# Cambridgeport

## Blue Ribbon Committee Report
## December, 1986

# CAMBRIDGEPORT BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE REPORT

Submitted to the City Manager, Robert W. Healy by the Committee:

Wilhelm Viggo von Moltke, Chairman
Professor Emeritus, Harvard Graduate School of Design

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Cambridge Seven Associates

Pablo Calderon
Riverside Cambridgeport Community Corporation

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Forest Cities Enterprises

Faith McDonald
City Assessor

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Cambridge Trust Company

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Benjamin Thompson & Associates

HARVARD UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF DESIGN

5 December 1986

Robert W. Healy
City Manager
City Hall
Cambridge, MA 02139

Dear Mr. Healy:

I am pleased to submit to you the report from the Blue Ribbon Committee on the Cambridgeport Revitalization Area. The report and recommendations contained within it are the products of thoughtful deliberation and debate among individuals representing diverse points of view. Most important to me is the fact that we have been able to conclude our work with a consensus among all of the active Committee members.

Your mandate to the Committee was broad but clear. Our efforts were to focus on the major issues regarding development in Cambridgeport that have eluded consensus before. In particular, we addressed land use goals, with special attention to housing, general urban design requirements and the practical issues of implementation such as open space, traffic circulation and employment opportunity. I feel that on all these matters, we have arrived at recommendations that are workable and that can provide a general framework for implementation over time. It is also important to note that there is an extensive ongoing environmental impact study dealing with the development area between Massachusetts Avenue and Pacific Street. The Committee has taken a broader view of the future for the larger area. However, the Committee recognizes that the findings of the environmental analysis will influence the specific character of the development in the Simplex area.

Our report is comprised of three sections: Section 1 articulates general objectives which apply to the entire Revitalization Area. Section 2 includes two sets of recommendations. The first apply to University Park. These are quite specific because the Committee was able to draw on the extensive planning and design work available for

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this development area. Recommendations for the rest of the Revitalization Area, the second set, are necessarily more general since substantial professional studies have not yet been done for this area. Also, since decisions on traffic circulation will affect the parcelization of land held by many different owners, it is our view that more specific recommendations are premature at this point. Section 3 sets out suggested next steps to implement our recommendations.

The active Committee members have been generous with their time and talent on this effort. In addition, the Committee invited many guests to address us on the topics which provided us with essential background to inform our discussion. The issues we grappled with - housing, traffic, urban design - are always difficult. In the case of Cambridgeport, that has been especially true. The Committee's approach was to bring our best expertise and judgement to bear on the perceived problems, and to debate each issue fully, identifying opportunities and constraints which are particular to this area of Cambridge. We anticipate that you will bring this report to the City Council, and the Committee stands ready to meet with them and to present our findings.

The current zoning for the area is primarily the Industrial B category, which does not allow housing, has no height limit, and is in many other ways inappropriate for the type of development envisioned by the Committee. It is our hope, therefore, that the Community Development Department will be directed to prepare a zoning petition which will guide development in accordance with the Committee's recommendations. With such new zoning in place, we feel confident that the City and its citizens will be able to reap the benefits that a revitalized Cambridgeport can offer.

On a personal note, I want to thank all the members of the Committee. Their commitment and cooperation made our hard work a pleasure, and as a Chairman, I am grateful to all of them.

I also want to thank you, Mr. Healy, for the opportunity to work on this difficult but gratifying assignment. I do hope our work will contribute to a final disposition on the development of the Cambridgeport Revitalization Area.

Very truly yours,

Wilhelm Viggo von Moltke

Wilhelm Viggo von Moltke
Chairman, Cambridgeport Blue Ribbon Committee
Professor Emeritus, Harvard Graduate School of Design

# OUTLINE

Cambridgeport Blue Ribbon Committee Report

I. General Goals and Objectives for the Cambridgeport Revitalization Area

   A. Land Use Objectives

   B. Urban Design Objectives

   C. Traffic and Circulation Objectives

   D. Employment and Equal Opportunity Policy

II. Recommendations

   A. Recommendations for University Park

   B. General Recommendations for the Area Below Pacific Street and for Massachusetts Avenue at Lafayette Square

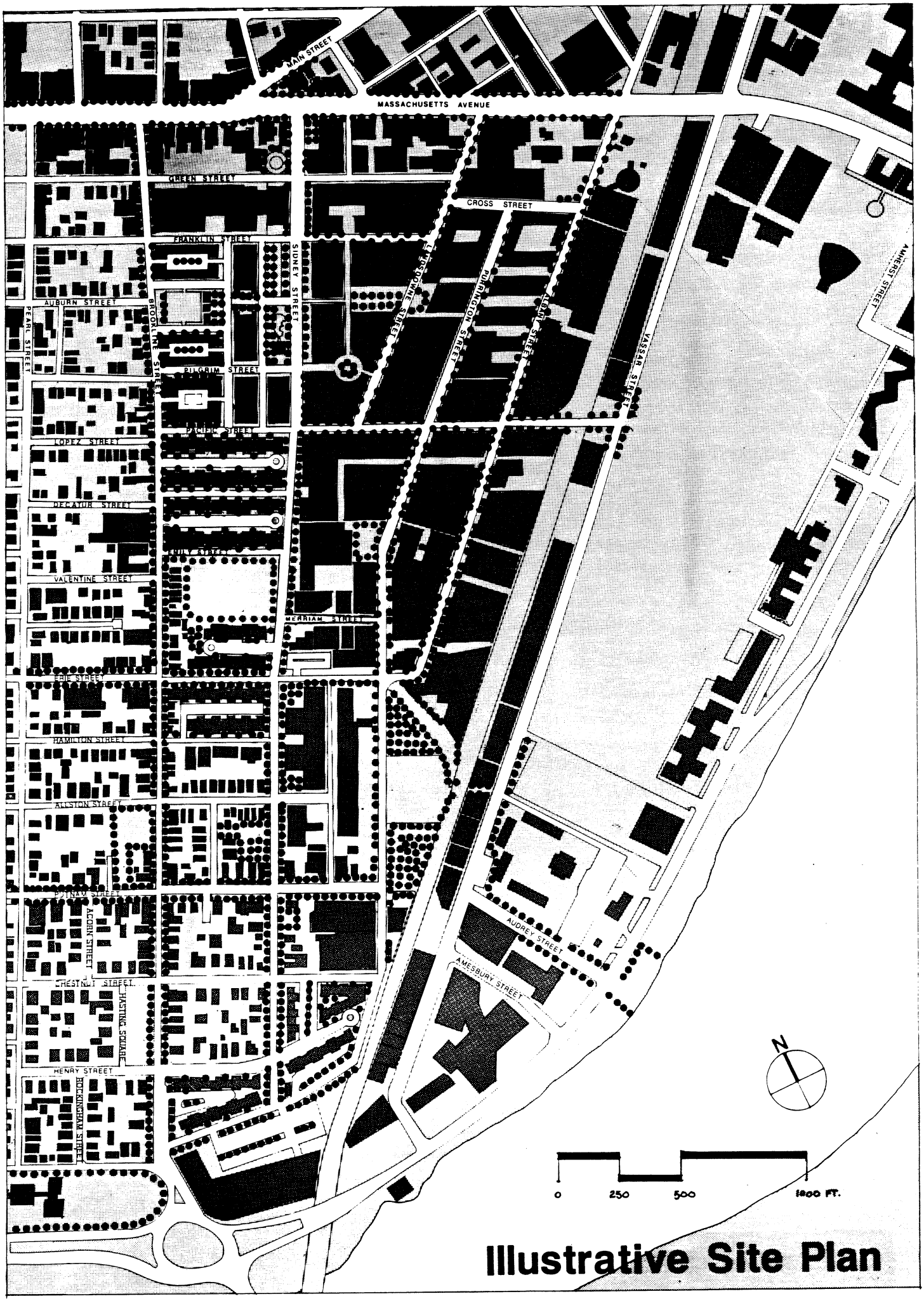
III. Next Steps Towards Implementation

   A. Distribution of Report

   B. Presentation to City Council

   C. Council Acceptance and Direction

The site plan on the opposite page illustrates the recommendations of this report.




# Illustrative Site Plan

## I. General Goals for the Cambridgeport Revitalization Area

The general goal is for balanced, orderly mixed-use development that is responsive to environmental, social, and economic interests of the community, including the neighborhood, businesses, and property owners. Important aspects include provision of adequate open space, housing, employment, tax revenue, and upgrading of the physical environment.

The following objectives have been identified to guide the future development of Cambridgeport.

### A. Land Use Objectives

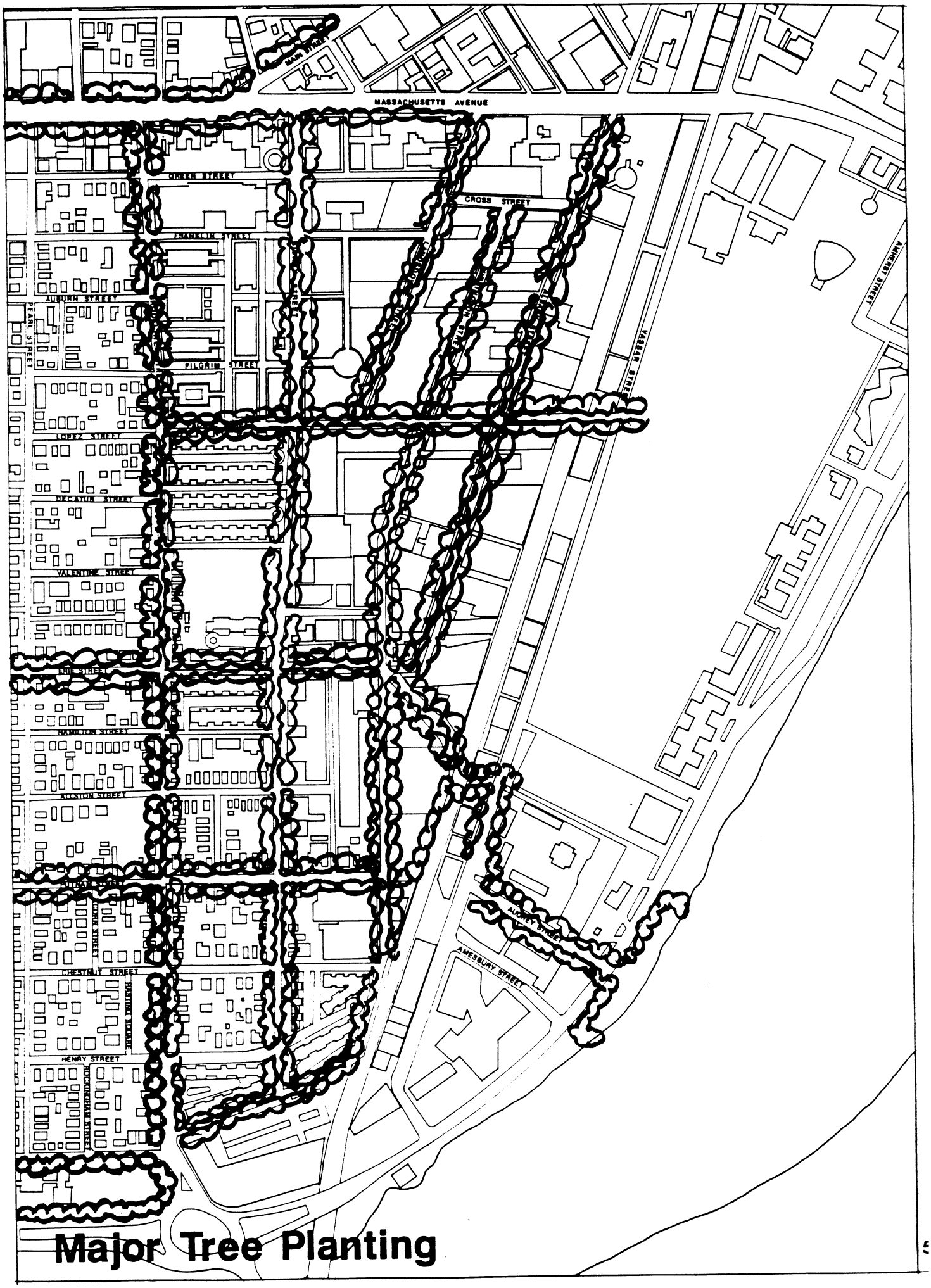
New mixed income housing with a minimum of 600 units should be provided in those areas of Cambridgeport which have historically accommodated only industry and business in order to extend the residential character of Cambridgeport, achieve a greater integration of residential and business areas, and to meet the on-going demand for housing in Cambridge. The mix of new housing should provide for a variety of ownership or rental choices and should include a significant proportion of units affordable for low and moderate income residents. Of the units here designated, the Committee recommends that a minimum of 25% affordable housing units or 150 units be sought as a goal.

### B. Urban Design Objectives

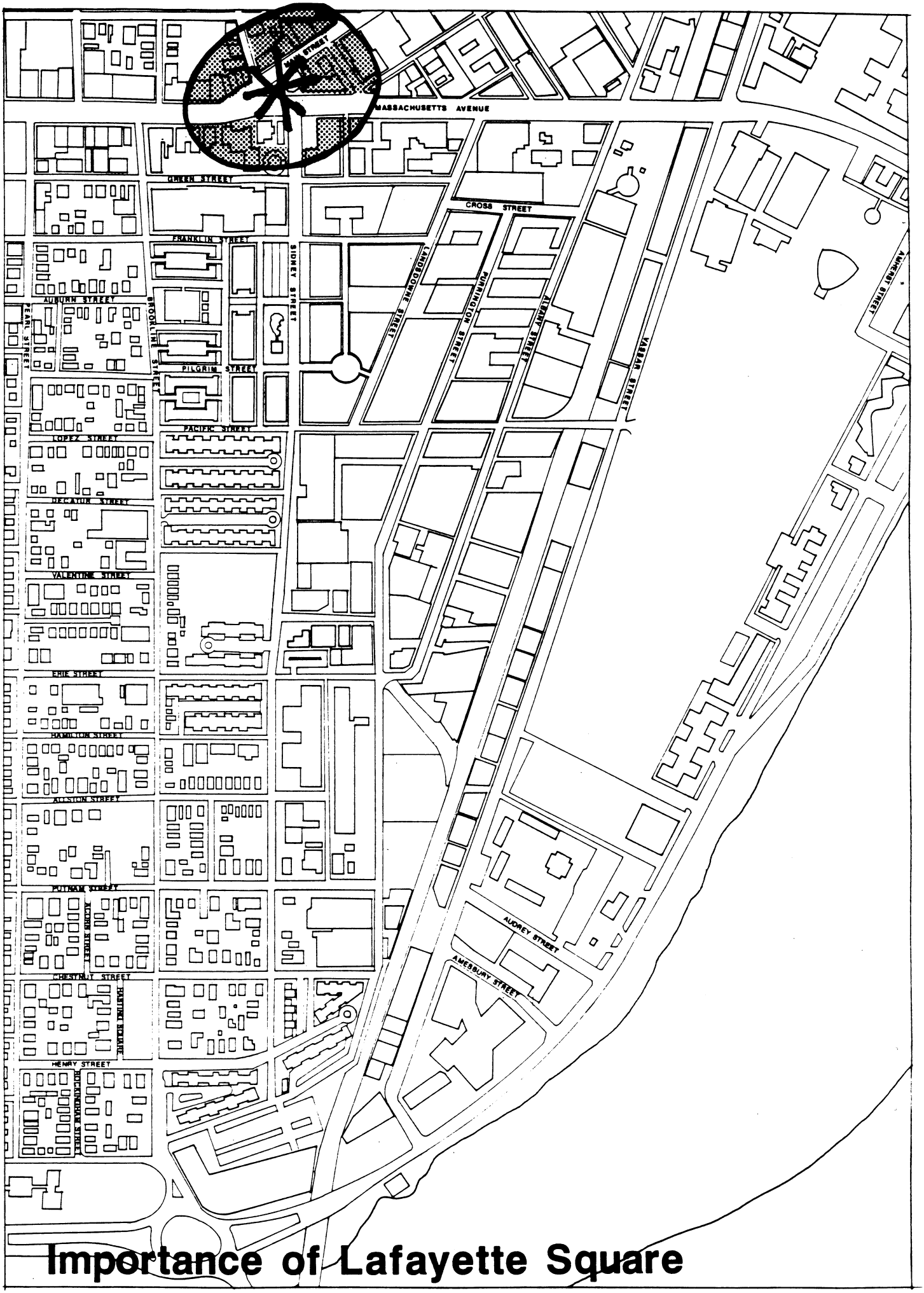
The environment of the Cambridgeport Industrial District needs major improvements in order to become an attractive mixed use area of the City. Quality of life must take precedence over vehicular circulation, and practical considerations such as traffic circulation should respect and be guided by the urban design guidelines for the area which include: 1) substantial tree planting and street improvements; 2) major new active and passive open spaces including Lafayette Square; 3) street-level treatment of the design of buildings, including garages; 4) provision of commercial/retail space at grade for shops, cafes, restaurants and entertainment; 5) blending together of community/residential and commercial/industrial land use and activity.

### C. Traffic and Circulation Objectives

Traffic analysis and studies for the eastern section of the City should identify ways to accommodate existing and future traffic flows: 1) without unduly disrupting the existing Cambridgeport residential neighborhood; 2) without unduly limiting the opportunities for enhancing the urban environment in the vicinity of major projects. To the extent




# Major Tree Planting




# Importance of Lafayette Square

possible, Lafayette Square should be designed and used as important public space for lively day and night use, and as a transitional pedestrian node, acting as a hinge from Massachusetts Avenue into University Park and the entire Cambridgeport Revitalization Area at Sidney. This potential pedestrian place should not be allowed to become an island surrounded by traffic flows. The Committee recommends consideration of precluding vehicular connection from Main Street across Massachusetts Avenue to Sidney. Through traffic in the area should move along Sidney, Waverly and Albany Streets. Connections to Memorial Drive should be provided in locations where they can have the most beneficial effect on traffic flow and on adjacent land uses. Use of public transportation and carpooling should be encouraged to the maximum extent possible.

D. Employment and Equal Opportunity Policy

The Committee recognizes that, to a large extent, the job possibilities that will be available to the revitalized Cambridgeport area will reflect larger economic trends and market opportunities. Nonetheless, we encourage developers to seek a broad mix of commercial, research, and light industrial tenants with growth potential who will provide jobs having varying skill levels, and training and advancement potential for Cambridge residents.

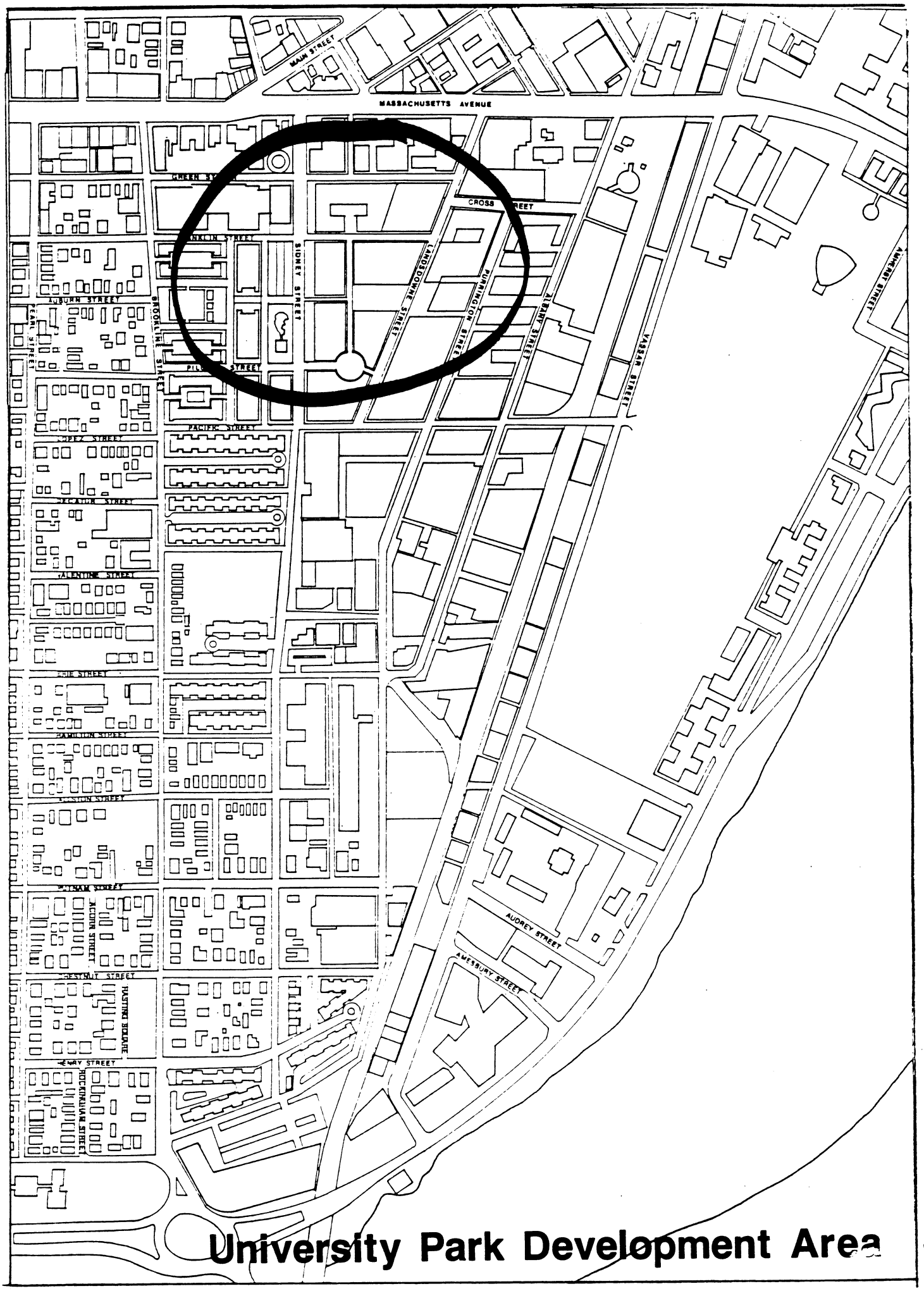
The Committee urges that the City actively enforce all applicable laws and regulations, including the Cambridge Employment Plan, and Affirmative Action Plan, which reinforce equal and open access to housing and employment for all people during both construction and operation of development in the Cambridgeport Revitalization Area.

## II. Recommendations

The following recommendations summarize the views of our committee. They are grouped into two categories.

Those that deal with University Park: these can be quite specific in that University Park has been the subject of substantial analysis which has identified the technical requirements for its build-out.

Those that deal with the remainder of the Cambridgeport Industrial District: these are necessarily more general since this area has not yet been analyzed to understand the impacts of different types and densities of development. The recommendations are important in that they lay out expectations and directions for development in the near term where appropriate, and define general guidelines for analysis and study of the areas whose development will occur further in the future.




# University Park Development Area

## A. Recommendations for University Park

### 1. Land Use Recommendations Regarding University Park

#### Residential Use

Between 200 and 300 units of mixed-income housing should be developed on the blocks between Green and Pacific Streets and Brookline and Sidney Streets. This housing should connect to the existing neighborhood edge along Brookline Street, and extend into the University Park development using a variety of housing types and densities to achieve a transition from low-scale housing at the edge to higher scale commercial uses as one proceeds eastward through the site.

#### Housing Configuration

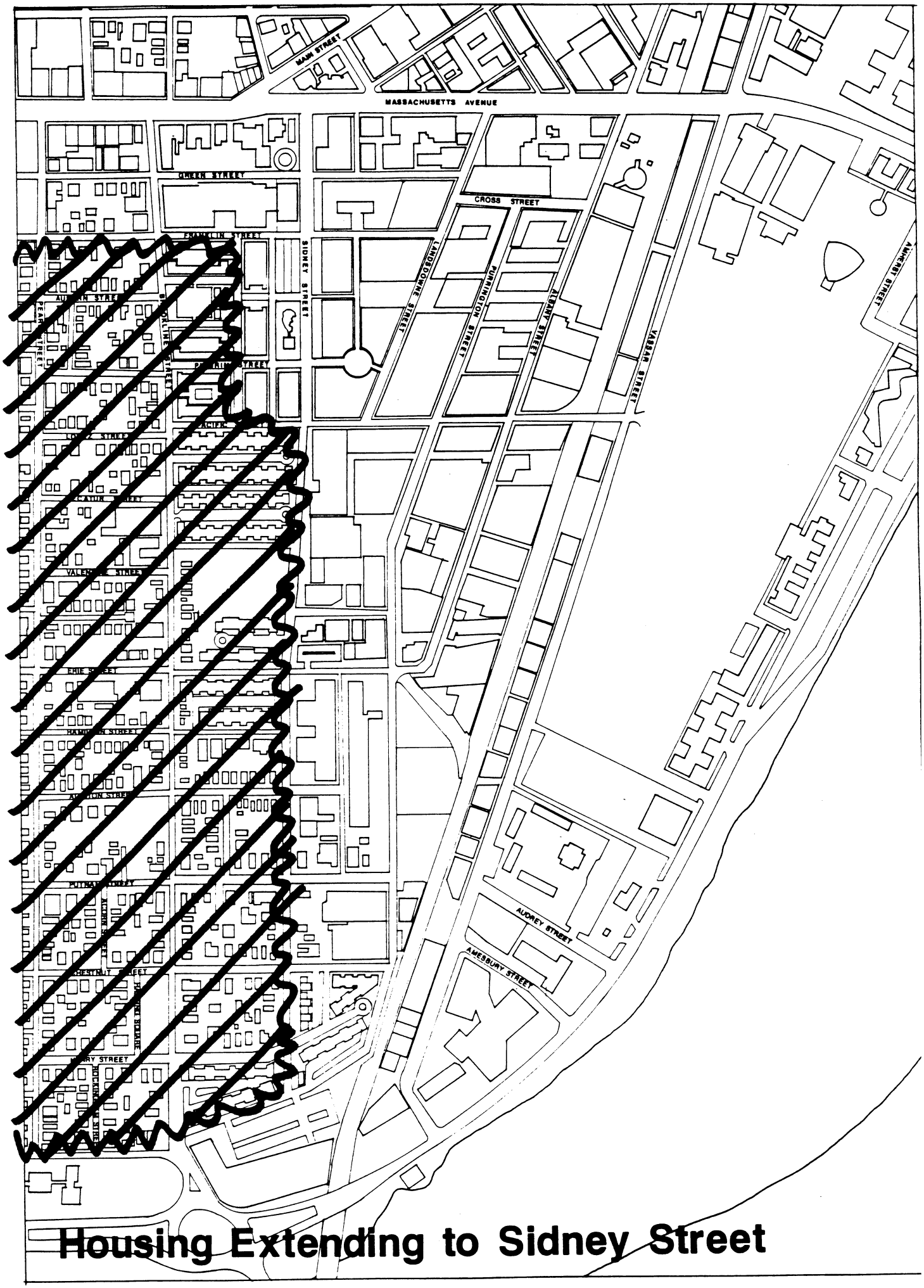
Much of the housing should be oriented to face streets running perpendicular to Brookline which are extensions of some of the existing Cambridgeport streets, to provide protected semi-private cul-de-sacs and loop streets at the center of the housing blocks, and to define an attractive urban environment. For that housing which is located on main streets and/or open spaces, ground level shops and neighborhood-oriented shops should be included as first floor uses where appropriate.

#### Massachusetts Avenue

Massachusetts Avenue should be stressed as a major pedestrian street and extension of the Central Square ground level retail district. Major through-block connectors into the University Park site should occur only where they reinforce this flow. Otherwise the major pedestrian connector into the Market Hall will be provided at Sidney Street.

#### Fenton Shoe Building

Partially in response to discussions of re-orienting the housing and ensuring that the Common is an active area, Forest City is now studying the means by which it would be possible to retain and renovate the Fenton Shoe Building for housing and retail. Retail uses on the ground floor tied to the adjacent Market Hall, including in part evening uses such as movie theaters and restaurants, would animate the Common. Using the major portion of the building for housing would bring residential use to the Common. The Committee strongly supports this use of the building.




# Housing Extending to Sidney Street

Retail Development

Recognizing that the new retail components of the proposed Market Hall, the Fenton Shoe Building reuse, and the ground floor of buildings surrounding the Common will have an impact on Central Square, we recommend that the University Park developers work with the City, businesses, and the neighborhood to ensure that the Central Square business district is strengthened over time.

2. Urban Design Recommendations Regarding University Park

Residential Environment

The residential areas should be designed with appropriate landscaping, yards, and sitting areas. Parking for housing should be provided in a convenient and economical manner and should be screened from view to the maximum extent possible.

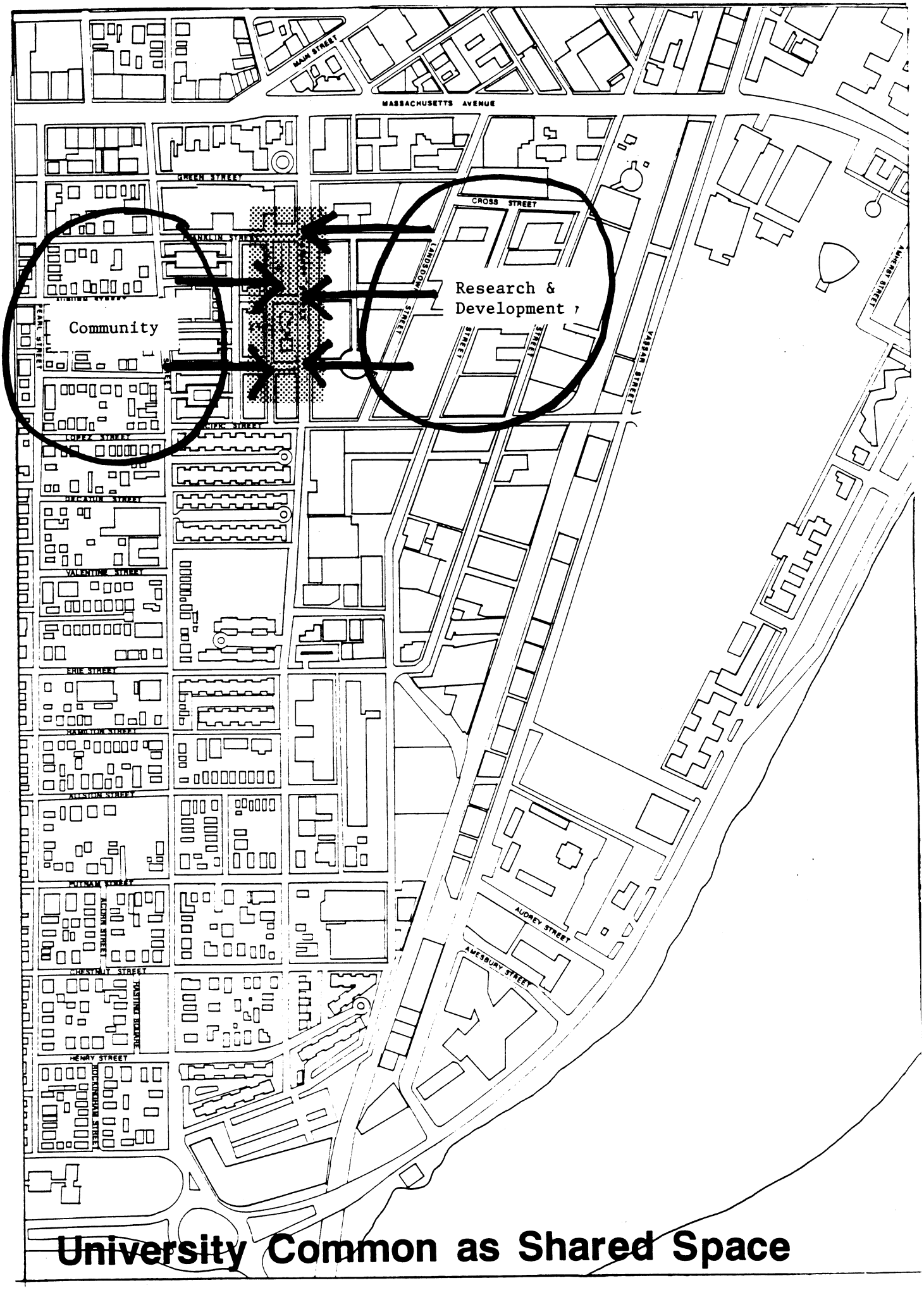
A variety of mixed-income housing types should be considered, including attached units with articulated facades to provide a modulated and varied street edge, with enough variety of form and scale throughout to relate comfortably both to the existing neighborhood and to the new development.

Open Space Environment

The Committee recommends that the northwestern edge of the Common include an element of housing to the extent possible. Buildings with first floor retail and with housing and/or office above will offer the potential for a critically important residential presence on that open space, giving it a mixed use residential, office, and retail character. The overall development incorporating offices, retail, research and development and housing thereby will be joined and integrated with the existing community, and the Common will be able to succeed as a lively open public space, in use day and night,seven days a week.

The Common should incorporate features such as sitting, play, and outdoor dining areas; some protected spaces; some performance areas; water and sculpture, as well as appropriate lighting; possibly a pavilion for exhibition and performing uses; and in general be inviting to both community residents and others at night and to all daytime users.

Auburn Park should tie into the adjacent residential community. Recognizing that this park will have an important role, the Committee recommends that the park's design be carefully developed in a dialogue with the community. The park's layout, operations, and maintenance must be carefully considered so that it serves the community as an amenity; the




# University Common as Shared Space

## B. General Recommendations for the Area Below Pacific Street

### 1. Land Use Recommendations

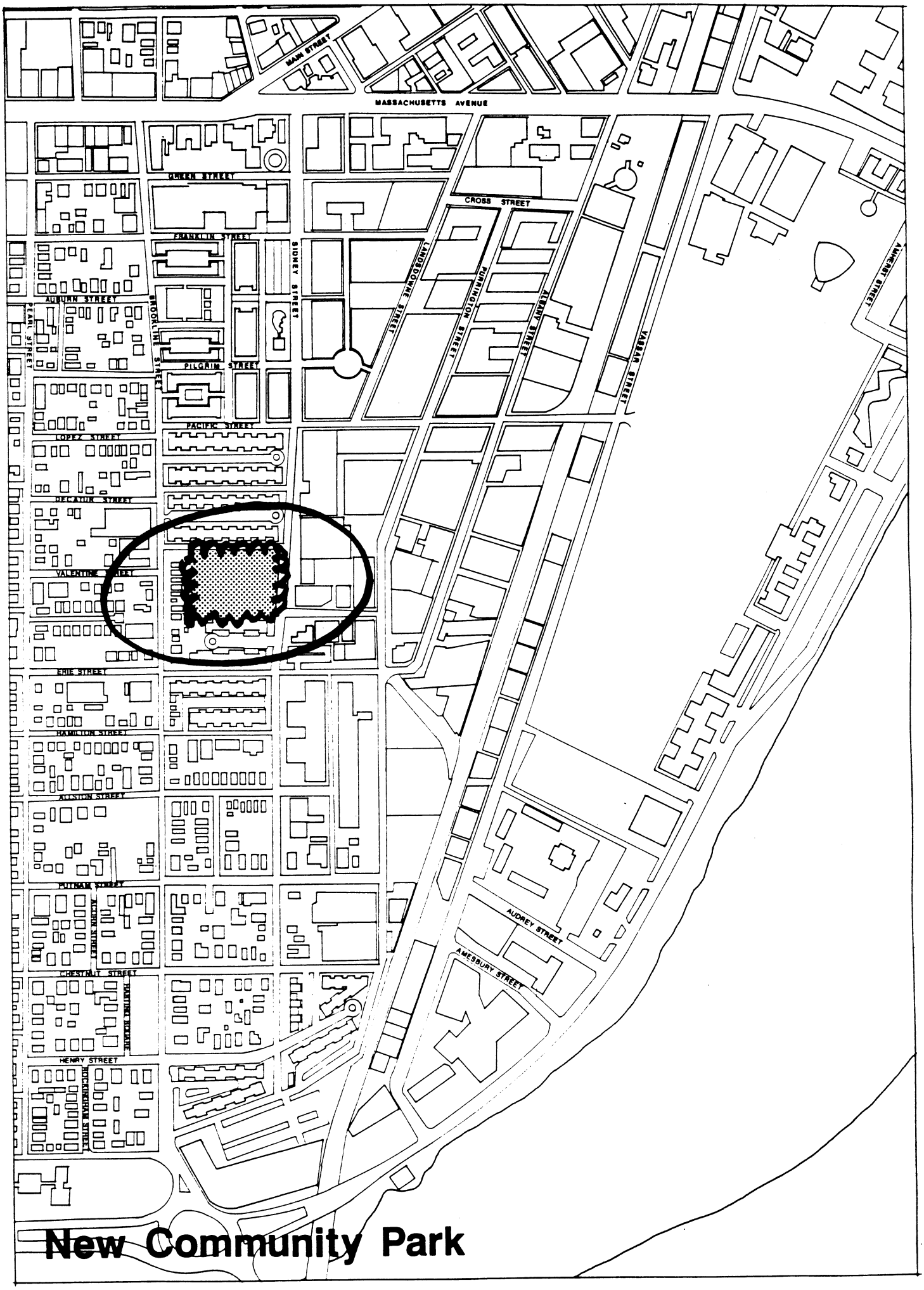
Mixed-income housing should be encouraged as a major reuse of this area, including different housing types and densities to meet the housing needs of a wide variety of individuals and families. The site between Chestnut, Sidney, Henry, and Waverly Streets has already been rezoned for housing use. Other potential sites for housing include the former Ford Assembly Plant Building and abutting areas south of Henry Street, the Fort Washington Area, and sites along Brookline, Pacific, and Sidney Streets. Housing should be encouraged between Brookline and Sidney, as shown in the illustrative site plan. The committee recognizes that increased housing in this area, which is now primarily light industry, may reduce job opportunities in the area, but considers housing to be the land use most beneficial to the community in the long run.

### 2. Urban Design Recommendations

A system of open spaces should be defined for this mixed industrial and residential area with provisions for active and passive uses, play fields, pedestrian oasis, and neighborhood focus. In particular, a comprehensive program for the use of Lafayette Square, Fort Washington and the provision of a neighborhood park and other open space areas for this sector of the City needs to be developed. This program should include siting and design concepts, acquisition programs, maintenance and management approach, and financing mechanisms.

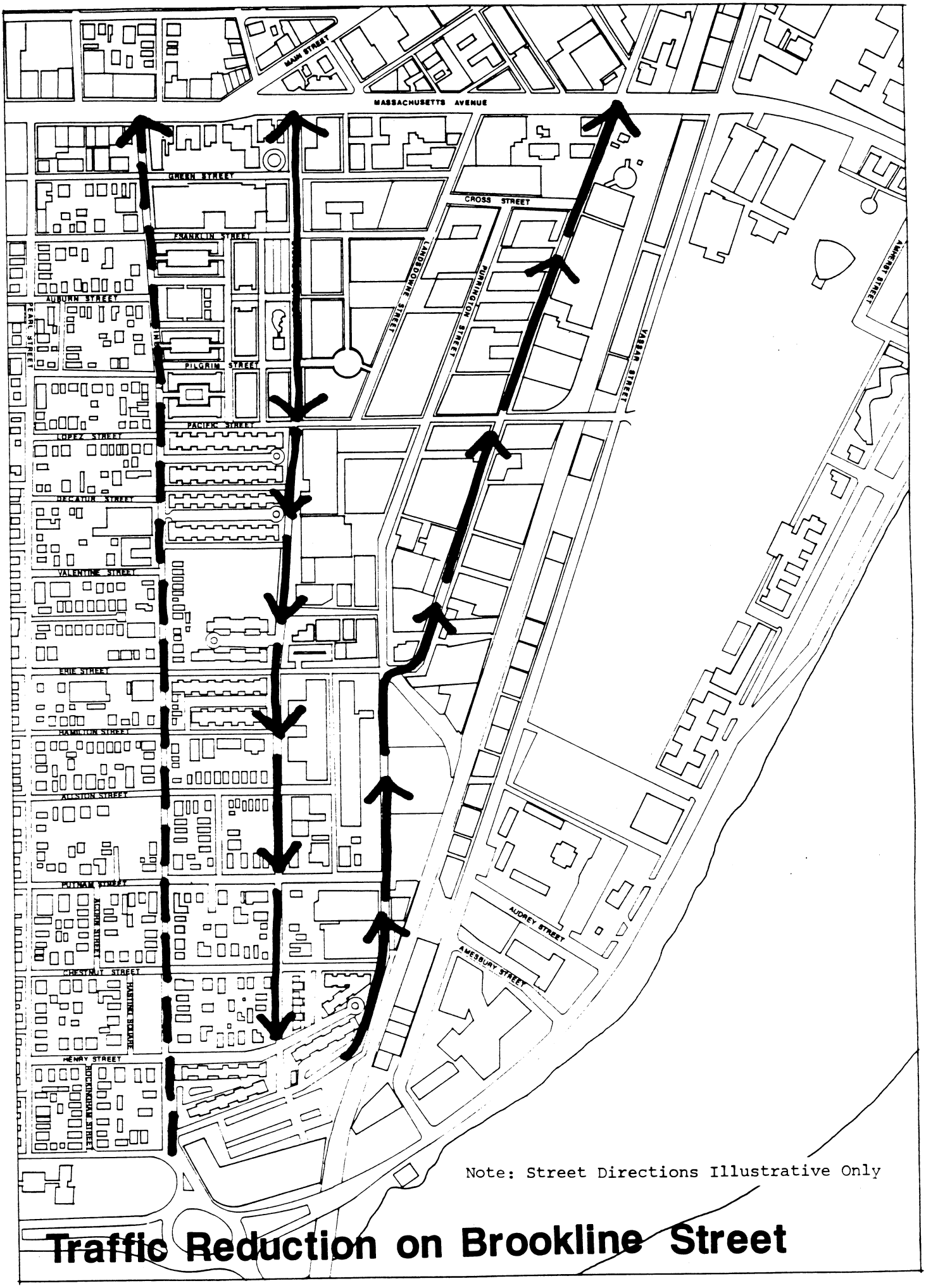
The Committee strongly recommends that a neighborhood park for active uses be provided, similar in scale and use to the facility proposed by the Community Development Department in the Cambridgeport Revitalization Plan (which suggested the block between Pacific, Sidney, Brookline, and Tudor Streets) in the same or comparable location below Pacific. The illustrative site plan prepared with this report shows an alternative site located on a portion of the block between Emily and Erie west of Sidney. Further studies will be needed to determine the uses and design of the park and whether one of these or an alternative site is appropriate.

Prominent lines of trees should be extended throughout the Cambridgeport Revitalization Area from University Park to provide visual unity and to accomplish an environmental transformation of the entire area.


MAIN STREET
MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE
GREEN STREET
CROSS STREET
FRANKLIN STREET
SIDNEY STREET
LANDSDOWNE STREET
PUNKINGTON STREET
ALBANY STREET
VARRAM STREET
AMHERST STREET
AUBURN STREET
PEARL STREET
BROOKLINE STREET
PILGRIM STREET
PACIFIC STREET
LOPEZ STREET
DECATUR STREET
VALENTINE STREET
ERIE STREET
HAMILTON STREET
ALSTON STREET
PUTNAM STREET
ACORN STREET
CHESTNUT STREET
HARTFORD BOULEVARD
HENRY STREET
ROCKINGHAM STREET
AUDREY STREET
AMESBURY STREET
New Community Park

3. Traffic and Circulation Recommendations

Depending on the outcome of traffic studies and analysis, new traffic routes should be established in this area, possibly a one-way pair using Sidney Street and Waverly/Albany Streets. Some connector requiring new rights of way will be important from Waverly to Memorial Drive. Linkages to Memorial Drive and/or other major arteries should be provided by means of connectors across the railroad right-of-way. These connectors will serve not only to manage traffic, but will provide important links between Cambridgeport and the Charles River. An important consideration is the goal of reducing the current flow of traffic on Brookline. Although further study will be required to establish feasibility of specific locations, the committee recommends consideration of a vehicular crossing at Pacific, continuity of a landscaped pedestrian pathway from the residential areas to Fort Washington, along Putnam and Erie, and further continuity of that landscaped pedestrian pathway to the Charles River, after crossing the railroad tracks at Fort Washington.




Note: Street Directions Illustrative Only

# Traffic Reduction on Brookline Street

## III. Next Steps Towards Implementation

A. The Committee through the Community Development Department will communicate these recommendations as the consensus of the Blue Ribbon Committee to the major landowners in the Cambridgeport Revitalization Area, to community groups, and to other immediately impacted parties.

B. The Committee is prepared to present its recommendations to the City Council at a hearing to which the Planning Board, general public, and other interested parties will be invited.

C. Upon the City Council's acceptance of this Blue Ribbon Committee report, the Community Development Department should be instructed by the Council to draft appropriate zoning changes to encourage and ensure implementation of these recommendations.

Acknowledgements

The Chairman wishes to acknowledge the efforts of the following individuals who participated in the discussions leading to this report.

Roger Boothe, Director of Urban Design, Community Development Dept. Mr. Boothe served as staff to the Committee, providing background on previous planning and design efforts and helping to facilitate the Committee's work.

Cambridgeport Residents

Leah Stoner, 15 Green Street. Voiced concerns about construction impacts and the fact that no additional housing was proposed for sites immediately across from her residence.

Peter Valentine, 55 Blanche Street. Made numerous criticisms of the plan and suggestions for how the plan should be modified.

City Representatives

Saundra Graham, City Councillor.

Alice Wolf, City Councillor.

Michael Rosenberg, Assistant City Manager for Community Development.

Developers and Consultants Who Advised the Committee

Lance Fair, Better Cities, Inc. Mr. Fair made several suggestions relating to housing and design.

Robert H. Kuehn, Jr. Housing Economics.
Mr. Kuehn was a member of the Committee until July 25, 1986, when he resigned due to a potential conflict of interest.

Fred Koetter, Koetter, Kim and Associates. Mr. Koetter presented the urban design plan of Forest City Development and made design studies of various suggestions by the Committee.

Catherine Donaher, consultant to MIT. Reviewed final drafts for MIT.

David Barrett, Boston Properties. Mr. Barrett discussed the Kendall Square urban renewal project as it relates to Cambridgeport.

Susan McCracken, Cognetics. Ms. McCracken, a consultant to Forest City, discussed market conditions.

Alex Steinberg, Resource Capital Group. Mr. Steinberg, a developer interested in housing sites in Cambridgeport, observed several meetings.

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Special thanks to the architectural firm of Cambridge Seven Associates, which donated design and graphics assistance to the Committee.