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**2011**  
**RUDY BRUNER**  
**AWARD**  
**APPLICATION**

**Chester Square Parks**  
**Boston, Massachusetts**

**Sheila Cheimets**  
**540 Massachusetts Avenue**  
**Boston, Massachusetts 02118**



# PROJECT DATA

Please answer questions in space provided. Answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

NOTE: This sheet and a selected image will be sent to the Committee in advance.

Project Name The Chester Square Parks Location Mass. Ave., South End, Boston, Ma  
Owner Department of Parks and Recreation, City of Boston  
Project Use(s) Restoration of historic park - outdoor space for dense urban neighborhood - some green city beauty  
Project Size Approximately 3/4 acre Total Development Cost \$750,000  
Annual Operating Budget (if appropriate) N.A.  
Date Initiated Spring, 1992 Percent Completed by December 1, 2010 100%  
Project Completion Date (if appropriate) \_\_\_\_\_

Attach, if you wish, a list of relevant project dates \_\_\_\_\_

### Application submitted by:

Name Sheila Cheimets Title Chairman - Parks Committee  
Organization Chester Square Area Neighborhood Association  
Address 540 MASS. AVE. City/State/Zip Boston, Ma 02118  
Telephone ( 617 ) 536-3281 Fax ( N.A. )  
E-mail dcheimets3@verizon.net Weekend Contact Number (for notification): 617-407-2546

### Perspective Sheets:

Organization	Name	Telephone/e-mail
Public Agencies	<u>The Honorable Thomas Menino, mayor@cityofboston.gov; Commissioner Antonia Pollack, Boston Parks &amp; Recreation Department, toni.pollack@cityofboston.gov; Director Robert Fleming, The Browne Fund, 617-635-4000</u>	
Architect/Designer	<u>Charles Kozlowsky, Landscape Architect, Halvorson Design, 617-536-0380 Ext. 3042</u>	
Developer	<u>N.A.</u>	
Professional Consultant	<u>N.A.</u>	

Community Group Sheila Cheimets, Parks Com., Chester Square Area Neighborhood Assoc. dcheimets3@verizon.net; Edris Lake, member, United Neighbors of Lower Roxbury, 617-445-8463

### Other

Robert Campbell, Architectural Writer, Boston Globe, camglobe@aol.com

Please indicate how you learned of the *Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence*. (Check all that apply).

- |  |  |  |   |
|--|--|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Direct Mailing | <input type="checkbox"/> Magazine Announcement | <input type="checkbox"/> Previous Selection Committee member | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Organization | <input type="checkbox"/> Previous RBA entrant  | <input type="checkbox"/> Online Notice                       |   |
|  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> Bruner/Loeb Forum                   |   |

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Signature

*Sheila Cheimets*

Date

11/11/10

## **The Rudy Bruner Award Application**

### **Chester Square Parks**

#### **Attachment Sheet**

There were a large number of significant dates involved in the effort to create parks out of urban waste land. Here are some of the most important. You will have to read between the lines to feel the effort, the lobbying, the endless discussions and the heartbreak embedded in this list.

- 1992 – City announces plans to redesign Massachusetts Avenue to move commuter traffic faster. Residents demand city consider noise, traffic and pedestrian issues as well as restoration of original park footprint.
- 1994 - On request of residents, city council forces DPW to hold hearings on the plans.
- 1994 – Chester Square community mobilizes 14 organizations and neighborhood groups to create the Mass. Ave. Taskforce, representing residents and institutions; endless meetings begin.
- 1995 - Neighborhood groups and others give support to restoration of original park
- 1997 – Elected officials support restoration of original park; Rep. Byron Rushing secures \$1 million appropriation for restoration out of the federal Transportation Bond Bill
- 1997 – City funded feasibility study reports original park can be restored
- 2000 – City discards option of restoring original park; rising cost estimates blamed
- 2003 – Final street design presented to Taskforce by city; plan includes many resident recommendations
- 2005 - Residents adopt a two-park plan and start again
- 2007 – Landscape design grant for two parks from the Browne fund
- 2008 – City council appropriates funds for parks' reconstruction
- 2009 – Heavily attended rainy-day ribbon cutting for two new parks

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2011  
RUDY BRUNER AWARD  
PROJECT  
AT-A-GLANCE



# PROJECT AT-A-GLANCE

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NOTE: This sheet and a selected image will be sent to the Committee in advance.

Project Name The Chester Square Parks

Address Mass. Ave. in the South End City/State/ZIP Boston, Massachusetts 02118

1. Give a brief overview of the project.

The project was an attempt to restore a destroyed and abandoned Victorian park, sacrificed for the sake of suburban commuters in the worst days of urban renewal. The intention was to provide open space, passive recreation and some shared center for a dense and diverse city neighborhood that had been neglected for decades.

The means was to identify every interest group, offer the city something it needed and be willing to negotiate.

2. Why does the project merit the *Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence*? (You may wish to consider such factors as: effect on the urban environment; innovative or unique approaches to any aspect of project development; new and creative approaches to urban issues; design quality.)

The story of an old East coast city like Boston is a story of change. Chester Square in the South End has experienced every facet of that kind of urban mutation; shape-shifting from a handsome enclave for wealthy merchants to a blighted slum/ghetto dumping ground.

But the square also exemplifies the rebooting of such neighborhoods to serve a 21st century world, coming alive again to embrace its present economically and culturally diverse population. The joining together of the people of this community to transform two dusty strips of land in the middle of six lanes of traffic into beautiful green neighborhood parks is a model for resident empowerment for change.

To succeed, residents needed to do the following:

- Structure an accepted representative body
- Create a viable cooperative mechanism for working with the city
- Be very clear in outlining realistic demands and requests
- Show patience, pragmatism and flexibility
- Accept losses and move on

This is a transferable model. We invited every shareholder (in our case, every institution, neighborhood group or organization that had a stake in Mass. Ave.) to become part of the ongoing discussion. We attached the park restoration to the reconstruction of the street as a whole and it became part of the residents' attempt to stop the city from making the neighborhood look like a piece of highway. We leveraged the city's need to meet federal requirements for resident in-put on projects funded with federal money by giving them a coherent group with whom to negotiate. We gave our project a forum with the city by insisting that the park restoration be part of the street redesign discussion. We came to consensus among ourselves and negotiated in good faith with the city. We never gave up even after we lost the first big battle. Our design was beautiful, simple and evocative of our past.

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# 2011 RUDY BRUNER AWARD PROJECT DESCRIPTION



# PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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1. Describe the underlying values and goals of the project. What, if any, significant trade-offs were required to implement the project?

The goals were to force the city to restore a park that had been ignored for fifty years; to ignite some kind of community feeling in organizing to do so; to provide communal outdoor space; to create an oasis in the middle of six lanes of traffic; and finally to give residents emotional ownership in a shared facility they had helped create.

Boston was the poster boy for the worst excesses of urban renewal in the 50's, destroying the West End and tearing down big swathes of the South End and Roxbury. By that time, neighborhoods like Chester Square had lost their wealthy merchant residents to the newer Back Bay, and in Boston, had become the site for the half-way houses, small black churches, subsidized housing and Aids hostels not welcome in more affluent neighborhoods (or those with more political clout). The square was also the only park in the city to have six lanes of traffic driven right through its center, destroying the most imposing of all the South End's parks.

We failed in our effort to get the city to restore the park to its original footprint by putting the roadway into an overpass despite 10 years of effort, wide community support and even significant funding. The painful and bitter trade-off was to accept this defeat in order to re-enter negotiations to restore what was left of the park, two narrow strips of land, then completely desolate and derelict.

2. Briefly describe the project's urban context. How has the project impacted the local community? Who does the project serve? How many people are served by the project?

Chester Square was modeled after English park-centered residential squares by the city as part of a newly created neighborhood built on filled land and called the South End. This new space was needed by the 1850's as the city ran out of room on Beacon Hill. Within a couple of decades however, the wealthy residents abandoned the five-story brick and brownstone bow-fronts for the even newer Back Bay, with its spacious French influenced boulevards. The square became a location for rooming-houses, an intake point for successive waves of immigrants, and a low cost opportunity for the BHA to site subsidized housing, for charitable organizations to place halfway houses and for small black church congregations. The fabric of the square remained intact, however, with every original building still curving gracefully around the center parks. Chester Square remains unique in its population. The South End's side streets, with much smaller bow fronts, were generally reclaimed for middle-class populations. Chester Square, with massive 6,000 sq. ft. buildings, continues to house institutions and residences reflecting a very wide range of demographics. We have in the square:

The Mt. Calvary Baptist Church and The International Gospel Party Boosting Jesus Church

Aids hospice, operated by the Aids Action Committee

Approximately 1/3 subsidized housing units, mostly managed by the Boston Housing Authority or non-profits

Victory House, a half-way house for grown men recovering from alcohol or drug addictions

Residential institution for teen-age boys with problems

VinFen operated permanent residential housing for people with mental problems

South End Historical Society

One of the oldest black women's institutions, The League of Women for Community Service

Scores of high end condos and a smaller number of market rate rental apartments

Obviously the parks serve everyone living here. But it isn't possible to estimate how many others of the thousands who go through Chester Square every day, benefit. Some walk through the park, some around, some have lunch, many walk their dogs. We believe the park has begun to be a focus for the community with a new committee planting bulbs and bushes. Mostly we know people have taken ownership of the parks by the number of complaints made about careless dog owners not being careful enough in the new parks.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION (CONT'D)

3. Describe the key elements of the development process, including community participation where appropriate.

The whole project sparked from the city's announcement that it was going to redesign and reconstruct a portion of Massachusetts Avenue, the street that runs through the center of Chester Square, and from the first public meeting about the plan. At that very first meeting, the city's engineer announced that the sole goal of the work was to move traffic faster along Mass. Ave. This had two results: it galvanized all those who were determined that the city was not going to make this residential street a piece of state highway; and electrified those who thought that with massive construction going on, the city could be convinced to restore the original Victorian park in the square as a fitting southern entrance to Boston, leading to national institutions like the Mother Church, Fenway Park and Symphony Hall.

Please see:

- 1) Question 2 on the Project At-A-Glance sheet for the details of the development process
- 2) Relevant Project Date attachment from Project Data sheet, that outlines the sequence of events in the development process
- 3) Attached page of members of the Mass. Ave. Taskforce
- 4) Attached sample sign-in sheets for some of the endless meetings

4. Describe the financing of the project. Please include all funding sources and square foot costs where applicable.

\$15,000	For conceptual landscape design from the Robert lingersoll Browne fund, that gives out grants for beautification projects in the city
\$126,000	For installation of Victorian lights in the parks, as a community benefit grant from the Boston Redevelopment Authority
\$10,000	For painting the parks' fences, from Boston Parks and Recreation Dept.
\$5200	For pruning trees in the parks, from Boston Parks and Recreation
\$100,000	For two Victorian fountains from The Browne Fund
\$500,000 (approx.)	Spec writing and implementation of the design for the parks from the Capital Account of Boston Parks and Recreation Department, appropriated by the Boston City Coujncil

5. Is the project unique and/or does it address significant urban issues? Is the model adaptable to other urban settings?

It is not unique in Boston. We were building on the premise of the Big Dig, which tied two severed parts of the city together and re-connected the city to its waterfront by putting a huge, ugly overhead highway underground. Although the Big Dig took years and cost unexpected billions, I believe it stands uniquely for the will of a city and its leaders to correct egregious past urban mistakes.

We were doing the same thing, trying to correct the destructive excesses of the old model of urban renewal by getting the city to recapture a truly handsome Victorian park from the automobile. Certainly this addresses the same kinds of misguided planning decisions taken in many Northeast cities in the 50's and 60's.

It is adaptable in any community that has something of planning or architectural significance to salvage, restore, rebuild or replicate. I don't know why the model of community action taken by our residents couldn't also be used for any new project in any urban setting as well.

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2011  
RUDY BRUNER AWARD  
COMMUNITY  
REPRESENTATIVE  
PERSPECTIVE



# COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Please answer questions in space provided. Answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

This sheet is to be filled out by someone who was involved, or who represents an organization that was involved, in helping the project respond to neighborhood issues.

Name	<u>EDRIS LAKE</u>	Title	<u>Member</u>
Organization	<u>United Neighbors of Lower Roxbury</u>	Telephone	<u>( 617 ) 445-8463</u>
Address	<u>38 Warwick Street</u>	City/State/ZIP	<u>Roxbury, Ma 02120</u>
Fax ( )		E-mail	

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Signature	<u>Edris C. Lake</u>	Date	<u>11-17-10</u>
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1. How did you, or the organization you represent, become involved in this project? What role did you play?

I've known Sheila Cheimets for years and when she started on this project, she lassoed me into becoming the liaison between my neighborhood and the Chester Square neighborhood. One side of the square is Roxbury and all black and the other side is the South End and is mixed, but a lot white. So you had two different kinds of people sharing the square. Nobody is mad at anybody, but there's very little connection either. She was trying to get them all to work together and finally get the city to do something for the neighborhood, and that's where I came in.

I would attend some of the meetings (that went on for years) and report back to my group or my president and get my neighborhood to support restoring the park and not making the street a traffic highway. To tell the truth, we didn't care a lot about the highway plans because most of my neighbors don't live right on Mass. Ave., but we really cared about the city doing something for the park that they cut in half years ago.

2. From the community's point of view, what were the major issues concerning this project?

We'd seen all this before, the tearing down of old perfectly good neighborhoods. Both of our groups had the same problems; the city called us slums and substandard housing for years and let huge chunks of Roxbury and the South End be torn down. Beautiful old buildings torn down for cement block projects on street after street. My father watched urban renewal tearing down house after house, coming toward ours. They stopped only one block away from the house I grew up in and live in now. Then, when they stopped tearing down, it still took us years to get the city to declare Frederick Douglas Square an historic area to protect it.

Well, they did the same thing in the South End. No-one now would put a street through a city park, but that's what they did then. So we were happy to support getting the park back and treating Mass. Ave. like a street with people living on it and not a state highway. We knew exactly how hard it is to get the city to move.

The major issue to us was stopping the destruction of the city under the idea that losing the city's history made it better, and when you got that far, getting the city to heal some of the scars and put some of the good stuff back.

## COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

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3. Has this project made the community a better place to live or work? If so, how?

Yes, no question. It's greener, it's prettier, it's good for the eyes to see in a world of asphalt. We've still got a lot of one family houses with little backyards in my neighborhood, but in the square there are a lot of people who have no private outdoor places. For them the park is great, and the fountains make it cool in summer. Lot of elderly people, lot of subsidized apartments, lot of half-way houses; that kind of housing doesn't have patios and terraces.

But really, you got people talking to each other from both sides of the street, just working on the project before anything happened. People came to talk about what they wanted in the new parks and they came to push for brick sidewalks and street trees and things that make it a street and not a road. Even before the parks were built, people began to come out for clean-up days, to rake the parks and try to plant flowers. And they really got to feel like they owned the new parks. I heard about folks leaning out of fourth floor windows yelling at dog owners who didn't clean up after their dogs and were messing up the new parks.

I don't think there is any question that the parks add to the neighborhood.

4. Would you change anything about this project or the development process you went through?

I would certainly shorten the length of time it took! If you could get people at meetings to say the same thing only once or twice instead of four times, that would shorten everything. I don't really know how many years she worked on this, but it was a long time in coming. Also, I would see if there was any possible way to get the city to do the original project, to restore the original park. That would have been wonderful, but I think the Chester Square people nearly killed themselves trying to get the city to do it. I suppose it was costs that killed it, but I don't know.

# COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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This sheet is to be filled out by someone who was involved, or who represents an organization that was involved, in helping the project respond to neighborhood issues.

Name Sheila Cheimets Title Chair, Parks Committee  
Organization Chester Square Area Neighborhood Association Telephone ( 617 ) 536-3281  
Address 540 Mass. Ave. City/State/ZIP Boston, Ma 02118  
Fax ( ) E-mail dcheimets3@verizon.net

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Signature *Sheila Cheimets* Date 11/11/10

1. How did you, or the organization you represent, become involved in this project? What role did you play?

The Chester Square Area Neighborhood Association became involved when the city proposed an unacceptable plan for reconstruction of Massachusetts Avenue. One of our members challenged the city to restore the Victorian park in the square as part of the reconstruction, while other residents along the length of the street opposed the basic premise set forth by the city which was simply to run traffic faster through what was in fact a heavily residential neighborhood. I picked up the park restoration proposal because I was offended at the original destruction of a magnificent square. I also felt this community had been badly treated by the city, since in fifty years there had been no public investment in the square, unlike other areas of the South End, which had renovated parks, brick sidewalks, flowering street trees and Victorian street lights.

CSANA became the lead actor in putting together the members of the Mass. Ave. Taskforce, who addressed the street reconstruction proposals, and as Chairman of the Parks Committee of CSANA, I represented the association on the Taskforce and led the park restoration effort.

2. From the community's point of view, what were the major issues concerning this project?

The major issue was forcing the city to deal with Chester Square and its surrounding community as a residential enclave and not a commercial inter-urban expressway.

The issues surrounding the park restoration were intertwined with the issues attached to the street reconstruction. A residential neighborhood, with about 1,000 people per block and only the smallest sandwich stores and pizza places at the intersection of Mass. Ave. with Tremont was seen explicitly by the city as a commercial roadway whose main purpose was to get commuters into the city faster and over to Cambridge faster. Their argument was that the federal money awarded for the Mass. Ave. reconstruction project required that the street follow certain guidelines. Our argument was that the federal government had long ago set out more favorable standards for historic areas and for neighborhoods and what were waivers for anyway? The idea of restoring the park was all of a piece of making the city finally see us as a community, not a pass through for others. It was helpful that private investment in the area had already begun and the beautiful buildings were slowly being returned to use by people much less accustomed to being ignored by their government.

The laborious discussions about every aspect of the street reconstruction (lane width, bike lanes, sidewalk width, street trees, median width, street light orientation, brick sidewalks, etc. etc.) ran in tandem with the effort to get the city to restore the park, but unlike the street design discussion, the park restoration effort was solely CSANA's, although we had secured the support of every member of the Taskforce. Both efforts were fueled by the same intention; to get the city to see the area as a living neighborhood, and begin providing public support commensurate with that provided other areas of the South End.



## COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

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3. Has this project made the community a better place to live or work? If so, how?

I believe that it has, but bear in mind that I am very biased. The difference, even for the most casual passersby, from two empty, dusty strips of land to a set of pleasant, green spaces with an echo of the Victorian past, is very great, I think. I believe the parks to be an obvious good for those who live here to use and for those who go through the square to see. In addition, the parks are living testimony that this is a neighborhood, about which both the residents and the city take care. I think that this provides a sense of community to a very diverse group of people.

4. Would you change anything about this project or the development process you went through?

If we could have pressed the city to use the \$1million in Transportation Bond Funds for engineering plans to put a piece of Mass. Ave. into an underpass to allow restoration of the park to its original footprint, we now know we could have gotten the project built with stimulus funds.

The major question is, however, should we not have accepted defeat on the original proposal to get the whole park back and taken nothing, rather than settling for two smaller renovated parks. There were a few who felt that we should hold out forever. My judgement then was that we had a sympathetic mayor who liked parks and spent money on neighborhoods and there was no way to know whom we would get next. My judgement now is that we would never have had anything, once the economy fell apart, and we made this by the skin of our teeth.

You should be aware that there are no utility lines in the center of Mass. Ave. because when they were originally laid, that was park land. I secured a written commitment from the DPW project manager for the Mass. Ave. reconstruction that no lines would be laid in the center during this street project. Therefore, any time someone wants to try again for total restoration of the Victorian park they can do so without the complication of utility lines.

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**2011**  
**RUDY BRUNER AWARD**  
**PUBLIC AGENCY**  
**PERSPECTIVE**



## PUBLIC AGENCY PERSPECTIVE

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This sheet is to be filled out by a staff representative of a public agency directly involved in the financing, design review, or public approvals that affected this project.

Name **Thomas M. Menino** Title **Mayor**

Organization **City of Boston** Telephone ( **617** )

Address **One City Hall Square, 5th Floor** City/State/ZIP **02201**

Fax ( ) E-mail **Mayor@cityofboston.gov**

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Signature  Date **11-15-10**

1. What role did your agency play in the development of this project? Describe any requirements made of this project by your agency (e.g., zoning, public participation, public benefits, impact statements).

The City of Boston funded the renovation of Chester Square Park as part of the capital budget in Fiscal Year 2008. The Parks Department led a community process to discuss and plan the Park renovations with the neighborhood stakeholders. With a general consensus on finalized plans, the Parks Department awarded a contract based on a public bidding process. The plans were created under the guidelines of and in consultation with the South End Landmark Historic District Commission.

2. How was this project intended to benefit your city? What trade-offs and compromises were required to implement the project? How did your agency participate in making them?

The final product incorporated the historical significance of the Park with the ideas and needs of the residents. With any planning process, there are trade-offs made, specifically with use, types of materials, potential maintenance needs, and budget. The residents and the City made a commitment to restore the Park to its former splendor, and did so by choosing to build twin parks with granite accents, Victorian fountains, and historic lighting. The neighbors also agreed to take on a primary role in helping the Parks Department maintain the new design.

## PUBLIC AGENCY PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

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3. Describe the project's impact on your city. Please be as specific as possible.

The project revitalized a park and the surrounding neighborhood in a highly visible and well-traveled area of the City. The project also occurred in parallel with a complete renovation of Massachusetts Avenue, the street that bisects the Park. These two remodels of former eyesores created a total transformation of the neighborhood. The community takes pride in this area, and these blocks have seen an increase in property values and business development follow these renovations.

4. Did this project result in new models of public/private partnerships? Are there aspects of this project that would be instructive to agencies like yours in other cities?

To make the reconstruction happen, The Friends of Chester Square Park took the initiative to seek out funding to plan and propose the renovations. They worked in conjunction with the City of Boston Parks Department to discuss proposals with and present plans to the stakeholders. Even with the renovations complete, the Friends of Chester Square Park continue to maintain the Park and seek out funding to accomplish this. This level of involvement is important to protect and reinforce the City's investment in the Park and the neighborhood. A greater and longer lasting result is achieved when residents partner with the City, participate in the process and take pride in their community. This cooperation is a great model for future projects inside and outside of the City of Boston.

5. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project?

At the Park Ribbon cutting, on a rainy day in April, dozens of residents came to the Park to celebrate. Many new neighbors, young families and long-time residents came together that day, and will continue to come together in their brand new park. The residents and the City have achieved a great result, however the residents will continue to advocate for restoration of the Park to its original size, before Massachusetts Avenue cut through the center of the once connected Chester Square Park. As it remains today, a major thoroughfare divides the two sides of Chester Square.

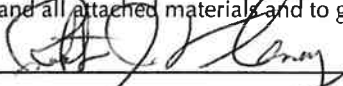
# PUBLIC AGENCY PERSPECTIVE

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This sheet is to be filled out by a staff representative of a public agency directly involved in the financing, design review, or public approvals that affected this project.

Name **Robert Fleming** Title **Director**  
Organization **Edward Ingersoll Browne Fund** Telephone ( **617** ) **635-3414**  
Address **Boston City Hall, City Hall Plaza** City/State/ZIP **Boston, Ma 02201**  
Fax ( ) E-mail **robert.fleming@cityofboston.gov**

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Signature  Date **12/6/10**

1. What role did your agency play in the development of this project? Describe any requirements made of this project by your agency (e.g., zoning, public participation, public benefits, impact statements).

The Edward Ingersoll Browne Fund is a public charitable trust of the City of Boston. Since its establishment in 1978, from an 1892 bequest, the fund has provided \$20 million in grants for more than 200 public space enhancement projects, 95% of which have been for community driven development projects in Boston's diverse neighborhoods. The Browne Fund grants have leveraged more than \$80 million in funds from public and private sources for these initiatives.

The Browne fund was established through the bequest of Edward Ingersoll Browne, a 19<sup>th</sup> century Harvard educated trust attorney whose ancestors immigrated to Boston from Ireland in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and were active in many of the issues facing a new and growing country. He was influenced by the 19<sup>th</sup> century Park Movement when he established his fund for the enhancement of the city he loved through projects that add to the beauty of its public spaces. The Browne Fund has provided funding for public art, memorials, fountains and ornamental enhancements to parks, schoolyards, public squares and business districts throughout Boston. In this case, the Browne Fund awarded grants that paid for both Chester Square's redesign and the ultimate installation of the Victorian era inspired fountains. These grants were provided to the Chester Square Neighborhood Association in two separate applications. We were impressed by the group's commitment to enhance these lost public spaces and also by their goal of restoring an echo of their Victorian past in their new design.

The Browne Fund requires that a completed project provide a demonstrable improvement to a city neighborhood's public space and that the project's proponents maintain a commitment to the future care and maintenance of the new public amenity.

2. How was this project intended to benefit your city? What trade-offs and compromises were required to implement the project? How did your agency participate in making them?

This project is a fine example of the Browne Fund's basic goal of assisting community groups is the enhancement of their neighborhood's public space in a manner that promotes the enjoyment of the site by all of Boston's residents.

This project is a key component of the Browne Fund's "Boston Gateways Program". This initiative was established in 1988 and has lead to the reconstruction of numerous public squares and neighborhood commons throughout the City of Boston. The initiative is "bottoms-up". It starts with the community and then continues throughout the site's future use. The Browne Fund provides future funding for the repair and or replacement of any of a site's ornamental elements as long as the community maintains the site in a high quality manner. This program is one of the Fund's six distinctive neighborhood developments initiatives established by the Browne Fund in the 1980's which continue today.

3. Describe the project's impact on your city. Please be as specific as possible.

Initiatives established nationwide including those emanating from the "Broken Windows" theory and the "Project for Public Spaces" program clearly demonstrated the critical need of returning lost public spaces to local use. In the early 80's the Browne Fund created a series of pocket parks in Boston's downtown business district as a test case for these theories, their success ultimately lead to larger award winning public spaces initiatives including Post Office Square Park and the recently completed Central Arterery Parks. In the late 80's the Browne Fund focused its activities on Boston neighborhoods and its goal since then has been to work with groups like the Chester Square Neighborhood Association in restoring their public spaces to their past glory while ensuring that they are well maintained and cared for in the future.

4. Did this project result in new models of public/private partnerships? Are there aspects of this project that would be instructive to agencies like yours in other cities?

The Browne Fund has assisted in the funding of such projects for 35 years and the impetus for a particular community enhancement project has almost always come from neighborhood residents and organizations. For us, this is not a new model of interaction but an ongoing effort to foster an effective collaboration between the Fund, city agencies, such as the Boston Parks & Recreation Department and the community's residents.

The key component of our program is Trust. Funders and city agencies must have the strength to foster a true "Bottoms-up" process through the design of public spaces where the community actively decides for itself what their public space should be. Community members are very cognizant of costs, they have they households to manage everyday. They are far more astutely aware of the practical needs of their neighborhood than city officials. "Top-down" projects, of any kind, do not promote this. The community must have a level of significant control in the design development process in order to foster a project's long-term success, if they do not the project will ultimately whither on the vine and fail.

5. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project?

The community interaction on this project was excellent. Meetings where well attended and residents from all of the neighborhoods' diverse ethic groups were represented throughout the project. Raising construction funds in an era of economic problems is always difficult.

# PUBLIC AGENCY PERSPECTIVE

Please answer questions in space provided. Answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

This sheet is to be filled out by a staff representative of a public agency directly involved in the financing, design review, or public approvals that affected this project.

Name	Aldo G. Ghirin	Title	Senior Planner
Organization	Parks & Recreation Department, City of Boston	Telephone	( 617 )
Address	1010 Massachusetts Avenue, Third Floor	City/State/ZIP	02118
Fax	( 617 ) 635-3228 (Phone is 617 961 3033)	E-mail	aldo.ghirin@cityofboston.gov

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Signature **Aldo Ghirin**

Digitally signed by Aldo Ghirin  
DN: cn=Aldo Ghirin, o=Boston Parks Dept, ou, email=Aldo.Ghirin@cityofboston.gov, c=US  
Date: 2010.11.18 12:56:37 -0500

Date November 18, 2010

1. What role did your agency play in the development of this project? Describe any requirements made of this project by your agency (e.g., zoning, public participation, public benefits, impact statements).

The Parks and Recreation Department ("the Department") is the owner of Chester Square. The conceptual design process, initiated by neighborhood residents, was funded by a grant from a city beautification endowment, the Edward Ingersoll Browne fund. The Department participated in this conceptual design process. Based on the results of that conceptual design process, the Department hired a design consultant, funded primarily with monies from its privately endowed foundation, the Fund for Parks and Recreation. Our Department coordinated the design development, construction drawings, and the construction administration for this project. We also served as the fiscal administrator of the project overseeing \$794,000+ in design and construction. The Browne Fund contributed \$100,000, the Fund for Parks and Recreation and the Boston Redevelopment Authority chipped in approximately \$200,000, and the City's own capital budget underwrote \$500,000 of the project's costs. We also coordinated with the Boston Water and Sewer Commission, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation and its design consultant for the Massachusetts Avenue reconstruction, the Street Lighting Division of the City of Boston Public Works Department, the Browne Fund, the Boston Redevelopment Authority, and the South End Historic District Commission.

2. How was this project intended to benefit your city? What trade-offs and compromises were required to implement the project? How did your agency participate in making them?

Fractured by the needs of the larger transportation network of the city, this project was intended to benefit the city by making these spaces more usable for recreation, walking, and social interaction in its own neighborhood, and a visual asset for passersby and motorists. Instead of spaces with only one means of entry, three entrances were provided in each park so as to enable people to walk through and feel safe in the space. A central fountain was put in each space as a focal point, to help attenuate traffic noise, and make the city's public realm more inviting and soothing. Berms were also added to further attenuate noise and the presence of motor vehicles on the Massachusetts Avenue arterial.

The main compromise was the decision by the Friends of Chester Square to focus their energies on going ahead with the design of two smaller parks rather than pursuing the option to recreate the original single park by tunneling Massachusetts Avenue under it. Given the massive expense of the tunneling and the relocation of various utilities, the compromise was to go ahead with the existing configuration of the park as two spaces separated by the four-lane arterial and its median. Given that Massachusetts Avenue is a barrier to travel from one side of the Avenue to the other, the two park scheme was needed to improve the character of Chester Square, given that tunneling was not an option.

The Department became involved after the decision to not tunnel under Massachusetts Avenue was made. Instead, we were involved in the efforts, along with the Friends of Chester Square, to build the funding partnership to implement the two park scheme.



## PUBLIC AGENCY PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

3. Describe the project's impact on your city. Please be as specific as possible.

These two parks were affected by the noise of the traffic and the limitation of only one entrance per park. In effect, the only use became an informal dog run. Almost no one else used the park. Now as a result of the redesign with additional points of entry, water fountains for beauty, relaxation, and noise attenuation, paths, and berms to further attenuate noise, it has become well used, with the diverse community of neighbors now interacting in this space and working together to help maintain it. As we coordinated with the Massachusetts Avenue reconstruction project, we were able to integrate our design with the streetscape design so as to make it seem seamless and consistent in appearance and quality, making for an attractive cityscape for the neighborhood and the larger metropolitan area.

4. Did this project result in new models of public/private partnerships? Are there aspects of this project that would be instructive to agencies like yours in other cities?

This project generated a model of responsive public-private partnership. Once the tunnel idea was set aside, the resident community, spearheaded by the Friends of Chester Square, organized to apply for Browne Fund monies to hire a designer to collect public input for the preliminary design scheme. As the community design process unfolded, the Department responded to the community's needs by taking the project under its wing so that its expertise and funding abilities could be fully utilized to flesh out the community's vision. The Department in partnership with the Friends of Chester Square was able to secure support from the City's capital budget office, the Boston Redevelopment Authority, and the Department's own private funding source, the Fund for Parks and Recreation, to implement the design vision of the community. The Department's expertise and management experience enabled it to secure cooperation from various public agencies so as to respond to their needs and responsibilities. We feel that the aspect of letting the community drive the initial design phase of the project would be instructive to other park agencies in other cities, as it allows for substantial buy-in by the community when their own design consultant is the one to bring up constraints to design rather than the public agency.

5. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project?

The least successful aspect of this project is not being able to achieve the original vision, championed by the Friends of Chester Square, of the larger single park as was historically the case. However, given financial constraints at this time, the City could not prudently pursue this option.

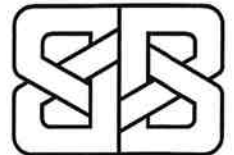
The most successful aspect of this project is seeing this park actually used, especially in the summer when the water element of the fountains are most appreciated, attracting neighbors to use the park and interact with each other. We also see as a successful aspect of this park the sense of stewardship on the part of the neighborhood as organized by the Friends of Chester Square in its maintenance events. They have continued to organize fundraising events to benefit the park, made commitments to further enhance the seasonal plantings in the park, and are consistently vigilant about self-policing the activities in the park, and notifying the Department's maintenance division about debris or other issues in the park.

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2011

RUDY BRUNER AWARD  
ARCHITECT  
OR DESIGNER  
PERSPECTIVE

RUDY  
BRUNER  
AWARD



FOR URBAN  
EXCELLENCE

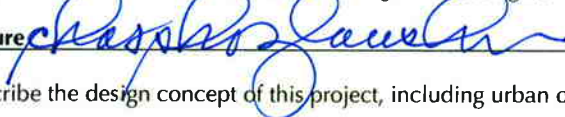
# ARCHITECT OR DESIGNER PERSPECTIVE

Please answer questions in space provided. Answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

This sheet is to be filled out by a design professional who worked as a consultant on the project, providing design, planning, or other services.

Name	Charles P. Kozlowski	Title	Vice President
Organization	Halvorson Design Partnership, Inc.	Telephone ( 617 )	536-0380 ext. 3042
Address	161 Massachusetts Avenue	City/State/ZIP	Boston, Massachusetts 02115
Fax ( 617 )	536-0626	E-mail	chuck@halvorsondesign.com

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Signature 

Date November 24, 2010

1. Describe the design concept of this project, including urban design considerations, choice of materials, scale, etc.

The renewal of Chester Square Park, conceived of by the Chester Square Association (CSA) Park Committee, was intended to harken back to a previous era, when Chester Square was a lively neighborhood park, lavishly landscaped, with a central Victorian era fountain as it's focal point. Unfortunately, urban renewal of the 1950's led to the bisection of Charles Park, with it's core converted to traffic lanes and the fountain removed, in effect, creating two smaller linear grass areas separated by vehicles.

The park concept was the creation of two symmetrical, linear parks, each with a smaller fountain at it's center, to serve as focal points and serpentine granite seat walls that retain a bermed lawn area creating a natural buffer against the street.

Historic period lighting, brick paving and restored perimeter fencing combine with the granite, fountains, lawn and mature tree plantings to create two defensible, highly desirable neighborhood gathering spaces.

2. Describe the most important social and programmatic functions of the design.

As a high percentage of the neighborhood is without private outdoor spaces, the design provides for passive neighborhood activities including sitting, reading, playing and socializing. Without the benefit of a generous maintenance budget or staff, the volunteer CSA Park Committee opted for a simple, low-maintenance approach to the design and programming of the park.

## ARCHITECT OR DESIGNER PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

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3. Describe the major challenges of designing this project and any design trade-offs or compromises required to complete the project.

Certainly the major challenges of designing the Chester Square Parks was the narrow, linear nature of the site and the close proximity of one edge of each space to four lanes of vehicular traffic on Massachusetts Avenue.

4. Describe the ways in which the design relates to its urban context.

The parks are located adjacent to a residential neighborhood of 19th century designed townhouses. The materials used in the park design echo the Victorian history of the original park and residential neighborhood. Park entrances and circulation patterns are on axis to adjacent pedestrian patterns of sidewalk and building entrances, inviting visitors into the space, as an alternate to the sidewalk along Massachusetts Avenue.

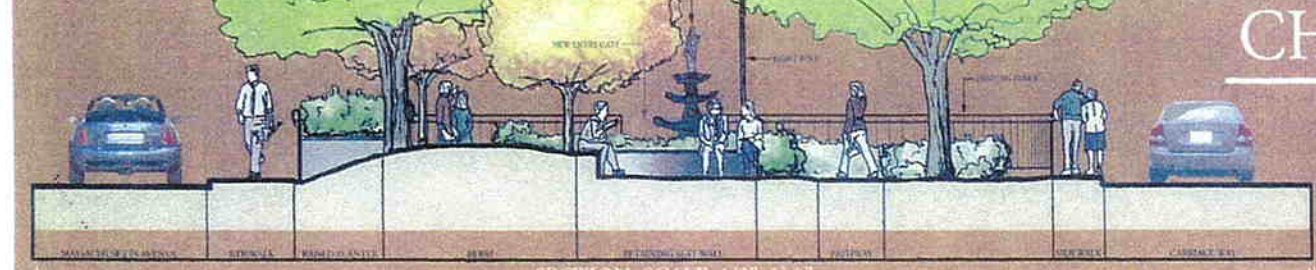
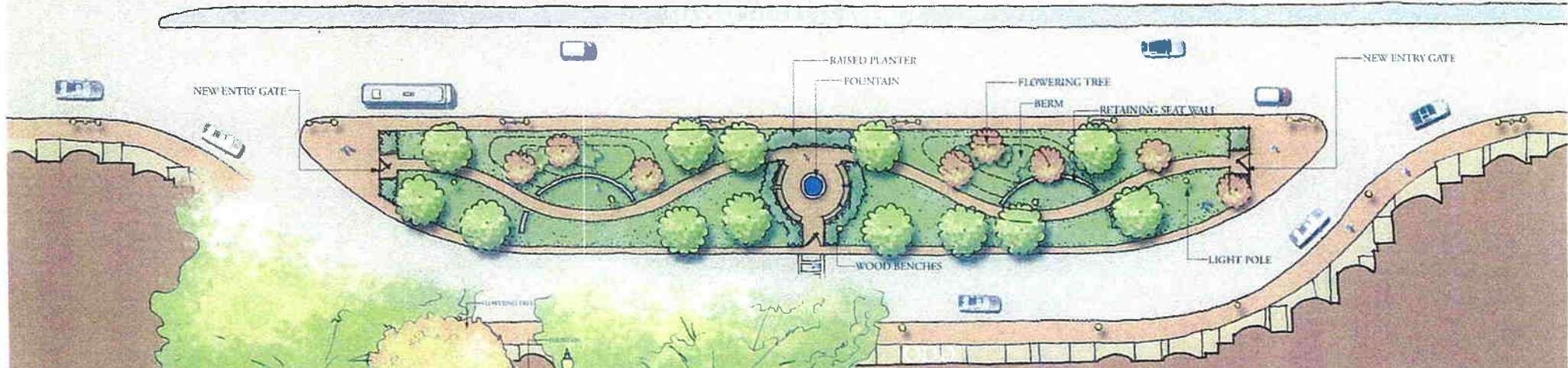
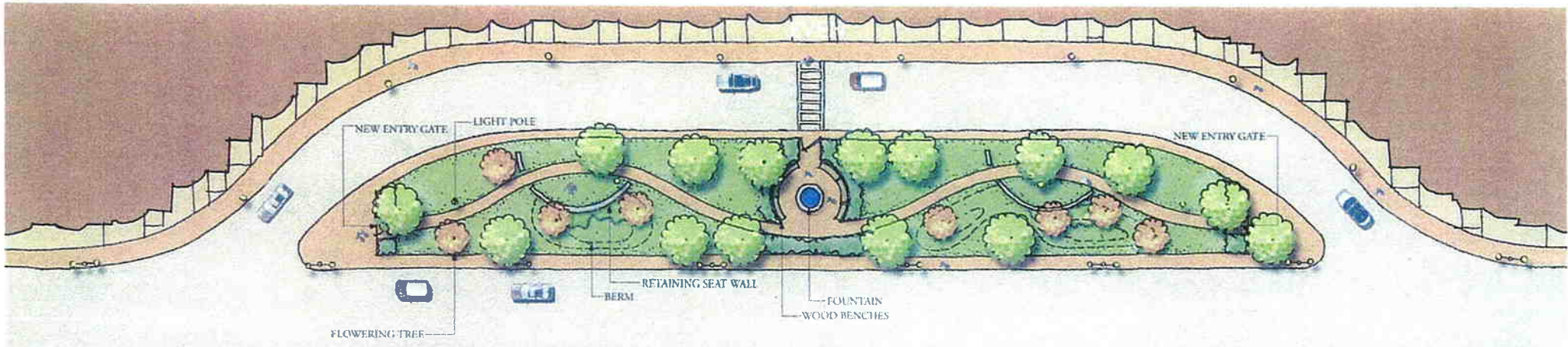


CHESTER SQUARE PARK CIRCA 1860  
SPNEA PHOTOGRAPH



Chester Square Park circa 1933





# CHESTER SQUARE PARK

## SCHEMATIC SITE PLAN

SCALE: 1"=10'-0" JANUARY 18, 2006



SECTION: SCALE: 1/2"=1'-0"

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**2011**  
**RUDY BRUNER**  
**AWARD**

**ADDITIONAL**  
**MATERIALS**



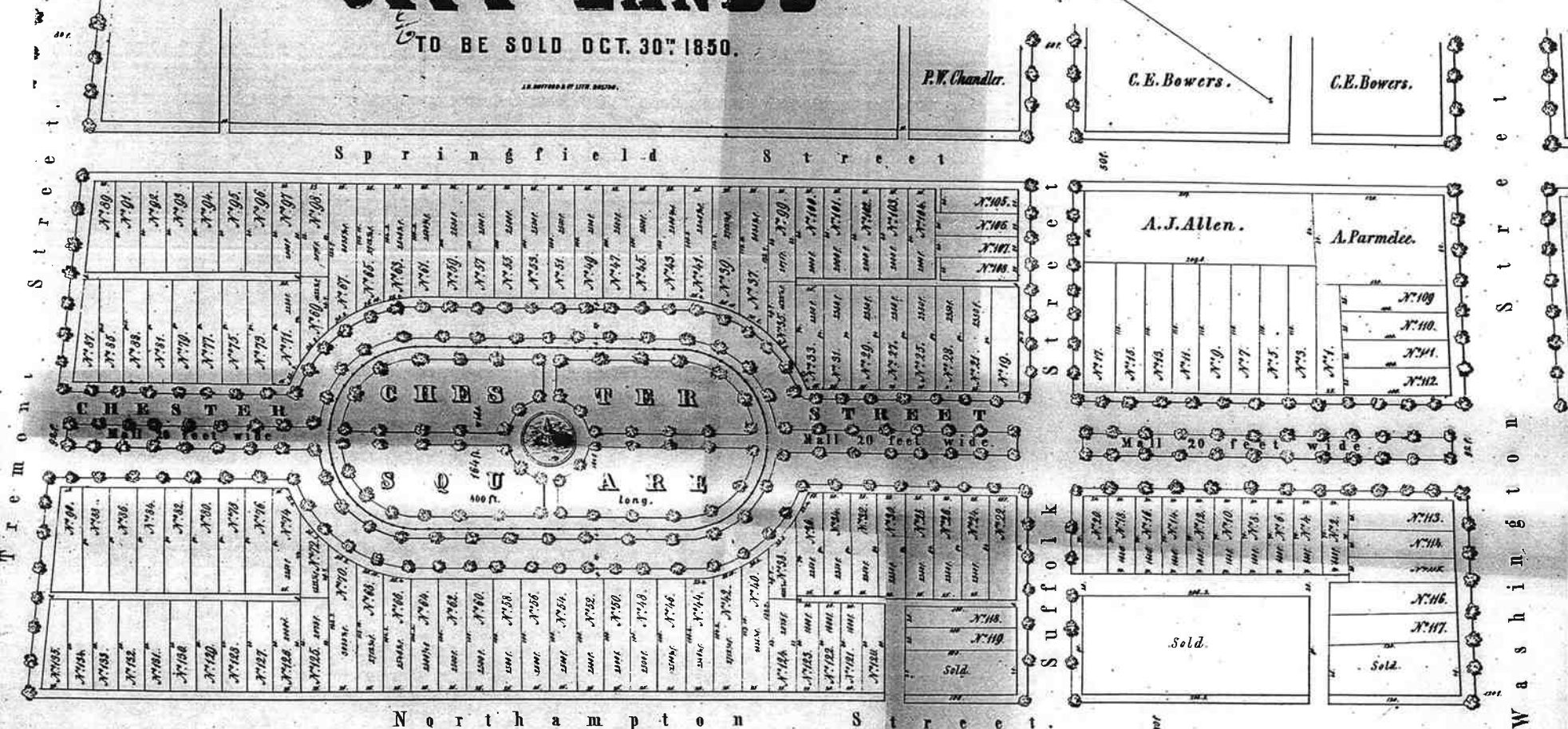
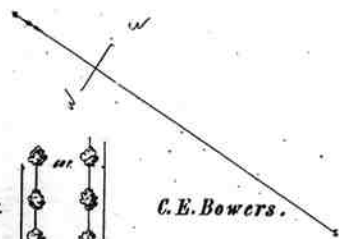
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1. Original advertisement for sale of lots in Chester Square, 1850
2. Fountain in the center of the original park, circa 1860
3. Modern street map of area
4. Position paper in opposition to city's plan
5. Fountain, east side of Chester Square, 2009

# PLAN OF CITY LANDS

TO BE SOLD OCT. 30<sup>th</sup> 1850.

AS SHOWN IN THE RECORD.



*Chester Square and Street to be improved by the City with Trees Fences and Walks agreeably to the above plan, previous to January 1852.*

I certify, that this Plan was originally  
 recorded as No 84, in File No 101  
 in the Suffolk Registry of Deeds.  
*Charles M. Metcalf*  
 Civil Engineer & Surveyor.  
 Boston, Dec. 1884.  
 This Plan is a reproduction of Plan No. 22.  
*Charles M. Metcalf*



FOUNTAIN IN CENTER OF ORIGINAL  
PARK - CIRCA 1860  
SOUTH END HISTORICAL SOCIETY PICTURE

LOCATION MAP - THE SOUTH - BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS



## HISTORIC CHESTER SQUARE - ENTRANCE TO THE CITY

The Chester Park Neighborhood Association, other South End neighborhood associations and the South End Historical Society seek the restoration of historic Chester Park, severely damaged in 1952 when six lanes of traffic off the Southeast Expressway were run down Massachusetts Avenue through the center of the Victorian park and neighborhood.

### Background

The historic residential squares of the South End; Chester Square, Union Park, Blackstone and Franklin, and Worcester Square, were modelled on the aristocratic English squares of the 17th and 18th century. The squares are a unique feature of a landmark district which is the largest intact Victorian residential neighborhood in the United States.

The squares are about 150 years old and were planned and designed by the city to provide residences for the wealthy middle class of Boston. Four of the five are intact, and remain useful to the present residents of their neighborhoods. Four of the five have received or are receiving significant city and other funding for landscaping, restoration of fountains, repair/repainting of fences and redesign.

Chester Square has retained its complete architectural framework in the gracefully curved bow-fronts which surround the Park. But the Park which centered this handsome residential neighborhood has lost its historic integrity, a huge chunk of its area, its fountain and most of its landscaping. It has been wholly or mostly neglected by the city for 60 years or more and does not serve the diverse and lively population of the Square at all.

### Present Efforts

The Chester Park Neighborhood Association, the South End Historical Society and other neighborhood groups are pressing to have the city implement its own recommendation in the South End Planning Study, which is to study the restoration of the Park.

It is particularly appropriate to do so now because:

- The city is at the earliest stages of a redesign and reconstruction of Massachusetts Avenue from City Hospital to the river
- The city is hosting 2500 preservationists for the 48th annual meeting of the National Trust for Historic Preservation on October 26-30

### Actions

1. The Massachusetts Avenue Taskforce (a group of neighborhood associations which include portions of Mass. Ave. in their

districts) is discussing with the city engineering department and the design consultants working on the Mass. Ave. redesign, the restoration of the park by undergrounding Mass. Ave. between Tremont and Shawmut. This proposal is under consideration by the city.

2. Funds for such a restoration have been identified by the Chester Park Neighborhood Association under a relatively new Federal transportation program called ISTEA (the Massachusetts Transportation Enhancements Guidelines of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act). Restoration of Chester Park qualifies under three separate sections of the eligibility criteria for ISTEA Enhancement.

3. Detailed research on all of the historic residential squares in the South End has been undertaken and a history and analysis of their background and derivation from English squares has been written.

4. Residents of the area are in discussion with City Councillors James Kelly and Gareth Saunders, and state Senator William Bulger and Representative Byron Rushing about the restoration of the historic park. The Park falls in each of their districts.

#### Conclusion

Mayor Thomas Menino will be asked to announce at or about the time the 2500 preservationists meet in Boston that the city will include restoration of Chester Park in the redesign of Mass. Ave. and will formally make application for a portion of the \$15 million FY96 ISTEA Enhancement funding for the project.



MEMBERS OF THE MASS. AVE. TASKFORCE

The Boston-Fenway Program, Inc.  
Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay  
Claremont Neighborhood Association  
Chester Park Neighborhood Association  
Worcester Square Area Neighborhood Association  
St. Botolph Neighborhood Association  
United Neighbors of Lower Roxbury  
Fenway Civic Association  
Roxse Homes Tenant Organization  
Friends of Copley Square  
Back Bay Association  
League of Women for Community Service  
Boston City Hospital  
South End Landmarks Commission  
Bradford Street Association  
Representative Byron Rushing  
Mark Merante, Esq. - Mintz, Levin

ALSO SUPPORTING RESTORATION OF THE PARK

South End Historical Society  
Senate President William Bulger  
City Council President James Kelly  
David Dixon - Goody, Clancy & Associates  
Ken Kruckemeyer - MIT  
James Cullian - Graham Gund Architects  
George Arnold - Rothman, Rothman & Heineman  
Peter Antell, Esq. - Antell & Associates  
Martha Byington  
*Congressman Joseph Kennedy*  
*Wolk Boston - Ann Hershfang*  
*South End - Betsy Johnson*  
*So. End/Lower Roxbury Open Space Land Trust - Betsy Johnson*

Fraternity Comm

7/13/98

Sign-In

Sheela Chennets

CSNA

536-3287

Leslie Washington

CSNAH Co President

266-9786

ANDY SUMANADASA - GREENMAN - PEDERSEN, INC (508)481

7200

Carl McKenzie - BOSTON TRANSPORTATION DEPT. 635-4758

Pete Szynt

BPOD

Ken Kruckemeyer

12 Holyoke St.

267-2110

BUB BARNER

463 MASS AVE

262-8142

John Affuso

677 MASS AVE #3

445 0662

DAN DE SANTIS

677 MASS AVE #1

541-0136

Paul Bacigalupo

681 MASS AVE #2

445-9391

Albert Hamilton

463 MASS AVE #5

266-1781

WYNNE WALSTON

555 MASS AVE

262-6883

Irvin & Carolyn Dallas

477 MASS AVE #1

266-7563

Tom & Bill Walsh/Ramus 497 MASS AVE #3

262-1774

Nich Katz

South End NEX

266-6670

Mark & Agatha McEachern

459 MASS AVE #5

424-5594

Kathy Grant

534 MASS AVE #6

262-8569

Allen Weiner

537 MASS AVE.

267-6296

KIC4 BARR #3 } 465 MASS AVE  
JEFF KRUSKALL #4 }  
JIM WEST #2 }

DIANA IAGULLI 463 Mass #2  
Joseph Barr formerly 400 Mass. Ave.

Rick Bourré 20 E Springfield St.

Pollyanne Melton Boston Parks + Rec.

EDRIS CAKE 38 ~~WAWK~~ BOSTON 02120  
Liz Kowalczyk 547 Mass Ave, Boston -

Jamie Simpson 1 Fairfield Street, Boston, MA 02116

and restore Chester Square seems visionary. In fact, it represents one way design can help

# To heal a CITY



# G

By Robert Campbell  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

ood urban design: It not only makes cities more livable and more beautiful. It can also solve social problems.

A case in point is Chester Square in the South End.

Today Chester Square is nothing but a wide place in Massachusetts Avenue. But once it was, very possibly, the most beautiful piece of open space in Boston. The city brutalized it in 1952, when it shoved four lanes of traffic through the middle.

Now, a group of neighbors is trying to put it back together. They want to drop Mass. Ave. into a tunnel under Chester Square so they can reweave the green carpet of park above.

They see the restoration of Chester Square as an act of healing — healing not just a park, but a society. Mass. Ave. is the barrier that divides the South End from Roxbury. Chester Square, its advocates believe, can be the green knot that ties those two worlds back together.

The idea seemed like a fantasy at first. But some very credible architects and urban designers have been getting involved lately, and they're taking the possibility quite seriously.

The advocates have talked to Mayor Menino and other leaders and to the city's engineers. Last week, for the first time, they argued their case to the Boston Redevelopment Authority. So far, nobody in city government is saying no. As a matter of fact, when the city's planners and en-

SQUARE, Page 55

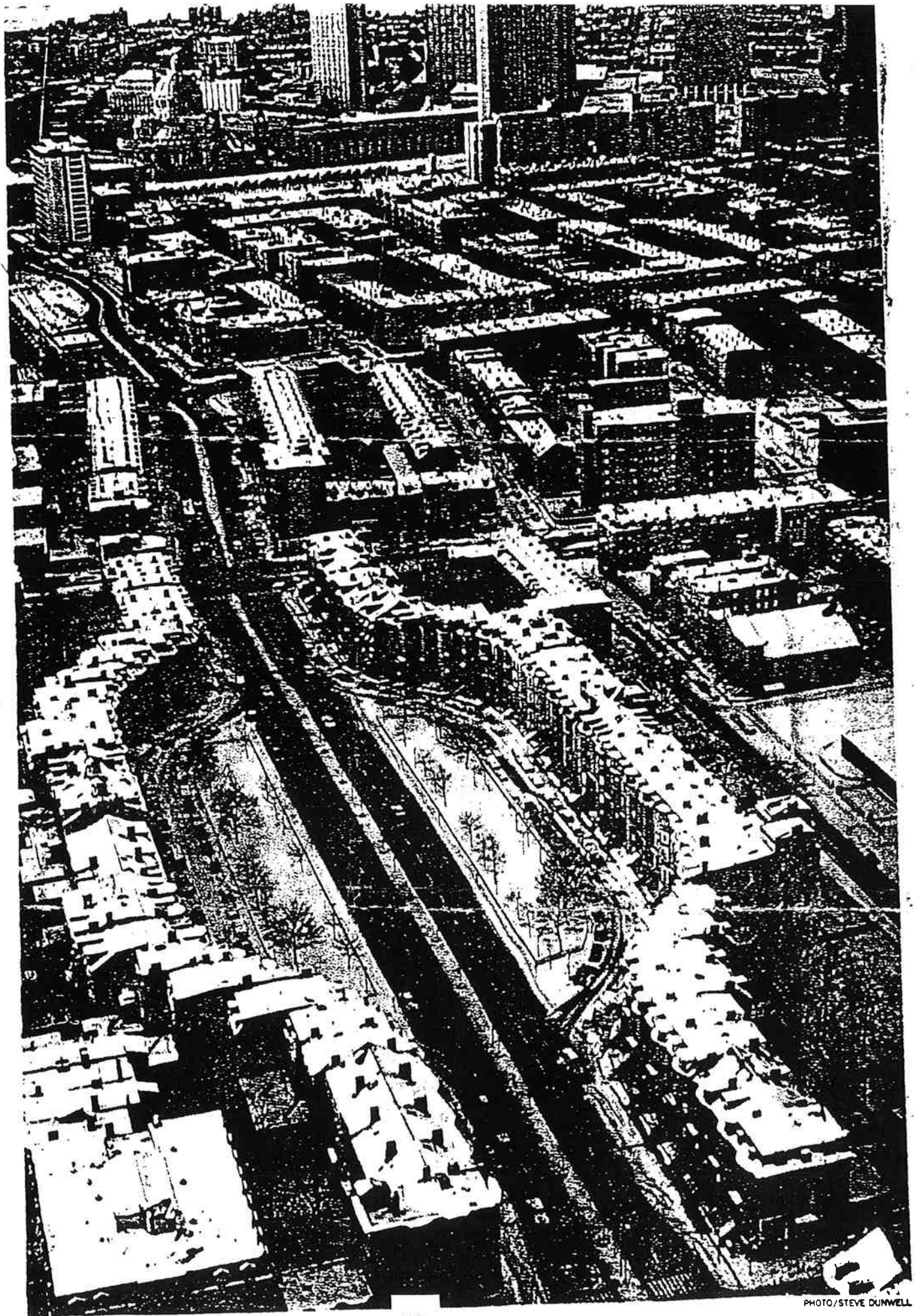


PHOTO / COURTESY OF SPNEA!

Young Bostonians enjoy Chester Square in the 19th century.

# ARTS ETC.

THE BOSTON SUNDAY GLOBE • FEBRUARY 5, 1995



2

engineers talk about Chester Square and its park, they sometimes sound more like Greenpeace advocates than hardhats.

A decision by the city on whether to pursue the idea is expected in the next couple of months.

In its heyday, Chester Square must have put Beacon Hill's Louisburg Square in the shade. Maps and photos reveal a sensationally beautiful oval of greensward, cupped between two long crescents of bow-fronted townhouses. It was created in the 1850s, when Bostonians were helplessly in love with the idea of being English. They made Chester Square into an emerald of grass and trees, with a fountain in the middle and a handsome iron fence all around. This was a place for nannies and prams and little Alice-in-Wonderland girls in frocks. A stage set for besotted Anglophiles, it was just like Bloomsbury or Bath.

The Anglophiles are long gone, which is probably a relief to everybody, but so is the Square, which is a tragedy. Since 1952 Chester Square has been nothing but a pair of drab strips beside a traffic artery. One pathetic swing set is the only amenity. There isn't even a bench. Lame-brained planners of another era turned a community park into a traffic sewer.

Any movement needs a spearhead - a nag, if you will - and in the case of Chester Square, it's Sheila Cheimets. Cheimets lives in the square and works as a private consultant on municipal issues. She's gathered the team of citizens and architects who have been meeting, sketching and talking to elected officials and city planners to figure out the future of Chester Square.

"Mass. Avenue is like the Grand Canyon," Cheimets says. "You can't get the kids on one side to meet the kids on the other side. That's the main issue: to tie Roxbury back into the city. We should think of Massachusetts Avenue not just as a traffic route, but as a wonderful boulevard, peacefully integrating all the different parts of the city - the Back Bay, the Symphony, the Mother Church, Roxbury, the South End, the city hospital: a living textbook of diversity."

State Rep. Byron Rushing (D-South End), who lives a couple of blocks away, is another fan. "Chester Square was scarred because of the combination of arrogant planning and disenfranchised men, women and children," he says. "I think the proposal is a wonderful thing. If we can undo this scar, it could become a memorial to the undoing of mistakes. I think it's worth spending the money to come up with a design."

Cheimets' dream would be just that, a dream, if it weren't for some outside forces that are converging to make it at least a possibility. Unlike the case in 1952, the South End today - including all of Chester Square - is a historic landmark that is recognized and protected by the city and by the National Register of Historic Places in Washington. And there's a major city effort under way, announced last August, to redesign and rebuild Mass. Ave. from Southamptton Street at Fort Point Channel all the way to the Charles River.

That rebuilding is what offers the chance for change.

Mass. Ave. is a crucial link in Boston's traffic network because for many drivers it's a back door to the Southeast Expressway. So when you talk to the officials and engineers who are working on the Mass. Ave. redesign, you expect to hear a crunch of numbers about vehicle counts. Not so. Frank Tramontozzi, Boston's commissioner of transportation, starts an interview by emphasizing: "We're not trying to speed it up."

"We're doing a complete reconstruction," Tramontozzi continues. "From back of sidewalk to back of sidewalk. We'll do better traffic management and better signalization. But we'll also do beautification, pedestrian qualities, bicycles, street trees, brick paving where it's appropriate, better bus stops."

If Tramontozzi is careful to respect the concerns of the park advocates, the latter are equally careful to talk about the requirements of traffic.

David Dixon, for example, is a South End resident who's also a respected urban designer. He thinks Chester Square can be a model for a new kind of city, one that will strike a better balance between cars and neighborhoods.

"Mass. Avenue was cut through the park in an era when we were discouraged about cities, when we thought we needed to pump up the infrastructure - the roads, in other words," says Dixon. "Today Boston's still in desperate competition for business, with other cities and with the suburbs, so it still needs to supply that infrastructure. But it also competes just because it's such a special place to live. So we need to create a city that is as livable as possible, but still has high infrastructure."

"At this point, depressing the street is looked on by the city as unbelievably complex and difficult. But I think if you just begin with the assumption that it's potentially achievable, you can get a favorable hearing. I think it's a wonderful idea, and compared to a lot of things that are actually being done, it's fairly modest."

"The city is the one place in America today that mixes different kinds of people together. If we can't make it work here, we are in deep trouble," says Dixon.

Jim Cullian is another South Ender. He's an architect with Graham Gund Associates in Cambridge, where he recently led the design team for a new ticket kiosk in Copley Square.

"I'm passionate about the fact that the South End is what society could become, where many kinds of people live in a social process that's really working," says Cullian. "We have to find out what the city can live with. What everybody has in common is that they'd like less traffic in the community."

Unfortunately, there are some potentially daunting technical problems in the tunnel proposal. Water tables and underground utilities might be a problem, and there are questions about whether there's room enough for proper slopes and headways and passage for fire trucks.

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In its heyday, Chester Square was a beautiful oval of greensward, cupped between two long crescents of bow-fronted townhouses, with a fountain in the middle and a handsome iron fence.

---

## A plan to restore Chester Square's glory days

Ken Kruckemeyer is an architect, a South Ender and a former MBTA official who now teaches transportation planning to engineers at MIT. He's looked closely at the site and thinks the nitty-gritty issues are solvable. "It's tight, but I believe all these dimensional issues can be worked out," he says.

Peter Scarpignagto, on the other hand, who's an engineer with the city, sounds as if he'd like to be a believer but isn't convinced.

"The way we figure it, it looks like you'd be basically going 10 or 15 feet into the living rooms of the townhouses at each end," says Scarpignagto. "But we're keeping an open mind. The neighbors have some qualified people. If we've missed something, if they can convince us, we'll listen."

Scarpignagto is the engineer not only for Chester Square, but for the whole rebuilding of Mass. Ave. Like Tramontozzi, he talks like an environmentalist's dream of an engineer of the future. "One of our goals is really to make this a pedestrian-friendly street," he says. "Not to have the auto take over from the urban design. We want to create special places along Mass. Avenue - at Symphony Hall and the Christian Science Center, and at the bridge next to Tower Records."

A force beneath the surface is helping drive all these people and ideas. That force is Ice Tea, or the ISTEA, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act

passed by Congress in 1991 but only now having an impact. The rebuilding of Mass. Ave., it's expected, will be 80 percent federally funded by Ice Tea. Only 20 percent will be state money, with the city picking up the tab for the design work. Ice Tea is intended to encourage exactly the kind of humane balance between cars and other means of travel - including the human foot - that the park advocates are hoping for.

"Ice Tea sounds as if it had been written for the South End," says Justine Liff of Boston's Department of Parks and Recreation. "There's a lot of language in there about pedestrian and bicycle paths, about historic preservation, about protecting scenic qualities."

Chester Square isn't the only place where Massachusetts Avenue is being rethought. Across the river in Cambridge, there's another plan to narrow Mass. Ave., this time between Central Square and the Charles River. Roger Boothe, the Cambridge planning director, sounds a lot like the Chester Square people.

"We're stuck with Mass. Avenue as a major corridor, but we're looking for opportunities to improve the lot of bicycles and pedestrians," says Boothe. "We expect to narrow it by two traffic lanes and widen the sidewalks so they can handle things like more cafes and two new rows of trees. We'll also create new bicycle lanes on both sides."

Back at Chester Square, a side issue is the simple question of real estate value. Chester Square was created by commercial developers not out of love, but in order to increase the value of the houses. While Boston trashed Chester Square, it spent \$500,000, says Sheila Cheimets, to fix up Union Square Park at the other end of the South End. A check of realtors suggests that a house on Union Square today sells for around \$300,000, more than double the value of a similar house on Chester Square. The difference is partly location, but it's partly amenity. "Sure, the park would help," says one real estate agent. "They're lovely homes, with great detail inside. Some of them are very grand, bigger than Union Park."

All good causes start out looking like lost causes. It's always just a few people meeting in someone's living room, or the parish hall of a church, drinking cold coffee out of styrofoam cups, looking lost and feeling helpless. But groups like that are powerful. In recent decades, for better or worse, they drove the Kennedy Library out of Harvard Square, killed the vast 40-story Park Plaza project on the Public Garden and stopped major highway projects.

Now another group is meeting in another living room. Something will probably happen.

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