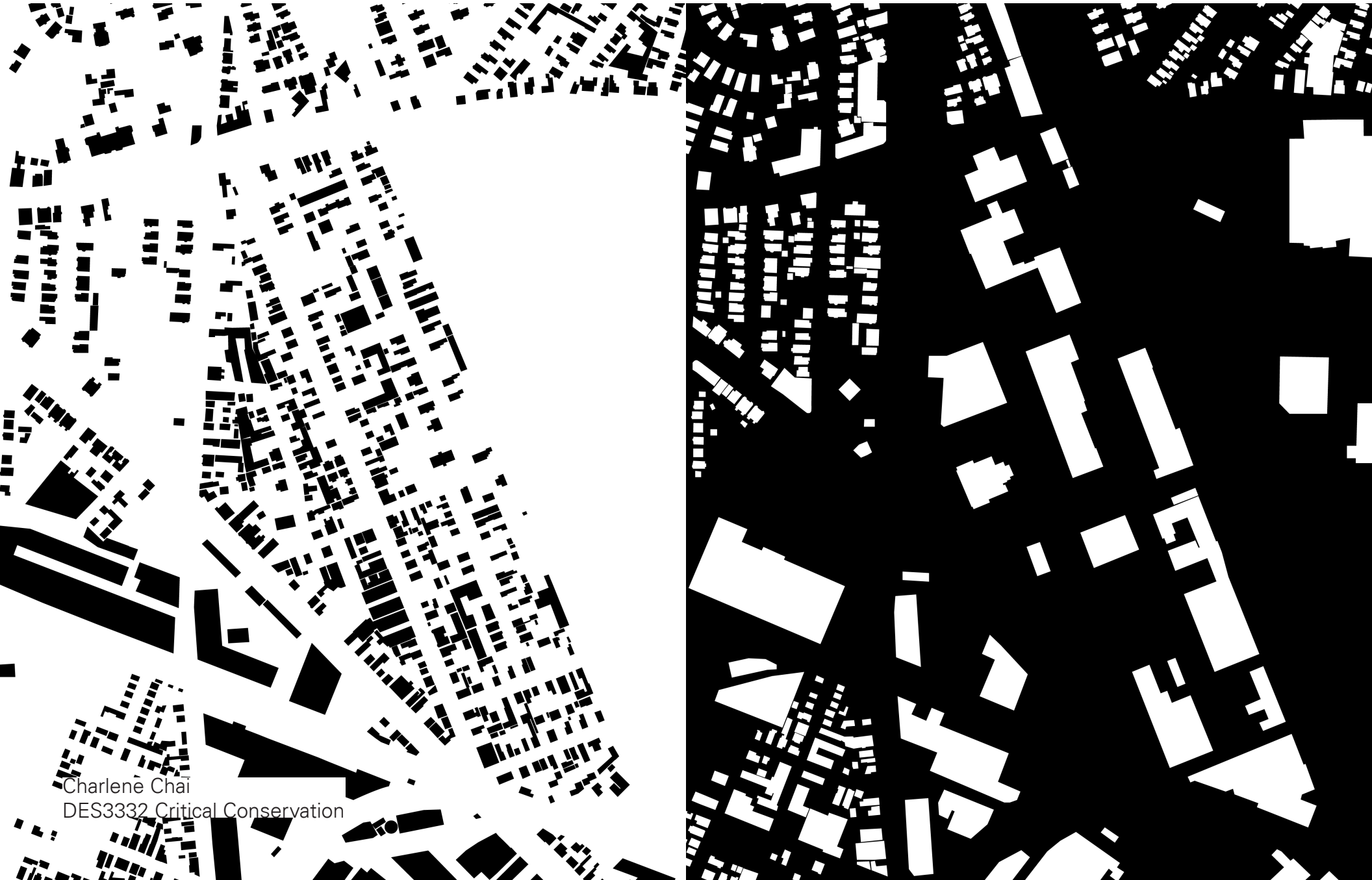
DIVIDED SOMERVILLE

BRICKBOTTOM 1900-1970



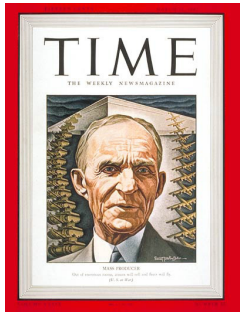
Charlene Chai
DES3332 Critical Conservation

THEMES

INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

1900
1945 WW II ENDS
1970

NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM



INDUSTRY

INFRASTRUCTURE

SCALE

PRE 1900

URBANIZATION THROUGH INFRASTRUCTURE

INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM

1900 | 1945 WW II ENDS | 1970

Transportation developments spur Somerville's growth and densification

1903 USGS

PRE 1900

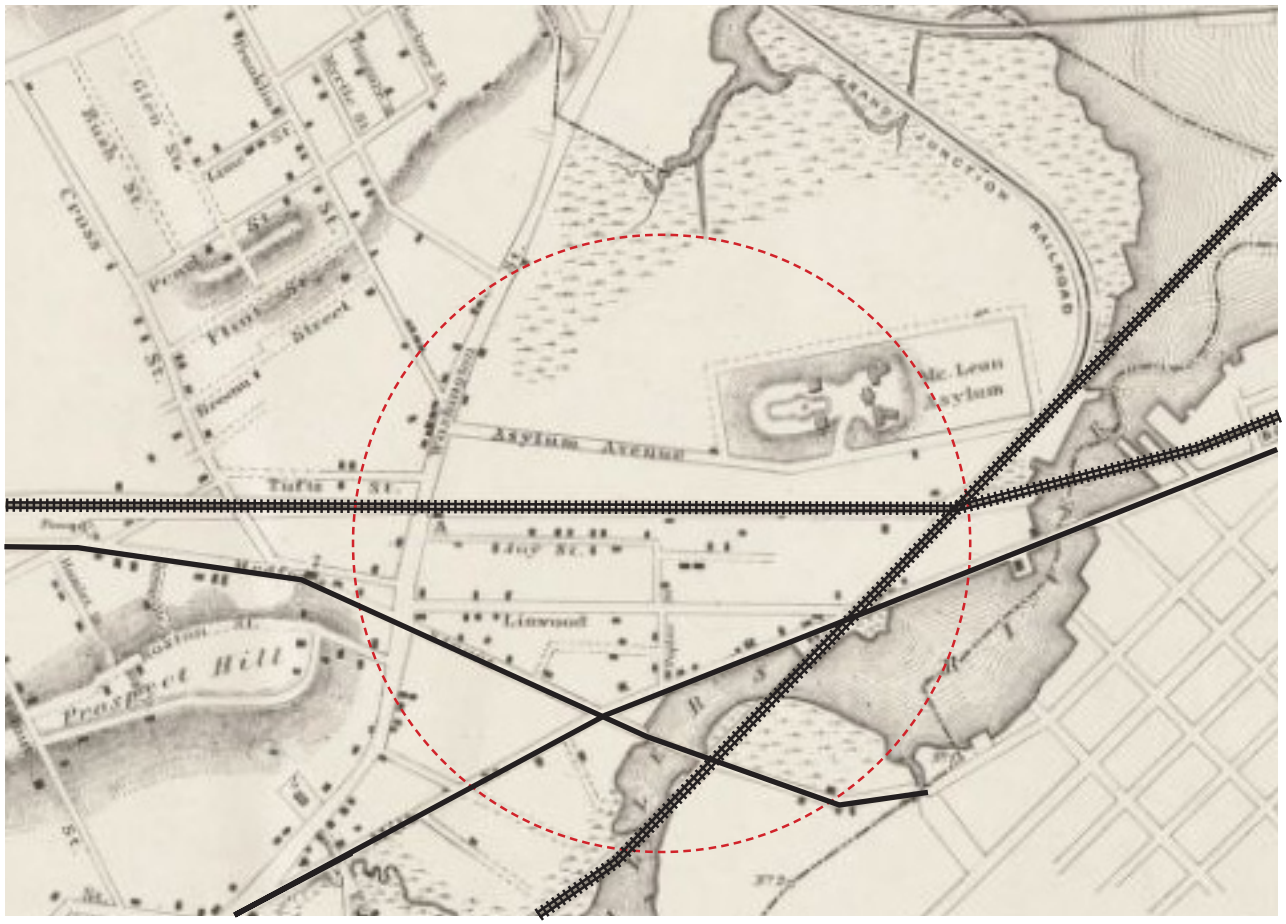
TRANSPORTATION LINKS WITH BOSTON

INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM

Infrastructure adjacent to Brickbottom:

Rail	Boston Lowell RR Fitchburg RR
Road	Milk Street (Somerville Ave) Medford Street
Water	Mill River



1852 Draper Map

PRE 1900

INDUSTRY ENABLED BY TRANSPORTATION

INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM

Food processing plants along rail lines

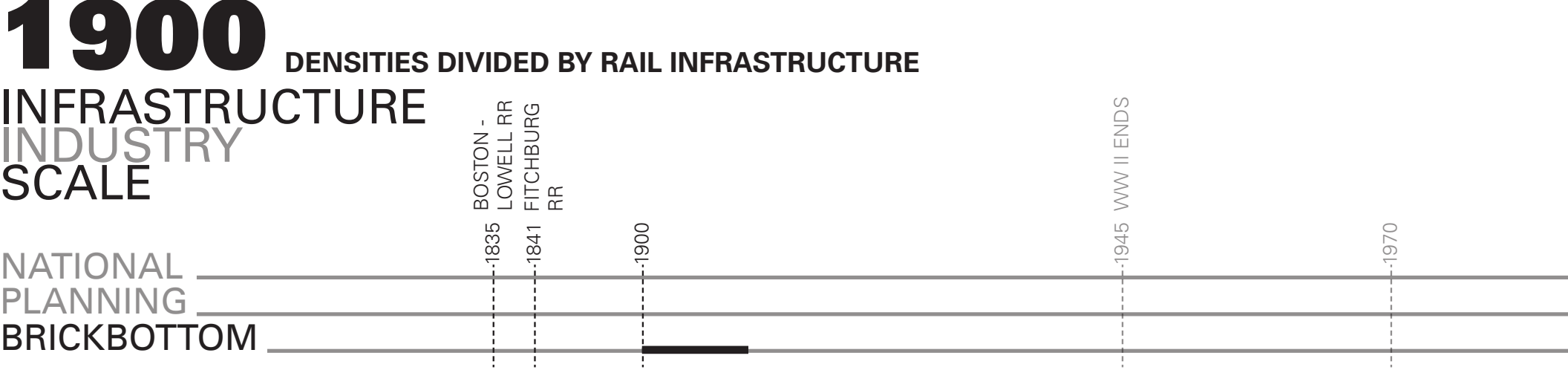
1883 McLean Asylum &
North Meat Packing Plant

1900

DENSITIES DIVIDED BY RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE

INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

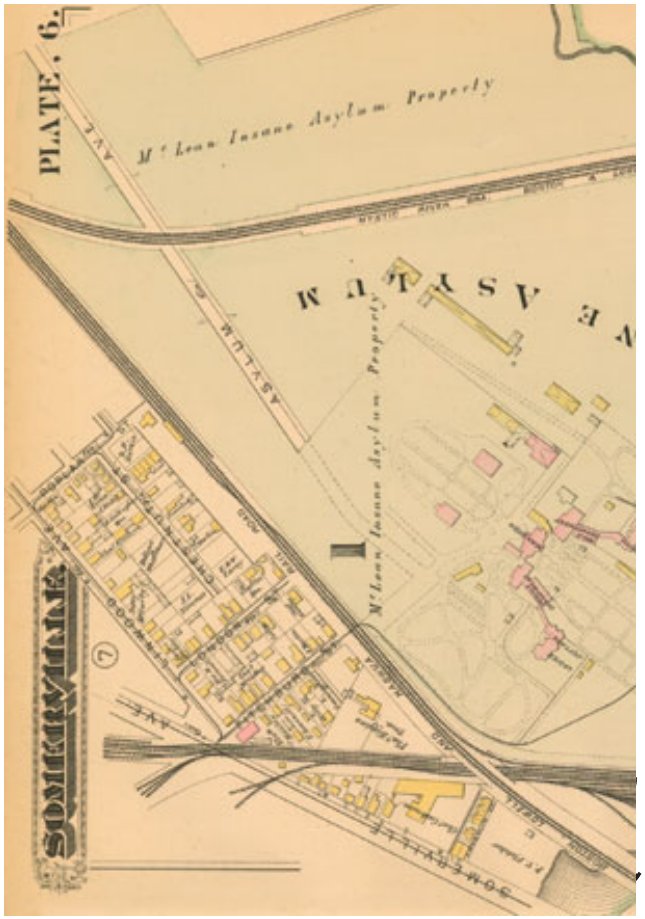
NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM



Unbuilt McLean Hospital

Low density Industrial zone

High density Brickbottom

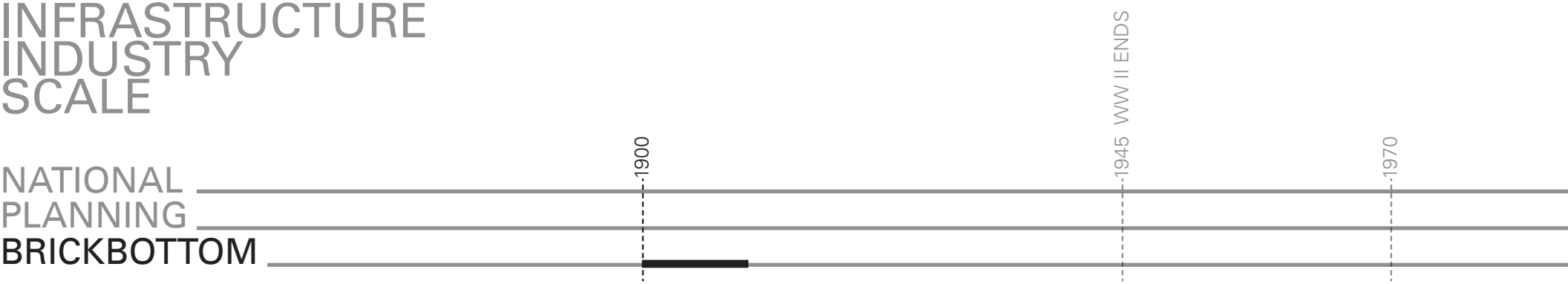


1874 Hopkins Map // 1900 Sanborn

1900 LOCAL CENTER: UNION SQUARE

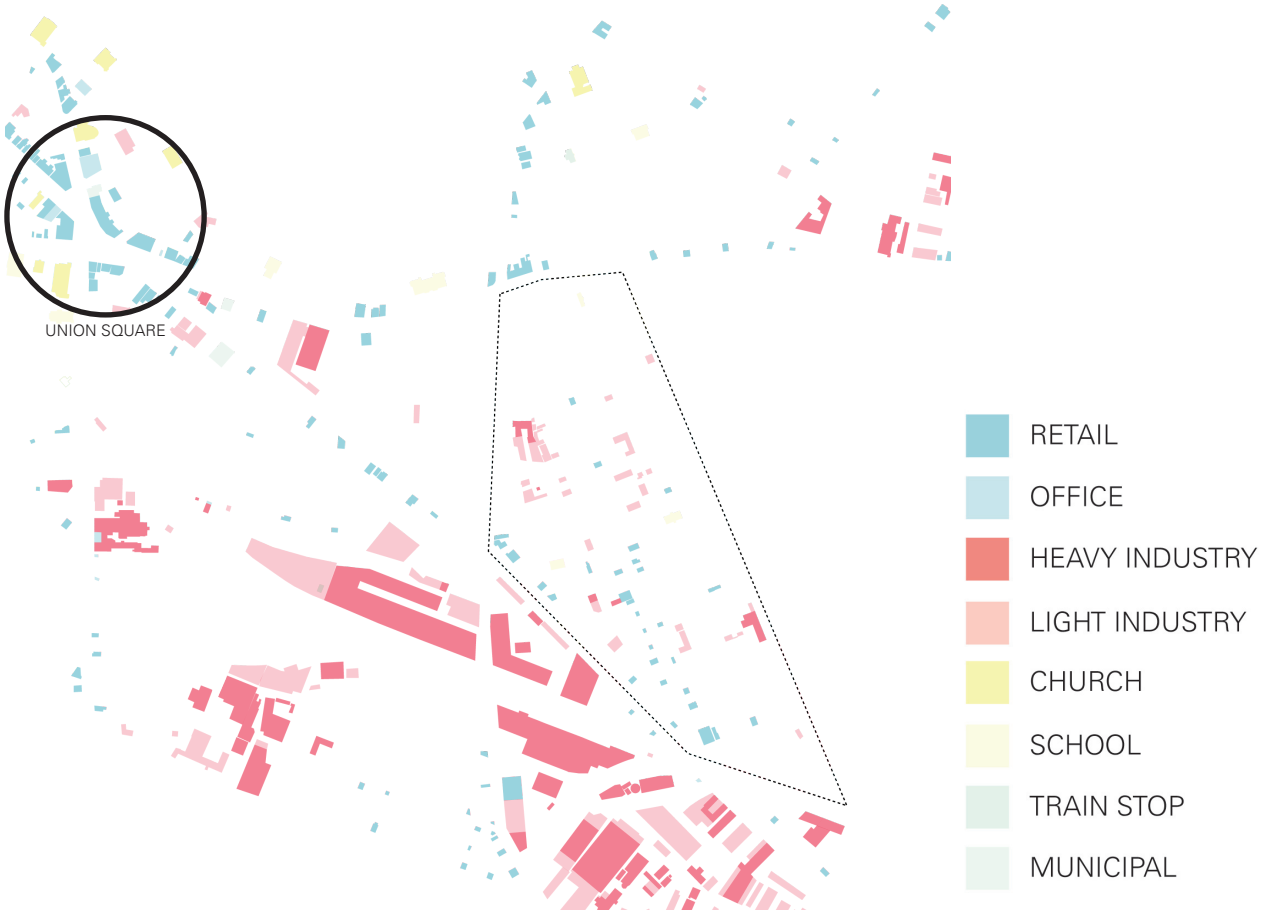
INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM



Union Square locus of retail and community functions.

Brickbottom primarily residential with some small scale retail and light industry.



1900 Sanborn

1900

SHOPPING + RETAIL

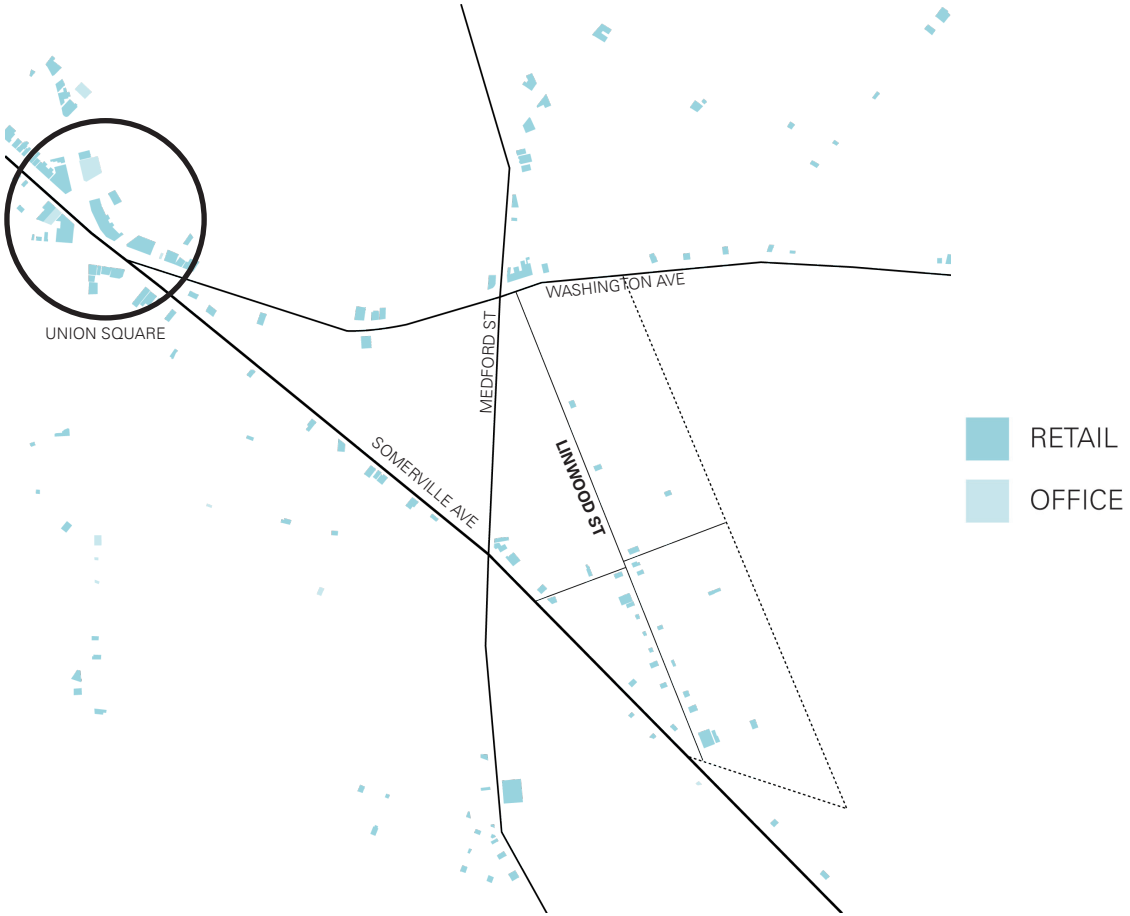
INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM

Shopping streets along corridors to Boston

Brickbottom Linwood St

Vicinity **Union Square**
Somerville Ave
Washington St
Medford St

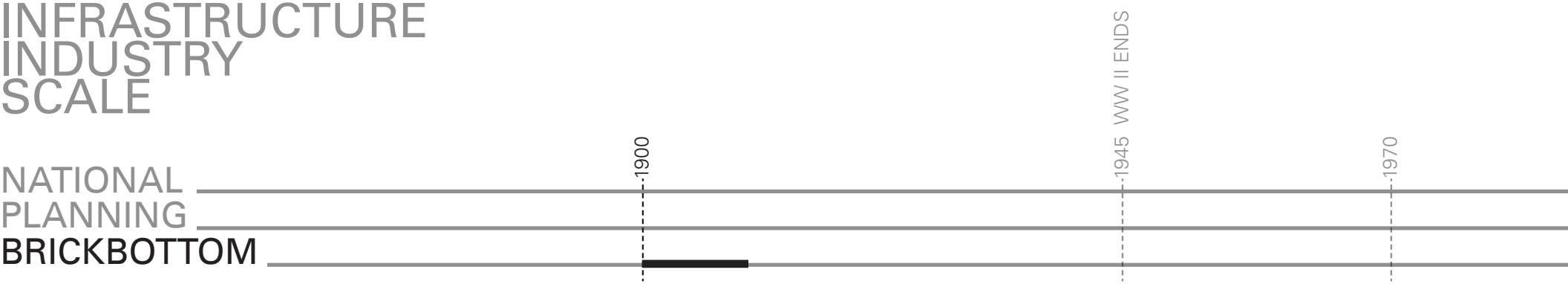


1900 Sanborn

1900 PROTESTANT COMMUNITY

INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM



Brickbottom

Schools
Jackson School
Bennett School

Union Square

Churches
First United Methodist Episcopal
Union Square Baptist
Prospect Hill Congregational
Union Square Presbyterian
Episcopal Church
St. Joseph's Roman Catholic

Schools
St. Joseph's Parochial School

Other

Churches
First Universalist Church

Schools
Prospect Hill School
Charles G. Pope School

1900 Sanborn

1900 IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY

INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM

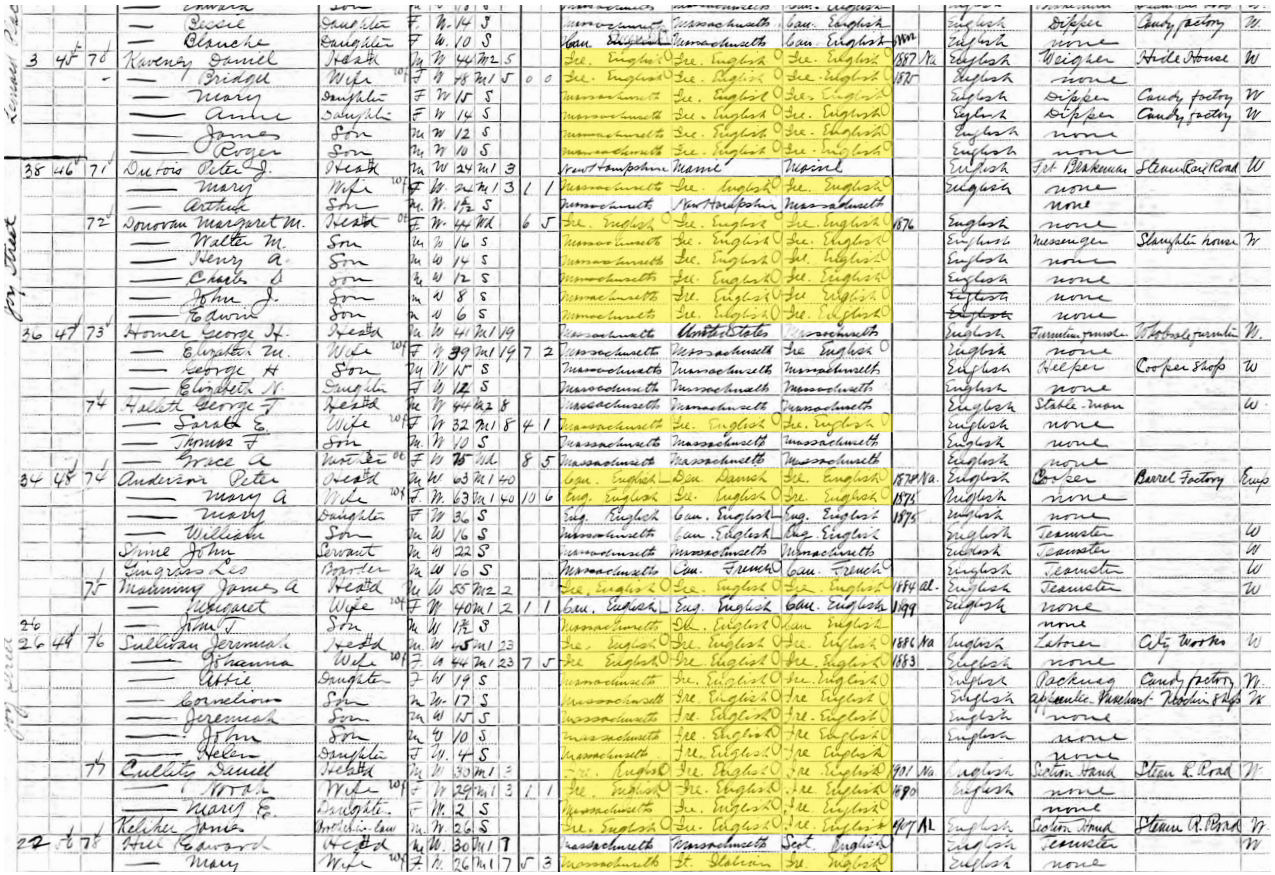
1900 | 1945 WW II ENDS | 1970

Majority first or second generation immigrants

Primary	Irish
Secondary	Italian Canadian
Other	Scottish German Swedish Russian Greek

1910 Census

First or second generation Irish



1900 MANUFACTURING

INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM

Industry develops along transportation infrastructure

Brickbottom population primarily works in or near where they live

1900 Sanborn

1900 FOOD PROCESSING

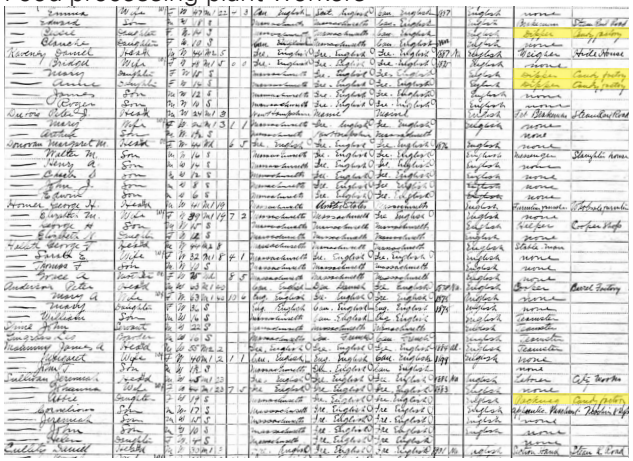
INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM

Not in Brickbottom but adjacent to rail

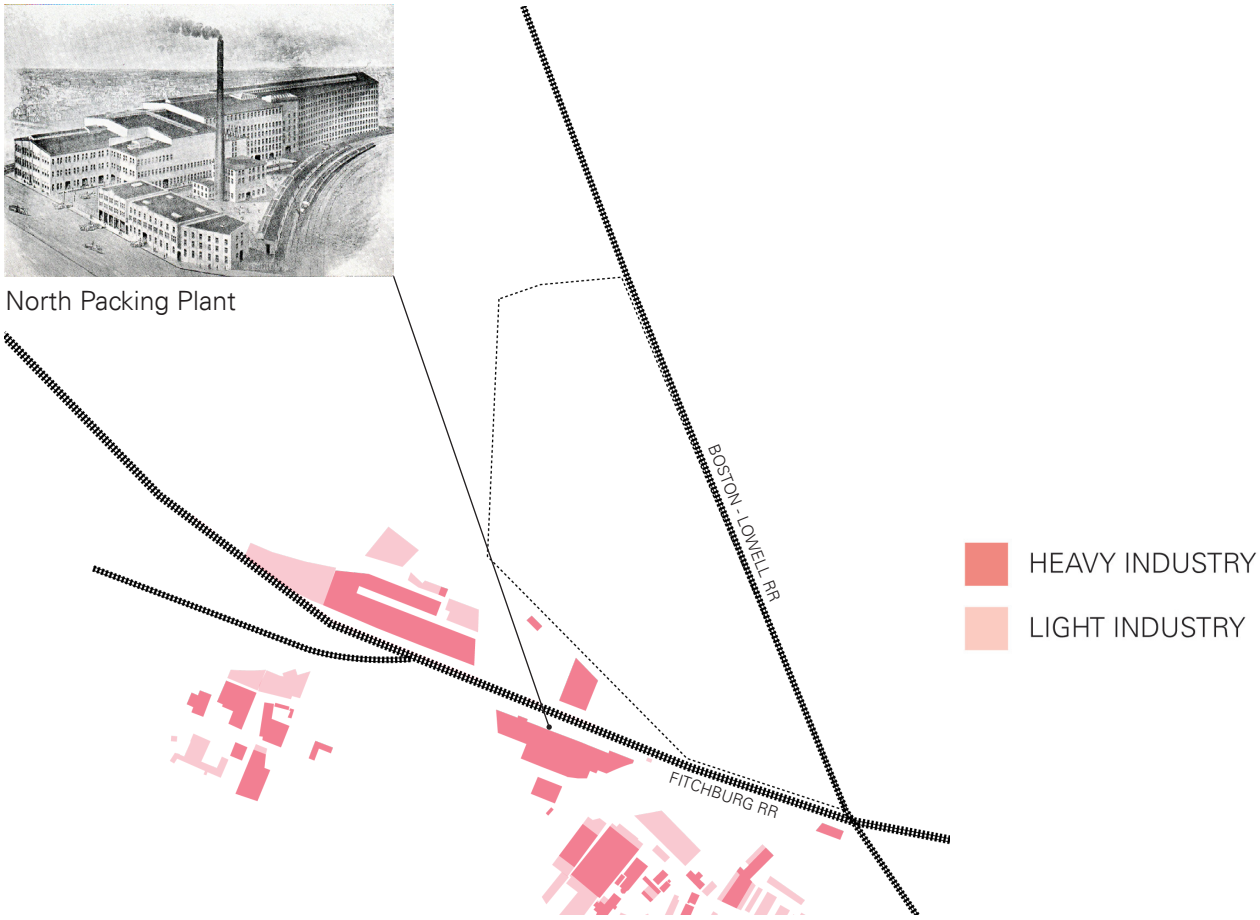
Food processing companies:
North Packing Co.
New England Dressed Meat & Wool
John P. Squire Pork Packers
L.D. Howe Bacon Works
Carl Weitz Sausage Works
Sturtevant & Haley Beef Co.
W.K. Lewis Pickling & Preserving Works

Food processing plant workers



1910 Census // 1900 Sanborn

North Packing Plant



1900 STORAGE

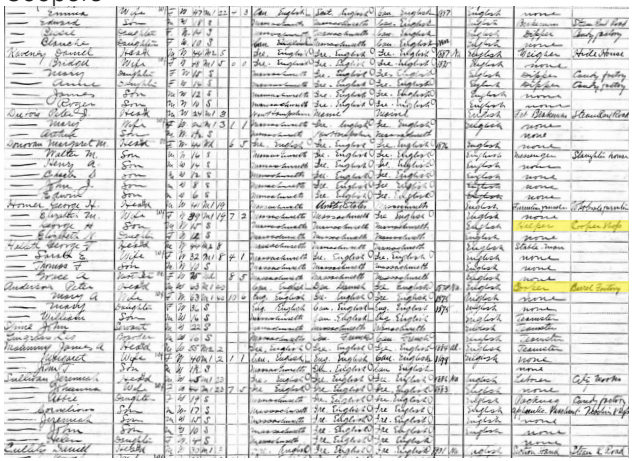
INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM

Storage as an auxiliary to manufacturing. Found in Brickbottom or near food processing plants adjacent to rail.

Storage companies + occupations:
Coopers
Barrel storage

Coopers



1910 Census // 1900 Sanborn

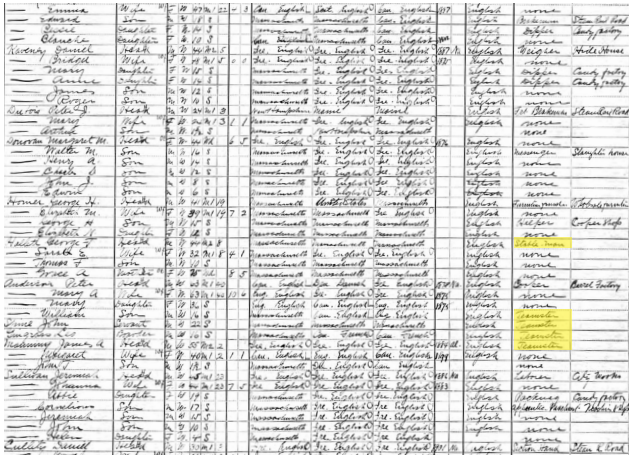
1900 TRANSPORTATION

INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM

Transportation companies as an auxiliary to manufacturing. Found in Brickbottom and along streets to Boston.

Brickbottom
Manning & Son Teamsters
Wagon Storage
Vicinity
Livery
Car repair
New England Oil Co.
Teamsters



1910 Census // 1900 Sanborn

1900 SLUMS & PROGRESSIVISM

INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM

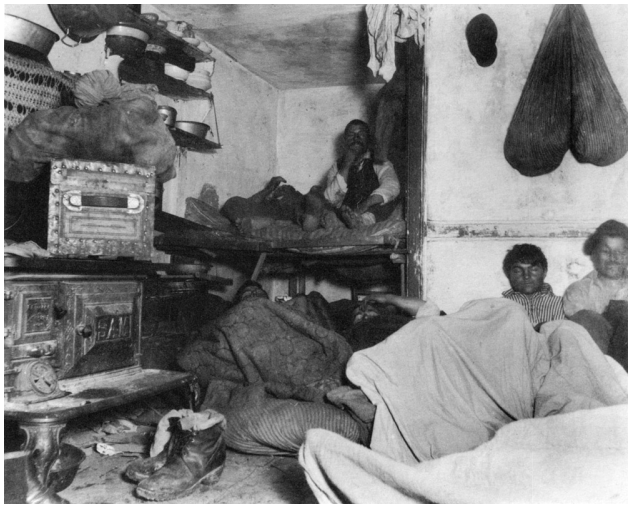
Progressive reformers such as Jacob Riis seek to improve public health and safety in overcrowded tenements

Brickbottom

Densely built and occupied. Multifamily building typologies include the "triple-decker" with ground floor retail.

MULTI-FAMILY

SINGLE FAMILY



1890 "HOW THE OTHER HALF LIVES"

1900 SANBORN

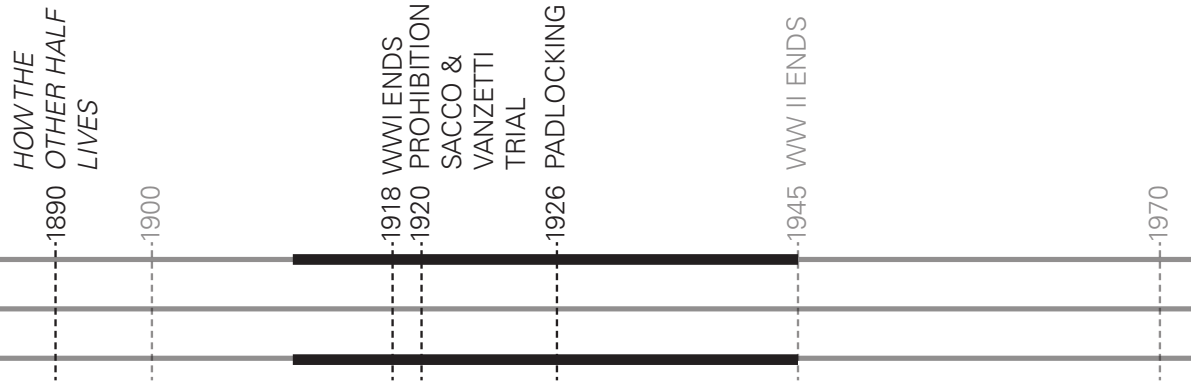
1925 WORKER HOUSING

PRE WWII

SLUMS , TEMPERANCE & XENOPHOBIA

INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM



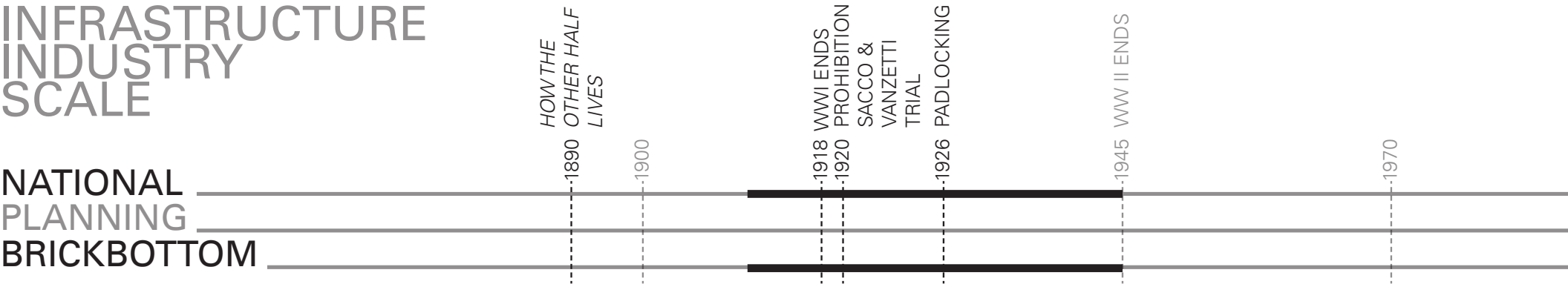
Tenements take on a moral valence with the rise of the temperance movement and post WWI xenophobia. Physical degeneracy is equated with moral degeneracy.

1920 18th Amendment // Sacco & Vanzetti trial

PRE WWII

SLUMS , TEMPERANCE & XENOPHOBIA

INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE



Brickbottom nationally seen as an 'un-American', morally degenerate slum and targeted under padlock laws for violating liquor laws. This is the first instance of government power to take private property in the neighborhood.

Immigrants →
Speakeasies →
Density →
Large families →

BRICKBOTTOM.

We have to thank the Massachusetts State Police and the District Attorney of Middlesex County for the unveiling to the world of Brickbottom. It is a loathed district of the very respectable, highly delectable City of Somerville. The name perpetuates the memory of the brickyards established there a century ago. Somerville seldom breathes the word of shame. Its newspapers don't speak of it. It is largely a nest of "foreigners," Greek, Italian, Portuguese. A writer in The Boston Transcript paints the hideous scene, forgetting, apparently, how much it resembles Boston of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and later:

Brickbottom is a slum, in every sense that the word connotes. It is a place of dirt and odor and every kind of squalor, real and literary. It is a maze of narrow streets circling round the packing houses, lined, crowded with wooden frame houses, painted scarcely within the memory of the oldest inhabitant. Houses are built flush with the sidewalk, and behind them are other houses, with tiny patches of damp dirt in between.

A district of large families; "children everywhere." How un-American! "Ragged little souls with faces "as black as their own back yards, "beautifully happy in the corner "dumps." Impudent little devils, how dare they be happy? Don't they know that they are "ill-nurtured"? The uplifters will be after them now. Brickbottom has been making wine and what-not till its perversity can be tolerated no longer. It is full of ostensible tobacco shops, which make their living out of thirsters for that which profiteth not. So there was a great and triumphant raid. We judge from the editorial dithyramb in The Transcript that this was one of the most momentous operations since the Battle of the Marne. The District Attorney will seek to have certain Brickbottomers deported as undesirable aliens.

Among those of Brickbottom the police found in a number of places "firearms, clubs and billies, brass "knuckles and other means for re-"pelling the police." But the official inference is not borne out by private testimony: "The police say" (the police, who always go in pairs in Brickbottom at night) "that the con-"duct of the usual inhabitant is quite

TEN BRICKBOTTOM BUILDINGS PADLOCKED

District Now Resembles Deserted Village

Owners Expected Action—Work Done Without Disorder

With the State troopers relieved from duty in the Brickbottom section of Somerville and 10 buildings or parts of buildings padlocked, that district, once teeming with excitement, resembled a deserted village last evening. The troopers were relieved yesterday, having served since the famous raid last August, and were replaced by Somerville police.

Most of the owners expected padlocks, and little disturbance was caused by the officers who served the padlock notices. But Pasquale Reale, who owns a block of 24 apartments and stores at 1 to 15 Joy-st pl and 7 to 9 Joy st, got the shock of his life. He thought only one store was going to be padlocked, but it was the whole building. He hurried about to notify his tenants.

Officers padlocked a store and two

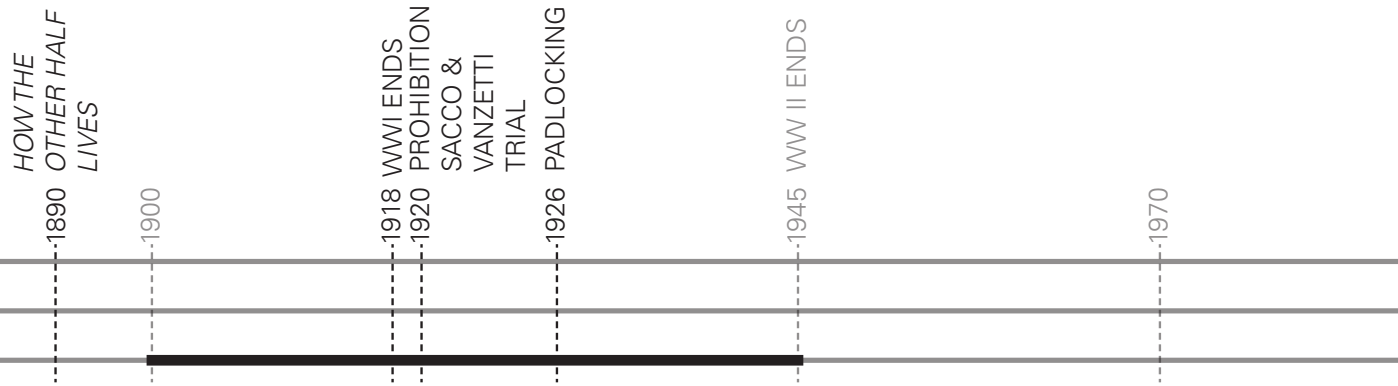
1925 The New York Times // 1926 Boston Globe

PRE WWII

ACTIVE NEIGHBORHOOD

INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM



Despite its poor reputation, Brickbottom is a very active neighborhood

The intersection of Linwood and Poplar emerges as the neighborhood locus of retail

1900 Sanborn

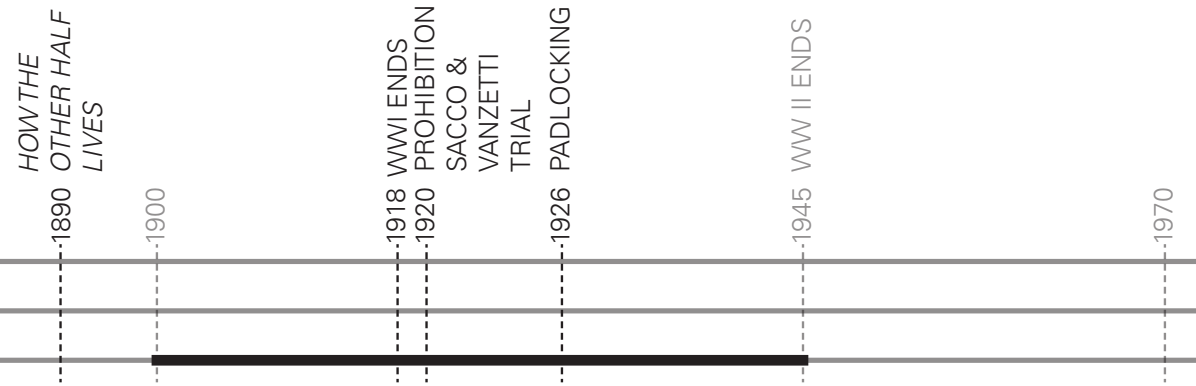
1933 Sanborn

PRE WWII

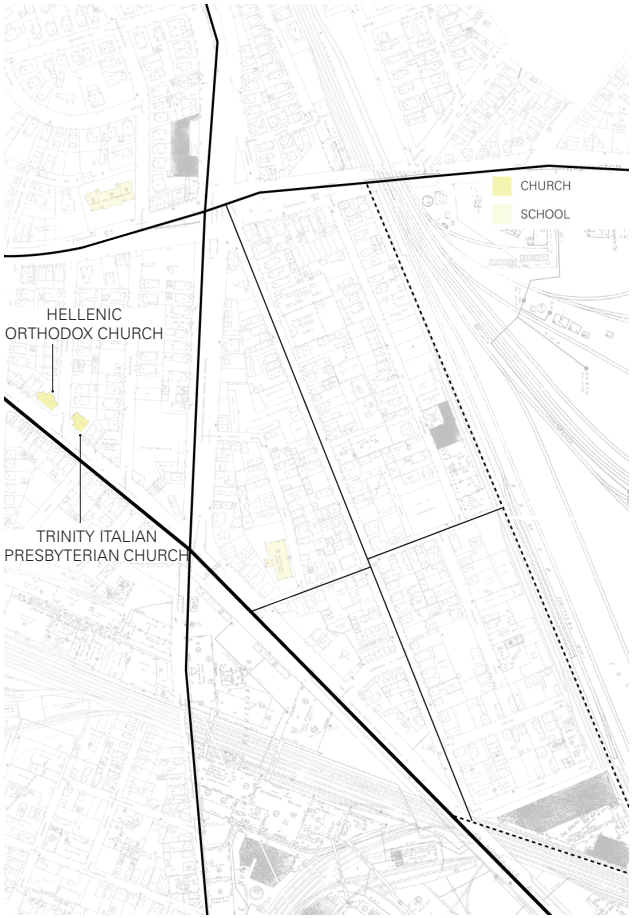
NEW IMMIGRANT POPULATIONS

INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM



New churches within a few blocks of Brickbottom reflect new Greek and Italian immigrant populations in the neighborhood



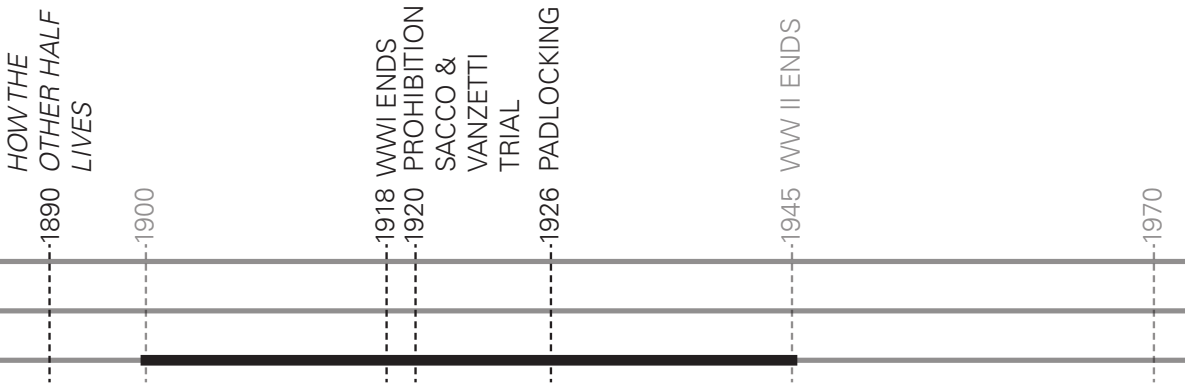
1933 Sanborn

PRE WWII

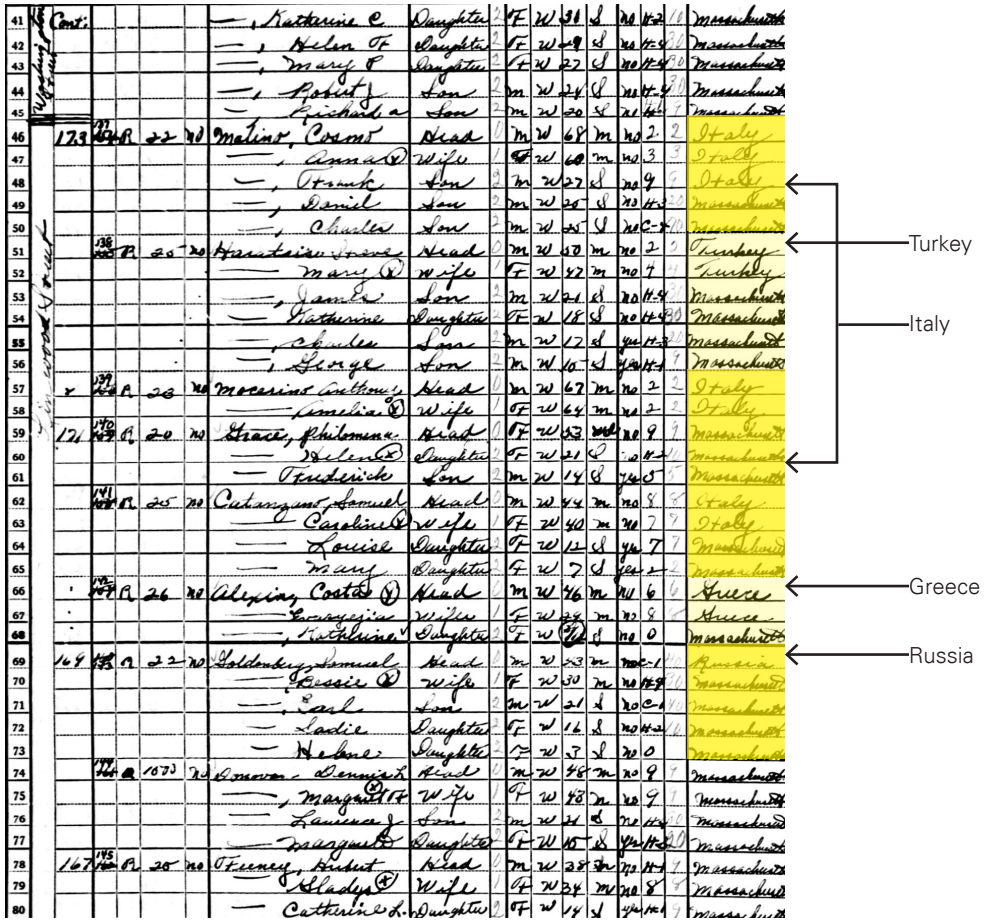
NEW IMMIGRANT POPULATIONS

INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM



Irish and Canadians are no longer as large a presence as Italians and Greeks. Other major groups include Turks and Russians.



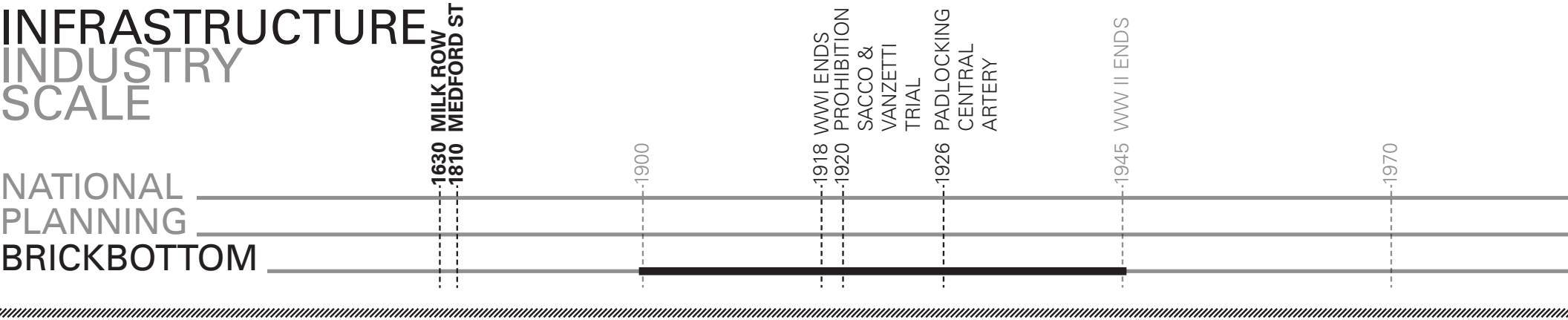
1940 Census

PRE WWII

1926 CENTRAL ARTERY: AUTOMOTIVE INFRASTRUCTURE

INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM



The Central Artery is built to create a direct highway north from Boston to greater New England. Increased traffic and tram lines to Boston brings the possibility for further economic and industrial development.

THE BOSTON GLOBE—TUESDAY, AUGUST 17, 1926

SUMMER'S WORK ON NORTHERN ARTERY HAS CHANGED THE FACE OF CAMBRIDGE AND SOMERVILLE

changed the face of two cities. It takes but slight imagination now to picture a stream of cars rolling swiftly over smooth, broad pavement by next vacation season, to carry an endless flow of tourists by the first direct route north that Boston has ever had. Meantime the steam shovel continues its daily fascination for crowds along the scarred streets.

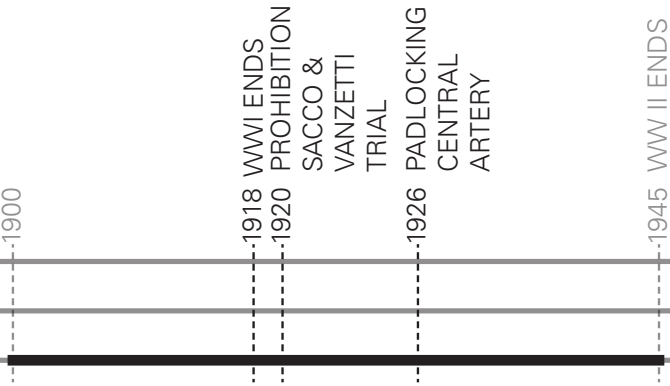
1926 Boston Globe // 1927 Photo

PRE WWII

1926 CENTRAL ARTERY: LAND TAKING

INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM



At the same time, the Central artery construction displaced hundreds of homes in Somerville. In Brickbottom, the east side of Medford street is widened. This land taking is simultaneously with the padlocking.

1900 Sanborn

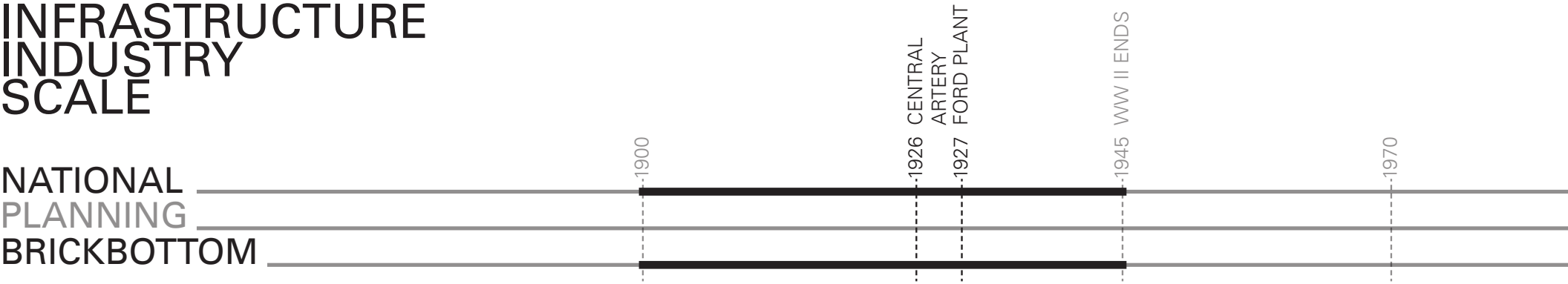
For the whole three-mile stretch from Mystic av, Medford, to Commercial av, Cambridge, the 100-foot swath of the new highway shows like a huge scar upon the thickly settled communities through which the grotesque claws of steam shovels have gashed the path.

1927 Medford & Somerville Ave // 1926 Globe

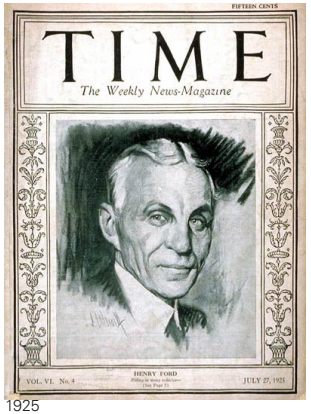
PRE WWII

FORDISM, TAYLORISM + MASS PRODUCTION

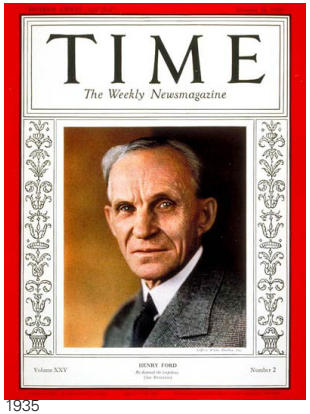
INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE



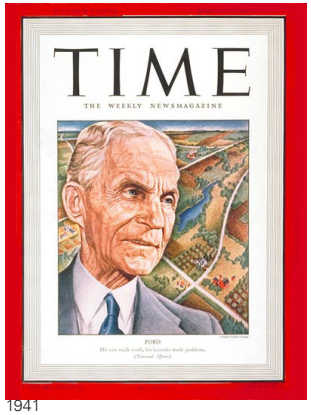
Mass production heralds a new scale of industry that depends upon the national highway infrastructure



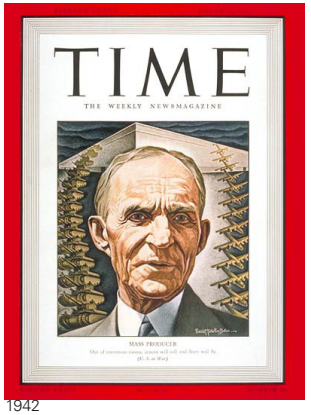
1925



1935



1941



1942

Brickbottom

Brickbottom is well situated for industrial development, building upon existing industry and transportation infrastructure. A Ford manufacturing plant opens in Somerville at Assembly Square in 1927.

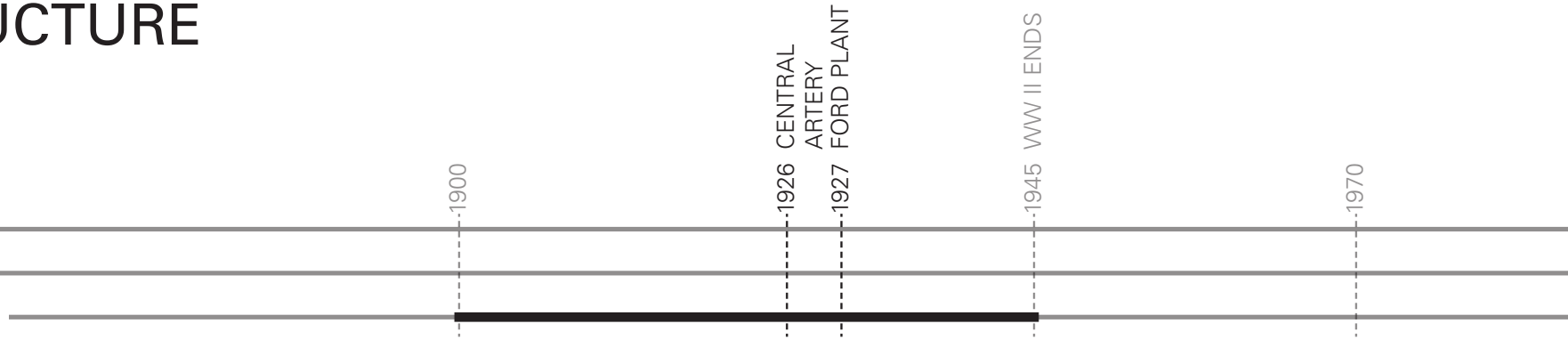
1927 Assembly Square Ford Plant

PRE WWII

INCREASED INDUSTRIALIZATION OF BRICKBOTTOM

INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM



The effect of development of transportation infrastructure can be seen in the increased industrialization of Brickbottom.

The Central Artery begins to become local spatial divider, replacing rail lines.

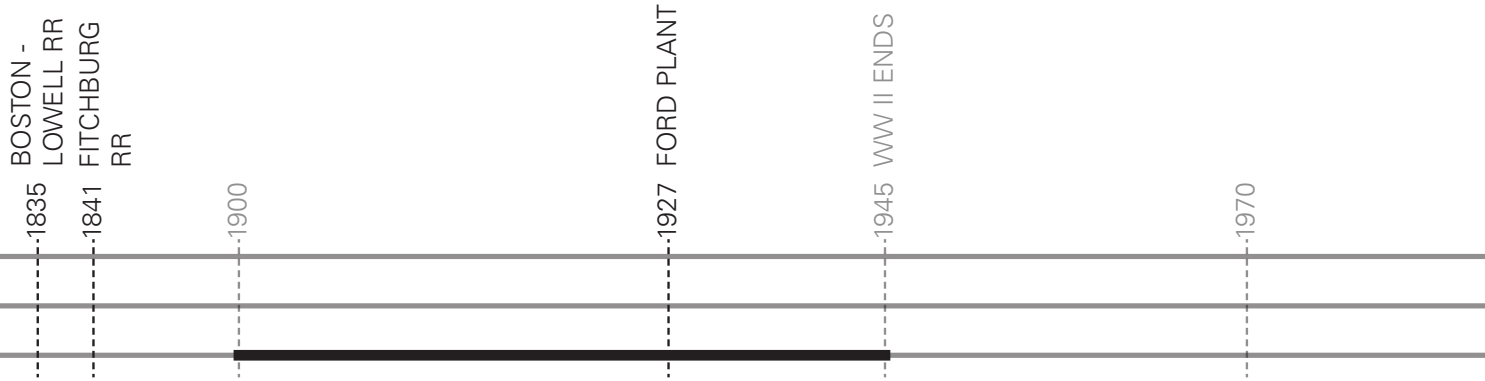
Increased industrialization also begins to replace the residential character of the neighborhood with warehouses and other low density land use.

PRE WWII

FOOD PROCESSING

INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM



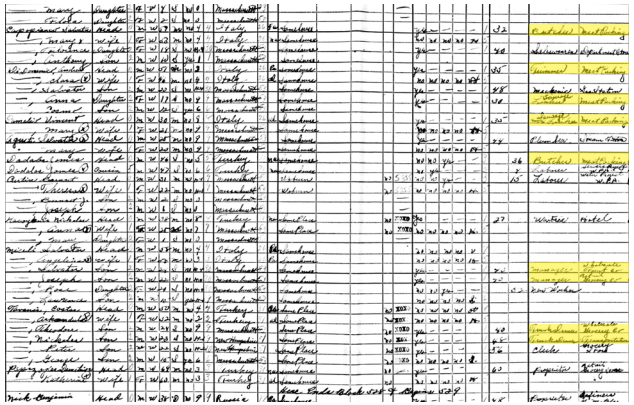
Food processing remains a major industry in the neighborhood

BRICKBOTTOM

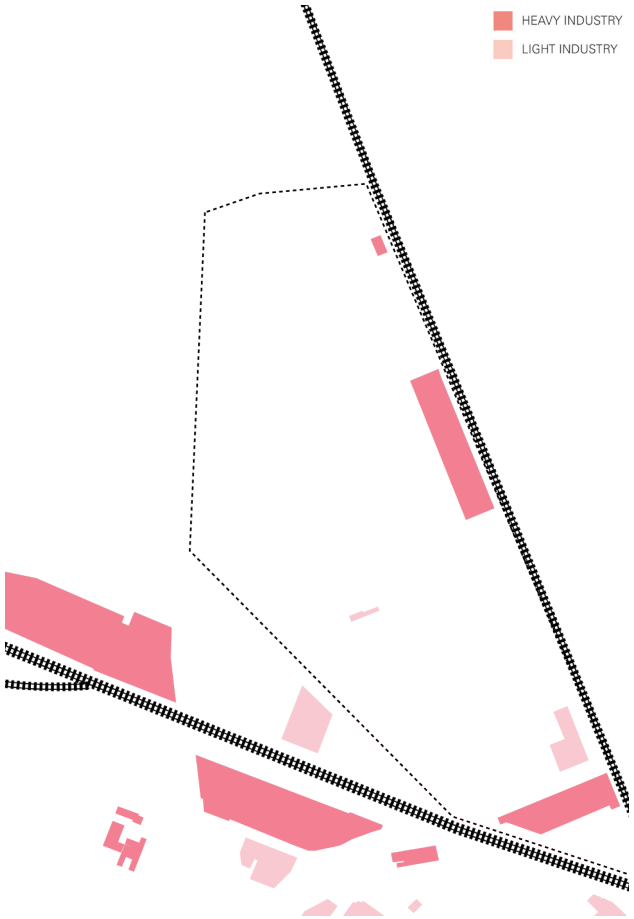
Great Atlantic Tea Co.
New England Bakery
Bottling Works

ADJACENT TO RAIL

North Packing Co.
New England Dressed Meat & Wool
Jasper F Morse Poultry Foods



Food processing plant workers



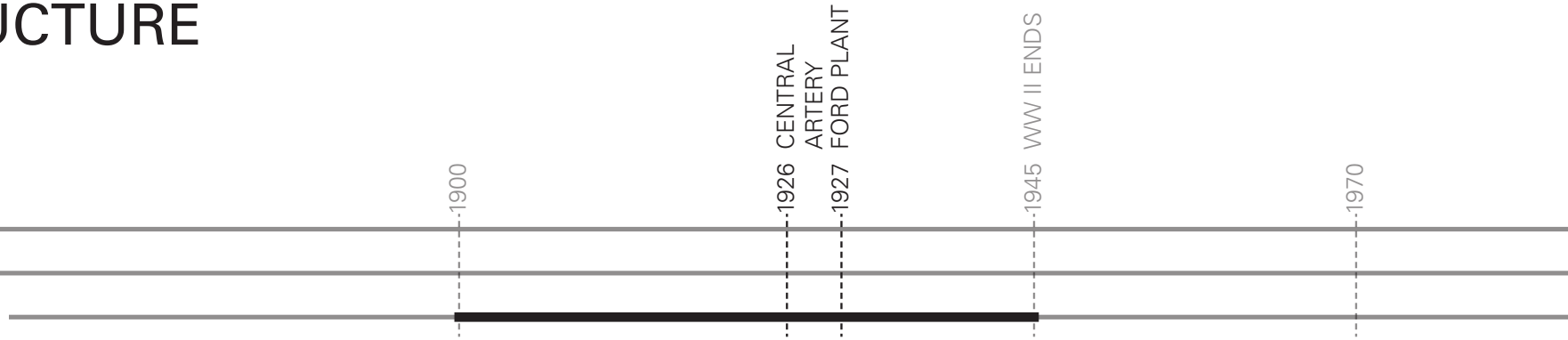
1940 Census // 1933 Sanborn

PRE WWII

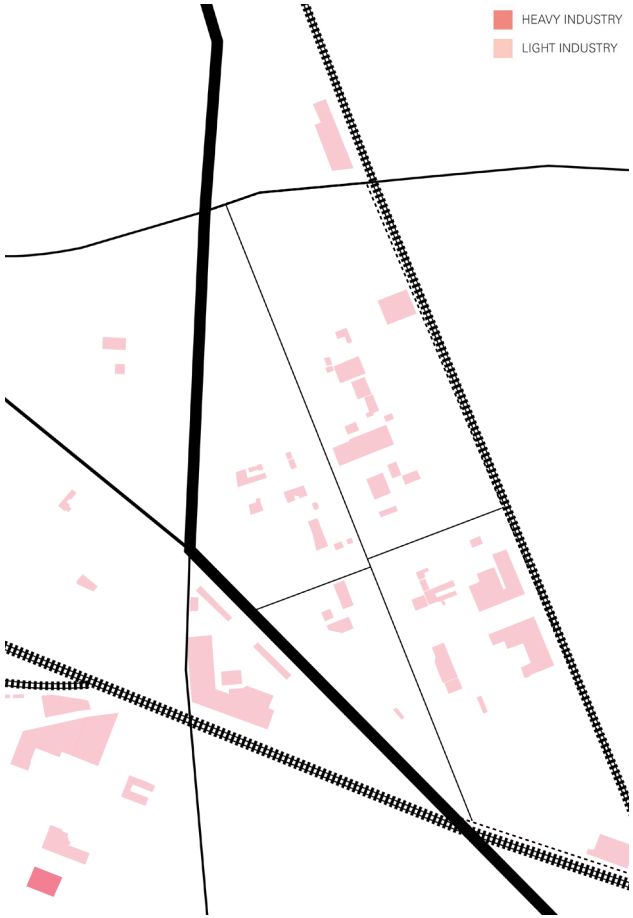
LOW DENSITY USE: STORAGE

INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM



Warehouses increase as manufacturing increases. Storage becomes a major land use in Brickbottom but does not provide local jobs such as coopers.



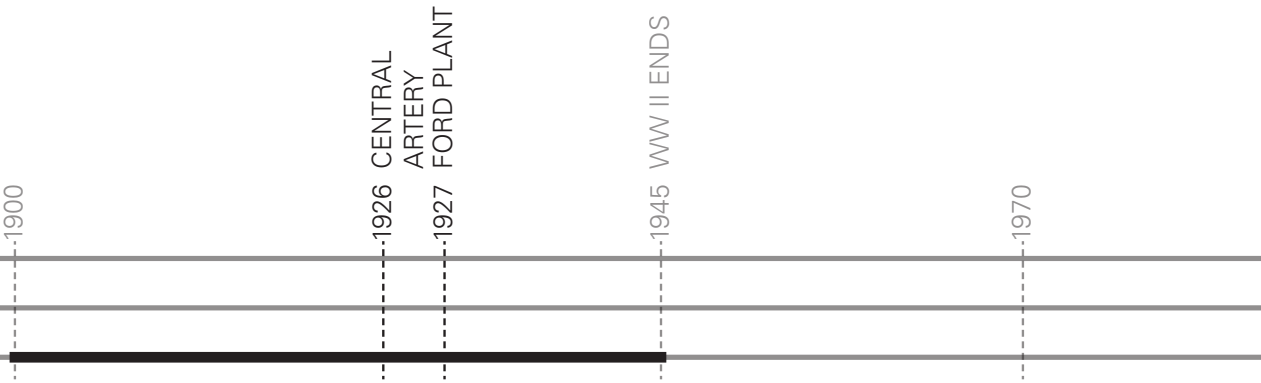
1933 Sanborn

PRE WWII

LOW DENSITY USE: AUTOMOTIVE ZONE

INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

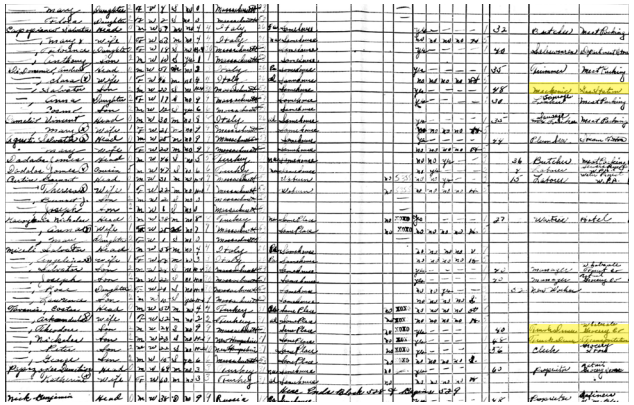
NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM



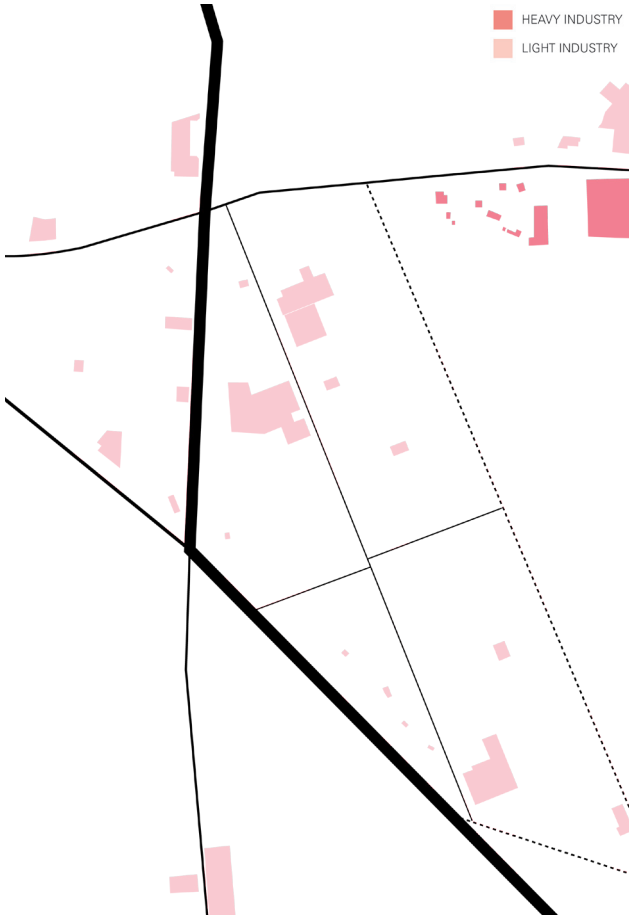
Automotive companies develop along the Central Artery to transport manufactured goods. These tend to be low density uses such as garages and filling stations but do provide local jobs.

BRICKBOTTOM

Truck + car garages
Auto repair, painting, and machine shops
Filling stations
Automotive sales



Automotive industry workers

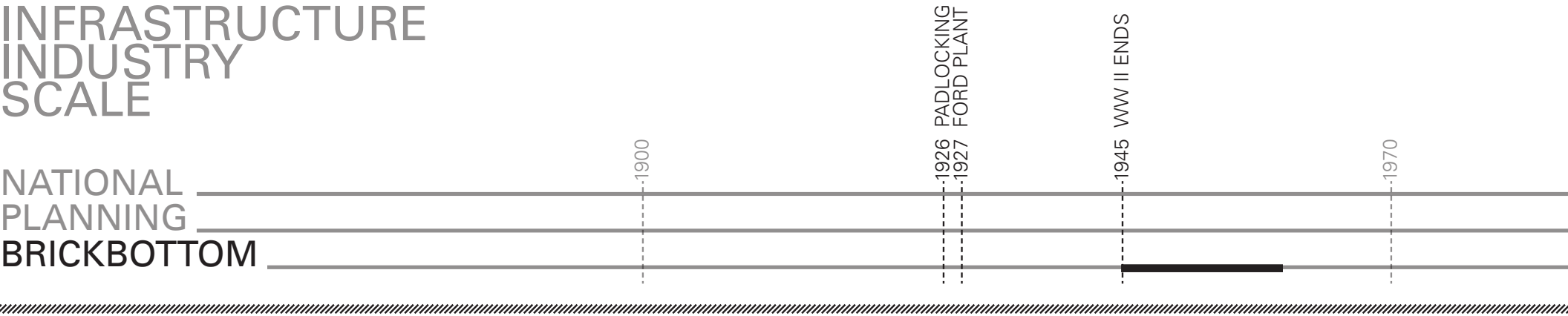


1940 Census // 1933 Sanborn

POST WWII

BLUE COLLAR NEIGHBORHOOD

INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE



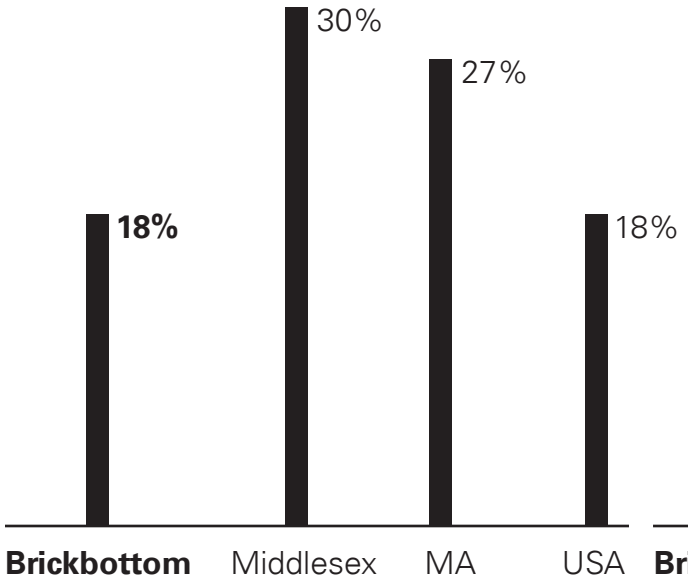
Brickbottom remains a blue collar neighborhood whose residents have lower levels of educational attainment and income.

Median Household Income

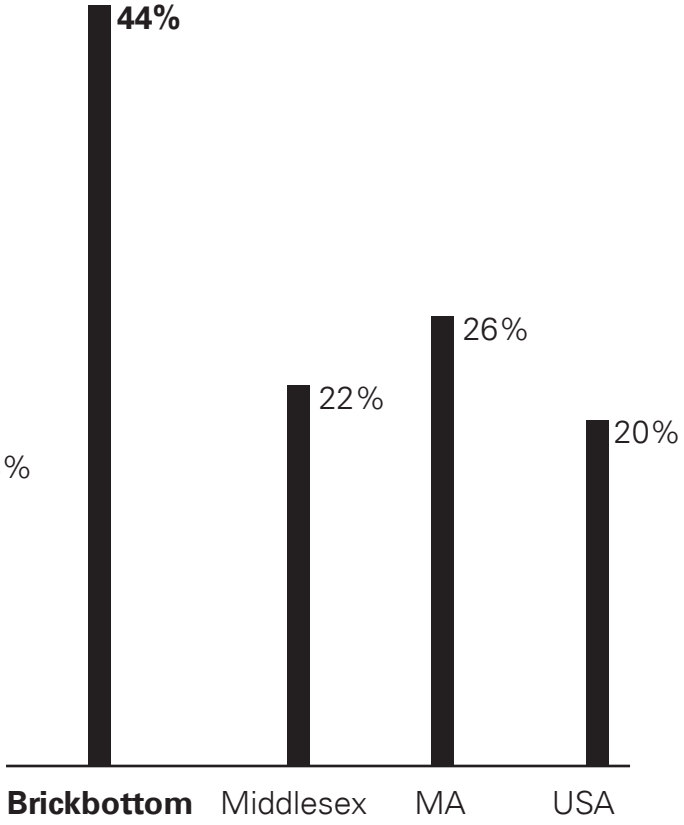
Brickbottom	**$27,000**
USA	$40,000

1950 Census

Education
(% completed high school)



Occupation
(% operators)

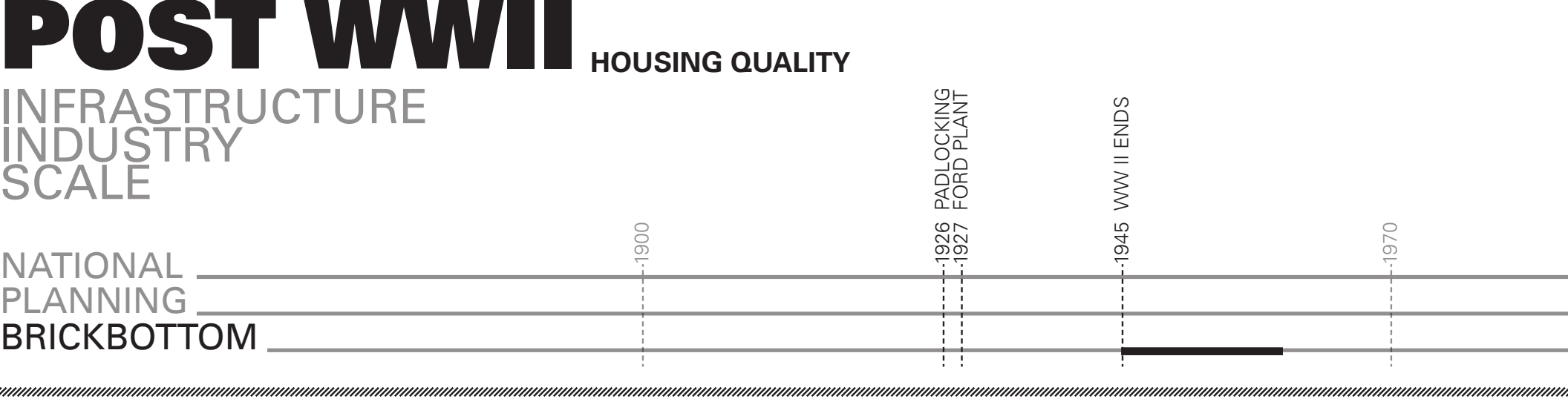


POST WWII

HOUSING QUALITY

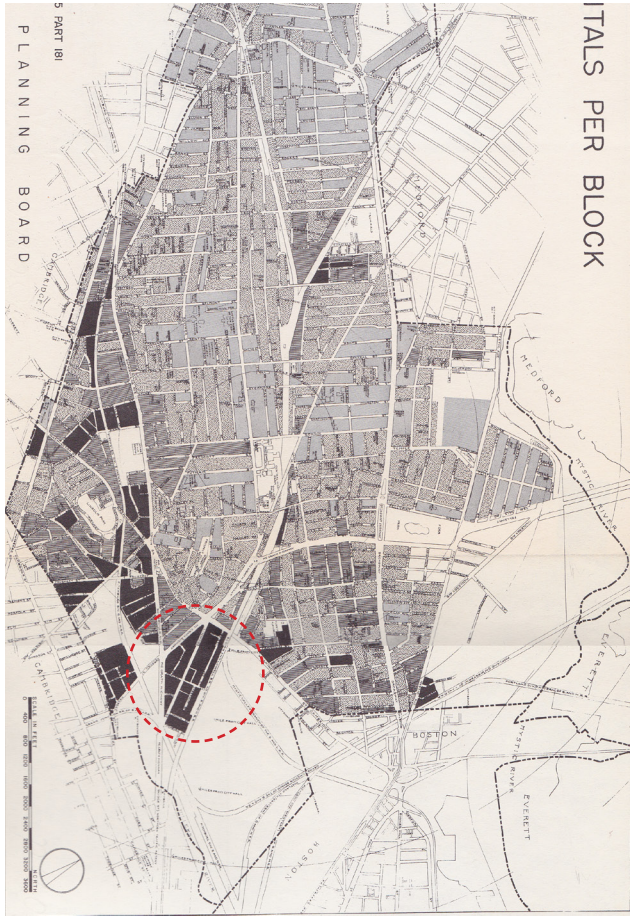
INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

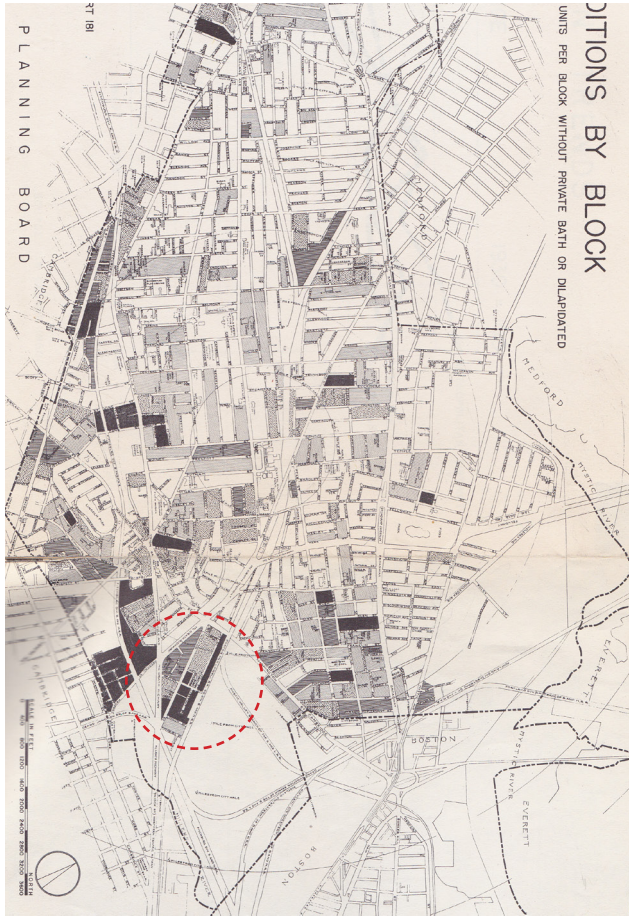
NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM



Using the 1950 Census, the Somerville Planning Board identifies Brickbottom as an cheap area with poor housing quality.

It is subsequently targeted for urban renewal.





1953 Somerville Planning Progress Average Rentals & Housing Conditions by Block

POST WWII

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION AND URBAN RENEWAL

INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM

Following planning ideas first proposed by Le Corbusier, planners begin a period of large scale urban projects. Highways are seen as engines of metropolitan growth and economic progress. Highway construction is accompanied by eminent domain slum clearance of old, often poor neighborhoods.

TIME 1957 "March of the Monsters" // 1964 "The City : Under the Knife"

POST WWII

1958 MCGRATH HIGHWAY: INFRASTRUCTURAL DIVIDE

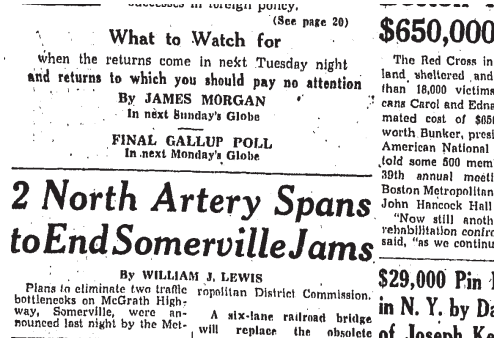
INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM

A 1.5 mile overpass is added along the McGrath Highway (formerly the Central Artery) to alleviate congestion.

This grade separation severs Brickbottom from the rest of Somerville. Eminent domain is also used to further widen the eastern side of the street.

Community resistance is muted.



(See page 20)

What to Watch for

when the returns come in next Tuesday night and returns to which you should pay no attention

By JAMES MORGAN
In next Sunday's Globe

FINAL GALLUP POLL
In next Monday's Globe

2 North Artery Spans to End Somerville Jams

By WILLIAM J. LEWIS

Plans to eliminate two traffic bottlenecks on McGrath Highway, Somerville, were announced last night by the Metropolitan District Commission. A six-lane railroad bridge will replace the obsolete

$650,000

The Red Cross in land, sheltered and than 18,000 victims cans Carol and Edna mated cost of $65 worth Bunker, presi American National fold some 500 mem 39th annual meeti Boston Metropolitan John Hancock Hall "Now still anoth rehabilitation confr said, "as we continu

$29,000 Pin in N. Y. by Da of Joseph Ke

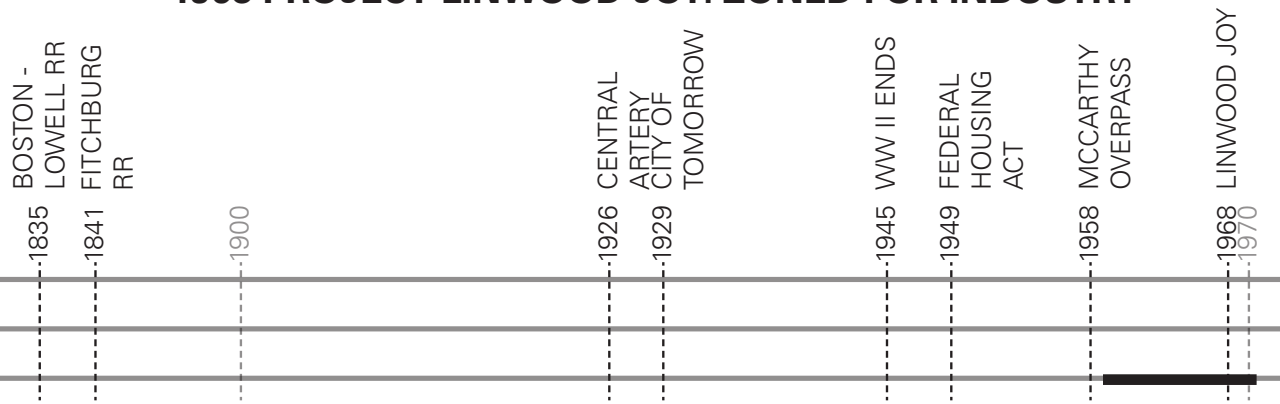
1954 Boston Globe // 1970 Sanborn

POST WWII

1968 PROJECT LINWOOD JOY: ZONED FOR INDUSTRY

INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM

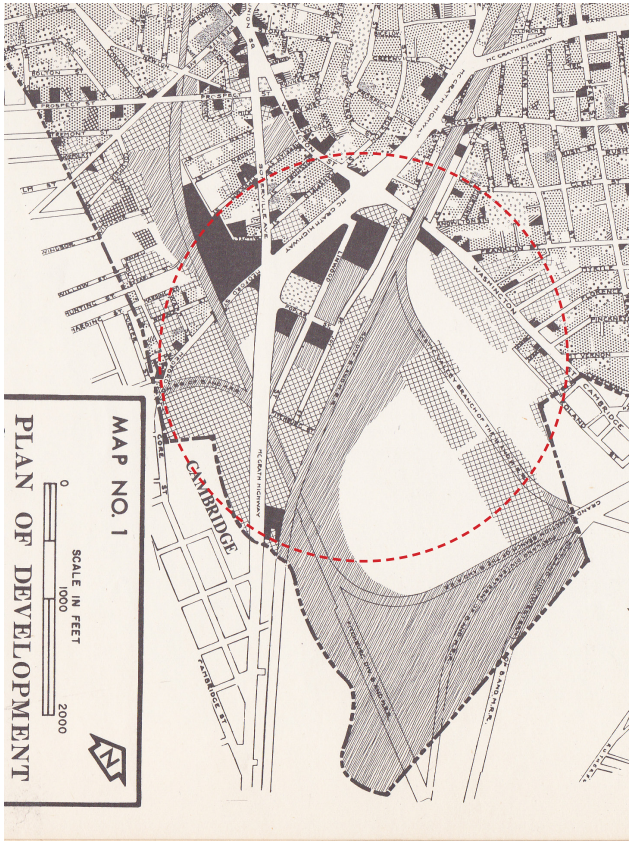


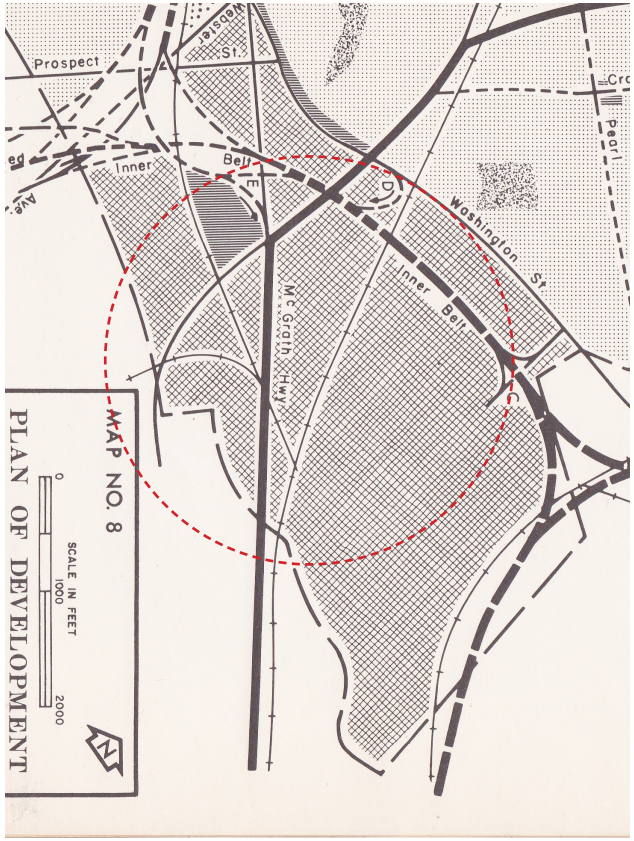
The Somerville Housing Authority acquires the Brickbottom using eminent domain and relocates the residents and businesses under the Federal Housing Act. The land is then rezoned for industry and sold to private investors. The rezoning is predicated on the proximity of transportation infrastructure.

Section 2. The existence of said area was impairing and arresting the sound growth and development of the City of Soraerville, and was inimical to the health, safety, morals and welfare of the inhabitants thereof, and the Commonwealth.

1968 Somerville budget

A case (*Papadinis vs. City of Somerville*) is brought by residents challenging the constitutionality of using the governmental power of eminent domain for the purpose of reselling it to private persons. The suit is denied on the grounds that clearing "sub-standard, decadent or blighted open areas" is in itself a public purpose.





1969 Somerville Comprehensive Plan Existing & Proposed Land Use

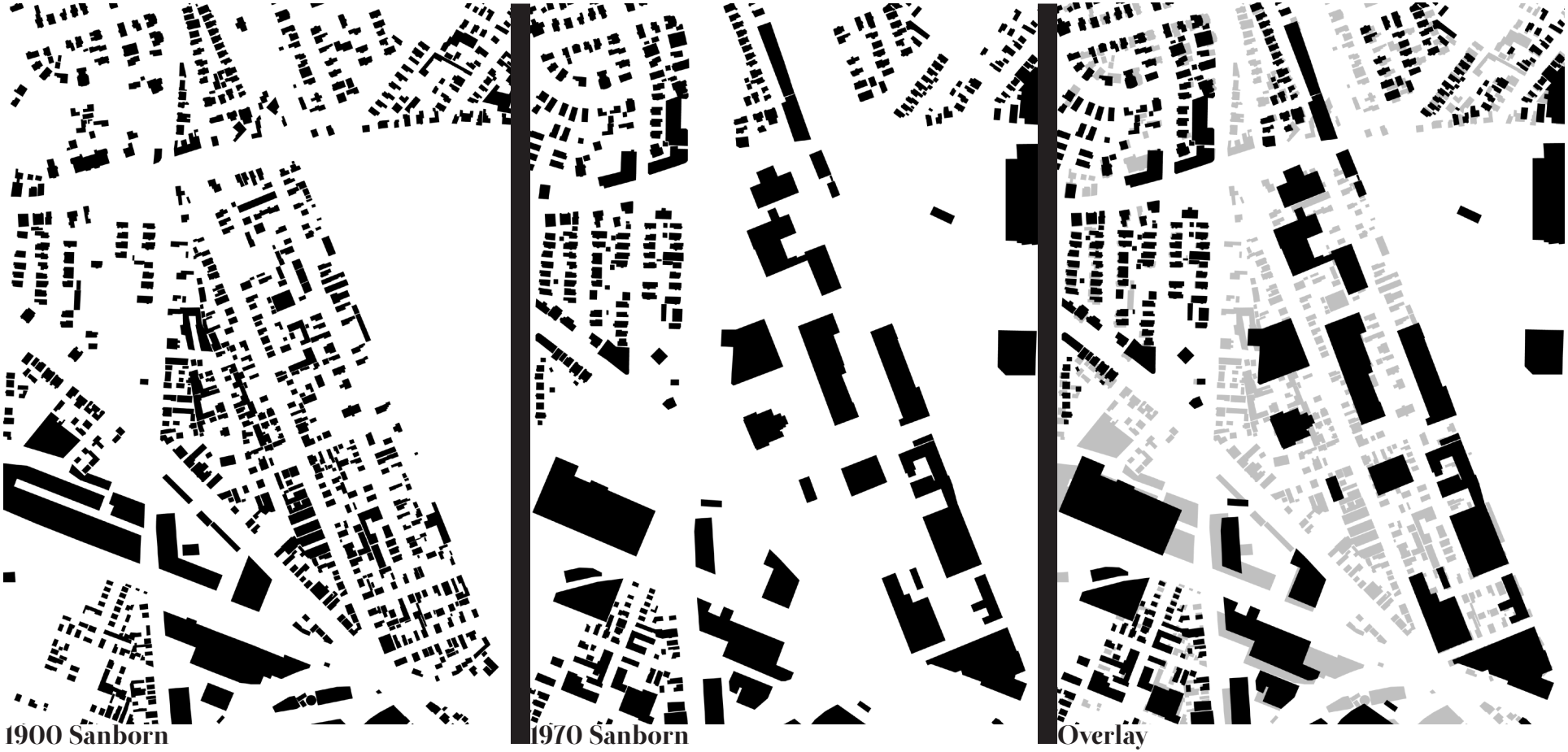
POST WWII

1968 PROJECT LINWOOD JOY: A NEW SCALE

INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM

1900
1929 CITY OF TOMORROW
1945 WW II ENDS
1949 FEDERAL HOUSING ACT
1958 MCCARTHY OVERPASS
1968 LINWOOD JOY
1970



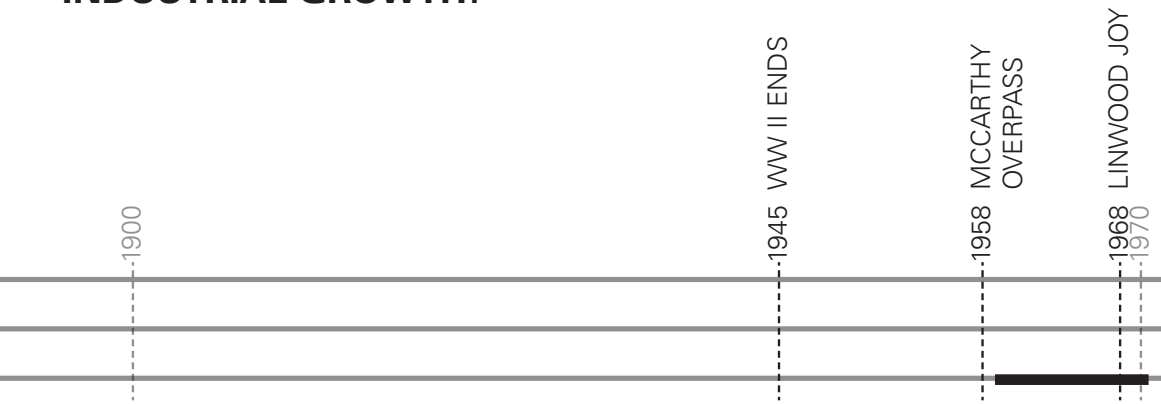
1900 Sanborn | 1970 Sanborn | Overlay

POST WWII

INDUSTRIAL GROWTH?

INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

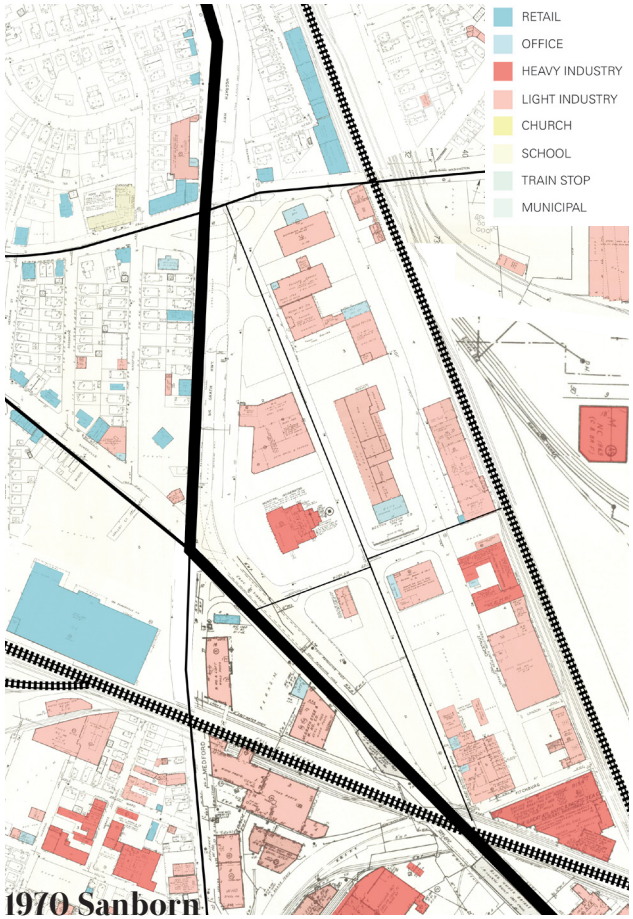
NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM



The community of Brickbottom ceases to exist. There are no longer any churches or schools in the area.

Although the intent of the Linwood Joy plan was to use large parcels to attract larger industry that would generate economic growth, the site is occupied primarily low density industry that provides relatively few local jobs.

1933 Sanborn



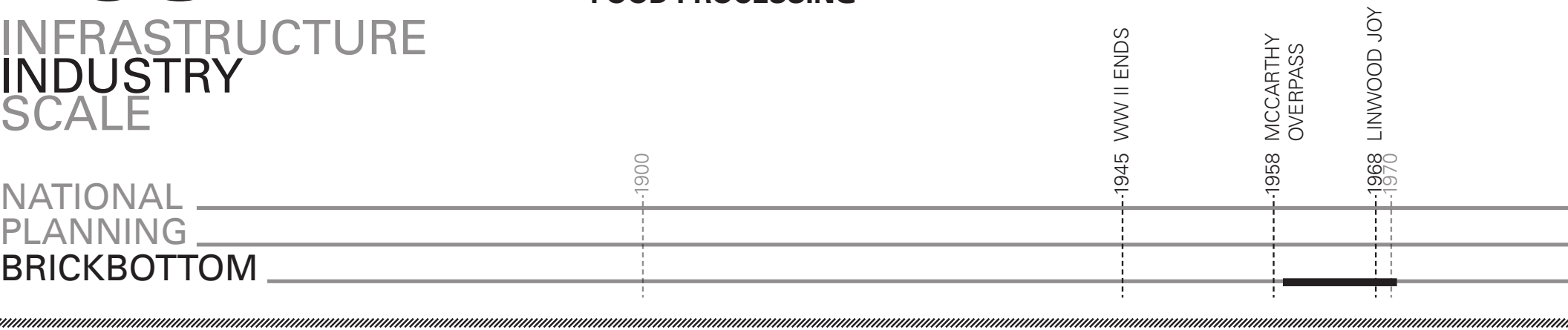
1970 Sanborn

POST WWII

FOOD PROCESSING

INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

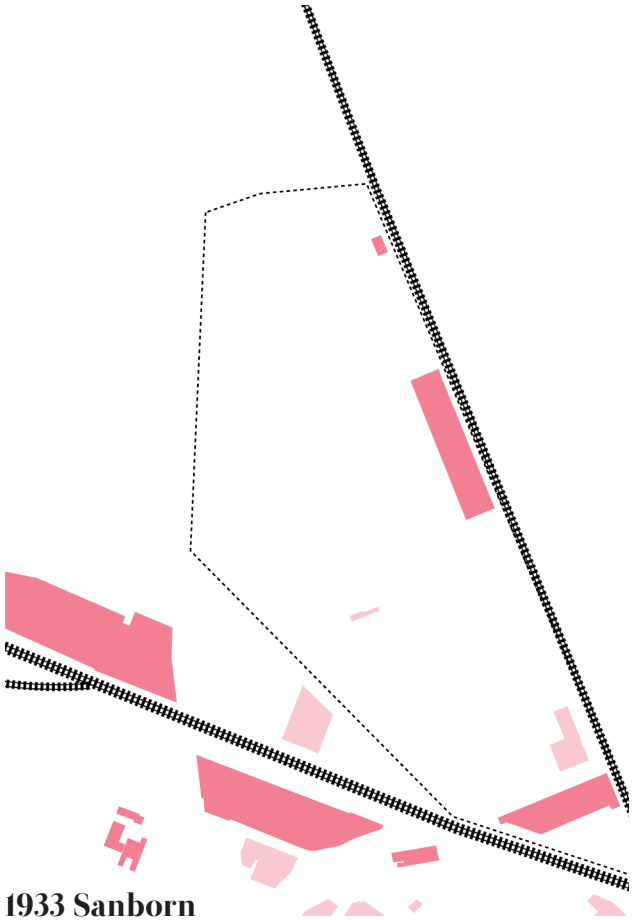
NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM



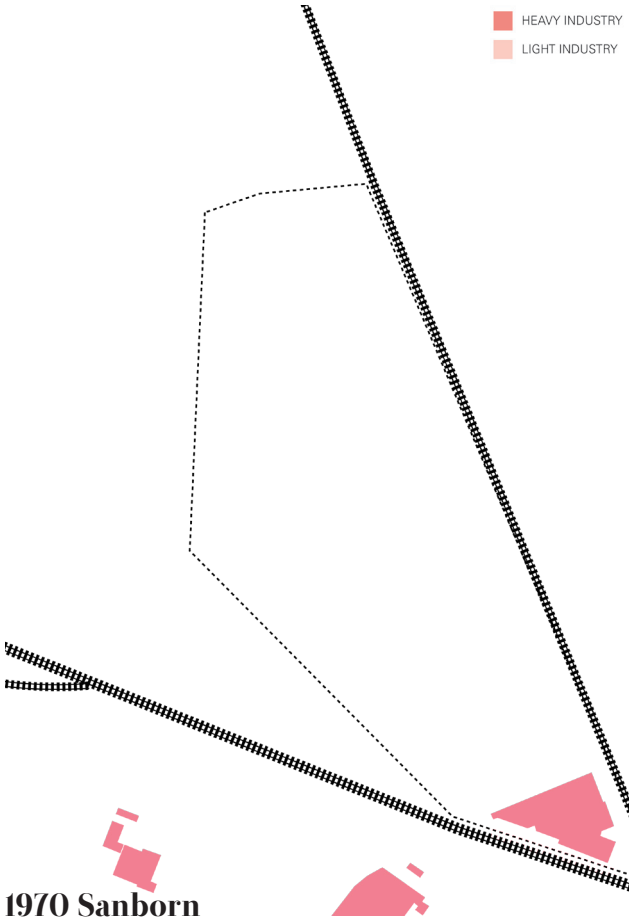
Food processing is no longer a major industry in the area

Brickbottom
A&P Warehouse

Vicinity
Jasper Morse Poultry Foods
John P. Squire Pork Packers



1933 Sanborn



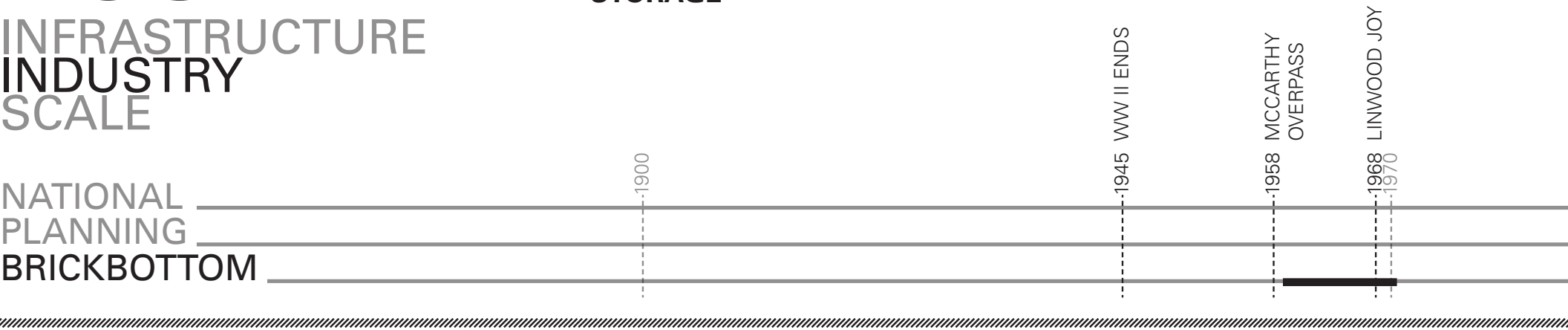
1970 Sanborn

POST WWII

STORAGE

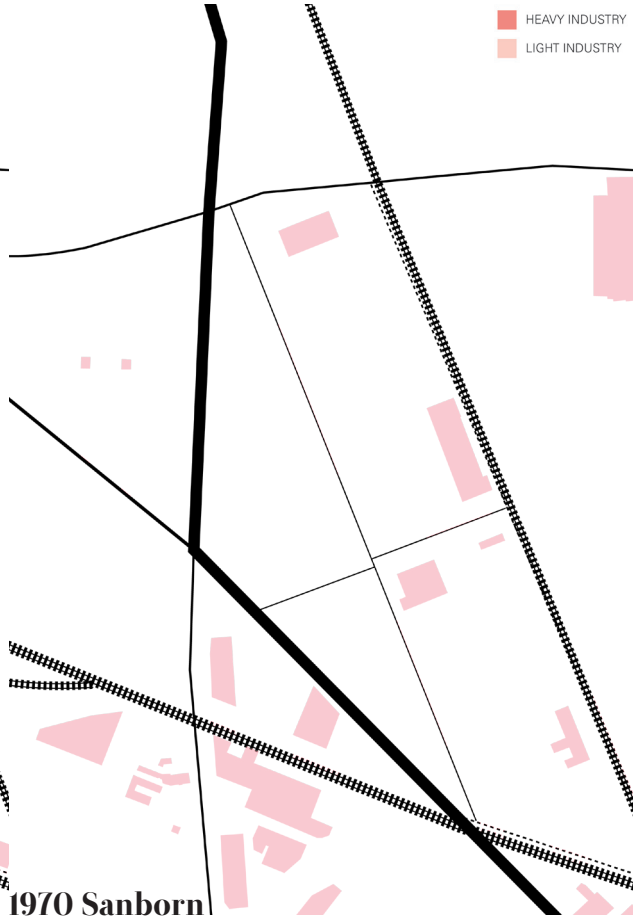
INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM



Many large warehouses in and around Brickbottom

1933 Sanborn



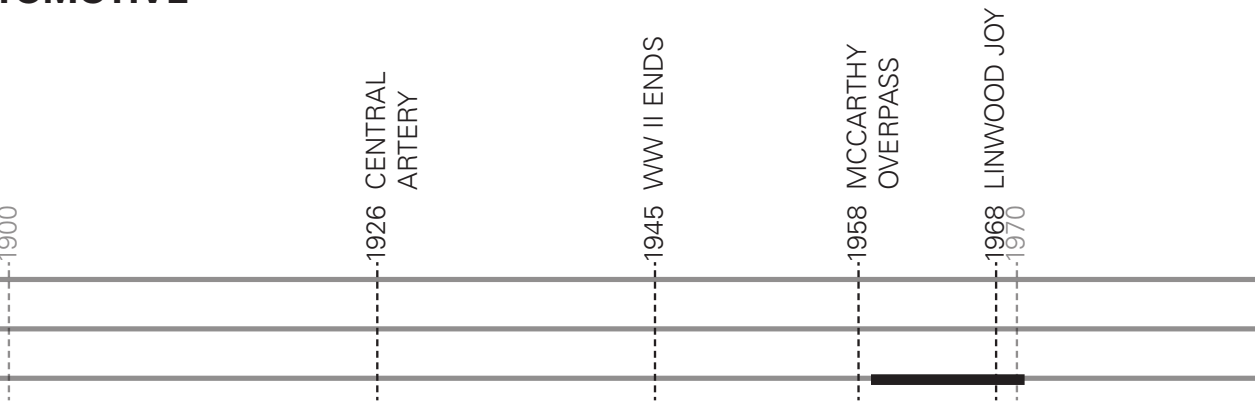
1970 Sanborn

POST WWII

AUTOMOTIVE

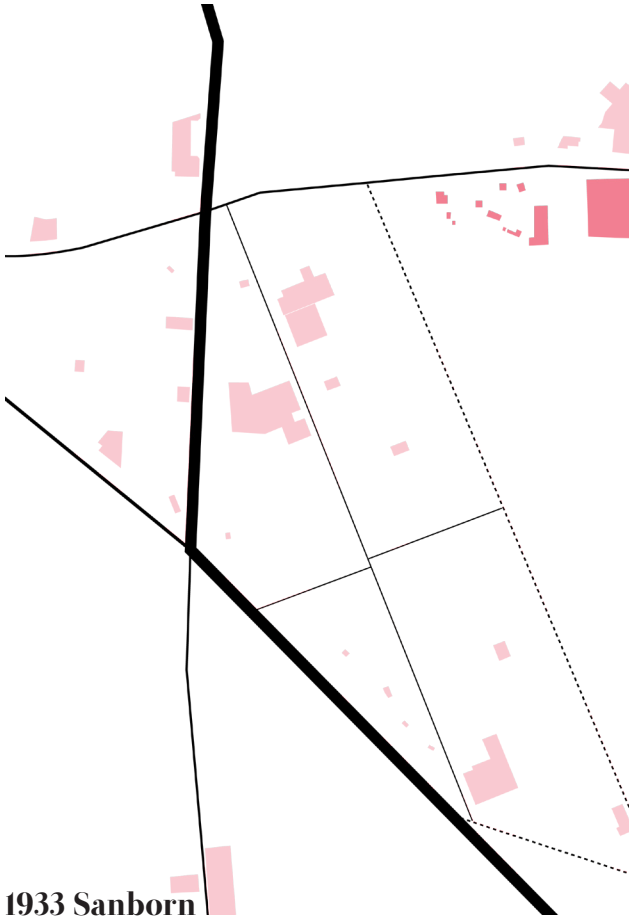
INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

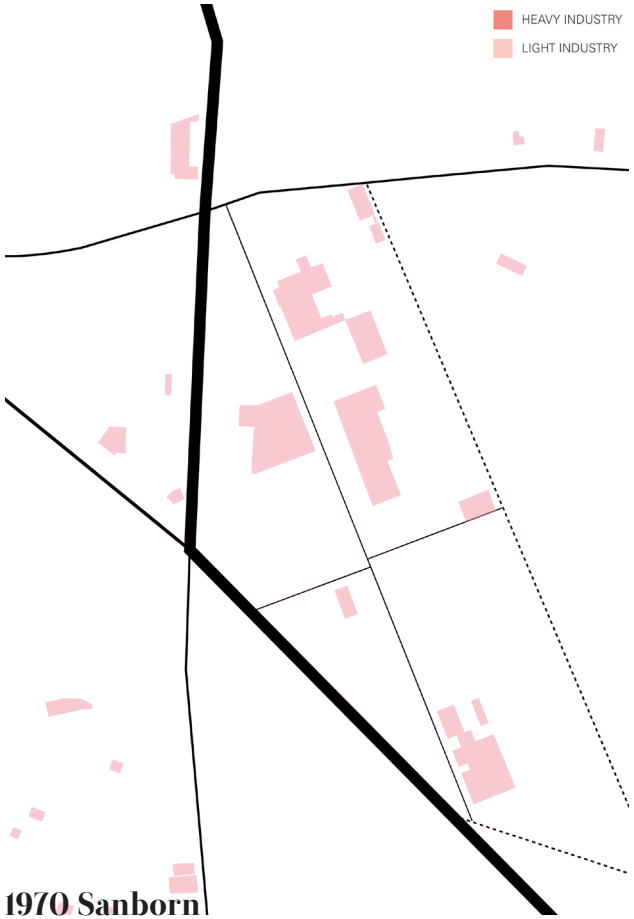
NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM



The majority of businesses in Brickbottom are now related to automotive transport

There are 6 garages/parking lots, 4 auto repair shops, and one auto sale store in Brickbottom



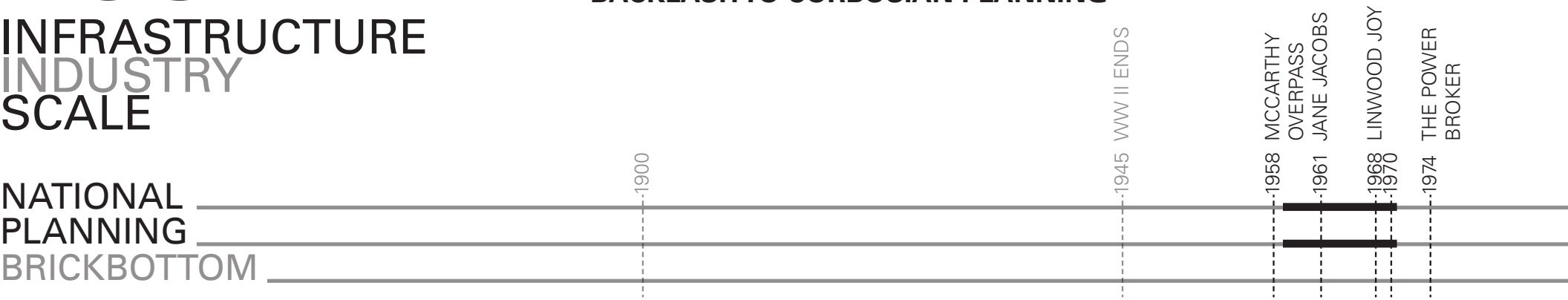


POST WWII

BACKLASH TO CORBUSIAN PLANNING

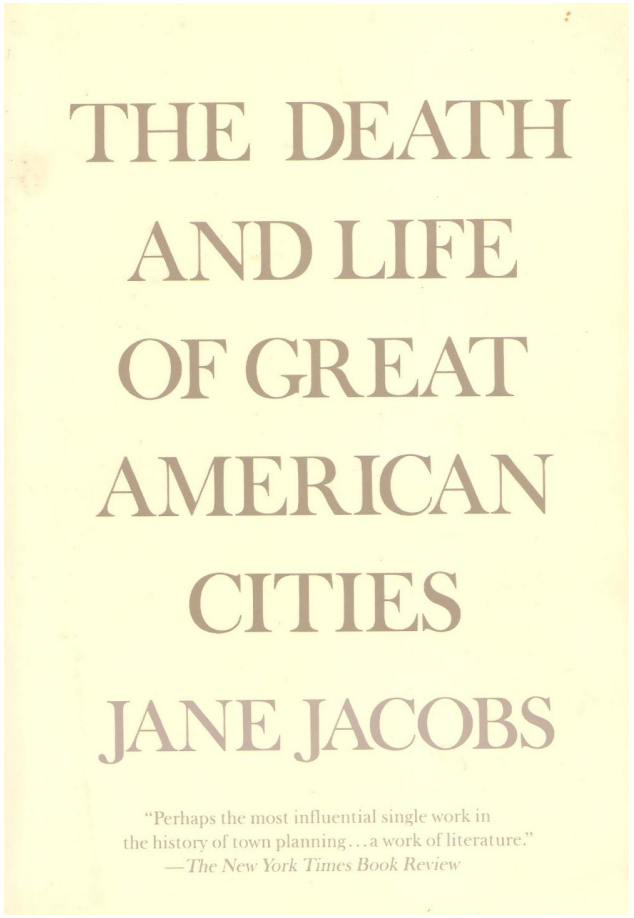
INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

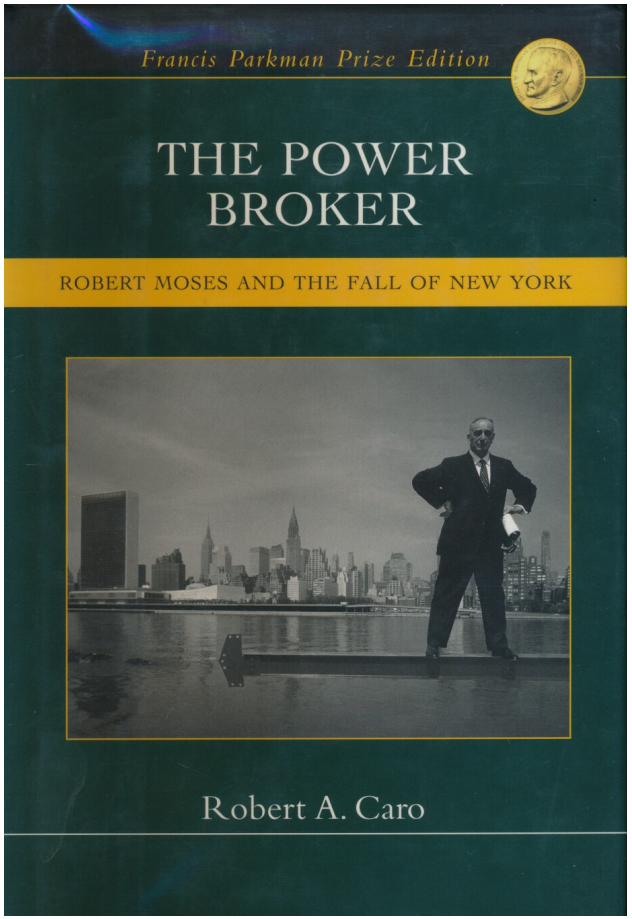
NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM



Opposition to large scale Corbusian urban renewal and high construction grows.

Led by Jane Jacobs, the Lower Manhattan Expressway is canceled in 1962.



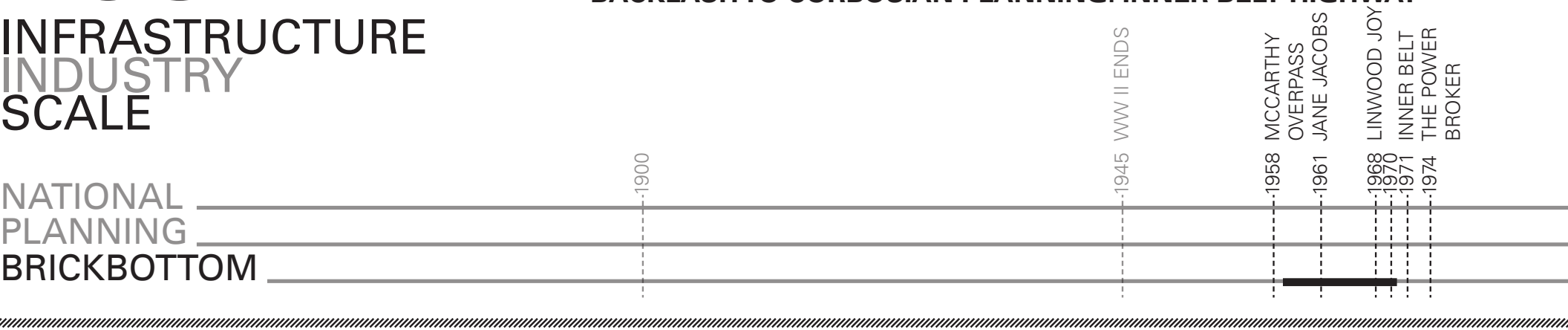


POST WWII

BACKLASH TO CORBUSIAN PLANNING: INNER BELT HIGHWAY

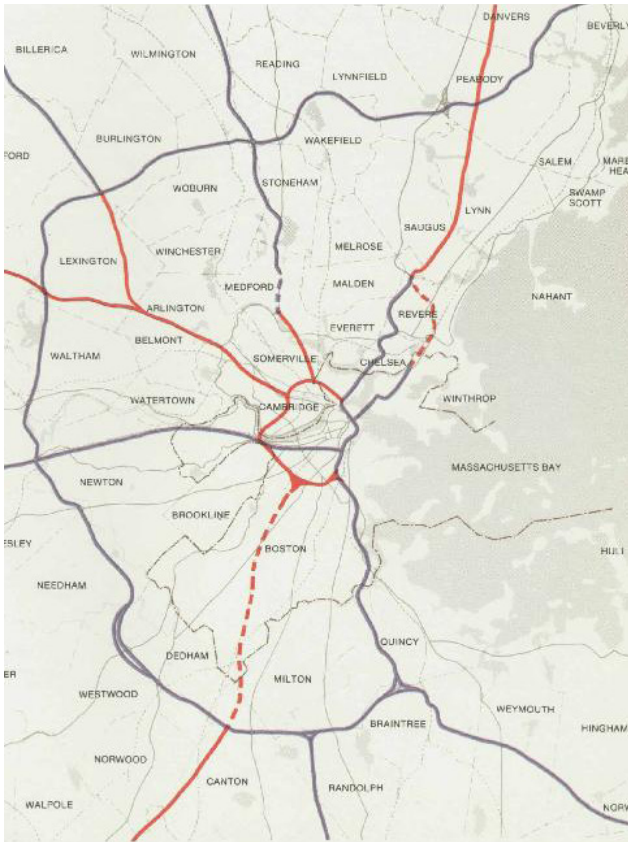
INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM

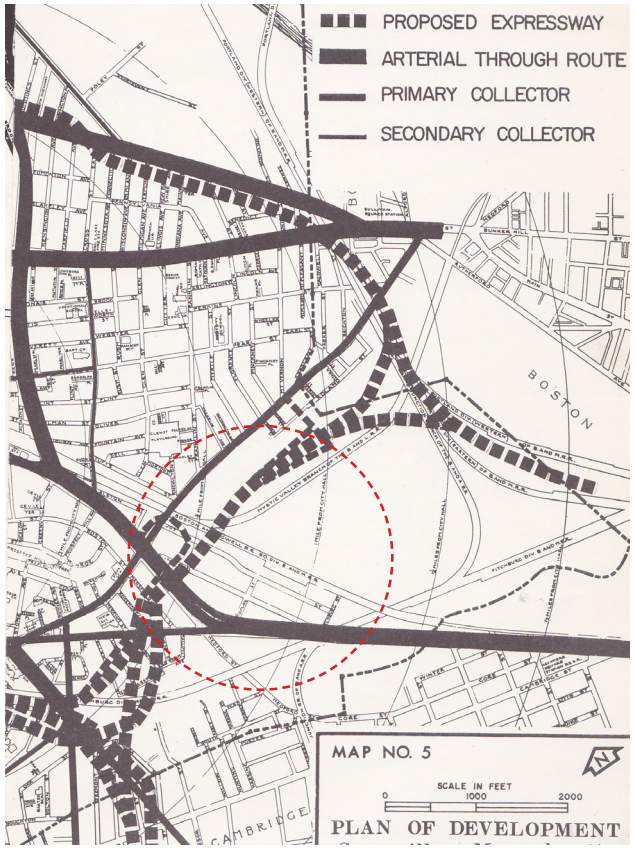


The Inner Belt was a planned highway that would have provided a circumferential route around Boston.

The highway would have displaced a total of 7,000 people in Cambridge and Somerville and would have run through the northern part of Brickbottom, further dividing it from Somerville.



1965 Inner Belt Plan



1969 Somerville Comprehensive Plan

POST WWII

BACKLASH TO CORBUSIAN PLANNING: INNER BELT HIGHWAY

INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM

The proposal was cancelled in 1971 in response to large scale grassroots protests.

This victory reflects not only shifts in planning attitudes but also the power of the Cambridge community in comparison to that of Brickbottom.

1969 Gov. Sargent with protesters

1960s Boston Globe

2200 Boo, Roar Protests At All Inner Belt Routes

By GEORGE McKINNON

More than 2000 noisily protesting Cambridge and Somerville residents verbally belted the State Department duce the 20 experts who sat with him on his platform.

The audience settled back into comparative quiet when DiNatale emphasized that his department has not yet de-

rear of the auditorium and crowds gathered around them early.

Most appeared angry pointing to the maps and grumbling: "See, right there, right

Proposed Inner Belt Would Kill Somerville, Says Sen. McKenna

The proposed Inner Belt route would "kill the City of Somerville," Sen. Denis L. McKenna (D-Somerville), said yesterday.

ing, also said he would pocket the veto repealer, if necessary, to halt construction of the present road layout.

A unanimous vote is re-

700 in Somerville Rally To Keep Inner-Belt Veto

More than 700 Somerville residents jammed Circle Hall in East Somerville last night in a protest against proposed repeal of the city's veto power over the inner-belt route.

The group was urged by several speakers to attend to-

Msgr. Hogan strongly urged everyone at the meeting to attend the hearing at the State House today.

The legislation filed by Sen. Philip A. Graham (R-Hamilton) calls for repeal of the 1961 law which gave Somer-

Besides attending today's to notify Gov. Volpe's office hearing, the group was urged its their opposition.

In NEW YORK CITY
Times Square

Cambridge and Somerville Fear Heavy Loss of Homes

families losing their homes.

This is where the route of the Belt, in the map area shown, would go:

After crossing the Charles River just west of Boston University Bridge, it parallels Brookline st., and crosses

It continues between Columbia and Elm sts., northeasterly to an interchange with Rte. 2 at the Somerville city line, between Donnelly Field, Cambridge, and Lincoln Park, Somerville.

Fitchburg division and McGrath Highway, enters the B. & M. freight yards, and runs parallel to Washington st., south of the industrial complex.

Officials in both cities have

1000 Protest Inner Belt

han 1000 residents of Cambridge erville, many of them children, tered buses to Boston Common then marched to the State protest the Brookline-Elm st.

At the rally Saturday, dem carried placards, "Cambridge is not a highway."

State Rep. Marie Howe (D

Somerville Aldermen Oppose Inner Belt

POST WWII

URBAN RENEWAL?

INFRASTRUCTURE
INDUSTRY
SCALE

NATIONAL
PLANNING
BRICKBOTTOM

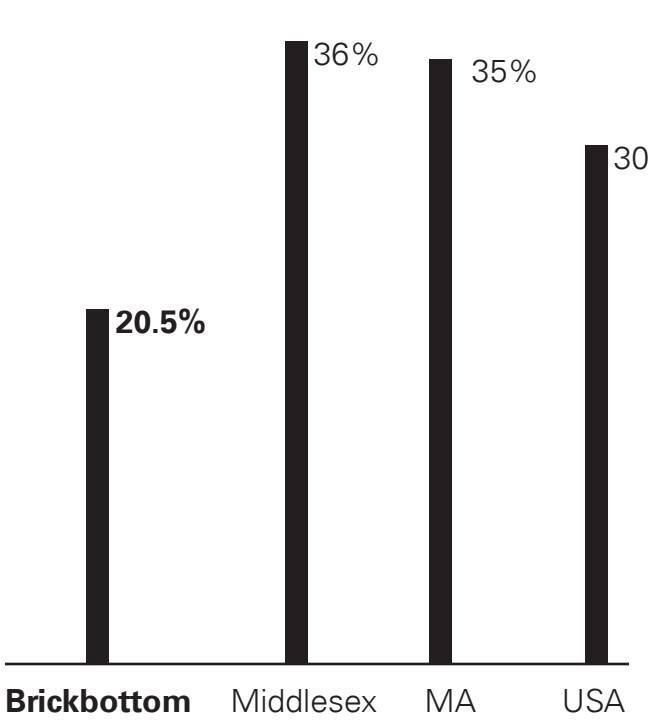
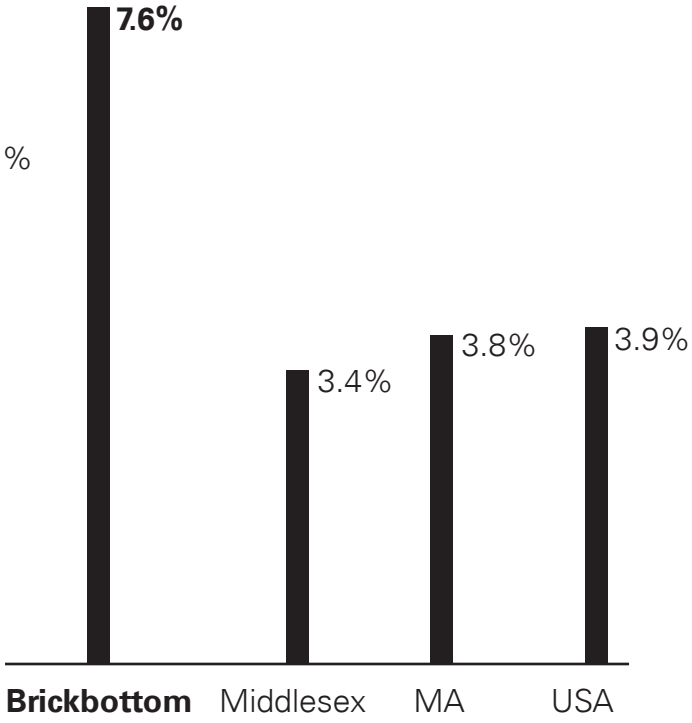
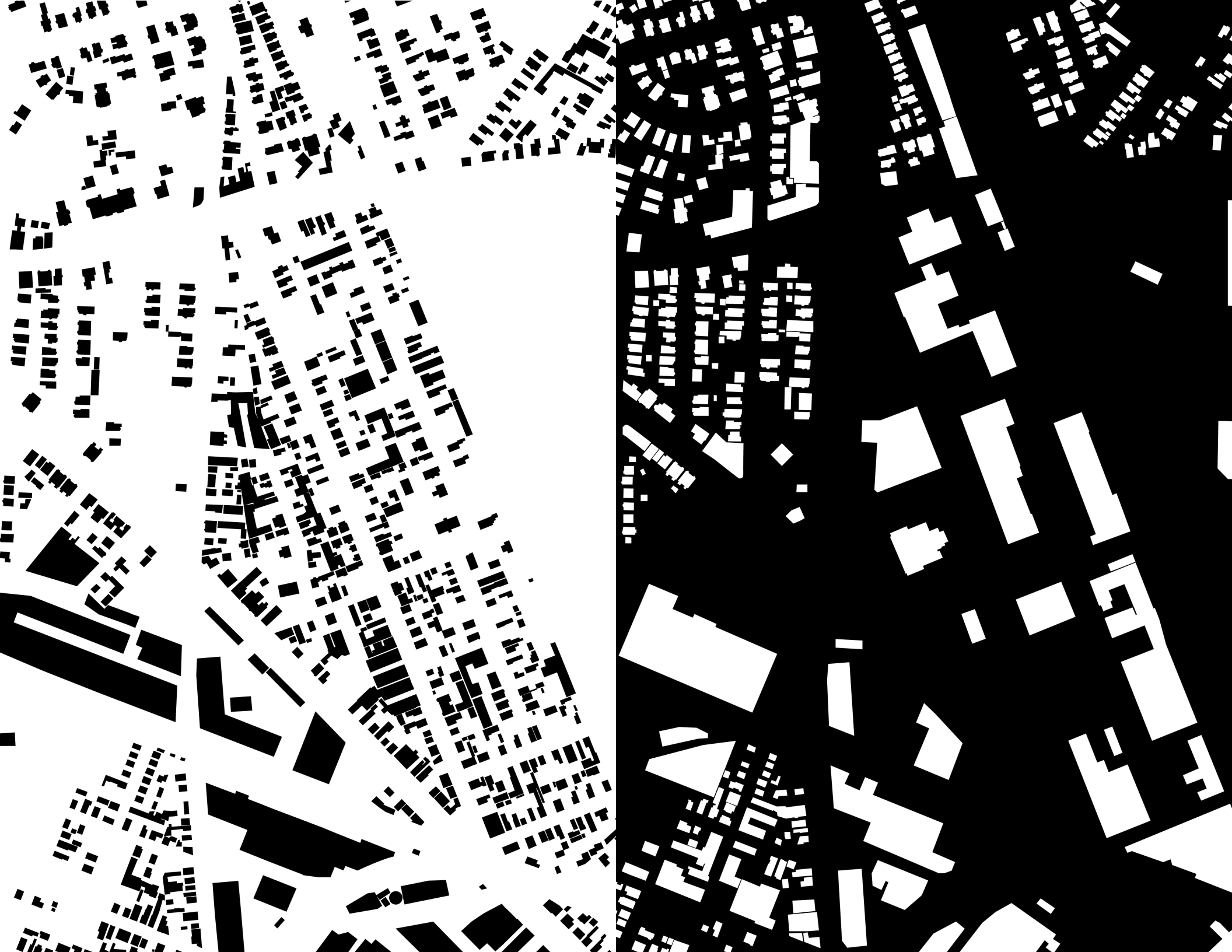
Urban renewal was unsuccessful in improving conditions in the Brickbottom area. Economic and social indicators show that the gap between residents and the national average has only increased since 1950. This disparity is even more pronounced in comparison to the rest of Middlesex county.

Median Individual Income

Brickbottom	**$7,350**
Middlesex	$13,650
MA	$12,300
USA	$10,350

1950 Census

Education
(% completed high school)



Unemployment