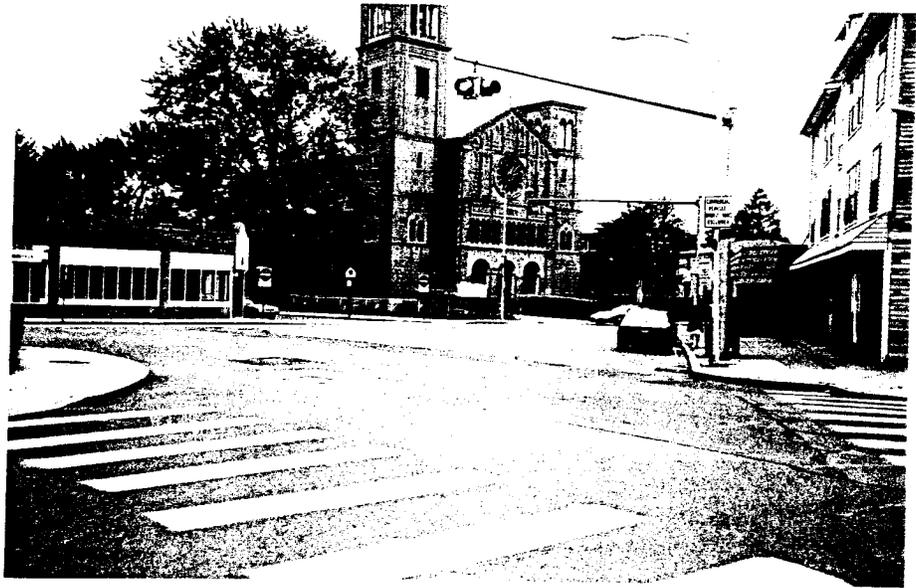


COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING FOR TROLLEY SQUARE AND SHERIDAN SQUARE



*North Cambridge Stabilization Committee
Cambridge Community Development Department
June 1995*

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For a full list of those who participated in the workshops or meetings held during the study process, see Appendix I.

Comprehensive Planning of Trolley and Sheridan Square

November 25, 1996

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 3

TROLLEY SQUARE -ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES 5

I. TROLLEY SQUARE -TRAFFIC, PARKING AND TRANSPORTATION 7

II. TROLLEY SQUARE -TROLLEY YARD SITE -RESIDENTIAL USE.....10

III. TROLLEY SQUARE -COMMERCIAL USE13

IV. TROLLEY SQUARE -URBAN DESIGN, OPEN SPACE AND ZONING.....15

V. HISTORIC ENHANCEMENTS IN TROLLEY SQUARE17

SHERMAN SQUARE -ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES 18

I. SHERMAN SQUARE -TRAFFIC, PARKING AND TRANSPORTATION 20

II. SHERMAN SQUARE -RESIDENTIAL USE 22

III. SHERMAN SQUARE -COMMERCIAL USE 24

IV. SHERMAN SQUARE -URBAN DESIGN, OPEN SPACE AND ZONING 25

V. HISTORIC ENHANCEMENTS IN SHERMAN SQUARE.....27

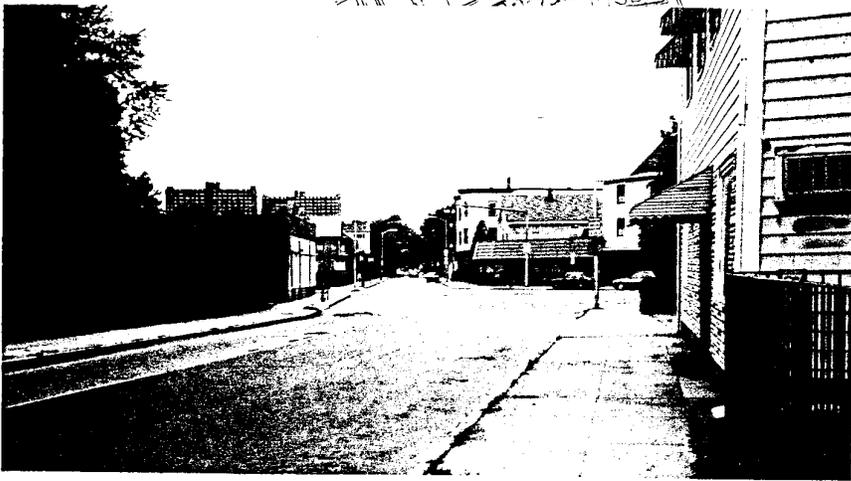
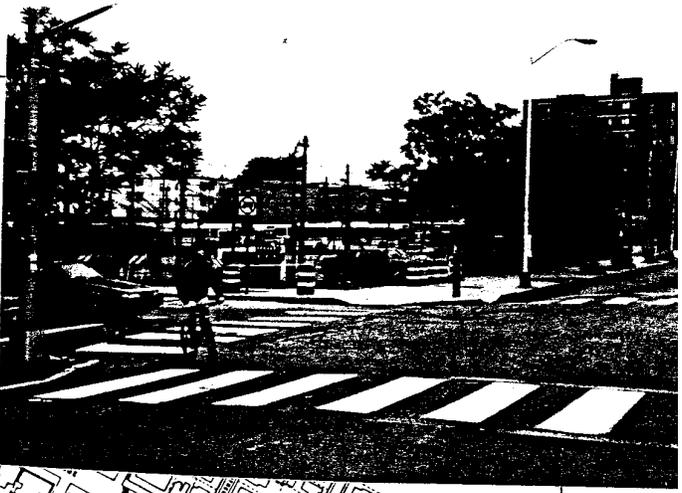
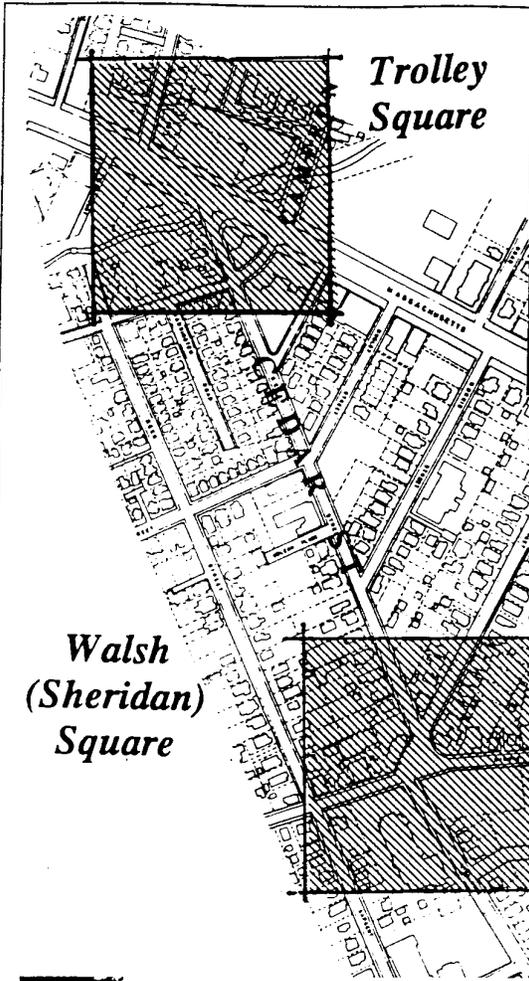
Appendix I -Additional Participants29

Introduction

Though seemingly lacking in visual prominence, Trolley and Sheridan Square are in fact key areas with respect to the future development of North Cambridge. Their location puts them at the corners of the old 18th century ox pasture formed originally by Massachusetts Avenue, Rindge Avenue and Cedar Street. While neither square is presently the site of enormous activity, this study will explore the important roles that each square should play in the area's future. These squares are also wholly within the neighborhood, unlike Porter Square, which is shared by other neighborhoods in Cambridge and Somerville. Planning for these squares presents a unique opportunity for North Cambridge residents to address not only concerns related to these locations, but also an opportunity to influence the future character of these neighborhoods.

The comprehensive planning of Trolley and Sheridan Square was a recommendation of the 1991 North Cambridge Neighborhood Study and was later requested by the North Cambridge Stabilization Committee (NCSC) in 1992. In 1986, the Trolley Square area was included as part of the North Massachusetts Avenue Urban Design/Land Use Study by Wallace, Floyd, Associates in 1986. This study led to the establishment of the North Massachusetts Avenue Overlay District in the City of Cambridge Zoning Ordinance, and to the rezoning of much of North Massachusetts Avenue. The recommendation of the Neighborhood Study and the NCSC to look at both Trolley and Sheridan Square in greater depth was in effect the next logical step with regard to these earlier efforts. In the winter of 1993, the Community Development Department (CDD) and (NCSC) initiated a comprehensive planning process.

After a series of initial meetings and the creation of the Subcommittee for the Comprehensive Planning of Trolley Square and Sheridan Square (the Subcommittee), a public meeting was held to solicit community comment, ideas and a vision for the squares. During 1993 and the spring of 1994 the Sub-committee and CDD, working with the participation of numerous residents and businesspeople, met to discuss the issues concerning each square and to make recommendations addressing areas of concern. This report will discuss those issues and recommendations which resulted from that process.



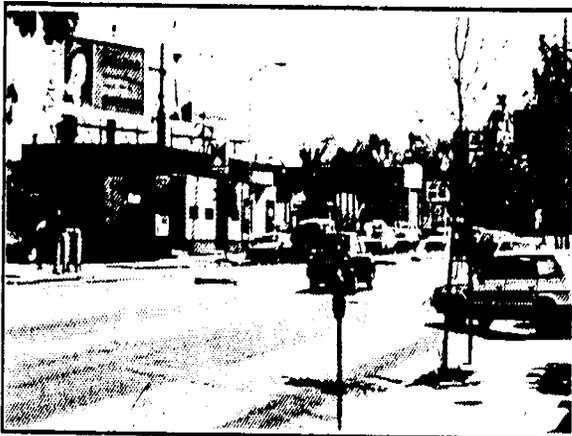
Trolley Square and Sheridan Square - Study Areas

Trolley Square -Issues and Perspectives

The Trolley Square area is defined in the North Massachusetts Avenue Urban Design/Land Use Study as extending along Massachusetts Avenue from Shea Road to Washburn Avenue. It is still best known as the site of the trolley barns that formerly provided space for storage and repair of the areas earliest streetcars. Originally dominated by cattle related industries, the area along Massachusetts Avenue extending in either direction from the trolley barns has seen a variety of uses over time. Nevertheless it has rarely established a strong commercial or residential identity. Possible transfer of the furthestmost triangular parcel (see map- Trolley Site) from the MBTA to the City of Cambridge presents the North Cambridge community with an opportunity , however, to make recommendations as to the ultimate disposition of this parcel with an eye towards a range of benefits to the neighborhood.

Unfortunately, the potential development of the Trolley site is impaired due to unknown levels of hazardous waste in the soil. Although the MBT A had arranged to sell the land for a nominal amount to the City of Cambridge in exchange for land taken during the Alewife T station construction, the City , finding itself unable to ascertain the level of hazardous waste on the site, was unwilling to assume ownership. As was discussed early and often in the meetings for this process, the possibility of developing this site must be preceded by the resolution of the hazardous waste/ownership issues still outstanding. The uses discussed for this site in this report are intended to encourage the ultimate cleanup and full utilization of the site.

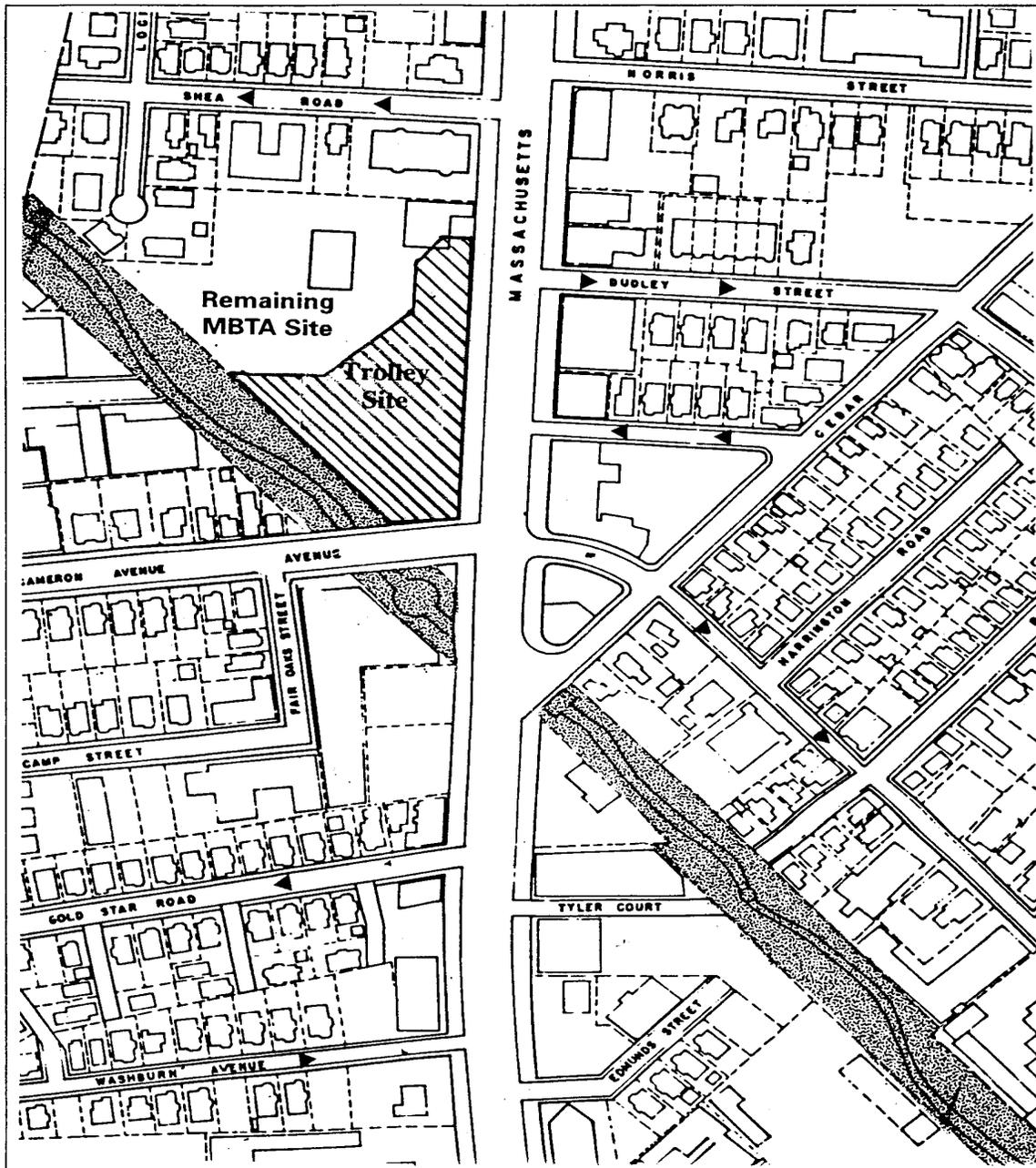
Against this backdrop of uncertainty concerning the ultimate disposition of ownership the Sub-committee solicited recommendations for the square.



Open area of the Square

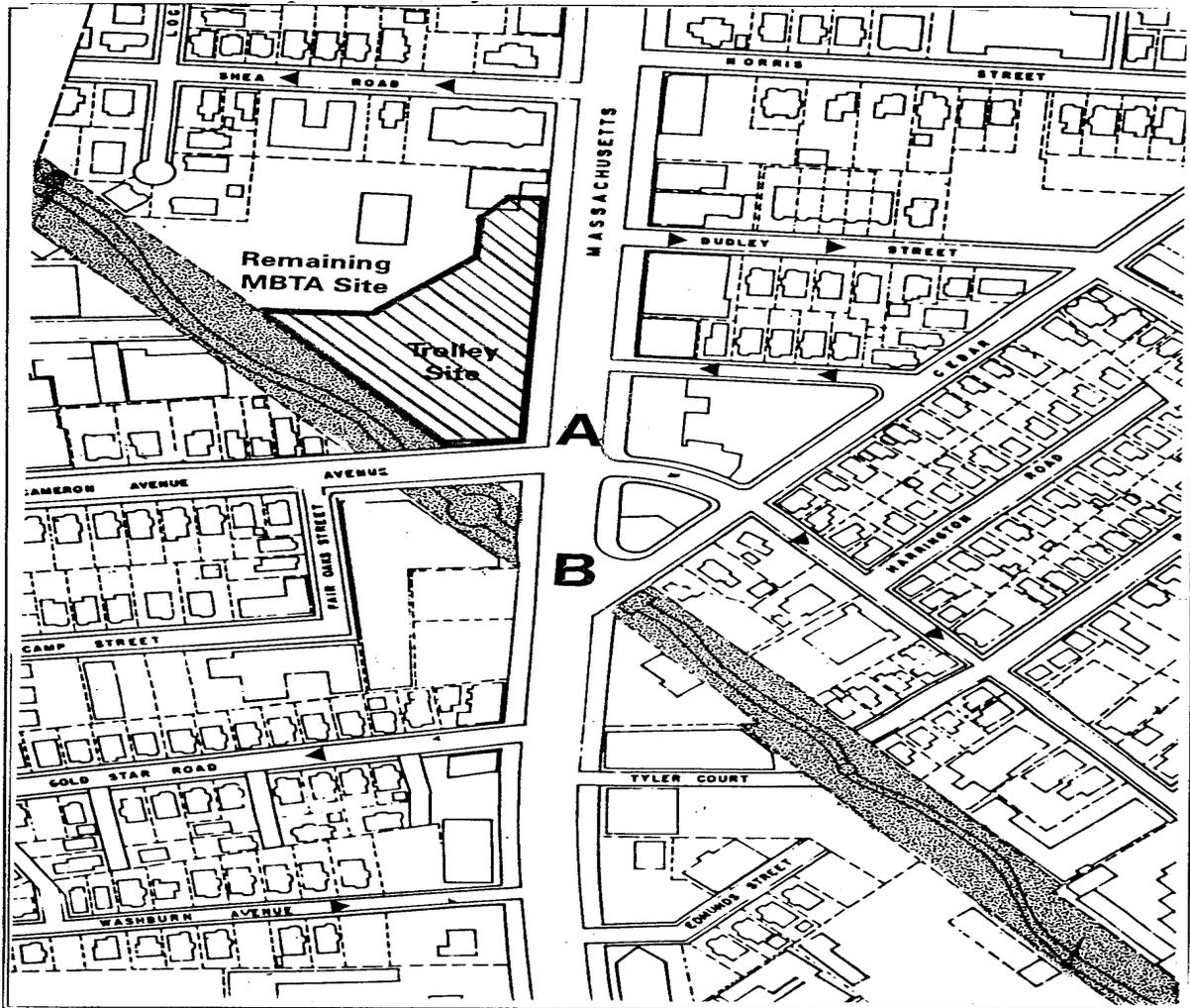


Downtown image of some of the square.



Trolley Square - Study Area

6. Vehicles making right turns onto Cedar from Massachusetts Avenue are hazardous to pedestrian/bicycle traffic at this intersection.

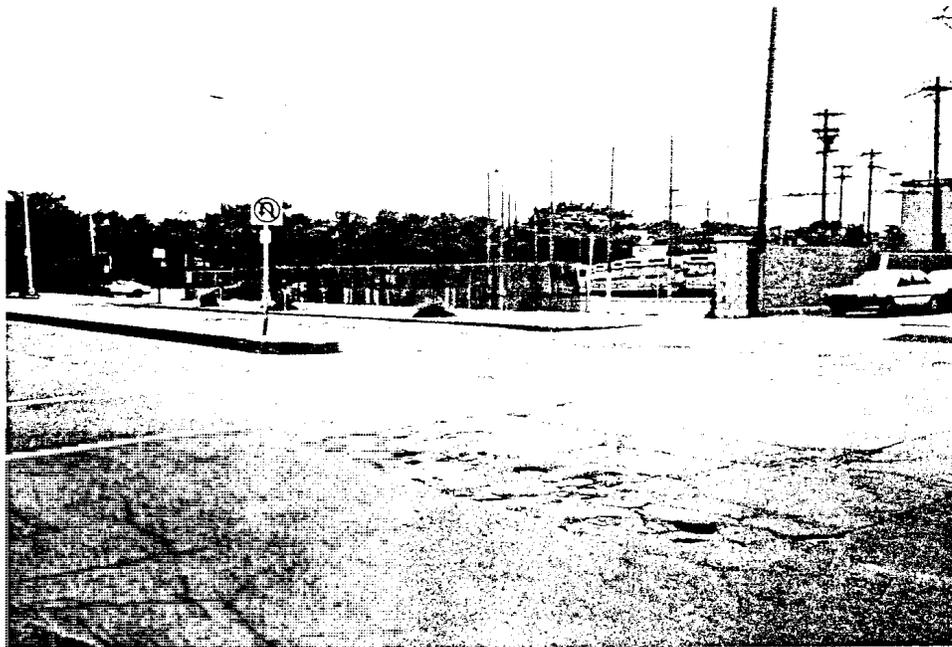


Traffic, Parking & Transportation Issues

Recommendations

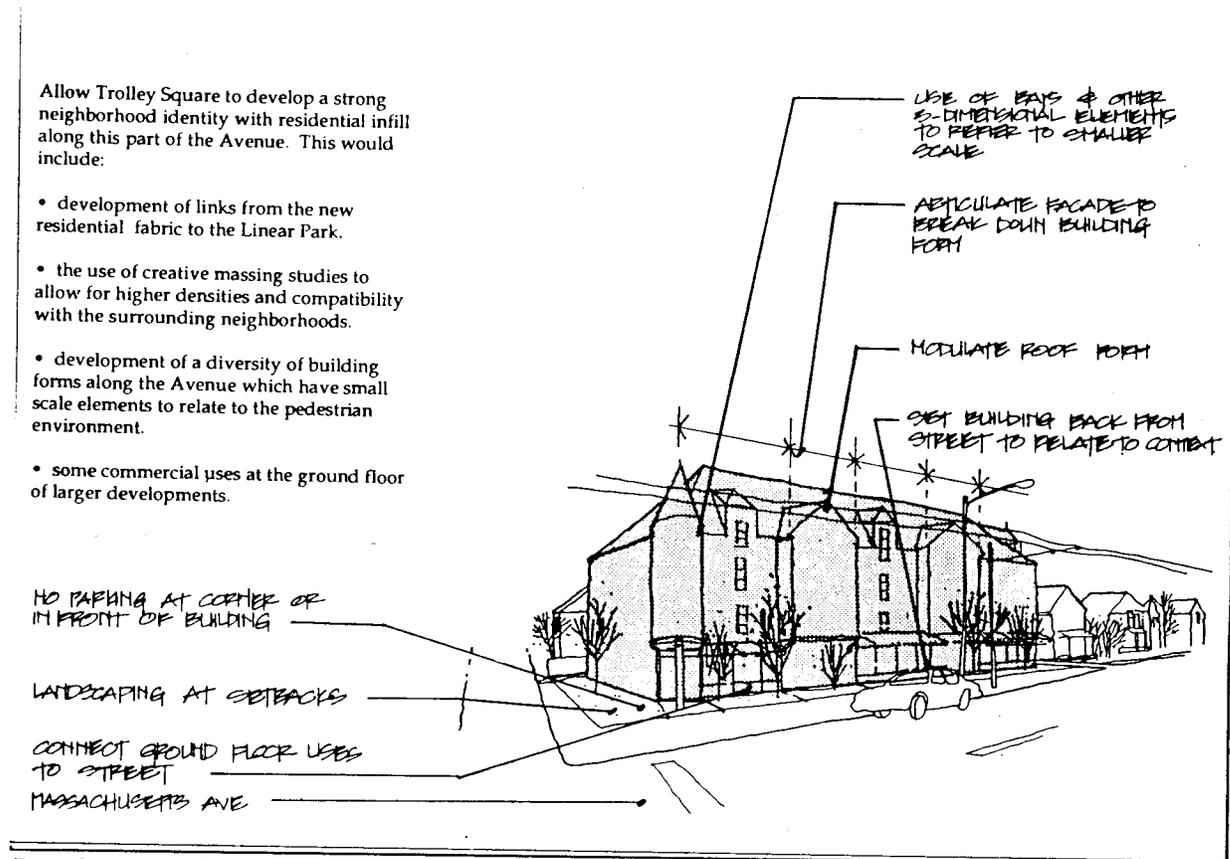
1. Make the left turn from Massachusetts Avenue onto Cameron Ave. easier, by increasing the green arrow interval.
2. Make the right turn onto Massachusetts Avenue from Cedar Street easier; consider using public land at the corner to improve the angle of this turn.
3. Reduce through traffic onto Goldstar Road.
4. Increase the enforcement of the "No Right Turn on Red" regulation at this intersection, and increase the difficulty for making fast right turns onto Cedar from Massachusetts Avenue by changing the configuration of the turn (see detail. This will also improve pedestrian crossing safety at this intersection.
5. Increase enforcement of No Parking areas to improve visibility at all side streets exiting and entering onto Mass. Ave.

D. Include Public Review in Roadway Changes -Changes in neighborhood roadways most often have impacts on a variety of neighborhood activities and are more likely to be well considered if informed by neighborhood comment. Any substantial changes made by the City to the layout of the roadways in these areas, (such as changes in lane number, Linear Park crossing, turning lanes or new signals) which are not safety related should be subject to community review. Particular concern should be paid to the concern of abutters.



II. Trolley Square. Trolley Yard Site. Residential Use -The Trolley Yard site will, because of its prominent location, establish an important housing segment in North Cambridge, and therefore will be important for its example beyond its size. Any housing on this site will also be important to the success of small retail in the square.

The following recommendations are made :

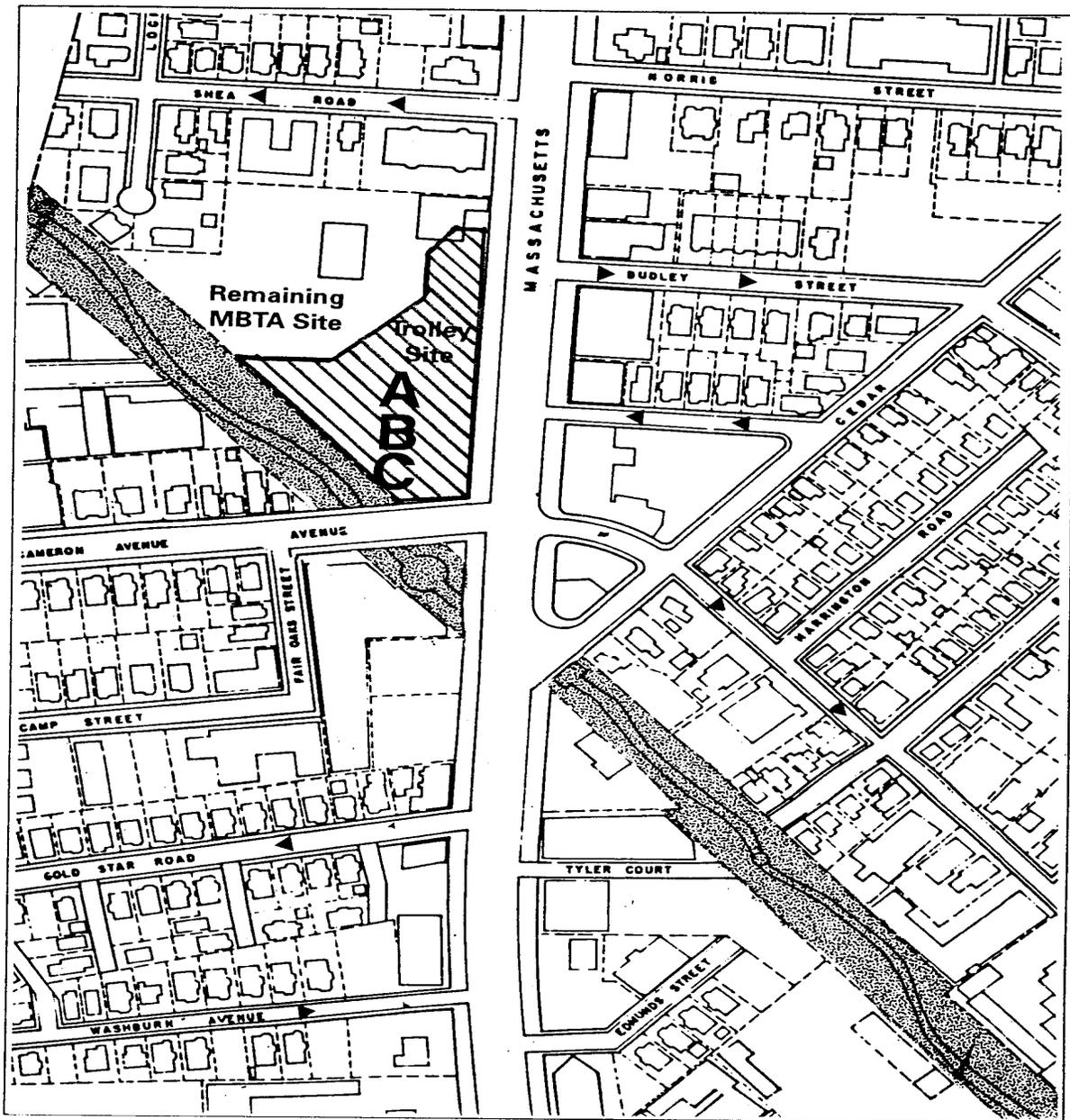


Development Strategy - Trolley Square Site

A. Housing types. The trolley square site is large enough to allow for a variety or mix of housing types, some of which may not be practical on smaller sites. These include:

1. mixed income;
2. age grouping;
3. alternative living arrangements:
 - a. congregate housing;
 - b. co-housing;
4. variety of tenures:

a. rental;	c. co-operative
b. ownership;	d. rent-to-own



Residential Use Issues - Trolley Square

B. Hazardous waste remediation. The Trolley Yard site may require substantial hazardous waste remediation for residential use. While full utilization of the site is a critical element for the development of Trolley Square, the Committee recognizes that a range of uses may be more appropriate given the potential for hazardous waste. The Committee recommends that discussions be initiated with the MBTA to determine hazardous waste remediation requirements.

C. Community Meeting Room The North Cambridge neighborhood would benefit appreciably from a medium sized community building similar to the Newtowne Club of decades past. While space is available at locations elsewhere in North Cambridge (Gately Shelter, Senior Center), there is no prominent location dedicated specifically for community use on Massachusetts Avenue. Recommendation:

Set aside a portion of any new building for use as a mid-size community meeting room. This might be accomplished by creating a community space as an amenity to a residential or mixed use.

D. Interim Actions -While the Subcommittee recommends immediate steps be taken to resolve the hazardous waste issues on the site, there are a number of interim actions which would represent significant improvement for those who live and work in this area, including:

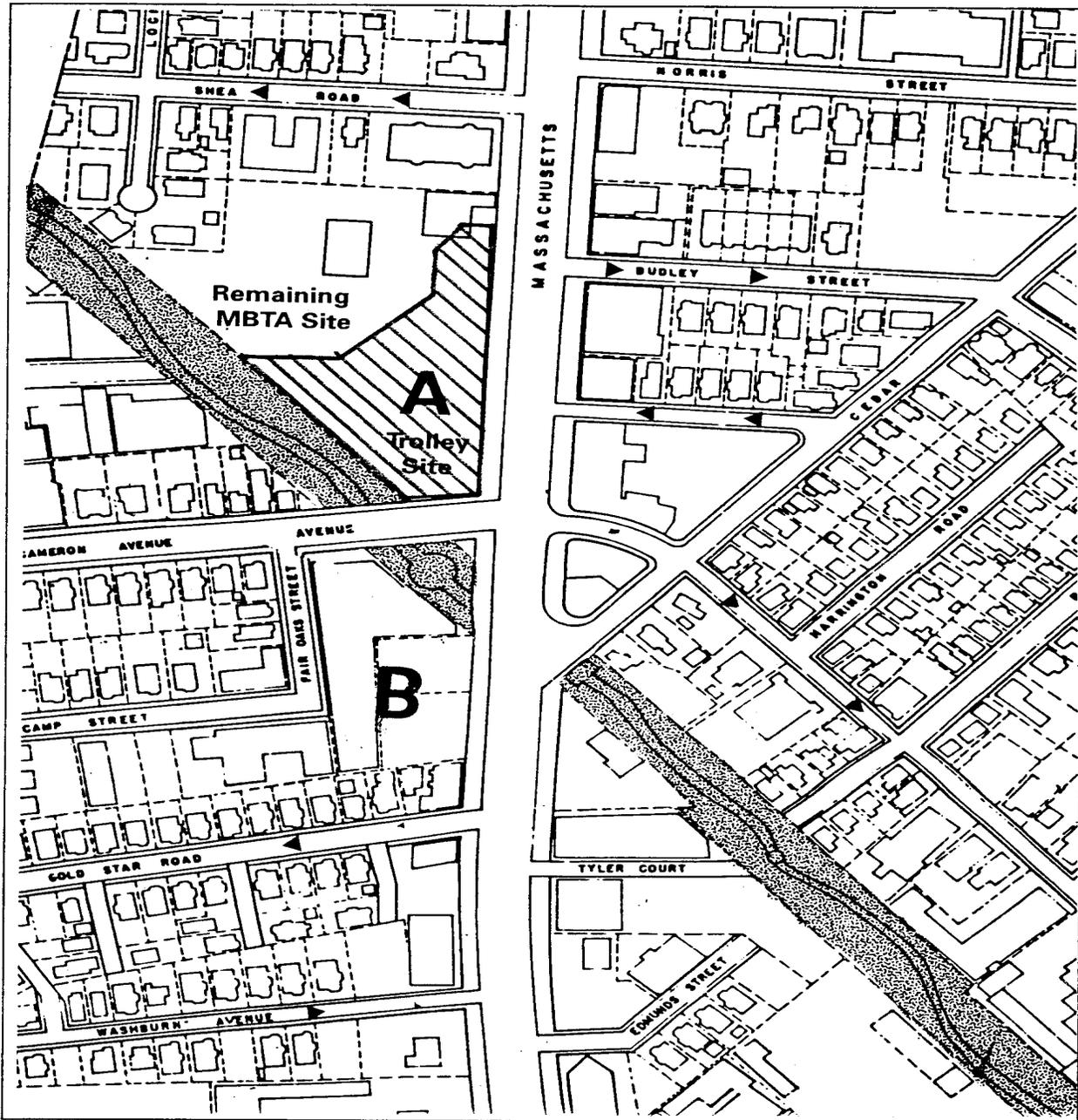
1. Regular clean up of rubbish and debris which accumulates in this lot;
2. Do not allow unauthorized parking of passenger or construction vehicles;
3. Improve the appearance of the lot through basic landscaping along the edges of the lot, and with a new fence.

III. Trolley Square -Commercial Use -The commercial strength of Northern Mass. Ave. has waned since its transition from cattle related business to streetcar suburb. Trolley Square, however, as the longstanding site of the trolley car barns, has played an important role in the public life of North Cambridge. As the crossing point of the railroad line (now Linear Park) on Massachusetts Avenue, this location can be seen as having the potential to become a commercially vibrant location.

A. Complementary commercial. Since commercial development at Trolley Square is not well established, it is important to recognize the critical role that any development of the Trolley site will play in determining the quality of commercial activity in the square. While the committee does not foresee or encourage the establishment of a major commercial area at Trolley Square, commercial uses which will complement existing businesses would be a valuable addition to the area. This Committee therefore makes the following recommendations:

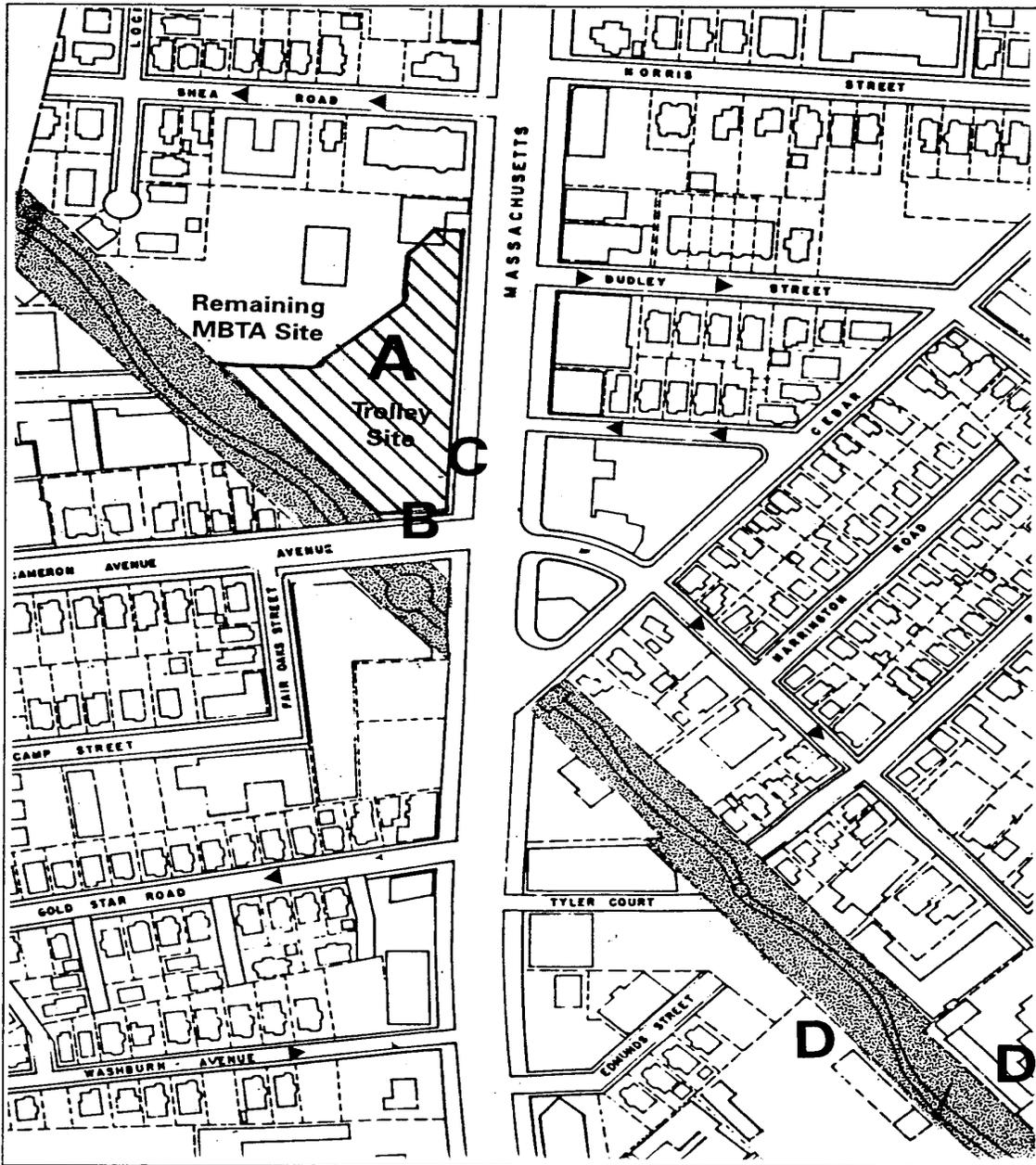
1. The trolley square site should complement existing commercial space in the area rather than adding significant commercial space to the square;
2. Discourage late night activities. Ensure that safety and residential compatibility issues are addressed before development occurs;
3. Allow only low-impact early evening activities, e.g. ice cream parlor, neighborhood restaurant; not bars or night clubs.
4. Establish a more consistent commercial area along Massachusetts Avenue with space for edge activities on the street;
5. Consider a portion of any commercial building for a community use, such as a mid-size meeting room. This might be accomplished by:
 - a. creating an evening community space which also functions daily as a commercial use area; or,
 - b. an outdoor plaza which also could function as an outdoor meeting area.
6. During any development planning, specifically identify existing parking capacity as well as projected needs.
7. Require any open or public space component of a private development to be linked to the Linear Park.
8. A police service center (currently under consideration) would support both the community and commercial strengthening of the square.

B. Consider the site at 2431 Mass. Ave. (former Middlesex Building) as an important potential development site in the square



Trolley Square - Commercial Area

- IV. **Urban Design, Open Space and Zoning** Presently Trolley Square is an automobile dominated area which creates incompatibilities with other transportation modes, such as bicycles and pedestrians. Although Linear Park crosses Massachusetts Ave. here, no clear urban design exists to improve the use and enjoyment of the square for any of these users. The development of the Trolley Yard Site has the potential to either increase the existing automobile oriented character or to redirect its character toward a more pedestrian oriented community area, through the improvement of bicycle access, and the establishment of a complementary urban design direction for public and private facilities. Development should be consistent with the North Massachusetts Avenue Guidelines (as incorporated into the City of Cambridge Zoning Ordinance). This Committee therefore makes the following recommendations:
- A. Provide a Mix of Uses A mix of commercial, residential and institutional uses at this location would serve the community as a lively central focus, and support commercial establishments which could strengthen the square's pedestrian aspect
 - B. Integrate Linear Park For any development of the Trolley Yard site, make the edge along Massachusetts Avenue and the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Cameron a continuation/complement to Linear Park, with trees, sitting areas, etc. Improve the connection of Linear Park to Massachusetts Avenue with:
 - 1. better visual linkages (such as brick surfacing) and;
 - 2. better pedestrian and bicycle access.
 - C. Support Pedestrian Activity The primary advantages of increasing pedestrian activity include greater safety, ability to support neighborhood businesses and support for an improved residential/commercial balance. Increase the pedestrian "friendliness" of the square, by:
 - 1. adding street trees and flowers to the streetscape;
 - 2. adding benches at specific locations around the square.
 - 3. encouraging the use of awnings on stores;
 - D. Rezone the Industrial A-1 zoning district which extends from Massachusetts Avenue to Clifton St. on both sides of the park to be consistent with surrounding uses.



Trolley Square - Urban Design, Open Space & Zoning

V. **Historic Enhancements to Trolley Square** -Northern Massachusetts Avenue, as a portion of the famous route for William Dawes' warning to the colonists of the British Army's advance, and the site (now Pemberton Market) of the 1st Colonial Army Field Hospital, is certainly a strong candidate for historic enhancement The local history of Cambridge and North Cambridge should be better represented at Trolley Square.

A. Use the Trolley Yard Development for historic enhancement There are many ways a development at the Trolley Yard site may be used as a vehicle to convey the history of the square, integrating, where possible, into public and private development, for example: historic panels/friezes on building exteriors depicting its former use as the areas most fertile farmland, tanneries and carriage factories, blacksmith shops and civil war encampment

B. Encourage the adoption of historical motifs in the design of retail or residential development

C. Connect Trolley Square to the rest of North Cambridge by developing a walking tour system of historical markers connected to the rest of the neighborhood and the city as a whole.

1. The existing markers in North Cambridge along Massachusetts Avenue which could be used for such a foot trail include:

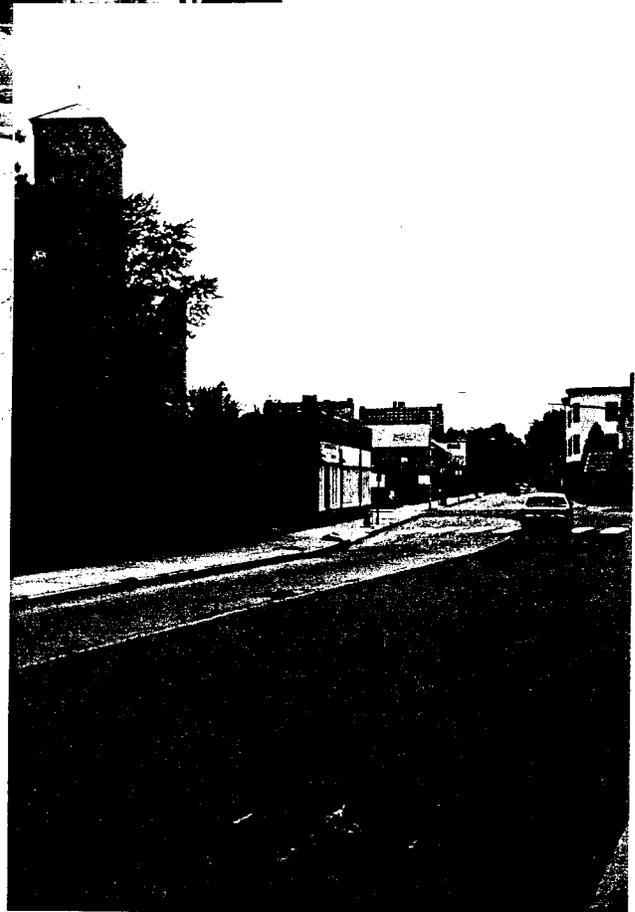
- a. Cooper-Davenport Tavern, 1991 Massachusetts Avenue
- b. Porter's Cattle Market Hotel, 1974 Massachusetts Avenue (lost, replacement scheduled)
- c. Porter Square History Station at Porter Station Plaza
- d. Battle Road granite marker installed about 1880 at 2156 Massachusetts Avenue

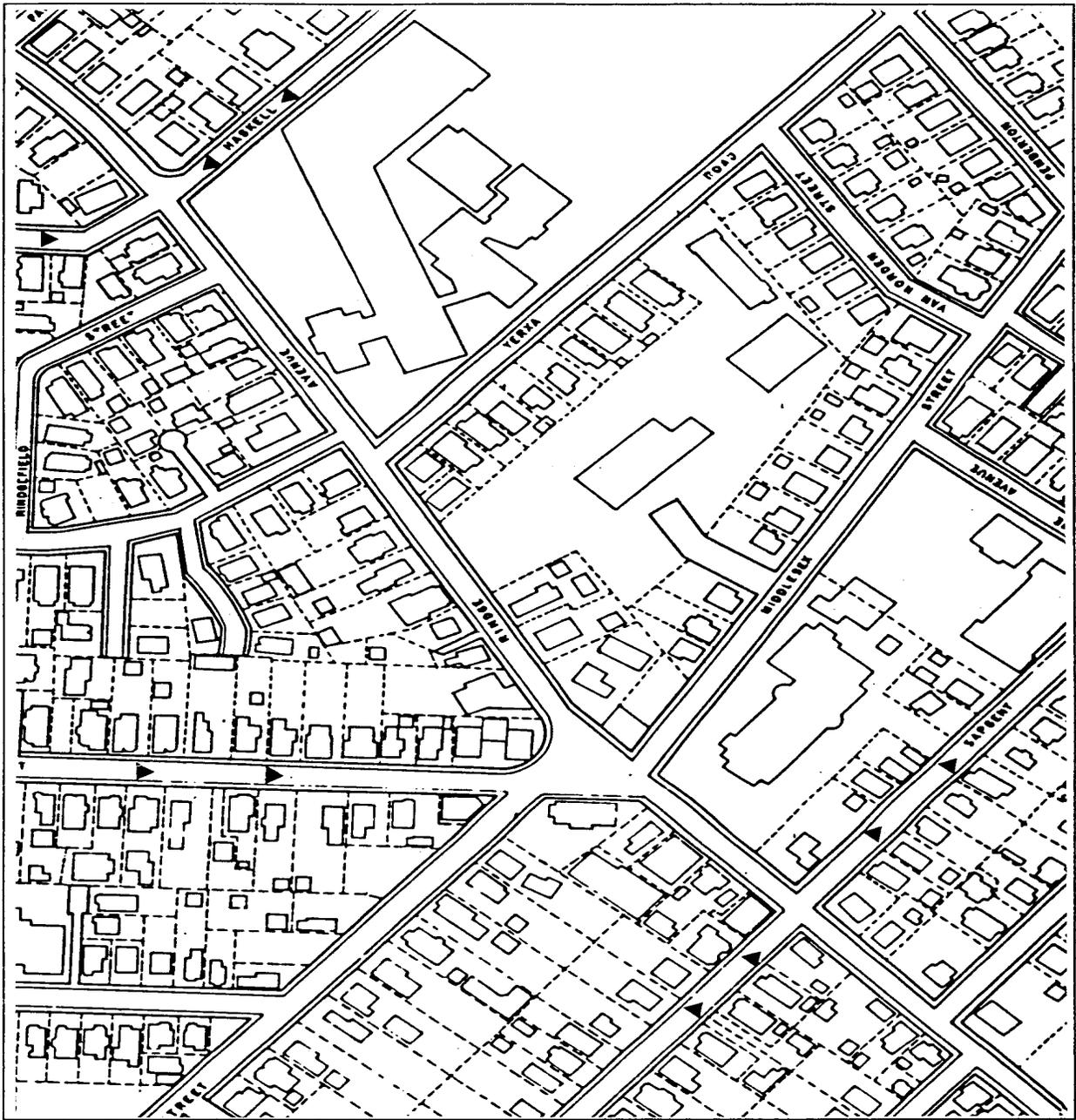
2. The markers which are planned for installation by the Historical Commission in the Trolley Square area include:

- a. Cambridge Poor Farm, 45 Matignon Avenue
- b. Camp Cameron, Massachusetts and Cameron Avenue
- c. Second Town Poorhouse, Harvey Street at Cedar Street
- d. Streetcar Barns, 2369 Massachusetts Avenue
- e. Newtowne Club, 5 Davenport Street
- f. Tannery Brook, Churchill Street and Muller Avenue
- g. Walden Street Cattle Tunnel, Walden Street at B&M Railroad.
- h. Watson's Corner, Massachusetts Avenue and Russell Street
- i. Trotting Park, corner Dudley Street and Cedar Street
- j. Rand Estate, Massachusetts Avenue at Porter Square Shopping Center

Sheridan Square -Issues and Perspectives

Sheridan Square (also known as Walsh Square) is the neighborhood square of North Cambridge, immortalized as Barry's Corner by the late U.S. House Speaker Thomas P. (Tip) O'Neill. While not on Massachusetts Avenue, it has become the second most heavily traversed area of North Cambridge. Despite this fact, its commercial viability has remained impaired. Sheridan Square is contained within the largest residential area of North Cambridge, and has, over the years, been the site of small neighborhood stores and gathering places. Most recently, however, Sheridan Square finds itself perched somewhat uncomfortably as a neighborhood square with "big time" traffic. Along with a marked increase in institutional use it is this conflict and the desire to see it function more safely for neighborhood residents and for pedestrians and automobiles travelling through the square which drew it to the Subcommittee's attention. In short, its character as a neighborhood square needs to be enhanced.





Sheridan Square - Study Area

I. Sheridan Square -Traffic, Parking and Transportation Sheridan Square presents a consistent picture of speeding cars, undefined traffic patterns and increasing traffic volumes from small institutions in the neighborhood, including the M.E. Fitzgerald School, the Muscular Therapy Institute (leasing from St. Johns), St. John's School and the Notre Dame Church and school (presently serving as the temporary home of the Haggerty School). Additionally, truck traffic going to and from Portland Stoneware adds heavily laden eighteen wheeled trucks to the traffic mix 24 hours per day. Parking, as elsewhere in much of Cambridge, is in short supply. The net result of these problems are diminished pedestrian and auto safety; parking shortage conflicts; noise; and, gridlock at rush hour. The Sub-committee therefore makes the following recommendations:

A. Reduce cut-through traffic during the a.m. and p.m. rush hour. Re-time the light at Sherman Street to reduce the length of the green interval on Rindge Ave.

B. Increase pedestrian safety:

1. Install a full traffic signal with pedestrian walk signals in Sheridan Square, which would:
 - a. reduce the attractiveness of cutting through Sheridan Square for auto traffic; and,
 - b. add to pedestrian safety .
2. Install crosswalk stanchions or signs that read "State Law- Yield to Pedestrians in Crosswalk".
3. Increase police enforcement and improve visibility entering and driving through the square;
4. Use a change in surface (texture, stripes) to alert traffic entering/exiting the square.

C. Reduce traffic on Cedar Street and Harvey Street:

1. Make the turn onto Cedar and Harvey Street from Massachusetts Avenue less attractive:
2. Consider reducing the traffic on Harvey Street during rush hours, by limiting access during rush hours;
3. Increase the enforcement of the "No Right Turn on Red" regulation at this intersection, and increase the difficulty for making fast right turns on to Cedar from Massachusetts Avenue by changing the configuration of the turn.

D. Reduce speeding on Rindge Avenue and Cedar Street:

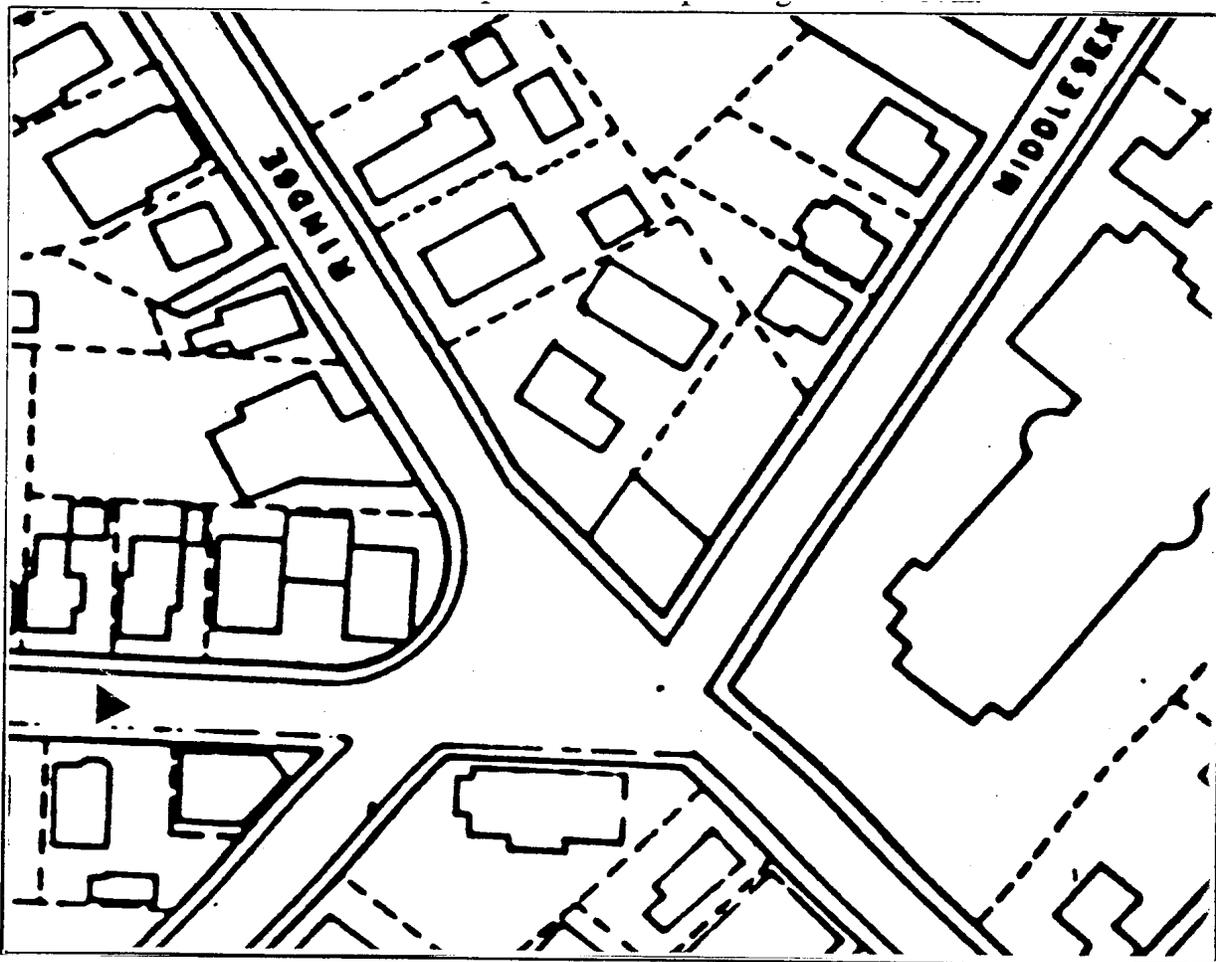
1. Increase police enforcement of speed limits;
2. reduce the speed limit on Cedar Street from 30 to 25 mph;
3. Increase the length along Rindge Ave. which is designated as a school zone, and reduce the speed limit during school hours.

E. Assist Portland Stoneware in the relocation of their business, and:

1. Enforce all traffic regulations currently in effect for trucks;
2. Establish limits on truck travel during the time period from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m.

F. Improve Sheridan Square Configuration The Committee further submits the following criteria for Sheridan Square Reconfiguration. Any change in the roadway should:

1. Strengthen Rindge Ave. residential quality, by:
 - a. increasing pedestrian crossing safety;
 - b. reducing the volume of traffic;
 - c. reducing the speed of traffic;
 - d. increasing the utilization of public transportation.
2. Support neighborhood business, by:
 - a. accounting for business parking needs;
 - b. increasing pedestrian safety throughout the square;
3. Rationalize school and church related traffic, including morning and afternoon bus/parent traffic;
4. Increase the parking if consistent with existing City Ordinances, and consider the relative impact on parking for existing areas of business
5. Develop a more workable plan for snow plowing and removal.



Intersection Diagram - Sheridan Square

II. Sheridan Square -Residential Use -The Sheridan Square area really is surrounded by a well established residential neighborhood, whose residents brought much of the interest for improving the square to this comprehensive study. There was one notably unique issue for residential use during the work of this Sub-committee -a pair of seriously dilapidated buildings at 63-63R Cedar Street These buildings had been eyesores for years, and they became a public health hazard due to raccoon infestation. With the building now demolished, the importance of the use and design of any development on this lot to the image of Sheridan Square compels the Sub-committee to make special recommendations regarding this relatively small lot The 63-63R Cedar St. site should be considered a significant site for residential development for the following reasons:

- the parcel, deep with narrow street frontage, resembling the typical 18th century farm lot shape, is the same as many of the lots in the area. This has prompted many concerns about separate development of the rear portion. Therefore;
 - such development, since it affects a significant visual open space of the rear of these lots, may set an important precedent
 - as this lot is adjacent to the commercial area of Sheridan Square, it will affect the visual and residential feel of the square.
- the history of the lot and the subsequent demolition of the deteriorating buildings, makes this a development of wider concern to the neighborhood.

This Committee therefore makes the following recommendations:

- A. Support High Quality development. In the development of the 63-63R Cedar Street lot encourage a high quality design to promote long-term ownership;
- B. Give preference to North Cambridge families in need of affordable housing;
- C. Balance the need for cost effectiveness with the issues noted above, in particular the potential value of developing the rear of the lot against the potential amenity of spacious backyards throughout the wider neighborhood;
- D. Consider architectural configurations that enhance and blend historically with adjoining structures.

III. Sheridan Square - Commercial Use Sheridan Square is presently a mixed use area with a weak commercial component, traffic and pedestrian safety problems, and little parking. Sheridan Square could have a stronger neighborhood commercial presence, with proper attention given to improved parking, traffic and pedestrian use. This Committee therefore makes the following recommendations:

- A. Support Small Businesses Work with the Community Development Department to assist property owners to support appropriate neighborhood business (e.g. small bakery, convenience store) location into this area. e.g. develop an RFP for business location in Sheridan Square.
- B. Maintain Restriction on Fast Food Do not allow "fast food" restaurants, e.g. "luncheonette" -yes, "McDonalds" -no.
- C. Restrict Automobile Oriented Businesses -Given the very significant vehicular limitations and the already busy intersection of Sheridan Square, auto-oriented businesses or other businesses which increase destination traffic should be discouraged.
- D. Do not allow uses which have significant late night activity -The proximity of residences surrounding Sheridan Square make it likely that businesses requiring . late night operation would cause unwelcome disturbances to many residents.
- E. Maintain the current Business A-1 and Residential B zoning districts. -The Sub-Committee considered the idea of expanding the Business A-1 to surrounding parcels in the square. While this would be consistent with some of the present uses (which are now non-conforming), the committee did not want to establish additional commercial area here which might add to traffic and safety problems.

IV. Sheridan Square - Urban Design, Open Space and Zoning Sheridan Square has succumbed partially, over the years, to the pressures of increasing traffic and random commercial development. The qualities which make a neighborhood square still visible, however, may yet be lost through inattention to urban design, and by not capitalizing on open space and zoning changes that can still be made. To direct those changes so that Sheridan Square may develop favorably as more of a neighborhood square rather than a traffic thoroughfare, the Sub-committee recommends the following considerations:

- A. Increase the pedestrian "friendliness" of the square. Though mostly pedestrian in character, Sheridan Square has become dominated by through traffic of automobiles and trucks, making the area confusing and somewhat hazardous to pedestrians and automobiles alike. Therefore:
1. Encourage the use of awnings on stores;
 2. Add street trees and flowers to the streetscape without compromising the visual safety of the square for automobiles.
 3. Do not add seating areas.
- B. Reconfiguration Changes to the configuration of the intersection, and the addition of commercial space have the potential of supporting the existing character of the square or redirecting its character toward a more pedestrian friendly neighborhood area. Therefore:
1. Change the texture of the street in the square to make drivers aware that they are entering a pedestrian zone.
 2. Make changes to the configuration of the square as previously noted in Section I.F. - Transportation.
- C. Maintain Open Space Around Square -Sheridan Square currently is at the center of an unusual urban design configuration of private and public open spaces resulting from the front yards of numerous institutional uses along Rindge Avenue, including the M.E. Fitzgerald School, the Muscular Therapy Institute, the Notre Dame Church, and the Cemetery. These uses are not currently protected as open space, yet they represent an open space amenity to the community .Provide for the continuation of the open spaces along Rindge Avenue through zoning or incentives to secure the benefit of the open space in the Sheridan Square area.
- D. Conduct a Public Works Survey -The sidewalk and feeder street system should be reassessed. Visual amenities such as the Fitzgerald School and the Cemetery should be maintained.
- E. Improve Institutional Coordination -Increase the involvement and coordination of the many institutions which surround Sheridan Square with neighborhoods groups to create a common vision.

V. Sheridan Square -Historic Enhancements The many layers of North Cambridge's rich history should be revealed and utilized to complement any revitalization. The square itself had been the point of intersection of several significant access ways for over three centuries. During those years Sheridan Square had been the touch point for the area's oldest cemetery, the City's only trotting track, common pasturage for the City's draught animals and the gathering place for a former U.S. House Speaker's boyhood acquaintances. It has always hosted a variety of unique activities ancillary to the development of the City of Cambridge.

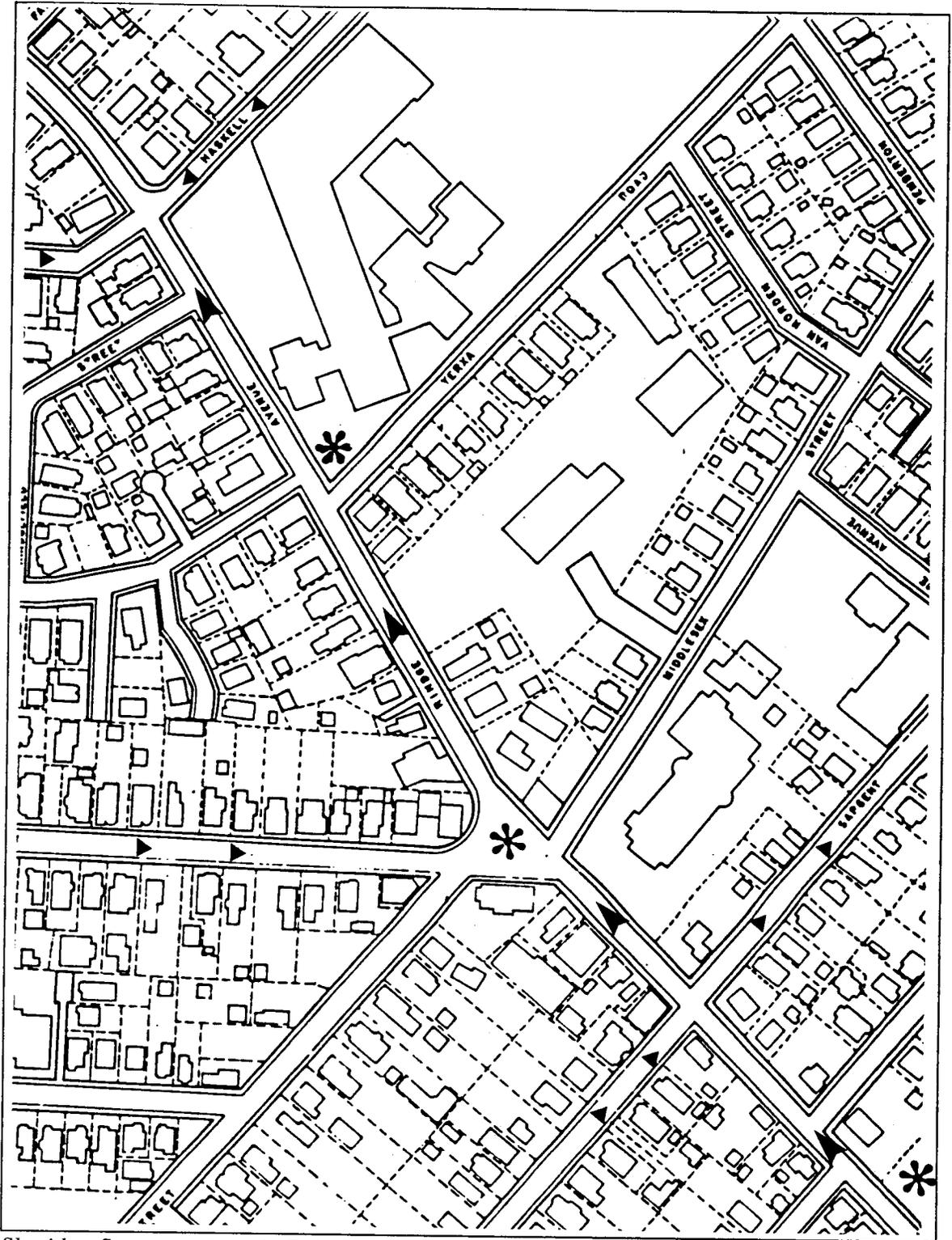
Recently, the City's Historical Commission, with the funding of the North Cambridge Stabilization Committee, has approved the manufacture of a number of "blue markers," the collective purpose of which is to lay the basis for a local historical foot trail. With its historical identity as a crossroads for a variety of activities over a period of time, Sheridan Square would make an excellent secondary orientation point for the proposed foot trail. Such a designation would aid small businesses as well as reinforce the pedestrian environment.

The existing markers in Sheridan Square which could be used for such a foot trail include:

1. Abraham Watson House, 181 Sherman Street
2. Barry's Comer, Rindge Avenue at Rice Street
3. Kidder-Sargent House, 146 Rindge Avenue
4. Brick Manufacturing, Rindge Avenue at Jefferson Park

The markers which are planned for installation by the Historical Commission in the Sheridan Square area include:

1. Brick Manufacturing, Jerry's Pit at Russell Field



Sheridan Square - Historic Enhancements

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Jim McGrail	
Shirley & Frank McGrail	
Don & Dorothy McMath	