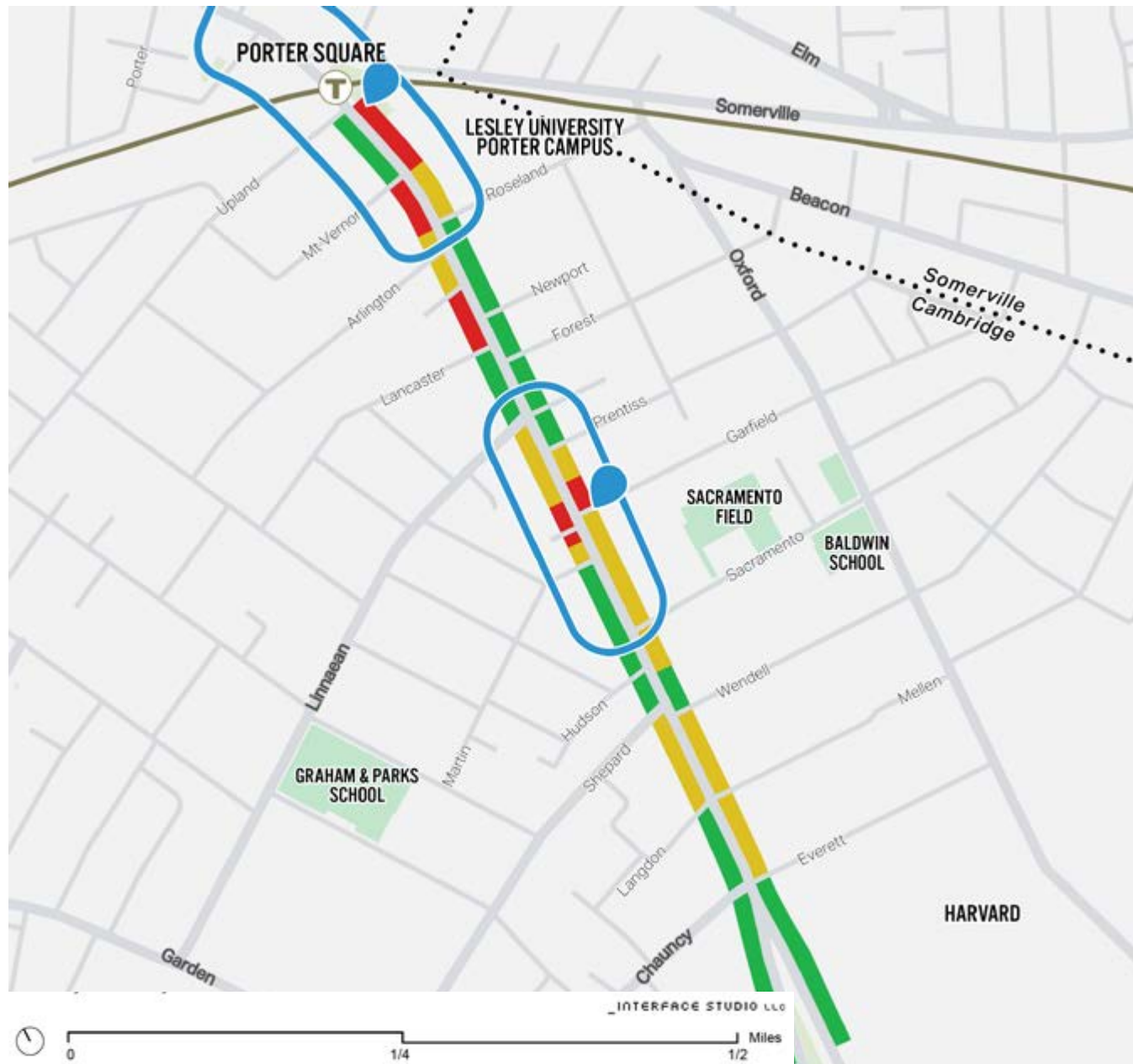
Specific pins refer to areas of high need for shade, which are in proximity to bus stops and areas that are lacking shade and street trees. These locations include Mass & Day, Mass & Walden, and Porter Square.

“We need more trees in north Cambridge”

- community quote



Opportunities for Trees and Shade - South of Porter



Mass Ave south of Porter Square has two locations that are identified as shade priority areas. The first area is south of the Porter Square T Station. Street trees or other near-term interventions to increase pedestrian comfort would be particularly beneficial to the large concentration of pedestrian and transit users accessing the T station and adjacent bus stops. The second area is centered around Mass and Garfield. There are several curb cuts at this intersection which presents challenges when considering shade interventions.

Source: Interface Studio, Urban Heat Island Technical Report, Cambridge Climatewalks

- High Priority**
Areas that lack street trees and are recommended to explore adding street trees in those locations.
- Medium Priority**
Areas with opportunities to plant more street trees to create a more consistent placement of street trees.
- Lower Priority**
Areas that currently have a consistent placement of street trees.
- Shade Priority Areas**
These are areas that need to be prioritized for tree plantings and near-term interventions to increase pedestrian comfort.

C. CREATE MORE PLACES FOR THE COMMUNITY TO GATHER

Open spaces are critical for community health and community building. They foster social interaction, recreation, and provide respite from urban heat. However, with limited publicly owned land opportunities and relatively narrow sidewalks, Mass Ave must take an innovative approach to maximizing existing spaces. This could include reclaiming underutilized areas, integrating parklets, enhancing streetscapes with seating and greenery, and designing flexible public spaces that serve multiple community needs. By creatively reimagining these shared spaces - both public and private - Mass Ave can be a more inviting and vibrant corridor for all.

STRATEGIES

1. Partner with property owners and institutions to activate underutilized spaces

Partnering with institutions like Lesley University, Harvard University, the MBTA, and local churches such as St. James and St. John can unlock underutilized spaces for public use. Shared courtyards, small plazas, and open gathering areas can enhance community interaction while benefiting property owners. Through creative pop up activations and leveraging the Public Space Lab, these spaces can be transformed into vibrant, accessible hubs along Mass Ave.

2. Identify opportunities for pop-up parklets and curb bumpouts on Mass Ave and side streets

Curb extensions can create much-needed gathering spaces while balancing the demands of bus and bike infrastructure. While sidewalk widening opportunities are limited in the short



Lunder Arts Plaza is a space with potential to be activated.



Sidewalks extensions along Mass Ave South of Porter Square provide space for outdoor dining, planters and seating

term, strategic locations for curb extensions should be explored to provide space for public seating, greenery, and outdoor dining.

3. Advocate for affordable indoor community event or meeting space on ground floor in new developments

Indoor publicly-accessible spaces can provide residents, organizations, and small businesses with flexible venues for gatherings, workshops, and cultural events. These might be achieved by prioritizing the creation of passive gathering spaces, event and meeting spaces on the ground floor of new development through incentives. A local example of this type of space can be seen at St. James Church, where a community space was provided in the addition of housing to the historic site.

“More pocket parks where there is no outdoor dining along the sidewalks.”



Spotlight: Cambridge Public Space Lab

The Cambridge Public Space Lab is a testing ground for intentional community building. It seeks to cultivate inclusive and participatory public spaces using a spirit of partnership, experimentation, and collective learning. Public Space Lab initiatives include the City's Play Streets Program, Public Patios, and other public space activation projects.

For more information, visit: www.cambridgema.gov/publicspacelab

4. Create meaningful connections to existing open spaces nearby

Enhance connections to existing open spaces such as Sacramento Field, Linear Park, and Alewife Greenway with improved wayfinding, safer pedestrian and bike access, and strategic streetscape enhancements to strengthen these links, making parks more accessible and inviting.

5. Leverage new large-scale development to create new open space

Larger sites, such as those in Porter Square, could be incentivized to provide a significant, contiguous open space when they redevelop. Community members were supportive of a space like **Post Office Square** in Boston that offers many uses and types of spaces.

New City action needed: Update zoning to incentivize publicly-accessible spaces and new open space.

IMAGINE IT! Gathering spaces

There are opportunities to activate existing spaces and create new pop-up and permanent gathering spaces along Mass Ave.



PARKLET



PROGRAMMABLE PLAZA



MULTI-PURPOSE



LINEAR MALL

Opportunities for improved public space

NORTH MASS AVE

Key locations include:

- Alewife Brook Parkway
- Clarendon Ave Park
- Linear Park
- St. James's Lawn

Create better connections from Mass Ave to: Russell Field, Reverend William Park, Peabody School, Rindge Field, Gerard Bergin Park, McMath Park and Raymond Park.

PORTER SQUARE

Key locations include:

- Porter Square Plaza
- MBTA Plaza
- Lunder Arts Plaza
- Potential significant new open space with large-scale redevelopment

SOUTH OF PORTER SQUARE

Key locations include:

- Cambridge Common
- Potential new pocket park at Chauncy and Mass Ave

Create better connections from Mass Ave to: Sacramento Field, Alden Park, Graham and Parks School



Linear Park



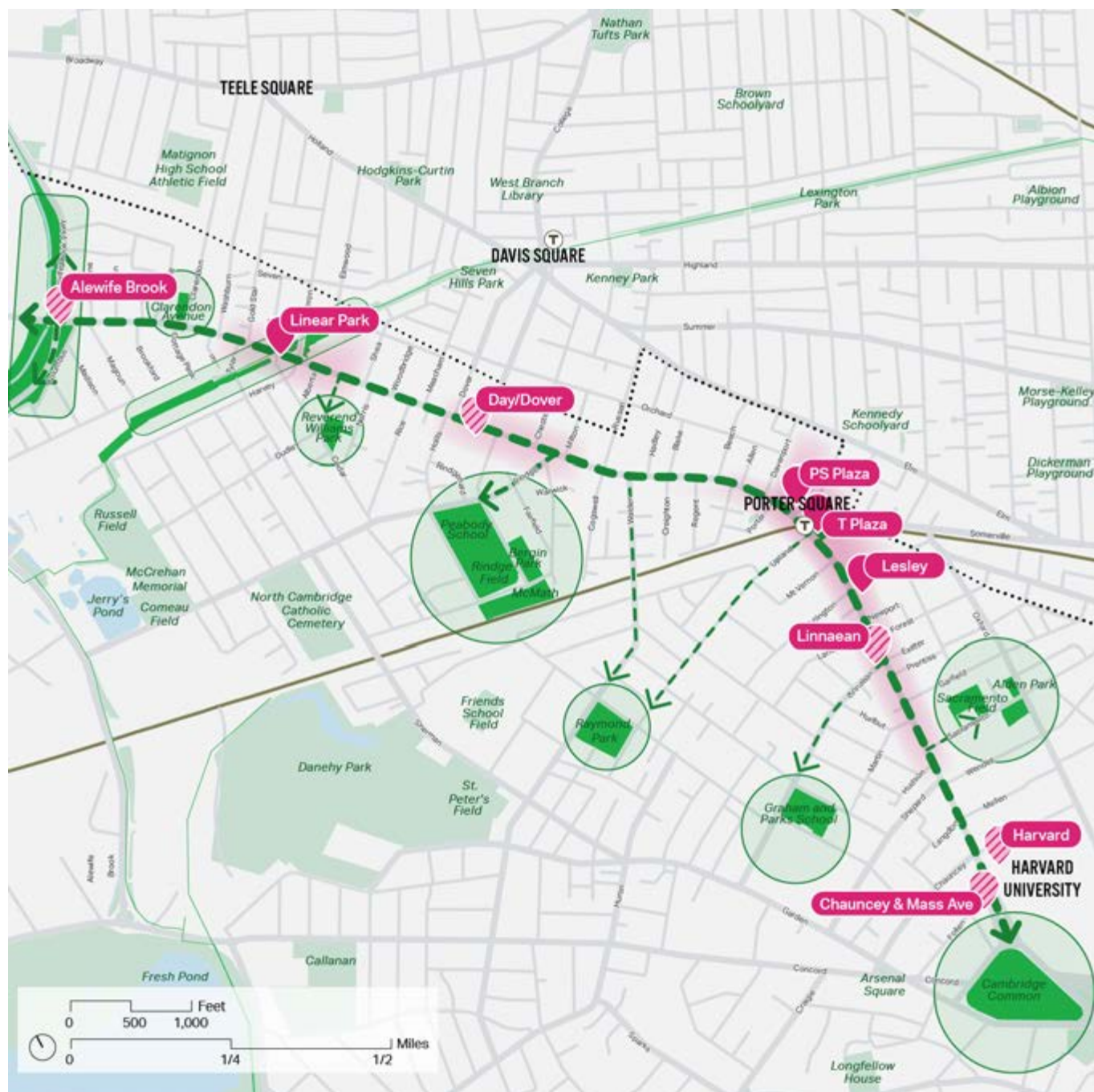
Porter Square Plaza



MBTA Plaza



Lawn at St. James's Episcopal Church

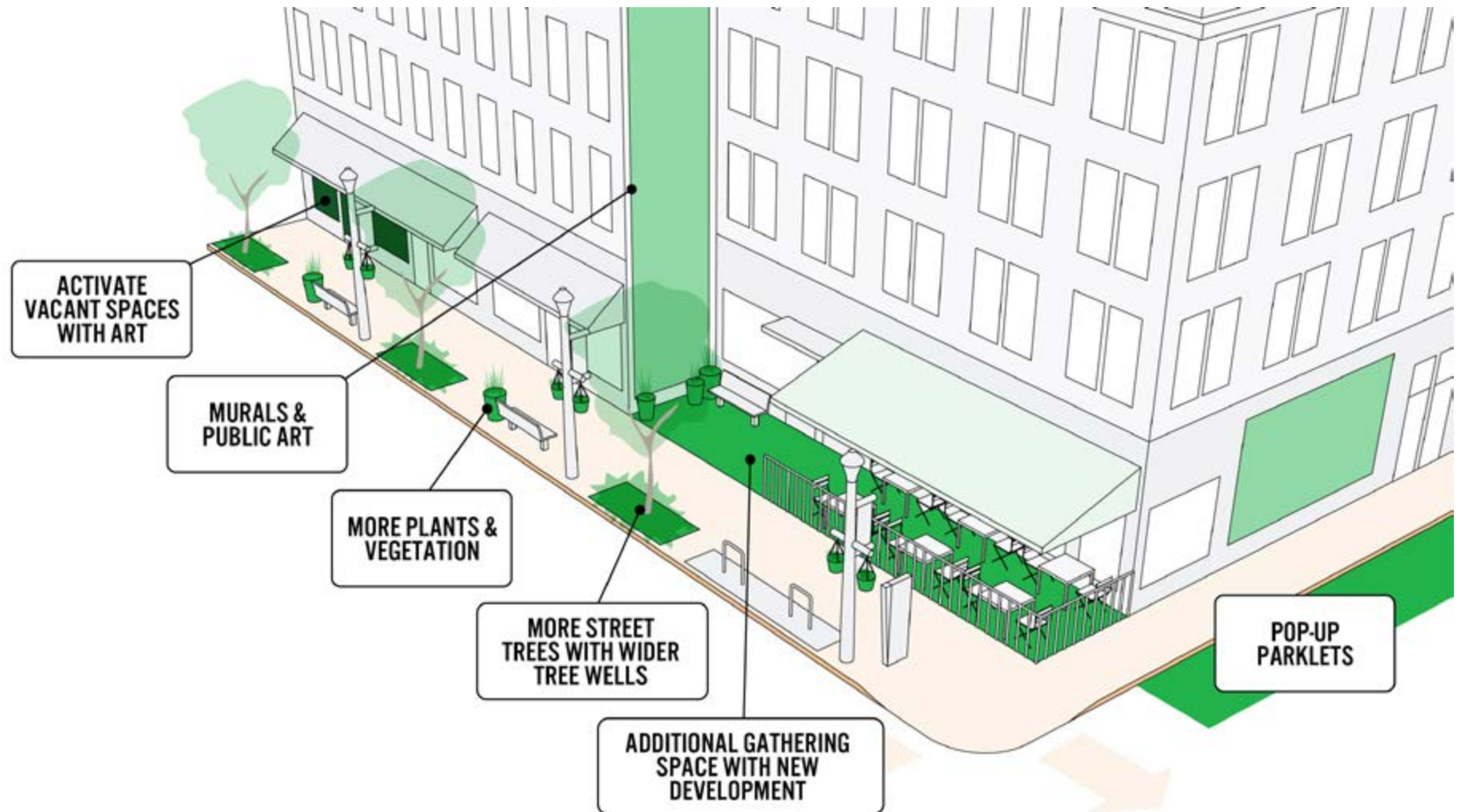


- Opportunity to enhance existing gathering locations
- Opportunity to create new gathering locations with willing property owners
- Encourage gathering locations in new development that occur within neighborhood centers
- Connection corridors to nearby parks and gathering spaces

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

How the strategies can create a MORE INVITING MASS AVE

The strategies aim to build more community identity, make it greener, and to create more places to gather.



BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

How the strategies can create a MORE INVITING MASS AVE

Activating the space outside Lesley University can transform it into a vibrant public gathering place that reflects the artistic energy of its surroundings. Thoughtfully designed seating, plantings, and creative lighting can enhance its appeal, making it more inviting for students, residents, and visitors. A successful proof of concept was demonstrated

during this planning study, which utilized the space for an outdoor public meeting. Participants praised the setting and expressed interest in more events activating the plaza in the future. By incorporating art-inspired elements, the plaza can become a dynamic hub for creativity, community engagement, and cultural expression.



Opportunity at the Lunder Arts Plaza on 1801 Mass Ave as part of the Lesley University Porter Campus.

3

EASIER TO GET AROUND

*“Prioritize people-centered places
over automobile access.”*

- community quote

Develop a balanced and integrated sustainable transportation network that focuses on actions to improve accessibility and space for people walking.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM ENGAGEMENT:

- There is strong support for improving the pedestrian experience, with a focus on sidewalk accessibility, safer crosswalks, and overall walkability. Residents highlighted the need for more curb extensions, raised crosswalks, and additional crossings, especially on North Mass Ave, where crossing opportunities are further apart.
- While separated bike lanes are being implemented, cycling safety and infrastructure remain a priority due to the busy nature of the street, and as a way to support children and families in the neighborhood. In particular, bicycles play a crucial role in fostering youth independence. Although the separated bike lanes are an improvement, some places, like Porter Square, are still seen as dangerous and confusing.
- Business owners expressed concerns about potential impacts on parking and loading zones due to the forthcoming partial construction which includes separated bike lanes.
- Some North Mass Ave residents believe there is increased congestion on side streets and emphasized the need for traffic management solutions.
- Transit users called for better amenities, including more bus shelters and enhanced public space around Porter Square T Station to improve comfort and accessibility.

WHAT WE LEARNED FROM ANALYSIS:

- Mass Ave serves a diverse mix of users, including 1,900 daily cyclists, 21,000 vehicles, 12,000 bus riders, and 6,900 subway and commuter rail riders, highlighting the need for a balanced and efficient multi-modal network.
- The Mass Ave Partial Construction Project will implement separated bike lanes, additional crosswalks, and improved bus stops in the coming years, enhancing safety and comfort for all users while integrating with existing transportation infrastructure.
- Mass Ave serves local and frequent buses, playing a critical role in regional transit. In particular, Mass Ave is one of the MBTA's Frequent Bus Corridors where additional bus service on Route 77 can be supported with dedicated bus lanes to provide high quality bus service

DAILY COMMUTERS



1,900

BICYCLISTS

Weekday Bike Count
2022¹



21,000+

VEHICLES

Average Daily Traffic Count
2020²



12,000+

BUS RIDERS

Average Weekday Boardings
2022³



~6,900

RAIL USERS

Average Weekday Boardings
2023
Porter Square Red Line and Commuter Rail

¹ Cambridge Open Data - Average Weekday AM and PM Peak Period-only Citywide Bicycle Counts, 2022; from the Total Bike Count on 9/22/22 at Cedar St & Massachusetts Avenue and Massachusetts Avenue & Somerville Ave Locations.

² Cambridge Open Data - Cambridge updated Bike Lane Comfort dataset. Average of counts from multiple segments along Massachusetts Avenue. 2020.

³ Bus Ridership: MBTA Bus Ridership by Time Period. 2022. Bus stops at and between Alewife Brook Parkway and Cambridge Commons.

⁴ Train Ridership: City of Cambridge.

KEY ANALYSIS:

PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE

The pedestrian experience along Mass Ave varies greatly, with some areas offering a comfortable environment and others needing improvement—particularly at key gateway intersections such as Alewife Brook Parkway, and at Porter Square where foot traffic is highest. In 2011 the City prepared a Conceptual Streetscape Master Plan for the Porter Square to Harvard Square segment, proposing upgrades such as curb extensions (bump-outs), brick paving, and overall sidewalk enhancements. A demonstration block was piloted in 2014, but the full implementation was not undertaken due to budget constraints, leaving many of these improvements unrealized.

The typical sidewalk width is 12 feet, which is generally sufficient but falls short of what is ideal for a major commercial corridor. This limits opportunities for a better tree canopy and outdoor dining. New city design guidelines recommend that sidewalks in major commercial corridors be at least 13 feet wide, with a preferred width of 19 feet to accommodate a vibrant mix of activities. Current zoning requires a 5-foot setback from the property line, which—if utilized—could bring the total sidewalk width to 17 feet, approaching the preferred standard and creating space for a more pedestrian-friendly streetscape

CYCLING EXPERIENCE

In April 2022, City Council approved implementing separated bike lanes on Mass Ave between Waterhouse Street and Alewife Brook Parkway through partial construction. The project will also improve and add crosswalks, improve the experience for people taking the bus and maximize to the extent possible curbside uses such as accessible parking, customer loading, and outdoor dining. Up to date timelines and construction schedules can be found at www.cambridgema.gov/Departments/publicworks/cityprojects/2021/massave4massavepartialconstruction



Conditions along Mass Ave vary

TRANSIT EXPERIENCE

> BY RAIL:

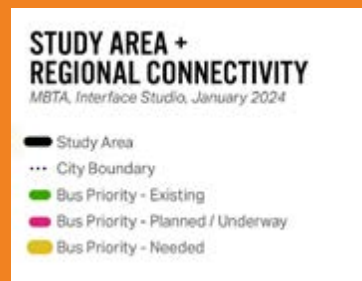
Porter Square is a major transit hub, connecting local and frequent buses with the MBTA Red Line subway and Fitchburg Line commuter rail. Around 6,900 daily commuters rely on the station, highlighting its importance in the regional transit network.

MBTA is financially constrained, guided by a strategic plan and 5-year capital plan which limits opportunities for improvements to Porter Square in the immediate-term.



> BY BUS:

Mass Ave hosts several bus routes, including 77, 83, and 96. In 2023, MBTA's Bus Network Redesign identified Route 77 as a "High-Priority Bus Corridor", calling for infrastructure improvements to ensure service every 15 minutes or better from 5:00 AM to 1:00 AM, seven days a week. City has installed dedicated bus lanes on North Mass Ave and will install additional dedicated bus lanes south of Porter Square in the Partial Construction project.



RECOMMENDATIONS

A. DESIGN TO IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN COMFORT AND ACCESSIBILITY

A pedestrian-friendly environment is essential for creating an inclusive and accessible Mass Ave. Designing to improve pedestrian comfort and accessibility helps to increase foot traffic for businesses, promotes social interaction, and enhances safety for all users, including individuals with disabilities, seniors, and families with young children.

STRATEGIES

1. Install more benches, shade structures, and other public infrastructure

Enhancing public infrastructure along Mass Ave with additional benches, shade structures, and pedestrian-scaled lighting will significantly improve pedestrian comfort, accessibility, and the overall experience — particularly in neighborhood centers where community activity is concentrated. A mix of fixed and movable seating, including benches with armrests and back support, ensures that people of all ages and abilities have comfortable resting areas while walking. Expanding tree canopy coverage and integrating shade structures will provide relief from sun exposure and inclement weather. [For more detail see More Inviting on page 39]

Priority locations for these improvements include:

- **Neighborhood Centers:** Seating and shade near bus stops, crosswalks, at identified key intersections such as the Arlington Line, Trolley Square, Rindge Ave, and Porter Square.
- **Senior and Accessibility Needs:** Around the North Cambridge Senior Center, CHA Cambridge Family Health North, and the Burns Apartments.

New City action needed: determine management and resourcing to implement and maintain new public infrastructure

Spotlight: Reporting poor sidewalk conditions

The Department of Public Works (DPW) is responsible for maintaining and repairing sidewalks. Residents can help by reporting damaged sidewalks, obstructions, or other hazards, through:

- SeeClickFix: Submit maintenance requests online at www.cambridgema.gov/SeeClickFix.
 - Street and Sidewalk Defect Line: Call 617-349-4854 to report the location and details of the issue.
-

2. Balance sidewalk activity with access

While outdoor dining, retail displays, and other sidewalk activities contribute to a vibrant public realm, they must be balanced with adequate pedestrian clearance to accommodate wheelchairs, strollers, and other mobility aids.

In the short term, maintaining a minimum 7-foot-wide unobstructed pathway is critical to ensuring accessibility, even as sidewalk activities continue. Businesses and permit holders should be guided by clear regulations to prevent encroachments that could hinder pedestrian movement.

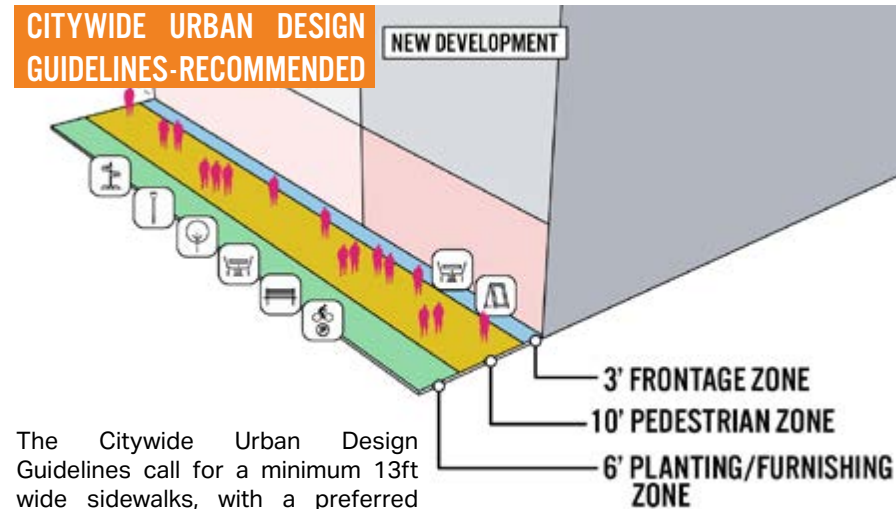
For new construction and major streetscape projects, the City should follow the new Citywide Urban Design Guidelines to expand sidewalk widths wherever possible, aiming for 19-foot sidewalks with a minimum 8-foot pedestrian zone to accommodate a mix of pedestrian movement, outdoor seating, and wider tree pits without compromising accessibility.

New City action needed: coordinate for long-term street reconstruction

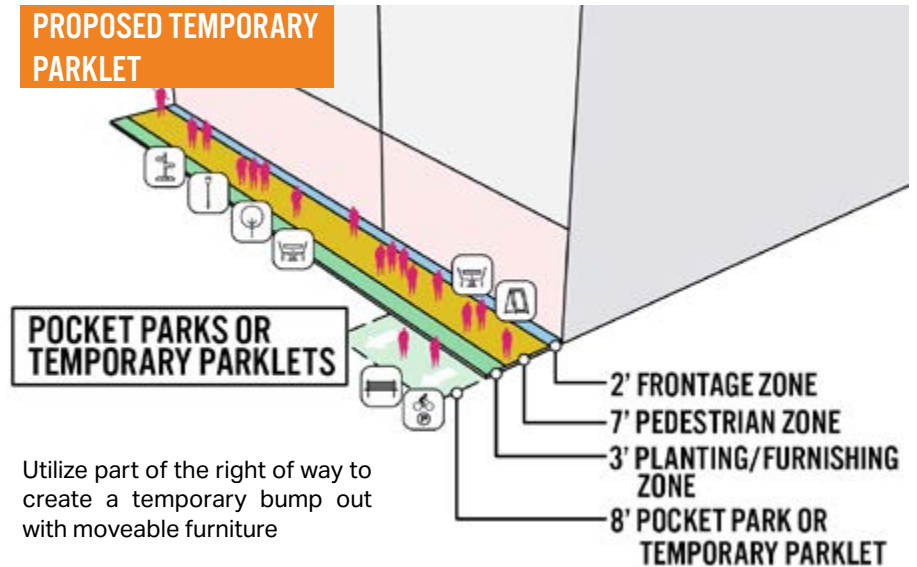
HOW TO DO IT

Mass Ave will need a variety of options to achieve wider sidewalks

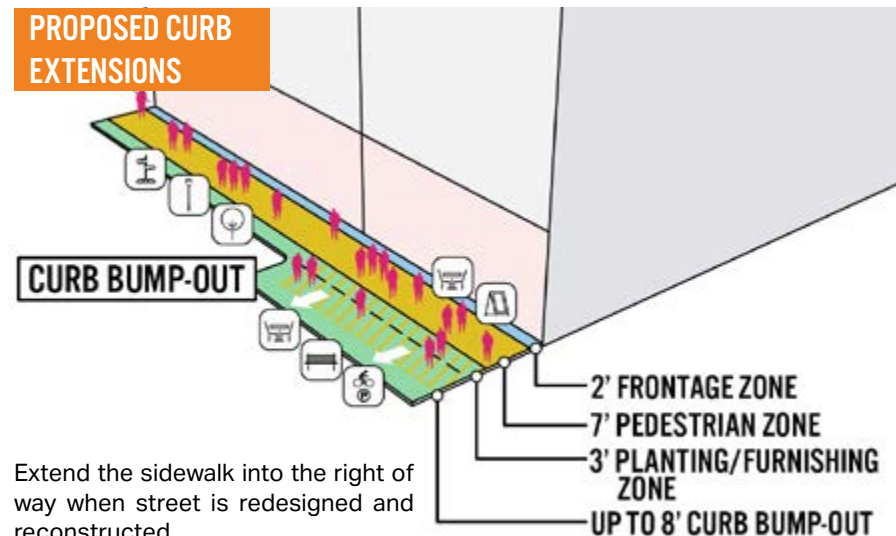
Much of Mass Ave has relatively narrow sidewalks (12ft) for a commercial corridor of this scale. A mix of strategies can help achieve wider sidewalks as the corridor develops and changes over time:



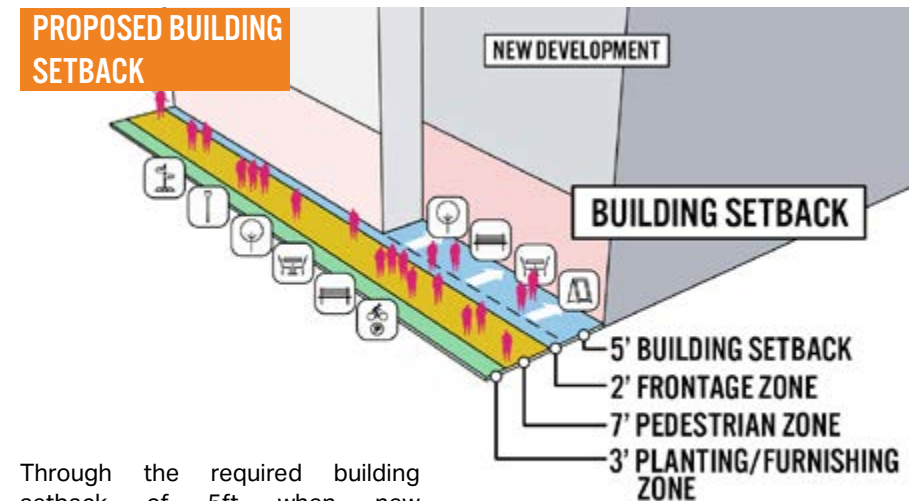
The Citywide Urban Design Guidelines call for a minimum 13ft wide sidewalks, with a preferred width of 19ft.



Utilize part of the right of way to create a temporary bump out with moveable furniture



Extend the sidewalk into the right of way when street is redesigned and reconstructed.



Through the required building setback of 5ft when new development occurs.

Opportunities to Improve Pedestrian Comfort - North Mass Ave

Priority areas to provide seating, shade and places of rest for increased pedestrian comfort include neighborhood centers, intersections, institutions, and transit stops. Neighborhood centers in particular are an important focus in order to make it easier to get around and have places to sit and rest.

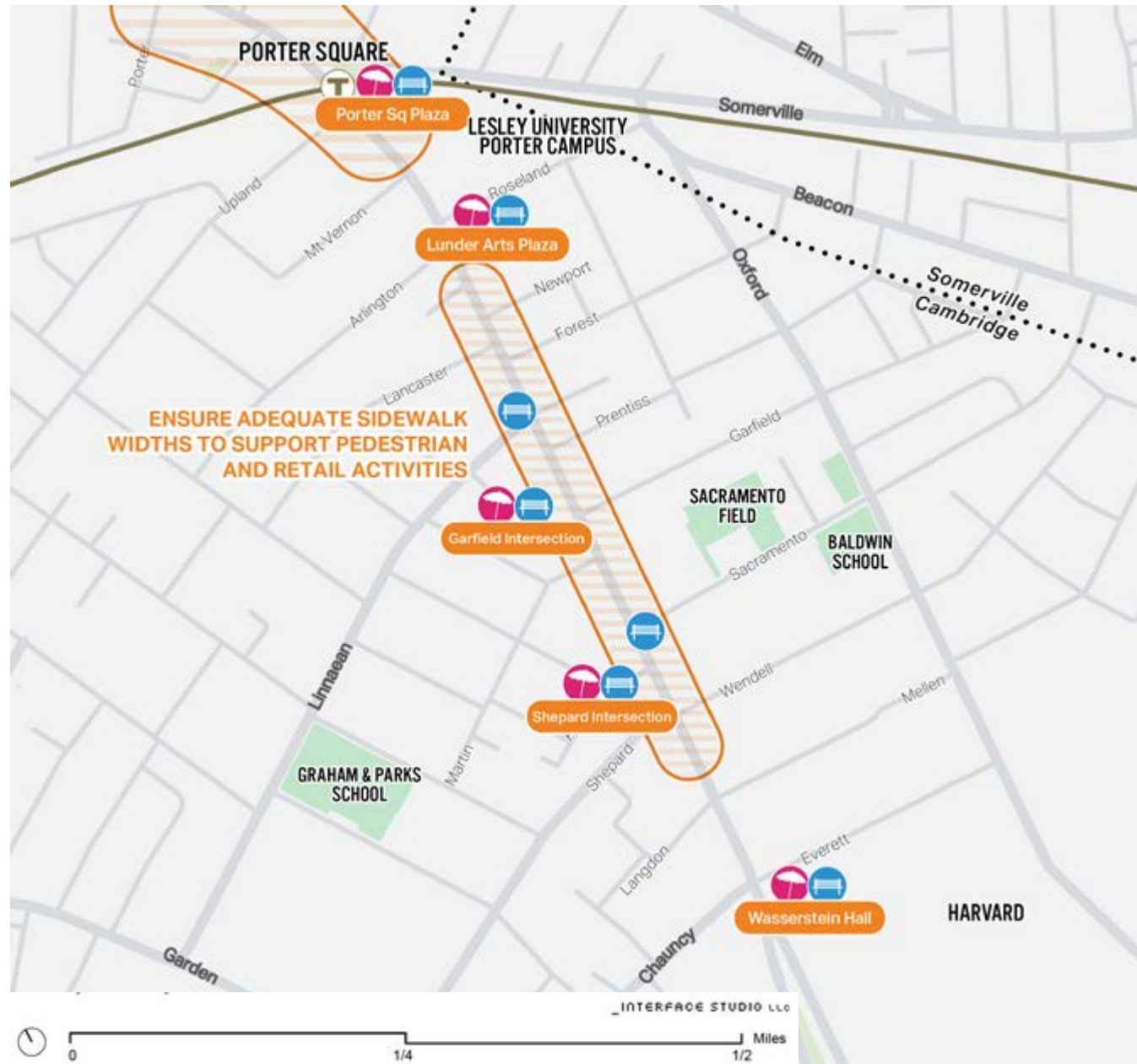
Pedestrian comfort is an important consideration for public interventions as well as any new development that occurs in the neighborhood centers.

“Add a diagonal pedestrian crossing next to the bike crossing and directly along the community path”

- community quote about Linear Park and Mass Ave intersection



Opportunities to Improve Pedestrian Comfort - South of Porter



The commercial core south of Porter Square is an opportunity area to improve pedestrian comfort. Specific areas to explore ways to improve the pedestrian experience are noted on the map. Areas highlighted are a mix of property owners such as Lesley University and Harvard University and key intersections including Mass Ave & Garfield and Mass Ave & Shepard.

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

- community quote

Source: Interface Studio, Urban Heat Island Technical Report

- Potential Location for Bench Seating
- Potential Location for Shade Structures
- Neighborhood Center

B. PROVIDE SAFE, CONVENIENT ACCESS TO SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

Enhancing access to sustainable transportation options along Mass Ave will promote traffic safety and encourage people to walk, bike, and take transit. This will also encourage people to access local businesses and maintain access for vehicles. While the scope of this study does not include street design, City departments will need to continually coordinate to accomplish long-term traffic safety and mobility goals.

STRATEGIES

1. Provide safer, more consistently marked and visible crossings of Mass Ave and intersecting streets

Improving pedestrian crossings at key intersections will enhance safety and accessibility. Priority locations include:

- Porter Square
- Trolley Square
- Alewife Brook Parkway

2. Work with MBTA to install more bus shelters

Bus shelters enhance rider comfort and encourage transit use by providing seating, shade, and weather protection. New development provides opportunities to install bus shelters with MBTA coordination to install these at strategic locations; recommended areas are noted on the map on page 59.

“Better bus shelters! If not enough sidewalk, require adjacent buildings to have an awning that can shelter waiting riders.”

- community quote

3. Provide additional bike parking and Bluebike station areas

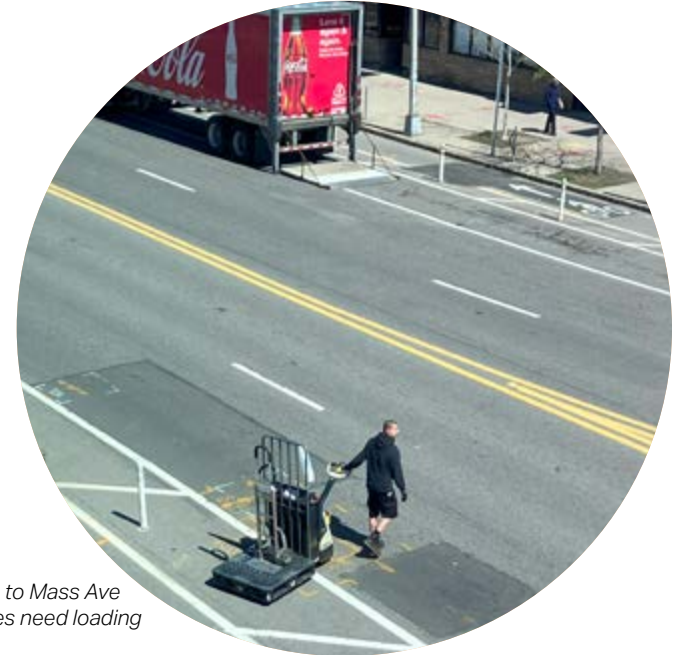
Expanding bike parking in strategic locations and providing additional Bluebike stations will complement the new bike lanes and improve last-mile transit connections. Individuals can suggest locations using the Bluebike Station Suggestion Map and buildings can host a new station. As the corridor develops over time, encouraging new development to host bike stations for their customers, tenants, employees and residents will help to support more local, car-free travel in the area.



Bluebike Station on Mass Ave

“Extend curbs (and maybe raise crosswalks) crossing side streets along Mass Ave. Drivers focus on turning into traffic and don’t look for pedestrians (or cyclists)! Even painted curb extensions would be a great initial step.”

- community quote



Deliveries to Mass Ave businesses need loading space

4. Encourage shared off-street parking facilities

Off-street parking lots should be utilized as efficiently as possible to maximize their capacity. Facilitating agreements between property owners and businesses with different peak hours—such as banks that provide parking during the day and restaurants that need it in the evening—can optimize existing spaces and accommodate various private vehicle drivers (such as commuters, shoppers and workers with different temporal needs) without adding to congestion. For larger new developments, incorporating a shared parking garage with public access can further support area parking demand needs while promoting a more sustainable and space-efficient approach to parking. The City’s Parking Study and new zoning encourage better use of existing underused accessory and principal use parking spaces.

5. Coordinate for better curb management

Maintaining reasonable loading and vehicle parking on Mass Ave is essential for supporting business operations, including deliveries, takeout orders, rideshare and other commercial activities. While ongoing construction is working to replace existing loading zones, business owners have emphasized the need for a clearer, more accessible process to request additional loading areas—whether on Mass Ave itself or nearby side streets—to provide more efficient operations and minimize illegal parking on the street. Reducing curb cuts, particularly along North Mass Ave, will also help to create more curb space for business needs, amenities, and pedestrian safety.

Opportunities for Sustainable Transportation Improvements - North Mass Ave

Priority areas to improve access to sustainable transportation options include neighborhood centers for bus shelters and bike amenities, and destinations and gateways for bike amenities.

For North Mass Ave, there are several opportunities to explore adding bus shelters to existing bus stop locations and adding bike share locations. Specific areas to explore adding more bike share locations include Alewife Brook Parkway, Clarendon Ave Park, Mass Ave between Rice and Milton, and within the Porter Square Shopping Center.



Opportunities for Sustainable Transportation Improvements - South of Porter



For south of Porter Square, there are several opportunities to explore adding bus shelters to existing bus stop locations. There is an opportunity to add additional Bluebike stations between Linnaean and Shepard. A station in this area would benefit local businesses and provide an intermediate point between Porter Square and Harvard University.

C. STREAMLINE SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING

Improving signage and wayfinding along Mass Ave will enhance navigation for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers while contributing to a more cohesive and visually appealing streetscape. Focusing on clear, well-placed signage at key locations will help residents and visitors easily find destinations, transit connections, and key landmarks, while reducing visual clutter caused by outdated or redundant signs.

STRATEGIES

1. **Locate branded pedestrian wayfinding signage at key gateways and destinations**

Strategically placed, well-designed pedestrian wayfinding signage can create a sense of place and help people navigate the corridor efficiently. A new business association could help campaign for branded wayfinding such as maps and directional signs at key intersections to guide foot traffic to transit stations, public spaces, and key destinations, and sidewalk markers and pavement graphics, such as embedded or painted markers to provide subtle, accessible navigation cues for pedestrians and cyclists, particularly at intersections and transit nodes. Priority locations include:

- Major intersections and transit hubs, such as Chauncy Street and Porter Square,
- Cultural nodes, including Lesley and Harvard campuses on Mass Ave, to direct visitors to local businesses and amenities,
- Connections to parks and trails, such as Linear Park and Alewife Brook Parkway, to improve access to green spaces and bike routes.

2. **Consolidate and clarify roadway signage**

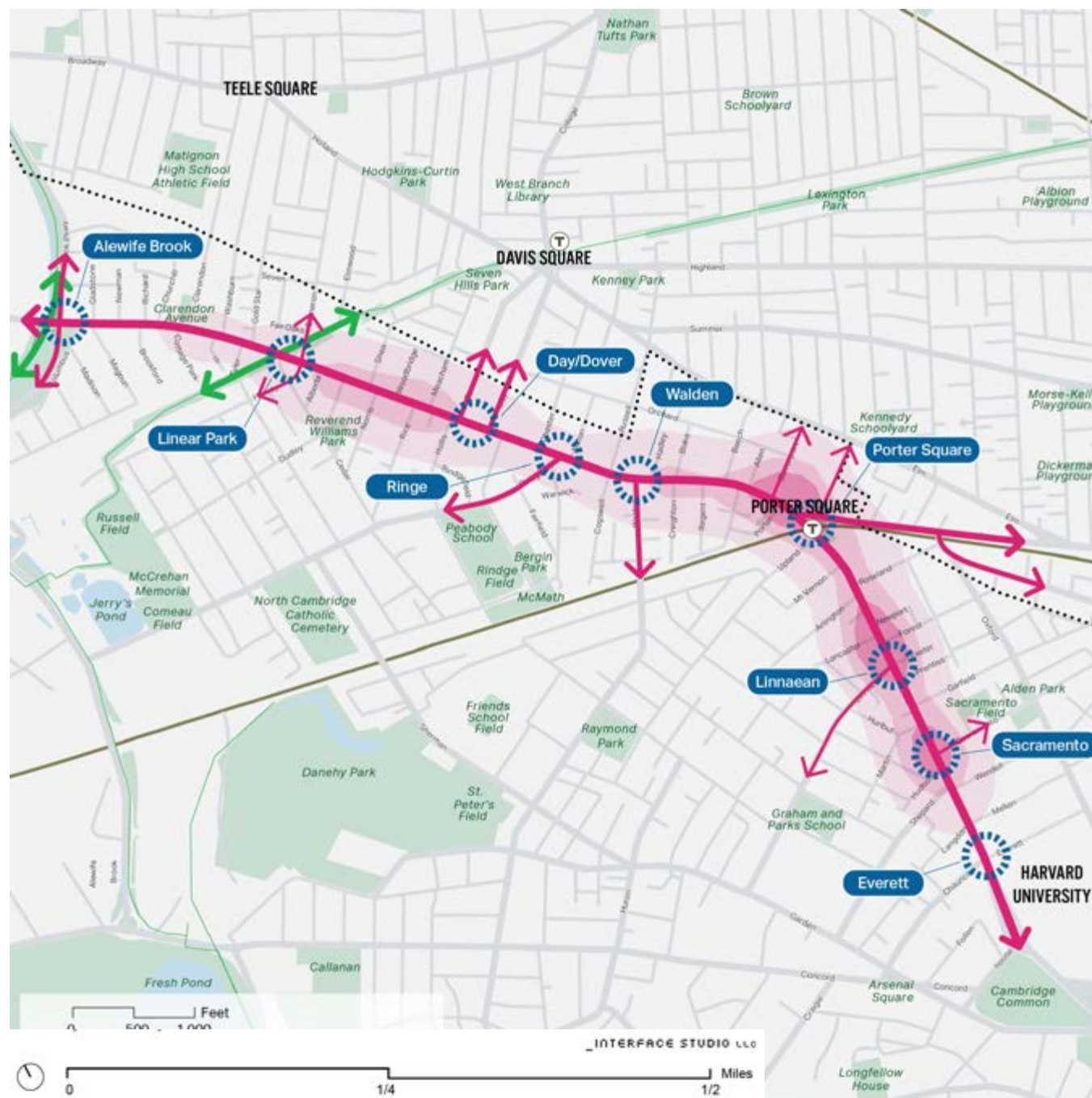
Over time, a profusion of signage, particularly outdated ones, has contributed to visual clutter and confusion. The City should conduct a comprehensive review to:

- Identify and remove outdated and redundant signs that no longer serve a clear purpose,
- Consolidate multiple signs into single, streamlined fixtures where appropriate,
- Ensure that all signage is clear, well-maintained, and aligned with the Citywide Urban Design Guidelines.

New City action needed: review signage on the corridor

Opportunities for Wayfinding

Priority areas for wayfinding include neighborhood centers, destinations and gateways. A unified system of signage and wayfinding along the corridor at the key points on the map would cover major entry points including Alewife Brook Parkway, Linear Park, Day Street, and Porter Square.



- Key Streets
- Wayfinding Locations
- Fewer/More Business Locations

D. STUDY SPECIFIC LOCATIONS AND INTERSECTIONS ALONG MASS AVE TO IMPROVE SAFETY AND THE MULTI MODAL EXPERIENCE

The community brought certain intersections and locations to project team's attention in this study. Because this was a planning study, assessing these intersections in great detail was not possible. This plan recommends further study of Porter Square, Linear Park crossing, and Alewife Brook Parkway to address community concerns and improve them in the long term. These locations experience high volumes of pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles, creating complex circulation challenges that require significant data collection and traffic analysis to identify targeted improvements.

Beyond the current partial construction project, future studies should explore potential solutions such as signal optimization, intersection redesigns, pedestrian safety enhancements, and bicycle infrastructure improvements. In addition, circulation planning for specific intersections could include study of the following:

- change one-way street directions
- change from two-way to one-way traffic
- banning turns or specific movements at intersections certain intersections
- close certain side streets or driveway' accesses to Mass Ave, where alternates exist

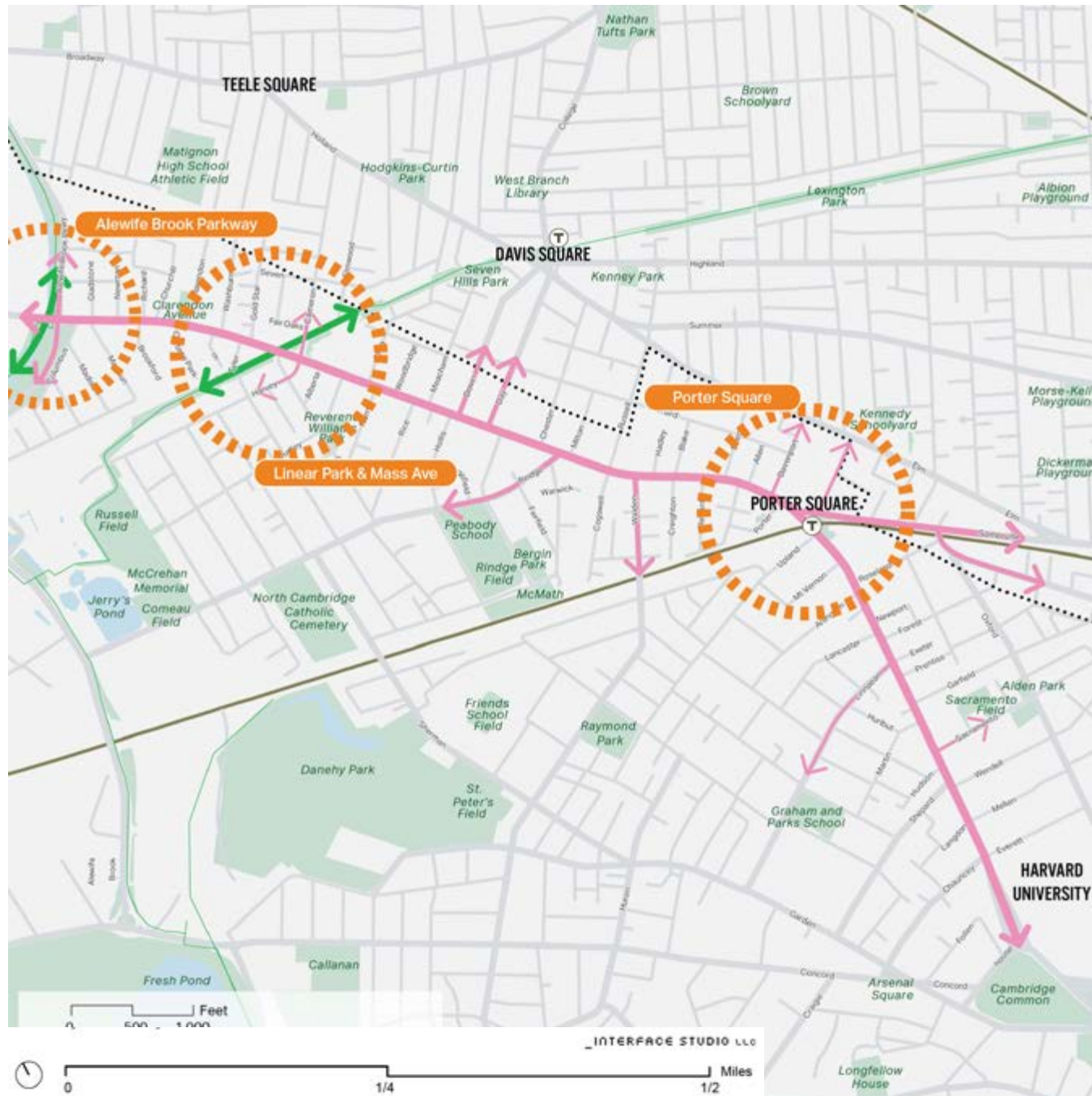


Community engagement and data collection will be essential to ensuring that proposed changes effectively address current and future mobility needs.

New City action needed: conduct some of these studies with larger-scale development proposals, while others can occur independently.

Recommended Locations for Study

- Porter Square, including Roseland, Upland and Beech Streets
- Linear Park
- Alewife Brook Parkway



- Key Streets
- Additional Study and Circulation Planning Area

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

How the strategies can make Mass Ave EASIER TO GET AROUND

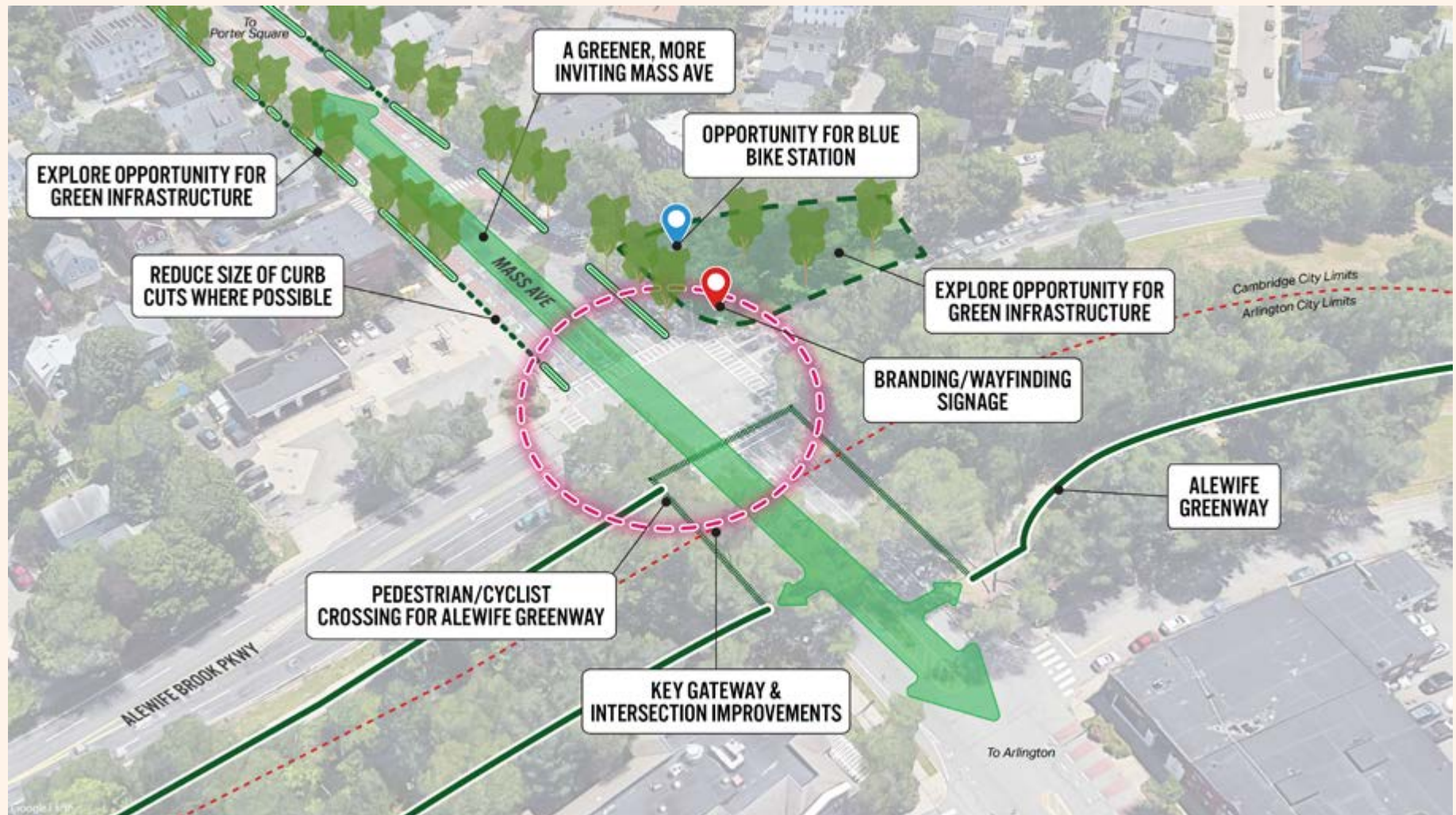
ALEWIFE BROOK PARKWAY

Key gateway to Alewife Greenway and Cambridge

Opportunities to make this a safer and greener entrance to the city

“Improve bike connections from Mass Ave to the [Alewife Greenway] path.”

- community quote



BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

How the strategies can make Mass Ave EASIER TO GET AROUND

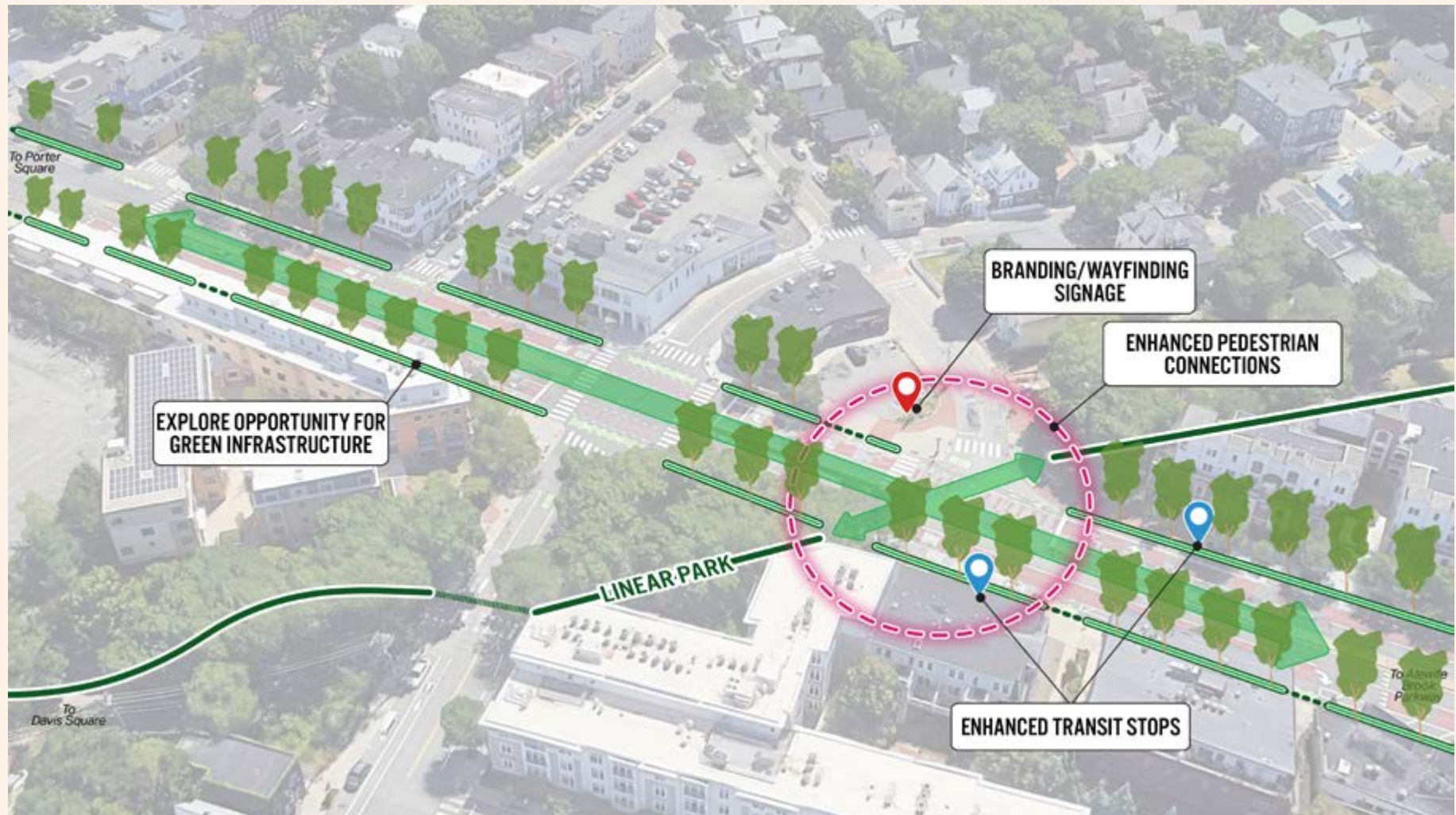
LINEAR PARK

Key gateway to Davis Square and Alewife

Opportunities for better connections for all modes

“Add a diagonal pedestrian crossing next to the bike crossing and directly along the community path.”

- community quote



BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

How the strategies can make Mass Ave EASIER TO GET AROUND

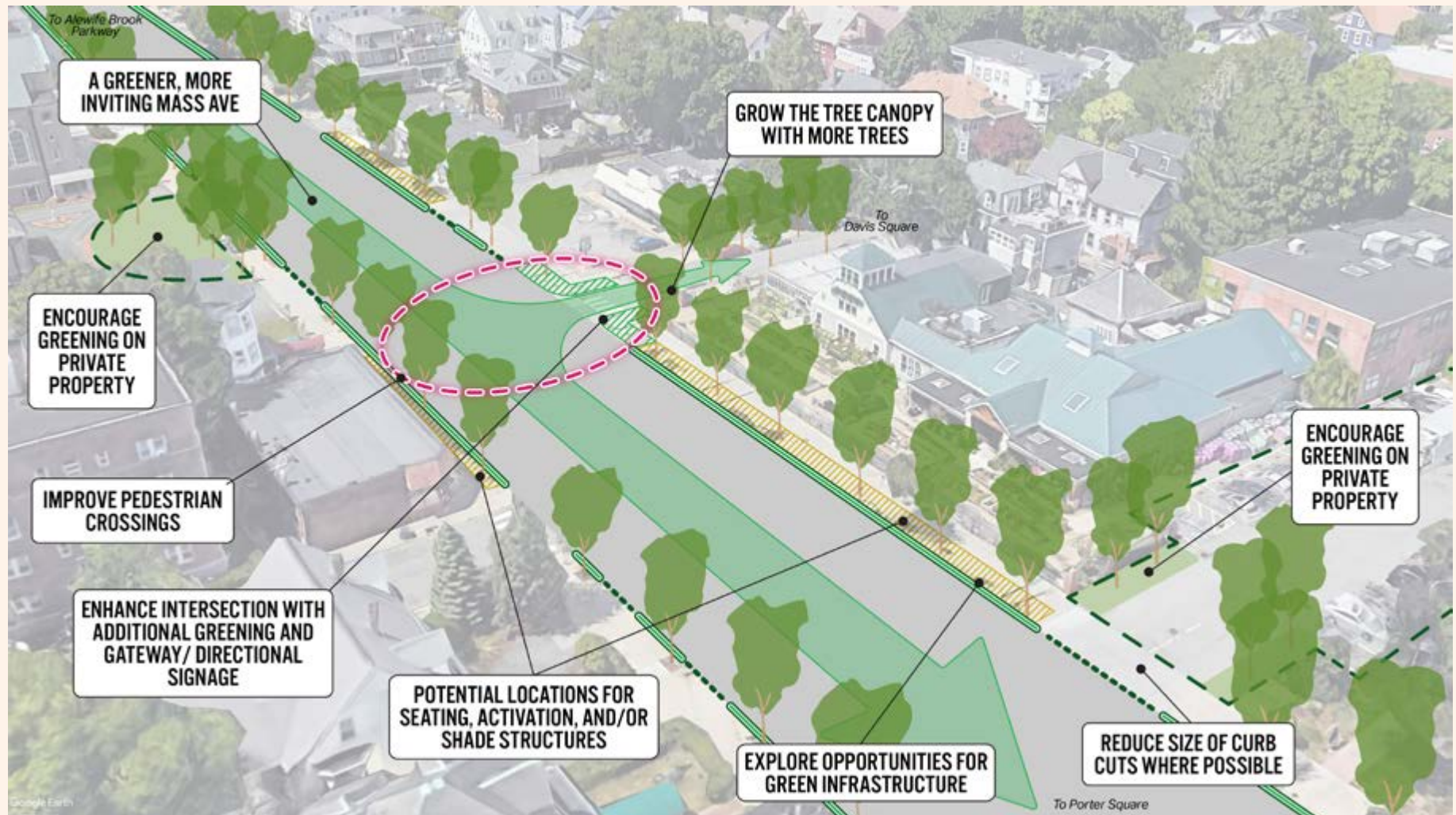
DAY STREET

Key gateway to Davis Square

Opportunities to enhance this neighborhood center and support businesses

"This crossing is truly unbelievable...it is horrendous and unsafe."

- community quote



BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

How the strategies can make Mass Ave EASIER TO GET AROUND

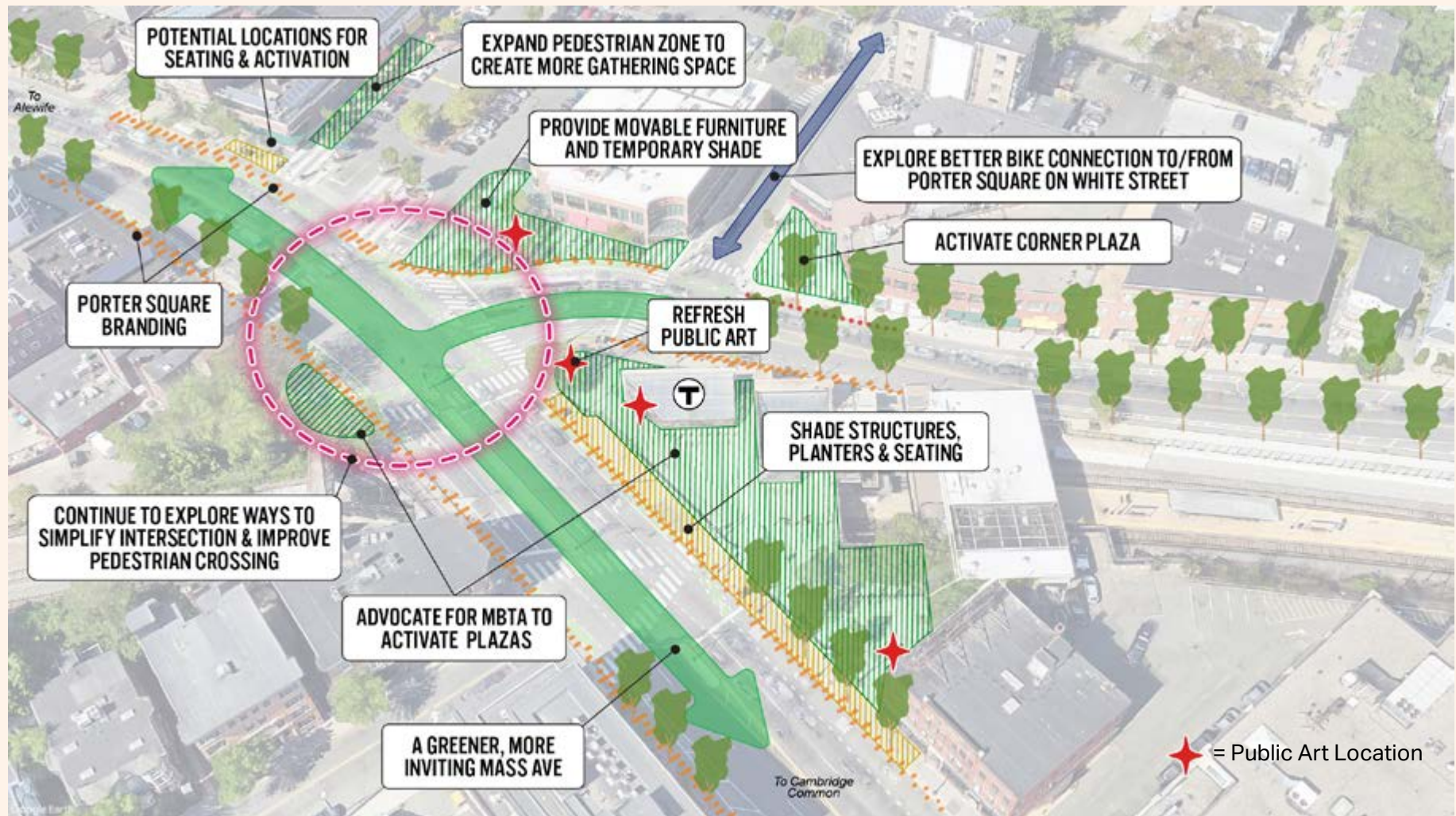
PORTER SQUARE

Key gateway and destination

Opportunities to make it safer to travel and more attractive to spend time

"I think the top priority should be finding ways to make this area more pedestrian- and cyclist-friendly."

- community quote



MORE HOUSING

4

Accommodate more housing development along Mass Ave through increased density and infrastructure planning. Address the need for affordable housing and integrate it into the existing neighborhood fabric.

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

"Why does everything transition into suburban-like sprawl north of Porter Square? It seems like such a transit corridor should have denser housing"

WHAT WE HEARD FROM ENGAGEMENT:

- Affordability is a primary concern. Many residents are struggling with rising housing costs and support efforts to create more affordable housing options.
- There is general agreement that Mass Ave is well-positioned to accommodate increased housing density, given its transit access and walkability, and that more people will benefit businesses and transit ridership.
- However, there is also concern among some over increased traffic congestion (at least in the short-term); this was a particular concern for North Mass Ave. Additionally, participants see the potential need for infrastructure upgrades to accommodate growth and potential displacement of small, locally owned businesses if redevelopment is not carefully managed.
- Generally, the public is comfortable with additional density and height as long as scale and design are considered. There is broad interest in zoning updates that allow for taller, mixed-use buildings that integrate housing with retail, community spaces and open space to ensure that Mass Ave remains a welcoming and dynamic corridor.

WHAT WE LEARNED FROM ANALYSIS:

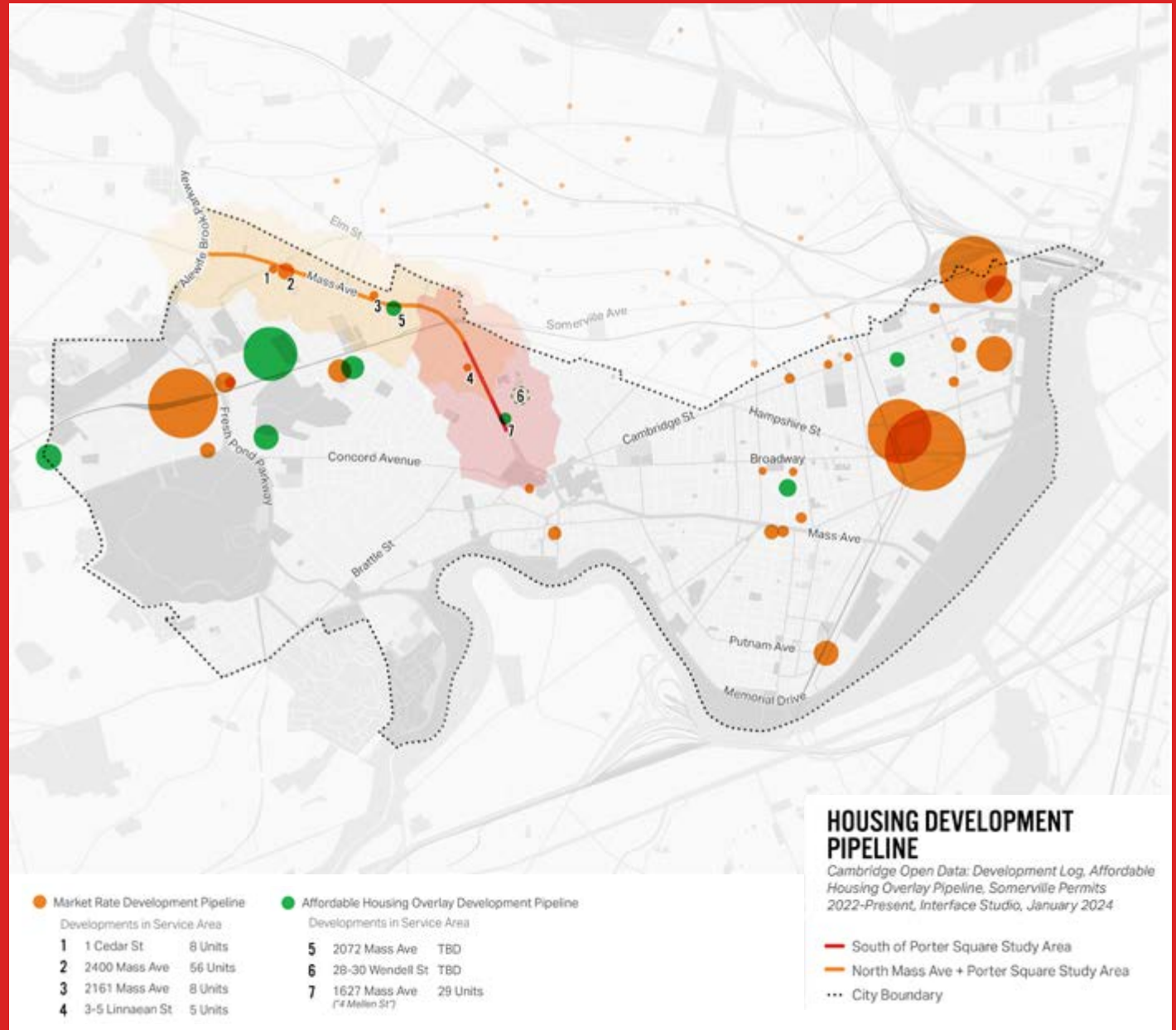
- While market conditions have cooled in recent years with higher interest rates, the need for housing—especially more affordable options—remains a critical issue.
- Many of the taller, multi-story apartment buildings along the corridor that date back to the early 20th century could not be built under today's zoning regulations.
- Highland and construction costs, along with zoning restrictions on height and density, continue to limit the feasibility of new residential projects along the corridor.
- There are few large-scale redevelopment opportunities that exist along the corridor. With low vacancy rates and few large, underutilized sites, most new housing will need to come from redevelopment and smaller-scale infill; this includes replacement of existing structures including underdeveloped single story commercial sites, adaptive reuse of suitable multi-story buildings, and building on surface parking lots.

KEY ANALYSIS:

HOUSING TRENDS

While Cambridge's housing market remains strong, rising interest rates and broader economic trends have contributed to a recent cooling of new building permits and transaction volumes. Cambridge remains one of the most expensive housing markets in the region, with rising rents and home prices making it increasingly difficult for many residents to afford housing, particularly those in lower- and middle- income brackets.

The Mass Ave corridor has experienced new residential development in recent years, but high land costs, construction expenses, and zoning restrictions—particularly on height and density—continue to limit large-scale housing production. In recent years, some of the larger development proposals along the corridor have been for affordable housing.



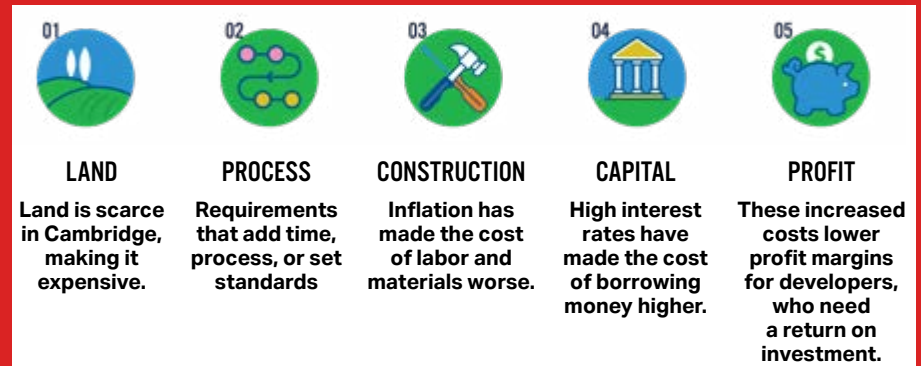
AFFORDABLE HOUSING

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 regulated Affordable Housing - which is when a unit is restricted to a household at a certain income.

What contributes to housing costs?



WHAT HOUSING EXISTS ON MASS AVE TODAY?



**HISTORIC
MANSIONS**



MIXED USE



**AFFORDABLE
HOUSING**



APARTMENTS

RECOMMENDATIONS

A. ENCOURAGE MORE HOUSING ON THE CORRIDOR

More housing and residents on the corridor will help to support more retail activity, transit ridership and non-car travel, and help reduce some of the housing pressure due to limited supply. Increasing density can also provide opportunities to gain community benefits, such as active ground floor uses and additional public space.

STRATEGIES

1. **Simplify the zoning code and streamline processes**

The complexity of current zoning regulations along Mass Ave presents challenges for development. With multiple base zoning districts, overlay districts, and split-zoned parcels, navigating the zoning process can be time-consuming and costly for property owners, developers, and small businesses. Simplifying the zoning code and permitting processes could help unlock more housing opportunities, support economic vitality, and create a more predictable and transparent regulatory framework. Potential strategies for future zoning updates include:

- Considering fewer zoning districts with a more consistent character
- Streamlining permitting and approval processes
- Adjusting height and density regulations for predictability and feasibility.

2. **Adjust zoning along the corridor to achieve zoning objectives to build more housing and prioritize mixed use development**

The overarching zoning objectives are to build more housing and prioritize mixed use developments along the entire corridor in order to encourage and concentrate retail activity and to promote walkability, biking and transit use. For Porter Square, additional principles include maintaining it as a retail destination, creating new significant open space, and exploring a shared district parking model.

The adjusted zoning will include district boundaries, uses, height and massing, bulk controls and the potential for a Planned Unit Development approach for Porter Square. [Additional detail on zoning is in the following chapter.]



This map highlights three types of areas along Mass Ave: the general corridor, existing and proposed neighborhood centers, and Porter Square. The neighborhood centers are intended to support a traditional, walkable commercial environment, while Porter Square also serves as a destination retail and transit hub. It is recommended that both the neighborhood centers and Porter Square continue to require active ground floor uses, while allowing greater flexibility along the general corridor to accommodate more ground floor residential uses.

B. CONTINUE TO SUPPORT CITY POLICY FOR A DIVERSE MIX OF HOUSING PRICE POINTS

As Mass Ave evolves over the next 15 years, it is essential to ensure that new development contributes to a range of housing options at different price points, with a strong emphasis on affordability. Supporting the city's broader housing goals means encouraging both market-rate and income-restricted affordable units, expanding access to housing for a diverse range of residents.

"Diverse, affordable housing options for diverse population"

STRATEGIES

1. Encourage the development of both market-rate and affordable housing

The city will continue to prioritize affordable units while also facilitating unrestricted, middle-income housing to support balanced growth. This can be achieved by supporting more housing along the corridor through a mix of zoning, such as for Multifamily Housing, the Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO), and inclusionary housing, as well as local funding such as the Housing Trust Fund.

2. Explore other strategies and funding mechanisms for encouraging affordable and mixed-income housing

Continue to explore additional funding mechanisms as well as ways to reduce housing development costs such as through new building technologies.

The City of Cambridge and developers are adding affordable units to the market in a few ways. New affordable housing is created through funding, zoning and other tools:



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.

“Density is fine but the program for the housing is more important. Does it support the community and respond to community-specific needs. What’s on ground floor. Is there space open to the community?”



URBAN FORM & ZONING

VISION

Mass Ave in the future -15 years from now and beyond - is envisioned as a **great street**, a coherent and meaningful place with an inviting and engaging public realm that prioritizes the pedestrian experience and supports a host of different users and uses. Encouraging additional density is a key part to achieving this vision. More density will enliven Mass Ave with people who live, work, learn, play, and shop, thus supporting businesses, activities and a thriving community.



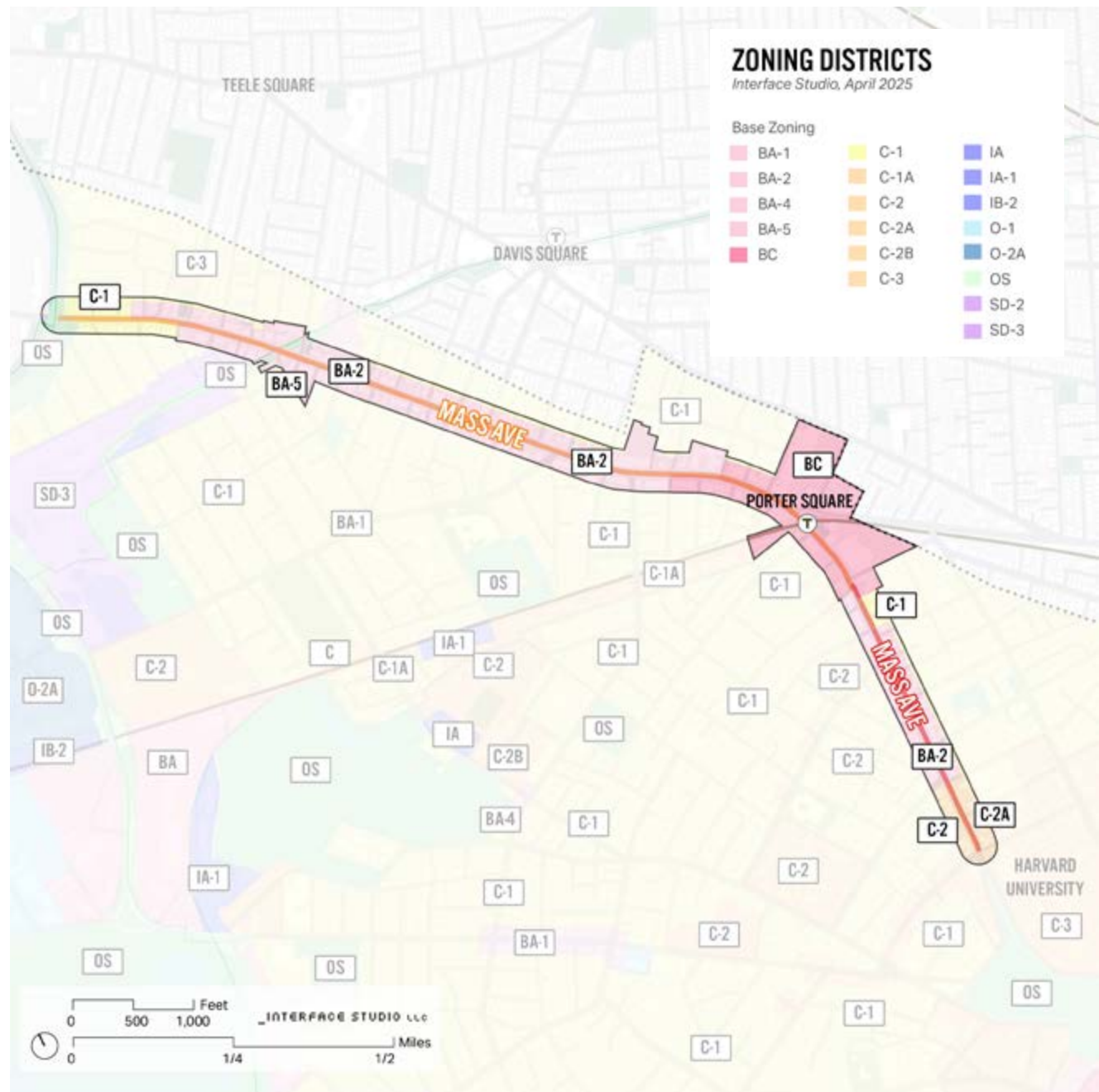
Aerial and street view looking north at Somerville Ave from Porter Square MBTA station (For illustrative purposes and not a current development proposal)

URBAN FORM AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Zoning is an important tool to influence urban form and paired with the Citywide Urban Design Guidelines and Multifamily Design Guidelines will help shape the built environment so that it can achieve the vision for Mass Ave. Thoughtful design will be key to ensuring new development enhances the character of the corridor while supporting a lively, business- and pedestrian-friendly streetscape.

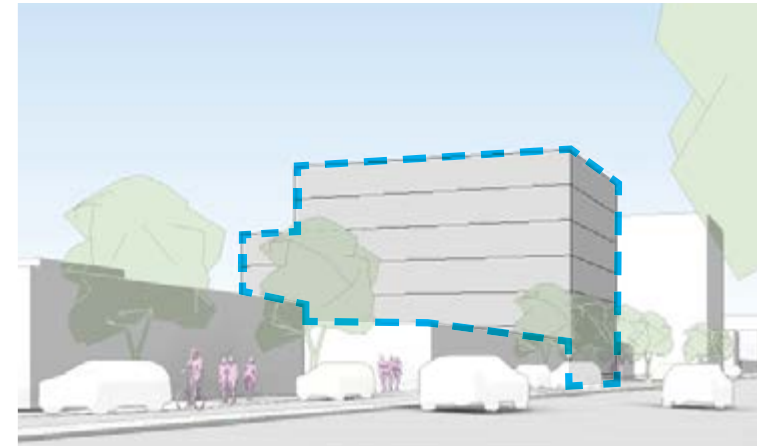
ZONING

Zoning regulations along Mass Ave are complicated and create challenges for redevelopment. With multiple base zoning districts, overlay districts, and split-zoned parcels, navigating the zoning process can be time-consuming and costly for property owners, developers, and small businesses. Currently, Mass Ave has four zoning districts: most of Mass Ave is zoned BA-2, Porter Square is zoned BC, the segment from Trolley Square to the Arlington line is C-1, and a portion of Trolley Square is BA-5.

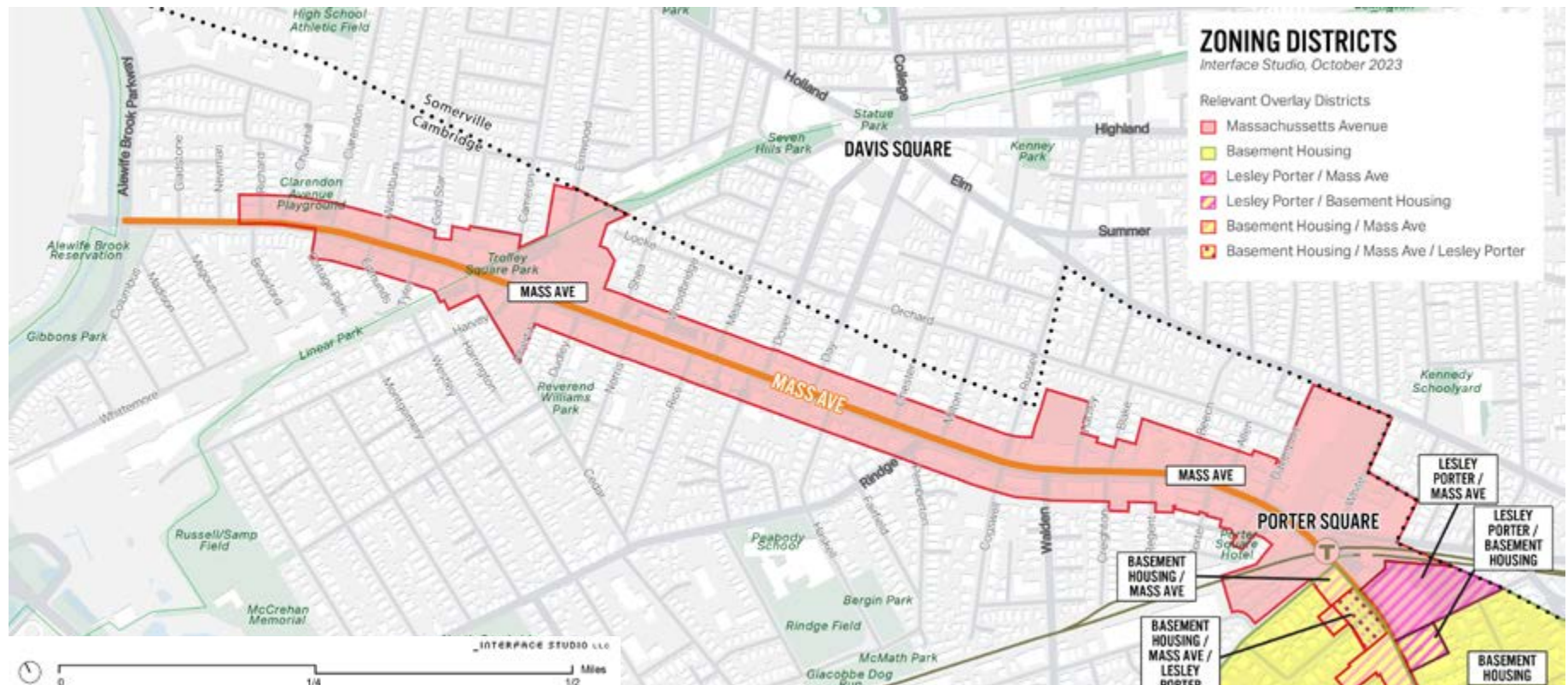


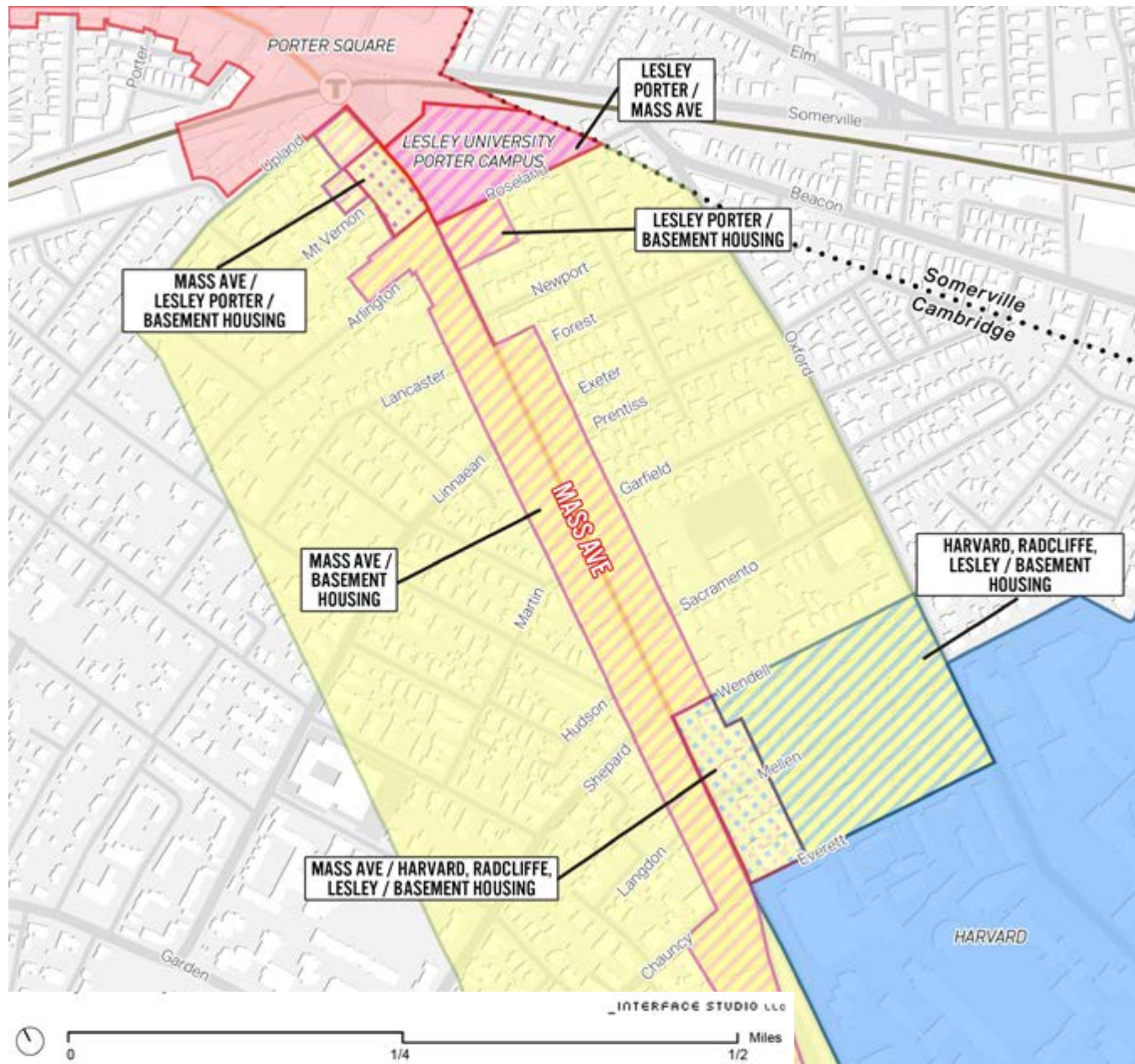
The Mass Ave Overlay District and other overlay districts apply additional design and development guidelines to maintain the corridor's urban character and pedestrian-friendly environment, encouraging active ground-floor uses, transit-oriented development, and context-sensitive building designs. The Affordable Housing Overlay and recently adopted multifamily zoning provide additional height for residential uses.

The complexity of the zoning regulations is further compounded by the typical parcels along Mass Ave. Parcel size and depth is a natural constraint and varies widely. With the exception of a few larger parcels, mainly in the Porter Square area, most parcels are only about 100-feet deep, which can make larger scale development challenging. Some properties along Mass Ave are split-zoned, meaning a single parcel falls under two different zoning designations.



Under today's zoning, a typical 10,000 sf lot would yield a six story mixed use building with about 25 units.





ZONING DISTRICTS

Interface Studio, October 2023

Relevant Overlay Districts*

- Massachusetts Avenue
- Lesley Porter
- Harvard, Radcliffe, Lesley
- Basement Housing
- Lesley Porter / Mass Ave
- Lesley Porter / Basement Housing
- Mass Ave / Basement Housing
- Mass Ave / Lesley Porter / Basement Housing
- Mass Ave / Harvard, Radcliffe, Lesley / Basement Housing
- Harvard, Radcliffe, Lesley / Basement Housing

* Affordable Housing Overlay not mapped but applies citywide

BASE ZONING

There are a total of seven base zoning districts found along the corridor with a majority of properties falling under the Business A-2 district, characterized as “neighborhood commercial.” The corridor can be split into four different sections:

- **Cambridge Common to Shepard Street/Wendell Street.** This area zoned residential, which also allows for institutional uses.
- **Shepard Street/Wendell Street to Porter Square.** This area is “neighborhood commercial,” which allows for most mid-rise residential and institutional uses as well as offices and most retail uses.
- **Porter Square.** Porter Square allows for generally the same uses as the neighborhood commercial district but at a marginally higher density.

District	All Uses	Residential Uses (Section 4.31 a-j.)				Non-Residential Uses (Section 4.30 except 4.31 a-j.)				
	Min. Open Space Ratio (5.22)	Max. Stories Above Grade (5.23)	Max. Building Height in feet (5.23)	Min. Front Yard Setback in feet (5.24)	Min. Side or Rear Yard Setback in feet (5.24)	Max. Building Height in feet (5.23)	Min. Front Yard Setback in feet (5.24)	Min. Side Yard Setback in feet (5.24)	Min. Rear Yard Setback in feet (5.24)	Max. FAR (5.25)
Residence Districts										
Res. C-1	30%	4	45	10	5	35	H+L 4	H+L 5	H+L 4	0.75
Res. C-2	15%	7	85	10	5	85	H+L 4	H+L 5	H+L 4	1.75
Res. C-2A	10%	6	75	5	5	60	H+L 5	H+L 6	H+L 5	2.5
Res. C-3	10%	10	120	5	5	120	H+L 5	H+L 6	H+L 5	3.0
Business Districts										
Bus. A-2	none	6	75	5	none	45	5	10	20	1
Bus. A-5	none	7	85	none	none	80	none	none	none	1
Bus. C	none	6	75	none	none	55	none	none	20	1.25

Base zoning requirements in districts on Mass Ave as of April 2025. More details can be found at:

https://library.municode.com/ma/cambridge/codes/zoning_ordinance?nodeId=ZOOR_ART5.000DEST_5.30DIDIRE

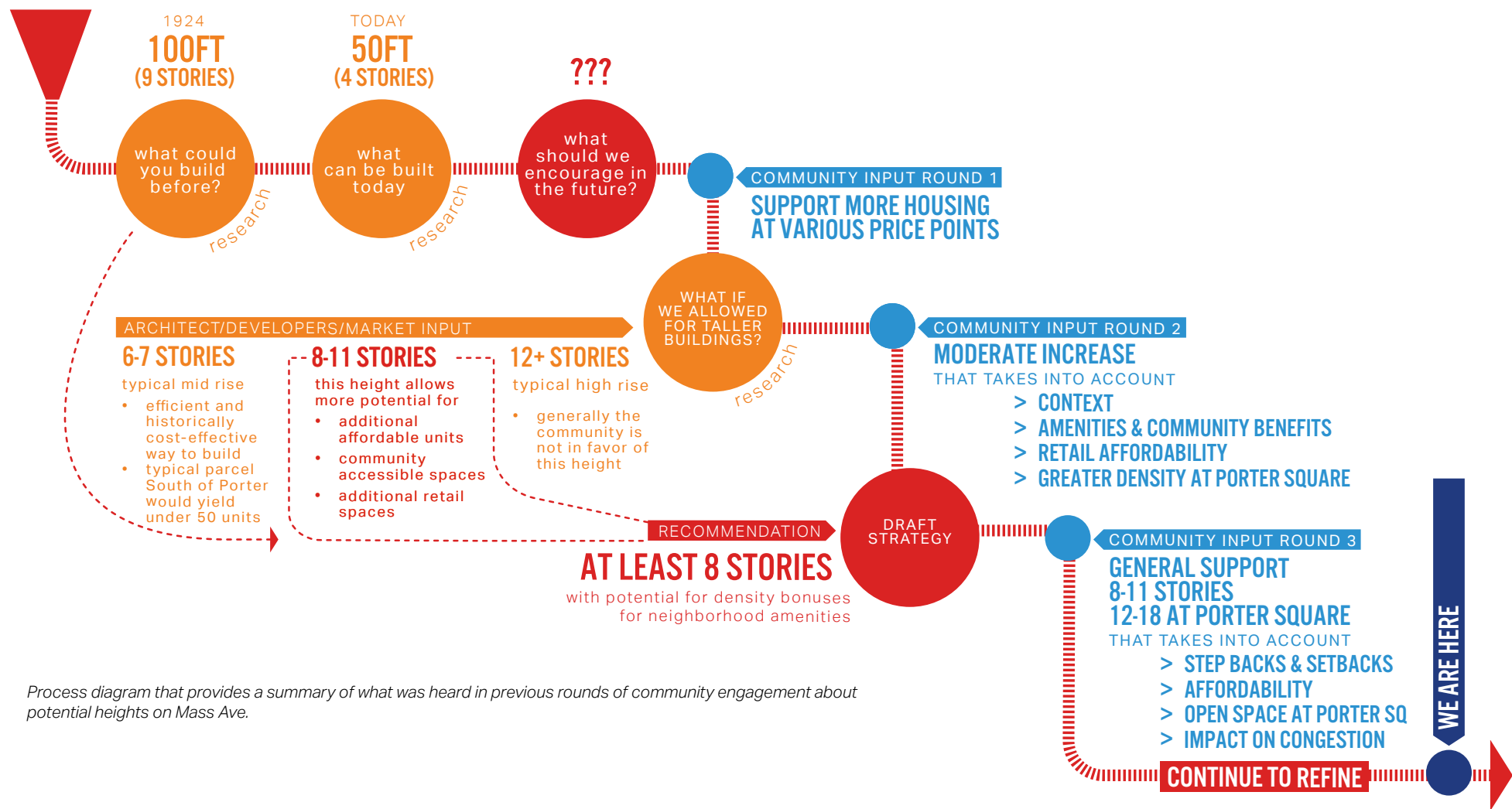
ZONING CONSIDERATIONS

When considering rezoning Mass Ave to support greater housing densities, our primary goal is to facilitate the construction of more housing units. Because this is a long-term planning effort, zoning decisions should not be dictated by the current housing market. Traditionally, construction has been limited to six-story buildings (five stories of stick-frame over a podium) or required a significant jump to 12 stories with steel. However, emerging building typologies—such as modular construction and mass timber—are making mid-rise buildings of 9-10 stories increasingly viable, expanding the range of feasible development options.

Public sentiment throughout this process covered a wide spectrum, from those opposed to any change to those advocating for unlimited heights. The majority of input, however, supported a moderate increase in density while avoiding the transformation of Mass Ave into “another Kendall Square” or creating a “canyon effect” with 12+ story high-rises. Porter Square emerged as an exception, with broad recognition that its proximity to the T station and rail corridor presents an opportunity for greater density and taller buildings. Community feedback also emphasized the importance of maintaining active ground-floor uses and ensuring that new development remains context-sensitive to the surrounding lower-density neighborhoods.

Ultimately, rezoning the corridor to allow building heights of 8-11 stories for the majority of the corridor, with 12-18 stories in Porter Square, would support the gradual, organic evolution of Mass Ave, creating opportunities for denser residential development over time. While zoning alone won’t solve the housing crisis, it is a crucial tool for enabling more housing options and increasing supply.

GOAL MORE HOUSING OPTIONS ON MASS AVE



Process diagram that provides a summary of what was heard in previous rounds of community engagement about potential heights on Mass Ave.

ZONING RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Streamline/Simplify the code and processes**

The complexity of current zoning regulations along Mass Ave presents challenges for development, business operations, and long-term planning. With multiple base zoning districts, overlay districts, and split-zoned parcels, navigating the zoning process can be time-consuming and costly for property owners, developers, and small businesses. Simplifying the zoning code and permitting processes could help unlock more housing opportunities, support economic vitality, and create a more predictable and transparent regulatory framework. Potential strategies for future zoning updates include:

- **Considering fewer zoning districts with a more consistent character**
 - » Instead of multiple zoning districts (BA-2, BC, overlay districts), Mass Ave could be rezoned into fewer zoning districts potentially with distinct sub-districts based on the corridor's character and function.
 - » Sub-districts could be differentiated based on criteria such as proximity to transit nodes, commercial hubs, destinations
- **Streamlining permitting and approval processes**
 - » Reduce the need for special permits by allowing more housing, mixed-use development, and more uses by right, such as hotels and cultural venues.
 - » Clarify zoning language to eliminate ambiguities that create unnecessary barriers to development.
- **Adjusting height and density regulations for predictability and feasibility**
 - » Consider allowing consistent building heights along the corridor, rather than fragmented height limits based on different zoning districts.

2. **Adjust zoning along the corridor to achieve zoning objectives to build more housing and prioritize mixed use development**

To support citywide goals of increasing housing production this report recommends targeted zoning adjustments along the Mass Ave by focusing on mixed-use development and expanding opportunities for housing density near transit and key activity nodes.

ZONING PRINCIPLES

The overarching zoning principles are to build more housing and prioritize mixed use developments along the entire corridor in order to encourage and concentrate retail activity and to promote walkability, biking and transit use.

For Porter Square, additional principles include maintaining it as a retail destination, creating new significant open space, and exploring a shared district parking model.

District Boundary

Simplify the code to three distinct zoning subdistricts. Each subdistrict is illustrated in the map to the right, with ground floor active use requirements only in key nodes of activity or “Neighborhood Centers”:

- **Mass Ave Corridor**
 - » Height: 8–11 stories
 - » Development incentives to achieve greater than 8 stories: Community-serving amenities (e.g., public open space, cultural facilities)
- **Mass Ave Neighborhood Center**
 - » Height: 8–11 stories
 - » Development incentives to achieve greater than 8 stories: Similar to corridor, with added focus on placemaking and neighborhood identity
- **Porter Square Neighborhood Center**
 - » Height: 12–18 stories in concentrated locations around the T
 - » Development incentives to achieve greater than 12 stories: Subject to the Planned Unit Development recommendation (See page 88).

Use Regulations:

- **Prioritize Residential Mixed-Use Development:**
 - » Permit the greatest building heights for projects that incorporate multifamily housing, particularly those with non-residential ground-floor activation.
 - » Do not adjust existing height limits to developments that do not include residential components.
- **Ground-Floor Activation Strategy:**
 - » Throughout the corridor: Encourage but do not require non-residential ground-floor uses.
- **Expand Allowed Uses by Right:**
 - » Corridor-wide: Allow additional by-right uses such as hotels and cultural venues
 - » Porter Square: Permit higher-intensity commercial uses including large-format retail and office space to leverage the area’s regional draw and transit access.



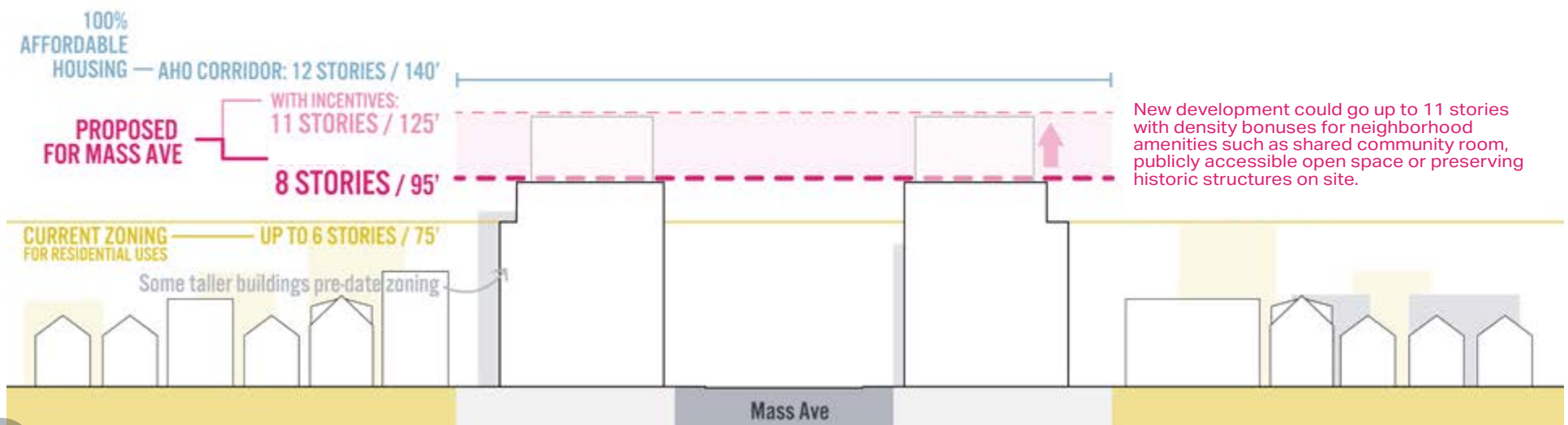
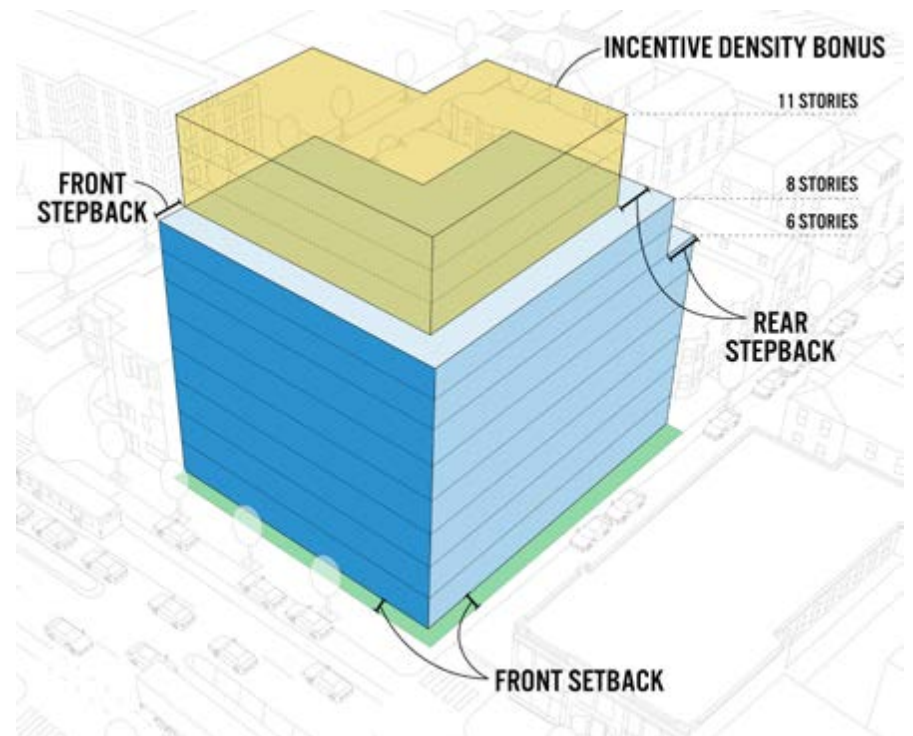
Height and Massing

Height and massing regulations define the scale and visual impact of buildings along Mass Ave. These controls help ensure that new development respects the corridor's existing character, supports a walkable environment, and maintains appropriate transitions to adjacent neighborhoods.

Mass Ave Corridor

Proposed height and massing is dictated by the intended use of the building, with different regulations applied to residential, commercial, and mixed-use developments. Since zoning principles prioritize mixed-use residential projects, these residential developments are permitted the greatest height allowances:

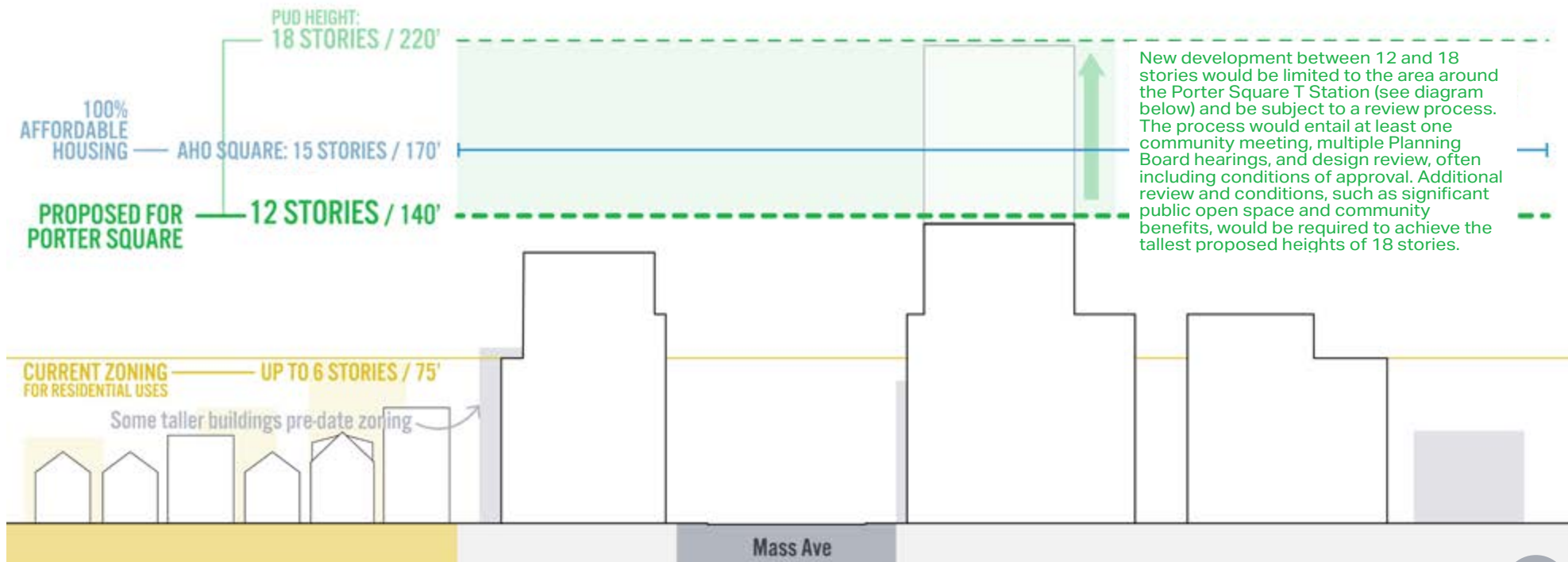
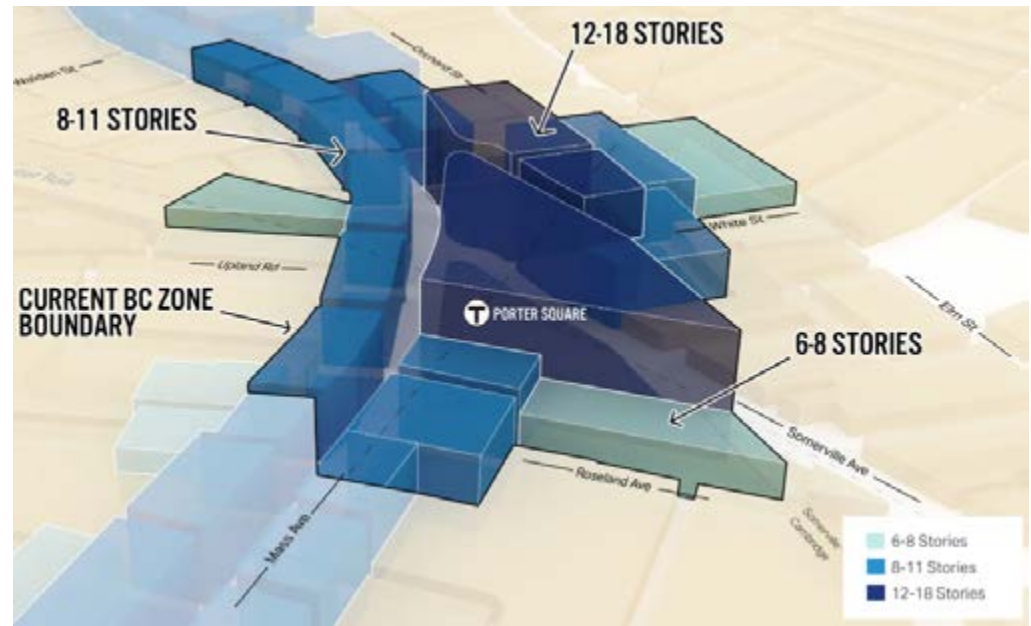
- » All residential: 8 stories
- » All non-residential: 45' (unchanged from existing)
- » Mixed-use: 10 stories (non-residential portion up to 45')
- » Mixed-use + (community benefit): 11 stories (non-residential portion up to 45')



Porter Square:

Porter Square was identified as a location suitable for increased residential density, while continuing to serve as a regional commercial destination. Community input informed the placement of the tallest zoning allowances, concentrating them nearest to the Porter Square station—indicated by the darkest blue in the zoning diagram to the right. As with the rest of the Mass Ave Corridor, building height and massing are determined by the intended use:

- » Mixed-use: 6-8 stories adjacent to lower-rise neighborhoods, 8-11 along Mass Ave, 12-18 stories on large parcels close to the T (non-residential portion up to 55')
- » Active non-residential ground floor required
- » PUD height: Up to 18 stories (see PUD section)
- » All non-residential: 55' (unchanged from existing)



Bulk Controls

Bulk controls regulate the overall volume and shape of buildings, including setbacks and stepbacks, which are essential for shaping how new development relates to the street, surrounding neighborhoods, and the broader public realm. These controls help manage density, ensure access to light and air, and contribute to a pedestrian-friendly, visually coherent corridor. They also reinforce urban design goals around scale transitions and streetscape continuity.

• Stepbacks

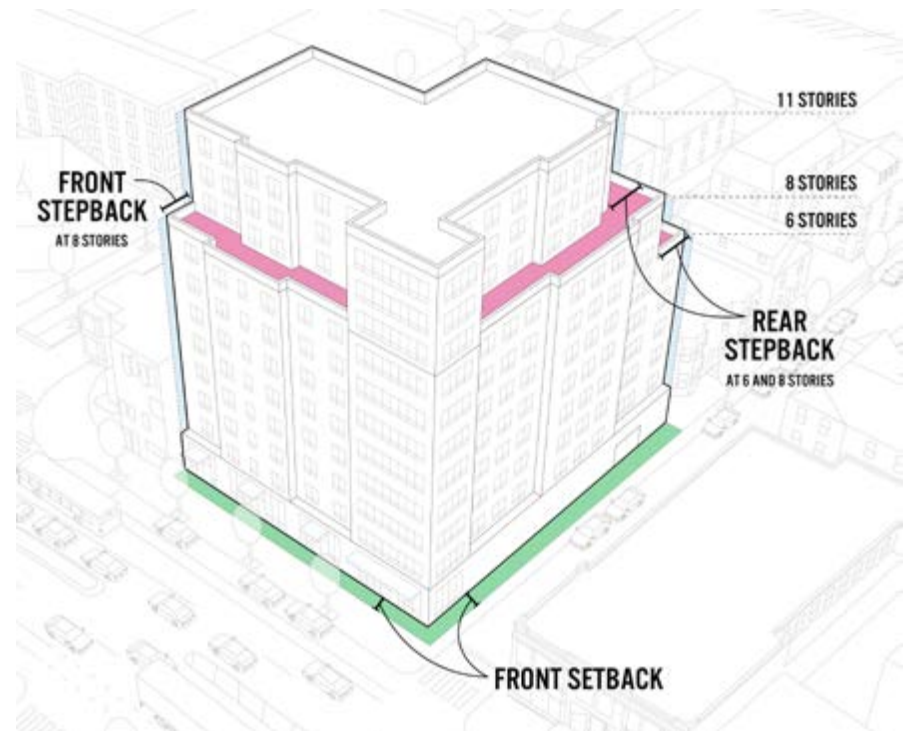
- » Facing Major Streets (Mass Ave):
Require a 5-10ft stepback at 8 stories along front-facing facades, applicable to at least 70% of the building's frontage. This ensures visual relief at upper levels and supports the corridor's mid-rise character, while encouraging variation in building form.
- » Facing Residential Neighborhoods (Rear and side):
Require 5-10ft stepbacks after 6 and 8 stories to provide sensitive transitions in scale and reduce shadow and privacy impacts on adjacent lower-density areas.
- » Building Sides (Interior Lot Lines):
No stepbacks required on side facades, allowing for continuous streetwalls where appropriate and greater flexibility in site planning.

• Setbacks

- » Establish a minimum 5-foot setback along all frontages facing Mass Ave. Larger developments are encouraged to exceed this minimum, targeting the 19-foot total sidewalk and frontage width recommended in the Citywide Urban Design Guidelines, to accommodate landscaping, outdoor seating, or expanded pedestrian circulation.

Porter Square PUD

A Planned Unit Development (PUD) Special Permit could allow building heights above 11 stories in exchange for significant community benefits, similar to the zoning approach in Alewife. This framework would provide flexibility for larger-scale redevelopment while ensuring that new projects contribute meaningfully to the public realm.



Key public benefits required for a PUD in Porter Square could include:

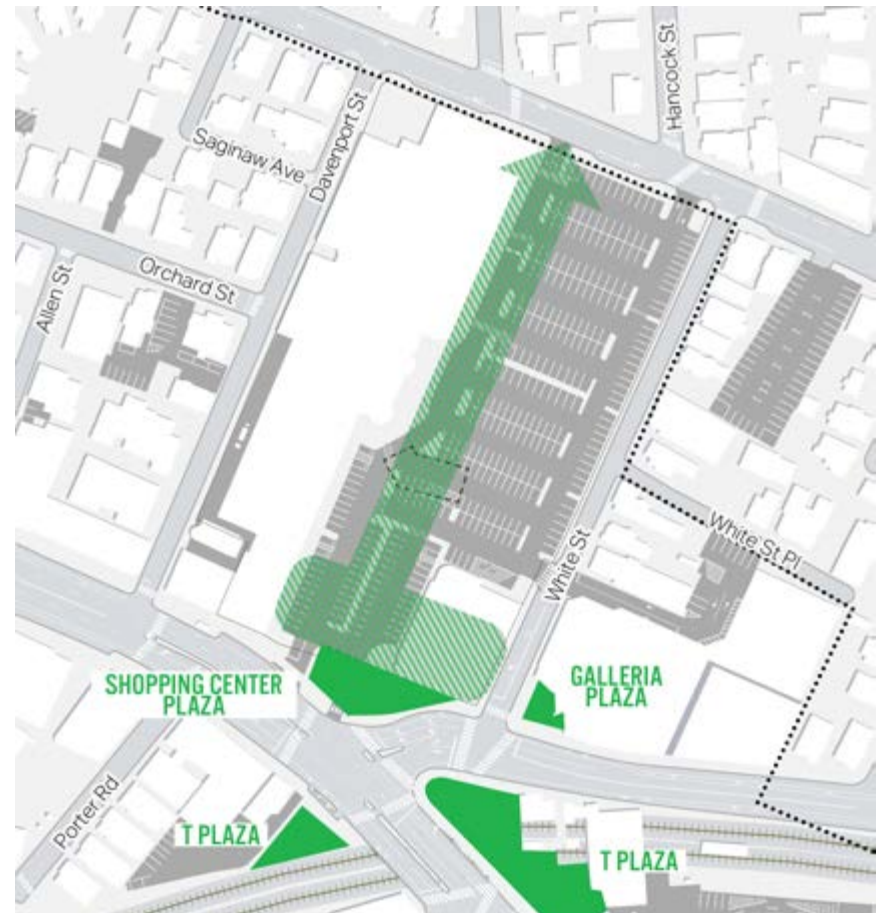
- Creation of a **significant new open space** that enhances the public realm and improves pedestrian connectivity.
- **Shared parking solutions** to better manage district-wide parking needs and reduce reliance on individual surface lots.
- **Preservation of Porter Square's "destination retail" character**, ensuring that large-format stores like supermarkets and general stores remain part of the neighborhood's commercial mix.

There are currently no open space zoning requirements in business districts, but future development should consider opportunities to enhance public space and climate resiliency, particularly in Porter Square. If Porter Square were to be redeveloped in the future, community feedback received during this process strongly supports the inclusion of a "significant open space" in any redevelopment plan.

Key takeaways from community input include:

- **A public space that supports businesses** – Open space should be linked to surrounding commercial activity, with the potential for creating a pedestrian mall or cut through in the site from Porter Square to Elm Street.
- **A space for all, with a variety of uses** – Similar to Post Office Square, the space should allow for both passive relaxation and active programming to accommodate different users and programming.
- **Make it LUSH** – Serve as a green respite that provides a break from the busy energy of Mass Ave.

- **Strategic placement** – Ideally, the space should balance multiple functions: supporting retail, offering a quiet retreat, and improving connections to Davis Square and pedestrian access through the site. Consider an larger space on Mass Ave that connects to a linear park through the site.



Summary of the public input received during the Porter Square Public Meeting, the hatch being the ideal location for an open space should Porter Square ever be redeveloped - expanding the existing plaza and connecting through the site.

Open Space

While business districts along the Mass Ave corridor are not currently subject to open space requirements, zoning can be used to encourage or require publicly accessible open spaces in strategic locations. These interventions can enhance neighborhood characteristics and reinforce pedestrian-friendly design.

- **Mass Ave Corridor**

- » Requirement:
No minimum open space requirements are proposed for business districts within the corridor
- » Incentives:
Encourage the inclusion of publicly beneficial open space through development incentives, such as height or density bonuses.

- **Porter Square**

- » Requirement:
No by-right open space requirements in business districts.
- » Planned Unit Development (PUD):
Require the provision of publicly beneficial open space as part of a PUD (See previous page)

Historic Preservation

Prioritize the preservation of historic structures whenever possible, maintaining the corridor's architectural character while allowing for growth. Integrating historic elements into new construction can help retain a sense of place, reinforce Mass Ave's identity, and create a visually rich streetscape that balances old and new.

- **Zoning Flexibility**

- » Provide flexibility in dimensional and use regulations when working with existing buildings that do not conform to current zoning standards (e.g. height, setbacks).
- » Allow modifications to facilitate adaptive reuse, infill development behind preserved facades, and creative integration of older structures within new developments

- **Incentives**

- » Offer height or density bonuses for projects that retain or restore historic structures on-site.



Example of a publicly accessible open space on Mass Ave at Trolley Square (above) and the St. James courtyard (right).

3. Provide incentives for community amenities

Incentives provide a strategic tool for encouraging the inclusion of community-serving amenities within private developments. By offering additional height or density in exchange for defined public benefits, zoning can help to achieve the vision for Mass Ave. These incentives ensure that new development supports not only physical growth, but also a more inviting neighborhood.

- **Incentive Structure**

- » Eligibility Area: Applies within the Mass Ave Corridor and Neighborhood centers

- *Maximum Bonus: Permit additional height and density, up to 11 stories, for qualifying developments*

- **Eligible Community Benefits**

To receive bonus height, developments must include one or more of the following amenities, which must be publicly accessible and maintained in accordance with established standards:

- » Shared Community Room or Center

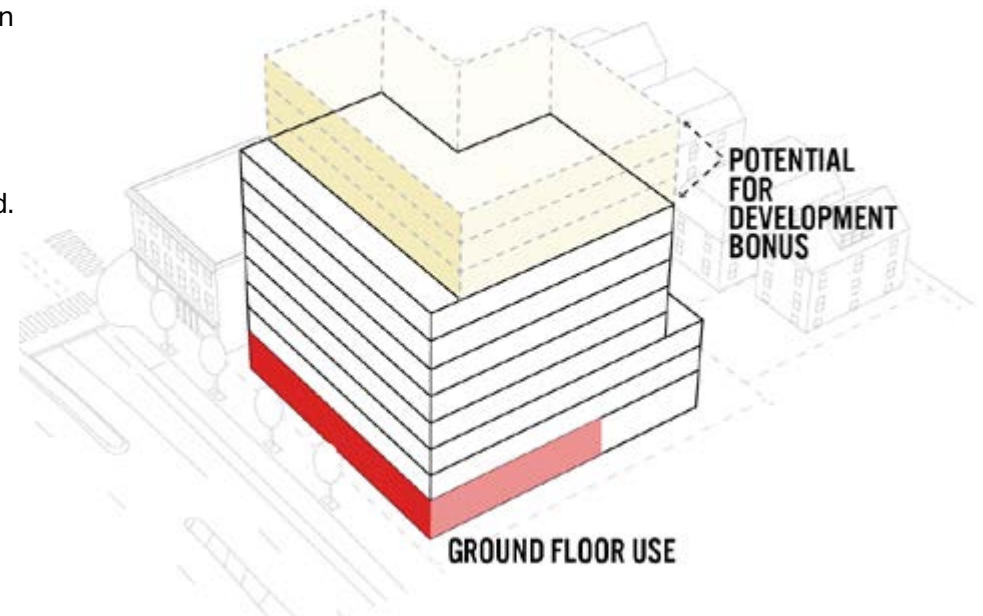
- A flexible indoor space that can be used for neighborhood meetings, programming, and cultural or educational events. Should be ground-level or easily accessible, with clear signage and community access protocols.

- » Publicly Beneficial Open Space

- Outdoor areas such as plazas, small parks, or courtyards that are open to the public during designated hours. Must include pedestrian seating, landscaping, and features that promote inclusive use.

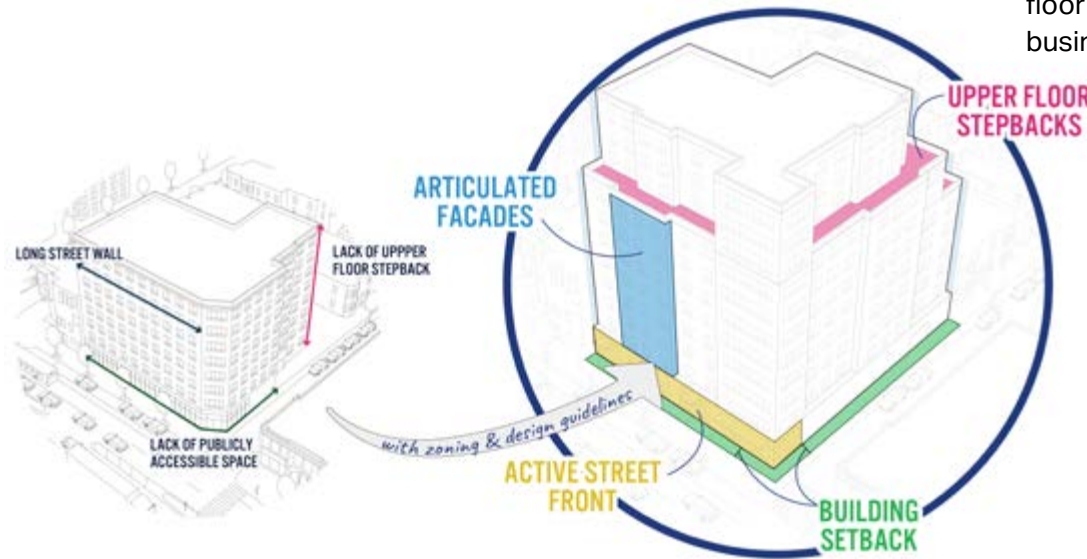
- » On-Site Historic Preservation

- Retention, restoration, and adaptive reuse of historically significant structures. Projects must maintain the building's architectural integrity and ensure long-term preservation.



4. Design guidance

Along the Mass Ave corridor, zoning and design guidance should promote buildings that are both architecturally engaging and supportive of street-level activity. These elements contribute to a cohesive identity and create a dynamic public realm. Design expectations should reinforce the Citywide Urban Design Guidelines, while responding to the unique character and development patterns of the corridor.



Spotlight: Elevating Mass Ave with the Cambridge Citywide Design Guidelines

The Cambridge Citywide Urban Design Guidelines provide a clear framework for shaping inclusive, resilient, and context-sensitive development. Along Massachusetts Ave, they offer guidance to balance growth with neighborhood character through strategies like height transitions, active ground floors, and transparent façades. The guidelines also emphasize public realm improvements—such as wide sidewalks, street trees, and outdoor seating—to support a vibrant, human-scaled corridor. By prioritizing equity, climate resilience, and multi-modal access, the guidelines enhance both the aesthetics and livability of Mass Ave.

For more information, visit:

www.cambridgema.gov/Departments/communitydevelopment/cambridgeurbandesignguidelines

Building and site design

To create a vibrant streetscape that supports businesses, building design should foster a walkable and visually engaging environment, offering a consistent urban rhythm while allowing for architectural creativity. It should also accommodate flexible and adaptable ground-floor spaces that can evolve over time, supporting a diverse mix of businesses and promoting long-term economic resilience.

To achieve this, consider:

• Streetwall and Building Alignment

- » Promote a consistently aligned streetwall along Mass Ave to define the public realm and reinforce the rhythm of the street.
- » Five foot setbacks are required to ensure adequate sidewalk depth.

• Façade Design and Materials

- » Encourage richly detailed and well-proportioned façades that reflect traditional urban building patterns, including vertical articulation and repetitive structural bays.
- » Encourage the use of durable, high-quality materials—such as masonry, stone, or high-performance composites—particularly at the ground floor, where buildings meet the sidewalk.
- » Promote facade design that mediates between the building scale and the human scale, using techniques such as clearly defined facade bays, setbacks at upper stories and architectural elements (e.g., cornices, canopies, signage) that engage pedestrians

- **Ground-Floor Height and Design**

- » Require tall ground floors (typically 15–20 feet) to accommodate a range of commercial, civic, or cultural uses, and to promote flexibility over time
- » Promote ground-level active uses, particularly in key nodes such as Porter Square and Neighborhood Centers, through both use requirements and design strategies.

- **Transparency and Articulation**

- » Require facade transparency—on ground floors—to enhance visibility into interior spaces and foster interaction between private buildings and the public realm.
- » Support façade articulation using a variety of materials, colors, and design elements to add depth, shadow, and visual interest along the corridor.

- **Pedestrian Scale and Entrances**

- » Promote frequent, clearly identifiable entrances to break up building mass and activate the street.
- » Require street-facing entrances oriented toward Mass Ave, avoiding long blank walls or secondary access points as primary entries.

- **Massing and Tower Spacing**

- » Require adequate tower separation to preserve access to light, air, and sky views for both public and private spaces, particularly in Porter Square. Towers should be designed to minimize their perceived bulk and preserve a human-scale environment at the street level.

- **Flexible Ground-Floor Commercial Spaces**

- » Encourage the design of sub-dividable commercial frontages that can accommodate small businesses, independent retailers, and diverse tenants.
- » Avoid oversized, monolithic retail spaces that reduce opportunities for variation and neighborhood-oriented uses.



BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

Turning the vision for Mass Ave into reality will require coordinated action, sustained commitment, and the flexibility to adapt over time. This section outlines key actions and partners to bring the plan into reality. Building early momentum through short-term actions, the implementation framework focuses on cross-departmental collaboration, and tangible initial outcomes. The Implementation Matrix that follows identifies specific actions, responsible partners, and targeted timeframes. Together, these actions will help realize the Mass Ave community's shared vision.

SHORT-TERM ACTIONS

While long-term changes will take time, a few initiatives can kick start transformation right away:

- **Activating Porter Square with a Pop of Color and Community Gatherings** – Introduce temporary seating and shade improvements to create a more inviting and distinctive space, while also implementing a simple, recurring community gathering to foster connection and engagement.
- **Study how to organize Mass Ave businesses** – To support creating a unified voice for local businesses, strengthen the corridor's identity, and aid in the implementation of the plan.
- **Re-zoning Mass Ave to support housing goals** – Implementing zoning changes to allow for greater residential density and mixed-use development, incentivize community space and open space in new developments, and simplify zoning districts. This action is the first step of implementing strategies in all of the goals areas, impacting not just housing but also ground floor uses, community space and open space, and wider sidewalks.
- **Collaborate across city departments on plan implementation actions** - Many of the strategies in this plan require coordination among city departments to get started, while others build off of existing initiatives. For example, creating an attractive and walkable streetscape includes coordination between Community Planning and Design to identify public space and activation opportunities, Cambridge Arts Council to integrate public art, and Public Works and Urban Forestry to add shade and street furniture.
- **Leverage the percent for art program for a public art project along Mass Ave** - The city will provide funding for art along Mass Ave together with the Mass Ave Partial Construction project. Utilize this funding for a call for artists for an installation along Mass Ave.

IMPLEMENTATION & NEXT STEPS:

To keep momentum, implementation matrix on the following pages outlines key actions, partners, and timeframes needed to bring this plan to life. The timeframes described in the matrix are as follows:

- Short-term: 1-5 years
- Medium-term: 5-10 years
- Long-term: 10 years or more

City departments will continue meeting regularly to track progress, ensuring that planning efforts stay on course and Mass Ave evolves into the dynamic, livable corridor envisioned in this plan. The following city departments are key partners in the implementation:

- CDD - Community Development Department
 - *CPD - Community Planning and Design*
 - *EOD - Economic Opportunity and Development*
 - *Zoning - Zoning and Development*
- CArts - Cambridge Arts
- CRA - Cambridge Redevelopment Authority
- DOH - Department of Housing
- DOT - Dept. of Transportation
- DPW - Dept. of Public Works
- OOS - Office of Sustainability

MORE OF A NEIGHBORHOOD AND DESTINATION

NEW	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
A) Foster a mix of local businesses including neighborhood-serving, family-friendly goods and services			
	1) Conduct a business organization feasibility study for North Mass Ave corridor	short- to medium-term	CDD-EOD
◆	<i>Initial Actions:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - conduct feasibility study - conduct business outreach - form business organization 		
	2) Target outreach to existing businesses on available grants and programs	ongoing	CDD-EOD
	3) Explore ways to keep commercial rents affordable and vacancies low	ongoing	CDD-EOD, CRA, CDFIs
◆	<i>Initial Actions:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - work with partners across the region to identify interventions for affordable commercial rents - compile and share resources on ownership opportunities through commercial condos - encourage sub-dividable and adaptable commercial spaces 		
B) Market the corridor to support local businesses			
	1) Create and implement branding strategy to highlight the corridor's identity	medium-term	Business organizing entity, CDD-EOD, Cambridge Arts
	<i>Initial Actions:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identify organizing entity and allocate resources - develop branding strategy that includes intervention type and locations 		
	2) Recruiting new businesses to the corridor	ongoing	Business organizing entity, CDD-EOD
	3) Providing business and marketing support	ongoing	Business organizing entity, CDD-EOD

MORE OF A NEIGHBORHOOD AND DESTINATION

NEW	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
C) Organize and host more community events and performance art			
	1) Partner with local institutions, organizations, and businesses to organize and fund events	medium-term	Business organizing entity, Harvard University, Lesley University, Cambridge School of Culinary Arts, Porter Square Neighbors Association, Baldwin Neighborhood Council, Gately Youth Center, large property owners, businesses
	<i>Initial Action:</i> - identify organizing entity and allocate resources		
	2) Connect with local artists and performers	medium-term	Business organizing entity, Cambridge Arts , CDD-CPD, Mudflat Pottery School, NOCA Glass School, NOCA Arts
	<i>Initial Action:</i> - identify organizing entity and allocate resources		

MORE INVITING

NEW	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
A) Build community identity through creativity and art			
	1) Target locations for neighborhood murals and public art	short-term	Business organizing entity, Cambridge Arts, CDD-CPD, property owners
	<i>Initial Actions:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identify organizing entity - identify locations and connect with property owners - leverage percent for art program for a large scale public art project - consider initiating a grant program for property owners to use murals to enhance building facades 		
	2) Install decorative lighting in key commercial areas	medium-term	Business organizing entity, CDD-CPD, DPW
	<i>Initial Action:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identify organizing entity and allocate resources 		
	3) Activate vacant commercial spaces with art	short- to medium-term	CDD-EOD, Cambridge Arts, Business organizing entity, property owners
	<i>Initial Action:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - target outreach for city programs to property owners 		
B) Plant more trees and vegetation along Mass Ave and open spaces			
	1) Install more street trees and maximize plantings in public spaces	ongoing	DPW, institutions, businesses, OOS, CDD-CPD, Cambridge Arts
	<i>Initial Actions:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - continue to implement planting on priority streets to create Cool Corridors - identify suitable locations for shade structures - engage public with art and stewardship 		
	2) Enlarge existing street tree wells and provide more space for additional ground-level vegetation	short- to medium-term	DPW
	<i>Initial Action:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - enlarge tree wells where possible as part of planting on priority streets to create Cool Corridors 		

MORE INVITING

NEW	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
	3) Work with property owners to plant more trees and vegetation	ongoing	DPW, property owners
	4) Explore opportunities to expand public realm space for trees and more plantings	long-term	DPW, CDD-CPD
◆	<i>Initial Action:</i> - consider expanding space for trees, GSI and potential utility relocation in the long-term reconstruction of the street		
	5) Coordinate with green stormwater infrastructure mitigation measures	long-term	DPW, CDD-CPD, OOS
◆	<i>Initial Action:</i> - coordinate for long-term street reconstruction to include space for trees, GSI and potential utility relocation		
C) Create more places for the community to gather			
	1) Partner with property owners and institutions to activate underutilized spaces	short- to medium-term	Property owners, Lesley University, Harvard University, MBTA, St. James Church, St. John Church, business organizing entity, Public Space Lab, CDD-CPD, EOD
◆	<i>Initial Actions:</i> - identify organizing entity and allocate resources - work with Wilder Co. to activate Porter Square Plaza with temporary seating and recurring community gathering - identify locations and connect with property owners		
	2) Identify opportunities for pop-up parklets and curb bumpouts on Mass Ave and side streets	ongoing	business organizing entity, CDD-CPD, DPW, DOT, Public Space Lab
	3) Advocate for indoor community space on ground floor in new developments	short-term	CDD-Zoning
◆	<i>Initial Action:</i> - update zoning to incentivize community spaces in new developments		
	4) Create meaningful connections to existing open spaces nearby	medium-term	CDD-CPD, DPW, Cambridge Arts
	<i>Initial Action:</i> - identify priority streets and allocate resources		
	5) Leverage new large-scale development to create new open space	long-term	CDD-Zoning
◆	<i>Initial Actions:</i> - update zoning to incentivize open space in new large-scale developments		

EASIER TO GET AROUND

NEW	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
A) Design to improve pedestrian comfort and accessibility			
	1) Install more benches, bike racks, shade structures, and other public infrastructure	short- to medium-term	DOT-Planning; DOT-Streets; DPW-Streets, Cambridge Arts
◆	Initial Action: - determine management and resourcing to implement new public infrastructure (e.g. shade structures or benches not at bus stops)		
	2) Balance sidewalk activity with access	ongoing	DPW, CDD-CPD, DOT
◆	Initial Action: - consider expanding space for trees, green stormwater infrastructure (GSI), and potential utility relocation in the long-term reconstruction of the street		
B) Provide safe, convenient access to sustainable transportation options			
	1) Provide safer, more visible crossings on Mass Ave and perpendicular streets	ongoing	DOT, DPW
	Initial Actions: - continue to identify improvements for pedestrian crossings in Partial Construction project - study specific locations and intersections (see Recommendation D below)		
	2) Work with MBTA to install more bus shelters where appropriate	ongoing	DOT-Planning, MBTA, MBTA's Contractor, CDD-CPD
	Initial Action: - identify new locations with MBTA for advertising-supported shelters - coordinate with larger development proposals' mitigation requirements		
	3) Provide additional bike parking and Bluebike station areas	ongoing	DOT-Planning
	Initial Action: - continue to evaluate new sites on the public right-of-way and on private property - develop a "state-of-good-repair" program for BlueBikes station as part of development review - pilot a neighborhood shared bike parking opportunity in North Mass Ave. - identify opportunities for BlueBikes stations and new bicycle parking as development occurs		

EASIER TO GET AROUND

NEW	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
	4) Encourage shared off-street parking facilities	ongoing	DOT-Planning, CDD-CPD, CDD-Zoning
	<i>Initial Actions:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - implement Parking Study recommendations - promote flexible parking corridor zoning for use of existing accessory and principal use parking 		
	5) Coordinate for better curb management	ongoing	DOT
	<i>Initial Actions:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - maximize creation of loading zones or pick-up drop-off areas to support business on Mass Ave - developing process for businesses/abutters to request new/modified loading zones - identify opportunities to remove or reduce curb cuts 		
C) Streamline signage and wayfinding			
	1) Locate branded wayfinding signage at key gateways and destinations	medium-term	business organizing entity, CDD-CPD, Cambridge Arts
	<i>Initial Actions:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identify owner and organizing entity, then allocate resources - develop branded signage and locations for installation 		
	2) Consolidate and clarify roadway signage	short-term	DOT-Streets
♦	<i>Initial Actions:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - review signage on the corridor 		
D) Study specific locations and intersections along Mass Ave to improve safety and the multi-modal experience (Porter Square, Linear Park, and Alewife Brook Parkway)			
♦	<i>Initial Actions:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - coordinate circulation planning alongside larger-scale development proposals, create more public plazas, transit and pedestrian improvements - conduct circulation planning of other locations independently as staff capacity allows 	varies	DOT-Planning

MORE HOUSING

NEW	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
A) Encourage more housing on the corridor			
	1) Simplify the zoning code and streamline processes	short-term	CDD-Zoning
◆	<i>Initial Actions:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - update zoning to adjust height and density, and consider fewer zoning districts - review development processes 		
	2) Adjust zoning along the corridor to achieve zoning objectives to build more housing and prioritize mixed-use development	short-term	CDD-Zoning
◆	<i>Initial Action:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - update zoning to adjust height and density for more housing and mixed-use development 		
B) Continue to support city policy for a diverse mix of housing price points			
	1) Encourage the development of both market-rate and affordable housing	ongoing	CDD-Housing, CDD-Zoning
◆	<i>Initial Action:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - update zoning to adjust height and density for more housing and mixed-use development 		
	2) Explore other strategies and funding mechanisms for encouraging affordable and mixed-income housing	ongoing	CDD-Housing
	<i>Initial Actions:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - explore additional funding strategies - maintain updating information on building technologies 		



