

M-C News

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Lorentz Park complex projects are focus of meeting

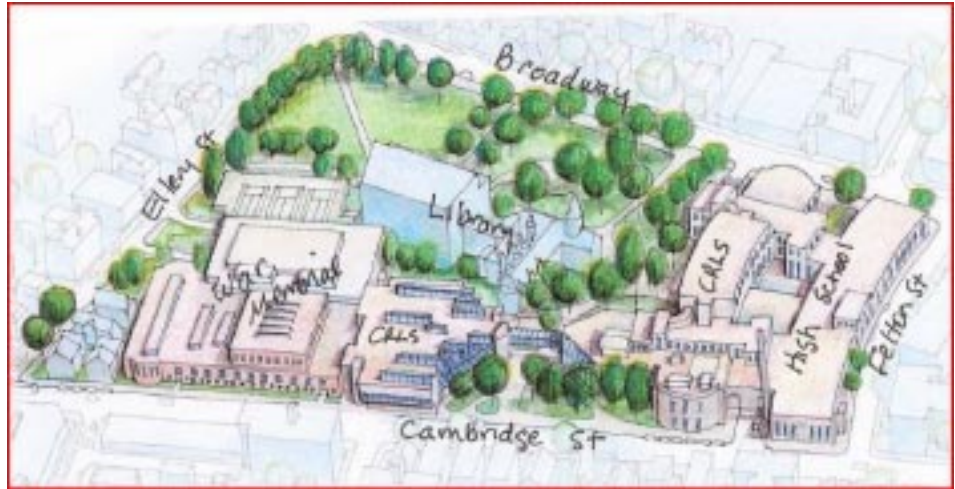
By 2011, every building and open space in the block will be upgraded, expanded, or re-landscaped.

While it comprises only one city block, the Joan Lorentz Park complex is home to several significant city buildings--the Main Library, CRLS High School and War Memorial--all of which are undergoing multi-million dollar renovations.

The big unveiling of the Broadway and Ellery Street side of the complex will happen this summer with completion of the

\$64-plus million Main Library renovation and expansion project started in 2007. All Cambridge residents look forward to exploring the historic renovated building, the new addition and its collections. Neighbors also anticipate using the soon-to-be newly landscaped park and tot lot.

The \$25.6 million renovated War Memorial re-opened in January 2009 after a 17-month overhaul, although access to the Cambridge Street sidewalk and



Bordered by Broadway, Ellery, Felton and Cambridge Streets, the Joan Lorentz Park complex is being transformed.
--Drawing courtesy of HMFH Architects Inc.

street parking is not yet restored. And, the \$125 million renovation of the Cambridge Rindge & Latin School (CRLS) is set to begin in May and last until 2011. As the drawing above indicates, pretty much every building and open space that makes up the Joan Lorentz Park complex will either be upgraded, expanded and/or re-landscaped by the time the last dollar is spent.

City officials including Richard Rossi Deputy Assistant Manager and Michael Black, project manager for CRLS, will be on hand at the March 4 MCNA neighborhood meeting to update residents on the status of these important projects, including the Main Library project, Joan Lorentz Park and tot lot reopening and the soon-to-be-started CRLS renovation. These large projects include significant sub-projects, such as the Ellery Street Drainage project, re-landscaping of the Joan Lorentz Park triangle on Cambridge Street, and a pedestrian improvement and traffic-calming plan around the entire complex. The Ellery Street drainage project, initially slated to begin in February 2009 (see fall 2008 newsletter at www.MCNA.org), has been postponed until early this summer, in part a reflection of neighborhood comments.

An update on that project as well as an update on the landscape design by HMFH Architects Inc. for the
(Continued on Page 2)

MCNA meeting agenda

When: Wednesday, March 4, 7 p.m.

Where: Cambridge Rindge & Latin High School media cafeteria, 459 Broadway. Enter through the main doors.

Agenda: Joan Lorentz Park Complex Projects Update

- Hear details of the Main Library renovation and expansion project. When is the new library set to open? Learn when you can use the main portion of Joan Lorentz Park again and the new tot lot.
- Update on Ellery Street Drainage project; new project schedule to be announced.
- CRLS project to kick off.
- Joan Lorentz Park triangle project update.

Neighborhood meeting to focus on park complex

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Joan Lorentz Park Cambridge Street triangular area between Cambridge Street, the CRLS media wing and CRLS Arts Building will also be part of the March meeting.

Landscaping issues

The current proposal for renovating this area is to construct a wooden deck over the depressed lawn and create a level plaza of synthetic boards extending from the street sidewalk to the main entrance of the school.

While there are a variety of opinions on the landscape design for this area, MCNA coordinating committee member and past president John Pitkin has shared his views which follow in a letter to the design team: "Though the deck would conserve the large old white oak trees, the effect of the plan is to tie the urban fabric of the street to the new paved plaza

between the school entrance and the library building.

"However well-intentioned this plan, the lead article in the Ideas section of the *Boston Sunday Globe* on January 4 'How the City Hurts Your Brain...and what you can do about it,' suggests that replacing the existing park area with a more urban landscape may not be a good idea and will provide students and neighbors far less benefit than lower cost alternatives," Pitkin continued. "Studies have demonstrated that the 'psychological benefits of green space are closely linked to the diversity of its plant life. When a city park has a larger variety of trees, subjects that spend time in the park score higher on various measures of psychological well-being, compared with less biodiverse parks.'"

Because the Joan Lorentz Park complex remains a work in progress, and the nature and scope of the projects are significant, the MCNA's Coordinating Committee wants to ensure that residents are updated on what to expect next and the timelines relative to the variety of projects underway. We look forward to seeing you March 4 at the upcoming meeting.

NEIGHBORHOOD CALENDAR

MCNA neighborhood meeting, Wednesday, March 4, 7 to 9 p.m. at the Cambridge Rindge & Latin School media cafeteria, 459 Broadway. See Page 1 for agenda and details.

March 9: Internationally renowned architect Renzo Piano will speak about his upcoming renovations to the Fogg, Busch-Reisinger and Sackler Museums, Monday, March 9, 6 p.m., at Sanders Theater. This project to refurbish Harvard's art museums is scheduled to start this year and end in 2013. Tickets are available from the Harvard box office at 617-496-2222. For more info, call 617-384-5224.

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