

VISION

Central Square is Cambridge’s downtown and a center for nearby neighborhoods; a vibrant cultural district; a sustainable urban environment that invites people from all walks of life to shop, live, enjoy entertainment and the arts, find community together; and more.

The architect Jan Gehl’s assertion *“First life, then spaces, then buildings: the other way around never works”* captures the Square’s spirit and the spirit of planning for its future...

First life... of Central Square is about welcoming the diversity of the people who use it: *poor and rich; children and retirees and every age in between; people of many races and ethnicities; techies and artists; Cantabrigians and tourists; residents and retailers, lifelong residents and newcomers; people who use the square to connect to myriad other destinations and as their “living room: to hang out. People from every walk of life have a stake and can contribute to the Square’s vitality.*

Then space... is about enhancing Central Square as a downtown whose mix of uses and character invites and expresses diversity: *changing character by location; home to long-term and new local businesses along with childcare centers and late night music venues; public spaces that celebrate the arts and technology; streets intended for transit, walking, biking, and festivals as well cars; a public realm marked by green lawns, trees, and flowers and the lively sidewalks of Massachusetts Avenue; parks and squares that invite quiet conversations between friends and the buzz of everybody’s downtown. This rich mix brings the Square to life.*

Then buildings... express this mix with variety that reinforces both the vitality of a downtown and the livability of adjacent neighborhoods: *an emphasis on housing for a diversity of people, especially families; a love of innovation and a commitment to preserve a rich heritage; blocks that mix taller structures with shorter ones; buildings that step down to a quiet residential face toward nearby neighborhoods and up to a vibrant mixed-use face toward Massachusetts Avenue. A constant variety in massing and design can invigorate the heart of the Square and respect its neighbors.*

Celebrating this rich mix represents a unique opportunity. Nurturing it represents a responsibility shared by the entire community.

This vision translates into four primary goals that frame the master plan strategies outlined on the following pages. To achieve the vision goals, **LEVERAGE FUTURE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC INVESTMENTS**, as appropriate (see page 12).

PUBLIC PLACES TO BUILD COMMUNITY

Enrich the Square’s public realm as place that invites community interaction at many levels



RESIDENTIAL DIVERSITY

Support community diversity through more varied housing choices



Massachusetts Ave: Housing framing a public plaza and additional retail

RETAIL, CULTURAL AND NON-PROFIT DIVERSITY

Celebrate and maintain the mix of old, new, venerable and funky enterprises activating Central Square’s Cultural District



CONNECTING PEOPLE TO THE SQUARE

Enrich neighborhood walkability and livability with safe, green streets and improved access choices



Bishop Allen Drive: Green infrastructure and neighborhood-scale housing and small business spaces enhancing walkability along

Goal 1: PUBLIC PLACES TO BUILD COMMUNITY

Leverage city owned property and new development partnerships to enrich the Square’s public realm as place that promotes community interaction

OBJECTIVE	PROPOSED STRATEGIES (ZONING)	PROPOSED STRATEGIES (NON-ZONING)
	Measures (see also facing page)	Measures (see also facing page)
<p>Establish Massachusetts Avenue as a great public place</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Promote lively mixed-use activity in the Central Square core along Massachusetts Avenue between City Hall and Jill Brown-Rhone Park and Main Street to connect to Kendall Square.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In Osborne Triangle west of Windsor Street, increase activity and sense of neighborhood around Jill Brown-Rhone Park and decrease the dominance of commercial uses that are not pedestrian-oriented in the area. ○ Require active ground floors (either retail or designed to accommodate retail in the future) with small allowances to accommodate lobby spaces; see Retail, Cultural and Non-Profit Diversity for more detail. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Continue application of the façade, signage and lighting improvement program.</i> • <i>Encourage businesses/organizations to be stewards of adjacent public places</i> • <i>As part of the City’s LED conversion, create a plan to improve pedestrian street lighting that addresses safety, identity, and convenient access to evening cultural and dining destinations.</i> • See Retail, Cultural and Non-Profit Diversity and Connecting People to the Square goal for more detail
<p>Add and improve public spaces to invite a broader range of community activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Create new outdoor and/or indoor public gathering spaces through use of zoning requirements and incentives</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Incent creation and programming of new/enhanced public space types as part of major redevelopment projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1-2 additional public gathering spaces up to approx. 1,000-3,000sf in area, facing Mass Ave between Prospect and Lafayette Square, with dining and/or other active uses, preferably in sunny (north side) locations. ▪ Public room/public market or similar enclosed space with significant daylight, approx. 5,000sf in area for year-round activity as part of or adjacent to an outdoor gathering space • <i>Accompany creation of any new public gathering spaces with efforts to expand the “public” using them, through associated creation of housing, as well as retail, cultural and/or office space drawing more people to Central Square daily.</i> • <i>In case of redevelopment, use special permit process to enhance existing public spaces</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Create a public-private program for creation of parklets on the sidewalk and/or replacing vehicle spaces in appropriate locations.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Implement at least 1-2 “parklets” per year toward goal of 5-6 priority parklets (see public places diagram). Parklets, typically occupying an area of roughly 200 to 500 square feet, should take the place of underutilized on-street parking spaces and/or sidewalk space. Partner with adjacent business and/or property owners to obtain their assistance funding, conceiving, designing and maintaining parklets. • <i>If City parking lots are redeveloped, a significant outdoor and/or indoor public space component should be included, as well as housing and/or retail helping activate the new public space (in event of associated redevelopment of adjacent private sites, coordinate with zoning strategies at left)</i>
<p>Intensify programming of public spaces within the Central Square Cultural District to provide opportunities for community activity, celebrating cultural diversity and the arts</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Enhance programming of public spaces by working with CSBA, City agencies, neighborhood and other groups to manage placement and scheduling of elements including buskers, temporary/ mobile retail, information (i.e. real-time transit & event information) and festivals.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Designate a go-to contact person coordinating scheduling of all Central Square events in public places. Invite participation by all (community groups, cultural organizations, businesses etc.) in programming public places. • <i>Work with CSBA, CAC, and property owners to expand ways to integrate more engaging, playful public art engaging people of all ages</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Examples of public art applications: in future parklets, vacant storefronts, working with the Healthy Play Initiative.
<p>Ensure positive relationship of new development to public space</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Refine development and design guidelines, with emphasis on limiting shadow impacts on neighborhoods and public spaces; ensuring transparent retail storefronts; enhancing residential street edges and accessibility; encouraging variety in architectural form and expression; ensuring new building heights and lengths to fit with context scale; and activating side streets with appropriate retail and office uses. See Residential Diversity goal for more detail.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To promote variation in building profile and deeper upper floor setbacks on side streets, allow up to one half of building façade length above the Mass Ave streetwall to be exempt from setback requirements. Impose the established Mass Ave upper floor setback policy along facades perpendicular to Mass Ave, with a base streetwall height of 55’ within one-half block distance of Mass Ave and a base streetwall height of 45’ (or matching adjacent zoning district condition) elsewhere. Exempt up to one third of façade length above streetwall from this setback. ○ <i>Help fund community benefits like affordable housing, retail and non-profit space through modest density and/or height increases where appropriate. See Residential Diversity goal for more detail.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>If City parking lots are redeveloped, apply updated design and development guidelines to maximize the quality of any new public places created as well as to avoid negative impacts (i.e. shadows, loss of sky plane) on established neighborhoods.</i>



Public Places elements

Major Spaces and Squares

Qualities

- Significant size and/or activity level
- Regular programming, quality facilities

Key locations and priority initiatives

- **City Hall Lawn and Square:** enhance programming along Post Office building per Plaza and Parklet categories below.
- **Carl Barron Plaza and Square:** introduce more event programming, beginning with quickly- implemented smaller events (see Parklets, below) and building toward larger events enabled by creation of broader open spaces on the plaza.
- **Jill Brown-Rhone Park and Lafayette Square:** introduce more active ground floor retail and residents near the park to take advantage of expanded programming opportunity.
- **University Park Commons:** enhance perception of public access through such means as removing perimeter fencing, adding programming for children, and continuing to host public events.

Parks and Plazas

Qualities

- Intermediate size and/or activity level
- Programming responds to more specific set of users
- Complement adjacent City facilities such as public room/market

Key locations

- Create one or more pocket parks along **Bishop Allen Drive** through conversion of current city parking lots. Alternative program concepts for further exploration may include a pedestrian court connecting Bishop Allen and Massachusetts Avenue, passive lawn space, and/or childrens' play space.
- Enhance the plaza in front of the **Post Office** as a usable and identifiable space
- Create one to two small plazas (approximately 1,000-3,000sf) along the **north side of Massachusetts Avenue** in conjunction with redevelopment projects over 50,000sf. Emphasize opportunities for outdoor dining and seating, taking advantage of good access to direct sun.
- Proceed with planned improvements to **Western Avenue/River Street** park spaces, for coherence and usability.
- A near-term small plaza at **Bishop Allen and Main**, and a publicly accessible courtyard at the **Novartis development**.
- Incorporate green elements into any **new street/access connection** between Main and Mass Ave enabled by redevelopment. Consider incorporating ground floor retail, visible from Massachusetts Avenue and/or Main Street, as part of this connection. Consider opportunity for permanent or periodic pedestrian streets in the Osborn Triangle (e.g. portions of Front, State and/or Village Street)
- Create a pocket park at **Green and Blanche Streets** as part of any adjacent redevelopment. Ensure new development includes occupied ground floor spaces facing park.



Public Room/Public Market

- Encourage establishment of a Public Room and/or public market of 5,000sf or more floor area in association with property redevelopment or adaptive reuse, esp. of a public building or parking lot. To ensure retail marketability and significant public use, locate the facility near areas of heavy pedestrian traffic such as the Red Line station. Prime locations to consider include: redevelopment sites of one acre or more. If on Naggar site, emphasize connection with pedestrian passage/court linking Massachusetts Avenue and Bishop Allen. If on Quest site, emphasize visibility/connection with Jill Brown-Rhone Park as well as portions of Massachusetts Avenue to the west.

Program Partnerships

- Work with any interested business or organization to enable their assistance in programming appropriate use of public spaces. Assistance may include design, funding and management.
- Accommodate the Central Square Farmer's Market at its current site (improved), Jill Brown-Rhone Park or other suitable location in the event of redevelopment of current city parking lot location

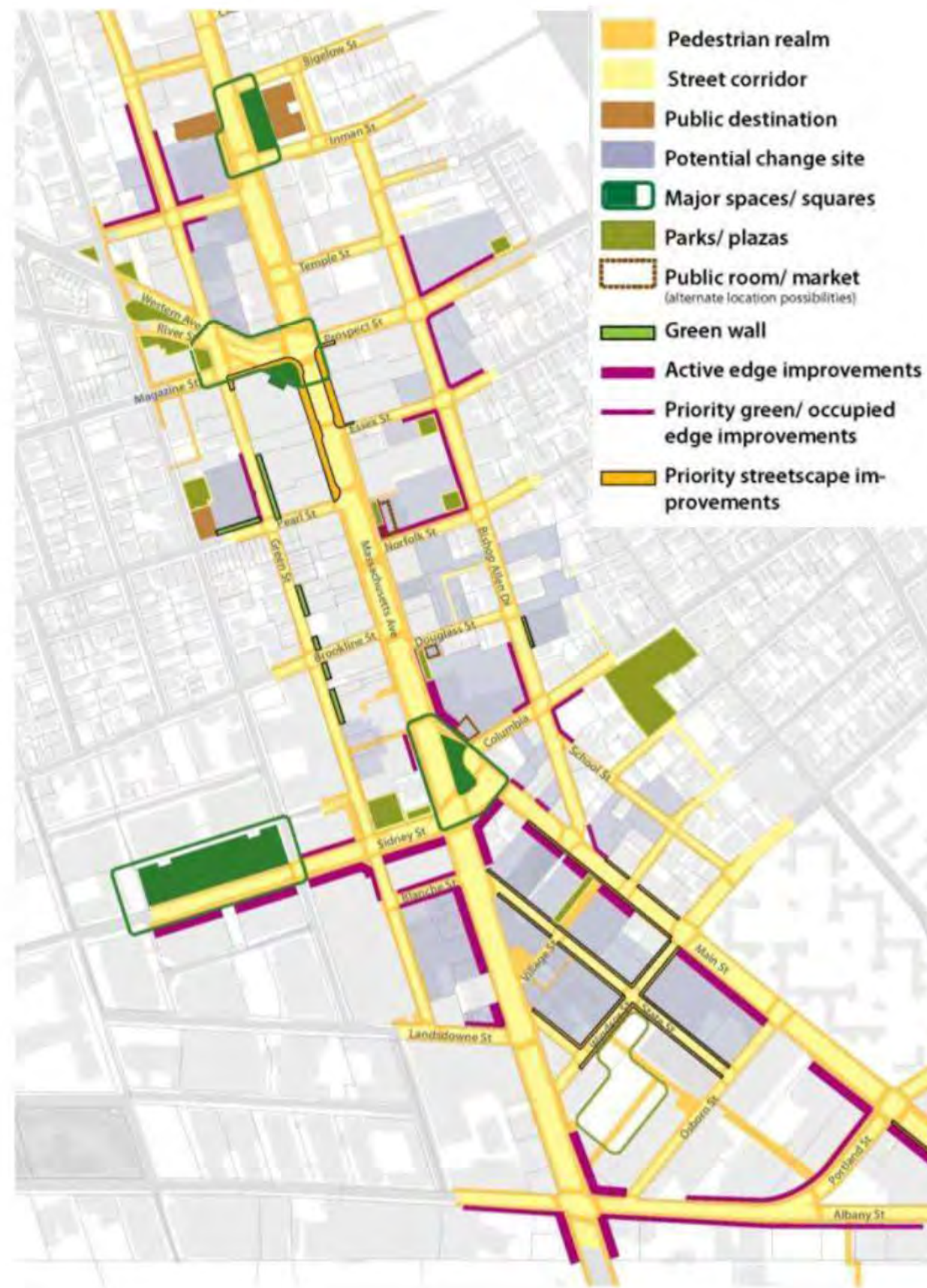
Priority Streetscape and Active Edge Improvements

- Priority areas for developing/adapting buildings to include **active ground floor uses** include
 - East side of Sidney Street at Lafayette Square (e.g. through replacement of the existing frame residential building. Retain historically/culturally significant structures).
 - One or both sides of Sidney Street from Mass Ave to and along University Park Commons.
 - City parking lot edges, and other large parking lot frontage along streets/sidewalks
- Priority areas for other streetscape improvements include
 - Install street trees and/or ornamental plantings in planters along Mass Ave between Prospect-Essex and Magazine-Pearl where below-grade obstructions prevent in-ground trees.
 - Install green "biowalls" or public art where parking structure walls abut sidewalks, in particular along south-facing portions of the Green Street and Quest parking structures

Parklets

- Important near-term opportunities for high-impact, low-investment parklets involving business/organization program partners on underutilized sidewalk areas include, but are not limited to:
 - Post Office plaza (consider USPS and/or Cambridge Senior Center as partner). Coordinate with adjacent Hubway station.
 - Carl Barron Plaza and/or Western Ave opposite the Plaza (consider interactive information/arts theme including real-time transit information; MIT Media Lab, CAC, MBTA as sponsor?)
 - Mass Ave opposite Norfolk Street (consider Dance Complex, with dance/healthy play theme, as partner)
 - Mass Ave opposite Jill Brown-Rhone Park (consider Nora Theater, CCTV, Salvation Army, Forest City and/or Cambridge Fire Department as partner)
 - Mass Ave at MIT Museum (MIT Museum as partner)





Goal 2: RETAIL, CULTURAL AND NON-PROFIT DIVERSITY

Expand retail & entertainment opportunities while celebrating and nurturing the mix of old, new, venerable and funky businesses and cultural institutions

OBJECTIVE	PROPOSED STRATEGIES (ZONING)	PROPOSED STRATEGIES (NON-ZONING)
	Measures	Measures
<p>Reinforce the Central Square Cultural District as a vibrant retail and cultural destination for nearby neighborhoods and the city</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Encourage lively mixed-use activity in the Central Square core along Massachusetts Avenue between City Hall and Jill Brown-Rhone Park. Encourage housing to expand the number of people supporting retail and cultural enterprises.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In new development projects and renovations involving more than 50,000sf, require that at least one third of ground floor retail floor area be devoted to businesses occupying 2,000-3,000sf or less, and no more than one third of ground floor retail floor area to businesses occupying more than 10,000sf (areas are preliminary, subject to refinement) ○ Exempt ground floor retail floor area from counting toward density limits ○ On selected side street areas, require ground floor space to be convertible to retail (adequate ceiling height, accessibility, services, storefront). Allow and encourage child care, arts uses, non-profit office space and similar community-serving uses where retail has limited market potential by exempting floor area of these uses from counting toward density limits; consider also allowing an equal amount of floor area as bonus density. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Promote the identity of the Central Square Cultural District</i> • <i>Work with the CSBA, City agencies and other existing groups to expand capacity for and participation in Central Square management.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Encourage further engagement of cultural organizations, neighborhoods and other stakeholders as well as businesses in CSBA initiatives • <i>Explore the feasibility of a Business Improvement District (BID) to expand management and funding capacity for initiatives such as marketing, cultural/community events, fielding “ambassadors” in the square, cleanliness, adding and maintaining plantings etc.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review the strengths and limitations of existing management services provided by the CSBA, city agencies and other stakeholders. Define priority unmet needs and determine whether a BID could effectively meet these. ○ If a BID is feasible, create a business plan for the organization in coordination with the CSBA, city agencies and other stakeholders including residents. Identify interim opportunities to address any unmet management needs through expanded actions by the CSBA, City or other stakeholders.
<p>Support an attractive and vibrant walking environment by keeping retail storefronts continuously occupied with active uses</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Work with CSBA, CAC, and property owners to expand opportunities for occupancy of temporarily vacant storefronts</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Proactively work with owners of vacant spaces to suggest opportunities for installation of public art, temporary or “pop-up” retail, or other occupancy that contributes to the overall economic prosperity and character of the Square. ○ Establish convenient mechanisms to help temporarily fund insurance, utilities and/or related costs that may impede short-term occupancy ○ Administer an annual storefront award program to encourage and recognize creative storefront displays
<p>Enable valued businesses and non-profit organizations to get started and maintain a long-term presence in the study area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Consider incentivizing community benefits like affordable space for retail and non-profit organizations by allowing modest density and/or height increases where appropriate</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consider requiring, in return for bonus density or as a condition of city parking lot redevelopment, a one-time up-front subsidy such as waived rent (e.g. for 6-12 months) or free fit-out of space for eligible businesses. As possible, invest the fit-out subsidy in building elements that would also have value for a future tenant should the first tenant fail within a limited time period (e.g. HVAC, kitchen facilities). Criteria for eligible businesses may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Limitation on floor area of subsidized space (e.g. 2,000sf) ▪ Non-eligibility of formula retail formats associated with national chains (i.e. fast food) ▪ Limit on total number of outlets of eligible businesses (e.g. no more than 3) • <i>Verify costs and feasibility of rental of small market stalls (indoor and/or outdoor, including mobile cart opportunities) to merchants. Locate any market stalls in a highly visible, marketable area with significant passing pedestrian traffic such as adjacent to a major public plaza or public room (see Public Places to Build Community)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consider requiring, in return for bonus density or as a condition of city parking lot redevelopment, creation and management of market stalls. These may be indoor or outdoor as judged to be most effective and feasible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Maintain and publicize an inventory of retail and office spaces, diverse in size, to help market spaces to potential new tenants, and to advise current tenants on opportunities for relocations</i>



Goal 3: RESIDENTIAL DIVERSITY

Add varied housing choices to support community diversity and cultural and economic activity

OBJECTIVE	PROPOSED STRATEGIES (ZONING)	PROPOSED STRATEGIES (NON-ZONING)
	Measures	Measures
<p>Expand the range of housing choices to serve a broad spectrum of incomes, ages and household sizes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Facilitate appropriate infill development and adaptive reuse by reducing minimum parking requirements.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Update parking requirements so that existing developments may request reduced minimum parking requirements as part of development proposals (including adaptive reuse, infill development and/or more comprehensive redevelopment). Minimum parking requirements associated with existing development in some cases require property owners to maintain more parking spaces than are actually needed to meet typical demand. Reducing these requirements, consistent with the reduced parking requirements the city has typically applied in recent development proposals in response to increased use of transit, walking and biking, would discourage traffic growth in the study area and help create potential for higher-value uses serving community goals of the master plan. • <i>Continue to apply Cambridge’s established inclusionary zoning program, which provides an incentive for developers to include affordable units in new development projects.</i> • <i>Incent development of middle-income family housing and additional affordable housing through means such as density bonus and conditions of city parking lot redevelopment.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Affordable/middle-income/family housing strategies for consideration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Offer bonus density, beyond that offered by the inclusionary affordable housing policy, on the condition that the equivalent of at least 20% of the bonus floor area approved be devoted permanently to middle-income housing (see definitions at right). Any bonus density must be subject to the design guidelines. Recommended range of bonus density for consideration (beyond inclusionary bonus opportunity): up to 9% within existing zoning/overlay height limits, and up to 16% with potential height increases to approximately 10 stories or 100 feet in selected areas. ▪ Make development of middle-income housing a condition of sale of city parking lots for redevelopment. For example, prioritize sale to non-profit affordable housing developers, and/or require that at least 20% of all units developed under base allowed density be permanently dedicated as middle-income units. ▪ Average minimum middle-income unit size should meet CDD Housing Division parameters for family housing (e.g. at least 950 net square feet and 2 bedrooms) • <i>Encourage development of housing in the Osborn Triangle, particularly along Main Street facing Area 4, as well as on the block contiguous with Jill Brown-Rhone Park.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Enable transfer of bonus housing density within the Osborn Triangle are. Maintain existing 45’ height limit and 45 degree upper floor setback plane at Main Street, while considering bonus height in the direction of Massachusetts Avenue. Limit upper floor area of any new buildings within 70 feet of Main Street and Jill Brown-Rhone Park to 15,000sf or less. Exempt floor area of any housing within 20’ of Main Street from counting toward density limits. • <i>Accommodate development of “micro-units” among the mix of housing types.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove any permitting barriers to “micro-unit” development; do not allow these to count toward family unit goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>If City parking lots are redeveloped, consider conveying land to a non-profit entity with a mission to produce affordable and/or mixed-income housing, such as the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust (see Leverage Future Public and Private Investments for more detail)</i>
<p>Promote housing units that are healthy and sustainable places to live</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Promote housing development close to transit.</i> • <i>Apply green building standards to improve the environmental performance of new and existing buildings.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Proposed sustainable development measures, to be updated to reflect advancement of state-of-the-art sustainability strategies and achievements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All development within the study area that is subject to Sec. 22.20 (Green Building Requirements) of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance must meet LEED criteria at the Gold level. ▪ Commercial buildings must track energy using Energy Star, Labs21, or LEED-EBOM tools and methodologies and must report energy use to CDD on an annual basis for 5 years after the building is occupied. Residential buildings are encouraged to follow these steps as well. ▪ Cool roofs (green or white) will be required. ▪ (Re)development must meet the DPW standard for water quality management and the retention/ detention of the difference between the 2-year 24-hour pre-construction runoff hydrograph and the post-construction 25-year 24-hour runoff hydrograph. Low impact development strategies are particularly encouraged as a means to meeting this standard. ▪ Planning Board may allow dimensional or other zoning relief to allow co-generation and other energy systems that allow developments to utilize waste heat and other shared solutions to minimize energy loss. ▪ Enhance property owner awareness of incentive programs for insulation, historic restoration and other means of achieving better environmental performance with existing buildings ▪ Penalize increased levels of waste generation (e.g. wastewater, non-recyclable solid waste) • <i>Encourage advancement of green building criteria by revising standards as better tools become available per advancements in technology and application. Measure building energy use by energy per person per unit building area, to reward efficient space utilization.</i> 	

Definitions of affordability for purposes of this plan:

- “Affordable” means that housing costs represent no more than 30% of a household’s gross income
- “Affordable housing” refers to housing affordable by households earning 65% - 80% of Area Median Income (AMI) as defined by HUD. In 2012, 65% AMI for a family of four is \$63,570, based on 100% AMI for a family of four being \$97,800.
- “Middle-income” housing refers to housing affordable by households earning 80% - 120%(?) of Area Median Income (AMI) as defined by HUD.
- “Family housing” refers to housing having 2 or more bedrooms and located with convenient access to private or shared outdoor space
- For more information, see Cambridge’s Community Development Department Housing Division webpage, <http://www.ci.cambridge.ma.us/CDD/housing.aspx>
- Sample housing costs for a family of four people, 2012 (source: <http://www.ci.cambridge.ma.us/CDD/housing/resourcesandadditionalinformation/housingprogramincomelimits.aspx>)

What impact can Central Square and the Osborne Triangle have on affordable housing opportunities in Cambridge?

The inclusionary zoning program has helped create more than 450 units of affordable housing across the city since its inception in 1998. If parking lots and other sites with significant untapped zoning capacity in Central Square and Osborne Triangle were redeveloped, as many as 100 or more additional affordable and/or middle-income housing units could potentially be created.

Goal 4: CONNECTING PEOPLE TO THE SQUARE

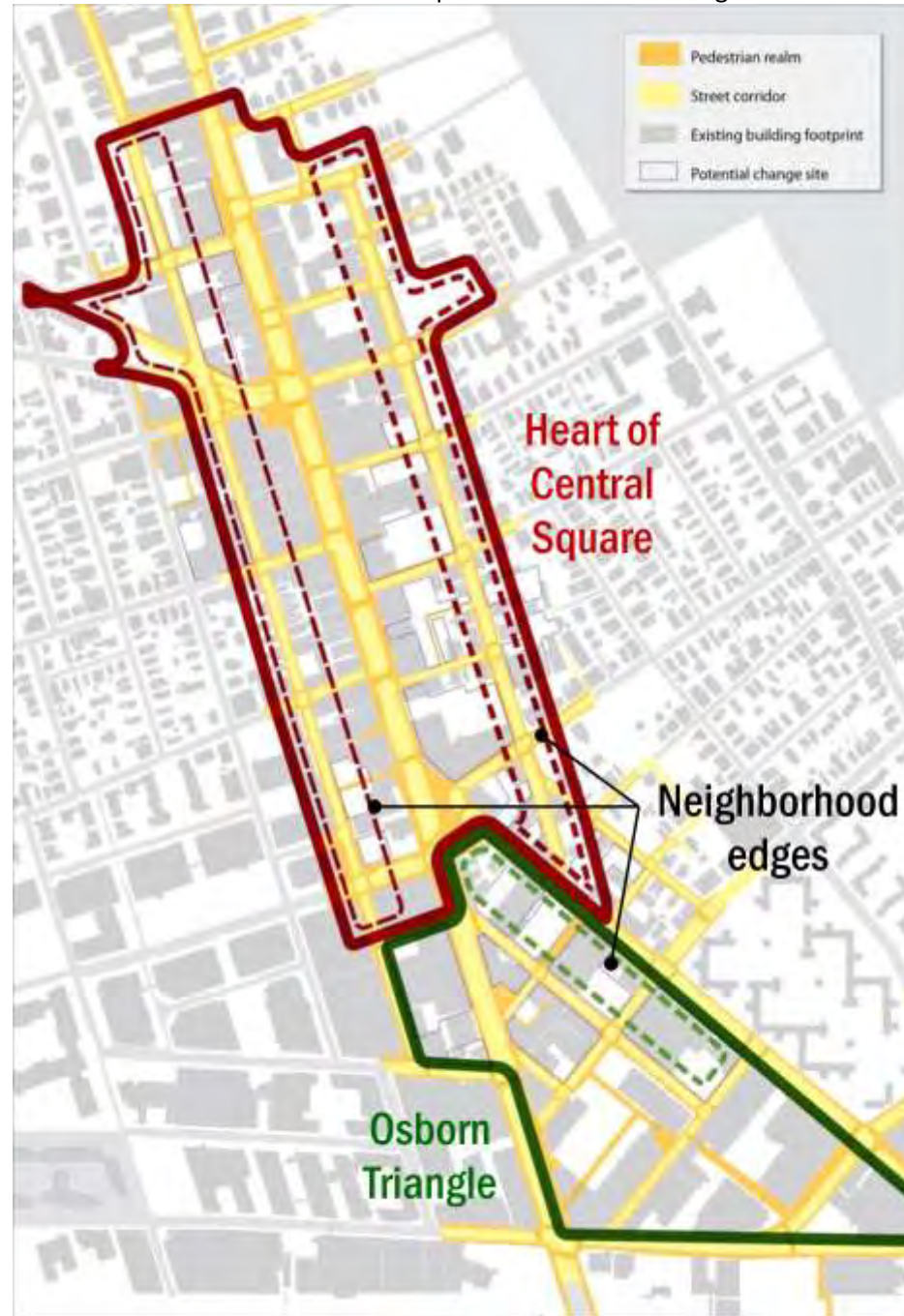
Enrich neighborhood walkability and livability with safe, green streets and improved access choices.

OBJECTIVE	PROPOSED STRATEGIES (ZONING)	PROPOSED STRATEGIES (NON-ZONING)
	Measures	Measures
<p>Enhance the street network to make walking more convenient, safe and fun</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Refine development and design guidelines, with emphasis on ensuring transparent retail storefronts; enhancing residential street edges and accessibility; activating side streets with appropriate retail and office uses; and defining appropriate transitions of scale, land use and character between the study area and adjacent neighborhoods.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ See details on page 13 ○ Include design guidelines to establish and improve pedestrian connections -- within the square, and to the neighborhoods. • <i>Enable appropriate infill development and adaptive reuse by reducing obsolete minimum parking requirements. See below.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Plant street trees where possible, and encourage gardens along residential uses on side streets.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Plant street trees in available locations where they are missing. Where lack of adequate soil quantity or quality prevents healthy tree growth, create linear tree trenches along the curb to aid root growth and water infiltration. Add irrigation where necessary, preferably utilizing retained stormwater. ○ Consider installing trees and/or smaller ornamental plantings along both sides of Massachusetts Avenue in the first block east of Prospect and Magazine where vaults and other below-grade obstructions have prevented installation of any street trees. Strategies include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Placing trees in planters can be an alternative where below-grade conditions preclude in-ground planting. Select a consistent planter design that contributes to overall identity of Central Square. City and CSBA will need to partner on maintenance and watering. ▪ Where properties with below-sidewalk vaults are redeveloped or substantially renovated, require vaults to be removed and replaced with street trees where locations allow. ○ Apply design guidelines to encourage small front gardens, 5 to 10 feet deep from sidewalk to principal façade line, along residential building frontage on streets other than Massachusetts Avenue and Main Street. Stoops and bay windows may protrude into this garden area. Where sidewalks lack adequate space for street trees, the 5-10 foot garden dimension may be applied instead to create a tree zone between the clear sidewalk passage and the curb. • <i>Widen sidewalks where widths are inadequate to accommodate pedestrian flow.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Widen the Magazine Street sidewalk at Carl Barron Plaza and adjacent bus stops as much as possible without impeding bus operations. • <i>Improve pedestrian street lighting with a plan that addresses safety, convenient access to evening cultural and dining destinations, and identity.</i> • <i>If existing parking lots are redeveloped, require creation of walkable, friendly ground floors and site edges.</i>
<p>Maintain and improve a variety of good transportation choices</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Work with the MBTA to introduce real-time transit service information signage in/near Carl Barron Plaza and/or nearby bus stops and Red Line station entrances, including bus schedule information.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Collaborate with the CAC, MIT Media Lab and/or other partners as well as the MBTA to make information a signature experiential/identity element as well as a practical one. • <i>Enforce traffic ordinances to minimize conflict between vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians</i> • <i>Monitor pedestrian and vehicle flow/conflict impacts of new development in critical locations, such as at Magazine Street and Mass Ave.</i>
<p>Update parking requirements to reflect increased preferences for alternatives to driving</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Define fixed parking maximums and flexible minimums (based on analysis and as approved by Planning Board) for all uses per table on opposite page.</i> • <i>Accommodate shared parking where feasible.</i> • See also Residential Diversity for application to existing development. 	
<p>Add plantings and green infrastructure to encourage a healthier environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Require on-site management of stormwater</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Add stormwater retention and infiltration infrastructure where appropriate to address flooding and water quality challenges</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Create a stormwater facility near Jill Brown-Rhone Park, coordinated to accommodate associated development and/or public open space on-site. ○ Install stormwater rain gardens along streets where they can effectively aid stormwater management. Encourage adjacent property or business owners to help maintain rain gardens. ○ Increase on-site retention and cleansing of stormwater in new development and adaptive reuse through encouragement of green roofs, cisterns, rain gardens and/or related strategies as appropriate.

Recommended parking space requirements		
Use	Minimum	Maximum
R&D	Based on analysis	0.8 sp/KSF
Office		0.9 sp/KSF
Retail /consumer service		0.5 sp/KSF
Residential	0.5 space/dwelling unit	0.75 space/dwelling unit

To achieve the vision goals, LEVERAGE FUTURE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC INVESTMENTS, as appropriate.
Mitigate any neighborhood impacts such as traffic, noise, shadows, or inappropriate scale.

OBJECTIVE	PROPOSED STRATEGIES (ZONING)	PROPOSED STRATEGIES (NON-ZONING)
	Measures	Measures
<p>Apply criteria to achieve community benefits if city parking lots are redeveloped</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Consider sale of public parking lots for redevelopment according to criteria that help advance the vision. Public parking lot redevelopment could help achieve community goals for Central Square in four significant ways:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <i>transforming development capacity into desired mixed-income housing, retail, cultural and workplace program</i> 2) <i>leveraging city land ownership to require additional benefits such as expanded park space or improved sidewalks</i> 3) <i>Allocating a portion of the parking lots’ real estate value toward funding community benefits.</i> 4) <i>making streets more walkable by replacing open parking lots along sidewalks with attractive, occupied buildings and green spaces</i> • <i>Priority community benefits include:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Requiring a share of new units developed on the site (e.g. 20%) to be affordable to middle-income family households. Consider designating a non-profit, mission-based housing developer to help achieve this goal.</i> ○ <i>Requiring a share of new retail or office space developed on the site (e.g. 5-10%) to be provided at reduced cost to small and/or local businesses such as through provision of free fit out.</i> ○ <i>Requiring advanced green building standards.</i> ○ <i>Requiring a new public plaza/park to be created, equivalent in size to a portion of the site area (e.g. 30%), associated with concurrent housing, cultural and/or commercial development promoting its use, and located in a priority location for additional public space such as along Massachusetts Avenue.</i> ○ <i>Requiring a “public room” or similar indoor public space at least 5,000sf in floor area to be created</i> <p><i>Other goals indicated among the strategies above. A strategy for interim provision of public parking during redevelopment is also necessary.</i></p>
<p>Consider establishing a community benefits fund to support benefits over time</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Verify feasibility of an ongoing community benefits fund, considering:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>potential pace and amount of fund contributions</i> ○ <i>priorities for fund application</i> ○ <i>mechanism for fund management</i> 	
<p>Continue to promote sustainability in planning, design, and development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Promote housing development close to transit.</i> • <i>Apply green building standards to improve the environmental performance of new and existing buildings.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Add stormwater retention and infiltration infrastructure where appropriate to address flooding and water quality challenges</i> • <i>Plant street trees where possible, and encourage gardens along residential uses on side streets.</i> • <i>Enhance bicycle infrastructure to be safer and more convenient.</i>



Design guidelines updates: summary of recommendations

The 1989 Central Square Development Guidelines currently in effect remain highly relevant to the goals and strategies of this master plan. The following relatively modest updates to the guidelines are recommended to enhance their impact and accommodate updated conditions:

- Limit shadow impacts of new development on portions of neighborhoods outside of the study area and public parks within approximately 1-2 blocks or 500 feet of a development site. Shadow impacts should not substantially reduce the appeal of public spaces, nor direct sun access to neighborhood housing, during spring and fall. Suggested standard: limit shadow impacts to no more than 2 hours per day between March 1 and October 31.
- Under “Stores and Storefronts,” require retail facades to be composed of at least 60-80% transparent material along Massachusetts Avenue, Main Street and Prospect Street, and at least 50-60% transparent material along other streets.
- Under “Housing,” require frequent ground floor doors, windows, stoops, gardens and/or similar elements promoting residential scale and identity where housing is located at ground level. Ground floor units in multifamily buildings should have their primary entrance doors oriented to the adjacent street.
- Under “Housing,” encourage housing that is located at ground level to incorporate universal access features that also promote unit privacy. For instance, a continuous raised plinth between unit front doors and the sidewalk can include both a continuous ramp-accessible route at first floor level as well as defined outdoor spaces for individual units.
- Under “Elements of Form/Height,” to promote variation in building profile and accommodate deeper upper floor setbacks on side streets, allow up to one half of building façade length above the Mass Ave streetwall to be exempt from setback requirements. Impose the established Mass Ave upper floor setback policy along facades perpendicular to Mass Ave, with a base streetwall height of 55’ within one-half block distance of Mass Ave and a base streetwall height of 45’ (or matching adjacent zoning district condition) elsewhere. Exempt up to one third of façade length above streetwall from this setback.
- Under “Elements of Form/Height,” explicitly allow an increase of building height for building forms set back from the Massachusetts Avenue/Main Street streetwall, followed by the indicated diminution of height approaching neighborhood context. This approach is consistent with the current Central Square building height overlay.
- Under “Elements of Form/Height,” limit the aggregate length of adjacent (perpendicular) building facades above 65 feet in height to 190 feet. Require at least one significant vertical break – a change in façade plane of at least 8 feet, reinforced with variation in material and/or other compositional elements – for every 100 feet of façade length.
- Under “Elements of Form/Exterior Treatments,” explicitly allow contemporary architectural expression as long as it is compatible in scale with significant context buildings.
- Prevent potentially incompatible retail or other commercial uses on side streets outside of active ground floor priority areas. Restaurant, retail and ground floor office or live/work uses should be encouraged as long as they do not produce significant noise, parking or other negative impacts on residents.
- When approving development projects, require or encourage incentives for walking, transit, biking to reduce car ownership and related neighborhood impacts. For instance, require housing developers to provide new tenants passes for transit, car-share and/or bike share services for their first month of occupancy to help introduce them to transportation options.
- Revise the Central Square subdistrict definitions per the diagram at left.