



In Cambridge, Harvard has used its leverage to block restrictive zoning amendments designed to preserve the residential character of the community. But now, the specter of neighborhood disruption from Harvard's expansion has mobilized and unified such disparate areas as East Cambridge, Riverside, the Agassiz School area, and Harvard Square.

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In Cambridge, Harvard University owns 20 percent or more property in several areas throughout the city, and, in the past, they have used that leverage to block restrictive zoning amendments. But now, the specter of neighborhood disruption has mobilized communities in East Cambridge (strongholds of City Councilors Al Velluci and Lawrence Frisoli), North Cambridge (Tom Danely), Riverside (Saundra Graham), the Agassiz School area (David Wylie), and, of course, Harvard Square (Mary Ellen Preusser). And as a result, last week the city council finally took a stand.

By a seven-to-two margin, the council adopted the Vickery petition (drafted by David Vickery of the Community Development Department) to rezone for residential use a small but significant segment of Wendell and Mellen Streets, near Massachusetts Avenue a few blocks north of Harvard Square. The petition was supported strongly by the area's residents, who believed that any further development by either Harvard or Lesley College might well endanger neighborhood stability, and it was just as strongly opposed by both institutions. The stakes are high — in Lesley's case, the college has little room to expand anywhere else. Harvard is upset because the Vickery petition intrudes on its 1975 "red line," which circumscribes the area where Harvard expects to develop its holdings with minimal outside interference. On the Wendell-Mellen vote, Lesley invoked its 20-percent property option. But the council supported the neighborhoods anyway. "I'm more excited about this vote than anything that's occurred in here this term," Councilor David Wylie later declared.

Basking in its newly discovered unity, the council also fired another surprise salvo in the battle to erect a height limit for Harvard Square. With the help of former Quincy solicitor Douglas Randall, the city is preparing to challenge the constitutionality of the 20-percent ownership statute.

Randall made a similar challenge on behalf of Quincy residents in 1970. In that case, *Quincy v. Trumper*, a unanimous decision by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court sustained the constitutionality of the law. Randall and Preusser now contend that a more recent SJC ruling granting inhabitants equal franchise rights regarding legislation could help overturn the *Trumper* decision.

In any event, one immediate result of the legal challenge will be to delay any construction on Louis DiGiovanni's University Road properties across Mount Auburn Street from the Harvard Square Post Office, and adjoining Parcel 1B, the old MBTA yards. As Harvard Assistant Vice-President Michael Brewer points out, that is the only place in the Square likely to be affected in the near future anyway. The discovery of Harvard-DiGiovanni consultations over the future of that property was one factor that hastened Preusser's presentation of the height limit plan. One immediate result of the latest council vote is that DiGiovanni has threatened to sue the city, claiming that the statute challenge simply is an attempt to damage him.

The city council has good reason to be running scared on this issue. The conse-

quences of an ambitious development on University Road could be enormous. Out-of-scale buildings there and on Parcel 1-B could alter irrevocably the Square's environment. The possibility looms of a new, upwardly mobile Harvard Square, one physically centered around Brattle Square.

There is evidence to suggest that Harvard would greet such a shift favorably. Certainly the university's unsuccessful fight to move the Square MBTA station to Brattle permanently (at an additional cost of about \$35 million), would have fit comfortably into that scheme, as would the vehicular circulation changes proposed in Harvard's 1975 Long-Range Planning Document.

Those alterations, which include closing Oxford Street and building tunnels to carry cars along Massachusetts Avenue, contain the additional virtue to Harvard of helping to coalesce the giant swath of university-owned property that runs on either side of Oxford Street to the river. Within the area, Harvard can expand without ever violating the limits of its own red line. This assumes, of course, that Harvard is eager to keep buying. Assistant Vice-President Brewer insists they are not.

"I know people say we're in an expanding mood," Brewer explained recently. "There's been friction with the community, and a lot of it has come from doing too many things too quickly. All of them can be legitimized, when explained one by one, but doing so much at once makes people nervous."

Brewer ticked off the list of recent controversies and, with one exception (the Farwell Place brick wall: "we just blew that one"), provided reasonable-sounding justifications for Harvard's actions. The low-interest loans for faculty housing were an "experimental" plan to "let faculty be competitive with other urban professionals" in a market where housing prices are skyrocketing. He discounted the potential for gentrification of predominantly working-class areas like Riverside, by arguing that, contrary to published reports in this paper and elsewhere, no purchases have occurred in Riverside yet. He defended Harvard's new lease agreements for apartments at 50 Ware Street (which is outside the red line, yet allows Harvard an option to buy in 1982) as "within the letter and spirit of that policy." He claimed that without Harvard's intervention, the buildings would have been converted into condominiums, thereby reducing Cambridge's already depleted rental housing stock.

However, Brewer's explanations hardly sound reasonable or believable to some Harvard tenants. It is true that Harvard has been busy redesigning its nonstudent housing policies, which had, for better or worse, fallen into benign neglect for the last several years. The majority of its holdings have traditionally been managed by Hunnemann & Company, which retained 6 percent of the rents as a fee for its services.

According to several reliable sources, those services often left a lot to be desired. One former Hunnemann administrator claims that the company had no painting policy and frequently cut services to conserve expenses. Hunnemann's connection with Harvard has diminished gradually over the years, but more substantial changes took place last summer with Harvard's creation of Harvard Real Estate, Inc., to oversee its real estate holdings. HRE's director, Sally Zeckhauser, instituted an investigation of the Hunnemann operation, and uncovered significant evidence of Hunnemann incompetence. As a result, Harvard is now much more directly involved with the management of its own properties.

Under the circumstances, such steps would seem to benefit most of Harvard's long-ignored tenants. But that is not necessarily the case. For one thing, Harvard Real Estate is now interested in turning these neglected properties into profitable entities. In a phone conversation last week, Zeckhauser verified that, until recently, Harvard had not asked the Cambridge Rent Control Board for any adjustments for several years. Since last December, however, HRE has requested adjustments for three properties. In at least two of the three, these requests

## Exits

The resignation of Boston Repertory Theatre artistic director Esquire Jauchem from the BRT to become associate director of production administrator for the Opera Company of Boston is one with mixed feelings. For years Jauchem was the driving force behind a troupe that boomed and renovated the first new theatre in downtown Boston in two years, a troupe that produced more than forty shows. Yet Jauchem was also responsible for the production of those shows. His lap-taste and judgment, especially the last couple of seasons, earned the BRT almost unanimous critical disapproval. (Because of shrinking audiences the group had to take a year-long leave absence.) So, though Jauchem brought us gems like *Art Farm*, *When You Comin' In Red Ryder?*, and *P.S. Your Card Dead*, he also gave us dud-like vulgar updating of Moliere's *Misanthrope*, Israel Horowitz's malnourished *The Reason We* and the sleazy *Rondelet*. Imports, Jauchem's judgment also an iffy proposition: if we the marvelous South African *vival* and Dick Shawn's *Severest Entertainer*, we also to take Tommy Tune's *Ich* and *My Mother . . . My Son*, which fit only for the axe.

Still, the BRT merits surmises without Jauchem, not merely theatre for hire to any producer with enough cash, but as a worthy repertory company. With an artistic director, the BRT deserves a new lease on life.

## Entrances

He's been threatening it for years. I've been laughing it off for years. Now, by the road, it's come. Al "The Mumbler" Pacino is reviving *Richard III* in New York under the direction of the Company of Boston honcho Wheeler. Back in 1973 Kevin simply adored Al's Crooked Dick; I found it appalling. Yet one harbored any doubts Pacino's drawing power. Shakespearean debut on Broadway should have fans lining the streets. But forget Pacino's oft-threatened Hamlet: his Richard gets roasted by Gotham critics.

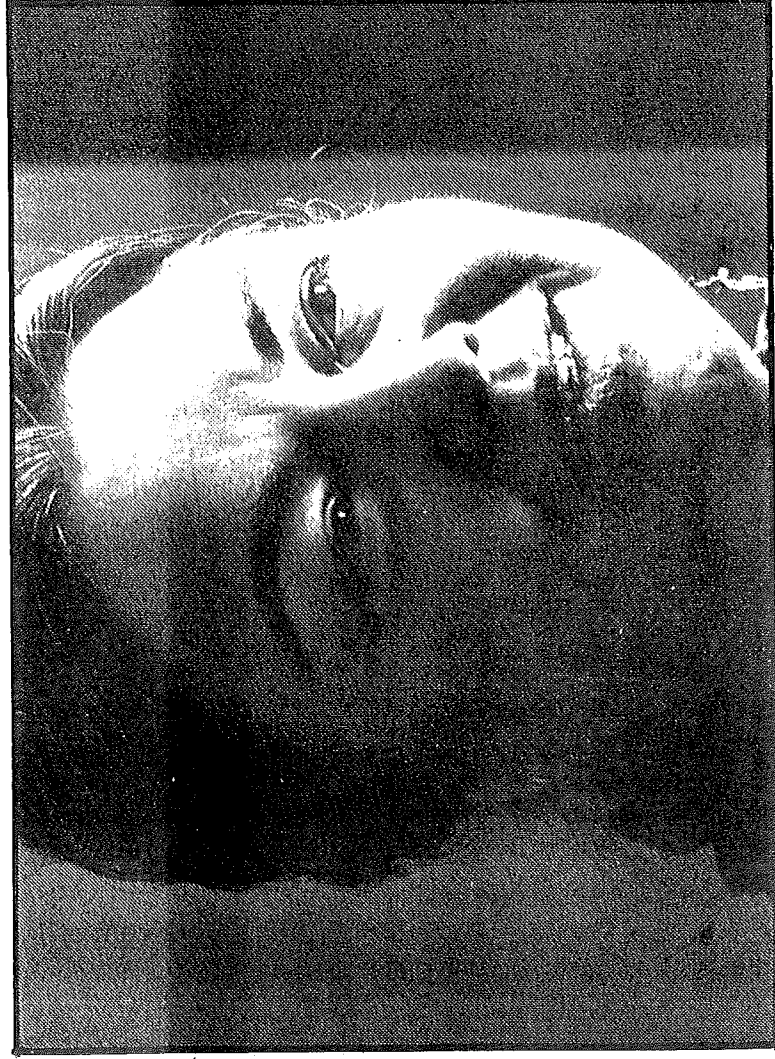
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Stephen J. Sherman

Mary Ellen Preusser, Harvard Square's city council member

seem to have emanated from a desire to harass tenants.

Take the case of 22-24 Prescott Street, just off Broadway east of Harvard Square. The residents of that building have been feeling pretty feisty since the forced retirement of their superintendent in 1977. Since that time, Hunnemann chose not to provide another live-in superintendent, and conditions gradually worsened there. By November 1978, residents allege that ceilings had collapsed in two apartments, that the front stairs at 22 Prescott had "crumbled," and that there was no regular pickup of refuse. At Harvard's request, the Prescott residents acquired written documentation of nineteen health code violations. But at a December 10 meeting with Harvard and Hunnemann representatives residents became alarmed when Lorraine Wade of Harvard Housing suggested that Harvard employees living at Prescott Street might have to suffer a salary cut. The following week, Hunnemann Vice-President Richard Bland announced that major rent increases (between 35 and 90 percent) would be sought from the Rent Control Board. Wade, the tenants claim, suggested that this action was a result of tenant complaints.

Zeckhauser prefers not to comment on the matter ("the case should be tried in court, not in the press") other than to say that HRE's reasons are delineated in the letter sent to Prescott Street tenants January 17. In that document, Zeckhauser dismisses the allegation of reprisals by noting that Harvard has asked for rent adjustments in two other buildings as well. (Harvard-Hunnemann oversees eighty-one apartments.) At 8 Mellen Street, however, the rent request has been filed concurrently with another petition to evict all the existing tenants. And, until last month, Harvard had neglected to register that property with the Rent Control Board at all. HRE blames the illegality on the tenants, claiming that the Mellen Street residents misrepresented themselves as a house of transients (boarding houses need not be registered with Rent Control). In addition, Harvard accuses them of damaging the premises, violating numerous health and building requirements, and severe maintenance neglect.

"That's absurd," responds tenant Rochelle Didier. "We've refurnished and painted floors, carpeted stairways and halls, and paid for our own paint supplies. The whole thing [rent and eviction proceedings] seems like a scattershot technique to get us out of here. We've been put in a very defensive position."

Harvard's main motive for the Mellen Street confrontation is probably the one they mention last in their application for an eviction certificate: that Harvard would like to convert the spacious property into a three- or four-family-unit dwelling. But while a desire to increase Cambridge's housing stock (along with rent receipts) is laudable, the manner in which the present tenants are being treated hardly can foster much public confidence in the new regime at

HRE

Along with the perpetual tugs of war over zoning regulations, these continued skirmishes in Cambridge's limited housing stock provide a constant source for hostility between the university and local citizens.

One handicap seems to be a lack of any real trouble-shooting organization to deal with these problems. Such a body would not be unprecedented. During the mid-Sixties, a more community-conscious Harvard banded with MIT to create the Cambridge Corporation, which turned out to be a microcosm of town/gown relations at their best and, ultimately, their worst. Beginning in 1966, the corporation received a total of \$630,000 over a nine-year period, mainly for the purpose of constructing low-income housing. Most of the funds came from the two schools (there were some private contributors, notably Polaroid). During its existence, the corporation was responsible for the construction or rehabilitation of about 1000 housing units, and made other significant contributions as well.

Problems arose when the corporation director, Ollie Brooks, also became the head of the Harvard Square Task Force, which, in addition to drafting the original sixty-foot height recommendation for Parcel 1-B, helped marshal forces against the construction of the Kennedy Library. This sort of involvement didn't sit well with Harvard, particularly with its first vice-president of government and community affairs, Charles Daly. A former White House staff member under President Kennedy, one of Daly's raisons d'être at Harvard was to smooth the way for the library construction. Daly and Brooks were inevitably at loggerheads, and most observers blame Daly, who is rarely described as a genial man, for the eventual defunding of the Cambridge Corporation in 1975.

It is possible that the current icy impasse between the city and the university is beginning to thaw. "I think we'll dig out from our current frictions in the next couple of months," Michael Brewer declares with cautious optimism, "and lay the groundwork for discussions about the next several years. I hope we can reach some sort of understanding with the neighborhoods. I don't know if it's possible. But I hope so."

If it is not, however, the Cambridge citizens and city council members may prove to be tougher customers than they've shown themselves in the past. Circumstances in the last twelve months have begun to forge one of the strangest political alliances in city history, a coalition that includes such unlikely compatriots as Velluci and Frisoli, Danehy and Graham. The real catalysts of course, are the neighborhoods, which are just starting to flex their collective muscles in this, an election year.

"Now for the first time," observes Wylie, "area associations are speaking up for each other. If the neighborhoods can continue to work together, this could be the beginning of a whole new era."

*This is the second in a series of articles on relations between Harvard University and the city of Cambridge.*

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