

Central Square Vision

April 11, 2012



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

Agenda

- **K2C2 Planning Process**
- **Emerging Vision**
- **Framework strategies**
 - Enhance public spaces
 - Maintain and expand retail diversity
 - Add housing choices
 - Improve connections
- **Small group discussion**
- **Report-backs and comments**
- **Next steps**



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Red Ribbon Commission process

Advisory
Committee
review and
discussion
with public
input

approved with
process input

Develop draft plan strategies for
each area of analysis

Final plan and Recommendations
(zoning and non-zoning)

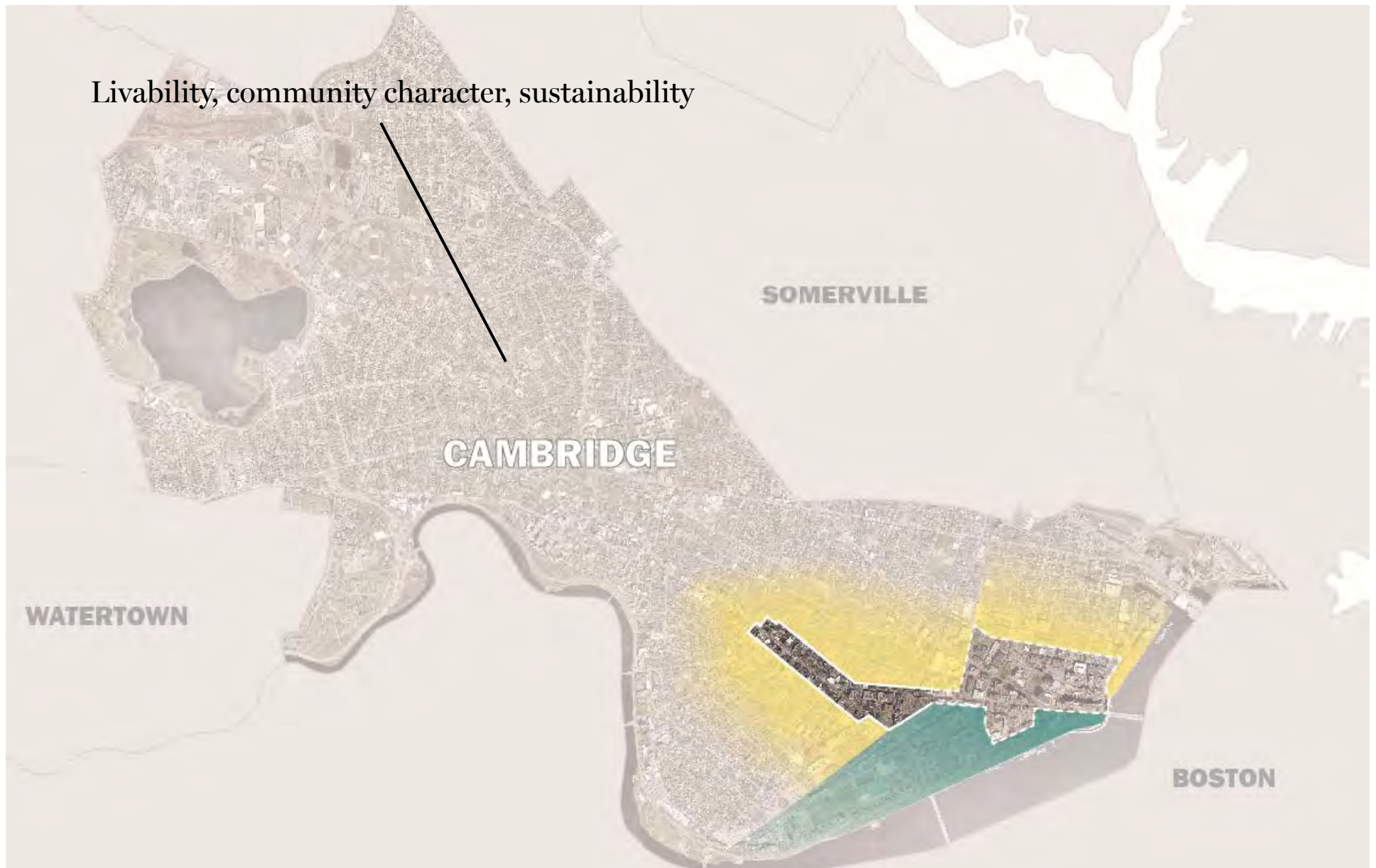
ZONING
RECOMMENDATIONS

VISION

NON-ZONING
RECOMMENDATIONS

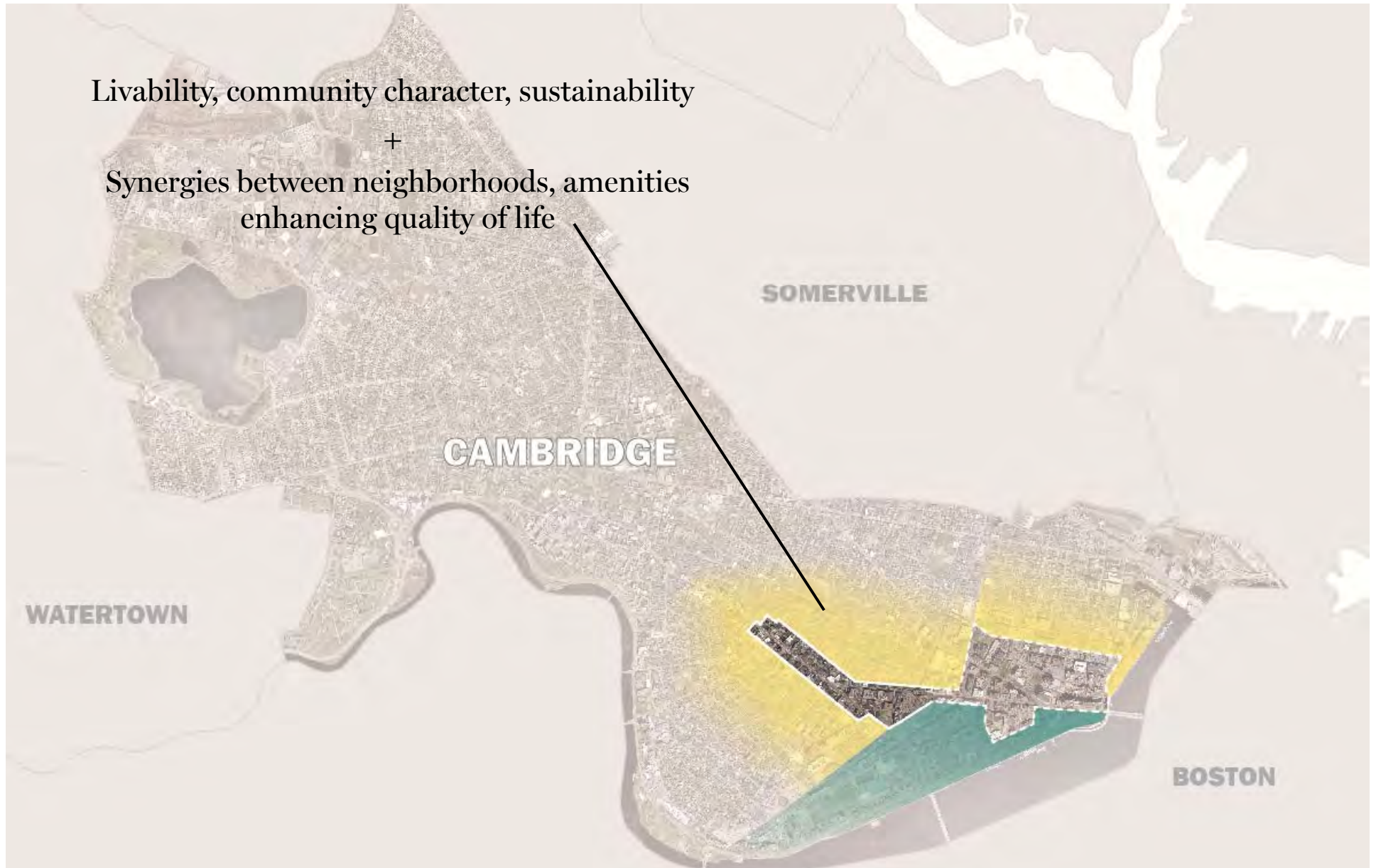
Values: Cambridge

Livability, community character, sustainability



Values: Neighborhoods

Livability, community character, sustainability
+
Synergies between neighborhoods, amenities
enhancing quality of life



Values: Cambridge's crossroads

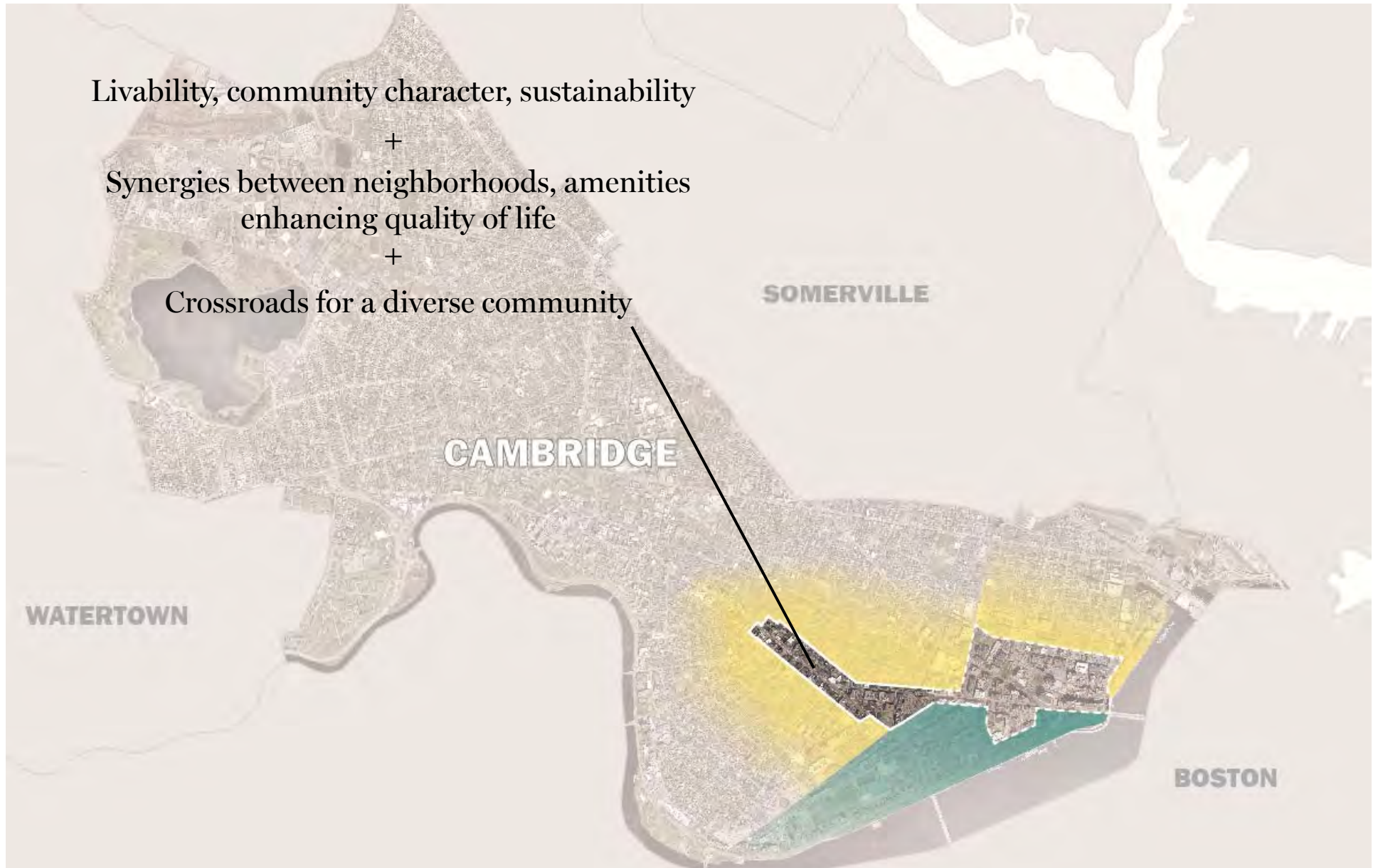
Livability, community character, sustainability

+

Synergies between neighborhoods, amenities
enhancing quality of life

+

Crossroads for a diverse community



Emerging vision

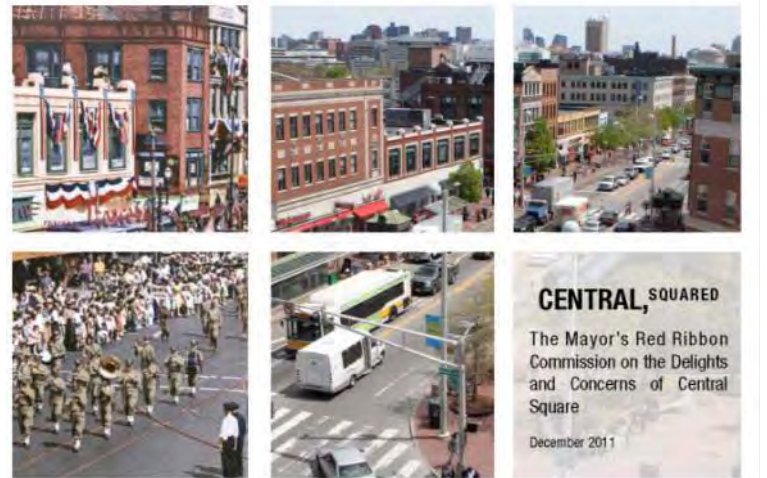
A crossroads that invites diverse people to share a place whose form and character support a unique mix of choices for culture, shopping, living, entertainment, and community.



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Community goals for achieving the vision

- Preserve and enhance the Square's appeal to people from every walk of life and neighborhood
- ...and the uniqueness of its diverse retail and entertainment
- Celebrate the Square's mix of old and new, venerable and funky
- Expand the Square's role as a place that promotes its own diversity through a variety of new housing choices that serve families, students, young and old professionals, artists...
- Enrich the Square's public realm as place that offers community at many levels



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Strategies

*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 goals for activities and experiences?
- **Context:** Which uses and buildings animate the public realm? Do we need more in parts of Central Square
- **Culture of use:** Which parts of the Square are welcoming? Why?



What makes a great community place?



MORE INTERACTIVE ◀ ▶ MORE PERSONAL

Festival

Parks

Outdoor dining

A place to sit
with a friend

Enjoying public
art

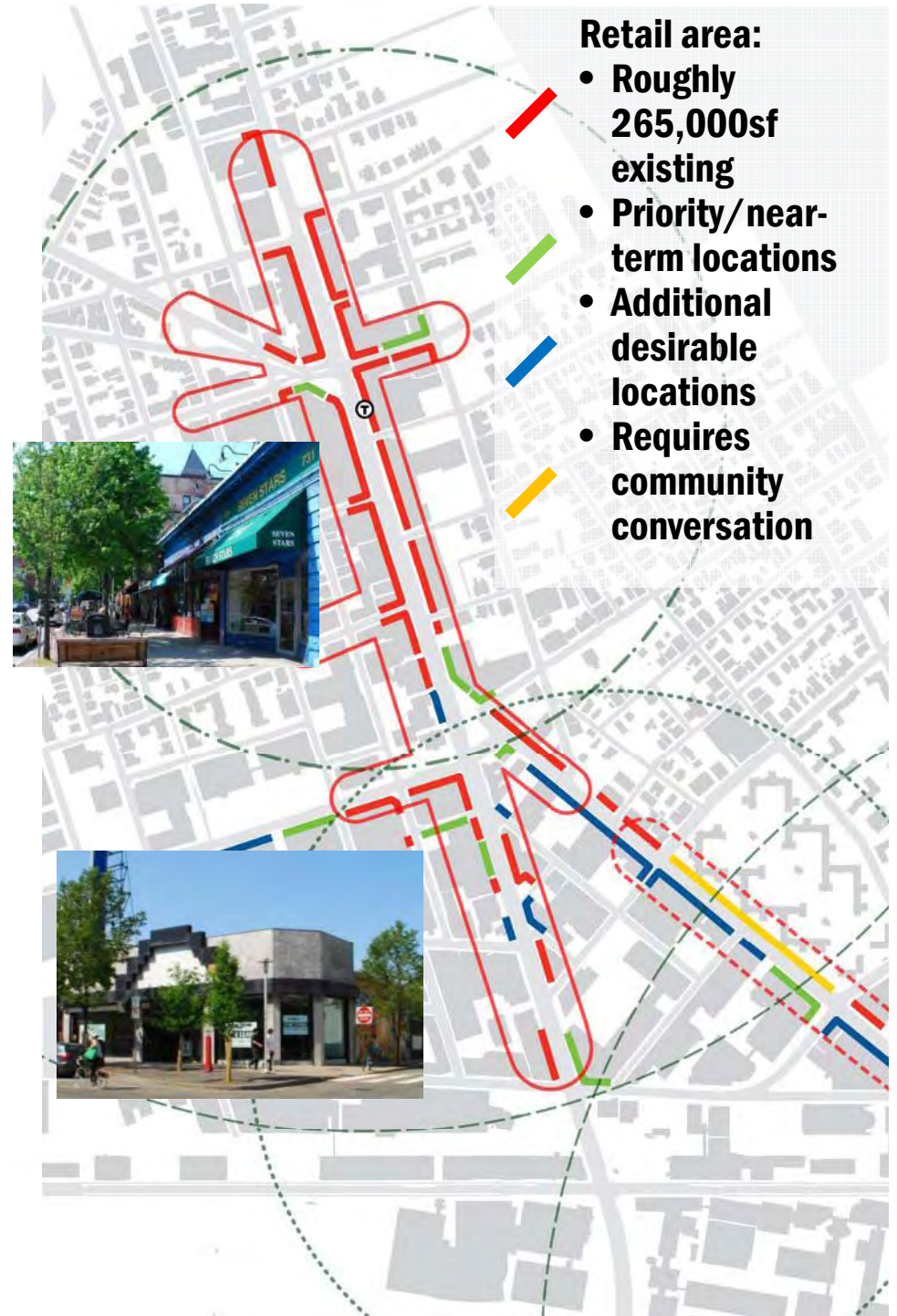


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2: Maintain and expand *retail diversity* (type, price point, ethnicity...)

KEY QUESTIONS

- **Who uses Central Square?**
Key messages from the customer intercept survey
- **Retail market analysis:** what's here, what's emerging
- **Managing change:** supporting long-term *retail* affordability...and economic diversity

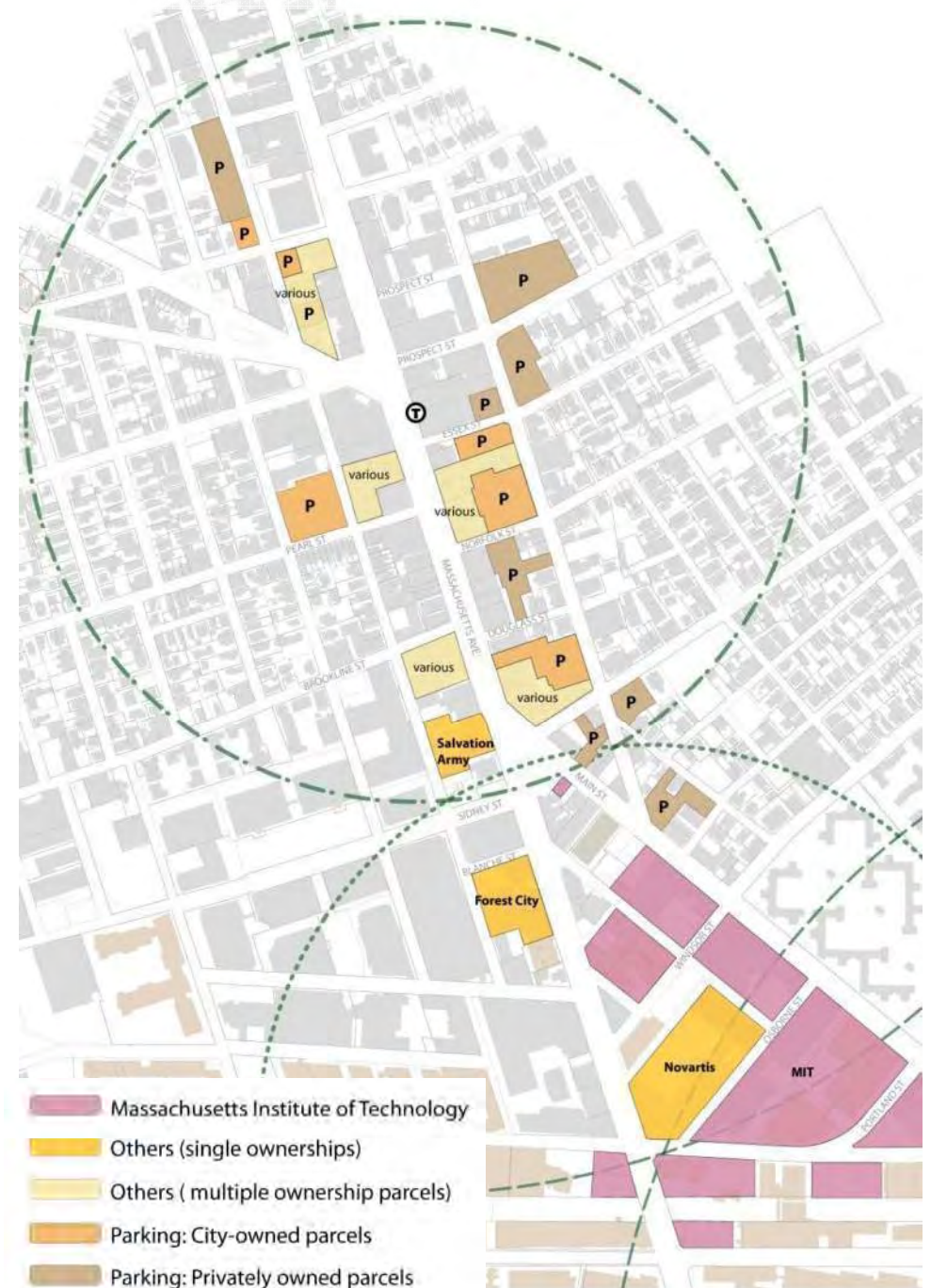


3: Preserve diversity of housing choices, community identity, the arts, retail and workplaces by adding mixed-income housing and preserving affordable retail

KEY QUESTIONS

- **Quantity:** Roughly how much housing do we want to add?
- **Scale and character:** How do we make it fit its diverse context
- **Land use mix:** How does housing relate to retail, entertainment, and other uses?
- **Feasibility:** What are the feasibility issues?

Sites with potential for change



4: 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
- **Transportation choices:** How to balance transportation modes (walk, bike, transit, auto)?
- **Parking analysis:** Can we demonstrate a feasible solution accommodating redevelopment and successful retail?



A history of constant change



Mass Ave

Before the Great Depression, some buildings were taller



CENTRAL SQUARE, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

Mass Ave

Before the Great Depression,
some buildings were taller



CENTRAL SQUARE, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

Opportunities to write the next chapter...preservation and innovation



Mass Ave

Options to consider:



CENTRAL SQUARE, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

Mass Ave

Options to consider: develop on adjacent sites, with view easement



CENTRAL SQUARE, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

Options to consider: develop above,
with step-backs



Mass Ave



CENTRAL SQUARE, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

Key criteria for infill

- Does it create opportunities for community?
- Does it support and broaden a unique mix of retail?
- Does it expand housing choices and diversity?
- Does it improve walkable of connections to adjacent neighborhoods?
- ...and how can it preserve and enhance Central Square's unique character and "vibe"



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Design that promotes walkable neighborhood connections



Residential front doors and gardens; live-work space; affordable small office and retail

Using investment to expand community



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Adding a new chapter of “cool”: Asheville, NC strategy precedents

- Establish business and/or arts **incubator facilities** nurturing start-ups
- Manage **community benefits fund** subsidizing small/local retail, funded by new development
- Encourage cost-effective **co-operative purchasing** among businesses



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Adding a new chapter of “cool”: Asheville, NC strategy precedents

- Maintain historic/unique retail with value from
 - **New upper floor development** (subject to step-backs and other appropriate guidelines)
 - Sale of “air rights” **view/solar access corridors**



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Existing development

Potential soft sites 



Potential development within existing density (limited sites)
1,000-1,100 new housing units; 155,000sf updated/new retail space (new residents support 13-18% of new retail)



Image depicts a potential development scenario; not intended to represent a specific plan or design intent for specific sites

Potential development within existing density (additional sites)
1,300-1,500 new housing units; 200,000sf updated/new retail space
(new residents support 13-18% of new retail)



Potential development beyond height envelopes (limited sites)
1,800-2,000 housing units; 155,000sf updated/new retail (new residents support 25-30 % of new retail)



*Image depicts a potential development scenario;
not intended to represent a specific plan or design intent for specific sites*

Potential development beyond height envelopes (additional sites)
2,200-2,400 housing units; 200,000sf updated/new retail (new residents support 25-30% of new retail)



*Image depicts a potential development scenario;
not intended to represent a specific plan or design intent for specific sites*



Western-
River-
Magazine-
Green

Essex-
Pearl-
Norfolk

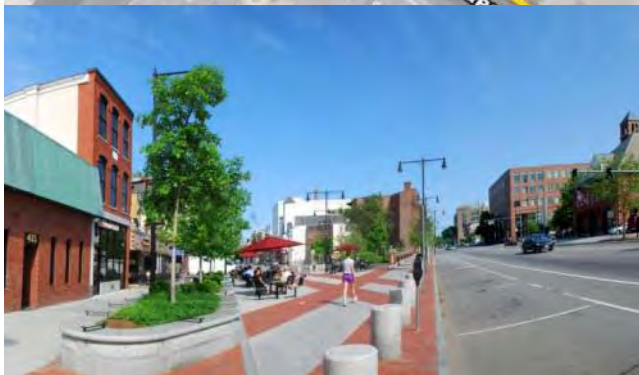
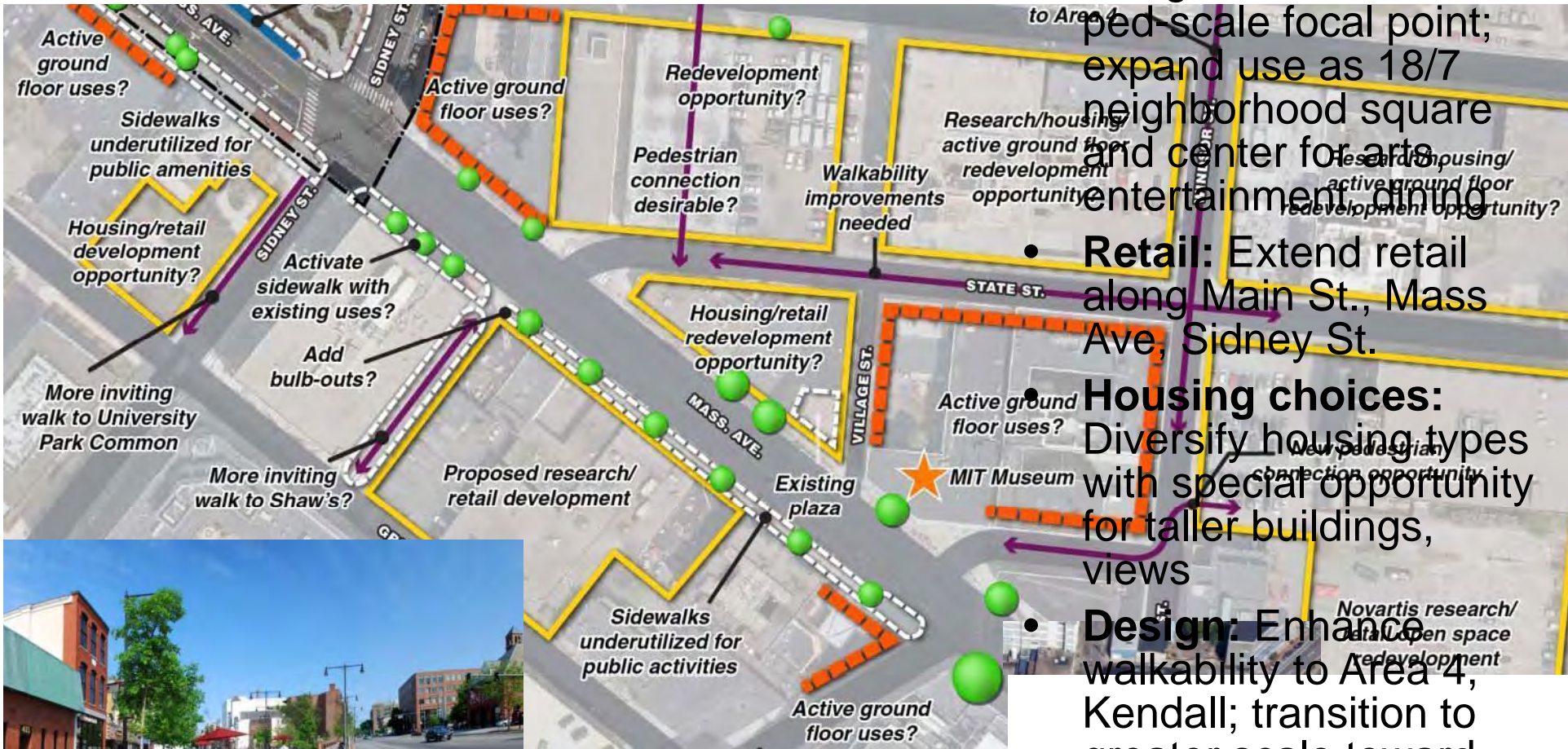
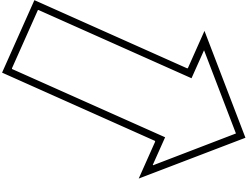
Brookline-
Columbia

Main-
Bishop-
Allen

Sidney-
Blanche-
Green

Redevelopment opportunity
Jill Brown-Rhone Park: Columbia St.

Jill Brown-Rhone Park: special opportunities



- **Public spaces:** Extend or create active edges along all sides; add ped-scale focal point; expand use as 18/7 neighborhood square and center for arts, entertainment, dining
- **Retail:** Extend retail along Main St., Mass Ave, Sidney St.
- **Housing choices:** Diversify housing types with special opportunity for taller buildings, views
- **Design:** Enhance walkability to Area 4, Kendall; transition to greater scale toward MIT; modern expression

Jill Brown-Rhone Park



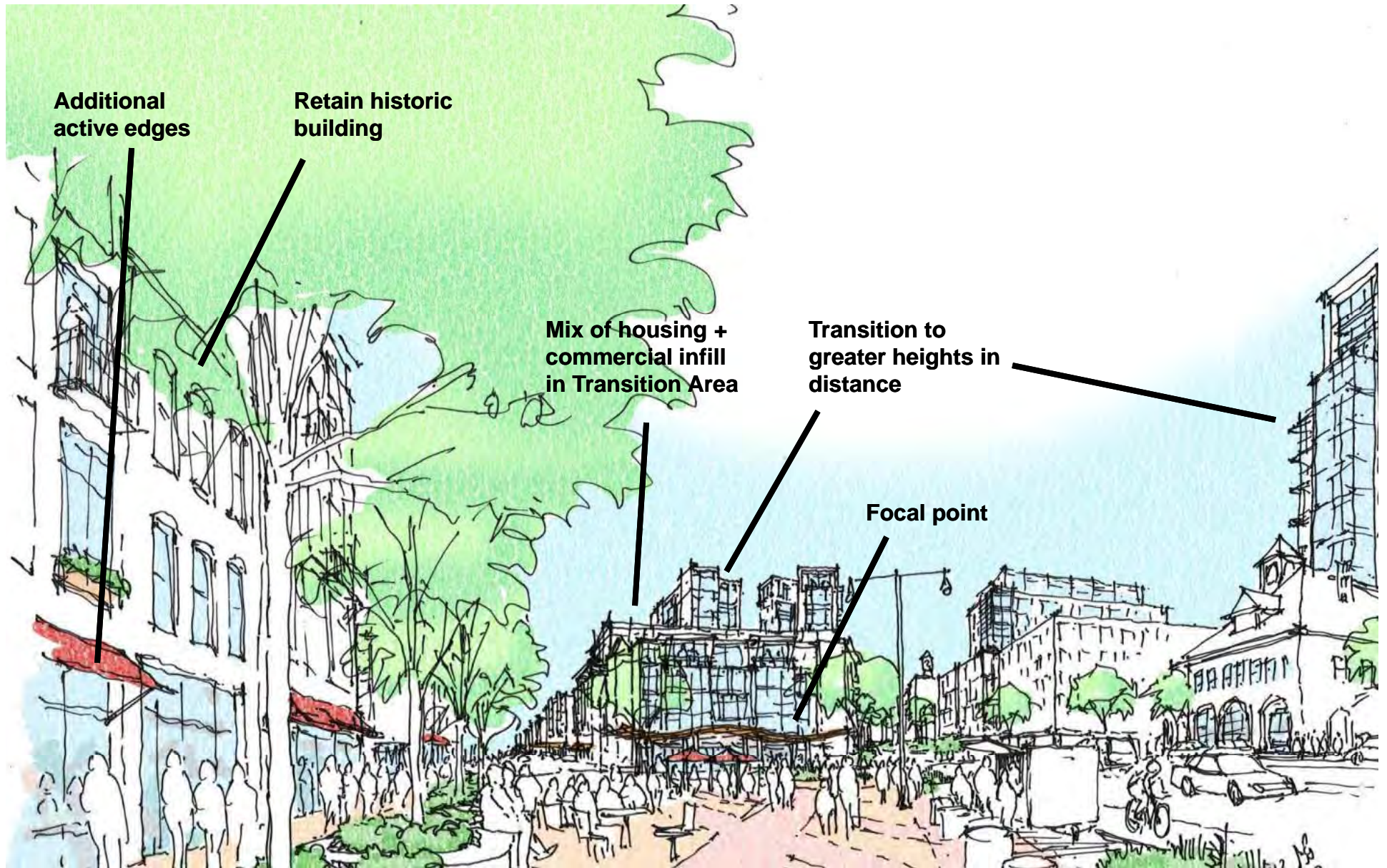
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Jill Brown-Rhone Park





Jill Brown-Rhone Park



underutilized for public activities

Bishop Allen Drive: *special opportunities*



- **Public spaces:** Green Bishop Allen with rain gardens, compact planting beds

• **Retail:** Reinforce retail node at Main/Mass Ave

- **Housing choices:** Engage Area 4, Mid-Cambridge communities with complementary housing choices, walkable streets, live/work space

- **Design:** Transition to Area 4 with 45' height, bays scaled to context



Bishop Allen Drive

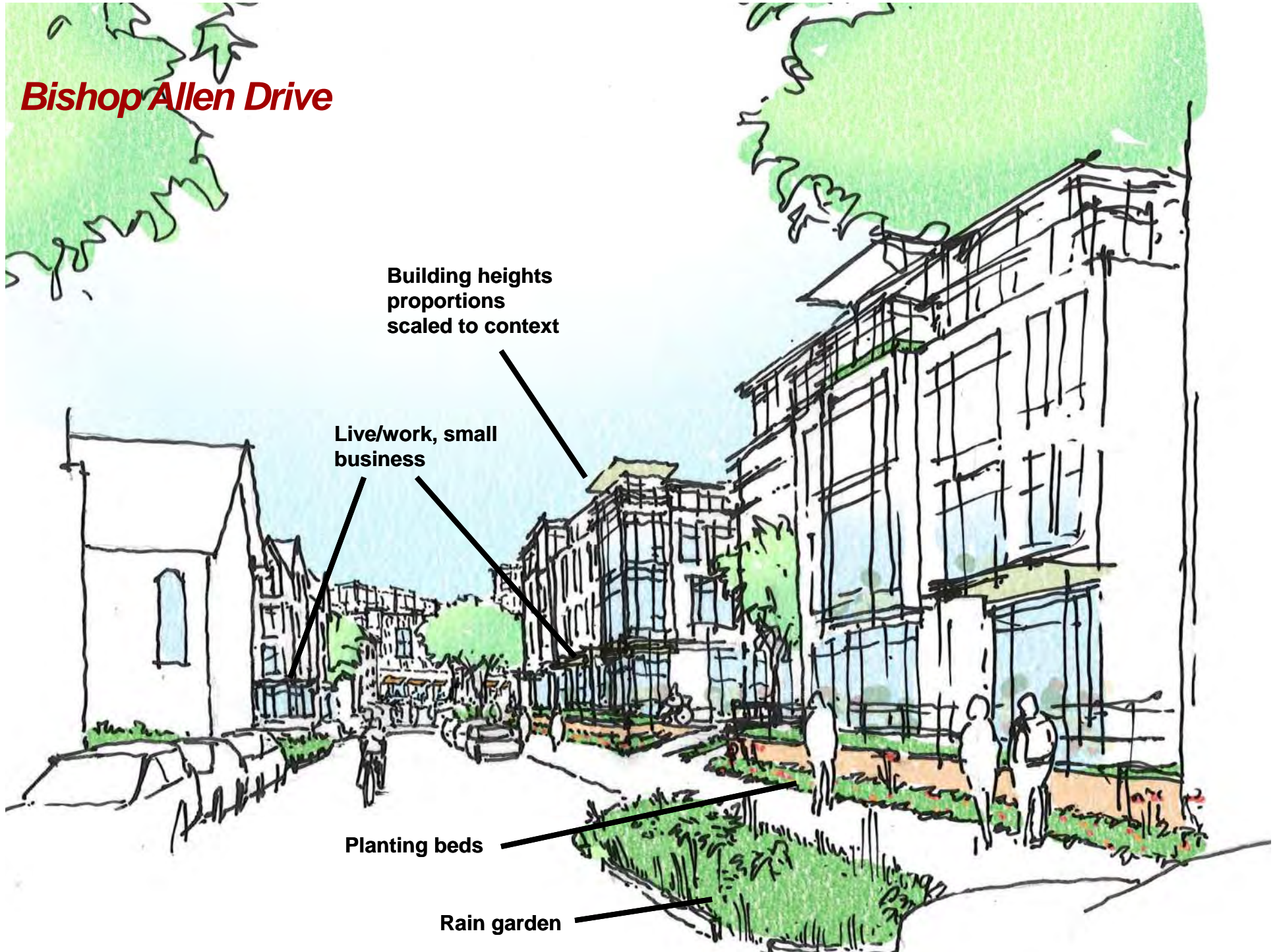


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Bishop Allen Drive



Bishop Allen Drive



Building heights proportions scaled to context

Live/work, small business

Planting beds

Rain garden

Mass Ave:
special opportunities

- **Public spaces:** Create new plaza space, activate existing sidewalks
- **Retail:** Unique opportunity to create new spaces tailored to market and community interest
- **Housing choices:** Establish an attractive transit-oriented neighborhood at Central Square's core. Special opportunity for height.
- **Design:** Activate sunny Mass Ave. and plaza edges; Reinforce Mass Ave. streetwall, avoid negative scale/shadow impacts



Mass Ave



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Mass Ave

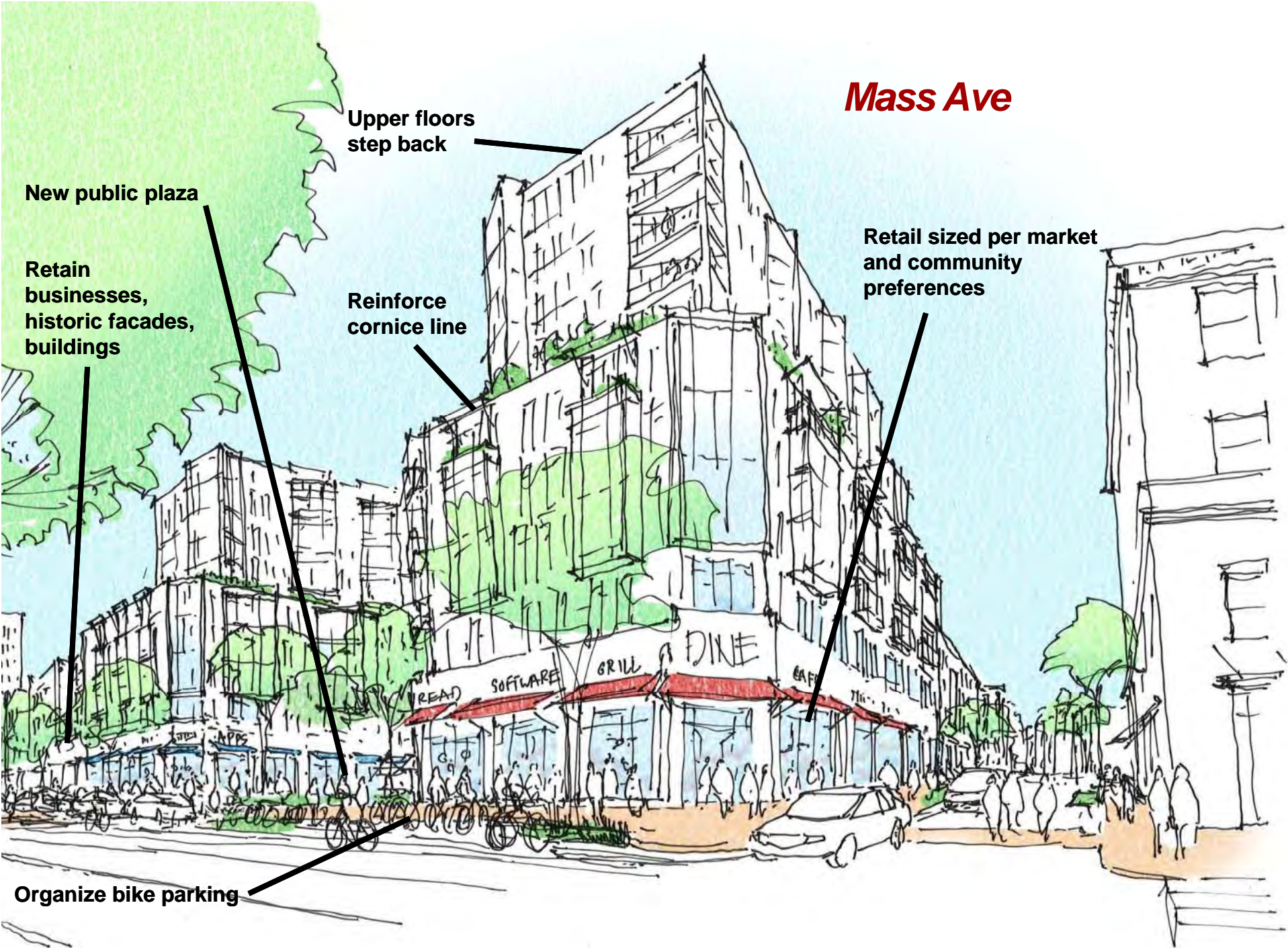






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Mass Ave



Upper floors
step back

New public plaza

Retain
businesses,
historic facades,
buildings

Reinforce
cornice line

Retail sized per market
and community
preferences

Organize bike parking

Mass Ave



Mass Ave

Ongoing support for valued businesses, public space improvements



Mass Ave

Add activity, art etc. to available sidewalk areas

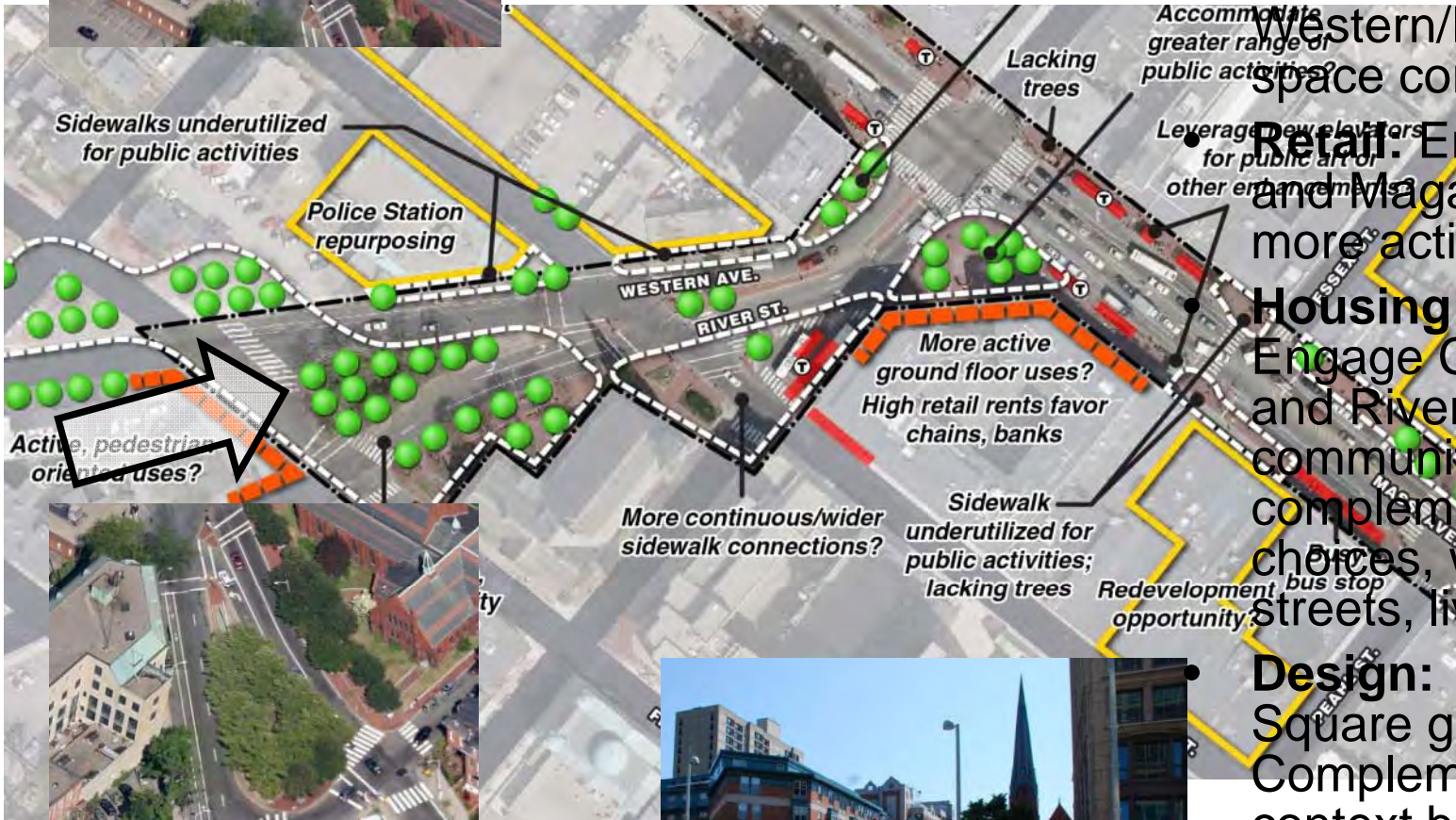
Encourage alternate local/startup tenants where possible

Retain existing buildings with strong character, affordable rents



Western Ave- Carl Barron Plaza: special opportunities

- Public spaces:**
 Activate Carl Barron Plaza and connect into Western/River green space corridor
- Retail:** Engage Western and Magazine with more active retail
- Housing choices:** Engage Cambridgeport and Riverside communities with complementary housing choices, walkable streets, live/work space
- Design:** Create Central Square gateway; Complement taller context buildings; transition to 45' height at neighborhood edges

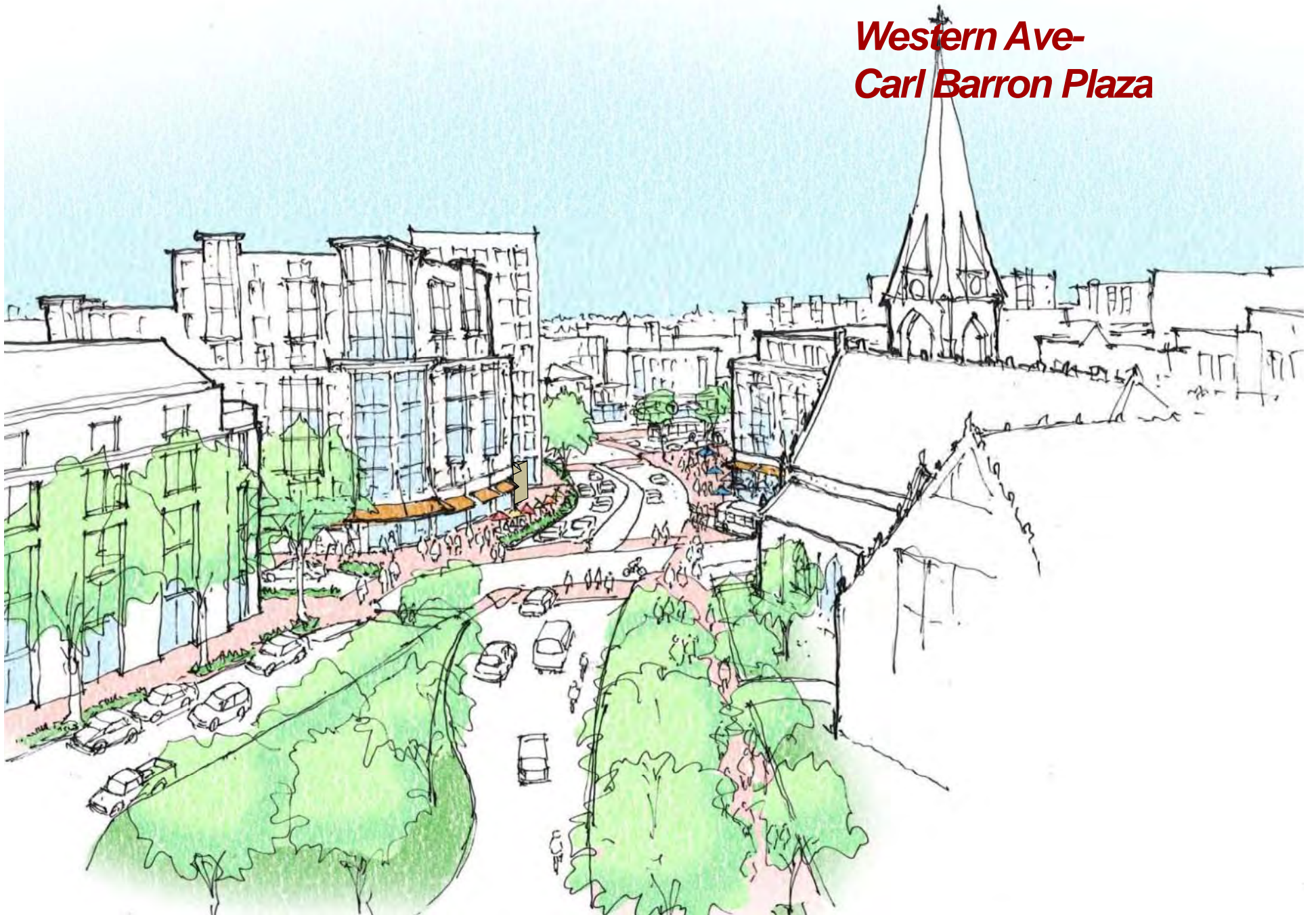


Western Ave- Carl Barron Plaza

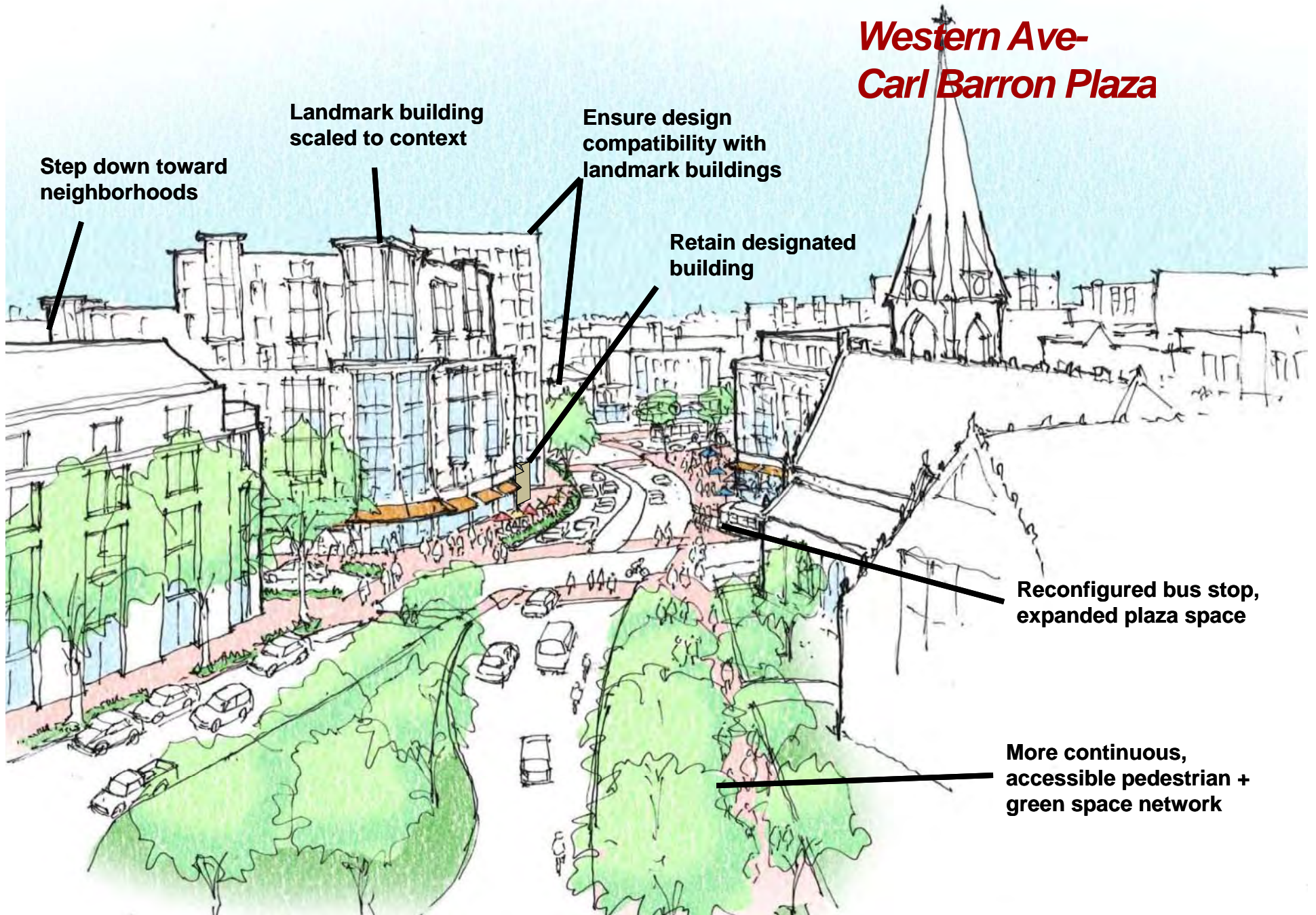


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***Western Ave-
Carl Barron Plaza***



Western Ave- Carl Barron Plaza



Step down toward neighborhoods

Landmark building scaled to context

Ensure design compatibility with landmark buildings

Retain designated building

Reconfigured bus stop, expanded plaza space

More continuous, accessible pedestrian + green space network

Discussion

