

# PUBLIC PLACES WORKSHOP



**Central Square Advisory Committee . Goody Clancy . November 1, 2012**

# Agenda

- Process update
- Context
  - Character of a diverse downtown
  - Opportunities to improve and expand the public realm
- Framework
  - Public places elements
  - ...working together
- Breakout groups
- Report-backs



# Central Square planning process: where we are

## Red Ribbon Commission process

### Public meetings

- Defin\_ core themes June 2011
- Vision workshop (April 10)
- City Council roundtable (May 30)
- Neighborhood open house/charrettes, Mondays in the Square (summer 2012)

### Advisory Committee meetings

- 14 meetings since November 2011 covering Central Square planning history, plan process, emerging vision, public places, retail, development economics, community benefits, transportation, draft vision and strategies, sustainability, Osborn Triangle vision, housing and smart growth
- **Public places workshop (November 1)**
- Built form workshop (November 3)
- Consolidate & finalize recommendations (November 7)
- Finalize recommendations (November 28; supplemental dates 11/13, 11/15)

# Character: what we heard from you

- Central Square is a crossroads for many
- Make better use of underutilized spaces that promote opportunities for interaction
- Aggressive behavior and panhandling are challenges
- Need to improve university-community synergies
- Central Square remains ethnically and culturally diverse, with emerging strengths (restaurants, entertainment)
- Different times of day bring out different dimensions of the diverse community
- Central Square is home to many needed social service agencies



# Opportunities to improve, expand public places

- Existing sidewalks
  - Mass Ave core area
  - Side streets
- Existing parks and plazas
- New park/plaza opportunities
  - City parking lots
  - Private redevelopment sites, through incentives
- New “public room”

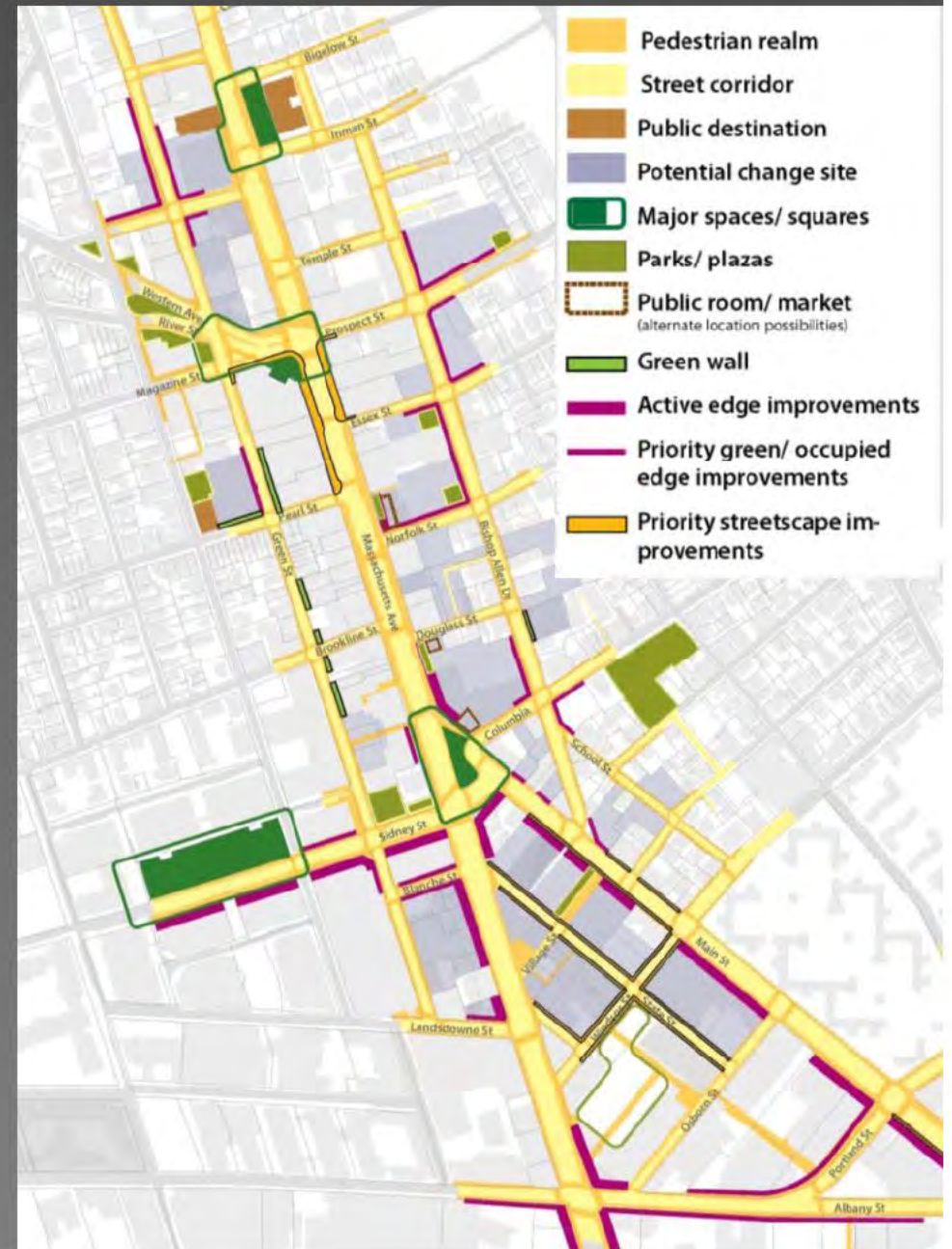


# Framework

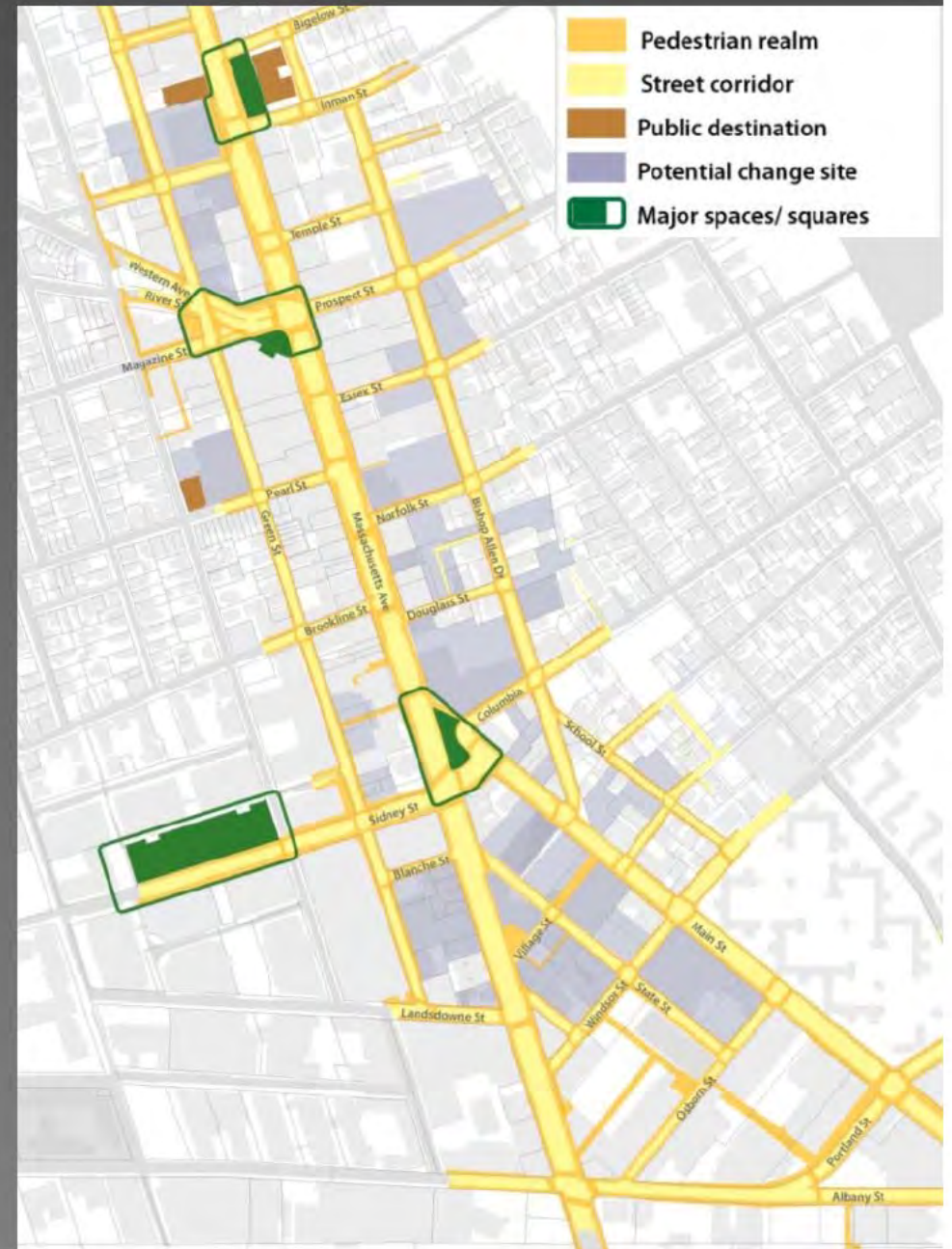
- Major spaces and squares
- Parks, plazas, public room
- Program partnerships
- Parklets
- Active ground floor use improvement
- Green, occupied edge improvement
- Streetscape improvement
- Wayfinding and new connections



# Framework



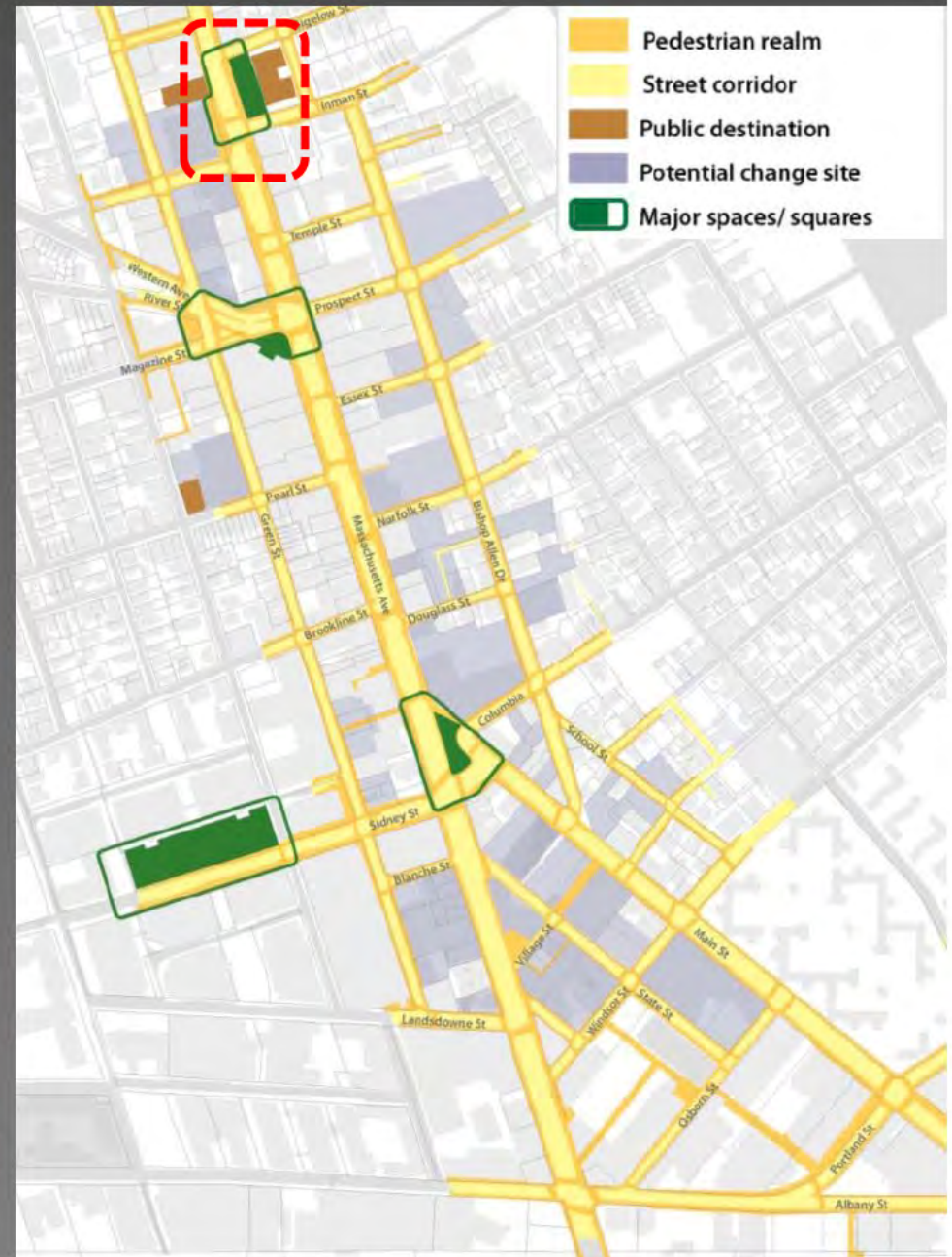
# Major spaces





# Major spaces: City Hall Lawn/Square

- Well enjoyed today; should we enhance opportunity for use?



# Carl Barron Plaza

## Existin\_ conditions\_ considerations

- Plaza alive with pedestrians, transit connections
- Provides shaded seating area in summer
- Current ground floor use at Holmes block does not support activity
- Traffic noise is a challenge
- Current design limits interaction and programming
- Limited programming
- Space pinched along Magazine Street: bus stop/pedestrian conflict



# Carl Barron Plaza

## Opportunities/ proposal/ concept

- More open layout offering flexible programming (*city*)
- Wider Magazine St sidewalk link (*city initiative, coordinate with MBTA*)
- Expand programmed events (*city/CSBA*)
- Improve active uses across Western Ave and Green Street (*parklets; city coordinate with Western Ave streetscape improvements*)
- More active occupancy along Holmes Building (*city work with owner to promote interim or permanent active use*)



# Jill Browne-Rhone Park

## Existin\_ conditions considerations

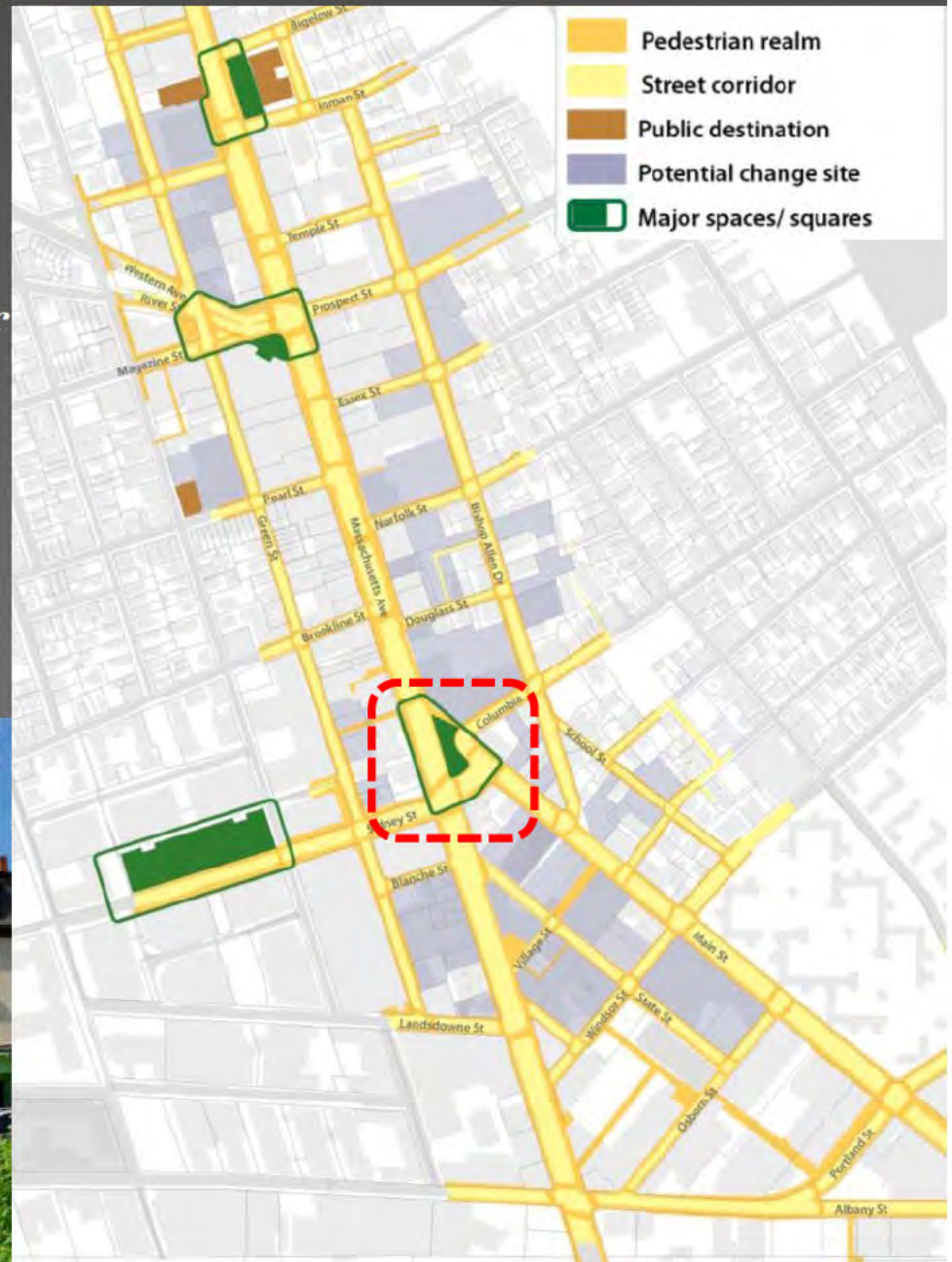
- Park has been a great success
- Tables and chairs with umbrellas open to the public and near restaurants. ice cream shop provide opportunities to stop, linger, interact with friends
- Diversity of spaces and seating opportunities to serve different needs (intimate to large)
- Restaurants provide active edge
- Property owners/businesses take ownership and partner with City to maintain/manage space
- Truck noise limits programming opportunities



# Jill Browne-Rhone Park / Lafayette Square

## Opportunities/ proposal/ concept

- Continue/expand programmed events (*CSBA, CAC etc.*)
- More active occupancy along Quest frontage, and across Mass Ave and Sidney Street (*condition of redevelopment; possible city arkin lot leverage*)
- Add spatial element (i.e. trellis, stage) toward Sidney St to buffer traffic, add human scale, host programmed activity (*city/CAC*)



# University Park Commons

## Existin\_ conditions considerations

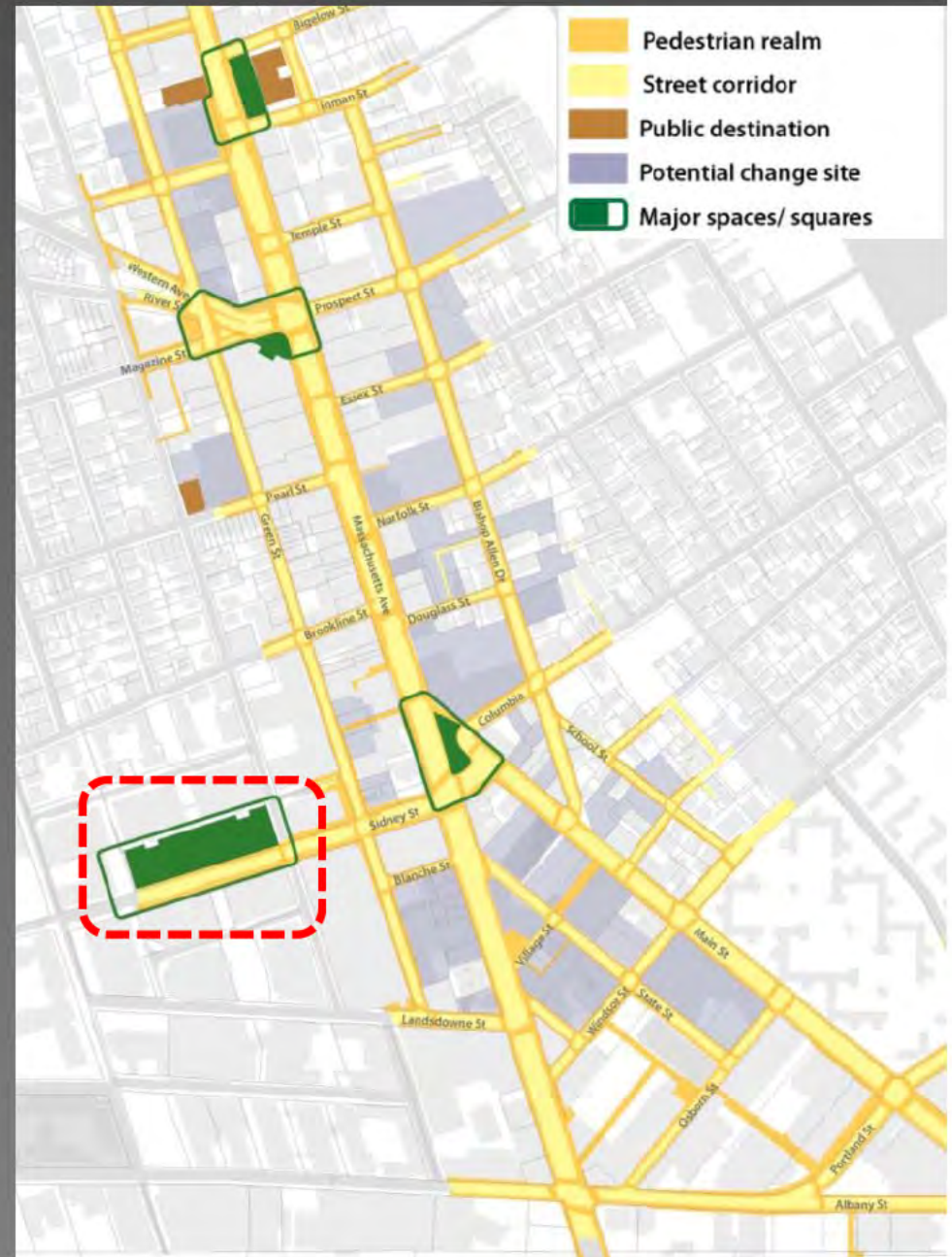
- Feels too remote, private, corporate
- Events have been a big success, drawing crowds
  - Citywide events, i.e. Taste of Cambridge
  - Local events organized by Vision Central Square and CSBA
  - Support from Forest City



# University Park Commons

## Opportunities/ proposal/ concept

- Continue/expand programmed events (*CSBA, neighborhoods, Forest City, etc.*)
- Add wayfinding signage from Mass Ave and other directions (*city/CSBA*)
- Promote more active ground floor uses along Sidney Street (*city, CSBA work with Forest City; leverage proposed 300 Mass Ave redevelopment*)



# Open Spaces along Parallel Streets

Existin\_ conditions\_ considerations

- Serve as a transition between the neighborhood and the commercial corridor
- Surface parking lots currently serve as open space providing sky view and breathing spaces between buildings
- ...and accommodate Farmers' Market





# Open Spaces along Parallel Streets

## Opportunities/ proposal/ concept

- Potential transformation for parking lots into residential uses and smaller park space serving the neighborhood.
- Opportunities for locally produced art in public spaces
- What roles could City parking lots play in the future?



# Mass Ave

## Existing conditions/ considerations

- Significant activity: pedestrians, transit users, people waiting, talking, outdoor dining...
- Many physical elements present: street furniture, bollards, trash cans, newspaper boxes...
- Heavy bus stop use can interfere with pedestrian flow
- Home to much loved businesses and cultural organizations
- Subway and vaults below sidewalk limit street tree placement in some locations
- Certain frontages (i.e. banks) lack animation
- Diverse storefronts and outdoor dining add activity
- Could use additional opportunities for unique, enjoyable experiences and 'places to pause' along the street



**Between Pearl and Magazine**

# Public room

- Programmed events
- Informal use
- Potential for associated market stalls



# Parks and plazas

- New park opportunities on City parking lots (*city initiative coordinated with other community benefit goals*)
- At potential Mass Ave parcel redevelopments over one acre, create shallow plazas expanding outdoor dining, performance opportunities (*updated zoning/design guidelines*)
- New park, plaza opportunity in Osborne Triangle associated with new Mass Ave-Main Street public connection (*updated zoning/design guidelines*)



# Program partnerships

- Events, programming in major spaces, from buskers to festivals (*CSBA, CAC, others*)
  - Central Swings
  - Taste of Cambridge
  - Street festivals
- Public art and play installations (*CAC, CSBA, cultural organizations in the square*)



# Parklets

- Compact area: 10-20 feet to any side
- Quickly installed, high-impact
- Significant funding, management and inspiration by potential business/ organization partners



# Parklets



# Improved edges and streetscapes

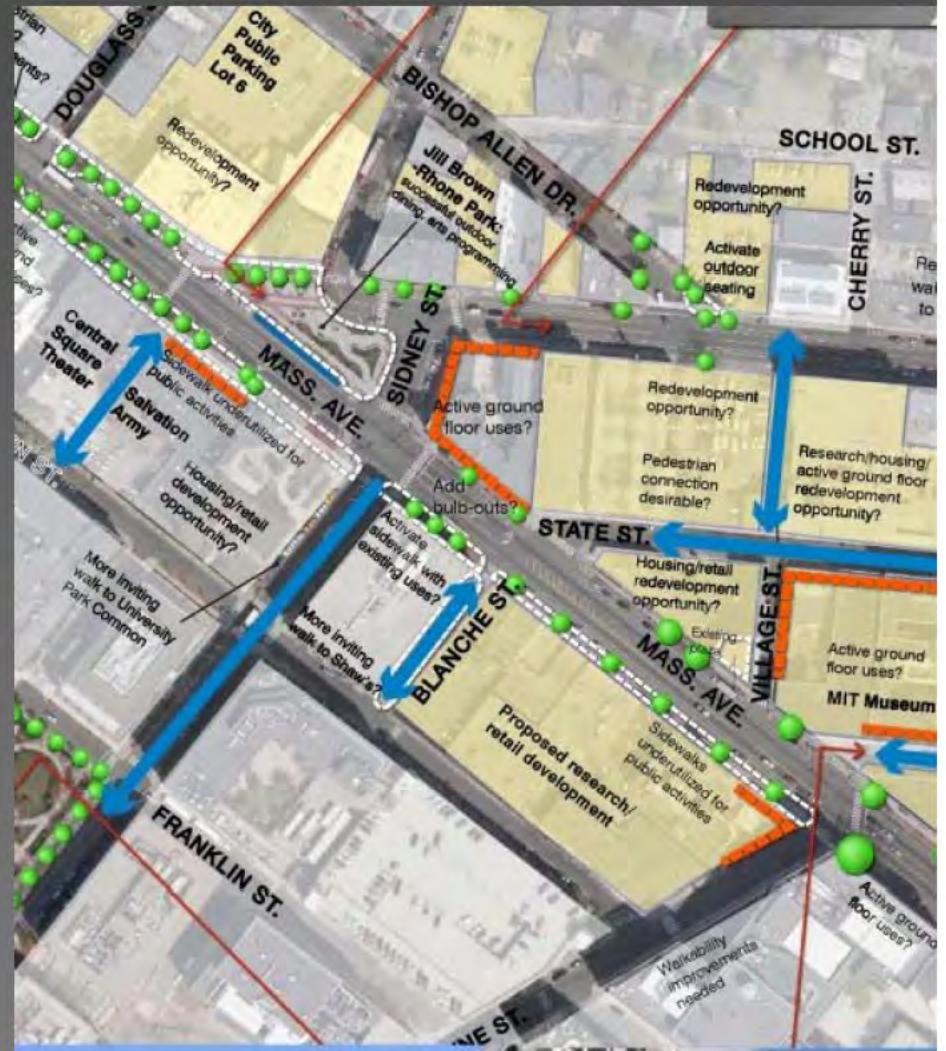
- Mass Ave and Main Street: active ground level uses where lacking
- Trees in planters where in-ground planting not possible
- Occupied spaces and/or green edges along parking lots
- Green walls along parking structures, other blank walls with southern exposure





# Improved wayfinding and connections

- New connections
- New wayfinding signage
  - Identity
  - Orientation
  - Events/information





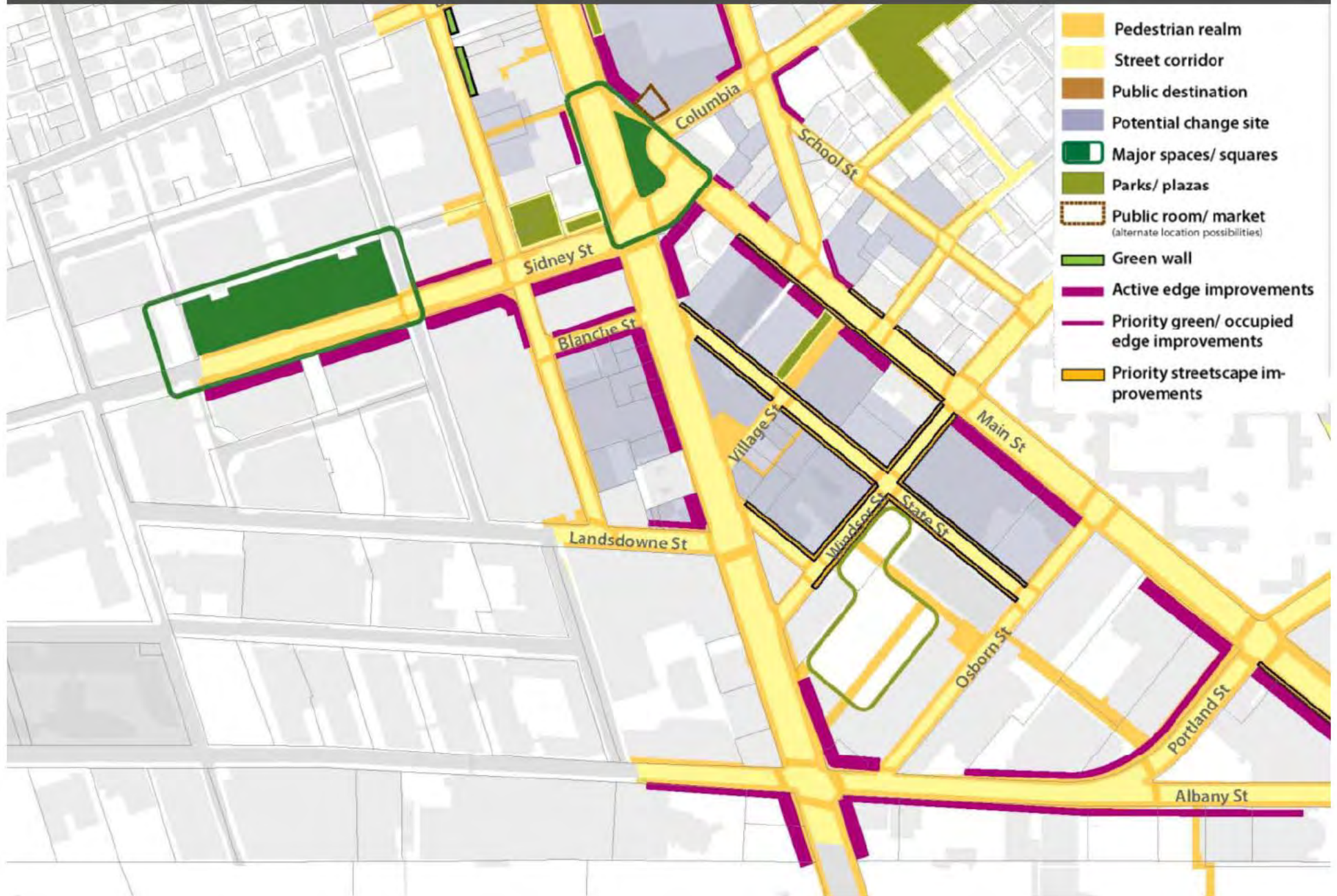
# MBTA Red Line station/Carl Barron Plaza area



# Jill Brown-Rhone Park area



# Osborn Triangle area



# Breakout group discussion

- What are the right kinds of public places we need within the Central square and Osborn Triangle area?
- What activities would you like to be doing outdoors in this area?
- Are these the right locations?
- Are these the right strategies/partnerships/other ideas we haven't included?
- Are there other things you'd add?

