

Harvard Square Conservation District

Guidelines for Demolition,
New Construction,
and Alterations

September 26, 2018

Chapter 2.78, Article III, Section 220 describes the factors to be considered by neighborhood conservation district commissions:

In passing upon matters before it, the Historical Commission or neighborhood conservation district commission shall consider, 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 a 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 vicinity ...

Demolition

The Cambridge Historical Commission will issue a Certificate of Appropriateness to an applicant seeking to demolish a structure in the Conservation District if the project, including both the demolished and the replacement buildings, is determined to be "appropriate for or compatible with the preservation or protection of the . . . district."

Approval of demolition will be dependent on a finding by the Commission that a) the demolition of the structure will not adversely impact the district, subdistrict, or abutting properties in the sense described in secondary goal #1, and b) the replacement project meets the purposes of the Conservation District with respect to secondary goals #3 through #9, where these are applicable.

New Construction/Additions to Existing Buildings

In reviewing new construction or additions to existing buildings, 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 vicinity." Review of new buildings will be guided by considerations such as the appropriateness of the structure's height, scale, mass, proportions, orientation, and lot coverage; the vertical and horizontal emphasis, rhythm of openings, transparency, texture, and materials of the publicly-visible facades; sunlight and shadow effects; relationship to public open space; and landscaping.

New Construction/Additions to Existing Buildings (cont.)

Under the City Code, the Historical Commission acting as a neighborhood conservation district commission "may in appropriate cases impose dimensional and setback requirements in addition to those required by the applicable provision of the zoning ordinance." Implementing such a measure could result in a reduction of the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) allowed by zoning. The appropriate circumstances for imposing dimensional and set-back reductions could include a wide disparity of scale and density between the proposed project and its surroundings, or a situation in which the proposed project would destroy or diminish the historical resources of the site.

Demolition and New Construction – Before Zoning



Brewer's Block, 28–32 Brattle Street (1868; demolished 1930). Photo ca. 1875.

New Construction – 1924 Zoning Code



Hadley Building, 28–36 Brattle Street (1930, William L. Galvin, architect). Burned in 1972 and was replaced in 1974.

New Construction – 1962 Zoning Code



New Hadley Building, 28–36 Brattle Street (1974, Symmes, Maini & McKee Associates, architects). Photo 2009.

Demolition and New Construction – 1962 Code, 1979 Overlay + Demolition Delay



Niles Building, 1280 Massachusetts Avenue (1889, J.R. & W.P. Richards, architects). Photo 1982.

Demolition and New Construction – 1962 Code, 1979 Overlay + Demolition Delay



Notman Building, 1282-1284 Massachusetts Avenue (1884). Photo 1982.

Demolition and New Construction – 1962 Code, 1979 Overlay + Demolition Delay



Niles Building, 1280 Massachusetts Avenue (1983, Symmes Maini & McKee Associates, architects). Photo 1986



What does 1280 do right (in my opinion)?

- Activates the street level with retail
- Durable storefront framework (granite)
- The building has a bottom, middle, and top
- Fenestration: Large openings at the street. Pairs of windows on 2nd and 3rd floors. Change to single windows in bands on the 4th and 5th floors
- Breaks up the massing with a bay and a lower corner element
- Not devoid of ornament: masonry, ironwork, etc.
- Massing: it's somewhat taller than the building next door, but it transitions from 3 stories to 5 and doesn't tower over its neighbors.

Demolition and New Construction – 1962 Code, 1986 Overlay + HSCD Review

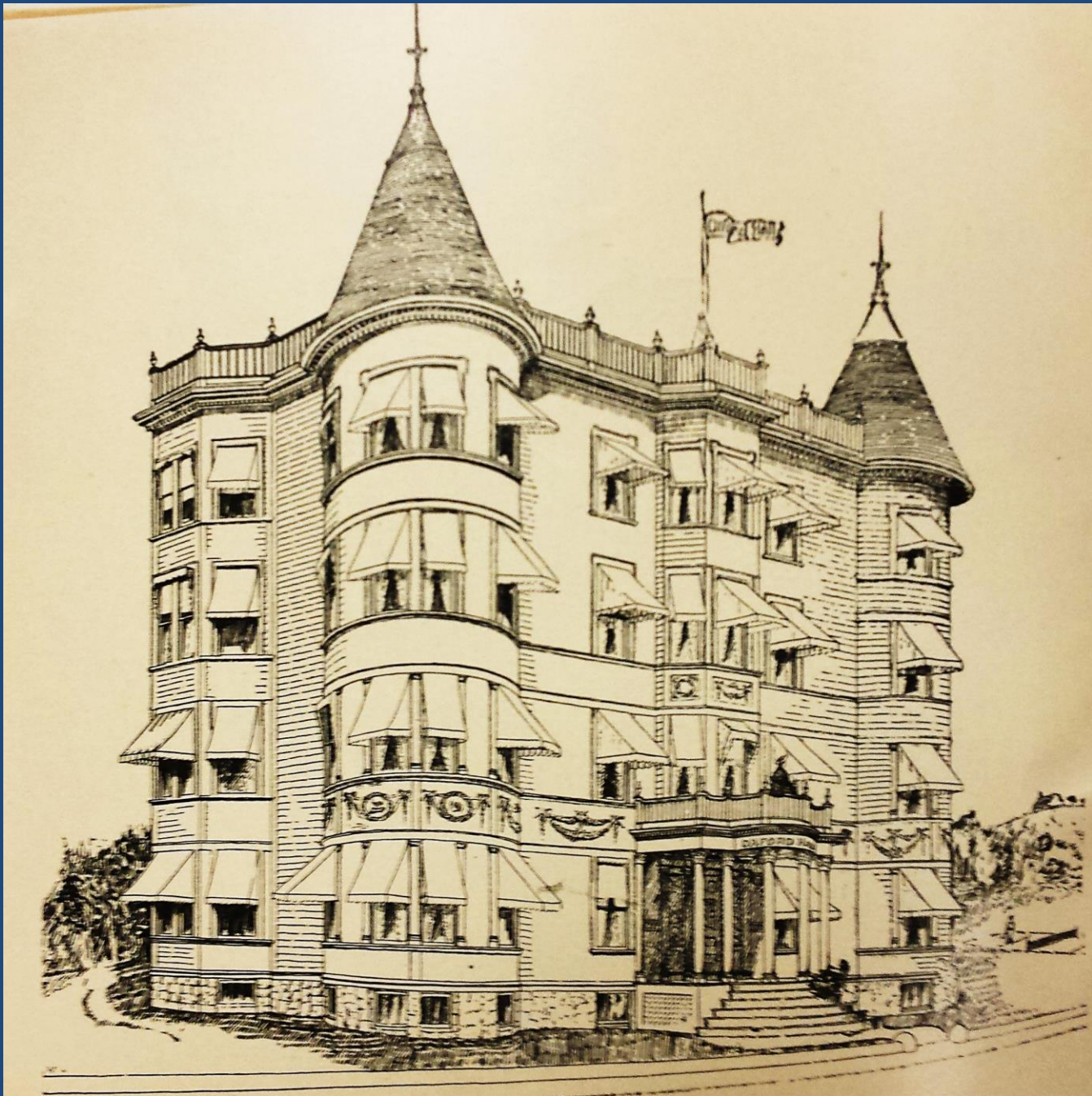


Harvard Square Post Office, 125 Mt. Auburn Street (1953, W. L. Galvin, architect). Photo 1985.

Demolition and New Construction – 1962 Code, 1986 Overlay + HSCD Review



Harvard Square Post Office Building, 125 Mt. Auburn Street (2001, Elkus Manfredi Architects). Photo 2009.



Demolition and New Construction –
1962 Code, 1986 Overlay + HSCD Review

Trinity Hall, 114 Mt. Auburn Street (1893)

Demolition and New Construction – 1962 Code, 1986 Overlay + HSCD Review



Trinity Hall, with added storefront (1929, W. L. Galvin, architect). Photo 1960.

Demolition and New Construction – 1962 Code, 1986 Overlay + HSCD Review



Demolition and New Construction – 1962 Code, 1986 Overlay + HSCD Review



114 Mount Auburn Street (2008, Elkus Manfredi Architects; constructed 2015). Photo 2017.

What do our existing guidelines discourage?

- Demolition of wood frame buildings in the district
- Facadectomies (mis-named but meaning preserving the façade only with all new construction behind it)
- Overpowering massing (either height or footprint) compared to the related context
- Bi-level, non-accessible retail
- Street-level voids or galleries (active streetwall construction preferred)
- Loading docks and garage doors

What do the guidelines encourage?

- Active first floor street frontage (with retail or other publicly accessible amenity)
- Courtyards and through-block passages, where possible
- Height and massing that relates to context. Transition down if development site is near a lower density area
- Contemporary and creative architectural expression.
- Durable materials

Proposed additions to guidelines:

- Encourage sustainability for new construction
- Relate horizontal elements to neighboring buildings when possible. Cornice lines, or fenestration, for example
- What say you?

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 3987: 10 Church St., by Kirche, LLC.

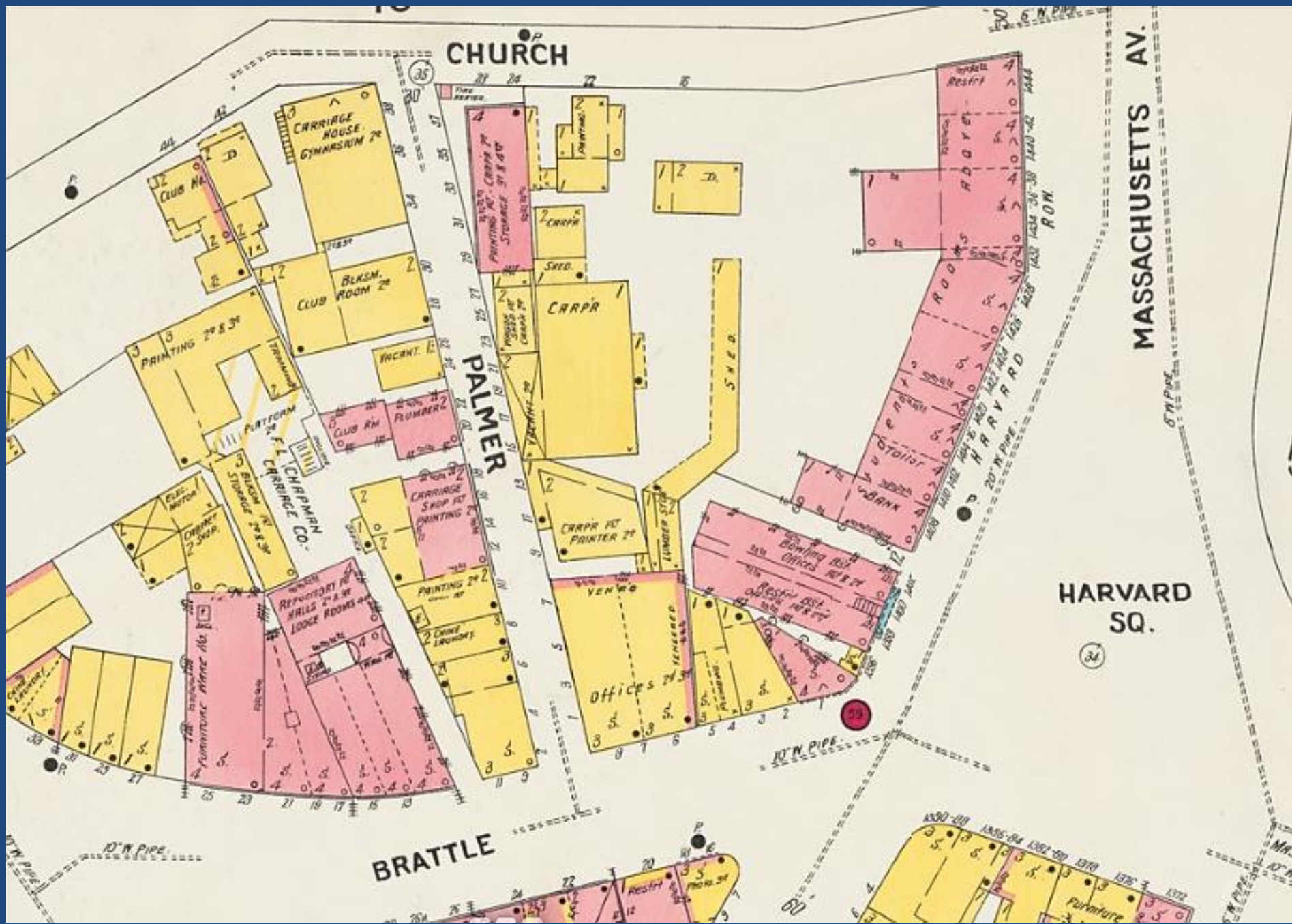
Demolish existing theater and construct new mixed-use building.



HARVARD SQUARE THEATRE II



BORDE



CHURCH

PALMER

BRATTLE

MASSACHUSETTS AV.

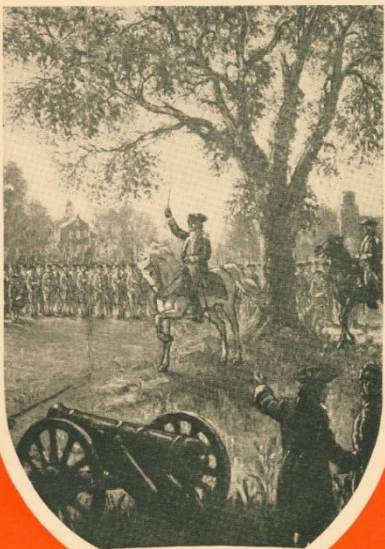
HARVARD SQ.

*Announcing
the Opening
Saturday Afternoon
@ October 30, 1926
at 2 O'Clock*

University Theatre

Harvard Square, Cambridge, Massachusetts

A Cambridge Institution



Pictures
Stage Specialties
Musical Features

UNIVERSITY
CONTINUOUS PERFORMANCE
2 TO 10:30 DAILY



John E. Fenton

A Cambridge Institution

University Theatre

Harvard Square, Cambridge, Mass.

CONTINUOUS PERFORMANCE 2 to 10:30 P. M.

Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, December 5, 6, 7, 8

W. C. FIELDS in

"SO'S YOUR OLD MAN"

(Julian Street's Prize Story "Mr. Bisbee's Princess")

Rod La Rocque in

"GIGOLO"

(A dramatic story of American youth fighting adversity abroad)

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, December 6, 7, 8

The Cambridge Rotary
BOY SCOUTS BAND

(An aggregation of 45 talented juvenile musicians)

Thursday, Friday, Saturday, December 9, 10, 11

JETTA GOUDAL in

"HER MAN O'WAR"

(A remarkable photoplay of the World War)

SHIRLEY MASON in

"SWEET ROSIE O'GRADY"

The "Abie's Irish Rose" of the Screen

UNIVERSITY SPECIALTY ACT

PHONE PORTER 4580 FOR
EVENING RESERVATIONS





HARVARD TRUST COMPANY

HARVARD SQ.
TO BED OR NOT TO BED
&
NEVER LET GO

MTA
RAPID TRANSIT
8 MINUTES
TO PARK ST.

NO LEFT

TELEPHONE TELEPHONE

HARVARD
SQUARE

HARVARD SQ. UN 4-4580

HARVARD SQ.

We are proud to announce the gala opening of the **Harvard Square Theatre** (formerly the *University Theatre*) on Wednesday evening, December 27.

HARVARD SQ.

Completely renovated, it will have comfortable pushback seating, the latest transistorized sound equipment, a new screen, special earphones for the hard-of-hearing, a panelled lobby and refreshment area, and a reserved-seat section.

HARVARD SQ.

Beginning January 7, 1962 a special Saturday morning children's series will be inaugurated, featuring films from J. Arthur Rank shown for the first time in this area.

HARVARD SQ.

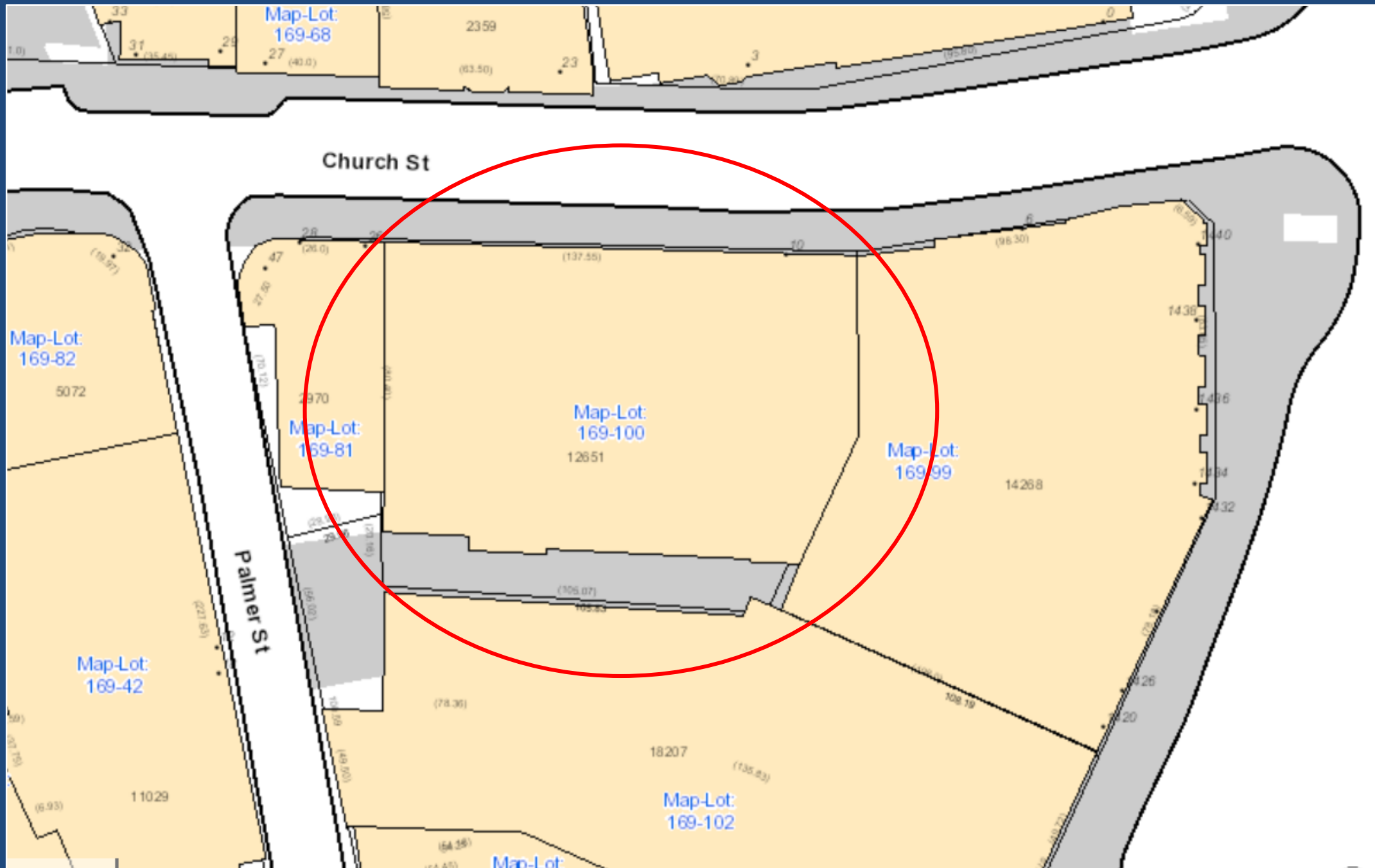
The first event of the 1962 'Great Players' Series sponsored by the Cambridge Drama Festival will feature Sir Michael Redgrave, in a program of stories by Hans Christian Andersen, on Sunday afternoon, January 21.

HARVARD SQ.

Throughout the year the new Harvard Square Concert Series will present the finest artists from the world of music, beginning with Elizabeth Schwarzkopf on April 18, 1962.

HARVARD SQ.

The opening film will be the New England premiere of the full-length version of Prokofiev's CINDERELLA in Magicolor with the entire ballet company and orchestra of the Bolshoi Theatre.











Indication of harm, not proof of harm, is our call to action.

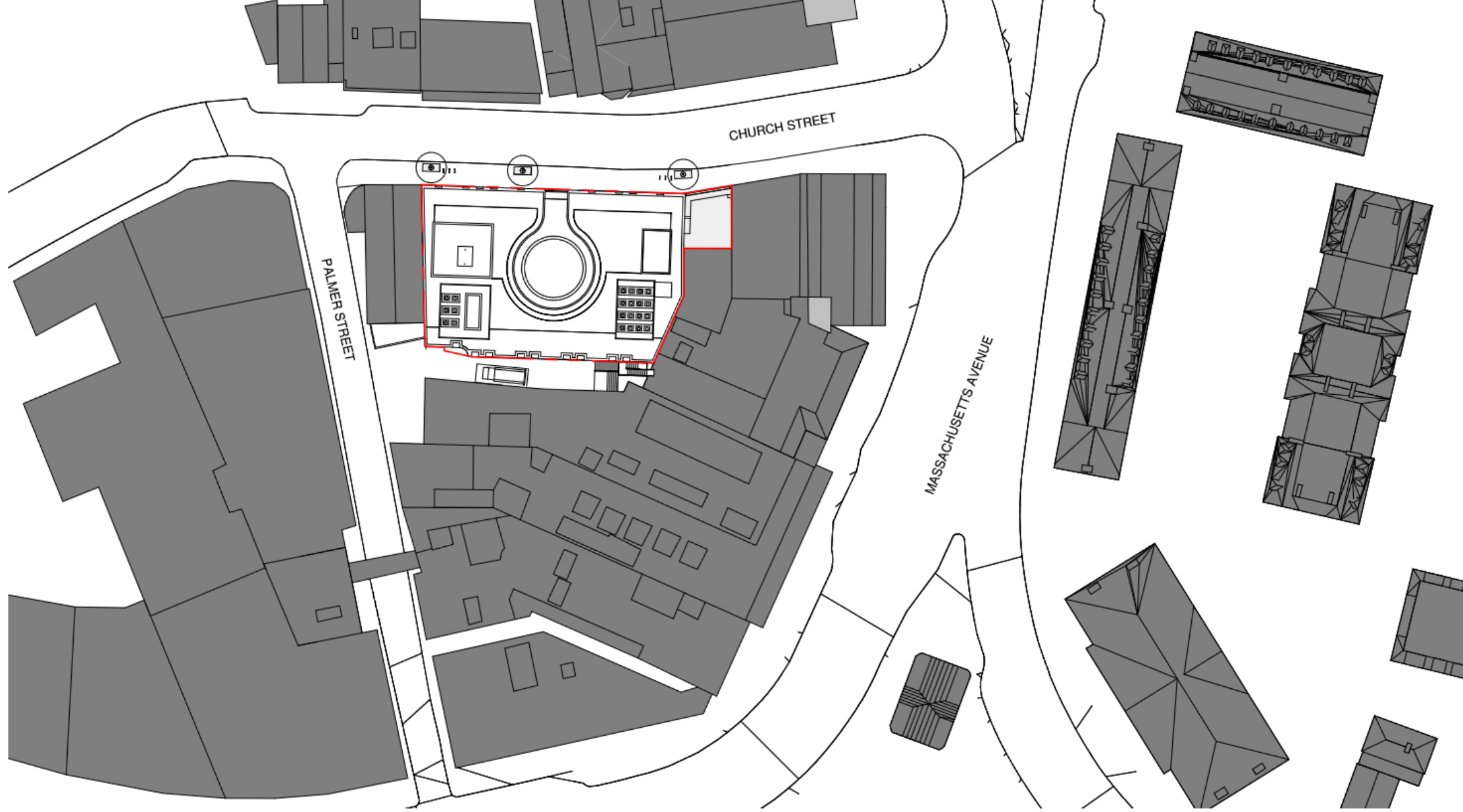






ORDER CAFE





Site Plan
Scale 1" = 50'-0"



Aerial View: Comparison



Existing



Proposed

- Break down massing with Courtyard
- Bring light & air to Church St



Proposed Perspective from Massachusetts Avenue

- Brighten Church St
- Relate to First Parish
- Celebrate theater entry



Proposed Perspective from Across Church Street

- Activate streetscape
- Bring light & air to street
- Break long facade



Proposed Perspective from Church Street at Palmer Street Intersection

- Continue retail along Church St
- Create proportional relationship to adjacent building



Proposed Perspective from Old Burial Ground

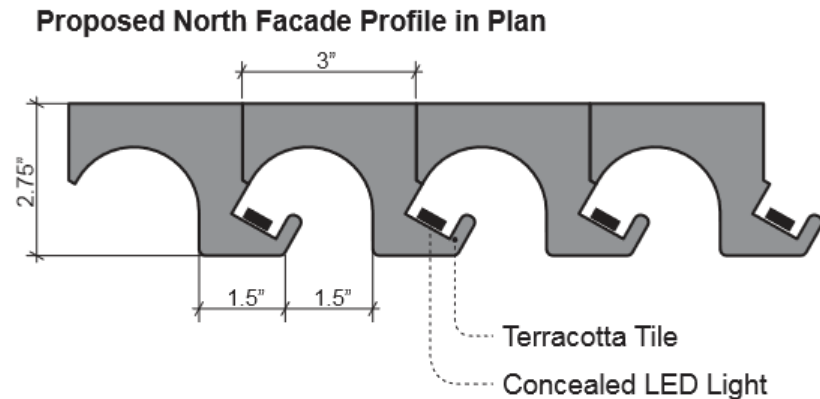
Proposed Church St Facade

Goal

- Create a dynamic platform for community engagement

Considerations

- Indirect, completely dimmable lighting
- Slow to no movement
- Low contrast
- Low energy use
- No advertising
- No overhang in public right of way
- Limited hours of operation
- Beautiful facade whether LEDs are on or off







LIGHT FRIEZE

NEW BUILDING FOR THE KUNSTMUSEUM BASEL, 2016

The light frieze of the new building for the Kunstmuseum Basel produces its effect through the symbiosis of stone and light. Designed to be an integral part of the architecture, it subtly enlivens the building's brick facade with words and graphic elements. The horizontal joints of the frieze are cast in shadow by the incident daylight, yet can be precisely lit by white LEDs. For the viewer, a play of light and shadow emerges, which is fleeting and yet seems to be as solid as the masonry itself.



Alterations to Existing Buildings

Alterations to exterior architectural features visible from a public way will be subject to binding review by the Cambridge Historical Commission, guided by secondary goals #1, #2, and #4. Storefronts will be treated more flexibly than building facades or upper stories. The goals of the district favor retention and repair, rather than replacement, of original or significant exterior fabric.

Alterations to Existing Buildings (cont.)

A Certificate of Nonapplicability will be issued by the staff for some alterations if

Conservation District guidelines are followed. These categories will include:

- Ordinary repairs or maintenance using similar materials and construction details.
- Reconstruction replicating the exterior design of a building, structure, or exterior architectural feature damaged or destroyed by fire, storm, or other disaster.
- Roof repairs and HVAC equipment not visible from a public way.
- Window replacement in conformity with guidelines adopted by the Commission.