Transitional Neighborhoods: Between the Central Business and Established Residential Districts. Bay Village a Case Study

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B.S. in Urban Studies and Affairs
City University of New York Baccalaureate Program

SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF URBAN STUDIES AND PLANNING IN PARTIAL FULLFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE IN URBAN STUDIES AND PLANNING AT THE MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

SEPTEMBER 2002

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ABSTRACT

"Transitional neighborhoods" had been traditionally viewed as areas that do not have much value to the urban fabric. Given that popular opinion, how have some of these neighborhoods survived the Central Business District expansion and Urban Renewal? Bay Village in Boston, Massachusetts is a prime example of a neighborhood that has withstood the development pressures of the downtown. In this thesis, I will examine how this neighborhood has survived and how the process of neighborhood preservation has conflicted and compromised with downtown interests. I will also examine how the neighborhood interests are viewed in today's development climate and what the affects have been on development processes and form.

Bay Village is on the right. Scar, on the Jaes building of a lost Federalist Structure, with parking garage hovering behind

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost I would like to thank Professor Langley Keyes without his encouragement and support this thesis would not have been completed.

I would also like to thank the Library Staff at MIT and Boston Public Library without their research capabilities the small details of my thesis may have been ignored.

Special thanks to Tunney Lee, June McCourt and Michael Maddigan for taking the time to meet and talk with me. I would also like to thank the Bostonian Society for the research in the history portion of my thesis.

And of course Eric, whose love, support, and encouragement has been an essential part of my education.
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Chapter 1 Introduction

The historic neighborhood of Bay Village in Boston, Massachusetts is nestled between the Central Business District (CBD) and the established residential neighborhoods of Chinatown and the South End. Today the neighborhood consists of 6 square blocks with approximately 700 hundred residents. In the past Bay Village was much larger, but as development has chiseled away at the neighborhood it has been reduced to its current size.

Given Bay Village’s location how has it survived the CBD expansion and urban renewal? Why would this particular neighborhood be considered valuable enough to preserve while other similar neighborhoods were not?

If there are certain characteristics that make the neighborhood valuable who makes this determination? Do the neighborhood residents recognize the valuable characteristics and fight to preserve them? Or did the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) recognize those characteristics and work to support the preservation of Bay Village?

In theory there are two extreme views of how these neighborhoods fit into the urban fabric. On one end to the spectrum the ecological determinist theory of Park and Burgess say that the market forces determine where and how people live. On the other end of the spectrum is Walter Firey’s theory that the cultural value of space ultimately determines where and how people live.

In the 1920’s, Park and Burgess’s had created the Concentric Ring Theory. This theory basically states that the form of the City is in concentric rings leading out from the middle (CBD). Market forces separate population into zones based on socio-economic class. The population of the inner zones will gradually move to the outer as their economic status improves.

If this theory were applied to Boston, Bay Village would be in the “Zone in Transition.”
Considered areas of deterioration. Encircles the business section are always to be found the so-called “slums” and “bad-lands,” with their submerged regions of poverty, degradation, and disease and their underworlds of crime and vice. Within a deteriorating area are rooming-house districts, the purgatory of “lost souls.... The area of deterioration while essentially one of decay, of stationary or declining population is also one of regeneration, as witness the mission, the settlement, the artists’ colony, radical centers—all obsessed with the vision of a new and better worked.\(^1\)

According to Walter Firey, in Land Use in Central Boston, Park and Burgess assume:

> That social activities distribute themselves according to uniform geographical patterns. These patterns are thought to manifest certain natural forces which automatically sift and sort social activities over physical space. Any active role on the part of human beings, apart from that of compliance is expressly or tacitly denied.\(^2\)

Firey emphasizes that “Social values may endow space with qualities that are quite extraneous to it as a physical phenomenon.”\(^3\)

Firey’s point is that people take an ‘active role’ in where they choose to live as opposed to market forces determining how people locate in a city. Also, that social or ‘cultural values’ give space qualities and not the other way around. If his theory is correct, then why this particular neighborhood preserved? It is possible that the residents’ cultural values of preservation were a response to the uniqueness of the architecture and form.

In this thesis I will explore how this particular ‘urban village’ has withstood neighboring development pressures. What particular characteristics were assigned value, so much, that preservation has been preferred over new development? Is it the location, architecture, form, private sector investment, timing of development interest, or community activism? Or is it some combination of all of these characteristics? I will also explore the changing cultural values space and what affect that has had on process and form.

\(^1\) The City, by Park and Burgess, pg 51  
\(^2\) Land Use in Central Boston, By Walter Firey, pg. 4  
\(^3\) Land Use in Central Boston, By Walter Firey, pg (?)
Chapter 2.1 History

In 1821, the Mill Dam (today’s Beacon Street) was constructed to control the tidal flow to the area that was then called the South Cove (Ward 11). The Dam divided the Back Bay into 2 separate basins using the tidal flows for energy to power local mills.

The Mill Dam proved to be an inadequate source of power. However, as the tidal water drained out of the receiving basin, land was exposed that could be used for the much-needed development. Boston was outgrowing its peninsula and was losing middle class residents to surrounding villages. In 1826, as a solution to the exodus, the City of Boston proposed filling in the South Cove to form a new residential district.

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4 Bay Village or the Church-Street District, by Mary Van Meter, pg. 10
Imbedded in Ward 11 was the future site of what was then called the Church Street District (today’s Bay Village.) This area, originally mudflats caused by tidal flows, is located to the Southwest corner of the Boston Commons (see map). The neck along Washington Street was known for its clams and was often referred to as Clam Shell Drive.

By 1826, the streets for the Church Street District had already been proposed. Fayette Street was the first street in the neighborhood. Once the streets were organized, private developers purchased the land for construction of Federalist Style row-houses indicative of the period.

A more notable developer of the Church-Street District was Ephraim Marsh. He purchased most of the land in the district, subdivided the lots, built the houses and sold them. Other properties in the district were sold to local Artisans. Marsh, was a contractor for a good portion of Beacon Hill and most of artisans worked on the Hill as well. These people greatly contributed to the similarities in the architecture and the craftsmanship between Beacon Hill and Bay Village that can still be detected today.

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5 Mapping Boston, a Norman B Lenethal Book  pg. 193
In 1834, the Boston & Providence railroads erected depots that separated the Church-
Street District from the Boston Commons. This separation permanently marked the
northern boundary of the district. The tracks for the Boston & Worcester Line that ran to
South Station (currently the same route as the Mass. Pike) separated the Church-Street
District from the Southern portion of the peninsula. This separation became the
Southwest boundary of the neighborhood. These enclosures gave the neighborhood its
geographical definition.

The Construction of the Railroad line embankments restricted further tidal flow to the
area exposing more land for development. During the 1850’s, as the development West
of Church St. continued, the existing street design was extended. Again the land was

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6 Drawn by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, a British organization. Provided by Bay
Village Historical Society
parceled off and sold to developers who continued to construct row-houses in the Federalist Style fashionable of that period.

As the Boston population continued to swell with Irish immigrants from the Potato Famine, (their numbers would reach 60,000 by 1960) City officials continued looking to the South Cove area for further expansion of the City limits. The fear of losing taxes to neighboring villages inspired the Committee on Public Lands to call for “every proper inducement should be offered to incline our Citizens to remain within our limits.”

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7 Mapping Boston, A Norman B. Leventhal Book, pg 303
8 Lost Boston by Jane Holtz Kay, pg. 170
9 Lost Boston by Jane Holtz Kay, pg. 172
Under Mayor Jacob Bigelow, the City of Boston responded to the need for more land by filling in and developing the South End and Back Bay. City planners designed and constructed the South End in the Victorian Style street grid fashionable at the time. The land was parceled and sold to the highest bidder. While this design of the streets was a departure from the customary Federalist style blocks, many characteristics of the Federalist Style were borrowed: row housing, parks and trees.

By 1862, plans to extend Columbus Street resulted in the demolition of the old Boston & Providence railroad station and the construction of a New Boston & Providence station directly across the street (the sight of present day Park Square Hotel). The Columbus Street extension cut through the North West Corner of Church-Street district and created the present day Park Square. This extension contracted the neighborhood further by tearing down Stuart Street and making Columbus Street the new northern border.
2.2 Raising of Church-Street District

As the areas of the Back Bay and South End began to build up with new construction surrounding the Church-Street District, negative repercussions arose. Sewage that was once designed to be carried out to sea through the tidal flows by the Mill Dam, began to flood the basements of the homes in Church-Street District. To solve this sanitation problem, City of Boston chose to raise the buildings in the district instead of demolishing them.

In 1868, Buildings were propped on stilts while new concrete and gravel foundations were poured into the basements. In the end, 457 homes and 24 stores were raised twelve to eighteen feet above sea level.

While this enormous construction project raised a large portion of the district it did not compromise original Federalist street pattern and architecture.

Fayette and Church-Street 1868

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Bay Village or the Church Street District by Mary Van Meter, pg 9
Church St. Church; notice the change in foundation heights between the two pictures¹¹

¹¹ Boston a Topographical History by Walter Muir Whitehill, pg. 139
Chapter 3.1 Neighborhood in Transition

Between the years of 1890 to the late 1930's the Church-Street District became an immigrant neighborhood known as "Kerry Village." This name was derived from the Irish immigrant enclave that the district had become. During the beginning of this period the neighborhood was comprised of working-class families. Once prohibition began many buildings were turned into speakeasies.

Gradually the district became host to many of the City's nightclubs and home to many rooming houses. These rooming houses, for servicemen and 'transient populations' were commonly used for prostitution. Once Prohibition was lifted many establishments became 'legitimate' businesses and the Kit Kat Klub, Latin Quarter, Brown Derby and the now infamous Cocoanut Grove became popular nightclubs in the area.

From the late 1930's to 1950's many bars had been established on the outskirts of the neighborhood, along Broadway, Piedmont and Tremont Streets. Also, during this period the neighborhood became a homosexual enclave, known for its gay bars and Drag Queen shows. The last remaining bar in the neighborhood is still operating as a Drag Queen establishment.

Another contributing factor to the changes of the neighborhood during this period was that it had become the home to local film distribution storage centers. Because of the weight and flammability of the film, these storage facilities required construction of buildings that were reinforced with concrete and steel. Many of the Federalist Style buildings were demolished to erect these utilitarian facilities. Even the former site of the Church Street Church is now a former United Artisans building.

During this period of transition, there was very little investment into the physical environment. As a result the neighborhood became dilapidated, with many structures being condemned. The properties values eventually fell to a point where it became enticing to private sector investment.
At this time there was also a shift in ‘cultural values.’ While the Boston region was being suburbanized there was an emergence of population moving into Boston. Many people chose to locate in Kerry Village for its downtown location. The rooming houses in the district were a convenient location for people working in the Theatre District.

Many people chose this neighborhood for uniqueness in architecture as well as it location. During this period the area became known as the “Greenwich Village of Boston.” The convergence of economic opportunity, location, shift in cultural values, architecture and form resulted in another change in the neighborhood.
3.2 Neighborhood Revitalization

During the 1950's, as people began to 'discover' the Kerry Village there was a period of renovation of the dilapidated buildings. The push to renovate was so strong that some owners even gave renters money to make improvements on the properties.

This basic commitment to renovation unified the community and gave them a desire to reinvent the neighborhood image. In 1959 the Bay Village Neighborhood Association (BVNA) was founded in order to facilitate cosmetic improvements to the neighborhood increase much needed City services..

The name 'Bay Village' was derived from a combination of Back Bay and Kerry Village. The residents wanted to keep their association with their 'Back Bay' neighbors but distance themselves from the negative image that 'Kerry Village' conjured, thus “Bay Village” was born. The new moniker ‘Bay Village’ was a step towards improving the image of the neighborhood.

To foster more renovation the BVNA began to hold window box contests in the neighborhood furthering the goals of restoring the neighborhood. The BVNA began making demands on City Hall for policing, trash collection and street cleaning.

These changes represent a shift in the ‘cultural value’ of space and demonstrate how this once neglected neighborhood was being appreciated and valued by a new population. This change would also affect future development outcomes and help preserve the neighborhood.

Although it is a well-nurtured myth that the ‘artist colony’ was responsible for renovations within the neighborhood, the data suggests otherwise: 92% of the homebuyers were in white-collar professions.12 The residents of the district, were similar

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to the population of today's urban dweller: Empty Nesters, Young professionals, and Double income no kids (DINKS). During the period of 1957 to 1975, 148 properties were sold, 89 were to owner occupied.\textsuperscript{13}

Prior to 1957 almost no properties had changed hands. This transition of property owners was pivotal to both the upgrading process and to the creation of a community that would stand up to City Hall, the BRA and future developments projects in and around Bay Village. The upgrading process gave the neighborhood a new image and citizen participation created new sense of pride in the area.

\textsuperscript{13} Thesis by Timothy James Pattison, The Process of Neighborhood Upgrading and Gentrification: An Examination of Two Neighborhoods in the Boston Metropolitan Area, pg. 107
Once the South Cove Urban Renewal Project was announced in the late 1960’s, neighborhood residents became nervous. They feared that another ‘West End’ was going to happen to Bay Village. Before the Urban Renewal plans were finalized, June McCourt, a neighborhood activist and former president of the BVNA, and several other concerned citizens scheduled meetings with City Officials. Neighborhood residents wanted the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) to understand “That there had been significant private investment in the neighborhood by the residents and they were interested in maintaining the historic character.”

According to Tunney Lee, a city official with the BRA at the time of the project, the idea that neighborhood pressure resulted in an alteration of the Urban Renewal Plan is a

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14 Bay Village or the Church-Street District, pg. 22
15 Interview of June Mc Court by author in June 2002
“heroic myth.”\textsuperscript{16} Apparently, the BRA was aware of the investment and the “uniqueness of the housing”\textsuperscript{17} and intended to design a plan that would further support the private sector investment in Bay Village.

The BRA had recognized the West End Urban Renewal Project as a failure. Urban renewal projects had since altered their approach from total clearance to committing to “stabilizing” neighborhoods through different approaches such as preservation and subsidized housing.

The real threat to Bay Village (and also Chinatown) was Tufts New England Medical center. Tunney Lee said, “The medical center was purchasing parcels of land left and right. It was a real struggle trying to keep them from taking over the neighborhoods”\textsuperscript{18}

In the final application of the South Cove Project, Bay Village along with “portions of the garment industry, several legitimate theaters, the Tufts-New England Medical Center and Chinese residential areas”\textsuperscript{19} were included in the “Conservation and Reconditioning”\textsuperscript{20} portion of the South Cove Urban Renewal Area:

1.a) Most of the structures in Bay Village (Treatment Area No. 3) are of sound original construction built in the early quarter of the nineteenth century on a non-speculative basis. Room sizes, design qualities in the structures and the scale of the residences are unobtainable in new housing for the population housed.\textsuperscript{21}

Other reasons for preservation sited in the application were that:

1.b) the conservation areas are centrally located and are contiguous to the Central Business District. Entertainment facilities, legitimate theaters, movies, and a great variety of ethnic restaurants are available within walking distances.

1.c) Public transportation is easily accessible. Major MTA stations are within five minutes walking distance

\textsuperscript{16} Interview of Tunney Lee by author in June 2002
\textsuperscript{17} Interview of Tunney Lee by author in June 2002
\textsuperscript{18} Interview of Tunney Lee by author in June 2002
\textsuperscript{19} Urban Renewal Application, Survey Planning Application pg 2 of 4
\textsuperscript{20} Urban Renewal Application, Survey Planning Application pg 3 of 4
\textsuperscript{21} Survey and Planning Application Project No. Mass R-, pg. 1 of 4
1.d) although the physical amenities within the areas are presently negligible, the Boston Common and the Public Garden are within five minutes walking distance. The scale of housing which produces an intimate, residential human quality is a definite physical asset.

Meetings during the mid-60's South Cove Urban Renewal project resulted in a program that was designed to compliment existing private sector investment. The negotiation process ran from 1964 to 1968 and resulted in the following improvements to Bay Village.

1. Bars and Lodging houses along Broadway and Tremont were demolished
2. To redirect traffic around the neighborhood, Carver Street, renamed Charles Street was widened.
3. Streets surrounding the neighborhood were re-aligned and widened to insulate Bay Village from commuter traffic
4. A rezoning took place to create a strict residential policy; however, some bars were grandfathered and caused the most neighborhood distress
5. Below the street new electric lines, water, and sewage were created

22 Survey and Planning Application Project No. Mass R-, pg. 1 of 4
23 Urban Renewal Application appendix
6. Above the street brick sidewalks were put in, streets were made narrow, trees planted, a pocket park was constructed and gas lamps were added to the sidewalks to give Bay Village turn of the century feel.

7. Homes in Bay Village were made eligible for the low-income, 312 housing funds.

By the time of South Cove Urban Renewal Project resident participation was required by the Federal Urban Renewal Program, did not always alter the plans that BRA had set forward. According to Tunney Lee the edges in of Bay Village were being contested parcel-by-parcel, "the public hearings didn't amount to anything." Essentially the BRA did what it wanted.

Even if the community participation may have been simply a public relation tool, it did help educate the residents in community participation. This education would be essential in the next development project that would have had enormous negative impact on Bay Village and the City of Boston as a whole.

The final South Cove Urban Renewal design; Bay Village in Yellow

24 The BRA Maps website
The final project resulted in the demolition of buildings along Broadway Street. Closing Broadway and Church Streets cut off thru-traffic. The construction of Radisson Hotel in the Northeast corner of Bay Village has been an annoyance to the neighborhood. The building has its back to the district and the parking facility hangs over the neighborhood (see picture in abstract at beginning of thesis). This building would not be built in today’s development climate.

Nightclubs along Tremont Street were demolished and housing was built in its place. The housing that was erected incorporated the historic characteristics found in the housing stock of Bay Village: three story buildings with Federalist Style row house character.

The South Cove Urban Renewal project allowed the neighborhood to self-insulate from the traffic congestion and the vices of the neighboring Combat Zone. The reshaping and infrastructure improvements differentiated Bay Village from the surrounding communities. New housing was built in scale with the neighborhood and people in the community are happy with most of the outcomes with the exception of the Radisson Hotel.

Bay Village was fortunate that the South Cove Urban Renewal project happened in the early 1960’s. The Urban Renewal projects had shifted from slum clearance to housing rehabilitation. This shift represents a change in the ‘cultural values’ of Federal Level. Prior to this period many Urban Renewal projects around the country had cleared so
called slum housing for new development. This earlier policy resulted in a lot of turmoil for municipal governments and proved to be an inadequate solution.
Chapter 5.1 Park Plaza Urban Renewal Plan

The 1970 Park Plaza Urban Renewal Plan caused one of the most heated battles of Urban Renewal for the City of Boston. Although Federal Government funds for Urban Renewal projects had dried up, the City of Boston, absent from Federal Government Regulation, moved forward with their own version of an Urban Renewal Project.

The Plan designated the area between Bay Village and the Boston Public Gardens and Commons, often called the ‘Combat Zone’ as the Urban Renewal area. The original 2-phase plan, proposed the demolition of all buildings between Washington and Arlington Streets. Phase 1 of the plan was the only portion ever proposed for redevelopment.

Phase 1 of the Urban Renewal plan called for the demolition of all buildings between Tremont and Washington Streets. These buildings would be replaced by a 6 million sq. ft. of commercial, residential, hotel and office towers.

25 Park Plaza: Now you see it. Now you don’t, case study by students in 11.132J, 1976
The original Park Plaza proposal of 6 million sf. of space Bay Village being wall off by buildings

The Park Plaza plan was particularly controversial because it would have caused shadows and wind factors that would have been detrimental to the Boston’s Public Gardens and Commons. The Park was already in a state of deterioration due to years of neglect by the City. The Beacon Hill Civic Association, Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay and the Friends of the Public Gardens and Commons began to organize against this project.

The battle over the Park Plaza Urban Renewal plan would last more than 10 years and would ultimately result in the implementation of a plan that was quite different than the original proposal. The conflict was between the BRA and developer versus the neighborhood associations. The State was forced to mediate the dispute by trying to balance the needs of everyone involved.

Although the BVNA was concerned about the conditions of the Park, their foremost concern was being ‘walled off’ from the rest of the City. As a result, they joined the coalition of the neighborhood organizations to fight the Park Plaza Development. The BVNA and the other neighborhood organizations were able to consolidate their power

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26 Park Plaza: Now you see it. Now you don’t, case study by students in 11.132J, 1976
and gain a stronger voice in the development process and outcomes. This coalition was essential to the change of development outcomes. The BVNA operation alone would never have had the impact that the collective voice of the coalition would.

The BRA, which pushed project approval at the municipal level, needed State approval to move forward with the project. The State, which had the authority to grant eminent domain, was under pressure from community groups to reject the Park Plaza Urban Renewal proposals.

After the first proposal was announced, the Beacon Hill Civic Association, Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay, Friends of the Public Garden and Commons, and the BVNA, created the Park Plaza Civic Advisory Committee (CAC) to contest the design.

First on the agenda for the committee was to save the park by leveraging funds for park improvements. Once the State rejected the first proposal, the CAC began to demand a formal citizen input mechanism to provide guidance and oversight to future development proposals.

A second revised proposal went before the State and was rejected. The BRA responded by formally recognizing the creation Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) in the development process. Although the power of the CAC was not defined, the organization began working on seeking funding for park improvements and contesting the BRA’s Environmental Impact Reports (EIR)

The CAC had consultants of their own review the BRA’s hotly contested EIR. The consultants determined that the reports grossly underestimated the effects the towers would have on wind, shadows, traffic and pollution. When the third revised plan went before the State, the CAC used their consultants findings as ammunition to fight against the plan.
The approval of the third design was contingent upon two issues; 1) another Environmental Impact Report was to be conducted and 2) The CAC, with start-up funds from the State, was to be the official advisory committee. The BRA was required to cooperate with the CAC; but was given the power to resolve issues raised by the CAC.

When the results of the BRA funded Environment Impact Report was leaked; the worst fears of the community groups were confirmed. The shadows would reduce sunlight to a portion of the Public Garden by 75% in the spring and the fall. In the winter, sunlight would be completely eliminated with the shadows that would have reached all the way to Beacon Street.27

Once the report was made public, the BRA changed it approach to the development. The CAC, with assistance from the BRA, developed a “Consensus Plan.” This plan, had a parcel-by parcel approach to improving the area and resulted in an entirely different design, half the size of the original proposal.

The coalition of neighborhood groups proved to be an effective tool for Bay Village. Without this coalition it would have been impossible to defeat this project. This alliance reflected a more sophisticated approach by the neighborhood organizations.

The shared cultural values of space allowed the neighborhood organizations to mobilize and have an effect on design outcomes that are more sensitive to the abutting communities. This partnership was an important step in changing the culture not only with the neighborhood associations but also with the BRA.

This grass roots approach was a departure from the single organizations working on their own behalf. The result was a decentralization of power from the BRA and developers while allowing the neighborhood associations to have more of an impact on the development. The creation of the CAC proved to be such an effective tool that when the

27 Friend of the Public Gardens and Commons Newsletter, Summer 1995 pg8
next development project to have an impact on the area arose, that the creation of CACs to serve as the development review board was embedded in the process.
Chapter 6.1 A Civic Vision for Turnpike Air Rights

In an effort to pay for Big Dig overruns the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority (MTA) decided to sell off Air Rights over Boston's portion of the Turnpike. After much heated conflict between the BRA and the MTA, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed.

This MOU exempted Air Rights development from Boston Zoning ordinances, but recognized that the creation of a Master Plan would be used as guidelines for future Air Rights development. The Turnpike Air Right parcels extend from Allston-Brighton to Chinatown.

In September of 1998, Mayor Thomas M. Menino commissioned a 26-member team of architects, lawyers, planners, residents, local business people and artists to staff the Strategic Development Study Committee (SDSC). Their goal was to create a "realistic urban design for the Turnpike corridor that is responsible and sensitive to the abutting communities."28 The SDSC was created as an independent body with the intentions of designing the best possible guidelines for the overall good of the City. As an independent organization, the SDSC was not to be influenced by the BRA or the MTA.

The creation of the SDSC is yet another change in the cultural value of space. The Mayor recognized the impact that development can have on the city. In an effort to balance the needs of the developers and the abutting communities of the air rights parcels, he created an enormous citizen participation project that has a twofold approach. The SDSC, was responsible for creating the Master Plan and CACs would be created in neighborhoods impacted by the development, are the stewards of the Mater Plan by being responsible for design review.

A Civic Vision For Turnpike Air Rights In Boston, was the end result of a two-year master planning process by the SDSC. A Civic Vision will be used as design guidelines for the 23 parcels that will cover the Turnpike.

28 Letter to Mayor Menino from M. David Lee Chair of the SDSC
Robert Campbell, a correspondent for the Boston Globe, described the Master Plan as “possibly the most thorough, most responsible planning effort that’s ever come out of Boston. If everyone takes it seriously—a big if, as always—this document could change the City forever. ‘A Civic Vision’ is about healing the Massachusetts Turnpike.” Mr. Campbell continued to say that the plan is “a model of what such a planning study should be...This could be the best thing for the city since the Emerald Necklace”.

Not everyone shares Mr. Campbell enthusiasm. Mike Maddigan, a neighborhood resident, feels that the “guidelines are reasonable, but are too loose. They won’t build a Hancock Tower, but we won’t get townhouses either.” June McCourt says, “that the plan is a wonderful tool but there are to many loop holes about the height of buildings.”

Although there are ranges of opinions for this project, this is the first time in the history of Boston Development that citizen participation has been a major component of the planning process.

The master planning process by the SDSC, involved meetings with each abutting community affected by the development of Air Right parcels. Upon completing numerous public meetings in the neighborhoods along the Air Rights Corridor a “Mission was clear.”

- Improve public transportation by providing responsible recommendations for public transit options, reduced parking, and land uses with low traffic generation;
- Enhance neighborhoods in the air rights corridor by accommodation a mix of housing and business opportunities, producing neighborhood specific recommendations, and creating necessary community facilities;
- Invest in city building by accommodating Boston’s world class science and technology opportunities, supporting Mayor Menino’s affordable housing initiatives, and creating for important cultural and entertainment facilities and;
- Promote the public realm by planning new pedestrian friendly connections, creating neighborhood parks, and mitigating the visual impact of the highway.

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29 Boston Gets a Plan to Build on, Boston Globe, author Robert Campbell, Sept. 28, 2000 pg D3
30 Interview with Mike Maddigan, May 2002
31 Interview with June McCourt, June 2002
32 A Civic Vision For Turnpike Air Rights In Boston, pg. 1
33 A Civic Vision For Turnpike Air Rights In Boston, pg. 1
The “Vision” of the Master Plan is to “repair the physical, social and economic breach presented by the railroad and the Turnpike’s cut through Boston.” Imbedded in this ‘Vision’ is an outline of “four mutually reinforcing perspectives:”

1. Reinforce the vitality an quality of life in adjacent neighborhoods
2. Enhance Boston as a place to live, work, and invest
3. Repair and enrich Boston’s public realm
4. Foster increased use and capacity of public transportation and decrease reliance on private automobiles

Originally, under the MOU between Mayor Menino and the MTA, the CACs would use the Master Plan as a framework in which to review development proposals and as guidelines for developers. However, on December 21, 2000, the BRA Board voted to formally adopt A Civic Vision “as the plan and development guidelines which will be the framework for the Boston Redevelopment Authority and future CAC to review proposed development projects over the Turnpike Air Rights in Boston.”

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34 A Civic Vision For Turnpike Air Rights In Boston, pg. 1
35 A Civic Vision For Turnpike Air Rights In Boston, pg. 1
36 A Civic Vision For Turnpike Air Rights In Boston, pg. 1
37 Project Notification Form for Columbus center, pg. 9 in summary
6.2 Air Right Parcels in Bay Village

The parcels that will have an impact on Bay Village are 16 through 21. The first parcels to receive development interest under the new process of CAC and BRA design review have been parcels 16 through 18. Winn Development Co. was selected by Mayor Menino to be the developer prior to *A Civic Vision* and was therefore exempted from the competition process that was outlined in the Master Plan. Mark Maloney, the Boston Redevelopment Authority director, wrote “exempting Winn from having to bid was ‘not ideal’ but implied it was understandable given Winn’s past work on the site”\(^{38}\)

The *Civic Vision* outlined four basic components of design review for parcels 16 –19.

1. Uses

*Upper floors*: buildings should be mixed-use, and focus on uses that are “low-traffic generating” such as housing and hotels. Office space is discouraged unless “customary urban traffic-planning assumptions’ are used as an alternative to auto transit.

\(^{38}\) Boston Globe, Pike Hotel, Housing Project Gets Boost, City State Say Winn Won’t Have To Bid, Richard Kindleberger, Oct 4, 2002
Street Level: Create active uses and an alternative of opportunities for a "diverse mix of unique business." National chain stores are discouraged. Buildings facing Stanhope and Columbus Streets should have "active" ground floor uses: "outdoor dining, music weekends, and other public activities." All structures should have a pedestrian friendly ground floor facades, and blank walls or parking garages facing sidewalks are not permitted.

Parcel 19
This parcel is uniquely small and has been designated for an open space project.

2. Transportation

Pedestrian Circulation: All buildings should enhance the pedestrian circulation through the neighborhoods. Traffic calming measures should be used on Clarendon Street between Columbus and Stuart St.

Parking: Garages access should face turnpike on-ramps, design should avoid auto lines, and exits must have audible and visible warnings. Meter parking designated for residential use after 6:pm.

The parking ratio goals for the parcels are:
- Residential - .75 to 1 space per unit
- Hotel - .5 space per unit
- Office - .75 per 1000 sq. ft.
- Retail- None if possible
- Cinemas- to be determined

Traffic Management: All development should support the City of Boston’s goal to discourage auto use. This means that the Orange Line needs to reopen its Clarendon entrance on the Station Lobby and the Green Line needs to reopen its Arlington’s. Bicycle storage units must be provided in new buildings and a bike path should be created to connect the South End with the Back Bay.
3. Public Realm

*Public and open space and connections:* This portion of the guidelines calls for a public park. If the park is located on Parcel 18 then the park should either be lined with row houses or the *terra firma* can be used as a portion of the parcel of Cortes St. for extensive landscaping.

*Sidewalks:* Active uses should line the sidewalks. Internal malls and atriums should not be used to provide access to these uses. All street fronts should have a continuous wall and/or provide access to public spaces created within the development. Existing sidewalks should either be maintained or widened to accommodate more active uses such as outside dinning.

*Streetscape:* All improvements along the Bay Village and South End corridor should be consistent with historic guidelines of those areas.

*View Corridors:* The South-West corner of Parcel 18 has unique factors that should be considered in development and should provide space for public art that responds to the views.

4. Form

*Building locations:* All buildings should occupy street frontage as much as possible. Any development within Parcels 16-18 is within the South End and Bay Village Historic District. Designs should be sensitive to design guidelines for those neighborhoods and are subject to review for each district.

*Scale and Massing:* All developments should support existing scale, setbacks, and traditional design of abutting neighborhoods. They should reinforce the transition between neighborhoods.

*Height:* Parcel 16 & 17 allow maximum height of 150’; however, Parcel 17 height is dependant on the amount of public space made available on Parcel 18 and the massing should start at 7-10 stories on the South-End side of the Parcel.
and scale up to 150’ on the Boston side. Buildings over 150’ should not have floorplates that exceed 15,000 sq. ft. Parcels.

Design Character: The design of new buildings should incorporate some of the traditional characteristics of the abutting neighborhoods. The buildings must be ‘street buildings’ with pedestrian friendly design that livens the streets. Half of the street frontage should be transparent.

The first design submitted by Winn Development Co., prior to the Civic Vision, received much criticism and was much too large for the surrounding communities. The two towers are exactly the kind of development the neighborhoods were trying to prevent.

The controversy of the design prompted Winn to withdraw its proposal and take a “fresh look” at other possibilities Winn agreed to withdraw their proposal and “engage in a ground up planning process with the CAC and community groups in an effort to revise the development to be more consistent with the A Civic Vision.\(^3\)

Seven months after the initial proposal and several working meetings with community groups and the CAC, Winn Development Co. submitted a second Proposal Notification Form. The process had received praise in the community: “The collective effort is seen by many as a model of how Turnpike Air-Rights projects will be developed in the future.”\(^4\)

\(^3\) Columbus Center PNF, pg 3 project description
\(^4\) Columbus Center PNF, pg 11 in summary
\(^4\) Developers to File Revised Plans For Turnpike Project, by Michael Rosenwald, Boston Globe pg.E1
Although the process was well received, many are still concerned with the size of the project. Martha Walz, president of the Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay said “This is a much better project than the initial proposal, but we have work to do before the project is as good as it could be. I respect the fact that they [Winn Development Co.] made a big step forward here.”

The second proposal, although much smaller in massing, is still large in scale. Residents are still concerned with the height of the building on parcel 16. Many residents feel that it is much too high. Many Bay Village residents are upset that Parcel 18, which was to be green space according to the A Civic Vision, has been used for development.

June McCourt feels that this has happened as a result of politics. Board members on the Columbus Center CAC board are selected, not voted on by the residents. These selections have resulted in a board that is friendlier to development than to the needs of the abutting communities.

Although the issue of height in the Winn Development proposal is still a hotly contested, this process of Citizen Participation has been unprecedented. The depth of citizen participation reflects a change in the culture values: neighborhood residents must have an

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42 Developers to File Revised Plans For Turnpike Project, by Michael Rosenwald, Boston Globe pg.E1
influence in development outcomes that will affect their community. The process of
citizen participation has had an enormous effect on the form of development.
7.1 Process and form:
In the beginning, the development in Bay Village, there was no process for citizen participation. As a result, many buildings were demolished to construct film storage facilities and alterations were made to the facades of buildings that were inconsistent with the historical designs. Without neighborhood input, these types of developments (which would never be approved in today’s climate) continued to the point where very few original structures were left standing.

The South Cove Urban Renewal project had a mechanism for limited citizen participation. As a result, part neighborhood is still standing; however, much was lost during this period. Buildings along the edge of Bay Village, that did not have private sector investment, were demolished. Today these buildings would be as valuable as the ones within the neighborhood. However, because they were neglected, at that time by the private sector, the Urban Renewal project was able to destroy them. Streets were also closed, disrupting the original form of the neighborhood

Park Plaza Urban Renewal project
In 1970 the original Park Plaza Urban Renewal project did not have a mechanism for citizen participation. As a result, a six-million square foot project was proposed. This proposal would have been detrimental to the Boston Gardens and Commons, and would have walled off Bay Village from the rest of the City.

After long and controversial battle by the citizens opposed by the project, the Park Plaza CAC was formed. Neighborhood residents choose the members of the CAC board and a “Consensus Plan” for the area was designed. This plan had a parcel-by parcel approach to the redevelopment of the area and ultimately resulted in a development half the size of the original proposal.
These before and after pictures show how the new development complied with the existing form of the Park Plaza area. As the buildings got taller they were scaled back. When these two images are compared, it is evident that citizen participation in had a
positive effect on the development outcome and made the City of Boston more livable for future generations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Park Plaza Score Card</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1971 Proposal</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Square Footage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tower Heights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Towers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boylston Towers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boylston St. Heights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This scorecard demonstrates the enormous impact that citizen participation can have on development outcomes. It is hard to imagine what Boston would be like if the Park Plaza development would have been built.

**Turn Pike Air Right Parcels:**

Winn Development Proposal before (left) and after citizen participation (right)

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43 Friends of the Public Gardens and Commons Newsletter, Summer 1995 pg8
When the first Air Rights parcels, 16 & 17 were designated to Winn Properties, there was no mechanism for citizen participation. As a consequence, Winn Development Co’s first proposal was a plan that conflicted with the needs of the neighborhood. When *A Civic Vision* was finished, it was apparent the two towers were exactly the kind of development that would have been discouraged. After intense citizen participation the development outcome is one that tries to balance the needs of the abutting communities and the needs of the developers.

### *A Civic Vision* Score Card:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parcel</th>
<th>First proposal</th>
<th>Second proposal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Sq. Ft.</td>
<td>713,000 sq. ft.</td>
<td>670,000 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tower Height</td>
<td>38 stories</td>
<td>29 stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking Spaces</td>
<td>331 spaces</td>
<td>210 spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Sq. Ft.</td>
<td>625,000 sq. ft.</td>
<td>323,000 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tower Height</td>
<td>33 stories</td>
<td>14 stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking Spaces</td>
<td>294 spaces</td>
<td>78 spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Sq. Ft.</td>
<td>This parcel was designated for green space in exchange for height on 16 in the <em>Civic Vision.</em></td>
<td>60,000 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tower Heights</td>
<td></td>
<td>6 stories/ no tower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking Spaces</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Parcel 18 was negotiated with the CAC and in exchange for height, that parcel was designated to Winn Development Co. for development.

The changes in the total project have been:

- Square footage of turnpike and rail lines being covered by the project has almost doubled;
- Linear footage of new streetwall being created has increased to approximately 3,000 linear feet;
- Approximately 30,000 square feet of new public park/open space is being created by the project;
- Despite incurring the cost to double the amount of exposed turnpike and rail lines covered by deck, the gross square footage of development in the Project has increased by less than 1% from 1,338,000 to 1,356,000 square feet;
- The Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of the entire Project has been reduced from an FAR of 7 to an FAR of 44^44

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^44 Columbus Center Project Notification Form, pg 2 of the Project Description
The public process of the *Civic Vision* allowed the community to participate in designing their neighborhoods. This process has created an environment that is friendly to negotiation of development. When developers go before a board they know what is expected of design. Neighborhood associations are more likely to negotiate design issues in this climate, as opposed to outright kill projects like the Park Plaza plan.

In general, the process of citizen participation can also be a public relations tool. Community charettes should identify the needs of the community, and the designs will respond to those needs.

Citizen participation also contributes to the Urban Fabric. The designs—if done right—are a manifestation of the ‘cultural values’ of the community. The community becomes connected to design by giving residents a sense of responsibility to the design. They become a part of the story on the neighborhood.
8.1 Conclusion

After reviewing the different developments that took place in and around Bay Village, it is evident that many factors contributed to its survival. Ultimately it is the culmination of the changing cultural values of space and the synergy between the following factors that have resulted in the survival of Bay Village in its present form: location, architecture, form, private sector investment, neighborhood activism, timing of development interest, and BVNA’s alliances with other community groups.

Location was a significant factor to the construction of Bay Village. Early on, the Bay Village area was nothing more than mudflats caused by tidal flows. This shallow area allowed for the expansion of the South Cove area when additional residential development was needed for the City of Boston.

Once the neighborhood was constructed it became desirable because of its proximity to downtown. The Landmark Building of the Providence Railroad and the Worcester line divided the district from the rest of the Boston. Although there was development within the district, the buildings did not compromise the scale or form of the neighborhood. Once the Boston region began to suburbanize Bay Village was ignored and considered a ‘slum.’ However, because of its location, the neighborhood began to attract residents that interested in living in the City.

When the CBD was looking to expand they ignored this area. Tunney Lee said, “There was a feeling in the business community that Bay Village and the surrounding areas were too messy for development.”\(^{45}\) The business community simply jumped the “transitional neighborhoods” and began construction in Back Bay (i.e. Prudential Center and Hancock Tower).

The architectural style of the neighborhood allowed residents to mobilize around the historic Federalist Style row houses. During the period of renovation it was the row houses that attracted a population that was interested in living in a neighborhood that was

\(^{45}\) Personal interview with Tunney Lee May 2002
unique and interesting. However if wasn’t for private sector investment and neighborhood preservation efforts the architecture of Bay Village would have been lost. Also, the alliance with other neighborhood organizations involved in historic preservation created a network that expanded beyond the boarders of Bay Village.

The form of the neighborhood, although unique and historic, has not been as important to Bay Village’s survival as the other factors. It was the efforts of the residents to try and preserve that form that was the important step towards preservation. In fact, neighborhoods with equal or greater architectural style and form in other parts of Boston have been lost to public and private sector developments.

46 BRA website
The form of the streets and buildings within Bay Village were exactly the same of those within the neighborhood that were lost. Stuart St. and its buildings were completely eliminated for the expansion of Columbus Ave. The buildings along Carver St. (built by the same craftsman as others in the neighborhood) were completely demolished, the street widened and renamed. Church and Broadway Street have been closed off to thru-traffic; further disrupting the form.

Private sector investment was an essential component to the preservation of Bay Village. If there had not been investment in the neighborhood prior to the South Cove Urban Renewal Project, the BRA would not have been able to support the preservation of the district. Like the surrounding areas that were in a state of deterioration, Bay Village would have been demolished. Once the private sector saw value in the buildings this enable the public sector to support their investment through the application process.

Neighborhood activism resulted in the creation of the BVNA. Their original goal was to make cosmetic improvements to the neighborhood and increase City services. As time went by, the BVNA became more powerful within the neighborhood.

In 1983 Bay Village received a local Historic Designation. Any developments within the neighborhood must go before the Bay Village Historic Preservation Board for approval. This process provides another layer of protection for the neighborhood.

Neighborhood activism used the creation non-profit organizations as a device for community organizing. As time past that device has evolved into the creation of organizations such as the CACs and SDSC and has helped preserve neighborhood interests. As M. David Lee, the Chair for the SDSC stated, it was the job of their organization to “balance public purpose and economic feasibility, neighborhood concerns, and citywide vitality.”

47 A Civic Vision
The timing of the South End Urban Renewal project happened after there had been a shift in the Federal Urban Renewal programs. These programs had transitioned from slum clearance to neighborhood rehabilitation. This change in Urban Renewal programs represented a cultural shift on a local and national level.

In Boston, the West End Urban Renewal project had been a complete disaster. As a result, the South Cove project had a mechanism for limited citizen participation in place. This participation resulted in the neighborhood being reduced by several blocks. Buildings that had not received private investment were demolished. Although much was lost it could have been much worse.

The BVNA alliance with the Back Bay Neighborhood Association, the Beacon Hill Civic Association and the Friends of the Public Garden and Common ultimately resulted in the decentralization of power. This alliance gave the BVNA more power when it came to mobilization efforts against the Park Plaza Urban Renewal project.

The Park Plaza Urban Renewal proposal, left to the BRA and the private sector developers would have been built to its original design. This would have had a detrimental effect on the neighborhood and all of Boston. The alliance against the Park Plaza proposal resulted in the creation of the CAC, and changed the way development projects happened in Boston. These organizations by themselves never could have had that kind of impact.

The synergy of location, architecture, form, private sector investment, neighborhood activism, timing of development interest, and dalliances with other community groups have all contributed to the survival of Bay Village. The most important component was private sector investment within the neighborhood, without that there would not have been any community to organize that would have been listened to at the time of Urban Renewal.
Essentially, the current size of Bay Village reflects the change in cultural values of space throughout time. The shift towards preservation was a pivotal moment in the survival of Bay Village. The cultural value of the residents responsible for this shift was one that valued the urban experience. June McCourt moved to Bay Village, because she wanted “to live in the City.” She valued her urban experience when she lived in Europe and wanted a similar experience here.

The urban experience is one of connection; connection to resources, economic opportunity, transportation, technology, education, diversity, information, social services, cultural networks, music, art, literature, and of course, history. If Bay Village residents should ever lose their cultural value of connection to the urban experience and preservation of the neighborhood, then the neighborhood would be replaced by new development.

Given theoretical spectrum of Park and Burgess’s market forces and Walter Firey’s social values, the example of Bay Village falls closer Firey’s point on the spectrum. Cultural value of space is more a determent of where and how people live than market forces. However, development can be more complicated that; Firey ignores the political climate in the cultural value of space.

The outside forces of the political climate can often be hostile to neighborhood demands on development. This hostility requires neighborhood organizations to develop an internal sophisticated skill set of mobilization. These skills, often out of reach for some neighborhoods, are the necessary tools required in neighborhood preservation movements.

In the case of Bay Village, the residents were able to create alliances with other more powerful neighborhood organizations. This alliance was central to its preservation and created a social network that expanded beyond it borders; ultimately changing the way development proposals were handled in Boston. This social network will be necessary to

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48 Interview with June McCourt June 2002
maintain in order for the interests of Bay Village to be address in future development proposals.
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