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The fascinating lives of brown-lipped snails, who are magicians of mucus

LOCAL PAGE 2
Cambridge rolls out housing permit dashboard

CAMBRIDGE DAY

THE WEEK OF OCTOBER 29 – NOVEMBER 5, 2026 FREE

CRLS soccer shows maturity beyond its years



Tadhg Ledlie

Kirubel Tilahun in action against Belmont. The junior scored in a 3-0 victory.

By DAN EISNER

Last season saw the Cambridge Rindge and Latin boys' soccer team have one of its best years ever, advancing to the quarterfinals of the MIAA tournament. With the loss of a dozen seniors, leaving the team with only four, a rebuilding year might have seemed likely.

But that has been anything but the case. The Falcons are having a stellar season, finding themselves ranked second in the MIAA power rankings, and carrying a 9-1-3 record after winning their seventh straight game, 4-1, against 15th-ranked Acton-Boxborough on Monday.

Although the team is young, with nine juniors, and eight sophomores to complement those four seniors, it is surprisingly experienced.

"Almost all of our entire starting lineup was on varsity last year," said junior Elias Hyland, who is tied for the team lead in goals with nine, tied for the lead in assists with six, and scored a hat trick against Westford Academy in a 10-2 win last Tuesday. "We were very, very young. I feel like we've grown into these positions where we're leaders. And we know varsity soccer, and we just know the system very, very well."

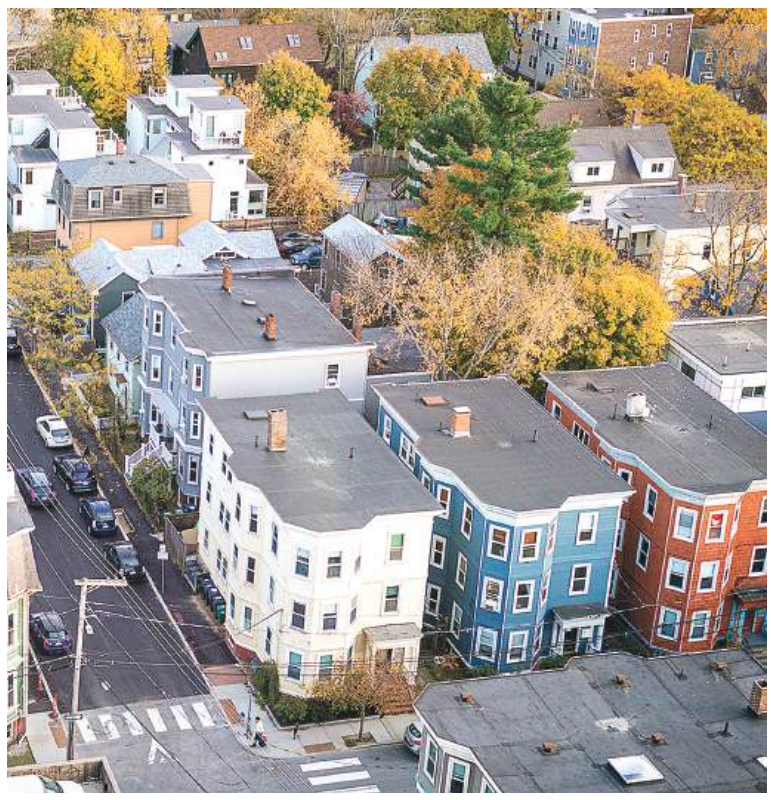
Last year, many of the older players made a point of the younger players on the varsity team. They also worked with players on the JV squad. This helped season them, their coaches said.

"We're finding their game IQ is much higher than it was for some of us when we were younger," said first-year coach Olf Mouyaka, referring to his coaching staff.

See SOCCER, page 11

Five years on, a mixed record for MBTA Communities Act

By RTE 2 NONPROFIT NEWS COLLABORATIVE



Tyler Motes

While Cambridge has seen plenty of development since the MBTA Communities Act was passed, it probably would have happened anyway.

While driving through just about any Boston suburb these days — or better yet, riding the MBTA bus, commuter rail or the T — you'll likely notice construction sites where new housing developments are popping up.

Biogen Idec's old global headquarters near Route 128 in Weston is slated to become a housing development with about 480 units. And down on the South Shore, the old Armstrong World Industries factory in Braintree near the town's Red Line station is set to become a 752-unit housing complex.

Why? Because for the past five years, municipalities have been moving forward with plans to comply with the MBTA Communities Act, which requires the 177 transit-connected municipalities around Boston to create zoning that allows for more multifamily housing. The act was signed into law in 2021 by former Gov. Charlie Baker, and deadlines for the some towns to submit their plans were in 2023. Now, residents are moving into the first developments.

The goal of the act is to bring down housing costs and put roofs over locals' heads. The new housing is supposed to be built along transit routes, which could limit the number of cars on the roads and lower carbon emissions.

The state surveyed each community and told town leaders how many acres of land must allow multifamily housing developments, then gave towns and cities varying amounts of time to draw up their own plans for where and how to rezone.

Most communities got to work on the messy process of rezoning, with all the NIMBY and YIMBY-ism it entails. (Not in my backyard; yes in my backyard).

But some resisted. Marblehead is a famous example. The town repeatedly refused to comply, arguing there isn't enough space in town for more housing. In May 2026, facing legal action from the attorney general and after losing some state grants, the town finally passed a plan. But its plan is designed to ensure no housing is built — its rezoned acres span Tedesco Country Club, a private golf course that isn't set to close.

Lexington

Lexington was the poster child for the MBTA Communities Act — until it wasn't. The town was the first to create a compliance plan, and an ambitious one at that. Lexington vowed to rezone 227 acres to allow multifamily housing, though the state only required it to rezone 50.

See MBTA, page 4

Cambridge civic assembly weighs ShotSpotter, cameras



Nathan Metcalf

Participants from among the 40 residents selected to serve on Cambridge's first-ever civic assembly engage in small-group discussion about their experiences living in Cambridge and their thoughts on public safety.

By NATHAN METCALF

Residents from across Cambridge gathered Saturday morning to help shape the city's approach to public safety in the first-ever civic assembly held in Massachusetts.

Among the group was a woman approaching her 80th birthday who has lived in the same building in The Port for half a century,three Cambridge Rindge and Latin School students, a mental health clinician who moved from Chicago nearly two decades ago, a third-generation Cantabrigian living in West Cambridge a woman who values Cambridge's walkability but feels unsafe when walking home late at night and a lifelong North Cambridge resident concerned about recent shootings in her neighborhood.

All are among the 40 residents selected by lottery to reflect Cambridge's demographics, and had volunteered to participate (each will receive a $1,000 stipend for completing the four sessions). They will weigh the future of the city's ShotSpotter gunshot detection system and surveillance cameras in public parks. And they may help heal a city riven by a death some think might have been prevented had the sound detection system not been deactivated by Cambridge's City Council May 18.

See CIVIC ASSEMBLY, page 2

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Somerville Theatre sold to some familiar faces

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Tod Machover's lab at MIT spawned Guitar Hero. Now he's creating a concerto with AI

SPORTS PAGE 11
Football scores come-from-behind win
● Crew teams earn golds, other medals

CAMBRIDGE NEWS INC.

LOCAL

Cambridge launches housing dashboard

By JANE PETERSEN

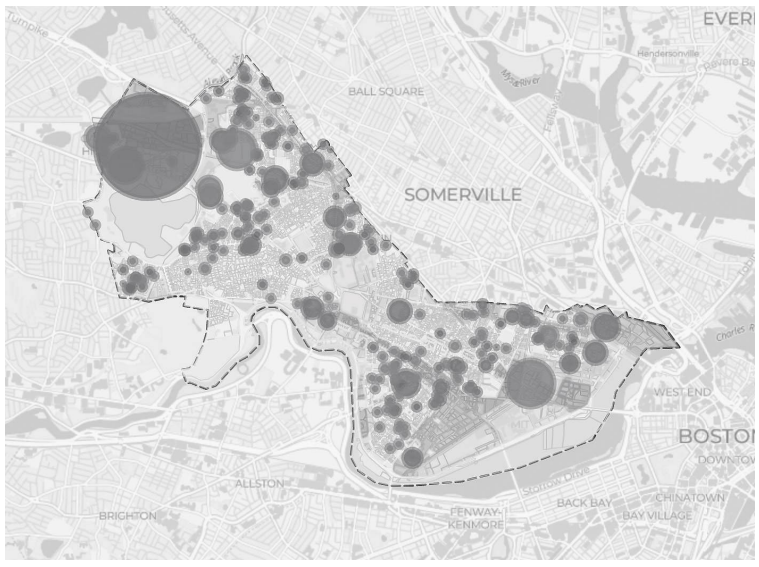
Cambridge unveiled its new development dashboard at Tuesday's City Council meeting.

The dashboard was built in response to a policy order sponsored by Councillor Cathie Zusy to make more information available about housing development, and is now available to the public.

Development plans have become a kind of sport for some residents since the Multifamily Housing Ordinance passed in February 2025. Residents eager to quantify the impact of the upzoning have submitted public records requests seeking permit information about new development in their neighborhoods, including provocative projects like ones on Wyman Road (soon to have a Huron Avenue address) and Ellery Street. Others have contributed to a crowdsourced site organized by Zusy.

City officials said Tuesday they hope by coalescing all the information in a single site, they can improve transparency without overburdening city employees..

"An important thing in setting up this dashboard was that this is sustainable in the long term and this is something that can be relatively automated," said Deputy Chief of Planning Jennifer Caira during Tuesday's meeting.



A screen grab of the Cambridge Housing Development dashboard.

Some early insights

The city will add more data, like links to the actual permits developers file with the city. It may adjust some of the dashboard's features based on feedback. But already the dashboard is revelatory.

- **Slow start:** Only 20 projects have been completed since January 2025. Most of them were rehabilitations of existing buildings that either added or subtracted one unit. In the pipeline, though, are 136 permitted projects. Another 89 have submitted permit applications.
- **Inclusionary improving:** Only four projects that have received permits have inclusionary units (one of them being a massive 439-unit residential building under construction in Kendall Square). But 15 more recent applications include such units, making a total of 19.
- **MFHO impact:** The MFHO greatly increased potential for development in the city's largest residential district, C-1. The dashboard filters only for C- districts. It shows most projects are underway in the C-1 district.

Some metrics

- Since January 2025, 19 projects have been completed in C-1. Some of these may have received permits before MFHO changes went into effect.
- There are 113 projects in the district that have received permits. Some permits were for demolition, and it is unknown what will be built on those lots. Of the 100 that have received their new build or rehab permits, two have inclusionary units, two were permitted with the affordable housing overlay, and one of them is a 100% affordable project with federal funding.
- Of the 68 projects in the district that have submitted permit applications, only a few have submitted demolition permits thus far. Five of the proposals are 100% affordable housing projects, and another six include inclusionary units.

A tale of two trackers

Zusy said her crowdsourced site has more meaningful design and data tracking than the city's dashboard.

According to Zusy, the crowdsourced tracker only logs projects in which the total number of units changes. It also includes a 21-property "watchlist" of homes that have recently been sold to developers but may not have publicly available plans.

Zusy's tracker also estimates the number of new units these projects will add to the city's housing stock. It offers crowdsourced assessments of project impact on things like parking and trees. And, it includes information on upcoming community meetings.

Zusy urged the city on Tuesday to add more of these details in its dashboard. That may not be quick to happen.

"We're just pulling from records and information that exists elsewhere in the system, so we're not going through every file and pulling out some of the specifics," Caira said. If residents have more questions about specific multifamily projects, the city has set up an email (multifamilyhousing@cambridgema.gov) to coordinate responses across departments.

Civic assembly

From Page 1

"When this process is finished, I hope you have done more than just make recommendations about technology," said the Rev. Dr. Jeremy Battle, senior pastor of The Avenue Fellowship and a member of the assembly's advisory committee, which helps guide the process, review educational materials and ensure participants hear balanced perspectives. "I hope you will have strengthened the way the city of Cambridge listens to itself from this inaugural moment."

The civic assembly was set in motion Aug. 3, when the council voted 6-3 to temporarily restore ShotSpotter and gather citizens to help determine its future.

The assembly will meet for seven hours a session over four Saturdays through Dec. 5, then present recommendations to the City Council. The council is not obligated to adopt them.


Photos: Nathan Metcalf
Cambridge City Manager Yi-An Huang observes Saturday's first session of the civic assembly.


Civic assembly participant Ted McKie, 75, of North Cambridge, speaks during the first session.


Civic assembly participant Daniel Murray, 25, of Wellington-Harrington.

Crunching the numbers

They started with data. Cambridge Police Department crime analysts Meghan LaMonica and Rebecca Leonard reviewed local crime trends showing the city recorded 475 violent crimes in 2025, less than half its 1990 peak of 1,077, although serious crime has risen since reaching a 55-year low in 2019.

Gun violence remains concentrated in a handful of neighborhoods. Of 134 confirmed gunfire incidents citywide between January 2014 and Oct. 15, 2026, 68 occurred in The Port, and that neighborhood together with Cambridgeport and Wellington-Harrington, accounted for roughly 70% of incidents.

ShotSpotter covers approximately 1.25 square miles, or 18%, of Cambridge's land area, encompassing much of those neighborhoods. Although that area accounted for 74% of confirmed shootings between July 2014 and May 2026, ShotSpotter detected only 58 of the 96 confirmed shootings within its coverage area, a rate of 60%.

Between 2015 and 2025, 35% of ShotSpotter alerts corresponded to confirmed shootings, compared with 18% of gunfire-related 911 calls. Following upgrades in 2021, ShotSpotter's confirmation rate rose to 53% between 2022 and 2025.

The science of surveillance

Ermus St. Louis, an assistant professor at Northeastern University, presented research on surveillance technologies nationwide, urging participants to distinguish between technologies that help police respond to crimes and those that prevent them.

In Chicago, which discontinued ShotSpotter in September 2024, a 2021 inspector general investigation found that just 9.1% of police responses to more than 50,000 alerts produced documented evidence of a gun-related crime. A separate 2024 study found that ShotSpotter increased firearm recoveries by roughly 11% but did not significantly reduce shootings or other serious gun crimes.

A yearlong pilot in Durham, N.C., reduced median police response times by 1.2 minutes, but the system detected only 26 of 52 shootings involving injuries or deaths, compared with 50 reported through 911 calls. Researchers could not determine whether the technology reduced gun violence, and Durham declined to extend the program in March 2024.

To read about the cases for and against ShotSpotter, scan the QR code.

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Editor-in-chief
Michael F. Fitzgerald
mfitzgerald@cambridgeday.com

Senior Reporter
Ruth Tam
rtam@cambridgeday.com

Reporter
Nathan Metcalf
nmetcalf@cambridgeday.com

Editorial Fellow
Jane Petersen
jpetersen@cambridgeday.com

We invite contributors from the community. Please reach out to editor@cambridgeday.com

News tips:
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Printing
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Fernando Alves (781) 801-9457
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EDUCATION

Harvard graduate workers union launches strike, others may follow

By CHINANU OKOLI

A potential wave of labor protests could disrupt life at Harvard and MIT as administrators at both schools maintain their stances in union negotiations.

Graduate student workers at Harvard University kicked off their second strike of the year Tuesday after failing to come to an agreement with administrators. The Harvard Graduate Students Union - United Auto Workers Local 5118, said 1,710 of the more than 4,000 graduate student workers who are members had voted over nine days in a strike authorization vote, with 88% voting in favor. The strike comes nearly five months after members ended a 40-day strike over a shift in how administrators were handling negotiations.

The union said it has held 38 bargaining sessions with administrators over the course of a year and a half. Among its demands are third-party investigations for harassment and discrimination claims, protections for non-citizen and disabled workers, pay equity between research assistants and teaching fellows and wages on par with Harvard's peer institutions — including MIT and Brown University.

The union and the administration have agreed on seven contract articles over the summer, including changes to the transition support fund and paid leave. But union members contend that since the start of the fall semester in September, administrators have "brought zero proposals to the table" and disengaged from discussion during bargaining sessions.

"A strike is no one's first choice and no one wants to be on strike, because we're all here with deep love and care for our teaching and research," said Denish Jaswal, president of HGSU. "However, I think that we're not seeing the progress that we need ... people are willing to go out again, even knowing the sacrifice and the toll that a strike will take."

In a statement shared with the Harvard community on Monday, Harvard Provost John Manning and Executive Vice President Meredith Weenick said that another strike is "unwarranted."

"Through both formal and informal engagements, the University has shown an unwavering commitment to reaching an agreement, reflecting our appreciation for the critical role HGSU-UAW members play in advancing Harvard's academic and research mission," the statement read.



Michael F. Fitzgerald

Striking members of Harvard Graduate Students Union - United Auto Workers Local 5118 began a protest march outside Harvard Yard.

Other Harvard unions also poised to strike

The strike at Harvard comes after Harvard Academic Workers - United Auto Workers, which represents around 2,600 university researchers, teachers and instructors, and UNITE HERE Local 26, which represents around 580 university food service workers, voted to authorize strikes of their own.

"Harvard has three strike threats this fall and it's because they're poorly negotiating with thousands of workers," Jaswal said. "People are seeing this strike as a moment to push back against this administration that is increasingly taking directives from top donors or corporate entities or its board, rather than the workers who actually make this university run."

MIT also faces potential strikes

At MIT, graduate student workers and facilities workers are preparing for the possibility of a joint strike. United Electrical Workers Local 256 - MIT Graduate Student Union and Service Employees International Union Local 32 BJ have bargained with administrators since May, with neither group reaching an agreement.

Of Local 256's 1,708 voting members, over 92% voted to authorize a strike, the union announced last Thursday. A representative of 32 BJ told Cambridge Day an overwhelming majority of its members voted to authorize a strike but did not provide specifics.

Local 256 represents more than 3,000 graduate student members, while 32 BJ represents around 600 MIT facilities workers. Both unions are demanding new contracts that reduce healthcare premiums, increase wages and provide protections for immigrant workers against the Trump administration.

Local 256 has seen small progress on a few contract articles, such as contract grievance procedures and workplace-specific safety protocols. And administrators have offered 32 BJ members a one-year contract with a 2.2 percent wage increase. But both unions said administrators refuse to meet their key demands, forcing them to escalate.

"We want the university to understand that our members are dealing with all of the affordability issues that everyone else is right now," said Kevin Brown, executive vice president and New England director of the union, in an interview ahead of the strike authorization vote. "Working class people are tired of taking it on the chin."

Seven bargaining sessions have taken place with administrators since 32 BJ began negotiations in May. Members have twice marched to MIT President Sally Kornbluth's office to deliver petitions urging administrators to agree to the union's demands.

Brown said administrators' sole 2.2 percent wage increase proposal is ridiculous, because it ignores the rest of the union's demands and wouldn't provide workers enough money to survive.

"While we understand that MIT is going through some serious issues with the federal government, you can't take it out on the blue-collar workers or any of the workers who make MIT work," Brown said.

Local 256 will meet with administrators for its 16th bargaining session on Wednesday, ahead of a last-chance practice picket set for Thursday. Daniel Shen, the union's campus chief steward, said that a strike could be avoided if administrators offer a more substantial proposal package with items such as wage increases, improved leave policy and a fair share agreement the union says will protect its shop.

Shen said union members are demanding just a fraction of MIT's $29.2 billion endowment. They have suggested that MIT could use unrestricted funds from its endowment to give them raises, and that Kornbluth's 12 percent salary increase from 2024 to 2025 suggests the university can offer more.

"These payouts to top executives show that MIT has the resources to fund its workforce, it's just a question of priorities," Shen said.

Though it's unclear if and when a strike at MIT could be called, Shen said union members are prepared to strike and intend to settle a contract this semester.

"A lot of how we respond in the next few weeks is going to be determined by how [administrators] come back at the bargaining table," Shen said. "But we're looking at all possible options, currently."

In a statement sent Monday to Cambridge Day, MIT administrators emphasized a commitment to retaining and attracting talent to the university and bargaining in good faith with unionized workers.

"As our leadership has explained, the Institute has had to adopt a careful stance on budgeting and hiring given the uncertain outlook for federal funding and policy," the statement read. "Even in such an environment, our bargaining team strives to reach agreement on contracts that are fair and recognize everyone's contributions while reflecting the reality of the Institute's financial situation."

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METRO

MBTA

From Page 1

But once developers' proposals started to roll in, residents wanted to roll back. So Lexington's Town Meeting passed a motion, born out of a citizen petition, asking the town to reduce its commitment to about 90 acres. After much back and forth, the town passed the motion, which removed Lexington's historic center district out of concern that building new housing there would compromise its charm.

As of late October 2026, there are 17 MBTA Communities Act compliant housing projects (some approved by the Planning Board and some proposed) in Lexington. Altogether, those 16 projects imagine bringing around 1,600 new dwellings to the town, 236 of which would be considered affordable.

All of this new housing comes to Lexington at a unique time. The town is designing and preparing to build a new high school. Many residents are worried about how additional housing could affect school enrollment, and therefore, whether the new high school is currently being designed to be the correct size. The town's School Building Committee has worked extensively with the district and the state to ensure the school can accommodate a range of students. One solution is to turn the planned central office space into about 11 classrooms if needed.

But in the present day, the opposite problem exists in Lexington — enrollment is declining. The district cut a handful of positions and laid off some teachers ahead of fiscal year 2027 to balance the budget and right-size staff. It has also stated it's considering closing an elementary school to keep up with declining enrollment.

— Maggie Scales



Maggie Scales

Outside The Lex Residences on Bedford Street in Lexington. The condo complex is the town's first MBTA Communities Act development.

Cambridge

If Marblehead was the truculent truant when it came to the MBTA Communities Act, Cambridge was a star student. The city was basically already in compliance with the requirements when the guidelines were passed. A Boston Indicators report from January credits Cambridge with 29 projects that comply with the act, 25 of which have been started since the act was passed.

But the MBTA Communities Act itself had little to do with Cambridge's new multifamily housing, multiple experts said. The act was probably "a bit of a spur," said Jeff Levine, an MIT professor and head of the university's Housing, Community & Economic Development program, "but wasn't really a driving force the way it was maybe in Lexington, where the community leaders really saw it as an opportunity to address this issue."

Levine said Cambridge was already doing most of what it needed to do to comply, and "There are a lot of people, perhaps a majority of people, that understood that Cambridge should have more housing." The city did need to take a few steps to align with the act's requirements. It already had multiple districts with a gross density over 15 units per acre, but none were large enough to meet the "reasonable size" requirement of 50 acres for a district. To be deemed compliant by Massachusetts' Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (HLC), the city needed to redraw and combine a few districts for size.

Cambridge was one of about a dozen rapid transit cities (Somerville was another) that were required to create 90% of new units within a half-mile radius of T stations, including Lechmere, Kendall/MIT, Central, Harvard, Porter and Alewife. The city completed the zoning compliance and was approved in 2023.

And Cambridge has gone on to exceed expectations. In February 2025, the city council passed the Multifamily Housing Ordinance, which created a multifamily zoning district in most areas of Cambridge. Developers can build up to four stories by right or up to six stories for buildings that include affordable homes. The ordinance aligns with the requirements and intent of the MBTA Communities Act, according to Levine and city officials, as Cambridge's density remains above the minimum, and now the majority of the city allows by right development. And the Boston Indicators report called that ordinance one of a few "breakthrough successes outside of the MBTA Communities mandate."

Cambridge City Councilors Patty Nolan and Burhan Azeem said their decision to support the Multifamily Housing Ordinance — a landmark zoning reform — was unrelated to the MBTA Communities act.

Nolan said she hopes the act will "indirectly impact — and benefit — Cambridge by having more surrounding communities zone for and hopefully build more housing. If that happens, it should help ease the price pressure a little bit in Cambridge." *— Chloe Taft*

Arlington

As one of the most densely populated communities in Massachusetts, Arlington faced the questions of how and where to make the act work. Even along corridors with MBTA bus service, single-family and two-family homes had long been the norm.

In a town of more than 46,500 residents living in about 20,000 housing units, the act prompted public pushback, including a hearing in September 2023 that was stopped briefly for Arlington police to restore order.

Arlington approved a plan for MBTA Communities zoning after several nights of debate in October 2023. An Oct. 15, 2023 report to Arlington's Town Meeting prepared by Stephen Revilak, a Precinct 1 Town Meeting member and member of the Arlington Redevelopment Board, used town records to project that "15-45 parcels could be redeveloped over the next ten years, for a net increase of 50-200 new units."

In reality, the numbers have played out more slowly. As of January 2026, Arlington had 57 units in its MBTA Communities pipeline, according to Boston Indicators. The first project under the new rules, on Belknap Street, turned a traditional two-family home into a modern four-family building.

Reached in October 2026, Revilak said that a number of forces have come into play — most notably, building costs have soared. "There's also some nuance. A project that's permitted might not get built, or it might get scaled back," Revilak said in an email. "That recently happened at 259 Broadway. They were permitted for a mixed-use building with 14 apartments; the construction bids came in higher than the applicants anticipated so they re-applied for a scaled-down version with five apartments. That property currently has four apartments so the net change is now plus one."

Town officials in Arlington are currently holding a series of hearings (the final is scheduled for Nov. 5) on zoning changes along Massachusetts Avenue near Park Avenue. that look at whether new development could be allowed up to five stories.

— Carol Beggy

Waltham

Not every community has seen a burst of new development. A January report from Boston Indicators shows that Waltham has exactly zero units of new housing in the pipeline through its MBTA Communities Act zoning reforms.

Building Inspector Brian Bower said his department has received interest in one potential housing project in one of the two overlay districts created by Waltham's MBTA zoning reforms — a project the applicant has since withdrawn. Bower said he was disappointed and expected to see more applications since the citywide attention to the zoning changes.

But there are many factors explaining why the city hasn't seen new housing from the act.

For one thing, both overlay districts are already fairly built up. The district near the Brandeis campus contains university buildings and apartment complexes, and the district along Waverley Oaks Road includes currently operating businesses and a significant amount of Beaver Brook swampland.

Housing advocate Tom Benavides of local nonprofit Waltham Inclusive Neighborhoods also pointed out both districts only allow for four-family housing, which he said wasn't economically viable or in keeping with either existing neighborhood. He added that housing reform initiatives like accessory dwelling units, or ADUs, may have found more relative success in Waltham — the city has approved 16 since Massachusetts allowed them by right — because the state provided a clearer mandate.

Ward 7 Councilor Paul Katz, who represents one of the districts, said the MBTA Communities Act was too much of a one-size-fits-all approach for Waltham. He added that although Waltham's zoning changes created "capacity and opportunity" for new housing, that's not the same as creating actual units. Katz said the jury's still out on whether the act will succeed in creating housing that fits the city's needs.

From Benavides' perspective, though, the act has still had a positive effect on Waltham by bringing discussions of community housing needs to the forefront of the city council agenda. He said he'd like to see that momentum extend to Waltham's ongoing zoning reform, which he hopes will return to council this fall, along with discussions about large potential housing projects in western Waltham.

— Artie Kronenfeld

Belmont

Meanwhile, in Belmont, Town Meeting considered two maps in November 2024 — the result of a long, drawn-out process that included consultants, hours of workshops, forums, public hearings, and an inability to come to a consensus on one map to present to Town Meeting.

The first set of maps shared with the community were designed by the town's consultants on the project, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council. Then-Select Board member Roy Epstein said those maps had significantly higher unit counts than the law required, which, for Belmont, was 1,632. Eventually, the counts were brought down, and they were presented to the community in early 2024.

At that stage, Epstein introduced his own map.

Eventually, the advisory committee that had been formed at the start of the process passed along its recommendation — essentially the map created by Epstein — to the Planning Board, at which point months of meetings and public hearings commenced.

The result of the process was two almost identical maps, both sent to the state for compliance review. One included the Purecoat North site in place of a portion of lower Belmont (along the Watertown line), while the other included lower Belmont but not Purecoat North. The crux of the debate rested on the elimination of a commercial district (at a time when Belmont is struggling with its commercial tax base) in favor of hypothetical mixed-use development. When it came time for Town Meeting, a Planning Board-approved map was included on the warrant for consideration, with the second map (created by Epstein) offered as an amendment. After much deliberation, the amendment was voted down while the Planning Board map, which excluded the Purecoat North site, was supported 213-8, with seven abstentions.

As of mid-August, just one project has received approval under the new zoning, according to Planning and Building Director Chris Ryan. Beyond that, "there has been a lot of communication with different parties" with respect to the Moraine Street and Church Street parcels.

Five years in, the new regulations on multifamily housing have meant very different things in five nearby communities: Cambridge now allows multifamily housing throughout most of the city. Lexington has seen a flood of new developments and proposals, Arlington a trickle. Belmont has a single approved project and Waltham an empty pipeline. Whether any of it makes the region more affordable is a question the first new residents are only beginning to answer. *— Mary Byrne*

The Route 2 Nonprofit News Collaborative is Your Arlington, The Belmont Voice, Cambridge Day, LexObserver and the Waltham Times.

■ Do you know of a business opening or closing in Cambridge or Somerville? Send news to business@cambridgeday.com.

BUSINESS

Somerville Theatre bought by familiar faces

By TOM MEEK

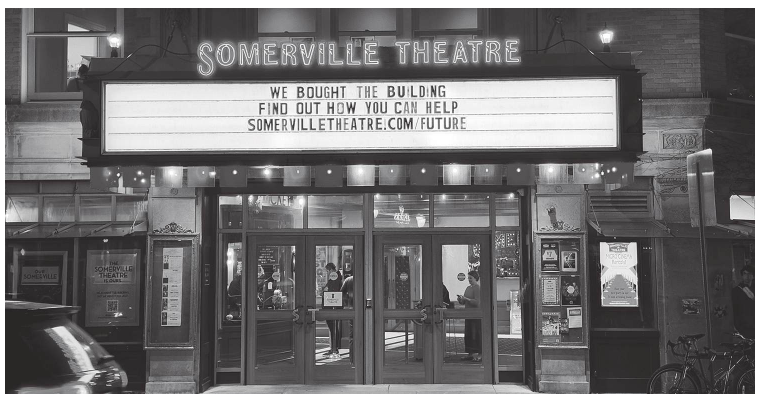
The future of the Somerville Theatre came into clear focus Friday when the Hobbs Building, which houses the historic theater, was transferred to CSB Theatres, Inc.

CSB is co-owned by longtime theater managers Ian Judge, Ian Brownell, Jamie Mattchen and John O'Leary. Judge's name is listed as owner of the limited liability corporation, but he called that a formality.

Judge called the deal "equal parts excitement and nausea." CSB has launched a GoFundMe campaign to help raise $90,000 to back monies used for the down payment. "It's scary," Judge said, "but it's basically our only chance to make sure that the theater stays around, locally owned in its current form for as long as possible."

CSB took over management of the Somerville and Capitol Theatres in 2025 when longtime owner and operator Richard Fraiman and Frame One Theatres decided to step back from the day-to-day operation. Fraiman's father Melvin bought the Hobbs Building in 1984 and died in 2022.

The two theater buildings were listed for $12 million each when the Fraiman family's Chatham Light Realty trust put the Somerville Theatre and Arlington's Capitol Theatre buildings up for sale in July. The holding company also listed another Davis Square asset, the Bryant Chambers apartments on College Avenue, for $16 million, which remains on the market.



Tom Meek

The marquee at the Somerville Theatre announced the news Friday night.



Ian Judge, new co-owner of the Somerville Theatre, was in the lobby greeting patrons.

Judge said CSB was able to secure a loan through First Citizens Bank thanks to a large sum from an anonymous donor and to Brownell's tireless fundraising. "It happened really quickly," he said. "Normally, you anticipate something like this, and you raise money in anticipation of it, but we really kind of had to do it backwards."

Richard Fraiman and the Fraiman family wanted to keep the Somerville Theatre as is to honor the memory of his father, said Carl Christie, executive vice president of investment sales and capital markets at Hunneman Realty, the listing agent. "There were other offers, but this is the one they wanted," Christie said. "It [the theater] will now remain a theater for decades."

Relief and joy

The Somerville Theatre has been in operation since 1914. Somerville Mayor Jake Wilson, who had pushed hard for the theater to remain as is, said in a statement, "From the days of Vaudeville to the 70mm screenings of " The Odyssey," the Somerville Theatre has long been a cultural hub for our community and region. Thanks to the CSB Theatres team, that timeless marquee will be lit up well into the future, but they will need our community's support."

"I'm thrilled," said Brian Tamm, executive director of the popular Independent Film Festival Boston (IFFB), which is based at the Somerville Theatre. "There had been a little bit of concern over the last month or so about what would happen. Now that the same people who are running it own the building, I feel like it's in good hands."

Tamm added that, "I'm glad the city was so supportive, and I think it just shows what a strong film town this is and what a strong film community." Also in the Somerville Theatre is the Crystal Ballroom, which Judge and Frame One converted from two smaller movie rooms in 2021. The ballroom has a bar and a capacity of 525 for live music, comedy shows and special events like Movie Trivia night, hosted by Brownell and his crew of merry stumpers the third Tuesday of every month. In addition, the building is home to the Mr. Crêpe cafe and creperie.

The Capitol Theatre building remains on the market. CSB is not in the running for that property, but it does have a 20-year lease to continue to exhibit there. Mattchen is the longtime manager of the theater. The Capitol building also is home to a number of other retail stores and apartments.

Judge, who lives in Teele Square, said added that is something of a homecoming. "I actually grew up about three blocks from the theater, behind Hodgkins Park. So, it was my neighborhood theater when I was a kid."

Judge hinted that CSB may consider a nonprofit structure like that of the Brattle Theatre. But day-to-day, "We just plan to keep the theater in the best condition we can and continue to do what we do."

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EVENTS OCT 29 TO NOV 12

Sunday, Nov. 8, 4 p.m.
McCarthy's, 1920 Massachusetts Ave. Porter Square.

Somerville Songwriter Sessions Upstairs at McCarthy's

$15 to $20. Singer songwriter Rachel Marie hosts multi-genre-inspired Mary Leissinger and musician and visual artist Ray Marie Johnson.

Monday, Nov. 2, 7:30 p.m.
The Rockwell, 255 Elm St., Davis Square.

Menopunks Podcast Live!

$20. Menopunks Founder Alicia J. Rose, who directed over 3 dozen music videos for artists like First Aid Kit, Cake and Bob Mould, hosts this live podcast focused on the intersection of rock and roll and menopause.

Wednesday, Nov. 4, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.
Arts at the Armory, 191 Highland Ave., Spring Hill.

Party Around the World: Celebrating Language, Culture and Connection

$25 to $75. Found in Translation celebrates 15 years of empowering bilingual women, advancing language access and building a thriving interpreter workforce at this family-friendly event. Children 12 and under are free.

Friday, Oct. 30, 10:30 p.m. to 1 a.m.
Lilypad, 1353 Cambridge St., Inman Square.

FYI: Halloween

$10. FYI: Halloween honors "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" with the DJ collective to dance to 1 a.m. Bring your best Halloween fit and dancing shoes.

For hundreds more events, or to submit your own, scan here .

Friday, Nov. 6, 7:30 p.m.
Multicultural Arts Center, 41 Second St., East Cambridge.

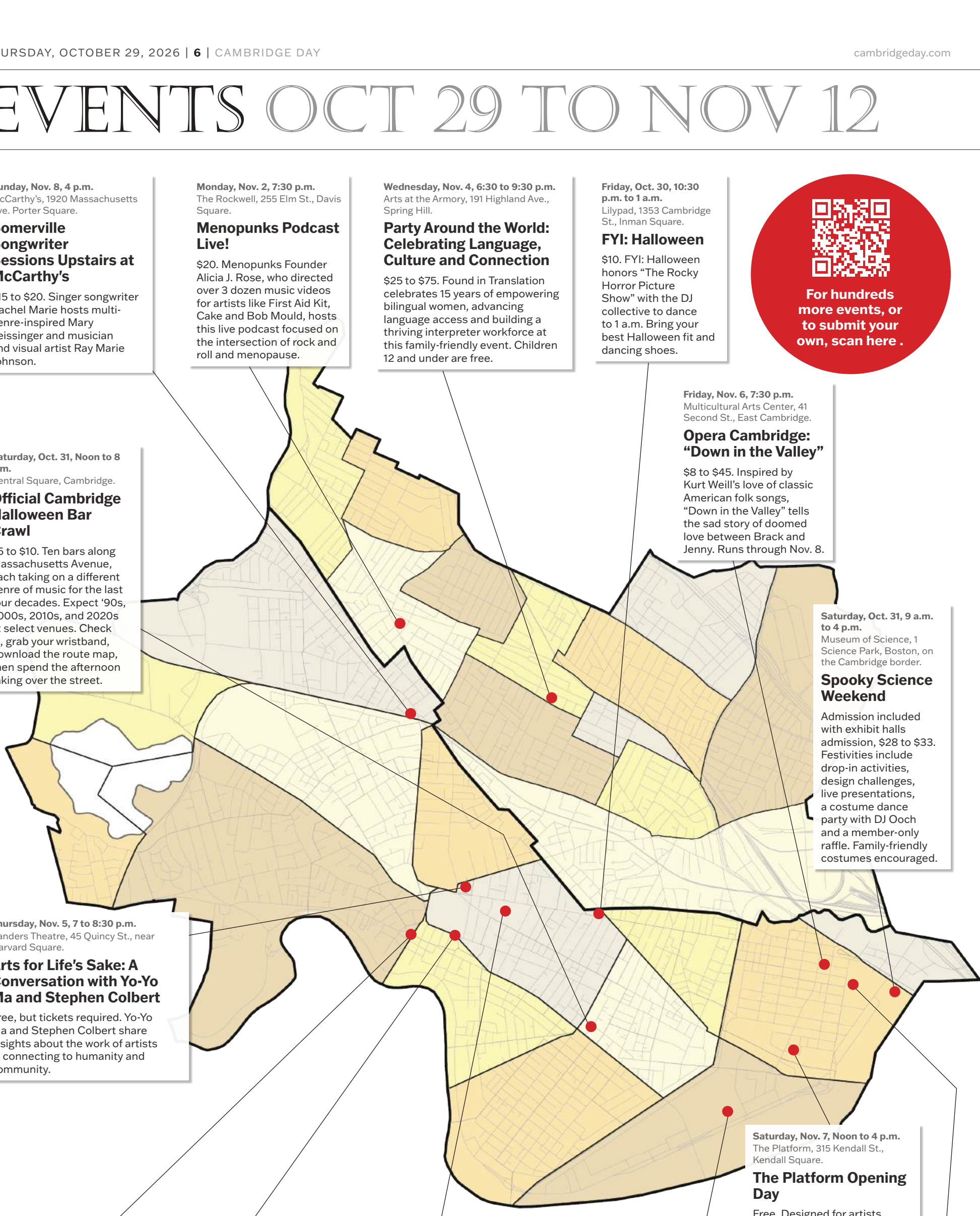
Opera Cambridge: "Down in the Valley"

$8 to $45. Inspired by Kurt Weill's love of classic American folk songs, "Down in the Valley" tells the sad story of doomed love between Brack and Jenny. Runs through Nov. 8.

Saturday, Oct. 31, Noon to 8 p.m.
Central Square, Cambridge.

Official Cambridge Halloween Bar Crawl

$5 to $10. Ten bars along Massachusetts Avenue, each taking on a different genre of music for the last four decades. Expect '90s, 2000s, 2010s, and 2020s at select venues. Check in, grab your wristband, download the route map, then spend the afternoon taking over the street.



Saturday, Oct. 31, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Museum of Science, 1 Science Park, Boston, on the Cambridge border.

Spooky Science Weekend

Admission included with exhibit halls admission, $28 to $33. Festivities include drop-in activities, design challenges, live presentations, a costume dance party with DJ Ooch and a member-only raffle. Family-friendly costumes encouraged.

Thursday, Nov. 5, 7 to 8:30 p.m.
Sanders Theatre, 45 Quincy St., near Harvard Square.

Arts for Life's Sake: A Conversation with Yo-Yo Ma and Stephen Colbert

Free, but tickets required. Yo-Yo Ma and Stephen Colbert share insights about the work of artists in connecting to humanity and community.

Saturday, Nov. 7, Noon to 4 p.m.
The Platform, 315 Kendall St., Kendall Square.

The Platform Opening Day

Free. Designed for artists, audiences, community gatherings and creative exchange, the venue opening features two performances from internationally renowned vertical dance company BANDALOOP, regional musical artists, participatory dance, family activities, a vendor market, and more.

Monday, Nov. 9, 7 p.m.
Harvard Book Store, 1256 Massachusetts Ave. Harvard Square

Lloyd Schwartz reads from "Artur Schnabel and Joseph Szigeti Play Mozart at the Frick Collection (April 4, 1948) and Other Poems"

Free. Schwartz, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Criticism and Poet Laureate of Somerville, presents his newest book of poetry using wit, intimacy and musical acumen.

Monday, Nov. 9, 6 to 7:30 p.m.
Cambridge Main Library, Community Room, 449 Broadway, Mid-Cambridge.

Cambridge Cooks with Chef Ashley Lujares

Register. Chef Ashley Lujares is a Boston-based Filipina American chef and creator of Mango Tao, a pop-up culinary experience that showcases modern Filipino cuisine and Southeast Asian flavors. A Food Network Chopped champion and former executive chef of Myers + Chang, Chef Ashley blends her cultural heritage with contemporary culinary techniques to craft inventive dishes rooted in Filipino tradition.

Tuesday, Nov. 3, 6:30 p.m.
Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Building W15: MIT Chapel, 48 Massachusetts Ave.

What is Your Light?

Free. Presented by the MIT Office of Religious, Spiritual, and Ethical Life, "What is Your Light?" transforms the MIT Chapel into a living canvas of light, sound and reflection. Visitors are invited to first strike a tam-tam, activating lanterns of light on the building and sending ripples of sound across the Kresge Oval.

Sunday, Nov. 1, 7 a.m.
CambridgeSide, 100 CambridgeSide Place, East Cambridge.

Cambridge Half Marathon

$50 to $148. The Cambridge Half Marathon is a 13.1-mile USATF certified course that starts and finishes at CambridgeSide. It is a flat course along Memorial Drive featuring views of the Charles River, MIT, John W. Weeks Footbridge, Harvard University Stadium, and more.

Tuesday, Nov. 10, 8 p.m.
The Comedy Studio, 5 John F. Kennedy St., Harvard Square.

Boston Comedy Festival Contest Round

$30 and 18-plus. The Boston Comedy Festival Comedy Competition brings 96 comedians from across the country to Boston for one of New England's biggest stand-up competitions. Over eight preliminary rounds, 12 comedians take the stage at each show, all hoping to impress the judges and earn one of just 32 spots in the semifinals.

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WILD THINGS

Brown-lipped snails have a colorful love life

By JEANINE FARLEY



Courtesy of Angus Davison

Brown-lipped snails display many variations in color and banding.

Who named this snail the brown-lipped snail *(Cepaea nemoralis)*? Who notices the color of a snail's lips, and who then compares the color of their lips to those of other snails? Do snails even have lips?

Well, yes, snails do have lips, or at least mouths — on the underside of the head and thus hard to see. And as we all know, snails also have shells. The opening or thickened edge of the shell is called a lip. In adult brown-lipped snails, the lip of its shell is dark brown or even almost black. Hence, the name brown-lipped snail, which distinguishes it from a similar snail with a white-lipped shell.

The brown-lipped snail's shell varies quite a bit. It can be yellow, brown, or even pink, with anywhere from zero to five bands. The brown-lipped snail is sometimes called the grove snail or the wood snail because it inhabits woodlands, but it also lives in gardens and grassy areas. In fact, it inhabits most any area with both shade and moisture. In its scientific name, Cepaea nemoralis, Cepaea comes from Greek kēpaia, meaning "of the garden." And nemoralis is Latin, meaning "of the woods."



Courtesy of Reinhold Mölle

A pair of brown-lipped snails mate.

These snails eat mostly dead plants, but they will eat leaves of dandelions and nettles. In general, they are not too much of a garden pest.

Where do I find these snails?

Brown-lipped snails are active in our region, especially on cool, damp days in spring and fall. Snail activity depends, however, on temperature and humidity levels more than on the calendar. Once sustained freezes arrive, they overwinter in sheltered spots and become dormant. In March and April, they re-emerge as temperatures rise. In hot summer weather, they estivate (a kind of dormancy). In October, look for them after it rains, under leaves and in your garden.

Brown-lipped snails, like many other snails, have both male and female organs and produce both sperm and eggs. They mate to increase genetic variation. Before mating, each snail tries to thrust into the other a sharp calcium carbonate spear (the same material as its shell) called a love dart. Like most every other part of the snail, the dart is covered in thick mucus. The mucus contains a compound that, if it reaches the blood of the other snail, increases the sperm's chances of survival.

Only about half of love dart stabs are successful. Some miss completely; others do not pierce the skin. After the love dart attempt, the snails exchange sperm. Each snail acts as both male (donating sperm) and female (receiving sperm). Later, when the temperature, humidity, and food conditions are right, both snails produce eggs. The snails fertilize the eggs with their stored sperm — often from several different snails.

The ancient Greeks observed snails and their love darts. Some people speculate that these observations led to the Cupid myth.

In New England, a brown-lipped snail generally lays eggs in late spring, summer or fall. First, it digs a small depression. How does a snail dig? Although it has no special digging appendages, it uses muscular contractions of its body to push into loose soil. It works its body into the depression, where it deposits 30 to 80 eggs covered in mucus (of course). It pushes soil over the eggs, which hatch in a few weeks. The young snails are miniature adults with small shells. The shells grow more spirals as the snail ages. In two to three years, the snails are mature adults with about five spirals and brown lips.

Brown-lipped snails are European, which means they are not native to the United States. People imported brown-lipped snails to New Jersey in the 1800s because of their colorful shells, which they thought would make a lovely garden addition. The brown-lipped snails in Massachusetts probably arrived from the Netherlands and Ireland on imported shrubs in the early 1900s. (Snail eggs and small snails are difficult to spot and remove in soil, mulch or other plant materials.) By the 1970s, these imported snails were common throughout the Northeast.



© Claire O'Neill / Earthwise Aware

A brown-lipped snail in Cambridge Highlands has no bands at all.

Brown-lipped snails have a great variety of colorful shells. Scientists often wonder why so many different shell colors persist over time, rather than one becoming dominant. However, shells in a given region may look similar for a couple of reasons.



Courtesy of Reinhold Mölle

A brown-lipped snail in Spring Hill, Somerville, produces mucus to propel itself over the rough surface of a rock.

Snail shells have a tendency to blend into their background in any given region. This likely occurs because birds see the snails that don't blend in well and pick them off first, leaving behind the well-camouflaged snails. Over time, the camouflaged colors become more common in a region. Natural selection at work.

In addition, brown-lipped snails easily overheat. Snails that people imported to hot climates tend to have paler, more reflective shells, presumably because these shells absorb less heat, keeping them cooler and better able to survive. Over time, pale shells become more common in such regions. Conversely, brown shells absorb more heat and are more common in cooler regions. Studies have found associations between shell color, habitat and temperature.

Why so much mucus?

Snails produce lots of mucus because they have specialized cells in their skin that produce nothing but mucus. They use mucus to glide or climb, to prevent dehydration, as a defense against predators (slime can make snails difficult to capture) and for communication (snails follow slime trails to find mates).

Snail mucus acts as both a lubricant and an adhesive. How can this be? Snail mucus is a non-Newtonian material. This means its viscosity changes depending on the forces applied to it. If you have ever played with cornstarch mixed with water, you know that it flows when handled gently but hardens under sudden pressure. Snail mucus acts in the opposite fashion.



Courtesy of Sara J. Gardner

On Prospect Hill, Somerville, a brown-lipped snail hangs upside-down from a leaf.

When a snail is stationary, the mucus behaves like a solid, gripping to prevent the snail from sliding backward. But when the snail produces muscular contractions with its body, the forces cause the mucus to flow, allowing the snail to glide forward. Snails crawl by using both of these properties. By producing mucus that both flows and grips, snails are able to move forward and even crawl up a fence or hang upside-down from a leaf.

The next time it rains, look for snails around you. They are easy to find. Just follow the visible slime trail. Notice the shell color and the number of bands. What snail colors do you find in our region?

ADVERTISEMENT



FILM

LOCAL FOCUS



Carol Ohmart and Vincent Price in a scene from "House on Haunted Hill."

Haunting and hallowed

By OSCAR GOFF

It's Halloween weekend, and few actors in cinematic history embody the spooky fun of the holiday better than Vincent Price, whose velvety voice and devilish smirk are as knowingly funny as they are unsettling. To celebrate this icon of the macabre, the **Somerville Theatre** on Friday welcomes the actor's daughter, Victoria Price, to introduce a pair of her father's favorite performances.

First up is William Castle's gloriously perverse **"House on Haunted Hill"** (1958), in which Price plays a sinister millionaire who invites five strangers to spend the night in his allegedly haunted mansion. It's followed by the lesser-screened gothic drama **"Dragonwyck"** (1946), which, while not a horror picture in the strictest sense of the word, is arguably the film in which Price cemented his villainous onscreen persona. The younger Price will be on hand between the film for a Q&A, sharing memories of her father and insights into the night's features. If your only exposure to Vincent Price has been the spoken bridge to **"Thriller,"** consider this a perfect opportunity to fill the void.

On Halloween itself, the **Kendall Square Cinema** concludes its month-long Monster Madness series with the 1943 Universal production of **"Phantom of the Opera,"** in which Herbert Lom dons the mask and the beautiful Paris Opera House can be seen in glorious Technicolor. The **Harvard Film Archive**'s Great Expectation series takes its exploration of post-war British cinema into eerie territory Saturday afternoon evening with two tales of murders and mayhem from 1948, Lance Comfort's **"Daughter of Darkness"** and Daniel Birt's **"The Three Weird Sisters."** Also on Saturday night, the Somerville welcomes the Tesseracte Players back to its stage for a live shadowcast of **"The Rocky Horror Picture Show"** (1975). Even the **Museum of Science** gets in on the fun with Friday and Saturday night screenings of the cosmic horror favorite **"Event Horizon"** (1997) on the gigantic screen of the Mugar Omni Theater. And if you're still not done celebrating, you can return to the Mugar on Sunday afternoon for a special Dia de los Muertos IMAX screening of the Pixar classic **"Coco"** (2017). For cinematic trick-or-treaters, there is no shortage of cinematic goodies.

In non-Halloween news, the programmers of **IFFBoston** return to the **Brattle Theatre** for round two of their annual **Fall Focus** series, with preview screenings of another baker's dozen of the year's most talked about films. Highlights this time around include **"Rehearsals for a Revolution"** (screening Friday), actress-turned-director Pegah Ahangarani's essay film about growing up in post-revolution Iran; **"Bitter Christmas"** (on Sunday), the latest from beloved Spanish auteur Pedro Almodóvar; **"Elsinore"** (Monday), in which Andrew Scott delivers one of the most talked-about performances of the year as the late Shakespearean actor Ian Charleson; and Tony Gilroy's closing night selection **"Behemoth!"** (Wednesday), starring Pedro Pascal as a renowned cellist at a crossroads. As always, Fall Focus is an essential primer as we enter prestige movie season; for the full schedule, be sure to refer to **IFFBoston's website**.

Beginning Thursday, the Brattle kicks off a run of one of the most haunting and enigmatic independent films of all time, 1991's **"Begotten."** The feature debut of director E. Elias Mehridge is an expressionistic nightmare. To tell his dreamlike story of characters with names like **"God Killing Himself"** and **"Flesh on Bone,"** Mehridge shot on intentionally damaged and overexposed 16 mm film stock, then meticulously processed and reprocessed over the course of several years on a homemade optical printer. The resulting film looks like it was exhumed after being buried in a crypt for several centuries, at once out of time and vastly ahead of its own. After being unavailable for many years, the film has at last been restored, allowing a new generation to grapple with its mysteries.

Fall Focus doesn't have a monopoly on exciting new releases; our local screens play host this week to a variety of under-the-radar premieres. On Sunday, the Somerville screens the noir comedy **"Concessions"** (2026), about a struggling independent cinema on its last day of operation, with director Mas Bouzidi and actor Jonathan Lorenzo Price in attendance for a post-film Q&A. On Wednesday, **Arrow Street Arts** hosts a very special screening of the music documentary **"Gregg Allman: The Music of My Soul"** (2026), followed by a conversation between the late guitarist's former managers Michael Lehman and Bert Holman. Lastly, on Thursday, the **Boston Jewish Film Festival** comes to the Brattle with the New England premiere of Jenny Lester's tender coming-of-age story **"Our Bodies and Other Shames"** (2026), also featuring a Q&A with the filmmaker. All three films are well worth seeing in their own right, and seeing them with these special guests promises to be extraordinary.

REVIEWS



Elissa Federoff / NEON

A still from "Fjord."

A stunning 'Fjord'

Cristian Mungiu's Palme d'Or winner is a stark contemplation on faith, family and the limits of tolerance when deeply held beliefs and social norms collide. The film focuses on a devout Romanian immigrant family living in Norway whose five children are taken by the authorities after the eldest daughter arrives at school with visible bruises. The parents, Mihai (Sebastian Stan) and Lisbet (Renate Reinsve), deny abuse and become embroiled in a long fight to regain custody that, as the case proceedings develop, increasingly becomes a clash between their conservative Christian beliefs and Norway's secular child protection system.

Throughout the ordeal, the Gheorghius feel largely isolated, even though Lisbet is from the remote village (located at the base of a towering mountain that's part of Norway's remarkable fjord system). Mihai, who just lost his parents (part of the reason for the move), speaks limited Norwegian, hampering communication, though he manages somewhat better in English. As parents of two teens, two elementary schoolers and one nursing newborn, the Gheorghius are strict by most standards, denying them cellphone and internet access and insisting on weekly Bible studies and daily prayer. They are also — as depicted — loving, caring and respected by their charges, and integrate well into the township's general population, including being members of a Pentecostal church.

Mungiu, part of Romania's exciting new wave of filmmakers (others on that list include Cristi Puiu and Radu Jude), is no stranger to common domestic issues with religious overtones that ruffle the fabric of society and blow up into life-altering occurrences. His other Palme d'Or winner, "4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days" (2007), dealt with illegal abortion in Romania. There as well as here, small intimate dramas play out around deeply drawn characters unwittingly pulled into unenviable and claustrophobic situations. The Gheorghius' eldest children have already been taken into state custody when Child Protective Services show up to inform Mihai and Lisbet of the situation and claim the other three.

To this point we have not witnessed any whiff of corporal punishment, let alone a raised voice from either parent, so inherently we feel their frustration and haplessness as the bureaucratic process coldly strips them of their children and their dignity — all with the false, hopeful promise that "all will come out in the investigation." This we know will not lean in the Gheorghius' favor, since Mihai has signed a statement even after he protests the nature of the terms (hitting and striking versus patting and lightly slapping a hand from a hot stove). The language barrier adds to the disconnect, and the church, seemingly fearful of the Norwegian governmental agency, encourages the Gheorghius to more or less go it on their own.

The spiraling situation turns hopeless when their church-referred lawyer quits because they won't quietly play their part in the kangaroo court. They make a late plea to a neighbor, Mia (Lisa Carlehed), ironically the wife of the schoolmaster and stepmother of a teen who played with the family's eldest daughter. She reluctantly takes the case, restoring a glimmer of hope.

Given the dour pacing of the film and somber overtones, Mungiu clearly isn't interested in distilling a didactic statement. He wants to stoke an internal conversation of conscience — one that for American sensibilities may feel a tad obtuse or staid initially. The film overall is a quiet tremor with a sense of finality lingering from atop the mountain high — a boulder of moral judgment teetering perilously above.

As provocative as Mungiu's slow emotional burn is, it could not become the hot brand it renders in the end without the talents of the cast. The nearly unrecognizable Stan proved himself more than "Captain America" action figure fodder (he was the Winter Soldier) as the young POTUS-to-be in "The Apprentice" (2023). Here, he shows another level of range as a pious man looking to his faith to guide him as the bureaucratic law boxes him in and plays his sensibilities against each other. (The actor makes good casting sense, having been born in Romania in the 1982 before becoming a U.S. citizen in 2002). There's great internal rage projected under his stoic, methodical facade.

Also multilingual and seemingly limitless in their range across roles and genres is Reinsve, seen this summer — and surprisingly underutilized — in the hit indie horror chiller "Backrooms." She fades into her role as matron and mother beholden to her church, husband and the chauvinistic reins of society. Her Lisbet — more in the know of the inner workings of the township — bites her tongue and ultimately becomes something of a quiet fixer behind the scenes. And not enough can be said of Carlehed's performance as the reticent attorney, empathetic, wary and uncertain, yet steadfast and dutiful once committed. Her Mia is the kind of person you want across the street, the one you never really know or appreciate until the chips are down and they are the one to extend the helping hand.

★★★½

Playing at Landmark Kendall Square Cinema

FOOD

WHAT WE'RE HAVING

Impressive new noodle bars just steps from Red Line stops

By TOM MEEK

Folks who like to slurp their way through these chilly fall days will rejoice in the warm comforts of two new noodle shops off the Red Line: the Noodle Lab in Kendall Square and Xi'an Cool Noodles in Porter Square. Both are no-nonsense, laser-focused eateries that are light on your wallet and hearty in your belly.

The Noodle Lab, an expansion of the Boston Noodle Lab that opened in Boston Public Market in 2015, is a clean, spacious cafe perfect for a working lunch, dinner, or a study and nosh. You could think of it as the Soup Shack with a sit-down-and-hang-out vibe. The Lab specializes in classic Japanese shoyu, tori paitan, shio and curry broths. The rich and savory chicken-based tori paitan comes in miso, creamy and spicy variations. The shoyu (soy-infused), shio (salty umami) and curry are also chicken-based, making the Noodle Lab one of the few ramen shops in the area, alongside old friend Sapporo Ramen at CanalSide, to lean primarily on chicken stock; pork is the more common base. After you select a broth, you build your own bowl with either ramen or rice noodles and add in your choice of protein (roasted chicken, katsu chicken, fried tofu, soy-braised pork belly, or miso ground pork) and veggies (corn, sprouts, Asian greens, and pickled shiitake). There's also the option to add a custard-like onsen egg.

Building your own steaming bowl is fun, but I prefer the rotating specials: preset bowls that you can further customize. The wonton noodle soup, a clean peppery slurp, comes with rice noodles and a light yet rich white pepper broth. The brothy bowl comes with bok choy and Asian greens and is a hearty eat, given the generous portion of savory pork wontons. If you want everything, go for the Laksa while it's on the specials slate: rice noodles, lightly fried tofu, lemongrass, roast chicken, and fish cakes all in a rich, coconut cream curry broth — add in sweet corn, sprouts, and an onsen egg to round out the flavor of your all-in-one slurpable.



Photos: Tom Meek

A line of hungry customers forms at the Noodle Lab.



Noodle Lab's wonton soup.

The curry packs the piquant yin and yang of sweet and spicy, with a pleasing bit of a pucker, and the noodles are pliable understudies to the complex broth flavors and main protein and veggie textures. The fish cakes are not the typical, thin pink and white slices that come atop most ramen, but lightly breaded and fried, producing a richer fish flavor. If you need a warm-up, the steamed chicken gyoza are impressively tender and savory, and the pickled assortment of Asian veggies (cauliflower, green beans, and carrots adorned with fresh scallions) makes for a nice side dish.

At the Noodle Lab, you order on a kiosk screen, and a friendly server delivers your brothy bowl to you and later buses your compostable dish.

In Porter Square's Lesley Building, Xi'an Cool Noodle has finally opened up shop in the storefront that had formerly been the popular udon noodle bar Yume Ga Arukara. (It moved around the corner to a shared space with Izakaya Ittoku late in 2024.) Xi'an Cool Noodle specializes in the Shaanxi province's street foods (Xi'an is where the old Silk Road started), namely the Roujiamo — Chinese hamburger — and Liangpi noodles — "cold skin noodles." The shop is in a soft-open mode; Lamb Paomo — lamb and hand-torn flatbread in a bone broth — and other savories are coming as the crew at Xi'an gets the kitchen up to speed and expands the menu.

Those Chinese burgers, which come in beef or pork, are essentially slow-simmered, pulled meat. The burgers come on a flaky, thousand-layer Tongguan flatbread that is the same yeasty bread used for the lamb soup. You can get flatbread grilled crispy (recommended) or soft. I had the pork burger and it was like having a nice lean — and less juicy — pulled pork sandwich in a flaky phyllo bun sans the vinegar, but with a spicy kick. It's not as greasy or as big as a burger — more bao bun snack-size than an American two-hander. The signature Liangpi are tender wide noodles washed and steamed and served cold with julienned cucumbers, cubes of meaty seitan, and dressed with vinegar and chili oil. The noodles are beefy yet supple and succulent. It's a sloppy slurp to be sure, but worth it — and something you don't typically find in the Boston area. (Though Xi'an Famous Foods, an Anthony Bourdain favorite in New York, just opened an expansion in Downtown Crossing.) The Xi'an Cool Noodle folks are based in West Hartford, Conn. At this restaurant, the beads of sweat on your brow are a thank you to the chef.

As at Noodle Lab, you order via a kiosk and take a seat at one of the few cafe tables or bar-tops, and wait for your cool noodles to come up.

A final note: It's great to see new activity in the Little Tokyo bodega pavilion that has had many eateries (Sapporo, Chocho's and Tampopo) depart over recent years. Next door, where Tampopo had been, a sign for an incoming Korean bibimbap concept (Mix & Toss) was recently posted.

Noodle Lab Kendall Square
238 Main St.
Kendall Square, Cambridge
noodlelabboston.com
$ (out of $$$$)

Xi'an Cool Noodle
1815 Mass. Ave.
Porter Square, Cambridge
xiancoolnoodlema.com
$ (out of $$$$)

Have a favorite dish or dine out spot that we've not covered and you think we should? Email Tom at tmeek@cambridgeday.com.



Xi'an Cool Noodle's signature Liangpi.

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From Guitar Hero to symphonic AI with MIT's Tod Machover

By MICHAEL F. FITZGERALD

As a composer, Tod Machover has received commissions from some of the world's leading orchestras and ensembles. As an inventor he's currently the director of the MIT Media Lab, and leads the Opera of the Future group, which has spun out innovative music technology such as Guitar Hero. He spoke with Cambridge Day's Jason Zhang about his new work "already and not yet," an interactive concerto commissioned by the Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO) and performed by the BSO and a generative AI model Machover's lab developed.

This interview has been edited for clarity and condensed.

Cambridge Day: Tell us about " already and not yet."

Tod Machover: The BSO got in touch a couple of years ago and asked if I wanted to write a piece. I said that I would be really interested in writing a piece without technology (which ultimately did not happen). I really wanted to write something about society and democracy, what was at risk, and what could possibly happen. And I thought of the orchestra as a society on stage that could tell an interesting story about individuals and groups, who's in charge, and how you negotiate where to go.

What inspired it?

We (the Opera of the Future lab) have been developing various kinds of AI in our music for a long time. With the new generation of systems, we did a piece called Flow Symphony, we built a specific model with music I wrote and sounds recorded from a river in Vermont, and we tried to make fits between natural sounds and string sounds. Right now, I find that the AI models are particularly useful for making sensitive and delicate variations on a single line of music. They're also pretty good at making mash-ups or combinations between things which don't necessarily seem to fit. Both of those ideas are very resonant with the idea of individuals versus communities. And so I decided there would be an electronic layer with a lot of things that I make in my studio, and then a live AI layer. The subtitle of the piece is "Concerto for Orchestra with Electronics."

And what do you hope audiences will take away from the experience?

I wanted to have three movements, "Smash Up," "Wake Up" and "Stand Up." The first movement is about the shock of having forces all of a sudden appear that are trying to kind of stop everything you care about. The orchestra's organized in normal sectional blocks, although the strings and winds are trying to spin out these melodies and counterpoint and the brass and percussion keep trying to shut them down and eventually just scream and explode and everything kind of stops.

The second movement basically treats the whole ensemble as a group of soloists. There are a few melodies that tie the whole piece together, but in the second movement, fragments of these melodies come out from different solo instruments that, little by little, pass it around, and then join in, and there I use the AI system to be sensitive to subtle changes of nuance in playing style between timbre of instruments. We can change what it's looking at in many different ways while the orchestra is playing. Manaswi Mishra (Machover's student) will be on stage right in front of the conductor, making sure the model doesn't crash, but also pointing the system in different ways over the course of the whole piece.



Natalia Tsarkova

Tod Machover, composer, inventor and MIT professor.

In the third movement, it's looking for connections between blocks of instruments, rather than individuals. We've tuned [the AI] so that it's especially sensitive to the contrast between things that are the same — everybody playing one chord at the same time — and things that are quite different — everybody playing something different. We have sections where it goes back and forth between these two types of instructions, and the orchestra plays, and the system listens, and then it responds, and then the orchestra responds. The third movement is based on trying to arrive at a different kind of balance.

We're also putting speakers around the hall. So in that third movement, little by little, the sound does creep out into the hall, and by the end, when they're trying to make this new balance, the idea is it's also embracing the audience, and hopefully, something special happens.

It seems like you're leveraging a lot of these technologies to make the messaging of how democracy ties to the society of the orchestra more clear, arriving at some kind of consensus between collective and individual voices.

Maybe I'll send you out there to explain the piece! I wanted to add that the whole public perception of technology, and especially AI, has changed so much in recent years. A lot of AI is pretty scary. It's not transparent; nobody knows what's going on inside.

Like you said, the public perception of AI is changing, with many people starting to view it as antagonistic to democracy. How did you think about what it means to include AI in your music?

Many days I woke up and said, "God, I should have stuck to my original idea and not had any technology at all." But then, technology's kind of part of my life, it's part of the way I think. I've always taken it as part of my responsibility to try to make models of technology that enhance human abilities and enhance human intention and connection. There's always been a tendency for technology to make people conform to it rather than the opposite, and it's just so exaggerated right now.

So, the kind of systems we're using in this piece are meant to be dialogue systems and collaborative systems. They don't have any models of the BSO inside; they don't have models of other people's music inside. They all react live, immediately.

The AI system is going to react differently every time the orchestra plays. The orchestra has the score, it's written so that the orchestra and individual soloists have the ability to respond to that with a fair amount of freedom. There's a lot of room for surprise, and for the orchestra to actually negotiate something that feels really fresh. Hopefully it'll work and feel that way.

I'm particularly excited about the upcoming conversation you'll have with George Lewis (composer, technologist, and professor at Columbia), because in the 1980s he was developing Voyager, an early live AI improvisation system. In trying to develop the musical AI interactions, did you look to the past, did you look back to your own work, or any other work that's been done in this area?

I've known George since the beginning and we've been friends for all these years, and in a certain sense, we've taken an opposite approach to interactive systems. Back in 1980, his goal was to develop systems where he put some of his DNA into the software. He really thought of those systems, and still does, as completely independent musicians.

I always viewed these systems as ways that an artist could have extra layers of expressive control over music that was composed. You knew what the shape of things were, but there were all kinds of things you might want to bring out in a performance, or the kind of performance variety that really interested me.

And I think there's something between his approach and my approach, which is where I want to go next. I'm not saying that's where the field should go, but that's kind of what I see.

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SOLID WASTE PICK-UP AND DISPOSAL AT VARIOUS LOCATIONS

The Cambridge Housing Authority, the Owner and Managing Agent for its affiliate properties, is seeking bids to provide Solid Waste Pick-up and Disposal at Various Locations, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in accordance with the documents prepared by the Cambridge Housing Authority.

The project currently consists of weekly pick-up and disposal services at eleven (11) sites located in and around Cambridge, Massachusetts. The Cambridge Housing Authority reserves the right to add or remove locations during the term of the contract in accordance with the unit prices submitted by the Contractor. The amount of weekly pick-ups will depend on the size of the development. **See Attachment** I-Price Sheet for schedule.

All bids are subject to M.G.L. Chapter 30B, Section 5. This procurement is also subject to the eligibility, bid-security, bonding, prevailing-wage, and other requirements stated in these Contract Documents. The not-to-exceed value of this contract is $750,000, and the term will be three years or until the funds are fully expended, whichever occurs first.

Bid Forms and Contract Documents will be available through Procore (may be viewed electronically and hardcopy download) **beginning Wednesday, October 28, 2026, after 10:00 AM.**

SPORTS

Football comeback, soccer reigns

By DAN EISNER

Boys' soccer: The Cambridge Rindge and Latin boys' soccer team (9-1-3) extended its winning streak to seven with a 10-2 thumping of Westford Academy on Oct. 20, a 2-0 win against Bedford on Thursday and a 4-1 victory over Acton-Boxborough on Tuesday. These wins, combined with a loss by Concord-Carlisle on Saturday, propelled the Falcons to the top of the MIAA Division I power rankings.

In the shellacking of Westford Academy, Elias Hyland scored a hat trick, with other goals coming from Mathias Asnake, Kirubel Tilahun, Erik Rojas, Bona Alemo, Leo Davis, Ben Richards and Campbell Callahan. Will Richards, Davis, Mason Richards, Phineas Tomsho and Callahan had assists.

In the clean sheet against Bedford — the Falcons' fourth in five games — the goals were scored by Ben Richards and Tilahun, with Tomsho and Hyland garnering assists. Asnake scored twice and Hyland and Alemo added one goal each against Acton-Boxborough. Asnake also had an assist, with two more from Tomsho and one from Winslow Lively.

Girls' soccer: The girls' soccer team (5-9) lost to Westford Academy, 1-0, on Oct. 20, beat Bedford 2-0 on Senior Night on Thursday, and fell to Acton-Boxborough, 3-1, on Monday. The Falcons are currently ranked 34th in the MIAA power rankings, and since the top 32 teams reach the tournament, their postseason hopes remain alive. To qualify, they have to beat Swampscott by three goals on Saturday and hope other teams on the bubble lose.

Mira Tanwar and Naomi Baldwin scored Cambridge's goals against Bedford, and Cailin Beckman had an assist. The lone goal against Acton-Boxborough came from Danica Tencer, with Baldwin assisting.

Football: The football team (4-2) defeated Newton South, 21-20, in dramatic come-from-behind fashion Friday night, with quarterback Max Batchelor connecting with Hugo Davis on a 20-yard touchdown pass with just 20 seconds remaining. It was Davis's second touchdown reception of the game. The Falcons trailed 20-7 at halftime, but pulled to within six points in the third quarter on a six-yard touchdown pass from Batchelor to Lincoln Jones.

Jamai Lewis led the running game with 48 yards on four rushes, and Christopher Jean Baptiste ran for 46 yards on 10 carries. On defense, Emmanuel Dieudonne recorded seven tackles, including two for a loss, and had a sack. Jhenassy Shaw had a sack, a fumble recovery, and six tackles, two of which were for a loss.



Xander Whitters

Hugo Davis, shown earlier this season, caught two touchdowns, including the game-winner, on Friday night against Newton South.

Boys' crew: At the Massachusetts Public School Rowing Association (MPSRA) Championships in Lowell on Sunday, boys' varsity crew teams captured three golds and a silver. The first varsity 4+ crew of coxswain Son Schneider, Nicolas Karnath, Daniel Morland, Zeke Bittker and Mateus Verdi won the gold with a time of 15:27.7. The second varsity 4+ crew of coxswain Vida Ristivojevic, Malcolm Funck, Milo Sperry, Eli Garcia and Timur Cerimagic took first with a time of 16:02.6. Right behind them with a time of 16:06.1 was the crew of coxswain Andrew Morland, Wyn Karmon, Emilio Franco-Parisi, Benjamin Scott and Rio Thielow. The third varsity 4+ of coxswain Akash Walter, Eli Wu, Lucian Smiles, Leo Soper and Eli Schulz won the gold with a time of 17:06.9.

Girls' crew: At the MPSRA Championships, girls' varsity crew teams captured two golds, a silver and a bronze. In the first varsity 4+ race, coxswain Antonia Millan, Moira MacCarthy, Nova Bahlmann, Imogen Wu and Violet Finley took first with a time of 17:52.4. In the second varsity 4+ race, coxswain Dahlia Abelson, Jordan Frishman, Marina Koyanis, Emma Gurjal and Beatrix Taylor finished first with a time of 18:44.5. The silver-medal-winning crew of coxswain Emi Hsieh, Imogene Goode, Rachel Dickie, Nina Penagos-Esquitin and Eleanor Goode had a time of 18:52.3. Coxswain Lila Doyle, Iris Moyer, Adele Umeki, Ayumi Batra and Leah McDiarmid finished third in 19:39.8.

Girls' volleyball: The girls' volleyball team (13-5) lost, 3-0, to Acton-Boxborough on Wednesday, Oct. 21 but bounced back for a 3-0 defeat of Somerville on Senior Night on Friday. Against Acton-Boxborough, Noah Beyer had 11 kills, Ellie Su recorded 15 digs, and Indie Fray had nine assists. Beyer had 15 kills and Abigail Fisher Seufert added 11 more against Somerville. Fray had 31 assists and 11 digs.

Boys' cross-country: The boys' cross-country team defeated Newton South on October 21, 15-46. CRLS runners captured seven of the first nine places, with Leon Ibanez Fraile, Kieran Eichler, and Thomas Dewitt finishing first, second and third. Due to issues with timekeeping, only places were recorded.

Girls' cross-country: The girls' cross-country team eked out a 27-28 defeat of Newton South. The Falcons' Neva Hartman finished second (15:59), Maeve Heynolds took third (16:17) and Violet Smith placed fourth (16:23).



Tadhg Ledlie

Mathias Asnake takes on a Belmont player in Cambridge Rindge and Latin's 3-0 victory in boys' soccer. Asnake had two assists in the game.

Soccer

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"Their decision-making, the timing of their runs, the things that go beyond just passing the ball — some of that is really high on this team. They know how to organize themselves on the field and know where to be, and it makes a big difference."

Niko Emack, who coached the team for two seasons before stepping down before this year, agreed the knowledge younger players received last year has boosted them.. "They're a lot more prepared, and they're not seeing the game go by in a blur," he said. "What makes this program so strong is there's less of a learning curve when we're seeing folks in their ability to slow the game down." (Disclosure: Emack is on Cambridge Day's board of directors.)

Their gameplay isn't the only way the team has exhibited maturity beyond its years. The players have the emotional maturity to support one another when someone makes mistakes or struggles. They are selfless, happy to play unfamiliar positions, and are eager to accept less playing time if that's what the team needs.

"New guys are stepping up to become new leaders, taking on the roles of the seniors who left," said junior Kirubel Tilahun, the team's leading scorer with nine goals. "Coming into the season, we knew that all the juniors and sophomores had to step up, even though we weren't comfortable with that. We had to step out of our comfort zone and take action and be leaders."

With the Falcons performing at high levels, Mouyaka has given his players considerable freedom on the field. His trust has given them the confidence to take risks.

"Coach isn't screaming at us what to do," said sophomore Leo Davis. "He just lets us make our own decisions. And then after we made our decisions, he gives us some pointers or compliments us if we do it correctly."

When the MIAA tournament begins in a couple weeks, the team has every reason to believe it can go as far as last year's team, if not farther.

"Despite the fact that we're young, I feel like that just makes us even more dangerous because we, you know, we're young, we have nothing to lose," said Hyland. "We don't really have any pressure."

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