

Columbia Road Community Advisory Team

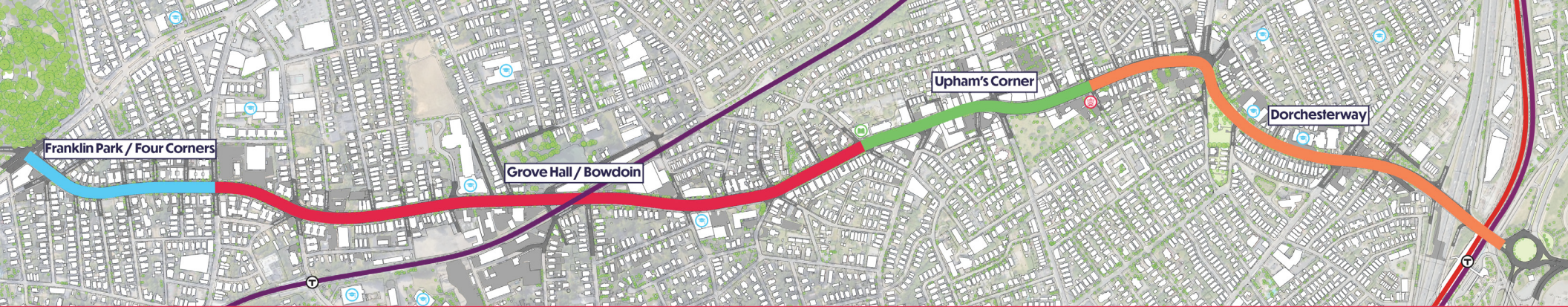
The fifth Community Advisory Team (CAT) meeting took place on Tuesday, October 8, 2024, at the Dorchester Bay EDC office.

This session offered an interactive workshop, led by Toole Design, centered around potential street design possibilities along Columbia Road. Through this hands-on workshop, CAT members examined how Columbia Road's layout could better serve various users and needs.



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The activity invited participants to envision the corridor from a fresh perspective, enabling them to explore street redesign concepts without any limitations. Four specific locations along Columbia Road, each with different widths, served as case studies, allowing CAT members to experiment with configurations and layouts that could transform how this space is used.

Using a “kit-of-parts” that included scaled pieces representing street elements like car lanes, sidewalks, bike lanes, and trees, participants physically mapped out alternative layouts on model streetscapes.

This setup encouraged participants to visualize the trade-offs and constraints involved in designing for Columbia Road’s varied segments, especially given the diversity of users and uses along the corridor. The activity fostered creativity and open-mindedness, focusing on experimentation rather than arriving at a single ideal solution. Each participant could prioritize different elements based on their values, illustrating the diverse perspectives in play when imagining

Columbia Road’s future. Facilitators documented the resulting designs, capturing photos of the various configurations developed during the workshop.

The exercise led to a lively conversation about key themes and challenges the project team will continue to consider in the ongoing redesign process. A major point of discussion was the inclusion of medians with trees or large plants, which, while adding greenery, require extensive maintenance that may not align with current city priorities. Bike lanes emerged as another focal point, with participants noting the need for further dialogue to balance accessibility, safety, and connectivity. Parking considerations sparked debate as well, with distinctions drawn between residential and business parking needs along the corridor. Additionally, bus priority was discussed, emphasizing the need for thoughtful placement of bus lanes or stops to improve transit access. Given Columbia Road’s varying widths, participants recognized that allocating space efficiently is significantly more challenging in narrower sections, which will require tailored solutions in the redesign. The meeting highlighted the importance of ongoing engagement as the CAT and project team work toward a vision that reflects the community’s needs and values.

