

ALLSTON

The Boston Globe

## Doormat to welcome mat? Move afoot to revive a ragged green strip

By Will Kilburn, Globe Correspondent | December 4, 2005

As green spaces go, the Lincoln Street Green Strip isn't much to look at: A narrow wedge of land bordered by Cambridge and Lincoln streets and the westbound lanes of the Mass. Turnpike, it's the kind of place known more for weeds and trash than any kind of natural beauty.

"It's this piece of land that's been sitting there for years [that] didn't exist until the Turnpike was built," says Heather Knopsnyder, open space community organizer for the Allston Brighton Community Development Corporation. "So it's just been sitting there neglected, growing weeds, trees, things that weren't necessarily planned, but just sort of popped up there."

A couple of summers ago, those weeds and trees caught the attention, and the bicycle spokes, of North Allston resident Harry Mattison, who uses the ramp at one end of the strip to ride to and from the business district and his home. A search to find out who owns and maintains the strip at first proved fruitless, so Mattison took matters and pruning shears into his own hands and cut back the overgrowth himself. But more work was needed on what he considered the front door to his neighborhood.

"It was one of the things that was always kind of disappointing about the neighborhood," he says. "When you leave your home and walk through it, or as you're heading home and walk through the other way, it certainly didn't give you a good feeling. It's not the 'welcome home' that one would like."

Now North Allston may get a better welcome mat: Mattison rounded up other neighbors to form the Friends of Lincoln Street Green Strip, and at a meeting of green space advocates, he outlined his hopes for the space. Then, the city's Department of Neighborhood Development got involved, as did the New England Foundation for the Arts, and a call went out to local artists and designers. Of the 20 teams who submitted samples of their work, four were selected to receive \$1,500 planning grants to work on their visions for the space, which will be unveiled tomorrow from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Honan Library in North Allston. The proposals can be viewed at the library through December. A final choice will be made in January by a committee to include Mattison, who says that while he hopes for a design that is practical year-round and is low-maintenance, he'd rather leave the specifics to the experts.

"I do a little bit of gardening in my backyard, but I'm not a landscape designer, and I'm not an artist," he said.

Two of the artists from the four finalist teams say they look forward to making a forgotten space a bit more memorable.

"It is obviously very challenging, but, it's also not been designed by anybody yet, so it's really totally an open site," says Kathleen Driscoll, an artist as well as a professor and gallery director at Mt. Ida College who is part of a three-person design team. "So it actually has a lot of possibility in that it hasn't been touched yet by anyone."

Competitor Ross Miller meanwhile, says he jumped at the chance to improve a strip of land near where he's had studios for 25 years.

"This space is a very clear example of a lot of leftover spaces around the city," he says, pledging to help out the project even if his team doesn't make the final cut. "If we can figure out some ideas that encourage neighborhood participation, and look at models for how to maybe make some community gardens [and] to bring artwork into those spaces, that could be used as an example for many, many other spaces."

Which is just the kind of thing that Mattison wants to hear. "If this can turn into something where more neighbors can come out and take an interest in it," he says, "that would be equally important as some change on the site."

Will Kilburn can be reached at [wkilburn@globe.com](mailto:wkilburn@globe.com). ■