



April 3, 2023

Yi-An Huang, City Manager  
City of Cambridge  
795 Massachusetts Avenue  
Cambridge, MA 02139

Dear Mr. Huang:

I am writing in response to your letter from March 3, 2023, requesting a permanent expansion of Riverbend Park on Memorial Drive in Cambridge to include both Saturday and Sunday roadway closures during the spring, summer, and fall.

As you are aware, the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) has worked closely with the City of Cambridge over the past three years to provide expanded outdoor recreational opportunities for our residents. During lockdown, DCR closed many road segments throughout greater Boston, including extended hours at Riverbend Park. Our open spaces provided critical opportunities to support the physical and mental well-being of residents during that difficult time. The coordination and expansion of this park from one to two days was the direct result of the COVID pandemic. Riverbend Park is the final remaining park to return to its pre-COVID-19 schedule in the DCR system.

As you know, while this effort was a success in expanding access to outdoor recreation, it was not without its negative impacts, particularly to the surrounding neighborhood, who expressed concerns about rerouted Memorial Drive traffic in residential areas and associated pollution. It is also worth noting that parts of the adjacent neighborhoods are classified as an [environmental justice block group](#). DCR and the executive office are eager to ensure all communities have access to open space, but we must also ensure that no community disproportionately bears the impacts.

In weighing this request, DCR has reviewed its authority to permanently expand such an opportunity. With the lifting of the COVID-19 emergency order on both the state and federal levels, DCR has determined a return to pre-pandemic operations at Riverbend Park is appropriate at this time. This change is to ensure compliance with Chapter 457 of the Acts of 1985 and to address the impacts on those on the surrounding neighborhood.

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS · EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

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Lt. Governor

Rebecca L. Tepper, Secretary  
Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs

Douglas Rice, Commissioner  
Department of Conservation & Recreation

With that in mind, I am writing to inform you that DCR will be returning to the statutory mandated days and hours of operation, closing Memorial Drive to create Riverbend Park on Sundays during the hours of 11 am to 7 pm from the last Sunday of April through the second Sunday of November.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter and please contact my office if you have any questions. I look forward to continuing to collaborate closely with the City of Cambridge across our shared assets.

Regards,  
Douglas Rice  
Commissioner  
Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation