

# THE DEATH OF HARVARD SQUARE

Or maybe it's a rebirth in brick. The debate rages on. BY PAUL HIRSHSON



Photo by Keith Jenkins. The Boston Globe

Charles Sullivan puts it this way: Harvard Square exists forever in people's minds the way it did when they lived there, a freeze-frame of the time of their lives. Sullivan is a professional historian who as head of the Cambridge Historical Commission is paid by the city to be a preservationist, watchdog, and chronicler of its considerable historical treasures. Sullivan has been involved with Cambridge since the mid-1960s, when he began his graduate studies at Harvard, and he speaks with the weight of authority.

If one accepts his premise, then Harvard Square will always be, to those who spent some years in the 1950s there, a quaint, somewhat sleepy academic village. They will remember with clarity the now-vanished all-night cafeterias, with their steam-table food and brackish coffee; the warren of narrow streets with laundries, barbershops, and grocery stores. If they were there in the 1960s, they will remember the coffee shops and the folkies, Joan Baez at the Club 47, and streets filled with chanting antiwar demonstrators and the sting of tear gas. Harvard Square was awakening. By the '70s, quaint had definitely given way to chic, and also to construction. Thousands of students and graduates of that era remember only the Big Hole, a giant crater dug in the center of the Square to extend the subway tunnel.

When the tunnel was finished earlier in this decade, the new identity of the Square began to jell. Parking lots gave way to condominiums, banks, and boutiques; a gas station became a parking garage, old wood turned to new brick. But boundaries were being set: Progress would

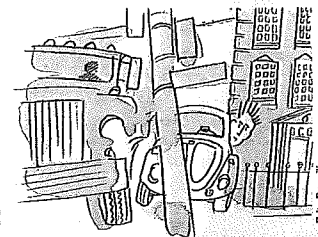
*Continued on page 79*

PAUL HIRSHSON COVERS CAMBRIDGE FOR THE GLOBE.

## DIARY *of a mad motorist*

OK. Let's head east on Brattle Street. It's a better bet than Mt. Auburn Street, because people visiting the hospital are always looking for spaces. Must remember, though, to turn off Brattle at Hawthorne Street, because after that, Brattle becomes a one-way. Confusing. Anyway, swing down Hawthorne, where's there's one free one-hour parking space. It's taken, naturally. The rest of the street is for parking-permit holders only. Parking permits owned by smug homeowners who look out of their smug homes at their cars parked by the front door. They should all have dead batteries! Never mind, take a left off Hawthorne along Mt. Auburn.

Have to pay attention here, because the first few meters are for two *Continued on page 93*



Boston Globe Magazine, Dec. 6, 1987

## Harvard Square

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

march this far and no more. The preservationists, alarmed at this spurt in building, rushed to establish historic districts, restrictive laws. Laws can affect the use of private property only to a degree. More buildings fell, and new ones grew, old favorite bars and bookstores disappeared. Chain stores selling jeans, records, and ice cream proliferated like amoebas.

Then time seemed to stand still for a while. A blocks-long complex, enhanced by a beautiful park on the Charles River, was created on a parking lot — an anchor in the southern sector. This complex consists of the Charles Hotel, riverfront condominiums, a shopping mall, and two office buildings. The whole complex is built of red brick and features big windows, and many observers have said that this first-class hotel in the Square has gone a long way to fostering a "big-city" atmosphere. But just when it seemed that most of such big changes were finished, new ones have begun to crop up: In the past year, six different developers — one of them Harvard University — have made public their plans for massive new projects, offices, condos, stores, classrooms. Now the questions of this late afternoon in the 1980s hang heavy in the air: Were the preser-

vationists too late? Will the buildings the developers have built or plan to build overwhelm forever the musty charm this place once had? Can Harvard Square be saved?

Sari Abul-Jubein, who has operated the Club Casablanca for 21 years and is a longtime Square watcher, is emphatic with his answer. "All this talk about 'saving the Square'... Forget it! It's too late. The Square is gone, the developers have killed whatever charm it had. They've killed the very reason they had for building here in the first place." Abul-Jubein has reason for his opinion: His club, one of the few dark, cavelike bars that has survived, will close soon because of development, though it may reopen in an adjacent space.

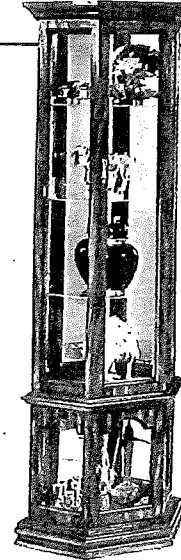
But others with equal interest and experience in the Square have a completely different viewpoint. Sheldon Cohen, for instance, the proprietor of Out of Town News & Tickets, who's also known as the unofficial mayor of Harvard Square, looks at change there as organic. "It's growth, the growth of business, the growth of Harvard Square, the growth of life. You have to look on it like the growth of a child. But some people don't like it, they just don't like change."

**W**hat has fired up this ever-simmering debate are plans to build a complex of buildings at the junction of Mt. Auburn Street and

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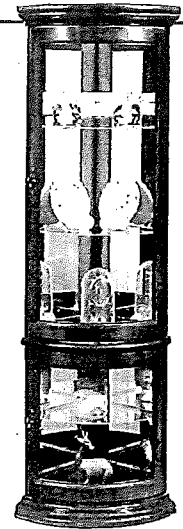
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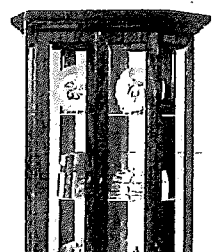
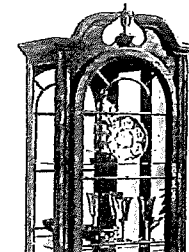
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Mifflin Place. Already torn down is one building containing several popular restaurants and bars, such as the Ha'penny Pub, the Blue Parrot, and what was once the Idler, popular with the younger crowd. Soon to fall are the Cherry Webb & Touraine department store and an adjacent bank building. One part of the Mifflin Place plans will probably cause the dislocation of the Casablanca. Across the street, another developer plans to tear down the Harvard Motor House and erect an office-and-retail building, and about a block away, Harvard plans an addition to its John F. Kennedy School of Government. About four blocks away, St. Paul's Catholic Church is selling its rectory and parking lot on DeWolfe Street, upon which condos will probably arise. This burst of construction activity will cause major changes in the texture of the Square in the next few years.

**T**o understand what all the fuss is about, one must go back a few centuries. In 1631, for instance, a farmers' marketplace was established on the dirt road leading up from the river, near

some marshes and a creek. That spot is now hallowed ground, a vest-pocket park, on the corner of John F. Kennedy and Winthrop streets, whose very names hint at the span of history here. At about the same time, in 1636, the General Court of the Massachusetts Bay appropriated 400 pounds for "a schoale or colledge" for young gentlemen and named it after John Harvard, an English minister who donated some money and books to help the fledgling institution get started in the New World. And so it began, a marriage of commerce and academia that eventually resulted in the Harvard Square of today: an international crossroads, a hub of hot consumerism, a haven for scholars and bibliophiles, a paradise for street performers, a magnet for the young of all ages, a maze of dark bars and coffee shops, a rich stew of languages and lifestyles.

The Square has, for instance, 26 bookstores — specializing in everything from spiritual essays to best sellers; it has a couple dozen clothing stores, selling everything from prep to punk; it has several "gourmet" ice cream stores

(which for ice cream lovers is like dying and going to heaven). There are coffee shops featuring exotic beans and brews from the world over, and diners featuring hot dogs and home fries; restaurants of four-star caliber and pizza parlors with pizzazz; bars plain and fancy, with styles ranging from Euro high-tech to dark-and-down-in-the-cellar. It has musicians who perform for serious money in clubs, and many more musicians who play for spare change on the street corners.

Harvard Square has style, it has energy, it has LIFE.

Ah, life. Along with life, quite naturally, come problems. And the problems that neighbors and Square-watchers like to complain about most often concern traffic, congestion (both physical and aesthetic), and parking. In one recent survey of 200 people conducted by the Harvard Square Defense Fund (a neighborhood activist group) on the new development planned, almost all of the 50 respondents had something to say about cars and the Square. "The impact of traffic and parking five years from now . . . is not being comprehensively studied," was one comment. "All the proposals for Harvard Square, except for the Kennedy School, are too massive and do not provide easy or sufficient parking," another wrote. And one person noted that "retail establishments cannot attract nonresidents because of the lack of parking." All of the six proposed devel-

opments have asked the city either to waive all the parking requirements for new buildings or to allow them to provide fewer spaces than required by law. So far, only one project (on Mifflin Place) has received all the necessary permits and clearances, so it is still unclear what impact their parking — or lack of it — will have on future traffic.

But present-day traffic and parking is plenty to get upset about. The traffic jams seem endless, the parking meters few. Meter maids (or parking-control officers, more correctly) prowl like sharks. Drivers exchange harsh words and nearly come to blows over who spotted which parking place first. People wait glumly for a meter to be vacated or to get into a parking lot. Once in a parking lot or garage, drivers wince at the price (an \$8 tab is not unusual for a few hours' parking). To put the situation into perspective, though, it should be said that the city, as a policy, does not encourage creation of more parking, out of concern for pollution. The number of parking spaces in the Square area, says George Teso, the traffic and parking commissioner, has stayed at about 1,500 — which is about 200 more spaces on- and off-street than there were in the late 1970s, Teso says.

"When people talk about parking, they're usually talking about free or low-cost parking," maintains Sheldon Cohen. "There's plenty of parking — we've had three new garages built in the past five

## AUDACE

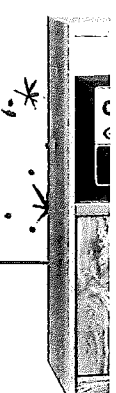
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years, and to park there, you have to pay the price. But validation from the stores makes it easier, at least for the first couple of hours."

One contributing factor to the traffic jams is, of course, the thousands of students who congregate or flow through the Square daily. There are, most obviously, the 15,000 or so Harvard students who live nearby and an uncounted number of others who visit, shop, eat, drink, or just hang out there. Another factor is the crazy-quilt pattern of the streets. They were laid out in Colonial days to conform to the meandering habits of cows and sheep, and modern man has not improved on them much. Some become one-way halfway through their courses; others swerve abruptly around traffic islands or pedestrian walkways. Sometimes, it seems, to travel a block or so by car requires a several-block negotiation of one-way streets.

Jay Tabor, a first-year student at Harvard University Law School, arrived here for the first time in September from his home in Liberal, Kansas. He was struck right away by the sensory impact of crowds,

stores, traffic. He got off the subway in Harvard Square and saw a young man in full punk regalia. "He had this weird hairdo; it looked something like a Trojan helmet. I couldn't believe anyone could look like that," Tabor recalls.

He's been here for a couple of months, but he still is amazed at the traffic snarls. "The only time we had a traffic jam in Liberal was when the train went through town," he says with a laugh. Patricia Walker, one of his classmates, came here from Dallas in August, and she was amazed at the casual combat between pedestrians and vehicles. "People never cross against the light in Dallas," she says. "In fact, you can drive down a big, deserted road with no cars on it, and there'll be six people standing on the sidewalk waiting for the light to change. They'd just never cross like people around here do."

Neither Tabor nor Walker had ever been to Cambridge before, so they were seeing it with unprejudiced eyes. Like thousands of students before them, they were quick to get out and explore on foot the delights of the Square on a recent fall day. They liked different as-

pects of it, but they agreed that there was something there for everyone.

Walker, for instance, enjoyed the variety of eating and drinking places all within a few-block area. She had been up until 2:30 a.m. the night before she and Tabor perambulated the Square together. She and other students had visited The Boathouse, a new and popular cellar bar with rowing shells, oars, and trophies decorating the brick walls, reminiscent of some of the older, bygone days of student hangouts. After the bar closed, the group walked a few blocks on a mild evening. "Some kids were playing great music on the plaza [in front of Holyoke Center], and we just stopped for a minute to listen, and suddenly it was really late," she recalls. She had touched on one of the points that visitors and residents often mention: the vibrancy of the street life.

Particularly in nice weather, it is not unusual for the streets to be thronged with people until midnight or later. There are three movie houses in the Square, some with midnight showings. Several of the 26 bookstores remain open until late in the evening. To take ad-

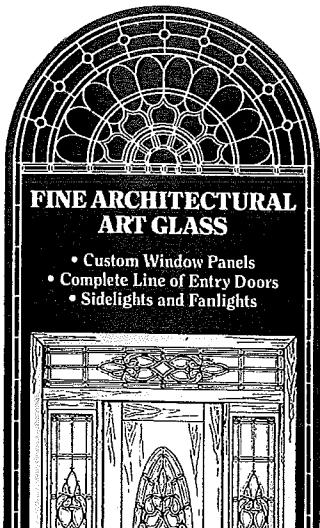
vantage of all the foot traffic, there are at times up to two dozen street performers doing everything from singing to juggling on a unicycle to reciting poetry. They congregate in doorways and on pedestrian plazas, often drawing large audiences to their al fresco shows and serious dollars into their hats or guitar cases. One of the most unusual acts is the man who lugs an old-fashioned player piano to the Square almost every day in a trailer and pumps out an endless repertoire of old songs on his machine. The casual sing-alongs that his piano music generates are one of the best shows, amateur critics agree.

This street theater takes place against a backdrop of wonderfully eclectic architectural styles: the old ivy on Harvard's mellow brick walls, some dazzling glass box buildings, Depression-era concrete, and a few hints of clapboard and shingle here and there. The nearby residents and others who have taken up the role of watchdog of the Square treasure this diversity and want to preserve it. "There's nothing like this in Dallas," Pat Walker remarks, walking through Harvard Square. "There's nothing old there," she explains, "everything's new and made of glass and steel." For Jay Tabor, though, the architecture is obscured by the relentless commercialism. "It looks like an outdoor mall, a commercial area," he offers, glancing along the storefronts on Massachusetts Avenue. "It doesn't look that historic to

me."

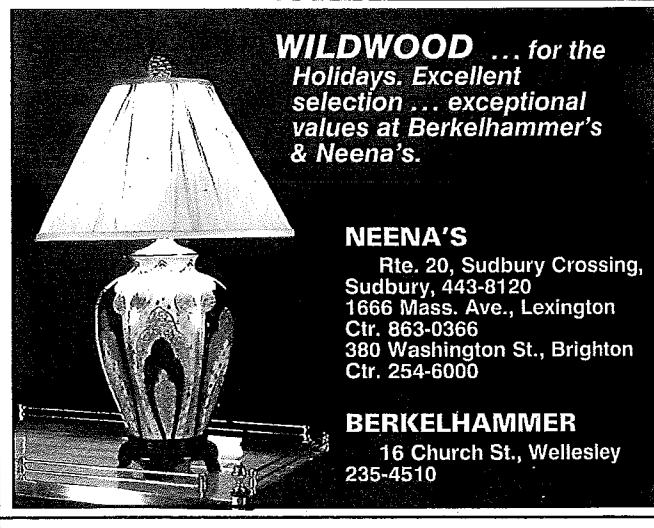
But that aspect has an appeal for Tabor. He liked the clothes displayed in the window at J. Press, a store selling traditional Ivy League men's clothes, but he seemed a bit overwhelmed by the prices. In fact, both he and Walker complained about the price of everything in the Square: the food, the clothing, the rents — Tabor took an apartment in nearby Somerville because it was cheaper — and living in general. "The Square is expensive," Walker says. "That's why students tend to gravitate away from it, except if you go to a Chinese restaurant." She and Tabor then compared restaurants in nearby Porter and Central squares, for instance, where the nightly hot-meal special would not use up the whole week's budget. Upon hearing that one popular eating and drinking spot — the Swiss Alps — was closed and would be replaced by a franchise-run chili-and-ribs restaurant, they shouted "Ribs!" in unison. Now that would be a welcome addition to the dining agenda.

Their perception of high prices, based on a few weeks' sampling, was accurate — to a degree. Many items — from a single cookie to a bottle of beer — are in fact more expensive because of the rent a retail establishment must pay for street-level space in popular areas. For instance, real estate experts say, a merchant wanting to rent prime retail space in 1987 may be asked to pay up to \$60 per square foot for it. Other spaces



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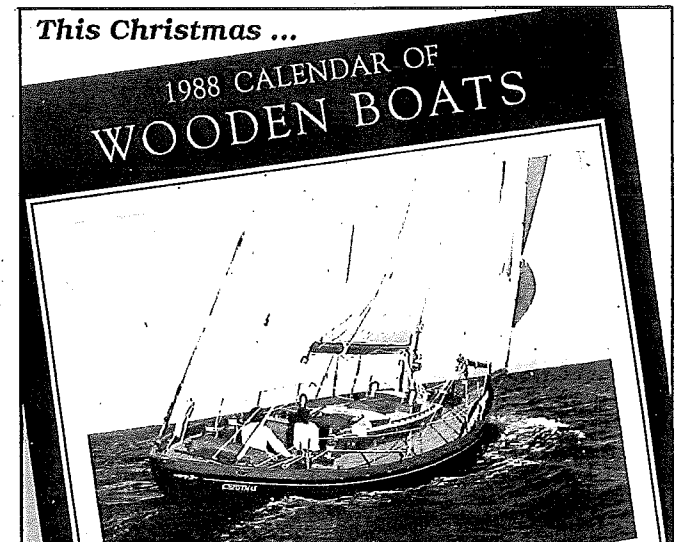
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at the periphery of the Square are less expensive, and if a merchant is lucky enough to have signed a long lease several years ago, his rent may also be lower. The high rates contrast with the prices for space in other Cambridge retail districts, where prices can go as low as \$10 per square foot. It doesn't take a degree in mathematics to see that a merchant can keep his prices down at those rates, or conversely, that a merchant will have to sell a lot of coffee or cookies or hot dogs or blue jeans to pay the higher rent and make a profit, too. This has led over the past decade to an influx of chain or franchise operations. There are representatives of pizza chains, women's clothing chains, record-store chains, all-night convenience store chains, etc.

Gary Hack, author and former head of the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at MIT who has taken time off to go into private practice, has studied urban centers all over the world. He says that one consequence of high rents is that it leads to chain stores and franchises and discourages new ventures. "A landlord may be unwilling to rent to someone

without a letter of credit, but renting to McDonald's is like money in the bank," he says. He also says that if that condition continues over time, a downtown area like Harvard Square could take on a sameness, looking like every other downtown area. "The place becomes homogenized and loses the special qualities it once had," he observes.

The influx of trendy boutiques and mega-chain stores has produced a rallying cry from the traditionalists that is heard at cocktail parties and public neighborhood meetings: "Why can't we have our Woolworth's back?" The question is both practical and symbolic. For years, the popular 5-and-10 cent store occupied a prominent place in the Square, but it was turned into offices and other stores several years ago. The store was cavernous and sold everything from "notions" to lawn chairs and dress patterns. It was, for most shoppers in the area, the only place to buy a spool of thread, for instance, or a low-priced toy or coloring book.

One of those who have publicly mourned the loss of her

Woolworth's is Iten Fales, who lives on Hilliard Street, at the edge of Harvard Square. She is concerned not only about the loss of the store, but with anything that happens in Harvard Square, from the kind of bricks used on the sidewalks, to the traffic patterns, to what plans a developer may be hatching. She has been at it since the 1960s, when she and others banded together to form the Harvard Square Defense Fund in order to stop the John F. Kennedy Library from locating in the Square. "We saw the tide coming," she says, "and we built dikes around it. We called ourselves the 'Hilliard Street Helions.' We wanted to keep Cambridge the way we found it."

Fales, a feisty and articulate woman, has not stopped since. She is wary and distrustful of developers, including Harvard University. "We love Harvard, but as a developer, they're no better or worse than any other developer. We play no favorites." Harvard has, in fact, built or converted dozens of buildings around the Square for academic use or housing. One of the most prominent Harvard buildings is Holyoke Center, in the geographic center of the

Square. It is a 10-story, concrete-faced building, 20 years old, that has met with scathing criticism for its raw, angular style and the way its height and bulk loom over the surrounding buildings. Another prominent new structure is the John F. Kennedy School of Government, which started small in the 1970s and has been growing since. The latest addition planned is a classroom-and-office building containing about 90,000 square feet that would be adjacent to the existing school buildings.

Fales has equally tart words for some of the other developers. Of the Charles Square builders she says, "The money came from Pittsburgh, steel money. And the money will go out of the city just as quickly." Of Louis DiGiovanni, who plans a building on Mifflin Place: "It will make Mifflin Place into a canyon." Of another developer, who wants to tear down the Harvard Motor House: "My project for this winter is to save the motor inn." Fales, who has seen so much change in the past decades, has no illusion that the past can be reclaimed, but she does mourn it. "Harvard Square was a very low-profile, local square. There was a 5-and-10 — Woolworth's — on Brattle Street. There were three food stores; you didn't need a car to shop, you could fill all your needs in Harvard Square. There was a hand laundry and three cobblers. The individual store owner can't maintain himself; they can't afford the rents."

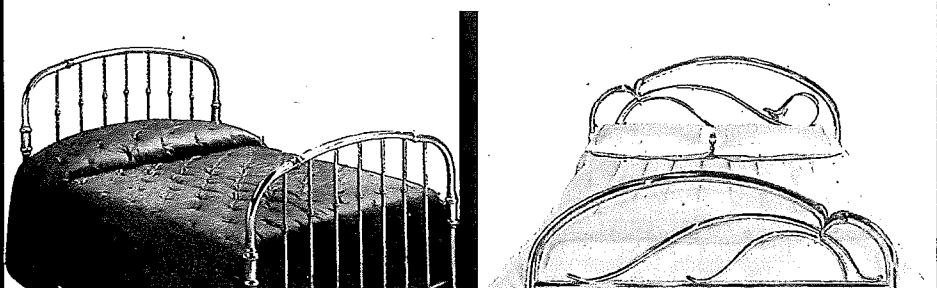
Development in Harvard Square has sparked its share of fear, anger, and criticism. But the champions of development remind us it has another side, and that is dollars. Tax dollars. When the place where the Charles Square complex was built was an empty lot, it brought into the city coffers nothing in taxes. This year, the owners of the complex will pay the city more than \$1.2 million in taxes, and the condo owners will pay another \$395,000. Similarly, the new condo-and-office complex next to it, University Place, pays hundreds of thousands in taxes each year.

Across the street, where there is now just a hole in the ground, a new building will soon rise, and so will the tax take. Multiply this by the hundreds of new buildings erected in recent years in all parts of the city — Kendall Square, Porter Square, the Alewife and Lechmere areas — and the economic picture emerges. All the taxes paid by new development, which often replaced disused or underused properties, mean lower taxes for homeowners. This fall, the residential tax rate in Cambridge is \$9.79 per thousand dollars of valuation, one of the lowest residential tax rates in Greater Boston. (The commercial tax rate, that paid by developers, stands at \$21.15.)

The argument can be made that new development creates pressure for more city services, but in fact, the essential

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services the city provides, fire and police protection, for instance, have changed little in recent years, and the school population is nearly stable. In some cases of new development around Harvard Square and in other areas, public improvements are often part of the master plan, paid for by the developer or by federal funds for that purpose.

For instance, the MBTA had several areas of the Square dug up periodically for nearly seven years. When all the underground work was com-

pleted, the MBTA resurfaced several streets, created attractive new pedestrian plazas and walkways, and re-created public parks. The grounds around the Charles Square complex and University Place were landscaped and streetscaped by the developers to match the publicly funded construction. In fact, the University Place owners created a mini country garden, with two old houses — one a reproduction, the other an original — and a grassy open area to beautify the entrance to their complex.

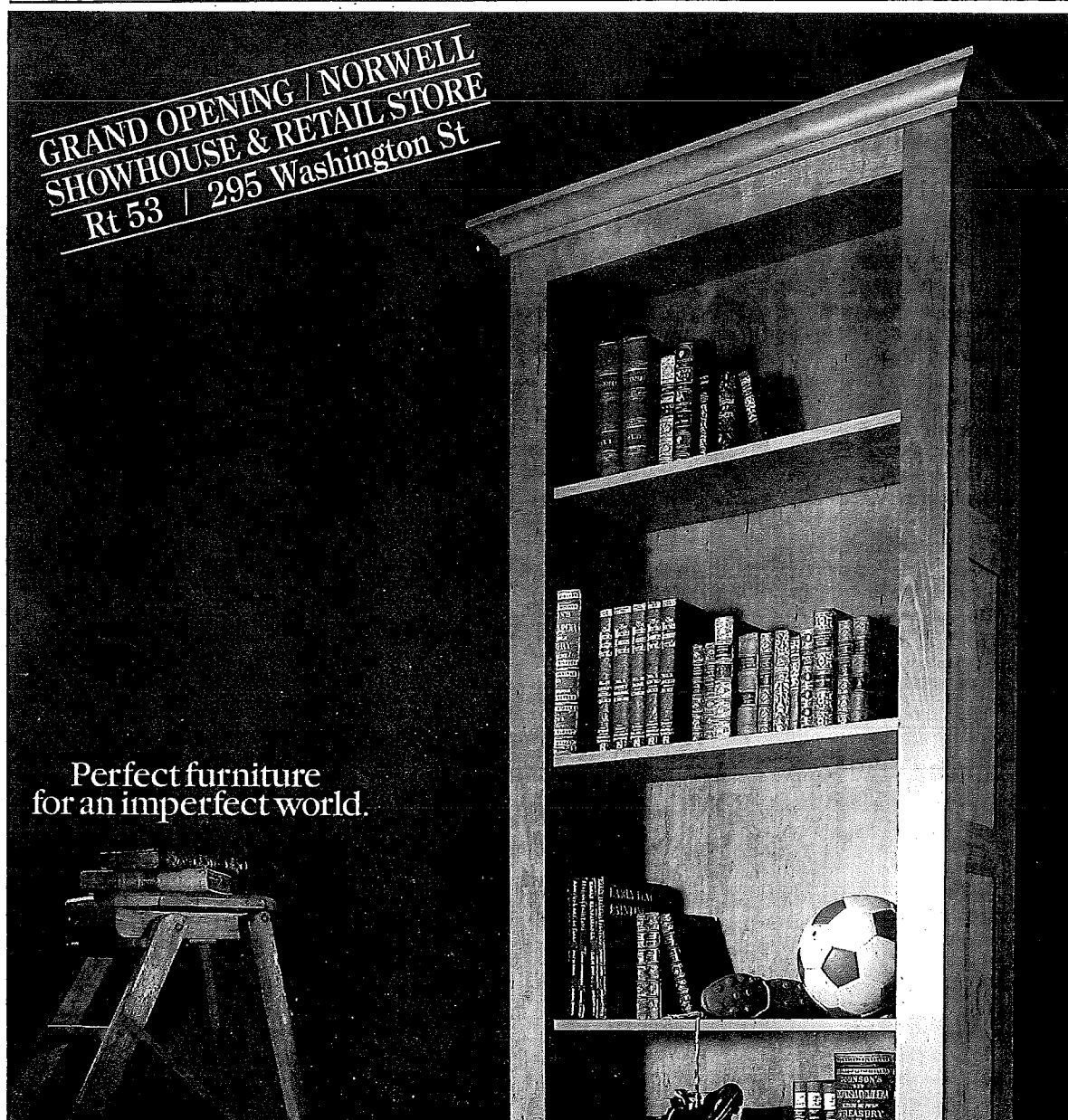
Behind the Charles complex, the Metropolitan District Commission built the John F. Kennedy Memorial Park, an open area facing the river, with a handsome granite fountain as its centerpiece. Gary Hack, the urban designer, expressed in an interview many concerns about possible overdevelopment in Harvard Square, but he gives high marks to the public improvements. "I like the new pedestrian plaza — even the punk kids who hang out there — and I like the curved shape of the bank building, and I like the 'fill-outs,' the way they build the buildings out to the lot lines to keep the same look as some of the older buildings."

None of this development, of course, takes place in a vacuum. Developers who have worked around Harvard Square are unanimous in voicing the opinion that there is hardly a municipality anywhere that makes the process so exhaustive — both from a legal standpoint and a citizen-participation standpoint. Cambridge has the usual complement of building laws, from the standard building codes to zoning regulations and height and density restrictions. But it also has safeguards by which each building is reviewed for historical value, parking regulations, and even aesthetics. There are also the usual zoning board, planning board, and board of appeals to which each project may have to submit its plans. And in 1986, to get a better handle on overall Harvard Square development, the city created the Harvard Square Advisory Committee. This is made up of 12 members, including landscape architects, business people, property owners, neighbors, and one representative from Harvard. Their purpose is to review all projects planned for the so-called Harvard Square Overlay District, a special zone created by the city to help apply uniform standards to projects there.

Basically, the Advisory Committee looks at each project from its earliest stages and, in effect, becomes the early clearinghouse of ideas and issues and the mediator between conflicting interests. In fact, all applications for permits and variances must be submitted to the committee. It does not have veto power over a planned project, but, according to the committee's statement, "it is expected that, in making decisions regarding special permits and variances within the Overlay District, the Planning Board and/or Zoning Board of Appeals will give due consideration to the report and recommendations of the Advisory Committee." So far, the committee has reviewed

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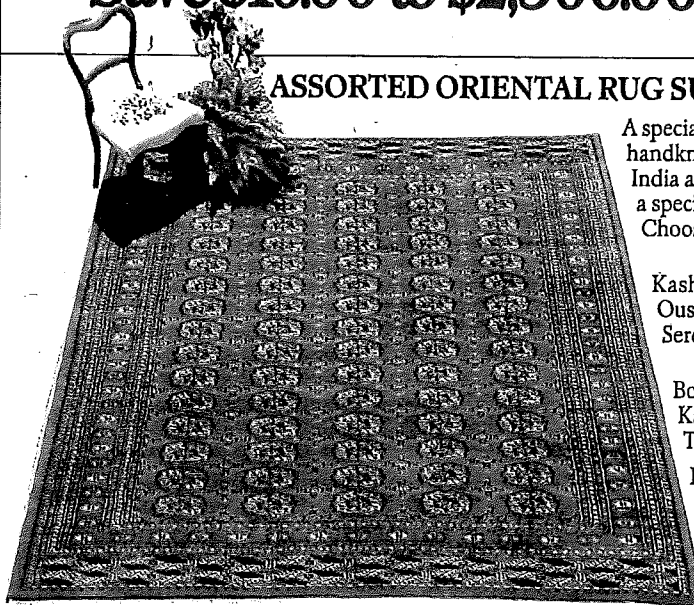
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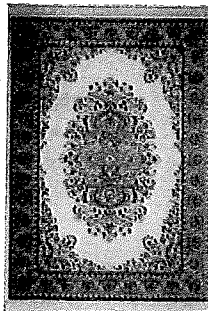


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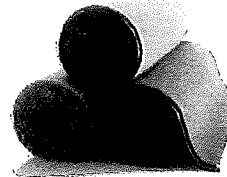
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9 x 12	\$99 <sup>00</sup> to \$259 <sup>00</sup> reg. \$270 to \$630
12 x 12	\$199 <sup>00</sup> to \$239 <sup>00</sup> reg. \$350 to \$480

## HANDMADE DHURRIE SUPER SALE



## CLASSIC PETIT POINT DESIGN FROM SPAIN

100% wool, Petit-Point Design in Ivory, Black or Rust. This rug would be a flattering addition to the Country, Colonial, or even Contemporary looks.

Reg. \$100.00 Sale \$60.00

eight proposals; one has been turned down by the Board of Zoning Appeals, the others are still in the planning stages. It is too soon to assess the worth or clout of the committee, but its supporters say that having one body look at all aspects of a project, from aesthetic appropriateness to parking, helps both developers and interested citizens to focus their energies.

In one report, for instance, the committee said of the proposed Brattle Street-Mifflin Place complex that will replace the department store and the bank building: "The building's proposed materials and detailing ... are consistent with Harvard Square building traditions, achieve a reasonable degree of special treatment appropriate to a building on such a prominent site, and are respectful of the wide variety of building scales and materials found in its vicinity." Some members voiced the view, though, that the plans need modification: "The building is too high, too bulky, and the reduction in parking is too extreme. Difficult site conditions do not justify granting extensive waivers but rather suggest that the limits of the site should be expressed through reduced development intensity."

The Advisory Committee is only one of several mechanisms used to ensure citizen input into the shape of new development and to ensure that the city's legal controls reflect the wishes of the citizenry, but it is an imperfect system nonetheless. There is no ideal way, most urban planners agree, to balance the conflicting interests of capitalism, with its desire to maximize profit, and neighborhood residents, with their desire to minimize overcrowding and drastic change.

Gary Hack points out that some cities, such as Seattle, have created public agencies to own and manage parts of the urban core, to give more public control over usage. He concedes that such an arrangement is unlikely in Harvard Square, given the pattern of private and institutional ownership. But he does agree with the principle of advisory committees, and he thinks they should be given even more power than they usually have, though not the ultimate authority of granting permission. "They slow down the pace of change. In an area where you're concerned with being engulfed, it's good to have some agency to slow things down."

Hack also credits the residents and businesspeople interested in serving on such boards — Harvard Square probably has more experts in ex-

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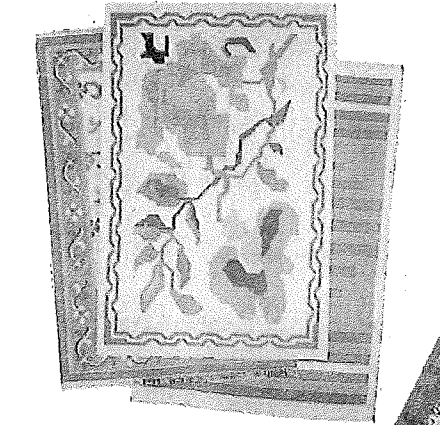
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**HANDMADE DHURRIE SUPER SALE**



**CLASSIC PETIT POINT DESIGN FROM SPAIN**

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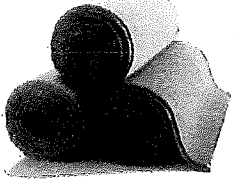
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8 x 10	\$89 <sup>00</sup> to \$199 <sup>00</sup> reg. \$204 to \$474	12 x 12	\$199 <sup>00</sup> to \$239 <sup>00</sup> reg. \$350 to \$480
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Hack also credits the residents and businesspeople interested in serving on such boards — Harvard Square probably has more experts in every field of endeavor per square mile than anywhere else — for curbing runaway development. "Desirable areas of cities always have a constituency," he observes. "Cities are as good as the political activism surrounding the issues."

**M**uch of the controversy of Harvard Square, its past, present, and future, has to do with a notion as elusive and amorphous as "charm." It has charm, it had charm, it's losing its charm. But what does that all mean? Does it mean a barbershop next to a hole-in-the-wall bookstore full of dark treasures? Or is it the flowers spilling out onto the sidewalk from the florist shop? Is it the motley crew that populates the outdoor cafe in front of Holyoke Center, the guitar players, the chess players? How about the airy atrium restaurant, with its own forest and waterfall? Or Harvard's stately brick-and-stone buildings that ring the Square, their walls strewn with ivy. Is charm to be found in the shops selling leather punk regalia or Italian sweaters? Or is it

*Continued on page 92*

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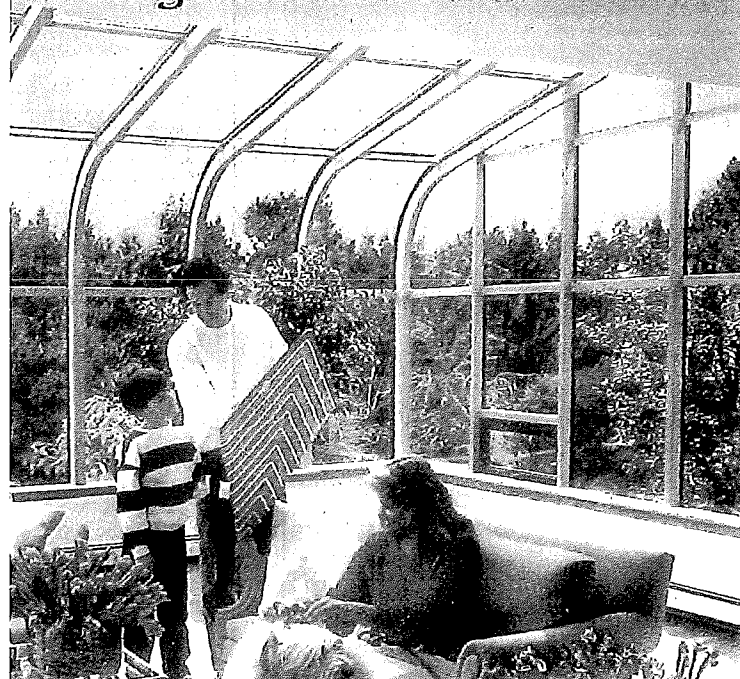
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## Harvard Square

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 88

in the bars packed with the exuberant young on a football weekend, their high spirits ringing out into the autumn air?

The answer is yes. To all of the above.

Which is a way of saying that each of us defines charm, for it exists in the eye of the beholder. As long as buildings and institutions attract people, there will be charm — and life. In recent years, changes in storefront use have changed the mix.

For instance, one low-priced restaurant became a branch bank, another became a high-priced clothing store. People still are attracted to these places, but they are, perhaps, different kinds of people who come to the Square for different reasons. Does it mean fewer professors or curbside philosophers are attracted by this dilution of diversity? No one

knows the answer, but it is an intriguing question, for the diversity that is Harvard Square is central to its existence and identity.

Longtime Square-watchers often bemoan every change, yet they will also privately admit that as long as there are 25,000 or so young people within a mile or two, that energy will inject verve into the life of this square.

Hack agrees that youth and diversity are crucial to the life of Harvard Square, but he sees an ominous trend in the proliferation of what could be classified as "tourist-oriented" establishments, such as T-shirt shops and fast-food stands. "It's like the evolution of the dinosaur," he says. "It requires more and more external food — more and more trees and green stuff to eat, to keep it alive, like tourists."

He leaves us the disturbing notion of Harvard Square as a dinosaur — heading not for extinction, perhaps, but something like it. •



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