

Cambridge Redevelopment Authority

2022 STRATEGIC PLAN

October 14, 2022 – DRAFT

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The 2022 Strategic Plan for the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority (CRA) provides an expanded vision of the organization's potential positive impact for the Cambridge community. The Strategic Plan takes into account the context of the CRA's growth, ten years after reforming itself with a new board and staff, in 2012 and 2013 respectively. Similar to the 2014 Strategic Plan, this report follows Kaplan's model for a balanced scorecard¹, with vision and mission at the center, supported by a focused look at the following four areas: external activities, internal operations, financial considerations, and learning, growth, and engagement.

The work has been developed with the voices of the CRA Board, staff, and Strategic Advisory Group over many different work sessions during these overlapping phases of work (Appendix A):

- Discovery Phase (February to July 2021)
- Strategic Priorities (August 2021 to June 2022)
- Mission Alignment (September 2021 to August 2022)

The CRA's mission has been robust in guiding the work of the organization and will continue to do so. This report includes slight refinements to the 2014 mission, but is overall consistent in meaning and intent. The vision statement reflects the context within which the CRA works in the City of Cambridge, while defining the important role that the CRA fulfills as a real estate entity working in the public interest and working in collaboration with partners.

The mission and the vision together set the tone for the range external activities that the CRA should consider in the future. These include stewardship obligations in Kendall Square, creative development opportunities that advance the mission, initiatives related to economic opportunity, and climate change adaptations that foster alternative means of mobility and improved parks and streets that contribute to high quality compact development. Considerations of diversity, equity and inclusion permeate all of these topics, ranging from where projects are located to how they are procured. A central concern of the CRA is that programs and spaces foster a sense of belonging for all residents and workers in the city.

With substantial financial resources and long-term stewardship obligations, a central question is whether the CRA can grow to meet the demands of so many different project types at different stages between planning and implementation or whether it remains a small organization focused on a few key initiatives. In either scenario, a strategic investment in management structures and

¹ Kaplan, Robert S. and David P. Norton. Fall 1996. "Linking the balanced scorecard to strategy." *California Management Review*, Vol 39, No. 1; Kaplan, Robert S.. Spring 2001. "Strategic performance measurement and management in non-profit organizations." *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, 11 (3).

systems will help the CRA carry out its external activities. Over the coming years, the CRA will need to find a balance between its ability to be nimble and to be strategic. Strategic decision-making will allow the CRA to carefully consider partners and opportunities while being mindful of mission alignment. By managing its human and capital resources wisely, the CRA will be able to respond nimbly in the face of unpredictable situations, rising to the occasion as needed.

A key point of discussion going forward is the ability to optimize the CRA's capital structure and use the available financial tools to maximize impact. This strategic question involves decisions about whether to carry out many small projects to disperse the impact, whether to focus on a few large initiatives that take advantage of the size of the resource pool, or whether to conserve funds for unforeseen crisis in the future. Key financial strategies outlined in this strategic plan include:

1. Invest in financial systems and human resources
2. Challenge current investment policies
3. Balance our future project portfolio
4. Manage expectations about the resource pool
5. Make the CRA's assets work harder
6. Leverage our Impact through partnerships
7. Invest in due diligence

The CRA works within a complex network of public, nonprofit, and private partners. From its restart in 2013, the CRA has been deeply committed to community engagement in all of its endeavors, yet acknowledges that there are always community members that are not yet involved or involved enough. The CRA is committed to not just listening, but acting based on knowledge and ideas generated in the community. Throughout the strategic planning process, the CRA staff have worked to identify key partners and to build an office culture that values time spent in building relationships with those in other organizations. Informal relationships, especially those that reach into underrepresented communities, can become the basis for future partnerships and future leaders.

2.0 VISION

The CRA's unique set of assets are a committed staff, sophisticated public policy tools, and resources. These assets will continue to give the CRA the opportunity to make a positive difference in the city, a responsibility that the board and staff take seriously. The strategic plan will be a framework that informs project and program decisions.

Geography and Scale of Impact

The CRA will be working on the most pressing needs in Cambridge. Recognizing how challenging it can be to move the needle on key issues, the CRA will scale up their efforts through partnerships that can accelerate impact and by developing models that are replicable. Cambridge has attentive City departments, many non-profit organizations, and a robust real estate market. Working within this context, the CRA will focus on places where gaps exist, where partnerships need strengthening, where greater equity and strategic intervention are called for, and where the CRA can make a difference with its unique assets (staff, public policy, and resources). The stewardship of Kendall Square will remain an important priority, but the CRA has demonstrated that opportunities are not limited to Kendall Square, and that the resources generated from real estate investment in Kendall Square are best used in making a difference in other parts of the city and in the lives of those in need.

Innovation and Growth

The CRA will be known for being responsive and strategic. Since its reformation in 2013, the CRA has functioned in many ways as a start-up enterprise, testing its capacity to solve problems as they arose across a wide array of scales, topics, and expertise. By 2022, the organization has grown to encompass significant assets and a larger staff. Moving forward, the CRA will chart its future initiatives as a more mature organization, employing a deep understanding of itself, community needs, national models, and research. The CRA will conduct research, invest in community relationships, and assess community needs in order to anticipate opportunities. Through this approach, the CRA will generate and attract ideas with a clear understanding of context and implications.

Stewardship

The CRA will continue to manage its long term obligations, including its role as the responsible authority for the Kendall Square Urban Redevelopment Plan (KSURP); oversight of KSURP Development Agreements including the Infill Development Concept Plan (IDCP); alignment of KSURP with the Kendall Square Mixed Use Development (MXD) District; environmental review and mitigation of KSURP through the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), including the Kendall Square Transit Enhancement Program (KSTEP) and annual transportation report (ATR); long

term operation of the Foundry; ownership of 99 Bishop Allen; and retirement obligations for its employees (Table 1).

Table 1. CRA Existing Long-Term Obligations (sorted by end term)

Initiative	Begin Term	End Term	Notes
Small Business Loans	2020	2025	COVID response, with City
MXD - Infill Development Concept Plan	2017	~ 2028	Amended 2019, projected 3 phases
Eversource	2021	2028	Affordable Home Ownership obligation
KSURP	1965	2035	Urban Redevelopment
MEPA / Transportation Report	1994	2035	KSURP review w/amendments
KSTEP	2019	2035	KSURP mitigation, until funds dispersed
Foundry	2022	2072	Long term lease
Open Space	1965	-	Galaxy, Grand Junction, 6 th Street
Bishop Allen	2021	-	Ownership of commercial property

Engagement and Partnerships

The CRA will continue to occupy a distinctive position as a quasi-public entity with autonomy, an appointed governing board, and independent sources of revenue, all working within a state-enabled framework (Chapter 121b). The CRA will work in partnership with community development corporations, non-profits large and small, private developers, the City, and other public and quasi-public entities. In efforts that involve the City, the CRA will coordinate and offer its services, tackling some of the thorniest issues with the ability to focus on specific tasks and move projects forward quickly if need be. The CRA will continue to build trust among its many partners and constituencies through its mission focus and commitment to equity and transparency. CRA activities will support, advocate for, engage, and collaborate with communities, and wherever possible, will involve youth in a deeper level of engagement. The staff will develop regional relationships with other cities and non-profit organizations that engage in related work and will increase their awareness of conditions on the ground through weekly walks, community walks, and other field reconnaissance.

Priority Topics of Interest

The CRA will focus its attention on a number of key priorities that address pressing needs related to creative development opportunities, economic opportunity, and climate change, through the lens of diversity, equity, and resilience. These are topics that have a particular resonance for the Cambridge community, and the CRA will tackle these as a public real estate entity within the framework of its distinctive policies, staff capacity, and resources, as well as its track record on project-based initiatives. This vision acknowledges the role and actions of other entities and the importance of the CRA working in partnership with others. Notably the City works on these same issues citywide through long-range planning, policies, and project implementation, and certain non-profits specialize in mission-based projects, programs, advocacy, and services in these areas.

- **Creative Development Opportunities:** The CRA will consider unmet needs in the realm of housing development, community infrastructure, and cultural facilities, stepping in to provide loans and grants, amenities, small infill development, and/or land acquisition, among other. These initiatives will require careful partnership with community development corporations, neighborhood settlement houses, nonprofit organizations, cultural organizations, private developers, the City, and/or others. The CRA will conduct local and national research that informs this practice and leads to creative models, such as land banks, community land trusts, or other methods of acquiring, holding, and writing down the cost of land.
- **Economic Opportunity:** The CRA will play a leadership role advancing workforce and entrepreneurial programs connecting Kendall Square's innovation economy to the Cambridge community. It will assist the City in convening workforce advocates, practitioners, educators, and employers to identify gaps in the delivery of services and to find better matches between residents and jobs in Cambridge. The CRA will take an active role by lifting up the role of the LINK as a workforce training and coworking space, promoting skill-based programs at the Foundry, supporting entrepreneurs, and drawing on connections to employers in Kendall Square. Opportunities will be pursued to inspire youth, encourage internships, connect with community colleges, and invest in community facilities that foster workforce services and training.
- **Climate Change Adaptations:** The CRA will employ its particular expertise in sustainable development, transportation and open space to reduce carbon emissions and promote greater resilience. These projects will advance electrification, active mobility; increase the tree canopy; and foster compact living and working through greater walkability and the quality of the urban environment. The CRA will explore collaboration with entities working on the issues of resilient community infrastructure at a district and at a regional level.
- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:** The CRA will strive to be actively anti-racist, not just in its statements but in its actions. Board and staff members will pursue ongoing trainings that will deepen this knowledge and awareness and help the CRA become a model in this regard as it grows. This commitment will be apparent in Board representation, hiring, and the location and format of public and community meetings. The CRA will listen not just to the loudest voices but will seek out those who are underrepresented and less comfortable in planning and development

spaces. The CRA Board and staff will build community relationships through involvement at neighborhood events and engaging with community members to share perspectives. The CRA will consider issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in its project decisions and formation of programs.

3.0 MISSION

The 2014 mission statement has proved to be very robust and is used on social media, websites, documents, policies, and project materials. Since it is used in so many ways, having a concise mission statement ensures that it is used in full, while still allowing second level information to follow as operating principles or as part of the general description of the organization. Based on discussions with the Board and staff, the following statement suggests an updated mission to guide the organization's work:

The Cambridge Redevelopment Authority is committed to implementing creative development projects and initiatives that promote social equity and environmental sustainability. As a real estate entity that works in the public interest, we offer distinctive public investment tools and a human dimension to our projects and partnerships throughout the city.

The Operating Principles from 2014 continue to animate the work of the CRA

1. **Act:** Complement the City's planning role by focusing on implementation using redevelopment tools imaginatively.
2. **Operate with transparency:** Be visible and foster face-to-face relationships and a forum for discussing ideas.
3. **Maximize the public benefit:** Serve a broad public purpose with ethically sound practices in partnership with the City and others.
4. **Operate with fiscal responsibility:** Use our independent resources wisely to accomplish our mission.
5. **Set an example:** Through our actions, advance thinking on issues with long-term consequences and within a larger context, be innovative yet with an awareness of history.

4.0 CONTEXT

When the CRA prepared a strategic plan in 2014, it was essentially a “new” organization with a new board, a new executive director, and the opportunity to re-envision its future. At that time, the Board established a mission, operating principles, and priority projects to direct its work over the near and mid-term future. To carry out the work, the plan outlined future staff needs, financial considerations, and how the organization could engage in continuous learning through outreach and other professional development.

In 2022, the world looks very different, in part because of the ongoing pandemic, but also because Cambridge, its neighborhoods, and its communities continue to change, and the CRA itself has evolved over the past eight years. The updated Strategic Plan offers a chance to reflect on the work to date and the organizational operation, while taking stock of current and future needs in the community and how the CRA might best work with its many partners to achieve its stated mission.

Urban Redevelopment Entities

Urban redevelopment agencies are enabled by the Massachusetts General Law Chapter 121b, which mandates a five-member board and offers a set of distinctive implementation tools for development. Each redevelopment authority sets its own goals based on local needs, and working within the parameters of state law, has wide latitude on how to carry out its mission. Of the many powers identified in Chapter 121b, Section 11 and 46, those most relevant to the CRA and its work include these abilities:

- **Financial:** Receive loans, grants, and other contributions from any public or private source; borrow money; and invest funds
- **Management:** Manage the urban renewal plan and other projects that it’s authorized to undertake; enter into, execute, and carry out contracts and all other instruments necessary for their work
- **Real Estate and Development:** Acquire and hold real estate; sell or lease properties; improve properties it has acquired; carry out demonstration projects
- **Planning and Research:** Prepare plans and workable programs for community development; conduct studies, surveys and plans and disseminate information relative to community development; develop, test, and report methods and techniques

CRA’s Evolving Identity

In Cambridge, the CRA has a 66-year history of managing change, primarily in Kendall Square but also in other parts of the city. One of the Commonwealth’s first urban redevelopment projects was the Roger’s Block, which later became Technology Square. In the 1970s, the CRA did extensive community development in the Wellington-Harrington neighborhood, integrating community

involvement, affordable housing, and workforce development. The Just-a-Start (JAS) community development corporation was created as a spin-off from these activities. Other early residential projects were in Walden Square and Riverview near Mt. Auburn Hospital. In the 1970s and 1980s, the CRA became increasingly focused on the 32-acre urban renewal area that originally was defined by Main Street and Binney Street and from Third Avenue to the current Galileo Galilei Way (the KSURP applicability to Volpe parcel sunset in 2010).

Over the last decade, the CRA has continued its work in Kendall Square; facilitating nearly two million square feet of mixed-use development, transforming the parks and streetscapes in the district, and relocating a critical electrical infrastructure investment. At the same time, the CRA has also expanded its activities in new initiatives and partnerships citywide. During this time, the CRA has steadily increased its visibility and built community trust, basically redefining the organization's identity. Through its work, the CRA has demonstrated its strengths in problem solving and implementation, working nimbly where needed and investing significant resources into key projects. The work has involved a wide range of partners throughout the City, and other relationships have grown through the Forward Fund grant program. As an independent entity, the CRA has been creative in exploring solutions to situations that would not move forward without its input and participation, tapping into its financial resources to make these projects possible (Appendix B, Current and Ongoing Projects).

Current Issues and Opportunities

The City of Cambridge is one of the most well-resourced communities in the Commonwealth, with a very engaged City government, renowned institutions of higher education, and an extensive non-profit sector. Despite these many assets, there are still substantial portions of the community left behind and a growing wealth disparity. In the 2020 census, the city's population of 118,000 people includes 36% black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC); 29% of its residents are foreign born; and 34% speak a language other than English at home. Only 35% of the housing units are owner-occupied with median values of \$843,000, much higher than the median value of owner-occupied units statewide, which is \$399,000. With a large number of rental units, the median gross rent is \$2,293, which is out of reach for many families. In Cambridge, 14.8% of the total housing units are subsidized. The residents of Cambridge are highly educated with over 95% with a high school degree and 79% with a bachelor's degree or higher. While the median household income is \$107,000, there are still 12% of the population living in poverty.² As with any college town, the student population can skew the data analysis since reporting on primary residence can vary and eventually graduate and part-time students can become long-term residents. Cambridge universities enroll more than

² U.S. Census, Quick Facts, City of Cambridge, 2020. DHCD, Subsidized Housing Inventory, December 21, 2020.

14,000 undergraduate students and almost 30,000 graduate students, all of which puts additional pressure on the housing market.³

Over the last two and half years, the pandemic has affected many aspects of urban living, and the economic and social responses continue to evolve. Most notably for this discussion, many workers switched at least part of the time to work from home, which has a ripple effect on transportation use, livelihood of small businesses in employment centers, office space demand, and the reconfiguration of housing units to accommodate home offices. The demand for and use of open space greatly increased, and many people took to bicycles and walking in place of public transit. Despite the future of work trends, Kendall Square real estate continues to command top prices, in part because of the increase in demand for lab space and the need for in-person work in the life science industries. Although those who could afford to may have sought rural escapes at the beginning of the pandemic, the quality of life in Cambridge is a strong factor in maintaining the desirability and market demand for housing in the city.

Although much has changed due to the pandemic, many other urban challenges and aspirations remain constant, and Cambridge is no exception. The Board, staff, and Strategic Advisory Group identified a wide range of topics that the City, the community, and other stakeholders are working on, which provides context for the CRA as it determines priorities. These include mobility, green infrastructure, housing, affordable non-profit and retail space, and job training, and are outlined in more detail in Appendix C. A discussion about the CRA's partners and evolving relationships with a wide range of entities in Cambridge is addressed in *Section 9.0, Learning, Growth, and Engagement*.

³ Enrollments: <https://facts.mit.edu/enrollment-statistics/>; <https://oir.harvard.edu/fact-book/enrollment>; <https://lesley.edu/about/lesley-by-the-numbers>

5.0 EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES

The Vision and the Mission are the basis for defining the CRA's future external activities. Focusing on the strategic priorities identified below, the CRA can develop new project ideas through a multi-pronged effort that involves increasing its presence at community meetings and activities; promoting its skills, abilities, and capacity with improved communications; and continuing to learn from the Forward Fund, which allows the CRA to identify community needs and cultivate potential partners.

A central theme during the strategic planning process has been the definition of a process to identify, screen, and pursue new projects. This approach acknowledges that the CRA can't do it all, all at once, and that there is a need to prioritize, use resource wisely, and leverage funding as the CRA seeks to create value and fulfil its mission. This decision-making process entails early due diligence as well as staff recommendations to inform board deliberations.

In some situations, change might be affected through a well-thought-out community strategy, while in others a deeper investment of resources may be warranted. Where possible, the CRA should be leveraging other partners and funding to achieve a larger social or environmental impact. Increasingly, future project decisions will be shaped by considerations of diversity, equity, and inclusion, such as efforts to lower barriers for black and brown businesses, fostering small business ownership, structuring cross subsidies of market and below market spaces, building non-profit capacity, and addressing chronic issues such as workforce gaps and affordable housing.

Strategic Priorities 2022-2027

The CRA's projects over the next five years will be mission-based with a focus on equity, resiliency and sustainability, and a comprehensive future-oriented view of the city. The CRA has a great deal of flexibility and is able to fill gaps that might otherwise not be filled through the staff's experience and ability, the authority's distinctive set of public policies, and access to resources. Priority areas for CRA involvement are identified below in alignment with the vision and the CRA's stewardship obligations. Over the coming years, individual projects will have to be weighed within these broad categories.

Kendall Square Stewardship: Oversight and Asset Management

- KSURP design review and signage approvals
- Oversight of Eversource infrastructure and development project
- KSURP MEPA and IDCP mitigations obligations: KSTEP, Annual Transportation Plan
- Open space property management: Galaxy Park, Grand Junction Park, 6th Street Walkway

Creative Development Opportunities: Real Estate and Operations

- Affordable home ownership (Eversource commitment)

- Cultural space preservation and investment
- Settlement house investments
- Affordable non-profit real estate
- Community land trust: acquisition of land or underutilized buildings
- 99 Bishop Allen Drive asset management
- The Foundry asset management

Economic Opportunity

- Workforce development: LINK
- Forward Fund loans
- Small business and entrepreneurial opportunity support
- Additional grant and/or loan programs

Climate Change Adaptations: Green Infrastructure and Mobility

- Civic space design, maintenance, programming
- Complete streets: bike infrastructure, walkability, public transit support, and landscaping to support the urban forest
- POPS/signage review
- Mobility policy research

Considerations of diversity, equity and inclusion permeate all of these topics. Decisions about the location, design, and programming of civic spaces affect their role as a community-wide asset that welcome all people, not just those that work or live in the immediate area. To best serve the community, events and spaces need to be discoverable, either through online platforms or word of mouth through various constituencies. While neighborhood change may seem threatening, it's also an opportunity to welcome new diversity and create bridges between long-time residents and newcomers. The areas between neighborhoods or districts should be treated carefully to avoid real or perceived edges or areas of "no-man's land" that separate rather than join communities. Integrating mission-based entities into new spaces, such as Commonwealth Kitchen, the 99 Bishop Allen non-profits, and Foundry programs can become the draw that welcomes residents and businesses of color. Attention to these aspects of design and operations can inform the future work of the CRA and its partners so that spaces foster a sense of belonging.