

An aerial photograph of the Concord-Alewife area in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The image shows a mix of residential and commercial buildings, green spaces, and a large body of water (the Alewife Brook) winding through the center. The text is overlaid on this image.

Concord-Alewife Planning Study

Public Meeting

March 27, 2003

Identifying Planning Goals:
Discussion and Workshops

Concord-Alewife Planning Study

 Goody, Clancy
& Associates

THOMAS HANCOCK BOYNTON
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COMMUNITY PLANNING SOLUTIONS



City of Cambridge

Agenda

- Welcome and introductions
- Presentation: A review of the study area, issues, opportunities, and challenges
- Workshops: Looking at Concord-Alewife
- Reporting back
- Next steps

A look at the study area



Concord-Alewife Planning Study

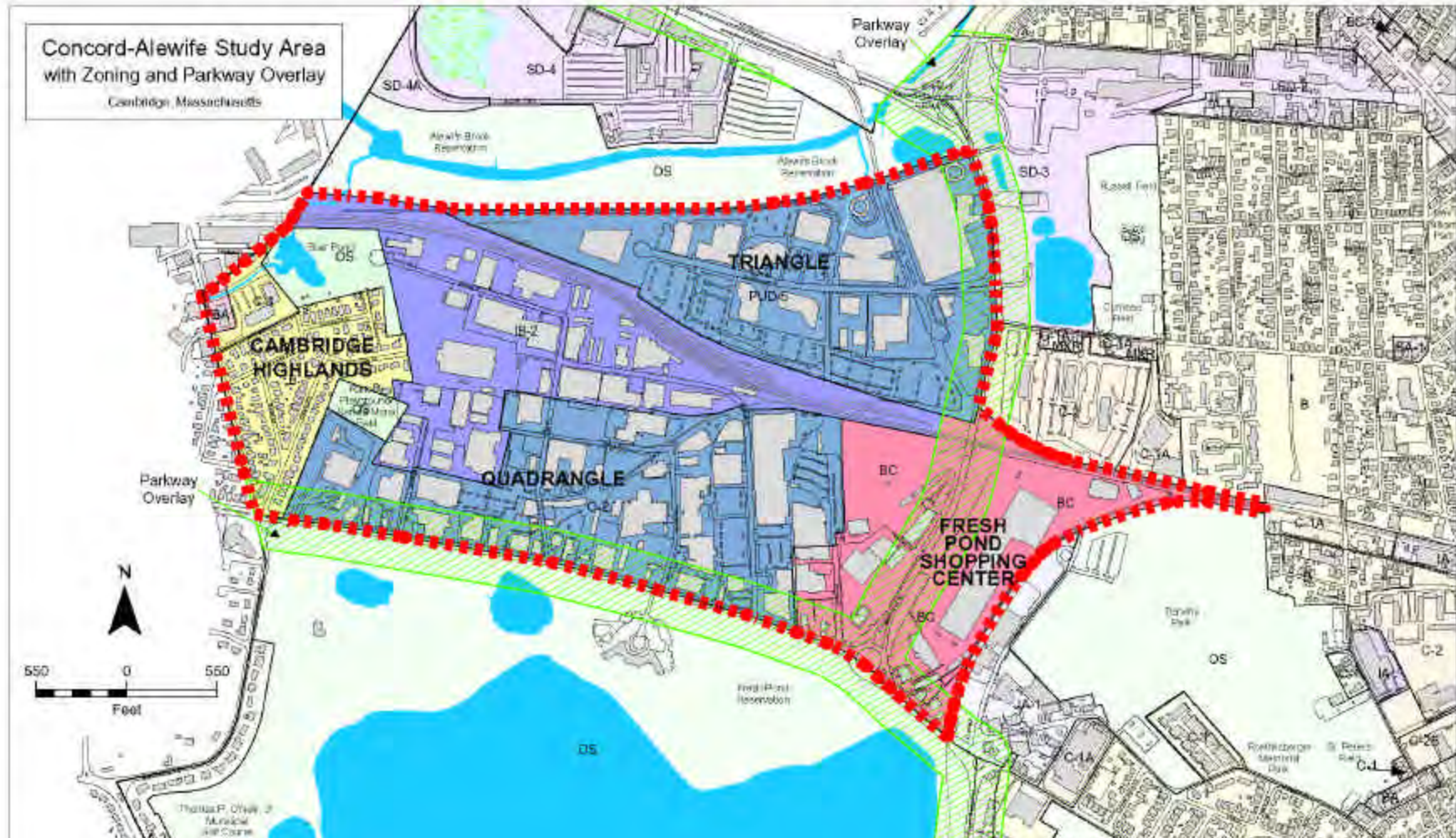
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City of Cambridge

Zoning and land use



Overview of the study area

The Highlands
19 acres
210 units housing



Overview of the study area

Concord Avenue
18 acres



Overview of the study area

The Quadrangle
80 acres



Overview of the study area

The Triangle
44 acres



Overview of the study area

Shopping Centers
20 acres

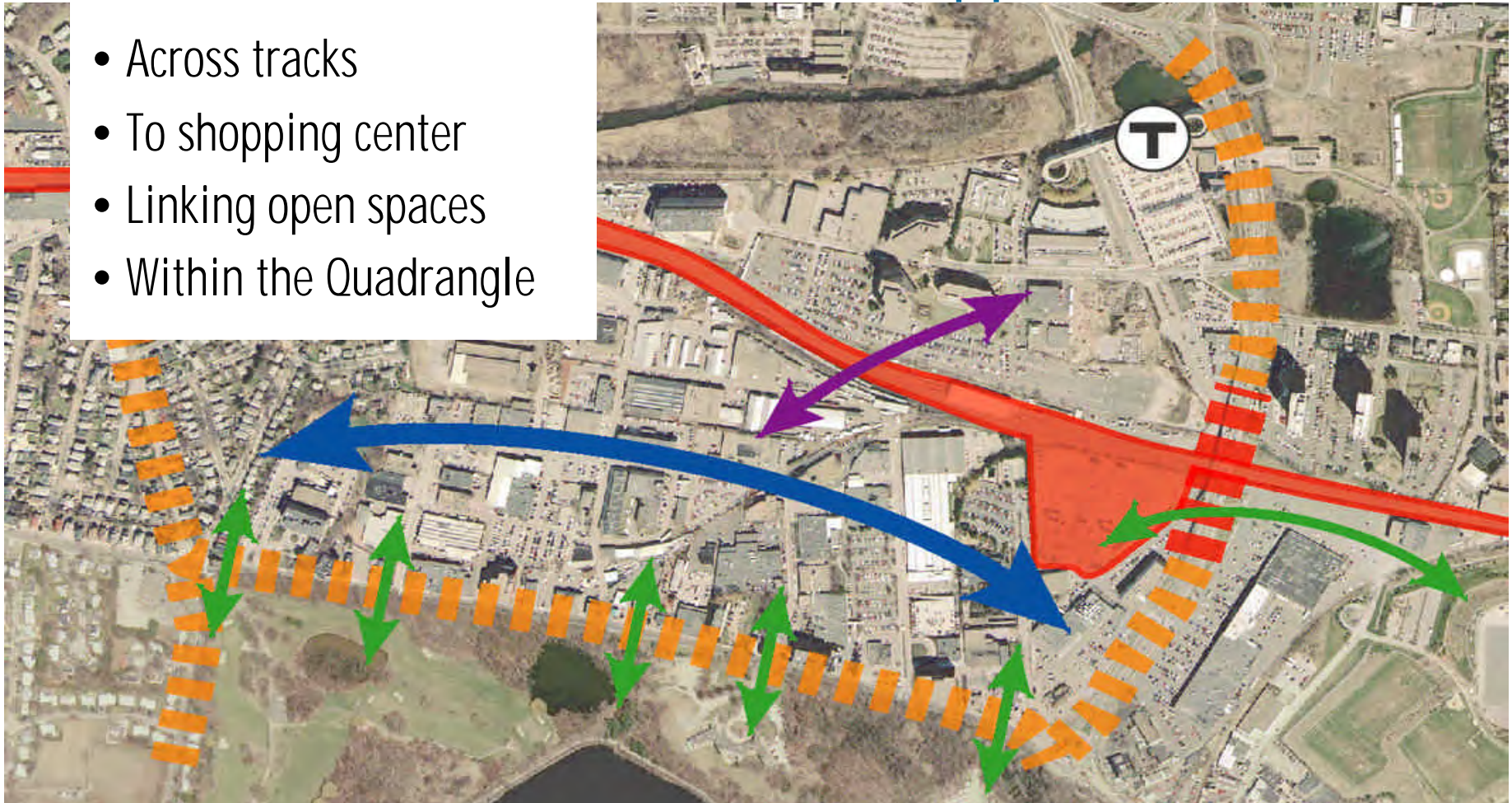


The Concord Alewife Planning Study – Five Emerging Goals

- Overcoming barriers and improving connections.
- Supporting and enhancing the community.
- Building a real “sense of place.”
- Forming a district of “good neighbors.”
- Preserving the natural environment and enhancing access to open space.

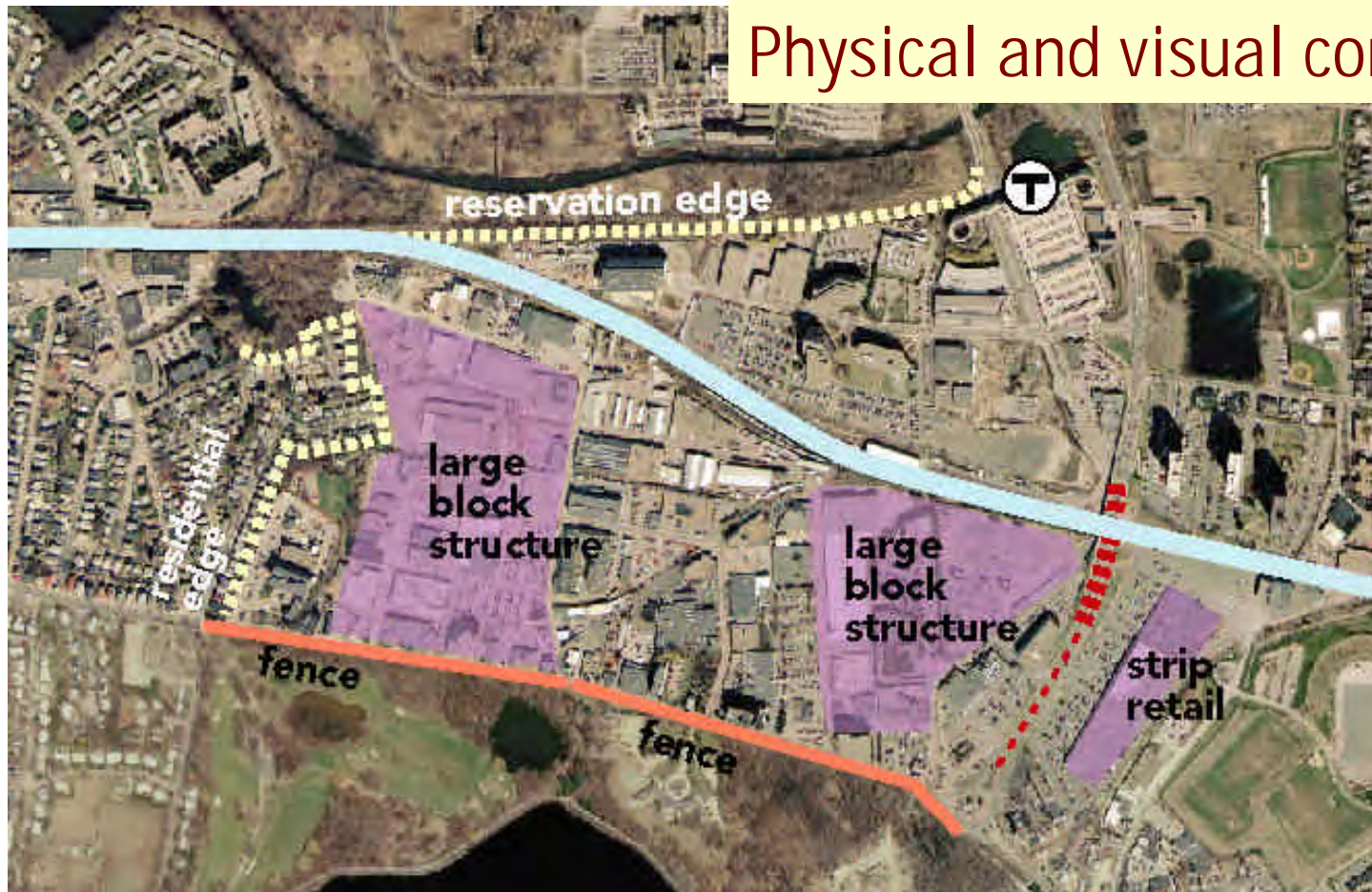
Overcoming barriers and improving connections: *Where are the opportunities?*

- Across tracks
- To shopping center
- Linking open spaces
- Within the Quadrangle



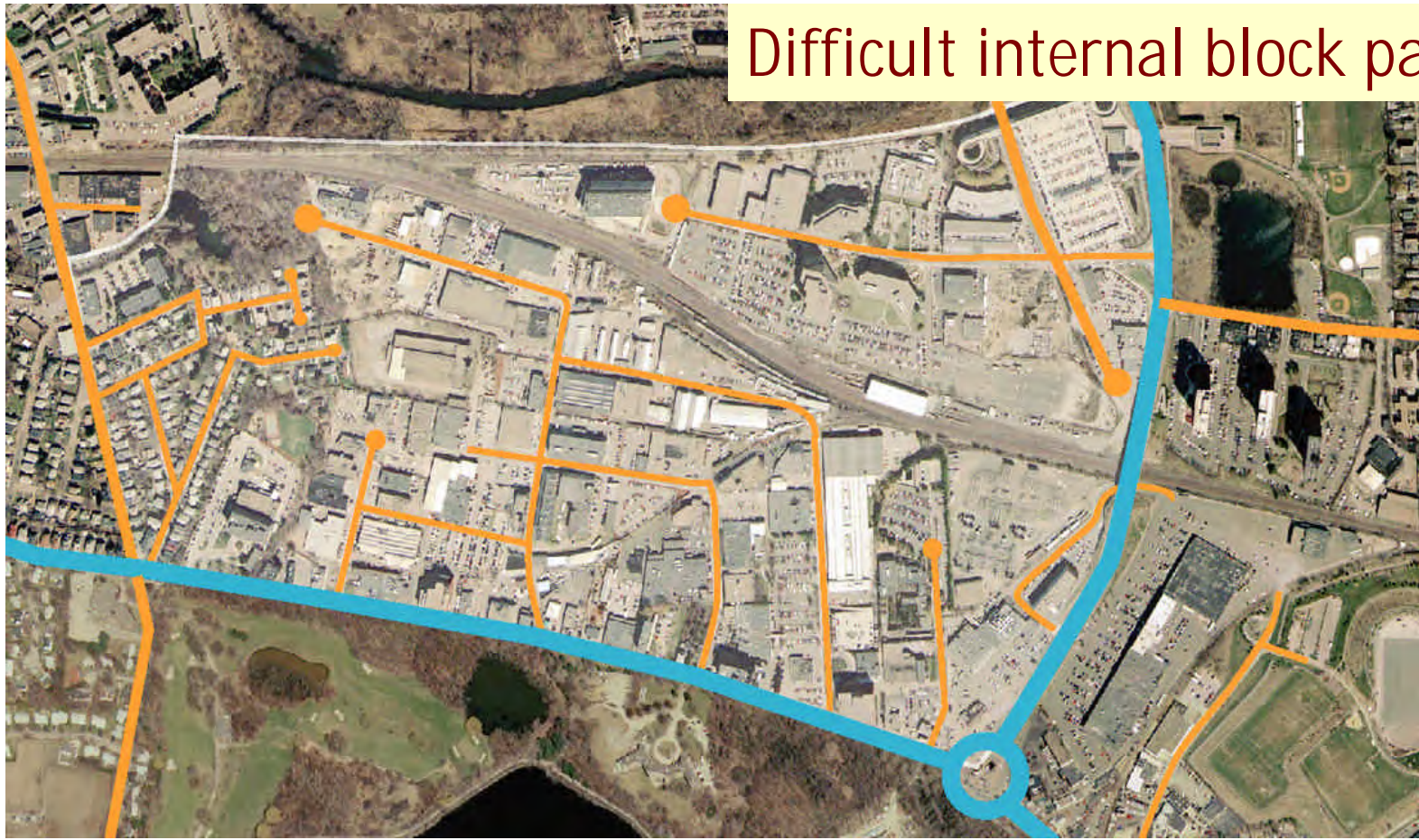
Overcoming barriers and improving connections: **What are the challenges?**

Physical and visual constraints



Overcoming barriers and improving connections: *What are the challenges?*

Difficult internal block patterns



Overcoming barriers and improving connections: What are the challenges?

Accessibility within the study area



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Overcoming barriers and improving connections: *What are the challenges?*

Accessibility within the study area



Supporting and enhancing the Concord-Alewife community: *Where are the opportunities?*

- Build on the stability of the existing community.



Supporting and enhancing the Concord-Alewife community: *Where are the opportunities?*

- Design new places and public spaces that support the community and a range of activities
- Make them accessible
- “Think personal and interactive”
 - Committee member



Pedestrian-friendly street with mixed uses

Supporting and enhancing the Concord-Alewife community: *What are the challenges?*

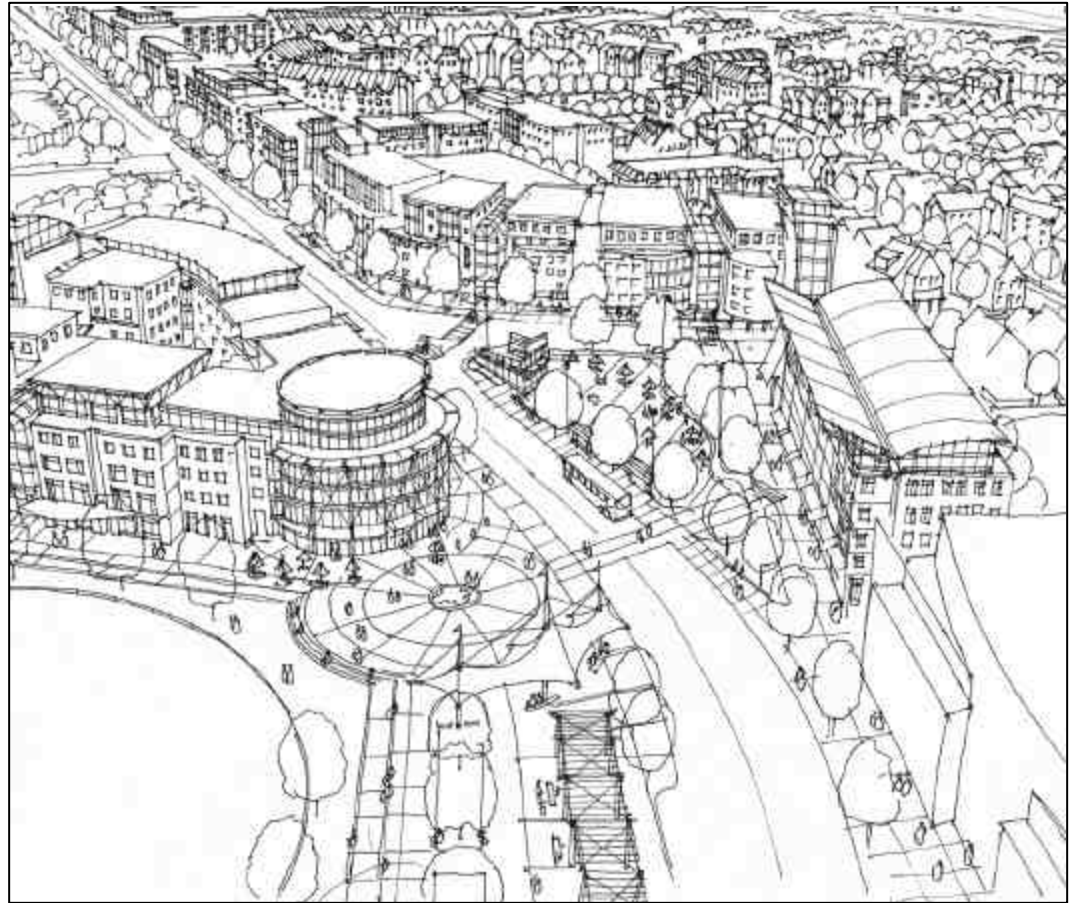
- Lack of meeting places
- Lack of pedestrian access
- Lack of critical mass to support new community "hearts"



Building a real “sense of place”: Where are the opportunities?

- Concord Avenue and Alewife Brook Parkway as true gateways
- Internal streets that welcome pedestrians
- Reinforcing connections to great outdoor spaces

Study for new
neighborhood square



Building a real “sense of place”: Where are the challenges?

- Concord Avenue:
Discontinuous street edges with awkward mix of uses
- Alewife Brook Parkway:
Suburban-style development and vast parking lots



Building a real “sense of place”: Where are the challenges?

- Lack of distinction in the Quadrangle between public and private spaces
- Blurred line between pedestrian and auto realms
- No hierarchy of public uses or architecture



Building a real “sense of place”: Where are the challenges?

- Lack of physical or visual corridors to outdoor spaces



Forming a district of “good neighbors”: What are the opportunities?

- Potentially conflicting land uses in the study area



Good transitions make good neighbors



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Forming a district of “good neighbors”: What are the challenges?

- Transitions in development scale in the study area



Preserving the natural environment and enhancing access to open space: Where are the opportunities?

- Fresh Pond Corridor Enhancement Project
- Fresh Pond and Alewife reservations
- Implementing “best management practices”
- “Connecting the green beads”
 - from Committee member





Environment and open space: What are the challenges?

- 90% impervious surface in Quadrangle
- Sensitivity of both Alewife and Fresh Pond reservations
- Managing development within environmental constraints

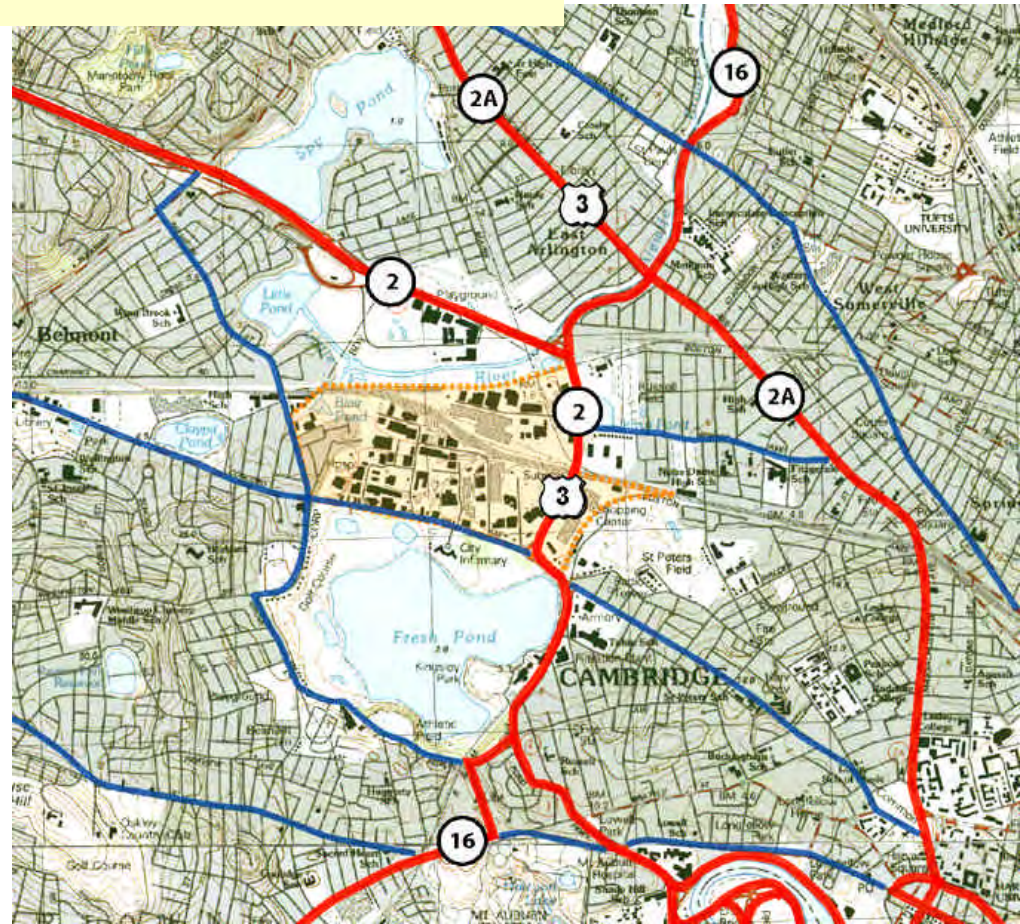
A review of the major technical considerations

- Transportation issues
- Market issues

Transportation issues:

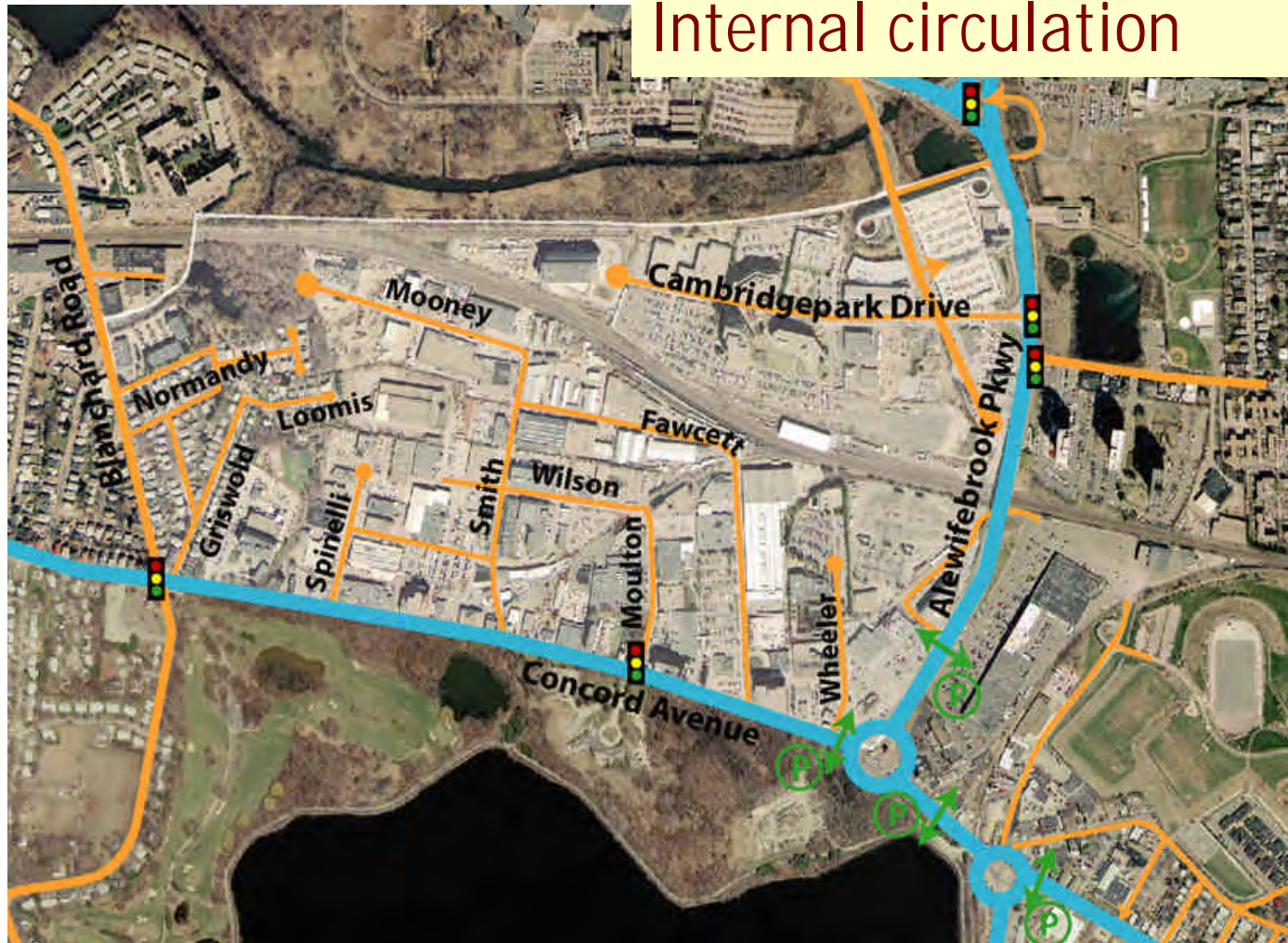
Regional vs. local traffic

- Study area is a small piece of the puzzle.
- Difficult to influence regional traffic.
- Auto access to the study area itself.



Transportation issues:

Internal circulation



Transportation issues:

The role of transit

- Red Line service at Alewife – regional and local functions.
- “Feeder” bus routes to station
- Concord Avenue routes connect to Harvard Square
- Commuter rail



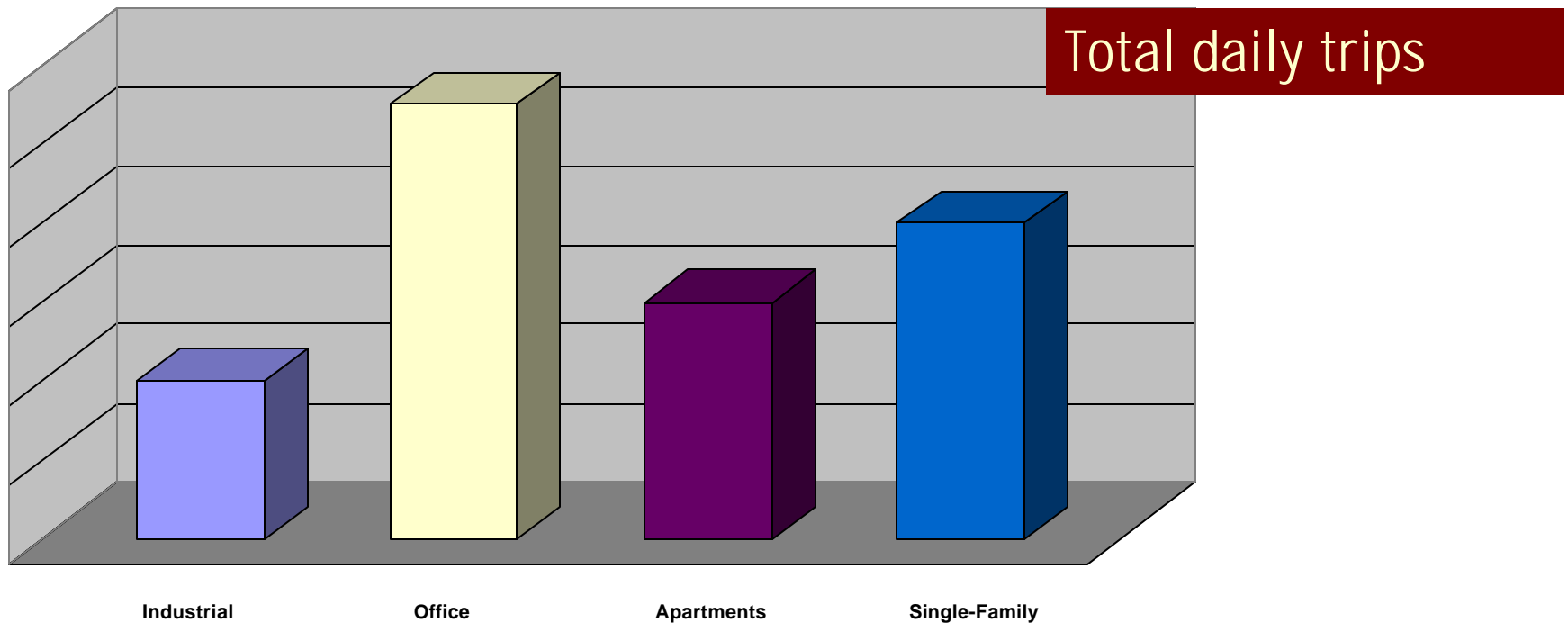


Transportation issues: Transportation is one piece of the puzzle

- Enhance opportunities for making connections
- Enhance non-auto mobility
- Influence different kinds of land use

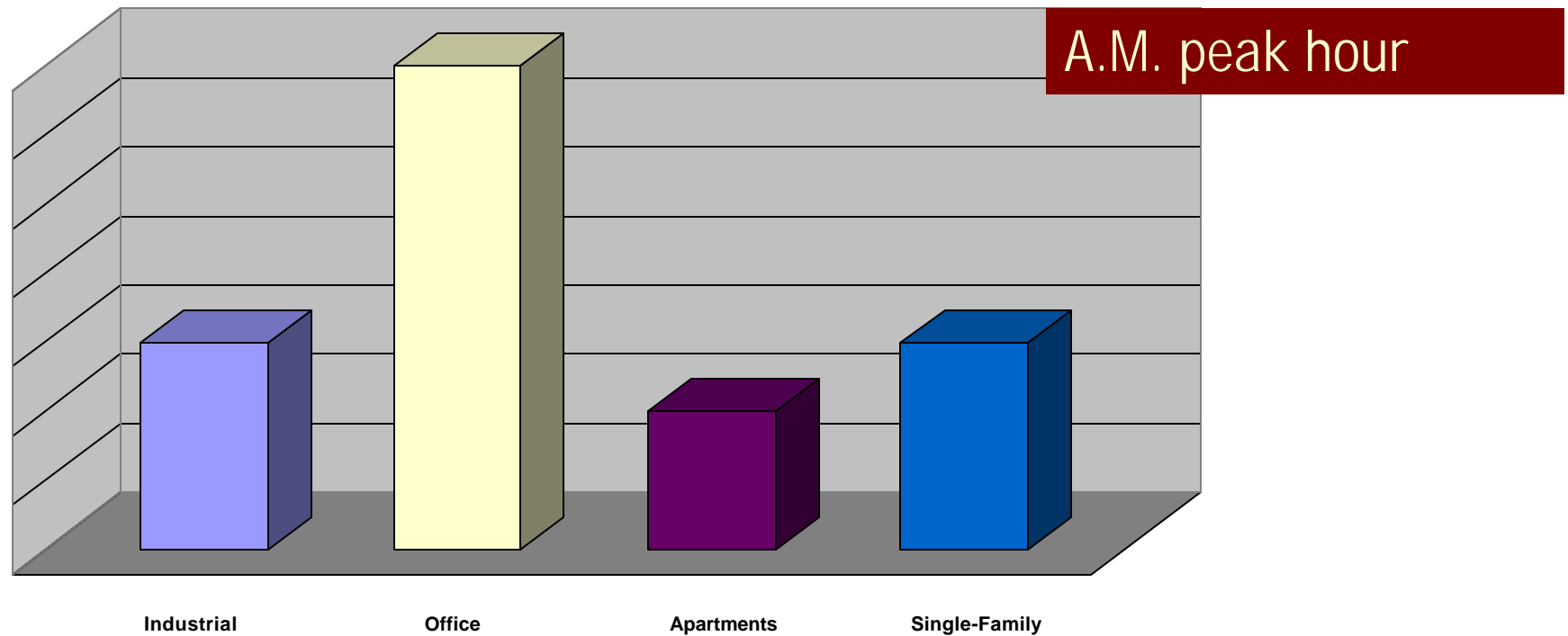
Transportation issues: Ways of dealing with limitations

How land-use options affect auto trip generation



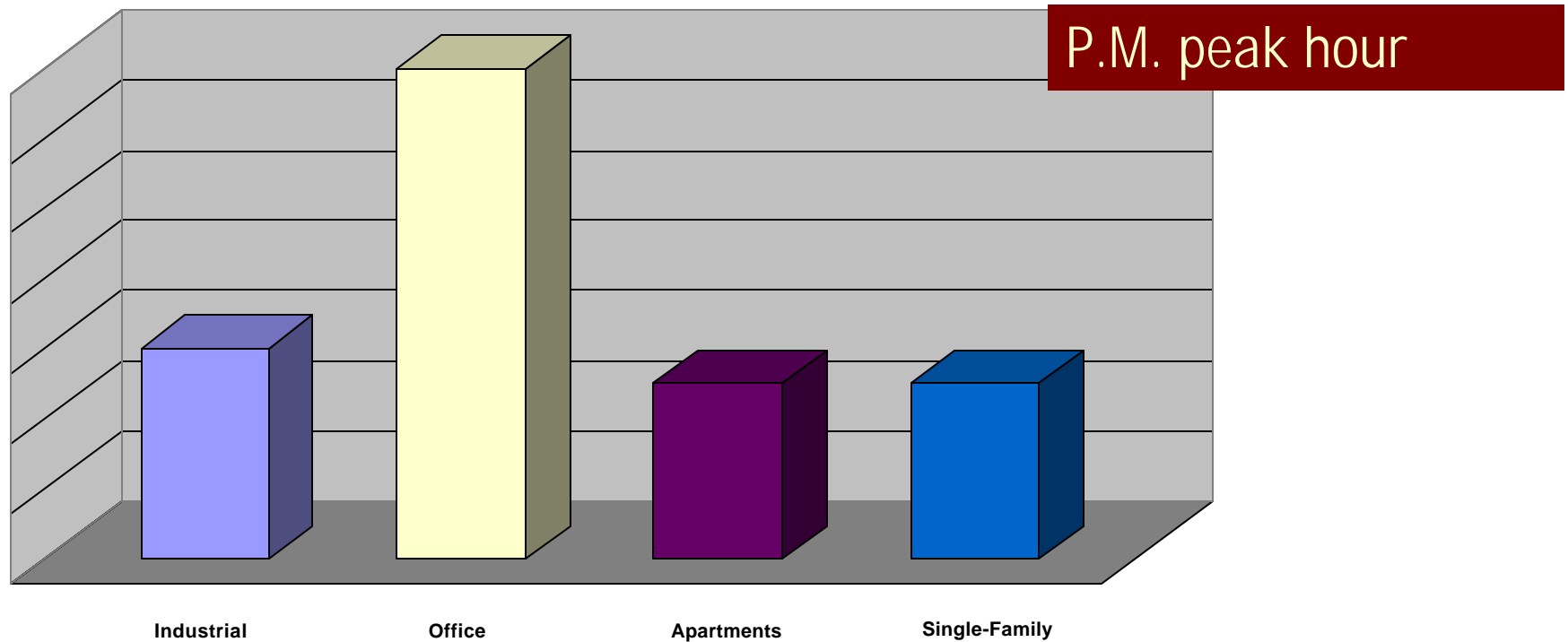
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Transportation issues: Ways of dealing with limitations

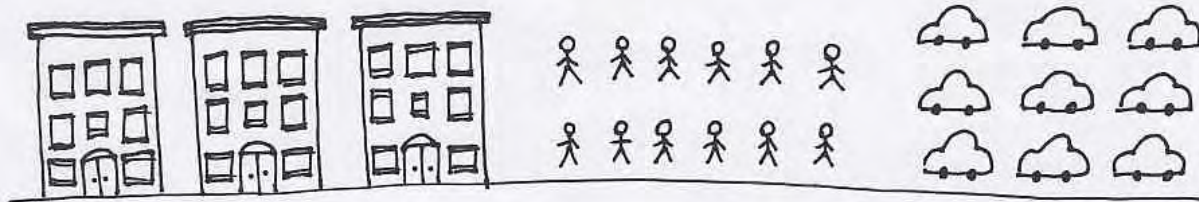
How land-use options affect auto trip generation



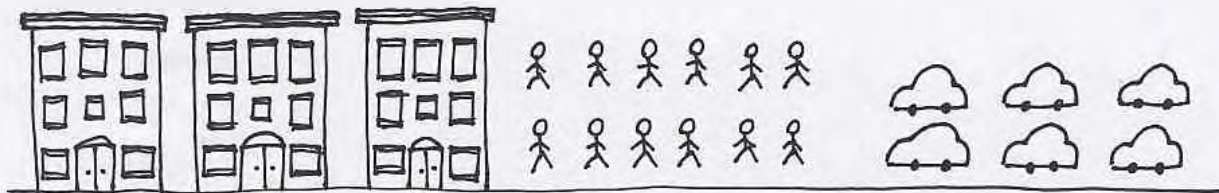
Transportation issues: What impact could transportation have on development?

Making transit more attractive could change mode splits

75% use cars



50% use cars



Market issues:

Development trends for the region

- Residential
 - Ownership & rental: strong
 - Assisted Living/Independent Living: strong
 - Special Nursing Facility: moderate
- R&D/Industrial
 - R&D and warehouse: strong
 - Construction: moderate
 - Manufacturing: weak
- Retail
 - Neighborhood and community: strong
 - Regional: moderate
- Hospitality
 - Restaurant: moderate
 - Hotel: weak
- Office
 - Class A/B: moderate
 - Class C/D: weak

Market issues:

Development themes in the study area

- Residential
 - Mature neighborhood
 - In-fill housing
- Transit-oriented
 - Office/R&D park
 - High-density residential
- Industrial district
 - Established businesses
 - Business incubators
 - Back Streets uses
- Retail and commercial destinations
 - Convenience retail and consumer services
 - Restaurants
 - Hotel
- Community service destinations
 - Medical offices
 - School
 - AL/SNF

Market issues: Existing patterns of development





Market issues:

Development trends and patterns

The nature of development to date:

- Opportunistic
- Eclectic
- Driven by:
 - parcel availability and location
 - ownership and occupancy
 - market context and timing

Market issues:

The “ambient outlook” for the study area

- ✱ No change expected
 - Mature residential neighborhood
 - Major investment within last 20 years
 - Long-term leases or other restrictions
- Areas of potential change
 - Higher-value uses or densities in the future
 - Vacant sites or buildings
 - Parking lots/yard storage





Market issues:

What could influence the “ambient outlook?”

Changes in:

- the market
- amenities
- parcelization
- streets
- access/transit
- zoning

Workshops: “A Look at Concord-Alewife”

Rules of the game

- assignments
- participants’ role
- facilitators’ role
- recorders’ role
- floaters’ role
- reporting back
- time

Workshops: Reporting out

- Where were the surprises?
- Where were the exciting opportunities?

Next steps

- Input from public meeting to inform Committee's work
- Charrette scheduled for Saturday May 17, Tobin School