Returning to the City:  
Sense of Place in Urban Neighborhoods  

by Andrew Joseph Grace  
Bachelor of Architecture  
Roger Williams University, May 1994  

SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF URBAN STUDIES AND PLANNING  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER IN CITY PLANNING AT THE  
MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY JUNE 1998  

Signature of the author  
Andrew Joseph Grace  
Department of Urban Studies and Planning  
May 21, 1998  

Certified by  
Dennis Frenchman, Professor of the Practice of Urban Design  
Departments of Architecture and Urban Studies and Planning  
Thesis Advisor  

Accepted by  
Lawrence Bacow, Lee and Geraldine Martin Professor of Environmental Studies  
Department of Urban Studies and Planning  
Chairperson, Master in City Planning Committee  

© 1998 Andrew Joseph Grace. All rights Reserved.  
The Author hereby grants to MIT permission to reproduce and to distribute publicly paper and electronic copies of this thesis document in whole or in part.
# Table of Contents

Abstract  
Chapter 1: Introduction  

SECTION I: RETURNING TO THE CITY  

Chapter 2: The Urban Revitalization Trend  
Part I. Defining the trend  
Part II. Returning  
Part III. Why are they returning?  

Chapter 3: Historical Background  
Part I. General history  
Part II. Wellesley Park, Dorchester  
Part III. Parley Forest, Jamaica Plain  

Chapter 4: The Neighborhoods Today  
Part I. Learning from the Community  
Part II. General Questions  
Part III. The Photos  

SECTION II: THE DESIGN OF URBAN NEIGHBORHOODS  

Chapter 5: Physical Design  
Part I. Components of Physical Design in Urban Neighborhoods  

Chapter 6: Prospects for Urban Neighborhoods  
Part I. Defining Sense of Place  
Part II. Conclusions  

Appendix: Questionnaires  
Bibliography  
Acknowledgements  
Illustration Credits
Dedication

This thesis has been a collaborative effort, with many professors, family, and friends contributing to this document. For their efforts, my heartfelt appreciation goes out to:

To Dennis, for your encouragement, guidance, and passion. I have truly enjoyed your energy and excitement.

To Julian, for provoking me to think differently and question everything.

To Larry, for your helpful comments and constructive feedback.

To my Parents, for your love and belief in me, and for making your home such a haven to return to.

To my sisters, Andrea and Claudia, for being there for me.

To my grandmothers, for your love and support.

To my friends, Ruth, Mina, Susan, Laura, Cheri, Camille, Michelle & Markus, who kept me sane through this entire process.

To my 10-485 mates, Maria, Bijoy & Sunni, who made me laugh.
Returning to the City:
Sense of Place in Urban Neighborhoods

by Andrew Joseph Grace

Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning on May 21, 1998 in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master in City Planning

ABSTRACT
Cities are being rediscovered by a new generation of people who are moving into urban neighborhoods for the first time. Many young professionals and maturing baby boomers are migrating from the suburbs and returning to the neighborhoods that middle-class people left behind fifty years ago. In Boston, many former streetcar suburbs have witnessed a dramatic resurgence during the past fifteen years. Many historic homes have been renovated, numerous parks have been restored, empty storefronts have been filled, and infrastructure has been improved. Seen from the broad perspective, this appears to be more than just a few isolated neighborhoods turning themselves around and instead appears to be an emerging trend which offers promise to the future of the city.

This thesis focuses on this emerging trend by examining how two Boston streetcar suburb neighborhoods have been revitalized. The trend of rediscovering city neighborhoods is traced, with particular attention focused on what forces have caused this trend to emerge. In examining these forces, I have attempted to discover the reasons why people have returned to the city and examine what the residents were attracted to in these neighborhoods. The thesis focuses on the physical characteristics of the neighborhoods and explores the characteristics of a place. It postulates that there are three physical design components of traditional urbanism: Public Realm, Site Layout, and Building Design, each of which has a corresponding scale. The thesis proposes the three categories as a way of evaluating neighborhoods, and argues that older urban neighborhoods with their traditional urbanism are far superior to recent new urbanist neighborhood developments.

Thesis Supervisor: Dennis Frenchman
Title: Professor of the Practice of Urban Design, Departments of Architecture and Urban Studies and Planning
Chapter 1: Introduction

There is no section in America half so good to live in as splendid old New England- and there is no city on this continent so lovely and loveable as Boston.

Mark Twain 1871
According to popular perception, the American city is in trouble. Turn on the TV, open the national magazines, and you are constantly reminded of this perception. The list of urban problems seems endless: drugs, poverty, crime, pollution, gang violence, racial injustice, moral decay, dying industries, aging infrastructure, declining school systems, the disappearance of well paying working-class jobs; the list goes on and on. Many urban experts claim our city centers are in a desperate situation which can’t be reversed. The picture they paint is not pretty; it’s difficult to imagine why any one would want to live in the city.

Contrast this with the reality of what is happening in some cities in America. Consider New York City for example. Following the heels of a booming stock market, healthy economy, and unprecedented Wall Street bonuses, New Yorkers are facing fierce bidding wars on urban real estate, causing sales prices below 96th Street to go up 20.7% over last year. This phenomenon goes beyond the success of the American economy though, and according to an April 1998 New York Times article:

In interviews, buyers and sellers also credit the newly desirable reputation of New York City- seedy is out, safety is in- for bringing young and old here to experience what they perceive as the new glitter and glow. When they arrive, many find renting an apartment prohibitively expensive: even with rising co-op and condo prices, many still argue it’s smarter (and cheaper) to buy than to rent.

The perceptions appear to be changing. While New York is arguably in a class by itself, only twenty-five short years ago, it too was a city in trouble, on the brink of declaring bankruptcy. Many predicted it would never turn around.

Although Boston is the largest city in the six New England states, it pales in comparison to New York. However, like New York, it has also witnessed a resurgence of interest in its urban neighborhoods. In-town neighborhoods like the Back Bay, Beacon Hill, Charlestown, and the North and the South Ends have experienced double-digit percentage sales price increases over the past four years.

Recently, many further out “streetcar suburbs” in Boston have also witnessed a resurgence of activity. While this trend is by no means of the scale or magnitude that the suburbs witnessed in the fifties and sixties, something is happening in these urban neighborhoods. Not only are they reversing the trend of decline, they are also attracting new public and private investment. Certainly, the healthy economy has helped to support these efforts, but these improvements are representative of something larger than the current economic cycle. The upgrades that are being made to these neighborhoods are helping to restore the level of service and quality of life, and in turn encouraging others to rediscover these places.

While these changes are not universal in every city, positive things are happening to many urban neighborhoods. Discounted as too small and insignificant to make a difference, this trend is often overlooked. In fact though, many of these neighborhoods have pulled themselves up by their bootstraps, and are finally beginning to attract new residents to them.
Large national retailers are also returning to urban centers, after concentrating on suburban expansion over the past forty years. “The suburbs are over-stored, profits are declining and retailers are looking for new opportunities,” according to Ann Habiby of the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City in Cambridge, Massachusetts. National retailers had looked overseas for new markets but many found better opportunities closer to home, in urban neighborhoods that are grossly under-served.

Prospects can be enticing. Take groceries: As much as 40% of the market is not being served and that market nationwide could total $20 billion a year. There are also opportunities for other essential community needs like banks, pharmacies, theaters and restaurants. “It really is a perfect world for us,” says Pat Burns of Cineplex Odeon, which is targeting inner-city areas all over the USA and Canada. It already has built one multiplex in an inner-city Chicago neighborhood and has plans for three more.2

Some of the turnaround stories in Boston are directly attributed to the local community, while others are classic stories of gentrification. In either case, in order for the trend to continue, these neighborhoods must convince people that the reality of these places has changed. Cities will never be what they were before, nor should they be. But if we want our urban communities to be successful, they must grow and adapt with the times.

**Purpose**

This thesis will investigate the scope of this trend by examining two urban neighborhoods which have successfully attracted middle-class residents. In its broadest sense, this thesis will focus on three areas: defining the trend, presenting the case studies, and postulating an approach for other urban neighborhoods. Through this study, I will demonstrate that the physical characteristics and layout of urban neighborhoods are an important factor in attracting people to these neighborhoods. Although there are multiple reasons why people are moving into urban neighborhoods, the primary focus of this thesis will be on these factors which relate to physical design. I believe these factors represent a significant component and therefore merit study in greater detail. While I am not advocating that physical design is the only factor, it is perhaps the most critical.

This study was born out of a series of interviews and experiences with residents in two neighborhoods, Parley Forest located in Jamaica Plain and Wellesley Park located in Dorchester. The Parley Forest neighborhood is located in the Hyde Square area in Jamaica Plain at the intersection of Center Street and the Green Street, near the Green Street T station. Wellesley Park is located between Codman Square and Fields Corner in Dorchester, and is served by the Shawmut T station on the Redline. Both of the neighborhood enclaves contain approximately 25-30 homes.

An empirical study of each of these two neighborhoods was conducted where local residents were interviewed. This thesis relies on the experiences and the knowledge gained from the interviews, but is not intended to be a scientific study. It is hoped that by carefully examining these places, their value will be appreciated at a larger scale.

This thesis is divided into two sections: I. Returning to the City, and II. The Design of Urban Neighborhoods. Section I contains three
chapters which attempt to define the trend and then examine it more closely in two Boston neighborhoods. The section begins by dissecting the urban revitalization trend and asks the question “Why are middle-class people returning to the city?” In postulating an answer to this question, it establishes that there are two reasons, spatial factors and non-spatial factors. Chapter Three looks at the historical development of each of the two case study neighborhoods as a way of understanding what forces shaped the physical environment. Chapter Four focuses specifically on the interviews and experiences with residents in the neighborhoods. It directly poses the question “Why are these two urban neighborhoods attracting people to them?”

The second section, The Design of Urban Neighborhoods, contains two chapters, and focuses on the spatial factors of these neighborhoods. This section isolates physical design, examines sense of place, and offers a critical evaluation of today’s urban neighborhoods while proposing ways of improving them. Chapter Five suggests a way of thinking about the design of urban neighborhoods and proposes three categories of physical design. Chapter Six, Prospects for Urban Neighborhoods, builds on what was discussed in the earlier sections, and considers what sense of place means in the context of an urban environment. It also reflects on what was discovered in the previous chapters and asks the question “Can a place like Wellesley Park or Parley Forest shed some new light on the current thinking about the future of urban neighborhoods?”

The Case Studies

This thesis uses the case studies of Wellesley Park and Parley Forest, to postulate that urban neighborhoods have a number of attractive and desirable features which are causing people to value them again. While the people I spoke with offer a wide array of reasons why they are moving to the city, in general, they’re reasons can be categorized into two groups, those that relate to the physical form (spatial factors) and those that do not (non-spatial factors). The two most important spatial factors are the physical qualities of the neighborhood; the houses, the streets, the proximity to shops and transit, in short, the design of these neighborhoods, and second, the strong feeling of community, or as one resident described it “the there there.” For lack of a better term, I’ll call it sense of place.

Criteria

The following criteria were established to guide the selection of the case study neighborhoods. Both neighborhoods chosen:

- Were originally built for middle-class residents around the turn of the century.
- Have a unique identifying characteristic which distinguishes it from surrounding neighborhoods.
- Developed as a streetcar suburb and continues to be connected to Boston via the T.
- Have a variety of housing types and forms; single family, multifamily, one and-a-half, two and three story structures.
- Can be described as transitional; the maintenance of some properties may be deferred, but the majority of the buildings are intact.
- Are being upgraded through public and private investment.
**Physical Design**

My search for sense of place in Boston that began by looking for certain attributes in the environment. I searched for places where the physical design had a very strong presence and was an integral part of the neighborhood. The Melville Park neighborhood, of which Wellesley Park is an enclave, is a collection of turn of the century single and multifamily homes. While these homes are for the most part pleasant, but by no means extraordinary, the quality of public space in this area is quite remarkable. The small area is characterized by four different sized parks which are integrated into the street pattern, with homes organized around them.

The Parley Forest neighborhood in Jamaica Plain strongest physical design features are winding dirt roads and natural landscape. The sheer fact that this neighborhood even exists is testament to the power of physical design. Residents in the neighborhood have fought to maintain these dirt roads in the face of multiple attempts to update them. The absence of asphalt and presence of a large share of untouched and heavily treed land in the urban fabric of Boston has led many people to assume the neighborhood is a private collection of homes. The surrounding neighborhood follows a more conventional model of development, with regularly ordered houses along linear streets, and is surrounded by the parks of Jamaica Plain.

While both of these neighborhoods are considered urban by today’s standards, they do have some characteristics of suburban development, from the winding roads, rear decks, and backyards. What is most interesting when considering the spatial and physical design is the amount of attention people living in these neighborhoods assign to these matters. The majority of people I spoke with commented on the physical characteristics of the neighborhood, be it their own home or the streets and parks. One resident in the Wellesley Park neighborhood admitted:

> Everybody here is sort of househappy... we all share stories and compare houses... we spend a lot of time talking about the houses. There is a certain self consciousness about the neighborhood, people like to talk about it a lot.4

Another resident in Parley Forest reflected on the physical design of the neighborhood and what it was that made it so pleasant:

> I like the tightness of the neighborhood, that things are close together when you go outside, there is often someone coming or going who you know you can sit and chat with for a while.3

Chapter Five will focus on the specific design features of urban neighborhoods. A framework will be developed for the components of physical design in urban residential neighborhoods.
By a margin of 3:1, Americans prefer a good community to a good house when buying.  

**Sense of Place: In Search of Community**

...And we didn’t want to live in the ‘burbs, in Waltham in tract housing...the suburbs are so sterile and homogenized. They don’t have a real sense of community, which was something we were looking for.  

Time magazine’s December 8, 1997 cover displays an image of a small village, with the title “Why more Americans are fleeing to the Small Towns.” It features a picturesque landscape complete with rolling hills, a barn with silo, and a church steeple in the distance. What is most telling about this cover however, is something most people probably will pay little attention to. The cover includes five roads leading to the town, all of which are bumper to bumper with trucks and cars. The message hidden within this tainted image, too much of a good thing usually leads to its demise. And judging from the tone of the article inside, this tested adage holds true.

I believe that the recent fascination with small towns is indicative of a much larger trend which extends beyond continued outward expansion of the frontier or Americans fascination with the new. Instead, it is indicative of people’s dissatisfaction with the quality of life and physical environment in the suburbs and their yearning for a community with a strong sense of place. The overwhelming majority of small town arrivals come from the suburban towns surrounding large metropolitan areas. Their heavily loaded trucks carry much more than their possessions though, they also carry a bundle full of expectations. Expectations of what...
living in a small town will be like, of what an ideal community
they will find, and of what a special place they are coming to. 
Unfortunately, the reality they encounter is far different from
their expectations.

Rural communities with populations between 300 and 3000 are
the fastest growing communities today. The three rural
communities that are profiled in the article are not celebrating
their sudden popularity though. Instead, these towns are
lamenting all the troubles they now face as a result of all the
new arrivals. One town, Wilmington, Ohio, has grown from
11,000 residents in 1990 to more than 13,000 in 1997, and has
been experiencing what resident Eric Pooley calls “metropolitan
headaches.” The town, according to Pooley, has acquired many
of the problems associated with much larger areas, such as
crack-houses, youth gangs, unplanned development, a rising
felony-crime rate (it has nearly doubled over the past five years),
racial problems, and traffic congestion caused by the 36,000
vehicles that clog the towns streets everyday. Another example
where the perception is also far different from the reality, only
this time its not for the better.

Many people who moved to Wilmington have discovered that
the utopian vision doesn’t exist, and are waking up to the reality
of what this small town has become. Ruth Dooley, a physician,
and her husband, a pilot at Airborne, moved to the town because
they were attracted to the timelessness of the place, the
picturesque Victorians and flags flying proudly on the homes, a
compact downtown with shops, and a downtown theater with
an art-deco marquee. However, after settling into a

Chapter Six will build upon this foundation and examine what
sense of place means in an urban context. The merits of
traditional urbanism will be contrasted with suburbia and the
new urbanism. The notions of place and community will be
explored.

Intimacy with your neighbors is something you don’t have
in the suburbs, but because you are living in the city, you
have to talk to your neighbors, there is a sense that living
in an urban area that is perceived as being transitional,
in some way it forces you to interact with your neighbors.
It creates a sense of community, that doesn’t have to
exist where you don’t feel threatened.
Notes
3 Debbie Howlett, (1997)”National Retailers Cashing in on Inner Cities” USA Today, Aug 15.
5 Interviews with Parley Forest residents, March 1998.
6 Fannie Mae study on single-family home ownership
7 Interviews with Parley Forest residents, March 1998.
8 Interviews with Wellesley Park residents, March 1998.
SECTION I: RETURNING TO THE CITY

...schools, libraries, music and the fine arts. People of the greatest wealth can hardly command as much as these in the country as the poorest working girl is offered in Boston at the mere cost of a walk for a short distance over a good, firm, clean pathway, lighted at night and made interesting to her by shopfronts and the variety of people passing.

Frederick Law Olmsted
Chapter 2: The Urban Revitalization Trend

Steve and Ann Lindblom moved from the outer suburbs to a home in the city "to be closer to the things we do— the restaurants, the bars, the fun activities, the biking and hiking trails." With their three children "grown and out of the house," the Lindbloms wanted a more active lifestyle... "Now we're out at least once every weekend and twice during the week. Before, it was once every three weeks, and only on the weekend.

"Home Buyers Moving In"
Washington Post
March 1998
A recent article in the Boston Phoenix summed up what is happening in the city.

*Boston is changing. In these improved economic times, there is a renewed sense of faith in the city’s future, which has brought a burst of urban planning, investment and development.*

Many neighborhoods of Boston have benefited from this economic prosperity, yet what is going on in these neighborhoods appears to be part of a much larger trend that has been gaining momentum over the last fifteen years.

This chapter will examine the scope of this larger trend of urban revitalization by defining the trend and discussing the multiple interpretations of the term "returning." The first two sections of the chapter will focus on these definitions. The third section will focus on the underlying theme of why people are returning to the city. It will investigate this question and propose two categories of thought. The first category, spatial factors, relates to physical design and sense of place. The second category, non-spatial factors, deals with issues outside of the physical realm.

**DEFINING THE TREND**

An emerging trend of middle-class people returning to the city appears to be in full swing, partly as a result of shifts in the way we work, the graying of America, and peoples desire for an alternative to suburban development.

This incremental change has been occurring over the last fifteen years. In contrast to the previous generation of urban renewal, which focussed on demolishing portions of the city, this change is being measured by the number of empty storefronts that have been filled, vacant houses that have been reoccupied, and abandoned buildings rehabilitated.

Some cities, particularly those that have been able to maintain a core of jobs in their CBD like Boston, have undergone a regeneration of many of their neighborhoods. Dubbed 'gentrification' in the late seventies, this trend was traditionally a troubling issue for architects, planners, and politicians because of the adverse effects felt by the low-income residents as affluent residents moved in. While this criticism is true in some neighborhoods, there have also been very successful efforts to integrate people of all income levels into revitalized neighborhoods. The success of the South End neighborhood in Boston is a prime example of how different income levels can
be integrated in an urban neighborhood. Innovative projects like the Villa Victoria housing development, the Southwest Corridor Park, and Tent City have had a positive impact on the quality of life in the community.

Christopher Leinberger, in a recent journal article on urban revitalization, suggests that there are seven features which successful cities have in common. I have condensed his list into five categories, which I believe better reflect the way cities operate. The characteristics that successfully revitalized cities have in common are:

1. A balanced mixture of all income levels; high, middle and low.
2. A functional and well used public transportation system.
3. Entertainment, recreation, and cultural amenities.
4. Presence of natural environment (waterfronts, parks, squares.)
5. Civic institutions, at the city-wide, neighborhood, and local level.

Cities that have these features have been able to recover from the mass exodus which took place in the fifties and sixties when many families left the city for the suburbs sprouting up outside of the city.

While the suburbs have provided a comfortable lifestyle for families with young children, other segments of the population discovered that their lifestyle wasn’t really included in the suburban formula equation. When the post WW II suburbs were first constructed, they were built for a largely homogeneous population, young veterans who were just beginning their families. Built at a time when dad went to work and mom stayed at home with the three kids, the school became the center of social life. As families changed and dual income households replaced single head of household as the dominant family structure, the suburbs have not adapted. Today, families take many different forms, divorced parents, single parents, gay and lesbian couples, and grandparents raising their children’s kids.

Urban neighborhoods have a major advantage over the suburbs: they have been able to accommodate these changes. They also have another advantage, the urban experience itself. Where else can you find genuine streetlife with many different kinds of people to watch, talk to, and interact with.

RETURNING

Returning to the city can be interpreted in many ways. If one were to define it literally, return means giving back, but in the context of the city, it means people coming back from outside of the city. It also refers to people rediscovering the city, reinhabiting the neighborhoods, and restoring the homes. Its not just new people moving in from outside though, its also middle-class people moving to neighborhoods in the city they had left. And since a full third of the people I spoke with in these neighborhoods have been living in the city for most of their lives, for them, returning means witnessing another wave of change in their neighborhoods.

The term “returning” has many definitions: reinhabiting, retaining, recycling, rediscovering, revitalizing, reusing, regenerating, renovating. It means people moving back, people deciding to stay, adapting structures, finding the city for the first time, injecting
new life, introducing new uses, making neighborhoods new again, and coming full circle.

Herbert Gans, in the Urban Villagers, uses the term “latency” to describe the social characteristic of a neighborhood. The term refers to the ability of a neighborhood to adapt to many different groups of people. The spaces and buildings are also described as latent, because they have been adapted for many different uses. In the two urban neighborhoods examined, latency refers to the ability of the homes in the area to serve many different groups of people and lifestyles. Over the course of their hundred year existence, the structures have been modified to accommodate these different needs. While the majority of homes in the two neighborhoods were built as single family home, they have since been converted to two and three family houses, boarding houses, nursing homes, apartment buildings, and more recently into condo’s or back into single family homes. If neighborhoods had life cycles, these buildings would be undergoing their third or fourth generation, as people rediscover the benefits of living in these neighborhoods.

If “returning” is to be understood in the context of Boston, then a suitable framework which establishes why people left is necessary. The next section examines these motivations.

**Returning to Boston**

The return of the middle-class to Boston follows a well documented period of outmigration. This outflow occurred over the course of twenty years and impacted the neighborhoods of Boston in different ways. The densely populated and in-town neighborhoods of the North End and Beacon Hill, maintained a large share of their population, while the outlying communities of Jamaica Plain, Dorchester, and Roxbury saw large share of the white middle-class population move out, only to be replaced by lower income Hispanics and African Americans.

As tastes changed and the nation invested heavily in new highways, city residents fled the older buildings and neighborhoods in search of the American dream, a new single family home on an individual lot in the suburbs. Over the course of thirty years, Boston, saw its population decline from a population of 801,444 in 1950 to a low of 563,00 in 1980.

The careful marketing of a new lifestyle outside of the city was promoted by developers, the federal government, and the rapidly expanding automobile industry. In fact, General Motors Futurama pavilion in the 1939-1940 World’s Fair featured their glamorous new cars and a new home complete with a garage for everyone in the country. According to Christopher Leinberger, the futurama exhibit:

> More than any other factor... has been the underlying reason our (cities) have been in decline for the past fifty years. Predicated on automobile convenience and privacy, the Futurama vision delivered real estate products that were modular with no relation to the their immediate surroundings⁴

America’s love affair with all that was new coupled with the problems of racial integration, resulted in the mass out-migration of the city’s white middle-class population. As the middle-class moved to new developments in the suburbs, urban neighborhoods were occupied at a much lower density, leading
to severe disinvestment and abandonment. By 1950, the decentralization of urban populations pushed the suburban proportion of metropolitan development in the US beyond the fifty percent mark, and by 1955, automobile ownership had passed the ratio of one car per family. Through the assistance of the government’s Federal Highway Program, cities were literally ripped apart, and the land outside of them readied for expansion.

As a result of these policies and shifts in the lifestyle, many urban neighborhoods fell into deep decline over the next twenty-five years. Many who remained saw their property values decline, services decline, and crime rates rise. In many Boston neighborhoods redlining and block busting caused stable neighborhoods to become remnants of what they were just five years earlier. This pattern of decline continued, reaching its nadir during the late seventies and early eighties. By this time, Boston had lost over 238,000 residents to the outlying communities.

Just when it seemed that all hope was lost on these areas, some urban neighborhoods began to turn themselves around. In Boston, credit can be attributed to a number of different factors, including the City’s Main Streets program, improvements to the Southwest Corridor project, investment in the commuter rail system, the efforts of the local gay population, and a citywide effort to promote home-ownership. While it is not likely that these neighborhoods will return to their pre World War II levels of occupation, the flight from the city has stopped. The 1990 Census recorded Boston’s first rise in population since the 1940’s, when it reached 574,823 (a rise of 2 percent or 11,000 people since 1980.) With a stable population, the city’s efforts can now focus on improving and updating the existing infrastructure.

The crime rate has dropped swiftly and steadily, and property values across the board have been rising at a rate which exceeds suburban communities. In June 1997, the city released a report that showed crime levels were at a 29-year low. The biggest changes were seen in the Lower Roxbury and Mission Hill sections of the city, where total crime dropped by 26 percent. Along with these dramatic drops in violent crime, other Boston neighborhoods such as South Boston, Brighton, or Charlestown, have seen real estate values rise more than 20 percent over the last five years, according to figures provided by Banker & Tradesman.

A new generation of inhabitants are rediscovering the same features that attracted others to these places in the first place. New people have moved in, restored, and reinhabited the houses. Many long-time urban dwellers are rediscovering the neighborhoods they have been living in for all their lives. The investment and revitalization of the housing stock has meant restoration, renewal, and reinhabiting properties that were empty or abandoned. Empty lots in these neighborhoods are being built on, and a house located in the Meville Park neighborhood in Dorchester that caught fire this past January is being entirely rebuilt. When the last house burned to the ground in the neighborhood in 1983, the land was cleared and remained vacant for eleven years.

Another factor influencing a return to the city are changes in family formation and structure. The norm of early marriages and large families which were common in the 1950’s ended by the mid 1960’s. Since the 1970’s the average size of households has continually declined, and the average age of people getting married
SECTION 1: RETURNING TO THE CITY

Chapter 2: The Urban Revitalization Trend

has increased. Many baby boomers have made a conscious decision to remain childless, and those that do have children only have one or two. The generations that have come after the boomers have followed these trends. These shifts in family structure provide an opportunity for urban neighborhoods to serve a wide range of population groups. The mixed use fabric and walkable neighborhoods allow for a broader range of living accommodations and options. With the growth of different ‘lifestyle’ and population groups, these older neighborhoods seem now to offer a viable alternative to the suburbs.

WHY ARE PEOPLE RETURNING?

One example of a regenerating Boston neighborhood is Charlestown. Young twenty-somethings are moving into the area surrounding Monument Square for a number of reasons, ranging from proximity to the CBD to the affordability of the housing units. According to a recent Boston Globe article, many female professionals are attracted to the gas lit streets, affordable rents, and safe neighborhoods. Kristen Ragusin, a financial planner from a Connecticut suburb moved to Charlestown in 1992 on the recommendation of a female friend. This past January, she purchased a condo on Monument Square, in one of the red brick town houses. “I just thought, Wow, I’ve never had a problem here, all the kids want to shovel my walk, and it’s so adorable and so central to the city”.7

Interestingly, many of the new arrivals are establishing roots in the community as well, which is in sharp contrast to the previous generation of young professionals who moved into urban neighborhoods in the late eighties. The newcomers, or “toonies”, as they are known to the long-time “townies”, volunteer side by side with the locals at hunger centers and social service agencies in Charlestown, as a way of giving something back to their community.

I have identified the factors which have motivated people to return to the city, and organized them into two categories, spatial factors and non-spatial factors. Within the realm of spatial factors lie considerations of the design of these neighborhoods and their physical layout. The non-spatial factors refer to the larger economic and social forces which influence peoples patterns of living and choice of neighborhoods. Both of these factors will be examined in the next two sections.

Spatial Factors

The physical characteristics motivating a return to urban neighborhoods can be organized into three categories: Public Realm, Site Layout, and Building Design. A brief overview of these follows and Chapter Five: Physical Design examines them in greater depth.

Public Realm: Neighborhood Scale

This category deals with the larger-scale issues of public consideration, at the neighborhood/sub-area scale. It includes components such as street design, surface pavement, and sidewalks, as well as lamps, fountains and benches, the natural
features, topography, and significant public open-spaces like parks and squares. The overall impressions people have about the places they live usually focus on these considerations. This category is particularly important because a neighborhood is defined by these components.

**Site Layout: Parcel Scale**
The second category focuses on the actual organization of the neighborhood and parcels. It takes into consideration the placement of houses, the definition of front, side and rear yards, the orientation of the sun, how elevation is used to define a space, and the qualities of compact development. It also includes lot sizes, the integration of public transportation options, mixed use development, and walkable neighborhoods. People's decisions are greatly influenced by these factors, and an understanding of what it is about the organization of urban neighborhoods can reveal patterns in the urban fabric that are attracting people.

**Building Design: Unit Scale**
The third and final category is at the level of the individual unit or house located in the neighborhood. The specific components of this category include the architecture of the structures, details of design, quality of buildings, and adaptability of structures. It also includes the form of buildings, building facades, roof pitches, front porches and rear decks. Ultimately, people's decision to return to the city comes down to the individual unit, or house. At this scale, the factors motivating people's decision are very personal, however, there are several traits which the buildings have in common.

**Non-Spatial Factors**
Physical design and sense of place are not the only factors influencing people's decision. Non-spatial factors have been divided into four factors categories: **Economics, Demographics, Cultural issues, and Policy issues.**

**Economics**
**Mortgage Rates**
A decline in the mortgage rates has fueled sales throughout the country. The rates, which have recently been below 7%, enable homeowners to purchase much more house because their payments are correspondingly lower. The low rates, which have been around for the past five years, were preceded by higher rates in the 10 to 12% and at one time in the 1980's were as high as 17%.
SECTION I: RETURNING TO THE CITY

Chapter 2: The Urban Revitalization Trend

Lower Cost of Housing in the City
Setting aside the select in-town neighborhoods of Back Bay, Beacon Hill, South End, and the waterfront neighborhoods, the outer areas of the city provide a less expensive alternative to the suburbs. Although the median price of a home in Boston has recently risen to $250,000, which is high in relation to other parts of the country, it is considerably lower than the surrounding communities of Brookline or Cambridge ($460,000 and $320,000 respectively) and a large share of the suburbs. The median price in 1997 for a home in Jamaica Plain was $157,000.

Boston is among a number of cities, including Sarasota, Fla., Champaign, Ill., and Memphis, that experienced double-digit price gains during the prior year. From the fourth quarter of 1996 to 1997’s fourth quarter, the average sales price of a detached, single-family home in greater Boston rose 10.5 percent, to $250,877. The overall number of sales also grew by 24.6 percent over the past year, a remarkable increase.9

Low Rate of Inflation
Although property sales prices today are now exceeding peak 1987 levels, they are still proportionally much lower when you factor in the rate of inflation over the past ten years, the increase in CPI, Cost of living increases in wages, and related low mortgage rates which allow people to purchase more house.

Demographics

Family and Personal Relationships
While it is less common for people to move to a neighborhood because they have family living it, it does still occur. What is more common though are people deciding to move to a neighborhood because their close friends live in the area.

Non-traditional Households
While these neighborhoods and the post WW II suburbs were built primarily to house returning GI's and their growing families, the population has shifted and many new types of family units now exist. The most significant of these is the emergence of the gay/lesbian family unit as a household. In addition, double income, no kids households (DINKS) have also had a significant impact on the revitalization of urban neighborhoods.

Many residents in the urban neighborhoods don't mind the presence of gay couples. In fact, they are the true pioneers in the revitalization of urban neighborhoods. Residents in the neighborhood are very conscious of the fact that gay/lesbian population maintain their properties very well. Gay men and lesbian women's are also able to contribute more time to the maintenance of their properties and often become activists in the neighborhood. They have helped to turn around neighborhoods and attract middle-class people. Most gays and lesbians don't have the responsibility of a family or children, and tend to be professional, with higher incomes that are more disposable.

Growth of Lifestyle Neighborhoods
Groups of the population have always tended to collect together in the city, ie immigrant groups. The growth of different lifestyle neighborhoods such as older couples, gay couples, young families, or any cluster of people who have the same lifestyle in common.
Aging of America
As the baby-boom generation matures, they are increasingly seeking out the cultural and entertainment amenities urban areas have to offer. Many vital older people are moving into the city after having raised their families in the suburbs. According to DiCara, "they are an untapped resource, and one that merits welcoming and nurturing in a city of neighborhoods and sub-neighborhoods."\(^{10}\)

Cultural Issues

Middle-class Ideals
Alan Wolfe, a sociologist from Boston University, recently completed an extensive study of the middle-class. His middle-class morality project contrasts the perceptions people have of the city with the reality of what really exists. He argues that things aren't as bad as they appear to be in terms of racial division and the future of cities. He points out that while most people identify the suburbs with middle-class ideals, in fact 58% of Americans in poverty live in the suburbs and rural areas (36% suburban, 22% rural) and only 42% live in the city.\(^{11}\)

The American Dream
The single-family detached house set in the landscape is probably the most readily identified icon of middle-class America, and is rooted in the victorian notion of the house as a secure place away from the contaminated industrial city.

"The styles that evolved from that era seem to represent ideas of hearth and home to people today. And, there is a romantic side to it too, an escape from the pressures of everyday life" said Daniel Riah, architect from Bruner Cott who was quoted in a Boston Globe article on the new Victorian houses being built in Parley Forest in JP.

Riah goes on to say in the article "the current popularity of Victorian styles may represent a backlash against some aspects of modern life, especially the transience of American society. Basically, it's grandmother's house." In the same article, Jack French, the Charlestown architect who designed the fourteen "neo-Victorian" homes being built in Parley Forest, believes that Victorian homes are popular because they fit the traditional notion of home. People are unhappy with sterile boxes for houses, and they are looking for the icons that remind them of home.
When you ask a child to draw a house, whether in the city or country, what you get is something that looks like a Victorian gable-front house."

Keith Morgan, chair of the art history department at Boston University, believes that the trend toward favoring Victorian homes began in the early 1970's as a reaction against modernism. "The modernists began to be challenged at that point, and to be perceived as being sterile and inhuman. That’s when people began buying up the old Victorians and preserving them... I think people are rebelling against the Colonial Revival cookie-cutter approach to house design. The heterogeneous nature of Victorian homes allow for a more creative approach- a more personalized architectural statement."

Standard of Living vs. Quality of Life
Understanding the distinction between standard of living and quality of life is critical for understanding why people are deciding to return. Most of the changes made to our built environment have been motivated by advancements in our standard of living. These changes are concerned with quantifiable and measurable elements like the number of bathrooms you have, how large your backyard is, and how old your house is. In contrast, quality of life is concerned with how well people live on their own terms. It takes into consideration whether the built environment provides alternatives to commuting long distances, the amount of discretionary income left over after the basic needs are met, and if you spend more of your personal time in traffic because of where you live or you are able to enjoy more free time.

Policy Issues
Role of CDC’s & CDBG’s
Community Development Corporations have had a profound impact on revitalizing urban neighborhoods. Aided by Community Development Block Grants, CDC’s have acted as catalysts in neighborhoods where little development was occurring.

HUD Programs
There have been a number of redevelopment initiatives led by HUD, including HOPE VI, Home Ownership Zones, Nehemiah program, Enterprise Zones, and Urban Renewal. From Jan. 1993 to July 1996, there have been 4.4 million new homeowners in America, causing the national homeownership rate to reach a fifteen year high. 1995, saw the largest increase in the nation's homeownership rate in thirty years. Many young adults, young families, Hispanics, African Americans, low and moderate-income families, first-time homebuyers, and urban households have become homeowners. President Clinton's national goal is to generate 8 million new homeowners by the year 2000, representing a national homeownership rate of 67.5%. The most recent figures from the third quarter of 1997, indicate a total of 66 percent of the nation’s households own their own home, breaking the previous record of 65.8% set in 1980.

Lending Reform
Since 1977, banks in Boston and elsewhere have had to meet the requirements of the Community Reinvestment Act. The thrust of the act is simple: as long as banks take deposits from low-income borrowers, they also have an obligation to make loans and investments in low-income areas. Although the law sets no
exact dollar figures for investment, banks are graded on their CRA performance. A 1995 report found that Boston banks invested more than $500 million in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods between 1990 and 1995. On the mortgage side, loans to minority borrowers in the Boston area rose by 33 percent between 1993 and 1995.15

Marketing of the City & Historic Preservation

Historic preservation has become a powerful force in attracting people to urban neighborhoods. Independent preservation societies have grown since they were established in the 1960's and 70's, and now finance restoration projects with revolving funds and other mechanisms. One such organization, the Providence Preservation Society, has been actively involved in marketing a historic section of the city to middle-class residents. (Figure 2.4)

Demise of Rent Control

Motivated by an almost thirty percent increase in her rent, Abbe Hershberg, a nonprofit attorney, recently bought her first home last year, a condominium located in JP. She had been living in Brookline, but found it to be too expensive to buy into, and knew she could get more space for her money in JP. She was attracted to JP because it was close by to her old neighborhood, had lots of green space, and most importantly, because she could afford to buy there.16

Many residents who had enjoyed the benefit of an inexpensive rent controlled apartment were able to save a substantial amount of money and are now in a position to purchase a home. Another large source of new homeowners have emerged in Boston as a result.

Conclusions

The trend of urban revitalization is in full swing. Urban neighborhoods are being rediscovered by young professionals, childless couples, aging baby-boomers, and gays and lesbians. A
return to the city has been impacted by three broad-based factors that have influenced this return: changes in the economic structure, a redefinition of the social structure, and a heightened awareness of the physical environment.

Notes
3 Ibid, p. 55.
Chapter 3: Historical Background

We love history. We love research, we're history buffs. We even did our own title search on the house, all the way back to when it was the Vinson estate. And it was the Vinson estate. There is a lot of misconception about this in the neighborhood. Just last night we saw a map at our neighbors house that had portions of Wellesley Park as the Baker Estate, but we have papers that show that when the land was subdivided, it was the Vinson's who sold it.

Wellesley Park Resident
Chapter Three focuses on the history of two communities in Boston: the Wellesley Park neighborhood in Dorchester, and the Parley Forest area in Jamaica Plain. The history of these neighborhoods will be examined at three scales; the village, the neighborhood, and the enclave, in order to understand how their physical form evolved. An overview of the streetcar suburb pattern of development will be provided to set the neighborhoods into the broader framework of Boston's history.

**RAILROAD AND STREETCAR SUBURBS**

Prior to the invention of the railroad, Boston was a compact city with a collection of densely inhabited urban neighborhoods concentrated near the waters edge. The territory located directly outside of the city remained largely undeveloped, with the exception of farms and the occasional hitching post located along well-traversed routes. Development in these areas began when affluent families migrated out of the city to build summer “cottages,” which they reached by horse-drawn carriage. The pace of development increased with the advent of the railroad in 1870 as “families of considerable means (began to) commute to white collar jobs in downtown Boston.” Many of the old family farmsteads were bought and new fashionable and ornate gothic-inspired homes were constructed. These stately homes still stand today, a testament to the railroad suburb period of development.
While the upper-class may have been the first urban dwellers to inhabit this territory, their impact on the landscape was minimal in comparison to what would follow. The introduction of the horse-drawn streetcar and electric trolleys in the 1870's led to the mass migration of middle-class home-buyers from the central city. These new residents quickly settled into the neighborhoods, which have since become known as streetcar suburbs. The sheer physical effects the streetcar had on the form of these neighborhoods is astounding. In thirty years over 28,500 new building permits were issued, providing homes from 167,000 new suburbanites.

**JAMAICA PLAIN**

Everybody who knows Boston knows the neighboring village of (Jamaica Plain) and its pretty pond, with sloping shores and neat villas and a distant spire.

George William Curtis, 1859

**The Village of Jamaica Plain**

Jamaica Plain is the fourth largest neighborhood in Boston, with a population of 41,112 and has more green open space, both publicly and privately, than any other neighborhood in the city.
Many stories have been told as to how Jamaica Plain received its name, but the one most commonly recited credits the early Puritan settlers who named the area in honor of Francis Drake’s conquest of the island of Jamaica. While its name may be unique, its historical development is not. Like many New England villages, Jamaica Plain developed along the paths of well-traveled trading routes. The town of West Roxbury, of which Jamaica Plain was a part of, was incorporated in 1851 when it seceded from the town of Roxbury. Although Jamaica Plain was considered a village at the time, it was in fact the most urbanized area of West Roxbury, with the 1850 census recording a population of about 2730 people. During this time, the village was home to three major populations: farmers, the wealthy, and businessmen-commuters.

Jamaica Plain’s rural character began to disappear after the mid 1800’s, as rail lines in western Stony Brook were introduced, enabling access to Stony Brook’s water power. The improved infrastructure attracted new development, and industrial mills were built along the Brook, followed by housing and services for the mill workers. Around the same time industrialization was taking place, affluent businessmen began to move to JP from downtown Boston, and ride into the city via the rail-lines or horse-drawn streetcars. The establishment of the Boston and Providence Railway service in 1834 made this method of travel possible, in effect representing the emergence of the modern day commuter. For many years prior to the construction of the JP station, these residents would flag down the slow-moving trains as they passed through the farms and estates of prominent JP families.
Around 1870, the horse drawn street cars which had connected the village to downtown Boston were replaced by electric trolleys. With the advancement of this new technology, middle-class commuters flocked to the newly subdivided farms and estates. The streetcars sealed the fate of JP as a community connected to Boston, and in 1873, the City of West Roxbury voted to annex itself to Boston.

When West Roxbury was annexed to Boston, Jamaica Plain was considerably less developed than Roxbury or Dorchester, most likely due to its greater distance from the center of the city. The areas which did receive the most amount of development were those located directly on the streetcar lines, like Centre Street and Washington Street, or the Stoney Brook Valley where the rail line ran through.

According to Sam Bass Warner, by 1876, Jamaica Plain had developed into a “substantial suburban colony” of upper and middle-class people. This point has been disputed by Alex von Hoffman, who asserts that a closer examination of the development pattern of Jamaica Plain reveals a different story. According to von Hoffman:

The territory never constituted a homogeneous segment of the class segregated city. And although it contained suburban elements, Jamaica Plain never conformed to the usual notions of suburban community... it evolved into a local urban community, not as an isolated or segmented district, but as part of the larger growth patterns of Boston.  

Many triple-deckers were built near the Roxbury line and near the Hyde Park and Stoney Brook manufacturing districts. How-
ever, detached single and two family houses remained the predominant form of housing throughout Jamaica Plain. The growth of the residential neighborhoods was supported by Boston's immigration inflow, the development of new churches, and the commercialization of Centre Street and Washington Streets.

Open space has been and remains a primary concern for the residents of JP. Today JP is best known as the location of four parks: Jamaica Pond, Franklin Park, the Arnold Arboretum, and the Forest Hills Cemetery, all of which have interesting histories to them. The land for the Arboretum was set aside in 1842 when Benjamin Bussey gifted the 250 acres to Harvard University “for the establishment of a school of practical agriculture, useful and ornamental gardening, botany” etc. Forest Hills Cemetery, which was modeled after Mount Auburn Cemetery, was opened in 1848. Finally, the plans for Olmsted’s Emerald Necklace were developed in 1876, along with the layout for the Arboretum. All of these new parks enabled the pastoral landscape of this area to be preserved and enhanced, and provided the residents of the area relief from the congestion and chaos of the growing industrial city.

Between 1941 and 1960, a large number of African-American, Hispanics, and other Latino immigrants moved into the neighborhood, creating one of the city’s most socially and economically diverse neighborhoods. While the area was hit hard by white flight in the late fifties and sixties, many artists and musicians moved into neighborhood in sixties and early seventies, earning JP a reputation as a haven for artists. Recently a new dynamic has emerged, as affluent white residents, themselves priced out of Cambridge and the South End, move back in. More and more young lesbian and gay professionals are also choosing culturally rich JP as their home, as are college students. All of these new residents are attracted by Jamaica Plain’s small-town feel, ample public transportation, and proximity to universities.

If you take a pair of scissors and cut out Jamaica Plain from Boston, you could put it down anywhere and have a big city complete in almost every detail. It has quaint winding roads lined with trees, brand new homes in which the plaster has hardly dried, and fine looking modern apartments. It also has a congested [industrial] area over which is heard the hum of the elevated or the whistle of the freight engines.

Max R. Grossman, Boston Post, 1941

Glenvale Neighborhood

As far back as the 1840’s, most residents in Jamaica Plain lived in the village center or in areas located directly adjacent to it. These abutting neighborhoods originally housed many upper income families, but were divided into smaller parcels in the 1860’s and 70’s for middle-income families. The Glenvale neighborhood, which is one such area, occupies approximately 200 acres and is composed of two subdistricts, Glenvale Park and Parley Vale. Both of these sub-districts are distinct in their topography and architecture, and have unique physical characteristics. (Figure 3.7)

Glenvale is situated directly between the Sumner Hill neighborhood, a collection of distinct italianate homes that were built around the 1860’s as an upper and upper-middle class residential enclave, and the Hyde Square neighborhood, a more compact area featuring a high concentration of triple deckers built for the middle-class. The physical boundaries of the
neighboring are defined by Boylston Street to the north, Green Street to the south, Centre Street to the West, and the old Boston and Providence railway right of way to the East.

Green Street, on the southern edge, subdivides Glenvale from the Sumner Hill neighborhood, and helped to define Jamaica Plain's identity early on. The street was laid out between 1836-1837 and connected Centre Street to the railroad tracks and Washington Street further beyond. At the time it was put in, it provided the residents of JP access to downtown Boston via the rail line located at the foot of the street. Soon after Green Street was put in, the Boston and Providence Railroad Company built the Jamaica Plain Station. (Figure 3.6)

After the Civil War and during the the early years of the 1870's, the Glenvale area began to develop more intensively as streets between Center and Lamartine were laid out across sub-divided farms, homesteads and estates. The modestly scaled, well-main-

tained, and often sparsely detailed front-facing gable roofed Italianate houses along Spring Park Ave, Hubbard Street and Lamartine Street date from this era.

The advent of the streetcar service in the mid 1870's and electric trolleys which followed resulted in a building boom during the last two decades of the 19th century. The resulting mix of single family, two-family and triple-decker residences were crafted in all the popular architectural styles of the time, ranging from...
Queen-Anne, shingle style, colonial revival, and even the adamesque style. The majority of these homes were constructed by local architects and builders, who created a middle-class neighborhood of unusually high quality. (Figure 3.8)

In 1848, Stephen Minot Weld created Gienvale Park out of the rocky hills and farmland of Glenvale to sell to businessman, who commuted to Boston using the newly constructed Jamaica Plain station. Although construction in Glenvale Park didn’t begin until the 1860’s, many homes were built in the fashionable italianate style (Figure 3.9). The lot sizes on the street varied from less than 4000 sq. ft to over 40,000 sq. ft, with most of the homes falling somewhere in the range of 8 to 10,000 sq. ft.

Enclave: Parley Vale

How is a village a village? By including young & old, white & black, rich & poor, churches & shops.
- Anonymous

The Parley Vale neighborhood, or as it is more affectionately known to it’s residents, Parley Forest is actually composed of two smaller areas, Parley Ave and Robinwood Ave, which share similar forms. Both are organized around circular islands, with homes located on the outside as well as the interior of the island. (Figure 3.10)

The wooded and rocky area earns it name from the children’s author Peter Parley, who’s real name was Samuel Griswold Goodrich. Goodrich, who lived from 1793 to 1860, was the author of such fabled tales as Billy Bump and Peter Parleys Tales,
as well as a large number of travel titles. Goodrich amassed the large holding of land in the area and in 1833, moved to JP to restore his health. The author reportedly cleared over 100 acres of forest to build Rockland, his great estate. The mansion consisted of landscaped gardens, barns, stables, and sheds, all set far back off of Centre Street. The estate featured an expansive piazza out front which flanked the great white house. Around the mid 1840's, Goodwich’s fortunes changed for the worse, and he was forced to sell his home and move his family into the converted gardeners shed. He maintained a large portion of the land however, and began to subdivide the parcel. By 1842 the demand was so high for the lots along Green Street that he laid out another road parallel to it, now known as Seaverns Ave. Most of the lots along Green Street were purchased by small business man who opened shops and provided services for the growing community.

A large portion of Goodrich's estate fell into the hands of Abraham French, a wealthy china-ware merchant. French built a large estate for his family on the land, which he called Parley Vale, which is now a part of Arbour Hospital's Parker Building.

In the 1880's, the heirs of Abraham French converted the family estate into a smaller version of Sumner Hill. While the developers of Parley Vale adopted Sumner Hill's curving roads, the homes constructed in Parley Vale were more naturalistic in character, with many crafted in the shingle style. The heirs maintained the winding dirt road which had led up to the original estate, and incorporated the new homes into the wooded setting. Parley Ave was laid out in 1880 and Parley Vale in 1884, with the majority of the homes constructed within the next ten years. The size of the homes around Parley Vale and Parley Ave vary greatly, but were designed as single family residences. A few of the homes have remixed single family, some have been converted to condominiums, and a large share of them are now group homes. The former French home was converted into the Glenside Hospital (now the Arbour Hospital) around the turn of the century and has been expanded numerous times since then.

The homes in Parley Forest are located on fairly large parcels, which range in size from 6,000 sq. ft to over 56,000 sq. ft. (Figure
Unlike the adjacent neighborhoods of Hyde Square and Sumner Hill, Parley Vale has retained a number of undeveloped parcels, which have only recently been built upon. The Parley Forest area remains distinctive today for the retention of its wooded park-like quality and curving unpaved streets which are only steps away from the bustling commercial downtown of Center Street.9

In 1896, a group of investors known as Robinwood Associates took advantage of the popularity of the adjacent Parley Ave. subdivision, and developed the adjacent parcel using the same style of winding roads. According to von Hoffman, real estate developers in Jamaica Plain formed partnerships and land development companies very frequently. The Robinwood Associates, which was founded in 1892, included Abraham T. Rogers, an assistant inspector of buildings for the City of Boston who lived close to the site, Thomas Minton, a well known Jamaica Plain contractor, as well as two Roxbury insurance agents, a Roxbury dentist, and investors from various locales. Robinwood, which is located on relatively flat land, has lots ranging in size from 3,250 sq. ft. to 15,000 sq. ft., though most are around 5,000 sq. ft. (Figure 3.10). A number of prominent Boston architect’s are responsible for the design of many of the shingle and queen-anne style homes.

DORCHESTER

To live on such a hill was like living on the roof of the world
Francis Russel on the view from Dorchester Hill

The Village of Dorchester

Dorchester is the largest neighborhood in the city, both in sheer size and in population. Its’ 85,641 residents occupy 6.03 square miles, totaling just over 12% of the cities land mass and represent 15% of the total population of the city.10 The Town of Dorchester was incorporated one month before Boston in 1630, and encompasses present-day South Boston, Mattapan, and Hyde Park. Like many New England villages, the town grew up along an Indian trail, with the first residents settling themselves high upon Pope, Jones, Savin and Ashmont Hills. The advent of the Old Colony Railway in 1844 encouraged a new pattern of settlement, as large farm parcels began to be subdivided into smaller
and smaller pieces. Although Dorchester developed primarily as a farming community, its river and harbor-fronts were centers for trade, particularly at Lower Mills and around Commercial Point. Without a doubt, the biggest influence on the development of the area happened in 1857, when the first horse-drawn streetcars (Figure 3.11) began travelling down Washington Street and Dorchester Ave. Followed by electric trolley cars, the streetcars have done more to establish the pattern of development in the area than any subsequent force. The predominance of streetcars and the simultaneous emergence of the middle class led to a tremendous demand for new style of detached wood frame suburban housing.

During the early part of the nineteenth century, Dorchester had been a choice location for the estates and summer-houses of Boston’s wealthy-class. However, as more farmsteads and estates were sold off and subdivided, the rural quality of the area was transformed quickly. Prior to this rapid expansion, Dorchester enjoyed a high level of local citizen involvement due to the small size of the community, but by 1870, with the middle-class flocking to the streetcar suburbs, local rule was dissolved and the town was annexed to Boston. Although the population totalled only 12,000 in 1870, it mushroomed to 150,000 by 1920, as a result of investments in transportation infrastructure and public works. The population stabilized after the 1930’s, but then began to decline after 1950. From 1950 to 1980, Dorchester witnessed the outflow of 23,000 citizens, as people left the city in search of the American dream promised in the suburbs.

With the annexation of Dorchester and the opening of the railroad lines and streetcars, residential and commercial development transformed the once agricultural area into a bustling hub of activity. Many upper class Yankees and Irish built large one- and two-family homes on Savin Hill and Jones Hill, which were then followed by middle and lower middle class families, who built and lived in the famed triple deckers. A number of commercial centers blossomed, including Fields Corner and Codman Square, both of which served as civic and retail hubs for the adjacent neighborhood of Melville Park.

The opening of the Southeast Expressway in 1960 coupled with the closing of the Old Colony railroad led to a gradual decline in investment in the area. Many of the Jewish, Italian, and Irish immigrants who moved into the area in the early part of the twentieth century were replaced by lower-income African-Americans. In the last two decades, many Vietnamese, Cape Verdean, and Hispanic families have moved into Dorchester, as have a large number of gay and lesbian professionals. Following their footsteps, a number of young professionals have also rediscovered many of the neighborhoods of Dorchester.
Melville Park Neighborhood

Wellesley Park is known as the nicest section of Dorchester. There is no other place that can surpass the spirit of this most friendly neighborhood.
Adelaide Robertson, 56 Wellesley Park, 1959

The Melville Park area was originally a part of the Great Lots, a “vast area of pasture, woodland, and marsh that was located south of the primary areas of Puritan settlement at Allens Plain, Savin Hill, and Meeting House Hill.” The Town Field and Gibson playground, which anchor the neighborhood to the east, were purchased by the town in 1693 with money provided by Christopher Gibson. Mr. Gibson, an Irish immigrant who came to Dorchester in 1630, left his money upon his death in 1674 to the town of Dorchester to support the development of public schools. Although Town Field was not the location of his home the playground was named in his honor because funds from his estate were used to purchase the park land. The Field served as a cow pasture for a number of years, but achieved its current configuration in 1874,

The area known as Melville Park was developed over the course of a thirty-five year period. The neighborhood is a trapezoidal mass of approximately 100 acres which is contained by Dorchester Ave. to the East and Washington Street to the West. One of the earliest streets to be laid out was Melville Ave (Figure 3.14) which connects Dorchester Ave. and Washington Ave. When Melville Ave was laid out during the late 1870’s, it was developed as an upper-income neighborhood. According to the Boston Landmarks Commission report on the area “Melville Ave.
is illustrative of an enclave designed for a families of considerable means whose heads of households commuted to white collar jobs in downtown Boston." (Figure 3.13)

Evidence of this status is apparent by the substantially larger lots and the unique architecture of many of the homes, which were designed by many well-known Boston architects. The most prominent of these architects is Arthur Vinal, who built a house for himself in 1886 on the corner of Allston Street and Melville Avenue. Vinal was the Architect for the City of Boston during the later part of the 19th century, and is responsible for a number of well known buildings around the city including many public schools, police stations, and engine houses. His home, like many of the others on the Avenue, is a mixture of turrets, wrap around porches, and reflected the latest “fashion” in architecture during the late nineteenth century.

The next road to be developed in the neighborhood was Tremlett Street (Figure 3.15), which is included in the Bromley Atlas of 1888, although it does not extend to where the present day square is located. Tremlett Street was laid out between sometime 1874 and 1884, through the former Alexander Beal estate, and was extended as far as Hooper Street by 1884. By 1894, Tremlett Square was bordered by nineteen houses, and Waldeck Street, which runs parallel to the New York, New Haven and Hartford railway (now the MBTA Red line). Tremlett Square was completely built up by 1910 in a number of architectural styles including the colonial revival, Queen-Anne and shingle style. The square itself is approximately thirty feet wide, with a row of trees planted down the middle. While Tremlett Square is the
first square in the area, it was soon followed by Centervale and Paisley Parks, which are to the east of WP.

The tradition of ordering a residential neighborhood around an urban park or square has a long history in Boston. Louisburg Square in Beacon Hill (Figure 3.16) and Chester Square in the South End (Figure 3.17) are evidence of this tradition, which is firmly rooted in the English tradition and commonly found in urban environments. However, while many of the homes at Melville Park are ordered around the central public space, the layout differs from Louisberg Square and Chester Square in two ways. First, the development is located in what at the time was called a suburban setting, and second, unlike the continual masonry facades which line both Louisburg Square and Chester
Centervale and Paisley Park (Figure 3.18) were set out sometime between 1891 and 1894 on a portion of the Baker estate. The two streets are located on the East side of Upland Ave, and are wedged between Town Field and Wellesley Parks. Eleanor Jameson Baker, heir to the Baker Chocolate fortune, died in 1891 at Intervale, her mansion located on the corner of Park and Washington Streets. Soon after her death, the members of the family, recognizing the opportunity presented to them by the new streetcars and nearby railway line, decided to subdivide the land. The mansion was demolished and they set out the Centervale Park and Paisley Park as two smaller versions of Tremlett Square. Centervale Park was originally called Intervale Park, after the family homestead. Its' two elongated oval parks appear in the 1894 Atlas, with eight lots located on either side of the park. The homes, an eclectic mix of bungalows, Queen Anne's, shingle and one or two colonial revivals, were built over the next fifteen years. Although these lots had the added amenity of the park, as did Tremlett Square, the small lot sizes and subsequent smaller homes meant that these two areas were intended for the middle-class, as opposed to the upper middle class on nearby Melville Street.

Paisley Park also appears on the 1894 atlas as a couple of elongated parks surrounded by open space owned by Walter Baker. It is uncertain, however, if in fact the park ever existed, as no such space exists, and the closeness of the houses to the street render it unlikely that a park the size of Centervale could exist. Paisley Park has a different mix of housing than both Tremlett and Centervale, with the north side consisting of the smallest square footage lots in the neighborhood (4000 sq. ft) and the south side containing the size more commonly found in the neighborhood of 5500 to 6000 square feet. The first lots to sell and get built up at the time in Paisley Park were located on the north side, and primarily consisted of two family residences. The architecture of the street is also decidedly less extravagant, with simple gable front homes lining the street. By 1898, the entire north side was developed, but not one of the larger lots on the south side had been built upon. Most of the lots on the south side were built right after the turn of the century, and the entire street was built up by 1910.

Upland Avenue (Figure 3.19), which was developed at the same time as Centervale and Paisley Park (between 1891 and 1910), consists of much larger lots (many falling into the 7,000 to 8,000...
The homes are set back approximately twenty feet from the road and the layout of the street is more in line with Melville Street than either Centervale or Paisley. The homes along it are also grander than either of the two parks, and most likely built for an upper middle class clientele. In fact, the largest home on the street, number 10-12 (two lots combined) was owned by Frances Meisel, president of the Meisel Press and Manufacturing Co. on Dorchester Ave.

Wellesley Park (Figure 3.20) was the last of the squares in the neighborhood to be developed, and was laid out during 1897. The first plan for the development of WP is dated Sept 1, 1897 by the architecture firm of Haddock and Allen, in addition to the civil engineers Frank A. Foster and Charles F. Baxter. There is some dispute as to whether the land was owned entirely by the Vinson Family, or if a portion of it was controlled by the Baker family. The 1897 plan shows house lots on the East side of Wellesley Park going back to un-subdivided parcels on the present day Upland Ave. On the West side the house lots extend back to the Shawmut branch of the NY, NH&H Railroad. Between the two sides was an irregularly shaped plot of land containing approximately one acre. Interestingly, the Bromley Atlas of 1899
shows the development with the middle parcel being unsubdivided, yet the original plan (Figure 3.21)) shows the center parcel broken into six lots.

The homes of Wellesley Park (Figure 3.22) are a consistent mix of Queen Anne and Victorian single-family dwellings. Every one of the twenty-six homes that fronts the park has a front porch, and most have a front facing gable. A few are accented with corner turrets some rising as high as three stories. For the most part, though, the architecture of the houses themselves can be described as average. It is very common to find homes like these in the surrounding streets, as they represent the model of homes that were in fashion with the middle class. According to the BLC report, “Wellesley Park’s detached wooden homes, for all of their lively Queen Anne surface treatments and boxy forms, occasionally made asymmetrical by corner towers, are essentially middle class houses that do not begin to approach the complex forms and profuse ornamentation evident in the upper middle class residences of Melville Ave.”

However, collectively as an urban form, they represent something much greater than the individual architectural achievements of Melville Ave. The collection of homes and the space which they are organized around is far greater than the sum of parts. The very fact that the neighborhood has remained physically intact, with the exception of the addition of aluminum siding on the exterior of a number of houses, is its greatest asset. The unique layout of the houses, and irregular shape of the park all lend a unique quality to the place. The residents of the neighborhood are quite aware of the asset they have and wrote last year in their first annual hour tour guide “Handsome though they are in themselves, these houses attain more significance when viewed as a commendably coherent and remarkably intact ensemble. If streetscapes can be likened to company assembled around a dinner table, Wellesley Park invites us to a veritable banquet.”

Considering what a remarkable place it is, it is even more remarkable to learn that it’s very existence was threatened by the developers who created it in the first place. There is an interesting history associated with the park which was documented by Ms. Adelaide Robertson, a resident of Wellesley Park in 1959. According to Ms. Robertson’s account, “As the house lots were sold and the houses built thereon, the new owners were assured that the center piece of land would always be an open spot. However, a few years after the last house was built, the owners were amazed to find work being started to build on the
Chapter 3: Historical Background

Figure 3.22 A historic photo of Wellesley Park circa 1910 looking from lower portion up towards Melville Ave.
The neighbors called a meeting and agreed that something needed to be done to stop the construction of houses on the center-piece. They approached the two developers, Haddock and Allen, but were not successful in persuading them to stop. The residents then decided to get the city of Boston involved, and consulted their local Alderman Frederick Brand who lived on Melville Ave.

The Alderman informed the residents that the city did not have the funds available to purchase the land, but if the residents wished to purchase the land and grant it to the city of Boston, the city would make it a “beauty spot”. According to Ms. Robertson, a petition was drawn up and all twenty-six residents on the park agreed to contribute equal amounts to the purchase price. A lawyer who lived on the park, but wasn’t a homeowner, agreed to handle the legal affairs and transaction.

The neighbors purchased the park in fall of 1908, and donated the land to the city soon thereafter. A large banquet was thrown downtown at the Hotel Thorndike to celebrate their achievement. In the Spring of 1909, the city began improvements to the property, installing granite curbs and sidewalks around the entire periphery of the street. Trees were planted at the edge, the gutters were lined with paving stones, and the center piece was shaped, curbed, and planted with flowers. According to Ms. Robertson, “Beautiful tulip beds blossomed every spring, and about the last of May were replaced by other flowering plants.”

A gardener was stationed here four or five days a week to weed, water, and mow the grass. After all this work was finished, the City of Boston assessed every home owner for the work done, This was a called a betterment tax, and was payable in equal amounts over a period of years.”

The Wellesley Park neighborhood has always had a long history of diversity with many different races and creeds represented. In fact, one of the original owners of a house on the park was a black porter on the NY NH Hartford Railway. Additionally, the mix of different nationalities and religions in the neighborhood was quite uncommon for the time, as Jews, Catholics and protestants of Irish, Italian, Polish, and other European descent lived side by side each other. This ethnic and racial blending is in sharp contrast to affluent Melville Ave, where a covenant prohibited the transfer or sale of property to Jews.

Notes
1 Tucci, Douglas Shand (1978) Built in Boston, p. 78.
3 1990 US Census & City of Boston Neighborhood’s web page.
7 Ibid, p. 28.
8 Ibid, p. 51.
10 1990 US Census & City of Boston Neighborhood’s web page.
12 BLC Comprehensive Survey Project, FY94.
13 Ibid.
Chapter 4: The Neighborhoods Today

I value the diversity, the sense of community. I perceive that I share the values with the people that choose to live here. I like the fact that the neighborhood is outside of the city, but you can still walk to public transportation. You can walk to a grocery store, to a liquor store; you can walk around this gorgeous neighborhood, and find funky music blasting out of the back of a car. I wouldn't want to live next to that, but I love knowing that my neighbors do that. It sort of reminds us that we all are here, living together.

Parley Forest Resident
This chapter will examine the results of a study of the Parley Forest and Wellesley Park neighborhoods in Boston. This study was broken into two components, first, a collection of personal observations, and second, a series of interviews with residents in the two neighborhoods. The second component of the study consisted of a series of lengthy interviews with ten residents in each neighborhood and will be the focus of this chapter. This study was conducted to answer the question “Why are people moving back to the city?” (See side-bar for details of the interview process and methodology).

LEARNING FROM THE COMMUNITY

At the core of what I am trying to discover are two basic questions:

1) What is attracting people to urban neighborhoods?
2) What is it that they value about these neighborhoods?

These two questions, in their rawest form, begin to get at the motivating factors behind peoples decision to return to the city. However, it is not merely enough to ask these questions alone. Therefore, the first question was expanded to include other aspects of inquiry, specifically, what was it about these two places that residents liked and disliked? Being careful not to bias the results, I tried to get people to consciously talk about the qualities of place that they appreciate. To this degree, showing them photos of their neighborhood proved to be very effective, because they photos were a way for them to see the physical attributes of their neighborhood collectively. The photos often initiated a much longer conversation afterwards, as people shared stories about favorite spots in the neighborhood or identified where their friends lived in certain photos. These conversations almost always led to a discussion about the neighborhood, and eventually the design of the place.

In my attempt to learn if physical design and place had influenced peoples decision to move to an area, I encouraged them to elaborate why it was that they valued certain attributes and didn’t value others. What I discovered from these conversations has led me to conclude that physical design is a very important consideration in initially attracting people to these neighborhoods. I also learned that once people have established themselves in the neighborhood, the social relationships they form become as important if not more important than the physical design. I believe that the success of these social relationships are directly related to the physical layout of the neighborhood and it’s ability to foster a strong sense of community. As I discovered from being there, the design of the place encourages a high degree of interaction amongst the neighbors. This became obvious to me by the end of the second interview. Everyone who I spoke with mentioned that the strong sense of community is a highly valued attribute.

I value the fact that my neighbors are so friendly and I know everyone on the street, it’s just incredible. You meet people who walk by, people tend to walk down this street a lot, and I have met so many people. We throw neighborhood parties, yard sales, last year we had our first house tour. The sense of community is definitely the best part of being here.
Interview Methodology

This thesis is based upon a series of interviews conducted during the Spring of 1998. A total of twenty people (ten from each neighborhood) were questioned over the course of four weekends. Each subject was personally interviewed and all conversations were recorded. I made a conscious effort to conduct the interview outside and wait for days when the weather was beautiful, knowing very well that I would have a better chance of finding people in the neighborhood. The interviews typically took place either on peoples front steps or porch. This location was chosen for two reasons.

First, I wanted to observe the activities of the neighborhood from the perspective of the front porch. I had visited the neighborhoods a number of times but had only viewed it from the pedestrian level. I chose the front porch because it is considered a public zone; I felt that people might be more comfortable speaking with a stranger in a public space where they still had the security of their neighbors watching. Secondly, by sitting on the steps or front porch, other neighbors became familiar with me and what I was doing. This became an excellent way to meet my subsequent interviewees. In fact, this strategy worked too well; by the end of the first day, people were coming up to me asking when they were going to be interviewed, which was something I hadn't planned for. Because of the time restrictions, I was not able to accommodate all of the requests, but tried to speak with a equal number of people from the three population groups: older residents, young couples, and gay and lesbian couples.

The residents in both neighborhoods welcomed me into their community. In fact, by the evening of the second day in Wellesley Park, I had been inside of half a dozen homes, was served dinner at one family's home, and was invited to the annual house tour. In Parley Forest, two people brought me cool drinks to sip on, and one man even shared his collection of historic maps of the neighborhood.

When I introduced the interview process, I began by saying that it would take approximately twenty minutes of their time. After the first interview (which lasted over four hours) I knew this was not the case. In actuality most of the interviews fell into the one to two hour range. With the exception of one person in each neighborhood, everyone who I approached willingly agreed to participate in the interview.

The interviews were broken into three sections, each using a different method of questioning. This variety allowed for a high degree of interest to be maintained.

In the first section, residents were asked a series of general questions about their background such as how long they had lived in the area. Although everyone was asked the same questions, when I learned that someone was a recent arrival (which I defined as less than two years) I did ask additional questions. These included: What other neighborhoods were you considering, how many open houses did you attend, and how would you characterize the type of people at the open houses?

In the second section, residents were given a map of the neighborhood and asked to identify certain areas that they thought were "particularly pleasant or particularly unpleasant." Each subject was also asked to draw the boundaries of their neighborhood.

The third and final section featured a collection of photographs of the neighborhood. Residents were shown these snapshots and asked to select the five that they thought best represented their neighborhood, as well as the five that they felt did not represent their neighborhood. After choosing the shots, they were asked to discuss why they selected these particular pictures. They were also asked if they thought any pictures hadn't been included which should have been. In all, twenty photos were shown of Wellesley Park and eighteen of Parley Forest. Most of them have been included in this study.

The questions were slightly modified for the Parley Forest neighborhood in an attempt to more closely match a prior survey on neighborhood change that was given in the mid 1960's (which I discovered while fumbling through papers at the JP branch of the public library.) This study had examined the trend of people migrating out of the neighborhood, and although it was of far greater scope than mine and took many other issues into consideration, I thought it would be an interesting exercise to ask some of the same questions and compare the results.

Although ten people in each neighborhood represents a small percentage of the total population in each neighborhood, at the enclave scale, the ten homes represented roughly a third of the households, since each enclave consisted of 26 homes. Given the number of interviews and the range of people I spoke with, I believe that the results are representative of those held by the neighborhood and enable me to make some general conclusions about these places. Finally, copies of both surveys are included in the appendix.
Before delving deeply into the specifics of what residents said, let's first consider this notion of values. Why is it that values are thought of so highly and why consider the study of values in connection with the physical environment? According to Michelson,

“As part of the cultural system, values are conceptions of what ought to be. They are rules, guidelines for behavior. They are not group structures, nor life styles; they are abstract goals which people seek to achieve via social groupings.”

When I spoke with people in the neighborhoods, I got a very strong feeling that when they were discussing values, they were speaking of something very basic, something which they held very close to their hearts and psyches. I hypothesized that the values people were talking about could be tied closely to the characteristics of the physical environment. Working with this hypothesis, I decided that getting people to speak about what they valued about their neighborhood would reveal a great deal about the things they appreciate which would indirectly lead to the design of the neighborhood.

**Framework**

Since the goal of this thesis was to get people to talk about their neighborhoods, I began by asking them a series of general questions. Their responses can be organized into two categories, those of the social nature (diversity, class invisible people), and those of a physical nature (architecture, compact development, suburban-like). Each of these two categories has a positive and a negative component to it, and both aspects will be examined in the next section. The breakup of the responses into positive and negative comments revealed a pattern. The social category was tipped on the side of the negative components, while the physical design category favored the positive comments. Another way to say this is that more comments focussed on the negative components of the social conditions than the positive, and more comments focussed on the positive components of the physical design.

Following the analysis of the general responses, the next section will explore how people define the boundaries of their neighborhoods. Directly after this section, the responses to the photos will be examined. Finally, the last section will summarize the findings of the interviews and propose a set of general themes.

**GENERAL QUESTIONS**

**Diversity**

The comments I received were remarkably consistent with respect to some issues, and quite varied regarding others. One positive comment that I heard repeatedly from residents in both neighborhoods had to do with the diversity of the neighborhood:

*Part of the attraction here is really the mix of all of the groups: singles, professionals, gays, lesbians, couples, young families, older families, black, white, Spanish, you name it, we've got it.*

*Knowing that there is a real diversity in the neighborhood is a real plus, that there are low income families and high*
income ones and all different kinds of people is great. There are families here from all types of backgrounds... Right down the street there are Spanish speaking families, and when I walk by there, I smile and say, Ola come sta. Its so much more real than the neighborhoods in the suburbs where everyone is all the same.

I value the diversity of the neighborhood; racially, sexually, and economically. There is a group home right next door for people who are severely disabled, which is a nice thing, because they are a part of the community. When I go for walks, I always chitchat with them on their porch, or if their wheel chair is stuck, I will help them out. It's nice to have this mix. And the kids in the neighborhood are exposed to this, which is good, because they get to see all kinds of people.

We have all kinds of people; gay couples, lesbian couples, regular families, young families like myself, it's a truly mixed neighborhood, we have black couples, interracial couples, all kinds of couples and we pretty much all get along.

Diversity is probably the strongest social attribute these neighborhoods have in their favor. And as one resident pointed out, its something you aren't likely to find in the suburbs.

**Sense of Community**

Connected with the diversity of the neighborhood is the strong sense of community apparent in the neighborhood. Many residents credit the physical design of the neighborhoods with helping to encourage the development of community. One resident in Parley Forest felt that the central space provided everyone with something to focus on:

I don't know, there is something about the focus of the center island that makes us all feel a part of the neighborhood.

The same comment was expressed in Wellesley Park, though, here the residents talked about the houses facing each other and not the space. One commented:

...that the houses face each other and look inward helps to build connection and communication among everyone.

In fact many felt that the layout of the neighborhood has something to do with people forming the strong community:

...because the houses face each other...there is the sense that we are in each others face and so we are more community oriented than streets like Melville Ave.

People also commented on the closeness and compact nature of the homes and how that contrasts with the openness of the park.

I love the fact that the houses are so close, but you have the park in front so you have a sense of space even though technically you are very close.

Although the park is not used for any activities, people use the park to gather around it. Because everyone's home faces onto it, becomes a real social incubator. One resident put it quite
succinctly:

... its kind of like our meeting place. We get together because of it, and it gives you an excuse to walk. And when the weather is nice, people always come out, work in their yards. Three or four households will be out, just standing around and talking most of the time. People move from one front porch to another, its very social.

Not only does the park give residents a place to meet and focus on as a community, it also serves as a buffer from their neighbors. At the same time it brings people together, it also provides added privacy and guarded public space, since everyone looks onto the park. It is difficult for people to come and go without someone noticing, since everyone can see your front door, your car, and whether you're lights are on.

{The neighborhood} has a strong sense of community, but no one is in your business. My neighbors are friendly, even the older ones who tend not to talk too much, if they see something going on, they let you know right away.

Finally, because the park forces everyone to be in each others face, there is an accountability which is upheld in the neighborhood. For whatever reason, people respect each other.

There are a lot of community meetings where many people show up, and the respect that people show for each other is great. Folks aren’t always going to agree on stuff, but there is an understanding that what makes us strong is the fact that people have opinions.

Best of Both Worlds

An interesting theme having to do with the physical character of the neighborhoods kept emerging throughout the interviews. People referred to the quietness of the neighborhood, the feeling that you are not in the city anymore, their backyard barbecues, all symbols of suburbia, which they juxtaposed against the amenities of urban living, like the walkability of the neighborhoods, access to public transportation, and proximity to downtown Boston. One Parley Forest resident shared this comment with me:

I like the quiet of it, you feel like you are not even in the city, even though you are a few minutes walk from the T. I like the fact that we are in the city, and it still feels like the city in a sense because there are so many people, even though the neighborhood is quiet, and you don’t hear car noises.

The landscaping and green of the neighborhood in the summer is just amazing, with all of the trees it makes you feel as though you are somewhere else and not in the city, and with the dirt roads, it’s as though you are in a different world.

The comments from residents in Wellesley Park mirror the ones expressed from their Parley Forest counterparts:

You have all the conveniences of being in an urban area, you can walk to the places, and when you come home, you are in suburbia. Look at our backyard, we garden back there, its very private... its so nice, we have our own backyard barbecues, it is unbelievably the best of both worlds.
We are still in the city, it’s still urban, its only a seven or eight minute walk to the T, 5 minutes to the bus, but we have a beautiful yard and a dog. It’s such a nice neighborhood.

Dorchester has houses that could be in the suburbs, they could be in Wellesley or Newton, or Lexington.

Rural Character
A trait which is unique to Parley Forest is the rural character and dirt roads. People living in the neighborhood feel very strongly about the roads, probably as strongly as the residents in Wellesley Park feel about their gas lamps.

Yeah, I like that the road is not paved. A lot of people complain about it, mostly people who come to visit as opposed to the people who live here, they all like it exactly the way that it is. Most people don’t see the benefits that come with it, there is no traffic because of it, look, we have been sitting here for forty minutes and not a single car has gone by.

One of my favorite things about the neighborhood is that the road isn’t paved, it keeps the traffic away and makes it so quiet. Its great for walking around.

Architecture
Another common trait which both groups of residents share is their appreciation for the architecture. The people moving into the neighborhood spent more time talking about how they were attracted to the design of the homes than the longtime residents

I like the character of the place, the pitched roofs, the craftsmanship of the older structures, they are uniquely designed, each house is different from the others.

...especially the architecture of the buildings, the houses have a lot of character to them, the trim and the details are so beautiful.

Old Homes
A number of residents also discussed the reality of owning an older home, the additional expenses, the lack of amenities, and the cost of maintenance requirements. While these factors were not enough to discourage them from moving to the neighborhood, the realities of owning an older building can not be overlooked.

What I dislike is that when you buy an old house, you really need to be sensitive to the house, be a caretaker for it, and maintenance and restoration cost a fortune. If you are sensitive, it’s expensive, you can just slap something up. We have always had a sense of stewardship with the house, we figure it is going to be here after we are long in the ground. We feel we have an obligation to upkeep, maintain, and preserve it for future generations.

Its a lot of maintenance. When we first moved in, my neighbor told me, congratulations, you think you just bought a house, but the house just bought you. There is always something to do. Right now on our wish list is another bathroom, we only have one bathroom with two girls and my wife.
Gentrification
A much larger problem that the residents of Wellesley Park identified has to do with the reality of gentrification. Many consider themselves to be an ‘invisible party’ within the larger Codman Square neighborhood, and spoke about this in great detail.

The fact that when people talk about Codman Square, I am an invisible party, because I am white and middle class. And there is this talk of diversity in Codman Square, for me is not just a code word for minority, but diversity means different races, different sexual orientations, different cultures, Vietnamese, Haitian, Chinese, Cape Verdean, South African, and white people of European background. Unfortunately when ever the word diversity is used in Codman Square, it is a code word for minority, and so I feel that we are overlooked.

I am accused of being a racist, as being a gentrifier, and taking the flavor away from the neighborhood, I am the flavor of the neighborhood and that just frustrates the heck out of me, because I live here, wait a minute, I own here. I am part of the neighborhood and I am not a minority. And it’s not just me, it’s something like 25 to 30% of the neighborhood are of European background, middle class. The only information you ever get from the Codman Square Health Center and the Y trying to get grants leads you to believe that every one who lives here is living below fifty percent income, female head of household and on welfare. In fact, this is one of the wealthiest little sections in Dorchester, it is extremely middle class, regardless of the race or class, we have a lot of black and white professionals. Whenever the middle class wants to influence something, regardless of race, we are accused of being in favor of gentrifying the neighborhood. People don’t understand, you need the middle class, the tax base, absolutely.

Another resident repeated these sentiments, almost word for word. There is a general sense in the neighborhood that their consumer needs were not being served by the local commercial areas. Imbedded within this issue is the much larger one of race and class. One resident summed up the complications quite well.

The problem is, there is a real undercurrent when you say that you don’t like the way the strip looks because it is a real class issue, because the moment that you say that strip doesn’t look like me, people are like, oh you are a racist. It’s very difficult to talk about those things as white middle-class folks without people saying, what, is it too Caribbean for you, is it too black for you? ... I think this is the biggest challenge the Codman Square NDC has because they don’t want to talk about these things. It’s hard because the whole staff except for one woman is white, so going out into the neighborhood, people are like what’s your real agenda, are you pissed off because there are not a lot of Starbucks up here.

This sentiment was echoed by a number of people I interviewed in Wellesley Park. One young couple expressed their frustration:

I would like to see some businesses in the square that reflect my needs, maybe a used furniture store, or a cafe. There is a place to buy black hair products, to get your nails done, a really bad liquor store, I mean all you can buy there is the kind of cheap liquor they sell to drunks. I would go to a place that sold wine and better liquor, but I can’t, at least not in Codman Square.
Lack of Consumer Scene
Another young couple also expressed their frustration with the local consumer scene, and in doing so likened the neighborhood to an island within the community. One resident commented that she has been thinking about doing something about this absence.

I dislike that the commercial strips do not reflect a broad chunk of people that live in this neighborhood, and that is one of the things I am really contemplating about, maybe opening a coffee house up in Codman Square, on Washington St., because nothing up there reflects any of this.

All of the residents in the neighborhood, young and old, were dissatisfied with both local commercial centers:

I don’t shop in either place. My consumer dollars don’t stay in the local neighborhood. We have walked into the hardware store with money in our hands and walked right back out with it because they have not had what we needed.

Both commercial centers are not places that I am really proud of. There are not stores there that appeal to me; I don’t need a Domain or Laura Ashley, but give me a decent liquor store. There is a liquor store, but they only sell the worst and the cheapest, I wouldn’t drink any of it. Payless Shoes, we do go to, but everything is fake there, I want to buy shoes that are made out of leather for my daughter.

I dislike the fact that there are none of the consumer outlets that I like. There are no bookstores, there are no coffee shops, you cannot get a double expresso and a scone, but you can get your nails done.

Proximity to Downtown
While residents in Wellesley Park are disappointed with the retail scene in the neighborhood, they do value the close access to downtown Boston, even though many of them admitted they may only go into the city center once or twice a month. In fact Proximity is a very important component of both neighborhoods, and is something which many of the new residents were attracted to. The easy access to the T in both neighborhoods enables many two person households to only own one car.

I value the proximity to downtown. We only own one car, and the fact that there are two T stations within five minutes of our house is fantastic.

What I really like is that I can walk to downtown Boston, its three miles and it takes about an hour along the Emerald Necklace. I can be at the theater, or Back Bay, its only a short subway or car ride, away.

I like this neighborhood because it is so close to the city, it really is only fifteen minutes to Boston and there is no highway traffic.

Unlike the residents of Wellesley Park, the community of Parley Forest were very proud of their commercial center. From a physical design perspective, they enjoy the architecture of the buildings along Centre Street and the mixture of shops and services that are located in them.

Centre Street is a very serviceable, walkable area, so you don’t have to leave downtown JP. I can get almost everything I need there, from groceries to the restaurants to the bookstore and coffee places. I actually shop for...
most of my groceries at the Spanish oriented Hi-Lo market because I can get my jalepenos, fresh cilantro, and all sorts of hot sauces. I'm from New Mexico originally, and it reminds me of there...They all laugh at me when I try to speak Spanish.

Crime
Crime in urban neighborhoods is another component which pervades everyone’s comments, though it appears to be more of an awareness of it than a threat to their existence. Everyone I spoke with, young and old, said they felt perfectly comfortable walking around their neighborhood during the day and early evening, but after 9 PM at night, they wouldn’t feel comfortable walking alone in certain areas. They didn’t limit this belief to their neighborhood only though. Many commented that they feel the same way in any neighborhood at nine o’clock at night, in the city or the suburbs. Some comments heard include:

There really aren’t any areas in the neighborhood where I feel uncomfortable, with the caveat that at ten o’clock at night, I am not comfortable being alone anywhere in the city; Back Bay, Beacon Hill or Dorchester.

Though the Melville Park area is stable and the residents did not report any high degree of crime, the surrounding neighborhoods are not perceived to be as safe. One gentleman used the acronym DMZ (de-militarized zone) to characterize the area just on the other side of Washington Street. Another reflected on the drug activity which still takes place on the edges of Codman Square, which she has been actively involved with trying to eliminate.

The tone of their comments does not reflect a paranoia though, but rather an awareness that these things happen in their neighborhood. They realize that they are living in an urban environment and these elements come with it. Most of the people I spoke with in Wellesley park are not content to just let it keep on happening though. An activist attitude pervades the neighborhood; many members of the community I spoke with mentioned they were involved with community policing efforts and neighborhood watches. Although the rate of crime incidence in these neighborhoods has decreased according to the residents, issues of safety remain a concern.

We have had problems with Shawmut Station, it really makes me mad when I go to Cambridge and I see the Alewife station, and then you see Shawmut Station. My son one night at about nine o’clock in the evening got jumped at the station. He didn’t get hurt or anything, but they stole his walkman, and when someone came to his aid, they offered to kill the person. And this was someone who was trying to help him. I just feel like it’s reasonable for a sixteen year old kid to walk home at nine thirty at night and expect to be safe.

The Neighborhoods

Both neighborhoods have seen their share of change. Many homes in the Melville Park neighborhood have been modified with aluminum, vinyl, or asphalt siding. Parley Forest has recently seen a number of older buildings torn down to accommodate new construction.

After completing the interviews, what stood out for me was just how similar both of the neighborhoods were to each other. When
I chose these two neighborhoods, I thought I had selected two very different types of places (physically) which were experiencing this phenomenon. What I discovered was that the populations in both of these neighborhoods were basically composed of the same groups. Both consist of approximately one third longtime residents (people who have lived in the neighborhood for over twenty-five years) and two thirds recent arrivals (people from the last ten years, many within the last five). Of the recent arrivals, they are equally distributed between two groups, urban professionals and baby-boomer returnees.

On the other hand, in addition to the similarity of population groups, both neighborhoods have a strong sense of community. Residents in both Parley Forest and Wellesley Park have organized “progressive dinners” where neighbors move from house to house for each course of the meal. Finally, although I am reluctant to draw comparisons between employment categories, I was surprised to find such a high concentration of people with advanced degrees (Masters and PHD’s) who are involved in the nonprofit sector. In all fairness though, there were probably as many financial analysts and management consultants that I spoke with as well. (A review of the 1990 census data did reveal that these neighborhoods had a high degree of professionals, but because the data is now almost ten years old, and the neighborhood has changed, I opted to not focus on this source.)

The physical form of each neighborhood is very different from the other. Wellesley Park has a much more cohesive sense of neighborhood about it, which can be credited to the shared green space all the houses face. This formal park is decorated with a fountain and two urns, and the entire enclave has maintained the original gas lamps.

Parley Forest, on the other hand, can be characterized as highly irregular and naturalistic. One resident invented the term ‘urban forest’ to describe it. While there is no central space like Wellesley Park in Parley Forest, there are the large islands of land with houses inside them. The homes in Parley Forest have strong physical features in common (dirt roads, the rural landscape, and shingle-style homes).

**A Sense of Pride in the Shared Environment**

Most of the people I spoke with talked about the great deal of personal satisfaction they get from working on their homes. While this is true of all homeowners in general, in these neighborhoods, there is a real pride in the exterior of the homes and their details, especially when one gets painted, or the aluminum siding is removed. There is a sense in Wellesley Park that because the building front each other, every one gains when somebody improves their home. Almost half the people told me the story of how one neighbor removed the siding on their house and discovered two stained glass windows that had been covered over. Each one recited this story with the same excitement and energy as the homeowner who actually did the work told it.

**Adaptability**

Although the houses were constructed as single family dwellings, many of them have been converted to multi-families. The income that these apartments generate has made them very attractive recently. Many of the residents discussed the adaptability of
structures in the neighborhood:

We were attracted to the character of the house, its kind of eccentric design, and the spaces in it which we could use for lots of different purposes. We have our studio in our house; it was large enough to allow us to do this, and we have an upstairs apartment that we rent out for additional income to help pay the mortgage.

One of the economic factors attracting people to the neighborhoods are that most of the homes have an income generating unit in them, which helps when qualifying for the mortgage.

Because we had the good fortune of buying when the market was down back in ’92, we now have many options available to us. The values of the houses have gone up by almost one hundred thousand dollars, so we have now taken out a home-equity line of credit so we can do more work on the house. And because our mortgage payment is so low, we have many options available to us. We can afford to send the kids to private schools, we don’t need to have two cars, in fact we don’t have any car payment, and because we only have one car, our insurance is cheaper. I don’t need to work full time, in fact most of the young families here on the park are just like us, one and a half incomes. We have lots of options.

Many residents in the neighborhoods also expressed that they were priced out of the communities of Cambridge, Brookline, and many of the close-in suburbs. For them, buying a home in a changing urban neighborhood represents a market they can afford.

THE MAP: DEFINITION OF NEIGHBORHOOD

When I asked people when you walk away from your home, at what point do you feel like you have left your neighborhood, the responses were for the most part consistent. However, in each neighborhood, most people didn’t want to talk about one scale of their neighborhood because they associated the term neighborhood with a number of scales. A composite drawing of all of their responses to this question are shown in Figure 4.0.

In Jamaica Plain, one woman admitted she had a very narrow point of view of what her neighborhood was, but expanded it as she began talking.

I feel like I am out of the neighborhood when I walk off this street, and that is the very small view. I feel like I am out of the neighborhood, as in JP, as in I am not going to run into people I know or know exactly where things are, when I step onto the T down at Green Street. Defined edge happens at Washington Street, along the Southwest corridor is definitely another edge, and beyond Brookline on the other side of the Pond feels foreign.

Another resident in Parley Forest defined her neighborhood by how far things were from her.

Green Street playground is not considered part of my neighborhood, because it is further away. I probably have a close in version of my neighborhood.
A lot of us hold as a value that JP is a neighborhood, so to some extent I would draw the boundaries of it fairly large. I think that in terms of a neighborhood where I feel more intimacy, it would have to be in the Parley Vale area.

A resident in Parley Forest discussed the multiple layers of neighborhood that he perceived:

There are levels of neighborhood in my mind; the core neighborhood and the larger neighborhood. I see the core neighborhood as our street, Robinwood. The larger neighborhood includes downtown and off to the Pond area.

In Wellesley Park, the residents’ physical definition of the neighborhood was very consistent, but people still wanted to talk about the neighborhood at a number of different scales. One woman described the boundaries of the neighborhood as such:

I know the distinct boundaries of our neighborhood, but it really depends upon who I am talking to. If I am talking to someone outside of Boston, who does not know the city, then I tell them I am from Dorchester. If I am talking to someone from Dorchester, then Codman Square is my neighborhood. If I am talking to someone from Melville Park, then I say Wellesley Park is my neighborhood. It really depends upon who they are and what they know in terms of geographic boundaries. I never define my neighborhood in the same way.

In Wellesley Park, there was some disagreement as to which commercial center people most identified with, since they are midway between Codman Square and Field’s Corner. Many of the newer residents identified with Codman Square and the improvements that have been going on there. The older residents tended to associate with the shops at Field’s Corner, though overall both groups felt neither commercial area served their consumer needs.

One older gentleman limited the definition of his neighborhood to where he walked the dog. He felt that since he didn’t own a car, he defined his neighborhood by where he walked. He explained that how he defined his neighbors was like the sign of the cross:

...You get to know the neighbors in the back of you, in the front of you and on the sides of you. But I really define my neighborhood as where I walk. It’s how I get to know people and make associations with where people live.

Most residents drew a hard boundary at Park Street, Town Field, the Shawmut T station, and the edge of Tremlett Square. One person commented that:

When I go down to Fields Corner, it definitely feels like a different neighborhood. And in some ways, Washington Street and everything on those sides feels like a different area too.

Of the two neighborhoods, the residents in Wellesley Park included more of the surrounding neighborhood in their context than the residents of Parley Forest, yet when they looked at the pictures, the exact opposite was true. The residents of Wellesley Park focussed almost exclusively on pictures of their enclave, while the residents of Parley Forest included pictures of downtown and the Green Street park.
THE PHOTOS

Jamaica Plain

I like the fact that it is kind of a secret place. People can’t seem to find us, which is sometimes frustrating, but is also sometimes really fun.

The five photos selected by residents on Parley Forest that best represent the neighborhood depict a mixture of different places in the area. Two of the shots focus directly on the wooded area, one is a shot of a large, well maintained house, and another shows downtown JP. The fifth shot is of the park on Green Street.

Photo #1 and 2: The Urban Wood
The two most popular shots of Parley Forest (Figure 4.1 & Figure 4.2) show the dirt roads, wooded setting, stone walls, and large homes and elicited a wide range of responses from residents.

Two words which kept reoccurring when describing the character of the neighborhood were roughness and rustic.

What I like about it is there are all these beautiful houses but you don’t feel like you are in this pristine neighborhood, it has a roughness to it, so people aren’t competing to keep up their lawn, or there house immaculate, when you drive through certain areas in Brookline everything is so proper, I like the roughness of this.

One gentleman living on Robinwood coined the term ‘urban wood’ as a way of describing the character of the neighborhood.

The Parley area is very nice, its not very dense, and it has a certain roughness to it, you don’t even know you are in the city; it has an urban-wood quality. When my godchild comes over, she always wants to go and walk in the woods.
Another resident, responding to why it was that she selected these pictures, had a difficult time pinpointing a specific item in the neighborhood, but finally agreed that what she liked most about the place was:

The big houses and the feel of the trees. It's wooded and the houses are close together... it really looks rustic.

Photo #3: Downtown
In sharp contrast to the 'rustic' images of the trees and dirt roads, seven of the ten people interviewed selected the third most popular shot of Downtown JP (Figure 4.3). Although this was one of two pictures showing the Downtown, the other photo was only selected by five people. People seemed to associate with elderly woman waiting at the bus stop and the Store 24 sign in the background of the picture. The residents have close associations with the downtown, and many residents feel that the downtown is part of their neighborhood:

It's the center of town, and whenever I am go into town, I watch the people, the old folks sitting on the bench waiting for the bus, the kids running around. It's always real busy.

One woman recognized that this was the less picturesque of the two photos, but still felt that it represented Centre Street better:

This is the less idealized view of downtown but it is downtown and the bus stop. What's interesting is that I now regularly run into people that I know down there, that I know from being downtown. Leon, who lives in one of the group houses for the disabled, runs around in his motorized wheel chair, and flirts with all the girls in the shops.

Photo #4: Natural Parks
While six people selected Figure 4.4 they did so reluctantly. Most commented that they were looking for a picture which represented the older parks and green space that they felt were a part of their neighborhood. One resident, after being asked why she chose this particular shot, explained:

I was looking for a photo to represent all of the green space. This park feels so urban... I would only go to it if I had kids with me. There are cars whizzing by and there all these lamps, a great fountain for the kids in the summer, but it's not natural.

This theme of the Green Street park not being natural kept surfacing again and again when people talked about that photo. They were adamant about talking about the natural beauty of the Pond, and the Arboretum:
Where are the pictures of the parks, the arboretum or the pond? The park that you do show is more of a place for little kids, and not for adults. If I am going to go and enjoy the outdoors, I am going to the Arboretum or the Pond...

The Pond is closer than going there and it is so much nicer. I would rather go to the Pond because it feels more rural, there are places in the Pond where you can’t see any buildings, you can still hear the cars, but it just feels rural.

You are missing the Pond, and the older more mature parks. You do have the new park, but when I think of the parks in my neighborhood, I think of the Pond and the Arboretum.

Photo #5: The Homes
The fifth most popular shot shows a large home on Robinwood Circle (Figure 4.5). Many of them commented that the condominium association takes meticulous care of the house, so it has become a real showpiece in the neighborhood. The homes location at the intersection of Robinwood and Enfield Street is a very prominent one, and it can be seen from Rockview Street as well. However, there were some reservations in choosing it, because according to one resident,

It makes it look like there is a lot of elegant housing in the neighborhood, I mean that is my neighborhood, but that is not what most of the houses are like.

In the end, people chose it because it represented the unique design of the homes in the area, and has become an icon for reinvestment in the area. Prior to being converted to
condominiums in the late eighties, it had been a boarding house.

Although the other photo of Downtown JP (Figure 4.6) was not one of the most popular, one person commented that the shot:

*Captures the spirit that I like so much about the downtown area, the brick walks, the architecture, this is what I mean when I say I am going downtown, the Daily Bread, the hardware store, the bookstore. It's an important part of living here in JP.*

Another shot which wasn't selected but that many people commented on was the photo of the new homes on Rockview (Figure 4.7). This shot seemed to instill a real discord in people. They didn't want to select it as one that represented the neighborhood, nor did they want to chose it as one that didn't represent the neighborhood, but they clearly wanted to talk about it. The construction of the new town homes has been going on for over a year and a half, and has impacted many of the residents lives. Many people were excited that new neighbors would be moving into their neighborhood, but were reluctant to include the picture as part of their neighborhood because they don't know who the people moving in will be. Up until this point, they had only associated with the contractors and the developer, and the residents don't consider either of them to be a part of their neighborhood. A number of residents felt this way:

*It doesn't have a personality yet, we don't know who lives there, what they are like... There is a piece of knowing people... maybe when I know them it will feel like it represents my neighborhood.*
I am hoping that eventually nice people will be moving in there and they will become part of our neighborhood. Another resident, himself a contractor who has restored a number of the homes in the local area, expressed his disappointment with the design and construction:

I didn’t choose that shot because I don’t like what those buildings look like, I think they are trying to be Victorian but they have cheapened out. I think they would have been better off choosing a different style and doing it well, instead of choosing an interesting style and not doing it so well. I don’t like the way that they orient themselves to the street, its an unfinished kind of naked look, its very coarse and hard looking, and it seems like it is an awful lot of stuff in a small area. Some of them don’t even have front porches.

The other shot of new construction in the neighborhood (Figure 4.8) evoked a much more positive response. Quite a few residents had something to say about this project, which was completed about two years ago. Many responded very favorably to the design, which although traditional, is definitely more modern looking than the “new Victorians” being built next to it:

The way it was done, the sensitivity to the existing context, it feels like they have been there for a while, they recognize the site that they are on, they are set back, they kept the yard and the trees that were there, just like all the other houses around it, and they give the feeling of being one, being a part of the neighborhood. . . . they kind of have the same mass as everything else around it.

A resident who abuts the property observed that since these homes on Parley Vale have been constructed, it has set the stage for other developers to follow. Another resident who lives on Robinwood Circle admired the construction of these homes as they were being built and commented:

. . . I was very impressed with it, watching it go up, and was real excited about it . . . that place is really wonderful, the way it’s sited is great, they have teenagers, and it works well, they have a large lawn which everyone shares, but it still preserves the open space and topography, so it still feels rural.

The sense that the rural character of the neighborhood was maintained even with the new construction was repeated by others. However, one neighbor felt very differently about it, likening it to suburban development and not truly in character with the surrounding buildings:

I look at that house and it almost seems like it is suburban . . . the way it is laid out, the big front lawn, the basketball court, and the minivans.

This residents comment that the house felt suburban is indicative
of a larger theme which pervades all of the residents comments. While many of them criticized the suburbs and the type of development that could be found there, at other times they chose to associate their neighborhoods as suburban-like.

A Secret Place
One photo which I thought would get a much better response than it did was the one of the entrance to Parley Vale. Flanked by two granite piers, it was how I first discovered the neighborhood. Yet the comment from the woman who did select it is probably most indicative of how the residents feel about their neighborhood:

The entrance-way into the area; this kind of goes along with my idea of it being a secret place; people always miss the turn, and I am always trying to find a better way to describe it.

Well its no wonder you didn’t include it, a lot of people who visit the neighborhood don’t even remember seeing the house, because of its’ color and all of the trees, its almost hidden. It’s set back, (and) a lot of people probably wouldn’t recognize this house if they saw a picture of it. It’s just like this whole neighborhood, people know it’s here, but they don’t think about it.

Perhaps people don’t think of the neighborhood. They certainly choose not to think about Arbor Hospital. Despite it being an enormous structure which sits on the top of a hill off of Robinwood Circle, not a single person chose it as a shot that represented or didn’t represent their neighborhood. In fact, when people did comment on it, they felt the Hospital (Figure 4.9) had very little impact on the neighborhood, with the exception of employees parking on the street.

I never think of there being a hospital right next door, its almost like its not there, since we can’t see it and we don’t face it, and its the back of the building.

The hospital is wood shingled, and features gable roofs, so although it is a very large structure, it does blend in with the surrounding buildings. Another resident when questioned about the hospital, commented:

Well isn’t that I am excluding the hospital or anything like that, but I guess that I think of it as part of the urban wood and not something that I focus on. I didn’t choose the front entry because it does look so institutional looking, and if I were trying to tell somebody where I lived, its certainly not like saying I live near the stone church on Center Street’ which immediately casts an image in peoples mind. The Arbor Hospital is just a nondescript building, no body really has an image of it.
When I asked other residents what pictures they thought were missing, many shared stories of their favorite view looking down the street or the view from a woman's living room window out to the park and the way a group of houses was organized on the street. One gentleman shared his favorite aspect about the neighborhood with me:

You wouldn't know this, but the canopy of trees as you come up Robinwood is wonderful in the summer, it is very beautiful. I love the feeling that you get when you walk under them.

The only other photos people felt very strongly about were the ones that depicted street scenes that the residents thought did not represent their neighborhood. Most residents in Parley Forest reacted against the regular alignment of homes along St. John Street (Figure 4.10).

I feel like that street has a totally different character than ours, the houses are different too, and its just one block over, because it is straight and all the houses are lined up one after the other, it doesn't feel like this neighborhood.

Most people identify with the irregular placement of homes and the natural landscape in Parley Forest, and can't identify with the more regulated pattern of development found on the adjacent streets.

St. John seems like its such a long street; one of the things that Robinwood offers is that it breaks things up somehow, and gives a very different sense of space around each house than what you get when you look at this picture.
Wellesley Park

Of the five most popular photographs selected, four of them were shots of the park or houses on it. This supports the feelings expressed by some people that the neighborhood feels like an island, but it also says something about the strong impact and sense of place that the residents of WP feel for the area. While I talked primarily with people who lived on the Park, two of the people I interviewed did not live directly on Wellesley Park, and they also selected many photos of the park as well. The park acts as a strong identifying marker for the area, and as one resident pointed out, people come from all around the neighborhood just to see it.

Photo #1: The Park
The shot of Wellesley Park (Figure 4.11) was selected by all ten people and proved to be the only shot in all the interviews that received unanimous approval. One elderly gentleman who has lived in the neighborhood over thirty years described it as like an outdoor room. When I asked another person why they chose this view they commented:

Wellesley Park is a real gem, I think people really enjoy it, in fact people come down here to sight see, they enjoy walking down here, its quiet, people are friendly, and there are always people around,

Another expressed her excitement when viewing the shot:

I love this view. When I am coming home from Shawmut Station, every time I get to Wellesley Park, I get so excited and I think to myself I can't believe that this is my house.
The next four most popular shots in order of rank were the picture of a gas street lamp, two shots showing groups of homes on the park, and a shot of Upland Ave.

**Photo #2: The Emblem of the Neighborhood**
The photo of the gas lamps (Figure 4.12) struck a loud chord in people. One woman commented:

*We are one of the few streets in Boston to have gas lamps, and are proud as a peacock of them. There was a huge battle in the seventies to keep them, thank God they weren't removed.*

All of the surrounding areas at one time had these lamps as well, but they were all replaced with modern square-headed fixtures. According to one resident, the lamps have become the emblem of the neighborhood. The residents are very conscious of their existence; one woman remarked how much she enjoyed seeing the neighborhood lit up at night. They represent a strong commitment to the history of the neighborhood and according to one gentleman:

*... Show how the neighborhood has gone through a transition, but at the same time people have held onto the history.*

From a physical design point of view, they are a small but important element in establishing the identity of the neighborhood. They are made even more special by the fact that no other ones exist in the surrounding areas.

**Photo #3 and 4: The Homes**
The two shots (Figure 4.13 & 4.14) that show grouping of homes were also very popular. People commented on the continuity of the architecture, and the sense that the picture just felt like home.

When one resident viewed the picture, he discussed how he liked the trees lining the street and the fountain sitting in the center of the park. Without even being aware of it, he went on
in a fair amount of detail describing the design qualities of the park. In fact many of the people I spoke with recognized that the neighborhood was special and emphasize the importance of the park, though curiously enough, no one seems to use it much. This is actually a very sore issue in the neighborhood, for two different reasons. One resident summed them both up quite nicely:

_There is and always has been this huge debate about whether the park is simply a ‘beauty space’ or if it can be used for light recreation. There are some people who earnestly believe that you must not walk across that park; there are people’s children who do not walk across the park because their parents don’t allow it, they would not even walk across it to get to their neighbors (on the other side). Which is besides the fact, and this is another huge issue, that everyone lets there dogs crap on the park and doesn’t clean up after them, so you don’t want to walk on it, I mean have you ever tried walking across it, you really can’t. You will step in it._

The frustration with people not curbing their dogs seems to supercede the issue of how people can use the space. For the most part, the older residents seemed to favor the idea that the park was an object of beauty, while the younger families thought that light recreation should be allowed on it.

_We use the park a lot more than when we first got here; the signs have come down and so forth. There were signs that said, no dogs in the park, no ball playing, and they kept putting them up, and someone kept pulling them down. If someone else hadn’t taken them down, I’d have. I think we are all a little bit embarrassed by the signs._

Of all the issues discussed in the interviews, the most amount of time was spent focussing on the dog problem. The tone of the comments ranged from pleasant and humorous “I think the neighbors could do a better job picking up after their little puppies” to downright serious:

_I really dislike the fact that people bring their dogs through and evacuate them everywhere and think that is sort of charming. I don’t see it as a minor nuisance, it really an issue of respect. I don’t think it is trivial._

One resident suggested a way to mitigate the problem was to allow only the people who lived on the park to let their dogs use it. While this gentleman was not a dog owner, his suggestion introduces the issue of ownership and responsibility for public open space. The problem with having a common space that a group of people identify with, but is also claimed by others in the larger neighborhood, is that it is difficult to restrict access to it. Since the dog problem is really one of compound use, it may be more realistic to institute a policy that everyone clean up after their dog, instead of restricting access to it.

_I think folks would be more receptive if only people who lived on the Park were limited to using it for their dog, because once you start incorporating the entire neighborhood and all of their dogs, it becomes a bit of a problem. I come out here in the morning and find little “samples” all over the place. You can’t walk across the park, the kids can’t play frisbee on it because it is everywhere, and that’s why the grass is so modeled, because too many dogs use it._
Photo #5: Open, Expansive Neighborhood

Finally, the fifth most popular photo (Figure 4.15) is the only picture which doesn't show Wellesley Park. It shows Upland Avenue, which is the widest street in the neighborhood, and also one of the least travelled. The street has wide sidewalks and a six foot planting strip between the street and the sidewalk, the only such place these conditions exist in the neighborhood. People responded very favorably to these characteristics, remarking that:

The neighborhood is physically beautiful, and the density is low enough, people obviously love their houses, because they take such good care of them.

Both comments were repeated by a number of people who associated the picture with openness and pride of home-ownership. These characteristics are something which the residents could easily identify with, and are how they think of their neighborhood.

Our neighborhood is not congested, and you can feel the home-ownership, the commitment, the dedication of the people.

I like Upland Ave, its not as dense as other areas, there is more space. I used to live in the South End and things were very dense there, very compact.

Although most residents identified with these homes on large lots and said that it represented their neighborhood, in reality, this couldn't be further from the truth. The homes on Wellesley park are on very small lots, with as little as fifteen feet between the homes. In reality, the density of the homes are much more similar to those shown in Figure 4.16, than they are to those in Figure 4.15, yet everyone reacted very strongly against the photo.
of Alpha Street. In fact, while the residents were able to identify with the characteristics shown in the photo of Upland Ave, they could not identify at all with what Figure 4.16.

Although it is literally within their block, most respondents didn’t even know where it was located. The subject’s responses to the picture of Alpha Street (Figure 4.16) ranged from “I hate this part of the street, it’s so dirty” to “it’s not part of my neighborhood, I can’t identify with it.”

The design of Alpha Street is quite interesting because it is actually a street that has been built at two different scales. The street has a step grade change in it which interrupts the road. At the higher elevation, triple deckers are densely packed together on tight lots, while at the lower level, which is adjacent to Tremlett Square, the homes are single family and on larger size lots. There are two newer homes located on both ends of the street, and each stands out in their environment. At the dense higher elevation, a new one story ranch, complete with a front facing two car garage, has been built on a former triple decker lot. On the opposite end, in the single family zone, a vacant lot that had never been built on was built upon a few years ago. While the owner of the house tried to build something which fit into the context of the neighborhood, they didn’t follow any of the conventions of the adjacent homes. Instead of raising the house a half story like all the others, they built the home at the grade level. They also did not maintain the tradition of a front porch or open fenestration pattern. The house ends up feeling more like a fortress, which is due to the limited number of windows on the ground floor.

The biggest distinction then between what the residents sense in Wellesley Park and Upland Ave, but don’t feel on Alpha Street is the sense of openness which the Park permits. In the absence of such a space, Alpha Street simply feels too dense and too urban for people who cherish their notion of green open space.

**Bleak Commercial Strip Development**

Another area which doesn’t fit into the image people have of the way that their community should look are the commercial strip development located on Washington Street and at the corner of Dorchester Ave and Park Street (Figure 4.17 & 4.18). People were very outspoken about how much they disliked this development “where Bradlees is located is real ugly, I would say that is visually unpleasant” and used the excellence of the design in Melville Park as model to be emulated.
Look at how disconnected the commercial strip is from the beauty of the rest of the neighborhood.

Another gentleman was emphatic as to why he wouldn’t choose this as a shot that represented his neighborhood:

*I wouldn’t pick two, no way would I pick two, because I don’t think it represents my neighborhood, it’s a commercial district, it’s not a neighborhood, it’s a stripmall.*

Similar sentiments were expressed about the physical character of Codman Square. The photo I included (Figure 4.19) evoked a series a negative responses, but the most telling of them was this one from a woman who admitted her bias towards places that are beautiful.

*When I think of Codman Square, I think of the intersection at Talbot, the Church, the real beautiful buildings, where it is beautiful, because aesthetics do matter. The picture that you have, this is what I wish that Codman Square didn’t look like. Storefronts that are inconsistent, signs that are inconsistent. I choose to focus on the beauty and not the ugly. If I focused on the ugly parts, then I would get depressed and say that I don’t want to live there.*

Finally, the residents in both neighborhoods always expressed a genuine sense of reality:

*I didn’t want to pick too many that showed beautiful houses and wide streets because our neighborhood is a mixture of congestion and those things and I wanted to show that this neighborhood is a cross section of many different people.*
Change
There is the sense that people living in these neighborhoods are very aware that they are living in a changing neighborhood. While they all want to see the neighborhood improved, they are conscious of what areas still need improvement. One woman from Parley Forest, when asked what photos she thought were missing, responded that:

I would like to see a picture of the trashy block at the end of the street that is in real bad condition, as much as I hate it, because that is part of this neighborhood.

Another person from Wellesley Park commented:

You don't show Geneva Ave, and the train going over it. At Geneva Ave, you see a very impoverished part of our community and we are all impacted by that. You don't show Latin Academy and the triple deckers back to back on the other side of Washington Ave.

Others described the change occurring in their neighborhoods, recognizing that over the past ten years these places have really reversed the pattern of decline:

This was a sort of dodgy neighborhood back twenty years ago. It has gone through a great deal of change, there was a considerable urban decline, and then Jim moved in, he says it was because of the size of the house that he could buy at the time, and then Nancy followed him.

You can see the change in the area, in the investment in the houses. I used to walk in this neighborhood in the late eighties, and it was all vinyl siding and the windows were covered over, there was no appreciation for the quality of what's underneath all of that... Now, I have noticed that the people moving in are more interested in restoration and are committed to the houses; they want to return them back to what they originally looked like.

Themes
Three themes emerged from the interviews. The first has to do with the social structure of the neighborhoods. People are happy with the diversity of the neighborhoods, but in Wellesley Park, they are unhappy with their ‘invisible status.’ The ugly side of gentrification became apparent when one resident spoke about the kind of neighbors she would like.

If you were to ask me personally who I want to be my neighbors, yes, there is a sense that because I have children I want other children to be around. But, I also want people who can maintain their houses, and double income no kids (DINKS) are fine with me. I want someone who can put money in their house. Look at my neighbor on the other side here, they work five jobs just to survive and they do not have any money to upkeep the house. Yes, they have two kids, but the kids are never home because she is never home. My other neighbor behind me, they have five kids, wonderful, dear kids, but if you have five kids, you can't afford to fix up your house, I mean five kids.

The second theme which runs throughout the comments is almost paradoxical, because on the one hand people adored the urbanity of their neighborhoods and lamented the ills of suburbia, while they also treasured the notion that their neighborhood
was like the suburbs. One resident summed it up well when she said “It is unbelievably the best of both worlds.” While this is easy enough to understand, their sentiments reflect something deeper about what an urban neighborhood is and what a suburban neighborhood is. The people I interviewed identify certain characteristics with the suburbs, many of which are negative (highways, traffic, auto dependency), but also many which are positive (big backyards, birds singing, open space, trees). Despite the fact that they are living in urban neighborhoods which have these suburban characteristics, I still got the sense that people don’t expect to find places like this in the city.

...the reality is that people have no idea this kind of place even exists. Most people don’t have a clue.

Finally, the third theme, which has been mentioned earlier, is the strong sense of community in these neighborhoods. Everyone I spoke with in both neighborhoods mentioned the way that people really interact with each other, be it evening strolls through the neighborhood, front porch chats, progressive dinners, or community meetings. People are aware that the design of the place where they live has affected them in a positive way, and fosters strong ties between neighbors.

I really like that these neighbors are real neighbors, they know me and I know just about everyone on the street, everyone gets involved.

The residents of Wellesley Park are very well aware they are living in a wonderfully designed neighborhood, and were anxious to share their stories with me about their walks through their neighborhood or how they enjoyed the architecture of the houses and the whole ensemble of buildings.

The layout of Wellesley Park, whether by accident or by design, has been a large factor in retaining and attracting new residents. While the surrounding streets contain many of the same houses, if not nicer ones, they are not as well maintained and do not
have as high of property values as those around either Wellesley Park, Tremlett Square or Centervale Park.

The Parley Forest neighborhood is less dynamic than Wellesley Park, perhaps because its landscape is not formalized and the landscape encourages a degree of privacy. The lone standing gas lamp in the edge of the street (Figure 4.20) is perhaps the best indicator of this. In Wellesley Park, these lamps are the emblem of the community, but in Parley Forest, one resident wasn’t even aware that it was on his street. It is vine covered, overgrown, and practically blends in with the all the trees.

Notes
2 She is referring to the Development Staff of the NDC, and not the entire organization. The development staff is composed of 5 people, 1 African American, 1 Latina, and 1 Caucasian.
SECTION 2: THE DESIGN OF URBAN NEIGHBORHOODS

My daughter goes to school up at St. Marks and we walk to school all the time, it’s fun... it’s one of the things I really like, because when you walk with kids, they talk to you, they tell you about their day and what happened to them, so and so called me a name and I told the teacher, where if I’m in the car, you don’t really talk much or listen because you are focussing on other things; the radio is on. Its so nice that its really close by; I really look forward to picking her up from school when I can. It’s not something we planned or even thought about, but its one of the pleasant things about being here. And now that my three year old is old enough, I get the wagon out, put her in it, and we walk down to pick her sister up. They both get a kick out of that, they like that. I like that.

Wellesley Park Resident
Chapter 5: Physical Design

The porches give people an orientation to the street; these days most people have decks in the back, but everyone here sits out on their front porch.

Wellesley Park Resident
Civil courage in an ecological age means not only demanding social justice, but also aesthetic justice and the will to make judgements of taste, to stand for beauty in the public arena and speak out about it.

James Hillman and Michael Ventura

**COMPONENTS OF DESIGN IN URBAN NEIGHBORHOODS**

The previous chapter demonstrated that the physical characteristics and layout of urban neighborhoods are an important factor in attracting people to these places. This chapter will focus on the specific physical design features of these areas and organize them into three categories: Public Realm, Site Layout, and Building Design. Each of these three scales will be examined and an analysis of the form of the neighborhoods will be conducted. This chapter is intended to be a primer for the design of urban neighborhoods. It is intended to suggest a way of examining the design components of urban neighborhoods which people are attracted to and analyze how these components contribute to the character of the place. When examined independently, they appear to be simple elements, but when combined with the other components, they become part of an inter-dependent complex system of place.

**Organizing Units of Traditional Urbanism**

After examining both of these neighborhoods, I identified three categories of their physical design, which I will call the organizing units of traditional urbanism. These categories are Public Realm, Site Layout, and Building Design. There are also three corresponding scales which are associated with each of these categories. The Public Realm, as its name insinuates, deals with issues at the larger neighborhood scale, Site Layout focuses on the intermediate parcel scale, and Building Design examines issues relating to the individual building unit, or house. Each of the three categories are further broken down into sub-categories which are illustrated with diagrams.

The design of urban neighborhoods possess a natural logic that can be best understood by examining each of the components. Traditional urbanism, when examined in this manner, unfolds its many layers and reveals the essence of what it is about these neighborhoods that makes them have such a strong sense of place. At each of the three scales, the following characteristics define the physical character of the neighborhood:

**I. Public Realm: Neighborhood Scale**
- Open space: Parks and squares
- The streetscape: From lampposts to fountains
- The natural landscape: Trees, Vistas, and Landscape
- The development pattern as a form-maker
- The integration of public transit

**II. Site Layout: Parcel Scale**
- Placement of buildings as a determinant of form
- The definition of Public/Private zones
- Using elevation to define space
- The impact of parcel size and shape

**III. Building Design: Unit Scale**
- Architecture as a unifier
- The details of design
- Structures that are adaptable
- Form and mass
- Building Elements: From front porches to rear decks
Figure 5.0 Glenvale and Melville Park Neighborhoods
I. Public Realm: Neighborhood Scale

By making nature urban, we naturalize the city.
Lewis Mumford

Open Space: Parks and Squares

- Use of Open Space to make unique places
- The Amenity of Open Space
- Parks and Squares as Value Creators

Use of Open Space to make Unique Places
The idea of ordering a neighborhood around a residential square was not a new one when these places were laid out, but the way that it was executed was unique. Whereas the squares in the South End and Beacon Hill were regularly shaped and symmetrically laid out, Wellesley Park was irregularly shaped and influenced by a condition of the site, the curve of the rail lines. Whether by accident or design, the curvilinear street rejected the grid form and epitomizes the suburban ideal of the pastoral, free-flowing landscape. It is the identifying space of the area.

In Melville Park, the open spaces help to define the greater neighborhood. As proof of this, consider that the name of the neighborhood is purely fictitious; there is no Melville Park. Yet because these parks are located off of Melville Ave, the name has become synonymous with the neighborhood. This is also true of the Parley Forest. While there is no forest, the concentration of trees and the largely undisturbed space define the neighborhood. In Wellesley Park, the open park creates a focus for the homes. In Parley Forest, the open space is distributed, but the circular shaped islands force the houses to focus on each other. (Fig. 5.2)

The Amenity of Open Space
In densely developed areas, open space is a highly valued amenity. Parks and Squares are places where people visit regularly and become the living room for the entire neighborhood. In Glenvale, people readily identify with the open space of Parley Forest because it contrasts with the adjacent streets which are regularly ordered and densely packed.

Parks and Squares as Value Creators
Open space in urban areas is valued at a much higher level than in suburban areas, because it is not as common. A home located on
Wellesley Park commands a higher price than a similar home not located on the park. Because it is so special, Wellesley Park is the prized jewel of the neighborhood, as are the smaller squares of Tremlett and Centervale. While all three parks are surrounded by many of the same size homes, each park has a very different feel to it. Wellesley Park’s facades enclose the space, Tremlett Square both opens up the street and terminates it, and Centervale Park extends Town Field linearly. (Figure 5.3)

At Glenvale, the open space is much less formalized than Melville Park, but still an integral part of the neighborhood. The open space is all encompassing as it completely surrounds the area. And while Parley Forest may not have a formalized square like Wellesley Park, the undisturbed parcels constitute an informal network of open space, giving it the rustic, rural quality the residents value highly. (Figure 5.4)

The Streetscape: From Lamposts to Fountains

A street is a spatial entity and not the residue between buildings.
Anonymous

- Street Furniture
- Surface pavement
- Sidewalks
- Street Design and Pattern

Street Furniture
The term street furniture describes elements like lamps, fountains, urns, planters, and benches. Each of these items help to define the identity of a neighborhood and leave a lasting impression of the physical environment. This is most evident in Wellesley Park, where the gas lamps (Figure 5.5) have become the emblem of the neighborhood. This is also true of the urns and fountain located on the park, which emphasize the formality of the space. In contrast, Parley Forest does not have any street furniture that residents can identify with. What Parley Forest doesn’t have in street furniture, it more than makes up for in natural features.

Surface pavement
The surface of the street impacts people’s perceptions of the physical environment. While it is common to find asphalt as the street surface material in Boston, some streets are surfaced in brick, crushed stone, concrete pavers, cobblestones, and in the case of Parley Forest, dirt.

Sidewalks
Sidewalks are commonly found in urban areas because the concentration of pedestrians is high enough to justify creating a separate zone for their exclusive use. The material of sidewalks, like streets can vary, though most sidewalks in Boston’s streetcar suburbs are now made of concrete. All of Melville Park’s roads have sidewalks on both sides, some with a planting strip between the street and the walk. The Glenvale neighborhood, in keeping with the rural aesthetic, has no sidewalks. In Melville, the sidewalks serve as a middle zone between parked cars on the road and the elevated porches on the houses. They act as a transition between the public street and the semi-public front porch.
Street Design and Pattern

Streets shape the built environment. They are the largest system of continuous public space in the built environment. Both Parley Forest and Wellesley Park are composed of curvilinear streets which accommodate the natural features of site. The street pattern of Glenvale (Figure 5.6) emphasizes connection, with very few culdesacs. There is a surprisingly high degree of variety in the street pattern, which is due to the individual developments occurring over a period of time. Despite this variety, the majority of the streets connect through, and a person traveling through these neighborhoods has many different options of access. The curvilinear streets of Parley Forest stand in contrast to the rectilinear streets in the surrounding areas, and help to define the neighborhood. In Melville Park (Figure 5.7) the streets are an integral part of the park system, since they surround the squares. The streets of Wellesley Park are also curvilinear and are surrounded by rectilinear ordered streets.
The Natural Landscape

- Trees
- Landscape

Trees
Trees are one of the strongest physical elements in the built environment. They are symbolic of growth and change, and at the same time, permanence. Depending on how they are planted, they can create a defined edge, provide a protective canopy overhead, frame a particular view, or provide shelter for the pedestrian. Some neighborhoods are defined by their trees; Parley Forest is one of them. Although Wellesley Park's trees have just recently been replanted, they serve as a buffer between the houses.

Landscape
The landscape, whether natural or man-made, establishes the grain and texture of a neighborhood. It is closely connected with the physical design and has a strong physical presence in Glenvale and Melville Park, both literally and symbolically. Literally, the gently sloping hills of Melville Park are a defining physical factor as are the ledge and rock outcroppings in Glenvale. Symbolically, the term vale is defined as an extensive tract of land that lies between two hills. This reinforces the rural and pastoral notion of the landscape. Although less common today, the term glens refers to a type of daffodil, hence Glen-vale, translated literally, means the flat land with daffodils located between two hills. And although the name Parley was given to the site to commemorate Peter Parley's connection to the land, like vale, the term Parley also has a symbolic association; it is defined as a hill where disputes of battling neighbors are settled.

Compact Development Form

- Walkable neighborhood
- Mixed-use
- Integration of Public Transit

Walkable Neighborhood
People remember places they have walked through, but seldom remember the places they drive through. Urban neighborhoods were designed to be compact, walkable environments where nothing was more than a ten minute walk away (Figures 5.8 & 5.9). At either edge of Parley Forest and Melville Park are the commercial center and T station's. Schools, churches, and other institutions are located close by. These neighborhoods are not designed to be auto dependant, but rather by their design and layout encourage walking, bicycling, and public transit.

Mixed-use
Neighborhoods where apartments are located above storefronts not only keeps eyes on the street at all hours of the day, but also provides alternative housing arrangement for singles, young...
Integration of Public Transit

The physical design of a neighborhood is strongly impacted by the presence of public transit. In Wellesley Park, the shape of the neighborhood was influenced by the Boston and Providence Railroad Line, and in Glenvale, the location of the streetcars and later the Green Line influenced the development of the Centre Street commercial area. Public transit contributes to the desirability of the neighborhoods.

II. Site Design: Parcel Scale

Placement of buildings as a determinant of form

Staggered buildings

How a building is located on its site establishes the character of the entire neighborhood. In Wellesley Park, the homes are staggered down the street. (Figure 5.10a) By staggering the buildings, a number of things are accomplished. First, it creates an undulating rhythm along the street. It also creates separate zones of privacy for each house. The offset allows for this privacy, because the homes do not align, and even though the homes are less than twenty feet apart, the windows, front porches, and rear decks all do not align. The views from the front porches are also accentuated by the staggering, because they are permitted a view up or down the street, depending on which side the homes are located on. Although the homes on both sides of the park are staggered, they do connect to the buildings on the opposite side the park. (Figure 5.10b) Finally, the staggering of the buildings is analogous to the spine of the neighborhood. In Parley Vale, the layout of the parcels are also staggered, but it is more of an irregularity that follows the pastoral tradition.

Building to Building: Building to open space relationship

The space between the buildings, between the street and the buildings, and between the street and open space are all voids which define the physical character of the neighborhood. Houses that are closely packed together create a strong edge. In Wellesley Park, the houses have a strong relationship to the open space (Figure 5.12), whereas in Parley Forest, the houses have a strong...
relationship to each other because of the circular organization (Figure 5.11).

The Definition of Public/Private Zones

Thought of individually, the notion of setting a building back off the street seems irrelevant, but when thought of collectively at the neighborhood scale, the setback and site layout have a pronounced impact on the physical character. In Wellesley Park, the distinction between the public zone and a private zone is made very clear. Although there are different levels of privacy, the rear yard is clearly the private domain, a place where people are allowed only by invitation. (Figure 5.13)

Using Elevation to Define Space

Elevation in urban neighborhoods helps to assign an identity to the area. The facades on Wellesley Park by themselves are unremarkable, but collectively, they provide a continuous wrapper around the park. (Figure 5.14) Elevation, like trees in the landscape, creates an edge to the street and enclose the open space.
The Impact of parcel size and shape

While the size and shape of the lot does deal with unit scale, it also more importantly has to deal with the physical character of a neighborhood. For example, if all the lots are equally the same size on a gridded street, it is very difficult to distinguish one from the other. In Wellesley Park, the size of the lots is consistent, but the way which they were subdivided is not. The fact that lot sizes vary greatly in urban neighborhoods from street to street provides an advantage over more homogenized environments, because the lots can accommodate different types of densities and therefore different types of housing arrangements. (Figure 5.15-5.16)

III. Building Design: The Unit Scale

Architecture as a Unifier

The house itself is of minor importance. Its relation to the community is the thing that really counts. A small house must depend on its grouping with other houses for its beauty, and for the preservation of light air and the maximum of surrounding open space.'

Clarence Stein

- Exceptional architecture not required
- Building for Permanence (Quality)

Exceptional Architecture not required

At the individual building level, attention is focussed at the individual unit on the parcel, how is it oriented, what is built of, how many stories. In these neighborhoods, very few of the houses stand out as remarkable architectural achievements. However, from a good neighbor perspective, these homes maintain a high degree in consistency and shape the physical form.

Building for Permanence

The phrase “building for permanence” relates to the method manner, and materials of construction. These homes are over 100 years old and still in excellent shape, considering they are wood frame structures. When the structures were built, they were constructed with a long period of time in mind, which is in sharp contrast to the temporary mentality pervading new construction today.

The Details of Design

Above all, this area includes Wellesley Park, which ranks among the most extraordinary late Victorian suburban developments in the United States; substantial, primarily Queen Anne and Colonial Revival houses border a large oval green. The great unbroken sweep of Wellesley Park’s irregular forms, ornate detailing and complex roof configurations represents an extraordinary survival within a neighborhood which had seen considerable socio-economic change. The area’s great strength lies in its late Victorian housing whose architects did not err on the side of restrained conservatism evident in so many Boston suburbs. This is one of the few areas in greater Boston that approaches the exuberant form and ornamentation, if not always vibrant color schemes associated with San Francisco’s famous “Painted Ladies.”

The design details in the homes are quickly identified with the neighborhood. Whether it be the turrets on the corner, or turned decoration on the front porch, these physical qualities stay with people and leave a lasting impression.
Structures that are adaptable

The buildings in these two neighborhoods are inherently adaptable, though this is not always apparent on the exterior. A large share of the homes were constructed as single family residences, but have since been converted to two or three families, group homes, boarding houses, hospitals, or condominiums. The physical layout of the houses enabled this flexibility, as did their size and steep pitched roofs which allowed third floors to be converted to accessory apartments.

Form and Mass

At the unit level, the form of the individual building shapes the larger environment. The massing of buildings in Wellesley Park are consistent throughout the neighborhood. The buildings are between 2.5 to 3 stories high, and are elevated off the ground a half level. In Centervale Park, many of the homes are between 1.5 to 2.5 stories, and were built as bungalows. (Figure 5.18) In Parley Forest, the massing of the homes is less consistent, but the informality of the layout allows for these variations to occur. There are very large masses next to much smaller ones, however the fabric of the landscape masks these large variations.

Building Elements: From front porches to rear decks

- Gable roofs, Towers, Bay windows
- Front Porches and steps/ Rear Decks

Gable roofs, Towers, Bay windows

The gable roofs on the buildings orient the structures to the street and cap off the buildings. In Wellesley Park, the same four home designs are repeated throughout the enclave, resulting in a very consistent mix of roof pitches. Although there are many copies of the same house around the park, the staggered layout makes it feel like each house is unique.

The towers, which are located on the corners of many houses, accentuate the staggered effect, and mark different locations along the park. The tops of the corner turrets are either crenelated or capped with a steeply pitched roof. Their 45 degree shift also
helps to mediate between the staggered buildings, in effect creating a transition between the staggered buildings.

The bay windows on the homes also create the undulating effect along the street edge, and help to differentiate the homes from each other. The two story bays break up the massing of the structures and provide views of the park from a 45 degree angle.

*Front Porches and steps/ Rear Decks*

The front porches and steps act as an intermediary zone for public socializing. As a building element, they extend the private zone of the house onto the street, but are elevated above it. This difference in elevation between the porch and the sidewalk below enables the transitional zone to exist. If the porch were closer to the street level, it would become much more public, and if it were elevated high above, it becomes a balcony. The generous front steps on the homes connect the private/public front porch to the public sidewalk, and are a common place to sit down.

The rear decks on the homes of Wellesley Park (Figure 5.20) are a recent addition (within the past twenty years) and serve as a private zone for close family gatherings. Barbecues, sunbathing, and entertaining all occur on the rear decks, while people socialize or read the paper on the front porch. The porch provides protection from the elements, while the deck leaves you exposed to them.

1. Streetcar Suburbs, Sam Bass Warner, p 144.
Chapter 6: Prospects for Urban Neighborhoods

We have claimed a spot in the neighborhood, we call it guerilla gardening, because the MBTA ignores the area outside of the T station, so we planted some daffodils and other flowers around there. My husband had the idea of making it a community garden, and through the City Parks and Partners program, we got some bulbs and planted them. A whole bunch of neighbors from all races and income levels got involved and we cleaned up the area last year. It generated so much excitement that when we made signs that said come on this Saturday and bring whatever flowers you have from your backyard so we can plant them, we had over twenty people show up. Total volunteer effort, guerilla gardening. We figure it is easier to ask forgiveness than ask for permission. The MBTA has never shown any interest in doing anything to the station, so we took it into our own hands.

Wellesley Park Resident
DEFINING PLACE

Our national characteristics, wrote de Crevecoeur in his Letter from an American Frontier over two hundred years ago, embrace the love of newness, freedom to move, and unfettered individualism. Americans, however, also have a big place in their hearts for place and tradition, for history, and for rootedness. Our greatest joys come from community: the people, places and neighborhoods we cherish. And the environments and neighborhoods we live in reflect our ambitions, our accomplishments, and who we are.

Edward Relph, in the book ‘Place and Placelessness’ discusses a “rationality” for how humans experience space and place. The designations he assigns to space range from “personal” or emotional based to more “rational” scientific type space. He believes that a space can not be characterized exclusively as one designation, but instead can and should fit into many different categories.

Place and sense of place do not lend themselves to scientific analysis for they are inextricably bound up with all the hopes, frustrations, and confusions of life, and possibly because of this social scientists have avoided these topics. Indeed the phenomenon of place has been the subject of almost no detailed discussion.1

Relph’s main goal in the study is to identify the numerous ways which places are experienced. In his analysis, he compacts Lukermann’s concept of place into the following six categories:

1) The idea of location, especially as it relates to other things and places.

2) Place involves an integration of elements of nature and culture.
3) Although every place is unique, they are interconnected by a system of interactions and transfers.
4) Places are localised, they are parts of a larger system.
5) Places are emerging or becoming, they have a distinct historical component, but are always changing.
6) Places have meaning.

Thus, according to Relph, a place is not just the “where” of something; it is also the location plus everything that occupies that set location seen as an integrated and meaningful phenomenon. In short, the sense of place includes both the physical and the social components.

Although place is a complex conception and possesses intangible qualities which change through time, the suggestion is that, above all, place has a physical, visual form- a landscape. Certainly appearance, whether of buildings or natural features, is one of the most obvious attributes of place. it is substantial, capable of being described... in short, the spirit of a place lies in its landscape.1

If we are to believe as Relph does that the spirit of a place lies in its landscape, then surely the best way to discover the landscape, and in effect, the sense of place, is to go there and experience it firsthand. Following this line of reason, by interviewing the residents while analyzing the physical characteristics, this thesis has attempted to define what the sense of place is in two urban neighborhoods. By examining both of these levels simultaneously, I have discovered that while each neighborhood is unique and very different from each other, there are certain qualities about the sense of place that are very similar. They include the strong association with the natural landscape, be it the square at Wellesley Park, or the trees at Parley Forest. Closely connected
to this is the identification with suburban ideals of open space and privacy. The other qualities include the close proximity to a neighborhood commercial center, a population which is very diverse in race, gender, sexual orientation, and age, and finally, the presence of a strong sense of community amongst the residents.

**Place and Community**

These two terms are almost interchangeable when discussing the sense of place, but cannot be considered exclusive of the physical characteristics of the area. According to Relph:

> Such an emphasis on community seems to be an overly extreme denial of the importance of physical setting in place experience... the relationship between community and place is indeed a very powerful one in which each reinforces the identity of the other, and in which the landscape is very much an expression of communally held beliefs and values of interpersonal involvements... In short, people are their place and a place is its people, and however readily these may be separated in conceptual terms, in experience they are not easily differentiated.

So the three remain intertwined, and yet:

> Places may be rooted in the physical setting and objects and activities, but they are not the property of them—rather they are a property of human intentions and experiences. Meanings can change and be transferred from one set of objects to another, and they possess their own qualities of complexity, obscurity, clarity, or whatever.

Place is therefore a multi-layered phenomenon; it can not be isolated into categories or rated like a machine. The quality of a place has more to do with its ability to accommodate many different uses and mixtures of people than it does with a specific dimension, though the dimensions are not to be dismissed. A well defined and highly valued place will allow many different groups to cohabitate the space. Given these caveats, Wellesley Park and Parley Forest both have a very strong sense of place.

In this thesis I attempted to get people to talk about place by asking them a series of questions. I learned many things about these places and the people who live here, but most importantly I discovered that people really do value the design of these two neighborhoods. They were able to quantify what it is about these places that makes it so special to them, and were able to identify what it was they valued about their neighborhoods. They also displayed an acute sense of criticism and awareness of the built environment around them. And though they rarely spoke in terms of sense of place, thy did discuss the physical features of the area and the strong neighborhood community, which indirectly, according to Relph, menat that they were talking about the sense of place.

**Suburban/ Urban Neighborhood**

The urban neighborhood, especially in small cities, has reemerged as a model for future living. Take crime, inhumane size, and dysfunctional infrastructure out of the city life equation and, as has been demonstrated, people will return to the cities.

According to Alan Wolfe, many critics insist “the suburbs are also increasingly becoming old, characterized by property tax revolts and an unwillingness to support services used by the young, such as schools and playgrounds. Suburbanization, from this point
of view, represents a retreat from community, not the desire to embrace it, if community is understood to include the dependent, the needy and the less fortunate. Berkeley public policy specialists David Kirp, John Dwyer, and Larry Rosenthal are quoted in Wolfe's book as stating that suburbanization symbolizes "a deep antagonism towards the nation's poor minority citizens" (Wolfe, p 19). Wolfe, in discussing the study of residents in suburban Mount Laurel, NJ prepared by the three specialists, extracts this point from it. "The very last thing they {Suburbanites} want to do is assume responsibility for those whom they deliberately left behind."

While this may be true about suburbanites, I found the exact opposite to hold true for these two urban neighborhoods. The residents in Wellesley Park and Parley Forest were very active members in the community. Many of them participate in or have coordinated neighborhood cleanups, volunteered at youth programs and health centers, and organized neighborhood leafletting campaigns. Both neighborhoods have also organized house tours and donate the funds raised to local community organizations.

According to Wolfe, there is a substantial enough middle-class population who are living in the city now "that the image of poverty-stricken urban and ethnic minorities trapped in the cities surrounded by whites in the suburbs no longer rings true."

In fact the diversity and ethnic mixture of people in these neighborhoods is one of the largest factors attracting people to these neighborhoods.

**Traditional vs. New Urbanism**

New Urbanism is to the 1990's what suburbia was to the 1950's: a vision of the Good Life made real... It is the degenerate utopia of the 1990's, nostalgically yearning for the realization of Norman Rockwell imagery.

At a time when most architects and planners are being bombarded with the virtues of new urbanism, the traditional urbanism which exists in most of our cities has received very little attention. Peter Katz in the preface to the book 'The New Urbanism: Toward an Architecture of Community states that the "new urbanism addresses many of the ills of our current sprawl development pattern while returning to a cherished American icon: that of a compact, close-knit community."

The greatest fault of new urbanism is embedded within this phrase, because the movement, if it can be called such, is about reacting to sprawl development and thus effect proposes a better way to do it. It does not assert that continued expansion on the greenfields will further diminish the quality of our built and natural environment, nor does it direct people to consider the very environments they are trying to emulate, traditional urban neighborhoods.

While the new urbanism has been very successful in re-establishing a role for architects and planners in the residential housing development arena, it needs to move beyond the 'new is better' mentality and address the real challenges of urbanism in the existing suburbs and cities.

The reality of this 'movement' is that it is neither new nor urban.
It is a reformulation of conventional suburbia; instead of mere housing tracts, the contemporary master planned communities blend a range of land uses, causing many people to label the movement the new suburbanism.

The problem with new urbanism is that it prescribes a specific solution to development through the use of rigid guidelines. The places most people consider to be wonderful weren’t designed using rigid guidelines, in fact most of them weren’t even designed. This is what makes these urban neighborhoods even more wonderful, because they are the real thing the new urbanists are trying to imitate, yet they aren’t really examining the true meaning of sense of place, and what it is that people really value about these neighborhoods. The codes and traditional architecture are not duplicates the traditional urbanism found in these neighborhoods. Instead of trying to replicate them far outside of the city center, they should be encouraging people to reinhabit these urban neighborhoods. As this thesis has shown, many types of people actually prefer this model and the amenities places like this offer. In the end, a new urbanism for America must deal with the heterogeneity of the population, the varying images of community, and the realization that not everyone wants or needs community.

The new urbanism must confront its own principles more convincingly and focus on rebuilding existing urban centers. It must move beyond proposing new towns and new suburbs, and instead deal with what already exists in our built environment.

**What can we learn from places like Wellesley park and Parley Forest?**

Successful urban neighborhoods have many features, some of which can be easily identified, and others which can not. Certainly the actual design and layout of these places is easy to identify, but in reality, the way each of these neighborhoods functions is a result of the way the current residents use their homes, porches, sidewalks, streets, public spaces, and commercial areas. Since these features are more readily identified, I have focussed on these components in this thesis.

While community can be facilitated by the design of a neighborhood, it’s not enough to have a well designed neighborhood. Many urban neighborhoods have similar qualities to these two places: they may have the same houses, the same lamps, the same roads, or the same lot sizes, but they are not successful because something in the entire calculation is missing. It is the combination of these components and the layering of them upon each other that gives a neighborhood its distinct sense of place. Therefore, we must not only look at the physical design of places but also what the residents value about their neighborhood. By examining the neighborhoods where community exists successfully, important lessons can be learned about the physical design and people who create and foster the sense of community and sense of place.

I have shown that physical design is an important factor in the decision to move back to these neighborhoods. Urban amenities, close proximity to public transportation, and cultural facilities,
are other reasons.

The challenge is to extract from these two neighborhoods lessons that can be applied to other neighborhoods. We must challenge the assertions of the new urbanists. We don’t need codes to create good neighborhoods. After all, the creation of walkable enclaves within regional sprawl, however delightful they may be, will not reduce automobile dependence or solve regional transportation and environmental problems.

The future economic development potential of urban neighborhoods depends greatly on the economic strength of its CBD. In order to encourage and maintain this type of environment, it will require rejuvenation by private commercial firms, upgrading through actions of local community development companies, and gentrification. It is best if these things happen in cooperation with one another, as they are less likely to occur if they happen independent of each other.

Tolerance and to a larger extent, celebration of diversity are constants in both of these places. The diversity that exists in these neighborhoods is genuine, and is by far one of the greatest strengths of these neighborhoods. As people seek more and more lifestyle options, looking for greater flexibility in their daily activities, these neighborhoods offer this possibility.

Longing for Community
There appears to be a general longing for environments where people can come together. While people still treasure their privacy and independence, they are also searching for community. Many have found that this community exists in these urban neighborhoods. While these people didn’t buy into the small town illusion, they have taken a gamble by choosing to live in changing neighborhoods in the city.

The layout of these neighborhoods and amenities connected to them has been a large factor. People ultimately decide on a house and a neighborhood based upon very individual criteria. Neighborhood and location are big deciding factors, and if schools aren’t an important consideration (which was the case with most of the people I interviewed) urban neighborhoods hold a clear advantage over suburban developments.

The prospects for Boston’s neighborhoods look better now than they have since the 1940’s. The inflow of public and private investment coupled with a robust economy, declining crime rate, a efficient public transportation system and stable population all are signs of a positive future. The pendulum appears to be swinging in favor of the city, and a cycle of investment in the city by private homeowners promises to upgrade even more urban neighborhoods.

The neighborhoods of Boston still have a long way to go, but many of them have come very far over the past fifteen or twenty years. More and more people are becoming aware that the quality of life in the city is much higher than the suburbs. And certain groups from the suburbs are questioning if the city might not be a better place for them.

Urban neighborhoods have traditionally been viewed as the stepping stone for the latest generation of immigrants to live in
temporarily until they achieve middle class status and move out to the suburbs. But many groups are asking themselves what success means to them and questioning the notion that suburban neighborhoods offer a higher quality of life.

Valuable lessons can be learned from places like Parley Forest and Wellesley Park. First, the design of these places was not the result of strict regulations or design guidelines, like the new urbanists propose, but rather from a developer and an active community, who ultimately were the ones responsible for the creation of the park. The example of the city partnering with the residents to build and maintain the park is also quite extraordinary.

We can learn from the physical layout of these neighborhoods. The rural notion is still a very strong value held by most residents in these neighborhoods who cherish the green spaces, curvilinear roads, and frequently compare the place to suburbia.

There is also something innately human about these two neighborhoods and the way that people live in them. They are both active neighborhoods with people walking, bicycling, gardening, shopping, and socializing within the neighborhood. The compact design of these neighborhoods also allows certain groups of people, namely the elderly and the very young, to not have to rely on the automobile as their sole means of transit.

In summation, these urban neighborhoods, which in reality are the first suburbs, really do offer a much wiser way of developing neighborhoods that people feel attached to. They consume much less land, afford people the opportunity to walk to stores, institutions, and as we have seen from the interviews foster a strong sense of community. The residents themselves describe these neighborhoods as being the best of both worlds because they feel as though they have suburban features, yet they also have urban amenities.

The end of all our explorations will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.
T.S. Elliot in Four Quartets

Notes
1 Relph, Edward. (1976) Place and Placelessness, p.27
2 Ibid. p.30
3 Ibid p.34
4 Ibid p. 47
5 Wolfe, Alan (1998) One Nation After All, p. 183
6 Ibid, p.186
8 In Defense of Dorchester, Boston Globe, Dec. 26, 1993?
9 The New Urbanism in America, Archis, March 98
10 The New Urbanism in America, Archis, March 98
Appendix
Melville Park Neighborhood Questionnaire
March/April 1998

Interview consists of 3 Sections

I. General Questions
II. Map of neighborhood
III. Photographs. (20)

Part I. General Questions

1. What are the ages of each member of your family?
2. What are your occupations?
3. How long have you lived in this house? What attracted you to this neighborhood and house? Why did you move here?
4. What do you value about this neighborhood?
5. Prior to moving to this neighborhood, where were you living, and how would you characterize that neighborhood (i.e. apt, townhouse, single family, suburban, rural etc.)?
6. Have you noticed a change in the type of resident or character of the neighborhood during the time that you have lived here?
7. What do you know about the history of the neighborhood? (How did you learn this?)
8. What do you like about your house and its location in this neighborhood? What do you dislike about the house?
9. What do you like about this neighborhood? What do you dislike about it?
10. Where do you shop for groceries? How many cars do you own? Do you have a rear deck? How do you think other people perceive Wellesley Park? Of the two commercial areas (Fields Corner, and Codman Square) do you use either and if so which one and for what services? Which T station do you use most often?

Part II. The Map

1. Circle your house and put an X through the houses of your closest acquaintances in the neighborhood, if any.
2. Do you go for walks in the neighborhood? If yes, please indicate the path that you usually follow.
3. Do you use the common public spaces (parks, playgrounds)? If yes how and how often? Who maintains them?
4. Are there any places in the neighborhood which you feel are particularly pleasant? Please shade these areas on the map and mark them “pleasant.”
5. Are there any places in the neighborhood which you feel are particularly unpleasant? For example, as you walk around the neighborhood, are there any places which you feel are unattractive or where you feel particularly unwelcome, uneasy, or uncomfortable? Please shade these areas on the map and mark them “not pleasant.”
6. When you walk away from your home, at what point in each direction do you begin to feel that you are outside of your neighborhood? (Mark these on a map, if beyond the map please explain where the points are)

Part III. The Photographs

1. Pick out those photographs which you feel best describe your neighborhood. If there are pictures of your neighborhood which you do not see but think are I should have taken, please tell me what they are.
2. For each photo you selected try to tell me what you know about each scene and what your feelings are about what is being pictured.
3. Finally, let's talk about the photos you didn't choose. Why did you feel that these were less important?
Glenvale Neighborhood Questionnaire
April 1998

Interview consists of 3 Sections

I. General Questions
II. Map of neighborhood
III. Photographs.

Part I. General Questions

1. What are the age groups of each member of your family?
2. What are your occupations? Do you Own___ or Rent___?
3. How long have you lived in this house? What attracted you to this neighborhood and house? Why did you move here?
4. What do you value about this neighborhood?
5. Prior to moving to this neighborhood, where were you living, and how would you characterize that neighborhood (i.e. apt, townhouse, single family, suburban, rural etc.)
6. How long have your neighbors lived in their houses? Do you know families that are moving out of JP? ___Yes___ No
   If Yes do you know why they are moving out? Would you say the families moving out are different than the families moving in? (younger families, older families, middle class, blue collar, different race, other)
7. Have you noticed a change in the type of resident or character of the neighborhood during the time that you have lived here? How would you characterize the type of people who live in this neighborhood?
8. What do you know about the history of the neighborhood? (How did you learn this?)
9. What do you like about this neighborhood? What do you dislike about the neighborhood? (Housing, Churches, Privacy, Stores, Parks, Trees, Schools, Transportation, Neighbors, other)
10. Where do you shop for groceries? Do you own a car? Do you use the T? If yes, how often?

Part II. The Map

1. Circle your house and put an X through the houses of your closest acquaintances in the neighborhood, if any.
2. Do you go for walks in the neighborhood? If so, can you indicate the path that you usually follow.
3. Do you use the common public spaces (parks, playgrounds)? If yes, how and how often?
4. Are there any places in the neighborhood which you feel are particularly pleasant? Please shade these areas on the map and mark them "pleasant."
5. Are there any places in the neighborhood which you feel are particularly unpleasant? For example, as you walk around the neighborhood, are there any places which you feel are unattractive or where you feel particularly unwelcome, uneasy, or uncomfortable? Please shade these areas on the map and mark them "not pleasant."
6. When you walk away from your home, at what point in each direction do you begin to feel that you are outside of your neighborhood? (Mark these on a map, if beyond the map please explain where the points are)

Part III. The Photographs

1. Pick out those photographs which you feel best describe your neighborhood. If there are pictures of your neighborhood which you do not see but think are I should have taken, please tell me what they are.
2. For each photo you selected try to tell me what you know about each scene and what your feelings are about what is being pictured.
3. Finally, lets talk about the photos you didn’t choose. Why did you feel that these were less important?
Selected Bibliography


Suarez Raymond. 'The Ideal City,' *Preservation Magazine*, March 1998 p 38.


Acknowledgements

Many Thanks to:
Doreen Treacy, Homebuying 101
Boston Public Library Fine Arts Library
Boston Public Library Prints and Archives Collection
Boston Public Library Rare Books and Manuscripts, William Faucon
Boston Public Library
Boston Public Library, Kirstein Business Branch
Rotch Library
Providence Preservation Society, Colleen Meagher
John Anderson, The Real Estate Analyst
Banker and Tradesman
Boston Landmarks Commission
City of Boston, Public Facilities Department
Department of Neighborhood Development
Boston Redevelopment Authority
Innovative Moves Real Estate, Jay Goober
Dennis Frenchman

and to

The kind residents of Wellesley Park and Parley Forest, who welcomed me onto their porches, fed me yummy snacks, and generously spent their weekends telling me all about the things they love (and hate) about their neighborhoods.
ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

Figure

1.0 Built in Boston
1.1 Time, Dec. 8, 1997
2.0-2.1 By author
2.2-2.3 Boston Globe
2.4 Providence Preservation Society
3.0 City of Boston webpage
3.1 Local Attachments
3.2 Streetcar Suburbs
3.3-3.6 Local Attachments
3.7 By author
3.8-3.9 Streetcar Suburbs
3.10 By author
3.11 Local Attachments
3.12 By author
3.13 Dorchester Historical Society
3.14-3.15 By author
3.16 unknown
3.17 Bromley Atlas
3.18-20 By author
3.21 Historic survey (unknown)
3.22 Boston Public Library Fine Arts Collection
4.0-4.20 By author
5.0-5.20 By author
6.0 By author