

May 5, 1999

Cambridge City Council
City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

To the Honorable, the Cambridge City Council:

As our city grows and develops, open space becomes even more important for the quality of life in our neighborhoods. We ask that you seriously consider alternate sites for the proposed new Cambridge Public Library. We of the Cambridge Greenspace Alliance oppose any expansion of the existing library at the Broadway site.

The present campus containing the high school, main library, and Lorentz Park was planned and built in the late seventies through a participatory process involving the surrounding neighborhood. At that time no future expansion of the existing main library was suggested. The high school building program was expansive and had severe impact on the design of the campus. The program pushed the arts building over the Cambridge Street sidewalk as an overhang. It pushed the parking area toward Broadway to provide space for the field house and garage. The campus thus became built to the maximum.

The design program for the park came from over 200 responses to a survey questionnaire seeking input from the neighborhood. The responses expressed an overwhelming desire for an open passive park with grass and trees around the perimeter, since the neighborhood had no such park. The design of the high school campus sought to provide good circulation and easy access to the school and a variety of outside spaces for the diverse student body.

Any expansion of the library on this campus will negatively impact the high school and Lorentz Park. Extension of the new library wing over the parking lot and the tennis courts will block circulation and destroy outside spaces used by students. Elevation of the tennis courts to the rooftop level will create visual blight and render playing problematic. The elevated court will present problems with security and supervision. Wind at the elevated level will be akin to the presently windy elevated Danehy Park.

The proposed library will block the diagonal walk extending across Lorentz Park from Broadway to Cambridge Street. This diagonal path provides for pedestrian circulation as it has existed here for over a hundred years. The below grade structure will lower the water table and eventually kill the large beech tree at the corner of the existing library. It will threaten other nearby trees. The increased traffic on the access drive from Broadway to the parking garage for 130 cars will present a greater hazard to park pedestrians than exists with the present drive to the modest parking lot.

Unjustifiable claims that the new building will enhance the park echo statements about previous library designs. The new library will raise a built skyline along one side of the park and degrade its openness. This openness with unfettered view of the sky is a major attribute of the passive recreational quality of the park. The building would demand additional space for pedestrian access, for fire lanes, and for the proposed forecourt entry.

Please consider carefully your decision concerning the siting of our library for the 21st century. We need to stop the pattern of building on scarce open space. This library will serve us, our children and beyond, and it deserves a proper site where it enhances its neighborhood rather than detracting from it.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Yours very truly,



Deborah Kershner, Chairperson
Cambridge Greenspace Alliance
12 Laurel Street
Cambridge, MA 02139



MEMORANDUM

TO: Robert W. Healy, City Manager

FROM: Susan M. Flannery, Director of Libraries *SMP*

DATE: April 27, 1999

RE: City Council Order #010, dated 4/12/99

RECEIVED
1999 APR 27 PM 3:09
OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

Attached is the response from STS regarding communication from Jose A. Gomez-Ibanez and Nanette E. Wilson.



April 26, 1999

Robert W. Healy
City Manager
City Hall
Cambridge, MA 02139

1218 MASSACHUSETTS AVE
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138
TELEPHONE 617-547-6475
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Dear Mr. Healy,

In February 1999, the Cambridge Public Library conducted a survey of citizen opinions regarding the future location of the city's main library. The survey design encouraged a high rate of response and allowed for a simple analysis process. While the results provide some valuable evidence as to where the citizens of Cambridge would like to see the library, this profile of community opinions is only one element of the decision-making process. There are certain limitations and unforeseen issues inherent to any real-world research process, which will affect the interpretation of the results. This survey is no exception.

Some of the issues that have arisen in the Cambridge Public Library location survey relate to the statistical analysis of the responses. In particular, there was concern over the way in which the results of certain questions were calculated. Questions asking respondents which modes of transportation they would use to reach the library if it were in various locations (questions 5 through 8) were specifically designed to accept multiple responses. After all, people may use more than one mode of transportation to reach the same destination at different times. The very nature of these questions is the reason why the percentages of the different possible responses total more than 100%. The total number of responses, all of which were accepted, exceeds the number of respondents, each of whom were only counted once.

While question 9 (which asks respondents for their main library location preference) was not specifically written with the intention for people to choose multiple locations, it did not restrict the respondent to one choice. Therefore, a significant percentage of respondents did choose more than one location. The fact that the total was more than 100% is indicative of this outcome. Even if the respondents who selected more than one location are eliminated from the totals, the Broadway location remains the most preferred option (56%) over the second most common choice, Central Square (22%). When looking at these figures, one should be comparing the percentage of respondents choosing Broadway to those choosing one other location, and not comparing those who chose Broadway to all those who chose anything but Broadway. The fact that one location is preferred to any other by a large margin is more important than whether a true majority of respondents chose one particular location.

The results of questions 2 through 4 (which ask respondents about their likelihood to visit the main library in other locations) support the preference for Broadway indicated in question 9 results. If the library were to move to any of the three different locations offered, respondents would be less likely to visit it. In addition, answers written by respondents when asked for additional comments support the preference for Broadway. The most frequent comment made was a statement of preference for this location and a desire to keep the main library there.

Another issue that affects any research survey is that of sampling. Unfortunately, it is nearly impossible to select a truly random sample of a large city in a cost-effective and time saving



manner. Researchers' samples are often the most convenient of several less than perfect options. In this case, the voter registration list of the City of Cambridge was used. Therefore, the results of the survey may better reflect the opinions of registered voters than those of the entire population of the city. In addition, a response bias can occur when certain types of people are more likely than others to respond. In this study, more responses were received from some neighborhoods of the city than from others. One solution to this issue is to weight the data according to the true population proportion of each neighborhood in the city as a whole, not to weight each neighborhood equally as was suggested. After weighting the data to correct for this neighborhood bias, the results still show a preference for the Broadway location (56%). Central Square remains the second choice (33%) of the total weighted sample.

In response to the concern that differences between frequent and infrequent library users were not reported, the survey did not ask respondents for this information. Respondents were asked whether they had visited the Main Library in the past 12 months. Results of this question are indicative of how recently respondents have visited the Main Library and not how frequently they use it. Differences between recent and non-recent visitors of the Main Library are reported in the last two columns of every table. As with the weighting of neighborhood populations, any overrepresentation of recent users of the library could be corrected for, but only if their proportion in the city as a whole is known. This proportion is not known because although the City of Cambridge can determine the percentage of registered library borrowers in its population, information on how recently or how often they have visited the Main Library is not available. (In addition, just looking at registered borrowers does not account for other patrons who use the library without actually registering for a library card.) The total results, then, should be viewed as a stronger reflection of the population of recent library users (who may or may not be registered borrowers).

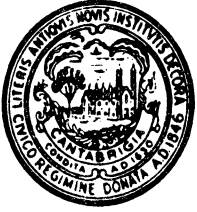
One might also consider the lack of alternative location descriptions as a limitation of the survey. However, the intention of the survey was to solicit opinions from citizens regarding the location and accessibility of the library, not the services and amenities of the particular building or surrounding neighborhood. This was also evident in the nature of the other questions that focused on accessibility issues such as transportation modes. In addition, a strong effort was made to keep the survey as short and simple as possible, making it difficult to provide lengthy descriptions. This may have also been the reason why question 9 was posed the way it was and not as a list of paired alternatives. While such an option may have provided some additional valuable information, the same could be said of an endless list of possible questions and alternative wordings thereof. If the survey were to become too long or too complicated, the response rate would have suffered and the statistical analysis would have become more time consuming and costly.

In summary, the Cambridge Public Library has conducted, to the best of its ability, a simple, cost-effective and valuable survey. The Library made every effort to complete this study in the allotted time and budget in as fair a manner as possible. As is the case with all research, the results must be viewed with the limitations of the study in mind. A vivid snapshot of the opinions of a relevant portion of the community was developed through the collection of this data. It remains but one factor in the very complicated decision of where to house the city's main library in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Karen Mears".

Karen Mears
Project Assistant



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6.

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

May 3, 1999

To The Honorable, The City Council:

Please find attached a response to Awaiting Report Item No. 99-73, regarding a report on the survey circulated by the Library Trustees, forwarded by Library Director Susan Flannery.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mec
Attachment

Consent Agenda #6

349 Cal. 1
5
Relative to AW Rpt. #99-73,
regarding a report on the survey
circulated by the Library Trustees.

In City Council May 3, 1999

CHARTER RIGHT

BY Councillor Davis

5/10/99

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