

Central Square

600 Block Massachusetts Avenue

Proposed Revisions



Massachusetts Avenue

Elevation

Scale 1' = 3/64"

Central Square

600 Block Massachusetts Avenue

Proposed Revisions

MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE

INBOUND REDLINE

WESTERN AVENUE

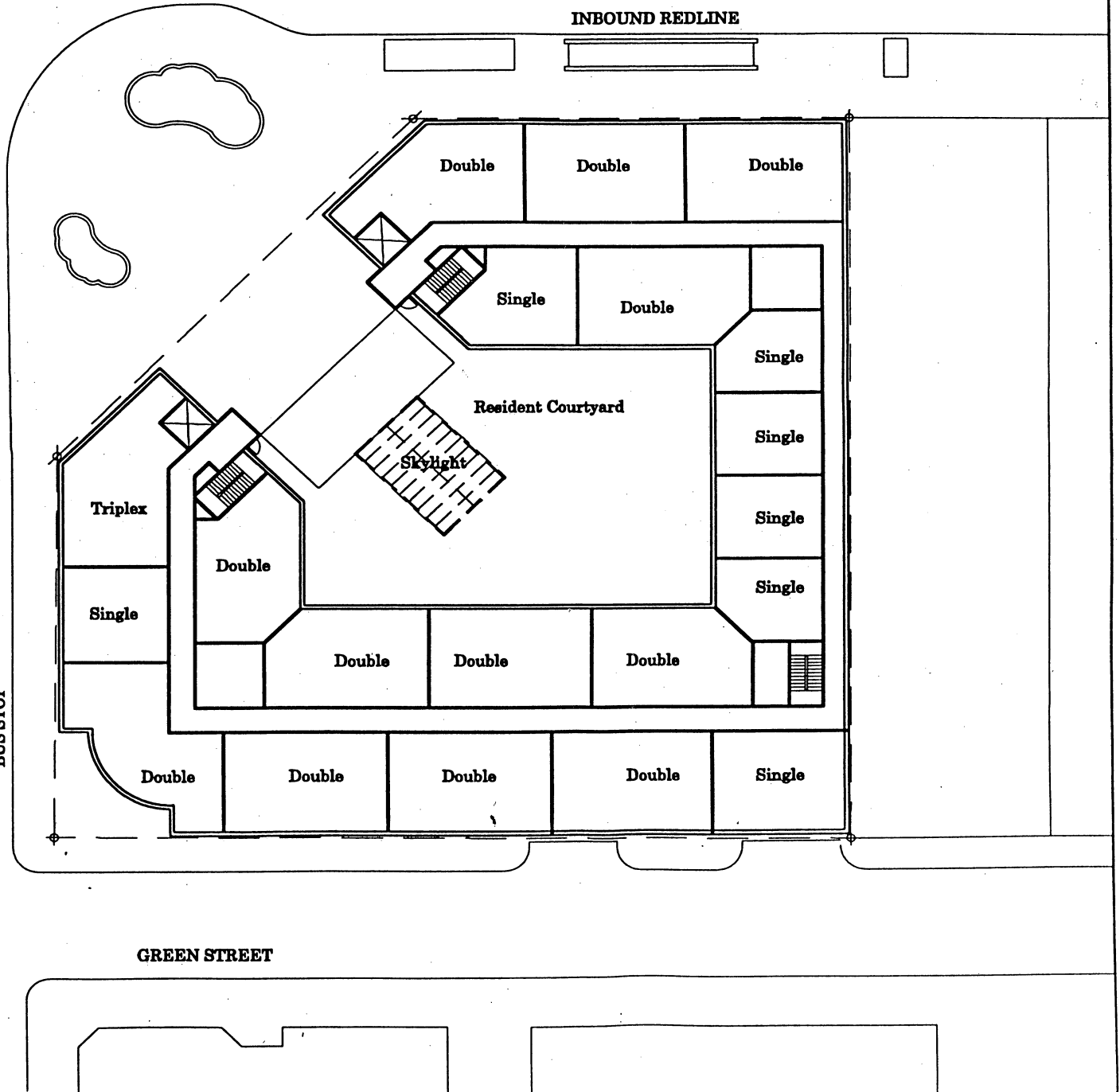
BUS STOP

GREEN STREET

STREET

Fifth Floor Plan

Scale 1" = 40'



Central Square

600 Block Massachusetts Avenue

Proposed Revisions



Green Street

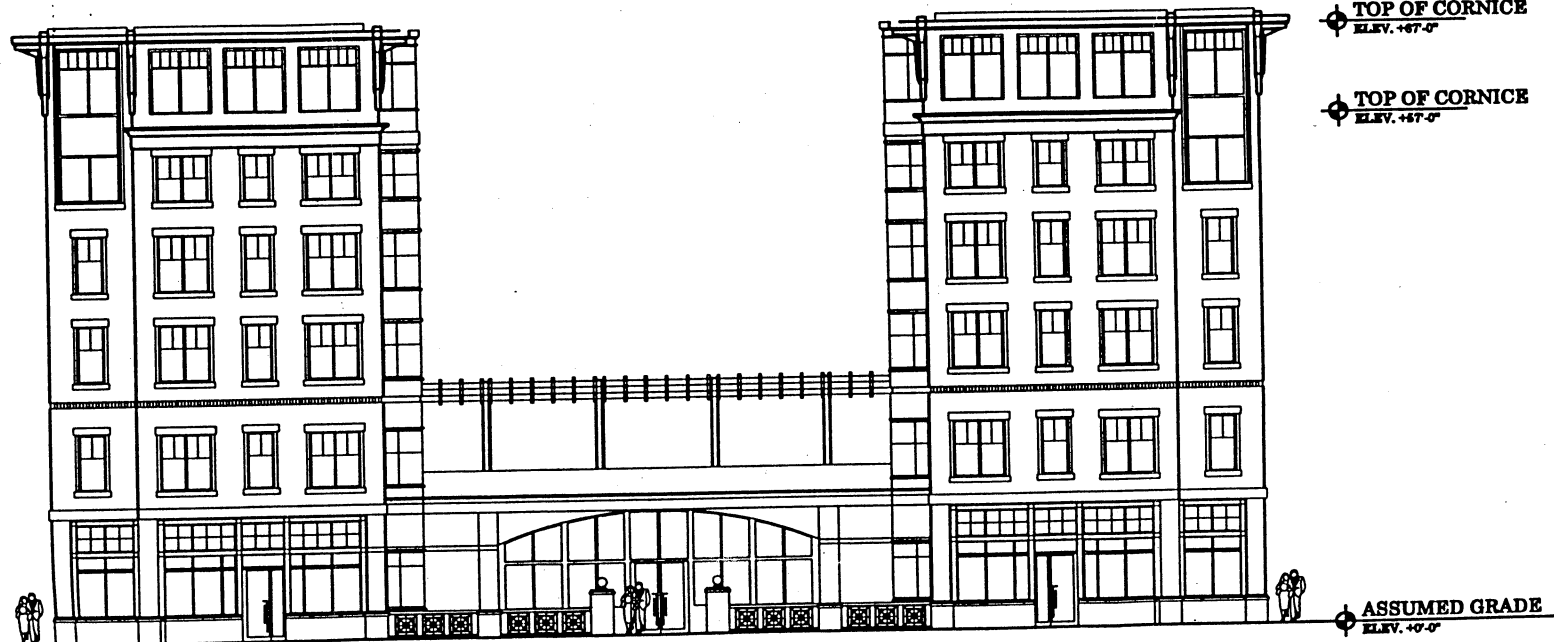
Elevation

Scale 1' = 3/64"

Central Square

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Carl Baron Plaza

Elevation

Scale 1' = 3/64"

PATRICIA SMITH

Elegy written in a city square



THERE'S A NEW RESIDENT in Central Square.

You probably haven't noticed him because he's an expert at blending in, folding himself into storefronts, adopting the hue of concrete. Black-hooded, faceless, and wielding a gleaming scythe, he ducks in and out of the grease-spattering eateries, polyester palaces,

and funky cafes that once were the soul of the neighborhood. He pauses to listen to their heartbeats. Then he stops their hearts.

Recently, he dropped into Golden Doughnuts, that beloved purveyor of sugar and goo in the heart of the Square. Soon after, someone slapped this note on the front window: "We are closed for business due to the upcoming demolition plans set forth by the owners of this building . . . It has been a pleasure serving you and getting to know you. Thank you for your friendship and your business. You will be greatly missed." The computerized goodbye is from former employees Chhoy, Vicky, Kayla and "TC". You read the note again and again. You wonder where they are.

Peer through the padlocked door into the darkness, and the Reaper's presence is almost palpable. Your breath catches at the sight of the bubble gum machines, half-full and languishing, and the dingy and deserted U-shaped counters, the yawning display case, that damned push broom tilted against the wall. You don't have to be inside to know that the sweet smell is gone.

Central Square is dying. It may not look that way, since the mortal wounds are covered with increasingly garish bandages. The bandages have names like Starbucks. Foot Locker. A community whose strength was its real people and wonderfully ragged character is being sucked dry because it lies unprotected between two real big schools and people who spend inordinate amounts of moolah.

The Square is ripe for the kill. Its newest resident strolls and swings his bloody blade with a vengeance. He doesn't miss much. Besides, the Cambridge Planning Board is helping him hold down the victims.

Around the corner from Golden Doughnuts, Emily Rose has wilted. After 59 years of peddling perky and crisp cotton clothing and affordable glittering garb for that "special evening", all that's left is the prerequisite sign: "Thank You!" Central Cleaners is gone. The New Airirang Restaurant, where bulgogi, chap chae and mandu graced a lavish daily buffet, has its "Closed" sign facing the world.

The Lucy Parsons Center, a raised-fist bookstore sporting sections on radical environmentalism, ruling institutions, utopianism, and anarchism, is putting up some semblance of a fight. In the window is a yellow piece of paper with its message clipped and pasted, much like a ransom note: A Quick Message to the Developers - This Building Will Not Be Evicted Quietly.

Inside, the mood is more of resignation than revolt.

"At this point, it's pretty much a clear-cut deal," says Marc Lasky. He is Central Square before it went upscale, nose rings, and attitude. "I'm confident we're going to lose, but we might as well be a pain in the ass on the way down."

Then there's Surman's, the men's clothing mecca, which bustles still, doggedly ignoring the scythe swinging lazily and rhythmically from the ceiling. The place is classic. Furry Kangol caps. Pre-hemmed pants (an exclusive). Pierre Cardin everywhere. And of course, since the store is scheduled to close at the end of this month - after 90 years in the Square - there are bargains to be had: wide, lemon-yellow ties, 3 for \$1. All suits, half price. Denim caps with leather visors, a paltry \$4. Questionable underwear. Practically free.

Philip Surman, the "Cal Ripken of retail," will be 83 years old next month. He has worked in the store for 65 years. His motto: "Sweet and kind goes a long way, but the dollar is the boss." His most notable feature: eyebrows with minds of their own.

"These stores will never come back," he preaches from his perch at the front, by the door. "They're dead forever. They claim demographics are changing around here, that the upper middle-class is coming in. I haven't seen it. We sell to the working people, people who make \$300, \$400 a week. You know how much rents have gone up? From \$2,000 to \$5,000 a month!"

"But the guys from Harvard came down and made a study, so who am I to argue?"

Across Mass Ave., two young people wander through the glitzy Foot Locker. Their feet whisper on the polished hardwood. Aside from bored and sluggish salespeople, they are alone. Or so they believe.

The Grim Reaper, newly appointed architect of Central Square, has decided to update his image. He's trying on a new pair of Reeboks, and he likes them. He likes them a lot.

Copy courtesy Eli Yarden

Save Central Square

February 26, 1998

19.
RECEIVED BY
OFFICE OF CITY CLERK
98 FEB 26 PM 3:56
CAMBRIDGE MA.

To the Honorable, the Cambridge City Council,
the Planning Board, and the Community Development Department

Re: Holmes Newest Plan Overwhelms Central Square

Central Square is a major resource and treasure of Cambridge's civic life. The Holmes new redevelopment proposal for the heart of Central Square, having already expelled most of the businesses, signals continued death of diversity and affordability of Central Square.

Holmes has refused to meet with community groups in the past weeks to obtain community input or discuss its proposals. A few outline pages of Holmes Trust's new plans to redevelop Central Square were made public on Wednesday. Much detail is missing from these redevelopment plans, making it impossible to adequately review them, particularly in the short time before the Tuesday March 3 Planning Board Hearing.

As shown by the annexed elevations, Holmes new plan still has many problems. Some of the problems identified in the public Wednesday night Save Central Square include the following:

- 30% over zoning limits
- over-height limits
- Shadow still keeps most of Central Square in the shade
- historic CVS "Grecco" facade missing
- No details about affordable housing guarantees
- No active, people-oriented spaces. No setbacks or open space for the public. The courtyard is restricted for residents only.
- Bus waiting area moved to Green Street, which already has significant traffic problems
- Large wide facade dominates and breaks with Central Square neighborhood, which is composed of many narrow buildings
- public art destroyed

Clearly, less than one week is inadequate to properly review this large redesign. Public policy and design requirements for Central Square call for re-initiation of the hearing process, including new public hearings, comments, and reviews by the Central Square Advisory Committee.

Don Ihil

Consent to Communication #19

1398
Communication was received from
Save Central Square, transmitting
annexed elevations on the Holmes
Newest Plans.

In City Council March 2, 1998

PLACED ON FILE