



Bringing Housing & Affordability to Porter Square

1826 & 1840 Massachusetts Ave.

Porter Square Neighborhood
Association
November 20, 2025





Overview

- Introduction to Just A Start
- Housing Affordability in Cambridge
- *What's happening at 1826 & 1840 Mass Ave?*
 - Community Process
 - Projected Timeline & Next Steps
- Q&A

WHO WE ARE

Since 1968, Just A Start has been creating pathways to possibilities in Cambridge and surrounding communities. We're dedicated to promoting equity by creating access to stable housing and building pathways to economic opportunity.

We are located at the Rindge Commons Economic Mobility Hub by Alewife Station where we bring together a state-of-the-art education and job training center, affordable housing, universal pre-kindergarten, and services available to the entire neighborhood.



OUR ESSENCE

MISSION

Promoting equity by creating access to stable housing and building pathways to economic opportunity.

VISION

An equitable community where everyone can secure a solid economic foundation.



OUR PROGRAMS

BUILDING HOMES, CAREERS & FUTURES



HOUSING ASSISTANCE

From affordable rental apartments to housing stabilization programs, we help residents in Massachusetts' Metro North region to stay safe and secure at home.



CAREER TRAINING

We're committed to ensuring that adults of all backgrounds have equitable access to career training, quality jobs, and sustaining career pathways.



YOUTH EDUCATION

With encouragement and support, we help young people reclaim their education, gain job skills, and become leaders in their communities.



FINANCIAL OPPORTUNITY

Through free, high-quality financial coaching and education, we help community members maximize their financial resources and increase their economic stability.

THE COST OF HOUSING IN CAMBRIDGE

A SNAPSHOT

As of November 2025,

- The average rent in Cambridge, MA is **\$3,274 per month**.
- This means households need to earn about **\$130,960 per year** to pay for housing without being rent-burdened.
- In **Baldwin, Porter Square, and Neighborhood Nine**, rents are **\$2,933 - \$2,947 per month** on average.



Source: Apartments.com Rental Market Trends in Cambridge, MA November 2025.

MAKING IT WORK

WHAT DOES AFFORDABLE HOUSING MEAN?

- Multiple levels of affordability - not one size fits all
- Varies by household size
- <30% of one's household income toward housing costs

Examples of what this looks like in practice:

- **30% AMI:** A retiree relying on Social Security as their primary source of income.
- **60% AMI:** A 3-person household with a single parent working as a nurse with two kids.
- **80% AMI:** A 4-person household with two adults working as teachers and two kids.

• **2,137 households applied** to live in the **106 affordable apartments** at 52 New Street, Just A Start's 100% new affordable housing development opening in early 2026.

Cambridge Incomes by Household Size (2025)

Income (AMI*)	1 person	2 people	4 people
30%	\$34,750	\$39,700	\$49,600
50%	\$57,900	\$66,200	\$82,700
60%	\$69,480	\$79,440	\$99,240
80%	\$92,650	\$105,850	\$132,300

*AMI = Area Median Income as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.



1826 & 1840 MASSACHUSETTS AVE.

BACKGROUND

Just A Start purchased the lots from Lesley University in November 2024 for the purpose of **creating new, affordable & sustainable multifamily housing.**



1826 Mass Ave.



1840 Mass Ave.

1826 & 1840 MASSACHUSETTS AVE.

PROJECT GOALS

Our Goals:

- ~100 units of affordable family housing
- Sustainable building design + site cooling
- Active use at ground floor that connects to the neighborhood

We are working in partnership with RODE Architects to study initial design feasibility and gather community feedback.



RODE

1826 & 1840 MASSACHUSETTS AVE.

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Building Height, Context + Construction Type

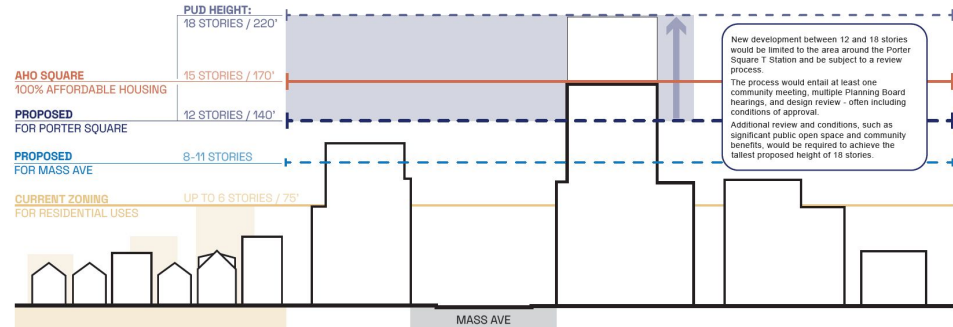
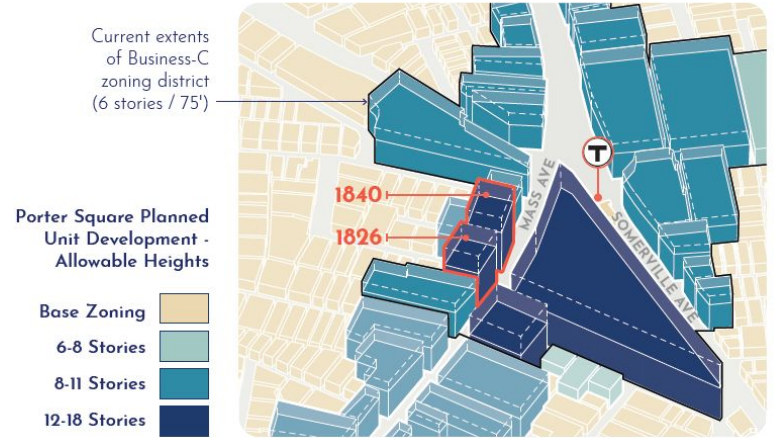
Unit Types - 1-, 2-, and 3-Bedroom apartments

Passive House All-Electric Design

Possible Amenities - Community Space, Open Space, Retail, Bike Storage, Parking, Onsite Management

Climate resilience and site cooling

Affordable Housing Overlay Zoning



1826 & 1840 MASSACHUSETTS AVE.

ENGAGING WITH NEIGHBORS

COMMUNITY MEET & GREET:

- October 14th at Lunder Arts Center
- **Topics:**
 - Intro to Project Team
 - Affordable Housing Goals
 - Neighborhood Context
 - Interim Use of the Lots
 - Project Timeline



1826 & 1840 MASSACHUSETTS AVE.

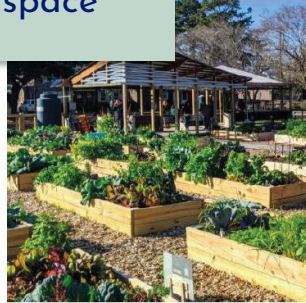
WHAT WE'VE HEARD

Interest In:

- Including trees
- Design that considers neighborhood context
- Future community space or outdoor dining
- Interim gardening space



Community event space



Container garden



1812 Mass Ave.



Concerns / Questions:

- Building heights
- Impact on parking & traffic
- Size of open space + setbacks

Balancing trade offs:

- Active ground floor or onsite parking
- Open space and building height
- Community space or retail?
- Family-sized apartments or 1-bedrooms?

1826 & 1840 MASSACHUSETTS AVE.

PROJECT TIMELINE & NEXT STEPS

- *Fall 2025 - Early Neighborhood & Community Outreach*
- *Winter/Spring 2026 - Community Meetings & Design Presentations (Affordable Housing Overlay)*
- *Summer 2026 - Planning Board Review*
- *Fall 2026 - Request for State Funding*
- *Fall 2027 - Construction Start*
- *Fall 2029 - Construction Completion*

STAY IN TOUCH

Project Website:

www.justastart.org/1826-1840-massachusetts-avenue/

Sign Up for Updates:



Madeline Lee

Project Manager

madelinelee@justastart.org

Noah Sawyer

Director of Real Estate

noahsawyer@justastart.org

Thank you!



BUILDING HOMES, CAREERS, AND FUTURES



@JustAStartCorp | www.justastart.org