

4.211J/11.016J (HASS-CI)
The Once and Future City
Professor Anne Whiston Spirn (spirn@mit.edu)
<http://architecture.mit.edu/class/city>

Spring 2011
MW 11:00-12:30
Room 9-450B

THE ONCE AND FUTURE CITY

What is a city? What shapes it? How does its history influence future development? How do physical form and institutions vary from city to city and how are these differences significant? How are cities changing and what is their future? This course will explore these and other questions, with an emphasis on twentieth-century American cities. A major focus will be on the physical form of cities – from downtown and inner-city to suburb and edge city – and the processes that shape them.

Cities are constantly built and rebuilt; from the initial settlement to the present, successive layers leave traces. There are also cities within cities; every city has many districts – downtown, neighborhoods, suburbs, each evolving with its own history, institutions, successive populations, and urban form. The result is a richly complex text of artifacts: from houses to schools and banks, playgrounds to parks and plazas, alleys to boulevards, sewers to freeways. These provide clues to the environmental, social, and political contexts in which they were built and to the people who built them, their needs and desires. Armed with an understanding of places built in the past, we will turn to a reading of contemporary urban settlements. What do the cities being built today reveal about the values societies and individuals hold or reject?

We will explore these issues through lectures, readings, discussion, and analysis of particular places. Boston will provide a primary text. A project involving short field assignments using historical maps and photographs will provide further opportunity to use, develop, and refine new skills in reading the city. The course takes advantage of opportunities afforded by the Web. The syllabus and a gallery of student work are posted online. Students present their projects on their own homepage with links to the class website (<http://architecture.mit.edu/class/city>). These student websites, along with readings and cases presented in lectures, provide material for class discussion.

Work for the course is evaluated in three ways: a project consisting of four parts (60% of the final grade), a weekly journal (20%), and class participation (20%). This is a HASS-CI class, which offers students opportunity for verbal and graphic expression through class discussion, written texts, and website design. Communication-intensive subjects in the Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences require at least twenty pages of writing divided among three to five assignments; at least one must be revised and resubmitted.

The class is limited to twenty-five students.

Class Schedule and Readings

All required readings are on reserve at the Rotch Library and are available at the MIT Coop. The cities of Boston, Cambridge, and others in the region are also primary texts.

Readings are also available on [Stellar](#) for those registered in the class.

I. Reading the City

Required Reading: Grady Clay, *Close-Up: How to Read the American City* (Chicago, 1980)

February 2 How Can Cities Be Read and Why

February 7 The Once and Future City: Processes That Shape

February 9 Reading and Writing the City

February 14 Guides to Reading and Writing Boston

February 16 *Project Assignment #1 Due in class: Select a Site*

February 16 Perspectives on Boston Sites

February 22
[Tuesday] Workshop: Designing Your Website

II. City and Nature: Natural Processes as Agents of Change

Required Reading: Anne Whiston Spirn, *The Granite Garden* (Basic Books, 1984); James Elkins, *How to Use Your Eyes* (Routledge, 2000): "Preface," "How to Look at a Culvert," "How to Look at Pavement," "How to Look at a Twig."

February 23 The Granite Garden: Boston, A Natural Environment Transformed

February 25 *Assignment #1 Due Online*

February 28 Earth and Water

March 2 Air and Life

March 4 *Project Assignment #2 Due: Your Site and Natural Processes*

March 7 Boston Sites: What Patterns Emerged?

III. City and Society: Social Processes as Agents of Change

Required Reading: Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (Oxford, 1985); Sam Bass Warner, in *Mapping Boston*, edited by Alex Krieger.

- March 9** Looking at Maps
- March 14** Technology, Innovation, and Change
- March 16** Economics, Politics, and Change
- March 19-27** **SPRING VACATION**
- March 28** Culture, Fashion, and Change
- March 30** Boston in Historical Context
- April 1 *Project Assignment #3 Due: Your Site Through Time*
- April 4** Boston Sites: What Patterns Emerged?

IV. Looking Back, Looking Ahead: Envisioning and Shaping Future Cities

Required Reading: Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*; Spiro, "The Yellowwood and the Forgotten Creek"; [The West Philadelphia Landscape Project](#) website.

- April 6** Looking Back, Looking Ahead?
- April 11** Workshop: On Finding and Photographing Traces and Trends
- April 13** Top-Down/Bottom-Up: Frameworks for Action
- April 18** PATRIOTS DAY HOLIDAY
- April 20** Workshop: Writing, Editing, Revising
- April 22 *Project Assignment #4 Due: Artifacts, Layers, Traces, and Trends*
- April 25** Shaping Future Cities
- April 27** Boston Sites: What Patterns Emerged?

V. Boston Sites: How Have They Evolved, Where Are They Headed

Required Reading: 2011 Boston Sites

- May 3** Presentation and Discussion of Sites
- May 5** Presentation and Discussion of Sites
- May 10** Presentation and Discussion of Sites
- May 11 *Revision of Selected Assignment Due*
- May 12** Presentation and Discussion of Sites

- Learn to read the city
- Use the web to post your work
- Must read other people's stories ~~etc~~
- core of class is selection of site
 - 4-10 blocks
- Visit often
- iGov center
- i Kendall Sq
- i South station
- i Beacon Hill
- i West end
- i Quincy - more out of the way
- Reading assignments + lectures
- No lib research + secondary research
- Not a book on that site
 - your observations
 - not some author's
- Want reasoned argument
 - no right answers
- Learn from your observations (doh)

2

How neighborhoods change

What Weekly journal

Relationship b/w processes and physical ~~shape~~ form

Emphasis is more on structures than demographics

Environmental aspects

What were the key things that happened on that site?

Snow - can see where it blows

- where does it melt fastest?

- microclimate

Find oldest map you can find

fire insurance maps

Beacon Hill - small changes

Back Bay - huge changes 1930s

- depression

- Fenway park

- autos - profand in some neighborhoods ≠

- but not in others

- historical preservation post 1960s

3)

Historian will come in

- can ask questions to

Can pick which assignment to revise + resubmit

Use colors on map ~~AA~~ for land usage

Trees responding to the light

- how they grow

Don't look too much at other years

She started teaching online in 1996

"Year to year projects got better"

- put on the plaza

to go one-up

Sites thinking about

Kendall interesting

Quincy - Can get access?

South Station area - great
- interesting things

Mysteries you want to solve

Where friends live

Find something that interests you

Where everything isn't all the same

First journal due Sat

(Need to decide if keeping class - look at future options)

Don't pick ~~1~~ too big site 4-10 blocks
avg 6-8 "

Gov center + west end 10 ~~0~~ blocks today
- many more blocks before

First assignment due next wed in class

Writing tutor

Interesting since visual is a big part

And its this people's majors for the most part

②

Writing tutor grades first

And can meet before submission

And before rewrite

Can also do site looking at in diff course

Book is to be read over the section

- no due date
- part was online
- read whole thing in Roach Lib

Also Abe.com - book exchange

(should pre-order used books now for shipping time)
(if keeping class)

Reading a whole book is different than selection
More readings on Stellar

Almost all people grew up in suburbs

Most people didn't spend much time downtown

Suburbs + city intertwined

Early street car suburbs are now inner city

③

Processes Shape Cities

- see remnants of the past
- natural processes
 - look from helicopter
- air
 - water
 - plant growth

Boston
Was once many small towns

Dudly neighborhood - changed over time

- inner city disinvestment today
- see old buildings

18th century gas mansion

can see old print where it is in the middle of farm fields

Various different flows

- will look at natural processes first

Sometimes change is abrupt

- Great Fire of London
- Urban Renewal

Look at building built in diff styles

Compare now and then

- w/ maps

(4)

Often the street structure remains the same

except 50s and 60s

- gov center

Look at street structure to see where ancient structures were
- monuments

Then look at old records

And overlay those over current streets

(this is stuff I already kinda look for)

How find which hyp is right?

Look at old maps

~~at~~ Old amphitheater

Puzzles

Roman amphitheater in Paris

- narrow ally to street

- other people's homes back up to it

Part of old walls in Paris

(like old RR bridge in H Town)

Again old maps

- See remnants of old walls even on 16th century maps

5

Onion skin as the country grows

Sometimes wall came down + replaced w/ boulevard w/ trees

Development of new weapons at same time

- Means need new forms of defense

Also made it a park

Boulevard = French for bull work

Haussman built a lot in 19th century

- some walls

- others were defensive - againsts pop of Paris

Did slice through city - tore down a lot of buildings

Also built new water + sewer ~~system~~ at the same time

Other cities saw this

- Philadelphia

- fashion -> to be up to date

- Art Museum, Science Museum

- early 20th century

Arizona

- irrigation canals

- Phoenix

- suburbs built on agri lands

- now used as paths

6) Were once earthened
Now concrete
SRP = Salt River Project

Indians built canals before this

Dug by hand ~1000 years ago
(I am interested more in modern Lev)
(Learning purposes on modern buildings)

Back to Duddy

-60s + lots of depopulation

-houses gone
(like Detroit today)

-~40% of land vacant

Map to better perceive patterns

Fires + Arson

Burned down own property to get insurance \$

~~an~~ Or environmental - ~~at~~ is at bottom of valley

Stream underneath - covered in sewer

cheaper buildings built

by 1 company/family

groundwater polluted so houses settled

Go back to old maps

⑦

Can read the slopes

Walk uphill, less vacant buildings

In ~~the~~ 60s + 70s wanted to build new public housing
did not think of building in flood plane

Wedi Phila example

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2/9

Due ~~4/18~~ 2/16 Select a site

Can you do mid block

- Probably
- adjacent to site

→ 10 blocks

If questioning about site - talk about that in journal

Journal due sat

~~She~~ She will comment if its a direct question

Can see mapping handout

~~Map~~ Map presentation Mon from lib

Usually a combn of effects

- look for patterns!

Review

- new form warfare
- new residents
- growth biz + institutions
- transport
- political values
- fashion
- catastrophic events

2

- change in security
- walk right into buildings
- bollards
- schools, etc
- institutions

- but traces remain
- property division
 - street + sewer division

Philadelphia

- The Fall Line
 - waterfalls + rapids
 - draw a line down the cost of all the waterfalls
- ~~water~~ ^{main} maintains - Piedmont
 - leads into costal plains
 - Amtrak follows this plains
 - cities located there
 - limit at navigation to the sea

Piedmont is the suburbs
 Downtown are on the costal plain

③

Downtown - lots of bricks

Suburbs - stone

Dam at Bathhouse run built to flood the rapids

Can see rock islands in the water

Don't see the link b/w local building materials + ^{new} houses
- transport much cheaper

Penn's vision of Greene Country town

- 5 squares

development started at both rivers

City hall built on central square

Logan circle is one

Some streets still preserved

- Society Hill

- More 20th Century than Beacon Hill

I 95 blocks river access

Urban Renewal 20th century

- lots of poor blocks in 50s in Society Hill

- name coined then to try to bring people back

- dev was to fit in

④ Independence National Historical Park

- tore down modern buildings in 1950s
- recreation
- Can follow fashions in planning thinking
 - way area has changed over that time
- 1930s + 40s area was in decline
 - recreated the creek

Central Biz district built in middle

- ← was very tiny row houses to North + South
 - "Trinities" - 3 rooms on top of each other
 - very cheap then
- Now not as affordable

Big res buildings on major streets

- small buildings on minor street
- wealthy + poor people living closely together
- economic + racially integrated
- Segregation happened in 20th century

South street is border street

- wanted highway on it in 50s
- push lower income people below it and cut them off as a wall
- political, social segregation explicit purpose

5

follow artists

- cheap rent
- large spaces

then leads to growth

Some changes in the works for decades

Ben Franklin Parkway

- break
- diagonal
- why the break?
(was wandering before)
- some from railway in 1920s
- (had not ~~thought~~ known that)
- Major civic project
- city beautiful movement

Urban Renewal thinking
1910-20s
-60 before 50s-60s

Smaller substreets

- tiny blocks within

Lancaster Avenue

- West Philly
- early street, before the grid
- before Lancaster Pike
- was first turn pike
- Pavilton Village - will talk about later
- Harford Ave

⑥

Ferry at Spring Garden + Market st

was ~~supp~~ maybe an indian trail - on a ridge line
Fairmount Waterworks and Park

- can walk along the park from city hall
- largest park inside city limits
- to protect water supply
- a few mansions there at First
 - but then city protected water supply
- Visionary water supply system
- art museum was reservoir
- ~~good art~~
- fancy, classical architecture for water system
- (should visit)
- water then flowed to central square
 - w/ pumping station

Two creeks

Wissinickion vs Mill Creek

Very nice park
part of Fairmount park
was not like that
- railroad suburbs

① Was industrial ~~the~~ creek, mills

Was bought up by developers to give to city

Mill

Lots of vacant, ↓ investment

Some for 40 years +

old fire hydrant

Close up: The City Reading

2/9

Thoughts / Notes

Grady Clay

What is that Wordplay section?

- author is crazy

Perspective thing changed w/ Google earth

- not in 1970s

- Disney used perspective a lot

- editor to make things nice

- unless you want to know what is behind the facade

(I should get that Brand architecture book)

70s: increasing gov surveillance

- ha!

Roads allowed being further out

- loss of centrality

Victor Gruen

- ped free - think ment car free

- highways

- parking garages

- big scale

60s local identity → money making

- fable making

②

City + country merging → the "front"
- except for military or indian lands

Spraw

No sharp boundaries, unlike Europe

70s: mobility + connectedness

Zoning battles

Anti-city legislators

Cities pull towards each other

Land buying by speculators

Strips

- to remove

- very suburban

- all cars

- "linear disposal area for surplus urban energies"

Started w/ river strip

- moved up river

- along a road → highway

Then interstate far up the hills

③

Sections/steps of development

- how road development progressed
- left awkward built houses
 - too close to roads
- some in further out suburbs of k.o.p., etc
(I love using these clues)
- Or awkward 2-level road
 - with a local parallel row
 - Or even a bypass

Highway interchanges favor big companies
↳ only they can afford it

deer fencing

Raise road out of flood plane

↳ place excess fill in for homes

Hill tops developed first

(I know some of these older limited access highways)
Can take it when no interstate

Talks about drive throughs

I have not see that food multi-cart before w/
central patio surrounded by chain stores

④

The present standard for shopping

- but not food chains

(I think the strips have networked into interconnected suburban sprawl)

70s: energy inexhaustible, unlimited resources

↳ only changing today

- ~~the~~ new urbanization

- or perhaps its the same battles from years ago

Beats

People move a lot more

Mobility has become packaged

↳ really that is important

70s Police using computers to plan their beat

(She is organizing book around words and exploiting double meaning)

(The AAA office is there!)

Lots of beat planning

↳ maps, traffic reports

(Even worse today!)

(Also ~~how~~ how have transit costs moved? Up or down?)

5

No one direction into the city

↳ people going all over the place

As people move out to suburbs delivery vehicles/services
move in

Much of traffic is tourist trade/seasonal

Shifted holidays to weekends for road trips

(Fun recollection of changes from 70s perspective)

↑ Book "Twitter" review

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2/14

(2 min late)

Going over area choice

Wanted to talk after class with me about Pru. Center

Describe site

- Uses
 - anomaly
 - Specific observations
 - for example
 - ~~th~~ - informal
 - personal
 - are questions to answer
 - make sure qv are clearly answered
 - Criteria for grading
 - cite the reading
-

Tale of 2 creeks cont

- Wishickon creek
- developed as railroad suburbs
- Lancaster ave
 - diagonal cutting through
- Vacant lots

②

- some woodlands 30-40 ft high

- means decades

Flood plane phenomenon is back

Mill creek

- buried 1880s

- forgotten now

- but can see valley bottom

Community gardens built on this

Pattern even stronger here

- map creek on top of it

- well sewer

Take into account when building

Don't have to find ~~addresses~~ old photos

Houses built on sewer

Lots of cave ins

What if it was not developed?

Sewer overflows

- since storm + other sewer combined

Common

- located along river

- Grid

- Buried flood plane, combined sewers

③ Parkways

Streetcar suburbs

Railroad suburbs

Distinctive

- linear + narrow biz district
- Fairmont park ~~park~~
- Society Hill
- large downtown residential
 - Denver, etc tore down

Why? What produced this?

GIS expert from MIT Lib Daniel Sheehan

- Have cataloged a lot of maps recently
- Harvard map collection
- How to fit the data together?
- Sanborn maps online
- Assessors online DB
 - property values
 - go to your town/city

Guide to Geographic Information for 4.211j11.016J - The Once and Future City, Anne Spirn

Presented by Daniel Sheehan, Senior GIS Specialist, MIT Libraries

Written by Lisa Sweeney, updated by Daniel Sheehan.

2/14/2011

Geographic Information offered through the MIT Libraries:

- **Rotch Library Map Room Hours:** The collection is available: M-F, 10 am- 5 pm. It is organized geographically – Boston Citywide maps; Boston neighborhoods (example: ‘central’)
- **Hayden Library Map Room** – contains USGS topographic series in paper for entire United States; accessible anytime Hayden is open
- **Barton:**
 - To **limit** your searches – use the advanced search option to limit search to formats/types = Maps and enter the location of interest as a subject term
 - To **expand** searches think about broadening geographically, for example: Dudley Square -> Boston -> Massachusetts. Sometimes maps and datasets that cover a larger geographic area will contain information of interest to a more specific location. Using keyword searches generally returns more results than subject search
 - **Books** can contain maps too (but may not be classified as format=map in Barton):
 - **Mapping Boston:** <http://library.mit.edu/item/000908840>
 - Subject: “Boston (Mass.) -- Maps.” leads to other related titles
 - **Mapping New York:** <http://library.mit.edu/item/001691836>
 - **Mapping London:** <http://library.mit.edu/item/001691834>
- **Libguide:** <http://libguides.mit.edu/gis>
 - Not all paper maps in the Rotch Library collection are cataloged. There is a working inventory available as an excel file on this libguide.
 - **Sanborn Fire Insurance maps tab**
 - Sanborns are available in multiple formats: Paper, Electronic, and Microfilm
 - For this semester we have online access to MA and NY (typically just MA) – must be on campus or use the VPN
 - Use the index to figure out which sheet your area of interest is on
 - Information and links to local map repositories (Harvard, BPL, etc) and links to major online map collections.
 - Social Explorer – US Census data from 1790- present, as maps and tables
 - David Rumsey collection - <http://www.davidrumsey.com/> offers different ways of viewing the collection (click “view collection” for 2D, 3D, Google Earth, etc); the Boston, MA collection:
[http://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/view/search/where/Boston+\(Mass.\)/?q=boston&sort=Pub_List_No_InitialSort,Pub_Date,Pub_List_No,Series_No](http://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/view/search/where/Boston+(Mass.)/?q=boston&sort=Pub_List_No_InitialSort,Pub_Date,Pub_List_No,Series_No)
 - Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection: Navigate to US -> MA -> Historical City Maps: <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/massachusetts.html>
 - American Memory: Cities and Towns -> Geographic Location Index-> Massachusetts – Needham Heights: <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi->

[bin/query/S?ammem/gmd:@FILREQ\(@field\(SUBJ+@od1\(United+States--Massachusetts--Boston+\)\)+@FIELD\(COLLID+citymap\)\)](http://bin/query/S?ammem/gmd:@FILREQ(@field(SUBJ+@od1(United+States--Massachusetts--Boston+))+@FIELD(COLLID+citymap)))

- New York Public Library – Picturing America, 1497-1899: Prints, Maps, and Drawings bearing on the New World Discoveries and on the Development of the Territory that is now the United States:
http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/explore/dgexplore.cfm?col_id=190
- Boston Atlas – “Future Boston Map Collection” contains historical maps
- **DOME:**
 - Atlas of the City of Boston, GW Bromley & Co., 1883-1885:
<http://dome.mit.edu/handle/1721.3/47999> (and in Barton
<http://library.mit.edu/item/000614122>)
 - Visual Collections –Aerial Photography: search for boston
- **MIT GIS Services:** <http://libraries.mit.edu/gis/>
 - Walk-in assistance hours: 12:30- 4 pm M-Th
 - Offers help with mapping demographics (census data)
 - Georeferencing – bringing a map image into a GIS
 - Geolytics – for mapping change over time with GIS (1970-2000)
 - MIT Geodata Repository –data for boston including parcel data with land use types (2000-2008) <http://libraries.mit.edu/gis/data/index.html>
 - Search for paper maps in the MIT Library
 - Search for scanned and georeferenced paper maps in the Harvard Geospatial Library
 - Email the team at gishelp@mit.edu
- **GPS units** – available for checkout from Rotch Library front desk
 - <http://libraries.mit.edu/gis/software/gps.html>
 - 1 day loan – just need MIT ID card
 - Longer than a 1 day loan email gishelp@mit.edu with request – requested loan period and brief description of project.
 - Can easily save collected data to GIS software, or google earth using free DNR Garmin tool.
- **Questions?:** email mapshelp@mit.edu
 - Emails should contain a brief description of **where** (location of interest), **when** (what years should the information represent), and **what** (types of information being sought – buildings, elevations, land use?)

④ even Zillow!

- nice even though not academic

Many Sanborn maps on paper

Hard to find what is available

David Rumsey

Nice one in BPL

Searching bad but nice maps

Special GIS software in lab

Add street network

Look for metadata

Check metadata to see author, ~~the~~ abstract, purpose

Can plot images ~~on top~~ on top of Google maps

Geoweb from MIT

- MIT
- Mass GIS
- Harvard
- Paper maps

~~BPL~~ Slow server

Harvard - already georeferenced

but need to figure out projection

All are public

5

Boston Parcel

Ptype - ~~paper~~

view metadata to see what it is

Rumsey - lots of detail

Lebanthal collection ^{DPL}
-online

Always cite source

2-4 M, R or by appointments

gis-help

12:30 - 4 open hrs M-R

Special search on geoweb

USGS - topographic

- old ones at Harvard

ArcGIS was the windows app

- site licensed

stuff changed rapidly

Post

- areas break in land-use type

+ adjoining blocks

dartmouth + huntington +

(6)

- times before 1950s
- traces of past missing
- what did it respond to
- take in other blocks
- older housing types

p 122

leaving early on weekends

4 hr rest stops

Portland - city of people from other places

Resorts

- catching them up as guests

But avoidance grand

- slums

- some torn down

Stacks

- of raw materials

- processing plants

- no good disposal system

- blue collar

tracks in downtown St. Louis

Goods more fancy

dangerous movement zones from heavy industry

②

Sinks

push stuff into ~~the~~

waste

Cities are sinks

Creeks underground ← mostly this

Urban renewal

Valleys are the poor

Whites don't think about

- invisible

change names

Streets may make accessible again

from careless handling in the past

marshes are good - don't develop

Turf

- from an amenity clause

- random sections of green space

- restoration

- close off local streets

- setting up your area in the airport

- do's and don't signs

- unified signage

3

private gate house

"defendable"

rules set

Cars only

Vantages

depletion of natural resources

price going up

Other countries copying

old scenes are transforming

managing more of a challenge

data empowers gov

- this has changed!

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2/16

Old map of Boston 1807

- very interesting
- lots of marshes

Show where our sites are

- Most people can't find

Lots of people have sites underwater

Washington street was the connecting street

Half the class is underwater in 1807

~~Need~~

Wooden pilings - groundwater needs to keep high
to keep them wet or they will rot

Seaport Square

Nice slides of site

Bridges b/w buildings

Streets underneath

Low car ownership

Allston

One Kendall Square

All areas of re investment

2

Combo of old + redevelopment

Fake brick

Artist haven - but moving to office area

Going diff ways

Cultural diversity

Trends of population

- associate names w/ ethnic groups

Was it built as commercial?

Emerald Necklace

well connected by transit

Roads widened over time

All of them no regular grid

Crossroads

- What came first? The ~~em~~ area or all the roads

- will see in next assignment?

Role of historic preservation

- districts?

- intermixed?

Fred Solvchi

She did southwest for a year

③

All have water stories

What was the most important shaping process

Find site on 1870 map

USGS is current ~~topography~~
topography

Tue: Photoshop + Web Authoring Workshop
- allowed to skip

4.211J/11.016J | The Once and Future City

Wordpress | Setting up your website + blog

1. Begin by navigating to <http://11.016.scripts.mit.edu/www/>
Scroll to the bottom of the page, and click "Register" under the "Meta" category.
2. Create your own account and site by entering a username (probably easiest to use your Athena username, but you can choose something else if you prefer) and your MIT email.
Be sure that "Gimme a site!" is selected, then click "Next".
3. Enter a Site Name for your URL. Again, it may be simplest to keep this as your username, but you may choose something else if you prefer. *Note: this cannot be changed!*
Enter a Site Title, such as the name of the place you have selected to study. (Ex: Beacon Hill). You can change this part later if need. Click "Signup".
4. Check your email for a notification from Wordpress or "the once and future city 2011". (This email sometimes gets redirected to spam, so check your spam folder if you don't see an email within a couple of minutes.) Follow directions in the email to activate your site, then login with your new username and the password supplied in another email from "the once and future city 2011".
5. Once logged in, you should see the Dashboard, from which you can manage your site. The first thing you should do is change your password to something you can remember.
From the Dashboard menu on the left side of the page go to *Users > Your Profile*. Scroll to the bottom of the page, where there is a field for your New Password. Be sure to save your changes.
6. By default, all new sites within our "the once and future city 2011" network will follow the same template, which should already have your basic pages and blog set up for you.
You can go through the options to edit your site's theme, settings, pages, options, widgets, etc, but be sure that your website includes the following (clearly linked) pages:
 - a. Site Selection
 - b. Natural Processes
 - c. Site Through Time
 - d. Traces and Trends
 - e. Journal

Please also be sure to include a link to the main 4.211/11.016 class page somewhere on your site.
(This should be automatically included in your site's links during setup.)
<http://architecture.mit.edu/class/city/>
7. New blog/journal posts can be displayed on your home page or another page of your choosing. To change where new posts appear, go to *Settings > Reading* from your Dashboard menu.
From here, you will see options for what the *Front Page Displays*. Select *Static Page*, then use the drop-down menu to choose which pages will be used your *Front Page* (ex: Home) and *Post Page* (ex: Journal). For clarity, send your posts to Journal; you may also use this as your *Front Page* if desired.
8. Replace the default placeholder pages/text with your own assignments!

SUGGESTION: Keep it simple. The design of your website should show off good content, not be confusing or complicated—easy navigation is crucial. See websites from previous years for ideas.

REMINDER: Website is due online by Friday, Feb 25th. It should include your first assignment (site selection) and your journals to date, as well as the pages described above.

Photoshop | Resizing your images for use online

1. File > Open (select the image you would like to resize)
2. Image > Image Size. Click the "Resample Image" option at the bottom of the popup window.
3. In the "Document Size" area, replace the default resolution with 72ppi. This should automatically adjust the pixel dimensions of your image. Click OK.
4. File > Save As > save your resized image with a new name. (Ex: Image01_small.jpg)
Note: Always keep your original photos; save your resized/adjusted images with a new name.

Image format guidelines for the web:

Image Resolution: 72 ppi max

Pixel Dimensions: 900 pixels max width (600-800px wide is good)

Image formats: .jpg, .png, .gif, are best; keep the file size relatively small, <1MB.

Larger/higher resolution files will only make your webpage load slowly.

Athena Computers with Photoshop:

All studio/lab computers in Architecture and DUSP:

3-415

5-414

7-303

7-401, -402, -408

7-432

9-251

9-551, -554, -555, -556

10-485

Other Athena clusters/labs:

E-15 IEL (within ACT, requires special permission for access)

4-035

26-139 (see <http://web.mit.edu/nmc> for details and reserved times)

Alternative software:

Photoshop Elements (basic Photoshop tools/functionality)

GIMP: open source image editor, similar to Photoshop <http://www.gimp.org/downloads/>

Other open source alternatives are listed here: <http://www.osalt.com/photoshop>

4.211

2/23

Start of next half of class: Natural processes
(Have to read)

What was original environmental context?

How did that shape current conditions?

How do natural processes continue to shape site?

How can ~~we~~ discover ans?

- First 2 maps

- last field work

Lectures 2/23, 2/28, 3/2

Assignment Due 3/4

5 people present 3/7

- she will choose

Boston: Natural Environment Transformed

City is part of the natural world

Traces/effects are still there!

The Granite Garden

- lots of diagrams

②

Concepts author thinks are important are in index

Read it to understand what you are seeing when you visit your site

False color infrared to see vegetation

- hills - stop development
- islands - from fault line ~~crossed water~~
- highways - houses built along

Boston is a drowned valley

Many ponds

From the glaciers

- Phila was not

~~W~~ - Wisconsin + Minnesota

Buildings - solar radiation

Lots of trees + plants in tiny patches of soil

Trees growing in cracks of ~~par~~ pavement

Eilantia tree ~~from~~

Geetto Palm

from China

Native in flood plains



How does this tell us about the area here?

Urban soils are highly compacted

- flood plain trees good at this

④
Later 1675 maps

Dam by mill pond

The common - common pasture

Fort Hill has a fort

17_

Lots of Filling

Cutting down Beacon Hill 60 ft

Mt Vernon proprietors

Fill was a ~~very~~ real estate operation

Mill pond = Bull Finch's Triangle

Shoreline - lots of old docs

1850s - Beacon Street was like a causeway

Wanted to put Mills on it

Huge mill pond on other side

for the mill water power

1850s Then filled in for Back Bay

Commonwealth of MA

Garbage, Sand, Gravel

from Needham

3

Or brick sidewalk
if not mortared

Can see 1/4 in soil profile to the side

Water moves nutrients down through soil level

Roots growing

Look for

- hills + valleys
- harbor, ponds, rivers, streams
- alignment of major streets
 - historical clues
- street names
 - sometimes

All hills oriented NW

Drumlins
Remnants of rocks from glacier

Boston and Its Environs - Marshall's Life of Washington 1806

Locate site on old maps

Water

- transportation
- power
- new land

5

Huge scope + scale

Steam shovel + railroad

Took 40 years to build

day + night 7 days/year

Did 2 baselots/day

Oldest houses near the garden

Commonwealth Ave built first

1870s - old photographs - Trees before houses

1836 - railroad tracks already there

Lots of tidal flats

No sewage treatment plants

Fens + Riverway

Preserved or Constructed?

Constructed

- Built like that

1848 Public Water Supply

- new fountain in Commons

- Before that private wells

- Got polluted

⑥ City had a competition

Did not like any

Had Frederick Olmstead

Make whole project a place where flood waters could rise + fall

Native plants

Marshes

Fens

Memory of what was here originally

First construction of a wetlands

It was dredged at

Put fills on banks

Tidal gate to Charles river

- ~~shook~~ since Charles not dammed yet 1910

- Plants died when it was no longer brackish

Also the Muddy River Jamaica Pond

- was lot of industrial

- but now street car + suburbs

All constructed

(Reminds me of NPS parkitecture)

Fashion + maintenance changed it.

Fens became fashionable place to live

7

Emerald ~~Neighborhood~~ Necklace

- flat open space system
- transportation
- sanitation
- etc

Urban wilds

Book helps see principals in new towns
 But what ~~about~~ about old cities

Dorchester + Roxbury

- 4 blocks bog originally

Robert Morris Copeland's 1872 Plan for Improvement of Boston

~~plan~~ proposed same for Dudley neighborhood

Like Phika Wishicon vs Mill creek

- park in wealthy area
- not in working class

Cities ~~don't~~ adapt to serve their people

Natural landscape provides enduring context

Look at map

walk

Look for signs

Ongoing natural processes

Avoid temptation for secondary research

MIT STUDENT WRITING AND SPEAKING SELF-ASSESSMENT

The MIT Communication Requirement stemmed partly from alumni feedback. MIT alumni consistently report that expertise in communication principles and practices—in other words, knowing how to write and speak clearly and compellingly in both formal and informal situations—is essential to their careers after MIT. A majority of MIT alumni report that they wish they had dedicated more of their own time and effort to learning how to argue effectively with evidence, how to write and speak with grace and style, and how to assess and provide for the needs of their various audiences.

As an undergraduate now in a CI subject, you have the opportunity to learn from their experience and to take charge of your own communication education, which begins by assessing your knowledge and abilities, and then setting specific goals for the semester. As you move through the communication requirement, you can keep adding new or more advanced goals, so that by the time you graduate, you will have learned how to write and speak as a professional in your field.

1. Name _____ Date _____

2. Your year: First year Sophomore Junior Senior Your Course: _____

3. Subject _____

4. Did you take the FEE?

YES

NO

If "YES," please list any specific advice about your writing that you remember:

5. Is this the first CI subject you have taken at MIT?

YES

NO If "NO," please list the other CI subject(s) you have taken: _____

CURRENT KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENT: WRITING FOR DIFFERENT SITUATIONS AND PURPOSES

6. From the following statements, select all that are true for you.

I have always enjoyed writing and seek opportunities to write for different purposes.

I believe that writing helps me to develop stronger ideas and to explore complex issues in academic work.

I have sufficient experience and knowledge about writing in this subject.

I have no strong feelings about writing, neither seeking nor avoiding it.

I find writing to be easy in some subjects and harder in others.

I generally understand the principles for academic writing, but want to learn more about writing in this subject.

I haven't given much thought to writing in different situations; I just write the same way in each subject.

I have mostly avoided writing, and subjects that involve writing.

I often feel unclear about the principles and purposes for writing in this subject, or in most subjects.

Adapted from the Writer's Personal Profile developed by Tracy Ann Robinson for the Oregon State University Writing Intensive Curriculum Program. For more information about the tool and best practices for using it, please visit http://wac.colostate.edu/atd/assessment/robinson_burton.cfm.

7. Which kinds of writing are you most comfortable producing? (select as many as you like)
- Personal writing (personal essays; first-person, factual narratives; journals, etc.)
 - Essay exams
 - Creative writing (fiction, poetry, etc)
 - Technical writing
 - Blogs
 - Factual reports
 - Lab reports
 - Literary analysis
 - Summaries or overviews of a reading or topic (literature reviews, annotated bibliographies, etc.)
 - Longer, synthetic arguments drawing on many sources
 - Proposals

8. What, specifically, do you consider strengths in your writing?
1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____

CURRENT KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENT: APPROACH TO DRAFTING AND REVISION

9. For each of the following aspects of the academic writing process, mark whether you consider your knowledge and abilities **STRONG (S)**, **WEAK (W)**, or **NEUTRAL (N)** in that area.
- Choosing an appropriate and workable topic
 - Locating and evaluating sources
 - Analyzing sources in detail and deepening your own interpretations
 - Developing a focused, arguable thesis claim
 - Organizing the information and ideas, and structuring them in a logical sequence
 - Generating the first draft of your paper
 - Writing the introduction and/or conclusion
 - Sticking to the topic; identifying and omitting extraneous information
 - Moving beyond the surface or the obvious claims to a more rigorous argument
 - Creating smooth, logical transitions between paragraphs and sections
 - Incorporating and citing sources in your text
 - Revising your draft for logic, structure, and development after instructor, peer, and/or self review
 - Editing your draft for syntax, clarity, and professional presentation
 - Using an appropriate tone, writing style, and level of complexity for your target audience
 - Establishing and maintaining a writing schedule that gives you enough time to produce your best paper

10. In your academic studies (and/or other areas of your life), how often do you use informal writing as part of your thinking/learning process?

ALWAYS

FREQUENTLY

OCCASIONALLY

NEVER

11. What kinds of informal writing activities have you found helpful for clarifying your thoughts and integrating new information and concepts as you develop your ideas for a draft?

- Summarizing ideas from lectures or readings
- Writing out your own reflections and responses to readings or lecture material
- Writing critical questions and exploratory answers about the material as you read
- Writing definitions of key concepts in your own words
- Keeping a general journal for recording thoughts and ideas
- Free writing on the topic before you begin formal writing
- Brainstorming notes in an informal outline, mind map, or cluster diagram
- Writing a formal outline
- Talking out your questions and ideas with a classmate or friend

12. Briefly describe your typical approach to writing a first draft (what do you do? How long do you spend on it?)

13. Briefly describe your typical approach to revising drafts of your writing.

14. What kind(s) of feedback from peers or instructors do you find most useful?

- Comments on my use of evidence and understanding of the content
- Comments on my thesis, original ideas, and insights about the material
- Questions that ask me to clarify what I mean in specific passages
- Questions that raise issues I hadn't yet considered, or considered fully
- Comments about the form or structure of my essay
- Positive comments about what's working well
- Critiques of what's not clear, accurate, or well-developed
- Specific suggestions for further development
- Editing marks on my syntax, grammar, and punctuation

CURRENT KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENT: SPEAKING ABILITIES AND RHETORICAL KNOWLEDGE

15. With which of the following academic speaking forms do you feel comfortable:

- Speaking actively and often in full-class discussion
- Raising questions about materials or ideas in class
- Speaking collaboratively in small groups to negotiate ideas and solve problems
- Debating informally in class discussion when there are differences in interpretation
- Debating formally with assigned or chosen positions
- Presenting informally on a reading or topic
- Presenting formally on your research
- Providing feedback to other students on papers or presentations

16. From the following statements, select all that are true for you.

- I have always enjoyed speaking in public and seek opportunities for public speaking.
- I believe that articulating my ideas helps me to develop stronger ideas and to explore complex issues.
- I have sufficient experience and knowledge about formal speaking in this subject.
- When I speak, I consider my audience and purpose.
- I have no strong feelings about speaking, neither seeking nor avoiding it.
- I speak primarily to communicate ideas that I already understand.
- I say what I think, whatever the audience.
- I have never given formal speaking much thought.
- I have mostly avoided public speaking, and don't find it easy.
- I often feel unclear about the principles and purposes for public speaking in this subject, or in most subjects.

SETTING PERSONAL WRITING AND SPEAKING GOALS FOR YOUR CI SUBJECT

Think about the kinds of writing and speaking you expect to do as a professional after graduation. Next, think about any gaps that exist between your current repertoire of writing and speaking skills and those needed by professionals in your field. To close these gaps, what needs to change about your writing and speaking?

The goals you choose should be *rhetorically based*, *specific*, and *realistic* (i.e., achievable). Thus, goals such as "ace this course" (not rhetoric-based), "get better at writing" (too general), and "produce grammatically flawless first drafts" (probably not realistic) are inappropriate for this exercise. **List your goals here:**

Writing:

1. _____
2. _____

Speaking:

1. _____
2. _____

4.211

2/27

Original environmental context

How shaped:

Response:

- windows to south - better kept up

Early maps

- mapping location

- before 1870 = earliest fire maps

Features or absence

Absence of something

Topographic break:

Are features common or particular to site?

Syllabus

Show your site on the map

Include specific examples

Make a list of each observations

then narrow down

Pick a strategy

- Chronology

- Location - sub areas

- Type of natural process

- Subtitles - use 'em

2

- radiant energy
- air flow
- water flow
- erosion
- subsidence
- plant growth
- don't need to talk about all of them
 - the one that is most significant(I should look at previous years)

Not much lib research

- Don't rely too much on

Add illustrations

- draw site boundaries
- annotate

~~##~~

Sometimes may be easiest to just do a sketch

Air + Life Lecture

Biomes = plants + animals

Airiness - how much moisture ya have

Eastern - get moisture in ~~the~~ summer

Western US - get moisture in winter

③

(She did a zoo report for the Shah of Iran
- putting natural plants in

Urban Biome - adaptation of plants + animals within context
- species of plants + animals that adapt to those climates

Book: Wild Plants in the City

Some from middle east - Plantains

Byzantine manuscripts pictured in the old paintings

Can see in vacant lots

"meto forest"

but also "pioneers" or "volunteers" - seed themselves

Succession of plants that colonize open lots

- can tell how long the lot has been open

Full of immigrants

Same in Boston + Berlin

Time Landscape - south of Washington Square NYC

- wanted original landscape

But all these other plants self-seeded in his landscape

④ Might not be nature — plants
— but set of processes

Why do some trees thrive while others die?
— Flood plain soil

Some trees can grow in tiny cracks

Suckers + twigs at base of tree

- Eucalypts do it normally
- otherwise sign of stress

Memorial Drive

- trees planted in $10 \times 10 \times 10$ tree pits w/ good soil
- ~~that~~ report talked about normal urban soil is bad

Urban forestry has emerged in last 30 years in US

Masses under the tree can't

Avg life span of street tree = 10 years

When under stress does not grow very much

Bricks set in sand very diff than concrete

Trees need a lot of soil

Casey Tree website

↳ for Washington DC

5

Trees shape microclimates

Can look at shape + structure at tree
- esp spring + summer

Shady streets are much cooler in the summer

Granite Garden; north side of street vs south side of street



Can design microclimates

Shady - shade, water, breeze

Sun patches - sun, warmer

Paley park in NYC

(Same examples as book)

Waterfall - cools and draws out city

In 70s - designing houses good for climate

- which way it is facing

Urban Climate

- Heat island

- macro climate

⑥ Use air drainage to push out polluted air

Use breezes to clear out air
Like Stuttgart which is in a valley
- inversion
- pollution trapped

Banned building in these valleys

Put in transit

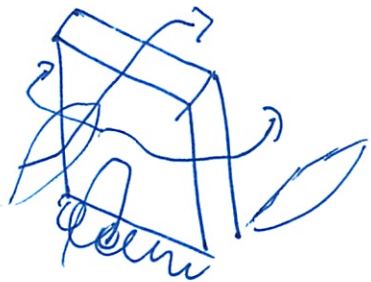
Put up plants as buffer from industrial

Play areas in middle of blocks

Daton Project

Scatter pellets over model

(could do snow blowing picture)



Plant trees upwind of tall towers

Differential climate

Wind

- just walk around
- snow blowing
- direction

Great for wind

Trash + snow piles up

Radiant

- Heat differential

4.211

3/2

(5 min late)

Use Topo maps

Q: Paper is raising qv

- Try to reason at possible ans
- Can say unsure about something
- don't do lib research first

Q: How to tell if landfill

- Shifting buildings
- Buildings held up
- Sign of settling
- Wood foundations, need to be underwater
- Storran Drive underpass was like a dam
- Now groundwater group

Problem w/ Trinity church when Hancock building

Copley Sq - retention basin

- roof drainage went in there to keep groundwater for pilings

Look for signs of settlement

May not be an answer

Just make a good argument

②

Wealthy people can put in extra maintenance to save house

Make field map perhaps

Half class in A range for assignment 1

Put captions on photos

Tell a story, make a point w/ photos

Part of the grade

Pick up papers in room 10-45 a secretary

Cite source of image next to image

All unattributed photos by author

Cite pg # of reading, then cite at end

I shall post my KML

Air + Life

Daton Climate Project

Patterns:

Regional wind usually goes over city

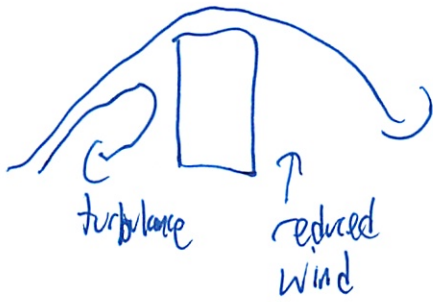
Planting trees adds drag

First time someone put whole city in wind tunnel

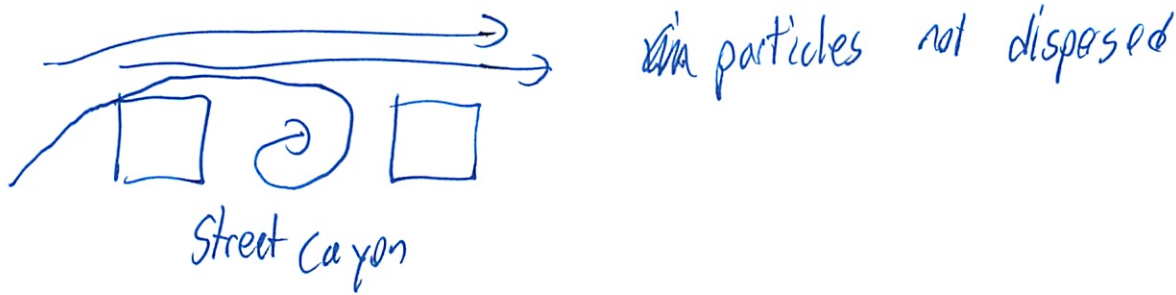
Solutions → req interventions in other places

Consider multiple contexts

3) More info on her website



Can bring smoke down to ground



than mixed form more dispersion

Paper think in terms of subtitles

Good strong intro + conclusion para s

Earth + water

geology important

- what foundations are on
- what early buildings built on
- geological hazards
 - fault zones
 - saturated soils
 - mud slides
 - forest fires

building construction

9

Saturated soil amplifies shaking in earthquake

↳ esp in filled land

building material

↳ masonry worse

wood better

Wildfires burn vegetation holding soil

Then mudslide sweeps it away when it rains

Revegetates soon

People rebuild

LA againts fire maintains

Controlled nature back

People's response to risk

Swimming pools leak into ground

Cut + filled land just slides off

Urban soil compacted

- has density of concrete

experiments on national mall

Street trees w/ too little soil don't grow as well

Had science ~~back~~ down in Paris

Artful manhole covers

⑤ Water

- Supply
- Sewage
- Settlement in harbor
- historical rivers
- water runs over certain areas faster
 - pavement fast
- Areas known have toxic soils
- Runoff picks up

Denver in book

- river
- storm water + flood control
- recreation

Landmark project in 1970s

Water comes all at once during storm

Undeveloped - Flows slower

Potsdammer Platz - retain storm water to reduce flooding

Air
Pollution

Park - needs to be based on climate
buildings too

Has this book changed how cities think about this?

Felt this - but never really thought about it

The German residential street design

Some stuff US has not made much progress on recently

Earth

topology changing

Settling

Sinking

Natural resources

earth quakes

Land slides

queries

- like US

- not allowed to use

- so expensive

Gardens often have led

2) Compacted soil

3/9

(did not take notes 2nd half)

Now I see why EIS so complex

Talk about how she uses same 30-year^{old} examples book + slides

World very different

- cities much more down frodden than

- NYC central park

- since then affluent people moved back in

Granite Garden is her life's work

- she milks it 'ii' ...

ASSIGNMENT 2. YOUR SITE AND NATURAL PROCESSES

This is the second part of a four-part, semester-long project. The first part consisted of finding a site. Now the task is to find evidence on your site of its environmental history and ongoing natural processes. The objective, through the examination of your site and its context, is to explore how natural processes shape cities.

Lecture notes and required readings will be helpful in identifying and thinking about how natural processes have shaped and continue to shape your site; by now, you should have read *Close-Up: How to Read the American City* and should finish reading *The Granite Garden*.

Start your investigation by locating your site on early maps of Boston, such as those shown in lectures (several of these are depicted in John Reys, *The Making of Urban America*; many can be found in other books, such as Alex Krieger, *Mapping Boston*). Do these maps depict any natural features on your site itself? These may include rivers or streams, ponds, hills and valleys. If so, did these features (or the absence of them) influence the settlement of your site? Examine your site's location in relation to the natural features of Boston as a whole. Do you think this context influenced the development of your site?

Take a walk through your site looking for signs of its pre-urban landscape: topography, for example, or water features. Look also for signs of ongoing natural processes of air, earth, water, and life (for example, light and wind; water flow and erosion; plant growth and animal movements). How do these relate to some of the larger environmental issues discussed in lectures and *The Granite Garden*? Make a map of your site with field notes of your observations.

Describe what you have found. The paper should be about 2400 words (approximately eight pages, typed double-spaced), accompanied by illustrations. Look for patterns. Include a copy of the map you used to discuss the environmental context of your site (don't forget to identify your site and to list the source of the map!).

Successful papers are well organized, cite specific examples to make each point, put examples in context, and are illustrated. In organizing your paper, focus on the features you found and the broader issues they raise. Go beyond mere description. Choose your examples carefully and discuss their significance.

Assignment #2 Due: Friday, March 4, 5PM. Post the assignment on your home page, send the address to spirn@mit.edu, and send [Jeanne Wildman](#), the writing tutor, the address and a copy of your text. Late submissions will receive a reduction in grade. There will be no extensions without prior, written, consent of the instructor.

Student Presentations - ~~East Boston~~

East Boston - subsidence

Non stratifient

Don't know where fill is

Looked clear under snow

Dirty when messy

No native trees

Good time of year to see north vs south facing

Fenway - was initially on land

Mill dam

Olmsted

Some roads added later

Trees grow poorly over sewer

Mill built later for bridge

West facing slopes are driest - warmer in afternoon, more evap.

East - wetter

North - no sun

South - sun

② Slight hills may not be on topo map
Fill dug out when building Subway + Fenway

18-20s built railway over + under passes

- Standardized construction

Back Bay - Filled means not natural plants ;
- (not necessarily)

trees are different on each street

As you go towards street in Copley Sq - get smaller

(She ignored the possibility that trees planted at different times)

Newbury street diff sizes

All on Boylston looked bad

- so nature may have some effects

Wind trapping pollution ;

Protection from wind

Coming off the tower

~~AMM~~

Charlestown - Nice fill by year map

- was most actual land, not fill

- original settlers were there

- many original buildings

③

A lot of construction

- above ground highway + trains

- blc settlement and ↓ in property values

? Down feels bad?

Repointed brick - makes it look newer

Kendall Sq (The ~~new~~ One Kendall Sq area)

Wind on Broadway St

Bi'z don't like - not many based on walk up bi'z

Plaza is there since it used to be Broad Canal

Buildings were built towards Canal

Warmer

Closed in windows

Bad air incanor parks

I should check weather history for regional wind dir

Alleys deep

Lots of drainage

Design from the ground up - including the ground

(4)

Journal entry graded in a block
will get feedback soon

My journal: most things 20-25 years old

Scientific understanding far more advanced than planning response

Not more sophisticated planning work

- ~~Planners~~ not a scientific?

~~Diff~~ - Lots of lit not being used

- But stormwater in Denver has become part of best practices

~~She~~ expected to change things overnight

- before sustainability + environmental justice

Things moved very slowly - West Phila project from NR 1987

just implemented 2010

Engineers are the obstacles

Denver is still ~~very~~ one of the best examples

still doing new projects

Designers + Planners still continuously re-inventing the wheel

- How to Plant a Street ~~Tree~~ Tree from 1800s in Paris

Urban climate + air quality

- 2004 reprinted the 1984 report

Very rare designers create microclimate

⑤

Emphasis on policy - disappointment

Not land use + planning

Focus on tech fix - not form of city

Many people resisted the ideas after Granite Garden

- poverty

So she worked on that

Worked in same neighborhood since 1987

Some stuff still ~~is~~ feels new

Much less resistance today

Language of Landscape - ~~is~~ reading the natural, political, social-economic history

Michael Plasmeier

4.211/11.016 ASSIGNMENT 1: SELECT A SITE

Basic Requirements

✓

Observations/Argument

good points, but you are working too much from secondary research to observations, as opposed to from observations → hypothesis; followed by research to verify. For this assignment, you have enough observations to make it ok, but be careful in future assignments to start with your own observations.

Writing

Illustrations

✓

effective use of google's oblique view

Web Site

Overall Grade

A

Site Selection

Michael Plasmeier

After looking at a few other sections of Boston, I have settled on roughly 5 blocks in the South End neighborhood. The area that I have selected is bounded by Huntington Avenue to the north, Harcourt and W. Canton streets to the west, Columbus Avenue to the south, and Dartmouth Street to the east. The defining feature of my site is the massive Copley Place development. However, to contrast the scale of Copley Place, I have also included a few blocks to the south of the complex. The blocks are comprised of a mix of original "brownstone"-style homes, 70s-era church-sponsored low-income housing,¹ and a groundbreaking late-80s mixed-income housing development called "Tent City."²

By combining offices, retail, hotels, and restaurants in one facility, and linking it by sky-bridge to other tall office buildings, the developers of Copley Place sought to create their own Epitome District within their development.³ In particular they sought to capture the "Political Venturi" who could eat, sleep, work, and shop all in the same development. The development is built around a mall which starts at the west-most corner of my site with a bridge to the Prudential Center and stretches to the MBTA and Amtrak Back Bay station. Office buildings are built on top of the mall creating a large atrium in the middle of the mall. The mall has two anchor stores which do not have anything built on top of them. Two hotels surround the mall. One is attached to the mall, while the other sits on a narrow triangle of land between Stuart Street and Huntington Avenue. In 2008, the owners of Copley Place proposed building a residential tower over Neiman Marcus on Dartmouth Street. Those plans appear to have been abandoned.

Explain Clay's terms - also, cite the meaning rather than their application to this example.

¹College Rentals. "Methunion Manor Cooperative." 16 Feb 2011 <<http://collegerentals.com/Methunion-Manor-Cooperative-apartments-Boston-Massachusetts/>>.

²Mass Movements. "Tent City in Boston." 16 Feb 2011 <<http://massmoments.org/moment.cfm?mid=126>>.

³Clay, Grady. Close Up: How to Read the American City. New York; Praeger, 1973.

The mixed scale is very interesting, especially in the Boston area. One minute one is walking along a tree-lined small street and then all of sudden one comes across what looks like a suburban office building. As one rounds the corner, one sees a 40+ story hotel tower. Despite the large difference in height, the effect is very gradual. In addition, I think that the developers built faux-brownstone residential units along the edge of the site to temper the change of scale. I want to investigate this further. Are these just facades or were they built separately?

The difference in income levels is also intriguing. One end of my site has a high-end hotel bordering Copley Square, while 800 feet down Dartmouth Street sits one of the countries' first mixed-income developments. In 1968, the Boston Redevelopment Authority tore down the houses near the corner of Dartmouth and Columbus streets without relocating the residents.⁴ In protest, between 100-300 activists set up camp in tents on the site. Almost 20 years later an alliance of nonprofits and governments built a "multi-racial, multi-ethnic" housing community on the site.

Underground transit corridors also define much of my area. The area that is now Copley Place was once a rail yard for the Boston and Albany Railroad. In the early 1960s, the state of Massachusetts removed much of the railroad and replaced it with the Massachusetts Turnpike.⁵ As they were building the highway, the state wanted to sell or lease out the rest of the land at the border of the Back Bay and South End of Boston.⁶ The Prudential Center complex was the first to be completed, with a tall tower built on the land next to the expressway and a plaza was built over the expressway to make it disappear underground. Copley Place was built almost 20 years later, around 1984, further covering the expressway in a similar pattern to the Prudential Center.

⁴Mass Movements."Tent City in Boston." *Mass Movements*. 16 Feb 2011 <<http://massmoments.org/moment.cfm?mid=126>>.

⁵Boston Roads."Massachusetts Turnpike." *Boston Roads*. 16 Feb 2011 <<http://www.bostonroads.com/roads/mass-pike/>>.

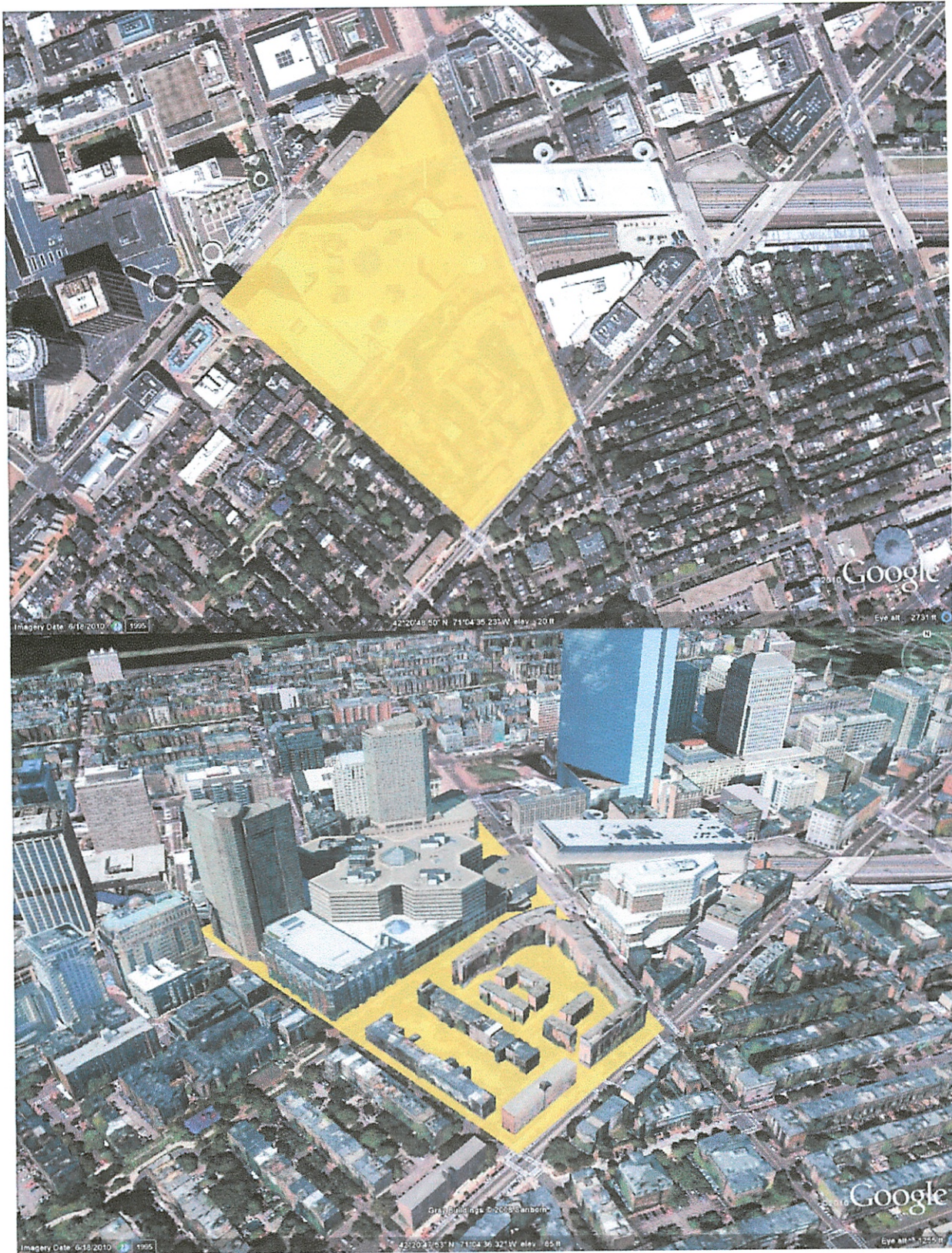
⁶Wikipedia contributors."Massachusetts Turnpike." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 15 Feb. 2011. Web. 16 Feb. 2011.

The Southwest Corridor also cuts through the site. In the late 1940s, William F. Callahan, Massachusetts Public Works director, identified the route as a potential highway.⁷ The right of way was cleared in anticipation of the highway project, leaving a long scar through the neighborhood.⁸ However by the 1970s, urban highway construction had fallen out of fashion and the plan was dropped. However, the route was reused as a new route for the Orange Line and Amtrak's Northeast Corridor. The tracks from Massachusetts Avenue east have been covered and the surface now carries a linear park. Today bikers and pedestrians meander down the path. One can still see how old brownstones were knocked down to create a path for the highway.

Conclusion? (Ending with specifics is a bit abrupt.)

Michael, your essay offers a good mix of relevant information about your chosen site. It begins very clearly with identification of the site, then characterization of the uses - you might also have included a brief indication of its appeal, which you detail in paragraphs three through five (mixed scale, mix of incomes, transit corridors). The essay as a whole would benefit from more identification of questions - there are some in the mixed-scale paragraph, but later paragraphs just contain historical information. What questions/ideas for further directions are raised by the facts you cite? I look forward to what you have to say, especially about the changing nature of transportation uses on the site. - Jeanne

⁷Wikipedia contributors. "Southwest Corridor (Boston)." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 30 Sep. 2010. Web. 16 Feb. 2011.
⁸Robin. "Boston's Open Spaces: The Southwest Corridor Park." 19 Feb. 2010. *Wicked Bostoner*. 16 Feb. 2011 <<http://wickedbostoner.blogspot.com/2010/02/bostons-open-spaces-southwest-corridor.html>>.



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