

Danielle Jones-McLaughlin
Chair

Avril dePagter
Melissa Miguel
Deepti Nijhawan
Emma Pan
Zach Solomons

Rachel Tanenhaus
*Executive Director/
ADA Coordinator*

Kate Thurman
*Deputy Director/
Assistant ADA Coordinator*

Maya Friedrich
Administrative Assistant

**The Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities is holding an
abbreviated meeting online via Zoom on October 9, 2025 from 5:30 – 7:00 PM**

PLEASE MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO JOIN BY 5:30 PM

AGENDA

Please keep your microphone muted when you are not speaking

1. Introductions	2 min.	
2. Announcements	2 min.	CCPD Staff/Board
3. Approval of August minutes <i>See pages 4-6 of this packet</i>	2 min.	CCPD Board
4. Presentation on Cambridge Participatory Budget (CPB) <i>See pages 7-16 of this packet</i>	30 min.	Melissa Liu, <i>Cambridge Participatory Budget & Engagement Coordinator</i>
5. Chair's Report	10 min	Danielle Jones-McLaughlin
6. Staff Report	10 min.	Rachel Tanenhaus
7. Public Works Update	5 min.	Jim Wilcox, <i>Engineer, Department of Public Works</i>
8. Public Input	4 min.	General public

See pages 2&3 of this agenda packet for instructions on providing public comment

CART/closed captioning will be provided for this meeting

Captions can be turned on within the Zoom platform or streamed in a separate URL at <https://bit.ly/CCPDcaptioning>.

(captions will not appear until the meeting has started)

The City of Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities, does not discriminate, including on the basis of disability. The Commission for Persons with Disabilities will provide auxiliary aids and services, written materials in alternative formats, and reasonable modifications in policies and procedures to persons with disabilities upon request.

**The next CCPD meeting will be held on
Thursday, November 14 from 5:30-7:00 PM.**

Members of the public: See instructions on pages 2 & 3 on how to watch the CCPD meeting and provide public comment via Zoom

Minutes for Thursday, October 9, 2025 CCPD Meeting

Online via Zoom

Meeting was called to order at 5:36 pm

Present:

Members: Emma Pan, Jim Wilcox, Danielle Jones McLaughlin, Zach Solomons

Absent: Deepti Nijhawan, Avril dePagter

Staff: Rachel Tanenhaus, Maya Friedrich, Kate Thurman

Other: Deputy Superintendent (DS) Buckowe Yam, Melissa Liu (Cambridge Participatory Budget & Engagement Coordinator)

Announcements:

- Because our board has several vacancies, we do not always know whether we will have quorum before our meetings. Loring and Dan's terms ended in September, and they could not stay on until we found successors. Rayna also recently informed us she needed to step down. We are very grateful for their service to CCPD.

Approval of Minutes:

- The August CCPD meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

Presentation on Cambridge Participatory Budget (CPB):

Melissa Liu reported (see attached slides for more details and resource links):

- We are currently in a participatory budget cycle!—see the slides for details on how to get involved.
- CPB is an annual process where City members can decide how to spend some of the Cambridge budget. We are now in our 12th PB cycle.
- Timeline: 4 stages
 - Idea collection**
 - This year we have \$1 million, so the City is asking members of the public, “if you had \$1 million to spend on anything for the city, what would it be?”
 - CPB collects over 1,000 ideas from the community. This stage allows people who don’t live in Cambridge to share their ideas.
 - Takes place through online forms, tables set up across the city, email, phone and mail.
 - Proposal development**
 - Volunteer CPB delegates convert ideas into tangible projects.
 - Involves “speed consulting” event where volunteers discuss project ideas with city staff.
 - City wide voting**
 - Cambridge residents aged 12+ can vote for their top 5 projects.
 - CPB does a lot of outreach in schools because Cambridge residents 12+ can vote.
 - CPB also sets up voting stations at housing developments, senior centers, City Hall, and other public spaces.

- Voting is also available online.
- Email and mail campaigns encourage participation.
- **Project Implementation**
- Examples of previous projects include:
 - Rat traps that do not use pesticides or poisons
 - Cool Spots project for more shaded seating spots
 - Pemberton street mural painted by youth in 2023
 - Cargo bikes for tree canopy care staff
 - Chromebooks for the Community Learning Center
- Boston and Somerville have both developed their own PB processes following Cambridge.
- Danielle shared that she is a PB delegate this year and has participated before. She particularly enjoys the speed consulting event. Some of her favorite projects included street signs with indigenous names and a bee honey collection station.
- Kate asked what CCPD can do to better advocate for accessibility project proposals.
- Melissa noted that, for example, people did not understand the importance of CART until someone compared it to TV subtitles. The project did not win, but this conversation showed the value of communicating its public benefit. Sometimes the public needs the broader benefits of accessibility projects explained to them.
- Rachel expressed concern that disability projects have never won at the CPB process. She asked how CPB deals with the ethics of voting on civil rights-related proposals.
 - Melissa affirmed that CPB folks consider this dynamic with disability-related projects. Residents have expressed concerns that the City should be funding these things anyway.
 - Melissa said people are often thinking about themselves voting. As a result, they gravitate towards the projects that interest them. We must consider how to push voters to focus more on the needs of their community members. Part of this is a communication issue, as people don't always understand what they are voting for.
- Rachel asked if there would be showcase event to educate the public on different PB projects. She also asked if CCPD is allowed to promote specific projects.
 - Melissa said the City used to do an annual PB ballot gallery walk, which stopped during the COVID pandemic. CPB may bring back the event and post videos about projects on City social media accounts.
 - City departments *are* allowed to "promote" projects but are not allowed to do so at voting sites. We are also prohibited from discouraging the public from voting for specific projects.

Chair's Report:

Danielle Jones McLaughlin reported:

- On October 4, CCPD participated in a Disability Pride event at Joan Lorenz Park that took a lot of planning and yielded a great turnout (hundreds of people!). Danielle volunteered at the event's sensory table and was part of the planning team. Many folks from the library and community took part in the activities and visited the resource tables. Danielle's highlight was the silent disco!

Staff Report:

Rachel Tanenhaus reported:

- Reiterated that the Disability Pride event was amazing:
 - We estimate that 350-400 people showed up and 100 large pizzas disappeared in 2 hours!
 - The event featured demonstrations from Special Olympics athletes and a presentation by the Cambridge Program

- There was a silent disco: people could dance to music while listening to headphones. The headphones had several music channels to choose from
 - An artist with a disability designed stickers for us to hand out
 - The Cambridge police brought an ice cream truck ("copsicles")
 - Rachel felt there was a lot of joy, and the event centered the disability community
 - We worked with Cambridge Health Alliance, the Recreation Department, the Metropolitan Area Planning Committee (MAPC), and many volunteers
- We closed applications for the new board positions on Tuesday. Emma is going to help us process and interview candidates. Once we fill the board seats, we can explore ideas from the retreat about improving our meetings.
- Rachel gave a presentation for MIT employees about disability accommodations. The event was sponsored by their Employee Resources Group for employees with disabilities. During the presentation, Rachel discussed how employers can accommodate their staff, and how employees can self-advocate.
- Rachel gave a presentation to staff at the Hive (a makerspace in the Cambridge Public Library open to Cambridge residents which has all sorts of equipment for creative projects like sewing, podcasting, etc.). They invited Rachel to talk about how to make the equipment and programming more accessible.
- Rachel serves on a committee that decides who gets grant money from the Forward Fund (managed by the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority). Rachel offers her expertise in assessing the accessibility of projects that apply. She noted that the nonprofits who applied want to make their projects as inclusive as possible.
- CCPD works with businesses seeking variance requests from the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB):
 - We worked with Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House, a social services nonprofit. They want to make sure their space is accessible to employees with mobility disabilities. They also want their programs to be accessible to those receiving services.
 - Other variance requests in Cambridge that came in front of MAAB included:
 - Darling restaurant (Kate advised the business owners on how best to make this request)
 - The Royal Sonesta Hotel
 - a residential building on Hayes Street
- Upcoming events:
 - Two events at the Watertown library by the Watertown Disabilities Commission:
 - On Monday 10/20 from 6:30-8:30pm there is a showing of Crip Camp, a movie about the disability rights movement.
 - A panel called "Democracy Talks: Advocates Respond to Disability Rights Under Attack" will take place on Tuesday 10/21 at 6:30pm. The panelists are notable disability rights advocates.
 - There will be changes to OneCare in January because of recent federal policy. [Disability Advocates Advancing our Healthcare Rights \(DAAHR\) is hosting an informational panel Thursday Nov 6 at 1pm on Zoom.](#)
- Our former Board Chair Keisha asked if CCPD would give a letter of support for an advocacy initiative. The letter asks the State Affordable Housing Trust Fund to allocate at least 10% of new housing for people with mobility disabilities. Rachel asked if the Board wants to support this.
 - Danielle expressed interest in supporting this initiative.
 - Rachel suggested that if people want to support it, she can reach out to Keisha for clarification on the timeline and the organization directing the initiative. Then, we could draft a letter and vote on it at the next board meeting.
 - A board member put a motion forward to write the letter in the coming weeks and vote on it at the November meeting. The motion to write the letter and hold a vote in November passed by a unanimous vote. Rachel said she would seek clarification from Keisha tomorrow.

Public Works Update:

Jim Wilcox reported on the following construction projects:

- **River Street:**
 - The Department of Public Works (DPW) is doing utility work along River Street at the Putnam Avenue intersection.
 - Next year DPW will continue working on sidewalks, bike lanes and roadways on River Street.
- **Carl Barron Plaza:**
 - There is ongoing construction at the Carl Barron Plaza in Central Square. Some of the new sidewalks there will open in November. These cut down the pedestrian detours, so they will be a welcome improvement for the winter.
 - The rest of the Carl Barron Plaza work will finish in the spring and summer.
- **Harvard Square Plaza:**
 - DPW is doing construction around the kiosk building and at the former Pit in Harvard Square.
 - Work will continue through the winter and most of next construction season. It should complete by November 2026.
- **Complete Streets program:** This is a DPW program aiming to improve streets through sidewalk and utility work. Current contracts include:
 - Contract 24: This contract is almost finished. Dodge Street and Chestnut Street are complete, and Elm Street will finish in a few weeks.
 - Contract 25: Work has finished on Montgomery Street. Construction on Maple Avenue will wrap up in the next few weeks. Utility work on Dana Street will continue through the winter. Work on Centre Street and Green Street will start this winter. This project will continue through the end of 2026.
 - Two more contracts will be going to bid over the winter:
 - 26A: This will include Chetwynd Road (a dead-end street). The project will create a shared street for cars, bikes and pedestrians. It will also include work on Gray, Haskell, and Norfolk Streets from Broadway to the Somerville line.
 - 26B: This includes Avon Hill Street, Hillside Avenue, Inman Street and Carlisle Street.
- **Cambridgeport infrastructure:** DPW has two projects going out for construction bids.
 - Clement Morgan Park and Paolillo Tot Lot: DPW expects construction on both parks to start in the winter. The parks will close during construction.
 - Streets package: contract will involve full reconstruction (utilities, streets and sidewalks) on the following streets:
 - Harvard Street from Prospect Street to Portland Street
 - Full length of Essex Street
 - Norfolk Street between Harvard Street and Bishop Allen Drive
 - Columbia Street from Harvard Street to Bishop Allen Drive
 - Full length of Worcester Street, Suffolk Street and Washington Street
- **Massachusetts Avenue:** DPW is making improvements for bicycles, public transit and pedestrians.
 - Work is ongoing between Waterhouse Street and Linnean Street, which will continue for a year and a half.
 - DPW is developing a design for Massachusetts Avenue from Linnean Street to Alewife Brook parkway.
 - Contracts for the rest of the project will go out for bids over the next few years.
- **Sidewalk Maintenance Contract:** involves various sidewalk repairs throughout the city and tackles accessibility issues.
- During this construction season, DPW reconstructed 122 pedestrian ramps to improve accessibility.

Public Comment:

None.

Meeting adjourned at 6:45pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Maya Friedrich



City of Cambridge, MA Participatory Budgeting

An Approach to Community-Led Decision Making and Engagement



What is Participatory Budgeting (PB)?

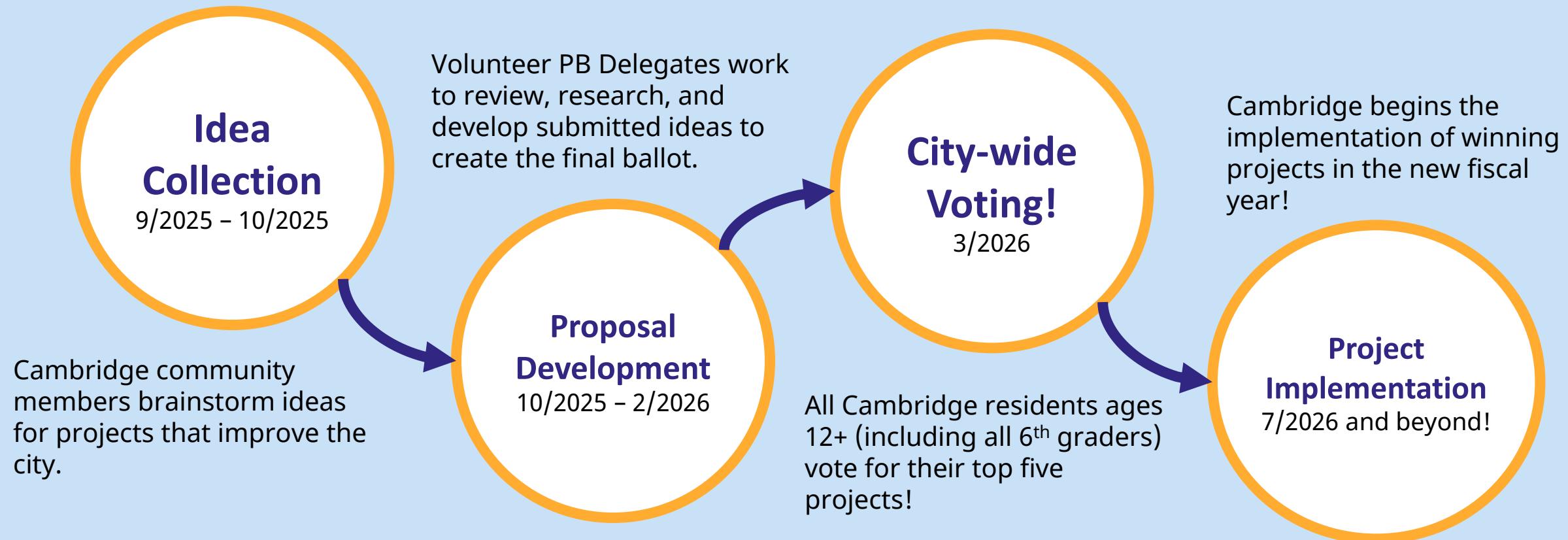


Participatory Budgeting is a process where community members decide how to spend part of the City's budget to improve Cambridge.

PB gives real people, real power, over real money.

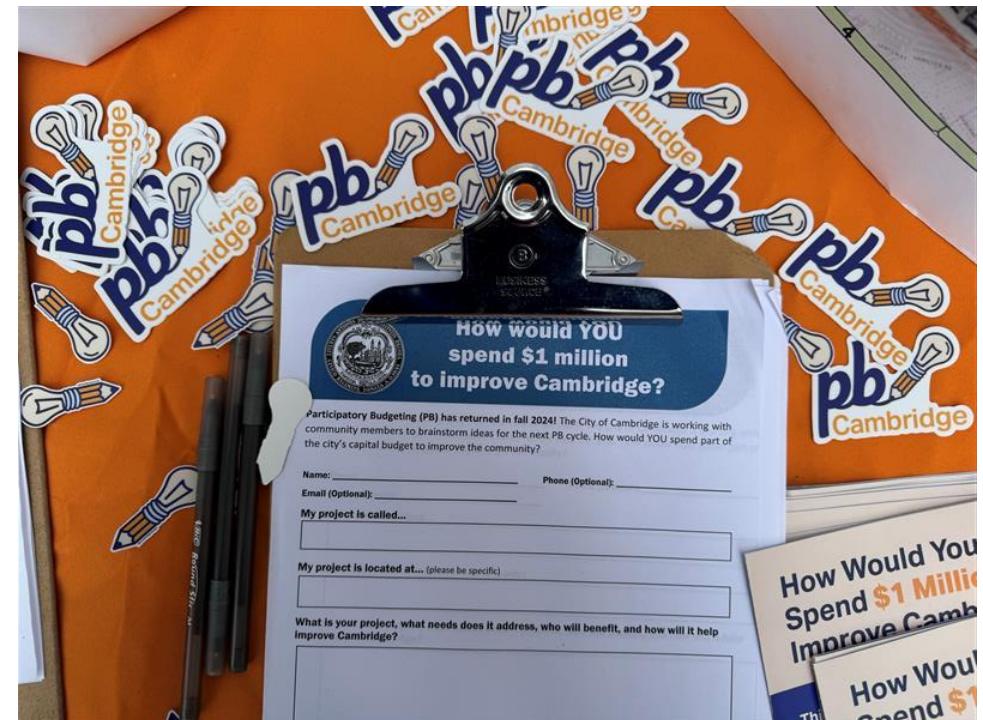
Cambridge residents have set aside over \$10.5 million to pay for 79 PB projects since the first PB Cambridge cycle in 2014.

PB12 Timeline





Idea Collection



What is the title of your idea?

Pickle Ball at Glacken Field

 Juliana Davis suggested this Community Resources & Education idea near 600 Huron Avenue, Cambridge, MA.

What is your idea, and how does it improve Cambridge?

I believe it is possible to add extra lines to a tennis court so that it can also be used as a pickle ball court. Would it be possible to do this at some of the courts at Glacken Field?

[VIEW ON MAP](#)

 0 Support This!



What is the title of your idea?

CPL bike racks

 Mark Feeney suggested this Transportation, Streets & Sidewalks idea near 449 Broadway, Cambridge, MA.

What is your idea, and how does it improve Cambridge?

There is often limited space for locking bikes at the library. Adding additional racks/posts would improve things for both library patrons and Rindge students who cycle to school.

[VIEW ON MAP](#)

 1 Support This!



What is the title of your idea?

Skate features in public spaces

 Landon wheeler suggested this city-wide Facilities, Parks & Recreation idea.

What is your idea, and how does it improve Cambridge?

Integrate deliberately fun to skate features in Public spaces like Malmö and Barcelona do. Integrate skateboarding into public spaces rather than deliberately excluding them.

[VIEW ON MAP](#)

 0 Support This!



What is the title of your idea?

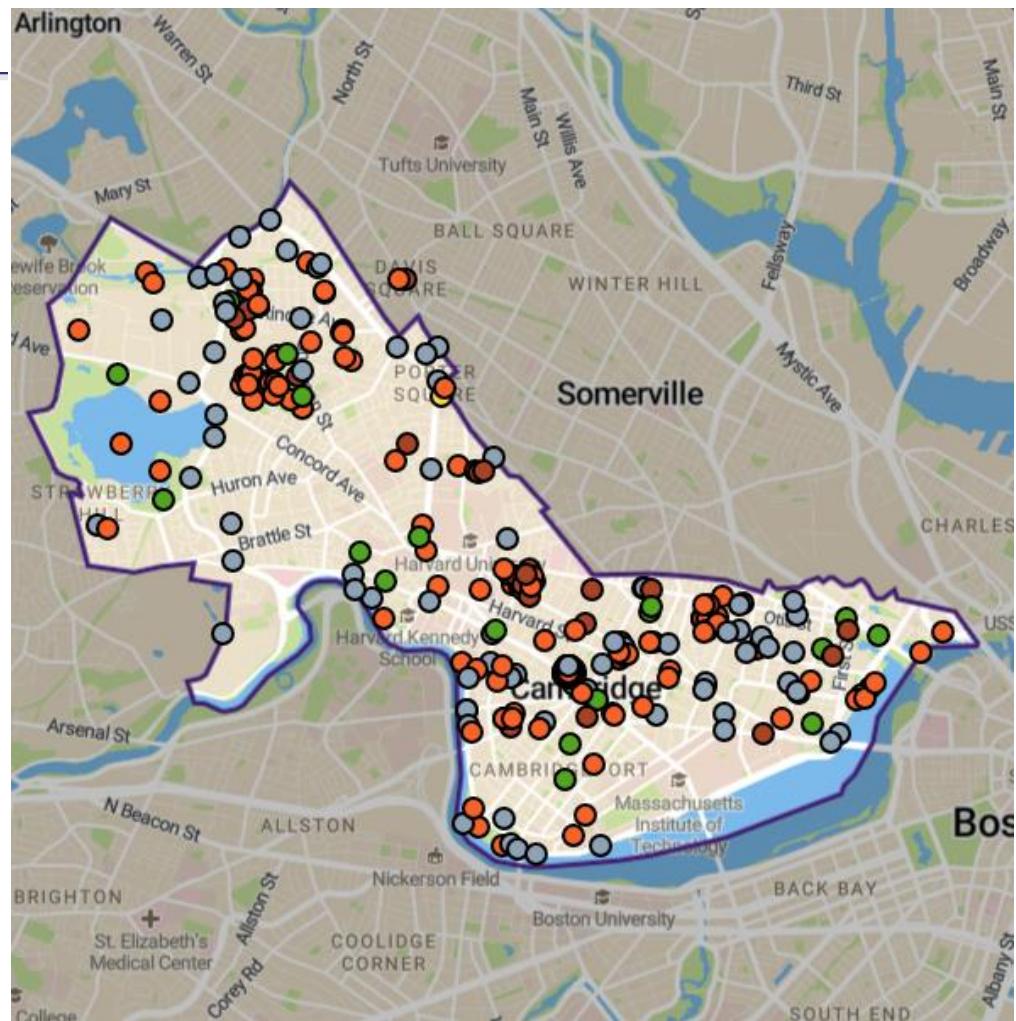
Scatter seating benches throughout the city

 jh suggested this city-wide Transportation, Streets & Sidewalks idea.

What is your idea, and how does it improve Cambridge?

There are a large number of pedestrian friendly sidewalks in every neighborhood that need occasional benches. Going to or from a major square, where there are some benches, and home or work can be a long walk.

 0 Support This!









Why PB?



- Provide a space for community members to engage in a fun, easy way to contribute to how the city can be improved for them
- Ensure that the budget reflects the public's needs, and inform the community on existing initiatives
- Foster civic engagement and community spirit, create community leaders and ways to work closely with the broader community

PB Resources



- [Cambridge Participatory Budgeting](#)
- [Participatory Budgeting Project](#)
- [Boston Youth Lead the Change](#)
- [Boston Participatory Budgeting: Ideas in Action](#)
- [Somerville Participatory Budgeting](#)