City of Cambridge

Department of Public Works
Planning and Zoning
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Planning Commission
Comprehensive Plan Workshop

Tuesday, February 3rd, 2026, at 6:00P.M.

The City of Cambridge Planning Commission will conduct an in-person meeting at 305 Gay Street. Cambridge, MD.

Planning Commission Members

1. George Brown (Ward 5) Chair	2. William (Bill) Craig (Ward 1)
3. Chan' Tay Nelson (Ward 2)	4. Eugene (Gene) Lauer (Ward 3)
5. Robin Stanley (Ward 4)	6. Vice-Chair Matt Pluta (Mayor's Appointee)
7. Mary Losty (Dorchester County)	**City Attorney:** Patrick Thomas

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING - STREAMING

TOWN HALL STREAMS: https://townhallstreams.com/towns/cambridgemd **Dial in:** (848) 777-1500#

TEAMS: Join the meeting now **Meeting ID:** 239 820 133 374 90 **Passcode:** av3FP9js

PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA

1.) Call to Order
2.) Roll Call
3.) Moment of Silence
4.) New Business
5.) Staff Comments
6.) Commissioner Comments
7.) Chair Comments
8.) Adjournment

NEW BUSINESS

A. Owen Bailey: Eastern Shore Land Conservancy - Financial Returns: Neighborhoods and Housing

B. INSPIRE CAMBRIDGE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN REVIEW:

Work Group 1: Intro, Future Land Use, Municipal Growth, Design & Preservation, Transportation
1. Planning Commission Vice Chairman Matt Pluta
2. Planning Commission Member Bill Craig
3. City Council Member Brian Roche
4. Historic Preservation Committee Chairman Tim Crosby
5. Greg Meekins

Work Group 2: Intro, Sensitive Areas, Water Resources, Fisheries, Natural Resources
1. Planning Commission Chairman George Brown
2. Planning Commission Vice Chairman Matt Pluta
3. Planning Commission Member Robin Stanley
4. City Council Member Frank Stout
5. Historic Preservation Committee Member Jeanette Pawlak
6. Dave Harp

INSPIRE CAMBRIDGE 2026

OUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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KITTELSON & ASSOCIATES

DAEDALUS
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Thornton Tomasetti

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Introduction

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Preface

Every Great City Has a Vision

Cambridge's vision is to be a resilient, inclusive, and prosperous waterfront community that embraces its historic character while preparing for a sustainable future. The City seeks to balance growth with preservation, strengthen its role as the economic and cultural heart of Dorchester County, enhance housing choice and affordability, promote connectivity across neighborhoods, protect natural resources, and celebrate its maritime heritage.

This Comprehensive Plan sets forth a long-term strategy to achieve that vision through coordinated policies, investment priorities, and partnerships that will guide development through 2040. Strong infrastructure, housing, and quality of life are the foundation for long-term prosperity. The recommendations in these pages reflect the City's commitment to aligning public and private efforts toward a future that is both vibrant and enduring.

The plan also advances goals of improving walkability and transportation options, expanding access to parks and community amenities, and encouraging a mix of housing opportunities at a range of prices. By streamlining the development process and coordinating with regional partners, Cambridge positions itself to manage growth in a way that strengthens community character while addressing future needs.

Cambridge Comprehensive Plan 2040 is a living plan. It represents an ongoing conversation about the City's future—one that does not end with adoption. As Cambridge's needs evolve, so must its plan. Just as a city's history provides lessons for today, its vision for the future requires adaptation, resilience, and collaboration to ensure that opportunities and challenges are met with a clear, shared path forward.

The conceptual illustrations throughout teh Comprehensive Plan depict just one possible design approach to accomplish the Comprehensive Plan's goals.

An aerial view highlights Cambridge's compact downtown

Race Street and Poplar Street showcase a vibrant downtown with historic architecture, local businesses, and a lively evening atmosphere.

The Choptank River waterfront is a defining feature of Cambridge, balancing maritime industry, recreation, and scenic beauty.

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How to Use the Plan

This Comprehensive Plan is intended to serve as Cambridge's policy framework for growth and investment decisions. It is both a vision document and a practical guide for:

1. City Leaders and Staff: The Plan provides strategies, policies, and capital improvement priorities to guide day-to-day decisions, zoning and subdivision regulations, and budget planning.
2. Residents and stakeholders: The Plan communicates the City's vision and priorities, offering opportunities to partner in implementation.
3. Developers and Investors: The Plan clarifies Cambridge's growth strategy, identifies areas prioritized for investment, and outlines design principles, infrastructure expectations, and sustainability goals.

The Plan is organized into elements. Elements include:

1. Land Use and Development Regulations
2. Municipal Growth
3. Sensitive Areas
4. Community Design & Historic Preservation
5. Water Resources
6. Mobility & Transportation
7. Housing
8. Natural Resources
9. Fisheries
10. Community Facilities
11. Cultural Resources
12. Economic Development
13. Health
14. Tactical Improvements
15. Comprehensive Plan Adoption & Implementation

Each element shall address four key areas, including

- Current conditions
- Community concerns
- Strategies for addressing concerns
- Goals and policies

The Highlights of this Plan

Comprehensive planning in Cambridge is about shaping a sustainable, inclusive, and resilient future. This Plan provides the framework to guide long-range decisions, helping the community set priorities, manage growth, and align public and private investment with shared goals. More than a list of recommendations, it is a commitment by the City and its residents to take responsibility for the choices that will define Cambridge through the year 2040.

The Plan affirms what Cambridge values: protecting natural resources, creating opportunity for all residents, and investing in the places and systems that connect the community. It does not seek to predict the future, but to prepare for it, by strengthening neighborhoods, fostering economic vitality, and building resilience to climate change. The highlights of this Plan include:

Targeted Growth and Revitalization: Future development will occur primarily within existing boundaries, focusing on underused areas where infrastructure already exists. Downtown will continue to densify and diversify, with streamlined regulations supporting infill development and adaptive reuse. New housing options, mixed-use development, and vibrant public spaces will create a stronger sense of place while protecting surrounding farmland and natural resources.

Environmental Stewardship: The City will protect and expand natural areas, waterways, and green infrastructure. Over the next two decades, Cambridge will create a continuous greenbelt of parks, trails, and restored habitats, ensuring a permanent natural legacy for future generations. Investments in tree planting, shoreline restoration, and stormwater management will strengthen resilience while improving daily quality of life.

Economic Opportunity: The City will nurture entrepreneurs and small businesses, strengthen the local workforce, and ensure families can thrive. By 2040, Cambridge will reduce poverty rates and expand opportunities for residents of all ages and backgrounds. Partnerships with regional institutions, training programs, and innovation networks will help position the City as a hub for creative and inclusive growth

Mobility and Accessibility: The City will modernize its transportation system with a focus on walkability, cycling, transit, and safe streets. Investments in sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes, and complete streets will reduce reliance on cars, making downtown a model for connected, people-first mobility.

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At the same time, Cambridge will address congestion on U.S. Route 50 and other critical corridors by working with regional partners to improve traffic flow, redesign intersections, and create safer, more efficient connections between neighborhoods and destinations.

Climate Resilience and Infrastructure: Cambridge will partner with regional agencies to prepare for flooding, sea level rise, and climate impacts. Infrastructure improvements will integrate resilience and sustainability while enhancing the quality of daily life. By upgrading utilities, modernizing stormwater systems, and redesigning streets to balance vehicles with pedestrians and cyclists, the City will simultaneously improve safety, reduce congestion, and build long-term resilience against climate risks.

A Connected and Vibrant Waterfront: Building on its historic relationship with the water, the City will enhance its waterfront with mixed-use development, public access, cultural amenities, and resilient design. Investments in boardwalks, open spaces, and community gathering places will transform the waterfront into a celebrated gateway to Cambridge and a year-round destination for residents and visitors.

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Choptank River Lighthouse

Existing Plans

Numerous plans and studies have been prepared for Cambridge over the years, offering important ideas to guide the City's future. Many of these documents present strategies and concepts that remain relevant today, and their recommendations continue to shape opportunities for community improvement. Highlighting these past efforts helps ensure continuity while reinforcing the City's long-term commitment to enhancing quality of life for residents, businesses, and visitors.

Cambridge Comprehensive Plan (2011)

The 2011 Comprehensive Plan is the guiding policy document for Cambridge, setting the framework for land use, housing, transportation, economic development, and natural resources. It emphasized infill development, preservation of sensitive areas, and maintaining Cambridge's role as the county's employment and population center.

Key goals included expanding economic opportunities, strengthening downtown as a civic and cultural hub, and ensuring that water and sewer capacity supported planned growth.

Dorchester County Comprehensive Plan

As the county seat, Cambridge is closely linked to Dorchester County's Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 2016. The plan addresses growth management, land use, transportation, and resource conservation at the county scale, with direct implications for Cambridge. It highlights the City's role as the primary growth area for the county and emphasizes coordination on infrastructure, housing, and economic development.

Historic drawing of Cambridge's municipal building

Downtown Cambridge Form-Based Code

Adopted to guide the revitalization of Cambridge's historic downtown, the Form-Based Code regulates the physical form of buildings, streetscapes, and public spaces to ensure a cohesive, pedestrian-friendly urban environment. It emphasizes building placement, frontage types, and design standards that reinforce the historic character of Downtown while allowing for adaptive reuse and infill.

Cambridge Waterfront 2022 (CWDI Master Plan)

The Cambridge Waterfront Development, Inc. (CWDI) Master Plan envisions transformation of the waterfront into a vibrant mixed-use destination for residents, visitors, and businesses. Key priorities include public access to the water, new parks and open spaces, investment in arts and cultural facilities, and redevelopment that strengthens Cambridge's economic base while celebrating its maritime heritage.

Heritage Area and Historic Preservation Plans

Cambridge's downtown and surrounding neighborhoods are recognized for their rich historic fabric. Preservation planning documents, including design guidelines and state heritage area designations, provide strategies to maintain architectural integrity, guide rehabilitation projects, and promote heritage tourism. These plans ensure that revitalization efforts respect Cambridge's cultural identity.

City Strategic & Revitalization Plans

The City and its partners have advanced several strategic initiatives to target downtown revitalization, housing, and economic development. These include Race Street corridor studies, housing rehabilitation strategies, and downtown revitalization frameworks. Together, they identify catalytic projects, funding opportunities, and public-private partnerships to drive community improvement.

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Strategic and Small Area Plans

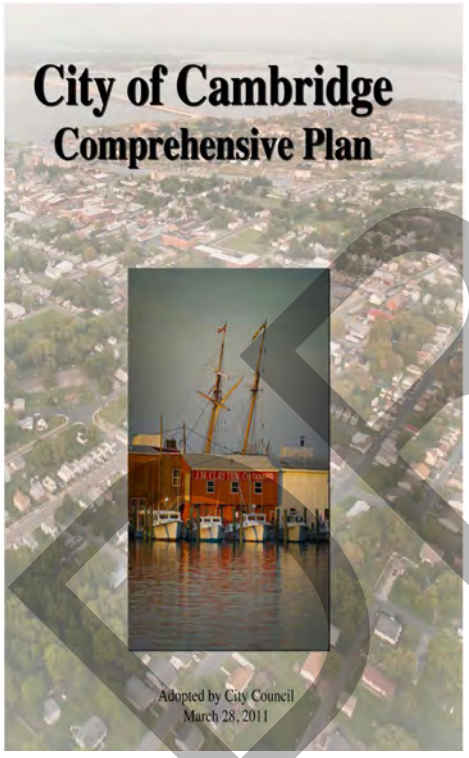
The City and its partners have advanced numerous targeted planning efforts, including Race Street corridor strategies, waterfront revitalization concepts, and housing assessments. These plans collectively identify catalytic projects, infrastructure needs, and reinvestment priorities to foster economic growth, preserve cultural assets, and expand housing opportunities.

State and Regional Policies

Cambridge's planning framework operates within the broader context of Maryland and regional requirements. The Maryland Twelve Planning Visions guide growth management, while Chesapeake Bay TMDL regulations require stormwater and nutrient reduction strategies. Climate resilience initiatives, including state and regional sea level rise adaptation efforts, also shape the City's long-range planning.

Dorchester County Comprehensive Plan 2021

Harriet Tubman mural



City of Cambridge Comprehensive Plan 2011

Historic preservation district architecture

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Cambridge's History

Cambridge, Maryland, one of the oldest colonial cities in the state, was founded in 1684 along the banks of the Choptank River. Its location on deep, navigable water made it a natural hub for commerce, ship-building, and fishing. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, Cambridge's waterfront supported thriving maritime industries, including seafood processing, oyster harvesting, and boat-building — trades that continue to shape the City's identity today.

By the 1800s, Cambridge had grown into a bustling port town. Its economy was deeply tied to the Chesapeake Bay and the fertile lands of Dorchester County. Agriculture and canneries fueled employment, while the City's waterfront remained the center of both economic life and community culture. Steamboats connected Cambridge to Baltimore, Washington, and beyond, positioning it as a regional hub for trade and travelers.

Cambridge is also a community of profound historical significance in the struggle for freedom and civil rights. Dorchester County was the birthplace of Harriet Tubman, the legendary abolitionist who led enslaved people to freedom through the Underground Railroad.

In the 1960s, Cambridge became a focal point of the Civil Rights Movement under the leadership of Gloria Richardson and the Cambridge Nonviolent Action Committee (CNAC). The activism of this period drew national attention, leading to both challenges and historic advances in desegregation, fair housing, and voting rights.

During the mid-20th century, Cambridge's economy experienced both growth and decline. Manufacturing and seafood processing provided jobs for thousands, but economic shifts, competition in the seafood industry, and disinvestment in downtown led to population decline and the loss of major employers. The civil unrest of the 1960s, combined with the nationwide challenges facing small industrial towns, left a lasting impact on the community.

In recent decades, Cambridge has entered a new phase of reinvention. The revitalization of the waterfront, adaptive reuse of historic buildings, and growth of arts and culture initiatives have helped reestablish the City as both a regional destination and a livable community. The development of Sailwinds Park, Race Street revitalization efforts, and the Downtown Cambridge Form-Based Code have strengthened connections between the City's historic character and its vision for a more resilient, economically diverse future.

Today, Cambridge is recognized as a city that honors its deep heritage while embracing renewal. Its history of resilience — from colonial trade to civil rights activism to modern revitalization — continues to shape its role as the civic, cultural, and economic heart of Dorchester County. With its waterfront location and diverse community, Cambridge is positioned to build a future that reflects both its historic legacy and its contemporary aspirations.

1907 : Oakley Beach Hotel

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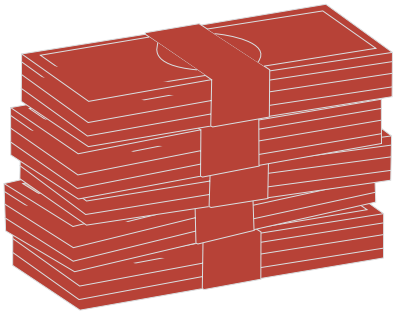
CITY PROFILE

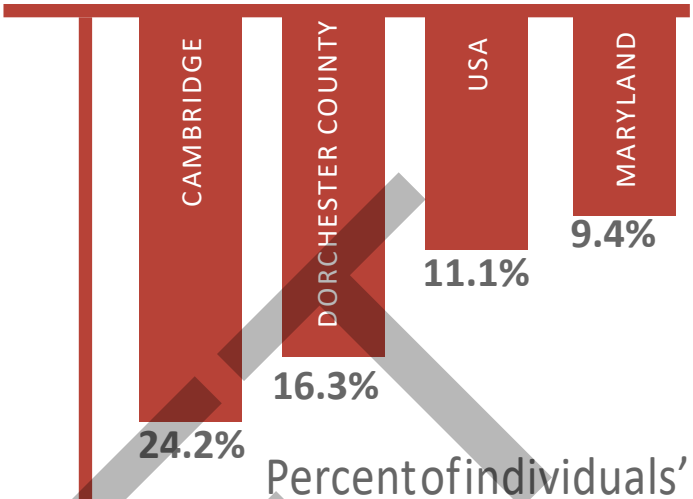
$46,261



Median Household Income in Cambridge

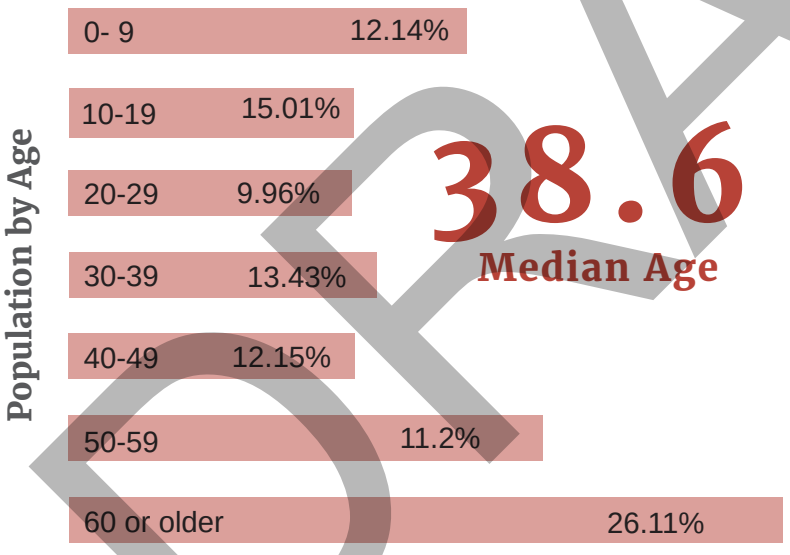
Dorchester County: $60,495
Maryland: $94,991

Source: 2018-2022 United States Census Bureau (in 2022 dollars)



Percent of individuals' Income **BELOW** Federal Poverty Rate

Source: 2018-2022 United States Census Bureau (in 2022 dollars)



Source: Census Reporter

38.6
Median Age

About **5,396**

Households in Cambridge

Source: Census Reporter

Source: Census Reporter from ACS 2022

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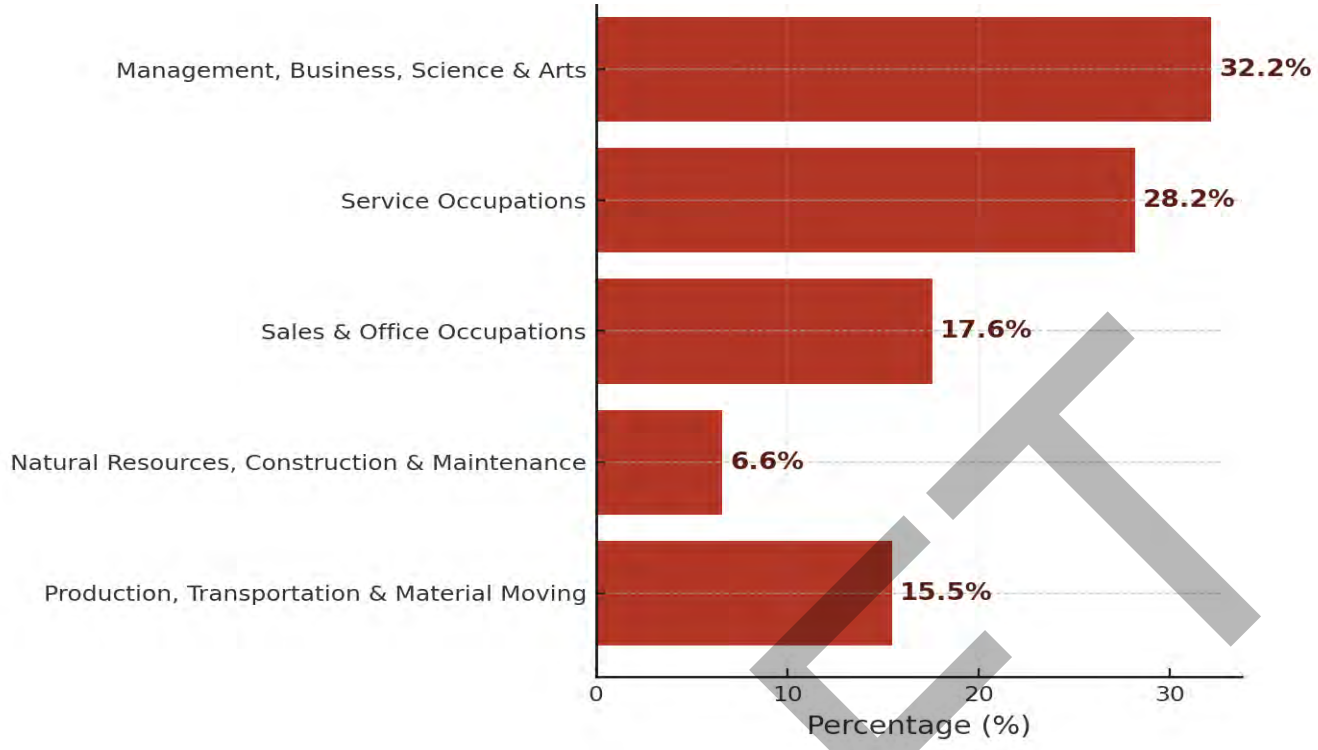

TRAVEL TIME TO WORK

21.4 Minutes

Source: Census Reporter

87.0%

Percent of high school graduate or higher

Source: Census Reporter

FOR SALE $254,400

MEDIAN VALUE OF OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS

In Cambridge
Maryland: $397,700
US: $303,400

*Margin of error is at least 10 percent of total value.

Source: 2018-2022 United States Census Bureau (in 2022 dollars)

41.1% Units owned

58.9% Units rented

Ownership Rates

Source: 2018-2022 United States Census Bureau)

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Community Goals

1. Continue to Make Downtown a Vibrant Multi-Generational Place

Downtown Cambridge is the cultural and economic heart of the city, but it has not yet reached its full potential. For Cambridge to thrive, Downtown must become a vibrant, multi-generational district that attracts new businesses, residents, and visitors while serving as a welcoming place for all ages. Revitalization must go beyond economic growth to also foster cultural expression, community pride, and inclusivity. Investments in arts, history, and culture, coupled with expanded housing and family-oriented activities, can create a downtown that is alive day and night, throughout the year. By restoring historic assets, activating underutilized spaces, and strengthening wayfinding and public identity, Downtown Cambridge can distinguish itself from neighboring communities as an authentic, dynamic, and memorable destination.

Attract More Businesses and Economic Activity

Downtown must continue to grow as a place for small businesses, restaurants, coffee shops, and creative retail. Supporting local entrepreneurs and fostering a younger, more diverse workforce will strengthen the local economy while ensuring Downtown remains competitive. Initiatives such as retail incubators, business assistance programs, and façade improvement grants will help fill vacancies and bring renewed vitality to the core district.

Expand Arts, Culture, and History

A vibrant Downtown must celebrate Cambridge's story through art, music, and heritage. Public art—especially murals—should be prioritized alongside new performance spaces and cultural programming. Efforts to highlight Cambridge's rich history, from its maritime heritage to its role in civil rights, can anchor Downtown as a destination for both residents and visitors.

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Aerial view of Cambridge

Ensure Affordable and Inclusive Housing

Sustaining a healthy Downtown requires that people of all incomes and ages can live in the city center. Expanding affordable and rental housing options, as well as rehabilitating upper-story units, will keep Downtown active day and night. Prioritizing accessible housing for families, young professionals, and older residents will ensure that growth is inclusive and supports long-term stability.

Create Spaces for Youth, Families, and Community Life

To become truly multi-generational, Downtown must include spaces and programming for children, teens, and families. Maker spaces, youth centers, and teen programming can connect younger residents with Cambridge's culture and workforce opportunities. Festivals, concerts, and community-wide events should also expand, creating year-round energy that makes Downtown a gathering place for all ages.

Restore Historic Assets and Activate Vacant Buildings

Historic buildings, such as Old City Hall, provide unique opportunities for adaptive reuse that blends heritage with new uses. Rehabilitation of vacant and underutilized structures should be a central strategy, turning liabilities into community assets. Partnerships with private investors, nonprofits, and arts organizations can accelerate the transformation of these buildings into places of activity and pride.

Improve Wayfinding, Gateways, and Public Identity

A clear sense of place is essential for Downtown's success. Wayfinding signage, coordinated gateways, and consistent branding will make Downtown easier to navigate and more welcoming to visitors. Investments in coordinated public realm improvements will strengthen the identity of the city center and ensure that it reflects Cambridge's character.

Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay Golf Resort

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2. New Development Should Create Great Places

New development in Cambridge must go beyond filling space—it should create places that strengthen neighborhoods, foster economic opportunity, and reflect the City's character. While Downtown is the heart of Cambridge, other corridors and neighborhoods must also provide destinations where residents can live, work, and gather. Thoughtful growth will ensure that the benefits of revitalization are shared citywide.

Create Walkable, Mixed-Use Centers

Future growth should focus on compact, mixed-use neighborhoods where housing, shops, offices, and public spaces are seamlessly connected. These centers create activity throughout the day and provide residents with access to everyday needs without long commutes. Reviving historic corridors such as Pine Street offers an opportunity to restore "lost Main Streets" that once served as hubs of community life.

Revitalize and Reinvest in Neighborhoods

Rehabilitation of existing housing stock, infill development on vacant parcels, and strategic reinvestment in aging areas will strengthen Cambridge's neighborhoods. Façade improvements, coordinated signage, and public-private partnerships can transform underutilized spaces into thriving community anchors. Redevelopment should prioritize affordability to ensure that residents of all incomes benefit from growth.

Address Blight and Vacancy

Blighted properties and vacant lots detract from neighborhood vitality and create barriers to reinvestment. Targeted redevelopment—such as transforming vacant parcels into new housing, parks, or small business spaces—will stabilize communities and reduce disinvestment. Code enforcement, paired with incentives for property improvement, can accelerate this process and provide visible, lasting impact.

Strengthen Connections Between Places

Great neighborhoods do not stand alone. As Cambridge grows, development should be connected by safe, attractive streets, green corridors, and multi-modal transportation. Linking new and existing centers together will foster a stronger sense of community and make it easier for residents to access jobs, schools, and amenities across the City.

By focusing new development on creating places of quality, Cambridge can enhance its neighborhoods, restore historic corridors, and ensure that revitalization extends well beyond Downtown.

Cambridge community members

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3. Safe, Comfortable, and Interesting Streets for Walking and Biking

Cambridge's streets are not just conduits for vehicles—they are the public spaces where daily life unfolds. To create a healthier, safer, and more connected city, streets must be designed for people as much as for cars. Comfortable sidewalks, safe bike routes, and accessible crossings allow residents of all ages and incomes to move freely and equitably. By linking neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, and the waterfront with high-quality pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, Cambridge can transform its streets into places that encourage recreation, social interaction, and mobility for everyone.

Expand Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure

Safe and connected routes are essential for those who walk or bike by choice or necessity. Expanded bike infrastructure—particularly for residents without access to a car—should provide both recreational and commuter options. Priorities include completing a network of bike lanes, widening the Maryland Avenue Bridge for pedestrians, and exploring a Creek Bridge crossing at the waterfront.

Improve Accessibility and Safety for All Users

Every resident should feel safe and supported in navigating the city. Investment in ADA-accessible routes, safe routes to school, and green streets will make daily travel more equitable and sustainable. Applying CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) principles—such as improved lighting and visibility—will help keep public spaces welcoming and secure.

Introduce Alternative Mobility Options

To reduce congestion and expand travel options, Cambridge should pursue diverse forms of mobility. A seasonal trolley and water taxi, especially serving key destinations like the Hyatt and waterfront, can provide affordable, fun, and sustainable alternatives to driving. Enhanced transit options will make it easier for residents and visitors to access Downtown and other key destinations without relying on cars.

Reimagine Major Corridors and Intersections

Key corridors—including Academy Street, Washington Street, and Cedar Street—should be redesigned to balance traffic flow with pedestrian comfort. Revamping dilapidated intersections, such as Cedar & Race and Cedar & Pine, will improve safety and create more attractive gateways into neighborhoods. Street trees, landscaping, and green infrastructure should be integrated into these improvements to enhance the public realm.

Provide Public Amenities that Support Walking and Biking

Infrastructure must be complemented by the amenities that make walking and biking enjoyable. Public restrooms, seating, signage, and shade will encourage residents and visitors to use the network more often. Wayfinding tools can better connect the waterfront, Downtown, and residential neighborhoods. These small but critical details help transform streets into destinations in themselves.

A trail in Cambridge

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4. Connect the City: Increase Access to the Waterfront and Add Cross-City Trails and Recreational Amenities

Cambridge's waterfront and open spaces are among its greatest assets, but they remain underutilized and unevenly connected. Increasing access to the water, expanding recreational opportunities, and building cross-city trails will strengthen community health, attract visitors, and reinforce Cambridge's identity as a city on the water. By investing in both everyday amenities for residents and signature destinations that appeal to tourists, the City can balance inclusivity with economic vitality.

Enhance Waterfront Access and Connectivity

Cambridge should prioritize opening and expanding access to the waterfront wherever possible. This includes new boardwalks, removing barriers created by past development approvals, and building east–west trail and park connections that link neighborhoods to the water. By continuing rail-to-trail projects and expanding pedestrian-friendly routes, the City can create a continuous recreational network that connects residents and visitors alike.

Expand Recreational Amenities Across the City

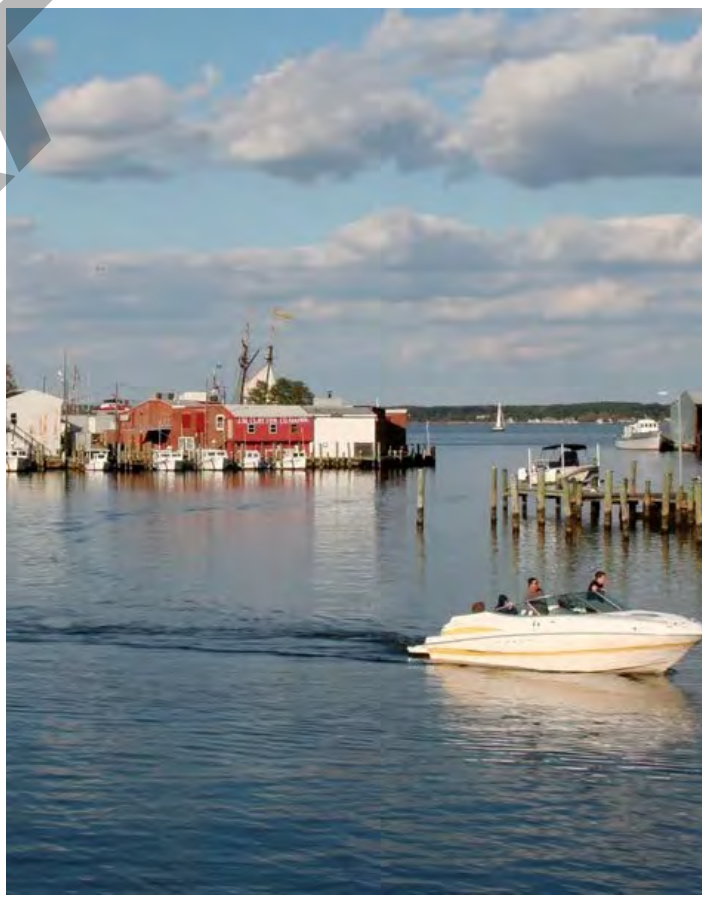
New recreational assets should respond to community demand for diverse and active spaces. Facilities such as pickleball courts, a skate park, public sports complexes, dog parks, and fishing tournament venues can provide year-round opportunities for residents of all ages. Public restrooms, shade structures, and other support facilities are essential to make these amenities accessible and comfortable.

Transform the Waterfront into a Community and Economic Hub

The waterfront should serve as both a gathering place for residents and a revenue generator for the City. Establishing an Innovation District focused on arts, entertainment, and cultural programming would anchor the waterfront as a regional destination. Outdoor concert and event spaces, a fishing pier replacement, and the development of a boutique hotel or larger accommodations can attract more visitors while supporting local businesses.

Promote Equity and Inclusion in Waterfront Development

Growth at the waterfront must remain accessible to everyone. Policies should ensure that the waterfront stays open to the public, that water-taxi services are expanded beyond current plans, and that alleys or privatization measures do not restrict access. By combining equitable design with high-quality amenities, Cambridge can ensure its waterfront reflects its identity as a community asset for all.



Waterfront view in Cambridge

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5. Build for the Future: Sustainability and Equitably

Cambridge's future depends on balancing growth with sustainability, equity, and resilience. Investments must protect the city from climate risks, strengthen its neighborhoods, and ensure that prosperity is shared across all residents. By combining environmental stewardship, housing choice, essential services, and cultural vitality, Cambridge can prepare for a future that is both resilient and inclusive.

Advance Climate Resilience and Environmental Stewardship

Cambridge must adapt to the realities of sea level rise and climate change. Strategies include constructing living shorelines, planting a downtown tree canopy, and expanding the use of permeable surfaces to reduce flooding. Solar energy installations on parking facilities, better stormwater management systems, and upgrades to sewer pump stations will reduce environmental risks while promoting long-term sustainability. Avoiding sprawl in farm fields ensures that development does not threaten agricultural lands or ecological resources.

Choptank River Lighthouse

High Street Storefronts

Provide Diverse and Equitable Housing Options

To retain and attract residents, Cambridge must expand housing choices that meet the needs of young professionals, families, and seniors. This includes converting larger homes into multi-family units, supporting middle-class housing, expanding affordable rental options, and allowing accessory dwelling units (ADUs). Future housing policy should focus less on creating entirely new neighborhoods and more on reinvesting in and improving the City's existing housing stock. Strong renter protections and affordable housing strategies will ensure equity in growth.

Ensure Services and Infrastructure for Families

Housing alone is not enough, families need strong schools, reliable healthcare, childcare, and well-maintained infrastructure to remain in Cambridge. Investments in schools, sewer and stormwater systems, and community-serving infrastructure are critical. Development impact fees and public benefits programs for rezonings can ensure that new growth contributes its fair share to maintaining high-quality services.

Foster Culture, Heritage, and Workforce Training

Economic and social sustainability are strengthened through culture and education. Cambridge should invest in visual and performing arts, preserve its historic districts, and create spaces such as community gardens that foster social connections. Expanding water-based industries such as yacht and boat maintenance can diversify the economy. At the same time, workforce training programs—including teaching youth maritime skills, business management, and entrepreneurship—will ensure the next generation has the tools to thrive.

Historic Pine Street

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Overarching Themes: Big Five Ideas

The Big 5 Ideas identified during the public charrette serve as the foundation for this Comprehensive Plan. They reflect the community's aspirations for growth, character, and livability and are woven throughout the goals, objectives, and policies of every element in this plan. Together, these themes articulate a unified vision for Cambridge's physical, economic, and social development.

1. Continue to Make Downtown a Vibrant Multi-Generational Place

Downtown is the heart of Cambridge, a place for culture, commerce, and connection. Reinforcing Downtown's role as the city's civic and economic center means continuing to invest in adaptive reuse, upper-story housing, and first-floor activation. Streetscape improvements, enhanced signage, public art, and outdoor dining will strengthen walkability and safety while creating memorable experiences for residents and visitors. Historic character remains central, but innovation through design and small-business support ensures Downtown remains active and inclusive for all generations.

2. New Development Should Create Great Places (Beyond Downtown)

Growth in Cambridge must produce complete, walkable places that bring together housing, local businesses, public spaces, and civic life. Extending the principles of the Downtown Form-Based Code to corridors and neighborhood centers will guide new infill and redevelopment toward human-scaled, mixed-use environments. Great places are defined not only by their buildings, but by their connections—streets that link neighborhoods, parks that anchor communities, and design that reflects Cambridge's distinct identity.

3. Safe, Comfortable, and Interesting Streets for Walking and Biking

Streets should function as both transportation routes and public gathering spaces. Designing safe, tree-lined, and engaging streets invites people to walk and bike while supporting local activity. Complete Streets principles will guide improvements to intersections, lighting, and sidewalks, with new trails and bikeways creating seamless links between neighborhoods, schools, parks, and the waterfront. A network of shaded, comfortable, and visually interesting streets strengthens community health and accessibility for everyone.

4. Connect the City: Increase Access to the Waterfront and Add Cross-City Trails

Cambridge's waterfront defines its identity and offers opportunities for recreation, resilience, and renewal. Expanding public access through new trails, linear parks, and greenway connections will knit the city together and strengthen its relationship with the Choptank River. Investments in shoreline access, boardwalks, and multi-use paths will provide equitable recreation options and enhance economic vitality. Collaboration among city departments, nonprofits, and residents will ensure that the waterfront remains both a community asset and a resilient landscape.

5. Build for the Future: Sustainably and Equitably

Building for the future means preparing Cambridge for environmental challenges while ensuring that prosperity benefits all residents. Green infrastructure, reforestation, and stormwater management will protect neighborhoods from flooding and heat, while energy-efficient design and compact growth reduce the city's footprint. Expanding affordable and missing-middle housing, supporting small businesses, and aligning infrastructure with resilience initiatives will foster a city that grows sustainably and equitably—balancing progress with stewardship for generations to come.

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Overview of Strategies, Goals, & Policies Across Plan Elements

The following summary illustrates how these overarching themes are reflected throughout the plan's various elements. Together, they serve as the framework for guiding future growth and decision-making:

Theme	Key Strategies	Representative Goals & Policies
1. Continue to Make Downtown a Vibrant Multi-Generational Place	Reinforce Downtown as Cambridge's economic, social, and cultural core through infill, design, and activation.	Support adaptive reuse and mixed-use infill; encourage upper-story housing; improve streetscapes, signage, and public spaces; expand events and local business programs.
2. New Development Should Create Great Places (Beyond Downtown)	Guide new growth toward walkable, complete neighborhoods that integrate housing, amenities, and civic spaces.	Extend form-based design standards; establish neighborhood centers; require connected street networks; integrate parks, plazas, and civic frontages into development.
3. Safe, Comfortable, and Interesting Streets for Walking and Biking	Redesign streets as public spaces that encourage active transportation, accessibility, and safety.	Implement Complete Streets standards; improve crosswalks, lighting, and bike infrastructure; enhance tree canopy and green street features; connect trails citywide.
4. Connect the City: Increase Access to the Waterfront and Add Cross-City Trails	Strengthen physical and recreational connections between neighborhoods, parks, and the waterfront.	Strengthen physical and recreational connections between neighborhoods, parks, and the waterfront.
5. Build for the Future: Sustainably and Equitably	Ensure growth supports environmental resilience, housing diversity, and equitable economic opportunity.	Implement green infrastructure and stormwater transects; expand tree canopy; promote affordable and missing-middle housing; support workforce and small-business programs.

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Areas of Special Attention

The following topics represent areas of citywide importance that intersect with multiple elements of the Comprehensive Plan. Addressing them effectively will help implement the Big 5 Ideas and ensure that Cambridge's future growth remains sustainable, inclusive, and resilient.

Public Engagement and Participation

Public engagement remains a cornerstone of successful planning in Cambridge. This Plan emphasizes the need to make community participation accessible, continuous, and transparent. Best practices include maintaining a mix of in-person and digital engagement tools to reach a wide audience.

Workshops, Charrettes, and pop-up events should continue to be used alongside interactive online mapping and surveys to gather feedback from residents of all ages and backgrounds.

To strengthen accountability, the City should publish periodic progress reports summarizing plan actions and achievements. Materials and meetings should be multilingual, accessible, and inclusive of historically underrepresented groups.

In parallel, this Plan establishes a template for future form-based code (FBC) expansion. The City's existing Downtown FBC will serve as a model for calibrating similar design and zoning standards along corridors and within emerging neighborhood centers. These updates should address building form, frontage types, street design, and public realm standards that support walkable, context-sensitive growth.

Downtown and Neighborhood Resilience

The vitality of Cambridge's Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods depends on coordinated investment, thoughtful redevelopment, and equitable access to housing and public space. The following issue areas require targeted attention as part of ongoing implementation:

Stormwater Management and Climate Resilience

Flooding and heat management are top environmental challenges for Cambridge. The Plan recommends applying a stormwater transect approach that scales best management practices according to urban, suburban, and natural contexts. In denser neighborhoods, strategies may include permeable paving, and rain gardens, while more suburban and natural areas may focus on wetlands restoration, and tree canopy expansion.

Economic Development and Infill Opportunities

Economic resilience depends on efficient land use and reinvestment in underutilized parcels. The City should continue identifying both publicly and privately owned parking lots that may be suitable for future infill or redevelopment. Downtown parcels could host mixed-use buildings, civic plazas, or upper-story residential units, while neighborhood sites may accommodate smaller-scale housing, retail, or employment spaces.

This approach supports the Plan's goals of encouraging compact, walkable growth while expanding the local tax base and strengthening neighborhood vitality.

First-Floor Activation and Upper-Story Infill

Encouraging the reuse and adaptation of existing buildings is essential to preserving Cambridge's character and maximizing space efficiency. The City should actively promote the conversion of upper floors for residential use and require first-floor activation in commercial areas to maintain lively street environments. Clear design standards, streamlined permitting, and building-code guidance can help property owners creatively navigate life-safety requirements and ensure that reinvestment aligns with form-based principles.

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Housing Diversity and Homeownership

Expanding housing diversity in Cambridge requires coordinated efforts among local government, private developers, and community partners. The City should evaluate its existing zoning and development regulations to ensure they support a range of housing typologies and allow gentle density increases in appropriate areas. Incentives such as reduced parking requirements, expedited review for infill projects, and rehabilitation grants can help encourage reinvestment in older housing stock and underutilized parcels. The City should also explore partnerships with nonprofit housing organizations and regional agencies to expand funding opportunities for workforce housing, first-time buyers, and rehabilitation programs. Strengthening the connection between housing and economic development will ensure that new investment benefits current residents and supports long-term community stability.

The Cambridge Comprehensive Plan is built upon a foundation of collaboration, vision, and action. Through extensive public engagement, technical meetings, and the August 2025 Charrette Week, hundreds of residents, business owners, and stakeholders came together to shape a shared direction for Cambridge's future. Their ideas formed the basis for the Big Five Ideas, a set of overarching themes that guide every element of this Plan.

These ideas, making Downtown vibrant and multi-generational, creating great places citywide, building safe and comfortable streets, connecting the city and its waterfront, and planning sustainably and equitably, represent the collective priorities of the community. Together, they express the balance Cambridge seeks between growth and preservation, innovation and heritage, and environmental resilience and economic opportunity.

Each element of the Plan, Land Use, Housing, Transportation, Natural Resources, Economic Development, and Community Design, translates these themes into specific strategies, goals, and policies. The result is a comprehensive framework that connects long-term vision with implementable actions, ensuring that development decisions reflect community values.

In addition to these guiding ideas, the Plan identifies several Areas of Special Attention that cut across all elements. These include expanding public participation and form-based design tools, improving stormwater management through a transect-based approach, promoting economic development and infill opportunities, and increasing housing diversity and homeownership. These focus areas represent the city's highest priorities for coordinated investment and serve as the foundation for the Plan's implementation.

Ultimately, this Plan provides a roadmap for achieving a more connected, inclusive, and resilient Cambridge—a city that celebrates its historic identity while embracing the opportunities of a sustainable and equitable future.

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1: Land Use and Development Regulations

Current Conditions

Preserved Downtown

The City of Cambridge contains a historically significant and well-preserved downtown core that serves as both the civic and cultural heart of the community. The Downtown Historic District, encompassing more than forty blocks along the Choptank River waterfront, features a concentration of late 19th and early 20th century commercial and residential structures that reflect the City's ongoing history as one of Maryland's oldest colonial settlements.

This area includes the traditional commercial corridors of High Street, Race Street, and Poplar Street, where mixed-use buildings provide ground-floor retail and dining opportunities with offices or residences above. Streetscapes are enhanced by brick sidewalks, historic street lighting, and mature trees, reinforcing a walkable and pedestrian-scaled environment

Traditional Neighborhoods

Just beyond the Downtown Historic District, Cambridge is defined by a series of traditional neighborhoods that reflect the City's residential heritage. These neighborhoods, including West End, Pine Street and areas surrounding High Street, are within walking and biking distance of downtown. Many of these neighborhoods feature historic housing stock, mature trees, parks, and churches that anchor the community.

While portions of these neighborhoods retain their historic charm, others have experienced disinvestment over time. Sidewalks are intermittent, and blocks lack continuous pedestrian infrastructure, with limited safe walkability. Vacant lots and underutilized buildings are present in several areas, particularly where older homes and businesses have not been reinvested in or maintained. The City and its partners are working to stabilize and reinvigorate these neighborhoods through targeted revitalization initiatives, including housing rehabilitations, infill developments and efforts to increase homeownership. These strategies aim to build upon the neighborhoods' historic character while addressing infrastructure gaps and creating new opportunities for walkable, livable community centers.

Suburban Development & Commercial Strip

As one moves outward from Cambridge's historic downtown, development patterns become more recent and auto-oriented, reflecting national trends of post-World War II growth. In these areas, the traditional street grid transitions into larger blocks and curvilinear streets that primarily serve automobile traffic. Land Use is increasingly separated into residential subdivisions, commercial centers, and light industrial areas, creating less walkable environments compared to the historic core.

Along the City's major corridors, particularly U.S. Route 50, Maryland Avenue, and Dorchester Avenue, commercial strip development is prominent. These areas contain larger retail centers, auto-oriented businesses, and service establishments set back from the street behind surface parking lots. While these corridors provide important economic activity and regional access, they are less pedestrian friendly and visually distinct than the traditional downtown and adjoining neighborhoods.

Farmlands

Agriculture is the largest land use in Dorchester County, with more than 130,000 acres of active farmland surrounding Cambridge. Expansive croplands of corn, soybeans, and grains dominate the landscape and remain central to the county's economy, heritage, and rural identity. These working lands also contribute ecological value, providing open space, wildlife habitat, and scenic views that shape the character of Cambridge and its surroundings. Despite its importance, farmland faces mounting pressures. Residential growth and speculative land sales place development pressure on agricultural land, while invasive non-native deer have become a threat to crop production. Climate challenges, including flooding and saltwater intrusion in low-lying areas, further jeopardize the long-term viability of farming.

In response, state and county farmland preservation programs, along with local land management initiatives, seek to protect this resource and ensure that agriculture remains a cornerstone of Cambridge's economy and community character for generations to come.

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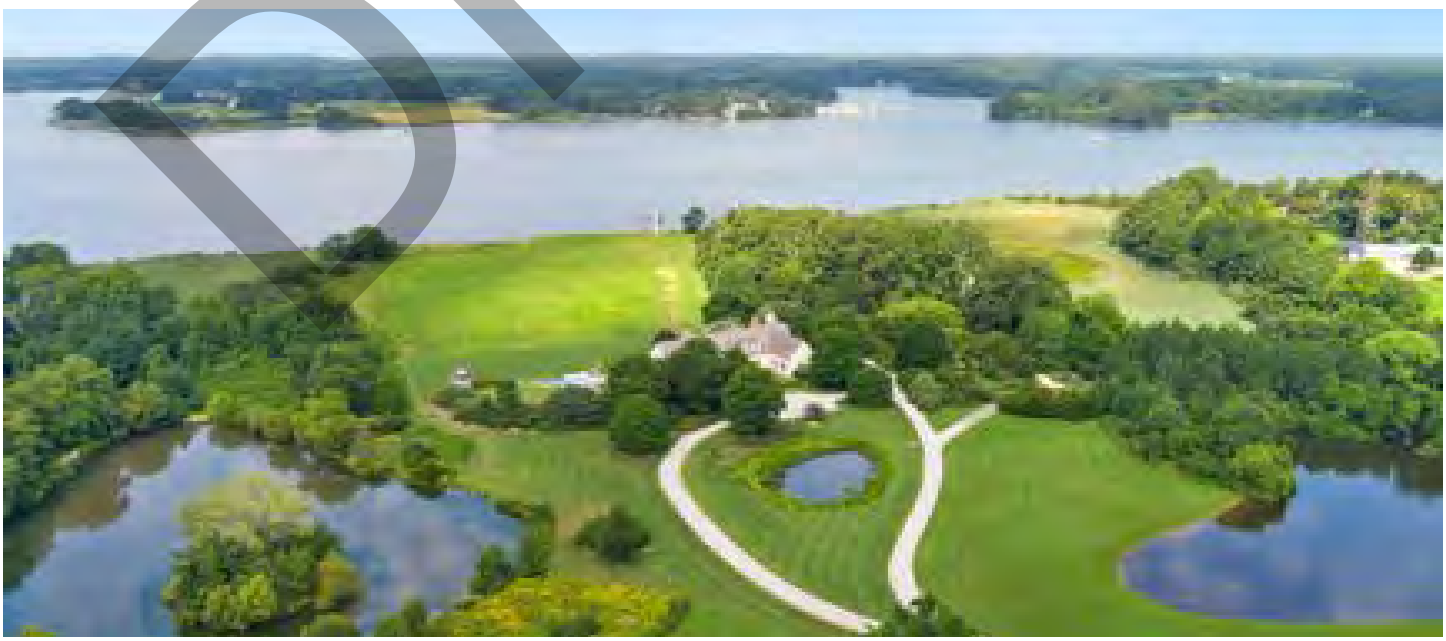
Downtown Cambridge

Peach Blossom Avenue

The Packing House in Cambridge was originally built in 1920. Today, it is a place where people can work, dine, gather, and learn.

Farmland in Cambridge, Maryland



Farmland in Cambridge, Maryland

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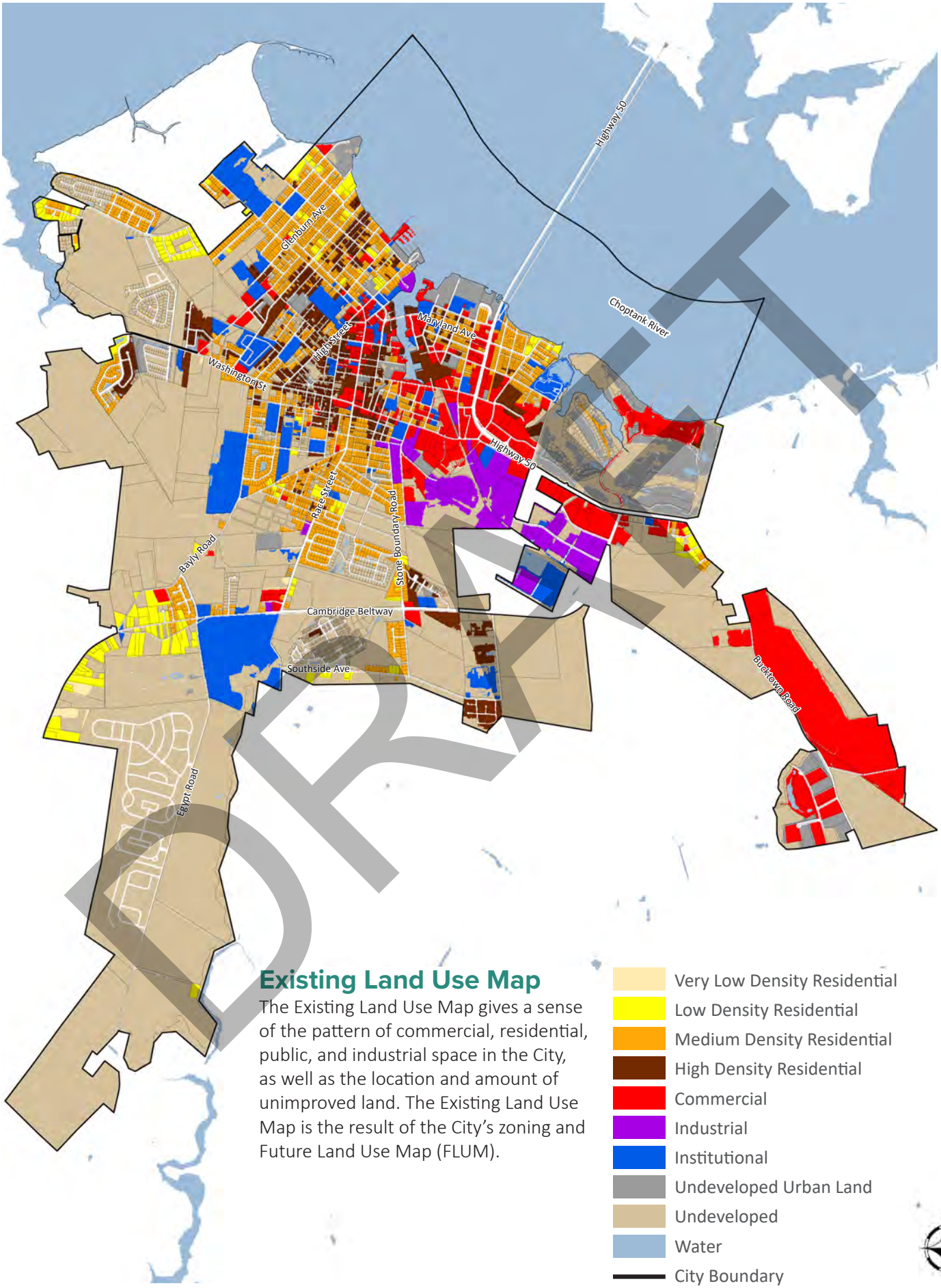
EXISTING LAND USE



Existing Land Use Map

The Existing Land Use Map gives a sense of the pattern of commercial, residential, public, and industrial space in the City, as well as the location and amount of unimproved land. The Existing Land Use Map is the result of the City's zoning and Future Land Use Map (FLUM).

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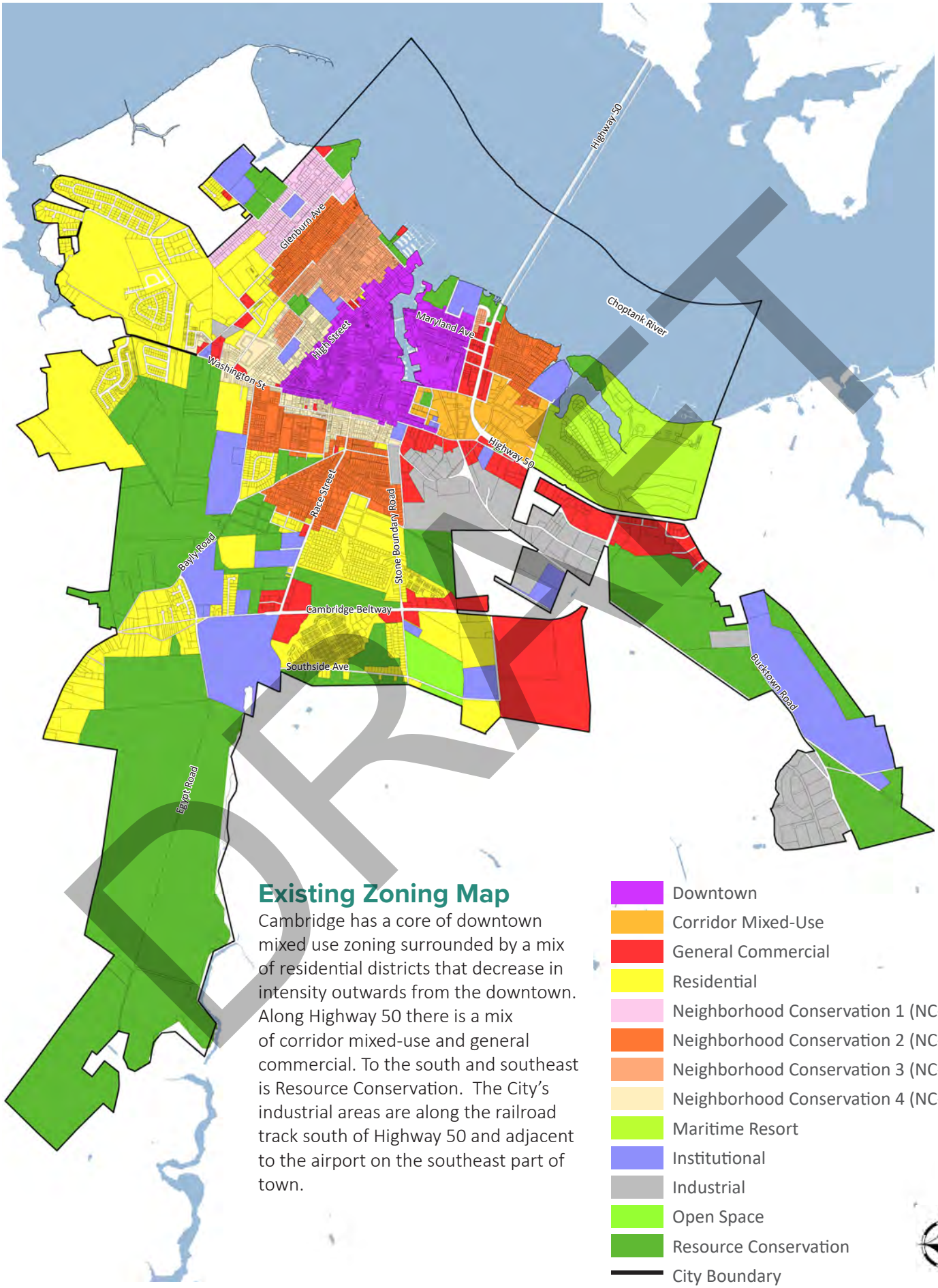
EXISTING ZONING



Existing Zoning Map

Cambridge has a core of downtown mixed use zoning surrounded by a mix of residential districts that decrease in intensity outwards from the downtown. Along Highway 50 there is a mix of corridor mixed-use and general commercial. To the south and southeast is Resource Conservation. The City's industrial areas are along the railroad track south of Highway 50 and adjacent to the airport on the southeast part of town.

- Downtown
- Corridor Mixed-Use
- General Commercial
- Residential
- Neighborhood Conservation 1 (NC-1)
- Neighborhood Conservation 2 (NC-2)
- Neighborhood Conservation 3 (NC-3)
- Neighborhood Conservation 4 (NC-4)
- Maritime Resort
- Institutional
- Industrial
- Open Space
- Resource Conservation
- City Boundary

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Community Concerns

Community outreach conducted through workshops, charrettes, and stakeholder meetings highlighted several recurring land use concerns that shape the direction of this Plan:

Vacancy, Blight, and Underutilized Land

- Residents expressed concern over the high number of vacant homes and empty commercial parcels that weaken neighborhood character, lower property values, and deter new investment.
- Property maintenance and absentee ownership are seen as barriers to revitalization.

Housing Choice, Affordability, and Quality

- Residents emphasized the need for more diverse and affordable housing options to meet the needs of families, seniors, and young professionals.
- Concerns were raised about the quality and upkeep of existing housing and the limited availability of attainable options for first-time homebuyers.

Inconsistent Development Patterns

- Zoning regulations have allowed suburban-style, auto-oriented development along gateways like U.S. 50 and Maryland Avenue.
- These patterns conflict with the historic, walkable scale of the city and do not support active streets or cohesive neighborhoods.

Waterfront Balance

- The working waterfront is a valued economic engine, but there are concerns about compatibility with residential and tourism uses.
- Some residents fear losing maritime industry, while others want more public access to the river.

Design and Form

- New construction is often perceived as out of scale with historic neighborhoods.
- Residents asked for stronger design standards, landscaping requirements, and building form regulations to ensure new growth enhances, rather than detracts from, community character.

Infrastructure and Flooding

- Concerns were raised about infrastructure readiness (water, sewer, stormwater) in areas identified for redevelopment.
- Climate change and sea level rise increase concerns about where new development should occur, especially in flood-prone waterfront areas.

Annexation and Growth Management

- While some stakeholders expressed interest in expanding the City limits to capture new development, most residents voiced concern about sprawl, infrastructure costs, and impacts on rural landscapes.

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Cambridge Harbor

Strategies for Addressing Concerns

1. Revitalize Vacant, Blighted, and Underutilized Land

- Expand housing rehabilitation programs, façade improvement grants, and tax incentives to reinvest in older housing stock and commercial storefronts.
- Establish a Vacant Property Registry and strengthen enforcement to bring blighted properties back into productive use.

2. Expand Housing Choice, Affordability, and Quality

- Support development of a broader range of housing types, including missing middle housing (duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, accessory dwelling units).
- Partner with state and nonprofit organizations to expand affordable homeownership opportunities and rental assistance programs.
- Encourage senior and workforce housing in accessible locations near services and transit.

3. Create Consistent and Walkable Development Patterns

- Revise zoning to encourage compact, mixed-use development along key corridors and discourage fragmented, auto-oriented patterns.
- Reinvest in Maryland Avenue and Dorchester Avenue as gateway corridors with stronger design standards and neighborhood-serving uses.
- Incentivize adaptive reuse of vacant or obsolete commercial and industrial buildings.

4. Balance Waterfront Uses and Public Access

- Protect the working waterfront while expanding public access and recreational opportunities.
- Encourage mixed-use, water-dependent businesses and dining that complement maritime industries.
- Implement design standards to enhance the waterfront's role as both an economic hub and community destination.

5. Modernize Infrastructure and Address Flooding

- Align infrastructure extensions with the Comprehensive Water and Sewer Plan to support compact, sustainable growth.
- Require flood-resilient design, including elevation standards, stormwater retrofits, and neighborhood-scale green infrastructure.
- Partner with Dorchester County and state agencies to implement coordinated resilience strategies.

6. Strengthen Community Identity and Gateways

- Enhance streetscape design and signage along U.S. 50 and Maryland Avenue to better reflect Cambridge's historic character.
- Reinvest in neighborhood commercial centers to create small-scale hubs of community life.
- Promote local business development, heritage tourism, and events that reinforce Cambridge's identity as an authentic Eastern Shore city.

This Comprehensive Plan emphasizes Cambridge's unique sense of place, focusing on walkable neighborhoods, historic districts, and its working waterfront. The intent is twofold: to preserve and strengthen the historic and cultural assets that define Cambridge's identity, and to guide reinvestment and growth in a way that is resilient, equitable, and forward-looking.

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Form-Based Code

The Future Character Area Map provides the foundation for a Form-Based Code in Cambridge. Each Character Area represents a distinct urban context and aligns closely with "transect zones." This structure allows development standards to reflect Cambridge's long-term vision for scale, form, and character. Form-Based Codes emphasize the physical qualities of place: how buildings meet the street, how public spaces function, and how varied building types coexist within complete neighborhoods.

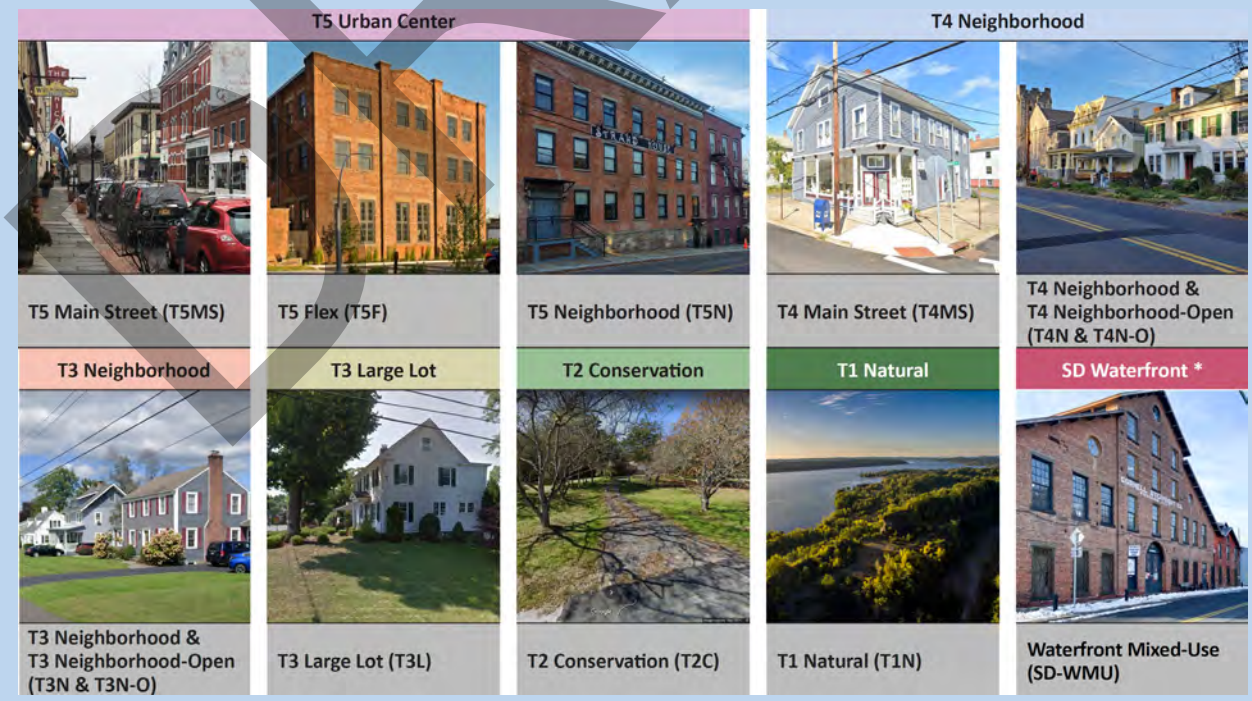
A Form-Based Code for Cambridge can:

- Protect historic character by ensuring infill and redevelopment respect existing block patterns, building forms, and traditional streetscapes.
- Guide corridor redevelopment—such as U.S. Route 50, Maryland Avenue, and Dorchester Avenue—through standards for building placement, parking, and mixed-use design.
- Strengthen the public realm with expectations for building orientation, pedestrian connections, active ground floors, and waterfront-facing design.
- Promote predictable, high-quality development with standards that support walkability, civic spaces, and neighborhood centers for residents and visitors.

Because each Character Area is tied to its physical context, a Form-Based Code is the most effective tool for translating Cambridge's Comprehensive Plan into zoning that produces the intended built form. This approach ensures new development fits historic areas while supporting diverse housing choices and economic opportunities. By adopting a Form-Based Code, Cambridge can preserve its identity, improve walkability, and guide reinvestment in ways that strengthen long-term community resilience and sense of place.

Ideas to Create Affordable and Complete Neighborhoods for Everyone:

- Build well; New development should create complete neighborhoods,
- Add missing housing types that can accommodate the senior population and young professionals with dignity,
- Sidewalks, street trees at key locations, and
- Biking and walking trails and routes



A Form-Based Code for Cambridge would be calibrated for the City after a close study of the city's character areas. The unique and celebrated design elements of various areas are documented, preserved, and replicated.

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Missing Middle Housing

There is a growing demand in Cambridge, and in communities across the country, for housing options that fit between single-family homes and large apartment buildings. These "Missing Middle" housing types include duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, cottage courts, townhomes, and small apartment buildings that blend into established neighborhoods while offering a broader range of housing choices. Missing Middle housing types provide an opportunity to add gentle density that respects existing character. The following Missing Middle housing characteristics help illustrate how these housing types can support Cambridge's long-term goals.

Walkable Context
Missing Middle housing works best in walkable areas. Residents of these homes often prioritize proximity to shops, parks, schools, and transit over large lot sizes.

Small-Footprint Buildings
These housing types typically have footprints comparable to nearby single-family homes, allowing them to fit naturally on existing lots. Their modest scale makes them compatible with Cambridge's traditional block patterns and neighborhood character.

Lower Perceived Density
Although Missing Middle housing increases the number of homes within a neighborhood, its smaller building massing and house-like appearance reduce the perception of density. This "gentle density" allows neighborhoods to evolve while maintaining their historic and architectural qualities.

Unit sizes in Missing Middle developments are often smaller, which can help improve housing affordability and expand options for residents who do not need or want large units.

Fewer Off-Street Parking Requirements
Because Missing Middle homes are most effective in walkable, centrally located areas, they often require less parking than conventional suburban housing. Right-sizing parking levels helps reduce development costs, frees up land for housing or green space, and supports a pedestrian-friendly streetscape.

Simple Construction
Missing Middle housing is generally easier and less expensive to build than larger multifamily buildings. This makes them attractive to small-scale developers and local builders.

Builds Community
Many Missing Middle formats, such as courtyard cottages, small multiplexes, and townhomes—naturally support shared spaces and neighbor interaction, supporting community connection and enhances neighborhood cohesion.

Market Responsive
With demand rising for walkable neighborhoods and diverse housing choices, Missing Middle housing responds directly to Cambridge's evolving demographic and economic needs. These formats can help retain existing residents, attract a broader workforce, and support local businesses.

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Development Capacity Analysis

The Maryland Land Use Article requires that municipalities include a Development Capacity Analysis (DCA) as part of the Comprehensive Plan. A DCA is a planning tool that estimated the amount of future development that can be accommodated within the City's current boundaries under existing zoning. In practice, the analysis considers the total amount of land available for development, accounts for environmental and infrastructure constraints, and applies zoning standards to estimate how many additional housing units and nonresidential uses could reasonably be built.

The purpose of the Development Capacity Analysis is not to predict what will occur, but rather to provide a benchmark for understanding whether the City has sufficient capacity to accommodate projected population and employment growth. The analysis also helps identify whether future annexations, zoning changes, or infrastructure investments may be necessary to support growth in an orderly and sustainable manner.

In Cambridge, previous capacity analyses conducted in partnership with the Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) have demonstrated that the City's existing zoning and available land supply provide adequate theoretical capacity to accommodate projected residential demand. Much of this potential comes from infill and redevelopment opportunities, in addition to units already in the development pipeline.

General Forecast Context

Looking ahead to 2045, the Comprehensive Plan considers a range of growth scenarios, low, moderate, and strong, to bracket the amount of new households and jobs that Cambridge may reasonably expect. The Planning Commission has historically favored a growth scenario that fully anticipates the potential impacts on land use, housing, transportation, and community facilities.

By comparing the results of the Development Capacity Analysis with population and household projections prepared by the Maryland Department of Planning, the City can ensure that zoning, infrastructure planning, and community investments remain aligned with anticipated needs. This alignment allows Cambridge to accommodate growth responsibly while maintaining adequate public services and preserving community character.

2045 Forecast

For Cambridge, the Development Capacity Analysis considers both existing zoning and planned development projects already in the pipeline. The analysis indicates that the City has the capacity to support projected growth, particularly under a strong growth scenario. This finding reflects several factors:

1. Infrastructure readiness: Cambridge's water and sewer systems have sufficient capacity to accommodate residential and nonresidential growth under current projections, reducing risk of over-committing resources.
2. Strategic role in county growth: As the center of population and employment in Dorchester County, Cambridge is positioned to absorb a substantial share of regional growth, supported by long-standing investments in infrastructure and community facilities.
3. State projections: According to the Maryland Department of Planning, Dorchester County is expected to add 3,350 households between 2010 and 2030. It is reasonable to anticipate that a significant portion of these households will locate in Cambridge, where infrastructure and services are already in place to support development.

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Purpose

The Development Capacity Report evaluates how much additional growth the City of Cambridge can accommodate under current land use policies, zoning regulations, and physical and environmental constraints. This analysis identifies both opportunities and limitations for new residential and nonresidential development and supports informed updates to the City's Comprehensive Plan, Capital Improvements Program, and growth management policies.

Methodology

This report follows the Maryland Department of Plannings Development Capacity Analysis (DCA) framework, which estimates future build-out potential based on:

- Existing land use and zoning designations
- Development constraints such as the Critical Area, 100-year floodplain, wetlands, and protected open space
- Current infrastructure and service boundaries (e.g., water, sewer, roads)
- Recent development trends and redevelopment activity

The analysis uses GIS-based parcel data and zoning maps to estimate theoretical build-out, distinguishing between developable, partially constrained, and constrained lands.

Existing Conditions

City Area and Setting

The City of Cambridge encompasses approximately 10.3 square miles (6,600 acres), situated along the Choptank River in Dorchester County. Cambridge serves as the County's principal population and employment center, with a diverse mix of historic neighborhoods, commercial corridors, industrial sites, and waterfront areas.

Current Land Use Composition

Land Use Type	Acres	Percent of City Area
Residential	2,050	31%
Commercial / Mixed Use	620	9%
Industrial	480	7%
Public / Institutional	510	8%
Parks / Open Space	410	6%
Agricultural / Vacant	1,900	29%
Total	6,600	100%

Data generalized from city GIS and MDP Land Use/Land Cover 2023

Environmental Constraints

Environmental and regulatory overlays significantly influence Cambridge's developable land base:

Environmental Constraints

Constraint	Approx. Acres	% of City Area	Notes
100-Year Floodplain	~2,300 ac	~35%	Based on FEMA DFIRM Zones AE, A, and VE.
Tidal Wetlands	~550 ac	~8%	Along Choptank River, Cambridge Creek, and associated tributaries.
Non-Tidal Wetlands	~120 ac	~2%	Found along drainage swales and low-lying interior parcels.
Critical Area Overlay	~1,200 ac	~18%	Includes Resource Conservation and Limited Development Areas.

Combined, these areas constrain nearly half of the City's land area from full development potential. Portions remain suitable for redevelopment, low-impact uses, or adaptive design approaches.

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Residential Development Capacity

Vacant and Redevelopable Parcels

- Approximately 1,900 acres of land remain undeveloped or underutilized.
- After removing environmental constraints and rights-of-way, roughly 950 acres remain potentially developable.
- Based on zoning allowances, the potential yield is summarized below:

Vacant and Redevelopable Parcels			
Zoning District	**Typical Density**	**Developable Acres**	**Potential Units**
R-1, R-2 (Low Density)	2–4 du/ac	300	750–1,200
R-3, R-4 (Medium Density)	6–10 du/ac	220	1,300–2,000
Downtown / Mixed Use	12–30 du/ac	90	1,000–2,500
Planned Development / Infill	Variable	150	600–1,000
Total Potential	—	760 ac	~3,650–6,700 units

du/ac = dwelling units per acre

Redevelopment and Infill

Approximately 15–20% of the City's parcels are underdeveloped relative to their zoning capacity. Targeted infill, adaptive reuse, and mixed-use redevelopment—particularly in downtown, along U.S. Route 50, and in the waterfront areas—could yield an additional **800–1,000 dwelling units** without expanding the City's footprint.

Non-residential Development Capacity

Non-residential Development Capacity			
Land Use Category	**Potentially Developable Acres**	**Floor Area Ratio (FAR)**	**Potential New Floor Area**
Commercial / Mixed-Use	160	0.3–0.5	2.1–3.5 million sq ft
Industrial / Employment	220	0.25–0.4	2.4–3.8 million sq ft
Institutional / Public	50	0.3	650,000 sq ft

These estimates represent long-term potential under current zoning, not short-term market absorption. Much of the City's future employment growth is expected through redevelopment of existing corridors and waterfront sites rather than greenfield expansion.

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Infrastructure and Growth Readiness

Cambridge maintains robust public water and sewer systems but must modernize capacity in some older neighborhoods and expansion areas. Transportation access via U.S. Route 50 supports regional connectivity, though local street connectivity, multimodal options, and flood-resilient infrastructure are ongoing planning priorities.

Infrastructure capacity is sufficient to support moderate growth within the current city limits, provided infill and redevelopment follow coordinated phasing and stormwater improvements.

Development Capacity Summary

Development Capacity Summary		
Category	**Estimated Potential**	**Notes**
Residential	3,650–6,700 units	Mix of infill, redevelopment, and vacant land build-out
Commercial / Mixed Use	2.1–3.5 M sq ft	Mostly corridor and downtown redevelopment
Industrial	2.4–3.8 M sq ft	Expansion at Cambridge-South Dorchester corridor
Population at Full Build-out	~20,000–24,000	Current population ≈ 13,000 (U.S. Census 2020)

Policy Implications

1. **Direct growth toward infill and existing infrastructure.**
   Encourage redevelopment of underutilized properties within the existing urban fabric before extending infrastructure outward.

2. **Integrate hazard mitigation with land use policy.**
   Because one-third of Cambridge lies within the 100-year floodplain, flood-resilient design, adaptive reuse, and managed retreat may be necessary in certain locations.

3. **Coordinate land use with environmental stewardship.**
   Maintain strong buffers, open space networks, and critical area protections while facilitating compact development patterns.

4. **Align zoning with housing and employment goals.**
   Consider adjustments to promote mixed-use and “missing-middle” housing types in walkable districts, balancing affordability and character.

5. **Track and update build-out potential.**
   Reassess development capacity every five years using updated parcel data, zoning amendments, and infrastructure improvements.

Conclusion

Cambridge retains significant development capacity within its existing boundaries. With more than 750 acres of developable land and opportunities for intensification and adaptive reuse, the City can accommodate several decades of residential and employment growth while preserving environmental resources and community character. The key to achieving this balanced growth lies in strategic infill, flood-resilient redevelopment, and alignment between land use and infrastructure investment.

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Land Use Considerations for the Future

The Land Use Element provides the guiding framework for how Cambridge will grow, reinvest, and conserve its resources over the next two decades. While zoning and subdivision ordinances regulate specific parcels and projects, the land use plan sets a broader vision for the City's desired development patterns, community forms, and environmental stewardship. The intent of this element is to guide growth in a way that strengthens Cambridge's historic character, revitalizes dis-invested neighborhoods, enhances the working waterfront, and conserves farmland and natural areas, while expanding housing and employment opportunities for residents.

Cambridge's existing land use patterns reflect both its historic roots and its recent development trends. The City is predominantly residential, with compact historic neighborhoods surrounding a small downtown business and civic core. Industrial uses are concentrated along the railway, while U.S. Route 50 functions as a regional commercial corridor. The waterfront along the Choptank River represents one of Cambridge's greatest assets, yet much of its potential remains unrealized. Recent development on the City's edges,through annexations and subdivisions, has increased housing supply but also diverted investment away from downtown and older neighborhoods.

A key issue facing Cambridge is the misalignment between its zoning map and long-term growth needs. Large amounts of land remain zoned for single-family residential use, even though approved development already exceeds projected housing demand. Meanwhile, zoning in the downtown core is restrictive, limiting the density and mix of uses needed to support a vibrant civic and cultural center. Corridor reinvestment also remains a challenge: Washington Street, Maryland Avenue, Race Street, Cedar Street, and U.S. Route 50 serve as primary gateways but lack cohesive design, pedestrian orientation, and consistent reinvestment.

At the same time, Cambridge has unique opportunities to reposition itself for long-term resilience and vitality. The Downtown/Waterfront Development District has the potential to become the community's focal point for higher-density housing, civic investment, mixed-use redevelopment, and cultural activity. Projects like the Cambridge Waterfront 20/20 Concept Plan and the Sailwinds redevelopment are poised to reconnect the City to its waterfront and expand public access. Investments in corridor beautification, missing middle housing, and adaptive reuse of underutilized buildings can help address disinvestment while offering a broader range of housing and employment choices. Protecting wetlands, floodplains, and open spaces along the waterfront and low-lying areas will also safeguard natural resources and improve resilience to flooding.

Together, these conditions highlight the importance of directing growth inward, leveraging existing infrastructure, and prioritizing reinvestment in the City's core. By balancing new development with conservation, and aligning zoning with the City's policy vision, Cambridge can foster a more vibrant, resilient, and equitable future.

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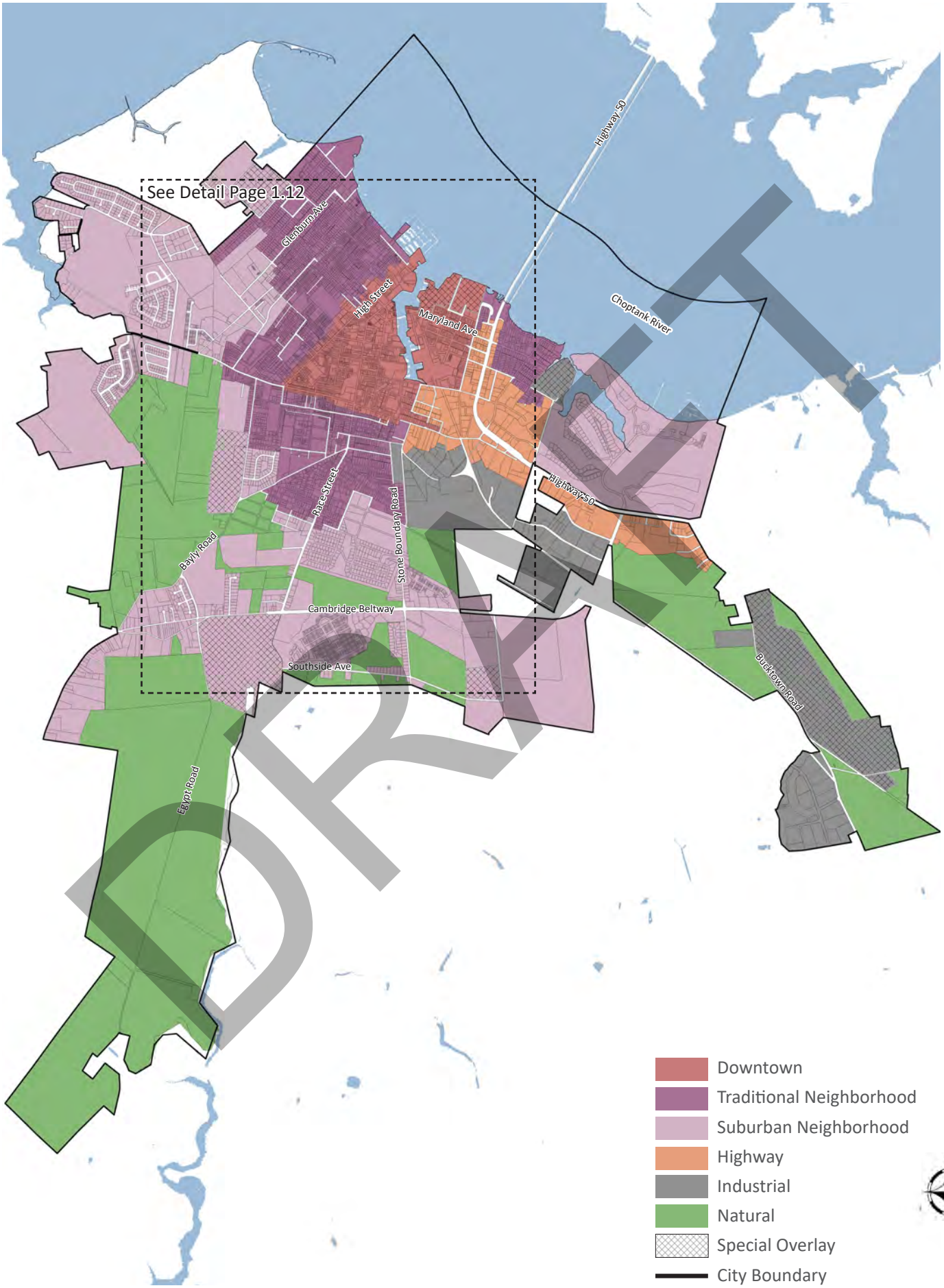
FUTURE CHARACTER AREAS



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Future Character Areas

The Future Character Areas Map organizes the City into six character area types, reflecting existing development patterns and logical areas for future growth. Its purpose is to guide new development so that it remains compatible with existing neighborhoods while advancing the City's long-term vision. Each character area can be further refined into more specific place types and transects. Together, these areas provide a framework for future street design and land use that supports the community's desired identity and goals.

The Future Character Areas for Cambridge are Downtown, Traditional Neighborhood, Suburban Neighborhood, Highway, Industrial, and Natural. In addition to the character areas, there are Neighborhood Centers, Neighborhood Crossroads and Institutional / Campus Overlay areas identified.

Neighborhoods

The "neighborhood" is the increment of planning. A single freestanding "neighborhood" is equivalent to a village. The "typical neighborhood" is limited in size to a 5-minute walk (0.25 miles, 1320 feet) from center to edge, and often includes the "needs of daily life" (shelter, food, clothing, employment, physical space).

A "neighborhood's" streets are in an interconnected network, allowing multiple routes to destinations. The "neighborhood's" streets are spatially defined by buildings. "Neighborhood" buildings are diverse in function but compatible in terms of size and configuration on the lot. The civic buildings of a "neighborhood" are located in important areas, for example, the termination point of a prominent street or fronting upon a civic space. "Neighborhood" open space should be defined, for example (park, greenway, green, square, plaza, pocket plaza, pocket park, playground, community garden, natural preserve).

Human-scale streets and civic spaces provide opportunity for social interaction, as the activities of daily life within a "neighborhood" are within walking distance. As a result, auto trips should be reduced, meaning less traffic and lower costs.

Finally, within a "neighborhood" there is a full range of housing types and workplaces, allowing age and economic integration.

Special Overlays

Waterfront Overlay: Cambridge's waterfront is one of its most defining assets, serving as both an economic engine and a cultural landmark. The waterfront accommodates a mix of maritime industries, tourism, and public access area along the Choptank River and Cambridge Creek. The working waterfront supports activities such as boat building, seafood processing, and marine supply, while also offering recreational amenities, including parks, marinas, and waterfront dining.

The overlay district ensures that water dependent uses are preserved, while also encouraging compatible public uses that activate the shoreline. Investments in boardwalks, trails, and storm-resilient infrastructure will enhance the waterfront's role as both a community gathering space and a regional destination.

Institutional Campuses: Cambridge is home to a number of important institutional facilities that serve both the City and Dorchester County. These include schools, the hospital and civic complexes that require specialized planning due to their unique form and function.

- **Schools and Colleges**: Cambridge hosts public schools as well as the Chesapeake College Cambridge Center. These facilities require large sites with parking, open space, and athletic fields.
- **Civic Complexes**: Municipal facilities, including City Hall, public safety, the airport, wastewater, and utilities, form the operational backbone of the community. These uses require sites and specialized building forms, distinct from residential or commercial districts.

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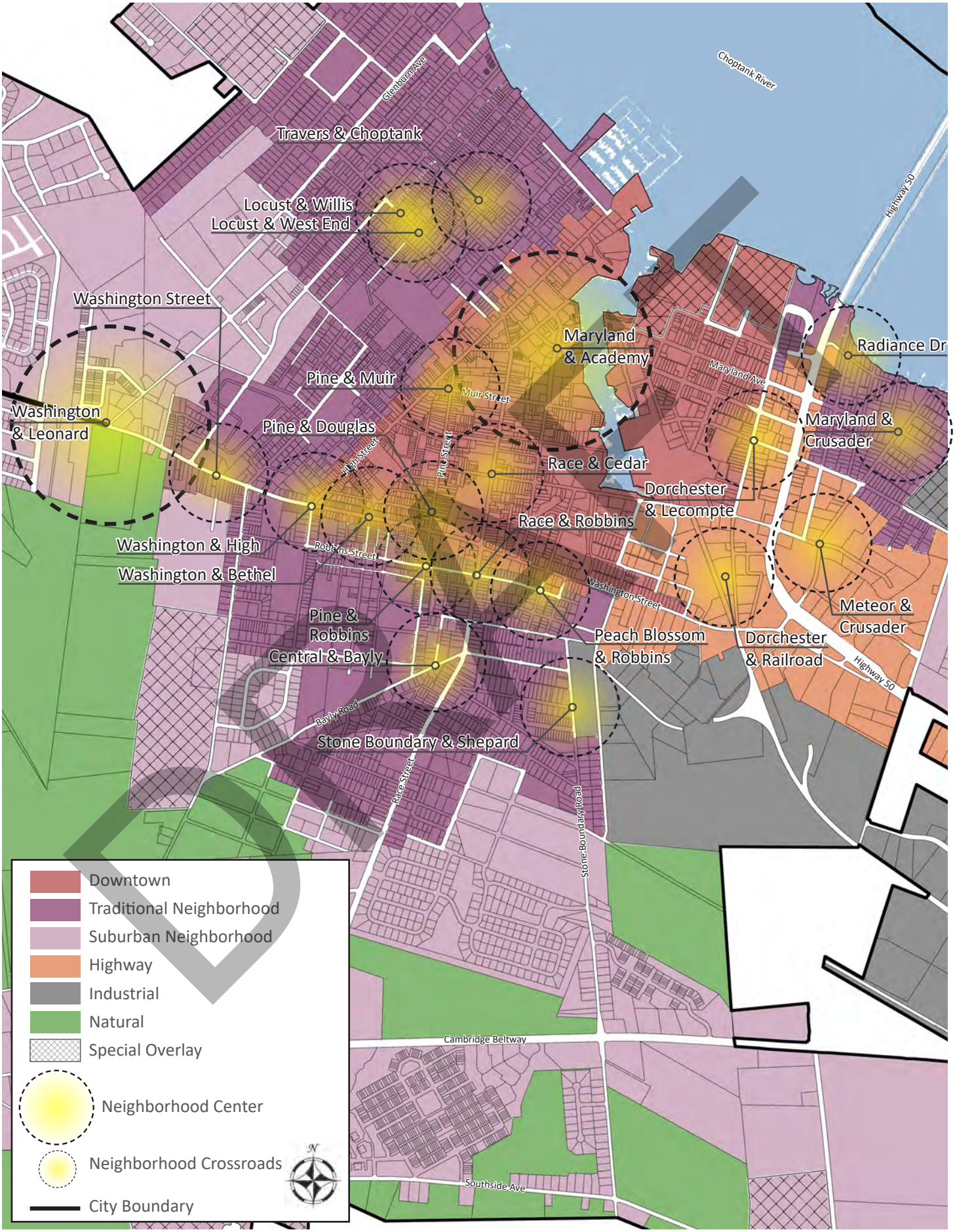
FUTURE CHARACTER AREA DETAIL



Neighborhood Centers

Neighborhood Centers typically include several blocks, generally across a 1/8th to 1/4th mile radius, as the center of a larger neighborhood pedestrian shed. These centers tend to have a more urban character with taller buildings closely lining downtown streets. Buildings are two to four stories in height and contain a mix of uses with active ground floor spaces including commercial uses and residential entrances. Parking is located on-street and in mid-block locations. Ideally, a public space, such as a park, plaza, square, or green is the focal point of these centers.

Identified Neighborhood Centers:

- Washington Street and Leonard Lane
- New Neighborhood by Maces Lane and Washington Street

Neighborhood Crossroads

Neighborhood Crossroads cover a smaller area than Neighborhood Centers, typically incorporating the parcels and buildings around an intersection serving as a community hub. They are composed of a mix of uses including commercial shopfronts and live work units that are typically one to two stories in height.

Identified Neighborhood Crossroads:

- Travers St & Choptank Ave
- Locust St & Willis St
- Locust St & West End Ave
- High St and Spring St
- Locust St, Poplar St, and High St
- Maryland Ave & Academy St
- Poplar St, Gay St, & Race St
- Pine St and Muir St
- Maryland Ave & Trenton St
- Cherry St by the waterfront
- Muir St & Academy St
- Race St & Cedar St
- Pine St & Douglas St
- Washington St & Greenwood Ave
- Washington St & High St
- Washington St & Bethel St
- Pine St and Robbins St
- Central Ave & Bayly Rd
- Stone Boundary Rd & Sheppard Ave
- Race St & Robbins St
- Peach Blossom Ave & Robbins St
- Aurora St by the river
- Radiance Dr
- Maryland Ave & Crusader Rd
- Dorchester Ave & Lecompte St
- Dorchester Ave by the railroad
- Meteor Ave & Crusader Rd

Building Placement

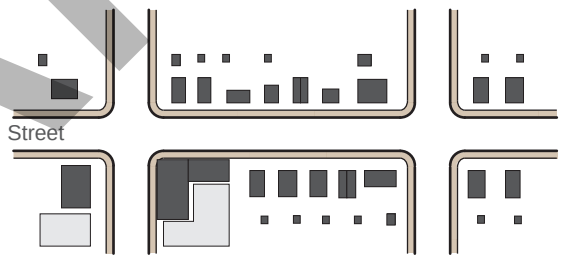
Neighborhood Centers and Crossroads have different building types and placement than typical for the Character Area.

A. Build to Zones should be shallower than surrounding areas, with buildings brought up to the sidewalk and directly adjacent to neighboring structures.

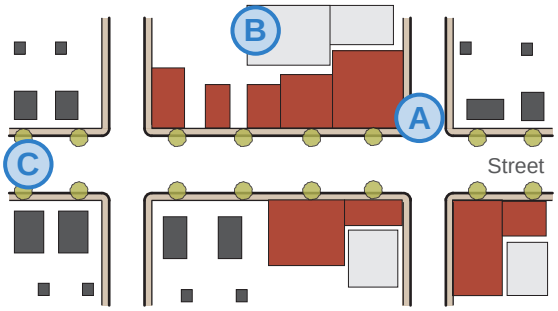
B. Parking should be on-street or behind buildings.

C. Access should be prioritized by walking or biking and efforts should be made to ensure safe and comfortable conditions for these modes of travel. Wider sidewalks and street trees are critical for creating a space where people want to be. They also provide a location for outdoor seating.

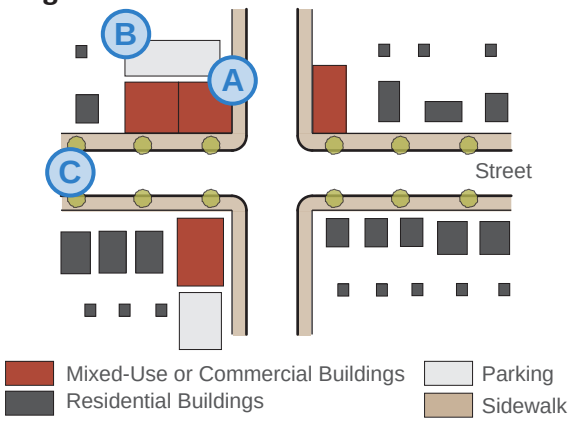
Typical Conditions



Neighborhood Center



Neighborhood Crossroads



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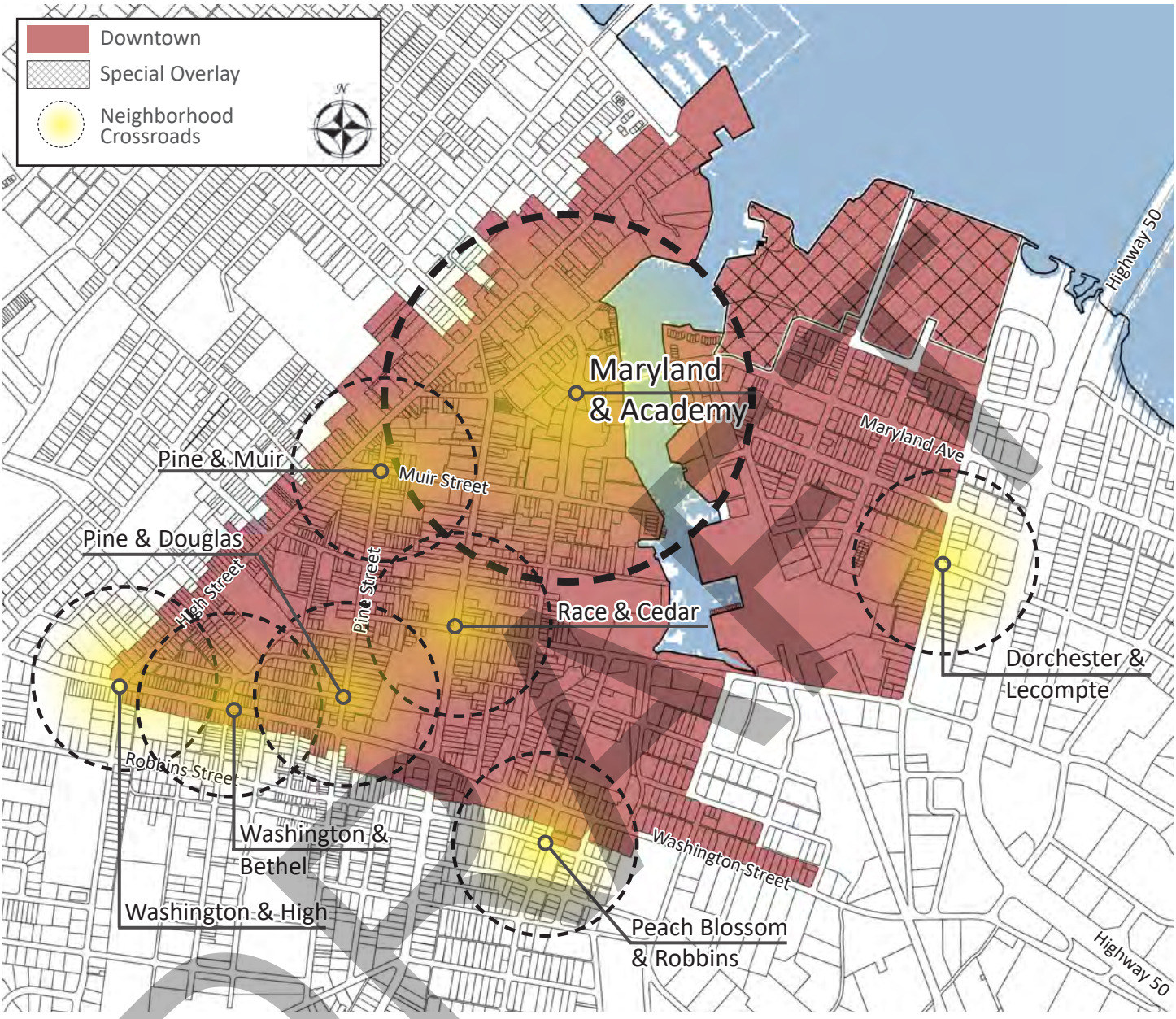
Downtown Future Character Area



Downtown

Downtown represents the City's most concentrated area of urban activity, serving as the center of economic, cultural, and civic life. It is the community's gathering place and a hub for mixed-use development, with multi-story buildings that combine commercial, office, and residential uses. Multifamily housing and attached townhomes provide an important transition between downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. Encouraging additional residential uses on upper floors of downtown buildings remains a priority, supporting downtown's vibrancy, walkability, and long-term prosperity.

The Downtown includes the Waterfront Overlay District as well as numerous neighborhood crossroads including:

- High St & Spring St
- Locust St, Poplar St and High St
- Maryland Ave & Academy St
- Poplar St, Gay St & Race St
- Pine St & Muir St
- Maryland & Trenton St
- Cherry St by the waterfront
- Muir St & Academy St
- Race St and Cedar St
- Pine St & Douglas St
- Washington St and Greenwood Ave
- Washington & High St
- Washington & Bethel
- Peach Blossom Ave and Robbins St
- Aurora St by the river

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Representative Images of the Downtown Future Character Area

Buildings that line the sidewalk with shopfronts and transparent windows create an engaging streetscape. Outdoor seating, landscaping, and pedestrian amenities further activate the public realm and support downtown commerce.

Downtown streets are designed for walkability, with on-street parking, wide sidewalks, and regularly spaced shade trees. These elements create a comfortable pedestrian environment while supporting local businesses.

Downtown buildings are most often two to three stories in height, though taller structures are also present. Upper stories are well-suited for office or residential use, adding both diversity and vitality to downtown activity.

The Courthouse stands as a prominent civic landmark. Its distinctive architecture, scale, and siting set it apart from surrounding structures, reinforcing its role as an anchor of downtown identity and public life.

Compact blocks with shopfronts and mid-block parking illustrate downtown's fine-grained development pattern and diversity of building types.

Townhouses with front stoops and defined street edges demonstrate a housing type that adds character and variety to traditional neighborhoods. Walkable urban fabric.

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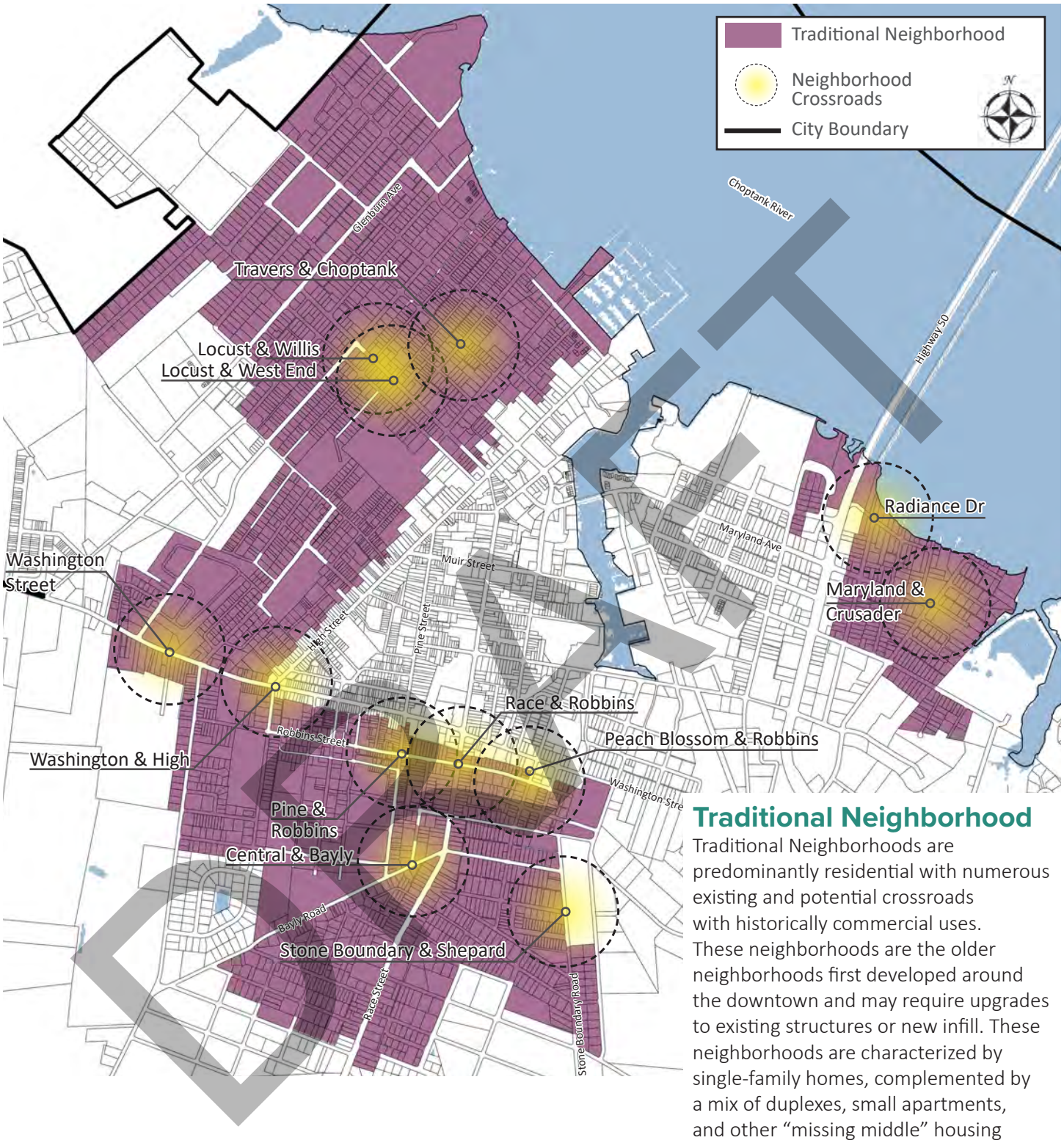
Traditional Neighborhood Future Character Area



Neighborhood Crossroads in the Traditional Neighborhood area include:

- Travers St & Choptank
- Locust St & Willis St
- Locust St & West End
- Washington St & Greenwood Ave
- Washington St & High St
- Pine St and Robbins St
- Central Ave & Bayly Rd
- Stone Boundary Rd and Sheppard Ave
- Race St & Robbins St
- Peach Blossom Ave & Robbins St
- Radiance Dr
- Maryland Ave & Crusader Rd

Traditional Neighborhood

Traditional Neighborhoods are predominantly residential with numerous existing and potential crossroads with historically commercial uses. These neighborhoods are the older neighborhoods first developed around the downtown and may require upgrades to existing structures or new infill. These neighborhoods are characterized by single-family homes, complemented by a mix of duplexes, small apartments, and other “missing middle” housing types. These areas often integrate commercial and civic uses at key intersections and neighborhood centers, where development patterns become slightly denser and more walkable. New development should reinforce the historic residential character while supporting opportunities for a diverse housing mix and accessible community amenities.

Representative Images of the Traditional Neighborhood Future Character Area

Traditional neighborhoods feature tree-lined streets with sidewalks, where small front yards and fences define the transition from public to private space.

Homes often include front porches set close to the sidewalk, fostering interaction between neighbors and enhancing the street's social life.

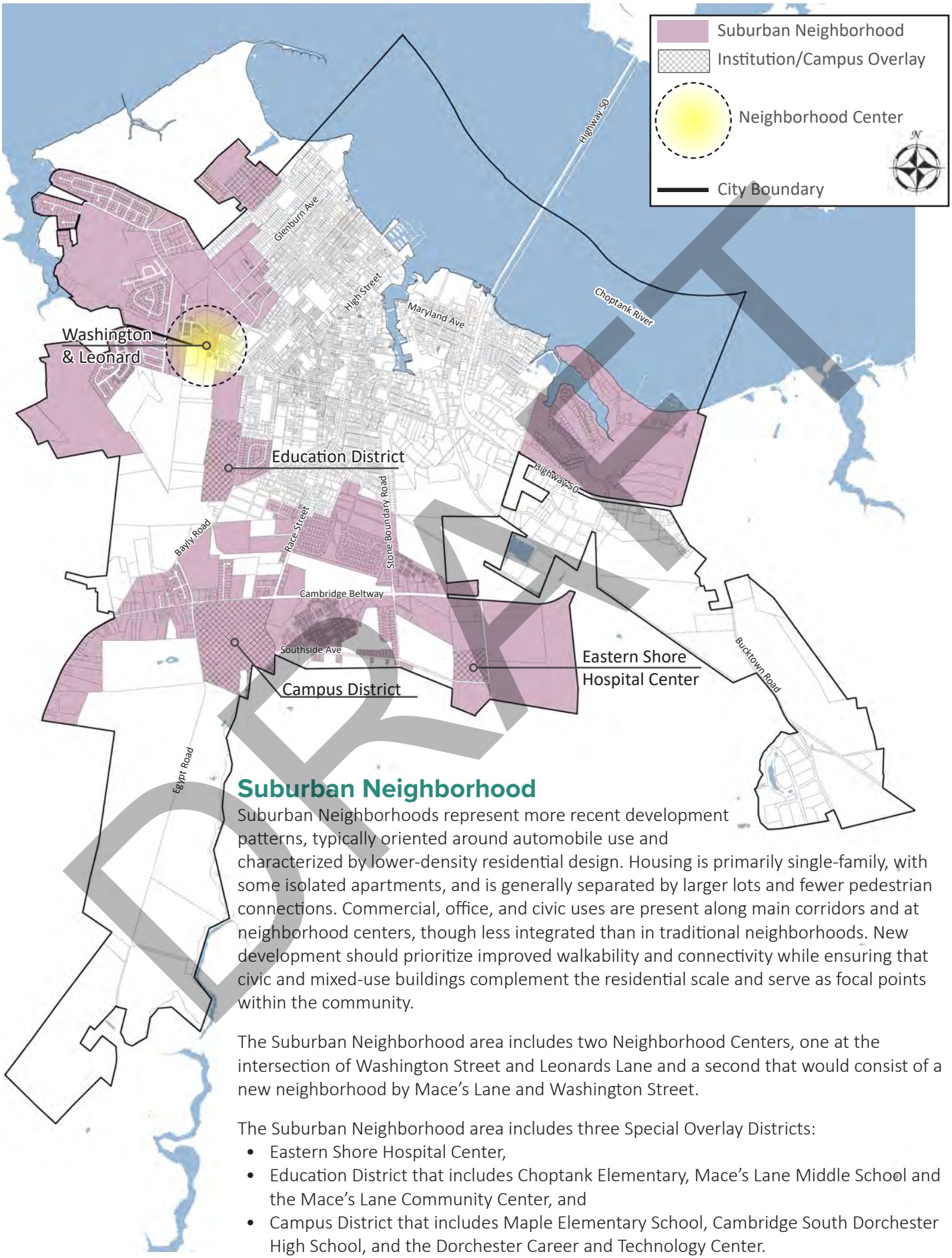
Multi-family buildings are designed to blend with single-family homes, maintaining neighborhood scale while offering more housing choices.

A mix of single-family house types on modest lots provides diverse housing options at different price points within the same neighborhood.

Neighborhoods are organized in small blocks with a connected street grid, ensuring that homes are within walking distance of parks, schools, and community amenities.

Commercial buildings front directly onto sidewalks, creating walkable centers that serve nearby residents and support neighborhood vitality.

Future Character Area Suburban Neighborhood



Suburban Neighborhood

Suburban Neighborhoods represent more recent development patterns, typically oriented around automobile use and characterized by lower-density residential design. Housing is primarily single-family, with some isolated apartments, and is generally separated by larger lots and fewer pedestrian connections. Commercial, office, and civic uses are present along main corridors and at neighborhood centers, though less integrated than in traditional neighborhoods. New development should prioritize improved walkability and connectivity while ensuring that civic and mixed-use buildings complement the residential scale and serve as focal points within the community.

The Suburban Neighborhood area includes two Neighborhood Centers, one at the intersection of Washington Street and Leonards Lane and a second that would consist of a new neighborhood by Mace's Lane and Washington Street.

The Suburban Neighborhood area includes three Special Overlay Districts:

- Eastern Shore Hospital Center,
- Education District that includes Choptank Elementary, Mace's Lane Middle School and the Mace's Lane Community Center, and
- Campus District that includes Maple Elementary School, Cambridge South Dorchester High School, and the Dorchester Career and Technology Center.

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Representative Images of the Suburban Neighborhood Future Character Area

Suburban neighborhoods often feature large lots with deep front and side setbacks, accommodating some of the community's largest homes.

Clusters of apartments are interspersed within suburban areas, adding housing variety while maintaining a low-density character.

Detached single-family houses of varying sizes dominate these neighborhoods, reinforcing a spacious residential feel.

Suburban commercial and mixed-use buildings are typically set back from the street, landscaped, and supported by side or rear parking areas.

Street networks tend to form large, irregular blocks with limited connectivity. Homes are set back on wide lots, emphasizing privacy and separation.

Retail corridors are lined with large-scale commercial buildings, often buffered with landscaping and supported by expansive rear or side parking areas.

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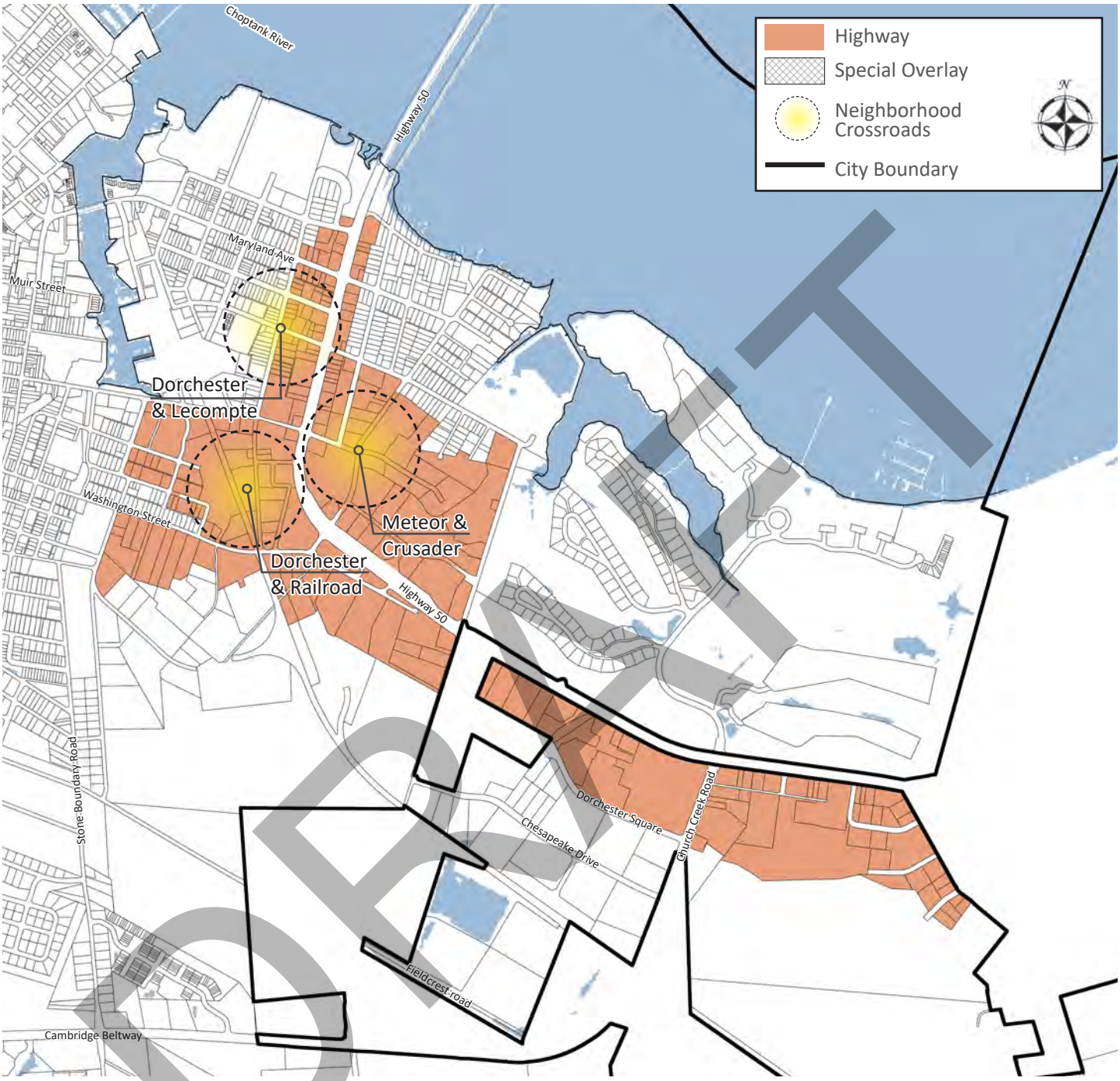
Future Character Area Highway



Highway

The Highway Character Area identifies locations suited for auto-oriented development primarily along Highway 50. This area includes big-box retail, large-footprint commercial buildings, national chains, drive-thrus, and other auto-related uses. These areas typically feature larger lots with deeper setbacks, convenient highway access, and separation from traditional neighborhoods. Because this type of development does not integrate well with walkable, mixed-use areas, it is most appropriate along Highway 50 as it passes through town and heads out to the east.

However, there are three Neighborhood Crossroads within the Highway area:

- Dorchester Avenue and the rail line—Has civic and commercial opportunities with the potential for residential
- Meteor Avenue and Crusader Road—Infill in this area could create a walkable crossroads
- Dorchester Avenue and Lecompte Street—On the edge of the downtown.

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Representative Images of the Highway Future Character Area

Highway corridors often accommodate large-format retail, such as big-box stores, in locations buffered from nearby residential neighborhoods.

Corridor areas can also include institutional uses, such as technical colleges, adding to the mix of destinations along major roadways.

Deep setbacks allow space for landscaping and sidewalks, though buildings closer to the street could improve the experience for both drivers and pedestrians.

High-speed traffic and limited pedestrian access make these areas auto-dependent, suggesting that redevelopment efforts may be better focused in more walkable locations.

Corridor areas are typically defined by large blocks and major thoroughfares, with limited street connectivity and traffic patterns dominated by automobiles.

Retail centers in these locations can benefit from improved site and landscape design to enhance their visual character and customer experience.

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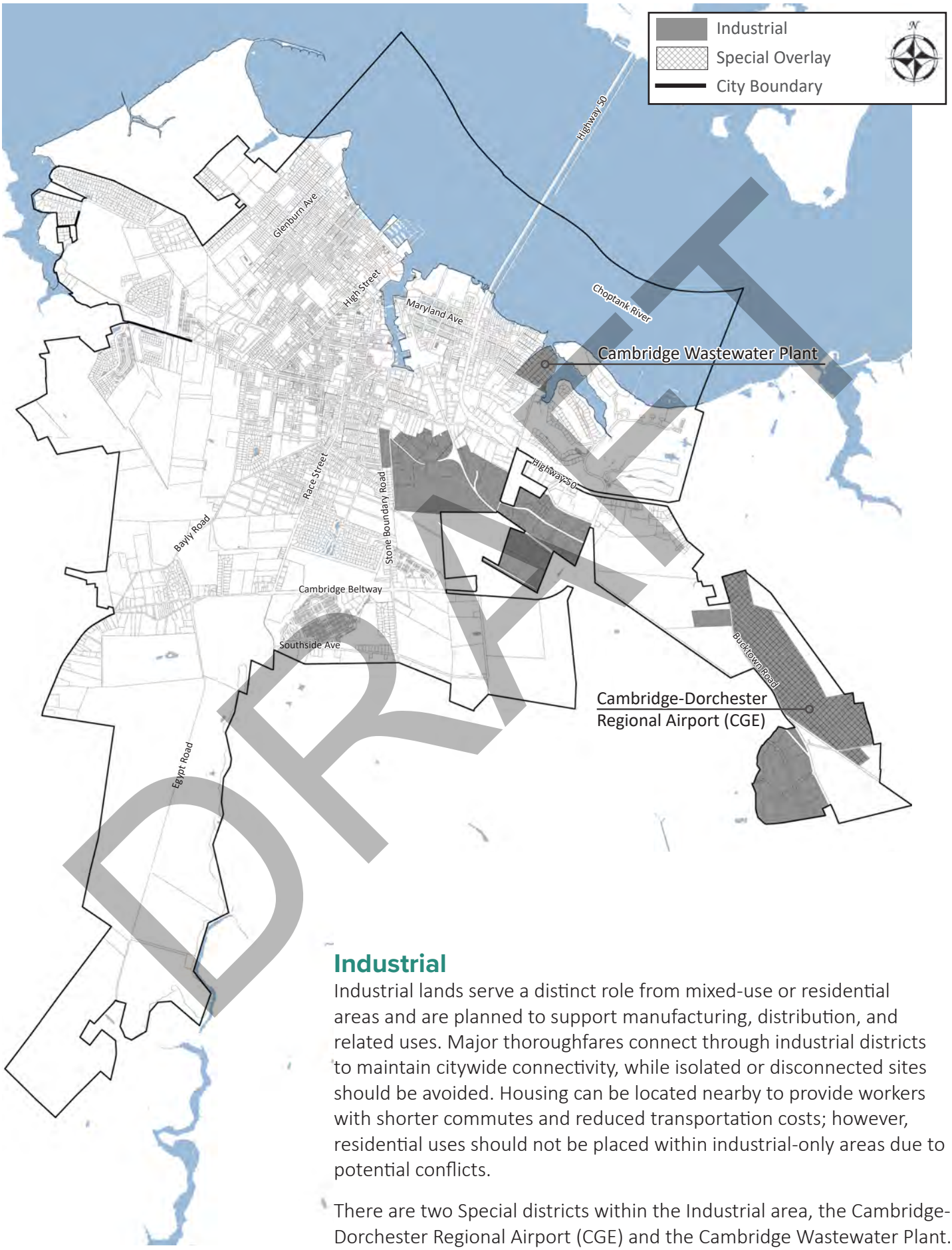
Future Character Area Industrial



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Industrial

Industrial lands serve a distinct role from mixed-use or residential areas and are planned to support manufacturing, distribution, and related uses. Major thoroughfares connect through industrial districts to maintain citywide connectivity, while isolated or disconnected sites should be avoided. Housing can be located nearby to provide workers with shorter commutes and reduced transportation costs; however, residential uses should not be placed within industrial-only areas due to potential conflicts.

There are two Special districts within the Industrial area, the Cambridge-Dorchester Regional Airport (CGE) and the Cambridge Wastewater Plant.

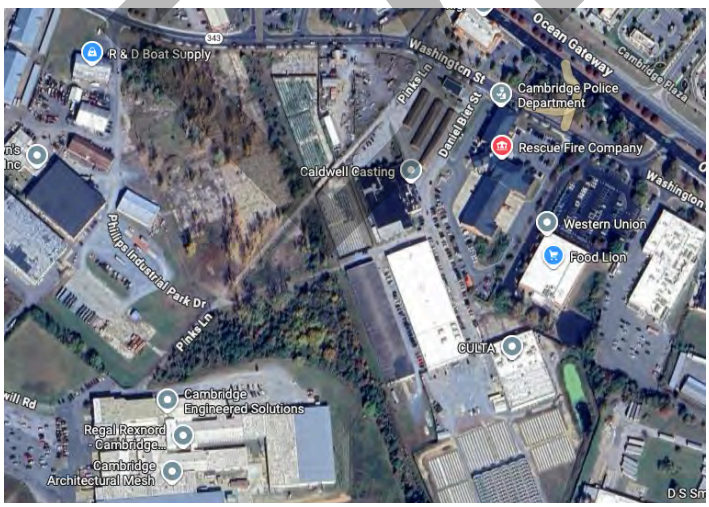
Representative Images of the Industrial Future Character Area

Wide setbacks in industrial areas can provide opportunities for landscaping and buffers, helping to ease transitions between industrial sites and nearby neighborhoods.

Industrial corridors must accommodate high volumes of truck traffic and loading activity, requiring roadway designs that support heavy vehicles and frequent deliveries.

Most industrial buildings are single-story structures designed for efficiency and ease of access for freight and logistics operations.

Industrial areas include a wide range of uses, from warehousing and distribution to heavy manufacturing, processing facilities, and specialized plants.



Industrial districts are often organized into large blocks with expansive parking and loading areas. Proximity to highways, rail, and freight routes is essential for their success.

Modern fulfillment and distribution centers require vast sites and building footprints. With careful planning, these large-scale facilities can coexist with natural features such as wetlands and green buffers.

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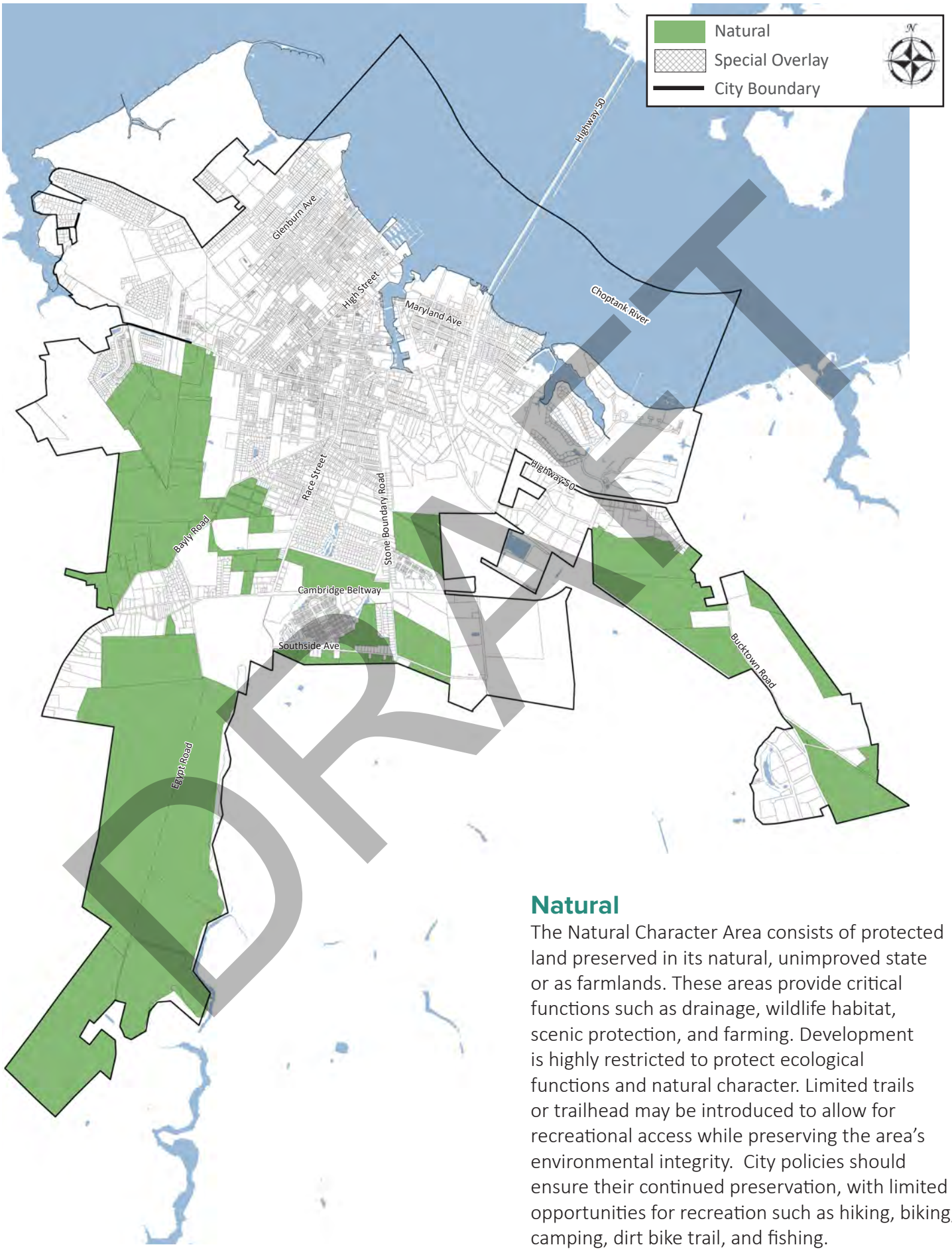
Future Character Area Natural



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Natural

The Natural Character Area consists of protected land preserved in its natural, unimproved state or as farmlands. These areas provide critical functions such as drainage, wildlife habitat, scenic protection, and farming. Development is highly restricted to protect ecological functions and natural character. Limited trails or trailhead may be introduced to allow for recreational access while preserving the area's environmental integrity. City policies should ensure their continued preservation, with limited opportunities for recreation such as hiking, biking, camping, dirt bike trail, and fishing.

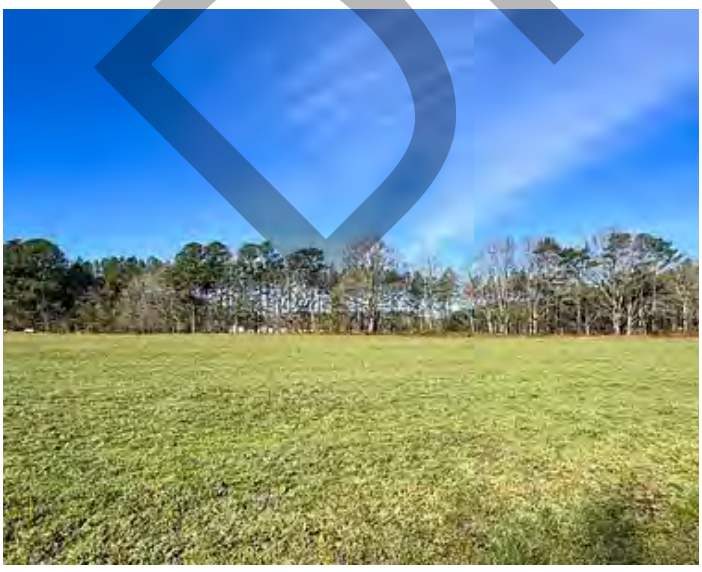
Representative Images of the Natural Future Character Area

Natural lands in Cambridge consist of forests

Unpaved roads provides access for walking and biking

Marshlands near Cambridge

Shorelines of Cambridge



Urban-rural edge landscapes

Natural vegetation

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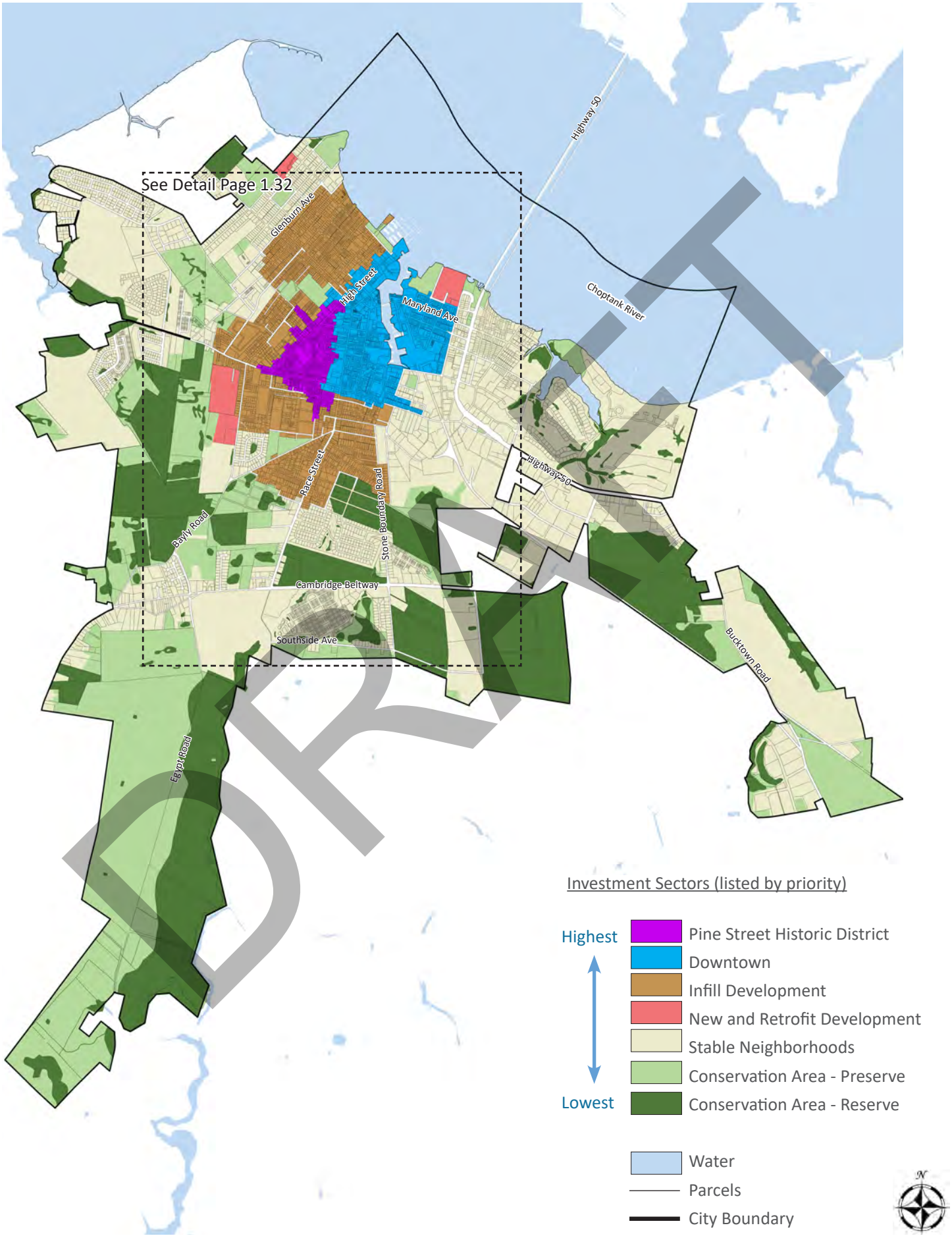
INVESTMENT SECTOR MAP



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Investment Sector Map

The Investment Sector Map prioritizes areas for development that make the best use of existing public investments in roads, utilities, and services. While not a zoning map, it guides decisions related to zoning, land subdivision, infrastructure upgrades, and service provision in coordination with the Future Character Areas Map. The sectors highlight key opportunities for reinvestment—Including the Pine Street Historic District, Downtown, infill areas, new and retrofit compact neighborhoods, stable neighborhoods, and conservation zones—each shaped by its underlying Future Character Area.

Top priority is given to places with significant existing infrastructure and walkable frameworks, particularly Downtown and the Pine Street area. The next level includes areas where substantial investment already exists but where a more compact development pattern would better serve the community. Infill areas with traditional neighborhood layouts follow in priority. Stable Neighborhoods remain open to redevelopment, but major public investment should be directed elsewhere to maintain the City's compact form.

Development should be avoided in Conservation Areas where natural systems, recreational value, or hazards such as floodplains make preservation the best long-term strategy. Focusing growth in infill and walkable areas enables stronger neighborhood centers while protecting sensitive lands. Each Investment Sector is described in detail below, listed from highest to lowest development priority.

Pine Street Historic District

The Pine Street Historic District Investment Sector is a key part of Cambridge's Downtown Future Character Area, envisioned as a place where focused public and private reinvestment can strengthen both the neighborhood and the broader Downtown. The City intends to prioritize improvements here—supporting economic opportunity, assisting with repairing or replacing aging housing where necessary, and collaborating with landlords to raise property conditions. The goal is to elevate this historic area while ensuring that longtime residents feel valued and welcome, creating a more vibrant and inclusive downtown for everyone.

Downtown

The Downtown Investment Sector aligns with the Downtown Future Character Area and represents the heart of Cambridge's civic and cultural life. Private investment is already emerging here, and the City should actively encourage and support that momentum. A thriving, shared downtown strengthens the entire community—providing a welcoming place for residents and offering visitors opportunities to experience local history, shopping, and dining. With established infrastructure that can be upgraded as needed, Downtown is uniquely positioned to accommodate a wide range of building types and land uses, ensuring it continues to meet the diverse needs of the City and its residents.

New and Retrofit Development Areas

New development and redevelopment areas have been identified at several key locations in the City where there is a need for walkable mixed-use centers. These areas are currently vacant, not developed, or developed in a suburban, single use fashion and are not well integrated with the surrounding communities.

These areas are proposed to be retrofitted with walkable centers which will serve multiple purposes. They will provide new amenities and shops for the surrounding neighborhoods with greater connectivity, to the community. These centers will also accommodate new residents by providing new housing options for a wider variety of housing needs, such as apartments, townhouses, and missing middle housing types to complement the existing adjacent single-family homes.

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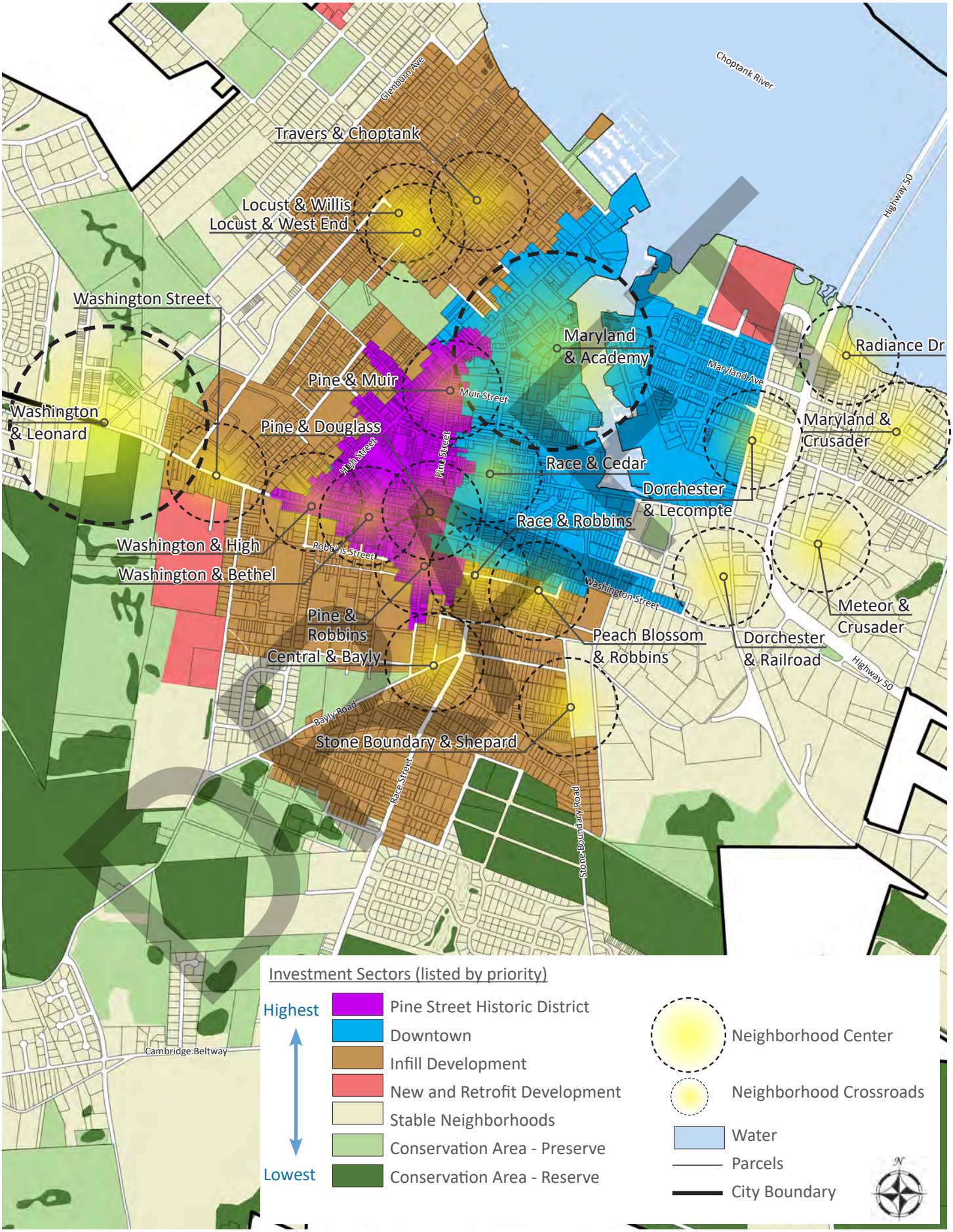
INVESTMENT SECTOR MAP DETAIL



Infill Development Areas

The infill areas identified are older, traditional neighborhoods extending outward from Downtown. After years of disinvestment, they now contain a mix of single-family homes, vacant lots, and abandoned structures. Despite these challenges, these neighborhoods maintain a highly connected street network with small blocks, frequent intersections, and close proximity to Downtown's amenities—key strengths that support reinvestment.

Infill development should include single- and multi-family homes designed to complement the historic character, along with small neighborhood-serving commercial or mixed-use buildings at neighborhood crossroads. With infrastructure and public services already in place, reinvestment can build on earlier commitments while improving housing conditions for existing residents and creating new, high-quality housing options for future families. This approach strengthens neighborhood vitality and accommodates growth without imposing additional infrastructure costs on the City.

Stable Neighborhood Areas

These areas are generally more stable and should be protected and enhanced. This is not to say that change should not occur here, but rather other portions of the City can be better served with an increased focus of policy and resources.

Conservation Areas

Conservation areas are those defined areas that should be set aside for public open space and to serve ecosystem services. These areas are located in low lying parts of the City where water naturally drains. Conservation area land could provide access to natural areas for hiking and biking and can serve as a greenway network coordinated with the city's trails to form a large, continuous greenway.

There are two types of conservation areas:

Preserve

This is land that is truly protected. Conservation area land that is already permanently preserved by law or contract, with little or no development rights, is included in this category. This area consists of full parcels and portions of parcels that meet at least one of the criteria below:

- Listed farmland
- Wetlands and wetland buffers
- 100 year floodplains
- Maryland Critical Resource Conservation Area

Reserve

This category includes parcels of land that may have value as community and natural open space and may have additional oversight, but are not protected from development. The reserve category represents the highest priority areas for open-space protection. Future efforts for land preservation should focus on protecting land under this designation. This area may consist of the following:

- Vacant woodlands
- Non-listed farmlands
- Living Resources Sensitive Areas Group 2
- Municipal parks
- Zoned Resource Conservation Area

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Goal 1-1: Use the Future Character Areas and Investment Sectors Maps to guide growth, redevelopment, and conservation in a manner consistent with the City's vision.

Objective 1-1.1 Guide development with clear mapping tools

Policy 1-1.1.1: Adopt the Future Character Areas Map

The Future Character Areas Map is a base map that defines distinct Character Areas for all of Cambridge. This map defines six character areas that reflect the desired type and form of development in part of the City.

Policy 1-1.1.2: Adopt the Investment Sector Map

Maintain and utilize the Investment Sector Map to prioritize areas for development, redevelopment, and conservation, maximizing the value of past infrastructure investments.

Policy 1-1.1.3: Integration of Character and District Maps in land use decisions

The City shall use the Future Character Areas Map and the Investment Sector Map together to inform land use, development, and infrastructure decisions. These maps shall serve as guiding tools for evaluating development proposals, shaping capital investments, and coordinating redevelopment efforts. The City will ensure that decision-making reflects each area's intended development form, desired land use pattern, and infrastructure needs.

Policy 1-1.1.4: Consistency Between Land Use and Zoning

The City shall maintain alignment between the Future Character Areas Map, the Investment Sector Map, and Cambridge's zoning regulations. All zoning updates, district standards, and permitting actions shall be reviewed for consistency with these maps to reinforce the City's long-term vision. The Future Character Areas Map should also guide street and public realm design, ensuring land use, preservation priorities, and mobility planning work cohesively.

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Goal 1-2: Revise and amend the City's zoning and land development regulations to support the Future Character Areas and Investment Sector Maps and the goals and policies of this document

Objective 1-2.1	**Modernize Cambridge's zoning and land development regulations to support the Future Character Areas and Investment Sector Map, ensuring regulations are clear, consistent and aligned with the City's long-term vision**

Policy 1-2.1.1: Unified Development Ordinance

Adopt a single, city-wide Unified Development Ordinance using a form-based approach. This code should be simple to use, visually clear, and consolidate all development-related ordinances into one document.

Policy 1-2.1.2: Historic character protection

Protect and enhance Cambridge's historic character by ensuring new regulations preserve the integrity and identity of historic districts and civic landmarks.

Policy 1-2.1.3: Zoning alignment with Character Areas

Amend zoning and development regulations to reflect the intent and qualities of the Future Character Areas Map, ensuring development patterns reinforce Cambridge's vision.

Policy 1-2.1.4: Street connectivity

Encourage a greater interconnection of internal streets to improve circulation, accessibility, and neighborhood cohesion.

Policy 1-2.1.5: Neighborhood amenities

Promote the inclusion of small parks, community gardens, and civic gathering spaces within neighborhoods to strengthen community life.

Policy 1-2.1.6: Housing variety

Allow a wide range of housing types—including multi-family, townhomes, and accessory units—to promote affordability, diversity, and complete communities.

Policy 1-2.1.7: Street design diversity

Permit a variety of street types that prioritize pedestrian safety and comfort, and establish interconnected networks with small block sizes.

Policy 1-2.1.8: Public space design

Require high-quality, well-designed public spaces. All newly created streets and open spaces should be accessible and open to the public.

Policy 1-2.1.9: Environmental protection

Safeguard natural features such as floodplains, wetlands, and stream beds through protective zoning and design standards.

Policy 1-2.1.10: Mixed-use zoning

Encourage mixed-use zoning to integrate housing, commerce, and civic uses in appropriate areas, fostering walkable, vibrant neighborhoods.

Policy 1-2.1.11: Parking review

Undertake a citywide review of parking requirements and update them to better align with desired outcomes for each Future Character Area, including flexibility for shared or reduced parking.

Policy 1-2.1.12: Design assistance for development

Offer design and planning assistance for both public and private projects to ensure compliance with Future Character Area goals. Support may include concept drawings, illustrative designs, and expedited approvals.

Policy 1-2.1.12: Encourage infill and mixed-use

Reduce excess residential zoning capacity by encouraging mixed-use, higher density, and infill within existing neighborhoods rather than on vacant greenfield sites.

Policy 1-2.1.13: Modernize downtown zoning for flexibility and density

Update zoning in the downtown core to allow flexible building types, higher density, and reduced parking requirements.

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Goal 1-3: Ensure Downtown remains the historic, cultural, and economic heart of Cambridge by fostering a walkable, mixed-use environment that celebrates its historic character, supports economic activity, and provides diverse cultural and civic opportunities

Objective 1-3.1

Encourage the adaptive reuse and improvement of downtown's existing building stock to expand housing, office, retail, and cultural opportunities

Policy 1-3.1.1: Adopt reuse of upper floors

Support the rehabilitation of upper floors of downtown buildings for residential, office, or cultural uses. Review and update building codes, including parking standards, to remove barriers to reuse. Explore financial incentives to encourage investment.

Policy 1-3.1.2: Encourage infill mixed-use development

Promote new multi-story, mixed-use infill development on vacant lots. Buildings should front sidewalks with transparent facades, maintaining pedestrian activity and reinforcing downtown's historic character.

Objective 1-3.2

Improve access and mobility in downtown while reducing reliance on-site parking requirements

Policy 1-3.2.1: Flexible parking strategies

Evaluate options for reducing or eliminating on-site parking requirements. Encourage shared parking solutions, off-site parking, and expanded use of on-street parking to support redevelopment.

Objective 1-3.3

Expand civic, cultural and community spaces that reinforce Downtown's role as a community hub

Policy 1-3.3.1: Integrate large downtown projects into the urban fabric

Ensure that new downtown complexes (such as hotels or convention centers) are integrated into the existing street grid and urban fabric, avoiding isolated "superblocks" that disrupt walkability.

Policy 1-3.3.2: Invest in the civic buildings and shared spaces

Encourage the development and improvement of civic buildings and shared community spaces downtown. Provide public parking and civic amenities that serve both residents and visitors.

Policy 1-3.3.3: Support downtown arts and culture

Advance cultural initiatives to enhance Downtown as a hub of art, entertainment, and community activity.

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Goal 1-4: Designate and maintain adequate land for industrial uses while ensuring that facilities do not adversely affect public health, safety, or the surrounding community

Objective 1-4.1 Support industrial development

Policy 1-4.1.1: Industrial business growth
Promote the development of industrial uses and related businesses within designated industrial areas to strengthen the local economy.

Policy 1-4.1.2: Protect residential areas
Prohibit primary industrial access through residential neighborhoods to minimize traffic, noise, and safety conflicts.

Policy 1-4.1.3: Restrict incompatible uses
Discourage the siting of residential development within industrial-only areas to reduce land-use conflicts.

Policy 1-4.1.4: Adaptive reuse of industrial sites
Encourage the repurposing of obsolete or underutilized industrial properties within Downtown for new employment, creative, or mixed-use opportunities, while retaining the industrial character.

Goal 1-5: Protect and enhance natural open spaces for environmental health, ecosystem services, and recreation opportunities for residents

Objective 1-5.1 Preserve critical conservation areas, including environmentally sensitive lands, flood-prone areas, and locations that provide essential ecosystem services

Policy 1-5.1.1: Identify and protect priority zones
Designate priority conservation zones, defined as lands along waterways, flood-prone and low-lying areas, and other environmentally sensitive locations most vulnerable to ecological degradation, and adopt ordinances to limit incompatible development.

Policy 1-5.1.2: Permanent land protection
Secure long-term protection of sensitive lands through tools such as land trusts, conservation easements, and the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program.

Objective 1-5.2 Expand and connect green infrastructure

Policy 1-5.2.1: Urban park development
Create new urban parks and green spaces that integrate with the city's trail and sidewalk network, offering accessible recreational opportunities.

Policy 1-5.2.2: Greenway connectivity
Establish a connected network of trails, parks, and open spaces that follow natural drainage corridors to link neighborhoods and conserve ecological systems.

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Objective 1-5.3 Expand regional partnerships that conserve farmland, forests, and sensitive habitats

Policy 1-5.3.1: Coordinate regional preservation efforts

Partner with Dorchester County, conservation organizations, and private landowners to protect farmlands, forests, and natural habitats that provide flood protection, scenic value, and economic benefits through eco-tourism and ecosystem services.

Goal 1-6: Protect environmentally significant lands

Objective 1-6.1 Safeguard critical natural resources and scenic landscapes within City limits

Policy 1-6.1.1: Collaborative land and transportation protection

Partner with Dorchester County, state agencies, and land trusts to preserve natural lands. Address land use and transportation issues to prevent incompatible development.

Policy 1-6.1.2: Maryland coordination for protection

Work with the U.S. Highway Administration, Maryland DOT, and rail providers to ensure transportation activities do not negatively natural areas.

Policy 1-6.1.3: Public access and stewardship

Maintain and improve public access points, such as scenic roads and trails. Provide resources to mitigate littering, trespassing, and other threats to these natural resources.

Policy 1-6.1.4: Direct growth away from sensitive lands

Limit new development in flood-prone or environmentally sensitive areas and encourage clustering development to preserve open space.

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Goal 1-7: Support compact, walkable redevelopment in designated neighborhood centers and key redevelopment areas that increases housing choice, reduces reliance on long car trips, and strengthens neighborhood centers

Objective 1-7.1	Guide redevelopment toward mixed-use, walkable centers.

Policy 1-7.1.1: Small area plans for key centers
Prepare detailed plans for New and Retrofit Development areas, focusing on walkability and prioritizing Neighborhood Centers.

Policy 1-7.1.2: Incentivize for private investment
Establish financial or regulatory incentives to support redevelopment projects in New and Retrofit Development areas, with an emphasis on neighborhood-serving uses.

Goal 1-8: Expand housing, employment, and recreation opportunities to address unmet needs

Objective 1-8.1	Encourage diverse building types and uses in key redevelopment areas

Policy 1-8.1.1: Prioritize strategic projects
Place New and Retrofit Development projects at the front of approval agendas to accelerate delivery of needed housing and services.

Policy 1-8.1.2: Streamlined approval processes
Provide eligibility for fast-track approvals and date-certain review timelines for priority redevelopment projects.

Policy 1-8.1.3: Expand housing options
Encourage a range of housing types—including apartments, townhouses, duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, cottage courts, and small-scale multifamily buildings—to meet diverse household needs while strengthening walkable neighborhood patterns.

Policy 1-8.1.4: Promote vertical mixed-use
Support multi-story buildings with residential uses above ground-floor commercial to create complete and vibrant neighborhoods.

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Goal 1-9: Strengthen the character of existing neighborhoods by encouraging context-sensitive infill

Objective 1-9.1 — Encourage redevelopment of underutilized parcels to strengthen neighborhood vitality

Policy 1-9.1.1: Redevelopment in context

Promote the redevelopment of vacant and underutilized parcels in and around historic neighborhoods in a manner consistent with their scale, form, and character, avoiding suburban or high-rise models. These sites should add housing, shopping, employment, and entertainment opportunities for nearby residents.

Policy 1-9.1.2: Neighborhood planning for infill

Prepare small area plans for infill sites that address land use, building form, and neighborhood compatibility, with an emphasis on integrating new development into existing residential areas while supporting affordable housing opportunities.

Goal 1-10: Leverage public and private investment in infill areas

Objective 1-10.1 — Support infill redevelopment with financial and infrastructure tools

Policy 1-10.1.1: Financial tools for redevelopment

Develop strategies for financial assistance such as public-private partnerships, utility relief, or targeted incentives to support projects within infill areas.

Policy 1-10.1.2: Maintain core public services in central areas

Oppose relocating essential public facilities such as government offices, post offices, and schools to peripheral suburban areas in order to maintain accessibility and strengthen infill neighborhoods.

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Goal 1-11: Expand housing variety though small-site infill in existing neighborhoods

Objective 1-11.1	Diversify residential building types through small-scale infill that complements existing neighborhood character

Policy 1-11.1.1: Support "Missing Middle" housing

Encourage multi-unit or clustered housing types—such as duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, courtyard apartments, and bungalow courts—that are compatible with the scale and form of existing single-family homes.

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2: Municipal Growth

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The Municipal Growth Area refers to the land outside Cambridge's current city limits that has been identified as suitable for potential annexation and future development. Identification of this area is required under Maryland law and ensures that the City's long-range planning accounts for the land, infrastructure, and environment resources needed to accommodate projected household and employment growth. While the 2011 and 2018 Comprehensive Plans projected modest household growth, subsequent analyses emphasized that Cambridge can accommodate most future development within its existing limits.

In Cambridge, the designated Municipal Growth Area provides for only modest expansion of City limits, primarily along the northeastern edge of the City, where previous annexations have created a shared boundary with Dorchester County. These lands include a mix of developed and undeveloped parcels currently under County jurisdiction. The Municipal Growth Area rationalizes this boundary and allows the City and County to coordinate infrastructure investment, land use planning, and service delivery in a more consistent manner.

Future growth within the Municipal Growth Area will be carefully managed to ensure that:

- Land use changes are consistent with Cambridge's long-range vision and state projections;
- Development is supported by adequate water, sewer, transportation, and community facilities;
- Sensitive environmental resources, including streams, floodplains, and habitats, are protected from adverse impacts;
- Growth occurs in a compact, logical manner that strengthens Cambridge's role as the center of population and employment in Dorchester County.

Current Conditions

Since 2000, the number of households in Cambridge has grown steadily, averaging about one percent per year. By 2010, the City had approximately 5,144 households, reflecting gradual but consistent residential growth, possibly driven by new housing development and the reoccupation of previously vacant units. As of the most recent American Community Survey estimates, Cambridge is home to approximately 5,396 households. Growth has stemmed from both modest new housing production and improved utilization of existing housing stock.

The Development Capacity Analysis for Cambridge was completed by the Maryland Department of Planning in partnership with City staff during the preparation of the 2011 Comprehensive Plan Update. At the time of the study, Cambridge's total capacity was estimated at 6,920 units, which included approximately 4,698 units already in the development pipeline. This analysis provided a benchmark for understanding how much growth Cambridge could accommodate under existing zoning and why additional expansion of city limits was not proposed at that time.

Community Concerns

Community feedback emphasized that while Cambridge is poised for modest growth, residents and stakeholders want to ensure that expansion occurs responsibly and aligns with the City's long-term vision. Participants expressed concern that unmanaged growth or annexation could strain infrastructure, impact sensitive areas, and alter the City's compact character. Key concerns include:

Infrastructure Capacity and Service Delivery:

Residents emphasized that growth should not exceed the City's ability to provide reliable water, sewer, and transportation infrastructure. Many expressed concern that expanding into new areas before maximizing existing capacity could strain municipal budgets and reduce service quality.

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Coordinated Growth: Public input highlighted the need for stronger coordination with Dorchester County when considering future annexations. Residents want to ensure that new development outside the existing city limits occurs only when it provides mutual benefits, such as shared infrastructure, improved access, or employment opportunities, and does not create competition for limited resources.

Environmental Protection and Flood Risk: Community members noted that portions of the Municipal Growth Area include low-lying or flood-prone lands. Participants stressed that annexation and development in these areas should incorporate resilient design, stormwater management, and buffer protections to prevent increased flood risk and loss of sensitive habitats.

Housing and Community Character: Stakeholders supported creating new housing opportunities, particularly for workforce and moderate-income residents, but cautioned that such development must align with existing neighborhood patterns and infrastructure. Growth should strengthen community character, not lead to sprawling subdivisions disconnected from downtown.

Economic Growth and Employment Balance: While residents value Cambridge's potential as a regional employment hub, they emphasized that future growth must balance economic opportunity with environmental and social sustainability. Participants expressed support for compact, mixed-use development that promotes business growth while preserving farmland and open space.

Strategies for Addressing Concerns

1. Prioritize Infill and Redevelopment

- Focus future growth within existing city limits to make efficient use of current infrastructure and public services. Vacant and underutilized sites should be redeveloped for housing, employment, and mixed-use opportunities before extending the City's boundaries

2. Coordinate Annexation with Infrastructure Capacity

- Evaluate any potential annexation based on infrastructure readiness, fiscal sustainability, and public benefit. Growth should occur only where adequate water, sewer, and transportation capacity can be provided without burdening existing residents.

3. Integrate Environmental Protection into Growth Decisions

- Ensure that new development avoids flood-prone, low-lying, or environmentally sensitive areas. Incorporate green infrastructure, stormwater management, and resilient design to safeguard wetlands, buffers, and the Choptank River watershed.

4. Strengthen Regional and Intergovernmental Coordination

- Collaborate with Dorchester County, the Maryland Department of Planning, and regional partners to align land-use priorities, infrastructure investment, and growth boundaries. Joint planning and shared data collection will help guide responsible annexations and support balanced regional growth.

5. Encourage Compact, Walkable Development Patterns

- Promote neighborhood-scale, mixed-use development that supports walking, biking, and public transit. Compact design reduces infrastructure costs, preserves farmland, and enhances Cambridge's identity as a historic, accessible small city.

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6. Support Economic Development within Existing Boundaries

- Direct commercial and industrial investment toward infill sites and revitalization corridors. Redevelopment of brownfield and waterfront parcels can expand the local tax base, provide employment opportunities, and minimize the need for outward expansion.

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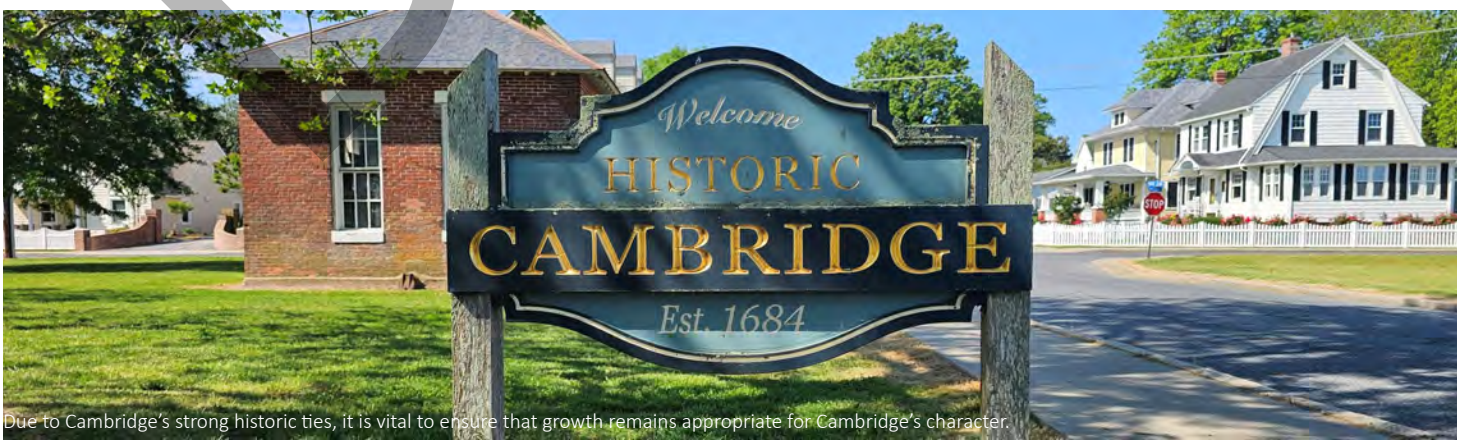

Due to Cambridge's strong historic ties, it is vital to ensure that growth remains appropriate for Cambridge's character.

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Goal 2-1: Manage growth to maintain Cambridge's compact form

Objective 2-1.1	Direct growth toward infill and redevelopment opportunities within current city limits

Policy 2-1.1.1: Infill prioritization
Encourage the redevelopment of vacant or underutilized properties before extending city boundaries.

Policy 2-1.1.2: Infrastructure efficiency
Evaluate the cost-effectiveness of serving new development versus reinvestment within existing service areas.

Policy 2-1.1.3: Urban services boundary
Maintain a clear distinction between the developed urban area and surrounding agricultural or rural lands.

Goal 2-2: Coordinate annexation and infrastructure planning so that growth occurs where infrastructure can support it and public resources are used efficiently.

Objective 2-2.1	Link annexation decisions to infrastructure readiness and fiscal impact

Policy 2-2.1.1: Annexation criteria
Limit annexation to cases where it improves boundary continuity, supports employment opportunities, or enables strategic infrastructure extensions.

Policy 2-2.1.2: Service capacity reviews
Require formal assessments of water, sewer, and transportation capacity as part of annexation evaluations and prior to approval of significant new development.

Policy 2-2.1.3: Public benefit requirement
Demonstrate measurable community benefits—such as affordable housing, job creation, or improved services—before annexation is approved.

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Goal 2-3: Protect environmental resources and sensitive lands

Objective 2-3.1.1 Integrate environmental protection into all land-use and growth decisions

Policy 2-3.1.1: Floodplain protection
Restrict development within flood-prone and low-lying areas to reduce future hazard risks.

Policy 2-3.1.2: Natural resource safeguards
Maintain buffers along wetlands, streams, and habitats during annexation and development review.

Policy 2-3.1.3: Resilient design integration
Require the use of green infrastructure, stormwater management, and resilient site design for new development in or near sensitive areas.

Goal 2-4: Strengthen regional collaboration and intergovernmental coordination with regional partners

Objective 2-4.1.1 Coordinate planning, infrastructure, and resource management efforts with regional partners

Policy 2-4.1.1: Shared planning framework
Coordinate planning, infrastructure, and resource management efforts with regional partners—such as the Maryland Department of Planning, Dorchester County, and nearby municipalities—to ensure consistent growth boundaries, shared service planning, and coordinated infrastructure improvements.

Policy 2-4.1.2: Growth boundary alignment
Ensure that designated Municipal Growth Areas and Priority Funding Areas remain consistent across county plans and local plans.

Policy 2-4.1.3: Joint infrastructure investments
Explore cost-sharing agreements for water, sewer, and transportation improvements that serve shared growth areas, such as locations where municipal and county growth boundaries overlap or where both jurisdictions anticipate coordinated development.

Policy 2-4.1.4: Regional Infrastructure Study
The City or County should consider a Regional Infrastructure Study or Master Plan to evaluate long-term infrastructure needs and coordinate planning, capital investment, and resource management strategies with surrounding municipalities.

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Goal 2-5: Encourage compact, walkable, and mixed-use development

Objective 2-5.1.1	Integrate mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented design into new and infill development

Policy 2-5.1.1: Mixed-use corridors
Encourage redevelopment along key corridors to include a mix of housing, retail, and employment uses.

Policy 2-5.1.2: Walkable neighborhood design
Require new developments to incorporate sidewalks, bike facilities, and street connectivity.

Policy 2-5.1.3: Transportation choice
Support transit-ready and bike-friendly design that reduces automobile dependence and improves local accessibility.

Goal 2-6: Promote economic growth through sustainable land use

Objective 2-6.1.1	Leverage redevelopment and brownfield revitalization to expand economic opportunity

Policy 2-6.1.1: Brownfield reuse
Partner with federal and state agencies to remediate and repurpose brownfield sites for community-serving uses.

Policy 2-6.1.2: Employment generating infill
Direct new commercial and industrial investment toward existing business parks and redevelopment corridors.

Policy 2-6.1.3: Fiscal sustainability
Promote growth patterns that expand the tax base without overextending municipal services or infrastructure.

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3: Sensitive Areas

The Sensitive Areas Element identifies Cambridge's most environmentally significant and vulnerable lands—those that sustain the City's natural systems, protect water quality, and mitigate the impacts of flooding and climate change. Consistent with Maryland's Land Use Article, this chapter addresses areas such as the 100-year floodplain, wetlands, streams and buffers, habitats of threatened and endangered species, and steep slopes. Protecting and restoring these areas is essential to maintaining the City's ecological health, supporting community resilience, and ensuring that future growth occurs in a sustainable manner.

Current Conditions

The Maryland Land Use Article requires that every municipal comprehensive plan include a Sensitive Areas Element. This element must identify and protect streams and their buffers, the 100-year floodplain, habitats of threatened and endangered species, and steep slopes from the adverse impacts of development. Many jurisdictions, including Cambridge, also extend this protection framework to wetlands, agricultural lands, and forested areas that are vital to the community's environmental health and long-term resilience.

Cambridge's location on the south bank of the Choptank River defines both its opportunities and its vulnerabilities. The City encompasses approximately 10 square miles (6,575 acres), much of which is flat and low-lying. With a high water table, poorly draining soils, and elevations that rarely exceed 20 feet above sea level, Cambridge is especially susceptible to flooding. Rain events, strong southerly winds, and high tides frequently combine to inundate low-lying areas, while land subsidence and projected sea-level rise intensify the risks over time.

The City's historic stream channels and natural drainage ways have been altered or lost to development, increasing pressure on the remaining streams and wetlands to provide stormwater storage and filtration. These natural systems, along with forested areas and the Choptank's tidal wetlands, continue to serve as ecological corridors that filter water, reduce erosion, provide habitat, and protect neighborhoods from flood impacts.

Protecting and restoring these sensitive areas is central not only to Cambridge's environmental sustainability but also to the safety, livability, and economic stability of the community.

The 100-year floodplain is another critical feature in Cambridge. A significant portion of the City's land area lies within FEMA-designated flood hazard zones, particularly in neighborhoods and waterfront areas adjacent to the Choptank. With sea-level rise projections indicating increased flood risk, the City must account for these area in future growth management and ensure that development is directed away from zones vulnerable to recurrent flooding.

Wetlands are found both along the waterfront and in interior low-lying areas of Cambridge. Tidal wetlands provide storm surge protection and act as nurseries for fish and other aquatic life, while non-tidal wetlands contribute to flood storage and groundwater recharge. Collectively, these wetlands are a natural defense system against storm events and are essential for maintaining the ecological balance of the City.

Habitats for threatened and endangered species also occur in and around Cambridge. Dorchester County is home to species such as the bald eagle, osprey, and the Delmarva fox squirrel, all of which depend on a combination of forest, wetland, and open space for survival. State and federal inventories identify portions of land within or adjacent to the City limits as sensitive habitat areas, requiring careful coordination with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources when reviewing development proposals.

Although Cambridge is primarily low-lying, areas of steeper slope occur near streams and waterfront embankments. These areas are especially prone to erosion and sedimentation if disturbed. Protecting and stabilizing these slopes is important for both ecological and public safety reasons.

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Forests and tree canopy contribute significantly to the City's livability and resilience. They provide shade, absorb stormwater, sequester carbon, and improve air quality. Urban tree canopy also reduces the urban heat island effect in densely built neighborhoods. As redevelopment occurs, maintaining and expanding canopy coverage will be a priority.

Finally, agricultural lands adjacent to Cambridge form part of Dorchester County's economic base and contribute to the rural setting that surrounds the City. Encroachment from growth and annexation can erode the viability of farming operations. Preserving farmland not only supports the County's economy but also maintains the open space edge that defines Cambridge's boundaries. A portion of agricultural land is located within the City's designated Municipal Growth Area.

In addition to protecting natural resources, Cambridge recognizes the importance of restoring and redeveloping Brownfield sites, properties where the presence or potential presence of contamination may complicate reuse. Many of these sites are remnants of the City's industrial past and are often located near residential neighborhoods or along the waterfront. Through the EPA's Brownfields Grant Program, Superfund Redevelopment Program, and Equitable Development and Environmental Justice Program, communities can receive funding and technical assistance to assess, clean up, and redevelop these underutilized properties. Cambridge can leverage these programs to transform environmentally impaired areas into new opportunities for housing, green space, and economic activity, while reducing public health risks.

Remediating Brownfield sites also supports sustainable land use by encouraging redevelopment within the existing urban footprint, reducing pressure on agricultural and greenfield lands, and contributing to the City's broader goals of resilience and smart growth.

Community Concerns

Protection of Sensitive Lands

Cambridge residents and stakeholders have consistently identified the importance of protecting the City's sensitive areas. The 2011 Comprehensive Plan noted the need to safeguard streams and buffers, the 100-year floodplain, wetlands, and habitats of threatened and endangered species, all of which are legally required under the Maryland Land Use Article. The Plan emphasized that inappropriate development in these areas could lead to water quality degradation, habitat loss, and increased flooding risks.

Flooding, Sea-Level Rise, and Stormwater Management

In the 2018 Comprehensive Plan Update, the development capacity analysis and municipal growth discussions highlighted that large portions of Cambridge lie within the 100-year floodplain. The update reinforced that expansion of City limits should be limited in order to avoid development pressures on environmentally sensitive and flood-prone lands. During the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Charrette, residents expressed significant concerns about flooding, sea-level rise, and stormwater management. These concerns reflect a recognition that wetlands, waterways, and other natural systems are central to the City's identity and long-term sustainability. Residents emphasized that new growth must not compromise the ecological health of the Choptank River or increase vulnerability to flooding in neighborhoods and commercial areas.

Waterfront Protection and Community Resilience

Community members called for making Downtown a vibrant, multi-generational place and for improving connections between the City and the waterfront, both goals that depend on maintaining resilient, flood-protected edges along the Choptank River. Improving streets for walking and biking and creating new mixed-use neighborhoods were also identified as priorities, but participants stressed that these improvements must be carried out in a sustainable manner that avoids impacts to sensitive areas.

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Sustainable Growth and Environmental Stewardship

Residents expressed broad support for proactive environmental management, balancing new development with the protection of natural systems. The community highlighted the importance of planning for sustainable growth that enhances Cambridge's resilience to flooding and climate impacts, preserves natural resources, and protects the ecological integrity of surrounding waterways and green spaces.

Strategies for Addressing Community Concerns

Cambridge will address community concerns about the protection of sensitive areas through a combination of regulatory tools, infrastructure planning, and coordinated conservation efforts. The City's strategies build upon state requirements under the Maryland Land Use Article, the direction set in the 2011 Comprehensive Plan and 2018 Update, and the community's input during the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Charrette.

1. Safeguard Floodplains, Wetlands, and Waterways

- The City will continue to enforce state and federal floodplain management standards to protect wetlands, streams, and buffer areas from inappropriate development. Development will be directed away from flood-prone areas consistent with Maryland's Land Use Article and the City's existing regulatory framework. Cambridge will also encourage the use of natural solutions, such as living shorelines, to stabilize streambanks and reduce erosion while enhancing aquatic habitats.

2. Promote Sustainable and Resilient Development Practices

- Cambridge will promote compact, sustainable development patterns that reduce pressure on environmentally sensitive areas. Future growth will be prioritized in already developed corridors and infill sites to minimize sprawl into floodplains, wetlands, and agricultural lands. Development and redevelopment projects will integrate low-impact design (LID) strategies, such as stormwater filtration systems, permeable pavements, and green roofs, to reduce runoff and improve water quality.

3. Enhance Ecological Health and Green Infrastructure

- The City will strengthen its natural resilience by expanding the urban tree canopy and incorporating green infrastructure throughout the community. This includes the installation of bioswales, rain gardens, and constructed wetlands in both new and existing developments. Cambridge will also support wetland restoration projects in partnership with state and federal agencies. These initiatives will mitigate flooding, improve water quality, and enhance biodiversity within the City's sensitive areas.

4. Coordinate Regional Resource Protection and Growth Management

- Cambridge will coordinate closely with Dorchester County, the Maryland Department of Planning, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, and other regional partners to ensure alignment between growth management and environmental protection goals. This coordination is especially vital for preserving agricultural lands adjacent to the City, which remain vulnerable to development pressures. Through land preservation easements, intergovernmental planning, and growth boundary enforcement, Cambridge will reinforce its compact development model while supporting the County's agricultural economy.

5. Advance Environmental Education and Community Stewardship

- The City will promote environmental awareness and community involvement in the protection of sensitive areas. Public outreach programs, volunteer cleanups, and partnerships with schools and local organizations will encourage residents to take an active role in stormwater management, tree planting, and habitat restoration. By fostering a culture of shared stewardship, Cambridge can ensure that its residents are engaged in long-term conservation and resilience efforts.

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6. Brownfield Redevelopment Opportunities

- Several underutilized or previously developed sites within Cambridge may qualify as Brownfield areas, where potential contamination has limited reinvestment. Redevelopment of these sites can transform environmental liabilities into community assets by restoring land for mixed-use, residential, or recreational purposes. Through programs such as the EPA Brownfields Grant Program and Maryland's Voluntary Cleanup Program, the City can partner with state and federal agencies to assess, remediate, and repurpose these properties. Incorporating green infrastructure, public open space, or affordable housing into remediation projects can further align environmental restoration with economic revitalization and community goals.

Cambridge's long-term resilience will depend on a balanced approach that protects sensitive lands while guiding growth into areas best suited for redevelopment. As development pressure increases along the City's edges, preserving agricultural land and open space becomes essential to maintaining Cambridge's rural character and supporting the County's farming economy. Strategic use of conservation tools, such as easements, growth-management boundaries, and coordinated land-use agreements, can help reinforce this protection while preventing unnecessary encroachment into productive farmland. At the same time, the City has significant opportunities to reinvest in underutilized or environmentally distressed properties within its existing urban footprint.

In addition to meeting state requirements for protecting sensitive areas, Cambridge will continue to pursue targeted flood-protection and shoreline-resilience strategies that combine natural and engineered solutions. Recent partnership efforts between the City and state and federal agencies offer an example of the types of collaborative resilience projects Cambridge may support in the future—initiatives that integrate habitat restoration, flood mitigation, and long-term climate adaptation. These models demonstrate how the City can proactively address community concerns about flooding, sea-level rise, and habitat loss without relying on any single project outcome.

Cambridge's ongoing resilience planning highlights how multi-benefit projects can reduce flood risk while restoring ecological function along vulnerable shorelines and waterways. Typical approaches may include raised embankments, improved stormwater systems, strategic road elevation, and natural-feature enhancements such as living shorelines or marsh restoration. These strategies illustrate the types of nature-based and infrastructure-integrated solutions the City should continue to encourage as opportunities arise.

When applied in future projects, these practices can provide tangible flood-protection benefits while advancing broader community goals related to habitat health, water quality, and climate resilience. For the Comprehensive Plan, they serve as examples of how sensitive-area policies can be put into practice through adaptable, collaborative, and scalable projects—rather than prescriptive commitments to any specific effort.

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Community feedback gathered during the Charrette reinforced the importance of planning for flooding and protecting Cambridge's waterfront neighborhoods. Residents repeatably emphasized the need to "plan for flooding" and to "make Cambridge more resilient for the future". These concerns reflect lived experience in areas that already flood during rain events and high tides, as well as widespread recognition that the City must take proactive steps to adapt to sea-level rise and storm surge.

To address these concerns, the City has begun work on the Cambridge Shoreline Resilience Plan, which identifies priority areas along the Choptank River waterfront. Proposed measures include earth embankments, elevated marsh and living shoreline systems, and rock sill with oyster reef stabilization. Together, these strategies represent a mix of natural and engineered approaches to managing flood risk while enhancing ecological health.

These projects not only mitigate flooding but also support the City's broader vision for a resilient and connected waterfront. As implementation progresses, Cambridge can continue to leverage partnerships with state and federal agencies to secure funding and advance long-term shoreline protection. Together, these investments will safeguard neighborhoods, infrastructure, and natural resources for future generations.

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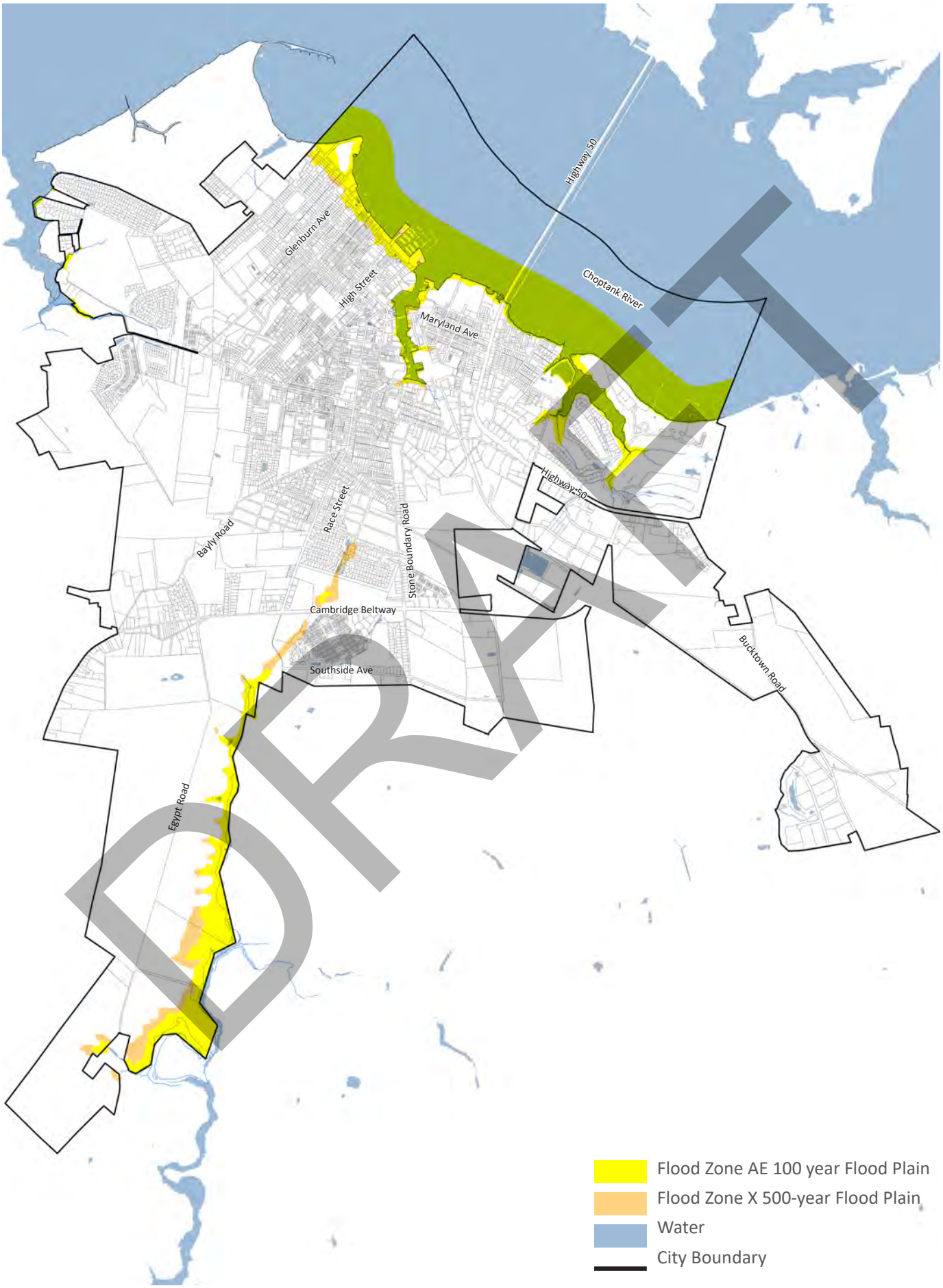
Figure 3.1: Cambridge Shoreline Resilience Plan- Project Map

Flood Zones



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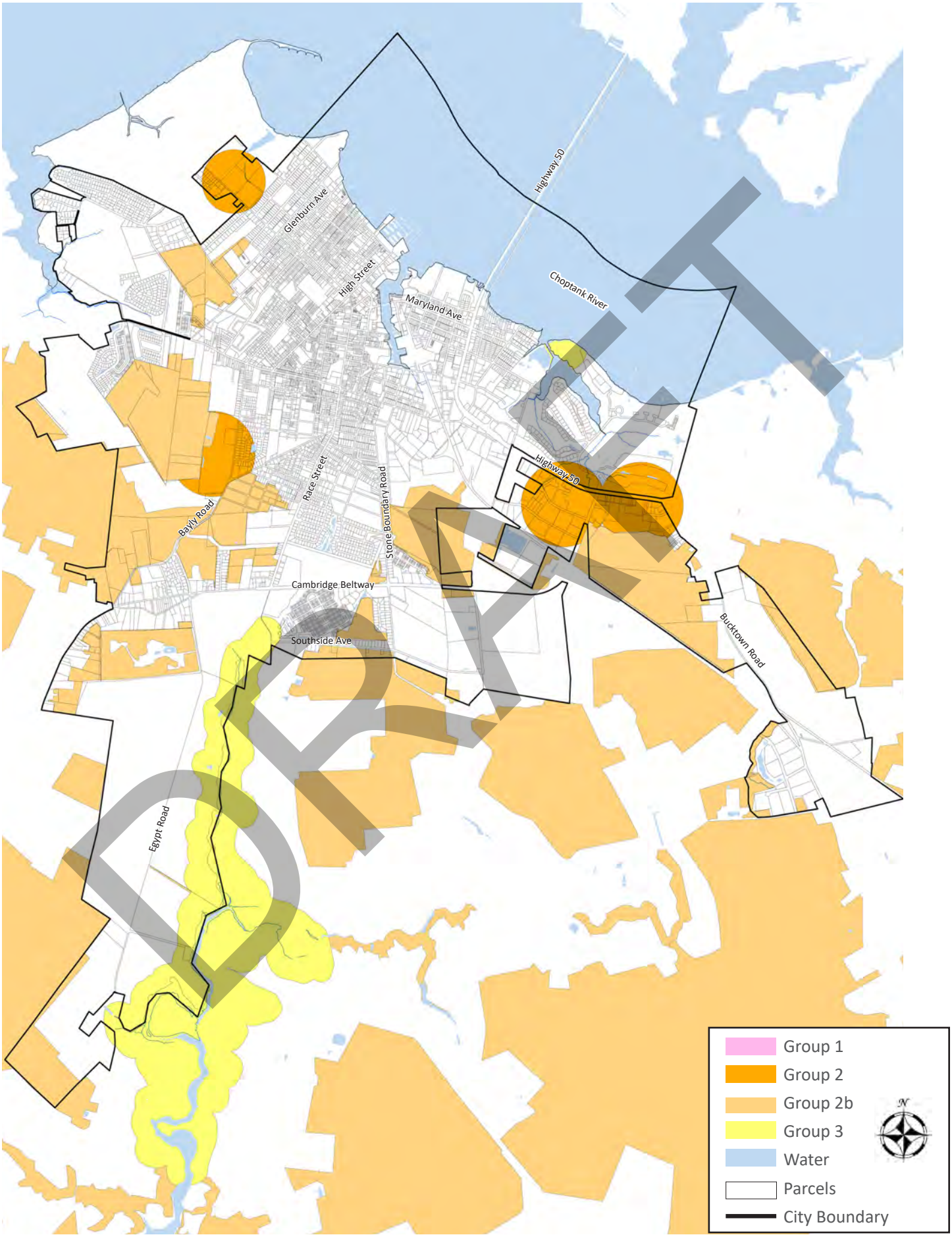
Maryland Living Resources Sensitive Areas



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Living Resources Sensitive Areas

The State of Maryland recognizes and maps certain areas as Sensitive Species Project Review Areas (SSPRAs) under its Living Resources program. These are buffered polygons that indicate general locations of documented rare, threatened or endangered species, and rare natural community types. They are intended for planning-guidance purposes rather than a definitive habitat boundary.

Consideration of these areas helps ensure land use decisions acknowledge habitats of high conservation value, support of biodiversity, and compatibility with the goals of the State's growth and resource protection policies.

When DNR (Wildlife & Heritage Service) maps these sensitive species / rare habitat areas, each polygon is given a "Group" designation (Group 1, 2, 2b, 3) indicating the regulatory- or conservation-priority status of the species or communities involved. Below is how these are typically interpreted:

- **Group 1**: These areas contain federally listed species (i.e., species listed under the Endangered Species Act of 1973) and/or their critical habitats. They represent the highest level of conservation concern and regulatory protection under federal law.
- **Group 2**: These areas contain species that are State-listed (i.e., listed by Maryland under its state endangered/threatened species statutes) but not federally listed. State regulatory mechanisms and review apply to impacts to these species and their habitat.
- **Group 2b**: This designation is used by DNR to identify species or habitat sites that are state-listed or of concern, where additional caution is warranted (for example because the habitat is particularly rare, the species' status is declining, or there is imminent threat) though the species may not yet be federally listed. In effect, 2b sits between 2 and 3, indicating elevated priority within the state listing framework.
- **Group 3**: These areas include species of conservation concern that do not currently have a federal or state listing status, but which are considered by DNR to warrant attention. These may be species experiencing declining populations, rare natural communities, or habitats important for overall biodiversity. While regulatory protections may be less strict, these sites still represent important conservation landscapes.

Application in Cambridge

In this Plan, where lands or development proposals fall within or adjacent to mapped Groups, the City should:

- Require early coordination with DNR and the Maryland Natural Heritage Program to determine whether species or natural communities of concern are present.
- Encourage avoidance of impacts to high-priority areas (Group 1, Group 2) as a first priority.
- Where impacts cannot be avoided, require mitigation measures commensurate with the Group ranking (higher priority = more rigorous mitigation).
- Recognize that Group 2b and Group 3 areas, while less strictly regulated, nonetheless merit special consideration in site planning, clustering, open space preservation and buffer design.
- Incorporate these areas into open space, green infrastructure, and habitat connectivity planning efforts — thereby aligning local growth decisions with State resource protection goals.

By explicitly acknowledging the SSPRA Group categories, the Plan strengthens its "rational nexus" between identified resources and land-use policy, and it helps guide development away from the most sensitive habitats while allowing for managed growth elsewhere.

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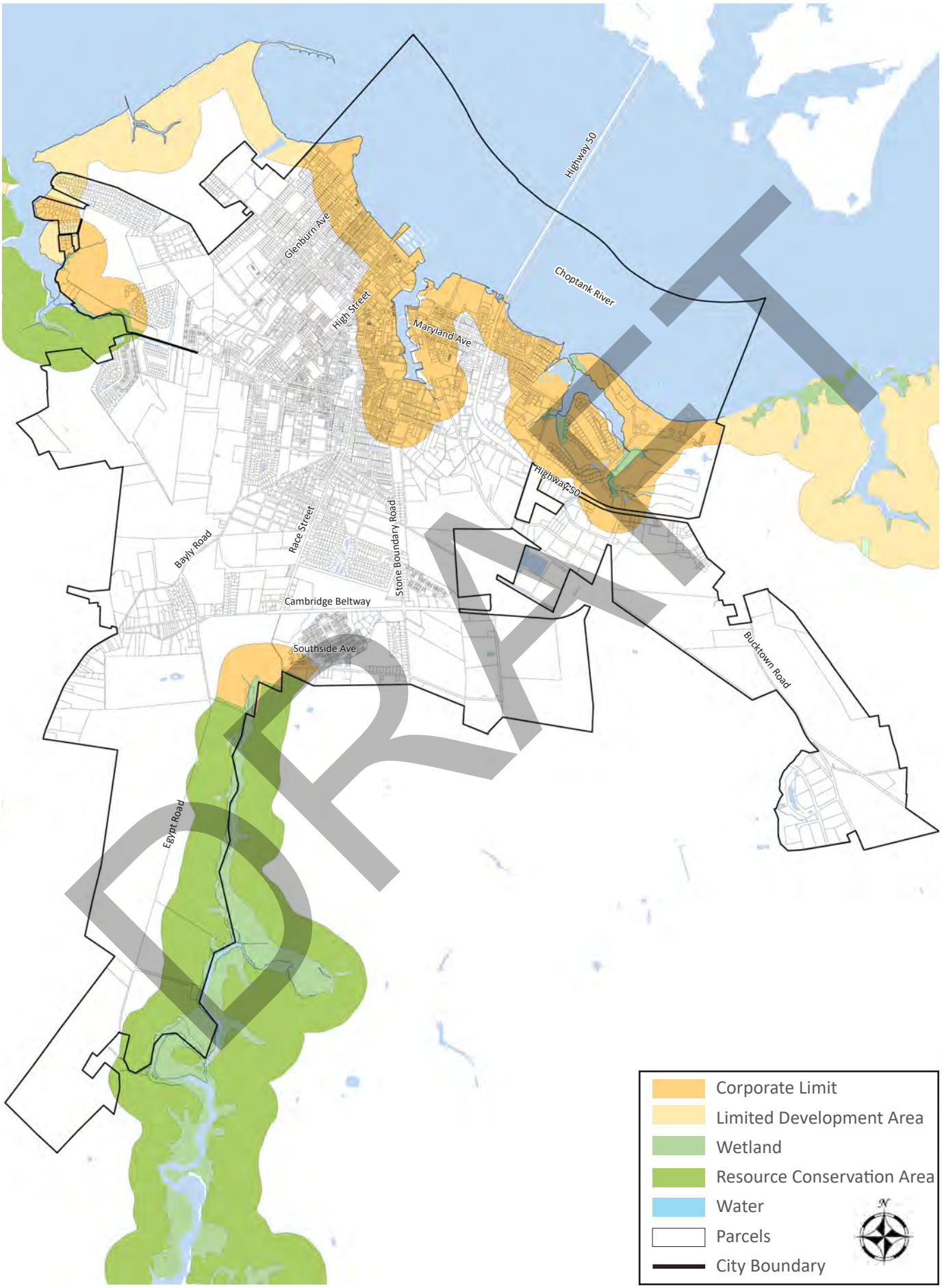
Maryland Critical Areas



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Maryland Critical Areas

The Maryland Critical Area Program establishes a regulatory overlay for all tidal waters of the State, the lands under those waters, and all land lying within 1,000 feet landward of the mean high-water line of tidal waters or the landward edge of tidal wetlands. Its three primary goals are:

1. Minimize adverse impacts on water quality from runoff and development,
2. Conserve fish, wildlife, and plant habitat, and
3. Establish land-use policies that accommodate growth while protecting the ecological functions of the Critical Area.

Within the City's Critical Area overlay, land is mapped and classified under one of several designations based on existing land use, intensity of development, and natural resource condition at the time of initial mapping. These classifications guide the application of performance standards for development, redevelopment, and resource conservation.

Below are the key classifications and their definitions for local plan reference:

- **Corporate Limit**: Refers to portions of the Critical Area that lie within the legal municipal boundaries of the City. Within these areas, the City's zoning, subdivision, and development review provisions apply. Accordingly, any land use designation in the Critical Area that falls within the City's corporate limits must comply with both local municipal regulations and the State's Critical Area criteria.
- **Limited Development Area (LDA)**: Limited Development Areas are those parts of the Critical Area characterized at the time of mapping by low- to moderate-intensity development, with some remaining natural habitat areas, and generally where runoff water quality has not been substantially degraded.
- **Wetland**: In the Critical Area context, wetlands include tidal wetlands and, where mapped, non-tidal wetlands that lie within the overlay boundary. Under the Critical Area regulations, wetlands (and their buffers) are treated as Habitat Protection Areas offering heightened protection from development impacts.
- **Resource Conservation Area (RCA)**: These areas are characterized by predominantly natural or resource-utilization land uses at the time of mapping. RCA is characterized by natural environments (wetlands, forests, open space, surface water) or resource-use activities such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries or aquaculture, or by very low residential density.

Application in Cambridge

- The Plan acknowledges that each parcel within the Critical Area overlay (within the Corporate Limits or within the City's jurisdictional planning area) falls into one of these classifications and that the appropriate development and conservation standards apply accordingly.
- For lands mapped as LDA or RCA (or other designations per the local map), the City will strive to align zoning, subdivision, and site-plan review to ensure consistency with both municipal growth objectives and the State's Critical Area goals.
- The Plan supports early coordination between the City's planning/zoning review and the Maryland Critical Area Commission (and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources) when land use or development proposals arise within the Critical Area to verify classification, applicable standards, and potential need for mitigation, buffer management, or growth allocation.
- In delineated RCA areas the City will prioritize conservation of forest/developed woodland cover, habitat continuity, water-quality protection and restricted densities; in LDA areas the Plan supports managed infill or redevelopment with attention to ecological and water-quality safeguards; and in areas within the Corporate Limits the City will coordinate its municipal zoning and Critical Area overlay to ensure that growth is directed appropriately and protective standards met.

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Adopting Waterfront Areas to Rising Waters

The Oakley Street waterfront highlights the urgent need for proactive shoreline strategies. Recurrent flooding here not only disrupts mobility and damages property, but also places long-term pressure on Cambridge's housing, infrastructure, and community identity.

The conceptual interventions shown in the rendering demonstrates how resilience can be built into the shoreline itself. Reinforced edges and bulkheads strengthen the first line of defense, while elevated walkways ensure access and safety during high tides. Green buffers and living shorelines add an ecological layer of protection, slowing wave energy, filtering runoff, and restoring habitat.

By combining structural and nature-based solutions, Cambridge can transform a vulnerable waterfront into a resilient community asset. These strategies not only address immediate flooding risks but also preserve the character, accessibility, and environmental health of the shoreline for future generations.

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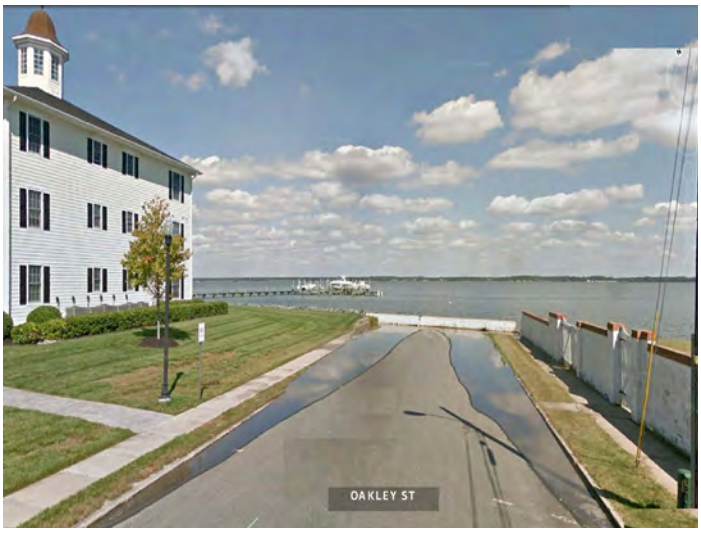
After- areal view rendering of the Oakley Street waterfront, illustrating at-risk neighborhood adjacent to the shoreline.

Shoreline Resilience Strategies for Sensitive Areas



Before-Flooding is not only a future concern but an existing reality. Tidal flooding along Oakley Street interrupts access and damages infrastructure.

Before- Recurrent flooding illustrates Cambridge's vulnerability to sea level rise and storm surge.

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Planning for Resilience in Sensitive Areas

Flooding along Cambridge's shoreline is more than an infrastructure challenge—it is a sensitive areas concern. Floodplains, wetlands, and shorelines provide the City's first line of defense against rising waters and storm events. When these natural systems are stressed or degraded, the impacts extend directly into neighborhoods, roadways, and community facilities.

The Oakley Street case study illustrates how sensitive areas and the built environment overlap. Recurrent tidal flooding here disrupts daily life, damages property, and highlights the urgency of action. The adaptation scenarios—bulkheads, embankments, and living shorelines—demonstrate the range of possible responses. Each carries trade-offs in terms of cost, ecological function, long-term resilience, and the character of Cambridge's waterfront.

Community input gathered through the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Charrette made these issues clear: residents want Cambridge to "plan for flooding" and to "make the City more resilient for the future." Addressing these concerns means recognizing that sensitive areas are not simply ecological assets but essential infrastructure. Protecting wetlands, streams, and floodplains reduces flooding risks, improves water quality, and sustains the City's natural identity.

Framing flooding as a sensitive areas issue ensures that resilience is integrated into land use, growth management, and conservation planning. The renderings on the preceding pages illustrate both the risks Cambridge faces today and the types of strategies that may be pursued to protect its future. The following Goals, Objectives, and Policies build on this foundation, setting clear direction for safeguarding sensitive areas while strengthening the City's resilience.

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Conceptual visualization of storm surge conditions along Oakley Street. Flood events of this magnitude highlight the urgency of shoreline adaptation and resilience planning in Cambridge.

Shoreline Resilience Strategies for Sensitive Areas

Bulkhead or seawall option provides hard protection but reduces ecological function and visual access to the water.

Living shoreline option — combines planted buffers and natural systems to absorb wave energy and enhance habitat.

Raised embankment option elevates the shoreline while providing long-term resilience but alters the historic waterfront character.

Looking ahead, a series of conceptual renderings illustrate potential shoreline treatments that could help Cambridge adapt to changing conditions. These scenarios range from traditional hard infrastructure such as bulkheads and seawalls to nature-based approaches such as living shorelines with vegetated buffers. Each option carries implications for cost, aesthetics, ecological value, and long-term resilience. While no single approach will address all of Cambridge's challenges, the renderings demonstrate the types of strategies that may be pursued to protect vulnerable waterfront areas.

***For illustrative purposes only.**

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Goal 3-1: Protect and enhance sensitive areas

Objective 3-1.1 Conserve and restore sensitive areas to strengthen natural flood and erosion defenses

Policy 3-1.1.1: Floodplain protection

Require protection of the 100-year floodplain and stream buffers in all development and redevelopment projects to reduce flood risk and improve water quality.

Policy 3-1.1.2: Land conservation partnerships

Support conservation easements and land acquisition programs, in partnership with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, to permanently preserve wetlands, forests, and flood-prone areas.

Policy 3-1.1.3: Promote nature-based solutions on the waterfront

Encourage use of living shorelines, vegetated buffers, and marsh restoration on the waterfront as alternatives to hard infrastructure.

Goal 3-2: Protect habitat and species

Objective 3-2.1 Integrate habitat protection into planning and development

Policy 3-2.1.1: Critical habitat preservation

Identify and protect habitats of threatened and endangered species in accordance with state and federal guidance.

Policy 3-2.1.2: Develop a Habitat Restoration Plan

The City or County should consider a Habitat Restoration Plan in order to decide how to best promote, coordinate, or require restoration efforts. Such a plan would provide specific, measurable, metrics for overall environmental health.

Policy 3-2.1.3: Development review for habitat impacts

Require review of development proposals for potential impacts on sensitive habitats, with mitigation or avoidance measures where needed.

Policy 3-2.1.4: Habitat connectivity

Encourage conservation of stream corridors, wetlands, and forested areas that provide ecological connectivity for wildlife movement.

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Goal 3-3: Strengthen community resilience through the protection of sensitive areas

Objective 3-3.1 — Apply flood-resilience criteria, such as elevation, design, and site-planning requirements, to planning and infrastructure projects

Policy 3-3.1.1: Prioritize vulnerable areas

Focus conservation and resilience efforts on areas most vulnerable to sea level rise, storm surge, and recurrent flooding.

Policy 3-3.1.2: Hybrid infrastructure systems

Implement stormwater strategies that combine green and gray infrastructure, such as bioswales, permeable pavements, and subsurface storage.

Policy 3-3.1.3: Elevation standards

Elevate or flood-proof critical infrastructure above projected 500 year flood levels in line with FEMA and ASCE standards.

Goal 3-4: Increase public awareness and stewardship of sensitive areas

Objective 3-4.1 — Expand education and community engagement programs that build understanding of local environmental risks and resilience strategies

Policy 3-4.1.1: Public education and sensitive areas

Provide outreach on the role of wetlands, buffers, and floodplains in protecting neighborhoods from flooding and maintaining ecological health.

Policy 3-4.1.2: Community engagement in resilience projects

Engage neighborhoods most at risk from flooding by promoting shoreline adaptation planning and involving residents in resilience decision-making. Prioritize outreach in areas where streets run directly to the river—particularly those perpendicular to Hambrooks Avenue and Water Street—to ensure community input informs future adaptation strategies.

Policy 3-4.1.3: Community stewardship programs

Support volunteer initiatives and citizen science programs to maintain sensitive areas and monitor local ecosystems.

Policy 3-4.1.4: Inclusive Community Engagement Plan

The City or County should consider a Community Engagement Campaign or Engagement Strategies for Hard-to-Reach Communities Plan that prioritizes inclusive communication, builds trust with underrepresented groups, and creates multiple accessible pathways for participation

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Goal 3-5: Promote Brownfield redevelopment and land reuse

Objective 3-5.1

Encourage the remediation and reuse of brownfield and underutilized industrial properties to support sustainable redevelopment

Policy 3-5.1.1: Brownfield assessment and clean up

Partner with the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to identify, assess, and remediate contaminated sites. Encourage participation in the Maryland Voluntary Cleanup Program to expedite reuse.

Policy 3-5.1.2: Incentives for redevelopment

Offer incentives for private developers to reuse brownfield sites through streamlined permitting, tax credits, and grants that prioritize sustainable design and community benefits.

Policy 3-5.1.3: Environmental safeguards in redevelopment

Require all redevelopment of brownfield or former industrial areas to include soil and groundwater remediation plans and long-term environmental monitoring to prevent future contamination.

Policy 3-5.1.4: Community integration

Promote brownfield redevelopment projects that reconnect neighborhoods to the waterfront and incorporate public spaces, green buffers, or mixed-use development to enhance community character and resilience.

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4: Community Design & Historic Preservation

Current Conditions

The design of Cambridge's built environment is central to how the community experiences its history, identity, and daily life. Community design and historic preservation ensure that growth respects the City's unique character while providing a framework for new investment that strengthens the public realm. Together, these values guide how streets, civic spaces, neighborhoods, and historic resources are maintained and enhanced.

Downtown Cambridge remains the civic and cultural heart of the City. It houses government offices, cultural institutions, and a mix of commercial and residential uses. Historic resources such as Washington Street, the Pine Street Cultural District, and the traditional town blocks embody the City's heritage while continuing to serve as anchors for economic and community life. Protecting and reinvesting in these areas preserves the authenticity that differentiates Cambridge from other regional centers.

Community design also emphasizes the importance of streetscapes, gateways, and the quality of the public realm. Cambridge prioritizes corridors such as Race Street, Washington Street, Maryland Avenue, Cedar Street (Harriet Tubman Boulevard), and U.S. Route 50 as major entryways and community connectors. These streets not only move people but also convey the City's identity to residents, businesses, and visitors. Coordinated streetscape improvements such as trees, sidewalks, medians, lighting, signage, and landscaping, contribute to safety, walkability, and civic pride.

The City's waterfront and neighborhoods also present opportunities for design excellence. Projects like the Cambridge Waterfront 20/20 Concept Plan and the Sailwinds redevelopment reinforce the connection between downtown and the water. At the neighborhood scale, reinvestment in Pine Street, the Washington Street corridor, and older residential blocks ensures that historic character is retained while allowing for compatible infill and mixed-use development.

By linking historic preservation with thoughtful design, Cambridge can create a more livable, attractive, and resilient community that builds on its past while planning for its future.

Historic Downtown Character

Downtown Cambridge remains the historic civic, cultural, and commercial core of the City. Anchored by government institutions, the library, churches, and community college, it also features a growing mix of restaurants, galleries, and shops. The central street grid and traditional development patterns provide a walkable, human scale environment, though infill development and reinvestment are uneven. Although recent condominium and mixed-use developments along Cambridge Creek have brought new housing to downtown, the broader downtown district still remains at a very low density (under four housing units per acre), which limits its vibrancy.

Architectural Heritage and Preservation

Cambridge's downtown and adjacent neighborhoods contain a rich collection of historic structures, many with architectural or cultural significance. These resources contribute to community identity and tourism. However, decades of economic distress have left vacant buildings, underutilized lots, and deteriorating structures. Without reinvestment and preservation efforts, these assets remain at risk of loss.

Streetscapes and Public Realm

The quality of streets and public spaces varies considerably. Major corridors such as Race Street, Washington Street, Maryland Avenue, and Cedar Street serve as primary gateways into downtown but suffer from inconsistent streetscape conditions. Sidewalks, crosswalks, street trees, and lighting are often lacking or in disrepair. U.S. Route 50, the city's largest transportation corridor, functions both as a regional highway and a commercial strip, creating a tension between high-speed traffic and the need for safe, attractive community design.

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Street Corridors

Washington Street, Maryland Avenue, Race Street, Cedar Street, and U.S. Route 50 have long been recognized as priority corridors for reinvestment. While this framework remains valid, many of these streets have not yet been redesigned to reflect "complete street" principles that balance mobility, safety, and placemaking.

Design Challenges and Opportunities

- Vacant and underutilized parcels remain scattered through the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods, creating gaps in the urban fabric.
- Inconsistent zoning and outdated design standards hinder efforts to encourage mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly development.
- Civic appearance suffers from cluttered signage, overhead utilities, and limited landscaping.
- At the same time, Cambridge has significant opportunity: reinvestment interest in downtown, a rich historic building stock, and community for better-designed public spaces and safety.

Community Concerns

Public input and past planning efforts highlight strong support for improving Cambridge's built environment while preserving the character that makes the City unique. Residents consistently voiced concerns about the following:

Preservation of Historic Fabric

Cambridge's historic downtown, the Historic West End, Washington Street corridor, and the Pine Street Cultural District together represent the City's architectural and cultural heritage. Residents worry that neglect, incompatible infill, or demolition could erode this historic identity.

Downtown Revitalization and Vacancy

Cambridge's historic downtown faces ongoing challenges related to storefront vacancies, underutilized buildings, and shifting market demand. Residents emphasized the need for reinvestment, active storefronts, and compatible infill that strengthens downtown's role as the City's commercial and civic center. Without targeted revitalization efforts, continued vacancy and disinvestment could undermine downtown's economic vitality and overall sense of place.

Streetscape Conditions and Walkability

Many streets lack adequate sidewalks, street trees, pedestrian-scale lighting, and crosswalks. Residents emphasized that the inconsistent quality of streetscapes reduces safety and discourages walking, biking, and tourism.

Corridor and Gateways Appearance

Key entry corridors such as U.S. Route 50, Maryland Avenue, and Cedar Street are heavily traveled but visually fragmented. Participants expressed concern that cluttered signage, overhead utilities, and auto-oriented design do not reflect Cambridge's identity as a historic waterfront city.

Compatibility of New Development

Larger-scale projects along the waterfront and infill downtown have raised concerns about building height, bulk, and design. Community members stressed that new development should reinforce traditional block patterns and walkable, human-scaled design.

Civic Spaces and Community Identity

Residents want more gathering spaces such as plazas, cultural venues, and public art, that reinforce downtown as the civic and cultural heart of the City. Many noted that without visible investment in the public realm, Cambridge risks losing its sense of place.

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Strategies for Addressing Concerns

To respond to these concerns, the Comprehensive Plan recommends a coordinate approach that balances preservation, reinvestment, and design excellence:

1. Preserve and Reinvestment in Historic Resources

- Strengthen historic district protections and expand recognition of cultural areas such as Pine Street and Washington Street.
- Provide financial incentives, grants, and technical assistance for the rehabilitation of historic buildings.
- Promote adaptive reuse of vacant structures for housing, retail, and cultural uses.
- Historic rehabilitation should involve attention to safety through thoughtful integration of visibility and access control.

2. Prioritize Streetscape Enhancements

- Prioritize corridor reinvestment and redesign along Race Street, Maryland Avenue, Cedar Street, Washington Street, and U.S. Route 50, with an emphasis on applying complete street principles.
- Improve sidewalks, lighting, trees, crosswalks, and street furniture to create attractive, safe, and accessible public spaces.
- Incorporate stormwater management and green infrastructure into streetscape design.
- Future streetscape design should incorporate principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), such as unobstructed sightlines at intersections, and activation of ground-floor uses.

3. Reimagine Gateways and Corridors

- Redesign U.S. Route 50 and other gateways to balance mobility with community appearance, using landscaping, signage, and design guidelines.
- Coordinate with the Maryland State Highway Administration to ensure corridor improvements reflect local design goals.
- Unified signage and celebrated entrances into the City foster a sense of pride for the community, and provide a sense of safety and order.

4. Ensure Compatible Infill Development

- Adopt design guidelines or form-based zoning that align new development with traditional block patterns and historic architecture.
- Require new waterfront and downtown development to maintain human scale, active ground-floor uses, and pedestrian orientation.
- Prioritize safety early in the design of new development by incorporating principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) into Cambridge's design guidelines.

5. Expand Civic and Cultural Spaces

- Develop new plazas, cultural venues, and public art installations to foster civic pride and community gathering.
- Strengthen downtown as a cultural hub through partnerships with arts organizations.
- Create stronger physical and visual connections between downtown and the Choptank River waterfront.

6. Link Community Design with Broader Goals

- Integrate community design strategies with transportation planning (e.g., complete streets, traffic calming, CPTED).
- Align preservation and streetscape efforts with economic development initiatives to attract investment and tourism.
- Incorporate resilience and climate adaptation into design standards, ensuring streetscapes and buildings are flood-ready and sustainable.

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Strengthening Cambridge Though Community Design

Cambridge's downtown core is the heart of the city, where history, civic life, commerce, and the waterfront intersect. Yet today, fragmented public spaces, underutilized parcels, and limited pedestrian connections constrain its potential. Residents emphasized during the Comprehensive Plan process that revitalizing downtown requires more than individual redevelopment projects, it requires a coordinated vision for placemaking, civic identity, and public access to the waterfront.

The renderings that follow illustrate opportunities to transform downtown into a vibrant, connected, and welcoming district.

Downtown Cambridge Today

Downtown Cambridge Tomorrow

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Key strategies include

- Activating the Waterfront: Building a continuous, publicly accessible boardwalk and integrating new public plazas, outdoor dining, and recreational amenities along the shorelines.
- Celebrating Civic Anchors: Restoring and reinvesting in historic assets, such as the Old City Hall, to serve as focal points of community life and symbols of downtown revival.
- Reimagine Gateways: Enhancing key entrances like Maryland Avenue and Academy Street with streetscapes improvements, pedestrian-friendly intersections, and visual cues that reinforce arrival into a historic downtown.
- Creating inclusive Public Spaces: Developing plazas, playgrounds, and interactive features that provide amenities for all ages and support year-round community gatherings.
- Encouraging Mixed-Use Redevelopment: Redeveloping underutilized parcels to include a mix of housing, commercial, and cultural uses that enhance vitality while respecting historic character.

The vision for tomorrow reimagines the core with vibrant civic plazas (A), enhanced green space (D) and outdoor community gathering areas such as cafe seating (E), in addition to a waterfront walkway (B) and downtown connections (C).

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Re-imagining the Gateway

Maryland Avenue Approach and Gateway

The existing entrance into downtown Cambridge provides limited visual cues of arrival and lacks cohesive design and welcoming features. The approach across the bridge, the transition into the downtown street network, and the intersection at Maryland Avenue, Academy Street, and Muse Street lack cohesive design, greenery, or pedestrian-friendly elements. These conditions offer an important opportunity to reimagine the gateway with enhancements that create a more welcoming, walkable, and distinctive arrival into the historic downtown.

Before- The current gateway and approach in Cambridge

After-Tomorrow's gateway in Cambridge

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Future Vision for Maryland Avenue

The Maryland Avenue corridor is one of the primary approaches into downtown Cambridge, yet today it feels fragmented and underwhelming. A lack of visual identity, inconsistent landscaping, and minimal pedestrian infrastructure diminish its role as a true gateway. Visitors and residents often enter downtown without experiencing a sense of arrival or recognition of the city's historic and cultural character.

Designing a True Gateway

The envisioned improvements transform Maryland Avenue into a greener, safer, and more people-friendly corridor. Streetscape upgrades, such as widened sidewalks, dedicated pedestrian crossings, enhanced landscaping, and bicycle accommodations, will foster a vibrant, multimodal environment. New gateway features, including signage, lighting, and streetscape furnishings, reinforce Cambridge's identity and create a memorable "front door" to downtown. Ground-level amenities increase "eyes on he street" enhancing the perception of safety.

A: Dedicated Bike Lane

B: Street Trees & Landscaping

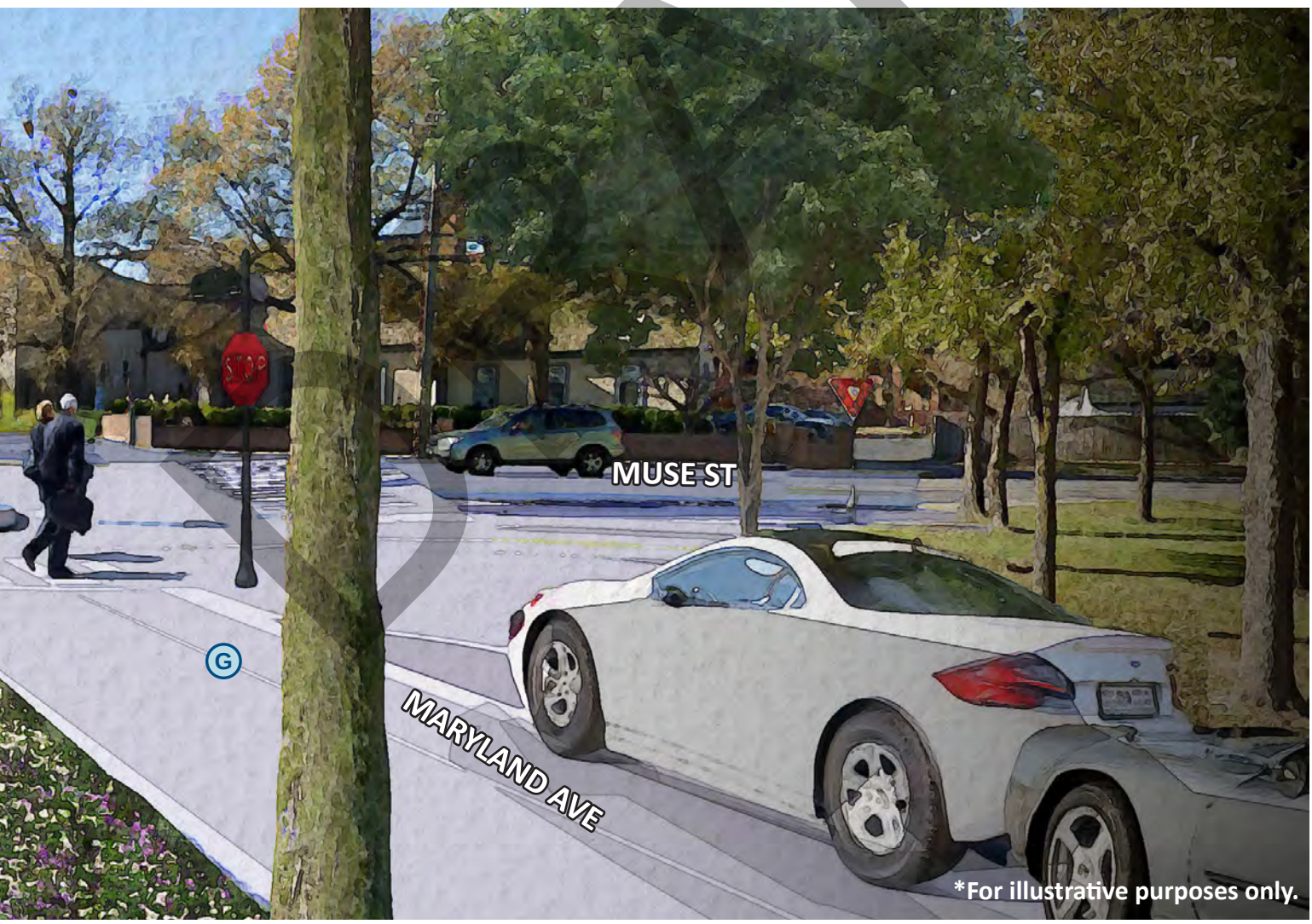
C: Pedestrian Crosswalks

D: Outdoor Cafe Seating

E: Gateway Monument/Feature

F: On-Street Parking

G: Traffic-Calming Design



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Downtown Civic Core

A vision of Cambridge's future downtown highlights how civic anchors like City Hall can be repositioned as prominent public landmarks. By strengthening the visual and physical connection between Maryland Avenue, Race Street, and the waterfront, the plan creates a cohesive civic district that blends government, cultural, and community spaces.

Today's City Hall Setting

The current City Hall site is underutilized, with limited architectural presence and minimal integration into the surrounding streetscape. The lack of civic identity in this area contributes to a weaker sense of place within the downtown core.

City Hall today

Civic use reimagined in Cambridge

Civic Use Reimagined

Rehabilitation and reinvestment in civic architecture transform the City Hall block into a vibrant, walkable hub. With upgraded landscaping, active frontages, and accessible public spaces, the area becomes both a symbol of government and a setting for daily community life. This could be the location of a new, remodeled City Hall, or the Historic City Hall location could be re-used. What is important is that City Hall take on a proud, new look representative of Cambridge's downtown renaissance.

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Cambridge's Waterfront

A vision of Cambridge's future waterfront highlights how currently underutilized land can be reimagined as vibrant public gathering space. By strengthening the visual and physical connection between the waterfront, civic anchors, and downtown streets, the plan creates a cohesive civic district that blends recreation, culture, and community identity.

Today

The current waterfront edge is fenced off and inaccessible, limiting public use and preventing the area from serving as a community asset. Its underutilized condition weakens the connection between downtown and the water.

Cambridge's waterfront today

Cambridge's waterfront reimagined

Waterfront Reimagined

Future improvements transform the waterfront into an active civic plaza with outdoor dining, shaded seating, and gathering areas. The redesigned space strengthens downtown's cultural and social fabric while creating new opportunities for recreation, events, and community life.

Why the Waterfront Matters

The Cambridge waterfront is one of the city's most defining assets, offering both cultural heritage and opportunities for recreation. Yet much of the shoreline today is fragmented, with limited public access and underutilized spaces.

Waterfront General Vision

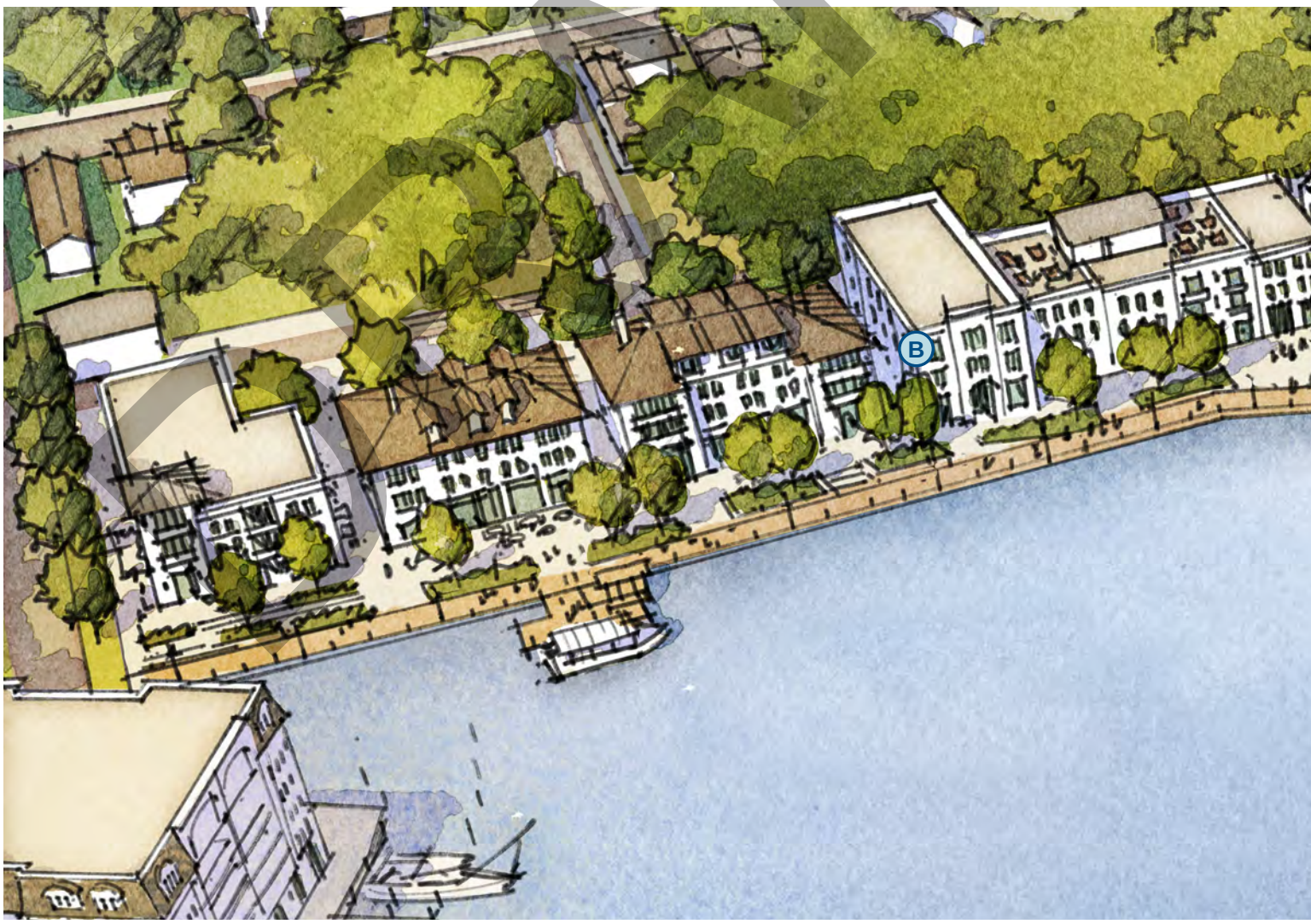
Connected Waterfront Trail: Envisions a continuous, publicly accessible boardwalk that links key waterfront destinations, enhances pedestrian access, and establishes the waterfront as a defining feature of Cambridge's identity.

Connected Waterfront Trail

A reimagined waterfront trail connects key sites along Cambridge Creek, linking civic, cultural, and commercial destinations. By integrating docks, water taxi service, and enhanced pedestrian spaces, the trail strengthens public access to the waterfront while supporting local businesses and maritime heritage. Future development introduces a vibrant mix of housing, dining, and gathering spaces that activate the shoreline and transform it into a continuous, publicly accessible community asset. New development and frontages enhance visibility and a greater perceived sense of safety.

Lasting Community Value

Beyond recreation, the trail supports local businesses, enhances tourism, and preserves Cambridge's maritime character. Together, these improvements ensure the waterfront serves as both a daily amenity and a lasting symbol of the city's identity.



Cambridge's Waterfront Tomorrow

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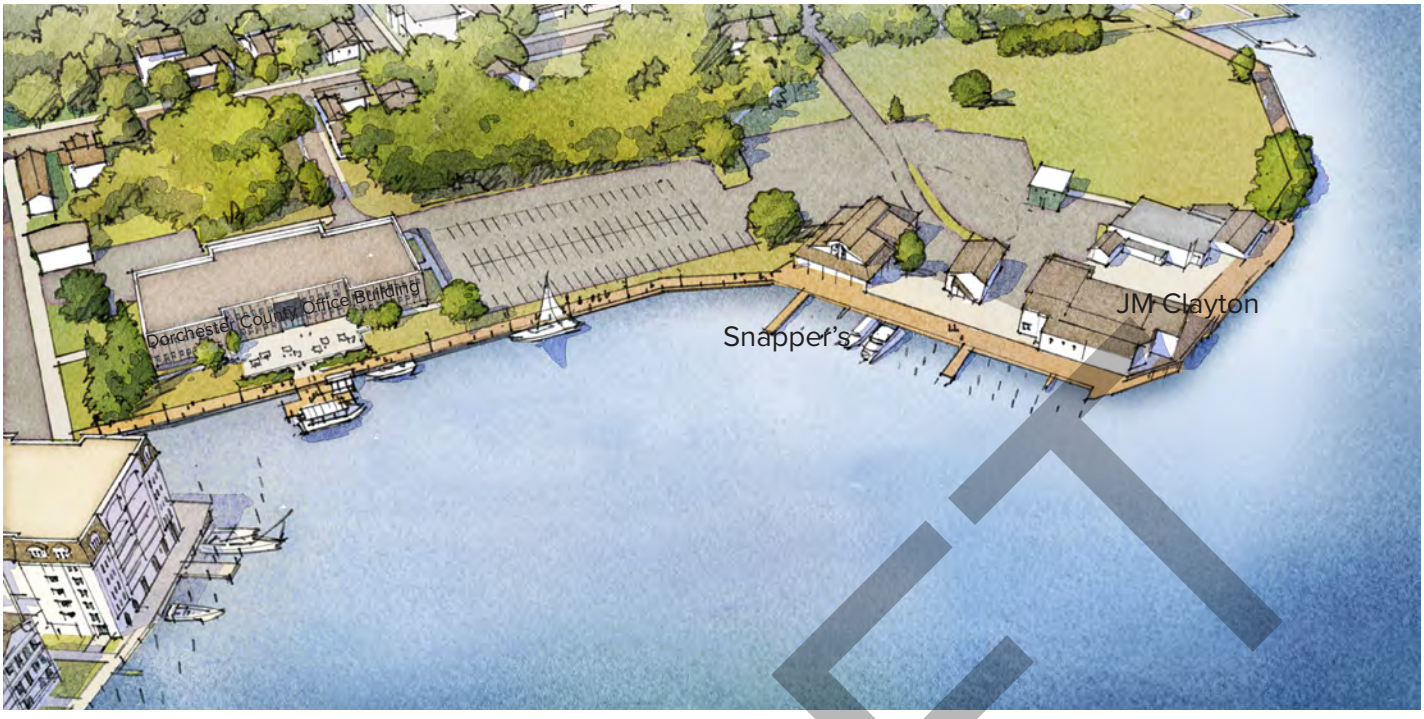
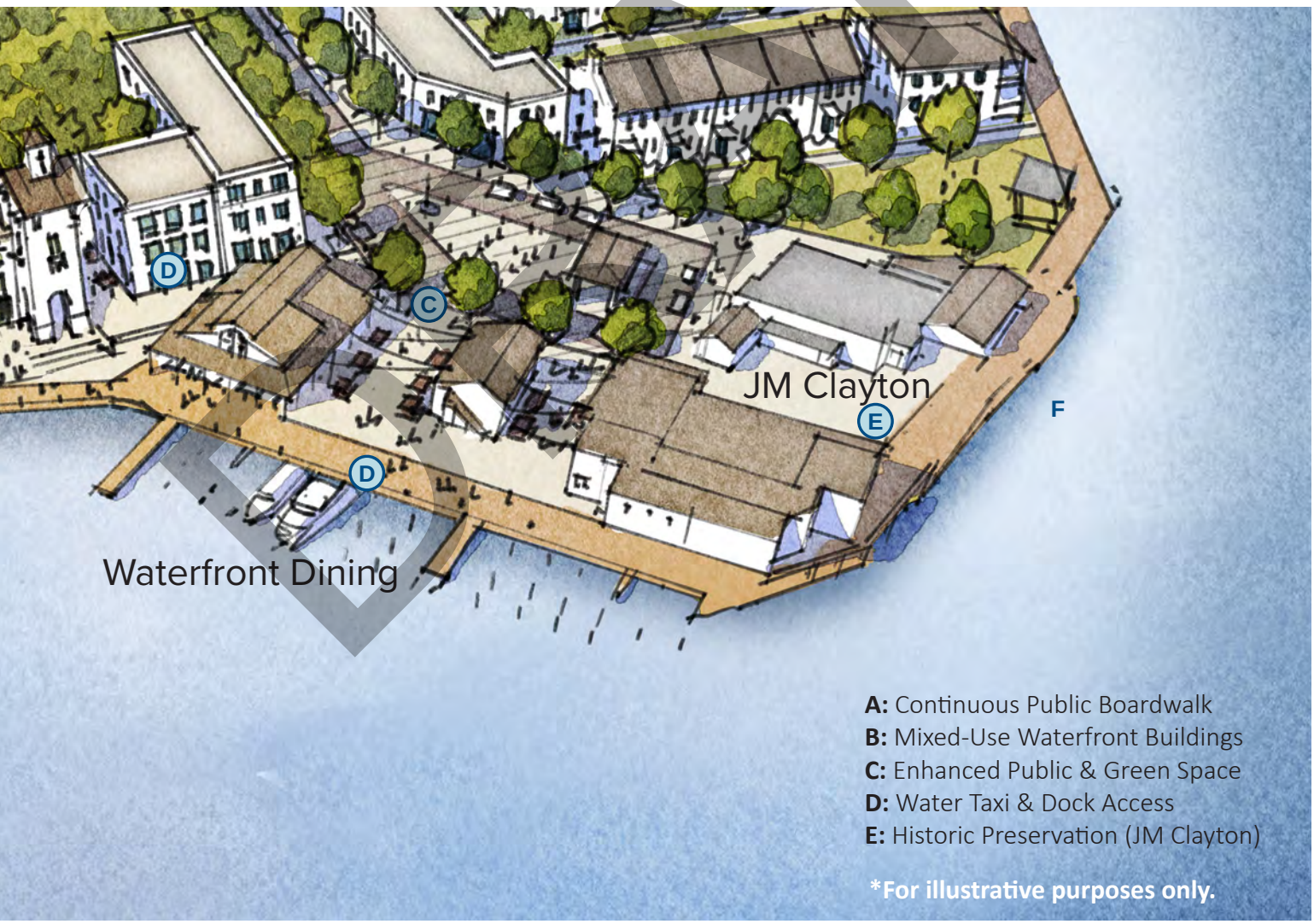


Cambridge's waterfront today



A: Continuous Public Boardwalk
B: Mixed-Use Waterfront Buildings
C: Enhanced Public & Green Space
D: Water Taxi & Dock Access
E: Historic Preservation (JM Clayton)

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Waterfront Setting

The waterfront is one of Cambridge's most defining assets, offering opportunities to connect downtown with its maritime heritage. Today's view across Cambridge Creek from Trenton Street highlights an underutilized shoreline. While it offers scenic water views, the area lacks amenities, public spaces, and active uses that would draw residents and visitors to engage with the waterfront.

Cambridge's waterfront today

Cambridge's waterfront tomorrow

Tomorrow's Waterfront Vision

Planned improvements reimagine the waterfront as an active district with outdoor dining, public plazas, and enhanced marina activity. By transforming the waterfront into a vibrant, accessible, and welcoming district, Cambridge can leverage its greatest natural asset as both a daily amenity for residents and a lasting attraction for visitors.

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Community Design in Cambridge

The Pine and Elm Street intersection reflects the neighborhood's historic role but faces challenges with limited streetscape design, vacant structures, and underutilized public space.

Pine Street & Elm Street today

Pine Street & Elm Street tomorrow

Pine Street & Elm Street Reimagined

A revitalized streetscape introduces trees, lighting, and storefront improvements that honor Pine Street's cultural heritage while enhancing safety, walkability, and community gathering opportunities.

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Future Neighborhood Fabric

The existing neighborhood fabric is fragmented, with limited tree cover, underutilized parcels, and a lack of pedestrian-friendly streets. In its current state, the area does not provide the walkable, connected environment that encourages community life and complements downtown Cambridge.

Tomorrow's Vision

Redevelopment reimagines the area with walkable blocks, tree-lined streets, and a mix of housing types that reflect the community's character. Integrated green spaces, safer sidewalks, and connected streets create a setting where residents can live, walk, and gather with a cohesive and attractive environment.

This future neighborhood fabric not only enhances livability but also strengthens connections to the historic waterfront. By introducing varied housing, improving mobility, and adding accessible open spaces, the design supports both current needs and long-term resilience while reinforcing Cambridge's identity.

Note that the plans and renderings below just show one possible future for the Cambridge Waterfront based on input from charrette participants. A successful waterfront redevelopment could take many forms.

Before- Vacant lots in Cambridge

After- Future neighborhood fabric of Cambridge

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Front porch neighborhoods

Reimagine Cambridge's Public Ream

*Note: The conceptual illustrations on this page depict just one possible design approach to accomplish the chapter's goals.

Today's Waterfront Edge

Alongside the Dorchester County Office Building, the current waterfront lacks active public spaces and has limited amenities, offering little opportunity for residents and visitors to engage with Cambridge Creek.

Tomorrow's Waterfront Experience

A revitalized waterfront trail introduces landscaping, lighting, and gathering spaces that enhance safety and walkability. New mixed-use development activates the shoreline with housing, shops, and dining, transforming the area into a vibrant, publicly accessible community destination.

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Central green spaces imagined in Cambridge

Public Access & Open Space

A continuous waterfront green ensures that public access is preserved, offering residents and visitors places to walk, relax, and enjoy views of the water.

A community neighborhood area with commercial spaces to gather

Neighborhood Commercial

A central green space with gathering lawns and a gazebo provides a civic heart for events, recreation, and community gatherings along the water. Ground level activities enhance visibility and a greater perceived sense of safety.

Public and open spaces

Waterfront Green

A central green space with gathering lawns and a gazebo provides a civic heart for events, recreation, and community gatherings along the water.

*Note: The conceptual illustrations on this page depict just one possible design approach to accomplish the chapter's goals.

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Goal 4-1: Improve the City's gateways

Objective 4-1.1 — **Improve arrival points by implementing design standards, installing unified signage, and completing streetscape upgrades at key gateways**

Policy 4-1.1.1: Gateway roundabout evaluation

Evaluate the potential for a roundabout or other streetscape enhancements at the intersection of Maryland Avenue, Academy Street, and Muse Street to improve safety and create a prominent sense of arrival.

Policy 4-1.1.2: Wayfinding and signage plan

Develop a unified signage and wayfinding plan that strengthens the identity of Cambridge's gateways, clarifies messaging, and directs residents and visitors to community destinations.

Policy 4-1.1.3: Facade and entry improvements

Encourage façade upgrades and provide design incentives for new or redeveloped buildings at the City's entry points or terminating vistas to enhance first impressions and reinforce Cambridge's character.

Goal 4-2: Create a connected waterfront

Objective 4-2.1 — **Develop a unified waterfront network that provides recreation, mobility, and gathering opportunities**

Policy 4-2.1.1: Publicly accessible boardwalk

Design and construct a continuous boardwalk connecting Maryland Avenue, Race Street, High Street, and the Dorchester County Office waterfront.

Policy 4-2.1.2: Waterfront access features

Incorporate docks, water taxi stops, and trailheads into the connected waterfront trail system.

Policy 4-2.1.3: Development public access easements

Require future waterfront developments to provide public access easements that maintain continuity of the trail and boardwalk system.

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Goal 4-3: Activate the waterfront by creating vibrant public spaces, amenities, and mixed-use destinations

Objective 4-3.1 Redevelop underutilized parcels into active, community-oriented spaces

Policy 4-3.1.1: Redevelop underutilized parcels along the waterfront into active, community-oriented spaces

Transform underutilized waterfront parcels into active spaces with outdoor dining, plazas, and flexible areas for community events.

Policy 4-3.1.2: Public realm enhancements

Integrate landscaping, public art, and pedestrian amenities to create a welcoming and engaging waterfront environment.

Policy 4-3.1.3: Incentivize mixed-use development

Support mixed-use developments that combine housing, dining, and cultural uses while protecting public access and waterfront view corridors.

Goal 4-4: Promote Cambridge's existing small town character by preserving and enhancing the City's past through historic preservation efforts

Objective 4-4.1 Strengthen design standards and public realm improvements in historic and cultural districts

Policy 4-4.1.1: Historic preservation oversight

Ensure that the Planning Department oversees all historic preservation goals, objectives, and policies—including coordination and support for the Historic Preservation Commission

Policy 4-4.1.2: Historic resource protection

Continue identifying, protecting, and rehabilitating Cambridge's historic resources.

Policy 4-4.1.3: Historic pattern book development

Consider the use of a pattern book to address the different architectural styles found within the historic district.

Policy 4-4.1.4: Comprehensive historic inventory

Create an updated inventory of all historic assets, including parks, trees, buildings, and monuments.

Policy 4-4.1.5: Preservation as economic driver

Leverage historic districts and structures as key assets for revitalization by encouraging reinvestment in historic buildings, promoting heritage tourism, and supporting adaptive reuse projects that generate business activity and strengthen neighborhood vitality.

Policy 4-4.1.6: Partnership and collaboration

Collaborate with organizations and agencies to promote preservation events and tourism.

Policy 4-4.1.7: Code enforcement support

Improve Code Enforcement efforts in historic districts so that properties are consistently maintained and owners can be assured that inclusion in a historic district guarantees a certain neighborhood character and higher level of maintenance.

Policy 4-4.1.8: Building code amendments

Amend building codes to simplify renovation and adaptive reuse within historic structures—for example, by allowing alternative compliance pathways that meet life-safety standards while accommodating historic materials, building layouts, and preservation needs.

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Policy 4-4.1.9: Public education and outreach

Provide widespread cultural and educational materials and workshops on preservation techniques and benefits.

Policy 4-4.1.10: Financial incentives for restoration

Inform the public about tax benefits and funding sources for restoration projects.

Policy 4-4.1.11: Historic property care workshops

Host workshops to teach appropriate property maintenance under Secretary of Interior Standards.

Policy 4-4.1.12: Diversity in preservation leadership

Encourage greater diversity on preservation boards and committees.

Policy 4-4.1.13: Historic Sites and Districts Master Plan

The City should consider a Historic Sites and Districts Plan to identify new or expanded potential National Historic Districts, Local Historic Districts, and Conservation Districts, ensuring the long-term protection of Cambridge's architectural and cultural heritage.

Goal 4-5: Recognize that public spaces and streets within the City's historic districts are themselves prime contributors to the vitality and appearance of the districts.

Objective 4-5.1	**Enhance public spaces and streets within historic districts to improve their visual quality, usability, and contribution to district character**

Policy 4-5.1.1: Downtown Green Space Plan

Create and enact a comprehensive green and public space plan integrated with downtown development to increase overall green space.

Policy 4-5.1.2: Context Sensitive Public Space Design

Ensure that redevelopment of plazas, greens, playgrounds, and other public spaces within historic districts is contextually appropriate and enhances district character.

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Goal 4-6: Continue to invest in downtown and ensure that it is a vibrant place for all Cambridge residents and visitors to live, work, eat, and play

Objective 4-6.1 Reimagine neighborhood corridors with design elements that support walkability, culture, and gathering

Policy 4-6.1.1: Enforcement of existing building code

Implement and enforce the most recently adopted version of the International Existing Building Code.

Policy 4-6.1.2: Form-Based Code exploration

Investigate adopting a form-based code in the City that provides standards based on a regulating plan that designates the appropriate form and character of development as opposed to land use types

Policy 4-6.1.3: Downtown character enhancements

Enhance Downtown's character by implementing streetscape, design, and façade improvements that align with established Downtown design guidelines and strengthen architectural cohesion, walkability, and public realm quality.

Policy 4-6.1.4: Adaptive reuse incentives

Provide financial incentives, regulatory guidance, and technical support to encourage the adaptive reuse of downtown buildings into a range of housing types—such as upper-story apartments, small multifamily units, that reinforce Downtown's character and expand attainable housing choices.

Policy 4-6.1.5: Rehabilitation code adoption

Adopt a rehabilitation code—such as the International Existing Building Code (IEBC)—to provide flexible compliance options that support the safe reuse of historic and non-historic buildings for housing, commercial, mixed-use, and upper-story residential conversions. A rehabilitation code allows alternative design solutions that meet life-safety requirements while reducing barriers to renovating older structures.

Policy 4-6.1.6: Vacant Building Ordinance

Create a Vacant Building Ordinance to encourage the use of existing structures instead of allowing them to sit vacant, detracting from a vibrant downtown environment.

Policy 4-6.1.7: Upper story reuse programs

Create programs to encourage the rehabilitation of upper stories of existing downtown buildings as office, retail, entertainment, and residential space. Financial incentives should be considered to encourage investment from the private sector.

Objective 4-6.2 Strengthen downtown's urban core and promote a walkable, mixed-use environment, enhancing pedestrian connectivity, and improving access to housing, services, and public spaces within a walkable environment

Policy 4-6.2.1: Minimum parking requirements

Remove minimum parking requirements for the development of residential uses in the downtown.

Policy 4-6.2.2: Downtown residential parking program

Establish a Downtown residential parking program to ensure that prime commercial on-street parking spaces remain available to shoppers and ensure frequent turnover on major retail streets.

Policy 4-6.2.3: Civic architecture as public identity

Civic buildings should be acts of civic art, embedded within the urban fabric of downtown and sited memorably, when possible, on high ground and at the terminal axis of streets.

Policy 4-6.2.4: Retention of public facilities

Important public facilities such as courthouses, post offices, museums, libraries, and administration buildings should not be moved from downtown to outlying locations.

Policy 4-6.2.5: Expand walkable core

Expand the walkable core of downtown with new street facing infill buildings, less visible surface parking, and pedestrian friendly design elements such as trees, benches, and public art.

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Objective 4-6.3 Encourage diverse downtown housing and creative reuse

Policy 4-6.3.1: Diverse downtown housing mix

Encourage a wide mix of residential housing types downtown and within downtown neighborhoods to encourage a diversity of ages and incomes. Housing should include arrangements such as: studio units, 1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom units, townhouses, penthouses, live-work spaces, duplexes, fourplexes, and mansion apartments; and should include both rental apartments and units that can be owned by their occupants.

Objective 4-6.4 Promote policies and programs that encourage downtown creativity and activation by expanding opportunities for public art, cultural events, temporary uses, and creative placemaking initiatives

Policy 4-6.4.1: Downtown pop-up activation

Create a program to encourage and facilitate the creation of "pop-ups" downtown, including temporary and mobile businesses and art installations. These help to program and activate empty storefronts and other underutilized spaces.

Policy 4-6.4.2: Public art committee

Establish a public art committee to assist in the regulation of public art, including murals, throughout the Downtown and city.

Objective 4-6.5 Modernize regulations to encourage contextual development and revitalization

Policy 4-6.5.1: Review of development regulations

Review development regulations within the downtown and historic districts to encourage historic preservation while allowing for modern buildings that are contextual in form and intensity. This can be accomplished by promoting an overhaul of the current form-based code and expanding upon the transect-based approach to guide development within the focus area.

Policy 4-6.5.2: Streamlined downtown development area

Create a streamlined regulatory area within Downtown that reduces barriers to small-scale development, simplifies permitting, and supports incremental, community-focused revitalization. Within this area, new development may be allowed greater flexibility in building placement, parking requirements, and adaptive reuse to encourage walkability, local business growth, and context-sensitive redevelopment.

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Objective 4-6.6 Strengthen downtown connectivity, inclusivity, and local identity

Policy 4-6.6.1: Wayfinding network investment

Invest in a coordinated wayfinding system—such as directional signage, maps, pedestrian and bicycle route markers, and digital tools—that helps visitors and residents navigate to Cambridge's historic landmarks and popular destinations, most of which are within walking or biking distance from Downtown.

Policy 4-6.6.2: Minority owned business support

Develop a program to encourage more minority-owned businesses in downtown.

Policy 4-6.6.3: Commemorative plaques program

Expand and strengthen the Historic Preservation Commission's commemorative plaque program to recognize and promote historically significant sites, buildings, events, and individuals throughout Cambridge that warrant public awareness and celebration.

Objective 4-6.7 Promote site-sensitive redevelopment and building reuse

Policy 4-6.7.1: Building reuse priority

Prioritize the reuse or repurposing of existing buildings within the Downtown Waterfront Development District (DWDD). When feasible, existing structures should be rehabilitated or adapted for new uses rather than demolished and replaced, conserving the district's character and reducing construction waste.

Policy 4-6.7.2: Facade transparency standards

Building façades that face sidewalks should not have more than 30% of their length or 30 feet, whichever is less, as blank walls (without doors and windows).

Policy 4-6.7.3: Transparent street level design

Sidewalk-level retail, office, and service uses that face a public space should be designed to have clear glass on at least 60% of their façades between 3 and 8 feet above grade.

Policy 4-6.7.4: Active street-front visibility

Sidewalk-level retail, office, and service windows should be kept visible (unshuttered) at night.

Policy 4-6.7.5.: Street-level activation standards

Sidewalk-level retail, office, service, and live-work spaces should comprise at least 60% of the street-level façade.

Policy 4-6.7.6: Building frontage requirements

Design new downtown buildings to have at least 70% of the total linear frontage of mixed-use and non-residential façades within one foot of the sidewalk and within the right-of-way.

Policy 4-6.7.7: Pedestrian accessibility standards

All businesses and/or community services on the ground floor should be accessible directly from sidewalks along a public space, such as a street, square, or plaza.

Policy 4-6.7.8: Ground floor dwelling design

Design new downtown buildings with ground-floor dwelling units such that at least 50% of those units have an elevated finished floor no less than 24 inches above the sidewalk.

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Goal 4-7: Create places and destinations for people by improving the public realm, and focusing on the comfort and interest of the pedestrian and cyclist

Objective 4-7.1 — Promote complete, walkable neighborhood streets and public spaces

Policy 4-7.1.1: Land use and transportation integration

Determine desired land use, including a varied mix of uses, then design the transportation infrastructure that supports the desired land use.

Policy 4-7.1.2: Pedestrian environment enhancement

Enhance the pedestrian environment. In existing neighborhoods, streets can be retrofitted with sidewalk installation, tree plantings, and interesting building facades.

Policy 4-7.1.3: Public Realm and Civic Master Planning

The City should consider a Downtown Public Realm Plan, Civic Master Plan, or Downtown Arrival Plan to guide the design of streets, civic spaces, and buildings. These plans should define specific public-realm elements and establish measurable indicators for tracking long-term success.

Policy 4-7.1.4: Street space design for public realm comfort

Street spaces should be designed to create prominent public spaces with a comfortable sense of enclosure using the following principles:

- Provide street trees on both sides on at least 60% of streets, between the travel lanes and sidewalk, at intervals averaging 40 feet or less.
- Provide streets with sidewalks at least 8 feet wide on retail or mixed-use streets and 5 feet wide on all other streets.
- Provide on-street parking on at least 70% of both sides of all new and existing streets.
- Minimize driveway interruptions so that curb cuts occupy no more than 10% of the total sidewalk frontage on a block.
- Policy 4-8.1.4: Neighborhood street design for safety

Neighborhood streets are designed for pedestrians and bicyclists by moderating the speed of motorized vehicles:

- 75% of residential-only streets should be designed for a maximum speed of 20 mph.

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Goal 4-8: Consideration for the design and preservation of general buildings

Objective 4-8.1 — Promote building design that enhances the public realm and supports sustainable urban form

Policy 4-8.1.1: Bicycle-oriented development

Development that promotes bicycle segments and/or secure bicycle storage should be encouraged along an existing or planned bicycle network.

Policy 4-8.1.2: Streamline the approval process

Develop a method of streamlining the process and guaranteeing approvals. For example, promote an "administrative approval" when development is in accordance with the community's vision as illustrated in various plans and urban design best practices.

Policy 4-8.1.3: Street frontage and parking design

New buildings should create an interesting street frontage, with parking hidden from view, typically located in the rear of the building. Setback requirements should be changed such that this is encouraged.

Policy 4-8.1.4: Building orientation and public realm relationship

The relationship between the fronts and the backs of buildings should ensure that public spaces have natural surveillance; the fronts of buildings should face the primary street adjacent to the property.

Policy 4-8.1.5: Climate responsive building design

Local building types and elements that have proven to react well to local climate and weather patterns should be encouraged.

Policy 4-8.1.6: Hidden or screened parking

Locate off-street parking so that it is not visually prominent from the street. Parking areas should be placed behind buildings whenever feasible, or screened from public view through landscaping, walls, or placement internal to the site.

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Goal 4-9: Consideration for the design and preservation of mixed-use buildings

Objective 4-9.1 Encourage contextual, pedestrian-oriented mixed-use development

Policy 4-9.1.1: Mixed-use zoning adjustments

Adjust zoning ordinances to promote mixed-use development within neighborhood centers and crossroads.

Policy 4-9.1.2: Traditional street and block design

Large-format buildings and uses should be developed within a traditional street and block network.

- Large parking fields typically associated with large-format uses can be located within the interior of a block structure adjacent to the use.
- The block and street network will allow on-street parking to be used to meet some parking needs, as well as allowing for passenger loading zones and parking directly in front of retailers.

To the maximum extent practicable:

- Perimeter and interior buildings shall be oriented so that the principal facade faces a public street or public space (street or space may be privately owned); and
- Perimeter or out-parcel buildings shall "wrap" the overall site, establishing a combined frontage build-out along the perimeter street.

Policy 4-9.1.3: Outdoor dining and sidewalk activation

Outdoor dining and seasonal sales should be allowed on city sidewalks provided that chairs and tables are placed in a manner that allows a minimum three-foot clear path for pedestrian movement.

Policy 4-9.1.4: Ground-flood accessibility

In non-residential and mixed-use developments, uses on the ground floor should be accessible directly from sidewalks along a public space, instead of from a parking lot.

Policy 4-9.1.5: Build entrances facing public spaces

A majority of the principal entries to buildings should face public spaces such as streets, squares, parks, or plazas, instead of parking lots.

Policy 4-9.1.6: Architectural extensions into the right-of-way

Awnings, balconies, arcades, galleries, and colonnades (privately maintained) should be allowed to extend into the right-of-way of city streets provided that adequate clearances are provided for pedestrian movement and for right-of-way maintenance.

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Goal 4-10: Consideration for the design of parking

Objective 4-10.1	**Improve the design and placement of off-street parking to reduce its visual prominence and strengthen the pedestrian environment, as demonstrated through increased use of rear-lot parking, improved screening, and enhanced pedestrian connections**

Policy 4-10.1.1: Parking lot placement principles

The careless placement of off-street surface parking lots can blight surrounding properties and public spaces. This blight can be avoided by using the following principles:

- Non-residential and multi-family buildings should have their surface parking lots placed at the side or rear of buildings.
- Buildings should have no more than 20% of their lots devoted to surface parking lots, with no individual lot larger than 2 acres.
- Parking lots should be designed for pedestrians as well as cars, with pathways and shade trees.

Goal 4-11: Consideration for the design and preservation of residential buildings

Objective 4-11.1	**Encourage residential design that enhances neighborhood character and livability**

Policy 4-11.1.1: Frontage elements

Semi-public building elements add to the congeniality of neighborhoods and should be encouraged within front setbacks. This applies to porches, stoops, bay windows, and balconies on residences.

Policy 4-11.2: Garage placement standards

Design buildings so that garage doors, loading docks, and other service bays do not dominate the street. Along the primary street-facing façade, garage doors and service openings should occupy no more than 20% of the total façade length, with the remaining frontage dedicated to doors, windows, and active uses.

Policy 4-11.3: Reduction of street-facing garages

Encourage a reduction in the percentage of building walls that face streets that contain garage doors or service bays. A maximum of 20% of front walls containing garage doors or service bays should be encouraged.

Policy 4-11.4: Neighborhood access and alley design

Design new residential subdivisions so that homes face and engage the primary street, with front doors, porches, and windows oriented toward the public realm. Vehicle access, including driveways and garages, should be provided from rear alleys wherever feasible to reduce curb cuts, improve walkability, and maintain a safe, continuous streetscape.

Policy 4-11.5: Residential street tree plan

Establish an urban canopy plan and possibly a tree bank to ensure that shade trees can be planted along residential streets.

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Goal 4-12: Streets and spaces should be safe and inviting with adequate lighting and clear signage

Objective 4-12.1	Improve public safety, wayfinding, and aesthetic quality through coordinated lighting and signage

Policy 4-12.1.1: Pedestrian-scaled lighting

Adequate and pedestrian-scaled lighting should line each street in Cambridge.

Policy 4-12.1.2: Utility placement standards

Utilities should not be located on the sidewalk, allowing clear access for pedestrians between destinations.

Policy 4-12.1.3: Wayfinding and signage programs

Install clear wayfinding signage in all of Cambridge, directing residents and visitors to significant locations including available parking.

Policy 4-12.1.4: Underground utilities requirement

The City shall continue to require all new utilities be built underground.

Policy 4-12.1.5: Relocation of overhead utilities

When opportunities arise, such as city-led development or redevelopment initiatives, overhead utilities should be relocated behind buildings or underground.

Policy 4-12.1.6: Sign ordinance and adoption

Adopt a new sign ordinance with form-based principals.

Policy 4-12.1.7: Relocation of overhead utilities

Adopt the outstanding lighting ordinance.

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5: Water Resources

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Water is a defining feature of Cambridge, with the City's identity, economy, and ecology deeply tied to the Choptank River, Cambridge Creek, Little Choptank River, and Fishing Bay. The City's municipal water and sewer systems provide reliable service, while regional watersheds contribute significantly to environmental quality and resilience. This chapter addresses the capacity of Cambridge's drinking water and sewer systems, the condition of surface water, and the strategies needed to ensure that future growth does not compromise water quality or supply.

Current Conditions

Drinking Water Supply

- The City draws groundwater from the Piney Point, Magothy, and Raritan, Pataspco aquifers.
- According to the 2007 Comprehensive Plan, nine municipal wells providing a combined capacity of 7.1 million gallons per day (mgd). Storage capacity included two elevated tanks and four ground storage tanks.
- According to recent consumer confidence reports, Cambridge's water system continues to draw from the same aquifers, operates multiple well and pumping stations, serves a distribution network of about 120 miles of pipeline, and meets all state and federal water-quality standards – with no significant violations recorded.

Wastewater Treatment

- According to the 2011 Comprehensive Plan, the City's Wastewater Treatment Plant had a design capacity of 9.1 mgd. In 2007, the facility treated about 3.0 mgd, with flows projected to reach 3.7 mgd by 2030, leaving approximately 4.4 mgd (54%) capacity remaining. Nutrient discharge caps were set at 98,676 lbs/year nitrogen and 7,401 lbs/year phosphorous.
- The City's Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) treats flows from Cambridge at a design capacity of 8.1 MGD. During the 2011 Comprehensive Plan update, average flows were about 3.0 MGD (2007) with projections of 3.7 MGD by 2030, leaving significant reserve capacity. The plant's discharge caps were set at 98,676 lbs/year Total Nitrogen and 7,401 lbs/year Total Phosphorus. The WWTP has since been upgraded to and operates with Enhanced Nutrient Removal (ENR). Recent reporting indicates average flow of ~3.21 MGD in CY 2020, with continued ENR operation.

Surface Water Quality

- According to the 2007 Comprehensive Plan, the Lower Choptank River was impaired for bacteria, nutrients, and sediment, while Fishing Bay (Little Blackwater River) was impaired for bacteria. Non-point source pollution (stormwater runoff, agricultural practices, and impervious surfaces) was the largest contributor of nutrient loading. At that time, no nutrient-based TMDLs had been developed for the Little Choptank or Fishing Bay.
- Currently, the City remains with the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area, and excess nutrients continue to impair water quality. Updated integrated reports from the Maryland Department of the Environment should be used to verity current impairments and TMDL status for the Little Choptank and Fishing Bay.

Future Demand

- According to the 2007 Comprehensive Plan, residential growth was projected at 2,480 new households between 2010 and 2030, requiring approximate 620,000 gpd. Non-residential demand was expected to add about 130,000 gpd, or 520 EDU's for a combined growth demand of about 3,000 EDU's by 2030.
- Currently, population and housing growth trends have been slower than projected, and actual development patterns differ from those forecasts. As of the most recent ACS estimates (2023), Cambridge's population is approximately 13,150 with about 5,400 households, compared to 5,144 in 2010. Updated development approvals and current household counts should be used to refine future water and sewer demand projections, which are expected to remain below earlier 2030 estimates given recent growth rates.

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Community Concerns

Aging infrastructure and Maintenance Backlog

- Sewer collection infrastructure, including pipes and manholes, is in need of repair and rehabilitation. Infiltration and inflow reduce system capacity, increase treatment costs, and create risks of wastewater leaks.
- Storm drain infrastructure in older neighborhoods pre-dates stormwater management (SWM) requirements, resulting in untreated runoff and localized flooding
- Lack of consistent repair funding and priority-setting leaves the system vulnerable to major failures (sinkholes, collapsed pipes).

Water Quality and Chesapeake Bay Obligation

- Local waterways continue to be impaired for nutrients, sediment, and bacteria. Excess nutrient loading contributes to degraded water quality in the Choptank River and Chesapeake Bay.
- Non-point source runoff from impervious surfaces and agricultural and is a persistent contributor to pollution.

System Reliability and Sustainability

- While both the water system and wastewater treatment plant have excess capacity above current demand, aging infrastructure and limited reinvestment threaten long-term sustainability.
- Inconsistent investment in monitoring and proactive rehabilitation may create operational and financial burdens.

Stormwater Management Gaps

- New development must comply with SWM ordinance requirements, but older parts of Cambridge lack adequate infrastructure for stormwater capture and treatment.
- Retrofitting older areas with cost-effective maintenance solutions remains a pressing need.

Strategies for Addressing Concerns

1. Rehabilitation and Modernization

- Implement trenchless pipe rehabilitation, and manhole rehabilitation to extend the life of aging sewer infrastructure.
- Prioritize infiltration and inflow reduction projects to restore capacity and reduce treatment costs.

2. Priority Mapping and Funding

- Utilize the City's GIS system annually to identify, prioritize, and record critical repair areas for water, sewer, and storm systems.
- Incorporate identified repair projects into the City's annual capital improvement budget to ensure consistent reinvestment.

3. Stormwater Retrofits

- Implement stormwater infill and retrofit opportunities such as parking lot runoff treatment, roadside bio-retention with permeable paving, rain gardens, and bio-swales.
- Focus retrofits in older neighborhoods where stormwater systems pre-date SWM regulations.

4. Water Quality Protection

- Support Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) goals through local stormwater retrofits, nutrient reduction projects, and protection of riparian buffers.
- Partner with Dorchester County and MDE to expand watershed-scale monitoring and pollution control initiatives.

5. Public Engagement and Education

- Expand outreach on water conservation and stormwater best practices, including rain barrels, tree planting, and low-cost retrofits.
- Encourage community participation in priority mapping and reporting problem areas.

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Goal 5-1: Ensure reliable, resilient and sustainable water, sewer, and stormwater systems

Objective 5-1.1 Maintain and modernize water-related infrastructure over the next five year period

Policy 5-1.1.1: Sewer system rehabilitation

Implement trenchless pipe lining, manhole rehabilitation, and inflow and infiltration reduction projects to extend service life and reduce treatment costs.

Policy 5-1.1.2: Water system reliability

Maintain wells, storage tanks, and distribution lines, repair aged pipes, valves, and services to ensure uninterrupted service.

Policy 5-1.1.3: Storm drain upgrades

Rehabilitate and replace storm drains and inlets in older areas of the City to reduce flooding and improve conveyance.

Goal 5-2: Protect and improve water quality in Cambridge's rivers and creeks that flow to and impact the Chesapeake Bay

Objective 5-2.1 Reduce pollutant discharge in order to improve water quality in Cambridge

Policy 5-2.1.1: Wastewater treatment performance

Maintain enhanced nutrient removal at the wastewater treatment plant and evaluate constructed wetlands or tertiary treatment to further reduce nitrogen and phosphorus discharges.

Policy 5-2.1.2: Non-point source management

Retrofit priority stormwater areas—defined as locations with documented flooding, poor drainage, high impervious surface coverage, or direct runoff into the Choptank River or its tributaries—with rain gardens, bioswales, permeable paving, and parking lot retrofits to capture and treat runoff.

Policy 5-2.1.3: Riparian buffer protection

Preserve and restore riparian buffers and wetlands to improve water quality and provide natural flood protection.

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Goal 5-3: Implement proactive planning and funding for infrastructure needs

Objective 5-3.1 Establish priority mapping and budgeting systems

Policy 5-3.1.1: GIS mapping

Utilize the City's GIS system to identify and prioritize repair and rehabilitation needs for water, sewer, and stormwater infrastructure.

Policy 5-3.1.2: Dedicated funding

Allocate a minimum share of the annual capital improvement program to prioritize water, sewer, and stormwater projects.

Policy 5-3.1.3: Performance reporting

Track progress of system rehabilitation annually and report findings to the public and City Council.

Policy 5-3.1.4: Targeted water resource planning studies

The City may commission targeted planning studies to modernize water-related infrastructure and reduce pollutant discharge, such as a Comprehensive Water Infrastructure Master Plan, Stormwater Management Plan or update, or Watershed Assessment to identify pollutant sources, evaluate runoff patterns, and recommend capital improvements. Additional studies may include a Water Quality Monitoring Program, a Sewer System Evaluation Survey (SSES) to detect inflow/infiltration, and a Climate Resilience Study to ensure infrastructure can accommodate future flooding and extreme weather. The City might also pursue a Water Quality Monitoring Study to track contaminants, a Sewer System Evaluation Survey (SSES) to locate inflow and infiltration, and a Climate Resilience Study or update to ensure infrastructure can handle future flooding and extreme weather.

Goal 5-4: Strengthen partnerships with county and state agencies and increase resident education and participation in water-resource stewardship

Objective 5-4.1 Build partnerships and educate residents about water resources

Policy 5-4.1.1: County and state coordination

Work with Dorchester County and MDE to meet Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) requirements and share data on nutrient reductions.

Policy 5-4.1.2: Public outreach

Partner with the Cambridge Utilities Commission to provide educational programs on rain barrels, tree planting, and low-cost household stormwater controls.

Policy 5-4.1.3: Community reporting

Encourage residents to participate in identifying and reporting infrastructure repair needs through the City's GIS mapping system.

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6: Mobility & Transportation

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Transportation and mobility are fundamental to the City of Cambridge's livability, economic vitality, and community identity. The City's roadway network serves both as a local circulation system and as a regional connector to surrounding jurisdictions, with U.S. Route 50 functioning as a major arterial corridor through the community that connects the greater region to the Eastern Shore communities and Annapolis and the Capital Region/DMV. Balancing the mobility needs of regional through-traffic with the safety and accessibility of local streets is a critical challenge.

This Element provides strategies for creating a transportation system that serves all users, drivers, pedestrians, cyclists, and transit riders, while advancing environmental sustainability, equitable access, mode choice, and neighborhood connectivity. Enhancements to local streets, trails, stormwater systems, and gateways will strengthen community cohesion, improve safety, and promote active living.

Current Conditions

The Ordering Streets of Cambridge

Cambridge has a number of key "ordering streets". These major streets allow travelers to establish location and context within the City and help bring a sense of structure and orientation to the street network. Together, these ordering streets form the backbone of Cambridge's transportation system. With targeted investment, they can evolve into "Great Streets" that support multimodal travel, reinforce historic character, and strengthen connections between neighborhoods, parks, and the regional highway network.

Traffic volumes on the majority of the streets in Cambridge are light and easily accommodated by a network of two lane streets, as shown in Figure 6.1. In fact the only multi-lane street in the city is US Route 50, which carries in the range of 30,000 vehicles per day on four lanes north and south of the city and expanded to six lanes from Washington Street east to the city limits.

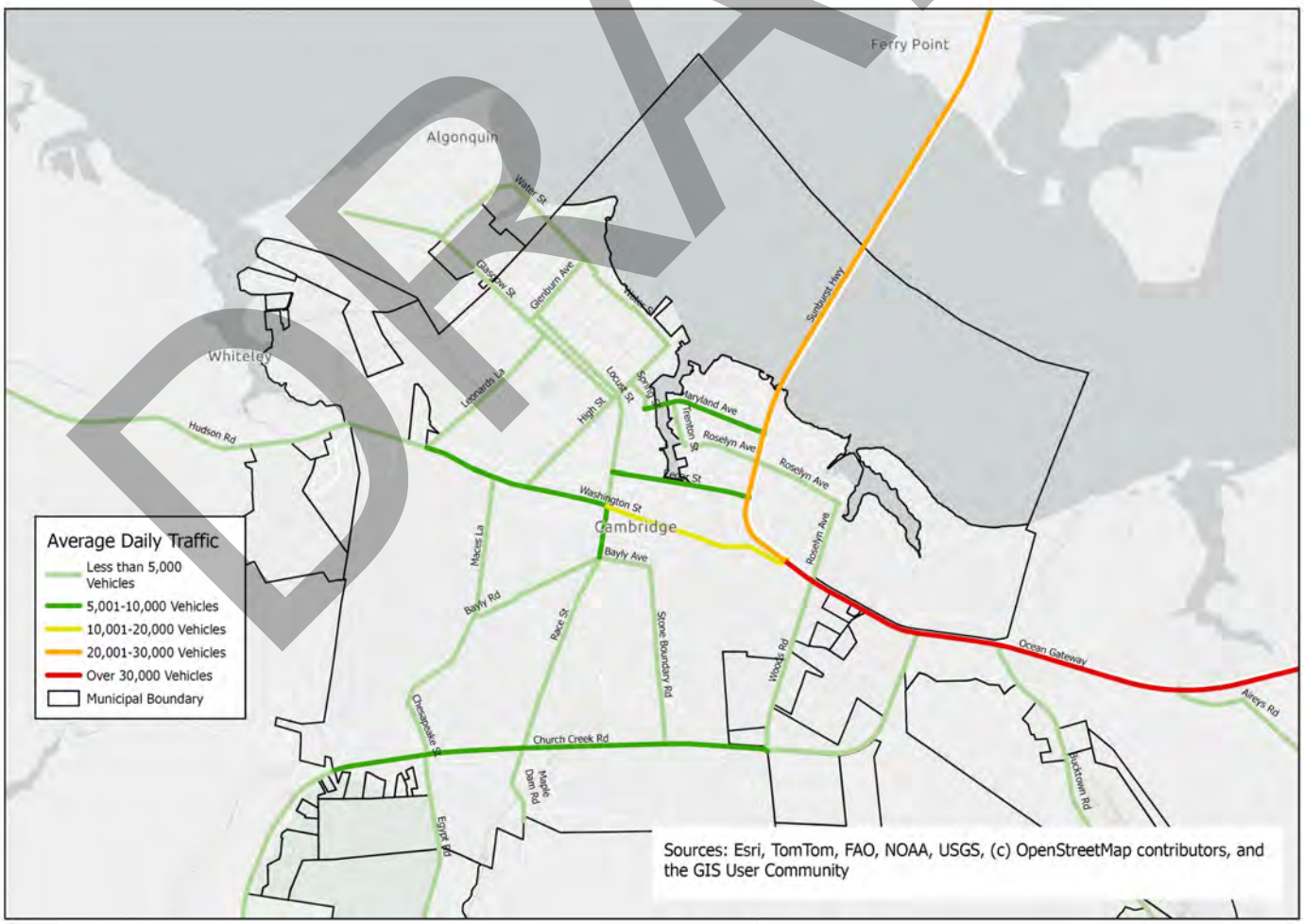

Figure 6.1: Average Daily Traffic

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Race Street

Race Street serves as a vital Street for Cambridge, extending from the central business district past Washington Street and north to MD Route 16. Classified by the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) as a collector street, Race Street collects traffic from local streets and conveys it to regional arterials such as MD Route 16. It also functions as a key gateway between the historic downtown, adjacent neighborhoods, and destinations along the Choptank River.

Washington Street

Washington Street is the traditional farm-to-market route and remains one of the City's most important corridors. It forms the southern boundary of Cambridge's traditional center and connects rural areas west of the City to the U.S Route 50 corridor. Washington Street has many intersecting streets both signalized and unsignalized, and traverses the proposed Washington Street Historic District between Hight Street and Pine Street. Growth west of the City has increased traffic demand on this corridor, creating congestion and raising concerns about the preservation of historic character. SHA classifies Washington Street as a collector street.

High Street

High Street is a principal diagonal road that intersects the downtown grid and connects east-west traffic to Long Wharf. It also serves as the western boundary of the downtown district and provides access to residential neighborhoods in the Cambridge Historic District. As one of the most architecturally distinctive streets, High Street combines civic identity with functionality. Between Long Wharf and Spring Street, the street is paved in brick, reinforcing its historic character.

Cedar Street

Cedar Street, though not long, plays an important role in ordering Cambridge's southern entrance. As a gateway from the U.S Route 50 corridor into downtown, it provides views over Cambridge Creek and serves as a vital connector when the Market Street drawbridge is up. Despite this importance, Cedar Street lacks curbs, sidewalks, bicycle lanes, street trees, and consistent streetscape design. With targeted investment, it could become a signature gateway between downtown and the highway corridor.

Maryland Avenue

Maryland Avenue serves as the principle gateway into the central business district from the U.S Route 50 corridor, crossing Cambridge Creek as the Market Street drawbridge. The avenue provides consistent architectural character as it traverses a residential area and runs parallel to the Choptank River. Maryland Avenue also serves as a critical link to the Waterfront, and downtown.

Glasgow and Locust Streets

This pair of one-way streets provides access to and from the west side of Cambridge. They serve residential areas and connect directly into the downtown core. Traversing the Cambridge Historic District, they carry a distinctly residential character while also functioning as critical local routes.

MD Route 16

MD Route 16 is a State-owned and operated arterial highway that defines the northern edge of Cambridge. As the western bypass route is completed, MD Route 16 will become part of the long-planned Cambridge Bypass system. It plays a dual role, providing access into the City while also carrying regional through-traffic that would otherwise burden local streets.

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U.S Route 50

U.S. Route 50 functions as the primary east-west arterial connecting Cambridge to the rest of the region and to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge as well as to the shore. Six lanes through most of Cambridge proper, U.S Route 50 carries between 21,000 and 32,000 vehicles per day through Cambridge, according to the MDO 2024 AADT. The highway serves primarily auto-oriented suburban land uses with large setbacks, front parking lots, little to no cross access, and parking fields in front of buildings. As such, it currently features numerous driveways and uncontrolled access points that create conflicts with through traffic. Finally, as the primary route to the eastern shore and coast, the roadway sees significant increases in traffic volumes on a seasonal basis, especially on weekends during the summer months. Much of the commercial retail and services for Cambridge and the surrounding area are located along this roadway.

Other Streets Serving Cambridge

Many smaller corridors connect downtown to neighborhoods and regional highways such as U.S Route 50 and MD Route 16. However, many of the cross-town links remain incomplete or undeveloped, placing heavy traffic on a limited set of roads. Parallel routes such as Dorchester Avenue and Rambler Road accommodate local circulation and access to commercial properties, reducing the need for direct access onto Route 50. Local streets in many neighborhoods pre-date modern design standards, resulting in narrow-cross sections, limited sidewalks, and inconsistent ADA accessibility.

Bicycle & Pedestrian Facilities

Cambridge's traditional grid supports walkability, but gaps exist in sidewalks, crossings, and bicycle facilities. Cedar Street is one of the most heavily used bicycle routes, yet it lacks consistent design, street trees, and safe connections to Route 50 and downtown. The 2007 Comprehensive Plan identified fragmented pedestrian and bicycle networks with limited connections between parks, schools, and commercial centers. Figure 6.2 shows the current bicycle facilities within Cambridge.

Trails such as those planned for Rigby Avenue, Wright Street, Wells Street, and Cedar Street remain partially incomplete, though recent community design initiatives have established alignments linking Cornish Park, Groove City Park and Leonard Lane Park. Additionally, the segment of shared use path on the north side of U.S. Route 50 between the Hyatt Regency resort and Cambridge Plaza offers an example of how walking and bicycling can be accommodated on a larger, heavily trafficked street.

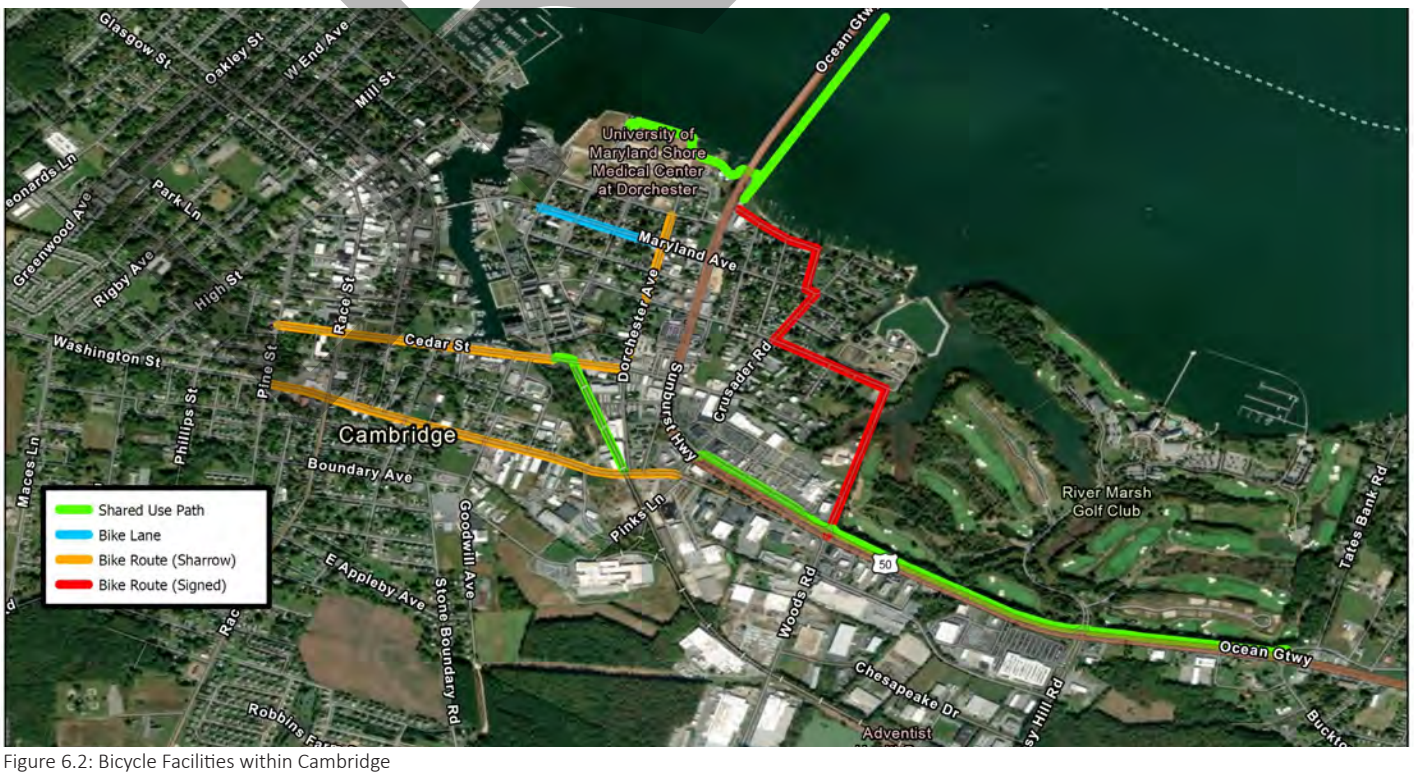

Figure 6.2: Bicycle Facilities within Cambridge

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Public Transit

While some services exist, coverage and frequency are limited. No dedicated local transit service is operated by the City; regional service is provided through a combination of fixed route, deviated fixed route, and on-demand service within Cambridge through Delmarva Community Transit/Maryland Upper Shore Transit (MUST). Frequency is limited, with 60-90 minutes minimum headways, most longer. Additionally, Bus stops often lack shelters and safe pedestrian connections. Current transit service for Cambridge is denoted in Figure 6.3.

Current Traffic Volumes

Traffic volumes in Cambridge do not exceed the need for two lanes of moving traffic; the dense network of more major routes and local streets create a web of mobility that allows traffic to use multiple routes to access destinations within the City. The notable exception to this fact is US Route 50, which carries up to 33,000 vehicles per day between Washington Street and the eastern city limit; volumes drop to the mid 20,000 vehicle per day range outside of the core of

Cambridge. As the primary regional route to the cities north of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge and to the shore communities, Route 50 carries much more regional traffic; however, due to the goods and services located along it within Cambridge, residents use it for local travel as well.

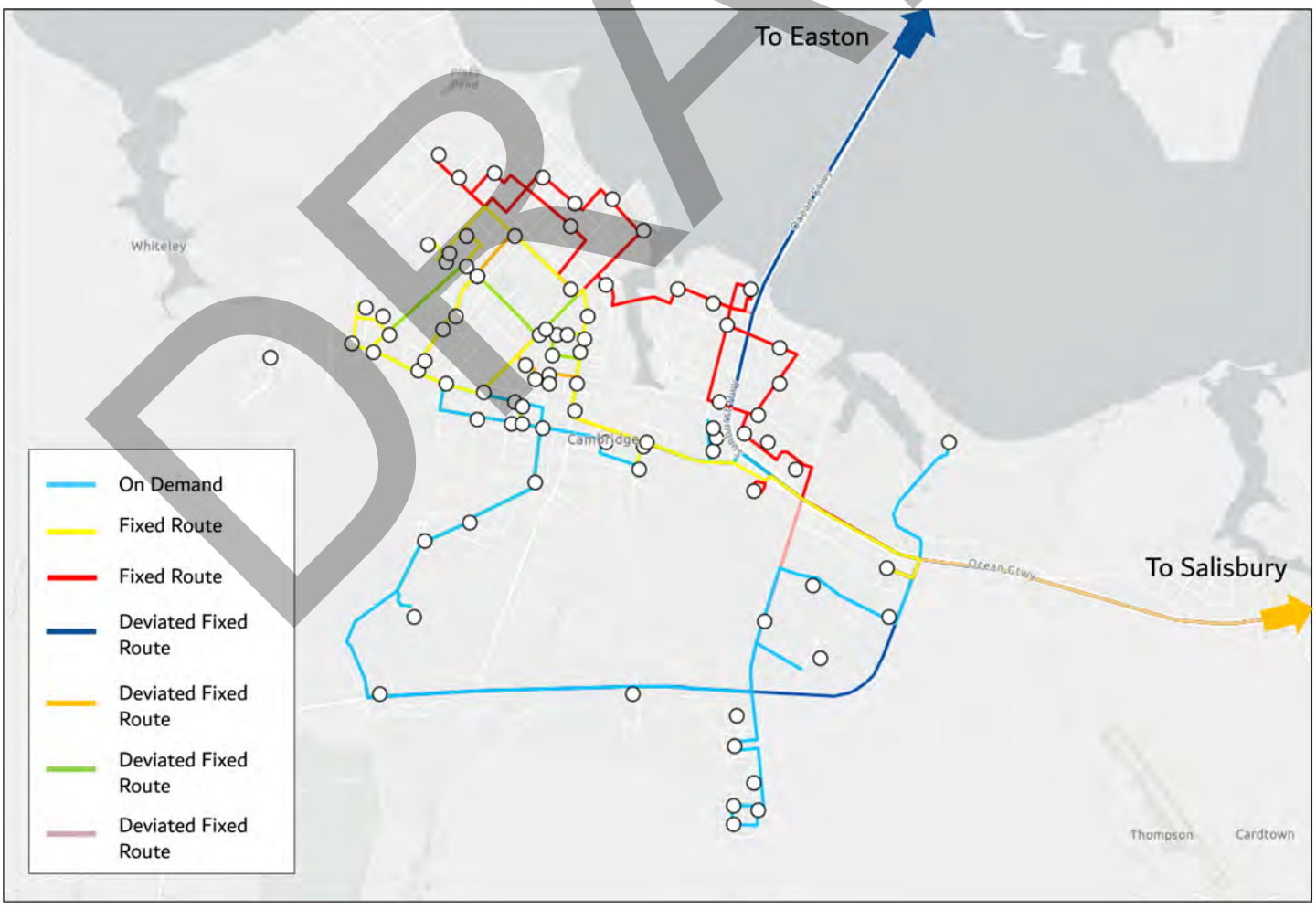

Figure 6.3: Transit services within Cambridge

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Community Concerns

Community feedback emphasized that while Cambridge benefits from a historic grid and traditional street patterns, the current transportation system does not adequately support safety, connectivity, or equitable access. Key concerns include:

Congestion on Key Corridors: Washington Street in particular faces increasing traffic volumes due to the new housing growth and its role as the primary farm-to-market and US 50 access route. Residents worry that without alternatives, this corridor will become severely congested and compromise historic preservation along its length.

Lack of Safe Walking and Biking Infrastructure: Many local streets lack sidewalks, curbs, crosswalks, and street lighting. Cedar Street, despite being a gateway, has no bicycle and or pedestrian amenities. The absence of connected, accessible infrastructure disproportionately affects residents without automobiles.

Disconnected Neighborhood and Parks: The lack of cross-town streets and safe off-street trail connections means that many neighborhoods remain isolated from parks, schools, and downtown. While projects such as the trails along Rigby Avenue, Wright Street, Wells Street, and Cedar Street are beginning to establish links, the system remains incomplete and inconsistent.

Highway Impacts: U.S. Route 50 bisects the City, functioning both as a highway and as a commercial strip. Residents cited safety, speed, and access concerns, as well as frustration that local businesses are oriented toward highway traffic rather than neighborhood-serving needs.

Equity and Accessibility: Several residents emphasized that inadequate mobility infrastructure limits access to jobs, medical care, recreation, and education. Gaps in sidewalks, unsafe crossings, and poor stormwater management contribute to unsafe and inequitable conditions.

Streetscape Quality: Across corridors like Race Street, Maryland Avenue, and Locust/Glasgow Streets, the lack of consistent street trees, lighting, and public realm design diminishes the character of the city and leaves historic districts vulnerable to incremental decline.

Parking and Access to Recreation: Residents expressed concern about the limited accessibility of parks and public spaces across Cambridge, particularly in neighborhoods located farther from the waterfront or downtown. Many noted that a lack of safe walking and biking connections, combined with limited parking availability near key recreational destinations, restricts opportunities for residents to enjoy parks, trails, and community facilities.

Public input also highlighted that parking areas often serve multiple purposes—supporting recreational users, workers, and visitors seeking goods and services—but are not always designed or managed to balance these competing needs. Improving access to parks through better multimodal connectivity, strategic parking management, and neighborhood linkages was identified as a priority to ensure equitable access to recreational amenities citywide.

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Strategies for Addressing Community Concerns

In response to these concerns, the following strategies are recommended to guide Cambridge toward a safer, more connected, and more resilient mobility system:

1. Transform Ordering Streets into "Great Streets"

- Implement streetscape improvements along Race, Washington, High, Cedar, and Maryland Avenue to recast corridors that are not only functional but also civic landmarks. Enhancements to pedestrian safety (crosswalks, lighting, ADA compliance), bicycle facilities (lanes, racks, and parking), and landscaping (street trees, stormwater bioswales) create inviting public spaces that encourage walking and community identity.

2. Address Congestion and Growth Impacts

- Advance the completion of the Western Cambridge Bypass/Beltway as a part of the overall Cambridge transportation network, to include design features to keep traffic speeds slow and in keeping with in-town character.

3. Expand the Trail and Greenway Network

- Complete planned trails on Rigby Avenue, Wright Street, Wells Street, and Cedar Street to connect Leonards Lane Park, Cornish Park, and Groove City Park into a unified greenway system. Incorporating trailheads, signage, and amenities will reinforce these corridors as safe, family-friendly alternatives to auto travel. This network also strengthens environmental resilience by providing flood-adaptive open spaces.
- Advance concept of completing shared use paths along US Route 50 extending current path near Hyatt Regency resort along both sides of roadway.

4. Reimagine U.S. Route 50

- Partner with SHA to implement the "controlled access boulevard" concept, redirecting local trips to parallel avenues (Dorchester, Rambler) and limiting driveways along the highway. Improved wayfinding can ensure downtown and the waterfront are visible and accessible from the highway corridor, turning a barrier into a gateway.

5. Ensure Equity and Accessibility

- Prioritize infrastructure upgrades in neighborhoods with low car ownership. Incorporate complete street elements into all new development approvals to ensure sidewalks, crosswalks, and bike access are built. Equitable mobility reduces transportation costs for residents while connecting them to jobs, schools, and services.

6. Create a Connected Street Network

- Pursue missing links such as the Stone Boundary Road alignment and Goodwill Avenue extension to ensure north–south and east–west connectivity. Require future subdivisions to dedicate rights-of-way for cross-town routes, ensuring that private development contributes to a more complete public street grid.

7. Promote Stormwater Resilient Streets

- Integrate green infrastructure (rain gardens, permeable pavement, bioswales) into roadway design to address flooding that currently undermines mobility. These features reduce costly road repairs, improve water quality, and help neighborhoods adapt to climate change.

8. Enhance Public Transit & Mobility Options

- Expand access to public and shared transportation, including regional bus routes, micro-transit services, and shuttle connections between key community nodes. Supporting alternatives to car travel not only relieves congestion but also broadens access for residents without vehicles.
- Explore waterborne transit such as water taxi service to serve the waterfront and downtown and provide better overall connectivity and choice of travel modes for residents and visitors.

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9. Coordinate Parking and Access Improvements

- Cambridge can improve parking access while supporting long-term mobility goals through targeted short-, mid-, and long-term actions. In the near term, updating the downtown parking study, improving signage, and coordinating event shuttles can relieve pressure in high-demand areas. Mid-term strategies such as reconfiguring streets, enhancing pedestrian connections, and adding curb extensions will improve safety and access. In the long term, initiatives like valet service, greenway connections, and a potential water taxi will promote a convenient "park once" environment for residents and visitors.

Implementation Tools

Carrying these strategies forward will require coordination among City agencies, the Maryland State Highway Administration, and community partners. Funding opportunities may include federal transportation grants, state resiliency programs, and private development contributions.

Transforming U.S. Route 50 into a Multimodal Boulevard

U.S. Route 50 is the only multi-lane arterial in Cambridge and serves both regional travel and local commercial activity. Its current highway-like form, with wide lanes, frequent driveways, and limited pedestrian facilities, creates safety challenges and reinforces a barrier between neighborhoods. Because it is also a major entry point into Cambridge, improvements to this corridor represent a significant opportunity to enhance mobility, character, and community identity.

Transforming Route 50 into a controlled boulevard would create a safer and more predictable roadway. Narrower lane widths, consolidated access points, and landscaped medians help organize traffic and reduce speeds, while providing opportunities for sidewalks, shared-use paths, street trees, and improved crossings. These changes also reinforce the role of local parallel streets such as Dorchester Avenue and Rambler Road, which can better accommodate business access and short local trips.

Upgrading Route 50 contributes not only to mobility but also to placemaking. Coordinated landscaping, lighting, and wayfinding can establish a stronger sense of arrival and improve connections to downtown, the waterfront, and nearby neighborhoods. Over time, these improvements support redevelopment that aligns with Cambridge's goals for walkability, safety, and economic resilience.

Re-envisioning U.S. Route 50 allows the corridor to evolve from a divisive highway into a unified gateway that serves residents, visitors, and businesses while strengthening the overall transportation network.

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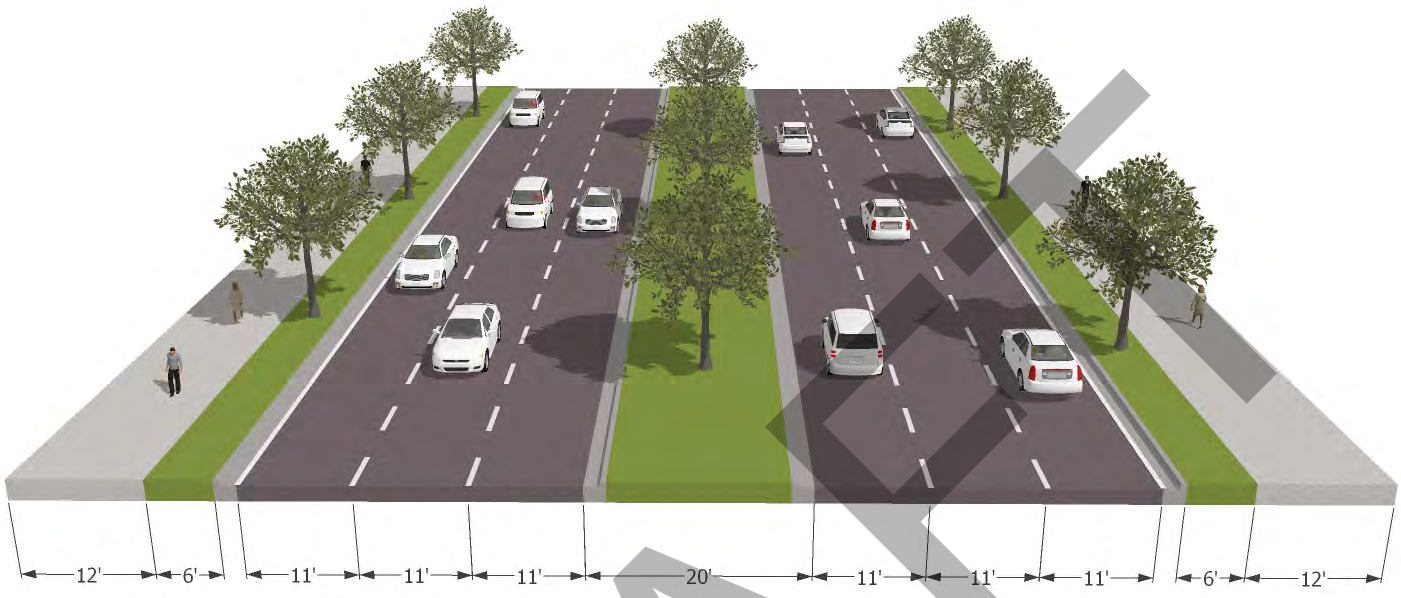

Figure 6.4: U.S. Route 50 Conceptual Boulevard Retrofit (Half-Section)
This conceptual half-section illustrates how U.S. Route 50 can transition from a highway environment into a controlled boulevard with narrower lanes, landscaped medians, and improved multimodal facilities. Only one half of the full roadway is shown to allow the design details to be visible at this scale.

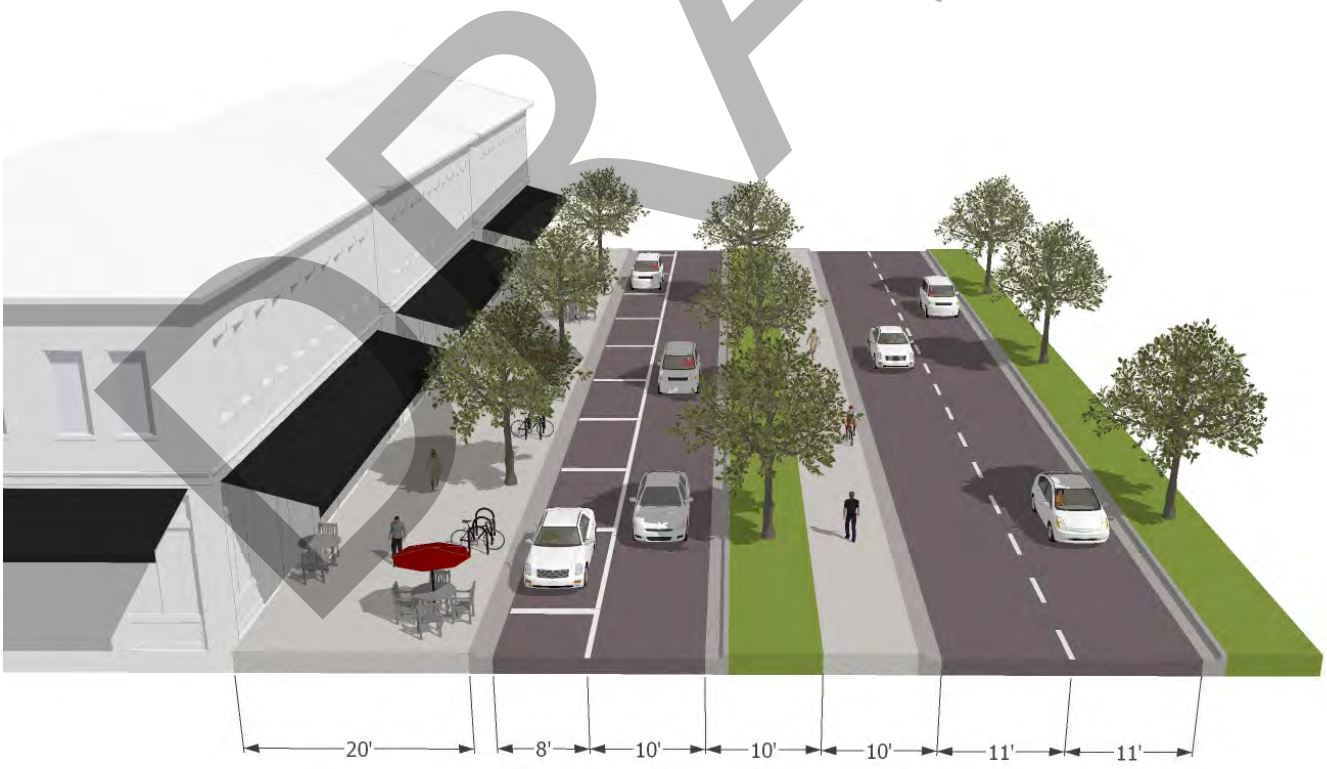

Figure 6.5: U.S. Route 50 Mixed-Use Edge Condition (Half-Section)
This half-section demonstrates how the proposed boulevard design interfaces with adjacent commercial development. The concept includes enhanced sidewalks, street trees, on-street parking, and safer access management. The full-width section is not shown because the entire corridor would be too wide to display clearly on a single page.

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Streetscapes and Transportation Design

Streetscapes are the foundation of Cambridge's mobility network, shaping how residents and visitors experience the city on foot, by bicycle, and by car. Well-designed streetscapes balance traffic flow with pedestrian safety, accessibility, and visual character. Improvements to intersections, sidewalks, and corridors are essential for addressing existing deficiencies, calming traffic, and creating a more inviting public realm.

Well-designed corridors balance traffic flow with pedestrian and bicycle safety, accessibility, and visual character. Improvements such as upgraded sidewalks, crosswalks, bike infrastructure, and traffic calming make streets safer and more inviting. At the same time, integrating stormwater management, street trees, and green buffers enhances resilience and comfort in the face of climate change.

Figure 6.6: Intersection of Washington Street and Dorchester Avenue

Figure 6.7 After- A Re-imagined intersection

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Existing Intersection and Proposed Roundabout

The existing intersection of Maryland Avenue and Academy Street is an important gateway for downtown. Currently, it prioritizes vehicle flow but offers limited pedestrian safety or visual appeal. The proposed roundabout calms traffic, improves crossings, and introduces landscaping, creating a safer and more welcoming streetscape.

The proposed roundabout re-balances the intersection to serve all modes more effectively. By reducing vehicle speeds and simplifying traffic flow, it enhances safety and efficiency. Shortened crosswalks, ADA-compliant curb ramps, and clear pedestrian routes make the intersection more accessible. Landscaping, stormwater features, and a central monument create an attractive gateway that also serves as a community focal point.

This design illustrates how a single intersection improvement can deliver multiple benefits—calmer traffic, improved pedestrian and bicycle safety, stronger neighborhood identity, and a more resilient, connected transportation system.

A: Pedestrian Crosswalks

B: Roundabout Traffic Calming

C: ADA Compliant Curbs

D: Street Landscaping

E: Gateway Monument/ Feature

F: Pedestrian Oriented Streetscape

*For illustrative purposes only.

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Retrofitting Oversized Streets

Many of Cambridge's streets are wider than necessary for current traffic demands, which creates safety issues for pedestrians and cyclists, encourages speeding, and results in an underutilized public realm. Retrofitting these oversized streets provides an opportunity to rebalance space for all modes of travel, improve safety, and enhance the character of the corridor.

Figure 6.8: Oversize Streets Retrofit Alternative 1

This alternative narrows travel lanes to 10 feet and introduces protected bike lanes on both sides of the street. The design emphasizes multimodal safety by physically separating cyclists from vehicles while maintaining wide sidewalks and street trees for a more comfortable pedestrian environment.

Figure 6.9: Oversized Street Retrofit Alternative 2

This alternative reallocates space to include two travel lanes with on-street parking on both sides. The configuration maintains vehicle access and convenience while calming traffic and supporting adjacent land uses, with continued emphasis on street trees and pedestrian-scale design.

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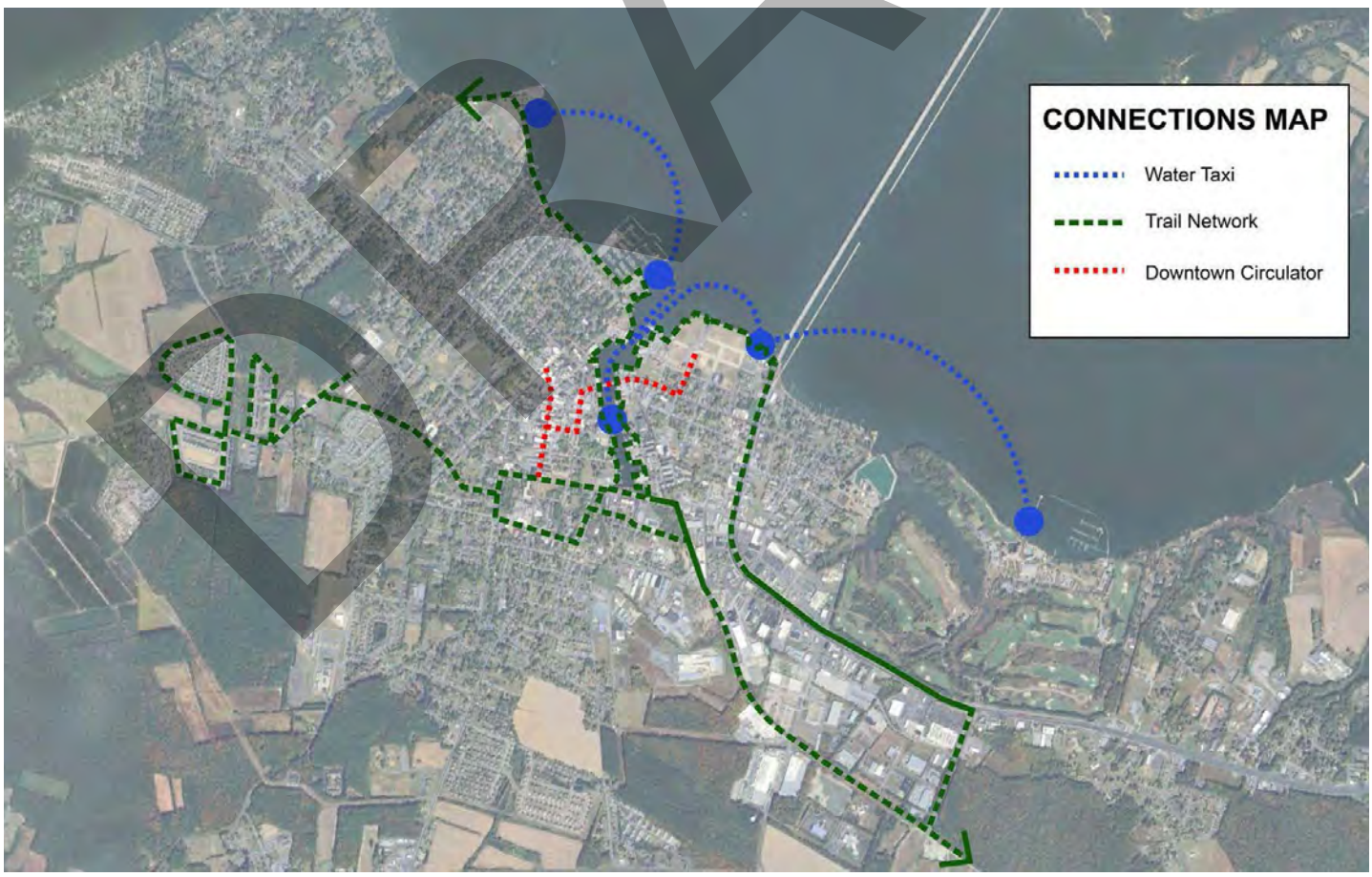
Connections by Land and Water

Cambridge's transportation system extends beyond roads to include multi-modal opportunities that enhance connectivity across neighborhoods and to the waterfront. Investments in trail networks, water taxis, and a downtown circulator expand mobility choices while making transit fun, accessible, and unique to the city's identity. Together, these strategies support tourism, reduce congestion, and encourage sustainable travel

Figure 6.4 and 6.5 Connections Map and Example Transit Options: The connections map illustrates planned routes for a trail network, downtown circulator, and water taxi service to link neighborhoods and the waterfront. Example transit options for land and water can include a circulator trolley, water taxi, or autonomous shuttle.

Making transit fun



Connection Map

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Mid-Block Pedestrian Connections

Strengthening walkability within downtown Cambridge requires more than just sidewalks along major streets. Mid-block pedestrian connections improve accessibility, encourage exploration, and create safe, welcoming spaces between destinations. These connections are especially important near cultural assets such as the Harriet Tubman Mural, where long blocks can discourage walking, and will help draw visitors onto the heart of downtown.

The proposed mid-block connection near the Harriet Tubman Mural illustrates the potential of these improvements. The existing space currently lacks amenities, landscaping, and visual interest, creating a barrier between Race Street and the waterfront. By introducing brick paving, street trees, landscaping, public art, and wayfinding signage, the corridor is reimagined as an inviting pedestrian passage. These enhancements serve multiple functions: they improve accessibility, encourage exploration, and highlight cultural assets such as the Harriet Tubman Mural. In doing so, they help draw residents and visitors deeper into the heart of downtown, supporting local businesses and reinforcing Cambridge's identity as a walkable, connected community.

A: Brick Paving

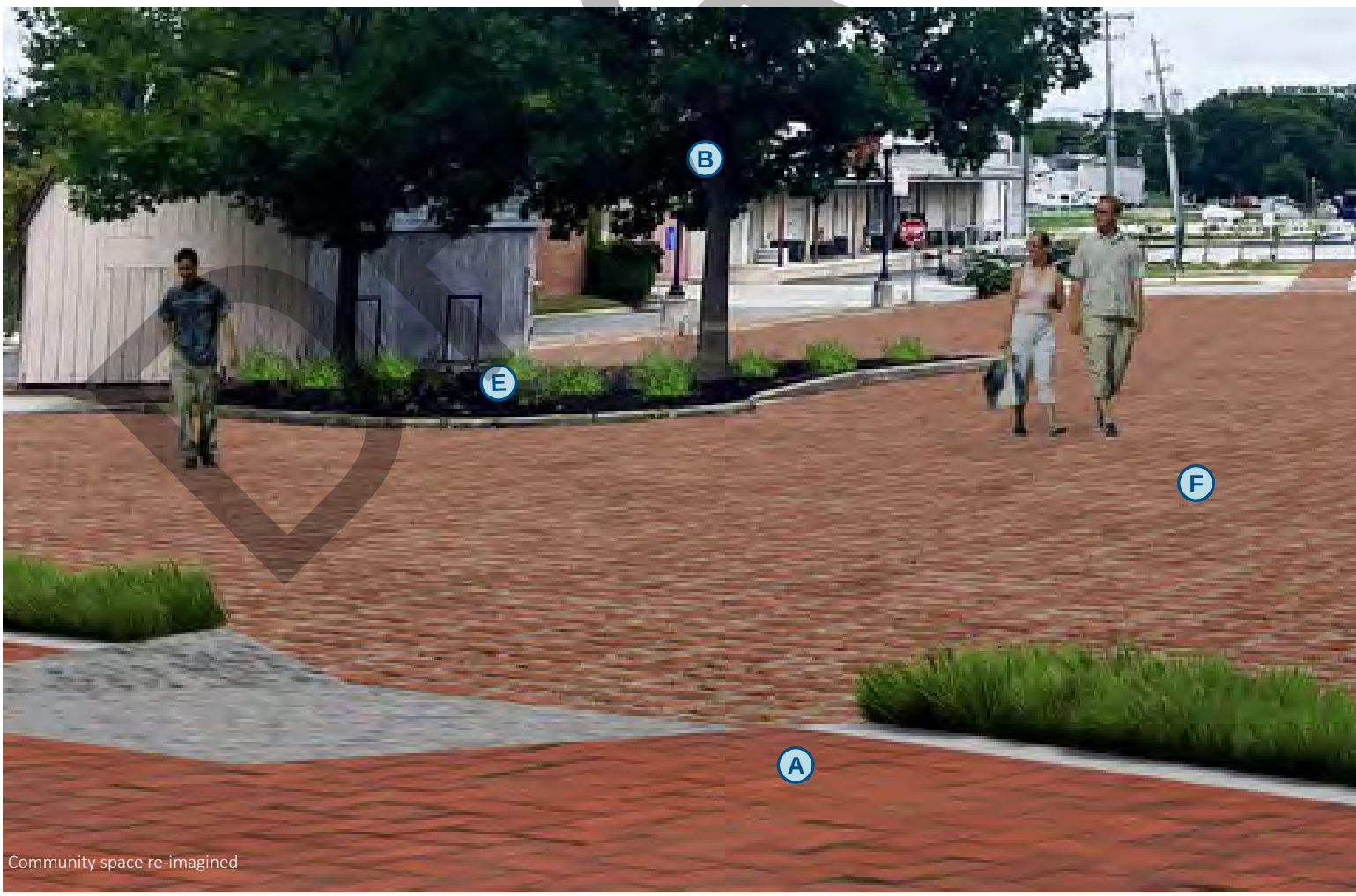
B: Street Trees

C: Wayfinding Kiosk

D: Public Art Mural

E: Landscaping Beds

F: Convenient Pedestrian Walkway



Community space re-imagined

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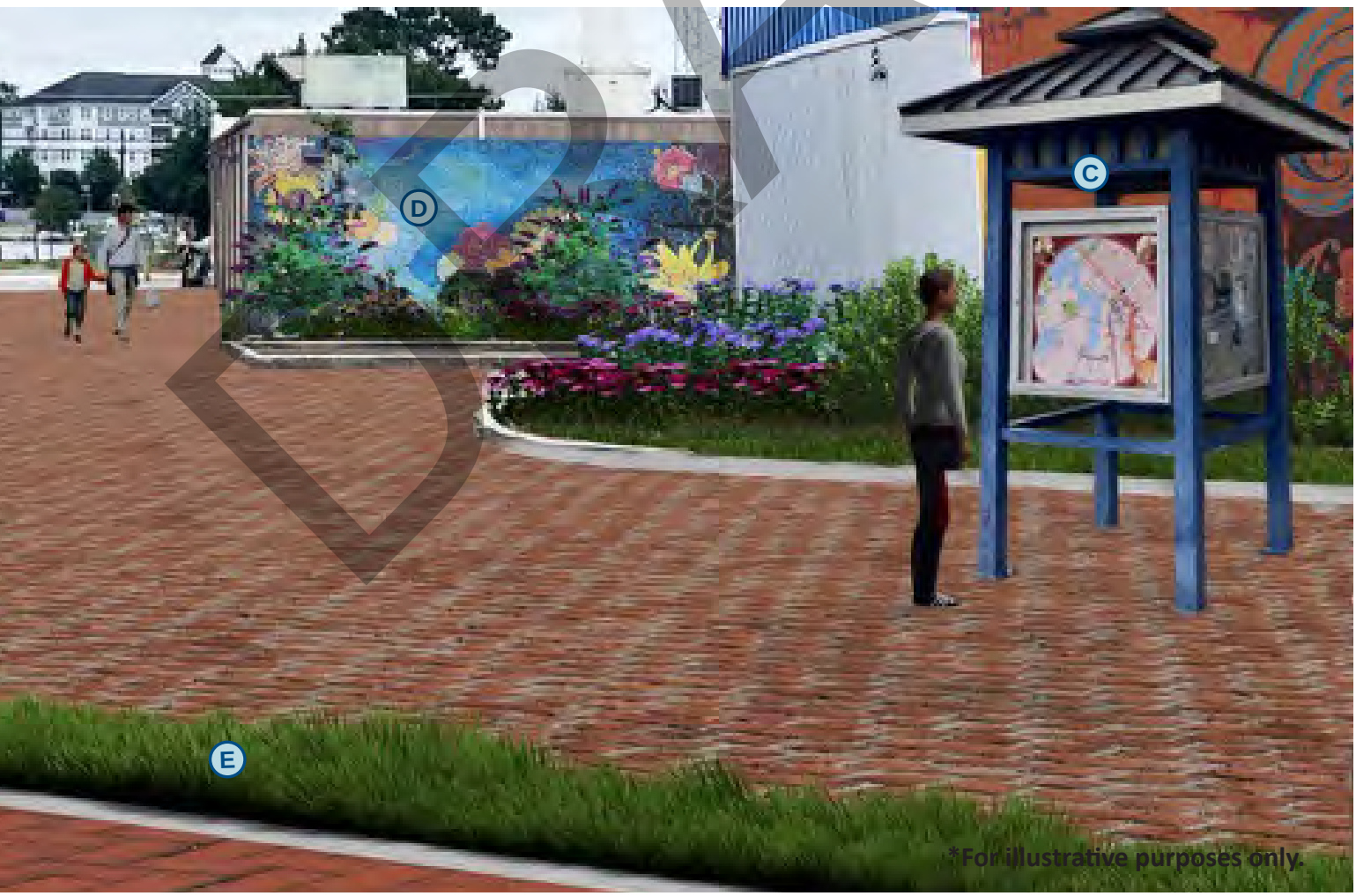
Aerial view

Existing Conditions



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Trails and Greenway Connections

Expanding Cambridge's trail and greenway network is essential for creating a safe, connected, and accessible mobility system. Trails provide alternatives to auto travel, linking neighborhoods with parks, schools, and community destinations while also supporting recreation and active lifestyles.

The Greenwood Avenue corridor illustrates this opportunity. Currently, the space is underutilized grassy strip that lacks formal walking or biking infrastructure. As a result, residents face limited options for safe, direct connections to surrounding amenities.

The proposed Greenwood Avenue Trail reimagines this corridor as a paved multi-use path with lighting, wayfinding, and safety features. The trail not only creates a direct link to Cornish Park but also establishes a welcoming greenway that encourages walking, cycling, and neighborhood connectivity. By investing in these types of improvements, Cambridge can strengthen its active transportation network, provide equitable access to community resources, and reinforce the city's identity as a walkable, family-friendly community.

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Greenwood Avenue Trail – Proposed
The proposed trail introduces a paved multi-use path with lighting, wayfinding, and safety features, creating a direct and inviting connection to Cornish Park.

Greenwood Avenue Trail – Existing: The current Greenwood Avenue corridor is an underutilized grassy strip that lacks formal infrastructure for walking or biking.

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Trails and Greenway Connections

Figure 6.17: Rigby Avenue Trail – Existing
Rigby Avenue is currently an open field with no defined trail alignment, limiting access and connectivity.

Figure 6.18: Rigby Avenue Trail – Proposed
The proposed design establishes a clear pedestrian pathway through the open space, enhancing walkability and linking to nearby neighborhoods.

Figure 6.19: Wright Street Trail – Existing
The Wright Street corridor currently functions as a narrow vehicular passage without pedestrian amenities.

Figure 6.20: Wright Street Trail – Proposed
The trail redesign transforms Wright Street into a gateway to Cornish Park, with shared-lane markings and a welcoming entry feature.

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Trails and Greenway Connections

Figure 6.21: Wells Street Trail – Existing
The Wells Street connection is an informal path lacking infrastructure, defined only by worn ground and minimal separation from adjacent homes.

Figure 6.22: Wells Street Trail – Proposed
The improved trail introduces a defined edge with fencing and landscaping, providing a safer, more attractive pedestrian route.

Figure 6.23: Cedar Street Trail – Existing
The Cedar Street corridor currently lacks visible pedestrian or bicycle infrastructure, limiting its role as a connector in the trail network.

Figure 6.24:. Cedar Street Trail – Proposed
The proposed improvements add bicycle markings and wayfinding, formalizing Cedar Street as a key multi-modal route and enhancing connectivity through the neighborhood.

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Cedar Street & Race Street: A Central Connection Point

Cedar and Race Streets form a key intersection in Cambridge, serving as both a physical and symbolic connection point where different sides of the city meet. This location offers an opportunity to improve mobility, strengthen pedestrian connections, and create a welcoming entrance to the neighborhood.

Figure 6.25: Existing conditions at Cedar and Race Streets, showing the open lot at the intersection with limited connectivity.

Figure 6.26: Current view of the open lot along Cedar Street, which lacks defined pathways, signage, or gathering spaces.

Figure 6.27: Proposed improvements introduce a gateway and pedestrian paths that also serves as a welcoming entrance to the community.

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Goal 6-1: Create a safe, connected, and equitable transportation network for all users

Objective 6-1.1

Retrofit and redesign existing streets to promote a more safe, connected and equitable network

Policy 6-1.1.1: Retrofit wide streets

Redesign oversized roadways to calm traffic, provide landscaping, and create safer spaces for pedestrians and cyclists.

Policy 6-1.1.2: Enhance multimodal access

Redesign intersections and corridors to include ADA-compliant sidewalks with a minimum clear width of 6 feet on residential streets and 8 feet within commercial or mixed-use areas, along with accessible crosswalks and dedicated bicycle facilities.

Policy 6-1.1.3: Complete Streets design

Apply Complete Streets principles to future roadway upgrades, balancing the needs of all users rather than prioritizing cars.

Goal 6-2: Expand and connect Cambridge's trail and pedestrian transportation network

Objective 6-2.1

Develop a comprehensive multimodal trail system that connects to a variety of neighborhoods, completing at least 1/2 of a mile per year

Policy 6-2.1.1: Trail network expansion

Expand trails to connect neighborhoods with schools, Downtown, waterfront areas, and parks.

Policy 6-2.1.2: Trail retrofits and upgrades

Convert underutilized corridors and informal paths into safe pedestrian and bicycle routes with lighting, signage, and landscaping.

Policy 6-2.1.3: Green infrastructure integration

Incorporate rain gardens, bioswales, and permeable paving into trail corridors to improve stormwater management and aesthetics.

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Goal 6-3: Improve gateways and circulation into Downtown

Objective 6-3.1

Map out a fiscally achievable approach to addressing gateway thoroughfares and downtown parking issues

Policy 6-3.1.1: Downtown gateways

Develop signature entry points along Cedar Street, Race Street, and Maryland Avenue with landscaping, signage, and traffic calming features.

Policy 6-3.1.2: Road network efficiency

Strengthen circulation by upgrading primary corridors while adding new local connectors to reduce congestion.

Policy 6-3.1.3: Parking and access management

Improve Downtown access through coordinated parking strategies, wayfinding, and shared mobility hubs.

Goal 6-4: Expand transit and water-based connections

Objective 6-4.1

Provide alternative mobility options through the City for pedestrians at a variety of scales

Policy 6-4.1.1: County and state coordination

Develop a small-scale shuttle or trolley service to improve local circulation to and around town and reduce parking demand.

Policy 6-4.1.2: Public outreach

Establish a water taxi route linking Downtown, the marina, and waterfront attractions.

Policy 6-4.1.3: Community reporting

Integrate transit stops, bike-share stations, and trailheads into a cohesive mobility network.

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Goal 6-5: Create a context-based, coordinated, and efficient multimodal transportation system that supports, complements, and meets the needs of different types of places throughout the City

Objective 6-5.1 Ensure street design aligns with Future Character Areas and context sensitive principles

Policy 6-5.1.1: Future Character Area Map alignment

The Future Character Areas Map defines the desired future vision for Cambridge and sets the context for street design.

Policy 6-5.1.2: Street system compatibility

Ensure that the City's street system is compatible with adjacent land uses and not "over-designed" in a way that will change the character of areas to be protected.

Policy 6-5.1.3: Context-sensitive street design criteria

Create a set of context-sensitive design criteria to evaluate specific roadway design and encourage multi-modal options.

Policy 6-5.1.4: Street hierarchy and character integration

Changes to thoroughfare design should correspond to similar changes to the form and mix of uses in the development standards (as depicted in the Character Area – including neighborhood centers and crossroads). This interface between public and private space is best addressed by adopting a new UDO containing form-based standards.

Objective 6-5.2 Align thoroughfare design with character area function and mobility goals

Policy 6-5.2.1: Thoroughfare function and compatibility

New and modified thoroughfares will match the context of the Future Character Area the thoroughfare is passing through as well as serving their essential functions in the larger road network.

Policy 6-5.2.2: Downtown and neighborhood centers

In the Downtown, Traditional Neighborhood Character Area, and Neighborhood Centers, multimodal transportation design will become the norm to enhance neighborhood character, safety, and walkability. Character and function will be more important than vehicle throughput and capacity, and the street network will be sized to yield smaller blocks with greater "people moving" capacity.

Policy 6-5.2.3: Downtown core thoroughfares

Where thoroughfares traverse the Downtown and Traditional Neighborhood Future Character Area, multi-modal or complete street treatments should be considered. Where these streets traverse through the Downtown Future Character Area and/or a Neighborhood Center, a road diet or lane reallocation should be considered.

Policy 6-5.2.3: Peripheral thoroughfares

The other Future Character Areas are likely to maintain a predominantly automobile-dependent development pattern while adding enhancements that promote beautification and safety. Thoroughfares will have sidewalks and the appropriate bicycle facility (on or off-street) will be provided where travel speeds are higher. An example is the recommendation for US Route 50: the proposal will enhance multimodal accessibility by initially completing the shared use paths on both sides similar to the path on the east side at the south end of the corridor in front of the Hyatt Regency property. A longer term initiative would be to "separate" local travel from the through traffic by creating an urban multi-way boulevard; this initiative would preserve and enhance through traffic operations by removing local traffic conflicts and consolidating access points, while creating walkable frontage along the access lanes where local traffic could access businesses along the corridor. This is a long-term action and will require close coordination with the SHA on its funding and implementation.

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Goal 6-6: Expand the walkability of neighborhoods based on their historic precedent for great pedestrian orientation in downtown

Objective 6-6.1

Improve pedestrian comfort and accessibility in downtown by integrating design enhancements that are measurable

Policy 6-6.1.1: Walkability prioritization

In the Downtown and Traditional Neighborhood Character Areas, as well as major Neighborhood Centers and Crossroads, walkability should be prioritized with wide sidewalks, shade, alleys, and street-facing access to adjacent land uses.

Policy 6-6.1.2: Sidewalk width standards

Widen sidewalks where appropriate in Downtown, Traditional Neighborhood Character Areas, and other high-activity corridors, with a minimum dimension of five feet (or more, depending on context).

Policy 6-6.1.3: Safe crosswalk design

Provide safe and convenient crosswalks in Downtown, Neighborhood Centers, and high-pedestrian areas, including mid-block crossings where feasible and needed.

Policy 6-6.1.4: Street canopy standards

Plant regularly spaced canopy trees in Downtown and Traditional Neighborhood Character Areas, and along major pedestrian corridors citywide, to provide continuous shade and pedestrian comfort.

Policy 6-6.1.5: Architectural encroachments for pedestrian protection

Encourage architectural encroachments such as arcades, awnings, and balconies in Downtown and zero-setback corridors to protect pedestrians from weather.

Policy 6-6.1.6: Street lighting for safety

Install pedestrian-scaled lighting in Downtown, Neighborhood Centers, and major pedestrian routes, ensuring full cut-off lighting in sensitive residential areas.

Policy 6-6.1.7: Curb radius design

Use small curb radii in Downtown and Traditional Neighborhood Character Areas to slow turning vehicles and shorten crossing distances.

Policy 6-6.1.8: Curb and gutter construction

Incorporate curb and gutter construction in Downtown and areas with existing stormwater systems, and apply citywide where appropriate to manage stormwater and prevent sidewalk flooding.

Policy 6-6.1.9: Inclusion of alleys

Alleys should be included when possible so that buildings may be serviced from the rear, driveways and curb cuts can be minimized, and parking can be consolidated at mid-block locations.

Policy 6-6.1.10: Rear access for small blocks

New neighborhoods or blocks with lot widths of 55 feet or less shall be required to have rear access via an alley or lane to reduce driveway curb cuts, improve pedestrian safety along the primary street frontage, and support cleaner, more continuous sidewalks and building facades.

Policy 6-6.1.11: Alleyway design and functional requirements

Design alleys to function as shared service corridors that provide safe and reliable rear access for buildings while accommodating utilities and essential services. Alleys should be designed to allow vehicles to reach rear garages, parking areas, and service entrances, and they should include adequate space for utility infrastructure such as electric, telecommunications, water, sewer, and solid-waste collection. They should maintain a clear width sufficient for service, delivery, and emergency vehicles and should incorporate appropriate paving, grading, lighting, and drainage to support safe use and prevent flooding. Where appropriate, alleys may also support pedestrian and bicycle movement without compromising their primary service functions.

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Goal 6-7: Create a city-wide sidewalk master plan to ensure the build-out of a complete pedestrian network

Objective 6-7.1 Implement and maintain a citywide sidewalk network

Policy 6-7.1.1: Sidewalk priority locations

Establish priority locations for sidewalks, sidewalk repairs, and sidewalk improvements in areas with high or potentially high levels of pedestrian activity such as near schools, parks, Neighborhood Centers and Crossroads, and within the Downtown and Traditional Neighborhood Future Character Areas.

Policy 6-7.1.2: Citywide pedestrian and bicycle safety planning

The City should consider developing a Pedestrian Master Plan, Bicycle and Pedestrian Access Improvements Study, or Vision Zero Action Plan to guide pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements. These tools would establish measurable performance metrics and prioritize investments that support equitable, safe, and accessible mobility for all users.

Policy 6-7.1.3: Sidewalk width standards

Establish minimum sidewalk width standards citywide to ensure safe and accessible pedestrian movement. Sidewalks in residential areas should be at least 5 feet wide to meet ADA requirements, while sidewalks in commercial areas, school zones, Neighborhood Centers and Crossroads, Downtown, and other high-activity locations should be at least 8 feet wide to accommodate higher pedestrian volumes.

Goal 6-8: Create a complete streets environment that forms a well-connected network supporting driving, walking, and bicycling and that ensures safety for users of all transportation modes, with attention to the most vulnerable users, including people with disabilities, those using mobility devices, the young, and the elderly

Objective 6-8.1 Design streets that balance safety, accessibility, and mobility

Policy 6-8.1.1: Complete street design elements

Complete street elements should be designed with all users in mind, with multimodal amenities appropriate for the type of roadway and its context.

Policy 6-8.1.2: Travel choice and safety

Street design standards should provide safe, accessible, and meaningful travel choices,driving, walking, and bicycling.

Policy 6-8.1.2: Public space-oriented streets

The majority of the City's streets should be designed as public spaces that are scaled for pedestrians and should be enhanced with appropriate street trees and landscaping.

Policy 6-8.1.2: Multi-modal level of service evaluation

When reviewing traffic impact analyses for infill and redevelopment, level of service measurements should consider all modes of transportation, including bicycles, pedestrians, and transit, in addition to automobile level of service. A "level of stress" metric should also be considered.

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Goal 6-9: Utilize Future Character Areas and neighborhood centers to delineate the most walkable and bike-able areas along an arterial and collector

Objective 6-9.1	Implement context-based street design improvements along arterial and collector corridors to increase walkability and bikeability, measured by the number of corridors redesigned or reconstructed each planning cycle

Policy 6-9.1.1: Support walkable corridors through context-based street design framework

Base roadway design on the Future Character Areas and Neighborhood Centers along arterial and collector corridors. Replace the traditional functional-classification approach with context-based street typologies that guide the form and function of each corridor.

Goal 6-10: Safe and attractive transportation choices among all modes should be encouraged through street patterns that consider multimodal transportation alternatives and access to and circulation between adjacent neighborhoods, parks, and commercial and employment nodes

Objective 6-10.1	Strengthen connectivity and network efficiency

Policy 6-10.1.1: Strengthen connectivity and network efficiency

Encourage a well-connected street network that balances efficiency, safety, and accessibility while supporting multimodal movement across all areas of Cambridge.

Policy 6-10.1.2: Network redundancy and capacity

Capacity and redundancy should be created by a densely interconnected network rather than by achieving high capacities by widening individual arterial streets.

Policy 6-10.1.3: Block size and street connectivity

Encourage small block size and connected streets.

Policy 6-10.1.4: Elimination of dead ends

Eliminate the use of cul-de-sacs and dead ends in new neighborhood development.

Policy 6-10.1.5: Non-motorized street connectivity

Where optimal street connectivity cannot be or has not been provided, non-motorized connections such as pedestrian passageways should be added to reduce walking and bicycling trip lengths.

Policy 6-10.1.6: Gaps in the street system

Gaps in the street system should be eliminated by providing for network connectivity. The existing grid network should be preserved and extended where feasible to increase overall connectivity.

Policy 6-10.1.7: Multimodal network integration for new development

Establish appropriate parking maximums for all uses, and require that any development seeking to exceed those maximums provide the additional parking as permeable surface parking or parking constructed with structured sod.

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Goal 6-11: The City will strategically manage the amount, location, and physical form of on-street and off-street parking

Objective 6-11.1 Improve parking efficiency and land use compatibility

Policy 6-11.1.1: Parking management planning

The City should consider preparing a Parking Management Plan that defines strategies for efficiently using, regulating, and improving parking resources. The plan should support mobility and economic goals by creating an organized, accessible, and visually cohesive parking system that strengthens downtown and neighborhood centers.

Policy 6-11.1.2: On-street and consolidated parking

Within the Downtown Future Character Area and Neighborhood Centers, on-street and consolidated parking facilities should be provided. In the Traditional Neighborhood Character Area, on-street parking should be prioritized.

Policy 6-11.1.3: Parking time management

Existing parking supply can be better managed with the use of time limits or meters at prime on-street locations to ensure frequent turnover on major retail streets.

Policy 6-11.1.4: Long-term parking reduction strategy

As part of a long-term strategy, land devoted to surface parking lots in existing developed areas should be reduced through shared parking strategies, reduction in parking demand, flexible ordinance requirements, improved parking standards, transportation demand management plans, and infill development on underused lots, to the greatest extent practical.

Policy 6-11.1.5: Gaps in the street system

Gaps in the street system should be eliminated by providing for network connectivity. The existing grid network should be preserved and extended where feasible to increase overall connectivity.

Policy 6-11.1.6: Multimodal network integration for new development

New residential, commercial, and mixed-use developments that require construction or extension of roadways should include a multimodal network and provide additional connectivity wherever possible.

Policy 6-11.1.7: Parking standards for development and redevelopment

- Shared on-street parking spaces are preferred to separate parking lots for each user.
- New parking lots should be placed behind or on the side of buildings instead of between buildings and the street.
- Do not provide more parking than is likely to be needed.
- Provide suitable loading zones for deliveries.

Policy 6-11.1.8: Parking minimums and maximums

Consider eliminating minimum parking requirements as well as maximum parking requirements after which surplus parking will be required to be permeable or structured sod.

Policy 6-11.1.9: Multimodal network integration for new development

Parking and development that encourages multiple destinations within pedestrian-connected areas should be encouraged. This will decrease single-purpose trips, save time and fuel, and increase economic potential for nearby businesses.

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Objective 6-11.2 Enhance parking deign, accessibility, and communication

Policy 6-11.2.1: On-street parking and drop-offs

On-street parking and drop-off areas should be located adjacent to sidewalks and building frontages to maximize on-street parking turnover and customer convenience. Excessive parking between sidewalks and building fronts should be discouraged.

Policy 6-11.2.2: Shared-use parking

Shared-use parking should be encouraged for land uses where peak demands occur at different times of the day, reducing the overall number of spaces needed. Parking lots should be sized and managed so that spaces are frequently occupied.

Policy 6-11.2.3: Parking lot connectivity and design

Parking lots should include vehicular and pedestrian connections between and through lots. Parking facility quality should be considered equally with quantity, using appropriate landscaping and stormwater management.

Policy 6-11.2.4: Screening of parking lots

Where parking supply needs to be increased on valuable land, parking garages may be constructed provided they are lined with habitable or storefront space to shield the garage from view and to provide a safe, interesting environment for pedestrians.

Policy 6-11.2.5: Optimization of existing parking facilities

The capacity of existing parking facilities should be optimized through tools such as small vehicle, motorcycle, and bicycle spaces, reducing the minimum parking area required for low-turnover spaces such as employee parking, and removing equipment and storage from parking areas.

Policy 6-11.2.6: Parking signage and wayfinding

Wayfinding signage directing motorists to parking locations and guiding pedestrians from lots to key destinations should be installed to improve efficiency and reduce confusion and conflict.

Goal 6-12: Employ design-based speed management measures to reduce speed and protect drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians

Objective 6-12.1 Improve street safety through design interventions

Policy 6-12.1.1: Traffic calming design measures

Traffic calming measures should be incorporated into the design of new or retrofitted streets in the Downtown, Traditional Neighborhood Future Character Areas, near schools and parks, and around Neighborhood Centers and Crossroads. Pedestrians and bicyclists should have safe, convenient, and well-marked means to cross streets.

Policy 6-12.1.2: Use of roundabouts

Consider the increased use of roundabouts to calm traffic, increase safety, diminish the need for traffic lights, and create sites for public art and monuments.

Policy 6-12.1.3: Narrow street design and on-street parking

Consider new or redesigned streets to have two-way traffic and on-street parking in order to increase access to properties while calming traffic.

Policy 6-12.1.4: Gateways and designated slow zones

Use gateways and special district designations to encourage slower speeds, establish transitions into slower multimodal activity areas, and highlight neighborhood identity.

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Goal 6-13: Provide safe, convenient infrastructure for bicyclists and pedestrians

Objective 6-13.1 Enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety and connectivity

Policy 6-13.1.1: Safe and convenient facilities

Safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle facilities should be maintained and should be universally accessible, adequately lit, and properly designed to reduce conflicts between motor vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians.

Policy 6-13.1.2: Enhanced circulation and safety

Bicycle and pedestrian circulation, access, and safety should be enhanced, especially along major corridors, in the Downtown and Traditional Neighborhood Future Character Areas, and in Neighborhood and Crossroad Centers, and near schools, libraries, and parks.

Policy 6-13.1.3: Priority intersection design

Where possible, and especially where pedestrians are prioritized, tools such as protected left turns, pedestrian head starts/leading pedestrian intervals, raised crosswalks, curb extensions, medians, pedestrian refuge islands, or mid-block crossings should be used to improve safety.

Policy 6-13.1.4: Network connectivity

The Cambridge Community Trail network should be treated as part of the City's transportation network, and connections should be planned for accordingly.

Policy 6-13.1.5: Walking and biking encouragement

Infrastructure and policy that encourages students to walk or bike safely to school should be supported.

Policy 6-13.1.6: Safe routes to school coordination

Continue to foster and implement Safe Routes to School programs.

Policy 6-13.1.7: Bicycle facilities for new developments

Bicycle facilities such as secure racks, personal lockers, and showers should be encouraged in new and redeveloped office and employment centers to facilitate bicycling and walking as viable alternatives to commuting by car.

Goal 6-14: Vigorously expand bicycle facilities throughout Cambridge to create a full network of connected, safe, and attractive bikeways and supporting facilities for both transportation and recreation

Objective 6-14.1 Develop and maintain a comprehensive and safe bicycle network

Policy 6-14.1.1: Bicycle network maintenance

Continue developing and maintaining the Cambridge Community Trail.

Policy 6-14.1.2: Installation of bikeways and infrastructure

Install bike paths, bike lanes, and infrastructure including bike racks and signage along key bicycle routes identified in the Bicycle Master Plan.

Policy 6-14.1.3: Best practices in bikeway design

Use best practices in physical design (i.e., bikeway width, type, signing, and advanced bicycle facility types) to create safer bikeways. Train select City staff to design bikeways.

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Policy 6-14.1.4:Bicycle network viability and wayfinding

Enhance the safety and visibility of the bicycle network through the implementation of safety and wayfinding signage improvements along all current and future bikeways.

Goal 6-15: Encourage increased bicycling by promoting health, recreation, transportation, tourism opportunities, and environmental benefits

Objective 6-15.1	Increase bicycle use by expanding education, outreach, and safety enforcement programs

Policy 6-15.1.1: Bicycle safety initiatives

Make Cambridge a safer City for bicycle riders through measures such as:

- Work with the Cambridge Police Department to address bicycle-vehicle safety measures through increased awareness of bicycle-related traffic laws and enforcement of existing and new laws.
- Provide ongoing training for City of Cambridge police officers regarding bicycle safety laws and issues.
- Work with local schools to educate on the use of innovative design elements such as bike boxes, separated bike lanes, protected intersections, and signalized crossings such as rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFB's) and pedestrian hybrid beacons (PHB's or HAWK) as these measures are considered for implementation in Cambridge.

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Goal 6-16: Enable the safe and efficient movement of goods via rail and truck. A reduction of the impacts of rail and truck operations on adjacent neighborhoods and sensitive lands is also important

Objective 6-16.1	Improve freight movement while reducing impacts on residential and environmentally sensitive areas

Policy 6-16.1.1: The coordination and movement of goods

Workshops on changing retail patterns could result from contact and discussions with stakeholders in shipping and retail.

Policy 6-16.1.2: Safe and efficient truck routing

The safe and efficient movement of truck traffic in, around, and through the City via designated truck routes should be properly managed in coordination with the Industrial Future Character Area.

Goal 6-17: Invest in the ongoing maintenance and refinement of the street system to adequately serve the needs of automobiles, bicyclists, and pedestrians

Objective 6-17.1	Improve the design, function, and maintenance of the street network

Policy 6-17.1.1: Context-sensitive design for new roadways

New roadways should utilize context-sensitive design to minimize impacts on historic buildings, neighborhoods, parks, and sensitive natural areas.

Policy 6-17.1.2: Neighborhood coordination on major improvements

Feasible solutions to lessen the impacts of major street improvements on local streets should be developed with neighborhoods on an individual project basis.

Policy 6-17.1.3: Tree preservation and landscaping in roadway design

New roadway projects and major reconstruction projects should preserve desirable existing trees where possible or plant new street trees where necessary. Multi-lane roads should be enhanced with landscaped medians when possible.

Policy 6-17.1.4: Right-of-way design for all users

New roadway projects and major reconstruction projects should provide appropriate and adequate right-of-way for safe and convenient movement and amenities for all users, including bicyclists, pedestrians, transit riders, and motorists.

Policy 6-17.1.5: Strategic capacity improvements

Adding lanes to increase traffic capacity should be considered only after the street exceeds an established threshold of full capacity and all other alternative approaches (including construction of parallel street networks) have been considered. Improvements to the street network should increase vehicle dispersion and circulation.

Policy 6-17.1.6: Comprehensive impact analysis for all modes

Comprehensive transportation impacts, including parking and impacts on all modes of transportation, should be identified and addressed before a development or redevelopment is implemented. Considerations should not assume that all travel is by personal vehicle.

Policy 6-17.1.7: Integration of bicycle and pedestrian facilities

New development, redevelopment, street reconstruction, and resurfacing projects should include bicycle and pedestrian facilities as appropriate for the roadway character. Existing development should be retrofitted with connections where possible.

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Goal 6-18: The City will incorporate "green infrastructure design" and similar light-imprint and low-impact principles for stormwater management and landscaping in streets that it builds and requires others to build

Objective 6-18.1	Implement low-impact design and sustainable stormwater management practices

Policy 6-18.1.1: Implement low-impact design and sustainable stormwater management practices

Encourage the use of innovative stormwater and landscape design strategies that enhance visual character, manage runoff naturally, and improve water quality.

Policy 6-18.1.2: Context-sensitive infrastructure design

Design culverts, drainage areas, and stormwater infrastructure in a context-sensitive and, where possible, artistic way.

Policy 6-18.1.3: Light-imprint infrastructure corridors

Consider appropriate light-imprint infrastructure design.

Policy 6-18.1.4: Include best management practices in street design

Consider use of bioswales, rain gardens, and permeable paving for parking areas in new or retrofitted street designs.

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7: Housing

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Housing is the foundation of community well-being and economic vitality in Cambridge. A healthy housing market provides safe, affordable, and diverse options for residents at all stages of life while supporting workforce stability, neighborhood reinvestment, and quality of place. Like many small cities, Cambridge faces the dual challenge of maintaining an aging housing stock while also creating new opportunities that respond to shifting demographics, rising construction costs, and evolving housing needs.

The City's approach to housing emphasizes equity, affordability, and neighborhood revitalization. This includes preserving historic character, addressing vacancies and blight, and expanding affordable and workforce housing opportunities. Partnerships with nonprofit and private developers alongside targeted programs for renters and homeowners, are central to these efforts. By investing in both existing neighborhoods and new development, Cambridge can ensure that housing contributes to a resilient, inclusive, and thriving future.

Current Conditions

Cambridge's housing market reflects both opportunities and challenges shaped by the city's history, geography, and demographics. The city's housing stock is diverse in age and type, with many historic homes, mid 20th century subdivisions, and more recent single-family and multifamily developments.

Cambridge's housing market has experienced shifts over the past decade, reflecting both opportunities and challenges. Between 2009 and 2017, the City added 578 new housing units, bringing the total to 6,486, while the number of households increased more slowly, contributing to a higher vacancy rate. Much of the city's housing stock is older, with more than one-fifth built before 1940. This aging stock remains a defining characteristic of Cambridge neighborhoods but also presents reinvestment needs.

Current data (2019–2023 ACS) shows that Cambridge has approximately 6,700 total housing units, with about 3,100 renter-occupied households and 2,200 owner-occupied households. The homeownership rate is now around 41%, which, while slightly higher than in 2017, remains well below Dorchester County's rate of 66%. Vacancy continues to be a concern, with nearly 15–16% of units vacant, compared to 12% statewide.

Several key conditions define the current landscape:

1. Housing Stock: Much of Cambridge's housing is older, with a large share built before 1970. These homes contribute to the city's character but often require reinvestment to meet modern standards.
2. Affordability: According to a 2019 Housing Market Analysis, 46% of households were cost-burdened, and 24% were severely cost-burdened. The 2019–2023 ACS reports a median gross rent of $1,046 per month and a median home value of $254,400, compared to a median household income of $46,261.
3. Tenure and Rentals: Cambridge contains a mix of owner-occupied and rental housing, with renters representing a significant portion of households. The rental market has been expanding, accompanied by rising rents.
4. Household Size: Average household size increased from 2.29 in 2013 to 2.35 in 2017, with renters averaging 2.39 people per household compared to 2.29 for homeowners. More recent Census data shows stabilization at around 2.31–2.32 persons per household.
5. Vacancy: Vacant and underutilized homes remain present in certain neighborhoods, creating both redevelopment opportunities and long-term maintenance challenges.
6. Housing Diversity: The market is predominantly single-family housing, though there are some townhomes and multifamily units. Demand for a broader mix, including senior-friendly and workforce housing, has been noted in planning studies.

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Community Concerns

Through community engagement, housing studies, and stakeholder feedback, several key concerns have emerged that go beyond the data and reflect lived experiences in Cambridge's neighborhoods.

Affordability Pressures

- Residents cite rising housing costs as a great concern. Long-term households worry about being priced out of their neighborhood, while younger families and first time buyers often feel locked out of home ownership opportunities. Renters, in particular, feel vulnerable to rising rents without corresponding to increased income.

Vacancy and Blight

- Abandoned, vacant, and poorly maintained homes are seen as a major drag on neighborhood stability. Residents report that these properties not only lower surrounding property values but also diminish community pride and safety. Vacancies are perceived as concentrated in certain wards, reinforcing patterns of inequity.

Quality of Rental Housing

- Renters often raise concerns about absentee landlords, deferred maintenance, and substandard living conditions. Stories of unreliable repairs, poor property management, and unsafe housing contribute to the perception that rental housing lacks accountability. While the City has taken steps toward strengthening code enforcement, community members continue to push for stronger oversight.

Limited Housing Options

- Community members express frustration with the lack of variety in housing choices. Many neighborhoods are dominated by single-family homes, with limited availability of modern apartments, townhomes, or senior-oriented housing. This lack of diversity restricts options for aging residents looking to downsize, young professionals entering the workforce, and families seeking affordable rentals.

Equity Across Wards

- Residents frequently voice concerns about uneven investment across the city's wards. Some neighborhoods feel left behind, particularly where vacancy, disinvestment, and aging housing stock are concentrated. There is a strong call for equitable distribution of resources, programs, and redevelopment efforts to ensure that all parts of Cambridge benefit from housing initiatives.

Balancing Preservation and Growth

- While residents recognize the need for revitalization and new housing, many also worry about potential displacement, loss of neighborhood character, and developments that feel disconnected from Cambridge's historic identity. There is support for growth that is sensitive, inclusive, and consistent with community values, but skepticism toward projects perceived as catering only to higher-income households.

Neighborhood Identity and Pride

- Beyond affordability and physical conditions, many residents are concerned about the broader social health of neighborhoods. Blight, absentee ownership, and inequitable investment are seen as barriers to rebuilding neighborhood pride, safety, and cohesion. Residents want to see housing policy connected to broader efforts in community development and revitalization.

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Strategies for Addressing Concerns

1. Rehabilitate and Reinvest in Existing Housing

- Expand housing rehabilitation programs to assist homeowners with repairs, energy efficiency upgrades, and accessibility improvements.
- Strengthen code enforcement in neighborhoods with high rates of vacancy and blight, particularly along Washington Street and Downtown.
- Leverage the City's Land Bank to acquire and repurpose abandoned properties into affordable and workforce housing.
- Promote adaptive reuse of large or historic homes into multifamily units where appropriate, with guidelines to protect neighborhood character.

2. Expand Housing Diversity through "Missing Middle" Solutions

- Update zoning to allow a greater range of housing types such as duplexes, townhomes, ADUs, and small-scale apartments.
- Encourage design that ensures Missing Middle housing blends seamlessly into existing neighborhoods.
- Support cautious conversion of larger homes into apartments while preserving historic character.
- Prohibit gated subdivisions to maintain inclusivity, walkability, and connectivity.

3. Improve Housing Affordability and Tenant Protections

- Incentivize affordable housing development through density bonuses, tax abatements, or inclusionary housing requirements.
- Expand affordable rental options by supporting nonprofit and private developers in delivering new units.
- Advocate for renters through stronger inspection programs, landlord accountability, and tenant protections.
- Encourage ADUs as a flexible tool to increase affordable housing supply.

4. Linking Housing to Infrastructure, Services, and Quality of Life

- Prioritize sewer and stormwater upgrades in reinvestment areas to support sustainable growth.
- Align housing policies with improvements in schools, childcare, and medical facilities to make Cambridge more family-friendly.
- Establish development impact fees and a public benefits program for rezonings to ensure new development supports community services.
- Invest in neighborhood amenities such as community gardens and safe public spaces to strengthen family and community life.

5. Promote Neighborhood Equity, Identity, and Cultural Vitality

- Direct resources equitably across all wards, prioritizing historically underserved neighborhoods.
- Create local historic districts to preserve neighborhood character and identity.
- Invest in cultural and economic vitality by supporting the visual and performing arts and strengthening water-based industries (e.g., yacht and boat maintenance).
- Develop job training and youth programs tied to watermen skills and entrepreneurship, connecting housing policy with long-term economic opportunity.

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Capital Improvements Based on Strategies for Addressing Community Concerns

1. Housing Rehabilitation and Preservation Fund

- Establish a dedicated fund to provide grants and low-interest loans for repair, weatherization, energy efficiency, and accessibility improvements in aging homes.
- Coordinate with state and federal programs (e.g., CDBG, HOME funds) to leverage outside resources for local rehabilitation.

2. Vacant and Blighted Property Redevelopment

- Allocate funds to expand the City's Land Bank program, enabling acquisition, stabilization, and reuse of vacant and abandoned homes.
- Prioritize investment in high-visibility areas such as Washington Street and Downtown to reduce blight and restore neighborhood vitality.

3. Affordable Housing Development Support

- Invest in site preparation, infrastructure upgrades, and public-private partnerships that reduce the cost of delivering affordable rental and ownership housing.
- Establish a local housing trust fund to support gap financing for nonprofit and private developers building affordable housing.

4. Infrastructure Upgrades Linked to Housing Investment

- Target capital funding toward sewer and stormwater improvements in neighborhoods slated for housing reinvestment to ensure long-term viability.
- Upgrade sidewalks, street lighting, and ADA-compliant infrastructure around housing redevelopment sites to create safe, accessible neighborhoods.

5. Neighborhood Amenities and Livability

- Incorporate funding for community gardens, pocket parks, and open space improvements in residential neighborhoods.
- Support cultural and educational facilities, such as performing arts venues and job training centers, that strengthen neighborhood identity and connect housing policy with economic opportunity.

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Advanced Mixed-Income Redevelopment at Key Opportunity Sites

To address housing concerns in Cambridge, the City should pursue a multi-faceted approach that combines reinvestment in existing neighborhoods with new opportunities for mixed-income and attainable housing. Larger-scale redevelopment efforts, such as Maces Lane Site, offer the chance to deliver a mix of rate of attainable, workforce, and affordable housing tied to targets. These projects should be designed to connect seamlessly with surrounding neighborhoods, incorporating walkability, public spaces, and access to schools, childcare, and other services to create inclusive communities.

Expand Attainable and "Missing Middle" Housing Options

- Encourage a range of housing types beyond single-family homes, including cottages, duplexes, townhomes, and small apartment buildings.
- Support work/live spaces for artists, gallery-integrated townhomes, and other hybrid models that blend housing with creative or small business uses.
- Promote design that reflects neighborhood scale and character, while diversifying options for young professionals, seniors, and families.

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*Note: The conceptual illustrations on this page depict just one possible design approach to accomplish the Chapter's Goals

Figure 7.2: Re-imagined opportunity site

Maces Lane Opportunity Site (Aerial View):

The Maces Lane site offers a major redevelopment opportunity for mixed-income housing that connects seamlessly to surrounding neighborhoods, schools, and services.

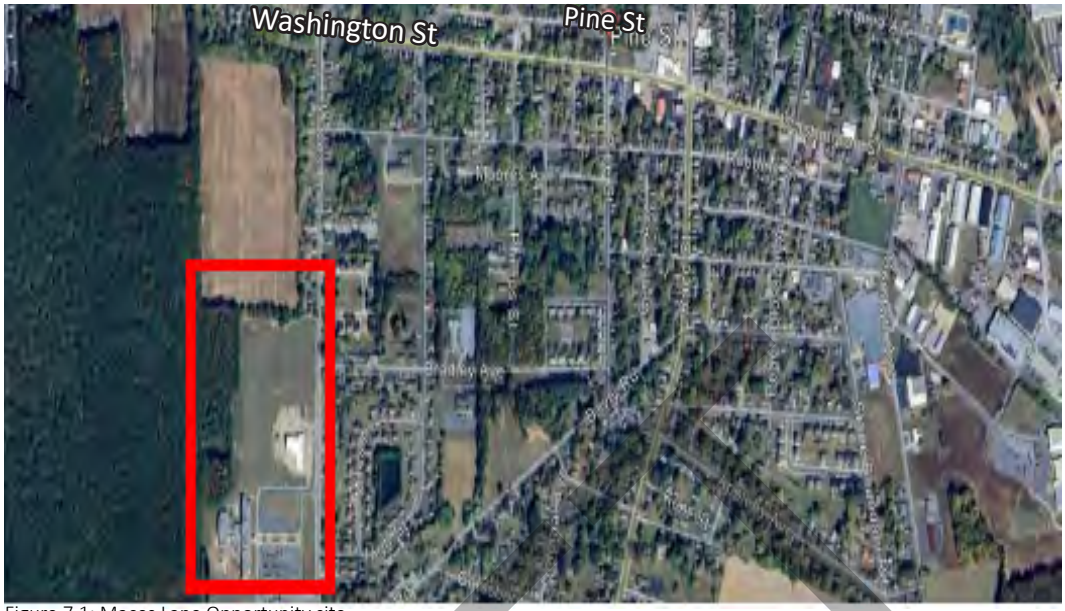

Figure 7.1: Maces Lane Opportunity site

*For illustrative purposes only.

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Redevelopment and Housing Opportunities at Key Sites: Maces Lane Opportunity Site

The Maces Lane site presents a major opportunity for housing reinvestment in Cambridge. Currently underutilized, the area includes aging community facilities and vacant land. Redevelopment here can provide a mix of attainable, workforce, and affordable housing types that serve the community's evolving needs.

A: Mixed-Income Housing
B: High Quality Soccer Facility
C: Walkable Streets and Sidewalks
D: Mace's Lane Community Center
E: Gateway Frontage
F: Work/Live Spaces for Artists
G: Pedestrian Oriented Housing Design
H: Housing with Flexible Ground Floors
I: Central Green Space
J: Gallery Spaces & Mid-Sized Townhomes
K: Tall Row Houses

Figure 7.3: Existing Site

Figure 7.4: Proposed redevelopment vision featuring mixed-income housing, central green space, and walkable streets

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Illustrative Vision-Before and After:

The renderings highlight how the Maces Lane area can be transformed from a largely vacant, underutilized site into a vibrant mixed-income neighborhood. The site today includes scattered structures, surface parking, and large vacant ares that do not contribute to surrounding neighborhood vitality. A reimagined design introduced townhomes, apartments, and community-serving uses. The addition of tree-lined streets, open space, and modern infrastructure creates a complete neighborhood that promotes safety, walkability, and social connections.

Revitalize Historic Neighborhoods through Cultural Identity and Preservation

- Implement the Pine Street Cultural District plan to reduce vacancy, improve housing quality, expand affordability, and activate public spaces.
- Establish conservation districts or local historic districts that protect character while supporting reinvestment and adaptive reuse.
- Link housing rehabilitation with public art, cultural events, and small business development to strengthen neighborhood pride and cohesion.

Invest in Housing Quality, Safety, and Infrastructure

- Target code enforcement, rehabilitation assistance, and stormwater/sewer improvements in disinvested areas to stabilize neighborhoods.
- Incentivize adaptive reuse of larger or historic homes into multifamily units, paired with guidelines to protect historic architecture.
- Expand programs that support homeowners with emergency repairs, energy efficiency upgrades, and long-term maintenance.

Figure 7.3: Tall Row Houses

Tall Row Houses:

Tall row houses introduce higher-density housing options that respect historic form while providing new opportunities for affordable and workforce units. Their vertical design maximizes land use, reinforces the traditional streetscape.

Figure 7.4: Gallery Spaces and Mid-Size Townhomes

Gallery Spaces & Mid-Size Townhomes:

Mid-size townhomes with integrated gallery and work spaces offer flexible housing that blends living with creative or small business uses. This model diversifies Cambridge's housing stock, supports local artists and entrepreneurs, and strengthens the cultural identity.

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Connect Housing Policy with Economic and Workforce Development

- Pair new housing strategies with job training and apprenticeship programs, including water-based industries (boating, crabbing, oystering) and cultural/arts careers.
- Integrate housing with spaces that support the visual and performing arts, enhancing both economic opportunity and neighborhood vibrancy.
- Encourage development agreements and rezonings to include public benefits such as workforce housing, infrastructure contributions, and cultural facilities..

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Figure 7.5: Work Live in Spaces for Artists

Work/Live Spaces for Artists:

This concept envisions housing designed to accommodate both living and creative work, with flexible ground-floor studio space and residential units above. These homes foster a supportive environment for artists, makers, and small business owners, creating a vibrant cultural district that blends economic opportunity with affordable housing. By integrating the arts into the neighborhood fabric, these spaces help strengthen community identity, encourage foot traffic, and expand Cambridge's creative economy.

Revitalizing Pine Street

The Pine Street Cultural District represents one of Cambridge's most important opportunities to align housing policy with cultural identity, economic revitalization, and neighborhood resilience. Building from the Cambridge Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, the district aims to reduce vacancy, improving housing quality and affordability, and create a community environment where cultural heritage and social cohesion are as central as bricks and mortar. By integrating housing rehabilitation with historic preservation, cultural programming, and enhanced public spaces, the Pine Street Cultural District can become a model for equitable, place-based revitalization.

Pine Street & Elm Street (Existing Conditions Figure 7.6):

The current view of Pine and Elm Streets reflects the challenges facing many older Cambridge neighborhoods, vacant or underutilized buildings, aging infrastructure, and limited public realm investment. While these conditions present obstacles, they also underscore the opportunity for targeted reinvestment that links housing improvements with cultural identity and community pride.

A: Tree-Lined Corridor
B: Mixed-Use Buildings
C: Pedestrian-Friendly Sidewalks
D: Outdoor Dining/Cafe Seating
E: Traffic-Calming Street Design
F: Cultural Identity Signage & Storefronts
G: Public Realm Enhancements

Figure 7.7: Pine Street and Elm Street Re-Imagined

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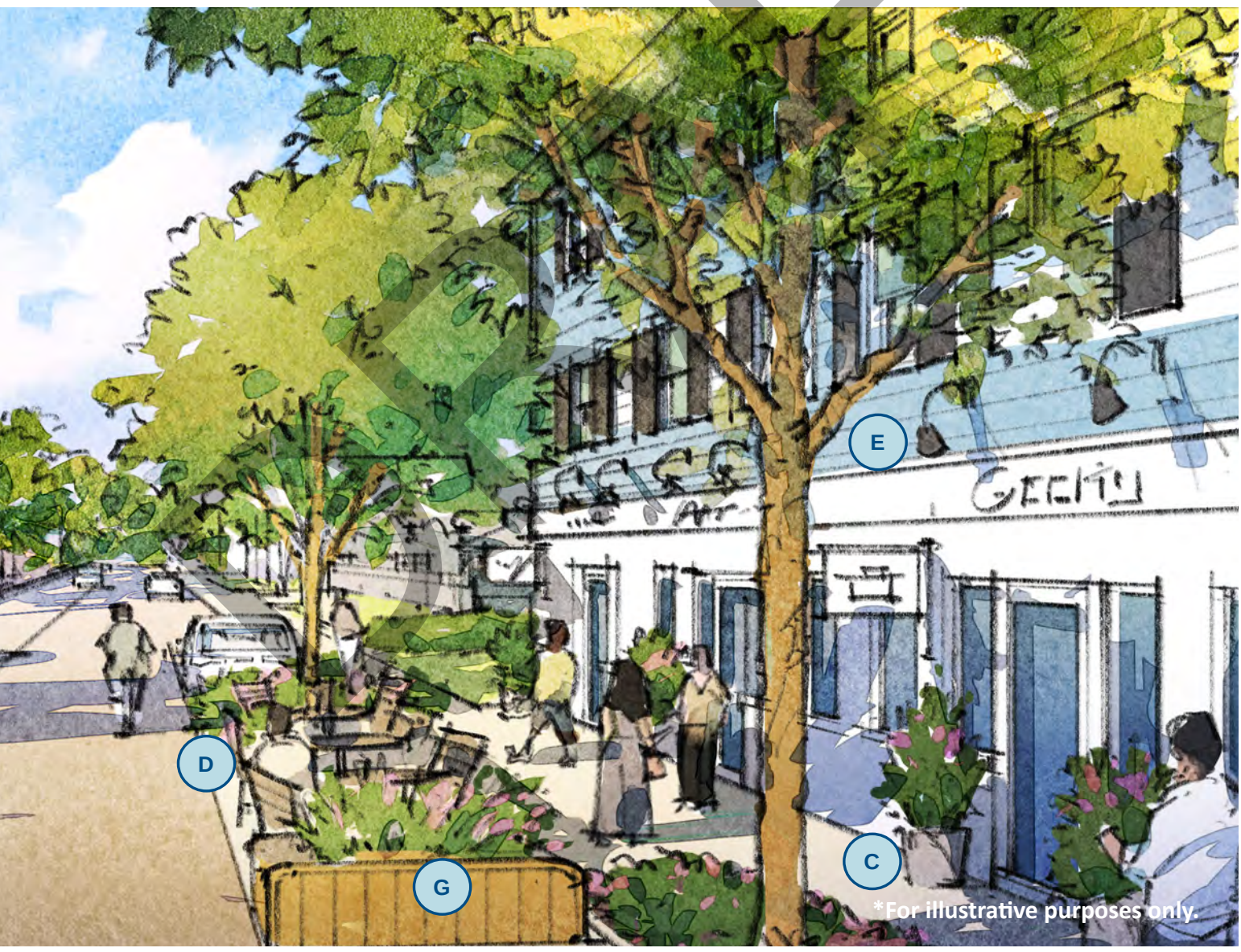
Pine Street & Elm Street (Proposed Vision):

The revitalization concept reimagines Pine Street as a tree-lined, pedestrian-friendly corridor with mixed-use buildings, rehabilitated housing, and active public spaces. The design supports affordable and workforce housing, enhances safety, and creates a vibrant cultural hub where residents can live, work, and gather.

Figure 7.6: Pine Street and Elm Street



Goal 7-1: Reinvest in and preserve Cambridge's existing housing stock

Objective 7-1.1 Support rehabilitation and code enforcement

Policy 7-1.1.1: Housing rehabilitation fund
Establish grant and low-interest loan programs to help homeowners with repairs, weatherization, and accessibility upgrades.

Policy 7-1.1.2: Strengthen code enforcement
Target enforcement in neighborhoods with high vacancy and blight to stabilize housing conditions and promote reinvestment.

Policy 7-1.1.3: Vacancy property reuse
Expand the City's Land Bank program to acquire, rehabilitate, and return abandoned properties to productive use.

Objective 7-2.1 Reinvest in and preserve Cambridge's existing housing stock

Policy 7-2.1.1: Infill housing on vacant lots
Support the redevelopment of underutilized or vacant parcels with context-sensitive infill housing that strengthens neighborhood character.

Policy 7-2.1.2: Rehabilitation and Missing Middle Linkage
Promote the rehabilitation of existing homes alongside the introduction of Missing Middle housing types (duplexes, townhomes, small apartments) to expand options while preserving scale and character.

Goal 7-2: Expand housing diversity and choice

Objective 7-2.1 Encourage Missing Middle and attainable housing

Policy 7-2.1.1: Missing Middle zoning
Update zoning to allow duplexes, townhomes, ADUs, and small apartments in appropriate areas.

Policy 7-2.1.2: Design compatibility
Develop design standards so Missing Middle housing complements neighborhood scale and character.

Policy 7-2.1.3: Adaptive reuse of large homes
Permit conversions of large homes into multiple units with protections for historic integrity.

Policy 7-2.1.4: Redevelopment in blighted areas
Target blighted corridors such as Washington Street and portions of Downtown for housing reinvestment, combining rehabilitation, infill, and code enforcement to restore neighborhood vitality.

Policy 7-2.1.5: Housing Production Plan
The City or County should consider a Housing Production Plan to determine the local capacity to produce workforce or affordable housing and the possibility of requiring affordable housing as part of all new developments. This plan could set target numbers for the yearly construction of workforce or affordable housing

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Goal 7-3: Improve housing affordability and protect renters

Objective 7-3.1 Establish priority mapping and budgeting systems

Policy 7-3.1.1: Incentivize affordability
Use density bonuses, tax abatements, and inclusionary housing policies to deliver affordable units.

Policy 7-3.1.2: Supports ADUs
Encourage accessory dwelling units as a flexible, affordable option within existing neighborhoods.

Policy 7-3.1.3: Advocate for renters
Strengthen rental inspection programs, improve landlord accountability, and expand tenant protections.

Policy 7-3.1.4: Partner with nonprofits
Collaborate with nonprofit developers and housing authorities to expand affordable housing supply.

Goal 7-4: Link housing to infrastructure and community services

Objective 7-4.1 Coordinate housing with infrastructure and services

Policy 7-4.1.1: Infrastructure upgrades
Prioritize sewer, stormwater, and utility improvements in reinvestment areas.

Policy 7-4.1.2: Family-supportive
Align housing investment with schools, childcare, and medical facilities to attract and retain families.

Policy 7-4.1.3: Development impact fees
Require new development to contribute to infrastructure and service improvements.

Policy 7-4.1.4: Public benefits program
Tie rezonings to benefits such as affordable housing, cultural facilities, and neighborhood amenities.

Policy 7-4.1.5: Housing and corridor gateways
Coordinate housing redevelopment at key corridors with transportation improvements, such as gateway roundabouts and streetscape enhancements along US-50, to attract activity and better connect neighborhoods.

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Goal 7-5: Strengthen neighborhood identity and equity

Objective 7-5.1 Coordinate housing with infrastructure and services

Policy 7-5.1.1: Equitable investment
Direct resources to historically underserved neighborhoods to close gaps in quality and opportunity.

Policy 7-5.1.2: Local historic districts
Establish districts that preserve neighborhood identity while guiding compatible reinvestment.

Policy 7-5.1.3: Community amenities
Support community gardens, pocket parks, and public art projects that enhance livability.

Policy 7-5.1.4: Cultural vitality
Pair housing initiatives with investments in visual and performing arts and water-based industries to support economic growth.

Goal 7-6: Update the Zoning and Land Development Regulations

Objective 7-6.1 Expand housing diversity through zoning flexibility

Policy 7-6.1.1: Diversity housing typologies
Amend zoning districts to permit a variety of housing types such as duplexes, townhomes, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), and small-scale multifamily housing in appropriate residential and mixed-use areas.

Policy 7-6.1.2: Context-based design standards
Transition toward form-based or context-sensitive zoning approaches that emphasize building form, streetscape quality, and neighborhood compatibility rather than strictly separated land uses.

Objective 7-6.2 Align land development regulations with affordable and workforce housing needs

Policy 7-6.2.1: Density and height incentives
Modify density and height limits in key corridors and near employment centers to promote workforce and affordable housing development.

Policy 7-6.2.2: Inclusionary zoning review
Reassess inclusionary zoning requirements to improve implementation feasibility while ensuring long-term affordability provisions.

Policy 7-6.2.3: Streamlined approval process
Introduce administrative or expedited review pathways for projects that include affordable or mixed-income housing.

Policy 7-6.2.4: Development incentives for affordability
Provide density bonuses, reduced impact fees, or other incentives for developments that incorporate affordable or workforce housing units.

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Objective 7-6.3 Promote sustainable and resilient housing standards

Policy 7-6.3.1: Resilient construction requirements

Require or incentivize flood-resistant construction methods and materials in hazard-prone areas consistent with FEMA and local resilience strategies.

Objective 7-6.4 Encourage redevelopment and infill housing opportunities

Policy 7-6.4.1: Infill opportunity mapping

Identify and map underutilized parcels suitable for infill housing and prioritize zoning updates that reduce barriers to redevelopment.

Policy 7-6.4.2: Mixed-use housing integration

Amend zoning to allow upper-story or live-work residential units within commercial and mixed-use districts.

Policy 7-6.4.3: Flexible and use standards

Introduce flexible mixed-use zoning standards that enable residential uses alongside compatible commercial and civic functions.

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8: Natural Resources

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Current Conditions

Cambridge's natural resources form the foundation of its resilience, identity, and quality of life. The City is located on the south bank of the Choptank River and is closely tied to its waterways, wetlands, forests, and soils. These features influence not only ecological health but also land use, infrastructure, and community safety.

The landscape is generally flat with low elevations and poorly draining soils, making the City highly vulnerable to flooding, storm surge, and sea level rise. Rain events, combined with high tides and strong southerly winds, frequently cause flooding across Cambridge. Hydric soils and tidal wetlands further shape the City's development patterns, limiting suitable building sites but offering valuable ecological services such as stormwater absorption, water filtration, and wildlife habitat.

Cambridge is also part of the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area, which places emphasis on protecting sensitive areas within 1,000 feet of tidal waters and wetlands. The Choptank River, Cambridge Creek, Little Choptank River, Fishing Bay, and Fishing Creek form an interconnected water network that supports the region's ecology but also receives runoff and pollutants from urban land.

In addition, the City's forests, riparian buffers, and wetlands support biodiversity, filter pollutants, and serve as flood protection systems. However, these systems are under stress from erosion, development, and climate change. Rising flood risk, aging stormwater infrastructure, and habitat fragmentation present challenges that will require coordinated conservation and adaptive management strategies.

Natural Resources

1. Maryland's Twelve Planning Visions

Law: Maryland's statewide planning framework emphasizes the protection of natural resources, stewardship of land and water, and responsible growth. These visions provide the foundation for how Cambridge manages development in balance with environmental conservation. Together, they guide land use policy to ensure that ecological systems, natural assets, and community well-being are sustained for future generations.

2. Soils:

The soils within Cambridge play a critical role in water management, agriculture, and development suitability. Many areas contain hydric soils that drain poorly, contributing to flooding and wetland formation, while riparian zones are highly susceptible to erosion. Soil characteristics, such as water-holding capacity, nutrient content, and erosion potential, directly affect stormwater infiltration, plant growth, and ecological health. Identifying soils most prone to erosion or hydric conditions is key to preventing degradation and protecting water quality.

3. Wetlands:

Wetlands are among Cambridge's most valuable natural resources, providing storm surge protection, floodwater storage, pollutant filtration, and critical wildlife habitat. The City's wetlands include freshwater, estuarine (salt-freshwater transition), and riverine types, each supporting unique ecological functions. These systems act as buffers for storm events and provide essential services that sustain biodiversity. Protecting and restoring wetlands is vital to maintaining resilience against climate change and development pressures.

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4. Riparian Areas/Stream Buffers: Riparian areas are transitional zones along streams and rivers that help regulate stormwater, stabilize stream banks, and filter pollutants. Vegetated buffers of 75-100 feet or more provide the greatest ecological benefits, from temperature regulation and habitat creation to floodplain stabilization. These buffers are critical for protecting the Choptank River, Cambridge Creek, and their attributes, all of which influence regional water quality. Maintaining healthy riparian corridors also supports recreation, aesthetics, and community resilience.

5. Floodplains: Floodplains are flat, low-lying areas adjacent to streams and rivers that temporarily store floodwaters during storms. In Cambridge, the FEMA 100-year and 500-year floodplains cover significant portions of the city, posing risks to development if not properly managed. Floodplains absorb and slow stormwater, reducing downstream flooding, but when developed, their ability to store and filter water is lost. Preserving floodplains is essential to protecting life, property, and water quality.

6. Storm Surge and Sea Level Rise: Cambridge's waterfront location makes it highly vulnerable to tidal flooding, storm surge, and long-term sea level rise. Historical data show sea level has risen steadily over the past century, with projections of an additional two to three feet by 2100. Storm surge events, modeled using the Sea, Lake, and Overland Surges from Hurricanes (SLOSH) systems, show that hurricanes can inundate large sections of the city.

7. Wildlife Habitat and Biodiversity: The Cambridge area supports a diverse range of wildlife habitats, including forests, wetlands and aquatint systems. These habitats provide food, shelter, and migration corridors for species, including those identified as endangered, threatened, or sensitive by the Maryland Natural Heritage Program. Forest Interior Dwelling Species (FIDS) habitats, which require large tracts of contiguous forest, are particularity important for maintaining biodiversity. Protecting these habitats ensures the long-term viability of ecosystems and enhances resilience to climate and land use changes.

8. Land Cover: Land cover patterns in Cambridge include forests, wetlands, open space, and developed areas, each contributing differently to ecological health.

9. Mineral Resources: While Cambridge's land use is primarily residential, commercial, and waterfront oriented, the surrounding region contains mineral resources that have historically supported construction and local industries. Maryland's planning requirements call for identifying areas suitable for a continuous supply of minerals, as well as exploring potential post-excavation uses. Within and near Cambridge, these resources may include sand , gravel, and other aggregates used in road building and development. Although large-scale extraction does not occur within city limits, policies to balance mineral resource management with surrounding land uses remain important. Post-excavation reuse of any extraction sites should prioritize ecological restoration, water quality protection, and compatibility with community character.

10. Farmland and Agriculture Land: Agricultural land remains an important component of the landscape surrounding Cambridge and the greater Dorchester County region. Farmland supports the local economy, provides open space, and serves as a buffer that helps to filter stormwater, absorb runoff, and maintain ecological health. Farmland also plays a role in sustaining the region's cultural identity and heritage connected to working landscapes. However, farmland is increasingly under pressure from development, storm surge, and sea level rise. Preserving prime agricultural soils, encouraging sustainable farming practices, and supporting farmland conservation easement are key to maintaining the long-term productivity of these lands. Integrating farmland into broader conservation strategies, such as the Cambridge Greenbelt, can also help establish ecological corridors and ensure long-term resilience.

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11. Chesapeake Bay Critical Area:

In 1984, the Maryland General Assembly enacted the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Protection Program to safeguard the Bay from the negative impacts of land use and development. The program established a 1,000 foot buffer from tidal waters and wetlands within which development is regulated to protect water quality, habitat, and shoreline conditions. Although much of Cambridge is exempt from the Critical Area regulations due to its designation as an intensely developed area, annexed lands and areas along the Little Blackwater River remain subject to these requirements. Protection of these sensitive shoreline areas remains essential for sustaining water quality, reducing nutrient and sediment runoff, and preserving habitat. The City may also choose to voluntarily apply best practices for stormwater management, tree canopy expansion, and shoreline stabilization within the buffer, even where not legally required, to advance long-term resilience goals.

12. Environmental Stewardship and Resource Conservation

Cambridge embraces environmental stewardship as a guiding principle for managing growth and protecting natural resources. Resource conservation efforts encompass forests, wetlands, riparian buffers, farmland, and wildlife habitat, each of which contributes to ecological health and community well-being. Conservation corridors connect fragmented resources, provide migration pathways for wildlife, and safeguard areas prone to flooding or erosion. Protecting and restoring these lands reduce the need for costly engineered infrastructure while supporting biodiversity, water quality, and recreational opportunities. Future stewardship efforts should continue to prioritize conservation easements, land trusts, and long-term management programs that safeguard Cambridge's sensitive natural areas. Integrating environmental stewardship into everyday decision making, such as zoning, infrastructure investment, and redevelopment, ensures that Cambridge grows in a way that is both sustainable and resilient.

Cambridge's natural resources are increasingly shaped by the impacts of climate change. Rising average temperatures, more frequent and intense storm events, and shifting precipitation patterns amplify pressures on wetlands, waterways, and forest systems. These changes contribute to shoreline erosion, saltwater intrusion, and heightened flood risks that threaten ecological health and community infrastructure alike. Addressing these challenges will require proactive adaptation measures and long-term resilience strategies.

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Community Concerns

Cambridge community input underscored the importance of protecting Cambridge's natural resources while balancing growth and development. Residents emphasized that flooding, water quality, and habitat loss are not abstract environmental issues but daily challenges that affect property values, public safety, and quality of life. Concerns include:

Flooding and Sea Level Rise:

Residents highlighted repeated flooding of streets, neighborhoods, and waterfront areas as a critical issue. Concerns focused on the long-term viability of at risk areas, the impacts of sea level rise on homes and infrastructure, and the need for stronger adaptation strategies.

Stormwater Management:

Stormwater runoff from development projects, particularly in Downtown and along Washington Street pose concerns. Residents want stronger requirements for stormwater infrastructure that reduces flooding and limits pollutants entering the Choptank River.

Water Quality and Habitat Protection:

There is strong support for protecting Cambridge's waterways, wetlands, and forested buffers. Poor water quality in the Choptank River is a concern, as this undermines recreational opportunities, fishing, and the local economy. Preserving wetlands and buffers is seen as critical for both ecological health and flood mitigation. Nutrient loading, agricultural runoff, and stormwater pollution from urban development affect the Choptank River and its tributaries, influencing both ecological integrity and public health. Maryland's Chesapeake Bay restoration framework, including the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) program, underscores the importance of local stormwater management and land use decisions in supporting Bay-wide restoration goals.

Tree Canopy and Greenspace:

Residents stressed the importance of maintaining and expanding the City's tree canopy and open spaces. Concerns included loss of mature trees due to development, lack of shade in certain neighborhoods, and the need for more equitable access to greenspaces.

Balancing Growth and Conservation:

While residents recognize the need for housing and economic development, there is a concern that poorly planned growth could degrade sensitive areas and increase flood risks. There is a need for development policies that integrate resilience, sustainability, and conservation as guiding principles.

Strategies for Addressing Concerns

Cambridge is already advancing a number of projects through federal, state, and nonprofit partnerships. These efforts provide a strong foundation for addressing community concerns about flooding, stormwater, and habitat loss. Building on these efforts, the City should pursue the following strategies:

1. Implement a Hybrid Stormwater Management System

- Transition to a stormwater system that combines natural "green infrastructure" solutions with upgrades to traditional "gray infrastructure". Green infrastructure strategies include bioswales, rain gardens, permeable pavers, bioretention bump-outs, underground water storage cells, and wetland enhancements. Proposed projects on Race Street and Poplar Street will integrate Silva Cells beneath new sidewalks to store and filter runoff while supporting urban tree canopy.
- Ensure existing stormwater pipes and outfalls, many of which are undersized or deteriorating, will ensure capacity for intense rainfall events that could exceed ten inches of rainfall in a single day.
- Establish a stormwater utility and asset management program to fund long-term operations and maintenance so the system can continue to protect residents and businesses as rainfall intensity increases.

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2. Strengthen Flood Resilience and Shoreline Protection

- Complete the Flood Mitigation Project along the Choptank River, which combines earthen and rock embankments, raised roadways, and living shoreline features such as marsh plantings, oyster reefs, and breakwaters. This hybrid approach protects against storm surge while also providing ecological benefits.
- Expand nature-based shoreline defenses including marsh restoration, dune plantings, and oyster reef structures to stabilize shorelines and reduce wave energy.

3. Advance Green Streets and Transportation Resilience

- Redesign Cedar Street as a model "Green Street" to reduce flooding, restore habitat, and improve multimodal access for walking and biking. Planned improvements include bioretention pump-outs, permeable paving, new sidewalks, bike lanes, and street lighting. Together, these features will create a safe and equitable gateway into downtown.
- Prioritize streetscape retrofits in historically underserved neighborhoods to improve safe access to jobs, schools, health care, and parks, while also reducing stormwater flooding.
- Require that all future roadway reconstruction projects incorporate green infrastructure features to provide dual benefits for mobility and stormwater management.

4. Protect Critical Infrastructure and Community Services

- Elevate and flood-proof key public facilities such as water wells, pump stations, storm drains, and electrical infrastructure to withstand at least a five-hundred-year flood event, ensuring that critical services remain operational during severe storms.
- Strengthen power and communication systems in partnership with private service providers to avoid cascading failures during extreme weather.
- Ensure that emergency access routes remain open by elevating flood-prone streets, replacing undersized culverts such as those along Peachblossom Creek, and adding redundancy in transportation connections.

5. Enhance Habitat and Water Quality

- Coordinate stormwater management improvements with habitat restoration, ensuring that runoff is filtered before it enters the Choptank River and its tributaries.
- Expand riparian buffers, wetland restoration projects, and oyster reef installations to restore ecological functions, improve water quality, and support fisheries and wildlife population.
- Monitor habitat health by tracking fish, shellfish, and waterfowl populations to ensure that living shoreline projects achieve both flood protection and ecological benefits.

6. Promote Sustainable Growth and Land Use

- Direct growth and redevelopment toward areas outside of floodplains and sensitive natural areas, reducing pressures on wetlands, flood-prone lands, and shoreline buffers.
- Update zoning and subdivision regulations to embed resilience standards such as freeboard requirements for building elevation, higher setbacks from waterways, and limits on impervious surface coverage.
- Incentivize redevelopment of underutilized or vacant parcels as walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods that balance housing demand with natural resource conservation.

7. Deepen Community Awareness and Engagement

- Expand public education programs to inform residents and businesses about flood preparedness, stormwater best practices, and habitat protection.
- Partner with schools, civic groups, and environmental organizations to launch stewardship projects such as shoreline cleanups, rain garden installations, and citizen science water quality monitoring.
- Establish a "Resilient Cambridge" community outreach initiative to brand these efforts, build public support, attract funding, and connect residents to resources and volunteer opportunities.

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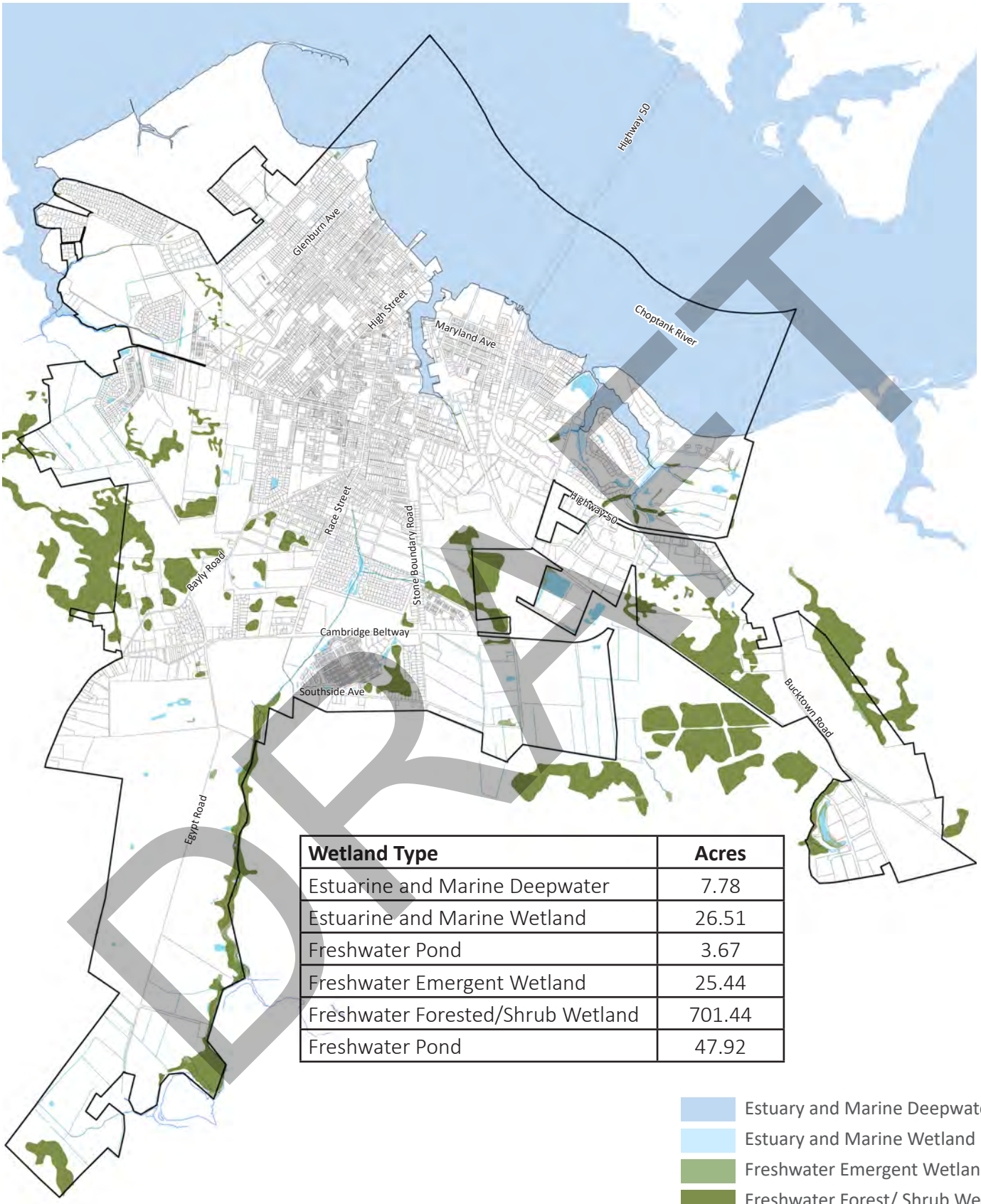
Wetlands



Wetland Type	Acres
Estuarine and Marine Deepwater	7.78
Estuarine and Marine Wetland	26.51
Freshwater Pond	3.67
Freshwater Emergent Wetland	25.44
Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland	701.44
Freshwater Pond	47.92

- Estuary and Marine Deepwater
- Estuary and Marine Wetland
- Freshwater Emergent Wetland
- Freshwater Forest/ Shrub Wetland
- Freshwater Pond
- Stream
- Riverine
- City Boundary

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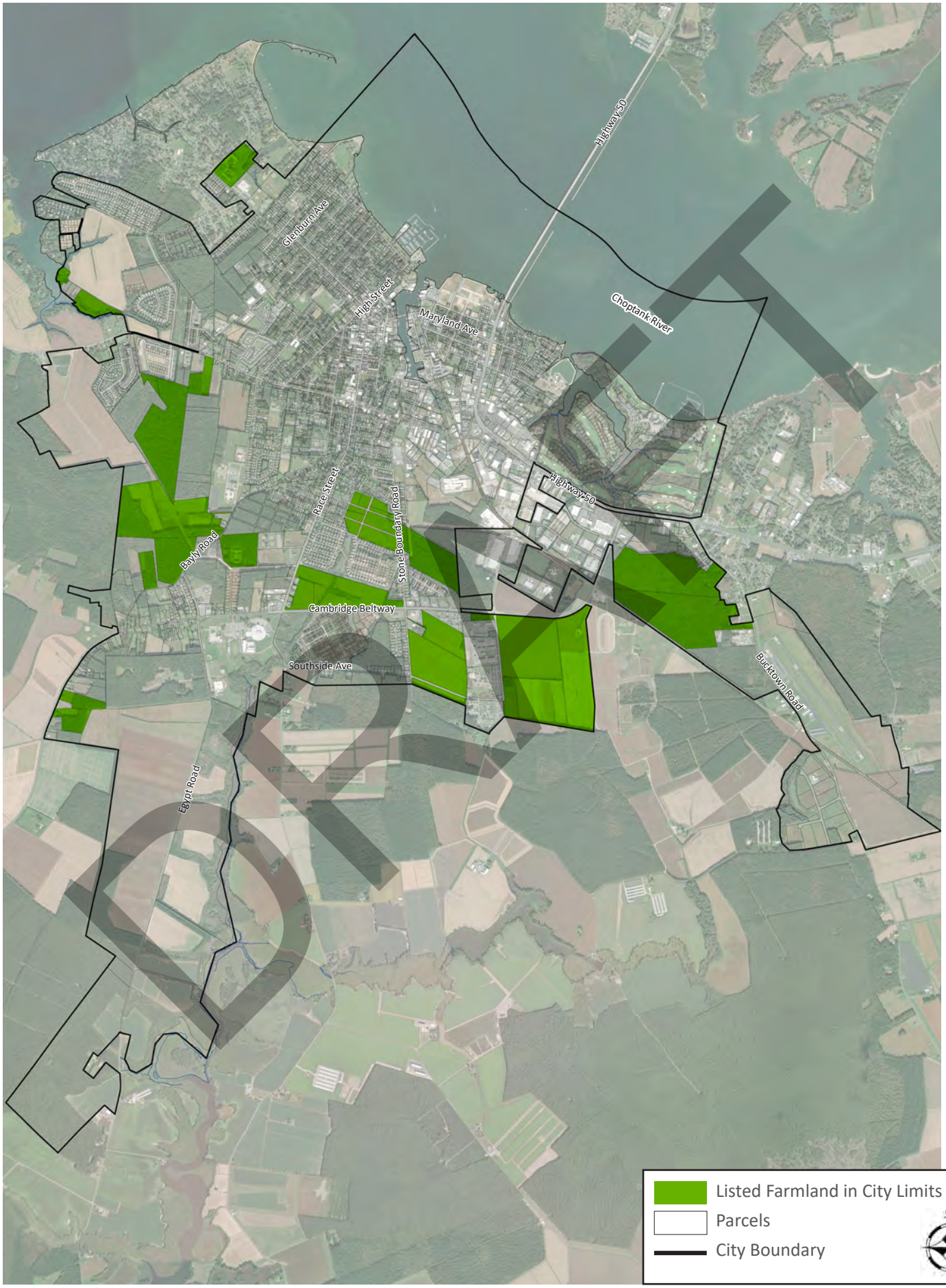
Farmland



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Goal 8-1: Protect and enhance Cambridge's natural resources

Objective 8-1.1 Safeguard ecological systems and functions

Policy 8-1.1.1: Wetland protection
Preserve and restore tidal and non-tidal wetlands to provide flood protection, water quality improvements, and wildlife habitat.

Policy 8-1.1.2: Riparian buffer standards
Maintain and expand riparian buffer areas along streams and rivers to reduce runoff, filter pollutants, and stabilize stream banks.

Policy 8-1.1.3: Floodplain management
Restrict development in flood-prone areas and promote nature-based solutions such as floodplain restoration to reduce risk to life and property.

Goal 8-2: Support sustainable land and soil management

Objective 8-2.1 Preserve prime soils and agricultural land

Policy 8-2.1.1: Farmland conservation
Encourage agricultural preservation easements, conservation programs, and zoning protections to safeguard prime farmland.

Policy 8-2.1.2: Sustainable farming practices
Promote soil health and agricultural resilience through incentives for regenerative practices such as cover cropping and reduced chemical use.

Policy 8-2.1.3: Urban-rural interface
Manage development at the edges of farmland to minimize land use conflicts and protect agricultural viability.

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Goal 8-3: Balance mineral resource use with environmental protection

Objective 8-3.1 Responsible resource management

Policy 8-3.1.1: Identification of resources
Maintain updated information on local mineral resources, including sand and gravel, to guide future land use decisions.

Policy 8-3.1.2: Post extraction reuse
Ensure that any mineral extraction sites are restored for ecological functions or compatible community uses following completion.

Policy 8-3.1.3: Land use compatibility
Balance mineral resource activities with adjacent residential, commercial, and ecological uses to prevent conflicts and environmental degradation.

Goal 8-4: Strengthen shoreline and Chesapeake Bay protection

Objective 8-4.1 Enhance shoreline resilience

Policy 8-4.1.1: Chesapeake Bay buffer practices
Encourage voluntary adoption of best management practices within the 1,000-foot Bay buffer, even where not legally required.

Policy 8-4.1.2: Living shorelines
Prioritize living shoreline projects, oyster reefs, and wetland restoration to stabilize eroding banks and improve habitat.

Policy 8-4.1.3: Water quality protection
Expand stormwater treatment and nutrient reduction strategies to limit pollutants entering the Bay.

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Goal 8-5: Advance environmental stewardship and community

Objective 8-5.1 Integrate stewardship into land use and development

Policy 8-5.1.1: Resource conservation areas

Designate and protect areas of high ecological value, such as forests, wetlands, and stream buffers, through land use regulation and conservation easements.

Policy 8-5.1.2: Green infrastructure

Incorporate natural systems into stormwater management, parks, and streetscape design to provide ecological, recreational, and aesthetic benefits.

Policy 8-5.1.3: Community education and partnerships

Partner with schools, nonprofits, and regional organizations to expand environmental education and community stewardship programs.

Policy 8-5.1.4: Waterfront Master Plan Development

The City should consider a Waterfront Master Plan or Civic Master Plan to further design public spaces, streets, and buildings with specific elements and provide metrics for measuring transitional success over time.

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9: Fisheries

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Current Conditions

Cambridge's fisheries form a cornerstone of the community's identity, economy, and heritage. Located along the Choptank River and within the greater Chesapeake Bay watershed, the city has historically relied on both fish and shellfish harvesting, especially blue crabs, oysters, striped bass, and catfish. These fisheries not only provide local jobs and income, but also support Maryland's broader seafood industry, which is nationally recognized.

The City's working waterfront includes docking areas, offloading facilities, processing plants, cold storage, and wholesale markets. Commercial watermen rely on these assets to maintain daily operations, while a growing recreational fishing sector attracts tourism and supports charter boat businesses. Aquaculture is becoming increasingly important with oyster farming and other sustainable practices offering new opportunities to supplement declining wild harvests.

Despite these assets, the industry faces significant challenges. Over-harvesting, habitat degradation, invasive species, and water quality decline in the Choptank River and Chesapeake Bay have reduced yields and placed stress on both fish and shellfish populations. Climate change compounds these pressures, as rising sea levels, warming waters, and changing salinity patterns threaten habitats and alter fish migration patterns. In addition, redevelopment pressures on the waterfront are reducing space available for water-dependent uses.

Fishing Areas in Cambridge, Maryland

Community Concerns

Loss of Working Waterfront: Residents and industry stakeholders fear redevelopment and tourism-driven uses could displace fisheries and limit access to docks, piers, and processing space.

Declining Harvests: The health of iconic species like oysters and crabs continues to decline due to disease, pollution, and habitat loss, affecting both cultural traditions and livelihoods.

Water Quality: Stormwater runoff, nutrient pollution, and sedimentation in the Choptank River reduce spawning and nursery habitat quality.

Economic Vulnerability: Seasonal harvests and fluctuation yields create economic instability for local watermen and seafood businesses.

Cultural Heritage: The watermen's way of life, which has defined Cambridge for centuries, is at risk of disappearing without support for younger generations to enter the industry.

Aquaculture Acceptance: While aquaculture offers economic resilience, some community members are concerned about potential conflicts with traditional practices and ecological impacts.

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Strategies for Addressing Community Concerns

1. Preserve Working Waterfront Access: Designate and protect priority waterfront areas for fisheries and water-dependent commercial uses through zoning and land use policies.

2. Invest in Infrastructure: Modernize docks, boat ramps, mooring areas, offloading facilities, and processing plants to improve efficiency and safety. Ensure facilities can withstand flooding and sea level rise.

3. Enhance Water Quality: Expand stormwater retrofits, wetland restoration, and riparian buffers along the Choptank River to reduce nutrient and sediment loads. Support watershed-wide initiatives to restore spawning habitats.

4. Support Sustainable Practices: Encourage aquaculture development (oyster farming, crab hatcheries) while ensuring regulations protect quarter quality and habitat integrity. Promote gear types and harvest practices that minimize ecological impacts.

5. Strengthen Workforce and Heritage Programs: Establish training, apprenticeships, and educational initiatives for youth interested in fisheries, aquaculture, and marine trades. Highlight watermen culture through festivals, museums, and cultural heritage programming.

6. Diversity the Fisheries Economy: Integrate fisheries into the city's economic development strategy by linking seafood businesses with local restaurants, agritourism, and regional branding for "Cambridge's seafood".

7. Climate Adaptation: Incorporate fisheries' needs into broader resilience planning, such as shoreline protection, flood-proofing facilities, and elevating critical infrastructure.

Choptank River Fishing

Choptank River Lighthouse

Choptank River

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Goal 9-1: Preserve and strengthen commercial fisheries

Objective 9-1.1 Protect working waterfronts

Policy 9-1.1.1: Zoning protections for fisheries
Designate and protect waterfront areas for commercial fishing and seafood processing to prevent displacement by non-water-dependent uses.

Policy 9-1.1.2: Infrastructure investment
Upgrade docking, unloading, and processing facilities to improve efficiency, safety, and climate resilience.

Objective 9-2.1 Support sustainable fishery practices

Policy 9-2.1.1: Habitat restoration partnerships
Collaborate with state and regional agencies to restore oyster reefs, submerged aquatic vegetation, and wetlands critical to fish habitats.

Policy 9-2.1.2: Promote aquaculture
Encourage sustainable aquaculture and shellfish farming to diversify fishery production and reduce pressure on wild stocks.

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Goal 9-2: Strengthen the fishing workforce and economy

Objective 9-2.1 Support the watermen community

Policy 9-2.1.1: Workforce Training

Expand apprenticeship and training programs to attract younger workers to commercial fishing and aquaculture.

Policy 9-2.1.2: Cultural Preservation

Promote watermen's heritage through festivals, museums, and education programs that connect younger generations to local traditions.

Objective 9-2.2 Enhance economic resilience

Policy 9-2.2.1: Diversify seafood markets

Support marketing initiatives and value-added processing to expand local and regional markets for Cambridge seafood products.

Policy 9-2.2.2: Heritage tourism development

Leverage Cambridge's fishing heritage to attract visitors through seafood festivals, waterfront tours, and local food branding.

Goal 9-3: Promote resilience of fisheries to climate change

Objective 9-3.1 Prepare waterfront infrastructure for sea level rise and storms

Policy 9-3.1.1: Climate-resilient design

Require that all new or rehabilitated fishery-related infrastructure incorporates design standards that address sea level rise and flooding.

Policy 9-3.1.2: Emergency preparedness

Establish emergency response and recovery plans for the fishing industry to minimize disruption during extreme weather events.

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10: Community Facilities

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Current Conditions

Cambridge's network of community facilities includes educational institutions, government buildings, recreational parks, and civic amenities distributed throughout the City. The Dorchester County Public Library, the Cambridge Police Department, the Public Safety Building, City Hall, and multiple public works facilities anchor local governance and community service operations. Schools and educational campuses continue to serve as critical institutions that also double as community gathering places.

Cambridge's community facilities network includes a mix of public and semi-public buildings, open spaces, and services that support residents across the city.

Key facilities include:

- City Hall, Public Safety Building, and Public Works facilities that serve as administrative and operational centers for municipal services.
- Dorchester County Public Library and public schools, which function not only as educational institutions but also as gathering spaces for civic and community events.
- Existing parks and recreation areas, including Sailwinds Park, Great Marsh Park, Cannery Park, and neighborhood playgrounds that provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and environmental connection.
- Faith-based and nonprofit facilities, which contribute to social support, youth engagement, and wellness programming.

While Cambridge benefits from a strong foundation of community facilities, the condition, accessibility, and geographic distribution of these resources vary. Many existing facilities are aging and require modernization to meet contemporary needs for accessibility, sustainability, and multi purposes.

Community Concerns

Feedback from residents, stakeholders, and local organizations highlights several ongoing challenges related to the condition, accessibility, safety, and inclusivity of Cambridge's community facilities. These concerns emphasize the need for strategic investment, equity-driven planning, and coordination between public and private partners to ensure facilities continue to meet evolving community needs.

Limited Neighborhood Scale Facilities:

Several neighborhoods, particularly those located farther from downtown, the waterfront, and existing park corridors, lack nearby recreation areas and public gathering spaces. Residents expressed a desire for smaller, neighborhood-oriented facilities that can host youth programs, community meetings, and outdoor activities without requiring travel across town. Expanding access to such localized amenities is critical for fostering neighborhood cohesion, safety, and daily activity.

Aging Infrastructure and Deferred Maintenance:

Many public buildings, parks, and recreation areas are operating beyond their intended life cycles. Facilities often face maintenance needs, outdated mechanical systems, and structural limitations that prevent energy efficiency upgrades or ADA accessibility improvements. Without proactive investment, these conditions can limit programming opportunities and deter community use, particularly among seniors and individuals with disabilities.

Uneven Distribution of Amenities and Services:

While some areas of Cambridge benefit from close proximity to parks, schools, and public services, others remain underserved. The uneven geographic distribution of facilities reinforces disparities in access to recreation, education, and wellness opportunities. This imbalance underscored the importance of equitable resource allocation and the need for new facilities in areas where residents must currently travel significant distances to reach public amenities.

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Need for Multipurpose, Flexible Facilities:

Residents and community partners consistently voiced support for year-round, multipurpose spaces that combine recreation, cultural programming, and educational opportunities under one roof. Existing facilities are often designed for single uses, limiting their ability to adapt to new programs or shared partnerships. Multi-use spaces, such as community centers with classrooms, studios, or indoor sports areas, can enhance efficiency and strengthen community engagement across all age groups.

Preservation of Cultural Identity and Heritage:

As redevelopment and revitalization continue across Cambridge, residents emphasized the importance of preserving the city's cultural heritage and sense of place. Historic schools, churches, and community landmarks hold deep social significance and serve as reminders of local history. Ensuring that new or renovated facilities incorporate storytelling, public art, and naming that honor Cambridge's cultural legacy is essential for reinforcing community pride and continuity.

Desire to Explore:

Residents are eager to experience the full breadth of the City's neighborhoods and culture, yet the absence of engaging activities, disruptive behaviors, and an uninviting streetscape contribute to a perceived lack of safety.

Strategies for Addressing Community Concerns

1. Invest in Facility Modernization and Maintenance

- Prioritize upgrades to aging public buildings, parks, and recreational areas to extend their useful life, improve accessibility, and enhance comfort for residents. Implement a capital improvements schedule that targets facilities with deferred maintenance, energy inefficiencies, and ADA compliance needs.

2. Expand Neighborhood-Scale Amenities

- Develop smaller, neighborhood-oriented community facilities within walking distance of residential areas, particularly in neighborhoods farther from downtown or the waterfront. These spaces could include pocket parks, satellite recreation centers, or multipurpose civic rooms that host community meetings, after-school programs, and wellness activities.

3. Encourage Shared and Flexible Facility Use

- Promote shared use of existing public and institutional spaces—such as schools, libraries, and faith-based centers—to maximize access and efficiency. Flexible, multipurpose facilities should be designed to accommodate a range of programs, events, and users of all ages.

4. Strengthen Partnerships for Facility Delivery

- Leverage partnerships between the City, County, private sector, and nonprofit organizations to coordinate investments and expand programming. Joint use agreements can help share costs while aligning community goals with available resources.

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5. Advance Equity in Facility Access

- Conduct an equity audit to identify neighborhoods with limited access to parks, cultural venues, and civic spaces. Prioritize investments in these areas to reduce geographic disparities and ensure that all residents have access to quality public amenities.

6. Integrate Arts, Culture, and Heritage in Public Spaces

- Incorporate storytelling, public art, and historic interpretation into community facilities and open spaces. By celebrating Cambridge's cultural identity and history, public facilities can serve as both gathering spaces and expressions of civic pride.

7. Monitor and Plan for Future Needs

- Regularly assess facility usage, maintenance costs, and demographic trends to guide future investments. Incorporate community feedback through surveys and open studios to ensure facilities evolve alongside changing resident needs.

Figure 10.1: Mace's Lane site

Vision Concepts and Opportunity Projects

Cambridge's community facilities network can evolve to become more vibrant, equitable, and connected. The following vision concepts illustrate how new and reimagined public spaces serve as a catalyst for neighborhood revitalization, cultural expression, and social cohesion.

The Mace's Lane area is one of Cambridge's strongest opportunities for community reinvestment and neighborhood revitalization. Once a focal point for education and civic life, the area is anchored by the active Mace's Lane Middle School and the adjacent former Mace's Lane School site, now largely vacant. This concentration of public land offers a foundation for future redevelopment that could integrate educational, recreational, and community uses.

Surrounding blocks feature a mix of housing, open land, and underutilized parcels that lack strong connections of shared spaces. Limited access to nearby parks and youth amenities highlights the need for a cohesive neighborhood hub. Despite these changes, Mace's Lane remains deeply rooted in Cambridge's cultural identity and is well positioned to once again serve as a cornerstone of civic pride and social connection in South Cambridge.

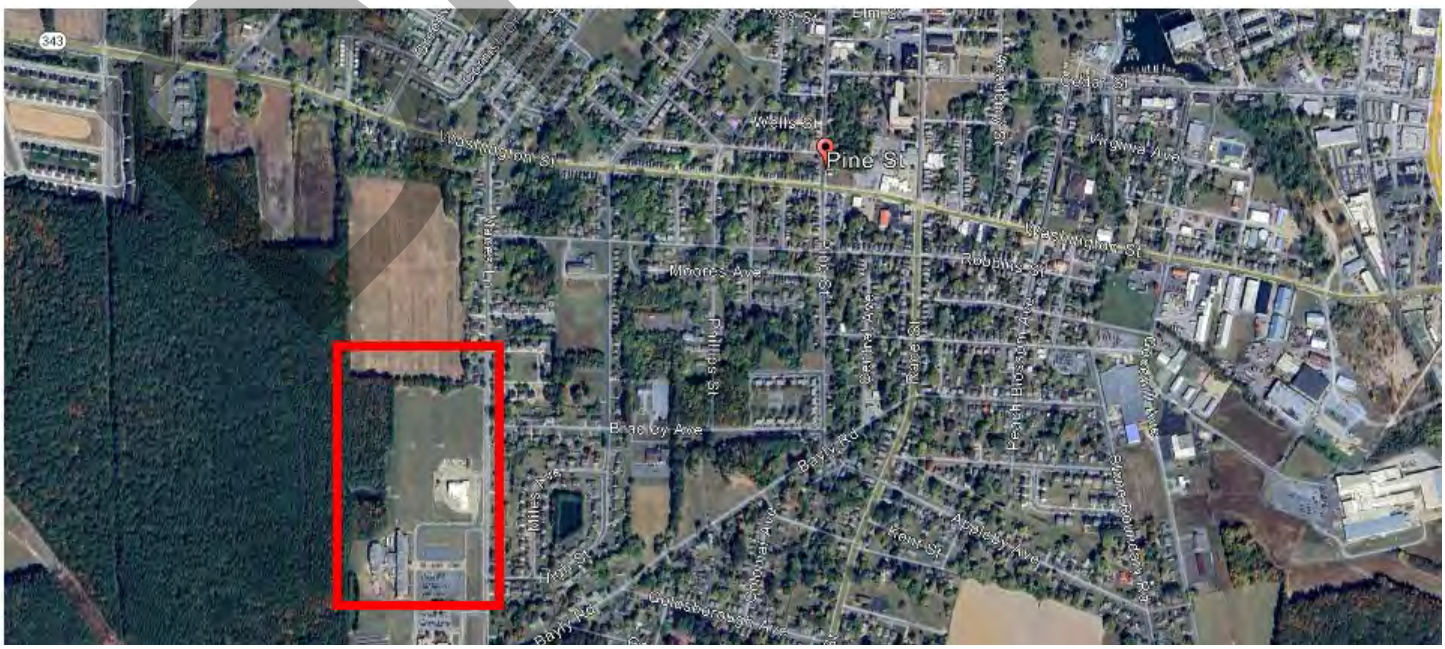

Figure 10.2 Ariel view of Mace's Lane site

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Figure 10.3: Mace's Lane site

Figure 10.3: Dorchester County Public Library located in Cambridge

Opportunity Site: Education District

The Mace's Lane Education and Community District envisions transforming the former school site and surrounding blocks into a vibrant, mixed-use civic hub that blends education, recreation, housing, and cultural activity. Centered around a new multi-purpose Community Center, the concept integrates Mace's Lane Middle School, state and county offices, and new attainable housing to create a connected, walkable neighborhood. The plan introduces shared athletic and green spaces, including a high-quality soccer facility, that double as community gathering areas.

The site would support Cambridge's creative economy, while upgraded public infrastructure and improved pedestrian connection would strengthen links between nearby residential areas and key civic institutions. Together, these elements establish Mace's Lane as a modern "education and innovation district", restoring its historic role as a center for community pride, learning, and opportunity.

Figure 10.4 Education District Before

Figure 10.5: Education District After

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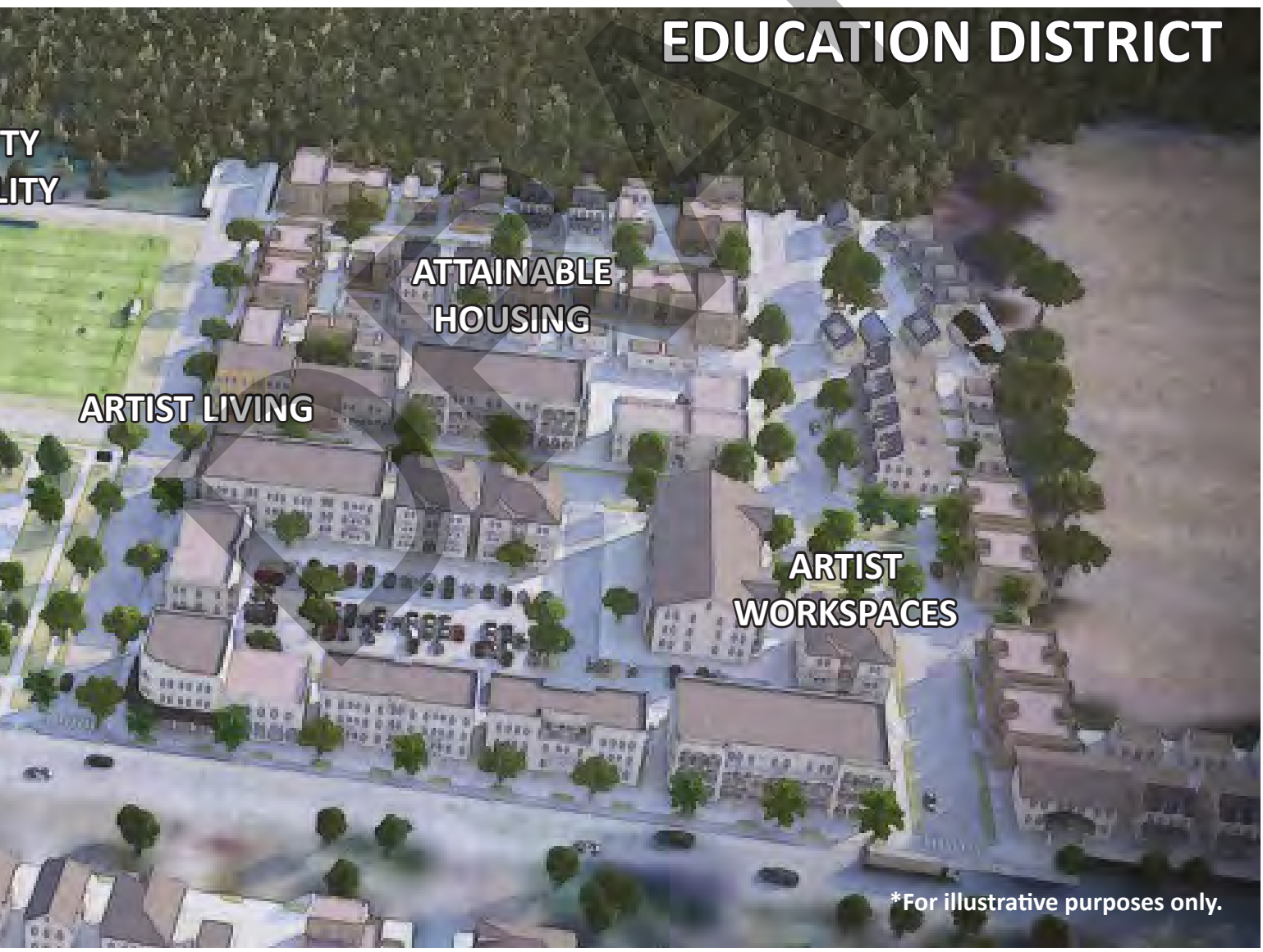
Another site that can strengthen community facilities in Cambridge is the waterfront. The Cambridge Waterfront concept envisions transforming the City's riverfront into a continuous, accessible public landscape that celebrates both recreation and heritage. Expansive lawns and shaded seating areas would accommodate community gatherings, festivals, and informal recreation while maintaining the area's natural character and scenic views.

The vision emphasizes universal access, resilient shoreline design, and public open space activation, through amenities such as walking trails, piers, and waterfront overlooks. By re-imagining the riverfront as a civic centerpiece, this concept strengthens Cambridge's identity as a waterfront community, enhancing livability, tourism, and environmental stewardship while ensuring the Choptank river remains open and welcoming all.

Figure 10.6: Public waterfront access



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Opportunity Site: Leonard's Lane Park

The Leonard's Lane corridor features a mix of industrial, residential, and undeveloped parcels, creating a transition area with limited public amenities. Existing open space along Leonard's Lane is largely unprogrammed and lacks defined facilities, pathways, or landscaping that invite community use. Despite its proximity to nearby housing and schools, the site currently offers minimal opportunities for recreation, environmental education, or neighborhood gathering. The corridor's fragmented edges, stormwater challenges, and lack of pedestrian infrastructure further limit access. However, the available land, adjacency to residential areas, and existing tree cover provide a strong foundation for a new community-oriented park that integrates both active and passive uses.

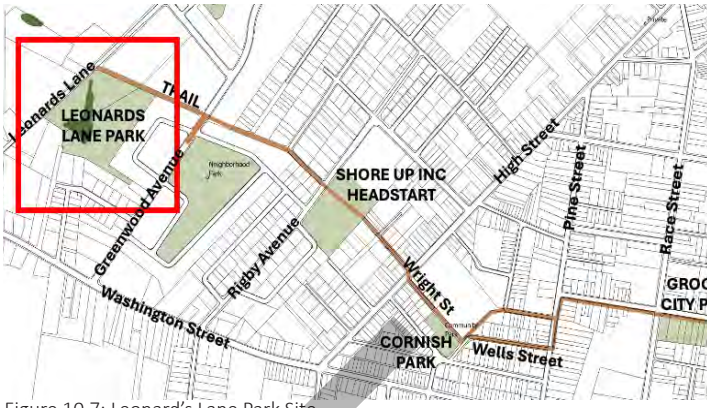

Figure 10.7: Leonard's Lane Park Site

Figure 10.8: Leonard's Lane Park Site

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The Leonard's Lane Park concept envisions transforming the existing open space into a dynamic, multi-generational community destination. The design introduces a balance of active recreation and passive green space, including three basketball courts, a splash pad, and shaded seating areas for families and youth. A network of walking trails and gardens weaves through the site, connecting to a Remembrance Memorial that honors community history and provides opportunities for reflection.

The concept integrates natural features, such as existing wetlands and native plantings, to enhance ecological resilience and create a visually rich landscape. Together, these features position Leonard's Lane Park as a new civic anchor for South Cambridge, linking culture, and environmental stewardship in one cohesive design.

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Goal 10-1: Strengthen Cambridge's network of community facilities to ensure equitable access, modern design, and cultural identity

Objective 10-1.1

Ensure all residents have access to safe, inclusive, and well-maintained community facilities within a short distance of their homes

Policy 10-1.1.1: Equitable facility distribution

Identify underserved neighborhoods and prioritize new or improved parks, community centers, and civic amenities in areas with limited access.

Policy 10-1.1.2: Accessibility and inclusion

Design all public facilities to meet ADA standards and universal design principles to accommodate users of all ages and abilities.

Policy 10-1.1.3: Facility condition assessment

Conduct regular evaluations of existing community facilities to identify maintenance needs, modernization opportunities, and capital priorities.

Objective 10-1.2

Promote multi-use, sustainable, and collaborative community spaces that adapt to evolving social, recreational, and educational needs

Policy 10-1.2.1: Co-location of services

Encourage shared-use facilities that integrate recreation, education, health, and cultural programs under one roof.

Policy 10-1.2.2: Sustainable design standards

Incorporate energy-efficient systems, renewable energy, and green infrastructure in the construction and renovation of public buildings.

Policy 10-1.2.3: Partnership development

Collaborate with nonprofits, private entities, and educational institutions to expand programming, operations, and funding capacity for community spaces.

Objective 10-1.3

Preserve and celebrate Cambridge's cultural identity and community heritage through facility design, programming, and adaptive reuse

Policy 10-1.3.1: Cultural and historic integration

Incorporate public art, interpretive signage, and design elements that reflect Cambridge's history and cultural diversity within community spaces.

Policy 10-1.3.2: Adaptive reuse of historic structures

Repurpose historically significant buildings, such as former schools or civic buildings, into new community-oriented uses that retain their heritage value.

Policy 10-1.3.3: Community storytelling and engagement

Support programs and events that foster intergenerational connections, local storytelling, and cultural expression in public spaces.

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Objective 10-1.4	Enhance connectivity and safety between neighborhoods, parks, schools, and community destinations

Policy 10-1.4.1: Pedestrian and bicycle access
Improve sidewalks, trails, and bike routes linking community facilities to residential areas and schools.

Policy 10-1.4.2: Safe routes and lighting
Integrate wayfinding, lighting, and landscaping improvements that enhance comfort, visibility, and user safety.

Policy 10-1.4.3: Transit coordination
Coordinate with regional transit providers to improve public transportation access to major civic and recreational destinations.

Goal 10-2: Ensure the long-term sustainability, resilience, and adaptability of Cambridge's community facilities through proactive planning, maintenance, and innovation

Objective 10-2.1	Strengthen the City's capacity to plan, fund, and manage community facilities efficiently and equitably

Policy 10-2.1.1: Capital improvement planning
Integrate facility upgrades, expansions, and new construction into the City's Capital Improvement Program to align with population growth and community needs.

Policy 10-2.1.2: Asset management program
Establish a data-driven inventory and maintenance tracking system for all community facilities to monitor condition, energy use, and lifecycle costs.

Policy 10-2.1.3: Sustainable funding and partnerships
Leverage grants, public-private partnerships, and regional collaborations to support facility modernization and community programming.

Objective 10-2.2	Incorporate climate resilience and innovation into the design and operation of community facilities

Policy 10-2.2.1: Resilient facility design
Design and retrofit community facilities to withstand flooding, extreme weather, and other climate-related hazards.

Policy 10-2.2.2: Smart infrastructure and technology
Integrate energy monitoring, adaptive lighting, and smart water systems to reduce operational costs and improve efficiency.

Policy 10-2.2.3: Emergency readiness
Designate community facilities as resilience hubs that can provide shelter, communication, and essential services during emergencies.

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11: Cultural Resources

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Cambridge's cultural resources tell the story of its people, from its maritime heritage and working waterfront to its artistic traditions and social movements that have shaped the City's identity. These places, landmarks, and cultural expressions connect residents to a shared sense of belonging and continuity. Protecting and celebrating these resources helps strengthen local identity, attract visitors, and inspire future generations. As Cambridge grows and adapts to change, its cultural legacy provides both an anchor and a source of creativity for what the City becomes next.

Current Conditions

Cultural resources in Cambridge include the physical, historical, and social assets that define the City's identity and collective memory. These encompass historic buildings, archaeological sites, cultural landscapes, and artifacts that tell the story of Cambridge's evolution as a waterfront community. Notable resources include the City's historic districts, the Harriet Tubman Museum and Educational Center, the Richardson Maritime Museum, the Choptank River Lighthouse, and various heritage trails and public art installations.

The City's architectural legacy, featuring 19th and 20th century homes, civic structures, and maritime industrial buildings, reflect the area's economic and cultural development. Many of these structures remain in active use, contributing to the character and livability of neighborhoods. Community events, such as heritage festivals, local art walks, and waterfront markets, continue to celebrate and reinforce the City's cultural fabric.

However, some historic and cultural sites face threats from deterioration, redevelopment pressures, and environmental risks such as flooding. As Cambridge continues to grow and attract new investment, protecting and integrating its cultural resources into modern development is critical to maintaining community identity and sense of place.

Community Concerns

Community feedback emphasizes that Cambridge's cultural identity is both its greatest strength and one of its most vulnerable assets. Residents expressed concern that the City's distinct history and sense of place could erode if redevelopment proceeds without regard to heritage, authenticity, and local storytelling. Several themes emerged:

Preserving Heritage within Change:

As Cambridge experiences reinvestment and redevelopment, many residents worry that new construction may not reflect the City's architectural character or maritime legacy. There is a shared desire for growth that honors the past, through adaptive reuse, preservation of iconic structures, and design that complements historic context.

Celebrating Diverse Histories: Cambridge's cultural narrative extends beyond its architecture, encompassing stories of resilience, social justice, and community pride, particularly in historically Black neighborhoods. Residents voice a need for greater viability and interpretation of these stories through public art, heritage trails, and educational programming.

Strengthening Waterfront Connectivity:

The City's working waterfront, museums, and public spaces are central to its identity, yet access to cultural resources along the water can feel fragmented. Community members envision the waterfront as a connected cultural corridor that links history, recreation, and economic opportunity

Supporting Downtown Vitality through the Arts: Downtown Cambridge remains a focal point for cultural activity, but many noted that vacant storefronts and limited event space hinders its full potential. Strengthening arts programming, creative business support, and public art installations were identified as strategies for re-energizing the downtown core.

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Resilience and Stewardship of Cultural Assets: Flooding and climate change pose increasing risks to historic buildings and cultural landmarks, particularly along the waterfront in older neighborhoods. There is a growing awareness that cultural preservation must also include adaptation and resilience planning to safeguard these resources for future generations.

Strategies for Addressing Concerns

1. Integrate Heritage into Economic and Downtown Revitalization (Downtown Vitality & Economic Opportunity)

- Encourage adaptive reuse of historic buildings for creative industries, local businesses, and cultural spaces to activate downtown and reinforce its historic character.
- Partner with local arts organizations, the Dorchester Center for the Arts, and business associations to expand cultural programming, public art, and events that draw residents and visitors year-round.
- Support cultural tourism initiatives that connect downtown retail, restaurants, and historic attractions through coordinated branding, wayfinding, and storytelling.

2. Protect and Elevate Cambridge's Diverse Cultural Narratives (Neighborhood Identity)

- Develop heritage interpretation programs and cultural trails highlighting the City's African American heritage, maritime history, and social justice legacy.
- Collaborate with community leaders, churches, and educational institutions to document oral histories and expand representation in public art and heritage displays.
- Encourage community driven placemaking efforts, murals, storytelling projects, and neighborhood festivals, that celebrate local identity and foster intergenerational pride.

3. Connect Cultural Assets along the Waterfront (Waterfront Connectivity)

- Create a unified "Cultural Waterfront Corridor" linking the Richardson Maritime Museum, Choptank River Lighthouse, Long Wharf Park, and downtown through interpretive signage, walking routes, and design enhancements.
- Incorporate public art and historical interpretation into waterfront redevelopment and open space projects to ensure new investments reflect Cambridge's maritime and cultural roots.
- Partner with the Heritage Trail and local organizations to improve pedestrian and bicycle access between key cultural destinations along the waterfront.

4. Strengthen Preservation Tools and Incentives (Heritage & Resilience)

- Update zoning and land development regulations to include stronger design standards and incentives for preservation and context-sensitive infill within historic districts.
- Pursue certified local government designations and utilize state and federal preservation tax credits to attract reinvestment in historic properties.
- Establish a Cultural Resource Inventory and integrate it into the City's GIS database to track condition, flood risk, and rehabilitation needs of historic assets.

5. Build Resilience into Cultural Resource Management (Heritage & Resilience)

- Develop climate adaptation and flood mitigation strategies specifically for at-risk historic and cultural sites.
- Encourage use of resilient building materials and evaluation techniques for historic structures vulnerable to sea level rise.
- Partner with preservation and environmental organizations to secure funding for resilient retrofits and long-term monitoring.

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6. Expand Community Engagement and Access (Neighborhood Identity and Downtown Vitality)

- Host annual "Cultural Cambridge" events to highlight local artists, performers, and traditions across neighborhoods.
- Support youth programs and artist-in-residence initiatives that connect new generations to Cambridge's cultural story.
- Improve digital access to cultural resources through interactive maps, QR-coded heritage trails, and online archives of historic photographs and oral histories.

The Packing House

Incorporating Revitalized and Preserved Cultural Assets

Cambridge's approach to cultural preservation and revitalization is evident in projects that bridge history with new opportunity. The adaptive reuse of The Packing House, once part of the Philips Packing Company complex, demonstrates how historic industrial spaces can find new life as modern centers for innovation, arts and community gathering. Now home to offices, event spaces, and a shared kitchen, the project reflects Cambridge's growing recognition that preservation and economic development can advance together.

Similarly, preserved places like Minty's, a locally owned business named in honor of Harriet "Minty" Tubman, celebrates both the City's African American heritage and its creative small-business community. Its preservation illustrates how local entrepreneurship and cultural storytelling can reinforce neighborhood pride and identity.

Together, these examples highlight Cambridge's commitment to preserving the soul of the City while fostering places that serve current and future generations. They embody a broader community vision; that revitalization can be rooted in authenticity, and that historic character remains one of Cambridge's most valuable assets.

Minty's

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Goal 11-1: Protect and enhance Cambridge's historic and cultural assets to preserve community identity and foster heritage-based tourism

Objective 11-1.1 Support preservation and adaptive reuse

Policy 11-1.1.1: Adaptive reuse incentives
Establish incentives and technical assistance programs to encourage adaptive reuse of vacant or underutilized historic buildings.

Policy 11-1.1.2: Funding and grants
Pursue federal, state, and private funding opportunities to support restoration and maintenance of cultural resources.

Policy 11-1.1.3: Preservation guidelines
Maintain clear design and preservation guidelines for historic districts to ensure appropriate rehabilitation and new construction.

Objective 11-1.2 Integrate cultural resources into community development

Policy 11-1.2.1: Cultural resource review
Require review of development proposals within or adjacent to historic districts for potential cultural and visual impacts.

Policy 11-1.2.2: Cultural overlay zones
Consider establishing cultural overlay zones or heritage districts to guide design and land use decisions in culturally significant areas.

Policy 11-1.2.3: Public art and interpretation
Encourage inclusion of public art, heritage interpretation, and local storytelling in development projects and public spaces.

Objective 11-1.3 Promote community awareness and engagement

Policy 11-1.3.1: Education and outreach
Support educational programs, workshops, and walking tours to raise awareness of the City's history and cultural diversity.

Policy 11-1.3.2: Heritage events and partnerships
Collaborate with local organizations to expand heritage festivals, art exhibits, and cultural events that celebrate Cambridge's identity.

Policy 11-1.3.3: Digital access and promotion
Develop digital archives, interactive maps, and online platforms to make cultural resource information accessible to residents and visitors.

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12: Economic Development

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Economic Development in Cambridge

The City of Cambridge stands at a pivotal moment in its recent economic history. As the only deep-water port between Baltimore and Norfolk, home to a federally designated Opportunity Zone, and the gateway to the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, Cambridge possesses a combination of strategic assets that are unique to the Eastern Shore. This Economic Development Element charts a course to leverage these competitive advantages through deepening its economic foundation and increasing linkages in an innovative manner to boost the maritime-tourism and waterfront character that has evolved over more than 340 years. This plan positions the city to own a distinctive economic niche: The Eastern Shore's Maritime Gateway. By integrating port commerce with heritage tourism, leveraging federal investment incentives, and maintaining its authentic small-town character built over centuries, Cambridge will create a distinct economic development model.

This strategy recognized that Cambridge's greatest economic asset is authenticity, a real working waterfront where visitors can experience maritime heritage in action, where port commerce drives local employment, and where historic preservation creates value while preserving the past. In addition to its scenic waterfront, a small but historic downtown, and cultural offerings including unique shops, art galleries, and restaurants can be aligned to attract visitors. Through careful implementation of this plan, Cambridge will demonstrate that industrial development and tourism need not compete but can instead reinforce each other to create a resilient, diversified economy.

The Economic Development Element of Cambridge's Comprehensive Plan establishes a strategic framework for sustainable economic growth that leverages the city's unique competitive advantages while preserving the authentic character that makes Cambridge distinctive.

This Element is developed in accordance with Maryland's Land Use Article and incorporates the State's 12 Planning Visions, particularly those focused on economic growth, community design, stewardship, and implementation. With a population of approximately 13,275 residents (as of 2023), Cambridge faces both the challenges and opportunities common to small Eastern Shore communities—but unlike its neighbors, it possesses strategic assets that position it to chart its own economic course rather than compete in over-saturated markets.

The economic vision is simple: Cambridge will become the Eastern Shore's Maritime Gateway, the essential hub where deep-water commerce meets authentic tourism experiences, where working maritime heritage drives modern economic opportunity, and where federal investment partnerships create lasting community value. This vision builds on what makes Cambridge unique rather than trying to become something other than it is.

Out of this report emerge three key observations: Cambridge is unique in its legacy assets and is poised for a renaissance that can build on the overall national, regional and local economic growth drivers evident in its local economy; and
Fostering economic growth will require innovation. and Cambridge is well-poised, both through its natural resources and its people, to embrace this innovation that can not only contribute to increased investments but also but also drive integrated policy programs and improvements in productivity across its entire economy; and

Cambridge cannot and should not attempt to compete with Ocean City's mass tourism model, Salisbury's regional retail dominance, or Annapolis's government-anchored economy. Instead, we will pursue a differentiated strategy that combines our irreplaceable assets—deep-water port access, Opportunity Zone designation, proximity to the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, and an intact historic downtown—into an integrated economic development approach that no other Eastern Shore community can replicate.

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The strategic framework rests on three pillars that reinforce each other:

- Maritime Commerce and Manufacturing: Leveraging our deep-water port to attract industries that require water access and cannot simply relocate to cheaper inland sites. This includes boat building, seafood processing, specialty agriculture export, and emerging opportunities in offshore wind energy support.
- Heritage and Experience Tourism: Developing tourism that celebrates rather than displaces our working waterfront, where visitors come specifically to experience authentic maritime culture, not a manufactured or sterile environment. This positions Cambridge as the "real" Eastern Shore experience compared to more commercialized destinations.
- Strategic Investment Attraction: Utilizing our Opportunity Zone designation to attract capital for projects that serve both economic development and community needs—mixed-use waterfront development, historic preservation with commercial application, and climate-resilient infrastructure that protects both commerce and community.

This Economic Development Element directly implements Maryland's planning visions as required by state law. The economic strategies herein specifically advance Quality of Life and Sustainability (economic development that enhances stewardship while creating sustainable communities), Public Participation (engaging citizens through the recent charrette process), Growth Areas (concentrating development in existing downtown and port areas), Community Design (promoting compact, mixed-use, walkable waterfront development), Infrastructure (leveraging existing assets efficiently), Transportation (balancing freight needs with pedestrian access), Housing (ensuring economic development creates workforce housing opportunities), Economic Growth (building on existing maritime, healthcare, and tourism strengths), Environmental Protection (protecting the Choptank River and Blackwater ecosystems), and Implementation (coordinating local, regional, state, and federal resources).

Current Conditions

Population and Demographics

Cambridge's demographic profile reveals both challenges and opportunities for economic development, with significant shifts occurring over the past decade that inform strategic priorities. The city's population has grown from 12,326 in 2010 to an estimated 13,275 in 2023, representing a 7.7% increase that exceeds many rural Eastern Shore communities but lags behind state growth rates. This modest growth masks significant demographic transitions that directly impact economic development potential.

The demographic evolution shows Cambridge becoming increasingly diverse (Black/African American population 42.1%, White population 39.0%, with a growing multiracial population at 8.7% as of 2023), which presents both economic opportunities and the need for broad development strategies. The median age of 38.9 years and the youth population (under 18) comprising 20.5% of the population suggest workforce pipeline potential, distinguishing Cambridge from aging rural communities.

Educational attainment levels present a mixed picture that directly impacts economic development potential. While the percentage of residents with bachelor's degrees (approximately 17.2%, 2023) lags behind state averages (41.6%, 2023), Cambridge shows strength in technical and vocational skills that align well with maritime industries and skilled trades. Migration patterns reveal interesting dynamics that inform economic strategy. In-migration consists primarily of retirees and remote workers seeking quality of life, while out-migration predominantly involves young adults pursuing higher education or career opportunities unavailable locally. This brain drain requires targeted strategies to create career pathways that retain young talent, particularly in skilled maritime trades, hospitality, and creative industries.

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Economic Base Assessment

Cambridge's current economic base reflects its maritime heritage while showing signs of diversification that provide the foundation for future growth. Analysis of employment trends from 2013-2023 reveals both stability in traditional sectors and the emergence of new opportunities.

Employment by Major Industry (2022 Data for Dorchester County):

- Total Employment for Dorchester County: 11,385
- Accommodation & Food Services: 1,939 employees (17.0%)
- Retail Trade: 1,328 employees (11.7%)
- Health Care & Social Assistance: 1,223 employees (10.7%)
- Manufacturing: 1,173 employees (10.3%)
- Construction: 645 employees (5.7%)
- Public Administration: 585 employees (5.1%)

Healthcare and social services represent a significant stable employment sector, anchored by the University of Maryland Shore Medical Center at Cambridge, providing recession-resistant employment with relatively higher wages. Manufacturing, though reduced from historical peaks, maintains a significant presence through food processing, boat building, and specialized industrial firms that benefit from port access.

The tourism and hospitality sector shows strong seasonal variation but growing year-round stability as Cambridge develops beyond a summer-only destination status. The presence of a diverse and growing dining scene, including RAR, Blue Ruin, the Dive Club and others, numerous lodging establishments such as the Hyatt Resort, and growing retail offerings demonstrates private sector confidence in tourism growth potential, though empty storefronts on Race Street indicate the need for innovative retail concepts.

Community Concerns

The recent (August 2025) week-long charrette involved nearly 375 local residents and revealed significant concerns (not in order of severity) requiring targeted strategies:

Extreme Seasonality: Business owners report a falloff in visitor numbers in winter months requiring strategies to extend visitor seasons. The presence of successful year-round businesses like RAR Brewing demonstrates the viability of innovative concepts combining multiple revenue streams.

Youth Employment Challenge: Connecting unemployed youth with expanding skilled trades opportunities, particularly in the growing boatyard sector that has added new capacity for servicing large yachts with advanced crane equipment.

Housing Quality Challenge: The city has approximately 3,500 rental units typically operated with 2-3 city inspectors, regularly condemning properties as unlivable. This represents not just a housing problem but an economic development barrier—workers will not relocate to Cambridge for maritime or tourism jobs if much of the housing stock is deteriorating.

Agricultural Disconnection: Expanding connections to the local agricultural sector through festivals, farmers markets, and restaurant local purchasing programs was identified as a priority.

Youth Activity Gaps: A critical lack of recreational facilities and programs for children and teens, particularly compared to competing Eastern Shore destinations.

Empty Storefronts: Race Street vacancies despite dining successes, indicating the need for innovative retail concepts following successful models.

Small business predominance characterizes Cambridge's economy, with over 90% of businesses employing fewer than 20 people (Dorchester County data). This entrepreneurial character provides resilience but also presents challenges in achieving the scale necessary for certain economic development initiatives.

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Key Findings

Employment and Workforce

- Employment data from 2013-2023 shows relatively stable total employment around 5,600 workers in Cambridge (2022), with modest fluctuations reflecting economic cycles and seasonal variation.
- Wage levels vary significantly across sectors, with maritime and manufacturing jobs typically providing wages above regional averages (median annual wage for production occupations in Dorchester County was $43,760 in 2023, with some specialized roles exceeding $70,000 annually) while tourism and retail employment often pays at or near minimum wage.
- Commuting patterns are bidirectional: 40% of residents work outside Cambridge, while many commute in for healthcare, government, and port jobs.

Income and Equity

- Median household income reached $47,261 in 2023, but inequality has widened and poverty exceeds state averages, particularly among children and seniors.
- Inclusive development strategies are needed to ensure growth benefits all residents.

Housing and Real Estate

- Affordability remains better than Western Shore, but housing quality is a crisis: unsafe rentals, regulatory loopholes, and lack of utilities in some units undermine stability.
- Cambridge faces a significant housing quality crisis that extends beyond affordability. Exploitative rental practices such as leasing units without utilities or abusing tax benefits, endanger tenants, create unfair competition for responsible landlords, and ultimately weaken overall housing quality.
- Waterfront commercial property commands premium prices and shows low vacancy rates, while inland commercial strips struggle with vacant storefronts and declining rents. This pattern suggests that economic development strategies should focus on strengthening waterfront commercial districts while re-imagining inland commercial areas for new uses.
- Industrial sites with port access are scarce, and potentially limiting maritime growth without new development.
- Historic property values are rising, showing market recognition but also raising risks of displacement.

Infrastructure

- The port facility, with a maintained channel depth of 25 feet and turning basin capacity for vessels up to 400 feet, represents the city's most distinctive infrastructure asset.
- U.S. 50 provides regional access, though local streets need truck management upgrades.
- Rail exists but needs costly reinvestment; broadband has expanded but gaps remain; utilities sufficient with room for growth.

Business Climate and Incentives

- Cambridge lacks locally controlled incentives (expedited permitting, tax relief, grants) that peers like Salisbury, Easton, and smaller towns use.
- This absence constrains competitiveness despite state/federal programs like the Opportunity Zone.
- When a maritime business considers Cambridge versus other port communities, or when a tourism-related business evaluates Eastern Shore locations, Cambridge cannot offer the expedited permitting, targeted fee waivers, tax increment financing, or other locally-controlled benefits that make deals financially viable. This limitation forces Cambridge to rely entirely on its inherent advantages while competitors may be able to sweeten their proposals with locally-created incentives.

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Regional Economic Context

Eastern Shore Regional Economy

The Eastern Shore region exhibits economic characteristics distinct from the state's metropolitan areas. Agriculture remains foundational to regional identity though its direct employment share has declined steadily for decades.

Tourism provides seasonal economic injection but creates vulnerability to weather and economic downturns. Healthcare and education have emerged as stable employment anchors in regional centers. Unlike other rural towns struggling with population decline, Cambridge maintains critical mass as a regional service center. Its economy diversity sets it apart from Ocean City's tourism mono-culture and Salisbury's retail dominance, with both port facilities and tourism assets offering resilience across multiple sectors.

Cambridge is directly affected by the shift toward value-added agricultural processing (creating opportunities for port-served food industries), the growth of retirement migration)driving service economy growth but pressuring affordability), and the rise of remote work)opening new potential to attract professionals seeking authentic small-town living).

Competitive Analysis of Regional Communities

Cambridge's competitive position is defined by how it differs from nearby communities:

1. Ocean City: Dominates mass tourism but at the cost of year-round community character. Cambridge should position itself as the authentic alternative, though it must address its lack of youth and family activities to compete effectively.
2. Salisbury: Serves as the region's retail, education, and healthcare hub. Rather than compete, Cambridge can complete Salisbury by focusing on niches like maritime commerce, waterfront tourism, and small-town authenticity.
3. Easton: Attracts wealthy retirees and second-home owners. Cambridge is better suited to middle-market retirees and remote workers seeking affordability and authenticity, while drawing lessons from Easton's arts community.
4. St. Michaels: Offers boutique, high-cost tourism with limited capacity. Cambridge can provide a more accessible experience, leveraging its working waterfront while adding family-friendly amenities St. Michaels currently provides.
5. Annapolis: Anchored by government, the Naval Academy, and sailing culture. Cambridge cannot replicate this scale but can emphasize its maritime heritage as a less congested, more affordable alternative, while learning from Annapolis's year-round event programming.

Market Position Assessment

Cambridge holds a distinctive mix of assets unmatched on the Eastern Shore: deep water port, opportunity zone designation, National Wildlife Refuge, Hyatt resort, and an intact historic downtown. These advantages position to the city to compete in unique market niches rather than in over-saturated regional sectors. However, fragmented efforts and ack of coordination between tourism promotion, major anchors like the Hyatt, maritime commerce, and Opportunity zone marketing have prevented Cambridge from fully leveraging these strengths or establishing a clear market identity.

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Creating Multiple Interlinked Centers of Economic Activity

Cambridge's economic approach has relied too heavily on Race Street as its single commercial corridor. Long-term resilience requires multiple hubs that serve different, circulate residents and visitors, and broaden economic benefits. A multi-hub strategy distributes activity, reduces seasonal vulnerability, and provides diverse experiences that encourage exploration beyond a single destination. The plan envisions four complementary centers:

- Downtown/ Race Street Hub: Historic commercial core with dining, retail, and entertainment. Youth components should include maker spaces, teen gaming areas, and after-school programming integrated into historic buildings. Evening activities for families could include outdoor movie nights and seasonal festivals in public spaces.
- Waterfront Development Hub: Mixed-use development combining maritime commerce visibility with recreational and commercial activities. This hub requires extensive family infrastructure including waterfront playgrounds with maritime themes, boat building workshops for youth, fishing piers accessible to children, and covered pavilions for family events during inclement weather.
- Agricultural Heritage and Nature Conservation Hub: Celebrates Eastern Shore farming and natural assets with a permanent market, commercial kitchen, and event spaces. Programming could include school gardens, cooking classes, 4-H, harvest festivals, and connections to Blackwater Refuge and eco-tourism.
- Pine Street/Neighborhood Hub: Revitalized neighborhood district with services, creative businesses, and community gathering spaces. Should feature youth recreation, technology access, and flexible venues for family and after-school activities.

Each hub must integrate youth and family amenities as core features, not just afterthoughts; a priority identified in the public charrette. Cross-hub connectivity through walkable streets, bike paths, and seasonal shuttles will allow these centers to function as a cohesive network, marketed as complementary experiences within Cambridge's broader story.

Strategies for Addressing Community Concerns

To address these concerns, Cambridge's strategy builds on its unique assets, clear positioning, and three economic pillars, while adding targeted actions to improve competitiveness and community benefits.

Strategic Assets and Competitive Advantages

Deep Water Port Infrastructure and Capacity: Cambridge's port is its most distinctive economic asset, with a maintained depth of 25 feet, a 400-foot turning basin, and 1,000 feet of serviceable bulkhead. As the only deep-water port between Baltimore and Norfolk, it provides infrastructure that becomes increasingly valuable as supply chains regionalize and climate impacts reduce the reliability of shallow-draft ports. Over 30 acres of adjacent land offer rare expansion capacity, enabling growth in maritime commerce and specialized functions such as offshore wind support, aquaculture operations, and boatbuilding. While dredging, bulkhead expansion, and potential rail restoration require substantial investment these improvement are achievable through federal and local partnerships.

Opportunity Zone Designation and Benefits:

Cambridge's Opportunity Zone, covering downtown, the port district, and adjacent industrial lands, remains an underutilized tool for attracting patient capital. Federal tax benefits, including deferred or eliminated capital gains, provide compelling incentives, especially for long-term investors. Cambridge's zone is especially competitive given its combination of maritime infrastructure, historic districts, and proximity to Blackwater Refuge.

The technical benefits of Opportunity Zone investment are compelling for patient capital. Investors can defer capital gains taxes until 2026 by investing gains in Qualified Opportunity Funds. If investments are held for five years, the basis increases by 10%; if held for seven years, the basis increases by 15%. Most powerfully, if investments are held for ten years, appreciation on the Opportunity Zone investment itself is tax-free. For investors with significant capital gains, these benefits can effectively reduce investment costs by 30-40%.

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Marketing Cambridge's Opportunity Zone requires a sophisticated approach targeting appropriate investors. Family offices and high-net-worth individuals with significant capital gains from stock sales or business exits represent prime targets. Real estate investment funds focused on secondary markets and value-add opportunities should find Cambridge compelling.

Historic Downtown and Preservation Assets

Cambridge's historic downtown, with over 600 contributing structures, represents an irreplaceable cultural and economic asset. Preservation supports property values and business attraction, but Race Street's vacant storefronts highlight the need for innovative retail concepts. Success stories like RAR Brewing demonstrate how authentic business can thrive year-round.

- Harriet Tubman and Underground Railroad Heritage: Cambridge holds international significance through Tubman's life and the Underground Railroad. Despite strong assets, the Museum and Educational Center, mural, statue, and markers see limited visitor capture. Improved wayfinding, packaged experiences, and marketing partnerships with the National Park Service would increase tourism.
- The Pine Street Historic District: As one of the most historically significant African American neighborhoods in the region, Pine Street's legacy—including its role in the Chitlin' Circuit—is a vital cultural asset that should be elevated in preservation and tourism strategies. Integrating storytelling, tours, and partnerships with local cultural organizations would support heritage-driven revitalization.
- The Hyatt Resort: The Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay is a major tourism anchor for expanded maritime heritage programming, leveraging the working waterfront to create a "living museum."
- Richardson Maritime Museum: This underutilized resource could serve as an anchor for expanded maritime heritage programming, leveraging the working waterfront to create a "living museum."
- Event Programming and the Arts: Festivals, the Jazz Festival, and Eagleman Triathlon generate visitation, but more family-oriented programming is needed. The arts community is a distinctive strength that should be nurtured through workspace programming and marketing integration.

Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge Partnership

Blackwater Refuge attracts more than 85,00 annual visitors, positioning Cambridge as a gateway to one of the East Coast's premier natural destinations. Refuge visitors represent high-value eco-tourists, yet many bypass Cambridge entirely. Coordinated marketing, shuttle services, packaged tours, and eco-tourism events could significantly increase local economic impact. Expanded partnerships with the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service could also support conservation research, education programs, and conferences linked to Cambridge's identity.

Transportation Connectivity: Cambridge's location along U.S. 50 provides direct access to the Baltimore-Washington metro area within 90 minutes and supports both tourism and commerce. Its combination of port and highway access offers unique inter-modal opportunities and avoids the congestion of larger metropolitan ports. However, challenges remain: limited interstate access, truck traffic conflicts with neighborhoods, and gaps in pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. Addressing these issues is critical to supporting both commercial competitiveness and quality of life.

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Primary Economic Pillars

Pillar 1: Maritime Commerce and Manufacturing

Maritime commerce is Cambridge's most defensible advantage, serving industries that require direct water access. Target sectors include boat building and repair, seafood processing, and specialty agricultural exports. Emerging opportunities in offshore wind support could transform Cambridge's maritime economy. As offshore wind development accelerates along the Atlantic Coast, ports will be needed for component staging, vessel support, and maintenance operations. Cambridge's location relative to planned wind lease areas provides competitive advantages. Early positioning for this industry could establish Cambridge as an essential facility for decades of development. The focus is on higher-wage, skilled positions and quality businesses that depend on Cambridge's assets, while ensuring environmental and design standards protect both water quality and the city's waterfront character.

Pillar 2: Heritage and Experience Tourism

Tourism must highlight Cambridge's authentic character rather than replicate resort destinations. Key narratives include Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad, maritime traditions, and ecological heritage tied to Blackwater Refuge. These assets position Cambridge for experiential travel that blends cultural, historic, and natural engagement, skip-jack sailing, culinary experiences, guided tours, and eco-tourism. Investments should balance visitor amenities with resident quality of life, emphasizing walkable waterfront, boutique lodging, and local dining that reinforce authenticity.

Pillar 3: Strategic Investment Attraction

Cambridge's Opportunity Zone provides a foundation for long-term reinvestment, but the city must expand beyond this single tool. Strategic investment attraction should focus on strengthening partnerships between the public and private sectors to advance innovation, infrastructure, and entrepreneurship. Incentives and streamlined review processes should target catalytic projects that enhance workforce opportunities, expand housing options, and activate underutilized properties.

Without local incentives, Cambridge competes at a disadvantage, layered federal, state, and local benefits must be developed to remain competitive.

Tourism-Maritime Synergy

Cambridge's greatest opportunity lies in linking its two strength, maritime commerce and heritage tourism. Carefully designed waterfront access. Interpretive programs, festivals, and career pathways can integrate both sectors while maintaining safety and authenticity. Managing these interactions ensures that economic growth reinforces, rather than displaces, the city's identity.

Local Economic Incentive Gap

While Cambridge's Opportunity Zone offers one pathway for reinvestment, additional local programs are needed to stay competitive. The City should explore the creation of targeted tax abatements, façade improvement grants, or revolving loan funds to encourage private reinvestment. Developing locally driven incentives can fill funding gaps left by state and federal programs and ensure that growth aligns with community priorities such as resiliency, heritage preservation, and equitable economic opportunity.

Implementation Framework

Economic development must create a vibrant, balanced, and sustainable community. For Cambridge, this means raising the city's profile, attracting log-term capital investments, and fostering innovation. While the city's physical assets, its waterfront, history, Main Street, and dining are important, they must be paired with a cohesive and well-targeted economic message. Cambridge should focus on building and marketing its key assets in a structured, results-oriented way, aligned with state, regional, and local trends. Insights from the charrette and site visits provide the foundation for an implementation plan that builds delivery capacity and a strong economic brand benefiting residents, visitors, and businesses alike.

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Figure 12.1: Existing Conditions

Lack of sidewalks and limited shade make walking uncomfortable.

Buildings are set far back, reducing the sense of enclosure and street activity. Lack of street lighting and crosswalks diminish pedestrian safety at night.

Auto-oriented driveways and curbs interrupt pedestrian flow.

Underutilized lots and single-use parcels limit neighborhood vibrancy. Minimal landscaping and tree canopy also create a harsh, uninviting streetscape.

Meteor Avenue: Neighborhood Connector

A number of key intersections and local streets within Cambridge, such as Meteor Avenue, offer strong opportunities to demonstrate context-sensitive infill and neighborhood-scale mixed-use redevelopment. This corridor connects established residential neighborhoods with employment and retail areas, making it a strategic location to introduce walkable, small-scale, and street-oriented development.

In many of Cambridge's older neighborhoods, auto-oriented layouts, large setbacks, and disconnected sidewalks have limited walkability and reduced opportunities for local business activation. As these areas mature, public realm upgrades and form-based design principles can help guide future private investment toward a more complete, cohesive urban form.

Future Vision

Meteor Avenue is envisioned as a walkable, mixed-use corridor linking Cambridge's historic neighborhoods to emerging centers of activity. New development should emphasize street-oriented design, active frontages, and tree-lined sidewalks that create a comfortable, people-focused environment.

Adaptive reuse of existing buildings and incremental infill, such as townhomes, small apartments, or corner cafés, can introduce new housing options and local amenities while preserving neighborhood character. Parking should be placed to the rear or shared between sites to support a continuous streetscape.

Public realm investments in lighting, landscaping, and crossings will enhance safety and accessibility, gradually transforming Meteor Avenue into a vibrant community corridor that blends residential life, local business, and walkable design.

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Figure 12.2: Small Initial Steps- Tactical urbanism measures such as pop-up parks and green space.

Figure 12.3: Gradual Evolution- Introducing infill buildings and enhanced public space

Figure 12.4: Continued Growth- Expanding mixed-use and housing options

Figure 12.4: Long Term Vision- A complete neighborhood core

Figure 12.5: A re-imagined sense of place

A: Mixed-use infill with active frontages

B: Street trees unify the corridor

C: Connected sidewalks and crosswalks

D: Diverse housing types

E: Central greens and public space

F: Street-oriented facades

Create a Community Destination of Meteor Avenue

Redevelopment along Meteor Avenue envisions a shift from vacant, underutilized land to a vibrant, walkable neighborhood hub. By introducing mixed-use buildings, active street-level spaces, and public plazas, the corridor becomes a destination for residents and visitors alike.

This transformation emphasizes pedestrian comfort and social life, providing shaded outdoor dining areas, wide sidewalks, and a central gathering space framed by human-scaled architecture. The result is a welcoming environment that supports local businesses and fosters daily interaction.

A mix of housing, retail, and civic uses ensures activity throughout the day and into the evening, while the addition of street trees, lighting, and connected walkways enhances safety and accessibility. Together, these elements redefine Meteor Avenue as a complete street and community destination where people can live, shop , and gather within a short walk of home.

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Figure 12.7: After

Future Vision

Redevelopment along Meteor Avenue envisions a transformation from vacant and underutilized land into a vibrant, mixed-use neighborhood corridor that supports both daily life and community gathering. A mix of residential, retail, and civic uses will bring new energy to the area while reinforcing Cambridge's small-town character and sense of place.

New buildings should be street-oriented, featuring active ground floors, shaded sidewalks, and human-scaled design that invites people to walk, shop, and gather. Outdoor dining areas, plazas, and small public spaces will encourage social interaction and create focal points for community life.

Incremental infill and adaptive reuse of existing structures will introduce new housing options and amenities while preserving the area's unique identity. Public investments in landscaping, lighting, and pedestrian crossings will enhance comfort, safety, and connectivity.

Over time, Meteor Avenue will evolve into a complete neighborhood connector—a place where residents can live, work, and enjoy local businesses all within a short walk, strengthening the broader network of connected and walkable streets in Cambridge.

Figure 12.6: Before

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Goal 12-1: Maximize deep water port competitive advantage

Objective 12-1.1

Increase port utilization by 50% capacity within 10 years through proactive recruitment of port-dependent businesses and expansion of existing maritime operations

Policy 12-1.1.1: Port recruitment

Proactively recruit 2–3 significant maritime businesses, including boat builders needing launch access, processors requiring refrigerated storage, and offshore wind companies seeking staging areas.

Policy 12-1.1.2: Cluster expansion support

Support boatyard expansion with infrastructure for large yacht servicing and crane capacity to strengthen Cambridge's position in maritime repair and construction.

Policy 12-1.1.3: Commerce priority

All economic development decisions affecting the port shall prioritize maritime commerce viability over competing uses.

Objective 12-1.2

Complete strategic port infrastructure improvements by 2027 that enhance competitiveness without speculative overbuilding

Policy 12-1.2.1: Infrastructure master plan

Complete a comprehensive Port Infrastructure Assessment and Master Plan with maritime engineering consultants to evaluate current conditions, capacity, and phased investments.

Policy 12-1.2.2: Federal partnership

Coordinate dredging schedules with the Army Corps of Engineers to maintain and potentially increase channel depth.

Policy 12-1.2.3: Phased investments

Implement Phase 1 improvements (maintaining channel depth and rehabilitating bulkheads), followed by Phase 2 (new berthing space, expanded cargo handling areas, and yacht service facilities).

Policy 12-1.2.4: Industrial land protection

Maintain adequate industrial land supply for maritime businesses and prevent residential encroachment near the port.

Objective 12-1.3

Establish Cambridge as the preferred port for the emerging offshore wind industry by 2028 through targeted infrastructure development and positioning

Policy 12-1.3.1: Offshore wind readiness

Develop infrastructure and partnerships to position Cambridge as the closest deep-water port to planned wind lease areas with space for staging, assembly, and maintenance.

Policy 12-1.3.2: Renewable energy cluster

Support development of a dedicated cluster for offshore wind, tidal energy, and marine technology, combining manufacturing, R&D, and trades.

Policy 12-1.3.3: Long term federal and regional coordination

Align with federal and state partners on funding and industry recruitment to secure Cambridge's role in offshore wind supply chains for decades.

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Goal 12-2: Develop an authentic maritime economy

Objective 12-2.1

Double annual visitor spending within five years through longer stays and higher per-visitor expenditure

Policy 12-2.1.1: Tourism branding and identity

Build a maritime brand identity kit including logos, signage, and visitor wayfinding that reinforces Cambridge's working waterfront character.

Policy 12-2.1.2: Signature visitor experiences

Develop and promote 3–4 signature attractions (skip jack sailing, waterman-for-a-day, culinary tours, port tours) that lengthen stays and increase per-visitor spending.

Policy 12-2.1.3: Retail and business incubation

Launch the Race Street Revitalization Initiative by providing temporary rent subsidies, façade improvement support, and incubator programs for creative retail concepts.

Objective 12-2.2

Achieve 60% hotel occupancy year-round by 2030, reducing seasonal variation from the current 80% summer/ 35% winter pattern

Policy 12-2.2.1: Winter programming

Create winter attractions such as maritime festivals, indoor exhibits, holiday markets, and coordinated winter event strategies to extend visitor demand.

Policy 12-2.2.2: Lodging diversity

Promote boutique hotel development and partnerships with existing resorts to expand lodging options that complement downtown character.

Policy 12-2.2.3: Family and youth programming

Attract a family entertainment complex and establish partnerships with schools/youth organizations to address gaps in family-oriented recreation.

Objective 12-2.3

Create a nationally recognized maritime heritage tourism destination by 2035 that distinguishes Cambridge from other Eastern Shore destinations

Policy 12-2.3.1: Maritime heritage integration

Strengthen partnerships with the Richardson Maritime Museum and local watermen to create living heritage experiences, workshops, and educational programs.

Policy 12-2.3.2: Harriet Tubman heritage promotion

Expand interpretation and wayfinding for Harriet Tubman and Underground Railroad heritage sites, linking them to regional tourism and National Park Service marketing.

Policy 12-2.3.3: Festival and cultural expansion

Launch 3–4 new signature festivals tied to agricultural heritage, maritime culture, and local food, while expanding the Pine Street Jazz Festival to national recognition.

Policy 12-2.3.4: Agricultural tourism integration

Create formal linkages between local farms and restaurants, festivals, and culinary events to showcase Eastern Shore food heritage.

Policy 12-2.3.5: Innovation and training center

Establish a Maritime Innovation and Training Center in partnership with the Richardson Maritime Museum that combines workforce training, incubation, and visitor experiences.

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Goal 12-3: Leverage opportunity zone status for strategic investments

Objective 12-3.1

Facilitate $50 million in Opportunity Zone investment by 2030 that aligns with the maritime-tourism strategy and community development goals

Policy 12-3.1.1: Integrated investment strategy

All Opportunity Zone projects shall align with the comprehensive plan and reinforce Cambridge's maritime-tourism synergy, community character, and economic competitiveness.

Policy 12-3.1.2: Branding and promotion

Finalize a multi-channel branding strategy (welcome signage, banners, digital marketing, influencer outreach) to promote Cambridge as an Opportunity Zone investment destination.

Policy 12-3.1.3: Digital investment platform

Launch the "Invest Cambridge" online portal showcasing properties, business opportunities, incentive programs, and success stories to attract high-value investors.

Policy 12-3.1.4: Targeted project facilitation

Prioritize mixed-use development incorporating retail, workforce housing, and adaptive reuse of historic properties to create catalytic early wins.

Objective 12-3.2

Ensure local participation in Opportunity Zone (OZ) benefits through capacity building and technical assistance programs

Policy 12-3.2.1: Technical support for local owners

Provide property owners with technical assistance to package projects for Opportunity Zone investment, including financial structuring and historic tax credit alignment.

Policy 12-3.2.2: Local partnership requirements

Require at least 30% of OZ projects to include local partners, ensuring benefits remain in the community and support local job creation.

Policy 12-3.2.3: Community benefit agreements

Develop agreements for large OZ projects that guarantee public amenities, affordable housing, or workforce training components.

Policy 12-3.2.4: Investor-local forums

Host regular investor forums connecting national fund managers with local businesses and developers, creating direct pipelines for investment.

Objective 12-3.3

Establish Cambridge as a model for strategic Opportunity Zone utilization that balances investment attraction with community benefits

Policy 12-3.3.1: Climate-resilient design standards

Require all OZ projects to incorporate resilience measures (elevated structures, green infrastructure, flood protection) to ensure long-term viability.

Policy 12-3.3.2: Monitoring and accountability

Implement a performance monitoring system tracking OZ project outcomes, including community benefits, job creation, housing affordability, and historic preservation.

Policy 12-3.3.3: Heritage and place-based integration

Promote OZ investments that rehabilitate historic structures, enhance downtown vitality, and integrate with Cambridge's cultural and environmental assets.

Policy 12-3.3.4: National model positioning

Market Cambridge as a national best-practice example in OZ utilization through conferences, case studies, and federal/state partnerships.

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Objective 12-3.4	Secure renewal of Cambridge's Opportunity Zone designation during the 2026–2027 federal redesignation cycle by coordinating state and federal advocacy, data preparation, and stakeholder engagement

Policy 12-3.4.1: State partnership for redesignation

Collaborate proactively with the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development to ensure Cambridge's census tract(s) are included in the State's 2026 Opportunity Zone nomination package, based on updated eligibility metrics and economic need.

Policy 12-3.4.2: Federal engagement strategy

Establish regular communication with the U.S. Department of Treasury and federal representatives to monitor redesignation guidance, advocate for inclusion of Cambridge's tracts, and ensure city projects align with federal Opportunity Zone objectives.

Policy 12-3.4.3: Eligibility data preparation

Prepare and maintain an updated demographic, income, and poverty dataset demonstrating Cambridge's continued eligibility under the revised federal OZ criteria, submitting documentation to state officials ahead of the July 2026 nomination deadline.

Policy 12-3.4.4: Regional coalition building

Coordinate with local institutions, regional partners, property owners, and investors to build a unified case for Cambridge's ongoing Opportunity Zone designation and communicate the demonstrated local economic benefits.

Policy 12-3.4.5: Public advocacy and testimony

Provide formal testimony, letters of support, and data packages to the State of Maryland during the re designation review to articulate the importance of Opportunity Zone tools to Cambridge's port development, downtown revitalization, and community investment goals.

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Goal 12-4: Build the City's Economic Development Implementation Capacity

Objective 12-4.1 Establish dedicated economic development leadership and staffing by 2025

Policy 12-4.1.1: Hire full-time leadership
Create and fund a permanent Economic Development Director position to coordinate initiatives, pursue grants, and facilitate investments.

Policy 12-4.1.2: Legislative support
Partner with the State legislature to secure funding that sustains economic development staffing and resources.

Policy 12-4.1.3: Internal coordination
Ensure staff provide consistent reporting and integration across city departments to align economic development with broader planning goals.

Objective 12-4.2 Enhance systemic business recruitment and retention capabilities

Policy 12-4.2.1: Recruitment protocols
Establish clear business recruitment and retention procedures, including annual outreach to priority industries.

Policy 12-4.2.2: Business retention program
Develop formal protocols for engaging with existing businesses to identify challenges, opportunities, and expansion potential.

Policy 12-4.2.3: Investor support
Provide technical assistance and forums for local property owners and entrepreneurs to encourage reinvestment in Cambridge.

Objective 12-4.3 Develop strategic partnerships with regional, state, and federal organizations

Policy 12-4.3.1: State and federal alignment
Maintain strong partnerships with the Maryland Department of Commerce, U.S. Economic Development Administration, and other agencies to maximize available funding and technical support.

Policy 12-4.3.2: Regional collaboration
Partner with neighboring communities and institutions, such as Chesapeake College, to create pipelines for workforce development and economic initiatives.

Policy 12-4.3.3: Youth training programs
Develop a Youth Maritime Career Pipeline linking local high schools and colleges to maritime and manufacturing trades, addressing high youth unemployment.

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Objective 12-4.4	Develop competitive local economic development incentives that complement state and federal programs while maintaining fiscal responsibility

Policy 12-4.4.1: Incentive toolkit

Establish locally controlled economic development incentives such as targeted fee waivers, façade improvement grants, and expedited permitting.

Policy 12-4.4.2: Financing mechanisms

Implement tax increment financing capabilities for strategic development projects that support long-term growth.

Policy 12-4.4.3: Program evaluation

Regularly monitor and adjust incentive programs to ensure they are competitive, fiscally sustainable, and achieving desired recruitment and retention outcomes.

Policy 12-4.4.4: Best practices

Research and adopt best practices from peer communities to strengthen Cambridge's position against competing jurisdictions.

Goal 12-5: Build the City's Economic Development Implementation Capacity

Objective 12-5.1	Maintain public transparency and accountability for all Comprehensive Plan implementation through real-time progress tracking

Policy 12-5.1.1: Implementation website

Create and maintain a public-facing Comprehensive Plan Implementation website that displays progress on all economic development initiatives, including timelines, responsible parties, and key performance indicators.

Policy 12-5.1.2: Performance tracking and reporting

Track measurable progress on metrics such as job creation, housing quality, tourism spending, and Opportunity Zone investments, publishing quarterly updates for community awareness.

Policy 12-5.1.3: Interdepartmental coordination

Require all departments to report implementation progress and coordinate initiatives to ensure alignment across land use, housing, transportation, and sustainability elements.

Policy 12-5.1.4: Transparent budget linkage

Connect City budget decisions to implementation priorities outlined in the Comprehensive Plan, ensuring funding aligns with adopted strategies.

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Objective 12-5.2

Ensure community stakeholder engagement throughout the implementation process

Policy 12-5.2.1: Advisory committees

Establish standing advisory committees with diverse community representation to provide feedback and guide implementation priorities.

Policy 12-5.2.2: Regular engagement forums

Hold quarterly community forums to discuss plan progress, upcoming initiatives, and to collect input on economic development and land use priorities.

Policy 12-5.2.3: Public access to data

Provide open data portals and dashboards that allow residents to review key performance indicators and submit public comments directly.

Policy 12-5.2.4: Educational outreach

Conduct community workshops, town halls, and youth engagement sessions to ensure residents understand the Plan's role and have a meaningful voice in shaping implementation.

Objective 12-5.3

Addressing housing quality and infrastructure deficiencies that undermine economic competitiveness

Policy 12-5.3.1: Real estate and inspection system

Establish a coordinated housing inspection and property maintenance program to identify code violations, prioritize repairs, and ensure safe and habitable living conditions across neighborhoods.

Policy 12-5.3.2: Housing quality enforcement

Strengthen code enforcement capacity and inter-departmental coordination to address blighted or neglected properties, streamline enforcement actions, and support responsible ownership.

Policy 12-5.3.4: Public disclosure of quality ratings

Create an online portal showing housing quality indicators and rehabilitation progress to promote transparency and accountability among property owners and tenants.

Policy 12-5.3.5: Infrastructure improvement alignment

Coordinate infrastructure investments—such as stormwater, broadband, and transportation upgrades—with neighborhood revitalization and housing rehabilitation to enhance community-wide competitiveness.

Objective 12-5.4

Establish Cambridge as a model for transparent, community-engaged comprehensive plan implementation

Policy 12-5.4.1: Integrated waterfront recreation network

Develop a connected system of public walkways, parks, and recreation facilities along the waterfront to enhance livability and tourism.

Policy 12-5.4.2: Rehabilitation of Substandard Housing Units

Support the rehabilitation of at least 200 substandard housing units through public-private partnerships while maintaining affordability.

Policy 12-5.4.3:Housing rehabilitation partnerships

Conduct annual evaluations to measure resident satisfaction, income growth, housing quality, and young adult retention rates, adjusting policies as needed.

Policy 12-5.3.4: Transparency in Performance Reporting

Position Cambridge as a model community for transparent, equitable, and performance-based comprehensive plan implementation through state and regional partnerships.

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13: Health

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A healthy community is one where people can live, work, and age in environments that support physical, mental, and social wellbeing. In Cambridge, health outcomes are shaped not only by access to medical care, but by the ever day conditions of life, the quality of housing, access to fresh foods, safe streets, green spaces, employment, and social connections. This element recognizes that health is inseparable from land use, transportation, environment, and equity. Creating a healthier Cambridge means addressing barriers while building places that foster active living, access to care, and community resilience.

Current Conditions

Cambridge's health profile reflects both strengths and challenges common across small, historic waterfront communities. Dorchester County ranks below the Maryland average on several health indicators, including rates of chronic disease, obesity, and access to primary care. Socioeconomic disparities and transportation barrier limit consistent access to healthcare, particularly among owner-income residents and older adults.

The City's layout influences health in tangible ways. Walkable neighborhoods, waterfront parks, and proximity to schools encourage active lifestyles, while food deserts, aging housing stock, and limited safe cycling routes constraint healthy choices. Flooding and storm events can disrupt healthcare access, compromise air quality, and impact mental wellbeing.

However, the community's strong social fabric, local nonprofits, and health-focused organizations such as Choptank Community Health provide a foundation for building a more resilient, equitable health system.

Community Concerns

Cambridge is not defined solely by access to doctors or hospitals, but by how people experience their neighborhoods day to day, how they move, breathe, eat, and connect. The City's health challenges are intertwined with the built environment, social equity, and resilience. Several concerns have emerged linking the built environment and health outcomes.

Access to Healthy Services and Preventive Care:

Residents expressed concern about the limited availability and geographic concentration of health services. Many primary care, dental, and behavioral health facilities are located near downtown or beyond City limits, making access difficult for residents without reliable transportation. While Choptank Community Health and UM Shore Regional Health provide essential services, gaps remain in preventive care, urgent care, and mobile health outreach, especially for low-income families, seniors, and residents.

Food Access and Nutrition Disparities:

Although Cambridge is located within an agricultural region, certain neighborhoods, particularly those outside the downtown core, have limited proximity to full service grocery stores and affordable fresh food options. Residents and local organizations have identified food access as an ongoing community challenge, particularly for households without vehicles.

Safe and Active Mobility:

Health and safety are closely tied to mobility in Cambridge. Residents consistently cited the lack of continuous sidewalks, limited bike infrastructure, and unsafe crossings as barriers to physical activity. Parents worry about children walking or biking to school, and many older residents avoid walking due to poor lighting and uneven pavements. Improved pedestrian and cyclist connectivity would not only promote fitness but also support social interaction and neighborhood pride. Additionally, promoting waking as a foundation of public health and community vitality is vital. Expanding sidewalks, crosswalks, and shaded walking routes that connect neighborhoods to schools, parks and essential services.

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Housing Quality and Environmental Health:

The City's aging housing stock contributes to preventable health risks. Moisture intrusion, mold, pests, and inefficient insulation create unhealthy indoor air conditions, particularly in older rental properties. Flooding and drainage issues compound these risks in low-lying areas. Healthy home programs that address safety, comfort, and long-term resilience, linking housing rehabilitation to public health outcomes are vital.

Climate Related Health Vulnerabilities:

Flooding, storm events, and extreme heat increasingly affect the health and well-being of Cambridge residents. Repeated flooding causes physical damage, stress, and displacement, while heat waves intensity respiratory conditions and energy burdens. Vulnerable populations, including the elderly, those without air conditions, and low income households, face heighten risks. The community recognized that climate adaptation must also be a public health strategy.

Mental Health, Social Isolation, and Community Cohesion:

Connection, belonging, and opportunities are essential for components of community health. Social isolation, particularly among youth, seniors, and those with limited mobility, can affect both mental and physical wellbeing. Public gathering spaces such as parks, libraries, recreation centers, and cultural venues are viewed as vital for fostering inclusion and a sense of shared identity. Strengthening opportunities for community participation, creative expression, and intergenerational engagement was broadly seen as a pathway to improving quality of life and emotional resilience.

Health Equity and the Social Determinants of Wellbeing:

Underlying all these concerns is a broader recognition that heath outcomes are shaped by socioeconomic conditions, income, education, housing, environment, and race. Historic disinvestment in certain neighborhoods, particularly those with higher proportions of minority and low-income residents has produce uneven access to resources that support heath. Residents and stakeholders emphasized the importance of addressing these structural inequities to ensure that all Cambridge residents can live healthy, fulfilling lives.

Strategies for Addressing Community Concerns

Improving community heath in Cambridge requires a coordinated approach that link land use, transportation, housing, environmental resilience, and social infrastructure. The following strategies respond directly to community-identified concerns and establish a framework for partnerships between the City, health agencies, and local organizations.

1. Strengthen Access to Health Services and Preventive Care

- Support the expansion of neighborhood-based and mobile health services to reduce transportation barrier and improve access for residents without reliable vehicles.
- Partner with Choptank Community Health, UM Shore Regional Health, and the Dorchester County Health Department to co-locate healthcare and social services in community hubs, schools, and downtown civic buildings.
- Encourage coordination between public heath and emergency management to ensure health services remain accessible during flooding or extreme weather events.
- Expand preventative health initiatives, such as wellness fairs, clinics, and behavioral health outreach, through City-County partnerships.

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2. Promote Safe, Active, and Connected Mobility

- Integrate health and safety goals into the City's complete streets and mobility goals implementation to ensure all residents, especially children, seniors, and individuals with disabilities can walk and bike safely.
- Prioritize sidewalk infill, crosswalk improvements, traffic calming, and street lighting in residential areas, inking neighborhoods to schools, parks, and downtown.
- Encourage walking and biking as daily health activities through public campaigns and partnerships with schools, recreational programs, and local employers.
- Enhance accessibility by ensuring ADA-compliant design and expanding pedestrian amenities such as benches, trees, and shade.

3. Improve Food Access and Nutrition Equity

- Encourage grocery and fresh-food retail development in underserved areas through zoning flexibility, tax incentives, or public-private partnerships.
- Support farmers markets, community gardens, and mobile produce vendors that increase access to affordable, healthy foods.
- Collaborate with the Dorchester County Health Department, local nonprofits, and schools to promote nutrition education and healthy cooking initiatives.
- Integrate food access considerations into redevelopment and neighborhood planning efforts, particularly in areas identified as low-access zones.

4. Advance Healthy and Resilient Housing

- Expand participation in home rehabilitation programs addressing concerns such energy efficiency, insulation, ventilation, particularly for low and moderate income households.
- Partner with state housing and weatherization programs to ensure healthy home retrofits align with flood resilience and environmental sustainability goals.
- Incorporate healthy housing guidelines into redevelopment codes and incentivize developers to meet standards for air quality, natural light, and energy performance.
- Prioritize reinvestment in neighborhoods that have experienced historic disinvestment, such as the Pine Street corridor, ensuring equitable access to housing resources and infrastructure upgrades.

5. Integrate Climate and Heath Planning

- Coordinate health and resilience planning to identity populations most vulnerable to heat exposure, flooding, and poor air quality.
- Increase tree canopy and green infrastructure to reduce heat stress, improve air quality, and manage stormwater in vulnerable neighborhoods.
- Establish emergency preparedness protocols for extreme heat and flooding events that include targeted outreach to seniors, medically fragile residents, and households without access to cooling.
- Collaborate with state agencies and universities to monitor climate-related health risks and integrate findings into resilience policies.

6. Foster Community Cohesion and Social Wellbeing

- Invest in public gathering spaces, parks, community centers, and waterfront areas that encourage social interaction, intergenerational connection, and cultural expression.
- Support community-led programs and creative initiatives, such as arts events, health fairs, and neighborhood cleanups, that build relationships and local pride.
- Encourage partnerships to provide youth mentorship, senior programs, and volunteer networks for addressing isolation.
- Promote inclusive public spaces and events that reflect Cambridge's cultural diversity and strengthen the shared sense of belonging among residents.

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Southside Crossing Town Center: Healthy, Connected Living

The Southside Crossing Town Center concept, on the following page, envisions a vibrant, walkable neighborhood at the corner of Race Street and the Cambridge Beltway. Adjacent to the 300-home Southside Crossing community, the Town Center would combine residential, retail, restaurant, office, and recreational uses to create a true mixed-use "town" environment. While the 20-acre site is currently zoned for suburban-style commercial development, adopting a form-based code would support a compact layout with tree-lined streets, inviting sidewalks, and public green spaces. A stream along the site's edge would be preserved through low-impact bridge design, ensuring ecological integrity while improving connections. At the center, a Town Square park would provide a social and recreational hub surrounded by neighborhood-scale shops and cafes.

Health and Wellbeing Benefits of Walkable Mixed-Use Communities

Walkable, mixed-use communities like the proposed Southside Crossing Town Center have been shown to deliver broad public health and social benefits:

- Encourages Daily Physical Activity: Compact street networks and pedestrian-friendly design make walking and cycling natural parts of daily routines-reducing risks of obesity, heart disease, and other chronic conditions.
- Improves Mental Health and Social Connections: Public spaces such as parks and plazas foster interaction and belonging, which can reduce stress and loneliness.
- Supports Access to Healthy Food and Services: Residents can walk to grocery stores, restaurants, pharmacies and wellness services, lowering dependence on vehicles and improving nutrition access.
- Reduces Environmental Stressors: Fewer car trips mean less traffic, noise, and air pollution, improving respiratory health and neighborhood quality.
- Promotes Safety and Livability: Streets designed for people, wide sidewalks, shade trees, lighting, and slower traffic, improve safety for all ages and abilities.

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Walkable Design and Health: The Southside Crossing Town Center

The proposed Southside Crossing Town Center represents an opportunity to link health, mobility, and land use through intentional neighborhood design. Located at the corner of Race Street and the Cambridge Beltway, the concept reimagines a currently underdeveloped area into a walkable, mixed-use district where residents can live, shop, and recreate without depending solely on a car.

By connecting over 300 new townhomes to neighborhood-scale retail, services, and a central Town Square park, the Town Center would demonstrate how thoughtful planning can improve both daily convenience and long-term health outcomes. The design introduces a compact, pedestrian-oriented street network with shaded sidewalks, plazas, and civic open space, creating natural opportunities for social interaction and physical activity.

Health and Community Benefits of Walkable Neighborhoods

Walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods support healthy communities by integrating movement into daily life. Studies consistently show that residents in walkable communities are more physically active, experience lower rates of chronic disease, and report greater life satisfaction. Walkability also reduces air pollution, improves access to healthy food and services, and fosters social connection, all key components of community wellbeing.

In Cambridge, where many residents rely on cars even for short trips, developments like Southside Crossing Town Center can expand mobility options and make walking the easiest, most enjoyable choice. The proposed Town Square Park, with seating areas and tree canopy, would provide an inclusive public space for recreation, rest, and community events, strengthening both mental health and social cohesion.

Figure 13.2: Existing conditions of the Southside Crossing Town Center

Figure 13.3: Proposed changes to Southside Crossing Town Center

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Design Principles for a Healthy Community

- Compact and Connected: Short blocks, safe crossings, and a continuous sidewalk network that links homes to shops, schools, and green space.
- Safe and Inviting: Street trees, lighting, and traffic calming measures to encourage walking for all ages and abilities.
- Active and Social: Public spaces and civic nodes designed for informal gatherings, exercise, and community programming.
- Accessible and Inclusive: A range of housing types, inclining missing middle and affordable units, integrated into a mixed-use framework.
- Environmentally Resilient: Stormwater features, green infrastructure, and shade trees that reduce flooding, heat, and environmental stressors.

Integrating Health into Future Development

The Southside Crossing Town Center model demonstrates how new growth areas can align with the Health Element of this Plan. By adopting form-based code principles and emphasizing connectivity, Cambridge can promote development patterns that enhance both livability and public health.

Encouraging walkable, mixed-use districts not only supports active lifestyle but also advances the City's broader goals of resilience, economic vitality, and equitable access to community resources.

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Goal 13-1: Design the built environment to support physical activity and safe mobility

Objective 13-1.1 — Integrate active mobility and complete streets design to make walking and biking part of everyday life

Policy 13-1.1.1: Complete streets implementation
Incorporate sidewalks, crosswalks, lighting, and bike lanes into all street improvement projects to promote safe, active transportation.

Policy 13-1.1.2: Safe routes to health
Prioritize infrastructure that connects neighborhoods to clinics, schools, parks, and grocery stores through safe, accessible routes.

Policy 13-1.1.3: Active design principles
Require developments to include trails, seating areas, and pedestrian amenities that promote physical activity and community interaction.

Goal 13-2: Strengthen food access and nutrition equity

Objective 13-2.1 — Increase access to healthy, affordable food options and support local food systems

Policy 13-2.1.1: Healthy retail incentives
Provide zoning flexibility and local incentives for grocery stores, farmers' markets, and small food retailers in underserved areas.

Policy 13-2.1.2: Community gardens and urban agriculture
Encourage community gardens, mobile produce vendors, and local agriculture programs to build neighborhood food security.

Policy 13-2.1.3: Nutrition partnerships
Collaborate with schools and nonprofits to expand nutrition education and healthy meal programs for residents of all ages.

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Goal 13-3: Improve housing quality and environmental health

Objective 13-3.1

Promote healthy, energy-efficient, and climate-resilient homes for all residents

Policy 13-3.1.1: Healthy housing rehabilitation

Expand home repair programs to address ventilation, insulation, and mold remediation for low- and moderate-income households.

Policy 13-3.1.2: Environmental health standards

Incorporate air quality and moisture control requirements into rental inspection and building code updates.

Policy 13-3.1.3: Resilient neighborhood investment

Prioritize housing and infrastructure improvements in neighborhoods with high vulnerability to flooding and heat.

Goal 13-4: Foster mental health, social cohesion, and community wellbeing

Objective 13-4.1

Enhance access to inclusive spaces and programs that promote mental wellness and social connection

Policy 13-4.1.1: Social infrastructure and public space activation

Invest in parks, recreation centers, and civic spaces designed to host community events, art installations, and wellness activities.

Policy 13-4.1.2: Intergenerational and creative programs

Support programs that bring together youth, adults, and seniors through mentorship, arts, and cultural events.

Policy 13-4.1.3: Neighborhood identity and belonging

Encourage events, design initiatives, and storytelling projects that celebrate Cambridge's history and strengthen community pride.

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Goal 13-5: Integrate health and climate resilience planning

Objective 13-5.1	Identify and reduce health risks associated with flooding, heat, and other environmental stressors

Policy 13-5.1.1: Health and climate mapping

Use data to identify populations vulnerable to climate-related health impacts and guide targeted adaptation projects.

Policy 13-5.1.2: Green infrastructure for health

Incorporate rain gardens, shade trees, and permeable pavements to reduce heat stress and improve air quality.

Policy 13-5.1.3: Emergency health coordination

Work with Dorchester County Health Department and emergency services to improve disaster response and community preparedness.

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14: Tactical Urbanism

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Implementing community plans often requires bridging the gap between long-term vision and on-the-ground action. Once a community envisions a future, the next challenge becomes how to test that vision in ways that are quick, visible, and cost-effective. Tactical Urbanism provides a practical framework for testing and refining the ideas that advance Cambridge's planning goals, one step at a time.

This section introduces the concept of "Tactical Urbanism", outlines strategies for success, and highlights how temporary installations can build momentum toward permanent change. By piloting ideas in real space, whether reconfiguring a street, activating an empty lot, or transforming a waterfront corner, Cambridge can engage residents, test improvements, and gather feedback that informs the City's long-term plans.

What is Tactical Urbanism?

Tactical Urbanism refers to small-scale, short-term interventions in the built environment designed to improve neighborhoods and public spaces. These projects test design ideas, materials, or uses before implementing them permanently.

The approach empowers communities to experiment with how streets, parks, and public spaces function, often with modest budgets but meaningful results. Through partnerships among City staff, residents, and organizations, tactical projects can bring life to underused areas, enhance safety, and foster civic pride.

By utilizing short-term, low-cost projects, such as temporary bike lanes, parklets, or public art installation, Cambridge can test new ideas, evaluate their impact, and adjust future capital investments based on real community response.

For Cambridge, Tactical Urbanism represents both a design philosophy and an engagement strategy. It allows the City to demonstrate progress toward its long-range goals while fostering community pride and ownership in the transformation of public spaces.

Tactical Goals

Tactical Urbanism supports several ongoing priorities of the City of Cambridge, including

- Activate Underused Spaces: Transform vacant lots, waterfront edges, and underutilized streets into active community spaces.
- Advance Street Safety and Walkability: Pilot improvements such as curb extensions, protected bike lanes, or enhanced crossings to create safer conditions for all users.
- Foster Civic Engagement: Empower residents to co-create improvements and provide feedback through visible, tangible action. Encourage hands-on participation in planning by involving residents, businesses, and institutions in design, installation, and evaluation.
- Test and Inform Long-Term Investment: Use successful pilots to inform future investment and permanent infrastructure improvements.
- Enhance Economic Vitality: Support downtown activity and local businesses by creating attractive, human-scaled public spaces that invite lingering and exploration.

Strategies for Success

Tactical Urbanism installations are successful when they are intentional, inclusive, and connected to broader community objectives. The following strategies can guide successful implementation in Cambridge.

Tie Each Effort to a Larger Vision: Every project should contribute to long-term planning initiatives such as the Downtown and Waterfront Revitalization strategies, Complete Streets policies, or the Cambridge Main Street program. Aligning short-term actions with enduring goals ensures that tactical projects advance measurable community outcomes.

Demonstrate Good Urbanism:Even temporary improvements should exhibit high-quality design. Pilot projects should prioritize safety, accessibility, aesthetics, and comfort-illustrating the value of human centered urban design and building public support fewer permanent enhancements.

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Know the Audience and Context: Each site presents unique opportunities and constraints. Projects in residential neighborhoods may focus on traffic calming or play spaces, while those in commercial districts may emphasize seating, lighting, and pedestrian amenities. Understanding the needs and habits of local users increases the likelihood of success.

Publicize and Engage: Public awareness is essential. Use of social media, local press, and partnerships with community groups to announce installations, invite participants, and share outcomes is important to engage community. High visibility not only increases engagement but also builds momentum for future projects.

Measure and Adapt Each installation should include a plan for collecting feedback and observing outcomes. Measuring usage, safety improvements, and community satisfaction provides valuable data to guide future design and investment decisions.

Process

Determining how and where to implement tactical projects requires coordination among City departments, community organizations, and residents. The process should be transparent, inclusive, and results-driven.

1. Identify Community Goals and Concerns

- Begin by defining the issues a tactical project seeks to address, such as speeding, limited pedestrian access, or inactive public spaces. Use community workshops, surveys, and site visits to confirm priorities.

2. Determine Tactical Installations

- Select interventions that align with those goals. Options may include parklets, painted curb extensions, temporary bike lanes, or outdoor seating. Adjust design concepts based on feedback and feasibility.

3. Establish a Timeframe

- Determine the projects duration, accounting for seasonal conditions, even schedules, and maintenance needs. Clearly communicate start and end dates to participants and nearby businesses.

4. Acquire Necessary Permits

- Work with City departments to secure approvals for temporary installations in the right-of-way or in public property. The permitting process can also serve as an educational opportunity for future infrastructure planning.

5. Advertise and Build Participation

- Encourage community members, local schools, and businesses to volunteer in the setup or maintenance of installations. Widespread participation strengthens community ownership and ensures diverse perspectives are reflected.

6. Implement and Have Fun

- Execute the project with enthusiasm and flexibility. Not every aspect will go as planned, but each installation provides valuable lessons. Celebrate community participation and highlight visible change, no matter how small.

Figure 14.1: Colorful street furniture and playful design elements create an inviting pedestrian zone that slows traffic, enhances safety, and encourages community interaction in underused public spaces.

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Examples

The following examples illustrate how Tactical Urbanism can be applied to address specific goals within Cambridge.

1. Goal/Concern: Excessive vehicle speeds and safety concerns along Race Street

Potential Tactical Installations: Streets experiencing high vehicle speeds often have overly wide travel lanes or limited pedestrian infrastructure. Tactical installations can help calm traffic and enhance pedestrian safety by visually narrowing lanes and redefinition space for walking and biking,

1. Street Reconfiguration: Introduce curb extensions, planters, or temporary parallel parking to visually narrow lanes and slow traffic
2. Bike Lanes: Install protected, temporary bike lanes connecting downtown to the waterfront to encourage multimodal travel.
3. Pavement Art or Crosswalk Enhancement: Use color and design to define pedestrian zones and enhance visibility.

2. Goal/Concern: Vacant or underutilized public spaces in downtown Cambridge

Potential Tactical Installations: Intersections that prioritize vehicular movement over pedestrian comfort can discourage walking and reduce safety. Tactical design solutions can balance travel modes by tightening curb radii, classifying pedestrian routes, and visually emphasizing crossings.

1. Pop-Up Park: Convert a vacant lot into a temporary public gathering space with seating, shade, and greenery.
2. Public Art Activation: Commission local artists to create murals, sculptures, or interactive displays in empty storefronts.
3. Outdoor Market Pilot: Test a recurring market or festival series to bring activity and foot traffic into key corridors.

Figure 14.2: Dedicated bike lanes and signage help calm traffic, enhance pedestrian safety, and activate underused spaces, creating safer and more vibrant streets throughout Cambridge.

Figure 14.3: Colorful street furniture and creative curb extensions demonstrate how tactical design can calm traffic, encourage pedestrian activity, and transform intersections into inviting community spaces.

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3. Goal/Concern: Underused waterfront areas and limited evening activity

Potential Tactical Installations: Public spaces may feel unsafe or inactive due to a lack of amenities, maintenance, or social activity. Tactical installations can introduce features that attract people, improve visibility, and foster a sense of community ownership.

1. Pop-Up Lighting: Add solar-powered string lights, benches, and landscaping to improve nighttime ambiance.
2. Temporary Event Space: Pilot evening concerts, film nights, or community picnics to explore new programming opportunities.
3. Wayfinding and Signage: Test pedestrian wayfinding signs that guide visitors to public waterfront access points and amenities.

Figure 14.4: Wayfinding signage and clear pedestrian routes improve waterfront visibility, guide visitors to key destinations, and help activate underused public spaces.

Concepts

The following pages proposes a toolkit of ideas that illustrate how Tactical Urbanism can be implemented throughout Cambridge to advance community goals. Each concept provides a low-cost, high-impact opportunity to improve livability, safety, and the quality of public spaces while strengthening local identity and vivid pride.

The intent of these tactical concepts is that they are inexpensive, flexible, and replicable, allowing the City and its partners to test improvements in real conditions and measure their effectiveness before pursuing permanent investment. These approaches can also be coordinated across multiple sites to achieve broader goals related to mobility, economic vitality, public safety through CPTED strategies, and environmental resilience.

The concepts on the following pages demonstrate a variety of tactical installations that can be applied in different contexts, from downtown corridors and residential streets to the waterfront and parks. Each is designed to engage the community, demonstrate good urban design, and inform long-term implementation strategies.

Some interventions may be implemented as community events, either as stand-alone pilots or as part of ongoing initiatives such as Main Street Cambridge programming, Saturday events, and Waterfront activation efforts. The examples provided are intended as models; Cambridge should select and adapt those that best align with specific plan goals and local opportunities.

Figure 14.5: Tactical interventions like outdoor markets and public seating areas can enliven downtown spaces, extending activity into the evening and strengthening community connection.

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Tactical Interventions

Bike Lane Pilot

A Bike Lane Pilot is a temporary installation that allows Cambridge to test bicycle infrastructure, evaluate safety improvements, and promote active transportation before investing in permanent facilities. By reallocating a portion of existing roadway space, this intervention demonstrates how even small changes can transform the way people move through the city.

A pilot may include striping temporary lanes, adding planters or cones to separate cyclists from vehicles, and incorporating signage and pavement markings to indicate the new configuration. These installations can range from a one-day demonstration to several months of testing, depending on community feedback and seasonal conditions.

Beyond infrastructure, a bike lane pilot can also serve as a community event—encouraging residents of all ages to participate in guided rides, bike safety workshops, or "open street" days where certain corridors are closed to vehicle traffic. Events like this can build enthusiasm, provide valuable data, and demonstrate how Complete Streets design principles enhance safety and livability.

Potential corridors for a Cambridge pilot include Race Street, Maryland Avenue, or Glasgow Street, where the City has already prioritized multimodal improvements. Each of these corridors connects key destinations such as the waterfront, downtown, and residential neighborhoods. Bike lane pilots implemented in other cities have often evolved into recurring community events. For example, "open street" programs—known internationally as Ciclovías—invite residents to experience their streets without cars, temporarily transforming them into public spaces for walking, biking, and play. Similar efforts in Cambridge could highlight the city's commitment to sustainable mobility and community wellness.

Materials:

- Paint or thermoplastic striping
- Flexible delinators or planters
- Wayfinding signage
- Temporary bollards
- Bicycle racks
- Educational banners and event tents

Installations

- When planning a pilot, coordinate with the Department of Public Works and Cambridge Police to ensure traffic safety and emergency access. Select a corridor that connects major destinations and can accommodate lane adjustments without significant disruption.
- Temporary striping can remain for several weeks or coincide with local events, such as Waterfront Festivals, when pedestrian and cycling activity is highest. Afterward, collect data on traffic speeds, user volumes, and public perception to determine whether the intervention should become permanent.
- Coordinate with Cambridge Police to identity opportunities to incorporate quick, low-cost CPTED strategies to prioritize public safety within pilot projects.

Figure 14.6: The above image shows how bike lane pilots and community cycling events promote safer streets, encourage active transportation, and highlight Cambridge's commitment to sustainable mobility.

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Pedestrian-Only Streets

Pedestrian-Only Streets allow communities to temporarily transform vehicular corridors into lively, people-focused spaces. In Cambridge, this approach can be used to test how closing a street to traffic impacts safety, walkability, business activity, and community gathering.

These streets can serve as dynamic public venues for markets, art fairs, concerts, or recreational programs, creating an immediate sense of place and belonging. By allocating roadway space to pedestrians, the City can evaluate how design improvements, such as wider sidewalks, street trees, and outdoor dining, could enhance downtown vitality and the public realm.

This tactical intervention is well suited for corridors such as Poplar Street, Race Street, and High Street, where strong retail and pedestrian activity already exist. During the pilot, vehicle traffic is restricted, allowing people to freely walk, shop, and socialize. Nearby businesses can extend seating or displays, and community groups can host temporary performances or installations.

Successful pilots often evolve into recurring community events or inform long-term infrastructure investments. They also offer valuable insight into how the City might redesign streets to balance mobility with livability, supporting Cambridge's broader goals for economic development, tourism, and sustainable transportation. Pilots can also inform long-term investment in maintenance programs to enhance the City's image.

Materials:

- Movable planters or water-filled barriers to close entrances
- Folding chairs, cafe tables, or benches
- Umbrellas or shade tents
- Chalk or paint for temporary street art and games
- String lighting or decorative banners
- Wayfinding and event signage

Installations

- To determine the best location for a pedestrian-only pilot, identify corridors that already attract people on foot and are adjacent to key destinations such as restaurants, shops, or the waterfront. Streets with lower traffic volumes and alternative vehicle routes are ideal candidates.
- Once the street is selected, determine the extent of the closure, whether a single block or series of connecting blocks, and the duration of the event. Short-term pilots may coincide with festivals while longer closures can test how businesses and residents adapt over time.
- Establish a clear traffic management plan in coordination with the Department of Public Works and Police Department. Use planters, cones, or barriers at closure points, leaving sufficient space for emergency access. For streets that remain closed beyond one day, ensure that accessible parking and delivery needs are accommodated nearby.
- Plan for the layout of pedestrian amenities such as seating areas, vendor stalls, and games or performance zones. Leave a minimum 12-foot wide fire lanes through the corridor for emergency access. Include shaded areas and resting spaces for encourage visitors to stay longer, and consider adding flexible programming, like outdoor chess, children's play zones, or temporary exhibits, that activate different times of day. Evening activities can increase foot-traffic, creating more lively spaces that support CPTED strategies such as natural surveillance.

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Decoration, lighting, and pop-up landscaping can make the installations feel welcoming and festive. Food trucks, music, or art displays near the entry points can help attract visitors. Signage should clearly indicate detour routes and promote local businesses within walking distance.

After the event, evaluate outcomes by documenting pedestrian volumes, business participation, and community feedback. These insights will guide future designs for permanent pedestrian zones, shared streets, or enhanced public plazas in Cambridge;s downtown and waterfront areas.

Figure 14.7: Pedestrian-only streets temporarily close corridors to vehicles, creating lively public spaces for walking, dining, and community gatherings.

Figure 14.7: Outdoor dining areas and shaded walkways transform everyday streets into inviting pedestrian destinations. These enhancements encourage people to linger, strengthen the local business environment, and demonstrate how tactical interventions can support a more vibrant and walkable Cambridge.

Pop-Up Markets

Pop-up markets are temporary, low-cost installations that activate underused spaces and bring residents, artisans, and local producers together. These markets can take the form of farmers markets, craft fairs, or community vendors events, offering an immediate way to test how public spaces can support small business activity and social gathering.

In Cambridge, Pop-Up Markets can help enliven downtown streets, waterfront areas, and vacant parcels awaiting redevelopment. They promote local entrepreneurship, celebrate regional culture, and strengthen connections between residents and the city's commercial centers. By using tents, tables, and temporary furnishings, these events are easy to organize, flexible in format, and highly visible to the public.

Materials:

- Pop-up tens and canopies
- Folding tables and chairs
- Portable lighting and string lights
- Planters or decorative barriers for edge definition
- Signage and wayfinding boards
- Trash and recycling stations
- Food trucks or mobile vendor units

Figure 14.8: Pop-up markets bring life to underused spaces by showcasing local vendors and artisans, encouraging foot traffic, and fostering community interaction. These temporary installations support small businesses while activating public areas throughout Cambridge.

Installations

Consultant with the City and community organizations to identify potential market sites that align with existing redevelopment, park improvements, or downtown activation goals. Consider both outdoor and indoor options, including vacant lots, underutilized plazas, and parking areas that can be safely closed to traffic.

- When selecting location, evaluate accessibility, visibility, and pedestrian circulation. Sites near established destinations, such as downtown retail corridors or waterfront parks, are ideal for attracting both vendors and visitors.
- Set up tents and vendor stations to form an organized and navigable layout. Tents should be spaced to allow for walking aisles. For evening or multi-day events, incorporating temporary lighting and signage to maintain safety and visibility.
- Designate seating and gathering zones using tables, planters, and shaded areas. These spaces encourage visitors to linger and enhance the social experience of the market. Planters and temporary landscaping can also define entries or buffer the market from adjacent roadways.
- Coordinate logistics for vendor access, setup, and waste collection. Parking for food trucks or delivery vehicles should be located nearby but outside pedestrian areas. Portable restrooms or nearby public facilities should be identified if he event lasts multiple hours.
- Decorative elements such as banners, string lighting, and seasonal displays can further animate the space and draw attention from surrounding streets. Signage should highlight participating vendors and promote future market dates.
- After the event, conduct brief surveys or intercept interviews with attendees and vendors to assess satisfaction and identity improvement opportunities. This feedback will inform future iterations of the Pop-Up Market and guide the design of long-term infrastructure.

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Food Trucks

Food trucks are a versatile tactical approach that can help activate underutilized areas, support small businesses, and test future dining or trail concepts. By allowing local entrepreneurs to operate mobile kitchens, food trucks create immediate opportunities for commerce while animating the streetscapes.

In Cambridge, food trucks can serve multiple purposes: drawing people to the waterfront, encouraging foot traffic downtown, and energizing vacant parcels or parking lots awaiting redevelopment. Their mobility allows them to adapt to different sites and events, ranging from lunch-hour hubs along Race Street to evening gathering near Long Wharf Park.

Food trucks can also complement other tactical initiatives such as pop-up markets, parklets, or pedestrian-only streets. When coordinated strategically, they enhance the social atmosphere of public spaces and provide affordable, diverse options that attract both residents and visitors.

Beyond their economic benefit, food trucks can be used as tools for placemaking, demonstrating how small-scale commerce can bring activity and color spaces that might otherwise remain inactive.

Materials:

- Planters or barricades for boundary definition
- Picnic tables, cafe seating, or standing tables
- Shade tents or umbrellas
- Trash and recycling bins
- Lighting for evening hours
- Signage and menus for participating vendors

Installations

- Work with the City and local partners such as Main Street Cambridge or the Dorchester Chamber of Commerce to identify potential food truck zones. Ideal locations include high-visibility areas with pedestrian activity, underused parking lots, or edges of parks and plazas that can accommodate safe queuing and seating.
- Once sites are selected, establish a rotation schedule for participating food trucks to ensure a consistent but varied experience. The City may choose to pilot lunch and dinner rotations several days per week, allowing staff to monitor traffic patterns, waste management, and community response.
- Coordinate with the Health Department and Department of Public Works to ensure compliance with food safety, waste disposal, and parking regulations. Temporary power sources or generators may be needed for longer events.
- Set up furniture and gathering areas using picnic tables, chairs, or benches to create welcoming spaces for dining. Add planters, lights, or banners to mark the event boundary and enhance visibility. Vendors can also be grouped by themes to appeal to different audiences.
- After the pilot period, gather data on attendance, vendor sales, and pedestrian counts to determine whether the site should be formalized as a permanent food truck court or plaza.

Figure 14.9: Food trucks activate underused spaces, attract visitors, and support local entrepreneurs while enhancing street life.

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Pop-Up Parks

Pop-Up parks provide a low-cost, high-impact way to transform vacant parcels, parking spaces, or underused corners into inviting public gathering areas. These temporary installations introduce greenery, seating, and art to test ideas for future development or to simply create a sense of place in the interim.

In Cambridge, Pop-Up Parks can help activate key downtown spaces or provide short-term improvements in neighborhoods lacking access to open space. They encourage social interaction, support public events, and allow residents to visualize how permanent park improvements could function.

Programming can include everything from shaded seating areas and outdoor games to temporary playgrounds, yoga zones, or art displays. Even small-scale parklets—installed in parallel parking spaces—can make a measurable difference in how people experience the city.

Pop-Up Parks also provide opportunities to strengthen community partnerships. Schools, nonprofits, and local organizations can assist with programming or maintenance, ensuring that installations remain engaging throughout their duration.

Materials:

- Movable planters or raised beds
- Benches, picnic tables, or cafe seating
- Umbrellas or temporary shade structures
- Turf or sod for soft-surface areas
- Lighting or solar fixtures for evening use
- Decorative fencing or barriers for definition
- Large games or art pieces for programming

Installations

Identify suitable sites for referencing the City's open space and downtown revitalization plans. Pop-up parks can be located in vacant lots, corners of parking areas, or along waterfront promenades. Look for locations with high pedestrian visibility and proximity to existing destinations, such as shops or restaurants.

- Determine the type and scale of green infrastructure required. Parks on pavement will need planters, sod, and edging materials to contain soil. Existing green areas may require only lightweight furnishings and programming elements.
- When planning for longer installations, rotate activities or furnishings to maintain interest. A single site might host yoga classes in the morning, family play areas in the afternoon, and small performances in the evening. If the pilot runs for several weeks, evaluate different layouts to test comfort, circulation, and maintenance requirements.
- Plan for accessibility and safety by maintaining clear walkways and ensuring all furnishings are stable and weather resist. Consider lighting or reflective materials for evening visibility.
- Decorations, banners, and community art can make the space more inviting and reflect local character. After removal, asses the site's performance, foot traffic, user feedback, and event participation, to inform future permanent park or plaza improvements.

Figure 14.10: Pop-up parks transform vacant lots or parking areas into temporary green spaces, offering places to relax, gather, and enjoy the outdoors.

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Pop-Up Entertainment

Pop-up entertainment activates public spaces through temporary performances, film nights and community gatherings that showcase local talent and celebrate Cambridge's creative culture. These events can range from small neighborhood performances to city-wide festivals, transforming parks, streets, and plazas into vibrant social venues.

Pop-up entertainment supports the City's goals of enhancing downtown vitality and promoting local businesses. Performances can highlight underused areas such as Poplar Street, Long Wharf Park, or Cannery Way Plaza, demonstrating how these spaces can accommodate larger public events and cultural activities.

Events may features live music, theater, art installations, or outdoor movies. When held regularly, they can build local identity and provide ongoing opportunities for residents to gather, reinforcing Cambridge's commitment to community life and the arts.

Pop-up entertainment also helps test infrastructure such as power access, lighting, and sound management, offering insight for future permanent amphitheaters or performance plazas.

Materials:

- Temporary stage platforms
- Sound and lighting systems
- Tents and canopies
- Folding chairs or benches
- Movie screen and projector
- Portable restrooms
- Picnic tables and trash receptacles

Installations

- Identify potential sites that can safely accommodate crowds, such as Long Wharf Park, Race Street, or underutilized parking lots near the waterfront. Indoor venues such as warehouses or vacant commercial spaces, can also host performances during colder months.
- Coordinate with local artists, schools, and community organizations to schedule performances and promote events. Encourage partnerships with local businesses for sponsorships or in-kind support such as food vendors and requirements rentals.
- When selecting outdoor venues, ensure that the surface is level and suitable for stage installation. Platforms should be approximately 4 feet by 8 feet and secured for safety. Arrange sound and lighting to avoid obstructing pedestrian movement or creating glare for nearby residents. Consider surrounding lighting and safe pathways as part of public safety considerations.
- Provide seating areas using chairs or picnic tables, and encourage attendees to bring blankets for lawn events. Consider using barriers or planters to define audience zones, enhance natural access control, and maintain accessibility.
- For movie nights or larger festivals, integrate food trucks or pop-up dining areas nearby to extend the extend the experience and attract evening activity.
- After the event, evaluate logistics such as crowd flow, sound projection, and vendor coordination to refine future entertainment programming in downtown Cambridge.

Figure 14.11: Pop-up entertainment events bring residents together through music, film, and art, activating public spaces and supporting Cambridge's creative culture and local businesses.

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Bike Lanes

Bike lanes are an essential tactical intervention for promoting active transportation, safety, and connectivity throughout Cambridge. Temporary bike lanes pilots can help identify the most effective locations for long-term cycling infrastructure, linking neighborhoods to key destinations such as downtown, schools, and the waterfront.

By reallocating roadway space for bicycles, these projects demonstrate how small design changes can make streets safer for all users. They also support Cambridge's goals of sustainability and multimodal access while reducing traffic congestion and emissions.

Tactical bike lane installations can include pavement markings, bollards, and painted buffers that clearly define safe travel for cyclists. These pilots can be implemented quickly and at low cost, providing immediate feedback from riders and drivers before permanent improvements are constructed.

Materials:

- Spray chalk or temporary paint
- Pavement stencils for lane markings
- Plastic bollards or flexible barriers
- Planters for buffer zones
- Wayfinding signage and bicycle symbols

Installations

- Identify candidate corridors using the City's transportation and complete streets priorities. Good test locations may include Race Street, High Street, and Academy Street, where existing right-of-way can accommodate reconfiguration without major disruption.
- Before installation, measure available lane widths. Temporary bike lanes should be at least 5 feet wide, with a two to three buffer from vehicular traffic. Use cones, planters, or bollards to physically separate lanes from motor vehicles.
- Paint or chalk the lane using high-visibility colors such as green or white, and include bicycle symbols at regular intervals. For one-way lanes, ensure signage clearly marks direction and access points.
- If feasible, test two-way cycle tracks on wider streets or along corridors with existing pedestrian activity, such as Poplar Street. Coordinate with the Department of Public Works to ensure proper drainage and maintenance during the pilot period.
- After installation, monitor bicycle usage and gather community feedback. Evaluate safety improvements and traffic flow impacts to determine if the configuration should become permanent.

Figure 14.12: Protected bike lanes enhance safety and comfort for cyclists while encouraging active transportation. By reallocating roadway space, these installations demonstrate how even small design changes can reduce traffic conflicts, improve connectivity, and support a healthier, more sustainable Cambridge.

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Street Reconfiguration

Street reconfiguration is a tactical design approach that rebalanced roadway space to improve safety, walkability, and efficiency. Through paint, planters, and signage, the City can test adjustments such as lane narrowing, new crosswalks, or back-in angled parking before investing in permanent infrastructure.

In Cambridge, street reconfigurations can be used along corridors like Washington Street, or Academy Street to calm traffic, increase visibility for pedestrians, and provide safer on-street parking. These projects help visualize how streets could better serve all users, drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians alike.

Tactical pilots can also identity opportunities for curb extensions or “bump outs” that shorten pedestrian crossing distances and provide space for landscaping or public seating.

Materials:

- Temporary paint or spray chalk
- Flexible bollards or planters
- Traffic cones or delineators
- Portable signage for new lane configurations
- Benches or small seating areas for bump-out zones

Installations

- Begin by selecting streets with excessive widths, high speeds, or documented safety concerns. Measure travel lanes and parking widths to identity space available for reconfiguration.
- Use paint or chalk to outline new traffic patterns such as narrowed lanes, back-in angled parking, or enhanced crosswalks. Mark lines between four and six inches wide, following standard roadway design practices.
- Install planters or bollards to define curb extensions and create visual narrowing. On-street parking can be rearranged to back-in configurations to improve driver visibility and reduce conflicts when exiting.
- Coordinate with DPW and local law enforcement to ensure the pilot meets safety and accessibility standards.
- During and after implementation, record traffic speeds, pedestrian activity, and driver compliance. Public feedback can guide refinements and determine whether to convert the pilot into a permanent redesign.

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Figure 14.13: Street reconfigurations use paint, planters, and flexible barriers to narrow lanes and slow vehicle speeds, creating safer, more vibrant streets. These tactical improvements help balance the needs of drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians while supporting long-term infrastructure goals for a walkable, livable city.

Goal 14-1: Advance tactical urbanism as a tool for community-driven change

Objective 14-1.1 Encourage experimentation through pilot projects that test public space improvements before permanent construction

Policy 14-1.1.1: Tactical pilot projects
Support short-term installations such as pop-up parks, food truck courts, and pedestrian-only streets to demonstrate the potential of underutilized spaces.

Policy 14-1.1.2: Collaborative implementation
Partner with local organizations, businesses, and residents to plan and execute temporary projects that reflect community priorities.

Policy 14-1.1.3: Data-driven evaluation
Measure success through metrics such as foot traffic, vendor participation, and user feedback to inform future investment decisions.

Objective 14-2.1 Integrate tactical urbanism into broader planning and capital improvement efforts

Policy 14-2.1.1: Plan alignment
Ensure tactical projects support Comprehensive Plan goals for transportation, downtown revitalization, public safety, and public spaces.

Policy 14-2.1.2: Design testing
Use temporary installations to evaluate site layouts, accessibility, and design features prior to permanent construction.

Policy 14-2.1.3: Lessons for long-term design
Incorporate findings from tactical projects into future design standards, zoning updates, and public realm improvements.

Goal 14-2: Activate public spaces and strengthen neighborhood identity

Objective 14-2.1 Encourage creative use of public and private spaces for community gatherings and events

Policy 14-2.1.1: Regular tactical events
Host recurring pop-up markets, movie nights, and art installations to activate downtown and waterfront areas.

Policy 14-2.1.2: Temporary site activation
Identify vacant or underused parcels that can temporarily serve as flexible event or gathering spaces.

Policy 14-2.1.3: Cultural expression in design
Encourage the integration of local heritage, art, and cultural storytelling within tactical installations.

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Objective 14-2.2 Build community ownership and stewardship of tactical projects

Policy 14-2.2.1: Streamlined permitting process
Develop a clear and efficient permitting process for temporary tactical installations to promote community participation.

Policy 14-2.2.2: Community grants program
Establish small-scale funding or sponsorship opportunities to support resident- or business-led tactical projects.

Policy 14-2.2.3: Youth engagement
Partner with schools and youth organizations to involve students in tactical design and maintenance as part of civic learning.

Goal 14-3: Improve mobility, safety, and accessibility through tactical design

Objective 14-3.1 Pilot projects that promote multimodal connectivity and safer street design

Policy 14-3.1.1: Tactical mobility projects
Implement temporary bike lanes, crosswalks, and curb extensions to test street safety improvements.

Policy 14-3.1.2: Monitoring and evaluation
Collect data on traffic flow, pedestrian activity, and safety outcomes to guide future infrastructure projects..

Policy 14-3.1.3: Agency coordination
Work with state and regional partners such and SHA to ensure tactical projects align with long-term transportation planning. Collaborate with Cambridge Police Department to identify opportunities for integration of public safety strategies.

Objective 14-3.2 Demonstrate how tactical interventions can improve access for all residents, including those with limited mobility

Policy 14-3.2.1: ADA-compliant design and CPTED strategies
Incorporate universal design principles into all tactical projects to ensure accessibility for all users.

Policy 14-3.2.2: Inclusive street layouts
Design pilot installations that maintain clear, safe routes for pedestrians, cyclists, and mobility devices.

Policy 14-3.2.3: Accessibility assessment
Use tactical installations to identify and address mobility barriers prior to permanent capital improvements.

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Goal 14-4: Foster collaboration and build capacity for tactical implementation

Objective 14-4.1 Establish a formal framework for tactical project coordination

Policy 14-4.1.1: Tactical urbanism toolkit
Create a publicly available resource outlining materials, design standards, and permitting guidance for tactical projects.

Policy 14-4.1.2: Interdepartmental coordination
Encourage collaboration among planning, public works, and parks departments to streamline tactical approvals.

Policy 14-4.1.3: Tactical events calender
Maintain a centralized schedule of tactical installations and events to promote visibility and coordination citywide.

Objective 14-4.2 Promote public awareness and long-term sustainability of tactical projects

Policy 14-4.2.1: Public education and outreach
Host community workshops to raise awareness of Tactical Urbanism's benefits and how residents can participate.

Policy 14-4.2.2: Knowledge sharing
Document and publish outcomes from successful tactical pilots to encourage replication across neighborhoods..

Policy 14-4.2.3: Institutional integration
Embed Tactical Urbanism practices into City planning documents and long-range policy frameworks as an ongoing strategy for community engagement and implementation.

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Chapter 15: Comprehensive Plan Adoption and Implementation

Comprehensive Plan Adoption and Implementation

The adoption of the Comprehensive Plan marks the culmination of a collaborative and transparent process to define the City's vision for its future. The following steps outline how the Plan will be finalized, implemented, and maintained as a living document guiding growth and decisions making for years to come.

The implementation of the Comprehensive Plan will require collaboration, coordination, and a shared commitment among City departments, elected officials, and community partners. The plan serves as both a vision and a guide for policy, investment, and decision-making. To ensure its success, a dedicated structure for implementation and periodic review is recommended.

Public Process and Compliance

The City of Cambridge has ensured that the Comprehensive Plan reflects extensive public participation and stakeholders input gathered throughout the planning process. The Plan has been prepared in accordance with all State of Maryland requirements and include documentation of the public process to demonstrate compliance. It established a framework that promotes long-term community benefit, fiscal responsibility, and sustainable development principles that respond to Cambridge;s unique character and needs.

Integration with City Regulations

As part of the next phase, the City intends to update its Unified Development Code to align with the form-based principles and development policies introduced in this Plan. This alignment will help ensure that the Plan's vision is reflected in future zoning decisions, design standards, and implementation tools.

Implementation Framework

As part of the next phase, the City intends to update its Unified Development Code to align with the form-based principles and development policies introduced in this Plan. This alignment will help ensure that the Plan's vision is reflected in future zoning decisions, design standards, and implementation tools.

Regional Coordination

Recognizing that Cambridge's growth and challenges do not stop at municipal boundaries, the Comprehensive Plan emphasizes coordination with Dorchester County, state agencies, and neighboring jurisdictions. The Plan addresses regional issues such as transportation, housing, and environmental management that require shared responsibility and cooperation.

Formal Adoption and Ongoing Review

Following public hearings, the Planning Commission will recommend adoption of the Comprehensive Plan to the City Council, after which it will become the City's official policy guide for land use, development and capital investment decisions. Regular reviews and updates will ensure that the Plan remains relevant, adaptive, and responsible to changing community needs and priorities.

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Plan Implementation Committee

A Plan Implementation Committee (PIC) should be established to oversee progress on the Plan's goals, objectives and policies. This committee would serve as the driving force behind execution, ensuring accountability, coordination and communication between City departments and external partners.

The PIC would

- Track progress on goals and policies annually
- Recommend updates or reprioritization as community needs evolve
- Facilitate partnerships between government, non-profits, and the private sector
- Ensure that implementation aligns with community input and equity goals
- Advise City Council and Planning commission on major policy or land use decisions

The Committee should be interdisciplinary, composed of staff from Planning, Economic Development, Public Works, and Housing; representatives from the business community and local institutions, and residents from each neighborhood sector.

Annual Review

An annual Implementation Report should be prepared to summarize progress, highlight completed or ongoing actions, and recommend revisions to the Plan. Every five years, a more comprehensive evaluation should be conducted to maintain alignment with new data, development trends, and community priorities.

Responsible Entities

The following entities are primarily responsible for plan implementation:

City Departments and Boards

- City Council
- Planning and Zoning Department
- Department of Public works
- Economic Development Department
- Housing and Community Development Department
- Finance Department
- Parks and Recreation Department
- Historic Preservation Commission
- Environmental Commission
- Waterfront Development Committee
- Transportation and Traffic Review Committee

Partner Organizations

- Dorchester County Government
- Maryland Department of Planning
- Maryland Department of Transportation
- Cambridge Main Street
- Cambridge Waterfront Development
- Local Neighborhood Associations
- Business and Nonprofit Partners

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Form-Based Codes

Purpose and Intent

Form-Based Codes (FBCs) focus on the physical form and character of development rather than simply separating land uses. They are a tool to help realize the Plan's vision for walkable, mixed-use, and context-sensitive neighborhoods that reflect Cambridge's historic fabric and community values.

Form Based Code's encourage design that prioritizes:

- Active and inviting streetscapes
- Pedestrian comfort and safety
- Building placement and massing consistent with neighborhood character
- Public realm design and open space integration
- Architectural standards that promote long-term quality and local identity

Why It Matters for Cambridge

As the City updates its Unified Development Code, incorporating form-based goals and policies will help achieve predictable, high-quality outcomes while allowing flexibility for creative infill and redevelopment.

These updates can clarify expectation for developers, streamline approvals, and reinforce the community's vision for neighborhoods, corridors, and downtown areas.

Example Form-Based District Types

While specific district boundaries and standards would be determined through a future zoning update, Cambridge should consider the following district types as conceptual models.

Potential District Type	Intent/Description
Gateway Destination (T6)	Defined key entries into the City and allows for the highest intensity of mixed-use, landmark buildings, and pedestrian-friendly design.
Neighborhood Core (T5)	Represents vibrant mixed-use areas such as Downtown, featuring ground-flood retail, upper-story residential, and walkable streets.
Neighborhood Center (T4)	Provides a transition between higher-intensity mixed-use areas and residential neighborhoods, with small shops and community services/
Residential Neighborhood (T3)	Maintains neighborhood character with primarily residential uses, allowing compatible infill and diverse housing types within walking distance of services.

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Design Standards Overview

Future code updates should include General Standards to ensure that new development contributes positively to the public realm. These standards typically address:

- **Building placement and setbacks** to frame streets and sidewalks
- **Façade composition** emphasizing base, body, and cap design elements
- **Transparency and entrances** for active ground floors
- **Parking location** behind or beside buildings
- **Lighting, landscaping, and signage** consistent with neighborhood scale
- **Architectural detailing and materials** to reflect local context durability

Together, these standards would provide a clear, visual framework for how growth should occur, reinforcing the unique character of Cambridge's downtown, waterfront, and neighborhoods.

These recommendations were developed through extensive community dialogue during the public design charrette and open studio, where residents helped define the look and feel of future development across Cambridge.

An Open and Collaborative Process

The creation of the Cambridge Comprehensive Plan was guided by an inclusive planning process centered on community input. Through a multi-day Design Charrette and Open Design Studio, residents, business owners, and local officials collaborated with planners and designers to imagine Cambridge's future together.

Participants shared ideas on topics ranging from neighborhood revitalization and downtown reinvestment to housing choice, connectivity, and resilience. The open studio format allowed residents to stop by, view in-progress maps and design concepts, and discuss their priorities directly with the planning team.

This collaborative approach ensured that the Plan reflects the values and aspirations of Cambridge's diverse community — not only as a policy document, but as a shared vision for equitable, sustainable, and locally inspired growth.

At a Glance: The Planning Framework

This Comprehensive Plan builds upon:

- Community input gathered through the public charrette, open design studio, and stakeholder interviews.
- Analysis of existing conditions, land use, housing, and infrastructure systems.
- Integration with regional and state planning goals, including Maryland's twelve Visions for sustainable growth.
- Implementation strategies designed to coordinate City departments, agencies, and partners around a common vision.

Community-Driven Design

Every idea in this Plan stems from the voices of Cambridge. The charrette and open design studio translated community priorities into design concepts and actionable strategies. From neighborhood revitalization to waterfront access, these collaborative sessions shaped the plan's vision for a connected, resilient, and welcoming Cambridge.

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STRATEGY	ACTION	CONCEPTUAL COST	RESPONSIBILITY	SEQUENCING
Create capacity and structure for implementing the Comprehensive Plan	Create a dedicated framework for coordinating implementation, tracking progress, and ensuring accountability across City departments and community partners.			
	Establish a Plan Implementation Committee (PIC) responsible for coordinating implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.	$	City Manager's Office, Department of Planning and Zoning, Department of Public Works (DPW), Economic Development Dept.	Immediate
	Form a multi-departmental PIC including Planning, Public Works, Finance, and Economic Development to meet quarterly.	$	City Manager's Office, Planning and Zoning , Finance, DPW , ED Dept.	Immediate
	Prepare an annual report summarizing completed, ongoing, and upcoming actions and projects.	$	Planning and Zoning , City Manager's Office, Finance Dept.	Ongoing
	Develop a standardized reporting template to track implementation progress.	$	Planning and Zoning, IT Department	Immediate
	Integrate plan recommendations into the City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and annual budgeting process.	$$	Finance Dept., City Manager's Office, Planning and Zoning	Near-term (Years 2-3)
	Include a "Comprehensive Plan Implementation" line item in the CIP to fund cross-departmental initiatives.	$$	Finance Dept., Planning and Zoning	Near-Term
	Establish a project prioritization matrix to align funding with plan objectives.	$	Planning and Zoning, Finance Dept	Near-Term
	Develop a public-facing online dashboard to track progress and share updates.	$$	City IT Dept., Planning and Zoning, Communications Office	Mid-Term
	Design an interactive "Plan Progress" page with indicators, maps, and completed project highlights.	$$	Planning and Zoning, IT Dept, ED Dept.	Mid-Term
Align zoning and development regulations with the Comprehensive Plan	Modernize zoning and land development regulations to implement the Future Land Use Map and promote compact, sustainable, and context-sensitive growth.			
	Conduct a comprehensive zoning update to align with the Future Land Use Map and community character areas.	$$	Planning and Zoning, Maryland Department of Planning (MDP)	Near-Term
	Audit existing zoning districts for consistency with the Future Land Use Map.	$	Planning and zoning	Immediate
	Update zoning text and map to reflect updated land use categories.	$$	Planning and Zoning, City Attorney, Planning Commission	Near-term
	Adopt a Form-Based Code for Downtown and key corridors to promote walkability, design consistency, and mixed-use development.	$$$	Planning and Zoning, Consultant Team, Planning Commission	Mid-Term (Years 3-5)
	Prepare design guidelines, regulating plans, and urban design standards to support form-based code implementation.	$$	Planning and Zoning, Consultant, Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)	Mid-Term
	Review and revise parking, landscaping, and open space standards to encourage infill and adaptive reuse.	$$	Department of Planning and Zoning, Department of Public Works (DPW)	Near-Term
	Update parking ratios and landscaping requirements for infill districts.	$	Department of Planning and Zoning, DPW	Near-Term
	Coordinate with Dorchester County to manage annexation areas and ensure infrastructure capacity supports new growth.	$$	Planning and Zoning, Dorchester County Planning and Zoning, City Manager's Office	Ongoing

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STRATEGY	ACTION	CONCEPTUAL COST	RESPONSIBILITY	SEQUENCING
	Update the Intergovernmental Coordination Agreement to reflect shared growth boundaries.	$$	City Manager's Office, Planning and Zoning, Dorchester County	City Manager's Office, Planning and Zoning, Dorchester County
	Explore sustainable funding tools to support public realm and waterfront improvements.			
	The City should consider a new hotel occupancy tax to finance the expansion of the waterfront trail system and other public realm projects that enhance tourism and community connectivity.	$	City Council; Cambridge Main Street; Dorchester County Tourism; Maryland Office of Tourism Development	Short-Term (Feasibility Study); Long-Term (Implementation)
	Expand waterfront access and recreational opportunities.			
	The City should petition the County to consider a voter-approved General Obligation bond to fund the expansion of a waterfront trail system, including right-of-way acquisition, public docking, and rehabilitation of waterfront buildings with new public amenities.	$$$	City of Cambridge; Dorchester County; Maryland Department of Natural Resources; Maryland Department of Transportation	Mid-Term
Strengthen partnerships and community participation	Enhance collaboration among government, community organizations, and residents to advance shared priorities and ensure inclusive engagement.			
	Host annual community meetings to review plan progress and gather feedback on priorities.	$	City Manager's Office. Department of Planning and Zoning, Communications Office	Immediate
	Develop a structured annual "Plan Check-In" event to present updates and receive community input.	$	Planning and Zoning, Communications, Economic Development	Immediate/Annual
	Develop partnership programs with associations and nonprofits to implement community projects.	$$	Planning and Zoning, Cambridge Main Street, Dorchester Center for the Arts, Local Nonprofits	Near-Term
	Identify three pilot partnerships (e.g., neighborhood beautification, community gardens, youth design workshops).	$	Planning and Zoning, Public Works, Local Nonprofits	Near-Term
	Establish youth and university partnerships to involve students in sustainability and planning initiatives.	$	Planning and Zoning, University of Maryland Extension, Chesapeake College, Cambridge-South Dorchester High School	Mid-Term
	Collaborate with business associations to support local economic development and downtown revitalization.	$$	Economic Development Dept. , Cambridge Main Street, Dorchester Chamber of Commerce	Ongoing
	Support waterfront-related economic development and infrastructure investment.			
	The City should petition the County to consider a voter-approved General Obligation bond for wharves, docks, warehouses, marina facilities, recreational port amenities, and other infrastructure necessary to enhance the port and waterfront economy.	$$	City of Cambridge; Dorchester County; Cambridge Waterfront Development, Inc.; Maryland Department of Commerce	Mid-Term

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STRATEGY	ACTION	CONCEPTUAL COST	RESPONSIBILITY	SEQUENCING
Maintain the Comprehensive Plan as a living document	Ensure that the Comprehensive Plan remains current, adaptable, and reflective of community values through regular updates and transparent reporting			
	Conduct a comprehensive review of the Plan every five years to assess progress and update data	$$	Department of Planning and Zoning, City Manager's Office, Maryland Department of Planning (MDP)	Mid-Term
	Include annual implementation updates in the five-year plane review process	$	Planning and Zoning, City Manager's Office, All City Departments	Ongoing
	Maintain a digital, interactive version of the Plan that can be updated as actions are completed	$$	Planning and Zoning, Information Technology (IT) Department, Communications Office	Near-Term
	Continue to engage the public through surveys, online forums, and community events to inform updates	$	Planning and Zoning, Communications Office, Cambridge Main Street, Dorchester Chamber of Commerce	Ongoing
	Highlight completed projects and milestones annually to demonstrate progress and celebrate success	$	Planning and Zoning, City Manager's Office, Communications Office	Annual
Strengthen Downtown Revitalization and Community Design	Promote adaptive reuse and infill development that reinforces Downtown Cambridge's historic character and waterfront identity.			
	Provide design assistance for property owners to support consistent façade improvements and storefront rehabilitation.	$	Planning & Zoning, Cambridge Main Street	Near-Term
	Create a Vacant Building Program to encourage the rehabilitation or reuse of underutilized structures downtown.	$$	Planning & Zoning, Department of Public Works	Mid-Term
	Identify priority vacant sites and coordinate with property owners to incentivize redevelopment through grants, tax abatements, or code assistance.	$$	Planning & Zoning, Economic Development, Finance	Mid-Term
	Develop design guidelines for new and redeveloped waterfront properties to ensure resilient, flood-adaptive, and context-sensitive design.	$$	Planning & Zoning, Department of Public Works	Mid-Term
	Enhance the public realm and downtown experience through streetscape, art, and connectivity improvements.			
	Prepare a Downtown Streetscape and Tree Planting Plan that improves pedestrian safety, comfort, and accessibility.	$$	Department of Public Works, Planning & Zoning	Near-Term
	Expand street furniture, lighting, benches, and bicycle facilities connecting downtown to adjacent neighborhoods.	$$	Department of Public Works	Ongoing
	Establish a Public Art & Placemaking Program to activate downtown spaces through murals, façade art, and community installations.	$$	Cambridge Arts Council, Main Street, Planning & Zoning	Mid-Term
	Develop a citywide Wayfinding and Branding Plan to highlight key routes, parking areas, and waterfront connections.	$$	Planning & Zoning, Main Street	Near-Term
	Support a thriving local economy through coordinated business attraction, partnerships, and events that celebrate downtown culture.			
	Establish a Downtown Business Recruitment and Retention Program targeting local entrepreneurs, restaurants, and creative industries.	$$	Economic Development, Cambridge Main Street, Chamber of Commerce	Near-Term
	Host small business workshops and match potential tenants with available properties downtown.	$	Economic Development	Ongoing

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STRATEGY	ACTION	CONCEPTUAL COST	RESPONSIBILITY	SEQUENCING
	Develop shared parking and mobility strategies to improve visitor access while maintaining pedestrian comfort.	$$	Planning & Zoning, Public Works	Mid-Term
	Organize recurring community events and seasonal markets that promote downtown visitation and local shopping.	$-$$	Cambridge Main Street, Arts Council, Economic Development	Ongoing
Enhance Urban Form and Land Use Efficiency	Adopt a Future Character Map identifying areas for reinvestment, conservation, and neighborhood stabilization.	$$	Planning & Zoning; City Council	Near-Term
	Align the zoning map with the updated Character Map and Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map.	$$	Planning & Zoning	Near-Term
	Develop a Unified Development Code (UDC) that integrates zoning, subdivision, and design standards to promote compact, mixed-use growth.	$$$	Planning & Zoning; Public Works	Mid-Term
	Provide design assistance for infill projects that contribute to historic context and human-scale urban form.	$	Planning & Zoning	Ongoing
	Encourage creative adaptive reuse of vacant buildings, especially along Race Street, Maryland Avenue, and the waterfront.	$$	Economic Development; Planning & Zoning	Ongoing
Protect and Celebrate Cambridge's Historic Assets	Update the City's Historic District Guidelines to align with Maryland Historical Trust standards and contemporary sustainability goals.	$$	Historic Preservation Commission; Planning & Zoning	Near-Term
	Explore creation of a new Conservation District to protect historic residential neighborhoods outside the existing district.	$$	Planning & Zoning; HPC	Mid-Term
	Develop a Historic Property Grant and Façade Program for owners improving contributing structures.	$$	Economic Development; HPC	Near-Term
	Establish educational partnerships to promote historic awareness and technical training in preservation methods.	$	Planning & Zoning; Local Schools; Maryland Historical Trust	Ongoing
Expand Housing Choice and Neighborhood Revitalization	Support development of affordable and workforce housing through public–private partnerships and local incentives.	$$-$$$	Housing Dept; Planning & Zoning; Economic Development	Ongoing
	Identify vacant or underutilized residential lots suitable for infill or accessory dwelling units (ADUs).	$	Planning & Zoning; Housing Dept	Near-Term
	Establish a Small Lot Infill Program with pre-approved designs for ADUs or cottage homes.	$$	Planning & Zoning; Nonprofits	Mid-Term
	Coordinate with Dorchester County agencies to pursue housing rehabilitation grants and weatherization funds.	$$	Housing Dept; City Manager's Office	Ongoing
Reuse Vacant and Underutilized Land	Inventory all vacant and abandoned parcels to prioritize redevelopment opportunities.	$	Planning & Zoning; GIS Coordinator	Immediate
	Establish a land bank or partnership with the Dorchester County Land Authority to return vacant lots to productive use.	$$	City Manager; County Land Authority	Mid-Term
	Develop model RFPs for affordable housing, green infrastructure, or commercial redevelopment of City-owned properties.	$$	Planning & Zoning; Economic Development Mid-Term	Mid-Term
	Encourage community gardens, pocket parks, or stormwater retrofits on vacant lots awaiting redevelopment.	$	Public Works; Local Nonprofits	Ongoing

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STRATEGY	ACTION	CONCEPTUAL COST	RESPONSIBILITY	SEQUENCING
Enhance Urban Form and Land Use Efficiency	Develop a Complete Streets Policy ensuring all new projects accommodate pedestrians, cyclists, and transit.	$$	Planning & Zoning; Public Works	Near-Term
	Prepare a Sidewalk and Bike Master Plan connecting Downtown, the waterfront, and residential areas.	$$	Public Works; Planning	Mid-Term
	Implement traffic calming measures such as curb extensions, raised crosswalks, and gateway signage near schools and key intersections.	$$$	Public Works; Police Dept	Near-Term
	Install consistent wayfinding signage to direct residents and visitors to parks, waterfront access, and civic destinations.	$	Public Works; Tourism; Main Street	Ongoing
Advance Sustainable Infrastructure and Climate Resilience	Establish a City Environmental Task Force to guide local sustainability projects and promote energy efficiency.	$	City Manager; Planning & Zoning	Immediate
	Promote use of renewable energy and energy-efficient upgrades for municipal and historic buildings.	$$	Public Works; Energy Utilities	Mid-Term
	Explore citywide recycling improvements and waste diversion programs in collaboration with Dorchester County.	$$	Public Works; Solid Waste	Near-Term
	Encourage green stormwater infrastructure in new developments and retrofits (rain gardens, permeable paving, tree trenches).	$$	Public Works; Planning & Zoning	Ongoing
Promote Health, Safety, and Well-Being	Partner with schools and nonprofits to expand Safe Routes to School programs and youth cycling education.	$	Planning & Zoning; Cambridge Police Dept; Board of Education	Ongoing
	Evaluate access to healthcare, grocery stores, and wellness services through equity mapping to identify service gaps.	$$	City Manager's Office; Planning; County Health Dept	Mid-Term
	Support community events that promote healthy lifestyles, neighborhood safety, and social connection.	$	Community Relations; Local Nonprofits	Ongoing
Strengthen Local Economy and Food Resilience	Partner with local farms and markets to expand access to fresh food within neighborhoods and downtown.	$	Economic Development; Cambridge Main Street	Ongoing
	Create small business incubator spaces in vacant storefronts or City-owned buildings to encourage local entrepreneurship.	$$	Economic Development; Planning	Mid-Term
	Pursue grants to support community gardens, farmers markets, and local food entrepreneurship.	$	City Manager; Nonprofits	Near-Term

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Appendix A: Public Process

Public Participation

Public participation is vital to the success of every Comprehensive Plan. The City recognizes that an effective plan must reflect the priorities of its residents, business owners, civic organizations, and institutions. Throughout the planning process, the City engaged the community through charrette, workshops, open studios, and stakeholder meetings to ensure that the Plan aligns with local goals and values. This collaborative process allowed participants to help identify challenges, generate ideas, and refine priorities that will guide Cambridge's growth, resilience, and quality of life for decades to come.

What is the Cambridge Comprehensive Plan?

The Comprehensive Plan serves as a guiding framework for how Cambridge grows, invests, and preserves its unique character. It establishes policies for land use, housing, mobility, parks, natural resources, and economic development, while protecting the City's historic and cultural identity. The Plan aims to promote sustainable, equitable growth that supports both residents and businesses, ensuring a resilient and inclusive future for all.

Why Plan in Public?

Public engagement builds transparency, trust, and ownership in the planning process. By involving residents directly, Cambridge ensures that its strategies reflect community aspirations and that decision-making is grounded in shared goals. Planning in public also allows participants to identify opportunities, test ideas, and understand trade-offs—creating a Plan that balances growth, sustainability, and livability. The outcome is not just a document, but a collective vision for Cambridge's future.

Collaborative Planning with Community Support

To ensure that the Plan reflects community priorities, the City partnered with Able City East to conduct an open and inclusive charrette process. The Cambridge Charrette Week, held from August 18–22, 2025, brought together residents, local leaders, and technical experts for a week of collaborative design and visioning.

The charrette featured hands-on design sessions, open studio hours, technical meetings, and a public open house, giving everyone an opportunity to share their perspectives. The process resulted in the development of the Big Five Ideas, which serve as guiding themes for this Plan.

Site Tour and Village Orientation

Before launching the public charrette, the project team conducted a comprehensive site tour of Cambridge, Maryland to better understand the City's unique assets, challenges, and opportunities.

Over the course of the day, the team explored key corridors, neighborhoods, community facilities, and environmentally sensitive areas. The tour highlighted important topics such as connectivity between Downtown and the waterfront, neighborhood revitalization needs, land use and infill potential, and resilience challenges associated with flooding and sea-level rise.

By experiencing Cambridge firsthand, the planning team was able to observe local conditions, identify priority areas for reinvestment, and document recurring themes that would inform the charrette discussions. This groundwork ensured that the subsequent public engagement process was context-specific, data-driven, and responsive to the City's character and needs.

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Project Timeline

The Comprehensive Plan update for Cambridge, Maryland was carried out through a phased process designed to ensure meaningful analysis, robust public engagement, and multiple opportunities for feedback before adoption.

Phase 1&2: Needs Assessment and Market Analysis

- The process began with a kick-off meeting followed by a site tour and technical analysis through early 2025. This stage focused on understanding existing conditions, challenges, and opportunities that shaped the framework for the Plan.

Phase 3&4: Public Workshops

- The project team hosted a week-long public charrette from August 18–24, 2025, bringing together residents, business owners, and stakeholders for a series of hands-on design sessions, open studios, technical meetings, and a public open house. The charrette provided a collaborative platform for participants to help define priorities and visualize Cambridge's future.
- Feedback gathered during the charrette directly informed the strategy overview, completed in September 2025, which synthesized community input into guiding principles and preliminary recommendations.

Phase 5: Develop Preliminary Draft

- Building on the ideas and strategies from the charrette, the planning team prepared the Preliminary Draft Comprehensive Plan in Fall 2025. This phase included refining policy recommendations, aligning them with local priorities, and preparing draft maps and visuals for review. A public presentation of the preliminary draft was held later that year to share findings and gather additional community feedback.

Phase 6: Final Draft and Adoption

- The final phase involved formal review and approval of the Comprehensive Plan. Following public hearings and revisions based on community and agency feedback, the updated Cambridge Comprehensive Plan is scheduled for adoption in Spring 2026.

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The Charrette Process

The Cambridge Comprehensive Plan Charrette was held from August 18-24 2025. This week long event served as the central platform for community participation and idea-sharing.

The Charrette:

Day One: Kick-Off & Hands-On Design Session: This session introduced the planning process and invited the public to help share early concepts.

Open Studio Hours: Days to two to four, from 9 AM to 6 PM, the open design studio allowed residents and stakeholders to drop in, review emerging ideas, and provide feedback directly to the design team.

Daily Technical Meetings: These meetings with Village staff, community leaders, and stakeholders were vital to discussing key issues including housing, resilience, land use, and mobility.

Area Tours: During the charrette week, area tours and interactions with the community were conducted to further ground discussion in real world conditions.

Work-in-Progress Presentation: On day five, a concluding presentation was shared with the public where preliminary findings and design concepts were presented back to the community for discussion.

Kick-Off Presentation

The charrette opened on the evening of August 18, 2025, with a Kick-Off Presentation and Hands-On Design Session. Community members were invited to learn about the Cambridge Comprehensive Plan update, hear from City leaders, and participate in interactive mapping and visioning exercises that helped set the tone for the week ahead.

The evening began with an introduction by City officials, who emphasized the importance of the Comprehensive Plan as Cambridge's roadmap for managing growth, enhancing resilience, and improving quality of life. Members of the consultant team provided an overview of the charrette process, explaining how public input would directly guide plan development and outlining the opportunities for participation throughout the week. Following the presentation, participants worked in small groups with facilitators to identify key community priorities, opportunities, and challenges. Discussion topics included strengthening Downtown and the waterfront, expanding housing options, improving connectivity across neighborhoods, and protecting natural resources.

The Kick-Off event not only energized participants but also ensured that the charrette began with clear community direction. The ideas and feedback gathered during this session directly informed the team's work in the following days, shaping the concepts and strategies that would ultimately guide the Cambridge Comprehensive Plan.

Community members at the charrette listening to their peers about their ideas for Cambridge

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Interactive Exercises

Community members were invited to participate in a series of interactive exercises designed to capture their priorities, values, and ideas for Cambridge's future. These activities provided direct feedback that guided the planning team's work during the open studio sessions and throughout Charrette Week. The following summaries highlight the key exercises and the insights they generated:

1. Table Exercises and Charrette Survey

Throughout the week, residents joined small group table discussions facilitated by members of the planning team. Each table focused on a different topic area—such as housing, transportation, economic development, and the environment, and participants were invited to discuss challenges, opportunities, and ideas for improvement.

To complement the discussions, participants completed a Charrette Survey, which asked for their input on community priorities, quality-of-life issues, and potential strategies for the future. This combination of guided conversation and structured feedback helped ensure that every participant's voice was captured and that emerging themes reflected a broad cross-section of the community.

Common topics raised during these sessions included revitalizing Downtown, improving neighborhood connectivity, enhancing waterfront access, expanding housing options, and protecting Cambridge's historic and environmental assets.

Mapping Exercises

At the tables, participants took part in a series of interactive mapping exercises that explored the community's vision for future growth, connectivity, and neighborhood improvement. Residents and stakeholders identified areas with potential for infill and redevelopment, highlighted key corridors needing safety and aesthetic upgrades, and mapped natural assets and historic features that should be preserved. The mapping input directly informed the Big 5 Ideas, particularly the identification of Neighborhood Centers, Connected Corridors, and Waterfront 20/20 opportunities, ensuring that the spatial vision of the Comprehensive Plan reflects community values and on-the-ground insight.

2. Community Image Survey

As part of the public engagement process, a Community Image Survey was conducted to gather input on community design preferences and perceptions of future growth in Cambridge. Participants reviewed photo boards representing a range of building types, public spaces, and streetscapes, identifying which images best reflected the desired character of the city. The feedback provided guidance on preferred development patterns, architectural scale, and the overall look and feel of new projects.

Additional input was collected during outreach at the Elks Lodge Parade and Street Fair on October 25, where the project team hosted an open-air booth along Pine Street. This event expanded participation to residents who might not typically attend public meetings and encouraged feedback from a broader cross-section of the community. Comments gathered emphasized the importance of balancing new housing with economic growth, improving neighborhood connectivity, and ensuring equitable access to parks and open space. Together, the Community Image Survey and festival outreach offered valuable insight into how residents envision Cambridge's future. The results affirmed strong community interest in preserving the city's small-town character while supporting thoughtful growth, local employment opportunities, and inclusive neighborhood investment. Several participants expressed concern that the City's focus on new housing along Douglass Street should be balanced with efforts to attract higher-paying jobs and new employers. Others appreciated the plan's emphasis on economic development and the opportunity to build on Cambridge's deep-water port advantage. Overall, participants valued the City's outreach efforts and highlighted the importance of inclusive engagement and improved trail connectivity linking east–west neighborhoods and parks.

3. Online Community Survey

In addition to the in-person charrette, an online survey extended participation to residents who could not attend the week's events. The digital platform mirrored many of the same questions posed during the table exercises and image survey, allowing the team to gather over a hundred additional responses.

This online feedback reinforced many of the themes identified in person, particularly the desire to strengthen Cambridge's economy, enhance walkability and connectivity, and preserve the City's character while encouraging smart, sustainable growth.

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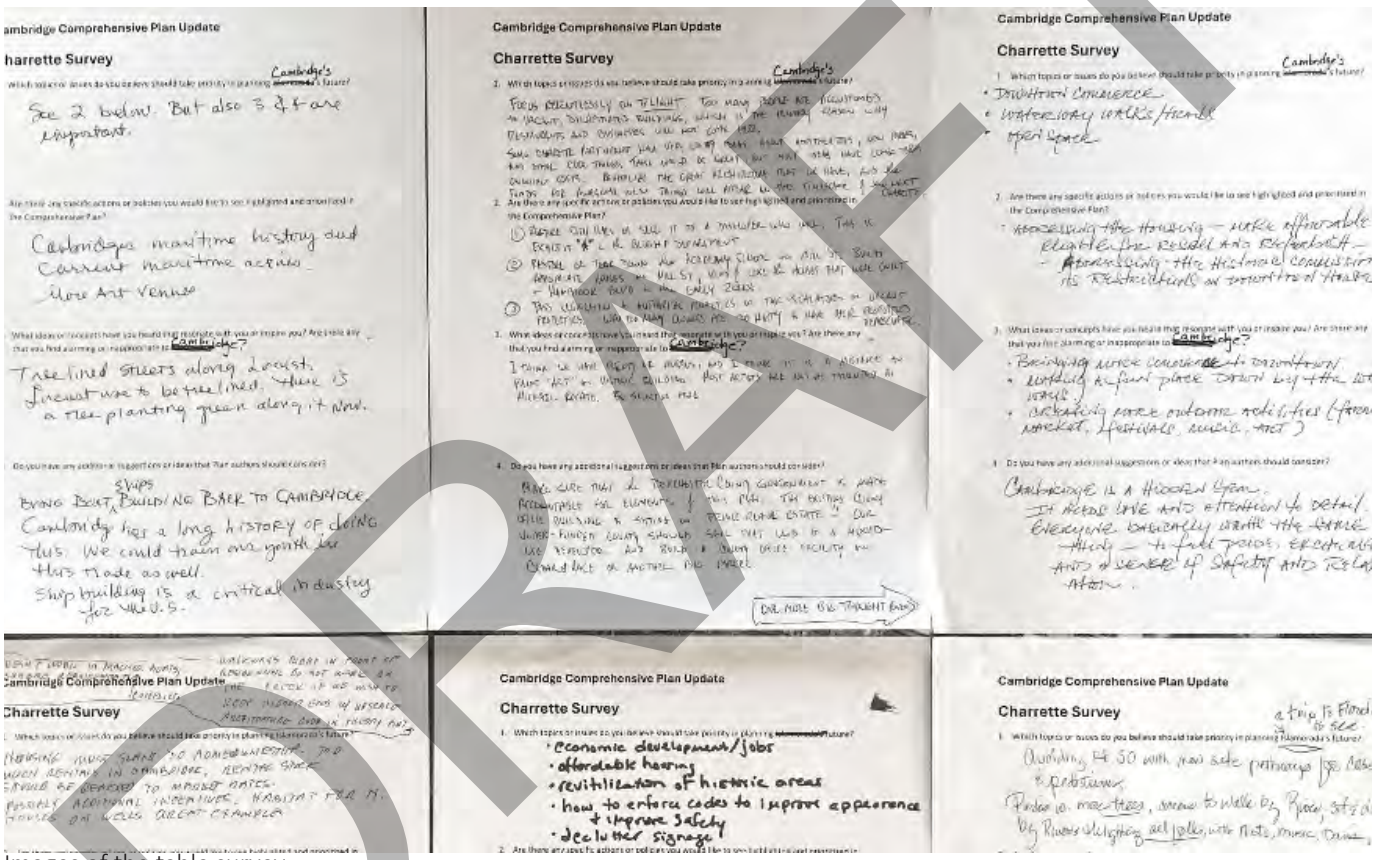
Attendees of the charrette gathering around the table for mapping exercises

A Cambridge community member sharing his tables map from the mapping exercise during the Charrette



Images of the table survey

During the charrette exercises, participants were asked to participant in a word cloud exercises, questions included: “one word that comes to mind about Cambridge now” and one words that comes to mind about Cambridge in the future”.

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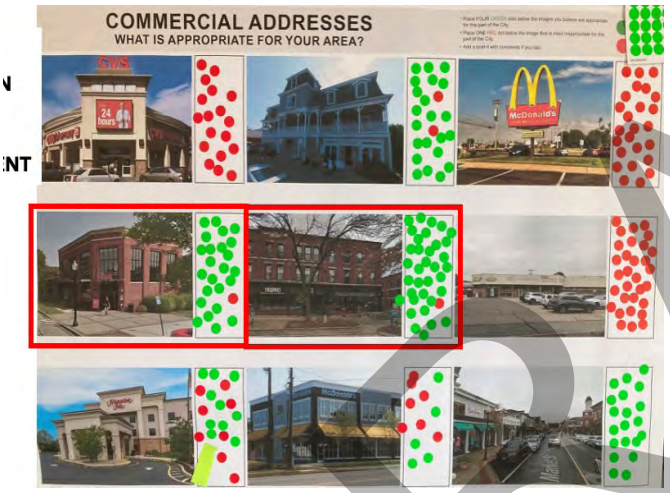
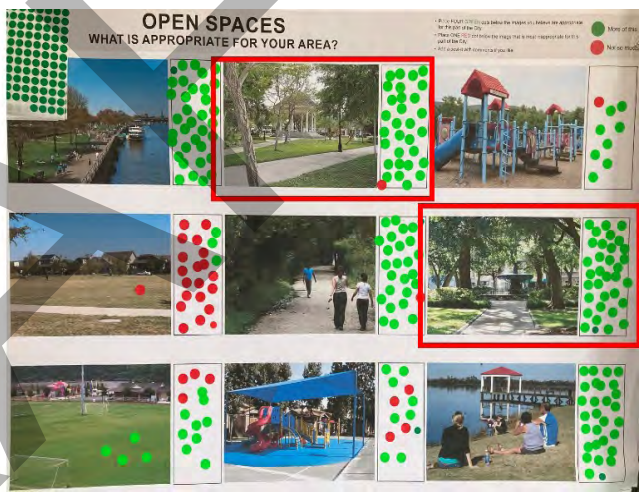
Visual Preference Surveys Results from the Charrette





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Online Survey Questions and Results Examples

5.Choose your top three priorities for the Comprehensive Plan Update

- [ ] Increasing housing options
- [ ] Density
- [ ] Affordable housing
- [ ] Infrastructure
- [ ] Sea level rise and climate change
- [ ] Traffic
- [ ] Pedestrian & biking infrastructure
- [ ] Green and ope space
- [ ] Conservation
- [ ] Neighborhood identity
- [ ] Public works and infrastructure

1. Choose all the statements you most correctly identify with

- [ ] I am a resident of Cambridge
- [ ] I work in Cambridge
- [ ] I own a business in Cambridge
- [ ] I own a home in Cambridge
- [ ] I frequently visit or spend time in Cambridge

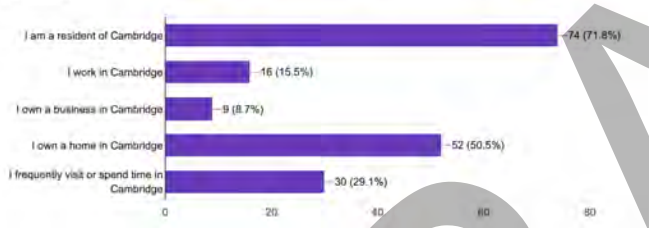
13. Are there specific areas within Cambridge you think should be preserved for environmental or historic reasons? If yes, where?

Short answer text

1. Choose all the statements you most correctly identify with

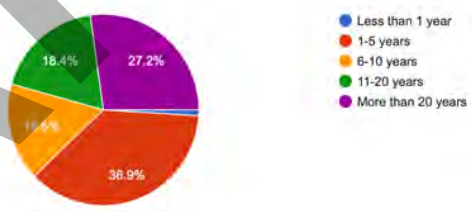
Copy chart

103 responses



2. How long have you been connected to Cambridge?

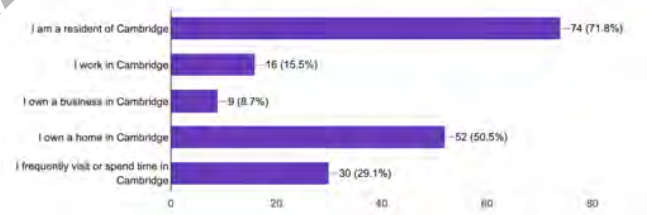
103 responses



1. Choose all the statements you most correctly identify with

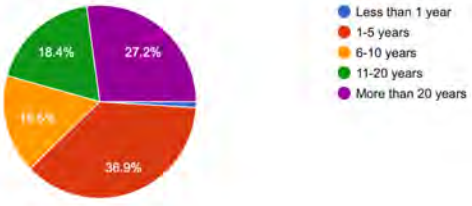
Copy chart

103 responses



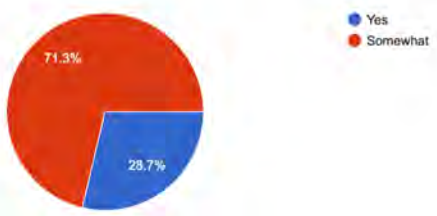
2. How long have you been connected to Cambridge?

103 responses



7. Do you feel that Cambridge does enough to preserve and promote its history and culture?

101 responses



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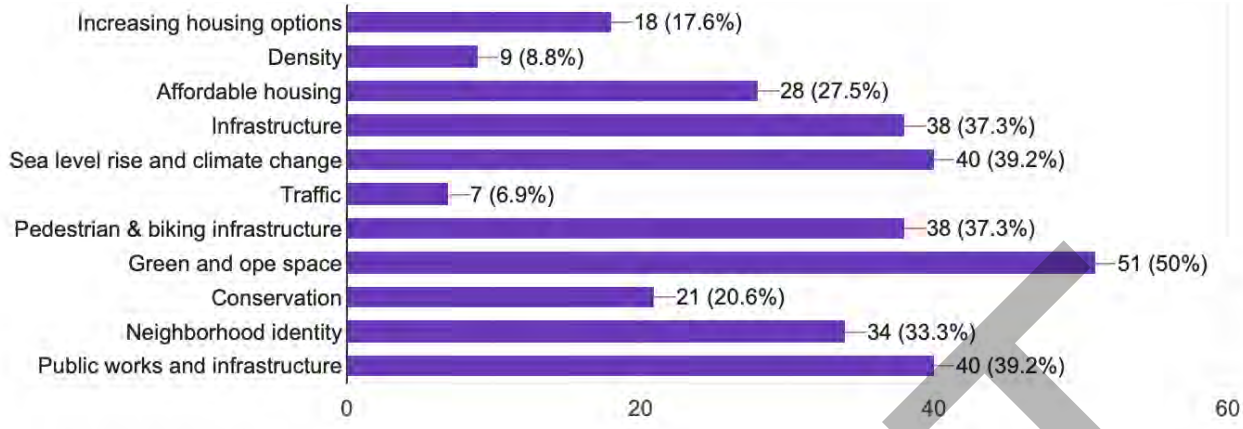
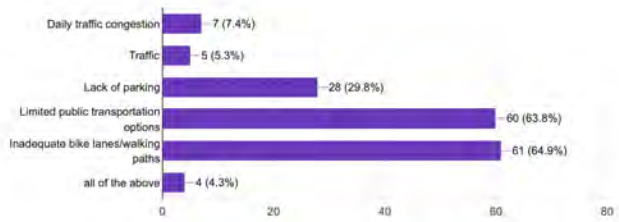
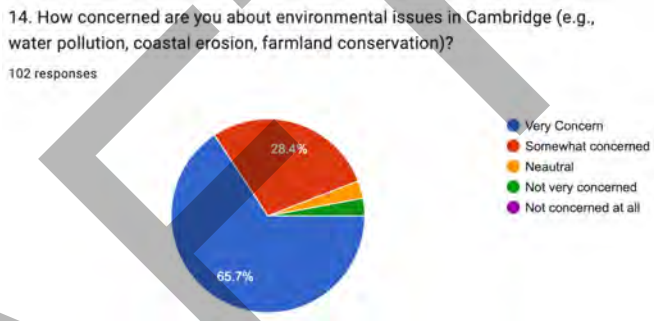
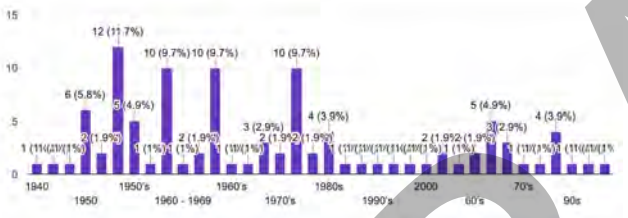
Online Survey Questions and Results Examples









Example Free Response Survey Question Summary

What are the top three goals you have for Cambridge's future?

Economic Development: Many responses focused on developing a vibrant economy, attracting new businesses and investment, creating job opportunities, and improving downtown areas with more diverse shops and restaurants.

Community and Quality of Life: Residents want improved quality of life, a safe community, better education, affordable housing, increased public spaces and art, and opportunities for youth.

Waterfront and Historic Preservation: There's a strong desire for thoughtful waterfront development that contributes to the economy and public access, alongside the preservation and enhancement of Cambridge's unique history and historic district.

Infrastructure and Sustainability: Goals include improved infrastructure (sidewalks, roads, utilities), addressing blight and dilapidated properties, and incorporating sustainable practices, climate resilience, and environmental protection.

Public Safety and Governance: Concerns about reduced crime and holding local government accountable were also frequently mentioned.

Do you have additional comments, concerns or suggestions regarding housing in Cambridge?

Code Enforcement and Property Maintenance: Many responses highlighted the need for stricter code enforcement on abandoned, vacant, and poorly maintained properties, and to hold slumlords accountable. Suggestions included a vacant property tax for blighted properties and incentives for landlords to improve their properties.

Affordable Housing and Diverse Options: There's a strong desire for more affordable housing options, including mixed-income developments, and a path to homeownership. Some respondents advocated for senior housing, while others expressed concerns about Section 8 housing and halfway houses in residential neighborhoods.

Historic District Preservation: Several comments emphasized protecting the historic district from inappropriate renovations by "flippers" and limiting multi-family/apartment conversions and group homes. Suggestions included salvaging house parts for re-use and offering tax breaks or grants for renovations.

Development and Innovation: Respondents suggested building planned communities that integrate restaurants, diverse housing styles, and retail, to make Cambridge feel like a vacation destination. There was also a call for innovative ways to create affordable rental units and to consider apartment-style options convenient to downtown.

Community Support and Incentives: Ideas included grants and loans for existing housing repairs, incentives for newcomers to renovate, and programs like "Homeless to Homeowner" and Habitat for Humanity. There's also a suggestion for first-time home-buyer classes.

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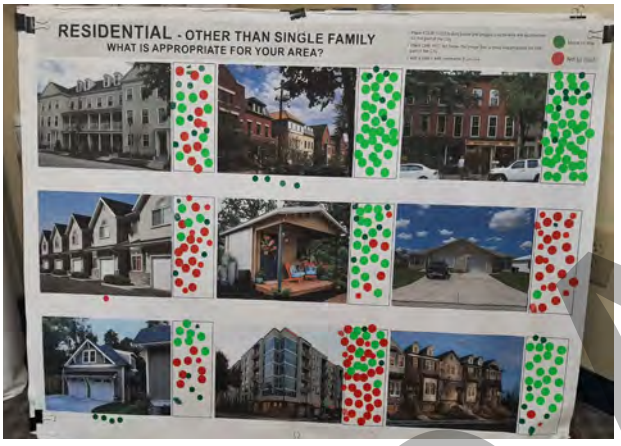
Visual Preference Survey Results from Elk Lodge Parade Street Fair



City Council Members at the Fair

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Technical Meetings

As part of the Cambridge Charrette process, a series of technical meetings were held with City staff, local stakeholders, and subject-matter experts. These meetings provided a focused space for deeper discussion on complex issues, challenges, and opportunities, ensuring that both technical expertise and community perspectives informed the Comprehensive Plan.

In total, more than 90 participants took part in these sessions, each focused on specific topic areas critical to Cambridge's future.

Each meeting explored key themes across a range of disciplines, with representation from local government departments, community organizations, regional agencies, and business leaders. Discussion topics included:

- Parks and Open Space
- Economic Development and Workforce Growth
- Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization
- Land Use and Development Regulations
- Natural Resources, Environmental Management, and the Waterfront
- Mobility, Transportation, and Parking
- Cultural and Historic Preservation, Community Design, and Placemaking

The technical meetings played a vital role in refining the concepts generated during public sessions, ensuring that plan recommendations reflected both broad community aspirations and technical feasibility.

Through these targeted discussions, the planning team was able to address complex, cross-cutting issues such as housing affordability, infrastructure investment, environmental resilience, and equitable growth. The dialogue between technical specialists and community representatives ensured that the Cambridge Comprehensive Plan reflects not only the City's values but also the practical realities of implementation.

Hands-On Design Session:
135+ People

Open Studio Drop Ins:
65+ People

Technical Meetings:
90+ Attendees

Open House
75+ Attendees

Total Participation:
375+ People

City Council members and technical experts discussing at the technical meetings.

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Work-in-Progress Presentation

The Cambridge Comprehensive Plan charrette concluded on Friday, August 22, 2025, with a Work-in-Progress (WIP) Presentation held at the Packing House. The event marked the culmination of a week of intensive community engagement, design collaboration, and technical analysis.

Participation throughout the week was broad and enthusiastic, demonstrating Cambridge residents' deep interest in shaping the city's future. Nearly 70 residents participated in the Hands-On Design Session at the Kick-Off event, while dozens more visited the studio daily to share feedback and ideas. More than 100 stakeholders, including local business owners, property managers, developers, and representatives from Dorchester County and the Maryland Department of Planning—participated through focused technical meetings and discussions. Combined with virtual participation, the process engaged more than 350 community members.

During the Work-in-Progress Presentation, the project team—working closely with City staff, the Planning Commission, and local stakeholders—presented the emerging direction for the Comprehensive Plan update, highlighting draft goals, objectives, and strategies across all major plan elements.

Key themes, concluded as "Big 5 Ideas" included:

1. Preserved Downtown – Reinforcing the heart of Cambridge as a vibrant, walkable center of commerce, culture, and history.
2. Neighborhood Centers and Crossroads – Strengthening local gathering places and commercial nodes that support everyday needs within neighborhoods.
3. Southside Crossing Town Center – Envisioning a mixed-use destination south of Route 50 to serve as a new employment and housing hub.
4. Waterfront 20/20 – Expanding public access and development along the waterfront in a way that balances economic growth with environmental stewardship.
5. Connected Corridors – Improving mobility, safety, and aesthetics along major routes like Race Street, Washington Street, and Maryland Avenue to better link neighborhoods and destinations.

The presentation provided an opportunity for the community to see how their feedback shaped the draft vision and strategies to date, while offering additional input on priorities and refinement. The ideas and discussions from this session will guide the next phase of plan development and help shape the final Comprehensive Plan for the City of Cambridge.

Summary of Public Participation

Public participation in the Cambridge Comprehensive Plan process has been broad, inclusive, and community-driven, reflecting the city's commitment to collaborative planning. Over several months, the project team engaged residents, business owners, and local organizations through hands-on workshops, mapping exercises, image surveys, and open-house discussions.

Additional outreach during community events, such as the Elks Lodge Parade and Street Fair, helped reach residents who might not typically attend formal meetings, ensuring a more representative process. Participants consistently emphasized the need to revitalize neighborhoods while preserving Cambridge's historic and cultural character, strengthen mobility and east–west connectivity, and expand employment and housing opportunities. Many also highlighted the importance of balancing economic development with environmental stewardship, particularly around the city's waterfront and major corridors.

Community feedback underscored the desire for more diverse housing options, enhanced public spaces and trails, and a continued focus on inclusive growth and resilience. These insights directly shaped the Big 5 Ideas that anchor the Comprehensive Plan—Preserved Downtown, Neighborhood Centers and Crossroads, Southside Crossing Town Center, Waterfront 20/20, and Connected Corridors—each capturing the values and priorities expressed throughout public engagement.

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