

Phase 3:
Working group
#6
10/30/24

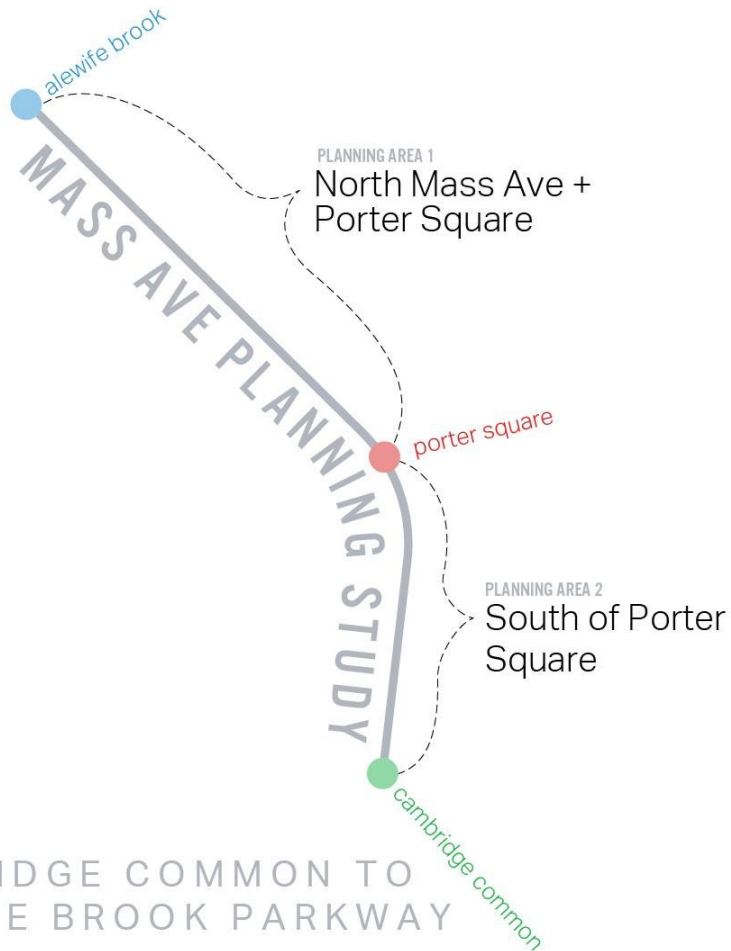
CAMBRIDGE COMMON TO
ALEWIFE BROOK PARKWAY

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

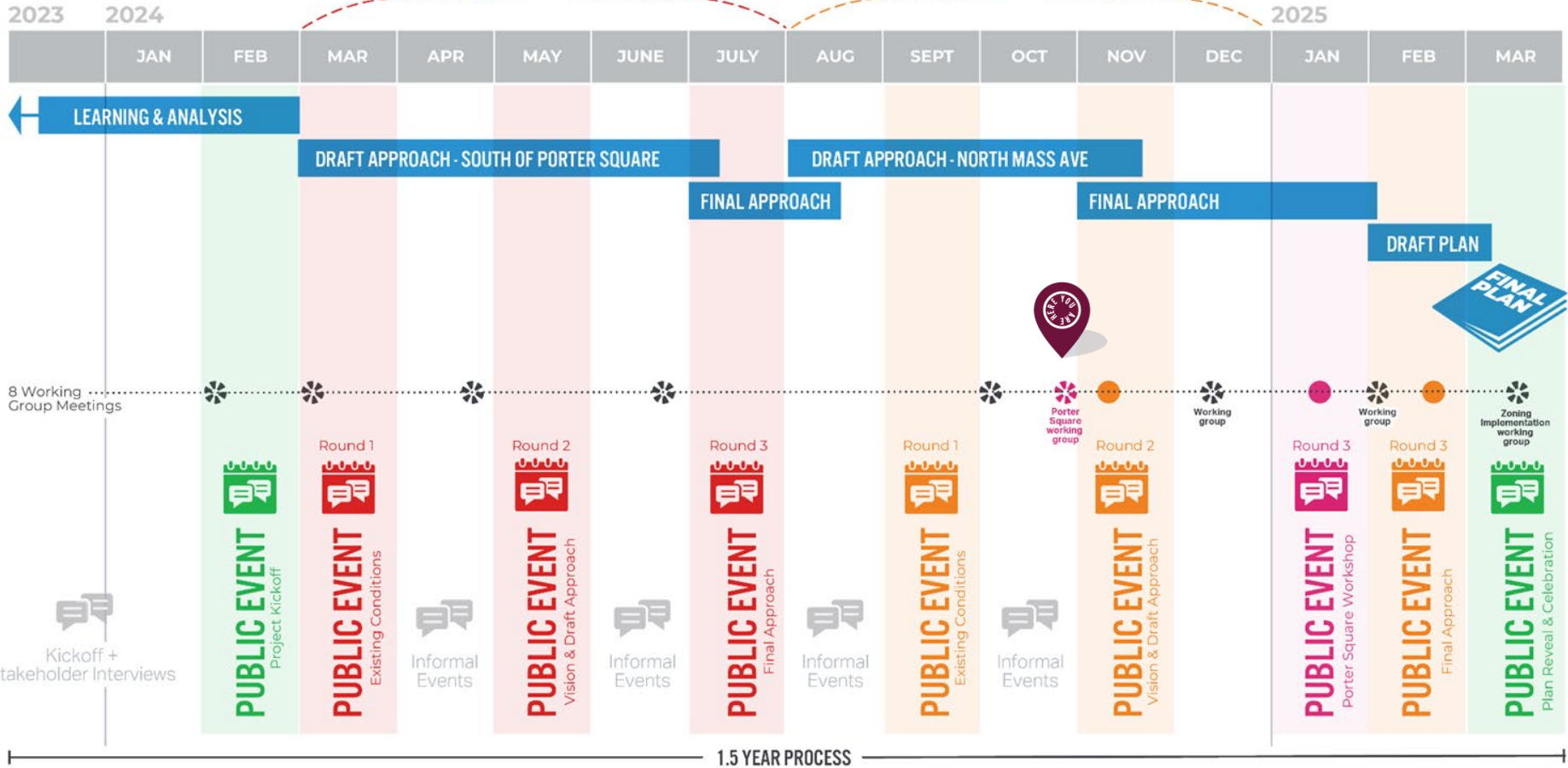
- 01** Project Background Recap
Study Area and Project
- 02** Zoning 101 by CDD
- 03** Phase 3:
Zoning in Porter Square
- 04** Next Steps

PHASE 1 PROJECT KICKOFF

PHASE 2 SOUTH OF PORTER SQUARE

PHASE 3 NORTH MASS AVE + PORTER SQUARE

PHASE 4 FINAL PLAN



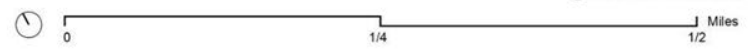
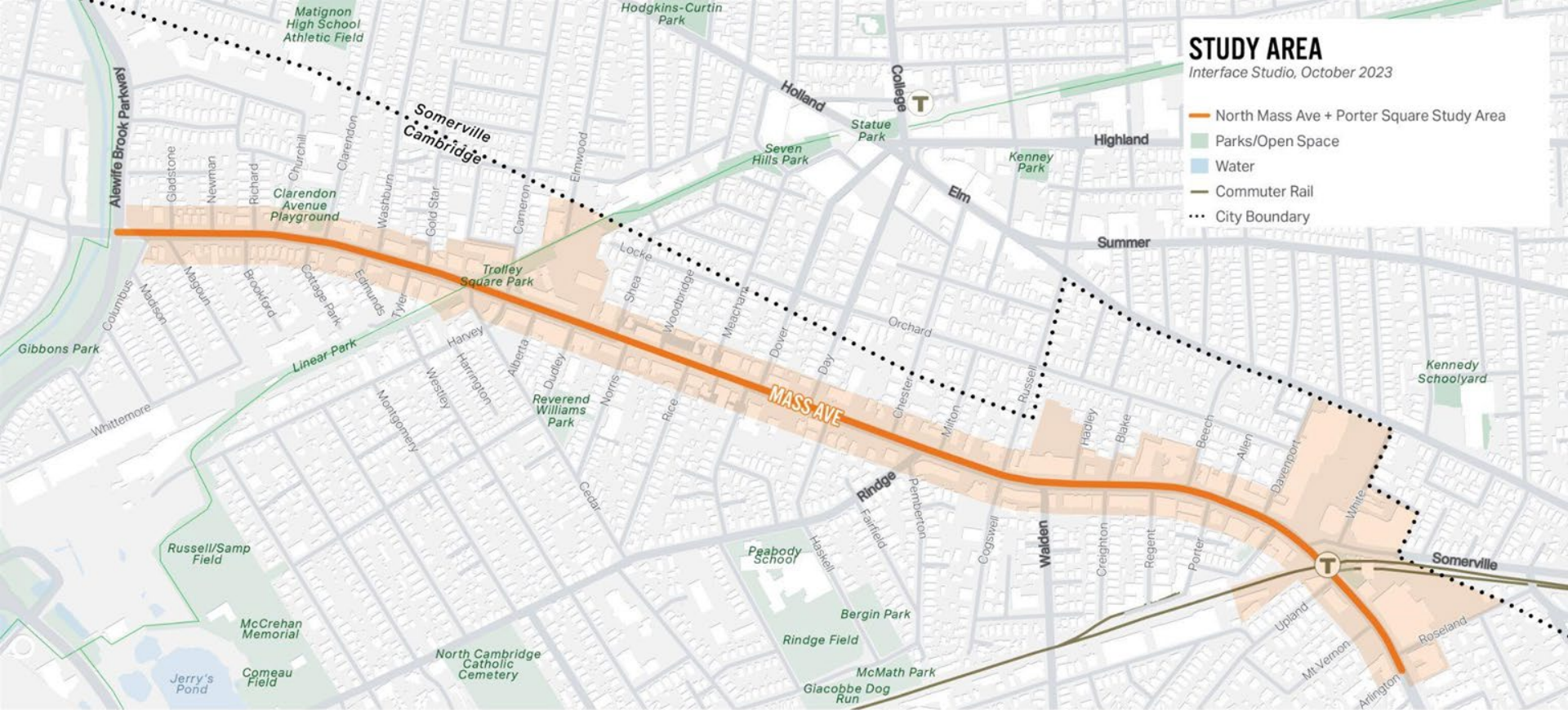
1.5 YEAR PROCESS

PROJECT BACKGROUND

STUDY AREA

Interface Studio, October 2023

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



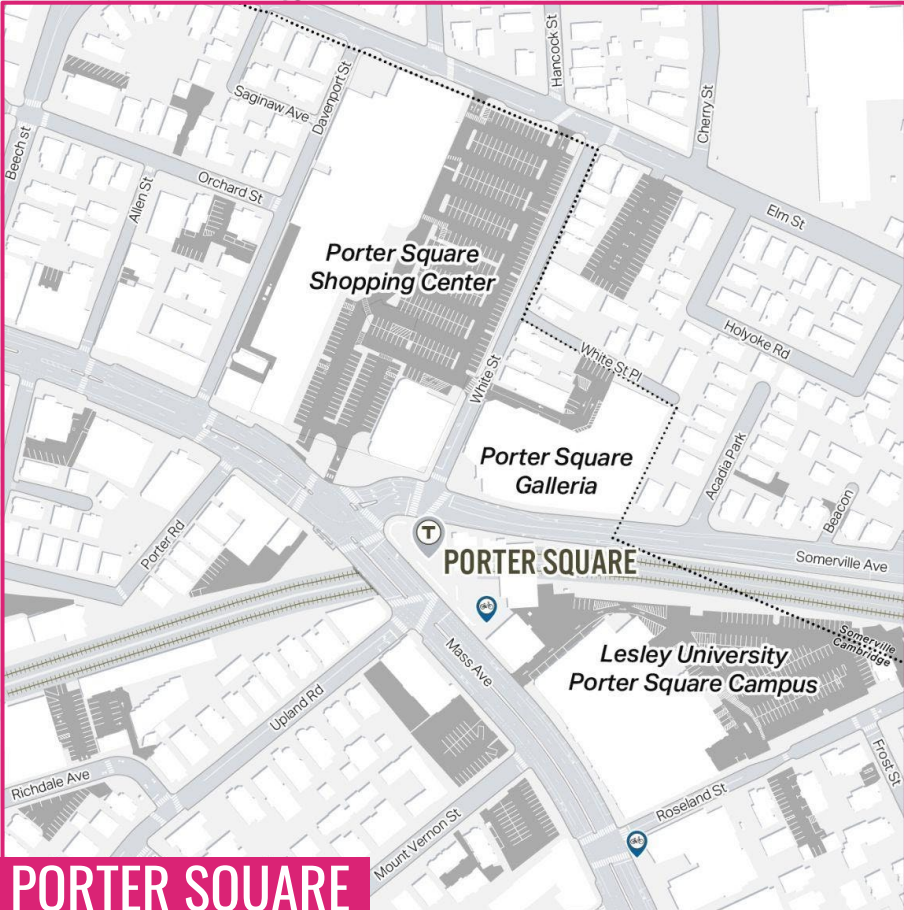
Matignon High School Athletic Field

Hodgkins-Curtin Park

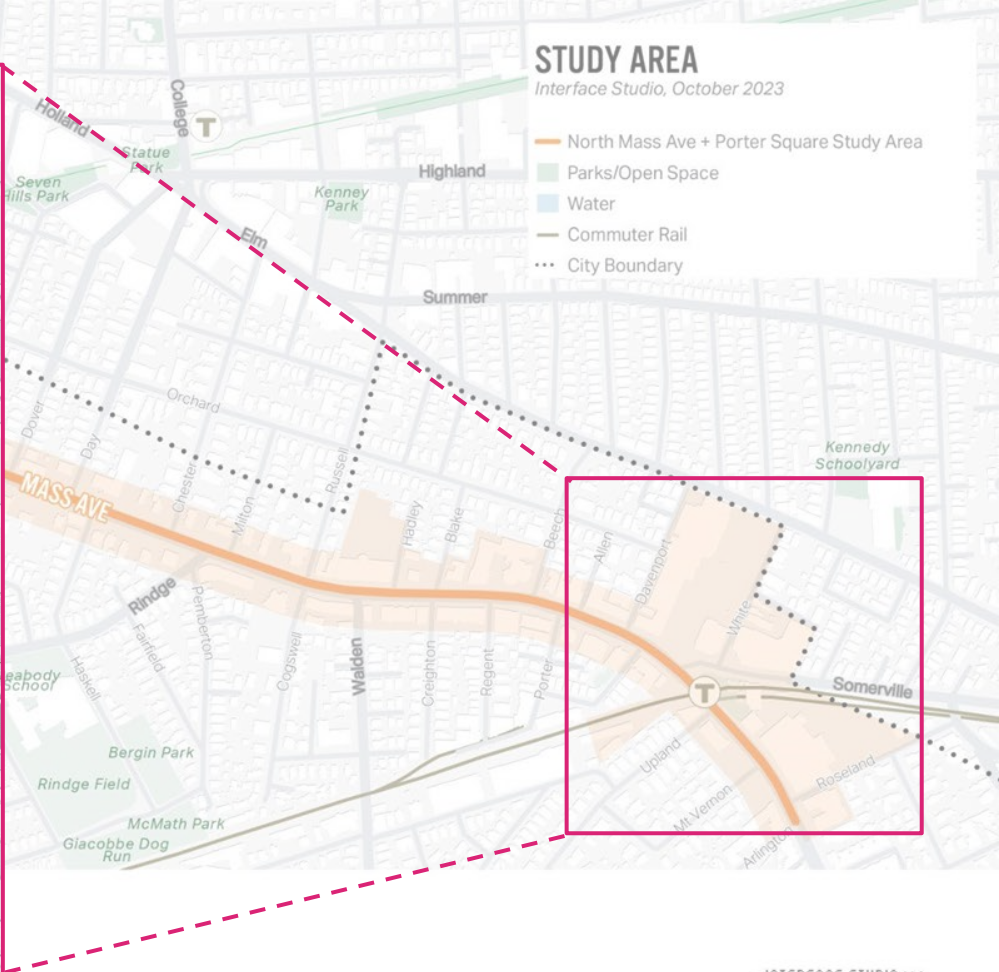
STUDY AREA

Interface Studio, October 2023

- North Mass Ave + Porter Square Study Area
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- Water
- Commuter Rail
- City Boundary



PORTER SQUARE



INTERFACE STUDIO LLC

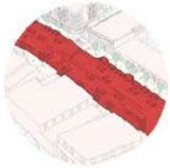
OUR CHARGE:

**WHAT DOES
MASS AVE
LOOK LIKE **15**
YEARS FROM
NOW?**

... and HOW do we get there?

- **Prioritization of goals and implementation**
- **Coordination with other planning initiatives**
- **Policy recommendations**
- **Proposed changes in zoning**
- **Complementing future Citywide Design Guidelines**
- **Long term infrastructure projects (public realm, open spaces, sidewalks, etc)**

FOUR CONCURRENT CITY INITIATIVES



PARTIAL CONSTRUCTION

Planning and Design of the separated bike lanes along Mass Ave

Near term



IMPACT STUDY

Assessing economic impact of bike lanes to businesses along Mass Ave

Annually For The Next Five Years



COMBINED SEWER OVERFLOW MITIGATION

Exploring Green Stormwater Infrastructure Mitigation measures to prevent Combined Sewer Overflow events on North Mass Ave.

Five -10 Years From Now

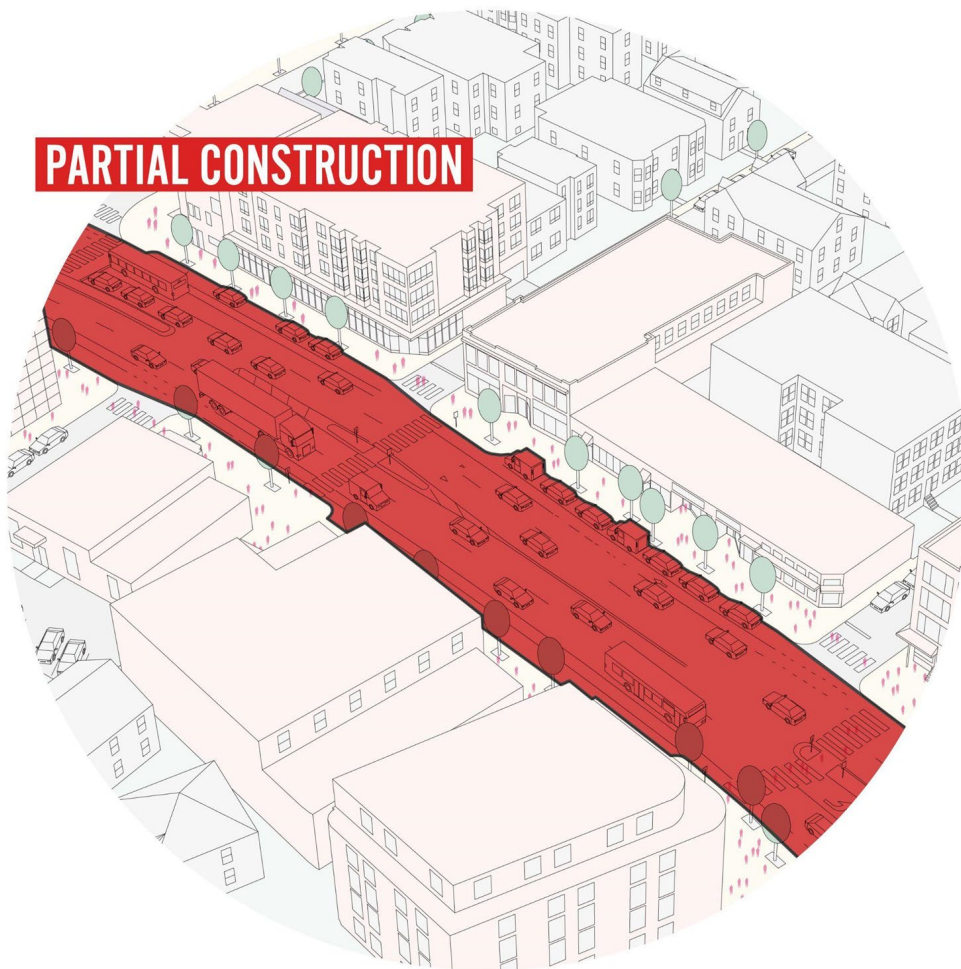


PLANNING STUDY

Vision plan for the properties surrounding Mass Ave, including Zoning, Urban Design, Housing and Business Supports.



15 Years From Now



The Mass Ave Partial Construction is focused on the near term street design of Mass Ave, curb to curb. The project was initiated in response to the city's Cycling Safety Ordinance (CSO) and includes:

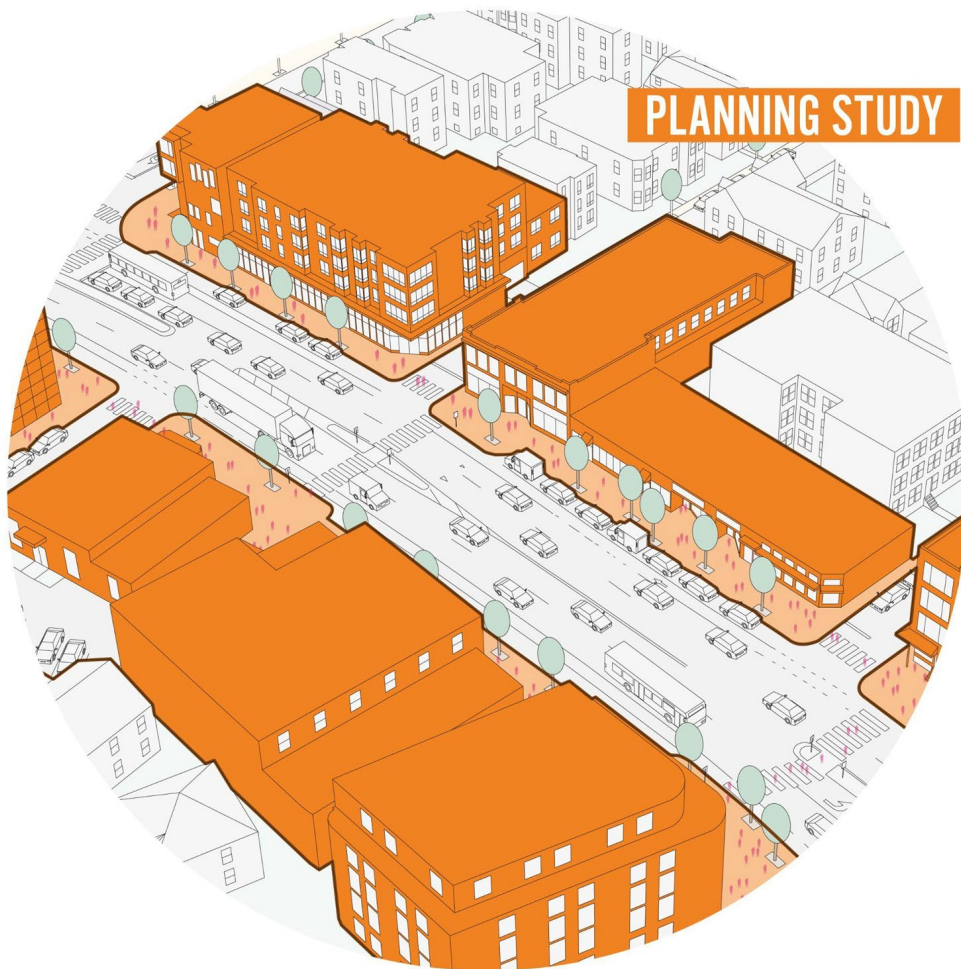
- The design of **separated bicycle lanes**
- Evaluating existing crossing locations for pedestrians and recommendations for additional crossing opportunities
- Curb use regulations (i.e., understand where parking/stopping/loading is possible and not possible)
- Options for bus priority to reduce travel times and improving the reliability of MBTA buses

For more information:

cambridgema.gov/massavepartialconstruction

Questions or comments? Contact:

massave4@cambridgema.gov



This Mass Ave Planning Study (MAPS) is a planning effort help map Mass Ave's future for the next 15 years and will focus on areas including:

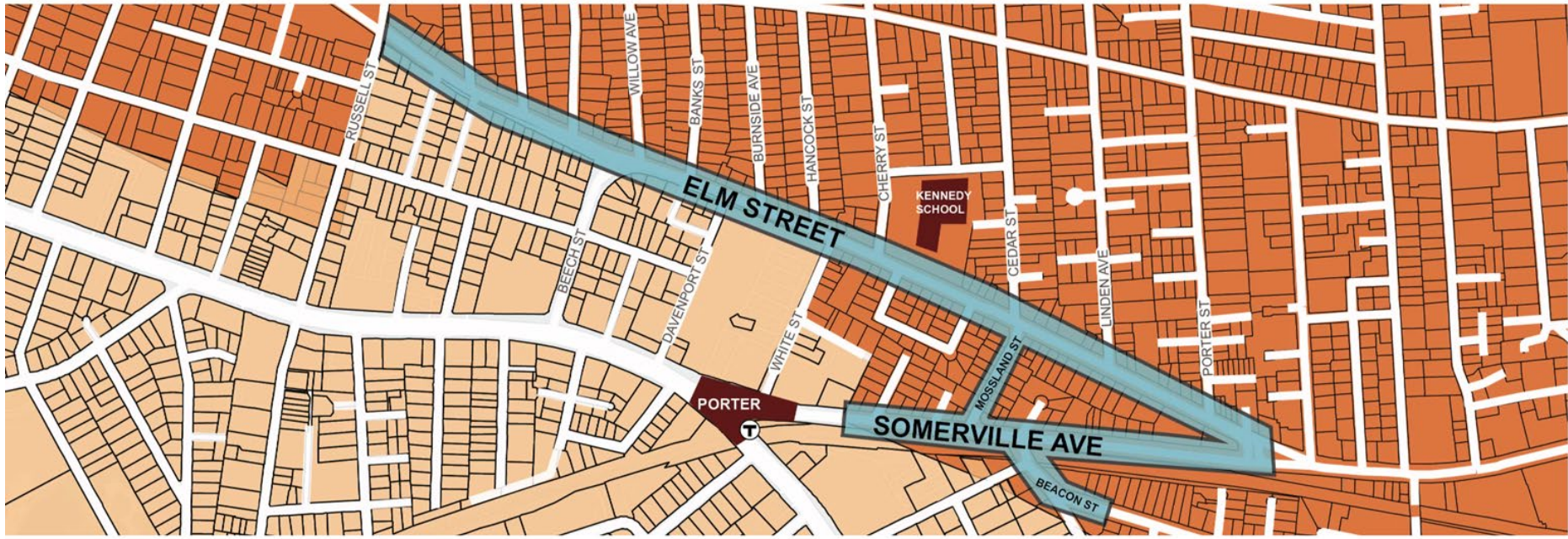
- Increasing density & housing opportunities along the corridor
- Addressing affordability issues
- Supporting small & local businesses
- Creating and enhancing vibrant sidewalks & public spaces

For more information:

www.cambridgema.gov/massaveplan

Questions or comments? Contact:

Drew Kane, Senior City Planner
dkane@cambridgema.gov



Home / The Elm-Beacon Connector

The Elm-Beacon Connector

ZONING PRINCIPLES

What is Zoning?

- Zoning is the City's rulebook regulating the use of land
- Rules are intended to advance the community's goals while allowing owners to use their private property in a reasonable way
- Zoning sets the rules, but property owners ultimately decide what to do with their land



What is Zoning?

Zoning regulates...

- How land can be used (residential, commercial, etc.)
- Building size and shape
- Where buildings are located on a lot
- Other site or building characteristics (open space, parking, etc.)

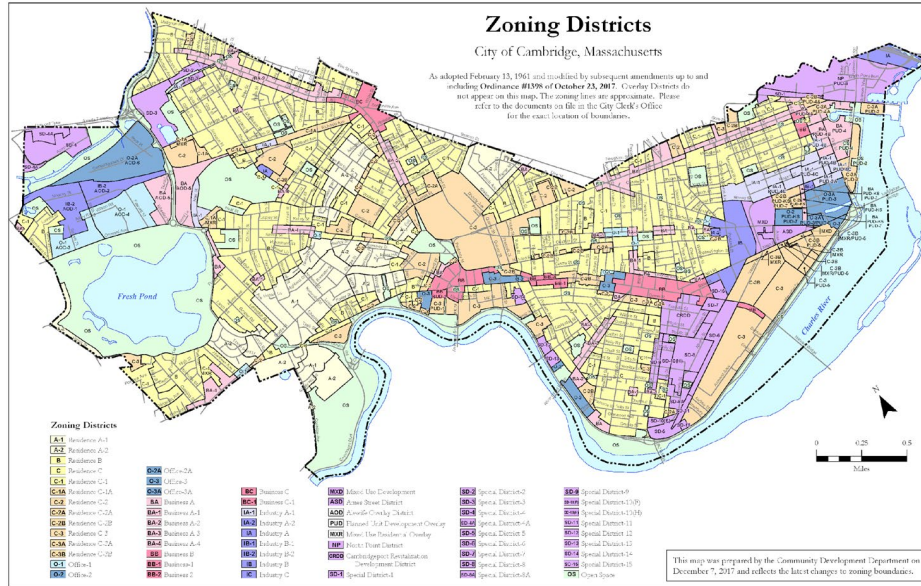
Zoning does NOT regulate...

- Who can own land
- How businesses operate
- How buildings are constructed and what materials they use
- Matters subject to other state or federal regulation (e.g., building codes, licensing, taxation)

Zoning can be used to prioritize or incentivize certain uses or site characteristics by relaxing regulations for the uses we want



Two Parts to Zoning



Zoning Map

Cambridge, Massachusetts

Search or jump to

NOTIFICATIONS SIGN IN HELP Select Language

Cambridge, Massachusetts - Zoning Ordinance / ZONING ORDINANCE CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

SHOW CHANGES MORE

VERSION: OCT 22, 2021 (CURRENT)

ZONING ORDINANCE CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

ZONING ORDINANCE CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

Published in 2019 by Order of the City

municode

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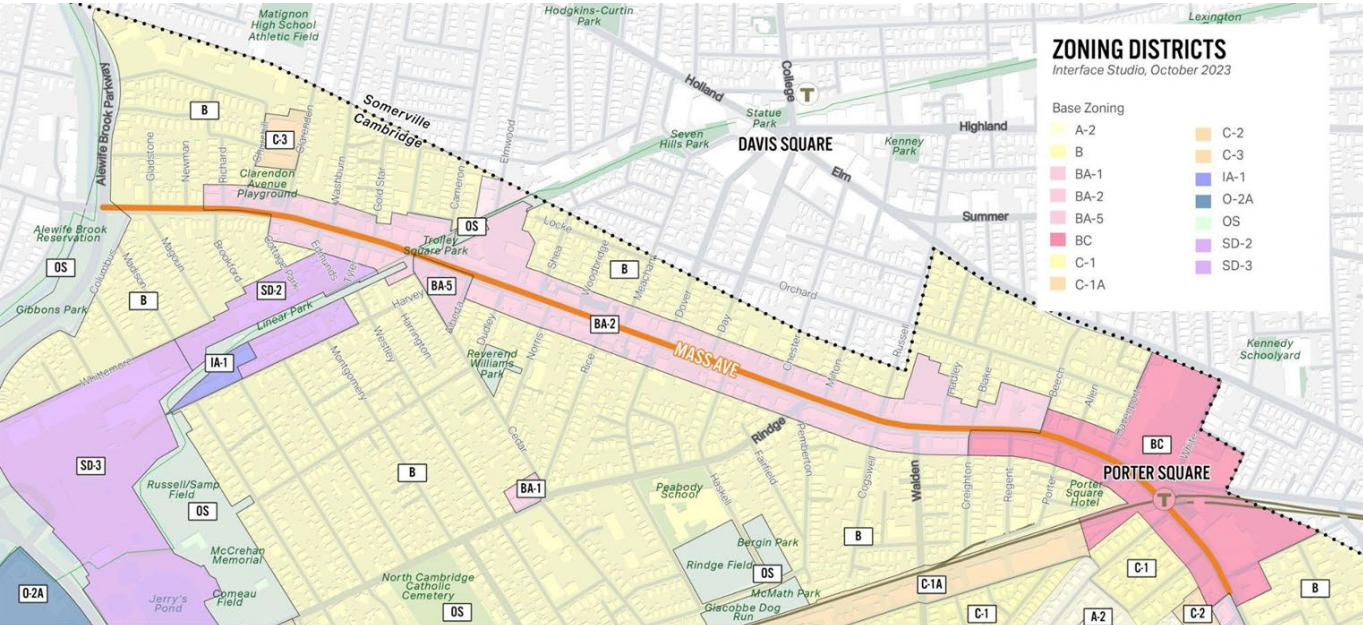
ZONING ORDINANCE CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

- ARTICLE 1.000 - PREAMBLE
- ARTICLE 2.000 - DEFINITIONS **modified**
- ARTICLE 3.000 - ZONING DISTRICTS
- ARTICLE 4.000 - USE REGULATIONS
- ARTICLE 5.000 - DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS
- ARTICLE 6.000 - OFF STREET PARKING AND LOADING REQUIREMENTS AND NIGHTTIME CURFEW ON LARGE COMMERCIAL THROUGH TRUCKS
- ARTICLE 7.000 - SIGNS AND ILLUMINATION
- ARTICLE 8.000 - NONCONFORMITY
- ARTICLE 9.000 - PROCEDURES AND ADMINISTRATION
- ARTICLE 10.000 - APPEALS, VARIANCES, AND SPECIAL PERMITS
- ARTICLE 11.000 - SPECIAL REGULATIONS
- ARTICLE 12.000 - PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT
- ARTICLE 13.000 - PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS

Zoning Ordinance



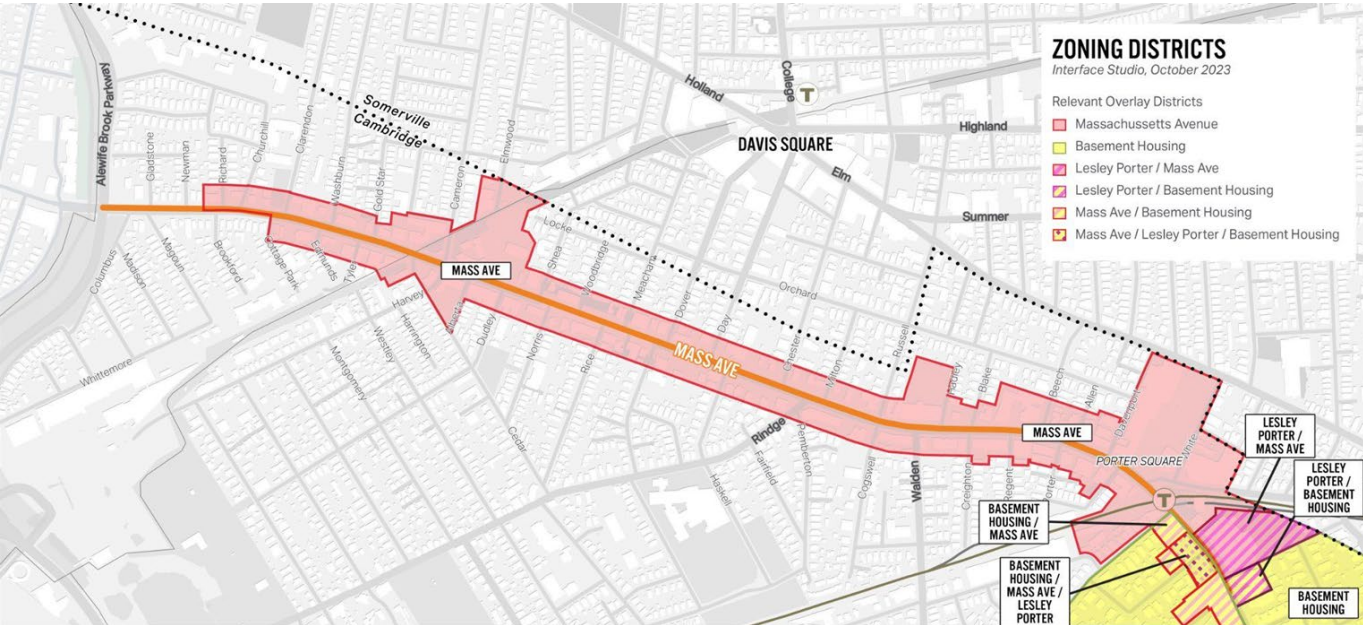
Mass Ave Base Zoning Districts



- North Mass Ave is primarily zoned Business BA-2 and BC in Porter Square
- Both districts allow most residential, retail, office, and lab uses



Mass Ave Overlay District



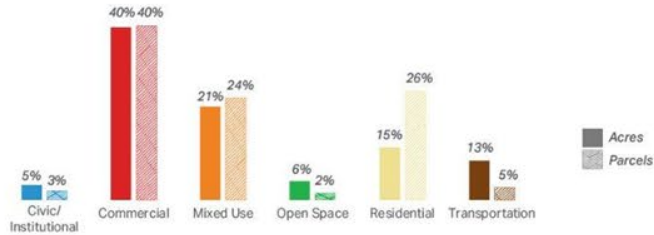
- Overlay districts change the rules of the base zoning districts to promote a particular use or purpose
- The Mass Ave Overlay aims to...
 - Promote active ground floor uses
 - Create consistent building facade design standards
 - Encourage mixed use development with housing above retail



Land Use



LAND USE SUMMARY

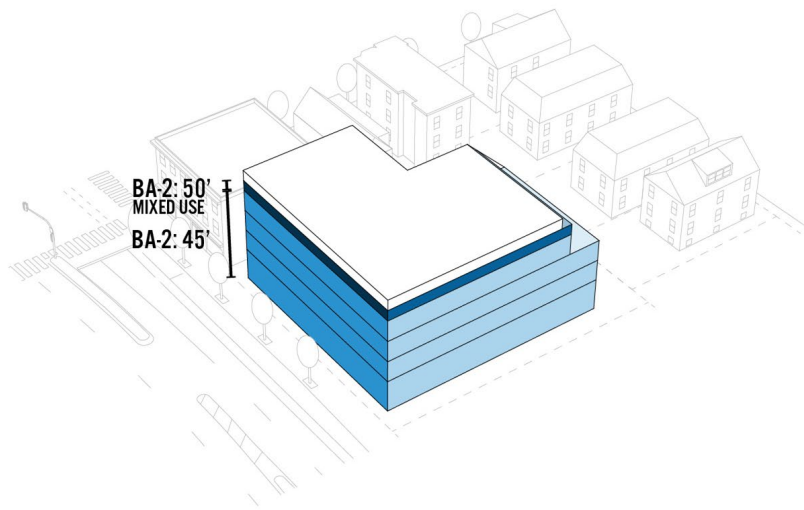


Mass Ave zoning allows a wide range of uses which has resulted in a vibrant urban area

Height and Bulk

- Zoning controls the size and shape of buildings through height and density limits
- *Bulk Control Planes* are used to shape the upper stories of buildings by requiring setbacks above a certain height
- Density is measured by the Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

In BA-2: 45 feet, 50 feet for mixed use

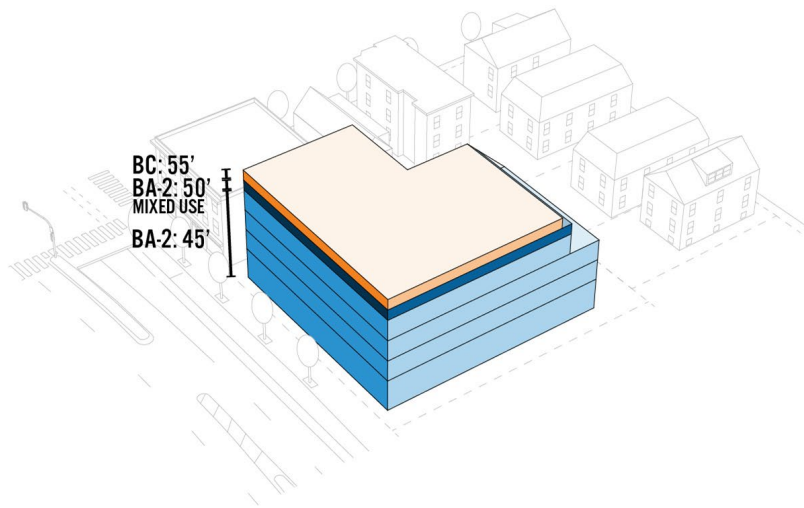


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- *Bulk Control Planes* are used to shape the upper stories of buildings by requiring setbacks above a certain height
- Density is measured by the Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

In BA-2: 45 feet, 50 feet for mixed use

In BC: 55 feet

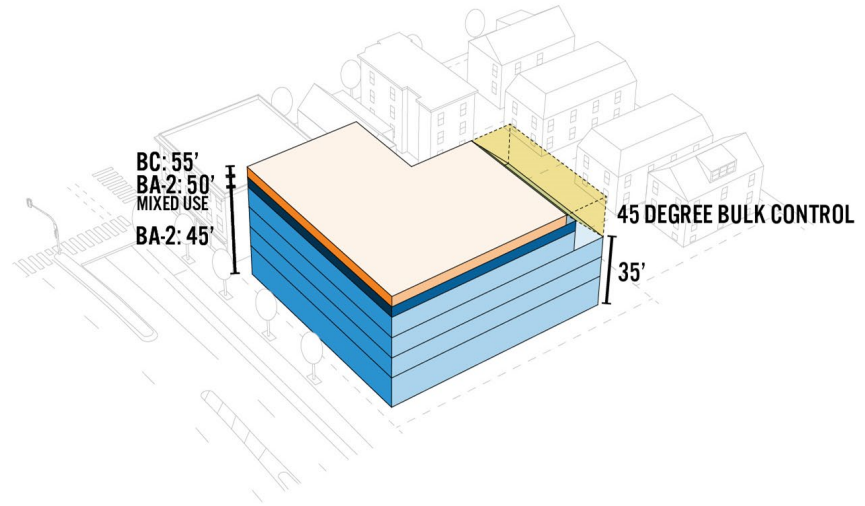


Height and Bulk

- Zoning controls the size and shape of buildings through height and density limits
- *Bulk Control Planes* are used to shape the upper stories of buildings by requiring setbacks above a certain height
- Density is measured by the Floor to Area Ratio (FAR)

In BA-2 and BC: 35' height limit within 50 feet of a residential district

In BA-2: 45-degree bulk control plane from principal rear wall beginning at 35'

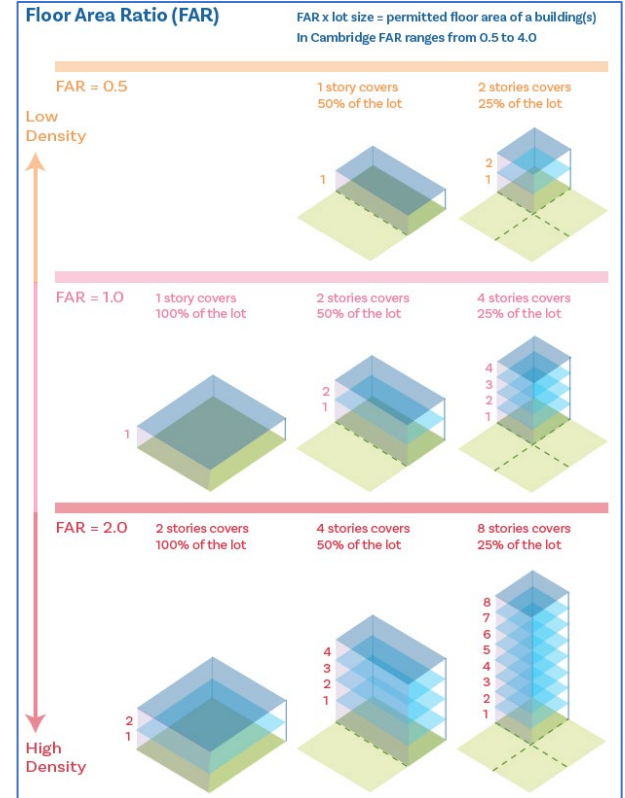


Height and Bulk

- Zoning controls the size and shape of buildings through height and density limits
- *Bulk Control Planes* are used to shape the upper stories of buildings by requiring setbacks above a certain height
- Density is measured by the Floor to Area Ratio (FAR)

In BA-2: 1.75 FAR allowed for mixed use, 1.0 for everything else

In BC: 1.25 FAR for nonresidential, 2.00 for residential



Open Space and Setbacks

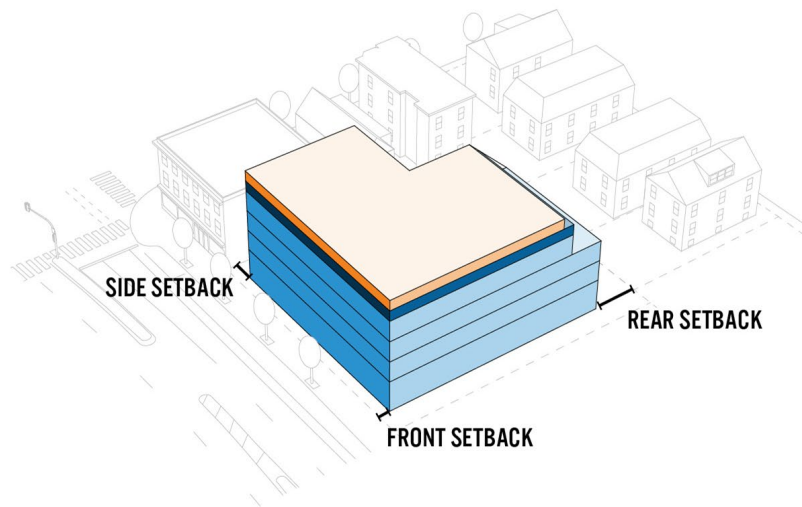
- Zoning sets minimum open space and setback standards that vary by district

In BA-2:

- **5-foot front setback**
- **10-foot side setback**
- **20-foot rear setback**
- **No min. open space**

In BC:

- **No front or side setback**
- **20-foot rear setback**
- **No min. open space**



Priorities and Incentives

How can zoning prioritize different uses?

- Many zoning districts have different dimensional standards for residential and non-residential uses
- Prioritize by allowing taller and denser buildings for one type of use over the other

In BA-2: prioritize mixed-use projects by allowing greater FAR and height

In BC: prioritize residential by allowing greater FAR



Priorities and Incentives

How Zoning Incentives Work

- Allow more space to be built for things that benefit the owner (such as market-rate commercial space or housing) in exchange for dedicating space to uses that have a public benefit (e.g., small business, arts, social services, affordable housing)

Ways to do it:

- “Exempt” space from Gross Floor Area (GFA) limits if it is dedicated to a desired use
- Allow a development “bonus”

In Mass Ave: **Not really used except bays and other small facade projections are exempt from GFA**



Priorities and Incentives

Can zoning require certain uses?

- Zoning sets the rules for what uses are allowed, but cannot compel a property owner to provide specific uses
- However, zoning can allow certain uses only if a desired use is provided
 - Ex. Housing is allowed only if the building includes ground floor retail

Important considerations:

- This only works if the cost of the “required” use is compensated by the value of other allowed uses
- Important to consider a range of uses that contribute to the planning goal, while remaining flexible to reduce potential vacancies

In BA-2: Active nonresidential ground floor uses are “required” to maintain a mixed use environment

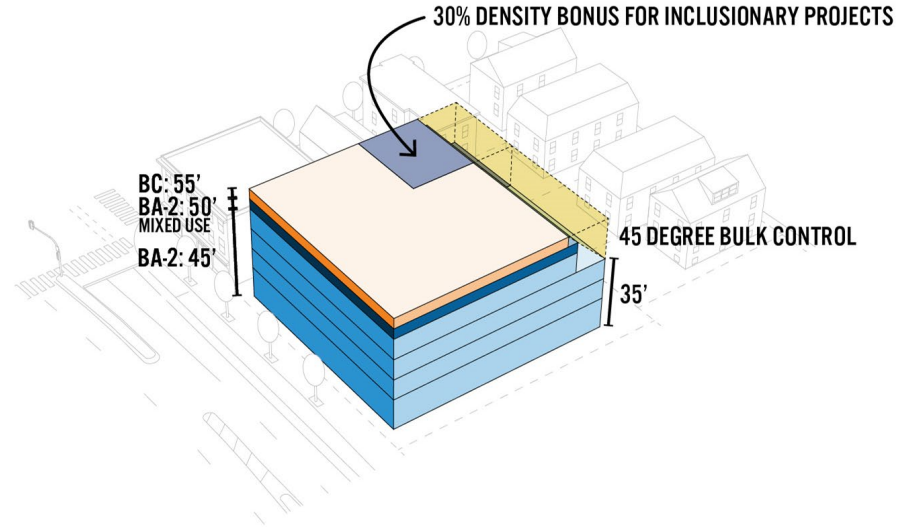


Inclusionary Housing

Inclusionary Housing leverages the private market to provide Affordable Housing in market-rate developments.

How it works:

- Projects that create 10 or more units are required to provide 20% affordable
- In return, Inclusionary Projects are afforded a 30% density bonus, but no height bonus
- For projects less than 10 units, a developer may voluntarily choose to comply with Inclusionary requirements to get the 30% density bonus

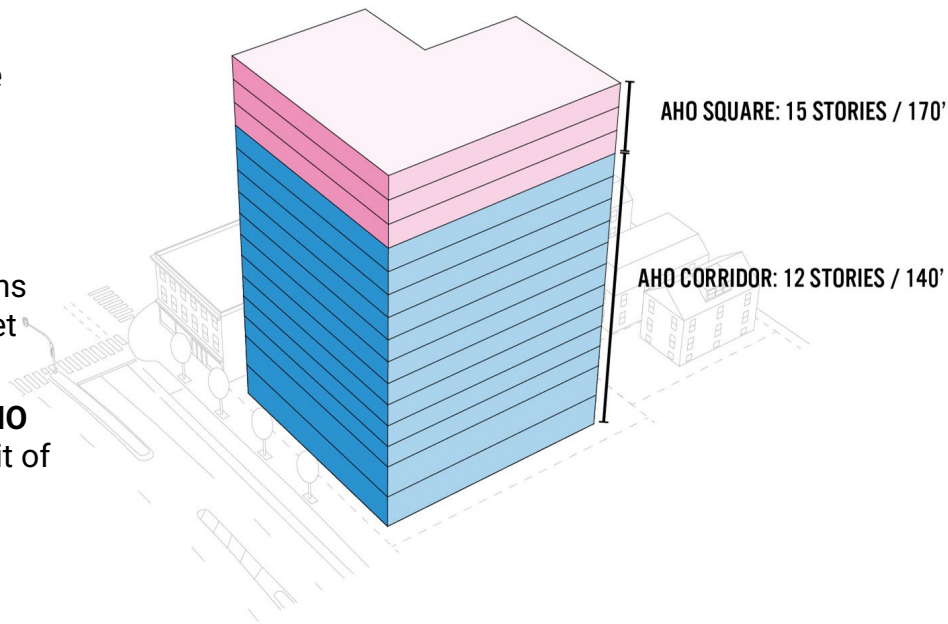


Affordable Housing Overlay

The Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO) is a city-wide overlay zoning district that establishes modified dimensional standards and a by-right approval process for projects that provide 100% Affordable Housing.

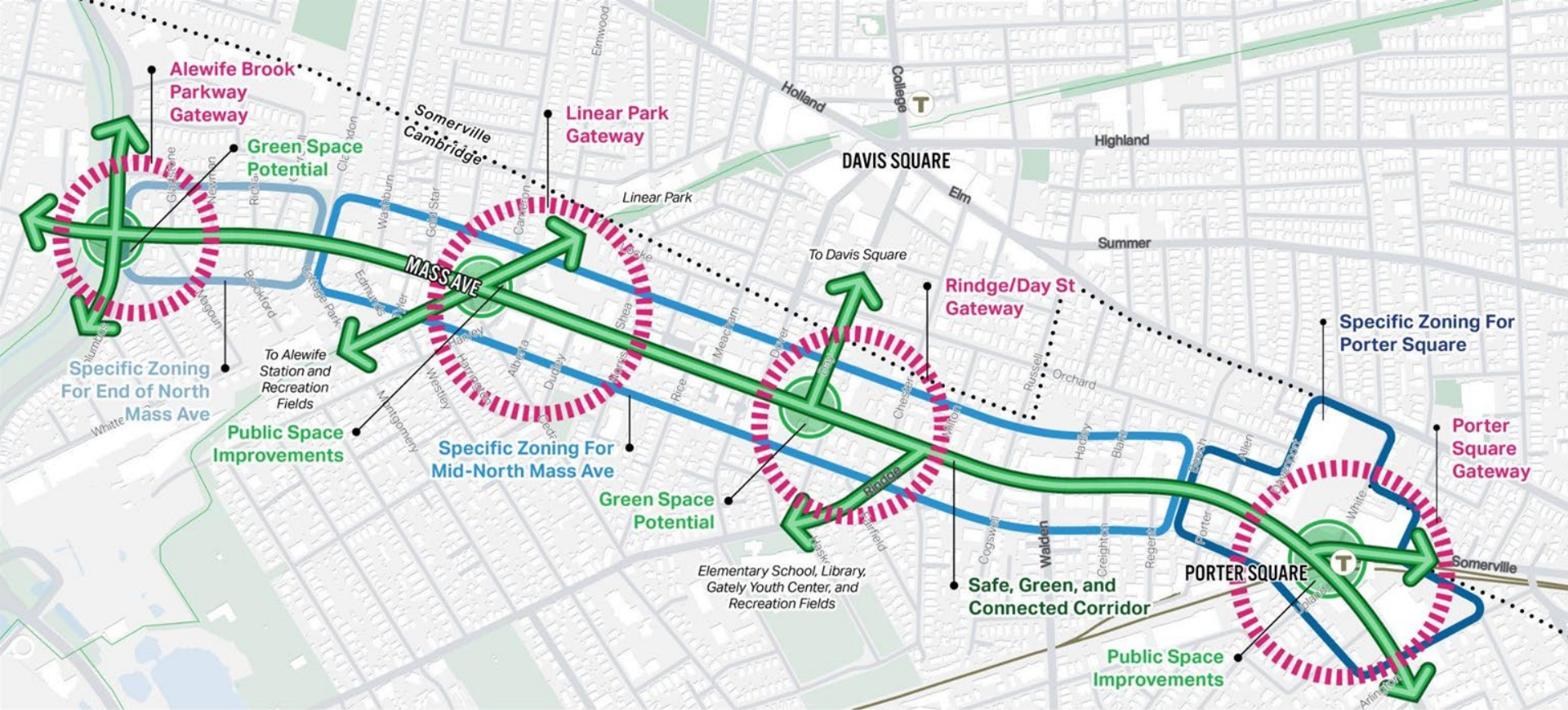
In Mass Ave:

- Mass Ave is considered an **AHO Corridor**, which means AHO Projects have a height limit of 12 stories/140 feet and have no FAR limits
- The Lesley Porter Overlay District is considered an **AHO Square**, which means AHO Projects have a height limit of 15 stories/170 feet and have no FAR limits



Quick Report Out: North Mass Ave

- Activity Centers
- Connections to Davis Square
- Zoning: Station Square to Alewife Brook Parkway
- Businesses/Activation of vacant storefronts



WORKING GROUP SUMMARY

PORTER SQUARE EXISTING CONDITIONS











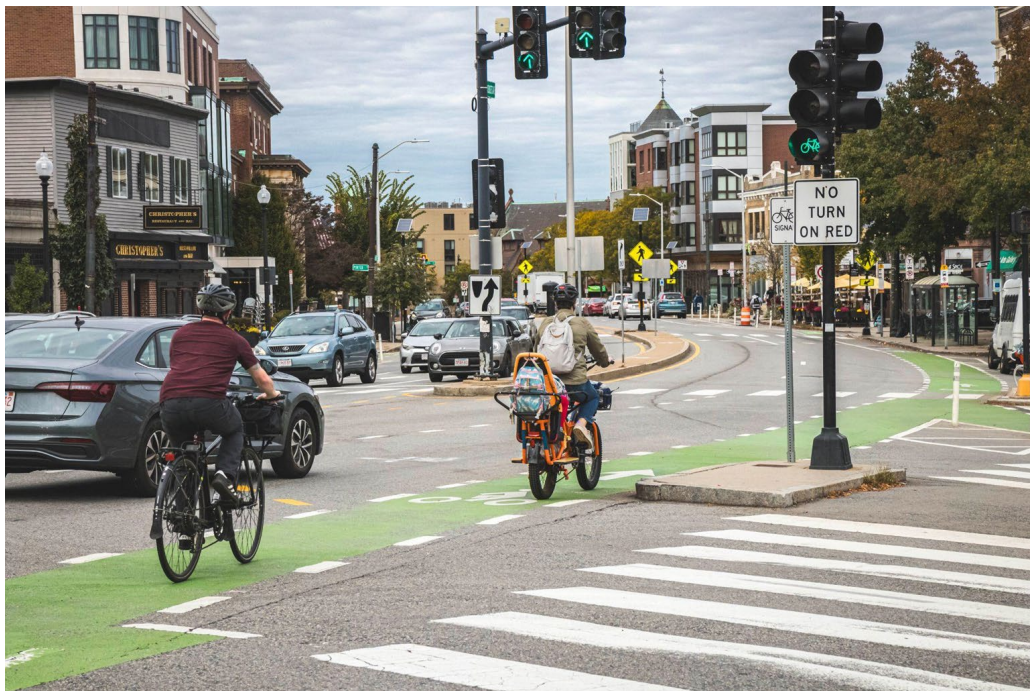
PORTER SQUARE CONTEXT

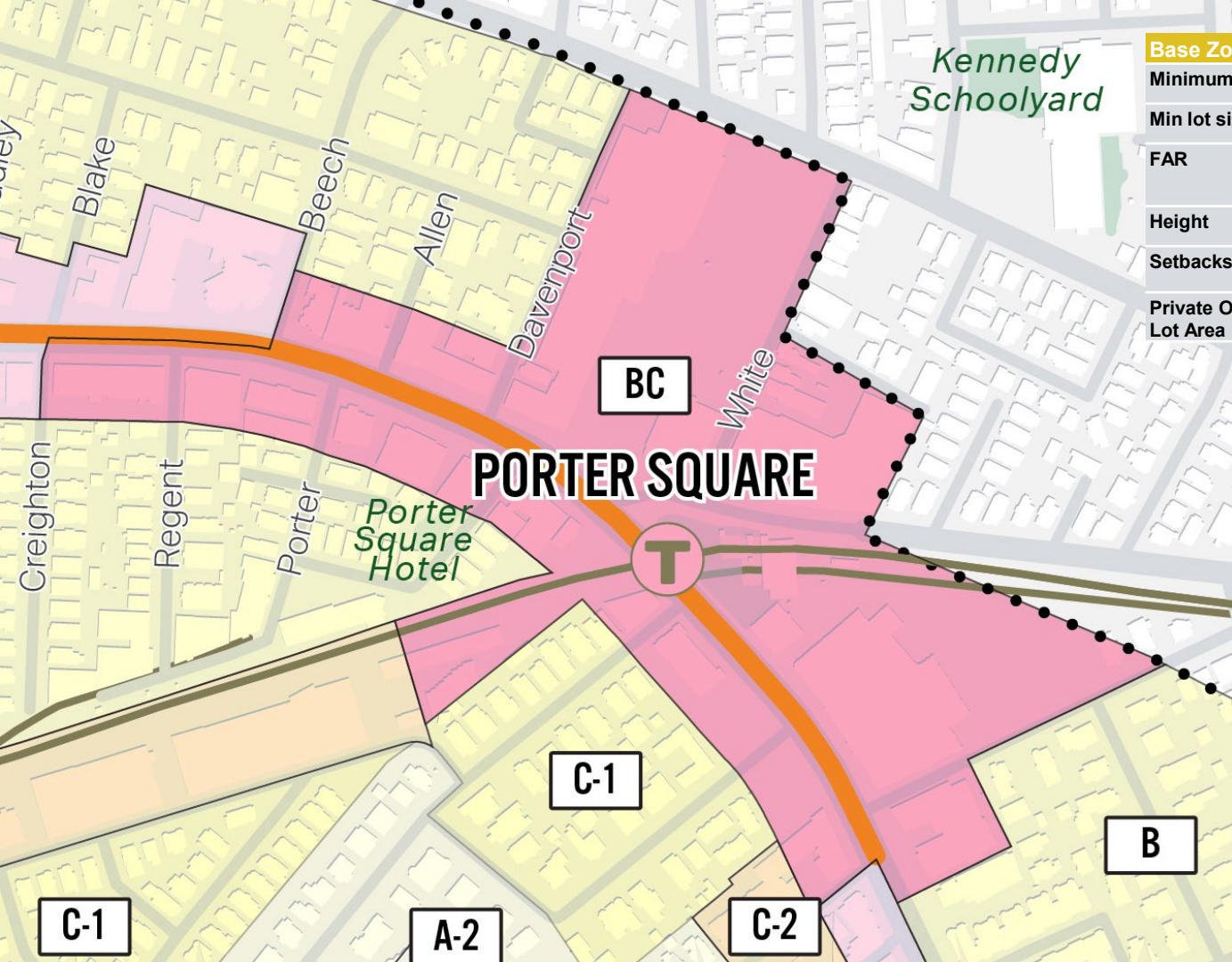
Interface Studio, August 2024

-  Rail
-  City Boundary
-  Blue Bike Station
-  MBTA Station

-  Green/Open Space
-  Porter Square Shopping Center
-  Porter Square Galleria
-  MBTA
-  Lesley University







Base Zoning: BC	Dimensional Requirements
Minimum Lot Width (ft)	None
Min lot size (SF)	None
FAR	Commercial 1.25 / Residential 2.0
Height	55' Max Height
Setbacks	20' rear
Private Open Space to Lot Area	None

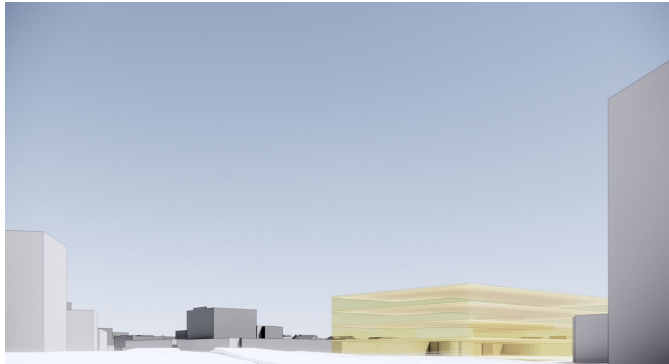
ZONING DISTRICTS

Interface Studio, October 2023

- Base Zoning
- A-2
 - C-2
 - B
 - C-3
 - BA-1
 - IA-1
 - BA-2
 - O-2A
 - BA-5
 - OS
 - BC
 - SD-2
 - C-1
 - SD-3
 - C-1A

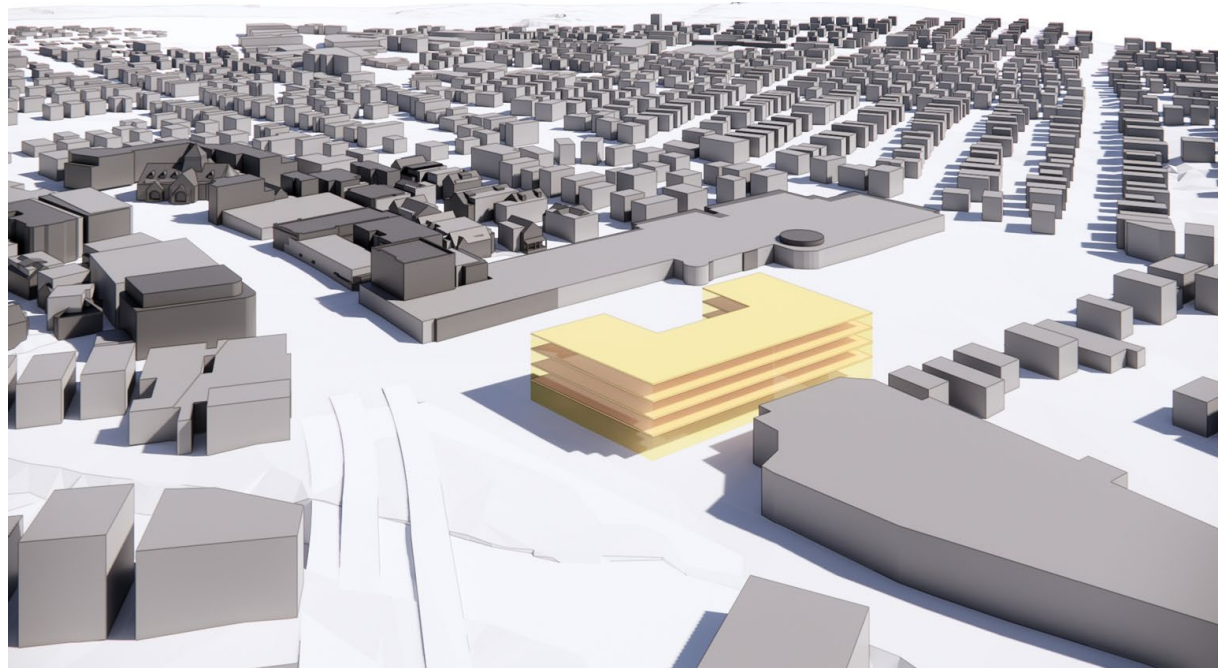
PORTER SQUARE ZONING

Building Scale Studies

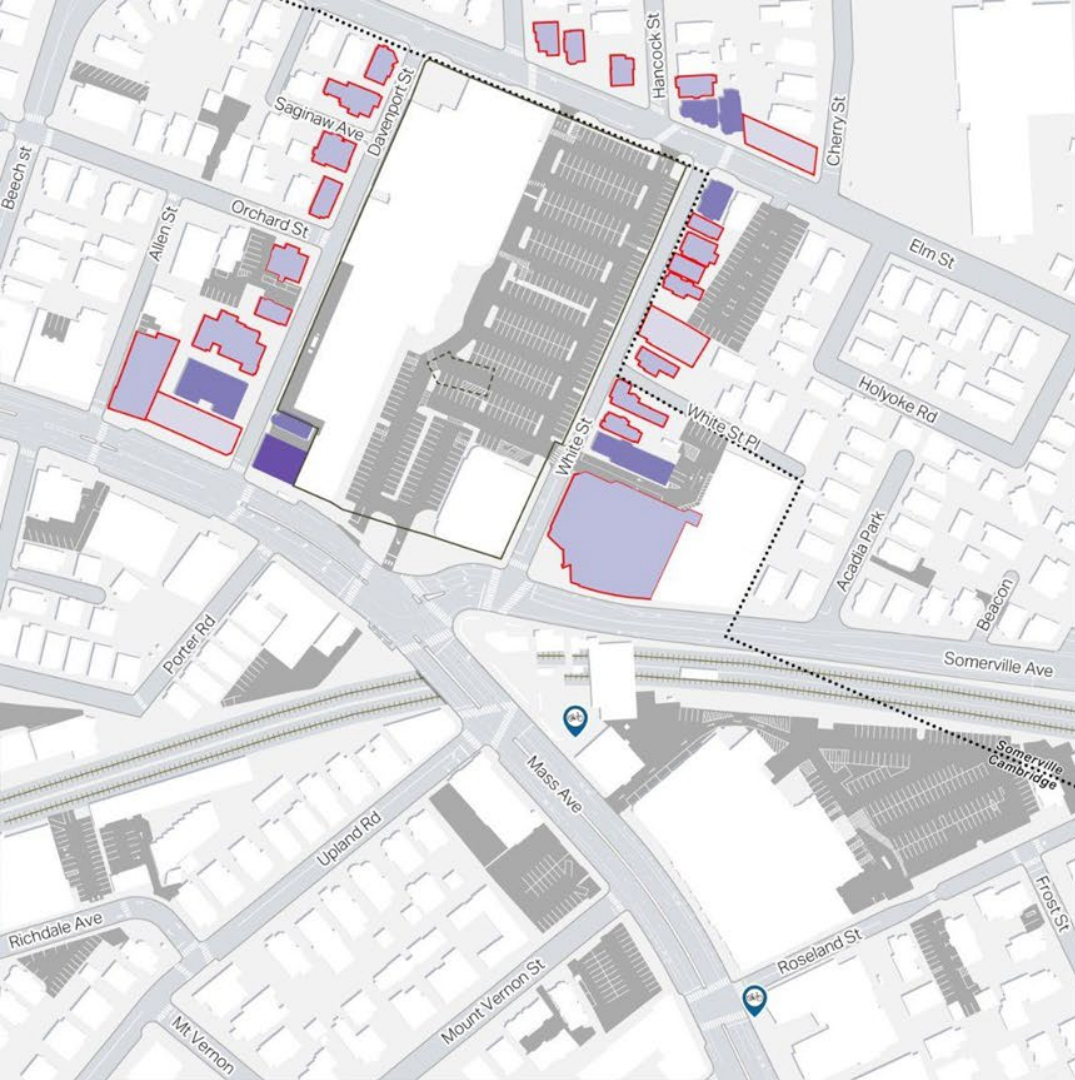


What does our current zoning allow?

A four story building (55 feet) can be built today, as-of-right



The rendering is for illustrative purposes only and does not represent a plan.

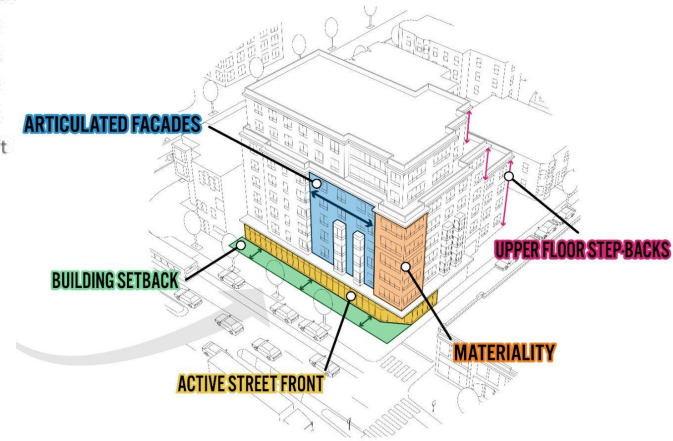


PORTER SQUARE CONTEXT

Interface Studio, August 2024

- Rail
- City Boundary
- Blue Bike Station
- MBTA Station

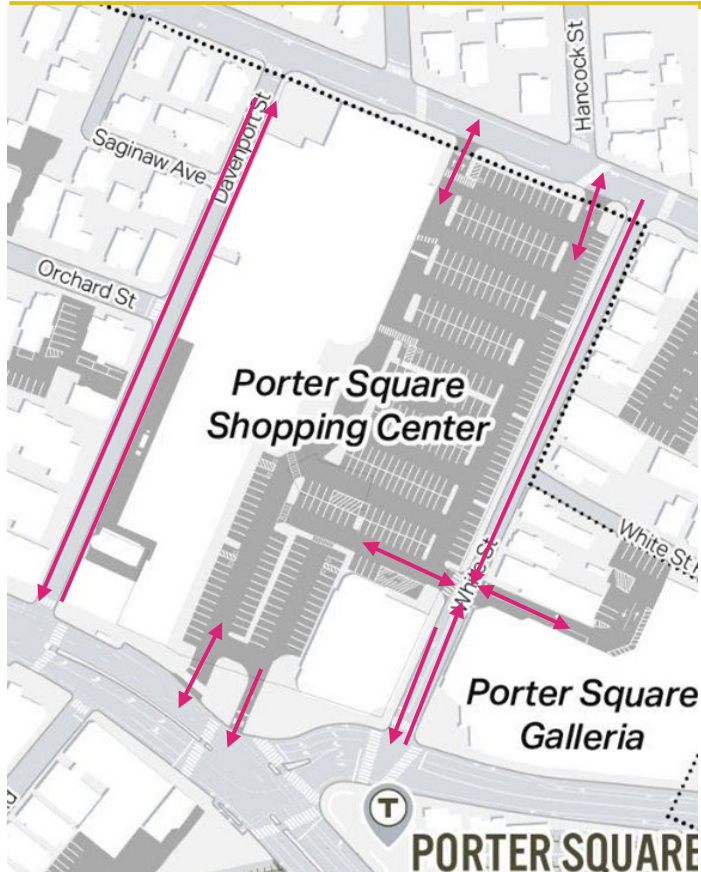
- 20' and below
- 20 - 35 ft
- 35 - 50 ft
- 50 - 70 ft
- 70 - 85 ft
- 85 - 120 ft



Most properties adjacent to the site are less than 35ft tall



DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS



Access

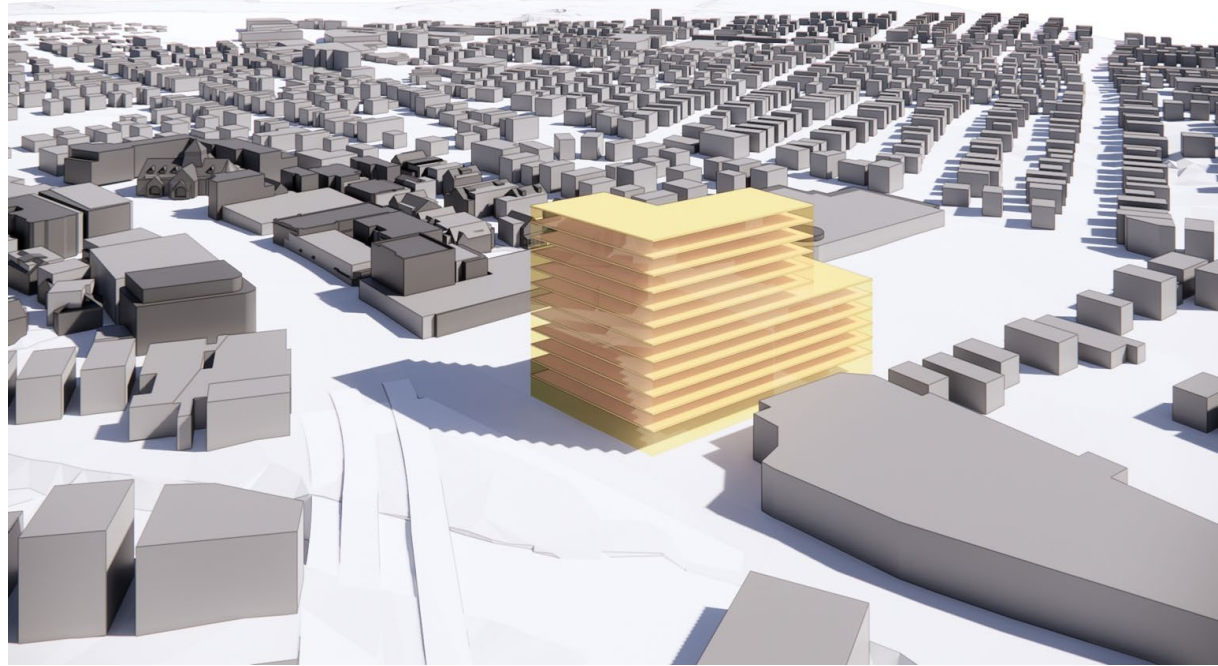
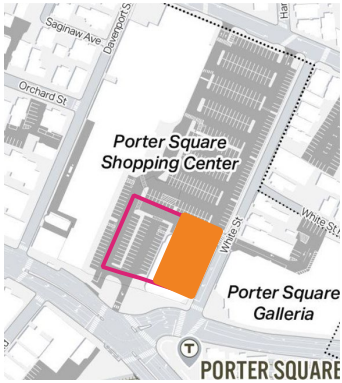
- 2 curb cuts on Mass Ave
- Continuous loading along Davenport
- White Street is partially one way

Parking

- Existing number of spaces: 313

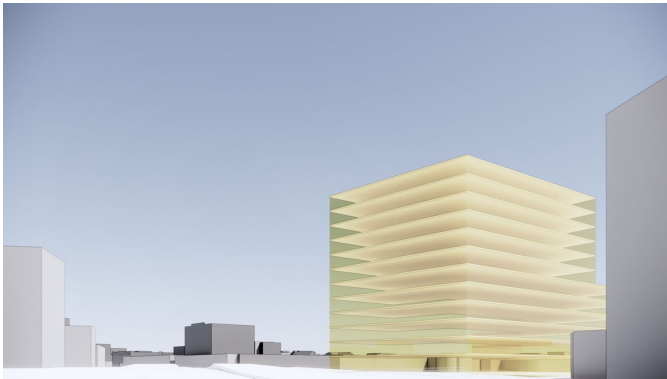
Building Scale Studies

This is an example building to evaluate scale.



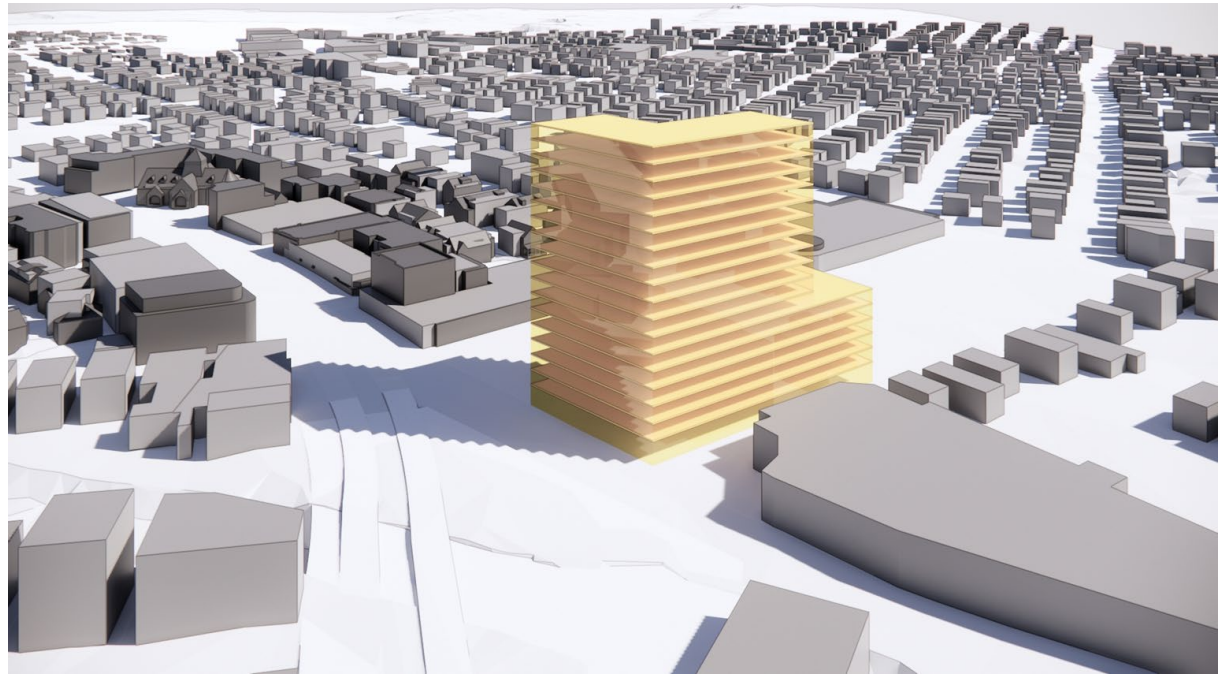
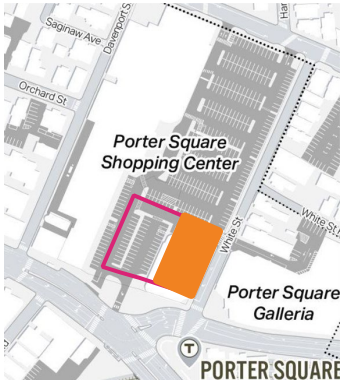
What would a 12 story building look like if we adjust zoning?

The rendering is for illustrative purposes only and does not represent a plan.



Building Scale Studies

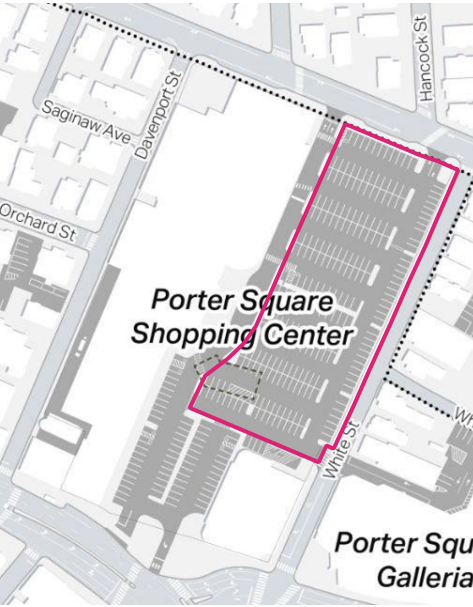
This is an example building to evaluate scale.



What would an 18 story building look like if we adjust zoning?

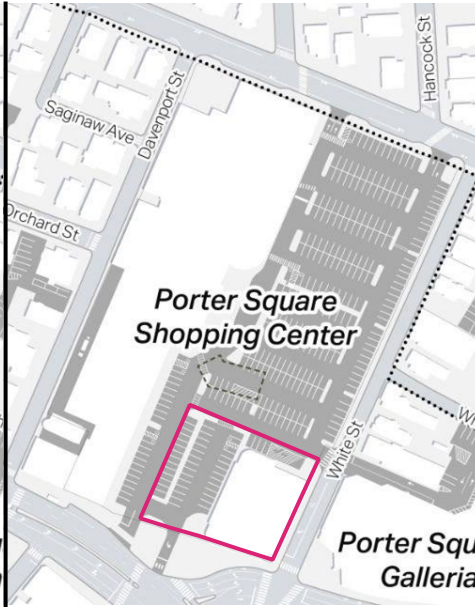
The rendering is for illustrative purposes only and does not represent a plan.

THINKING ABOUT CHANGE (example only - not a development proposal or plan)



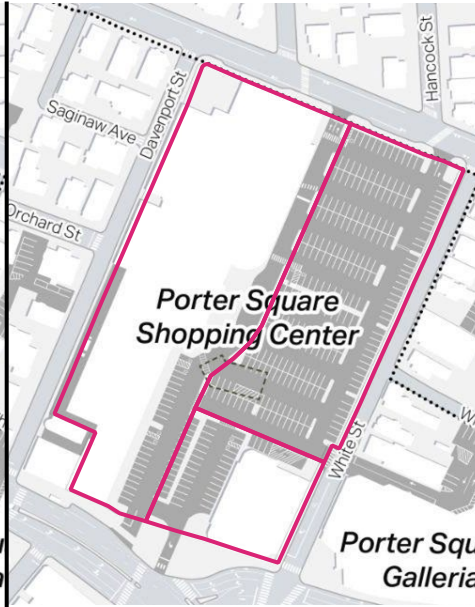
Scenario 1: Surface Parking Lot

Full shopping center remains
Parking garage podium with residential high rise



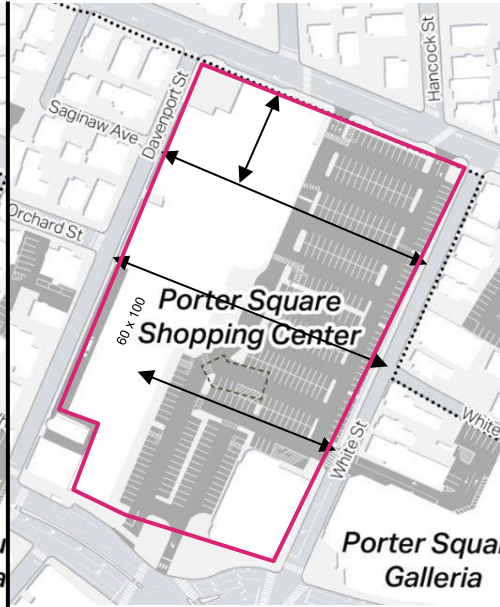
Scenario 2: Corner/ T Frontage

Main shopping center remains
Redevelop corner with mixed use tower



Scenario 3: Phased full site

Phased approach to re-development over time
Redevelop surface parking, then corner, then shopping center



Scenario 4: Full site

Complete site reconfiguration
Activate Mass Ave frontage
Opportunity to re-establish grid

COMPARABLE MIXED USE SITES

Mass and Main



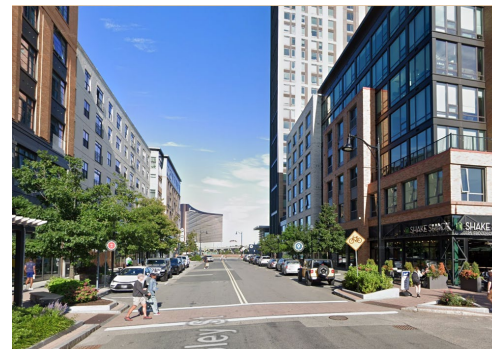
Cambridge Commons



Assembly Square



Prospect Union Square





WORKING GROUP DISCUSSION TODAY

- What do we have to gain from taller, higher density development in Porter Square?
- What should we keep in mind?

PUBLIC QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

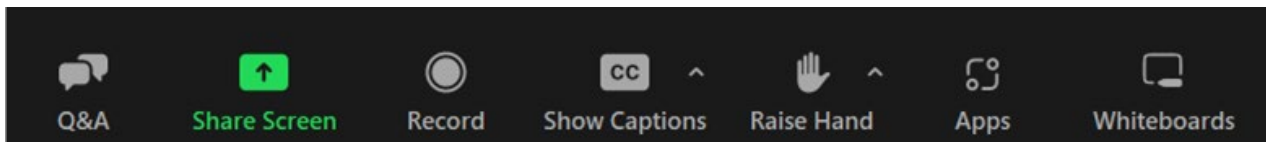
Your feedback is important

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



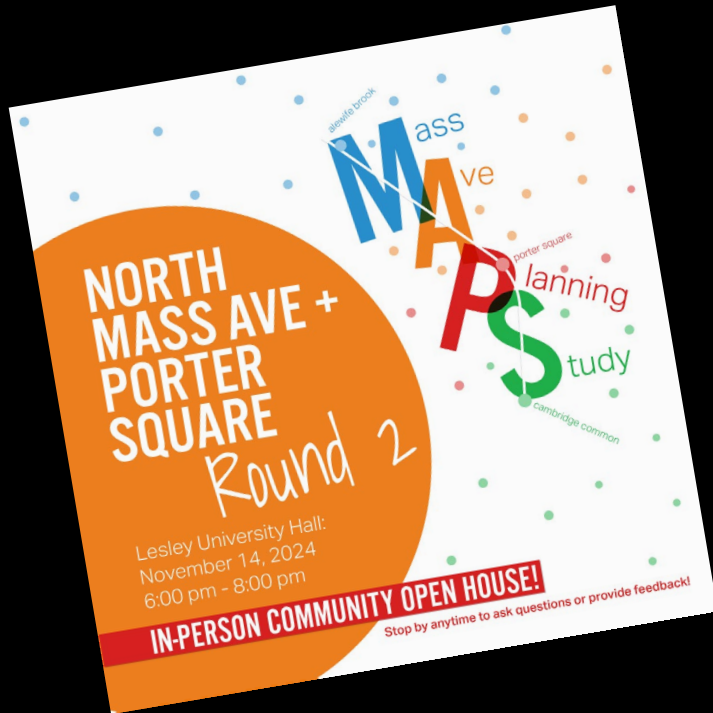
Use **Q&A** to type a question

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



November:

- November 14, North Mass Public Meeting

January:

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

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!