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THE NORTH END

A SURVEY AND A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

REPORT OF THE CITY PLANNING BOARD,
BOSTON, MASS.



[DOCUMENT 40 — 1919]

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CITY OF BOSTON.

IN CITY COUNCIL, January 20, 1919.

Ordered, That an edition of fifteen hundred copies of the report of the City Planning Board, dated November 18, 1918, and entitled "The North End," be printed as a city document, and the expense of such edition be charged to the appropriation for City Documents.

Passed. Approved by the Mayor January 23, 1919.

Attest:

W. J. DOYLE,
Assistant City Clerk.

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL.

Boston, November 20, 1918.

HON. ANDREW J. PETERS,
Mayor of the City of Boston:

DEAR SIR,— In accordance with the provisions of chapter 494 of the Acts of 1913, pursuant to which the members of this Board were appointed, we have made "careful studies of the resources, possibilities and needs" of the district known as the North End, "particularly with respect to conditions which may be injurious to the public health or otherwise injurious in and about rented dwellings," and have prepared plans for the development of the district "with special reference to the proper housing of its people." We have also studied the existing improvements and the amenities of the district, the public services that are now maintained in and for its benefit, and possible plans for extension or modification of those services.

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The results of these investigations, studies and designs we present herewith as a report, together with a set of plans. In presenting these records and recommendations we realize that we may be criticised for suggesting improvements from which, under existing laws and customs, the direct financial return to the public treasury will not be sufficient to cover the cost. We believe, however, that some changes must be made, and will be made, in the district, and that such changes as are made will prove more efficient if executed in accordance with a definite and complete general plan; and we further believe that the entire plan, if adopted to be carried out as opportunity offers, will be justified by the improvement in living conditions over which the city is the official guardian, and upon which the welfare and prosperity of the municipality is absolutely dependent.

Certain of the improvements herein recommended should, we believe, be made at once; others may be post-

poned; but in order to make the plan effective, definite building lines should be at once laid down wherever practicable under existing laws. Other proposed extensions that cannot be established under existing laws should be adopted as definitely proposed streets, to be opened when demanded, or, better yet, should be established under special legislation.

Respectfully submitted,

THE CITY PLANNING BOARD,

R. A. CRAM, *Chairman.*

JOHN J. WALSH.

HENRY ABRAHAMS.

ELISABETH M. HERLIHY, *Secretary.*

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XVII.—SPECIFIC IMPROVEMENTS
RECOMMENDED.

In the North End, as has been shown above, there are many blocks containing rear lots and inadequate streets and alleys that can never become satisfactory until some radical changes are made. In a few cases, as in the triangular blocks between Hanover, Battery and Commercial streets, small lots have been so effectually combined under single ownership as to permit of better developments. In other cases, as that of the blocks between Fulton and North streets, and between North and Hanover streets, south of Cross street, the present use of interior lands by industries makes the need for change less urgent, and not of such vital importance to the residential district. There are, however, eleven blocks, or groups of blocks, in the residential district, which are seriously in need of development in such a way, with public open spaces, as to provide adequate light and air.

There are thirteen other blocks in the district where conditions, although not so serious, are still in need of improvement.

There is also the block now owned and occupied by the Boston Consolidated Gas Company. Should this property be ever diverted from its present use to residential purposes, careful plans should be made for its subdivision and development.

To improve each of these several blocks various plans have been considered, and the most suitable for each that will at the same time serve best for the district as a whole has been worked out as shown on the general plan (Fig. 29). The proposed improvements have been numbered and described in detail in the following sections.

PROPOSED MAIN THOROUGHFARE. (Numbers 1 to 12,
Inclusive.)

Between the Charlestown Bridge and the wholesale market and cold storage warehouses there is no wide main

thoroughfare, so that produce teams coming and going to the northern part of the city, Charlestown, and the districts beyond, become congested and delayed on the narrow streets through which they now have to pass. If a main thoroughfare were constructed to relieve these conditions, it would pass through the North End section of the city.

The most direct route at easiest grade, and passing through properties that are not so excessively high in value as to make the cost of constructing such a thoroughfare prohibitive, is indicated on the general plan by Numbers 1 to 12, inclusive.

Other possible routes lying to the northeast and to the southwest have been considered and rejected for various reasons. To the northeast steeper grades would be encountered between Hanover and Commercial streets; while between Hanover and Salem streets such a change would interfere with the present grouping of playground, schools and gymnasium. In the block beyond Salem and Thacher streets any change to the northeast would be obstructed by a modern mercantile building of higher assessed value than the properties to the southwest where the line is indicated; while between Thacher and Commercial streets traffic would be so complicated as to make a difficult approach to the Charlestown Bridge. If the line were moved still further south, it would complicate traffic arriving at and departing from Washington Street North.

If, on the other hand, an attempt were made to relocate this proposed street farther to the southwest, the property valuations would be much higher. The cost of construction in this location would be increased because the distance between Atlantic avenue and the Charlestown Bridge over such a route is longer. Also, the present proposed street lines include streets that already exist, such as Parmenter, Richmond and part of Endicott street, so that for a greater part of the way it means no more than widening streets already determined. On the general plan this proposed main thoroughfare is shown 80 feet between buildings.

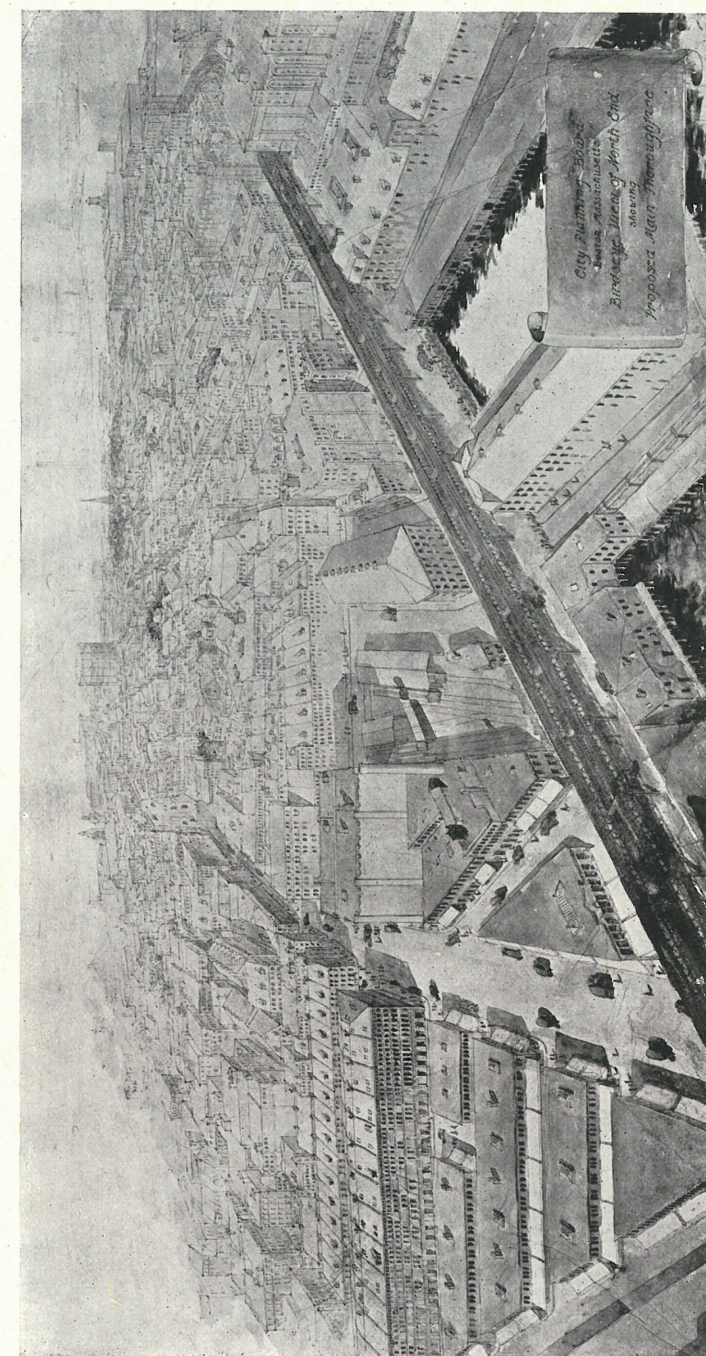


FIG. 30.— BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF NORTH END SHOWING PROPOSED MAIN THOROUGHFARE.

Block 87, bounded by Atlantic avenue, Richmond, Mercantile and Clinton streets, is divided by the proposed street as shown on the general plan (Number 1). This block is used as a wholesale market, divided by streets and alleys for convenience in loading and unloading produce. By a rearrangement of the buildings, and a relocating of streets and alleys, there will still remain an equal amount of floor space, and at the same time an outlet will be afforded for the proposed new thoroughfare to Atlantic avenue at a convenient angle.

From Mercantile to Commercial streets (Number 2) there is shown a widening of Richmond street on the south side, cutting through a five and one-half story building and leaving a slight remnant. Any widening on the north side would be prohibitive on account of the existing seven-story cold storage warehouse at that point.

Between Commercial and Fulton streets (Number 3) Richmond street should be widened the entire distance on the northeast side, through five and six-story buildings; and for about half the distance, between Commercial street and Chair alley on the southwest, through a four and one-half story building. In each case the property taken is under the same ownership or control as large adjacent holdings, so no excess taking need be made.

Between Fulton and North streets (Number 4) the buildings on the southwest side are well developed on relatively shallow lots, and should be left intact. Those on the northeast side, Block 72, can be cut back and still leave satisfactory lots consisting of two large buildings.

Between North street and Hanover street (Number 5) fairly high buildings line both sides of the street, but there again the widening can best be made on the north side by taking away a row of buildings and leaving fairly large lots on the new line. There will remain a small remnant which should be acquired to be sold to the abutters or retained as a part of the street.

From Hanover street to Salem street (Number 6), Parmenter street should be widened on both sides, and the lot lines on the southwest side of the bank relocated, com-

binning remnant properties with excess takings, in order to provide building lots of advantageous proportions. The remnant properties remaining on the north side are under the same ownership as adjacent holdings.

West of Salem street and south of Cooper street the present arrangement of lots and streets is very bad. The



FIG. 31.—RICHMOND STREET, LOOKING SOUTHEAST; LONG BRICK BUILDING, NOS. 91 TO 103.

new street should be extended by a diagonal cut across the corner of the block (Number 7). With the exception of properties at the northeast corner of Salem and Wiget streets (Nos. 92 and 96 Salem and No. 3 Wiget), the remaining portions of the block, as far as the alley, together with Bartlett place, should be combined and lot lines relocated providing advantageous frontage on the

proposed new street. This change has been considered in connection with the improvement of Wiget street as discussed in Section Number 15.

Northeast of Cooper street (Number 8) the proposed new street line intersects the block, leaving a triangular

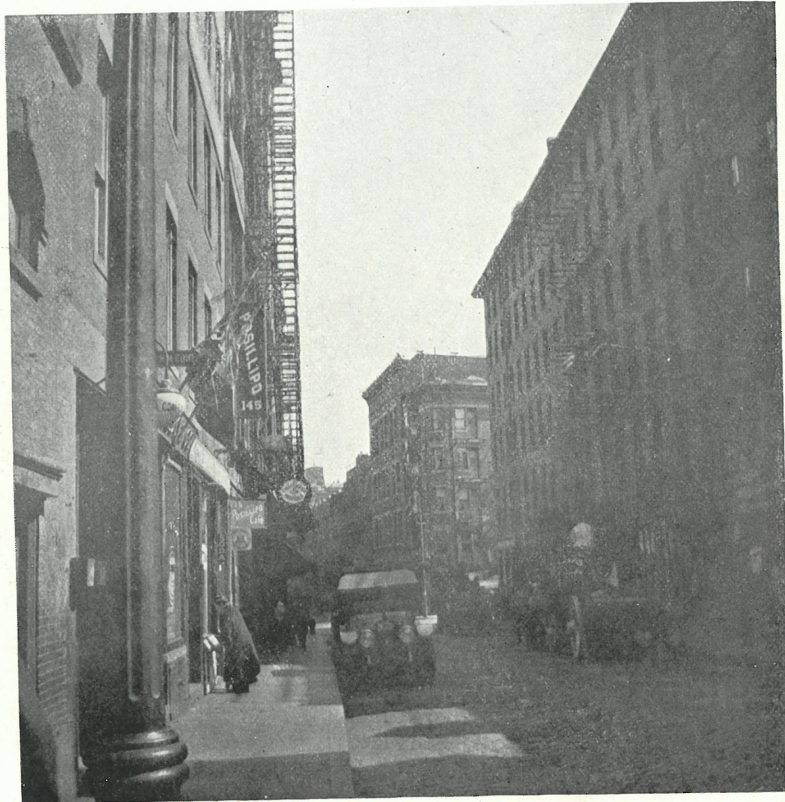


FIG. 32.—RICHMOND STREET, LOOKING SOUTHEAST; SHOWING CORNER OF NORTH STREET.

area at the corner of Cooper and North Margin streets, of which the corner lot should be taken by excess condemnation and combined with the several remnant properties. By a short extension of Baldwin place, and an extension of the present alley from Prince street, and its widening from Noyes place to Baldwin place, an outlet is provided for all three on the new thoroughfare, at the same time

doing away with the present excessive depth of the lot. On the northeast side of the proposed new street line, between Salem and Thacher streets, practically all of the present lot lines should be relocated in order to make proper provision for further development. The treatment of this block is further discussed under Section Number 14. From North Margin street to Thacher street (Number 9)

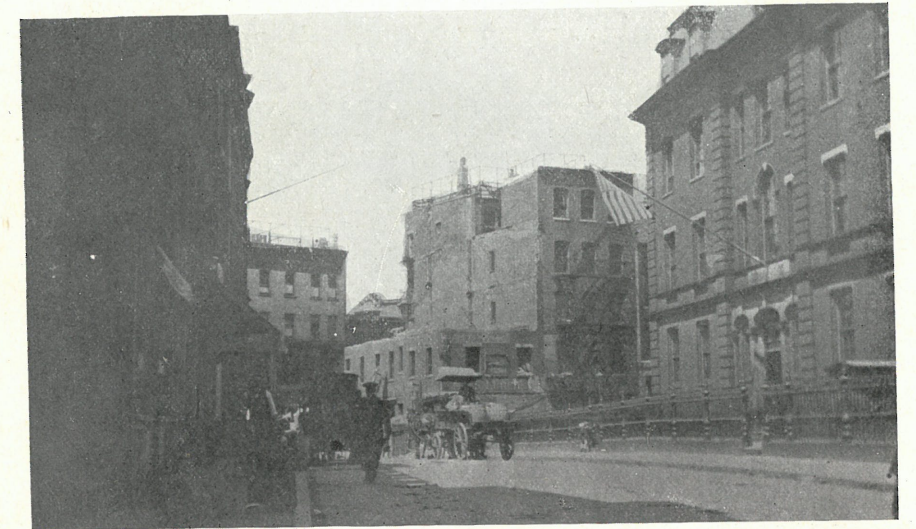


FIG. 33.—PARMENTER STREET, LOOKING WEST, SHOWING CUSHMAN SCHOOL-HOUSE AND CORNER OF SALEM STREET ON WHICH NEW BUILDING IS BEING ERECTED.

The construction of the proposed main thoroughfare would necessitate the removal of this building. The number of similar cases to be dealt with would depend largely upon the delay in establishing definite street lines.

a diagonal cut is made across the corner of the block, leaving several remnants which should be combined with adjacent lots to be taken by excess condemnation.

North of Thacher street (Number 10) the proposed street will pass through the center of a small block now largely owned by the Boston Coöperative Building Company. This will leave a triangle at the corner of Thacher and Endicott streets, which can be made to lend itself readily to the erection of a well located business structure. North Margin street should be discontinued

between Thacher and Endicott streets and combined with the thin strip or remnants remaining on the northeast side of the new street line in order to provide building lots of adequate depth and frontage.

On Endicott street, between North Margin street and Lafayette avenue (Number 11), a small narrow block, now solidly built up to four or five stories in height, lies within the proposed street. A small strip along the northerly side of North Margin street will not be needed for street purposes and should be combined with adjoining lots to be

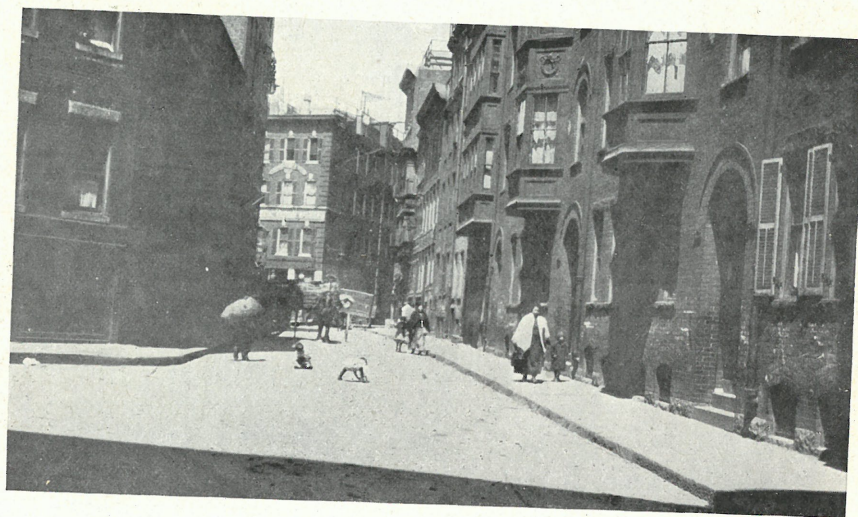


FIG. 34.—NORTH MARGIN STREET LOOKING NORTH FROM THACHER STREET.
Buildings on the left and in the background would be removed.

taken by excess condemnation. Lafayette avenue, a narrow street leading to Prince street, should be widened as referred to in Section Number 40.

From Lafayette avenue to the approach to the Charlestown Bridge (Number 12) the property on the east side of Endicott street has for the most part no costly buildings. A few shallow remnant lots will remain, and might be combined under one ownership, or possibly disposed of to owners of adjacent property. At the corner an additional taking should be made to widen Commercial street as far as Prince street.

An appropriate name which suggests itself for this proposed new thoroughfare is "Lafayette Street." Little need be said in justification of this recommendation, particularly at this time when the nation is more keenly alive to the events of history, past and present, than ever before. The North End is already particularly rich in historical associations, and this proposed street, which would link up many of its attractive features, might well bear the name of one who rendered substantial service to



FIG. 35.—ENDICOTT STREET LOOKING NORTH FROM CORNER OF ENDICOTT COURT.

Buildings on the right would all be removed.

this country in the War for Independence, and who did much to cement the amicable relations which have always existed between America and France.

ENDICOTT COURT WIDENING AND EXTENSION.

(Number 13.)

Endicott court is a narrow dead-end street, leading west from Endicott street. On the north side there is a row of small buildings that should be removed and the lots thrown into the street. The end of the court is blocked by a four-story building, No. 131 Washington Street North,

that should also be removed and the court continued, thus providing a through street about 30 feet wide from Endicott to Washington street.

THACHER COURT EXTENSION AND WIDENING.
(Number 14.)

Thacher court should, by means of a short extension, be connected through to Endicott court. There will remain a small remnant which should be combined with adjoining property.

WIGET STREET WIDENING. (Number 15.)

Wiget street is entirely too narrow for satisfactory housing. It can be widened uniformly only by reducing the depth of already shallow and small lots and by cutting through valuable lots on Salem street. This would involve a very large expenditure of money and would not produce entirely satisfactory results. It would be possible to remove the central lots on the north side of the street, thus providing ample light and air for the remaining buildings, and a small neighborhood open space in the center.

The remnants, together with Bartlett place, which should be closed, and the lots fronting thereon should be combined and the lot lines relocated to provide advantageous frontage on the proposed main thoroughfare.

MORTON AND STILLMAN STREETS IMPROVEMENT.
(Numbers 16, 17, 18.)

The improvement of Morton and Stillman streets was made the subject of a special report and recommendation as outlined in the third annual report of the City Planning Board. This investigation was undertaken at the request of representatives of civic organizations who were desirous of bringing about an improvement in existing conditions in the immediate vicinity of Morton street and the adoption of some plan for a wholesome development of the blocks in question.

The menace to life and health which has existed in the two blocks separated only by Morton street, a dark and

narrow alley, is difficult to describe. Little light and air penetrated the lower floors of buildings on this street, which was only eleven feet wide, and between walls forty or fifty feet in height. The blocks covered about one and one half acres, which would make six or eight suburban house-



FIG. 36.—VIEW OF MORTON STREET, LOOKING WEST FROM SALEM STREET; 11 TO 14 FEET BETWEEN WALLS. 1915.

lots for half a hundred people, but here it was cut into over fifty lots and housed over a thousand people, and this with three of the outside corners occupied by large factory buildings that monopolized the best exposures. Between the two blocks, Morton street, eleven to fourteen feet in width, and three alleys, four to eight feet in width, afforded access to the buildings and served as the dooryards and

playgrounds for many of the parents and children who had no better place to go. The alleys could not be kept clean and were often wet and foul. Sunlight seldom entered them and never reached many of the dismal homes in the crowded buildings.

These conditions were the result of gradual growth without design, foresight or even a fair appreciation of the seriousness of the situation. Nearly fifty years ago attention was called to the growing menace of overcrowding in buildings unfit for residence. Twenty-five years ago, before the rebuilding of a large section of the block, the city was urged to take the interior for a local playground. The tenants of the block were powerless to improve conditions; the owners could not without sacrifice of much of their invested savings, and relief could only come through philanthropic or municipal investment of relatively large sums of money.

The City Planning Board, therefore, made a careful study of this block, which was but one of a dozen similar large congested blocks in the North End, though it appeared to be one of the worst, taking into consideration every phase of the past, present and probable future conditions, and as a result of this study certain recommendations were made.

These recommendations provided for the removal of the apartment house opposite the end of North Margin street, through which space a street should be opened to Morton street. This thoroughfare might be curved to avoid cutting the rectangular lots on Morton street and to take advantage of the open space south of the Creamery. From the angle in this street a public passageway or alley could be made along the rear of the houses on Morton street through the existing passageway then privately owned. This would insure the maintenance of an opening much needed for light and air and fire protection. This passageway divided the Salem street frontage of the property, and could be relocated when buildings were replaced to follow the property line and thereby leave the lot in better shape for a larger building. While

only about four feet in width near Salem street, the passageway could be wider the rest of the way. The street extension should be not less than twenty-five feet wide.

Between Cross and Stillman streets were practically six rows of buildings with only two reasonable frontage spaces, and both of these very narrow. With the removal

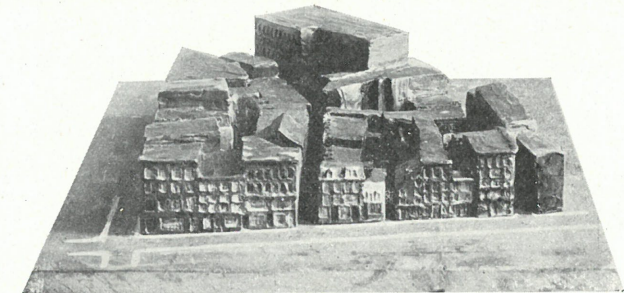


FIG. 37.—MODEL OF BLOCKS ADJACENT TO MORTON STREET, LOOKING FROM SALEM STREET, SHOWING CANYON-LIKE STREETS AND ALLEYS BETWEEN CROWDED BUILDINGS.

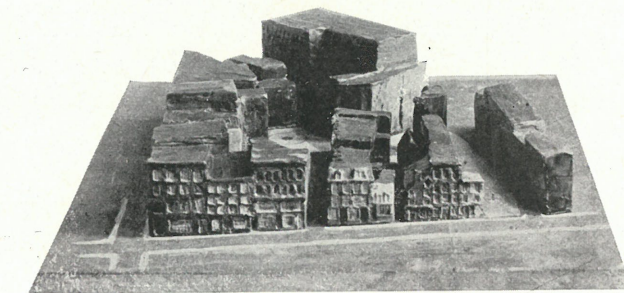


FIG. 38.—MODEL OF BLOCKS ADJACENT TO MORTON STREET, LOOKING FROM SALEM STREET, SHOWING BUILDINGS REMOVED AS PROPOSED BY CITY PLANNING BOARD.

of one row on Stillman street and one row on Morton street along the south side, there would remain only four rows, one between Morton and Cross streets that is very deep and needs a double frontage, one north of Morton street, and two on one lot near Stillman street that would doubtless be rebuilt as they were unfit and vacant. As a short street of local interest, Morton street was left

narrow at each end where it passed between properties of high valuation. Between these points, after the removal of the row of buildings, would be a space fifty or sixty feet in width. If a narrow walk and a nine-foot roadway were carried along each side, the central area could be reserved as a small outing place for the neighborhood.

A few remnants of lots on the south side would remain.

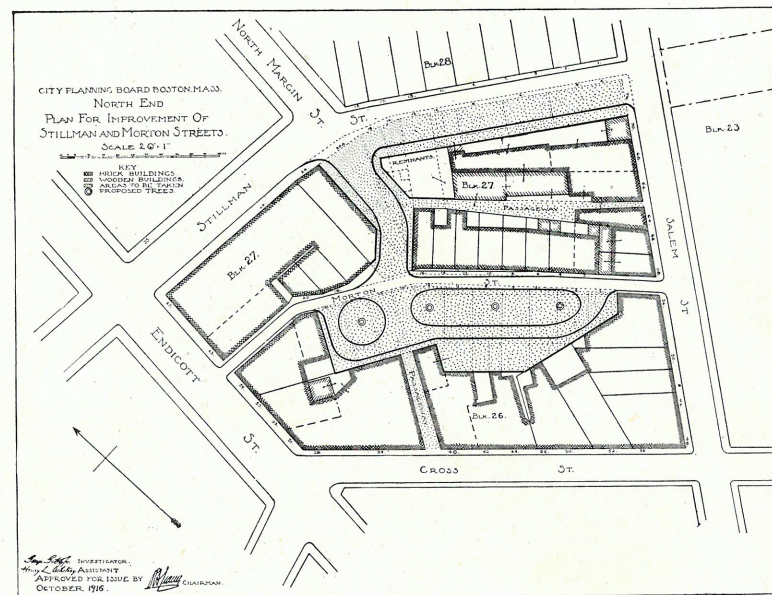


FIG. 39.—PLAN FOR IMPROVEMENT OF MORTON AND STILLMAN STREETS, AND EXTENSION OF NORTH MARGIN STREET, IN A WAY TO LEAVE EVERY LOT WITH SUITABLE FRONTAGE, AND NO LOTS OF EXCESSIVE DEPTH OR EXTREME SHALLOWNESS.

These could be taken by the city as an added walk space, or those remnants owned by the owners of adjacent property could be left for space in which to reface the adjacent buildings, the others to be sold to adjacent owners also if desired.

The existing passageway to Cross street should be opened through as a public way, while Morton street and North Margin Street extension should be closed to general traffic to serve as a local recreation space.

Between North Margin and Salem streets, Stillman street was only about eighteen feet wide, but could have been made forty feet wide if the row of buildings along the south side were removed. This would involve some costly property, but would be offset in part at least by

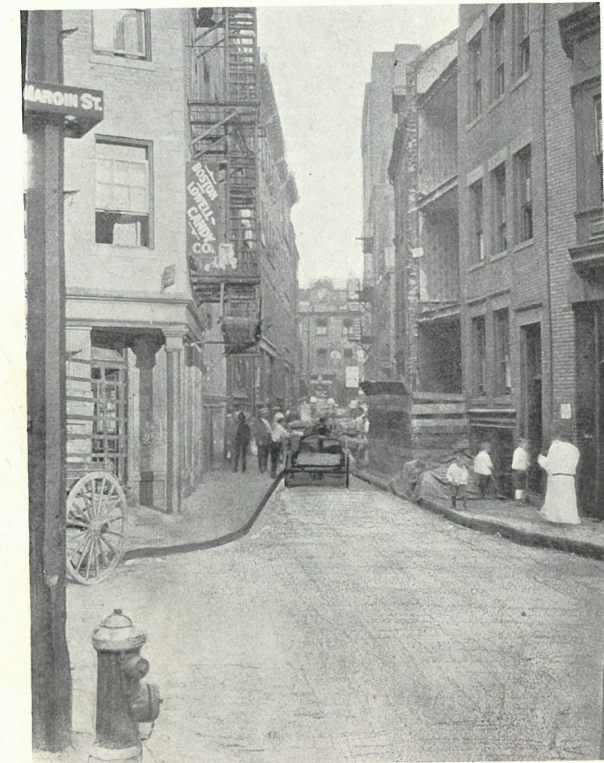


FIG. 40.—STILLMAN STREET, LOOKING EAST FROM NORTH MARGIN STREET.

On account of the darkness of the narrow street it was necessary to take a time exposure.

the increase in value of the large interior property which would then be located on the corner. Some remnants would also be left at the corner of the proposed North Margin Street extension that should be acquired by the city to be combined and resold.

The plan was for many months under consideration by the Mayor, the City Council, the Street Commissioners,

the Finance Commission, the Chamber of Commerce, and the various interested charitable and improvement organizations. It received almost unanimous approval, though the Finance Commission advised delay until a complete plan for the city could be prepared. The Street Commissioners reported doubt as to the need for wider streets, and as to the legality of taking land for widening a portion only of a street, and proposed that more of the interior of



FIG. 41.—THE NORTH END. PHOTOGRAPH SHOWING AREA WHERE BUILDINGS HAVE BEEN TORN DOWN IN MORTON STREET DISTRICT TO MAKE ROOM FOR PLAYGROUND DEVELOPMENT.

the block be taken to be converted into a local playground of half an acre. On this basis the improvement is being made as shown on the general plan. As a playground problem the change is for the better; as a housing problem it drives out some additional tenants who might have remained under improved conditions, and it leaves less space and less inducement for the construction of better buildings with better surroundings. As a financial problem it represents more land acquired by the city at about the same first cost of \$200,000, but it does not provide for the collection of betterments, and it probably will not lead

to an increase in taxable values of adjacent property. It is estimated that the first plan would cost at the end of twenty-five years about \$225,000 or less, as against \$375,000 or more under the revised plan.

While the advantage of the larger area of playground to the neighborhood will be very great, and the need for it is evident, the question may well be asked whether ultimately it would not have been better to extend the improvement over a larger number of blocks, and to provide for housing a much larger number of persons under improved conditions than to provide a single playground at a cost that is not likely soon to be repeated in many of the other blocks that sorely need public attention.

NORTH HANOVER COURT WIDENING AND EXTENSION. (Number 19.)

North Hanover court, leading westerly from Hanover street, should be widened on the northerly side by the removal of four and five story brick buildings at the corner, leaving one small remnant under the same ownership as adjoining properties, and old wooden buildings in the rear, including at the back the narrow alley now known as Anthony place, thus eliminating two narrow and unsatisfactory passageways. It should also be extended to Salem street, through several lots now occupied by wooden houses under a single ownership.

BOARD ALLEY WIDENING. (Number 20.)

Board alley is a narrow foot-passage leading from Hanover street to North street, with an average width of a little more than four feet, lined on both sides by high brick buildings. The widening should be made on the northerly side, providing for a uniform width of forty feet. In this improvement remnants will be left that should be taken, together with all the small, unsatisfactory rear properties on the south side of Keith's alley, with which they should be combined to form better lots fronting on this new widening.

MECHANIC STREET RELOCATION AND EXTENSION.
(Number 21.)

Mechanic street should be widened in the central portion by acquiring the adjoining vacant land, and should be extended through to North street to meet the end of Ferry street. This improvement comprehends the taking of a five-story brick building fronting on North street and the passageway now running under a portion of this and the adjoining building.

MECHANIC COURT. (Number 22.)

Mechanic court, a small open space under the same ownership as the four-story brick houses by which it is surrounded on three sides, should be acquired by the city and preserved as a public open space.

LANGDON PLACE EXTENSION. (Number 23.)

Langdon place is now a dead-end street leading southerly from North street. It is at the present time connected with Fulton street by means of a passageway under existing buildings. These buildings should be taken, and Langdon place extended through to Fulton street. This improvement leaves two remnant corner properties, fronting on Fulton street, which should be readily disposed of.

NORTH SQUARE IMPROVEMENT. (Number 24.)

The center of North square is now much used as a public gathering place and could well be protected by a curbstone and made a simple graveled area with a few seats, and a tree or two to make it more attractive.

PAUL REVERE PARK (PROPOSED). (Number 25.)

In the block which contains the Paul Revere House there are several lots of excessive depth, and a number of dwellings on interior lots without proper street frontage or adequate light and air. Certain of these lots should be taken to form a small public park, which will answer the requirements of the immediate locality as a small

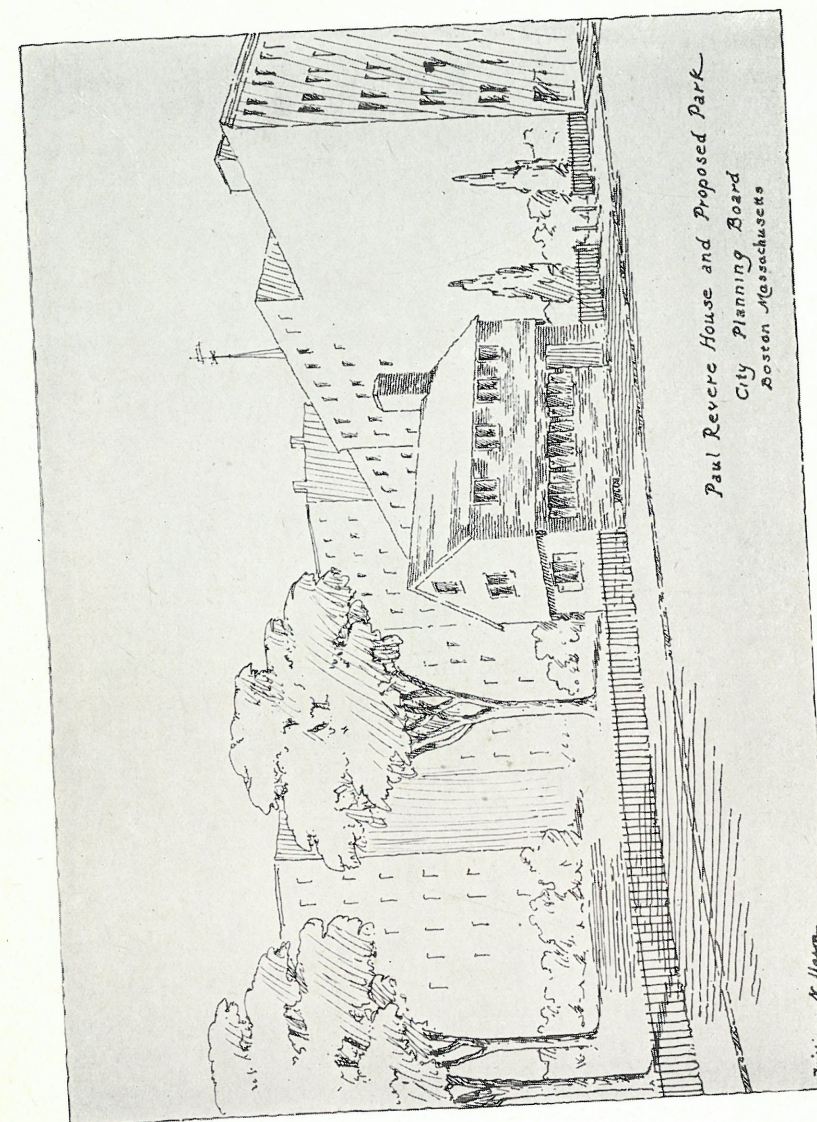


FIG. 42.—SKETCH OF PROPOSED PAUL REVERE PARK.

recreation space, a feature which is now lacking. The buildings adjacent to this proposed park will thereby be afforded an attractive outlook, together with a sufficient amount of light and air. At the same time it will constitute an appropriate setting for the Paul Revere House itself which has been, and should continue to be, carefully preserved by a historical society. It will also materially lessen the fire risk in connection with this ancient wooden building.

LOTHROP PLACE. (Number 26.)

Lothrop place, a private passageway running southeast from Hanover street, should be taken over by the city, thus affording a direct connection from Hanover street to the proposed Paul Revere Park.

THE CUSHMAN AND HANCOCK SCHOOL GROUNDS.

(Numbers 27 and 28.)

Most of the schools, both public and private, in the North End have very little playground space adjoining. The Hancock and Cushman schools, however, have together about eight tenths of an acre. Owing to the location of the buildings, the playground area is divided in such a manner as to lose many of its advantages as an open space. If the properties Nos. 4 and 5 Wesley place were acquired (Number 27) the school yard would be not only enlarged but made much more available, and with direct connection through Wesley place to Hanover street.

By the acquisition of properties Nos. 40 and 42, 46 and 52 Prince street (Number 28) the Hancock School would be provided with additional yard space and a desirable frontage on Prince street.

PRINCE STREET PLAYGROUND. (Number 29.)

Prince Street Playground, comprising about 0.4 acre, was acquired by the city in 1897, 1899 and 1901, at a cost of \$180,000 for the land and approximately \$10,000 for

construction. It is a very important center, but it is far too small for the district, and can be advantageously enlarged by combining it with the Paul Revere school yard, and acquiring the four remaining properties in the rear of Nos. 34 to 40 North Bennet street. This would result in

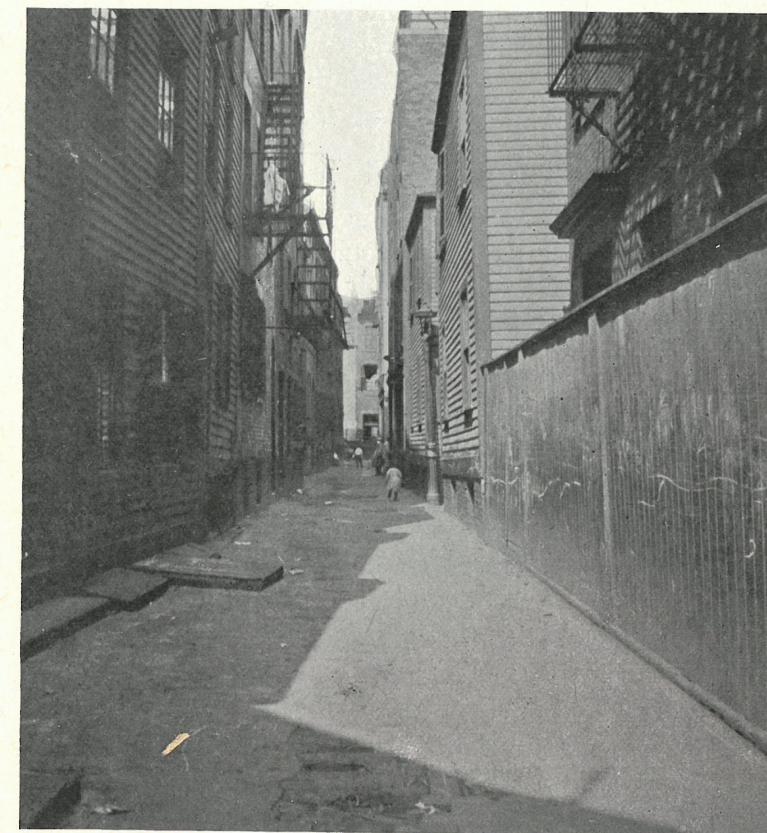


FIG. 43.—WEBSTER AVENUE, LOOKING WESTERLY FROM HANOVER STREET.

practically doubling the playground area, and with this space available for recreation throughout the entire year, the needs of the district would be much better served than at the present time. Unity terrace will then provide direct access from the widened Webster avenue to the Freeman School property.

WEBSTER AVENUE AND UNITY STREET WIDENINGS.
(Numbers 30, 31, 32, 33.)

Webster avenue, a narrow public passageway from 10 to 12 feet wide, extending westerly from No. 374 Hanover street to No. 20 Unity street, should be widened. This can best be done by removing the four-story brick building at the southwest corner of Hanover street and Webster avenue, together with a part of the three-story wooden building in the rear, and buildings Nos. 10 to 26 Webster avenue.

From this point the widening should be made on the opposite side of the street, taking all of the properties on Oliver court, Washington place and Canney place, together with Nos. 27, 29, 35 and 37 Webster avenue and Nos. 16, 18 and 20 Unity street, in order to complete the Webster avenue widening which at this point merges with the Unity street widening (Number 33).

To complete the Unity street widening, properties Nos. 22, 24 and 26 Unity street and No. 39 Tileston street must be taken in addition. This widened portion of Unity street, together with the adjoining widened portion of Webster avenue, should be developed as a neighborhood park space as shown on the general plan, thereby opening up one of the worst examples of interior-lot conditions to be found in the district.

Leading northeasterly from Webster avenue are two private ways, Revere place (Number 31) and Unity terrace (Number 32), both of which should be acquired by the city and kept open as public ways.

MARGARET STREET EXTENSION. (Number 34.)

Margaret street, which now extends northerly between Prince and Sheafe streets, should be extended in the same general direction from Sheafe street to Hull street by passing through Nos. 11 and 13 Sheafe street and 10 and 12 Hull street. This removes several brick buildings of excessive depth, and provides proper frontage for two interior brick buildings now facing on Hull street court.

It affords also direct connection, by means of Snelling place (which is further discussed in Section 53), with the Pormort School property.

CLEVELAND PLACE WIDENING. (Number 35.)

Cleveland place, running westerly from Margaret street to Snow Hill street, is a narrow passageway lined on either side by high brick buildings. Except for local delivery purposes it is a foot passageway only. This particular locality has been made the subject of special investigations and reports by other bodies on several occasions. The street should be widened on the southerly side by the removal of No. 16 Margaret street, No. 4 Cleveland place, and No. 17 Snow Hill street, and the cutting back of properties Nos. 14, 16, 18 and 20 Cleveland place. The rear remnant properties on Cleveland place should be combined and resold. The property No. 10 Cleveland place is a large holding running through to Prince street, and therefore would not necessitate any rearrangement of property lines.

NOYES PLACE WIDENING AND BALDWIN PLACE EXTENSION. (Numbers 36 and 37.)

At the present time there is a narrow private alley leading southerly from Prince street to the Vermont Building property. This alley should be extended through to the proposed main thoroughfare, and widened from its point of intersection with Noyes place to a width of forty feet. This will leave remnants at No. 15 Noyes place and No. 9 Baldwin place which should be combined with adjacent properties, making a valuable location with a frontage on three sides, and in close proximity to the proposed new street.

Noyes place, leading westerly from Salem street, should be widened to a uniform width throughout. This can be done by cutting back the properties on the northerly side, Nos. 4 to 12 inclusive, leaving remnants which should be combined and lot lines relocated (Number 36).

Baldwin place should be extended until it meets the proposed main thoroughfare at approximately the same point as the alley extended from Prince street (Number 37).

Noyes place, Baldwin place and the alley leading from Prince street should all be taken over by the city and maintained as public ways. These three improvements will serve to open up the heart of a block which is now almost entirely given over to interior lot development. They also provide opportunity for the easy circulation of traffic, and afford street frontages for every remaining lot, at the same time giving to all three streets a desirable opening into the proposed main thoroughfare.

PROPOSED ALLEY RUNNING NORTHWEST FROM THACHER STREET TO THE PROPOSED MAIN THOROUGHFARE.
(Number 38.)

The construction of the proposed main thoroughfare through this part of the district as shown on the general plan makes advisable the closing of that portion of North Margin street lying between Thacher and Endicott streets, to be combined with the remnant properties remaining from the improvement as described in Section 10. Through the center of the block thus created there should be an alley at least fifteen feet wide to provide for rear access to the properties fronting on Prince street and the new street.

This alley should be constructed by taking properties now numbered 63 to 87, inclusive, on North Margin street. This will leave remnants on the south side which should be combined with the closed portion of North Margin street and the triangular remnant property remaining from the construction of the proposed main thoroughfare, which will permit of the location of lot lines affording excellent street frontages. On the north side there will remain one row of houses fronting on Prince street. It may be advisable to acquire the properties Nos. 3 and 5 Thacher street and 102 to 108, inclusive, Prince street, at present under one ownership, in order to arrange for a satisfactory relocation of property lines.

LAFAYETTE AVENUE WIDENING. (Number 39.)

Lafayette avenue is a short thoroughfare running north-easterly from Endicott street to Prince street. At present it is but a little over twenty feet wide, with high brick buildings on either side, and since many of the lots in the adjoining block are being relocated, this avenue should be widened to not less than forty feet. In the event of the ultimate subdivision of the gasometer property, this street will then afford direct access to the proposed main thoroughfare.

CAUSEWAY AND COMMERCIAL STREET WIDENINGS.
(Numbers 40, 41, 42, 43.)

Causeway street from Washington Street North to Prince street, and Commercial street from Prince street to just east of Charter street, should be widened throughout to a uniform width of one hundred feet.

From Washington Street North to Prince street (Number 40) the widening should be made on the south side by cutting back properties Nos. 283 to 293, inclusive, Causeway street and 166 Prince street. The small remnants remaining in the rear should be combined with adjacent properties to be taken by excess condemnation and the lot lines relocated in order to provide conveniently arranged building lots of adequate proportions.

From Prince street on (Numbers 41, 42 and 43), the widening should be made on the north side by cutting back properties owned by the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad and the Boston Elevated Railway Company, for the most part unbuilt upon at the present time.

NORTH HUDSON STREET WIDENING. (Number 44.)

North Hudson street is too narrow to be satisfactory and should be widened on the northerly side by cutting back a portion of the Boston Consolidated Gas Company property, Nos. 4, 5 and 6 North Hudson street and Nos. 55 and 46 Snow Hill street. The remnant properties remaining from these small lots might well be combined to form two or three lots of reasonable proportions.

SUBDIVISION OF GASOMETER PROPERTY. (Numbers 45 and 46.)

If it should ultimately be found advisable to subdivide the large area known as Block 1, bounded by Prince, Commercial, Hull and Snow Hill streets, now under the ownership of the Boston Consolidated Gas Company, and on which the large gasometer is at present located, it would be necessary to open up the interior of the property by the construction of new streets. This might be done by extending North Hudson street to Lafayette avenue (Number 45) and continuing Sheafe street to meet this proposed extension (Number 46). These streets would never become available for more than local use owing to the steep grades encountered.

COPP'S HILL TERRACES AND NORTH END BEACH AND PLAYGROUND. (Numbers 47, 48, 49 and 50.)

The land for the Terraces, or Copp's Hill, was acquired in 1893 at a cost of about \$91,000. It has been improved at a cost of about \$43,000, making a total of \$134,000 for about 0.6 acre of park space.

The Terraces were made useful and attractive at the start; the first work was of a dignified and monumental character, designed to last and to command admiration and respect, but the more recent additions are of a somewhat less imposing nature. The Elevated structure, with its noisy trains, also greatly reduced the value and utility of the property, pocketing the lower portion of the Terraces and rendering them practically useless as a recreation space.

The early plans contemplated a connection between the Terraces and the North End Playground by means of a bridge, but with the advent of the Elevated structure this plan was apparently abandoned. It is still quite possible, however, to construct a passageway immediately beneath the upper Elevated structure and well above the busy street (Number 48). Such a bridge, while connecting directly with the North End Playground by means of a



FIG. 44.—VIEWS OF NORTH END BEACH AND PLAYGROUND FROM RECREATION PIER.

flight of steps at the northwest corner, can also be continued by means of an elevated walk, at practically the same grade, to the recreation pier, passing over the men's bath house. From the recreation pier to the playground an easy incline already exists. This improvement would do away with the present danger to children in crossing Commercial street, with its numerous car tracks and heavy teaming, in order to reach the playground from the congested area surrounding their homes. It provides also satisfactory access to the playground and recreation pier for mothers with baby carriages since the grade is at no point severe.

Since the Elevated structure has greatly reduced the value of the frontage on Commercial street at the lower level and the lower terraced portions, greater value from the Terraces could doubtless be obtained by filling the lower area up to a higher elevation. This would permit the planting of several shade trees under favorable conditions. They would add much to the attractiveness of the spot and also serve as a protection from the sun's rays during the excessive heat of the summer.

The area now comprised in the North End beach, playground and recreation pier, consisting of about 6.7 acres, was acquired by the city in 1893 at a cost of about \$330,000. It has been improved at a cost of nearly \$200,000, or a total of over half a million dollars. Considerable money has recently been expended on this area in accordance with plans prepared in 1916. A retaining wall has been constructed between the playground and beach, and a strong wire netting placed around the playground as a protection from baseballs and other projectiles. Along the Commercial street side of the playground a low, permanent grandstand has been erected. The area could be made still more attractive by planting trees around the edges. This should be done in such a way as not to obstruct the view from the grandstand.

The bathing beach, used from June 15 to September 15, about 75 days, is very popular for at least a part of that time. Salt water bathing is a valuable asset for the people.

It is estimated that nearly 200,000 persons patronize the bathing facilities during the season. The bath houses provide for 600 or 800 men and as many women, and some of the bathers dress at home.

The slope of the beach is such that for six hours out of every twelve there is very little water owing to low tide, and it is always far from clean. This could be overcome by the construction of a dam near the end of the recreation pier as shown on the general plan. This would keep the water on the beach at a high mark at all times, and could

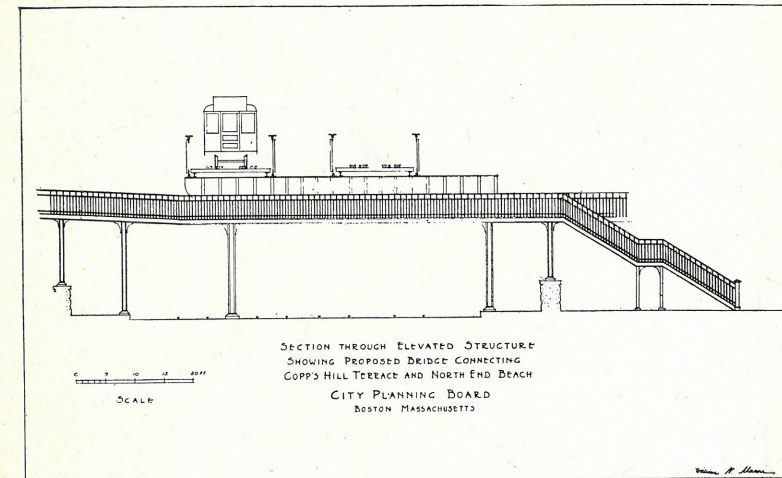


FIG. 46.—DETAIL DRAWING OF BRIDGE AND ELEVATED WALK FROM COPPS HILL TERRACES TO THE NORTH END BEACH.

be maintained and kept clean by a flow of tide water through controlling inlet and outlet devices.

The city has an investment at this point that represents a cost in interest and tax values of over \$30,000 a year, so that any further improvement which would increase the benefits derived from the large investment already made would seem worthy of serious consideration.

UNITY COURT WIDENING AND EXTENSION. (Numbers 51 and 52.)

Unity court, leading northwesterly from Unity street, is too narrow for healthful housing. If properties Nos.

3 and 7 Unity street and Nos. 7, 9 and 21 Unity court were taken and the buildings removed, a small square would be formed which would provide good frontage to a number of existing buildings on both Unity court and Unity street (Number 51).

From the end of Unity court to Salem street a passageway or small street should be opened by taking properties No. 201 Salem street and Nos. 20 and 22 Unity court. Such opening will benefit also the rear ends of the excessively deep lots on Charter street (Number 52). The small remnant remaining from No. 20 Unity court might well be thrown into the street unless sold to the adjacent property owner.

PHIPPS PLACE EXTENSION. (Numbers 53 and 54.)

Phipps place, leading southerly from Charter street, should be extended through Snelling place to Hull street, there connecting with Margaret street extended as described in Section 34. This would necessitate the regrading of the property in front of the Pormort School, where a small square would be formed opposite the school building. The extension would necessitate also the acquiring of property No. 9 Hull street and the taking over by the city of the narrow passageway known as Snelling place (Number 53).

Between the square thus formed in front of the Pormort School and Salem street there is now some vacant yard space and a small brick building, through which a passageway might be constructed to provide additional access for light, air and service to the interior of the block (Number 54). This would also provide practically direct connection with Unity court extended as proposed in Section 52, and thereby afford much easier access to the school buildings for the children in that immediate locality.

FOSTER STREET NEIGHBORHOOD COURTS. (Numbers 55, 56 and 57.)

Between Henchman street and the Copp's Hill Terraces are two deep blocks separated by Foster street, which averages about twenty feet in width, and forms a steep connection between Charter street and Commercial street.

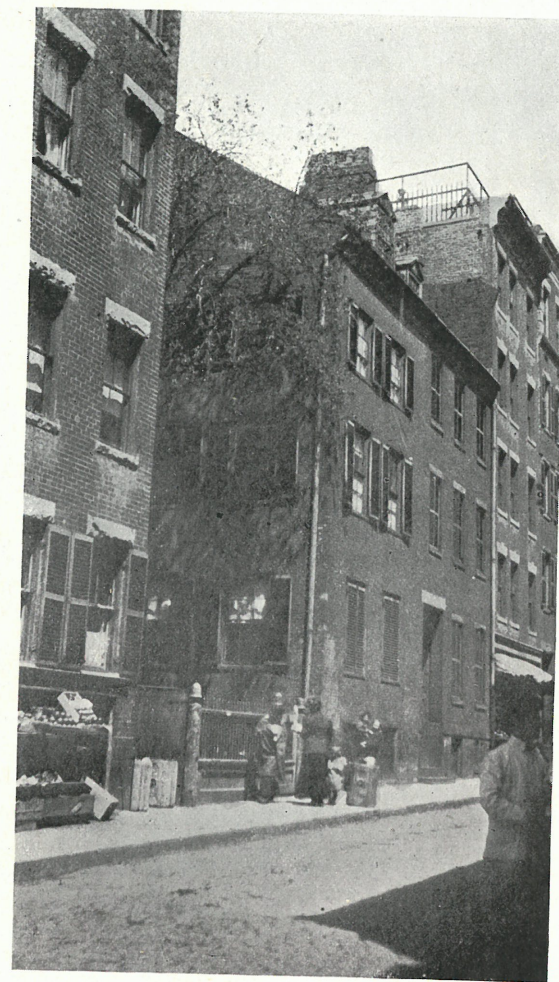


FIG. 47.—SALEM STREET, NEAR THE OLD NORTH CHURCH, SHOWING SIDE YARD THROUGH WHICH CONNECTION CAN BE MADE WITH PHIPPS PLACE EXTENDED.

These two blocks now contain interior lots that can be satisfactorily developed only by removing the buildings which at the present time lack adequate street frontages. For the most part these are wooden buildings, and their removal will not only insure light and air to the houses, but it will also materially lessen the fire risk and at the same time afford opportunity for the construction of two small neighborhood outing places.

Beginning at the rear of properties facing on Copp's Hill Terraces, half way between Charter and Commercial streets, as shown on the general plan, by acquiring part of the yard space in the rear of buildings fronting on either street, together with the 2½ and 3 story buildings, and the brick building No. 12 Foster street, a court can be formed with entrance on Foster street (Number 55). This court should be reserved for local use only.

From Foster street to Henchman street this court should be continued by acquiring the 4-story brick building, No. 11 Foster street, and the wooden buildings, Nos. 3, 4 and 8 Foster place (Number 56).

From this point an outlet may be had to Henchman street by means of a passageway through lots at present unbuilt upon, lying between Nos. 10 and 14 Henchman street (Number 57).

GREENOUGH LANE WIDENING. (Number 58.)

This improvement was made the subject of a special investigation and report in February, 1915, accompanied by diagrams showing the historical growth of the blocks during a period of 100 years, together with recommendations for their satisfactory development substantially as shown on the general plan.

Block 8 is separated from Block 9 by a narrow alley known as Greenough lane, which connects Charter street with Commercial street, the two in effect comprising one large block with a large number of interior lots. The blocks are bounded on the west by Henchman street, known in the years 1708-1850 as Henchman's lane, and

before that as Declination Passage and Day's alley; on the north by Commercial street; on the east by Hanover street; and on the south by Charter street.

All the boundary streets afford fair frontage space for buildings, but between these streets, a distance of about 250 feet each way, there is no sufficient public open space, and no guarantee that the present private open spaces will remain such. In this block some opening is needed, and from careful examination it would appear that the

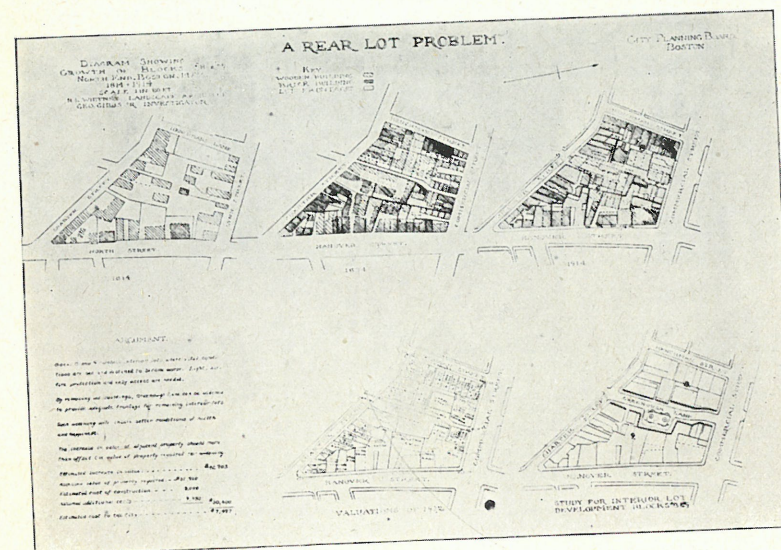


FIG. 48.—PLAN FOR GREENOUGH LANE WIDENING.

best results at the least cost can be obtained by widening Greenough lane as indicated.

Southeast of Greenough lane there are in effect four rows of buildings, of which only those on Hanover street have an adequate outlook. If two of the other three rows of buildings are removed, as proposed in the plan, the third will be provided with good frontage space.

If the property of the Bennett heirs, which covers 9,916 square feet of land, should be built upon to maximum capacity with permanent structures, the light and air would be shut off from the surrounding houses and the

nearby property would doubtless depreciate in value. In order to increase the value of the surrounding properties, and insure a sufficient amount of light and air, the Bennett properties, together with Nos. 13, 15, 17 and 19 Greenough lane, and Nos. 430 to 438, inclusive, Commercial



FIG. 49.—CHARTER STREET LOOKING NORTH SHOWING OLD BUILDING ON BENNETT PROPERTY, THROUGH WHICH GREENOUGH LANE SHOULD BE WIDENED. PRESENT OPEN AREA VISIBLE IN REAR OF BUILDING.

street, and the vacant yard space at the rear of Nos. 428 and 452 Hanover street, should be taken by the city, and Greenough lane widened. This will provide for a small open square in the center of the block, which should be developed as a neighborhood outing space. This widening will serve also as continuation of Unity street.

The cost of widening Greenough lane would not be very great if made in advance of rebuilding, while the increase in adjacent values should be nearly equal the cost of the improvement. Whether this increase can all be collected as betterments may be questioned, but if the increase can be made, and a very bad slum condition prevented, the change would be amply justified.

The small remnants remaining from Nos. 17 and 19

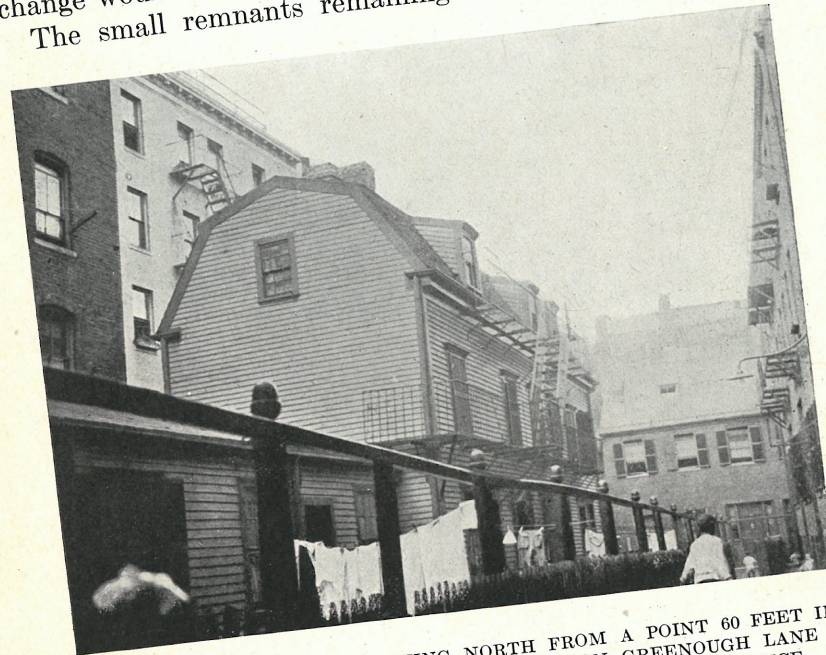


FIG. 50.—VERNON PLACE, LOOKING NORTH FROM A POINT 60 FEET IN FROM CHARTER STREET. HIGH BUILDINGS ON GREENOUGH LANE ON THE LEFT. WOODEN BUILDINGS AND BRICK IN DISTANCE SHOULD BE REMOVED TO WIDEN THE LANE.

Greenough lane and No. 434 Commercial street could be advantageously combined to form one corner lot of good building proportions.

The report of 1915 provided for the widening of Greenough lane on the northwest side, at the corner of Commercial street. Since that time the properties at this location have been combined under one large holding, and a fireproof building erected, thereby requiring for economic reasons, a change in the original plan to provide for the widening on the opposite corner.

Although the results in this instance are not particularly disastrous, the incident might serve as an illustration of the possible disadvantages to be encountered in the development of any section without reference to a definite plan.

SUBDIVISION OF BLOCKS 64, 65 AND 66. (Numbers 59, 60 and 61.)

Between Hanover, Harris, North and Battery streets is a large area of poorly divided and inadequately approached interior property shown as assessors' blocks 64, 65 and 66. These blocks are separated by the narrow ways of Hanover avenue and Salutation street, the latter only an alley. Any widening of these narrow ways would still leave much of the interior property without proper street frontage.

The blocks can best be opened up by the construction of a new street from Battery to Harris street, half way between Hanover and North streets. This will intersect the several narrow cross streets which separate the block, and afford excellent street frontages to many interior properties whose only outlook at the present time is on dark and narrow streets, courts or private alleys.

At the northeast corner of Battery street and the proposed street there will remain a small remnant, No. 23 Battery street (Number 59). This adjoins property already owned by the City of Boston (occupied in part by Police Station 8) and might well be combined with it.

Between Salutation street and Hanover avenue (Number 60) and between Hanover avenue and Harris street (Number 61) there will remain several remnant properties on either side of the proposed street. Several of these remnants already constitute reasonable sized building lots. Others might be sold to adjacent owners; or, by taking the adjoining property by excess condemnation, and relocating existing lot lines, satisfactory building sites with frontages on the proposed street can be obtained.

HARRIS STREET WIDENING. (Number 62.)

In order to provide an adequate approach to the southerly end of the proposed street (discussed in Sections 59, 60 and 61) Harris street, now narrow and crooked, should be widened.

Between North street and the new street this widening should be on the northerly side, by cutting back properties numbered 20 to 32, inclusive, Harris street and 350 Hanover street. These properties, which are wooden houses with the exception of one brick building at the corner of Harris and North streets, are all under the same ownership.

Between the new street and Hanover street the widening should for the most part take place on the southerly side. This can be done by acquiring the vacant space north of St. Stephen's Church in order to insure the maintenance of the present width between buildings. A slight cutting back of properties numbered 16 and 18 Harris street is shown in order to facilitate traffic passing in and out of the new street.

BARBER'S ALLEY, EVERETT COURT AND WEBSTER PLACE IMPROVEMENT. (Numbers 63 and 64.)

Block 62, bounded by Hanover, Clark, North and Fleet streets, contains a number of rear houses fronting on Barber's alley, Everett court and Webster place.

The space between and including Barber's alley and Everett court (Number 63) is about fifty feet in width, all of which should be taken and treated as a small public open space. From there to North street one three-story wooden building should be removed. Toward Hanover street a width of about twenty feet can be obtained by taking the existing vacant yards and a small portion of the stable No. 24 Fleet street.

Between this point and Webster place (Number 64) are several wooden buildings which should be removed, and the area maintained as a small neighborhood outing

space. Access should be had to this area from Clark street, by acquiring properties Nos. 17 and 19 Clark street, together with wooden buildings in the rear. The adjacent property, under this plan, would be left in fairly reasonable shape so that, with the possible exception of the stable, no remnants need be considered.

FINANCIAL ASPECTS.

ESTIMATE OF COSTS FOR, AND OF POSSIBLE RETURNS FROM, THE PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS.

The following items of cost must be taken into consideration in connection with the different improvements recommended:

- (a.) *Assessed value of properties taken.*
- (b.) *Additional costs for taking.*
- (c.) *Construction costs.*
- (d.) *Loss in taxes during period of reconstruction, figured on basis of three years.*

These items together represent the probable gross cost of the undertaking. To determine the net cost to the city, the following sources of revenue must be considered:

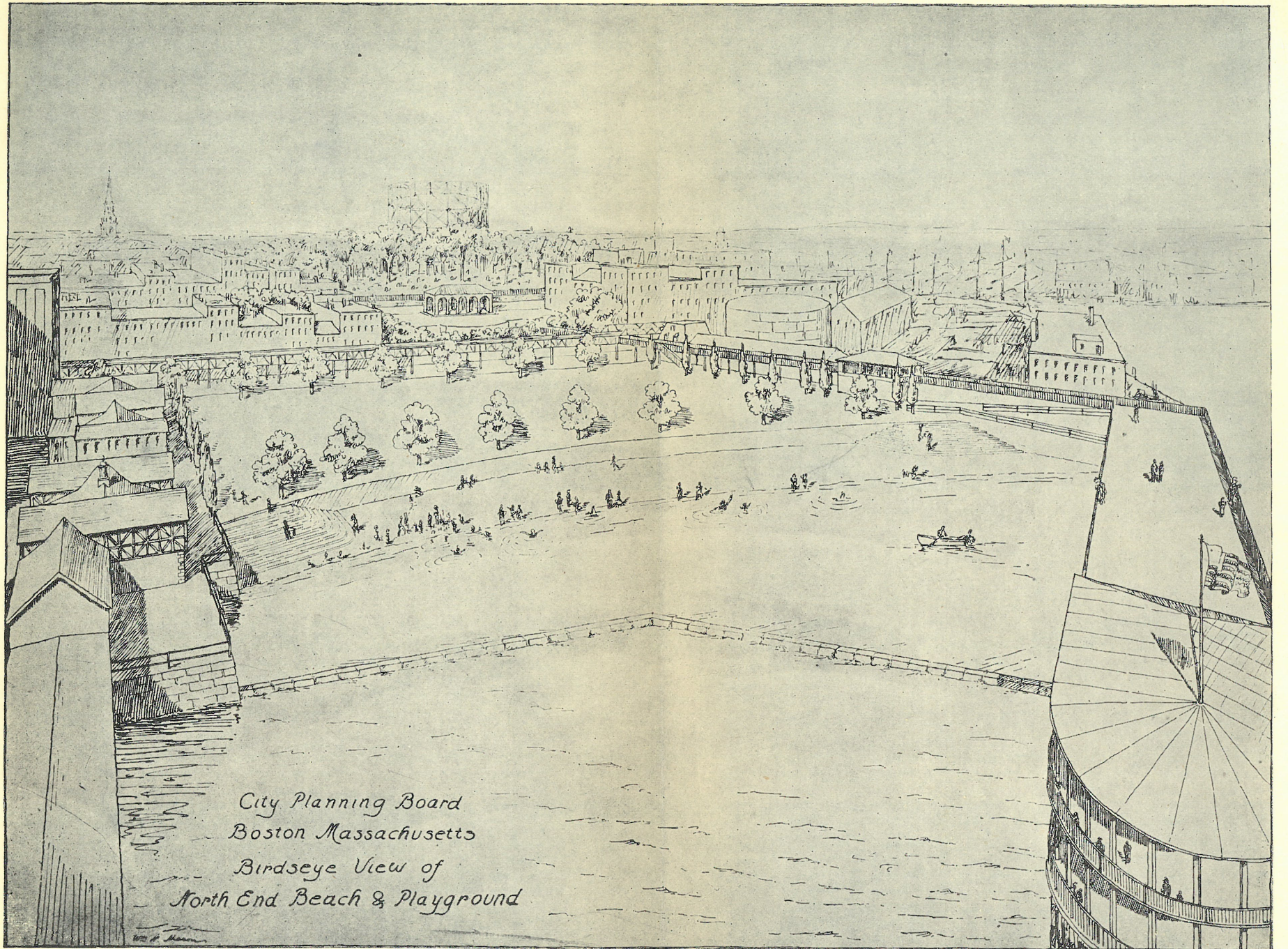
- (e.) *Possible revenue from assessment of betterments.*
- (f.) *Possible revenue from sale of lands after improvement.*
- (g.) *Possible revenue from sale of buildings.*
- (h.) *Increase in tax returns, due to betterments, covering a period of ten years.*

These questions have been determined as hereinafter described in their application to each improvement, and the results are given in the concluding summary.

(a.) The assessed value of properties taken, land and buildings, including eminent domain, remnant and excess takings, has been ascertained in each case.

(b.) The rate for additional costs is based upon the usual estimate for similar work, or at about 25 per cent of the assessed valuation of the properties.

(c.) Construction costs have been figured upon prevailing prices for similar work. This estimate is above the average, due to the excessive cost of labor and materials at the present time.



City Planning Board
Boston Massachusetts
Birdseye View of
North End Beach & Playground

FIG. 45.—BIRDSEYE VIEW OF NORTH END PLAYGROUND AND BEACH AND BRIDGE CONNECTING WITH COPP'S HILL TERRACES.

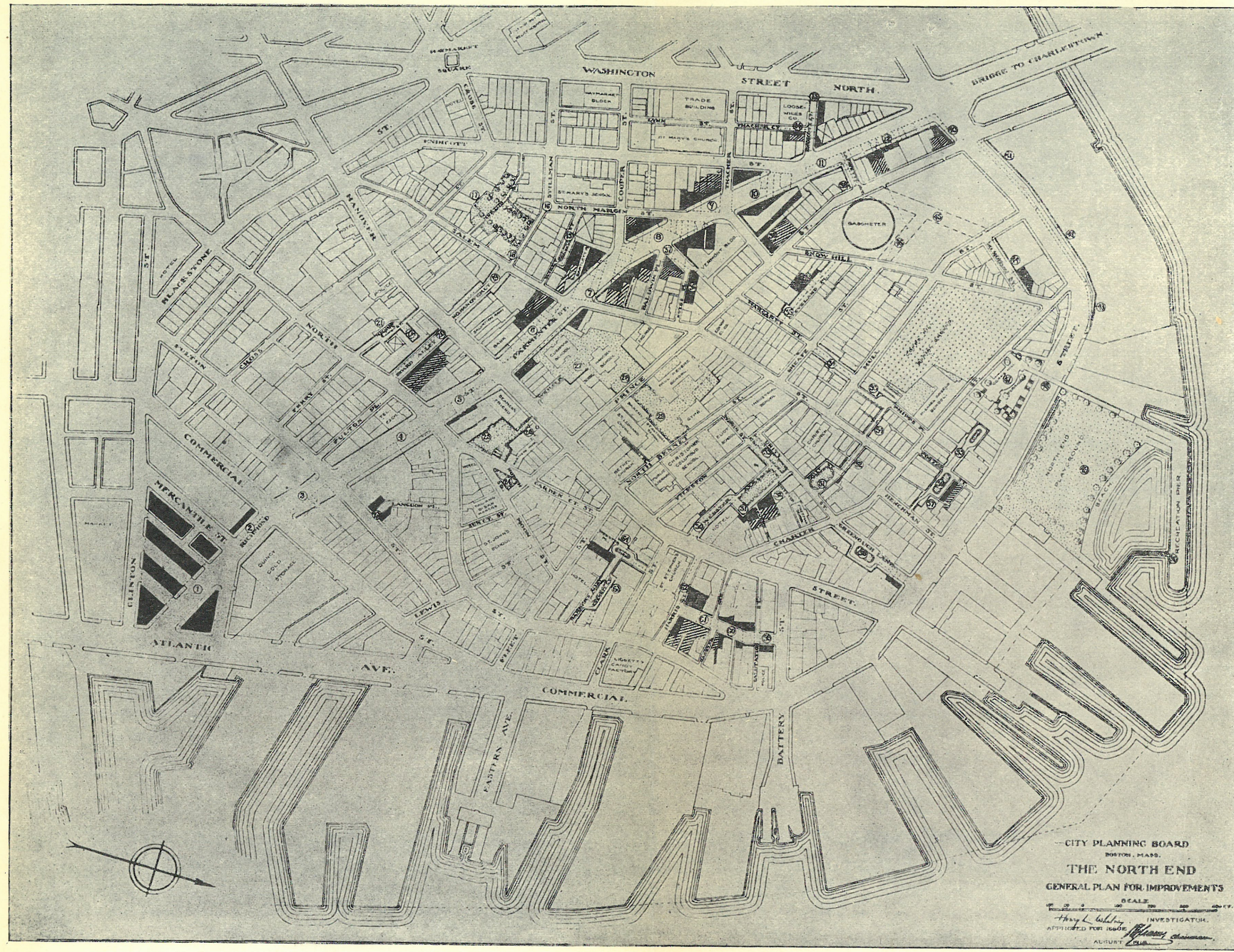


FIG. 51.—MAP OF NORTH END SHOWING REMNANT AND EXCESS TAKINGS IN CONNECTION WITH THE PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS.

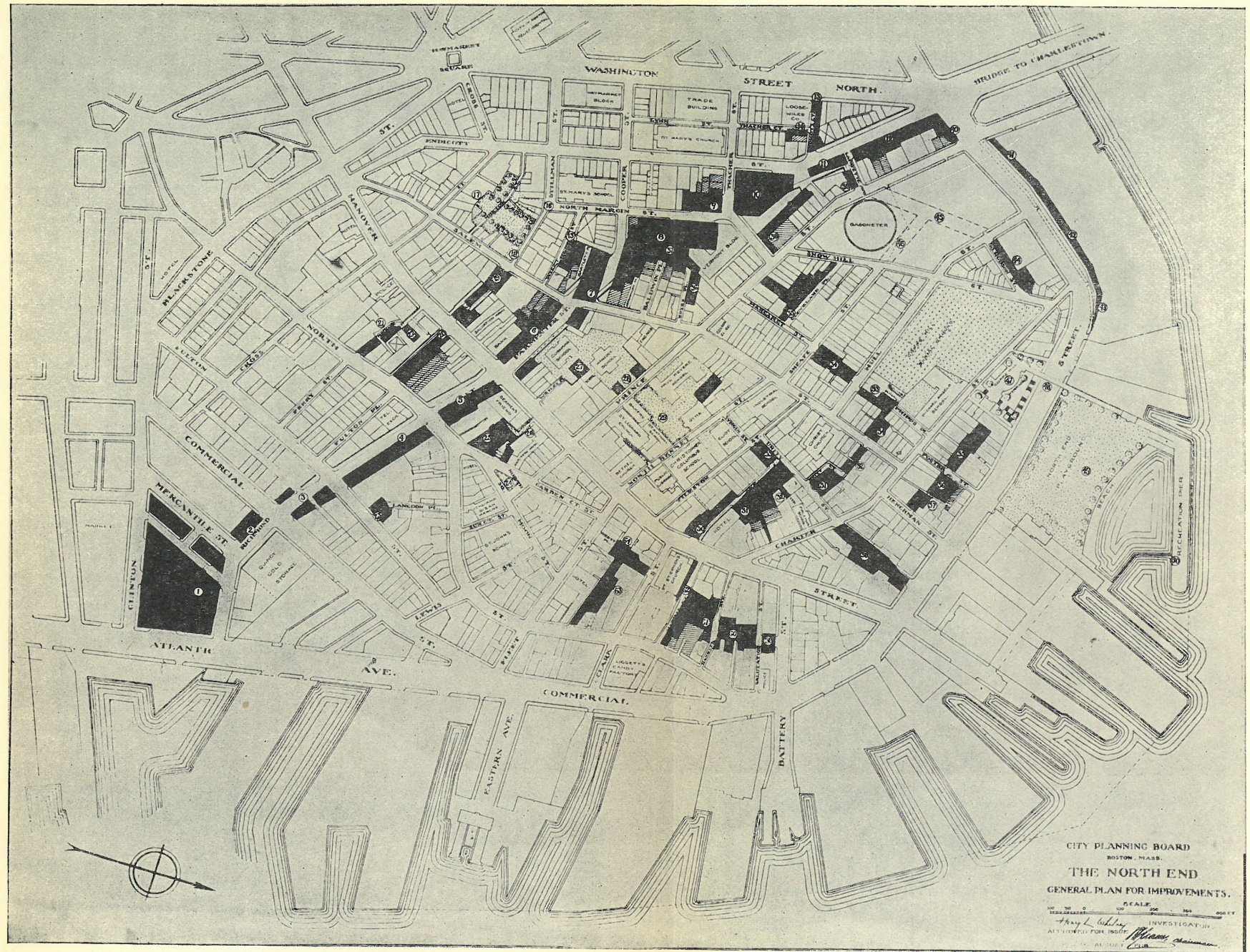


FIG. 52.—THE NORTH END. GENERAL PLAN FOR IMPROVEMENTS.
 Black — Property acquired for actual improvement. Hatched — Excess takings.