

**Draft Landmark Designation Report
Harvard Square Kiosk
0 Harvard Square, Cambridge, Mass.**



Harvard Square Kiosk, 2016

CHC photo

Summary

[Summary to follow]

Charles Sullivan
Cambridge Historical Commission
September 1, 2017

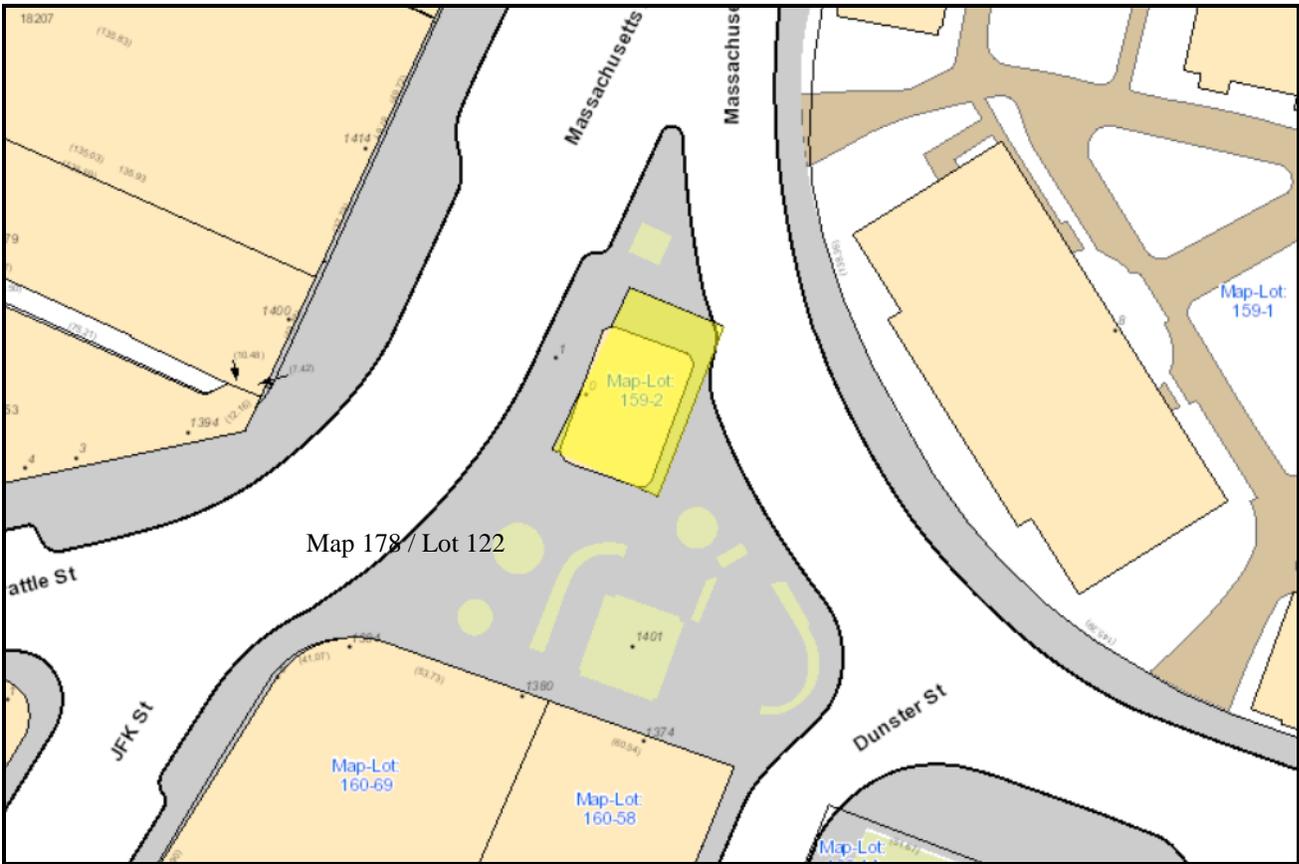
Draft Landmark Designation Report

Harvard Square Kiosk
0 Harvard Square, Cambridge, Mass.

I. Location and Regulatory Status

A. Address and Parcel Information

The former Harvard Square Kiosk in Harvard Square is located at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue, John F. Kennedy Street, and Brattle Street. It contains a single one-story brick building on a 1,350 square foot lot. The assessed value for the building (Map 159, Parcel 2), according to the current on-line real estate commitment list, is \$652,400. No value is assigned to the lot, which is owned by the City of Cambridge and surrounded on all sides by public ways.



Harvard Square Kiosk.

Assessor's Map 159/Parcel 2, City of Cambridge GIS, August 2017

B. Ownership and Occupancy

The former Harvard Square Kiosk is owned by the City of Cambridge, which took title from the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority on August 6, 1985 (Book xxxxx, Page xxx). The premises are leased to the Muckey Corporation, which operates it as a newsstand.

C. Zoning

The former Harvard Square Kiosk is located in a Business BB district, in which all types of businesses, general retail, and educational, institutional, and office uses are permitted.¹ This district allows development up to a 2.75 FAR with an 80-foot height limit. The site is also governed by the Harvard Square Overlay District, which was established to achieve the following general purposes:

to augment existing zoning regulations to respond to the unique problems and pressures for change particular to the Harvard Square area. The regulations contained in said section provide for more careful public scrutiny of development proposals that may alter the established urban form of the Harvard Square area. These regulations are intended to channel the extreme development pressures in ways which will preserve and enhance the unique functional environment and visual character of Harvard Square; to mitigate the functional impacts of new development on adjacent residential neighborhoods; to maintain the present diversity of development and open space patterns and building scales and ages; and to provide sufficient regulatory flexibility to advance the general purposes of this Section 20.52. The additional flexibility granted to development within the Harvard Square Historic Overlay District is intended to facilitate the protection and enhancement of the historic resources and character of Harvard Square while not unreasonably limiting the opportunities for appropriate contemporary changes to the built environment in the Harvard Square area (Cambridge Zoning Code, §20.52).

Certain development proposals in the Overlay District are subject to a Development Consultation Procedure. In the case of the kiosk, these will probably fall into the category of a Small Project Review (§19.42). Reviews are conducted by the staff of the Community Development Department in consultation with other city agencies and must be completed within five days of receipt. Three of the enumerated potential alterations might conceivably apply to the kiosk:

(3) any exterior building alteration increasing gross floor area by one hundred (100) square feet or more; (5) erection of a sign; and (6) any other exterior building alteration facing a street but not including painting, brick repointing or masonry repairs, building cleaning, gutter replacement or similar routine repair, replacement, or maintenance

Large Project Reviews triggered by new construction of 2,000 square feet or more are conducted by the Harvard Square Advisory Committee (§19.43). Given the size of the kiosk (1,350 sq. ft.) this provision is not likely to apply.

In the event that a special permit or variance is required, the following criteria will apply:

In reviewing applications for variances, special permits or development consultation reviews the permit or special permit granting authority or the Harvard Square Advisory Committee shall be guided by the objectives and criteria contained in the publication *Harvard Square Development Guidelines* [Document compiled from the *Guidelines for Development and His-*

¹ The table of use regulations in the Cambridge Zoning Code (§4.30) enumerates dozens of uses permitted as-of-right, by special permit, or not at all. The current use as a newsstand is a permitted use.

toric Preservation as contained in the Final Report of the Harvard Square Neighborhood Conservation District Study Committee, dated November 29, 2000 and the Harvard Square Development Guidelines, 1986], in addition to the requirements of Sections 10.30 (Variances) and 10.40 (Special Permits) and this Section 20.50. These guidelines are also intended to assist in shaping any contemplated physical change within the Harvard Square Overlay District. (§20.53.2)

The Overlay District contains special provisions for buildings that are individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places, but these pertain to the inclusion of retail uses in a base residential or office district where they are not otherwise permitted.

D. Historic Preservation Status

In 1976-77 the Harvard Square Kiosk was threatened by the MBTA's plans to extend the Red Line subway; initial plans called for its replacement with a new headhouse. The Cambridge Historical Commission nominated the kiosk to the National Register of Historic Places in 1977, and the Department of the Interior approved the listing on January 30, 1978.²

The effect of a National Register listing is that any proposed Federal- or State-funded, licensed or permitted activity affecting the kiosk must be reviewed by the Massachusetts Historical Commission to determine whether the structure would be adversely affected, and if so to negotiate appropriate mitigation. National Register status has no effect on non-Federal or State activities. In the case of the kiosk, the MBTA quickly agreed to preserve the structure. Working with its architectural consultants, the MBTA developed a plan to dismantle the structure during station reconstruction and rebuild it as a newsstand on approximately its original location.

The MBTA transferred ownership of the Harvard Square Kiosk and the surrounding plaza to the City of Cambridge soon after completion of the surface improvements in 1983-84. Out of Town News, at that time owned by Sheldon Cohen, immediately occupied the property. When Hudson News succeeded Cohen in 1994 the new lease required CHC approval of future alterations, a provision that has never been exercised.³

In 2000, the City Council designated Harvard Square as a conservation district under Ch. 2.78, Article III of the City Code. The effect of this designation means that no activity can be undertaken, and no building permit can be issued, that would affect the publicly visible exterior features of any structure in the district without prior review and approval by the Cambridge Historical Commission. The Commission's jurisdiction is subject to several exemptions, such as for storefronts, conforming signs, exterior colors, and normal maintenance activities, but in general extends to every visible aspect of a building's fabric, including walls, doors, windows, roofs, and non-conforming signs.

The CHC grants Certificates of Appropriateness for projects in the Harvard Square Conservation District that it finds to be appropriate or not incongruous. The Commission considers, "among other things, the historic and architectural value and significance of the site or structure, the general design, arrangement, texture and material of the features involved, and the relation of such features to similar features of structures in the surrounding area. In the case of new construction or additions to existing structures [the]commission shall consider the appropriateness of the size and shape of the structure both in relation to the land area upon which the structure is situated and to structures in the

² The kiosk was subsumed within the Harvard Square National Register District on April 13, 1982, but maintains its individual listing.

³ In 1994 the Commission decided not to act on a citizen petition to consider landmark designation because the new lease was considered to have the same effect.

vicinity ...” (2.78.220). Decisions are made in the context of the “Statement of Goals and Guidelines and Standards for Review” contained in the Order establishing the District, as well as the standards and guidelines in the “Final Report of the Harvard Square Neighborhood Conservation District Study Committee” dated November 29, 2000. Since 2000, the Commission has granted one certificate for the kiosk, for restoring masonry damaged in an automobile accident in 2013.

In 2014 the Community Development Department and the Harvard Square Business Association published the *Harvard Square Vision Plan* prepared by Partners for Public Spaces (PPS), a “non-profit planning, design and educational organization dedicated to helping people create and sustain public spaces that build stronger communities” (PPS website). With regard to the kiosk, PPS recommended opening up the structure to increase its visibility, adding food and/or information services, and installing architectural lighting.

In 2015 the City Council directed the City Manager to implement the recommendations of the plan. City staff (including representatives of DPW, CDD, and CHC) began meeting to consider capital improvements for the kiosk and the plaza, reflecting a City Council appropriation of \$2.6 million in FY17 and an additional \$2 million planned for FY18. Halvorson Associates was retained to study the plaza, while architect Ted Galante prepared several conceptual designs that showed how the kiosk could be adapted as a general-purpose public space.

During this process CHC staff successfully insisted on two fundamental principles: that all original material that remained after the conversion to a newsstand in 1983 should be preserved, and that there should be no additional enclosure of the structure. These were reflected in the unofficial rendering that Galante released in the summer of 2016. This concept represented a preservation approach in which all original building fabric would remain and be restored; it showed glass where it was historically used or where it would be needed to enclose the staircase entrances that are now occupied by magazine racks. Lighting was shown for illustrative purposes.



Conceptual restoration design

Galante Architecture Studio, 2016

City staff suspended design activities for the kiosk in late spring 2016 because of uncertainty about the ultimate use of the kiosk. In the spring of 2017 the City Manager appointed a Harvard Square Kiosk and Plaza Working Group to provide community input, and July the city retained PPS again to guide the process of finding appropriate uses for the kiosk and the plaza. “PPS will provide expertise in public space programming and community engagement around placemaking initiatives to the Working Group process and will work with City staff and the Working Group to develop recom-

mendations for the use, governance, and operation of the Harvard Square Kiosk and Plaza” (CDD website).

Meanwhile, on September 28, 2016 Commission staff received a petition requesting, “that the Cambridge Historical Commission initiate with all possible haste the process of designating the Harvard Square Kiosk as a protected landmark of the City of Cambridge.” The fifteen signatures on the original hard copy petition were verified by the Election Commission and a public hearing was scheduled for November 3. In addition to the submitted petition, an online petition was said to have been signed by hundreds of others.

At the hearing on November 3 numerous citizens expressed concern about the future of the kiosk. Despite reservations about the duplicative nature of landmarking a structure that was already protected by the Harvard Square Conservation District, the Commission voted 6-0 to initiate the study.

E. Area Description

The Harvard Square Kiosk occupies a site in the center of Harvard Square, one of three traditional business districts in the city, and lies between Harvard Yard on the east and commercial activities on the west and south. Historically, the kiosk occupied a small traffic island that it shared with a free-standing newsstand. During construction of the Red Line subway extension in 1978-84 the reconstructed kiosk was placed on a large new plaza adjacent to a new headhouse.

F. Planning Issues

The center of Harvard Square has long been an area of special planning concern. The following are among the many issues currently under discussion:

- Traffic and transportation issues traditionally dominated the discussion, but the extension of the Red Line subway largely eliminated above-ground passenger transfers to buses and related street improvements eased traffic flow;
- Pedestrian issues have been addressed repeatedly, but some interfaces are awkwardly arranged;
- The physical limitations of the plaza, which was constructed in 1983, have been addressed in piecemeal fashion and are currently the subject of study. Awkward changes in grade, chaotic pedestrian flow patterns, conflicting activities, and (until recently) limited seating options are among the concerns;
- Public use of the plaza, including programming for community events;
- Future use of the kiosk, which has been operated as a newsstand since 1983. The decline of print media has meant that the operator sells a greater proportion of souvenirs and related products than before. The possibility of reprogramming the kiosk for other public or commercial uses is currently under study.

The most recent relevant study of planning issues around the kiosk is the Harvard Square Vision Study, prepared by the Cambridge Community Development Department and the Harvard Square Business Association in 2014.

II. History

Harvard Square became a transportation hub soon after the opening of the West Boston (Longfellow) Bridge in 1793. This was the most direct route to Boston from towns to the west and northwest and drew traffic through Cambridge from western Massachusetts, Vermont and New Hampshire. By the 1840s horse-drawn omnibuses were leaving the Square for Boston every fifteen minutes throughout the day. The introduction of horsecar service in 1854 reinforced this trend, and soon car lines from Newton, Waltham, Watertown and Arlington brought travelers to the Square. After electric streetcars were introduced in 1889 as many as 20,000 changed cars on summer Sundays.

Planning for rapid transit, in the form of an elevated railway with a terminal on Mt. Auburn Street (to avoid disturbing Harvard Yard), began in 1897. The city rejected this idea, and in 1909 the Boston Elevated Railway (a private company) began construction on a subway with a terminal station under Harvard Square. When construction ended three years later the press marveled at the new station, which had been designed with the participation of an elite committee of local architects.



Harvard Square in 1912, after completion of the subway. The new headhouse was initially considered to be an ornament to the Square, but the design was hazardous to pedestrians and converging automobiles and streetcars. Library of Congress

The solid brick structure of the first headhouse was initially hailed for its dignified architecture, but it was soon perceived as a hazard for pedestrians and automobile traffic.⁴ The streetcar tracks on each side left little room for other traffic, drivers could not see vehicles approaching on converging streets, and pedestrians were left at risk by the absence of sidewalks. The Planning Board called it “unsightly, inconvenient, and extremely dangerous” (*Cambridge Tribune*, June 21, 1919). The Harvard Square Businessmen’s Association began calling for its removal in 1919, and asked the Cambridge firm of Newhall & Blevins “to prepare a plan reducing the size and height of the subway entrance so that people may look over the top and see what is going on on the opposite side” (*Cambridge Chronicle*, March 15, 1919).⁵ The City Council concurred and the legislature seemed sympathetic, but after an extensive engineering analysis the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities (DPU) found that it was impractical or impossible to build adequate entrances elsewhere. The DPU concluded that if the taxpayers of Cambridge wished to provide “a lighter or more perishable or a more beautiful structure” they should be allowed to do so, but neither the Commonwealth, the Elevated Company, nor its passengers should be burdened with the expense (*Chronicle*, Jan. 22, 1921).

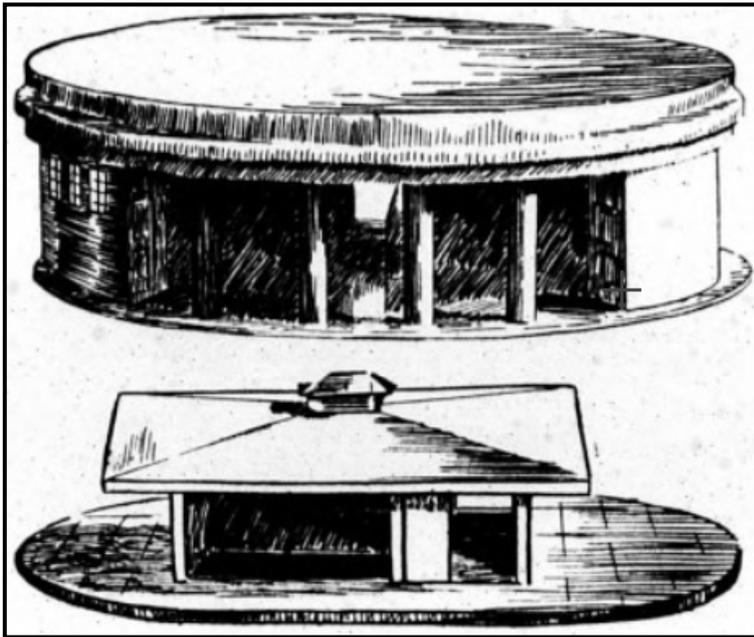
⁴ The function of a headhouse in this context is to provide weather protection for stairs leading to the station below.

⁵ This plan has not been found.

The idea of a more transparent replacement structure was discussed by the DPU in 1921, but the first practical plan for replacement of the kiosk came from Charles B. Breed (1875-1958), professor of railway and highway engineering at M.I.T., in a speech to the Harvard Square Business Men's Association in March 1925. Prof. Breed said the footprint of the station could be reduced by about 80%. He "proposed to tear the station down to the granite base and cover the decreased area by a canopy eight feet high at the eaves and 11 feet high at the peak" (*Chronicle*, March 21, 1925). At least one of the staircases would be covered with a concrete hatch that could be opened during days of peak travel. This would provide more room around the station and allow relocation of some of the car tracks. The Association then retained Breed to represent them in the design process.

On April 30, 1925 the legislature adopted a measure authorizing the Department of Public Utilities to approve plans for a new headhouse. The city, which would also have to approve the plans, paid half the estimated cost of \$30,000 in advance; the Commonwealth then lent that sum to the Elevated Company so it could pay its share.

In July 1925 the Public Utilities Commission reviewed two models, one prepared by Prof. Breed and the other by the Elevated's engineering staff. Breed's model is illustrated below; a depiction of the Elevated's has not been found, but it was said to have had a considerably larger footprint, probably because the company wished to retain both original staircases. The commissioners asked Breed to return with an updated design that reflected some of the features of the company's model.



"Present structure and model designed by Professor H.C. Breed (sic)." Breed's original design appeared to retain only the escalator and one of the original station's two staircases. *Cambridge Tribune*, Aug. 1, 1925

Breed's revised design would have retained the granite walls around the two staircases and supported a canopy on eight concrete pillars "which would be the only obstruction to a clear view through the structure from all sides" (*Chronicle*, Oct. 25, 1925). The footprint of the proposed structure within the pillars would be 17 by 25 feet. There would be no enclosed shelter for passengers. A rendering of this version has not been found.

The Public Utility Commissioners approved the design in the spring of 1926, but the City Council dragged its feet until August. Once it approved the de-

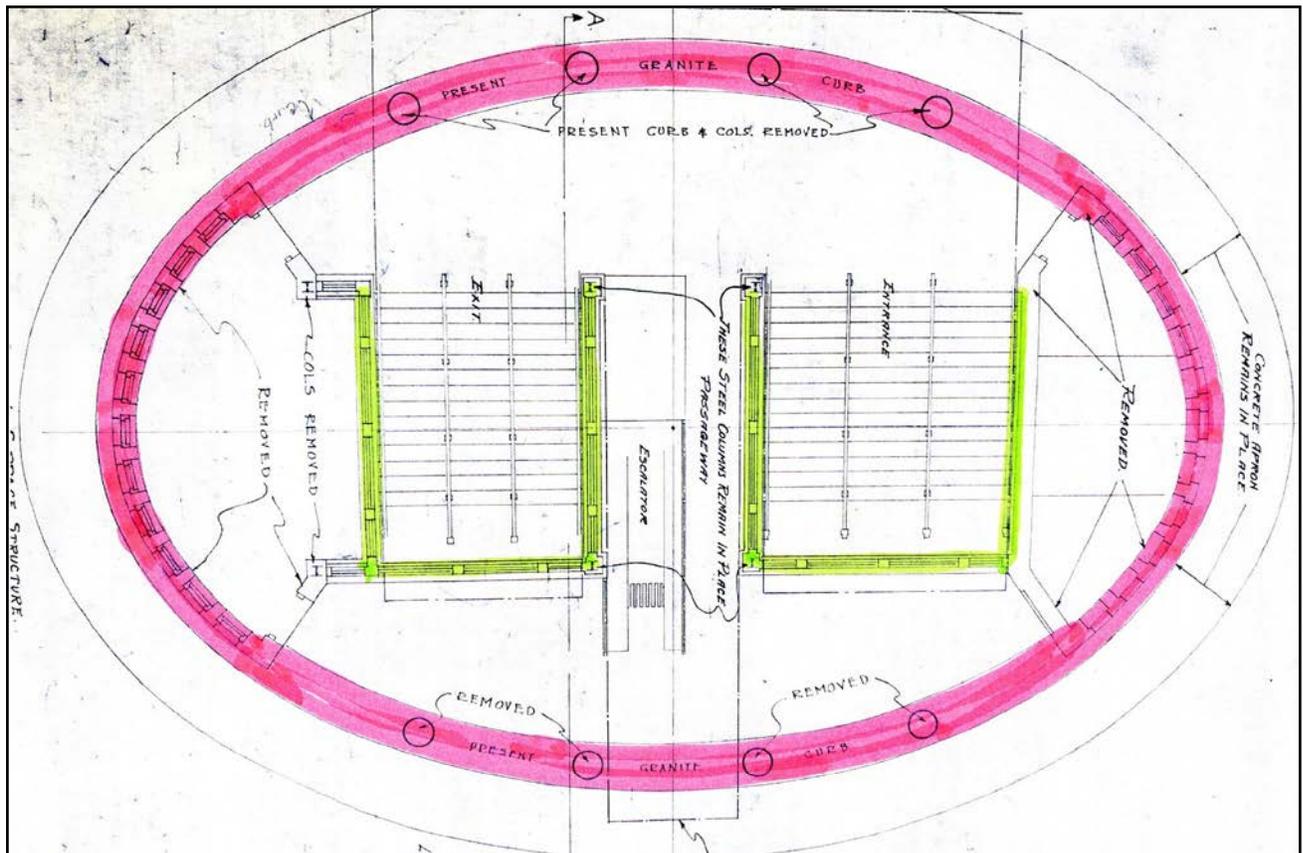
sign and appropriated the necessary funds construction followed quickly. On October 21 the DPU awarded the contract to the Guiney & Hanson Construction Company of Boston, which

had bid \$15,950 and promised to complete the work within 90 days. Work started on November 21 and was completed in late January.

The final design of the headhouse displayed considerably more attention to architectural considerations than Breed's rudimentary shelter. The architectural firm of Blackall, Clapp & Whittemore was retained to refine the design and make it compatible with the Georgian Revival architecture that characterized most new buildings in Harvard Square in the early 20th century. Steel columns, rather than concrete pillars, were clad in alternating bands of dark waterstruck brick and limestone in a pat-

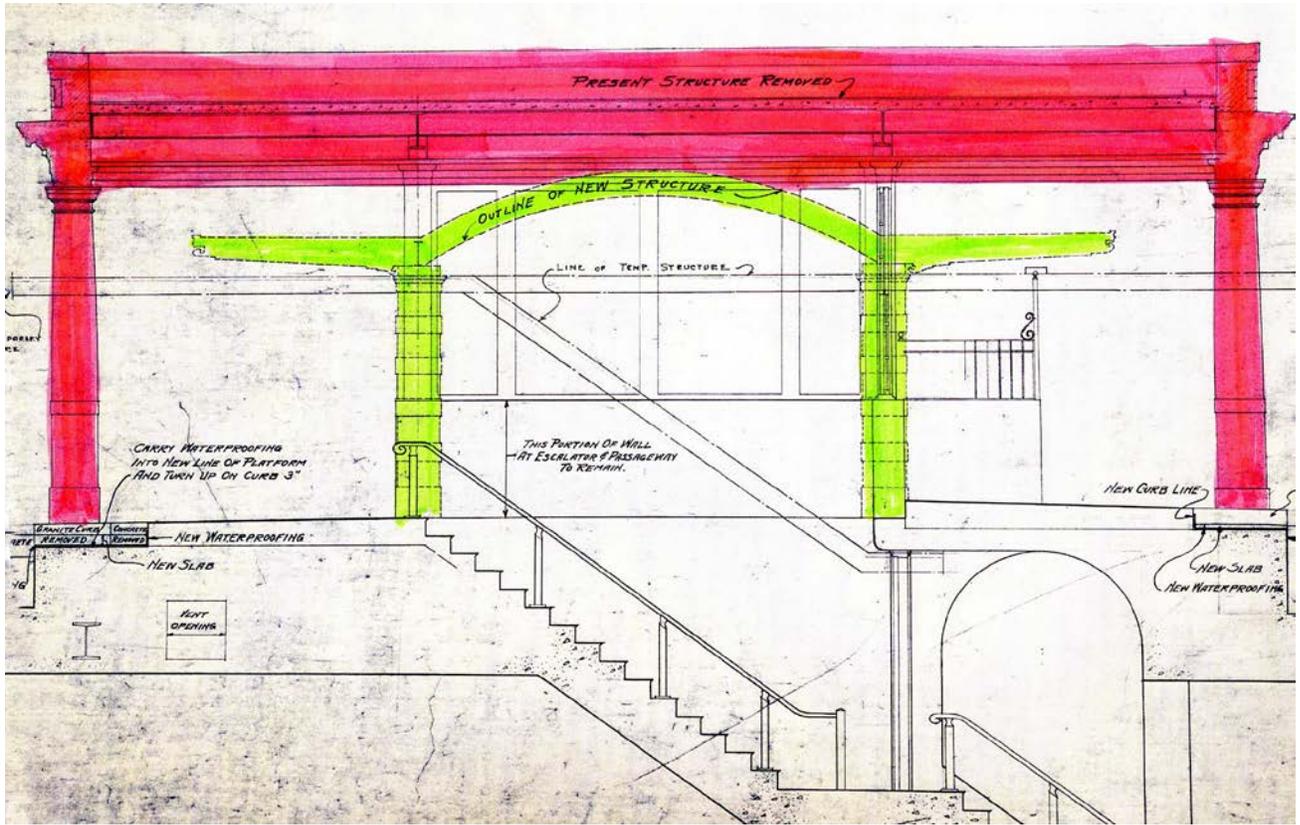
tern that resembles the nearby Class of 1877 Gate of Harvard Yard. A thin, copper-clad roof comprised of intersecting barrel vaults replaced Breed's hip roof and ventilator. Wire glass panels filled the spaces between the columns from the low perimeter walls to the roof. Illuminated copper panels with back-lit red letters designated the building as Harvard Station.

It is not clear whether Blackall's firm was retained by the Elevated Company or the Business Association. Clarence Blackall (1857-1942) was a prominent Cambridge resident who had helped form the Cambridge Municipal Art Society in 1904 and served as the first chair of the Board of Zoning Appeal. The firm designed numerous residences, apartment houses, commercial buildings and theaters throughout the Boston area. The press consistently gave Prof. Breed the credit, but as a civil engineer he would not have been qualified in architectural design. In any event the construction drawings were prepared by the Engineering Department of the Boston Elevated Company and bear the signature of William J. Keefe, Chief Engineer.

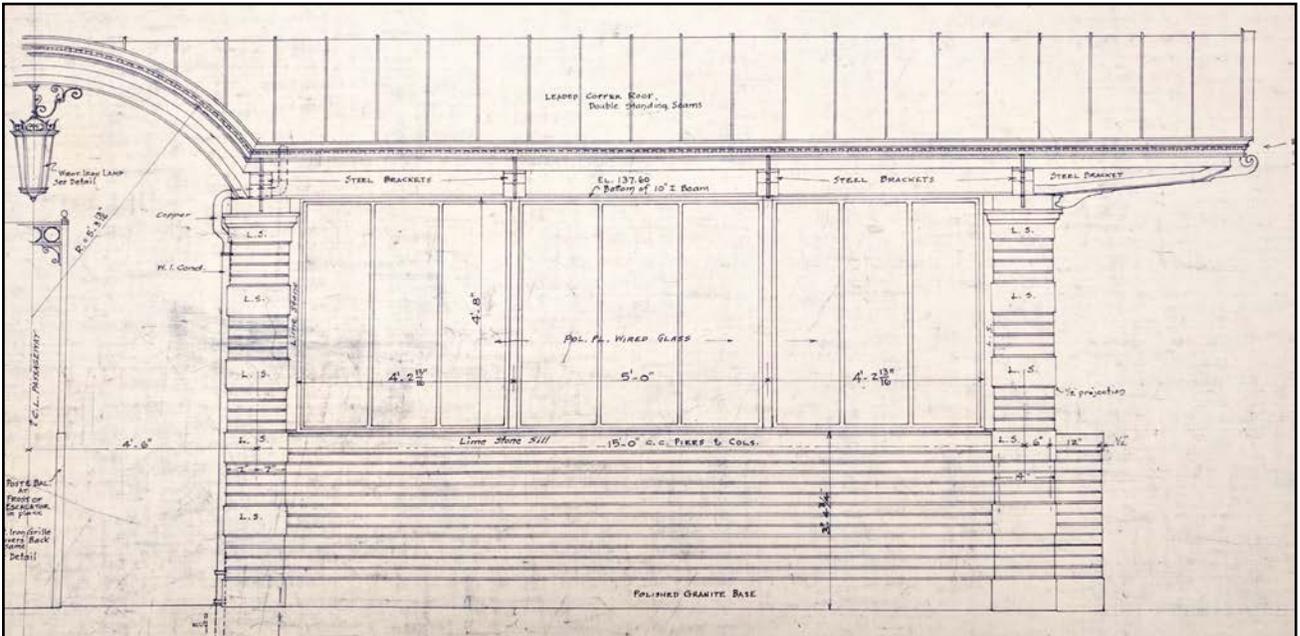


Demolition plan, 1927. Green = glass partitions around stairs to remain; Pink = brick structure to be removed. The top of the plan is oriented toward the Coop.

When seen in plan it is apparent that every effort was made to preserve the functionality of the original kiosk. The entrance and exit stairs and the escalator were preserved intact and low brick walls were built around them, defining the footprint of the new structure. The scale of the new kiosk was much smaller than the original, as can be seen on a sectional view.



Sectional view of the new and old kiosks, looking north and showing the original staircases. Green = outline of new structure; Pink = brick structure to be removed.



East Elevation, north side



Harvard Station on completion February 1928. This view shows the transparency desired by the proponents, already obscured by a taxi rank. BERy Collection, CHC

The new station received critical approval in the press. The *Boston Globe* complimented its “artistic appearance,” while the *Chronicle* noted that the replacement for the old “pillbox” was being called “the greenhouse” in recognition of its transparency (Feb. 12, 1928; March 9, 1928). Nevertheless agitation continued for complete removal of the headhouse. Spurred by a fatal bus accident in 1944, the state studied the cost of relocating the entrance away from the center of the Square, but found the \$1 million-dollar cost prohibitive. In 1962 the Metropolitan Transit Authority, which succeeded the Elevated Company in 1947, announced plans to move the station to its Bennett Street yards in conjunction with the sale of 11 acres of land for private development; a covered transfer platform would eliminate buses from the center of the Square.⁶ An MTA official was quoted as saying that when this move was made “the city would be crazy if it didn’t wipe out the kiosk altogether” (*Chronicle*, Dec. 6, 1962).

By this time the cultural significance of the kiosk was beginning to be recognized. A 1962 headline referred to Harvard Square’s “famed kiosk” (*Globe*, Dec. 9, 1962). Opinions about the Square were decidedly mixed:

Many people at this time perceived Harvard Square as undistinguished, overburdened, obsolete, and chaotic. Architect Josep Lluís Sert, Harvard’s chief planner, warned an audience that “a few steps away, there is a gateway that opens to Harvard Square and like Dante’s door to hell, could carry over it the inscription ‘Abandon all hope,’ meaning all hope of finding these elements that make our environment human, because across the gate there is noise, disorder, lack of visual balance and harmony” (Sert, 1956). One journalist called the Square “an unmitigated mess” (*Boston Sunday Herald*, Dec. 11, 1966). Others found it cosmopolitan and charmingly eclectic, reflecting the debate between the prevailing planning orthodoxy of Corbusian Modernism and the humanistic principles espoused by Jane Jacobs. (*Building Old Cambridge*, 150).

⁶ See *Building Old Cambridge: Architecture and Development*, pp. 158-162

At about the same time, British architecture critic Ian Nairn, writing in *The Observer Review*, stated an opposite view:

Hundreds of architects have labored in the last two centuries to make up the huge mass of buildings which is Harvard University. Yet, for me, the real triumph of the place is a newsstand and subway entrance just outside the university's main gate.

Accident has created what deliberate design rarely seems able to achieve in urban planning, and a nation which elsewhere squanders land as though it were toilet paper has here produced an urban epigram in a tiny space. It looks dreary enough ... but it feels fine, and in all its tawdriness this is probably the most important space in Harvard (quoted in *Chronicle*, July 27, 1967).



Harvard Square in 1962.

Radcliffe College Archives

During this period Harvard Square began to develop a bohemian culture based on its two dozen bookstores and lively music scene. The kiosk came to symbolize the Square to a national audience, so that when it was threatened with destruction in the 1970s it was not difficult to develop a consensus in favor of preservation. As a writer for the *Christian Science Monitor* put it, it was the kind of “unofficial, unsung landmark ... that suggest the traveler has arrived somewhere.”

Some of the famous and dangerous people of our time have darted in, out, and around it. The likes of John F. Kennedy and Edward Kennedy surfaced through its doors to enroll at Harvard.

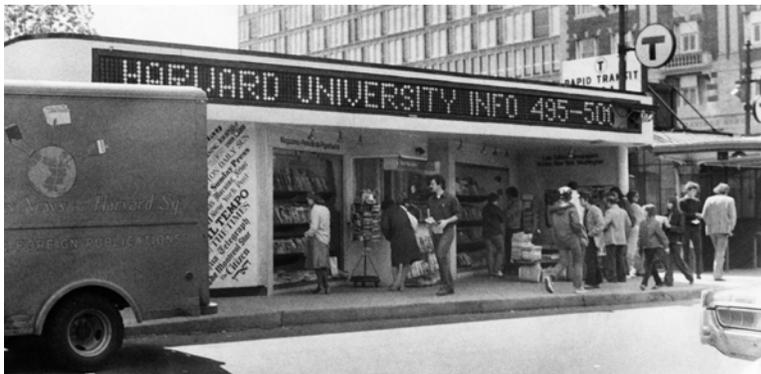


Joan Baez and friends behind the kiosk, 1959. In the 1970s the Cambridge Arts Council sponsored bi-weekly rush hour concerts on the roof
CHC



On April 15, 1970, antiwar protestors rioted in Harvard Square, setting fires and trashing storefronts despite a massive police presence. Boston Globe photo, CHC

The Bennett Street yards were preempted by the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library about the same time that plans for the extension to Alewife Brook Parkway began to take shape in 1966. Harvard Square interests opposed plans to move the station entrance to Brattle Square or Flagstaff Park, and by the mid-1970s the MBTA had settled on a plan to extend the tunnel under Massachusetts Avenue. This would require demolishing much of the original station to construct new platforms under Flagstaff Park, and the Authority commissioned Skidmore, Owings & Merrill's Chicago office to design a new headhouse. In 1976 the Cambridge Historical Commission nominated the 1927-28 kiosk to the National Register of Historic Places, which effectively preserved it from demolition.⁷ The MBTA changed its plans and agreed to restore the kiosk as a store for Out of Town News. A much smaller headhouse than originally planned was built on the south side of the new plaza, near the entrance of the Cambridge Savings Bank.⁸



Out of Town News, 1976

CHC

For many years the Out of Town News stand accompanied the kiosk on its traffic island. Founded by 23-year-old Sheldon Cohen in 1954, the company quickly built a succession of larger stands, culminating in a 1966 prefab that for a while sported an electronic zipper sign. The cultural significance of Out of Town News coincided with the postwar rise of print journalism and the increasing internationalization of Harvard and M.I.T. Cohen stocked 3,000 periodicals and newspapers from

forty countries; the stand was also a major outlet for the New York Times when that paper was not widely sold in the Boston area.

The adaptive reuse of the kiosk to accommodate Out of Town News was an obvious move. The newsstand kept growing and overwhelmed the small traffic island that the two structures shared. With preservation of the kiosk now mandated, combining the two opened up desirable space and supported the polished brick-and-granite aesthetic of the new landscape. Cohen commemorated the move by producing a ceramic music box of the kiosk that played a Harvard fight song when the lid was lifted.



The kiosk remained in place during the first two years of subway construction, but in February 1981 the roof was removed and the masonry elements were numbered, dismantled, and placed in storage.

⁷ Federally-funded projects that are determined to have an “adverse effect” on a Register property are subject to an arduous review that can cause delays of up to several years while alternatives are sought.

⁸ In deference to the bank the height of the new headhouse was kept as low as possible and it was depressed below the grade of the surrounding sidewalks, creating the infamous “Pit.”

When the station was completed in June 1984 the structure was rebuilt and the restored copper roof reinstalled. Aluminum-framed windows replaced the old wire glass, news racks filled the staircase openings, and a cashier's booth appeared in the old escalator passage, but the original masonry and roof were reinstalled with only minor alterations.

The city executed a twenty-year lease with Out of Town News in 1983, but in 1994 Cohen sold the business to Hudson County News, Inc., a New Jersey firm. A few years later, a manager said “the bottom has just fallen out” of the business (*Globe*, Sept. 29, 1999). Customers could no longer justify travelling to Harvard Square to pay up to \$10 for an outdated foreign newspaper when they could find it online for free. Sales of the *Boston Globe* and the *New York Times* had fallen by 75% since the early 1990s. Hudson gave up the lease, and in 2009 the Muckey Corporation took over the property. Muckey diversified its product line to include cigarettes and souvenirs, but retained as many foreign publications as it could profitably sell. As of August 1, 2017, either party may terminate the lease upon the provision of 60 days' notice in writing to the other. The lease terminates on January 31, 2019 with no option to extend beyond that date.

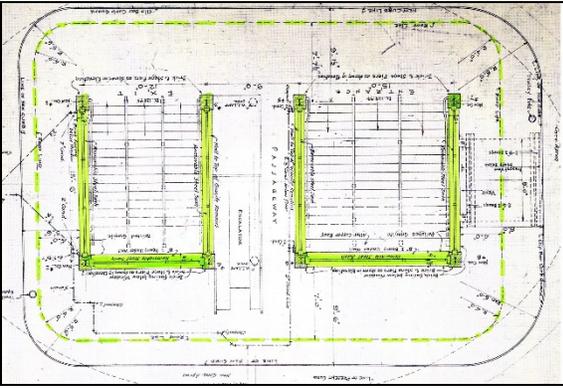
III. Description

The Harvard Square Kiosk was designed for the Boston Elevated Railway in 1927 to replace the original subway station headhouse of 1912. Designed by Blackall, Clapp & Whittemore and constructed in 1927-28, the new kiosk had thin piers of alternating waterstruck brick and limestone in a pattern similar to that of Harvard's Class of 1877 Gate. The piers supported a thin copper roof of shallow, intersecting barrel vaults. Between the roof and a low brick perimeter wall the entire structure was glazed so as to be transparent to converging traffic. The perimeter wall enclosed three sides of the structure; the fourth side, facing the Coop, was open to the staircases down to the station. The two staircases were separated by an escalator and a passageway.



Harvard Square Kiosk, 1938

Boston Elevated Railway (BERY) Collection, CHC



Original plan; perimeter walls in green.



East elevation, ca. 1955

Both CHC

The current configuration of the kiosk dates from the construction of the Red Line Extension in 1978-84. Initial plans to raze the structure were thwarted when the Cambridge Historical Commission nominated it to the National Register of Historic Places, and the MBTA directed the architects of the station and the surface improvements, the Chicago office of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, to preserve the building. The Massachusetts Historical Commission agreed to adaptive reuse of the kiosk as a newsstand. Project architect Edward Tsoi prepared detailed plans for dismantling and reconstruction, and in 1979 the structure was removed and stored while most of the station below was demolished. In 1983 the kiosk was reconstructed a short distance from its original site using the salvaged brick and limestone and copper roof. Sections of the interior walls were removed, and a cashier's booth and doors were inserted in the former passageway between the stairs. Magazine racks were inserted in the staircase openings, and the south wall was modified to accept two additional doors (never used) and a vent for the heating system. Period-appropriate pendant lights were added under the roof overhang. No significant changes to the building have been made since 1983.



West elevation, 1977

CHC



Kiosk adapted as a newsstand, 2016

CHC

The kiosk currently shows the effects of many years of deferred maintenance. Investigations led by the Cambridge Department of Public Works in 2015-16 found that the copper roof had reached the end of its useful life and needed replacement. Leaks had damaged some of the cypress tongue-and-

groove sheathing, but the iron structure was found to be intact. Some glass panes had broken and not been replaced. The masonry was dirty, but generally in sound condition. Heating and cooling equipment was outdated and inefficient. An investigation of the floor found that the kiosk sits on an unventilated crawl space partially filled with water, probably air conditioning condensate. There is a water supply but no drains; installing drainage to a sanitary sewer would be extremely difficult.

IV. Significance of the Property

The Harvard Square Kiosk is significant for its architecture and method of construction, and for its associations with the urban development of Cambridge in the 19th and 20th centuries. It is a rare and distinctive example of a specialized early twentieth-century transportation structure. The building is intimately associated with the development and character of its surroundings. The building is also significant for its important associations with Prof. Charles B. Breed and architects Blackall, Clapp & Whittemore.

V. Relationship to Criteria

A. Article III, Chapter 2.78.180 a.

The enabling ordinance for landmarks states:

The Historical Commission by majority vote may recommend for designation as a landmark any property within the City being or containing a place, structure, feature or object which it determines to be either (1) importantly associated with one or more historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, aesthetic, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City or the Commonwealth or (2) historically or architecturally significant (in terms of its period, style, method of construction or association with a famous architect or builder) either by itself or in the context of a group of structures . . .

B. Relationship of Property to Criteria

The former Harvard Square Kiosk meets landmark criterion (1) for its important associations with the architectural, cultural, and economic history of the City. The property also meets criterion (2) as a unique example of its type in Cambridge and for its association with important architects and engineers, including the firm of Blackall, Clap & Whittemore and Prof. Charles B. Breed.

VI. Recommendations

A. Purpose of Designation

Article III, Chapter 2.78.140 states the purpose of landmark designation:

preserve, conserve and protect the beauty and heritage of the City and to improve the quality of its environment through identification, conservation and maintenance of . . . sites and structures which constitute or reflect distinctive features of the architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City; to resist and restrain environmental influences adverse to this purpose; [and] to foster appropriate use and wider public knowledge and appreciation of such . . . structures . . .

B. Preservation Options

The former Harvard Square Kiosk is already protected by its listing on the National Register of Historic Places and by its location within the Harvard Square Conservation District. Designation as a landmark will have mostly symbolic value, although the suggested review guidelines will focus discussion about the appropriateness of any proposed changes. The only other possible preservation option would be designation of the kiosk as a single-building historic district under M.G.L. Ch. 40C, but this would add little to its protected status.

C. Staff Recommendation

The staff recommends that the Commission find that the former Harvard Square Kiosk meets the criteria for landmark designation and forward this report and the attached Order to the City Council.

VII. Standards and Criteria

Under Article III, the Historical Commission is charged with reviewing any construction, demolition or alteration that affects the exterior architectural features (other than color) of a designated landmark. This section of the report describes exterior architectural features that are among the characteristics that led to consideration of the property as a landmark. Except as the order designating or amending the landmark may otherwise provide, the exterior architectural features described in this report should be preserved and/or enhanced in any proposed alteration or construction that affects those features of the landmark. The standards following in paragraphs A and B of this section provide guidelines for the treatment of the landmark described in this report.

A. General Standards and Criteria

Subject to review and approval of exterior architectural features under the terms of this report, the following standards shall apply:

1. Significant historic and architectural features of the landmark should be preserved.
2. Changes and additions to the landmark which have taken place over time are evidence of the history of the property and the neighborhood. These changes may have acquired significance in their own right and, if so, that significance should be recognized and respected.
3. Deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced.
4. When replacement of architectural features is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. New materials should, whenever possible, match the material being replaced in physical properties, design, color, texture, and appearance. The use of imitation replacement materials is generally discouraged.
6. The surface cleaning of a landmark should be done by the gentlest possible means. Sandblasting and other cleaning methods that damage exterior architectural features shall not be used.
7. Additions should not destroy significant exterior architectural features and should be recognizable as new architectural elements, without compromising the original building's historic aspects, architectural significance, or the distinct character of the landmark, neighborhood, and environment.
8. Additions should be designed in a way that, if they were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the landmark would be unimpaired.

B. Suggested Review Guidelines

1. Site Development.

There appears to be little or no further as-of-right potential for development on the site.

2. Alterations

Review of exterior alterations should reflect two fundamental principles: that all original material that remained after the conversion to a newsstand in 1983 should be preserved to the extent possible, and that there should be no additional enclosure of the structure.

a. Exterior surfaces

Exterior materials should be preserved insofar as practicable, except where previously approved for replacement. Special care should be taken to protect and maintain the brick and limestone masonry. Repointing the mortar joints should be done only as required, and with special care to maintain the color and texture of the mortar and the profile of the joints.

b. Roof

The standing seam copper roof should be replaced in kind, duplicating the original details as shown on the 1927 construction drawings; if replacement of the perimeter dentilled fascia is required it must duplicate the original. The iron supporting framework should be cleaned to remove rust and accumulated paint layers and repainted in the historic color, to be determined by technical analysis. The cypress sheathing should be replaced in kind only where necessary, and painted as above. Paint and rust removal should be accomplished by the gentlest means available to avoid damage to historic materials.

c. Fenestration

The existing fenestration was installed during conversion to a newsstand in 1983. Replacement fenestration should respect the original design to the extent consistent with the original design intent as a transparent structure and the structure's intended use. Replacement of the magazine racks that fill the traditional staircase openings with glazing is encouraged.

d. Interior features

Although interior features are not subject to the jurisdiction of the Cambridge Historical Commission, the owner should be encouraged to preserve original (1927-28) structural materials and surfaces. Alterations from the adaptive reuse project of 1983 should be removed to recover the original transparency of the building.

e. Utilities

Utilities (heating, air conditioning, lighting) should be designed to minimize exterior alterations. Utilization of the 1983 vents on the south elevation should be considered. Facility and architectural lighting fixtures should be period-appropriate and the amount of light should not be distracting.

VIII. Proposed City Council Order

ORDERED:

That the former Harvard Square Kiosk, 0 Harvard Square, Cambridge, be designated as a protected landmark pursuant to Chapter 2.78, Article III, Section 2.78.180 of the Code of the City of Cambridge, as recommended by vote of the Cambridge Historical Commission on [...]. The premises so designated is defined as Parcel 2 on Assessor's map 159 and the building thereon as described in a deed recorded in book xxxxx, page xxx of the South Middlesex Registry of Deeds.

This designation is justified by the important architectural and historical associations of the premises with the development of Harvard Square, and for its association with important architects and engineers, including the firm of Blackall, Clap & Whittemore and Prof. Charles B. Breed.

The effect of this designation shall be that review by the Cambridge Historical Commission and the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness, Hardship or Non-Applicability shall be required before any construction activity can take place within the designated premises or any action can be taken affecting the appearance of the premises, that would in either case be visible from a public way. In making determinations, the Commission shall be guided by the terms of the Final Landmark Designation Report, dated [...], with respect to the designated premises, by Section VII, Standards and Criteria of said report, and by the applicable sections of Chapter 2.78, Article III, of the Cambridge Municipal Code.

IX. Bibliography

1. General Sources

Boston Globe

Cambridge Chronicle

Hail, Christopher. Cambridge Buildings and Architects. Cambridge, 2002.

2. Government Records and Sources

Cambridge Historical Commission survey files

Cambridge maps and atlases.

Maycock, Susan, and Charles Sullivan. *Building Old Cambridge: Architecture and Development*.

Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2016