

West Cambridge Youth Center

Site Assessment Study

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STUDY OBJECTIVE:

The City of Cambridge is in the process of finding an appropriate location for a new Youth Center, which will support the neighborhoods of West Cambridge. This study has been undertaken to determine if a site that is adjacent to Glacken Field and the Cambridge Golf Club on Huron Avenue is adequately sized to support such a facility, and to study an alternate site behind 700 Huron Avenue near the Huron Towers. This report will show several options that were studied with regard to building placement and size of the Youth Center.

Environmental concerns on these sites are of great importance, this study outlines the necessary planning guidelines to ensure that the Youth Center would not be detrimental to the environment.

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SITE PROFILE

The Glacken Field site, which has been identified as a possible location for the West Cambridge Youth Center, is currently the site of three tennis courts that lie between the Golf Club parking lot and the Glacken Field bleachers bordering on Huron Avenue. The tennis courts represent an area of approximately 21,000 SF. Behind the tennis courts and adjacent to the Golf Clubhouse is an outdoor basketball court that has been dedicated to Sharif Moustafa. The bleachers alongside the courts face the softball diamond on Glacken Field and were constructed over 60 years ago. The bleachers are in need of repair and do not meet current requirements for accessibility.

The entire site area of Glacken Field, the courts, and the Golf Club are within the Fresh Pond Reservation and overlook Fresh Pond itself. All of the areas described above are set back from the pond along the "Glacken Slope" by well over 100'. Care must be taken in considering any new building or site disturbance within this area to carefully follow the "Fresh Pond Reservation Master Plan" as well as environmental concerns regarding site drainage, construction run-off control, and site permeability.

The site studied is zoned Open Space (OS), this district does allow for Social or Recreation uses such as a Youth Center provided that due notice and that a public notification and Planning Board process is followed per the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance. A further discussion with the City's legal department and a full zoning analysis is recommended.

The Glacken Field site is owned by the City of Cambridge, as is the Golf Club and the adjacent Golf Club parking.

The other site studied is behind the Huron Towers at 700 Huron Avenue. This site is not owned by the City and its access is limited from Huron Avenue.

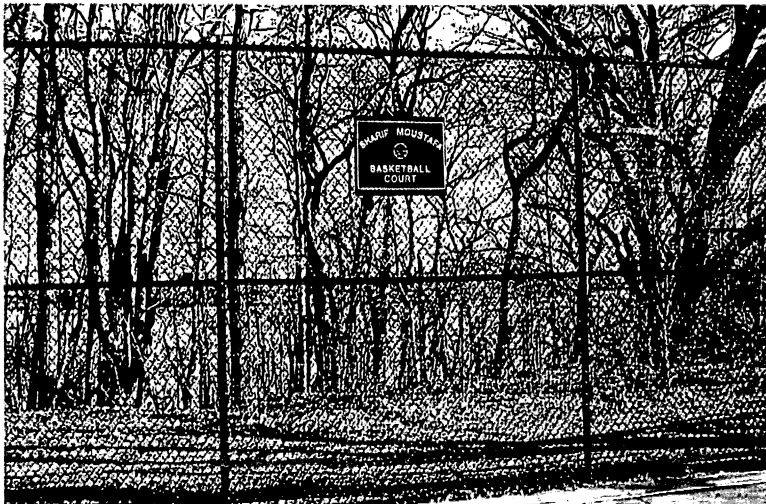
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SITE PROFILE

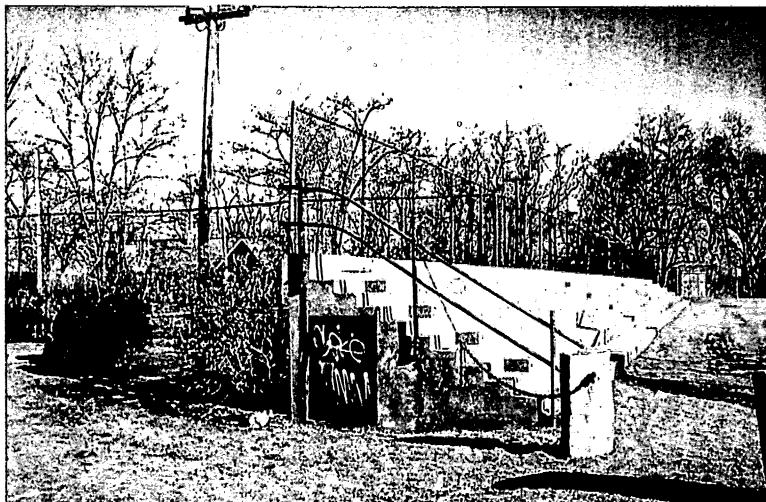
Site Photos



Site from Huron Avenue



Sharif Moustafa Basketball Court



WPA Bleachers

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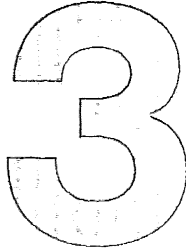
GENERAL SITE ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

This section summarizes general environmental issues associated with construction and operation of a proposed Youth Center to be located adjacent to Glacken Field and the Cambridge Golf Club on Huron Avenue. This summary is based on review of the Site Assessment Study and prior knowledge of the area from siting studies conducted five or more years ago for the new water filtration plant. No field evaluations or other studies specifically for this project were conducted.

Because the site is already developed with recreational uses and a parking lot, the project will apparently involve little or no disturbance of currently undisturbed land. We assume that site access and egress would be via an existing curb cut off Huron Avenue. It appears that the site and all four options are more than 100 feet from the top of bank of Fresh Pond Reservoir. Assuming this is the case, and there are no wetland resource areas on the site itself, site development would be outside Conservation Commission jurisdiction and no permit under the Wetlands Protection Act would be required. However, a site-specific reconnaissance should be conducted to determine whether there are any jurisdictional areas that could be affected by the project.

During the siting studies conducted for the water filtration plant, site topography was noted as a potential issue for site development. Site drainage and placement of stormwater management controls, particularly during construction, must account for topographical constraints, as appropriate. Discharges of stormwater to Fresh Pond are not allowed since the reservoir is an Outstanding Resource Water. Stormwater must be directed away from the reservoir, collected and sediments removed prior to discharge to either a separate storm sewer (if one exists in Huron Avenue) or to an MWRA sanitary sewer (if no storm sewer currently exists in that area). Because the total site area is less than one acre, no National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit would be needed for discharge of stormwater during construction if that discharge is to a separate storm sewer. If the discharge is to the MWRA sanitary sewer, an MWRA Construction Dewatering Permit would be needed for construction related discharges (groundwater and stormwater) and an MWRA Sewer Use Discharge Permit would be needed for post-construction stormwater discharges to that sewer. Similarly, discharges of sanitary sewage to the MWRA sewer may require modifications to an existing permit or a new filing.

As noted in the Site Assessment Study, public recreational uses are allowed in an Open Space District. There may be other Planning Board approvals required for parking and for the facility itself, however. Therefore, early discussions with the Planning Board are recommended. The Site Assessment Study also notes that the project must be consistent with the Fresh Pond Reservation Master Plan, which contains recommendations for landscaping and planting materials, among other objectives for the Fresh Pond Reservation. Plantings may also require review by one or more local committees. Fresh Pond and Fresh Pond Reservation are highly valued recreational and visual resources. Maintaining public access to the area during and after construction, and potential post-construction visual impacts are therefore important considerations during project planning and design. Because of the proximity to residential land uses across Huron Avenue, minimizing construction impacts to residents (noise and traffic) is also critical.



GENERAL SITE ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Although most of the site has apparently been disturbed, archaeological investigations may be needed to confirm that the site does not contain significant archaeological resources that were left intact in spite of previous construction activities. Communication with the Massachusetts Historical Commission and the Cambridge Historical Commission is therefore advisable.

OTHER SITE CONSIDERATIONS

Another issue to consider during planning and design is the protection of two existing parallel 40-inch water pipelines that run through the site. These lines are the influent and effluent lines connecting to the Payson Park Reservoir.

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PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

The City of Cambridge has recently designed and constructed new Youth Center facilities that are the basis for the proposed West Cambridge Youth Center. The new Youth Centers are the Area IV Youth Center on Harvard Street, the Frisoli Youth Center on Willow Street, and the Gately Youth Center adjacent to the Fitzgerald School. The Center's are adjacent to public recreational open spaces, Area IV abuts Sennot Park and Frisoli is placed within Donnelly Field and adjacent to Harrington School. The Glacken Field site offers similar adjacencies to public open space.

The West Cambridge Youth Center program requirements are planned to be similar to those of the aforementioned Center's. The total square footage of those buildings is approximately 19,000 SF. Of that total, 3,000 to 3,500 SF is devoted to a Pre-School program space for up to 40 children. Cambridge Zoning does not permit a child care facility within an Open Space (OS) Zone, and is therefore omitted from this study. The square footage devoted to the Youth Center includes a gymnasium, weight/training/dance studio, game room, computer room, community-room with kitchen, office, storage and mechanical spaces. The following table outlines the proposed program for the West Cambridge Youth Facility and is the basis of the site assessments.

SPACE	SQUARE FOOTAGE
Gymnasium	6,200
Spectators	500
Lobby/Circulation	3,000
Weight/Exercise	1,000
Lounge/TV Room	400
Kitchen	200
Game Room	400
Computer/Career Resource	500
Office	300
Meeting/Conference Room	400
Toilets/Walls	1,000
Storage	300
Child Care*	0
Mechanical	1,000
TOTAL SF	15,200

* Not permitted by zoning



Frisoli Youth Center

West Cambridge Youth Center

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SITE ASSESSMENTS AND OPTIONS

This study has evaluated 5 options for locating the Youth Center on the Glacken Field site and the 700 Huron Avenue site. Each option has advantages and disadvantages and each has differing impacts on the Golf Club Facility, and Glacken Field, and the accessibility to the youth of West Cambridge. We believe Option D offers the best solution for a building location and as will be seen it actually increases the available recreational open space along Huron Avenue.

OPTION A

This scheme organizes the proposed Youth Center in a position on the site that uses one tennis court closest to Huron Avenue and brings the building placement out to the street edge. It also suggests the total demolition of the bleachers facing the softball field and using that land to accommodate an adequate footprint to support the program space of the Center. This site location retains two tennis courts and the outdoor basketball court and has no impact on the Golf course. Parking for the Center would be within the Golf course lot.

This location effectively places the Youth Center and its entrance on Huron Avenue and allows the Center to open out onto the tennis courts and to the softball diamond and Glacken Field.

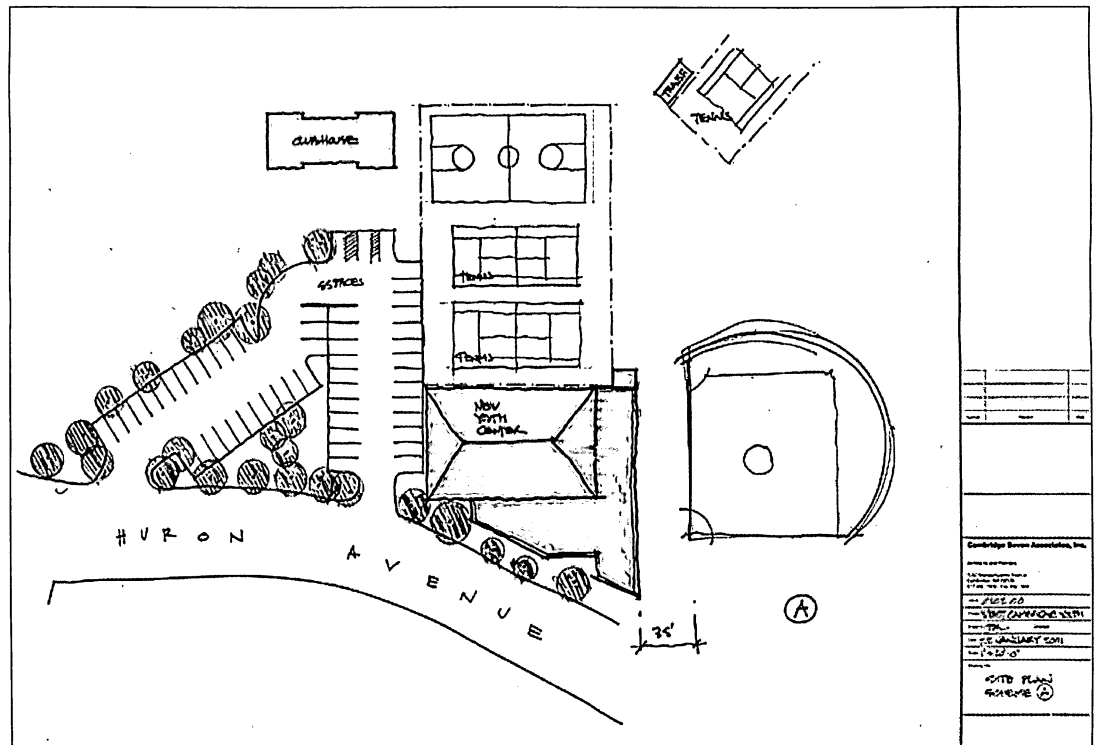


Option A Site

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SITE ASSESSMENTS AND OPTIONS

Option A



Option A Site Plan

West Cambridge Youth Center
Site Assessment Study

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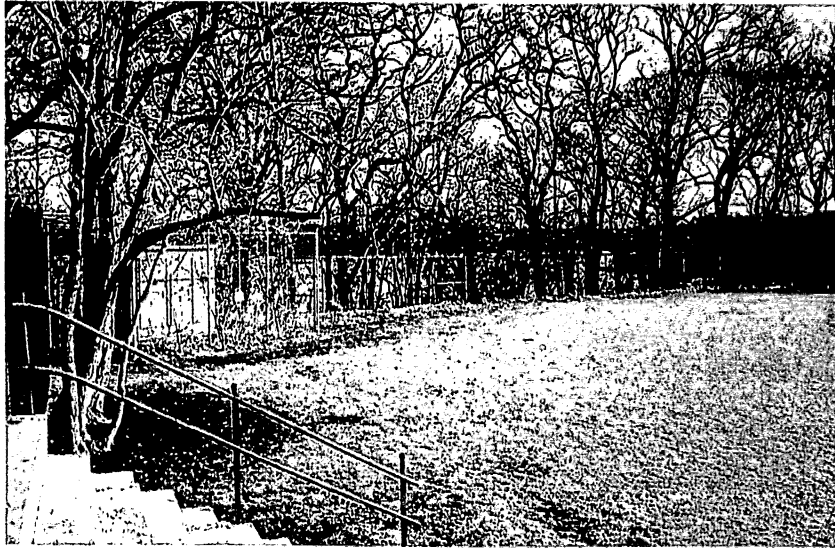
SITE ASSESSMENTS AND OPTIONS

OPTION B

The second site option is to place the building further back from Huron Avenue utilizing two tennis courts but preserving the Lt. Glacken Memorial. This site plan also suggests removal of the WPA bleachers to increase the site area.

By pushing the proposed building site back from the street the Glacken Field open space continues along Huron Avenue to the Golf Club parking lot with the proposed Youth Center behind. The parking lot for the Golf course would be unaffected and would retain its current 56 spaces.

Because this option limits the number of tennis courts from three to one it is also a possibility that one tennis court be constructed on Glacken Field adjacent to the soccer field, with no detriment to the soccer field playing surface.



Option B Site

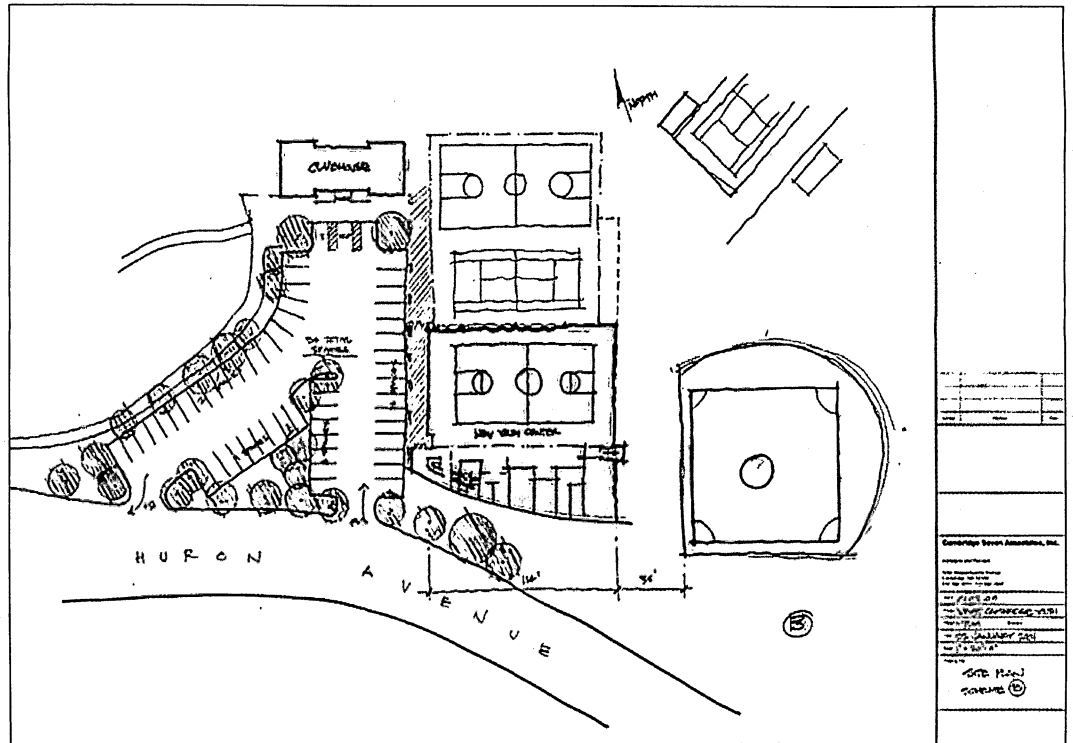


Tennis Court Site

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SITE ASSESSMENTS AND OPTIONS

Option B



Option B Site Plan

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SITE ASSESSMENTS AND OPTIONS

OPTION C

Option C takes the proposed Youth Center and pushes it even further off of Huron Avenue to the back of the outdoor basketball court. This location aligns the back walls of the Youth Center and the Golf Club clubhouse with one another establishing a building edge. The basketball court and one tennis court would be re-constructed in front of the Youth Center facing Huron Avenue. One additional tennis court can also be built on Glacken Field as noted in Option B.

This approach has some additional benefits; first the open space qualities of Glacken Field remain visible all along Huron Avenue with buildings placed behind and away from the street. Second, the new building siting may allow for expanded parking options for the Golf Club by allowing a new parking layout in front of the Golf Course Club house. Finally, this scheme potentially could unite the Youth Center and Golf Clubhouse into one City owned and operated facility.

Naturally care must be taken with this approach to ensure that the new buildings remain the appropriate distances away from Fresh Pond. Construction mitigation measures must also be in place to prevent any detrimental surface runoff from entering Fresh Pond. These issues have been successfully addressed elsewhere within the Reservation which suggests that they might work here as well.



Option C Site

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SITE ASSESSMENTS AND OPTIONS

OPTION D

Option D is very similar to C above with two very important differences. First, the Youth Center is shown to be somewhat smaller with a corresponding reduced footprint. In this scenario the Youth Center assumes a two-story scheme with 3,000 SF on a mezzanine level for a 12,500SF site footprint.

The second difference from C is how the parking and open space is arranged. In this scheme all parking for the Golf Club and Youth Center is placed below grade, this opens the site for additional green space and recreational areas that are presently occupied by the Golf Club parking lot. Not only does this increase the parking capabilities on site to 94 from 56, but also it creates a continuous edge of green open space along Huron Avenue with only a parking entry point as interruption.

The parking is accessed directly off Huron taking advantage of the sloping site to create a drive-in parking garage that is lower than the street and the present parking area. This arrangement would allow Golf Club patrons to drive in and approach a revised entrance to the Clubhouse where the snack-shop is presently located. Cart storage would be a part of the garage adjacent to the cart path. A new snack shop would be created at the upper level of the clubhouse. The changes suggested effectively double the parking on the site, create easier access to the clubhouse and provide more open space at Glacken Field.

In short, this approach, while more ambitious in terms of project size, does enhance the present recreational opportunities at Glacken Field while providing a Youth Center that is removed from the street, but, is directly adjacent to the recreational opportunities of Glacken Field.

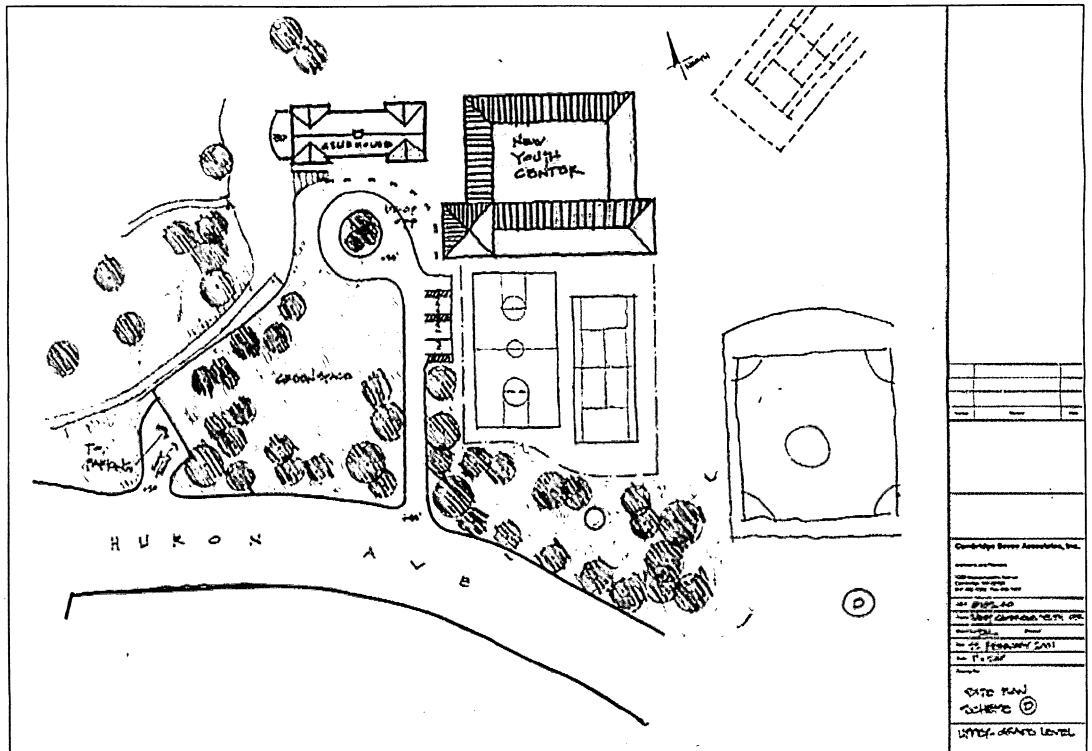


Option D Site

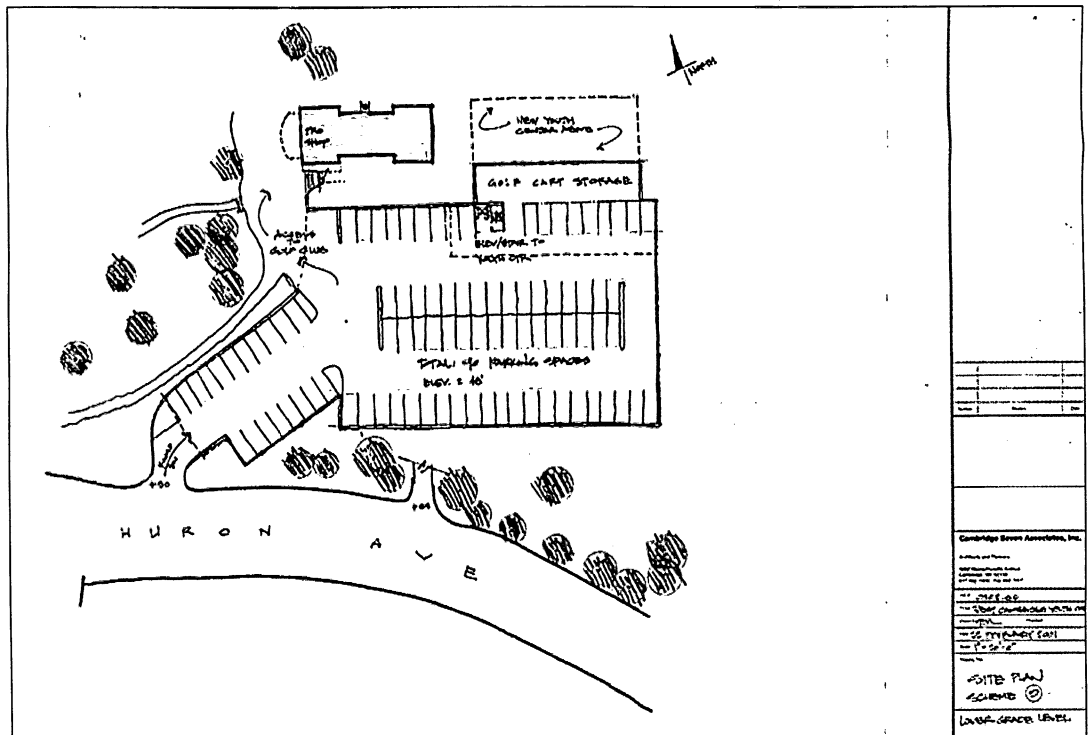
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SITE ASSESSMENTS AND OPTIONS

Option D



Option D Site Plan



Option D Parking Plan

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SITE ASSESSMENTS AND OPTIONS

OPTION E

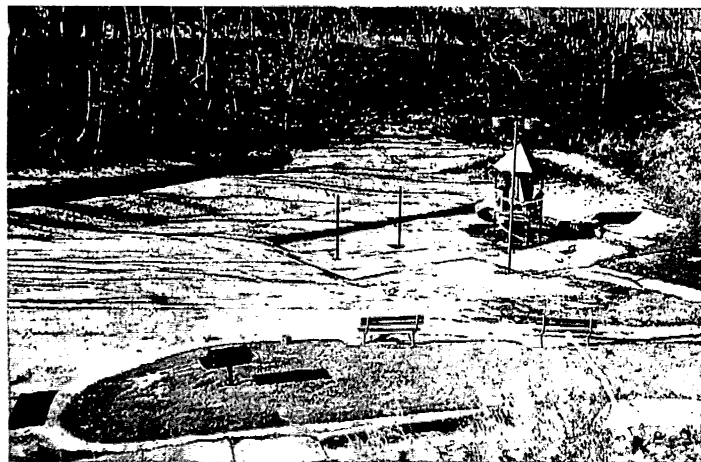
A second site evaluated is on the opposite side of Huron Avenue connected to the Huron Towers residential development. A playground area behind that building was studied as a possible Youth Center site. This location poses some opportunities and concerns. First, the site is large and a Youth Center would easily fit. Accessibility to the site however, is difficult. A public land taking would be necessary as this is not city owned land, nor is there a public access to the site. The site is not visible from Huron Avenue and thus the Youth Center would be "hidden" from the street.

Drainage and storm water management issues are important with this site as it sits in a hollow surrounded by higher ground.

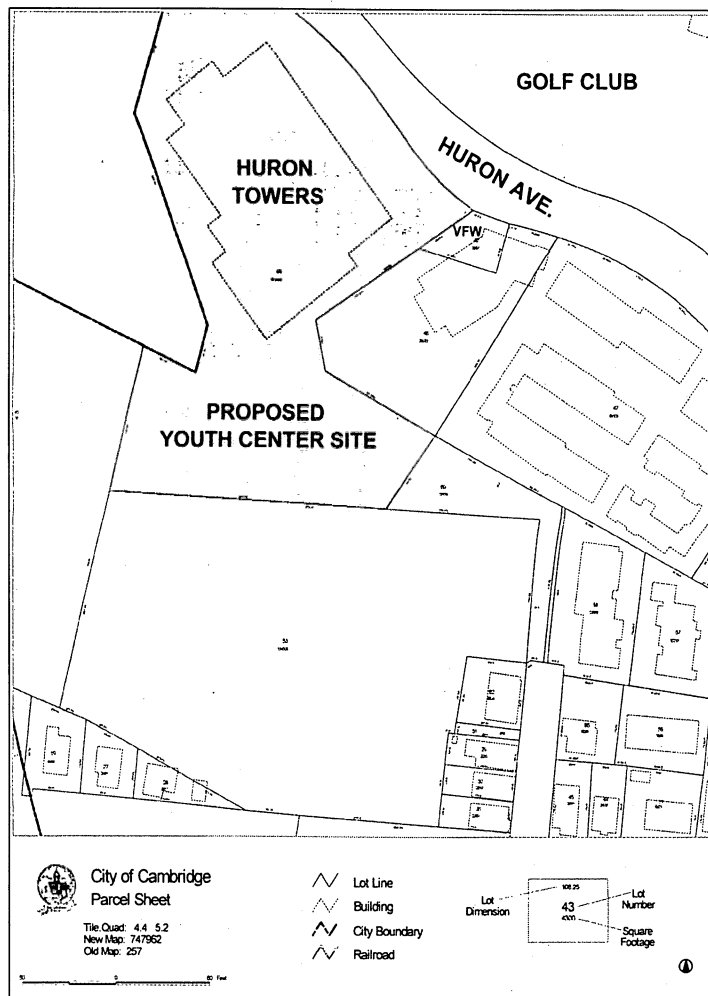
This site is determined to be inappropriate as Vehicular and Pedestrian access and site slopes suggested that this site was less desirable than the Glacken Field location.



Huron Towers Site



Huron Towers Site



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H.

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE • EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

Robert W. Healy, City Manager Richard C. Rossi, Deputy City Manager

April 2, 2001

To The Honorable, The City Council:

Please find attached for your information the Site Assessment Study for the West Cambridge Youth Center at Glacken Field and behind the VFW adjacent to Huron Towers. This Study also responds to Awaiting Report Item No. 00-110.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mec
Attachment



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Consent Agenda #4

Site Assessment Study of the
West Cambridge Youth Center
at Glacken Field and behind the
VFW adjacent to Huron Towers.
Also response to Awaiting
Report Item Number 00-110.

In City Council April 2, 2001

Referred to the
Public Facilities
Committee on motion
of Councillor Born

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