



# Central Square Rezoning

## Community Meeting 2

Wednesday 17 July 2024

# Our team tonight



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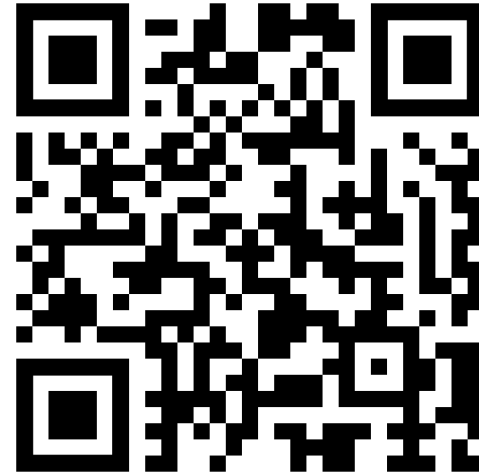
**Agency**  
Landscape + Planning

# Who's in the room?



To ensure that the community members we're engaging represent the diversity of Cambridge, we ask anyone who is comfortable to **fill out the brief survey using the link in the chat.**

**No personal or identifying information will be recorded.**



<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LPWJK3J>



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# What brings us here?

## Central Sq. Rezoning:

A community process to **update zoning for Central Square to allow for and encourage:**



More housing (incl. affordable)



Diverse retail, cultural and non-profit activity



Public spaces to build community



# Project Timeline



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# Today's focus

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- Project objectives
- Community feedback so far
- Defining the district
- Zoning ideas & priorities
- Discussion
- Next steps



# Today's focus

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- **Project objectives**

- Community feedback so far

- Defining the district

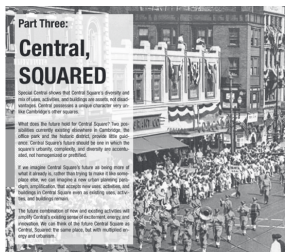
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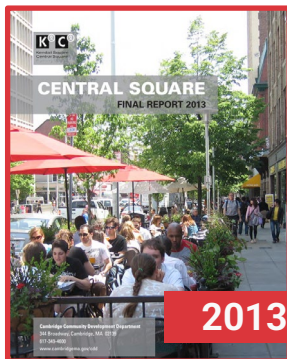


# Previous studies have informed **Central Sq. community goals**

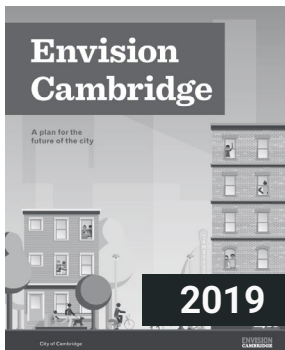


Red Ribbon Commission Sub-committee Views: Visions for Central Square

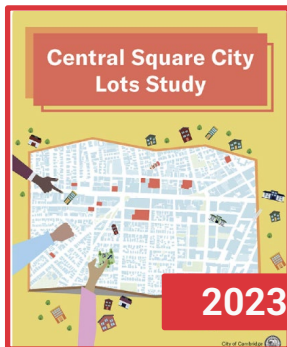
2011



2013



2019



2023



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## **PUBLIC PLACES TO BUILD COMMUNITY**

*e.g., outdoor entertainment, pocket parks, programming*



## **RETAIL, CULTURAL, AND NON-PROFIT DIVERSITY**

*e.g., small businesses, arts and cultural spaces; outdoor dining*



## **INCREASED HOUSING STOCK & DIVERSITY**

*e.g., affordable housing, family housing*



## **PEOPLE CONNECTED TO THE SQUARE**

*e.g., pedestrian and bicycle improvements*



## **A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR CENTRAL SQUARE**

*e.g., green buildings, tree planting, shade structures*



# Progress has been made on a number of goals...



**KEY**

Public spaces to build community

Retail, cultural, & non-profit diversity

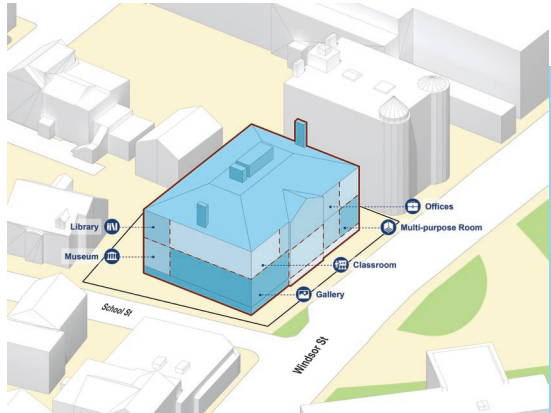
Increasing housing stock & diversity

People connected to the Square

Sustainable future for Central Square

# ...with exciting new projects on the horizon.

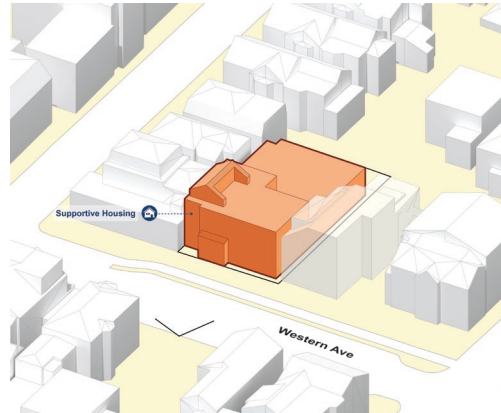
## 105 Windsor St.



### PLACES TO BUILD COMMUNITY

**Next steps:**  
Engagement process to co-design community center

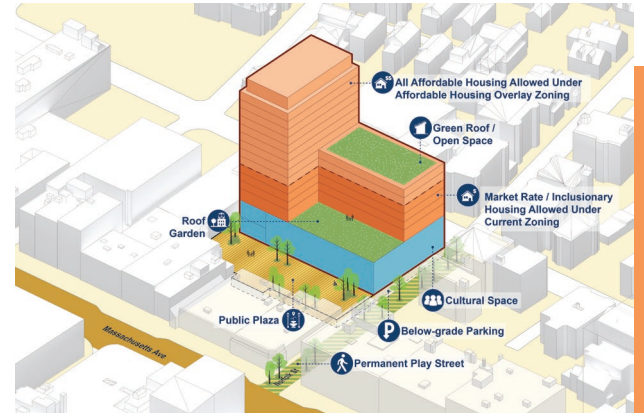
## 205 Western Ave.



### COMMUNITY PLACES + HOUSING

**Next steps:**  
Engagement process to explore the best use

## 84 & 96 Bishop Allen Dr.



### CULTURAL SPACE + CONNECTIONS + HOUSING

**Next steps:**  
Request For Information released to understand opportunities for housing and cultural space



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**Now**, we are updating Zoning to reflect community goals, with a focus on **increasing housing, cultural & retail spaces**.



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As we do this, we want to understand:

- ? Where in Central Square should taller development be allowed?
- ? How tall should we allow development for housing?
- ? What specific uses should we be prioritizing in addition to housing?

# Today's focus

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● Project objectives

● **Community feedback so far**

● Defining the district

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# Community Meeting 1



**Central Square Rezoning**

**Join Us!**  
Community Meeting 1  
Thursday, May 30  
6-7:30 PM via Zoom

Link to Register:  
<https://bit.ly/Mtg1CentralSqRezoning>

Learn more about zoning in Central Square and how you can help shape future changes!

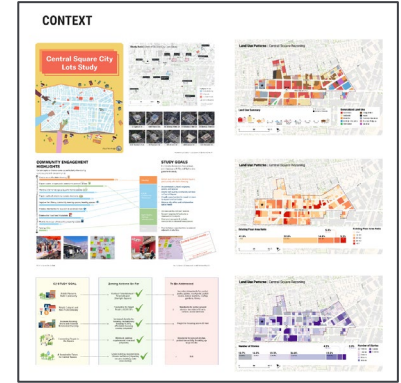
Visit the project website to learn more!  
Scan the QR code below with your phone camera

<https://bit.ly/CentralSqRezoning>

The poster features the City of Cambridge logo, a QR code, and a map of Central Square with various zoning icons and a hand pointing to a specific area.

## At this meeting, our team

- Introduced the **process and timeline**
- Recapped prior planning efforts and **community goals**
- Reviewed **current zoning** and the C2 recommendations
- Shared methods for **sharing ideas** and engaging

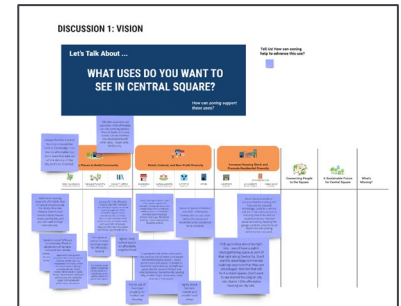


**CONTEXT**

Central Square City Lens Study

Key findings and context maps for Central Square, including zoning maps and project goals.

The slide contains several maps and diagrams illustrating the context of the Central Square rezoning project, including zoning maps and project goals.



**DISCUSSION 1: VISION**

Let's Talk About ...  
**WHAT USES DO YOU WANT TO SEE IN CENTRAL SQUARE?**

How can we best support these uses?

Community input and discussion points regarding vision for Central Square.

The slide features a central question and a grid of sticky notes with handwritten responses from community members.



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# Public feedback so far **reinforces** community goals



## PUBLIC PLACES TO BUILD COMMUNITY

Spaces where communities can gather, and local artists perform



*Need for shared cultural spaces*



## RETAIL, CULTURAL, AND NON-PROFIT DIVERSITY

Maintain small, local businesses that make Central special



*Support local businesses*



## INCREASED HOUSING STOCK & DIVERSITY

Create more multi-family, mixed-income, and affordable housing



*Okay with height if for housing*



## PEOPLE CONNECTED TO THE SQUARE

Provide multimodal access to neighborhood amenities



*Not everyone rides a bike*



## A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR CENTRAL SQUARE

Increase greenery, shade, and publicly accessible open space



*More trees and places to gather*

## Some have concerns, e.g.,

Maintaining Central's **unique character**

Discouraging **lab and office** uses

Maintaining adequate **parking and loading** for businesses

Achieving a high degree of **affordable and family housing**

Needing to balance **increased density** with open spaces



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# Today's focus

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● Project objectives

● Community feedback so far

● **Defining the district**

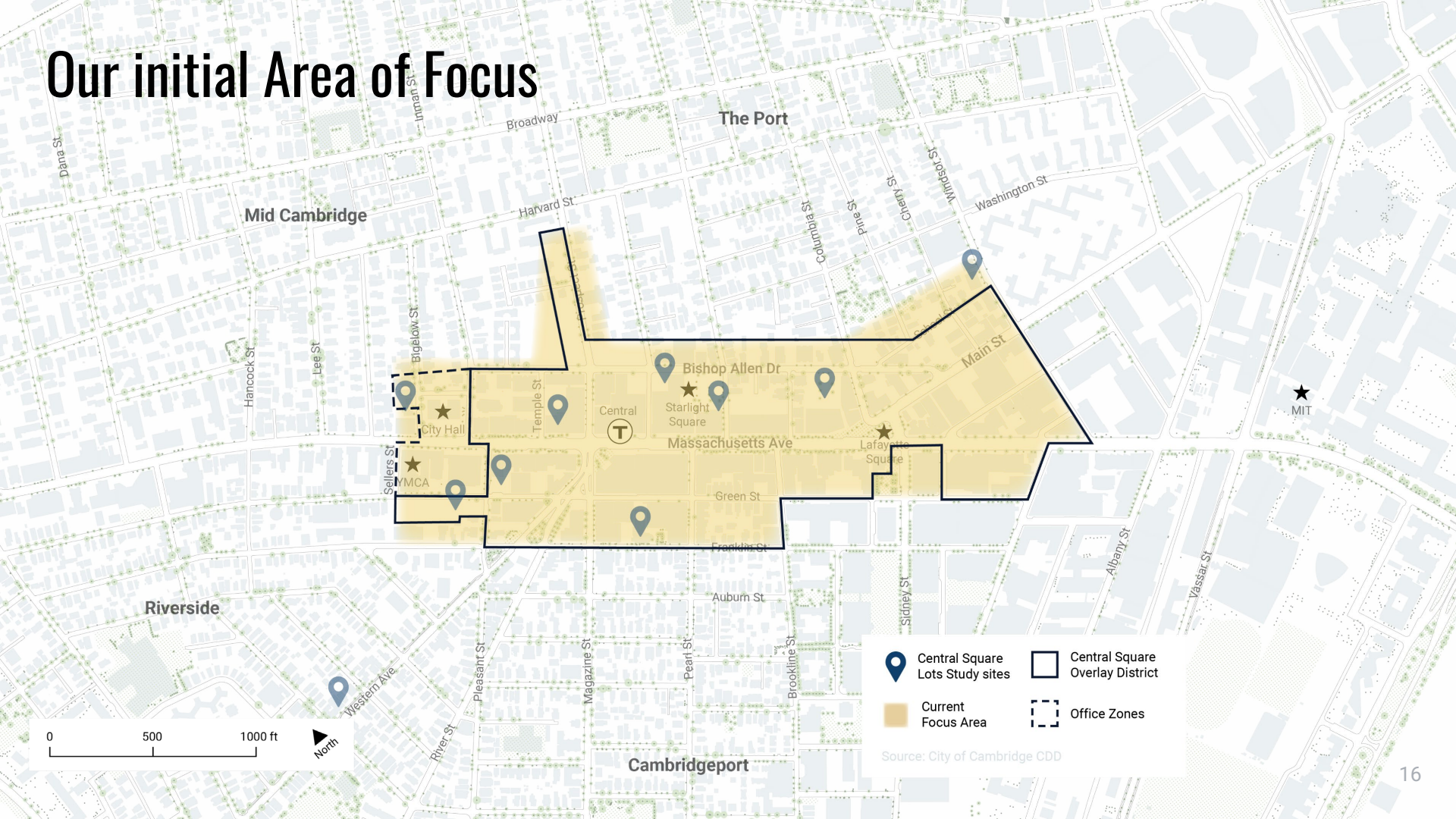
● Zoning ideas & priorities

● Discussion

● Next steps



# Our initial Area of Focus



- Central Square Lots Study sites
- Current Focus Area
- Central Square Overlay District
- Office Zones

Source: City of Cambridge CDD



# The C2 Study's Recommendations



# Suggestions that we've heard so far



- Central Square Lots Study sites
- Potential expansions

Current Focus Area

Source: City of Cambridge CDD

# A potential scenario we'd like your thoughts on



Potential to expand?

Neighborhood edge

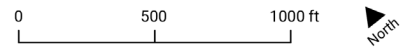
Heart of Central Sq

BA-3

Central Square Lots Study sites

Current Focus Area

Source: City of Cambridge CDD



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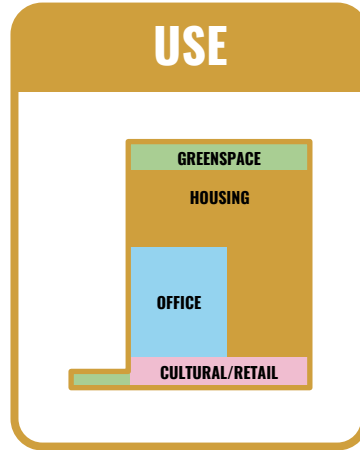
# Zoning is **one useful mechanism** to achieve community goals...

## What is Zoning?

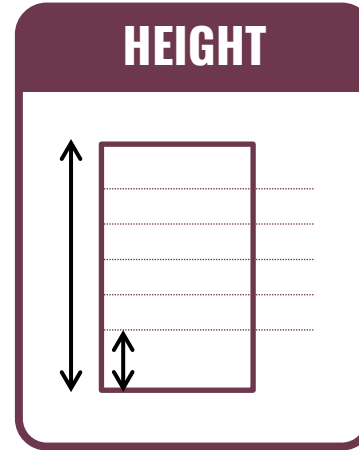
A set of rules that determines **how land in a specific area can be used**, and the **physical features** of the development.

Zoning informs the **Form and function** of our neighborhoods.

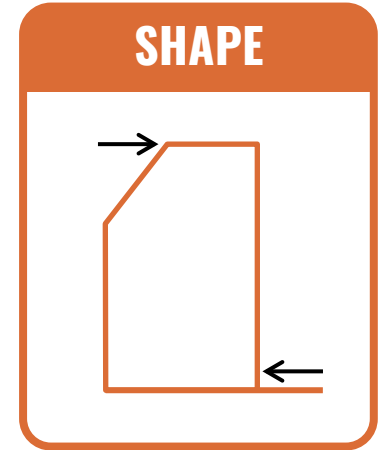
## Zoning Tools



- Allowed and prohibited uses
- Incentives to promote preferred uses
- Ground floor requirements



- No. of stories
- Max building height
- Min ground floor height
- Transitional height zone to neighborhood



- Street and property line setbacks
- Bulk control plane
- Building shape setbacks
- Tower footprint size
- Open space requirements



# ...for example:



**PUBLIC PLACES TO BUILD COMMUNITY**

**“Need for shared cultural spaces**



**RETAIL, CULTURAL, AND NON-PROFIT DIVERSITY**

**“Support local businesses**



**INCREASED HOUSING STOCK & DIVERSITY**

**“Okay with height if for housing**



**PEOPLE CONNECTED TO THE SQUARE**

**“Not everyone rides a bike**



**A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR CENTRAL SQUARE**

**“More trees and places to gather**

## Zoning Tools

**USE**

**HEIGHT**

**SHAPE**

e.g., incentives for incorporating cultural spaces, allowing for taller lower-level floor heights

**USE**

**HEIGHT**

**SHAPE**

e.g., Design guidelines for active ground floors, encouraging smaller retail spaces

**USE**

**HEIGHT**

**SHAPE**

e.g., allowing taller heights for housing, incentivizing affordability and family-sized units

**USE**

**HEIGHT**

**SHAPE**

e.g., requiring wider sidewalks, preservation of public parking

**USE**

**HEIGHT**

**SHAPE**

e.g., incentives for public plazas, standards green space



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# How might we encourage retail/cultural/open space?

USE

Accessible open space

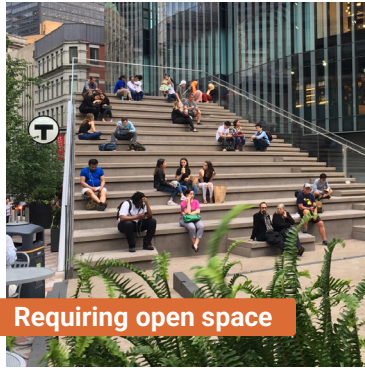
Small retail & nonprofit

Cultural spaces

Artist live/work space

HEIGHT

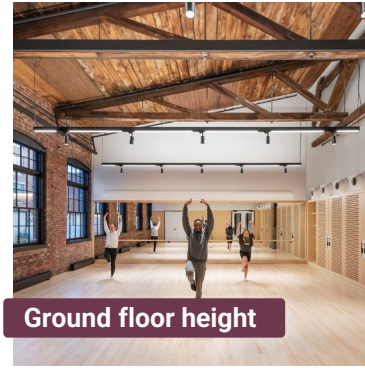
SHAPE



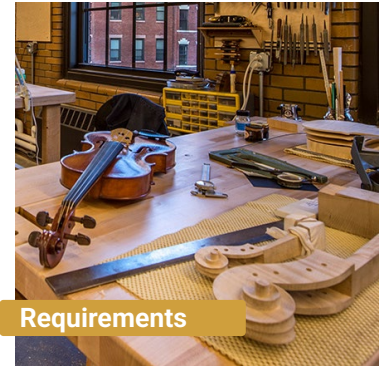
Requiring open space



Use incentives



Ground floor height



Requirements

**BENEFITS**

Additional public open space to gather and play.

Supports local and small businesses / orgs.

Spaces to host events and performances.

Supporting local artists and the Cultural District.

**CHALLENGE**

Reduces the amount of developable land.

May be less profitable due to reduced rents.

Tall spaces reduce the number of floors above.

May restrict who can rent these spaces.

**APPROACH**

Allow additional height to compensate loss.

Exclude square footage from density totals.

Calculate height by floors and not feet.

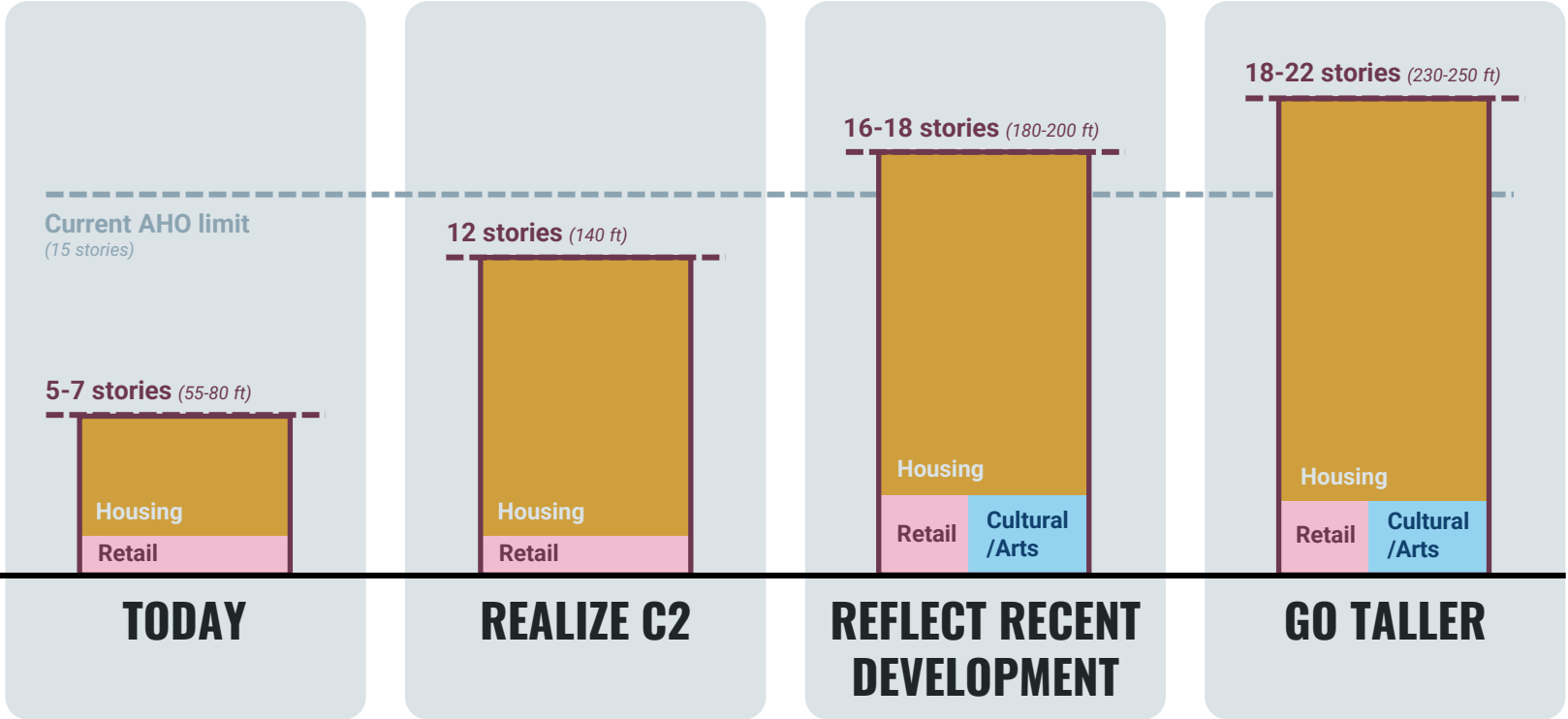
Assess impacts on inclusionary unit req's.

# How tall should housing be allowed?

USE

HEIGHT

SHAPE



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# Some examples:

10 Essex Street  
Central Square



The Smith  
Boston



Market Central  
Central Square



Proto  
Kendall Square



**TODAY**

**REALIZE C2**

**REFLECT RECENT  
DEVELOPMENT**

**GO TALLER**

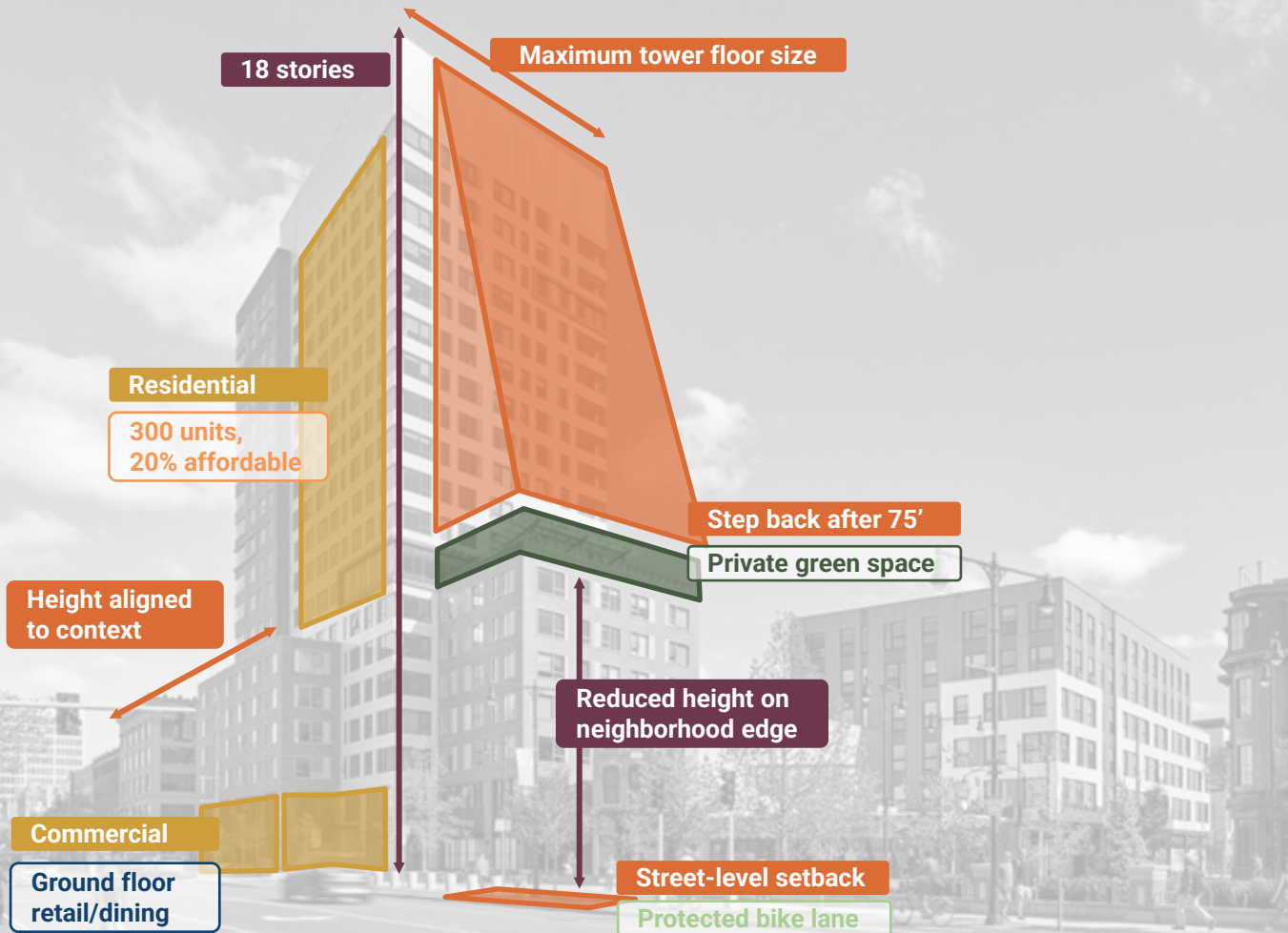
# How zoning tools can mitigate height impacts

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**Market Central (2018)**  
Central Square

# How zoning tools can mitigate height impacts



## ZONING TOOLS

USE

HEIGHT

SHAPE

## COMMUNITY GOALS

PUBLIC PLACES

RAIL/CULTURE

HOUSING

CONNECTION

SUSTAINABILITY

# Each zoning decision has **trade-offs**



**PUBLIC PLACES TO BUILD COMMUNITY**

**Incentivizing** cultural spaces for community building...

...**may** require cross-subsidies with more profitable uses.



**RETAIL, CULTURAL, AND NON-PROFIT DIVERSITY**

**Incentivizing** space for local stores and nonprofits in Central...

...**may** require zoning incentives like increased density.



**INCREASED HOUSING STOCK & DIVERSITY**

**Incentivizing** housing, especially inclusionary and affordable units...

...**may** require allowing taller buildings that can create wind & shadows.



**PEOPLE CONNECTED TO THE SQUARE**

**Incentivizing** gathering spaces where people can connect...

...**may** reduce the area available for housing and retail.



**A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR CENTRAL SQUARE**

**Incentivizing** green infrastructure and flood resiliency...

...**may** add to development costs and translate to higher rents



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[www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LPWJK3J)  
[/r/LPWJK3J](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LPWJK3J)

What is your **favorite thing**  
**about Central Square,**  
something that should be  
preserved or expanded?



[https://www.surveymonkey.com/  
r/LPWJK3J](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LPWJK3J)

What do you see as the  
**biggest challenges facing  
Central Square** in the next  
ten years?

# We want to hear from you!

- ? **Where** in Central should taller development be allowed?
- ? **How tall** should we allow development for housing?
- ? **What specific uses** should we prioritize in addition to housing?

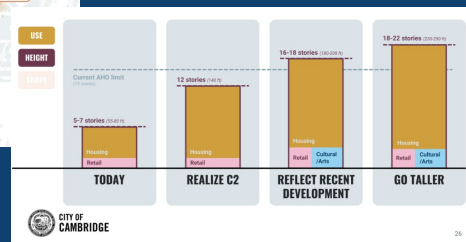


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## In breakout rooms:

Share your thoughts on our three questions in Miro (40 mins).

Choose **one person to share back** themes from your discussion (5 mins)





# Guidelines for a **productive and inclusive** discussion



**Make space for everyone to contribute** and avoid interruptions.



**Listen to understand,** not to respond. Respect others while they're talking.



**Challenge ideas,** not people. Embrace different points of view, we might not all agree.



**Speak from your own experience (e.g., I...),** instead of generalizing (e.g., “we, us, them”).



**Share, even if you don't have the right words!**  
Ask for clarification and ask questions freely.



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## Share out

- ? **Where** in Central should taller development be allowed?
- ? **How tall** should we allow development for housing?
- ? **What specific uses** should we prioritize in addition to housing?



What were the **main themes** from your group's discussion?

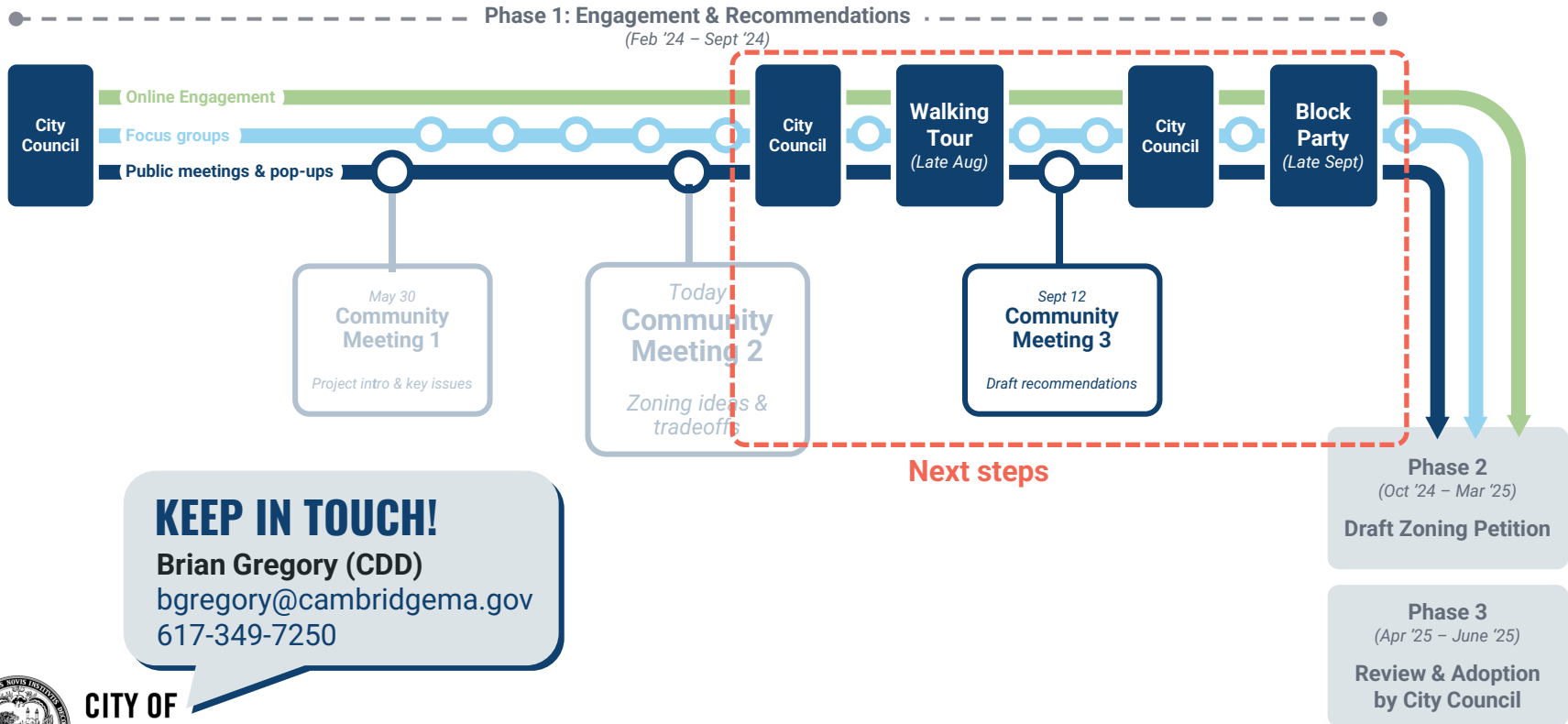
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