NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018 (Expires 5/31/2012)

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NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Charles River Reservation – Upper Basin Headquarters

other names/site number Charles River Speedway Headquarters (preferred); Speedway Complex

2. Location

street & number 1420-1440 Soldiers Field Road (aka 525 Western Avenue) ☐ not for publication

city or town Boston (Brighton) ☐ vicinity

state Massachusetts code MA county Suffolk code 025 zip code 02135-1021

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ✓ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ✓ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ **national** ___ **statewide** ✓ **local**

Brona Simon SHPO June 10, 2010

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

✓ entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:)

for Edson H. Beall July 19, 2010

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Charles River Speedway Headquarters
Name of Property

Suffolk, MA
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- [ ] private
- [ ] public - Local
- [X] public - State
- [ ] public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

- [X] building(s)
- [ ] district
- [ ] site
- [ ] structure
- [ ] object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
7	0	buildings
		district
1	0	site
		structure
		object
8	0	**Total**

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Domestic: institutional housing (staff housing)
Government: offices, police station

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Vacant
Storage

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Late Victorian: Shingle Style
Late 19th and Early 20th Century Revival: Colonial Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Stone: fieldstone
walls: Shingle, concrete
roof: Asphalt shingle
other:

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The Charles River Speedway Headquarters is a remarkable ensemble of connected buildings lining the southeast corner of Soldiers Field Road and Western Avenue in the Brighton section of Boston (see sketch map). The complex is visually prominent, particularly as one enters the intersection from the south. It recalls the late 19th- and early 20th-century summer estates in seaside and rural areas, hinting at the original importance of these buildings, which served as a gateway to the recreational attractions along the river.

Designed in a harmonious blend of the Shingle and Colonial Revival styles, the buildings were constructed beginning in 1899 as a companion complex for a recreational racetrack known as the Charles River Speedway. Residential in scale, the buildings rise from fieldstone foundations and have picturesque massing that includes extended roof slopes, overhanging second stories, multiple gables, and one-story towers with conical roofs. Other details include smooth shingle cladding, shingled brackets, and elaborate Colonial Revival-style door surrounds. The complex, which forms a courtyard, fills its relatively small lot at a major traffic node. The principal façade along Soldiers Field Road is landscaped with mature trees and shrubs. All resources, which include the buildings and the courtyard, are contributing and are described on continuation sheets for section 7. Soldiers Field Road was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2006 as a contributing resource in the Charles River Reservation Parkways, Metropolitan Park System of Greater Boston Multiple Property Submission.

Narrative Description

The Charles River Speedway Headquarters stands on the northeast corner of the major crossroads of Western Avenue, Soldiers Field Road, Leo M. Birmingham Parkway/Market Street, and Arsenal Street. The intersection is just south of the Charles River, with the Arsenal Street Bridge crossing the river to the west of the site. The Speedway complex is bounded by Western Avenue on the south, the curve of Soldiers Field Road on the west and north, and commercial property on the east. Soldiers Field Road, a divided highway that separates the Speedway complex from the parkland along the south bank of the Charles River, was originally a scenic drive with a bicycle trail, pedestrian promenade, and harness-racing track. Built in 1899, the racetrack was known as the Charles River Speedway, from which the complex takes its preferred name. (The official name is Charles River Reservation–Upper Basin Headquarters.) Along Western Avenue, the Speedway complex is in a low-rise, mixed-use area dotted with parking lots and vacant parcels. An animal hospital and kennel occupy a wood-frame, ca. 1900 building abutting the complex on the east at 501 Western Avenue; a wood-frame, late 19th-century multifamily building (522 Western Ave.), a 1938 gas station (500 Western Ave.), and used car lot line the south side. There is a bus stop in front of the complex on Western Avenue. South of Western Avenue is a residential neighborhood of late 19th-century houses. Northeast of the site along the south side of Soldiers Field Road are contemporary office buildings and a hotel.

The Shingle and Colonial Revival-style Speedway complex overlooks the intersection from its triangular, bull-nosed corner lot. The principal and most visible component of the complex is a series of six connected, wood-frame, one- and two-story, shingle-clad structures that line Western Avenue and curve around the bull nose, jutting in and out as they continue along Soldiers Field Road. Begun in 1899, the connected buildings reached their present size and shape in 1925. A freestanding concrete maintenance garage at the northeast end of the complex was added in 1940. While the principal buildings face public streets with sidewalks, their arrangement creates an interior courtyard with a roughly rectangular plan. On the Western Avenue side, the buildings are set at the lot line, bordering the sidewalk where a row of street trees has recently been planted. Landscaping is more evident along Soldiers Field Road, where the buildings are set back to varying degrees allowing for grass, shrubs, and several mature deciduous trees.

See continuation sheets (Section 7)

Charles River Speedway Headquarters
Name of Property

Suffolk, MA
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- [X] A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- [ ] B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- [X] C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- [ ] D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- [ ] A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- [ ] B removed from its original location.
- [ ] C a birthplace or grave.
- [ ] D a cemetery.
- [ ] E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- [ ] F a commemorative property.
- [ ] G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Community Planning and Development

Architecture

Period of Significance

1899 to 1960

Significant Dates

1925

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

William D. Austin (Stickney and Austin) (architect)

Charles Eliot, Olmsted Brothers (landscape architects)

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance begins in 1899 with the construction of the original segments of the complex and ends in 1960, which is the National Register's standard 50-year cutoff for historical perspective. The principal Shingle Style elements of the complex reached their present appearance in 1925, when a stable was remodeled to become a police station.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)
N/A

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The Charles River Speedway Headquarters, officially known as the Charles River Reservation – Upper Basin Headquarters, is an extraordinary and unique set of buildings that survive from the earliest days of the Metropolitan Park System of Greater Boston and the creation of the Charles River Reservation. The Metropolitan Park System transformed the regional landscape by preserving vast amounts of land for public parks and reservations. The Charles River Reservation changed the riverfront from a gritty tidal estuary used for commercial and industrial enterprises to a desirable place for residential and recreational development.

The Speedway complex, most of which was constructed in 1899, was the administrative headquarters for a recreational facility that had as its centerpiece a mile-long harness-racing track known as the Speedway. It was the first permanent development project undertaken in the Charles River Reservation. The headquarters complex, including additions through 1925, was designed in the fashionable Colonial Revival and Shingle styles by William D. Austin, a prominent Boston architect, who was also the principal designer of many other buildings in the Metropolitan Park System of Greater Boston. The organization of the Speedway complex into a superintendent's residence, park headquarters, and park police station helped set the standard for construction of administrative facilities in reservations throughout the park system. The nationally renowned landscape architect Charles Eliot, who died two years before the construction of the Speedway and its associated buildings, had prepared the plans for the Speedway in 1894 when he was a partner in the firm of Olmsted, Olmsted and Eliot (figure 1). After his death, the Olmsted Brothers oversaw the landscape design.

Areas of Significance (summary)
The complex is significant in the area of community planning and development for its association with the regional park system. It is significant in the area of architecture because of its masterful blend of Colonial Revival and Shingle Style architecture. A tangible reminder of the first chapter in the history of the Charles River Reservation and the Metropolitan Park System of Greater Boston, the Speedway Headquarters, now over 110 years old, retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, feeling, and association and meets criteria A and C for listing in the National Register of Historic Places with a local level of significance. Given the importance of the Metropolitan Park System and the preeminence of its landscape and building designers, it is possible that the Speedway complex would qualify for state or national significance, but further study is needed to provide a state and national context.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)
See continuation sheet, Section 8

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)
See continuation Sheet, section 9

Previous documentation on file (NPS):
- ____ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- ____ previously listed in the National Register
- ____ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ____ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ____ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #_____
- ____ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- ____ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:
- _X_ State Historic Preservation Office
- _X_ Other State agency
- ____ Federal agency
- ____ Local government
- ____ University
- ____ Other

Name of repository: Department of Conservation and Recreation

Charles River Speedway Headquarters | Suffolk, MA
Name of Property | County and State

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):
BOS.8064

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	19	323330	4691980	3			
2				4			

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

As drawn on the attached assessors map, the boundary includes all of parcel #2200577001, on which the Maintenance Garage stands, and the portion of parcel #220057700 (Charles River Reservation in its entirety) upon which the connected buildings of the Speedway Headquarters stand. Specifically, the included portion of parcel #220057700 runs along Western Avenue on the south, curves along Soldiers Field Road on the west and north, and meets the property line of abutting parcels on the east, including parcel #2200577001. (See attached map.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries are those historically associated with the Charles River Speedway Headquarters during the period of significance.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Karen L. Davis with Betsy Friedberg, National Register Director, MHC
organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date June 2010
street & number 220 Morrissey Blvd. telephone 617-727-8470
city or town Boston state MA zip code 02125
e-mail

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

Charles River Speedway Headquarters
Name of Property

Suffolk, MA
County and State

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

See Continuation sheets

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

DESCRIPTION

For descriptive purposes, the connected buildings on the site have been divided into six components based on their use. A letter of the alphabet was assigned to each component in a stabilization study prepared in 2001. The lettering system was continued in a historic structures report of 2006, upon which the following descriptions are based. For this nomination each segment has been given a name that corresponds to its use, and the letters previously assigned are indicated in parentheses. These letters are also used to correlate the site map and photographs with the text. The primary buildings on the site are described first, followed by the ancillary structures. The three primary building segments were used respectively as a residence, an office and stable, and a police station. The ancillary buildings are storage sheds and garages.

Currently vacant and in need of repair, the wood-frame components of the complex are in fair to poor condition both inside and out. Nevertheless, alterations to the most visible elevations along Soldiers Field Road and Western Avenue are minimal. Except where noted, it is assumed that the original window sash remain.

Superintendent's Residence (1899) (Building F) Photo 1

Anchoring the curve of the site at the junction of Western Avenue and Soldiers Field Road, the Superintendent's Residence faces west and north. It is an asymmetrical arrangement of gables, extended roof slopes, and projecting bays. The massing consists of a 2-story, front-gabled main block facing west (principal façade) and a 2-story cross-gabled pavilion projecting from the north elevation (secondary façade). A one-story porch topped by a balustraded balcony fills the angle between the main block and the projecting pavilion, and a door leads from the second floor to the balcony. A hip-roofed one-story wing extends to the southeast, where it connects with the south shed (E).

Brick chimneys rise through the north and south slopes of the main block's roof. The main entry, in the west-facing main block, is sheltered by a portico with open pediment resting on clustered columns. Brick steps lead to the front door, which is flanked by sidelights and an elaborate full entablature with diamond-pattern ornament in the frieze. A wooden fan surmounts the frieze. To the right (south) of the entry is a projecting one-story, polygonal bay with a conical roof. Adjacent to it is the one-story, hip-roofed wing, which has an entry flanked by two windows on its westerly elevation.

The north-facing projecting pavilion on the secondary facade features an overhanging second story resting on shingle-covered brackets and a square oriel window supported by decorative wooden brackets at the first story. The north slope of the main block's roof descends steeply to the first story, meeting the line of the overhang. A gabled dormer with 6/6 sash surmounted by a round-arch window with keystone lights the attic, and two windows beneath it light the first story. The principal windows, which are paired above the entry, have 6/6 sash with simple wooden frames. Small windows light the gable ends above the second floor. The residence is clad in wood shingles that meet at the corners and flair slightly at the sill. These details are typical of the Shingle Style, as is the shingle-clad knee wall of the front porch. Trim consists of a slightly overhanging cornice decorated by exposed purlins.

The courtyard elevation (southeast) features another extended roof slope (south slope of the west-facing section). A large gabled dormer with 6/6 sash projects from the slope, creating a second-story room. A back door in a small, shed-roofed, enclosed porch and a variety of windows, most with 6/6 sash, complete the rear elevation.

The east, side elevation of the superintendent's residence is connected to the south shed (E) that lines the sidewalk along Western Avenue, and the other side elevation is connected to the Headquarters and Stable (G) on Soldiers Field Road. Historic photos dating to ca. 1900 show the residence's principal windows with 6/6 sash and louvered blinds. The front porch appears to have been open and decorated with short columns rising from the knee wall. By 2006, what appear to be casement windows enclosed the porch.

Interior: Containing approximately 1,900 square feet on two floors, plus a 975-square-foot basement, the Superintendent's Residence contains standard residential spaces (living room, dining room, bedrooms, kitchen, bathroom). The walls and ceilings of the principal rooms are finished with plaster, and floors are wood or linoleum. Ceramic tile is found in the kitchen and bathroom.

Headquarters and Stable (1899) (Building G) Photos 2 and 3

The section of the complex abutting the Superintendent's Residence (F) on the east is a one-story, side-gabled, one-pile-deep building that served as a Headquarters and Stable. Rising from a fieldstone foundation, it is clad with wood shingles and has an asphalt shingle roof. The linear building has an almost L-shaped plan that steps back on the site to enclose an interior courtyard. The windows in this section were replaced ca. 1999. The façade along Soldiers Field Road has clerestory windows set at the cornice line, and is articulated by three projections. The first (westernmost) abuts the Superintendent's Residence and contains the main entrance to office space—a one-story, gable-roofed portico decorated by exposed purlins along the rake. The side elevations have long vertical windows on each side. The main entry features a multilight, nonfunctional door (no evidence of hardware). A transom and sidelights support a simple lintel, which is surmounted by a double round-arch transom with a muntin pattern resembling longitude and latitude lines as seen on a globe. An original feature, the globe transom with a vertical keystone fills most of the gable. A sign hanging from a bracket set at a right angle to the building reads "Metropolitan District Commission." Concrete steps lead to the doorway. Historic photographs show what appear to be wooden steps leading to an open porch; short columns rested on the shingled knee wall of the porch and framed the entry.

The second projecting section, facing northwest, is a round bay—or short tower—with a conical roof and copper finial. It is lit by a T-shaped window group composed of a central 6/6 sash flanked by small, four-paned sash. The tower, which functions as the turning point in the L-plan, connects to a long, north-facing segment, which features a large dormerlike roof vent and three windows beneath the cornice (photo 3). Two of the windows have four-light sash and one is 6/6. Originally, there was a quartet of four-light sash evenly spaced beneath the cornice.

The third projection, facing north, is a front-gabled vehicular portal to the courtyard. The opening is defined by a round arch cut into the gable. The gable itself projects, so that its flared bases rest on shingled brackets beside the entry (photo 3). The stable extends a few more feet (with one window lighting what is now a garage entered from the courtyard) to intersect with the MDC Police Station (H). The courtyard elevations of the building (G, moving west to east) contain a small gabled section that is on axis with the front entry, a projecting mudroom with door and small window, a number of full-size windows with 6/6 sash, one small four-light clerestory window, and garage doors at the east end.

Interior: Containing approximately 1,900 square feet, the Headquarters and Stable section contains a garage space that is separated from the office space by the vehicular portal into the courtyard. The office area has an open plan fitted with partitions to create office space. Floors are carpeted and ceilings are acoustic tile. One

office is two steps up from the entry in the south end of the building. While little historic interior building fabric remains, there is an oak door with grid pattern that likely dates to the building's use as a stable. The door now leads to a storage room. The interior of the garage section of the building has parged walls and ceilings.

A ca. 1900 photograph (figure 2) shows that the stable was the end of the Speedway complex at that time. A tall chimney rose through the roof to the east of the round tower bay, and principal windows were flanked by blinds. Landscaping consisted of a lawn, shrubs, walkways and driveways to the entries, and newly planted trees along the sidewalk at Soldiers Field Road.

MDC Police Station (1904, 1925) (Building H) Photo 4

This segment of the complex is attached at a right angle to the garage of the Headquarters and Stable (G), and it repeats the L-plan and tower configuration of that segment (G). It began as a stable in 1904, but reached its present appearance in 1925 when it was remodeled to become the MDC Police Station. The building rises from a high fieldstone foundation and has three sections: a six-bay, one-story section facing west, a short tower with conical roof, and a 1 1/2-story office section facing north. The office section, which is residential in character, is the most highly detailed, and it is at the north end of the entire complex of shingle-clad buildings.

The office section has a side-gable roof. The façade (north) has an off-center entry flanked by four grouped windows on the east and one on the west. The building then steps back slightly to a recessed bay with paired windows. All except one of the windows have 6/6 sash that meet a bold stringcourse, above which are three-light transoms. Each single window is further articulated by bold brackets on either side of the transoms, supporting the deep overhang of the eaves. The easternmost single window is narrow and has 4/4 sash with a two-light transom. Two dormers rise from the north slope of the roof. A small front-gabled one at the east end has one 6/6 sash. Next to it (to the west) is a room-sized, two-bay, front-gabled dormer with an extended roof slope on the west that contains another small, gabled dormer. The large dormer is detailed with exposed purlins along the raking cornice, and it has a small window lighting an attic space.

Concrete steps and iron railings lead to the entry, which projects slightly from the plane of the façade. The door and sidelights are framed by pilasters supporting a full entablature that rises to the eaves. The gable end (east elevation) has a centered secondary entrance framed by a brick surround and narrow wooden cornice. Steps to the door have been removed. There is one 6/6 sash window on each side of the door and one 8/8 directly above it. The first-story windows have transoms above the stringcourse; the stringcourse continues from the façade and wraps part way along the courtyard elevation.

The tower section, to the west of the entry, is lit by a group of three windows. Like the tower on the Headquarters section, this tower serves as a turning point. It connects to the one-story section of the building, which has five windows and a door at its west end.

The rear (courtyard) elevation of the building features two gabled wall dormers detailed with exposed purlins. At the inner corner, where the building makes its right-angle turn, is a one-story, shed-roofed section that supports a polygonal turret with conical roof and 6/6 sash. A shed-roofed porch shelters the back door.

Interior: Containing approximately 3,000 square feet plus a 1,600-square-foot basement, the interior rooms include four heavy, metal jail cells, a booking area, and four toilet rooms. The interior appears to retain many of

its original finishes and fixtures, but most are in deteriorated condition. Ceilings are plaster. Most walls are plaster with wainscoting, but there is also some later paneling in the booking area. The basement, which once functioned as a stable, contains the heating system.

South Shed (1899, 1923) (Building E) Photo 5

Attached to the east end of the Superintendent's Residence (F), the South Shed is a linear, shingle-clad, rectangular-plan building that has no setback as it extends approximately 160 feet along the Western Avenue sidewalk to the end of the site. Facing south, it rises one story from a low stone foundation to a gable roof covered with asphalt shingles. The façade is punctuated by small clerestory windows and two matching vehicular entries. One is located near the middle of the façade and the other near the east end. These front-gabled entries are wall dormers that project beyond the plane of the façade to rest on shingled brackets at the cornice line. The design features a round-arch portal similar to the vehicular entrance on the Headquarters and Stable (G). The south shed's portals are fitted with double doors made of diagonal beaded boards and bracing. The easternmost portal opens into the east shed (D) described below. The courtyard elevation (north) is covered with vertical boards and features three open and three enclosed bays with sliding barn doors. It appears that the building began as an open storage shed and was enclosed, reaching its present appearance with the gabled portals ca. 1923.

Interior: The South Shed contains approximately 2,000 square feet on a concrete slab. Wood-framed partitions divide the enclosed bays.

East Shed (1899) and Front-Gabled Garage (ca.1940) (Buildings D and C) Photo 6

The segment of the complex that includes the East Shed and Garage is attached at a right angle to the South Shed (E). It begins as a linear, one-story, side-gabled structure that borders the lot line and forms the east side of the courtyard. At its north end, it makes a right-angle turn (a wing) that further encloses the courtyard. The long eastern leg of the shed has a fieldstone foundation that is parged in some areas. The east elevation has four double-hung windows at its north end. The west elevation of building D (facing the courtyard) features three two-car, overhead garage doors, a pedestrian door, and a window.

The wing of building D faces south onto the courtyard. After 1932, and probably ca. 1940, the depth of its footprint was doubled. The wing features a side-gable roof with an extended south slope. Other details of the south elevation of the wing are a metal overhead door, a pedestrian entry door, and a large multipaned window. Brick piers on granite bases support the corners. The west elevation has a window in the gable end and a secondary pedestrian entry at the south corner. The north wall is attached to a front-gabled garage (C, photo 6) that faces north.

This rectangular-plan structure (C), which was present by 1945, rises one story from a rubble foundation parged with cement. It is divided into three bays by wide piers that rise to the triangular base of the shingled gable end. Two of the bays have modern, sectional overhead garage doors with two rows of glazing. The easternmost bay, which was once identical but appeared damaged in 2006 photos, is now infilled with vertical boards and has a pedestrian door. There are a total of nine windows—four on each side elevation and one in the gable end.

Interior: Containing approximately 3,100 square feet, the long east leg (the portion that dates to 1899) rests on a concrete slab floor. Partitions divide the space into four vehicle bays. The walls and underside of the roof are

coated with cement. The wing (south-facing section) has wood-frame partitions, metal grills for security, and a loft in the attic.

The north-facing garage section (C) contains approximately 1,140 square feet and is divided into three vehicular bays and a loft in the attic reached by wooden stairs. The ceiling and walls are coated with stucco on metal lath.

Maintenance Garage (1940) (Building B) Photo 7

Constructed in 1940, the Maintenance Garage is the only freestanding building on the site and the only one not clad with shingles. Located in the northeast corner of the lot, it is a concrete and steel, L-plan, one-story, side-gabled building covered with stucco. A two-bay wing extends to the west from the south end of the main block. Facing west, the main block is divided into seven bays fitted with wooden sectional garage doors that have a single row of glazed panels lighting the interior. The middle bay, which has a taller opening than the others, features a date block (1940) above the door. A fuel island with two gas pumps stands parallel to the main block in an area paved with asphalt. The two former garage bays of the wing have been infilled with concrete block and each is fitted with a double-hung metal window.

Interior: The long leg of the building has seven vehicle bays, and the wing contains storage space. The floor is concrete slab and the walls are finished with stucco.

Courtyard (A)

The courtyard created by the configuration of the buildings is a utilitarian service yard that is paved for vehicles and provides access to garages and storage buildings. It is generally rectangular and relatively flat, but slopes somewhat from south to north. A fence separates the residential section from the service yard.

(End section 7)

DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY AND CONTEXT

Brighton—the westernmost portion of Boston—is bounded on the north by the Charles River with Cambridge and Watertown on the opposite bank. Originally part of Cambridge, Brighton became a separate municipality in 1807. It was annexed to Boston in 1874, and was the last of a series of annexations that began in 1867, greatly increasing the size of Boston. Prior to the development of the Metropolitan Park System of Greater Boston, the fringe of north Brighton along the Charles River was an industrial area lined with railyards, coal and lumber wharves, and slaughterhouses. By 1865, there were 34 slaughterhouses in Brighton and the industry was deemed a menace to public health. As part of legislative action to correct the pollution and unsanitary conditions, the Butchers' Slaughtering and Melting Association was created to construct a modern slaughterhouse. It opened as the Brighton Abattoir in 1873 and operated on a 42-acre site southwest of the Speedway Headquarters until 1956.

The second half of the 19th century was a period of intense immigration to and urbanization of Boston brought about by industrialization. In Brighton, population growth averaged 237 people per year between 1870 and 1885. Between 1885 and 1915, it averaged 758 per year. Beginning in 1900, Eastern European Jews and Lithuanians settled in north Brighton, most of them attracted by employment opportunities at the Brighton Abattoir.

The increasing urbanization, industrial activity, and population density created an unhealthy environment and a general desire for designated open space to provide fresh air, recreation, restoration, and pleasure for all residents, but particularly those crowded into tenements. The park movement was preceded by the garden cemetery movement, which began with Mount Auburn Cemetery, established in 1830, on the outskirts of Cambridge (NHL). The era of park development quickly followed, and its first major designer was the landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. After designing New York's Central Park, he refined the concept of an urban park to include parkways and park systems. In Boston, he designed the ring of parks known as the Emerald Necklace, which began at the previously established Public Garden of 1856. The Emerald Necklace continues as a string of urban parks linked by tree-lined parkways, or pleasure roads, ending at Franklin Park. One of Olmsted's disciples was Charles Eliot, who along with journalist Sylvester Baxter conceived what would become the Metropolitan Park System of Greater Boston—the first regional park system in the United States. This pioneering effort has been deemed a source of inspiration and encouragement to metropolitan communities everywhere.

Charles Eliot, the son of Harvard president Charles William Eliot, was born in Cambridge in 1859. He was also a cousin of Harvard's distinguished art historian Charles Eliot Norton and the nephew of prominent Boston architect Robert Peabody, who introduced him to Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. Eliot graduated from Harvard in 1882. He had studied horticulture at Harvard's Bussey Institute, which was a precursor to programs in landscape architecture. Upon graduation, Eliot went to work as an apprentice for Frederick Law Olmsted and Company. Eliot's projects at the Olmsted firm included designs for Boston's Franklin Park, the Arnold Arboretum, and the Fens. In 1885, Eliot traveled to Europe to study public parks and botanical gardens. Upon returning home in 1886, he opened his own office. In 1893, he rejoined the Olmsted firm as a partner of Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. and John Charles Olmsted. (Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. was in ill health by this time.) The firm was renamed Olmsted, Olmsted and Eliot. A few months later, the firm was hired to prepare a plan for the metropolitan parks, with Eliot having primary responsibility for the project until his early death from meningitis in 1897 at the age of 38. The work on the park system was taken over by John Charles Olmsted and Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., who renamed the company The Olmsted Brothers.

In January 1893, Baxter and Eliot, working in conjunction with a temporary park commission, completed a report synthesizing the ideas of many earlier park proponents to propose the concept of a regional park system for

greater Boston that would supersede town boundaries and jurisdictions. It was modeled after the successful Metropolitan Sewerage Commission, which had been established in 1889 to address water and sewer issues on a regional level. Eliot and Baxter argued that open space was as essential to the quality of life in urban communities as the water supply. Noting that most towns were not in a position to make the acquisition of parkland a priority, they advocated for a regional agency with that mandate. The report was followed by the creation of a permanent Metropolitan Park Commission (MPC) in June 1893. Eliot became the Commission's landscape architect and Baxter became its secretary. Armed with the power of eminent domain and a fund of one million dollars, the MPC immediately began to acquire land for the Metropolitan Park System.

Among the specific types of landscapes that Eliot and Baxter had proposed for preservation, restoration, and public use were the banks and waterways of Boston's three large rivers—the Charles, Mystic, and Neponset. The Charles River Reservation, established in 1895, was the first and the most urban of the three river reservations in the Metropolitan Park System. The term *reservation* was adopted to distinguish the MPC lands from city parks and to emphasize that the land was being *reserved* in a relatively naturalistic state to preserve its scenic qualities while allowing for passive and/or active recreation. The concept of naturalistic state rather than natural state is significant, because many of these landscapes were intended to be designed. Rivers, in particular, would need to be converted from industrial uses to pleasure grounds. In fact, planner Karl Haglund titled his seminal 2003 book on the Charles River Basin, *Inventing the Charles River.*

Land for the Charles River Reservation had been acquired by the mid-1890s, and the earliest portion of the river reservation to be developed was the segment between Boston Harbor and Watertown—the Charles River Basin. For administrative purposes, it was divided into the Lower Basin (now Charles River Dam to Eliot Bridge) and the Upper Basin (Eliot Bridge to the Watertown Dam). The major feature of the Upper Basin would be the Speedway for which Charles Eliot had prepared a plan in 1894 (figure 1). The actual construction in 1899, however, was carried out under the direction of the Olmsted Brothers. According to the 1900 annual report of the Metropolitan Parks Commission, the Speedway section of the Charles River Reservation was the first portion of the river to be developed within the reservation.

The 1890 Bromley atlas shows that prior to MPC ownership, the area consisted of three parcels on the north side of the Western Avenue/Market Street intersection. The largest parcel contained a lumberyard and five buildings owned by G. Fuller & Sons along the Charles River. The other two parcels along Western Avenue contained dwellings and outbuildings. The 1899 Richards map (figure 3) shows what would shortly be named Soldiers Field Road dividing the Fuller parcel from the residential parcels. The Fuller parcel became a playground, while the residential parcels became the site of the Speedway Headquarters. The sprawling Brighton Abattoir, located a short distance upriver from the Speedway Headquarters, was the only substantial parcel of land that the MPC had not been able to acquire for the Charles River Reservation.

Development of the Speedway began in 1898 when H.P. Nawn Company constructed a dike and graded and drained the site. This was followed in 1899 by construction of a 1.75-mile park drive, a racetrack known as the Charles River Speedway, a bicycle path, and a pedestrian promenade. The 1899 Richards map (figure 3) shows a parkway, which was a pleasure drive for carriages, winding along the river from the present buildings at Soldiers Field Road and Western Avenue to North Harvard Street in the vicinity of the present Harvard Stadium at Soldiers Field. The Speedway, located between the parkway and the river, was a 50-foot-wide, one-mile-long roadway with a turning loop at each end. Primarily designed for harness racing, it could also be used as a bicycle path when not in use as a racetrack (figures 1 & 3). A greensward labeled "walk" was between the Speedway and the Parkway.

In conjunction with the Speedway, administrative and ancillary buildings were needed for MPC personnel, horses, and storage. Accordingly, designs for the superintendent's residence, administrative headquarters, and stables were prepared by William D. Austin in 1899, and construction was completed that same year by H. P. Cummings and Co. The 1899 Richards map shows the footprints of the original buildings in the Speedway Headquarters complex (D, E, F, G).

The series of connected buildings forming an interior courtyard was designed in a fashionable blend of the Colonial Revival and Shingle styles. The Colonial Revival style is a composite of historical features from the Colonial and Federal periods. Overhanging second stories and extended rooflines are features drawn from First Period buildings (ca. 1620-1720). Columns, pilasters, entablatures, pediments, and multipaned double-hung sash are drawn from the classical designs of the Georgian (ca. 1720-1800) and Federal (ca.1790-1820) styles. The Colonial Revival style, which began to appear in the 1880s, became the most popular architectural style in the country following the grand display of neoclassical architecture at the World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago in 1893. This "fair," with grounds designed by Frederick Law Olmsted Sr., was attended by an astounding number of Americans, and it had a profound effect on architecture.

Early examples of the Colonial Revival style (generally before 1910) combined classical door and window details with the picturesque and asymmetrical massing characteristic of the Queen Anne and Shingle styles. The Shingle Style, which was popular about a decade before the Colonial Revival, is characterized by its wood-shingle cladding and absence of cornerboards, which gives the buildings a smooth shingle skin. Other features include asymmetrical massing, prominent porches, and round towers. The style dates to about 1880 and was most popular in wealthy seaside resort communities, such as those on Cape Cod and the Berkshires (MA), Newport (RI), and Long Island (NY). Pure examples, which are relatively rare, do not emphasize trim such as door and window surrounds. Those embellishments, almost always using Georgian- and Federal-period details, were incorporated with increasing frequency on Shingle Style designs after 1893.

Given that the Shingle/Colonial Revival style was particularly popular among the affluent, it can be argued that modeling the Speedway buildings on these styles reflected a desire on the part of the planners to provide the metropolitan parks and the public who would enjoy them with the handsome, high-quality architecture that could otherwise be afforded only by the wealthy. It also reflects the ethos of an era in which principal public buildings and even outbuildings, as seen at the Speedway complex, were intended to dignify the setting as well as serve a public purpose. Furthermore, providing the park superintendent with a gracious residence and headquarters suggests the high stature that the planners and the MPC placed on the position.

An illustration of the Speedway complex from the *Boston Globe* on opening day shows sulkies racing down the Speedway with the companion administrative buildings in the background. Pictured is the façade along Soldiers Field Road. It shows the north gable end of the Superintendent's Residence (F), as well as the Headquarters with its rounded bay, conical roof, and stable with portal into the courtyard (G). The drawing of the buildings is a very close match to a ca. 1900 photograph of the complex (figure 2). In the photograph, landscaping included shrubs near the building foundations and young trees along the sidewalk abutting the Speedway. While not shown in the photographs, the South Shed (E), and the East Shed (D) were among the original segments of the complex.

The project architect, William Downes Austin (1856-1943) of the firm Stickney and Austin, was the principal architect for many of the Metropolitan Park Commission's buildings through at least 1925. Austin's designs for MPC buildings display a variety of fashionable styles including the Italian Renaissance at Revere Beach and the hybrid Shingle/Colonial Revival style at the Speedway. The significance of Austin's work at Revere Beach (NHL, 2003) has been well documented by Keith Morgan in his National Historic Landmark nomination for that

property. Austin's extant buildings there include the superintendent's residence, police station, bandstand, and pavilions. According to Morgan, Austin's success at Revere Beach led to many of his other commissions for both the Metropolitan Park Commission and the Boston Park Commission. Some of these projects include the Jamaica Pond Boathouse, the Fenway Field House and Stadium, the Lion House and Bird House at the Franklin Park Zoo, and a comfort station, headquarters, and stable for the Blue Hills Reservation in Milton.

Prior to his work for the MPC, Austin appears to have concentrated on residential and school buildings. In 1892, he formed a partnership with architect Frederick Stickney (1853-1918) of Lowell. After 1900, they practiced independently, but each retained the firm name. Stickney worked out of an office in Lowell, while Austin was based in Boston with offices at 50 Bromfield Street, followed by 120 Boylston Street. In the early years of the partnership, the firm designed a notable Shingle Style summer house for George Bullock on Long Island. Destroyed by fire ca. 1899, it had many of the features that Austin incorporated into the Speedway complex, including overhanging gables, dormers, and distinctive round towers with conical roofs. Austin was a fellow of the American Institute of Architects and a member of the Boston Architectural Club and the Boston Society of Architects, where he served as president and wrote a history of the organization.

Austin, a strong supporter of Charles Eliot's plan for the Metropolitan Park System of Greater Boston, worked closely with the Olmsted firm in siting the Speedway Headquarters, which was not shown on Eliot's 1894 plan. The architectural additions and alterations to the original complex are discussed below. Most of the changes are documented as William Austin's designs; others have been attributed to him because they fall within the period of his other work for the MPC and maintain the scale and style of the original work.

The first addition to the complex appears to have been a second set of stables (H) added to the headquarters section along Soldiers Field Road in 1904. While this segment was later altered to become the MDC Police Station, the footprint of the principal segments of the Speedway complex was in place by 1904.

By 1912, photographs show maturing trees and large shrubs that obscure the buildings. The Superintendent's Residence (F) has awnings on the visible windows, and a flagpole stands before the headquarters section (G). In the 1920s, changes to the outbuildings began to reflect the automobile era. In 1923, the south and east sheds (D and E) were altered and enclosed as garages for vehicles rather than for horses. It is likely that the gable-roofed portals along Western Avenue were added at that time to match the courtyard entrance on Soldiers Field Road.

In 1924, Austin was hired to design the MDC Police Station (Building H), which was an alteration and expansion of the 1904 stables. The latter were no longer needed because the automobile had replaced horse patrols. The renovations—the last to the principal façade of the complex— included the addition of the public entrance, a brick cellblock entrance, a booking area, and conversion of a loft into a dormitory.

The Front-Gabled Garage (C) was added between 1932 and 1945. The final building in the complex was the freestanding nine-bay, L-plan concrete Maintenance Garage (B), which dates to 1940. The 1939 acquisition of the parcel on which it stands was noted in MDC's 1940 annual report. Thus the Speedway Headquarters site reached its current size in 1939.

Social History

When it opened on September 11, 1899, the Speedway was an instant success. Horse and buggy racing—or harness racing—was an extremely popular 19th century pastime. Prior to the Speedway, the nearest track had been the Beacon Park Raceway, a half-mile track that occupied a 50-acre parcel on the east side of Cambridge Street

near the River Street Bridge. That site became a freightyard for the Boston & Albany Railroad. Indeed one of the reasons the Upper Basin was selected for the Speedway was the ability to construct a one-mile track that was uninterrupted by cross streets.

A 1902 photo shows hundreds of sulkies gathered on the Speedway for the third annual Speedway Parade (figure 4). An undated photo shows crowds lining the Speedway; another photo dated 1951 shows drivers with one- or two-horse buggies. In addition to its use as a racing venue, the Speedway was used for horse shows. A long-time club that held events on the Speedway was the Metropolitan Driving Club. Several photos show a Mr. McDonald, exercising horses for the club in the 1930s. Other photos from the period show a replica of a chariot driven by a man dressed in a Roman costume. The Metropolitan Driving Club occupied a Shingle Style clubhouse on the south side of Soldiers Field Road at the corner of Speedway Avenue from at least the 1920s to the 1950s. A substantial stable stood next to the clubhouse. Built in 1914, it was reportedly destroyed by fire. The site of both buildings is now a parking lot in the vicinity of 1200 Soldiers Field Road. Speedway Avenue, which ran from Soldiers Field Road to Western Avenue, still exists at its Western Avenue end, but it no longer goes through to Soldiers Field Road.

Improvements to the landscape in the Speedway vicinity began in 1905, when a playground was developed on the site of the nearby Fuller lumberyard. Then in 1910, the Charles River Dam at the east end of the Charles River Basin was completed. This highly significant change created a constant water level, allowing the basin to become the lake-like body of water that it is today, instantly increasing its appeal for recreation as well as development along the banks. Also in 1910, a portion of the Speedway was altered to create a half-mile oval track. (The site of the oval, which is opposite the site of the Metropolitan Driving Club, is now occupied by the Publick Theater and main parking lot in Christian Herter Park.) A 1928 photo shows Soldiers Field Road as a tree-lined, two-lane (one eastbound, one westbound) parkway with cars parked along the north side abutting the Speedway.

The first superintendent of the Charles River Upper Basin was John L. Gilman. Responsible for maintenance and policing of the Upper Basin, he lived in the Superintendent's Residence (then 525 Western Avenue) from 1900 to at least 1924, by which time his title was Captain of the Metropolitan Police. Among the police captains who followed him in residence were, first, Henry R. Hayes and then, Burton A. Murray, who lived there with his wife Margaret in the 1940s. During Gilman's tenure in 1919, the Metropolitan Parks Commission was merged with the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board to become the Metropolitan District Commission. In 2003, the MDC was merged with the Department of Environmental Management to create the Department of Conservation and Recreation, in part to manage the Metropolitan Park System of Greater Boston.

Suburbanization and the increasing dominance of the car after World War II cannot be understated in terms of its impact on the road network along the Charles River in general, and on the Speedway buildings in particular. In 1956, the Brighton Abattoir finally closed after 85 years on a site just southwest of the Speedway complex. The site was sold for commercial development, which did not take place until 1960, following the extension of Soldiers Field Road to North Beacon Street. MDC annual reports suggest that extending Soldiers Field Road to North Beacon along the north side of the abattoir had been contemplated since at least 1930, but the Leo M. Birmingham Parkway, which skirted the south side of the abattoir, was built in 1933 instead.

In the 1950s and 1960s, there was intense demand for limited-access parkways and high-speed expressways to accommodate the increasing numbers of commuters who were driving between Boston and the growing suburbs. Photos indicate that the Speedway was in use at least until 1951, and some sources suggest it existed into the 1960s, but since few people had horses and carriages by that time, the era of harness racing on the Speedway came to an end. Although the precise date is unclear, the Speedway was incorporated into Soldiers Field Road,

which became a limited-access, divided highway with a parallel road serving the commercial buildings along its south side. This five-lane roadway created a barrier between the Speedway Headquarters complex on the south side of Soldiers Field Road, and the Charles River and parkland on the north side. This, in combination with the other major roads surrounding the Speedway complex, isolated the buildings from the parkland they served.

Nevertheless, the MDC continued to occupy the Speedway Headquarters as a base for their administrative, policing, and maintenance functions. In the 1970s, the policing functions were separated from maintenance and park administration. The park police were incorporated into the Massachusetts State Police, while the MDC staff continued to administer and maintain the park. In 1984, the MDC and State Police expanded their facilities in the area when they acquired the ca.1953 office building next door for police barracks and offices. Known as the Almy's Building, it stands on a separate parcel (1400 Soldiers Field Road) and had no association with the Speedway complex during the period of significance.

In 2001, the Speedway complex was in use as follows: The Superintendent's Residence (F) was occupied by an MDC employee and her mother, who had been living there for more than 20 years. The Headquarters (G), including the portal drive and garage, was in use as offices for the Public Access Board. The garage portion was used to store trailers, signage, paint, and other equipment used by the employees, who spent most of their time in the field. The MDC Police Station (H) was vacant, the police having moved to the Almy's Building. The concrete maintenance garage (B) was occupied by MDC Central Services, which was responsible for servicing and fueling MDC vehicles. The Front-Gabled Garage (C) was being used to store boats, furniture, and boxes. The East Shed (D) was being used to store boats and equipment. The South Shed (E) was used to store construction materials and miscellaneous items.

Today, the principal office spaces and the residence are vacant. While in need of updating and restoration, the complex nevertheless retains its architectural integrity and stands as a tangible reminder of the first chapter in the history of the Metropolitan Park System of Greater Boston, and it embodies the vision of those who conceived and created the Charles River Reservation.

[End section 8]

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Charles River Speedway Headquarters
Name of Property
Suffolk, MA
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number photos Page 1

Photographs

Name of Property: Charles River Speedway Complex
City or Vicinity: Boston (Brighton)
County: Suffolk State: MA
Photographer: Phil Bergen
Date Photographed: May 20, 2006
Description of Photograph(s) and number:

1 Superintendent's Residence (F), from corner of Western Ave. and Soliders Field Road

2 Headquarters and Stable (G), from Soldiers Field Road

3 Headquarters and Stable (G), showing portal into courtyard, from Soldiers Field Road

4 MDC Police Station (H), from Soldiers Field Road

5 South Sheds (E), looking east along Western Avenue

Photographer: Lewis W. Bushnell
Date Photographed: February 21, 2010

6 Front-gabled Garage, from Soldiers Field Road

7 Maintenance Garage, from Soliders Field Road

Figures

1 Site Plan for the Speedway. Originally drawn by Charles Eliot in 1894, the plan was refined for publication by the Olmstead Brothers in 1897.

2 Historic photo of Speedway Complex, ca. 1900

3 Richards Map, 1899, showing the Speedway Headquarters and the Speedway

4 Historic photo of the third annual Speedway Parade.

Figure 1– 1894 Plan of the Speedway

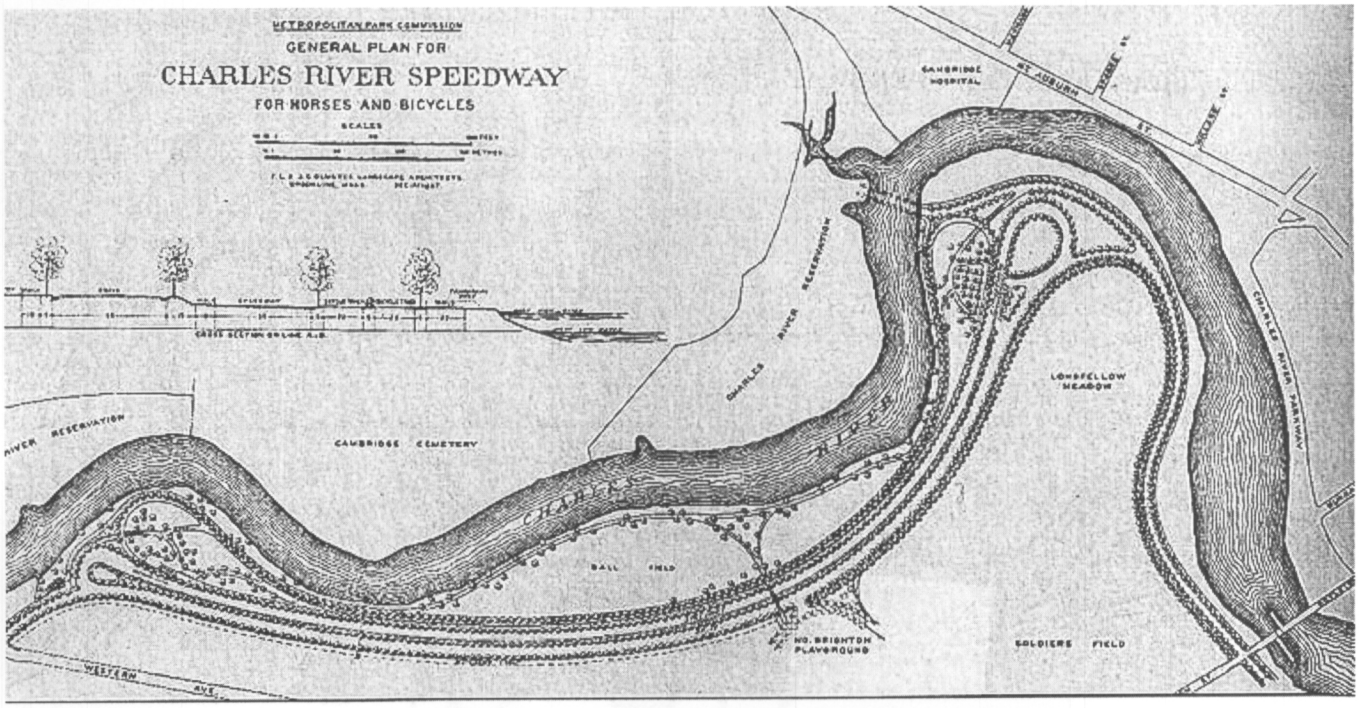
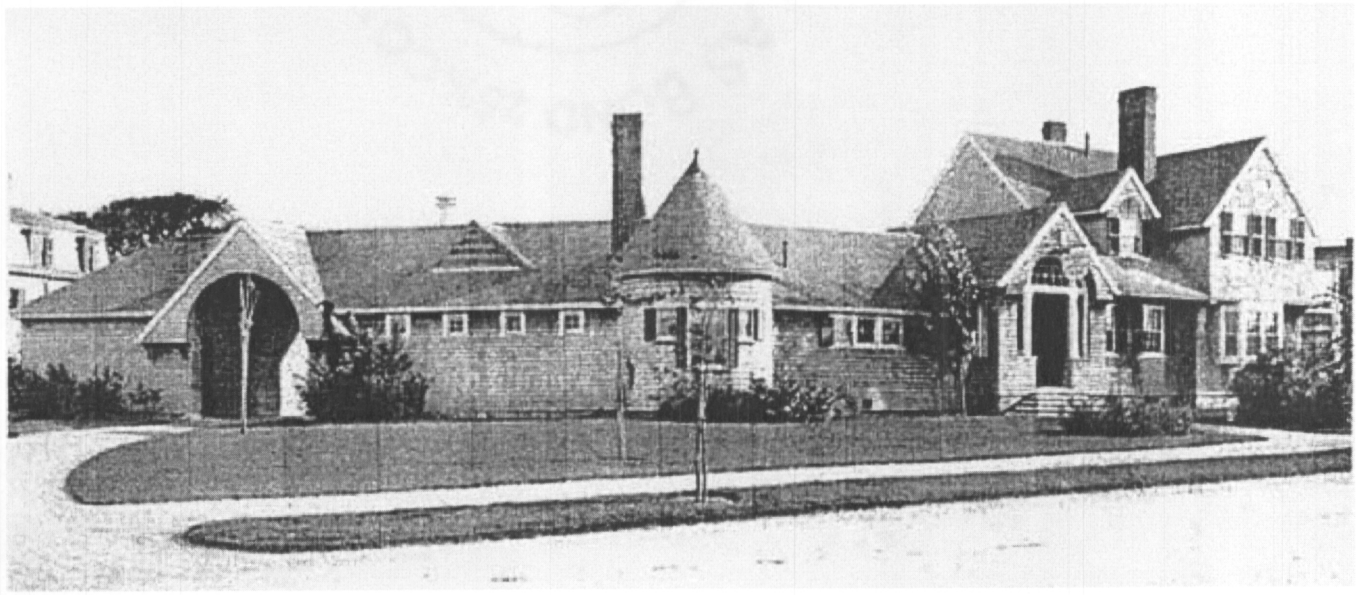


Figure 2 – Speedway Headquarters ca. 1900



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Charles River Speedway Headquarters
Name of Property
Suffolk, MA
County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number figures Page

Figure 3 – 1899 Richards Map

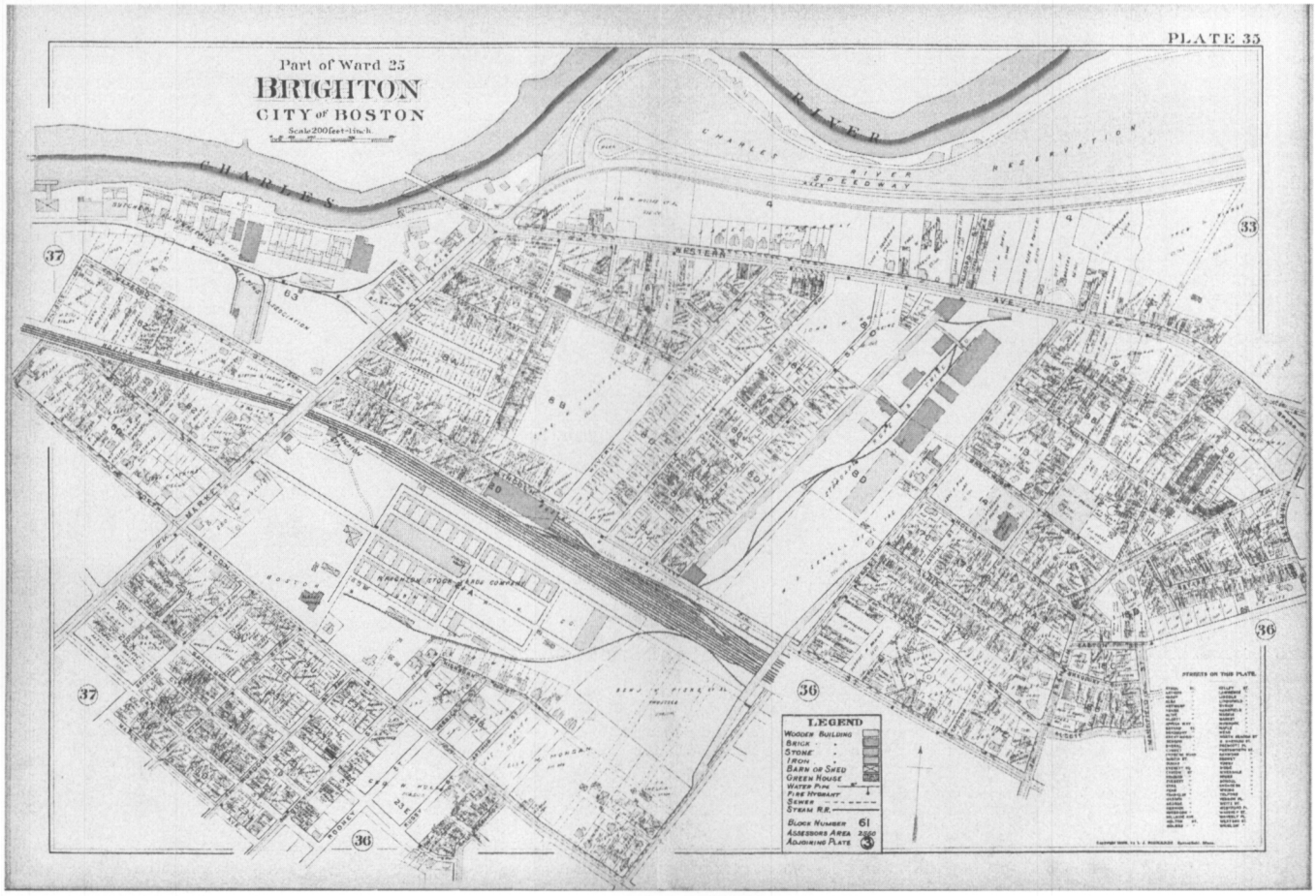


Figure 4 Third Annual Speedway Parade, 1902

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

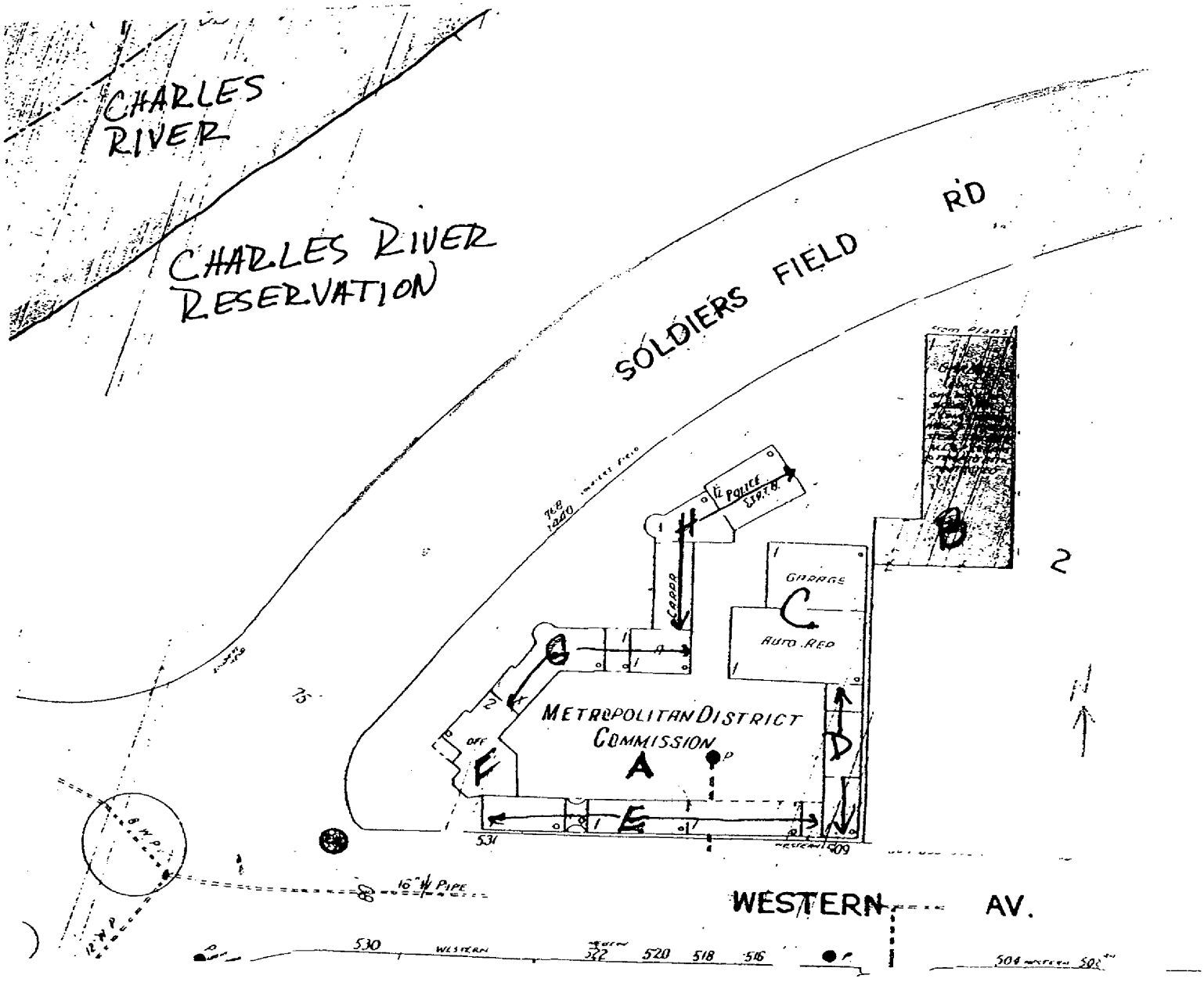
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

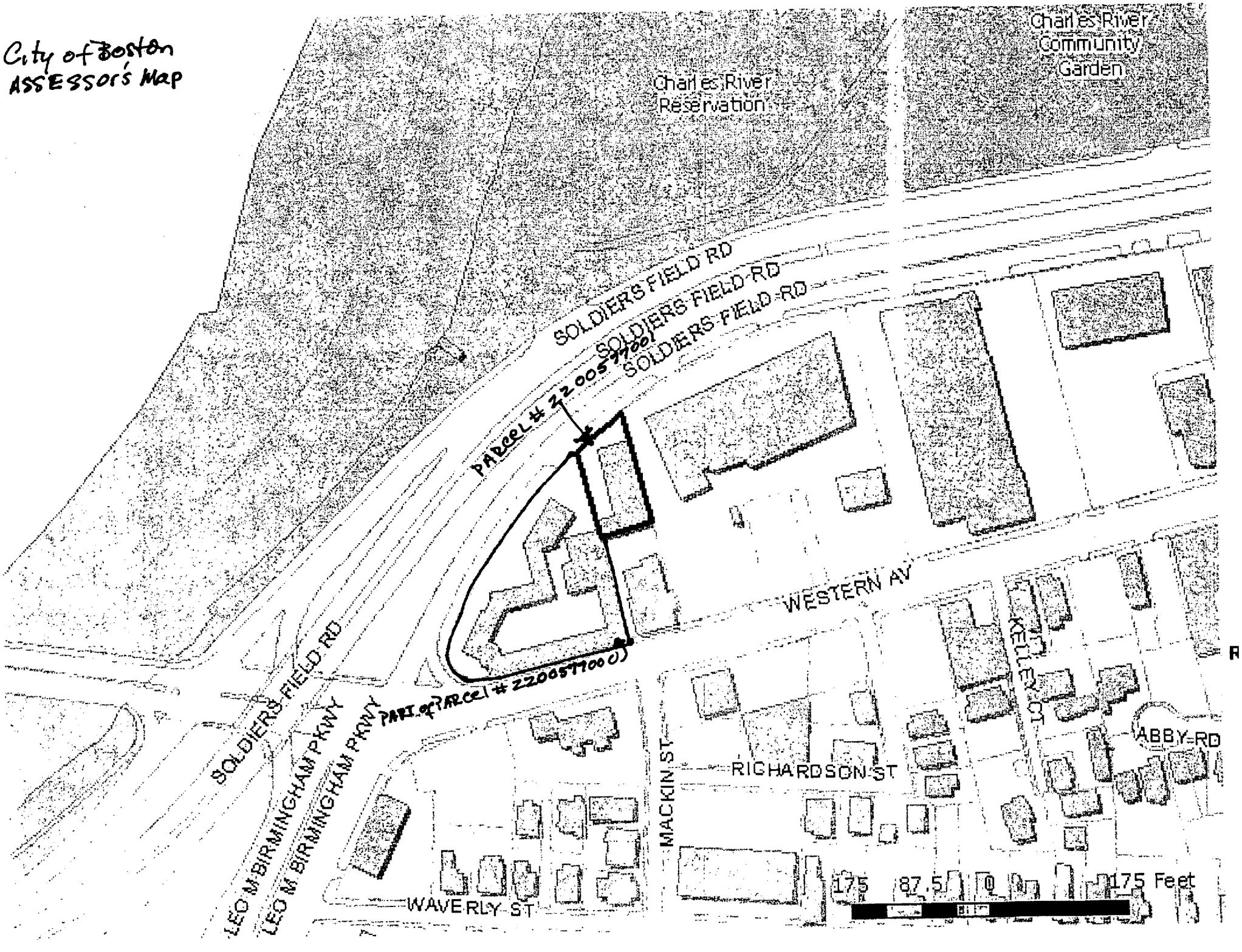
Charles River Speedway Headquarters
Name of Property
Suffolk, MA
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number ____ Page ____

Sketch Map and List of Resources

Resources:
Superintendent's Residence (F)
Headquarters and Stable (G)
MDC Police Station (H)
South Shed (E)
Front-gabled Garage (C)
Maintenance Garage (B)
Courtyard (A)




City of Boston
ASSESSOR'S MAP
Charles River
Reservation
Charles River
Community
Garden
SOLDIERS FIELD RD
SOLDIERS FIELD RD
SOLDIERS FIELD RD
PARCEL # 2200577000
WESTERN AV
SOLDIERS FIELD RD
LEO M BIRMINGHAM PKWY
LEO M BIRMINGHAM PKWY
PART OF PARCEL # 2200577000
MACKIN ST
RICHARDSON ST
KELLEY CT
ABBY RD
WAVERLY ST
175
87.5
0
175 Feet