

PROBLEMS OF VACANT LAND IN THE IN-TOWN AREA

by

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B.A. Dartmouth College, 1942

Submitted in partial
fulfillment of the
requirements for the
degree of Master in
City Planning.

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June, 1949



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Graduate House, M.I.T.
Cambridge 39, Massachusetts
June, 1949.

Professor Frederick J. Adams
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Dear Professor Adams:

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for a
Master in City Planning Degree I submit this thesis entitled,
"Problems of Vacant Land in the In-Town Area".

Very truly yours,

Robert G. Emerson

Acknowledgement:

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere appreciation for the valuable assistance received from the Department of City Planning, and from the tax assessor's office and the City Planning Board in the city of Boston. Without such cooperation this thesis would not have been possible.

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The objective of this investigation is to determine the amount, distribution, and character of vacant land in a specific in-town area; second, to determine as closely as possible the effects that vacant land may have on the social and economic welfare of the community; third, to determine the causes of vacant land; fourth, to propose suitable uses for vacant land; and fifth, to propose a method of approach by which vacant land can be put to use.

For the sake of convenience, the term vacant land as used in this report will be the same as that used by the tax assessor in the city of Boston. According to that office, vacant land is any land that has no permanent improvement on it. This definition does not include lots with derelict foundations, parks and playgrounds, cemeteries, golf courses, institutional grounds, commercial gardens, and land used for the sale of automotive vehicles. Parking lots and billboard lots are considered to be vacant.

The in-town area was chosen for study because it represents a part of the urban pattern that is almost completely developed and has an established physical pattern that is difficult to change. It is the area in which our urban problems are most serious and numerous, and is one in which there is a great need for replanning and rebuilding. The presence of vacant land here indicates that not all the land is being used, and suggests the possibility that such land

might be useful for the rebuilding of urban areas.

The choice of a community for a study area was made arbitrarily; guided solely by the factors of proximity, accessibility, and the availability of information. The Brighton section of Boston was chosen because it satisfied these factors of convenience and could be considered an in-town area because of its high degree of development, its proximity to downtown Boston, and its central location with relation to the Boston Metropolitan Region.

A variety of techniques were used to gather the data that is presented in this report. The basic survey was accomplished by recording vacant parcels from the 1947 tax assessor's books, and delineating the parcels on a map with the aid of the Sanborn Atlas and a field survey. The data was then analyzed by elementary statistical procedures in order to determine the amount and distribution of vacant parcels. Past data was also used for comparisons in order to determine how long some of the parcels have been vacant. The more general information was obtained from the literature, frequent contact with the various municipal departments, and personal interviews with interested groups and persons. The program for the use of the vacant land is based upon an assumed master plan for Brighton which was prepared for an earlier study.

DESCRIPTION OF BRIGHTON

One of the striking features of the map of the city of Boston is the large, practically unrelated area to the west. At first glance this section appears to be completely separated from the city-but upon closer inspection a connection not unlike a "panhandle" is noticed, joining it to the city proper. This seemingly disinterested section of Boston is known as Brighton. It was one of the last additions to Boston (annexed in 1874) and is one of the newest districts of the city. It's topography ranges from the flat, low lying northern parts to the hilly section to the west where elevations of 200 feet above sea level are to be found.

Brighton is essentially a dormitory community for the middle class "white collared" group that earns its living in the downtown parts of Boston. The area is divided both socially and geographically into two sections by a railroad and an industrial area which parallels it. The southern section, comprising about two thirds of the area and most of the "white collared" population, is identified as an apartment house district with relatively high densities. The northern part is a relatively old and poor semi-blighted district of wooden tenements which house the workers of the nearby industries. Most of the dwelling structures were built between 1900-1930- however 24% were built before 1900 and are located for the most part in the northern section. 40% of the residential structures are of the two family flat type, 30% are of the single family type; and 78% are of wooden construction. There are no

areas of "fine homes"- and neither are there any serious slum areas. The overall population density in Brighton is 100 persons net residential acre.

Brighton is essentially a residential community -with an economic dependence upon Boston proper and the surrounding metropolitan region. The industrial activity which exists there serves both Boston and the region and cannot be considered as vital to the community itself.

The population of Brighton was 63,367 in 1940 -representing a 12% net gain for the period 1930-1940 as compared to a 34% net gain for the period 1920-1930. The rate of population increase has been steadily decreasing -with most of the increase taking place in the western sections. The northern section has been actually losing population since 1930. The total population of Boston in the same period has been steadily declining. Brighton has a potential population of 76,000 (based on the amount of land now available for residential use at current densities) and it has been estimated that this figure will be reached by the period 1960-1970.

The land use pattern is best described by the accompanying map. Most of the land is in residential use, however there are well defined commercial and industrial areas. The business and commercial centers are of a local service nature except for the automobile sales and service center along Commonwealth and Brighton Avenues. A large part of the industrial area is occupied by the B&A R. R. yards, the stockyards and slaughter house, and numerous warehouses. The semi-public uses which occupy much

of Brighton's area belong to institutions--such as Harvard University and the Catholic Church. The greenbelt on the northern border is the Charles River Reservation.

The zoning ordinance and map indicate the common characteristics of both strip-zoning and overzoning for business. There is no single family residence area, however there is a general residence zone that is divided into various height zones. The industrial zone coincides largely with existing industrial uses.

The circulation pattern in Brighton is divided into two parts: (1) local traffic, and (2) through traffic. The local traffic is largely related to the local commercial and industrial activity, whereas the through traffic is related to that which generates outside the area and passes through Brighton on its way to and from downtown Boston. The main traffic arteries cut across the area in an E-W direction and siphon off the local traffic from the minor streets. Trucking activity is handled primarily in the northern section along Western Ave. and N. Beacon St., and is largely composed of trucks going to and from the industrial and commercial areas north of Boston.

Brighton is fortunate in being reasonably well served by public transportation. No part of it is more than 1/4 mile from the extensive network of bus and street car which serve the area.

Brighton is well supplied with community facilities, however they are not often located where they are most needed. Both schools and playgrounds are poorly located with relation to the using population, and in some cases a differential in

the intensity of use is to be found at the various facilities. A recent playground report of the Boston City Planning Board indicates that 25% of the total child population is not served by the existing outdoor recreational facilities. Most of these children live in four major areas: (1) north of Oak Sq., (2) west of Washington St., (3) south of Commonwealth Ave., and (4) in the eastern section -near the commercial and industrial areas.

The excellent cultural and advanced educational facilities of the metropolitan region make it unnecessary for Brighton to develop any of its own. Local branches of social and religious groups, as well as two settlement houses, are active in children programs, especially during the summer months.

The water and sewage systems of the M.D.C. meet the needs of the area. The low lying land in the northern section has made installation of the facilities difficult in some cases. A small percentage of the streets remain unpaved, and there are a few "paper" streets; most of these are to be found in the northern and western sections.

DESCRIPTION OF VACANT LAND IN BRIGHTON

Amount

The amount of vacant land in Brighton was obtained from the tax assessor's books for 1947. It was simply a matter of recording those properties that are classified as vacant land and have a total assessed valuation equal to that of the assessed valuation for the land. It was found that there were 1274 parcels of vacant land in Brighton with a total area of 300 acres and a total assessed valuation of \$2,378,800. This is all taxable land except for the III parcels owned by the city of Boston through the foreclosure of tax titles and several parcels owned by the Boston Park Department and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This vacant land represents 12.5% of the total land area in Brighton and 5.5% of the total assessed valuation of the land. (Total refers to the sum of taxable and tax-exempt properties.) It was not possible to obtain comparable information for Boston, however it was determined that there are approximately 8000 parcels of vacant land in the entire city. Brighton has 16% of this total.

DISTRIBUTION

The parcels of vacant land are widely scattered throughout the entire area in a random manner, and it seems almost impossible to distinguish any definite pattern of distribution. However a closer inspection of the map will bring to light the fact that these parcels are mostly concentrated in groups or clusters, which in turn are scattered throughout the area. In most cases these concentrations are composed of numerous vacant

parcels, located either adjacent to each other within the same block, or within an immediate area of several blocks. Few parts of Brighton are without such concentrations and these parts are usually to be found in the oldest and most extensively developed sections of the community

Several large concentrations stand out on the map, the largest of which is located along the river at the eastern border. This property belongs to Harvard University and consists of large holdings adjacent to each other. Another large concentration is to be found in the extreme northwest corner of Brighton, north of Oak Sq., and consists of a large number of small parcels under different ownership. The others represent large holdings along Kenrick Rd. near the Newton line; along Commonwealth Ave. between Washington and Warren Sts.; along N. Beacon St. near Market; along the railroad in the industrial district; and north of Lincoln St. along Waverly St. It is in these concentrations that the largest percentage of vacant land is to be found.

The distribution of the parcels with reference to the various land uses was obtained by correlating the areal distribution with the zoning map for Boston. It was found that 843 parcels were in the general residence zone -representing 65% of the total number of parcels, 67% of the area, and 46% of the total valuation.

	<u>No. parcels</u>	<u>%parcels</u>	<u>%area</u>	<u>%valuation</u>
residential	843	66	67	46
commercial	174	14	12	20
industrial	257	20	21	34
	1274	100.0	100.0	100.0

The predominance of vacant parcels in the residential zones is to be expected in view of the fact that Brighton is a residential community. A comparison of the assessed valuations of the parcels in the different use classifications shows the relatively low value of the residential land, which probably is the result of the location and character of such parcels and the higher speculative values attached to commercial and industrial properties.

The distribution of vacant parcels is largely influenced by topographical features. The northern section is characterized by flat, low lying land, and large parcels of vacant land. The southern section is characterized by hills and small parcels- and concentrations of vacant land on hillsides and rock ledges.

Character

In order to adequately describe the character of the vacant land in Brighton it would be necessary to give close attention to each parcel-since each parcel has its individual characteristics. However this would be both impossible and impractical, and for the purpose of this report I believe "blanket"

descriptions of the character of the land will be sufficient and will best suit my purpose.

Topography

The character of the lots may be described in terms of topography, size, shape, location, and condition. Topography seems to be a very important factor in determining whether or not land will be used, especially in the hilly sections where ridges, hillsides, and rock ledges are to be found. Such areas inhibit development because of the difficulties of construction and the provision of adequate service from existing utilities. The vacant parcels in the northern section are characterized by flat low lying land, which is marshy in those parts nearest the river. In some cases it is difficult to dig substantial foundations and to provide the necessary utilities.

Size

Size is another important characteristic of vacant parcels and has a considerable influence on the manner in which the land is to be used. There are many different sizes of vacant parcels in Brighton - however the largest number of them are below 5000 sq. ft. in area. The following chart illustrates the distribution of vacant parcels by size:

	below 5000 s.f.	5000- 9999 s.f.	10,000- 19,999 s.f.	20,000 s.f.
No.	816	282	79	97
%	64	22	6	8

The size of the parcels is influenced by topography and is best illustrated by the distribution of smaller parcels in the southern section and larger parcels in the northern section. The original subdivider and the character of the development also influence the size of the lots.

Shape

The shape of a parcel is also influenced by topographical conditions, and most of the vacant parcels in Brighton are regular in shape except where topography dictates otherwise. Public improvements, such as new streets, street widenings and extensions, may also carve lots up into irregular shapes.

Physical Appearance

Physical appearances are frequently an important characteristic of vacant land and exert a strong influence on the opinions of future buyers and developers. Residential land is more affected by appearances than is land in the industrial and commercial areas. It is much easier to sell a lot that is well maintained than one that looks like an adjunct to the city dump.

Improvements

The character of vacant land is also determined by the presence of improvements in the form of streets, sidewalks, water and sewage facilities, and adequate grading. Improved land is more desirable than unimproved land and is therefore more salable. Brighton has few areas that have not already been subdivided and improved to a considerable extent.

Location

The location of a vacant parcel plays a large part in determining both how the parcel is to be used and whether or not it will be developed. A vacant lot may either have a good or a bad location, depending upon the purpose for which it is to be used, and different criteria must be established for each type of land use before it can finally be determined that the parcel in question has either a good or a bad location. The fact that a parcel has a good location for a particular use does not necessarily mean that it will immediately be brought into that use, because its location is interrelated with so many different factors, such as the previously mentioned characteristics of vacant parcels, the relationship of the parcel to the surrounding neighborhood, and the all-important factor of demand. Many of the vacant lots in Brighton have good locations for residential or industrial uses, but have remained vacant because there is no immediate demand for those uses at those particular locations.

Ownership

The vacant land in Brighton is held in three different types of ownership; namely, private, semi-public, and public. Vacant land in private ownership represents 71% of the total area and 75% of the assessed valuation. Such parcels are distributed among residential, commercial, and industrial uses. Semi-public ownership represents 15% of the total vacant area

and 7.7% of its assessed valuation. Parcels in this category are distributed between religious and educational institutions - with Harvard University holding most of the area. Vacant land in public ownership amounts to 14% of the total vacant area and 17.3% of its assessed valuation and is shared by both the city of Boston and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The land owned by the city is held by the Real Estate Board and the Park Department. The city held 111 parcels of vacant land in Brighton by foreclosure in 1947 - amounting to 3.7% of the total vacant area and 3.4% of its assessed valuation. Extensive holdings of this type are found in the northwestern corner of Brighton and in the section north of the railroad. The largest part of the land held by the Park Department is in the Chandler Pond area and is scheduled for future improvements.

OWNERSHIP OF VACANT LAND

	Private	Semi-public	Public	Total
% area	71	15	14	100
% valuation	75	7.7	17.3	100

Current uses of vacant land

Although the term vacant implies a lack of structure or structures on the land, it does not necessarily mean that the land is not being used for some purposes. In many cases, such land is being used for parking, especially near the commercial

and industrial areas. At present there is a movement on the part of the local real estate dealers to purchase vacant land that can be used for parking. There are several large lots near Brave's Field which have been used for parking for a long period of time. These lots have been vacant for more than thirty years, and are now earning an income despite their vacancy. Several vacant lots are used for the location of billboards and for small gardens in residential areas. However the majority of vacant parcels are not producing any income for their owners and are being used as improvised playlots, refuse collectors, storage yards, and junk yards.

Assessed valuations

The assessed valuation of most of the vacant land on a square foot basis is exceptionally low, and varies with the above mentioned characteristics. Parcels in areas of irregular topography are generally assessed at less than 10 cents/sq. ft. Parcels in the residential areas that have the potential for development range from 10-20 cents/sq. ft. Parcels in commercial areas range from 15-30 cents/sq. ft., however there are several parcels which go as high as 40 cents/sq. ft. Parcels in the industrial area vary from less than 10 cents/ sq. ft. in the northern section to 25-50 cents/ sq. ft. in the main section along the railroad. Parcels devoted to parking vary from 25-50 cents/sq. ft. - except for the large parcels near Braves which range from 50 cents - 1.00 dollar and 50 cents/sq. ft.

EFFECTS OF VACANT LAND ON THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL WELFARE

Up until now, this report has been concerned with a description of the amount, distribution, and character of vacant land in Brighton. I would now like to discuss some of the effects which the condition of vacancy may have on the general social and economic welfare of the community. Such an undertaking is made difficult by the lack of available information and the complex nature of the subject. Effects are usually of a variable and indirect nature, and are therefore difficult to isolate and measure. In order to clearly understand the effect of vacant land each parcel must be first studied individually, and then related to the other vacant parcels. It is the interaction of many different vacant parcels which produces the total effect- and to isolate any one effect as a clear-cut example is both impossible and impractical. It seems to me that the best manner of discussing the effects of vacant land would be to describe in general terms those effects which can be readily determined- and at the same time use specific examples whenever possible.

Perhaps at this point it would be best to describe a hypothetical area in order to see how vacant land affects the economical welfare. For our purpose let us assume a definite part of an in-town area to have certain amount of vacant land distributed among the various types of land uses, topographic conditions, size, shape and locations. This land is not improved by structures and is essentially frozen from use.

Assuming an adequate supply of municipal services, the land has the potential for future improvements which would later result in increased revenue for the city. But because of its vacant state, the city is failing to realize its potential income. The land, although it is paying taxes, does not begin to pay its share of the utilities and improvements which serve the area. The inefficient use of these services restricts the tax base and places the burden upon the owners of the improved properties. In some cases parcels have a blighting effect on the surrounding property values, reducing both the resale value of the property and the chances for use of the vacant property. This may also depend upon the condition of the vacant land itself. Poorly maintained vacant land proves difficult to sell, whereas land that is well kept may prove very attractive. So much depends upon the character of the local environment and prevailing conditions that it is difficult to isolate these blighting effects. In cases where tax delinquent land has been taken over by the city by process of foreclosure, we find a further shrinking of the tax base. Sometimes such land is returned to private use, but in most cases it is held by the city for lack of buyers. Foreclosed property usually reflects land which hasn't been put to a profitable use and whose owner has given up paying taxes on it.

Land which has been vacant for a long time and is still paying taxes represents a burden on the taxpayer, since the property is usually not producing an income. The owner may want to keep it for personal reasons or else is holding for the right

moment to make a profit.

The effects of vacancy on the social welfare of the community are even more intangible than are those of an economical nature. The effects of any physical condition upon the well being of society are difficult to measure because of the interrelationship of many different social, economic, and psychological factors. An accurate analysis of these effects would require much more time and study than has been allotted to this report.

The presence of vacant land may have both a good and bad effect upon the local environment - depending largely upon its physical condition and location. The northern section of Brighton best illustrates the bad effects of vacant land, for it is here that we find parcels that are poorly maintained and used for storage, trash collectors, and unsupervised playlots. The lots for the most parts are unattractive and provide excellent harborage for rats, and may be considered as hazards to health and safety. They increase the unattractiveness of an already shabby area. Most of the vacant parcels have been in such a state for thirty years or more, and it doesn't seem likely that they will suddenly be brought into use until the area is improved by the processes of redevelopment and rehabilitation.

The southern and western sections offer examples of the good effects of vacant land upon the surrounding neighborhood.

A large percentage of the vacant land in these sections is characterized by irregular topography, and is not suitable for development. These sections are fairly well developed and the parcels seem to provide some measure of open space in an area of already high densities. Although this open space is not usable in most cases, it does relieve the monotony of a solid row of houses and creates a more pleasant environment.

SUMMARY OF EFFECTS

1. The municipal government fails to realize the increase in revenue which improvements on unused land would create.
2. The cost of governmental services and administration is increased by the inefficient use of utilities and public improvements, and the burden of higher taxes falls upon the owners of the existing improved properties.
3. The security of property values in areas that contain unsightly and ill-kept parcels of vacant land is reduced by their presence.
4. The tax base is reduced by the foreclosures of tax delinquent land.
5. Vacant land may have a blighting effect upon the local environment if it is poorly maintained - and may in some cases prove to be harmful to the health and safety of the adjacent population.
6. Vacant land may have the good effect of providing open space in highly developed residential areas.

CAUSES OF VACANT LAND

The factors which cause land to be vacant are as varied as the number of vacant parcels in a given area - with each parcel having its own reason or reasons for being vacant. Such factors vary between different cities, different neighborhoods, and between different types of vacant land within the same neighborhood. Brighton is no exception, and follows the same pattern. Since it would be impossible to make a detailed study of each of the 1274 vacant parcels in Brighton I would like to present briefly some of the major causes which seem to be related to the greatest number of parcels.

Topography

One of the most important factors causing land to be vacant in Brighton is that of topography. Numerous lots are to be found on the rock ledges and irregular terrain of the southern and western sections, and on the flat, low lying areas in the northern sections. Such parcels are either not suitable for any development whatsoever, or else the impracticalities and difficulties of improving them inhibit their development so long as suitable land for the possible uses can be found elsewhere.

Neighborhood influences

The character of the neighborhood in which the vacant parcels are located exerts a strong influence on the duration of the vacancy. This is well illustrated in the northern section of Brighton. This is one of the oldest parts of Brighton, and has long been associated with the railroad yards,

the slaughter house, the stockyards, and the residence of those who work there. It is an area characterized by a mixture of residential, commercial, and industrial activities, and a complete lack of sound land planning. The area itself is run-down and is in need of a general overhauling. 29% of the total number of vacant parcels are found in the four areas designated by the Boston City Planning Board as in need of strong measures to check the spread of blight. (This figure does not include land outside residential areas.) This section is unattractive for residence, and as a result, there has been no demand for such developments here - even though there is a considerable amount of vacant land suitable for residence distributed throughout the area.

The intensity of development may also influence the vacancy of land, especially in the well developed residential areas. Occasionally we find a scattered vacant parcel in the midst of a row of houses. The lot isn't large enough to allow a house to be built according to modern standards of light, air, and open space, and there is apparently no demand for the construction of houses similar in character to the existing ones; namely, two and three deckers.

The racial and economic status of a neighborhood also influences its character. Such a situation may be found in the northern section where we find a large foreign population of rather low economic status. The area is currently experiencing an invasion of Negroes which no doubt will have a profound influence on the social structure of the area. This does not

necessarily mean that these features give the area its bad character, but there are many people who consider them to be a detriment and would refuse to live there under those circumstances.

High Taxes

The high taxes in the city of Boston may be considered a factor in forcing people out of the city into areas where they can find better living conditions at lower costs. The tax rate in Boston has been rising steadily until now is one the highest of any large city in the country. Such a rate has a deterring effect on the demand for residential land within the city limits. People are beginning to balk at paying these high taxes and are moving out of the city in order to find relief - thus reducing the demand for existing vacant land.

Will of the owner

The will of the owner of vacant land has considerable influence on the duration of the vacancy. Frequently the land is held for speculative reasons, and the owner prefers to hold his land and pay taxes until the opportune moment arrives and enables him to make his desired profit. Such activity is generally characteristic of the commercial and industrial areas, especially near the automobile sales section and the larger tracts in the main industrial sections. Some owners desire to keep the family land intact and use the excess area for lawns and gardens. Examples of this may be found in the western section where some large homes with extensive grounds are still in existence.

Availability of land

Many communities surrounding Boston offer more attractive and socially desirable residential areas (and in some cases more attractive commercial and industrial locations) than can be found in Boston. Land costs are sometimes less than in Brighton, and in all cases taxes are much lower. Such features as these induce many persons to leave the city and settle in these areas rather than in Boston itself.

Excess subdivisions do not play a large part in the vacant land picture of Brighton. There are, however, several areas where such activity has taken place; namely, in the northwest area, to the north of Oak Sq., and in the northern section near the large storage yards of the American Building and Wrecking Co. In the first case, numerous small lots were subdivided on the side of a steep hill, and in the latter, numerous small lots were platted in an area unsuited for residential development. Such parcels have remained vacant for a period of thirty years or more and there is little chance for their being used unless replatting or redevelopment takes place.

Demand

The factor of demand is closely interrelated with the above mentioned causes of vacancy and is subject to the unpredictable choices of the consumer. If there is no demand for land, the land will remain vacant until a demand for it arises. Demand for land varies among the different land uses and is subject to many variable factors; such as changes in

population, income, fashion, general economic conditions, social and political conditions.

Municipal policies

Municipal policies and controls have considerable influence on the use of land, and generally it is not so much the restriction itself, but the lack of its enforcement, that is responsible for faulty land use patterns and deteriorated neighborhoods. Since most of Brighton's development took place in the early 1900's before the enactment of the present zoning ordinance (1924) it is not possible to blame the city for failing to enforce such regulations. However the very lack of such a control has given rise to mis-used land in all parts of the city - and Brighton is no exception. The lack of effective subdivision control and the loose enforcement of the building code have given rise to poorly designed and constructed developments which are partly responsible for the blighting effects found in certain areas. The very fact that the city of Boston has no basic land policy and no comprehensive general plan for the development of its land is well substantiated by the current problems of general physical disorganization.

It must also be added that controls and restrictions that are too rigidly enforced and are inflexible may have the adverse effect of discouraging any development whatsoever. Examples of this may be found in areas that are over-zoned for a use which there is no present or future demand.

From the above we see that the factors which cause land to be vacant are numerous, and that they are interrelated to such

an extent that it is almost impossible to isolate any one and say that it is the only cause. The vacancy of each parcel is usually the result of the interaction of many different causes, and each parcel must be studied intensively, both by itself and in relation to its surrounding area.

SUMMARY OF THE FACTORS WHICH CAUSE VACANCY

1. Topographical conditions: irregular terrain; rock ledges; marshy areas.
2. Neighborhood Characteristics: blighting and semi-blighting influences; high development of outdated residential structures; neighborhood population characteristics.
3. Will of the owner: speculation; desire to keep the land in the family.
4. Municipal policy: lack of zoning regulations in the past; lack of proper enforcement and administration of present zoning; lack of effective subdivision control; lack of enforcement of building codes; lack of a basic land policy; lack of a comprehensive plan of development.
5. High Taxes
6. Availability of more desirable land beyond the city limits.

USE PLANNING FOR VACANT LAND

One of the objectives of this investigation is to determine uses for these vacant parcels and the means by which such uses can be effectuated. We have seen that the factors which bring about a state of vacancy are numerous and complex, and that each vacant parcel is a specific problem in itself. The same situation applies to finding uses for these parcels. Each parcel must be considered by itself, and with relation to its surroundings. Since the aim of land use planning is to establish and improve the land use pattern, any uses that are proposed must conform with the land use policy of the city. The role of vacant land in the execution of the land use plans is determined by the character of the land and the territorial limitations of these plans, and is one of considerable importance to city planners because of the potential capacity of the vacant land as an instrument for rebuilding and rehabilitating in-town areas.

"Vacant land is, however, little more than a symptom. It may indicate what type of use and what methods of exploitation have not proved successful or those which would have been preferable, but in itself hardly reveals what the possible or desirable future uses may be. To this end potential demands for each type of land use must be estimated. Social objectives and economic factors determine this demand. The scope of social objectives varies from locality to locality and may differ between urban communities. The economic factors affecting land use may be influenced by the economic needs of the local

area or the fluctuations of a world market. Thus an estimation of the demand for a certain type of use must be based upon a determination of social objectives and economic factors, and an appraisal of their interdependence. To this end land use plans are required." 1

There exists no land use plan for the city of Boston, which means that Brighton is without a master plan. Since planning for the use of vacant land is predicated upon the existence of a master plan, it has been necessary to prepare a very general master plan for Brighton. Such a plan is based upon a superficial knowledge of the area and should in no manner be construed as an authentic master plan. The circulation pattern has been largely fixed in advance by the extent to which the area is already fully developed, and any alterations in the circulation scheme are determined by purely local considerations. The industrial area has been consolidated as much as possible along the railroad, and the offensive abbatoir has been removed from its site along the river. The existing major commercial areas remain unchanged except for certain rearrangements to create more pleasing shopping facilities. No expansion of these facilities has been made except at the local level. Since trends in population indicate little increase in the demand for additional facilities, the problem of planning becomes one of making the existing areas more habitable by providing more open space, relocating schools to better serve the population, and in general by improving the area. It is to be assumed that a

1. " A Program for the Use of Tax-abandoned Lands " American Society of Planning Officials, 1942, Chicago.

zoning ordinance and map exist to implement this plan and that the city of Boston has the necessary powers to effectuate the plan. And it must also be assumed that the plan is a desirable one and will meet the needs of the people of Brighton.

In order to determine how vacant land in the in-town area may be utilized, it might be best to first enumerate some general uses for the vacant land and then propose specific uses that can best be adapted to either individual parcels or the various concentrations or clusters. In this way we are able to first determine the possibilities at our disposal, and then to select those use that will best meet the needs of the people and can be adapted to the existing vacant parcels in Brighton.

POSSIBLE USES FOR VACANT LAND

1. Redevelopment and rehabilitation.
2. Private residential, commercial, and industrial development.
3. Off-street parking facilities - public and private.
4. Parks, playgrounds and totlots.
5. Greenbelts and wedges.
6. Public housing.
7. Sites for public buildings.
8. School sites.
9. Public works projects.
10. Accessory yards and storage yards - public and private.
11. Temporary uses - public and private.
12. The expansion of existing public facilities.

Since the selection of uses must be based upon the actual demand for such uses, it would seem expedient to present a brief review of the needs of Brighton to serve as a guide in the final determination of these uses. As has been previously mentioned, Brighton is almost completely developed and offers little opportunity for an increase in population and any large expansion of industrial and commercial activities. The principal need for land in Brighton is to improve the area and to make it a better place in which to live. The blighted and near-blighted areas need land for redevelopment and rehabilitation; the high density apartment area needs additional open space; and new sites for playgrounds, totlots and schools are needed throughout the community. Sites for public housing may be needed, as well as for the expansion and consolidation of commercial and industrial uses, the construction of new highways and parkways, and the extension of residential development into areas of lower densities. Land is needed for the expansion of existing facilities, such as schools, playgrounds, and for the provision of greenbelts and wedges within the area.

Vacant land suitable for large scale residential use is not to be found in Brighton, primarily because of the topography and the scattering of the vacant parcels. Certain hilly areas may be suitable for a carefully designed and planned development, similar in character to such developments found in the vicinity of Pittsburgh, Pa. The cost of developing such areas would almost certainly necessitate some form of multi-family housing. Three such areas exist in Brighton; (1) in the

northwest corner, behind Oak Sq.; (2) Kenrick Rd., near the Newton line; and (3) Corey Rd., near the Brookline line.

The development of some of the more suitable parcels as residence is expected to take place in those areas that are already considered to be good neighborhoods (such as may be found in the western sections of Brighton). It can also be expected that many of the vacant lots will be brought into a residential use as the surrounding neighborhood is improved by redevelopment or rehabilitation.

The consolidation of the industrial area will create a demand for such additional space as may be suited to industrial uses. Vacant lots found along the railroad and in the northeastern section along Cambridge St. and Western Ave. will be put into industrial uses. In some cases the filling-in of the land will be necessary before low-lying land can be effectively used - especially near the river.

Uses of a commercial nature are not expected to create any large demand for land, however a few local neighborhood stores may be needed in some areas. There is a need for off-street parking in the shopping districts and already some of the vacant parcels are being used for that purpose.

One of the greatest potentialities for the use of vacant land in Brighton is found in the redevelopment and rehabilitation of the blighted and near-blighted areas as designated by the Boston City Planning Board. It is fortunate that most of these areas have some vacant land that can be used for replanning and redevelopment.

The use of vacant land for large-scale public housing developments is limited by the small number of tracts of adequate size. Two large tracts have recently been acquired by the Boston Housing Authority for the development of garden apartments. One site is located on No. Beacon St., near Market St., and the other site is located along Commonwealth Ave., near Washington St. It is quite possible that public housing on a smaller scale could be provided by distributing single units or a small group of units throughout the area on some of the smaller parcels that would be suitable for such developments. Other possible sites may be found on institutional property - especially in the western section.

The relocation of school sites is in accordance with the Strayer School Report which was made for Boston in 1944, and utilizes vacant land wherever possible. The school sites are for the most part too small and inadequate for the overall demand. It is hoped that the people of Brighton will be better served by the extension of these facilities. Since the large parks, reservations and playfields are already established, the problem of providing additional open space in built-up areas becomes one of distributing platlots and green wedges throughout the area - especially in the high density apartment areas. The green wedges can be small unusable lots, scattered throughout the area. Rock ledges and steep hillsides are especially suitable for this purpose.

The Charles River Reservation is to be extended into the

the area formerly occupied by the abbatoir and will provide a greenbelt around the northern border of the community. Vacant land can also be used as a buffer strip between two conflicting land uses.

Vacant land may be used as sites for public structures and municipal activities, such as branch libraries, fire and police stations, accessory yards, and storage yards. Public works projects can also utilize vacant land for street widenings, new roads, and highways.

Temporary uses of vacant land must also be considered. Frequently the land is valuable for a future use and is not needed in the present, so it could well be put to a temporary public or private use, with suitable restrictions to prevent it becoming non-adaptable to its future use. Temporary housing could be built for the rehousing of persons displaced by a housing or redevelopment program, similar to that which is currently being built in England.

Some land is often in its best use when vacant because it serves the general welfare better by providing needed open space in areas of intense development, relieving the monotony of solid walls of buildings, and by adding to the general appearance of the neighborhood. In many cases these vacant parcels are accessory residential uses (side yards and gardens) and are too small for suitable residential development. Such parcels usually belong to one of the owners of the adjacent improved property and result from his desire to own two or more lots - one of which is to be used for residence, and the

other or others to be used as side yards and gardens. Some of these vacant parcels have been acquired for speculative reasons and are currently being used as accessory residential uses until they can be sold for development. Many of the parcels that are unsuited for development are being used as side yards. The assessed valuation of these parcels is very low (5-10 cents/sq. ft.) and it becomes expedient for an adjacent property owner to acquire these parcels in order to complement his residence with a measure of open space. Other vacant parcels are widely scattered throughout an area of multi-family residences (apartments and three deckers). Such parcels remain vacant because no demand exists for the type of construction that predominates in the area, and the surrounding area is not attractive to a different type of residential construction. Most of the parcels are too small for suitable residential development and should remain vacant.

In order better to illustrate the determination of uses for specific vacant parcels or groups of parcels, I would like to propose uses that can find general application in in-town areas and the processes necessary for their effecuation, and to supplement them with specific illustrations that are applicable to Brighton. The general uses are a detailed extension of the previously mentioned possible uses for vacant land. A detailed analysis has been made of four sections of Brighton to demonstrate the application of the proposals for specific uses. The sections are sufficiently different in character to offer

a broad range of proposed uses. They will be delineated by maps on the following pages that will show the relationship between the existing vacant parcels and the land uses that are proposed for those sections by the master plan. Each section will be illustrated by two maps; (1) a sketch plan for the future development, and (2) an overlay showing the existing vacant land. A list of proposed uses and the methods to obtain them precedes the maps. The various parcels or groups of parcels as shown on the overlay are numbered in accordance with the list of proposals to facilitate the determination of their respective uses.

Sample Areas 1 and 2 are located in the south-central part of Brighton and are residential in character. Sample Area 3 is located in the northwestern corner of Brighton. It is also residential in character and contains a large amount of undeveloped land. Sample Area 4 is located in the northern section and is characterized by a mixture of land uses and a generally run-down environment.

PROPOSED USES FOR VACANT LAND

1. Parcels to be utilized in the replanning and redevelopment of arrested areas.

It is recommended that vacant land in arrested areas (and existing structures when necessary) be acquired by a redevelopment agency for replatting and improvements, and the project area be sold or leased for private development.

A section in the extreme northwest corner of Brighton is an arrested residential area that is characterized by irregular topography, unpaved streets, a lack of utilities, and scattered residences on the periphery. It is proposed that the vacant parcels and those existing structures that are found to interfere with the effective redevelopment of the area, be acquired by the existing redevelopment agency (the local Housing Authority), replatted, graded, improved with paved streets and the necessary utilities, and sold or leased to private groups for the erection of homes.

2. Parcels to be utilized in the redevelopment of slum areas and blighted areas of mixed land uses.

It is recommended that vacant land in slum areas and blighted areas of mixed land uses be acquired by the local redevelopment agency to expedite the redevelopment plans for those areas.

An area of mixed land uses is located in the northern section of Brighton. It is a semi-blighted area characterized by a large proportion of shabby dwellings, mixed industrial and residential uses, a sizable amount of vacant land, and the presence of nearby obnoxious industries. It is recommended that the local redevelopment agency (the local Housing Authority) acquire the vacant parcels in the area prior to the relocation of the industries and the actual redevelopment proceedings. Existing residential structures that will fit into the new residential pattern need not be acquired by the agency. Public housing can be built on both the existing vacant land

and the sites created by the relocation of the industries to rehouse some of the families displaced by the destruction of old residences. It is to be expected that some of the vacant land will also be used for streets, open space and community facilities.

3. Parcels to be utilized in the rehabilitation of reconditioning of semi-blighted areas.

The rehabilitation of semi-blighted areas requires some measures of public and private assistance in order to forestall the spread of blight. It is recommended that vacant land be used for public improvements and that the city encourage the local property owners to use some of the vacant parcels for private improvements (side yards and gardens) in order to improve the neighborhood.

Some residential parts of the northern section of Brighton require rehabilitative measures to improve the local neighborhood environment. It is recommended that both the city and the local property owners cooperate in the formulation and execution of improvement plans and that the city encourage the owner to improve his property, and at the same time provide the streets, utilities and improvements necessary to raise the neighborhood to acceptable standards. Vacant parcels may be used for public improvements (street widenings, and extensions, small open spaces, and tree planting) and private improvements (side yards and gardens). It is also expected that some of the vacant parcels will be used for private residence because of these neighborhood improvements.

4. Parcels expected to develop as industrial sites by private means.

Frequently vacant parcels are located in areas that are experiencing an increase in industrial locations, and there is every reason to believe that they will be privately developed as industrial uses within a relatively short period of time. It is recommended that these parcels be made more attractive for future development by municipal action (advice from the Planning Board, installation of utilities by the city).

Some of the vacant parcels in the industrial area are expected to be privately developed because of (1) the present increase in industrial locations in the area, and

(2) the increase in demand for industrial space as a result of the consolidation of the industrial area. It is recommended that the City Planning Board assist the owners in the improvement of their property, and that it recommend to the city council the installation of those utilities found to be necessary for the improvement of the parcels.

5. Parcels to be utilized in the development of a new industrial area.

It is recommended that vacant parcels be used to develop new industrial areas and that it be acquired by the local redevelopment agency for improving as suitable industrial sites. Such land may be either held by the city to form a Municipal Industrial District, or it may be sold or leased for private development.

Part of the area between Western Ave. and Soldiers' Field Rd. in northern Brighton is to be zoned (by amendment to current zoning ordinance and map) and redeveloped as an area for selected light industries. It is recommended that the local redevelopment agency (the local Housing Authority) acquire the vacant parcels for improvement as suitable industrial sites, and that the city either create a Municipal Industrial District or sell or lease the sites for private development. Additional state enabling legislation would be required to create a Municipal Industrial District.

6. Parcels expected to be privately developed as light industrial or commercial uses as a result of increased industrial activity in adjacent areas.

Frequently an increase in industrial activity in a given area creates a demand for an increase in service uses, and it is to be expected that those vacant parcels that are too small for industrial sites will be privately developed for such activities.

Scattered small vacant parcels are located along Lincoln St. on the periphery of the industrial area, and it is expected that some of these will be privately developed as service uses (gas stations, repair shops, restaurants, specialty stores) as a result of an increase in industrial activity in the adjacent industrial area.

7. Parcels expected to be privately developed as residence because of public improvements made in the surrounding area.

A neighborhood can be improved by public improvements to such an extent that some of the vacant parcels in the area can be expected to develop as private residences.

It is expected that public improvements in Brighton will encourage the use of some of the vacant parcels as private residence.

8. Parcels expected to be privately developed as commercial uses because of an increase in residential development in the area.

An increase in population within a given area very often creates a demand for additional commercial activity, and it is expected that some of the existing vacant land will be developed for such activities.

It is expected that some of the vacant land in the area near Commonwealth Ave. and Washington St. will be developed as a commercial use because of the construction of a public housing project.

9. Parcels with the potential for private residential development.

It is recommended that the city cooperate with the owner or owners of land with the potential for residential development in the preparation of development plans and that it make the administrative changes necessary to encourage the use of the land.

When replatting is required, it is recommended that (1) the Planning Board assist the owner to replat and improve his property (in cases of single ownership), and that (2) the local redevelopment agency acquire the parcels and return them to private ownership after they have been replatted and improved (in cases of multiple ownership).

An area with the potential for private residential development is located along the borderline between Boston and Brookline. Joint municipal action is required to solve the problems of zoning, land assembly, replatting and improvements. It is recommended that the Boston Housing Authority carry out the redevelopment after a plan of development has been prepared by the two municipalities.

10. Parcels to be utilized as off-street parking facilities in areas of high population density.

It is recommended that some of the larger vacant parcels in the apartment house district be acquired by the city, developed as off-street parking facilities, and sold or leased to the surrounding apartment house owners.

Some of the vacant parcels in the apartment house districts of Brighton could be used for parking, and it is recommended that they be acquired by the city, developed into off-street parking facilities, and sold or leased to the surrounding apartment house owners. Additional state enabling legislation is required to allow the city to develop these facilities.

11. Parcels to be used as parking bays.

It is recommended that some of the vacant parcels that are formed by undeveloped road sections be used for parking by the adjacent property owners, that the city (present owner of such parcels) make the improvements necessary for the development of such facilities, and that the costs incurred be assessed against the surrounding property owners who will benefit by such improvements.

12. Parcels to be utilized for the creation of parks, totlots and small playgrounds, and for the addition to existing open space facilities.

It is recommended that suitable vacant parcels be acquired by the city to be developed as public open space, or to be added to existing public open space.

Many vacant parcels in Brighton are suitable for the development of public open space, especially in the southern and western sections, and it is recommended that they be used for both the development of new public open space and additions to existing public open space. It is also recommended that vacant parcels unsuitable for development be considered for use as public open space.

13. Parcels to be used as pedestrian ways.

In order to provide convenient access through long blocks, it is recommended that suitable vacant parcels be used for pedestrian ways, and that they be acquired by the city to be developed and maintained by the Park Department.

14. Parcels to be used for large scale public housing.

It is recommended that some of the larger vacant tracts be acquired by either the local or the state Housing Authority for the construction of public housing projects.

The large tract near Commonwealth Ave. and Washington St. has recently been acquired by the local Housing Authority for the construction of garden apartments.

15. Parcels to be added to the public land reserve.

It is recommended that the city acquire those vacant parcels that may be needed for a future use, and for which no present use can be found, and add them to the municipal land reserve. Such parcels may be used for either temporary public or private uses (storage, temporary housing) until they are developed for their future use. It is also recommended that certain vacant parcels be added to the land reserve and held by the city until suitable uses may be found for them, and the demand for the new use is great enough to justify the expense of further improving the parcels to make them satisfactory for the new use.






16. Parcels to remain vacant for the provision of private open space in residential areas.

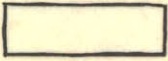

It is desirable that some of the vacant parcels in residential areas now in use as side yards and gardens remain vacant as long as the owners desire to leave them unimproved. Development of such parcels can be controlled to the extent that it must comply with existing zoning regulations and the requirements for the issuance of building permits. In cases where scattered vacant parcels are unsuitable for development (rock ledges, steep hillsides, marshland) it is to be expected that the high costs of installing utilities will deter their development.

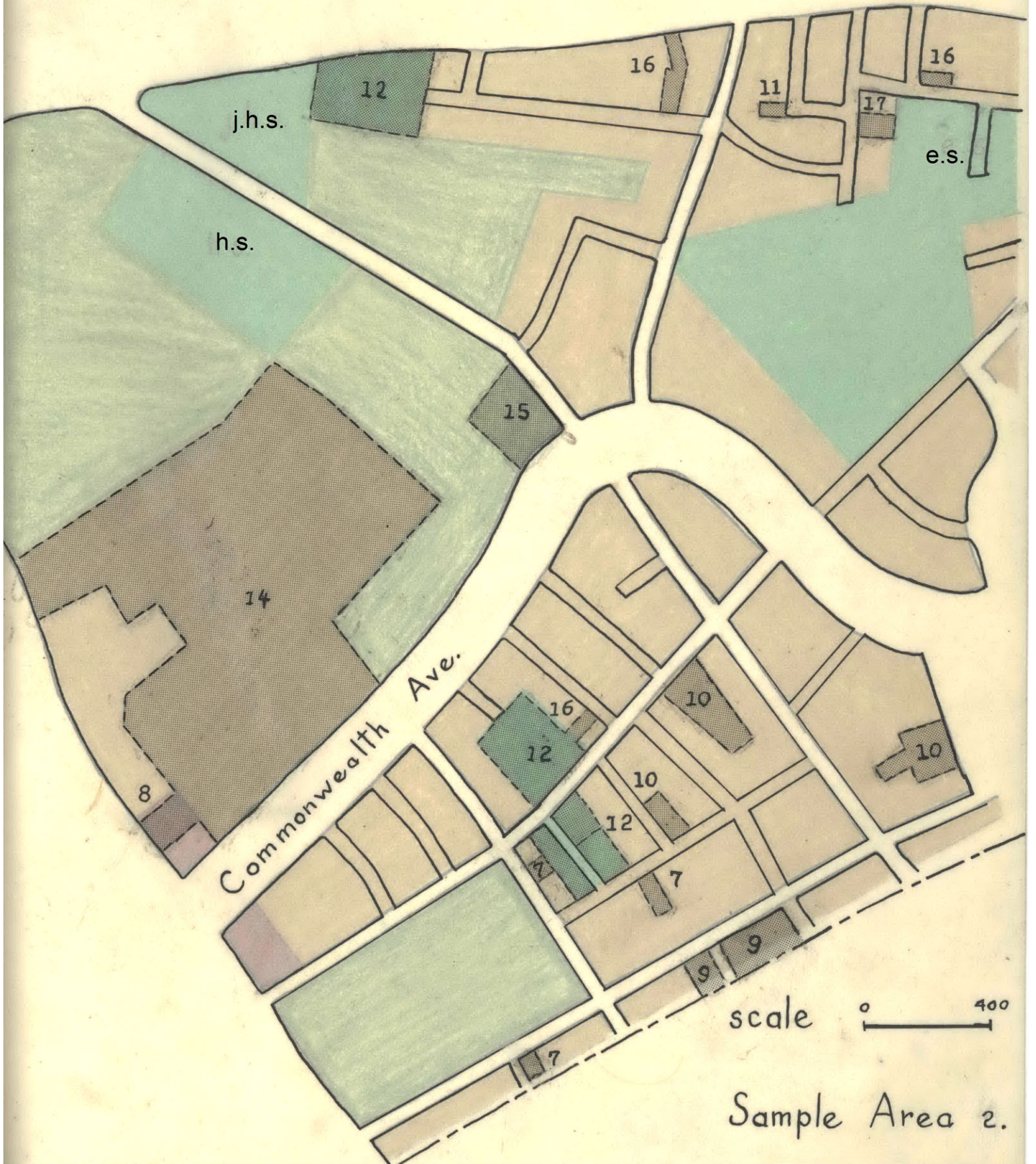
17. Parcels to be added to existing school property.

It is recommended that suitable vacant parcels be used to enlarge existing school properties in order to bring them up to more desirable standards.

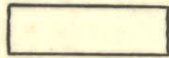
LEGEND FOR THE LAND USE PROVISIONS OF THE SKETCH PLANS

Residential	
Commercial	
Industrial	
Public	
Semi-public	

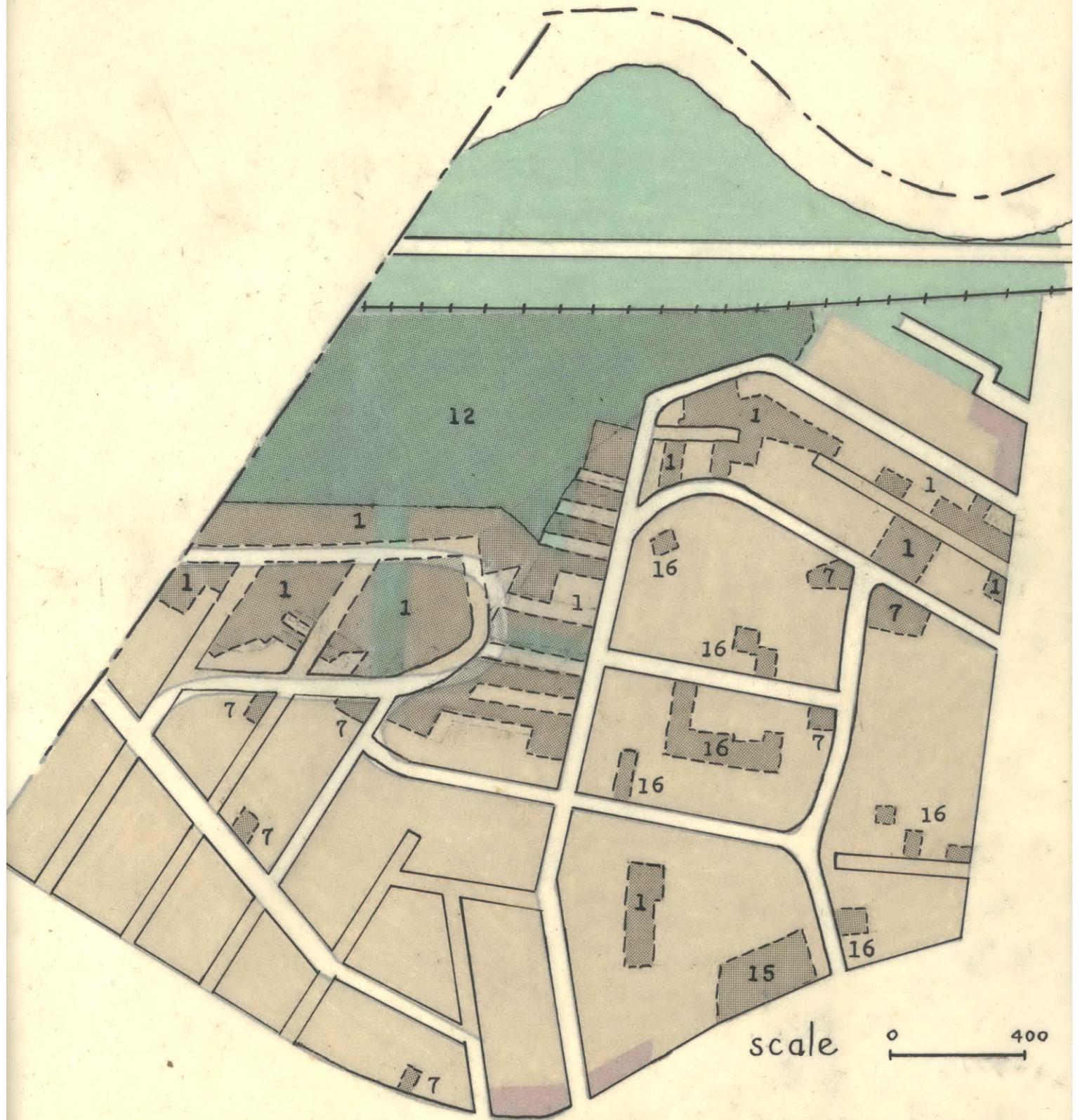
Land in use 
Vacant Land 



Land in use

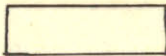



Vacant Land



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Sample Area 3.

Land in use 

Vacant Land 



TOWARD AN EFFECTIVE LAND USE POLICY

Once it has been determined that vacant land can play an important role in the replanning and rebuilding of our cities, we are faced with the problem of how to get such land into use. This is indeed the stumbling block to the whole problem of the use of vacant land, and is one that constantly thwarts the best of plans and city planners. The task of getting this land into its best use is beset by many problems of a complex nature - all of which require detailed analyses that are beyond the pale of this report.

The first step to be taken prior to the implementation of a policy for the use of vacant land should be concerned with removing as much as possible those factors that are responsible for maintaining the condition of vacancy. A review of these factors will show that, excluding topographical conditions, many of the basic causes arise either directly or indirectly from the policies of the municipal government. This seems to imply that some form of municipal action is necessary to remove these factors, and that the city should "clean house" in order to provide a sounder base for future improvements. The following is a list of proposals to aid the city in carrying out such a program:

1. Prepare a comprehensive plan of development for the entire city.
2. Bring the zoning ordinance and map up to date.
3. Improve and enforce subdivision control regulations.

4. Improve and enforce building codes.
 5. Reassess property values.
 6. Revise the tax policy.
 7. Improve governmental services.
 8. Redevelop and rehabilitate slum and blighted areas.
-

The city has most of the legal powers necessary to accomplish these proposals, however additional state enabling legislation will be required to improve subdivision control regulations and to revise the present tax policy. It is also important that members of the municipal government, as well as those of various interested citizen's groups, take the initiative to secure these additional powers for the city.

Since a large percentage of the vacant land in Brighton is in private ownership, it becomes necessary for the city to encourage the owners as much as possible to utilize their land. The city can encourage a better use of the property by improving its own administration, and in some cases, by offering inducements in the form of tax revisions and tax benefits. The city could also maintain a record of all its vacant land and establish a clearing house for information and advice to persons interested in developing this land. The City Planning Board could be very helpful in suggesting appropriate uses for the different parcels and in assisting the developer to create a socially desirable use. The Planning Board could also recommend to the proper authorities that adequate public utilities be installed on certain parcels where development

utilities be installed on certain parcels whose development is considered to be held back by the lack of these facilities.

Privately owned vacant land that is unsuitable for development (rock ledges, steep hillsides, marshland) should be left vacant to serve as needed open space. The city may prevent the development of such land by regulation or by acquisition of the land and adding it to the municipal land reserve. Regulation may be effectuated by refusing to issue a building permit until certain utilities are provided by the developer. It may be expected that the high cost of installing these utilities would preclude any development of such land. The City Planning Board might suggest more suitable areas to the developer as a means of discouraging the development of vacant parcels that are unsuitable for development. In cases where taxes are no longer paid on these parcels, it is recommended that the city immediately acquire them by the process of tax foreclosure and add them to the municipal land reserve.

Vacant land owned by the city is of three types: (1) land held and used by the different municipal departments, (2) land held but not used by these departments, and (3) land acquired by the process of tax foreclosure. Land held by the departments is either in use or will eventually be put to use, however there are cases in Boston where several departments hold more land than they intend to use. Such land remains idle and has no prospect of being used until it has been re-

released by the department. The school department is one of the worst offenders, and holds land for future use (which it doesn't now use) and land that has been abandoned for school purposes and does not now enter into the present or future school program.

At present the land held through the process of foreclosure offers the best opportunity for implementing a land use policy. It is unfortunate that only ten percent of the total number of vacant parcels is held by the city. Such holdings are characterized by a wide scattering throughout Brighton and a concentration in the northwestern corner behind Oak Sq. where a large number of tax foreclosed properties are found side by side on a hillside. Some holdings are also found in the semi-blighted areas of the northern section. At present, such parcels that have been delinquent in taxes for a period of four years or more may be acquired by the city through the process of foreclosing the tax titles to these parcels in the Land Court. All tax reverted properties are placed in the hands of the Real Estate Department which is responsible for both management and sale of the acquired parcels. The Department has a three point program for dealing with such land; viz. (1) restoring real estate to the tax rolls, (2) administration of foreclosed property, and (3) retaining for a municipal use. In other words, each piece of property is view in the light of these three alternatives to determine that is to be done with them. Each parcel acquired is examined for suitability for some likely munic-

ipal use. The determination of the parcels to be held for such use is made by a committee consisting of the Chairman of the Planning Board, the City Treasurer, and the Chairman of the Real Estate Department. The value of their judgement depends, of course, on their knowledge of department needs and plans, and the planning policy of the city as a whole. Land that is not needed for departmental use is put up for sale at a public auction after a sufficient period of advertising and is retained by the city if not sold.

The city may acquire land by means other than the process of tax foreclosure, such as by direct purchase or eminent domain proceedings. There is no central land acquisition agency and several municipal departments (especially the School and Park Departments) acquire land for their respective purposes - subject to appropriations authorized by the City Council. The Board of Street Commissioners acquires land that is needed by the other departments - subject to the approval of the City Council. If the purchase price exceeds 125 % of the assessed valuation, the case must go through eminent domain proceedings.

In order to facilitate the acquisition of land by the city and to insure the rightful use and development of the land within the city, I would like to propose that a definite land use policy be established by the city of Boston. It is only by the use of such measures that the maladjustments of the present land use pattern can be corrected and prevented,

and that the future development of the city can be guided in the direction best suited to the needs of the people. Such a policy would be based upon a comprehensive plan of development for the city, which in itself is an expression of the present and future needs of the population. It is only in this manner that the city can adequately determine what its future land requirements will be. Such advance notice will enable the city to effectuate both its long and short range plans. The city should have the necessary powers to acquire land for its programs as quickly and economically as possible, and to dispose of it in a manner that is most expeditious to the city. Such a policy of public land acquisition would serve to prevent the spread of decaying areas as well as promote a rational development of new areas.

Although a Real Estate Department exists within the framework of the municipal government of Boston, the effectuation of a land use policy by this agency would be severely restricted by its present scope, size of staff, and functions. I would like to recommend that a new Real Estate Department be established to serve as a central agency for the coordination of the various activities concerned with municipal real estate (acquisition, management and disposal) and the effectuation of a municipal land use policy. The City Planning Board is largely responsible for recommending the land use policy to the mayor and the city council, and the Real Estate Department is largely responsible for its effectuation. Close

coordination between these two agencies is necessary for the successful development of the city, and it is recommended that a designated member of the planning agency be officially required to attend all meetings of the Real Estate Department and to participate in its deliberations. It should also be one of the duties of the planning agency to recommend areas in which the Real Estate Department should acquire, hold, or dispose of property. The Real Estate Department should be able to acquire land for the various municipal departments, for housing and redevelopment projects, and for the future needs of the city. Land acquired through the process of tax foreclosure should be first classified by the Department as to its suitability for a present or a future public use before it is considered for a return to the tax rolls.

In order to operate efficiently, it is proposed that the Real Estate Department have the legal authority to accomplish the following:

1. To acquire land needed for any public purpose by purchase; eminent domain; tax reversions; gift; exchange; leasing; reclamation.
2. To classify the land acquired as follows;
 - a. land needed for a public purpose - present and future
 - b. land that is unsuitable for both public and private development.
 - c. land that is suitable for private development.
3. To dispose of land as follows;
 - a. transfer land immediately needed for public purposes to those departments that request it.

- b. transfer land required for a public purpose in the future to the municipal land reserve.
 - c. transfer land unsuitable for public or private ownership to the municipal land reserve.
 - d. sell land suitable for private ownership immediately.
4. To acquire both vacant and improved land in a redevelopment project area for clearance, improvements, and sale or lease to a public or private agency for redevelopment or public housing.
 5. To acquire derelict subdivisions for replatting and a return to private development.
 6. To lease property not required immediately for a public use to either public or private agencies for a temporary use. Such a lease is to be accompanied by restrictions necessary to protect the possible future uses of the land.

It is strongly desirable that all the municipal real estate activities be located in one department in order to insure that the land acquired by the city will be efficiently administered and used for the rebuilding of the city. Management of municipally owned land involves several functions, such as perfecting titles to the land, mapping, classifying, and administration. All these functions are related by the common purpose that the land should be used to promote comprehensively planned land use programs.

Recently there has been a growing tendency toward planning metropolitan regional land use programs, however such activity is beset by complex administrative problems which may prevent the execution of such plans for sometime to come. At present, the best that we can hope for is that municipalities forming an economic entity may gradually bring their land use programs into harmony with one

another. The city of Boston must relate its plans and land use policy not only to the various districts within the city, but to the metropolitan region of which it is a part.

CONCLUSION

This investigation has shown that 16% of the total area of Brighton is vacant and is distributed throughout the area in groups or clusters. The effects of vacant land are numerous and are complicated by the interrelationships of the many different parcels. The effects of vacant land on the economic welfare of the community are characterized by loss of potential revenues and the high costs of servicing incompletely developed parts of the city. The social effects of the vacant parcels may be both good and bad - depending upon the condition of the parcel. Poorly kept parcels have a blighting effect upon the surrounding area and may in some cases be considered a hazard to both the safety and the health of the local community. Parcels that are well maintained may have the good effect of improving the general appearance of the area and of providing light, air and open space.

The factors that cause land to remain vacant are as complex and interrelated as the effects. However, in the case of Brighton, it was possible to determine certain factors which were responsible for the condition of vacancy. Topographical conditions were found to have a pronounced effect on the amount, distribution, and character of the vacant parcels. The character of the neighborhood exerts a strong influence on vacancy, especially in the deteriorated parts of the northern section of Brighton. The lack of municipal controls and failure to properly administer and enforce the existing ones also plays a considerable role in keeping land from being used.

Since Brighton is a highly developed community, there is little opportunity for the expansion of the existing land uses, except possibly for some future industrial expansion and some residential development. It was found that the existing vacant land could play an important role in the general reconditioning of the community and that vacant land could be used for: (1) redevelopment and rehabilitation, (2) extension of existing schools and playgrounds, (4) provision of playlots and small open spaces in the areas of high densities, and (5) public works projects.

In order to encourage the development of privately owned vacant land, the city could establish an information service within the Real Estate Department for the purpose of cataloging the existing vacant land and advising potential developers where to find the best locations for certain uses. Vacant land owned by the city offers the best possibility for the implementation of a land use program. A comprehensive plan of development is a prerequisite for any land use policy and should form the basis of any municipal land acquisition program.

The finding and proposals of this report are peculiar to Brighton and apply solely to that community. It is not to be expected that they can be applied to other in-town areas because of the many differences that exist between those areas and Brighton. It is hoped however, that this report has been successful in showing that unused land does exist in the in-town area, that it affects the social and economic

welfare of the community, and that it has the potential
for a major role in the replanning of our cities.

APPENDIX

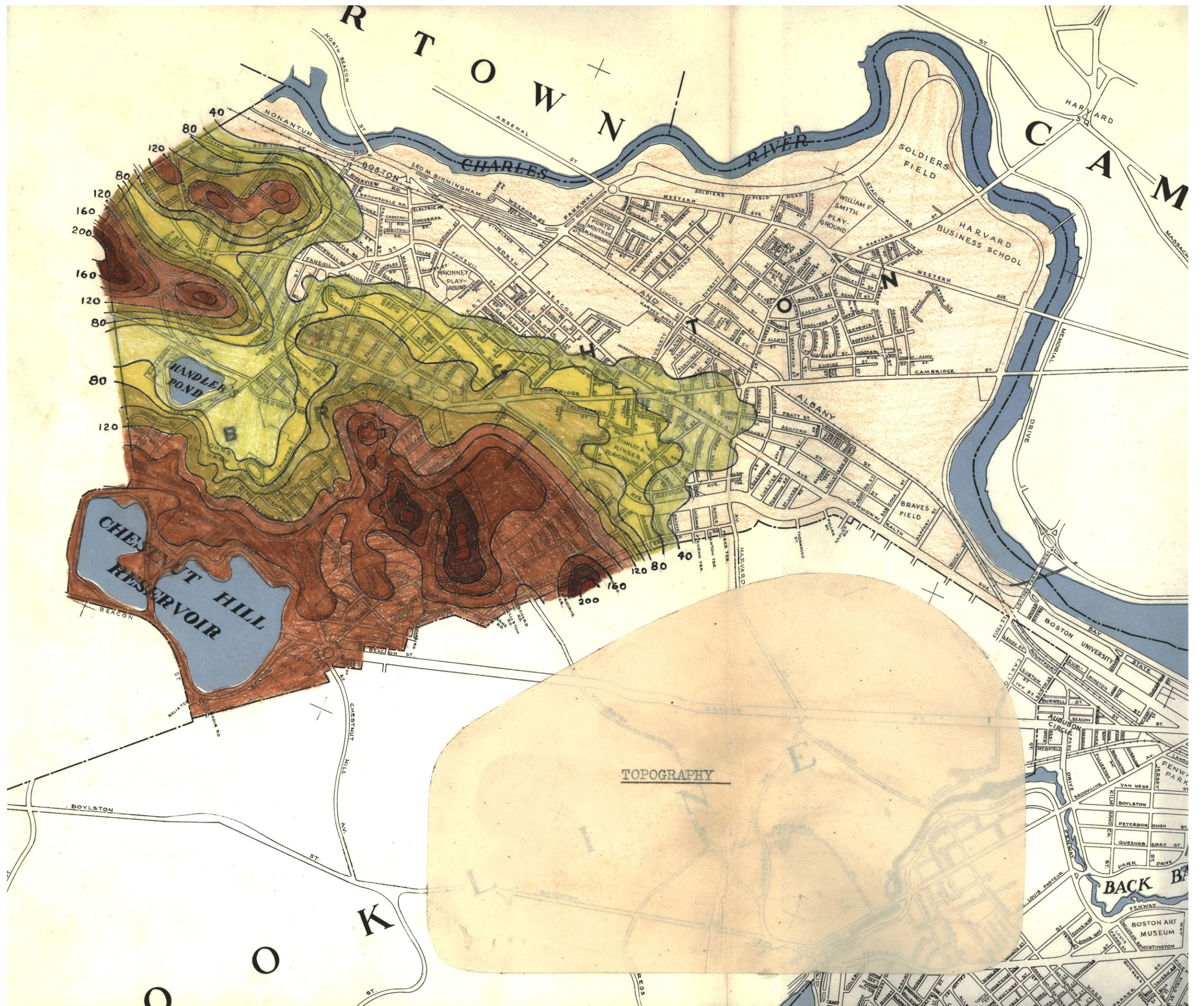
The appendix contains the following maps:

1. The City of Boston.
2. Brighton.
 - a. Topography
 - b. Population Spot Map
 - c. Land Use
 - d. Zoning
 - e. Characteristic of Areas
 - f. Master Plan

All Brighton maps, except the Population Spot Map, are drawn to the scale of 1 inch equals 1600 feet.

MAP OF BOSTON







each dot represents 50 persons.

POPULATION SPOT MAP



LAND USE

- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Public
- Semi-public
- Vacant





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CHARLES RIVER

SOLDIERS FIELD

HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL

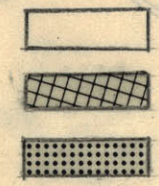
CHANDLER POND

ST. JOHN'S SEMINARY

CHESTNUT HILL RESERVOIR

ZONING MAP

- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial



(from Boston Zoning Ordinance and Map, 1925)

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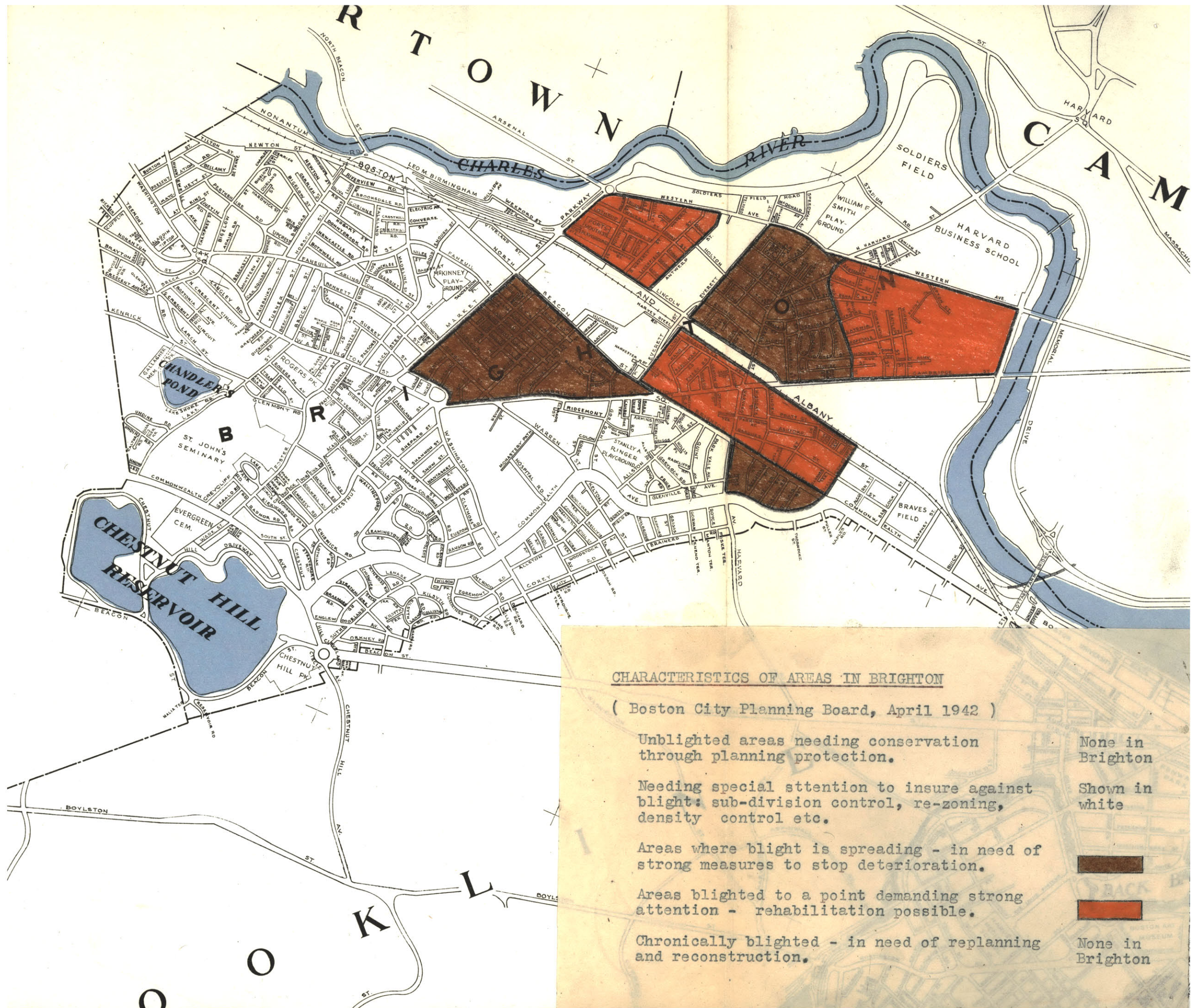
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BACK BAY

BOSTON ART MUSEUM

BOSTON BAY
UNIVERSITY
STATE
LEWIS
LY ST
BUSWELL ST
AUBURN CIRCLE
FENWAY
PETERBOROUGH
QUEENSBURY
PARK
FENWAY
BOSTON ART MUSEUM
MUNICIPAL BUILDING



CHARACTERISTICS OF AREAS IN BRIGHTON

(Boston City Planning Board, April 1942)

Unblighted areas needing conservation through planning protection.

None in Brighton

Needing special attention to insure against blight: sub-division control, re-zoning, density control etc.

Shown in white

Areas where blight is spreading - in need of strong measures to stop deterioration.

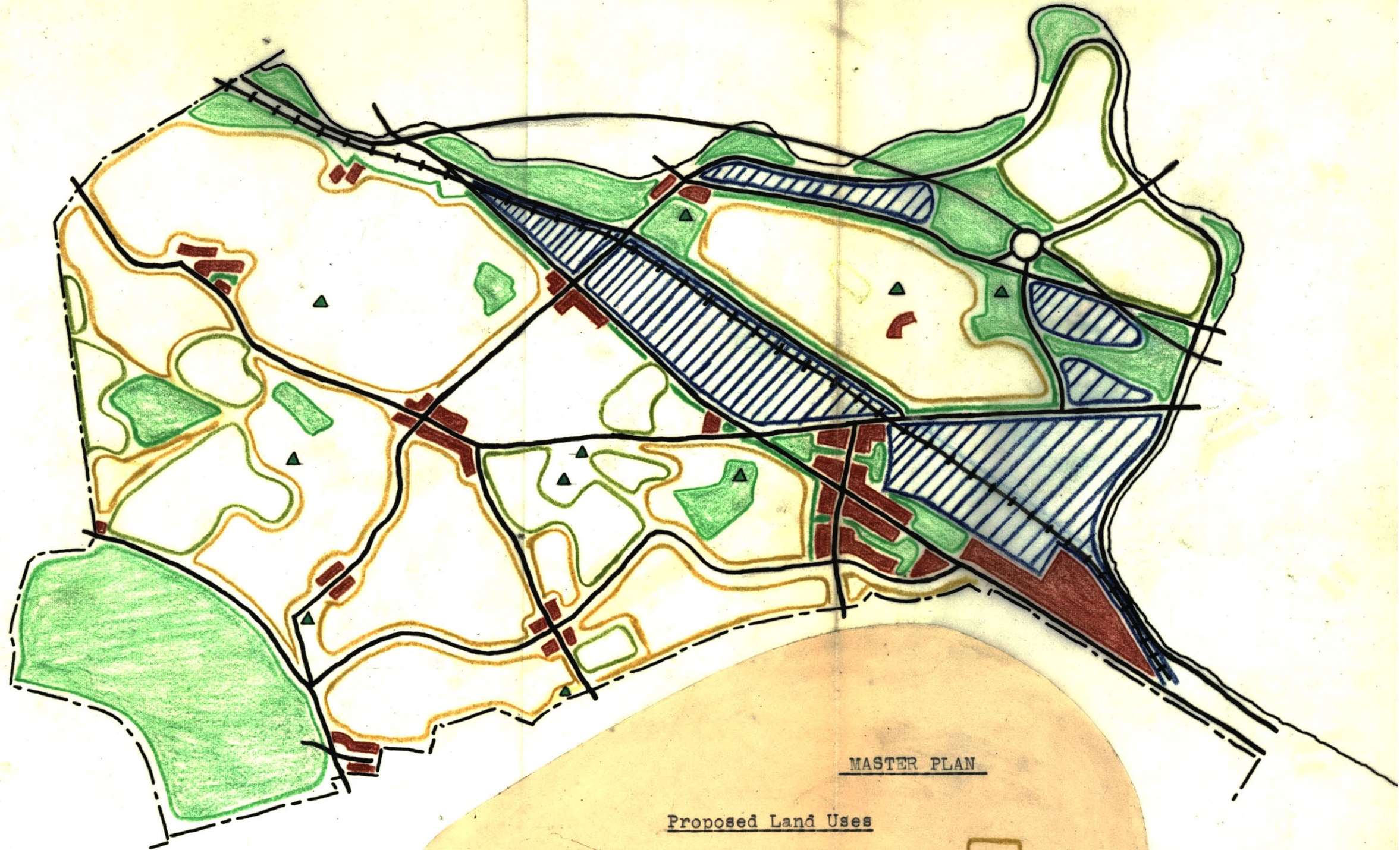


Areas blighted to a point demanding strong attention - rehabilitation possible.



Chronically blighted - in need of replanning and reconstruction.

None in Brighton



MASTER PLAN

Proposed Land Uses

Residential

Commercial

Industrial

Semi-public

Parks and
Playgrounds

Public schools



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