



# Western Avenue Corridor Study and Rezoning Community Meeting

August 12, 2020



**boston planning &  
development agency**



[bit.ly/westerncorridor](https://bit.ly/westerncorridor)  
[@bostonplans](https://twitter.com/bostonplans)

# Agenda

1. Housekeeping
2. Planning goals
3. Urban design framework
4. Financial analysis
5. Q&A and discussion



# 1

## Housekeeping

CITY of BOSTON Mayor Martin J. Walsh

PAY AND APPLY PUBLIC NOTICES

### CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19) IN BOSTON

The state has updated guidance on the [Reopening Massachusetts website](#). We also continue to update City-specific guidance for Boston on [our reopening website](#).

July 12, 2020

PUBLISHED BY:  
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMISSION

MULTILINGUAL CONTENT

- العربية (Arabic)
- Kriolu (Cabo Verdean creole)
- 中文 (Chinese)
- Français (French)
- Kreyòl ayisyen (Haitian Creole)
- Português (Portuguese)
- Русский (Russian)

TOPICS COVID-19 UPDATES LATEST PRESS CONFERENCE

BOSTON (AS OF FRIDAY, JULY 10)

**13,673 CASES | 9,683 RECOVERED**

Raise Hand

yes no go slower go faster more

Unmute Me

# Project Website

[bit.ly/westerncorridor](https://bit.ly/westerncorridor)

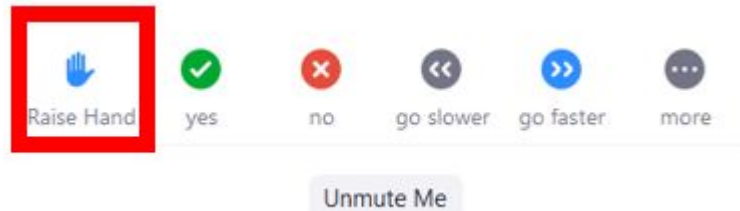
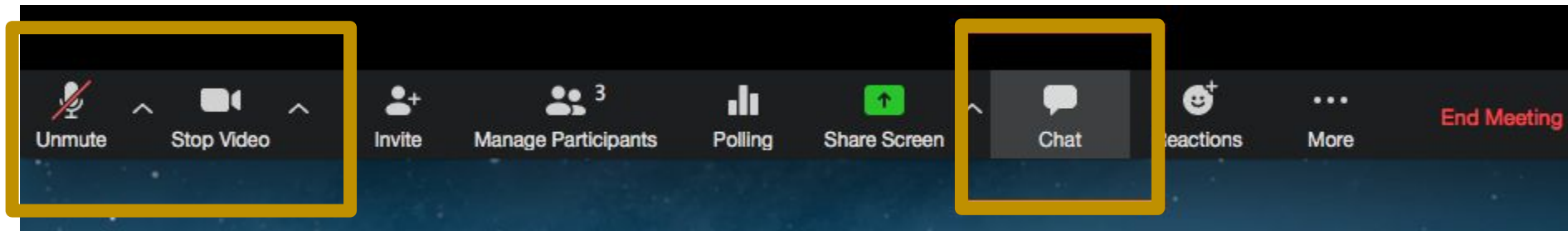
- Presentations (including tonight's!)
- Recordings from virtual meetings
- Survey to fill out at end of tonight's meeting
- Zoning Toolkit
- Additional content (e.g. reports) to be posted



# Zoom Tips

Your controls should be available at the bottom of the screen.

Clicking on these symbols activates different features:



# Virtual Meeting Protocols

- During the presentation you can ask questions through the chat feature. Depending on the question, we will answer it in writing in the chat box, verbally, or wait until the Q&A period.
- During verbal Q&A, please be respectful of each other's time so that all may participate in the discussion.
- You can always set up a conversation with Gerald Autler, [Gerald.Autler@boston.gov](mailto:Gerald.Autler@boston.gov).



# Meeting Recording

- The BPDA will be recording this meeting and posting it on its website at [bit.ly/westerncorridor](http://bit.ly/westerncorridor). The recording will include the presentation, Q&A, and public comments afterwards.
- Also, it is possible that participants may be recording the meeting with their phone cameras or other devices.
- If you do not wish to be recorded during the meeting, please turn off your microphone and camera.



# COVID-19 Resources

Stay up-to-date with COVID-19 related announcements, City of Boston reopening plans, and resources for you and your community at:

[boston.gov/coronavirus](https://boston.gov/coronavirus)



The screenshot shows the City of Boston website header with the logo, Mayor Martin J. Walsh's name, and navigation links for 'PAY AND APPLY' and 'PUBLIC NOTICES'. The main heading is 'CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19) IN BOSTON'. Below the heading is a paragraph of text: 'The state has updated guidance on the Reopening Massachusetts website. We also continue to update City-specific guidance for Boston on our reopening website.' To the right, it says 'July 12, 2020' and 'PUBLISHED BY: PUBLIC HEALTH COMMISSION'. Below this is a section for 'MULTILINGUAL CONTENT' with links for Arabic, Criolu (Cabo Verdean creole), Chinese, French, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, and Russian. At the bottom, it says 'BOSTON (AS OF FRIDAY, JULY 10)' and '13,673 CASES | 9,683 RECOVERED'. There are also navigation links for 'TOPICS', 'COVID-19 UPDATES', and 'LATEST PRESS CONFERENCE'.



# 2020 Census Update & Reminder

## Key Dates:

August 11 - Doorknocking begins.

September 31 - Last day to respond.

## Quick Facts:

As of 7/7, 52.2% (about 175,800) of Boston's households have responded.

In 2010, the final response rate was 64.4%.

The Census has never been more accessible. You can respond:

Online ([my2020census.gov](https://my2020census.gov))

Over the phone, or by mail.

13 different languages available.

Boston depends on your household to respond. For every person not counted, **nearly \$2,400** per year in federal funding is **lost** for the next ten years.

# Team: Core BPDA Planning



Gerald Autler



Rosa Herrero



Kennan Rhyne



Charlotte Ong



# Team: Other BPDA

- Community Engagement: Mark McGonagle
- Urban Design: Jeong-Jun Ju, Matt Martin
- Zoning: Bryan Glascock, Jeff Hampton
- Development Review: Nupoor Monani
- Legal: Matt Fitzgerald
- BPDA Transportation and Infrastructure: Tad Read, Jack Halverson
- Mapping: Carolyn Bennett, Piaotian Jin, Alla Ziskin
- Smart Utilities: Manuel Esquivel



# Team: City of Boston and Consultants

- Other City of Boston:
  - Parks, Public Works, Transportation, ONS (Conor Newman)
- Consultants:
  - Jon Stover and Associates (financial analysis)
  - Kittelson (transportation)

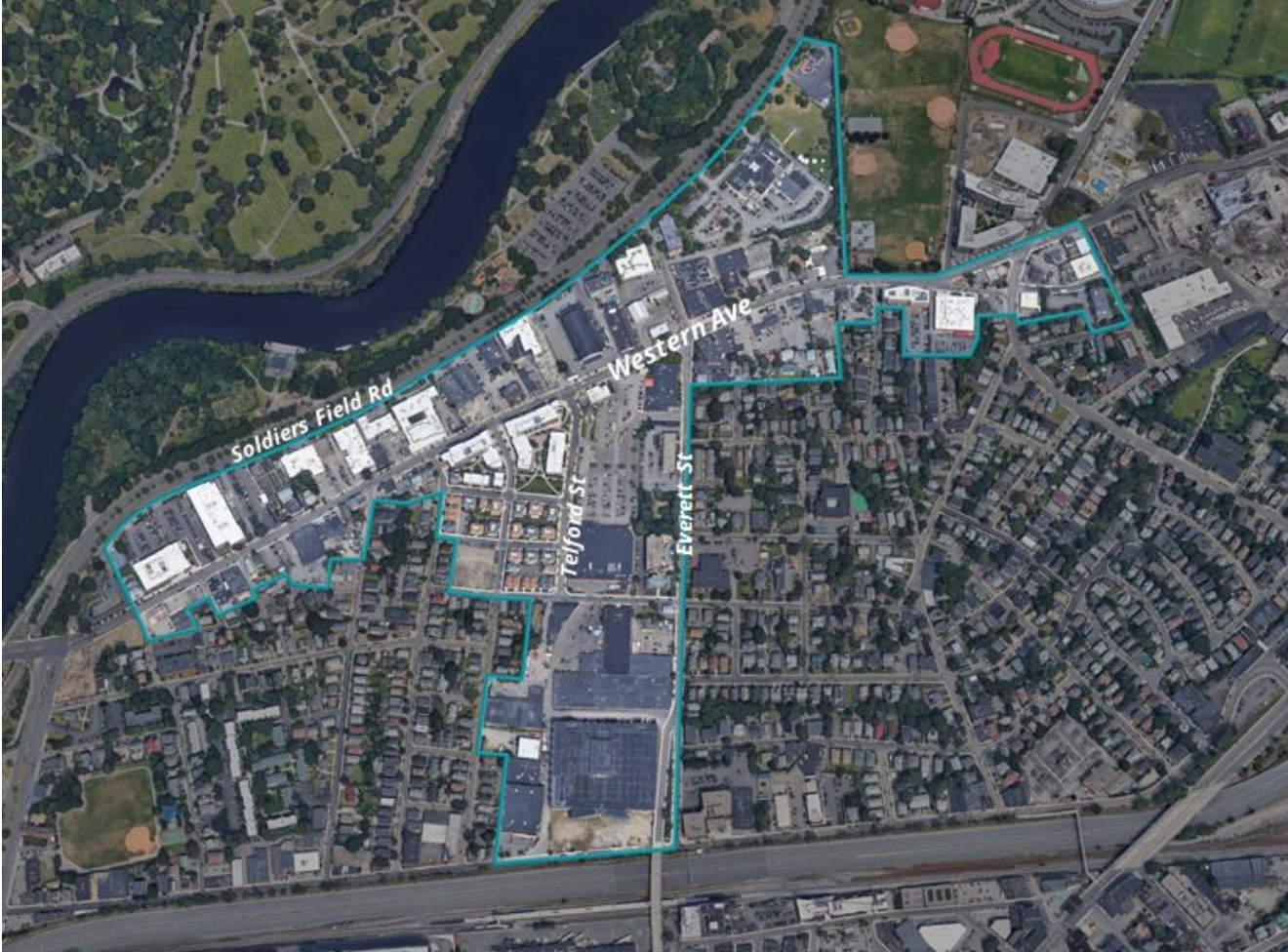


# Western Avenue Corridor Study & Rezoning

- The Western Avenue Corridor Study and Rezoning will:
  - Build on previous planning in the area.
  - Foster dialogue among residents, developers, and property owners.
  - Inform recommendations for new or modified zoning.
  - Recommend public realm improvements and transportation enhancements in conjunction with the Allston Brighton Mobility Study.

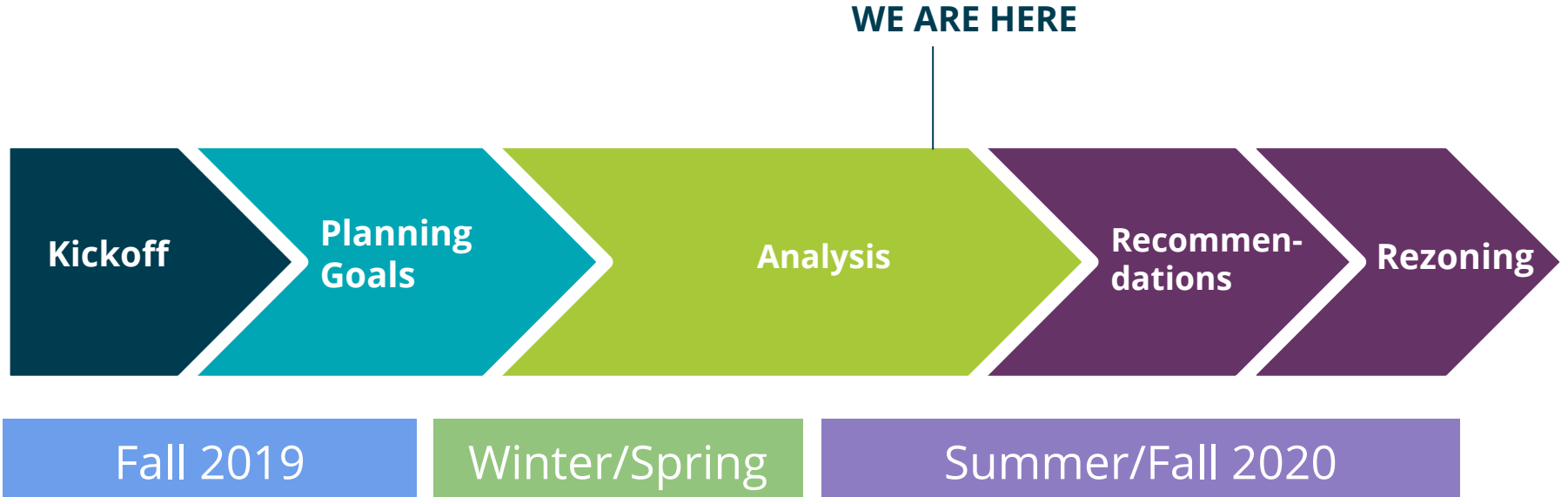


# Study Area



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# Timeline



# Next Steps

- August 26:
  - Development types: residential, office, and lab buildings
  - How we will use the urban design framework to test parcels and create land use scenarios
- September/October meetings:
  - Area-wide land use scenarios and their implications
  - Transportation and financial analysis
  - Recommendations for zoning





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Western Avenue Corridor Study and Rezoning

## **A Brief Guide to Zoning and the Article 80 Review Process**



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# 2

## Planning Goals



*Workshop, October 30, 2019*

# Planning Goals -- Five Categories\*

1. Open Space, Public Realm, and Placemaking
2. Connections
3. Western Avenue Character
4. Land Use
5. Building Dimensions and Character

\* See presentation from 12-19-19 for more detail



# Open Space, Public Realm, Placemaking

1. Ensure a variety of types of **open space** as part of new development
2. Plan for **significant new green space** in Holton Street area
3. Work with property owners to create **public realm improvements**
4. Plan for **climate resilience**



*Ray Mellone Park (Library Park)*



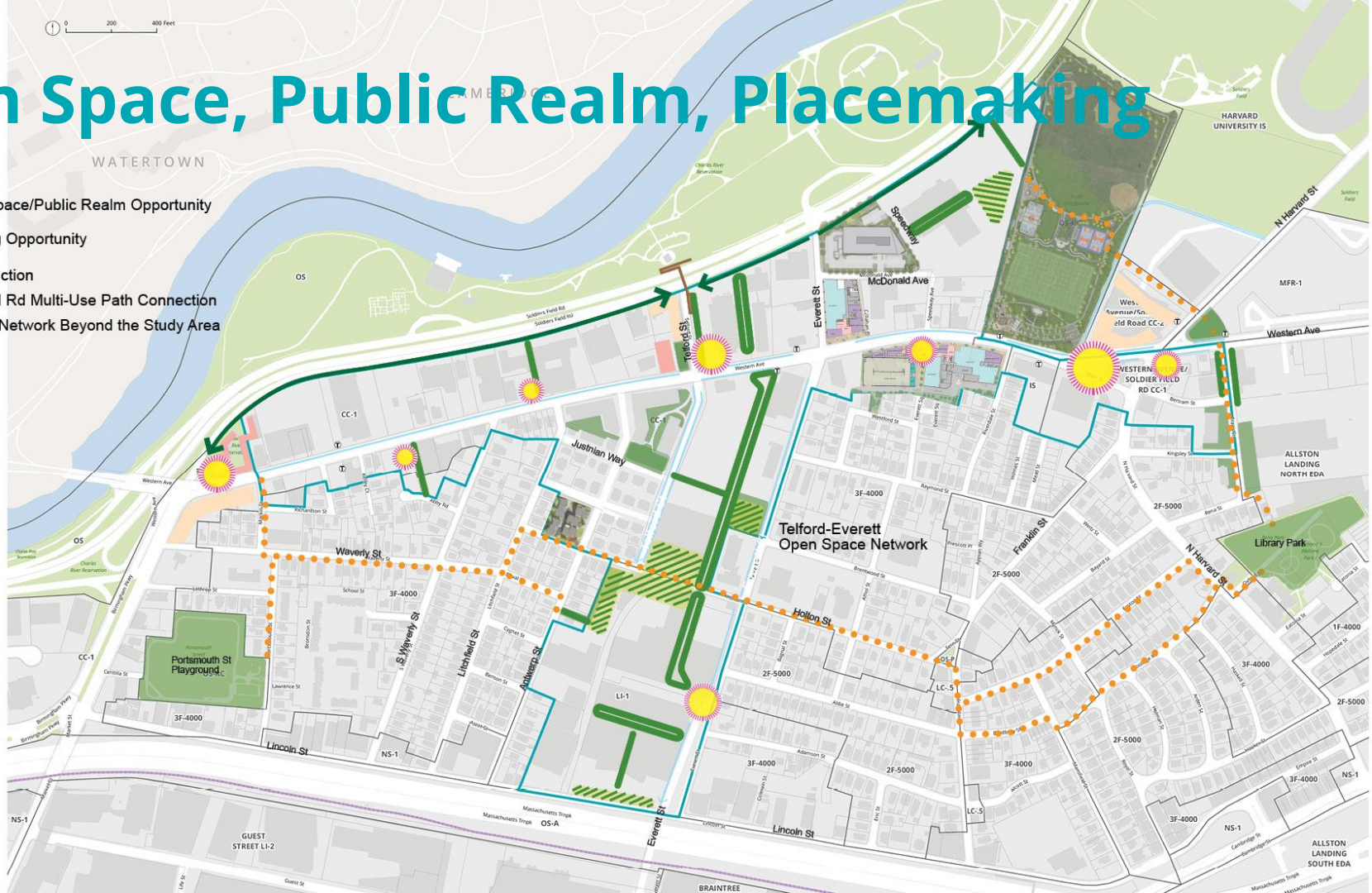
*Zone 3, Allston*



*40 Erie Street, Cambridge*

# Open Space, Public Realm, Placemaking

-  New Open Space/Public Realm Opportunity
-  Place-Making Opportunity
-  Green Connection
-  Soldiers Field Rd Multi-Use Path Connection
-  Open Space Network Beyond the Study Area



# Connections

1. **Create and improve connections** throughout the study area
2. Ensure connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists from Western Avenue to **Soldiers Field Road and the Charles River**
3. Improve connections for all modes to the **Everett Street Bridge across I-90**



# Connections

0 200 400 Feet

-  Telford-Everett NS Connection
-  Telford St Extension
-  Potential New Connection
-  Soldiers Field Rd Crossing

*\*Footnote:  
New Connections shown particularly for the area west of Telford between Western Ave and Soldiers Field Rd don't necessarily represent vehicular access, exact locations or number of new connections.*



# Western Avenue Character

1. Create a **multi-modal complete street** that works for all users
2. **Set new development back** from Western Ave
3. Encourage a **mix of land uses** and **enough density** to support an **active streetscape**, esp. between Telford St. and Barry's Corner
4. Encourage **affordable retail spaces** that serve the neighborhood
5. Leverage development to create **great public realm**






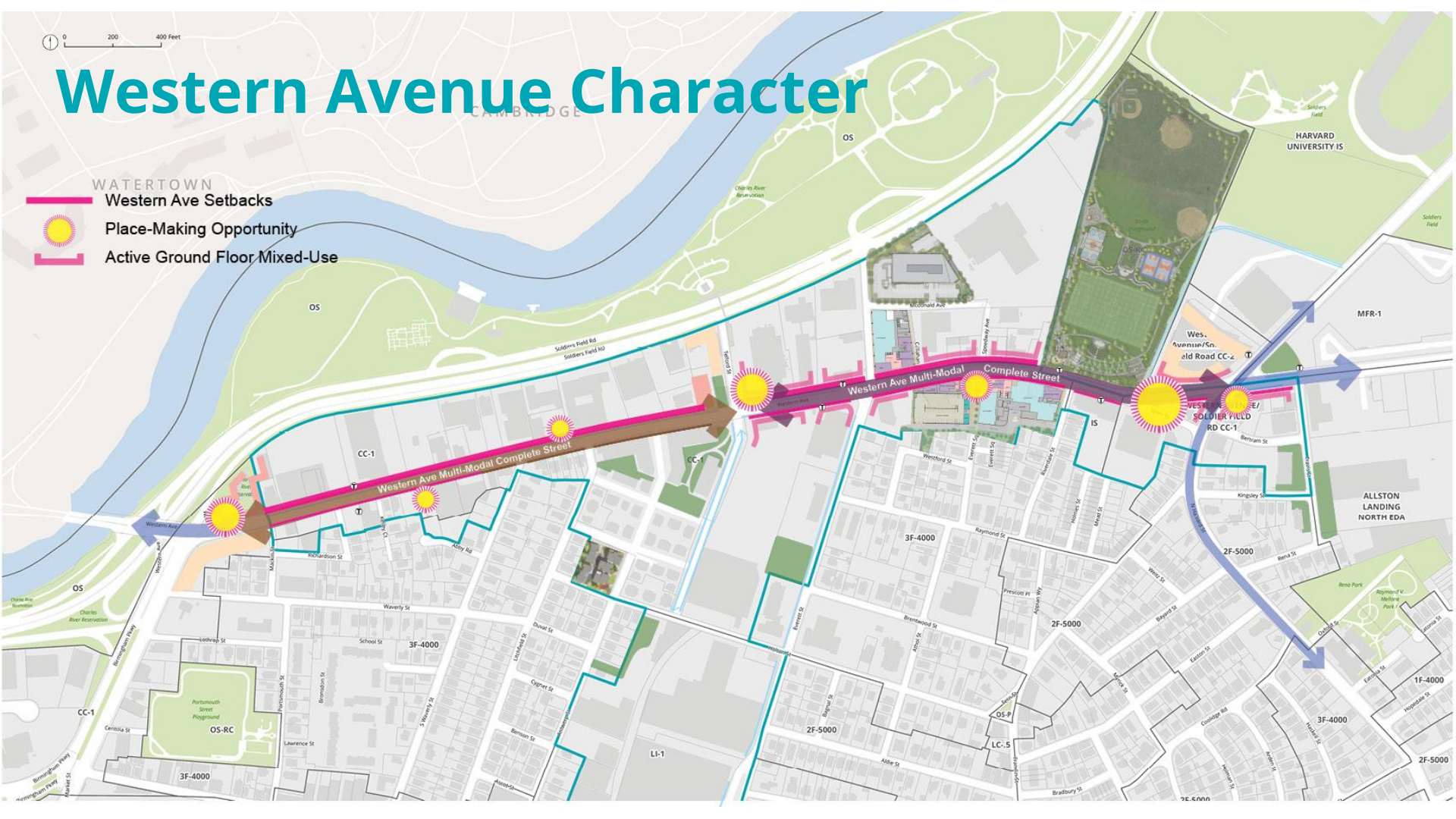




# Western Avenue Character

WATERTOWN

-  Western Ave Setbacks
-  Place-Making Opportunity
-  Active Ground Floor Mixed-Use



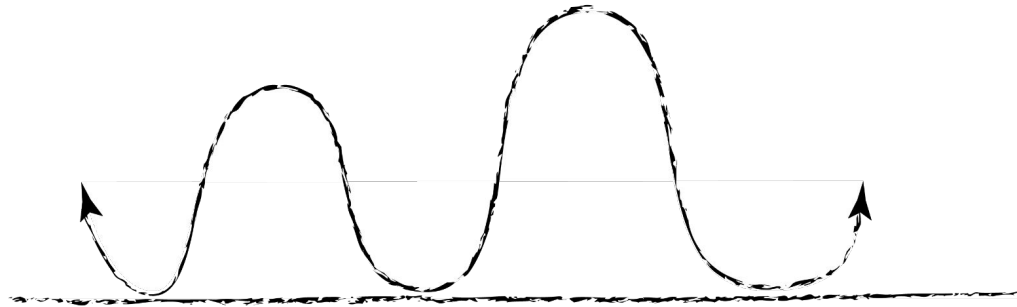
# Land Use

1. Allow for a **mix of land uses** (commercial and residential)
2. Allow **sufficient density** to facilitate redevelopment and support active streetscape along Western Avenue
3. Create housing with a **significant affordable component**
4. Encourage diverse, **neighborhood-serving retail uses**
5. **Anchor active streetscape** along Western Avenue with nodes at Telford Street and Barry's Corner



# Building Dimensions and Character

1. Generally, **more height north of Western Ave** vs. south
2. Stepbacks north of Western Ave to **keep height closer to SFR**
3. Vary height within these zones to ensure **diversity of character**
4. Ensure buildings **do not turn their backs** to Soldiers Field Road



# Sub-Area Character

0 200 400 Feet



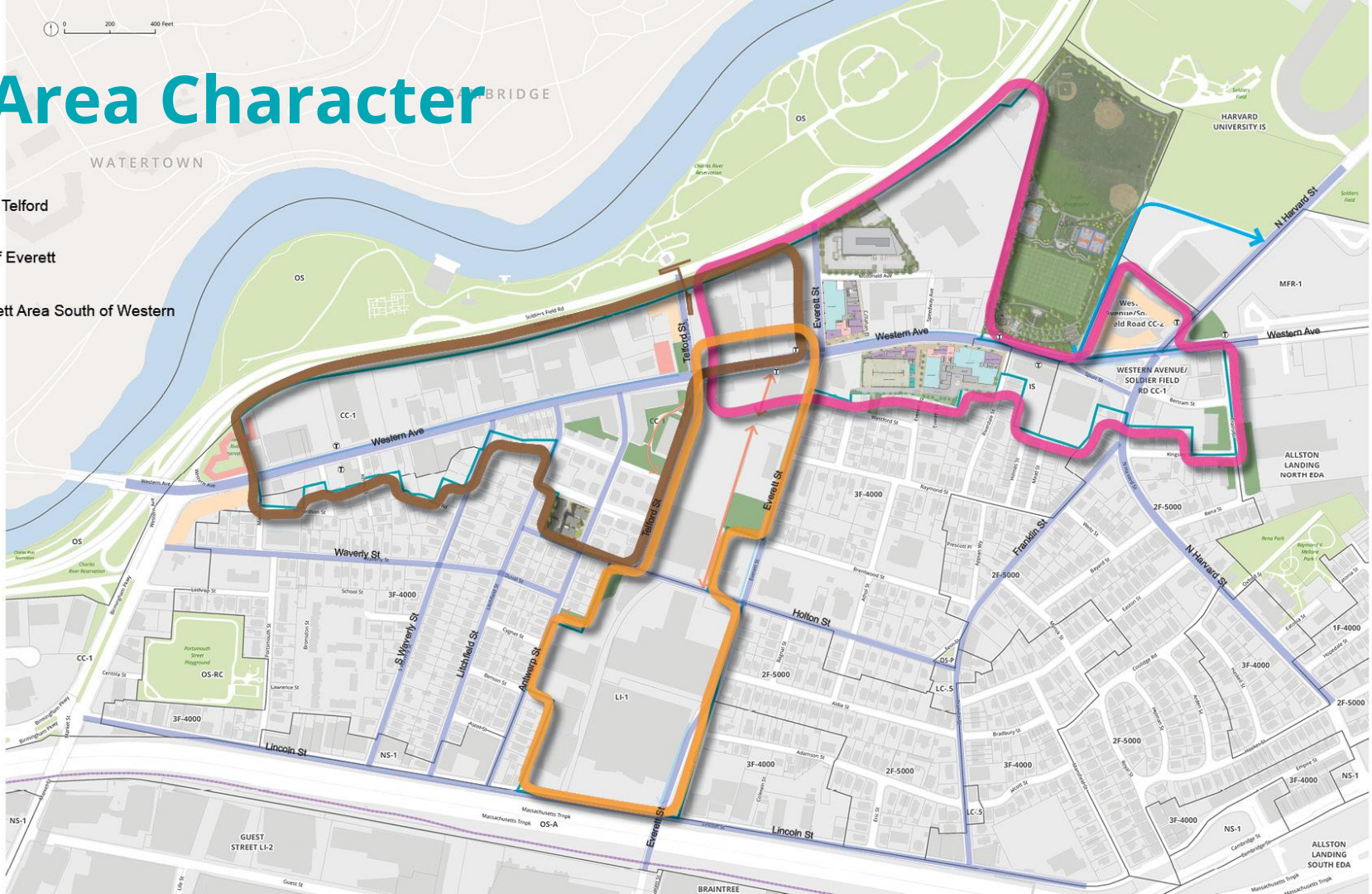
Area East of Telford



Area West of Everett

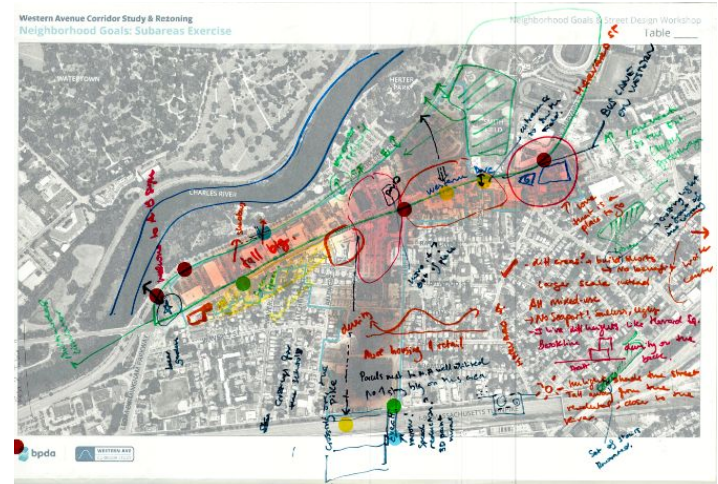


Telford-Everett Area South of Western



# 3

## Urban Design Framework



Workshop, October 30, 2019

# Urban Design Framework

- **How did we get here?**
  - Planning goals (Past planning exercises + community input)
  - On-the-ground observations (e.g. parcels and ownership)
  - Precedents (good examples from other places)
  - Testing of implications



# Urban Design Framework

- **How will we use it?**
  - Memorialize desired outcomes
  - Test physical and financial implications and propose development scenarios
  - Inform rezoning, e.g. building dimensions, lot coverage maximum
  - Inform PDA\* and development review
  - Inform Western Avenue street design

\* Planned Development Area

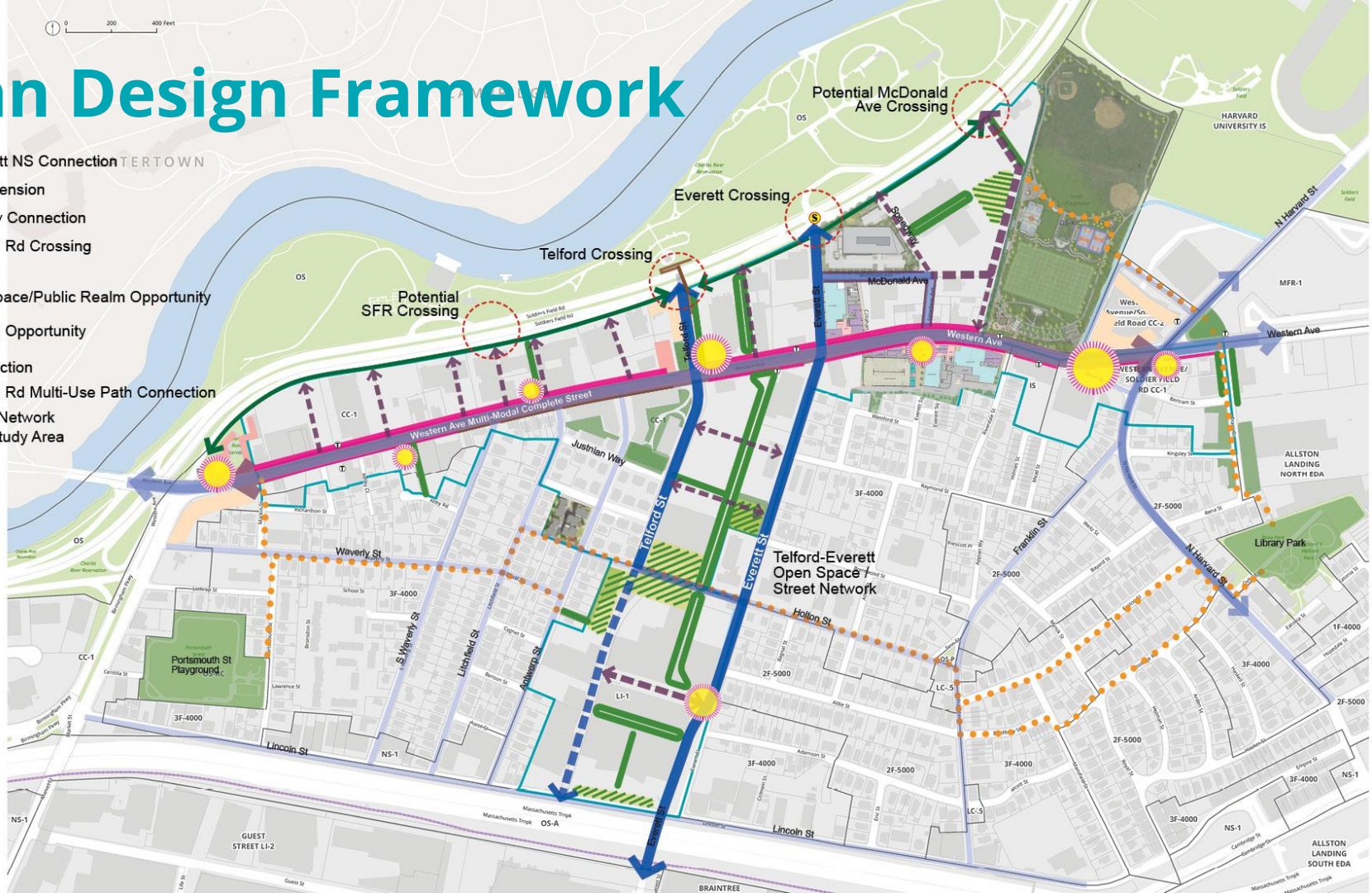


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# Urban Design Framework

0 200 400 Feet

-  Telford-Everett NS Connection
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Potential McDonald Ave Crossing

Everett Crossing

Telford Crossing

Potential SFR Crossing

Telford-Everett Open Space Street Network

Portsmouth St Playground

Library Park

GUEST STREET LI-2

BRAINTREE

ALLSTON LANDING SOUTH EDA

HARVARD UNIVERSITY IS

ALLSTON LANDING NORTH EDA



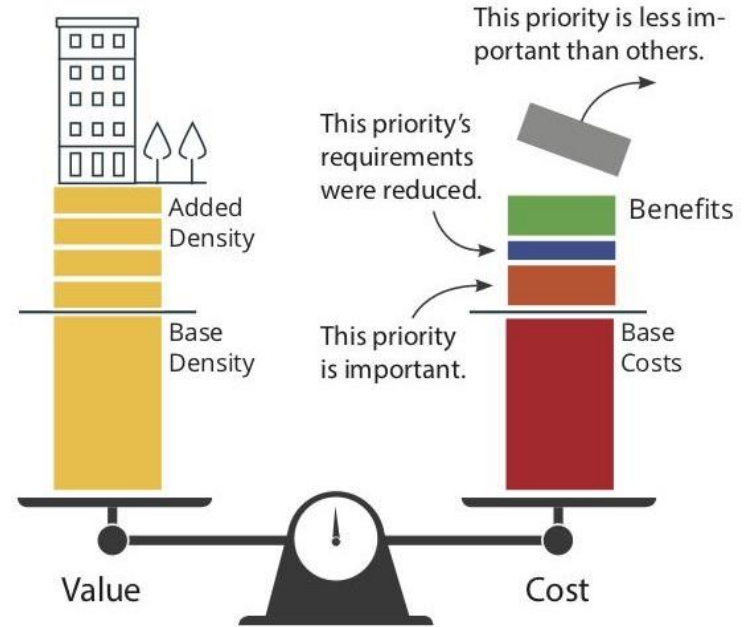
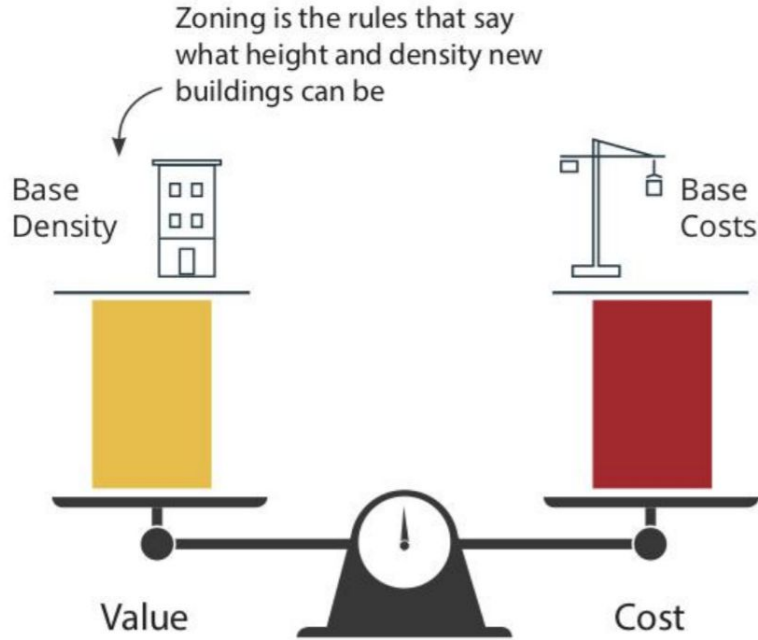
# 4

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## Financial Analysis

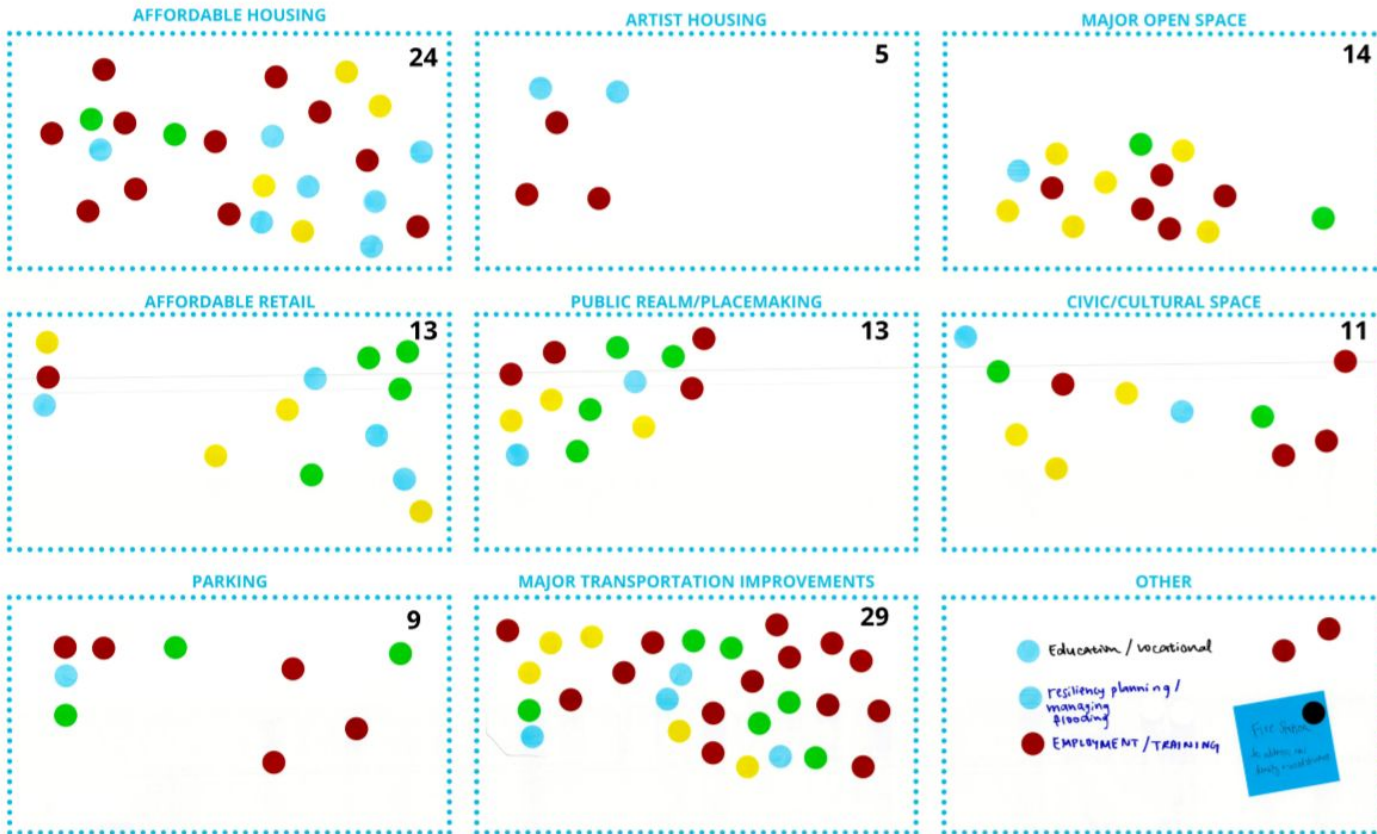


# Development Feasibility and Zoning



# Benefits Prioritization

Place your stickers in the boxes representing the different benefits. You can place one in each box, all of them in one box, or distribute them according to your preferences. We'll tally up the totals to rank the different options.



# Development Benefit Priorities (Ranked)

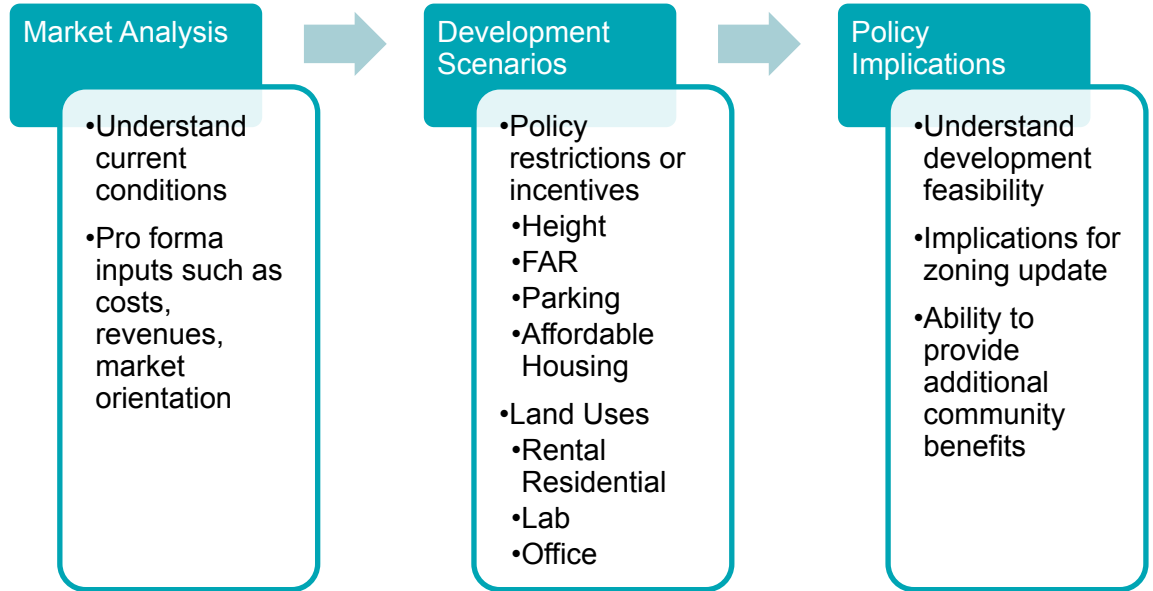
1. Major Transportation Improvements (29)
2. Affordable Housing (24)
3. Major Open Space (14)
4. Affordable Retail AND Public Realm/Placemaking (13 each)
5. Civic/Cultural Space (11)
6. Parking (9)
7. Artist Housing (5)
8. Other: Educational, Resilience Planning, Employment/Training

# Financial Analysis

## Purpose

- **Assess interplay of development feasibility and the ability to provide community benefits**
- **Test zoning scenarios to understand impact**
- **Help educate all stakeholders**

## Process



# Market Analysis -- Key Facts

- Residential market is established, office/lab is emerging:
  - Significant recent growth and investment, six major projects planned
  - Numerous recent residential projects
  - Harvard Enterprise Research Campus, New Balance Headquarters: lab, office



# Market Analysis -- Key Facts

- Residential market is established, office/lab is emerging
- Margins are tight for most development projects:
  - High land costs
  - High construction costs
  - Low interest rates and surge in investment = slim margins and low returns
  - Market doesn't always support rent/sales prices needed to justify high costs



# Market Analysis -- Key Facts

- Residential market is established, office/lab is emerging
- Margins are tight for most development projects
- Conditions are highly uncertain:
  - Demand for retail, office, and life science space is somewhat unclear
  - Economic slowdown may reduce development feasibility for all land uses
  - Construction and financing costs uncertain





# Residential Development

- Need to maximize revenue generation / site coverage
- The most feasible height is 6 or 7 stories (construction materials/costs)
- Height over 16 floors may be feasible as well.
- There are exception to the rules, and future conditions may change (therefore need flexibility)



Lantera at Boston Landing



Radius

# Residential Development

- Other factors that impact feasibility:
  - Parking
    - Limits buildable square footage and drives up costs
    - Surface parking limits lot coverage and has negative impact but structured parking is expensive
  - Affordable units
    - 15% units at 70% AMI is not feasible for many projects without subsidy
  - Retail space



# Lab and Office Development

- The most feasible height is 6-7 stories.
- Lab usually does not locate above 6th floor
- Office and lab may work in combination on site
- Unestablished market.
- Parking
  - Limits buildable square footage and drives up costs
  - Surface parking limits lot coverage and has negative impact but structured parking is expensive
  - Market need for parking to be competitive



400-500 Cambridge Discovery Park



# Financial Analysis -- Key Conclusions

- Feasibility driven by
  - Land acquisition price, construction costs, parking, risk/uncertainty
  - Implications: build at top of market, maximize value, minimize risk
- Need for flexibility
  - Every development is different:
    - Building program; location; site conditions; site acquisition costs... and ability to provide benefits
  - The future is uncertain:
    - Future market conditions, community needs, building materials, transportation conditions, retail conditions, building typologies



# Financial Analysis -- Key Conclusions

- Implications for Community Benefits
  - Height



# Financial Analysis -- Key Conclusions

- Implications for Community Benefits
  - Height
  - Density / FAR
    - Setbacks, shadows, physical impact
    - Greenspace and public open space
    - Infrastructure and public right of way



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# Financial Analysis -- Key Conclusions

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  - Affordable housing





# Financial Analysis -- Key Conclusions

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    - Setbacks, shadows, physical impact
    - Greenspace and public open space
    - Infrastructure and public right of way
  - Parking
  - Affordable housing
  - Permitted land uses (especially retail)



# Financial Analysis -- Key Conclusions

- Implications for Community Benefits
  - Height
  - Density / FAR
    - Setbacks, shadows, physical impact
    - Greenspace and public open space
    - Infrastructure and public right of way
  - Parking
  - Affordable housing
  - Permitted land uses (especially retail)
  - Linkage, building standards, environmental requirements



# 5

## Q&A and Discussion



*Workshop, December 19, 2019*

# Feedback

Please provide your feedback on this meeting and the content at:

[bit.ly/westerncorridor](https://bit.ly/westerncorridor)



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## Planning

What is Planning?

[Planning Initiatives](#)

Climate Change & Environmental Planning

Downtown & Neighborhood Planning

Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS)

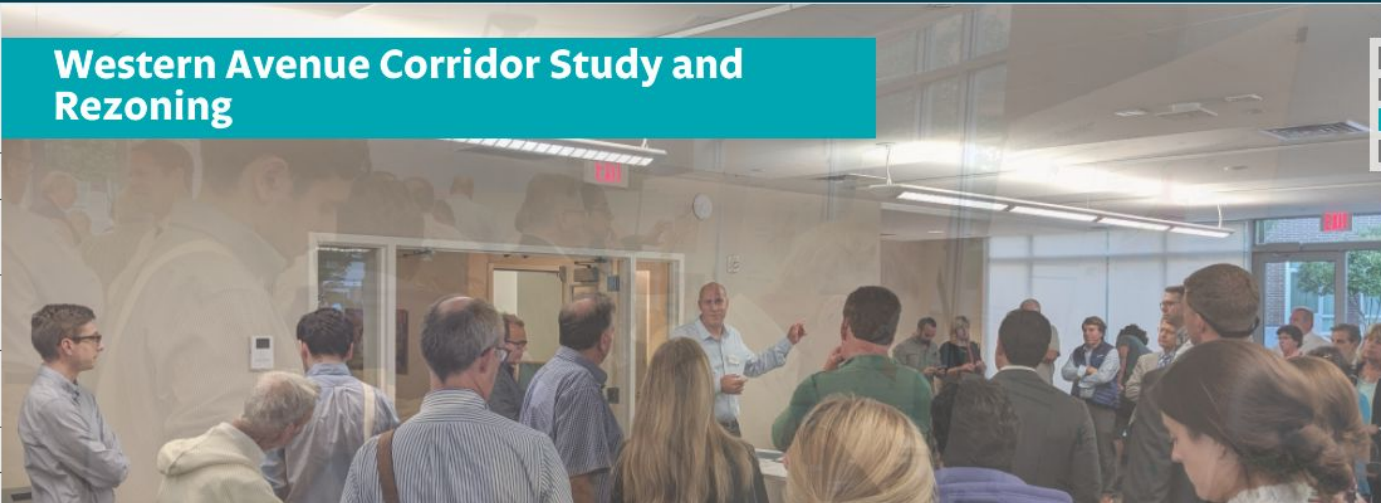
Regulatory Planning & Zoning

Transportation & Infrastructure Planning

Institutional Planning

Urban Design

Urban Renewal



## Western Avenue Corridor Study and Rezoning

If you attended the August 12 virtual meeting please [fill out this survey](#).

### Summary

The Boston Planning & Development Agency launched the Western Avenue Corridor Study and Rezoning to engage local stakeholders in discussing the future of Western Avenue between

### STAY CONNECTED

Sign up for Neighborhood Email Updates!



# Community Conversation

- Write your question in the chat.

## OR

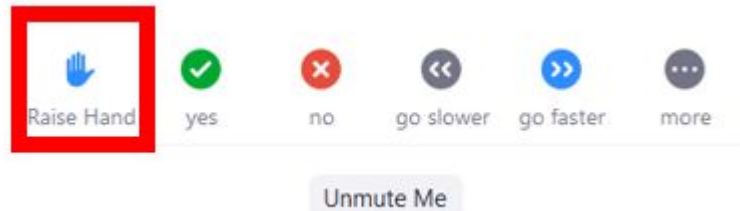
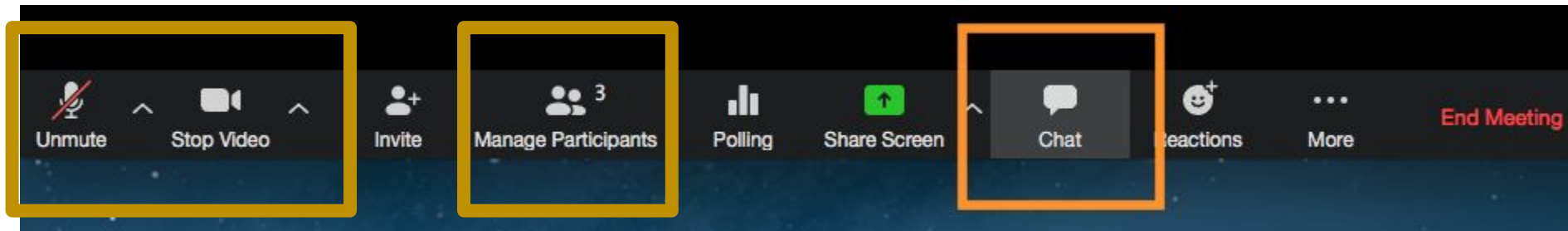
- Raise your hand or use chat to indicate you'd like to speak.
- Unmute microphone when called on by moderator.
- Please allow everyone space to participate.
- If you are joining only by phone, unfortunately, you will not be able to ask questions.



# Zoom Tips

Your controls should be available at the bottom of the screen.

Clicking on these symbols activates different features:



# Thank you

## CONTACT US:

Gerald Autler  
[gerald.autler@boston.gov](mailto:gerald.autler@boston.gov)  
617.918.4438

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