

221 Mount Auburn Street Riverview Condominiums

Community Meeting

July 10, 2025

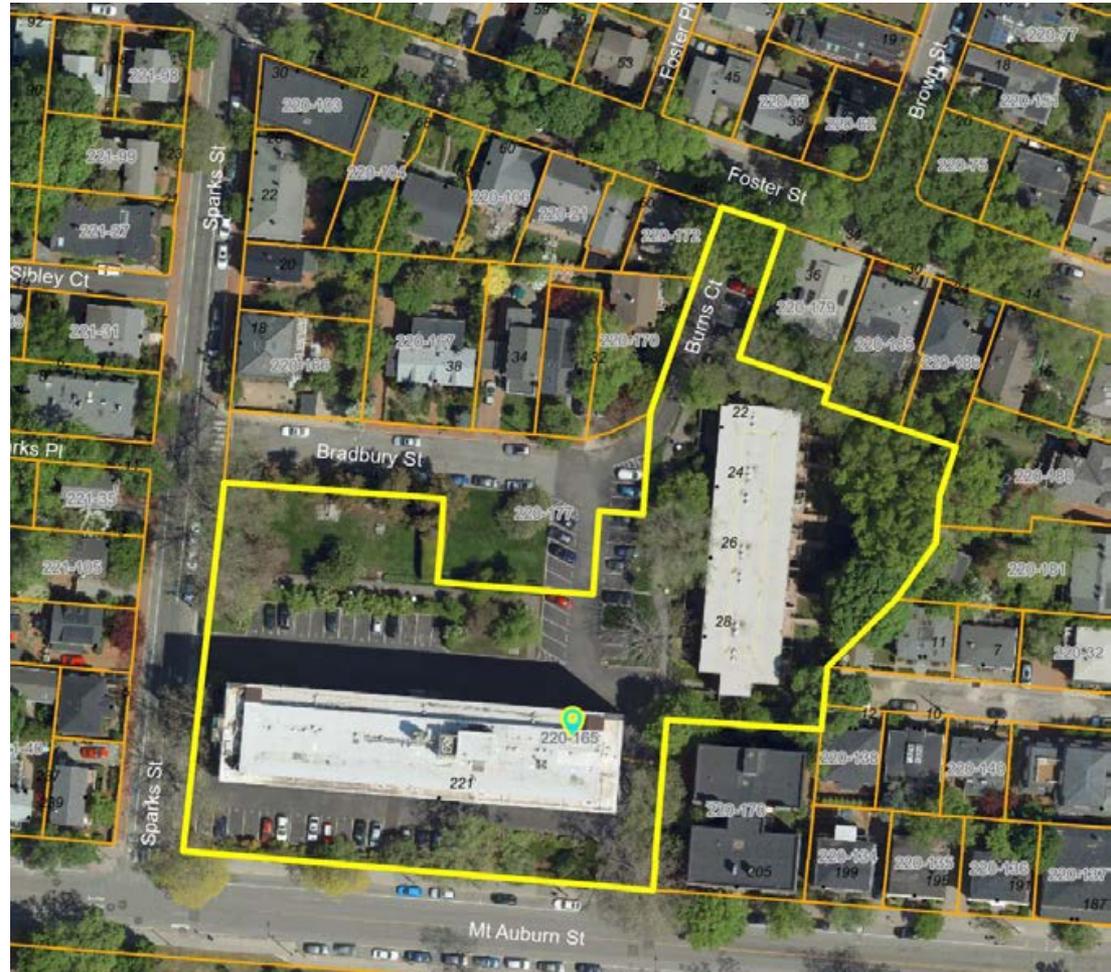
www.cambridgema.gov/221mtauburnst

221 Mt Auburn Street – Riverview Condominiums



Agenda

- History of 221 Mt Auburn St/Riverview Condominiums
- Structural issues
- What's next?



Executive Summary



In February 2023, structural issues were identified in the nine-story building at 221 Mt Auburn Street, which is part of the Riverview Condominiums, during preparatory work associated with planned roof and drainage improvements. The Condo Association hired SGH, Inc. to evaluate the capacity of the concrete slabs through visual observations, drone photography, non-destructive testing and observations of the concrete slabs at exploratory openings.

SGH identified and documented the following conditions:

- Low Reinforcement – Reinforcement placed lower than specified on the design drawings
- Low Concrete Compressive Strength -- Lower than specified concrete strength
- Utility penetrations – Penetrations and alterations of the concrete slabs

The low reinforcement and low compressive strength were found to be widespread throughout the building. With this updated understanding of the as-built conditions, SHG performed a structural analysis of the concrete slabs that support the building. This analysis shows “that there is a very low (to potentially zero) safety factor when the slabs are subject to code-required loads.” Code required loads include the weight of materials that make up the building (e.g. structure, walls, floors, roofing, etc.), loads produced by the use of and occupancy of the building (e.g. people and their possessions), and loads associated with snow.

Residents of the 66 units in the nine-story building vacated the building in November / December 2024. And residents of the 14 units in the adjacent lower Bradbury building vacated in June / July 2025. Even with the removal of people and furniture from the building, analysis indicates potentially dangerous building conditions.

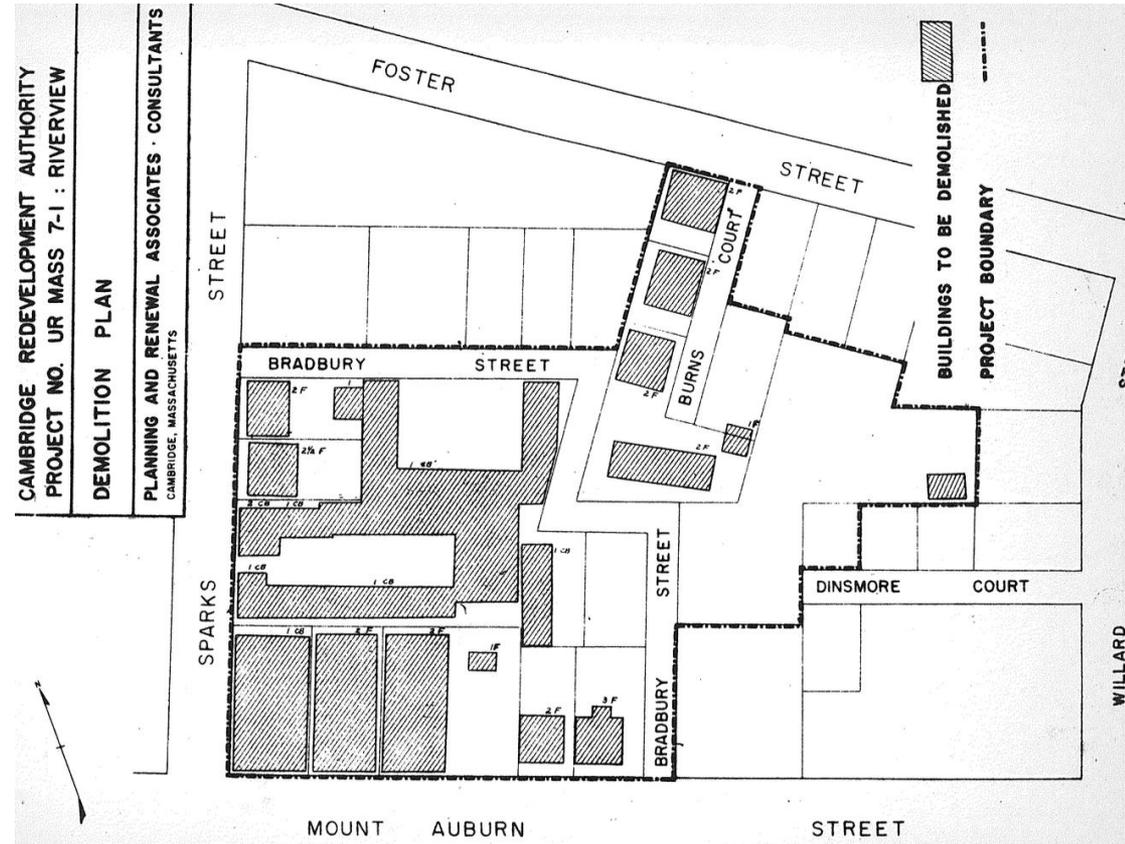
The Condo Association has been working to evaluate alternatives for slab strengthening as recommended by SGH. They have determined that based on the concerns associated with working in a building with such significant structural deficiencies, rehabilitation is not feasible and the building must be demolished.

The City is working closely with the Condo Association to have the building demolished.

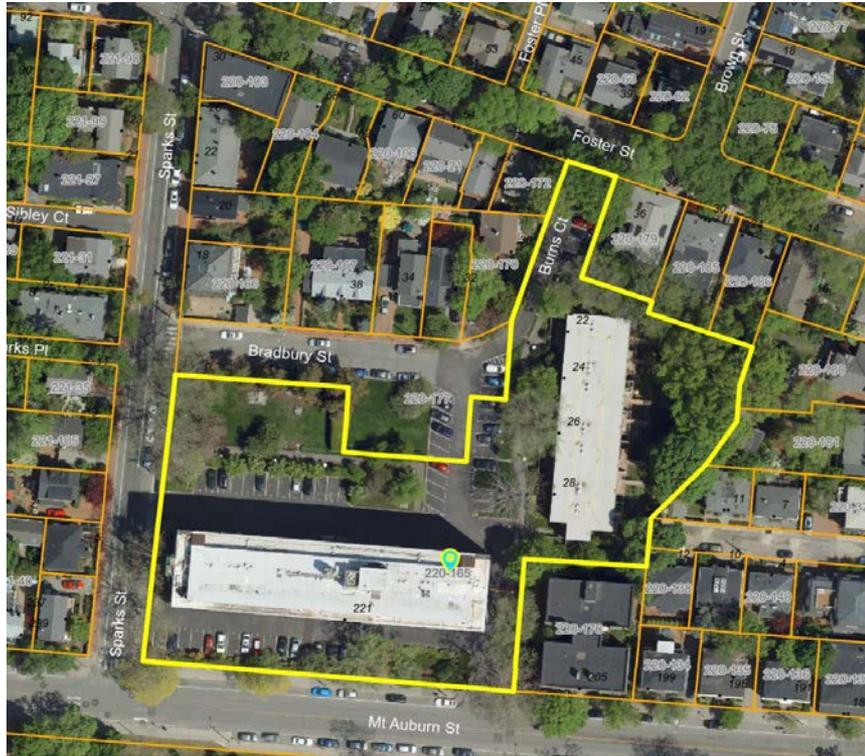
History of Development



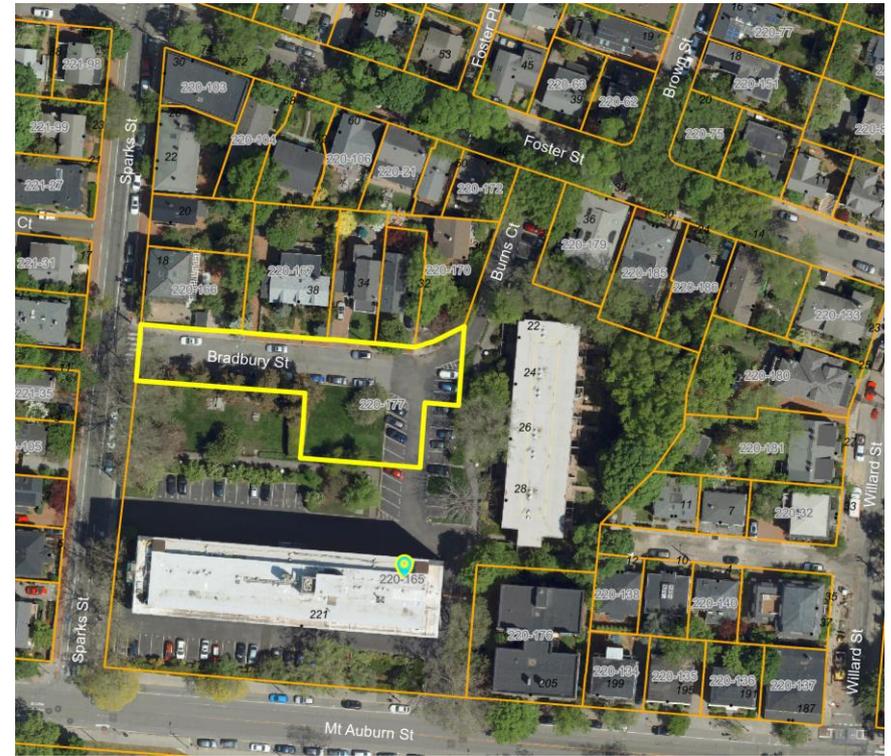
- CRA Redevelopment Plan approved September 29, 1958
- Land assembled, cleared and prepared for development in 1959
- Sold by CRA to First Realty Company of Boston in 1962 (\$150,000)



History of Development



Riverview Parcel



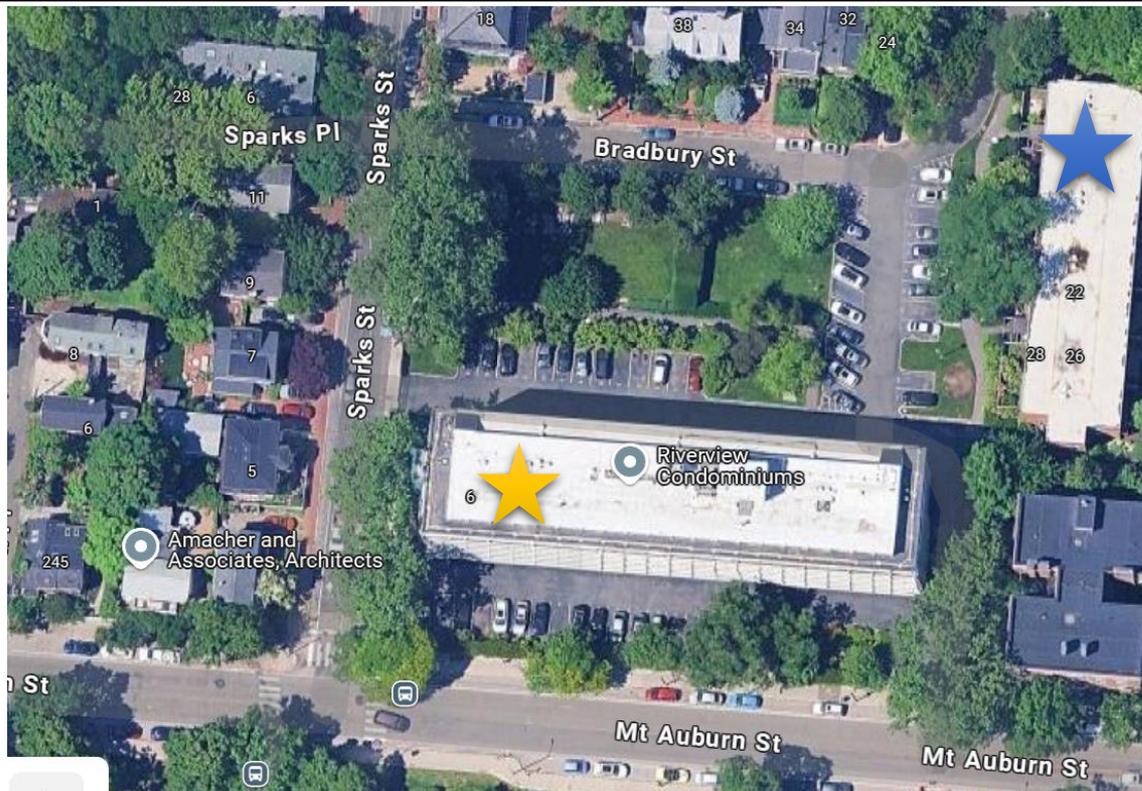
City Parcel

Certificate of Occupancy issued in 1963.
Bradbury Street and portion of parking lot transferred from CRA to the City.

History of Development



History of Development



Two separate buildings:

- ★ 221 Mount Auburn Street – 9-story concrete structure with 66 units
- ★ 3-story brick Bradbury Building with 14 units

Structural Issues Identified Over Time

More understanding of the extent of issues



Structural issues cause evacuation of Cambridge condo building for at least a year

A major infrastructure repair project will commence to shore up the building before the end of the year.



Residents of the Riverview Condo building in Cambridge fear they may need to leave their homes for as long as a year after the recent discovery of a structural issue. *David L. Ryan for the Boston Globe*

By **Beth Treffelson**
November 15, 2024
2 minutes to read



Residents of a luxury condominium complex along Cambridge's Charles River have been ordered to evacuate for at least a year due to structural safety concerns. The iconic, eight-story 1960s building, home to 66 mostly owner-occupied units, must be vacated before construction begins later this year.

Meanwhile, residents of the neighboring Bradbury building, which is part of the same association, will not be affected.

The property management company for the Riverview-in-Cambridge Condominium Association says construction crews discovered structural issues in the condo building on Mount Auburn Street last year during a roof repair project.

Residents evacuated Cambridge condo building amid structural issues. Now they're worried it may have to be demolished.

By **Spencer Buell** Globe Staff, Updated January 9, 2025, 7:32 a.m.



Riverview in Cambridge. SUZANNE KREITER/GLOBE STAFF

CAMBRIDGE — They had planned to spend retirement there. Then late last year, amid grave [concerns about newly discovered structural issues](#) in the building's concrete, residents of the 66-unit Riverview condo building had to evacuate their homes in a hurry. They believed they would need to be away for as little as a year before they could move back.

Now residents, most of them seniors, are facing difficult choices about what comes next and confronting the very real possibility that they might never return home.

Some have lived in the white-concrete building along the picturesque Charles River, which was built in the early 1960s, for decades. Others had moved there only recently. In weekly meetings in recent months with the company that manages the building, they have learned that the building may be too expensive to fix and therefore unsalvageable — and ripe for being demolished, according to several unit owners with knowledge of the discussions who spoke with the Globe.

"We all need to go through the five stages of grief," said Linda Salter, 78, who said she bought a unit in the building only two years ago. "Everything is on the table."

'It's time to demolish it': Cambridge condo owners face hard goodbye after evacuation



The Riverview condo building in Cambridge last year. *David L. Ryan/Globe Staff*

By **Spencer Buell**, The Boston Globe
updated on May 20, 2025
3 minutes to read



The owners of an historic 66-unit Cambridge condo building, who **had to flee it in a hurry** last year amid concerns it might collapse, are planning to demolish their home along the Charles.

The process is anticipated to begin in the months ahead, according to a statement from the company that manages the property. A formal vote to demolish hasn't yet been taken, and it was not immediately clear when, exactly, the building would be taken down.

"The Board of Trustees is planning for the demolition of the Riverview Building," said Thayer & Associates, the company that manages the Riverview complex, in a statement. "Conversations continue among the residents about the future sale of the Riverview property."

Structural Issues Timeline



Riverview identifies strategies
for repair ('23/'24)

Riverview Condo Trust determines
demolition needed ('24/'25)

Riverview
vacated
(Nov/
Dec '24)

Bradbury
vacated
(July '25)

City's help
requested,
additional
inspections
conducted
(May/June
'25)



2023

2024

2025

Structural Issues Identified



- 2023 preparatory work for roof and drainage improvements to address leakage and ponding issues included **coring new holes** in the **cantilevered balconies**.
- The coring contractor cut through reinforcement in the balconies. SGH **identified cracks** in the slab and observed that the **slab reinforcement** was **substantially misplaced** compared to the original design drawings.
- Riverview asked **SGH** to **evaluate the capacity** of the slabs throughout the building and hired **Consigli** for construction management.



SLAB EVALUATION

Riverview Condominiums
221 Mt. Auburn Street
Cambridge, MA
7 February 2025
(Revised 25 April 2025)

SGH Project 200609.04



PREPARED FOR
Thayer & Associates, Inc.
1812 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02140

PREPARED BY
Simpson Gumpertz & Heger Inc.
480 Totten Pond Road
Waltham, MA 02451
o: 781.907.9000



Report available on City website:
<http://www.cambridgema.gov/221mtauburnst>

Structural Issues Identified

SGH report documented structural issues (primarily associated with initial construction)

- **Low Reinforcement** – Reinforcement placed lower than specified on the design drawings
- **Low Concrete Compressive Strength** -- Lower than specified concrete strength
- **Utility Penetrations** – Penetrations and alterations of the concrete slabs
- Deterioration from **Leakage and Corrosion**
- Previous **Concrete Repair Work**



Photo 41

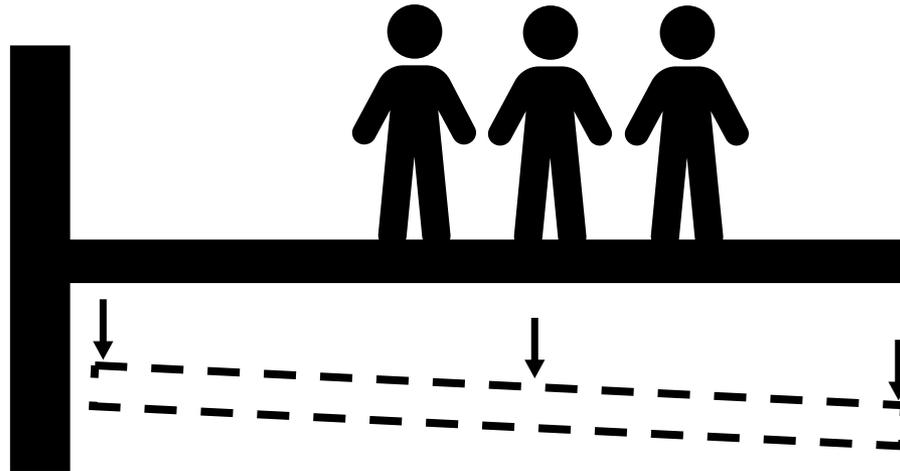
GSSI's Structure Scan Mini used to GPR scan the majority of slab-column connections on Levels 1 – 8.

Structural Issues Identified

Punching Shear Explained

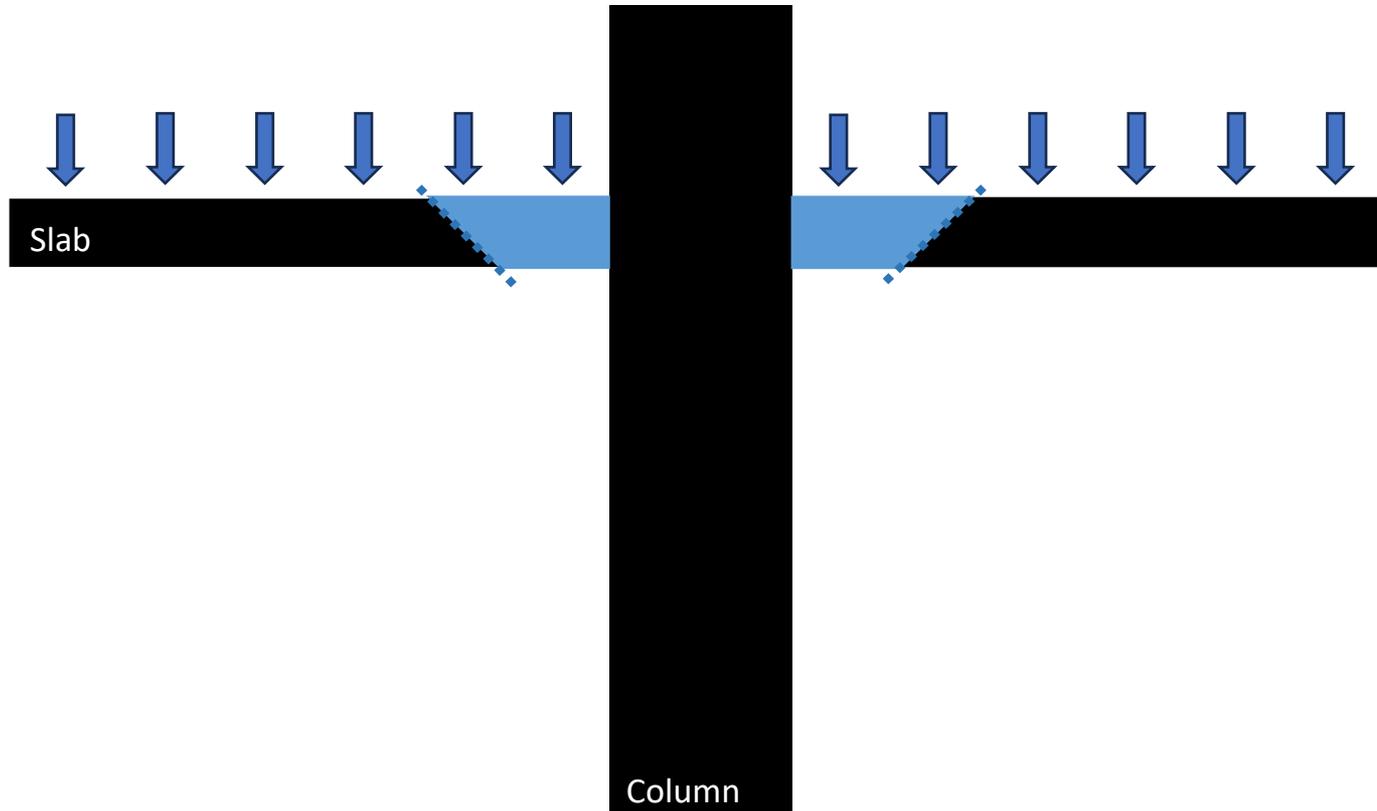


The slab needs to be strong enough to support the weight



Structural Issues Identified

Punching Shear Explained





Structural Issues Identified

SGH analyzed the **structural capacity** of the building.

Initial reports "show(ed) that there is a very low (to potentially zero) safety factor when the slabs are subject to code-required loads."

Further analysis was completed after the building was vacated and indicated a **potentially dangerous slab-to-column connections**, even with the building being unoccupied and without snow.

Structural Issues Identified

Outreach to the City



Condo Association **shared SGH report** with City of Cambridge Inspectional Services Department (ISD) on April 28, 2025, and **met with City leadership** June 4, 2025.

- Condo Board and their consultants shared their **concern about low to zero factor of safety, particularly with additional snow load.**
- The initial SGH report focused on the structural analysis based on an occupied building and snow loads (consistent with code requirements) and recommendations for the repair of the building. Additional analysis indicates the **building is over capacity and potentially dangerous even without snow loads.**

City leadership has been meeting with Condo Board and their consultants weekly and hired an independent engineering firm to advise the City.

- The City's involvement is to protect public health and safety

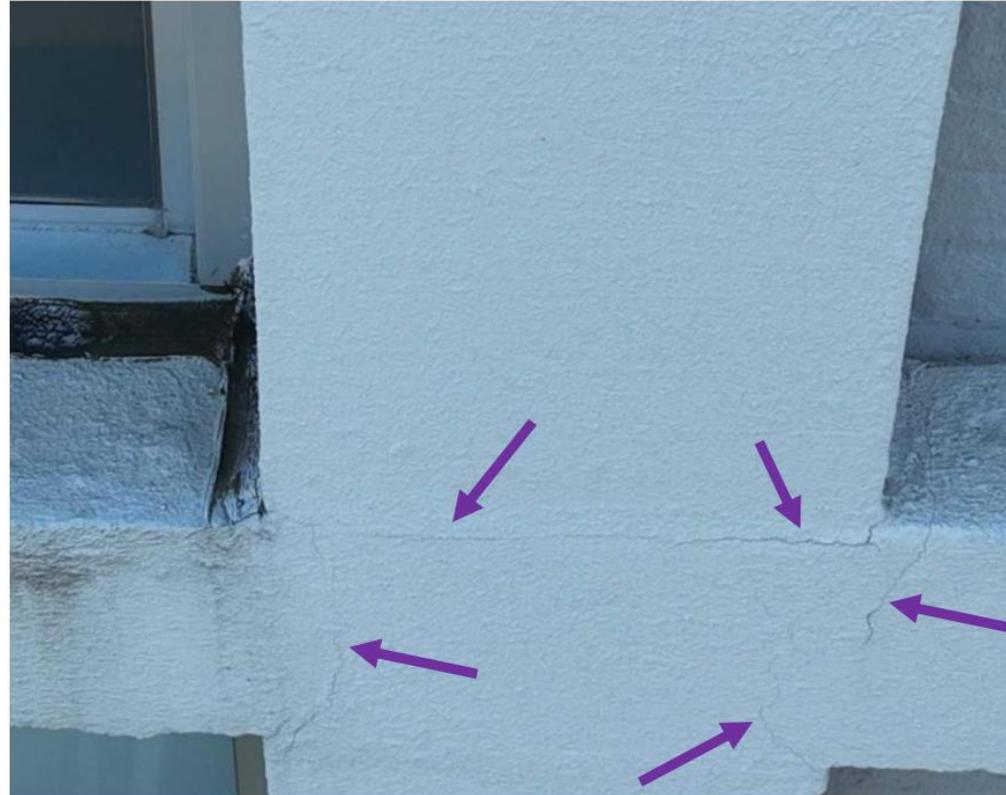
City coordinating with state partners, including Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP), Department of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM), MBTA, and Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR).

Next Steps

Reducing Risk, and a Path to Demolition



- Additional fencing installed to secure the site.
- Disconnecting utilities.
- City staff directed Condo Association to conduct a visual survey by **drone every 2 weeks** to identify changing conditions. Beginning this week.



21 April 2025 Drone Survey, IMG#323

Next Steps

Reducing Risk, and a Path to Demolition



- June 27, 2025, ISD notified owners that the **building must be removed**.
- This week the **Board of Survey** is assessing the property and will issue a report for orders that it determines are necessary to **protect the health and safety of the public** and the **occupants and owners** of the building.



Peter J McLaughlin
Commissioner

June 27, 2025

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
INSPECTIONAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT 831 MASS. AVE.
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139 (617) 349-6100

Re: ORDER TO MAKE STRUCTURE SECURE PURSUANT TO G.L. C. 143,
§§ 6 and 7 RIVERVIEW CONDOMINIUMS, 221 MT. AUBURN STREET,
CAMBRIDGE, MA

This letter serves as official notification under G.L. c. 143, § 6, that the existing structure located at 221 Mt. Auburn Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts, known as the Mount Auburn Building in the Master Deed recorded at Book 12188, Page 401 (the "Structure"), is currently in a condition that is unsafe and dangerous to life and limb, and therefore must be removed. You are hereby ordered to remove the Structure located at 221 Mt. Auburn Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts (the "Property") by twelve o'clock noon on Thursday, July 3, 2025, pursuant to G.L. c. 143, § 7. Section 7 of the G.L. c. 143 provides that any person so notified shall be allowed until twelve o'clock noon of the day following service of the notice in which to begin removal of such structure. Without waiving any rights or obligations to the owner or mortgagees of the Property, the City of Cambridge (the "City") agrees to extend the time for commencement of demolition to twelve o'clock noon on Thursday, July 3, 2025. If you fail to do so, please be advised that the City reserves the right to remove the Property through demolition as authorized under state law.

On or around April 28, 2025, the Condominium Association for the Riverview Condominiums, through its counsel, James Rafferty, provided the City with a Slab Evaluation (the

Next Steps

Reducing Risk, and a Path to Demolition



- City staff has been meeting with direct abutters to update them and share the analysis. Will continue to make ourselves available.
- Working closely with Condo Association to have building demolished with experienced contractor familiar with this type of work in a dense, urban environment.
- Additional community notifications/updates posted on the website.
- Additional community meetings to share progress and answer questions.
- Closing access to adjacent public streets July 19th – Mt. Auburn Street & Sparks Street

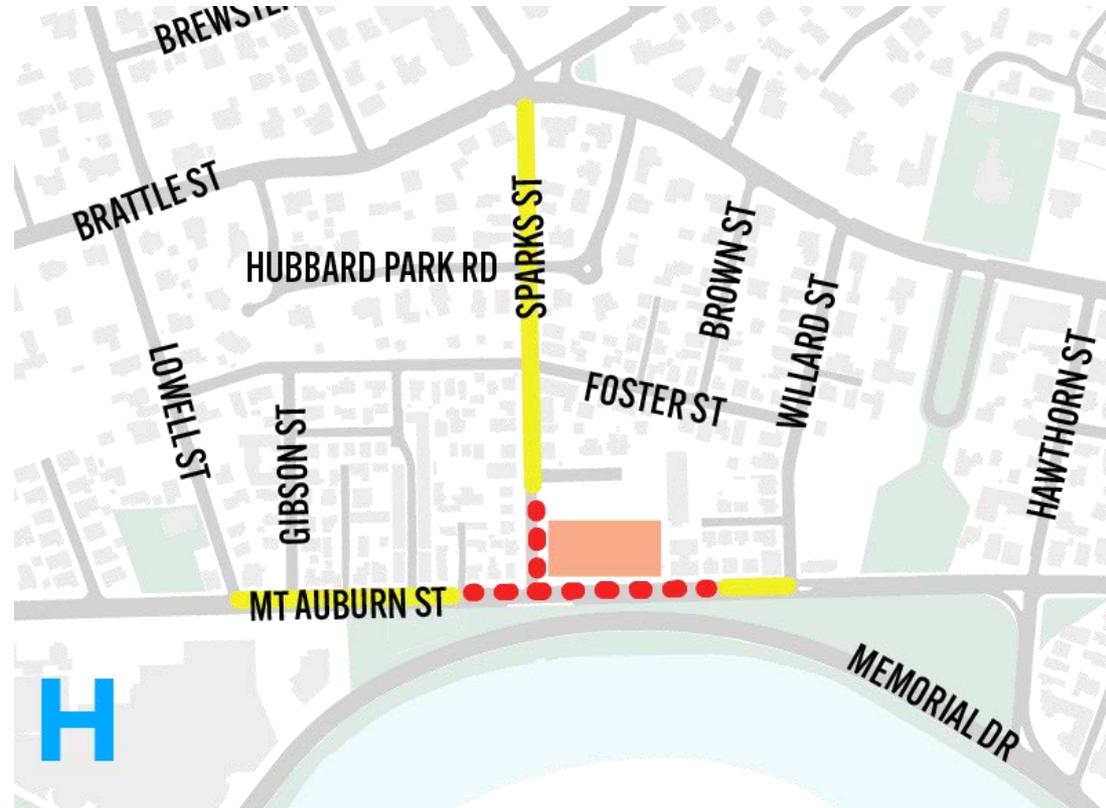
Next Steps

Closing Mt Auburn and Sparks Street



- Beginning **Saturday, July 19th** the following street and sidewalk closures will be in place:

- Mt. Auburn Street will be closed around 221 Mt. Auburn from approximately 197 Mt. Auburn Street to 239 Mt. Auburn
- Sparks Street will be closed from just south of Bradbury Street to Mt. Auburn Street
- Access to residents' homes will be maintained.



..... ROAD CLOSED

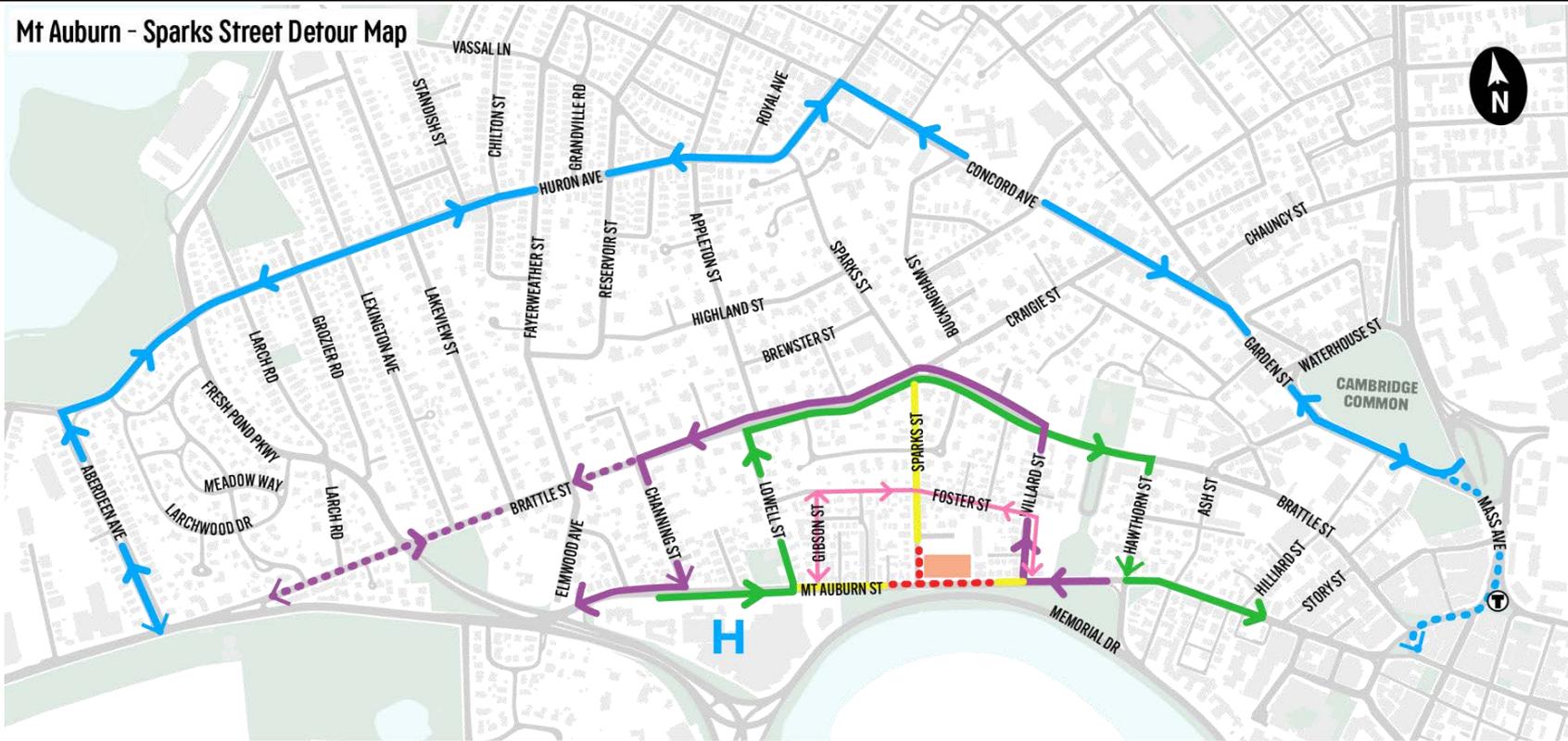
———— ABUTTERS ONLY

Next Steps

Closing Mt Auburn and Sparks Street



Mt Auburn - Sparks Street Detour Map



Map Key

- TRUCK ROUTE
- TRUCK ROUTE ENDS
- WESTBOUND BUS ROUTE/ LOCAL DETOUR / HOSPITAL ACCESS
- WESTBOUND THROUGH TRAFFIC
- EASTBOUND BUS ROUTE/ LOCAL DETOUR
- ABUTTERS ONLY
- STREET FULLY CLOSED
- RIVERVIEW CONDOMINIUMS
- BIKE AND PEDESTRIAN DETOUR
- MT AUBURN HOSPITAL
- MBTA REDLINE

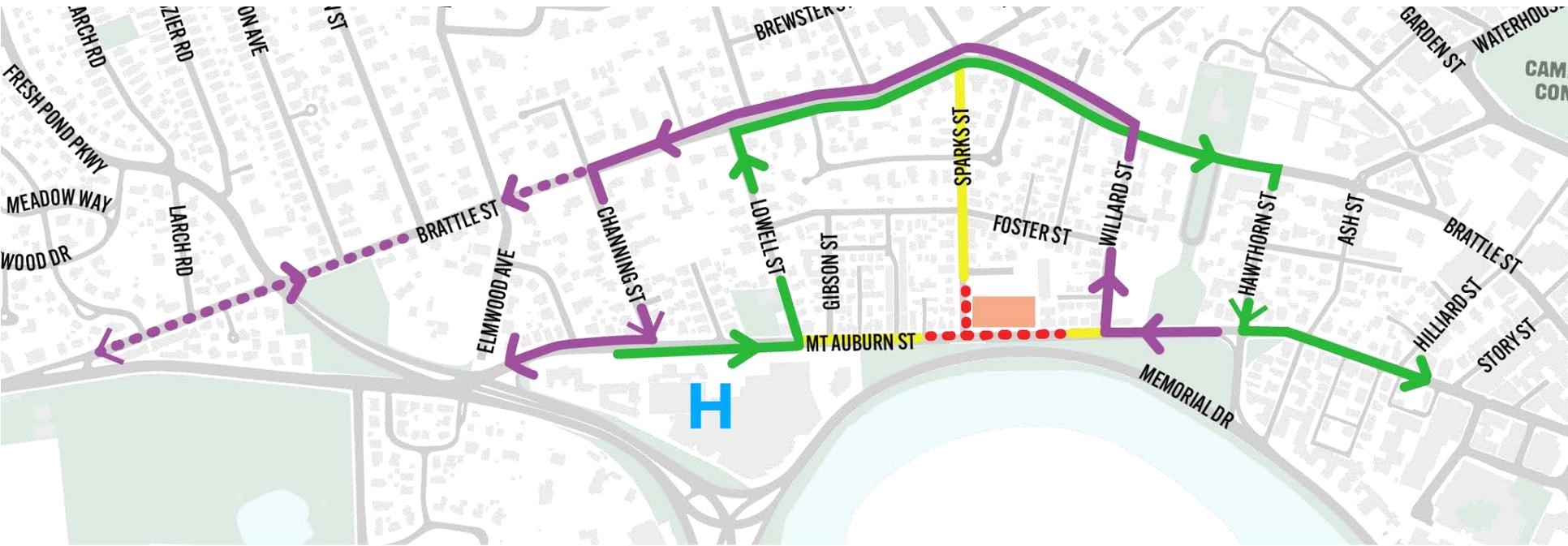
- Detours will be in place around the closure area. Detours will address:
 - Local resident access
 - Bus routes
 - Hospital access
 - Pedestrian and bicycle access
 - Truck routes
 - Re-routing of regional trips

Next Steps

Closing Mt Auburn and Sparks Street



Local Car Access

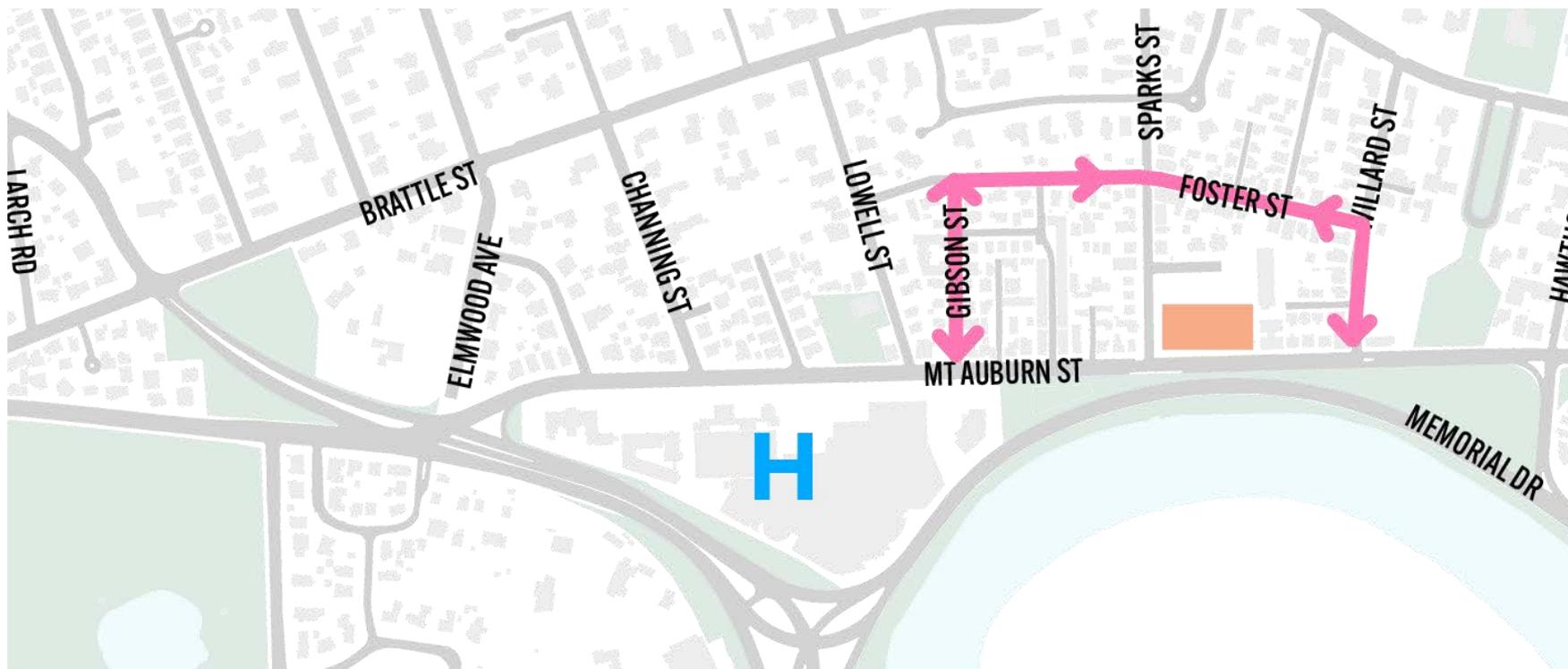


Map Key

- WESTBOUND BUS ROUTE/ LOCAL DETOUR / HOSPITAL ACCESS
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- STREET FULLY CLOSED
- ABUTTERS ONLY
- RIVERVIEW CONDOMINIUMS
- WESTBOUND THROUGH TRAFFIC

Next Steps

Closing Mt Auburn and Sparks Street



Bicycle and Pedestrian Routes

People walking and biking will use the detour above in both directions: Gibson St., Foster St., and Willard St.

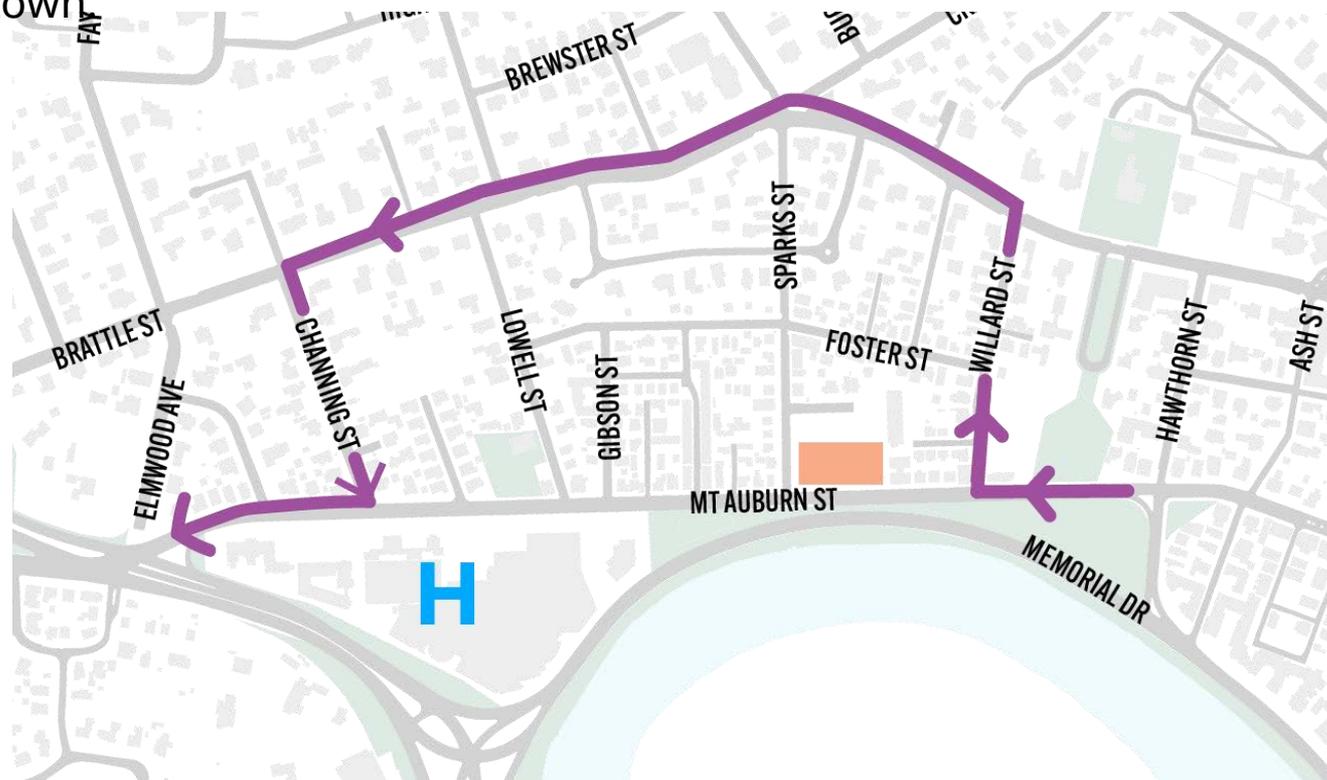
Next Steps

Closing Mt Auburn and Sparks Street



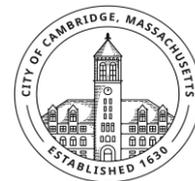
MBTA Bus Detours

- The 71 and 73 MBTA routes are impacted by closures
- Westbound bus detour: Mt. Auburn St. westbound, right onto Willard St., left onto Brattle St., left onto Channing St., right onto Mt. Auburn St. towards Belmont and Watertown



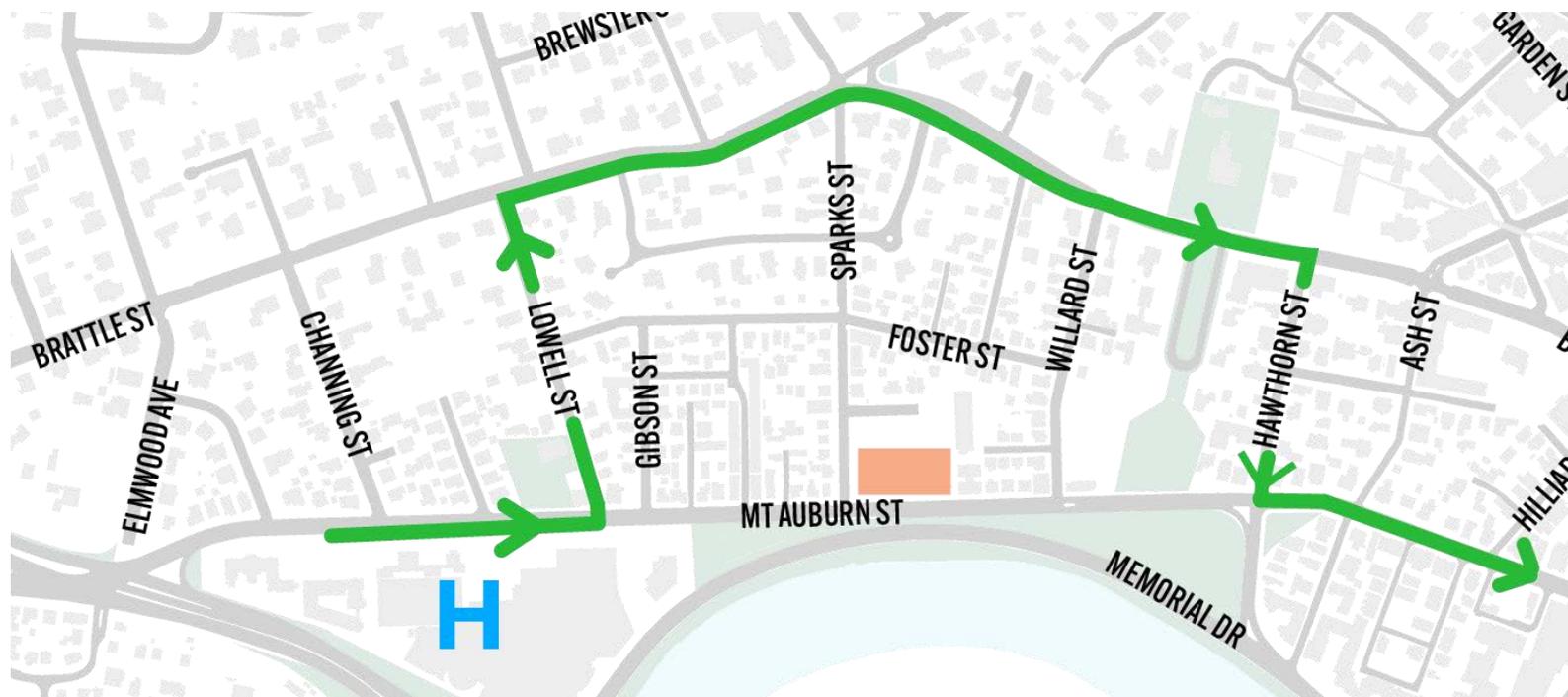
Next Steps

Closing Mt Auburn and Sparks Street



MBTA Bus Detours

- The 71 and 73 MBTA routes are impacted by closures
- Eastbound bus detour: Mt. Auburn St. eastbound, left onto Lowell St., right onto Brattle St., right onto Hawthorn St., left onto Mt. Auburn St. toward Harvard Square.



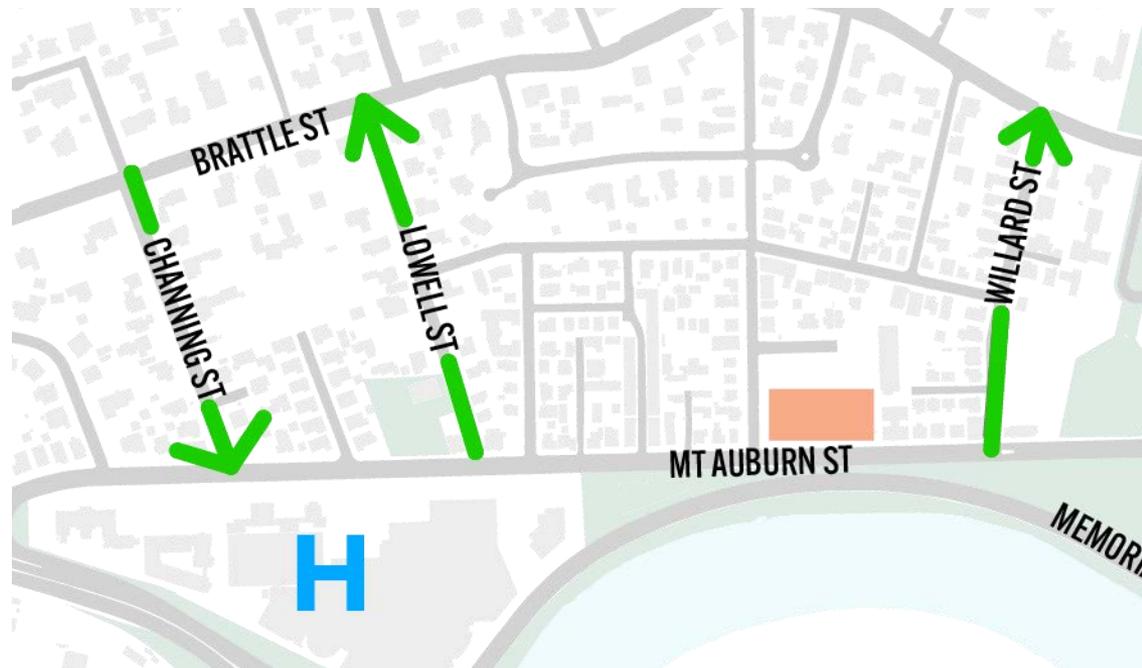
Next Steps

Closing Mt Auburn and Sparks Street



- **Temporary One-Way Conversions**

- Three streets will temporarily be converted to one-way traffic to accommodate the detours.
- This will allow for the safe, efficient operation of MBTA buses and ambulances.
- Channing Street will be one-way Southbound towards Mt. Auburn Street.
- Lowell Street will be one-way northbound towards Brattle Street.
- Willard Street will be one-way northbound towards Brattle Street.

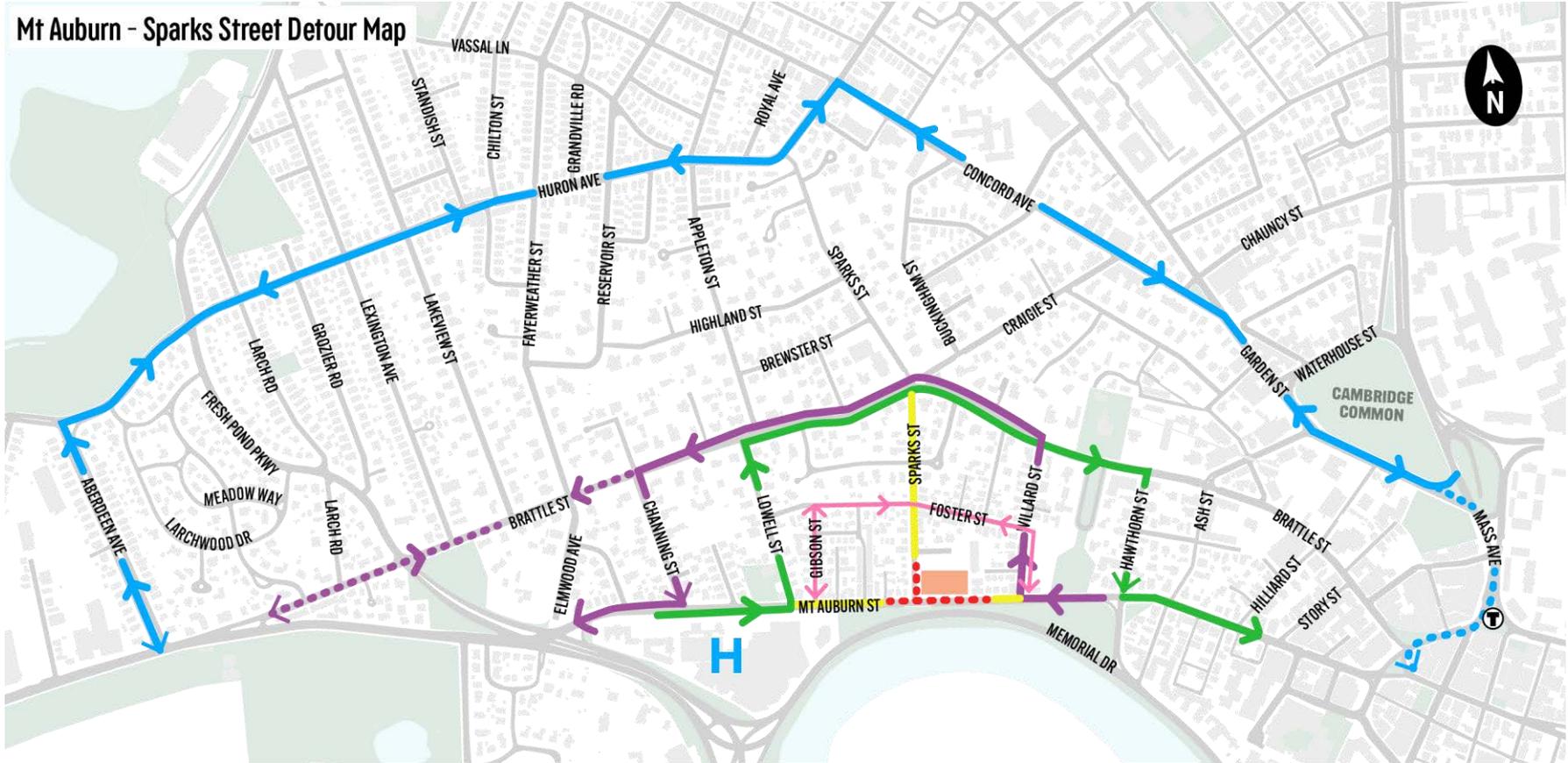


Next Steps

Closing Mt Auburn and Sparks Street



Mt Auburn - Sparks Street Detour Map



Map Key

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Next Steps

Demolition



- Disconnecting utilities in preparation for demolition and to reduce risk.
- Bring a qualified contractor on board with experience in complex demolitions in dense urban environments.
- Contractor will develop a demolition plan that would be permitted through MassDEP for Non-Traditional Demolition
- Environmental consultant is a significant component of the team to address hazardous building materials like asbestos. Plan would typically include misting, air monitoring and other measures.
- 6 to 8 weeks for engineering and permitting.
- Once mobilized, 12 to 16 weeks for demolition.
- We would have a community meeting in advance of planned demolition.

What's Next for City Staff



- Committed to protecting public safety and public health.
- Continue to be transparent throughout this process and sharing information as quickly as we can.
- Continue to meet with direct abutters.
- Hosting additional community meetings.



What's Next for Residents

- Check website – <http://www.cambridgema.gov/221mtauburnst>
 - **Sign up for email notifications**
 - Structural analysis and reports are posted
 - Check for FAQs – posted next week and updated regularly
- Attend Zoom meeting on July 24th, 6:30 –8 p.m.
 - Meeting link:
https://cambridgema.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_uwf8ZF7CS3epU5hSAvcU6A
- Contact Kristen Kelleher, Community Relations Manager, with questions:
 - 617-349-4825
 - kkelleher@cambridgema.gov



Questions?

- Staff are available in the aisles with microphones.
- Raise your hand and staff will hand you the microphone.
- Once your question is done, please hand microphone back to staff.
- *If you prefer to write your question, use a notecard. Please hand the card to a staffer.



Contact Information

Please send questions/concerns to:

Kristen Kelleher

Community Relations Manager

617-349-4825

kkelleher@cambridgema.gov

Project website: www.cambridgema.gov/221mtauburnst

Katherine Watkins

Deputy City Manager

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Brooke McKenna Commissioner

Department of Transportation

617-349-4723

bmckenna@cambridgema.gov