



January 30, 2023

**COMMENTS OF THE OLMSTED NETWORK
IN OPPOSITION TO THE LONGWOOD PLACE PROJECT**

The Emerald Necklace – a great system of parks designed by famed landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted – is a world-renowned treasure and national asset whose restorative spaces have been serving Bostonians and diverse visitors for over 100 years. It is the result of visionary City leaders who, in 1875, passed a Park Act and then commissioned Olmsted to create a linear park system that would provide city dwellers with an opportunity to enjoy nature in the city.

At a time of climate change and growing climate challenges, this inviting park system is more important than ever. We also know, in the face of the pandemic, the incredible value of parks and green spaces in advancing mental and physical well-being. It would, therefore, be tragic indeed if Boston permitted high-rise development that would produce harmful shade and do damage to this historic and natural landmark.

We, the national voice for Olmsted parks and landscapes across the country, write in opposition to the planned Longwood Place Project at 305 Brookline Avenue and call on the city to explore alternatives that would minimize impact on the city’s irreplaceable park system. Benefits of this proposal are currently outweighed by threats to the natural health and beauty of Riverway Park, Justine Mee Liff Park, and the length of the Muddy River in the Emerald Necklace.

As other parties have outlined, the amount of shade created by the proposed development will seriously and negatively impact the ecology and historic character of these parks. The shadow will interfere with tree, shrub and turf growth, with a predictable impact on the Olmsted design. The structures would ADD shadows expected to range in size from one to five acres. With more shade, the growth of existing trees and thriving plant communities will be impaired and it will be increasingly difficult to stabilize the soils along the Muddy River –an urgent and ongoing taxpayer-funded initiative.

Diminished growing conditions would in turn produce “dead zones” along the Necklace and diminish the healthy connectivity of the linear park – so important to Olmsted -- that serves as a

corridor for people, plants and wildlife. At the same time, the shade will make the parks darker, raising concerns of both safety and user experience.

Boston has been a leader in ecological sensitivity and preservation for years and should be so here. It is noteworthy that citizens and public officials chose in 2017 to protect the Boston Common and Public Garden from undesirable shadows through legislative action.

Rather than ignoring this precedent, Boston leaders should embrace the opportunity to develop comprehensive shadow regulation -- as other cities have done across the country. 98% of Boston's public parks do not have any sunlight protections in place. With thoughtful collaborative planning, cities can allow both desirable development and thriving natural assets. Case by case decisionmaking favors those with political clout and results in outcomes that fail to factor in the broader public benefit of sunlight and inviting public spaces. Shadow regulation and mandatory review of development by the Parks and Recreation Commission can ensure appropriate and systematic attention to the preservation of public green space,

On behalf of Olmsted parks and landscapes which provide restorative green spaces across the country, we ask you to take all steps necessary to protect and respect the Emerald Necklace so that it can be fully enjoyed by future generations.

Sincerely,

Anne Neal Petri

Anne Neal Petri
President and CEO
Olmsted Network

The Olmsted Network (formerly the National Association for Olmsted Parks) is the only national organization dedicated solely to protecting and preserving the work and living legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted. Our network includes the Emerald Necklace Conservancy, Central Park Conservancy, Biltmore, Bok Tower Gardens, Lake Park Friends, The Frederick Law Olmsted Society of Riverside, and scores of other partners around the country dedicated to protecting Olmsted parks and landscapes. The Olmsted Network is serving as the Managing Partner of Olmsted 200, the celebration of the bicentennial of Olmsted's birth, www.olmsted200.org.

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