

ENVISION CAMBRIDGE



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

Planning Topics

Housing

Economy

Mobility

Climate and Environment

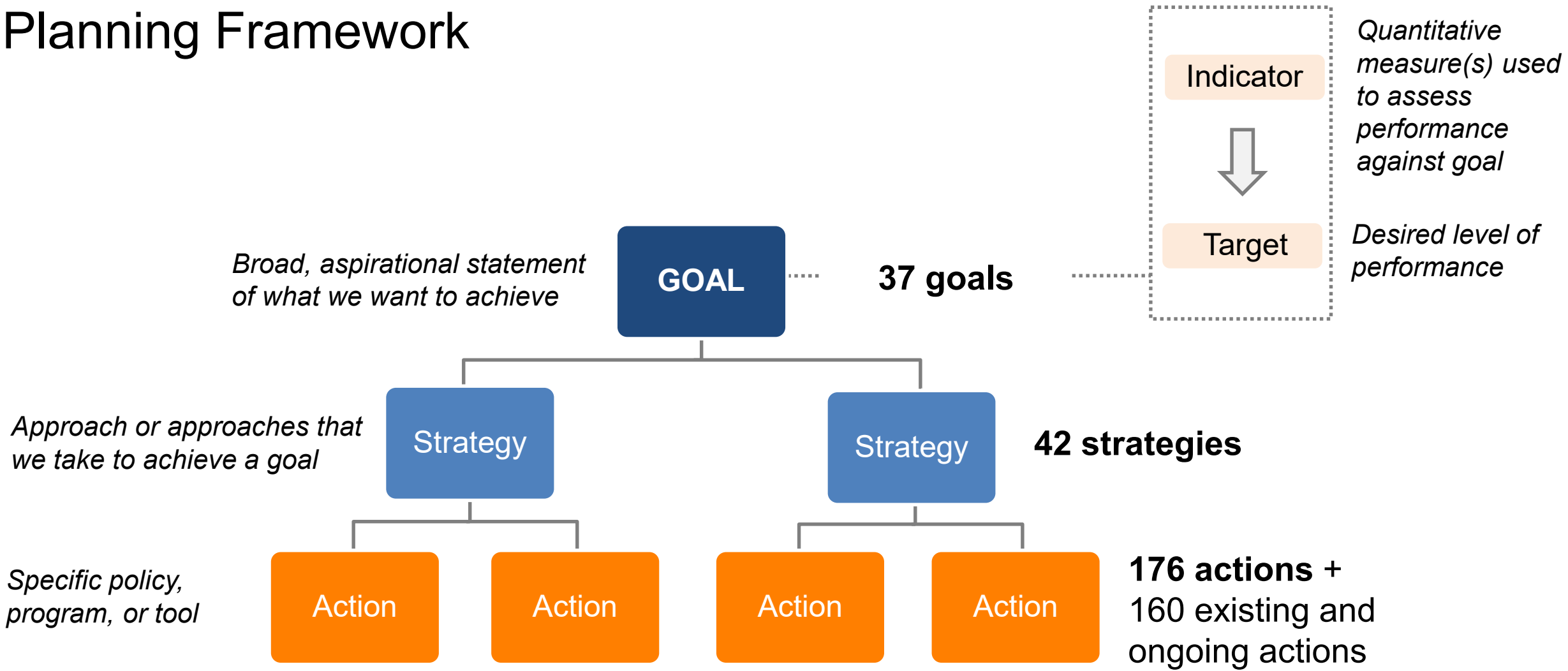
Urban Form

Community Wellbeing

Urban Form Recommendations



Planning Framework



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)

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

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....

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

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

Eliminate minimum parking requirements for development along the corridors.

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

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

Urban Form Indicators and Targets

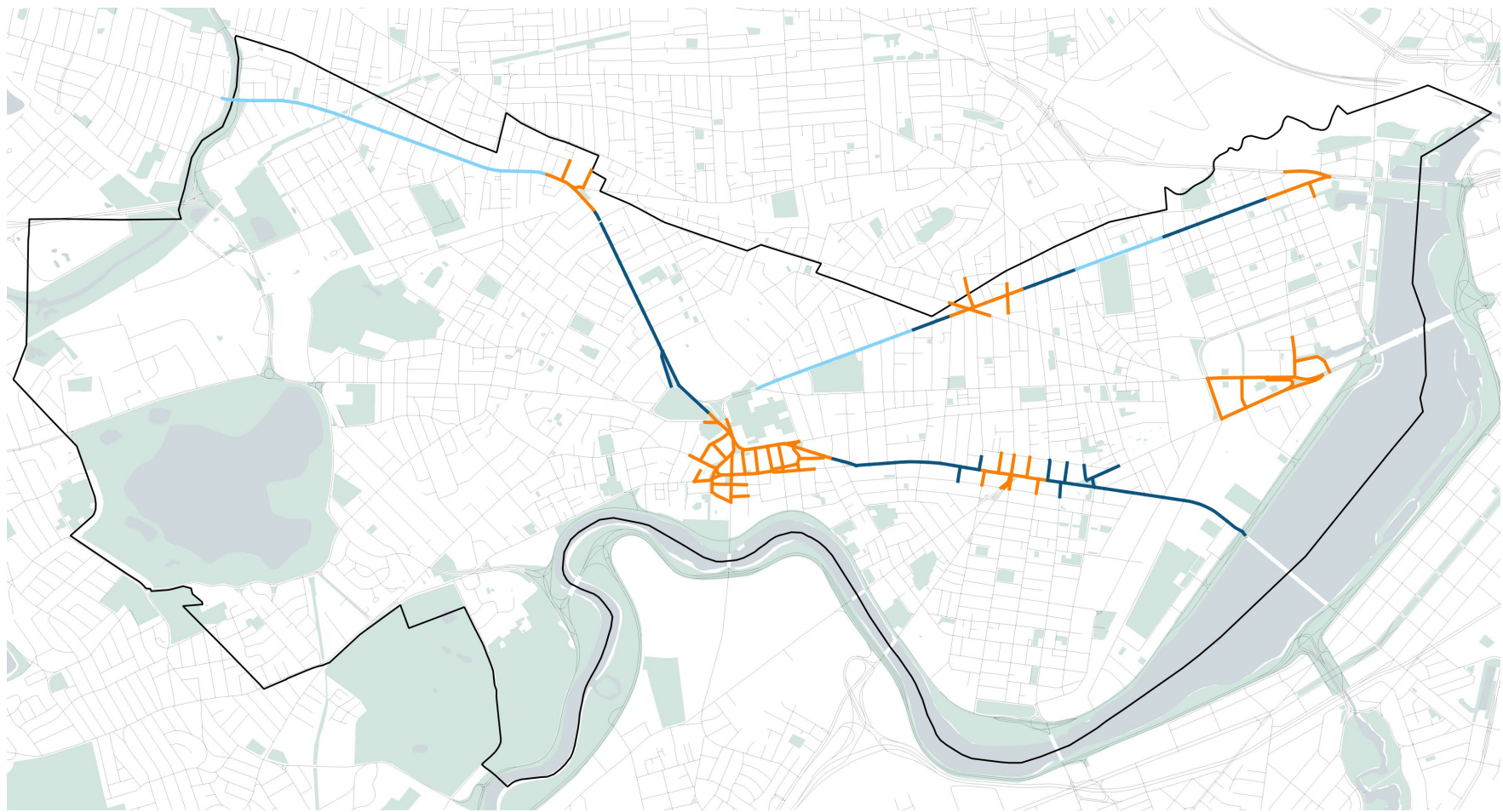
- Extent of street activating features on Massachusetts Avenue and Cambridge Street, and in major squares

Indicator	Baseline	2030 Target*
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)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 180' in major squares 150' in active pedestrian segments 120' in mixed residential segments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 70% in major squares 74% in active pedestrian segments 95% in mixed residential segments (2018) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 85% in major squares 85% in active pedestrian segments 98% 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

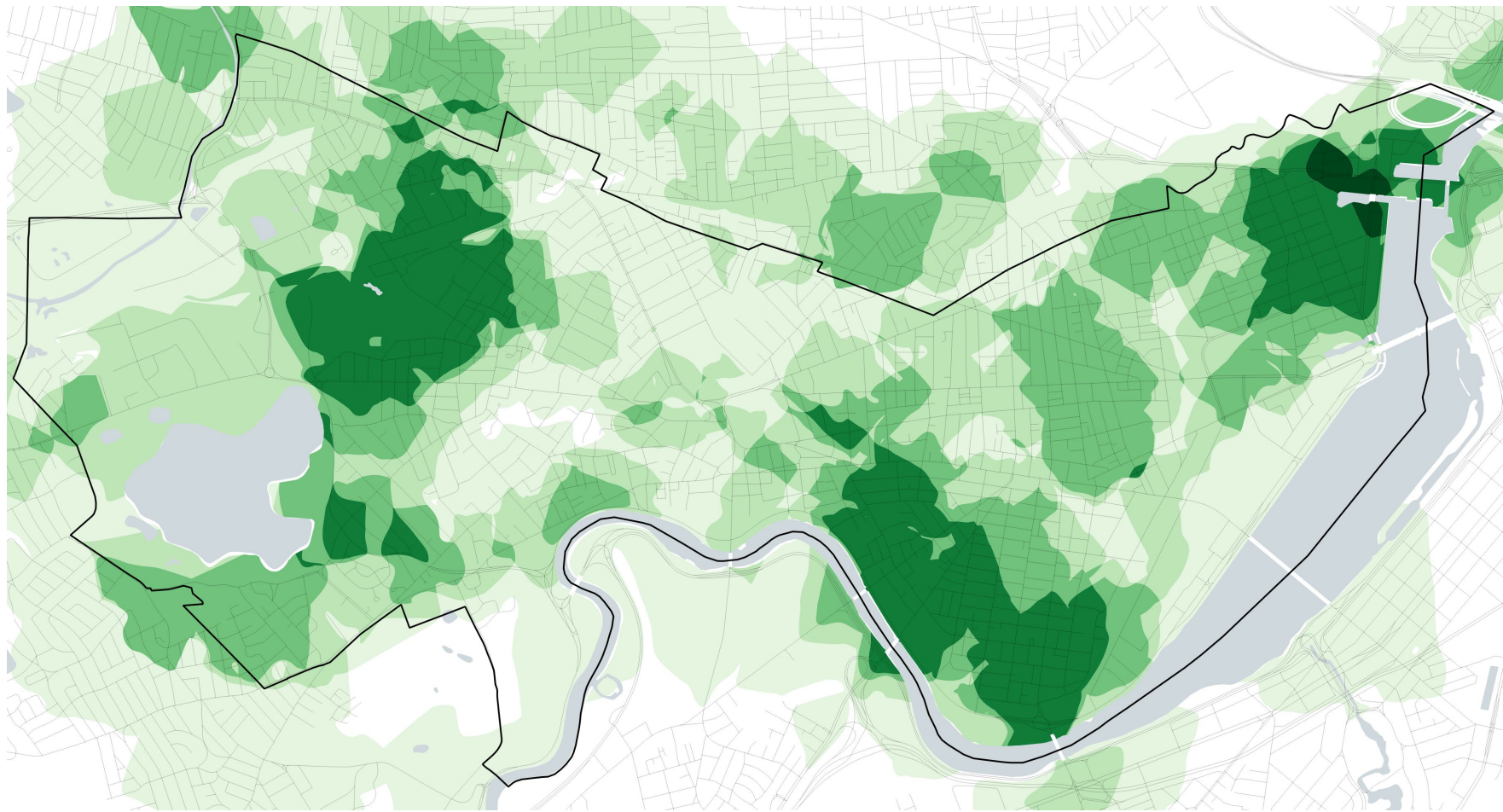
Urban Form Indicators and Targets

- Proximity to parks

Indicator	Baseline	2030 Target
Percentage of housing units that are within a given distance to three or more different parks, including parks in adjacent municipalities. Distances are measured at: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quarter-mile walking distance for playgrounds and passive open space• Half-mile walking distance for active recreation, trails and nature, and specialty spaces such as off-leash dog parks or exercise equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 85.2% (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 87.0%

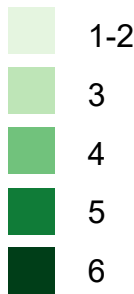
Source: City of Cambridge GIS

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

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

Source: Urban Forest Master Plan

- Design quality

Indicator	Baseline	2030 Target
Percent of survey respondents that rate Cambridge’s overall appearance as good or excellent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 83% (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 90%

Source: City Manager’s Biannual Survey

Alewife Urban Design Guidelines



Urban Design Vision

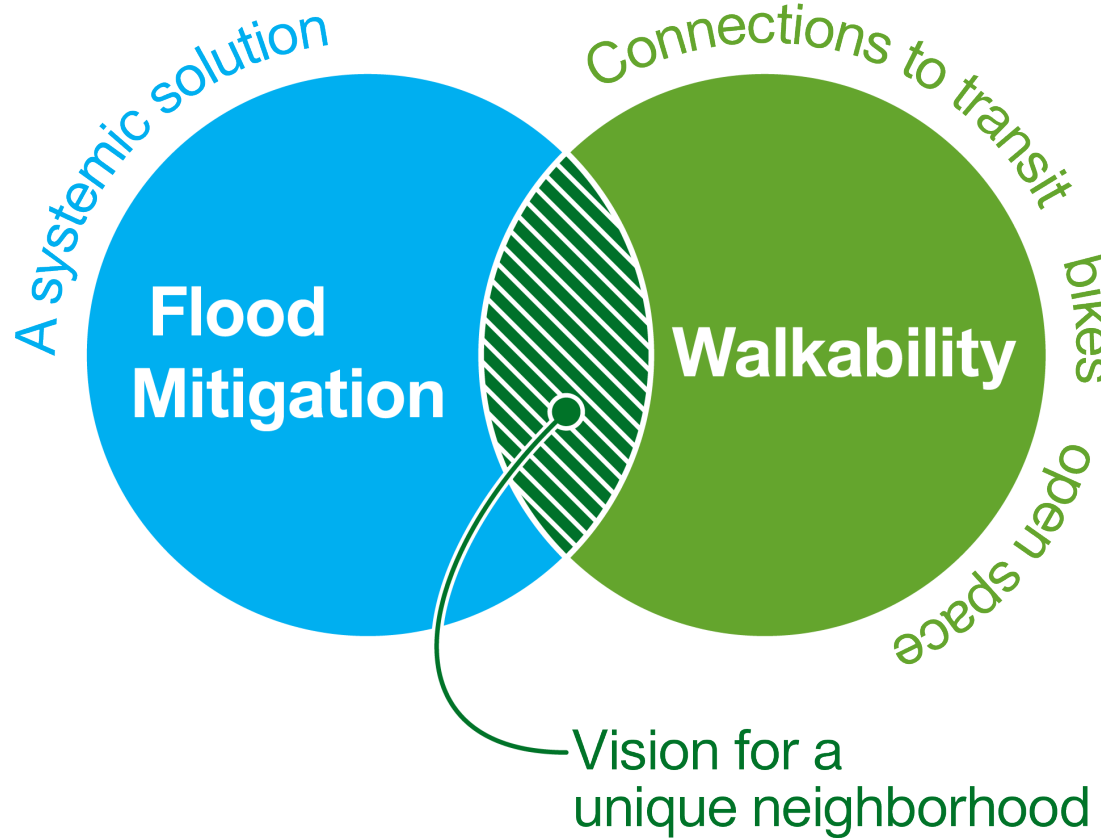
- **A place of opportunity and connection.** Its urban form will encourage meeting, engagement, and interaction.
- **Varied.** It will be comprised of areas of differing character, and will accommodate a wide range of functions and uses, and serve Cambridge's diverse residents and workers.
- **Inclusive 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.



Resiliency and Urban Form Benefits

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

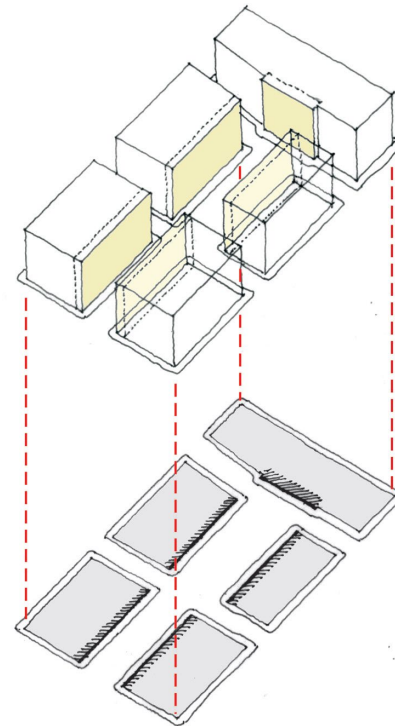


Site and Building Organization



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.

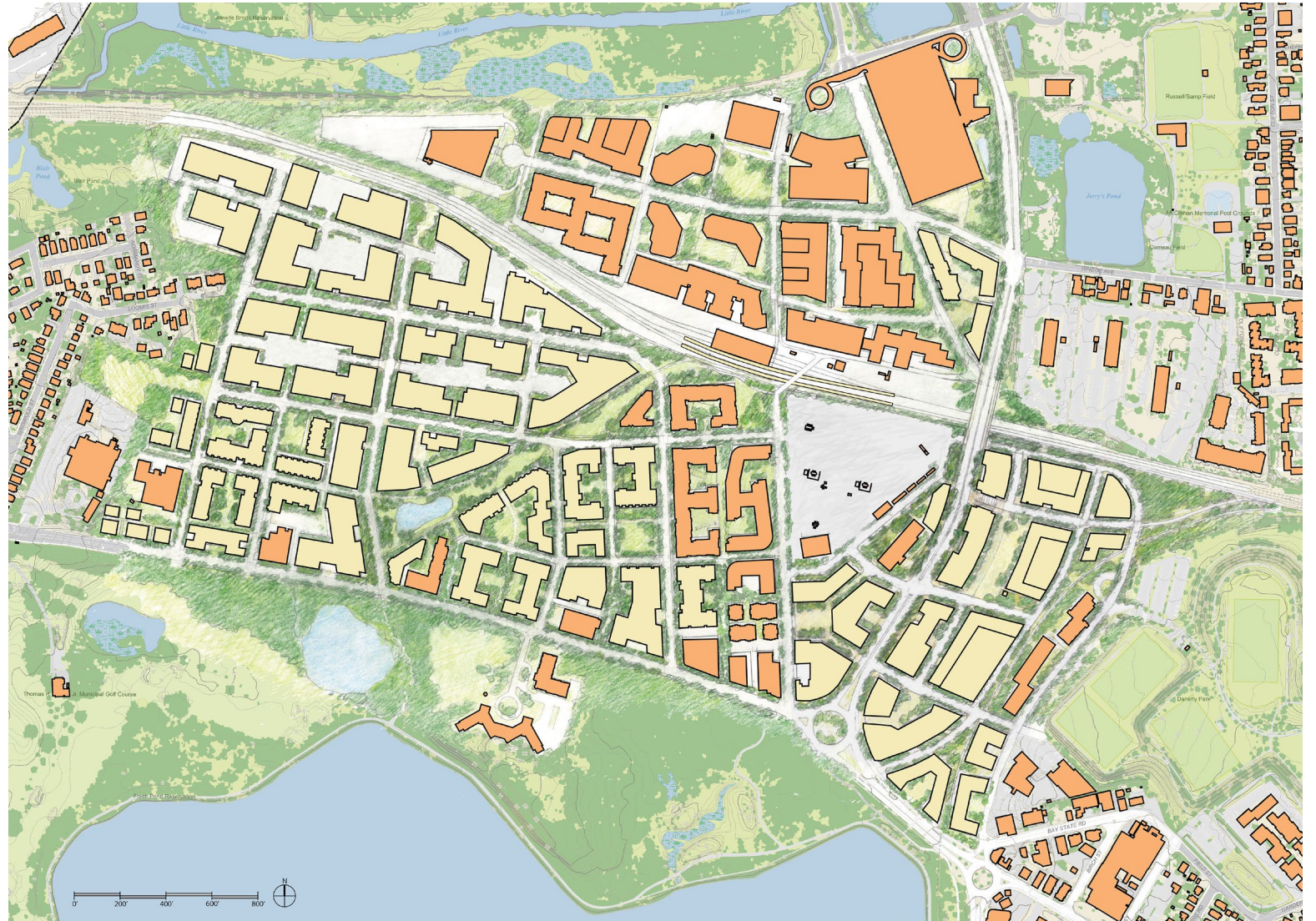


Entries, Access and Utilities

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 programmatically rich; varied in size and character



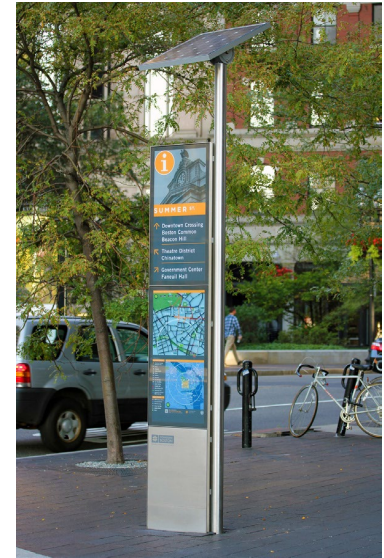
Streets and paths

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.

Open Spaces cont.



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

