

May 5, 1999

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

To the Honorable, the Cambridge City Council:

1999 MAY -7 A 8:33

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

Consent Communciation #4 3755

A communication was received from
Deborah Kershner, Chairperson,
Camridge Greenspace Alliance,
transmitting opposition to any
expansion of the existing library
at the Broadway site.

In City Council May 17, 1999

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