



City of Cambridge

Consent Agenda #39

IN CITY COUNCIL
June 14, 1999

- ORDERED:** That the White Tower Restaurant, 25 Central Square, be designated as a protected landmark pursuant to Chapter 2.78, Article III, Section 2.78.180 of the Code of the City of Cambridge, as recommended by vote of the Cambridge Historical Commission on May 6, 1999. The premises so designated are defined as the structure of the White Tower Restaurant standing on parcel 82 of assessor's map 105, with the understanding that the remainder of parcel 82 from the west party wall of the restaurant and including 343-347 Green Street and 15-24 Central Square is considered non-contributing to the landmark property. The record owner as of March, 1999 is Central Property Limited Partnership, Jeanette Simon, General Partner. The property is recorded in the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, Book 17733, page 580; and be it further
- ORDERED:** That this designation is justified by the significant associations of this building with the broad architectural, economic, and social history of the City and the Commonwealth as an early example of fast-food retailing by a major chain of mid-20th-century restaurants and as a reflection of Central Square's early 20th-century commercial history that demonstrates the origins of fast-food retailing in the country's urban centers. It is of further significance in terms of its period and style of construction as a representative of the White Tower Company's earliest national design, as an early and intact example of "iconographic" architecture, as one of two known surviving White Tower Restaurants of the pre-World War II era in Massachusetts, and as Cambridge's earliest example of fast-food franchise architecture; and be it further
- ORDERED:** That the effect of this designation shall be that no construction activity can take place within the designated area, and no action can be taken affecting the appearance of 25 Central Square, that would in either case be visible from a public way, without review by the Cambridge Historical Commission and the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness, Hardship or Non-Applicability, as the case may be. In making determinations, the Commission shall be guided by the terms of the landmark designation report, and by Section VII, Standards and Criteria, of the landmark designation report, and by the applicable sections of Article 2.78.

In City Council June 14, 1999.

Adopted by the affirmative vote of six members.

Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-

D. Margaret Drury

D. Margaret Drury
City Clerk

VIII. Proposed Order

ORDERED:

That the White Tower Restaurant, 25 Central Square, be designated as a protected landmark pursuant to Chapter 2.78, Article III, Section 2.78.180 of the Code of the City of Cambridge, as recommended by vote of the Cambridge Historical Commission on May 6, 1999. The premises so designated are defined as the structure of the White Tower Restaurant standing on parcel 82 of assessor's map 105, with the understanding that the remainder of parcel 82 from the west party wall of the restaurant and including 343-347 Green Street and 15-24 Central Square is considered non-contributing to the landmark property. The record owner as of March, 1999 is Central Property Limited Partnership, Jeanette Simon, General Partner. The property is recorded in the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, Book 17733, page 580.

This designation is justified by the significant associations of this building with the broad architectural, economic, and social history of the City and the Commonwealth as an early example of fast-food retailing by a major chain of mid-20th-century restaurants and as a reflection of Central Square's early 20th-century commercial history that demonstrates the origins of fast-food retailing in the country's urban centers. It is of further significance in terms of its period and style of construction as a representative of the White Tower Company's earliest national design, as an early and intact example of "iconographic" architecture, as one of two known surviving White Tower Restaurants of the pre-World War II era in Massachusetts, and as Cambridge's earliest example of fast-food franchise architecture.

The effect of this designation shall be that no construction activity can take place within the designated area, and no action can be taken affecting the appearance of 25 Central Square, that would in either case be visible from a public way, without review by the Cambridge Historical Commission and the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness, Hardship or Non-Applicability, as the case may be. In making determinations, the Commission shall be guided by the terms of the landmark designation report, and by Section VII, Standards and Criteria, of the landmark designation report, and by the applicable sections of Article 2.78.



Cambridge Historical Commission

831 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139. Telephone 617/349-4683
Fax 617/349-6165, TTY 617/349-6112, E-mail HistComm@ci.Cambridge.ma.us



William B. King, *Chair*, Allison M. Crump, *Vice Chair*, Charles M. Sullivan, *Executive Director*
M. Wyllis Bibbins, Suzanne R. Green, Helen F. Moulton, Robert G. Neiley, Jo M. Solet, *Members*
Jennifer Jones, Anthony C. Platt, *Alternates*

To: The Honorable, the City Council

From: Charles Sullivan, Executive Director, Historical Commission *CMS*

Re: Final Landmark Designation Study Report
White Tower Restaurant, 25 Central Square

Date: May 25, 1999

The attached landmark designation study report for the White Tower Restaurant, 25 Central Square, is being forwarded to you with the unanimous recommendation of the Cambridge Historical Commission that it be designated a protected landmark. The White Tower Restaurant, though small, is a unique and distinctive building in Cambridge that reflects the early 20th-century history of Central Square as the city's center of commerce and transportation. Please do not hesitate to contact me or Sally Zimmerman of the Commission staff if you have any questions.

WHITE TOWER RESTAURANT
25 CENTRAL SQUARE
LANDMARK DESIGNATION STUDY REPORT

Prepared by Sally Zimmerman, Preservation Planner
Cambridge Historical Commission
May 10, 1999

| | |
|---|----|
| I. Location and Economic Status | 2 |
| A. Address and Zoning | |
| B. Ownership and Occupancy | |
| C. Area Description | |
| D. Planning Issues | |
| E. Map | |
| II. Description | 4 |
| III. History of the Property | 6 |
| A. Historic Development Patterns | |
| B. Historic Photographs | |
| C. Bibliography | |
| IV. Significance of the Property | 8 |
| A. Historical Significance | |
| B. Architectural Significance | |
| V. Relationship to the Criteria | 11 |
| A. Criteria for Designation | |
| B. Relationship of Property to Criteria | |
| VI. Recommendations | 13 |
| A. Purpose of the Landmark Designation | |
| B. Preservation Options | |
| C. Staff Recommendation | |
| VII. Standards and Criteria | 15 |
| VIII. Proposed Order | 17 |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The White Tower Restaurant, 25 Central Square, was built in 1932 by the White Tower Systems, a chain of hamburger restaurants that was one of the earliest fast-food retailing concerns in the country. Architecturally, the White Tower Restaurant represents the first phase of the company's design idiom, which featured a miniature, medieval-looking towered "castle", prominent siting, bright materials, and dramatic lighting to draw customers to what was then a novel form of restaurant. The White Tower is the earliest example of fast-food architecture in Cambridge and one of only two known White Tower Restaurants of this era surviving in Massachusetts. It meets criterion (1) of the designation criteria for its important associations with the broad architectural, economic and social history of the City and the Commonwealth; it meets criterion (2) for its historical and architectural significance in terms of its period and style of construction.

I. Location and Economic Status

A. Address and Zoning

The White Tower Restaurant is located at 25 Central Square, at the eastern end of a 9360 square foot lot at the intersection of Western Avenue, Green Street and River Street in the Central Square commercial district. It is zoned Business B within the Central Square Overlay Zone. The terms of the Overlay Zone limit building heights in the Business B zone to 80' by special permit and floor areas to 3.0. The Central Square Overlay Zone provides incentives for waiving parking and loading requirements for contributing National Register properties; it also requires that special permits not be issued for projects that substantially alter or demolish contributing National Register properties. The White Tower Restaurant, constructed in 1932 by the White Tower Systems, a hamburger restaurant chain, on land owned by Annie E. Southwick, is a contributing building in the Central Square National Register district, listed on March 2, 1990. The White Tower Restaurant stands on lot 82 of map 105 of the Cambridge assessor's records.

The portion of the property that is the subject of this report is confined to the premises located at 25 Central Square: the other structures standing on lot 82 are not considered contributory to the historical and architectural significance of the White Tower Restaurant.

B. Ownership and Occupancy

The building at 25 Central Square is part of a larger parcel, numbered 15-25 Central Square and 343-47 Green Street. It is owned by Central Property Limited Partnership, 347 Green Street, Jeanette Simon, general partner. The current occupant of the White Tower Restaurant is Moody's Falafel Palace.

C. Area Description

The property is one parcel west of Massachusetts Avenue facing into Central Square and onto an open area at the intersection of Western Avenue and River Street that contains the Central Square bus terminus. The site has been commercial in character since the mid 19th century and stands at the historic center of Central Square. It is adjacent to the Cambridge Police Department headquarters (Putnam & Cox, 1933) at 1 Western Avenue, opposite the First Baptist Church (Hartwell & Richardson, 1881) at 5 Magazine Street, and directly behind the Central Square Building (Blackall, Clapp & Whittemore, 1926) at 678 Massachusetts Avenue. The restaurant directly overlooks the site of the Holmes Block, a complex of mid to late 19th-century buildings demolished in 1998; the site is now being redeveloped for retail, office and residential uses in a new 7-story building of 128,000 square feet.

D. Planning Issues

The property that comprises lot 82 includes the White Tower Restaurant and two earlier one-story buildings, 17-24 Central Square (ca. 1860, truncated 1960) and 15-16 Central Square (C. Herbert McClare, 1896; also known as 343-47 Green Street). The ca. 1860 building was constructed as a three-story, wood-frame tenement in the Italianate style, which in 1960

With projects such as the Holmes Block under construction in the immediate area, the desire to maximize square footage in under-utilized properties such as the Central Property holdings will increase. The current owner has expressed an interest in redeveloping the site, including removing the White Tower Restaurant. With a cleared site, the 9,360 square foot property could be expected to support a building in the range of 28,000 square feet.

E. Map

II. Description

The White Tower Restaurant is a diminutive, one-story, flat-roofed structure built in 1932 of white glazed brick with an offset corner tower. At a tiny scale, the building imitates a castle, with a sturdy, block-like character and castellated elements including a crenellated roofline and a buttressed tower with arrow-slit windows. It is rectangular in plan with two wide bays forming the façade and two narrow bays along the side elevation. The façade is asymmetrical, with a wide window to the left of the entrance, which is in the base of the tower. The side elevation contains two narrow sash. The glazed brick walls are ornamented with a water table of dark green glazed-brick laid in a soldier course, with a running course of the same brick at the base of the crenellation, and diamond panels of the green brick in the buttresses of the tower. The same dark brick, in a canted soldier course, forms the sills of all the windows. Shallow recessed panels to hold signs occupy the wall space above the window on the entrance façade and at the base of the tower at the corner.

As it currently stands, the restaurant displays its original masonry appearance: only six years after its construction, the masonry was covered with enameled steel panels and given a streamlined, Moderne look (building permit #38970, 1938). In 1988, the steel panels were removed to reveal the original finish. The windows in the restaurant were also replaced in 1988 with single, fixed lights; the original sash had transoms with fixed plate-glass lights below a leaded, Luxfer-prism glass section. Small movable sections of the leaded transom pivoted open for ventilation. In the main window, a central panel in the transom spelled out "White Tower." The other original feature now removed is the restaurant's exterior lighting, which consisted of a series of ten flood lights on projecting "gooseneck" armatures placed around the perimeter of the tower and restaurant rooflines. Shaded to direct their light down onto the building, these lights would have created a brilliant effect against the shiny, glazed surface, making the tiny building into one large advertisement.

The rear wall of the restaurant, which angles back along the property line, is not finished to match the public faces of the building: the brick on the rear wall is roughly laid up and has been painted. The remaining wall of the building is a party wall with 24 Central Square.

When the White Tower was constructed in 1932, the existing building on the site was demolished. It was a small wooden storefront with essentially the same dimensions and footprint of the restaurant, which housed a shoe store. As a condition of the lease (Book 5694, page 74), the White Tower System agreed to handle the demolition of the store and all of the matters relating to the construction of the restaurant.

The remaining buildings on the site are not the subject of this report and do not contribute to the significance of the White Tower Restaurant. The following information provides background information on the evolution of the site prior to 1932.

The two other structures on the site are 17-24 Central Square (ca. 1860, 1960) and 15-16 Central Square (1896). The earlier building, now so altered as to be unrecognizable as an historic structure, was constructed as a three-story, gable-roofed Italianate tenement-type building with ground-floor storefronts. It was a utilitarian structure with simple window cornices and a

bracketed roofline. The building was owned by Dana Hyde and Daniel Chamberlin in 1873. In 1887, it housed a hay and grain merchant, a painter, a plasterer, and an express office. The upper floors must have been rented, but photos show no evidence of residential use. There were two stables at the rear of the building. Plate-glass storefronts were apparently added to the ground floor about 1890. In 1960, the top two floors were removed and the storefronts were refaced with steel. Only the rear of the building exhibits its early frame structure.

The building at 15-16 Central Square was designed by Cambridge architect C. Herbert McClare and built for its owner, Dr. George Southwick, in 1896. One-story in height, the building extends around the corner to Green Street, with storefronts along the entire frontage. As constructed, the building was a typical commercial structure, with three plate-glass storefronts separated by brick piers and topped with a pressed metal cornice. In 1907, it housed a bowling alley, a barber, a moving company and a lumber dealer. The building was refaced in 1938 (building permit #38463) with black metal paneling with chrome accents.



III. History of the Property

A. Historic Development Patterns

The White Tower Restaurant is located at the western end of Central Square, Cambridge's historic downtown retail and office center and the heart of the Cambridgeport neighborhood. The Central Square commercial district is linear in form, extending for seven blocks along Massachusetts Avenue from Bigelow Street on the west to State Street on the east, but at two points, it opens up with "squares" where arterial streets enter Massachusetts Avenue at an angle. These are located at Lafayette Square on the east, where Main Street exits Massachusetts Avenue, and at what was originally called Haymarket Square on the west, where River Street and Western Avenue intersect Massachusetts Avenue. The White Tower faces Haymarket, now Central Square, an irregular open area in front of the First Baptist Church where open-air markets were occasionally held through the 19th century.

Prior to 1800, Cambridgeport was virtually uninhabited, with marshland and mudflats surrounding limited areas of higher ground that were used for farming and pasturage. The construction of the West Boston Bridge in 1793 connecting present-day Kendall Square to the foot of Beacon Hill changed the area from a backwater to a locus of intersecting transportation networks that in turn spurred commercial, residential and industrial growth through the 19th century.

The area around the White Tower Restaurant was largely shaped by the roads that grew up around the new village. Prospect Street was laid out in 1804 to connect with Somerville, while River Street led to the River Street Bridge of 1811 and Brighton beyond. Magazine Street ran south to Captain's Island where the Commonwealth established a powder magazine in 1817. Green and Franklin streets were laid out along a narrow strip of high ground south of the main road, then called Main Street, now Massachusetts Avenue. When Western Avenue was laid out in 1824 to connect with Watertown, the street pattern defining the White Tower site was complete.

The first major building in the area was the First Baptist Church, a large frame meeting-house modeled on a plan of Asher Benjamin and constructed in 1817 on the site of the present church, facing into Central Square. Despite the early presence of the church in Central Square, other institutional uses did not locate there and the square instead grew as a commercial and transportation center. In 1852, the city built an engine house for the fire department at the intersection of Western Avenue and River Street, later acquiring the site at 1 Western Avenue for a combined police and fire station. The Holmes grocery store stood at 1-5 Central Square, while the White Tower site appears to have been used by the building trades.

Through much of the 19th century, Cambridgeport grew steadily: regular omnibus and horse-car service encouraged the growth of commuter suburbs in areas of high ground, while the draining and filling of large tracts of land along the railroad embankment east of Central Square began to bring in industry. But large-scale industrialization and residential construction did not take place in Cambridgeport until after the Civil War. By the end of the 19th century, the Central Square

commercial district served a broad population of the city and housed an array of national franchise stores, local merchants, professional offices, and other services.

At the turn of the century, the area immediately surrounding the White Tower site was characterized by marginal, local commercial enterprises. Among the surrounding businesses were a large number relating to the building trades, including lumber dealers, plumbers, and plasterers. Transport-related businesses nearby included hay and grain merchants and express offices.

The White Tower Restaurant sits on land that has been in related ownership for over a century. In 1896, Dr. George Southwick of Boston and Mary P. Southwick of Franklin, New York purchased a 19,628 square foot property from Dana and Maria Hyde and Daniel Chamberlin (Book 2477, page 371) that contained the parcel on which the White Tower now stands. Hyde and Chamberlin obtained the parcel through the settlement of Edward Hyde's estate in 1885, although the Hyde family had for many years been associated with the property. The Southwick family, owners of a number of properties in Cambridge, retained the property until 1953, when as the Southwick Corporation, they sold the Central Square properties to the Central Trust, Maurice Simon, Trustee (Book 8051, page 139). Currently, the parcel is owned by the Central Properties Limited Partnership, Jeanette Simon, Trustee (Book 17733, page 580).

B. Historic Photographs, Maps

C. Bibliography

Cambridge Historical Commission: Inventory files for 1-25 Central Square;
National Register nomination form for Central Square Historic District;
Central Square photographs file

_____, Cambridgeport, M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1971
Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Registry of Deeds, South Middlesex Region

Hirshorn, Paul and Steven Izenour, White Towers, M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1979

Liebs, Chester, From Main Street to Miracle Mile, (bibliographical info incomplete)



WHITE TOWER RESTAURANT, AS BUILT IN 1932
25 CENTRAL SQUARE

Boston #5 (1938)

"I think the best thing that ever happened was when we covered them. Then they looked clean, once you cleaned them."

Boston #5 (1932)



WHITE TOWER RESTAURANT, AS REFACED IN 1938
25 CENTRAL SQUARE

IV. Significance of the Property

A. Historical Significance

The White Tower Restaurant is historically significant as an early representative of national franchise retailing in Cambridge and a reflection of the retail character of Central Square in the 1930s.

The White Tower restaurant system was established in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1926. It imitated the White Castle restaurants, which first opened in Wichita, Kansas, in 1921. Both were among the earliest of the nation's chain restaurants and used the image of a spotless white building to promote the cleanliness of their facility and the wholesomeness of their product. In their 1979 history, White Towers, Paul Hirshorn and Steven Izenour cite the suburbanization of the 1920s as a factor in the development of fast-food chains. Commuters on trolleys, subways, and buses seeking a quick, safe and reliable meal on the way to or from work presented the opportunity for a new style of restaurant (Hirshorn and Izenour, p. 1).

White Tower restaurants were open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, serving a very limited menu that consisted of small, two-inch diameter hamburgers, coffee, doughnuts, ham sandwiches, pie, and soda pop; the hamburgers, which cost 5¢, were made to order, cooked in full view of the customer, and served on a paper napkin (Hirshorn and Izenour, p. 3).

By 1929, the system operated a half dozen shops in Wisconsin and 30 more in Detroit. Uniformity in the menu and in the design of the restaurants enabled the company to contain costs, to build customer recognition, and to expand rapidly, despite the Depression. Building sites were more often leased than purchased outright, and construction was done by company crews that traveled to the site to build the towers, completing the buildings in just two weeks (Hirshorn and Izenour, pp. 4-5).

Through the Depression, the chain continued to expand, focusing on commuting centers and factory locations in large eastern cities. By 1935, more than 130 towers operated throughout the northeast and mid-west (Hirshorn and Izenour, p. 11). Most employees and most customers were working-class men, but in the early 1930s, the menu and floor plan were expanded to attract a broader clientele (Hirshorn and Izenour, pp. 8-9). After World War II, the chain made a successful transition to automobile-oriented retailing and in the mid 1950s, the number of shops peaked at over 230 outlets in the eastern U.S. (Hirshorn and Izenour, p. 21). But as fast-food restaurants became an accepted phenomenon and competition increased in the 1960s, the White Tower System cut back its original retail operations and diversified into other areas of food service (Hirshorn and Izenour, p. 23).

The history of the White Tower restaurant in Central Square reflects all the major elements of the chain's early operation. The square was a nexus of subway and streetcar transportation serving a burgeoning industrial base in Cambridgeport and East Cambridge. Central Square had everything the White Tower system sought in its restaurant locations: a corner site on a public transit system with a large population of working people passing through on a regular basis. In

the 1930s, Cambridge ranked second in the state in industrial production, employing 25,000 people. The plaza-like openness of the Central Square site provided visual access, and the subway entrance was just steps away. While the site was tight, it allowed the restaurant to build its preferred corner design.

The Central Square restaurant was the fifth opened by the White Tower systems in the Boston area and the only one in Cambridge. The company appears to have entered the Boston market en masse in 1932, when at least 8 restaurants were opened. A detailed five-year, renewable lease agreement recorded at the Registry of Deeds between Annie E. Southwick and the White Tower Systems in December of 1932 (Book 5694, page 74) illustrates the company's operating procedures.

As part of the lease, the White Tower System agreed to clear the existing building, erect their restaurant, maintain and insure the building, including paying all taxes and utilities, and reserved unto itself the right to remove the distinguishing features of the building if the lease should be terminated. The company specified it would take down as much of the tower as projected above the roof, remove the battlements, and change "the entire front of said building and the window on the side of said building near Massachusetts Avenue", making the entire building watertight and sound "so that the same may be suitable for such use or occupancy as the Lessor may then desire to make of said building." Clearly, if their building was to be re-used, it was the original intent of the White Tower Systems that it no longer appeared to be a White Tower.

At the time of the White Tower's construction, there were only a few other national retail chains operating in Cambridge. These included the A&P (Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company) grocery stores, with 33 small storefront locations around the city, the F. W. Woolworth Company (also in Central Square at 639 Massachusetts Avenue), Fannie Farmer Candies, and several gas stations.

B. Architectural Significance

The White Tower Restaurant is a well-preserved example of the White Tower Systems early castle-form design and the earliest known example of franchise architecture in Cambridge. Hirshorn and Izenour outlined the evolution of the White Tower's architecture in their monograph. The first of the restaurants, opened in Milwaukee in 1926, was designed by the company's founder, Thomas E. Saxe, and featured a boxy, somewhat medieval-looking design consisting of a white brick block and an offset corner entrance tower. The color and massing were salient features that were retained throughout the history of the chain. "The 'tower' and its motifs evoked the social and gastronomic prominence of royalty, just as 'white'-- the name as well as the building materials -- evoked cleanliness and wholesomeness" (Hirshorn and Izenour, p. 2).

In 1928, the company hired Clarence Haffeman, a builder and draftsman, as its building superintendent. It was Haffeman's design that established the first phase of the company's national iconography. Haffeman added stepped pilasters to the tower, crenellations to the roofline, and plate glass windows with the name in leaded glass (Hirshorn and Izenour, p. 5). All

of the company's 1932 Boston outlets featured Haffeman's design, which was constructed on what was essentially a production-line basis.

The importance of the building's design features as a company icon can be gauged by the terms of the lease agreement for the Central Square restaurant, which required the removal of the distinguishing elements of the building if the lease was terminated. In that event, the roofline, tower, and main walls were to be rebuilt by the company so that the building would no longer convey the distinctive castle form.

By 1935, the scale of the White Tower system's operation necessitated employing local architects to design restaurants, with the result that some variability occurred in the buildings of the middle 1930s. Seeking to again impose the design consistency of the original buildings, and also to replace the original "medieval" castle icon with a more modern image, the company hired a staff architect, Charles J. Johnson, in late 1935. Johnson spent the rest of his career with the company, retiring after 40 years, and directed all of its subsequent style changes, but the entrance tower and white exterior remained throughout the hallmarks of the chain.

Johnson's first major modification was the replacement of the original white glazed brick exterior with porcelain enamel paneling. The chain's strict cleaning standards required windows to be washed daily, interiors entirely washed down twice a week, and exteriors once a week; the switch to porcelain enamel made the job of keeping the restaurants spotless much easier. It also gave the buildings a streamlined, aerodynamic quality. Porcelain enamel had the additional advantage of being easily installed over the original brick structure. In the late 1930s, the company began systematically re-facing its restaurants, and in 1938, the Central Square White Tower received a new paneled exterior. That exterior was removed in 1988 after the restaurant vacated the space.

As it currently stands, the building is the earliest example of franchise architecture in Cambridge and a rare example of this type of building in Massachusetts. Only two other examples are listed in the Massachusetts Historical Commission MACRIS data base: a 1933 White Tower at 2 Chandler Street in Worcester and a 1953 White Tower at 24 Kneeland Street in Boston.

C. Historic Photographs

V. Relationship to Criteria

A. Criteria for Designation (Article III, Section 2.78.180)

The criteria for designation contained in Article III state as follows:

The Historical Commission by majority vote may recommend for designation as a landmark any property within the City being or containing a place, structure, feature or object which it determines to be either (1) importantly associated with one or more historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, aesthetic, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City or the Commonwealth or (2) historically or architecturally significant (in terms of period, style, method of construction or association with a famous architect or builder) either by itself or in the context of a group of structures . . .

B. Relation of Property to Criteria

The White Tower Restaurant meets criterion (1) for its important associations with the broad architectural, economic and social history of the City and the Commonwealth. It also meets criterion (2) for its historical and architectural significance in terms of its period and style of construction.

The White Tower company established a chain of restaurants in the late 1920s and 1930s that was among the first examples of a form of commerce that has come to be a major force in late 20th-century America, the fast-food retail chain. Among the elements of the form are consistency of architectural design, menu, and presentation; an emphasis on speed, reliability, cleanliness, and product safety; modest cost; and orientation to a mobile population.

The Central Square White Tower location reflects the origins of “fast-food” as an urban commercial phenomenon that evolved in response to patterns of early 20th-century work- and life-styles and that only after World War II assumed its current suburban and exurban form. Central Square in 1932 fulfilled all of the company’s requirements for success: a large and potentially-mobile industrial work force in close proximity to mass transit systems. As one of only two known examples of this era of the company’s history still standing in Massachusetts, the White Tower Restaurant is a rare survivor of this early 20th-century form of commerce.

Architecturally and historically, the White Tower Restaurant is also significant in terms of its period of construction, both within the company and in the city, and for its style. It represents the first phase of national development of the White Tower chain, when the company’s design idiom relied on the connotations of quality implied by the towered castle form. It is also the earliest example in Cambridge of fast-food architecture and a rare surviving example of this form in Massachusetts. In terms of its style, the White Tower Restaurant is an early example of “iconographic” architecture, as Hirshorn and Izenour state, of “a series of buildings that set out only to be visible and evocative in order to sell hamburgers” (Hirshorn and Izenour, p. v). The company’s founder and, subsequently, its builders and architects, achieved this through a combination of prominent siting, bright materials, consistent massing around the tower entrance,

and dramatic lighting. The Central Square restaurant is the earliest example of such architecture locally and, except for its windows and lighting, retains all of its major original features.

VI. Recommendations

A. Purpose of Landmark Designation (Article III, 2.78.140)

The purpose of landmark designation is defined in Section 140 of Article III as follows:

The City Council finds it necessary to enact this article . . . in order to preserve, conserve and protect the beauty and heritage of the City and to improve the quality of its environment through identification, conservation and maintenance of . . . structures which constitute or reflect distinctive features of the architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City; to resist and restrain environmental influences adverse to this purpose; to foster appropriate use and wider public knowledge and appreciation of such . . . structures; and by furthering these purposes to promote the public welfare by making the City a more attractive and desirable place in which to live and work. To achieve these purposes, the City may designate . . . landmarks to be administered as set forth in this article.

B. Preservation Options

There are two options available to accomplish the long-term preservation of the White Tower Restaurant. The first is through a City Council vote to designate the property a landmark (recognizing the White Tower Restaurant as the sole contributing significant element of the property) , the second through the owner's voluntary donation of a preservation restriction or easement to the Historical Commission or some other qualified body.

According to Article III, Chapter 2.78.190, designation of the White Tower as a landmark would establish a process wherein "the Historical Commission . . . shall review all construction, demolition or alteration that affects the exterior architectural features, other than color," of the landmark. Chapter 2.78.210 states, "No building permit for alteration of an exterior architectural feature of a landmark . . . and no demolition permit for demolition or removal of a landmark . . . shall be issued by the City or any department thereof until the certificate required by this article has been issued by the Historical Commission . . ." It should be noted that the two other buildings on the property do not contribute to the architectural and historical significance of the White Tower and that the White Tower alone is the subject of the landmark protection.

A certificate of appropriateness, hardship or non-applicability is issued by the Historical Commission depending on the nature of the alteration or construction proposed for the landmark. Applications for certificates of appropriateness or hardship are reviewed by the Commission at a public hearing, with 14 days notice provided to affected parties by legal notice and first class mail. The staff issues certificates of non-applicability administratively. The intent of the review process is to prevent "developments incongruous to the historic aspects, architectural significance or the distinctive character of the landmark" (2.78.220) The designation report may be drafted to allow specific development opportunities to take place on the property. Preservation easements for buildings on or eligible for the National Register may be donated to the Historical Commission or another qualified historic preservation organization under Chapter 184 of the Massachusetts General Laws. An easement is a "non-possessory right to control what happens to buildings or land owned by others." It is voluntarily conveyed by the property owner

to an entity, such as the Historical Commission, which holds the right and enforces the terms. To be effective, the easement must protect the publicly visible features of the subject property from alteration without the Commission's prior review. It may also be drafted to allow specific development opportunities to take place or to protect significant interior features. Again, it is the White Tower Restaurant that is the contributing and significant component of this property.

Donation of an easement encourages private investment in significant buildings with no corresponding expenditure of public funds. Under Internal Revenue Service regulations, the value of an easement on a property listed on the National Register of Historic Places may be taken as a charitable deduction on personal income taxes. The value of an easement is calculated by taking the difference between "before" and "after" appraisals of the property. However, the rules for charitable contribution deductions for preservation easements are very technical. Any property owner considering the donation of an easement should consult a qualified tax consultant relative to the specific circumstances.

Preservation easements protect significant property in a similar manner to landmarking, that is, through review and approval of the Historical Commission and issuance of a certificate of appropriateness or hardship for any proposed repairs or alterations that affect protected portions of the property. Unlike landmarking, a preservation easement may have certain financial benefits for an owner and can address the protection of significant interior features.

It should also be noted that the White Tower Restaurant is a contributing building within the Central Square National Register District. As such, it is eligible for certain tax benefits for certified rehabilitation under the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Restoration or adaptive use of the property through the joint Internal Revenue Service-Department of the Interior preservation tax incentive program provides for a 20% tax credit.

C. Staff Recommendation

It is the staff recommendation that the Historical Commission pursue designation of the White Tower Restaurant as a landmark. It is the further recommendation that the Commission consider acceptance of a preservation easement for the property if the owner indicates interest in that option.

VII. Standards and Criteria

A. Introduction

Under Article III, the Historical Commission is charged with reviewing any construction, demolition or alteration that affects the exterior architectural features (other than color) of a landmark. This report describes exterior architectural features that are among the characteristics that led to consideration of the property as a landmark. Except as the order designating or amending the landmark may otherwise provide, the exterior architectural features described in this report should be preserved and/or enhanced in any proposed alteration or construction that affects those features of the landmark. The standards following in paragraphs B and C of this section provide specific guidelines for the treatment of the landmark described in this report.

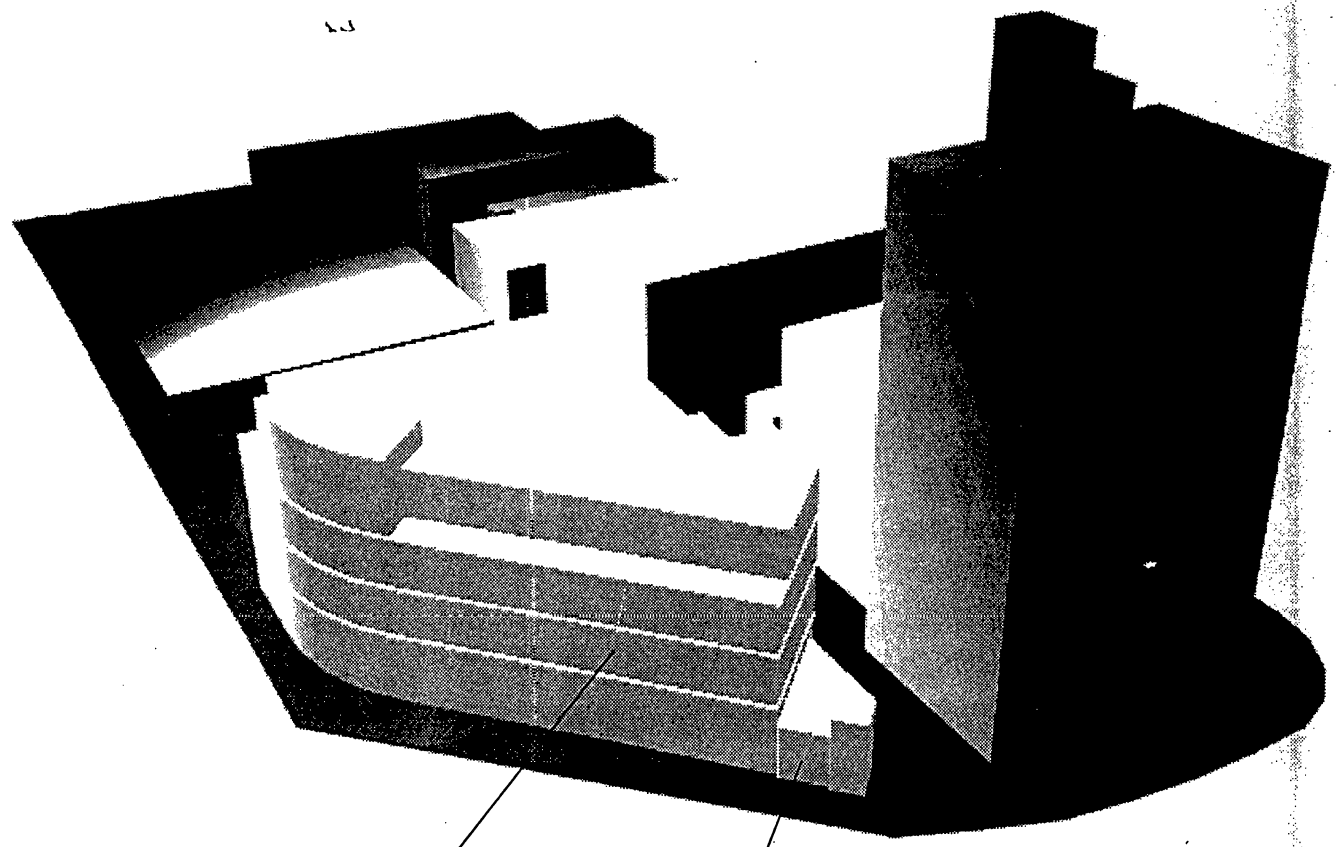
B. General Standards and Criteria

Subject to review and approval of exterior architectural features under the terms of this report, the following standards shall apply:

1. Significant historic and architectural features of the landmark shall be preserved.
2. Changes and additions to the landmark, which have taken place over time, are evidence of the history of the property and the neighborhood. These changes to the property may have acquired significance in their own right and, if so, that significance should be recognized and respected.
3. Deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced.
4. When replacement of architectural features is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. New materials should, whenever possible, match the material being replaced in physical properties, design, color, texture, and appearance. The use of imitation replacement materials is discouraged.
6. The surface cleaning of a landmark shall be done by the gentlest possible means. Sandblasting and other cleaning methods that damage exterior architectural features shall not be used.
7. New additions shall not destroy significant exterior architectural features and shall not be incongruous to the historic aspects, architectural significance, or distinct character of the landmark, neighborhood, and environment.
8. New additions should be done in a way that if they were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the landmark should be unimpaired.

C. Suggested Review Guidelines

1. If the windows are altered, the original fenestration of the White Tower Restaurant should be reinstated. This would entail removal of the fixed light sash installed in 1988 and installation of windows with a fixed sash below a transom in the same proportion as the original fenestration; if possible, the transom section should be of leaded glass, although replication of the original "White Tower" sign panel is not recommended. Windows in the tower should be of the vertical casement-style indicated in the pre-1938 view of the restaurant.
2. If the door is altered, it should be replaced with a multi-light door below a transom in the same proportion as the original door shown in the pre-1938 view of the restaurant.
3. It would be desirable to replace the projecting gooseneck lighting at the roofline.
4. Cleaning, pointing, and any necessary replacement of the glazed white and green bricks of the principal two elevations (south and east facing) should not damage or alter the joint width, color, surface appearance, or pattern of the original masonry as shown in the pre-1938 view of the restaurant.
5. Signage should be contained within the original recessed, cornice-level sign panels provided on the south and east elevations.
6. The White Tower Restaurant should remain intact and recognizable as a major design feature within any development proposals for the property as a whole; this would include maintaining the free-standing character of the two principal elevations (south and east facing), maintaining a sharp contrast in surrounding building materials, and retaining the original pattern and relationship of solids to openings in the walls; reuse proposals should pay particular attention to retaining the appearance of the corner entrance, the tower windows, and the large display window of the south elevation.
7. A Certificate of Appropriateness will be granted supporting a redevelopment proposal for lot 82 that includes the preservation and restoration of the White Tower Restaurant according to the terms outlined in 6. above and that substantially conforms with a massing study presented by the owner and prepared by Pfeufer/Richardson Architects and dated May 6, 1999 that shows a new structure on the site of the present buildings at 343-347 Green Street and 15-24 Central Square.
8. Consideration should be given to supporting a "transfer of development rights" within the property defined as lot 82 of map 105 if such an approach included the owner's written commitment to preserve, adaptively-reuse, and/or otherwise retain the White Tower Restaurant as an intact, distinctive, and largely-free-standing element of a redevelopment proposal.



Proposed 4 story Building

White Tower

Retail Ground Floor
Office Upper Floors
Parcel A

May 6, 1999

Pfeufer/Richardson PC Architects
700 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139
617.354.3561

VIII. Proposed Order

ORDERED:

That the White Tower Restaurant, 25 Central Square, be designated as a protected landmark pursuant to Chapter 2.78, Article III, Section 2.78.180 of the Code of the City of Cambridge, as recommended by vote of the Cambridge Historical Commission on May 6, 1999. The premises so designated are defined as the structure of the White Tower Restaurant standing on parcel 82 of assessor's map 105, with the understanding that the remainder of parcel 82 from the west party wall of the restaurant and including 343-347 Green Street and 15-24 Central Square is considered non-contributing to the landmark property. The record owner as of March, 1999 is Central Property Limited Partnership, Jeanette Simon, General Partner. The property is recorded in the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, Book 17733, page 580.

This designation is justified by the significant associations of this building with the broad architectural, economic, and social history of the City and the Commonwealth as an early example of fast-food retailing by a major chain of mid-20th-century restaurants and as a reflection of Central Square's early 20th-century commercial history that demonstrates the origins of fast-food retailing in the country's urban centers. It is of further significance in terms of its period and style of construction as a representative of the White Tower Company's earliest national design, as an early and intact example of "iconographic" architecture, as one of two known surviving White Tower Restaurants of the pre-World War II era in Massachusetts, and as Cambridge's earliest example of fast-food franchise architecture.

The effect of this designation shall be that no construction activity can take place within the designated area, and no action can be taken affecting the appearance of 25 Central Square, that would in either case be visible from a public way, without review by the Cambridge Historical Commission and the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness, Hardship or Non-Applicability, as the case may be. In making determinations, the Commission shall be guided by the terms of the landmark designation report, and by Section VII, Standards and Criteria, of the landmark designation report, and by the applicable sections of Article 2.78.



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

TEL 349-4300
FAX 349-4307



39.

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

June 14, 1999

To The Honorable, The City Council:

Please find attached for your consideration, the Final Study Report for designating the White Tower Restaurant located at 25 Central Square as a protected landmark.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mec
Attachment

Consent Agenda #39

OIP

Relative to a recommendation
from the Historical Commission
for designating the White
Tower Restaurant located at
25 Central Square as a
protected landmark.

In City Council June 14, 1999

*Adapted Recommendation
of the Historical
Commission*