



CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE
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October 30, 2000

Dear City Councilors,

Thank you for the opportunity tonight to speak to you about an issue dear to our hearts – the future of Cambridge Rindge & Latin. As you know, in January of this year the Cambridge School Committee voted unanimously to redesign the high school to enhance the academic, social and emotional lives of our students, especially those who have not been succeeding in the past.

While we all look forward to having a brand new expanded library in our city as soon as possible, we are speaking tonight as individual School Committee members who are very concerned about potentially negative impacts to the high school if the Broadway site is chosen. We believe these impacts will work against the redesign. It would certainly make our work much harder as we try to build a successful high school in a decade when schools will be—and already are—competing fiercely for students and talented teachers. In short, we believe the Broadway site offers many potential negatives with few significant benefits for our students.

1. Three years of construction will not only be noisy and difficult logistically, but worst of all, it will drain valuable time and energy away from work that needs to be done to upgrade curriculum, create internships, devise new vocational programs and complete the many other tasks we've promised to do at the high school. These activities would be interrupted by the need to make sure the campus remains passable and safe during construction.
2. There are significant concerns about whether an expansion would prevent us from having a workable emergency evacuation plan for the high school.
3. An expanded library could take away valuable open space, eliminate meeting places, block access, block natural light, and would most likely make our urban campus more urban. The high school has precious few outdoor facilities and many rules for its students. With more people and less space on that site, students would be policed even more-- something that is neither desirable nor developmentally appropriate for high schoolers.
4. Right now, parking around the high school is very difficult and there are events-- frequently multiple events--every night. Sharing parking with an expanded library seems

unrealistic. To the extent that the new library would impinge on high school parking during the day, it would hurt our ability to attract new teachers at a time when we expect to see many retirements over the next five years.

- 5 Finally, we do not see any significant benefits from putting the new library next to the high school. Students are not allowed to use the public library during the day. There are no formal programs between the school and library threatened by a move to Central Square. In fact, the School Committee has increased funding for the high school library by 50 percent over the past five years. Through computers in the high school, students are learning to use the Internet to find resources wherever they might be. For studying at night and on weekends, it is easier for students to get to Central Square by public transit.

We believe the issue of how the Broadway expansion would impact the high school has not been adequately explored at all. Please take seriously the letter that the high school principal has written about her concerns. Since it is our understanding that there will be another special meeting sometime in November to continue the siting discussion, we hope you will seek the opinion of the School Committee and our senior staff between now and then. We ask that you join us in doing all you can to make our one and only high school an inviting, challenging and exciting place for young adults to be.

E. Denise Simmons
Alice Turkel
Nancy Walser

School Committee members



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5-404
Cambridge School Committee letter regarding
the library site and the negative impacts
if the Broadway site is chosen.

Special Meeting for November 16, 2000