Quincy Street façade will likely remain intact. Piano has not yet begun his work, city review boards have not considered it, and so any speculation about the building’s final looks would be just that.

While the building is under reconstruction, the museums will maintain a public presence with an exhibition—perhaps of their greatest hits—probably in the Sackler galleries. That state of affairs will prevail until the overhaul of 32 Quincy Street is complete, which Lentz hopes to see in 2011 or 2012. Everything else will go into storage. Paintings, ceramics, clocks, silver vessels, bronzes, furniture, et cetera, will move in part to a commercial art-storage facility now being built in neighboring Somerville and in part to an interim museum site, along with most of HUAM’s staff of 250. This facility will also function temporarily as a public museum for modern and contemporary art.

The location of the interim site had not been published as this issue went to press. Lentz has considered at least 25 potential sites, in Boston, Cambridge, and Allston. Some existing Allston edifice will get the nod. A strong possibility, Lentz said in an interview, is a 75,000-square-foot building on Soldiers Field Road, on the Allston-Brighton line, formerly bank offices and now owned by Harvard. The building has things to recommend it for the museums’ purposes, but is far removed from the heart of the proposed new Allston campus, a disadvantage.

A permanent second site presumably will be part of the cultural complex in the new campus. A committee chaired by associate provost for the arts and humanities Sean Buffington is now discussing creating a museum facility in Allston to provide space for several University collections. Members include Lentz, John Megan, director of the Office for the Arts, Robert Orchard, director of the Loeb Drama Center, Watts professor of music Kay Shelemay, and William Fash, Bowditch professor of Central American and Mexican archaeology and ethnology and Howells director of the Peabody Museum.

The permanent second site will become Harvard’s museum of modern and contemporary art. (Its spaciousness will enhance Harvard’s ability to add such art, much of which is huge, to its collection; adequate exhibition space is a sine qua non for donors.) The date of the new museum’s completion is highly conjectural: perhaps a decade or more hence.

This site will also contain offices for HUAM’s curatorial staff, the Center for the Technical Study of Modern Art, a multipurpose study center, a satellite of the Straus conservation center, and the museums’ major loading facility.

Lentz’s predecessor as director, James Cuno, strove to hatch a two-building satellite museum in the Riverside area of Cambridge along Memorial Drive (see “Riverside Rezoned,” January-February 2004, page 63). One of its parts would have housed modern and contemporary art, the other the collections in the Sackler. That museum’s architect was Renzo Piano. The neighbors shot down the low, wood-and-glass complex he proposed, and Harvard eventually struck a multi-part agreement allowing it to build 250 beds of housing for affiliates on the site instead.

When Cuno’s plans were torpedoed, Piano’s attention was turned to the rehabilitation of the Quincy Street building. When Lentz became director in Novem-