

Central Square Advisory Committee

February 8, 2012



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Agenda

- **Planning process and product overview**
- **Emerging vision and strategies**
- **Getting into the strategies: key questions, tools, products**
 - Public spaces
 - Walking streets
 - Mixed-income housing
 - Retail diversity
- **Discussion**
- **Next steps**



urban design/planning study for
the **central** and **kendall square area**

EASTERN CAMBRIDGE PLANNING STUDY

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE



CAMBRIDGE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
EASTERN CAMBRIDGE PLANNING STUDY COMMITTEE

OCTOBER 2001

Major Plan Components

- Land Use – Development (uses, density, heights, setbacks)
- Urban Design
- Public Space
- Transportation
- Economic Development/Retail

CENTRAL SQUARE IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT MASTER PLAN REPORT

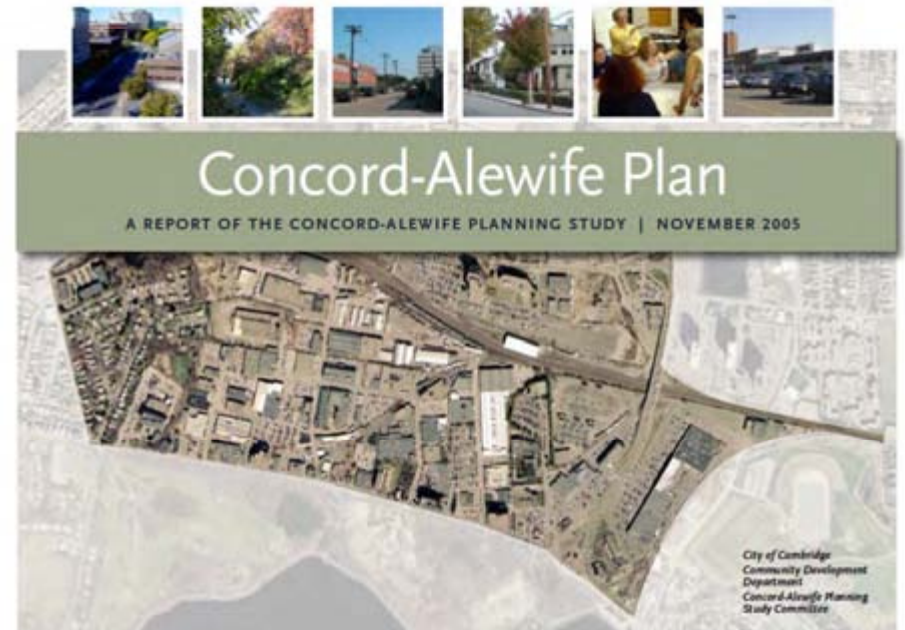
City of Cambridge
Community Development Department

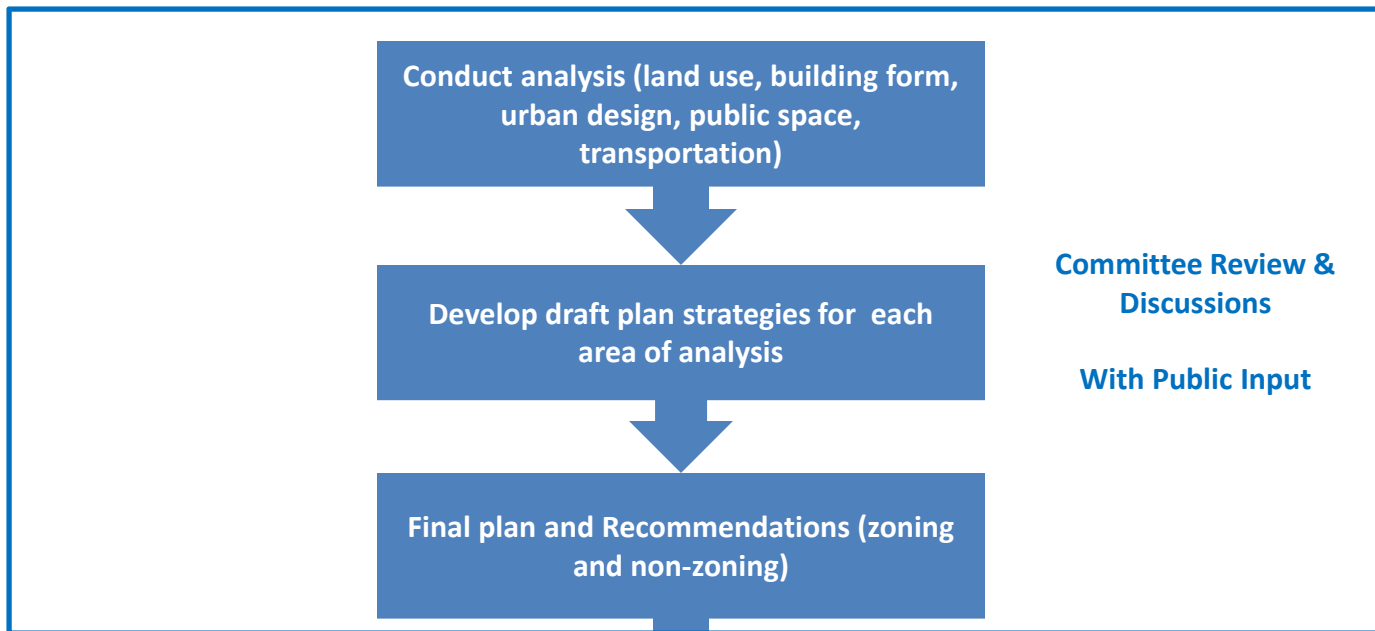
Central Square Committee

Prepared by: Carr, Lynch, Hack and Sandell

In association with: John Lees and Jeffery Dawson Assoc.
Ripman Lighting Assoc.
Rizzo Associates Inc.

May 1995





ZONING RECOMMENDATIONS

- zoning language developed by staff and consultants
- zoning petition for consideration and action at City Council and Planning Board
- shapes future development and creates mechanisms to leverage positive change through redevelopment
- guides public-private partnerships

VISION

- guide property owners
- guide project review
- create shared understanding of the future
- assist in marketing

IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

- implemented through redevelopment
- through public-private partnerships
- through state or grant funding
- through city budget
- through local business association or other non-profit



ECaPS Committee Recommendation:

Encourage retail on Third Street and Broadway to create active street life in Kendall Square.

Zoning Language:

13.13.1 (3) ...the first 50,000 square feet of retail ... shall not be counted toward the non-residential GFA limitations ...provided the GFA is located on the ground floor of a multistory building, fronts on and has a public entrance onto Third Street, Broadway, or a public park, and for each individual establishment the GFA does not exceed 10,000 square feet.



ECaPS Committee Recommendation:

Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Streets

- For residential uses, provide small setbacks (5 to 15 feet) for stoops, porches, and front gardens.
- Provide individual entrances to ground floor units along the street.

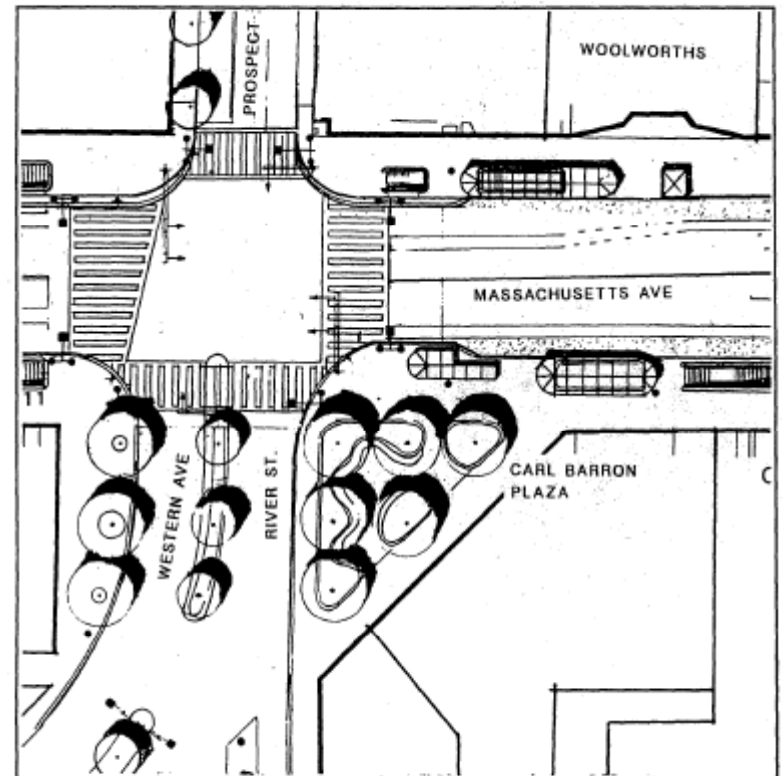




Central Square Improvements Committee, 1995



Plan Recommendation



Conceptual plan of proposed Carl Barron Plaza



Emerging vision

A destination for cultural life, retail choices and community gathering

Supporting plan strategies:

- Enhance ability of Central Square to support active civic life and dynamic cultural arts – especially in **public spaces**
- Connect Central Square with the larger community with a network of **great walking streets** and improved walking, biking and transit choices
- Preserve diversity of housing choices, community identity, the arts, retail and workplaces by adding **mixed-income housing**
- Maintain and expand **retail diversity** (type, price point, ethnicity...)



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Applying the strategies: managing change

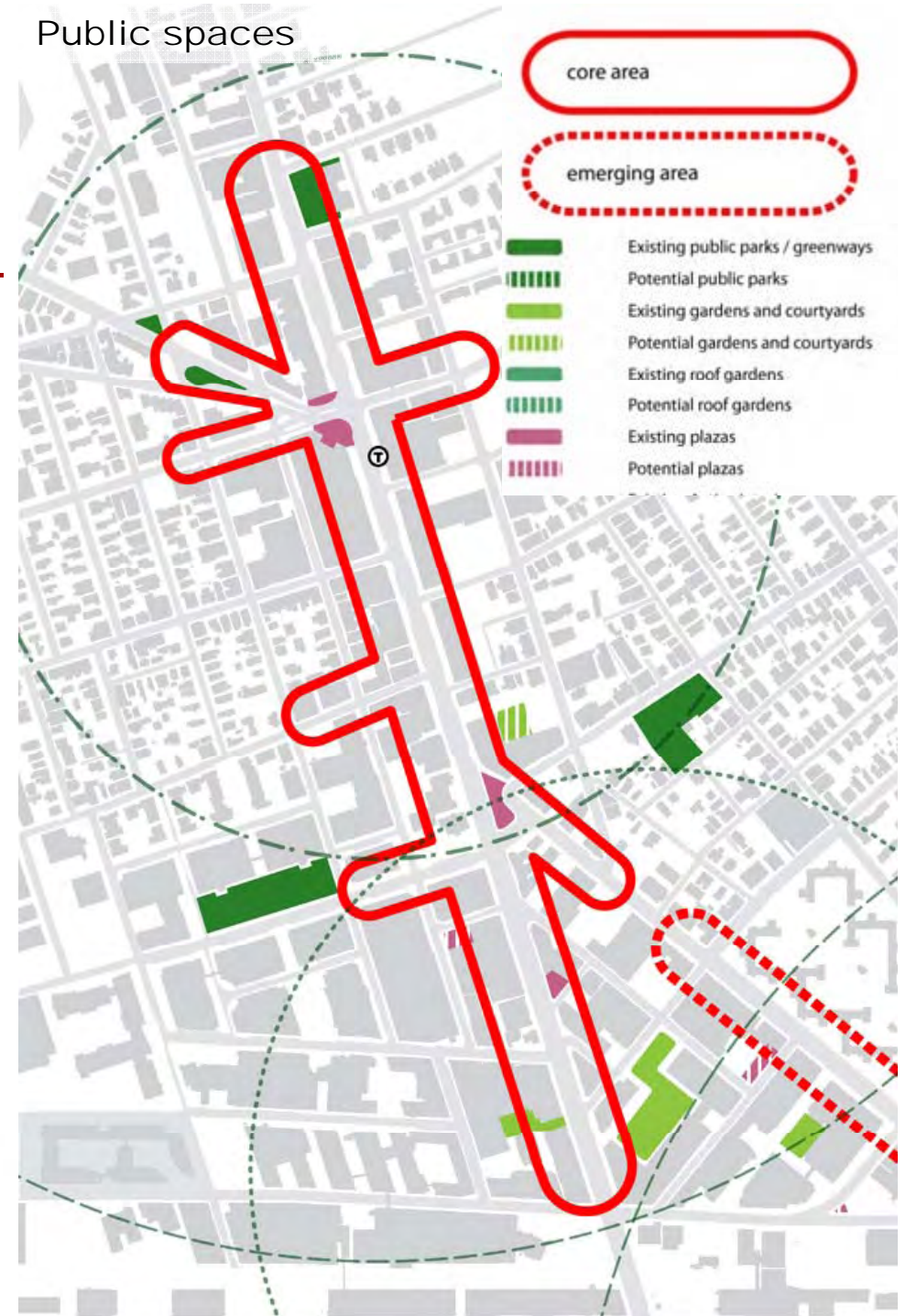


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Strategy 1: Enhance ability of Central Square to support active civic life and dynamic cultural arts — especially in **public spaces**

KEY QUESTIONS

- **Physical Space:** Does the design fit the intended range of activities and experiences?
- **Context:** Does adjacent land and building use/design support active use of the space?
- **Culture of use:** Is the space welcoming to all? Is it cared for?
- What **improvements** are needed in each category?

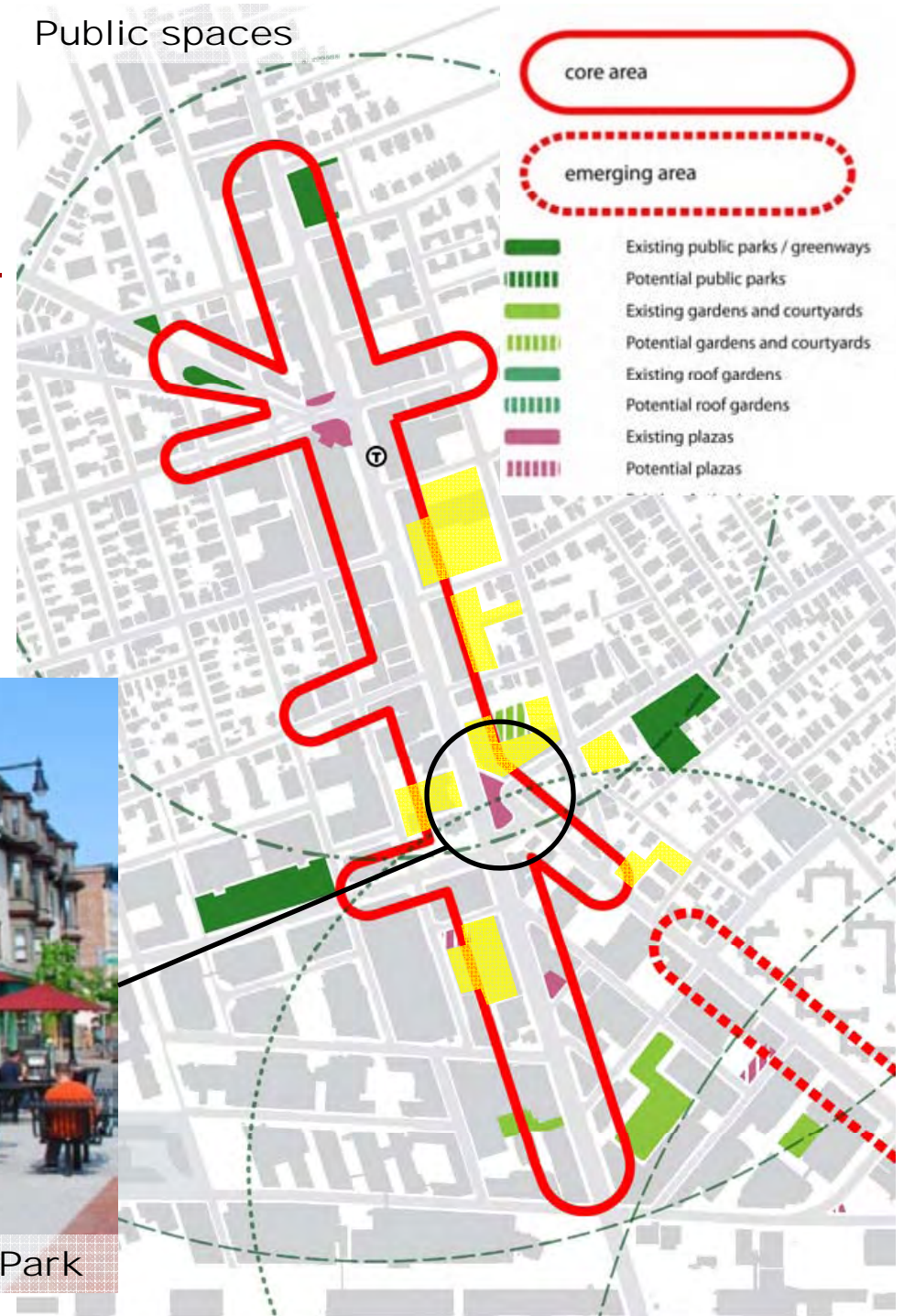


Strategy 1: Enhance ability of Central Square to support active civic life and dynamic cultural arts — especially in **public spaces**

Jill Brown-Rhone Park: Versatile space, restaurants, business stewardship, programming, quality plantings and furniture all work together



Jill Brown-Rhone Park



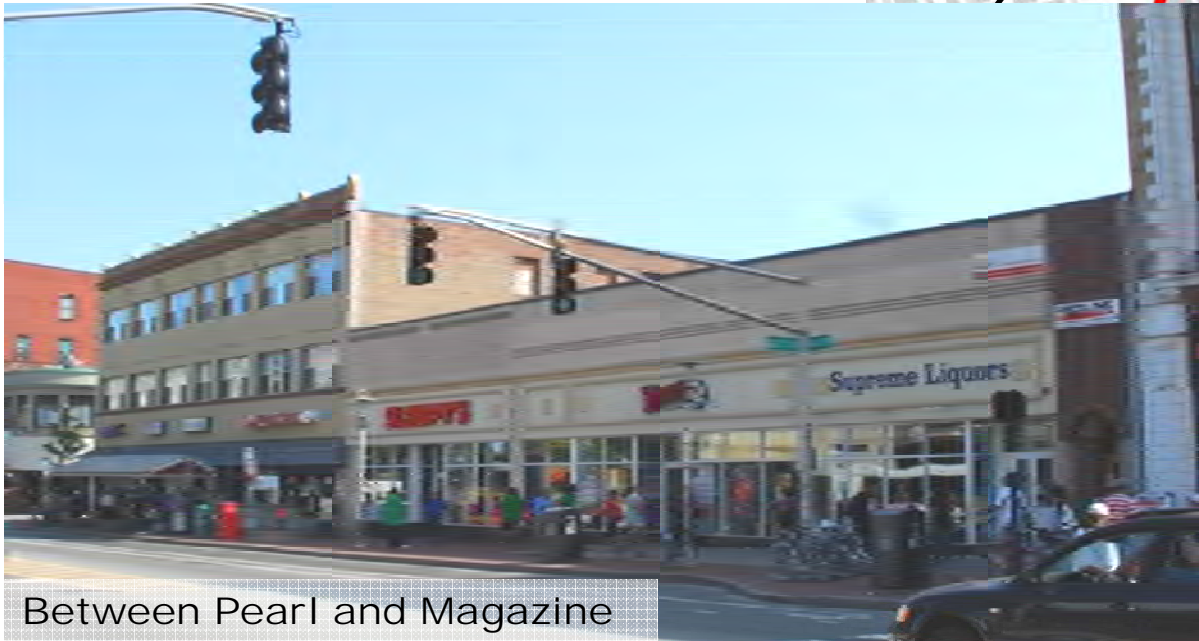
Strategy 1: Enhance ability of Central Square to support active civic life and dynamic cultural arts — especially in **public spaces**

Carl Barron Plaza: Holmes building frontage and retail occupancy pose challenges. Space constraints limit programming. Plaza alive with pedestrians, transit connections.



Strategy 1: Enhance ability of Central Square to support active civic life and dynamic cultural arts — especially in *public spaces*

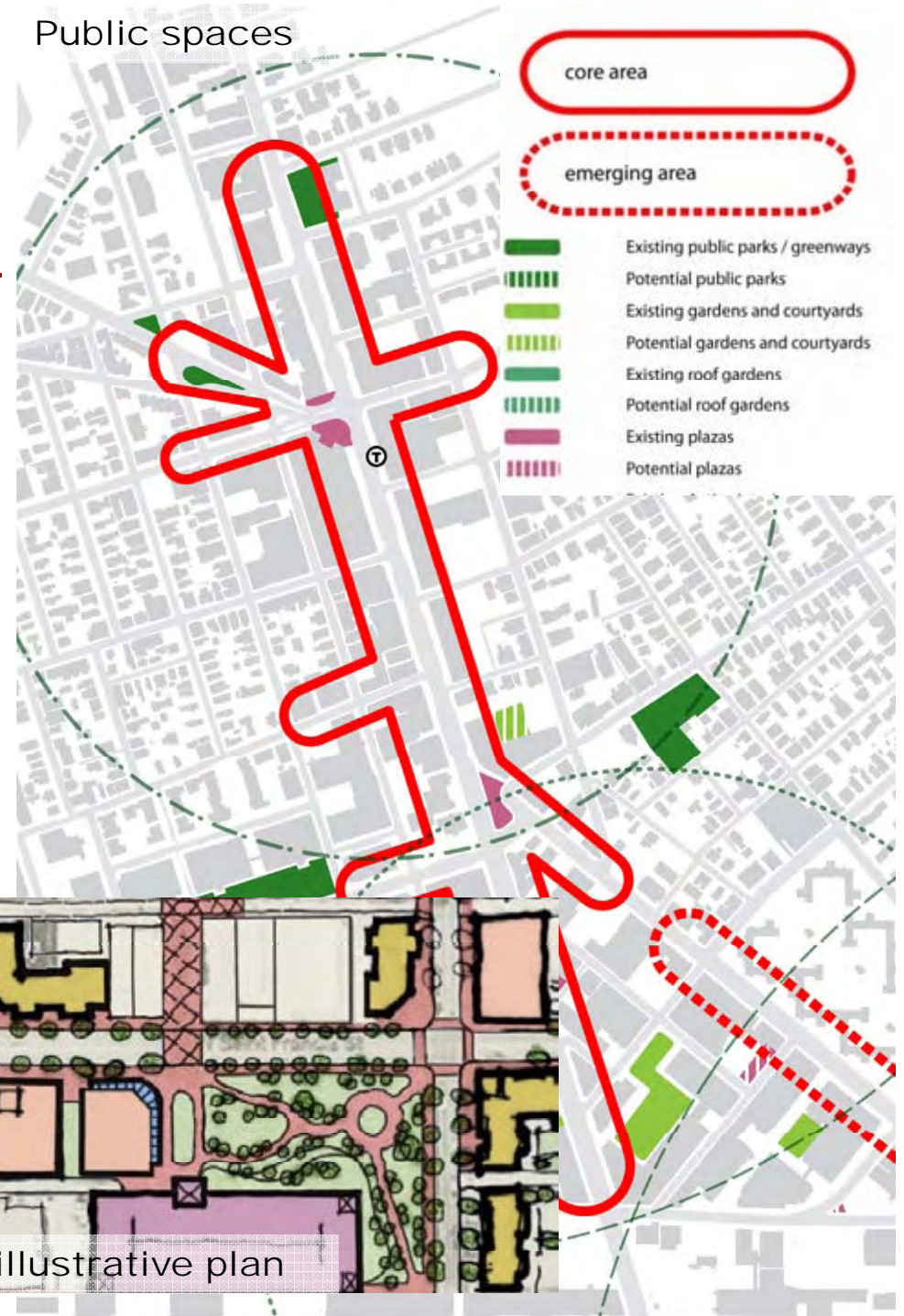
Mass Ave sidewalks: Subway and vaults below sidewalk limit street tree placement. Banks, CVS do little to enhance walking or activity. Heavy bus stop use. Street performer opportunity?



Strategy 1: Enhance ability of Central Square to support active civic life and dynamic cultural arts — especially in *public spaces*

PRODUCTS

- Illustrative plan showing vision for space, addressing its configuration, surfaces, facilities (seating, trees, public art etc.)
- Diagrams of vision for adjacent land use and design; design guidelines



Strategy 2: *Connect Central Square with the larger community with a network of **great walking streets** and improved walking, biking and transit choices*



KEY QUESTIONS

- **Street character:** How can buildings and streetscapes improve links to neighborhoods and destinations (Kendall, MIT, Harvard, Inman...)
- **Transportation choices:** How to balance transportation modes (walk, bike, transit, auto)?
- **Parking analysis:** Can we demonstrate a feasible solution accommodating redevelopment and successful retail?
- What **improvements** are needed in each category?

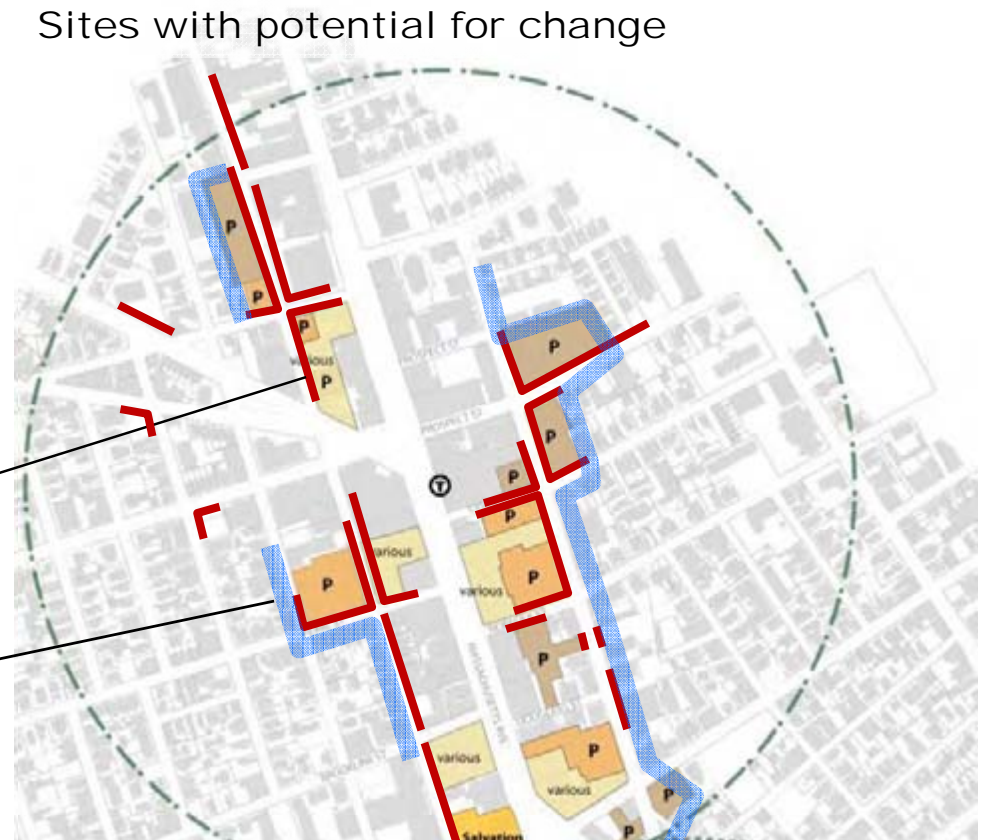


Strategy 2: Connect Central Square with the larger community with a network of **great walking streets** and improved walking, biking and transit choices

Street character:

-  • Parking and blank walls interrupt connections
-  • Sensitive transitions of building use and scale needed

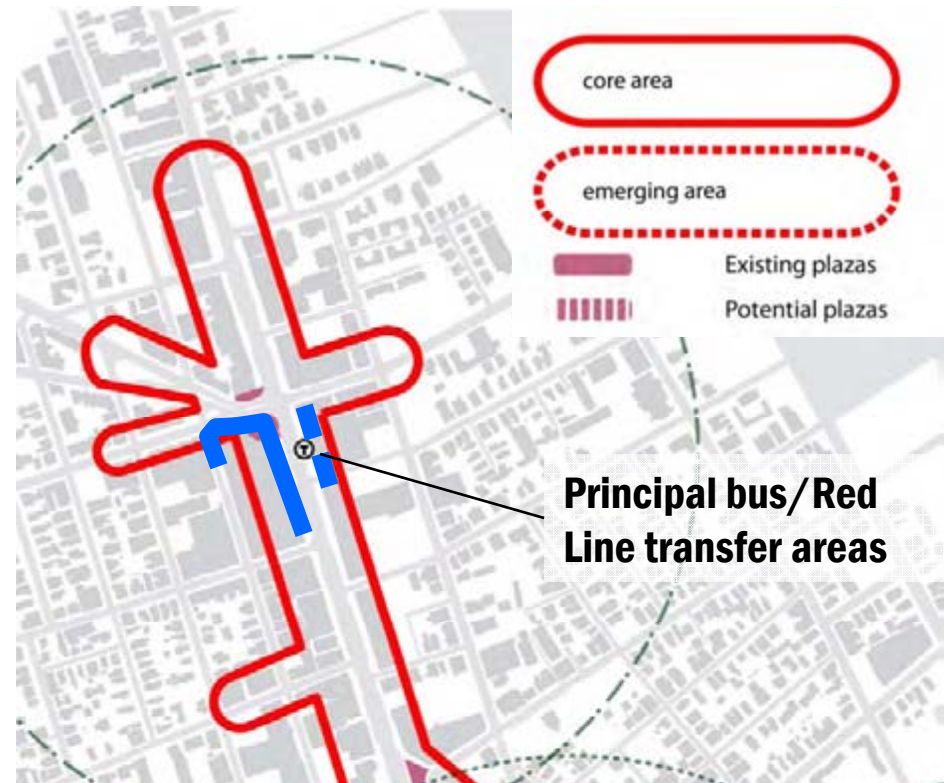
Sites with potential for change



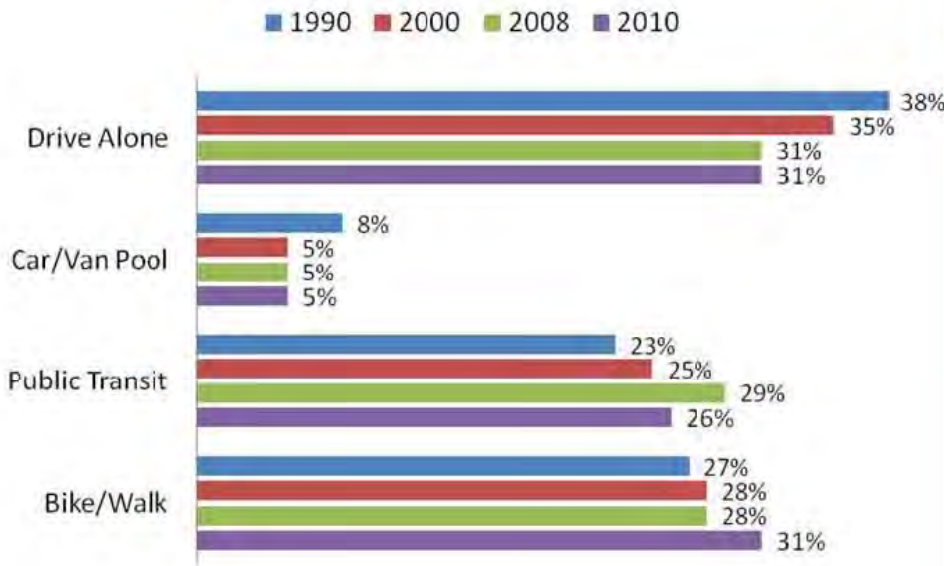
Strategy 2: Connect Central Square with the larger community with a network of *great walking streets* and improved walking, biking and transit choices

Transportation choices:

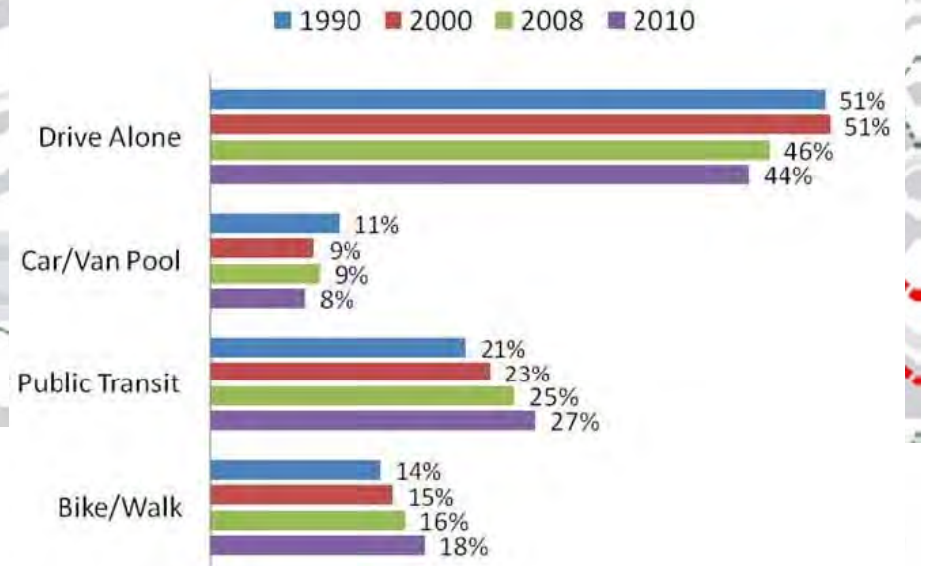
- Red Line’s 3rd busiest station
- 28 buses per hour
- America’s “most walkable city” – trend toward more walking, biking



Cambridge Residents Means of Commuter to Work



Cambridge Workers Means of Commute to Work

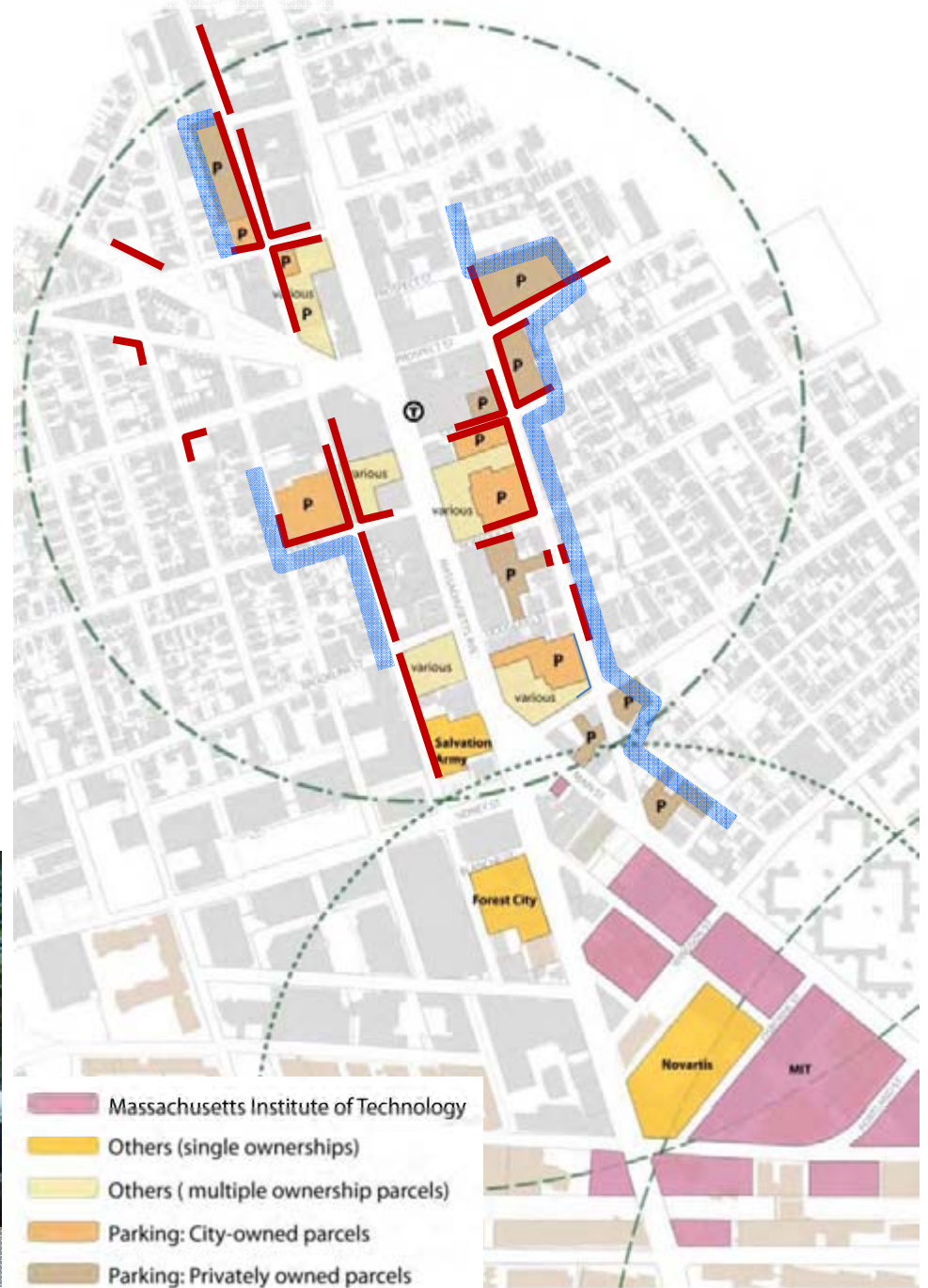


Strategy 2: Connect Central Square with the larger community with a network of *great walking streets* and improved walking, biking and transit choices

Parking:

- Lots could be key mixed-use development opportunities, if ongoing parking needs addressed
- Retail intercept survey: 11% drive but 35% consider parking “very important” to where they shop

Sites with potential for change

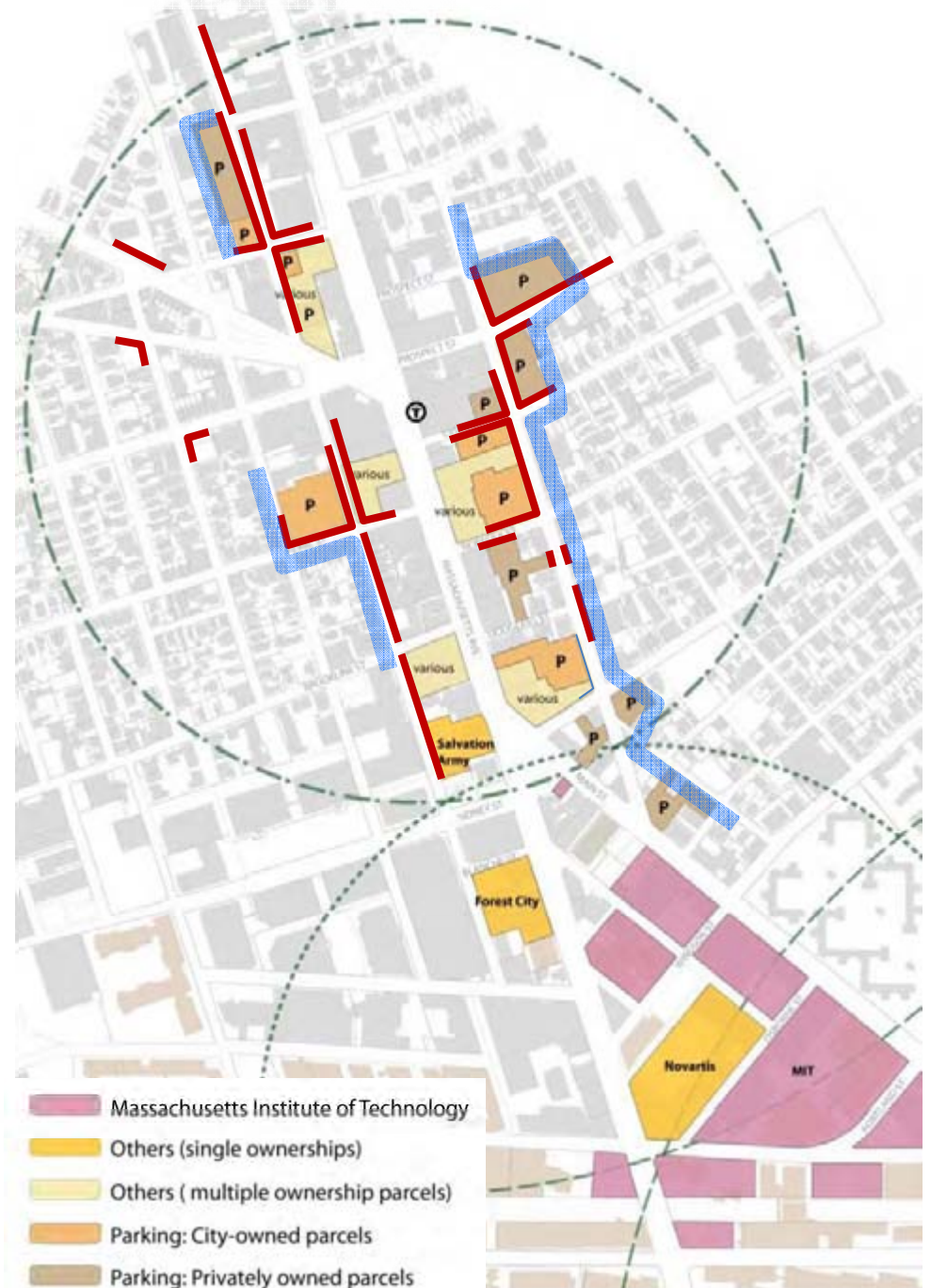


Strategy 2: Connect Central Square with the larger community with a network of *great walking streets* and improved walking, biking and transit choices

PRODUCTS

- Land use and streetscape recommendations supporting walkability
 - Zoning: ground floor use, design
 - Non-zoning: encourage partnerships with developers, property and business owners etc.
- Transportation recommendations
- Parking lot redevelopment scenarios that are feasible from transportation, economic and land use perspectives

Sites with potential for change

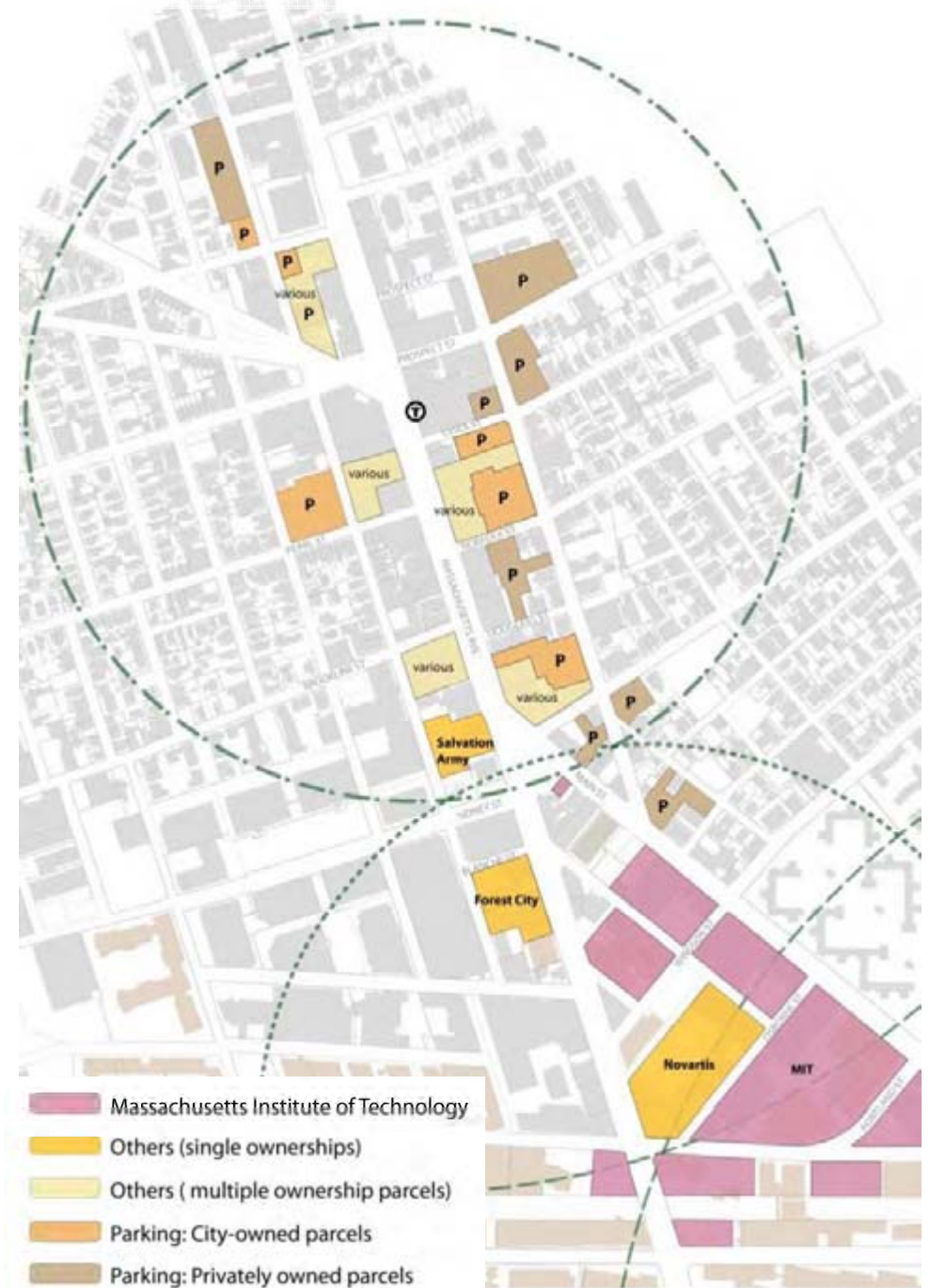


Strategy 3: *Preserve diversity of housing choices, community identity, the arts, retail and workplaces by adding **mixed-income housing***

KEY QUESTIONS

- **Quantity:** Roughly how much housing do we want to add?
- **Scale and character:** How much housing comfortably fits?
- **Land use mix:** What is the right balance between housing, retail, office and other uses?
- **Feasibility:** How do economics influence development feasibility?

Sites with potential for change



Strategy 3: *Preserve diversity of housing choices, community identity, the arts, retail and workplaces by adding **mixed-income housing***

Housing quantity considerations:

- Its support for existing/additional retail
- What amount and variety of unit types would make a difference in housing choice?
- What amount would support nearby employers and minimize traffic impacts?

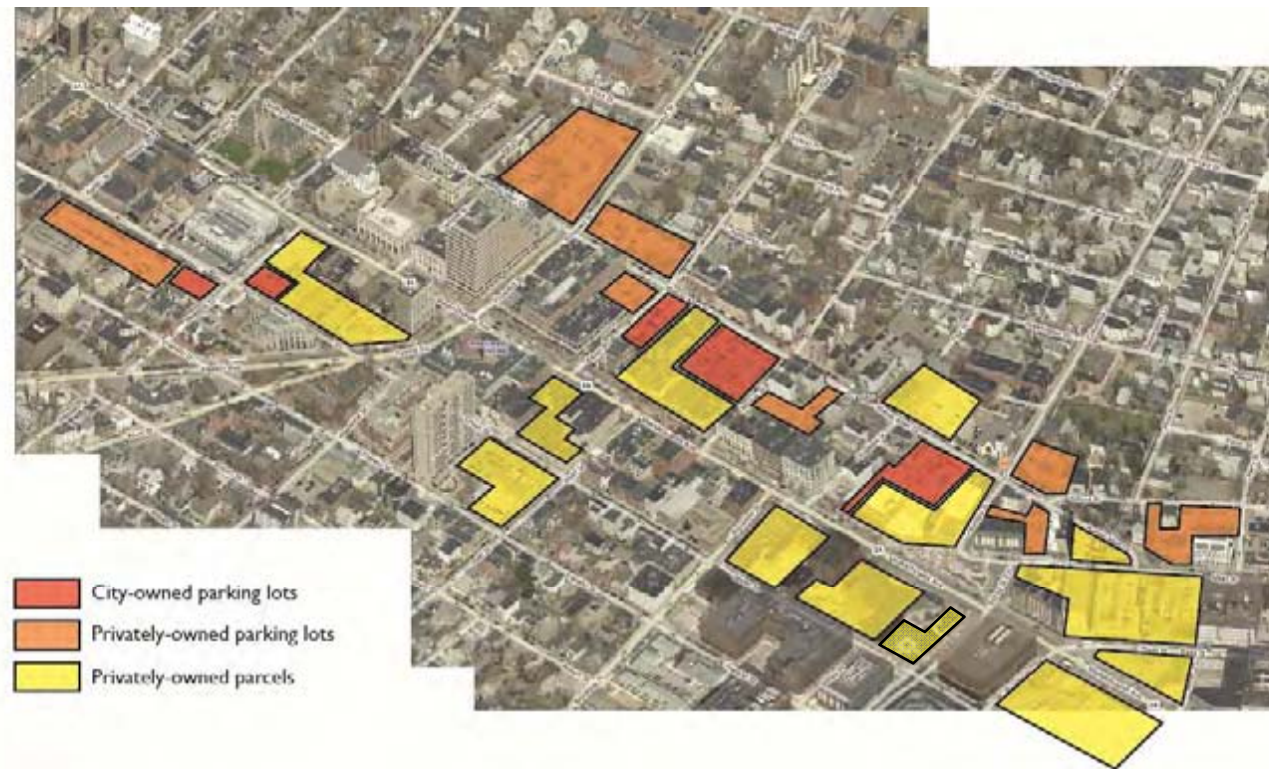
Sites with potential for change



Strategy 3: *Preserve diversity of housing choices, community identity, the arts, retail and workplaces by adding **mixed-income housing***

Potential capacity:

- Under existing zoning, and alternate height scenarios
- What envelope offers the right scale and character relationships with context?



Scale transition: DeWolfe Street



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Scale transition: Tent City



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Strategy 3: *Preserve diversity of housing choices, community identity, the arts, retail and workplaces by adding **mixed-income housing***

Land use mix:

- Parking:
 - How much the housing market demands – given the walking, transit and biking options at hand
 - Can parking for housing also serve other uses at times?
- Mix between housing, retail and other diverse uses (cultural, workplaces):
 - Existing?
 - Desired?



Strategy 3: Preserve diversity of housing choices, community identity, the arts, retail and workplaces by adding **mixed-income housing**

Development economics:

- Feasibility analysis by partner W-ZHA: implications for...
 - Heights
 - Affordability mix
 - Use mix (how much retail?)
 - Parking ratios – given the high cost of below-grade parking
 - Public benefits, such as local/diverse retail, housing, streetscape/park improvements etc.



Braddock neighborhood, Alexandria, VA

Key factors include:

- Land cost
- Housing price points
- Height impacts on costs for structure, “high-rise” life-safety code
- Mixed-use (i.e. ground floor retail)
- Parking ratio
- Parking format (below, on or above grade)
- Parking sharing
- Building efficiency

Strategy 3: Preserve diversity of housing choices, community identity, the arts, retail and workplaces by adding *mixed-income housing*

PRODUCTS

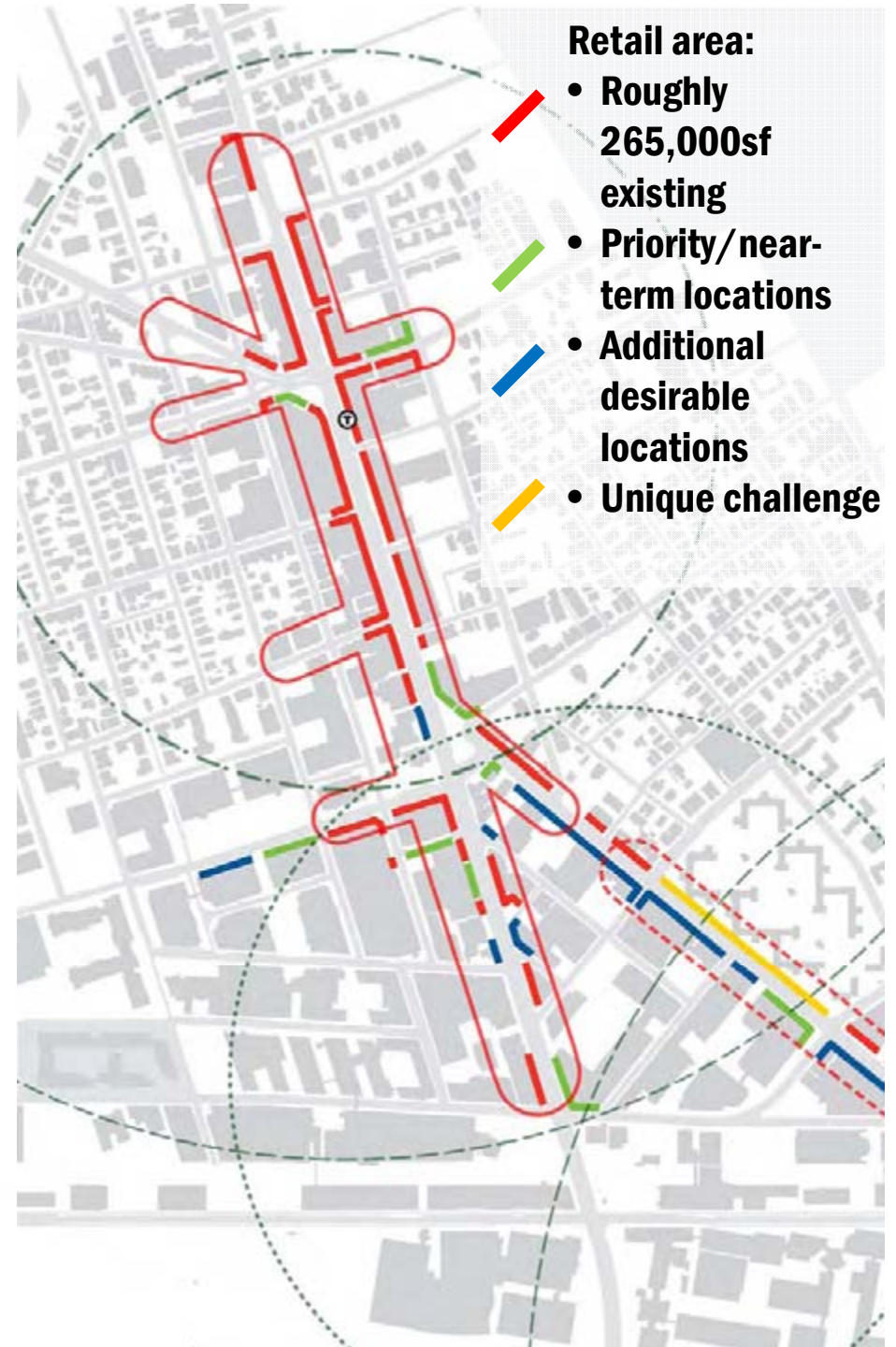
- Illustrative vision conveying desired qualities for redevelopment/reinvestment
- Rationale for leveraging future development to meet plan goals
- Zoning criteria for redevelopment addressing land use, building height and massing, use/design interaction with public realm, parking
- Basis for public-private partnerships enabling investment on key sites



Strategy 4: *Maintain and expand retail diversity (type, price point, ethnicity...)*

KEY QUESTIONS

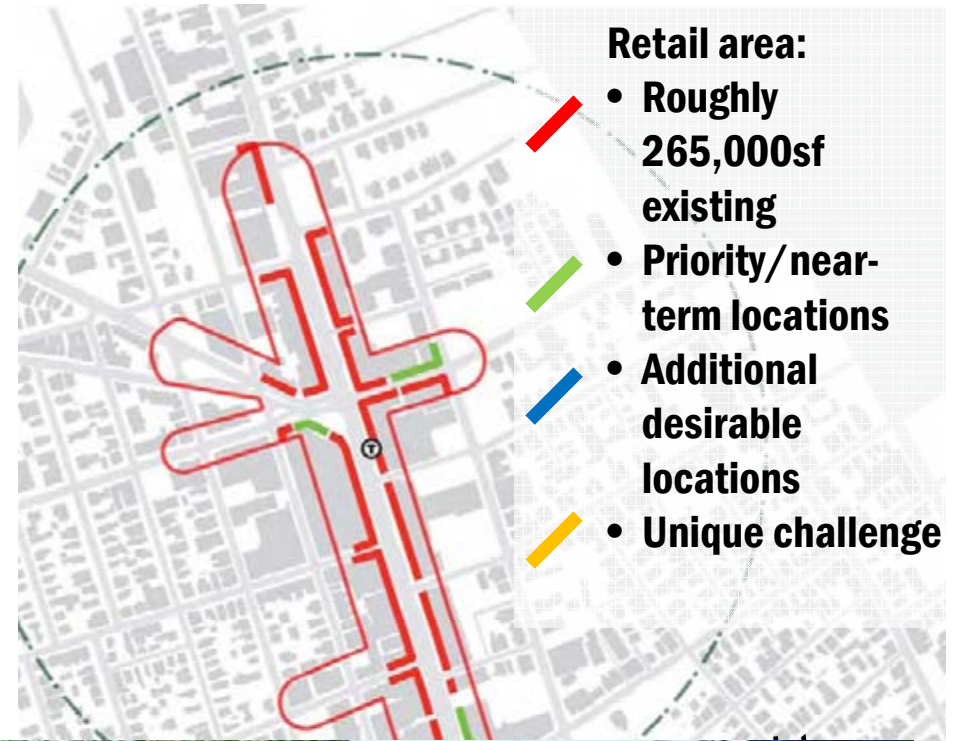
- **Who uses Central Square?**
Key messages from the customer intercept survey
- **Retail market analysis:** what's here, what's emerging
- **Design guidelines and incentives** promoting active, occupied, locally-oriented storefronts: review existing policy, explore alternatives



Strategy 4: Maintain and expand retail diversity (type, price point, ethnicity...)

Customer intercept survey:

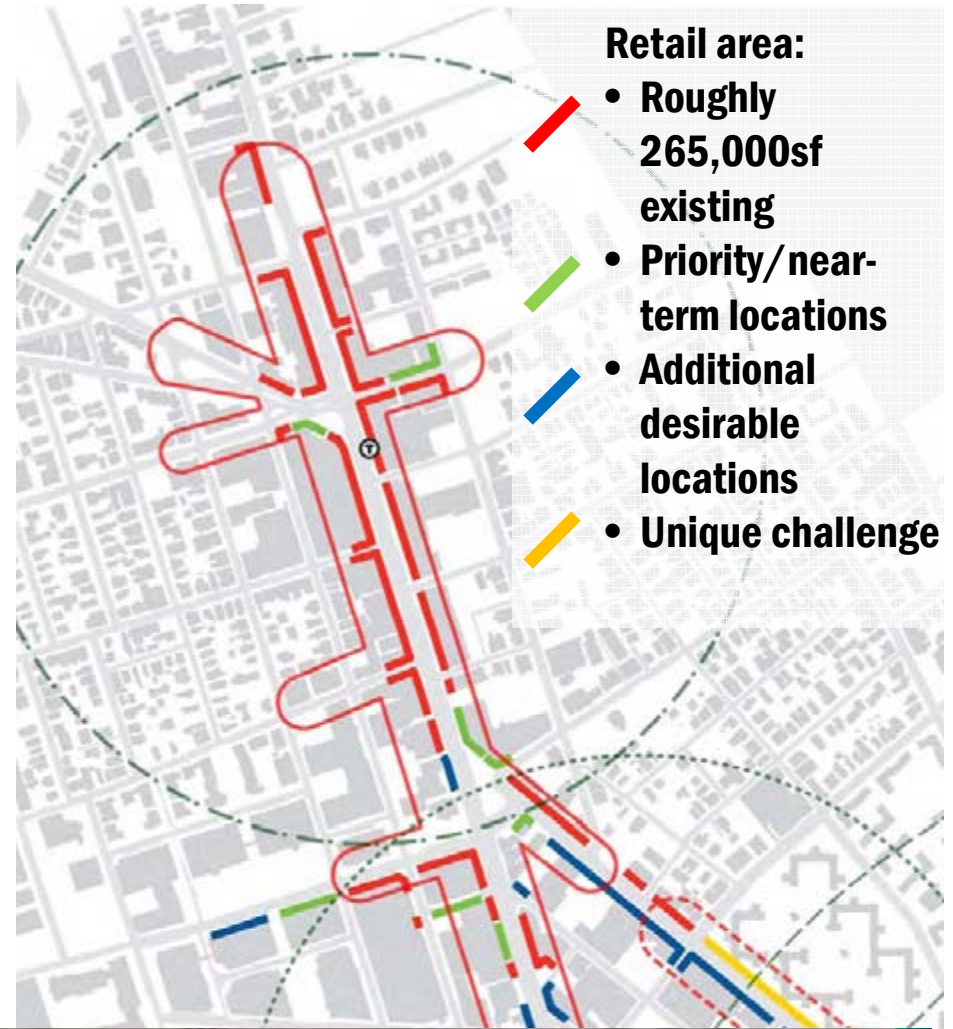
- 43% were in Central for work or just came from work
- 52% arrived on foot; 22% via Red Line; 11% via car
- 18% came to shop, 13% came to dine, 7% for entertainment, 5% for city hall or post office
- Cafes, pharmacies, municipal services, grocery stores and banks are most patronized
- Over 80% want more apparel stores
- Strong desire for local retail



Strategy 4: Maintain and expand retail diversity (type, price point, ethnicity...)

Retail market analysis:

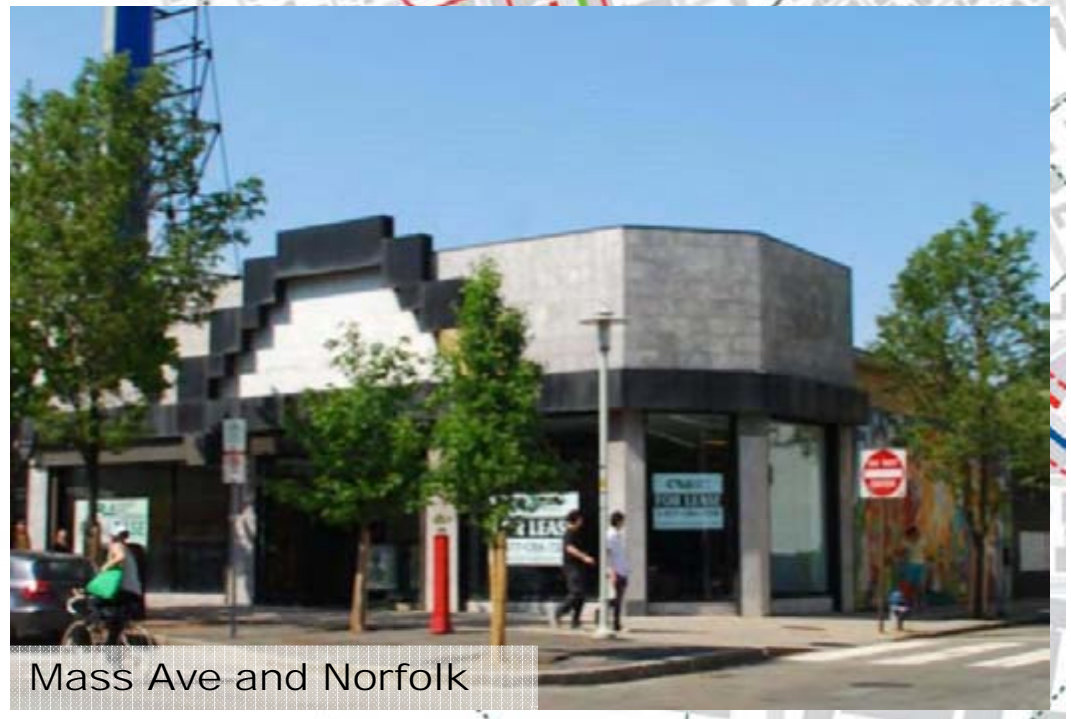
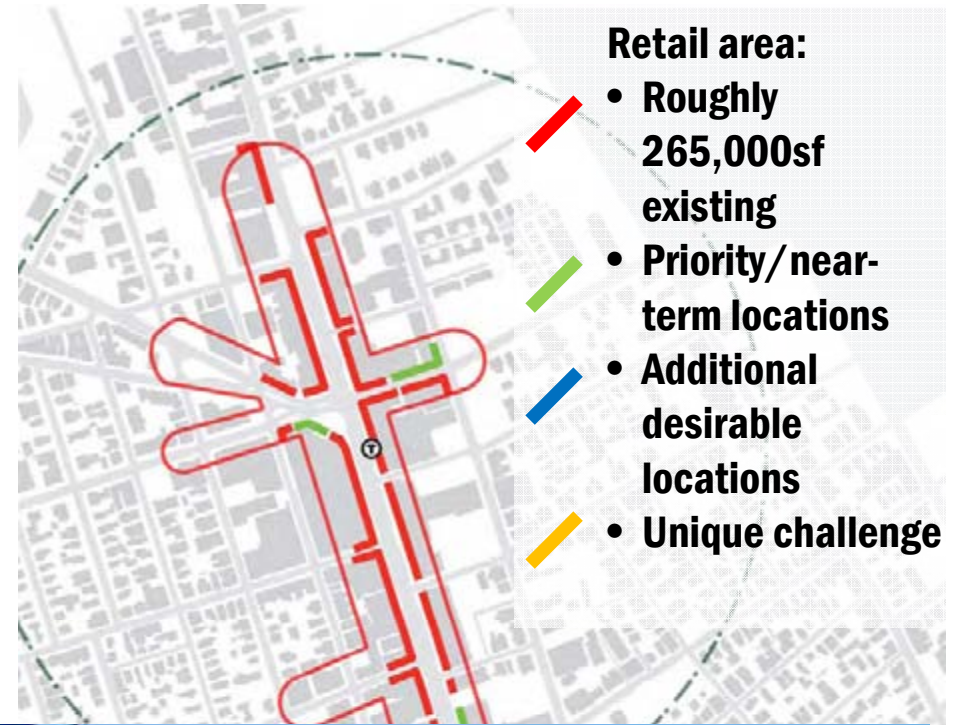
- 48,000 residents in trade area – well-scaled to retail floor area; 32% lack a car
- 19% households in trade area have children
- Many students: 6,000 in dorm, more off-campus
- Higher rents than Inman, Davis, Kendall; no critical mass for comparison goods



Strategy 4: Maintain and expand retail diversity (type, price point, ethnicity...)

Promoting active, occupied, locally-oriented storefronts:

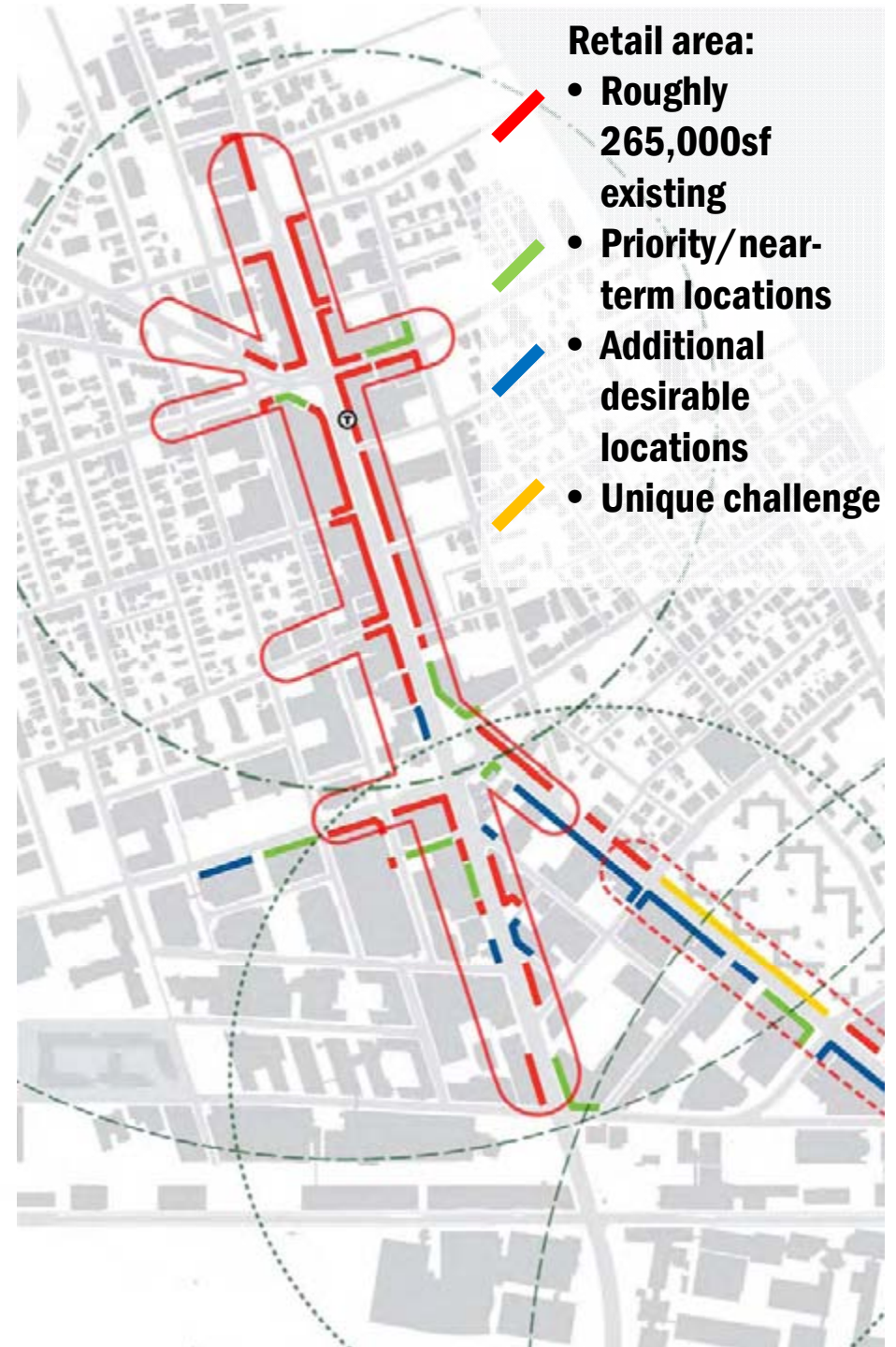
- Design guidelines
 - How to keep store windows transparent, interesting?
- Public/private partnership
 - Expand market base
 - Improving streetscape setting for retail
 - Encouraging locally-based businesses
 - Improving transportation access



Strategy 4: Maintain and expand retail diversity (type, price point, ethnicity...)

PRODUCTS

- Zoning guidelines and development incentives for retail meeting plan goals
- Management guidelines promoting good fit between retail and housing



Discussion



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