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Image and New Development:
Highland Park
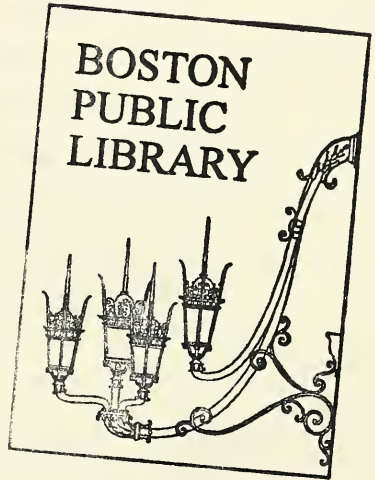
An urban design thesis submitted to the faculty of
the Harvard Graduate School of Design as partial
fullfillment of the requirements for the Master of
Architecture in Urban Design degree.

Spring, 1988

Anne Burns

The thesis behind this study is that a strategy for increasing the positive perception of a community is the positive reinforcement of symbolic spaces within and relationships with the larger community surrounding it.

An important point of departure is that the character of a community is very important. That is both how the community perceives themselves, as well as that image that the community at large envisions. Any redevelopment strategies should address this character and make specific directives towards acknowledging and enhancing it. This should take place before new development occurs in the community. This thesis hopes to illuminate relationships between an existing community and opportunities for positive new development. It is important to understand how this character, or image, has been defined.

What is meant by image? The perception of an area or place. This perception could be very different in person, or from the media, or photographs. This image could vary also depending on whether the perceiver is a stranger traveling through or a member of that particular community. There are many definitions of image, but an important definition for the field of architecture and urban design has been the Lynchian version. Kevin Lynch, in his book, The Image of the City, defines and elaborates on physical attributes which contribute to one's mental image of a particular area.

>"This leads to the definition of what might be
>called *imageability* : that quality in a physical
>object which gives it a high probability of evoking
>a strong image in any given observer. It is that

shape, color, or arrangement which facilitates the
making of vividly identified, powerfully
structured, highly useful mental images of the
environment. It might also be called *legibility*, or
perhap *visibility* in a heightened sense, where
objects are not only able to be seen, but are
presented sharply and intensely to the senses." [1]

The degree of 'imageability' is attributable to five keys elements. Lynch
labels these as edges, nodes, districts, landmarks and paths. [2] Perceivable
boundaries, key activity spaces, significantly identifiable areas, notable
structures or spaces, and circulation systems which tie these together on
various levels, all contribute to the special identity or image of a place.
Cognitive representational maps denoting elements contributing to the
image of a place show up in various works. The word imageability keeps
creeping into studies. This is a very important piece of work and although
its influence has been great in its field, in recent urban history, we have
allowed infrastructure and other city services to dominate the 'design',
rather than issues of image or identity. Efficiency and economies of scale
have dictated the city's structure, often producing plans which are not
sympathetic with important factors of topography, climate and culture. [3]
It is my intent to look at these factors when studying the image of a
particular area. These physical elements are important to a community's
image, but as one looks into more study on the idea of image, this is not
all.

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The dictionary defines image to be a likeness; a mental picture, conception or idea; an extended metaphor; and a representation of a mental image. The word 'image' shows up in many ways and it is interesting to see the variety of definitions. Photography collections, scientific studies of the eye, and newspaper titles are just a few of these situations. These begin to suggest that the image of a place can be much more than physical urban design elements. This begins to suggest that people and events also contribute to this image. A festival, a community strike, or vandalism could all be images of a particular area. It is interesting to think of three familiar sites in the Boston area and compare them. Beacon Hill, Somerville and Roxbury have many similarities when one considers their housing stock and other physical elements, and yet the three areas produce very different images. [4] There is much more to the notion of image or identity then physical aspects, such as income, residents, particular commercial places in the area. It is evident to me that these notions affect the physical environment. Along this same line, it is not simply physical and social elements which contribute to a particular area's character, but also the distance at which it is viewed. This is very important to be aware of when faced with different perceptions of one particular area.

Donald Appleyard, in a paper for the California University's Institute of Urban and Regional Development, wrote of this discrepancy, or rather distortion, of images at different distances. He states that as physical mobility and communications increase, more and more people are environmental strangers, so that conflicts and discrepancies in perception become more and more prevalent. There are those who travel by, and those

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who live there. [5] In his paper, Appleyard divides a sheet into two sides, differentiating views from home and distant environments. He cites words that pertain to behavior, perception and meaning, and attitudes and roles. Examples of these are 'theirs vs. ours' and 'influence of the media vs. direct experience'. [6] By not being aware of the community firsthand, there is a danger of working with the wrong perception.

It is interesting to note that city agencies consistently produced positive literature about urban renewal in Roxbury, while at the same time, the community had been criticizing it. It is only now in 1987, two decades later, that these same city agencies published neighborhood profiles which admit that urban renewal may not have been the answer. An interesting way to look at other means of image other than physical elements, as stated earlier, is the media. This could be a citywide newspaper, which would be an outside view, or a community publication, an inside view. An interesting difference to note is in the history that a city agency produced for a neighborhood profile and one that a community organization wrote. The city agency's was very general, and stated that with disinvestment, lower income blacks moved into Roxbury. [7] The community organization's history stated that 'Yankee' families once dominated the area, and with disinvestment and a large migration from the South, Blacks were forced to move into a neighborhood which was already deteriorating through racism. [8] The later is much more of a defense, than just a general historical statement as the former. Another interesting thing is to look at newspaper articles written about Roxbury. One type I found were the 'new development' articles in the real estate section; Roxbury on its way up.

Another type were those discussing political issues such as 'Mandella'; a fragmented community with little or no cohesion.

Through various encounters with Roxbury, with city agencies, in the media, and various individual's reactions, I began to question its image. As stated above, images from the media are at best mixed, and more often negative. The city agencies seem to have a different perspective than those in the neighborhood. Many people have images of fear and caution, without having any firsthand experience. The physical image of Roxbury is mixed with many wonderful features, like natural land forms and solid, historic structures, juxtaposed by vacant lots and decrepit structures. Cities are constantly changing, and to comprehend a city's image, one must also have a good understanding of its changes. With this in mind, it is important to look at its history. Roxbury's history is one that rivals Boston, both in when it was founded and its heterogeneous nature.

The town of Roxbury, in the central part of Boston, was founded in 1639 and annexed to Boston in 1868, 229 years later. It is one of the City's most historically significant areas. Roxbury Village started at what is now the Dudley Station area. It was at the edge of hilly farmland which today is know as Highland Park and Washington Park Areas. Roxbury was connected to Boston only by a narrow neck of land, later to become Washington Street. In the early 1800's, the summer homes and country estates of Boston's wealthy families were in the highlands.

Lower cost models of Boston's townhouses,and detached singles and doubles were built on Dudley Street from 1840-1870. And the majority of residential development took place between 1870-1900 when streetcar service to Boston was established and the bays between Boston and Roxbury along the neck were filled.

The Highland became the site of a more affluent residential neighborhood during the 19th century, while Lower Roxbury became the site for light industrial uses, and residential stock corresponding to this.

During the 1940's and 50's, there was significant migration of Blacks from the South. In ten years, the racial composition completely flipped from a large majority of white households, to those of black households. Housing deterioration became widespread. By 1960, community leaders recognized that they needed to do something, and this turned out to be urban renewal. Although this has been seen in a variety of perspectives, even city agencies now begin to admit the scars and negative image that urban renewal has helped to give to this community. [9]

The image that Roxbury projects is very important to its success as a cohesive community. It is linked with its identity and sense of community. It also would help if Boston had a better image of Roxbury. It could lead to better services and a more cohesive relationship. It is interesting to look at Roxbury's connection with the rest of Boston. Eventhough the bays between them were filled in long ago, it still seems like Roxbury is across the bay, connected only by a neck. Many of the scars left by urban renewal,

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and other interventions, are in the form of vacant land and decayed structures. The potential for development is great. Although again, there is a discrepancy between the image that the city sees, in terms of new development, and the image that the community sees. When one looks closer at Roxbury, it becomes more complex. As we start to appreciate in its history, Roxbury is actually made up of smaller, more heterogeneous areas, not unlike Boston. The image of these areas are quite different. It is important to understand not only the image internally in the community, but also that which is seen from the outside, Boston. Roxbury is a large area and a big percentage of Boston. It seems fair to look at the various areas of Roxbury for their own image and identity, as one might look at various parts of Boston. Since redevelopment and revitalization does not happen instantaneously, it is useful to look at phases which would be most effective in the long term process. The image of the area, both from the inside and from the rest of the city, is very important. Because of this, it is important to look at an area which could positively affect both Roxbury, and the rest of Boston. There is a particular area which draws my interest first. This area is Highland Park. The map shown on the following page illustrates Highland Park in relation to other areas of Boston. The neighborhood is approximately three miles from the Downtown Area.

Historical Reference Map
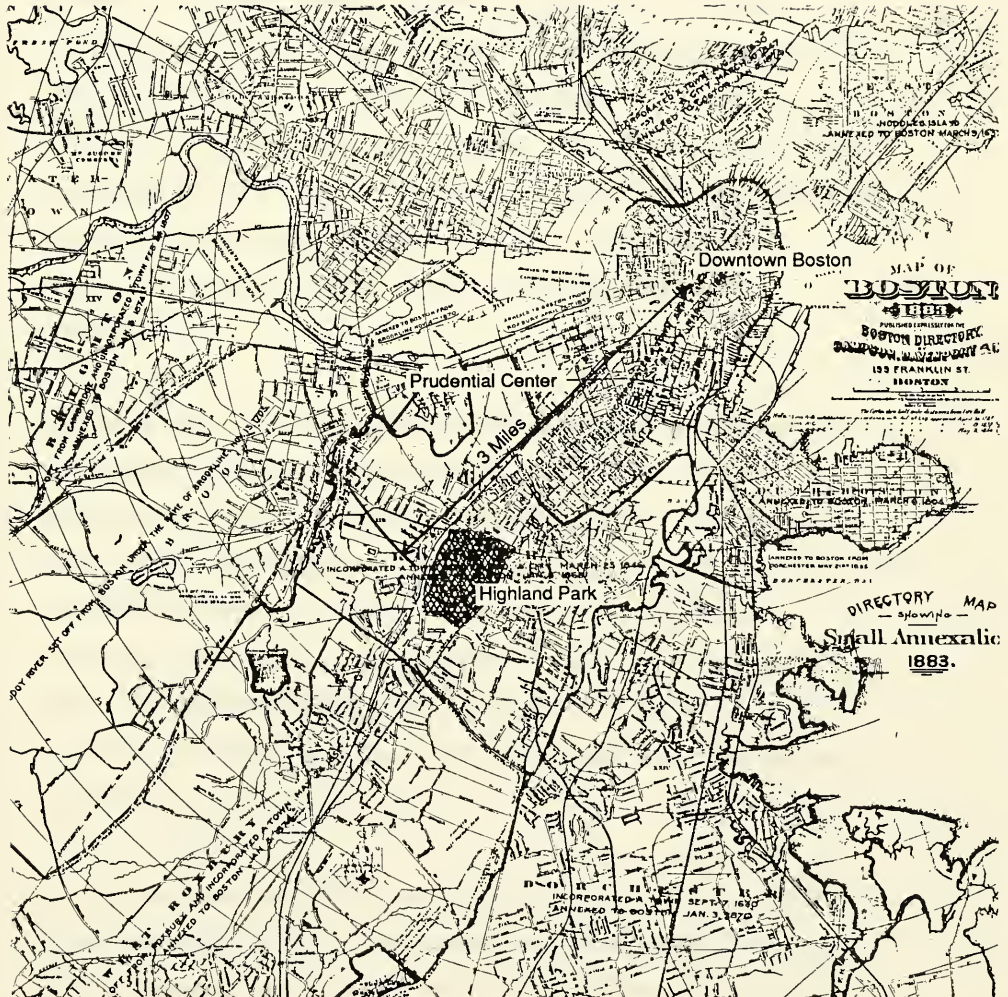
Highland Park has great potential for enhancing Roxbury's image. It borders along the Southwest Corridor, and the new transit line. This would enable many people traveling past Roxbury to have a different perception of it then they might have now. This is also true where it borders Washington Street, a major artery for the City. Highland Park is a historically significant area with many historical structures still existing there today. Highland Park has a large amount of vacant parcels, enabling new development strategies which could reinforce the areas identity and meet the needs of the community. And Highland Park has topographical features which make opportunities available to develop or reinforce vista relationships with other areas of Boston, as well as other areas of Roxbury.

Highland Park, from its founding in 1630 until the second quarter of the 19th century was a sparsely settled agricultural hill area adjacent to the main activity centers of the Dudley and Elliot Squares. Elliot Square has been a center for settlement ever since the beginning of this area. Many of its historical structures still remain. Highland Park, on Fort Hill, is another physical landmark of early history in the area. A fort was built there in 1775 as part of ring defense in the revolutionary war. It only survived until 1869 when a water standpipe was built, and then restored in 1895 by Frederick Law Olmsted.

In 1825, when a group of citizens brought 26 acres of land around the fort for a residential community, development began in Highland Park. Alvah Kittredge was responsible for much of the development that took place

between 1835 and 1866. Much of this had to do with subdividing large estates; a practice which caught on. By 1658, a grid of small streets and a substantial number of structures were evident. This was very different from their agrarian beginnings. By 1873, most of the streets that exist now were present. It was at this time that the row house was introduced to Highland Park. Before this there were mainly single and double structures. Row houses in Highland Park, unlike Back Bay, were built by developers, mainly by the block. They also varied quite a bit in material and detail. Row housing was mainly built in the early 1870's. The estate owners that waited until after this to develop mainly built multi-family housing.

By 1900, Highland Park was developed. The last of the 19th century estates were developed in 1915. The more recent history brought about a decline in the intensity of land-use, with vacant and deterioriating buildings being demolished. This decline carried on through most of the 20th century with Highland Park, and other 'streetcar suburbs' being passed up for points further west. With disinvestment, lower income residents were able to move into the area, and the decline went further with less services from the city, and a decrease in capital. [10]

There are both, general and specific characteristics which directly affect the image, or identity, of Highland Park. Some general conditions are the amount of vacant land in the area, the existing housing stock, the existing street patterns in the area, topography and land forms particular to the area, and the area's historical significance. Specific conditions are the

Southwest Corridor and Washington Street in relation to the area. Also important are the existing historical open spaces and their role in the area. These characteristics are important to study further in determining new development strategies for the area.

A very important step between initial research and the analysis of the existing conditions was a brief study which interviewed a variety of people involved in Highland Park from a variety of perspectives. This is not a complete concensus, but rather a brief look at attitudes toward the area and new development within it.

The community is quite optimistic about the amount of renovation that has been going on. They are very cautious, and somewhat skeptical about new development. They like slow, orderly growth. They are a very strong, vocal community group. The city representatives realize this as an important force when planning for new development. The community realizes that there is much vacant land in the area but would like a cohesive development plan before moving ahead with the various pieces. The area has quite a bit of historical fabric, not just particular landmarks, and is applying for the entire neighborhood to become a National Register District. The community themselves are very interested in preserving as much as possible of the existing fabric. It is my interpretation that they perceive the existing character of their community positively and aspire to reinforcing that and building on it.

I have found through initial research that not only is the perceived character important to a community, but as I started to elaborate earlier in this text, there are different perceptions, depending on where, and who, is perceiving it. To simplify the argument, I will narrow in on two different perceptions, internal and external. An internal perception is one which is seen from inside, and usually by someone from, the community. I beleive that a cohesive, supportive environment is desirable for a residential community. The external perception of a community is that which is seen from the rest of the city. Many that directly affect the community are often not directly from it. This could be the case in a political, commercial, or private realm. It is for this reason that a relationship, or dialogue, should exist between the internal and the external perceptions. The internal character should be coherent from outside the community so that people will not make decisions based on an inaccurate, or one-sided perception. These two different perceptions, and the need for a relationship between them should be expressed, and positively reinforced by any development opportunities.

It is important to keep in mind not only that there are varied perceptions of a community, but that these many perceptions are usually made of very similar elements. To use the vocabulary that is quite familiar to the profession of architecture and urban design, these are Lynchian Elements. As stated earlier in the text, these are edges, paths, nodes, districts and landmarks. There are an infinite number of variations of these elements, many of them in existence. Subheadings of these elements would be the texture of the district, and the building settings around nodal areas. It is

important, when looking at positively reinforcing existing communities with new development, to discover what is worthwhile and how that can be reinforced. Then to establish opportunities and strategies for intervention which reinforce what exists.

Basic propositions which determined the type of analysis was that new development should be sensitive to its surroundings and also be a part of an overall scheme. Edges should reflect both the internal and external structure of the community; a synthesis. Along these edges, are entry points which are important elements to a community's character. Relationships among internal elements and relationships between internal and external elements are important factors. This is an environment which signifies that a community is not only tied together, but also tied with the rest of the city. A community which is unique, yet integrated.

The analysis of the existing community, which looked at various combinations of the elements discussed above, was based on general and specific points which I felt directly affected the character of the area. These characteristics have been listed earlier in the text. A general conclusion to the analysis was that the character of the existing fabric is very strong in the center of the area, and is usually strongest around existing open spaces and strong building settings. The internal character is strong, with several weak areas. The external character, mainly on the edge of the community, is weak, with several strong areas. It is interesting to reflect on one of my initial starting points, the variety of perceptions of one community, when reviewing these conclusions of the

analysis. There is a very direct correlation between the strength of the existing fabric and attitudes toward the community. Those attitudes in the community are typically stronger, where the existing fabric is more intact, than those looking in from a distance. The edges have a very weak existing fabric condition. Individual analysis drawings and their conclusions follow.

Existing Building Pattern

The existing texture in the area is predominately small scale. The pattern reflects various stages of historical development. There tends to be a gradiation of density, going from a dense pattern in the northern part to a less dense pattern in the southern part.

EXISTING BUILDING PATTERN

Vacant Land

There is a significant amount of vacant land in the study area. Much of it is spread throughout the site in small parcels, but a good part of it is grouped in large areas, usually located on or near boundaries. These large areas of vacant land also make it possible for major interventions. The amount of vacant land is approx. 30 acres, or 14% of the area.

VACANT LAND

Edge Condition

The quality of the edges vary greatly around the study area from a sharp cliff edge, to a delicate layered edge, to weak, or no edge.

EDGE CONDITION

SHARP EDGE; CLIFF
WEAK EDGE
LAYERED EDGE
RESIDENTIAL EDGE
NO EDGE, OPEN
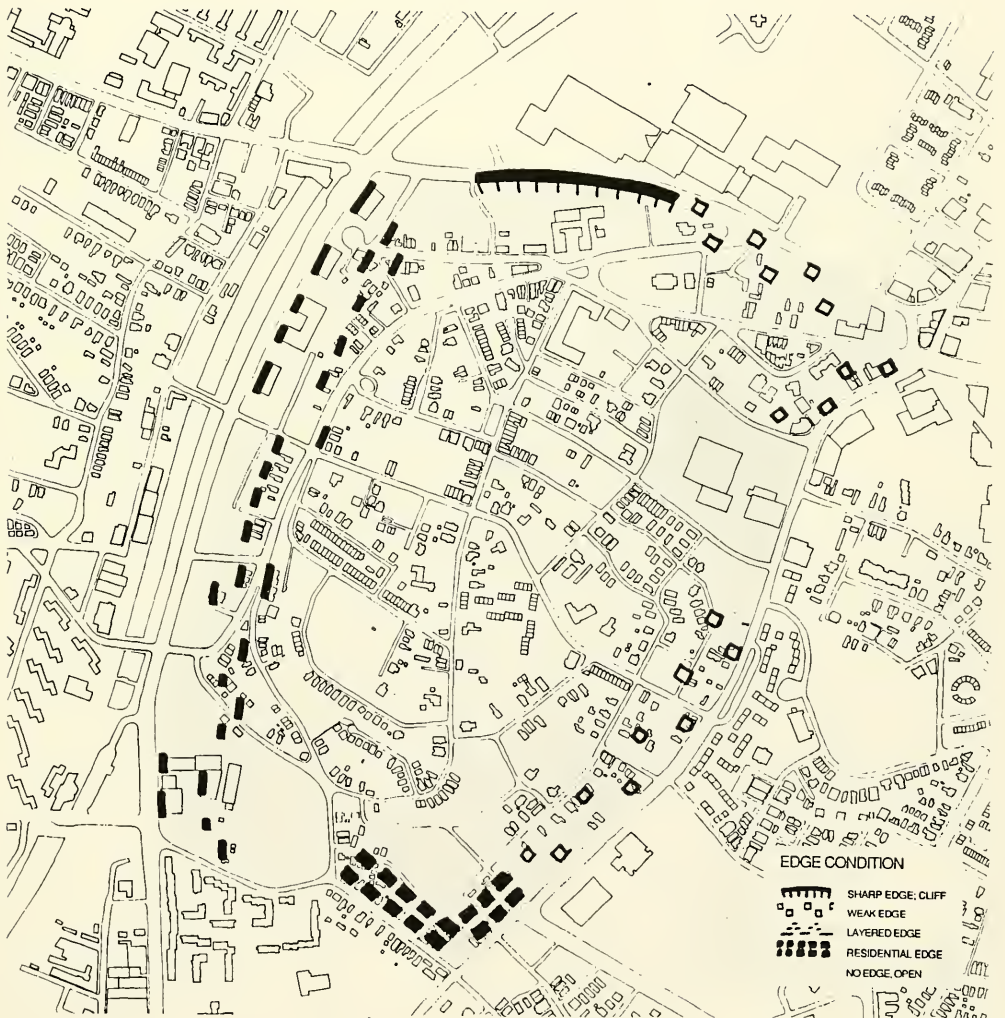
Existing Fabric Status

Both strong and weak areas exist in the study area. The weak areas tend to be near the edge, which contribute greatly to the external character of the area.

EXISTING FABRIC STATUS

STRONGEST FABRIC
STRONG FABRIC
WEAK FABRIC
WEAKEST FABRIC
DIFFERENT SCALE, POSITIVE ELEMENT
DIFFERENT SCALE, NEGATIVE ELEMENT
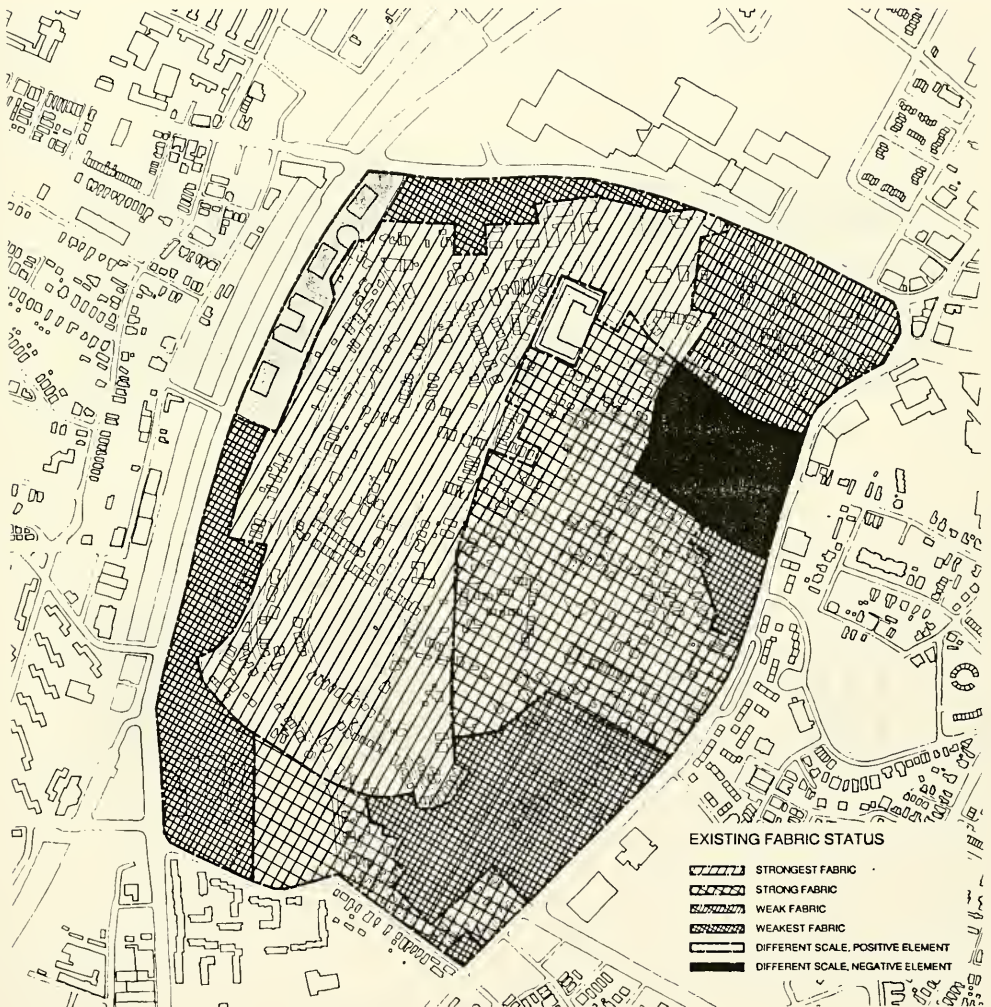
Existing Housing Types

Predominate types in the area are small scale residential styles. Articulation of windows and entrances are very common. Also, attention is given to roof elements.
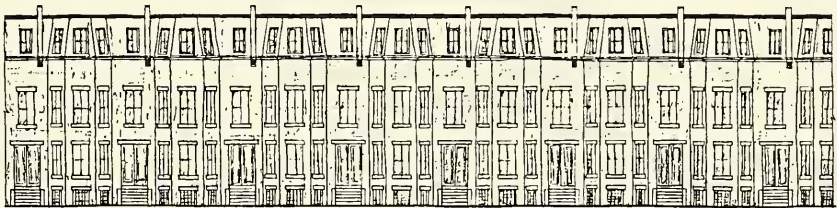
ROW HOUSE

THREE FAMILY

SINGLE FAMILY

EXISTING HOUSING TYPES

Existing Street Pattern

The street pattern in the study area is very irregular, due to topography and historical development patterns.

EXISTING STREET PATTERN

22
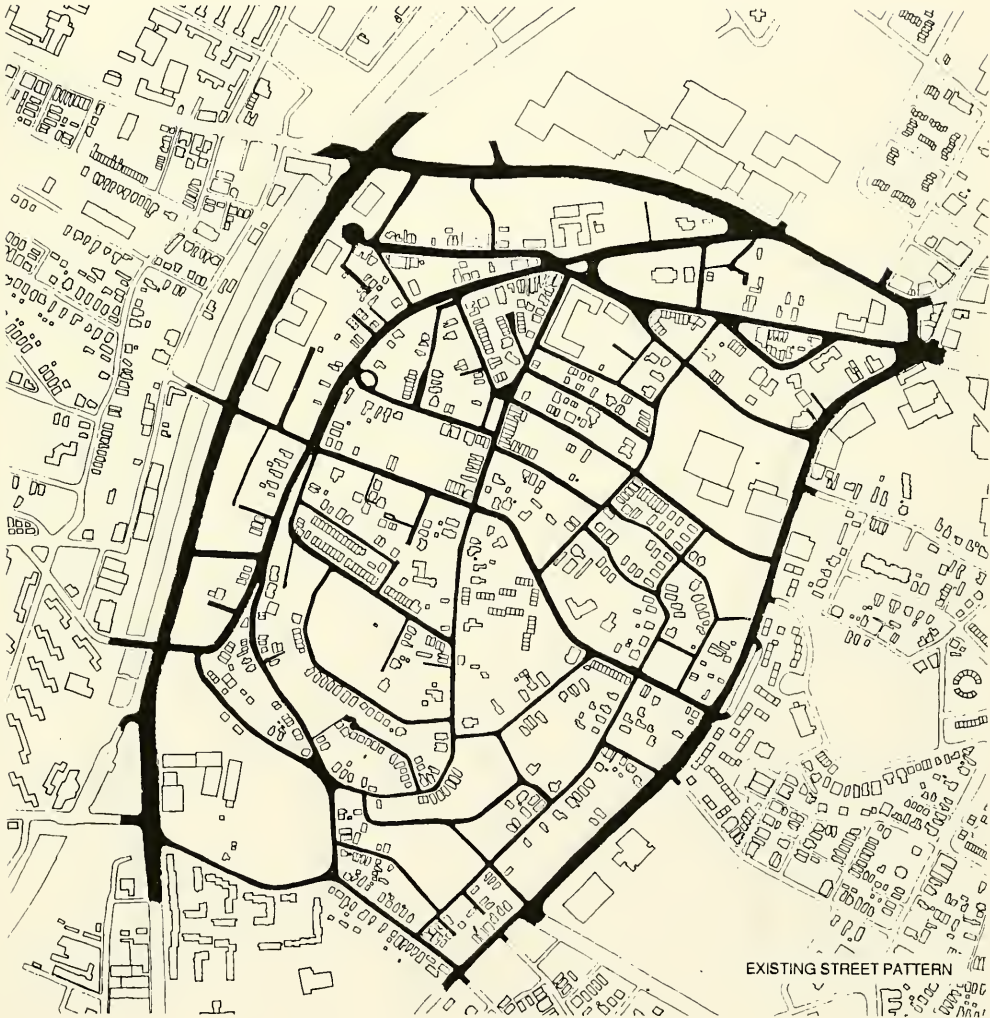
Transportation

There are major roads on three sides of the site. There are also transit nodes on three corners of the site. The internal secondary roads often go past public open spaces.

TRANSPORTATION

▬▬▬	MAJOR ROADS
·–·–·–	SECONDARY ROADS
Ⓣ	RAPID TRANSIT STATION
Ⓣ	BUS STATION
·····	PEDESTRIAN ZONE
▨	ENTRY POINT
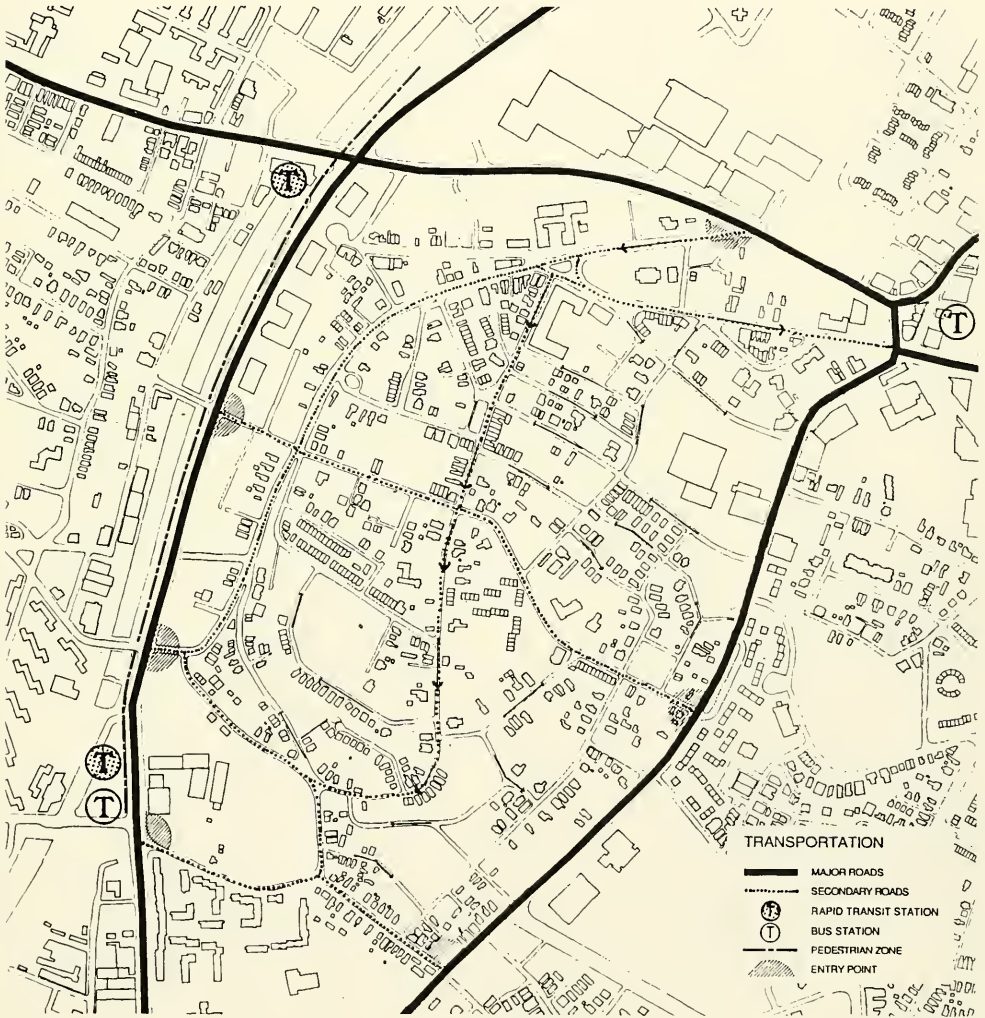
Historic Fabric

Significant historic buildings in the study area tend to be on or near historic open spaces. They are located mainly in the northern part of the site.

SIGNIFICANT HISTORIC FABRIC

■■■■ BUILDING

OPEN SPACE

Open Space/Views/Focal Points

There is a large amount of open space in the area, but it is lacking in several areas of the site.
There is a long stretch of open space on one edge of the site, Columbus Avenue. Views and focal
points are very important, both into and out of the study area.

OPEN SPACE/VIEWS/FOCAL POINTS

PUBLIC OPEN SPACE
URBAN WILD LOCATION
VIEW DIRECTION
* FOCAL POINT

Historic Spaces/Extent of Influence

The most successful spaces in extent of influence are those which line up with streets for extended views. Those with focal points located on the open space are even more successful because they are able to extend influence even beyond the study area.

HISTORIC SPACES;
EXTENT OF INFLUENCE

PUBLIC SPACE
AREA OF INFLUENCE
VIEW OF TOWER IN SPACE
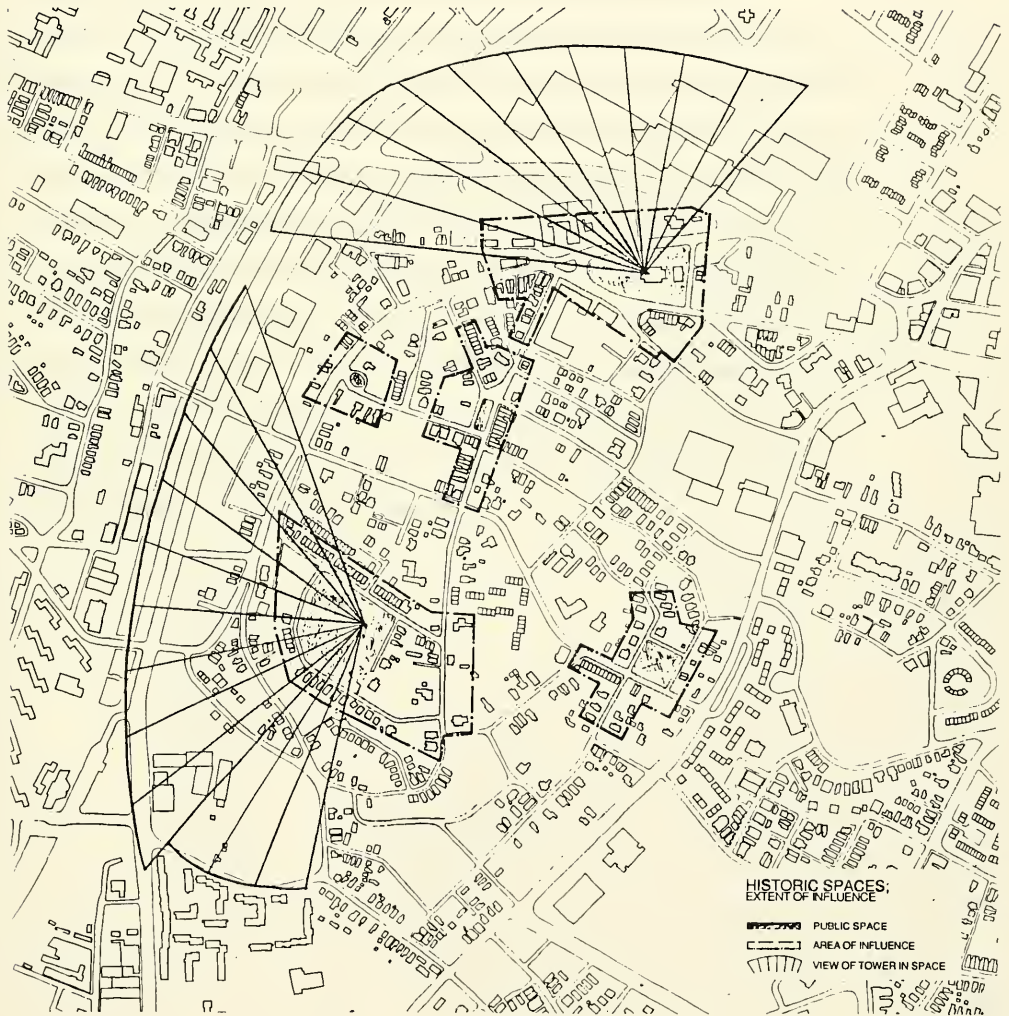
Development Proposal

Based on the previous analysis, the basic strategy for development is to take areas which have strong character, and existing fabric, and develop these areas with infill. The infill should keep in character with the existing housing types, and a plan would be developed to guide the infill development in a manner which would help reinforce the existing patterns of historical development. Infill development would also reinforce existing patterns of circulation and open space. The several areas which have been marked for redevelopment are those in which either existing uses are to be renovated, new uses are to be designated, or both. New Development is primarily the large areas of vacant land which exist in the site. These areas, which comprise a large part of the boundary, are extremely important for the character of the area, both internal, external, and a relationship between the two. A plan showing the disposition of this development is on the following page.

Development Proposal

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

▭▭▭ INFILL DEVELOPMENT
▨▨▨ REDEVELOPMENT
███ NEW DEVELOPMENT
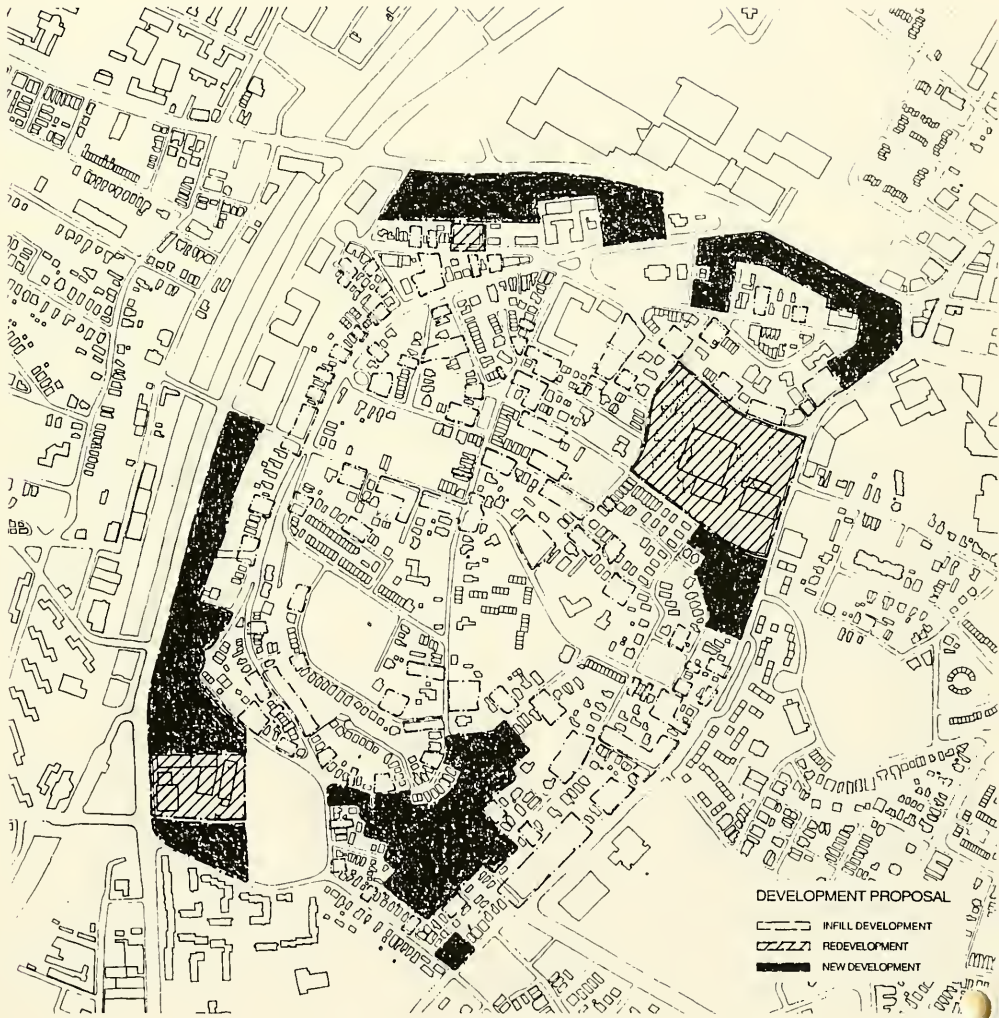
Parcel Boundaries

The large areas of vacant land and redevelopment areas have been broken up into individual parcels to be able to look more closely at the role that they need to play in the area. Forces acting on these various parcels, both internal and external, have been recognized on this drawing.

PARCEL BOUNDARIES

⊏▭▭⊐	PARCEL BOUNDARY
▬▬▬	MAJOR STREET EDGE
·-·-·-·-	STREET EDGE
⌒	CORNER FOCUS
←	VIEW DIRECTION
▪▪▪▪▪▪	RESIDENTIAL EDGE
▲▲▲▲	INSTITUTIONAL EDGE
◖◗◖◗	OPEN SPACE EDGE
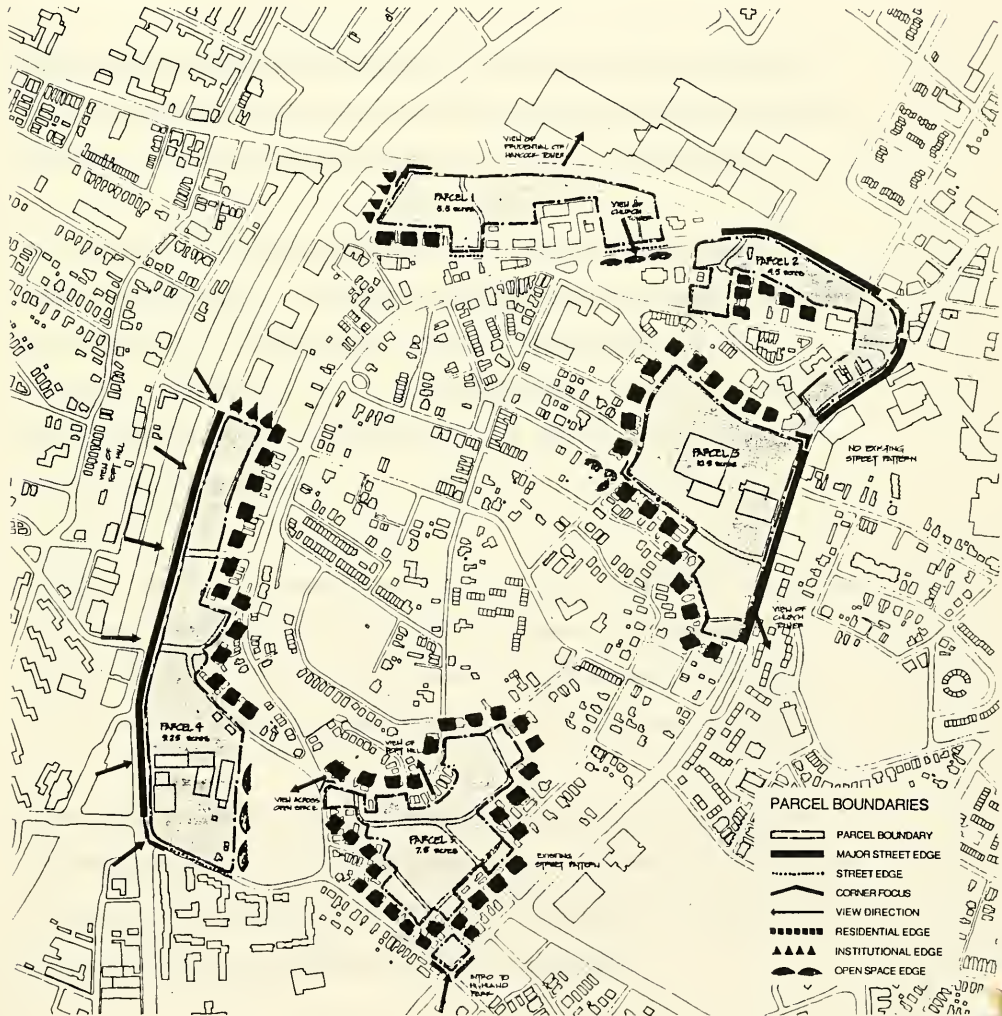
Parcel 1 is unique in that it borders a busy road, New Dudley Street, but is elevated on a steep cliff and looks out over Boston. The other edges of this parcel vary quite a bit from institutional, to residential, to historic open space.

Parcel 2 is really a part of the Dudley Station Area. It also extends down Washington Street on one side, and into the back of John Elliot Square on the other side. There is a small area which meets a residential edge.

Parcel 3 is the site of an existing bus garage area. This area has no existing street pattern. It is bounded mainly by residential edges, with one corner opening on to existing open space. A long edge of this parcel is located on Washington Street, just outside of the Dudley Square Area. An important characteristic that this site has is a view of a church tower across Washington Street.

Parcel 4 has one long edge along Columbus Avenue, while the back edges vary from institutional, to residential, to open space. An important charcteristic about this site is the views of Fort Hill and other highlights in the community from Columbus Avenue and the Southwest Corridor.

Parcel 5 has an existing street pattern and is bound almost entirely by residential edges. The two exceptions to this are one, where a corner looks across an existing open space, John Connolly Playground, and two, where a corner is exposed to Washington and Marcella Streets.

Housing Typology Study

After a development strategy was established, a brief study was done to look at various housing types, both on site and in the surrounding area. The various types, or schemes, were evaluated both for the approximate number of dwelling units which could be produced, and for their relationship to existing conditions. This study was not meant to suggest that one type of housing could be placed in all development parcels, or that only housing was appropriate development. It does however start to suggest that some form of most, if not all, the types looked at would be appropriate at different sites around Highland Park. This depended largely on the adjacent existing edges, and the role that the new development needed to play. With either of the large scale schemes, E or F, it is interesting to see how out of scale the types look when surrounded by small scale residential fabric. Yet these same types seem more plausible located on Columbus Avenue. Plans of the various housing types looked at and a table for comparison follows.

SCHÉMA B

SCHÉMA A

33

SCHEME D

SCHEME C

34

SCHEME F

SCHEME E

35
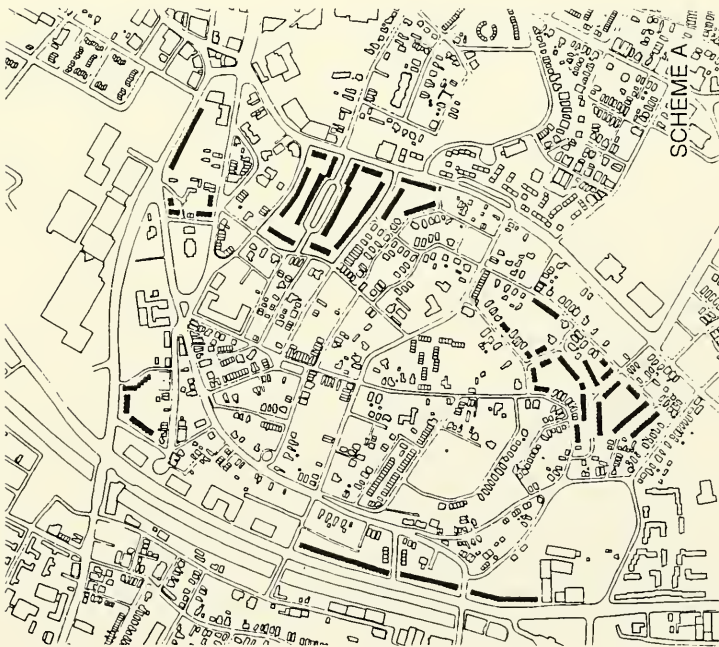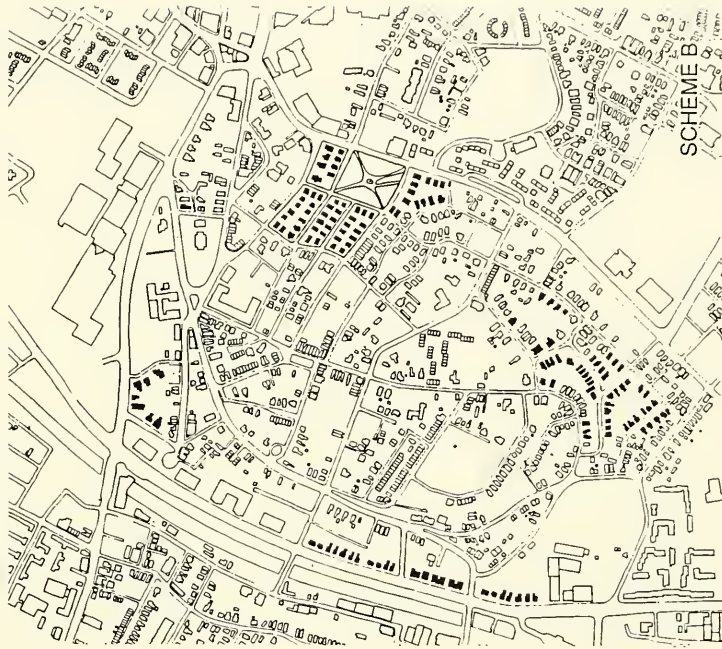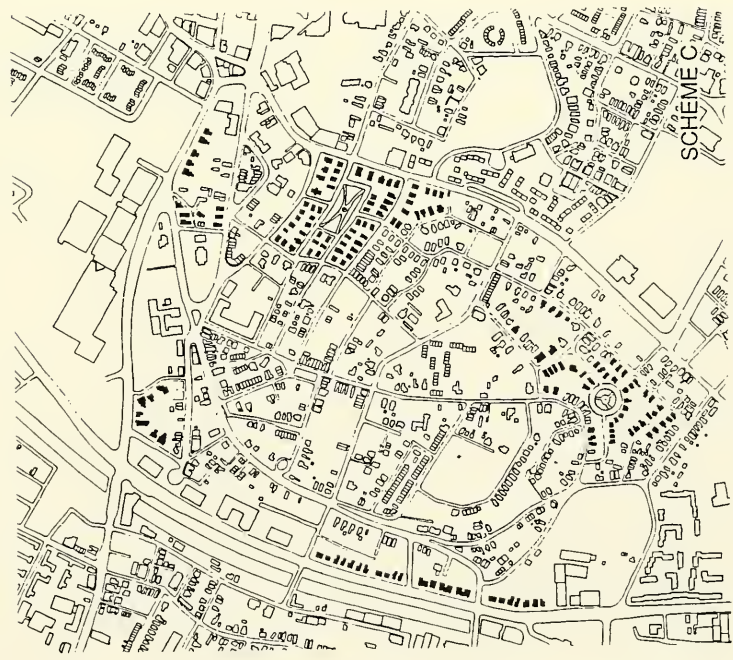
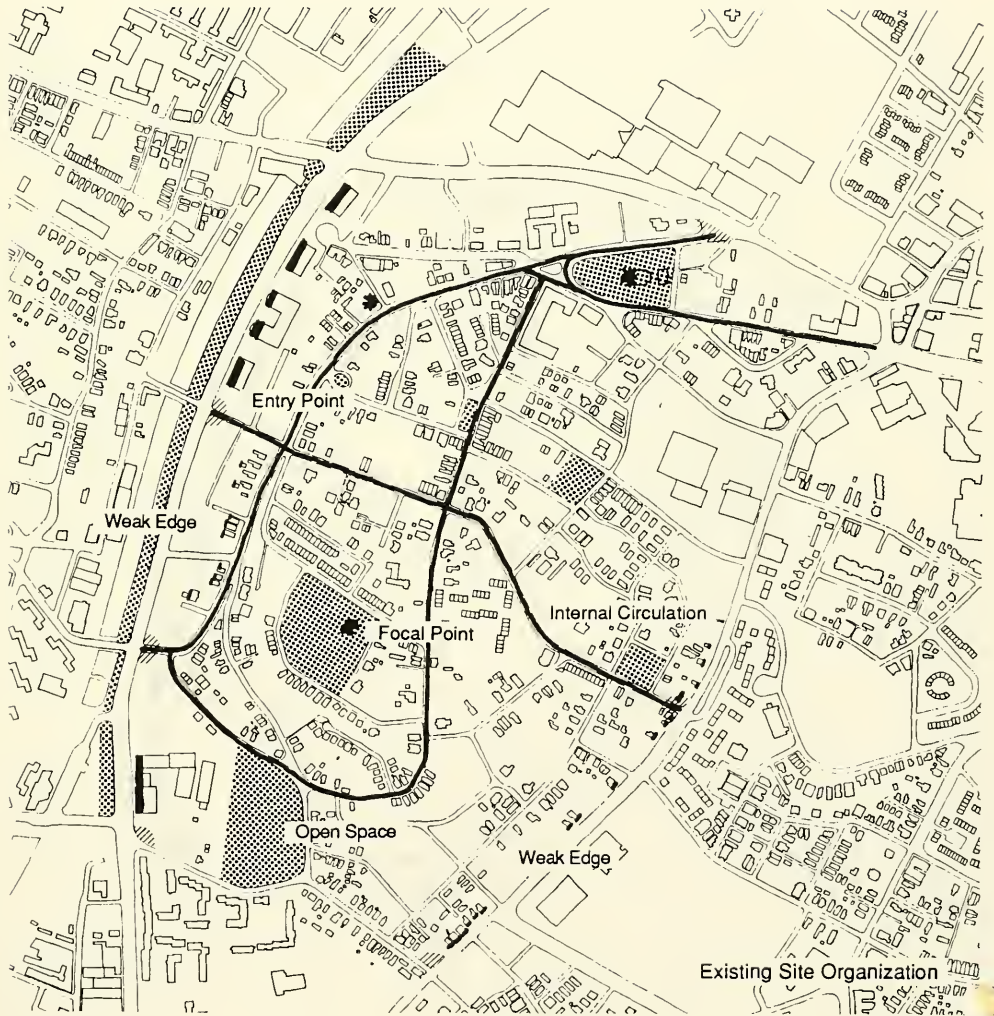| SCHEME	TYPE	D.U./ACRE	PARCEL 3 (10.5 ACRES)	PARCEL 5 (7.5 ACRES)	RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING CONDITIONS
A	ROW HOUSE; MULTIPLE UNITS 3-4 STORIES	30 D.U./ACRE	(PUBLIC SPACE; 1 ACRE) 285 UNITS	225 UNITS	ROW HOUSE TYPE EXISTS IN AREA, MAINLY AROUND OPEN SPACE RESPECTS STREET PATTERN 3-5 STORIES, 20-25' BAYS, UNITS ATTACHED PUBLIC FRONT/ PRIVATE BACK SMALL GARDEN SPACE AT ENTRY ELEVATED ENTRY
B	SINGLE FAMILY, TWO FAMILY & THREE FAMILY	10 D.U./ACRE	(PUBLIC SPACE; 2.4 ACRES) 81 UNITS	75 UNITS	HOUSING TYPE MATCHES EXISTING CONDITIONS
C	SINGLE FAMILY, TWO FAMILY & THREE FAMILY	10 D.U./ACRE	(PUBLIC SPACE; 1 ACRE) 95 UNITS	(PUBLIC SPACE; .5 ACRE) 70 UNITS	HOUSING TYPE MATCHES EXISTING CONDITIONS
D	ROW HOUSE; SINGLE UNIT TWO STORIES	15 D.U./ACRE'	157 UNITS	113 UNITS	TYPE ONLY EXISTS ON SITE IN ONE CASE, NOT GOOD EXAMPLE OFTEN DOES NOT RESPECT STREET PATTERN 2-3 STORIES, 20' BAYS, UNITS ATTACHED HEIGHT VARIES WITH EVERY UNIT, DIFFERENT FROM EXISTING CONDITIONS PUBLIC FRONT/ PRIVATE BACK, SOMEWHAT OBSCURED SMALL GARDEN SPACE AT ENTRY ELEVATED ENTRY, SOMETIMES
E	APARTMENT BLOCK; THICK TOWER 6 STORIES	50 D.U./ACRE	525 UNITS	375 UNITS	OFTEN DOES NOT RESPECT THE STREET PATTERN SCALE AND DENSITY VERY DIFFERENT; HEIGHT, 6 STORIES PUBLIC/PRIVATE REALM OBSCURED, BOTH IN BUILDING AND LANDSCAPE DEVOID OF ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE
F	APARTMENT BLOCK; SLIM TOWER 6 STORIES	50 D.U./ACRE	525 UNITS	375 UNITS	DOES NOT RESPECT STREET PATTERN SCALE AND DENSITY VERY DIFFERENT, HEIGHT, 6 STORIES PUBLIC/PRIVATE REALM OBSCURED AS IN SCHEME E, SPACES WERE SMALLER, BUT STILL NON-DESCRIPT ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS; SEE SCHEME E

A series of interventions, based on the analysis, have been proposed which have three basic goals. The interventions should reinforce the internal character of the community. They should reinforce, and establish where appropriate, the external character, and then establish a relationship between the two which reflects the internal structure, and yet takes into account external forces also. Basic strategies for reinforcing the internal character are to mend the existing fabric, or texture, and to introduce open spaces which extend and reinforce the existing inner structure. This has to do with the urban design elements of texture, open space, landmarks, building settings, and linkages between them. Basic strategies for reinforcing the external character of the community is to define their boundaries, and reflect the various positive qualities that are present in them, and to define the entrances to the area. This has to do with urban design elements of edges, texture, and landmarks. Basic strategies for establishing relationships between the internal and external organizations are to establish or reinforce focal points, institutional buildings and landmarks, which give a sense of the community. Another thing would be to make the edge a synthesis between the internal texture and one which might be more appropriate with external forces.

Site Organization

The existing and proposed site diagrams illustrate several important points. They show the reinforcement and extension of the main internal circulation. The addition of new open space, both on the edge that overlooks central Boston, on the internal circulation system, and at many entry points to the area. Also, there is the addition of focal points, in conjunction with the open space system. The diagrams also show the treatment of the two major edges of the site, the Southwest Corridor and Washington Street. The two major streets, Columbus Avenue and Washington Street, while both calling for edge conditions are treated quite differently. For Columbus Avenue, a busy road which flanks a transit line, a strong intervention is called for. The important thing to note in this diagram is the spacing of the buildings to allow for intermittent views up into the community. On Washington Street, an edge which is primarily residential is established, except for commercial around Dudley Station, and the crucial thing to note in the diagram is the gradiation of density from the Dudley Station Area down Washington Street. This gradiation of density also reflects the internal organization of the site.

Existing Site Organization

Entry Point

Weak Edge

Focal Point

Internal Circulation

Open Space

Weak Edge

Existing Site Organization

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Proposed Site Organization

Internal Circulation

Focal Point

Open Space

Proposed Site Organization
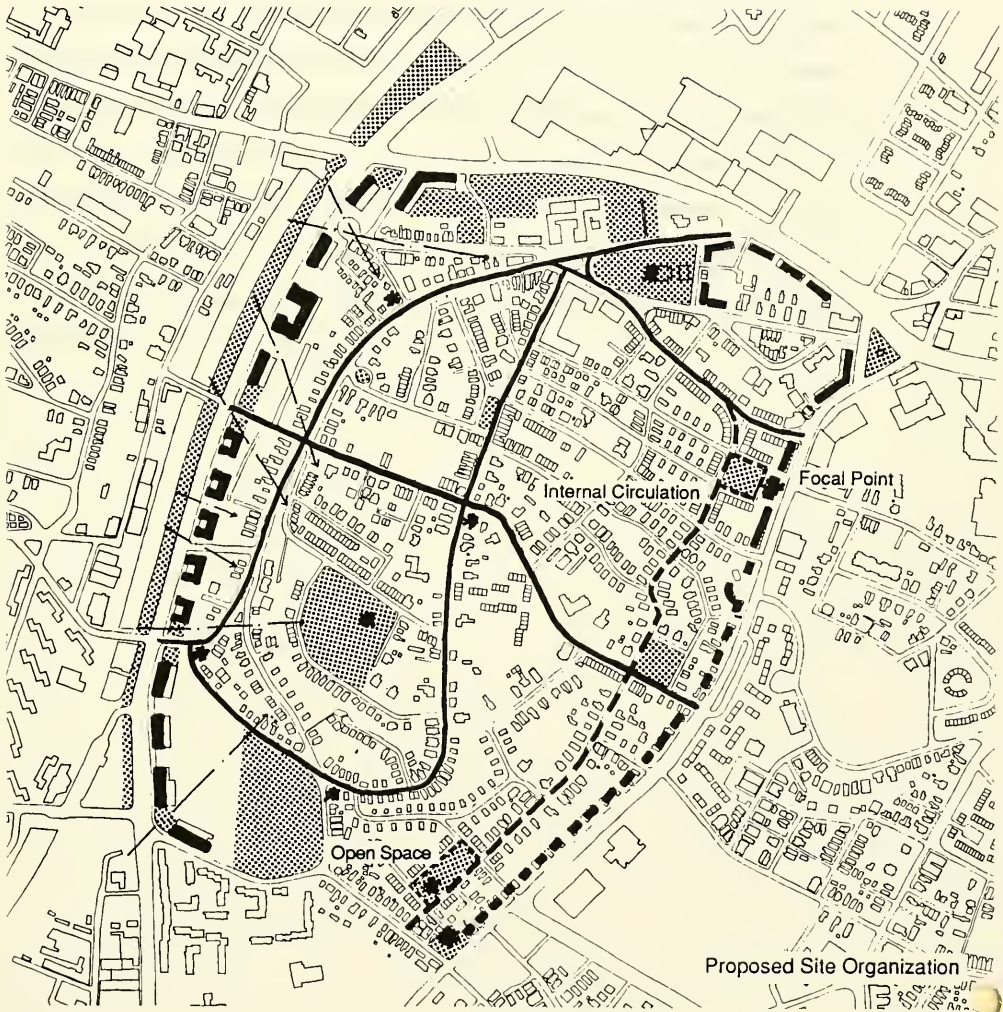
Proposed Land Use

The proposed land use is primarily residential, except where specific locations warrant otherwise. Commercial has been proposed at two corners of the site. These correspond to existing conditions, at Dudley Station, and to a new rapid transit station at Jackson Square. Institutional has been proposed to extend the existing institutional use along Columbus Avenue. It has also been dotted throughout the site, either corresponding to new or existing open space, or in relation to external conditions. Open Space has been proposed along Columbus Avenue in relation to entry or corner points, along New Dudley Street overlooking Boston, at Dudley Station, and in two interior locations in new development sites, but placed within the existing street pattern.

The following parcels have been studied in more detail to further examine their development. In particular, their edges, open spaces and building settings, and the relationship between the two have been looked at more closely.

Parcel 3

Parcel 3 is located on Washington Street just outside of the Dudley Station Area. The existing street pattern was extended into the site. The parcel was absent of any existing ones. An interior open space has been created on a road which links existing and new open spaces. Institutional uses have been proposed in two places. One fronts on the interior open space and the other fronts across Washington Street at an angle which corresponds to an existing church tower behind a housing project on the other side of the street. Focal points would be on or in relation to the institutional buildings. Except for these two buildings, the rest of the site is residential. The housing types proposed are those that are existing already. The types with more density, like row houses, are proposed where more enclosure and definition is desired. These locations are around the newly created open space, along the major secondary roads in the area, at an existing open space in the upper corner, and along Washington Street. This is appropriate because of its proximity to Dudley Station, historically a dense center. Other than the specific locations stated, the housing types used are either single, small multi-family dwellings or triple deckers. This is so that the new development can blend into its context much more easily, making the edges of the new development less distinct. These smaller dwelling units would have a flexible plan, not unlike the infill

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development, the intent would be to reinforce the existing historical patterns of development. The desired effect is not of a homogeneous fabric, but rather a complex quilt. In this parcel, as in all of them, the intent is to reinforce the internal structure, the external structure, and develop a relationship, or a dialogue, between the two. In this parcel there is an extension of existing streets and the placement of an open space on this system to reinforce the internal character. The external character is strengthened with a strong edge which responds to Washington Street and beyond and institutional buildings with focal points. An important relationship is that the institutional building which builds the edge is also on the internal open space. Also, the same housing type that encloses the open space comes out to make the edge on Washington Street. One of the perspectives which illustrate this parcel shows a view of the strong edge with the institutional building on Washington Street. The open space is just on the other side of the institutional building. The other perspective is looking at an existing landmark from the new open space.

45
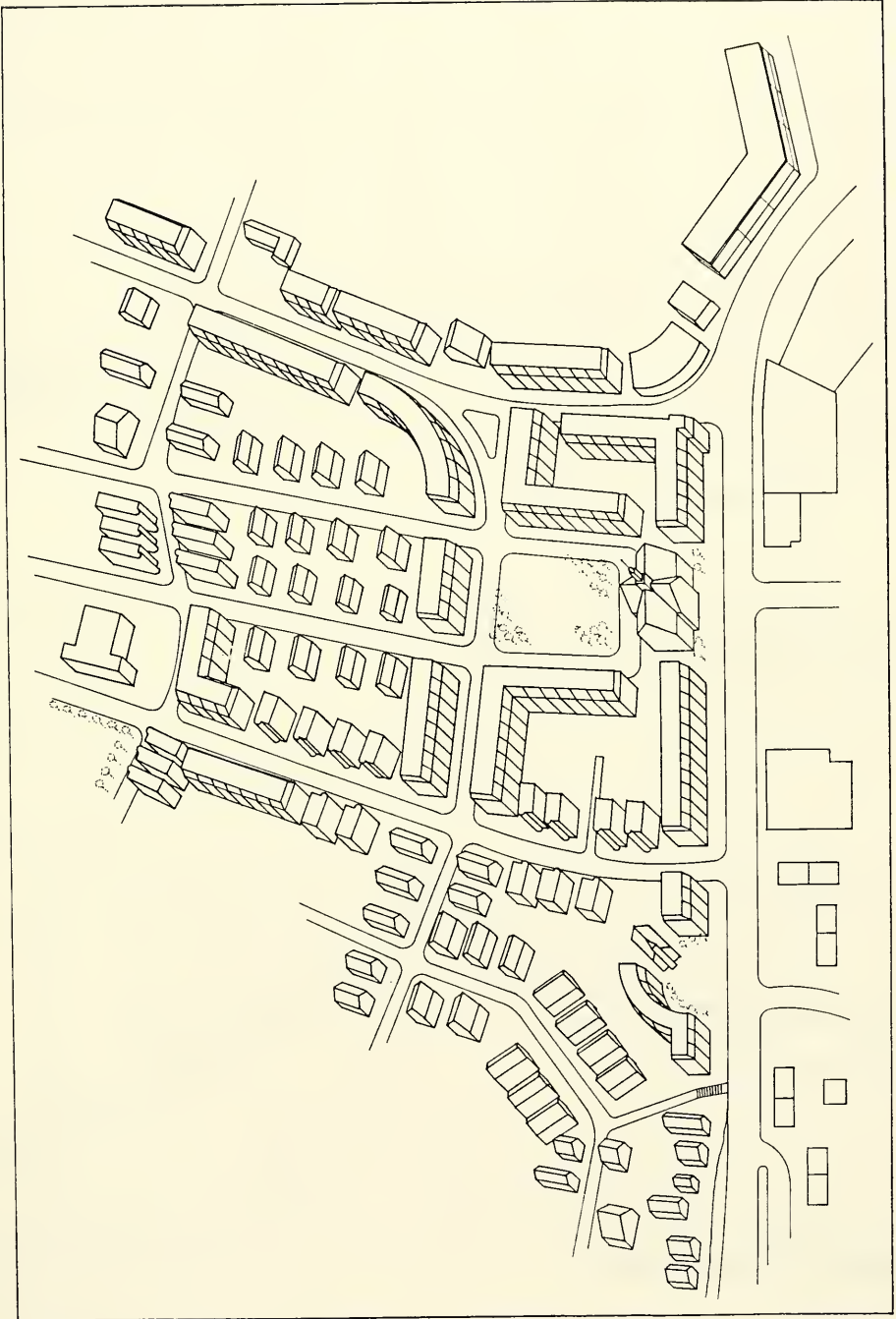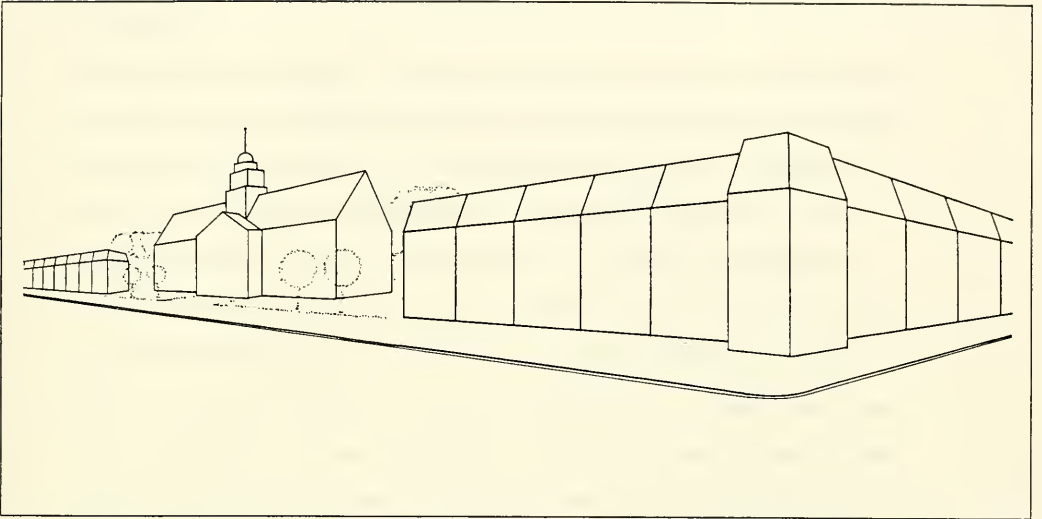
Washington Street near Dudley Station Area
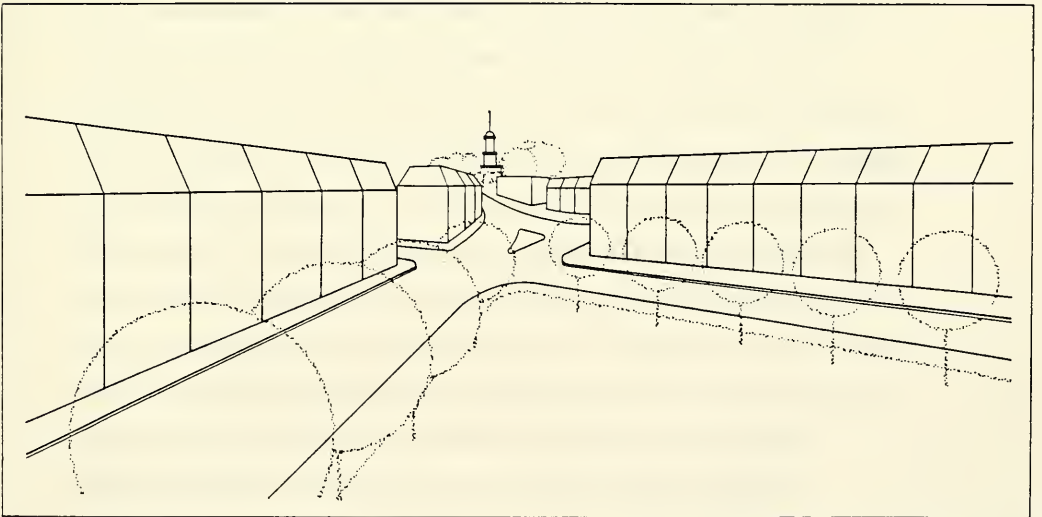
View of First Church from Parcel 3

Parcel 5

Parcel 5 is also located on Washington Street, but at the other end of the site. While the other end, Dudley Station, is fairly dense, this end is much more open. There are much more smaller dwelling units. In this parcel, existing streets were already present. These were respected. One new street was added to create a new open space, this being located on an existing street. Another open space is located on the corner of Washington and Marcella Streets. This is either an introduction, or farewell, to the piece of Washington Street which flanks Highland Park. Institutional uses, with focal points, have been proposed in three locations. In all cases they are either located on a new open space, or overlooking an existing one. The land use is once again, primarily residential. The housing types are again those which already exist in the area. The dense types, such as row houses, have been located on the newly created open space wherever possible. Where existing buildings were present, they were retained. All other building would be small dwelling units, such as was the case in Parcel 3. The same intent of 'patchwork' development would be created. This quality is evident in this area also. The internal character has been reinforced by the creation of a new open space and building setting along an existing street which also runs past other open spaces, both new and existing. The external character has been strengthened by the addition of an open space with an institutional building on it to celebrate the corner. The perspective for this parcel shows a visual relationship between the institutional buildings located in the open spaces, and also starts to suggest a relationship to Fort Hill.
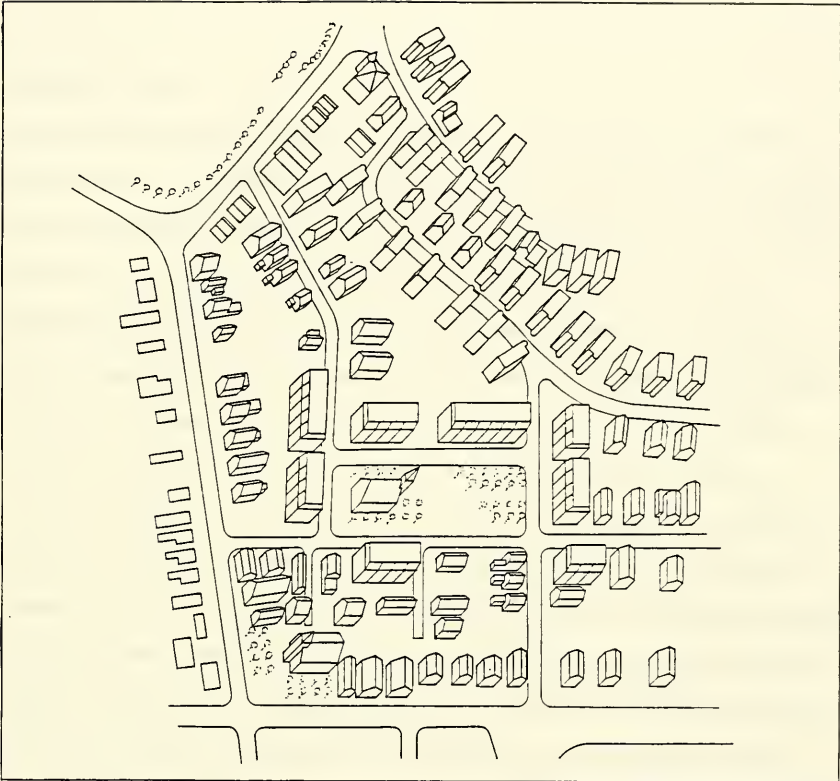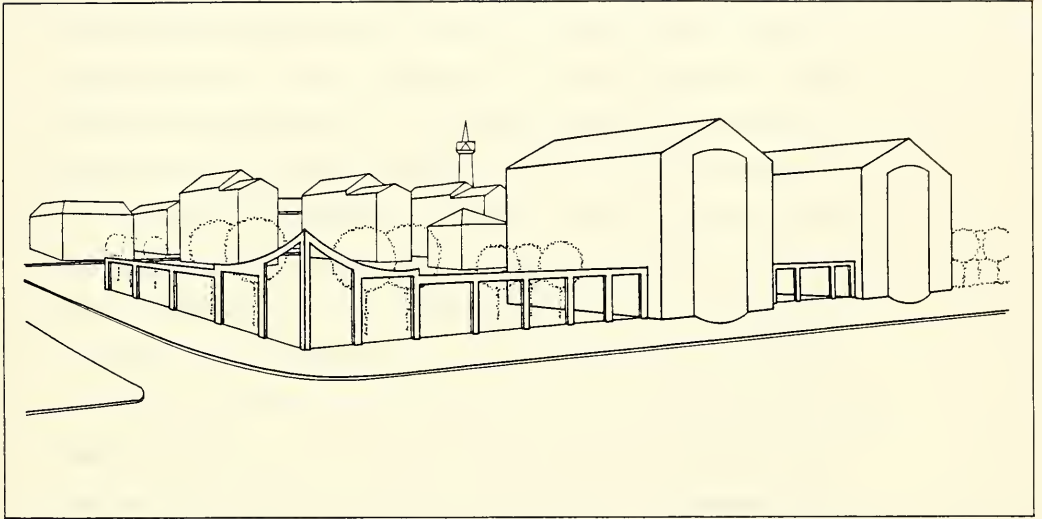
Parcel 5 - Washington Street

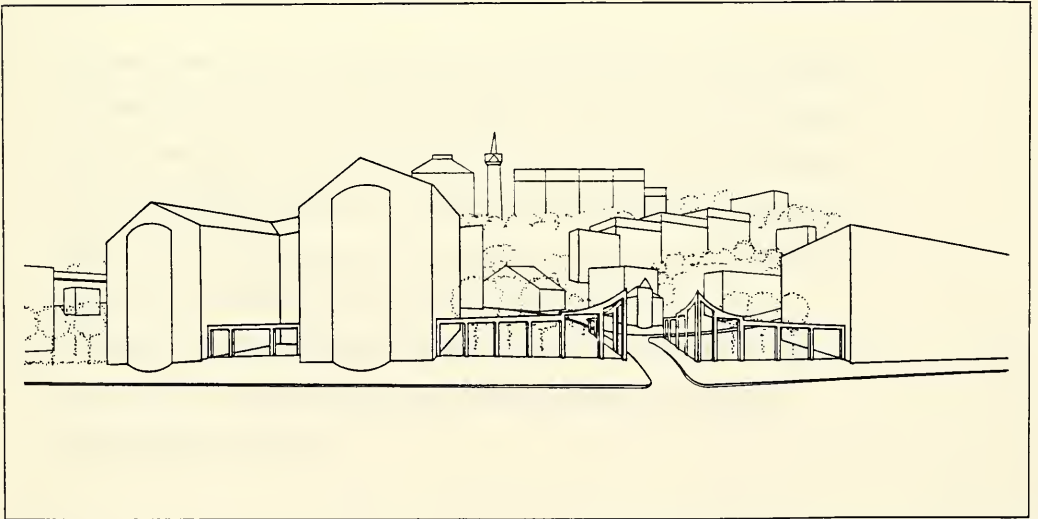Corner of Washington and Marcella Street

48
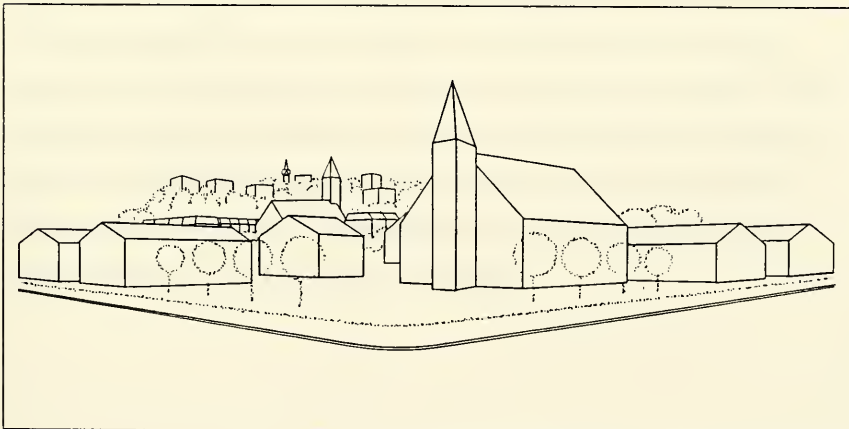
Parcels 1 & 4

Parcel 1 and Parcel 4 are really best seen in relation to each other. This development helps to strengthen, and in some instances create, the edge of Highland Park on Columbus Avenue, and the Southwest Corridor. A distinct quality to note about this edge was the view of Highland Park from the Southwest Corridor. Not only Fort Hill and other landmarks, but also the ability to see the fronts of houses, and the backs of houses. An abstraction of this can be seen in the elevation. The intent of the new development, taking its cue from the existing institutional buildings, was to create a continuous, rythmic line as an edge for Columbus Avenue. The important point is the spacing inbetween the buildings which allows for intermittent views beyond into Highland Park. The proposed land use drawing shows that a combination of institutional, housing and commercial uses make up this edge. Open spaces have been proposed to celebrate entry points into the site as well as corner points. At both ends as they turn the corners, they terminate into open space, one existing and one proposed. The relationship here between the internal and the external characters is not as active as has been apparent in the other parcels. The relationship is more about coexistence. The existing fabric on this side of the site is very strong, only the edge is weak. Also, Columbus Avenue and the Southwest Corridor is a wider and more congested street. Smaller dwelling units did not seem as appropriate in this location. Perspectives of this edge show views of two entry points into the site with views of Fort Hill.

View of Fort Hill from Columbus Avenue

View of Fort Hill from Columbus Avenue

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It is interesting to reflect, at the close of this study, on one of the main beginning points. This was a discrepancy in people's attitudes about the character of Roxbury, and Highland Park. I found the various analysis studies of the existing fabric condition extremely telling. The conclusion of these being that the existing fabric at the center of the site was strong and intact, and that at many of the boundaries was very weak. This was a similiar condition to people's attitudes about the area. Those that were most familiar with the area were most positive about it. Those that were more distant, held more negative attitudes about the area. There is a direct relationship here between people's attitudes about the character of the area and their perception of the physical condition. It is important to take, both the internal and external, perceptions into account when looking at redevelopment strategies of a community.

What was developed here was a series of interventions which reinforced the internal character positively by building on existing symbolic spaces and relationships. The external character was built up, and established where appropriate, to respond to both internal and external forces. And a dialogue between these two was established, making a more supportive, cohesive environment, that is tied with the rest of the city. It is a strategy for increasing the positive perception of a community by positive reinforcement of symbolic spaces and relationships with the larger community surrounding it.

Footnotes

1. Kevin Lynch, <u>The Image of the City</u>, p. 9
2. Kevin Lynch, <u>The Image of the City</u>, pp. 47-48
3. Ali Rizvi, 'Imageability in the Design of New Cities', p.14
4. In conversation with Peter Rowe
5. Donald Appleyard, 'Inside vs. Outside: The Distortions of Distance', p.1
6. Donald Appleyard, 'Inside vs. Outside: The Distortions of Distance', p.3
7.' Roxbury, A Plan To Manage Growth', a report by the Boston Redevelopment Authority, p.27
8. 'Housing Strategy for Roxbury', a draft report by the Greater Roxbury Neighborhood Authority Housing Subcommittee, p.4
9. 'Roxbury, A Plan To Manage Growth', a report by the Boston Redevelopment Authority, pp.27-28
10. <u>Highlands Study</u>, a report by the Boston Architectural Center, pp. 2-1 to 2-4

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