

Brighton Area Vision Plan

Planning Board Public Meeting

January 22, 2026

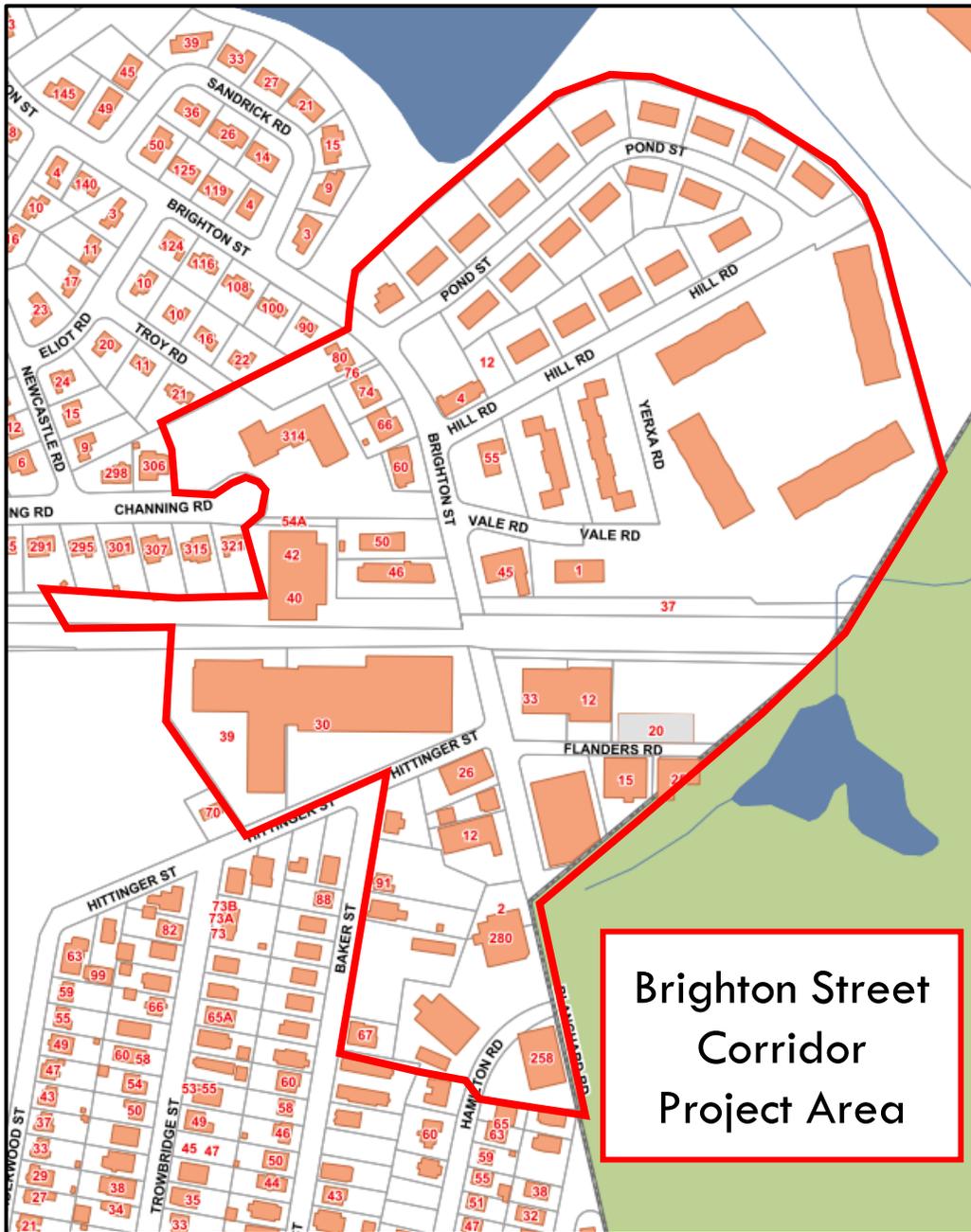
Draft Brighton Area Vision Plan – February 2026

Brighton Area Vision Plan

February 2026

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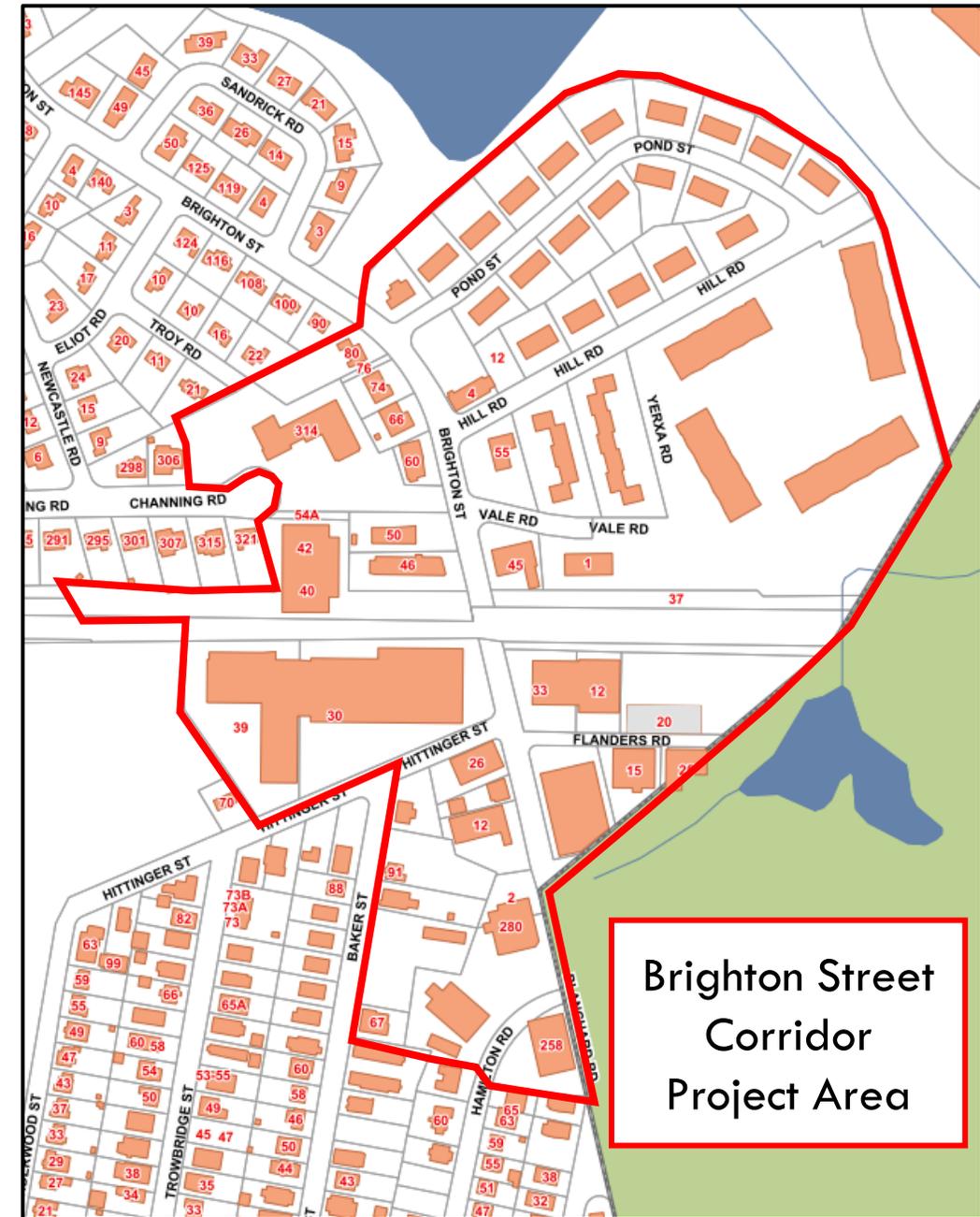
Introduction & Purpose

- **Brighton Street is one of Belmont's key gateways** – linking neighborhoods, business areas, recreational assets, and regional connections.
- The Vision Plan seeks a framework to:
 - Enhance/strengthen a key commercial corridor in town
 - Grow the town's commercial tax base
 - Expand housing opportunities
 - Provide additional amenities for residents, businesses, and visitors
 - Leverage existing, forthcoming, and potential transit options
- A key goal of the Vision Plan will be to develop a new zoning overlay district for this area.
- Provide new opportunities for growth and guide reinvestment that reflects the needs of the neighborhood, the Town, property owners, businesses, and visitors.

Guiding Principles

Intended to ensure that any proposed changes to this area support a connected, vibrant, and resilient community are around the importance of:

- Connected neighborhoods and multi-modal transportation options
- Revitalization of public spaces
- Private investment in commercial centers/corridors
- Redevelopment of underutilized properties
- Diversifying municipal tax base
- Meeting current housing needs
- Amenities for residents, businesses, and visitors
- Open spaces and recreations areas
- New development complementing Town's form and fabric



Brighton Street Corridor Vision Statement

“The Brighton Street Corridor will become a vibrant, walkable, and well-connected gateway that reflects Belmont’s character while embracing new opportunities for housing, neighborhood-serving businesses, and safe, multimodal access.

Guided by community priorities and realistic market conditions, the corridor will transition from a fragmented mix of uses into a cohesive district with high-quality design, improved streetscapes, strong connections to the Alewife MBTA station and the Community Path bikeway, and redevelopment that provides amenities, open spaces, and diverse housing options.

This vision balances growth with sensitivity to existing neighborhoods, affordability, infrastructure capacity, and environmental resilience, ensuring that Brighton Street evolves into a lively, attractive, and sustainable place for current and future generations.”

Brighton Street Corridor Project Area

Existing Conditions

- Land Use
- Transportation
- Open Space & Recreation
- Natural, Cultural & Historic Resources
- Public Utilities & Infrastructure
- Population & Housing

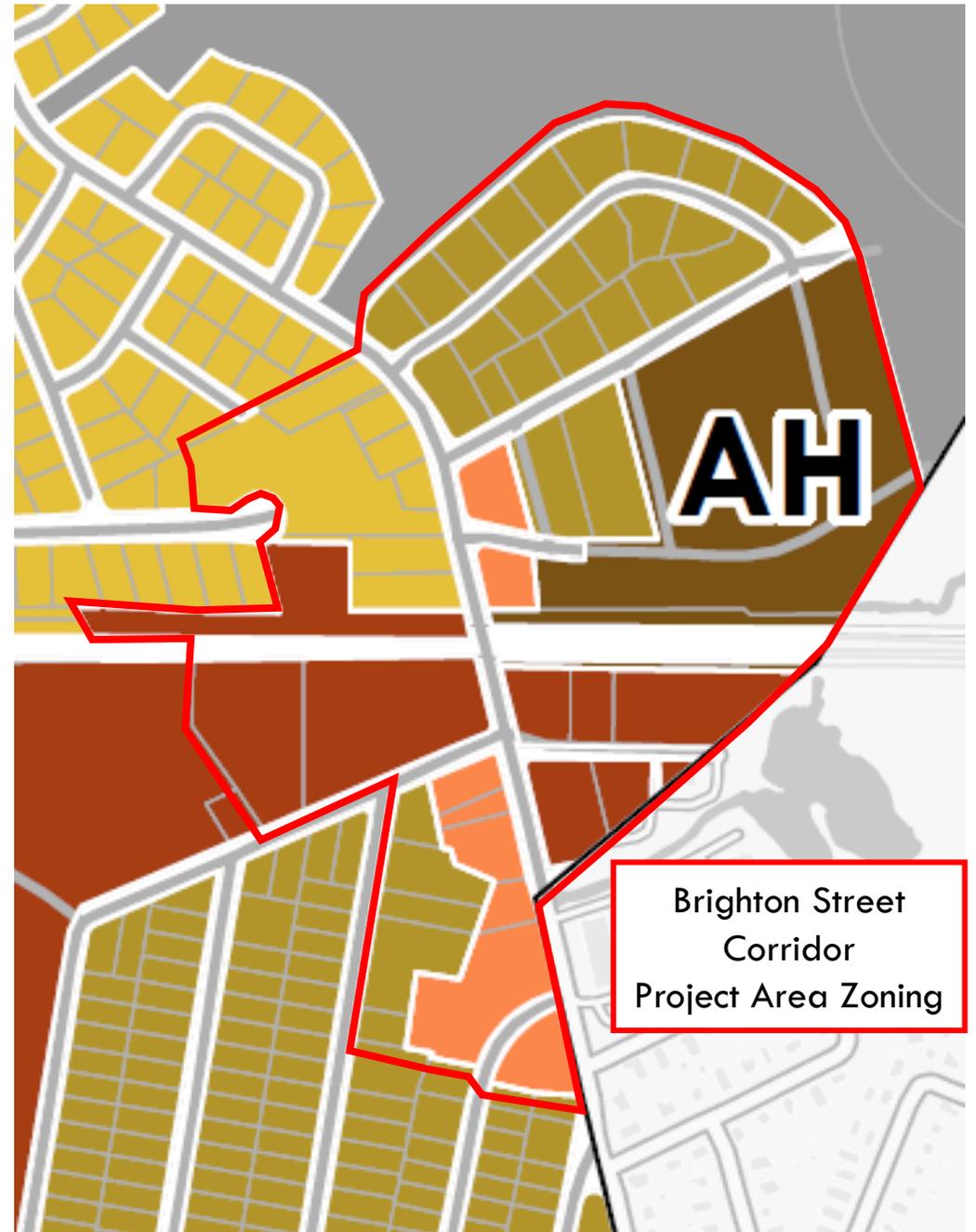


Brighton Street Corridor Land Use

- Brighton Street, between Pond Street and Hamilton Road
- Current land uses include:
 - Purecoat North Plant
 - Hill Estates Complex
 - Cornerstone Baptist Church
 - Small to medium sized commercial buildings
 - A number of small residential parcels
 - Eversource Facility

Brighton St Zoning is currently a mix of:

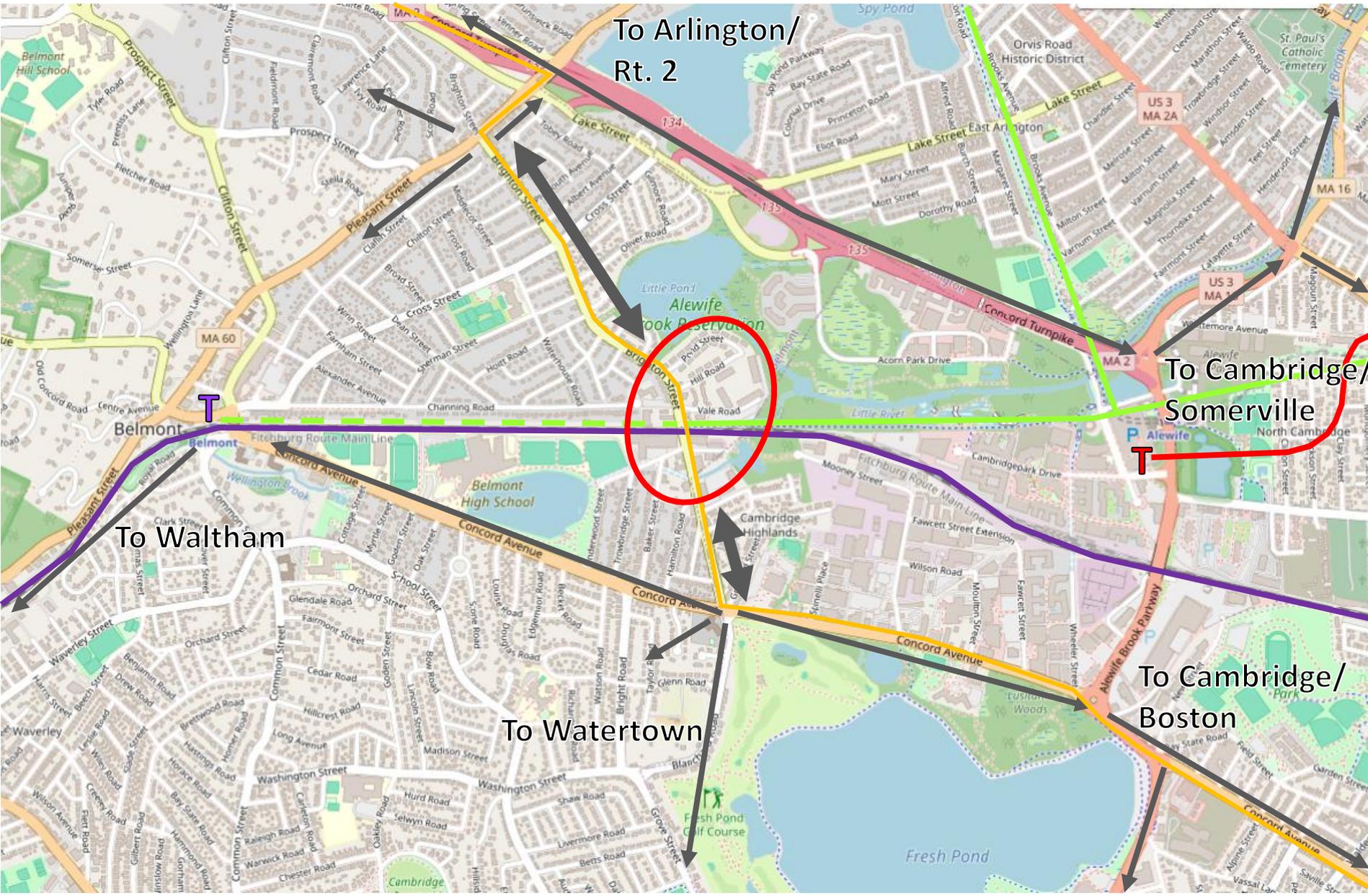
- **Apartment House (AH)**
- **General Residential (GR)**
- **General Business (GB)**
- **Local Business 3 (LB-3)**
- **Single Residence C (SR-C)**



Brighton Street Corridor Transportation Connections

- Well connected to regional destinations
- High traffic/congestion area

- Fitchburg Cutoff/
Belmont Community
Path Bikeways
- MBTA Bus #78
- MBTA Redline
- MBTA Fitchburg
Commuter Rail Line



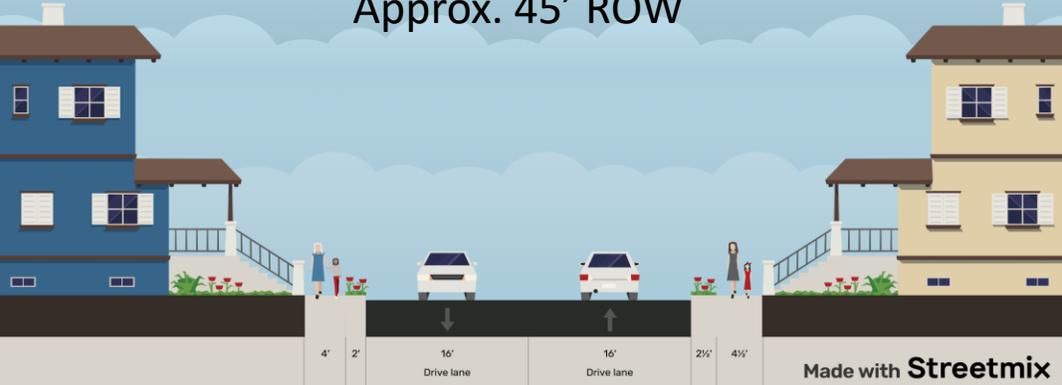
Brighton Street Right-of-way

(Measurements are approximations)

- Limited street parking
- Numerous large curb cuts
- Narrow/variable street width
- No turning lanes
- No bicycle accommodations
- Limited street tree coverage

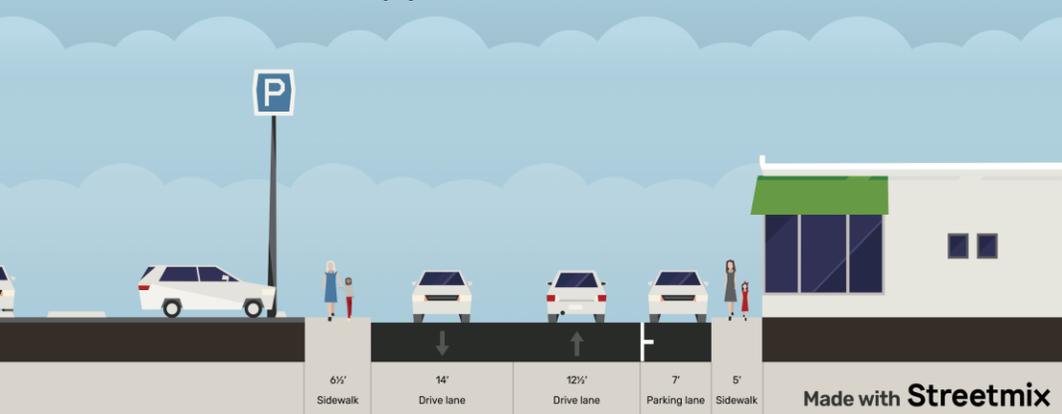
Brighton St @ Pond St

Approx. 45' ROW



Brighton Street @ Comella's

Approx. 45' ROW



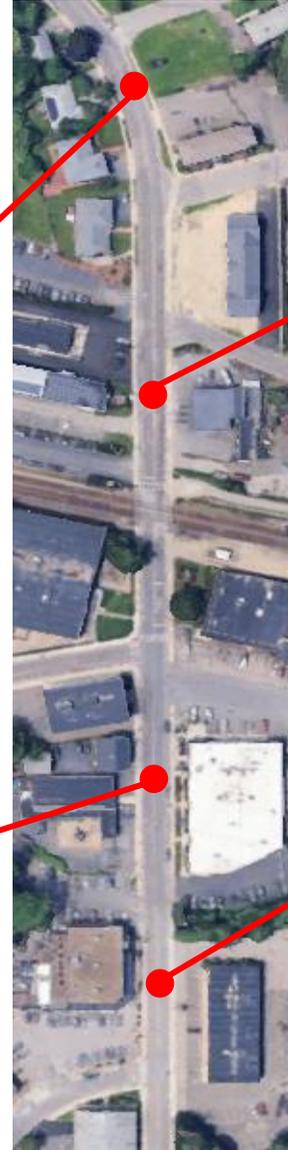
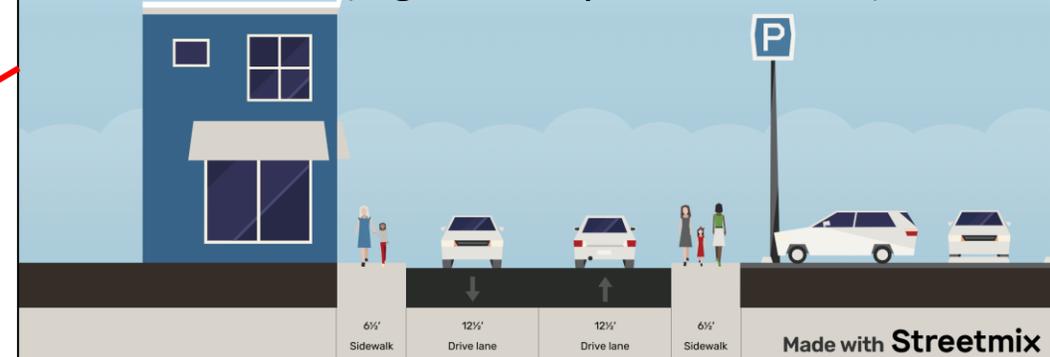
Brighton Street @ Vale Rd

Approx. 45' ROW



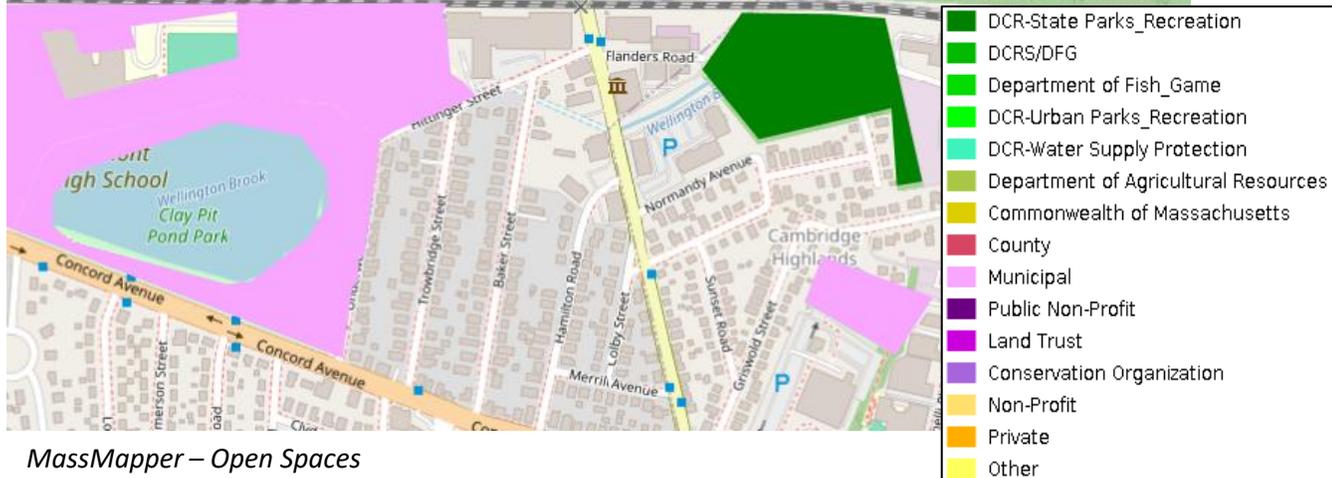
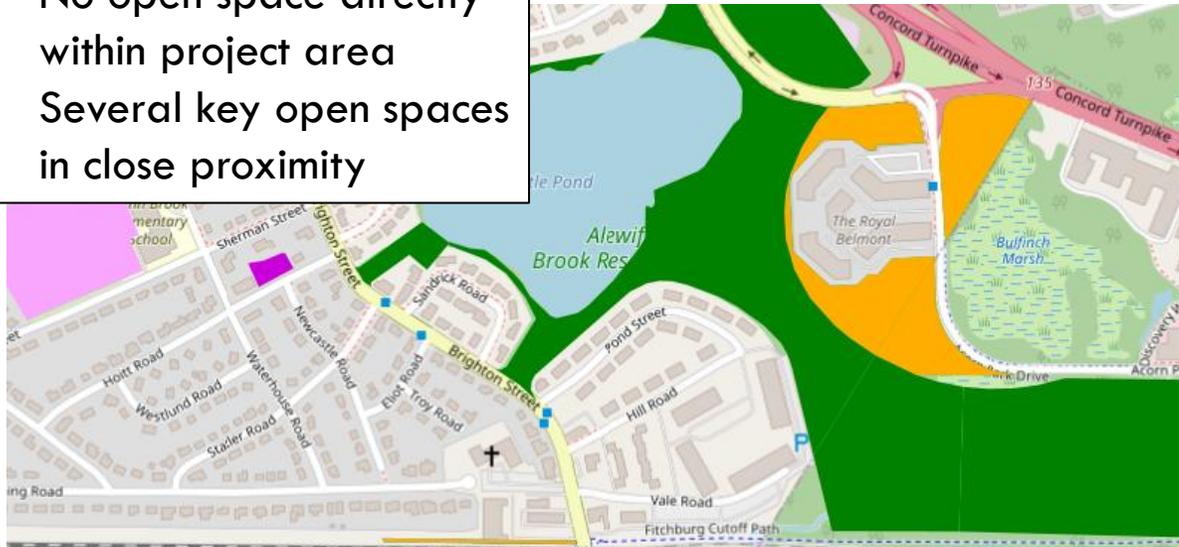
Brighton St @ Hillside Garden

Approx. 38' ROW
(Right-of-way narrows here)

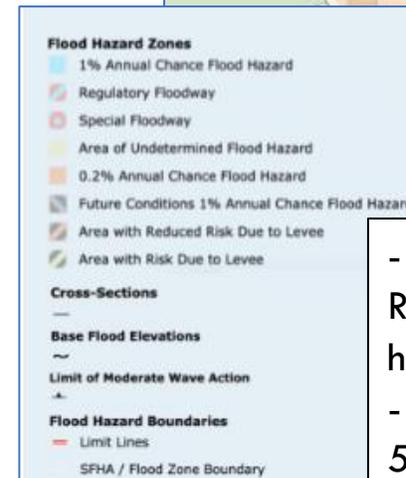


Brighton Street Corridor Open Space and Recreation & Natural, Cultural and Historic Resources

- No open space directly within project area
- Several key open spaces in close proximity



MassMapper – Open Spaces



- Project area is close to the Regulatory Floodway, barely hitting 100-year flood plain
- Some parcels are within the 500-year (0.2%) flood plain

Brighton Street Corridor Public Utilities & Infrastructure

- Electric – Belmont Light
- Water/Sewer – Belmont DPW & MWRA
- Stormwater - Belmont DPW
- Natural Gas – Eversource
- Telecom/Internet – Verizon, Xfinity, Astound, etc.



Potential Concerns for Future Growth:

- Capacity concerns
- Dated water and sewer infrastructure
- Existing stormwater infrastructure & impervious surfaces

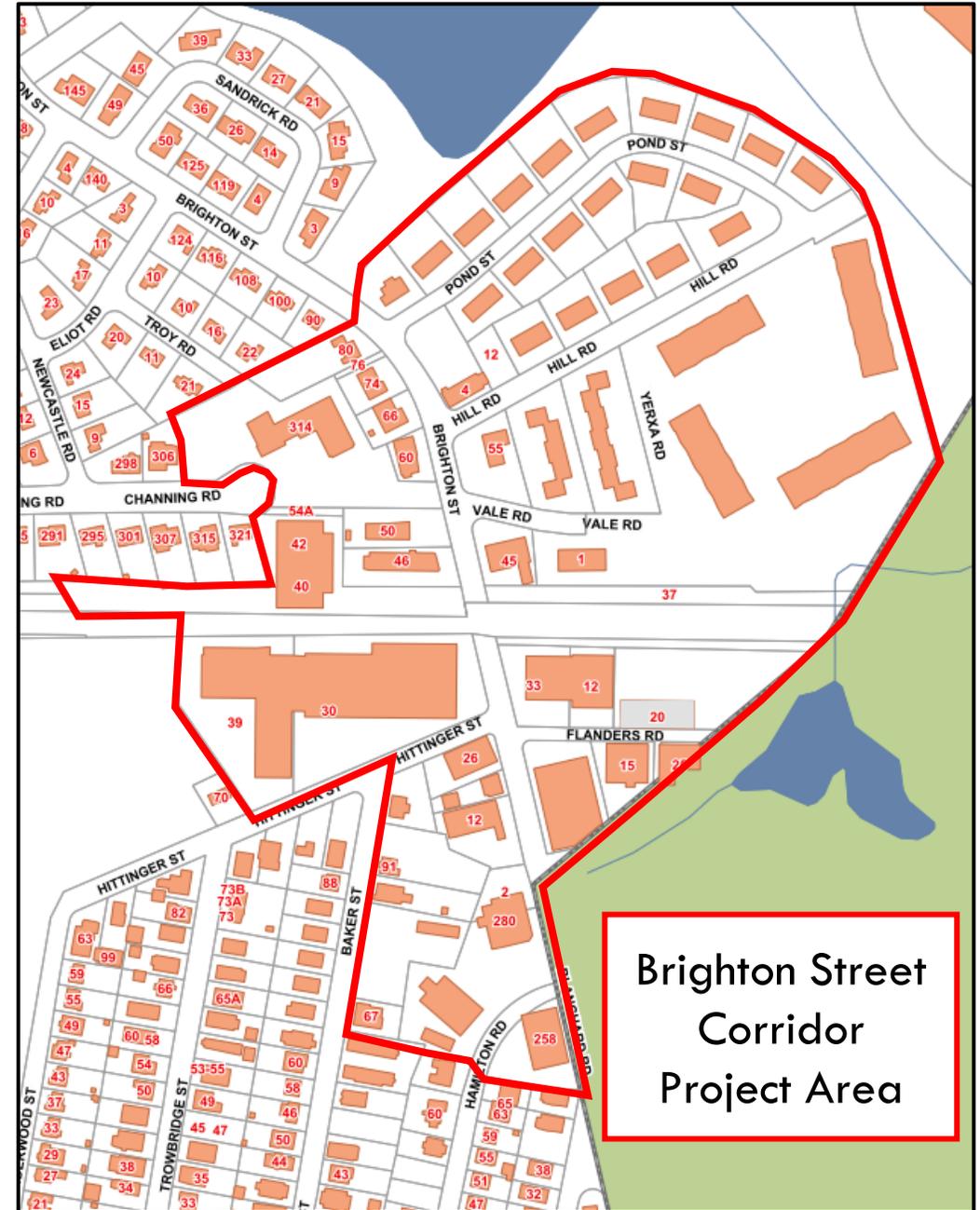
Opportunity:

- Introduce more green infrastructure
- Infrastructure improvements that benefit both new and existing users

Brighton Street Corridor Population & Housing

Estimated 486 housing units and 1,020 persons within Project Area (extrapolated using 2020 U.S. Census data)

- Vast majority of units located at the Hill Estates complex
 - Considered to be Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH)
- Surrounding Area - Largely single-family homes to the north & a mix of single-, two-, and multi-family homes to the south



Brighton Street Corridor Market Analysis

Conducted by RKG Associates in 2024

Brighton Street is “...one of the few areas in town that could support greater levels of commercial development from the perspective of available developable space.”

- Mixed Use Residential Development
- Transit-Oriented Multi-Family Housing
- Retail and Neighborhood Services



- Small Scale Office and Medical Services
- Strategic Advantage: Proximity to Cambridge and Alewife
- Need for Zoning Reform to Unlock Potential

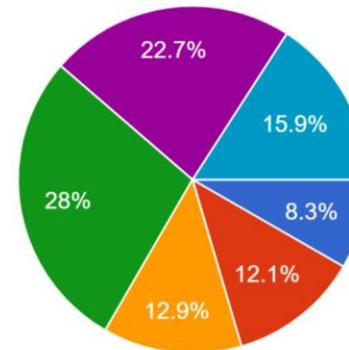
Brighton Street Corridor Public Outreach Survey

Conducted by the Office of Planning & Building in Spring 2025 – 137 responses

- Desire to see a medium change to complete redevelopment of the area
- Traffic, congestion and parking a concern
- Limited commercial opportunities
- Improved aesthetic and streetscape
- Better pedestrian and bicycle facilities

What degree of change would you like to see related to the mapped Brighton Street area? Limited change might be improving the buildings and storefronts in the area with new ones of a larger scale.

132 responses



- No Change. I like it just the way it is.
- Limited Change
- Moderate Change
- Medium Change
- Substantial Change
- Complete Redevelopment

67%

Brighton Street Corridor

Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) Urban Politics Field Lab Project

- Data Analysis
- Resident Engagement
 - 4 focus groups and 1 survey
- Developer & Property Owner Interviews
 - 14 private contributors
- Peer City Interviews

AFFORDABILITY & EQUITY	COMMUNITY	FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS
<p>Housing is the top concern for affordability and equity. Residents recognize a strong need for more affordable housing, with some accepting that solutions could involve inconveniencing a few for the benefit of many. However, they don't want Brighton Street to shoulder full responsibility for providing affordable housing. They hope to see the Hill Estates protected and more integrated with the rest of the town, recognizing that Hill Estates' interests have not always been well represented in local decision-making.</p> <p>Residents Tend to Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affordable housing Protecting and integrating Hill Estates <p>Residents Tend to Oppose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Luxury housing and upscale amenities <p><i>"This area includes voices that are underrepresented in our community."</i></p> 	<p>Resident communities near the Brighton Street Corridor largely revolve around family life and senior living. Residents enjoy spending much of their social time outdoors, but indoors public and communal spaces gain a heightened importance during the winter. There is clear demand for more of these social spaces.</p> <p>Residents Tend to Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spaces to be with neighbors and socialize Family and senior-friendly Outdoors living <p>Residents Tend to Oppose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adult experiences Individual experiences <p><i>"I like seeing liveliness. People walking their dogs, taking their kids to get ice cream."</i></p> 	<p>Many residents recognize the importance of generating tax revenue for the Town, with some saying revenue is so important that it should be the primary factor guiding local decision-making. That said, they are uncertain about what impacts they can actually expect from redevelopment, with some holding reservations that increased traffic or population could actually burden public services further. Residents are interested in hearing outside professional assessments.</p> <p>Residents Tend to Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revenue-generating opportunities Professional financial assessments Transparency on expected impacts <p>Residents Tend to Oppose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unclear and unsubstantial financial/revenue implications <p><i>"When we talk about revenue, we are really talking about preserving schools, keeping seniors in town, and letting people stay in their homes."</i></p> 
SUSTAINABILITY	MOBILITY	PARKING
<p>Flooding is a top concern around redevelopment in the area, with many suggesting the need for resilient construction features like elevated foundations and rain gardens. There are also concerns around environmental contamination from Pure Coat with residents wanting a thorough cleanup before development. Additionally, given the importance of outside activities for Belmont residents' lifestyle, they hope to see continued protection of natural and green spaces.</p> <p>Residents Tend to Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resilient development Environmental protection <p>Residents Tend to Oppose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contamination and pollution Reduced green space <p><i>"This is a low point in Belmont so there are concerns about drainage and flooding."</i></p> 	<p>Residents support multimodal mobility and believe the area should accommodate walking, biking, and driving. This should aim to alleviate reliance on automobile traffic, as overcongestion is one of residents' top concerns around future development. Pedestrian and cyclist safety, especially at intersections, is the top priority for multimodal mobility. The community path is an exciting new amenity, and an additional MBTA stop is a possibility.</p> <p>Residents Tend to Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety features Multimodal transit Walkability <p>Residents Tend to Oppose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overcongestion Traffic <p><i>"Accommodate biking, walking, and driving."</i></p> 	<p>Despite desiring walkability and bikability, many residents believe some parking is essential, saying that businesses will struggle to survive without the car traffic enabled by parking (especially during the winter). A few residents were concerned that parking could be a problem if new housing units were built. However, these concerns contrast with residents' strong interest in active sidewalks and small-scale look and feel. Putting parking in the back is a popular way of marrying the two.</p> <p>Residents Tend to Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being able to park at amenities Parking space for housing Parking in the back <p>Residents Tend to Oppose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large parking lots <p><i>"If we don't include parking, it will be a challenge to find retail that would survive solely on the bike path."</i></p> 
LOOK & FEEL	BUILDING HEIGHT	AMENITIES
<p>Nearly all residents desire a cohesive destination that fits Belmont's small-town character, favoring active sidewalks with accessible storefronts, and familiar materials like brick, wood, and other warm materials. However, some are open to more modern design, citing appreciation for the new public library. Residents value "organic" and "green" elements, including greenery, natural materials, and features that create opportunities for people to gather outside.</p> <p>Residents Tend to Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active sidewalks Familiar materials and designs Organic feel and outdoors spaces <p>Residents Tend to Oppose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urban and modern materials and design Hostile and car-oriented design <p><i>"Character and aesthetics are key, because they distinguish change that feels interesting versus aggressive."</i></p> 	<p>While some residents are open to greater height, there is broad agreement that Belmont residents would probably not tolerate any development over four stories tall. Residents concerned about revenue generation and affordability see increased height as a necessary piece of the puzzle. They see setbacks, and especially setbacks of upper levels, as an opportunity to prevent taller buildings from feeling "oppressive."</p> <p>Residents Tend to Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modest height increases (up to 4 stories) Evidence and reasoning for increased height Upper-level setbacks <p>Residents Tend to Oppose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large height increases (over 4 stories) <p><i>"We need to think strategically about where to put more height, and as someone who lives near here, I would love to see more 3-4 story buildings."</i></p> 	<p>Residents show strong preference for the following six categories of amenities: dining options, family-friendly recreation, health services, live entertainment and theaters, convenience and grocers, and boutique retail. They are mixed on local business vs. chains, with some feeling much stronger than others, but there is wide agreement that amenities should generally be small and scaled to the needs of the community.</p> <p>Residents Tend to Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A mix of local businesses, regional chains, and national chains Family-friendly and affordable Small-scale establishments <p>Residents Tend to Oppose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National big-box stores <p><i>"To me, what is more important is how the business interacts with the rest of the community."</i></p> 

HKS Urban Politics Field Lab Project

Resident Perspectives – Brighton Street

Desired Amenities & Services

- Restaurants and cafés with outdoor seating
- Small-format grocer, convenience store, or bodega
- Family-friendly dining and “third places” where people can gather

Built Form and Design Preferences

- Development that feels familiar, human-scaled, and visually warm
- Active, attractive sidewalks
- Buildings generally no taller than four stories, with upper-story setbacks
- Greenery and street trees

Environmental Considerations

- Flooding, stormwater, and soil contamination concerns—especially related to the Purecoat site

Mobility, Access, and Safety Concerns

- Traffic was the most commonly cited concern
- Improvements at congested intersections
- Safe multimodal access for walking, biking, and driving
- Support for pursuing a new MBTA Commuter Rail station in the area (most likely @ Alewife)

Housing Affordability and Equity

- Acknowledge need to preserve affordability, particularly for households at Hill Estates
- Redevelopment that does not displace vulnerable residents or raise neighborhood housing costs
- Broader range of housing options that support aging in place, smaller households, and moderate-income residents



HKS Urban Politics Field Lab Project

Resident Perspectives – Brighton Street

RESIDENT CONSIDERATIONS

BUILT FORM

- Familiar, warm architecture (e.g., brick)
- Open to up to 4 stories
- Active sidewalks and upper-level set-backs
- Greenery/natural features

MOBILITY & ACCESS

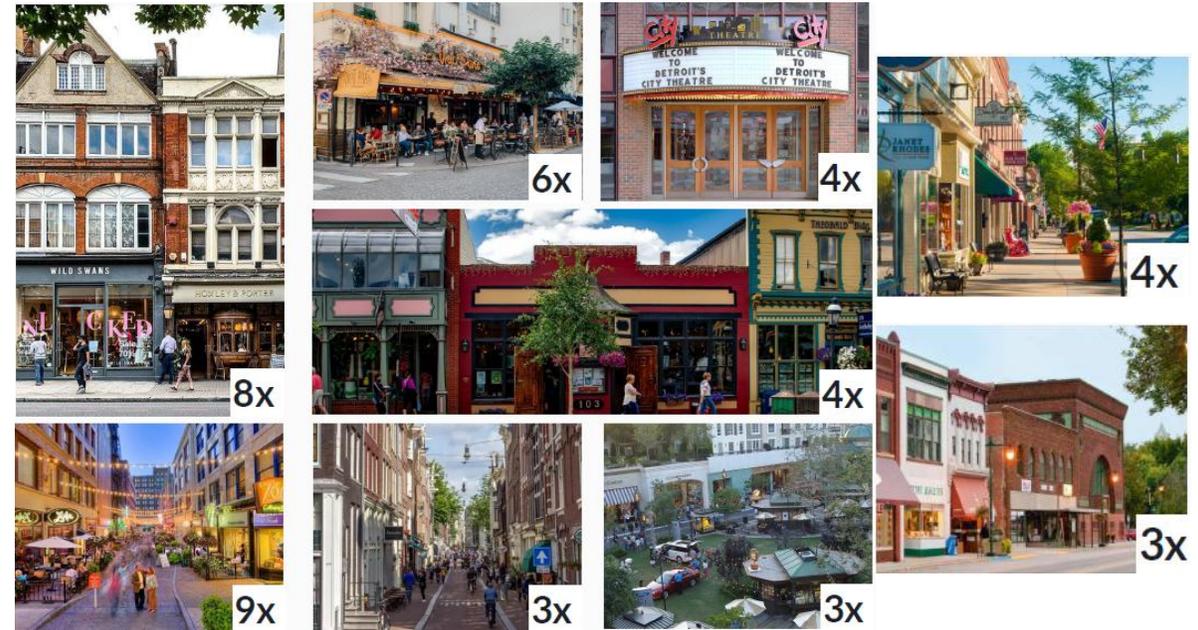
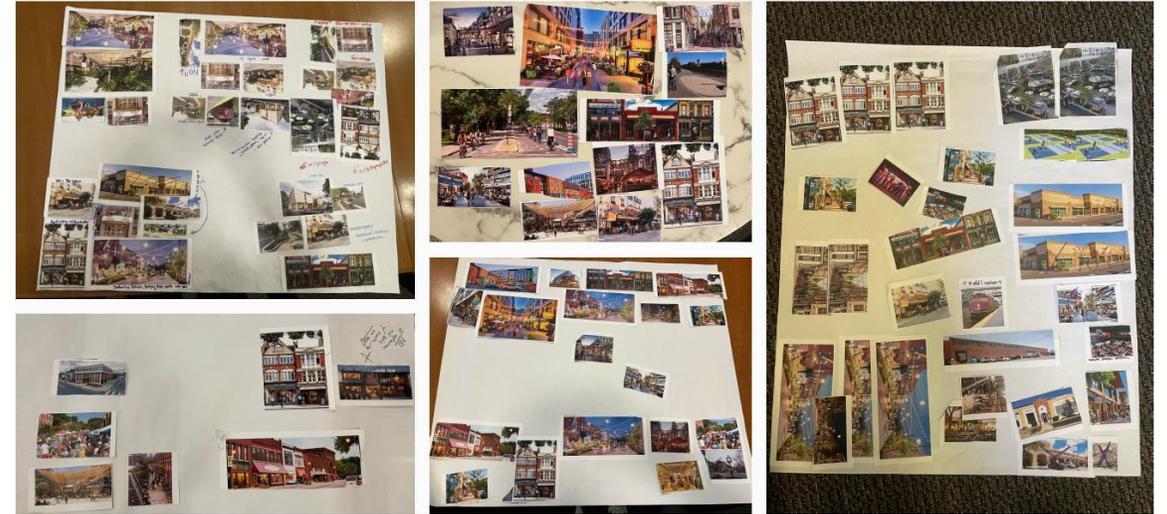
- Multi-modality (biking, walking, driving)
- Traffic mitigation
- Parking availability, parking in the back
- Pedestrian and bike safety

AMENITIES

- Local-serving amenities
- Third spaces
- Restaurants, grocers, family-friendly entertainment, health services

OTHER

- Environmental concerns (flood, contamination)
- Affordability
- Engage Hill Estates
- High city revenue opportunity



HKS Urban Politics Field Lab Project

Private Sector Input

PRIVATE SECTOR CONSIDERATIONS

BUILT FORM

- High FAR, reduced setbacks and parking reqs
- Reparcelizing for 5-over-1 construction
- Increase density to support commercial
- Ensuring zoning flexibility

MOBILITY & ACCESS

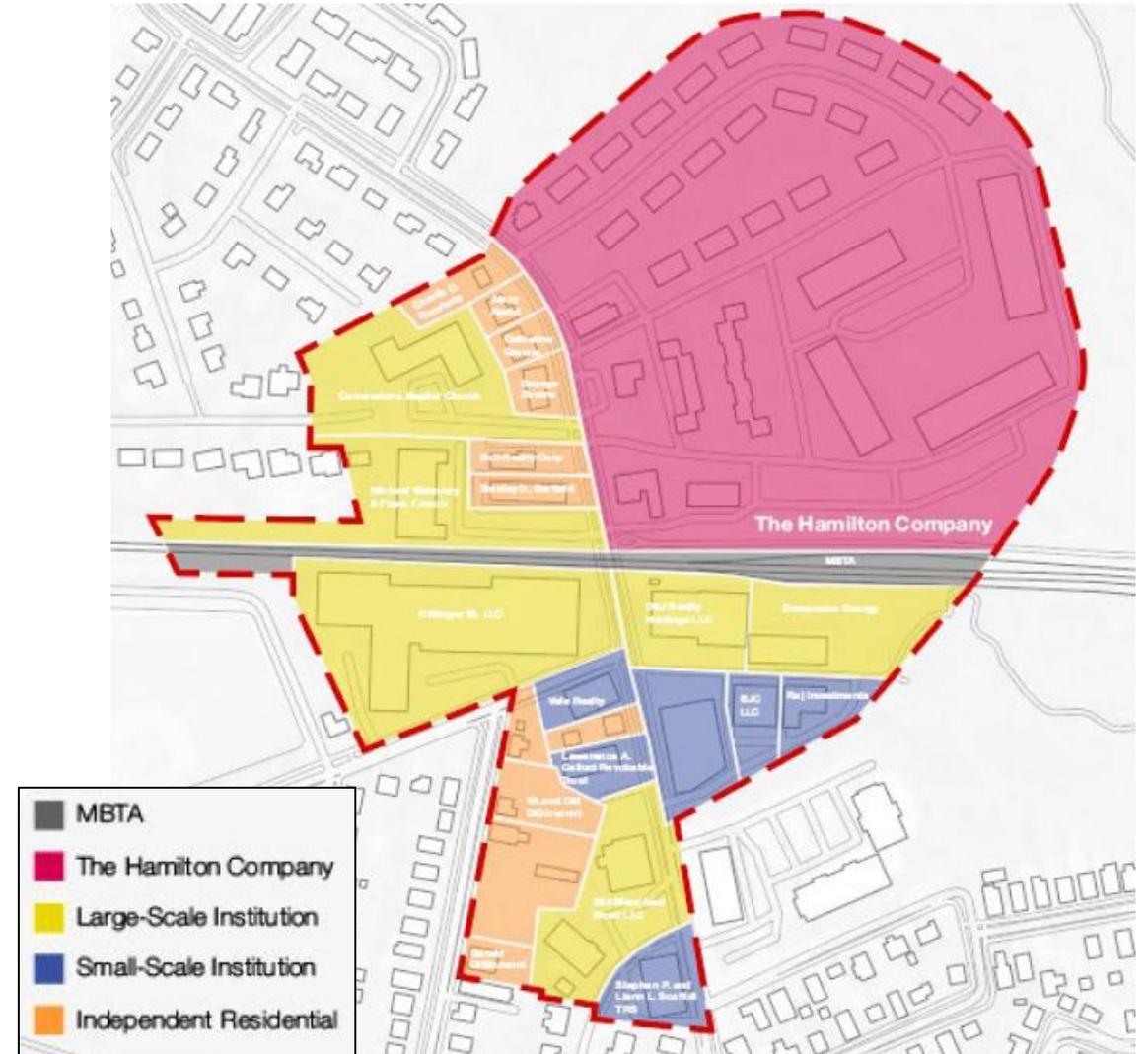
- Improve traffic flow
- Transit oriented development
- Sufficient parking to attract tenants
- Setbacks enabling street-accessible storefronts

FEASIBILITY

- Policy support to fund improved infrastructure
- Coordinated site control & phasing
- Speedy entitlement and permitting
- Housing as anchor, town support for affordable

OTHER

- Speedy entitlement and permitting
- A healthy feedback loop of communication
- Highlight appreciation potential
- Flood prevention



HKS Urban Politics Field Lab Project

Resident & Private Sector Perspectives

Areas of Alignment

- Consistent communication and engagement about future Town plans, and to provide direct input
- Transit-oriented development
- Walkability and bikeability to amenities
- Smaller setbacks at commercial corridors for street-accessible storefronts
- Greenery and social spaces
- Safety for pedestrians and bikers at major intersections
- Flood prevention

Areas of Non-alignment

- Number of buildable floors allowed
 - Residents prefer a max. of 4 floors vs. private entities seek a min. of 5 floors for feasibility
- Residential setbacks: Residents prefer setbacks from the property line on housing to allow for an active and light-filled streetscape—not developer preferred
- Low parking minimums
- Affordable housing and Inclusionary Zoning percentages



Vision Plan seeks to rectify and strike a balance between competing visions and concerns

HKS Urban Politics Field Lab Project Visioning

- Active street facades
- Human-scaled
- Building setbacks & articulation
- Streetscape upgrades
- Minimize curb cuts
- Orientation towards Community Path

Brighton St & Vale Rd, facing south



Brighton St & Hamilton St, facing south



Brighton St & Hamilton St, facing west

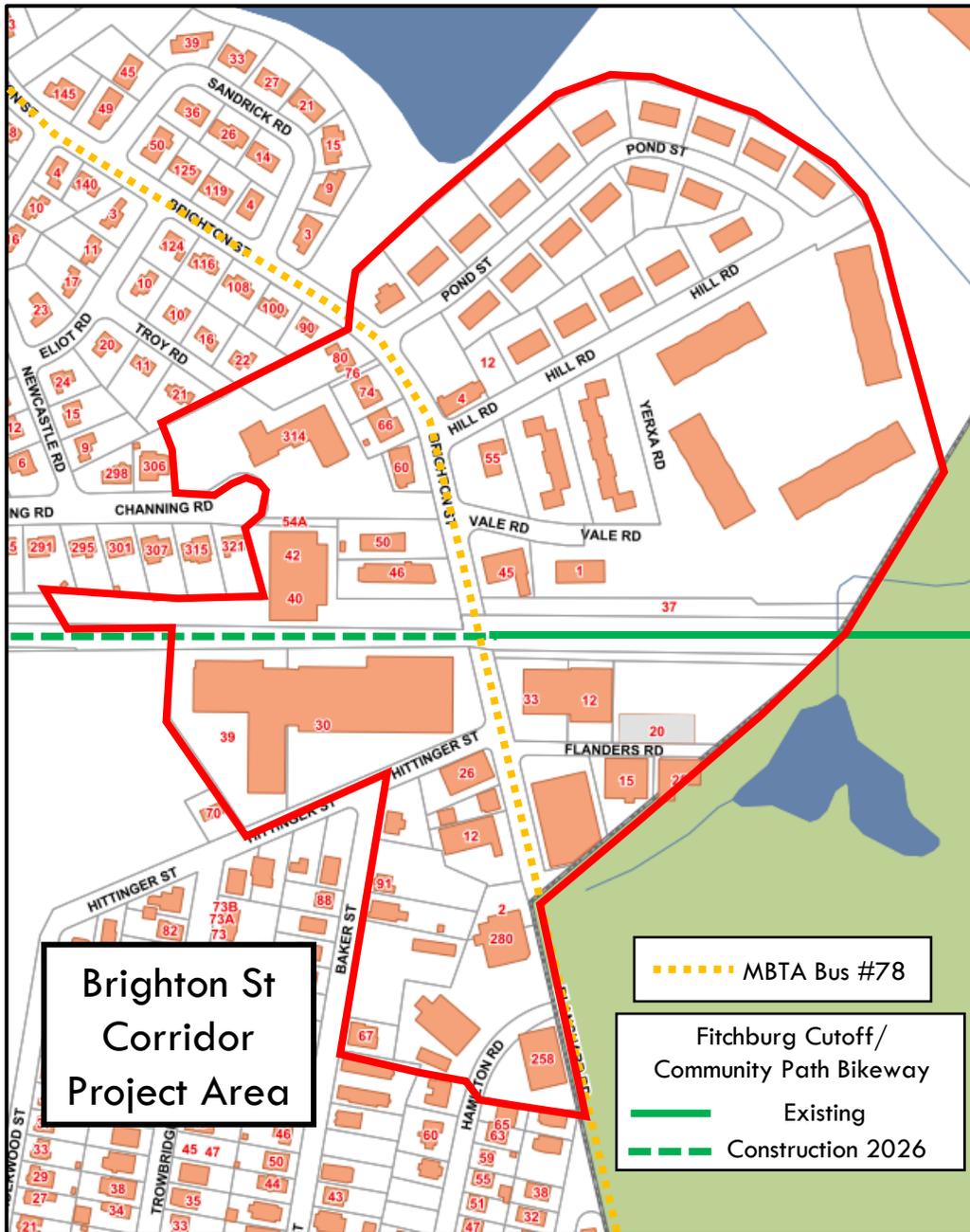


Vision Plan Recommendations: Land Use

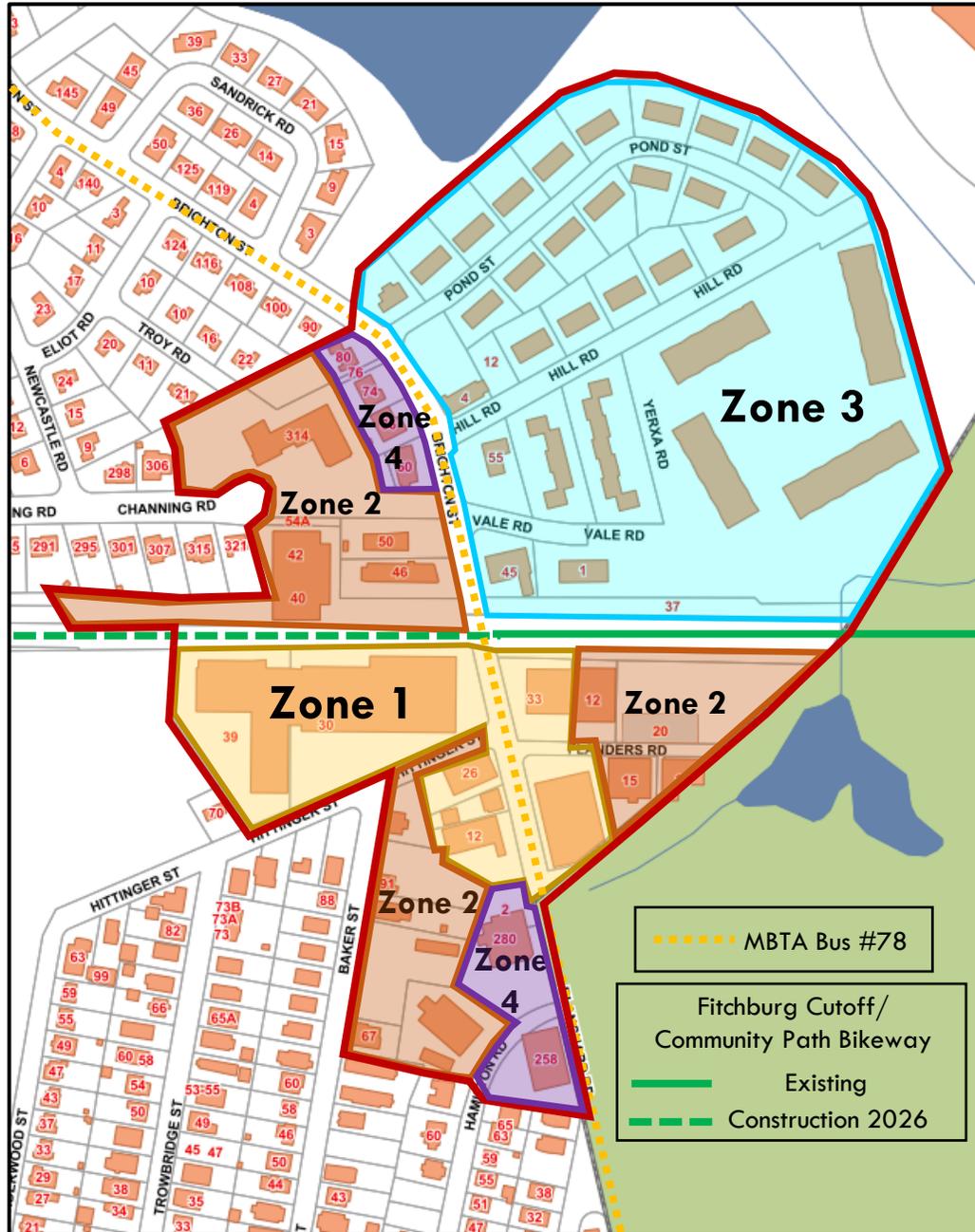
Develop a new **overlay zoning district** that is specific to the needs of the Brighton Street Corridor:

- Increased density that allows moderate mixed-use, commercial, and multi-family development
- Ground-floor commercial requirements along Brighton St
- Form-based code that provides a clear and shared expectation for the physical character of redevelopment
- Subdistricts that are tailored to specific buildings/parcels
- Different zoning intensities that allows for a transition to the surrounding residential neighborhoods

Note: The underlying zoning would remain in place. This is an optional overlay district that allows property owners to take advantage of increased allowances to add density and retail over time.



Vision Plan Recommendations: Potential Zoning Concept



Zone 1 – Mixed-Use

This would be similar to MOZ5B but be more prescriptive regarding the types of commercial and residential uses and how they are laid out both vertically and horizontally.



Zone 2 – Creative Commercial

This would be a novel concept allowing artisan and light industrial uses, artists lofts and creative and non-creative commercial spaces, some accessory retailing and no new residential.



Zone 3 – The Commons

This is envisioned as Belmont’s compact version of Arsenal Yards or Assembly Row with around 75,000 s.f. of new luxury retailing and restaurants and 100 additional housing units. Most of the street system for this is already laid out and it would include an underground parking facility.



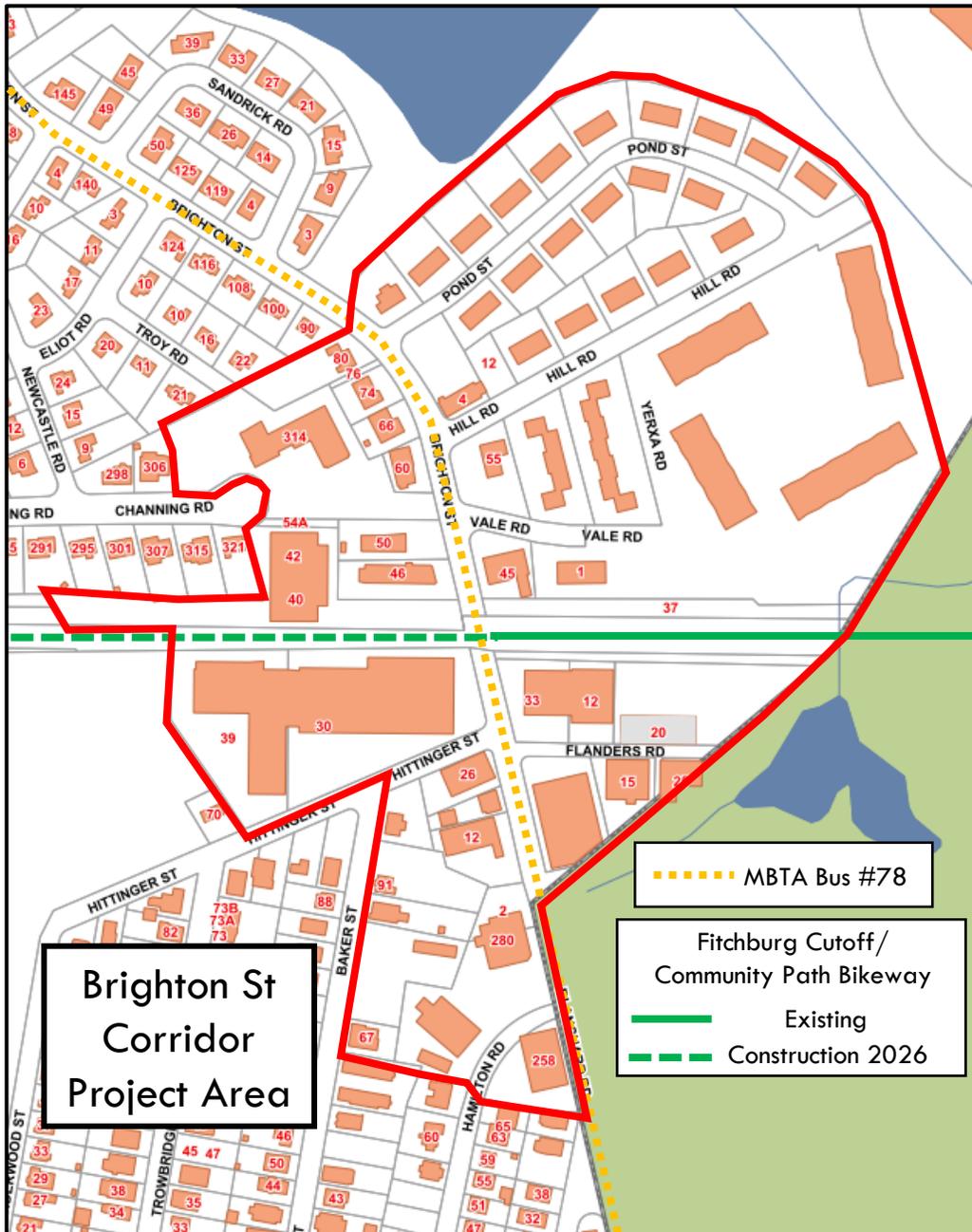
Zone 4 – Street-front Commons

Zone 4 would be gap filler parcels located along the street frontage allowing for street retailing and some upper floor apartments.



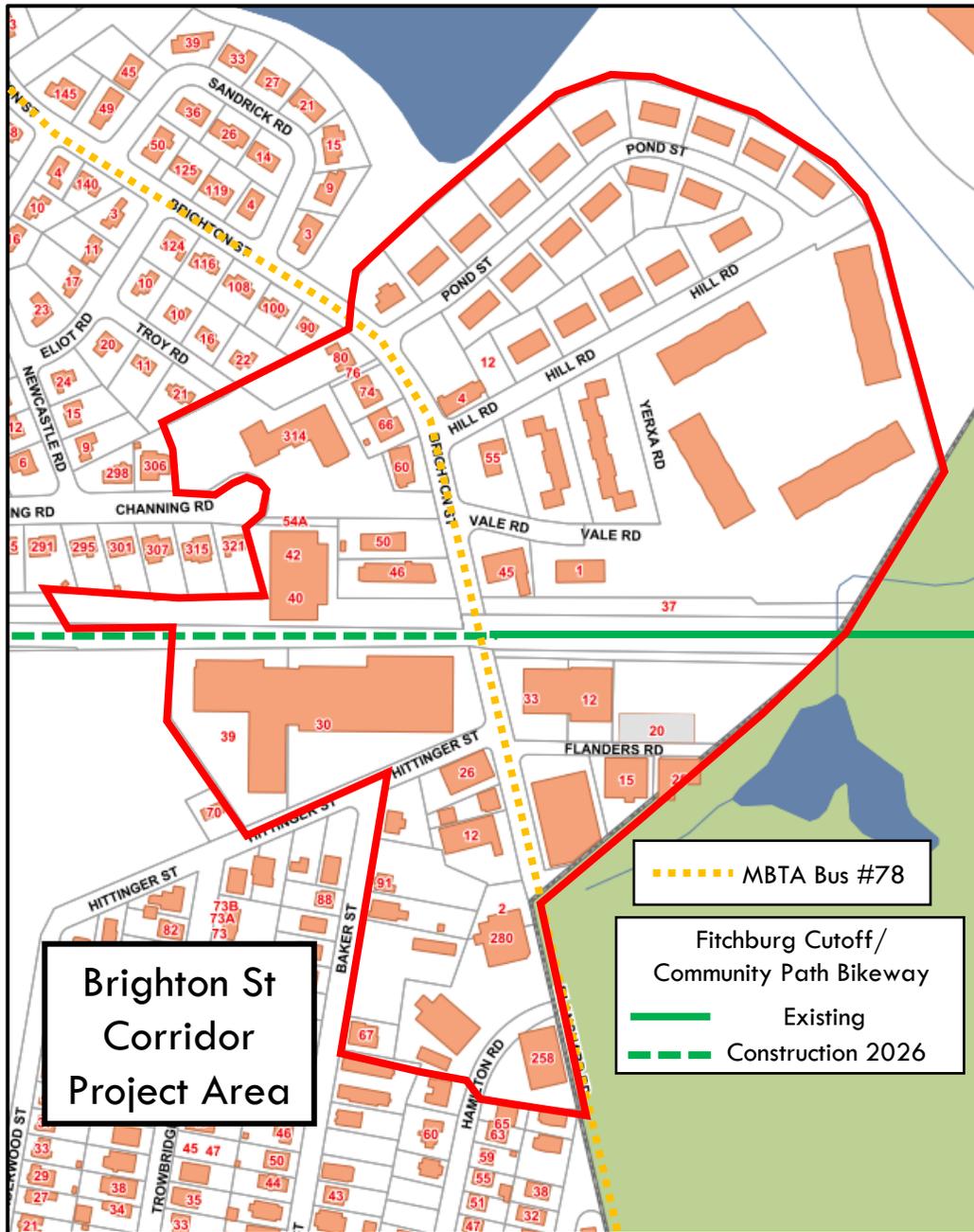
Vision Plan Recommendations: Transportation

- Opportunities to Reconfigure Brighton Streetscape
 - Wider sidewalks
 - Improve bicycle safety where possible
 - Increase street parking
 - Reduce curb cuts
 - Introduce turning lanes
 - Better align Hittinger St. & Flanders St. geometry
 - Possible signalization at key intersection(s)
- Coordinate with MBTA & Cambridge to explore the potential of a new Commuter Rail stop in the vicinity—possibly Alewife
- Integrate the Community Path Bikeway into future transportation and land use decisions



Vision Plan Recommendations: Open Space & Infrastructure

- Incentivize the inclusion of open space in the new zoning overlay
 - i.e. green space at Hill Estates or plazas/rooftop decks
- Town should further assess infrastructure needs within the project area
- Provisions to include green infrastructure in any new developments to better address stormwater
- Town should seek grant funding to help make infrastructure/streetscape improvements



Brighton Street Vision Plan

Next Steps

- Take lessons learned from Center Zoning
- Proactive engagement process:
 - Multi-channel communication
 - Early and iterative engagement
 - Clear explanations of process
 - Understand potential impacts and benefits
- **Phase 1** - Listening session (**today**) & Vision Plan adoption (earliest Feb 3)
- **Phase 2** – Workshop/charrette, focus group meetings, public hearings & listening sessions



Brighton Street Vision Plan

Next Steps

- Develop draft zoning overlay
 - Spring 2026
- Planning Board Public Hearing on draft zoning
 - Summer 2026
- Bring proposed zoning overlay to Town Meeting
 - Fall 2026
- Potential to do a phased approach – Zone 1 first

Intermunicipal – Coordinate with Cambridge/MBTA on transit opportunities and with DPW and Belmont Light on capacity planning



How to Participate

- Visit the Project Website

<https://www.belmont-ma.gov/2131/Brighton-Street-Planning-and-Zoning-Proj>

- Email Us (pending) – BrightonPlan@belmont-ma.gov
- Use our comment form (pending)
- Sign up for News Flash on Town Website
- Attend Planning Board Meetings



An aerial photograph of a city area, showing a mix of residential and commercial buildings, parking lots, and green spaces. The image is slightly faded to make the overlaid text stand out. The text "Thank you!" is centered in the upper half of the image.

Thank you!

Questions?

Brighton Area Vision Plan Public Meeting | January 22, 2026