



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

City Hall Annex - Inman & Broadway - Cambridge, Mass. 02139

498-9034

To: Robert W. Healy
City Manager

January 9, 1986

From:  Mary T. Flynn
Interim Director
Community Development Department

Subject: Council Order 33, August 5, 1985

In response to the Council Order, the Community Development Department has prepared the following analysis and recommendation regarding housing proposals for City parking lots on Bishop Allen Drive.

1. The Parking Lot Sites

The City owns three (not four as suggested by the Council Order) parking lots on Bishop Allen Drive in the Central Square area. The area of one of these, Parcel No. 55 on the attached copy of the City Assessor's plan, is only 6210 square feet; about 18 spaces are presently on this site. It would be very difficult to maintain these spaces and, in addition, build housing with its required parking on this small lot. To design housing that would be roughly compatible with existing buildings on lots of similar size in the area, the public parking spaces would need to be replaced in another location nearby in the Square.

There are two larger parcels also to be considered for development as housing: Parcel No. 184 (33,715 square feet) and Parcel No. 195 (27,800 square feet). Since both of these sites are intensively used as parking lots and service areas for adjacent commercial uses, any housing proposal again must deal with maintaining or replacing the spaces and solving the service problems; approximately 90 spaces are on Parcel 184 and 65 on Parcel 195.

2. A Plan to Balance Housing and Parking Needs

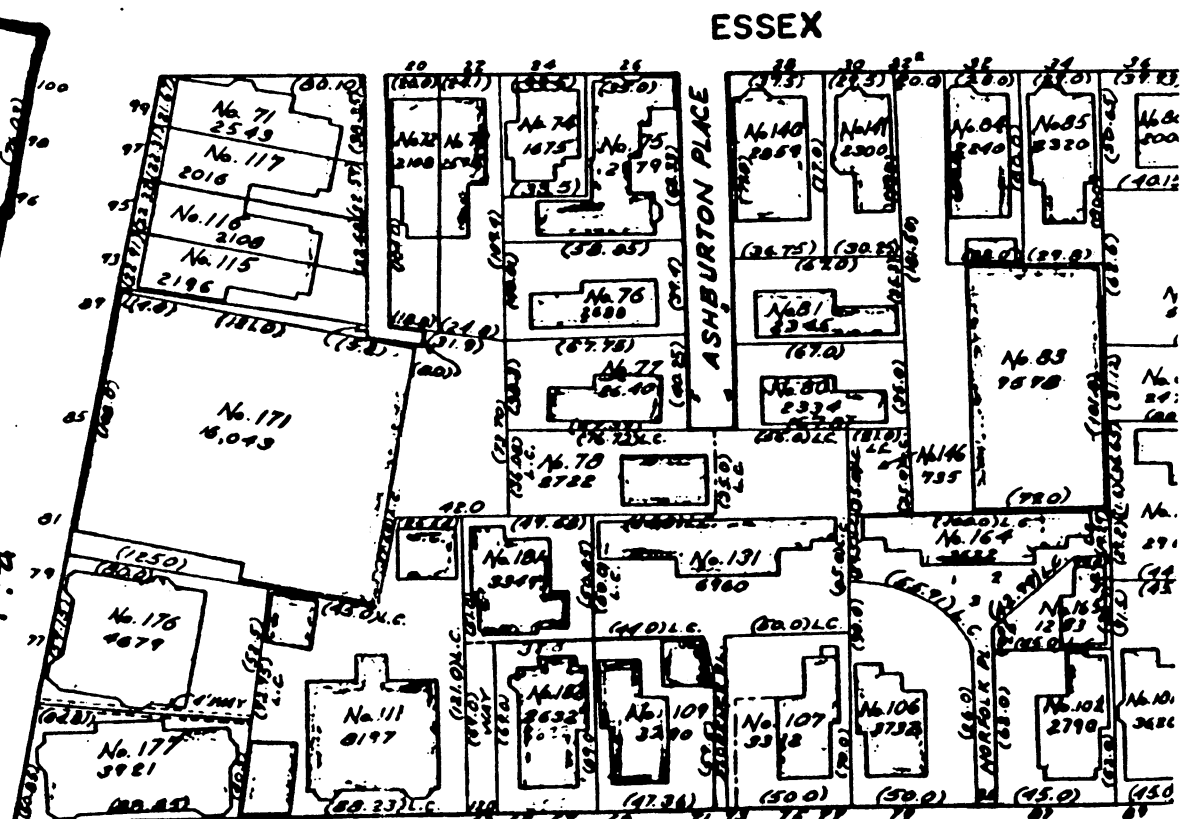
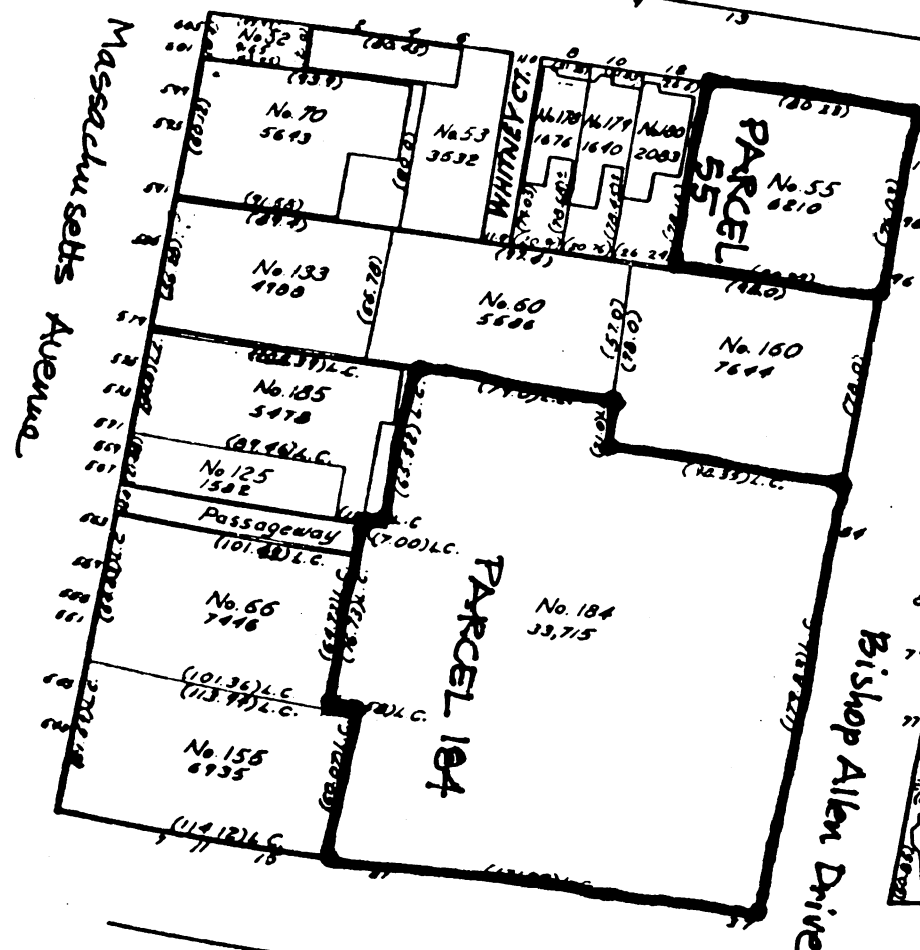
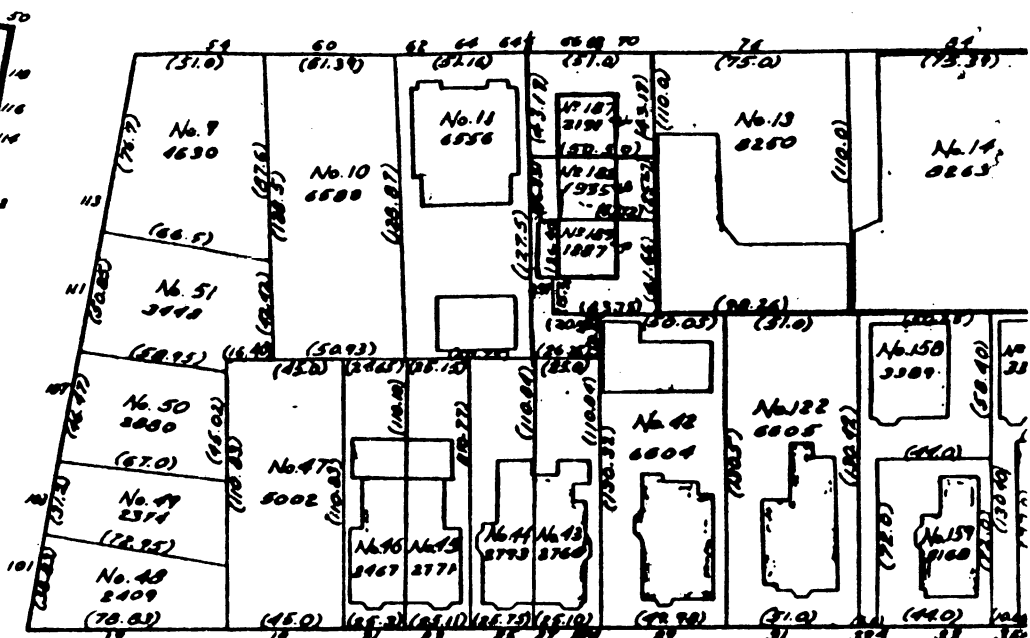
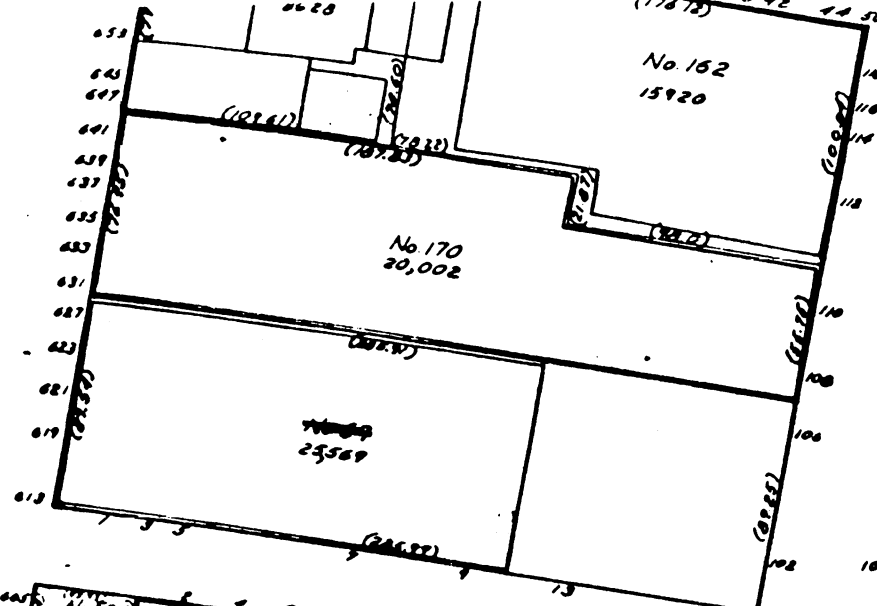
Clearly, housing and parking needs are both important issues facing Central Square. Residents would like more housing affordable by low and moderate income persons, and businesses would like more parking. It would be very difficult, perhaps impossible, to build an environmentally acceptable housing project with its required parking in addition to replacing the existing spaces on any of the three sites. At the currently allowable density of 3 FAR for housing with one parking space per unit, a project on either of the two larger sites would have to be fairly tall, on the order of 10 stories high, with 2 levels of parking. If provisions were made on-site for replacement of existing spaces, the project would be even taller and would present traffic and environmental problems that would be difficult to resolve.

One approach which might begin to address these problems would be to build housing on one of the larger sites and a parking garage on the other larger site. This would allow for residential development at an appropriate scale and density along with a consolidated parking facility which would add to the total supply in the Square.

Another approach would be to merge the parcels with other adjacent private properties, as developers in the area have proposed. The City's interest in expanding the housing and parking supply could possibly be met best by allowing joint development of one or more of the sites with other private sites on the condition that a certain percentage of low and moderate housing units and public parking spaces were provided by the private developers. Obviously there are many programming, design, and funding issues which would need to be resolved with the residential and business communities if any of these potential solutions are to be successful.

3. Recommendation

The Community Development Department and the Central Square Economic Development Subcommittee are presently working to develop a Comprehensive Action Plan for revitalization of the Square. It seems most appropriate that this plan should attempt to formulate a solution to the housing and parking problems in a coordinated fashion with particular emphasis on the possibility of using the two sites in question. The Action Plan will be discussed in deliberations of the Subcommittee, presentations will be made to business and neighborhood groups and reports will be made to the Council as work progresses. A draft Action Plan is scheduled to be completed in June 1986.



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CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139
TEL. 498-9011

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

January 13, 1986

To the Honorable, the City Council:

With respect to City Council Order No. 33 of August 5, 1985, relative to the feasibility of developing low and moderate income homes on the four (4) public parking lots located on Bishop Richard Allen Drive, enclosed please find copy of a report from Mary T. Flynn, Interim Director of the Community Development Department.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Robert W. Healy", is written over the typed name.

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mbf
Enc.

Agenda Item No. 2

S-25

Re: feasibility of developing low & moderate
income homes on the four public parking lots
on Bishop Richard Allen Drive.

In City Council,

January 13, 1986

1/13/1986

Placed on File