



NATIONAL  
ASSOCIATION for  
OLMSTED  
PARKS

**Board of Trustees**

Philip Schultz, Chair & Treasurer  
Fox Point, WI

Douglas Luetjen, Vice-Chair  
Seattle, WA

Lane Addonizio, Secretary  
New York, NY

Mark Buscaino  
Washington, DC

Stephanie Crockatt  
Buffalo, NY

Patrice Kish  
Boston, MA

Lucy Lawliss  
Bradenton, FL

Arleyn Levee  
Watertown, MA

Steven Livengood  
Washington, DC

Paul Daniel Marriott  
Washington, DC

Alida Silverman  
Atlanta, GA

Spencer Tunnell  
Atlanta, GA

Barbara Yaeger  
Madison, CT

Anne "Dede" Neal Petri  
President and CEO

Aga Simmons  
Administrator

April 13, 2021

Ms. Loryn Sheffner  
Office of Real Estate  
One Ashburton Place, 15th Floor  
Boston, MA 02108  
[loryn.sheffner@mass.gov](mailto:loryn.sheffner@mass.gov)

Re: Shattuck Campus at Morton Street AMB Public Hearing

Dear Ms. Sheffner:

Boston has a one-of-a-kind opportunity to recapture 13 acres of parkland in Frederick Law Olmsted's magnificent Franklin Park.

Often referred to as the "crown jewel" of the Emerald Necklace, Franklin Park is a public park, open to all citizens. For over 100 years, it has been a unique gathering space, as well as a welcome respite from city life for neighbors and other visitors.

Yet city and state officials have, over many years, appropriated more and more parkland for **nonpark and private** purposes. Over its history, the Park has been subjected to numerous intrusive uses—the transformation of the meadow into a golf course and buildings; adaptation of the Greeting promenade into the Zoo and its structures; the addition of a stadium and parking; the building of a maintenance yard; and the construction of the Lemuel Shattuck Hospital. **Today, 40%, or 200 acres, of Franklin Park cannot be accessed freely by the general public.**

Now, the Department of Health and Human Services is proposing to enter into a 99-year lease with a private developer to build multi-unit housing and a recovery campus, without obvious consideration of viable alternatives.

While the Commonwealth has a responsibility to provide these important services, building in Franklin Park is not the answer.

**As a matter of environmental and social justice, Boston neighborhoods deserve expansive and well-maintained public parks and the mental, physical and ecological**

**Advisory Council**

Eleanor Ames  
Portland, ME

Kathleen Conner  
Seattle, WA

Julie Crockford  
Boston, MA

Eliza Davidson  
Seattle, WA

Rolf Diamant  
Woodstock, VT

Robert Doyle  
Oakland, CA

Erin Gallentine  
Brookline, MA

Betsy Shure Gross  
Davis, CA

Esley Hamilton  
St. Louis, MO

Donald Harris  
Seattle, WA

Faye Harwell  
Alexandria, VA

Tomás Herrera-Mishler  
Sarasota, FL

John Karel  
Ste. Genevieve, MO

Anne Knight  
Seattle, WA

Francis Kowsky  
Buffalo, NY

Phil Loughlin  
Cambridge, MA

Rosemarie Murane  
Denver, CO

Christine Edstrom O'Hara  
San Luis Obispo, CA

Ed Orser  
Baltimore, MD

Elizabeth Barlow Rogers  
New York, NY

Ann Satterthwaite  
Washington, DC

**benefits they provide. The proposed plans for construction in the park should be rejected.**

**Olmsted made very clear that parks are not building sites.** The purpose of a park, Olmsted opined, was “a ground to which people may easily go after their day’s work is done, and where they may stroll for an hour, seeing, hearing and feeling nothing of the bustle of the streets, where they shall, in effect, find the city put far away from them.”

In an essay entitled *The Spoils of the Park*, he railed at politicians and public officials who viewed parks as simply places to build: “The very ‘reason for being’ of the Park,” said Olmsted, is “the importance to the city’s prosperity of offering to its population ... opportunity for pleasurable and soothing relief from building .... Building can be brought within the business of the park proper only as it will aid escape from buildings. Where building for other purposes begins, then the Park ends.”

The fact is: This is not an either-or proposition: **The Commonwealth can ensure the effective provision of necessary services while also returning parkland and open green space to the neighborhood.**

Although the Department has made no serious examination of other alternatives, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy and Northeastern University have identified the Arborway Yard Bus Facility as an ideal spot for the provision of these services. The 18-acre site is the largest undeveloped area along the Emerald Necklace and it offers space for:

- 8 acres for community services, residential units, and affordable housing (as required by the 2001 MOU between the MBTA and the City of Boston).
- Mental health and addiction rehabilitation services and 75-100 units of housing for the formerly unhoused
- Mixed-use services and recreational greenspace adjacent to public transportation
- Supportive services adjacent to the Forest Hills T stop; and
- Public transportation

By building in the Arborway Yard site, the Commonwealth could have a win-win situation. It could return a 13-acre parcel to its original use as a park while locating health services in a more desirable and accessible location. It is incumbent on the Commonwealth to explore alternatives and to optimize benefits to the public.

Today, 85% of all Americans live in urban areas. A healthy urban environment is more critical than ever – contributing to a city’s economic vitality, recreation, education, and ecological sustainability. Preserving, enhancing and expanding parks is thus essential to public and global health –as thousands who have embraced Olmsted parks have confirmed over the last year.

In these challenging times, Olmsted has bequeathed us a valuable legacy: green and open spaces, which renew our spirits and provide critical ecological benefits at a time of climate crisis.

Recapturing 13 acres of Franklin Park would be a fitting tribute to Olmsted – who literally designed much of the American landscape – and whose 200<sup>th</sup> birthday will be celebrated in 2022.

It would also set a national example for how cities and states can redress decades of environmental injustice by restoring park land to high-need neighborhoods while creatively addressing public needs in other locations.

Sincerely,



Anne Neal Petri  
President and CEO

*The National Association for Olmsted Parks is the only national organization dedicated to protecting and preserving the life, leadership and legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted. Our network includes the Emerald Necklace Conservancy and more than 60 other friends groups and conservancies around the country dedicated to protecting Olmsted parks and landscapes. NAOP is serving as the Managing Partner of Olmsted 200, the celebration of the bicentennial of Olmsted's birth in 2022, [www.olmsted200.org](http://www.olmsted200.org).*