September 25, 2006

The Honorable Mayor Thomas M. Menino  
Mayor's Office  
Boston City Hall  
One City Hall Plaza  
Boston, MA  02201  

Dear Mayor Menino:

On behalf of the National Association for Olmsted Parks (NAOP), we are writing to express our concern over the proposed demolition of the historic Perkins Pinebank mansion – the only surviving estate house on Jamaica Pond’s shore.

Destruction of this notable building – rather than its preservation and rehabilitation – would result in the permanent loss of the central cultural landscape element of Frederick Law Olmsted Sr.’s original design for the Emerald Necklace. As the only remaining intact linear park designed by Olmsted Sr., the Emerald Necklace occupies an important position in our national heritage of urban parks. Preservation of the entire system and its architectural components is critical to the integrity of the Olmsted vision.

NAOP has worked with communities all across the country to preserve and protect their heritage resources. In park after park, once decrepit and abandoned historic park structures have been reborn as vital and attractive places for public use and services. Pinebank, situated in one of the nation’s premier historic landscapes, deserves the same fate.

NAOP, established in 1980, is a coalition of design and preservation professionals, historic property and park managers, scholars, municipal officials, citizen activists and representatives of numerous Olmsted organizations around the United States and Canada. Its primary concern is the legacy of work designed and inspired by Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. and his firm that continued to practice landscape architecture for almost a century through the involvement of his sons John Charles Olmsted and Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. NAOP advances the use of Olmstedian design principles and advocates for the protection of irreplaceable historic parks and landscapes that revitalize communities and enrich people’s lives.

We strongly believe that the City of Boston should preserve this historic structure and make it available to current and future generations of residents and visitors.
We ask that the City of Boston revive Olmsted Sr.’s original vision for this historic park and urge you to reconsider the City’s plans to demolish a potential icon of Boston’s historic and cultural legacy.

Sincerely,

David Bahlman
Co-Chair

Susan West Montgomery
Co-Chair

Cc: Ellen Lipsie, Boston Landmarks Commission, Boston City Hall
    James Hunt, Chief of the Environment, Boston City Hall
    Toni Pollak, Commissioner, Boston Parks Department
    Hugh Mattison, President, Friends of Pinebank