

M-C News

A PUBLICATION OF THE MID-CAMBRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION
AND THE LONGFELLOW NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

Vol. 5, No. 1

January, 1996

Will MCNA Take a Position On Library Expansion?

At the beginning of February the City and the Public Library will direct their design team to develop one conceptual plan for expansion of the Main Library. By March 15 the architects are to complete the plan, and on April 10 it will be submitted as part of a grant application to the State.

The design team supports Scheme A, in which the new building is attached to the old building next to the current parking lot and then extends through the lot and down the driveway almost to Broadway.

The design team is made up of William Rawn Associates and Ann Beha Associates, together with landscape architects Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates.

Scheme A and three other very different alternatives were shown to the city-wide Library Design Advisory Committee on January 17. The architects have prepared plans and the "pros and cons" of the four schemes, and these are included on pages 3 to 6 of the *M-C News*.

An acting MCNA Library Study Committee has been working since mid-December to develop the information residents and the Association will need to respond to the library initiative. This Committee has produced a report which appears on pages 2 and 3.

On January 20 the MCNA Coordinating decided to call a Neighborhood Meeting on February 1 to consider taking a position on the library expansion in time to influence the choice of schemes. Library Director Susan Flannery has told *M-C News* that any positions taken by MCNA will be weighed in choosing a scheme that is submitted to the State.

There is no assurance that the grant application will be successful. If it *is* successful, some modifications in the design may be possible, but the basic concept will be locked in at that time unless the City is willing to turn its back on State funding for the project.

The Library and the park which surrounds it are both of enormous importance to our neighborhood. The Main Library is our *local* library. The park is our *only* substantial public open space.

We have an opportunity to influence the library expansion that we may not have later, but time is short. To do this we must express a shared preference among the schemes and voice common concerns about their effects on the park, about parking and about automobile access. This will be a challenge for us as individuals and as an Association. Please join the effort and attend the February 1 Neighborhood Meeting.

**Neighborhood Meeting
On Library Expansion Plans
Thursday, February 1, 1996
7:00 PM**

CRLS High School Media Cafeteria

Background

1994

Nov. *M-C News* reports on need for upgrading library facilities, on focus groups which discussed ideas for improvement, and on hiring of Adam Cohen Associates by Library to do a "needs study."

1995

Sep. Library Director Susan Flannery leads group discussion on expansion initiative with at MCNA Issues Forum.

Oct. City's architect selection process begins; unanimous first choice is team of Rawn and Beha associates.

Nov. *M-C News* report from Issues Forum on expansion.

Nov. Meetings between architects and City's Library Expansion Steering Committee begin.

Dec. MCNA holds community meeting on expansion with Director Flannery; MCNA Library Study Committee is formed.

Dec. Study Committee organizes and starts to meet regularly.

—continued on page 7

LIBRARY STUDY COMMITTEE REPORT

This report reviews the major issues raised by the library expansion project and summarizes the views expressed by committee members. There is not consensus among committee members on all issues. We have tried to present the issues in a balanced way, noting the areas of agreement and where there is not consensus, the different viewpoints.

We believe that there are four major issues, the *need for library expansion, open space, traffic and parking and design.*

I. NEED FOR LIBRARY EXPANSION

Cambridge needs a library that is large enough to provide for the entire community's current and future needs. We strongly believe that the current space is inadequate. We recognize that there are many needs and that there are also areas in which expansion could be scaled back.

Cambridge needs a library with:

- Small meeting rooms for community and other groups
- Space for quiet reading
- Room for children's programs
- Better administrative space
- More stack space
- More room for media and new technology
- Space that is disabled accessible
- Space that is properly climate controlled
- A meeting room large enough to accommodate readings and cultural events

The expansion could possibly be *reduced* by:

- Using other community buildings, like schools, to avoid duplication, e.g., in young adult programs or meeting space
- Moving non-library activities, like the cable TV office, out of the main library
- Using existing space more efficiently
- Using other space when there is an unusually large crowd for a library event, thus reducing the size needed for large meetings
- Careful analysis of the real future space needs
- Not including a cafe/bookstore space

We believe that the Library should communicate with the School Department and other city officials about the inventory of other public spaces, opportunities for shared use with the Library, and the requirements and goals of the expansion.

II. OPEN SPACE

The park is the only significant open space in mid-Cambridge and the impact on this space is of great concern to the neighborhood. We agree that any reduction in open space should be minimized.

We believe the open space can be enhanced by:

- Preserving important specimen trees

- Improving views from Broadway by cleaning up landscaping, removing unnecessary signs, etc.
- Improving lighting on paths to main library entrance for safety reasons
- Designing and landscaping so all sides of a new building present attractive views

We question whether it is necessary to:

- Straighten path between the library and high school
- Fill amphitheater west of children's room
- Build a new structure that creates a "presence" on Broadway

The biggest open space issue is presented by the "J scheme" which puts the new building on the existing parking lot and driveway, separating the open space in front of the library from the space on the east side of the new building. This site is the largest area of open space in our neighborhood.

III. TRAFFIC AND PARKING

We believe that any plan must include *realistic* and *specific* information about how parking needs and automobile access will be met. We are concerned that parking not become an "afterthought" that is addressed too late.

We do not want open space sacrificed for parking or roadways. Almost all the present plans call for parking to be built on the site of the tennis courts, either below or above ground. We need to know whether this is feasible.

We agree with the need for a traffic study. Such a study must be an essential part of planning early on.

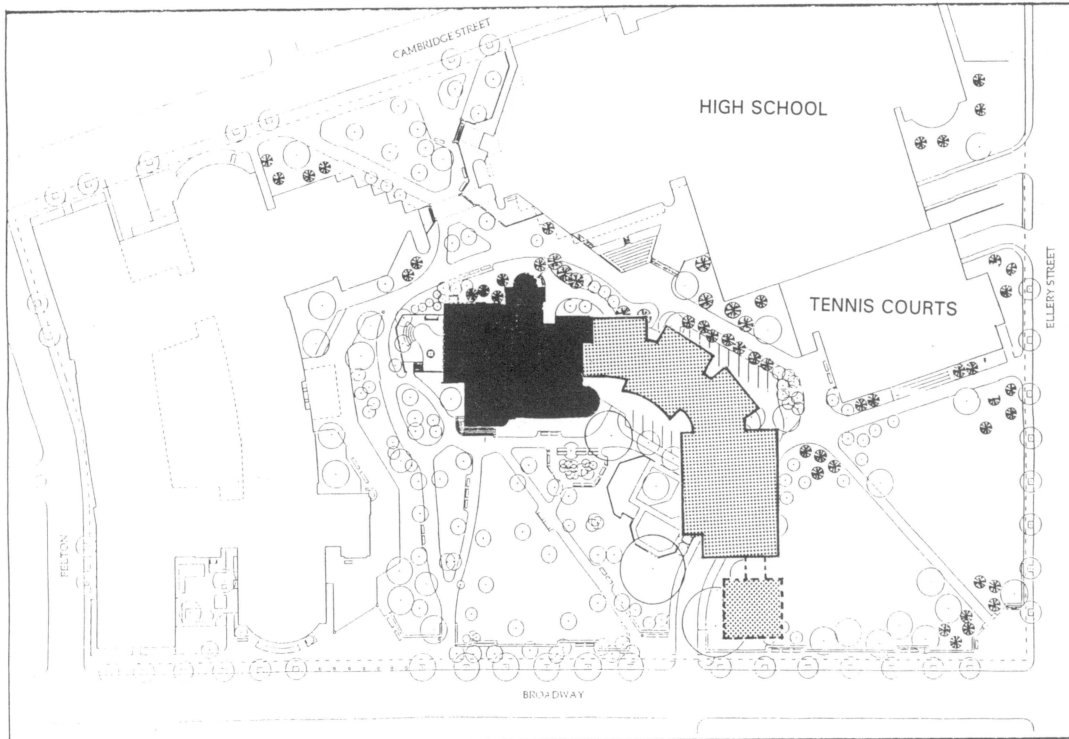
We strongly believe that a clear, detailed, realistic parking scheme **MUST** be part of the design. Before any plan goes forward, we need to know whether:

- The School Committee will permit use of the tennis court garage
- The number of parking spaces for expansion can be reduced from 110
- Traffic impact on Ellery St. and on the neighborhood in general, particularly during peak use after a major event, can be mitigated
- Underground parking at the tennis court is economically feasible

—continued on page 7

Cambridge Public Library Project Information

The plans and other information this page were provided by the City's design team of William Rawn Associates, Architects, and Ann Beha Associates, Architecture - Historic Preservation.



SCHEME A

New building (shaded) on existing parking lot forward toward Broadway (bottom of drawing) in general area of driveway.

Advantages

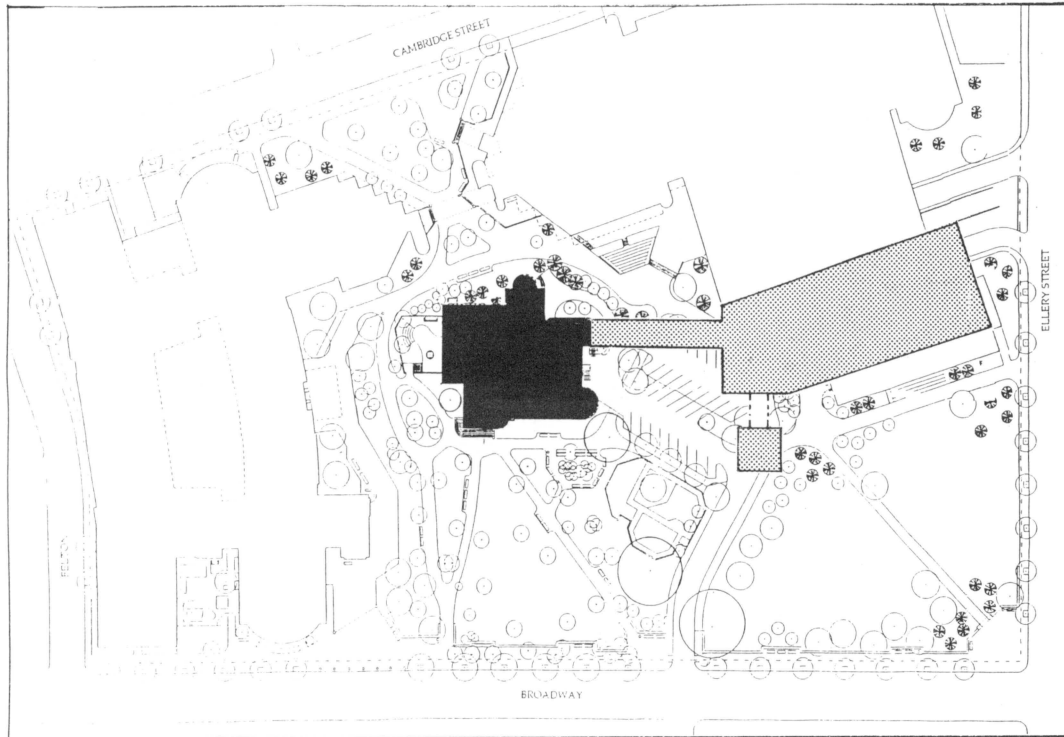
1. Forms a balanced civic park space with the High School, the existing Library, and the new library addition; a three-sided space.
2. This civic grouping pays strong respect to the existing building.
3. Civic celebration of resources being devoted to new library as well as to restoration of existing.
4. Builds primarily on existing asphalt surfaces thus preserving as much park space as possible.
5. Opens view from interior of new building into Civic Park space.
6. Opens view from new building into Ellery Street Park - giving an importance to Ellery Street Park.
7. Maintains strong and seamless connection between new building and existing building.
8. Keeps open, and relatively direct, the path from the Ellery Street/Broadway corner to Cambridge Street.
9. Can provide security for Ellery-to-Cambridge Street path with views out from inside library building.
10. Moderately direct connection between parking garage and new building.

Disadvantages

1. Places the building between the two parks (limits extent of open space).
2. Limits view of existing building from corner of Ellery Street.

Library Project Information —continued

The plans and other information this page were provided by the City's design team of William Rawn Associates, Architects, and Ann Beha Associates, Architecture - Historic Preservation.



SCHEME B

New building (shaded) on top of tennis courts with long connecting bridge to existing library.

Advantages

1. Simultaneously covers up a particularly unattractive facade of the high school.
2. Builds upon an already-built area to save more park space.

Disadvantages

1. Forecloses use of tennis court structure for parking.
2. Forces new parking to be located at grade, thereby destroying significant park space.
3. Civic identification of library is overwhelmed by much bigger presence of high school.
4. Building is not very close to Broadway, thereby diminishing its visibility.
5. Rear of new building is without natural light.
6. Significant portion of new building is on School Department property.

GOALS OF THE LIBRARY DESIGN

—January 17, 1996

To design a Library that captures the unique spirit of Cambridge.

To design a Library which captures the important civic role a library plays in a democratic society, in a city committed to those civic values.

To design a Library that meets the 21st century needs of the city.

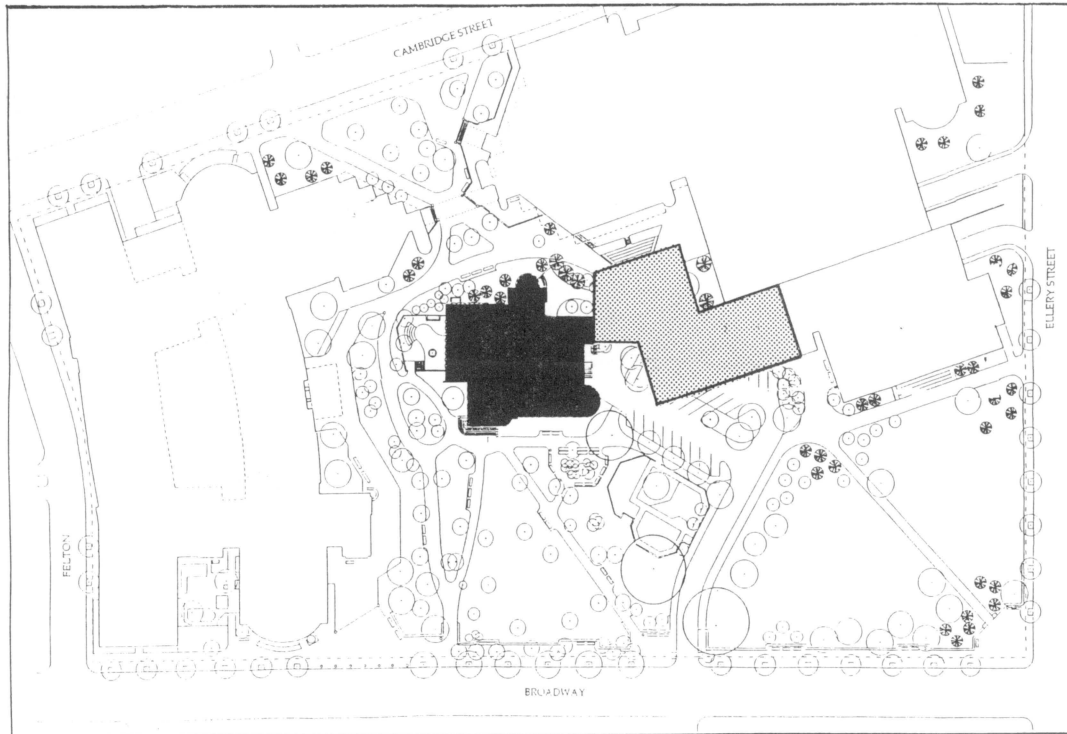
To design a Library that is every bit as beloved as the existing building.

To design a Library which respects, indeed celebrates, the landscape setting of the two adjacent park spaces.

To design a Library which provides sufficient parking for its patrons.

Library Project Information —continued

The plans and other information this page were provided by the City's design team of William Rawn Associates, Architects, and Ann Beha Associates, Architecture - Historic Preservation.



SCHEME C

New building (shaded) to the east of existing building as close as possible to the High School.

Advantages

1. Covers parking lot and less-used space near high school, minimizing impact on park.
2. Entirety of new building is very close to existing building.
3. New building would be close to parking garage (under existing tennis courts).

Disadvantages

1. The design and commitment of resources is in no way celebrated as a civic building.
2. Creates narrow, sinister and dark path between Ellery/Broadway corner and Cambridge Street.
3. Covers windows and casts shadows on high school classrooms.
4. Three sides of new building would have no natural light.
5. Much of new building is on School Department property.

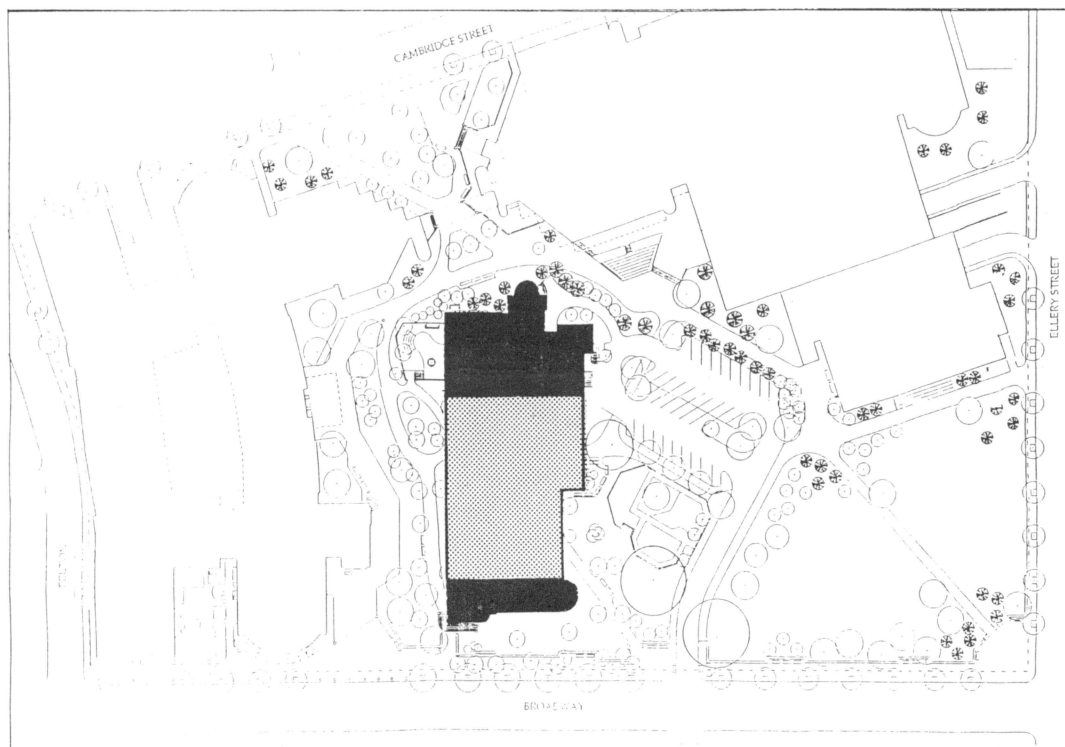
FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE LIBRARY EXPANSION PROJECT....

The Library has published a booklet "Why Are We Thinking About Improving and Expanding the Main Library Building." Free copies are available at the Library.

Project documents, including the "needs assessment study" by Adam Cohen Associates and Frederick Rindge's deed to the City for the Library and its land, are in a binder available at the reference desk in the Library.

Library Project Information —continued

The plans and other information this page were provided by the City's design team of William Rawn Associates, Architects, and Ann Beha Associates, Architecture - Historic Preservation.



SCHEME D

Part of existing building (dark shading) pulled forward into park. New building (shaded) inserted between two existing buildings.

Advantages

1. Maintains the 19th century feeling of the entirely library.
2. Front of library closer and more visible to Broadway.

Disadvantages

1. Huge costs involved in separating and moving the existing building. This includes indeterminate cost of literally cutting away parts of the same building. (These costs will never be retrieved in new space but simply adds to total cost.)
2. Entire existing building would be closed during construction. A temporary main library would need to be established for two years.
3. Moving building forward would destroy 1/2 - 2/3 of park space in front of the library and compromise the historical relationship between park and open space.

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Editor: John Pitkin. Copy editors: Connie May,
Martha Osler

Committee Report *(continued from p. 2)*

- Parking can be controlled to ensure it is for short-term library use only
- Other sites, like Harvard's Felton St. garage, can be shared at least for large events
- Safety can be maintained in enclosed parking areas
- Automobile drop-off areas for main entrance are included in the landscape plan

Parking in any new garage should be made available to neighborhood residents during snow emergencies, when school or library are closed

IV. DESIGN ISSUES

Points of agreement:

- *The historic building should be an important focus on the site*
- *The historic building should be preserved and restored*

Key questions:

- *Should the design create a compact building?*
- *Can the mass of the new building be reduced?*
- *How prominent should the new building be on the site?*

There are four principal schemes under consideration. We agree that all design schemes must include realistic information on parking and on building costs before a decision can be made. The schemes with their pros and cons are:

Scheme A: New Building on Existing Parking Lot and Toward Broadway

PROS:

- Strong new building with a "presence" on Broadway.
- Creates "browsing" area within library.
- Creates new park spaces that reflect the different current uses, i.e. courtyard in front and recreational space on the east; these spaces are currently divided by the driveway and tot lot.
- Builds on existing driveway, so usable open space is not effectively reduced.

CONS:

- Open space is divided by a building.
- May block views of old building from Ellery St.-Broadway corner.
- Back and side of new building face Ellery St.
- Architect's plan calls for building that is narrow and extends toward Broadway; it could be more compact.

Scheme B: New Building on Tennis Courts, Connected by Bridge

PROS:

- Leaves park as one contiguous space.
- Presents attractive long facade on north side of park

CONS:

- Eliminates the only apparent site for parking.
- Should not be considered without a parking plan.
- Also has a long extension dividing two buildings.

Scheme C: New Building to East of Existing Building, Next to High School

PROS:

- Leaves park as one contiguous space.
- Does not interfere with views of old building.
- Builds on existing parking space.

CONS:

- New building feels cramped and squeezed in.

Scheme D: Move Front of Old building Forward, New Building Between Two Parts of Old

PROS:

- Creates a single compact building.
- Makes old facade the single focus.

CONS:

- Expense.
- Library will be closed during construction.
- Reduces open space in front of library.

The Library Study Committee

Ed De Angelo (chair), Bob Brattvet, Karen Carmean, Tony Gomez-Ibanez, Fred Kimberk, Joan Krizack, Stavros Macrakis, Nancy Nyhan, Doane Perry, Barbara Petery, Rita Richmond, Judy Stitt, David Szlag, Emily West, Nan Wilson.

These members' names will be submitted to the Association for confirmation at the February meeting.

Background

—continued from page 1

1996

- Jan. 2. Charles Sullivan speaks on History of Library Site and Building, sponsored by MCNA.
- Jan. 7 and 9. Design team holds open design sessions.
- Jan. 9. First meeting of City Manager-appointed, city-wide Library Design Advisory Committee.
- Jan. 10. Designers and Library hold Community Discussion and Recap of Open Sessions in High School; 100 residents attend.
- Jan. 17. Architects review 4 principal design concepts with design advisory committee.
- Jan. 25. Design Advisory Committee views site.
- Jan. 29. Design Advisory Committee scheduled to make recommendation.
- Mar. 15. Architect goal to complete design for submission.
- Apr. 10. Deadline for submission of proposals to State Board of Library Commissioners; \$26,000,000 to be awarded on a competitive basis.

Police Name Liaison With MCNA

On October 28, the MCNA Coordinating Committee wrote to the Cambridge Police Department to request that appointment of a liaison. The letter said, "We believe that regular contacts between the MCNA and a dedicated police officer can open the door to effective cooperation to improve public safety in our neighborhood."

The Department has informed us that Officer Anthony Santiago, a member of the Bicycle Patrol Unit, has expressed a desire to work in Mid-Cambridge and will act as the liaison. He will be invited to all future meetings of the Association.

Cambridge Hospital Update

The Hospital has said that it will return to the Conservation District Commission no earlier than April to complete consideration of its application. The new ambulatory care building is being completely reworked in keeping with the downsizing from 80,000 to 60,000 square feet. The Hospital now intends to start construction in December of this year.

Broadway Marketplace First Anniversary

The Broadway Marketplace will celebrate its one year anniversary on Friday, February 9, between 4 and 8 pm. The gala includes free gifts, entertainment, wine tastings and food samplings as well a presentation of a plaque to the MCNA as an "expression of thanks for their support."

Longfellow Community School Notes

The Longfellow Community School winter term classes begin on Monday, January 29. For information or to sign up, please call Penelope Kleespies, Coordinator, at 349-6260.

The Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association is open to all residents of the neighborhood, which is bounded by Massachusetts Avenue, Harvard Square, Kirkland Street, Somerville City, Prospect Street and Central Square.

New members are welcome to join at all meetings or write to MCNA, Membership Secretary, P.O. Box 907, Cambridge, MA 02238 for information.

NOTICE OF MEETING

Thursday, February 1, 1996

7:00 PM

CRLS High School

Media Cafeteria

M-C NEWS

P.O. Box 907

Cambridge, MA 02238

Councillor Timothy Toomey
City Hall/Mass Ave
Cambridge MA 02139

Uniting the Mid-Cambridge and Longfellow Communities



City of Cambridge

43.

IN CITY COUNCIL

January 29, 1996

COUNCILLOR TOOMEY

ORDERED: That this City Council go on record congratulating the Broadway Marketplace on celebrating its one year anniversary on Friday, February 9 between 4:00 and 8:00 p.m.

In City Council January 29, 1996
Adopted by the affirmative vote of nine members.
Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:- *D. Margaret Drury*

D. Margaret Drury
City Clerk



City of Cambridge

43.

IN CITY COUNCIL

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A true copy;

ATTEST:-

D. Margaret Drury

D. Margaret Drury
City Clerk

Consent Order #43

R-124

Councillor Toomey re:
Congratulations to the Broadway
Marketplace on celebrating its
one year anniversary on Friday,
February 9 between 4:00 and 8:00 pm.

In City Council January 29, 1996

Order Adopted