



City of Cambridge

Community Meeting on Memorial Drive Closures

Thursday, October 6

6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. School Auditorium

Agenda

Brief background

Next steps

Community meeting agreements

Community comments

Memorial Drive Closures: Background

1892

The City of Cambridge takes over land next to the Charles River by eminent domain. The City develops Charles River Road and a series of riverfront parks.

1924

The Massachusetts state government takes over Charles River Road and the riverfront parks and renames the parkway Memorial Drive.

1975

A pilot project closes a section of Memorial Drive for recreation for the first time. Longer pilots and closures occur for the next 10 years.

The temporary recreation area created by this closure is sometimes referred to as "Riverbend Park." At some point, the term also begins to apply informally to the permanent riverfront parks.

1985

The Massachusetts Legislature passes a law requiring the Metropolitan District Commission (precursor to the Department of Conservation and Recreation) to close Memorial Drive between Gerry's Landing Road and Western Avenue from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. every Sunday from the end of April until mid-November.

ACTS, 1985. – Chaps. 457, 458.

Chapter 457. AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE METROPOLITAN DISTRICT COMMISSION TO CLOSE A PORTION OF MEMORIAL DRIVE IN THE CITY OF CAMBRIDGE ON CERTAIN SUNDAYS.

Be it enacted, etc., as follows:

SECTION 1. The metropolitan district commission is hereby authorized and directed to prohibit the use of motor vehicles on Memorial Drive between Hingham street and Eliot Circle in the city of Cambridge from the hours of eleven o'clock ante meridiem to seven o'clock post meridiem on Sundays from the last Sunday in April through the second Sunday in November.

SECTION 2. The metropolitan district commission is hereby authorized and directed to prohibit or otherwise regulate the use of motor vehicles on Memorial Drive between Western avenue and Hingham street in the city of Cambridge on Sundays from the hours of eleven o'clock ante meridiem to seven o'clock post meridiem from the last Sunday in April through the second Sunday in November.

SECTION 3. The metropolitan district commission is hereby authorized, upon receipt of a request to that effect from the city council of the city of Cambridge, to suspend on any given Sunday the prohibitions as set forth in sections one and two of the use of motor vehicles on Memorial Drive in the city of Cambridge.

SECTION 4. Notwithstanding any of the foregoing provisions of this act, the metropolitan district commission may at its discretion suspend any authorized closings, if in the judgement of said commission such authorized closing poses a threat to public safety and should any emergency arise in which said commission in its judgement deems it necessary to alter the authorized closure.

Approved October 31, 1985.

Memorial Drive Closures: Background

2020

As the COVID-19 pandemic closes indoor recreation opportunities, DCR begins closing Memorial Drive on Saturdays and extends the season at the request of the Cambridge City Council.

2021

The Cambridge City Council requests that DCR continues Saturday closures in 2021.

2022

Saturday closures continue at the request of the Cambridge City Council, and DCR begins closing Memorial Drive from 8 a.m. on Saturdays to 7 p.m. on Sundays due to staffing constraints.

May and June: Councillor Denise Simmons hosts a series of community meetings to gather feedback on the closures after residents of the neighborhood adjacent to the closures report concerns.

June 28: Memorial Drive closures are one of several topics that the City gathers feedback on during a "Riverside Transportation Conversation" event and survey.

July to September: The Traffic, Parking, and Transportation department conducts observations of traffic, signals, and recreation along Memorial Drive.

September 14: Community meeting on Zoom (A planned September 13 in-person meeting was rescheduled to today due to rain)

Closure area



Memorial Drive Closures: Roles

Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation

DCR controls and operates Memorial Drive and the parks adjacent to the Charles River. DCR has final authority over closures of Memorial Drive to create the "Riverbend Park" recreation area. This year, DCR does not have the capacity to reopen Memorial Drive between Saturday evening and Sunday morning.

Cambridge City Council

In the past, the City Council has asked DCR to close Memorial Drive to create space for recreation outside of the legally-required schedule.

Cambridge Department of Traffic, Parking, + Transportation

City staff are organizing and convening these meetings and will provide engagement summaries to the City Council and DCR.

To help community members understand what's happening with closures and City-led engagement, city staff have created a webpage at www.cambridgema.gov/memorialdrive.

Next Steps

- The Cambridge TP+T Department will summarize feedback from these community meetings and prior outreach efforts and will provide these summaries to DCR and the City Council.
- Determine a plan for remainder of 2022 closure season.
- Determine plan for 2023 and beyond:
 - Evaluate feasibility of Saturday evening/overnight reopening and other adjustment to closure hours

Comments from DCR and Elected Officials

Our Community Meeting Agreements

One speaker at a time

Only one person speaks at a time. Each person will get the same amount of time to speak. Please respect others by not interrupting the person speaking.

Listen to and respect each other's views and concerns.

Everyone in attendance is here because they care deeply about our community. Please respect your fellow community members and staff and listen to their thoughts and concerns.

Do your part to create a welcoming space.

The City of Cambridge is home to people of many different backgrounds and strives to be a welcoming place for all. We may not all agree, but everyone should feel comfortable voicing their opinion.

Avoid directing your comments at others.

It may be tempting to direct your comments at others who have already spoken. It's okay to disagree with someone else's opinion, but please do so respectfully and refrain from re-interpreting what others have said or attacking others.

Community Feedback

- Line up behind a microphone to give a comment. We will acknowledge when it is your turn to speak, alternating microphones.
- If you are not able to get to a microphone or wait in line, **raise your hand** and we will bring you a cordless microphone.
- We may limit your speaking time to 90 seconds.
- We may announce a cut-off time to get in line or raise your hand.
- We are taking notes on your comments and will prepare a summary.
- This meeting is scheduled to end at **8 p.m.**

Questions and Additional Comments

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More Information

[www.cambridgema.gov/
memorialdrive](http://www.cambridgema.gov/memorialdrive)