

Item C Traffic and Parking with Attachments (Revised 10/30/07)

INTRODUCTION

A. Parking

In evaluating alternative parking locations to serve customers and employee in Newton Centre, the following criteria governed:

Constrains:

1. Assumed that only City or Government Agency¹ owned property is available.
2. Assumed that Eminent Domain is not an option.
3. Assumed that negotiations, with private property owners, can occur and result in benefits for customers, merchants, owners and the City.

Basic Parking Location Strategy:

1. Place longer term parking at the perimeter of Newton Centre eliminating the need for traffic, destined for the Centre, to enter the central shopping area.
2. Reserve street parking for customers' short-term parking using "Credit Card" meters or meters with increasing per time period rates.

Mitigation:

1. All Task Force Groups agreed that surface parking in the Triangle must be eliminated allowing the three commercial sub-areas in Newton Centre to form a "Village Centre".
2. Locations for temporary replacement parking has been identified that will allow construction or building(s) and a pedestrian plaza on the Triangle.

Brief Summary of Locations Considered for Parking Structures:

1. Northerly: Seemingly the easily area to locate a parking structure, it has, however, proved to be the most difficult. Many Task Force members felt that the parking area behind the Langley Road shops would be an ideal location but at least one owner raised strong objections. While there could be density bonuses for owners, apparently there is no interest.

At this time, many innovative approaches and two meetings with the MWRA resulted in the conclusion that construction on or over the Sudbury Aqueduct imposed costly construction restrictions and functional impediments. However, if the Aqueduct is abandoned or if a "by-pass" for the function of the Aqueduct is possible, this site must be reconsidered.

Replacing the Fire Station and Fire Headquarters buildings were considered but relocation sites for these facilities could not be identified, cost for replacement were a consideration, and, in any case, the location for customers was distant until the Langley Block was fully developed.

An underground garage below the northerly Green (the site for summer concerts) was investigated and legal restriction on use as well as width of the site proved to be limiting

¹ Meetings occurred with the MWRA and the MBTA. Memo regarding these meetings are attached.

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factors.

Therefore, unless negotiations with the property owners on Langley Road are undertaken and are successful or the Adqueduct is no longer required, the only remaining location for parking is below the Triangle in an underground garage. This is not in keeping with the Basic Parking Location Strategy but there is no other option.

2. Southerly: The existing Cypress Street Lot and air rights over the adjacent MBTA right-of-way allows a structure to be located on public property. The location can be enhanced through negotiations with the owner of the Herrick Street apartment building and/or the owner of the "Learning Express" building.

This location is convenient to shops on the southerly side of Newton Centre, the MBTA Station and any shops located on the Triangle.

3. Westerly: This is only available site totally under City ownership. The impediment, however, is *perceived traffic impact* on adjacent neighborhoods. *By designing a parking structure that is only accessible from Centre Street, the existing and any future traffic impact on neighbors living on Pelham, Pleasant or Crescent Streets can be reduced.*

There are two options under consideration. The first, envisions a parking structure utilizing City property on either side of Pelham Street. The second envisions a taller structure south of Pelham Street with the City Property north of Pelham devoted to housing.

4. Easterly: Since there is no publicly owned, property on the East side of the Centre, no public parking site is available. It is recommended that the City undertake two actions: first, negotiate with the owners of the existing private parking areas to see if shared parking during the day or in the evening when shops are closed would be acceptable and second, be prepared to purchase property on the east side if any becomes available.

B. TRAFFIC

There are two key recommendations regarding traffic:

1. Reduce the traffic volume by eliminating the need for vehicles to enter the central area of Newton Centre to find parking for shopping, business, or work. Use "Credit Card" meters to price the remaining short-term street parking at an increasing per hour rate².
2. Construct "Urban Round-About" at Beacon and Centre Streets and at Beacon, Langley and Sumner Streets. This will allow continuous flow of traffic automatically adjusting for changing directional traffic flows

² For example, the first 20 minutes could be free after swiping your credit card; the second 20 minutes would be \$5.00 and the third 20 minutes and thereafter would be \$10.00 per 20-minute period. If "Credit Card" meters are unavailable other meters with increasing rates per period are suggested.

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PARKING

Proposed changes in “The Triangle” will require relocation of existing parking. A key strategy for “finding” new spaces has included conversion of parallel parking spaces to diagonal spaces and sharing of parking spaces on private property. *Combined Groups Two and Three supports use of diagonals where they do not degrade the pedestrian experience or local circulation.*

However, there is concern that too much diagonal parking or improperly placed diagonal spaces can cause conflicts that will endanger pedestrians and be detrimental to the center. In addition, Combined Group Two and Three generally favors use of the public right-of-way for wider sidewalks and landscaped medians rather than for maximizing parking on the streets. Groups Two and Three proposes some modest additions to on-street parking and parking structures for better use of available land to meet a variety of parking needs.

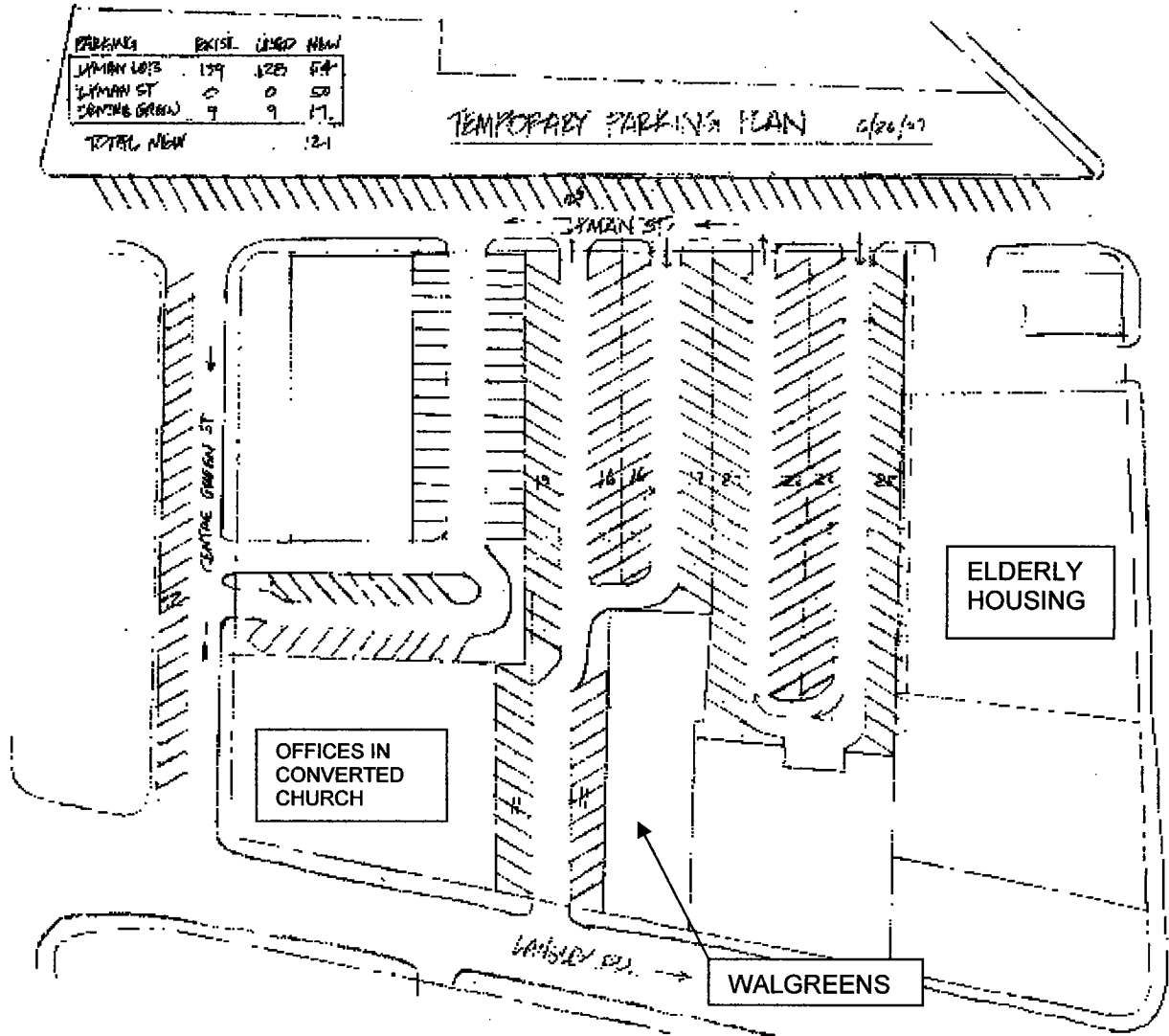
Replacement Parking

When “The Triangle” is made into a public space, replacement parking could be located in several places:

- Lyman Street. This street has a low volume and can tolerate delays that may occur with the addition of 35-40 new parking spaces. Because spaces are accessible from the rear of stores and on the perimeter of the center, they should be designated as long-term spaces to improve employee options. If it is not possible to widen Lyman Street to accommodate diagonal parking, consideration should be given to making it a one-way street so additional parking can still be provided there.³
- The private surface parking lots behind buildings that front onto Langley Road (and are accessed off of Lyman Street). Re-grading and repaving of these sites as shown below could result in as many as 50 new parking spaces. Public use of the new spaces would need to be secured and businesses could continue to have use of the spaces for their staff and patrons. Short-term spaces are recommended closest to the shops and long-term spaces designated to the rear of the lots. At least one owner did not reject this idea and indicated that it would be considered. When the construction of a parking garage is complete, parking spaces between Lyman Street and Langley Road would be returned to private use unless some other arrangement for public/private use is negotiated.

³ Review of traffic circulation revealed that fire engines heading south from the station on Willow Street typically circle the block and go down Langley Road. Changing the direction of Langley Road and Sumner Street could improve fire response time by allowing more direct access to the intersection at Langley Road and Beacon Street. Langley Road would flow from east to west (Sumner to Centre) with a right turn only allowed at Centre Street. Sumner Street where Lyman and Willow meet and Langley would run north to south. If Lyman were to become a one-way street to accommodate more parking, the streets could allow circulation in a single direction and good access to all points along the way. These changes appears to have no observed negative impacts on the center.

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- Centre Green Street. Approximately 15 diagonal spaces can be provided on the west side of the street where there are no curb cuts. This also is a low-volume street and diagonals should not pose any problems there.
- Centre Street between Gibbs Street and Tyler Terrace. Between 8-12 parking spaces can be added to the west side. Since they would not be in front of any shops and are peripheral to the center, they could be useful for long-term employee parking.
- Private lots, especially those used by churches and some offices. To acquire the remainder of the 155 replacement parking spaces, the group supports requesting a temporary waiver of

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parking requirements to allow use of church and/or office parking spaces at times when they are not otherwise in use.

- Langley Road. Diagonal spaces on the north side and elimination of parallel spaces on the south side would not increase the number of spaces, but would place them nearest the stores for easiest access during and after construction. This would be safer for pedestrians because now they often jaywalk if their cars are parked across the street. Since cars backing out of traditional diagonals have limited visibility, this poses a safety hazard. Back-in diagonals are recommended instead because they allow drivers to see the street when they exit and also allow for rear loading from the sidewalk.

Future Parking Demand

If more active space is added to the center of “The Triangle,” parking demand is likely to increase. The uses and scale of additions will determine future parking needs. For instance, consider projects that range in scale from 30,000 to 50,000 and include some restaurant, some retail and possibly some community space (see appendix for detailed description and parking calculations). Depending on the method used to calculate parking requirements, the range of required spaces varies widely. If the nature of uses is similar in parking demand to those already in Newton Centre and the current ratio of gross floor area is applied to the future uses, the requirement for parking will be very low (between 35 and 58 spaces for 30,000-50,000 square feet of new floor area). If the City’s Zoning Regulations are applied, 239-556 spaces would be required for the same square footages. A third method that computes parking based on the mixture of uses and the likelihood that people will park once and visit several places such as in shopping center, yields a requirement of 108-200 parking spaces for the same projects.

Census data and Newton Centre merchant surveys show that between 65% and 75% of employees drive to work and anecdotal evidence suggests that nearby residents often walk. Therefore, it is recommended that the City’s parking requirements for Newton Centre be multiplied by a factor of .7 (70%) to adjust for availability and active use of transit. With this adjustment, the parking requirements would range from 167 spaces for 30,000 sq. ft. to 389 for 50,000 sq. ft. of retail, restaurant and community space.

Additional parking is recommended in strategically-placed public facilities where the spaces can be shared. Parking structures that serve many uses reduce the overall need for individual businesses to provide parking and uses available land more efficiency than when parking is located in multiple surfaces lots. City-owned lots and other public properties are especially appealing sites because they do not require acquisition costs and generally are already well situated for local parking needs. At the present time, there is demand for parking throughout the center, so distributing it evenly and/or providing structures where demand dictates is optimal. As nonconforming uses leave the area, the city should consider purchase of land for possible future parking, especially on the east side of Newton Centre. Possible develop of City-owned properties is described below. Not all of the options described are viable at the present time, but are noted for their potential to serve current or future parking needs.

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ALTERNATIVE PARKING GARAGE LOCATIONS

A. Underground Parking and Development of the Triangle

After analyzing and discussing the various alternatives, parking under “The Triangle” is now the default location to satisfy the present and some modest future demand. Approximately 90-95 spaces can be provided per floor and two floors will more than replace the spaces that currently exist on the site. Because they are in the “prime” location ~ close to shops and the proposed new public space above it ~ they should be the highest priced spaces to discourage use by long-term parkers and ensure availability for consumers.

While parking under the triangle is the default location, the following items were considered as benefits to this conclusion:

People already gravitate towards “The Triangle” and if spaces are easily accessible and well-managed, a driver entering the structure would be more likely to find a space and circulating traffic would be contained within the facility and not on the street. Well-placed access points that allow through traffic to pass without conflicts with cars searching for parking will control congestion on the streets. By keeping parking on the streets to a minimum, sidewalks can be wider and the pedestrian experience given priority.

Whether on the street or in additional structures, long-term parking spaces on the perimeter will capture most employees before they enter “The Triangle” area and relieve it of some of the current demands.

Underground parking is more costly; for each level down parking goes, the cost increases in contrast to above-ground parking in which the cost per floor is fairly stable. For financial reasons, it may be necessary to limit the size of the structure to two floors.

Financing for approximately 190 parking spaces at \$50,000 per space would cost an estimated \$10 million. If financed by bonds and repaid over 10 years, the annual cost would be approximately \$1 million. Parking meter revenues currently generate about \$520,000 in Newton Centre. If additional parking spaces are added, parking rates are increased and citation revenues are included, it is possible to generate the necessary capital to repay bonds. Since parking in Newton Centre is also heavily used in the evenings during BC football and Red Sox seasons, extending the hours of operation of meters could be used to manage parking and also could generate additional revenue.

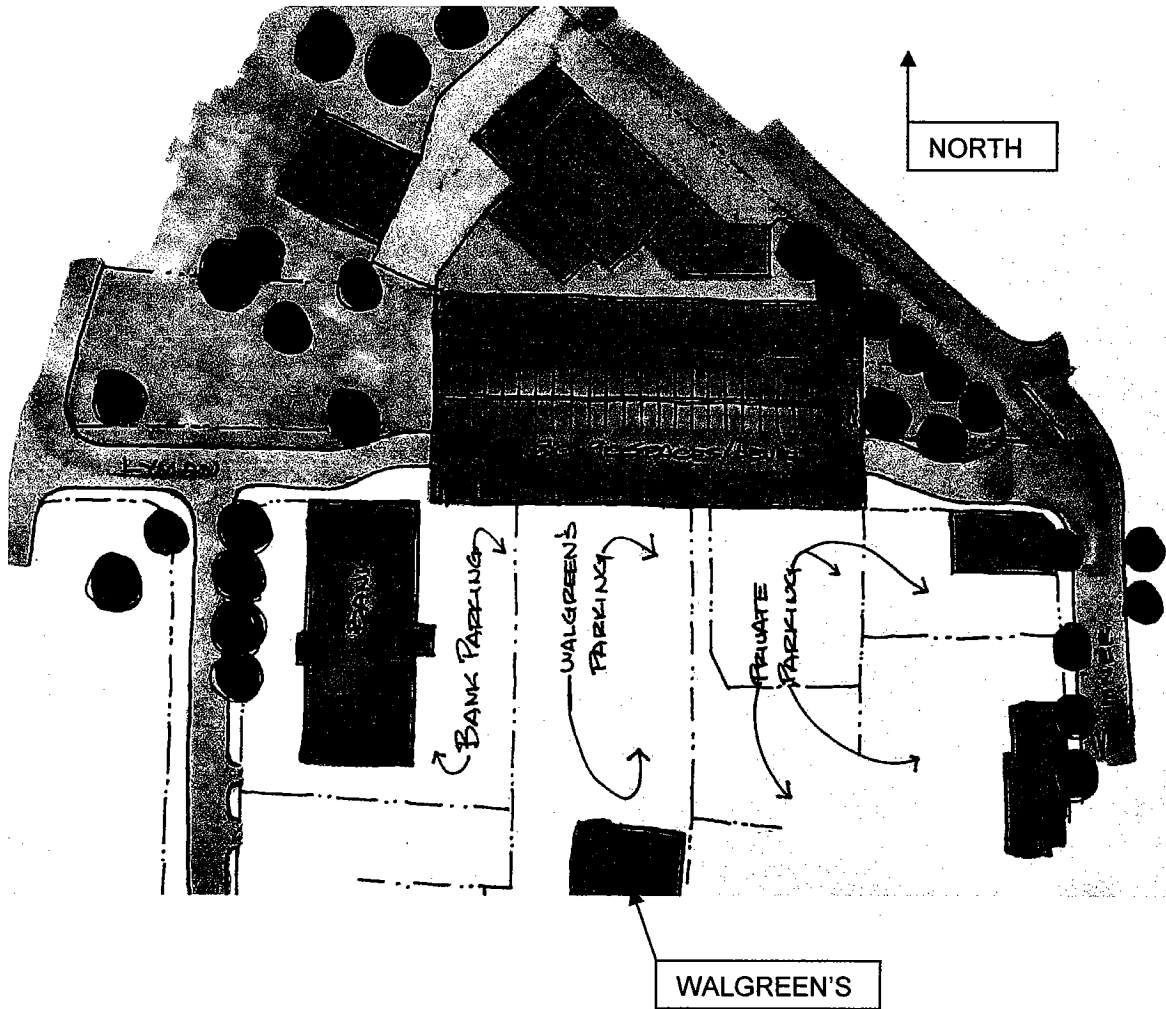
The conceptual design is efficient because it is rectangular and does not extend under the adjacent streets so, streets would remain open for circulating traffic during construction. Replacement parking behind the Langley Road shops would be in place before construction begins so existing businesses on Langley Road can be reached by either Langley Road or Lyman Street.

B. Lyman Street as an Alternative

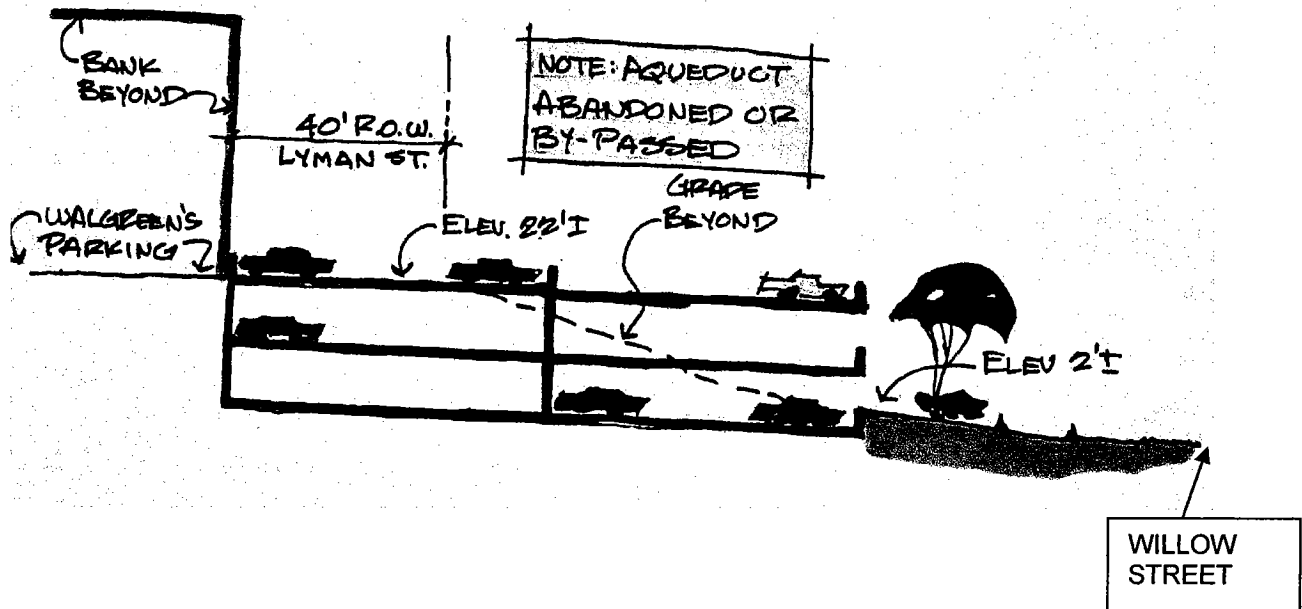
As previously discussed, options to build a sizable structure are limited by placement of the

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existing aqueduct located 10 feet underground and running parallel to Lyman Street on MWRA property. The aqueduct is currently maintained as a backup system and it is possible that within the next 10 years, it may be abandoned and the potential to develop a structure into the slope of the hillside can be considered. In addition, it may be possible to provide a "by-pass" or otherwise construct on this site.



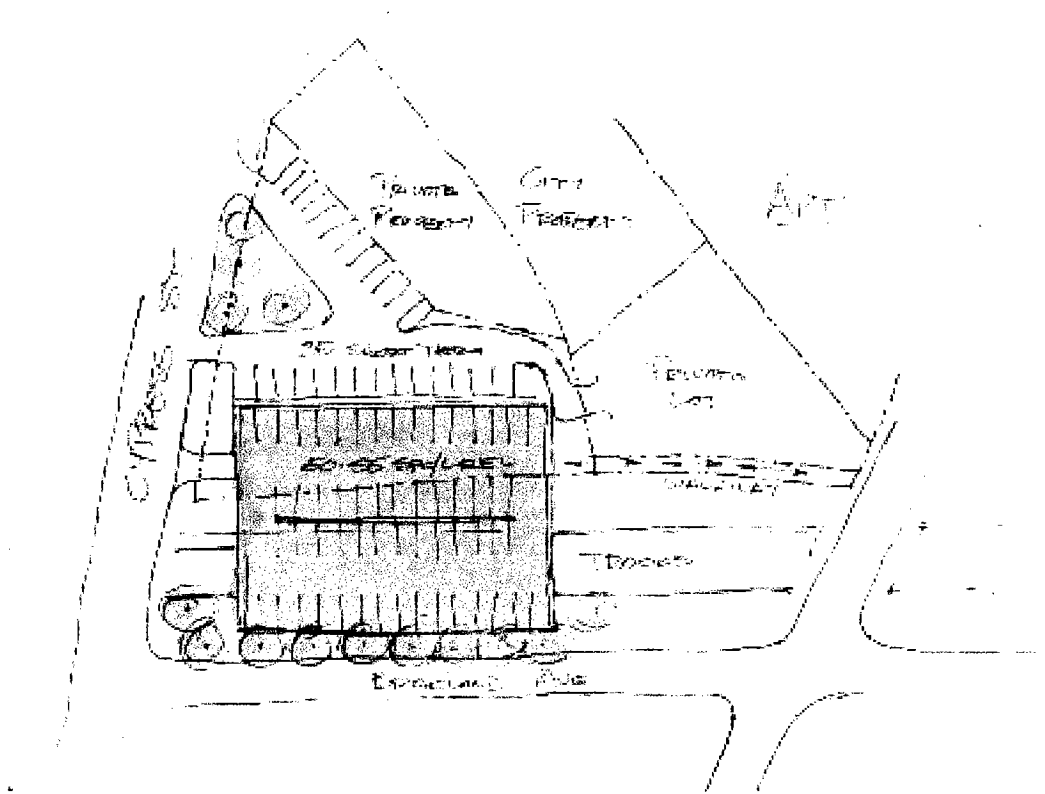
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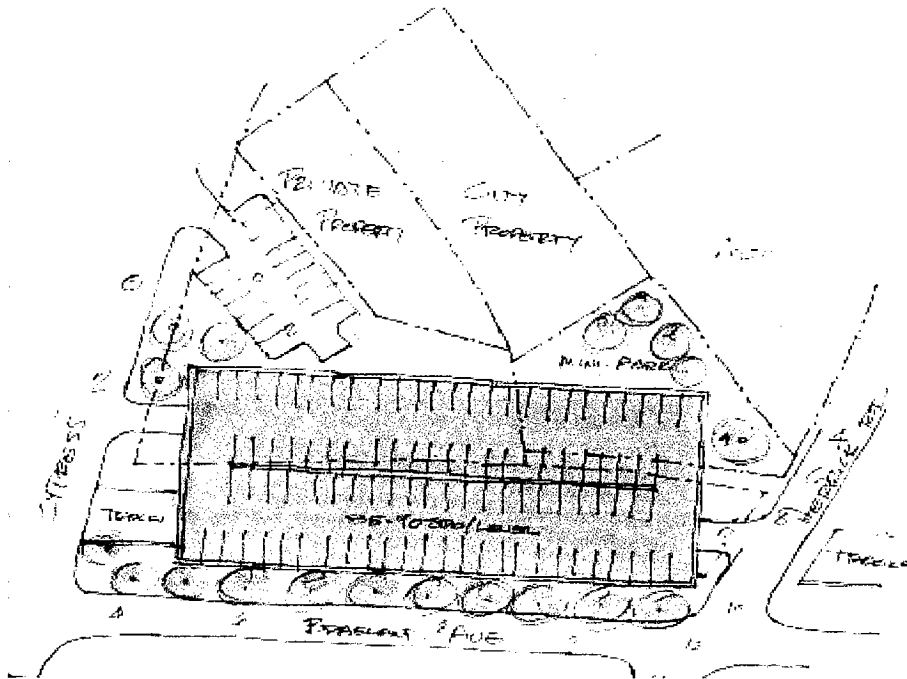
- C. **Cypress Street Lot for Long-Term Parkers.** The Cypress Street lot serves both commuters and employees and additional levels of parking on this site would have minimal impact on residents. Braeland Street separates the MBTA tracks from existing residences and there is only one house that faces Braeland Street adjacent to the site. In July 2007, MBTA representatives expressed a willingness to allow the City to encroach over MBTA property contingent upon some compensation in the way of additional revenue and/or commuter parking.

Design A (below) offers the benefit of retaining the surface lot for short-term parking that serves customers to the area. It extends over the tracks and will provide a sound buffer to adjacent businesses and residents. Design of the building will need to be sensitive to those as well and landscaping along Braeland Street to complement the streetscape and screen the building is recommended. The use of private properties is not needed to construct such a building and access to an adjacent private lot is maintained. The existing path to the MBTA station would remain in its current location. This structure could house between 50-55 spaces per floor.

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CYPRESS STREET DESIGN A



CYPRESS STREET DESIGN B