



City of Cambridge

Executive Department

YI-AN HUANG
City Manager

November 16, 2022

To the Honorable, the City Council:

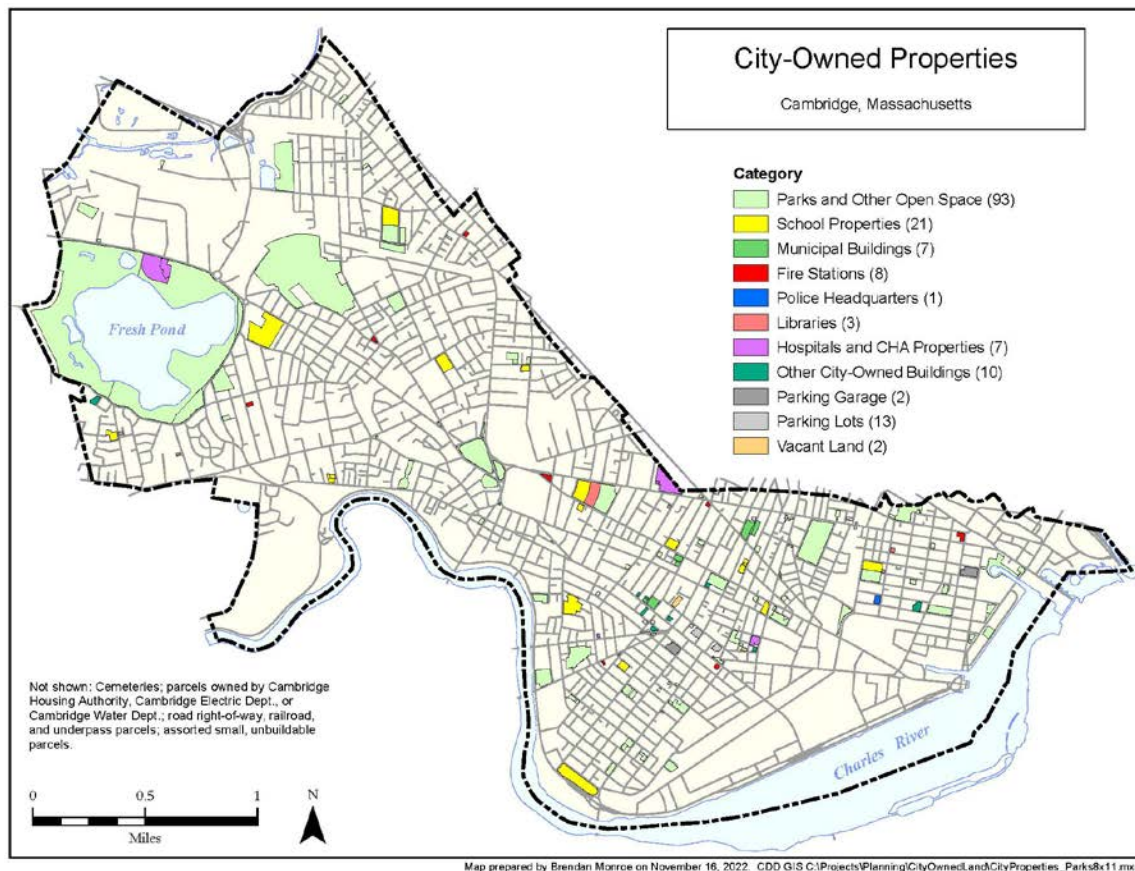
Regarding Responses to the following Awaiting Reports:

- **No. 16-111 of 12/12/16**, *Report on the potential of building below market rental housing on City-owned parking lots along Bishop Allen Drive;*
- **No. 18-38 of 3/26/18**, *Report on inventory and plans of all City-owned vacant buildings and lots; and*
- **No. 20-61 of 11/16/20**, *Report on an update on City-owned vacant properties inventory.*

As a growing city, there are significant demands on City-owned properties in Cambridge. As indicated in the above-mentioned policy orders, community needs include affordable housing, cultural and human services space, and community facilities among others.

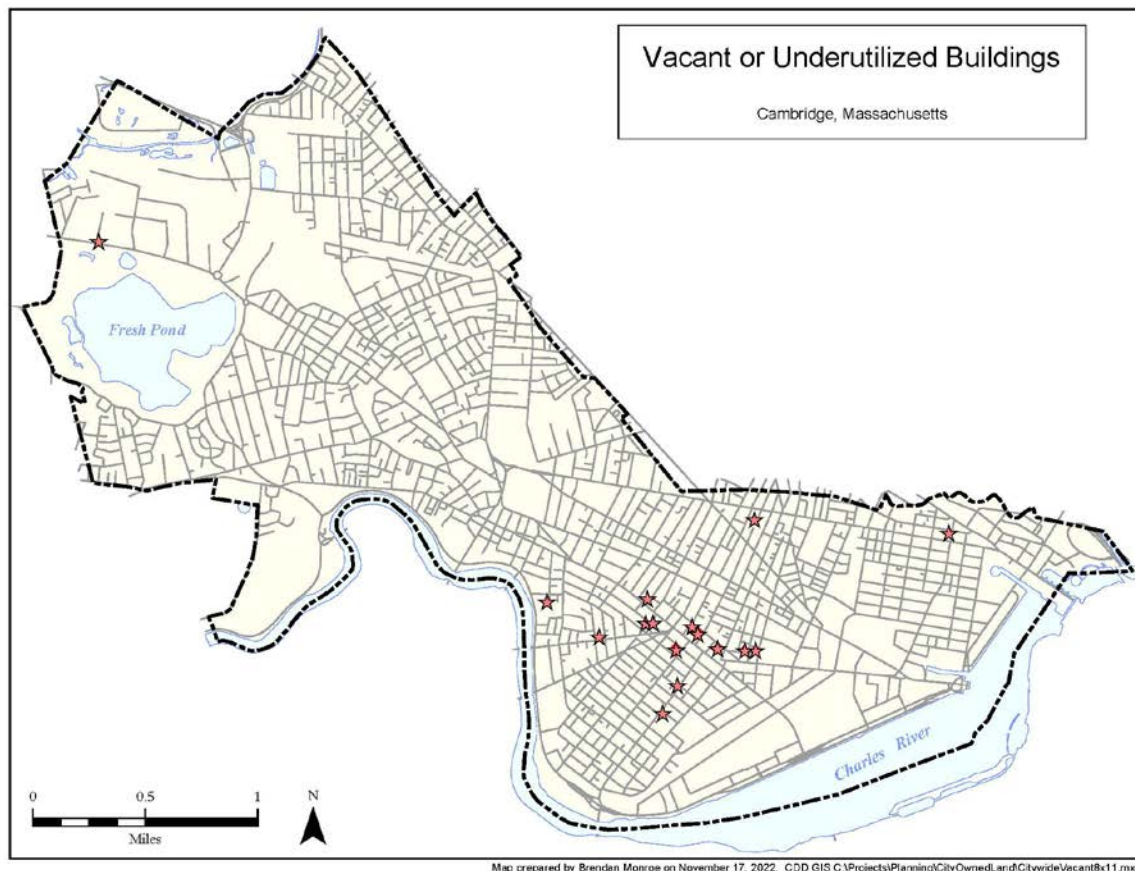
Municipal Property Inventory

According to a municipal property inventory, the City owns approximately 551 acres of land, divided across 167 parcels. Parks, playgrounds, and other open space account for 481 acres of the total, across 93 parcels. The remaining parcel inventory includes 8 fire stations, 3 Cambridge Health Alliance care centers, 21 school properties, 7 municipal buildings, 15 parking garages and parking lots, and two vacant lots at Vail Court and Cherry Street. A citywide map of City-owned properties is included below.



Vacant or Underutilized Municipal Property Inventory

Most of these properties are actively in use for municipal functions. Parcels that are vacant or underutilized are shown in the map below and listed in the following tables:



<u>Location</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Square Feet</u>	<u>Notes</u>
105 Windsor St	Vacant building c/o Cambridge Health Alliance	10,064	105 Windsor has previously been used as a school, recreation center, health clinic, and library for the Port neighborhood. The building currently sits vacant; contains 13,000 sf of interior area; and needs substantial interior and exterior renovations. A robust community process will listen to and consider a wide variety of potential uses. Suggested future uses include: a history museum; art gallery; community kitchen; meeting space;

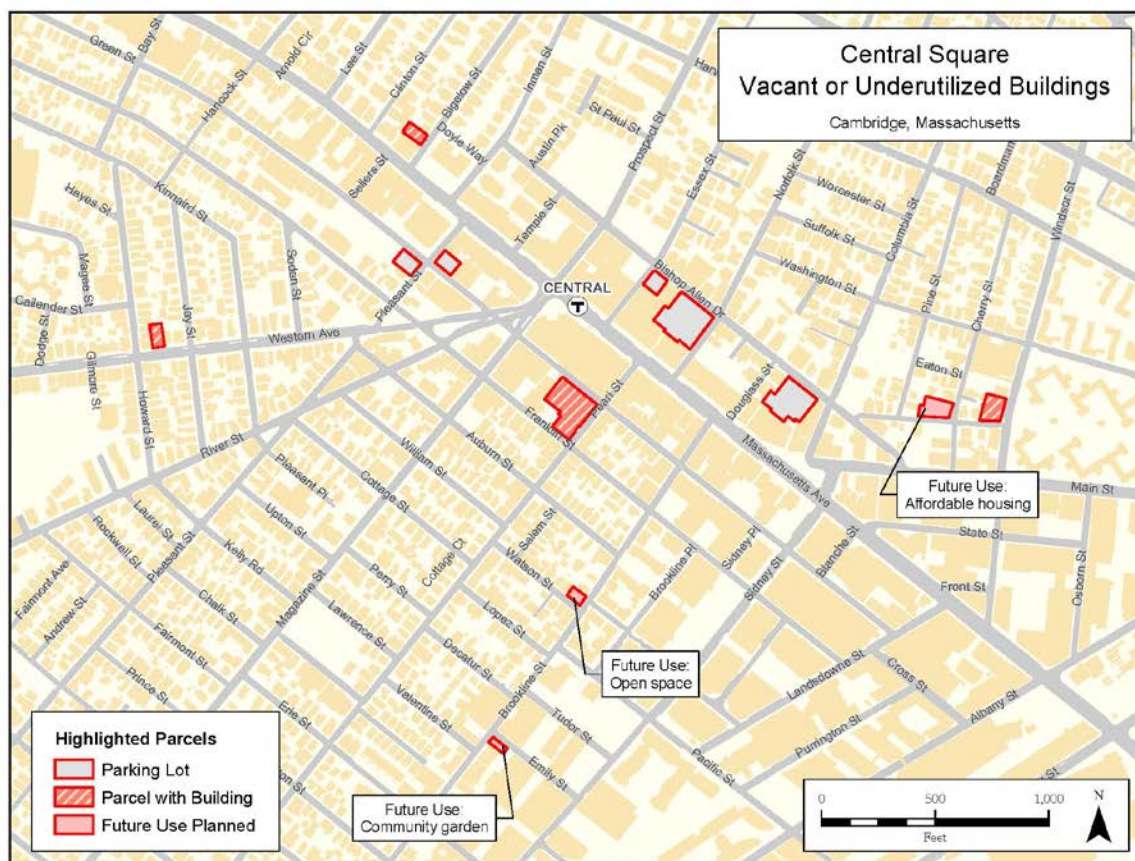
			social services; economic enrichment; preschool; <u>not</u> city offices.
205 Western Ave	Vacant building c/o Cambridge Health Alliance	5,312	205 Western Avenue was built in 1993 as an outpatient clinic for the Cambridge Hospital network. The center closed in 2009. The building has been unoccupied since and under the care of the Cambridge Health Alliance (CHA). The Department of Public Works has recently completed an assessment of the building in response to Council Order PO 2022#65 and has concluded that the building needs substantial renovation.
3 Bigelow St	Transitional /Shelter Housing	5,275	This building has been unoccupied since 2015 and the transitional shelter has now been relocated to 859 Massachusetts Avenue. The building needs substantial repairs and has been identified in previous studies as office space for City staff.
260 Green Street	Green Street Garage/Central Square Branch Library	31,545	The Central Square Branch Library is the City's largest and busiest branch, located next to the Green Street parking garage.
29 Third St	Cambridge Electrical Department	5,348	29 Third Street is the former East Cambridge Fire Station presently used by the Cambridge Electrical Department.
763 Concord Ave	Cambridge West Industrial Park Green Patch	4,814	The City owns a small vacant parcel at the corner of Spinelli Place and Concord Avenue in Alewife.
35 Cherry Street	Lot at School and Cherry Street	10,324	35 Cherry Street was acquired by the City from MIT as part of a development agreement. The Community Development Department hosted a series of public meetings and focus groups in 2021 to understand the community's vision and priorities for

			affordable housing. The community identified the site for affordable home ownership and developed design principles to guide the size, scale, and quality of development.
89 Brookline St #1	Lot at Watson and Brookline Street	3,432	89 Brookline Street, at the corner of Brookline and Watson in Cambridgeport, was donated to the City by MIT. The space will be used as future open space. In the spring/summer of 2022, the City made improvements to the space, including removing the fence, planting trees along the perimeter, and adding a pollinator garden.
3 Emily St	Lot at Emily Street	2,401	Previously owned by MIT, 3 Emily Street in Cambridgeport was previously used and continues to be used as a community garden.
32 Flagg St	Corporal Burns bathhouse and Gym	4,920	Square footage includes the building and immediate area only, in the southeast corner of Corporal Burns Park

While they are being actively used as parking, surface parking lots owned by the City offer the possibility of redevelopment to serve multiple municipal goals.

<u>Location</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Square Feet</u>
84 Bishop Allen Dr	Municipal Parking Lot 5	34,442
38 Bishop Allen Dr	Municipal Parking Lot 6	26,201
9 Pleasant St	Municipal Parking Lot 9	7,220
331 Norfolk St	Norfolk St Lot	7,576
375 Green St	Municipal Parking Lot 8	6,163
96 Bishop Allen Dr	Municipal Parking Lot 4	5,938

As illustrated, a significant number of vacant and underutilized municipal property is located in Central Square, including five surface parking lots, totaling about 80,000 square feet. The map below shows City-owned vacant and underutilized buildings in Central Square.



Central Square area municipal property needs assessment and planning study

To best manage City-owned property, it is beneficial to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment and planning study for municipal properties. Given the concentration of the City's vacant and underutilized property assets in and around Central Square, we believe it is best to consider these sites together to see how best to meet the City's needs. The study will, therefore, focus on this area. This holistic approach will identify how the City can best leverage our properties to support municipal services and advance City priorities. Based on prior studies such as the Central Square Planning Study (C2 Plan), priorities articulated by the City Council, and City needs, these priorities include the following:

- Affordable housing;
- Open space and other community gathering space;
- Arts and culture (e.g., Starlight Square, museums);
- Community services and facilities (e.g., preschool space);
- Central Square municipal parking (e.g., loading);
- Stormwater management and flood reduction in the Port neighborhood; and
- Office space for municipal functions.

The Community Development Department is preparing to hire a consultant to develop a municipal property needs assessment and planning study for City-owned property in and around Central Square. The scope of the project will include the following:

- Documenting what facilities will be needed in the next 5 to 15 years for achieving the City's programmatic and service goals;
- Analyzing how the City's existing facilities and properties can accommodate those needs;
- Quantifying the gap between our needs and existing facilities; and
- Developing an action plan with recommendations to address future needs.

The planning study will include an assessment of municipal needs through interviews with key departments; an inclusive public engagement process; and drawing on recently completed studies. Of note, and on the City Manager's agenda tonight, is a report that the City is currently embarking on a citywide comprehensive mapping and analysis of cultural infrastructure in partnership with the City of Boston, the City of Somerville, and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). Results from the cultural infrastructure assessment will be incorporated into the citywide municipal property needs assessment and planning study.

The study will consider which sites are appropriate for certain type and scale of development and consider compatible uses when feasible and appropriate. It will result in a comprehensive assessment of current municipal property in the Central Square area and possible future options to best serve the longer-term needs of the Cambridge community. Specifically, the study will determine the potential for affordable housing on the City-owned parking lots along Bishop Allen Drive (as per POR 2016 # 111); and the study will incorporate the inclusive public process requested specific to 105 Windsor Street (as per POR 2022 # 142 and discussed during the design appropriation debate by City Council on September 12, 2022) with the expectation that such will result in a building use recommendation made to the City Council before detailed design begins.