The Neighborhood and Long Term Planning, Public Facilities, Arts and Celebrations Committee Hearing

November 29, 2018
Our Process

**2016**
- Work with community to develop a shared understanding of key planning issues
- Determine vision and core values with community input
- Assess challenges and opportunities through data analysis and public feedback

**2017**
- Dive into planning topics with working groups
  - Set goals
  - Identify strategies
  - Develop the Alewife district plan

**2018**
- Develop focus area recommendations with working groups
  - Discuss trade-offs and scenarios
  - Draft final plan
  - Refine and integrate Alewife district plan
Urban Form Recommendations
Planning Framework

**GOAL**

- **37 goals**

**Strategy**

- **42 strategies**

  - **176 actions** + 160 existing and ongoing actions

**Broad, aspirational statement of what we want to achieve**

**Approach or approaches that we take to achieve a goal**

**Specific policy, program, or tool**

**Indicator**

- Quantitative measure(s) used to assess performance against goal

**Target**

- Desired level of performance
Urban Form Goals

1. Development Patterns: Maintain the existing patterns of the city where they are well-established, and advance the city’s values through a mix of preservation and complementary infill development.

2. Growth in Evolving Areas: Promote redevelopment that is mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented, and sustainable within areas currently characterized by surface parking lots, automobile-oriented uses, and obsolete commercial buildings.

3. Transitional Development: Where redevelopment occurs at the edges of well-established districts, shape new development to complement the prevailing pattern of adjacent districts, accommodating variations in use and scale.

4. Public Realm: Create a connected network of high-quality open spaces that links all residents to local and regional natural assets, provides a range of activities and experiences, is inclusive of all people, and encourage social connections.

5. Activation: Shape the form, use, and design of development, especially its public spaces, so that it supports an active public realm.

6. Design Process: Strive for design excellence in all new development by creating a review process that is clear and efficient in its engagement with City staff, boards and commissions, and the community.
Urban Form Strategies

1. On the major corridors and squares, increase density near transit nodes while accommodating the unique character of different areas along the corridors.

2. Preserve the historical integrity and diversity of Cambridge’s neighborhoods, including both buildings and the public realm.

3. Encourage activity on the ground floors of new buildings, particularly along the mixed-use corridors.

4. Proactively guide development in areas with a strong potential for change through area-specific planning and development review.

5. Leverage private development to create and maintain high-quality public open spaces, and provide dynamic programming.

6. Expand the public open space network through new open spaces, new programming, and improved local and regional connections.

7. Improve the public open space network by preserving, maintaining, and enhancing existing open spaces to serve a diverse population.

8. Revise the development review process to be more transparent to developers and the public while striving for high-quality design.
Priority Urban Form Actions (from working group process)

1. Build the connections to integrate “Alewife Square” into the fabric of the City...

2. Establish development standards to promote street-activating uses (such as retail) on ground floors, including minimum ground-floor heights, limitations on the frontage length occupied by lobbies, etc.…

3. Design and implement clear wayfinding for biking and walking routes to the City’s open spaces and other destinations.

4. Encourage family-friendly design in residential and commercial buildings and public realm improvements through development review (i.e. playgrounds, etc.)

5. Eliminate minimum parking requirements for development along the corridors.

6. Identify opportunities for increasing the amount of open space in or near growth areas.
## Urban Form Indicators and Targets

- Extent of street activating features on Massachusetts Avenue and Cambridge Street, and in major squares

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>2030 Target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of blocks with at least three building entrances per 200 ft.</td>
<td>The City does not have a baseline measurement for this indicator at this time, but it will collect this information moving forward.</td>
<td>Targets for major squares, active pedestrian segments, and mixed residential segments will be set once the initial data is collected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of total frontage that is restaurant or retail use</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of building frontage that is transparent (no posters or curtains, no tinted glass or other window treatments, up to ten feet tall)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Urban Form Indicators and Targets

- Extent of street activating features on Massachusetts Avenue and Cambridge Street, and in major squares

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>2030 Target*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Percent of parcel frontage with building frontage within five feet of parcel boundary | 66.5% across all areas (excluding open spaces and university campuses) (2018) | • 80% in major squares  
• 50% in active pedestrian segments  
• 30% in mixed residential segments |
| Percent of blocks with at least the given length of curb per 200 linear ft. of block face: | • 70% in major squares  
• 74% in active pedestrian segments  
• 95% in mixed residential segments (2018) | • 85% in major squares  
• 85% in active pedestrian segments  
• 98% in mixed residential segments |
| • 180’ in major squares  
• 150’ in active pedestrian segments  
• 120’ in mixed residential segments |                                                            |                                                            |

Source: City of Cambridge GIS

* See next slide for the designation of street segments as “major squares,” “active pedestrian segments,” and “mixed residential segments.”
Corridor and Square Designations for Indicators

Street segment designations for Urban Form indicators
Source: Cambridge Community Development Department

- Major Square
- Active Pedestrian Segment
- Mixed Residential Segment
Urban Form Indicators and Targets

- Proximity to parks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>2030 Target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of housing units that are within a given distance to three or</td>
<td>• 85.2% (2018)</td>
<td>• 87.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more different parks, including parks in adjacent municipalities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distances are measured at:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Quarter-mile walking distance for playgrounds and passive open space</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Half-mile walking distance for active recreation, trails and nature,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and specialty spaces such as off-leash dog parks or exercise equipment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: City of Cambridge GIS
Park Access

Number of different kinds of parks within walking distance

Source: City of Cambridge GIS
Urban Form Indicators and Targets

- Tree canopy over sidewalks and streets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>2030 Target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of sidewalks and streets covered by a given level of tree canopy (TBD)</td>
<td>The City does not have a baseline measurement for these indicator at this time. Data is being collected by the Urban Forest Master Plan.</td>
<td>Targets to be established by the Urban Forestry Master Plan in 2019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Urban Forest Master Plan

- Design quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>2030 Target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of survey respondents that rate Cambridge’s overall appearance as good or excellent.</td>
<td>• 83% (2014)</td>
<td>• 90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: City Manager’s Biannual Survey
Alewife Urban Design Guidelines
Urban Design Vision

• **A place of opportunity and connection.** Its urban form will encourage meeting, engagement, and interaction.

• **Varied.** It will be comprised of areas of differing character, and will accommodate a wide range of functions and uses, and serve Cambridge’s diverse residents and workers.

• **Inclusive and welcoming.** It will serve both the immediate community and the region.

• **Comfortable, beautiful, and safe.** It will offer an enjoyable environment in which to live, work, play, and shop.

• **Sustainable.** It will be designed for resiliency and environmental sustainability, and to support the communities of Cambridge.
Find a systemic solution to the impacts of climate change by aligning with the preparedness planning process:

- Build to an elevation of 4’ or over for the first habitable floor level, which reduces flood risk from 2070 SLR/SS.

Create a mixed-use walkable neighborhood that also promotes bicycles and transit:

- Create a distributive multimodal transportation network by “completing the street grid” and making better connections to the T.
- Create a “there there” for daytime and evening populations and to improve the “quality of address.”
- Achieve a scaled transition of new development towards Cambridge Highlands.

In order to realize our vision of transforming Alewife into a resilient neighborhood with strong amenities and sense of place, we need to retain a sufficient amount of value in order to encourage redevelopment.
Raised Sidewalk
Site and Building Organization

Create Human Scaled Urban Blocks
Break up large blocks to create a walking/cycling environment.

Frame Urban Space
Create continuous street walls that define streets and public spaces.

Entries, Access and Utilities
Minimize intrusion of entries, access and utilities on the public realm.
Urban Blocks

- Create more streets and connections
- Break up large blocks to create a walking/cycling environment.
Built Form

**Architectural Character**
Design buildings and facades that emphasize the human scale and create an engaging pedestrian environment.

**Building Materials**
Use high quality, durable and sustainable materials.

**Building types**
Incorporate a broad range of building types accommodating a variety of uses to create a rich urban environment.
Open Spaces

Open Spaces and Site Design
Public open spaces should be visually and programatically rich; varied in size and character.

Streets and paths
Design streets that accommodate all modes and mediate between the public and the private realm.

Parks
Parks should be welcoming, offer connections to nature and provide opportunities for a wide range of activities.

Universal Access
Design the district’s public and private outdoor spaces for universal access.
Squares and Plazas

Squares and plazas should be the foci of community life: predominately pedestrian, enlivened by outdoor uses and by the ground floor retail of the buildings that frame them.

Privately-Owned Open Space (POPS)

POPS should be perceived as fully public components of the urban environment.

Environmental Comfort and Public Amenities

Open spaces should be designed to provide a safe and comfortable pedestrian environment.
Conceptual Open Space

- Diagonal pedestrian/bicycle path linking through district
- Mitigate stormwater
- Framed by architectural facades
Conceptual Aerial Perspective
Discussion