

Working Group Meeting #5

10/10/24

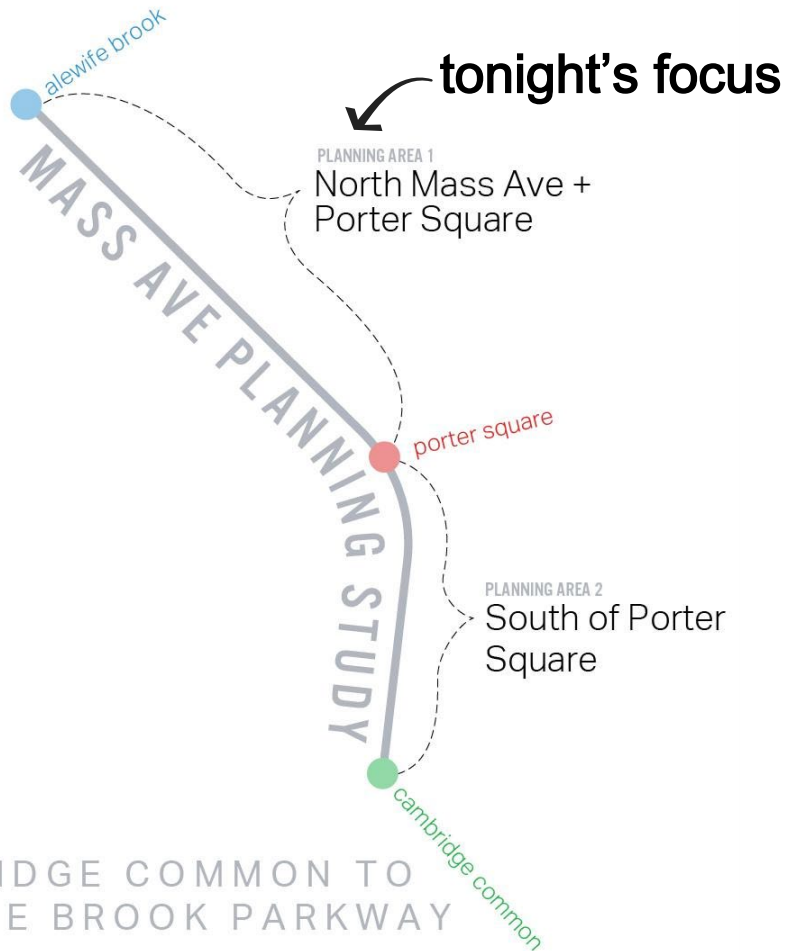
CAMBRIDGE COMMON TO
ALEWIFE BROOK PARKWAY

Welcome!

WORKING GROUP MEETING 5

Jannet Arevalo - resident and urban designer
Josiah Bonsey - resident and local business owner
James Burns - resident
Polly Carpenter - resident and architect
Camilla Elvis - resident
Magdalena Gomez - resident
Crystal Klaahsen - local business owner
Sharmil Modi - commercial property owner and developer
Anna Restuccia - resident
Michael Rome - resident and former business owner
Ruth Ryals - resident and neighborhood association representative
David Sullivan - resident and former City Council member
Neheet Trivedi - resident
Mark Verkennis - institutional representative, Harvard University

If you are here from the general public, you'll be able to ask questions at the end of the meeting.



AGENDA

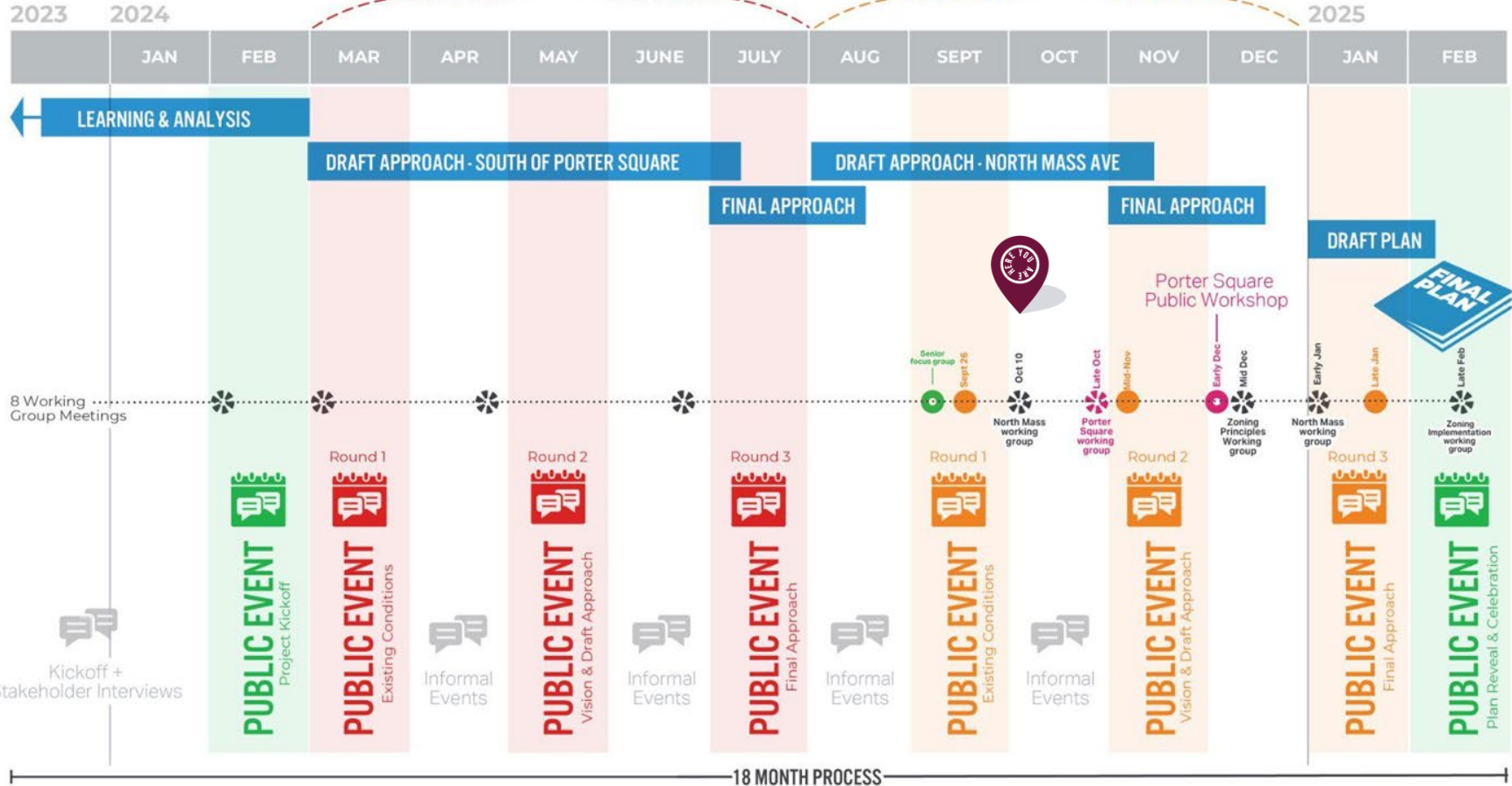
- 01** Quick Refresh
Project Process
- 02** Community Meeting Recap
Summary and Report out
- 03** Drafting Recommendations
Discussion on Recommendations for North Cambridge + Porter Square
- 04** Working Group Discussion
- 05** Public Q+A
- 06** Next Steps

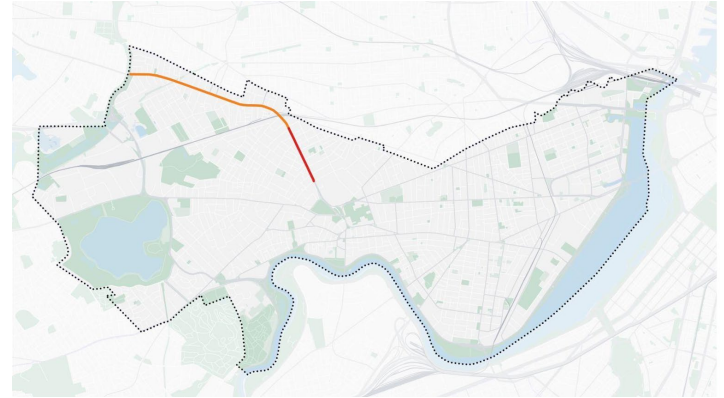
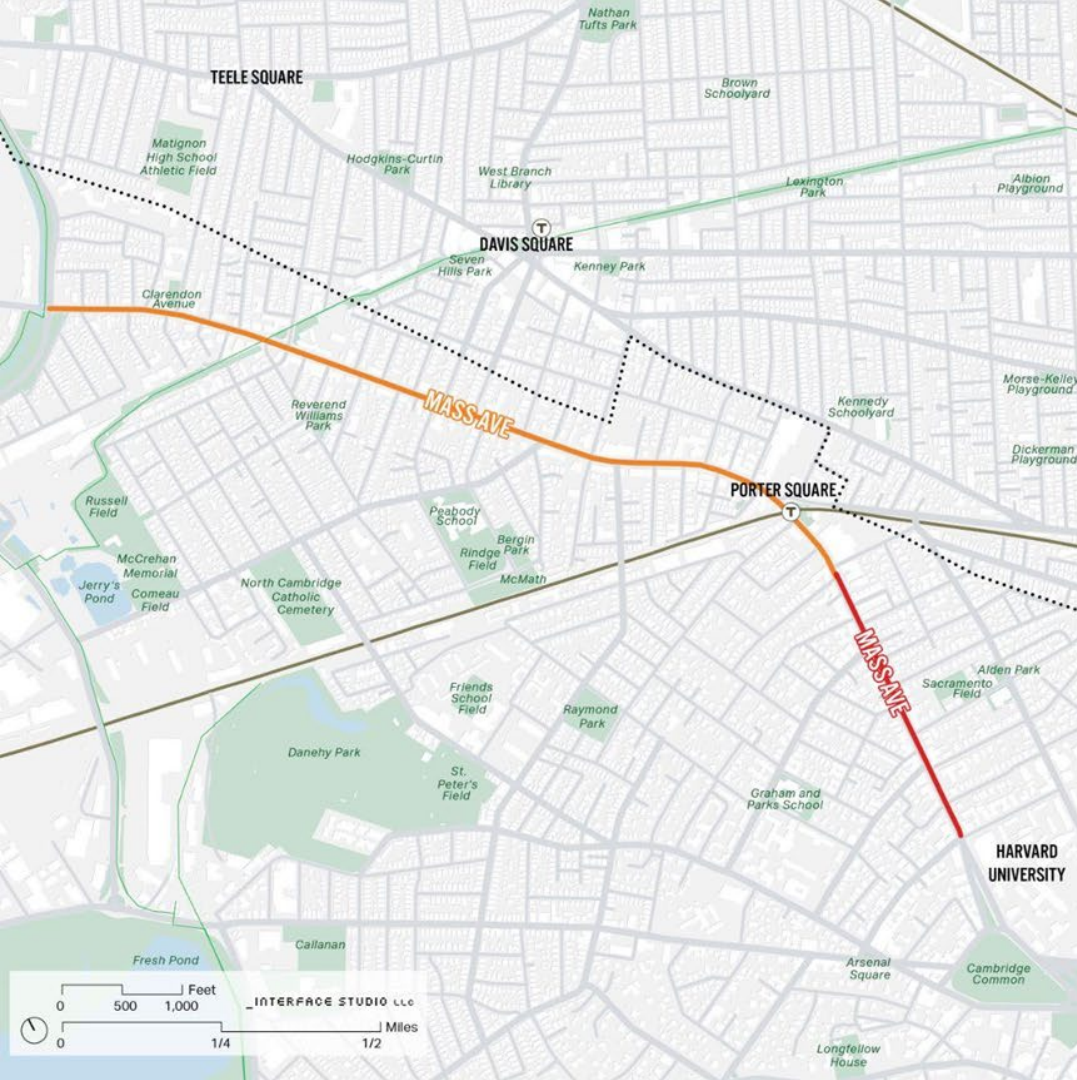
PHASE 1 PROJECT KICKOFF

PHASE 2 SOUTH OF PORTER SQUARE

PHASE 3 NORTH MASS AVE + PORTER SQUARE

PHASE 4 FINAL PLAN





STUDY AREA

Interface Studio, October 2023

- South of Porter Square Study Area
- North Mass Ave + Porter Square Study Area
- Parks/Open Space
- Water
- Commuter Rail
- ⋯ City Boundary

NORTH MASS AVE + PORTER SQUARE ROUND 1 SUMMARY

VIRTUAL MEETING: SEPT 26, 2024

Attendees

221 registrants, 70+ attended

Purpose

Kick-off the planning study for North Mass Ave and Porter Square, presentation of existing conditions, and conversations around the future of the study area

Key Takeaways

The community shared context and information for the planning team to incorporate into the creation of draft recommendations for North Mass Ave and Porter Square. **Insight and feedback from the community indicated overlapping priorities, needs, and concerns that were expressed in the South of Porter Square study area.**



ROUND 1 - WHAT WE HEARD

For this round we asked three questions:

What do we need to know most about North Mass Ave and Porter Square?

How might it be different than Mass Ave, South of Porter Square?

What are your hopes for the future of North Mass Ave and Porter Square?

WHAT WE HEARD

What do we need to know most about North Mass Ave and Porter Square?

- **Traffic congestion makes it challenging to thinking about how this corridor can support additional future density**
 - Mass Ave remains a regional transportation corridor
 - Traffic patterns have been shifting, with more volume on side streets impacting residents
- **The area needs to look and feel more like a neighborhood**
 - There is a desire for more businesses that are neighborhood serving
 - More public spaces to gather are needed
- **More greenery and attention to flooding**
 - Existing features such as historical signs and public spaces need updating
 - More shade is needed along the corridor
 - There are some concerns of flooding and mitigating the combined sewer infrastructure
- **It needs to be easier to bike and walk**
 - More pedestrian amenities and benches are needed
 - Better connections are needed to access surrounding neighborhoods
 - What's the right amount of bike parking, where?

WHAT WE HEARD

How might it be different than Mass Ave, South of Porter Square?

- **There are fewer pedestrian destinations**
 - Many commuters use this stretch of Mass Ave to get in and out of town. North Cambridge residents are not creating the traffic, it's commuters by car
 - Pedestrian activity is more limited in North Mass Ave because there are fewer destinations and businesses
- **Who lives there now *and potentially in the future***
 - Mass Ave south of Porter Square has more college students and older apartment buildings
 - North Mass Ave and Porter Square have greater potential to add more housing and residents
- **There are immediate needs to address**
 - Examples include activating vacant storefronts and making the corridor safe, cleaner, and more beautiful

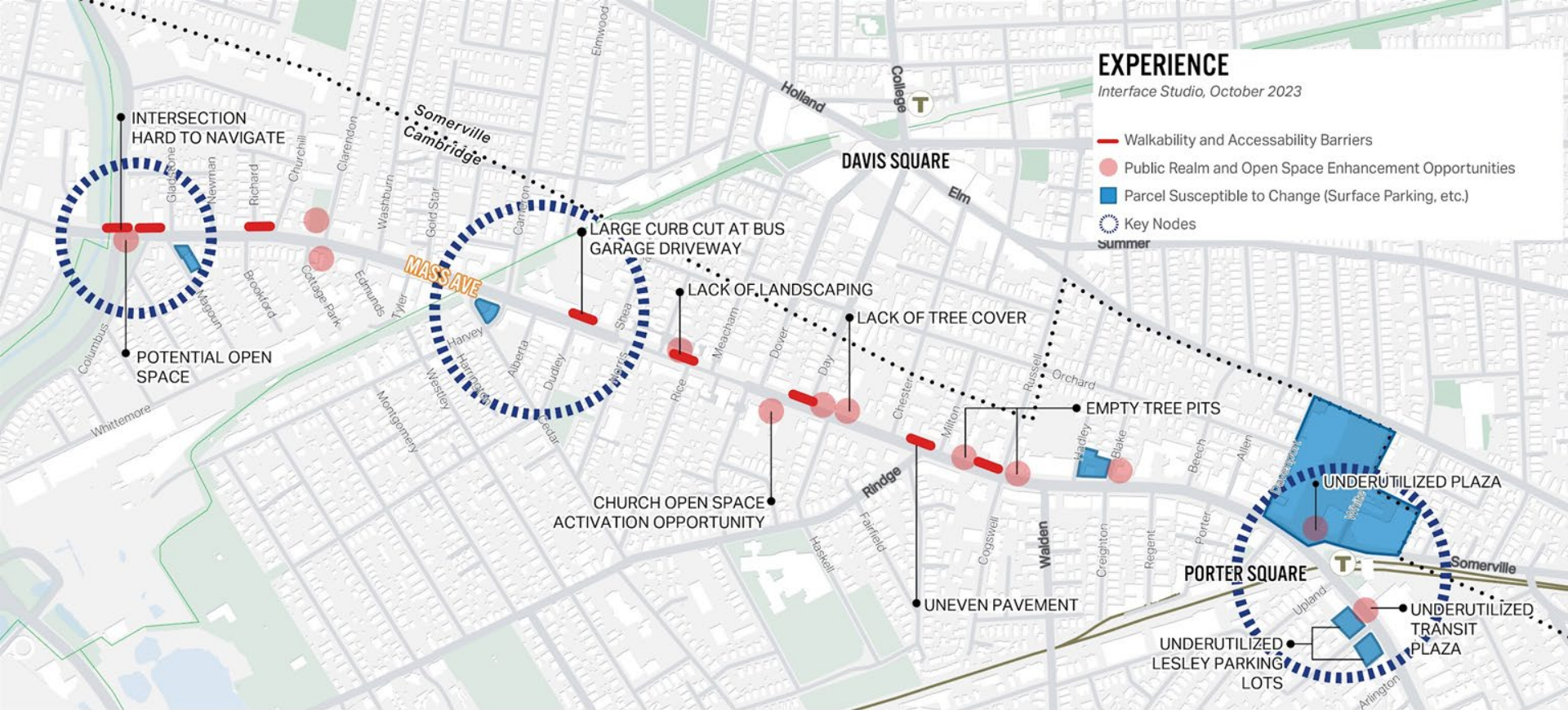
WHAT WE HEARD

What are your hopes for the future of North Mass Ave and Porter Square?

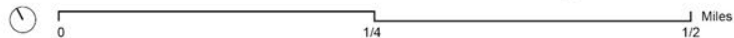
- **More of a Neighborhood and a Destination**
 - There will be more businesses on North Mass Ave
 - A cultural district & identity will define the corridor
- **It's more Inviting**
 - North Mass Ave will be much more green with more trees, plants, and green infrastructure
 - The area's history will be celebrated
 - There will be more spaces to gather as a community
- **It's easier to Get Around**
 - North Mass Ave will be more walkable
 - Our green spaces will be better connected - Alewife Brook, Linear Park, and others
 - There will be improved bus/bike service on the corridor
- **It provides more Housing Options**
 - A balance between more housing and scale that is needed for attracting more businesses and activities
 - More affordable housing options will be available
 - Future density on the corridor will consider impacts on the transportation network

KEY FINDINGS

- South of Porter Square has more students and institutional anchors whereas North Cambridge has more families
- South of Porter Square has a higher density of walkable blocks. North Cambridge is less dense, has more auto oriented (and sometimes destination) business, and more diverse businesses
- Key anchors include Porter Square, Linear Park and Alewife Brook Parkway
- Heavy focus on pedestrian experience and urban design, particularly as it ties to Porter Square
- Traffic congestion was top of mind



KEY OBSERVATIONS



**DRAFTING RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR NORTH MASS AVE AND
PORTER SQUARE**

DISCUSSION TODAY

We're not starting this phase from scratch...

MORE OF A
NEIGHBORHOOD
& DESTINATION

MORE
INVITING

EASIER
TO GET
AROUND

MORE
HOUSING
OPTIONS



How should we refine/tailor our
recommendations for North Mass Ave?

We're not starting this phase from scratch...

**MORE OF A
NEIGHBORHOOD
& DESTINATION**

MORE
INVITING

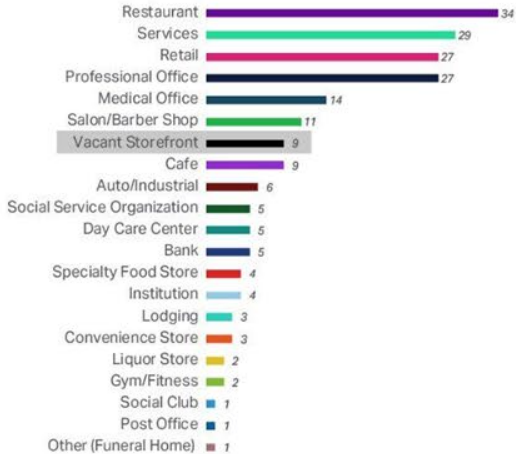
EASIER
TO GET
AROUND

MORE
HOUSING
OPTIONS

BUSINESSES

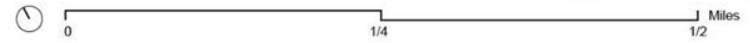
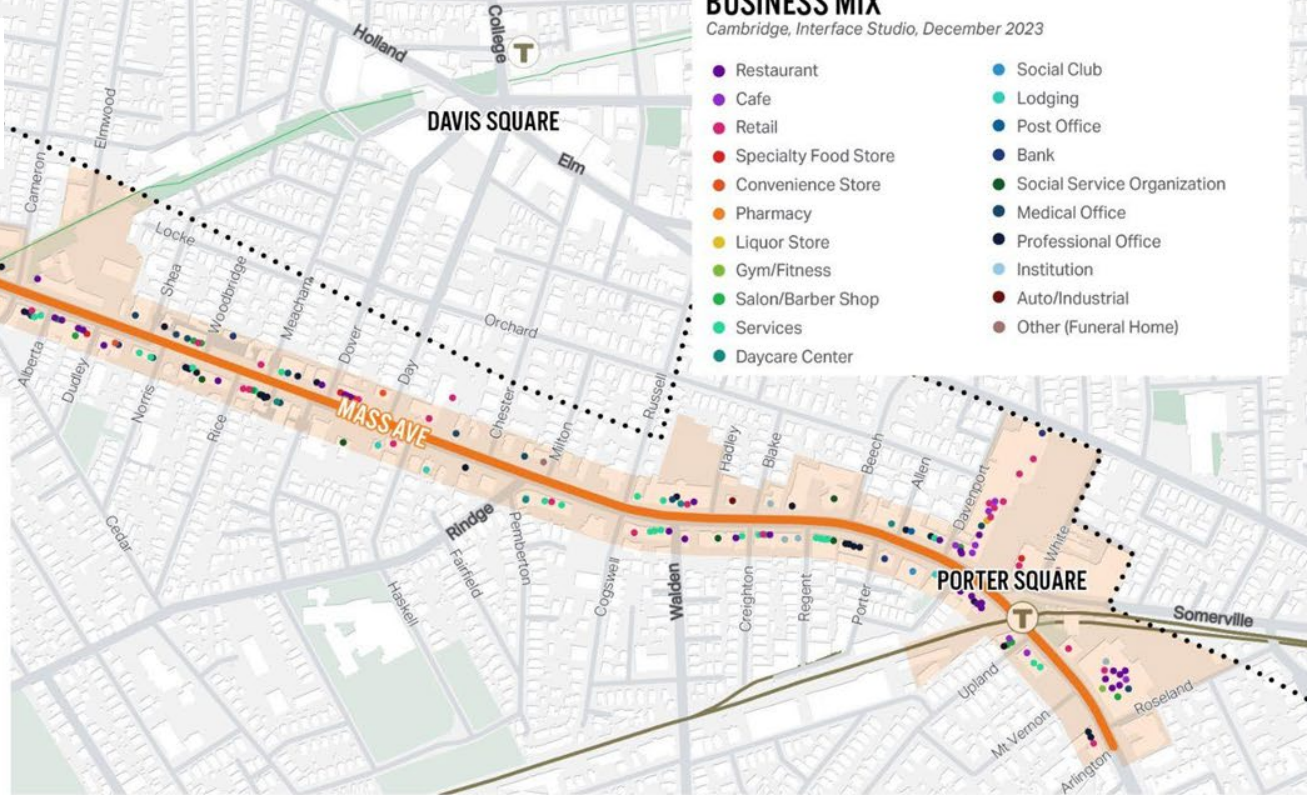
Total number of first floor businesses: **203**

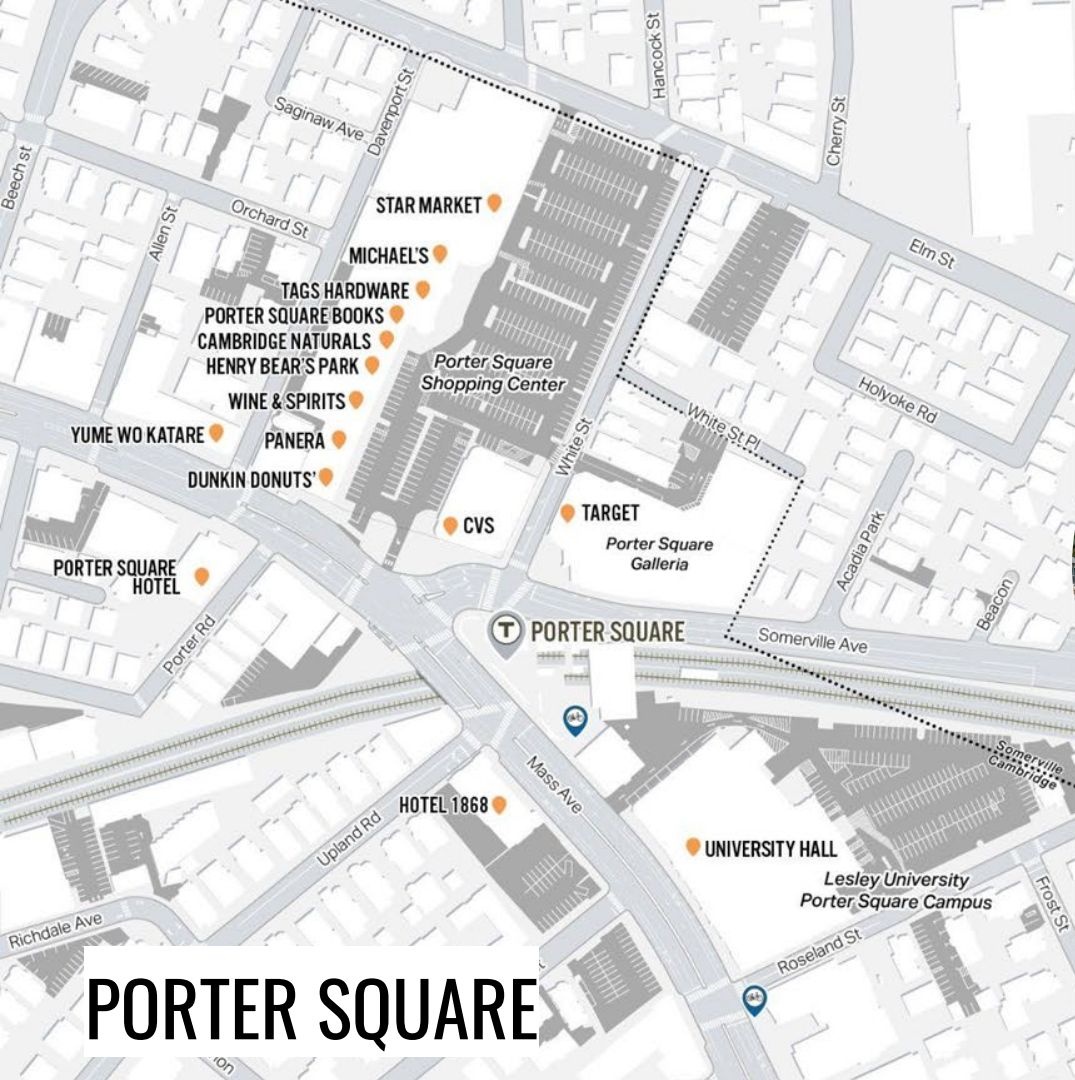
STOREFRONTS



BUSINESS MIX


Cambridge, Interface Studio, December 2023





PORTER SQUARE

Interface Studio, August 2024

-  Rail
-  City Boundary
-  Blue Bike Station
-  MBTA Station
-  Selected Identifying Points



PORTER SQUARE



MORE OF A NEIGHBORHOOD & DESTINATION

How can Mass Ave continue to provide neighborhood goods & services and foster an active corridor for residents and visitors?

- A. Foster a mix of neighborhood-serving, family-friendly goods and services
- B. Market the corridor to support local businesses
- C. Organize and host more community events and performance art

Considerations for North Mass Ave?



MORE OF A
NEIGHBORHOOD
& DESTINATION

**MORE
INVITING**

EASIER
TO GET
AROUND

MORE
HOUSING
OPTIONS

OPEN SPACES + PARKS



**MORE
INVITING**

What are ways to build more community identity along Mass Ave, make it greener, and to create more places to gather?

- A. Share community identity through creativity and art
- B. Plant more trees and vegetation along corridor and open spaces
- C. Create more places for the community to gather

Considerations for North Mass Ave?



MORE OF A
NEIGHBORHOOD
& DESTINATION

MORE
INVITING

EASIER
TO GET
AROUND

MORE
HOUSING
OPTIONS

DYNAMIC STREET, DIFFERENT QUALITIES



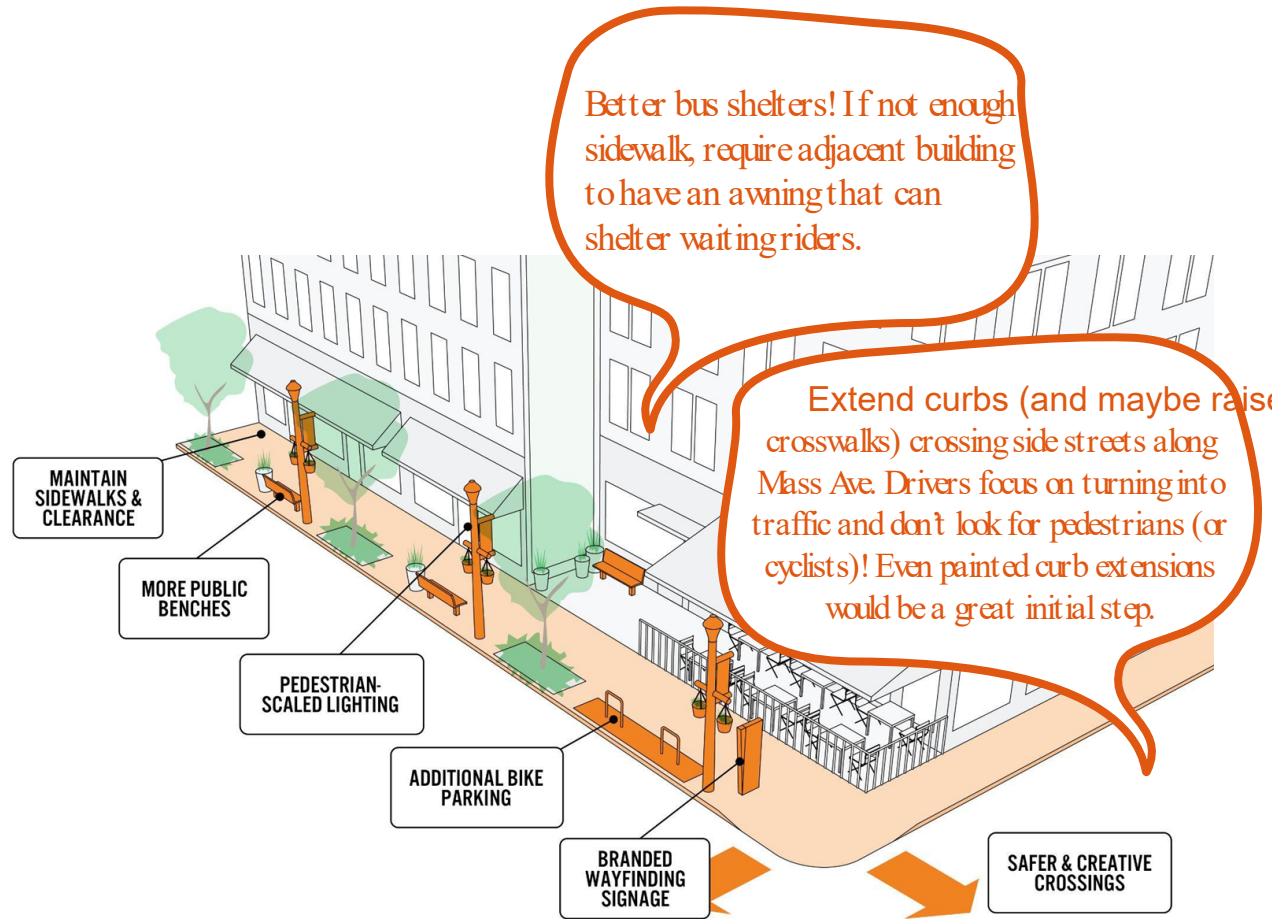
GENERALIZED LAND USE - EXPERIENCE

Interface Studio, January 2024

- Commercial
- Mixed Use
- Residential
- Institution
- Parks and Open Space
- Transportation

EASIER TO GET AROUND

There are too many inconsistent street signs - some very old, some on old trackless trolley route. As a resident it is hard to navigate Mass Ave.



**EASIER
TO GET
AROUND**

What are ways to make it easy for everybody on Mass Ave to access and navigate the corridor?

- A. Ensure sidewalks are accessible for everybody
- B. Provide safe, convenient access to sustainable transportation options
- C. Streamline signage and wayfinding

Considerations for North Mass Ave?



MORE OF A
NEIGHBORHOOD
& DESTINATION

MORE
INVITING

EASIER
TO GET
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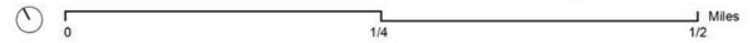
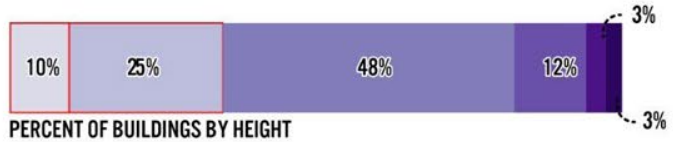
**MORE
HOUSING
OPTIONS**

BUILDING HEIGHTS

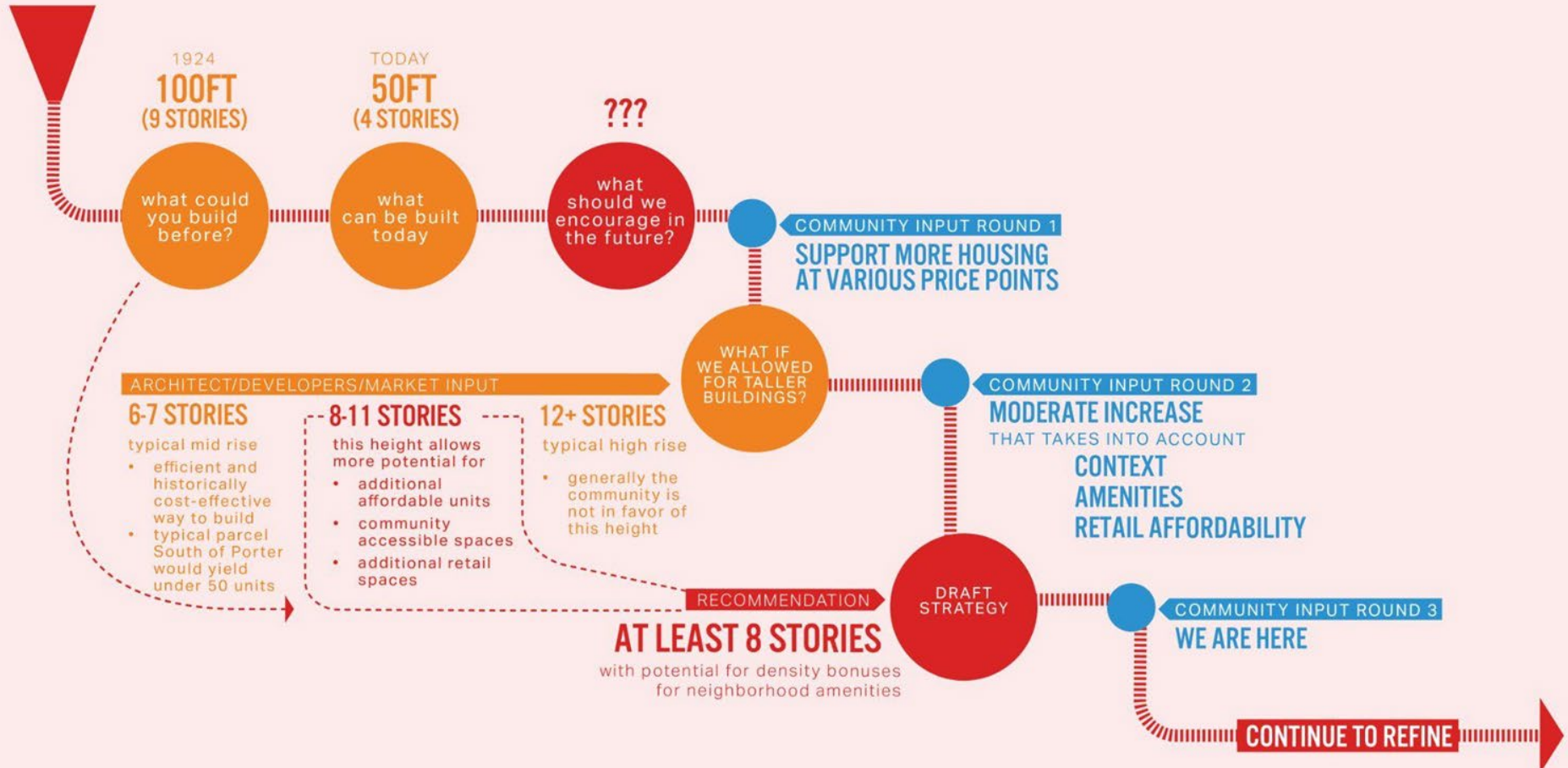
City of Cambridge, Interface Studio, January 2024

- 20' and below
- 20 - 35 ft
- 35 - 50 ft
- 50 - 70 ft
- 70 - 85 ft
- 85 - 120 ft

EXISTING HEIGHTS



GOAL MORE HOUSING OPTIONS ON MASS AVE

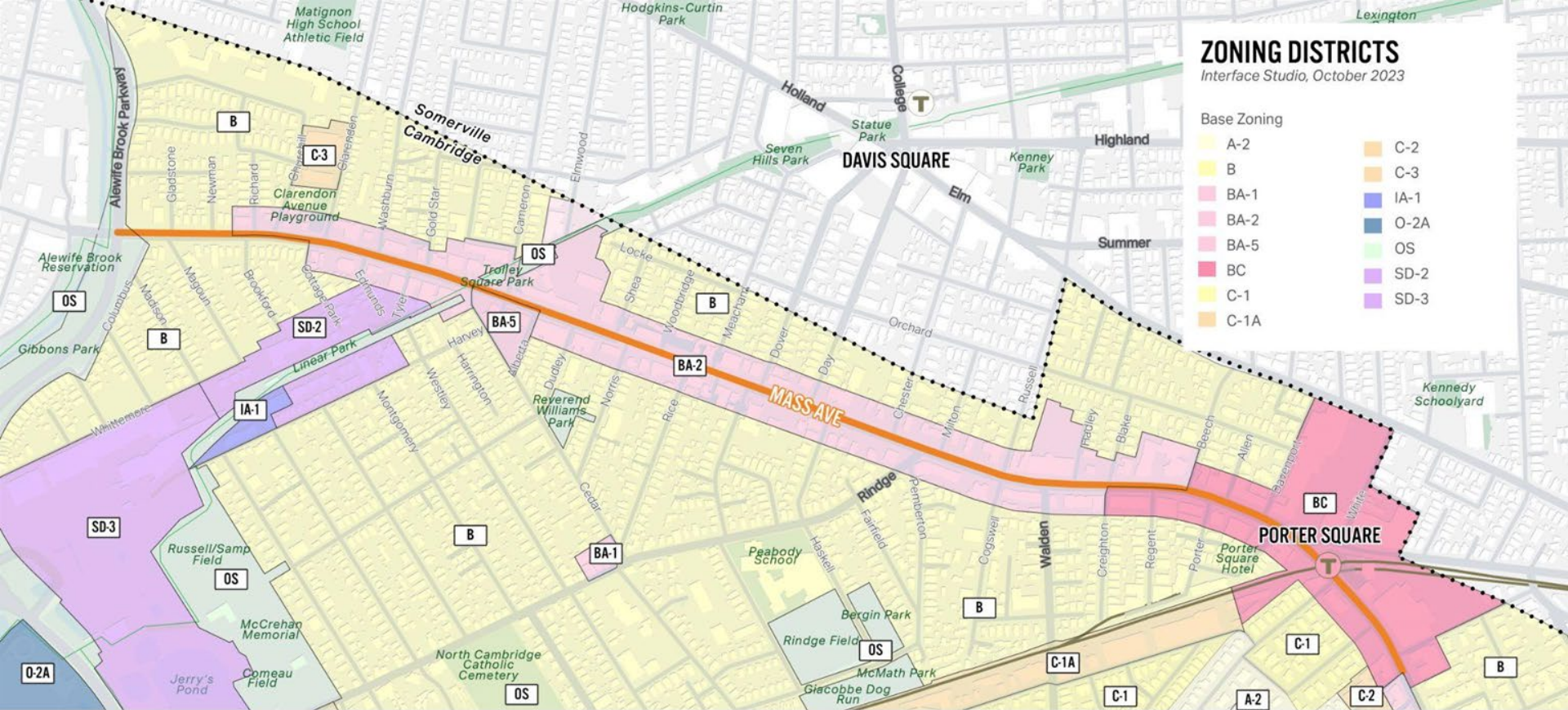


MORE HOUSING OPTIONS

How can Mass Ave provide more housing options?

- A. Encourage more housing/residents on the corridor
- B. Continue to support City policy for a diverse mix of housing price points
- C. Encourage context-sensitive design

Considerations for North Mass Ave?



BASE ZONING

Most of North Mass Ave is currently zoned BA-2.

Let's talk about this study area, how might zoning recommendations be the same or different on North Mass Ave to Alewife Brook Parkway?

PUBLIC QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

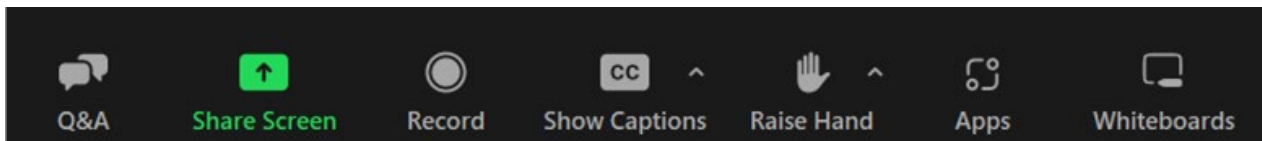
Your feedback is important

Here are the guidelines for tonight's discussion:

- We want to give **as many people as possible the opportunity to be heard**. If you've already had a chance to speak, or if someone else has voiced your comment, please let people with new ideas be heard.
- Respect the experiences of others
- Listen to each other & divergent perspectives
- Stay on topic and strive to be succinct
- Each person has **two minutes** to speak.
- If we're unable to hear from all raised hands by 7:15 pm, you can **send your comments/questions directly to Drew Kane** by phone: 617-349-4640 or by email: dkane@cambridgema.gov.

Visit www.cambridgema.gov/massaveplan to sign up for our email list!

RAISE YOUR HAND TO ASK A QUESTION



Use **Raise Hand** to ask a question and we will unmute you!



On your phone, use *9 to request to speak, we'll read the last 4 digits of your phone number when it's time for you to speak.

NEXT STEPS

October 30:

- Reconvene our **Stakeholder Working Group**

November 13:

- Host the next **Community Meeting** to discuss draft ideas for North Mass Ave

December:

- Host a **Community Workshop focused on Porter Square**

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