



NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION for
OLMSTED
PARKS

“... advances Olmsted’s principles and legacy of irreplaceable parks and landscapes that revitalize communities and enrich people’s lives.”

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Statement of the National Association for Olmsted Parks South Mountain Reservation

2020 marks the 125th anniversary of the Essex County (NJ) Park System, the first county park system in the nation, and one of the jewels of the Olmsted firm. On April 23-25, Essex County will be hosting an anniversary conference, *Olmsted Legacy: Honoring the Past, Treasuring the Present, Shaping the Future*, in conjunction with NAOP’s annual meeting. We look forward to participating in this celebration and exploring the County’s open spaces.

We understand that a proposal to expand the Turtle Back Zoo in the South Mountain Reservation is generating considerable public concern. This large and complex Reservation was designed by the Olmsted firm to balance remarkable natural features with built assets providing diverse recreational experiences. In the spirit of the Conference, we urge Essex County to go slow and to explore its range of options before proceeding. The Reservation is a historic nature reserve and any changes should be pursued only after public hearings and with due attention to the historical and ecological ramifications. Over the last decade, the Essex County Executive and other public officials have successfully transformed the Zoo from a facility in need of rehabilitation into a popular and dynamic destination. Any future changes should build on this success by ensuring the input of concerned citizens and professionals.

For 40 years, the National Association for Olmsted Parks has been dedicated to advancing Olmsted principles and the legacy of irreplaceable parks and landscapes that revitalize communities and enrich people’s lives. To learn more about our work, please sign up [here](#).

January 9, 2020

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