

Fig. 44 Map of Harvard Square Indicating Location of Subdistricts A-F

Detail of "An Axonometric Rendering of Harvard Square As It Appears in 1996"  
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The 1986 Development Guidelines, developed for the Harvard Square Overlay District, divided the Overlay District into six subdistricts based on architectural characteristics, historical development patterns, and modern usage trends. This method has proven to be a useful portion of the Development Guidelines and the study committee unanimously agreed that revised and updated subdistrict descriptions and goals should be included as part of the guidelines for a Harvard Square conservation district and for continued use in administering the Overlay District.

Because Harvard Square is such a diverse environment, defining the context of subdistricts is important both in developing long-range planning goals and in making determinations of appropriateness for alterations to the physical environment. The six subdistricts are:

- A. Harvard Square/Massachusetts Avenue
- B. Bow Street and Arrow Street/Putnam Square
- C. The Gold Coast
- D. Winthrop Square/JFK Street
- E. Brattle Square
- F. Church Street

The subdistricts do not have precise boundaries, as the characteristics of neighboring subdistricts tend to overlap. In considering some sites, the guidelines for more than one subdistrict should be considered together and weighed according to the individual needs of the site.

A description of the unique qualities of each subdistrict and specific goals for each follows. The description is organized with a historical and physical description, followed by a focused discussion on the treatment of public spaces and private sites. A site map accompanies each description. Specific goals for each subdistrict have been identified to help boards and applicants apply the general goals and guidelines of the larger district to the special needs and circumstances of a particular site. Revisions to this document include updating the discussions of private development sites, summarizing recent discussions for improvements of public spaces, expanding the discussion of site and architectural history, and reinforcing the recommendations for preservation of significant structures.

## Subdistrict A: Harvard Square/Massachusetts Avenue

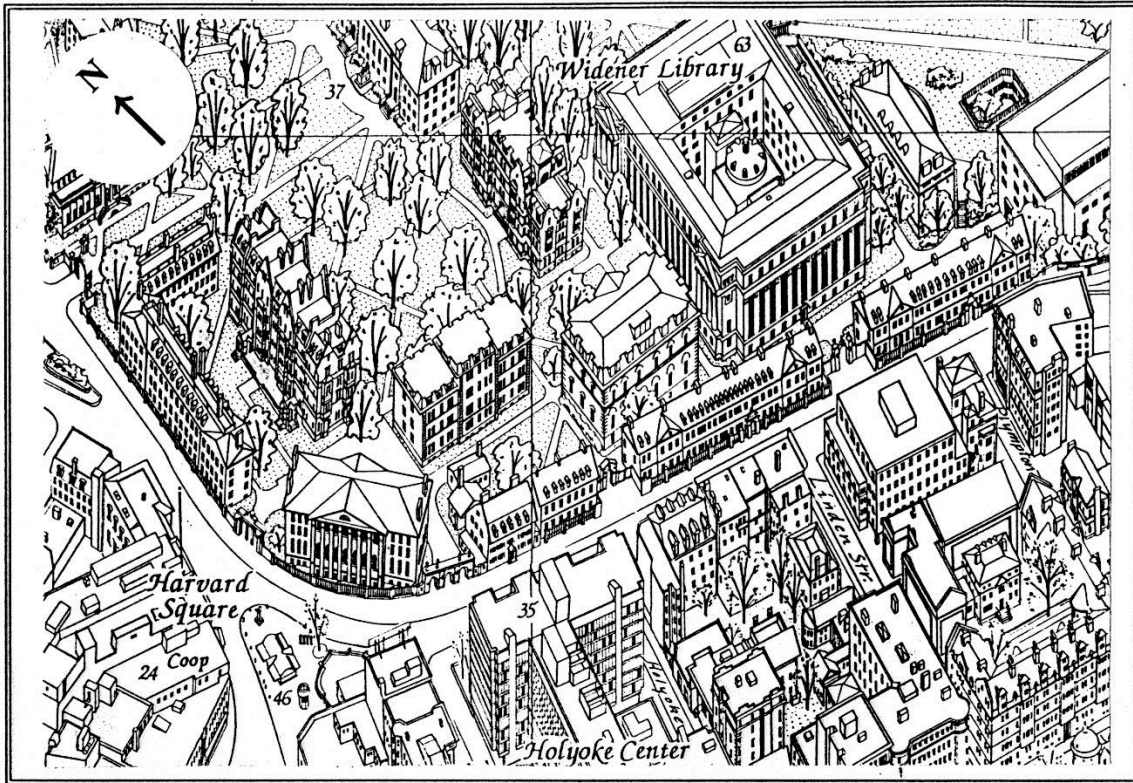


Fig. 12 Map of Subdistrict A

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### Historical and Physical Description

This subdistrict includes the center of Harvard Square and the south side of Massachusetts Avenue to Quincy Square. The area marks the intersection of town and college with Harvard Yard on the north side of Massachusetts Avenue and mixed-use commercial, office, and residential structures on the south side. The strong presence of the MBTA subway station at the center of the Square reflects Harvard Square's long history as a transportation hub. In the early years of the Newtowne (later Cambridge) settlement, the area was an open space to the north of the grid-patterned town, south of the Burial Ground, and adjacent to the highway. By 1790, structures built in this area began to orient themselves toward the Square. Development in Harvard Square has always been for mixed uses. Residences, college buildings, several meetinghouses, two courthouses, and a market building were constructed around the Square in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Three- to five-story structures built out to the sidewalk predominate the south and west sides of Massachusetts Avenue near Harvard Square. The historic structures facing on the south and west sides of the Square itself include the Read Block buildings, the Harvard Cooperative Society, College House, and the Harvard Square Kiosk. Certain mid-twentieth-century structures, such as Holyoke Center and the Fleet Bank (Harvard Trust Company) facade, have attained their own architectural significance. Although the architectural significance of Holyoke Center is

acknowledged, another development of its size in the Square is not recommended. Efforts in this subdistrict should focus on the retention of the small retail storefronts that add vitality to the streetscape.

### Public Space

All publicly-accessible open spaces on private and public properties should be preserved. The public space in the center of Harvard Square should be well maintained for the general enjoyment and safety of its pedestrian users. The materials and design of the public space at the center of the Square can be used as a reference when designing future improvements to open spaces in the district.

A long-range plan, called "Polishing the Trophy," for public and private sidewalk, crosswalk, and lighting improvements throughout the Square was commissioned in 1997 and funded by a combination of public and private resources. The study recorded existing conditions and makes recommendations for improvements in most of the subdistricts, except Bow Street and Arrow Street/Putnam Square and part of the Gold Coast. The improvements in the Harvard Square/Massachusetts Avenue subdistrict which were proposed by this study include sidewalk replacement in front of the Read Block and College House, a new crosswalk in front of Holyoke Center, and lighting improvements to Cambridge Savings Bank, Holyoke Center, and the Omphalos statue near the news kiosk. The sidewalk at the Read Block was renewed and the curb extended in conjunction with the redevelopment of that building.

### Private Sites

As evidenced by the recent Read Block development proposal, large redevelopment potential does exist in the heart of the Square and along Massachusetts Avenue. Rehabilitation of existing structures should be carefully considered as a first alternative by developers. Historical photographs can often be valuable references during the design of facade restoration or rehabilitation projects. Investigation of the collections of the Historical Commission is a good starting point for this kind of historical research. The rehabilitation of the Read Block included restoration of the 1896 facade, renovation of the forward portions of the original structures, and construction of a new 3-story structure at the rear. The renovated space accommodates both retail and office uses.

Retention of the small-scale retail environment, with narrow storefronts and interesting signs should be encouraged in this subdistrict. Careful attention should be paid to materials, storefront design, and signage in this area. The 1907 Art Nouveau storefront at 1304 Massachusetts Avenue by Coolidge and Carlson is an example of exceptional storefront design. The unique lines, transparency, and high-quality materials of this storefront can be used as an example of a creative, contemporary approach to retail design in the district. Not every new storefront design in the Square can or should aim to be this unique, but it demonstrates the timelessness of an exceptional design.

## Subdistrict B: Bow Street and Arrow Street/Putnam Square

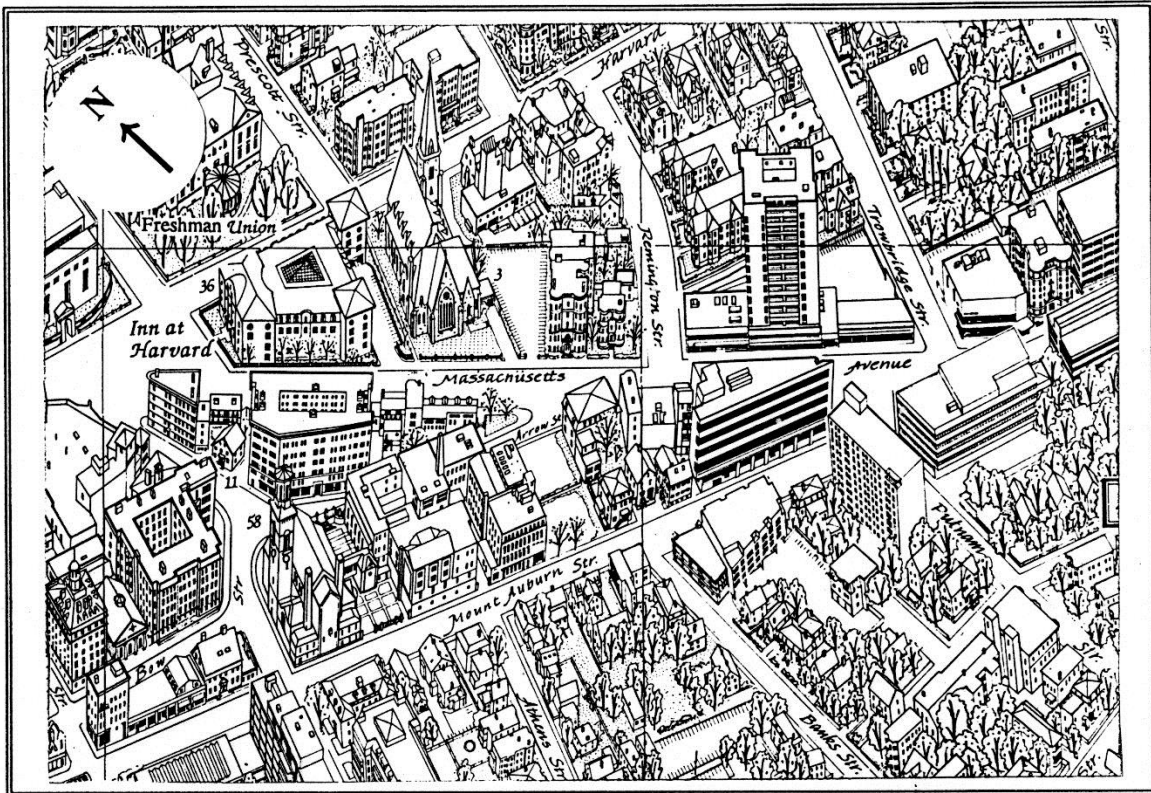


Fig. 13 Map of Subdistrict B

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### Historical and Physical Description

This subdistrict includes the properties along Bow Street, Arrow Street, and along the converging lines of Massachusetts Avenue and Mount Auburn Street, including Putnam Square. It is the easternmost edge of the existing Harvard Square Overlay District. Putnam Square and the eastern portions of Massachusetts Avenue and Mount Auburn Street are not included within the boundaries of the Harvard Square National Register District.

The highest structures in this subdistrict are the campanile of St. Paul's Catholic Church, the stone spire of the Old Cambridge Baptist Church, and the office tower at 1105 Massachusetts Avenue. The locations of these towers correspond with the triangular boundaries of this subdistrict. The careful siting of the Old Cambridge Baptist Church at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and Harvard Street allows for the spire to be seen from several different viewpoints, thus making it a prominent landmark in historic and contemporary photographs. The transition from dense Putnam Square and the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue to the smaller scale of the residential Riverside neighborhood is evident traveling east to west along Mount Auburn Street. This transition of mass, scale, and use complicated discussions for the development of the Zero Arrow Street site. The Harvard Square Advisory Committee worked with the developer, Gunwyn Company, through several designs and over a number of years to try to address the special needs of this site.

Historically, construction in this area has included small residences, light industry, and churches. Though the industries are no longer active, the Reversible Collar factory at 8-20 Arrow Street and 21-27 Mount Auburn Street is still a dynamic structure in this subdistrict. It was adaptively re-used for retail and office space in the late 1960s and was renovated through the federal tax act program in the mid-1980s. The commercial nature of Putnam Square and Quincy Square developed primarily in the mid-twentieth-century. The larger office buildings there were constructed in the mid-1970s.

### Public Space

The largest public space in this subdistrict is Quincy Square, which was redesigned and landscaped in 1997. The project's purpose was to enhance the area for pedestrians while maintaining vehicular access to all of the streets. The prominent location of the park also provided the designers the opportunity to create an attractive gateway to Harvard Square and Harvard Yard. This project was a particularly-successful collaboration between a landscape architect (The Halvorson Company) and an artist (David Phillips). The Quincy Square Design Review Committee reviewed the design during a long, and often contentious, community process. The design included plantings of trees, shrubs, perennials, ground covers, and grasses along with stone walls, boulders and sculptures. Sidewalk improvements on the surrounding streets were also part of the total design concept.

Putnam Square, a very busy traffic intersection, did not contain many amenities for the pedestrian until 1998. The small island with a memorial plaque that is located in the middle of Putnam Square benefited from a new landscaping plan that uses grasses and other landscaping elements to make it a much more pleasant place.

The tip of land at the corner of Arrow Street and Massachusetts Avenue was landscaped by the city in 1991 after an unsuccessful attempt by the abutting restaurant to privatize the use of the land.

### Private Sites

The major development sites identified in the 1986 guidelines have since been developed or are currently in process. The Inn at Harvard filled in the former Gulf gasoline station site and city boards have recently approved an office building design at Zero Arrow Street. The approval of plans for the Zero Arrow Street site is currently being appealed, so the outcome of this site is uncertain. An important site not identified in the 1986 guidelines is the historically and architecturally significant 1906 garage concrete garage building at 1230 Massachusetts Avenue. This building is now being sensitively redeveloped with two new stories above a restored original facade.

The Old Cambridge Baptist Church spire and St. Paul's Catholic Church bell tower are important visual landmarks that should be respected by any new development. The recent restoration of the tower at St. Paul's Church and the repairs to the slate roof at Old Cambridge Baptist Church have

been recognized by the Historical Commission. The development potential at St. Paul's Church was largely filled up in the late 1980s, with the construction of the new choir school.

Development or adaptive re-use proposals should recognize and be sensitive to the fact that a transition from commercial to residential uses occurs in this subdistrict.

A transition of building materials and scale is also evident at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and Bow Street. The rare grouping of six small-scale frame and brick buildings at that intersection represents a 140-year span of residential and commercial building construction in Harvard Square. The earliest buildings in the cluster, 12 Bow Street (ca. 1820) and 1208 Massachusetts Avenue (1842) are examples of residential buildings that were later converted to commercial uses.

Denser development should be confined to Putnam Square. The quiet, residential character along Mount Auburn Street should be maintained, and the wood-frame structures there should also be preserved.

Restoration and/or renovation potential exists in this subdistrict. Prime candidates include the triple-decker residence at 1131 Massachusetts Avenue at the corner of Remington Street the Hong Kong restaurant at 1234-1238 Massachusetts Avenue, Longfellow Court at 1200 Massachusetts Avenue, and the frame and brick rows at 1156-1166 and 1168-1174 Massachusetts Avenue.

## Subdistrict C: The Gold Coast

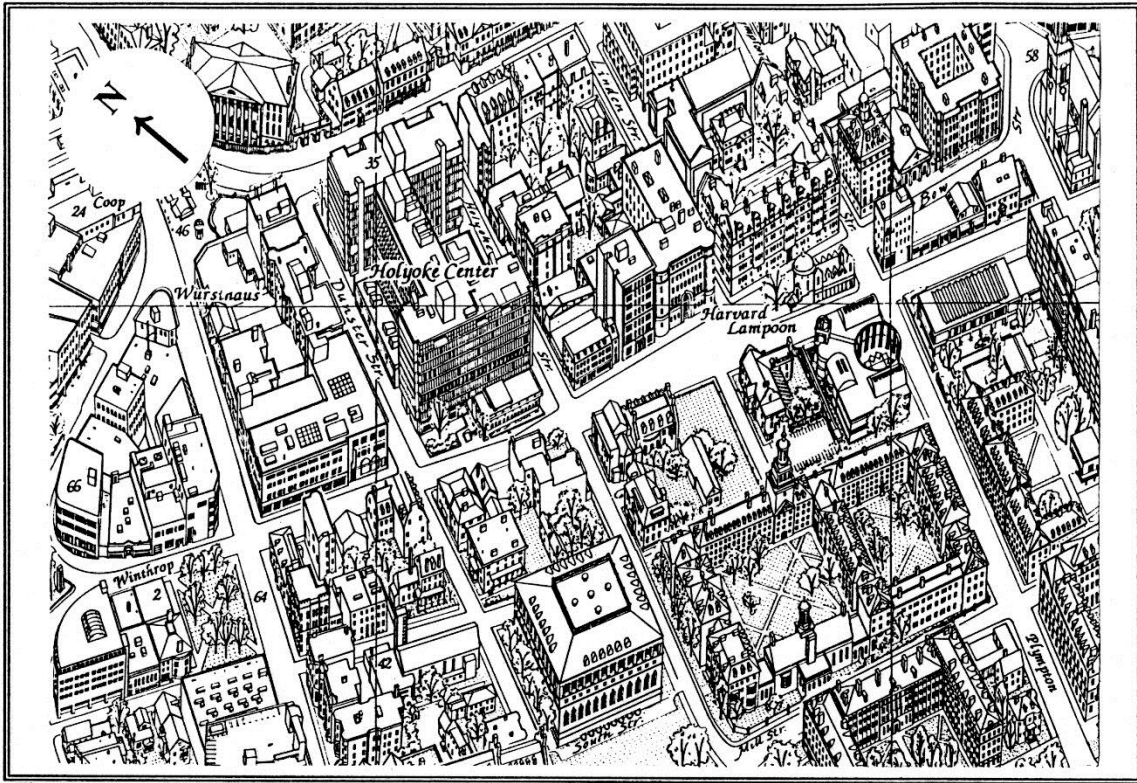


Fig. 14 Map of Subdistrict C

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### Historical and Physical Description

The boundaries of this subdistrict stretch from Massachusetts Avenue on the north, Mount Auburn Street on the south, Dunster Street on the west and Bow Street on the east. The name of the area reflects the affluent students for whom the private luxury dormitories and undergraduate clubs were constructed during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The quality of the buildings' designs and materials matched the means of the private investors and wealthy students, making the Gold Coast an area as rich in architectural merit as it was rich in assets. Many of the private dormitories were converted to apartments in the 1920s. The architectural character of this subdistrict today is still dominated by these dormitories and clubs. For the most part, commercial establishments remain oriented toward Massachusetts Avenue and Mount Auburn Street.

### Public Space

Although the Gold Coast does not contain any public parks or squares, the relationship of architectural facades, courtyards, and sidewalks provide visual interest to the pedestrian. Alterations to the landscape and transportation plan should respect the historic street pattern. Pedestrian safety concerns should be studied at Bow Street and Mount Auburn Street. Parking



and loading issues should be investigated and a plan developed for efficiency. Street trees, an important commodity in this dense subdistrict, have been planted and are maintained by the City.

Private courtyards in the Gold Coast subdistrict, though not open to the public, do provide a welcome relief to the otherwise dense area. Property owners should be encouraged to preserve these spaces and upgrade the paving and landscaping materials therein. Exemptions to parking requirements could be offered, where necessary, to ensure the preservation of these urban green spaces. Another important open space in this subdistrict is the open lot at 68 Mount Auburn Street, owned by Harvard University. The lawn provides the only expanse of green along this stretch of Mount Auburn Street.

The Polishing the Trophy study recommends new brick crosswalks on Mount Auburn Street at the intersections of Dunster Street and Holyoke Street and new street lighting on Mount Auburn, Dunster, and Holyoke streets.

### Private Sites

Many of the Harvard clubs have donated preservation easements to the City, granting review of alterations to the Historical Commission. Though buildings in the Gold Coast are predominantly of masonry construction, a few examples of wood frame construction remain. The Greek Revival house at 43-45 Mount Auburn Street is a prime candidate for a careful restoration. Improvements to this structure would greatly enhance the subdistrict.

Other examples of wood-frame architecture that should be preserved are:

- 20 Holyoke Street, a pre-1854 residence, remodeled in the Stick style in 1870s;
- 9 Bow Street, a Mansard with elaborate Queen Anne ornamentation; and
- 30 Plympton Street storefronts, rare survival of 19th-century with few alterations.

Commercial development on the south side of Mount Auburn Street should continue to be carefully regulated. Restorations and renovations of existing storefronts along Mount Auburn Street are encouraged. Any new development in this subdistrict would require a sensitive approach to architectural context and open space considerations. The open lot at 68 Mount Auburn Street and the commercial buildings at 45 1/2-49 Mount Auburn Street are two potential development sites to monitor.

Sites that have been redeveloped in the last decade include the Hillel Center at 52 Mount Auburn Street, which was designed by architect Moshe Safdie to complement the Lampoon's architecture, and the St. Paul's Catholic Church complex, which was designed by Koetter Kim & Associates to include a European-styled courtyard that accommodates both cars and pedestrians. A substantial expansion project and the restoration of the bell tower have been completed at St. Paul's. The Harvard Lampoon building has also undergone a restoration in recent years.

Subdistrict D: Winthrop Square/JFK Street

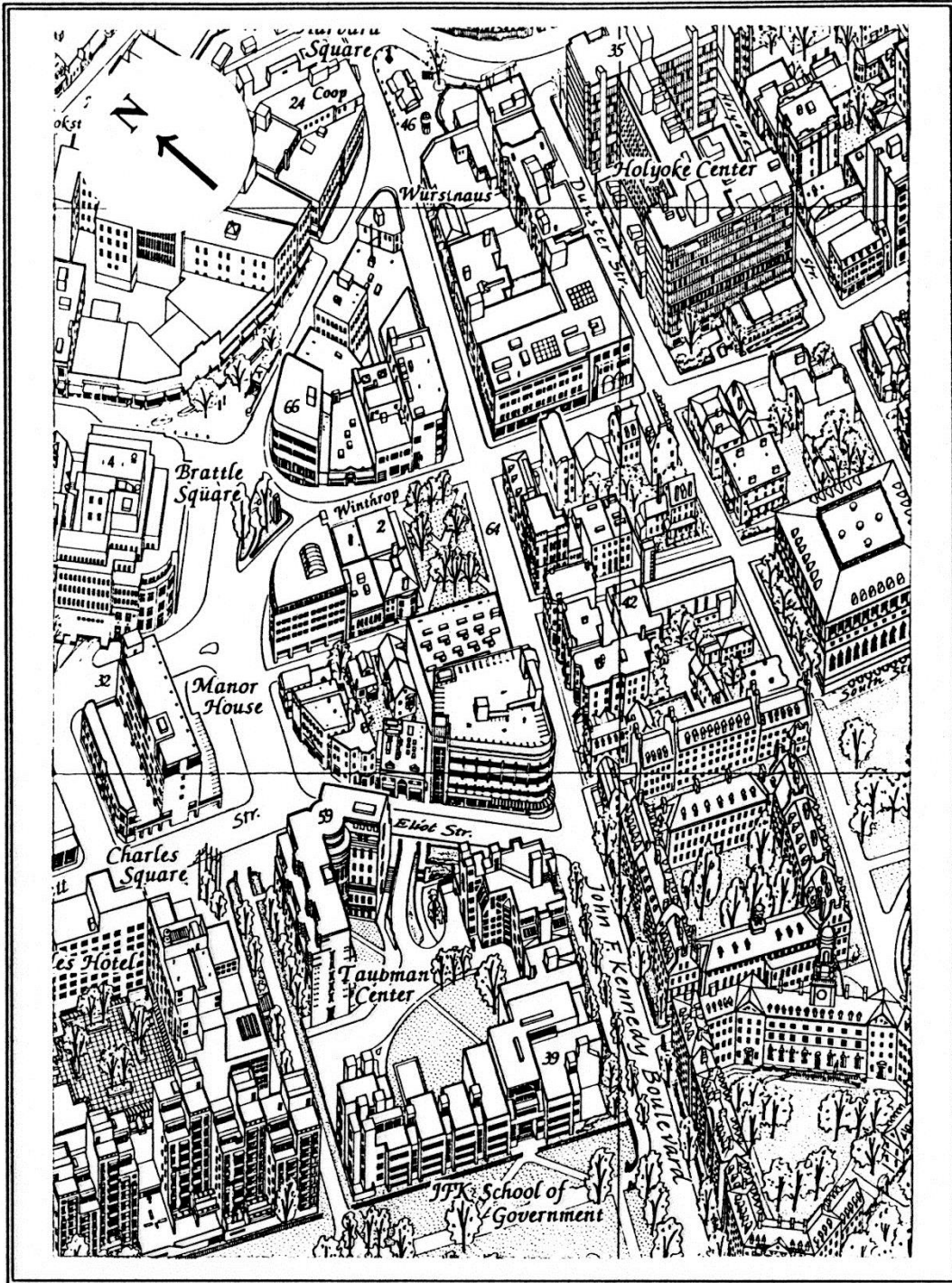


Fig. 15 Map of Subdistrict D

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### Historical and Physical Description

John F. Kennedy Street (formerly Boylston Street) is the primary entryway into Harvard Square from Memorial Drive and Boston. The subdistrict includes the properties along JFK Street and around Winthrop Square. This subdistrict includes an eclectic mix of architecture that spans 200 years of Cambridge history. At the center is Winthrop Square, a house lot of the original settlement that was never built upon and was used as a public market place in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The buildings located around Winthrop Square and on the northern section of JFK Street represent a mixture of frame and masonry construction. Most of the older buildings, including residences and light-industrial buildings have been converted to commercial uses. The built environment along JFK Street near the river has undergone a dramatic transformation in the twentieth century. The Harvard residences, Kirkland House and Eliot House, were constructed in 1913 and 1930, respectively. The Kennedy School of Government, constructed in the 1970s and 1980s, dominates the other side of JFK Street.

### Public Space

Winthrop Square has been renovated within the last ten years. A ten-foot wide strip of paving was returned to turf and grass, the pathways through the park were returned to an earlier configuration, and a new post fence was installed along the perimeter. A public artwork, designed by Carlos Dorrien, stands at the center of the park.

As indicated in the 1986 Guidelines, consideration should be given to excluding passenger vehicles from the block of Winthrop Street between JFK Street and Eliot Square. The result would reduced traffic congestion on this narrow street with several small-scale historic structures, thus enhancing the pedestrian's experience and making it a safer place.

The recommendations made by the Polishing the Trophy study include repair of sidewalks along much of JFK Street, new brick crosswalks at the intersections of Mount Auburn Street and Eliot Street, and new street lights along the length of JFK Street.

### Private Sites

The mixed-use redevelopment of Winthrop Square is a model of restoration, adaptive reuse, and sensitive infill construction. The relocation of the Chapman Heirs' House to face Winthrop Square and the renovation of the Pi Eta Club (Grendel's) at 91 Winthrop Street secures the setting of this important open space. Potential development sites in this subdistrict include the Banker properties on Eliot Street, which were proposed for redevelopment in the late 1980s. The small houses on Winthrop Street are underdeveloped, but are largely protected as individual landmarks or through preservation restrictions. The 18<sup>th</sup> century wall that runs behind the properties on Winthrop, Eliot, and South Streets is a critically-important artifact of early development in Harvard Square and should be protected and exposed to public view in any future development

Storefront and signage designs vary widely along JFK Street. While the bold 1980's remodeling of the triple-deckers at 52-56 JFK Street with two-color striped siding is valued by many as a product of its era and for its eccentricity, similar treatment of other wood-frame buildings in the

Square is not encouraged. The house at 98 Winthrop Street (c. 1800) is an important historical structure. Any redevelopment of that site should be sensitive to the limitations of the small, wood-frame house. An office or residential re-use would be more suited to the building than a busy commercial enterprise.

Aggressive signage can be noted throughout the subdistrict, from the eclectic collection seen on the JFK Street triple-deckers to the integral new signage program developed for The Garage building. New proposals for signage should follow the general design guidelines for the district, but it would not be out of character for signs in this subdistrict to be more dynamic than in the quieter subdistricts of the Square such as the Gold Coast.

## Subdistrict E: Brattle Square

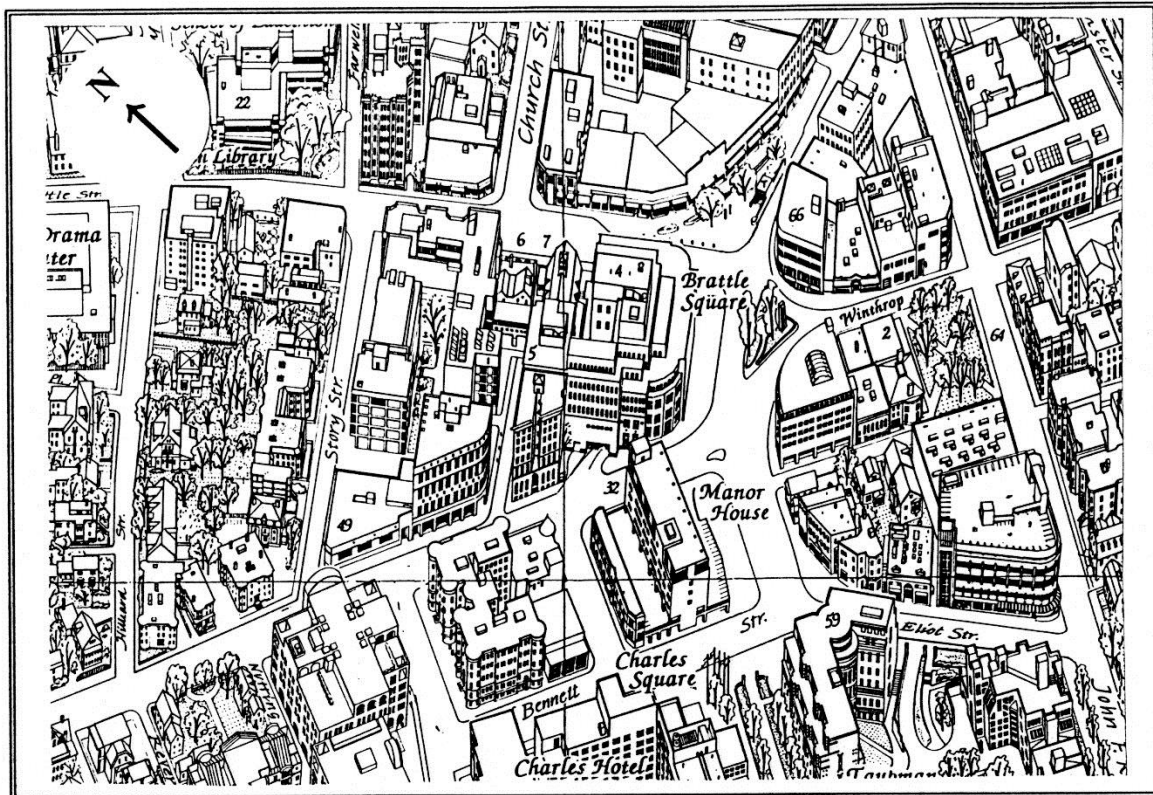


Fig. 16 Map of Subdistrict E

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### Historical and Physical Description

This subdistrict includes the properties around Brattle, Mount Auburn, and Eliot streets and at Brattle Square, where these three streets intersect. The north (or west) side of Story Street is recommended to be included in a district, as it is now left completely unprotected by its exclusion from the Harvard Square Overlay District, the Harvard Square National Register District, and the Half Crown Neighborhood Conservation District.

In 1810, Mount Auburn Street was extended west, through the former Brattle estate. By 1840, it seemed that a neighborhood of homes would be built near the Brattle mansion (42 Brattle Street), but the residential character of Brattle Square changed when the Brattle House, a 106-room hotel, was constructed there in 1849. Brattle Square, Palmer Street, and Church Street became the favored locations for stables, blacksmiths, carriage shops, and saloons. The hotel soon failed, and the building became the University Press printing plant. The site of the University Press was largely vacant from 1893 until the mid 1980s, when University Place was constructed.

After World War I, the Harvard Square shopping district expanded to include Brattle Square, where a new post office was built in 1919, and the Sage family replaced the old Jacob Bates House with a Georgian-style market in 1926. George Dow assembled most of the remaining frontage on Brattle Street between Palmer and Church streets, which was occupied by a

collection of storefronts and one substantial building at 11-25 Brattle Street. By 1941, the Dows had removed the upper stories of 17-25 Brattle Street and refaced the entire row with a cast-stone Moderne facade. This complex is sometimes called the Brines Block, which refers to the Brine's Sporting Goods store, a long-time retailer in the block.

The recommendations made by the Polishing the Trophy study include new brick sidewalks at the intersection of Eliot and Bennett streets, and at either end of Story Street, and street lighting improvements throughout the subdistrict.

### Public Space

In the 1980s, the curve of Brattle Street was narrowed to form a T intersection and to create the plaza and sidewalks in front of the Brines Block. The historic street pattern is still discernable by the strong visual effect of the curve of the buildings of the Brines Block. This curve should be maintained in future. The terraced public space created a buffer for pedestrians, and it is now a vibrant part of the Square, providing space for street performances.

The One Brattle Square building was designed with multiple street-level entrances to the retail stores, but most of those entrances have been closed off by the retailers. Future re-developments should respect the historical tradition of narrow storefronts and multiple entrances along a large facade. The Brines Block would make an excellent reference to inform new retail construction.

### Private Sites

The study committee analyzed two potential development sites in this subdistrict: the Harvard Motor Inn and the Brines Block. The committee reviewed schematic drawings that depicted the maximum build-out potential allowed under current zoning. Suggestions for the composition of the design guidelines grew out of that discussion. The 1986 goals for this subdistrict outlined ways to maximize the pedestrian experience in the square:

In general, all of these projects should be built to the property line, respecting the vitality of the sidewalk and plaza spaces. Improved mid-block connections, such as at Mifflin Place, would be welcome as complementary to the subdistrict's public open spaces in the area.  
(1986 Harvard Square Development Guidelines)

The north (or west) side of Story Street contains several wood-frame residential buildings. It is important that these buildings be maintained because the street is a transition point from the mixed-use character of Harvard Square to the primarily-residential nature of the Half Crown Neighborhood Conservation District. The siting of 127 Mount Auburn Street (17 Story Street, an important mansion of 1846, should be respected.

## Subdistrict F: Church Street

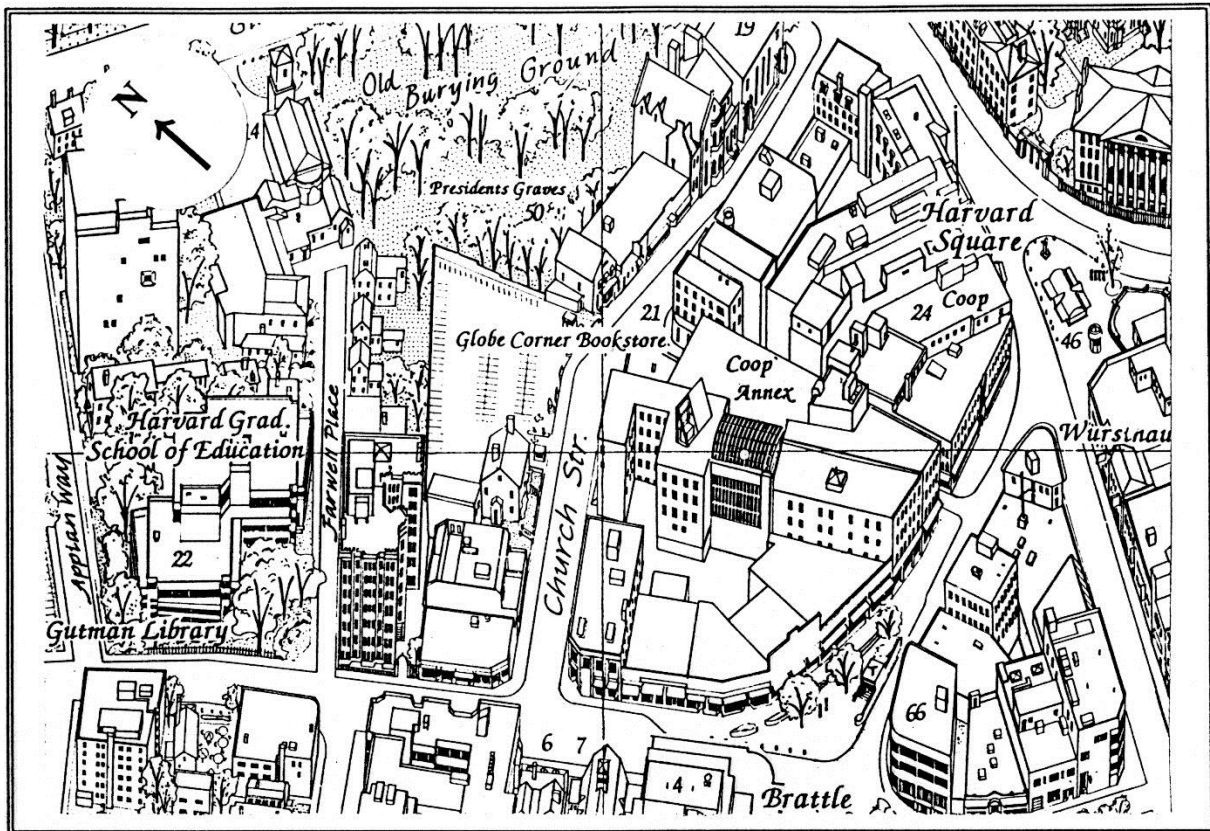


Fig. 17 Map of Subdistrict F

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### Historical and Physical Description

This subdistrict includes both sides of Church Street, Brattle Street to Farwell Place, and the whole of Palmer Street. The structures along the north side of Church Street from Massachusetts Avenue to the Church Street parking lot and the eastern half of Farwell Place are located within the boundaries of the Old Cambridge Historic District and are thus under the jurisdiction of the Cambridge Historical Commission. The sites of the greatest historical significance in this small subdistrict are the First Church Unitarian, the Burying Ground, the Torrey Hancock House/Cambridge School of Architecture building (53 Church Street), and a former police station at 31-33 Church Street (now Starbucks). Farwell Place is a small residential enclave that is protected as part of the Old Cambridge Historic District.

As in Brattle Square, Palmer Street and Church Street in the nineteenth century were home to stables, blacksmiths, carriage shops, and saloons. The industrial character of the subdistrict has been successfully translated to retail uses. The former carriage factory at 26 Church Street (1857) has been renovated and now serves as the home to the Globe Corner Bookstore and Club Passim. A brick police station was constructed at 31 Church Street in 1864 and is now occupied by a Starbucks coffee shop and a hair salon. A controversial proposal to close Palmer Street in the 1960s was defeated by community opposition, and the street was paved with granite blocks and

brick sidewalks in 1964-67. This urban design improvement added interest to the narrow side street, though more retail storefronts would help enliven it.

### Public Space

The street and sidewalk improvements suggested in the 1986 Guidelines have not yet been realized. The sidewalk on the east side of Church Street is so narrow that it does not meet ADA requirements. More pedestrians need to be accommodated on the busy sidewalks.

The recommendations made by the Polishing the Trophy study for this area include sidewalk replacement on Church, Palmer, and Brattle streets, new brick crosswalks at the intersection of Church and Brattle streets, and new street lighting along Church, Palmer, and Brattle streets.

### Private Sites

The Church Street parking lot was analyzed by the study committee as a potential development site. Abutting the parking lot on the west is the Torrey Hancock House. The Cambridge School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture addition to the Torrey Hancock House is an important site to American women's history. These two structures are historically significant and should be preserved. Any new development on the parking lot site should emphasize retail storefronts, and the mass should be broken up to avoid a severe street presence on the expansive site. The architecture of a new development should take cues from the scale, massing, and setbacks of the historic structures on either side of the lot. Special consideration should be given to the development's relationship to the Old Burying Ground and the smaller-scale residences on Farwell Place.