

# ELM-BEACON CONNECTOR QUICK-BUILD PROJECT

FIRST COMMUNITY MEETING, SEPTEMBER 25, 2024

WEBSITE: [SOMERVILLEMA.GOV/ELMBEACON](http://SOMERVILLEMA.GOV/ELMBEACON)

**MAYOR KATJANA BALLANTYNE**

CITY OF SOMERVILLE, OFFICE OF STRATEGIC  
PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

WARD 6 COUNCILOR LANCE DAVIS

WARD 5 COUNCILOR NAIMA SAIT

WARD 3 COUNCILOR BEN EWEN-CAMPEN

WARD 2 COUNCILOR J.T. SCOTT

## VIRTUAL MEETING INSTRUCTIONS

1. We are recording this meeting. We will post a recording of tonight's meeting on the project webpage this week at [somervillema.gov/elmbeacon](http://somervillema.gov/elmbeacon).
2. Your camera is off for the duration of the meeting.
3. We will enable your microphone only when you are speaking.
4. Throughout the meeting we will conduct optional poll questions.
5. After the full presentation, we will open the meeting to discussion. We will first answer questions that came in through the chat and then move to spoken comments.
6. You can send your written questions to the host, through the chat box and the host will read them out loud during discussion.
7. If you have any technical difficulties, please email [transportation@somervillema.gov](mailto:transportation@somervillema.gov) or call 617-366-7293.

# COMMUNITY MEETING PURPOSE, OUTCOMES, PROCESS

- **Purpose:** We aim to create a safer design for Elm Street (Russell Street to Somerville Avenue), Somerville Avenue (City Line to Elm Street), Beacon Street (Somerville Avenue to Oxford Street), and Mossland Street as part of the Somerville Bicycle Network Plan and Safe Street Ordinance. In this meeting, we will introduce the project, and you will learn about the goals, background, potential design options, and ways to engage during the design development.
- **Outcomes:** We want to hear your transportation safety concerns for the project area and your initial feedback to help us start designing the quick-build protected bike lanes project.
- **Process:** We will present a slideshow on the project and then have a question-and-answer session for community input. Over the next month, there will be more opportunities to get involved in different ways.

# INTRODUCTION QUESTIONS

- Where in Somerville do you live?
- What are the main ways that you generally travel?
- Please share how you use the streets in this project area today.



# TONIGHT'S AGENDA

- Welcome / Introduction (*10 min*)
- Presentation by staff (*35 min*)
  - Who are we and what do we do? (*5 min*)
  - Why Elm Street, Somerville Avenue, Mossland Street, and Beacon Street? (*5 min*)
  - What is the project plan? (*20 min*)
  - What's next and how can I engage? (*5 min*)
- Discussion (*45 min*)



WHO ARE WE AND WHAT DO WE DO?

## PROJECT TEAM

### Mobility Division, Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development (OSPCD)

- Adam Polinski, Senior Planner
- Kate White, Transportation Planner - Outreach & Engagement
- Lillian Worth, Transportation Planner

For any questions throughout the project, reach out to [transportation@somervillema.gov](mailto:transportation@somervillema.gov)

# WHAT ARE OUR VALUES?

- Keeping people safe on our streets
- Improving access to public transit
- Creating more sustainable transportation options for people

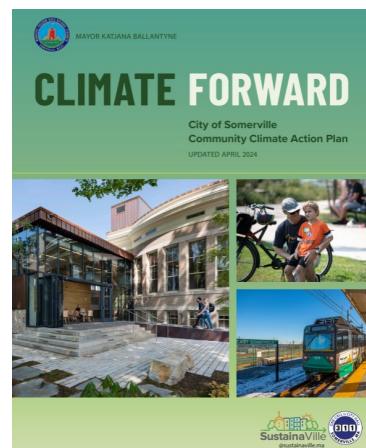
These values are codified by the Complete Streets Ordinance (2014) and Safe Streets Ordinance (2024)



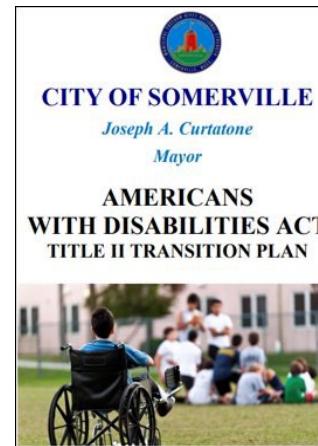
# GUIDING PLANS



SomerVision (2021):  
Planning for Community-oriented development



Climate Plan (2024):  
Decarbonizing our transportation system



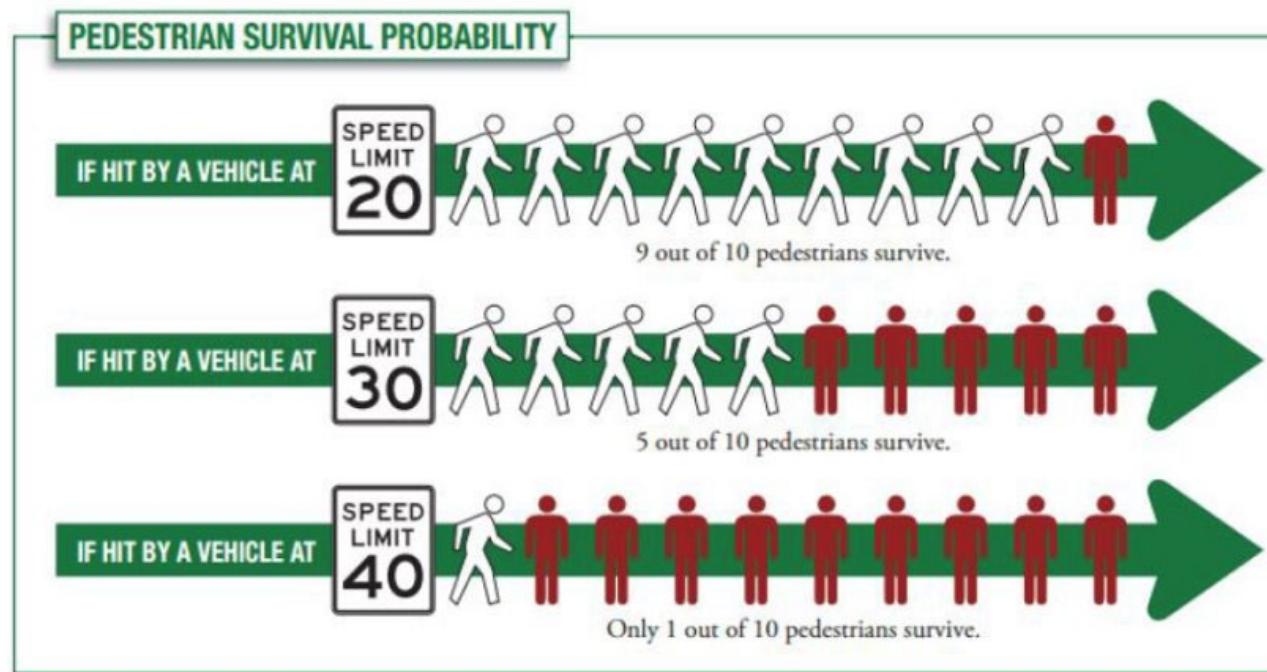
ADA Transition Plan (2013):  
Making our streets accessible to everyone



Bicycle Network Plan (2023):  
Enabling people to get around safely by bike

# VISION ZERO

We can't prevent people from making mistakes. However, if those mistakes are made at slow speeds, the chance of death or serious injury is significantly reduced.



Vision Zero Action Plan (2020)

# WHY HERE?



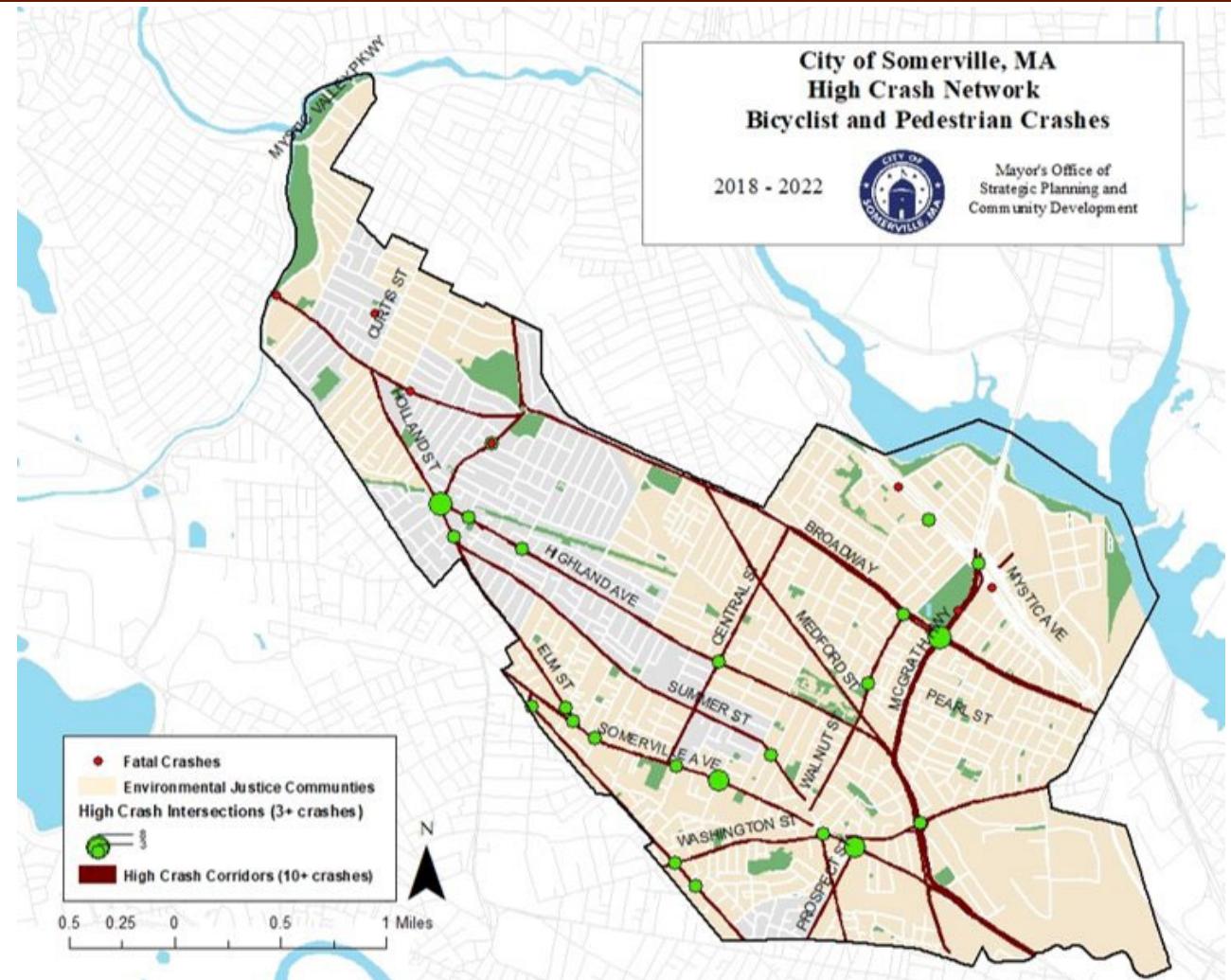
# SAFE STREETS ORDINANCE & BIKE NETWORK PLAN



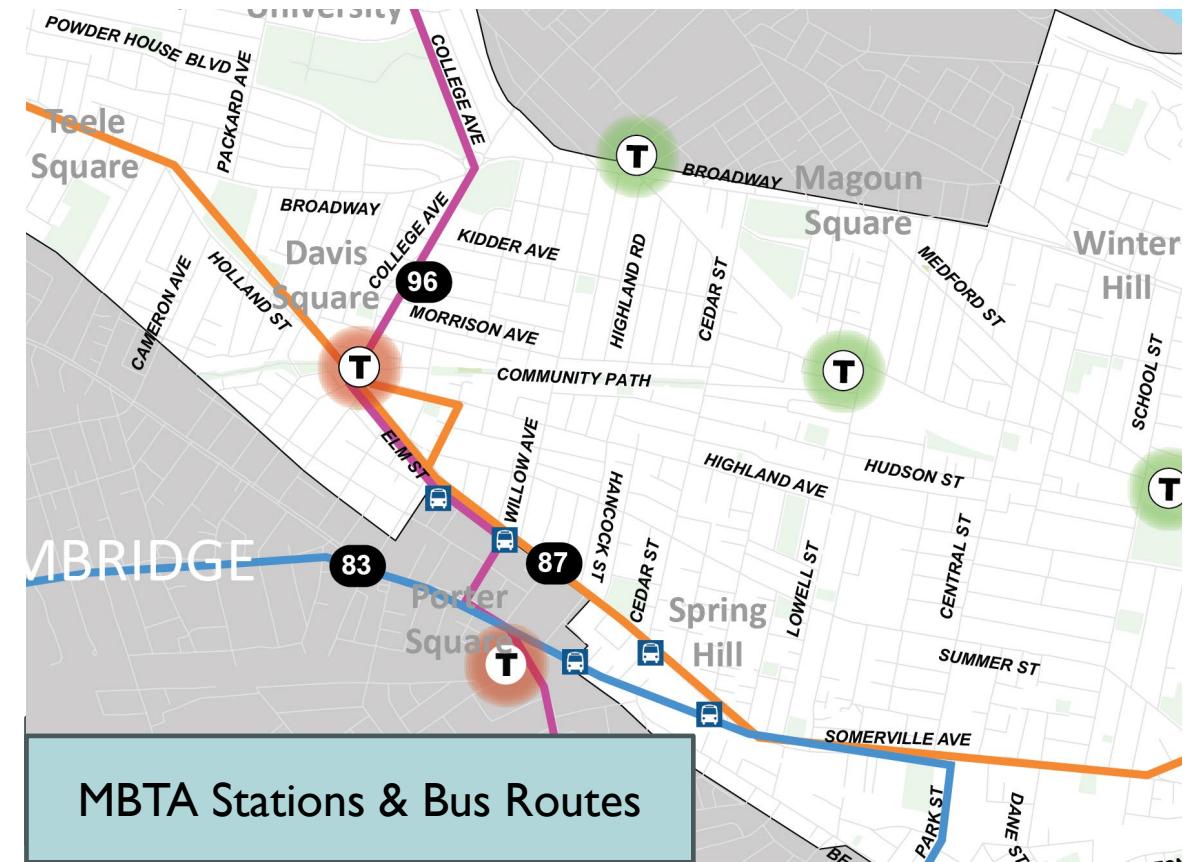
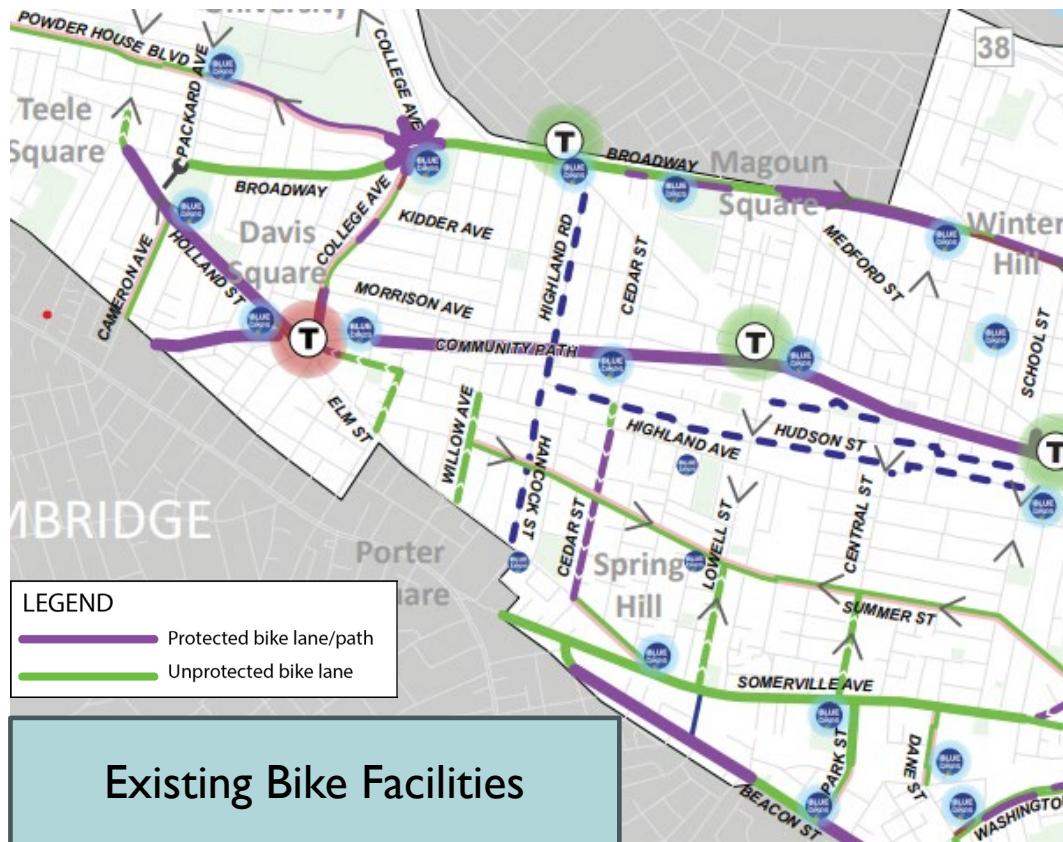
- In the Bike Network Plan, Elm Street, Somerville Avenue, and Beacon Street are all designated for protected bike lanes in both directions. Mossland Street is designated as a low-speed, low-volume Neighborway.
- Elm Street & Somerville Ave are part of the Plan's Priority Network to be completed by 2030.
- Under the Safe Streets Ordinance passed by the Council, the City of Somerville must deliver 30 miles of new protected bike lanes by 2030 (average: 4.5 miles per year).
- When completed, this project will deliver about 2 miles of protected bike lanes.

# VISION ZERO HIGH CRASH NETWORK

- Elm Street, Somerville Avenue and Beacon Street are high-crash streets for people walking and riding bikes
- Project area includes 3 high-crash intersections:
  - Elm Street/Porter Street
  - Elm Street/Somerville Avenue
  - Beacon Street/Oxford Street



# TRANSPORTATION CONTEXT & GAPS



# NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS



# WHAT IS THE PROJECT PLAN?

# OVERVIEW

- At this time, the streets within the project area do not currently meet most of the goals defined in the previous slides
- To better reflect the values of our community, we will be redesigning these streets and implementing changes using quick-build materials such as paint, signs, and flex posts. The new designs will include:
  - Protected bike lanes on
    - Elm Street between Russell Street and Somerville Avenue
    - Somerville Avenue between Acadia Park and Elm Street
    - Beacon Street between Somerville Avenue and Oxford Street
  - Making Mossland Street a low-volume, low-speed neighborway
  - Clear corners markings at all crosswalks and intersections
  - Signal timing changes and equipment upgrades
- The new designs may also include crosswalk improvements or changes to bus stop locations, which we'd like your input on



Illegal parking in the bike lane on Somerville Avenue



Recent safety improvements on Holland Street

# WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THIS QUICK-BUILD PROJECT?

## Definitely



Protected bike lanes



Changes to parking regulations



Narrowing of travel lanes



Traffic signal changes



Street network changes

## Could be



Improved crosswalks



Bus stop changes



Tree plantings



Repaving street or repouring sidewalks



Speed humps or raised crosswalks



New crosswalks



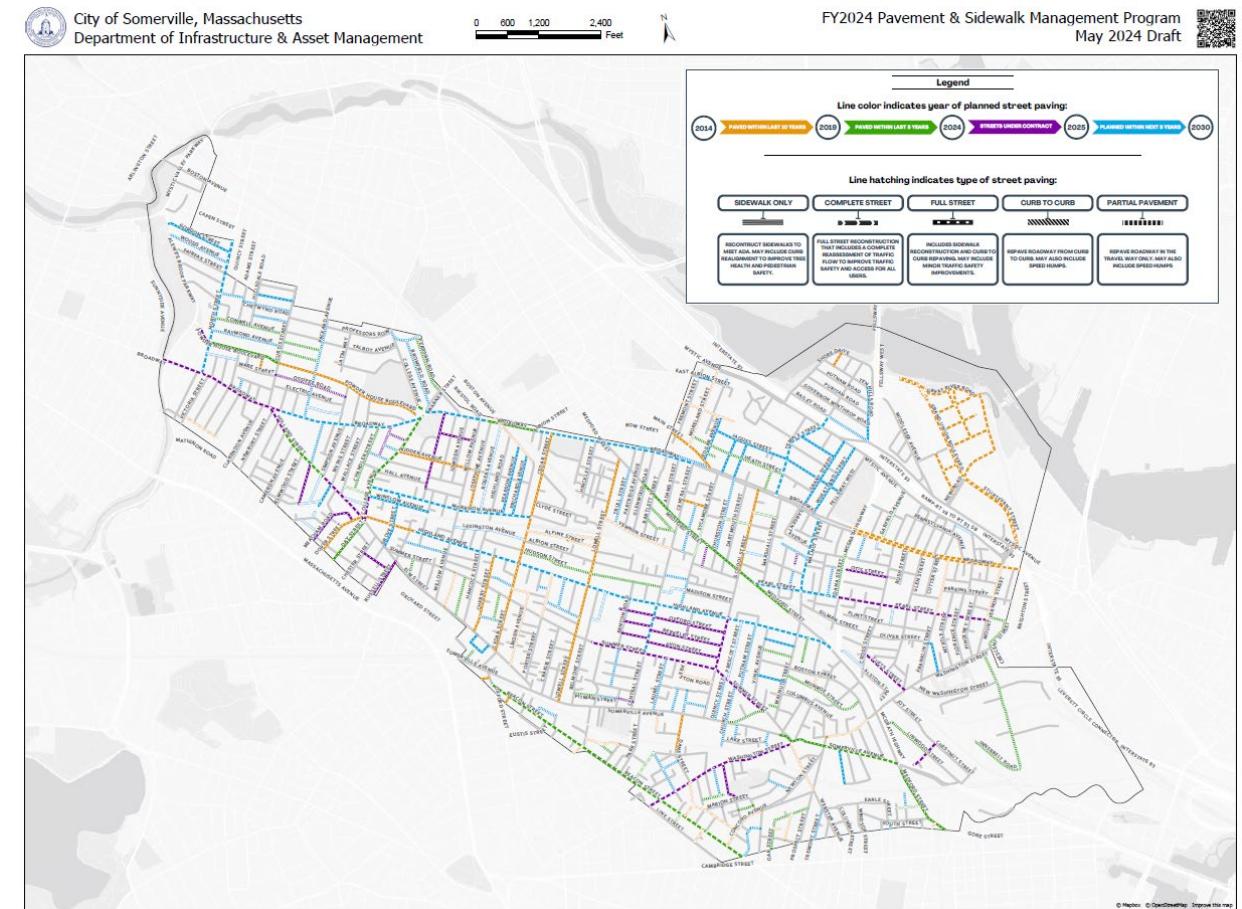
Utility, lighting, or stormwater work



Planters

# WHY A QUICK-BUILD PROJECT?

- None of the streets within the project area are in the Capital Investment Plan or the 5-Year Repaving Plan
- A quick-build “lines and signs” project is the only other option for delivering street improvements here in the next five years
- The benefits of quick-build projects are that they are faster to implement, less impactful during installation, and more flexible



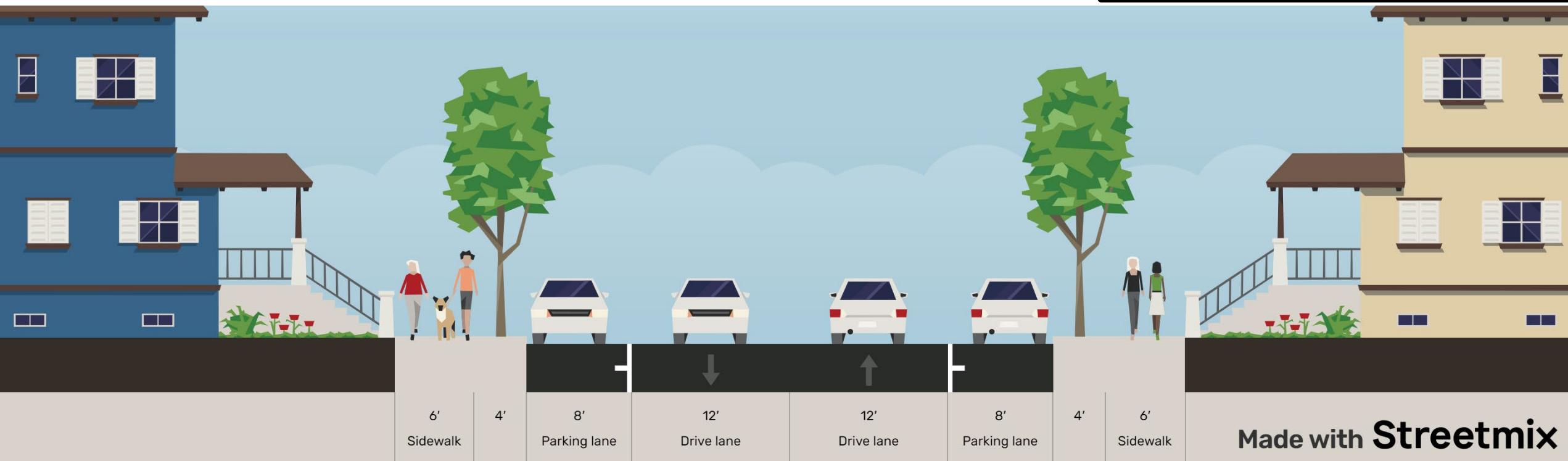
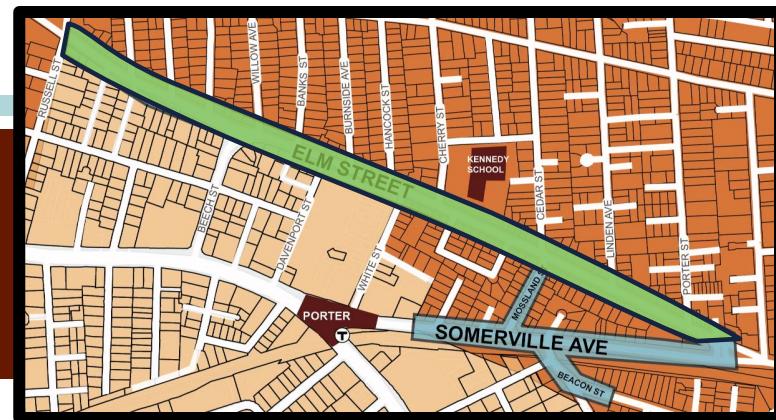
Learn more about the recent update to the 5-year repaving plan at  
<https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/programs/pavement-and-sidewalk-management-program>

# WHY PROTECTED BIKE LANES?



- Protected bike lanes are dedicated space for people on bikes that are physically separated from motor vehicle traffic with curbs or vertical objects such as flex posts
- The City of Somerville has built 8 miles of protected bike lanes since 2017 and will be increasing the number of these facilities that we build going forward, including as part of this project
- Protected bike lanes are important elements of safe streets because they:
  - Increase comfort and access for people of all ages and abilities
  - Reduce crash and injury risk
  - Eliminate the threat of "dooring" from parked vehicles
  - Reduce potential conflicts between vehicles and people biking
  - Encourage slower traffic speeds by visually narrowing the street

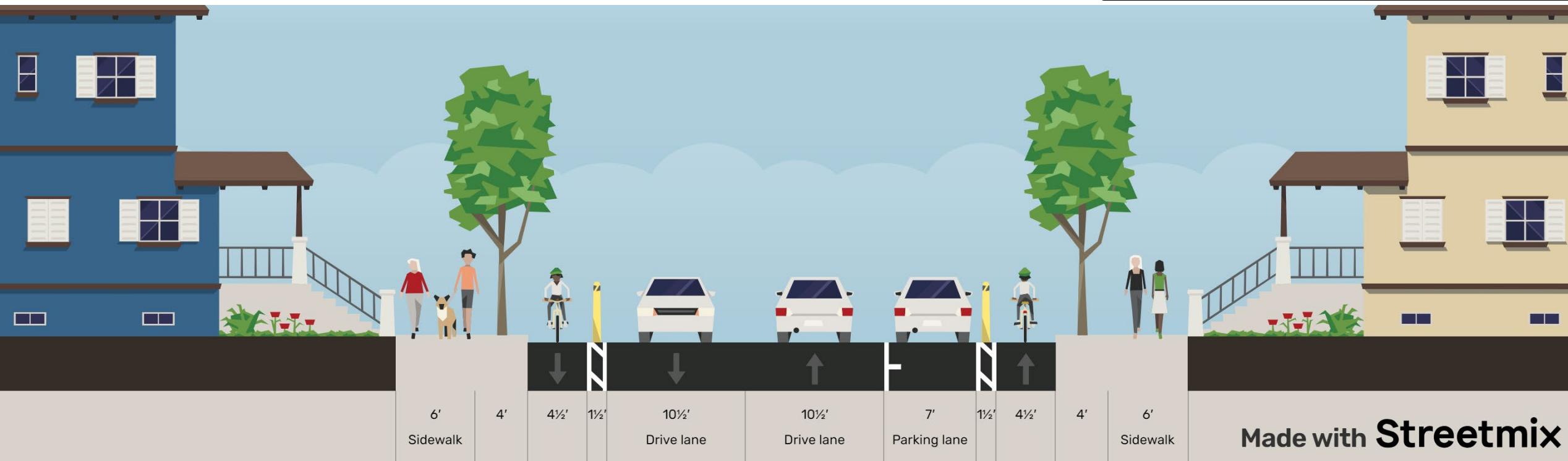
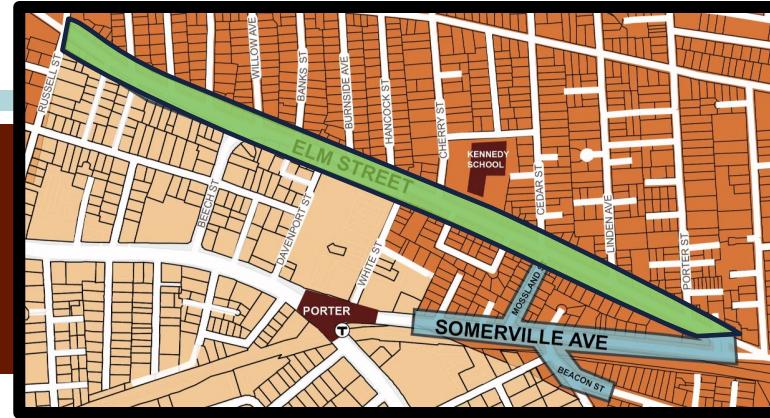
# ELM STREET EXISTING CONDITION



Right now, most of Elm Street has a travel lane in each direction and parking on both sides of the street.

# ELM STREET

## ANTICIPATED CHANGES



We will design Elm Street to include a travel lane in each direction and a protected bike lane in each direction. For most of the street, this will leave about 7 ft of additional space. We currently anticipate using that space to provide a lane of on-street parking, and welcome the community's input on which side of the street parking will remain on each block.

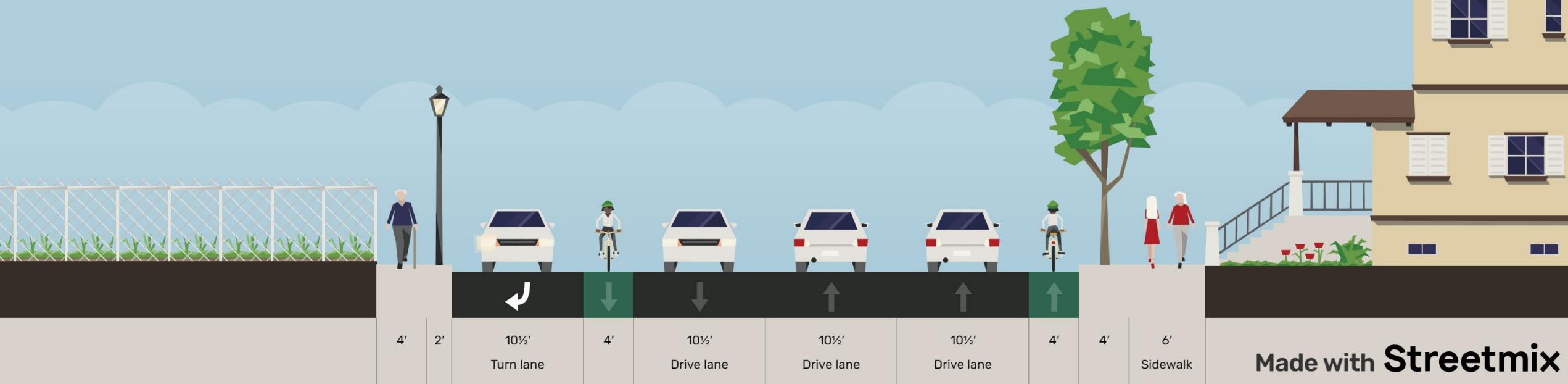
# What could Elm Street look like?

This photo from Holland St is an example of a recent project with similar street width and constraints as Elm St, and could serve as an example of the potential future condition



# SOMERVILLE AVENUE

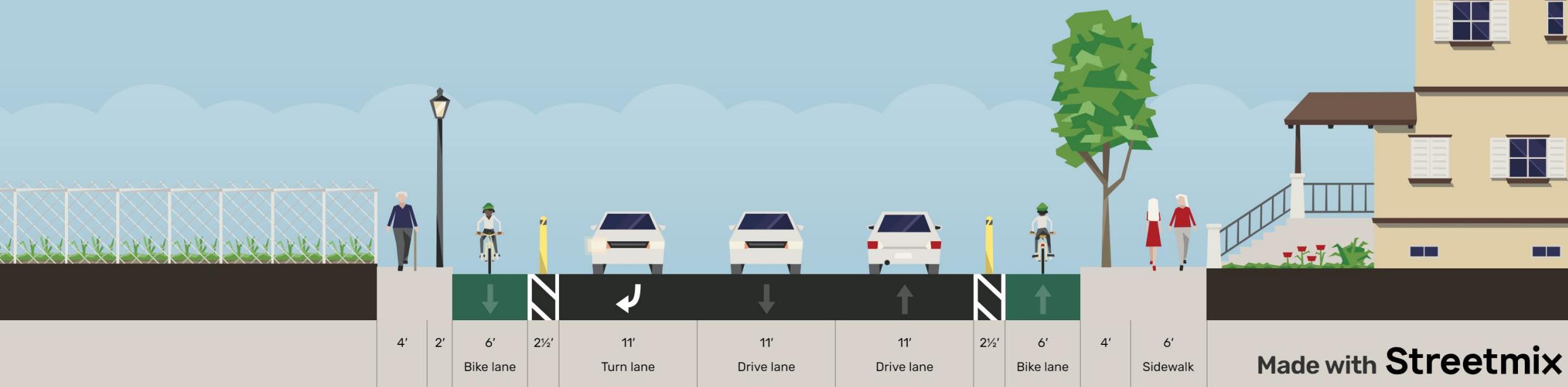
## EXISTING CONDITION



In the example shown here, we are on Somerville Avenue at Mossland Street facing west towards Porter Square. Currently, this stretch includes two travel lanes in each direction and two unprotected bike lanes.

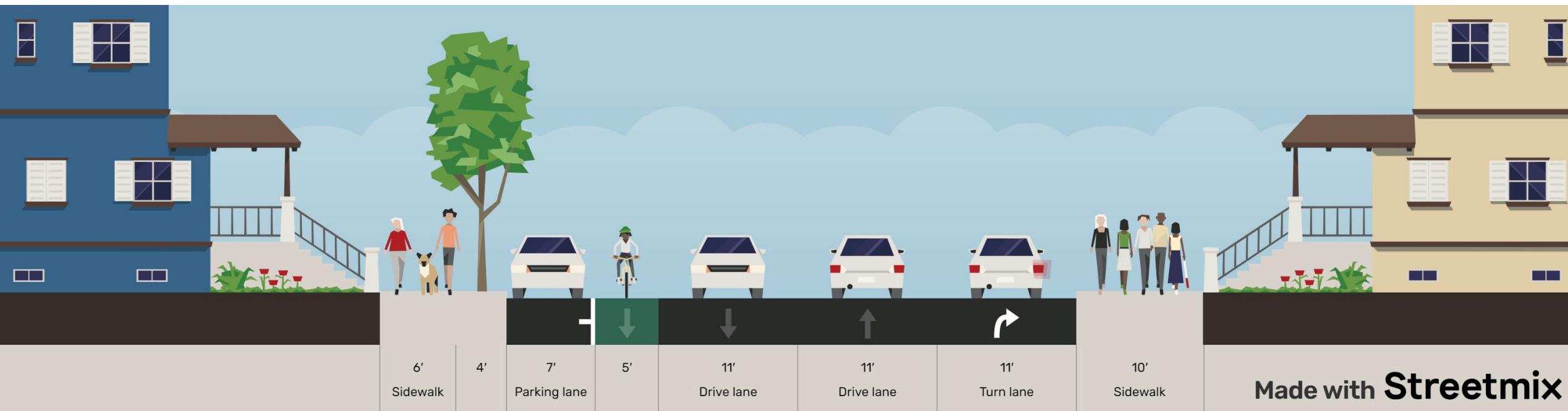
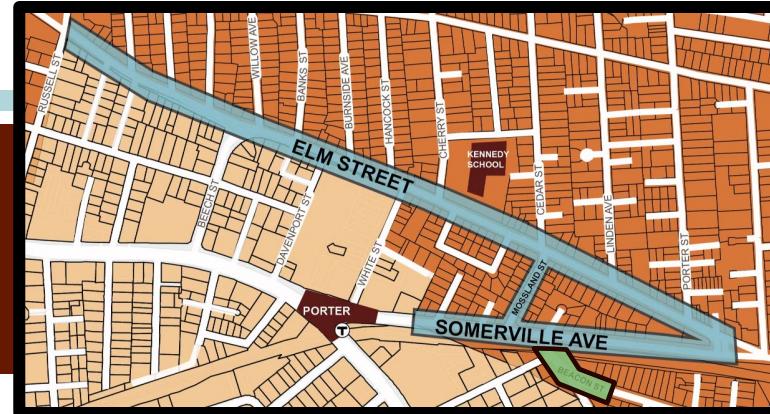
# SOMERVILLE AVENUE

## ANTICIPATED CHANGES



We will design Somerville Avenue to include a travel lane in each direction and a protected bike lane in each direction. In the stretch between Mossland Street and Beacon Street, that leaves about 16 feet of additional space. We currently anticipate using that space to provide a turn lane and slightly wider buffers between the bike lanes and the vehicle lanes, but will be conducting a traffic analysis to determine the best way to move people safely and efficiently through these intersections.

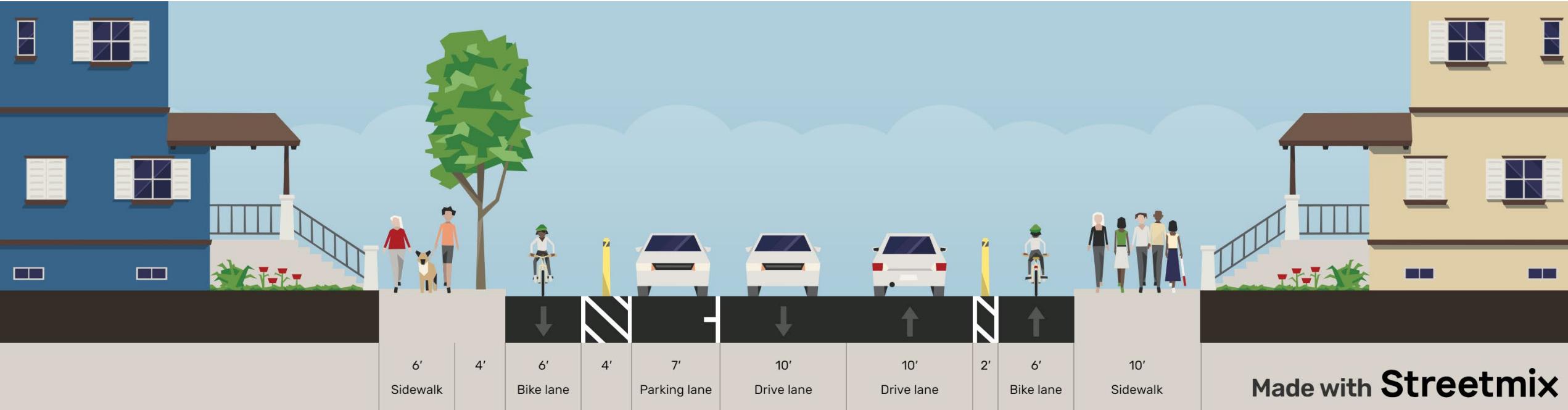
# BEACON STREET EXISTING CONDITION



In the example shown here, we are on Beacon Street at Oxford Street facing north towards Somerville Avenue. Currently, this stretch includes a southbound travel lane, two northbound travel lanes, a southbound unprotected bike lane and a parking lane on the west side.

# BEACON STREET

## ANTICIPATED CHANGES

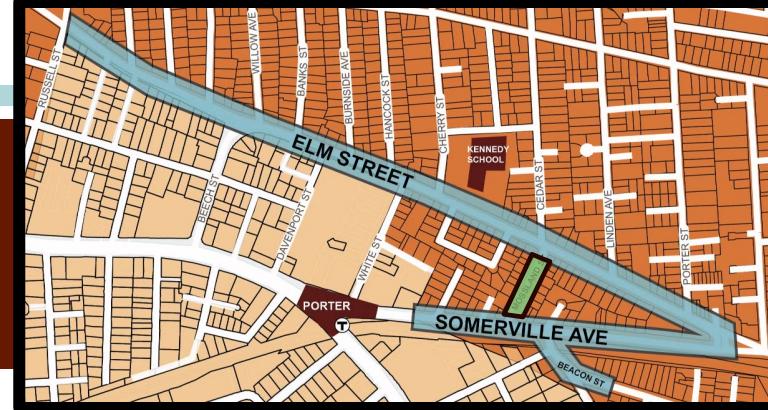


We will design Beacon Street to include a travel lane in each direction and a protected bike lane in each direction. In the stretch between Roseland Street and Oxford Street, that leaves about 10 feet of additional space. We currently anticipate using that space to provide a lane of parking on the west side of the street and slightly wider buffers between the bike lanes and the vehicle lanes, but are also considering an option that includes a right turn lane instead of a parking lane.

# MOSSLAND STREET

## WHAT IS A NEIGHBORWAY?

- Mossland Street is designated as a neighborway on the Bicycle Network Plan
- A **Neighborway** is a street that is characterized by
  - Low traffic volumes and speeds
  - Two-way travel for people on bikes, even if the street is one-way for cars
- The goal of a neighborway is to make the street quiet enough that people of all ages and abilities can safely bike in the middle of the street
- Examples of existing neighborways in Somerville include Hancock St in Spring Hill and Glen St in East Somerville



Source: Neighborways Design



Neighborway Requirements

Motor Vehicle Speed	Motor Vehicle Daily Volume	Motor Vehicle Peak Hour Volume
< 20mph	<2000 motor vehicles per day	<50 motor vehicles during busiest hour in busiest direction

Adapted from 'Designing for All Ages and Abilities' published by National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO)

# MOSSLAND STREET

## HOW COULD IT BECOME A NEIGHBORWAY?

- Most of Mossland Street won't have to change to become a neighborway – it can remain a one-lane street with parking on both sides
- However, there is currently too much traffic for it to function as a neighborway today
- Options to reduce traffic include:
  - Reversing the direction of Mossland Street
  - Restricting turns onto and/or off Mossland Street
  - Making Mossland Street a dead end



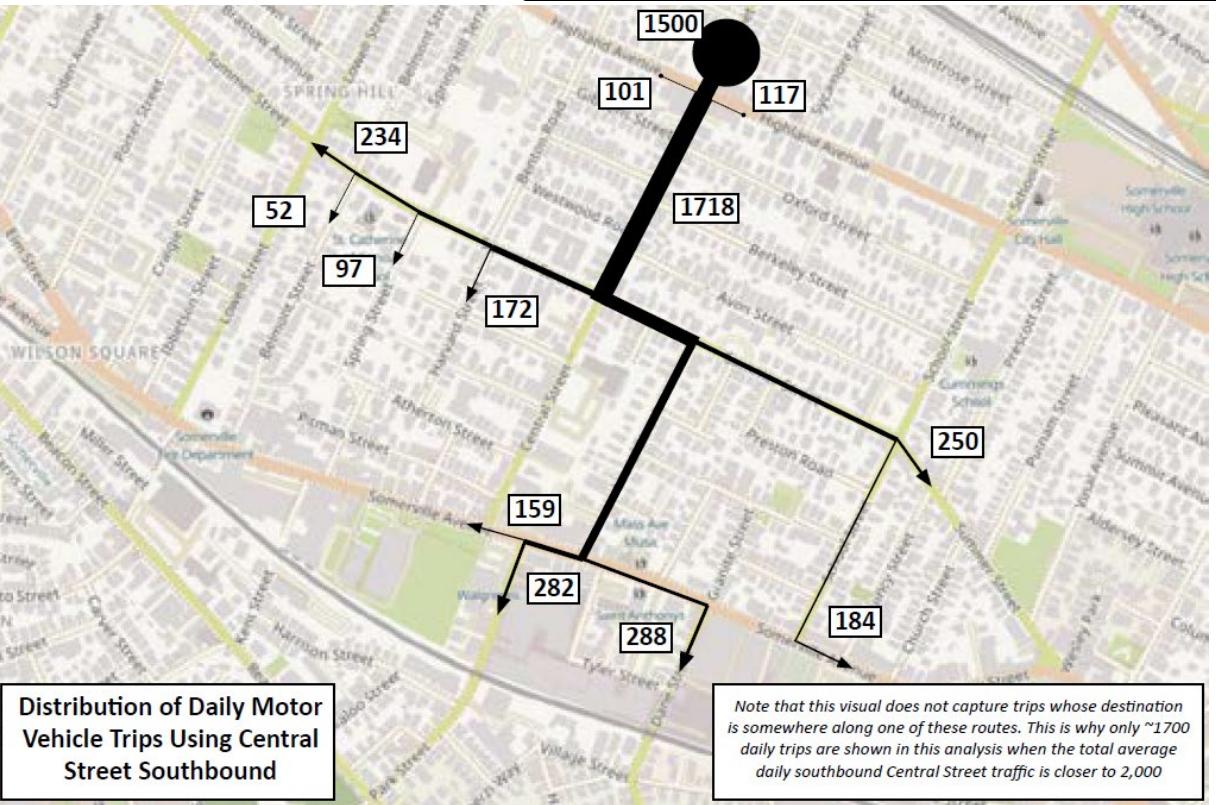
Rendering of flex posts across Mossland Street at Elm Street, one potential solution for decreasing traffic volumes on Mossland Street

# MOSSLAND STREET

## HOW WILL WE DECIDE WHAT TO DO?



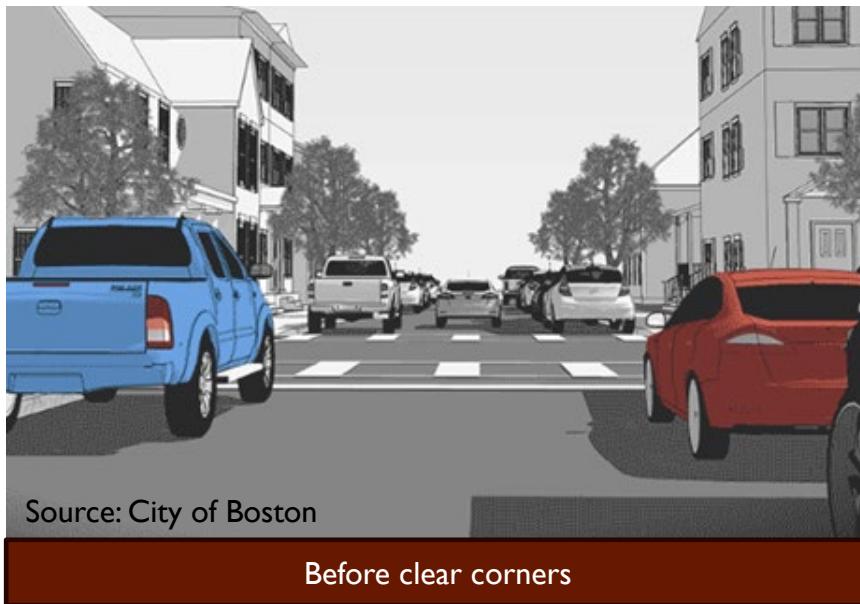
- We will be conducting a traffic analysis to better understand the origins and destinations of people that currently drive on Mossland St
- Based on the estimated traffic impacts to other streets, we will make adjustments such as adding more green time to signals



Traffic distribution analysis on Central St that we will be reproducing for Mossland St

## WHAT ELSE IS GOING TO BE DONE? CLEAR CORNERS

- The designs that we will be producing can also be expected to have clear corners markings and/or signage at all intersections and crosswalks



- These markings have been rolled out at the citywide scale in Hoboken, NJ to great effect – which has not had a traffic fatality in over 6 years

## WHAT ELSE IS GOING TO BE DONE?

# SIGNAL TIMING CHANGES AND EQUIPMENT UPGRADES

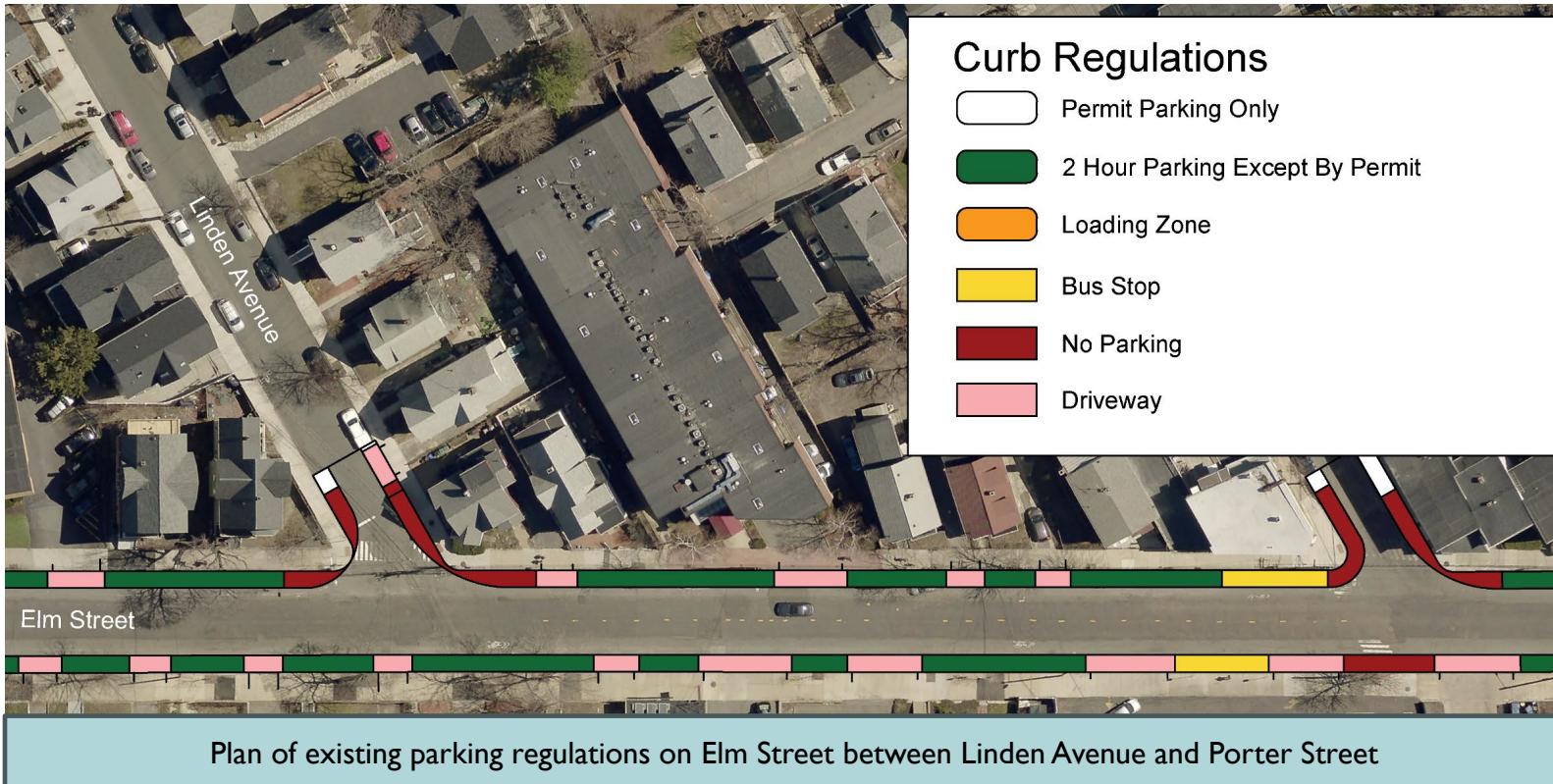


Recent signal equipment upgrades and intersection changes on Powder House Blvd at Alewife Brook Pkwy

- The designs will also include signal changes on:
  - Somerville Avenue
    - At Mossland Street
    - At Beacon Street
    - At Elm Street
  - Elm Street
    - At Cedar Street and Mossland Street
- These signal changes could include:
  - More green time
  - Different phasing/operations
  - Equipment upgrades, such as countdown timers or camera detection
- We will be collecting traffic data this fall to inform our proposals at these intersections

## WHAT ELSE IS GOING TO BE DONE? CURB REGULATIONS CHANGES

We also want to acknowledge that we can't fit everything we want in this design, and adding protected bike lanes on Elm Street will require removing parking on one side of the street



- We know this is going to be a big change. To minimize the impact, we will be:
  - Documenting existing curb regulations
  - Taking community feedback for side of street and type of parking into consideration
  - Prioritizing regulations that will support small business needs and those with mobility challenges
  - Considering changes to side street regulations to mitigate the loss of certain parking types on Elm Street

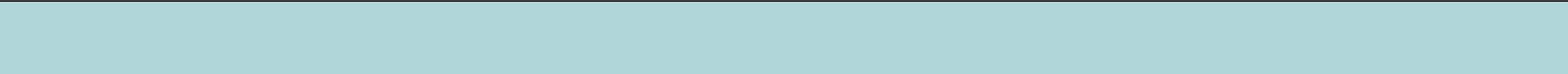
WHAT ELSE COULD BE DONE?

## CROSSWALK AND BUS STOP IMPROVEMENTS

- With your feedback guiding where we prioritize additional changes, we will explore opportunities to implement:
  - Crosswalk improvements such as centerline hardening, which call attention to crosswalks and slow down turning vehicles
  - Bus stop consolidation, which reconsiders where bus stops are located on the street to find the best balance between convenient access and quicker bus trips

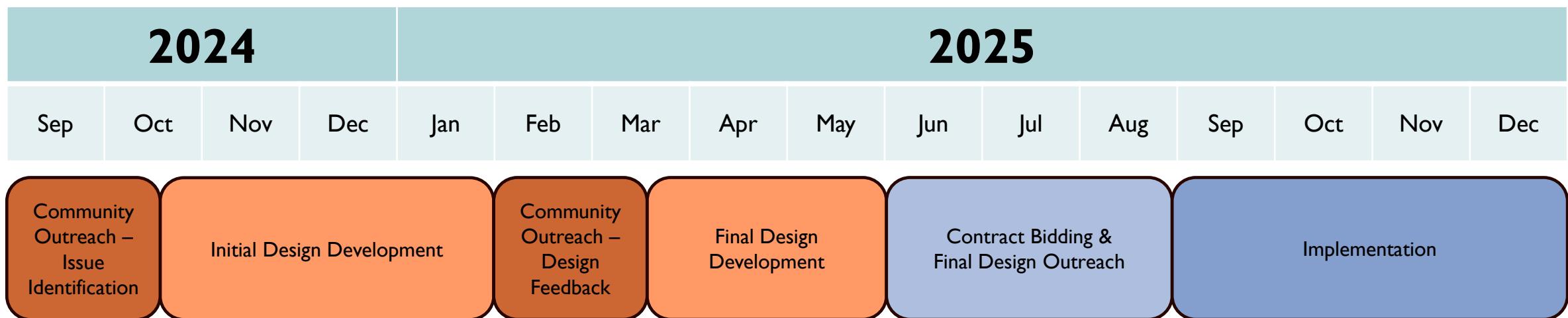


Example of centerline hardening on Temple St at Sydney St



# WHAT'S NEXT AND HOW CAN I ENGAGE?

# ANTICIPATED PROJECT TIMELINE



# HOW WILL COMMUNITY FEEDBACK SHAPE THE DESIGN?

## Pre-Concept Design (Fall 2024)

- Provide insight into transportation safety concerns in the area
- Help identify critical crosswalks to prioritize and inform types of improvements
- Share bus riding experience and critical transit service concerns
- Inform which side of parking to maintain per block or street segment
- Share experience traveling through intersections

## Concept Design (Early Spring 2025)

- Ask questions about the details of the design
- Share feedback on what design elements make you feel safe
- Provide feedback on the types of parking regulations that best fit the needs of the blocks
- Share feedback on the bus stop proposals
- Share overall impression of the new design

## Design Implementation (Summer 2025 – Fall 2025)

- After reviewing all the input we collected throughout the development of the project, we will narrow in on a final design.
- We will then work to spread the word about the upcoming changes.
- We are always happy to field questions and listen to suggestions, but our main goal will be to communicate plans and share the anticipated schedule for implementation.

Per the Bicycle Network Plan, the new design will include **protected bike lanes** in both directions on Elm Street, Beacon Street, and Somerville Avenue.

Implementing **Clear Corners**, restricting parking 20 feet ahead of a crosswalk, is required under federal, state, and local regulations. The City has been working to bring our streets into compliance along with increased safety at intersections

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES THROUGHOUT THE PROJECT

## Community Meetings



- Virtual Community Meeting, Fall 2024
- Concept Design Open House, Spring 2025

## Surveys



Surveys available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole, Nepali, Simplified and Traditional Chinese

- Pre-Concept Transportation Safety Concerns & Priorities, Fall 2024
- Public Input Map, Fall 2024
- Concept Design Feedback, Spring 2025

## Direct Outreach



- Street outreach pop-ups at high pedestrian traffic locations
- Outreach pop-ups around school arrival and/or dismissal
- Business block-walking
- Small community group meetings (i.e. school coffee hours)
- Virtual Office Hours following the release of the concept design

## Communications



- Publishing updates at [somervillema.gov/elmbeacon](http://somervillema.gov/elmbeacon)
- Posting flyers on nearby homes
- Posting in city social media channels
- Posting informational posters
- Sending updates in City and Mobility Division newsletters
- Sending email updates to meeting participants

## Community Events



- Mayor's Senior Picnic
- Gilman Square Arts Festival
- SomerStreets Monster Mash
- SomerStreets Carnaval

## Committee/Commission Feedback



- Pedestrian and Transit Advisory Committee
- Bicycle Advisory Committee
- Commission for Persons with Disabilities

# WHAT COMES NEXT?

- Visit [somervillema.gov/elmbeacon](http://somervillema.gov/elmbeacon) to:
  - Take the survey, available until October 25
  - Add comments to the Public Input Map
  - Subscribe to the Mobility Monthly Newsletter for project updates.
- Come talk to us at our next street outreach pop-up
  - Intersection of Beacon Street and Somerville Avenue, October 3, 4:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. (Inclement weather date, October 16, check webpage for updates).
  - Scheduling additional pop-up during Kennedy School arrival time.
- Share your questions to our team via email to [transportation@somervillema.gov](mailto:transportation@somervillema.gov) or call us at 617-666-3311.



## POLL QUESTION

Out of the following list of options, please share how you feel at this time about the project.

- a) I'm excited about the project!
- b) I'm mostly excited but have some concerns
- c) I need more information before I can determine how I feel about the project
- d) I'm mostly concerned but am excited about some things
- e) I'm concerned about the project
- f) Other

# THANK YOU!



## DISCUSSION INSTRUCTIONS

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- We will first address unanswered questions in the chat and then move to spoken questions and comments.
- You can send your written questions to the host through the chat and then we will read them out loud.
- We will take spoken questions and comments in the order that hands are raised. We ask that community members aim to keep it to 2 minutes per person.
- If calling in, dial \*9 to raise your hand / \*6 to unmute
- If you have any technical difficulties, please email [transportation@somervillema.gov](mailto:transportation@somervillema.gov) or call 617-366-7293.