

REVISED APRIL 25, 1978

Report of the Boston Landmarks Commission
on the proposed designation of COMMONWEALTH AVENUE MALL
as a Landmark under Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975

Approved by *Mauro Nypus* *Feb. 21, 1978*
Executive Director Date

Accepted by *Pauline Chase Harrell* *Feb. 21, 1978*
Chairman Date

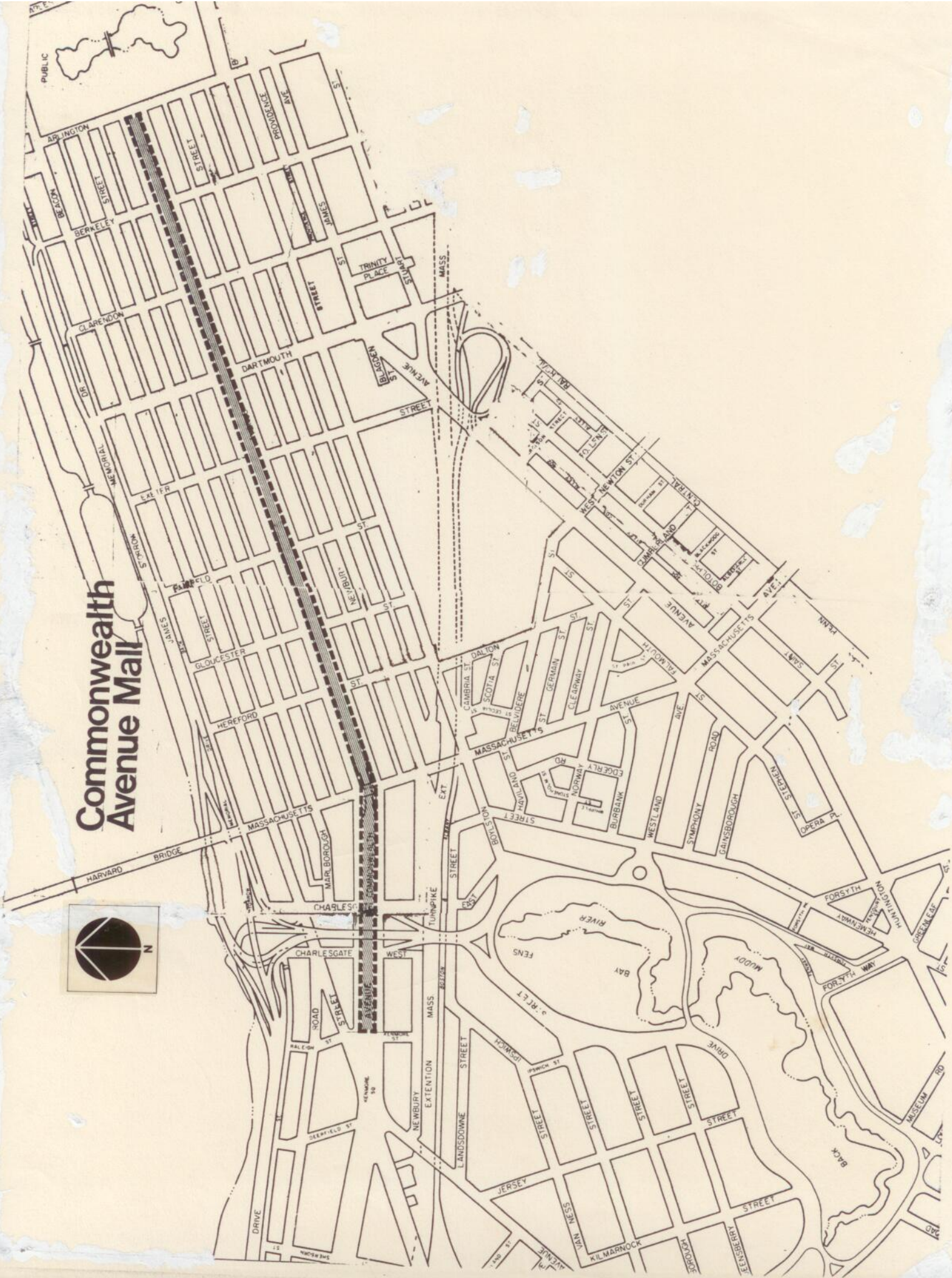
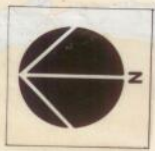
1.0 LOCATION OF THE PROPERTY

- 1.1 Address: The Commonwealth Avenue Mall runs down the center of Commonwealth Avenue from Arlington Street to Kenmore Street, interrupted by ten street crossings.
- 1.2 Area in which the property is located: The Mall is one of the principal urban design features of Back Bay, a late 19th century landfill area containing rowhouses laid out on streets fitting a French Second Empire style grid pattern.

This part of Boston was marshes from the founding of the city until the 1820's, when a poorly engineered tidal dam created a sanitation hazard in the area. Fill of the land was ordered by the legislature in 1852, and the project, begun in 1857, reached Gravelly Point (now Kenmore Square) by 1890. Long an upper class district, Back Bay in recent years has seen changes to a largely transient and student population.

- 1.3 Map showing location: attached.

Commonwealth Avenue Mail



DARTMOUTH

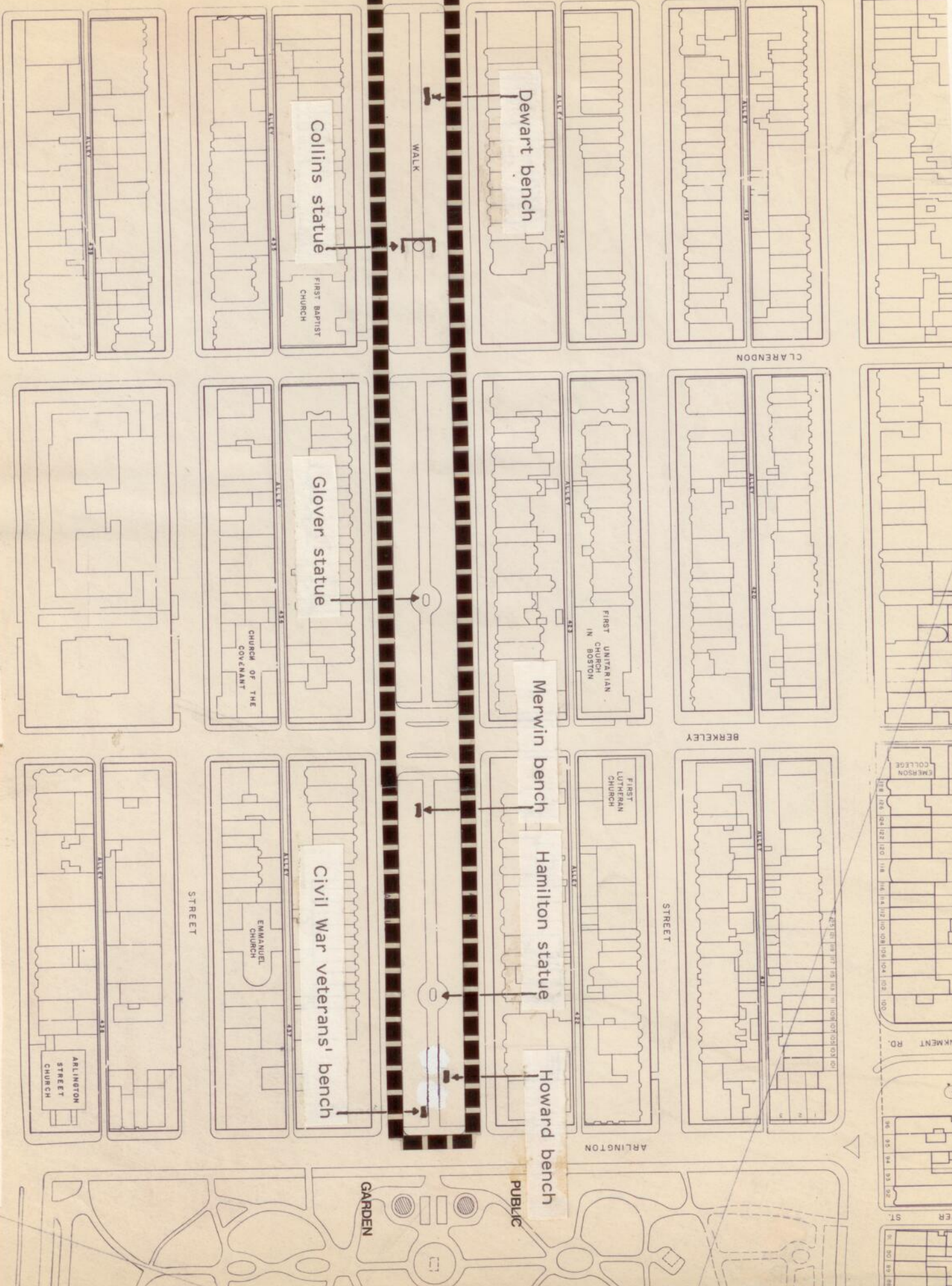
CLARENDON

BERKELEY

STREET

ARLINGTON

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Dewart bench

Collins statue

Glover statue

Merwin bench

Hamilton statue

Howard bench

Civil War veterans' bench

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

CHURCH OF THE COVENANT

FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH IN BOSTON

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

ARLINGTON STREET CHURCH

GARDEN

PUBLIC

WALK

ALLEY

ALLEY

ALLEY

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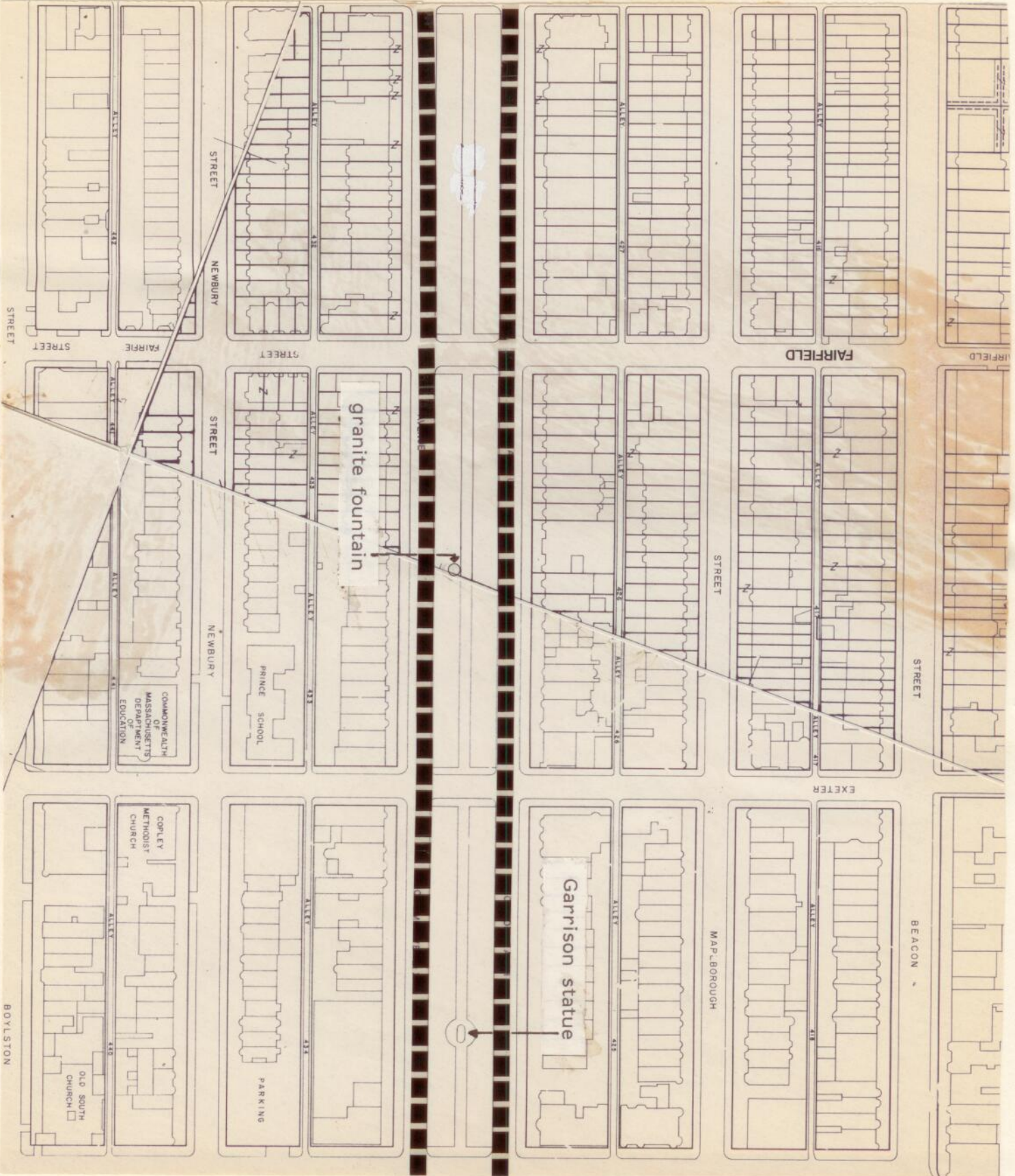
CLARENDON

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granite fountain

Garrison statue

COMMONWEALTH
MASSACHUSETTS
DEPARTMENT
OF
EDUCATION

PRINCE
SCHOOL

CORLEY
METHODIST
CHURCH

OLD SOUTH
CHURCH

PARKING

FAIRFIELD

EXETER

BEACON

MAP-BOROUGH

STREET

NEWBURY
STREET

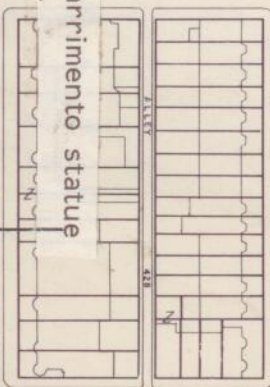
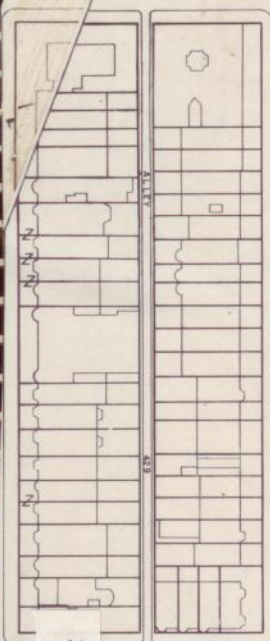
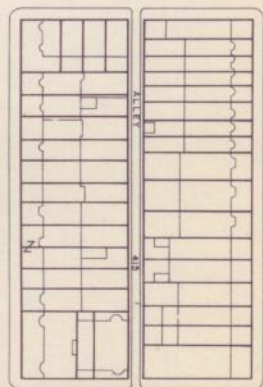
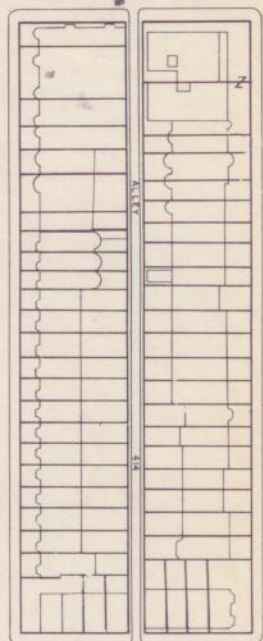
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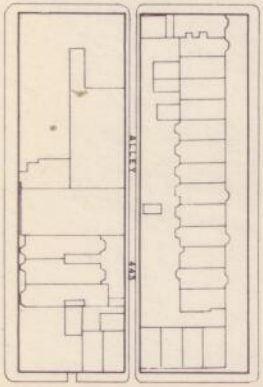
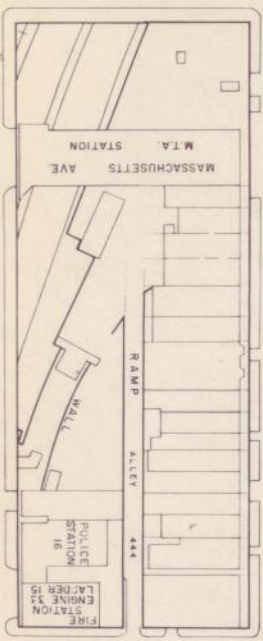
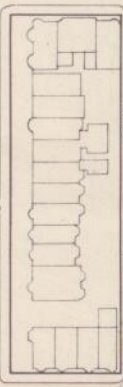
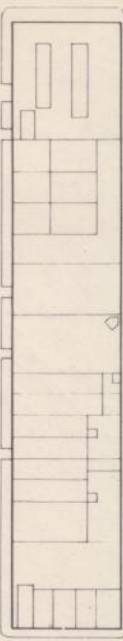
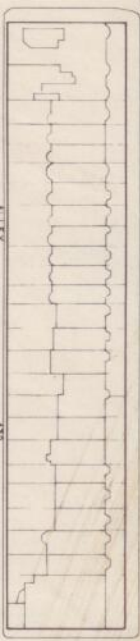
STREET

STREET

BOYLSTON



Sarrimento statue



NEWBURY

HEREFORD

STREET

STREET

GLOUCESTER

STREET

STREET

MASSACHUSETTS AVE
M.T.A. STATION

ALLEY

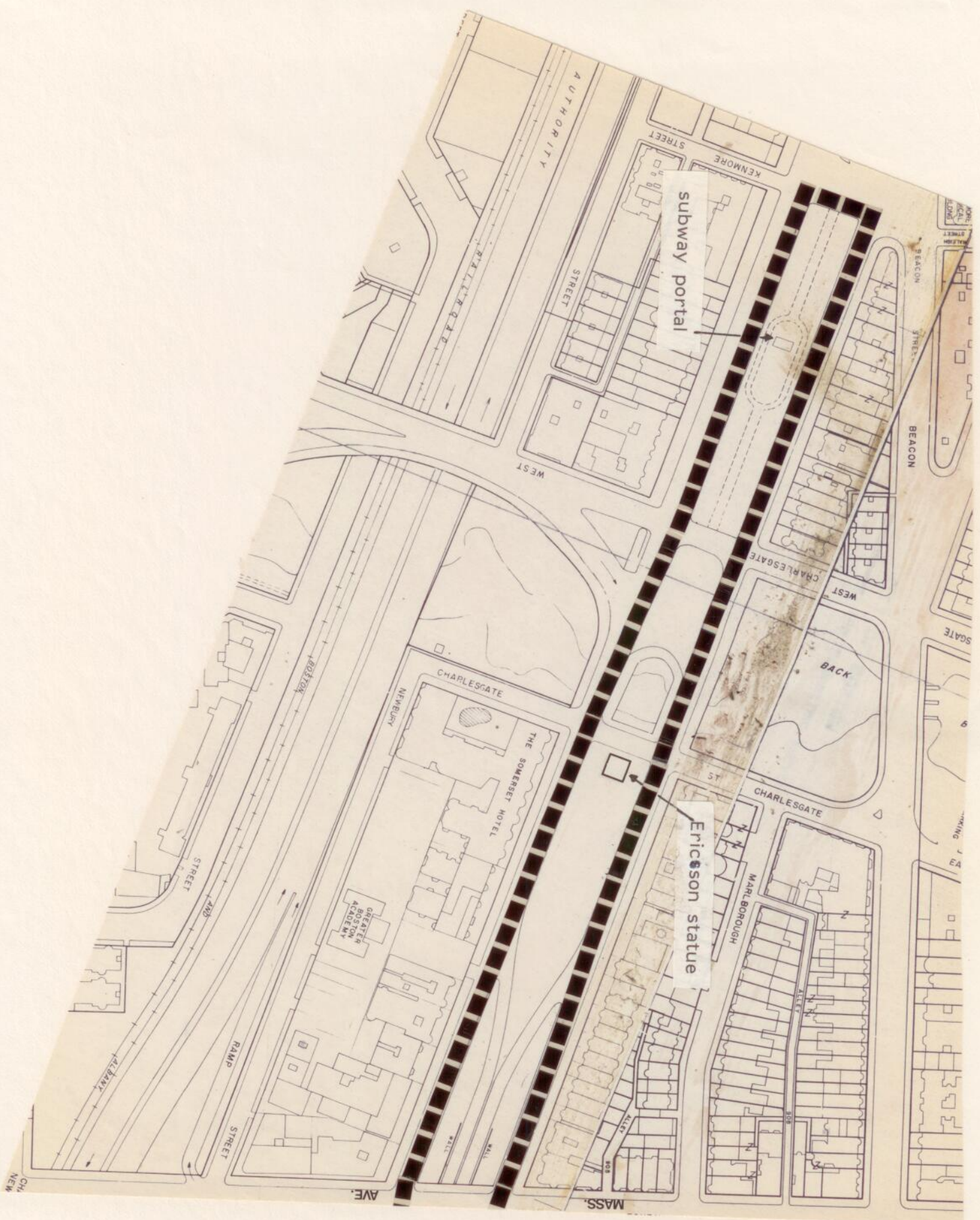
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RAAMP

WALL

FIRE STATION
ENGINE 32
LADDER 15

POLICE STATION
16



subway portal

Ericson statue

CH
NEW

AVE.

MASS.

2.0 DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 Type and Use: The Commonwealth Avenue Mall is a public park covering approximately 600,000 square feet. The City of Boston Department of Parks and Recreation is responsible for maintenance.
- 2.2 Physical Description: The Mall is a long, narrow strip of grass, trees, and monuments with a central pathway. The four long sides of the Mall face Commonwealth Avenue, a residential street; the east short side of the Mall faces across Arlington Street to the Public Garden, and the west short side faces Kenmore Square, a large commercial area and transit center. In width the Mall varies from 100 feet at Arlington Street westward to Charlesgate to 85 feet west from there to Kenmore Square. The principal features of the Mall are: (1) its topography; (2) its surroundings; (3) paths, malls and plantings; and (4) monuments.
 1. Topography: As part of the Back Bay landfill project of the 19th century, the Commonwealth Avenue Mall is essentially flat. Irregularities occur at the underpass at Massachusetts Avenue; at Charlesgate, where a bridge spans the Muddy River; and near Kenmore Square, where an abandoned subway incline juts above the surface. The Mall crosses ten streets on its route from Arlington Street to Kenmore Square: Berkeley, Clarendon, Dartmouth, Exeter, Fairfield, Gloucester, Hereford, Massachusetts Avenue, Charlesgate East, and Charlesgate West. In addition, a large concrete traffic overpass runs above the Mall between Charlesgate East and West.
 2. Surroundings: The Mall is one part of Commonwealth Avenue, planned by architect Arthur Gilman to be the central boulevard of the new West End. Setback restrictions and the design of the Mall resulted in the wide open character of the street. The domestic architecture of the street reflects the series of prevailing styles as the street proceeds westward: French Mansard and Queen Anne are predominant. The length of Commonwealth Avenue, as far west as Charlesgate East, is part of the Back Bay Architectural District, established by state law in 1966 and expanded in 1974.
 3. Paths, malls, bridges, and plantings: The Mall has a 17-foot central pathway, consisting of macadam, beginning at Arlington Street and running as far west as the Massachusetts Avenue underpass. Farther west, no formal pathway exists, although bare areas in the grass suggest a continuation to the old subway portal near Kenmore Square. Benches, both concrete or granite memorials and standard park benches with green oak slats and concrete standards, face inward from the edge of the pathway. Other accoutrements at the path include

new trash containers along the length of the Mall and an inoperative granite drinking fountain between Exeter and Fairfield Streets. The Dartmouth Street Mall, constructed in 1970-4, crosses the Commonwealth Mall with its wide brick pathway. Once completely fenced in with an iron fence, the Mall has an assortment of fence types enclosing only part of its perimeter. At the Arlington Street end of the Mall, a wrought iron fence on granite posts marks the beginning point. The next fences along the Mall are at the cross streets Gloucester and Hereford; these fences are simple steel picket fences with granite posts, as are the next fences, under construction near the Massachusetts Avenue underpass, enclosing a section of the Mall as a small park for the elderly and small children.

Completely enclosing the Mall west of Massachusetts Avenue is a low wooden rail fence, approximately 18 inches high. A single flat rail mounted on square wooden posts composes this fence; several of the rails are engraved with the legend "BOSTON PARKS AND RECREATION DEPT." East of Massachusetts Avenue, grass completely covers the Mall from the curb line to the path. The condition of the grass deteriorates west of Massachusetts Avenue, with large bare areas and an ersatz path of compacted bare earth in the center.

Trees on the Mall are largely elms of various species, including examples of naturally cross-pollinated hybrids. A recent survey of trees on the Mall as far west as Charlesgate identified 314 of the 493 trees as elms. (Chater & Holmes, appendix I) Other species represented on the Mall include: Japanese Zelkova, London plane trees, European Linden, golden-rain tree, crab-apple, Norway maple, Hawthorn, and European mountain ash.

The general condition of the trees surveyed, on a scale of excellent-good-fair-poor-bad-dead, is fair to good. Considerable pruning is recommended to combat Dutch elm disease; the block between Clarendon and Dartmouth Streets is cited as a particular problem area.

Compacting of the soil, a result of heavy use, is the single most serious overall problem accounted for in the survey. Compacting makes the soil impervious to water and air.

Shrubbery on the Mall is limited: some shrubs decorate monuments, and the rest screen the subway portal near Kenmore Square.

A four-foot high concrete balustrade encloses the opening in the Mall where the Muddy River crosses at Charlesgate. This balustrade is of a Classical design, with urn-shaped balusters supporting the railing.

4. Monuments: Monuments and memorials on the Mall take two forms, benches and statues. Beginning at Arlington Street and proceeding westward, these are:

Charles Pagelson Howard bench -- a marble bench near Arlington Street given by the Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay in memory of Howard, cited on the bench as "defender of the artistic integrity of Commonwealth Avenue."

Alexander Hamilton statue -- this granite statue by Dr. William Rimmer was installed near Arlington Street in 1865, paid for by Thomas Lee.

Henry C. Merwin bench -- a concrete bench between Arlington and Berkeley Streets.

John Glover statue -- a bronze figure of a Revolutionary War general, this statue was installed between Berkeley and Clarendon Streets in 1873. Design was by Martin Milmore.

Patrick A. Collins statue -- located between Clarendon and Dartmouth Streets, this memorial for a former mayor, congressman and diplomat was originally sited on the Mall at Charlesgate West. Collins died in 1905, and three years later his bust with two standing figures by Henry H. and Theo Alice Ruggles Kitson was erected; it was moved to its present site in 1968. 1966

Rev. & Mrs. William Herbert Dewart bench -- a concrete bench between Clarendon and Dartmouth Streets.

William Lloyd Garrison statue -- a bronze figure of the abolitionist on granite base, this statue was built by Olin Levi Warner, and installed between Dartmouth and Exeter Streets in 1886.

Domingo F. Sarmiento statue -- a gift from Argentina, this statue of a former president of Argentina was installed in 1973 between Gloucester and Hereford Streets. The bronze figure on concrete base was designed by Yvette Compagnion.

Leif Ericsson statue -- a bronze figure of the Norse explorer in a stylized ship, this statue was formerly located at the Mall just west of Massachusetts Avenue, in one of the curving islands designed by Olmsted. The statue, by Anne Whitney, was installed in 1887 by Eben N. Horsford, a manufacturer who believed that Ericsson landed at the mouth of the Charles River. After a straightening of the Mall in 1925, the statue was moved to its current location just east of Charlesgate. A fountain contained in the base is not operating.

- 2.3 General Condition: The condition of Commonwealth Avenue Mall varies inversely with the distance from the Public Garden.

The grassy areas, while open to city traffic and heavy use by Back Bay residents, are reasonably full, especially east of Massachusetts Avenue. Large bare areas scar the Mall in the Kenmore Square section. Many trees require significant attention, largely because of epidemic Dutch Elm disease and the hazards of city climate and pollution.

- 2.4 Physical History: At its beginnings, Commonwealth Avenue Mall was built as soon as landfill became available. In 1860, the Mall reached Clarendon Street, by 1870 it reached beyond Exeter Street; and in 1876 all of Commonwealth Avenue east of West Chester Park (Massachusetts Avenue) was filled. (Bunting, 1967, p. 366; Whitehill, 1968, pp. 157 ff.) Olmsted's western extension of Commonwealth Avenue, designed in 1881, was completed by 1888.

The principal changes in the Mall since that time, except for the addition and subtraction of monuments, benches, and the like, have been to accommodate the automobile. In 1925, the original curving pattern for Olmsted's section of the Mall was straightened to correspond to the same plan as the Mall east of Massachusetts Avenue. The Parks Department report for that year trumpets the change as "elimination of dangerous curves and junctions." (Parks Department, p. 9) In 1937, the existing underpass at Massachusetts Avenue was built, again to help solve a traffic bottleneck. The overpass at Charlesgate was constructed in 1965; this route affects the Back Bay Fens more directly than the Mall, although it does obstruct the axial view west from Massachusetts Avenue.

The other major change to the Mall was also to accommodate transportation: this was the subway portal and tracks built in 1914 from the new Boylston Street subway to the surface station in Kenmore Square. The present underground Kenmore Station was opened in 1932, whereupon the portal was closed off and the tracks removed.

- 2.5 Photographs: attached.



COMMONWEALTH AVENUE MALL

view facing east from Exeter St.

photo 10-77 Robert P. Burke



COMMONWEALTH AVENUE MALL
Massachusetts Ave. underpass
photo 10-77 Robert P. Burke



COMMONWEALTH AVENUE MALL

view facing east from Kenmore St.

photo 10-77 Robert P. Burke



COMMONWEALTH AVENUE MALL

Alexander Hamilton statue

photo 10-77 Robert P. Burke



COMMONWEALTH AVENUE MALL

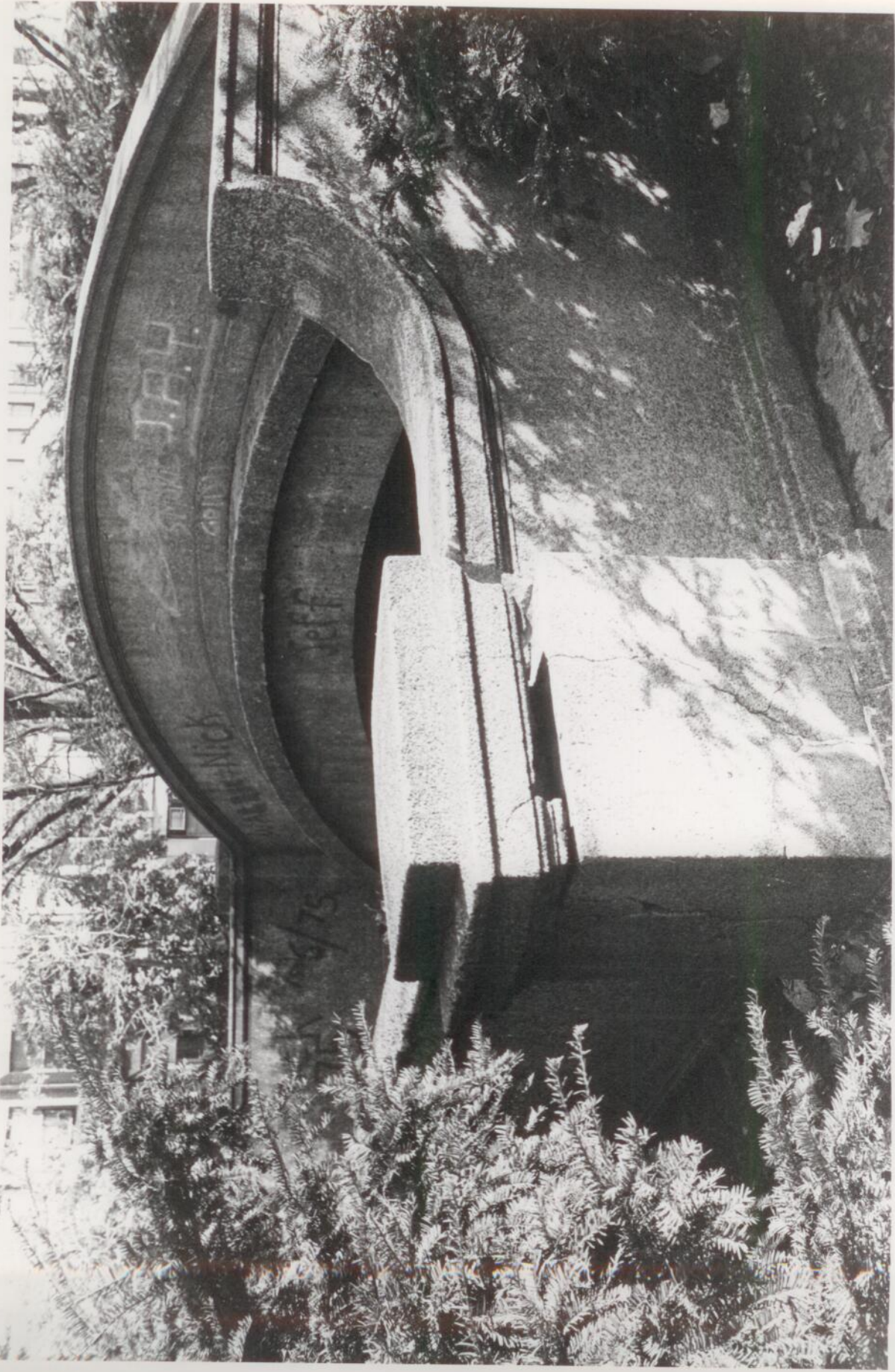
John Glover statue
photo 10-77 Robert P. Burke



COMMONWEALTH AVENUE MALL

Sarrinento Statue

photo 10-77 Robert P. Burke

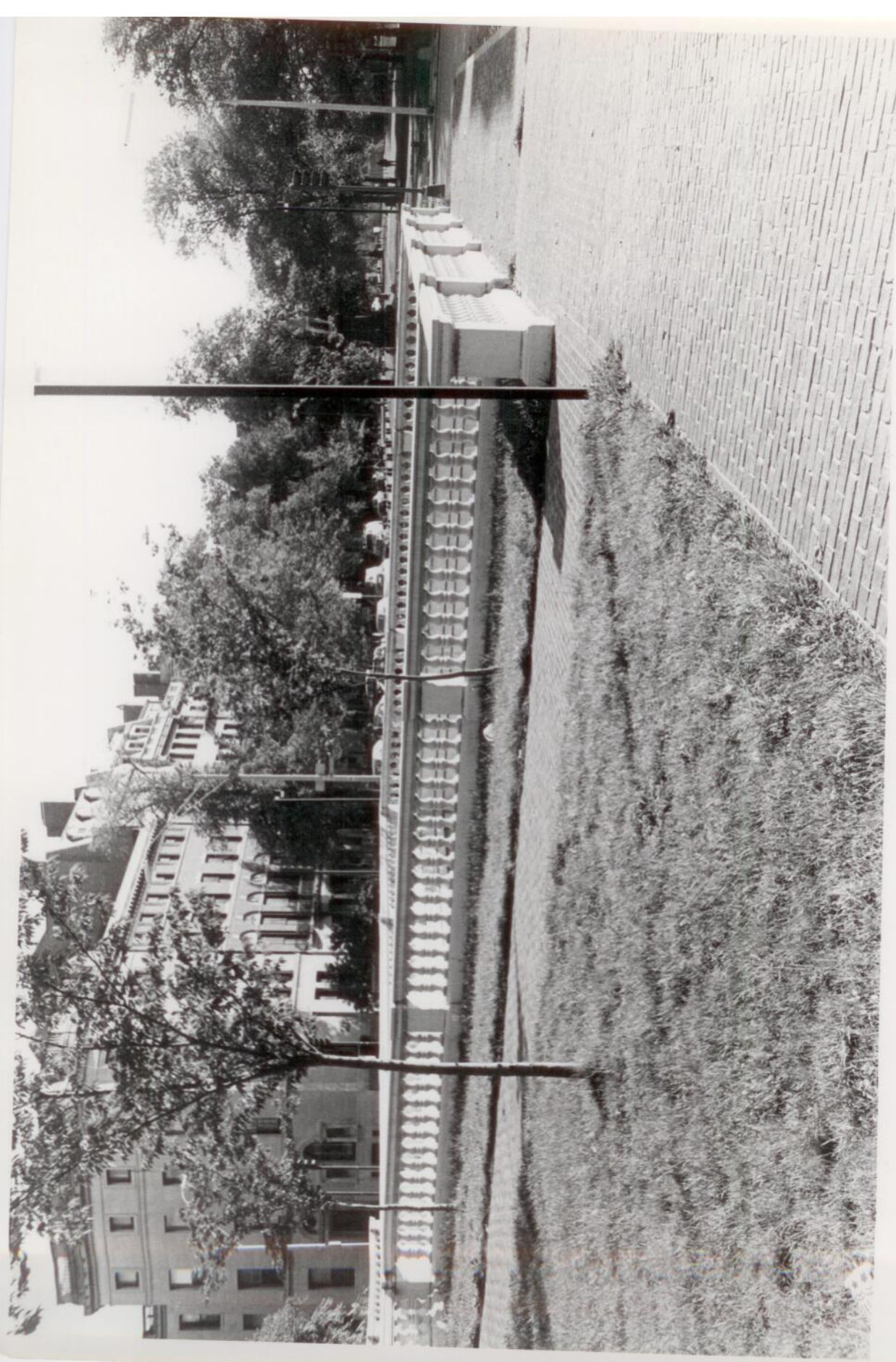


COMMONWEALTH AVENUE MALL
Kenmore Sq. subway portal
photo 10-77 Robert P. Burke



COMMONWEALTH AVENUE MALL
view facing west from Arlington
Street
photo 10-77 Robert P. Burke

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COMMONWEALTH AVENUE MALL

Bridge balustrade at Charlesgate

photo 10-77 Robert P. Burke



COMMONWEALTH AVENUE MALL

traffic overpass at Charlesgate

photo 10-77 Robert P. Burke

3.0 SIGNIFICANCE

- 3.1 Architectural Significance: Commonwealth Avenue Mall is one of the principal urban design features of Back Bay, one of America's first urban areas planned in the French Second Empire style pioneered in France by The Baron Hausmann. "In planning Commonwealth Avenue in 1856 as a great boulevard and in constructing in the early sixties blocks of impressive brownstone mansions akin in style to those being built in Paris in the same years, Boston expressed her will to assume a place among the great cities of the world. Here, symbolically, in adopting the new architectural style of Napoleon III's Second Empire, she exchanged her provincial and well-worn garb of the Greek Revival tradition for the more splendid and worldly robes of contemporary Europe." (Bunting, 1967, p. 15).

The opportunity for such a Back Bay plan resulted from the failure of tidal dams across the bay to provide sufficient water power. Railroad causeways subsequently built atop the dams added to stagnation of the water, which had long been used as a depository for sewage; ultimately, the city Board of Health in 1849 declared the bay "to be one of nuisance, offensive and injurious to the large and increasing population residing upon it." (quoted in Memorial History, IV, p. 35) Once a dispute between Boston and Roxbury over title to the area was settled by the legislature (by giving the Commonwealth itself the land), the fill began following a street layout drawn up by Arthur Gilman.

French architecture, which Gilman had observed in Hausmann's replan of Paris, was the pre-eminent style during the mid-19th century: not only was Hausmann a renowned architect but the only systematic architecture education in the world was available in France. (Bunting, op.cit., p. 75) Gilman's overall design for Back Bay won out over numerous other proposals, and houses were built on the grid as soon as fill was completed.

Commonwealth Avenue, with its mall bisecting both the avenue and the entire Back Bay, was clearly planned as an axial street. "In one of his last memoranda, the late Matthew Nowicki, a brilliant modern architect, and one of the original planners of Chandigash, pointed out the importance of a strong axis for holding together any large complex plan..." (Mumford, p. 20) "The great scheme of axial extension makes a sharp break from the English, cell-like, additive scheme of private residential squares which had previously guided Boston's building." (Bunting, op.cit., p. 397) The South End, nearer to Boston Neck, had been designed not long before on this English plan.

Important to the axial design and sense of space of Commonwealth Avenue were deed restrictions imposed by the Commonwealth for size and setback requirements. Individual lots were standardized at 26 feet in width, and buildings were required to be set back 20 feet from the property line. Even with these restrictions, "... lots facing broad Commonwealth Avenue sold for almost twice the price of those facing the narrower adjacent streets." (Bunting, XII, p. 22)

The Mall on its own level represents, as does the nearby Public Garden, a commitment to in-town open space unusual for its time. "... the generous allotment of land for streets and parks was probably unique in mid-century urban planning in America. The sense of spaciousness which permeates the district was further enhanced by the large open areas that existed on all sides." (Bunting, 1967, p. 397) "The green mall down Commonwealth Avenue links the green open areas of the Public Garden and Fenway Park [i.e., the Back Bay Fens] and serves as a channel to bring a sense of open country into the heart of the district." (ibid., p. 67)

The original Mall terminated at West Chester Park, now called Massachusetts Avenue. In the Back Bay Fens development of the 1880's, landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted was presented with a dilemma: continuing Commonwealth Avenue to the Fens on its existing line would cause an awkward diagonal grade crossing before the Fens with the Boston and Albany Railroad. Olmsted's solution was to turn the avenue approximately 20 degrees northward, thus making it parallel with the railroad and intersecting the extension of Beacon Street at Governor Square. He continued the Mall out to Governor Square (now Kenmore Square) making it the first part of his "Emerald Necklace" park system; but instead of keeping its rectangular form he designed a curving set of islands and sidewalks in the neighborhood of the Muddy River and the Fens. Traffic engineers straightened this section of the Mall in 1925.

The monument sculpture of the Mall has been also an important feature of its design from its first days. Even the most recent addition, the Sarrimeno statue in 1973, is respectful of scale and materials of similar statuary on the Mall. Thus, the Mall presents a selection of monument sculpture from both the 19th and 20th centuries, and in particular displays the contrast among the three periods represented, early Victorian, late Victorian and modern.

The quality of the Mall's surroundings adds further significance. The buildings at the eastern end of the avenue, with their mansard roofs, are consistent with the overall design of the area; toward the west, different styles (notably Queen Anne) turn the avenue into a time line of Victorian residential architecture. As mentioned above, the setbacks of the houses add to the breadth and sense of space of the Mall. At its

western end, the Mall is connected with the Back Bay Fens, Olmsted's triumph of landscape design; this connection is no longer so clear because of changes to benefit auto traffic.

The Mall's overall value depends on its stature as a principal extension of greenery into a densely built area. "Because of Arthur Gilman's Commonwealth Avenue, because of Frederick Law Olmsted's park system, and because of the open stretches of the Charles River, the twentieth century inhabitant, standing in the heart of the city and looking out onto sprawling modern Boston, can enjoy the restorative qualities of space and greenery so rare in other urban centers. Despite the grime and congestion of a huge metropolis, one senses that he still has a lifeline to the open country even though the country has receded far beyond the visible horizon." (ibid., p. 399)

3.2 Relationship to criteria for Landmark Designation: The Commonwealth Avenue Mall meets the standards of Chapter 772 for Landmark designation in the following areas:

1. as a principal component of the design of Back Bay, one of the nation's first urban areas planned in the French Second Empire manner, and as the first French-plan boulevard to be built in the United States and also as designed by two of the nation's most prominent urban designers, Gilman and Olmsted, the Mall is clearly a feature of the city "representative of elements of... landscape design... which embody distinctive characteristics of a type inherently valuable for study of a period... (and) the notable work of... (a) landscape architect, designer or builder whose work influenced the development of the city, the commonwealth, the New England region, or the nation." (Ch. 772 (1975), sec. 4)
2. the section of the mall east of Charlesgate as a significant section of the Back Bay National Register district, a criterion in the statute (ibid.)*

* The Mall from Charlesgate East to Kenmore Street is not included in the National Register district, and does not qualify under this one criterion.

4.0 ECONOMIC STATUS

- 4.1 Current ownership and status: The Commonwealth Avenue Mall is owned by the City of Boston; thus no property taxes are paid on this land.

No changes in ownership are planned for the Mall. A capital improvement program is being proposed for the Mall west of Charlesgate. Maintenance of the entire Mall is paid for by the City, with occasional assistance from Federal funds.

5.0 PLANNING CONTEXT

- 5.1 Background: The Commonwealth Avenue Mall runs through two separate planning districts designated by the Boston Redevelopment Authority: Back Bay and Fenway-Kenmore. Both are 19th century landfill projects, with the Kenmore sub-area of the Fenway-Kenmore district being an extension (completion) of the Back Bay fill project, which ultimately added 450 acres to the City.

From its inception, the Back Bay was planned as both a major civic improvement and a substantial residential district. There was not only concern over the sanitary conditions in the area, but also over crowding in the existing residential sections of the city. Boston's population had increased a full 33 percent from 1840 to 1850, adding pressure both on space and on the sewage disposal system, which dumped into the stagnant Back Bay. The development attracted many of the city's leading families, and the handsome townhouses and mansions reflected the tastes of its fashionable and affluent clientele. Cultural institutions and churches also added dignity to the area.

The original deed restrictions against incompatible land uses, more recently replaced by zoning, have protected sizeable sections of the area against commercial encroachment. Horse-cars were prohibited on Commonwealth Avenue, for example. In 1966, after much dispute over early '60's plans for high-rise development along Commonwealth Avenue, the legislature created the Back Bay Residential District and the Back Bay Architectural Commission, a design review board. In 1974, the District was expanded and renamed the Back Bay Architectural District.

Developed as an upper-class district, Back Bay today is predominantly home for young adults and students. In recent years there has been an influx of families with children, and with consolidation of many of the small schools, the college-age population has leveled off and possibly even declined. Housing is predominantly a mix of quality apartment buildings, lodging houses, and dormitories. Owner-occupancy in 1970 was 8 percent.

In the Fenway, Frederick Law Olmsted's 1881 solution to problems in the Back Bay Fens, including tidal gates and fill to create a park, led to renewed residential and commercial development and the westward expansion of the city. Public transit in the late 19th century made the region more accessible for residential use, and the Boston Fire of 1872 led such institutions as the Massachusetts Horticultural Society and the Boston Symphony Orchestra to locate here in the late 1800's.

The Kenmore Square area had existed prior to the redesign of the Fens, as an annex of the downtown characterized by fine hotels, shops, and professional offices. Wealthy families moved into townhouses on Bay State Road around the turn of the century, and areas along Peterborough Street and Audubon Circle were built up with large apartment structures by speculators in ensuing decades. Just south of the square, a light industrial and wholesale district flourished. The fibre of this area has changed greatly in the past 30 years because of the dominance of Boston University and other colleges over the area, the placement of highway and railroad lines and Fenway Park, and the change in location preference for offices and manufacturing facilities.

Kenmore Square today is a major vehicular traffic and transit node, and a commercial district of citywide importance. In the past, the Square was a center for fine hotels. Today, many of these hotels are used as dormitories by educational institutions: this dominance of students is reflected in the Square's many retail stores, restaurants, and night clubs. Bay State Road is a tree-lined street of well-kept brick and brownstone rowhouses. Interspersed in this generally residential area are doctors' offices and several buildings owned by Boston University.

The area is populated mainly by students: persons aged 15 to 24 compose over 80 percent of the population. Few families live in the area, just 3 percent of residents are elderly, and group quartering provides housing for 63 percent of the population (contrasting with the overall Fenway-Kenmore figure of 36%). Density is twice that of the city overall, although much land use is non-residential.

- 5.2 Planning Issues: As identified in district planning reports by the Boston Redevelopment Authority, the principal issues facing the two districts are:

Back Bay: preservation of housing stock; commercial area needs; neighborhood capital improvements; downtown redevelopment project impacts; institutional expansion and contraction; and traffic congestion and parking.

Fenway-Kenmore: residential area uncertainties; Kenmore Square transformation; open space improvement and access; disposition of urban renewal parcels; traffic and parking; upper Boylston Street reuse; institutional encroachment; scarcity of social services.

The issues of principal effect to Commonwealth Avenue Mall are those of redevelopment impact, open space improvement, and traffic improvement. The effect of redevelopment such as Park Plaza will be felt mainly in the easternmost section of the Mall, along with Boston Common and the Public Garden.

Increase in use can have deleterious effect on the condition of grass and trees. A master plan for this easternmost link of the Emerald Necklace can provide solutions, possibly without restrictions on types of use.

For Back Bay and Kenmore residents, the Mall is the most easily reached open space: access to the Charles River Esplanade is hazardous, and the heavy auto traffic on Storrow Drive negatively affects the atmosphere (both figuratively and literally). The segment in the Kenmore Square area is in poor condition, and requires significant expenditure for improvement; high density here implies a great need for such space.

Through the area, traffic and parking present a major and difficult problem. In Back Bay, traffic lights and intersection crosswalks make access to the Mall comparatively safe. However, the lack of fences makes the Mall's grassy area hazardous for families with children, who have begun to move back into the area in small numbers. From the underpass west, the automobile reigns over Commonwealth Avenue, to the extent that the Mall sometimes becomes, illegally, a parking lot during baseball games. Enforcement of speed limits and increased towing of illegally parked cars can alleviate this problem.

- 5.3 Relationship to Current Zoning and Design Controls: The section of Back Bay through which the Commonwealth Avenue Mall runs is zoned H-4-70. This zoning permits all residential uses plus several institutional uses, such as elementary schools, hospitals, rest homes, and laboratories. Park use is an allowable use throughout the city; thus the Mall as park for passive recreation conforms to the city's zoning code.

From Arlington Street to Charlesgate East, the Mall is within the borders of the Back Bay Architectural District, expanded in 1974 from the 1966 Back Bay Residential District. Design review in this district is restricted to buildings; thus, the Back Bay Architectural Commission has no control over changes to the Mall (except that it must approve design of new structures, if any, proposed for the Mall). Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975 restricts the Boston Landmarks Commission to designation of interior features and landscape features in both the Back Bay and Beacon Hill historic districts. Thus, it is the Landmarks Commission that, if it designates the Mall, would have design review powers.

The placement and type of public monuments is the responsibility of the Art Commission, a branch of the Administrative Services Department of the City of Boston. This five-member commission must approve the acquisition and placement of all paintings, mural decorations, statues, bas-reliefs, sculptures, monuments, fountains, arches, ornamental gateways, and other structures of a permanent character intended for ornament or commemoration that will become property of the City of Boston. The Mayor must also approve the removal, relocation, or alteration of any such work of art. In addition, the Mayor may ask the Art Commission to study any plans for municipal buildings, bridges, fences, and the like. (City of Boston Code, Statutes, Title 5, Section 4)

6.0 ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

Because all but the small westernmost portion of the Commonwealth Avenue Mall lies in the area in which the Commission may not designate districts or protection areas, the only designation the Commission may give for the Commonwealth Avenue Mall east of Massachusetts Avenue is Landmark. The short section of the Mall from Massachusetts Avenue to Kenmore Street, designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, may reasonably belong in an Olmsted Park District running from the Mall to Franklin Park; however, this would divide the logical unit of the Mall into two separate designations, without allowing a single "Emerald Necklace" designation from the Common to Franklin Park.

The Commission thus may choose to designate the entire length of the Mall as a Landmark; or instead to designate as a Landmark that portion from Arlington Street to Massachusetts Avenue, leaving the westernmost section to be included in a future Olmsted Park District.

Another option is to nominate that same westernmost section to the National Register of Historic Places or to extend the Olmsted Park System district to include that portion. Such a listing would provide protection only against action by or sponsored by the Federal Government. The section east of Massachusetts Avenue is part of the Back Bay National Register district; it is possible to list separately the entire Mall, although the Mall ~~does~~ qualify as an historically significant part of the district for purposes of grant applications and Section 106 reviews.

If it chooses, the Commission may also neither designate the Mall under Chapter 772 nor nominate it to the National Register.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The staff of the Boston Landmarks Commission recommends that Commonwealth Avenue Mall, extending from Arlington Street to Kenmore Street, be designated a Landmark under Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975. Boundaries should be the curb lines of the Mall, excluding the public rights-of-way of the cross streets; see attached map.

Recommended standards and criteria for proposed changes to the property are attached.

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9.0 BOSTON LANDMARKS COMMISSION - STANDARDS AND CRITERIA

9.1 Introductory Statement on Standards and Criteria to be Used in Evaluating Applications for Certificates

Per Sections 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 of the enabling statute (Chapter 772 of the General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for 1975), Standards and Criteria must be adopted for each Landmark Designation which shall be applied by the Commission in evaluating proposed changes to the property. Before a Certificate of Design Approval or Certificate of the Exemption can be issued for such changes, the changes must be reviewed by the Commission with regard to their conformance to the purposes of the statute.

The Standards and Criteria established thus note those features which must be conserved and/or enhanced to maintain the viability of the Landmark Designation. The intent of these guidelines is to help local officials, designers, and individual property owners to identify the characteristics that have led to designation, and thus to identify the limitation to the changes that can be made to them. It should be emphasized that conformance to the Standards and Criteria alone does not necessarily insure approval, nor are they absolute, but any request for variance from them must demonstrate the reasons for, and advantages gained by, such variance. The Commission's Certificate of Design Approval is only granted after careful review of each application and public hearing, in accordance with the statute.

As intended by the statute a wide variety of buildings and features are included within the area open to Landmark Designation, and an equally wide range exists in the latitude allowed for change. Some properties of truly exceptional architectural and/or historical value will permit only the most minor modifications, while for some others the Commission encourages changes and additions with a contemporary approach, consistent with the properties' existing features and changed uses.

In general, the intent of the Standards and Criteria is to preserve existing qualities that cause designation of a property; however, in some cases they have been so structured as to encourage the removal of additions that have lessened the integrity of the property.

Introductory Statement on Standards and Criteria
page two

It is recognized that changes will be required in designated properties for a wide variety of reasons, not all of which are under the complete control of the Commission or the owners. Primary examples are:

- a) Building code conformance and safety requirements.
- b) Changes necessitated by the introduction of modern mechanical and electrical systems.
- c) Changes due to proposed new uses of a property.

The response to these requirements may, in some cases, present conflicts with the Standards and Criteria for a particular property. The Commission's evaluation of an application will be based upon the degree to which such changes are in harmony with the character of the property.

In some cases, priorities have been assigned within the Standards and Criteria as an aid to property owners in identifying the most critical design features.

The Standards and Criteria have been divided into two levels: (1) those general ones that are common to almost all landmark designations (with three different categories for buildings, building interiors and landscape features); and (2) those specific ones that apply to each particular property that is designated. In every case the Specific Standard and Criteria for a particular property shall take precedence over the General ones if there is a conflict.

9.2

GENERAL STANDARDS AND CRITERIA FOR PHYSICAL, LANDSCAPE OR TOPOGRAPHICAL FEATURE(S) DESIGNATED AS LANDMARKS.

A. APPROACH

1. The design approach to the property should begin with the premise that alternation to the lanscape design will be minimized.
2. Changes to the property which have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history of the property and the neighborhood. These changes to the property may have developed significance in their own right, and this significance should be recognized and respected. "Later integral features" shall be the term used to convey this concept.
3. New materials should, whenever appropriate, match the material being replaced in physical properties, design, color, texture, and other visual qualities.
4. New additions or alterations to the landscape should not disrupt the essential form and integrity of the property and should be compatible with the size, scale, color, material and character of the property.
5. New additions or alterations should be done in such a way that if they were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the landscape would be unimpaired.
6. Priority shall be given to those portions of the property that serve as the more important public areas.

B. WALKS, STEPS AND PAVED AREAS

1. Deteriorated paving materials should be replaced with the same material or a material which matches as closely as possible. Consideration will be given to an alternate paving material if it can be shown that its properties will assist in site maintenance and/or will improve the original or later integral design concept.
2. Original layout of the walks, steps, and paved areas should be maintained. Consideration will be given to alterations if it can be shown that better site circulation is necessary and that the alteration will improve this without altering the integrity of the design.

C. PLANT MATERIALS

1. Existing healthy plant materials should be maintained.

2. All plant materials should be cared for according to good horticultural practices. Hazardous plants or portions of should be removed.
3. New plant materials should be added on a schedule that will assure a continuity in the existing landscape design and its later adaptations.
4. New plant materials should either be the same as the existing or be similar in form, color and texture.
5. New locations for plantings or new selection of species with a different form, color, or texture must not alter the overall site design.
6. Maintenance of, removal of, and additions of plant materials should consider maintaining existing vistas, creating new ones where appropriate, and maintaining new spaces.
7. Whenever appropriate, plant materials rather than structural materials should be used to solve erosion problems.

D. LANDFORMS

Not applicable.

E. ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS

1. Whenever possible, original or later integral architectural elements such as benches, fences, fountains, statues, bridges, lighting, shelters and signs shall be retained.
2. Maintenance should not alter the original or later integral color, material or design. Consideration, however, will be given to alterations that will either improve the design or the function of the element.
3. Architectural elements that are replaced should be of the same or similar material and design of the original or later integral feature. Consideration, however, will be given to changes that will improve the function of the architectural element without altering the integrity of the design.
4. Architectural elements may be removed if they are no longer functionally useful and their removal will not alter to a significant degree the site design.
5. Architectural elements may be added if they will not alter the integrity of the design, are necessary for the site safety, are useful for site maintenance, and/or will improve site usage.

9.3 STANDARDS AND CRITERIA - Commonwealth Avenue Mall

A. APPROACH

1. The intent is to maintain the Mall's existing character as lineal park and centerpiece of the street. The layout of paths, monuments, trees, and grass areas shall be maintained wherever possible.
2. No uses shall be allowed if they disrupt the Mall's present use as quiet sitting and strolling space.
3. There shall not be any physical change in landscape design to provide for active recreational use.
4. It is recommended that special events be permitted only if organized to prevent damage to grass, plantings, monuments and other features.
5. Maintenance and replacement of existing monuments, benches, trees and fences should be done in a manner consistent with the Mall's character. No new elements shall be permitted if they would alter special vistas or open spaces; existing interfering elements should, if possible, be removed.
6. No motor vehicles of any kind, except maintenance vehicles approved by the Department of Parks and Recreation, shall be permitted on any part of the Mall at any time.

B. PLANTINGS

1. Future plantings shall be guided by the original design for the Mall, as modified by Shurtleff.
2. All new trees, whether replacements for diseased or fillers for gaps in the planting rows, shall be semi-mature deciduous shade trees, minimum size 3.5-4 inch caliper. Since the existing planting on the Mall consists of various species of elm, new trees shall be improved introductions of Ulmus or Zelkova family resistant to disease, drought, and pollution. Examples include Zelkova Serrata Village Green and Ulmus Hollandica Groenwald. If a cure for Dutch Elm disease is found, it is strongly recommended that American Elm be used for future plantings.
3. Except for flowering shrubs, which shall be permitted only near monuments and the Kenmore Square subway portal, no plantings other than approved species of trees should be introduced.

4. Removal of diseased, dead, and unsalvageable trees, as well as those trees that violate the formal row planting plan, is permitted.

C. WALKS, STEPS, AND PAVED AREAS

1. Deteriorated pavement on the paths may be replaced with paving material of the same quality, texture, and color. In the reconditioning of old paths, new materials may be considered. Samples of the proposed material will be submitted to the Commission for review.
2. New pathways are discouraged, except that a pathway may be paved for the Mall west of Massachusetts Avenue. Such a pathway should be of material similar to and no wider than the path on the Mall east of Massachusetts Avenue.

D. MONUMENTS AND FOUNTAINS

1. In general, existing memorials, fountains, statues and monuments shall be preserved. Any consideration of the removal of any such element shall be reviewed with the Commission and the Art Commission.
2. Location of new monuments shall not disturb special vistas, nor impede pedestrian circulation. They will be similar in scale, material and character to those now on the Mall. Any plans for new monuments shall also be reviewed by the Art Commission.
3. All new monuments and fountains shall be located on the central path. No monuments or fountains may be placed on the grass on either side of the path.

E. FURNITURE

1. See D1 above.
2. Before adding or replacing benches, the Parks Department will first review the location, number and kind of benches to be installed with the Commission. In general, the Commission will favor benches consisting of wood slats on a concrete or metal base located parallel to and on or adjacent to the paved walkway.
3. The existing granite drinking fountain shall be retained and made operational if possible.

New drinking fountains shall be modern in design and located along the central path in consideration of high use areas.

4. Trash receptacles shall be simple, functional and unobtrusive.

F. FENCES

1. Any new fence shall be located around the Mall's perimeter only. Such fences shall be similar in material and general appearance to the original 19th century iron fence. Any plan for a new fence shall also be reviewed by the Art Commission.
2. The existing concrete balustrade at Charlesgate shall be retained.

G. SIGNS

1. The only signs permitted on the Mall are those providing essential public information, such as street signs, or public safety regulations, such as prohibition of vehicles.
2. Signs shall be designed to be consistent in design and general character throughout the Mall and will be subject to review of the Commission. Only species signs will be allowed on trees.

H. LIGHTING

New lighting fixtures should be compatible with existing features on the Mall and on Commonwealth Avenue proper. Fixtures for lighting monuments should be designed in coordination with the Art Commission.

I. BUILDINGS

No buildings of any type should be erected on the Mall.

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