

# Christian Science Plaza

Built: 1894-Present

Architects: Welch, Brigham, Coveny, Beman, Churchill, Pei

The Christian Science Plaza is built on a block of Boston just west of Copley Square, and surrounds The First Church of Christ, Scientist. The plaza is owned by the church and serves to provide a valuable public open space. Since the first construction of the original mother church in 1894, the plaza has expanded drastically to its current state, and it continues to be adjusted and added to today.

In 1894, the mother church was built. Designed by architect Franklin Welch of Malden, the mother church is built of New Hampshire granite, with an interior seating capacity of 900 people. The entire sanctuary is stenciled with frescoes and mosaics. A white Italian marble floor and red birch woodwork complete the design.

As the church grew rapidly, an extension was added to the mother church. Completed in 1906 and designed by Charles Brigham, Charles Coveney, and Solon Beman, the extension to the mother church was constructed in the Italian renaissance and byzantine styles to match other local construction. With a seating capacity of 3000, the extension granted the church a significant increase in capacity.

In 1934, the Christian Science Publishing House was constructed to support the publication of the Christian Science Monitor. The limestone and granite building was designed by Chester Lindsay Churchill. In addition to the Christian Science Monitor, the building now houses the church headquarters, the Mary Baker Eddy Library, and the Mapparium. The Mapparium is an occupiable glass globe. People can enter the art piece and experience the political world

Prepared by: Thomas Darr



Night shot of Christian Science Plaza looking west over the reflecting pool.



Overhead shot of Christian Science Plaza looking east.





from the perspective of the earth's core. This element is a major tourist attraction on site.

During the 1960s, the church commissioned I. M. Pei to design the Christian Science Plaza as it is built today. This includes the Collonade Building at 101 Belvidere Street, the tower at 177 Huntington Avenue, the Reflection Hall, and the reflecting pool and fountain. To most users, this open plaza is the most critical portion of the Christian Science Center, and the reason most people occupy the site.

The plaza is above a massive parking garage, and has a surface that is dominated by water. The reflecting pool is 670 feet long, more than twice the length of a football field. At the end of the pool is a large fountain that attracts large groups of children during the summer. Surrounding the reflecting pool is a wide open brick plaza. It is enclosed by trees along Huntington Avenue and Belvidere Street, providing a feeling of separation from the rest of the city.

This separation and the peacefulness of the reflecting pool are what draw people to the site. There is not a lot of seating (nowhere near enough according to William Whyte's analysis of what makes a good public space), but it is still a place where people meet. The limited seating is regularly occupied during the summer, and the site is used as a travel corridor year-round, as it is a more attractive alternative to the busy and noisy city streets.

The Christian Science Plaza is an important landmark for Boston residents and tourists alike. It provides all with a peaceful urban landscape and a break from the densely built surroundings.

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