

# M-C News

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

Vol. 11, No. 5

September, 2002

## Four library designs considered; One to be picked in October

Designers presented four alternative plans for expanding the Main Public Library on Broadway to the city's Design Advisory Committee at meetings on Sept. 12 and 19. The city administration will select one scheme to be developed further, to be revealed publicly on Oct. 22.

The alternative plans are very different, although they all preserve the old main building and call for demolishing the 1967 addition, which houses the reference and children's rooms. According to Deputy City Manager Richard Rossi, the choice of plan will be guided by the Design Committee as well as by public comments.

On Tuesday, October 8, 7 p.m., at the Sakey Room in the Main Public Library, the MCNA will hold a public meeting for members and all interested residents to review the current massing plans, discuss shared concerns, and consider making a unified statement of these concerns on behalf of the association.

At this stage, the size of the new building has been set to house the library's activities, and architect William

### Has Harvard abandoned its plan for a tunnel?

The Planning Board on Sept. 3 gave Harvard the go-ahead to proceed with construction of the Center for Government and International Studies (CGIS)--with or without a tunnel under Cambridge Street to connect the new academic buildings. Although Harvard has not formally withdrawn its application with the City Council for a tunnel easement, it now has asked for and received from the Planning Board special permit approvals to proceed with two different plans, with or without the tunnel.

Harvard acknowledged to the board that City Council approval of the tunnel easement is unlikely, so it has therefore decided to proceed with the project without the tunnel. However, Harvard continues to  
*(Continued on Page 3)*

Rawn has proposed four schemes showing different ways that this amount of space could be arranged on the site. Currently these plans show only broad outlines of how the building would be related to the overall site, which includes the high school and adjacent Joan Lorentz Park. Detailed architectural and design considerations will be developed later.

The proposed plans include: The "west" (#1), a two-story addition extending forward toward Broadway close to the historic Rindge School building; "center" (#2), a three-story addition surrounding the rear of the old building on three sides; "east" (#3), a four-story addition on the existing parking lot; and "far east" (#4), at two and three stories stretching across  
*(Continued on Page 2)*

### MCNA to review library plans at Oct. 8 meeting

The MCNA will hold a neighborhood meeting on Tuesday, Oct. 8 to review the four schemes currently under consideration for the massing of the new library building on Broadway.

The meeting, starting at **7 p.m. in the Sakey Room of the Main Public Library at 449 Broadway**, has been arranged to ensure that the decision-makers hear directly from Mid-Cambridge residents about the issues and concerns that affect our community, before they make a final decision about the massing of the library complex.

There will be an informational presentation followed by a business meeting to determine the MCNA's formal position on the alternative schemes.

## Four library designs under consideration

(Continued from Page 1)

the parking lot and half of the tennis courts.

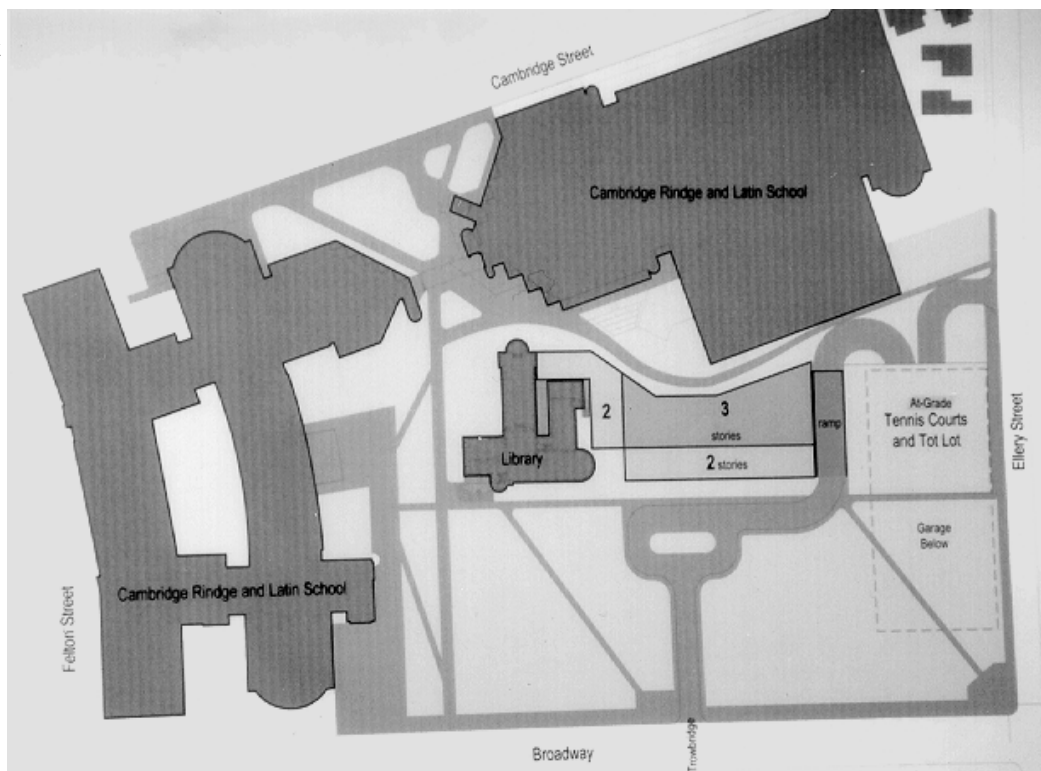
The last scheme would require demolishing and replacing the parking now under the tennis courts, relocation of two tennis courts and the tot lot, and loss of one tennis court. (See illustration below.)

### One Scheme Favored

When the different plans were unveiled Sept. 12, the design team and committee members alike heaped praise on the last scheme, while making mostly negative

comments about the first two. Comments on the third ("east") scheme were mixed.

According to the design team, the many pluses of the favored scheme include workable floor plans, restoration of "Irving Walk" (a straight pedestrian connection between



**"Far East" scheme shows planned addition (shaded) at right of old library.**

Broadway and Cambridge Street west of the library), a restored view of the library façade from this walk, "true neighborhood spaces around the building" that are a "gift to the city," an enhanced relationship of the library to the high school and park, views from the park, and a "sense of open space," and the potential for a better location of the tot lot next to Ellery Street.

In commenting, committee members echoed many of these points. One declared the "far east" scheme exciting, "a fabulous step forward" and "the best design approach." Committee members did, however, voice two concerns about the favored plan. The passage between the new addition and CRLS building could become an "airless" alley. Also, the new addition dwarfs the existing historic building, threatening to "bury" the Sakey Hall addition.

(For more information about the schemes, meeting notes, and the design process, see the project Web site at <http://www.ci.cambridge.ma.us/~CPL/booksandmortar/connews.html>.)

### Public Less Enthusiastic

More than 50 members of the public, including many Mid-Cambridge residents, attended the Sept. 12 meeting, filling the Sakey Room to capacity. Although some supported the favorite scheme, others raised concerns and questions.

Tony Gomez-Ibanez (Ellery St.) was concerned that the addition's windows overlooking Joan Lorentz Park would make the space less welcoming to casual users such as sunbathers, frisbie players, and exercisers.

Renee Arb

(Kirkland St.) saw the proposed Irving Walk not as a positive feature but as a negative one. She said she failed to see how a direct line-of-sight "between two streams of car traffic" was preferable to the slightly meandering connection that exists now.

### MCNA Recommendations

The MCNA has recently submitted to the committee the recommendations of its Library Design and Open Space Subcommittee, headed by Margaret "Tuny" McMahon, and the Library Traffic and Parking Subcommittee chaired by Rachel Solem, recommendations endorsed by the members of the association. Most relevant to the choice of schemes are those about trees, design and preservation of Joan Lorentz Park, the tot lot, garage area, high school use, light, pedestrian circulation,

(Continued on Next Page)

## Cambridge Street tunnel?

(Continued from Page 1)

believe that the tunnel “will make the project a more successful neighbor and will support Harvard’s objective to strengthen trans-national, cross-disciplinary scholarship at CGIS.” Harvard therefore requested the Planning Board grant approval to proceed with the project, with or without the tunnel.

The question that rises from this unusual situation is: Has Harvard really abandoned the tunnel? And, at what point in the project do they have to irrevocably commit to one plan or the other?

### Revised plans unveiled

The CGIS plan *sans* tunnel creates a new delivery point at the back of the south building and calls for related landscape modifications. A loading dock on the South building is needed because the original plan with tunnel allowed for deliveries to be made to the North building with internal distribution through the tunnel to the South building. Given the extensive prior comments about the need for the tunnel from a distribution perspective, some Planning Board members and attendees were surprised by the small change required to the project to accommodate the lack of the tunnel. The revised plans call for a delivery platform to be placed at the west side of the sunken garden. When not in use, the delivery platform lift will lie flush with the ground. Modifications to the landscaping will shield view of the delivery lift from Prescott Street. On Prescott Street, an existing curb cut will provide entrance for deliveries and trash pickup.

### Enhanced mitigation

Although the Planning Board does not have authority over mitigation plans, several members of the board pursued with Harvard an understanding of the mitigation for the project. During that exchange, Associate Dean David Zewinski stated that Harvard did intend to implement “most” of the recommendations of the Parsons Brinckerhoff report. It is still not clear to MCNA specifically which recommendations are to be implemented, although MCNA has asked for specific details. MCNA will continue to actively pursue clarification of the enhanced mitigation with Harvard and communicate with neighbors on Harvard’s mitigation plan.

Back on Aug. 5, the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission approved the same plans and modifications. The MDCNDC based its approval on its assessment that the revised plans without the tunnel were consistent with the originally submitted and approved plans. As Harvard proceeds with the project, they will be required to return to the commission with regard to lighting, landscape materials and planting plans.

If you walk by the site now, it is apparent the project

## Library Designs

(Continued from Page 2)

and the need for dialogue between the designers and neighbors. (The text of the recommendations can be found on the MCNA Web site at <http://www.MCNA.org>.)

The favored “far east” scheme clearly goes against the MCNA position that the diagonal walk from Broadway and Ellery Street to Cambridge Street should be maintained. It also seems to go against a recommendation to not overwhelm the site with cars: Joan Lorentz Park would be almost surrounded by car traffic.

All Mid-Cambridge residents are invited to the Neighborhood Meeting on Tuesday, October 8, 7 PM, at the Sakey Room of the main library to discuss to the schemes and decide if and how the Association should respond.

Two other public meetings are planned for Oct. 16 and Oct. 22 (see details on Page 4). Following this step, the designers will then make a cost estimate, and after adjustments are made, start the “schematic” phase of the “phase II” of the design process. The target date is for this to occur by the latter part of November.

### Design Advisory Committee

Deputy City Manager Richard Rossi said that he expects the Design Advisory Committee to play an important part in shaping the new library. He described the committee’s membership as balanced, including the members’ geographic representation of city-wide residency.

Members include representatives of the library staff and trustees, the School Committee, the Historical Commission, the Community Development Department, and citizens with a mix of expertise as well as a mix of long and short term involvement in the project. They are: Janet Axelrod, Eric Bird, Roger Booth, Carla Bosco, Ruth Butler, Ted Carpenter, Alex Duval, Fred Fantini, Elizabeth Gibb, John Gintell, Wen Quing Han, Arlyne Jackson, Emily Norris, James Roosevelt Jr., Hugh Russell, Victoria Solomon, Carole Sousa, and Charles Sullivan.

Rossi further stated that all committee meetings will be open to the public, with opportunity for public comment at the end of each meeting.

---

has begun with the appearance of construction fencing. The only step left for Harvard to truly begin the construction is to obtain building permits.

# Help Wanted: Your neighborhood needs you

Your neighborhood association needs you! Volunteer your skills!

Hours: flexible; set your own schedule

Compensation: generous praise and gratitude

Start date: Depends on the need and your availability

To apply: Call Joan Pickett at 617-497-8816, or e-mail her at [jpickett7@yahoo.com](mailto:jpickett7@yahoo.com) to express your interest.

## MCNA News “Stringers”

Have your finger on the pulse of Mid-Cambridge? Like to share news with friends and neighbors? Be a part of a network of neighborhood informants, sending along news items for the newsletter and Web site.

## Mediators and Negotiators

When things get tough, we need calm heads and cool tempers. If you are trained in these skills and can either represent MCNA in negotiations or coach neighbors, we need you!

## Lobbyists

Political junkies with good connections skilled in the art of educating political leaders on the issues. All political persuasions needed. No Guccis required.

## Public Relations

No flacks here – just folks with a clear writing style and experience in effective communications with a variety of audiences. Local press connections a plus.

## Graphics Designers and Artists

Make-over needed! Design a new look for MCNA – logo, stationery, newsletter template, etc. Also more professional-looking posters, flyers, maps and other materials. Computer skills a plus, but not required.

## Urban Planners

As we think about how Mid-Cambridge is growing and changing, we often need expert advice. Specialists in urban design, traffic planning, and real estate development are particularly welcome.

## NEIGHBORHOOD CALENDAR

**Tuesday, Oct. 8, 7-9 p.m., MCNA Neighborhood meeting.** Members of the Library Design Committee will discuss plans for the redesigned main library complex. Sakey Room, Main Public Library, 449 Broadway.

**Wednesday, Oct. 16, 6 p.m., Library Design Advisory Committee Public Meeting.** During the first half-hour, the current status of the project will be presented. The public will then be invited to comment and discuss. City Hall, Sullivan Chamber, 2nd floor, Mass. Ave.

**Tuesday, Oct. 22, 6 p.m., Library Design Advisory Committee Public Meeting.** The designers will present the alternative chosen to be the basis for the design for the library's expansion project. A public comment period will follow. Senior Center, 806 Mass. Ave.

### M-C NEWS

P.O. Box 907

Cambridge, MA 02238